Making a mockery of a vital electoral activity

Thanks to the lackadaisical approach of the regulator and the ignorant masses, the election manifesto of a political party has been reduced to something no one really cares about



WITHOUT CONTEMPT

SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN

e are the world's largest democracy. We pride ourselves on having substantially "free and fair" elections term after term. Typically, every year there is some election somewhere in the nation. Yet, something as fundamental as an election manifesto is so poorly regulated that the entire electoral process borders on being a farce.

A fundamental element of a public contract is that the promise and reciprocal promises that create the contract are clearly understood, well communicated, and that the general public is able to take an "informed decision". When a company raises public money through an initial public offering of securities, for example, it must write a "prospectus" that states what the company does, what it plans to do with the money raised and explains the risks associated with what is on offer.

Yet, when it comes to the mother of all public contracts — elections that decide who we put into government to rule our destiny ("serve us", for the politically correct) — the regulation of the document equivalent of the "prospectus" is pathetic. Elections are regulated by the most-extremely empowered regulator in the nation — the Election Commission of India (EC), a constitutional functionary. Yet, the light-touch and handsoff approach to regulating such a vital

piece of the public promise that lies at the core of elections has resulted in piquant and unacceptable outcomes.

It is in this year, at the fag end of the seventh decade of the Republic that the EC has imposed a 48-hour cut off for release of the election manifesto. While this is lauded as a reform, it also means that, according to the EC, 48 hours is all the time necessary for a voter to read an election manifesto, appreciate its contents, and take an informed decision about whether to vote for that party. Regulators with far lesser powers than the EC enforce far longer periods of time for appreciation of promises made in public offering documents. In a securities offering, the draft prospectus has to be posted online for the public to see what is being worked on.

Whatever be the promise in an election manifesto, after the election results are announced, there is nothing in the election manifesto that the party called to account for — except for a potential denial of a vote at the next election. No manifesto even pays lip service to the fact that regardless of contents, if political expediency so demands, the party may prune, truncate or even abandon the promises set out in the manifesto. In a nutshell, at the threshold, the manifesto means nothing. Election manifestos have never had caveats about potential "common minimum programmes". If a company were to say in its prospectus that it is raising money for a certain purpose, but later uses the money for something else, there will be hell to pay.

No election manifesto has any content that shows in a single comparative chart or table, how the party in power performed as against its promises in the previous manifesto. A promise-versusperformance narrative is an integral part of every regulatory environment other than the regulation of elections.

In short, the election manifesto is a ritualistic document that no one really cares about. Neither the regulator, which only fixes timelines for its release, nor the electorate, that is supposed to be informed about the election promises all in one place, can be said to truly care about it. Perhaps a more truthful depiction of reality would be to abandon election manifestos altogether. However, do picture telling the capital market regulator that no investor reads a prospectus in any case and therefore one must not get carried away by the role of a prospectus. If you were to indeed believe in this statement, it would mean you truly believe that Sahara did not deserve an iota of the treatment meted out. The foundation of the case against Sahara was the non-issuance of a prospectus for raising funds from investors through issue of securities

The story lies in the mockery that election manifestos have been reduced to. And indeed, in the lackadaisical approach of the regulator, and the attitude of the ignorant masses in the marketplace for votes. That some political parties are taking pains to engage in widespread public consultation to come up with a manifesto, is heartening. It would be abject apathy if the parties were to stop caring about even an ostensible manifesto. Yet, that day is not far, unless the umpire wakes up to the need to regulate this important piece of electoral activity.

The author is an advocate and independent counsel. Tweets @SomasekharS

CHINESE WHISPERS

Correct budget



Former finance minister P Chidamharam (pictured) had accompanied his son Karti, who was speaking at in election rally, to Sivaganga district.

them, had gathered at the event and some 100 plastic chairs were arranged for them to sit on. When he saw the arrangement, Chidambaram asked the volunteers to remove the chairs as they might add to the event expenses and it would be difficult to explain to the expenditure observers appointed by the Election Commission if they visited the venue. The chairs were removed immediately and the women were made to sit on old flex banners. As the meeting got underway, the expenditure observers happened to drop by, as the veteran politician had rightly predicted. The former finance minister's calculations turned correct when they went away after satisfying themselves that the party meet hadn't overshot the budget.

Party workers, many women among

About chor and chowkidar



Congress President Rahul Gandhi filed his nomination from the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency on Wednesday. Accompanying him were his

mother Sonia Gandhi, sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, brother-in-law Robert Vadra and their children. Congress supporters came out in significant numbers to cheer them on. While the Congress president and other family members travelled in an open-top vehicle, some party leaders walked alongside it. Several of them later found that their phones and wallets had been stolen. The episode gave the Bharativa Janata Party social media supporters a good reason to ridicule the Congress for its slogan "chowkidar chor hai".

Only snakes, no ladders

Candidates canvassing for votes ahead of an election are known to do strange things to sway voters. One simply decided to groove to Bollywood music. And hoped his moves would move voters to choose him. Karnataka Housing Minister MTB Nagaraj of the Congress broke into a "nagin dance" much to the amusement of the people gathered at his rally in Hoskote, 25-odd km from Bengaluru. As the live band that was following the minister's convoy started playing a famous song from the 1954 hit movie Nagin, Nagaraj, 67, couldn't stop himself from dancing. Translated into English. the minister's name stood for king cobra, a Congress worker proffered helpfully.

Call drop by Indian handset firms

How domestic manufacturers lost their status as feisty challengers to multinationals

ARNAB DUTTA

n mid-2016, Keshav Bansal, then 24 and a director at India's third-largest smartphone firm Technologies, was gung-ho about the firm's future. Sitting in his luxurious family residence in Delhi's Sainik Farms, Bansal was revealing his plans on taking the company public soon. Also in focus was his effort to make his newly acquired franchise rights for the Indian Premier League team Gujarat Lions finally join "the big league".

Bansal, freshly returned from the UK's Alliance Manchester Business School, was yet to anticipate the roadblocks to his ambitions. Close

to three years later, both his dreams, of taking Intex public and crowning his team with an IPL trophy, remain in the realm of aspiration. And Intex Technologies' fortunes have since dwindled in its own field — the local smartphone market. The company's sales have more than halved between 2015-16 and 2017-18 (see table).

Intex Technologies' fortunes was no exception among the Indian handset makers that once offered some feisty competition in a fast-growing market. Micromax Informatics, the poster boy of local handset industry during the early vears of the decade, is in no better shape. The Gurgaon-headquartered firm's sales have shrunk, according to filings with the Registrar of Companies - from a peak of over ₹10,000 crore in 2014-15. And its share in the country's bustling smartphone market has come down to less than five per cent in 2018 from a high of 18 per cent in early-2014. In fact, it remains the only Indian brand to cross the respective marks in revenue and market share ever.

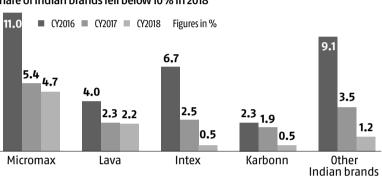
Since its heydays in the handset market. when it used to challenge the mighty multinational market leaders Nokia and Samsung between 2010 and 2014, Micromax, like Intex, has tried its hand at other businesses too. Both of them entered the low-margin white goods business by 2016. But success in their

new endeavour has been hard to spot. Both managed to come out with competitively priced air conditioners and washing machines, but they never made it to the top five brands. In fact, their most ambitious venture — to foray into the fast-growing smart LED television market — was fiercely challenged by new entrants.

Xiaomi — the current leader in the local smartphone market and a Chinese brand with a diverse consumer electronic portfolio — rattled the entire TV market with its low-cost smart TV sets. After entering the local market in early-2018, it not only decimated the fringe players but is also challenging the very dominance of the top four of India's TV market — Samsung, LG, Sony and

DISCONNECTED

Share of Indian brands fell below 10% in 2018



Panasonic. Further, brands like VU, Thomson, Kodak and Iffalcon from TCL, nipped the dreams of Micromax and Intex in the bud.

The fortunes of the other two major Indian handset brands - Lava and Karbonn — together the big four of the Indian handset industry — have run on similar lines. Together, share of these four and other Indian brands' fell below 10 per cent in 2018 — for the first time since 2010. In 2018, the share of Indian brands in smartphone market stood at 9.1 per cent from a peak of over 45 per cent in 2014. While, investment proposals to the tune of thousands of crores to ramp up the local manufacturing base and upgrade their respective portfolio were made in recent years, none of the four have managed to increase their clout over India's handset market since the slide began in 2015.

Why did they lose market share so quickly? Principally because the Chinese outdid them in the price game and turned the competitive dynamics at the lower end of the handset market from price to value. From being fringe players offering inexpensive phones to pricesensitive consumers, Chinese handset firms have risen to dizzying heights, shedding their humble image to corner an unprecedented 60 per cent share of the smartphone market in 2018. And that has come at the expense of Indian firms. According to Karn Chauhan, research analyst at Counterpoint Research. Indian brands could not match the innovation that their Chinese counterparts brought in in recent years. Their failure to adopt to the fast-changing market realities played an important role too.

"The growth of Chinese brands and the slow adoption of industry trends led to this decline. One of the key reasons for the growth of Chinese brands is their affordable offerings with stand-out features including strong design language and their ability to leverage deeper access to the Shenzhen-based manufacturing and supply chain ecosystem. Chinese suppliers are now experts in hardware design, software and user interface integration. They have built a robust original design manufacturer (ODM) and supplier network", he said. Further, the Chinese brands have

also been aggressive in terms of their device launches and capturing key marketing trends to offer well-designed products at competitive price points with clever marketing and robust channel strategies. Also, factors like big war chests of Chinese players that are mostly having the advantage of 'economies of scale', years of expertise in product design, backing of strong research and development capabilities and marketing budgets have only acted against the local players, analyst point out.

Despite their decimation by Chinese rivals, the big four Indian brands still have a chance to bounce back, says, Prabhu Ram, head-industry intelligence group, CyberMedia Research. "If these four brands are able to come-up with attractive product offerings, with the latest specs and the right pricing and promotions, they can recover some lost ground". The wide offline retail network, set up by the Indian brands years ago, can also be leveraged to reach the hinterlands.

Lava is putting innovation at the front and centre of its plans. "We are investing in product design and R&D and bringing component manufacturers on baord to increase the extent of local value addition. Currently, 25-30 per cent of the components used in our phones are sourced locally," says Sunil Raina, president and business head, Lava International.

Relatively down-market overseas regions such as Africa and Eastern Europe also offer a glimmer of hope to these companies. "For Lava and Micromax, it makes sense to exploit and leverage such opportunities. It would complement their domestic focus," says Ram.

INSIGHT

Hats off, NG

Jet's ousted chairman has successfully transferred the headache of reviving his airline to SBI and the government



ANJULI BHARGAVA

ven as Naresh Goyal, the recently ousted chairman of Jet Airways, opens his bottle of wine at his home in London, he must look back on the last 25 years with great satisfaction.

Let me explain why. In 1994, Jet Airways was owned 60 per cent by Goyal, 20 per cent each was held by Gulf Air and Kuwait Airways. Government policy at the time permitted investment in domestic airlines by a foreign carrier and Goyal took full advantage of it.

In 1996, the Tata group wanted to set up a new domestic airline with Singapore Airlines (SIA) in a joint holding. To prevent competition, Goyal singlehandedly manipulated government policy to ensure that foreign airline investment in domestic carriers was forbidden. New Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) guidelines were issued that prevented "foreign airline" investment in a domestic carrier. As a result, the Tata group could not partner SIA. Goyal too had to ensure that Kuwait Airways and Gulf Air divested their stake in Jet Airways, a minor inconvenience in comparison to

having a formidable new competitor. This ridiculous caveat — not per-

mitting foreign airline investment even as cement, power or telecom companies could freely invest in a domestic airline — stayed in place for 16 years right up to September 2012, when the government issued new guidelines allowing automatic investment of up to 49 per cent by a foreign airline in a domestic carrier. It also permitted holding of up to 100 per cent by a nonresident Indian (read: Naresh Goyal).

The new guidelines conveniently came into place a bit late to help Kingfisher Airlines (KFA). KFA, which started flying in 2005, was on a downward spiral by 2010. By October 2012, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) suspended KFA's licence.

However, in 2012, after the KFA demise, the government policy was changed to allow foreign airlines to invest up to 49 per cent through the automatic route in an existing Indian carrier, making Jet the first airline to take advantage of the new rules. In 2013, Etihad bought 24 per cent stake in Jet Airways for \$379 million. Had the same new guidelines come into force just one or two years before it actually did, KFA may have survived or at least survived a bit longer. But timing is everything and in this case too timing was on NG's side.

Interestingly, the new guidelines issued in late 2012 or early 2013 specified "existing Indian carrier" to prevent foreign airline investment coming into a new domestic airline at the time. Perhaps realising the absurdity of this, the government of the day and FIPB



mission — although they were not existing Indian carriers — to come in with SIA and Air Asia Berhard respectively, a matter that reached the courts and remains pending.

A second rule whose timing worked in Jet's favour was the 5/20 introduced in 2004, just before Jet Airways went international (its first international flight was May 2005). This prevented new domestic airlines from going international unless they had been in operation for five years or had 20 aircraft in their fleet. The rule stayed till October 2016.

Smaller policy diktats also tended to be on his side. In 1998, sensing an opportunity, Jet decided to introduce the ATR72-500 for certain regional routes. Miraculously, policy again favoured NG: Landing and parking charges for aircraft of less than 80 seats was waived at airports across the country and ATF was taxed at 4 per cent. On October 15, 1999, Jet introduced its first ATR flight on Delhi-Jaipur-Udaipur sector.

All through these years, the airline has operated with costs far higher than most rivals. It pays higher salaries than

most rivals. It pays more than rivals for almost all services it outsources. It buys its aircraft at a higher price. It has higher sales and distribution costs than rivals and has steadily been paying commissions to JetAir Pvt Ltd, owned by NG. Naturally, it is broke.

Now with close to \$4 billion of dues on its head, timing is on his side yet again. The most crucial general election is staring the present government and nobody wants Jet to go under right now. So, NG has left the entire mess in the hands of SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar & Co. It is the ministry and Kumar who are promising to get more aircraft in the air to save the airline from bankruptcy and trying to find someone to buy it. As one rival airline CEO put it, "The villain of the piece now is Rajnish Kumar."

Even as the writing is on the wall, Goyal can, if he so wishes, spend his days freely in London or Dubai where, by all accounts, he leads quite a comfortable life. He's not a fugitive, has no dues on his head directly and can watch the show in peace from a safe distance. Mallya and others can learn a lesson or two from this gentleman.

Hats off to NG!

LETTERS

Alarming state of Jet

Apropos to the various reports in Business Standard about many bidders who might show interest in the sinking airline Jet Airways, I have serious doubts on the valuation that's going to be fixed for a stake sale especially with the huge amount of debts payable by the airline to lessers, vendors, employees, oil companies and so on. I wonder what's stopping the law from taking action against the original promoter of Jet who has mismanaged the accounts. The law here is acting differently with promoters of Kingfisher and Jet. While the government is doing everything to extradite the Kingfisher promoter who too defaulted on loans provided by the banks, the same banks are dealing with the Jet promoter with a velvet glove. It raises suspicion on the behaviour of the banks and the government. Aren't rules meant to be the same for everyone?

Sachin Nair via email

Stable Fitch rating

For the past 13 years, the Fitch sovereign rating of India hasn't improved. The main reason behind this is the fiscal weakness of the country. The government budgeted fiscal deficit of ₹6.24 trillion or 3.3 per cent of GDP in the financial year 2019 but up to November 2019, it will be ₹7.14 lakh crore. Now, in the financial year 2020 also, our country's fiscal position is going to be weak because of direct cash transfer. Farmers' loans have been waved off, income tax rebate has also increased up to ₹5 lakh. The government has failed to improve the Fitch rating from 'BBB' stable outlook, though it implemented transformative reforms that have led to the stabilisation in the reforms rating. This stable rating will affect the election results too. To improve it, the government must attain the fiscal deficit target, generate more employment and strengthen the fiscal position of the economy by increasing revenue

and decreasing expenditure. Shubham Sharma Bathinda

A correction

"Why manifestos lose credibility", published on April 10, had erroneously mentioned that the government's capital expenditure and internal and extrabudgetary spending by public sector enterprises were estimated at ₹6 trillion in 2013-14. The correct figure is ₹4.5 trillion. Consequently, the average annual growth of this expenditure during the five years of the Modi government would be 16 per cent, and not 10 per cent. The BJP manifesto, therefore, promises a little less than a four-fold increase in the growth rate in five years. The errors are regretted.

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

HAMBONE



Headwinds for growth

Deeper reforms needed to put India on a high-growth path

he International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised downwards its estimates of growth in India's gross domestic product (GDP) by 20 basis points for both 2019-20 and 2020-21. The IMF now sees GDP growth coming in at 7.3 per cent in the ongoing fiscal year and at 7.5 per cent in the year to come. The IMF is the third multilateral agency to revise growth forecasts downwards in recent days. Last week, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank both set a lower forecast for India's GDP growth in 2019-20. They, as well as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), estimated it would be 7.2 per cent, also 20 basis points lower than their earlier forecast. The Central Statistics Office of the government estimated in February that growth in 2018-19 would be 7 per cent — down from the 7.2 per cent it had released earlier. There has thus been some downgrading of India's growth momentum all round.

It is worth noting that the multilateral agencies' expectations of a moderate pickup in GDP growth over the next two years — from about 7 to about 7.4 or 7.5 per cent — are dependent upon looser fiscal and monetary policy and some revival in demand, and not upon a resurgence in private investment. This reflects the RBI's recent relaxation of monetary policy and its two successive cuts in the headline interest rate. But there is limited fiscal headroom for the RBI to stimulate growth, given that government borrowing has not been reduced sufficiently. The IMF argues, in its outlook for the Indian economy, that the build-up of debt will have to be reduced. This is correct, since it is serving as a drag on private sector borrowing and investment. India will also face global headwinds, as the agencies have cut their estimates for global growth for 2019 by 20 basis points to 3.3 per cent — the lowest since the financial crisis in 2008 —blaming trade tensions between the US and China, loss of momentum in Europe and uncertainty surrounding Brexit. Of course, the future path of crude oil prices will also play a major role.

It is clear that for sustainable growth going forward, business-as-usual from the next government will not be enough. At best, India will, if the current slow momentum of reform is maintained, stabilise growth at around 7.5 per cent according to the new series of GDP. This is clearly not enough. The need is to raise India's potential GDP growth considerably. This can only happen if deeper structural reforms are carried out as a priority. Unfortunately, few of these appear to be on the agenda of either national political party at the moment. Labour and land law need to be re-examined to see where the bottlenecks are for private investment at the moment. It is also clear that state-driven growth — through spending on infrastructure, for example — has lost its ability to drive India's growth over 8 per cent a year. Nor has this spending been able to "crowd in" private investment to the degree earlier thought. It is essential to ensure that the government now borrows less so that private investment, which is more productive and growthenhancing, can take up some of the slack and restore growth to a higher trajectory.

The risk factor

Cautious stand needed on commodity derivatives

he Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) will be well-advised to revisit its plan to allow mutual funds and portfolio managers to deal in commodity derivatives following the misgivings expressed by the finance ministry about this move. The Sebi board had approved the move to offer investors additional tools to hedge against inflation and facilitate efficient price discovery in a transparent manner. However, the economic affairs department of the finance ministry thinks otherwise. It is wary of opening up the commodities market to institutions that have no direct exposure to underlying commodities. The danger is that this could lead to speculative bids, thus, heightening the risks for the investors. The price volatility may actually accentuate if these institutions use their financial muscle for manipulative trading instead of hedging — which may often be the case.

Such apprehensions are, in fact, shared by some independent analysts as well. Agricultural goods, being seasonal and perishable in nature and innately prone to unforeseeable price fluctuations, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by speculators. The proponents of institutional involvement in the commodities sector, on the other hand, argue that their presence would lend greater liquidity and depth to this market and provide more avenues of safe investment, especially for retail investors. This plea rests on the assumption that the institutional investors would undertake well-informed and research-based trading for more credible price discovery. However, this may not happen all the time.

Sebi's decision on the liberalisation of the commodity derivatives market was, actually, based on the counsel of its Commodity Derivatives Advisory Committee, which had mooted phased induction of domestic and foreign institutional investors into this sector. In the first phase, which is currently under way, specified types of alternative investment funds, portfolio managers, mutual funds and foreign portfolio investors are to be permitted to operate through commodities bourses. In fact, a few foreign entities, especially those having some association with the Indian commodity markets, and selected alternative investment funds (category III) are already active on these platforms. With the entry of the mutual funds and portfolio managers, the first phase would be complete. Other institutions such as banks, insurance and reinsurance companies are slated to be roped in during the subsequent phases.

Though the futures trading in commodities resumed in India after nearly a 40-year hiatus way back in 2003, this form of commerce for all practical purposes is still in its infancy. Its track record in price discovery and price risk management has been quite indifferent thanks largely to rampant malpractices and ineffective supervision. The former commodities regulator, the Forward Markets Commission (FMC), was a toothless body which, being an appendage of the finance ministry, could not take any independent decisions. Though the present regulator, Sebi, is relatively more powerful and autonomous than the FMC, it, too, has yet to prove its worth as a commodities sector watchdog. A vigilant and strong regulator can stave off speculation-driven price aberrations by changing margin requirements, capping investments and prices, or halting the trade if the situation so warrants. In any case, it is imperative to tread cautiously and put adequate safeguards in place before allowing institutional investors with deep pockets an open access to the price-sensitive commodity derivatives sector.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

Macroeconomic priorities for new govt

It will have to contend with some key challenges that do not figure in the election manifestos

A PIECE OF MY MIND

SHANKAR ACHARYA

ith the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government completing its five-year term and elections under way, it is a good time to outline what should be some of the macroeconomic priorities for the new government, whether NDA (as seems likely) or some Congress-centred coalition. The economic record of the last five years has been mixed, ending on a somewhat weak note and entailing substantial challenges for the incoming government, especially in the context of a weakening global economic environment.

Consider the following:

Even the official 2011-12 base national income data

(which has suffered its due share of professional questioning) show a growth slowdown in the past two years, with GDP growth decelerating from 8.2 per cent in 2016-17 to 7 per cent in 2018-19. Quarterly growth rates have come down from above 8 per cent in 2017-18 Q4 to 6.5 per cent in 2018-19 Q4. This slowdown is also reflected in high frequency information such as the Index of Industrial Production. trade statistics, corporate earnings results, Purchasing Managers Indices, major sectoral indicators and so forth. On current trends and

policies, GDP growth could drop to 6-6.5 per cent in 2019-20. Main causes include: slowdown in global growth and trade; continued stagnation in India's exports; weak private investment because of crowding out by high fiscal deficits (centre plus states running close to 7 per cent of GDP and a Public Sector Borrowing Rate of about 8.5 per cent) and associated high real interest rates, balance sheet stresses as well as subdued "animal spirits"; persisting high stress in the financial system (including both banks and non-banks); and the lack of major reforms in agriculture, electric power, land and labour markets.

■ On the plus side, the rate of headline CPI inflation has come down below 3 per cent, averaging about 3

per cent in 2018-19 (although "core inflation" has remained above 5 per cent), helped by moderate energy prices and declines in agricultural commodity prices.

■ On the other hand, external finances are under stress, with the current account deficit in the balance of payments averaging an uncomfortable 2.6 per cent of GDP in April-December 2018. This is particularly worrisome against the background of merchandise exports suffering unprecedented stagnation around \$300 billion a year since 2011-12, bringing the ratio to GDP down from 17 per cent in that year to about 12 per cent in 2018-19. Causes include: an over-valued exchange rate; our failure to gain from relocation of

low-end manufacturing from China (in sharp contrast to Vietnam and Bangladesh) or to successfully plug into global value chains; our ill-advised lurch towards higher customs duties in the past two years; persisting negative effects of demonetisation and GST transition (especially on small-scale exporters); and a still pervasive lack of "ease of doing business" in exporting.

Above all, our employment situation has become quite dire because of long standing weaknesses in education, skilling and

health, and an exceptionally anti-employment edifice of labour laws and regulations. Data from the as yet unreleased, "draft" Periodic Labour Force Survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Office in 2017-18 show: Unemployment above 6 per cent; youth (age 15-29) unemployment rates at dangerously high 27 per cent for urban females and 19 per cent for urban males; and labour participation rates (the proportion of working age population actually in the labour force) at below 50 per cent overall, a tragically low 23 per cent for females and a disastrous 16 per cent for female youth.

In sum, the new government will have to contend with slowing economic growth, weak private

investment, anaemic exports and vulnerable external imbalances, a stressed financial system, mounting fiscal pressures (including high government debt-to-GDP ratios) and an exceptionally bad employment situation.

In this context, it would be easy for any government to agree on the objectives of macroeconomic policy. It would want faster growth of GDP and employment, continuation of low consumer inflation, lower external deficits and a stronger financial system. The difficult challenge is in devising and implementing a consistent and politically acceptable set of policies to attain these objectives. Accordingly, I suggest the following priority areas for macroeconomic policy:

■ Accelerate the growth of exports through: reduction in the current over-valuation of the rupee; reforms in GST systems and procedures to closely approximate the textbook zero-rating of exports; standstill (and then rollback) of customs duty increases, which typically operate as taxes on exports; proactive efforts to successfully finalise the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, which is necessary to secure our trading opportunities in fast growing Asian trade; and a serious efforts on trade facilitation. Faster export growth would be thrice-blessed by increases in GDP and employment (remember 35-40 per cent of our exports come from small-scale producers), reduction in our large trade and current account deficits, and deeper engagement with our trading partners.

■ Reduce the central government's fiscal and revenue deficits (yes, that old chestnut) through some difficult decisions on both the expenditure and revenue sides of the budget. That too will be thrice-blessed by lower real interest rates for medium- and long-term funds for private investment, higher public savings to accommodate a lower trade deficit in the national macro balance, and a gradual reduction in our near 70 per cent government debt-to-GDP ratio.

■ Build on the major economic reforms of the past five years, notably the GST and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). The GST rate structure needs to be simplified, perhaps with a modal rate of 15-16 per cent, a concessional rate of 8-10 per cent and a high rate around 25-30 per cent on "sin" items and a limited set of consumer luxuries. Exports need to be zero-rated effectively. The information technology system, registration/reporting requirements and compliance procedures need periodic review and reform. The IBC system is under constant and serious attacks from the promoter and other vested interests of delinquent firms. To preserve and strengthen this major reform will entail continuous review and improvements of the extant legislative and institutional framework.

■ And if we are serious about reviving employmentintensive manufacturing, we have to undertake major reforms of labour and land laws. Our goal should be to compete effectively with Vietnam and Bangladesh to attract and nurture much more of the low-end, labour-using industries shifting out of China.

These priorities may not figure much in election manifestos, but they remain critical for faster growth of national output and employment, the bedrock of sustained economic and social development.

The writer is Honorary Professor at ICRIER and former Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India. Views are personal.

Trump's most worrisome legacy

irstjen Nielsen's forced resignation as US Secretary of Homeland Security is no reason to celebrate. Yes, she presided over the forced separation of families at the US border, notoriously housing young children in wire cages. But Nielsen's departure is not likely to bring any improvement, as President Donald Trump wants to replace her with someone who will carry out his anti-immigrant policies even more ruthlessly.

Trump's immigration policies are appalling in almost every aspect. And yet they may not be the worst feature of his administration. Indeed, identify-

ing its foulest aspects has become a popular American parlour game. Yes, he has called immigrants criminals, rapists, and animals. But what about his deep misogyny or his boundless vulgarity and cruelty? Or his winking support of white supremacists? Or his withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, the Iran nuclear deal, and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty? And, of course, there is his war on the environment, on health care, and on the rules-based international system.

This morbid game never ends, of course, because new contenders for the title emerge almost daily. Trump is a disrupting personality, and after he's gone, we may well reflect on how such a deranged and morally challenged person could have been elected president of the world's most powerful country in the first place.

But what concerns me most is Trump's disruption of the institutions that are necessary for the functioning of society. Trump's "MAGA" (Make America Great Again) agenda is, of course, not about restoring the moral leadership of the United States. It embodies and celebrates unbridled selfishness and self-absorption. MAGA is about economics. But that forces us to ask: What is the basis of America's wealth?

Adam Smith tried to provide an answer in his

classic 1776 book *The Wealth of Nations*. For centuries, Smith noted, standards of living had been stagnant; then, toward the end of the 18th century, incomes start to soar. Why?

Smith himself was a leading light of the great intellectual movement known as the Scottish Enlightenment. The questioning of established authority that followed the earlier Reformation in Europe forced society to ask: How do we know the truth? How can we learn about the world around us? And how can and should we organise our society?

From the search for answers to these questions

arose a new epistemology, based on the empiricism and scepticism of science, which came to prevail over the forces of religion, tradition, and superstition. Over time, universities and other research institutions were established to help us judge truth and discover the nature of our world. Much of what we take for granted today — from electricity, transistors, and computers to lasers, modern medicine, and smartphones — is the result of this new disposition, undergirded by basic scientific

research (most of it financed by government).

The absence of royal or ecclesiastical authority to dictate how society should be organised to ensure that things worked out well, or as well as they could, meant that society had to figure it out for itself. But devising the institutions that would ensure society's wellbeing was a more complicated matter than discovering the truths of nature. In general, one couldn't

conduct controlled experiments.

A close study of past experience could, however, be informative. One had to rely on reasoning and discourse — recognising that no individual had a monopoly on our understandings of social organisation. Out of this process emerged an appreciation that governance institutions based on the rule of law, due process, and checks and balances, and supported by

foundational values like individual liberty and justice for all, are more likely to produce good and fair decisions. These institutions may not be perfect, but they have been designed so that it is more likely that flaws will be uncovered and eventually corrected.

That process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation, however, requires a commitment to ascertaining the truth. Americans owe much of their economic success to a rich set of truth-telling, truth-discovering, and truth-verifying institutions. Central among them are freedom of expression and independent media. Like all people, journalists are fallible; but, as part of a robust system of checks and balances on those in positions of power, they have traditionally provided an essential public good.

Since Smith's day, it has been shown that a nation's wealth depends on the creativity and productivity of its people, which can be advanced only by embracing the spirit of scientific discovery and technological innovation. And it depends on steady improvements in social, political, and economic organisation, discovered through reasoned public discourse.

The attack by Trump and his administration on every one of the pillars of American society — and his especially aggressive vilification of the country's truth-seeking institutions — jeopardises its continued prosperity and very ability to function as a democracy. Nor do there appear to be checks on corporate giants' efforts to capture the institutions — the courts, legislatures, regulatory agencies, and major media outlets — that are supposed to prevent them from exploiting workers and consumers. A dystopia previously imagined only by science fiction writers is emerging before our eyes. It should give us chills to think of who "wins" in this world, and who or what we might become, just in the struggle to survive.

The writer is Professor at Columbia University and the 2001 recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economics. His new book, People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent, will be published this month by W W Norton and Allen Lane. ©2019 Project Syndicate

Taming India's waters



torical quest to tame water and weather to the present condition of the sub-continent. A MacArthur fellow, he has spent eight years chatting with Tamil fishermen and internationally-known meteorologists and traversing dusty British archives as well as the sub-continent to research this book.

Last week, when private weather forecasteruly Waters begins with the arguing agency Skymet predicted that the Himalayas and the rivers monsoon could be below normal this darriginate from them control the the country went into a tizzy. Givernative, not just of the sub-continent but Indian agriculture continues to dipleted, the entire world. Consequently, largely on rains for irrigation, a poor his region's quest for mastery over water soon augurs everything from farmer indianet-wide implications. To argue tress and rising food prices to slagging sign, Mr Amrith takes the reader on markets and higher food imports. The netter benging, sometimes acawhy Sunil Amrith's Unruly Water lenging trip in history.

timely book. As climate change is caus Much of the sub-continent's history increasingly more erratic monsoons and een driven by, what he calls more extreme weather phenomen a training ambition". Long before Babar ever before, his painstakingly researched, rulers and the ruled were both treatise establishes a link between by their interest in water. For the his
Mughals, water was both an ornament and necessity, not just in their formal gar-

dens but also in their architecture. British colonial rule took hydraulic ambition to new heights. The British were the first to study the linkages between monsoons and dry spells; famines and droughts. The canals they built, notably the Ganges canal, were not just great feats of engineering, they were monuments to imperial power; of England's ascendancy over India and its erratic monsoon, cyclones and unruly rivers.

As British maritime power pushed further inland into the subcontinent, the Gangetic plain became the power axis, with vast quantities of cotton, tobacco, indigo, gunpowder and opium shipped by river to Calcutta. Early on, the British realised that much of their commerce depended on the capricious monsoon, unruly rivers and unpredictable storms that the sub-continent saw with such regularity. Their efforts to tame these forces of nature were aimed more at improving their own fortunes rather than those of the populace they governed. Consequently,

their policies worsened the impact of droughts and famines that became a miserably regular feature at the time. In fact, it was when famines and droughts came to be viewed as damning indictments of administrative practices that anger against the British began to build up. Even a Raj loyalist like Dadabhai Naoroji criticised the government's inability to create drought-resistant water infrastructure even as it levied heavy taxes on Indians.

JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

The quest to harness natural water resources picked up pace after Independence. As Mr Amrith writes, the concept of development became synonymous with the taming of its water resources. Nehru famously referred to dams like Bhakra Nangal and Hirakud as the new temples of modern India. Mega dams and multi-purpose projects came to be seen as ways to improve agricultural output. They could magically address the inequalities of nature by greening vast tracts of land hitherto not irrigated by any rivers. The control of water became a source of power; its absence, a source of enduring exclusion. In the seventies. the subcontinent's quest for food security led to the Green Revolution and an

unprecedented consumption of ground water, tapped through the humble tube well. New power centres emerged in the once-arid regions of north-west and south-east India, which were now irrigated by these mega dams and had emerged as hubs of arrightnral growth.

as hubs of agricultural growth. Through all this tumultuous, breathless "development", few paused to think of the consequences of this mastery over rivers and ground water. The author estimates that since independence, 40 million have been displaced by dams in India. Most of these have been Adivasi, tribals, who have not received any form of compensation. The environmental consequences of large dams have been equally huge: forests drowned, soil, rivers blocked, deltas starved of silt, natural drainage hindered and worse. The present-day scenario is dire from the environmental perspective, as pollution, climate change and accelerating glacial melt have added to the sub-continent's water woes.

Although Mr Amrith offers a critical analysis well-backed by environmental science, he offers no alternative plan. For example, he writes: "Groundwater has been the cornerstone of Indian food

security since the 1970s — but for how long?" Readers might feel compelled to also ask — if not groundwater, what else? The fact is that there is a crying need for us to develop a plan to harness the planet's water resources sustainably.

Mr Amrith offers an indirect solution though, when he makes the case that rivers, oceans and the weather should be issues that transcend national boundaries. As should the issues of climate change, pollution and carbon emissions. He writes: "Climate change creates problems of distance — between the source of pollution and its consequences - but it also creates new forms of proximity in the form of shared risks and interdependence." This is what makes Unruly Waters a thought-provoking read. At a time when our planetary commons, so to speak, are under such grave stress, the book offers a critical understanding of the politics of water that could shape the fate of mankind in the years ahead.

UNRULY WATERS

Sunil Amrith

Allen Lane; 379 pages, ₹799

FINANCIAL EXPRESS WWW.FINANCIALEXPRESS.COM

Dinion in thursday, April 11, 2019



CORRUPTION OF ELECTIONS

N Gopalaswami, CEC from 2006 to 2009

The potential of mischief for subversion of the process of elections represented by social media is immense



When all parties flouting rules, what is EC to do?

If EC bans party chiefs for flouting its directives, all hell will break loose; parties need to ponder over this possibility

ITH MOST POLITICAL parties flouting the Election Commission's (EC) model code of conduct with impunity, it is not surprising EC is coming in for a lot of flak and being pilloried as a stooge of the government. Though the EC has retrieved some ground in ordering that the biopic on prime minister Narendra Modi will be shown only after the elections are over, it allowed the NaMo channel to be aired and it didn't take any serious action when Modi tried to made a clear divide between Hindu and Muslim voters by saying that, after angering Hindu voters with the UPA's Hindu-terror charge, Rahul Gandhi was contesting in an area where the majority was in a minority. And, while it is still examining the issue, it is not clear if the EC will take a decisive stand—and without much delay—on the prime minister canvassing votes in the names of the CRPF jawans who died in Pulwama or the air force heroes who conducted the Balakot raids; this is despite the EC clearly saying, last week, that the Balakot strikes were not to be politicised.

But before alleging EC is soft on the government, it is important to keep in mind that it is not just the BJP, most major political parties are guilty of the same thing. The EC's advisory asks parties not to make unverified allegations against one another, but that didn't stopped Gandhi from saying, after Wednesday's Supreme Court (SC) ruling, that SC had accepted that there was corruption in the Rafale deal and that Modi had given ₹30,000 crore to Anil Ambani. The SC has not opined on corruption and the fact that Ambani does not get ₹30,000 crore has been explained many times over, but Gandhi's allegations haven't stopped. While UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath was censured by the EC for referring to the armed forces as Modi's *sena*, BSP chief Mayawati made an explicit appeal to all Muslims to vote against Modi.

Certainly, the EC's reputation has taken a beating, but so has that of the entire political class since the model code of conduct is something they have all promised to adhere to. When all parties are united in throwing decency to the winds—in the days the EC was seen as more powerful, parties and individuals took the EC warning/censure more seriously—the only option for the EC is to take extreme steps to enforce its writ. This could include barring candidates from fighting elections or asking them not to campaign in certain states, but if this is done to leaders of various political parties, the repercussions of this could be a quite serious. Perhaps the EC should consider large monetary fines running into a few crore rupees, depending upon the size of the infraction.

Along with political parties—obviously it is too late to do this in the current election—EC needs to take a fresh look at the model code of conduct. Asking parties not to base appeals on the basis of caste or religion sounds very good—indeed, there is a PIL on this in the Supreme Court—but when political parties are either set up on the basis of caste/religion, or derive a substantial part of their support from such groups, it is even reasonable to lay down such a code of conduct? And if, as in this case, one party is seeking votes on the basis of it being more muscular than the other, then is it reasonable to even expect that a Balakot will not be politicised even if, in keeping with EC orders, pictures of defence personnel are not used as a backdrop to a stage in a political rally?

Right move on VVPAT

This should lay to rest the fears over EVM hacking

HE SUPREME COURT'S direction to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to increase random matching of voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) to five polling booths per assembly segment, from one at present, will help allay the doubts—even if these are irrational—that voters might have regarding EVMs. While 21 opposition parties were demanding that VVPAT slips be matched for at least 50% of EVMs across all assembly segments—currently, this is done for less than 1% of the EVMs—the ECI had opposed it because that would have imposed tremendous pressure on the poll regulator's overextended manpower and infrastructure, and delayed announcement of results by six days. The SC reasoned that increasing the VVPAT matching to five booths per assembly segment will neither leave the ECI struggling for manpower nor will it delay the announcement of results significantly. But, the larger gain, as the SC noted in its ruling, is that increased VVPAT verification "would be of greater satisfaction not only of political parties but also for the entire electorate".

The fact is that the constant attacks by political parties, be it the BJP in the pre-NDA-2 years or the Opposition parties now, are corrosive for the electorate's faith in EVMs. There can be no doubt that the EVMs are a much more efficient way of polling and essentially an antidote to all the ways the paper ballot process can be hijacked, from booth capturing to manipulation of ballots and fake ballot papers. While the ECI has been insisting that the EVM it uses can't be hacked, the demonstration of wired hacking by scientists at University of Michigan and by AAP legislators in the Delhi Assembly brought the EVM under a cloud in recent years. And, even though voters in Surat (Gujarat) and Mandsaur (Madhya Pradesh), the epicentres of the anti-GST and the farmers protests chiefly targeting the BJP, could have overwhelmingly voted for the BJP despite the protests, the clean sweep the BJP made in these regions have been used by opposition parties to further fan EVM-scepticism among voters. To be sure, the ECI challenged political parties and civil society bodies stoking anti-EVM paranoia to hack its EVM in an open event, and none of the parties claiming that EVMs could be tampered with participated. Former chief election commissioners, including SY Quraishi, vouched for its security. Experts have also detailed how it is nearly impossible to hack EVMs in a wireless manner with currently available technology, and even if such an endeavour were to become possible with new technology being developed, how expensive and complicated it would be, requiring the hacker to collaborate with, among others, the EVM manufacturer and the ECI itself! But, the cloud of suspicion has doggedly refused to lift, more so in the light of reports emerging that what ECI presented as the Indian Statistical Institute vouching for the adequacy of the existing level of VVPAT verification may have been the endorsement of just one of the academics at the hallowed institute, and not the institute's considered view.

Once the ECI implements the SC order, and voters see for themselves how unfounded the fears over EVM hacking are, perhaps political parties across the spectrum will be forced to bury the bogeyman they have been using to put a spin on their own fast-eroding credibility at the hustings. Some have recommended that the ECI allow the candidate who comes second in EVM counting to select the five booths, but that is a call the ECI will have to take.

StandingFirm

US's objections to India's e-commerce policy should be viewed as a continuation of their global assault on trade

HE UNITED STATES has criticised India's restrictions on cross-border data flows and data localisation requirements. It has termed India's move as a barrier to digital trade in its 2019 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers. It said these requirements raise input costs for internet-based suppliers of services by forcing the construction of data centres and preventing local, indigenous firms from taking advantage of the best global practices available by impeding and restricting competition to these companies. The Indian government's draft e-commerce policy calls for regulating cross-border data flow, banning the sharing of data of Indian users stored abroad with other business and third-party entities, and mandating that all e-commerce companies have data storage in India.

This comes hot on the heels of last month's announcement that they will end preferential trade treatment for thousands of Indian products guaranteed under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), a programme that aims to promote trade with more than a hundred developing countries by giving duty-free entry for their goods. This is Trump's *modus operandi*—to economically arm-twist opponents until they give his country some concessions, as demonstrated by US's trade tussle with China, the outcome of which still lies in the balance. He has recently threatened to implement tariffs on goods worth \$11 billion from the EU as well. With internet companies and social media platforms, both collectors and databases of massive troves of data on individuals, coming under increasingly intense scrutiny for the propagation of content on their platform and with privacy and ownership of data becoming a resultant matter of central concern, stringent policy proposals like India's e-commerce one are bound to come up. EU has the General Data Protection Regulation and Brazil, Japan and Australia are just three more countries that currently have a data protection and/or privacy law. India is right to introduce such legislation and should stand its ground, especially as the US's increasing hostilities with the rest of the world might open up grander trading opportunities as a result.

HAIRY POLICIES

LIKE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN KINGS IN PLAYING CARD DECKS, THERE IS DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN ARMED FORCES AND POLICE WHEN IT COMES TO MOUSTACHE ALLOWANCES

Moustaches and the king of hearts

In the army and

police, there was a

movement away

from beards and

moustaches,

though those who

wanted to sport

them could do so

SUALLY, WE DON'T notice subtle differences in playing cards. Sure, one deck of cards may differ a bit from another, depending on design. But often, the spade's sign on the ace of spades will be larger and more ornate than the corresponding signs on the aces of hearts, diamonds or clubs. There is a historical reason. Card manufacturers had to pay taxes and stamp duties were extended to playing cards in 1711 (in England). You needed a stamp to prove duties had been paid and that stamp would naturally be on the first card of the deck, which was the ace of spades. However, stamping every deck became a nuisance. Hence, the ace of spades bore the insignia of the printing house, proof that taxes had been paid. The consequent larger ace became a legacy that till now often continues. Ditto with the four kings.

In standard English playing cards, the two black kings wield swords. The king of diamonds has a battle-axe, while the king of hearts has a sword he seems to be using to slice off his own head, unlike the black kings. In addition, the king of hearts doesn't sport a moustache, while the other three kings do. Why should discrimination exist? I don't think anyone knows definitively. There are theories. A standard answer is copying from original French versions and the disfiguring and distorting when block-makers changed symbols of office. In French versions, all kings have moustaches.

"In fact, there are endless styles of mustachios, all appropriate to the wearers and indicative of the various orders, as rigorously adhered to as if they had all been patented by the Government of India or had been sanc-



tioned by special appointment with His Majesty, the King, or Her Majesty, the Queen". This is from Mulk Raj Anand's *A Pair of Mustachios*, written in pre-Independent India. In Independent India, what are rules for the armed forces? I am asking about whiskers/moustaches, not beards.

For beards, there are indeed some prohibitions and special

exemptions and special exemptions. Do remember that before fighting the Persians, Alexander the Great had his soldiers shave off their beards. Because of Abhinandan Varthaman, if not otherwise, everyone knows moustaches are allowed in armed forces. Indeed, between 1860 and 1916, moustaches were compulsory in the British Army and that also

applied to British India, starting earlier with the East India Company. These rules changed in October 2016 and World War I was the reason. If you had to wear a gas mask, a moustache was a problem. Henry VIII taxed beards and so did Peter the Great in Russia. I don't think Henry VIII's tax applied to moustaches, but the Peter tax seems to have covered both beards and moustaches.

A tax is a disincentive. There is no

prohibition against, or compulsion for, moustaches in the Indian army today, nor is there a tax on moustaches. But neither is there an incentive in the form of a moustache allowance. However, like discrimination between kings in playing card decks, there is discrimination between armed forces and police when it comes to mous-

tache allowances. Here is a quote from 1943 police regulations. "Officers and men shall always be neat and clean in person and dress both in and out of uniform. Their hair shall always be closely cut.

Those who shave shall

always be clean-shaved. Moustaches may be worn though beards are shaved. Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims who are in

the habit of growing long hair and beards are permitted to do so". No bar, but there can be a positive incentive through a moustache allowance. I don't mean a moustache allowance specific to an individual. For instance, Bengaluru traffic police now have Meesey Thimmaiah as an official mascot. He was known as "Meesey" because of his distinctive and ornate moustache and he died on duty, trying to save a woman and her child from being

run over. While he was alive, Meesey Thimmaiah got an annual moustache allowance of ₹500. This was an allowance specific to him, not across the board.

Across the board, I know of only two states where policemen get a moustache allowance—Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh, it only seems to be for some districts, not all, and is ₹33 per month. In UP, the targeting of moustache allowance isn't district-wise. Policemen get it everywhere, but only if they belong to Uttar Pradesh Provincial (Pradeshik) Armed Constabulary (PAC), not otherwise. The amount has recently been hiked from ₹50 per month to ₹250.

I don't think there is any correlation between popularity of Chulbul Pandey or Singham and absence, or presence, of moustache allowances in different states. In a government system, the answer often lies in precedence. For the Indian Police Service, something like this is governed by Indian Police Service (Uniform) Rules of 1954. For a state, it will be the respective state rules on uniforms, such as the 1986 rules for UP, or corresponding uniform rules for PAC. Differences between rates are thus inevitable. In the army, there was a movement away from beards and moustaches, though those who wanted to sport these could do so. That is what happened in the police, too, and you see this reflected in UP's 1986 uniform rules. However, because of historical preferences and legacies, traces of moustache preference and "mooch" allowances remain in PAC uniform rules. Evidently, UP's 1986 Police Service (Uniform) Rules will soon be amended. But probably not those for PAC. Others are kings of hearts.

Western nations can avoid the Japan trap

When crafting the required comprehensive policy response, economies must recognise that the hurdles are a lot less technical, and a lot more political



Chief economic adviser at Allianz, was chairman of former US president Barack Obama's Global Development Council



wisdom held that "Japanification" could never happen in Western economies. Leading US economists argued that if the combined threat of weak growth, disinflation, and perpetually low interest rates ever materialised, policymakers would have the tools to deal with it. They had no problem lecturing the Japanese about the need for bold measures to pull their country out of a decades-old rut. Japanification was regarded as the avoidable consequence of poor policymaking, not as an inevitability.

And yet, the spectre of Japanification now looms over the West. After the 2008 financial crisis, the recoveries in both Europe and the United States were more sluggish and less inclusive than the majority of policymakers, politicians, and economists expected. And, more recently, hopes for achieving "escape velocity" out of the "new normal" of low growth and persistent disinflationary pressure have been dashed in Europe and Japan, and some worry that they may be

receding in the US. Europe, in particular, is back in the grips of a worrisome regionwide slowdown. Growth projections have been consistently revised downward, and the European Central Bank has acknowledged that its earlier optimism about achieving on-target inflation was misplaced. With yields on government bonds having fallen, the global trade in securities at negative interest rates has reached around \$10 trillion. Meanwhile, Japan is approaching its fourth consecutive decade of consistently low nominal growth, inflation, and interest rates. And, in the US, a growing number of economists are worried about a coming slowdown, with some urging the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates, and others calling for it to adopt a higher inflation target in order to combat the risk of excessive disinflation.

Were all those Western economists who dismissed the threat of Japanifica-

tion in the past being too glib? Yes and no. Today's Japanification fears stem from legitimate worries about structural disinflationary forces that could cause

lower, less inclusive growth, both directly

and indirectly. These forces include societal aging, rising inequality (in terms of income, wealth, and opportunity), social and economic insecurity amongst broad segments of the population, and a loss of trust in institutions and expert opinion.

Along with the zombification of firms after the last asset bubble, these structural factors have led to lower demand, as well as increased risk aversion and self-insurance, rather than growth-promoting risk-pooling, at the margin. Innovation, particularly in artificial intelligence, big data, and mobility, is another factor. Though the economic impact of these technologies is ambiguous, there is no doubt that they are reducing entry barriers across a growing number of economic activities and putting downward pressure on prices (the "Amazon effect"), at least in the short-term. Nonetheless, their long-term effects on growth and productivity remain to be seen. Growth is also being undercut in less direct ways. For example, persistently low—and in some cases, negative—interest rates tend to eat away at the institutional integrity and operational effectiveness of the financial system, thereby reducing bank lending and limiting the range of long-term products that insurance/retirement firms can offer to households. Another indirect effect stems from expectations about the future. The longer growth and inflation remain low, the more tempted households and companies will be to postpone consumption and investment decisions, thus prolonging low growth and inflation.

The Western economists who initially underestimated the threat of Japanification did so because they had downplayed or simply ignored these direct and indirect factors. In retrospect, they should not be surprised to find that the societies with the fastest-aging populations and less inward migration are the ones now struggling with Japanification. Still, those economists were not wrong to argue that policies can play a decisive role in macroeconomic outcomes—especially when structural forces are being amplified by excessive cyclical tightening, as was the case in

Japan in 1989. The problem is that they have tended to focus too narrowly on monetary policy, while overestimating its effectiveness. Countries at risk of Japanification need a much broader mix of policies to address both the demand side and the supply side of the economy.

Monetary policy, after all, is less effective near the "zero bound" and in scenarios where other "liquidity trap" factors are in play. Large-scale balance sheet operations like quantitative easing (QE) can buy time by seeking to inject more liquidity directly into the system. But they don't address the underlying issues, and they come with their own set of costs, forms of collateral damage, and unintended consequences.

The strongest protection against Japanification, then, is a combination of demand- and supply-side measures at the national, regional (in the case of Europe), and global levels. In countries with adequate fiscal space, this could mean looser government budgets and more productivity-enhancing investments (such as in infrastructure, education, and training). And in any country facing skills shortages, increased legal migration and better policies to facilitate labour mobility can help close the gap.

Moreover, these policies would need

Moreover, these policies would need to be accompanied by more effective protections for the most vulnerable segments of the population, particularly when it comes to health, training, and labour retooling. None of this will materialise without better political leadership and more enlightened global policy interactions.

Japanification offers three lessons

Japanification offers three lessons that Western policymakers and politicians have yet to internalise sufficiently. First, structural pressures make prompt action to reverse low growth, disinflation, and zero-to-low interest rates all the more critical. Second, unconventional monetary measures may be necessary, but they certainly are not sufficient. And, third, when crafting the required comprehensive policy response, we must recognise that the hurdles are a lot less technical, and a lot more political.

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THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO

Blame it on the EC?

Often, the political entities leave no stone unturned when it comes to undue criticism of the regime and, at times, even their so-called allies. While stringent regulations are required to establish ethical leadership skills and ensure that members refrain from actions that have a potential to impact solidarity, micro-monitoring is not feasible/viable, especially because the buck doesn't stop with the EC. Parties, too, are accountable for the potential failure to project a constructive long-term vision/agenda, aimed at addressing sensitive and key issues in a diligent manner. Announcement of consumerfriendly schemes to combat unemployment, illiteracy, inflation and malnutrition ought to be backed by a thorough financial planning and market research and analysis for sustainable generation of revenue/income in the state. Reactive measures to enforce policies that tend to benefit a particular section of the society, at the cost of the other, far from promise an ideal governance model. Acquiring numbers via opportunistic alliances, drawing attention through ambiguous/bizarre statements and focusing on gains in the short-term appear to be the prime motive, as significant effort is seen expended towards futile tasks. It is unfair to blame the regulator or question its credibility when most participants in the process are found wanting on decorum — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

Balakot card

PM Narendra Modi playing the
Balakot card and pleading with firsttime voters to dedicate their vote to
the defence personnel who carried
out the heroic act has left a bitter
aftertaste. The move has come in for
stick from several quarters, including
the opposition leaders. The Election
Commission has rightly taken
cognisance of the prime minister's
remarks and has sought a report
from poll officials. The saffron party
would do well to desist from wooing
voters in the name of soldiers and
martyrs

— Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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HE WORLD BANK'S historic issuance of green bonds in November 2008 was the result of a phone call to their Treasury by Swedish pension funds who were keen on investing in climate projects. It gave investors an opportunity to support climate solutions through investments guaranteeing financial returns. According to the multilateral agency, they have since then raised \$13 billion through 150 green bonds in 20 currencies. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2007 report that prompted Swedish investors to take note of climate solution projects had linked the increase in global temperatures to the increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations, and had highlighted that the largest contributors to emissions during 1970 to 2004 were energy supply, industry and transport sectors. Ever since, emissions have gotten the attention of global policymakers like never before. Last month, reports of record levels of carbon emissions in 2018 made to the headlines of several dailies.

India accounts for around 7% of global GHG emissions. India's per capita emissions are one-fourth of the G20 average. Despite a low share and low per capita emissions, India seems to be on the forefront of reducing its emissions. The 2018 Brown to Green report mentions that none of the G20 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets for 2030 are in line with the Paris Agreement. India's NDC are the most ambitious, closest to the 1.5°C limit, and closest to the Paris Agreement. The central aim of the Paris Agreement is to keep the rise in global temperatures in this century well below 2°C above the pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C.

Estimates suggest that India's GHG emissions more than doubled between 1990 and 2015. This coincides with India emerging from the legacy economic policies to embracing open economic policies. In these 25 years, India's economy grew by an average of 6.5% per annum, versus sub-4% growth in the preceding 25 years. Many of today's developed nations reduced their GHG footprint by shifting their production base out of their national borders. Developing countries such as China, India and other South-east Asian nations were more than happy to take up production activities in a bid to promote economic growth.

Power generation has the highest share in GHG emissions. India has an ambitious plan for clean energy-to achieve a share of 20% in electricity generation by FY22 and 23% by FY27 for renewable energy. According to an IndiaSpend report, in 2016, India invested a record \$9.7 billion (₹64,990 crore)—the cost of building 11 new coal-fired plants of 1,000 MW capacity each—in renewable energy installations. The resulting installed renewable capacity is much less than the possible thermal capacity. Falling solar tariffs have made solar $power competitive \, to \, coal\text{-}based \, thermal$ power, primarily due to a fall in prices of solar power modules. While the cost of generation of solar power has fallen, the cost of transmission has not fallen at the same pace. Various challenges of using solar and wind power for heavy industrial activity are well known.

The clean energy populism isn't really all clean. Setting up of solar capacities, too, leaves behind a large carbon footprint. Over 85% of the solar equipment used in India is imported. Extraction and production of quartz and silicon involves a huge amount of energy. China, the world's largest manufacturer of solar panels, is still heavily dependent on coal for its power needs. In fact, 65% of electricity generation in China comes from coal. Logistics and transportation to get these panels to their place of intended use further adds to the carbon footprint. While the life cycle emissions of solar power are still less than those of thermal power, there are other challenges. For example, production of panels involves use of hazardous chemicals, with many reports citing improper disposal—proper



ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE



Walking the tightrope: emissions vs development

India will need much more energy as its people prosper. Therefore, given the dependence on coalfired power and its indispensability to some sectors, steps should be taken to reduce emissions from existing fuels and make power generation more efficient through newer technologies, in addition to developing renewable sources of energy disposal of solar panels at the end of their 25-30-year life remains a challenge. In addition, recycling of solar panels is expensive and hasn't really picked up in a big way as yet. Some studies have also shown that land-based solar parks alter the local climate and land characteristics.

Today, India proudly sits in the league of top renewable power-generating countries, along with China, the US, Japan, Germany and the UK—which are the leading economies of the world. However, India's GDP per capita is one-fourth that of China's GDP, one-30th that of the US's and about one-20th that of Germany, the UK and Japan. In addition, the country's per capita electricity consumption is one-third the global average.

An analysis by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) shows a high correlation between lower energy consumption and lower development; development increases as energy consumption increases. The analysis also shows a strong correlation between human development and per capita energy consumption till around 100 gigajoules (GJ), and 80% of the world's population is currently below this threshold. Per capita energy consumption in the US is over 300 GJ and that for India is around 30. India will need much more energy as its people prosper.

Thus, given the dependence on coalfired power and its indispensability in some sectors, parallel steps should be taken to reduce emissions from existing fuels and make power generation more efficient through newer technologies. According to the World Coal Association, since 1970, US emissions from coal have reduced by 82%, even as coal consumption has risen 146%. Their estimates suggest that moving the current average global efficiency rate of coal-fired power plants from 33% to 40% could cut 2 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide emissions—equivalent to India's carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS) is the next step in further reducing emissions from coal and making it a sustainable source of cheap

World Coal Association estimates suggest that moving the current average global efficiency rate of coal-fired power plants from 33% to 40% could cut 2 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide emissions

energy. Globally, more than 30 million tonnes of carbon dioxide is captured from large-scale CCUS facilities, and more than 70% of this occurs in North America. Leading energy-intensive industries in the UK have already come together to form a new governmentbacked advisory group, in a bid to accelerate the development of CCUS technology, even as the current pace of development and adoption of CCUS technology remains low.

Nearly 70% of the incremental global energy demand in 2018 was met by fossil fuels—of which coal accounted for 8%. Coal accounts for nearly 40% of global power generation; in India, it accounts for around 74%. While Europe and the US are decreasing their reliance on coal, for India and most of the emerging economies of the world, coal will remain a critical source of energy in the foreseeable future. India's coal demand is expected to rise 120% through 2040. As India tries to follow an export-led growth model and promote manufacturing to create jobs for its people, reducing GHG emissions will be all the more challenging. Debates and discussions around climate change and emissions have become far too common. While populism in this regard is not unwarranted, discussions around energy needs and energy security to promote development need to be strengthened. Prosperity of a major chunk of global population, including India, depends on the availability of cheap and reliable energy.

We're not even close to the next great recession



HAT'S ALLTHE FUSS about? Maybe the

Let's not get too

giddy, though. A

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Germany is flirting

with recession and

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term trajectory of

slower growth

The global economy may not feel great. That doesn't mean it's terrible

world economy isn't in such terrible shape, after all. New projections from the International Monetary Fund, published Tuesday, show that expansion still has some legs. Growth will be a not-too-shabby 3.3% this year. That's down from a previous forecast of 3.5%. So, yes, it's a cut. But not a dramatic one. These numbers are a ways from

one IMF definition of recession, 2.5%, and miles from the contraction recorded in 2009. Superlatives about the lowest growth since the Great Recession are misleading. These updates from the IMF also make you wonder where all the drama—so prevalent in headlines—is coming from. A bounce in US job growth last month, signs of a partial

give some comfort. Let's not get too giddy, though. A recession in, say, the US is inevitable at some point. The current expansion will this year become the longest ever. Germany is flirting with recession and China is on a long-term trajectory of slower growth.

recovery in China and a dovish pivot from big central banks

On the surface, the IMF numbers don't say anything dire. Their direction does make an impression—this was the third time the lender has marked down its numbers in six months. You have to give them credit for staying current. Is the IMF's track record perfect? Far from it. (I'm writing this column from Indonesia, scene of one of the IMF's most contentious programmes).

Private sector doomsayers deserve equal scrutiny. Next time you see a survey showing recession odds, question why and how far it deviates from

consensus. Same with the hagiographies accorded some individual investors whose prognostications just glide by without review. I'm all for putting the IMF under the microscope; let's do the same for others.

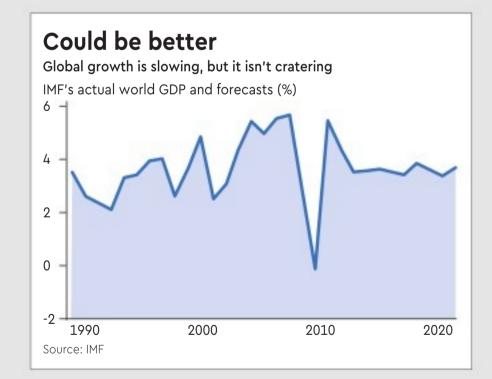
The list of risks outlined by the IMF in its World Economic Outlook could use a little refreshing. Trade wars? Check. Brexit? Sigh. What else you got?

IMF chief Christine Lagarde calls this a "delicate moment" for the world economy. Central banks have a role to play as well, in the US, Europe and Asia.

As I wrote late last month, the idea of interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve was a fringe theory that's now come into the mainstream, even if it's not quite consensus. If cuts do come to pass, it won't be because the Oval Office wants it. It will be because of reasoned analysis that inflation is too low, or at risk of being so, and that risk management requires the Fed to take out some insurance.

It's entirely possible the world economy muddles through this year. It might be messy and there will be regional divergences aplenty.

The economy may not feel great, particularly depending on where you are. That doesn't mean it's terrible.



NSIDER TRADING IS trading on the basis of unpublished price sensitive information (UPSI) that is not generally available to everyone. Insider trading is prohibited since it allows certain individuals with access to UPSI to profit from information asymmetry. In recent times, SEBI has stepped up the regulation of insider trading. In 2015, SEBI had put in place a new framework for prohibition of insider trading based on the report of an expert committee. Subsequently, SEBI set up another committee in 2017 under the chairmanship of TK Viswanathan to review the 2015 regulations. Based on the recommendation of this committee, SEBI made significant amendments to the 2015 regulations on the last day of 2018. To allow market participants to realign their internal procedures, SEBI has made these amendments effective from April 1, 2019.

Widening the ambit

The recent amendments have broadened the applicability of the regulations. The requirement for reporting trades and seeking pre-clearance before trading in the company's shares has been extended to senior employees of material subsidiaries and promoters of listed companies. The new requirements mandate that listed companies have to maintain records of personal information (including PAN, mobile number) of their directors, employees and their immediate relatives, and persons with whom such employees

SEBI's insider trading ruling gets new teeth

Listed firms should now be more careful in designing internal controls for UPSI



share a material financial relationship. The inclusion of persons with whom employees have material financial relationship is a much-needed inclusion. However, SEBI has decided to drop the requirement of disclosures about persons staying at the

same address, as was recommended by the

committee, based on public comments. These records, especially mobile number, will make it easier for SEBI to establish a connection between the company and the person who trades, and provide valuable inputs during the investigation of leakages of UPSI. While SEBI already has access to call data records, it has now decided to send a proposal to seek power to intercept calls and electronic communication to the government. SEBI has also used Facebook to establish connections between insiders in certain

cases. With the use of these records, technology and SEBI's sophisticated surveillance systems, we can expect a much higher possibility of insider trading complaints being more effectively investigated.

Crackdown on leaks

These amendments come on the heels of several directions passed by SEBI against listed companies (including Axis Bank, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank) to ascertain leakage of confidential financial results in private WhatsApp groups ahead of their official announcements to the respective stock exchanges. The recent amendments make it clear that the regulator is rightly concerned about leakage of sensitive information and difficulty in identifying the origin of such leaks.



To assist in identifying the source of leaks, listed companies are now required to have internal controls for identifying inside information and maintain lists of employees and other persons with whom such information is shared. They are also required to periodically review their internal processes to evaluate effectiveness of internal controls. Listed companies are required to intimate the persons receiving UPSI of their obligations towards preventing misuse of such information for insider trading, by way of an advance notice.

The latest amendments require boards of listed companies to put additional policies in place, including a policy for determining what constitutes legitimate purpose, whistle-blower policy for reporting leaks of UPSI and inquiry policy for deter-

mining the source of leaks. These policies are aimed at monitoring the flow of UPSI and encouraging employees to inform the company about any suspected leaks of UPSI. It will be interesting to see how effective the whistle-blower policy for reporting leaks turns out to be and whether internal investigations by listed companies are able to identify the source of leaks.

Additional defences

In the 2015 regulations, SEBI included a provision that in case of connected persons, the onus of establishing that they were not in possession of UPSI will be on such connected persons, whereas in all other cases it will be on the regulator. SEBI has now inserted an explanation clarifying that when a person who has traded is in possession of UPSI, his trades will be presumed to be motivated by such UPSI.

In its efforts to increase ease of doing business, SEBI has added certain defences to the charge of insider trading such as any transaction that is carried out in pur suance of a statutory or regulatory requirement. SEBI has also included exer cise of stock options at a predetermined price as an exception. The defence available for off-market inter se transfers between promoters, who were in possession of the same UPSI, has been extended to all insiders. A similar defence has been included for trades carried out through the block deal window mechanism.

These amendments have far-reaching consequences for everyone who deals with UPSI of listed companies. SEBI has signalled its intent to clamp down on leakage of UPSI, and is clearly trying to change the social culture of casually discussing UPSI While the unauthorised communication of UPSI has always been illegal, these new amendments are likely to make it easier to identify the source of leakages. In the future, we can expect orders penalising insiders for leaking UPSI, even if they do not trade on it themselves. Incidentally, the charge against Rajat Gupta in the US was one of unauthorised communication of UPSI, not trading. In view of these recent amendments, listed companies should be far more careful in designing internal controls for handling UPSI and conduct regular training of their employees to ensure UPSI is handled in a responsible manner.

WORDLY WISE

Women and fiction remain, so far as I am CONCERNED, UNSOLVED PROBLEMS.

— VIRGINIA WOOLF

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FORECAST: CLOUDY

It's a delicate year for global economy and for India. And policy response cannot be in form of fiscal easing or another stimulus

HE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY Fund is the latest agency to cut India's growth forecast for 2019-20 by 20 basis points to 7.3 per cent, after the RBI, Asian Development Bank and Fitch Ratings. India is not an outlier on this count. When global economic growth, after peaking at 4 per cent in 2017, softened to 3.6 in 2018, and is now projected to decline to 3.3 per cent in 2019, it is inevitable that one of the fastest growing large economies in the world could also hit a speedbreaker. There are reasons for the loss of momentum in global economic activity, ranging from weak investment and production in many countries and global trade, given the slowdown in the Eurozone and China, which has prompted central bankers in many of these countries to adopt a more accommodative monetary policy stance, after having signalled an end to monetary easing as late as December last year. These downside risks, including those surrounding Brexit, are expected to continue in the first half of this year with the IMF saying that conventional monetary and fiscal space is limited as a policy response.

Even in the US, where the job markets have rebounded, fears of a deepening global economic slowdown had forced the US Federal Reserve to signal a pause on raising interest rates this year. The RBI, too, had flagged some of these risks, besides the slowdown in China and the potential impact of an El Nino event on the South West monsoon over a week ago when it cut the growth forecast for FY 20 to 7.2 per cent from 7.4 per cent, while justifying its monetary dovishness. The IMF may be worried about the high levels of public debt and fiscal slippages in India but reckons that growth would pick up to 7.5 per cent in 2020 on the back of an investment recovery and robust consumption amid a more expansionary monetary policy stance and some expected impetus from fiscal policy. Securing that growth would call for fiscal consolidation, pruning of public debt, strengthening of GST compliance and cutting of subsidies, it says.

There are the other solutions, too, such as governance reform in state-owned banks, revamping of labour laws and rules on land acquisition — all of which have been acknowledged by successive governments and policy-makers but are yet to be addressed. More importantly, the IMF says that this is a delicate year for the global economy. That could well have been said for India's economy too. Just as a return to global growth is contingent on policy support and downside risks not materialising, a growth uptick in India will hinge largely on a boost to investment activity and supply side reforms by the next government at the Centre. But it is equally important to recognise that the policy response this time cannot be in the form of a fiscal easing or another stimulus. That's the sobering message from the experience of the collateral damage to the economy after the 2008-09 stimulus.

A GROWING THREAT

The latest drug-resistant microbe may not be a creation of overmedication, but of the overuse of fungicides in agriculture

HERE'S A NEW superbug on the loose. Candida auris was first described as a pathogen in 2009, when it was found infesting a Japanese woman's ear (whence the auris) and in the decade since, it has been reported in 32 countries, including India and Pakistan. A hardy fungus, undeterred by antifungals, it may have killed a third of the several hundred people it has infected, and is at the new threat horizon of drug-resistant microorganisms. Sulpha drugs and penicillin liberated the human race from the tyranny of microbes, which used to casually cut short lives. Easily accessible antimicrobials made possible an era of improving public health, which changed the fortunes of nations and, arguably, altered the course of history. But now, an excess of access threatens to send us back to the dark times before penicillin, when ordinary micro-organisms even soil bacteria — could slay the weak at will. Candida auris has gained infamy as a hospital-acquired infection, and like other resistant organisms, preys on people with poorly developed or compromised immune systems, including newborns, the elderly and diabetics. In a few decades, they could represent a greater threat to life than cancer.

It's anthropogenic Darwinism at work. Drug-resistant strains of microorganisms commonly develop from flawed prescription regimes, a matter of concern for decades. In affluent populations, they may be caused when patients demand overmedication. But slums in poor countries probably yield a richer crop, with patients buying antimicrobials over the counter from untrained shopkeepers. The method is hit-or-miss, a full course of medicines is rarely taken, and the bugs that survive are those resistant to medication. Over time, the efficacy of the antimicrobial can only diminish. But the cause for the Candida auris rampage lies deeper, in the over-use of antifungals in agriculture and animal husbandry. This has wiped out whole species, giving hitherto fringe species room to flourish. The new superbug is a country cousin of the well-known Candida albicans, which causes the oral infection called thrush. But the hitherto obscure organism now represents a far greater threat to humans.

Whether resistance is of medical or agricultural origin, the solution is the same: Public education against the arbitrary use of antimicrobial drugs. It did not work earlier, when it was a largely theoretical issue. But now that organisms like Candida auris are actually killing patients and contaminating entire hospital wards, as it has done in the US, UK and Spain, audiences will be more receptive.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

2019 Man Booker International Prize shortlist features a record five women, makes a statement

HE SHORTLIST FOR the Man Booker International Prize 2019 is out and this year, the six finalists include five women. All six books were translated, too, by women. The annual award is given to the best book which has an English translation and is published in Britain or Ireland.

It seems that four decades and a half later, the Man Booker International prize, for starters, has registered the sentiment behind American poet Adrienne Rich's past protestations. In 1974, Rich had refused to accept the National Book Award for poetry, which she won for her collection, *Diving Into the Wreck*. Rich read out a statement instead, which, she said, was "prepared by three of the women nominated for the National Book Award for poetry, with the agreement that it would be read by whichever of us, if any, was chosen." The other two nominees were Audre Lorde and Alice Walker. Rich went on to "accept this award in the name of all the women whose voices have gone and still go unheard in a patriarchal world". In 1991, the Booker Prize shortlist included no women at all. The same year, a bunch of like-minded individuals recognised this serious gender disparity and set up the annual Women's Prize for Fiction. For years, literary spaces have seen a constant pushback against sexism that nudges women onto the fringes of mainstream literary hierarchy.

The shortlist makes another important departure from convention. It features French author Annie Ernaux's The Years, an autobiography. The norm has been to cleave autobiography from "fiction". Ernaux's inclusion then, is a nod to the fluidity of creative works. If the idea is to chip away at convention and rigid literary structures, the Man Booker International prize has done well. However, other institutions must ensure that this "trend" sustains long enough to become the new normal.

A debate has two sides



BJP shows it will weave nationalism, security with religious identity. So far, Opposition has no response

Suhas Palshikar

AFTER THE FIRST phase of campaigning, a puzzle looms. While most surveys suggest that the BJP has an edge, the campaign rhetoric of the BJP suggests that it is on edge. A party riding on the popularity of its leader would have been expected to be confident, if not gracious. Given his popularity and penchant for going down in history, Narendra Modi had an excellent opportunity to steer the campaign into a debate on development. Even if he wanted to take advantage of Pulwama, he could still engage in a serious debate over what constitutes security and what needs to be done.

At least the first round of campaigning indicates that this is not the case. The idea of security is employed only to whip up the BJP's traditional ideological anxieties — on nationalism and Hindutva. And this is being done in ways unbecoming of a truly popular leader – or it is betraying the limits of his popularity.

The campaign opened with almost trickery — the prime minister's address to the nation on the achievement of the DRDO. Subsequently, a chief minister described India's armed forces as Modi's sena. The PM began his attack on the Congress by talking of constituencies where the "majority is in minority". As the campaign for the first phase was set to conclude, he chose to violate the exhortation of the Election Commission by asking for votes in the name of the martyrs of Pulwama and the brave soldiers who participated in the air strikes. If these are not signs of nervousness, then the definition of confidence needs a re-

All this shows the so-called electoral smartness of the ruling party and its willingness to bypass rules and institutions. These virtues of the current establishment do not need fresh advertisement. But why would the BJP want to display these in the very first round of campaigning when it appears that it has probably overcome the adverse public sentiment setting in until a few months ago?

Perhaps the answer is in the trends shown in the surveys. Overall, it seems that the BJP on its own is unlikely to reach its 2014 performance. While the media has rightly publicised that the NDA will probably be in a position to form the next government if the present trends continue, what seems to have

It is quite possible that issues related to the economy may resurface in the campaign. Therefore, there seems to be a systematic effort to keep the security kettle burning. End February, the Balakot strike took place and for the next couple of weeks the atmosphere was filled with how the government has shown determination in

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terrorists. That drowned out

happened in the first place.

slipped attention is the fact that in spite of the extraordinary use of media and in spite of the constant projection of the PM, the BJP may fall fairly short of a clear majority. So, desperate attempts to further ignite nationalist fervour become necessary for the BJP.

The second reason emerging from the surveys that may explain the puzzle is even more serious for the BJP. Pulwama and Balakot appear to be bailing out the party for the time being — and particularly in the north and west of the country. But the Lok Sabha election is a long drawn affair and as time passes by, the proximate emotive value of Pulwama and Balakot can diminish. If that were to happen, the BJP would be

exposed to the other realities that the surveys point to: Social discord, charges of cronyism and, above all, the simple material facts of life. It is quite possible that issues related to the economy may resurface in the campaign. Therefore, there seems to be a systematic effort to keep the security kettle burning. End February, the Balakot strike took place and for the next couple of weeks the atmosphere was filled with how the government has shown determination in retaliating against the terrorists. That drowned out any sensible discussion about why Pulwama happened in the first place. Afraid that Modi would draw advantage from any security-related discussion and would turn any questioning into "anti-national acts", the Opposition shied away from a systematic critique of the current government's security lapses.

Then, end March, the announcement about India's anti-satellite capability came, rekindling the hyphenated relationship between nationalism and security. As the first round of campaigning came to a close, the PM openly invoked Pulwama and Balakot to steer the debate to that same sensibility which appears to have captured voters' imagination on a large scale — a hazy concern about security and a more concrete search for false nationalism.

Over the past couple of weeks, the BJP has shown how it will weave issues of nationalism, security, and religious identity by presenting Modi as an embodiment of all three. In contrast, what has been the response of the Opposition? The BJP's many regional speedbreakers, cocooned as they are in their states, are often oblivious to these issues.

For them, issues like security and nationalism don't exist. When state parties cry hoarse that the BJP need not tell them what patriotism is, they are both right and wrong. They are right because surely patriotism is not the monopoly of the BJP. Yet, they are wrong, because they have nothing to offer in terms of "true" nationalism, they have no imagination of a responsible federalism, nor do they bother to develop any security policy. In fact, their illpreparation on this front allows the BJP to go to the states and talk about security.

While the Congress did say that it has an expert group advising it on security policy, the party has failed to come out with anything that can engage the BJP in this regard. And it is not only about security; for the past four years the BJP has given clear indications of its overemphasis on nationalism and the meaning it attaches to it. But the Congress, through its manifesto, has only made academic references to a possible robust and democratic nationalism, instead of practising and popularising it

From Modi's remarks about Rahul Gandhi running away from the "majority" and from Yogi Adityanath's remark, "hamare liye Bajrang Bali paryapt hai (for us, Bajrang Bali is enough)" it is quite clear where the "nationalism" debate is headed. In this openly communal discourse, security is only a fig leaf. The coming rounds of the campaign are bound to witness the re-deployment of the majority motif.

They would need to take on the BJP on the security question and start asking why this government failed to ensure the nation's security. Secondly, the Opposition could begin asking questions more aggressively about the economic hardships citizens face.

The Opposition is left with two options.

The "puzzle" mentioned at the beginning portends closure of debate. Only a concerted strategy can bring a semblance of debate into this campaign. Otherwise, whoever wins or loses, democracy will be the sure loser in this

> The writer is co-director of the Lokniti programme and chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics



A RARE OPPORTUNITY

New rare disease policy is a chance to create an inclusive public health imagination

Shilpi Bhattacharya and Diya Deviah

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE not given the rare disease community much to celebrate. The suspension of the National Policy for the Treatment of Rare Diseases was a rude shock, particularly for those patients who were relying on the money allotted through the policy for life-saving treatments. A rare disease affects a small percentage of people. Most rare diseases are chronic and severe, leading to death or disability. Since these diseases are not found commonly, doctors are typically unaware about them and therefore either misdiagnose or do not diagnose them. This further decreases recorded incidence of the disease, which in turn diminishes interest in understanding the disease and finding treatments for it. This cycle of neglect can only be overcome by strong support from the government.

Unfortunately, India's suspended rare disease policy has reinforced the premise that public health is a game of numbers, not lives. There is an implicit calculation as the high "opportunity cost" of treating someone with a rare disease is considered a sound basis for negligible governmental spending on rare disease. While it is impractical to ignore fiscal constraints, India's meagre 1.15 per cent of GDP allocation to healthcare amplifies this dilemma and turns it into a decision of "balancing" disease incidence. A cold utilitarian calculation is a disturbing basis for public policy because it perpetuates marginalisation and subverts the state's duty to treat its citizens equally.

A new and inclusive rare disease policy should allocate substantial resources to research for the development of new platform therapies that could commonly treat different rare diseases, with the additional possibility of simultaneously bringing down the costs of current treatments. More research will also facilitate greater interest in rare diseases in the medical community, increasing rates of diagnosis and improving medical care.

heat touching 105 degree Fahrenheit.

It is not surprising that in various orders recognising the rights of rare disease patients, the Delhi High Court has categorically stated that low disease incidence cannot be the state's basis for denying someone the right to life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution. The HC has also demanded that the government promptly frame a new rare disease policy that incorporates global best practices. To respect the HC's directions, a new policy must be founded on non-discriminatory ideals. Policymakers will have to address fiscal constraints without devaluing lives of entire patient populations.

The government should create a new policy that is based on different fundamentals. The suspended policy's narrow focus on allocating funds to treat a select few rare diseases to the exclusion of untreatable diseases lacked vision and is costly. When only 5 per cent of all rare diseases are treatable, it is extremely problematic for a government's rare disease policy to state that its least priority is to allocate money to diseases that cannot be treated. Yet, per the government's calculation, it should spend first on diseases that can be treated through a one-time treatment, then on diseases that need regular treatments and last on diseases with no treatment. In doing so, it effectively excluded

95 per cent of rare diseases from its purview. A new and inclusive rare disease policy should allocate substantial resources to research for the development of new platform therapies that could commonly treat different

rare diseases, with the additional possibility of simultaneously bringing down the costs of current treatments. More research will also facilitate greater interest in rare diseases in the medical community, increasing rates of diagnosis and improving medical care.

Increased focus on research could help develop cheaper treatments. Giving incentives to pharmaceutical companies to develop treatments for rare diseases has resulted in treatments being priced so exorbitantly that even the government cannot afford to procure them for the economically weaker sections of society. Facilitating increased profits while helpful in creating incentives for research, ignores the problems that the prohibitively high cost of treatments create once they do become available in the market. In India, where most patients are uninsured and rare diseases fall outside the insurance system, increased drug prices through patent protection will further increase patient dependence on government

The government must not abandon the rare disease community to the market mechanism. Low incidence makes rare diseases "unprofitable" and companies are reluctant to invest in them.

> Bhattacharya is associate professor and Deviah is a student at Jindal Global Law School. Both are associated with World Without GNE Myopathy, a rare disease patient advocacy organisation

APRIL 11, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



EAST IN THE DARK

MOYNIHAN REVEALS POWER GENERATION IN West Bengal and A FORMER US Ambassador to India, Daniel Bihar has slumped to a record low, crippling industry, business and domestic life. Major industries in West Bengal were closed until next week. Smaller units had very restricted power supply. Bihar too plunged into virtual darkness, creating an unprecedented drinking water crisis. Calcutta and its neighbourhood had long spells of power shedding affecting normal life, including water supply and hospital services. Cinema houses suspended matinee shows. Shops pulled down Moynihan has written. "We had twice, but their shutters before dusk. Office workers only twice, interfered in Indian politics to the and housewives suffered an ordeal with the extent of providing money to a political party.

Patrick Moynihan, has said that the American government gave money to the Congress party twice for elections, once to Mrs Gandhi herself. In his book, A Dangerous Peace, published in the US recently, Moynihan has disclosed that after Mrs Gandhi's speeches in 1974 about the danger of subversion by the CIA, he ordered an inquiry into America's doings in India in the past 25 years. "I was satisfied we had been up to very little,"

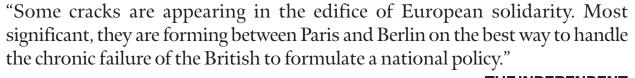
Both times this was done in the face of a

prospective communist victory in a state election, once in Kerala and once in West Bengal. Both times the money was given to the Congress party which had asked for it Once it was given to Mrs Gandhi herself, who was then a party official."

IP's HEALTH

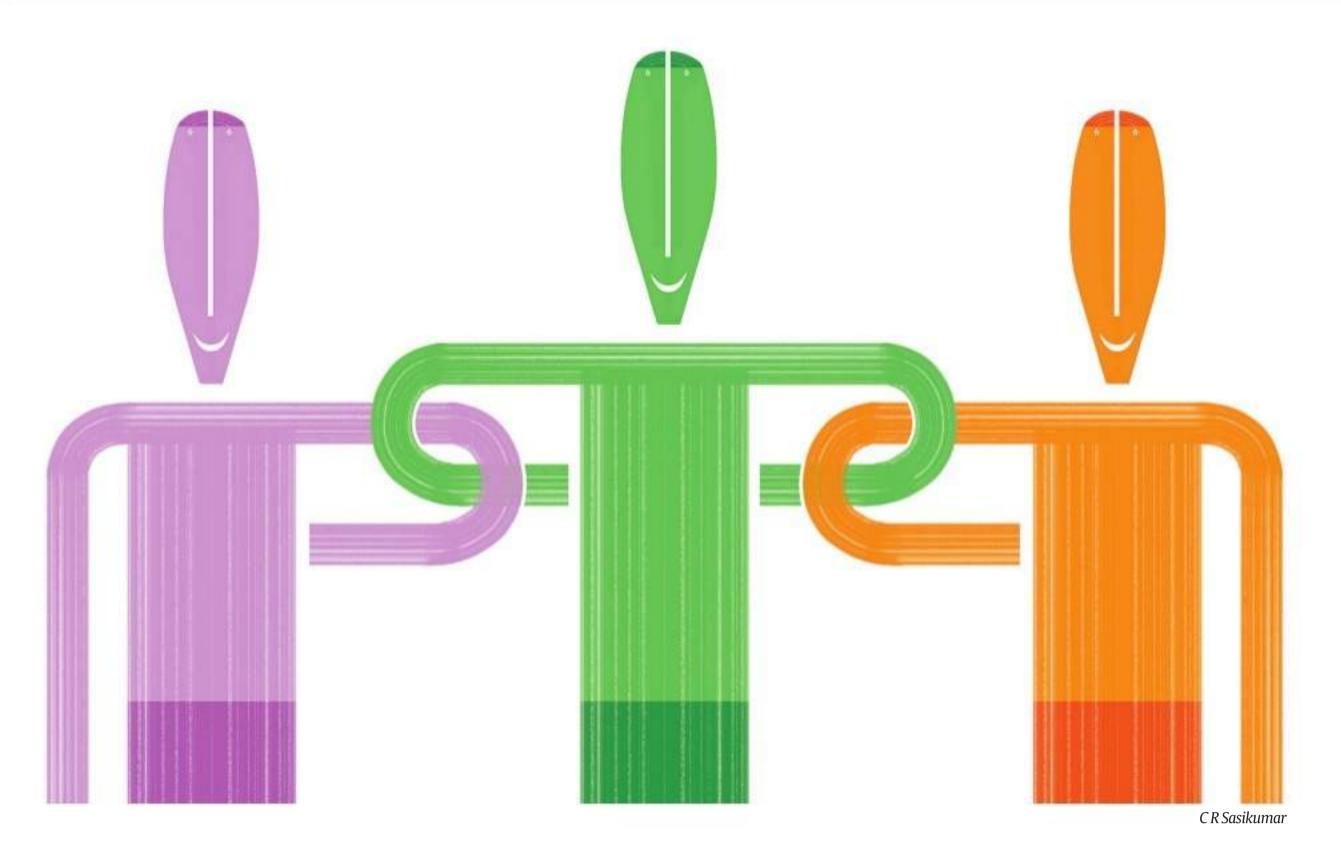
JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN, STATED to be still "quite weak", today withstood well yet another five-hour dialysis. He was given a bottle of blood transfusion during his 10th dialysis after he was flown to Bombay on March 19. His secretary, T Abraham, said in the evening that JP was running slight temperature and feeling exhausted.

5 THE IDEAS PAGE



WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

- THE INDEPENDENT



The importance of IUML

Indian Union Muslim League's politics, with Malayali characteristics, has created a language for articulating the legitimate demands of a religious minority without alienating other segments of society



SHAJAHAN MADAMPAT

THE INDIAN UNION Muslim League (IUML) is in the news following Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from the Wayanad constituency, a stronghold of the party. Yogi Adityanath dubbed the League "a virus" sure to infect the rest of the country if the Congress wins. The decision also occasioned an unabashedly communal comment from the prime minister, who described Wayanad as a constituency where the majority is in a minority. Interestingly, statements from the Left, which is likely to face a major setback because of Rahul's foray into Kerala, reflected an uncanny resemblance to the Sangh Parivar's vitriol.

The colour of the IUML's party flag and the insinuations about its purported links and nomenclatural similarity to Jinnah's All India Muslim League did not help matters either, especially at a time when the ruling party's pathological obsession with Pakistan and hatred of Muslims have coalesced into an expedient election narrative. The only solace for Muslims in India today is that the PM and his party have termed not only the Muslims, but also the entire Opposition as anti-national and sympathetic to Pakistan.

Is the IUML a communal political formation? The "Muslim" in its name may hasten judgements about it, but its work in Kerala over the past 70 years shows that the League never indulged in the politics of hate and divisiveness. If organising a religious community politically on the basis of antagonism to another is communalism, the IUML has never mobilised its cadre nor used its political and often administrative clout to create religious divides. On the contrary, whenever the state faced a communally sensitive situation, the party rose to the occasion and

played a stellar role in dousing the flames. It is pertinent to mention that the decision to establish the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, for "the promotion and development of the study of Sanskrit, Indology, Indian Philosophy and Indian languages" was taken when a Muslim League leader was Kerala's minister of education.

Interestingly, the several splinter groups,

which quit the IUML and formed rival political parties, or the few Muslim political outfits that emerged with the sole aim of challenging the League, did so because they felt that it refused to toe a divisive line even when the "interests of the community so dictated. For instance, the late Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait, then national president of the IUML, rebelled against the party and formed the Indian National League (INL) in 1994. He rebelled because he thought the IUML was not politically strident enough to quit the then Congress-led United Democratic Front government in Kerala in protest against Narasimha Rao's complicity in the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The IUML leadership argued that their decision to continue in the government was in the larger interest of communal harmony, since an emotional decision by the League would have pushed the entire state into a communal frenzy. That the INL is now a constituent of the CPM-led Left Democratic Front is an irony of sorts as the IUML and INL are different from each other only in the sense that the Muslim in the former's name has been replaced by the "national" in the latter's.

So if not communal, what is the IUML? The founders of the party believed that the Muslims, in the volatile post-Partition environment in India, needed a political outfit to work for the empowerment and uplift of the community within the ambit of the Constitution. Although it did not succeed in attracting people in the post-Partition environment of fear and insecurity in the North, it took roots in Kerala, far removed from the

Partition nightmare. In Kerala, it pursued a carefully crafted politics, working for the representation of the Muslims in all spheres of public life in the state. It did so without pitting itself or the Muslim community against the other com-

remarkably harmonious social fabric for which the Left must get due credit, and the legacy of struggles by marginalised groups in Kerala from the late 19th century helped IUML's unique brand of politics. By practicing a brand of politics that could be termed communitarian rather than communal, the IUML succeeded in actualising the constitutional guarantee of equal citizenship for the Muslims in the state.

In fact, it will not be an exaggeration to say that Kerala is the only state in the republic where the Muslims fully live out the constitutional promise of equal citizenship. The IUML's brand of identity politics, with its unmistakable Malayali characteristics, created a language and idiom for articulating the legitimate demands of a religious minority without alienating the other segments of the polity. The distinctive feature of the League in Kerala is that it strove to keep the community at the centre of the state's politics, unlike other Muslim political formations elsewhere in India that revelled in con-

munities in the state. The Gulf remittances

that began flowing in from the 1970s, Kerala's

While the ideal of different communities working under a pan-Indian secular umbrella is indeed still preferable, our history has taught us that downtrodden and marginalised communities tasted political empowerment only when they organised themselves. BSP, SP, RJD and so many other political parties across India testify to this fact. It is to the credit of the founders of the IUML that they had pioneered this kind of

The IUML has been downright conservative, often illiberal, sometimes corrupt, some other times opportunistic, but never communal. That is precisely why it remains an integral and highly respected component of Kerala's multi-dimensional political fabric. That Atal Bihari Vajpayee had no hesitation in sending IUML MP, E Ahmed, to the United Nations to represent India should convince the UP CM

> Madampat is a cultural critic and commentator writing in English and

fessional isolationism.

politics decades before others did.

that his utterances were widely off the mark.

Malayalam

VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

VOTER DECIDES

AS THE CANVASSING for the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections inches to a close, the editorial in *Organiser* notes that the voter is faced with two fundamental questions: Why to vote and how to vote. "Can we draw certain common parameters irrespective of ideological inclinations and political preferences so that we can nurture the healthy democratic practices," it asks. The editorial adds that people are talking more about delivery on programmes. So, a larger ideological perspective seems to be missing from the political scenario, it points out. "Of course, the delivery factor is important as mere lip service under the garb of a sacred document is not good enough. For instance, most of the promises made in the 2019 Manifesto by Congress are the same or the improvised versions of the promises like Direct Income Support to farmers, One Rank One Pension, Universal Household Electrification etc were made in the 2004 and 2009 manifestos of the grand old party. Why the Congress could not deliver on those

promises then and how it is going to deliver now are obvious questions that should be asked (sic). On the other hand, how far the BJP has delivered on Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat and Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas plank, as promised on various verticals of the party's vision document released in 2014, should be analysed," the editorial says. It also says that questions related to the welfare of all, the links between the country's

cultural heritage and the government's policies, the financial viability of programmes and whether alliances are trustworthy would influence the electorates. "A leader who commands legitimacy and respect not just within his own party but by the large masses should be a natural choice in a democracy. The foreign policy and security considerations of the nation generally do not play much important role in our national elections... In the present scenario, when the international scenario is in flux and the regions like Jammu-Kashmir and Northeast Bharat are in search of a new direction and narrative of peaceful development and

CONGRESS'S DECEIT

AN OPINION ARTICLE in Organiser claims that the Congress's election manifesto is built around blatant lies and false promises to get back to power. It says that the manifesto,

Bharatiyata, the security considerations are

all the more important," the editorial asserts.

"Congress Will Deliver", is poor on facts on issues such as farm prices, exports and investment. This exposes Rahul Gandhi's ignorance on economic matters, it asserts. The article adds that it is well-known that the Modi government increased the minimum support price (MSP) for agricultural products. Similarly, anyone can verify the foreign direct investment (FDI) data over a decade and details relating to capital expenditure and capital formation can also be compared between the UPA and NDA regimes it points out. The article claims: "These blatant lies raise a question over Rahul's political ambition — win the election, by hook or by crook. Preferably by crook." It says that in an effort to "up the ante" on the Modi government, Rahul Gandhi has announced the Nyuntam Aay Yojana. But its manifesto does not say how the scheme will be implemented and funded.

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"As it also promises to omit Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code with regard to Sedition, an amendment to Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, (AFSPA), 1958, deployment of armed forces in J&K, the Congress needs to explain to the nation (sic). National integrity has been targeted time and again by Congress by openly encouraging divisive politics, primarily through the 'tukde tukde' gang that seeks to undermine the integrity of the nation. The party is still in 'no mood' to learn any lessons," the article claims. It describes the party's promises such as punishment for hate crimes and assurances about

Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia as minority appeasement. It goes on to ask a few questions: "When we have enough laws to tackle incidences like mob lynching, then what is the need to mention it in an election manifesto? What Congress is going to do on incidences where a Hindu is lynched by a Muslim mob? If every citizen of the country is equal in front of the Constitution, then why do you need any specific laws for a particular community?"

New India

AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* says that India's Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, who recently shot to national fame, has sparked off fashion trend among the Indian youth. His trade mark "gunslinger" mooch has become a rage in the country, the article says. It notes that despite his ordeal at the hand of his tormentors, Abhinandan has become a symbol of peace between the two countries. It claims that after a brief dip in the PM's popularity in early January, the Modi juggernaut seems unstoppable. "Clearly, the nation is very gungho about Modi and Naya Bharat... And the youth see in Modi an able and decisive Prime Minister who can destroy the terror factories in Pakistan, Abhinandan is the new face of a Naya Bharat," the article asserts.

Compiled by Lalmani Verma

Kings and moustaches

Is there a correlation between popularity of Chulbul Pandey or 'Singham' and absence, or presence, of moustache allowances in states?



BIBEK DEBROY

USUALLY, WE DON'T notice subtle differences in playing cards. Sure, one deck of cards may differ a bit from another, depending on design. But often, the spades sign on ace of spades will be larger and more ornate than the corresponding signs on aces of hearts, diamonds or clubs. There is a historical reason. Card manufacturers had to pay taxes and stamp duties were extended to playing cards in 1711 — in England. You needed a stamp to prove duties had been paid and that stamp would naturally be on the first card of the deck, ace of spades. However, stamping every deck became a nuisance. Hence, the ace of spades bore the insignia of the printing house, proof that taxes had been paid. Consequently, the ace of spades became larger and the legacy often continues.

Ditto with the four kings. In standard English playing cards, the two black kings wield swords. The king of diamonds has a battleaxe, while the king of hearts has a sword he seems to be using to slice off his own head, unlike the black kings. In addition, the king of hearts doesn't sport a moustache, while the other three kings do. Why should there be such a discrimination? I don't think anyone knows definitively. There are a few theories. A standard answer is that while copying from original French versions, there was disfiguring and distortion when block-makers changed symbols of office. In the French versions, all kings have moustaches.

"In fact, there are endless styles of mustachios, all appropriate to the wearers and indicative of the various orders, as rigorously adhered to as if they had all been patented by the Government of India or had been sanctioned by special appointment with His Majesty, the King, or Her Majesty, the Queen." This is from Mulk Raj Anand's, Pair of Mustachios, written in preindependent India. In independent India, what are the rules for the armed forces? am asking about whiskers/moustaches, not beards. For beards, there are indeed some prohibitions and special exemptions. Do remember that before fighting the Persians, Alexander the Great had his soldiers shave off their beards. Because of Abhinandan Varthaman, if not otherwise, everyone knows moustaches are allowed in the armed forces. Indeed, between 1860 and 1916, moustaches were compulsory in the British Army and that also applied to British India, starting earlier with East India Company. These rules changed in October 1916 and World War I was the reason. If you had to wear a gas mask, a moustache was a problem. Henry VIII taxed beards and so

did Peter the Great in Russia. I don't think Henry VIII's tax applied to moustaches, but the Peter tax seems to have covered both beards and moustaches.

A tax is a disincentive. There is no prohibition against, or compulsion for, moustaches in the Indian army today, nor is there a tax on moustaches. But neither is there an incentive in the form of a moustache allowance. However, like discrimination between kings in playing card decks, there is discrimination between armed forces and police when it comes to moustache allowances. Here is a quote from the 1943 police regulations: "Officers and men shall always be neat and clean in person and dress both in and out of uniform. Their hair shall always be closely cut Those who shave shall always be cleanshaved. Moustaches may be worn though beards are shaved. Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims who are in the habit of growing long hair and beards are permitted to do so." No bar, but there can be positive incentive through a moustache allowance. I don't mean a moustache allowance specific to an individual. For instance, Meesey Thimmaiah is the official mascot of the Bengaluru Traffic Police. He was known as "Meesey" because of his distinctive and ornate moustache. He died on duty, trying to save a woman and her child from being run over. While he was alive, Meesey Thimmaiah got an annual moustache allowance of Rs 500. This was an allowance specific to him, not across the board.

Across the board, I know of only two states where policemen get a moustache allowance - Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, In Madhya Pradesh, it only seems to be for some districts, not all, and is Rs 33 per month. In UP, policemen do get it everywhere, but only if they belong to the Uttar Pradesh Provincial (Pradeshik) Armed Constabulary (PAC), not otherwise. The amount has recently been hiked from Rs 50 per month to Rs 250. I don't think there is any correlation between the popularity of Chulbul Pandey or Singham and absence, or presence, of moustache allowances in different states. In a government system, the answer often lies in precedence. For the Indian Police Service, something like this is governed by the Indian Police Service (Uniform) Rules of 1954. For a state, this is governed by its rules on uniforms, such as the 1986 rules for UP, or the corresponding uniform rules for the PAC. Differences between states are thus inevitable.

In the army, there was a movement away from beards and moustaches, though those who wanted to sport these, could do so. That's what happened in the police too and it's reflected in UP's 1986 uniform rules. However, because of historical preferences and legacies, traces of moustache preference and "mooch" allowances remain in the PAC uniform rules. Evidently, UP's 1986 Police Service (Uniform) Rules will soon be amended. But probably not those for the PAC. Others are kings of hearts.

The writer is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the PM. Views are personal

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

RESTORE SANCTITY

omission' (IE, April 10). The Constitution provides for an independent Election Commission to conduct elections. The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) provides for a moral restrain on candidates and political parties from indulging in electoral malpractices. In the first phase of elections, the EC's voice seems to be subdued. There have been concerns about executive overreach and violations of the MCC. The EC should restore the sanctity of the electoral process.

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Election

Anirudh Parashar, Solan

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Election omission' (IE, April 10). Once the election dates are announced, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) kicks in. However, of late, flouting the MCC has become more a norm than an exception. This is where the EC needs to step in. However, it's easy to blame the EC. The guestion remains: What more can the EC do beyond giving offending parties a rap on the knuckles? Electoral reforms have been hanging in Parliament for quite some time.

Vijai Pant Hempur.

HAPPY KASHMIR

THIS REFERS TO the article. 'Dear Home Minister' (IE, April 10). Yes, can we please help create a Kashmir where fathers get back home after a day's work, where mothers cuddle their children to sleep, where students don't lose their eyesight to pellets, where youth finds employment, where Kashmiryat is celebrated, and where Articles 370 and

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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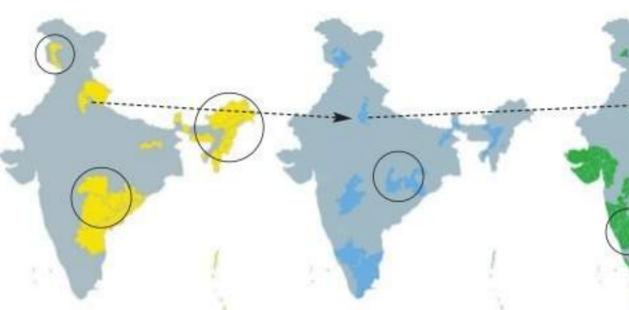
FAMILIAR NEGLECT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The issue is healthcare' (IE, April 9). The Alma Ata declaration of "Health for all" in 1978 has just given political parties a tagline for their manifestos. But health has never been a political priority A "no healthcare no vote" campaign might help to remind parties of the issue.

Piyush Supekar, Ahmednagar

Local festivals, LWE, ease of moving forces, even lunar cycles — what's considered in mapping security

UP, the electorally most crucial state, will see voting for its 80 seats spread across all 7 phases — 8 seats in Phase 1, and 8, 10, 13, 14, 14, and 13 respectively in subsequent phases. As voting moves from west to east, so will security forces



PHASE 1 APRIL 11, 91 SEATS IN 20 STATES

The biggest challenge — the Naxal heartland, areas along LoC and IB in J&K, the hilly and/or restive areas in the Northeast — is best tackled early, when legs are the freshest and minds most alert

PHASE 2 APRIL 18, 97 SEATS IN 13 STATES

Even lunar cycles are taken into account for areas such as Chhattisgarh, where the forces may have to move by night. April 19, for example, is a full moon night, with moonrise a little after 6 pm

PHASE 3 APRIL 23, 115 SEATS IN 14 STATES

Forces deployed in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the first phase will move to secure contiguous states in the phases that follow: Tamil Nadu in Phase 2, and Karnataka and Kerala in Phases 2, 3

PHASE 4 APRIL 29, 71 SEATS IN 9 STATES

To reduce unnecessary movement of forces, CRPF has worked out deployment patterns in a way that forces in the Northeast move to West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha, but not any farther

PHASE 5 MAY 6, 51 SEATS IN 7 STATES

To the extent possible, after balancing other considerations, elections in contiguous areas are bunched together. Example: this north-south axis from Nepal to Maharashtra through UP, MP

PHASE 6 **MAY 12, 59 SEATS** IN 7 STATES

There was a time, says a senior CRPF officer, when forces would travel across the country from perhaps West Bengal to Gujarat. A more scientific approach has been used over the last 2 elections

PHASE 7 **MAY 19, 59 SEATS** IN 8 STATES

The way forces will move across UP and Bihar during the course of the election will help to concentrate them in the high population-density Purvanchal area, where Phases 6, 7 will be held

SIMPLY PUT

Anatomy of a giant election

The world's biggest, most complex democratic exercise begins today. Here's what it takes to organise, secure, and conduct India's Lok Sabha elections

DEEPTIMANTIWARY& RITIKA CHOPRA

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

IN 2017, when Chinese forces moved on the Doklam plateau, India moved close to 60,000 soldiers to China-India-Bhutan trijunction on the Sikkim border leading to days of a standoff.

Between April 11 and May 19, India will be moving more than 2.5 lakh central forces personnel on over 25 helicopters, over 500 trains, 17,500 vehicles, hundreds of horses and mules and scores of boats and ships at a cost of more than Rs 200 crore. These are the logistics of organising and securing elec-

tions in the world's largest democracy. Getting 90 crore people to vote across 10 lakh booths in 543 seats spread over 33 lakh sq km takes months of planning, gathering of resources, meticulous coordination and exceptional management skills. Given India's diversity, caste and communal fissures and threats from insurgency and terrorism, it is a huge logistical challenge.

In the last two months, three key players in poll management — the Home Ministry, the Election Commission and the Central Reserve Police Force — have sat in multiple meetings thrashing out the challenges, solutions and the final plan.

Who does what

The EC remains the supreme body or-

ganising the elections beginning from deciding the schedule to allocation of resources and coordinating civilian and uniformed manpower. The Home Ministry provides the security force companies in consultation with the EC and ties up with other ministries such as Railways and state governments for movement of forces. The CRPF is the nodal force coordinating deployment and movement of

all forces on election duty. "General elections entail a very large movement of central and state police forces. As per different requirements of different states in different phases, the movement of these forces is planned and it is as per the orders of the Election Commission and the Home Ministry. The movement entails arranging for trains, meals and accommodation of the jawans, their briefing and familiarisation of particular theatres. It is a very complex exercise and requires exactness and precision so that the forces are available at the right time and at the right place," CRPF DG R R Bhatnagar told *The Indian Express*.

The EC has a secretariat headquartered in Delhi, but this set-up is not enough to conduct elections on this scale. The Constitution provides that the President or the Governor of a state is obliged to provide all "such staff as may be necessary" for the EC to conduct elections. The expression "such staff as may be necessary" was at the centre of controversy in 1993, before the Supreme Court decided that the

EC and the government should jointly decide the staff and forces required for conduct of elections. Since then, it has always been done through mutual consultation.

Fixing the calendar

The first challenge is deciding the dates. "Every state has unique culture and religious practices. So, if you plan to hold elections in the Northeast on one date, you have to ensure there is no festival in any of the seven states on that date. And each state has different festivals. So the EC has very few dates to begin with," said a senior CRPF officer who has been part of several poll meetings. An EC official agreed: "We have to avoid polling not only on festivals celebrated nationally like Holi, but also those celebrated regionally. For instance, in Assam we cannot have polling during Rongali Bihu," an EC official said.

Drawing up a list of public holidays, therefore, is the first step. The EC also tries to keep regular religious practices in mind while narrowing down on dates. "Since the Northeast states have a significant population which goes to church every Sunday, we don't keep polling on that day. Similarly, for Kerala, where a number of voters are Muslim, we avoid Fridays."

The EC also factors in examination schedule and weather patterns. "For example, states that receive early monsoon rains like the Northeast have to wind up voting by April," the EC officer added.

According to a former Chief Election Commissioner, the EC normally prepares a number of dummy calendars with different sets of dates. This is done to ensure secrecy. "We have to coordinate with agencies and state governments to execute this mammoth exercise and yet ensure the actual dates remain a secret. This is why we make arrangements in a way that will suit all dummy schedules. The final one can be selected by the EC shortly before announcement," said an EC officer.

Forces on the move

Once the EC gives out a list of available dates, the Home Ministry and forces sit down to chart out the best possible schedule that will suit force movement. Depending on what forces can achieve with minimum movement and least use

of resources, poll schedules are decided. "Forces deployed in Tripura cannot move to Kanyakumari in the next phase. Distances matter. So schedules have to be worked out depending on availability of forces in nearby regions to ensure minimum movement. There has to be enough time between phases to ensure smooth movement and optimum rest," said the officer.

Given that insurgency-hit areas will require fresh legs, districts affected by left-wing extremist violence and secessionist militancy in Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast will vote first. So will the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands and

the hills of Uttarakhand. "Difficult areas will require greater concentration of forces. Islands of Andaman and Lakshadweep require days of travel. Troops from Kolkata and Tamil Nadu move over three to four days in ships. Then all islands have to be covered in ferries and boats. In the hills, going up requires time. So, once they are done, movement of forces becomes smoother and faster," another senior CRPF officer said.

For Chhattisgarh, even lunar cycles have been kept in mind while drawing up schedules. "In certain parts of Naxal-affected Chhattisgarh, we need forces to make movements in the night on foot. For that we need a moonrise between 5-7 pm, so that it sets early morning giving us a full moonlit night," the officer said.

Schedules for the next few phases have also been decided based on availability and mobility of forces. Forces deployed in UP will move eastward laterally until the last phase of elections. In Bihar, forces will move from south to east and then laterally to west. This will help concentrate forces in the last two phase of elections in UP's Purvanchal and West Bihar districts which have high population density.

The CRPF has worked out deployment to ensure that forces now in the Northeast will later move on to West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha, and not any farther. The companies deployed in UP will be there through the entire schedule. Those in Andhra and Telangana will move to Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the next few phases.

"In the last two elections, deployment has been worked out scientifically. For example, the units which secure polls on April 11 will get free only by April 13 to board a train and reach his destination on April 14. After some rest, they will be available for the next phase on April 18. But the third phase is on April 23, with little gap. So what we have deployed forces for the first three phases now itself. Barring a few states like UP, the forces deployed in the first phase will be moved to secure the fourth phase giving enough time for movement, rest and recuperation," the CRPF officer said.

Forces on the ground

Time and energy are also consumed in arranging logistics such as accommodation and food for the forces. "The state government provides accommodation. But suppose it's a school in Sukma, Chhattisgarh, we have to turn it into a fortified camp with *morchas* and sandbags," a CRPF officer engaged in deployment said.

It's also not enough to secure booths and accommodation. In areas such as Chhattisgarh and Odisha, even roads have to be secured. "Road opening parties would be needed for all movements in LWE areas. Beyond that we will need people to keep an eye on the roads. For that local units have sought civilian help and tied up with truck and bus drivers and regular commuters to alert us if anything amiss is noticed," the officer said.

Every state has force coordinators and state police poll coordinators who take care of all the logistics as forces move from one place to another. Their job is humongous as they are not merely handling the 2.5 lakh central forces soldiers but also state police which is in comparable numbers and moving.

To ensure time is not wasted in cooking, CRPF has tied up with IRCTC to provide food for troops moving in trains. Earlier, trains would stop at stations and troops would cook on platforms throwing the entire deployment schedule haywire, said sources.



TELLING NUMBERS

For an electorate equal to the combined population of Europe & Bangladesh

2.5 lakh

Central troops deployed on poll security.. That's 4 times the 60,000 soldiers who were moved to the China-India-Bhutanese tri-junction during the 2017 standoff at Doklam.

Rs 200 crore

The cost of transporting the troops. They will use 25 helicopters, over 500 trains, 17,500 vehicles, hundreds of horses and mules and scores of boats and ships.

10 lakh

Number of booths around which these troops will move, part of 543 constituencies spread over 33 lakh sq km. On Thursday, 91 of these constituencies will go to polls.

90 crore

The number of voters enrolled for this Lok Sabha election. For context, that is roughly equal to the combined population of Europe (74 crore) and Bangladesh (16 crore).

DELHI THE HINDU THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2019

Rafale rebuff

Supreme Court's decision exposes attempts to de-legitimise investigative journalism

The Supreme Court's decision to consider the relevance of the documents published in the media on the Rafale deal is a firm and necessary rebuff to the Central government's attempts to prevent judicial examination of these papers and to de-legitimise all investigative journalism on the subject. The court's unanimous verdict, rendered in two concurring orders by a three-judge Bench, means that review petitions filed against earlier orders declining an investigation into the purchase of Rafale jets will now be taken up on merits and that the petitioners are free to rely on these documents, regardless of their provenance. These documents include those published by The Hindu. A dissenting note by members of the India Negotiating Team, and notes that disclose unease in the Defence Ministry over parallel negotiations at the PMO's instance undermining the official parleys are among them. It would have been a travesty had the government succeeded in blocking judicial scrutiny of these documents, as they disclose significant details about the decision-making process. The government's desperate attempts to prevent the court from relying on these papers included a claim of privilege under the Evidence Act, a threat of invoking the Official Secrets Act (OSA) and an accusation that the published documents were "stolen" ones. Later, it toned down the allegation by saying the original documents had not been stolen, and what were published were unauthorised photocopies. None of these claims impressed the court, which relied on the principle that how a piece of evidence is obtained is immaterial, as long as it is relevant to adjudicating an issue.

The decision on the admissibility of the documents has significance beyond the Rafale issue: it revivifies the rights of a free press and underscores the principle that it is public interest, and not the content of a document alone, that will decide whether disclosure is needed or not in a given case. Referring to the publication of the Rafale documents in *The Hindu*, Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi observed that "the right of such publication would seem to be in consonance with the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech". Citing the U.S. Supreme Court decision on the Pentagon Papers, he noted that neither the OSA nor any other law vests any power in the executive to stop publication of documents marked 'secret' or the placing of such documents before a court of law which may be called upon to adjudicate a legal issue. It is premature to conclude, based on this development, that the court's earlier decision to not order a criminal investigation into the purchase of 36 Rafale jets will be revisited. However, it will certainly help provide clarity on several aspects of the murky deal. Had the government agreed to a parliamentary probe early on, it would not be suffering the sort of setback it has now faced in the Supreme Court.

Dantewada ambush

As polling begins in Chhattisgarh. a brutal reminder of the Maoist challenge

The Election Commission has taken the correct decision to go ahead with the first phase of polling, on Thursday, in the Lok Sabha election in Chhattisgarh after the deadly Maoist attack in Dantewada on Tuesday. Maoists struck at a convoy in Dantewada, which comes under the Bastar parliamentary constituency, and killed Bhima Mandavi, the BJP MLA from Dantewada, and four security personnel. The aim was clearly to disrupt the electoral process, and it will be vital for the administration to ensure polling without fear of violence. Equally grimly, the attack underlines the reality that for all the reverses they have suffered in the past few years, the Maoists retain their ability to pick and choose targets. Initial reports suggest that an improvised explosive device blew up the lead vehicle in Mandavi's two-vehicle convoy, and the second then came under gunfire from the Maoists who had laid the ambush. A speedy inquiry should clarify the facts of the incident, but it is reported that the BJP legislator may have been complacent, choosing to ignore the police advice that he take along additional security cover that was available to him. However, these early details also show that in terms of intelligence the attackers managed to be one step ahead, despite the heavy security bandobast in the area in light of the Lok Sabha election.

Given that it is difficult to fully secure a State with a history of violent attacks, it is important that adequate measures be put in place to protect the candidates in the fray, over 160 of them, for the 11 Lok Sabha constituencies that will go to the polls in three phases, on April 11, 18 and 23. After the relatively peaceful conduct of the Assembly elections in the State late last year, it would have signalled a precipitous slide if the electoral process in Chhattisgarh were to be disrupted now. Beyond security for the peaceful conduct of elections, the latest attack highlights the need for the security forces to keep updating their standard operating procedures. It is also a call for the civil administration to keep extending its reach in the forests of central India, especially Bastar. Even as the security forces stare down the Maoist threat, the political and administrative responses are crucial. In most of the violence-hit regions of India, responsibility for security has been passed on to the paramilitary forces in abundant measure. The capacities of the State police need to be addressed. Local communities, in turn, have to be reassured that the fight against Maoism is also a political one. The Maoist argument lost its potency long ago. But the difficult task of addressing people's aspirations and concerns, especially about exploitation and alienation from their lands in the face of extractive policies in their resource-rich habitat, must be pursued on a war footing.

Trickeries of the money bill

The judgment in the tribunals case could have a profound bearing on India's constitutional arrangements



SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY

The Supreme Court has now heard oral arguments in Revenue Bar Association (RBA) v. Union of India, in which the validity of the Finance Act of 2017, insofar as it affects the structure and functioning of various judicial tribunals, is under challenge. At first blush, a dispute over the apparent inscrutabilities of a tribunal's working might strike us as uninteresting and, perhaps, even unimportant. But, as the RBA's arguments show us, how the court decides the case will likely have a profound bearing on India's constitutional arrangements.

Untrammelled power

Ordinarily, the Finance Act, which is enacted at the beginning of every accounting year, seeks to give effect to the government's fiscal policies. In 2017, however, the state wielded the statute like a blunderbuss. It not only set the fiscal agenda for the year ahead but it also toppled the existing regime governing the working of 26 different judicial bodies. Until recently, each of these panels was governed by a separate statute, and those laws individually contained a set of principles providing for, among other things, the criteria employed to select and remove members to and from these bodies, and for salaries, allowances and other such service conditions of the

But, in one fell swoop, the Finance Act not only abolished some of the tribunals but also altogether repealed the standards provided in the different statutes. In their place, the law vested in the Central government an absolute,

untrammelled power to make rules to effectively govern the operation of the tribunals.

The petitioners argued that this move runs sharply athwart judicial independence. The new law, in their belief, deputed to the executive what was really an essential legislative function. Many of these tribunals, which included the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal, and the Industrial Disputes Tribunal, they pointed out, performed roles that were originally undertaken by the higher judiciary. To assign to the executive's whims the task of establishing the criteria employed in selecting members to the panels and to provide for the members' service conditions was, therefore, pernicious to the basic principle of separation of powers. Consider one of the consequences. Despite the Supreme Court's previous ruling that the chairperson of a judicial tribunal ought to be equivalent to the Chief Justice of the high courts, as a result of the rules now made in furtherance of the Finance Act, in 13 different tribunals, a person who is merely qualified to be appointed as a judge of a high court can be selected as the presiding of-

The RBA's case, though, goes beyond questions concerning delegation of power. Of equal concern is the enactment of these stipulations through the wangled mechanism of the Finance Act. Substantive matters concerning the governing of tribunals, one would think, can scarcely be considered as a fiscal measure. Yet the draft law which introduced these provisions was classified as a money bill, and the sanction of the Rajya Sabha was altogether dodged. Although this too might appear on first glimpse to be a quarrel over esoteric matters of procedure, the consequences are enormous, travelling, as they do,



to the heart of India's democratic apparatus.

The need for the minutiae In B.R. Ambedkar's vision, the Constitution embodied not only a charter of rights but also a foundation for republican governance. His worries that democracy in India was "only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic", saw him lay stress on a need to diffuse constitutional morality among India's citizens. Citing the classical historian, George Grote, while moving the draft Constitution on November 4, 1948, Ambedkar said constitutional morality had to be seen as representing "a paramount reverence for the forms of the Constitution". Since such reverence had to be cultivated, he thought it imperative that the Constitution commend the minutiae of administration rather than leave such matters purely to the legislature's wisdom. In the absence of such prescriptions, democracy, he feared,

would wallow in decline. The Constitution's verbosity has been a source of antipathy to many. Too long, too rigid, too prolix, Sir Ivor Jennings, a preeminent British constitutional expert, reportedly said, of the document, in a lecture delivered at the University of Madras in 1951. But only years later Jennings was lauding India for representing the region's most successful constitutional experiment. This volte face, as it happened, was occasioned by those provisions of administrative intricacies, which Jennings had initial-

ly found so troubling, and which Ambedkar had thought indispensable. And it is those provisions that are today under siege.

Some trickery

One such clause, Article 110(1), grants to the Lok Sabha Speaker the authority to certify a draft law as a money bill so long as such legislation deals only with all or any of the matters specifically listed in the provision. These include subjects such as the imposition or abolition of a tax, the declaring of any expenditure to be expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund of India, and, significantly, also any matter otherwise incidental to the subjects specified in Article 110. The ensuing clause clarifies that a draft law will not be a money bill for the reason that it also provides for the imposition or abolition of a tax. In other words, substantive laws, which are not merely incidental to the subjects enlisted in Article 110(1) cannot be finagled into a bill that also happens to contain taxing rules. It is precisely such trickery that the petitioners contended the Finance Act of 2017 indulges in.

The Union government, for its part, argued that the Speaker of the Lok Sabha was not only correct in making the classification, but that, in any event, her decision was beyond judicial review. To this end, the government relied on Article 110(3), which states that in cases where a dispute arises over whether a bill is a money bill or not, the Speaker's decision shall be considered final. But, as the Supreme Court has repeatedly held, the finality accorded to the Speaker's decision does not altogether oust the court's jurisdiction. The irrevocability of such decisions operate only within the realm of Parliament. For the Constitution expressly vests in the Supreme Court and in the high courts the power to review governmental actions, and issue prerogative writs

every time those actions exceed the Constitution's remit.

Ultimately, the Speaker derives her power from the Constitution. In classifying a draft law as a money bill, therefore, her decision has to be demonstrably justifiable. An immunity from judicial scrutiny would effectively allow the government to elude the Rajva Sabha's constitutional checks by simply having the Speaker classify a draft law as a money bill regardless of whether it, in fact, meets the conditions stipulated in Article 110(1) or not.

From a parliamentary custom The idea behind a money bill is derived from British parliamentary custom. But unlike in Britain,

where judicial review of the Speaker's opinion is unambiguously prohibited, in India, Article 110 avoids creating any such bar. Money bills exist simply to ensure that the Rajya Sabha isn't allowed to bring down a government by refusing it access to the exchequer for everyday governance. To use it as a means to nullify the Upper House's democratic role in making substantive legislation denigrates the Constitution's form which Ambedkar and the Constituent Assembly considered inviolate.

As the lawyer Gautam Bhatia wrote in these pages ("The imperial cabinet and an acquiescent court", March 8, 2019), the Supreme Court has already squandered at least two opportunities in recent times to provide a sense of sanctity to the Constitution's carefully structured arrangements. The dispute over the Finance Act of 2017, therefore, assumes particular significance. In deciding the case, the court will do well to pay heed to Ambedkar's warnings, by recognising that the niceties of constitutional form are not a matter of trifles.

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

Forcing China's hand?

The U.S. initiative to have Masood Azhar blacklisted at the UN Security Council marks a new turn



ate last month the U.S. opened another front in its le with China when it circulated a draft resolution to the powerful 15nation UN Security Council (UNSC) on March 27 to blacklist Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and subject him to a travel ban, an assets freeze and an arms embargo. It did so knowing full well the Chinese position on the issue as China had put a hold on a French proposal to list Azhar under the 1267 al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the Coun-

cil just a few days earlier. Washington has underlined that it would utilise "all available avenues" to ensure that Azhar is held accountable by the UNSC by suggesting that "while we strongly prefer that UNSC designations take place through the committee pro-

cess, the United States and its allies and partners, including those on the... Security Council, will utilise all available avenues to ensure that the founder and leader of the UN-designated terrorist organisation JeM is held accountable by the international community."

China, of course, has reacted strongly to this move by arguing that the U.S. decision to go directly to the UNSC to designate Azha could scuttle China's efforts to resolve the issue amicably. As per the Chinese spokesperson, "China has been working hard with relevant sides and is making positive results. The U.S. knows that very well. Under such circumstances, the U.S. still insists on pushing the draft resolution, (which) doesn't make any sense."

The U.S.-China angle

Washington will be aware that China would continue to oppose the move but the fact that it is willing to take on China so openly on this issue underscores that it wants to call China out publicly. This was reflected in U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's tweet: "The world cannot afford China's shameful hy-



pocrisy toward Muslims. On one hand, China abuses more than a million Muslims at home, but on the other, it protects violent Islamic terrorist groups from sanctions at the UN.

France's proposal to get Azhar listed as a terrorist by the the UN's 1267 sanctions committee was scuttled by China despite the move having the support of 14 out of 15 members. In its zeal to shield Pakistan, China has used its veto on Azhar's listing at the 1267 UNSC sanctions committee four times in the past decade. But after the February 14 Pulwama attack that killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, for which the JeM took responsibility, Chinese intransigence has come under the spotlight. After China's block last month, France moved quickly to impose sanctions on Azhar, including a freeze on his assets. It is working with its European partners the matter of putting Azhar on a European Union list of terrorists and terror organisations. The international community apart from China has rallied behind India after Pulwama and has pushed Pakistan to undertake serious measures to control terrorism emanating from its territory.

This has been shaped by India's diplomatic outreach over the last few years in which global support has been sought to reverse Pakistan's support to terrorist organisations. But what has given this an added sense of urgency is India's decision to up the ante after the Pulwama attacks by taking the fight to the Pakistani territory. This has now put the onus on Pakistan to de-escalate, a reversal of the post-1998 situation where in every India-Pakistan crisis it was New Delhi which was expected to take steps for de-escalation even as ev-

ery crisis was precipitated by Pakistan. After every crisis, the international community, especially the West, would persuade India to ease tensions, and in most cases India relented. The post-Pulwama South Asian strategic equilibrium has shifted as New Delhi has made it clear that it could not be expected to look the other way from Pakistani provocations.

Regional peace

The latest American move is an unprecedented one, and is not only aimed at forcing the Chinese hand on Masood Azhar but is also a recognition of the new regional context in South Asia where a stronger global attempt to rein in Pakistan is the only viable option of maintaining regional peace. As the U.S. and China prepare the South Asian chessboard, Indian moves have suddenly become the decisive ones and both the powers are calibrating their own moves accordingly.

Harsh V. Pant is Director, Studies at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi and Professor of International Relations

$LETTERS\ TO\ THE\ EDITOR\ \ \text{Letters}\ \text{emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.}$

BJP manifesto

By taking up issues of ultranationalism and national security in its manifesto, the Bharatiya Janata Party has devised a clever election strategy (Editorial, "Blinkers on", April 10). But the Prime Minister's popularity has dwindled, which opinion polls have highlighted. The Congress's NYAY scheme, the discouraging job scenario, and the aftermath of the goods and services tax and demonetisation are some of the spoilers. The manifesto is silent on senior citizens who were looked after well under the UPA. In his relentless pursuit of 'rob Peter to pay Paul principle', the Finance Minister has drastically reduced interest rates in banks and post offices savings schemes and handed over the spoils to industry to create nonexistent jobs. KANGAYAM R. NARASIMHAN,

■ The promise of a Ram temple in Ayodhya means

the BIP can't garner votes without invoking the issue (Editorial, "Blinkers on", April 10); it is a promise that is inimical to democracy and secularism and all the liberal ideals our Constitution subscribes to. From a broader perspective, all political parties do not seem to be focussing enough on protecting the environment from corporate plunder – an issue that affects the livelihood of millions of ordinary and less-privileged people. The Mahatma rightly said that India lives in the villages, but today it is the unchecked pressure of development that is devastating the environment and rural livelihoods. SUKUMARAN C.V.,

■ The manifesto is nothing but a blueprint for a 'saffron India'. There is enough evidence in the last five years that the ruling party has a penchant to interfere in the independent functioning of Central institutions. Dubious ways of allowing pieces of

legislation without debate in Lok Sabha under the guise of a 'money bill' point to a regime that has no respect for established conventions. Mob-lynching under the garb of 'cow-protection' is another horror bequeathed to the nation. Moves to put down dissent and opinion show that even law-abiding citizens have much to fear. K. NATARAJAN,

■ Essentially, there is nothing sacrosanct or legally binding about poll manifestos. There is little chance that party manifestos will sway public opinion in an election nor does the average citizen get an opportunity to read them. Pakistan-centric election canvassing will not make Pakistan go away. It is our neighbour and we have to live with that reality. There is no plan on how any political party will eventually resolve the thorny relationship. India is under an enormous misinformation campaign largely fuelled by political

parties using their back office

cyber cells. This poses a grave challenge to the very diversity that is India's unique heritage. H.N. RAMAKRISHNA,

■ Economic woes will weigh on the voter but may not determine the outcome of the Lok Sabha election. The BJP's main opponent does not have any compelling economic propositions either. And elections are not determined by economics alone. The BJP has the ultimate, powerful weapon a Prime Minister who has unmatched oratorical skills and popularity.

The first vote

Nobody needs to teach the people about the valour, s of our defence forces. They already have a lot of gratitude towards our armed forces. Therefore, the Prime Minister's appeal to first-time voters is perplexing. It runs the risk of being misconstrued in terms of 'us

and them' (Page 1, "Dedicate your first vote to armed forces, Modi tells young voters", April 10). People should not get carried away by such oratorical appeals, but judge him and his party on the basis of performance. D. SETHURAMAN.

■ It is almost as if the armed forces are also contesting the elections. Is this not a blatant violation of the model code of conduct? Not only is our leader attempting to politicise the armed forces but he is also looking at them as a part of goods and services being offered by his party. Prime Ministers will come and go but the armed forces will go on forever. ABDUL ASSIS P.A.,

■ It is unfair to make an issue out of every utterance and attribute motives. The sacrifices made by our armed forces have never been the talking points during elections. The statement could well be

construed as aimed at invoking the spirit of nationalism in the minds of young voters who are otherwise ignorant of the sacrifices of our armed forces personnel. Requesting voters to dedicate their votes for the country, society and armed forces is way better than asking for votes on a caste and communal basis. which almost all parties do without any compunction. V. SUBRAMANIAN,

Emerging concern

I wonder how Indian health authorities are reacting to reports on the spread of a multi-drug resistant fungus, Candida auris, especially in hospital settings. In a country where health-care responses vary and where there is still limited awareness of the dangers of antibiotic misuse, a central and clear response becomes all the more important. SHYMALA NATARAJAN,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

Notes on the BJP's manifesto

The party is obsessed with technological fixes to humanitarian problems



SHIV VISVANATHAN

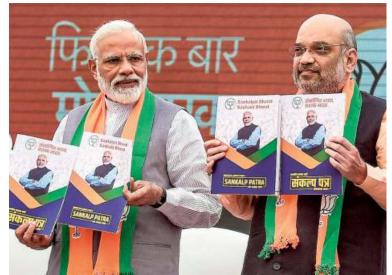
Manifestoes are acts of communication. They seek to inspire with rhetoric. When the BJP's manifesto was released, I was not sure if the party was even trying to communicate with the people. There is a humourless ferocity in the document that makes one wonder about the mindset of the communicators. It's like an exam where the examinee awards himself full marks, regardless of the questions the public is asking. There is an attempt to force the discourse towards what the party is obsessed with rather than answer questions about its performance.

To switch metaphors, it reads as though three directors of a board are sending letters to stockholders about profitability. The marginalisation of the stakeholders is obvious. On pages 34 and 35, for instance, minorities, the elderly, the disabled, shopkeepers, and artisans each get a line not as a statement of concern but as a recognition of their marginality.

A checklist

The cover shows Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the back page features Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya and Atal Bihari Vajpayee assuring ideological continuity. If the three letters from Mr. Modi, Home Minister Rajnath Singh, and party president Amit Shah reveal some attempt to communicate, the rest of the document achieves a change in style, which is intriguing. It reveals a checklist, a 'take it or leave it' attitude. There is no attempt to even correct typos in the document. One cannot quite figure out if it is indifference to quality or the arrogance of a group convinced that it is returning to power, performing an unnecessary but unavoidable exercise.

Mr. Modi called the elections a festival of democracy. One wishes the manifesto was an invitation to it. It is clear that Mr. Modi has turned development into a dismal science and he invites us to this dismal India. The document celebrates elections but has little sense of democracy. The



"There are prescriptions without a real sense of the polity in the BJP's manifesto". Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah release the manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, in New Delhi • PTI

rat Mission leaves one wondering

whether the BJP has heard of Bezwa-

da Wilson. As Mr. Wilson, who is na-

tional convenor of the Safai Karma-

chari Andolan, said, behind all

Swachh programmes there are sca-

vengers and septic tanks. To ignore

the scavengers and tanks is to deny

justice and dignity to people. By em-

phasising technology, the BJP seems

There is a fixation with technology

blind to the humanity of scavengers.

and management everywhere, but as

a result, one loses the imagination of

the city and the informal economy.

There is no sense of civics or civic life

as transport grids cover the city. The

city is conceived of as a grid of tech-

nologies. The question of plurality,

culture, difference and migration is

lost in this monolinguism of technoc-

There is an absent-mindedness to

the document when it talks of unity

and Ram Janmabhoomi in the same

breath. The confusion of majoritar-

ianism with national unity is a lethal

flaw. But the BJP refuses an attempt

change, no sense of the Anthropo-

cene. Ecology gets reduced to a fixa-

One returns repeatedly to the lan-

guage of the report. First, it has a

sense of a submission to the Guin-

ness World Records rather than a re-

port to a people. The subconscious

humour turns sour as the document,

There is no urgency about climate

to correct the error.

tion on the Ganga.

confidence of ushering in achhe din is missing in it.

Development is second to security. Terms like "surgical strike" and "zero tolerance towards terrorism" are summoned to dance to the BJP's idea of national security. There is a quiet sense of paranoia as security gets defined as the standard obsession of the right. Yet, the way the roads in Kashmir were shut down creating a humanitarian problem reveals scant sensitivity to the pro-

On agriculture, the responses are rote. There is barely any grasp of the crisis of agriculture, of the rampant drought, of the epidemic of suicides. The assumption is that a bit of tinkering with prices and insurance can restore the livelihoods of a people. What is stark is the separation of security from livelihood. Agriculture is broken down to a few programmes and missions. During World War II, soldiers would be made to dig ditches and fill them up to keep themselves occupied. They coined an irreverent term for it: SNAFU ('situation normal, all fouled up'). The SNAFU sense of agriculture in the BJP document stands out. There are mentions of technological fixes, but there is no exertion to tie technology, the political economy and culture. For a party which invokes culture, agriculture is reduced to a set of price and technological fixes.

The claims about the Swachh Bha-

ignoring the problems brought about by the National Register of Citizens, the Rohingya crisis, and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, claims the Northeast is now closer to the mainstream than ever before.

The document barely mentions demonetisation, which caused havoc across the country.

It emphasises Artificial Intelligence and "robotic research". Do such technologies add to jobs? We don't know. There is little sense of biological and ecological technologies. Anthropocene and urban planning are forgotten as India joins the technological bandwagon without any sense of ecology, culture or context.

A managerial model

India wants to be a world-class nation without even asking what the term means and what its consequences are. There is hardly any thought on the quality of science or education. What one confronts is a huge promise of access to seats without any understanding of the university as an organic institution. The question of expansion is treated linearly in terms of technology and admissions but the role of the teacher as an autonomous academic is ignored. We face the prospect of universities serving government and industry but lacking any function beyond this service model. Even the question of women's empowerment lacks a vision of rights-based strate-

Reading the document one sees an emphasis on policy without culture, of prescriptions without a real sense of the polity. It is an attempt to create a managerial model of governance while quietly downplaying the demands of democracy. Here again, language is the key. There are haunting silences - about violence, freedom, alternatives - as the BJP pretends it is a juggernaut moving linearly towards its goals. What one misses is a nod to debate and doubt. Everything gets subjugated by indicators and indices, which show little awareness of the actual lives of the people. The dreariness of the future becomes obvious in the document when a democracy, like development, is reduced to dismal science.

Shiv Visvanathan is an academic associated with the Compost Heap, a group in pursuit of alternative ideas and imagination

Algeria after Bouteflika

While the long-serving President's exit is a tactical triumph of the popular will, it pushes the nation into uncharted territory



MAHESH SACHDEV

Abdelaziz Bouteflika's resignation as Algerian President on April 2 was a momentous development. The popular disaffection that forced him out after two decades in power was triggered by worsening socio-economic conditions largely due to lower oil and gas revenues. It can also be seen as a delayed arrival of the Arab Spring, with the youth feeling increasingly disconnected from the gerontocrats and their hogra (insolence).

Algerian peculiarities

However, the Algerian socio-political context has at least two peculiarities. First, since Algeria's independence in 1962, the country has always been ruled by an informal coalition of the National Liberation Front and army generals (collectively called le Pouvoir, or 'the Power'). While this has ensured continuity, durability and predictability, it has resisted political evolution. Second, from the late 1980s, Algeria endured a long period of socio-political crisis which resulted in the emergence of the Islamists led by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). This party was denied victory in the 1991-92 elections, and this led to a gruesome insurgency causing nearly 200,000 deaths. In fact, le Pouvoir brought in Mr. Bouteflika in 1999 to close this chapter and foster national reconciliation. It is because of this bitter legacy that Algerians prefer a stifling stability over any uncertainty. As a result, the recent demonstrations, though massive, were peaceful.

However, Mr. Bouteflika's attempt to seek a fifth term was the proverbial last straw. In popular perception, the country was being ruled in Mr. Bouteflika's name by le Pouvoir. The popular opprobrium against his fifth term intensified and morphed into a call for his resignation, removal of the entire old guard, and a new political structure that is more transparent and responsive to the people. Le Pouvoir's initial response to the popular discontent was to be in denial, prevaricate and resort to tokenism. It was only recently that the army chief publicly called for Mr. Bouteflika to be declared as incapacitated. 'Boutexit' followed, paving the way to a transitional presidency, which was ratified by the national Parliament on April 9.

Although Mr. Bouteflika's exit is certainly a tactical triumph for the popular will, it also pushes Algeria into uncharted territory.

While nominal political institutions and processes exist in Algeria, these lack both efficacy and credibility. On the other hand, the protests were largely spontaneous, without orchestration, organisational structure and leadership. Boutexit seems to have emboldened the protesters to expand their wish list to exclude le Pouvoir from the future dispensation. Though on the defensive, le Pouvoir (and the oligarchs tagged to it) is unlikely to ride willingly into the sunset. Thus, an immediate and uncompromising pursuit of this ambitious popular agenda runs the risk of unleashing a protracted battle of attrition resulting in instability, radicalisation and/or regime repression. The substantive issues of socio-economic reforms, corruption, and the Arab-Berber divide are likely to be held in abeyance till political issues are resolved. This could further accentuate these grievances. Any long-winding transition would strengthen Gulf influence, French meddling and simmering Islamic militancy. Avoidance of such pitfalls would require everyone to show maturity and flexibility. After all, the stakes are quite high: Algeria's 42 million population is second only to Egypt's in the Arab world. It is an OPEC member, a major gas supplier to Europe, and a large importer of goods ranging from automobiles to pharmaceuticals. Protracted uncertainty in Algeria can affect Europe by disrupting energy supplies, causing a surge in immigration and in radicalisation of the four million Algerians living in Europe.

Significance for India

For India, too, Algerian developments have multiple significance. First, Mr. Bouteflika was a friend of India and paid a state visit in 2001. His successor will, hopefully, continue the bilateral amity. Second, bilateral economic ties are robust and growing. Algeria is an important market for India's foodstuff, automobiles, farm machinery, pharmaceuticals, mobiles and cosmetics. It is also India's source for strategic commodities, especially hydrocarbons and phosphates. A number of Indian contractors have been active in Algeria, notably Larsen & Toubro, which recently won a \$1 billion hydrocarbon project from Sonatrach, the national oil company. At the political level, Algeria has been one of the few members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to have consistently supported India's case against terrorism. India can play a vital role in ensuring that Algeria's imminent socio-political transition is smooth by helping the country with institution-building and infrastructure.

Mahesh Sachdev was Indian Ambassador to Algeria

FROM The Mindu. ARCHIVES

UK Sikhs force lifting of ban on turbans

Civic chiefs of Wolverhampton last night [April 9] lifted a two-

year ban on Sikh busmen wearing beards and turbans - and averted a ritual suicide threat. The ban had angered Britain's

130,000 Sikhs who considered it an affront to their religion, and it sparked demonstrations in India. The British Govern-

ment, fearing a race crisis could blow up here [Wolverhamp-

ton, England], intervened, and last night the Wolverhampton

Transport Committee reversed its policy - just four days be-

fore Sikh leader Sohan Singh Jolly planned to burn himself to

death. Mr. Jolly, 66, a former Inspector in the Kenya Police,

had declared that unless the ban was lifted, his self-immola-

tion on Sunday would be followed by other prominent Sikhs in

a chain of death-by-burning. A British Government junior Mi-

nister paid a surprise visit to Wolverhampton on Tuesday. The

Committee, in apparent deference to this, said it was lifting the

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 11, 1969

SINGLE FILE

Gubernatorial impropriety

The promise of the institution remains as underwhelming as ever

SHIVAM & ANMOLAM



The political endorsement that was recently given to the BJP by the Rajasthan Governor has reignited the debate on the independence and neutrality of the constitutional post. The Governor's office has often courted controversy for the incumbent's political views. Howev-

er, there is a marked difference between seemingly routine deviations from strict constitutional norms and the present case, in which the alleged impropriety is neither subtle nor cloaked in specious constitutional justifications.

The Sarkaria Commission described the Governor as "a Constitutional sentinel and a vital link between the Union and the State." In S.R. Bommai (1994), the Supreme Court said, "The office of the Governor... is intended to ensure protection and sustenance of the constitutional process of the working of the Constitution by the elected executive." M.K. Gandhi said about the Governor's office: "He would be an arbiter when there was a constitutional deadlock in the State and he would be able to play an impartial role."

Given the vagueness surrounding the process of appointing and removing the Governor, doubts have been raised about the 'legal nature' of his office. According to B.R. Ambedkar, "He is the representative not of a party; he is the representative of the people as a whole of the State. It is in the name of the people that he carries on the administration." In Hargovind Pant v. Raghukul Tilak (1979), the Supreme Court affirmed that the "office of the Governor was not subordinate or subservient to the Government of India"

In the contemporary constitutional landscape, the Governor is expected to advance the cause of 'federalism' and 'democracy', which form a part of the basic structure of the Constitution. In Government of NCT of Delhi v. Union of In- $\it dia$ (2018), then Chief Justice of India, Dipak Misra, clarified that democracy and federalism are firmly imbibed in India's constitutional ethos, while reiterating that democracy requires the constant affirmation of constitutional morality.

Despite his unique constitutional positioning, the Governor is sometimes not seen as willing or able to discharge his functions as judiciously, impartially and efficiently as envisaged by the first Administrative Reforms Commission. A perusal of the reports of the Sarkaria, Punchhi and Venkatachaliah Commissions reveals that the independence and dignity of the gubernatorial office is invariably undermined by the appointment of persons not suited to the post, the lack of security of tenure, the lack of an appropriate removal mechanism, with no reasonable post-retirement benefits and limitations on post-retirement political ingratiation. Consequently, the promise of the institution remains as underwhelming as ever while the perils continue to multiply. It is high time that the recommendations of the relevant commissions are implemented in letter and spirit to obviate the danger of a full-blown constitutional crisis, to buttress constitutional morality and to restore the dignity of this office.

Shivam is a PhD candidate in law at the Faculty of Law, Delhi University. Anmolam is a lawyer, running a non-profit organisation BDLAAAW

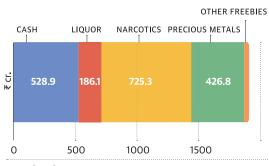


DATA POINT

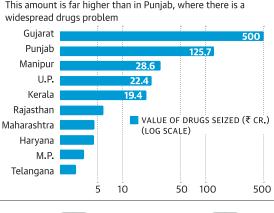
Since the announcement of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Election Commission officials have seized cash, liquor, narcotics, precious metals and other freebies worth ₹1,908.76 crore (as on April 9). The cash seized so far is ₹529 crore, which is already higher than the amount seized before the 2014 Lok Sabha election (about ₹313 crore). By **Varun B. Krishnan**

What was seized?

Drugs accounted for the highest value of seizures, followed by cash and precious metals. Overall, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh topped the list in seizures



Drug haul Drugs worth over ₹500 crore have been seized in Gujarat. This amount is far higher than in Punjab, where there is a



Cash is king The highest amounts of cash seized were from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. In the 2014 election, the highest amount of cash Telangana ₹45 cr. was seized from A.P. | **₹118** cr. undivided Andhra Pradesh T.N. I **₹171** cr. Cash seized (₹ cr.)

Election high The values of seized liquor were highest in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In terms of volume, Maharashtra topped the list (22 lakh Karnataka litres were ₹34 cr. Value of liquor seized (₹ cr.)

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 11, 1919.

ban because of outside pressure.

Railway Nationalisation.

In the [House of] Commons [on April 2], replying to Sir J.D. Rees, Mr. Fisher stated that [Secretary of State for India] Mr. Edwin Montagu had proposed that as soon as convenient after the war there would be an enquiry in India regarding the desirability or otherwise on administrative and financial grounds of modifying the present management of Railways in India which were owned by the State, but worked by Companies domiciled in England by incorporating the lines in existing State-worked systems, or converting them into separate State-worked lines or handing them over to Companies domiciled in India. Mr. Fisher also stated that the reports of the Southborough Committees had not yet been received from the Government of In-

POLL CALL

Electoral bonds

Electoral bonds are bearer instruments in the nature of Promissory Notes issued by banks. They are interest-free instruments that can be purchased from specified branches of the State Bank of India by any citizen of India or body incorporated in India within fixed periods. The government's argument was that banks would be able to track the buyers of electoral bonds through their KYC details and thus ensure that clean money comes into the system, while protecting the donor's anonymity. However, critics argue that this has made political funding more opaque since there is no way of knowing who donated and how much to a political party. There is also no cap on the quantum of electoral bonds. The BJP was the biggest beneficiary of electoral bonds in 2017-18, accounting for 94.5% of the bonds worth a little over ₹210 crore.

MORE ON THE WEB

Watch | N. Ram in conversation with Prannoy Roy

http://bit.ly/PrannoyRam

Source: Election Commission of India



अगर जवाब चाहते हैं तो सवाल पूछिए

राफेल का सच–झूट

राफेल सौदे पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट का फैसला निश्चित रूप से मोदी सरकार के मन मुताबिक नहीं है, लेकिन इस फैसले का वह भी मतलब नहीं है जो कांग्रेस और कुछ अन्य दलों के नेताओं की ओर से पेश किया जा रहा है। चूंकि चुनावी माहौल में राजनीतिक दल हर छोटे-बड़े मसले को तूल देते हैं इसलिए इस पर हैरत नहीं कि कुछ नेता सुप्रीम कोर्ट के ताजा फैसले को अपनी जीत बताने में जुट गए हैं, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि जब सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने राफेल सौदे को क्लीन चिट दी थी तो कांग्रेस ने उस पर गौर करने से इन्कार करते हुए चौकीदार को चोर बताने का सिलसिला कायम रखा था। तब उसका यह भी तर्क था कि हम तो सुप्रीम कोर्ट गए ही नहीं थे और हमारी मांग यह है कि संयुक्त संसदीय समिति से इस सौदे की जांच हो। राफेल सौदे पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के खिलाफ दायर पुनर्विचार याचिकाओं की सुनवाई होनी ही थी। इन याचिकाओं की सुनवाई को लेकर सरकार ने यह दलील दी थी कि चोरी से हासिल किए गए दस्तावेजों का संज्ञान नहीं लिया जाना चाहिए। यह एक कमजोर दलील थी और उसके खारिज होने के आसार थे, लेकिन यह समझना कठिन है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट को यह तय करने में इतना वक्त क्यों लग गया कि किसी मामले की सुनवाई में चोरी से हासिल किए गए दस्तावेजों का संज्ञान लिया जा सकता है या नहीं?

अब जब सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने यह साफ कर दिया है कि विशेषाधिकार वाले और साथ ही गोपनीयता अधिनियम के दायरे में आने वाले दस्तावेजों को किसी मामले की सुनवाई का हिस्सा बनाया जा सकता है तब फिर जरूरी यह है कि वह अपना अंतिम फैसला यथाशीघ्र दे। इसका कोई औचित्य नहीं कि राष्ट्रीय महत्व के एक जरूरी सौदे की सुनवाई लंबे समय तक सप्रीम कोर्ट में अटकी रहे। यह ठीक नहीं कि अभी भी यह तय नहीं कि पुनर्विचार याचिकाओं पर सुनवाई कब से शुरू होगी? इस मामले में अंतिम फैसला देने में इसलिए देर नहीं की जानी चाहिए, क्योंकि कुछ राजनीतिक दल राफेल सौदे में गड़बड़ी को चुनावी मुद्दा बनाने की कोशिश में हैं। स्वाभाविक तौर पर कांग्रेस इसमें सबसे आगे है। इसमें हर्ज नहीं. लेकिन यह विचित्र है कि उसके नेता न्यायाधीश की तरह व्यवहार करने में लगे हुए हैं। इतना ही नहीं, वे झूठ का भी सहारा ले रहे हैं। उनकी मानें तो सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने यह मान लिया है कि वायुसेना की 30 हजार करोड़ की राशि अनिल अंबानी को दी गई। आखिर यह कोरा झूठ नहीं तो क्या है? कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी राफेल सौदे पर प्रधानमंत्री को खुली बहस की चुनौती भी दे रहे हैं, लेकिन यह स्पष्ट नहीं कर रहे कि क्या वह अगस्ता वेस्टलैंड हेलिकॉप्टर खरीद और नेशनल हेराल्ड मामले पर भी बहस करने को तैयार हैं? जो भी हो, अगर राहुल गांधी के पास राफेल सौदे में गड़बड़ी का वैसा कोई सुबूत है जैसे बोफोर्स तोप सौदे या फिर अगस्ता वेस्टलैंड हेलिकॉप्टर सौदे में सामने आए थे तो फिर वे सार्वजनिक किए जाने चाहिए या फिर सुप्रीम कोर्ट को सौंपे जाने चाहिए।

पहाड़ पर मुद्दा विकास

लोकसभा चुनाव में पिछले तीन दशकों में पश्चिम बंगाल में ऐसा पहली बार हो रहा है कि पहाड़ी क्षेत्र दार्जिलिंग में अलग राज्य की मांग मुद्दा नहीं है। वहां गोरखा जनमुक्ति मोर्चा (गोजमुमो) का विमल गुरुंग गुट हो या फिर विनय तामांग गुट या फिर जीएनएलएफ सहित अन्य पार्टियां अलग गोरखालैंड की पुरानी मांग से अधिक चाय बागान श्रमिकों को न्यूनतम मजदूरी, पीने योग्य पानी, बिजली, शिक्षा और रोजगार के अवसरों की मांग पर अधिक जोर दे रही हैं। हालांकि गोजमुमो के भूमिगत नेता विमल गुरुंग ने कुछ दिन पहले एक न्यूज एजेंसी को दिए साक्षात्कार में कहा था कि गोरखालैंड राज्य का मुद्दा नहीं छोड़ा है। परंतु इस बार वह सक्रिय रूप से चुनाव में सामने नहीं हैं। दार्जिलिंग लोकसभा निर्वाचन क्षेत्र में 18 अप्रैल को मतदान होगा, जिसमें गोरखा जनमुक्ति मोर्चा के दो गुट एक-दूसरे को टक्कर देते दिखेंगे। इसमें एक गुट का नेतृत्व विमल गुरुंग और दसरे का विनय तामांग कर रहे हैं। गरुंग यहां भाजपा के उम्मीदवर राजू सिंह बिष्ट का समर्थन कर रहे हैं, वहीं तामांग तुणमूल कांग्रेस के टिकट पर मैदान में उतरे अमर सिंह राई के पक्ष में हैं। भगवा दल को प्रमुख स्थानीय दल, 'गोरखा नेशनल लिबरेशन फ्रंट (जीएनएलएफ) का भी समर्थन हासिल है। इस सीट पर 16 उम्मीदवार भाग्य आजमा रहे हैं। इनमें बिष्ट और राई के अलावा माकपा के समन पाठक और कांग्रेस के शंकर मालाकार प्रमुख हैं। पाठक ने आशा व्यक्त करते हुए कहा कि लोग माकपा को वोट करेंगे, क्योंकि तृणमूल और भाजपा दोनों ने लोगों का भरोसा खो दिया है। गोजमुमो विमल गुट के कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष लोकसांग लामा ने कहा, चुनाव से यह साफ हो जाएगा कि यहां पहाड़ में गुरुंग और तामांग में से बड़ा नेता कौन है। पहाड़ के लोग गुरुंग के साथ हैं। तामांग ने निजी हितों के चलते तृणमूल से समझौता कर लिया है। सत्तारूढ़ तुणमूल ने 1998 में अपने गठन के बाद से केवल एक बार दार्जिलिंग सीट जीती है वहीं भाजपा दो बार यहां से जीत का स्वाद चख चुकी है। तृणमूल कांग्रेस के उम्मीदवार अमर सिंह राई ने कहा, हम पहाड़ के पूर्ण विकास पर जोर दे रहे हैं। यह अच्छी बात है कि विकास मुद्दा बना है, जिससे सबको भला होगा।

मोदी और मुस्लिम जगत

एमजे अकबर

इस पर यकीन कर पाना किंदन है कि भारतीय मुसलमान उस बात को नहीं समझते जो शेष दुनिया के मुस्लिम समझ पा रहे हैं

आम चुनावों में बड़े विरोधाभास दिख रहे हैं। चुनावी पंडितों का अनुमान है कि भारतीय मुसलमान प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के पक्ष में मतदान नहीं करेंगे। दूसरी ओर किसी अन्य प्रधानमंत्री को मुस्लिम जगत से उतना समर्थन नहीं मिला जितना पीएम मोदी को मिला। संयुक्त अरब अमीरात और सऊदी अरब के नेतृत्व में खाड़ी देशों ने पीएम मोदी के पहले कार्यकाल के दौरान कई मोर्चों पर भारत में भारी निवेश किया है। आज भारत में यूएई के तेल का संचित भंडार मौजूद है। भारत, सऊदी अरब और यूएई 44 अरब डॉलर की लागत से बनने वाली रिफाइनरी बनाने के लिए सहमत हुए हैं। उनके प्रत्यक्ष निवेश का आंकड़ा भी 10 अरब डॉलर से अधिक हो गया है। मोरक्को में हमने आधुनिक तकनीक वाले पुल बनाए हैं। साथ ही उत्तरी और सब-सहारा अफ्रीका में हमारी मौजूदगी बढ़ी है। इंडोनेशिया के साथ संबंधों में व्यापक सुधार हुआ है। पश्चिम एशिया के साथ संबंध भी पटरी पर लौटे हैं। सुरक्षा और आतंकवाद के मसले पर हम अधिकांश शक्तिशाली अरब देशों के साथ कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर काम कर रहे हैं। बीते चार साल में जो भगोड़े सुरक्षित ठिकाने की आस में खाड़ी देशों में गए थे, उन्हें वापस लाया जा रहा है। पाकिस्तान को छोड़कर समस्त मुस्लिम जगत इस समय सीमा-पार आतंकवाद को लेकर भारत के रुख का समर्थन कर रहा है।

एक समय दुबई को लेकर यह धारणा थी कि वह भारत से वित्तीय घपले करके भागने वालों का सुरक्षित ठिकाना है, लेकिन आज ऐसे भगोड़े

भारत को सौंपे जा रहे हैं। इससे उन ताकतवर नेताओं के साथ उनके गहरे जुड़ाव की परतें भी खुल रही हैं जिन्हें उन्होंने रिश्वत खिलाई थी। एक वक्त कांग्रेस ने बिचौलियों को देश से भागने में मदद की, लेकिन अब अगस्ता हेलीकॉप्टर मामले में दलाली खाने वालों को भारत में वापस लाने में सफलता मिली। पीएम मोदी की विदेश नीति और उसका शानदार प्रबंधन करने वाली विदेश मंत्री सुषमा स्वराज की सबसे बड़ी सफलता यह है कि उन्होंने सभी पक्षों को अद्भुत तरीके से साधा। इजरायल से हमारे रिश्ते और परवान चढ़े। बेंजामिन नेतन्याहू भारत का दौरा करने वाले पहले इजरायली पीएम बने। इसके साथ ही इजरायल के इर्दगिर्द अरब जगत के साथ हमारे रिश्तों की बुनियाद और मजबूत होती गई। 2018 में मोदी फलस्तीन का दौरा करने वाले भारत के पहले प्रधानमंत्री बने। उन्हें वहां का सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान मिला। इसके बाद सऊदी अरब और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात ने भी उन्हें अपने सबसे बड़े सम्मान से नवाजा। इसी दौरान ईरान के साथ हमारे संबंध और प्रगाढ़ हुए। चाबहार बंदरगाह के विचार ने भी मूर्त रूप ले लिया। यह कूटनीति की उत्कृष्टता का प्रमाण है।

यह कोई संयोग नहीं कि यूएई ने अपनी जमीन पर पहला हिंदू मंदिर बनाने की स्वीकृति दी। क्राउन प्रिंस मोहम्मद बिन जायद अल नाहयान के नेतृत्व में यूएई ने स्थानीय हिंदुओं की एक बडी आबादी की जरूरत पर उचित प्रतिक्रिया दी। इसमें पीएम मोदी के साथ उनकी मित्रता ने अप्रत्याशित भूमिका निभाई। जरा अतीत के



असंतुलन से तुलना कीजिए जब अक्सर लगता था मानो हम एक ही दिशा में चले जा रहे हैं। जवाहरलाल नेहरू मिस्न के राष्ट्रपति नासिर के इतने अनन्य मित्र थे कि इस दोस्ती की खातिर भारत ने इजरायल से कोई रिश्ता ही नहीं रखा, जबिक 1950 के दशक में अधिकांश अरब देशों की पसंद पाकिस्तान हुआ करता था।

उस समय सऊदी अरब का दिल्ली के साथ नाममात्र का ही रिश्ता था। नेहरू की विदेश नीति की कड़वी हकीकत उनके निधन के एक साल बाद तब सामने आई जब 1965 में पाकिस्तान के साथ युद्ध के दौरान इंडोनेशिया, ईरान, जॉर्डन और सऊदी जैसे मुस्लिम देशों ने पाकिस्तान का समर्थन किया। नेहरू ने कई साल सुकर्णों के नाम किए थे। इंदिरा गांधी ने भले ही यासिर अराफात को फलस्तीन का नायक बताकर पलक-पांवड़े बिछा दिए हों, लेकिन मुस्लिम जगत ने 1968 में उन्हें सार्वजनिक रूप से शर्मिंदा ही किया जब ओआइसी में शामिल होने के लिए गए भारतीय प्रतिनिधिमंडल को पाकिस्तानी तानाशाह याह्या खान की ख़ुशामद के लिए अलग-थलग कर दिया गया। 1970 के दशक में लीबिया ने भारत के खिलाफ परमाणु हथियारों का जखीरा बनाने

के लिए पाकिस्तान को वित्तीय मदद पहुंचाई। उस समय सीरिया और इराक जैसे अरब देश ही भारत के पक्ष में खड़े थे।

पड़ोसी बांग्लादेश के साथ हमारे संबंध बड़ी सावधानी के साथ आगे बढ़े, लेकिन पीएम मोदी के दौर में उन्हें एक नया क्षितिज मिला। पुरब की ओर बढ़ें तो इंडोनेशिया के साथ हमारे रिश्ते आज इतने सकारात्मक पड़ाव पर हैं कि उसके साथ व्यापार में बहुत तेजी आई है। इंडोनेशिया अंडमान से लगा हुआ है और हम इस विस्तृत द्वीप समृह में एक बंदरगाह विकसित करने पर काम कर रहे हैं। मोदी जो बदलाव लाना चाहते थे उसे उन्होंने अपनी विलक्षण निजी कूटनीति के जरिये भी अंजाम दिया। बीते 36 वर्षों में यूएई का दौरा करने वाले वह पहले प्रधानमंत्री बने। उनसे पहले जब सोनिया और राहल सत्ता की कमान और डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह प्रधानमंत्री पद संभाले हुए थे तब दस साल तक भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री के पास उस देश का दौरा करने का वक्त नहीं था जहां लाखों भारतीय आजीविका के लिए बसे हैं। मुस्लिमों के प्रति कांग्रेस की नीति केवल अतीत की औपचारिक निरंतरता वाली ही रही जिसमें कल्पनाशीलता और नई पहल का अभाव होने के

कारण वह शिथिल पड़ गई। इस बदलाव को हाल में आयोजित इस्लामिक देशों के संगठन में भारत को मिले आमंत्रण से बेहतर कुछ और नहीं दर्शा सकता। 1968 में इसी समूह ने भारत के लिए दरवाजे बंद कर दिए थे। अब उसने एक खिड़की खोली है। 1968 में पाक ने भारत का बहिष्का कराया था। 2019 में पाकिस्तान ने धमकी दी कि अगर सुषमा स्वराज को ओआइसी के मंच पर बोलने दिया गया तो वह इस आयोजन का बहिष्कार करेगा।ओआइसी के 57 में से 56 देशो ने पाकिस्तान को स्पष्ट कह दिया कि वह ऐसा करना चाहता है तो करे, लेकिन भारत को भेजा बुलावा निरस्त नहीं किया जाएगा। इसे किसी भी भाषा में बड़ी कूटनीतिक विजय ही कहा जाएगा पाक को छोड़कर दुनिया के तमाम मुस्लिम

देश पीएम मोदी पर भरोसा कर रहे हैं। आखिर वे मोदी के साथ काम क्यों करना चाह रहे हैं? पहला कारण यह है कि वे जानते हैं कि भारतीय पीएम पक्षपाती नहीं हैं। वे यह समझते हैं कि मोदी का एकमात्र मकसद है भारतीय हितों की रक्षा करना दूसरा कारण यह है कि उन्होंने महसूस किया है कि मोदी के नेतृत्व में भारत एशिया और दुनिया की बड़ी आर्थिक-सामरिक ताकत बनने की राह पर है। मैं नहीं मानता कि भारतीय मुस्लिम उस बात को नहीं समझते जो शेष दुनिया के मुस्लिम समझ पा रहे हैं। किसी भी लोकतंत्र में एक खास चीज होती है जिसे अदृश्य वोट कहा जाता है जो कई कारणों से खुद को प्रदर्शित नहीं करता यह बात भारतीय मुसलमानों पर भी लागू होती है। 23 मई को नतीजे सामने आने के बाद जब चुनावी विशेषज्ञ आंकड़ों की छानबीन करेंगे तो वे मोदी के पक्ष में पड़े अदृश्य वोट देख पाएंगे हर सर्वे में मोदी को फिर से चुने जाने के कारणो में विदेश नीति का उल्लेख प्रमुखता से हो रहा है। भारतीय मुसलमानों पर असर डालने वाला यह एक अतिरिक्त पहलू है।

(लेखक पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री एवं वरिष्ठ

response@jagran.com

अहितकारी है अल्प मतदान

चुनावी महापर्व के दौरान राजनीतिक विश्लेषण और अंटकलों के साथ-साथ सूचनाओं के प्रवाह के चलते लोग अक्सर या तो किसी एक खेमे से जुड़कर ध्रुवीकृत हो जाते हैं या फिर दुविधा के शिकार बन जाते हैं। ऐसे में सबसे पहले यह सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि सभी मतदाता अनिवार्य रूप से मतदान करें। मतदान से बचना या फिर नोटा विकल्प चुनना कर्तव्य से विमुख होना है। इससे निराशा का आभास होता है। अगर किसी समाज के कुछ लोग शंकालु हो जाएं तो भी वह प्रगति कर सकता है, लेकिन उसमें निराशा के लिए कोई जगह नहीं हो सकती। अब मतदान के सैद्धांतिक पहलुओं को किनारे रखकर उसके गणितीय आंकड़ों पर चर्चा करते हैं। मान लीजिए किसी निर्वाचन क्षेत्र में सौ लोग रहते हैं और उनमें से 70 प्रतिशत यानी 70 मतदाता हैं। वहां यदि 60 प्रतिशत मतदान हुआ तो इसका अर्थ है केवल 42 ने मत दिया। भारत में बहुदलीय तंत्र और फर्स्ट पास्ट द पोस्ट यानी सबसे अधिक मत हासिल करने पर जीत वाली प्रणाली होने की वजह से अक्सर यह दिखता है कि महज 33 प्रतिशत यानी लगभग 14 वोट पाने वाला प्रत्याशी भी जीत सकता है। सौ में 30 लोग बालिग नहीं हैं जबिक 28 मतदाताओं ने अपना मत प्रयोग नहीं किया। जिन 42 ने वोट दिया उनमें से भी 28 ने उस प्रत्याशी को खारिज किया और किसी अन्य का चयन किया, परंतु केवल 14 वोटों के दम पर ही उस प्रत्याशी का चुनाव हो जाता है। आखिर ऐसा विधि निर्माता कितने सच्चे अर्थों वाला जनप्रतिनिधि होगा? अधिकांश लोगों ने उसके बजाय किसी अन्य को वरीयता दी, लेकिन फर्स्ट पास्ट द पोस्ट और बहुदलीय प्रणाली की जुगलबंदी उनकी पसंद पर पानी फेर देती है।

हमारी विविधता और संघीय ढांचे को देखते हुए द्वि-दलीय व्यवस्था की ओर कदम बढ़ाना व्यावहारिक नहीं होगा और फर्स्ट पास्ट द पोस्ट सिस्टम भले ही आदर्श न हो, लेकिन लोकतंत्र चलाने के लिए यही बेहतरीन विकल्प है। फिर भी लक्ष्य यही होना चाहिए कि जनप्रतिनिधि वही बने जिसका चुनाव ज्यादा से ज्यादा लोगों के मतों से हो। इसका सबसे सरल तरीका यह है कि अधिक से अधिक मतदान किया जाए। वास्तव में यही एकमात्र पहलू है जो हमारे नियंत्रण में है। अगर हम शत प्रतिशत मतदान सनिश्चित करने के साथ ही उपरोक्त उदाहरण के अन्य अनुपातों को यथावत रखें तब भी इतना तो हो ही जाता है कि पहले जो प्रत्याशी 14 वोट पाकर जीत रहा था उसका आंकड़ा बढ़कर 23 तक जा सकता है। हालांकि यह भी आदर्श स्थिति नहीं, लेकिन इस अपूर्ण संसार में अभीष्ट की अधिक प्राप्ति अवश्य होगी। इसके लिए इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मतदान का प्रावधान करना होगा ताकि अधिक





से अधिक लोग मतदान कर सकें। हालांकि जब तक ऐसा नहीं होता तब तक सभी मतदाताओं को चाहिए कि वे अपने मत का प्रयोग हर हाल में करें। एक ऐसे संसदीय चनाव में जहां लगभग अखिल भारतीय स्तर पर मौजूदगी वाले दो राष्ट्रीय दल एवं विभिन्न भौगोलिक अंचलों में ढेरों क्षेत्रीय दल भी चुनावी प्रतिस्पर्धा में जुटे हों वहां किसी एक विकल्प को चुनना खासा जटिल हो जाता है और यह सवाल खड़ा हो जाता है कि वोट करें तो किसके लिए?

आम धारणा यह है कि स्पष्ट जनादेश वाली स्थिर सरकार ही निर्णायक नेतृत्व के लिए आवश्यक है। हालांकि समय के साथ इसका विरोधाभासी दृष्टिकोण भी विकसित हुआ है। कछ जानकारों का मानना है कि एक पार्टी की सरकार में तानाशाही प्रवृत्ति पनपने की आशंका होती है। पूर्ण बहुमत वाली सरकारों के संदर्भ में उनका यह भी तर्क है कि वे लोकतांत्रिक संस्थानों को समुचित सम्मान न देकर उनके राजनीतिकरण की कोशिश करती हैं। ये जानकार गठबंधन सरकारों का इस आधार पर महिमामंडन करते हैं कि वे भारत के संघीय ढांचे का कहीं बेहतर प्रतिनिधित्व करती हैं और उनमें दबाव एवं जुड़ाव के अंतर्निहित तंत्र से किसी को तानाशाह बनने से भी रोका जा सकता है। ये तर्क कम कुतर्क ज्यादा हैं। ऐसे लोगों में एक तबका अपने हितों से प्रेरित है, जो मौजदा सरकार और उसके शीर्ष नेतृत्व के खिलाफ अपनी नफरत के भाव के चलते एकजुट है। किसी पूर्ण बहुमत सरकार के स्थान पर अस्थिरता को प्राथमिकता

देना तार्किक कम और व्यक्तिगत धारणा और द्वेष आधारित अधिक प्रतीत होता है।

अक्सर कहा जाता है कि अतीत में भारत ने गठबंधन सरकारों के दौर में तेज वृद्धि हासिल की। इसकी भी पड़ताल करते हैं। 1989 से 1999 के बीच पांच आम चुनाव हुए। इस दौरान छह प्रधानमंत्री बने। चुनावों के चलते सरकारी खजाने पर पड़े बोझ के अलावा हम अस्थिर सरकारों के कारण चुकाई जाने वाली आर्थिक कीमत से भी परिचित हैं। कोई यह दलील भी दे सकता है कि 1991-96 के दौरान नरसिंह राव सरकार, 1998 से 2004 के बीच वाजपेयी सरकार के दो कार्यकाल और मनमोहन सिंह के नेतृत्व में दस साल रही संप्रग सरकार गठबंधन की होने के बावजूद कमोबेश स्थिर रहीं और उन्होंने कई मोर्ची पर शानदार प्रदर्शन किया। इन सरकारों की विशेषताओं और विफलताओं पर विस्तार से चर्चा करने के बजाय हम यह देखें कि इनमें एक अहम समानता यह थी कि ये गठजोड़ असंगत मिश्रण नहीं थे और इनका नेतृत्व ऐसी मजबृत पार्टियां कर रही थीं जो अपने बल पर बहमत से दर होने के बावजद संख्या बल में काफी दमदार थीं। इस लिहाज से गठबंधन का नेतृत्व करने के लिए उपयुक्त थीं। गठबंधन सरकारों की वास्तविक तस्वीर देखने के लिए हमें 1989 से 1991 के बीच वीपी सिंह सरकार और चंद्रशेखर सरकार, 1996-1998 के बीच देवेगौड़ा और गुजराल सरकार और उससे भी पहले 1977-80 के बीच मोरारजी देसाई और चरण सिंह सरकार के प्रदर्शन पर भी नजर डालनी होगी। हमें असफल प्रयोगों को विस्मृत नहीं करना चाहिए।

यह सही है कि पूर्ण बहुमत वाली एकदलीय सरकार को तानाशाह नहीं बनने दिया जा सकता। निगरानी और नियंत्रण का संतुलन कायम रहना चाहिए और इसके लिए संविधान ने स्वतंत्र न्यायपालिका, प्रमुख लोकतांत्रिक अंगों की संस्थागत स्वायत्तता, मुखर मीडिया, मूल अधिकार और स्वतंत्र एवं निष्पक्ष चुनाव की व्यवस्था की है। लोकतंत्र को और बेहतर बनाने के लिए स्थिरता से समझौता करने के बजाय उसे और प्रभावी बनाया जा सकता है। बहुमत न मिलने पर तत्काल चुनाव टालने और सरकारी खर्च बचाने के लिए गठबंधन सही हो सकता है, लेकिन चुनाव से पहले ही खंडित जनादेश की अभिलाषा और उसके पक्ष में तर्क देना मूर्खता ही कहा जाएगा। यह तो 23 मई को ही स्पष्ट होगा कि जनादेश बहुमत वाली सरकार के लिए होगा या फिर गठबंधन के लिए, लेकिन याद रखें कि पूर्णता सिर्फ कल्पनाओं में होती है। क्या केवल इस कारण हम उत्कृष्टता के लिए प्रयास करना बंद कर दें?

response@jagran.com



आस्था

वर्तमान समय में नैतिक मूल्यों का पतन तेजी से हो रहा है। मनुष्य-मनुष्य के बीच अविश्वास की खाई चौड़ी होती जा रही है। इस सामाजिक समस्या के कुछ महत्वपूर्ण कारण हैं। पहला कारण तो यही कि लोगों में चरित्रहीनता बढ़ी है। दूसरा, नैतिकता घटी है। तीसरा, ईश्वर के प्रति विश्वास घटा है। इन बिंदुओं पर विचार करने पर यह निहितार्थ निकलता है कि मानो चरित्र शब्द कुछ समय बाद शब्दकोश का ही विषय होगा। समाज में कोई विरला चरित्रवान दिखाई देगा, जिसे आदर्श माना जा सके संस्कारों के अभाव में नैतिकता का स्तर गिरना स्वाभाविक है। जबकि नीति से गिरा हुआ समाज कभी उन्नति नहीं कर सकता। आज के दिखावें के युग में आयोजन तो बहुत हो रहे हैं, किंतु उनके मानवीय सरोकार नहीं हैं। इसीलिए इन आयोजनों से कोई सामृहिक हित नहीं होता।

अध्यात्म के बिना भौतिक उत्थान का कोई महत्व नही है। हृदय निर्मल नहीं है तो सुगंध कहां से आएगी ? इसीलिए हृदय की पवित्रता को विशेष महत्व दिया गया है। हृदय के पवित्र भाव ही बाह्य रूप में भिक्त, सरलता और आचरण के रूप में प्रकट होते हैं, किंतु इस आचरण के अभाव मे सर्वत्र अराजकता दिखाई देती है। जीवन से सुख, शांति और सरलता मानो विदा हो चुकी हैं। ऐसे में परमात्मा का आधार ही सुख एवं आनंद प्राप्ति का कारण है। इस संदर्भ में गुरुनानक की वाणी अत्यंत सार्थक है 'नानक दुखिया सब संसार, सुखी वही जो एक अधार।' परमात्मा की अनुभूति हमारे कल्याण का कारण है। इसलिए जीवन में ईश्वर के प्रति आस्था रखते हुए मानवीय नैतिक मूल्यों पर अमल करना चाहिए।

तमाम उदाहरण हैं, जिनसे आस्था, नीति, चरित्र, भक्ति और अध्यात्म की महिमा प्रमाणित हो जाती है। पांडवों की जीत नीतिमार्ग की जीत है। तमाम संकटों के बावजूद वे विजय प्राप्त करने में सफल रहे। शिवाजी और महाराणा प्रताप के चरित्र हमारी धरोहर हैं। वे न केवल वीरता के प्रतीक थे, बल्कि न्याय और नीति के अनुयायी थे। शत्र तक उनके चरित्र के कायल थे। ध्रुव और प्रह्लाद ईश्वर भिक्त के उदाहरण हैं। आचार्य शंकर, रामानुज आदि अध्यात्म के प्रतीक हैं। ईश्वर के प्रति आस्था के बल पर ही उन्होंने मनुष्य मात्र की मुक्ति का मार्ग प्रशस्त किया।

विजय नारायण गप्त

सिंगल टाइम जोन होने का नुकसान

पूर्व से पश्चिम तक भारत 3,000 किलोमीटर यानी 1,864 मील तक चौड़ा है। देशांतर रेखा पर देखें तो ये कम से कम 30 डिग्री तक के इलाके में फैला है। सूर्य को आधार बना कर होने वाली समय की गणना के अनुसार इसका मतलब है कि एक छोर से दूसरे छोर तक समय का फर्क कम से कम दो घंटे का है। इस छोटे से फर्क का असर लाखों लोंगों पर पड़ रहा है।

भारत के सूदूर पश्चिमी छोर के मुकाबले देश के पूर्व में सूर्योदय तकरीबन दो घंटे पहले होता है। पूरे देश के लिए एक मानक समय की आलोचना करने वालों का कहना है कि देश के पूर्वोत्तर में सूर्य की रोशनी का पूरा इस्तेमाल करने के लिए ये जरूरी है कि भारत में दो मानक समय को स्वीकार किया जाए। पूर्व में सूर्य की रोशनी जल्दी पड़ती है और इस कारण वहां इसका इस्तेमाल पहले शुरू हो सकता है। हमारे शरीर के भीतर एक घड़ी होती है जो एक नियत ताल पर चलती है, इसे सिर्काडियन रिदम कहते हैं। सूर्य का उदय होना और ढलना इस ताल को सीधे तौर पर प्रभावित करता है। जैसे-जैसे सांझ होने लगती है हमारे शरीर में नींद को प्रभावित करने वाला हॉर्मोन मेलाटोनिन बनता है, इस कारण व्यक्ति को नींद आने लगती है। कॉर्नेल विश्वविद्यालय में

अगर भारत दो मानक समय की नीति अपना ले तो देश को सालाना 452 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की मानव पूंजी का लाभ मिलेगा

अर्थशास्त्री मौलिक जगनानी कहते हैं कि पूरे देश में एक ही मानक समय होने का असर बच्चों की नींद की गुणवत्ता पर पड़ता है। इसका सीधा असर उनकी शिक्षा पर पड़ता है। चूंकि पूरे भारत में एक ही मानक समय को अपनाया गया है तो देश भर के स्कुल लगभग एक ही समय पर खुलते हैं, लेकिन जिन जगहों पर सूर्य देर से अस्त होता है वहां बच्चे देर से सोने जाते हैं और इस कारण उन्हें कम नींद मिलती है।

दो मानक समय जोन को अपनाने को लेकर भारत में लंबी बहस चली है। 1980 के दशक के आखिर में एक नामी ऊर्जा संस्थान के शोधकर्ताओं के एक दल ने बिजली बचाने के लिए एक मानक समय की व्यवस्था सुझाई थी। 2002 में एक सरकारी पैनल ने इसमें मुश्किलों

का हवाला देते हुए इस तरह के एक प्रस्ताव को ठंडे बस्ते में डाल दिया था। कुछ विशेषज्ञों को लगता है कि इसमें ट्रेनों के एक्सीडेंट का खतरा अधिक है, क्योंकि अलग मानक समय जोन में प्रवेश करते ही उनका समय बदलना जरूरी होगा। हालांकि बीते साल आधिकारिक भारतीय टाइमकीपर्स ने खुद ही दो मानक समय जोन का सुझाव दिया था-एक मानक समय देश के आठ उत्तर पूर्वी राज्यों के लिए और दूसरा शेष भारत के लिए।इन दोनों मानक समय जोन में एक घंटे का फर्क सुझाया गया था।

नेशनल फिजिकल लेबोरेटरी के शोधकर्ताओं के अनुसार एक ही मानक समय जोन का होना जीवन को बुरी तरह से प्रभावित कर रहा है, क्योंकि आधिकारिक तौर पर काम करने के समय से काफी जल्दी सूर्योदय और सूर्यास्त होता है। जल्दी सूर्योदय होने के कारण दफ्तरों में काम के घंटों का नुकसान होता है, क्योंकि स्कूल और कॉलेज सूरज की रोशनी का सही लाभ लेने के लिए देरी से खुलते हैं। सर्दी के दिनों में हालात और बुरे हो जाते हैं, क्योंकि सूरज जल्दी ढलता है और काम बंद न हो इसलिए बिजली की खपत भी बढ़ जाती है।

(साभार: बीबीसी में सौतिक बिस्वास)

अफवाहों से बचें

सोशल मीडिया की अफवाहें शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में सुजनपाल सिंह ने सोशल मीडिया का दुरुपयोग रोकने के लिए इससे संबंधित संस्थाओं को कड़ा रुख अपनाने को जरूरी बताया है। इसे लेकर केंद्र सरकार ने वॉट्सएप को चेतावनी भी दी कि वह अफवाह फैलाने वाली खबरों, वीडियो और तस्वीरों पर लगाम लगाने के लिए गंभीरता दिखाए। सरकार की चेतावनी के बाद वॉट्सएप ने इसके लिए जरूरी कदम भी उठाए हैं। लेकिन सरकार को चाहिए कि वह सोशल मीडिया पर जो लोग अफवाहें फैलाते हैं, उनके खिलाफ भी कठोर सजा का प्रावधान करे ताकि कोई अफवाह किसी की जान की दुश्मन न बन पाए या देश के किसी कोने की शांति भंग न कर सके। यह बात तो सच है कि हम सब आजाद देश के नागरिक हैं। लेकिन आजादी का यह मतलब नहीं है कि हमारे दिल में जो भी आया उसे सोशल मीडिया पर लिख दिया। हम सब को चाहिए कि सोशल साइटों पर कोई ऐसा भड़काऊ पोस्ट न करें जिससे कि सरकार को मजबूर होकर इन पर बैन लगाना पड़ जाए। जैसा कि कुछ देशों में हो भी चुका है। सोशल साइटों पर ऐसे कमेंट लिखने चाहिए जिससे देश में प्यार, भाईचार और एकता की भावना बढ़े न कि दूसरों की भावनाओं को ठेस पहुंचे और देश में किसी प्रकार की कोई अशांति फैले।

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

भारत एक लोकतांत्रिक देश होने के साथ-साथ विश्व में सबसे बड़ा लोकतंत्र है। जहां आम जनमानस गांव से लेकर देश की सरकार का चयन करते हैं। हमारे देश में 18 साल से ऊपर प्रत्येक जन को मतदान का अधिकार है, परंतु सर्वाधिक

लोकतंत्र के निर्माण में सहायक बनें

मेलबाक्स

मतदान ना होना देश का दुर्भाग्य है। जबकि सबसे अधिक युवा लगभग 65 फीसद हमारे देश में हैं। बावजूद इसके लोकतंत्र की भागीदारी में कमी रह जाना चिंता की बात है। इसकी जिम्मेदारी देश के प्रत्येक नागरिक को लेनी होगी। मतदाताओं को वोट का महत्व समझना होगा। अगर हम मतदान नहीं करते तो हमें चुनी हुई सरकार पर अंगुली उठाने का भी कोई अधिकार नहीं है। अक्सर लोगों की सोच होती है कि एक वोट से क्या होगा। जिस प्रकार बूंद-बूंद से घड़ा भरता है, ठीक उसी प्रकार एक-एक वोट से भारत के लोकतंत्र का निर्माण होता है। बीती घटनाओं पर नजर डालें तो 1999 में अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी द्वारा अविश्वास प्रस्ताव में एक वोट न होने से उनको प्रधानमंत्री पद से इस्तीफा देना पड़ा था।

sdarshan676@gmail.com

मुद्दों पर हो सियासत

जवानों के नाम पर हो रही सियासत पर चुनाव आयोग द्वारा सख्त टिप्पणी के बावजूद चुनाव प्रचार में जवानों के नाम का सहारा लिया जा रहा है। कर्नाटक और महाराष्ट्र की चुनावी रैलियों में प्रधानमंत्री ने वोटरों से अपील की कि वह अपना पहला वोट उन जवानों को समर्पित करें, जिन्होंने देश के लिए जान दी है। जवानों के शहादत पर सियासत प्रधानमंत्री पद की गरिमा और जवानों के मनोबल को कमजोर करता है। हालांकि चुनाव आयोग ने इस बात का संज्ञान लिया है। अब इस पर कितना अमल होता है यह देखने वाली बात होगी। साथ ही यह भी देखना होगा कि चुनाव के दौरान जवानों के नाम पर वोट मांगने वाले चुनाव के बाद शहीदों को कितना याद करते हैं। चुनाव के दौरान देश की मजबूत अर्थव्यवस्था को मुद्दा

बनाया जाना चाहिए। रोजगार पर सियासत होनी चाहिए कि कौन सियासी दल रोजगार के कितने अवसर प्रदान करेगा। मुहम्मद आसिफ, जामिया नगर दिल्ली

लोकलुभावन वादों की हकीकत

10 अप्रैल के अंक में त्रिलोचन शास्त्री का लेख 'मुफ्तखोरी की खतरनाक प्रवृति' पढ़ा। राजनीतिक पार्टियां चुनाव जीतने के लिए अपने घोषणा पत्रों में जिस तरह से लोगों को खैरात बांटने का काम कर रही हैं, वह न तो देशहित में है और न ही जनता के हित में। सभी राजनितिक दल समाज की भलाई के नाम पर मुफ्तखोरी का सहारा लेकर एक-दूसरे से प्रतिस्पर्धा कर रहे हैं। दिखाया तो यह जाता है कि समाज की भलाई के लिए क्या किया जा रहा है, जबकि वास्तविक मंशा सरकारी पैसे से वोट खरीदने की होती है। चुनाव के दौरान पैसे, शराब और विभिन्न प्रकार के उपहार बांटे जाते हैं। क्या ये उचित है। इस पर देश की न्यायपालिका और चुनाव आयोग को विचार जरूर करना चाहिए। मुफ्तखोरी से किसी का भला नहीं होता बेहतर होगा कि ऐसे लोकलुभावन वादों से बचा जाए।

चंद्र प्रकाश शर्मा, रानी बाग, दिल्ली

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

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

हमला और चुनौती

नाव से ठीक पहले छत्तीसगढ़ के दंतेवाड़ा में माओवादियों ने भाजपा विधायक और चार पुलिस वालों को मार कर यह संदेश दिया है कि भारत की लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया, चुनावी व्यवस्था में उनका कोई भरोसा नहीं है और वे हिंसा का रास्ता छोड़ने को तैयार नहीं हैं। पिछले एक हफ्ते के दौरान माओवादियों ने लगातार ऐसे हमले करके अपनी ताकत दिखाने और मौजूदगी दर्ज कराने की कोशिश की है। चार अप्रैल को माहला के जंगल में सीमा सुरक्षा बल के गश्ती दल पर हमला किया गया, जिसमें चार जवान शहीद हो गए थे। पांच अप्रैल को धमतरी जिले में सीआरपीएफ पर हमला हुआ और एक जवान शहीद हो गया। छह अप्रैल को माओवादियों ने प्रधानमंत्री की रैली से ठीक पहले एक विस्फोट किया। सात अप्रैल को राजनांदगांव में मुख्यमंत्री की सभा से पहले भी विस्फोट हुआ। इसके बाद दंतेवाड़ा में हमला हो गया। हालांकि यह कोई नई बात नहीं है। चुनाव के वक्त माओवादी ऐसे हमले करते रहे हैं। छह साल पहले झीरम घाटी में कांग्रेस कार्यकर्ताओं के एक काफिले पर ऐसा ही भीषण हमला किया गया था जिसमें प्रदेश कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष नंद कुमार पटेल, उनके बेटे और कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेता विद्याचरण शुक्ल सहित तीस से ज्यादा लोग मारे गए थे।

माओवादियों ने मंगलवार को दंतेवाडा में भाजपा विधायक भीमा मंडावी के काफिले पर जो हमला किया उसका मकसद भी बस्तर इलाके में चुनाव प्रक्रिया को बाधित करना रहा है। वे किसी भी कीमत पर चुनाव नहीं होने देना चाहते। मंडावी इस इलाके में चुनाव प्रचार में जुटे थे। प्रचार खत्म होने के ठीक पहले वे जनसंपर्क के लिए श्यामगिरि पहुंचे जहां सालाना मेला चल रहा था। वहां लोगों से मिले। यहीं नक्सलियों ने उन्हें पहचान लिया और उनके लौटने वाले रास्ते में बारूदी सुरंग लगा दी। विस्फोट इतना जर्बदस्त था कि मंडावी की बुलटप्रूफ स्कॉर्पियो दो सौ मीटर दूर गिरी और तीन टुकड़े हो गए। हालांकि मंडावी के साथ छत्तीसगढ़ पुलिस का पचास जवानों का पूरा दस्ता चल रहा था, लेकिन हमले की भनक किसी को नहीं थी। यह हमला बता रहा है कि माओवादी पहले से ही ऐसे हमले की तैयारी में थे, बस मौके का इंतजार था।

केंद्र और राज्य सरकार माओवादियों के सफाए के भले कितने दावे करती रहें, लेकिन माओवादी आज भी पूरी ताकत के साथ मैदान में हैं। अपने इलाकों में उनका पूरा कब्जा है, और सबसे बड़ी बात यह कि उनका मजबूत खुफिया नेटवर्क है। पल-पल की खबर उन्हें रहती है। वरना ऐसे बड़े हमलों को अंजाम देना संभव नहीं होता। हालांकि कहा जा रहा है कि इस हमले के बारे में सत्ताईस खुफिया सूचनाएं थीं और स्थानीय थाना प्रभारी ने मंडावी को आगाह भी किया था। लेकिन उन्होंने इसे नजरअंदाज किया और सर्वाधिक खतरे वाले इलाके में चले गए। दरअसल, छत्तीसगढ के बड़े इलाके में फैले माओवादी अपनी समांतर सत्ता चला रहे हैं। वरना कैसे जीपीएस वायरलैस जैसे उपकरण, बारूदी सुरंग के लिए विस्फोटक और अत्याधुनिक हथियार उन तक पहुंच रहे हैं। पिछले दो दशकों में माओवादी हिंसा में करीब बारह हजार लोग मारे जा चुके हैं जिनमें करीब तीन हजार पुलिस और सुरक्षा बलों के जवान हैं। ऐसे में क्या माना जा सकता है कि बड़ी संख्या में माओवादियों ने हथियार डाल दिए हैं या माओवादी हिंसा में पहले के मुकाबले काफी कमी आई है। केंद्र और राज्य सरकार के ये सारे दावे खोखले साबित हुए हैं। जिस तरह माओवादियों ने इलाकों पर अपनी मजबूत पकड़ बना रखी है और बड़े हमलों को अंजाम दे रहे हैं उससे तो यही लग रहा है कि माओवादियों से निपटने में सरकार की नीतियां कामयाब नहीं रहीं।

कर का दायरा

🖚 निया भर में इंटरनेट के विस्तार के साथ बहुत सारे मामलों के लिए 🔰 इस पर निर्भरता जिस तेजी से बढ़ रही है, उसमें इसके नियमन का सवाल उठना ही था। खासतौर पर इसके कारोबारी पहलू पर पिछले कुछ समय से यह स्वाभाविक सवाल उठ रहे थे कि अगर कोई कंपनी इंटरनेट के जरिए अपनी गतिविधियों से भारी मुनाफा कमाती है तो वह नियम-कायदों और आर्थिक नियमन से अलग क्यों रहे! अब इस मुद्दे पर बहस के जोर पकड़ने के बाद फ्रांस ने इस दिशा में एक ठोस कदम उठाया है। सोमवार को फ्रांस के सांसदों ने गूगल, अमेजन, फेसबुक और एप्पल जैसी वैश्विक स्तर पर दिग्जज मानी जाने वाली कंपनियों पर एक नए कर डिजिटल टैक्स को मंजूरी दी। इसे 'गाफा' का नाम दिया गया है। यों इस मसले पर फ्रांस की ओर से यह कहा गया है कि उसे इस तरह के विषयों पर अगुआई करने में गर्व महसुस हो रहा है और यह मसौदा इक्कीसवीं सदी के लिए अधिक प्रभावी और निष्पक्ष कर प्रणाली की दिशा में एक कदम है, लेकिन इस घोषणा के साथ ही अमेरिका की ओर स्पष्ट रूप से नाराजगी सामने आ गई है। अमेरिका का कहना था कि यह योजना अमेरिकी कंपनी और इन डिजिटल मंचों का इस्तेमाल करने वाले फ्रांस के नागरिकों. दोनों को प्रभावित करेगा।

दरअसल, यह माना जा रहा है कि फ्रांस का यह कदम इस तथ्य के मद्देनजर सामने आया है कि डिजिटल क्षेत्र की बड़ी कंपनियां उपभोक्ताओं के आंकड़ों से भारी मुनाफा कमाती हैं। यहां तक कि फ्रांस में होने वाले लाभ पर विदेशों में कर लगाया जाता है। फ्रांस का कहना है कि यह 'अस्वीकार्य' है। फिलहाल यह टैक्स सीधी बिक्री पर नहीं लगाने के बजाय इंटरनेट प्लेटफार्म की ओर से उनके जरिए सामान बेचने पर लगाया जाएगा। इसके अलावा, अगर ये कंपनियां खास लिक्षत समूहों के लिए दिखाए जाने वाले विज्ञापनों की सुविधा बेच कर राजस्व की कमाई करती हैं तो उसे भी कर के दायरे में माना जाएगा। यानी वस्तुओं का उत्पादन करने वाली कंपनी और ग्राहकों के बीच माध्यम का काम करने वाली अमेजन जैसी ऑनलाइन मार्केंटिंग करने वाली कंपनियों पर अब टैक्स लगेगा। इस कानून के लागू होने के बाद फ्रांस सरकार को इस नए नियम से सालाना तकरीबन पचास करोड़ यूरो का राजस्व मिलेगा।

हालांकि फ्रांस के इस कदम का फिलहाल आर्थिक रूप से सबसे नकारात्मक असर अमेरिका पर पड़ने वाला है और यही वजह है कि अमेरिका ने फ्रांस से अभी इसे टालने का आग्रह किया था। इससे पहले न्यूजीलैंड सरकार ने गूगल और फेसबुक जैसी ऑनलाइन बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों पर अलग से टैक्स लगाने की घोषणा की थी। वहां सरकार का कहना था कि हमारी कर-प्रणाली में व्यक्ति करदाता और बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों को एक जैसा ही देखा जाता है, जो सही नहीं है। जबकि ये कंपनियां ज्यादा कमाई करती हैं और कम टैक्स देती हैं। गौरतलब है कि दुनिया की कुछ सबसे अमीर कंपनियों को बेहद कम कर का भुगतान करने की सुविधा मिली हुई है। यह अपने आप में एक बड़ा सवाल है कि कोई कंपनी अपने कारोबार से अकूत कमाई करे, लेकिन उसे उस पर टैक्स का भुगतान न करना पड़े। माना जाता है कि दुनिया भर में खासतौर पर विकसित देशों में कर-प्रणाली के मामले में सख्त नियम-कायदे हैं। लेकिन आज भी अगर यह स्थिति बनी हुई है तो निश्चित रूप इन कंपनियों को कर संबंधी नए नियमों के तहत लाने की जरूरत है। फ्रांस के इस कदम को इसी आलोक में देखा जा रहा है।

कल्पमधा

अपनी भूख सहने वाले तपस्वी की शक्ति उतनी नहीं होती जितनी कि दूसरों की भूख मिटाने वाले की शक्ति। -तिरुवल्लुवर

मानसून के अनुमान का संकट

प्रमोद भार्गव

पिछले दस साल के आंकड़ों में एक भी साल भविष्यवाणी सटीक नहीं बैठी। इसलिए मौसम विभाग के अनुमान भी भरोसे के लायक नहीं होते। यदि किसान इन भविष्यवाणियों के आधार पर फसल बोए, तो उसे नाकों चने चबाने पड़ जाएंगे। चूंकि कृषि वैज्ञानिक भी मौसम संबंधी भविष्यवाणी के आधार पर किसानों को फसल उगाने की सलाह देते हैं, लिहाजा उनकी सलाह भी किसान की उम्मीद पर पानी फेरने वाली ही साबित होती है।

सम की भविष्यवाणी करने वाली एजेंसी स्काईमेट का बारिश का पूर्वानुमान सही निकलता है तो इस बार देश में अपेक्षाकृत कम बारिश होगी। सामान्य से कम बारिश होने का कारण जून से सितंबर के दौरान प्रशांत महासागर में अलनीनो का बनना है। नतीजतन, लंबी अवधि के औसत (एलपीए) के मुकाबले में मानसून नब्बे से पनचानवे फीसद रहने का अनुमान है। इन महीनों में औसत तिरानबे फीसद बारिश होगी, जबिक मई से जुलाई के बीच अलनीनो का छियासठ फीसद प्रभाव रहेगा, जो कम बारिश का कारण बनेगा। एलपीए वर्ष 1951 और 2000 के बीच की बारिश का औसत है, जो नवासी सेंटीमीटर है। साफ है, यह किसान और अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए अच्छी खबर नहीं है। इससे इस साल सूखे की आशंका बन सकती है। जून से सितंबर तक दक्षिण-पश्चिम क्षेत्र में सिक्रय रहने वाले मानसून पर आई यह पहली भविष्यवाणी है। इस भविष्यवाणी को करते हुए स्काईमेट ने दावा किया है कि यह उसकी

दुसरी भविष्यवाणी है, जबिक हकीकत यह है कि स्काईमेट छह साल पहले से मानसून की भविष्यवाणियां कर रहा है। लेकिन सही साबित नहीं होने के कारण वह जनता के बीच भरोसा पैदा नहीं कर पाया है।

हर साल अप्रैल-मई में मानसून आ जाने की अटकलों का दौर शुरू हो जाता है। यदि औसत मानसून आए तो देश में हरियाली और समृद्धि की संभावना बढ़ती है और औसत से कम आए तो अकाल की परछाइयां देखने में आती हैं। मौसम मापक यंत्रों की गणना के अनुसार यदि नब्बे फीसद से कम बारिश होती है तो उसे कमजोर मानसून कहा जाता है। छियानबे से एक सौ चार फीसद बारिश को सामान्य मानसून कहा जाता है। यदि बारिश एक सौ चार से एक सौ दस फीसद होती है तो इसे सामान्य से अच्छा मानसून कहा जाता है। इससे ज्यादा बारिश अधिकतम मानसून कहलाती है। भारतीय मौसम विभाग की भविष्यवाणियां अक्सर गलत साबित होती हैं. इसलिए

स्काईमेट के अनुमान सटीक बैठेंगे यह कहना भी मुश्किल है। पिछले साल मौसम विभाग और स्काईमेट ने अच्छी बारिश की भविष्यवाणियां की थीं, लेकिन इसी के समांतर बादलों के छीजने की भविष्यवाणी करके यह आशंका भी जता दी थी कि वर्षा कम भी हो सकती है। नतीजतन, बारिश तो अच्छी हुई, लेकिन कुछ राज्यों में सिमट जाने के कारण बाढ़ और भूस्खलन का कारण भी बनी। केरल, हिमाचल प्रदेश और उत्तराखंड अतिवृष्टि से बेहाल हुए। वहीं महाराष्ट्र, तमिलनाडु और कर्नाटक में कम बारिश हुई। पिछले दस साल के आंकड़ों में एक भी

साल भविष्यवाणी सटीक नहीं बैठी। इसलिए मौसम विभाग के अनमान भी भरोसे के लायक नहीं होते। यदि किसान इन भविष्यवाणियों के आधार पर फसल बोए, तो उसे नाकों चने चबाने पड़ जाएंगे। चुंकि कृषि वैज्ञानिक भी मौसम संबंधी भविष्यवाणी के आधार पर किसानों को फसल उगाने की सलाह देते हैं, लिहाजा उनकी सलाह भी किसान की उम्मीद पर पानी फेरने वाली ही साबित होती हैं। देश में कुल खाद्य उत्पादन का लगभग चालीस फीसद इसी बरसात पर निर्भर है। इसी मानसून का कुल बारिश में अस्सी फीसद योगदान रहता है। हैरानी इस बात पर भी है कि मौसम संबंधी अनेक उपग्रह अंतरिक्ष में पिछले पांच साल के भीतर स्थापित किए गए हैं, इसके बावजूद शत-प्रतिशत भरोसे की भविष्यवाणी नहीं हो पा रही है।

आखिर हमारे मौसम वैज्ञानिकों के पूर्वानुमान आसन्न संकटों की क्यों सटीक जानकारी देने में खरे

नहीं उतरते? क्या हमारे पास तकनीकी ज्ञान अथवा साधन कम हैं, अथवा हम उनके संकेत समझने में अक्षम हैं? मौसम वैज्ञानिकों की बात मानें तो जब उत्तर-पश्चिमी भारत में मई-जून तपते हैं और भीषण गर्मी पड़ती है तब कम दबाव का क्षेत्र बनता है। इस कम दबाव वाले क्षेत्र की ओर दक्षिणी गोलार्ध से भूमध्य रेखा के निकट से हवाएं दौड़ती हैं। इस तरह दक्षिणी गोलार्ध से आ रही दक्षिणी-पूर्वी हवाएं भूमध्य रेखा को पार करते ही पलट कर कम दबाव वाले क्षेत्र की ओर गतिमान हो जाती हैं। ये हवाएं भारत में प्रवेश करने के बाद हिमालय से टकरा कर दो हिस्सों में विभाजित होती हैं। इनमें से एक हिस्सा अरब सागर की ओर से केरल के तट में प्रवेश करता है और दूसरा बंगाल की खाडी की ओर से प्रवेश कर ओड़िशा, पश्चिम-बंगाल, बिहार, झारखंड, पूर्वी उत्तर-प्रदेश, उत्तराखंड, हिमाचल प्रदेश, हरियाणा और पंजाब तक बरसता है। अरब सागर से दक्षिण भारत में प्रवेश करने वाली हवाएं



आंध्र प्रदेश, कर्नाटक, महाराष्ट्र, मध्यप्रदेश और राजस्थान में बरसती हैं। इन मानसूनी हवाओं पर भूमध्य और कैस्पियन सागर के ऊपर बहने वाली हवाओं के मिजाज का प्रभाव भी पड़ता है। प्रशांत महासागर के ऊपर प्रवाहमान हवाएं भी हमारे मानसून पर असर डालती हैं। वायुमंडल के इन क्षेत्रों में जब विपरीत परिस्थिति निर्मित होती हैं तो मानसून के रुख में परिवर्तन होता है और वह कम या ज्यादा बरसात के रूप में धरती पर गिरता है।

महासागरों की सतह पर प्रवाहित वायुमंडल की हरेक हलचल पर मौसम विज्ञानियों को इनके भिन्न-भिन्न ऊंचाइयों पर निर्मित तापमान और हवा के दबाव, गति और दिशा पर निगाह रखनी होती है। इसके लिए कंप्यटरों. गब्बारों. वाययानों. समद्री जहाजों और रडारों

से लेकर उपग्रहों तक की सहायता ली जाती है। इनसे जो आंकड़े इकट्ठे होते हैं उनका विश्लेषण कर मौसम का पूर्वानुमान लगाया जाता है। भारत में मौसम विभाग की बुनियाद 1875 में रखी गई थी। आजादी के बाद से मौसम विभाग में आधुनिक संसाधनों का निरंतर विस्तार होता रहा है। विभाग के पास साढ़े पांच सौ भू-वेधशालाएं, तिरसठ गुब्बारा केंद्र, बत्तीस रेडियो पवन वेधशालाएं, ग्यारह तूफान संवेदी व आठ तूफान सचेतक रडार और आठ उपग्रह चित्र प्रेषण एवं ग्राही केंद्र हैं। इसके अलावा वर्षा दर्ज करने वाले पांच हजार पानी के भाप बन कर हवा होने पर निगाह रखने वाले केंद्र, दो सौ चौदह पेड़-पौधों की पत्तियों से होने वाले वाष्पीकरण को मापने वाले यंत्र, अड़तीस विकिरणमापी एवं अड़तालीस भूकंपमापी वेधशालाए हैं। लक्षद्वीप, केरल व बंगलुरु में चौदह मौसम केंद्रों के डेटा पर सतत निगरानी रखते हुए मौसम की भविष्यवाणियां की जाती हैं। अंतरिक्ष में छोड़े गए

उपग्रहों से भी सीधे मौसम की जानकारियां सुपर कंप्यूटरों में दर्ज होती रहती हैं।

दुनिया के किसी अन्य देश में मौसम इतना विविध, दिलचस्प, हलचल भरा और प्रभावकारी नहीं है जितना कि भारत में है। इसका मुख्य कारण है भारतीय प्रायद्वीप की विलक्षण भौगोलिक स्थिति। हमारे यहां एक ओर अरब सागर है और दूसरी ओर बंगाल की खाड़ी। इन सबके ऊपर हिमालय के शिखर हैं। इस कारण देश की जलवायु विविधतापूर्ण होने के साथ प्राणियों के लिए बेहद हितकारी है। इसीलिए पुरी दुनिया के मौसम वैज्ञानिक भारतीय मौसम को परखने में अपनी बुद्धि लगाते रहते हैं। इतने अनुटे मौसम का प्रभाव देश की धरती पर क्या पड़ेगा, इसकी भविष्यवाणी करने में हमारे

वैज्ञानिक अक्षम रहते हैं। इसका कारण यह माना जाता है कि आयातित सुपर कंप्यूटरों की भाषा 'अलगोरिथम' वैज्ञानिक ठीक से नहीं पढ़ पाते हैं। कंप्यटर भले ही आयातित हों, लेकिन इनमें मानसून के डाटा के लिए जो भाषा हो, वह देशी होनी जरूरी है। हमें सफल भविष्यवाणी के लिए कंप्यूटर की देशी भाषा विकसित करनी होगी, क्योंकि अरब सागर, बंगाल की खाड़ी और हिमालय भारत में हैं, न कि अमेरिका अथवा ब्रिटेन में। जब हम वर्षा के आधार स्रोत की भाषा पढ़ने व संकेत परखने में सक्षम हो जाएंगे तो मौसम की भविष्यवाणी भी सटीक बैठेगी। स्काईमेट के पास भी न तो भारतीय भौगोलिक स्थिति के अनसार सॉफ्टवेयर हैं और न ही अपनी भाषा है। ऐसे में उसकी भी आयातित कंप्यूटरों पर निर्भर रहने की मजबूरी है।

मर्यादा की जुबान

विप्रम

मुंभव है कि हथियार के वार से कोई मरने से बच जाए, लेकिन कई बार शब्द बड़े मारक होते हैं और इनकी मार से बचना मुश्किल हो जाता है। इनकी मार इतनी घातक होती है कि शर्मदार व्यक्ति पानी मांगने की हालत में भी नहीं होता। 'साला' एक संबोधन है। किसी-किसी का तकिया कलाम भी। लेकिन पता नहीं क्यों हम भूल जाते हैं, यह एक रिश्ते का द्योतक भी है। फिर भी, न जाने क्यों हमें इससे बहुत चिढ़ होती है। ऐसा कहने वाले अपने इस कहन में भूल जाते हैं छोटे-बड़े का लिहाज। बस एक सनक रहती है कि कह दो! कुछ लोग तो 'साला' या 'साली' के साथ-साथ बहन-बेटी-मां के शुरुआती शब्दों से अंत बड़े ही घृणित शब्दों से करते हैं। ऐसे में ये सर्वव्यापी क्रिया-विषेषण बडे ही सोचनीय हो जाते हैं।

एक शब्द और चलन में सुनने को मिलता है-'यार'! यह शब्द भले ही बड़ा मिलनसार-सा लगता है उच्चारण करने वालों को। पर कुछ अर्थ में इस पर आपत्ति जताई जाती है। मसलन, किसी जमाने में कहा जाता था कि 'यार तो उसके होते हैं जो यार रखते हैं या रखती हैं!' यह बात अब गुजरे जमाने की हो गई। अब तो क्या स्त्री, क्या पुरुष, हर कोई यार कह रहा है या खुद यार बन रहा है। कहीं कोई संकोच नहीं, न कोई भेद। बड़ी ही सहजता से पुकार दिया जाता है- 'यार'! यहां संदर्भ दोस्ती का होता है।

हमें बड़ा अचरज हुआ था जब हमारे पोते ने एक दिन हमसे कह दिया- 'यार दादू! पिज्जा खिलवा दो ना!' यह फरमाइश सुन कर हम सकते में रह गए। खैर, अपने को संयत कर हमने उसे टोक दिया-

'बेटे! ऐसे नहीं बोलते। यह अच्छी बात नहीं।' हम मन ही मन समझ रहे थे. लेकिन इसमें

पोते का क्या दोष! यह तो ऊंचे फ्लैटों में रहने वालों की नई कल्चर या संस्कृति का परिणाम है। नई पीढ़ी की नई उपज है। माता-पिता जो संस्कार अपने बच्चों को दे रहे हैं, उसी का एक ईनाम है। दादा-दादी ने संग-साथ रखा होता तो बहत-सी परंपराएं तीसरी पीढी को अपने आप सीधे मिल जातीं। कई बार लगता है, खुली हवा का यह खुलापन कहीं किसी बंद गर्द की ओर तो नहीं ले जा रहा?

'दादू! यार तो मम्मा-पापा भी बोलते हैं'! अबोध बालक बता रहा था। उसमें हमें अब पोता नजर नहीं आ रहा था। बल्कि हालात का मारा एक बिगडैल दिख रहा था. जिसके पास अपना टच-स्क्रीन

मोबाइल है। उस पर हेडफोन लगाए वह जाने क्या-क्या खेलता रहता है। कुछ कहें तो वह सुनता नहीं। कुछ समझाने की चेष्टा करें तो वह परवाह नहीं करता। यह हमारी समझ से परे है। हम उसके पिता के पिता हैं। पता नहीं, अपने पिता के साथ वह क्या करता होगा? खैर! वह जानता है। दादू तो गांव से एक-दो दिन के लिए आए हैं, फिर न जाने कब आएंगे। आज हम सोचते हैं, कहीं हम गलत तो नहीं थे। हमारी विचारधारा कहीं

दुनिया मेरे आगे जबिक हमने सदैव कहा है कि बच्चे जब शादीश्रदा हो जाएं, एक-दो बच्चों के मां-बाप बन जाएं, तब ऐसे में उन्हें बात-बेबात टोकना नहीं चाहिए। भला-बुरा वे जानते हैं। सो, सब ठीक करेंगे। चाहे कहीं रहें। अब सोच रहे हैं हम कि ठीक-अठीक, क्या सुंदर है?

धार पर तो नहीं लग गई है।

एक शब्द बड़ा ही सहज-सरल होता है- धंसाना। यह कभी-कभी चुभने के अर्थ में भी प्रयुक्त किया जाता है। लेकिन बोलचाल में कई बार जब किसी खास मंशा से यह शब्द उच्चारित किया जाता है तो सुनते ही कान खड़े हो उठते हैं। अर्थ जब कहां से कहां पहुंच जाता है, तो यह शब्द ही अमर्यादित लगता है। गहराई में जाने से क्या लाभ! चालू भाषा में समझाने का हमारा

कोई उद्देश्य नहीं है और न ही इच्छा। गाली या अश्लील संदर्भों में शरीर के अंगों का नाम लेना कैसे किसी शब्द को घृणित बना देता है, यह हम सब जानते हैं।

दिल्ली के एक इलाके में जहां हम रहते हैं, वहीं नजदीक एक चारदिवारी के भीतर चार सरकारी स्कूल चलते हैं। सुबह वहां लड़िकयां और दिन में लड़के पढ़ते हैं। वहीं स्कूल से आते-जाते बच्चों के मुंह से एक अक्षर के हेरफेर के साथ एक विशेष संबोधन सुनने को मिलता है। चालू भाषा में वह शब्द देह-व्यापार में धकेली गई स्त्रियों को अपमानित करने के लिए प्रयोग किया जाता है। स्त्री के लिए इस शब्द में गहरे पैठे दुख के भाव को समझना मुश्किल नहीं है, फिर भी लोग सरेआम ऐसा बोलते दिख जाते हैं। मगर बच्चे जब इस शब्द के प्रयोग को लेकर सहज हो रहे हैं तो यह गहरी चिंता की बात है कि इस भाषा के जरिए हम किस तरह का समाज बना रहे हैं। भले ही ये कु-बोली हैं, मगर इसमें भाषा का क्या दोष? हम कहेंगे- 'गलत'। भाषा से संस्कृति प्रकट होती है। इससे पता चलता है कि ऐसा बोलने वाले समाज पर किनका आधिपत्य है। हमें अपनी भाषा-बोली में ऐसे अमर्यादित शब्दों से बचना होगा। हम बचेंगे तो बचपन बचेगा। अन्यथा शब्द कब गाली-गोली बन जाएं, कहना कठिन है।

हाशिये पर हिंदी

हाल ही में संघ लोक सेवा आयोग यानी यूपीएससी की परीक्षा के परिणामों ने एक बार फिर हिंदी माध्यम से सफल विद्यार्थियों को सुपर पावर वाले चश्मे और टॉर्च से ढुंढ़ने के लिए बाध्य किया है। हो सकता है कि कुछ तथाकथित विद्वान इस बात को झुठला दें और कहें कि ज्ञान का कोई माध्यम नहीं होता, और भला आयोग हिंदी माध्यम के विद्यार्थियों को हीन भाव से क्यों देखेगा! लेकिन हकीकत यही है कि आयोग की नजरों में हिंदी माध्यम के विद्यार्थी आर्थिक, सामाजिक व शैक्षणिक तीनों ही दृष्टियों में पिछड़े हैं। उसकी नजर में हिंदी ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों या छोटे शहरों के साधारण लोगों और वंचितों की भाषा है जबकि अंग्रेजी अभिजात वर्ग की भाषा है। अंग्रेज भारत छोड़ कर चले गए लेकिन अपनी औपनिवेशिक मानसिकता को इन तथाकथित विद्वानों के दिमागों में बो गए। जिन प्रदेशों में हिंदी भाषा बोली जाती है उनमें अधिकतर की अर्थव्यवस्था का आधार कृषि है और यह मामला न सिर्फ हिंदी बनाम अंग्रेजी माध्यम का है बल्कि यह सूट-बूट बनाम धोती-कृर्ता (किसान) भी है।

गौरतलब है कि हिंदी माध्यम के उद्धार के लिए करोड़ों रुपए का व्यवसाय मुख्यतः मध्यम वर्ग के आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े लोगों के बृते करती हैं जिनके अभिभावक या तो कृषक हैं या किसी प्राइवेट कंपनी के मजदर। यह है शिक्षा का व्यवसायीकरण, और इसके लिए चाहिए ही क्या- 10 टेबल, दो शिक्षक, 'हम लेकर आएंगे हिंदी माध्यम का गौरव' जैसी टैगलाइन और कुछ झूठे चयन के दावे! काश हमारी सरकारें शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता के लिए कुछ क्रांतिकारी कदम उठातीं ताकि हम जैसे मध्यमवर्गीय छात्र इस

कदर कोचिंग संस्थानों पर माथा टेकने न जाते!

अचरज की बात यह है कि जिस प्रतिस्पर्धा में हिंदी माध्यम के छात्र नकारे जा रहे हैं उस आयोग के सदस्य या अध्यक्ष ने कभी प्रशासक के तौर पर देश की शिक्षा व्यवस्था पर कार्य अवश्य किया होगा। वैसे तो प्रशासनिक सेवा की तैयारी करने वाले छात्र हमेशा सकारात्मक ऊर्जा से लबरेज रहते हैं और खुद को बेहतर बनाने एवं सीखने के लिए प्रेरित करते रहते हैं लेकिन यदि जमीन से जुड़े हिंदी माध्यम के छात्रों को इस तरह नकारा जाएगा तो उनके सपने गर्त में चले जाएंगे। मैकाले की शिक्षा व्यवस्था ऐसे नौकरशाह चाहती

रही है जो 'रक्त एवं रंग से भारतीय हों पर अपने

है जिससे राष्ट्र और आगे बढ़ सकता है। दुर्भाग्य यही है कि कोई पार्टी ऐसा सोच ही नहीं रही है। • वेद मामुरपुर, नरेला, नई दिल्ली

मनरेगा में सधार

अनेक बुद्धिजीवियों द्वारा 'गेम चेंजर' तक बताई जा रही मनरेगा योजना के क्रियान्वयन के अव्यावहारिक प्रावधानों की ओर किसी का ध्यान नहीं जा रहा है। आज बाजार में अकुशल मजदूर की दिहाड़ी प्रतिदिन 250 से 300 रुपए तक है लेकिन

मनरेगा में यह महज 170 से 180 रुपए प्रतिदिन है। लगभग 100

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

विचार, नैतिक मापदंड, प्रज्ञा एवं प्रवृत्ति से अंग्रेज हों'। मैकाले के इन्हीं सपनों की सिद्धि के लिए समर्पित हैं संघ लोक सेवा आयोग के परिणाम।

• रविसुता पुत्र ऋषभ, रीवा, मध्यप्रदेश खैरात के बजाय

आजकल राजनीतिक दल चुनाव जीतने के लिए जनता को अनेक चीजें मुफ्त या खैरात देने की घोषणाएं कर रहे हैं। इससे मेहनतकश करदाताओं को बहुत निराशा होती है और आम लोगों को भी हर चीज मुफ्त पाने की आदत पड़ जाती है। यह सभी के लिए हानिकारक है। देश में काम की कोई कमी नहीं है। कमी सिर्फ नीयत और नीति की ही है। देश में रोजगार से जनसंख्या को भी पारदर्शी तरीके से जोड कर इस बडी समस्या को हल किया जा सकता

रुपए कम दिहाड़ी पर कोई मजदुर क्यों काम करेगा? फिर मनरेगा में मजदूरी का भुगतान आदर्श स्थिति में तमाम औपचारिकताओं के बाद कम से कम आठ से दस दिन बाद बैंक खाते में हो पाता है जबकि मजदर रोजाना नकद मजदुरी चाहता है। उसे रोज किराना या अन्य आवश्यक चीजों के लिए पैसे चुकाने पड़ते हैं।

दूसरा, प्रधानमंत्री ग्राम सड़क योजना के कारण सैकड़ों गांव पक्की सड़कों से शहर या कस्बे से जुड़ गए हैं। ऐसे में ग्रामीण मजदुर आसानी से शहरों में चले जाते हैं जहां उन्हें मनरेगा से ज्यादा और नकद मजदुरी मिलती है। ऐसे में मनरेगा का औचित्य क्या है? इसके अलावा ग्राम पंचायत के ही पंजीकृत मजदूरों से उसी पंचायत में काम कराने की अनिवार्यता के कारण अनेक पंचायतों में लाखों रुपए होने के बाद भी निर्माण

कार्य नहीं हो पा रहे हैं। लिहाजा, आवश्यकता इस बात की है कि मनरेगा का पनर्मल्यांकन कर उसे ऐसे जनपदों में लाग किया जाए जहां आवागमन की सविधा न हो और वे शहरों से न जुड़े हों। शहरों से जुड़ी ग्राम पंचायत को मनरेगा से मुक्त करना चाहिए।

• मिलिंद रोंघे, महर्षिनगर, इटारसी मौत के गड़ढे

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का स्पष्ट आदेश है कि किसी भी व्यक्ति को बोरवेल खोदने से पंद्रह दिन पूर्व उस जिले के डीएम या संबंधित अधिकारी को सूचना देनी होगी और बोरवेल को चारों तरफ कंटीले तार से घेरने के साथ उसके सराख को 30 सेंटीमीटर मोटे ढक्कन से पूरी तरह ढकना होगा ताकि उसमें कोई बच्चा न गिरे। फिर भी इस नियम की जम कर अवहेलना हो रही है जिससे अनेक बच्चों की खुले बोरवेल में गिर कर मौत हो चुकी है। इस लापरवाही के चलते सेना, पुलिस के जवानों, इंजीनियरों और मजदूरों के हजारों श्रम दिवस बर्बाद होने के अलावा लाखों रुपए उन बच्चों को बचाने में की गई खुदाई और अन्य आवश्यक उपकरणों आदि के उपयोग पर खर्च हो जाते हैं ।

बोरवेल में छोटे बच्चों के गिरने की आशंका सदा बनी रहती है। उसे एकदम खुला छोड़ देना घोर आपराधिक कृत्य है। बोरवेल को चारपाई, तखत, लकड़ी की चौकी या बांस की जाली से ढक कर उसमें बच्चों को गिरने से बचाया जा सकता है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देश की अवहेलना करने वाले बोरवेल मालिकों के खिलाफ कठोर कानूनी कार्रवाई मसलन, बच्चे की जानबूझ कर हत्या का आपराधिक मुकदमा चलाकर उन्हें कम से कम तीन महीने की जेल और 50 हजार रुपए जुर्माने की सजा तो दी ही जानी चाहिए। तभी इस स्थिति में सुधार हो सकता है।

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

बहुत-सी कोचिंग संस्थाएं देश के विभिन्न शहरी क्षेत्रों में अपने को हिंदी का पालनहार बताते हुए

ब्रिटेन को संकोच क्यों

मृतसर के जालियांवाला बाग में 13 अप्रैल, 1919 को सैकड़ों निहत्थे लोगों की हत्या ब्रिटिश उपनिवेशवाद के क्रूरतम अपराधों में से एक है. औपनिवेशिक शासन के विरुद्ध हमारे स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन का इतिहास बलिदानों की महागाथा है, परंतु हमारी राष्ट्रीय स्मृति में दो शताब्दियों के ब्रिटिश अत्याचार और शोषण भी अंकित हैं. आज ब्रिटेन और भारत के बीच अच्छे संबंध हैं और हमारे मन में बदले की कोई भावना दूर-दूर तक नहीं है. लेकिन, जब हम जालियांवाला बाग जनसंहार के शताब्दी वर्ष पर बलिदानियों को स्मरण कर रहे हैं, तो ब्रिटेन की वर्तमान सरकार द्वारा औपनिवेशिक अपराधों के लिए क्षमायाचना से मना कर देना दुखद है. यह इसलिए भी दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि क्षमायाचना की मांग भारत ने नहीं की है, बल्कि यह ब्रिटिश सांसदों का ही आग्रह है. क्षमायाचना और प्रायश्चित मानवीय मूल्य हैं. इनके व्यवहार से घाव भी भरते हैं और परस्पर विश्वास भी बढ़ता है. स्वयं ब्रिटिश विदेश कार्यालय के मंत्री मार्क फील्ड ने स्वीकार किया है कि भले ही भारत के साथ द्विपक्षीय संबंध भविष्य की ओर उन्मुख हैं और वे

बेहतर हो रहे हैं, किंतु उन पर अतीत की परछाईं जब हम जालियांवाला बाग भी है. उन्होंने जालियांवाला बाग को लेकर जनसंहार के शताब्दी वर्ष भारतीय भावनाओं को भी रेखांकित किया है. पर बलिदानियों को स्मरण मंत्री ने क्षमा के संदर्भ में 'वित्तीय पहलुओं' की कर रहे हैं, तो ब्रिटेन की निरर्थक बात की है. क्षमा मांगना मूल रूप से एक संवेदनात्मक व्यवहार है. ब्रिटिश सरकार वर्तमान सरकार द्वारा बहुत पहले से ही इस घटना पर दुख प्रकट औपनिवेशिक अपराधों के करती आयी है, पर उसने औपचारिक तौर पर लिए क्षमायाचना से मना कभी क्षमा नहीं मांगी है. आज भी प्रधानमंत्री कर देना दुखद है. थेरेसा मे ने यही किया है. यहां प्रश्न मात्र भाषा और भावनाओं का ही नहीं है, बल्कि नीयत का

> भी है. ब्रिटेन अन्य औपनिवेशिक देशों की तरह अपने इतिहास को लेकर सहज नहीं हो सका है. उसमें इतिहास में मानवता के साथ किये गये भयावह अपराधों को उचित ठहराने की प्रवृत्ति भी है. एशिया, अफ्रीका और लातिनी अमेरिका के देशों को आज भी दासता की बेड़ियों की जकड़ से हुए घाव से छुटकारा नहीं मिला है. इन देशों में निर्धनता और पिछड़ेपन का सबसे बड़ा कारण यूरोपीय देशों की लूट-खसोट और दमन ही है. यूरोप के कोष और संग्रहालय इन देशों की संपत्ति से आज भी भरे हैं. यह संतोष की बात है कि ब्रिटिश संसद की निचली सदन की चर्चा के बाद बहस के प्रस्तावक और सत्तारूढ़ कंजरवेटिव पार्टी के सदस्य बॉब ब्लैकमैन ने कहा है कि इस जनसंहार को देश के स्कूली पाठ्यक्रम में शामिल किया जायेगा और इस पर औपचारिक ढंग से क्षमा मांगना उचित व्यवहार होगा. इस घटना के शताब्दी वर्ष आयोजनों के संयोजक भारतीय मुल के सांसद और प्रतिष्ठित नागरिक हैं तथा वे प्रधानमंत्री थेरेसा मे के समक्ष भी क्षमा मांगने का प्रस्ताव रखेंगे. संसद के ऊपरी सदन में 19 अप्रैल को एक विशेष कार्यक्रम भी प्रस्तावित है. इतिहास और वर्तमान की खाई को पाटने और भविष्य को संजोने के लिए आवश्यक है कि ब्रिटेन अपने अतीत के साथ सहज होने का प्रयास करे.



कर्तव्य के आयाम

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

कुछ अलग

शक्ल से 'गरीब' नजर आऊं

मैं 'अमीर' नहीं होना चाहता. 'गरीब' ही बना रहना चाहता हूं. मैं नहीं चाहता मेरे कने कार हो, बंगला हो, रुपया-पैसा हो, मकान-दुकान हो. मेरा मानना है कि यह सब अमीरों के चोचले हैं! मैं चाहता हूं, मेरे पास

कबाड़ा साइकिल हो, मेरे मकान में न छत हो न खिड़की, मेरे कपड़ों में पड़े बेतरतीब छेद मेरी दयनीयता की कहानी खुद बयान करें. मेरी जिंदगी पूरी तरह से 'उधार' पर टिकी हो और मैं शक्ल से ही 'गरीब' नजर आऊं.

गरीब होना अभिशाप नहीं, बल्कि 'पॉलिटिकली करेक्ट' है. गरीब और गरीबी की सबसे अधिक 'पूछ' राजनीति में ही होती है. मौका अगर चुनाव का हो तो क्या ही कहने. फिर तो हर पार्टी का छोटा-बड़ा नेता देश से गरीबी हटाने के वायदे कुछ यों करने लग जाता है जैसे- एक जमाने में कभी हम 'पोलियो' खत्म करने की बातें किया करते थे.

नेताओं के इतना प्रयास करने के बाद भी देश से गरीब और गरीबी दूर होने का नाम ही नहीं लेते. बल्कि ये सुरसा के मुंह की भांति फैलते ही जा रहे हैं. हकीकत यह है कि हर घर में कोई न कोई गरीब निकल ही आता है.

ऐसा नहीं है कि अमीर सिर्फ अमीर ही होते हैं, वे भी गरीब होते हैं, मगर वे कुछ अलग टाइप के गरीब होते हैं. अमीरों की गरीबी उनके चेहरे पर नहीं, व्यवहार में नजर आती है. मैं ऐसे तमाम अमीर किस्म के गरीबों को अच्छी तरह से जानता हूं, जिन्हें खुद को गरीब कहलवाना बेहद पसंद है.

अंशुमाली रस्तोगी

anshurstg@gmail.com

खैर, इस वक्त हमारे देश का मौसम चुनावी है. ऐसे में गरीब की याद न आये, यह तो हो ही नहीं सकता. चारों तरफ बस गरीबों के ही चर्चे हैं. पार्टियों के घोषणापत्रों में गरीबों के लिए ऐसी-ऐसी क्रांतिकारी

योजनाएं हैं कि पढ़कर मुंह में पानी आया जा रहा है. गरीब के हित की बात अब बहत्तर हजार तक पहुंच गयी है. नित दिन कोई न कोई नेता गरीबों के लिए किसी न किसी लाभकारी योजना की घोषणा कर ही देता है. ऐसा समझ लीजिये कि गरीबों की दसों उंगलियां घी और सिर कड़ाही

में है. बिन बरसे ही सोना चारों तरफ से उन पर बरस रहा है. यही वजह है कि मैं गरीबी रेखा से ऊपर नहीं उठना चाहता. बीवी को भी सख्त निर्देश दे दिये हैं कि वह हर ओर से गरीब ही लगे, गरीब के अतिरिक्त कुछ नहीं.

फिर भी, देश में कुछ ऐसी 'गरीब विरोधी ताकतें' हैं, जो नेताओं की 'गरीब कल्याण योजनाओं' पर किस्म-किस्म के सवाल उठाती हैं. उन्हें 'बोगस' बताती हैं. लोग हैं, कहते ही रहते हैं. किंतु आप लोगों के कहे का जरा भी असर मत लीजिये. जो नेता कह रहे हैं बस आंखें मूंदकर मान लीजिये. सरकार बन जाने के बाद वे देश के प्रत्येक गरीब को गरीबी रेखा से ऊपर उठकर अमीरी की सीमा में ले आयेंगे. उनके वायदों पर अपनी उम्मीद को बनाये रिखये बस.

फिलहाल, मैं तो अपना उपनाम ही 'गरीब' रखने की सोच रहा हूं! आप भी ऐसा ही कुछ सोच रहे हैं क्या?

घोषणापत्रों के वादे और इरादे

छले हफ्ते भाजपा और कांग्रेस के मेनिफेस्टो जारी हुए. अगर मेनिफेस्टो से चुनाव जीते जाते तो कांग्रेस यह चुनाव जीत जाती. अगर इस देश के वोटर पार्टियों के घोषणापत्र को पढ़कर नंबर देते. तो भाजपा जरूर परीक्षा में फेल हो जाती. भाजपा का 'संकल्प पत्र' पढ़कर समझ नहीं आता कि इस दस्तावेज में कहा क्या गया है. दिक्कत यह नहीं है कि भाजपा ने जुमलेबाजी का सहारा लिया है. दरअसल, भाजपा के दस्तावेज में असंभव वादे बहुत कम हैं, सच कहें तो स्पष्ट वादे ही बहुत कम हैं. इसमें ना तो पिछले पांच साल का हिसाब दिया गया है और ना ही अगले पांच साल के लिए कोई भी नयी घोषणा या बड़ी योजना प्रस्तावित है. लगता है मेनिफेस्टो लिखनेवालों को स्पष्ट हिदायत थी- पचास पेज भर दो, लेकिन ऐसा कुछ मत लिखना कि बाद में जवाब देना पड जाये. इसलिए सिर्फ गोल-मोल बातें लिखी गयी हैं. राममंदिर और धारा 370 के बारे में भी जलेबी बना दी गयी है. कहीं-कहीं 'प्रयास करेंगे' जैसा नुक्ता जोड़ दिया गया है, ताकि बाहर निकलने का रास्ता खुला रहे.

उधर, कांग्रेस का दस्तावेज महीनों की मत्था-पच्ची के बाद बनाया गया है. वे मुद्दे उठाये गये हैं, जो उठाये जाने चाहिए: गरीबी, किसान की आय, युवा बेरोजगारी, स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा और सुरक्षा. वादे ठोस हैं, पर अधिकांश ऐसे हैं जिनकी भविष्य में जांच हो सकती है. कुछ बातों को छोड़कर हर वादे के बारे में सोचा है कि उसे कैसे लागू किया जायेगा. यह दस्तावेज एक दिशा दिखाता है, एक बहस को आमंत्रित करता है. दिक्कत यह है कि कांग्रेस को लगता है कि कागज पर सही योजनाएं बना देने से लोग भरोसा कर लेंगे. कांग्रेस के पास न तो अपनी घोषणाओं को साधारण वोटर तक पहुंचाने का कोई तंत्र है, न ही उन्हें यह भरोसा दिलाने का कोई तरीका है कि कांग्रेस इन घोषणाओं के प्रति ईमानदार है. अगर भाजपा के संकल्प पत्र के पीछे कोई प्रकल्प नहीं है, तो कांग्रेस के घोषणापत्र के पीछे कोई उद्घोष नहीं है.

आज देश के दो सबसे बड़े मद्दे यानी कृषि और बेरोजगारी के संकट पर इस दोनों घोषणापत्रों की जांच करने से यह यह अंतर साफ हो जाता है. भाजपा का घोषणापत्र किसानों की प्रमुख मांगों पर मौन है. देशभर के किसान आंदोलनों ने बार-बार दो मांग उठायी है- फसल का पूरा दाम और कर्ज से मुक्ति. कर्ज में डूबे किसान की कर्ज-मृक्ति के सवाल पर इस घोषणापत्र में एक शब्द भी नहीं कहा गया है. भाजपा साफ कह रही है कि इस सवाल पर वह कुछ नहीं कर सकती, और आगे कुछ करने का उसका इरादा भी नहीं है. किसानों को फसल का दाम दिलाने के बारे में भी इसमें कुछ नहीं कहा गया है. ना एमएसपी, ना स्वामीनाथन आयोग, ना सरकारी खरीद के बारे में एक भी शब्द है. बस इशारा किया गया है कि बाजार से किसान को सही दाम मिल सके, इसके लिए 'प्रयास किया जायेगा'. यानी कि इस सवाल से भी भाजपा पूरा पल्ला झाड़ रही है. इन दोनों मुद्दों पर भाजपा की

चुप्पी मानीखेज है, क्योंकि प्रमुख प्रक्रित विपक्षी दल कांग्रेस ने कर्ज-मुक्ति और किसानों को फसल का उचित मूल्य दिलवाने के लिए नयी व्यवस्था के बारे में ठोस घोषणाएं की हैं.

जार किसाना की फसल की उचित मूल्य दिलवान के लिए नयी व्यवस्था के बारे में ठोस घोषणाएं की हैं. कांग्रेस का घोषणापत्र कहता है कि वह कई राज्यों में की गयी कर्ज-माफी से आगे बढ़कर अब किसान की संपूर्ण



योगेंद्र यादव

अध्यक्ष, स्वराज इंडिया

yyopinion@gmail.com

अब नीतियां नहीं नेता की नीयत पर चुनाव लड़े जाते हैं . जिसके पास नीति है, उसके नेता और नीयत में देश को भरोसा नहीं है . जिसके पास प्रचार-प्रसार और प्रभाव है, उसके पास देश के लिए सकारात्मक

प्रकल्प नहीं है . कुछ ठो तो कांग्रे वाने के की नौकरी में 22 लाख वैवे

कर्ज-मृक्ति करेगी. कर्जदार किसान के खिलाफ चेक बाउंस के बहाने फौजदारी मुकदमे पर पाबंदी लगायी जायेगी. किसान को लागत का डेढ गुना दाम दिलाने की बात तो कांग्रेस ने नहीं की, लेकिन कृषि लागत और मूल्य आयोग के बदले एक नये कमीशन का वादा किया है. साथ में कांग्रेस का घोषणापत्र किसान बजट का प्रस्ताव भी रखता है. अलग बजट से किसान को कुछ मिले न मिले, कम-से-कम हिसाब तो मिलेगा कि सरकार ने किसान के लिए क्या किया. कांग्रेस की घोषणाओं के बाद आशा की जा रही थी कि भाजपा उससे बेहतर घोषणा करेगी. लेकिन, इन दोनों सवालों पर चुप्पी रख भाजपा ने अपनी मंशा जाहिर कर दी है.

कुछ ऐसा ही मामला बेरोजगारी का है. नोटबंदी के बाद से बेरोजगारी ने आज तक के रिकॉर्ड तोड़ दिये हैं. जाहिर है, विपक्षी होने के नाते कांग्रेस के लिए इस सच को बोलना आसान है, भाजपा के लिए इसे स्वीकारना कठिन है. ज्यादा महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि कांग्रेस का दस्तावेज इस मुद्दे पर कुछ ठोस सुझाव देता है. सबसे पहले तो कांग्रेस केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों

की नौकरी में 22 लाख वैकेंसी भरने का वादा करती है. सरकारी नौकरी में आवेदन के वक्त आवेदन शुल्क हटाने की बात मानती है. हर ग्राम पंचायत और म्युनिसिपॉलिटी में 'सेवा मित्र' का पोस्ट बनाने और बड़े गांव में एक और 'आशा' सेवक की बहाली का वादा करती है. बेहतर होता अगर कांग्रेस जिन राज्यों में राज कर रही है, वहां इन सुझावों को लागू करवाती. लेकिन, भाजपा का संकल्प पत्र तो रिक्त पड़े पदों और नयी नौकरी के सवाल पर मौन है. यानी यदि भाजपा दोबारा सत्ता में आती है, तो यह तय है कि रिक्त पदों को खत्म किया जायेगा.

बेरोजगारी का सवाल सिर्फ सरकारी नौकरी से सुलझ नहीं सकता. कांग्रेस का मेनिफेस्टो रोजगार सृजन की एक योजना देता है. एक नया मंत्रालय होगा, जिसके जरिये प्राइवेट सेक्टर को रोजगार सृजन में प्रोत्साहन दिया जायेगा. नया बिजनेस शुरू करने पर तीन साल तक नियम-कानून से छूट मिलेगी. हर उद्योग को अप्रेंटिस लगाना जरूरी होगा. जिन्हें स्टाइपेंड मिलेगा और पक्की नौकरी में प्राथमिकता दी जायेगी. ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में बड़े पैमाने पर रोजगार सजन की योजना के अभाव में कांग्रेस के प्रस्ताव अधूरे हैं. लेकिन भाजपा तो अपने दस्तावेज में बेरोजगारी का नाम भी नहीं लेती है. पार्टी के कुल 75 मुख्य संकल्पों में एक भी रोजगार बढ़ाने के बारे में नहीं है. दस्तावेज में एक जगह स्टार्टअप के लिए सस्ते लोन और 22 तरह के उद्योगों को प्रोत्साहन की बात की गयी है. युवाओं वाले हिस्से में मात्र दो बिंदु रोजगार के बारे में हैं, लेकिन छह बिंदु खेल-कूद से जुड़े हैं! स्किल मिशन और मुद्रा लोन की बात को दोहरा दिया गया है. अगर बेरोजगारी की समस्या इससे दूर होती, तो अब तक क्यों नहीं हुई?

कुल मिलाकर इस घोषणापत्र के जिरये किसानों और नौजवानों को भाजपा यही संदेश दे रही है- 'हमने पिछले पांच साल में तुम्हारे साथ जो किया, वैसा ही अगले पांच साल में भी करेंगे!' अब नीतियां नहीं नेता की नीयत पर चुनाव लड़े जाते हैं. यही आज के भारत की विडंबना है. जिसके पास नीति है, उसके नेता और नीयत में देश को भरोसा नहीं है. जिसके पास प्रचार-प्रसार और प्रभाव है, उसके पास देश के लिए सकारात्मक प्रकल्प नहीं है.

चुनाव आयोग की हिचकिचाहट



पवन के वर्मा लेखक एवं पूर्व प्रशासक

pavankvarma1953@gmail.com

आम नागरिकों को टीएन शेषण जैसे आयुक्तों की कमी खलती है, जो निष्पक्ष चुनाव सुनिश्चित करने के लिए राजनीतिक खेमे को डरा कर रखते थे. आखिरकार, आयोग की अच्छाई मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त पर निर्भर करती है. र्वाचन आयोग के प्रति उचित ही बड़े सम्मान से देखा जाता है. राष्ट्रपति और उपराष्ट्रपति समेत विभिन्न चुनाव प्रक्रियाओं को सराहनीय क्षमता और समर्पण से यह संस्था संचालित करती रही है. आयोग की निष्पक्षता और एक संस्था के रूप में इसकी स्वायत्तता संदेह के घेरे में नहीं रही हैं. लेकिन, आज उसकी क्षमता पर प्रश्न खड़े किये जा रहे हैं. ऐसा इसलिए नहीं कि आयोग के नेक इरादे में कमी है, बल्कि इसलिए कि यह संस्था किन्हीं कारणों से आदर्श आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन होने पर सक्रिय और निर्णायक ढंग से कार्रवाई करने में हिचकती दिखायी दे रही है. इस हिचिकचाहट का क्या कारण है? क्या चुनाव आयोग के पास रोक लगाने के पर्याप्त कारण नहीं हैं या फिर उल्लंघनों के विरुद्ध वह उन अधिकारों का प्रयोग नहीं करना चाहता है? यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न है, क्योंकि देश में मतदाताओं की संख्या लगभग 90 करोड़ है और यह जरूरी है कि

संविधान के अनुच्छेद 324 के तहत निर्वाचन आयोग को शक्तियां प्राप्त हैं कि वह चुनाव को 'संचालित' करे. यह एक शक्तिशाली और बहुप्रयोजन प्रावधान है. इसी के अनुरूप सभी राजनीतिक पार्टियों और प्रत्याशियों के लिए आयोग आदर्श आचार संहिता लागू करता है. मसलन, इसमें साफ कहा गया है कि कोई पार्टी ऐसी गतिविधि नहीं करेगी, जिससे विभिन्न जातियों और धार्मिक या भाषायी समुदायों के बीच भेदभाव या तनाव बढ़े. यह भी निर्दिष्ट किया गया है कि वोट के लिए जातिगत या सांप्रदायिक भावनाओं का दोहन नहीं होना चाहिए.

आयोग की क्षमता और निष्पक्षता में लोगों का विश्वास बना रहे.

यह भी प्रावधान है कि मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त को कार्यकाल पूरा होने से पहले नहीं हटाया जा सकता है और न ही नियुक्ति के बाद उनकी सेवा शर्तों में नकारात्मक बदलाव किया जा सकता है. पद से हटाने के लिए वही प्रक्रिया अपनानी होगी, जो सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के न्यायाधीश के लिए निर्धारित है. इस तरह मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त का कार्यकाल लगभग निरापद है और उन्हें किसी सिद्ध दुराचार या अक्षमता के आधार पर संसद के दोनों सदनों के दो-तिहाई बहुमत से ही हटाया जा सकता है.

दाना सदना के दा-ातहाई बहुमत से हा हटाया जो सकता है. तब भी मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त और उनके दो सहकर्मी राजनीतिक वर्ग द्वारा किये जा रहे खुले उल्लंघन के विरुद्ध कार्रवाई करने में संकोच और हिचक क्यों दिखा रहे हैं? संविधान के तहत आयोग की शक्तियां निर्बाध हैं. फिर भी, हम आयोग को संहिता के उल्लंघन पर अधिक-से-अधिक डपट कर या अप्रभावी चेतावनी देते हुए देख रहे हैं. ताजा उदाहरण योगी आदित्यनाथ द्वारा 'मोदीजी की सेना' कहकर सशस्त्र बलों के राजनीतिक दुरुपयोग की कोशिश के मामले में आयोग की प्रतिक्रिया है. इस मसले

देश दुनिया से

सकती है संघर्ष का कारण

दुर्लभ संसाधन, शक्ति और हैसियत को लेकर

प्रतिस्पर्धा, अधिकार और जिम्मेदारियों को लेकर

अस्पष्टता. अतिक्रमण और वैश्विक शक्ति का

हस्तक्षेप, विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी की उन्नति:

रासायनिक और जैविक हथियारों का विकास.

वैश्वीकरण और सार्वजनिक सेवाओं का निजीकरण

और बढ़ता उपभोक्तावाद आदि वे पहलू हैं, जो

21वीं सदी में देशों के बीच संघर्ष को बढ़ायेंगे.

अंतरराष्ट्रीय हित, वैश्विक संघर्ष में एक महत्वपूर्ण

kathmandu हैं, और ये संघर्ष

अक्सर राजनीतिक, सुरक्षा, रणनीतिक और

आर्थिक सहायता में निहित होते हैं. पर्यावरणीय

तनाव, प्राकृतिक आपदा और जलवायु परिवर्तन,

पानी की कमी, खाद्य असुरक्षा, सामूहिक

आप्रवासन और महामारी भविष्य में इस संघर्ष में

और योगदान देंगे. अतीत में युद्ध आम थे. लेकिन

बीसवीं सदी के मुकाबले, इस सदी में, विकसित

देश ज्यादा असुरक्षा का सामना कर रहे हैं. ज्यादा

जोखिम उठाने की धारणा, गहरा संदेह और पहले

से कहीं अधिक सामरिक रिश्ते शक्तिशाली देशों की

नयी विशेषता बन गयी है. संभावना है कि भविष्य में

अंतरराष्ट्रीय सीमा और क्षेत्र संघर्ष के प्रमुख कारण

होंगे. अर्थव्यवस्था भी तनाव बढ़ाने में महत्वपूर्ण

भूमिका निभायेगी.

भूमिका निभाते

बिष्णु राज उप्रेती

अंतरराष्ट्रीय सीमा बन

का स्वतः संज्ञान लेने की जगह आयोग ने उन्हें एक नोटिस भेजा और इतना ही कहा कि आगे से सशस्त्र बलों के उल्लेख में सावधानी बरतें. अब जब प्रक्रिया ही इतनी सुस्त है और कार्रवाई नरम, तो इसमें क्या आश्चर्य कि विरष्ठ केंद्रीय मंत्री मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी ने भी ठीक यही बात अपने भाषण में कह दी.

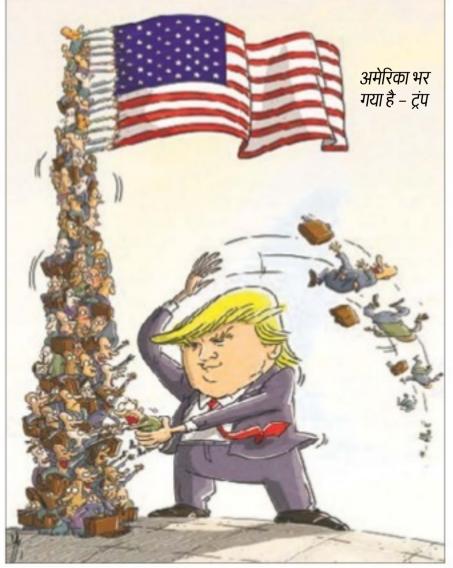
बात अपन भाषण म कह दा. राजस्थान के राज्यपाल कल्याण सिंह एक वीडियो में कहते पाये गये कि वे भाजपा के समर्थक हैं और लोगों को प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के लिए मतदान करना चाहिए. उनके अराजनीतिक होने के संवैधानिक निर्देश का यह गंभीर उल्लंघन है. चुनाव आयोग ने इसका संज्ञान लिया और राष्ट्रपति के पास अपनी राय भेज दी. उन्होंने इसे सलाह के लिए गृह मंत्रालय के पास भेज दिया. इसके बाद मामले में कोई जानकारी सामने नहीं आयी है. साल 2012 के उत्तर प्रदेश विधानसभा चुनाव के दौरान मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त ने यूपीए सरकार के दो मंत्रियों द्वारा जान-बूझकर और लगातार आयोग के निर्देशों के उल्लंघन की शिकायत राष्ट्रपति के पास भेजी थी. उन्होंने इसे प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय को भेज दिया. चूंकि दोनों मंत्री तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री की पार्टी से थे, सो अचरज की बात नहीं है कि उन्होंने इस मामले में कुछ खास कार्रवाई नहीं की.

दुनिया के सबसे बड़े लोकतंत्र को चुनाव आयोग की भूमिका में बदलाव करने की जरूरत है. यदि आयोग खुद ही आगे बढ़कर कार्रवाई नहीं करता है, तो उसकी भूमिका कमजोर होती है तथा उसके निर्देश बेअसर हो जाते हैं. हमारे नेता सावधानी बरतने की सलाह या नाराजगी जताने की ज्यादा परवाह नहीं करते हैं. वे नियमों के अनुसार तभी चलेंगे, जब उन्हें लगेगा कि आचार संहिता के उल्लंघन पर आयोग कार्रवाई कर सकता है और उन्हें दंडित कर सकता है. ऐसे दंड एक तय समय के लिए चुनाव प्रचार को रोकने, चुनाव रद्द करने या किसी उम्मीदवार को अयोग्य करार देने के रूप में हो सकते हैं. संवैधानिक शक्तियों से लैस स्वायत्त संस्था के रूप में चुनाव आयोग कानून का डर पैदा कर सकता है.

आम नागरिकों को टीएन शेषण जैसे आयुक्तों की कमी खलती है, जो निष्पक्ष चुनाव सुनिश्चित करने के लिए राजनीतिक खेमे को डराकर रखते थे. आखिरकार, आयोग की अच्छाई मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त पर निर्भर करती है. सर्वोच्च न्यायालय को आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति सत्ताधारी दल की इच्छा से न कराकर कॉलेजियम के जिरये कराने के लंबित मामले पर जल्दी फैसला करना चाहिए. जिस तरह मौजूदा चुनाव आयोग काम कर रहा है, उसे देखकर गालिब का एक शेर याद आता है-

हमने माना कि तगाफुल न करोगे लेकिन खाक हो जायेंगे हम तुमको खबर होने तक

कार्टून कोना



साभार : कार्टूनमूवमेंटडॉटकॉम

आपके पत्र

नौकरशाहों के आरोप

देश के 66 पूर्व नौकरशाहों ने चुनाव आयोग के खिलाफ राष्ट्रपति को ज्ञापन सौंपा है, जिसमें पिछले एक महीने के दौरान आयोग ने किस-किस तरह से सरकार का साथ दिया है, उसका उल्लेख किया गया है. यह लोकतंत्र के लिए चिंता का विषय है. क्यों बार-बार इस सरकार पर नौकरशाहों, बुद्धिजीवियों, साहित्यकारों, मानवाधिकार कार्यकर्ताओं एवं फिल्मकारों द्वारा प्रश्न चिह्न लगाया जा रहा है ? पहले साहित्यकारों ने पुरस्कार वापसी की. फिर जून 2017 में 65 पूर्व नौकरशाहों ने बढ़ती असहिष्णुता के खिलाफ सरकार को खुला पत्र लिखा. इधर फिल्म निर्माण से जुड़े सैकड़ों लोगों ने एक मंच में आकर लोगों को अपना वोट काफी सोच समझ कर देने की अपील की. सरकार को इन आरोपों पर गंभीर होकर विचार करना चाहिए कि आखिर क्यों उन पर एक ही तरह के आरोप बार बार लग रहे हैं.

जंग बहादुर सिंह, गोलपहाड़ी,जमशेदपुर

भाजपा का संकल्प पत्र

भाजपा ने लोकसभा चुनाव के लिए अपना संकल्प पत्र जारी कर दिया, जिसमें में कई ऐसी घोषनाएं हैं जो देश की जनता के हित में हैं. इस पत्र में कृषि, शिक्षा, सुरक्षा समेत लगभग सभी क्षेत्रों को ध्यान में रखा गया है. किसानों के लिए 60 वर्षों के बाद पेंशन की घोषणा की गयी है. इसके अतिरिक्त प्रधानमंत्री जी ने यह साफ कर दिया है कि देश की सुरक्षा के साथ कोई समझौता नहीं किया जायेगा. इसके लिए भारतीय सेना के लिए अधिक संख्या में हथियार भी खरीदने का लक्ष्य रखा गया है. परंतु कई ऐसे संवेदनशील मुद्दे हैं जो भाजपा के लिए चुनौतियों से भरे हो सकते हैं. इसमें कश्मीर की धारा 370, नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम व तीन तलाक जैसे मुद्दे सबसे अहम हैं. खैर जो भी हो भाजपा के संकल्प पत्र से ऐसा प्रतीत हो रहा है कि यह पत्र राष्ट्रवाद की नीति पर फोकस कर जारी किया गया है. जरूरत है चुनाव जीतने पर इसे अमल में लाने की.

शुभम गुप्ता, नावागढ़, धनबाद

खैरात नहीं ,काम दीजिए !

चुनावी माहौल में सभी पार्टियां आम लोगों को आकर्षित करने के लिए तरह-तरह की घोषनाएं कर रहीं हैं. अजीब बात है कि पार्टियां चुनाव जीतने के लिए जनता को मुफ्त की खैरात देने पर ही तुली हैं, जिससे मेहनतंकश करदाताओं का हौसला टूटेगा ही और साथ ही दूसरों को हराम और मुफ्त की ही खाने की आदत पड़ सकती है. यह हर किसी के लिए हानिकारक है. करदाताओं का पैसा इस तरह बांट देना उचित नहीं. इनका उपयोग विकास कार्य में किया जा सकता है. देश में काम की कभी कोई कमी नहीं है. कमी तो सिर्फ नीयत और नीति की ही है. देश में काम या रोजगार से जनसंख्या को भी पारदर्शी तरीके से जोड़कर इस बड़ी समस्या को भी हल किया जा सकता है. इससे राष्ट्र और आगे बढ़ सकता है. मगर दुर्भाग्य यही है कि अभी तक कोई भी पार्टी ऐसा सोच ही नहीं रही है.

वेद मामूरपुर, नरेला

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