

# The 888 vs 996 debate

Those extra late nights in office may not necessarily be the best way to go



## HUMAN FACTOR

SHYAMAL MAJUMDAR

Labour rights activist Robert Owen coined the famous phrase — 888 (eight hours labour, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest). That is one extreme. Alibaba founder Jack Ma went to the other extreme just a few days back. Ma has stirred up a huge controversy after saying that young people should see overtime work cultures ("996" schedule) as a huge blessing.

The 996 schedule refers to working 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week. "Unfortunately, many companies and many people don't have the opportunity to work 996," Ma said.

However, very few, it seems, would be interested to avail of the opportunity — evident from the discussion group called "996.ICU" set up by activists on Microsoft's code-sharing site GitHub, suggesting that employees who work those hours could end up in an intensive care unit.

The 996 culture is common in many countries, apart from China. Japan, for example, has been having a problem with "death by overwork", expressed not only by statistics but also the fact that the Japanese language has a word for this: karoshi. It means employees dying either from stress-related ailments or the ones who take their lives because of the pressures of the job. A Japanese government report showed employees at nearly one in four com-

panies notched up more than 80 hours of overtime a month, while staff at about one in 10 workplaces did an extra 100 hours.

But Ma's advice is perhaps being taken most seriously in India. Consider this: According to a study by UBS, two Indian cities (Mumbai and Delhi) figure in the top 10 overworked cities in the world. Mumbai, in fact, is the most hard working in the world as Mumbaiers work for an average of 3,315 hours annually. In comparison, a full-time employee in Beijing works for an average of 2,096 hours a year.

This is reflected in the number of vacations as well. According to the annual Vacation Deprivation Survey by Expedia, a global travel agency, India is the most vacation deprived country in the world. India moved up to the top position last year, from fifth in 2017. According to the survey, 68 per cent of people cancelled or postponed their vacations due to work in 2018.

This is a disturbing set of data, as research has shown that employee output falls sharply after a 50-hour-work-week, and falls off a cliff after 55 hours — so much so that someone who puts in 70 hours produces nothing more with those extra 15 hours. This is evidence that those extra late nights in the office don't necessarily boost output, and can put even rational employees on the edge. As the Harvard Business Review wrote, as employees work longer, they "progressively work more stupidly on tasks that are increasingly meaningless".

Technology has made matters worse. Some of the risks associated with the use of technology, often right up till bedtime, include disrupted sleep patterns, depression, burnout and relationship problems. Thankfully, many companies have realised this doesn't help anybody. That explains the "right to disconnect". In Germany, for example, Daimler offers staff an auto delete function for their email while they are on holiday. Volkswagen has set its servers to stop delivering emails to mobile devices for some workers from 30 minutes after the end of the working day time until 30 minutes before it starts. Of course, this right does not apply in emergency situations.

But a common mistake companies make is to overwork their top talent. It is not fair that because a person is twice as good that they work twice as much. They will notice, and they will feel undervalued, mistreated and as if they are being punished for performing. They are the first to realise that their work quality may fall as a result.

The idea is to avoid a culture that venerates overwork because in such an environment, people internalise crazy hours as the norm. But those incredibly long days clearly aren't sustainable and, therefore, it's perhaps time to ask a better question: Are we working smart instead of just working hard?

There is just no point in finding yourself in a state of being where everyone feels 24x7 working is the best way to impress the boss who would be mighty impressed with their permanent state of busy-ness. The danger is that the CEO would end up with a bunch of multi-tasking, channel-flipping, fast-forwarding zombies, who are always banging the lift button without realising that it will only stop working.

While the 888 culture may not be feasible anymore, the option can't be the 997 way of working. The solution may lie somewhere else.

## CHINESE WHISPERS

### Booth loses WP status

Stella Maris College, located on RK Salai, at the heart of Chennai, has been the cynosure of all eyes in most past elections. The late AIADMK supremo J Jayalalitha lived behind the college; the late DMK supremo M Karunanidhi lived right opposite to this college. For decades they had cast their votes at the RK Salai booth. With the two dead, the polling station seems to have lost its sheen this election. While actor-turned-politician Rajinikanth and Karunanidhi's son Stalin went to the college to cast their votes, the security personnel there appeared relaxed and even found time to shake hands and take selfies with Rajinikanth.

### A 'fake' vote



A media house was caught on the wrong foot when it tweeted pictures of Google Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sundar Pichai surrounded by people stating that he had "marked his vote in this election". The picture went viral (above), with many retweeting the news. Some Twitter users from the state — Pichai hails from Tamil Nadu — also pointed out how a recent movie, Vijay-starrer *Sarkar*, had a character, Sundar Ramasamy, CEO of a multinational, who had returned to the country to cast his vote during an election. *Sarkar's* Ramasamy went to the extent of conducting a fresh election and forming a government on his own after finding that somebody had cast his vote. But as it turned out, the Pichai video was from a tweet in 2017, when he visited his alma mater IIT Kharagpur. In any case, being a US citizen, the Google CEO cannot cast his vote in an Indian election.

### Mosquito nets as wedding gifts

A joint Sun Pharma-Madhya Pradesh government initiative has helped bring down the incidence of malaria in Mandla (MP) by 90 per cent. Interestingly, the mosquito nets that were distributed among locals have taken pride of place among dowry gifts in many homes. When local coordinators of the programme visited families to assess the progress, they found that some families had neatly tucked away unopened packets of mosquito nets to give them as gifts to the groom's family when they marry off their daughters. Mosquito nets were also found in villages that were not targeted under the programme. When asked, locals told officials that they got them as wedding gifts.

# Nokia wants to topple Huawei

It is trying to expand in the US and China, while steering a path through a global technology showdown

STU WOO

The US and China are waging a war for technological supremacy. Nokia Corp, the onetime cellphone pioneer, is looking to play both sides. The Finnish company, which had nearly disappeared, has transformed itself into a global manufacturer of telecommunications equipment — such gear as cellular antennas, phone switches, internet routers and new components for next-generation 5G wireless systems — and is now the world's No 2 player behind China's Huawei Technologies Co.

In the US, the government has all but barred Huawei sales over fears its equipment could be commandeered by Chinese authorities to disrupt or spy on communications. The Trump administration is pushing such allies as Britain, Germany and Japan to do the same.

That's a part of Nokia's sales pitch as the world prepares to upgrade wireless systems to 5G, the superfast technology that could enable driverless cars and internet-controlled factories. Its sales staff has cold-called wireless carriers in countries where the US has stepped up its anti-China rhetoric, pushing its gear as an alternative.

Without secure 5G systems, "essential trade secrets will fall with those networks: Airplane innovations, pharmaceutical formulas, electric-car schematics," Nokia Chief Executive Rajeev Suri said in a February speech.

At the same time, while helping the US wage its campaign against Huawei, Nokia is seeking to build its presence in China. Largely through a joint venture with a state-owned Chinese enterprise, Nokia employs roughly 17,000 in its Greater China region, which includes Hong Kong and Taiwan. That is about triple the number of its employees in Finland. Together, the company runs a factory and six research facilities in the region.

"We want to be a friend of China," Suri said in an interview at Nokia headquarters in Espoo, a forested city across the bay from Helsinki. He serves on the Chinese premier's overseas CEO council, which advises the government on business.

Suri has said his goal is to be China's top foreign supplier. Last year, Nokia's business in its China region accounted for roughly 10 per cent of its sales, €2.1 billion (\$2.4 billion).

Nokia Chairman Risto Siilasmaa is the co-head of a bilateral business consortium that China President Xi Jinping and Finland President Sauli Niinistö established. During a June 2017 trip to China, Siilasmaa announced creation of a Nokia unit dedicated to helping Chinese internet companies expand overseas.

To play both sides of the US-China divide, Nokia is following a strategy used by Finland during the Cold War. The nation allied with European



countries while mollifying its eastern neighbour, the Soviet Union.

The playbook seems to be working. In July, Nokia signed a deal worth as much as \$1.1 billion to provide equipment and services to China Mobile Ltd., the world's biggest mobile carrier by subscribers. Three weeks later, it landed a \$3.5 billion deal to sell 5G equipment and services to T-Mobile US.

Nokia has a long way to catch up with Huawei, which began to expand beyond China two decades ago. Huawei found a global toehold by first winning over carriers in developing countries with cheap and reliable gear. Huawei has since gained customers across the West. Carriers say the company routinely offers hardware innovations months before Nokia does and is competitive on pricing.

Last summer, a Finnish wireless carrier set up a 5G network to test a wireless system from Huawei to deliver

high-speed Wi-Fi directly to homes. If successful, it could eliminate visits from a cable guy to hook up the home internet.

Nokia didn't introduce a comparable product until February.

"You can nitpick us on one or two products," said Suri, Nokia's chief executive, "but on the whole, we're competitive."

Nokia sold its phone business in 2013 to Microsoft Corp. for \$7 billion. By then, its market share was around 14 per cent. The company was left with its telecom-equipment enterprise, which it expanded with the purchase of French rival Alcatel-Lucent for \$17 billion in 2015.

The acquisition turned Nokia into a major seller of routers and other infrastructure to cable and internet providers, propelling the company past Swedish rival Ericsson AB to become the industry's No 2 player. Only Huawei was bigger.

Nokia hasn't had a profitable year

since 2015. The company has since gone through layoffs and executive turnover. Last year, Nokia reported revenue of €22.6 billion (\$25.5 billion) and a loss of €335 million. In January, it announced more layoffs, including 280 in Finland and 408 in France.

Company executives saw a potentially lucrative edge in the American market: Congress had effectively barred Huawei on national-security grounds in 2012, just as the Chinese company had started to make inroads in the US. Nokia's acquisition of former American giants Motorola and Lucent helped it earn Washington's seal of approval. The Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., a national-security panel, reviewed the purchase of Alcatel-Lucent in 2015 because the deal included Bell Labs, the famed New Jersey research center with a long history of sensitive government work. The panel gave its approval.

Nokia has gotten help at home and abroad. Finland's export credit agency, Finnvera, reached a novel deal in 2017 with its counterpart in Canada for both organizations to guarantee Verizon Communications Inc.'s purchase of Nokia equipment and services, worth at least \$1.5 billion.

Despite the US-led campaign against Huawei, the Chinese company expanded its lead in the global telecom-equipment market in 2018 with a 28.6 per cent share of revenue, compared with Nokia at 17 per cent and Ericsson at 13.4 per cent, according to research firm Dell'Oro Group.

Suri, Nokia's chief executive, has been cautious in public statements about Huawei, rarely naming Huawei or China as he addresses security risks raised by Washington and its allies.

Source: The Wall Street Journal

## INSIGHT

# From penury to affluence



VANI S KULKARNI & RAGHAV GAIHA

The Congress manifesto for 2019 elections announced with elan an ambitious Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) that guarantees a cash transfer of ₹72,000 a year to the poorest 20 per cent of the families without compromising fiscal prudence. This is inspired by Rawlsian difference principle that "...social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are... to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged".

The spate of recent commentary is largely ill-informed, hostile, and ideological, and occasionally favourable but with serious fiscal concerns. Some are even concerned about its perverse incentives such as discouraging job search. Apart from the mistaken concern for perverse incentives (lump sum transfers do not affect the labour-leisure choice), what the commentary lacks is solid empirical evidence one way or another. In a previous comment, we sought to fill this gap and offer insights into targeting of NYAY and how state environment matters.

Here we focus on income mobility from the poorest to moderately better-off and (relatively) affluent over the period 2005-12, based on a detailed analysis of India Human Development Survey 2015. This is the only nationwide panel survey of income distribu-

tion. Three income categories are constructed: poorest in 2005 (<20 per cent in terms of per capita income) who remained poorest in 2012; poorest in 2005 who moved up into the next higher income category (21 per cent <50 per cent) or moderately better-off, and the highest (>50 per cent) or relatively affluent.

Let us first consider salient facts of income mobility of households during this period. 34.50 per cent of the poorest in 2005 remained poorest in 2012, while a little over 37.5 per cent moved up into the category of moderately better-off and about 28 per cent into relatively affluent. Besides, per capita incomes rose markedly. The poorest who remained poorest recorded an increase of 1.35 times; the larger category of the poorest saw a markedly higher increase of 2.9 times; the moderately better-off doubled their income; in sharp contrast, the relatively affluent experienced the lowest increase of 1.06 times. Thus there was considerable upward income mobility from a state of penury to affluence.

Now let us examine the factors underlying the upward income mobility of the poorest, based on a state-of-art econometric model.

Poorest in the general category of castes were less likely than OBCs to move up into moderately better-off during 2005-11. In sharp contrast, they were more likely to be among (relatively) affluent. SCs did not show any upward movement. However, STs were less likely to move up the income ladder.

Illiterate poorest were more likely than those with middle level education to move up into moderately better-off but less likely to be (relatively) affluent during this period. Those with some education (one-five years of education) were more likely to be moderately better-off but less likely to be affluent. Matriculates were less



Labour households displayed a lower probability of moving up into moderately better-off but a higher probability of becoming (relatively) affluent

likely to be moderately better-off but more likely to be (relatively) affluent. Some of these results are seemingly implausible as educational attainments denote highest level of an adult in the household.

Occupations of the poorest reveal an interesting contrast. Labour households displayed a lower probability of moving up into moderately better-off but a higher probability of becoming (relatively) affluent. A similar pattern of income mobility is observed among artisanal households, those in organised business, salaried and others. Arguably, this could be due to the low threshold of (relative) affluence (that is, above the median income).

Poorest in 2005 exhibited a higher probability of becoming moderately better-off but a lower probability of moving up into (relatively) affluent relative to not-poor who remained not-poor.

State environment in terms of affluence (that is, NSDP per capita) and inequality a la Piketty (that is, share of top 1 per cent of state income distribution) reveals an interesting contrast. State affluence is associated with a low-

er probability of poorest becoming moderately better-off but a higher probability of being (relatively) affluent compared with not-poor who remained not-poor. The pattern is reversed with higher inequality's positive association with poorest becoming better-off but a negative association with becoming (relatively) affluent.

While NYAY is a first important step towards justice to the most deprived, much more is needed to enable a transition from penury to affluence in terms of investment in education, overcoming of caste barriers against advancement of the poorest (that is, exclusion of STs from the mainstream of economic activities), occupational diversification, state affluence, and curbing of income inequality drastically.

In conclusion, from penury to affluence is far from a fairy tale, as the poorest could be enabled to do much better.

Kulkarni is lecturer in Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, USA; Gaiha is (Hon.) professorial research fellow, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester

## LETTERS

### Calibrating interest rate Verify investment inflow



Your editorial "Rate or stance" highlights an important issue that has been brought into focus by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das' (pictured) speech in the recently concluded fund-bank meeting in Washington. One possible way to calibrate the interest rate response is possibly to look at the level of neutral rate. If one assumes that the neutral rate in the United States is about 3 per cent, while the same in India being at least 6 per cent, a 25 basis point rate response will amount to about 8 per cent of the neutral rate in the US while in India it will be about 4 per cent.

Given the rigidities in transmission in emerging markets, the effective rate response may even be lower. Hence there's possibly a case for calibrating rate response to the level of interest rates. The second issue you talk about in the edit is the need to ensure liquidity. Clearly, a central bank cannot target rate and liquidity simultaneously.

If the interest rate (including term deposit rates) is what the central bank policy is designed to target, it should be possible to provide any amount of liquidity to achieve the target.

Indranil Chakraborty Mumbai

This refers to your article "India-focused funds under Mauritius lens" (April 17). The verification of the sources of funds originating from foreign economies (also read portfolio investors) and flowing into a national system is as important as monitoring their external movement from the country of origin. Further the authenticity of the fund movement within a country will additionally ensure continuous monitoring of the funds trail not only within the country of origin but also globally. Illegal investments have social repercussions like terrorism and smuggling.

A background comparison in the inflow of investment has thus to be made by Mauritius along the lines of know your customer norms currently prevailing in India. This will help it prevent illegal funding by ensuring greater fund supervision in interactions with the foreign regulators. A stringent verification of investment inflow will, as a consequence, also enhance the reputation of Mauritius, and shed its image as a tax haven, providing better confidence to the international community.

C Gopinath Nair Kochi

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



## HAMBONE

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## Transparency in data

Questions abound about IMF and World Bank forecasts

Last week, the International Monetary Fund revisited its estimates of growth in Indian gross domestic product (GDP) for 2019-20 and 2020-21 and revised them both downwards by 20 basis points, to 7.3 per cent and 7.5 per cent in the respective years. Prior to that, the World Bank had also revised its estimates of Indian GDP growth downwards, to 7.2 per cent for 2019-20 — again, lower by 20 basis points. These estimates are not out of line with the current official growth numbers for the Indian economy reported by the Central Statistics Office and are dependent, according to the two multilateral agencies, on certain policy steps that would step up the growth momentum over the next two years. Even so, however, one question should be asked: What provoked the downgrading? After all, neither the World Bank nor the IMF has independent data collection sources on the ground in India. So it is unclear what additional data triggers a downward — or an upward — revision to the growth forecast by either agency.

This is a larger issue that speaks to the reliability of the growth forecasts from multilateral agencies. In a situation in which official statistics are increasingly coming under question, it is natural for many observers of the Indian economy to turn instead to “independent” sources for answers as to what is happening to macro-economic variables. However, if those independent sources are not clear as to why their estimates are better sourced and more reliably calculated than official statistics, then it is not certain why they would help anyone. What precisely is the relationship between the official headline numbers for growth issued by the CSO and the multilateral agencies’ predictions? The World Bank is, for example, clear that it uses for its data tables the local-currency data issued by each country. If so, what changes to its methodology does it make to ensure consistency when methods of calculation by domestic statistical agencies are changed, as has controversially happened in India? And what additional data could have come in that caused a change in forecasts? There should also be some accountability for problematic past forecasts. The World Bank and IMF should consider listing its past forecasts and the eventual outcomes for growth while providing an explanation, if any, for the diversions. This will provide accountability for its analysts and transparency to observers.

There are other questions that should also be asked about the World Bank and IMF GDP numbers. For one, the World Bank says that India’s GDP in 2017 was \$2.6 trillion and its GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms was \$11.9 trillion. This is a PPP scale-up of 4.76. But, in the same year, the World Bank claims Bangladesh’s PPP GDP was \$637 billion while in real terms it was \$250 billion. This is a scale-up of only 2.54. The difference is so stark as to be questionable. In other years and for other similar peer economies it can be even starker. Questions of PPP size and per-capita power are increasingly important in international negotiations. These anomalies should also be better explained.

## A rough road

The risk factors in Uber’s IPO prospectus are alarming

Ride-hailing pioneer Uber has filed the initial documentation for an initial public offer and is probably aiming to raise about \$10 billion, with a valuation of about \$100 billion. Alongside its lofty mission statement, Uber has printed a disclaimer suggesting that it expects its operating expenses to increase significantly, and that it may not achieve profitability. Even as it listed a large swathe of transportation-related businesses it is interested in, Uber has also warned investors that these could be dead-ends. The filing highlighted the platforms Uber runs across 700 cities in 63 countries. The core idea — using software to match rides and passengers — is, by far, the biggest contributor to revenues. Ride-hailing generated \$9.2 billion in 2018, out of the total revenues of \$11.3 billion, with an impressive 42 per cent growth rate over 2017. Uber is also into food delivery, developing self-driving cars, pooling, on-demand scooters and bicycles, freight-trucking and research into flying cars.

Ten years into its existence, Uber had a \$3 billion loss on operations in 2018. It has made \$987 million net profits mainly because of the sale of its South-East Asia business to Grab for \$5 billion. Uber also has \$6.9 billion in long-term debt. But Uber does seem upbeat about growth. It says it holds less than 1 per cent of market share in terms of the miles (4.7 trillion) logged on personal transport in the 63 nations where it has operations. It sees ride-hailing as a \$5.7-trillion “opportunity” and its meal delivery business, Uber Eats, as a \$795-billion one. The company estimates the Uber Freight business, where it matches shippers and carriers, as a \$700-billion market opportunity. Beyond this, there are “advanced technologies, including autonomous vehicle technologies”.

However, there are several problems: Ride-hailing, freight-matching and meal delivery are all easily replicable. Indeed, Uber has lost out to Didi, Yandex and Grab in key regions. It is fighting to retain market share versus Lyft in North America and Ola in India, which is one of its biggest markets. In the Indian meal delivery business, Uber Eats is fighting to gain traction against entrenched locals — Zomato and Swiggy. There are multiple regulatory worries as well. It has been hit by bans in several jurisdictions for flouting local laws. It has a love-hate relationship with its 3.9 million drivers, who have filed many class-action suits, demanding they be considered Uber employees. Plus, there are problems with an allegedly toxic work culture. Founder-promoter Travis Kalanick was forced out as chief executive officer after many unsavoury incidents and allegations. Uber has also been sued by Waymo, Alphabet’s autonomous vehicle arm, for intellectual theft, and it paid \$128 million in a settlement that may not be final.

The jury is out on whether Uber can surmount these issues and challenges. It sparked a revolution when it launched its ride-hailing concept. But it might find itself outpaced by later entrants or forced out by regulatory changes even though it initiated radical change in the transportation industry. While the profitability part can be treated as a standard disclaimer in IPO documents, the fact is that Uber’s risk factors run into 35,000 words. And the warning may indeed be real, as only 16 per cent of the technology firms that went public last year were profitable.



## The eternally optimistic IMF

The IMF is unwilling to counter the recent upbeat sentiment. But with conditions set to worsen, complacency is likely to have a high cost

In April 2018, the International Monetary Fund projected that the world economy would grow robustly, at just above 3.9 per cent that year and into 2019. The global upswing, the Fund said, had become “broader and stronger.” That view quickly proved too rosy. In 2018, the world economy grew only by 3.6 per cent. And in its just released update, the IMF recognizes that the ongoing slowdown will push global growth down to only 3.3 per cent in 2019.

As always, the Fund blames the lower-than-forecast growth on temporary factors, the latest culprits being US-China trade tensions and Brexit-related uncertainties. So, the message is that growth will rebound to 3.6 per cent next year. As Deutsche Bank points out, IMF forecasts imply that fewer countries will be in recession in 2020 than at any time in recent decades.

But the forces causing deceleration are still in place. Global growth this year will be closer to 3 per cent, with rising financial tensions in Europe.

The IMF keeps getting forecasts wrong because it misses the big picture. The economically advanced countries — which still produce about three-fifths of global output — have been experiencing a long-term slowdown since about 1970. The reason, Northwestern University’s Robert Gordon says, is that despite the promise of modern technologies,

ever-slower productivity growth has dragged down the growth potential of these rich economies.

As a result, China has come to play a dominant role in determining the pace of global growth. Besides its large size, the Chinese economy has extensive trade links that transmit its growth to the rest of the world.

When China grows, it sucks in imports from other countries, giving the global economy a big boost. Rapid Chinese growth revved up the world economy between 2004 and 2006, in 2009-10, and in 2017.

But China’s once-heady growth rates have necessarily fallen as the country has become richer. By historical standards, an economy as rich as China today should be growing at 3-5 per cent a year, rather than the 6 per cent or more that the Chinese authorities are trying to achieve through fiscal and credit stimulus.

Pushing too hard for extra growth has increased China’s financial vulnerabilities to worrying levels. By standard measures of credit growth and asset-price inflation, the country should have had a financial crisis by now. The Chinese authorities have therefore played yin and yang, stimulating growth to prevent a rapid slowdown, but reining in the stimulus to contain financial risks.

The latest cycle has been no different. In 2017,



ASHOKA MODY

## A plan for deeper India-China engagement

Would not all-round economic engagement between China and India be in the mutual interest of both nations? Most of the discussion in India on economic relations with China is focused on short-term trade and investment issues. But huge mutual benefits are possible in the medium- and long-term if the two countries can strategise and develop expanded and deeper linkages.

Whilst China is India’s largest bilateral trade partner (\$100 billion in 2018-19, having grown from a mere \$2 billion in 2002), the Sino-Indian trade relationship is still modest — even lower than that between China and Vietnam. China and India invest very little in each other — official cumulative investment from China in India is about \$8 billion to date — though there is increasing Chinese interest in Indian brown-field projects, particularly in the digital e-commerce space. Two-way tourism amounts to just over a million persons — a minuscule fraction of China’s 100 million-plus outbound tourists, or of India’s 18 million. As these figures reveal, the overall India-China canvas of engagement is narrow.

Further, over the years, India has persistently run a bilateral trade deficit with China, which now (2018-19) amounts to \$58 billion — a reduction of \$5 billion over the last year. The deficit causes political worry in India, even though trade or balance of payments figures are usually evaluated not in bilateral terms, but as an overall national picture. But since the bilateral deficit is a reality — and a worry — we need to find a way to deal with it.

India’s exports to China consist predominantly of commodities and raw materials such as iron ore. Whilst India is not yet competitive in many value-added exports, there are areas such as IT and pharmaceuticals where we do have advantages. As one example, the price of several Indian generic drugs is well below what the Chinese pay for their medicines, so a compelling case can be made that targeted Indian generic exports will help China reduce healthcare costs for its people. (*Dying to Survive* — a popular

Chinese film — depicts the true story of a man who smuggled anti-leukemia generic drugs from India to help over 1,000 Chinese patients. Convicted of the offence, he was released following an outcry in the social media). Since India imports Chinese drug intermediates (APIs) for many of its formulations, the Chinese API business is a natural ally to support the entry of India’s generics into China. Strange, but true.

Inbound tourism from China — a relatively low-hanging fruit — can also reduce the bilateral deficit, since tourism is an “invisible export”. How to attract Chinese tourists is well-known but not yet implemented: Simplified visa procedures, a stock of Mandarin-speaking tour guides, and imaginative tourism offers specially crafted for the Chinese outbound tourism market. Also, increased and more convenient flight connections, and the ability for tourists to pay using WeChat or Alipay. Above all, a creative communication strategy in China’s social, print and TV media, presenting India as a novel and engaging destination.

Inward investment from China would provide a positive infusion on the capital account, thus mitigating the deficit on the revenue account. China seeks opportunities where its considerable investible reserves can earn a decent return. India needs massive investment in infrastructure facilities, transportation, port development, green energy projects etc — areas where China has both strength and experience. But for Chinese investment to strengthen employment generation in India, our own reform processes must see acceleration.

Coming now to medium- and long-term Sino-Indian economic collaboration, there are four areas that should draw our attention:

Firstly, the nature of globalisation is changing: Being first-to-market with a product is becoming more important, just as pure labour cost arbitrage is no longer the key. Thus, intra-regional trade chains are gaining ground over the shipment of goods across trans-oceanic expanses. Also, Asian economies continue to be fast-growing, with the lion’s share of the future potential in trade, tourism, cross-border invest-

Chinese policy stimulus spread through the world, leading to the celebration of a “synchronous upsurge.” The most significant beneficiary was Europe, which depends heavily on trade. European Central Bank president Mario Draghi patted himself on his back for deft “monetary policy measures,” which he said had supported “broad-based” momentum.

When China withdrew its stimulus in early 2018, the IMF, the ECB and other forecasters blissfully continued to project high growth rates, even as the global economy slowed rapidly. Soon enough, Europe swooned, sending Italy into a technical recession and Germany to the threshold of one. (Oddly, the United Kingdom’s economy, for all its Brexit-related troubles, is doing marginally better than both.)

In the past few months, China’s leaders, concerned about their economy’s slowdown, began a new round of stimulus. Although data are not yet available, world trade growth appears to have risen slightly since then. European growth rates have ticked up, although only enough to alleviate immediate recessionary risks.

For the world economy, the continuing problem is the short-lived nature of Chinese stimulus. The OECD has already warned that the latest stimulus will drive up the worryingly high volume of corporate debt, and that over-indebted local governments will borrow more to finance wasteful infrastructure. Faced with the choice of financial crisis or slower growth, the Chinese authorities — and the rest of the world — will once again prefer slower growth. Thus, China’s deceleration will resume in the coming months, dampening world growth yet again. For now, no other country is in a position to take China’s place.

Darkening the global outlook further, the US economy is coming off the “sugar high” of fiscal stimulus and corporate cash repatriation from overseas. In addition, Germany’s slowdown in 2018 and early 2019 may not only reflect its sensitivity to slower world trade growth. Its economy may be finally descending from its high pedestal as its vaunted diesel-engine-based car industry struggles to meet pollution standards and growing competition from electric cars.

The real risk, however, lies in Italy. Running down the checklist of crisis indicators, all of Italy’s are flashing red. The economy has zero — possibly negative — productivity growth, which makes it impossible to generate internal momentum to pull out of recession. The ECB has no room to help. Italy’s debt-to-GDP ratio is above 130 per cent, and the European Union’s absurd budget rules, in any event, make fiscal stimulus nearly impossible. Tremors along the Italian fault line will spread quickly to France, which has only slightly better indicators and also little scope for an effective policy response to a serious downturn.

The IMF, always reluctant to ring alarm bells on the global economy, is especially unwilling to counter the recent upbeat sentiment. But with economic conditions set to worsen, complacency is likely to have a high cost.

*The writer, a former mission chief for Germany and Ireland at the International Monetary Fund, is currently Visiting Professor of International Economic Policy at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University. He is the author of EuroTragedy: A Drama in Nine Acts.*

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## India’s fake news story



### BOOK REVIEW

VIKRAM JOHRI

Alt News was launched in 2017 by Pratik Sinha and Arjun Sidharth. The book, it is rich in visual and semantic content. Picking apart these carefully constructed information bits, the writers provide original sources of the photographs and videos that are circulated with the variously attributed, at least in part, nefarious ends.

Mr Sinha and colleagues have compiled their major findings since the website’s founding into the book under review. From the BJP’s massive social media army posting (dis)information online to the Opposition’s selective targeting of the prime minister, the book covers a gamut of fake news propaganda that blurs the line between fiction and truth.

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cated that the violence was the spontaneous outcome of India’s loss to China in the 1962 war. In truth, the book informs us, the photo is from before the war and shows Nehru being protected by a security guard during a particularly well-attended Congress meeting. Without this clarifying context, it is easy to fall prey to the fake message’s interpretation.

The book is chock-a-block with such instances and notes on how the Alt News team meticulously tracks the origins of fake news using such tools as Google’s reverse image search. While the focus is largely on political personalities, the book also looks at pernicious events involving common citizens, such as the spate of mob lynchings around false claims of child abductions that took place in mid-2018.

Although the book is a valuable compendium of fake news claims and the website’s commendable efforts to invali-

date them, it provides no discussion on why fake news has become such a potent force in our divided times, and why certain kinds of fake news find far greater traction than others.

Consider the Nehru fake image discussed above. One Twitter user who shared it wrote: “Why didn’t he disperse Congress when Gandhi asked Nehru? He kept it for Indira, then for next and next. Is this nation a family property of Nehru?...” One notices here that the picture — which, even in its fakeness, ostensibly spoke about India’s defeat to China in 1962 — has little to do with the poster’s comment.

In other words, the fake news machine works not merely to bring up particular historical points that continue to rankle — India’s defeat, say — but to use such moments to make a larger commentary about historical figures. The fake picture was used by the Twitter user in this case to criticise dynastic politics to which the Congress, more than any other party, has fallen victim.

This phenomenon is seen, most per-

niciously, when the propagation of fake news sows communal discord. One example is the stories from last year circulating about Rohingya Muslims who sought asylum in India after being thrown out of Myanmar. Accounts portraying these refugees as murderers out to destabilise India greatly enlarged their numbers within the Indian territory.

Although the book deflates such claims, it refuses to analyse the source of such anxiety. It is no secret that illegal immigration from Bangladesh has altered the demography of border districts in West Bengal, a fact that has been used by some political parties to adapt their vote appeals in the current election season.

Speaking of such matters is verboten in traditional media for fear of destabilising India’s coalition of coexisting faiths. But not addressing something does not wish it away. While fake news can be reprehensible, in some circumstances it can allow the articulation of ideas and anxieties that are too controversial to be raised by un-fake media.

*India Misinformed* takes a measured, non-partisan stance towards the phenomenon it seeks to expose. There are exposés of fake news against both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress President Rahul Gandhi, though, of course, the numbers pertaining to the latter are far higher given the zeal with which the BJP IT army functions.

Yet, the book would have made for richer reading had it gone beyond chronicling and discrediting this menace of the modern media age and looked into the reasons and conditions that allow it to not just exist but thrive in a manner that has now become the headache of governments, investigation agencies and tech companies.

**INDIA MISINFORMED: The True Story**  
Pratik Sinha, Dr Sumaiya Shaikh and Arjun Sidharth  
HarperCollins, ₹399, 270 pages

*The writer is an Independent Director on corporate boards and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi*

# Opinion

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2019



## CHILDREN-FIRST ASSISTANCE MUST

Panos Moutzias, UN humanitarian coordinator for Syria crisis

Children should be treated first and foremost as victims. Any solutions must be decided on the basis of the best interest of the child... irrespective of children's age, sex or any perceived family affiliation

## Rational Expectations

SUNIL JAIN

sunil.jain@expressindia.com  
@thesuniljain



# It's just Hindutva, not development

BJP may be right that Sadhvi Pragya's charges were trumped up, but fielding her before an acquittal suggests anything goes

**T**HOUGH THE ELECTION campaign started off as somewhat centred around development issues—hence the Opposition's talk of joblessness, farm distress, etc.—with nationalism-read-as-Hindutva as the backdrop, it has rapidly deteriorated into an all-out communal one. So, on the BJP's side, union minister Maneka Gandhi set the ball rolling by telling Muslim voters that she wouldn't want to give them jobs if they didn't vote for prime minister Narendra Modi; given that Gandhi repeated the threat to even Hindu villagers by saying villages that didn't vote for Modi would find their work getting done last, though, suggests her bullying may not have been restricted to just Muslims.

On the other side, BSP chief Mayawati made a clear appeal to the Muslim community, asking it to vote as one against the BJP, proving the adage—or at least the belief among politicians—that Muslims vote their religion while Hindus vote their caste. Punjab politician and former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu made the same appeal to Muslims in Bihar. In other words, the battle has clearly been cast as one of Hindutva vs caste (plus Islam), at least in key north Indian states where the Opposition has aligned along caste lines.

On Wednesday, the BJP, in turn, dramatically ratcheted up the Hindutva component of its campaign by announcing the candidature of Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur in Bhopal against Congress leader and ex-Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh. Given Sadhvi Pragya is still under trial for her role in the Malegaon blasts in 2008 that killed six Muslims, and that Digvijay Singh was the principal architect of the term 'Hindu terror'—used to arrest people like Sadhvi Pragya—the BJP top brass has obviously decided to make this a Hindutva-anti-Hindutva battle.

As part of his 'Hindu-terror' campaign—as a counter to the term 'Islamic terror'—for instance, Digvijay Singh had even said that the Batla House encounter where two terrorists were killed was, in fact, a fake; in that case, then home minister P Chidambaram had said the encounter was genuine. Singh even claimed Mumbai Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare had told him—before Karkare was killed in the 26/11 attacks—that he feared Hindu extremists would kill him; Karkare was in charge of the investigation that eventually led to Sadhvi Pragya's arrest. Singh, in fact, made this statement at the launch of a book that claimed 26/11 was actually an RSS plot, not one hatched by Pakistani terrorists.

To that extent, pitting an alleged victim of the 'Hindu-terror' tag versus the originator of the concept appears a master coup since the BJP has, for long, held that the charges were trumped up. So while the initial charges talked of meetings among the conspirators that Sadhvi Pragya was part of, later the charges centred around mobile phone calls between the conspirators. While those defending Pragya spoke of big gaps in the prosecution's arguments, including the call data records as well as the register of the circuit house in Indore where the accused are supposed to have met, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) which took over the case in 2011, said the most crucial evidence—a statement by Yashpal Bhadana who said he was present at some of the meetings where Sadhvi Pragya was present—was incorrect as Bhadana later said he made the statement under duress. Indeed, Sadhvi Pragya herself has alleged severe torture—the hospital report mentioned rupturing of the stomach and lung membranes—and duress when she was in custody, and was repeatedly denied bail though she was even diagnosed with cancer and needed treatment. The public prosecutor even argued that the tissue samples tested may have belonged to someone else!

The NIA also said that Sadhvi Pragya's motorcycle—used to plant the bomb—had been in possession of another accused, Ramchandra Kalsangra, for two years before the blast. In the event, NIA gave Sadhvi Pragya a clean chit. While the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) charges were dropped by the court, Sadhvi Pragya is still being tried under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

While the BJP may be right in believing the 'Hindu terror' cases were trumped up—last month, the NIA special court acquitted the other 'Hindu terror' accused Swami Aseemanand and three others in the 2007 Mecca Masjid blast case—the fact of the matter is that Sadhvi Pragya has not been acquitted by court. If the BJP feels comfortable with fielding Sadhvi Pragya, then how can it object to other parties fielding those accused of murder or rape. According to the Association of Democratic Reforms, 17% (213) of the candidates in Phase 1 of the elections had criminal cases against them, of which 12% (146) were serious cases; 10 related to murder and 25 were attempt to murder. In Phase 2, 16% (251) of the candidates had criminal cases against them, of which 11% (167) were serious cases; six related to murder and 25 were attempt to murder. Around 30% of the BJP's candidates, so far, have criminal cases against them and around 20% of the candidates have serious criminal cases.

Sadhvi Pragya may well win the elections, but the "people's court" is not a substitute for the real thing. Ideally, the BJP should have waited for Sadhvi Pragya to be acquitted. Indeed, India needs special courts to try such political cases since it is possible—like the BJP is arguing in the case of 'Hindu terror' charges—the charges are trumped up. It is certainly curious that from 2008, when Sadhvi Pragya was first arrested till 2014 when the BJP came to power—it is only after this that allegations can be made, if any, of interference with the investigation—the investigation was not completed and the case was put to trial. But in fielding Sadhvi Pragya, the BJP has let short-term electoral gains dictate its policies. The election is now mainly about Hindutva, not development.

## BrainDead?

Yale research plants the germ for restoring brain function after death

**H**OW DEAD IS dead? Scientists have long considered the puzzle. With modern medicine, clinical death is no longer death, only a pause if luck, and extreme medical competence, is on your side. Now, Yale researchers have queered the pitch further, by restoring some cellular activity in brains removed from slaughtered pigs. The brains—predictably—did not show sort of consciousness or alertness. The study, instead, showed that the death of brain cells could be halted and that some connections in the brain were restored, but without any meaningful form of awareness. The research, conducted by Yale University scientists, grew out of efforts to enhance the study of brain development, disorders and evolution.

Results of the experiment run contrary to long-held principles relating to the death of the brain—though these had been challenged in recent years by scientists—that vital cellular activity in the brain ceases almost immediately after oxygen and blood flow are cut off. The limited rejuvenation of activity was achieved four hours after death by infusing the brains with a special chemical solution. Although the team of scientists stressed that the study offers no immediate therapeutic benefits for humans, the results pave the way for new research that may ultimately help doctors find ways to revive brain function in patients for restoring brain cells damaged by injury or sickness. In the meanwhile, the study certainly blurs, even if by a tiny bit, the already foggy lines of death. This, in turn, introduces unprecedented complexities. For instance, with the march of research in restoring consciousness, how will our views on euthanasia change?

● **STATE OF THE FISC**  
ACTUAL FISCAL DEFICIT FOR FY18 IS NOT ONLY LOWER THAN ITS REVISED ESTIMATE (2.5% VS 3.1%) BUT ALSO LOWER THAN THE ACTUAL DEFICIT FOR FY17, MARKING THE FIRST CONSOLIDATION IN YEARS

# The enigmatic finances of India's states

PRANJUL BHANDARI

Chief economist, India  
HSBC Securities and Capital Markets



**I**NDIA'S PUBLIC SECTOR borrowings remain sticky and at elevated levels; however, the underlying mix has been changing. The period FY13-17 was characterised by the Central government lowering its fiscal deficit, and states offsetting some of those efforts by running wider deficits in almost each of the years. Between FY12 and FY17, the consolidated state deficit had risen from 1.9% to 2.8%. However, after lowering the deficit every year since FY13, the Central government paused in FY18. The Central government's fiscal deficit came in at 3.5% of GDP, the same as in the previous year. The FY19 and FY20 estimates of 3.4% each also did not show much consolidation either. On the other hand, after rising almost every year since FY13, the state fiscal deficit fell notably in FY18. What is driving this fall? And are we at an inflection point for state finances?

At the start of a fiscal year, every state announces the 'budget estimate' for the fiscal deficit. Towards the end of the year, they announce a 'revised estimate'. And, one year later, they release the 'actual' data. Actual data is superior as it is audited and, therefore, final. The coexistence of three versions of the data would not have created much problem had it not been for the fact that over the last few years, the 'actual' aggregate state fiscal deficit is turning out to be lower than the revised estimate. And the difference is rising. This creates a problem. Until the

actual data are available a year later, how does one think about the state fiscal stance? Is it rising, or falling? What is not subject to revision, though, is every state's net market borrowings. Over the last three years (FY16-18), net market borrowings are funding about 80% of the state fiscal deficit (excluding UDAY borrowings). Assuming that the proportion remains unchanged, a rough estimate of the 'actual' fiscal deficit can be worked out.

The actual fiscal deficit has been higher than the previous year's fiscal deficit for almost every year between FY13 and FY17.

However, FY18 seems different. RBI had pegged the FY18 'revised estimate' at 3.1% of GDP, higher than the 2.8% 'actual' deficit of FY17. But the study of recently released 18 state budget documents suggests that the FY18 'actual' could be closer to 2.5% of GDP, lower than the 2.8% 'actual' fiscal deficit in FY17. This marks the first notable fall in the 'actual' state fiscal deficit in five years.

Net market borrowings fell by 0.2% of GDP between FY18 and FY19. Assum-

ing that the proportion of state deficit funded by market borrowings remains at least 80% as in the previous year, the FY19 actual fiscal deficit to be released next year will turn out to be lower than the FY19 revised estimate of 2.9%.

FY20: The 18 state budget documents suggest that India's states are pegging a fiscal deficit of 2.5% of GDP for FY20. This implies that the FY20 state deficit, too, may be no worse or no better than in FY19. All said, while the states are running higher deficits than a decade ago, they have inched lower compared to their FY17 highs. And perhaps there are some good reasons supporting this. A confluence of factors was pressuring RBI over the FY13-17 period: (1) The Seventh Pay Commission (SPC) called for a higher wage and pension bill. (2) UDAY borrowings raised the interest bill. (3) Lower oil prices hurt tax revenues. (4) And the slowdown in the real estate sector depressed stamp duty revenue. Some of these drivers have faded. Most SPC wage increases are done. UDAY borrowings are done. And oil prices are higher than a few years ago.

Alas, things don't look good with all parts of the fiscal picture put together: -

■ Elevated borrowings: Despite states running lower fiscal deficits, borrowings in FY20 are likely to grow faster than nominal GDP growth and are likely to remain elevated at 8% of GDP. There are three reasons for this.

■ PSE borrowings: These have 'galloped' in recent years. Almost half of the ₹4.5 trn PSE borrowings in FY19 were by the Food Corporation of India.

■ Central government borrowings: Borrowings are likely to rise 24% y-o-y in FY20, led by a sticky fiscal deficit and a rapid rise in the repayment bill.

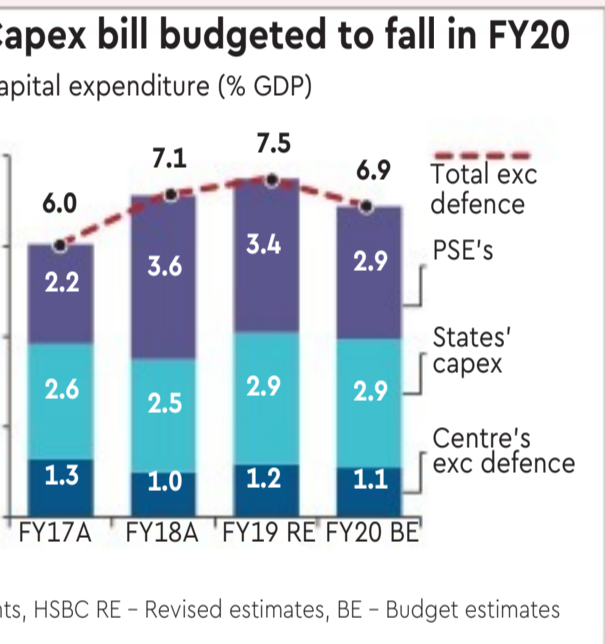
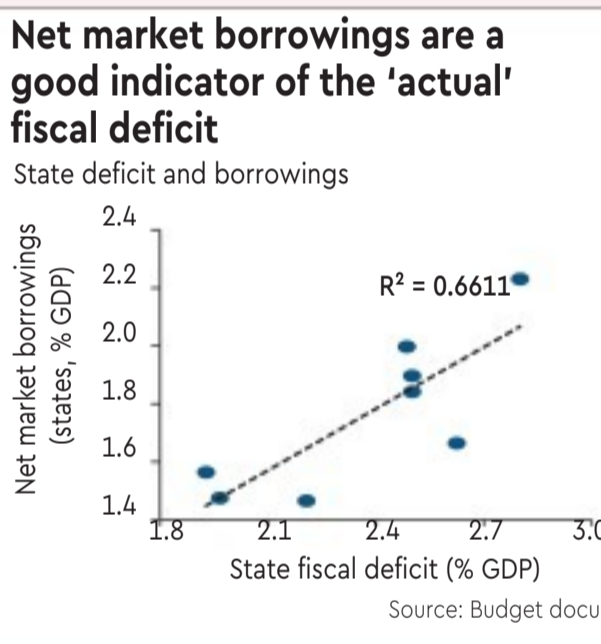
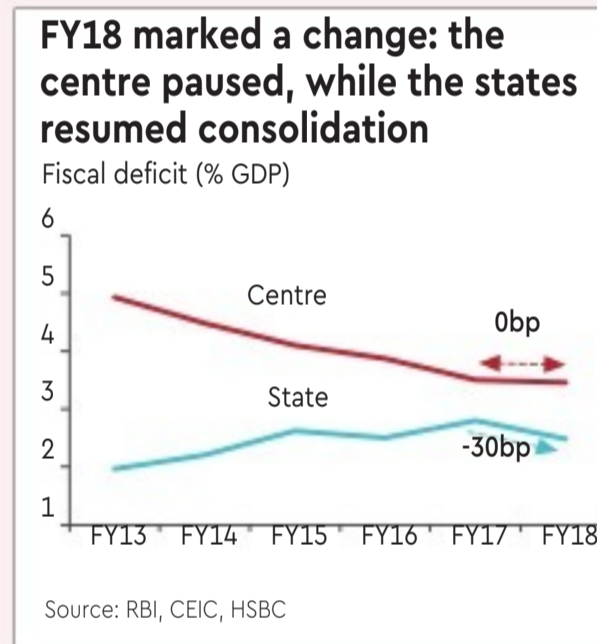
■ State redemptions: With state borrowings having risen over the last few years, the redemption bill is on the rise. It has risen from 0.2% of GDP in FY16 to 0.7% of GDP in FY19. Looking ahead, it cannot be said with certainty that they are at an inflection point. Two of the reasons are as follows:

■ Oil: The value-added sales tax on petroleum products accounts for 15% of the states' self-collected tax revenues. This leaves them vulnerable to oil price volatility.

■ Rural schemes: Over the last year, several states have announced farm loan waivers and direct cash transfers. If more and more states join the fray, without 'weeding' out old schemes, this could lead to a ratcheting up of current expenditure.

For FY20, all three arms of the government—the Centre, the states and the PSE—are budgeting a lower capex spend. There is a double whammy for capex. The government is not spending much on investment. And the private sector is being crowded out as the government is running an elevated fiscal deficit. Over time this could weigh on India's potential growth. Elevated borrowings and insufficient capital expenditure are likely to keep us on guard, despite some improvements in state finances.

Edited excerpts from HSBC's *India's enigmatic state finances* (April 15)  
Co-authored by **Aayushi Chaudhary** and **Deep Nagpal**



# Utilising endowment funds of DMFs

Endowment funds created through District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) can increase the period for which funds are available and protect projects against price fluctuations

JOYITA GHOSE

Associate fellow at the Centre for Resource Efficiency and Governance at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

**A RECENT REPORT** of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on coal and steel examines the functioning of District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) and finds that fund utilisation has been much lower than expected. DMFs are district-level institutions that receive a share of mineral revenues and use these to fund projects to improve access to drinking water, healthcare, education, and sanitation, amongst others. The report of the Standing Committee states that only 23% of the total amount collected had been utilised till August 2018. More recent numbers tell a similar story, with approximately 23% of the ₹245.3 billion collected by DMFs across the country having been utilised till January.

High fund utilisation is not always an indicator of a scheme's success as it does not tell us much about the quality of assets created or services provided. Nonetheless, the failure to use DMF funds seems to be a disservice to mining-affected communities. However, the issue is a larger one. While making funds available locally is a necessary first step, it is not a solution in and of itself. The capacity to use DMF funds effectively needs to be improved, while also continuing to use existing mineral revenues appropriately.

In this context, it may be worthwhile exploring a lesser known aspect of DMFs—the provision to establish endowment funds. Unlike annual budgetary funds that use mineral revenues to finance projects for the duration of mining, endowment funds invest a part of this revenue to continue to get returns on investments even after the minerals are depleted. For example, in the US, the Alaska Permanent Fund invests a certain portion of the mineral revenues to provide an

annual dividend to all residents of Alaska, much like a universal basic income.

In fact, the Economic Survey 2016-17 discussed creating a permanent fund at the national level in India into which all mining revenue can be deposited, along these lines. It recommended re-distributing any income that is earned from investments to individuals affected by mining.

While this specific recommendation has not been implemented in practice, the central guidelines for DMFs permit them to keep a portion of their receipts in an endowment fund. States such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu have provided for establishment of endowment funds, but without details on how they are to be operationalised. Goa, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, however, have specified that 50%, 20%, and 0.5% of DMF revenues, respectively, should be transferred to an endowment fund.

Given its experience in attempting to establish the Goa Iron Ore Permanent Fund, Goa has provided the most details on operationalising the fund. Half the amount collected by DMFs is to be used to fund projects, and the rest is to be invested in a FD/government bond/bank bond. Of the interest earned, 90% may be used to fund projects and the rest must be re-invested to enable the corpus to remain financially sustainable. However, since the formulation of the Goa DMF rules in 2016, progress has been slow and

mired in legal controversy due to lapses in registering the DMF appropriately.

Thus, while some states have allowed for the creation of endowment funds in their DMF rules, there is limited information on the functioning of endowment funds in these states, and the challenges which state governments face in operationalising them.

The regulatory frameworks and practices that take shape around DMFs in the coming years, including those pertaining to endowment funds created through DMFs, will determine the extent to which they are able to deliver on their promise of equitable development for mining-affected communities. Endowment funds can increase the period for which funds are available and protect projects against price fluctuations. However, they may lead to losses if they are mismanaged through faulty investments and require diverting money from projects that meet communities' immediate requirements.

The experience with existing endowment funds shows that creating rules that outline saving, investment, and spending processes clearly, and develop a monitoring framework that encourages compliance with these rules can prevent mismanagement. Monitoring and accountability can be strengthened through making information about funds publicly available, involving key stakeholders such as representatives of affected communities in decision making, and instituting independent audit mechanisms.

**While some states have allowed for the creation of endowment funds, there is limited information on the functioning of these funds**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Jet in hot water

Our worst fears have been realised with Jet Airways deciding to temporarily ground operations after its lenders declined a ₹600-crore lifeline, putting 20,000 jobs and thousands of crores in passenger refunds on the line. India's longest-serving private airline is also in the dock for non-payment of dues to vendors and banks. The National Aviator's Guild's distress call to the PM to bail out the employees appears to be a cry in the wilderness. However, with the consortium confirming receipt of bids for the stake sale, there is a ray of hope yet for Jet  
— Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Doled out data

With recent incidents on leakage of personal data via unsecured interfaces and non-encrypted storage of passwords across social media servers coming to light, serious questions are being posed over the implementation of regulations and cognisance towards security needs of consumers. Accountability of owners should be ascertained with a greater consistency to encourage business ethics and adhere to content management, information/financial security and data encryption norms. Recurring deviations call for due diligence and standardisation across diktats in order to promote consumer awareness and fulfill security requirements, especially when most e-commerce platforms at present offer a multitude of services and continue to focus on diversification to widen their horizons. Prior to a market rollout, products/services must be optimised for performance and thoroughly validated/tested for compliance to integrity/confidentiality benchmarks  
— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



ILLUSTRATION: ROHNITH PHORE

**VIVIAN FERNANDES**

Author blogs at [www.smartindianagriculture.com](http://www.smartindianagriculture.com)



● **CHLOROPHILE**

# India's silent chickpea revolution

Once a winter favourite for farmers in North India, the crop lost ground there to wheat and rice. But, in Andhra Pradesh's hot climes, it is being resurrected by research efforts of agri-scientists

**T**HE ADAPTATION OF chickpea or chana, a winter crop edged out of northern India by the Green Revolution in wheat and rice, to the warm climates of south and central India, is an event that is perhaps little known outside the realm of agricultural researchers. The green revolutions in wheat and rice, enabled by the crossing of traditional Indian varieties with short-statured, high-yielding and fertilizer-responsive ones imported respectively from the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) in Mexico and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines resulted in a quick step-up of both yields and output. But the "Silent Chickpea Revolution of Andhra Pradesh" took a long time to bake. The pace was slow and the "revolution" was hardly noticed.

Even as chickpea was being displaced from northern India, it helped that the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) was set up near Hyderabad in 1972. Like the two organisations mentioned before, it is part of a global network of 15 agricultural research institutions, collectively known as CGIAR that were put together by the World Bank. Apart from sorghum, groundnut, pigeonpea and millets, ICRISAT took up chickpea for breeding.

The chickpea varieties cultivated in northern India thrived in cold winters and matured in about 150 days. In south and

central India, the winters, if they can be called so, are short. The crop has to face dry and hot weather as it matures and is likely to be attacked by wilt and pod borers.

The first set of varieties developed at ICRISAT, wilt-resistant and maturing in about 100 days, was released in 1993 after four years of strategic and 12 years of applied research. ICRISAT's vast collection of propagating material (or germplasm) with useful traits aided the adaptation. These varieties were trialled at the research stations of state agricultural universities at Jabalpur, Guntur, Nandyal, Sehora, Akola and Rahuri. The trials were coordinated by the Indian Institute of Pulses Research (IIPR) in Kanpur. It was a collaborative effort. The initial varieties did not click with farmers. The second set was released between 1990 and early 2000s after six more years of research. They won over the farmers of Andhra Pradesh and by 2012 had replaced Annigeri, a desi variety released in 1978. Farmers gained from higher yields and lower unit cost of production.

Among the new popular varieties was JG 11 developed at the research station in Sehora, near Bhopal, with ICRISAT lines. The station was then part of the Jabalpur-based Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishya Vidyalaya. In the all India trials it was found suitable for southern India. Chickpea breeder S K Rao who was at the Jabalpur university recalls requisitioning about one quintal of the seed from the breeder in Sehora and producing in two years about 500 quintals

of nucleus seed through a network of 55 farmers. Rao, who is vice-chancellor of a state agricultural university in Gwalior, is credited with helping set up Madhya Pradesh's seed supply system. He tapped the State Farms Corporation and the seed corporations of Andhra and Karnataka to produce foundation and certified seeds which were distributed to farmers of the respective states. JG 11, a desi variety, resistant to wilt and tolerant to the pod borer replaced Annigeri over time. Both have similar maturities—100 days—but JG 11 can give a yield of 1,483 kg per hectare on the lower side, about 50 percent more than that of Annigeri.

Other varieties followed. Panjabrao Deshmukh agricultural university in Akola released KAK 2 in 1999. It is a bold Kabuli variety maturing in 90-110 days, with a yield of about two tonnes per hectare. From the state agricultural university at Rahuri in 2002 came Vihar, a large-seed Kabuli variety with a yield of about 1,800 kg per hectare. The regional research station in Nandyal of the state agricultural university in Hyderabad set up in 2004, released varieties like NBeG 3 in 2012 which tolerates drought and heat. NBeG 119 is a bold Kabuli variety, a hundred seeds of which weigh 42 grams (compared to 23 grams for JG 11). NBeG 47, released in 2015 is a machine-harvestable variety. It is about two feet tall—double the height of manually-harvested ones—with branches starting about one foot from the ground. In all about more than 20 varieties have been released for Andhra.

Owing to these developments, chickpea has made up for the loss of area in northern India. In Punjab, the chickpea area, which averaged 3.2 lakh hectares between 1971 and 1980, fell to about 4,400 hectares during 1971-80. Now, Punjab does not figure among the major chickpea-producing states. At 580,000 hectares, the area in Uttar Pradesh has declined to a third of its 1971-80 level. But the country's chickpea area of 7.5 million ha during 1971-75 has increased to 8.22 million hectares. Among the five major chickpea-growing states, Andhra Pradesh has the lowest area, averaging 538,000 hectares between 2010-11 and 2015-16. But it is an eight-fold increase from the average of 64,700 hectares during 1971-80. Madhya Pradesh, the largest chickpea producing state has seen a seven fold increase to over three million hectares during this period. Karnataka's area under chickpea has grown six-fold to a little less than one million hectares, while that of Maharashtra has increased more than three-fold to 1.44 million hectares. Getting farmers to grow a new crop is not easy. Some will take the initiative, while others will await the success of the first-movers. The chickpea plant is also not precocious. Effectively, each will yield about 20 good seeds. Multiplication takes time. The seed rate is also high. An acre needs about 40 kg of seed, while for

pigeonpea or tur 3 kg will suffice.

Among the new breed of chickpea farmers, Andhra's have been the most progressive. They are quick to adopt new seeds and have a high seed replacement rate. The state's average yield is the highest at 1,153 kg per hectare, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 1,055 kg per hectare. Within Andhra, Prakasam district leads with an average yield of 1,710 kg per hectare, followed by Kurnool at 1,143 kg per hectare. In YSR district (formerly Kadapa), the average yield is 847 per hectare. The national average is 910 kg per hectare. It is noteworthy, that these yields have come from varieties with abridged maturities.

Average annual production of chickpea has risen from the annual average of 4.88 million tonnes during 1970-80 to 7.38 million tonnes during 2005-15. This is a reason for India achieving sufficiency in pulses. "The production of pulses has stabilized," says Narendra Pratap Singh, Director of IIPR, who coordinated the all India chickpea trials for nine years till 2014-15. Chickpea has been the prime contributor, as it accounts for 46 percent of the country's pulses production.

"Chickpea is best and easy farming method," says Y. Govardhan Reddy, 42, of Balapanur village in Kurnool district's Panyam mandal. A traditional chickpea grower he was the first to switch to the new varieties in his village. He produces seed for the Nandyal research station, which fetches him a 25 percent mark-up over the market price of the pulse. Reddy says he gets 10 quintals of output per acre, which is higher than the average productivity of the district. At the market price of Rs 4,500 a quintal (lower than the government's support price), he should have made a decent profit, had the drought this year not let him down.

Chickpea needs two irrigations. A bag of DAP fertiliser is enough for one acre. The cost of cultivation ranges between Rs 12,000 to Rs 16,000 an acre, excluding the value of family labour and own capital, according to V Jayalakshmi, Principal Scientist at the Nandyal research station. More than 95 percent of the chickpea area in Andhra is under new varieties, she says.

B Sreeramulu, 45, also of Balapanur village, has seen his yield shrink to 3 quintals an acre—a third of usual—despite irrigation. It is an aberration that does not dishearten him. "This is a guarantee crop," he says. Reddy grows a variety of pulses including chickpea on 30 acres which he cultivates jointly with four brothers.

At Pathakandukurru village in Kurnool district's Allagadda mandal, R. Radhakrishna, 35, has planted NBeG 4, a machine harvestable, large-seed desi chana variety. Last year, he harvested 7.5 quintals per hectare which he sold as seed, at a premium. A graduate in science with a diploma in agriculture, Radhakrishna finds chickpea a better bet than mungbean because it needs less water, fertiliser, pesticides and labour.

There are inventive farmers like M Venkatrami Reddy, 65, of Kotapadu village in Kurnool district's Kolimigundla mandal. He has planted chickpea on ridges, with furrows in between for irrigation to minimise water use. He hopes to save a substantial sum by displacing workers with bullocks for weeding. Because of the wide spacing between ridges, he had used 15 kg of seed per acre (a third of the norm) but had hoped to harvest about four quintals more. A lack of rains has scuttled his plans.

"The adoption of new varieties and good agronomic practices," are aspects that India can learn from Myanmar and Ethiopia, says Pooran Guar, Research Director for Asia at ICRISAT. He has overseen chickpea breeding at the institute since he moved from Jabalpur University in 2001. (In April ICRISAT awarded him for chickpea breeding). In Myanmar, 96% of the chickpea varieties are ICRISAT's. Ethiopia has a high average productivity of about two tonnes per hectare. Comparing India, where chickpea is grown in diverse conditions, to the farmers "is not fair," he says. But chickpea farmers in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka can gain by imitating those of Andhra. By planting new varieties and given them proper care, they can raise their yield considerably.

**Getting farmers to grow a new crop is not easy. Some will take the initiative, while others will await the success of the first-movers.**

## A clean Yamuna soon?

**RC ACHARYA**

Former member, Railway Board



If all of DJB's ambitious plans materialise, the river may yet be saved

**L**IKE MANY INDIAN RIVERS, Yamuna suffers the distinction of being grossly abused and polluted. As the main water body of Delhi NCR, with its politically charged environment and scores of activists, its state has also attracted a lot of judicial scrutiny.

Ranging from rampant mining in Uttarakhand on its river banks to its deteriorating water quality, poor environmental regulation, inadequate waste management and unregulated construction on its flood plains, a host of issues plaguing the Yamuna has had both the Supreme Court of India and the High Court of Delhi coming down heavily on the government departments charged with ensuring its health.

Based on a news item in 1994 titled 'And quiet flows the maili Yamuna', the Supreme Court had taken suo-motu action, emphasising that the authorities need to take effective steps to deal with the quality of water. In order to tackle this problem on a war footing, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) was set up through an Act of Delhi Legislative Assembly in April 1998.

Though it has been meeting the needs of supplying wholesome filtered water to the National Capital Territory of Delhi, whose population has spurred to more than 1.6 million now, it is the shortcomings in preventing pollution of Yamuna that has generated the maximum criticism of the DJB.

Against an estimated generation of around 720 mgd (million gallons a day) of sewage, the installed capacity for treatment by DJB is 620 mgd, of which only 490 mgd is being utilised. Or, 130 mgd of untreated effluent sewage flows into the Yamuna.

The 8,100-km-long internal, peripheral and 200-km-long main trunk sewers covering 130 urban villages, 54 villages and a whopping 266 unauthorised colonies, are able to provide sewerage facilities to only around 70% of the population of Delhi. Sewerage system needs to be laid in the remaining unauthorised colonies—though work is already in progress in 355 such colonies.

A Sewerage Master Plan 2031 envisages laying of sewer lines in all unsewered areas in a phased manner so as to meet the demands by that year. DJB has also taken up an ambitious project to rehabilitate 167 kms of existing peripheral and 21 kms of trunk sewers.

Under Yamuna Action Plan (YAP) III, in addition to rehabilitating old STPs (Sewage Treatment Plants) at Kondli and Rithala, a brand new 1.24 mgd capacity STP is to be built at Okhla to replace the existing smaller capacity ones.

DJB has also been striving to minimise discharge of treated effluent into Yamuna and encouraging its use for non-potable purposes. This also incidentally reduces the demand for potable water supply to the city.

However, so far it has succeeded in supplying only 89 mgd of treated effluent to Delhi-based agencies, viz. the National Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd., the Central Public Works Department, the Delhi Development Authority, Central Road Research Institute, the New Delhi Municipal Corporation, and the East and South Delhi Municipal Corporations, mostly for horticulture and air-conditioning requirements.

There is ample room for greater use of treated effluent from the STPs, in particular, for rejuvenation of Delhi's other long neglected water bodies such as Sanjay lake, Bhalsawa, and Hauz Khas, etc. There is also scope for rejuvenation of the Jehangirpuri marshes, water bodies at Narela, Dwarka, and, of course, ground water recharge within the vast premises of STPs and Sewage Pumping Stations (SPS).

In 2015, its new 10 mld (million litres a day) tertiary treatment plant has managed to meet the water required by Delhi Transport Corporation for washing its fleet of buses at Sukhdev Vihar. However, it has so far not succeeded in getting the water quality up to the mark for use of effluent as raw water which can further be treated and used for drinking purposes at any of its 20 locations across Delhi.

At present, three major drains—Najafgarh, Supplementary and Shahadra—carry more than 70% of Delhi NCR's raw sewage into the Yamuna for which interceptor sewers, to trap 242 mgd of sewage, are now being built. These could become a major factor in reducing pollution levels of the Yamuna. This mega initiative has been included in KPMG's list of 100 most innovative infrastructure projects in the world.

However, the day is not far when Yamuna, with proper river training, removal of encroachments from its banks and river front development, could become a prized recreational area with boats plying up and down its stretch.

**W**HEN THE OHIO-BASED Huntington Bank, established in 1866, decided to diversify its product offerings in 2012, it had only to look at the opportunities available in its backyard—the vibrant commodity markets of the US Midwest. In the event, the bank started not only speciality initiatives in energy, food and agribusiness, but also launched commodity hedging services to help its customers succeed in the global markets. Today, Huntington is counted as one of the most successful banks, with matching metrics of operational performance and equivalent valuation comparable to that of the largest American banks. In India, banks have traditionally been one of the most significant players in financial markets, enabling and controlling the flow of finance to the real sectors while connecting money to the financial markets. India's commodity sector has, likewise, benefited from bank finance—whether through crop loans at mandated below-market rates; business finances to those in the mining and metals segment; finance for creating infrastructure for storing, quality testing or transporting commodities; funding the production, procurement, refining, value addition, or financing commodities through pledge including the gold pledge.

Thanks to the section 8 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, our banks have been, since independence, saved from the vagaries

## Banking on commodities

With banks participation, there could be higher coverage of commodities as banks can enable development of the markets

**V SHUNMUGAM & DEBOJYOTI DEY**

Shunmugam is Head, and Dey is AVP, Research, MCX. Views are personal

of financing commodities and having to end up dealing with the dilapidated ways of functioning of the opaque markets for commodities. Between Independence and now, though, markets have got transformed, and ICT initiatives and various other infrastructural and legal initiatives have further emerged to safeguard the interests of stakeholders. This is one of the key reasons the Essential Commodities Act, which safeguarded consumers against hoarders, has been sparingly used in the recent years, ably aided by the open trade policy adopted at the start of the 21st century. Further, legal codes such as Warehousing Development and Regulation Act, and institution of WDR Authority (WDR), have been brought into being—not only to safeguard the interests of

commodity stakeholders but also to make the electronic-Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (e-NWRs) issued by the Electronic Repositories under the regulatory supervision of WDR safe, pledgeable electronic instruments. Coming into being of e-NWRs not only makes commodities underlying them loan-worthy but also protects the bankers from the misdeeds of the paper era. It is a different story that WDR approved warehousing is just about 4.5% of total available warehousing capacity for agri/horticultural products. In fact, the total value of issued e-NWRs during FY19 accounts for a negligible portion of the total amount of the banks' exposure to commodity lending. Ignorance is not only no bliss for growth of regulated warehousing capacities, but also



retards the development of the commerce behind storage capacity. A well-developed storage infrastructure, backed with funding of stored commodities, would have gone a long way to contribute to a well-developed forward curve for commodities, leading to efficient decision making by borrowers.

Compared with a decade ago, greater efforts have been made by exchanges, regulators and government institutions to make prices transparent. Though, the quality of products sold is a missing dimension of the prices disseminated, it would help lenders protect their credit risk effectively—thus making commodities a clearly bankable product. Growth of collateral management agencies and related activities provided by the warehousemen is a clear boon to the

lenders, improving the bankability of commodities. Further, with the adoption of the Model APMC by almost all the states, the monopoly of the APMC mandis and their registered traders is a thing of the past. It makes disposal of commodities behind defaults or the e-NWRs seamless through a standard process acceptable to the regulators and wins the trust of the participants. Healthy financing of commodities sector will go a long way in aiding businesses efficiently fund their working expenditure needs, and improve their competitiveness.

Besides, like their developed economy counterparts, banks can also help the commodity market stakeholders effectively hedge their commodity risks and thus reduce the risk of these businesses ending up as NPAs. A Working Group (2017) of RBI had, for instance, recommended that banks offer customised hedging products to their borrowers exposed to commodity risks, while taking back-to-back positions on commodity exchanges. If the same can be taken forward, it will ease the hedging process for the commodity businesses and could lead to effective adoption of risk management culture amongst commodity businesses. With banks participation, there could be higher coverage of commodities as banks can enable development of the markets by bringing in assistance on various other aspects of market development such as bringing in hedgers and hand-holding them, providing participants with independent market research, customising hedge

instruments as per the risk profile of the participants with back-to-back hedge on the exchange platform. An offshoot of the activity of making available research reports could be setting up of an advisory desk with the knowledge of commodity markets and trade for banks. In fact, RBI has already asked banks to advise their clients to hedge their agricultural commodity price risks. Taking a cue from this, banks can also start a full-fledged commodity advisory desk, consulting clients on hedging or investment strategies. The Indian commodity derivatives market is currently undergoing path-breaking transformation, focussed on institutionalisation of the markets, widening of participation, enriching the product profile, strengthening intermediation, etc. Such a transformation opens up opportunities for the banking sector in terms of diversifying product/service portfolio. Policy initiatives such as 'Make in India' and increasing per capita income levels are likely to make the country commodity-intensive as the manufacturing sector shifts its production base, to cater for increasing domestic consumption besides serving the export demand. Sustenance of such a transformative policy measure is dependent on the opportunities available for adoption of global best practices by the investors. Banking sector hand-holding them and serving them with products that best suits their hedging needs with a back-up on the existing exchange traded commodity derivatives will go a long way in inculcating risk management as culture.



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## FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

## BEFORE 'OUMUAMUA VISIT, DID AN INTERSTELLAR OBJECT HIT EARTH?



Artist's impression of 'Oumuamua. It was so far the only known interstellar object to make a fly-by of Earth; now scientists have found evidence that an earlier object may have entered Earth's atmosphere. *European Space Observatory*

LAST YEAR, the interstellar object 'Oumuamua generated worldwide interest — discovered in late 2017, it was then the first known object from outside the Solar System to do a fly-by of Earth. Harvard University astronomer Abraham Loeb made headlines recently by suggesting that 'Oumuamua might have been part of an alien spacecraft. Now, Loeb and a colleague, Amir Siraj, have proposed that before 'Oumuamua, there may have been another recent interstellar visitor — a meteor from another solar system may have actually hit Earth in 2014. It burned up in the atmosphere and fell into the South Pacific, they suggest in a paper uploaded on the preprint server *arXiv*.

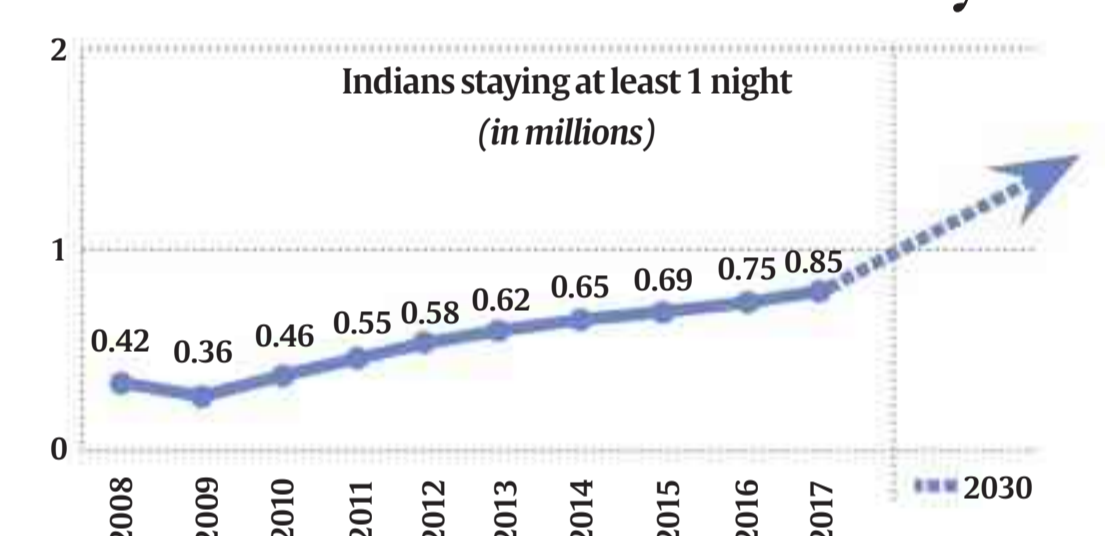
How did they reach their conclusion?

They searched NASA's Near Earth Object Database to identify the fastest meteors with strange trajectories. If an object moves extremely fast, it can be a sign that it is not tied to an orbit around the sun. The object they spotted was about 0.9 m in diameter and travelling at about 60 km/sec when it burned up in January 2014. The researchers traced the object's orbit back in time, and found that it might have come from the interior of another planetary or star system in the Milky Way. That would make the meteor the first known to have made the trip from outside the solar system to Earth. The researchers have submitted their paper to *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

## TELLING NUMBERS

## German tourism board eyes 1 mn mark in Indian visitors this year



Source: German National Tourist Board

ON THURSDAY, the India arm of the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) projected that the number of Indian tourists who stayed at least one night in Germany will likely reach 1 million by the end of this year. In 2018, around 9.22 lakh Indians who travelled to Germany stayed at least for a night, a year-on-year growth of more than 8%. "Our vision 2030 is to have 2 million overnights from India into Germany and we are right on track to achieve that," PTI quoted Romit Theophilus, Director (India), German National Tourist Office (GNTO), as saying.

A GNTB report for tourism shows 852,224 overnight stays by Indian vis-

itors in 2017. It states that the volume of overnight stays has increased by 102.2% between 2008 and 2017, at an average annual growth of 9%.

The GNTO's tourism theme for this year is the centenary of the Bauhaus art movement that started in 1919 in Weimar. "Rabindranath Tagore inaugurated our own Indian Bauhaus, the Kala Bhavan, in Santiniketan in 1919. Like the Bauhaus, it developed a modernist language. In 1921, Tagore visited Weimar. The first major Bauhaus exhibition took place in Kolkata in 1922," PTI quoted Jasper Wieck, Deputy Head of the German mission in India, as saying.

## SUNNY VERMA

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

FOR FOUR decades after eight independent domestic airlines — Deccan Airways, Airways India, Bharat Airways, Himalayan Aviation, Kalinga Air Lines, Indian National Airways, Air India (formerly Tata Airlines), and Air Services of India — were merged to create state-owned Indian Airlines in 1953, India's aviation sector remained a national monopoly. Policy changes came in the 1990s — and liberalisation and economic reforms gave the private aviation industry new wings of hope. Several of the private airlines that took off during that decade were to hit air pockets soon, however — and in the years that followed, the sector saw the entry of quite a few new players even as the businesses of others collapsed or were taken over. The suspension of operations at Jet Airways — at one time India's largest private airline — announced Wednesday, follows the troubles at Kingfisher, Air Deccan, and Sahara.

## The beginnings

Founder promoter Naresh Goyal's Jet Airways was one of the first private airlines in newly liberalised India. In 1993, a year after its launch, Jet got an air-taxi operator's permit, which meant it could fly, but without a schedule. A flight schedule allows a carrier to estimate costs and revenues for six months, the period of a single schedule in India. Less than two years later, Jet got permission to fly as a scheduled airline after the government abolished The Air Corporation Act, 1953, which gave the state-owned carriers the monopoly to operate as scheduled airlines.

## Start-stop-start

Besides repealing The Air Corporation Act, the government announced an Open Skies policy in 1992, liberalising rules and regulations to open up the commercial aviation market. This led to the birth, over the next decade or so, of private sector players including ModiLuf, Damania Airways, Air

GROUNDED: (Clockwise from top) Kingfisher, East-West, Sahara, Damania. *Archive*

Sahara, and East-West Airlines. Most of these new players, however, folded up soon or were merged — Jet Airways in contrast, stood out as an efficient private sector operator, gaining market share with each passing year.

ModiLuf and East-West ceased operations in 1996. Air Sahara, which started operations in 1993 as Sahara Airlines, was acquired by Jet in 2007 — a business move that many analysts argue marked the beginning of the company's troubles.

ModiLuf, which had an excellent record for three years until it shut down in 1996, was later acquired by Ajay Singh, who launched it as SpiceJet in 2005 along with NRI businessman Bhulo Kansagra. As SpiceJet faced difficulties, Kansagra sold his stake to US distress investor Wilbur Ross in 2008, who sold it to Sun Group's Kalanithi Maran a couple of years later. The airline was teetering on the verge of closure when it was again acquired by Ajay Singh in 2015, who turned it profitable.

## Boom and bust

The real expansion of the private airlines, and the number of domestic flyers in India, started in the 2000s. In 2003, Captain G R Gopinath started the country's first low-cost carrier Air Deccan, which was followed by the launch of SpiceJet, IndiGo and GoAir. All these carriers followed the model of no-frills, cheaper tickets, and higher passenger load factors.

The LCC (low-cost carrier) model revolutionised the Indian aviation sector, pushing the country's annual passenger growth rate to double digits. Alongside the LCCs, Kingfisher Airlines started operations in 2005, pitching itself in the middle of a no-frills and a full-service carrier. These new airlines posed a formidable challenge to Jet Airways, which had so far operated largely in a duopoly with state-owned carriers Air India and Indian Airlines (which were merged in 2011).

But the situation changed soon.

## What Finland verdict signals to India, world

## SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

FINLAND, RANKED the world's happiest country, held elections on Sunday, April 14. In a country whose 5.5 million population includes about 300,000 immigrants, immigration emerged the dominant, most politically divisive issue in the elections. What are the takeaways for the rest of the world, including India, which ranks 133 out of 156 countries in this year's World Happiness Report released by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the United Nations?

## Big 3 down

Elections to the 200-member Parliament, called Eduskunta, saw a turnout of 72%, the highest since 1991. The centre-left Social Democratic Party (SDP), which has strong links to trade unions, won 40 seats. The right-wing, anti-immigration Finns Party, got 39. The centre-right, economically liberal National Coalition got 38 seats. The incumbent Centre Party, which has liberal and traditionalist wings, managed merely 31 (down by 18 seats).

The number of women MPs elected, at 92, is the highest ever.

The combined 109 of the big three (SDP, National Coalition and Centre) is an all-time low. Professor Markku Jokisipilä, who led the Parliamentary Research Unit at the



The right-wing, anti-immigration Finns Party of Jussi Halla-aho (left) has emerged as a strong opposition while the Social Democratic Party of Antti Rinne (right) has won the elections with the smallest margin ever. *AP*

University of Turku, said this election marks the "end of the era of big parties". Between 1983 and 2011, the big three used to get two-thirds of the votes and 135-145 seats with 20-25% of the votes and 45-60 seats each.

The rise of the Finns Party broke this pattern. The big three got 55.2% and 121 seats in 2011, 55.8% and 120 in 2015, and 48.5% and 109 now.

This is the first time since 1999 that the SDP is the biggest party, and Antti Rinne is expected to become Prime Minister. However, the SDP's 40 seats and 17.7% votes are smaller than ever before. Compared to PM Paavo Lipponen in the 1990s, when the SDP got 28.3% votes and 63 seats, Rinne will be considerably weaker.

The incumbent PM's Centre Party paid a

high price for its four years in power even though employment went up and the economy fared well. Its 31 seats is the lowest since Finnish independence.

## Rise of the right

In June 2017, after a hardliner took over as Finns Party chair, the party split and the breakaway group formed the Blue Reform. While the Blue Reform lost all of its 17 seats, the Finns Party under the leadership of Jussi Halla-aho won back all the seats it had lost and even added one. Opposition to humanitarian immigration is its most important plank today. The high turnout is being attributed to the Finns Party being able to mobilize those who don't usually vote.

Halla-aho, 48, holds a doctorate in linguistics,

with a dissertation on church Slavonic. Although dry, rational and reserved, his immigration-critical blogs have helped earn him a devoted following. His writing is inflammatory and has been critical of immigration and Islam. Finland's highest court in 2012 upheld a conviction and fines against him for inciting ethnic hatred and blasphemy in 2008.

## Message for Indians

For Indians, tightening of immigration rules does not bode well in a country known for good access to healthcare, long life expectancy, low corruption, less competition at work and better support for those without a job.

Out of 11,780 members of the Indian community in Finland as of end-2016, 5,016 are Indian citizens and 6,595 PIOs, according to the Indian embassy. Most of the settled ones had immigrated during the 1980s and 1990s from Punjab and are engaged in the restaurant business. In recent years, many Indians joined Finnish companies like Nokia and Indian companies like TCS, Wipro, L&T, Infosys, HCL, Mahindra InfoTech. Some Indian/PIO academics work in Finnish universities while 779 Indian students are enrolled at Finnish universities.

The political relationship is steady with Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting leaders of the Nordic countries in April 2018 in Sweden, including Finland's PM Juha Sipilä.

## Recalling the 2004 Supreme Court order that EC invoked in NaMo TV case

## KRISHN KAUSHIK

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

SECTION 126 of The Representation of the People Act, 1951, prohibits campaigning by candidates and parties in the 48-hour period ending with the scheduled conclusion of polling in an area. "Display to the public any election matter by means of cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus" is not allowed in these 48 hours — and as the second phase of voting approached, the Election Commission decided on April 16 to enforce this silence period with regard to NaMo TV.

The EC had said last week that the Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi had "confirmed... that there has not been any pre-certification of the content being displayed on NaMo TV/Content TV", and cited a direction given by the Supreme Court 15 years ago to underline that all political ads on electronic media need "pre-certification".

The Commission has said that expenditure on programmes and ads on NaMo TV will be attributed to the BJP or its candidates,

saying in effect, that everything on NaMo TV is BJP-sponsored advertisement. NaMo TV is available on all major DTH platforms, and is classified as a "platform service" paid for by the BJP. Despite the silence period having kicked in, the channel was available in several states on the eve of the April 18 vote.

## Who 'pre-certifies' political ads that are aired on TV?

The Supreme Court, in *Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting vs M/s Gemini TV Pvt Ltd & Others* on April 13, 2004, directed that "advertisement of political nature on TV Channel or Cable Network" could be issued "only after obtaining necessary clearance from the (Election) Commission or the (EC's) designated officer".

Two days after the court's interim order, on April 15, 2004, the EC directed that "for pre-viewing, scrutinizing and certifying advertisements to be telecast over TV channels and cable networks by any registered political party or by any group or organization/association, having headquarters in NCT of Delhi, the Chief Electoral Officer,

Delhi is to constitute a Committee". For parties or organisations headquartered in other states, the respective CEOs were to set up the committees. Each committee was to be headed by an additional or joint CEO of that state. Members include a Returning Officer from one of the parliamentary constituencies in that state's capital, and an expert who is an officer "not below the rank of Class-I officer to be requisitioned from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting".

## What is the procedure to get an advertisement certified?

Recognised political parties and candidates must apply three days before the ad is to be aired, but in the first phase, applications can be sent just two days in advance. Parties or candidates must submit two copies of the ad, its transcript, cost of production, and the approximate cost of the proposed telecast with the break-up of the number of insertions and the proposed charge for each insertion. The application has to mention whether the ad is for the benefit of a candidate or party.

A person of organisation other than the

party or candidate, too can get political ads approved by the committees. However, applications by any other persons or by unregistered political parties must be made seven days in advance. Along with the details above, unregistered parties or other entities have to give an undertaking that "it is not for the benefit of the political party or a candidate and that the said advertisement has not been sponsored or commissioned or paid for by any political party or a candidate".

Payments for ads, either by registered/unregistered political parties or anyone else, cannot be made in cash.

## How did the matter reach the Supreme Court?

The landmark decision that led to the establishment of these committees specifically for political ads during the election period, when the Model Code of Conduct is in place, came on a challenge by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to an order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court that had stayed Rule 7(3) of The Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994, which

prohibits religious and political ads on TV. The High Court order came in March 2004, weeks ahead of the first phase of polling for that year's Lok Sabha elections. Section 7 of the Rules defines the Advertising Code; part 3 therein says: "No advertisement shall be permitted, the objects whereof, are wholly or mainly of a religious or political nature; advertisements must not be directed towards any religious or political end."

After the I&B Ministry appealed, the Supreme Court asked the EC to suggest the modalities to allow such ads. The EC's suggestions were shared with the Union government, which recommended minor changes. On April 13, the court ordered the setting up of the committees, setting aside the HC's stay, and laying down the procedure to regulate political ads.

## And who had gone to the High Court against Rule 7(3)?

Gemini TV, a Telugu channel, had approached the court saying that the Rule was impacting its business. Gemini TV is part of the Sun TV network owned by the Maran

## What is the legal status now?

The Supreme Court had passed an interim order on April 13, 2004, but no subsequent orders or judgments were passed on this matter. The 2004 order, therefore, remains the law of the land, as is clear from the EC's invocation of it this month.



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## GROUNDING

Collapse of Jet is a moment of reckoning for Indian aviation. The gains from liberalisation must not be reversed

FROM OPERATING A 120-aircraft fleet and being India's second largest passenger carrier as recently as January, to possibly flying for the last time on Wednesday, it's been a literally grounding-to-a-halt for Jet Airways. Except that it wasn't as sudden as would seem. The company's financial difficulties were public from around March 2018, when it started deferring disbursement of salaries, which was followed by defaulting on aircraft lease rentals and loan repayments towards October-December. The fault lay with the lenders for failing to see these signs of trouble. They allowed the founder-chairman, Naresh Goyal, to be on the airline's board right till March 25 this year, when its fleet size was down to a third and debts to banks had crossed Rs 8,000 crore. Given that the country today has a bankruptcy law, allowing lenders to file an insolvency petition against any defaulting firm and effect management change by inviting bids from prospective new promoters, it is striking why this option was not exercised early enough.

Only this month have banks finally acted and called for expression of interest from investors. It is unlikely that they would want to take over the ailing airline without the lenders agreeing to a substantial write-off of its outstanding dues. The fact that Jet Airways has suspended operations makes things worse. The company needed emergency funding from banks in order to be able to run. The latter declined the request. They had no choice really, as doing so would have risked more money going down the drain. But once an airline stops flying and its unused airport slots are allocated to others, the valuations during bidding are only bound to fall further. Such a situation could have been avoided had the lenders forced Goyal to step down earlier and sounded out other carriers, both domestic and foreign; they may have been more willing even about six months back. A nudge from the government, too, would have helped, especially with the likes of State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank being the main lenders. The losers in the bargain aren't just banks, but also Jet Airways' 16,000-odd employees. Their being on the streets while national elections are on isn't good news for the ruling party at the Centre.

What is the road ahead? Whether Jet Airways — a symbol of the 1991 economic reforms much like Airtel or Infosys — will fly again will be known only when the current bid process concludes on May 10. The country's leading domestic carrier Indigo already has a 43 per cent-plus market share. It is in the consumer's interest that no airline gets to monopolise the skies and reverse the gains from liberalisation. This is the time the government should do away with the 49 per cent ownership limit in Indian airlines by foreign carriers. Consumers ultimately want competition, never mind whoever provides it.

## WHEN RAHUL DESCENDS

His remark that all thieves have Modi in their names is not very different from hate talk about identity from the other side

IT'S A GIVEN in the heat and dust of elections that candidates lose their cool. In a noisy, fractious democracy where so much is — and should be — deeply contested and churned, a little mud flying is par for the campaign course. And yet, over the past few weeks, there has been on display talk that's divisive, vicious and hateful. What kind of an echo this finds across the electorate only May 23 may tell. But one thing is clear, the bar has fallen so low that there's little to shock. Into this wades in Congress president Rahul Gandhi. He keeps reminding the voter that this fight is about the idea of India itself and then descends from this grand perch to the same low that he accuses his rivals of: Denigrating a community, collapsing identities and firing the cheapest of shots. Why do all thieves have Modi in their names, whether it is Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi or Narendra Modi, is the rhetorical question he asked at a rally in Karnataka. He has used this line more than once, perhaps believing that it's smart and devastating and that it makes his point that there is a kinship between the prime minister and these accused. Financial corruption by businessmen and how the government responded or didn't to their irregularities need to be vigorously debated but Gandhi trivialises his argument — and also debases it.

The Modi surname appended by different communities denotes multiple identities across castes and geography. To link theft to this name is damning a community. Ironically, this exact same framework and strategy is constantly deployed to polarise people. The recent Ali-Bajrang Bali talk, for instance, was intended to create a campaign thread that slotted Hindus and Muslims in silos and deny the possibility of a secular debate on governance. Similarly, the spectre of Pakistan and the Bangladeshi migrant are frequently raised to fuel a communal narrative against Muslims. Even the most recent anointment of Sadhvi Pragya Thakur is meant to push the falsehood that terror has a religion. Such talk dehumanises politics, reduces it to a transaction between collectives. It negates a foundational principle of democracy which is one person, one vote, one value; the vote is seen as an instrument to signal the pact between the individual voter and the candidate. Collective identities are invoked only to deny agency to the individual, relieve a person of her identity, undermine the very basis of liberal democracy.

Gandhi claims he doesn't stoop low to conquer. So he should lift himself up. An apology, an admission of error would be a good place to begin.

## SCHRÖDINGER'S PIG

Porcine brains which are neither dead nor alive have opened up the possibility of a third state of being

THANKS TO SOME pigs sacrificed and resurrected in the cause of science, a death sentence hangs over traditional thinking about life, consciousness, and whether shuffling off the mortal coil is a one-way process. Published on April 17 in the journal *Nature* by the researchers Zvonimir Vrselja, Stefano G. Daniele et al, the fateful sentence reads: "The isolated, intact large mammalian brain possesses an under-appreciated capacity for restoration of micro circulation and molecular and cellular activity after a prolonged post-mortem interval." This is a learned way of saying that the scientists were wrong, pulp writers were right and a return from death is possible. At least in the brain cells of slaughtered pigs.

According to received medical wisdom, the brain is the first organ to go after the heart stops beating, and that it suffers irreversible damage from oxygen starvation. But this group of researchers found pig brains removed from the cranium and supplied with an artificial circulatory fluid still going four hours after death. Cells remained healthy and metabolism proceeded. At the tissue level, this was clearly not brain death. Even a few neurons were perceived to fire. While cranks the world over will take this as evidence that they were right about resurrection and zombies, the usual electrical activity of the brain, signalling awareness, was not recorded.

The implication is for ethics, which draws a clear line between the living and the dead. Now, sundry pigs have raised the bogey of partly dead, and therefore partly recoverable beings. The question had last arisen when a snail which went into suspended animation in Egypt in the time of the pharaohs stirred when put in water. But that was a simple gastropod, not a complex mammal, whereas pigs with brains neither dead nor alive pose a problem which almost rivals Schrödinger's cat.

# Three mistakes, two ironies



CHINTAN CHANDRACHUD

EC order prohibiting Narendra Modi biopic is too broad in its scope, sets a disturbing precedent

THREE WEEKS CAN be a long time during an election season. Over the course of three weeks from the end of March to the middle of April, applications and complaints with respect to the biographical film on Prime Minister Narendra Modi have meandered from one venue to another. These venues include the Election Commission (EC), the Bombay High Court, the Delhi High Court, the Censor Board and the Supreme Court. Most recently, on April 9, the Censor Board certified the film — featuring Vivek Oberoi, Barkha Bisht and Boman Irani — for release. This was swiftly followed by an order from the EC prohibiting the release of the film on the basis that it would "disturb the level playing field during the elections".

The producers of the film approached the Supreme Court challenging the EC's decision on the basis that it violated their fundamental rights. On April 15, upon being told that the EC had issued its order without watching the film, the Court directed the EC to finalise its decision after watching the film. The next hearing at the Supreme Court is slated for April 22, by which time the viewership of the film ought to increase by at least one.

At first glance, the EC's order appears well intentioned. It is targeted at political parties seeking to circumvent the Model Code of Conduct through "surrogate publicity". The logic of the argument is that political parties cannot seek to do indirectly (through hagiographic films) what they cannot do directly (through advertisements or banners). Examined more closely, however, the order fails to identify important differences between an advertisement and a film, it is disproportionately broad in scope and sets an ominous precedent for the future.

An order of this scope and breadth sets a disquieting precedent for the future, as it effectively enables the EC to impose broad prohibitions on the publication of books and films. Hagiographies also have a place in our literary landscape — not least, they enable us to better appreciate more nuanced, sophisticated narratives. Books and films frequently prove soft targets to public institutions in India, and so it is with the EC.

In treating the film as an advertisement under the "garb of creative freedom", the EC fails to acknowledge the differences between an advertisement and a film. An advertisement is typically imposed upon the viewer during the course of another activity. Its aim is to have an impact over a short timeframe, even if that impact develops incrementally through multiple viewings. The viewer may pay for a collateral product that carries the advertisement (a newspaper or a television channel subscription), but not the advertisement itself. On the other hand, a film involves a large, voluntary investment of time by the viewer — in this instance, two hours and 16 minutes. A film almost invariably involves payment by the viewer.

What this means in practice is that the sphere of influence of a film is limited to those willing (and able) to make that investment of time and money. However, there is an important distinction between a film and an advertisement even for those that can make that investment. While an advertisement claims to represent reality, the creators of a film — even if it is based on a true story — are entitled to a generous artistic license. For the EC to assume that the film creates "an impression of truthfulness" and that the viewer is unable to distinguish between film and fact is to underestimate the intelligence of the viewer.

The EC's order is also disproportionately broad in a number of respects. It prohibits the release of the entire film, rather than suggesting cuts of any scenes that it considers especially likely to disturb the level playing field. It prohibits the release of the film until "further orders", which is probably a euphemism for "until the end of the election cycle".

Rather than just prohibiting the publication of promotional material for the film (which could arguably perform the same function as a political advertisement), the order prohibits the release of the film itself.

An order of this scope and breadth sets a disquieting precedent for the future, as it effectively enables the EC to impose broad prohibitions on the publication of books and films. Hagiographies also have a place in our literary landscape — not least, they enable us to better appreciate more nuanced, sophisticated narratives. Books and films frequently prove soft targets to public institutions in India, and so it is with the EC. While the EC has asserted the strength of its authority on this issue, it has been far less decisive in addressing a catalogue of divisive and hateful speeches made by politicians across the spectrum (although its recent embargoes on campaigning are a welcome first step).

This sequence of events is beset with two ironies. First, as is often the case with attempts at censorship, the EC's order feeds the flames that it seeks to quench. The producers of the film will be unhappy with the delays in the film's release, but its putative political beneficiaries may be smiling. Second, censorship begets more censorship, as the Supreme Court has, somewhat inexplicably, requested the EC's opinion to be submitted to it under "sealed cover". The ultimate point remains the same — the voter is mature enough to appreciate the difference between hagiography and reality, and to digest critical EC reports for what they are.

The writer is an associate at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, London. Views are personal



ABHAY SHUKLA

THE GOOD NEWS is that health has arrived on the country's political agenda. The bad news is that health systems are in critical condition and there is significant public discontent over the lack of quality and affordable healthcare.

We can confirm that health is making an impact on the political scene, when on the one hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launches the Ayushman Bharat scheme a year before the elections — a programme that claims to benefit 50 crore Indians — and on the other hand, the Congress's manifesto carries the party's pledge to enact a Right to Healthcare Act. However, in the past five years, the Union health budget has stagnated in real terms, allocations to the National Health Mission do not cover inflation and there have been avoidable deaths of scores of children in public hospitals in Gorakhpur and other places that can be ascribed to the lack of material and human resources.

Governments have failed to regulate private hospitals effectively, leading to numerous instances of mismanagement and massive over-charging of patients, such as the tragic case of Adya Singh in Fortis hospital, Gurgaon. There are convincing facts which show that the "solution" being offered in the form of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojna is not only seriously underfunded (current funds being less than one-fourth of required) but it will only scratch the tip of the iceberg of healthcare requirements in India.

Given this context, India needs a major health policy reboot. The general elections are an appropriate occasion to propose such comprehensive changes. The Jan Swasthya Abhiyan — a national coalition of health sector organisations and activists — has attempted to do this through its *People's Health Manifesto 2019*. The manifesto includes the following proposals:

One, adopting a Right to Healthcare legislation at the Centre and state levels. This

## A MANIFESTO FOR HEALTH

Paradigm shift to universal healthcare is not unrealistic, requires political will

would ensure that all residents of the country are entitled to healthcare facilities. Development of a system for Universal Healthcare (UHC) would be a key constituent of this initiative, which would require expansion and strengthening of public health services at all levels. Private providers would also be involved, as per need, to supplement the public health system.

Two, increasing the public health expenditure exponentially through taxation. This expenditure should be increased from the current grossly inadequate 1.2 per cent of the GDP to reach 3.5 per cent of the GDP in the next five years, and eventually touch 5 per cent of the GDP in the medium term.

Three, ensuring major reform and strengthening of public health services with increased staff and infrastructure. A key component of this reform would be guaranteed provision of free essential medicines and diagnostics to all patients in public health facilities, by adopting systems for procurement and distribution which are similar to the current models in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Rajasthan.

Four, there should be a comprehensive health sector human resource policy, which provides upgraded skill training, fair wages, social security and decent working conditions for all public health services staff. The services of all contractual health workers, including ASHAs and anganwadi workers, should be regularised.

Five, community-based monitoring and planning of health services that are being practised in a few states should be upscaled and user-friendly grievance redressal systems put in place to ensure social accountability and participation.

Six, the PMJAY component of Ayushman Bharat, which is based on a discredited insurance model, should be jettisoned. Such schemes need to be replaced by the universal healthcare system.

Seven, private hospitals must be brought under the ambit of regulations by modifying and adopting the Clinical Establishments Act in all states. This legislation must ensure that the Charter of Patient's Rights is observed, it must provide a grievance redressal mechanism to patients, the rates for services must be regulated and standard treatment guidelines should be adopted in healthcare institutions.

Eight, essential medicines and medical devices must be subject to price regulation, based on their manufacturing cost. A Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices should be put in place to curb unethical marketing practices. Manufacturers should be asked, in a stepwise manner, to sell medicines only under their generic name, and doctors should be directed to write generic names of medicines in prescriptions.

These initiatives must be accompanied by measures to ensure that people with special needs — women, children, differently-abled persons, people living with HIV — enjoy appropriate health services. Traditional social determinants of health such as nutrition, water supply, sanitation and healthy environment must be ensured. There should be plans in place to tackle new determinants like air and water pollution and addictions.

Such a paradigm shift towards a rights-based system for universal healthcare, based on massive increase in health budgets and strengthened health systems, is not an unrealistic dream. Several low- and middle-income countries such as Thailand, Brazil and Sri Lanka have such systems in place. The core ingredient required for UHC is political will. As we prepare to exercise our choice in the elections, we need to boost such political will by supporting parties which have pledged the right to health care to all.

The writer is a National Convenor, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan



## APRIL 19, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

JANA SANGH MINISTERS HARYANA WAS DRAWN into the vortex of the political crisis gripping Bihar and Himachal Pradesh when an emergency cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Devi Lal authorised him not to allow any minister to remain in the cabinet who had any link with the RSS. The 15-member Haryana ministry has four members belonging to the erstwhile Jana Sangh. They did not attend the meeting where only six ministers and the chief parliamentary secretary were present. The sudden developments in Haryana, which are a result of the confrontation between the two major constituents of the Janata Party, the BLD and the Jana Sangh,

did not lead to the expected ouster of the Jana Sangh ministers immediately. Apparently, the dominant BLD leadership in the state wants to watch the situation in HP and Bihar.

SCRAMBLE IN PATNA WITH LESS THAN 24 hours to go for Bihar Chief Minister Karpooi Thakur to seek a vote of confidence at the Janata Legislature Party meeting, the dissidents and ministerialists were engaged in seemingly interminable activities in preparation for the showdown. The tempo of campaigning acquired a feverish pitch in the ministerialists camp soon after the arrival of Madhu Limaye, general secretary of the Janata Party, Union Home Minister

Dhanik Lal and Raj Narain.

JANATA'S FATE MUCH MORE THAN the fate of three chief ministers — Nilamani Routray, Karpooi Thakur and Shanta Kumar — is involved in the meetings of the Janata legislature parties to be held in Orissa, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh. On the eve of the crucial meetings where the three beleaguered chief ministers are to seek a vote of confidence, the state leaders' politics seemed to be pushing the party towards another crisis. Most observers in Delhi feel that Routray and Shanta Kumar will win the vote comfortably but it will be difficult for Thakur to scrape through.

# 13 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Coming down from ivory towers

Educational institutes and higher learning centres should devote a substantial chunk of their resources to solve local problems for vikas to be meaningful



MILIND SOHONI

AS ANOTHER ELECTION gets underway, we see the political class engaged, yet again, in a war of words — claims and counterclaims on what was delivered, of jumle-baazi and corruption. Sadly, there is no analysis of why is vikas — basic amenities, jobs and growth for small enterprises — not being delivered or why there is no coherent plan for the purpose. Instead, what we have is more rights-based beneficiary vaad and good intentions. The fact of the matter is that the politicians cannot deliver vikas even if they wanted to. They are the junior-most partner of largely spectators, touts and fixers in the bureaucrat-scientist-politician triumvirate which rules this nation. The sooner we citizens and our politicians realise this, the better.

Indeed, there are about 2,000 elite bureaucrats — the IAS — and a similar number of senior professors, scientists, social scientists and experts from elite centrally-funded institutions — the IITs, JNU, scientific and multilateral agencies — who determine what happens to most of our people. It is what they think and do, or fail to do, that decides how buses run, droughts or anganwadis are managed, what is taught in colleges, and how local businesses survive.

As an example, consider drinking water in Parbhani, a district in the drought-prone Marathwada region of Maharashtra. Traditional rural water supply schemes, which were based on wells, have failed long ago as groundwater levels plummeted and these wells went dry. This happened because cropping patterns changed and more land was brought under well irrigation. Of course, there was no systematic study of either of this by our elite institutions since this is not what they consider science. Regional universities are simply incapable of formulating such research and carrying it out, unhindered by the bureaucracy. Large water supply schemes based on surface water — that are needed — are moribund. No new techniques of design and optimisation have come up. The Water Supply Department is supposed to spend 1 per cent of its expenditure on monitoring and evaluation. The secretary has not bothered to establish protocols and standards or to set up a network of trusted institutions. As a result, "jar water" and RO plants abound. Many "jar water" plants are illegal and their quality is doubtful. There is no easy certification. Getting an ISI label is tied up in bureaucracy and red-tape, leading to corruption.

Yet another example is the recent BEST bus strike in Mumbai. For nine days, the common people were held to ransom by an argument between the management, which wants to reduce losses, and the employee union, which wants an increase in wages. And yet, there is no report in the public domain on the actual operations of BEST, the routes that are profitable, the crew and vehicle utilisation and the social welfare that it provides. This should have come from an IIT or an IIM. In the absence of such factual analysis, the can was kicked down the road, with few changes in planning or operations. The same situation prevails in social sectors such as public health, where an absence of analysis is a primary cause of paralysis.



Suvajit Dey

Why is this happening and what is to be done? The IAS system, itself an enormous concentration of power, has great faith in its own competence and does not allow any factual analysis or review. This has prevented the emergence of a long-term plan for any sector. The IITs, IISERs etc. have lost the plot on what science really means and how it connects with society and the real world. Let alone documenting and analysing the lived reality, they live in cocoons of borrowed rigour, which they call "global science". Their prestige comes from their monopoly over central funds and the right given to them by Parliament to conduct national-level competitive exams in the name of science. This has destroyed an important purpose of science — the means for the common man to speak truth to power. It has converted the university into a franking machine instead of an institution which empowers the community.

What our political parties should now do is to unravel the bureaucrat-scientist elite nexus through political means. A huge number of problems lie before us. Problems of planning and efficiency, nutrition and health, poorly-run small factories and disappearing forests and rivers. These threaten our very existence as a peace-loving and multi-cultural society. Solving these problems requires concrete steps to democratise knowledge and power and localise the ability to act. It also needs a revitalised university and an immersive curricula which prepares our youth to meet these challenges. So here are our top 10 suggestions to our politicians, our vikas manifesto:

The All India Services Act, 1951, will be amended so as to ensure accountability and competence and allow lateral entry at all levels, including the state and the district.

The secretary of each department at the state level will bring out every two years, a public document assessing the delivery levels, knowledge and practices within the department, the key problem areas, and a long-term vision.

A deputy secretary level position will be created within each department to handle monitoring, assessment and knowledge management. This should be done by creating a network of regional institutions and enterprises, who will support and conduct the required applied research.

Centrally-funded institutions like the IITs, IIMs, and IISERs will devote 20 per cent of their curricula, faculty time and funding in

solving regional problems. They should do this through innovative multidisciplinary field-work based curricula, in partnerships with state agencies and regional universities. These institutions and their partners will create a state-level knowledge network which implements a "Right to Know" — a right to an analysis of failures of public services and problems of small enterprises.

Centrally-funded agencies such as the Department of Science and Technology will disburse 50 per cent of their funds directly to state-level science and technology councils with guidelines on research topics and measurements of outcomes. Central and state scientific agencies will strive to make most useful data public, for example, maps in all formats, data from irrigation, agriculture and other departments.

Research in the form of case studies in key areas of sustainability, natural resources, small industries, public amenities, social welfare will be encouraged. Institutions like IISc, IITs and JNU will administer a journal of development research as an avenue for reporting such work. School curricula will include a substantial component of local and regional relevance — local maps, village handbooks, measurement of local produce, field trips to facilities such as bus depots or rice mills, and visits by local functionaries. Colleges and educational institutions at the district level will have an important role in studying the outcomes of development programmes and providing professional support to state agencies. This will be done by students, faculty members and fresh graduates through innovative curricula and mechanisms.

All national entrance exams will slowly be modified from ranking exams to qualifying exams in the spirit of the Constitution. States will have a more constructive role in student admissions into elite institutions so that graduates contribute to the national and state economy and society.

The above agenda will establish a new balance between science, the state and the community, and a social understanding to sustain it. Only when this emerges, will we see vikas and jobs which deliver value. It is also the only way to approach more vexing problems of sustainability, equity and culture.

The writer is with Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas, IIT Bombay. He is currently on deputation to IIT Goa

## Solving the Modi mystery

He remains India's most popular leader for his strong decisions, personal appeal



JANMEJAYA SINHA

ONLY PRESIDENT LULA of Brazil could claim to have had a popularity level higher than Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the end of his first term in office. I exclude countries like Russia, where while Vladimir Putin is very popular, the nature of contestation and political freedom for opposition candidates is limited. In India, all the polls conducted by agencies of different hues and preferences, find Modi to be the most popular political leader in the country. The range of popularity may vary but not one survey disputes the fact that he remains the most popular Indian political leader. Nor, in fact, do leaders of the Opposition parties that I meet deny this — they only suggest that it is so because he has managed to fool people.

His popularity has sustained through the many strong decisions across a broad spectrum of issues that he has taken, many of which the intelligentsia has criticised — Aadhaar and its use, demonetisation, GST implementation, military strategy vis a vis Pakistan, the Doklam standoff, etc. Yet every Opposition party has only one theme — Modi is bad for the country and must be removed. Despite all this, he has remained popular with the mainstream of Indian public opinion, even when they have not agreed with him. It's a phenomenon that requires introspection especially as some of his decisions have

gone against the interest of his core supporters, unlike say, a Donald Trump.

I have to confess my analysis has been influenced strongly by the community of hired car drivers across the country. I travel a lot within India (admittedly city travel) and I use the travel time between the airport and the city to talk politics with my drivers. Most times, I find they have a positive opinion on Modi, even if they don't like the BJP or even if they vote for a different party in the elections (especially true in South India — Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala; I have to confess Bengal is a bit complicated to assess because most of the taxi drivers are Bihari).

There are a few things I have distilled through my conversations. Modi has found a way to communicate directly with the people. He is a phenomenal orator and talks on the issues that have not been raised before. He has embraced themes that give people both hope and pride. He has also been able to call upon the latent spirit of sacrifice in Indian's for a larger good. He has highlighted how other parties have failed India and repeatedly talked of a bigger agenda that he should be given time to complete. He has demonstrated that he is hard-working and shown he has no personal family interest to further. One driver in Calcutta, originally from Bihar, told me he is a welcome change from

the family business called Indian politics. It is also interesting that many drivers are aware that he has not delivered on all his promises but they see him as trying hard.

People like the fact that he has raised issues that instil pride in the people. He has talked about an Indian past which is something to look up to. He has talked about a more muscular national policy where India will not take everything lying down. Not just with Pakistan but also against a powerful country like China. He has the ability to stand up to countries and does not appear indecisive. He has underlined India's scientific progress and believes that we can be great.

He also has the ability to take up issues like cleanliness and hygiene. No political leader put issues like toilets and sanitation on the national mainstream agenda. Only when leaders talk about these issues do we become conscious of their absence, one driver in Bengaluru mentioned. Making the cleaning of the Ganga a priority has connected with people. The Kumbh mela became a show piece and so many foreigners took a dip in the Ganges, with all their concerns about infection and hygiene. I must say that some of my friends living abroad, including the global chairman of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and his wife, came and took a dip in the Ganges. They mentioned the mela was well-

organised and that my caution on the quality of the water was perhaps overstated.

Even demonetisation was seen as a strike against the corrupt, even if it hurt the people I spoke to personally. They believe some personal sacrifice to clean up the system for a larger purpose is acceptable. In fact, the relentless talk of corruption against Modi has just not stuck. People just don't believe "ki chowkidar chor hai" (the watchman is a thief). So, whether it is Nirav Modi or the Rafale deal, the attempts by the Opposition to paint Modi as corrupt have not worked. The early strike with "suit boot ki sarkar" (a suited and booted government) has waned.

Finally, Modi has managed to connect with and speak to young India. He challenges the credibility of the Opposition. He is good with social media and manages to convey strength and hope. Whether his personal popularity will be enough to take the BJP over the post is going to be tested, but were this a presidential election, he would be an easy winner. With the way our parliamentary democracy works, the results are always unknown. In a bid to short-circuit the process, I called up God to ask him who is winning. Even he said I don't know, let's wait and see.

The writer is chairman, BCG India. Views are personal

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"China is strong, determined, and capable of tackling great challenges and making incredible achievements. Other countries should never underestimate and coerce China." — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

## Insecurity at the top

BJP's attempt to use national security as its poll plank betrays its desperation and fear at the unfulfilled promises of the last five years



SWAMI AGNIVESH

THE BJP HAS, predictably, pinned all its hopes on creating hype about our endangered national security. No one can miss the total break between Narendra Modi's rhetoric in 2014 and his election masala this time around. Intelligent voters will, given that Modi has failed to deliver on all promises made in 2014, conclude that "crying wolf" about a neighbouring country, which is no match for India in any respect, is meant to deflect attention from the poverty of a party's performance in office.

Yet, there are "threats" that we face today. To see them in perspective, a distinction needs to be made between the threats that the people endure and the threat that plagues those in power. Modi and company would like us to believe that they are the same. They are not.

The "security threat" that Modi faces is from the voters; a threat to continuity in office. The signs of desperation are everywhere, and they cannot be missed or mistaken. Why would Modi, who has a penchant for unrivalled leadership and hegemonic domination, be so desperately keen to enter into pre-poll alliances with uncomfortable outfits — the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and AGP in Assam, to take just two examples — if he felt electorally secure? Why else would he use agencies like the CBI, ED and I-T against his rivals in an electorally suggestive manner? Are we to believe that economic offenders are to be found only among his political rivals? Why would Modi sacrifice five seats in Bihar out of the 22 his party is currently holding to ensure that the JD(U) is on board? Surely, there is a manifest "insecurity" issue here. And it is understandable that it has intensified to a feverish pitch since the setbacks the BJP suffered in the recent assembly elections.

Secondly, there are security threats that several sections of the society — especially farmers, unemployed youth, small-scale entrepreneurs, Dalits, Adivasis and religious minorities — are facing. There is no greater insecurity than a threat to one's survival. Suicide is the ultimate and unambiguous acknowledgement of insecurity. Ask the farmers across India, they will readily agree. Modi needs to answer why farmer suicides have increased, rather than decreased since 2014. How does this square with his promise to double the income of farmers? The talented and well-educated youths of India are second only to the farmers in the desperation they harbour. They are highly "insecure". Lynch mobs have added to the insecurity of vulnerable sections of the society. Anti-Romeo squads — unofficial, lumpen squads out to terrorise individuals who exercise the freedom to choose their life-partners — have widened the ambit of this insecurity. Free thinkers and votaries of our rational-secular culture are stigmatised and

damned as urban Naxals and anti-national saboteurs. Our liberal centres of educational excellence — JNU, University of Hyderabad, FTII, etc — too have felt the heat.

There is, finally, the threat from across the border. Admittedly we have an unwise and intransigent neighbour to live with. But this is nothing new. Successive governments have had to deal with this headache. It is integral to the duties of those who govern the country. If it is handled well, the security environment improves; otherwise, it worsens, as indeed it has in the last five years. That given, discerning voters will ask a few questions: Why is it that the borders begin to boil closer to election times? Why is it that the BJP is so palpably edgy when commonsensical questions are asked out of legitimate curiosity by anyone? Why does it become a patriotic duty to accept on blind faith — like in fundamentalist religions — "official versions" put out for public consumption? What patriotic duty is it that coerces citizens to consume what they are not free to examine? Why is it necessary that military operations are dragged into the public sphere where, in a democracy, citizens should be free to examine them on their merits?

The opposition parties — especially the Congress — are doing the country a service by re-focusing the national debate on people-centred, real-life issues. As a non-partisan political observer with a lifelong commitment to social justice, I am relieved that the 2019 elections are being fought on where the parties stand in relation to issues like rural and farmer distress, unprecedented unemployment, escalating social and communal tensions, economic and industrial instability due to reckless governance, etc. Citizens, if they are mature, will not allow themselves to be hijacked by mendacious propaganda, even of the most electrifying kind. They know that by voting in indifference to their needs, aspirations and lived realities, they invite, legitimise and perpetuate mis-governance.

Those who are in touch with the election scenario cannot miss the fact that the charismatic appeal that Modi had in 2014 has waned. Now, TV channels keep the cameras turned away from crowd-responses as Modi goes on with his predictable lines of attack. Such "Modi-Modi, Modi-Modi" chants now sound feeble, forced and contrived.

The common man appears to have aright the "security threat" that he is facing. He has concluded that his life and welfare matter a great deal more than potent doses of insincere rhetorical flourishes: Electrifying to hear, but illusory to live by. This had its novelty in 2014. But the last five years has dimmed its authenticity. Now the words remain; the magic is gone. As a politically savvy person put it the other day, with reference to the advertisement about gas connections given to the poor, "Well, they seem to have got gas connections; the rest of the country mere gas, without the connections." Many may not paint as vivid a picture as this cynic, but there are millions who feel likewise. This should worry Modi and his cheering squad.

The writer is Vedic scholar and social activist

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### LACK OF PRINCIPLES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Who cares,' (IE, April 18). The induction of Pragya Thakur in the BJP and granting her a ticket to contest from Bhopal at a time when she is out on bail and is one of the prime accused in the Malegaon blasts case sends alarming signals. The BJP has not only violated its own stance of zero tolerance to crime and corruption but has violated its credentials of upholding and promoting clean electoral politics.

Pranay Kumar Shime, Kolkata

### ALL WORK

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Work 996' (IE, April 18). Historically, it is not the advent of new technology but the way it has been applied by employers that has caused work-related problems for employees. The Industrial Revolution heralding mechanisation of work also coincided with extreme exploitation of workers. Now the computer-based and internet-related gadgets disturb work-life balance. The Chinese IT companies' insistence on their employees working 12 hours a day, six days a week is born out of their greed to make maximum use of technology to enhance output.

YG Chouksey, Pune

### WHO IS A PATRIOT?

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'What a community has lost,' (IE, April 18). The

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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problem of injustice towards the minorities arises due to the different understanding of patriotism. The dynamics of unity in diversity in India operates differently from countries which have a national religion. Prejudices against certain communities happen because one is considered a patriot only if one follows a particular religion. Common people are brainwashed into tagging certain communities as unpatriotic.

Titus Gonmei, Ahmedabad



## Hard landing

Airlines must take stock of their collective plight and sell seats at the real cost

To the long line of private airline carcasses dotting the bleak landscape of Indian aviation, one more may soon be added. Jet Airways announced a temporary halt of its operations from Wednesday night as funds to keep the airline going dried up. Despite intense lobbying by the bankrupt airline, banks stood firm on their decision to not release emergency funds to sustain operations until a white knight is found. With operations halted and the half a dozen or so planes that were flying till Wednesday grounded, the airline is starting down the barrel, especially because most of its prized departure slots at major airports across the country have either already been or will soon be allocated to other airlines. Jet will be able to regain these slots only if it bounces back before the end of the summer schedule in October. Whether that will happen is now in the hands of prospective buyers, who are said to have evinced interest in buying the airline during the Expression of Interest (EOI) process called by banks last week. The fact that the banks refused to extend emergency support is probably an indicator of the quantity and quality of the EOIs received by them. It is hard to believe that they would not have temporarily supported Jet if the EOIs had been serious. In sum, it does appear at this point that a miracle will be needed for Jet to take wing again.

The collapse of Jet has caused turbulence in the market and also raised some serious questions over why the domestic airline industry is proving to be so perilous for enterprises. There have been more than half-a-dozen private airline companies that have fallen by the wayside in the last decade and more, and it is well-known how Air India is propped up with government support. While it is true that fuel costs, which account for about half of the expenses of running an airline, have been difficult to manage, the fact is that reckless competition is responsible for the sorry plight of the industry. Margins in the airline industry are wafer-thin in the best of times and the combined effect of rising fuel prices and the inability to pass them on to consumers due to competition has proved to be a deadly cocktail. In the race to the bottom, it was Kingfisher seven years ago, Air Deccan and Air Sahara before that, it is Jet now, and who knows which airline could be next. It is notable that airlines took stock of their collective plight and stopped undercutting each other on fares. The Centre can help too by reviewing fuel taxes and surcharges apart from airport levies, which the airlines complain are too high. After all, a healthy airline industry can only be good for government revenues over the long term.

## Beijing surprise

The Chinese economy has grown faster than expected, but concerns over stimulus remain

China's economy is showing signs of a rebound. According to figures released by its National Bureau of Statistics on Wednesday, the Chinese economy grew at 6.4% in the first quarter of the current year compared to the same period last year. While this rate of growth is equal to the pace registered in the December quarter and faster than economists' expectations of a 6.3% expansion, it is still slower than the growth rate of 6.8% recorded in the same period last year. Retail sales and factory output also showed strong growth momentum. The latest growth figure is seen as a sign that the Chinese government's efforts over the last few quarters to stimulate what is the world's second largest economy are beginning to have a positive effect. Total social financing grew by almost 40% to 8.2 trillion yuan in the first quarter of the year, pointing to a credit expansion that will boost growth in the coming quarters. With trade tensions with the United States subsiding significantly for now, export growth may accelerate, further boosting the Chinese economy. Chinese exports reached a five-month high in March, rising 14.2% when compared to the same month last year. The Chinese stock market has also been buoyed by the early signs of an economic turnaround and increased liquidity, with the CSI 300 index rising by over a third in value since the beginning of the year.

Gross domestic product growth that is generated largely by increased lending, however, poses the risk of losing momentum once the stimulus is withdrawn. Beijing, of late, has once again been prodding its banks to boost lending to public and private businesses, apart from implementing various fiscal measures to boost consumer spending. This could lead to a tricky situation where businesses that resort to heavy borrowing when credit is easily available become burdened with disproportionately high amounts of debt over the economic boom cycle reverses. Chinese authorities may eventually be forced to crack down on exuberant lending by banks when the economy is found to be overheating. It was such a crackdown that contributed to the fall in property prices in the last few years. For now, though, property prices have begun to rebound after restrictions on the real estate sector were eased lately, in an attempt to stimulate growth in the economy. The Chinese government is now walking a tightrope as it attempts to keep the momentum from slowing in the short term, even as market forces try to correct imbalances within the economy. Such macroeconomic policy, focussed too narrowly on the short term while ignoring the long-term consequences, however, does not bode well for either the Chinese economy or the wider global economy.

# A shameful marker of five years

India's dubious contribution to a global epidemic of hate is a spate of performative mob lynchings



HARSH MANDER

The most malignant legacy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's five years in office is that he has made India a more frightening and dangerous place for its religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians. His leadership has been scarred by a massive surge in hate speech and violence against these groups. In particular, this period has seen the rise of a form of hate violence that targets its religious and caste minorities, better known as "lynching". In these five years, this word entered popular discourse in India, for the first time, by describing frenzied attacks by mobs against people mainly because of their religious or caste identity, Muslim and in some cases Dalit.

### Contours of hate

Right-wing regimes that are hostile to minorities have risen to power in many countries. But in no other country than India has this current anti-minority, far-right politics resulted in a concerted pattern of lynch attacks against minorities — and emerged as a scourge in the country today.

Lynching itself is of course not unknown in many countries. I have found three broad kinds in the modern world. The first is as occasional and random criminal acts, without any pattern or regularity to signal a significant social phenomenon. This can and does occur anywhere.

The second is as 'rough justice', of people frustrated by failures of

legal justice, attacking people alleged frequently to be petty thieves or rapists. This has been common, for instance, in Indonesia and Latin America.

The third kind is as hate crime, one which targets persons not because of what a person has done, but because of who they are. This is what India is currently witnessing. These hate crimes are often dressed up as rough justice: people rationalise cow lynching as popular anger because state systems have not implemented cow protection laws. But the targets of lynch mobs are particular communities, and the allegations of crimes against them are usually patently false — and, in any case, just an excuse.

The closest global parallel to lynchings in India is the one of racial terror against African-Americans in the American South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The motive of both was/is to target people because of their identity, to instil fear, and to convey a message of violent dominance.

### The environment

I would characterise lynching in India not just as communal terror but specifically as command hate crimes. India Spend found that as many as 97% of cow-related attacks since 2010 occurred after Mr. Modi was elected to office; and that 90% of all religious hate crimes since 2009 have occurred under his watch. These point compellingly to the conclusion that an environment has been created since the Prime Minister assumed office, in which people feel safe, enabled and even encouraged to act out their hate and attack religious minorities.

This permissive environment is stirred firstly by frequent toxic hate speeches by senior leaders of



the ruling party. A leading television channel found a 490-fold rise in hate speech by leaders in the four years of the current government compared to five years earlier. Mr. Modi has been remiss in condemning both hate speech and lynch attacks by communal vigilante formations, except in the most general terms. The police has tended mostly to criminalise the victims of these attacks and protect the attackers. They, therefore, feel emboldened and encouraged to attack people of minority identities, assured of their impunity, and convinced of their nationalist fervour and heroism.

Hate violence targeting religious, caste and gender minorities is, of course, not new in India. Violent clashes and attacks based on religious identity, most often targeting religious minorities especially Muslim, but also on occasion Sikh and Christian minorities, have continued after Independence. According to some estimates, the numbers of people who died due to communal violence in India could be significantly more than 10,000.

There are no accurate official data of casualties by lynch attacks

and hate crimes in the past five years. But the numbers of persons killed in all such hate crimes are likely to be far less than those killed in even a single major episode of mass communal violence.

What then makes this present form of targeted hate violence, through lynch mobs and occasional solitary attacks, so worrying? Every episode of mass communal violence of the past, however grave, would occur in a particular area, and would unfold over some hours, some days, or in the rare instance of the Gujarat communal carnage of 2002, for some weeks. The difference with the new phase of lynch mobs and solitary hate crimes under the Prime Minister's watch is that it is no longer bound by geography and time, and so it mounts pervasive fear.

### Signal of impunity

Historian Amy Louise Wood writes vividly of the performative character of American lynching. In these "hundreds, sometimes thousands, of white spectators gathered and watched as their fellow citizens tortured, mutilated, and hanged or burned their victims in full view" This, she said, lent to lynching a "tremendous symbolic power precisely because it was... public and visually sensational".

In India this same performative symbolic power has been attained with the video camera. In 28 journeys of the Karwan e Mohabbat to lynch victims in 14 States, we have found that almost every lynching was videotaped by the perpetrators and triumphally and widely circulated online. Through this the perpetrators signal that they feel assured of their impunity, that despite their posting their images of committing murder online, they will be valorised as 'nationalist' heroes of the Hindu nation.

But they also seek through these videos to convey to the targeted community what they have been reduced to, begging vainly for their lives from their powerful attackers. Prof. Wood recalls: "Even one lynching reverberated, traveling with sinister force, down city streets and through rural farms, across roads and rivers... To be black in this time was to be 'the victim to a thousand lynchings'." In the same way, each lynching in India is reverberating to every inner-city and rural Muslim area: to be Muslim in India today is to be victim to ten thousand lynchings.

The message that such performative lynching communicates is stark and unambiguous. That if you are of the targeted community, you are no longer safe. In no place, and at no time. You can be attacked in your home: a mob can enter it and check what meat is cooking, and bludgeon you to death claiming it is cow meat. For being visibly Muslim, you can be lynched on a train, while walking down the road, at your workplace or a park. This fear, assiduously encouraged by the ruling establishment, is the most shameful marker of these five years.

India sometimes creates its own specific cruelties. These include untouchability, caste atrocities and the cruel burning of brides for dowry. While politically encouraged bigotry and hatred against minorities are growing into a malignant global epidemic, India's dubious contribution to this is its spate of performative mob lynchings, bludgeoning its religious minorities and disadvantaged castes into the pervasive fear of everyday living that this has brought in its wake.

Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher

# Predictable chaos in Libya

The Iraqi-Libyan species of intervention, with UN 'approval' but under the West's watch, is a post Cold-War phenomenon



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

General Khalifa Haftar, head of the Libyan National Army, is advancing on the capital Tripoli, having taken control of the east of the country including most of the oilfields. Gen. Haftar had helped Muammar Qaddafi seize power in 1969 before going into exile in the U.S. in the 1980s, but returned to Libya in 2011 to join in Qaddafi's overthrow. He now casts himself as a conservative Salafist opposing Islamists and the Muslim Brothers, and has the backing — for their individual reasons — of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and some West Asian states, apart from Russia (openly) and France (covertly).

### Libya's descent

The United Nations recognised Tripoli's administration is called the Government of National Accord, but is anything but that, being dependent on a motley of warlords, militant or moderate Islamists, secessionists and monarchists, all split on regional and ethnic lines. Even before Gen. Haftar launched his offensive, West Libya was replete with inter-militia battles and kidnappings. The Tripoli government commands no security forces, public administration scarcely exists, water, petrol and power shortages abound, and few banks operate. Thousands are

fleeing towards Tunisia, and 180 people have been killed so far in the recent fighting.

The rule of the gun prevails in Libya ever since western forces overthrew Qaddafi. The oil-rich country, now a departure point for thousands of migrants travelling to Europe, once had one of Africa's highest standards of living, free health care and education, with high female literacy and percentage of women in the workplace. Its inland waterway to green the eastern desert was called the world's largest irrigation project. But after the western armed intervention supported by some Arab sheikhdoms, a perceptive commentator noted, "Nothing was certain, least of all what kind of country Libya would now become."

The revolt against Qaddafi began in Benghazi, and western intervention was legitimised by the fig leaf of a UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire, a no-fly zone and protection of civilians, on which there were five abstentions which included India, Russia and China. Qaddafi accepted the resolution. Shortly thereafter, France, the U.K. and the U.S. attacked Qaddafi's forces and NATO assumed responsibility for regime change at the same moment that an African Union mediation mission was en route to Libya.

The Libyan tragedy, like those in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and most probably to ensue in Afghanistan, illustrates wider issues at play. Iraqi warring militias after the Second Gulf War empowered jihadists, made Iraq ungovernable, U.S. withdrawal inevitable, and led to the Balkanisation of the nation.



No lessons were learned, causing former U.S. President Barack Obama to confess that his worst mistake was a failure to prepare for the aftermath of western intervention following Qaddafi's overthrow. Western wishful thinking persists in the belief that Libya could arrive at a path to democracy that revives the country's collapsed institutions, rather than falling under military rule.

### Post Cold-War phenomenon

In 1965 and 1981, the UN adopted declarations on the inadmissibility of intervention in the domestic affairs of states, and until the 1990s the UN was the custodian of state sovereignty. The Iraqi-Libyan species of intervention, professedly with UN approval but actually under western control, is a post Cold-War phenomenon, the motivation being to implant liberal democratic institutions and human rights, along with security concerns, usually thinly justified by 9/11 and lately the Islamic State. Exogenous state-building and a peripheral role for local leaders characterise this innovation in international relations. The spectre of failed states became a major concern, leading to the imposition of a neo-liberal agenda in the guise of human

rights protection.

The ambiguous legal justification for interventions not specifically authorised by the UN, such as the creation of safe havens in Iraq, established a pattern despite negative precedents that showed that attempting nation-building in societies divided by ethnic, factional, ideological and religious lines is beyond the capacity of any minority group of UN members, let alone of one super-power. None of the interventions could have taken place without the projection of U.S. power or its indirect underwriting.

Two factors paved the way for these neo-protectorates; activists with rights-based agendas joined the political mainstream, and western outrage to televised suffering. Activists united with foreign policy establishments, and third world disorder presented opportunities for sly expansion of mandates into new operating areas. Added to these was post-1990 revisionism towards state sovereignty and permissiveness to humanitarian interventions. Relativism towards sovereignty was anathema to post-colonial independent states, especially when western interventions were selective and political in nature, and the victims of intervention lacked the power to oppose.

Western nations came to contemplate, albeit fitfully and inconsistently, neutralising a number of sovereign states in the third world that were illiberal, war-torn or internally weak, as potential threats to international peace. But this essentially political project was pre-

sented as a high-minded enterprise with altruistic motivations, similar to the post-war occupations of Germany and Japan.

There were many reasons for the failure of state-building in the new protectorates. The new elites were never very different or more liberal than those deposed. Organised criminality was invigorated by opportunities created by the absence of proper law enforcement due to outsiders not understanding the consequences of their policies. This was because the interveners were more concerned with checking the power of institutions rather than building them, and to appease domestic opinion back home, concentrated on exit strategies and political markers such as holding elections. If the outcome was doubtful even in Kosovo in Europe, the challenge of transforming political and social cultures in the world beyond Europe, where there is no economic pull factor and traditions have little in common with western liberalism, was obviously far more formidable.

As for humanitarian arguments and the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, such reasoning is malleable enough to be appropriated by Russia in Georgia and Ukraine. Whether in Libya or elsewhere, expeditionary interventions to implant human rights and democracy have a certain heuristic value in understanding the illusions of western hegemony which rose to prominence in our times and sought to mould the third world in its image.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### The real issue

It is strange that the Congress party has taken so long to realise that unemployment is the real national issue (Page 1, "Unemployment is the real national security issue: Rahul", April 18). The issue of unemployment is a certainty that is often overlooked by successive governments but conveniently raked up only during election season. The Congress is largely to be blamed for having failed to generate adequate employment in its long years of governance. The party's unprecedented struggle to try and change the narrative of Election 2019, from national security to that of unemployment, is

nothing but hypocrisy and easily comprehensible. It is a do-or-die battle in the face of the formidable challenge posed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling party. The seriousness and concern of the Congress over critical issues are dubious, lack honesty and with the general election in mind.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,  
Bengaluru

■ One of the main factors in this election will be employment. India, as many reports suggest, is a power house with prolific talent and skills. The current government has hardly paid attention to job creation. This election is also sensitive in its own right as it will

determine how the 'New India' will evolve.

AMBARISH APPAT,  
Nallepilly, Palakkad, Kerala

### Rahul interview

Congress president Rahul Gandhi terming the 2019 general election as a fight for the very idea of India is only a vain attempt to take a high moral ground ('Interview - Rahul Gandhi', "This is a fight for the very idea of India", April 18). The fact is that the dynastic Congress party and its equally dynastic regional allies are fighting for their own credibility and survival. There is an imperative need to get rid of them once and for all for the very idea of India and the sake of its democracy. Mr. Gandhi comes across as if he

has all the solutions to the problems of the country and that only he and his party represent the idea of India. His die-hard habit of belittling the Prime Minister at every opportunity betrays his lack of maturity.

C.G. KURIKOSE,  
Kothamangalam, Kerala

■ It is refreshing to see purpose and clarity in Mr. Gandhi on what he proposes to do if given a chance. He is quite right that the nation's potential lies in its huge economic potential and in the millions of aspirational youth. On the contrary, the cacophony by the NDA over the national security issue is making people tired. The ruling party should realise that people have travelled

some distance from the rhetoric-based approach.

J. ANANTHA PADMANABHAN,  
Tiruchi

### Poll notes

The elections in Tamil Nadu may have been held in a peaceful manner but in quite a few polling stations, some voters were put to difficulty as officials refused to let us vote even though we had our

voter ID card. In the Villivakkam constituency many of us were not given our booth/voter ID slips. The excuse was that we may not have been at home when officials visited our place. As a senior citizen, I have been denied my right to vote.

BHANUMATHI RAJAGOPALAN,  
Chennai

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:  
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### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

There was an erroneous reference to Sri Lanka beating India in the quarterfinal in Kolkata of the 1996 World Cup (Between Wickets column, Sport, April 17, 2019). Actually, Sri Lanka defeated India in the semifinal.

A report, "India to launch coffee consumption drive" (Business page, April 14, 2019) inadvertently said that the country has a domestic consumption of more than 5 mn bags (60 kg each) of coffee. Actually, the country produced 5.84 mn and consumed 1.47 mn bags (60 kg each) of coffee during 2017-2018 as per International Coffee Organisation.

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



# Is the Election Commission toothless or is it refusing to bite?

PARLEY

On its powers and limitations in conducting free and fair elections

*The Election Commission (EC) has come under intense scrutiny over the last few weeks for its inability to take swift action against those violating the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). It took a rap on its knuckles by the Supreme Court for the EC to crack the whip. In a discussion moderated by Anuradha Raman, S.Y. Quraishi and Trilochan Sastry talk of the EC's powers in imposing the MCC, and the controversy over NaMo TV. Edited excerpts:*

**Mr. Quraishi, with the EC recently taking action against some politicians for violation of the MCC, do you think it has finally demonstrated that it can bite?**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** It is a pity that we needed the Supreme Court to remind the EC of powers that it always had. Even advisories for senior leaders is good enough because it leads to a lot of naming and shaming, which is effective. To say that the EC is toothless in ensuring that the MCC is followed is wrong. It probably needs a little more will power to act strongly, particularly against the ruling party, because the ruling party always has an advantage which has to be neutralised. I think the EC has enough teeth. Just polite advice to the Prime Minister is enough to cause ripples. To underestimate the power of advisories is wrong.

**But it took a long time for the EC to actually act. Is there reason to believe that the EC is compromised?**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** I wouldn't use such a harsh word. The EC has always been under observation. Not only does it have to be fair, it has to appear to be fair. Now that it has got a rap on its knuckles, I think it will be bolder than it has been so far.

**Does it worry you that the EC is taking its own time to act against the Prime Minister?**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** It is very unfortunate that instead of debating the conduct of politicians, we are debating the EC. The EC is partly responsible because of delays. Had it acted promptly, it would not be in the

dock.

**What are your thoughts on the Supreme Court interim order directing political parties to provide full information on each and every political donor in a sealed cover to the court? I recall a conversation where you had serious misgivings about electoral bonds.**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** I am partly disappointed and partly happy. I am happy that it has taken note and commented that there is no transparency [in the electoral bonds scheme]. But asking that the information be delivered in a sealed envelope is beyond my comprehension. It is a grave error and very unfair. Is it a state secret? Parties know who the donor is, the government knows, and the donor knows who he or she gave the bond to. It is only you and I who don't know. Another sad thing is that while the elections are in process, the Constitution has barred any intervention by the court. The fact that the court has to intervene again and again is a sad situation.

**Trilochan Sastry:** There is a procedural issue and a substantive issue. On the procedural issue of whether the court should have intervened during the election, I have no comments to offer, but on the substantive issue as to whether such actions should be taken against hate speeches and on the countering of elections in a constituency in Tamil Nadu where cash was seized, the EC's decision is welcome. How institutions become aware of their power is a work in process and a long one at that. The EC is still discovering its powers, and if it is being nudged and that helps, it is okay.

On the issue of giving information on electoral bonds in a sealed cover to the court, we are very patient. We would have preferred something faster. The court perhaps felt it did not want to interfere when the election process was underway. So, it found a compromise and directed parties to declare who gave how much funds in the form of electoral bonds in a sealed cover. We will see on May 30th what it does. But the best practice all over the world is complete transparency.



**Does the EC suffer from some inherent structural problems in the manner of the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners?**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** The appointment system to the EC must improve. Right now, the Election Commissioners are appointed by the government of the day and they might feel beholden to the government or the government might feel that they should be beholden. In any case, public perception is that if they have been appointed by a particular government, they will be soft. A collegium system of appointment should be considered.

**It is not as if the Supreme Court's manner of appointment of judges is free of problems. You appear to be suggesting that the collegium system is working fine.**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** Yes, there may be problems, but this is the best system possible. If you see the electoral system in the world, the shortest cut-off for appointment is in India. Everywhere in the world, such constitutional appointments are made by either a collegium or even by the parliamentary committees and there is a parliamentary endorsement. In some cases there is a live interview of the candidate so that the whole nation is privy to the appointment. It is only in India that the most powerful Commission in the world has the most defective system of appointment. Mind you, it also puts pressure on the incumbent. The Com-

**TS:** The EC probably needs a little more will power to act strongly, particularly against the ruling party, because the ruling party always has an advantage which has to be neutralised.

missioners, even if they're acting bona fide, if the public perception is, 'oh they must be soft on the government', as is happening just now, to insulate them from these kind of allegations and accusations, a neutral system of appointment is perhaps the answer.

**Should the MCC be enacted into a law?**

**TS:** I think good practice sometimes is better than a law. When we pass a law, we are unable to anticipate every contingency. I think we need to trust the EC to exercise its powers. The moment you make a law, some comma or some phrase somewhere will be interpreted this way or that way and it will end up in the courts. And there will be a legal tangle. The Supreme Court has kind of endorsed the idea of a MCC without giving it a legal status. I think we should just let it be like that.

**S.Y. Quraishi:** I am absolutely against making it a law. It is a clever trap. The MCC will be taken away from the EC's discretion and it will have to be given to the judiciary in which case it will take 20 years for you to know whether some act was committed. Now this MCC acts like a fire brigade

— if there is fire, it has to be extinguished right then and not after five or 10 years. Second, its moral authority should not be underestimated even if the ultimate punishment under the model code is advice, warning, censure or reprimand. Its contribution towards forming public opinion is firm. The moment a leader gets a notice, it becomes a newspaper headline. The moral authority of the model code is very strong and the leaders are actually scared of getting a notice under the model code. Third, anything which is in the model code is also part of different laws, and action is simultaneously taken under the laws also. The only difference is that the action will be known to you after 10 years, whereas, here, a notice is served even to the Prime Minister: you violated the model code, please reply why action should not be taken. And the reply comes in 23 hours. This kind of speedy compliance never happens even to a law of the land.

**The week before the announcement of election dates is when we usually see a flurry of advertisements from the government. This year was no exception. How is it that the week before the EC actually announces the dates, the government is prepared with its advertisements?**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** All I can say is that the dates are decided by the EC and governments are very curious to know what the dates are and we never let them out, so that the surprise element is not taken away. The incumbent government cannot plan its political moves accordingly.

**TS:** It's very tricky to distinguish between a genuine policy decision which is announced and an announcement which is for the sake of getting votes. I think everything cannot be legislated. Something has to be left to the good sense of the voters.

**What actually is the problem with the TV channel that was launched in the name of the Prime Minister a few weeks after the MCC kicked in?**

**S.Y. Quraishi:** I don't have the full facts, but *prima facie* there is no problem in a political party or a political leader owning a channel. We know that in the south every politician seems to

have a channel. So when we were formulating the guidelines for the expenditure monitoring division in 2010 and 2011, we came across many channels which are owned by political parties. What they were doing was that their appearance on their own channels was shown as nil expenditure. We said, nothing doing. After all, there is a notional value attached to the telecast on the channel, which will have to be counted and shown as expenditure incurred. NaMo TV, if it is owned by the party or Mr. Modi himself, there is no problem except that the expenditure on the publicity on the channel has to be accounted for.

**TS:** I want to add one point here. You know the framework in which we are discussing all this. It seems to me that we are convinced that wrongdoing will happen and we are trying to fix it by this rule or that rule. Then we are falling back on the MCC. I think the only long-term solution is voter awareness. If the three of us seem to feel that a certain practice may not violate a constitutional right but it violates a moral code, I think when the people of India largely realise that, these things will disappear and among a large section of politically aware voters this is already happening.

**Do both of you agree that the EC suffers from no limitations whatsoever?**

**TS:** It can exercise far more powers when it chooses to, but the one power it does not have is to de-register political parties and you know there are parties which never contest elections, which do not submit their accounts, which do not follow their own internal Constitution of holding elections on time. And the EC becomes powerless. I think with due caution they should be allowed to de-register. In any case, there is judicial oversight.

**S.Y. Quraishi:** This has been pending for 20 years. We have been demanding that. The power to register does not include the power to de-register, according to a Supreme Court judgment. We went to the government and asked them to empower us. We have nearly 2,000 parties. Most of them are bogus; they are there only for money-laundering. We cannot do anything. To that extent, the EC is toothless, yes.



**S.Y. Quraishi** is a former Chief Election Commissioner and the author of 'An Undocumented Wonder: The Great Indian Election'



**Trilochan Sastry** is the chairperson of the Association of Democratic Reforms and former Dean at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

## SINGLE FILE

### A struggle to breathe

In this election season, it is imperative for political parties to talk about pollution

ARMIN ROSENCRANZ & NITISH RAJ



The National Capital Region's pollution levels make it to the headlines every year. Every October to December, stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, smog arising from industries, and motor vehicle emissions increase the air quality index (AQI) of Delhi to the hazardous level of 450. In the remaining months, the AQI goes back to the level of 101-200 (unhealthy for sensitive groups). The economic loss for India in the last five years due to the exposure to crop burning is about 1.7% of the country's GDP. Annually, this exposure to pollution costs Delhi, Haryana and Punjab around ₹2 lakh crore.

Despite this alarming level of pollution, neither the Union government nor the Delhi government has taken significant steps to plan out a long-term solution. Even the interim Budget took no significant step to tackle this issue. The odd-even scheme, which was launched some years ago to curb pollution, failed to achieve its objective. A study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water found that the average number of vehicles plying on the roads daily increased by 10% during the odd-even period in January 2016 compared to the last week of December 2015. This increase was mainly due to a 17% increase in two-wheelers, 12% increase in three-wheelers, 22% increase in taxis and 138% rise in the number of private buses. Another study published in *Current Science* found that the odd-even scheme led to an increase in emissions as the median concentration of 13 out of the 16 gases measured were higher in the morning hours and afternoon hours on days when the scheme was enforced.

Clearly, the government needs to take more radical steps to curb pollution. It should: find alternatives to stubble burning and impose strict sanctions in case of contravention of any ban on the practice; impose a blanket ban on firecrackers; impose a blanket ban on all vehicles exceeding prescribed tailgate emission standards; legislate stricter norms for fuels; open toll roads where trucks should be excluded and high-occupancy vehicles exempted from the toll; provide separate bus lanes to reduce congestion; create a separate fund in the Budget to specifically deal with this crisis; provide agricultural subsidies to farmers to disincentivise crop burning; improve the drainage system; and incentivise the use of renewable energy.

Apart from the courts, none of the other organs of the state has shown any readiness to deal with the pollution crisis. Meanwhile, until the government responds, NGOs and social workers should step in to tackle this issue through their own programmes and campaigns. In this election season, it is imperative for political parties to make this issue a priority, for pollution doesn't only affect us but our children, the generations to come, and our planet.

Armin Rosencranz is Professor of Law and Nitish Raj is a student of law at the O.P.J.S. Global University, Sonapat, Haryana



## NOTEBOOK

### The many roads to development in Chhattisgarh

In the heart of Bastar, which is peaceful only on the surface

JACOB KOSHY

They may be remote and disconnected from electricity, dispensaries and schools, but several villages in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region abutting large tracts of forest boast of well-maintained roads. An activist who works to boost awareness among the Adivasis about their traditional rights to forest land attributes the quality of these roads in the conflict region to the influence of Naxalites.

Several villages and administrative blocks in Kanker district (about 150 km from Raipur), such as Narayanpur, Antagarh and Abujhmad, are considered part of the 'Red corridor', a zone where Naxalite influence is considered pervasive. Keshav Shori, co-founder of DISHA, says: "In their efforts to reach deeper into the State and counter the Naxalites, the go-

vernment and security forces have invested in building pucca, all weather roads. Where you see great roads, you also see military men and their camps. That brings about its own set of problems."

Indeed, no settlement of the forest villages in Kanker or Narayanpur district is too far away from a camp site. A soldier from the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) says he has already spent four years in the Antagarh forest. A photographer colleague and I were in the district for a story about the forest rights of the Adivasis. When my colleague took some innocuous photographs of the majestic sal and mahua trees, a barrage of Army men approached us and demanded that the photographs be deleted.

The SSB is tasked with guarding the various infrastructure projects coming up in the region, particularly the 235-km railway line

that will connect Jagdalpur district with the Rowghat mines. Though the project was commissioned more than two decades ago, the Maoist insurgency and the general intractability of the region had considerably delayed the railway line's progress. "Even if everything looks peaceful on the surface, there's always uncertainty. Anything can happen any time over here. Half a kilometre from here, some months ago, an improvised explosive device went off," the soldier says. "If any adverse report from this area reaches our superiors, we're hauled up and get into trouble."

The solid roads bring the Army men closer to the villages, but without dispelling the mutual suspicion that seems ever-present among the tribals and the security personnel. It's hard to tell if a particular villager is a Naxalite, an informant or a courier,

another soldier says.

The passive friction plays out even among the stray dogs in the villages. Several camps have their police dogs who accompany the soldiers when they are out patrolling. The dogs are well fed and well nourished, and several times, says Mr. Shori, the local strays tag along with the Army dogs and attack the domestic fowl in the villages. "When the villagers demand compensation from the Army men, they refuse to pay saying that it wasn't their dogs that devoured the fowl," he says.

With India's cities incessantly hungry for the coal and minerals that abound in Chhattisgarh's forests, governments — whether Congress or the BJP — are unlikely to ever stop building roads that will reach deeper into the heart of the forests. But how effectively they win hearts is still a story in the making.

## FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 19, 1969

### Czech party drops liberals

Mr. Gustav Husak, the tough Slovak leader, who urged compromise with the Kremlin, replaced reformist champion Mr. Alexander Dubcek as Czechoslovakia's Communist leader last night [April 17] and declared "there will be no changes in policy." Mr. Husak, 56, was named First Secretary of the party at a crucial Central Committee session in Prague Castle following the worst crisis in Prague-Moscow relations since the Soviet-led invasion last August. Prague Radio, in reporting the change in the party leadership, which drops leading progressives Joseph Smrkovsky and Josef Spacek from the presidium, also announced that the progressive Editor of the party newspaper, Rude Pravo, Mr. Jiri Sekera, had resigned. Mr. Dubcek, President Ludvik Svoboda and the Federal Prime Minister, Mr. Oldrich Cernik, had been retained in a smaller 11-man Presidium.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 19, 1919.

### Indian Cotton Committee Report.

The Report of the Indian Cotton Committee [as available in Simla] says: We have divided our Report into two parts, the first of which deals with the agricultural and irrigational aspect of cotton cultivation and the second with the commercial aspect. But in conclusion we wish to emphasize as strongly as possible that the recommendations in both parts must be treated as an organic whole. It is of little avail if the agricultural department involves pure or improved strains of cotton, increases the outturn by the introduction of improvements in agricultural practices and ensures cleaner methods of picking or in the irrigation department provides facilities for the extension of the cultivation of cotton unless the cotton produced is marketed in a condition which enables it to secure its proper price and unless the cotton trade pays that price for it.

## POLL CALL

### Electoral roll

An electoral roll is a list of persons who are eligible to vote. Every Indian citizen who has attained the age of 18 years on the qualifying date (the first day of January of the year of revision of the electoral roll), unless otherwise disqualified, is eligible to be registered as a voter in the roll of the polling area of the constituency where she is ordinarily a resident. The roll helps streamline voting on election day. Voter registration helps combat electoral fraud by enabling authorities to verify an applicant's identity and ensure that no voter casts her ballot more than once. Publishing and updating the electoral roll is the responsibility of the Election Commission of India. The electoral roll is updated every year in September-October and published in the first week of January.

## MORE ON THE WEB

Why are global measles cases up by 300%?

<http://bit.ly/MeaslesVideo>



## लेखन न केवल मुक्त करता है, बल्कि सुखद भी है

मैंने पहली बार तेरह साल को उम्र में लिखना शुरू किया। इससे पहले मैंने अच्छी शिक्षा पाई थी। हाँ, मैंने कभी कॉलेज में पढ़ाई नहीं की। मैंने सैकड़ों नौकरियाँ कीं, खराब से खराब नौकरियाँ। जब मैं पैंतीस वर्ष का था, उस समय वर्षों से अत्यधिक शराब के सेवन के कारण मुझे भारी रक्तशर्करा हो गया। यह समझिए कि मैं लगभग मरणासन था। अस्पताल के लोगों ने मुझे खैराती वार्ड में डाल दिया और मेरे मरने की प्रतीक्षा करने लगे। लेकिन मैं मरा नहीं। मैं फिर से स्वस्थ हो गया।

अस्पताल से बाहर निकल कर मैंने ट्रक ड्राइवर की नौकरी पाई और खाली समय में कविताएँ लिखने लगा। वास्तव में पिछले दस वर्षों से मैंने लिखना छोड़ दिया था। मुझे नहीं पता था कि उन कविताओं को कहाँ भेजूं। मैंने बिना कुछ सोचें-समझे टेक्सस की एक पत्रिका को अपनी कविताएँ भेज दीं। मुझे लगा कि ये कविताएँ एक दिन लोके के आ जायेंगी और शायद कहीं प्रकाशित नहीं होंगी, लेकिन मुझे उस पत्रिका की संपादक का एक बड़ा सा पत्र मिला, जिसमें उसने मुझे प्रतिभावाण व्यक्ति बताया था। बाद में वह मुझसे मिलने भी आई और हम दोनों ने शादी भी कर ली, लेकिन वह शादी ज्यादा दिनों तक नहीं चली। हम दोनों का तलाक हो गया और बाद में मैंने एक दूसरी महिला से शादी कर ली। हमारी एक बेटी भी है, जो प्रतिभाशाली है।

लोग जब कहते हैं कि लिखना बहुत दर्दनाक और कष्टकर है, तो मैं उनकी बात समझ नहीं पाता हूँ, क्योंकि मेरी समझ से लेखन जाने-पहचाने पर्वत से लुढ़कने जैसा है। इसमें आनंद आता है। लेखन न केवल आपको मुक्त करता है, बल्कि सुखद भी है। यह एक तरह से उपहार है, क्योंकि आपको अपने मनचाहे काम के लिए पैसा भी मिलता है। मैं इसलिए लिखता हूँ, क्योंकि इसके लिए मुझे अंदर से प्रेरणा मिलती है और बाद में पैसा भी।

-जर्मनी में जन्मे अमेरिकी कवि

अस्पताल से बाहर निकल कर मैंने ट्रक ड्राइवर की नौकरी पाई और खाली समय में कविताएँ लिखने लगा। वास्तव में पिछले दस वर्षों से मैंने लिखना छोड़ दिया था। मुझे नहीं पता था कि उन कविताओं को कहाँ भेजूं। मैंने बिना कुछ सोचें-समझे टेक्सस की एक पत्रिका को अपनी कविताएँ भेज दीं। मुझे लगा कि ये कविताएँ एक दिन लोके के आ जायेंगी और शायद कहीं प्रकाशित नहीं होंगी, लेकिन मुझे उस पत्रिका की संपादक का एक बड़ा सा पत्र मिला, जिसमें उसने मुझे प्रतिभावाण व्यक्ति बताया था। बाद में वह मुझसे मिलने भी आई और हम दोनों ने शादी भी कर ली, लेकिन वह शादी ज्यादा दिनों तक नहीं चली। हम दोनों का तलाक हो गया और बाद में मैंने एक दूसरी महिला से शादी कर ली। हमारी एक बेटी भी है, जो प्रतिभाशाली है।

## हरियाली और रास्ता

### महिला, बूढ़ा व्यक्ति और हीरा

एक महिला की कहानी, जिसने एक बूढ़े को हीरा देकर जीवन के प्रति उसका नजरिया ही बदल दिया।



एक महिला समुद्र के किनारे रेत पर टहल रही थी। उसके चेहरे पर चमक और हाठों पर मुस्कान थी। वहाँ एक बूढ़ा व्यक्ति भी बैठा था। अचानक उस बूढ़े व्यक्ति ने देखा कि समुद्र की लहरों के साथ एक चमकदार पत्थर छोर पर आ गया। वह महिला उस चमकदार पत्थर के पास से गुजर रही थी। वह हीरा था। महिला ने वह पत्थर उठा लिया और अपने पर्स में रख लिया। फिर वह पहले की तरह रेत पर टहलने लगी। बूढ़ा व्यक्ति यह देख रहा था। अचानक वह अपनी जगह से उठकर महिला के सामने जाकर हाथ फैलाते हुए कहा, मैंने पिछले चार दिन से कुछ नहीं खाया है। क्या तुम मेरी मदद कर सकती हो? महिला अपना पर्स खोलकर खाने की कोई चीज ढूँढने लगी। उसने देखा बूढ़े की नजर उस पत्थर पर है। महिला ने वह पत्थर निकाला और बूढ़े को दे दिया। बूढ़ा हैरत में पड़ गया कि ऐसी कीमती चीज कोई भला इतनी आसानी से कैसे दे सकता है! इतने में औरत पलटकर वापस अपने रास्ते पर आगे बढ़ चुकी थी। हीरा देने के बावजूद उसके चेहरे पर कोई शिकन नहीं थी। बूढ़े ने फिर उस औरत को रोका और कहा, क्या तुम जानती हो, जो चीज तुमने इतनी आसानी से मुझे दे दी, वह बेशकीमती हीरा है? इसे अपने पास रखकर तुम ज़िंदगी भर खुश रह सकती हो। महिला ने कहा, जी हाँ, मैं जानती हूँ कि यह हीरा है। पर मेरी खुशी इस हीरे से नहीं, मेरे भीतर है। समुद्र की लहरों की तरह ही दौलत और शोहरत आती-जाती रहती है। अगर अपनी खुशी इनसे जोड़ेंगे, तो कभी खुश नहीं रह सकते। बूढ़े ने उस महिला को हीरा लौटाते हुए कहा, यह तुम रखो और मुझे इससे कई गुना ज्यादा कीमती वह भाव दे दो, जिसकी वजह से तुमने इतनी आसानी से यह हीरा मुझे दे दिया।

धन-दौलत में खुशियाँ ढूँढना बेकार है, खुशी हमारे अंदर होती है।

आर्थिक रूप से दिवालिया होने के कगार पर खड़ी जेट एयरवेज को जिस तरह से अपनी सारी उड़ानें रद्द करनी पड़ी हैं, उससे साफ है कि भारत का विमान उद्योग गंभीर संकट से गुजर रहा है और उसने किंगफिशर कंपनी के बंद होने के बाद कोई सबक नहीं सीखा।

## जमीन पर जेट

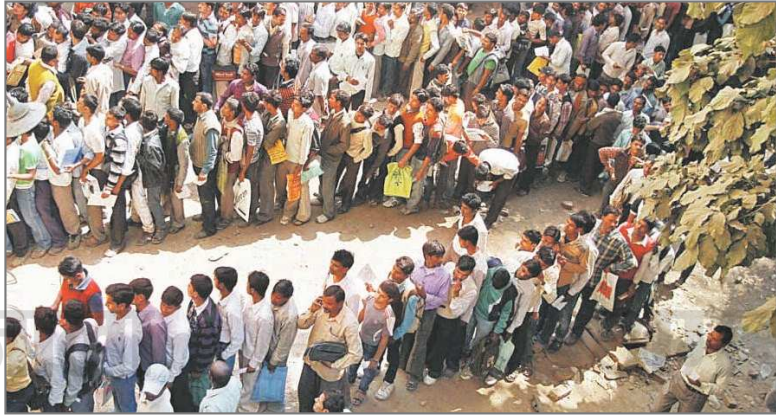
### अंततः

निजी हवाई कंपनी जेट एयरवेज का वही हथ्र हुआ, जिसका अंदेशा कई महीने से था। भयंकर आर्थिक संकट से गुजर रही इस कंपनी ने सार विकल्प तलाशने के बाद आखिरकार मंगलवार को अपनी सारी उड़ानें रद्द कर दीं। एक समय देश की सबसे बड़ी निजी विमानन कंपनी रही जेट एयरवेज को यह हालत बताती है कि देश का विमान उद्योग किस संकट से गुजर रहा है। कंपनी पर आर्थिक बोझ के साथ ही कर्जदाता बैंकों का दबाव भी बढ़ता जा रहा था, जिसके चलते उसके मालिक नरेश गोयल को कंपनी के बोर्ड से अलग होना पड़ा था। कंपनी को ईंधन और जरूरी खर्चों के लिए तात्कालिक रूप से 1,500 करोड़ रुपये की जरूरत थी, मगर स्टेट बैंक की अगुआई वाले

कर्जदाताओं के समूह ने भीतर से पूरी तरह से जर्जर हो चुकी इस कंपनी पर भरोसा नहीं किया, तो इसके पीछे की वजह समझी जा सकती है। सवाल है कि एक समय जो कंपनी बाजार पूंजीकरण के लिहाज से देश की सबसे बड़ी एयरलाइंस कंपनी बन गई थी, वह दिवालिया होने के कगार पर कैसे आ गई! जबकि हाल के वर्षों में भारतीय नागरिक उड्डयन क्षेत्र ने दो अंकों में वृद्धि दर्ज की है और भारत को इस मामले में संभावनाओं वाले देश के रूप में भी देखा जाता रहा है। दरअसल सस्ती विमान सेवाओं के शुरू होने के बाद पिछले एक-डेढ़ दशक के दौरान विमान यात्रियों का एक नया वर्ग भी तैयार हुआ। इसके बावजूद विमानन कंपनियाँ आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर हो रही थीं, तो कहीं न कहीं यह नीयत और नियंत्रण, दोनों का मामला

है। हैरानी की बात यह है कि 2012 में ऐसे ही हालात में विजय माल्या की किंगफिशर एयरलाइंस बंद हो गई थी, इसके बावजूद कोई सबक नहीं लिया गया। जेट एयरवेज को उड़ानें रद्द करने का असर विमान यात्रियों पर तो पड़ ही रहा है, इसकी वजह से कंपनी के तकरीबन 20,000 कर्मचारी सड़क पर आ गए हैं। दूसरी ओर जेट को उड़ानें रद्द होने से अचानक विमानन क्षेत्र में मांग और आपूर्ति का संतुलन बिगड़ गया है, जिसका असर हवाई यात्रा पर दिखने लगा है। सरकार को देखना चाहिए कि चुनावी आचार संहिता के बीच वह इस संकट को दूर करने में किस तरह से हस्तक्षेप कर सकती है। यह मुद्दा सिर्फ एक कंपनी और उसके कर्मचारियों के हितों से ही नहीं जुड़ा है, बल्कि इसका संबंध विमानन क्षेत्र के निवेशकों के विश्वास से भी है।

# कृषि क्षेत्र से ही पैदा होगा रोजगार



हमारे यहां के अर्थशास्त्री अब भी ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों से लोगों के शहरी इलाकों में जाने को अच्छा मानते हैं, जबकि चीन ने शहरों से गांव जाने को प्राथमिकता में रखा है। भारत में अकेला कृषि क्षेत्र अर्थव्यवस्था को पटरी पर ला सकता है।

देविंदर रार्मा, कृषि नीति विशेषज्ञ



करोड़ से ज्यादा रोजगार के नुकसान को दर्शाता है। अकुशल से लेकर कुशल, अशिक्षित से लेकर शिक्षित और यहां तक कि उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त लोगों के लिए रोजगार के अवसर सिमट रहे हैं। उत्तर प्रदेश में 3,700 डॉक्टरेट डिग्रीधारी, 28,000 पोस्ट ग्रेजुएट और 50,000 ग्रेजुएट ने चापरासी के मात्र 62 पदों के लिए आवेदन किया। इस नौकरी

के लिए मूलतः न्यूनतम पांचवीं क्लास उत्तीर्ण और साइकिल चलाने की योग्यता होनी चाहिए। यह पहली बार नहीं है कि उच्च शिक्षित लोगों ने ऐसी छोटी नौकरी के लिए आवेदन किए हैं। इसलिए हैरानी नहीं कि अजीम प्रेमजी विश्वविद्यालय के अध्यक्ष ने दिखाया है कि उच्च शिक्षित, कम शिक्षित के साथ-साथ अनियोजित कार्यबल के

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सी महीने रेलवे भर्ती बोर्ड ने टाइपिस्ट, स्टेनो, एकाउंट क्लर्क, टिकट कलेक्टर आदि के 35,000 पदों के लिए 1.6 करोड़ आवेदन प्राप्त किए। पंजाब में छह लाख से अधिक छात्रों ने इंटरनेशनल इंग्लिश लैंग्वेज टेस्टिंग सिस्टम (आईईएलटीएस) में भाग लिया। यह ऐसी परीक्षा है, जिसे विदेश जाने के इच्छुक छात्रों को पहले पास करना होता है। विदेश जाने की कोई ऐसी लालसा है कि आईईएलटीएस कोचिंग एक बड़ा व्यवसाय बन गई है, जिसका कारोबार अनुमानित रूप से 1,100 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक है। खेती के आर्थिक रूप से गैर-लाभकारी होने और रोजगार की कोई संभावना न होने के कारण पंजाब के युवा तेजी से देश छोड़ने के इच्छुक हैं।

अगर आप देश में बढ़ती बेरोजगारी के दीर्घकालीन प्रभाव से परेशान हैं, तो आपको एक और झटका लग सकता है। बंगलूरू स्थित अजीम प्रेमजी विश्वविद्यालय ने अपने स्टेट ऑफ वर्ल्ड इंडिया-2019 की रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि वर्ष 2016 से 2018 के बीच 50 लाख लोगों को अपनी नौकरी खोनी पड़ी है। एक महीने पहले नेशनल सैपल सर्वे ऑफिस की पिरियॉडिक लेबर फोर्स सर्विस 2017-18 की रिपोर्ट ने बताया कि 2011-12 से 2017-18 के बीच ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 3.2 करोड़ अनियमित श्रमिकों ने अपना रोजगार खोया। इनमें से मोटे तौर पर तीन करोड़ कृषि श्रमिक थे, यह कृषि श्रमिकों के लिए रोजगार की उपलब्धता में 40 प्रतिशत की गिरावट दिखाती है। कुछ अर्थशास्त्रियों ने इस रिपोर्ट का विश्लेषण करने पर पाया है कि 2011-12 से 2015-16 के बीच अकेले विनिर्माण के क्षेत्र में रोजगार 580.6 लाख से घटकर 480.3 लाख रह गया, जो एक

## मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> नगराज गंगोली

## अपराधियों से लेकर नदियों तक को नवजीवन दिया

मैं बचपन से ही स्वतंत्र और उदार विचारों का रहा, जिसकी मुझे जब-तब कीमत भी चुकानी पड़ी। मैं स्कूल में कई बार ऐसे सवाल पूछने पर डांट खा चुका था, जो जायज तो थे, पर मेरे शिक्षकों के लिए असुविधाजनक थे। पंद्रह साल की उम्र में घर पर मेरी पिटाई हुई थी, क्योंकि मैं एक दलित लड़के के साथ घूम रहा था। बाद में मैं एचएमटी कंपनी में नौकरी करने लगा। पर दूसरों की बेहतरी की चिंता के कारण मैं अपनी नौकरी से संतुष्ट नहीं था। इसी सिलसिले में वर्ष 2004 में मैं आर्ट ऑफ लिविंग से जुड़ गया। यह जुड़ाव सिर्फ अपनी शांति के लिए नहीं था, बल्कि इसलिए था कि दूसरों की तकलीफें दूर कर सकूँ। लोगों में बदते गुस्से, ईर्ष्या भाव और घृणा को उनके स्वभाव से न जोड़कर वर्तमान जीवन स्थिति से जोड़ने का आईडिया मुझे आर्ट ऑफ लिविंग से मिला। चूंकि लोग मुझे जानते थे, इसलिए युवाओं, पुलिस के जवानों और अपराधियों तक को बदलने का अभियान मैंने शुरू कर दिया। अपनी इस मुहिम में मैं सफल भी हुआ। इस संदर्भ में मैं प्रवीण का उदाहरण दे सकता हूँ। मोड्या का रहने वाला प्रवीण खूंखार अपराधी था और बंगलूरू के सभी थानों में उसके खिलाफ डकैती और चैन छीनने के मुकदमे दर्ज थे। अपराधियों को मुख्यधारा में लाने के लिए चलाए जा रहे एक वर्कशॉप में मेरी मुलाकात प्रवीण से हुई। मैंने उसे बदलने की टानी और आज वह वेदवती नदी को नवजीवन देने के अलावा चिकमगलूर के जंगल में भूमिगत जल स्तर को बेहतर करने के अभियान में लगा है। प्रवीण में आए इस बदलाव से राज्य का पुलिस महकमा बहुत खुश है और वह मेरे अभियानों को और व्यापक रूप देना चाहता है। कर्नाटक में किसानों की परेशानी दूर करने के लिए मैंने वेदवती और कुमुदवती नदियों के पुनरुद्धार अभियान पर न सिर्फ काम शुरू किया, बल्कि स्थानीय लोगों को भी इस अभियान से जोड़ा। अगर यह काम सफलतापूर्वक पूरा हो जाता है, तो बंगलूरू



मैंने नदियों के पुनरुद्धार पर न सिर्फ काम शुरू किया, बल्कि स्थानीय लोगों को भी इससे जोड़ा।

शहर में जल संकट का भी समाधान निकल सकता है। यही नहीं, इससे कावेरी के पानी को लेकर तमिलनाडु के साथ चल रहे पुराने विवाद का भी अंत हो जाएगा। इस काम की शुरुआत 2011 में तब हुई, जब मैं लक्ष्मीपुरा गांव के लगभग एक सौ किसान परिवारों के साथ जल संकट के समाधान की परियोजना पर काम कर रहा था। चूंकि वहां जल संकट के स्थायी और टिकाऊ समाधान पर वैज्ञानिक तरीके से काम हो रहा था, इसलिए हमें समाधान मिला और लक्ष्मीपुरा गांव तथा उसके आसपास के इलाकों में जल स्तर साढ़े तीन सौ फीट से अस्सी फीट पर आ गया। उसी दौरान मुझे यह भी समझ में आया कि अगर सही तरीके से काम हो, तो मानसून की कम बारिश के बावजूद पानी की कमी से निपटा जा सकता है। इस परियोजना में सफलता के बाद अब मैं जल संकट के समाधान की एक बड़ी परियोजना पर कुमुदवती रिवर बेसिन में काम कर रहा हूँ, जो 1,097 गांवों, 24 ग्राम पंचायतों और 25 लाख लोगों के जीवन से जुड़ा है। यह नदी कभी 276 गांवों और बंगलूरू महानगर की प्यास बुझाती थी। लेकिन तीव्र शहरीकरण, जंगलों की कटाई, अंध रेत खनन और यूकैलिपटस के पेड़ लगाए जाने के कारण यह नदी धीरे-धीरे मर चुकी है। शुक्र है कि कर्नाटक में नदियों को नवजीवन देने के मेरे अभियान को सरकार और स्थानीय प्रशासन का सहयोग मिला है। जगह-जगह तालाब खोदे जा रहे हैं और वर्षा जल जमा कर भूमिगत जलस्तर को ऊपर उठाया जा रहा है।

विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

# नई जमीनें खोजता प्रेम

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कसर कहा जाता है कि आधे मन से किया गया कोई प्रयास कभी वह प्रभाव नहीं छोड़ता, जो पूरे मन से किया गया काम छोड़ता है। इधर जब आईआईटी, बाँबे से बीटेक पास राजस्थान के कनिष्क कटारिया ने सिविल सेवा परीक्षा-2018 में शीर्ष स्थान हासिल किया, तो एक सवाल के जवाब में उन्होंने इस सफलता का श्रेय अपने माता-पिता, बहन और प्रेमिका की मदद व नैतिक समर्थन को दिया। अपने माता-पिता और स्वजनो का स्मरण तो हर कोई ऐसे मौके पर करता है, पर खास तौर से प्रेयसी (गलफ्रिड) को इसका श्रेय देने का दुस्साहस और आगे बढ़कर मौका पड़े, तो उससे शादी करने का प्रयास विरले ही कर पाते हैं। लेकिन कनिष्क ने पूरे मन से दोनों काम किए, करियर में आगे बढ़ने की पहल और प्रेम व उसका उद्घोष। इसीलिए जब उन्होंने प्रेमिका को अपनी सफलता का श्रेय देने का प्रयास किया, तो इससे जहां कुछ सवाल पैदा हुए वहीं कुछ उम्मीदें भी उस प्रेम को लेकर जगीं, जिसकी जमीनें इधर देहेज जैसे बंधनों ने बंजर कर दी हैं और करियर में सहयोगी से प्रेम को भीट्टे जैसे अभियानों की बदौलत आशंकाओं की अमरखेल खाने लगी है।

अगर यह कहें कि महजब तक की दीवारें तोड़ करियर में सहयोगी के प्रेम को स्वीकारने और उसे निबाहने की इधर जैसे बंधनों ने बंजर कर दी हैं और करियर में जमीन पर पैदा कुछ अंकुरों ने शुरू की है, तो शायद गलत नहीं होगी। एक किस्सा साल 2015 के यूरोपससी टॉपर टीना डाबी और दूसरे नंबर आए अतहर का है, जिन्होंने तीन साल चले प्रेम के बाद पिछले बरस पहलवानों में शादी रचाई थीं।

वह दौर अपने देश में ज्यादा नहीं चला, जब कहा



मनीषा सिंह

जाता था कि लड़कियों को अच्छी पढ़ाई-लिखाई और अच्छे करियर का मतलब यह है कि मां-बाप उनकी शादी को लेकर निश्चित हो सकते थे। कहा जाता था कि आईटी, बैंकिंग और प्रबंधन में अच्छी नौकरियाँ पाने वाली लड़कियों के विवाह में कोई दिक्कत नहीं आएगी और उन्हें देहेज जैसी समस्या का भी सामना नहीं करना पड़ेगा। माना गया कि पढ़ी-लिखी और अच्छे करियर में जाने वाली लड़कियों को या तो सहयोगियों के बीच से ही कोई योग्य जीवनसाथी मिल जाएगा या फिर जाति-समाज के बंधनों के बीच किए गए रिश्तों में उनकी शादी देहेज आदि झंझटों से मुक्त हो जाएगी। पर उम्मीदें जगती इन धारणाओं के उस वक्त पूर्ण-पूर्ण हो गए, जब देहेज नई शक्तों में लौट आया। जैसे, सीधे-सीधे कैश

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## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 53

### आंकड़ों में पारदर्शिता

गत सप्ताह अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (आईएमएफ) ने वर्ष 2019-20 और 2020-21 में देश के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) में होने वाली वृद्धि को लेकर अपने अनुमान में संशोधन किया और दोनों वर्षों के अनुमान को 20 आधार अंक कम करके क्रमशः 7.3 फीसदी और 7.5 फीसदी कर दिया। इससे पहले विश्व बैंक ने भी भारत में जीडीपी वृद्धि

के अनुमान को संशोधित करके घटाया था और कहा था कि 2019-20 में यह 7.2 फीसदी रह सकती है। उसने भी 20 आधार अंकों की कमी की थी। ये अनुमान हालिया आधिकारिक आंकड़ों के अनुरूप नहीं हैं। ये आंकड़े केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय ने जारी किए हैं और दोनों बहुपक्षीय संस्थानों के मुताबिक ये चुनिंदा नीतिगत कदमों पर आधारित हैं जो अगले

एक-दो वर्ष में वृद्धि को गति प्रदान करेंगे। बहरहाल, एक सवाल तो फिर भी बनता है कि आखिर अनुमानों में कटौती क्यों करनी पड़ी? आखिरकार, न तो विश्व बैंक और न ही आईएमएफ के पास भारत में आंकड़ों का संग्रह करने का कोई स्वतंत्र जरिया है। ऐसे में यह स्पष्ट नहीं है कि आखिर एक एजेंसी के अनुमान में गिरावट और दूसरी में सुधार किस वजह से आया।

यह एक व्यापक मुद्दा है जो बहुपक्षीय एजेंसियों की ओर से जारी किए गए वृद्धि अनुमानों की विश्वसनीयता से ताल्लुक रखता है। ऐसे हालात में जब आधिकारिक आंकड़ों पर लगातार सवाल उठ रहे हों, तब कई पर्यवेक्षकों के लिए सबसे सहज बात यही है कि वृहद आर्थिक स्थिति से संबंधित आंकड़ों

के बारे में जानकारी जुटाने के लिए स्वतंत्र स्रोतों का सहारा लें। इससे यह पता चल सकेगा कि वृहद अर्थव्यवस्था में चल क्या रहा है? बहरहाल, अगर वे स्वतंत्र सूत्र भी यह बताने की स्थिति में न हों कि उनके अनुमान सरकारी एजेंसी के अनुमान से बेहतर और अधिक भरोसेमंद क्यों हैं तो वे किसी के काम आएंगे ही क्यों? सीएसओ द्वारा जारी वृद्धि के आधिकारिक शीर्ष आंकड़ों तथा बहुपक्षीय एजेंसियों के अनुमानों में आखिर रिश्ता क्या है? उदाहरण के लिए देखें तो विश्व बैंक स्पष्ट कहता है कि वह अपने डेटा टेबल के लिए स्थानीय मुद्रा से जुड़े आंकड़ों का इस्तेमाल करता है जो हर देश जारी करता है। जब घरेलू एजेंसियां अपने आकलन के तरीके में बदलाव लाती हैं तो निरंतरता बनाए रखने के लिए

विश्व बैंक अपनी आकलन पद्धति में क्या बदलाव लाता है? भारत में ऐसा हुआ है और उस पर विवाद भी उठा था। सवाल यह भी है कि ऐसे कौन से अतिरिक्त आंकड़े आए होंगे जिनके कारण अनुमान में बदलाव आया? अतीत के दिक्रतदेह अनुमानों की भी कुछ जवाबदेही होनी चाहिए। विश्व बैंक और आईएमएफ को अपने अतीत के पूर्वानुमानों और वास्तविक आंकड़ों पर नजर डालनी चाहिए और अंतर होने पर स्पष्टीकरण तैयार करना चाहिए। इससे उनके विश्लेषकों में जवाबदेही आएगी और पर्यवेक्षकों को पारदर्शिता मिलेगी।

कई सवाल ऐसे भी हैं जो विश्व बैंक और आईएमएफ के आंकड़ों के बारे में पूछे जाने चाहिए। उदाहरण के लिए विश्व बैंक का कहना

है कि वर्ष 2017 में भारत का जीडीपी 2.6 लाख करोड़ डॉलर था और क्रय शक्ति समानता (पीपीपी) के संदर्भ में उसका जीडीपी 11.9 लाख करोड़ डॉलर था। पीपीपी आधार पर यह 4.76 था। उसी वर्ष विश्व बैंक ने दावा किया कि बांग्लादेश का पीपीपी जीडीपी 63,700 करोड़ डॉलर था जबकि वास्तविक संदर्भ में यह 25,000 करोड़ डॉलर था। पीपीपी आधार पर यह 2.54 है। दोनों के बीच इतना अधिक अंतर है कि प्रश्न उठाना लाजिमी है। दूसरे वर्षों और अन्य समकक्ष अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के साथ यह अंतर और अधिक हो सकता है। पीपीपी के आकार और प्रत्यक्ष शक्ति के सवाल अंतरराष्ट्रीय बातचीत में काफी महत्वपूर्ण हैं। इन विसंगतियों को स्पष्ट किया जाए तो बेहतर होगा।



विनय सिन्हा

# मोदी की विदेश नीति क्या खोया क्या पाया?

आम चुनाव में कुछ ही दिन बचे हैं। ऐसे में मोदी सरकार की विदेश नीति की सफलता और उसकी नाकामी के बारे में विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं श्याम सरन

देश इस समय उन्मत्त चुनावी कवायद में उलझा हुआ है लेकिन विदेश नीति एक ऐसा विषय है जो शायद ही कभी मतदाताओं की कल्पनाशीलता को जगाता हो।

पाकिस्तान के साथ रिश्तों की बात अपवाद अवश्य हो सकती है लेकिन अतीत में कभी भी यह साबित नहीं हुआ है कि राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के मुद्दे पर भी वोट जुटाया जा सकता है। यही बात बालाकोट घटना पर भी लागू होती है जहां सत्ताधारी दल ने घटना को गहरे राष्ट्रवादी रंग में रंगने की कोशिश की लेकिन वह बहुत तेजी से फीका पड़ रहा है। पहले कुछ अन्य चुनावों की तरह ही इस बार भी चुनाव प्राथमिक तौर पर घरेलू मुद्दों से ही निर्धारित होंगे। हालांकि विदेश नीति भी चर्चा का विषय है। विदेशी नीति के मुद्दों को लेकर पार्टियों का रूख अलग-अलग हो सकता है। नेतृत्व शैली अलग हो सकती है और अतीत से कुछ अलग रुख देखने को मिल सकता है। परंतु देश के बाहरी रिश्तों में मोदी के पिछले पांच साल के कार्यकाल में कोई व्यापक बदलाव नहीं आया है। आने वाली सरकार चाहे जिस राजनीतिक विचारधारा की हो, उनमें आने वाले समय में भी कोई बदलाव आता नहीं दिखता।

सवाल यह है कि विदेश नीति के मोर्चे पर मोदी सरकार के प्रदर्शन को किस प्रकार आंका जाए? यहां तीन अलग-अलग विशेषताएं हैं जो दिमाग में आती हैं।

पहली बात, मोदी ने व्यक्तिगत कूटनीति के मूल्य में बहुत अधिक यकीन दिखाया है और तमाम मुद्दों को हल करने में उन्होंने नेताओं के बीच व्यक्तिगत संपर्क को तबज्जो दी है। इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि पूर्व अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति बराक ओबामा के साथ उनके रिश्तों ने भारत और अमेरिका के रिश्तों को मजबूत करने और उन्हें विस्तार देने में काफी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है। मोदी और जापान के प्रधानमंत्री शिंजो अबे के बीच उठा रहे थे जो पहले ही अमेरिका और जापान को भारत के करीब ला रहे थे। चीन का उभार भी इसमें एक प्रमुख कारक था। मोदी को ट्रंप और चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी चिनफिंग के साथ रिश्तों में कोई बहुत अधिक कामयाबी नहीं मिली। मिसाल के तौर पर गत वर्ष जून में वुहान शिखर बैठक में भी चीन ने भारत की वास्तविक चिंताओं को कुछ खास तबज्जो नहीं दी। अगर रिश्तों को सकारात्मक दिशा

में ले जाने वाले कुछ कारक पहले से मौजूद हों तो व्यक्तिगत कूटनीति एक अतिरिक्त कारक साबित हो सकती है। परंतु नकारात्मक तत्वों के दौर में इनका प्रभाव कमतर साबित होता है। अगर नेताओं के प्रगाढ़ रिश्तों के बावजूद बाद में उचित फॉलोअप न लिया जाए तो रिश्ते कमजोर साबित होते हैं। हमारे देश में यह कमजोरी निरंतर बनी हुई है।

दूसरा, मोदी ने विदेश नीति में प्रवासी भारतीयों का कदम मजबूत किया है। उन्होंने पिछली सरकारों से ज्यादा पहल की है। उन्होंने कई देशों के भारतीय समुदायों तक पहुंच बनाई और अपना घरेलू और अंतरराष्ट्रीय कद मजबूत किया। इसका फायदा भारत को राजनीतिक फंडिंग के रूप में मिला और मोदी की छवि मजबूत हुई परंतु देश के विकास में प्रवासियों के योगदान में कोई खास बढ़ोतरी नहीं हुई। इसके उलट चीन के प्रवासी समुदायों से ज्यादा देश के लिए काफी कुछ किया है। राष्ट्रीय नजरिये से यह सवाल पूछा जाना चाहिए कि समय और ऊर्जा की जो खपत की गई, क्या वह उपयोगी साबित हुई है।

तीसरा, मोदी हाल के वर्षों में पहले प्रधानमंत्री हैं जिन्होंने खुले दिल से विदेशी निवेश का स्वागत किया है। अपनी हर विदेशी यात्रा में उन्होंने विदेशी पूंजी जुटाने

की बात कही। उन्हें इसका श्रेय मिलना चाहिए। यह अलग बात है कि भारतीय बाजार में संभावित विदेशी निवेशकों के लिए चुनौती बरकरार है। सच तो यह है कि भारतीय निवेशक अपने ही देश में निवेश के इच्छुक नहीं दिख रहे। यह कोई अच्छा संकेत नहीं है। नियामकीय और कर संबंधी मुद्दे भी हैं। अहम बात यह है कि नीतिगत अनिश्चितता के बीच प्रधानमंत्री के सकारात्मक संदेश के बावजूद ये चिंताएं कम नहीं हो रहीं। आर्थिक कूटनीति इस सरकार की प्राथमिकता रही है लेकिन नतीजे बहुत सकारात्मक नहीं रहे हैं। इससे लगता है कि ढांचगत और संचालन संबंधी मुद्दों को जल्द हल करने की आवश्यकता है।

चौथा, खाड़ी और पश्चिम एशिया में तेजी से बदली जटिल परिस्थितियों का प्रबंधन करने में हमें कामयाबी मिली है। मोदी सरकार एक ओर सऊदी अरब और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात तो दूसरी ओर ईरान के साथ अपने रिश्ते मजबूत करने में लगातार कामयाब रही है। इजरायल के साथ भी हमारे रिश्ते अच्छे हैं। इससे न केवल देश को ऊर्जा सुरक्षा हासिल हुई है बल्कि आतंकवाद के खिलाफ नए सहयोगी भी मिले हैं। उसने ईरान और सीरिया के प्रति नीति बदलने के अमेरिकी दबाव को भी धटा बताया। यह पिछली सरकारों का भी लक्ष्य था लेकिन ऐसी कूटनीति पहले देखने को नहीं मिली।

हालांकि मोदी की पाकिस्तान नीति ने देश को अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर हिचक में डाल दिया। पाकिस्तान को घरेलू राजनीतिक मुद्दा बनाने की कोशिश ने विदेश नीति को नुकसान पहुंचाया और समाज में सांप्रदायिक भेदभाव को बढ़ावा दिया। हम पाकिस्तान से इसलिए नहीं निपट पा रहे हैं क्योंकि इसके पीछे घरेलू राजनीतिक कारण हैं। हमारी मानसिकता में पाकिस्तान ने इतना स्थान घेर रखा है कि हम अन्य पड़ोसियों के बारे में नहीं सोच पा रहे हैं।

चीन ने हमारे पड़ोस में कहीं अधिक गहरी पकड़ बना ली है। इसके अलावा पाकिस्तान के प्रति बढ़ते शत्रु भाव और तनाव के कारण भारत अंतरराष्ट्रीय हस्तक्षेप को लेकर भी संवेदनशील हो गया है। जम्मू और कश्मीर का कुप्रबंधन, सामान्य कश्मीरियों में पाकिस्तान के समर्थन में सहानुभूति की भावना आदि ने पाकिस्तान के साथ रिश्तों को खतरनाक स्तर पर पहुंचा दिया है। अगर हम भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप में यूं ही उलझे रहे तो हमारे मजबूत क्षेत्रीय और वैश्विक कद पर असर होगा।

बीते 70 वर्ष से अधिक समय में भारत ने एक जीवंत लोकतंत्र के रूप में जबर्दस्त अंतरराष्ट्रीय पूंजी जुटाई है। इसकी मदद से ही विविधतापूर्ण आबादी वाला हमारा देश एकजुट रहा और असहमति और बहस का उत्सव मनाता रहा है। एक और आम चुनाव देश की लोकतांत्रिक पहचान को मजबूती का प्रतीक है लेकिन कौनसा राजनीतिक बहस इसका परिचय नहीं देती। देश की विशिष्टता को जोखिम उत्पन्न हो रहा है। बहुलतावादी धर्मनिरपेक्ष लोकतांत्रिक देश की पहचान को खतरा है। इस मायने में मोदी सरकार काफी हद तक विफल रही है।

(लेखक पूर्व विदेश सचिव और सीपीआर के वरिष्ठ फेलो हैं।)

## तमाम सरकारों ने संपन्न और मध्य वर्ग को ही लाभ पहुंचाया

करदाताओं के पैसे से गठित बुनियादी ढांचा निवेश फंड नेशनल इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर इन्वेस्टमेंट फंड (एनआईआईएफ) जमीन पर आई निजी एयरलाइन जेट एयरवेज के लिए बोली लगाने के बारे में सोच रहा है। हमें ध्यान रखना होगा कि आबादी का बहुत छोटा-सा हिस्सा ही हवाई यात्रा करता है। वहीं करोड़ों लोगों के इस्तेमाल में आने वाले रेलवे स्टेशनों के पुनर्विकास के लिए फंड का इंतजाम भी नहीं हो पा रहा है।

भारत में अक्सर डॉक्टर जटिलतम मामलों में भी सफल सर्जरी और अत्याधुनिक इलाज के लिए सुविधाएं बनाते रहते हैं जिससे भारत आज गंभीर रोगों के किफायती इलाज के लिए बेहतर स्थल बनता जा रहा है। लेकिन एक आम भारतीय के लिए माकूल इलाज करा पाना अब भी काफी मुश्किल है। राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य प्रोफाइल के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि भारत में प्रति 11,000 आबादी पर एक एलोपैथी डॉक्टर है जबकि विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (डब्ल्यूएचओ) का अनुसंधान अनुपात इसका दस गुना है। बिहार में तो 28,000 की आबादी पर एक ही डॉक्टर है। जहां तक अस्पतालों में उपलब्ध बिस्तरों का सवाल है तो प्रति हजार आबादी पर एक से भी कम बिस्तर है जबकि डब्ल्यूएचओ की अनुसंधान एक हजार आबादी पर पांच बिस्तरों की है।

भारत में विश्व स्तरीय इंजीनियरिंग एवं प्रबंध संस्थान मौजूद हैं जहां से पढ़कर निकलने वाले युवाओं को वैश्विक मानकों के हिसाब से वेतन मिल रहे हैं। लेकिन देश में प्राथमिक शिक्षा दे रहे सरकारी स्कूलों की गुणवत्ता इतनी खराब है कि 'प्रथम की तरफ से शैक्षणिक स्तर पर जारी सालाना रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक आठवीं कक्षा के 27 फीसदी छात्र दूसरी कक्षा की कितारों में भी ठीक से नहीं पढ़ पाते हैं। तथ्य यह है कि प्रथम इस स्तर को भी पिछले वर्षों की तुलना में सुधरी हुई स्थिति बताता है। यह देश में सरकारी स्कूलों में मिलने वाली शिक्षा की नाकामी का सूचक है।

ऐसे में बड़ी तस्वीर यही उभरती है कि उदारता के बाद का भारत अपने मध्य एवं उच्च-मध्य वर्ग और समृद्ध लोगों के लिए ही काम करता नजर आ रहा है। गरीबों के लिए वह कुछ खास



जिंदगीनामा कनिका दत्ता

करता नहीं दिख रहा।

ये सभी तथ्य जाने-पहचाने सच हैं लेकिन चुनावों के समय इनका सार्वजनिक विमर्श पर प्रच्छन्न प्रभाव देखा जाता है। यह विडंबना ही है कि वर्ष 1991 के बाद गरीबी के स्तर में आई नाटकीय गिरावट के बावजूद बुनियादी सुविधाओं तक पहुंचने में ऐसी गहरी असमानता तमाम सत्तारूढ़ सरकारों के बीच रोचक ढंग से एक जैसी रही है।

इसी से हमें पता चलता है कि न्यूनतम आय योजना, मनरेगा, जन-धन, उज्वला और आयुष्मान भारत जैसी लोक-तुभावन योजनाओं का साल-दर-साल इतना राजनीतिक आकर्षण क्यों बिहता जा रहा है?

राजनीतिक विचारधारा से इतर सार्वजनिक नीति में ऐसी सामूहिक दुर्बलता का होना एक पहली की तरह है। यह सुविदित है कि मध्य वर्ग और संपन्न लोगों की तुलना में गरीब मतदाता बड़ी संख्या में मतदान करने के लिए बाहर निकलते हैं।

साफ तौर पर कहें तो भारत के विधा मंत्रान, अंटोमोबाइल, खुदरा, अस्पताल, दूरसंचार, आईटी सेवा और आवासीय क्षेत्र में वैश्विक मानकों की बराबरी नहीं कर पाने की कोई वजह नहीं है। इन सभी क्षेत्रों ने रोजगार पैदा करने के मोर्चे पर अपनी-अपनी भूमिका बखूबी निभाई है। सुरक्षा एवं इमारतों का देखभाल से संबंधित क्षेत्र में 'चौकीदार' की मांग भी खूब बढ़ी है। समस्या यह है कि नीतियों की प्राथमिकता इतनी एकगोरी रही है कि आर्थिक सुधारों के फल समान रूप से वितरित होने के बजाय शीर्ष-से-नीचे आते रहे हैं। ऐसा होने से अवसरों की असमानता बढ़ी है जिसके चलते भारत चीन और दक्षिण-पूर्व एशियाई देशों की बराबरी कर पाने में पीछे रह गया है। यह देखा आसान है कि

आखिर क्यों हमने एयरपोर्ट, एयरलाइन, दूरसंचार और चिकित्सा देखभाल में निवेश को प्रोत्साहन देने पर जोर दिया। इस तरह के क्षेत्रों को यह भारतीय समाज के उस तबके की सहमति मिलती है जो दावोस बैठक में शामिल होता है। इससे प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेशकों को यह संदेश भी दे दिया जाता है कि भारत कारोबार के लिए खुला बाजार है। चीन हमें यह सिखा चुका है कि आला दंड के एयरपोर्ट से बेहतर संदेश देने वाला कुछ नहीं है। ऐसी स्थिति में स्वास्थ्य एवं शिक्षा से जुड़ी परियोजनाओं में पैसा और मेहनत लगाने का उतना असर और नतीजा नहीं नजर आता है।

लेकिन गुणवत्तापरक सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा और ढांचगत सेवाओं पर कम ध्यान देने और उसकी जगह इन सेवाओं में निजी क्षेत्र को प्रोत्साहन देने का व्यावहारिक एवं सामाजिक दोनों संदर्भों में विपरीत असर होता है। वर्ष 2000 से लेकर 2008 के बीच अर्थव्यवस्था की तेजी का दौर रहा था। इस दौरान भारतीय कंपनियों को कुशल श्रमिकों की कमी का सामना करना पड़ा था। हालांकि इसका नतीजा यह हुआ कि कर्मचारियों का वेतन भी बढ़ गया। लेकिन अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती आने और नौबंदी जैसे व्यवस्थागत आघातों की स्थिति में अशिक्षित एवं कम-कुशल कामगारों को बड़ी संख्या में नौकरी से हाथ धोना पड़ा।

सार्वजनिक सेवाओं को नजरअंदाज किए जाने एवं उनमें आए हास ने भी समाज के विभाजन करने में एक प्रच्छन्न भूमिका निभाई है। अच्छी कमाई करने वाले लोग सार्वजनिक परिवहन, ट्रेन, सरकारी अस्पतालों और स्कूलों के बिना चलती जैसे व्यवस्थागत आघातों की स्थिति में अशिक्षित एवं कम-कुशल कामगारों को बड़ी संख्या में नौकरी से हाथ धोना पड़ा। सार्वजनिक सेवाओं को नजरअंदाज किए जाने एवं उनमें आए हास ने भी समाज के विभाजन करने में एक प्रच्छन्न भूमिका निभाई है। अच्छी कमाई करने वाले लोग सार्वजनिक परिवहन, ट्रेन, सरकारी अस्पतालों और स्कूलों के बिना चलती जैसे व्यवस्थागत आघातों की स्थिति में अशिक्षित एवं कम-कुशल कामगारों को बड़ी संख्या में नौकरी से हाथ धोना पड़ा।

### कानाफूसी

#### बिजली संकट और राजनीति

गर्मियों का मौसम शुरू ही हुआ है और मध्य प्रदेश के लोगों को अचानक बिजली चले जाने से परेशानी का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। यह मामला इतना जोर पकड़ गया कि प्रदेश की कांग्रेस सरकार तक चिंतित हो उठी। मुख्यमंत्री कमलनाथ ने बार-बार बिजली कटने को राजनीतिक षडयंत्र तक कह डाला। उनके पास इसकी वजह भी थी। कुछ माह पहले विधानसभा चुनाव के दौरान शिवराज सिंह चौहान समेत भाजपा नेता जनता से कहते थे कि कांग्रेस की सरकार आई तो बिजली की दिक्रत शुरू हो जाएगी। अब जबकि लोकसभा चुनाव आरंभ हो चुके हैं तो इस मुद्दे को संवेदनशील होना ही था। कमलनाथ ने इसके लिए बकायदा अधिकारियों से जवाब तलब किया। गौरतलब है कि मध्य प्रदेश बिजली अधिशेष वाला राज्य है और वह अपनी बिजली अन्य राज्यों को बेचता भी है।



#### ममता का बायोपिक!

भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) ने पिछले दिनों चुनाव आयोग से शिकायत करते हुए एक फिल्म को रिलीज करने से रोकने की मांग की है। यह फिल्म पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री और तृणमूल कांग्रेस नेता ममता बनर्जी की बायोपिक है यानी उनके जीवन पर आधारित है। बाघिनी नामक इस फिल्म को आगामी 3 मई को रिलीज होना है। यानी चुनावी मौसम के ठीक बीचोबीच। केवल भाजपा ही नहीं बल्कि तृणमूल के अन्य विरोधी भी इस फिल्म के रिलीज को लेकर विरोध दर्ज करा रहे हैं। फिल्म की पटकथा लेखिका और निर्माता पिकी पाल के मुताबिक फिल्म की शूटिंग 2016 में आरंभ हुई थी थी लेकिन बाद में कई सारी कमियां दूर करने में इतना वक्त लग गया।

### आपका पक्ष

#### चुनावों में विदेशी सरकारों का प्रभाव

लोकतांत्रिक देशों में सत्ता का हस्तांतरण विदेशी सरकारों के प्रभाव के बगैर होता है। लेकिन हाल के वर्षों में किसी देश के चुनावों में बाहरी शक्तियों या विदेशी सरकारों के प्रभाव के कई उदाहरण देखने को मिले हैं। वर्ष 2016 में अमेरिकी आम चुनावों में रूस की भूमिका के संदर्भ में विकिलीक्स के जरिये कई खुलासे हुए जिनकी पुष्टि भी की जा चुकी है कि किस तरह ट्रंप के पक्ष में सोशल मीडिया का उपयोग किया गया। अमेरिका खुद भी ऐसी गतिविधियों में शामिल होता आया है। क्यूबा के आंतरिक मामलों में हस्तक्षेप का विषय चर्चा में रहा है। बाद के वर्षों में अफगानिस्तान तथा इराक में भी अमेरिका का प्रभाव साफ दिखा। अमेरिकी प्रभाव का सबसे नवीनतम उदाहरण इजराइल का आम चुनाव है। जहां सत्तासीन प्रधानमंत्री को पुनः सत्ता दिलाने के लिए वातावरण तैयार करने में अमेरिका ने कोई कसर नहीं छोड़ी। इजराइली



प्रधानमंत्री की छवि को मजबूत करने के लिए अमेरिका ने पूरे विश्व के मत को किनारे करते हुए तेल अवीव स्थित अमेरिकी दूतावास को फिलिस्तीन एवं इजराइल के मध्य विवाद का विषय रहे जेरुशलेम स्थानांतरित करने की घोषणा की। साथ ही सीरिया से छीने गए गोलन पहाड़ी वाले क्षेत्र पर भी इजराइल के कब्जे को मान्यता दे दी। भारत

#### महाराष्ट्र के सोलापुर में पहली बार मतदान करने के बाद सेल्फी लेती युवतियां - पीटीआई

भी नेपाल, मालदीव तथा बांग्लादेश के चुनावों में अपनी सकारात्मक भूमिका का दावा करता आया है। कुछ इसी तरह का उदाहरण इस बार लोकसभा चुनाव में भी दिखाई दे

रहा है। प्रधानमंत्री को चुनाव की घोषणा के कुछ ही समय बाद संयुक्त अरब अमीरात सरकार द्वारा अपने देश के सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान से नवाजे जाने का ऐलान किया गया। रूस की सरकार ने भी प्रधानमंत्री को सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान से सम्मानित करने की घोषणा की। इसे विपक्षी दलों का दुर्भाग्य कहे जा सकते हैं। इसकी शिकायत चुनाव आयोग से भी नहीं कर सकते हैं। प्रधानमंत्री को सम्मानित होता देख जनता का भावविभोर होना स्वाभाविक है। ऐसे वातावरण में मुख्य चुनावी मुद्दे गौण होते नजर आते हैं। मित्र देशों द्वारा चुनाव के वक्त सम्मान दिया जाना बहस को जन्म देता है। इस पर विचार करने की जरूरत है। आम मतदाता को चाहिए कि वे बिना किसी प्रभाव के घरेलू मुद्दों तथा तथ्यों के आधार पर ही मतदान करें। ऋषभ देव पांडेय, कोरबा

#### आग से सुरक्षा के लिए जागरूकता

देश में 14 अप्रैल को अग्निशमन दिवस के रूप में मनाया जाता है। बॉम्बे डॉकशिप में 14 अप्रैल 1944 को आग लगने से 71 अग्निशमन कर्मियों की जान चली गई थी। उन्हें याद करते हुए इस दिन श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित की जाती है। इस अवसर पर मुंबई में माॅक ड्रिल, डेमोंस्ट्रेशन, व्याख्यान के जरिये लोगों को जागरूक किया जाता है। आग से सुरक्षा पर कार्यक्रम आयोजित किए जाते हैं। देश में सिलिंडर फटने की घटनाएं सामने आती रहती हैं। घटना के समय अग्निशमन फिलिंडर इस्तेमाल करने का कौशल आम लोगों के पास नहीं होता है जिससे आग पर काबू पाने में देर हो जाती है। ऐसी घटनाओं से निपटने के लिए सरकार को स्कूल, कॉलेज और सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर आग से सुरक्षा पर अभियान चलाना चाहिए। फायर ब्रिगेड सेवा ग्रामीण इलाकों में भी होनी चाहिए।

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



## हिंसा का चुनाव

चुनाव में हिस्सा लेने वाले आम नागरिकों या चुनाव प्रक्रिया संपन्न कराने की कोशिश करने वाले अधिकारियों के खिलाफ हिंसा की घटनाओं पर काबू न पा सकना प्रशासन की कमजोरी को साबित करता है। नक्सल प्रभावित इलाकों में नक्सली हर चुनाव में स्थानीय लोगों से मतदान के बहिष्कार का आह्वान करते हैं। इसके लिए वे लोगों पर दबाव भी बनाए रखते हैं। इसी तरह उनकी कोशिश होती है कि चुनाव प्रक्रिया में हिस्सा लेने वाले कर्मचारियों–अधिकारियों को भी डरा–धमका कर उनके कर्तव्य निर्वाह में बाधा डालें। इस तरह वे व्यवस्था पर अपना दबाव बढ़ाने का प्रयास करते हैं। इसी प्रयास के तहत ओड़ीशा के कंधमाल जिले में मतदान की पूर्व संध्या पर माओवादियों ने एक महिला निर्वाचन अधिकारी की गोली मार कर हत्या कर दी। इसके अलावा एक चुनावी वाहन को आग लगा दी। दोनों घटनाएँ तब हुईं जब निर्वाचन कर्मी अपने मतदान केंद्रों की तरफ जा रहे थे। कंधमाल जिला माओवाद प्रभावित है। वहां नक्सलियों ने स्थानीय लोगों से चुनाव में हिस्सा न लेने का आह्वान किया था। लिहाजा, स्थानीय प्रशासन और मतदान संपन्न कराने के लिए तैनात सुरक्षा बलों को ऐसी घटना की आशंका पहले से रही होगी। फिर भी हेरानी की बात है कि नक्सली मंसूवों पर काबू पाने में वे विफल हुए।

नक्सल प्रभावित इलाकों में चुनाव संपन्न कराना अब भी बड़ी चुनौती बना हुआ है। यह ठीक है कि इन इलाकों में सभ्य वन क्षेत्र हैं, मतदान केंद्रों पर पहुंचने के लिए आमतौर पर निर्वाचन कर्मियों को पैदल ही उनसे होकर जाना पड़ता है। वहां अंदाजा लगाना कठिन है कि कहां माओवादी घात लगाए बैठे होंगे। पर सूचना तकनीक के इस जमाने में सुरक्षा तंत्र को यह भनक न लग पाना कि माओवादी किस तरह की और कितनी बड़ी साजिश रच रहे हैं, एक प्रकार से उसकी मुस्तेदी और प्रशिक्षण पर भी सवाल खड़े करता है। निर्वाचन आयोग का प्रयास होता है कि देश का हर नागरिक अपने मताधिकार का प्रयोग करे। इसके लिए जागरूकता अभियान, प्रचार–प्रसार पर खासा खर्च किया जाता है। इसी तरह हर मतदान केंद्र तक कर्मियों की सुरक्षित पहुंच के लिए पुख्ता इंतजाम किए जाते हैं। दुर्गम जगहों पर हेलीकॉप्टर का भी इंतजाम किया जाता है। कंधमाल जैसे इलाकों में जहां भी माओवादी इस कदर ताकतवर हैं कि वे सुरक्षा इंतजामों को चुनौती दे सकते हैं, तो वहां निर्वाचन कर्मियों को जान पर खेल कर मतदान कराने भेजने के बजाय सुरक्षित विकल्पों पर विचार किया जाना चाहिए।

माओवाद या दूसरी चरमपंथी गतिविधियों से प्रभावित इलाकों में मतदान संपन्न कराना निर्वाचन आयोग के समक्ष बड़ी चुनौती है। वहां मतदान न हो पाने से न सिर्फ एक बड़ी आबादी अपने मताधिकार के प्रयोग से वंचित रह जाती है, बल्कि चरमपंथी संगठनों का मनोबल भी बढ़ता है। फिर चुनाव ड्यूटी के मामले में बहुत सारे कर्मचारी किसी न किसी बहाने कन्नी काटते देखे जाते हैं। ऐसे में कंधमाल जैसी घटना होती है, तो दूसरे कर्मियों का मनोबल टूटता है। इसलिए निर्वाचन आयोग पर इसका दारोमदार आता है कि कैसे निर्वाचन कर्मियों को मतदान केंद्रों तक सुरक्षित पहुंचाए और स्थानीय लोगों को चुनाव प्रक्रिया में सहयोग करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर सके। माओवाद प्रभावित इलाकों में लोगों के मतदान के प्रति उत्साहित न होने का एक कारण माओवादियों की धमकी तो है ही, सुरक्षा बलों का उनके साथ तालमेल न बिठा पाना भी है। इसलिए इन तमाम पहलुओं पर गंभीरता से विचार की जरूरत है।

## आफत की बरसात

इस बार अप्रैल में ही बाकी सालों के मुकाबले मौसम में जिस तेजी से गरमी महसूस की गई, उससे यह आशंका पहले से ही थी कि हवा के दबाव की वजह से असमय ही आंधी या बरसात कहर बरपा सकती है। पर बुधवार को राजस्थान, मध्यप्रदेश, गुजरात और महाराष्ट्र सहित अन्य कुछ राज्यों के अलग–अलग हिस्सों में तेज रफतार की आंधी के साथ बेमौसम बारिश ने जैसा कहर ढाया, उसका अनुमान नहीं था। यों एक दिन पहले से मौसम में तेज बदलाव के संकेत दिखने लगे थे। मगर आगे दिन बरसात और आंधी की वजह से जहां संपत्ति और खेत में कटे पड़े गेहूँ की फसल के साथ–साथ आम और लीची को काफी नुकसान हुआ, वहीं ओलावृष्टि, बिजली गिरने और लगातार बारिश की वजह से पचास से ज्यादा लोगों की मौत की खबरें आईं। अकेले राजस्थान में इक्कीस लोगों की जान चली गई, जबकि मध्यप्रदेश में पंद्रह लोगों की मौत हो गई। इतने बड़े नुकसान के बाद फिलहाल गमोमत यही है कि बारिश की वजह से चक्रवात जैसी भयावहात की आशंका टल गई लगती है, लेकिन मौसम में अचानक उतार–चढ़ाव की स्थितियों की अनदेखी कई बार भारी पड़ जाती है।

यों अप्रैल महीने में बढ़ती गरमी के चलते मौसम में काफी दबाव होता है और उतार–चढ़ाव की वजह से आंधी और ओलावृष्टि की आशंका बनी रहती है। मौसम पर नजर रखने वाली एक एजेंसी के आकलन के मुताबिक उत्तरी पाकिस्तान में एक पश्चिमी विक्षोभ बना है, जिससे चक्रवाती हवाओं का प्रदूष पश्चिमी राजस्थान पर मौजूद है। इसी वजह से मौसम में ऐसा तेज बदलाव देखा गया और बड़ा नुकसान हो गया। हालांकि अभी यह खतरा टला नहीं है, मौसम विभाग ने उत्तर और पूर्वोत्तर के राज्यों में आंधी–तूफान और बारिश की चेतावनी जारी की है। ज्यादा जोखिम उत्तर प्रदेश, पंजाब, हरियाणा, चंडीगढ़, उत्तराखंड, बिहार, पश्चिम बंगाल आदि मैदानी इलाके वाले राज्यों पर है। जाहिर है, इन राज्यों की सरकारों को सतर्क रहने की जरूरत है। मुश्किल यहीं खड़ी होती है कि जब मौसम सामान्य रहता है तो आम लोगों से लेकर सरकारें तक निश्चित रहती हैं। जबकि मौसम की अपनी गति होती है और पर्यावरण में होने वाली उथल–पुथल की वजह से उसमें अचानक ही कोई बड़ा बदलाव हो सकता है।

एक शोध के मुताबिक पिछले कुछ समय से देश के एक ही क्षेत्र के अलग–अलग हिस्सों में बारिश की स्थितियों में काफी फर्क देखा गया है। इसकी सबसे बड़ी वजह प्रदूषण और जलवायु में बदलाव को माना गया है। शायद यही वजह है कि एक ही समय में देश के किसी इलाके में बाढ़ होती है तो कहीं सूखे का सामना करना पड़ता है। अक्सर असमय तेज बरसात, आंधी या तूफान की वजह से जानमाल का बड़ा नुकसान होता है, लेकिन इससे सबक लेकर मौसम का सामना करने के लिहाज से किसी पूर्व तैयारी पर शायद ही कभी ध्यान दिया जाता है। फिर जब आंधी या बरसात की वजह से काफी तादाद में लोगों की जान चली जाती है, तब राहत पहुंचाने का दावा किया जाता है। दुनिया भर में ऐसे उदाहरण भी मौजूद हैं कि किसी इलाके में तूफान या चक्रवात आदि के महेनजर लोग तैयार रहते हैं और सरकारें भी बचाव और राहत के लिए पूर्व तैयारी रखती हैं। सिर्फ इतनी कोशिश से कई बार काफी लोगों की जान बचाने और संपत्ति को नुकसान न पहुंचने देने में कामयाबी हासिल की गई है।

## कल्पमेधा

जिंदगी कितनी भी मुश्किल क्यों न लगे, आपके पास कुछ न कुछ करने और कामयाब होने की गुंजाइश हमेशा रहती है।

–स्टीफन हॉकिंग

# जनसत्ता

# चुनाव सुधार और सवाल

## पंकज चतुर्वेदी

**आधी-अधूरी मतदाता सूचियां, कम मतदान, मध्यवर्ग की मतदान में कम रुचि, महंगी निर्वाचन प्रक्रिया, चुनाव में बाहुबलियों और धन्नासेटों की पैट, जाति-धर्म की सियासत, बढ़ता चुनावी खर्च, आचार संहिता की अवहेलना- ऐसी बुराइयां हैं जो स्वस्थ लोकतंत्र के लिए जानलेवा साबित हो रही हैं।**

## सत्रहवीं लोकसभा के लिए दूसरे चरण का मतदान भी हो गया लेकिन असल मुद्दे अभी तक गायब हैं। इसके लगता है कि सियासत का जन-सरोकार से कोई वास्ता रह नहीं गया है। चुनाव के प्रचार अभियान में साफ दिख रहा है कि लाख पाबंदी के बावजूद चुनाव न केवल महंगे हो रहे हैं, बल्कि हर सियासी दल अपने को पाक-साफ बताने और दूसरे को चोर साबित करने में लगा है। असल में समूचे कुंए में ही भांग चुली हुई है। लोकतंत्र के मूल आधार निर्वाचन की समूची प्रणाली ही अर्थ-प्रधान हो गई है। विडंबना यह है कि सभी राजनीतिक दल चुनाव सुधार के किसी भी कदम से बचते रहे हैं। हकीकत यह है कि कोई भी दल ईमानदारी से चुनाव सुधारों की दिशा में काम नहीं करना चाहता है।

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## पूनम पांडे

मन की सक्रियता ही सार्थक जीवन की नींव होती है। विचारों को भली-भांति पकड़ कर उनका अनुसरण करते हुए खुलेपन से काम करने वाले ही महासागर पार कर पाते हैं, दुर्गम पर्वत बाहें फैलाए उन्हीं का स्वागत होता है। बस बेहतर से बेहतरनि होने की नजर और नजरिया चाहिए। एक बेहतर भविष्य का निर्माण करने के लिए सपने देखना जरूरी शर्त है। दूसरे शब्दों में यह भी कह सकते हैं कि अगर सिर्फ कितारों को टट कर कोरा ज्ञान प्राप्त कर भी लिया जाए तो वह जानकारी नितांत नाकाफी होगी, क्योंकि उसको और प्रगति देनी है तो कल्पना के पंखों पर सवारी करानी ही होगी।

एक बार आंखें मूंद कर क्या हमने सोचा कभी कि पहली बार आलू के चिप्स बनाने की समझ या जुगत, कुछ भी कह लीजिए और बिजली का लट्टू यानी बल्ब बना कर पूरी दुनिया को अंधकारमुक्त करने की महत्त्वपूर्ण घटना भी निश्चित रूप से किसी की कल्पनाशक्ति का ही परिणाम है। इस संसार में सुई से लेकर सिलाई मशीन तक, जितने भी आविष्कार और खोजें हुई हैं, वे किसी न किसी के सपने, कल्पना,

## सच से दूर

इन दिनों सोशल मीडिया पर जहां फेक न्यूज यानी फर्जी खबरों पर लगाम लगाने के लिए कड़े कदम उठाए जा रहे हैं वहीं चुनावी मौसम में फर्जी खबरों की बाढ़ आती जा रही है। सच से कोसों दूर खबरों को सोशल मीडिया पर इस तरह परोसा जा रहा है कि सच और झूठ का पता ही नहीं चल पाता। नतीजतन, आम मतदाता बुरी तरह भ्रमित होता जा रहा है। मौजूदा चुनाव में भी जम कर फर्जी खबरों का सहारा लिया जा रहा है। फोटोशॉप या दूसरी अन्य तकनीकों से फोटो, पत्रों, वीडियो, ऑडियो आदि से छेड़छाड़ कर इस तरह प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है कि जब तक सच सामने आता है तब तक वह ‘पोस्ट’ अपना असर डाल चुकी होती है। यदि बात करं फर्जी अकाउंट की तो ऐसे अकाउंट्स की मंडी सज गई है। कोई देश के प्रधानमंत्री के नाम पर अकाउंट चला रहा है तो कोई अन्य किसी नेता के नाम पर। राहुल गांधी और उनके ‘फैन’ के नाम पर भी खूब फर्जी अकाउंट चल रहे हैं।

साइबर विशेषज्ञों के मुताबिक ऐसे फर्जी अकाउंट चलाने वाले किसी भी फर्जी खबर या सूचना वाली पोस्ट को वायरल करते रहते हैं। इसके बदले में हजारों रुपए कमा रहे हैं। रॉयटर्स इंस्टीट्यूट के एक सर्वे के मुताबिक भारतीय इंटरनेट उपभोक्ताओं में से 52 फीसद को खबरें ‘व्हाट्सएप’ के जरिए मिलती हैं। करीब इतने ही लोगों को फेसबुक के जरिए खबरें मिलती हैं। 2017 और 2018 में फेक न्यूज के चलते कम से कम 31 लोग मारे गए हैं। हाल में मुरली मनोहर जोशी का लालकृष्ण आडवाणी को लिखा कथित पत्र सोशल मीडिया में काफी वायरल हुआ। बाद में जोशीजी को चुनाव आयोग को खत लिखना पड़ा कि उन्होंने ऐसा कोई पत्र नहीं लिखा लिहाजा, इसकी जांच कराई जाए। इसी तरह सेना के अधिकारियों द्वारा राष्ट्रपति को लिखा गया कथित पत्र भी सोशल मीडिया में काफी वायरल हुआ जो एकदम

स्वस्थ लोकतंत्र के लिए जानलेवा साबित हो रही हैं। इस बार भी चुनाव इन समस्याओं से अछूता नहीं है। कहीं पर हजारों मतदाताओं के नाम गायब हैं तो नगालैंड में एक राजनेता कैमरे के सामने ग्यारह वोट डाल लेता है। पूर्व मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त या कर्नाटक निर्वाचन आयोग के ब्रांड एंबेसडर का नाम ही मतदाता सूची से गायब है। कहीं देखने में आ रहा है कि कचरे के ढेर में मतदाता पहचान पत्रों के बंडल मिल रहे हैं। लेकिन किसी भी कुसूरवार पर कोई कड़ी कार्रवाई होती नहीं दिख रही। कई मामलों में तो निर्वाचन आयोग असहाय-सा नजर आता है। जाति, धर्म के नाम पर या शराब, साड़ी के लालच में या फिर बाहुबल से धमका कर मतदान को अपने पक्ष में करने का जुगाड़ जब दिल्ली जैसे महानगर में सरंआम होता दिखता है तो जरा कल्पना करें उन गांवों की स्थिति क्या होगी जहां न सरकारी अमला पहुंचता है, न मीडिया, न बड़े-बड़े रणनीतिकार मतदाता सूची का विश्लेषण कर तय कर लेते हैं कि हमें अमुक जाति या समाज के वोट चाहिए ही नहीं। यानी जीतने वाला क्षेत्र का नहीं, किसी जाति या धर्म का प्रतिनिधि होता है। चुनाव लूटने के ऐसे हथकंडे इसलिए कारगर हैं कि हमारे यहां एक वोट या फिर पांच लाख वोट, दोनों तरह जीतने वाले सांसदों के समान अधिकार होते हैं। यदि राष्ट्रपति चुनाव की तरह किसी संसदीय क्षेत्र के कुल वोट और उसमें से प्राप्त मतों के आधार पर सांसदों की हैसियत, सुविधा आदि तय कर दी जाए तो नेता पूरे क्षेत्र के वोट पाने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध होंगे, न कि केवल किसी खास जाति के वोट के। कैबिनेट मंत्री बनने के लिए या संसद में आवाज उठाने या फिर सुविधाओं को लेकर सांसदों का वर्गीकरण माननीयों को न केवल संजीदा बनाएगा, वरन उन्हें अधिक से अधिक वोट हासिल करने को भी मजबूर करेगा।

कुछ सौ वोट पाने वाले निर्दलीय उम्मीदवारों की संख्या, जमानत राशि बढ़ाने से भले ही कम हो गई हो, लेकिन लोकतंत्र का नया खतरा वे पार्टियां बन रही हैं जो महज राष्ट्रीय दल का दर्जा हासिल करने की खातिर तयशुदा वोट पाने के लिए अपने उम्मीदवार हर जगह खड़ा कर रही हैं। ऐसे उम्मीदवारों की संख्या में लगातार बढ़ोतरी से मतदाताओं को अपनी पसंद का प्रत्याशी चुनने में बाधा तो महसूस होती ही है, प्रशासनिक दिक्कतें व व्यय भी बढ़ता है। ऐसे उम्मीदवार चुनावों के दौरान कड़े गड़बड़ियां और

जाती है। चुनाव में बड़े राजनीतिक दल भले मुद्दों पर आधारित चुनाव का दावा करते हों, लेकिन जमीनी हकीकत यह है कि देश के दो सौ से अधिक चुनाव क्षेत्रों में जीत का फैसला वोट-कार्टने वाले उम्मीदवारों के कद पर निर्भर करता है। यह विडंबना ही है कि कई राजनीतिक कार्यकर्ता जिंदगीभर मेहनत करते हैं और चुनाव के समय उनके इलाके में कहीं दूर का उम्मीदवार आकर चुनाव लड़ जाता है और ग्लैमर या पैसे या फिर जातीय समीकरणों के चलते जीत भी जाता है। ऐसे में सियासत को दलाली या धंधा समझने वालों की पीढ़ी बढ़ती जा रही है। संसद का चुनाव लड़ने के लिए निर्वाचन क्षेत्र में कम से कम पांच साल तक सामाजिक काम करने के प्रमाण प्रस्तुत

# कल्पना की उड़ान

विचार, निरंतर चिंतन आदि का ही साकार रूप हैं। मनोवैज्ञानिक इस कल्पनाशीलता को बहुत ही महत्त्वपूर्ण मानते हैं। आजकल तो दफतरो, संस्थानों के तकनीकी विभाग से जुड़े कर्मचारियों को मेडिटेशन, मौन साधना, एकांत विचार आदि करने की सुविधाएं कार्य क्षेत्र पर ही उपलब्ध कराई जाती हैं, ताकि उनकी रचनात्मकता और कल्पना का स्तर दुरुस्त हो सके। कल्पना क्या है? यह कोई जटिल वस्तु नहीं है।

कल्पना अपने भविष्य का मोटा प्रारूप है या कुछ आधी-अधूरी-सी तस्वीर है, जो पर्याप्त ऊर्जा लगाने के बाद पूर्ण रूप से साकार हो जाएगी। बहुत कम लोग इस बात पर यकीन करते हैं कि तीन घंटे की एक फिल्म जिस थीम-लाइन पर टिकी होती है, उसे लगभग आधा दर्जन लेखक अपनी कल्पना शक्ति से अर्थपूर्ण बनाने के लिए निरंतर प्रयासरत रहते हैं। हॉलीवुड के स्टीफन स्पीलबर्ग ने एक साक्षात्कार में कहा था कि किसी विचार को कम से कम दस-बारह लेखकों की टीम साथ मिल कर ही निखारती है। उन सबकी कल्पना से एक मुकम्मल कहानी सामने आती है और दर्शक उसे सराहते हैं। उनके काम करने का तरीका यह है कि वे कुछ कल्पनात्मक चित्र हर लेखक को समझा देते हैं, फिर

## दुनिया मेरे आगे

यसी कल्पना को आगे बढ़ा कर हरेक दिमाग से चमत्कृत करने वाली कथा उपजती है। ऐसा माना जाता है कि हरेक व्यक्ति का दिमाग अलग-अलग प्रतीकों का अनुसरण करता है और कल्पना के रास्ते से होकर वह बिंब दिखता है। जेम्स कैमरन की कालजयी फिल्म ‘अवतार’ भी ऐसे ही उपजी होगी। इसीलिए एक कहावत भी बन गई है कि हम जैसे सोचते हैं, हू-ब-हू वैसे ही बन भी जाते हैं।

सामान्य तौर पर जानकारी, कल्पना और प्रेरणा- ये तीन चरण हैं, जो अब्दुल कलाम को राष्ट्रपति। एक बार एक प्रसिद्ध इंजीनियर लंबे समय से पुल निर्माण पर काम कर रहा था। मगर वह पुल के डिजाइन को अंतिम रूप नहीं दे पा रहा था। उसे बार-बार यह बात खटकती थी कि यह डिजाइन पुल को मजबूती नहीं दे सकता। वह इंजीनियर कागज, कलम और किताब एक तरफ रख कर कल्पना के पुल बनाने लगा। हर वक्त यही विचार। इन्हीं कल्पनाओं में इसने एक दिन पानी के बहाव पर से गुजरती महिला को देखा और जुनून से उछल पड़ा। वह महिला ऊंची हील पहन कर आराम से पानी पर चल रही थी। इंजीनियर ने उसी डिजाइन

याद दिला दीं और आयोग ने त्वरित कार्रवाई करते हुए कई नेताओं के प्रचार करने पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया। उम्मीद है कि इससे हमारे नेताओं के मन में चुनाव आयोग का भय रहेगा और वे चुनाव में इस तरह के अवांछित हथकंडे अपनाने से परहेज करेंगे।

- बुजेश श्रीवास्तव, गाजियाबाद हाशिये पर सरोकार**

भारत में 543 संसदीय चुनाव क्षेत्र हैं जिनकी अलग-अलग प्राथमिकताएं और समस्याएं हैं। भारत की आजादी के बाद से ही जम

सभी प्रतिनिधि (सांसद) अपने-अपने संसदीय क्षेत्र से संबंधित सवाल पूछ कर, समस्याएं उठा कर उनके समाधान के लिए प्रयासरत रहे। भारतीय लोकतंत्र में जिस तरह हमेशा भिन्न भौगोलिक, सामाजिक, आर्थिक परिस्थितियों वाले संसदीय क्षेत्र रहे उसी तरह अलग-अलग विचारधारा और मजबूत जनाधार वाले उन क्षेत्रों का प्रतिनिधित्व करने वाले प्रतिभाशाली सांसद रहे हैं। पर कुछ समय से विभिन्न माध्यमों से एक प्रकार की संकीर्ण विचारधारा का प्रचार-प्रसार किया जा रहा है। इससे किसानों की आत्महत्याएं, बढ़ती बेरोजगारी, दलित-आदिवासी, अल्पसंख्यक भाइयों की परेशानियां नजर नहीं आ रही हैं। विद्यार्थियों के लिए पुस्तकालय, विद्यालय या विश्वविद्यालय बनाए जाने

करना, उस इलाके या राज्य में संगठन में निर्वाचित पदाधिकारी की अनिवार्यता जमीन से जुड़े कार्यकर्ताओं को संसद तक पहुंचाने में कारगर कदम हो सकता है। इससे थैलीशाहों और नव-सामंतवर्ग की सियासत में बढ़ रही पैट को कुछ हद तक सीमित किया जा सकेगा।

चुनाव कराना बेहद खर्चीला होता जा रहा है। अगर किसी राज्य में दो चुनाव हो जाएं तो सरकारी खजाने का दम तो निकलता ही है, राज्य के काम भी प्रभावित होते हैं। विकास के कई आवश्यक काम भी आचार संहिता के कारण रुके रहते हैं। ऐसे में नए चुनाव सुधारों में तीनों चुनाव (कम से कम दो तो अवश्य) लोकसभा, विधानसभा और स्थानीय निकाय एक साथ करवाने की व्यवस्था करना जरूरी है। सांसद का चुनाव लड़ने के लिए क्षेत्रीय दलों पर अंकुश स्थायी व मजबूत सरकार के लिए जरूरी है। कम से कम पांच राज्यों में कम से कम दो प्रतिशत वोट पाने वाले दल को ही सांसद के चुनाव में उतरने की पात्रता जैसा कोई नियम सांसदों की खरीद-फरोख्त को रोकने का जरिया बन सकता है। ठीक इसी तरह के बंधन राज्यस्तर पर भी हो सकते हैं। निर्दलीय चुनाव लड़ने की शर्तों को इस तरह बनाना जरूरी है कि आंगंधीर प्रत्याशी लोकतंत्र का मजाक न बना पाएं। सनद रहे कि सोलह से अधिक उम्मीदवार होने पर इलेक्ट्रॉनिक वोटिंग मशीन की एक से अधिक यूनिट लगानी पड़ती हैं, जो खर्चीला काम है और जटिल भी। जमानत जक्ट होने वाले निर्दलीय उम्मीदवारों को अगले दो किसी भी चुनावों में लड़ने से रोकना जैसे कुछ कड़े कानून समय की मांग हैं।

चुनाव में काले धन के बढ़ते उपयोग चिंता जताने के घड़ियाली आंसू हर चुनाव के पहले बहाए जाते हैं। 19०4 में संशाम कमेटेी ने कहा था कि राजनीतिक दलों का चंदा एकत्र करने का तरीका चुनाव के दौरान और बाद में भ्रष्टाचार को बेहिसाब बढ़ावा देता है। 1971 में वॉन्ू कमेटेी ने अपनी रपट में कहा था कि चुनावों में अंधाधुंध खर्चा काले धन को प्रोत्साहित करता है। इस रपट में हरेक दल को चुनाव लड़ने के लिए सरकारी अनुदान देने और प्रत्येक पार्टी के खाते का नियमित ऑडिट करवाने को सुझाव थे। 1980 में राजा जे. चलेया समिति ने भी लगभग ऐसी ही सिफारिशें की थीं। ये सभी रिपोर्टें अब भूली जा चुकी हैं। चुनावी खर्च को लेकर आज भी कहीं कोई गंभीरता नहीं दिख रही है। ऐसे में चुनाव सुधार की बात बेमानी से ज्यादा कुछ नहीं लगती।

## कल्पना की उड़ान

कल्पना की उड़ान
विचार, निरंतर चिंतन आदि का ही साकार रूप हैं। मनोवैज्ञानिक इस कल्पनाशीलता को बहुत ही महत्त्वपूर्ण मानते हैं। आजकल तो दफतरो, संस्थानों के तकनीकी विभाग से जुड़े कर्मचारियों को मेडिटेशन, मौन साधना, एकांत विचार आदि करने की सुविधाएं कार्य क्षेत्र पर ही उपलब्ध कराई जाती हैं, ताकि उनकी रचनात्मकता और कल्पना का स्तर दुरुस्त हो सके। कल्पना क्या है? यह कोई जटिल वस्तु नहीं है।

कल्पना अपने भविष्य का मोटा प्रारूप है या कुछ आधी-अधूरी-सी तस्वीर है, जो पर्याप्त ऊर्जा लगाने के बाद पूर्ण रूप से साकार हो जाएगी। बहुत कम लोग इस बात पर यकीन करते हैं कि तीन घंटे की एक फिल्म जिस थीम-लाइन पर टिकी होती है, उसे लगभग आधा दर्जन लेखक अपनी कल्पना शक्ति से अर्थपूर्ण बनाने के लिए निरंतर प्रयासरत रहते हैं। हॉलीवुड के स्टीफन स्पीलबर्ग ने एक साक्षात्कार में कहा था कि किसी विचार को कम से कम दस-बारह लेखकों की टीम साथ मिल कर ही निखारती है। उन सबकी कल्पना से एक मुकम्मल कहानी सामने आती है और दर्शक उसे सराहते हैं। उनके काम करने का तरीका यह है कि वे कुछ कल्पनात्मक चित्र हर लेखक को समझा देते हैं, फिर

यसी कल्पना को आगे बढ़ा कर हरेक दिमाग से चमत्कृत करने वाली कथा उपजती है। ऐसा माना जाता है कि हरेक व्यक्ति का दिमाग अलग-अलग प्रतीकों का अनुसरण करता है और कल्पना के रास्ते से होकर वह बिंब दिखता है। जेम्स कैमरन की कालजयी फिल्म ‘अवतार’ भी ऐसे ही उपजी होगी। इसीलिए एक कहावत भी बन गई है कि हम जैसे सोचते हैं, हू-ब-हू वैसे ही बन भी जाते हैं।

सामान्य तौर पर जानकारी, कल्पना और प्रेरणा- ये तीन चरण हैं, जो अब्दुल कलाम को राष्ट्रपति। एक बार एक प्रसिद्ध इंजीनियर लंबे समय से पुल निर्माण पर काम कर रहा था। मगर वह पुल के डिजाइन को अंतिम रूप नहीं दे पा रहा था। उसे बार-बार यह बात खटकती थी कि यह डिजाइन पुल को मजबूती नहीं दे सकता। वह इंजीनियर कागज, कलम और किताब एक तरफ रख कर कल्पना के पुल बनाने लगा। हर वक्त यही विचार। इन्हीं कल्पनाओं में इसने एक दिन पानी के बहाव पर से गुजरती महिला को देखा और जुनून से उछल पड़ा। वह महिला ऊंची हील पहन कर आराम से पानी पर चल रही थी। इंजीनियर ने उसी डिजाइन

याद दिला दीं और आयोग ने त्वरित कार्रवाई करते हुए कई नेताओं के प्रचार करने पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया। उम्मीद है कि इससे हमारे नेताओं के मन में चुनाव आयोग का भय रहेगा और वे चुनाव में इस तरह के अवांछित हथकंडे अपनाने से परहेज करेंगे।

सामान्य तौर पर जानकारी, कल्पना और प्रेरणा- ये तीन चरण हैं, जो अब्दुल कलाम को राष्ट्रपति। एक बार एक प्रसिद्ध इंजीनियर लंबे समय से पुल निर्माण पर काम कर रहा था। मगर वह पुल के डिजाइन को अंतिम रूप नहीं दे पा रहा था। उसे बार-बार यह बात खटकती थी कि यह डिजाइन पुल को मजबूती नहीं दे सकता। वह इंजीनियर कागज, कलम और किताब एक तरफ रख कर कल्पना के पुल बनाने लगा। हर वक्त यही विचार। इन्हीं कल्पनाओं में इसने एक दिन पानी के बहाव पर से गुजरती महिला को देखा और जुनून से उछल पड़ा। वह महिला ऊंची हील पहन कर आराम से पानी पर चल रही थी। इंजीनियर ने उसी डिजाइन

याद दिला दीं और आयोग ने त्वरित कार्रवाई करते हुए कई नेताओं के प्रचार करने पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया। उम्मीद है कि इससे हमारे नेताओं के मन में चुनाव आयोग का भय रहेगा और वे चुनाव में इस तरह के अवांछित हथकंडे अपनाने से परहेज करेंगे।

- बुजेश श्रीवास्तव, गाजियाबाद हाशिये पर सरोकार**

भारत में 543 संसदीय चुनाव क्षेत्र हैं जिनकी अलग-अलग प्राथमिकताएं और समस्याएं हैं। भारत की आजादी के बाद से ही जम

सभी प्रतिनिधि (सांसद) अपने-अपने संसदीय क्षेत्र से संबंधित सवाल पूछ कर, समस्याएं उठा कर उनके समाधान के लिए प्रयासरत रहे। भारतीय लोकतंत्र में जिस तरह हमेशा भिन्न भौगोलिक, सामाजिक, आर्थिक परिस्थितियों वाले संसदीय क्षेत्र रहे उसी तरह अलग-अलग विचारधारा और मजबूत जनाधार वाले उन क्षेत्रों का प्रतिनिधित्व करने वाले प्रतिभाशाली सांसद रहे हैं। पर कुछ समय से विभिन्न माध्यमों से एक प्रकार की संकीर्ण विचारधारा का प्रचार-प्रसार किया जा रहा है। इससे किसानों की आत्महत्याएं, बढ़ती बेरोजगारी, दलित-आदिवासी, अल्पसंख्यक भाइयों की परेशानियां नजर नहीं आ रही हैं। विद्यार्थियों के लिए पुस्तकालय, विद्यालय या विश्वविद्यालय बनाए जाने

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चुनाव कराना बेहद खर्चीला होता जा रहा है। अगर किसी राज्य में दो चुनाव हो जाएं तो सरकारी खजाने का दम तो निकलता ही है, राज्य के काम भी प्रभावित होते हैं। विकास के कई आवश्यक काम भी आचार संहिता के कारण रुके रहते हैं। ऐसे में नए चुनाव सुधारों में तीनों चुनाव (कम से कम दो तो अवश्य) लोकसभा, विधानसभा और स्थानीय निकाय एक साथ करवाने की व्यवस्था करना जरूरी है। सांसद का चुनाव लड़ने के लिए क्षेत्रीय दलों पर अंकुश स्थायी व मजबूत सरकार के लिए जरूरी है। कम से कम पांच राज्यों में कम से कम दो प्रतिशत वोट पाने वाले दल को ही सांसद के चुनाव में उतरने की पात्रता जैसा कोई नियम सांसदों की खरीद-फरोख्त को रोकने का जरिया बन सकता है। ठीक इसी तरह के बंधन राज्यस्तर पर भी हो सकते हैं। निर्दलीय चुनाव लड़ने की शर्तों को इस तरह बनाना जरूरी है कि आंगंधीर प्रत्याशी लोकतंत्र का मजाक न बना पाएं। सनद रहे कि सोलह से अधिक उम्मीदवार होने पर इलेक्ट्रॉनिक वोटिंग मशीन की एक से अधिक यूनिट लगानी पड़ती हैं, जो खर्चीला काम है और जटिल भी। जमानत जक्ट होने वाले निर्दलीय उम्मीदवारों को अगले दो किसी भी चुनावों में लड़ने से रोकना जैसे कुछ कड़े कानून समय की मांग हैं।

चुनाव में काले धन के बढ़ते उपयोग चिंता जताने के घड़ियाली आंसू हर चुनाव के पहले बहाए जाते हैं। 19०4 में संशाम कमेटेी ने कहा था कि राजनीतिक दलों का चंदा एकत्र करने का तरीका चुनाव के दौरान और बाद में भ्रष्टाचार को बेहिसाब बढ़ावा देता है। 1971 में वॉन्ू कमेटेी ने अपनी रपट में कहा था कि चुनावों में अंधाधुंध खर्चा काले धन को प्रोत्साहित करता है। इस रपट में हरेक दल को चुनाव लड़ने के लिए सरकारी अनुदान देने और प्रत्येक पार्टी के खाते का नियमित ऑडिट करवाने को सुझाव थे। 1980 में राजा जे. चलेया समिति ने भी लगभग ऐसी ही सिफारिशें की थीं। ये सभी रिपोर्टें अब भूली जा चुकी हैं। चुनावी खर्च को लेकर आज भी कहीं कोई गंभीरता नहीं दिख रही है। ऐसे में चुनाव सुधार की बात बेमानी से ज्यादा कुछ नहीं लगती।

## विरासत बची रहे

विख्यात नोत्र देम चर्च की ऐतिहासिक इमारत में लगी आग से दुनियाभर में गहरी उदासी का माहौल है। फ्रांस के राष्ट्रपति एमैनुएल मैक्रॉन ने पेरिस के इस चर्च को उचित ही अपने देश का इतिहास, साहित्य और कल्पना' कहा है। ऐसी इमारतें अतीत का प्रतीक होने के अलावा मनुष्य की उन भावनाओं और क्षमताओं की उत्कृष्टता की भी प्रतिबिम्बित करती हैं, जिनके आधार पर हम सभ्यताओं और संस्कृतियों को गढ़ते हैं। इसीलिए जर्जर भवनों और खंडहरों को भी सहेजा जाता है। यह सहेजना बीते हुए के प्रति आभार है और आगत के लिए उत्तरदायित्व का भाव। पेरिस के केंद्र में स्थित करीब हजार साल पुराने भवन के पुनर्निर्माण के लिए सरकार और समाज ने जो पहलें की हैं, वह प्रेरणादायी हैं। हमें भी अपने देश की ऐतिहासिक इमारतों के रख-रखाव और बचाव के लिए सचेत होना चाहिए।

ऑस्ट्रेलिया में बसे भारतीय मूल के प्रतिष्ठित संग्रहालय विशेषज्ञ विनोद डैरिन्गल ने निवेदन किया है कि भावी सरकार को कार्याभार संभालते ही आग से स्मारकों की सुरक्षा की व्यवस्था की विस्तृत समीक्षा करनी चाहिए। इस प्रयास में राज्य सरकारों की भी महती भूमिका है, क्योंकि हजारों इमारतों की जिम्मेदारी उनके पास भी है। विश्व की प्राचीनतम सभ्यताओं में एक भारतभूमि को सांस्कृतिक विविधता और ऐतिहासिक धरोहरों की बेमिसाल पूंजी मिली हुई है। स्मारकों से देश का कोना-कोना आबाद है। ये इमारतें हमारे इतिहास के विभिन्न काल-खंडों का अध्याय हैं, संस्कृतियों के समुच्चय और सहभागिता का उदाहरण हैं तथा पुरखों के गौरव का महाकाव्य हैं। दुर्भाग्य से हम इस विरासत की देखभाल में लापरवाह हैं।

वैसे तो देशी-विदेशी सेलानी बड़ी संख्या में इमारतों को देखते-सराहते हैं, पर पर्यटकों के लिए आकर्षक इमारतों की संख्या बहुत कम है। इसका एक नतीजा यह है कि कुछ स्मारकों पर हम बहुत अधिक ध्यान देते हैं, लेकिन बाकी को उनके हाल पर छोड़ देते हैं। इतिहास बता रहा इमारतों को हम नुकसान पहुंचाने से भी बाज नहीं आते। जिन पर हमारा ध्यान भी है, तो उनकी सुरक्षा का इंतजाम नहीं है। साल 2016 में दिल्ली में प्राकृतिक विज्ञान का राष्ट्रीय संग्रहालय आग में तबाह हो गया था। देश की राजधानी में होने के बावजूद उसे बचाया नहीं जा सका था। पुराने पुस्तकालयों और संग्रहालयों में न तो पानी की ठीक व्यवस्था है और न ही किसी संकट में अमूल्य पांडुलिपियाँ एवं संस्करणों को बचाने की आपात योजना है। तोड़-फोड़ और अतिक्रमण के कारण भी बड़ी संख्या में इमारतें नष्ट हो रही हैं। धरोहरों को बचाने के लिए कानूनों की कमी नहीं है, पर बेहद कम निवेश, प्रबंधन की अक्षमता और निगरानी में लापरवाही जैसी चिर समस्याएं आड़े आ जाती हैं। नोत्र देम की आग के दो दिन बाद 18 अप्रैल को विश्व धरोहर दिवस मनाया गया है। आनेवाली पीढ़ियों के प्रति हम सबकी जवाबदेही है कि विरासती स्मारकों को आग और अन्य आपदाओं से बचाकर रखें।



## सद्गुण-दुर्गुण

एक बार की बात है। भगवान कृष्ण ने पहले युधिष्ठिर को एक काम सौंपते हुए कहा- तुम जाओ और एक ऐसे व्यक्ति को ढूंढ लाओ जो बहुत दुष्ट हो, जिसमें गुणों का सर्वथा अभाव हो और जो दोषों से पूर्ण हो। फिर भगवान कृष्ण ने दुर्गोधन को अलग बुलाकर आदेश दिया- तुम ऐसा व्यक्ति खोजकर लाओ, जो सद्गुणों से पूर्ण हो, जिसमें एक भी दोष न हो। युधिष्ठिर और दुर्गोधन दोनों चले गये और कुछ दिनों के बाद दोनों ही वापस आकर भगवान कृष्ण से अलग-अलग समय में मिले। भगवान कृष्ण ने दोनों से पूछा कि क्या जिस व्यक्ति को खोजने गये थे, उसे ले आये? दुर्गोधन कहता है- मैंने ऐसे व्यक्ति को, जो सद्गुणों से संपन्न हो और जिसमें दुर्गुणों का सर्वथा अभाव हो, खोजने का अथक परिश्रम किया, किंतु ऐसा व्यक्ति कहीं भी न मिल सका, जो सर्वथा निर्दोष हो। यदि किसी में एक गुण है, तो उसमें दर्जनों दोष भी हैं। पूरी खोज-बीन के बाद मैंने पाया कि यदि कोई ऐसा व्यक्ति है जिसमें कोई दोष न हो, तो वह मेरे अतिरिक्त अन्य कोई नहीं है। अब आप जैसा चाहें, मेरे साथ करें। श्रीकृष्ण मुसकुराये और बोले- बहुत अच्छा हुआ। दोषों से सर्वथा मुक्त व्यक्ति के दर्शन कर मुझे बड़ी प्रसन्नता हुई। युधिष्ठिर के आने पर कृष्ण चूबते हैं- तुम्हारा व्यक्ति कहाँ है? युधिष्ठिर ने उत्तर दिया- हे प्रभु! संसार का निकृष्टतम पापियों में भी मैंने अनुकरणीय गुण पाये हैं, उनमें भी श्रेष्ठ लक्षण पाये हैं। ऐसे व्यक्ति पाने में मैं सफल न हो सका, जो दोषों से ही पूर्ण हो। प्रत्येक व्यक्ति में कुछ-न-कुछ सद्गुण हैं। तब मैंने अपना अपना विस्लेषण किया और पाया कि मैं दोषों से इतना भरा हुआ हूँ कि मैं आपके समक्ष उपस्थित करने के लिए अपने से अधिक उपयुक्त व्यक्ति नहीं पा सका। इन दोनों बातों से यह लगता है कि दृष्टिकोण के ये दो उपर्युक्त दो रूप हैं। युधिष्ठिर का दृष्टिकोण साधक का दृष्टिकोण था। उनमें दोष ढूंढने की प्रवृत्ति बहिर्गामी न होकर अंतर्मुखी थी। आध्यात्मिक मार्ग के हर यात्री के लिए यही आदर्श होना चाहिए।

स्वामी शिवानंद सरस्वती

## कुछ अलग

# मोहर लगेगी जात पर!

**शम्मी** कपूर की एक फिल्म थी, जिसमें अनाथ होने के कारण वह अपनी प्रेमिका के बात-बात पर गोली मारने की धमकी देनेवाले फौजी बाप के सामने अपने रिश्ते की बात करने जाने के लिए एक भिखारी-दंपती को तैयार करता है, जिनकी भूमिका किन्हीं हास्य-कलाकारों ने निभायी थी। भिखारी को थोड़ी-थोड़ी देर बाद झुककर सलाम करते हुए 'अंधे को भाई साहब!' कहकर भीख मांगने की आदत हुए। शम्मी कपूर उन्हें खूब ट्रेनिंग देता है कि फौजी के सामने उन्हें किस तरह पेश आना है और और भिखारी को इस बात की खास ताकीद करता है कि वह भूल से भी फौजी को 'अंधे को भाई साहब!' कहने की भूल न कर दे। तत्सली ही होने पर वह उस भिखारी-दंपती को अपनी प्रेमिका के खड्डूस बाप, जो कि दुनिया की सभी प्रेमिकाओं के बाप हुआ ही करते हैं, के पास भेज देता है। भिखारी-दंपती वहां शम्मी कपूर के मां-बाप की भूमिका अच्छी तरह निभा देते हैं और उनके व्यवहार से खुश होकर वह फौजी शम्मी कपूर से अपनी लड़की की शादी करने के लिए तैयार भी हो जाता है, पर एसे रखसती के वक्त भिखारी अपने वाली पर आ जाता है और फौजी को झुककर सलाम करते हुए कह बैठता है, 'अंधे को भाई साहब!'

चुनाव में नेता लोग भी विकास, देशभक्ति, जनसेवा आदि की बात करते-करते अपने वाली पर आकर जाति-धर्म के नाम पर वोट मांगने लगे हैं। कोई धर्म-विशेष के लोगों को चेता रहा है कि वे दूसरों के भुलावे में आकर अपने वोट खराब न कर

# कम होती खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति की चुनौती

माच के नवीनतम आंकड़ों के अनुसार मुद्रास्फीति की दर 2.6 प्रतिशत है। मार्च में समाप्त पिछले वित्तीय वर्ष के लिए औसत मुद्रास्फीति दर भी लगभग 3.5 प्रतिशत ही है। ये आंकड़े इस क्षेत्र में सफलता की अपनी ही कहानी बयान करते हैं, जिसका श्रेय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) तथा एनडीए सरकार को संयुक्त रूप से दिया जाना चाहिए। सिर्फ तीन वर्ष ही गुजरे हैं, जब आरबीआई ने मुद्रास्फीति को लक्षित करना आरंभ किया और यह नीति प्रभावी होती प्रतीत होती है। मुद्रास्फीति की दर की गणना कई कारकों को मिलाकर की जाती है, जिनमें वस्तुएं एवं सेवाएं भी शामिल हैं, जिन्हें उपभोक्ता मूल्य सूचकांक (सीपीआई) भी कहते हैं। इसे याद करें कि नवंबर 2013 में सीपीआई मुद्रास्फीति 12 प्रतिशत की चोटी पर पहुंच चुकी थी, जो पिछले दशक का सबसे ऊंचा आंकड़ा था।

सीपीआई की गणना में ली जानेवाली आधी सामग्रियों तो खाद्य तथा पेय पदार्थों से संबद्ध हैं। इसमें भी खाद्य सामग्रियों को 46 प्रतिशत भारता (वेटेज) दी जाती है, जबकि ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में उसे और भी ऊंचे स्तर की यानी 54 प्रतिशत भारता दी जाती है। इसलिए जब मुद्रास्फीति में गिरावट का रज्जान रहता है, तो इसमें खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति की गिरावट एक बड़ी भूमिका निभाती है। यह एक तथ्य है कि फरवरी के पहले के पांच महीनों के दौरान खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति नकारात्मक ही थी। मार्च की खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति शून्य से कुछ ही ऊपर 0.3 थी। पिछले पूरे वित्तीय वर्ष के लिए खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति 0.1 पर थी, जो 1991 के बाद की अवधि में न्यूनतम है।

खासकर शहरी उपभोक्ताओं के लिए निम्न तथा स्थिर मुद्रास्फीति खुशी की वजह होती है। विकसित देशों में जहां शहरी आबादी पूरे देश की 90 प्रतिशत अथवा उससे भी ऊपर तक होती है, खाद्य मूल्य वस्तुतः निम्न तथा स्थिर स्तर पर कायम रहते हैं। मगर, भारत जैसे देश के लिए

जहां आज भी 50 प्रतिशत आबादी प्रत्यक्षतः अथवा परोक्षतः कृषि से संबद्ध है, निम्न एवं नकारात्मक खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति का अर्थ यह होता है कि इन परिवारों की आय भी निम्न स्तर पर है। अन्य गैर-खाद्य सामग्रियों के विपरीत, कीमते गिर जाने पर खाद्य सामग्रियों की मांग तेजी से बढ़ नहीं जाती है। इसलिए गिरती कीमते साधारणतः किसानों की आय घटने की भी सूचक होती हैं, न कि कृषि उत्पादन में वृद्धि की। खाद्य सामग्रियों में भी जिन चार श्रेणियों की कीमतों में सर्वाधिक गिरावट हुई है, वे हैं फल, सब्जियाँ, दालें एवं चीनी। इन चारों की सम्मिलित भारता 15 प्रतिशत है। इनकी कीमतें अंशतः तो जरूरत से ज्यादा आपूर्ति की वजह से गिरी हैं। एक वक्त वह भी था, जब हमें दालें आयात करनी पड़ती थीं। पिछले तीन वर्षों में खाद्यान्नों का उत्पादन भी लगातार बढ़ा है।

कम कीमते तथा किसान परिवारों में कम आय ही वे वजहें थीं, जिनसे प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि शुरू करने का विचार उत्पन्न हुआ। न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य (एमएसपी) भी किसानों को कुल उत्पादन लागत के 50 प्रतिशत का मुनाफा देने पर लक्षित है। पर यह प्रत्याशित ढंग से प्रभावी सिद्ध न हो सका, क्योंकि तंग राजकोषीय स्थिति की वजह से केंद्र एवं राज्य सरकारों द्वारा उपज की खरीद काफी कम ही रही। यही कारण है

ही हैं। हालांकि, हम कृषि में सार्थक आर्थिक सुधारों के इंतजार के साथ ही विनिर्माण, खनन, रियल एस्टेट, निर्माण एवं सेवा क्षेत्र में जाँब के भारी सुजन की राह



**अजीत रानाडे**  
सीनियर फेलो, तक्षिला  
इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ  
editor@thebillionpress.org

शून्य के करीब खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति यह संकेत करती है कि शहरी बनाम ग्रामीण व्यापार संतुलन एक ओर अत्यधिक झुक चुका है, जिसे विपरीत किये जाने की जरूरत है।

# चीन के निर्यात का गिरता ग्राफ

ल गभग दो दशक से सबसे तेज अर्थव्यवस्था के रूप में ही नभे, बल्कि 'मैनुफैक्चरिंग हब' के रूप में स्थापित होता चीन, आज संकटों से गुजर रहा है। चीन के मॉडल को दुनिया के कई देश एक आदर्श के रूप में मान रहे थे। अब उन्हें सोचना पड़ेगा कि क्या चीन वास्तव में एक आदर्श अर्थव्यवस्था है? चीन मैनुफैक्चरिंग में आगे बढ़ा, तो दूसरे मुक्त इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स, टेलीकॉम, वस्तुओं, मशीनरी, केमिकल्स, दवाइयों, कच्चे माल आदि के लिए चीन पर निर्भर होते गये। उन देशों में रोजगार का संकट उत्पन्न हो गया, क्योंकि चीनी उत्पादों के कारण उनके उद्योग बंद होते गये। भारत, अमेरिका, यूरोप और अन्य कई देशों के औद्योगिकरण को बड़ा धक्का लगा।

भारी निर्यातों और व्यापार में अतिरेक के चलते चीन का विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार बढ़ने लगा, जिसके बलबूते चीन ने दूसरे मुक्तों में काफी मात्रा में भूमि खरीदी और इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर कंपनियों में भारी निवेश किया। पाकिस्तान के कच्चे तेल के कश्मीर में सड़क निर्माण, श्रीलंका में हंबनटोटा बंदरगाह समेत कई स्थानों पर चीन द्वारा इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर निवेश इसके उदाहरण हैं। चीन दुनिया में एक महाशक्ति के रूप में दिखायी देने लगा। लेकिन, आज उसकी जीडीपी ग्रोथ घट रही है। विदेशी व्यापार में धोमेधने के कारण विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार घटकर चार हजार अरब डॉलर से अब तीन हजार अरब डॉलर रह गया है। चीन की कई कंपनियां बंद हो चुकी हैं। पिछले साल चीन के निर्यातों में भी भारी कमी आयी है। कई देशों में अब चीनी आयातों पर आयात शुल्क बढ़ाकर उनको रोका जा रहा है। चीनी हुस्मरान अब कह रहे हैं कि घरेलू उपभोग भी महत्वपूर्ण है, क्योंकि अब चीन का विदेशी बाजार सिकुड़ रहा है।

अप्रैल 2018 से दिसंबर 2018 के बीच चीन द्वारा भारत को किये जानेवाले निर्यातों में पिछले वर्ष की तुलना में 6.6 अरब डॉलर की कमी आयी। दुनियाभर में भी चीन के निर्यात अब घटने लगे हैं। दिसंबर 2018 में चीन के निर्यात 4.4 प्रतिशत कम हुए। इसकी वजह व्यापार युद्ध (अमेरिका द्वारा चीनी उत्पादों पर आयात शुल्क बढ़ाना) और वैश्विक मंदी को बताया जा रहा है। लेकिन यह पूरा सच नहीं है। साल 2001-02 में जहां चीन के निर्यात मात्र 266 अरब डॉलर ही थे, 2014-15 तक वे 2,342 अरब डॉलर पहुंच चुके थे। उसके बाद वे लगातार घटते हुए 2017-18 में 2,263 अरब डॉलर रह गये। इस साल तो वे और ज्यादा घटनेवाले हैं। दरअसल, चीन बड़ी मात्रा में इलेक्ट्रॉनिक कलपुर्जों का आयात करता है, जिसको इलेक्ट्रॉनिक सामान तैयार करने में इस्तेमाल किया जाता है। चूंकि इलेक्ट्रॉनिक टेलीकॉम निर्यात प्रभावित हो रहे हैं, इसलिए चीन से इन कलपुर्जों के आयात में भारी कमी आयी है।

वर्ष 2010 की दिसंबर तिमाही में जीडीपी ग्रोथ की दर जो बढ़ते-बढ़ते 12.2 प्रतिशत पर कर गयी थी, वर्ष 2018 की दिसंबर तिमाही तक आते-आते घटकर मात्र 6.4 प्रतिशत ही रह गयी। इसमें ज्यादा नुकसान मैनुफैक्चरिंग को हुआ है और मैनुफैक्चरिंग के महत्वपूर्ण सूचकांक (पीएमआई) में प्रदर्शित भी हो रहा है। फरवरी 2019 तक आते-आते चीन का पीएमआई सूचकांक 49.2 प्रतिशत पहुंच चुका था। गौरतलब है कि पीएमआई सूचकांक का 50 से नीचे होना मैनुफैक्चरिंग में गिरावट को दर्शाता है। यानी चीन में आयात भी घटने लगा है।

वर्ष 2001 में डब्ल्यूटीओ का सदस्य बनने के बाद, उसके व्यापार नियमों का फायदा उठाकर चीन ने अपने निर्यात काफी बढ़ा लिये थे। वास्तविकता यह है कि चीन अपने निर्यातों को गुप्तचर तरीके से सब्सिडी देकर अपनी प्रतिस्पर्द्धा शक्ति बढ़ाने का काम कर रहा था। लेकिन, दुनियाभर में चीनी माल की भारी आवक के चलते जब फेक्टोरियां बंद हो गयीं और रोजगार प्रभावित हुआ, तब इन देशों ने आयात शुल्क बढ़ाना शुरू किया। निर्यात आधारित अर्थव्यवस्था होने के कारण पिछले काफी समय से घटते निर्यातों ने चीन की नींद उड़ा दी है।

चीन ने श्रीलंका में हंबनटोटा बंदरगाह के निर्माण का जिम्मा लिया और इस हेतु श्रीलंका को बड़ा कर्ज भी दिया। कर्ज इतना ज्यादा था कि जिसे श्रीलंका सरकार चुका नहीं पायी और इसके बाद चीन ने श्रीलंका को इस हेतु बाध्य किया कि वह इस बंदरगाह को उसे 99 वर्ष की लीज पर दे दे। श्रीलंका का यह अनुभव बाकी दुनिया के लिए एक नसीहत बन गया है और अन्य देशों को यह लगने लगा है कि इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर के नाम पर चीन इन देशों को फांसकर उन्हें अपने ऊपर आश्रित करते हुए उनके लिए खतरा बन सकता है। ऐसे में चीन के साथ इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर के लिए समझौते के रास्ते पर जा रहे, या समझौता कर चुके देश अब पीछे हटने लगे हैं। पिछले दिनों मलेशिया के प्रधानमंत्री ने चीन के लगभग 23 अरब डॉलर के समझौतों को हरी झंडी दे दी थी, जिसे अब रद्द कर दिया गया है। बांग्लादेश, हंगरी और तंजानिया ने वेस्ट शेड परियोजनाओं को या तो रद्द कर दिया है या उसके स्वरूप को घटा दिया है। म्यांमार ने चीन को धमकी देकर कि वह उसके समझौते को रद्द कर सकता है, क्यावपीयू बंदरगाह की पूर्व लागत 7.3 अरब डॉलर से घटाकर 1.3 अरब डॉलर पर ले आया है। चीन के साथ पहले साझेदारी और मित्रता निभानेवाला पाकिस्तान भी अब परियोजनाओं का पुनरावलोकन करने लगा है।

इन सभी घटनाओं से स्पष्ट है कि चीन का दुनिया के इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर में एक महाशक्ति बनने का सपना धूमिल हो रहा है। आर्थिक रूप से चीन का गिरता ग्राफ उसे कहां ले जायेगा, यह तो समय ही बतायेगा।

कि सरकार भी अत्यंत निम्न खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति के निहितार्थों से चिंतित है। ऐतिहासिक रूप से भारत की औद्योगिकरण नीति में शहर समर्थक एवं कृषि विरोधी पुट रहा है। नतीजतन, व्यापार की शर्तें उद्योग की तुलना में कृषि के विरोध में ही झुकी रही हैं। यदि किसान परिवारों की तादाद में एक बड़ी गिरावट आयी होती और कृषि उत्पादन उसी अनुपात में बढ़ा होता, तो हमें इन दो स्थितियों के सम्मिलित फायदे हासिल हुए होते। पर दुर्भाग्यवश कृषि के बाहर किसी सुरक्षित जाँब के अभाव के कारण किसान कृषि क्षेत्र को छोड़ नहीं सके। एक गतिविधि के रूप में कृषि स्वयं ही कई बंधनों में जकड़ी है, जिनके उदाहरण में मूल्य एवं मात्रा नियंत्रणों, कृषि बाजार समितियों तथा बटाईदारी खेती से संबद्ध पुरातन कानूनों के चंगुल, महाजनों का नियंत्रण और कॉरपोरेट-किसान संबद्धता की सीमाओं को लिया जा सकता है। खेतों से खाने तक की मूल्य शृंखला को कृषि प्रसंस्करण, शीतगृहों, खुदरा सुपर बाजारों के विस्तार तथा मूल्य वर्धित उत्पादों की दरकार होती है, जिनकी संभारनाएँ अभी भी सुदूर

अब भी ताक ही रहे हैं, ताकि ये सब मिलकर कृषि से अतिरिक्त श्रमबल सोख सके, फिर भी हमारे द्वारा यह सवाल तो किया ही जाना चाहिए कि क्या लगभग शून्य खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति हमें स्वीकार्य हो सकेगी? कुछ वर्ष पहले आरबीआई के शोध विभाग ने एक रिपोर्ट प्रकाशित की थी, जिसके अनुसार भारत में आर्थिक विकास की रफ्तार तेज करने के लिए इसकी मुद्रास्फीति दर पाँच प्रतिशत के लगभग होनी चाहिए। इसलिए मुद्रास्फीति की शून्य दर तो निश्चित रूप से अत्यंत निम्न है। मुद्रा अस्फीति अंततः मुद्रा अपस्फीति (डिप्लेशन) को तथा मूल्य प्रत्याशाओं को एक अधोगामी शृंखला को ही जन्म देती है। यदि लोग यह उम्मीद करते हैं कि कीमते और भी नीचे जायेंगी, तो वे खरीद को टालते हैं, जिससे मांग में कमी आती है और जिसमें का भंडार बढ़ता जाता है, जो कीमतों में और भी कमी पैदा करता है। ऐसी स्थिति एक विकासशील देश के लिए खतरनाक होती है। यदि खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति बहुत कम हो गयी, तो हमें अविलंब गैर-कृषि गतिविधियों या नकदी के ट्रांसफर से कृषि आय बढ़ाने के रास्ते तलाशने होंगे।

आधिकारिक अनुमानों के मुताबिक, इस वक्त भारत का 42 प्रतिशत हिस्सा सुखाड़ की चपेट में है। ऐसे में फल तथा सब्जियों के दाम तेजी से बढ़कर खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति के परिदृश्य में नाटकीय परिवर्तन ला सकते हैं। कृषि उत्पादन में कमी से अधिक आपूर्ति की स्थिति में भी कमी आ सकती है। हालांकि, चीनी की कीमतों में वृद्धि की कोई संभावना नहीं है। यदि खरीद की मात्राओं में पर्याप्त बढ़ोतरी लाते हुए एमएसपी से संबद्ध नीतियों को प्रभावी ढंग से लागू किया जाये, तो कृषि संकट में कुछ कमी लायी जा सकती है। शून्य के करीब खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति यह संकेत करती है कि शहरी बनाम ग्रामीण व्यापार संतुलन एक ओर अत्यधिक झुक चुका है, जिसे विपरीत किये जाने की जरूरत है।

(अनुवाद : विजय नंदन)



## आपके पत्र

### चुनाव में पैसे का खेल

देश में पहली बार पैसे देने के मामले में किसी लोकसभा चुनाव को स्थगित करना पड़ा है। दूसरे चरण यानी 18 अप्रैल को तमिलनाडु के वेल्लोर संसदीय चुनाव को आयोग ने अनिश्चित काल के स्थगित कर दिया है। इससे पहले तो इस राज्य में दो विधानसभाओं आरके नगर और तंजावुर का चुनाव पैसेओं के कारण स्थगित कर दिया गया था। ऐसा लगता है कि चुनाव का मतलब पैसा रह गया है। जनसभाओं में लोगों को लाने के लिए पैसे खर्च होते हैं। महिलाओं को साड़ी बांटी जाती है। आयोग बाहुबल और सरकारी अधिकारियों के दुरुप्रयोग पर तो बहुत हद तक काबू पा लिया है, मगर रुपये की शक्ति के आगे चुनाव आयोग अभी भी कमजोर साबित हो रहा है। आयोग कहता है इस महामारी से लड़ने के लिए मतदाताओं को भी आगे आना होगा। मगर यह कैसे होगा जब देश में गरीबी इतनी अधिक है। लोग एक-एक रुपये के लिए मोहताज हैं।

जंग बहादुर सिंह, गोलकुण्डा, जम्शेदपुर

### फेक न्यूज से वोटर्स रहें सचेत

चुनावी मौसम में सोशल मीडिया पर फेक न्यूज की बाढ़ आती जा रही है। झूठी खबरों को इस तरह से परोसा जा रहा है कि सही और झूठ का पता ही नहीं चल पाता। आम मतदाता पूरी तरह से भ्रमित होता जा रहा है। जब तक सही स्थिति सामने आती है, तब तक वह पीट्ट अपना असर डाल चुकी होती है। हाल में मुरली मनोहर जोशी का आडवाणी को पत्र काफी वायरल हुआ। बाद में जोशी को इस मामले में चुनाव आयोग को खत लिखना पड़ा कि ऐसा कोई पत्र नहीं लिखा गया है, इसकी जांच कर कार्रवाई की जाये। सेना के दिग्गजों द्वारा राष्ट्रपति को लिखा गया फेक लेटर भी सोशल मीडिया में काफी वायरल हुआ। फेसबुक और व्हाट्सएप ने अपने स्तर से कदम उठाये हैं लेकिन लोगों को इसके लिए जागरूक करना बहुत जरूरी हो गया है। सरकार को फेक न्यूज से लोगों को सचेत करते रहने की जरूरत है।

अमन सिंह, बरेली, उत्तर प्रदेश

### पूरी तरह बैन हो पबजी

कुछ वर्षों से ऑनलाइन गेम के प्रति बच्चों व युवाओं का झुकाव ज्यादा हो गया है। खासकर पबजी आने के बाद प्रायः हर युवा को इसकी लत लग गयी है। चलते-फिरते, खाते-पीते हर वक्त वे गेम में चुसे रहते हैं। इसका नतीजा ऐसा है कि रात के तीन-चार बजे तक इसे खेलते रहते हैं। इस कारण वे पर्याप्त नींद भी नहीं ले पा रहे हैं। उनके मस्तिष्क, आंख एवं पढ़ाई पर बुरा प्रभाव पड़ रहा है। वास्तविक दुनिया से वे कटते जा रहे हैं और खुद को वर्चुअल दुनिया में कैद कर रहे हैं। स्थिति इतनी भयावह है कि मना करने पर बच्चे आत्महत्या तक कर ले रहे हैं। यह गेम बच्चों को उनके कैरियर से भी ज्यादा महत्वपूर्ण लगाने लगा है। बच्चे व युवा अपनी पढ़ाई को प्राथमिकता न देकर इस गेम को दे रहे हैं। आनेवाली पीढ़ी को इस तरह बर्बाद करनेवाले इस गेम के लिए सरकार को कड़े कदम उठाने चाहिए। इसे पूरी तरह बैन कर देना चाहिए ताकि हमारे देश के भविष्य के साथ खिलवाड़ न हो।

पीयूष राज, गुल्मा



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