

# Not so secret ballot

There are no easy ways to anonymise voting data beyond a point without allowing massive scope for post-poll rigging



## TECH-ENABLED

DEVANGSHU DATTA

During this election campaign, voters have been threatened with consequences if they don't vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP candidate for Sultanpur (UP), Menaka Gandhi told a predominantly Muslim crowd that she would know how many people voted for her, and she would not be inclined to help them find employment if they did not vote for her. She also said she would

categorise villages "A, B, C, D" depending on the number of votes she received and structure development accordingly. Another BJP legislator, Gujarat MLA, Ramesh Katara, also reminded voters there were CCTVs in booths.

The threats were odious. But there is a deeper issue here. Citizens have the right to a secret ballot. However, the technology and processes used in Indian elections actually makes secrecy almost impossible to maintain.

It is now possible to make very accurate guesses about the votes of individuals. While few politicians will be crass enough to say this as bluntly as Gandhi or Katara, every major political party does its own data-analysis to work this out in as fine-grained detail, as possible.

The earlier system of paper ballots stuffed into boxes made it impossible to judge the order in which votes were cast and tally that with individual voters. In addition, ballot boxes were collected at a single location (as are EVMs) and the papers mixed up together

before counting. So the vote was secret.

This is not how things work in the modern electoral system. The voters' rolls are open and accessible online, and include details like name, father's name, address, gender. The voter is tied to the voter ID, the assigned polling booth, and increasingly, to the Aadhaar number.

The electoral rolls have to be open in fact, since this gives citizens a chance to check if their names have been deleted, or to change address. Of course, electoral rolls have also enabled communal riots targeting one community or another. That started with 1984 long before rolls were online.

Voters go to their assigned booth, where their ID is checked and their names entered in a register before they vote. EVMs are used, where votes are registered in the order cast and there's a VVPAT record as well. If the register could be tallied with the order of votes cast, it would indeed be possible to figure out the vote cast by every individ-

ual voter. We have to rely on the integrity of the Election Commission in this respect.

Since each EVM services a specific booth, which services a specific neighbourhood, it is possible to figure out how entire neighbourhoods voted. This information is available publicly. The candidates have representatives observing the counting process. The ECI releases Form 20 Data for elections online, and this contains breakups for votes received down to EVM-level.

Political parties do a lot of big data analysis to guess religion, caste and other preferences of voters. Local workers usually have a good idea of economic status. There are new tools available, given the prevalence of social media and the linkages made possible through Aadhaar.

Aadhaar for example, gives access to mobile numbers, and it is also tied to IT Returns, welfare schemes, etc. It is easy enough to start mining for more information such as presences on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, the educational background, employment pattern, family dynamics and so on. Very few people scrupulously sweep their online presence clear of their political biases, and family connections, and indeed, why should they?

When all this information is matched to Form20, algorithms can make accurate guesses as to how individuals, families, communities and villages have voted. Local party workers can flesh in details, create WhatsApp and Facebook groups and get cracking as "influencers".

Once "non-supporters" have been identified, skulduggery such as attempting to delete the names of non-supporters, or simply intimidating them to stay away on election day, is possible. So are carrot-and-stick threats like the ones Gandhi and Katara employed.

There has already been a scandal about a private firm mining Aadhaar data in Andhra Pradesh to profile voters. The data for almost 8 million persons has been copied and misused. This is probably just the tip of the Aadhaar iceberg. The penalties for this seem close to nil in practice, and the potential returns are obviously, large.

There are no easy ways to anonymise voting data beyond a point, without allowing massive scope for post-poll rigging. The Supreme Court vetoed a proposal in 2017 to "totalise" by clubbing together data from different EVMs. This is just another example of how the legal system has been overtaken by technology.

## CHINESE WHISPERS

### Election holiday



For the participants in Y S Jaganmohan Reddy's (pictured) political campaign, *achhe din* has arrived. The staff has been given paid holiday for

a month. While the junior staff gets paid holiday only, some senior employees have been offered holiday at a destination of their choice. Only a core team of about 20 people has been retained to continue working with Reddy on the final details. They have been promised "good rewards" if the results are good.

### Attorney General under 'attack'



During an unprecedented hearing in the Supreme Court on Saturday in which the chief justice of India heard "a case of grave national importance",

Attorney General K K Venugopal (pictured) lamented that he had been "under attack" from a lawyer for defending the government. Venugopal said he was an officer of the court and was simply assisting the court in his capacity as government counsel. His comments led to speculation about the identity of the lawyer who had "attacked" him. While many names came up, the consensus in the courtroom and outside was that it was either senior advocate Indira Jaising or public interest lawyer Prashant Bhushan. Bhushan and the AG are locked in a legal battle after the former alleged that the AG had misled the court on Rafale. This prompted Venugopal to move a contempt petition against Bhushan.

### Model code? What's that?

A report released by the Election Commission shows political parties in Tamil Nadu, especially the big two, are locked in some sort of a contest when it comes to committing the maximum number of violations of the model code of conduct. Of the total 4,690 violations reported in the state till April 19, around 1,450 cases were reported against the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), while 1,694 cases were reported against the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The smaller parties in the state also tried their best with 1,546 cases against them during the period. Most of the violations reported related to defacement of property. Almost 1,368 cases were reported from the southern part of the state, including from Madurai, Theni, Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari.

# To bank or not to bank on Indiabulls

A banking licence, unlike, say, a licence to enter the telecom or gas business, is not sold to the highest bidder; it goes to a "fit and proper" entity



## BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

After Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd (Indiabulls) and Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) announced their decision to merge and create Indiabulls Lakshmi Vilas Bank, the nation's eighth largest private bank by assets, a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) release clarified that the merger announcement didn't have the regulator's approval "at this stage". This was to quell the speculation that the central bank's nod was a given since its two nominee directors have been on the LVB's board. Incidentally, the mortgage company too has a couple of former RBI deputy governors on its board. One of them, S S Mundra, is heading a "reorganisation committee" to oversee the proposed merger.

The RBI will examine the proposal, "as and when received", in accordance with the regulatory guidelines. Both the entities, I understand, are yet to submit the proposal to the central bank even as the Indian financial system seems to be vertically divided on the deal.

There have been animated discussions — not on the financials of the two or how long it will take for Indiabulls to get value out of the merger with a sick bank but whether the regulator should clear it.

The merger between a bank and a non-banking finance company or NBFC (in this case, a housing finance company) is not new. For instance, Bharat Financial Inclusion Ltd (formerly SKS Ltd) is being merged with IndusInd Bank Ltd; Capital First Ltd was merged with IDFC Bank Ltd; and Bandhan Bank Ltd is in the process of merging Gruh Finance Ltd with itself.

If Capital First is allowed to get the licence to bank (through merger with IDFC Bank), what's the harm in welcoming Indiabulls into this club? The detractors point out that Indiabulls was one of the 27 applicants when the RBI opened the window in 2014 but it didn't feature in the list of two that could make it. What has changed since then?

Also, Capital First and Indiabulls are chalk and cheese. The first was an NBFC, run by a banker-turned-entrepreneur, V Vaidyanathan. The latter is a housing finance company, the flagship entity of a diversified conglomerate with presence in housing finance, consumer finance, insurance, stock broking and even real estate.

Unlike Vaidyanathan who created an unconventional model of credit underwriting and collection at Capital First, Sameer Gehlaut, a mechanical engineer, started his entrepreneurship journey by setting up an online broking platform in 1999. In course of time, the group spawned many com-

panies and Indiabulls today is the nation's second largest housing finance company by assets.

Indeed, things have changed since 2013 when it had applied for a banking licence. For instance, the real estate business assets accounted for one-third of the group's assets at that time; it has come down to almost one-tenth now. In an interview with a national business daily, Gehlaut recently said he is willing to get out of the real estate business entirely if it becomes a bank.

Besides, the new on-tap licensing guidelines stipulate that not more than 40 per cent of the total assets/gross income of an aspiring bank should be generated from non-financial activities. In case of Indiabulls, it is less than 20 per cent.

Finally, the shareholding of the promoters for a new bank is capped at 30 per cent of the paid-up voting equity capital within 10 years and 15 per cent by the 15th year. Gehlaut, who now holds 21.5 per cent stake in Indiabulls, will end up owning 19.5 per cent in the merged entity but is willing to pare it to 15 per cent before the merger becomes effective. I am sure he might also be willing to give up his executive role to ensure better governance.

Incidentally, after being denied a banking licence in 2014, in November 2015, Indiabulls acquired close to 40 per cent stake in OakNorth Bank, one of the so-called challenger banks in the UK. I presume that such an acquisition could not have been done without the nod of the RBI and, of course, the Bank of England. By November 2017, Indiabulls had sold part of its stake and made more than what it had invested in the bank that specialises in giving loans to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on a smart technology platform.

If it gets the RBI nod, the proposed Indiabulls Lakshmi Vilas Bank may



After being denied a banking licence in 2014, Indiabulls acquired close to 40 per cent stake in OakNorth Bank, one of the so-called challenger banks in the UK, in November 2015

replicate this in India. To start with, its assets will be disproportionately tilted towards real estates but a large segment of Indiabulls consumers can be sold SME products to diversify the portfolio. Gehlaut, in his interview, said they would not look for any relaxation in the terms of meeting the RBI norms for holding government bonds and keeping cash with the regulator.

Indiabulls has been discussing the proposal for months before both the boards met to seal it. To be sure, LVB had very little option but to be taken over by a stronger entity; and Indiabulls, or, for that matter, all NBFCs which do not have access to public deposits, eventually need to convert themselves into banks for growth and even survival, in some cases.

I would not like to second guess the regulator's call because a banking

## INSIGHT

# Are these seven deadly sins plaguing your supply chain in India?



NEELLESH MUNDRA

The emergence of new digital and analytic capabilities, combined with significant policy changes and rising customer expectations, mean companies in India need to upgrade their supply-chain processes. Here are seven outdated, but all too common, practices that companies need to watch out for — and change.

■ **Having your planning team forecast demand.** With the advent of machine learning and neural networks, having demand-planning teams churn out numbers based on statistical models is not good enough. The best forecasts are now created from advanced analytics engines that crawl the web for digital signals, take into consideration crowd-sourced data, and can explore correlations with more than 2,000 data sets to estimate future demand. Leveraging such data can improve forecasts as much as 10 per cent to 20 per cent.

■ **Running a monthly sales and operations planning (S&OP) process.** In today's dynamic markets, meeting once a month is not nearly enough: If a particular assumption changes, chaos can set in. Leading companies have instead moved towards a circular planning loop. That

means setting up a central team to track and coordinate events — the same way a control tower manages flights. This team gets live feedback of events, such as supply disruptions, and then reacts in real time. Setting this up is not easy, but companies that do it well have seen improvements in service levels consistently.

■ **Relying on a hub-and-spoke network.** With the advent of India's goods-and-services tax (GST), most companies re-examined their network model and perhaps closed a few depots. That is not enough. This policy change was the once-in-a-blue-moon opportunity for all departments (from sales to manufacturing) to come together and reconsider their entire supply-chain strategy. GST implementation presented the opportunity for Indian companies to finally innovate their distribution network and create segmented supply chains for different product groups that have different demand and supply patterns. This meant not each product needed to be stored at each hub and connected depot or 'spoke' — and multiple handlings and inventory pile ups can now be avoided with networks tailored for each category.

■ **Treating domestic trucking as a per kilometer variable cost.** Historically, due to the fragmented and unorganised nature of the market, most Indian companies have not looked at trucking strategically. They have outsourced it to third-party vendors and treated this as a variable cost based primarily on the distance travelled between plant and depots/warehouses and capacity of the truck. The better approach is to treat trucking more like

machinery — that is, to see trucks as a fixed cost that need to be used intensively. This concept has been demonstrated by e-commerce players in India who run trucks close to 15,000 to 18,000 kilometers per month, two to three times as much as other sectors. This "sweating the asset" mindset shift could lower transportation costs by 10 percent to 15 per cent. The key to do this is a robust digitally enabled tracking of the loading, unloading and transit times through a 24/7 control room coupled with a well-coordinated dispatch and receipt planning analytical engine.

■ **Staffing supply-chain teams with domain experts alone.** Supply-chain teams typically have centered around experts who understood specialties such as warehousing, logistics, or planning. Now best practice is to blend supply-chain practitioners with analytics experts, such as data scientists, in order to leverage the data generated through every transaction and uncover inefficiencies across inventory, service product needed to be stored at each hub and connected depot or 'spoke' — and cost in different nodes of the supply chain — for example, by analysing the usage of last mile trucks and creating a dynamic routing algorithm, a company was able to realise a forty per cent drop in last mile costs.

■ **Procuring off-the-shelf digital solutions and tools without clear business rationale.** Many companies that embark on massive and all-encompassing supply-chain digitalisation programmes have struggled to define and eventually realise the return on investment of such efforts. Companies that have done well have picked specific use cases that can be cracked by digital and analytics such

as the ones we have discussed above example, better demand forecasting, end-to-end closed loop planning, with impact that is linked clearly to a business objective such as improvement in cost by 10 per cent, or maybe, service levels increasing by 15 per cent.

■ **Treating your suppliers as vendors and not as partners in an eco-system.** At times, it is more pragmatic to partner with a start-up to build a routing algorithm for your trucks, for example, rather than trying to code it internally. Companies that are able to build an eco-system of partners across the supply chain have usually seen benefits, such as getting to market faster, cutting development costs, or just having access to talent and expertise. To do this, companies need to move away from traditional vendor management processes of having annual contracts, standard 'request for quote' (RFQ) processes and quarterly performance reviews toward an 'eco-system management' of a set of partners across the supply chain that feel joint ownership to improve your efficiencies. Examples include joint investments with reputed transporters to ensure dedicated capacity in customised trucks that will improve costs, taking a stake in a logistics start-up to co-develop business solutions relevant to you or even collaborating to create an open platform that facilitates all partners in the eco-system to thrive and build on each other's efficiencies and scale.

Indian companies need to see their supply chains as sources of value — and then take action to unlock that value. To do so requires them to innovate rapidly, and eliminate traditional, but stale practices.

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## LETTERS

### Worth a case study

This refers to, "The Empire strikes back: How print media is winning the internet" (April 20). Print media is not only winning the digital space, but is also consolidating its editions. New city editions are getting launched by newspapers. Chennai-based The Hindu group launched its Mumbai edition. In nations like the US and the UK, even well-known publications that have been there in the print form are either closing down or reducing the number of copies. They are focussing more on digital editions. Another factor behind the print media conquering the digital space is free content, as Indian readers are averse to paying for digital content. A number of big publications have made the digital content free. When one buys the print edition, he recovers a small amount of the subscription money when old newspapers are sold to a scrap dealer. Management schools should make a case study on the subject of print media winning the internet, both in India and abroad.

Deendayal M Lulla Mumbai

### Holistic solution needed

The civil aviation industry in India, for about a decade now, is passing through the most complex phase. Many players have fallen like a pack of cards, unable to meet their debt obligations owing to a variety of reasons. That is serious and does not augur

well for the industry and the country. The latest on the list is the cash strapped Jet Airways that has announced a temporary shutdown of its operations after the lenders thoughtfully turned down the airline's demand for emergency funding.

It may be stated here that, to give a boost to the domestic aviation sector, the government has been working on various initiatives including upgradation of airports as well as enhancing regional air connectivity. It is unfortunate that this turbulence should occur in a country like India that offers a huge potential for expansion.

While all concerned, including the Director General of Civil Aviation, are already seized of the matter, it is necessary that some kind of viable solution is expeditiously worked out to ensure business continuity. This is vital now when the world is recognising India's steady advances in multiple fields. The industry is highly cyclical and operates on a thin margin with a heavy capex leading to a high leverage. The crux of the problem concerning the entire civil aviation industry will need to be addressed in a holistic manner instead of treating any single airline in isolation.

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## HAMBONE





## Lessons from Jet

No promoter can be treated bigger than the company

As the last flight of what once was India's second-largest private airline landed in Mumbai at 12.30 am on Wednesday last week, the pilot's message said: "We hope to fly again soon. When we do, do book with us." It was a poignant moment for 25-year-old Jet Airways, but the indefinite suspension of operations was hardly surprising for an airline that had only five functional planes after starting the year with 119. With ₹8,400 crore of debt, and the failure to receive a stopgap loan from its lenders as part of a rescue deal agreed in late March, Jet's wings had not only been clipped; they were simply taken away. The airline is now clearly staring down the barrel. It is not difficult to figure out why Jet's lenders developed cold feet after announcing on March 25 a resolution plan that envisaged stake sale and "priority funding". It became simply impossible to extend the funds for two reasons: One, the airline's cash flow was severely impacted; and two, the Supreme Court quashed the Reserve Bank of India's February 12, 2018, circular on stressed assets resolution. The resolution plan was built on the premise of that circular. The fear of witch-hunt by investigative agencies must have also weighed on the bankers' minds. Even a reduced amount of ₹400 crore as requested by the airline was an unviable option, as most of the funds sought were for the payment of salaries and dues to lessors.

But this does not absolve banks of the blame for the mess that Jet finds itself in. They gave a long rope to Naresh Goyal, the promoter of the airline, even though Jet was trapped in a vortex with seemingly no end in sight for months. There were many signals of protracted mismanagement before Jet defaulted on its repayments at the end of 2018. The airline was careening out of control with continuing losses and a severe cash crunch, and Jet's auditor raised questions over its survival in August last year. Yet, the banks did not think it was necessary to save the airline by forcing Mr Goyal to bring in strategic investors. Instead, they convinced themselves that they could convert their debt into equity and keep it going, even though past experience with such endeavours has been hardly encouraging. Banks also refused to take the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code route, which was enacted precisely to handle situations such as what Jet found itself in.

What prompted banks to treat Mr Goyal with kid gloves for so long is unknown, but it is probably because the Jet promoter had many important friends on speed dial. The fear of annoying the political powers who would be wary of the nasty optics of large-scale job losses and spike in airfares seems to have also played a part, though it must be said that the government appears to have stayed out of the picture and left it to bankers and the airline management to sort things out, and minimised disruption by temporarily re-assigning airport slots to other airlines. At this point, however, it does appear that a miracle will be needed for Jet to take wing again. Finding an investor is hardly going to be an easy task, given that nothing much remains of the airline, except for some flying rights, a few landing and parking slots, an eroding talent base, and a shrinking brand value. The important lesson from the Jet saga is that no promoter should be treated bigger than the organisation.

## Critical time for trade

India must have a balanced response to global pressures

According to the recent data, in March 2019 Indian trade in goods unrelated to petroleum or to gold snapped a five-year-long streak in the red to register a surplus. That was, as this newspaper has argued, a good sign that needs to be backed up with proper trade policy. A recovery in exports cannot be guaranteed on its own — a point that must be kept in mind by New Delhi's trade negotiators as they prepare to welcome the trade ministers of 25 developing nations to a mini-ministerial summit. This is the second such summit, after one last year, and comes in the context of major pressures on the world trading system.

The biggest symptom of this pressure is the slow-motion trade war between the US and China. Patience has run out within the US political system for entities it sees as flouting the rules and norms of the international trading system. While India in principle shares many of these objections, there is nevertheless little doubt that the US' response has been arbitrary, scatter-shot and short-sighted. The US' initial fusillade of the trade war, a tariff on aluminium and steel, hurt producers in allied countries as much as those in China. More concerning are the direct moves on India taken by Washington: In particular, the announced withdrawal of benefits under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), which allows tariff-free access to the US market for producers exporting certain goods from developing countries. Indian officials have shrugged off the GSP benefits as minimal, but a fairly large swathe of exports, particularly in sectors that India would wish to see benefit, will find themselves rendered less competitive in one of their major overseas markets, thanks to the withdrawal of the GSP. Finally, there are moves afoot to make changes to the world trading system, which might also affect India. In particular, the European Union, the US and Japan have sought to begin a discussion on the preferences set aside for developing countries within the trading architecture.

It will not be surprising if these possible changes to the international trading system will be a major topic of discussion at the mini-ministerial. India, however, must carefully calibrate its response. It is not in India's interests to be seen to be providing cover to exporters from China. There is a massive difference between the two countries' relative economic status and trading power. India must defend special rules for developing countries, but it is not necessary to also make the claim that Beijing should continue to benefit from those rules. Second, it is important to note that while systems such as the GSP are WTO-compliant, India does not have a right to tariff-free access. So it must not close the door on negotiating with the US to ensure that such access is retained. The India-specific waiver on the US' Iran sanctions is also discretionary, and New Delhi cannot afford to see this expire because it has alienated Washington. This is a critical time. India has so far been dragging its feet on firming up a position, but it cannot be allowed to delay — elections or no elections.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



## The bird's eye view in finance

Micro prudential regulation of finance is essential

We are seeing difficulties in banks, mutual funds, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), the bond market, and real estate. There are interconnections between these difficulties: The components are not siloed. It is difficult for a siloed financial regulatory architecture to obtain information, engage in root cause analysis, and solve problems. There is a natural bias for micro-prudential regulators to postpone the recognition of a problem. System thinking diverges from the view of one firm at a time. We require the Fiscal Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill, the Financial Data Management Centre (FDMC) and a technical secretariat at the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC). Absent these three components, we need an informal team which will self-consciously mimic the working of these institutions.

There is a perennial tension between the worm's eye view and the bird's eye view. The worm sees things that the bird does not, and vice versa. In recent months, we have been freshly reminded of the need to see the wood for the trees in Indian finance.

Micro-prudential regulation is the job of pushing financial firms to cap their failure probability. As an example, we may have an objective that no more than 2 per cent of banks should fail per decade. Roughly speaking, this corresponds to about two significant bank failures in India per decade. Micro-prudential regulation involves writing rules that prevent excessive risk taking by banks, so that the failure probability of any one bank does not exceed 2 per cent over a 10-

year horizon.

With mutual funds, there is no possibility of firm failure. The Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi's) concern in micro-prudential regulation is to ensure that net asset value (NAV) is always reported correctly, and promises of redemption are always met.

To achieve these objectives, micro-prudential regulation thinks deeply about one financial firm at a time. The regulator requires a deep understanding of the business and identifies a minimal set of interventions which achieve its narrow objective, while avoiding central planning of products and processes.

Micro prudential regulation of finance is essential. But it is different from system thinking. Let us look at events of recent years, at the interactions of components of the

financial system.

Credit stress in non-financial firms (e.g. infrastructure and real estate) surfaced in 2008. Early bankruptcy solves the problem, but when this is not done, the amount of debt balloons. With stressed borrowers, new debt is required to pay off old debt. The balance sheet grows and increasingly leverages, as default is staved off by paying old lenders using money borrowed from new lenders. This raises the question: Where is the new debt going to come from?

For many years, banks and the RBI tried to grow out of the problem. Weak borrowers were given more debt by banks. When the banks got conscious about their over-leveraging, at first, a new funding channel was opened up through mutual funds, NBFCs and



**SNAKES & LADDERS**

AJAY SHAH

## Being the change

It is clear now that in this age of the Anthropocene, environment security is the biggest casualty. It is well known now that the world is fast exceeding its capacity to live within the boundaries that the Planet sets — news is exploding in our face of the local crisis of health because of our mismanagement of the environment and the global existential crisis of impacts of climate change.

What can I do then? This then is a question many of us ask. We want to make a difference. We want to clean up and protect the environment. We want to be part of the change that is so desperately needed today. We know that the air we breathe is so polluted that it is hazardous for our health. Our rivers are dying because of garbage and sewage, and our forests are under threat. We know that much has to be done to safeguard our environment, because without this our planet's survival is at stake.

We know this. But the question in our mind is: What can we do? Is there anything we can do, as individuals or as collectives belonging to schools, colleges or even residential complexes and colonies? Can we contribute? How?

We can. Many years ago, Mahatma Gandhi had said we need to be the change we want to see in the world. This is what we need to do in today's world.

It is clear that our lifestyle has an impact on the environment. What we do and how we do it make a crucial difference. This is why the first task of being the change is to become aware of what we do — benchmark how much water and energy we

use and waste we generate. It is only then can we transform our ways so that we can use as little and waste as little as possible — "tread lightly on Earth" has to be our motto.

We must live the change.

Take the issue of water. We know that while, on the one hand, water scarcity is growing — many do not even have clean drinking water — on the other hand, available water is getting contaminated. The answer then is to do the following:

First, augment our water resources by capturing every drop of water where and when it falls — we can do rainwater harvesting so that every rooftop, every paved surface becomes a water catchment. We are then part of the solution. This is not just the "job" of government. It is within our own reach. Every village, every school, every colony and every other agency can and must be part of capturing the rain, harvesting it and then valuing the raindrop.

We can and must minimise our water demand — we can do this by making sure that we do not waste water and, in fact, come up with solutions to use recycled water and even ways to minimise what we use in our kitchens, bathrooms and gardens. This is not something that is often in our reach because wastewater is connected to official sewage systems — we flush and will forget.

But, it is also a fact that many households — many more than those that are "so-called" connected — are dependent on on-site collection systems — everything from well-designed septic tanks to boxes that contain the waste and then discharge it into the open drain or land. These are systems that can get connected locally to wastewater treatment, designed for reusing and

the bond market. This channel has run into difficulties in the last one year. Now we have a group of stressed borrowers running out of ways to roll over, and we have four stressed components of the financial system. There are feedback loops at work where the problems of borrowers, real estate prices, bond market, mutual funds, NBFCs and banks are reinforcing each other.

These two paragraphs constitute system thinking. We have to see the financial system from a high-level perspective, and see these pressures and relationships. This cannot be done by micro-prudential staff for two reasons. First, the day-job of micro-prudential regulators is to look at the failure probability of one firm at a time. Second, the failure of firms beyond the targeted rate (e.g. about two bank failures per decade for banks, about zero errors in NAV or redemption for mutual funds) is a failure of micro-prudential regulation. Micro-prudential regulators thus have a bias in favour of glossing over problems.

This question was examined by Justice Srikrishna's Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (2011-13). System thinking in finance does not fit well with monetary policy, as this is primarily about macroeconomics, about delivering low and stable inflation. System thinking in finance does not fit well with sectoral micro-prudential regulators, as their orientation is to look one firm at a time, as their knowledge is siloed within one sub-sector of finance at a time, and as micro-prudential regulators have a bias in favour of not recognising difficulties.

This led to the design of a council, the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), made up of chairmen of financial regulators and the finance minister. This would be backed by a technical secretariat, which would have expertise in system thinking, and a system-wide database that was named the Financial Data Management Centre (FDMC). Alongside this was the thought process about the bankruptcy of financial firms (to be done by the Resolution Corporation, and encoded into the FRDI Bill) and non-financial firms (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, IBC). We now have one out of these four components of the destination financial regulatory architecture (the IBC). The recent years would have worked out better if we had the other three tools also.

When we look back at the financial stress of 2000-01, the key actors were UTI, the BSE, and Calcutta Stock Exchange. There was no FSDC or FDMC in the picture. The resolution of financial firms requires the FRDI Bill (which constructs the financial Resolution Corporation), but this was deep in the future. Hence, that crisis was dealt with by putting together an informal team at the Ministry of Finance, which bundled together certain elements of the FSDC, FDMC and RC.

Such an approach may be useful in the present context, as about three years are required to build the FSDC, FDMC and RC. For such a team, there is one important lever that is now in hand, which was not available in 2000-01: For stressed real sector firms, we have the IBC. The ability to put firms through the IBC as soon as possible, and let creditors choose between resolution and liquidation, is an important arrow in the quiver, which is now available.

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**DOWN TO EARTH**

SUNITA NARAIN

recycling water. But all in all, we have to work to turn wastewater into water.

It is the same with garbage. If we measure our garbage we will know how much we generate. But if we deliberately separate out the wet waste — all the food peels, leaves and other biodegradables — from the plastic, glass, metal, etc., we will know the composition of our waste. Once we know this, we can manage it — as the biodegradable can be composted or used to make energy, and the plastic, glass and metal can be recycled. But more importantly, we will know what we use that generates non-degradable garbage and then plan deliberately to cut out the high-waste items. We can do this.

Added to this is all that we can do to reduce our energy needs — by first reducing what we need to consume, through efficiency and sufficiency, and then working to use renewable sources of energy on our individual homes and institutions — like the rainwater that we harvest or the sewage that we recycle and the garbage we compost — these small steps combine to make it a giant leap.

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), where I work, has a green school programme, where schools do not preach environmental change but practise it. It makes for amazing change-makers. In this programme, students and teachers first benchmark the environmental status of their school — how much water, energy or vehicles they use and how much garbage or pollution they generate. They then take steps to fix their own environmental footprint — they become the change. I believe if each school and each home becomes the laboratory of action, then the ripples will spread fast and furious. We will take these lessons of life to make them life itself. This has to be the way ahead.

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## 2008: The first responders' view



BOOK REVIEW

PAUL KRUGMAN

For a few months in 2008 and 2009 many people feared that the world economy was on the verge of collapse. They had good reason to be afraid. Financial markets were virtually frozen, with credit almost unavailable to anyone except the safest of borrowers. The real economy was in free fall: Over the winter America was losing 700,000 jobs a month, while world trade and industrial output were falling as fast as they did in the first year of the Great Depression.

In the end, however, the worst didn't happen. What saved us? There were mul-

iple factors. But one element was that key public officials didn't stand aside while the world burned. Instead, they acted — not always soon enough, not always forcefully enough, not always wisely, but pretty effectively all the same.

Firefighting is a brief account of that crucial moment by three of the most important actors. Ben S Bernanke was the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, then and now the most influential economic position in the world. Henry M Paulson Jr was George W Bush's Treasury secretary. Timothy F Geithner was president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York — another key position in the Fed system — then became Paulson's successor under Barack Obama. There are a number of forms a book by central players in a historic episode can take. *Firefighting* could have been a juicy tell-all; it could have been an exercise in boasting about how its authors saved the world; it could have been a litany of excuses, explaining

why none of what went wrong was the authors' fault. And the truth is that there's a little bit of each of these elements — but not much, considering.

What Bernanke et al. — I'm going to call them BGP for short — have given us, instead, is a primer on why the crisis was possible (and why, even so, almost nobody saw it coming); a ticktock on how the crisis and the financial rescue unfolded; and a very scary warning about the future.

So why didn't people see it coming? Part of it was hubris: "Serious economists were arguing that financial innovations like derivatives... had made crises a thing of the past." (How serious were these economists, actually?) And the reality was that financial innovation made things worse, not better: Most of "the leverage in US finance" — debt that was vulnerable to panic — had moved to "shadow banks" that, unlike conventional banks, were largely unregulated and lacked a financial safety net. Also, as they say, "it's hard to

fix something before it breaks." As long as the housing bubble was still inflating, defaults were few and everything seemed sound. And BGP, to their credit, acknowledge their own failures to recognise the danger, including Bernanke's notorious declaration that problems in subprime lending were "contained."

Most of the book is concerned with the increasingly desperate efforts of BGP and other officials to prop up financial dominoes before they could topple and collapse the whole system. It's an intricate story, one whose details probably seem a lot more interesting to those who were involved than they will to a broader readership.

There is, however, a unifying theme to all that complexity: Containing this crisis was so hard precisely because of all that financial innovation. Conventional banks are both overseen and guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, which has the power "to wind down insolvent banks in an orderly fashion while standing behind their obligations." But "the federal government had no orderly resolution regime for nonbanks." So BGP and company had to engage in frantic innova-

tion. For example, the Fed funnelled money through conventional banks into the hands of nonbanks, in effect lending to institutions they weren't really supposed to support. This exposed the Fed to new risks; Paulson effectively indemnified the Fed against those risks, apparently without real legal authority to do so.

But should we be worried about another crisis? Yes, the authors say.

Banking, they argue, is actually less risky than it was, thanks to financial reforms that, while far short of what should have been done, have nonetheless led to safer practices. But crises will still happen, and when they do, the firefighting abilities of policymakers will have been gravely compromised. Interest rates are too low for cutting them further to do much good. Fiscal stimulus, which BGP agree was crucial, will be much harder to sell given high levels of debt. And Congress has taken away much of the authority that made extraordinary measures possible in the crisis. It's hard to imagine BGP's modern successors carrying out the kind of rescue operation the authors managed a decade ago. The authors are too nice to say this, but today's top economic

officials seem to be systematically drawn from the ranks of those who got everything wrong during the crisis. The failure of Bear Stearns was the first solid indication of how much trouble we were in; Donald Trump has just chosen David Malpass, Bear's chief economist at the time, to head the World Bank. Larry Kudlow, now the administration's top economist, ridiculed "bubbleheads" who claimed that housing prices were out of whack, then praised Paulson for refusing to bail out Lehman — just hours before financial markets went into full meltdown. We seem to have learned the wrong lessons from our brush with disaster. So, when the next crisis comes, it's likely to play out even worse than the last one. Isn't that a happy thought?

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**FIREFIGHTING: THE FINANCIAL CRISIS AND ITS LESSONS**

Ben S Bernanke, Timothy F Geithner and Henry M Paulson Jr Penguin Books; \$16; 230 pages



# Opinion

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2019

## RESOLVING BRI CONCERNS

Wang Yi, foreign minister of China

Of course, there is a development process for the Belt and Road. You can't get there in one step, and it's unavoidable it will cause some worries during its development. So we welcome all sides to come up with constructive suggestions

## NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

STRENGTHENING INDIA'S ECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALS MAY POTENTIALLY BE THE BEST ROUTE TO ENHANCE ITS INFLUENCE AS A STRONG ECONOMY IS A MAJOR DRIVER OF FOREIGN POLICY

# Getting India's geo-economics right

## HIMANSHU ARORA

Young professional in NITI Aayog working with Economic Advisory Council to PM  
Views are personal



consensus that instead of supplying fighter jets to Pakistan, it makes more sense to initiate a currency swap agreement between central banks—a move less likely to provoke a security response from US or India.

China's friendship with Pakistan is also influenced by the presence of a dominant third party—the US—making it a 3-player strategic triangle. China's strategic choices in Pakistan draw significantly from the fact that the US has limited its military relationship with Pakistan since 2011. For China, having strong ties with Pakistan is a considerable source of leverage over US. As long as Pakistan acts contrary to the interests of US by encouraging militant activity, providing safe havens for terrorists, and preventing peace efforts in Afghanistan, Pakistan remains an important source of leverage for China.

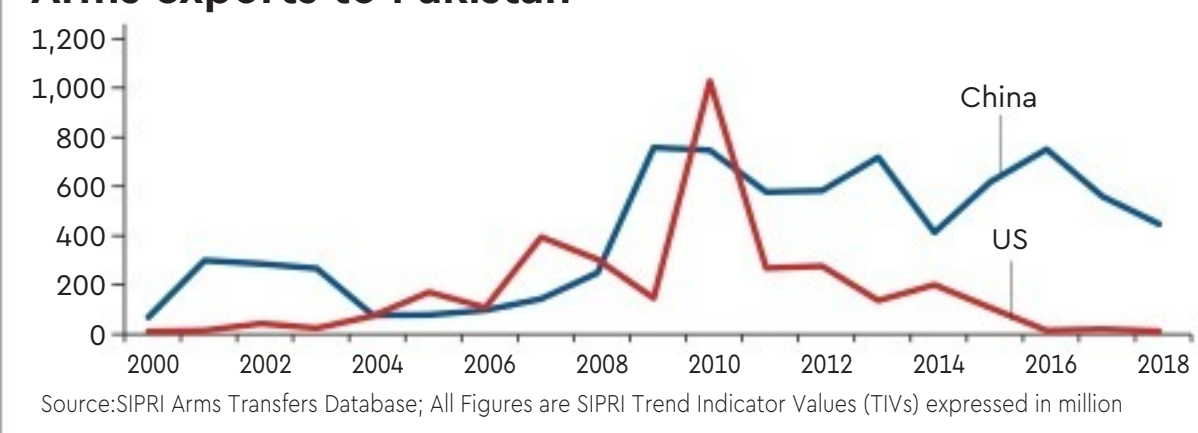
China's interest in Pakistan is also heightened by improving Indo-US ties. Since 2006, defence contracts worth more than \$18 billion have been signed between the two. The US has backed India's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and the two nations have signed an Agreement for Cooperation Concerning

Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy in 2008, thereby ending decades of India's nuclear apartheid.

Chinese anxiety about consistently improving Indo-US ties is reflected in its investments in Pakistan. For instance, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with a total investment of \$46 billion, is China's most ambitious effort to keep Pakistan under its influence. Once completed, almost one-fourth of China's foreign trade will pass through the CPEC. China has promised to build transport networks, highways, and Gwadar as a major international oil port, for enhancing trade. Gwadar and CPEC are the two most prominent examples of China's geo-economics in Pakistan. India views these initiatives with suspicion and has repeatedly reiterated that China wants to expand its influence in South Asia. China will use Gwadar as a base for its navy to oversee and expand its influence in the Indian Ocean.

China remains Pakistan's rescuer by responding to the infrequent crisis moments. The Chinese government had offered \$500 million in assistance to Pakistan during its 1996 balance of payments crisis. In 2008, Pakistan once

### Arms exports to Pakistan



**I**N THE WAKE of the horrific terrorist attack on Indian forces in Pulwama, France, United Kingdom and the US have moved a proposal to designate Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar under 1267 Al-Qaeda Sanction Committee. However, in a geopolitical move to safeguard its interests in Pakistan, China has vetoed India's bid to declare Azhar a global terrorist, for the fourth time. Back in 2009 as well, soon after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, India had moved a similar proposal. In 2016, after the Pathankot attack, India had again moved the proposal at UN's 1267 Sanctions Committee along with P3 (USA, UK, France) to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. In 2017, P3 nations moved a similar proposal yet again. On all such occasions, China blocked the proposal from being passed by the Security Council. The proposal, if passed, would have designated Azhar a global terrorist with his assets frozen, travels banned and imposed an arms embargo.

Why has China adopted such a stand? China's relationship with Pakistan can be understood within the context of its relationship with India. As China-India relations started to move southwards, its relations with Pakistan strengthened. China and Pakistan have long valued their alliance as a strategic hedge against India. Beijing's move to save terrorist organisations operating from Pakistan is part of its larger geopolitical plan. It has invested heavily in Pakistan and any move by India to declare it as a hub of terrorist activities will have major economic and strategic consequences.

Historically, China has relied on its military to influence its relations with Pakistan. China has played a major role in building Pakistan's defence capabilities, supplying missiles, aircrafts and radar equipment. However, as China's economic prowess has grown, so has its temptation to use economic power to advance its geopolitical goals. China has been playing the geo-economics game at a maestro level by relying on economic instruments to expand its influence. Chinese leadership has reached a

## India should beware of Aramco's billions

In a country at grave risk from climate change, whose cities are already choking on vehicle smog, reducing the reliance on imported fossil fuels is more than just an issue for the current account

### DAVID FICKLING

Bloomberg



**IT IS FUNNY** how friendly someone gets when they're trying to sell you something. Saudi Arabian Oil Co. is doing its best to make nice with one of its biggest customers. With the ink barely dry on the takeover of 70% of the country's chemical giant Saudi Basic Industries Corp. and the issuance of its first-ever corporate bond, Aramco is looking to buy a stake in the world's biggest oil refinery. Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. is seeking to sell as much as a quarter of its refining business for at least \$10 billion and is entertaining offers from Aramco and Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., people with knowledge of the matter told Bloomberg News this week.

That represents quite a prize. Reliance's Jamnagar refinery is about twice the size of the biggest US plant, Aramco-owned Port Arthur, and is so massive that maintenance work occasionally skews India's entire trade balance. Trade is also the reason India should be cautious of Aramco's embrace. The country has a dangerous addiction to imported crude, and it should be wary of getting too cozy with its dealer. For more than a century, the rise of major economic powers has been fuelled by petroleum. The US is both the world's biggest oil consumer and its biggest producer. The Soviet Union was built on its oilfields in the Caucasus and Siberia. While China has overtaken America as the biggest oil importer, it is also the biggest producer outside the Middle East after the US, Russia and Canada.

India is different. The US produces about 1.8 metric tons of oil a year per capita and even China manages 138 kilograms. India—at a far earlier stage of development than either country—ekes out just 30 kilograms. Production

peaked all the way back in 2010, and shows no sign of recovery. Industrialisation is an energy-intensive process. If India's development is going to be powered by crude oil, it is going to be buying a whole lot more from Aramco and its ilk. Such a future would pose some profound risks. Balance of payments crises are a recurring danger for emerging economies, and even at its current stage of development, oil typically accounts for about a quarter of India's imports. If prices spike higher—as, inevitably, they will from time to time—that is good news for Riyadh, but potentially devastating for New Delhi.

When crude is averaging \$85 a barrel—roughly the level at which Saudi Arabia can balance its budget, according to the International Monetary Fund—oil imports would reduce India's gross domestic product by about 3.6 percentage points, according to a study this year by RBI. Higher prices will also push up inflation and weaken the government's fiscal position, the authors found. At present, that dynamic is somewhat mitigated by the fact that about a third of India's oil imports are re-exported as petroleum products, giving the country a natural hedge against rising prices. Jamnagar, for instance, produces almost exclusively for export, meaning that it probably makes a modestly positive contribution to the trade balance since oil products are more valuable than the crude they're made from.

Should domestic consumption grow faster than export refinery capac-

ity, though, India's oil dependence will start taking a deeper bite out of its current account. In a worst-case scenario, a spike in oil prices could drive the country toward a balance of payments crisis like the one it suffered in 1991, when a spurge on oil imports over the previous decade resulted in New Delhi pledging its gold reserves as security for bailouts from multilateral lenders. India is aware that its dependence on imported crude risks constraining growth. The government wants 30% of new cars and two-wheelers to be electric by 2030 and is already home to more than 1.5 million electric rickshaws. It has also adjusted tax policies to encourage that transition. In a country at grave risk from climate change, whose cities are already choking on vehicle smog, reducing the reliance on imported fossil fuels is more than just an issue for the current account.

That goal isn't an unrealistic one given the rock-bottom local cost of wind and solar. Still, no country has managed a low-carbon industrialisation on this scale before, so it won't be easy—and Saudi Arabia will be hoping it proves all but impossible. By promising to buy a chunk of Reliance and help fund a new \$44 billion Jamnagar-sized refinery in western India, Aramco is counting on the country being unable to kick its self-destructive oil habit. Indians should hope that it is wrong.

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

again found itself at the verge of an economic crisis. With its traditional allies US and Saudi Arabia in the grip of the global financial crisis and refusing to grant concessions, the then president approached Beijing for help and the latter obliged by granting \$500 million. Another important variant of China's geo-economics strategy was directly aimed at India when, in 2009, China blocked £2 billion of multilateral assistance to India at the Asian Development Bank amid tensions surrounding a border dispute in Arunachal Pradesh.

Today, China holds much more influence in Pakistan than any other country ever has in history. Pakistan and China share a symbiotic relationship. Pakistan is dependent on China for its economic, political, military and diplomatic support and China is dependent on Pakistan for its strategic and geopolitical objectives. If China does not want to lose a strategically and funds it has invested in CPEC and Gwadar, it must provide economic and diplomatic assistance to Pakistan like the one at the United Nations (UN).

Finally, to counter China and Pakistan, India on its part must become an equally active player in this geo-economic game. Strengthening its economic fundamentals may potentially be the best route to enhance influence. A strong economy is a major driver of foreign policy. India must strengthen its economic ties with neighbouring countries. The revival of SAARC can be a good starting point. India must fill the geopolitical vacuum in South-East Asia due to China's masculine foreign policy. Most South-East Asian nations are aghast by China's moves in the South China Sea and India can strengthen its ties with such nations by promoting trade and investments through regional trading agreements. This would act as a counter to China's influence. We must prioritise our economic relations with US and its allies amid the growing concern of a China-US trade war. The only feasible option we have in order to sideline China diplomatically at the UN is forming stronger economic ties with US, UK, Russia and France.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Less tick, more talk

While social media platforms with a large consumer base are proving to be a breakthrough in message transmission and broadcasting of information across the globe, it is important that owners of non-compliant products/applications disable access to questionable features for existing users and disallow access to new/potential users. Moreover, it is important to regulate the content and ensure that technology is not misused to promote unethical behaviour and encourage false propaganda. The credibility of messaging platforms has been under scanner time and again. It is therefore only a fair expectation that the data-intensive e-commerce firms co-operate and participate in the goodwill-building exercise. Traceability of messages over social media platforms in conjunction with robust underlying encryption/security is a prerequisite to promote transparency/integrity and relevant user-participation. Further, adherence to information security/financial standards is a must to protect consumer interests, keeping in view the multitude of services on offer

— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

### No law in place

It is really condemnable that an IAS officer was suspended by the Election Commission for checking PM Narendra Modi's helicopter in Odisha's Sambalpur on Tuesday. Narendra Modi is not the first prime minister whose chopper was checked and, before him, former PM Manmohan Singh's chopper was also carried out to such a confirmation process. As it is a fact that there is no rule that exempts anyone from such checks during polls, the Election Commission should take back its hard decision

— Md Azim Sheeher

• Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

## The surprise about Jet was that so few saw it coming

The economy can't sustain a full-service airline, but no banker acted in time; Jet's staffers never looked for jobs either

**E**VEN IN LATE 2017, ratings agency CRISIL had sounded a warning on the aviation industry, pointing out that rising fuel prices could hurt airlines. Even otherwise, it has become evident over the last few years that the country simply does not have enough purchasing power to be able to sustain full-service carriers; in fact, there have been quarters in which even the well-run no-frills airline Indigo has posted losses. Which is why, it is surprising the banks were not more alert about their exposure to Jet Airways and didn't push the management to pull up its socks. They did in the end and, whatever the reason, whether the fear of the 3Cs—CVC, CBI and CAG—or of losing more money, it was a good decision to not pump in more money; and the government did well to not pressurise PSU banks to do so.

To be sure, the value of Jet Airways falls further every day that it does not fly, but it is not going to be easy to get any buyer to cough up much money for the airline. A newly-licensed carrier can easily pick up slots and bays, there are enough planes to be leased, and more than enough pilots to fly them. To be sure, Jet has international slots and alliances, but paying off ₹15,000 crore of loans—or half of it if bankers take a 50% haircut—and taking on 22,000 employees may not be worth it for most investors.

There are lots of lessons to be learnt from the closure of Jet Airways. First, bankers need to be far more vigilant about their loans and strict with their borrowers. Employees, for their part, need to be far less demanding. While it is unfortunate that so many people have lost their jobs—not just those with Jet, but in other companies that have been wound up—the unions and officers' associations must accept some of the responsibility since their demands are often unreasonable and their rigid stance, on salaries and increments for example, have been a contributing factor to businesses getting destroyed.

Unions in the government sector, of course, get away with virtually anything since the hapless taxpayer is there to foot all bills. Salaries in state-owned banks, for instance, are renegotiated upwards without any commensurate commitment to an increase in productivity. Employees in public sector enterprises, such as Air India and BSNL, have taken it for granted that the government will continue to support these businesses even if they are loss-making and unviable. One reason why there were no takers for Air India—and there may never be—is because the government would not allow employees to be laid off, nor was it willing to write off most of the debt. Indeed, going by the reported offers for Jet Airways—buyers are understood to have asked for an 80% haircut on the loans—the government should be grateful if some buyer even agrees to run Air India without paying a penny and with even half its employees. The carrier may become viable if it is run very efficiently. This way, it can ensure there is enough flying capacity and protect thousands of jobs as well. There are those who will argue that the government itself can run the carrier if it can pare the workforce by 50%, but when an enterprise is owned by the government, there is always the pressure to interfere in the operations and to recruit more people; also, thanks to PSUs being considered an 'instrumentality of state', decision-making tends to be more sluggish even if the government has a completely hands-off policy and allows professionals to run the company. Handing over Air India to a private sector entrepreneur—easier said than done, and unlikely in the near future—will keep the airline going without constantly burdening the taxpayer.

## Getting investment back

CMIE estimates new investment proposals are at a 14-year low

**T**HE STATE OF the economy, not surprisingly, is the last thing on the mind of the government right now, but given how rapidly GDP growth is slowing, and the continued collapse in private sector investment, reviving this has to be the next government's—whether it is the Narendra Modi one or another one—top priority. While even CSO data shows a consistent decline in investment levels, from 34.3% of GDP in FY12 to 26.8% in FY18, CMIE data on new investment proposals in FY19 indicates that, at ₹9.5 lakh crore, this is the lowest in the last 14 years; between FY07 and FY11, CMIE says, this averaged around ₹25 lakh crore a year. And within this, the share of the private sector has collapsed. In the 2006-2011 boom, the average share of the private sector in total investments was around 62%; this was down to around 47% in 2014-16.

While the government has to find ways to revive investment, getting back to earlier levels is going to be very tough. For one, a large part of the investment boom was driven by demand from the global boom and, within India, by the rush to complete projects via public private partnerships (PPPs). While the global boom has been replaced by gloom, the PPP model came unstuck several years ago and, to the extent PPPs are limping back in the road sector, these are very different since the bulk of the risk is now being taken on by the government. More important, as the pileup of NPAs shows, the investment boom was unsustainable, and probably fuelled by the fact that bank loans were easily available and, at that time, most investors knew that defaults weren't going to be taken as seriously as they are now.

Even so, there are obvious areas that the government needs to work upon. This newspaper has documented how, even before RJio's low-price assault, the telecom sector was reeling under the burden of high government levies—the levies made sense when spectrum was given free, but made no sense when spectrum was bought at market prices. In the oil and gas sector, the government's policy has been one of big flip-flops and, in the case of mining where there is a lot of investor interest, the policy hasn't been welcoming; indeed, in the coal sector, despite announcing commercial mining of coal, this has still not been acted upon for several years. In the power sector, with the government unable to ensure commercial prices are paid for power, huge state electricity board (SEB) dues have crippled power plants; and the precarious finances of these SEBs have ensured they are not signing contracts with power producers. Both power and telecom are the next sources of big NPAs for the banking sector. In the sugar sector, similarly, bad government policy has crippled fresh investment. And, despite the sharp increase in FDI in areas like e-tail, the fact is that, as a proportion of GDP, overall FDI is down from 1.9% in FY16 to 1.2% in the first three quarters of FY19; that is not surprising, given the U-turn in the e-tail policy or the fact that nothing has happened to reverse the UPA's retrospective tax, etc. The new government, though, has to bring in the changes in policy very soon, since leaving it to later is the surest way of ensuring that very little gets done.

## PriceGains?

Controlling stent prices may show benefits in the short-run, but does long-term damage

**A**NEW STUDY by doctors and policymakers at public hospitals posits that the price cap on coronary stents may have helped a larger number of patients from lower-income groups undergo life-saving angioplasty since their money went up sharply after the price-regulation move. The study, led by Dr Bhanu Duggal, head of cardiology at AIIMS, Rishikesh, found that the number of patients who underwent procedures involving stents in Maharashtra rose by 43% after the state reduced prices of drug-eluting stents in 2014—while only 40.7% of the patients could afford the high-end stents in 2013, the number jumped to 71.3% in 2015.

All that said, the price-control regime was a bad idea then and is a bad idea now. The effect that the study describes could most likely be temporal, since drug-eluting stents are mostly manufactured by medical-device MNCs, and post 2017, many have either pulled out their state-of-the-art stents from the Indian market or have announced plans to do so. The capping slashed the price of drug-eluting stents by as much as 70%. While a company offset a hit on margins in Maharashtra because of pricing freedom in other stents, post 2017, it is a changed reality for medical-device makers. Top-run MNCs pulling their products out of the Indian market also has serious implications for patients in the country. The move is likely to deprive them of access to the best, and perhaps the most appropriate, stent technology in the long-run. In any case, if the government felt that there was a problem of lower-income patients being more likely to opt out of life-saving procedures because of high stent costs, it could have defrayed the costs by subsidising stents at public hospitals based on income. The lack of pricing freedom in medical devices sends out signals to the international investing community that regulatory action in India could be a potential threat. It was, therefore, a sane decision when the NPPA decided to hike stent prices in its latest move.



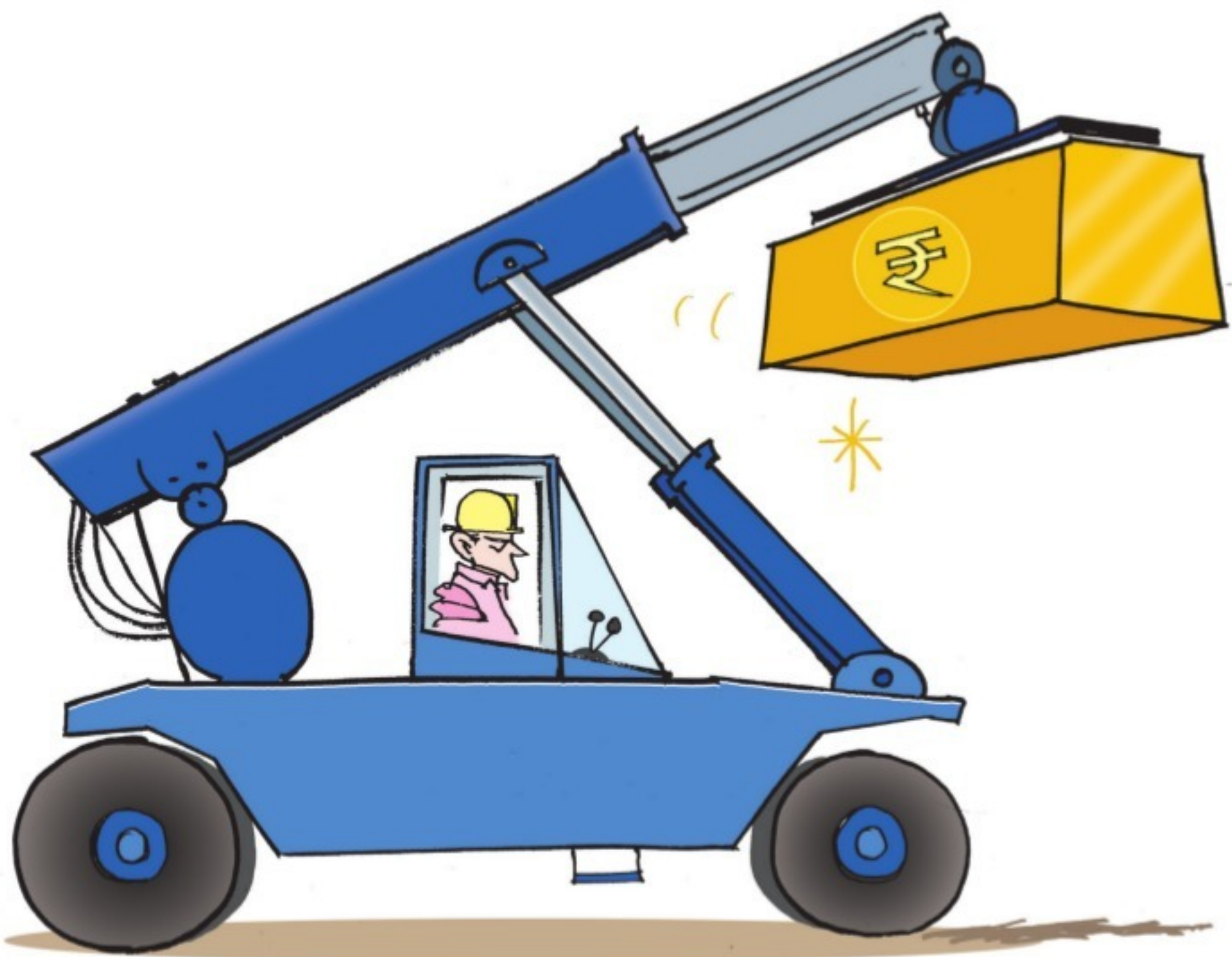


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

## V SHUNMUGAM & TULSI LINGAREDDY

Authors are head, Research, and senior research analyst, respectively, at MCX. Views are personal

### FINANCIALISATION OF GOLD

# The gold standard for gold reserves

A comprehensive gold policy, ensuring quality standardisation through Good Delivery Rules in tune with global standards, mandatory hallmarking of jewellery, transparent pricing, institutional enablement for accreditation and regulation of vaults, and well-functioning electronic spot market platforms will reduce gold imports through financialisation, and also boost jewellery exports

**WITH ₹51,053 CRORE** of household savings being invested in gold assets as per the National Accounts Statistics (2018), India is the second largest consumer of the gold in the world with an annual average demand of about 732 tonnes during the past three years. Close to 90% of this demand is met through imports, adding to the country's current account deficit. Gold imports, estimated at \$24.7 billion (Q1 to Q3, FY19), accounted for 6.25% of total imports and 17% of total trade deficit, also referred to as gold deficit. This, in turn, adds more to India's current account deficit, which stood at 2.6% of GDP during the first nine months of 2018-19. On the contrary, China, with a trade surplus of 1.25% of GDP in the last three years, had an average demand of 950 tonnes. Adding to the fact that China's domestic market capitalisation

with all the foreign participation limitations is \$8.71 trillion compared with India's estimated at \$2.33 trillion (end-2017), it shows that there is a dire need to financialise the gold-based saving and investment needs by turning them into financial instruments.

Being an investment commodity, gold has trivial consumption use, largely owing to its scarcity. This led to a debate around productivity of investments in gold given that, in today's digitally-connected world, Indian savers have access to far more high-yielding, liquid and low-risk productive equity and debt instruments. Secondly, with lower domestic production/recycling and partially-convertible economy, any spurt in demand for gold puts pressure on forex reserves and hence the commodity markets.

At the same time, Indian households and religious institutions are estimated to be holding about 25,000 tonnes of gold (World Gold Council, 2017)—the

largest gold stocks above the ground. It prompts for immediate steps to reduce the import burden through raising domestic supply of gold by promoting mine production and recycling of gold as well as promoting financialisation of gold for investment purposes. The domestic annual mine production of gold in India stood at 2 tonnes compared to 450 tonnes in China, despite the fact that there is an estimated 484 million tonnes of gold ore under resource category (Indian Bureau of Mines, 2018), suggesting the potential for a significant increase in domestic gold production. A friendlier mining policy towards promotion of exploration will go a long way in reducing the import burden and hence the forex outgo.

The other potential way of reducing import dependence and increasing domestic supplies is by recycling the substantial but idle holdings of gold with Indian households and religious institutions through an attractive monetisation scheme. While efforts started two decades ago (the 1999 Gold Deposit Scheme—subsequently the Gold Monetisation Scheme, or GMS, in 2013), monetisation of gold in the country has not yet gained the desired momentum. Policy measures to encourage religious endowments and trusts are critical in converting a large quantity of physical gold held by them into digital/demat format, and should be taken up to facilitate monetisation of gold held by them. Establishing Good Delivery Rules in line with global benchmarks asserting uniform quality standards and transparency with necessary infrastructure and policies are critical in ensuring the trust of the market participants in any gold monetisation measures we take.

As far as Good Delivery Rules are concerned, these were set by the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) and are widely accepted as the necessary guidance for refiners seeking accreditation and the list of refiners certified by LBMA are known as the 'good delivery list'. The first London Good Delivery List was set up by the Bank of England in 1750, recognising the refineries that produced mandated standard of gold acceptable to enter London markets. This list eventually became globally-accepted accreditation for wholesale gold bars traded in the bullion market, which is now overseen by LBMA following its setting up in 1987.

At present, there are 68 gold refiners in LBMA's Good Delivery List across the world. Although 29 of them are in Asia, only one (MMTC-PAMP) such gold refiner is in India; in China, nine such refiners are already operating and more are in the pipeline to be certified. In addition, the Shanghai Gold Exchange (SGE), an electronic spot gold trading platform

launched in 2002 by the People's Bank of China, has also set up 'standard gold' rules for domestic refiners that can enter into the SGE-designated vaults. The radical transformation of the Chinese gold ecosystem in the past 15 years was brought about by establishing uniform quality standards and bringing transparency into the gold markets, primarily through SGE. Essential components of LBMA Good Delivery model comprise of establishing accredited refiners (good delivery list); vaults providing secure storage and ensuring the quality of the bars as specified in terms of weight, dimensions, fineness along with serial number marks; governance through compliance panel and physical committee for responsible sourcing of gold ensuring compliance, risk management, transparency, information sharing and business conduct; and connecting to institutions such insurance and secure carrier service providers for ensuring quality and quantity during storage and transit of gold. Implementing Indian Good Delivery standards similar to the above will win the trust of market participants and connect Indian markets with their global counterparts, besides enriching the refining ecosystem. In conjunction with the Good Delivery Rules, it is vital to formulate and implement guidelines for vault accreditation through notifying gold and silver under WDR. The e-NWRs issued by the vaults under a regulated scenario also provide gold better connect with the financial markets.

Apart from gold bars, standardisation of domestic gold jewellery would have to be mandated through the current hallmarking mechanism, taking a leaf out of the UK markets where jewellery hallmarking is mandatory. Globally, hallmarking is a widely accepted standards system to indicate purity and fineness of gold jewellery, and it aids in effective recycling. While the historical reference to hallmarking of gold jewellery dates as far back as to 13th century, a group of European countries signed the "Vienna Convention on the control of the fineness and the hallmarking of the precious metals" in 1972 introducing the Common Control Mark (CCM) and the member countries accept of jewellery marked with CCM. India is the fourth-largest exporter of jewellery accounting for about 10% of world jewellery trade. A large potential for exports will open up if India takes measures to become a member of the Vienna Convention. This will significantly expand potential new export destinations for Indian jewellery and help to achieve the target of doubling jewellery exports by 2022.

The third and the most practical strategy to reduce the burden of gold imports is to divert the investment demand for physical gold to paper gold through financial products such as exchange traded funds (ETFs) based on gold futures, sovereign gold bonds and gold savings accounts. Domestic annual investment in physical gold, in the form of bars and coins along with ETFs, during the past five years on an average stood at around 230 tonnes, accounting for about 25% of total gold demand in the country. A substantial part of this investment demand for gold may be diverted to financial products from physical through suitable regulatory and policy measures. In addition to the necessary policy and regulatory measures, there is a need for creating awareness among the gold investors about the merits of investing in financial products over physical gold, such as ease of buying and selling, cost savings on storage, insurance, etc.

A comprehensive gold policy, ensuring quality standardisation through Good Delivery Rules in tune with global standards, mandatory hallmarking of jewellery, transparent pricing, institutional enablement for accreditation and regulation of vaults, and well-functioning electronic spot market platforms will not only reduce gold imports through financialisation and monetisation of gold, but will also boost jewellery exports by establishing India as the global benchmark source for standard gold and jewellery, thereby contributing to employment and value addition than just being a forex burden.

### EARTH DAY

## Towards a lower GHG future

RAJARSHI DATTA

The author is country head & GM, South Asia, Honeywell Advanced Materials

The Kigali Amendment is a significant opportunity for us to live up to the promise of better environment

**WITH EFFORTS BEING** made globally to preserve ozone layer, the primary question remains unanswered. "How can we succinctly respond to address global warming and its impact on climate change?" A number of factors are causing climate change and the efforts to address them have been manifold. Large-scale use of environmentally damaging refrigerants is one of the key areas identified, with a direct impact on the depletion of the ozone layer and subsequently on global warming.

India was part of a historic global climate deal that was reached in Kigali, Rwanda, at the 28th Meeting of the Parties (MoP28) to the Montreal Protocol, on substances that deplete the ozone layer. The Kigali Amendment, an amendment to the 1987 Montreal Protocol, aims to phase out high-global-warming-potential hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), a family of potent greenhouse gases (GHG), by late 2040s. Under this amendment, 197 countries, including India, agreed to a timeline to reduce the use of HFCs by 80-85% of their baselines over the next several decades.

HFCs have many everyday applications. These include refrigerants to cool cars, appliances and buildings, foam-blowing agents that create cushioning and insulating foam, solvents used in manufacturing to clean and sanitise, and certain specialty propellants used in products like aerosols. When HFCs are released into the atmosphere, they trap GHGs with significant global-warming-potential (GWP) and take years, sometimes decades, to break down in the atmosphere—thus contributing to the overall warming of the planet. HFCs have high a GWP. For example, HFC-134a, the

commonly used automobile refrigerant, has a GWP of 1,300, which means its impact on global warming is 1,300 times that of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Replacing high GWP HFCs with low-GWP HFO alternatives could help avoid up to 0.5°C of warming by the end of this century.

This background triggers an opportunity, as well as a set of challenges for the industry at large to develop new technologies and transition to the use of more environmentally preferable alternatives. There has been a continuous effort globally to cut down the use of high-GWP HFCs ever since we decided to shift from chlorofluorocarbons to HFOs. Thus, the journey to explore alternatives continues, to meet the diverse requirements of industry.

Addressing the implications for India

India is the world's fourth-largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>. According to a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA), the share of space cooling in peak electricity load is projected to rise sharply in India, from 10% today to 45% in 2050. Given the estimations of India's rapid economic growth, the government has recognised the importance of lowering the country's GHG emissions as part of an international effort to limit global warming. Along with the NITI Aayog, the government is working towards an India Cooling Action Plan, meant to meet the country's growing cooling needs in a climate-friendly manner. One of the key focus areas in the Action Plan is in-room air conditioners (ACs). The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) estimates that if by 2030, India's AC stock improves in average efficiency by 30% from 2015 levels, annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will decrease by approximately 80 million metric tonnes per year.

The Kigali Amendment is a significant opportunity for us to live up to the promise of better environment. Successful implementation of the amendment will require a high level of national cooperation from our government, along with industry, research institutes and regulators coming together in sustaining efforts. While daunting in several ways, the positive prospect of technology cost reductions, a cleaner and healthier environment, along with improvements in quality of life, can all support a world of increasing action on climate change. India has been a key partner in the quest for reducing emissions and should continue to take the lead in efforts to protect the planet from climate change.

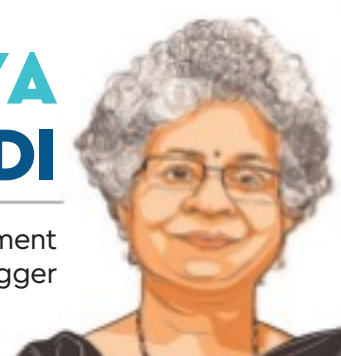
**MUCH OF THE** controversy around management being art or science is based on description of the fact that the earlier leaders of industry used intuition, hunches, common sense and experience in managing organisations. They were not well-educated, they were not trained professional managers, but they managed their businesses brilliantly. However, common sense and science differ considerably in solving the problems. Examples are Dhirubhai Ambani, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata and Ghanshyam Das Birla... the list is long. In 1919, GD Birla was in no better position. He had fought hard with his family and the colonial establishment to start a jute mill. World War I broke out before he could place orders for machinery. He had based his projections on ₹6,000 per loom. The price shot up to ₹16,000. He went ahead. In 1950, aged 17, Dhirajlal Hirachand Ambani sailed in a steerage class of ship to Aden to search for a job. For eight years, he sweated it out. Later in his life, without a single educational degree, he created an empire called Reliance Industries. Management is science because of several reasons—it has universally accepted principles, it has cause and effect relationship, etc., and at the same time it is art as it requires perfection through practice, practical knowledge, creativity, personal skills, etc. Management is both art and science. Artistic application of management

## Why management is both art and science

Management is science as it has universal principles. It's also art as it requires perfection through practice

VIDYA HATTANGADI

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know-how is a must for solving complex situations in organisations. It is understood that managing is doing things artistically in the light of the realities of a situation. Human skills cannot stand alone; they need to be aligned with conceptual skills and technical skills. Therefore, theoretical knowledge of management is not adequate or relevant for solving problems. A manager gains experience by continual application of management knowledge and facing new experiences. By solving many problems, a manager develops skills for translating knowledge into practice. Application calls for innovativeness and creativity; Larry Page of Google is one such example of a businessperson who can endure a challenge, while also face criti-

cism. Larry and his business have faced much criticism and received ample praise over the years for his company's actions. But whenever he was caught in the midst of the storm, he never let what others think influence him from pursuing the course for his company that he considered the best. The art of management is in knowing how to accomplish the desired results.

Art may be defined as personalised application of general theoretical principles for achieving best possible results. Apple's Tim Cook is often compared to Steve Jobs. It is difficult to follow Jobs, but Cook is doing a tremendous job. Rather than attempt to match the consumer-facing innovations Jobs was known for, Cook is forging into the future with his own new



advances, such as Apple's newest original inventory management techniques.

Traditionally, creativity was linked with people in artistic professions such as writers, painters or musicians. But in today's competitive business world, the need for creativity has transitioned into the business world. It has become increasingly important for organisations to rely on creative thinking, in an effort to distinguish themselves from competitors. Jeff Bezos of Amazon prefers focus on the customer. It is famous that in every meeting he leaves an empty seat for a customer to represent them. He considers the customer to be the most important person in the room, even if there is no customer present physically in the room. Bezos has made the customer

a key component of his business strategies; customers find him very inspiring. He always portrays through his strategies that at the centre of his business are his customers. Amazon grew in leaps because of cultivated customer value.

Most science and engineering students are good at managing business because they are good at analysis and solve problem in the real world specifically based on their subject. Businesses need engineering managers to oversee projects, product design and development, operations; create strategic plans; handle budgets, costs and financing; interface with marketing.

Frederick Winslow Taylor was one of the first management thinkers. He advised to scientifically select, train and develop

each worker rather than passively leaving them to train themselves. Taylor concentrated more on productivity, and wages to be paid based on productivity. He stressed on time and motion study and other techniques for measuring work. Apart from this, in Taylor's work, there also runs a strongly humanistic theme. He felt ideally that the interests of workers, managers and owners should be synchronised.

Henri Fayol was a French coal-mine engineer, director of mines and modern management theoretician. His scientific management theory was formed on the bases of business administration and business management. He introduced the 14 principles of management. In the academic world, this is also known as Fayolism.

Management science theory is based on the thought that a contemporary approach to management focuses on the use of rigorous quantitative techniques that help managers make maximum use of organisational resources to produce goods and services. It is also known as the mathematical or quantitative approach. In quintessence, this theory is a contemporary extension of scientific management, which, as developed by Taylor, also looks at quantitative approach to measuring the employee and his task in order to raise efficiency. The art to get maximum productivity is to use permutations and combinations as per employee's strength, desire to work, desire to learn and the motivation techniques used by the management.





WORDLY WISE  
NOBODY IS QUALIFIED TO BECOME A STATESMAN WHO IS ENTIRELY IGNORANT OF THE PROBLEM OF WHEAT. — SOCRATES

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# Why Imran bats for Modi

For Islamabad, a non-secular India is easier to contest



AYESHA SIDDIQA

## YOUR HONOUR

How the SC responds to the sexual harassment complaint will test its institutional integrity, and fortify it against attacks

THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT complaint against Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi by a woman who once worked in his office is about much more than an individual accusing an individual. Given that it names the chief of the highest court, an institution fundamental to the health of the nation's democracy, the complaint tests the integrity of the entire institution. More so at a time of delicate — and sometimes indelicate — balancing of powers between the executive and unelected supervisory institutions. In January last year, it was Justice Gogoi who risked his elevation to the highest judicial office by joining three of his colleagues in the collegium — at a press conference — to caution the nation against attempts to undermine the independence of the judiciary. The jury is still out on how that unprecedented airing of an internal dispute affected the institution but one thing is clear. Since then, a lot more of the Supreme Court has been in public glare than ever, there is, often, a frenetic rush to judge judicial independence through the prism of politics. Into this swirl, drops the sexual harassment complaint. Curiously, the court responded in a hurried manner convening an "extraordinary" sitting barely hours after the allegations went public. The government's representative, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, with the CJ himself in attendance, tore into the complaint, questioned the motives of the complainant. In the presence of two brother justices, Justice Gogoi warned of "a bigger force" behind the complaint set off by people who "want to deactivate the office of the CJ". The alarm bells couldn't have been more ominous; they raised more questions than they answered. Who are these people the CJ refers to, what constitutes this bigger force out to "de-activate" his office, what about the woman's right to be heard — these questions can't be brushed aside by anger or piety. Justice Gogoi's warning of a plot needs elaboration. So does the complaint that details dates and names and records — each can and should be probed. How, that's for the court to decide. For one, there is already an in-house mechanism but it's required to seek the CJ's permission. Surely, the judges can find a way around this. After all, it is the Supreme Court that has, over the years, interpreted and re-interpreted the Constitution to empower women, to lay down the law for their protection at work and at home, underlined the primacy of due process for every voice to be heard — whatever its motive. That's why how the court responds to the complaint will test its institutional integrity and resolve. The Supreme Court is its history, its tradition, its verdicts, its formulation of Constitutional morality, it is also its Chief Justice and the 26 Justices of the Court, they shape its future, fortify it against any attack. So, over to Their Lordships.

## FIELD LESSONS

The Modi government squandered an opportunity by ignoring farm crisis, next government can't afford to do so

HOW MUCH OF a factor farm distress is in the current Lok Sabha elections will be known only on May 23, the day of counting. What's clear, though, is that the party or coalition in power next cannot afford to ignore the challenges facing agriculture. The new government will, to start with, have to deal with the prospect of a not-so-good monsoon. The Met Department has, in its April 15 forecast, predicted overall rainfall for the southwest monsoon season (June-September) at 96 per cent of its historical long period average. This prognosis of a "near normal" monsoon must, however, be tempered by the warnings of global weather agencies vis-à-vis El Niño — the abnormal warming of the equatorial eastern Pacific Ocean waters, seen to adversely impact rainfall in India.

But the real challenge for agriculture isn't weather-related. The Narendra Modi government's tenure has actually witnessed bumper harvests on a whole, despite monsoon failures in 2014 and 2015. The pressure on farm incomes has come more on account of low prices. That, in turn, is a result of the end of a decade-long global commodity boom after 2014 and also domestic policy measures, whether relating to export, internal trade and stocking restrictions (in the name of inflation targeting) or demonetisation. These have ultimately impacted sentiment and liquidity in the mandis. The sufferers from the lack of buying interest for agri-produce — the best indicator of it being consumer food inflation ruling below general retail inflation for 31 months running since September 2016 — have been farmers.

Reviving sentiment — both amongst the trade to buy and stock up as well as agri-businesses to invest in modern processing, warehousing, transport, finance, research and extension — should be a top policy focus for the next government. Indian agriculture can do with a lot of supply-side reforms to unleash the true potential of a sector for generating jobs, both on- and off-farm. It is welcome to see the BJP promising to institute a "predictable export and import policy" for agriculture and the Congress poll manifesto stating that its government "will repeal the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act" and make trade in farm commodities "free from all restrictions". Equally reassuring is the focus of the two main national parties on direct cash transfers and income support, which are less market-distorting than physical grain purchases at unrealistic minimum support prices or provision of fertiliser, electricity, water and credit at way below economic cost. The Modi government squandered an opportunity to address these distortions. This luxury will not be available for the government that takes over after May 23.

IT SEEMS THAT people from very odd quarters — such as Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan — want Narendra Modi to win the upcoming elections. Khan's recent comments, in which he desired victory for his counterpart as good for the future of a peace initiative, may be driven by pragmatic reasons, but it indicates the separation that exists between the two countries. Following comments by the Opposition and in segments of the social media, the federal information minister intervened and pretended that Khan, who can often open his mouth before engaging his brain, was misunderstood.

Intriguingly, despite India being the most significant country in the neighbourhood, its election outcomes have marginal impact on the region. Khan's statement, in fact, indicates that disconnectedness in which the head of the government of a neighbouring state refused to measure the implications beyond tactical effect. It seems a right-wing government in India does not matter to Pakistan. Or, perhaps, a Modi-led right-wing government is a wish come true for the ideological right-wing in Pakistan. For the first time since 1947, people do not have to convince each other of how right Muhammad Ali Jinnah was in creating Pakistan: Not that Pakistan was ever designed for all Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, but it now sees its formula for ideological nationalism justified in the face of rising religious-ideological nationalism next door in India. I have lived through the times when Pakistan's intelligentsia was confused in the face of Indian secularism and democracy. Despite having their own country, there would be an internal conversation about the Indian experiment being better. The last four to five years has brought about a change in that thinking.

The BJP leadership of the last five years cannot be held entirely responsible for all the political and sociological change. If anything, the last four years have helped expose the true colours of the rising Indian middle-class that does not necessarily think very differently from the Hindutva supporter on certain issues. There is no sign that the Congress under

For the first time since 1947, people do not have to convince each other of how right Muhammad Ali Jinnah was in creating Pakistan: Not that Pakistan was ever designed for all Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, but it now sees its formula for ideological nationalism justified in the face of rising religious-ideological nationalism next door in India.

Rahul Gandhi would have the gumption to change the course of society. Hearing the young Congress leader speak at a university in London, he did not seem to possess the temerity to deviate markedly from the ideological path that the BJP has chosen for India. However, there is an opinion in Pakistan that a Congress-led government, or any dispensation other than the present formulation, may be more cautious in how it approaches issues in the region.

Meanwhile, the general sense is that with Modi at the helm of affairs, war and conflict will mark the tone of relations between the two countries. However, this would be beneficial for Pakistan's nationalist project that gets strengthened with every news of mob lynching of Muslims and other minorities, from India. This is not to argue that the state of minorities in Pakistan is any better: But New Delhi no longer represents a secular ideal. For Islamabad, a non-secular India is easier to contest.

The only limitation that Pakistan faces in fighting a BJP-led India is its own internal problems, like the dearth of financial resources, and not the intent. This also means that conflict cannot remain the only shrill refrain: A resolution would have to be negotiated for which the establishment in Rawalpindi prefers a BJP-governed India. Khan's statement basically means that he, and others who share his thinking, believe that a strong right-wing government is the only credible element with which Pakistan could settle its matters. The question then is, what happened after the Lahore declaration? Wasn't it a BJP-government that was willing to talk peace? Or, what happened to the peace initiative between the A B Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf governments?

Seen purely from the Pakistani establishment's perspective, Kargil happened because the military wanted an equaliser at a time when the political government had not taken it into confidence. As far as the breakdown of talks at Agra are concerned, the right-wing in India was divided at the time and the segment represented by LK Advani did not want peace.

For Rawalpindi, Modi represents a neat synthesis of India's right-wing. Hence, the negotiations would be more comprehensive than ever before. The only problem, however, remains that how does one predict Pakistan's deep state — whose contours, today, are even more difficult to define.

This understanding goes hand in hand with the thinking that the pragmatism of the Hindu right-wing would not stop Delhi from talking to Pakistan despite the latter's habitual U-turn from peace initiatives. While the emphasis following most track-II dialogues, particularly after a bilateral crisis, is on the Indian members of the group to apprise their counterparts of the anger in India, the Pakistani side has always maintained that it is possible to pick up the conversation thread from where it was dropped. A decade into this behaviour, there is barely anyone on Pakistan's side with the capacity to remind their own the highly problematic nature of this approach.

Not unlike today's India, the cost of dissent in Pakistan is very high. There is little traction in the corridors of power towards an alternative approach to resolving the conflict. The deep state in Pakistan — which is not necessarily the entire military, but is symbolised by it — has gained excessive control of all discussions and dialogue. There is also the confidence that international and regional geopolitics allows Rawalpindi the opportunity to continue with its old approach. Money matters are critical, but it will not force a course correction unless Pakistan reaches a breaking point.

The re-election of BJP may not necessarily mean a sturdier India. It will certainly be a more defiant India. Notwithstanding Khan's desire, a peace initiative would become less of a possibility, unless a foreign player forces Pakistan's hand and Delhi does a tactical readjustment. Until then, any communication between the two civil societies will become even more difficult.

The writer is a research associate at the Center for International Studies & Diplomacy at SOAS, University of London



AJAY VIR JAKHAR

## THE DANGER OF SILVER BULLETS

Rural crisis needs nuanced interventions, not tall promises in party manifestos

FARMERS WERE SOLD a dream in 2014 that everything was going to change. But now they have compelling reasons to feel they were deceived. Party manifestos indicate what the politicians want us to believe. After elections, winners get either selective amnesia (Rs 15 lakh in each bank account), re-interpret promises (MSP at C2+50 per cent), continue to tout failures as successes (crop insurance) or devise policy fine print to exclude proposed beneficiaries from the promised largesse (farm loan waiver). Actions not even referred to in manifestos wrecked a stable economy (demonetisation and GST) and, consequently, unemployment percentages have risen. Unable to create jobs (let alone the promised 100 million jobs in five years) or kickstart the Make in India initiative, the wisest thing BJP did with the lost causes was that it let them go. I had naively presumed it would similarly bury the "doubling farmer income by 2022" slogan. But it hasn't.

Though, there are countless reasons and measurable indicators for rural India to reject the government and not cry over spilt milk, in election time it's time to heed the words of CS Lewis: "You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."

Considering the acuteness of the crises in the rural economy and the external factors, it's time to focus on practical deliverables and prioritise from amongst the best combination of trade-offs, rather than on populist unicorns (PM Kisan, Farm Loan Waiver, NYAY).

The earth is on the verge of crossing the planetary climate change tipping point and

depleting natural capital. Everything has a cost, which we are transferring to the next generation, including what has not been even attempted. The unregulated over-exploitation of scarce natural resources is resulting in a falling groundwater table, deteriorating soil health and environmental pollution. While this generates today's food surpluses and low commodity prices, it also ultimately foments farm distress. Ironically, this leads to public scorn and policy apathy towards farmer demands. Political parties are unable even to fathom the urgency of the existential crisis we are headed for.

Transferring agriculture input subsidies (fertiliser and power) to farmers in cash is the need of the hour. This must precede attempts to transferring cash for subsistence. Politicians have clarified that the proposed large cash transfers will not be funded by removing existing subsidies. I do not wish to speculate whether this is wishful thinking or wilful deceit. Experts advising on cash transfers, designed it as a "rationalisation" of subsidies — an academic way of saying "reducing or removing" subsidies. My fear is the ensuing fund crunch will not only grind to a halt improvements in essential basic services of healthcare and education, which are far below acceptable levels but also strangle the flow of productive public investments. Policies propagated by theorists, twisted by politicians, fine-printed by bureaucrats are akin to jumping from the frying pan to the fire.

At the same time, many government programmes will need to be shelved. For exam-

ple, the concept of 100 smart cities must be replaced by developing 6,000 smart census towns (population over 5,000) spread across rural India. Even a novice would have suggested developing the hinterland rather than draw the millions to a few megapolises. Instead of aping western development models, it's better to try establishing institutions like US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide timely market intelligence services. Prioritising a "nationally consistent database" will be the key driver for improved transparency, traceability, governance, policies and implementation.

The undeniable fact is that farmers will need to be supported in perpetuity — we need to tread cautiously in designing support systems because neither do we have the luxury of time, nor do our nuanced problems have silver bullet solutions. The required transformative change can come from a statutory "farmers commission" headed by a farmer with a mandate to review existing interventions and recommend new initiatives to improve rural livelihoods. For coordination and deliverables, ideally the commission must be comprised of an IAS officer as a full-time member-secretary and agriculture secretary as an official member.

Finally, after the heat and grind of the elections is over, India needs a national government with practitioners heading important ministries. It's time for professional politicians and armchair experts to step aside.

The writer is chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj

## FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



## APRIL 22, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

**THAKUR VS DAS**  
A FRESH CRISIS is feared in the Janata Party as the erstwhile Bharatiya Lok Dal and some supporters of the former Bihar chief minister, Karpooi Thakur, have decided not to cooperate with the new ministry in the state headed by new CM and socialist leader, Ram Sunder Das, "so long as RSS elements are in it." The BLD group at a meeting today, attended among others by Raj Narain and SN Mishra, decided that no one from among them should join the ministry. They also decided to work for toppling Das' ministry either from inside the state legislature party or on the floor of the Assembly. The move has the blessings of the deputy prime minister,

Charan Singh, according to a party spokesman.

**VINOBA BHAVE FASTS**  
HIGH-LEVEL EFFORTS ARE on to persuade Vinoba Bhave to give up his threatened fast on the cow-slaughter issue. The Union home minister, HM Patel, tonight rushed a wireless message to the chief ministers of 14 states asking them whether they will agree on changing their state laws banning the transport of cows to slaughter houses outside their states where there is no total ban on cowslaughter. The chief ministers of Kerala and West Bengal have rejected Bhave's plea for a total ban. Patel is reportedly working on

the presumption that if cows are not transported to Kerala and West Bengal, a formula may be found to save Bhave's life.

**ZIA ON INDIA**  
PAKISTAN PRESIDENT GENERAL Zia-ul-Haq, said that relations between his country and India were "very delicate". At a news conference in Rawalpindi, General Zia referred to the Jamshepur riots and said, "I have conveyed my feelings to the Indian government." He also expressed his sympathy with those affected in Jamshepur. Zia also said that Pakistan was not building a uranium enrichment plant, but vowed his nation would continue efforts to acquire nuclear technology.



# THE IDEAS PAGE

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Sivajit Day

## Ram Naam as a sanctuary

In Mumbai, the akhanda kirtan during Ram Navami provided a relief from the bustle of elections and an opportunity to approach politics from a broader view

**IN GOOD FAITH**  
BY RAJNI BAKSHI

respite from the jostling of the mad race outside. What is this "more" and why does it feel more precious when the akhanda kirtan is happening in an election year?

Ironically, the feeling of sanctuary derives partly from what is not there. The iconography is similar to what our older people are familiar with, akin to what was handed down by our grandparents. Completely missing is the feral, angry face which in many other places now masquerades as an image of Hanuman. Here, Hanuman is still a loving and lovable presence. Absent also is any hint of Bollywood style images — which have become common at many newer temples. At the Ram Mandir, the black stone idols are beautifully carved and utterly simple. Here Ram is not alone, as often depicted in many contemporary images. Ram is completed by the presence of Lakshman on one side and Sita on the other.

Exquisite flower decorations are always done in a traditional manner with meticulous care. This aesthetic, becoming more intense and elaborate in the festive mood of Ram Navami, is an essential element of fostering a sense of welcome and respite. But all of this remains true year after year. Why should the feeling be any different because the experience is happening in an election year? This question stayed with me, long after I had returned to the world outside. Here are some of the answers that have slowly become visible.

That lightness of being, experienced in the midst of the akhanda kirtan, is possible because of what I am able to leave outside — most of all history and politics as a string of events and contestations. For that is the domain that houses all my angst and feelings of conflict with those who hold or promote a perspective with which I passionately disagree. Since these emotions are at fever pitch in an election season the sense of relief and respite in the sanctuary is proportionately more intense. Could this be the escapism of religion that in modern progressive jargon is called an opium? It might be, if the escapism — be it playing candy-crush or video gaming — locks you away from social and political

Since these emotions are at fever pitch in an election season the sense of relief and respite in the sanctuary is proportionately more intense. Could this be the escapism of religion that in modern progressive jargon is called an opium? It might be, if the escapism — be it playing candy-crush or video gaming — locks you away from social and political questions and choices that need to be addressed.

questions and choices that need to be addressed.

The proper function of a sanctuary is not escape but renewal and recharge. This can happen through a 10-day silence retreat within the Buddhist tradition or at an akhanda kirtan within a Brahmin tradition, as at the Ram Mandir, or in singing praises at the Vithoba temple next door which celebrates centuries of tradition of non-Brahmin saint poets.

An exhaustive list of such spaces within all the religions of the world would fill volumes. It is not that the disagreements and conflicts are dissolved. What constitutes justice, who should win in this election, what is at stake, who is endangering democracy — all these questions and more are waiting outside. The difference is that even a brief experience of sanctuary can alter the form that these questions take. To me, even the questions seemed to be waiting somewhat peacefully — as opposed to the usual images of pulling at a thin leash and baying for blood.

It is not the nature or complexity of the questions, the problems, that changes. But rather that they appear on a much wider, a more multi-dimensional frame or view of existence. Consequently, "reality" acquires nuance and appears less monochromatic. Why? Because the sanctuary is like an entry point into a space where we can reflect on the most basic questions of all: Who am I? Why am I here?

None of this is new. Long before the frenetic pace of life in industrialised society, the essentials may have been the same — that is why the ashram, the monastery have been around for centuries. Newer forms of such time-away sanctuaries are also growing in the contemporary world. But most require a considerable time commitment.

This is why the akhanda kirtan, right in the middle of the confusion and jostling of everyday life, is like the respite of a soothing gurgling stream of cool clean water on a blazing hot day.

Bakshi is a Mumbai-based author

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"This report is further proof that Mr Trump is unfit for office, and of the methods which helped to place him there. Mr Mueller took his time, but the matter could hardly be more urgent as the next presidential race approaches."  
— THE GUARDIAN

## Democracy vs militarisation

Restrictions on using national highway further alienate Kashmiris, feed into a narrative of exclusion



WAHEED UR REHMAN PARA

DESPITE REPEATED CLAIMS by top political leaders that India is intent on safeguarding the Kashmiri people, the ground realities now reflect a total siege with restrictions on all freedoms, including the freedom of movement. This unfreedom, more than containing the pro-azadi sentiment, has further alienated the population of Kashmir, Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal region of Jammu and Kashmir.

Over the past few years, there has been a consistent effort to brand every Kashmiri a terrorist through a carefully-crafted campaign by Hindutva groups who ignorantly see a forcible demographic change — dismantling the Muslim-majority character of J&K — as the only solution. This dangerous mindset has gained official patronage and a boost from certain television anchors who misrepresent and spread venom against the Muslims of J&K for petty gains: Naturally, this hostility isn't limited to the fringe right-wing groups.

The recent restriction on the use of the national highway — the most important road link in the state — by the people is the latest manifestation of the Centre's hegemonic approach. This measure, too, can only be understood in the context of larger and widespread approval to harsh treatment of Muslims of J&K, particularly Kashmiris. The latest ban, of course, isn't the first instance of deprivation of Kashmiris at the hands of jingoistic decrees; overpowering us has been a constant strategy.

The current phase of the conflict in J&K was triggered by the Amarnath land row, which was followed by an economic blockade of Kashmir when the adherents of Hindutva assembled in Jammu and shut down the national highway. Those who defied the government in 2008 and forcibly blocked the highway are now ruling both the state and the country. That's why it is an official act this time.

The subjugation in Kashmir has become personal and the reactions, whether in terms of militancy or stone pelting or protests, too, are an outcome of individual experiences of the larger political climate. The consequences have been predictable — the fissures have only widened. These fissures are dangerous to the very idea of India that places Jammu and Kashmir, its only Muslim-majority state, as an emblem of its secular credentials.

Hostilities towards minorities have dangerously increased in the recent years and have become more common, personal and discriminatory. It would be pertinent then to pause for an introspection: If spewing venom against Muslims, lynching them for what they eat, banning their roadway access to the mainland, vituperating them for how they look or pray can secure votes for a po-

litical party and ensure its victory, how true is the nation towards its own idea of a secular state? If India doesn't have a respectable position for its Muslims, then why does this country even want a Muslim-majority state in the Union?

The ruling class must realise that actions like the blocking of the national highway only reinforce the Kashmiri belief that Kashmir is maintained only to be fed into the incinerator of campaign speeches and vote-seeking across the country: Each time depleting the faith that Kashmiris have in the Delhi elite. The blocking of the national highway is a blatant dismissal of years of investment in reconciliation, aimed to reduce conflict between the people and security forces. By pitting the public against the security forces, the government has further estranged the population that it should, ideally, be engaging with. The security forces that should provide people a sense of security have become the main cause of insecurity and inconvenience for the people because of the myopic policies of the political elite.

Many questions arise about the motives behind this policy when one realises that, if army and security force convoys are safe in sharing the highway with the public for five days, why ban public use for two days? Meanwhile, the tactical specific schedules of security convoys will endanger soldiers more than mixed traffic, by making movements predictable and official. So, ironically, by making public the schedule of movements of the security convoys, the government itself has jeopardised the safety of the security forces.

Generalising threats and fear, reducing democracy to token elections — and elections to a security drill, inconveniencing tax-payers for securing convoys, and, disproportional and misdirected counter-reaction to every attack, may not embody the democratic ideals that India professes to adhere to: Instead, it represents the novel solutions that have been proposed for the Kashmir issue. This is a glaring contradiction, and there are many others. For example, in removing the security of the mainstream politicians in Kashmir, the state has risked the same people who have been the custodians of the mainstream political space in Kashmir for seven decades. To all the questions of dissent and resentment in the Valley, Delhi's response earlier was democracy. Now it is more about securitisation.

It is also relevant to question that if mainstream parties in the state — that have traditionally won more than two-third majority together in consecutive elections — have no say in the matters concerning their people, cannot put forth facts about the foundations of J&K's constitutional relationship with the Union, and, are dismissed as anti-nationals, then who is a patriot in Kashmir?

When the world is focused on connectivity, we are unfortunately blocking our own ways to our own people, and then celebrating this disconnect in the name of territorial control. If policies are framed as tools for revenge, if law enforcement agencies are used as weapons against ideological and electoral opponents, democracy can't survive.

The writer is youth president of the PDP

### VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

### IMRAN'S U-TURNS

IN HIS COLUMN in Dawn on April 20, Irfan Hussain compares Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan rather unfavourably with Jacinda Arden, his New Zealand counterpart. The thrust of Hussain's argument is this: Khan has gone back on nearly all his campaign promises, and worse, "there appears to be little compassion in our prime minister's heart for the plight of the Hazaras who are regularly targeted by Sunni extremists".

The suicide bomb attack in Quetta, in which 20 people lost their lives, took place in an area where the Hazara community lives. By not visiting the families of the victims of the attack, Hussain believes Khan is "sending out a signal". On the campaign trail a year ago, Khan had "promised an inclusive Pakistan". In fact, Hussain argues that U-turns on his most important promises have marked Khan's tenure: "Less than a year into his tenure, the prime minister has been forced into a number of U-turns that would have been embarrassing had he not been blessed with a thick skin. At campaign rally after rally, he vowed he would not beg for aid and loans. Indeed, he went so far as to vow he would commit suicide rather than extend a begging bowl before the IMF. But as soon as he was sworn in af-

ter a contentious election in which many detected the active role of hidden forces, there he was in China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, asking for alms. And just a few days ago, his verbose now ex-finance minister was in Washington, negotiating a loan from the IMF."

Hussain also gives several other examples of PM Khan's going back on his word. Khan had also promised, for example, "that transfers and promotions in the bureaucracy would be made strictly on merit. However, the swift changes of officers in Punjab have shown that little has changed: personal likes and dislikes take precedence over efficiency and transparency."

PM Khan did visit Quetta and address the Hazara community on Sunday, April 21.

### DOUBLE STANDARDS

MANO RATWATTE, A Sri Lankan commentator, writes in *The Island* on April 16 of the double standards on issues like war crimes and human rights' violations. Taking off from the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the article uses a series of examples of how the West gets away with such crimes while third world countries are constantly vilified. He argues: "Is Accountability not required when the ones committing atroci-

ties are resource-rich, powerful western nations? This is no defence of alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka (those need to be investigated) or India, but just a commentary on the rank hypocrisy that is part of geopolitical realities. There is definitely a different playing field for different nations."

US Senator Bob Kerry of Nebraska, for example, has admitted to committing war crimes in Vietnam, and the My Lai massacre was initially covered up by the US government. "And only this week did EU member Belgium apologise for the kidnapping, segregation, deportation and forced adoption of thousands of children born to mixed-race couples during its colonial rule of Burundi, Congo and Rwanda. The apology is the first time that Belgium has recognised any responsibility for what historians say was the harm on the Central African nations, which it colonised for eight decades."

### UNFREE MEDIA

REPORTERS' WITHOUT BORDERS' recently published report on media freedom ranks Bangladesh at dismal 150 out of 180 countries when it comes to freedom of the press. According to the editorial in *The Daily Star*, "it cannot be a pleasing thought that every

other country of South Asia stands above us; even in Myanmar (where there's a virtual military government), the press seems to be doing somewhat better than ours."

India ranks at 140, so perhaps some of the following issues raised by the editorial could have some resonance, across South Asia: "Regrettably, the press in Bangladesh is in a unique situation. Like most segments of the society, the media has become fractured, and thus vulnerable to the powers that would want a pliant media. This has given way to the media exercising more self-censorship than is necessary for it to perform its job with impartiality and fairness, devoted to projecting news as it is rather than twisting the tale to give the people what a particular media outlet wants them to read. But there are compelling reasons for the press to choose discretion over valour—physical harassment of journalists by ruling party cadres, unnecessary litigation as well as the newly enacted draconian rules that encumber free media, are a few."

The editorial remarks that a free media is also an index of other freedoms available in a society — and on that front, the neighbourhood has much room for improvement.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### RAHUL'S GAFFE

THIS REFERS TO your editorial, 'When Rahul descends' (IE, April 19). Rahul's barb that all thieves have the Modi surname in common is totally uncalled for. It does a disservice to his relentless attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for promoting crony capitalism. It vilifies a whole community. At a time when personal attacks are becoming the new normal in Indian politics, Rahul Gandhi would do well to exercise a little restraint and stay away from such sordid mudslinging.

Vijai Pant Hemptur

#### BABASAHEB'S LEGACY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The legacy of Ambedkar' (IE, April 18). As the architect of the Indian Constitution, B R Ambedkar stood for the sanctity of fundamental rights. He believed in constitutional methods to solve the social, economic and political problems of the country. Untouchability has largely been eradicated. Democracy is thriving in India, the judiciary is independent and elections are conducted regularly with impartiality. Credit for these achievements must go to Ambedkar.

Atul Thakre, Nagpur

#### FILMS AS ADS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Three mis-

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

takes, two ironies' (IE, April 19). Releasing political movies during elections is a type of advertisement. Parties cannot convey through banners what they can do through political movies. But unlike banners, not all political parties will have films made about them or their leaders.

Akshata Anil, Rupnagar



**THIS WORD MEANS**

**ODEBRECHT SCANDAL**

It has sent a once iconic South American leader to prison, and last week drove a former President to suicide. What is it?



Friends and family carry the coffin of Peru's former President Alan Garcia, who killed himself last week, in Lima, Peru on Saturday. Reuters

PERU'S FORMER President Alan Garcia shot himself in the head last week after investigators probing his role in the Odebrecht corruption scandal sought to arrest him in Lima.

**THE SCANDAL:** The Odebrecht Scandal, one of the biggest corruption cases of its kind in history, was discovered by Brazilian authorities in 2014. The scam gets its name from Odebrecht (pronounced Odeb-resh), a giant construction firm based in Brazil, that has been accused of paying over \$800 million in bribes to politicians and government officials in countries across South America over the past two decades.

Odebrecht is alleged to have built an elaborate structure for sending bribes to patrons in over 12 countries in South America and Africa in return for contracts to build largescale projects such as roads, pipelines, trains, and irrigation systems. Many of these projects overbilled the countries many times over the approved costs -- an example is the Inter-oceanic Highway between Peru and Brazil, which cost more than four times the budgeted amount.

Odebrecht allegedly used shell companies in the British Virgin Islands and Belize to funnel money to politicians and officials, using multiple bank accounts scattered across the globe. Smaller banks whose employees could be compromised were chosen, typically in jurisdictions with strict confidentiality laws. A separate "Division for Structured Accounts" at Odebrecht ran these clandestine operations.

The Brazilian investigation began after authorities stumbled upon illicit cash transfers taking place through car-wash stations in the southern part of the coun-

try. As their "Operation Car Wash" spread and gathered momentum, politicians started to fall in the net, and public anger grew. 77 Odebrecht functionaries agreed to cooperate with the investigators. In 2016, the company's CEO was sentenced to 19 years in prison. That same year, the US and Switzerland too pressed charges, and the company was forced to settle for \$4.5 billion, one of the largest corruption settlements of all time.

**POLITICAL FALLOUT:** The most visible upheaval was seen in Brazil, with leftist leader and President from 2003 to 2010, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, being sent to jail for 12 years and 11 months in 2018. Lula was a favourite to win the recently concluded Brazilian elections, but his conviction paved the way for the hard-right Jair Bolsonaro to grab the Presidency. Another former President, Michel Temer, too was briefly incarcerated.

In Ecuador, a former Vice President has been sent to prison for six years. There are accusations against former Presidents of Colombia and Argentina. In Venezuela, the government of President Nicolás Maduro has targeted journalists investigating the scandal.

In Peru, three former Presidents are accused in the scandal. Garcia killed himself last Wednesday; his predecessor in the post, Alejandro Toledo, has fled to the US. The Peruvian daily El Comercio, while expressing regret for Garcia's suicide, said, "... We must not lose sight of the importance of continuing with the investigations that are taking place today. It is essential that the truth advances, and that justice prevails in order to break with a past of impunity, and to speak of a future where no citizen is above the law."

OM MARATHÉ

**SIMPLY PUT**

## LoC trade, in perspective

India last week suspended the cross-LoC trade, alleging misuse of the facility by individuals linked to terrorist groups. How and when did this trade start, and what was it intended to achieve for India and Pakistan?

**NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN**  
MUMBAI, APRIL 21

COMPARED TO the cross LoC bus service that was flagged off with much fanfare in 2005, cross-LoC trade between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir got off to a low-profile start, receiving little attention at the time in India or Pakistan.

In diplomatic parlance, these two measures are categorised as "Kashmir specific confidence building measures" and flowed out of backchannel negotiations between India and Pakistan on a resolution to Kashmir, in the belief that this would then give both sides legroom to "remake" India-Pakistan relations.

**Four-point proposal**

Specifically, these measures seems to have originated in a four-point proposal for Kashmir that began to get regular airing from about 2005 from then military ruler General Pervez Musharraf. The four points were:

The LoC will stay but Kashmiris on both sides will be allowed to move freely back and forth; (ii) self-governance or autonomy to the region, but not independence; (iii) gradual demilitarisation on both sides; (iv) a joint supervision mechanism with India, Pakistan and Kashmir represented on it.

In India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh spoke about "soft borders" and "making borders irrelevant" in Kashmir. These proposals, now denied by both India and Pakistan, represented the closest that the two sides have got to an agreement on Kashmir, but neither side could take it further, each for its own reasons. The joint mechanism was one stumbling block in the proposals themselves.

**The road to opening**

On July 7 that year, the Indian Embassy in Kabul was bombed, killing an Indian diplomat and a senior Army officer and several Afghans. The US and India said the ISI was behind the bombing.

But the India-Pakistan foreign secretaries' talks were held as scheduled later that month on July 21 under the composite dialogue format, and they agreed to the opening of trade routes across the LoC. The two sides then rushed to finalise the details in the following weeks, including at a meeting of the "working group of cross LoC CBMs" on September 22, 2008.

To Pakistani observers it appeared that India was eager to provide a vent for the steam building up in Kashmir over the Amarnath land row earlier that year, when there was a blockade of the Valley by the Jammu-based BJP and other Hindutva groups. That in turn led to the demand for opening the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road. Separatists and others called a "Muzaffarabad March" on August 11. Firing on the march left 5 people dead.

**Cheer on both sides**

Both sides of Kashmir welcomed the opening of the trade routes. On October 21, two crossing points, Srinagar-Muzaffarabad at Uri, and Poonch-Rawalakot at Chakan da Bagh, were opened for trade. A convoy of 13 trucks carrying apples and honey set off from Kashmir to PoK, and 13 trucks came



The trade has been taking place through two crossing points, Poonch-Rawalakot at Chakan da Bagh and Srinagar-Muzaffarabad at Uri. Shuaib Masoodi/Archive

INDIA'S TRADE WITH PAKISTAN (\$ MILLION)				
	EXPORTS	IMPORTS	TRADE BALANCE	TOTAL TRADE
2009-10	1,573	276	1,297	1,849
2010-11	2,040	333	1,707	2,372
2011-12	1,542	398	1,144	1,939
2012-13	2,065	542	1,523	2,607
2013-14	2,274	427	1,847	2,701
2014-15	1,857	497	1,360	2,354
2015-16	2,171	441	1,730	2,612
2016-17	1,821	454	1,367	2,275
2017-18	1,924	489	1,435	2,413
2018-19*	1,608	441	1,167	2,049

\*2018-19 figures from April to December  
**TRADE BALANCE:** Exports minus Imports  
**TOTAL TRADE:** Exports plus Imports  
Source: Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, via 'Recent Trends in India-Pakistan Trade, 2018-19: ICRIER paper

**A FEW ITEMS, SMALL NUMBERS**

**THE CROSS-LOC** trade is technically not considered bilateral trade. When it was started in 2008, trade was allowed twice a week, which was increased to 4 days a week in 2011.

**THE INDIA-PAKISTAN** Joint Working Group on Cross-LoC Confidence Building Measures, which reviews the

cross-LoC trade, last met in March 2014.

**UNTIL RECENTLY,** only the initial 21 items, which included embroidery items, bananas, red chilli, dry fruits and mangoes, were allowed to be traded.

**THE TRADE** since 2008 is valued at approximately Rs 7,000 crore.

from Muzaffarabad to Kashmir. Three trucks crossed over from either side at Chakan da Bagh.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said at the time "it is a dream come true", and Sardar Attique Khan, the prime minister of POK, named the day "Youm-e-Karvaan-e-Commerce" (Day of the Caravan of Commerce). The Mumbai attacks put a freeze on India-Pakistan relations, but the cross-LoC trade remained unaffected by that.

**Hiccups and demands**

The agreement was for zero duty trade for a list of 21 items. It ran into problems almost immediately as traders on both sides floundered on currency and communication

issues. A chamber of commerce, called the Intra Jammu & Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry (IJ&KCCI), came into existence. They pointed to the need for banking relations and mutual acceptance of letters of credit, a communication network, a regulatory network to determine the composition of trade, and a legal network for dispute resolution.

The joint chamber recommended expansion of the list of items for trade, facilitation of travel and traders' access to each other, infrastructure facilities, banking services, use of dual currency of both countries as the mode of payment with the US dollar as the reference point, inclusion of the services sector, and opening of more trade routes.

Despite the difficulties, trade grew. In the absence of banking facilities, traders on either side, mostly from divided families, made it work. From 180 trucks carrying freight worth Rs 1.3 crore, the value of the trade grew to Rs 3,076 crore by March 2019. There were complaints that the trade had expanded to include non-Kashmiri goods. The complaints were particularly loud from the traders at Wagah border who catered to the same markets and were envious of the zero-duty cross LoC trade.

**Trade in perspective**

Last week, the government cited malpractice and the involvement of terrorist groups in the trade to suspend the LoC trade. There have been previous suspensions. Once in 2015, trade was suspended for 40 days after drugs were discovered in a truck from Muzaffarabad. The longest suspension came during the post-Burhan Wani killing agitation in the Valley, for three months. There were other brief spells when trade was suspended, mostly at Chakan da Bagh, on account of heavy cross-border shelling.

However, Kashmiris point out that trade has never been suspended for under-invoicing or other such violations at any other port in the country where Customs and other enforcement officials strictly monitor the inflows and outflows, and the same could have been done at the LoC.

As for the involvement of former militants in the trade, this was seen as a welcome development towards creating "constituencies of peace" and building stakes for normalcy in the Valley. In 2011, a four page report called Intra Kashmir Trade, jointly prepared by the Delhi-based IPCS, Conciliation Resources of London, and the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, said cross border trade had proved it could be insulated from the ups and downs in the India-Pakistan relationship, and had begun to establish a "bottom up" approach to peace-building. "Trade has attracted divided families and some former combatants and provided a non-violent and alternative vision for change and conflict transformation," the report said. It spoke about 40 former militants who had chosen to participate in the economic activity.

More than its value in currency terms, the cross LoC trade holds much symbolic value in Jammu & Kashmir, especially in the Poonch-Rawalakot sector, where there are more divided families and villages than at the Uri crossing point. They would be hoping that the current suspension is not permanent.

**SUGGESTED READING**

- *The Back Channel: India and Pakistan's Secret Kashmir Talks*, by Steve Coll, *The New Yorker*, February 22, 2009 (Print edition of March 2, 2009)
- *Expanding Cross-LoC Interactions: A Conflict Transformation Approach to Kashmir*, by Shaheen Akhtar, *Institute of Regional Studies, in Regional Studies*, Vol. XXX, No.1, Winter 2011-12, pp.3-37

# Why the Notre Dame fire was a tragedy waiting to happen

A week after the devastating fire that wrecked the 850-year-old jewel of Paris and triggered a global outpouring of grief, it is evident that peculiarities of structure and construction made the cathedral especially vulnerable. Also, that fire safety procedures at Notre Dame were premised on assumptions that were proved grotesquely wrong -- and that the reaction time for the emergency was far too long

**1 INACCESSIBLE, INFLAMMABLE**

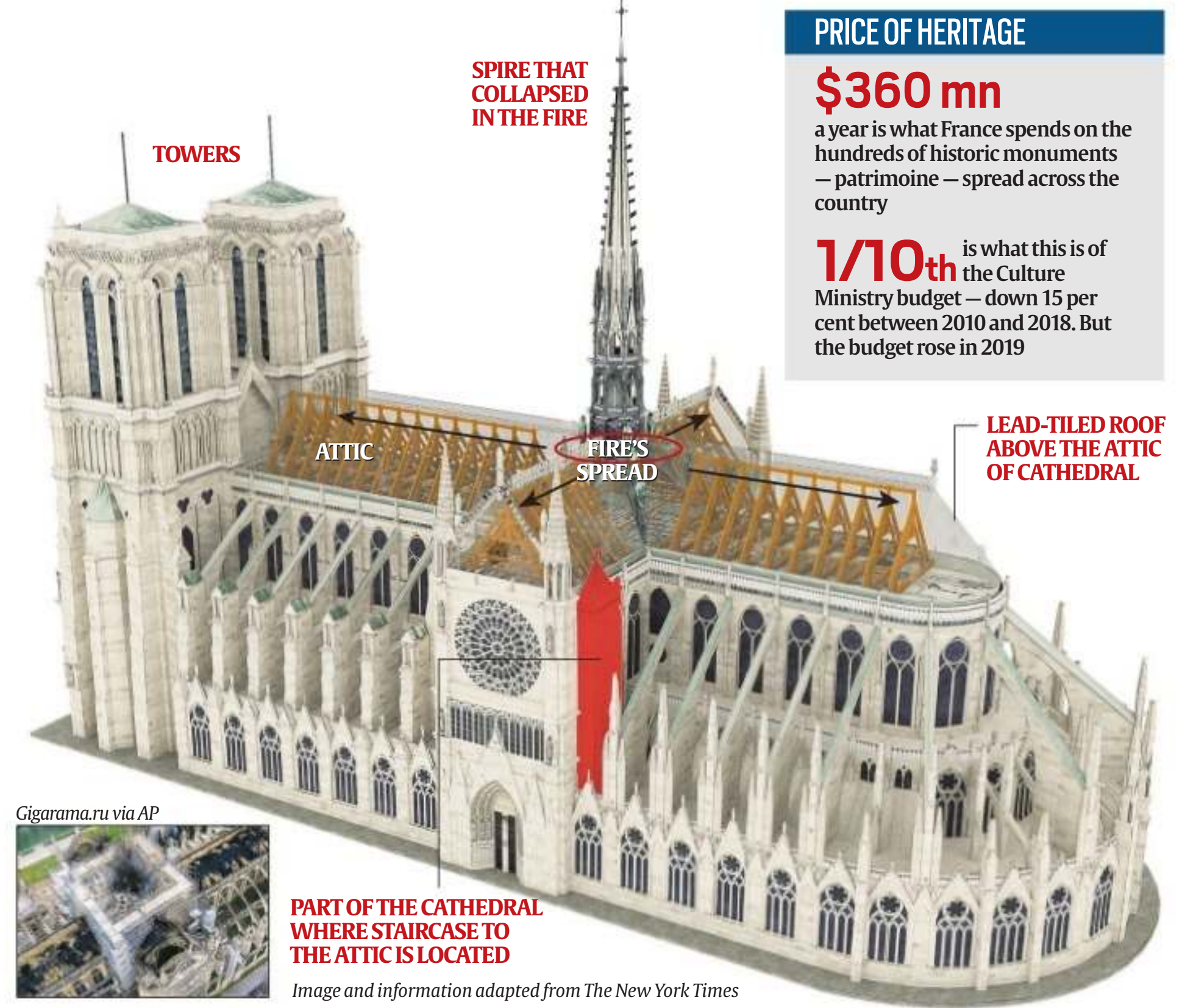
Structural features and architecture of cathedral made fighting the fire difficult

VAULTED STONE ceiling prevented firefighters from shooting water up into the attic from within. Lead roof of attic may have hindered access further; firefighters may've had to wait until lead panels were burnt through before they could start spraying water from above. Attic structure was enormous, complex, made of extremely dry, super inflammable wood. Giant oak beams were entangled with each other in a 'forest' that was near impossible to enter. And because preservation designers didn't want to mutilate wood by cutting it, they put no fire walls.

**2 UNDERESTIMATION OF RISKS FROM FIRE**

Prevention and detection of fire was the focus; keeping the Notre Dame 'original' the mantra

OFFICIALS HAD misjudged the speed with which a blaze, once ignited in the attic, would spread. According to the top architect who oversaw the fire protections, the system had assumed that the ancient oak timbers would burn slowly, leaving time for firefighting action; what actually happened was, therefore, "incomprehensible" (right). A conservative bias towards preserving the beautiful historic structure unaltered ensured that sprinklers or fire walls were not installed in the attic; the mantra, instead, was prevention and detection of fires.



Cigarama.ru via AP  
Image and information adapted from The New York Times

**PRICE OF HERITAGE**

**\$360 mn**  
a year is what France spends on the hundreds of historic monuments -- patrimoine -- spread across the country

**1/10th** is what this is of the Culture Ministry budget -- down 15 per cent between 2010 and 2018. But the budget rose in 2019

**3 BUILT-IN DELAY IN RESPONSE TIME**

As per the emergency drill, staff had to complete -- twice -- 6-minute climb to the attic before calling fire services

**6.20PM**  
**FIRST ALARM WENT OFF**  
A fire security agent alerted church staff. A guard started to climb the steep staircase to the attic to have a look.

**6.26PM**  
**A FULL SIX MINUTES LATER**  
Guard reached attic, but found no fire. Climbed down, reached the ground after several minutes, announced all was well.

**6.43PM**  
**SECOND ALARM WENT OFF**  
Just as cathedral was closing to visitors, alarm rang again. The fire had likely been burning for well over 20 minutes then.

**6.49PM**  
**A RACE BACK TO THE ATTIC**  
Two staffers who climbed up this time found a big fire. Hurrying down, realised they'd locked door; had to go back up.

**6.51PM**  
**CALL FOR HELP, FINALLY**  
Fire department was called in. Smoke and flames were clearly visible by then.





## In his own cause

The Chief Justice of India shows how not to deal with a sexual harassment complaint

The manner in which the Supreme Court responded on the judicial side to allegations of sexual harassment made by a former employee against the Chief Justice of India is a textbook example of how not to deal with such a complaint. An issue that squarely fell within the domain of an internal process was taken up by a special Bench constituted by CJI Ranjan Gogoi, comprising himself, Justice Arun Mishra and Justice Sanjiv Khanna. On a 'mention' by the Solicitor-General, it was listed as 'Re: Matter of Great Public Importance Touching upon the Independence of the Judiciary'. The decision to hold an open court hearing is questionable. A complaint of this nature requires an institutional response on the administrative side. There is an internal process to initiate an inquiry mandated by the law regarding sexual harassment at the workplace. The Supreme Court itself has an internal sub-committee under its Gender Sensitization and Sexual Harassment of Women at Supreme Court (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Guidelines, 2015. There is a separate 'in-house procedure' to deal with complaints against judges, under which their judicial peers, and not outsiders, will examine them. It is not known if the complaint will be probed under an internal process, but it is clear that the CJI ought not to have presided over the special Bench that took up the matter that concerned himself. The onslaught on the complainant's credibility and the references made to her alleged criminal record when she was not a party to the proceedings are deplorable.

Justice Gogoi was one of the four judges who spoke out against the manner in which his predecessor as CJI, Dipak Misra, managed the roster. It is ironical that as one who was aggrieved that senior-most judges were kept out of Benches handling major cases, he went on to form a Bench that included himself but not the two senior-most judges after him. Nor was there a woman judge on the Bench. CJI Gogoi's anguish is understandable, if indeed the complaint is baseless and false, as he contended from the Bench. But then, the court's Secretary General has sent a denial to the online news organisations that carried details of the complaint. The complainant, a former junior court assistant, had made her charge in the form of an affidavit, supported by purported evidence, and sent it to 22 judges of the court. It referred to likely witnesses to the alleged sexual harassment and victimisation. This is a serious matter that requires careful processing. It is possible even now to send the complaint to an independent committee. That is the only reasonable and fair means of establishing the innocence the CJI has asserted. Pronouncements and protestations from the Bench to a captive audience of acquiescent law officers and lawyers are not the way.

## Rough road

The U.S. President's legal troubles over his campaign are not over with the Mueller report

The investigation report of Special Counsel Robert Mueller is unlikely to end the scandal around Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election that has rocked American politics for the last two and a half years. The redacted version that has been released confirms what U.S. Attorney General William Barr had said last month when he released a summary – Mr. Mueller neither indicts nor exonerates President Donald Trump. Mr. Mueller concluded that Russia interfered in the election in a "sweeping and systematic fashion". The Russians carried out an information campaign on the Internet against Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and in favour of Mr. Trump, while Russian hackers hacked into the Democratic National Committee systems as well as Ms. Clinton's campaign chief's email account, and dumped the files on the Internet. While there were contacts between the Russians and Trump campaign members, the investigation doesn't establish that "members of the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government". But on the question on obstruction of justice, the Special Counsel was less emphatic.

The report has damning details on how Mr. Trump tried to undermine the investigation. He wanted to fire Mr. Mueller, and when his then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions failed to do so, he wanted him to shut the probe. Mr. Trump didn't succeed as his staff resisted the orders. In one such instance, White House attorney Donald McGahn preferred to resign rather than carry out Mr. Trump's order to fire Mr. Mueller. The report also confirms that the President had asked FBI Director James Comey to go easy on Michael Flynn, Mr. Trump's original pick for National Security Adviser. Mr. Comey was fired later. What Mr. Mueller has effectively done is to state the facts of Mr. Trump's efforts to obstruct the probe, while leaving unanswered the question of whether he obstructed justice. He has left the issue for Congress to decide, saying the legislature "has authority to prohibit a President's corrupt use of his authority in order to protect the integrity of the administration of justice". As soon as the report was out, Mr. Trump had claimed victory by tweeting: "For the haters and the radical left Democrats – Game over." But the House Judiciary Committee chair has issued a subpoena to the Justice Department to hand over the full report. Senator Elizabeth Warren, who is running for the Democratic presidential ticket, has called for impeachment proceedings against Mr. Trump. The President's legal troubles are also not over. A Senate Intelligence Committee investigation into the Russian interference scandal is still on. The Trump campaign is also being probed for alleged campaign finance violations. All this suggests a tough road is ahead for Mr. Trump, though Mr. Mueller stopped short of indicting him.

# Being fair and transparent

After these elections, the Election Commission needs to take stock of several issues, including campaign funding



NAVIN B. CHAWLA

Two phases of the 2019 general election have been completed. Polling has finished in 186 out of 543 parliamentary constituencies. Polling in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, has been cancelled for corrupt practices. Five phases still remain till counting is comprehensively undertaken for all the seven phases of the election, on May 23. The reason to complete all the phases is that the result of any one phase should not influence the choices that electors may make.

Having served the Election Commission of India (EC) for five-and-a-half years during which I conducted the 2009 general election, I have an insider's view, but of course am not privy to the inputs that the EC has and on which its decisions are made.

### Dark points

As I have argued in my recent book, *Every Vote Counts*, several negative features of our electoral scene have worsened. Since the Model Code of Conduct came into effect, in just the first two phases this time, money power has so reared its ugly head that seizures made of unaccounted cash, liquor, bullion and drugs amounting to ₹2,600 crore have already surpassed the entire seizures made in the nine phases of the general election in 2014. Most depressingly, this includes huge hauls of drugs, the vast majority smuggled into Gujarat. Uttar Pradesh is awash with liquor. Tamil Nadu has

seen the largest seizures of illicit cash – over ₹514 crore.

These vast sums intended to bribe or influence voters prove several things. The first is that these sums almost certainly represent only a fraction of current illegal spending, a tip of the iceberg as it were. They have been detected by the EC's machinery acting on the basis of tip-offs, or else by the vigilance of electoral officials in the States. Unfortunately, the bulk of illegal tranches of money, liquor or freebies would have reached their destination. Second, political players have refined their methods in being many steps ahead of the EC's observers and their vigilance teams by moving their funds to their destinations even before the elections are announced.

Does this not make a mockery of the statutory limit of ₹70 lakh that each Lok Sabha candidate has as his poll expenditure limit?

### Difficult questions

As a country we need to ask ourselves some hard questions. When every rule in the book is being broken, when there is no transparency on how political parties collect or spend their funds, when limits of candidate spending are exceeded in every single case, then the time has come to debate whether we need to re-examine our rule book. In order to supervise the matches in play, the EC has had to deploy over 2,000 Central observers for the entire duration, drawing them out from their ministries and departments at the cost of their normal work at the Centre and in the States. Thousands of vigilance squads are set up and must act on the information they receive, which is why the current level of seizures have already made this India's most expensive general



SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

election yet. An intelligent guess may lead us to a final tally of spending in excess of ₹50,000 crore, the bulk of which is made up of illicit funding and spending.

It is by now clear as daylight that electoral bonds, far from enabling a legitimate and transparent means of political funding, have proved to be the reverse. The EC, in its own affidavit before the Supreme Court, has admitted as much. The Supreme Court's order has made sure that full disclosure, albeit to the EC, has already effectively killed further funding along this route. Nothing is a better disinfectant for camouflaged funding than sunlight itself.

With my experience this compels me to say that any serious reform with regard to funding must come from the EC itself, for it is very unlikely that any government will take an initiative in this direction. The EC must take stock after this election is over. It should convene a conference of all stakeholders, including of course all recognised political parties, both Central and State. But this should not be exclusively confined to them, for they will tend to support the status quo or they will be unable to reach consensus. The list of stakeholders must also include the best constitutional and legal minds in our country.

In my book I have also raised the twin problem of candidates

fielded with criminal antecedents. The 16th Lok Sabha that has now passed into history, saw almost 30% of its members declaring, in their compulsory self-sworn affidavits, the list of criminal cases registered against them. They are also legally obliged to declare their wealth and their educational qualifications. This is the result of two vital orders passed by the Supreme Court in 2002-2003, the result of a battle that the Association for Democratic Reforms fought tenaciously. Unfortunately, in the first phase of this election, 12% of the candidates perforce declared that they had heinous cases pending, while in the second phase the figure was 11%. It may be noted that these cases include murder, attempt to murder, dacoity, kidnapping and rape. Have we forgotten Nirbhaya and 2012 already?

### Giving it teeth

The matter of the Model Code of Conduct and its administration by the EC has been the most frequently reported single issue in this election. For those of a certain generation, the 10th Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), T.N. Seshan – he once famously declared that "he ate politicians for breakfast" – was the man who made the country sit up and take note when he decided to level the playing field as never before. There is little doubt that he reminded the EC that it had powers inherently enshrined in Article 324 of the Constitution – powers so great that there is arguably no other electoral management body with similar powers.

I learned this during my years as Election Commissioner, and these are the powers I exercised during the course of the 15th general election in 2009; I was successfully able to confront three

Congress-ruled State governments and one Congress ally too. One of them even convened a special press conference to declare that his government would move the Supreme Court against the EC's "arbitrariness", but I personally had no doubt about its outcome. As it happened, he chose not to in the end.

The point I seek to make, by virtue of my own experience, is that the powers of the EC are so enormous and so all-encompassing that they exceed the powers of the executive in all election-related issues during the course of the election period. Of course, these must be exercised judiciously, fairly and equitably, not least because every decision is analysed in every "adda", every home, every street corner and every "dhaba" across the country, where the EC's decisions must be seen to be fair and transparent. During the years precedent to becoming CEC, I was fortunate that Mr. Seshan advised me whenever I called on him. As a result I never felt any need to make reference to government or court, once the process was under way.

### Words into action

If there is anything for me to applaud thus far in this election, it is the decision made by two political parties which have selected over 33% women candidates – Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (41% for 42 Lok Sabha seats) and Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal (33% for 21 Lok Sabha seats). After years of patriarchy or at best lip service, these parties have taken a vital step towards empowering women politically.

Navin B. Chawla is a former Chief Election Commissioner and is the author of 'Every Vote Counts'

# Workers and refugees are not criminals

Global political action is required to reinforce the legitimate identity of a worker



TABISH KHAIR

The Mexican border was closed for hours on November 25, 2018 at the San Ysidro Port of Entry to the U.S., after a group of migrants, including children and women, in Tijuana reportedly stormed the area. This prompted the U.S. Border Patrol to fire tear gas at the group. Among the hand-made placards carried by the migrants was this one: "We are international workers. We are not criminals."

### Xenophobic assertion

It was a revealing placard, and one that commented on a major change in global economic and political thinking: since the 1990s, not just international but even interregional workers have slowly been pushed into the rubric of 'criminals'. U.S. President Donald Trump is a prime example of this: his victory was largely founded on his ability to depict international workers, particularly those crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, as 'criminals'. With elections coming up in the U.S. once again, he has returned, with renewed vigour, to this discourse. The fact that such a sweeping xenophobic assertion – though often it was in the form of

pointed innuendoes – does not make him a 'loser' (in his language) highlights the fact that many voters now think of certain kinds of workers as basically criminals.

This tendency is present, though in less obvious versions, in almost all developed and developing countries, including the social welfare democracies of Europe. It is also present within nations, as we in India witnessed in the recent 'Gujarati' backlash against workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Now, it is true that 'foreigners' have been looked at with suspicion by some 'natives' in the past too, but what we are talking about is a bit different.

This is because no one really denies that most of these people who want to enter a country do so in order to find work. Also, all but the most rabid of hate-mongers are fully aware that, say, most Biharis in Gujarat or Mexicans in the U.S. are law-abiding and often needy workers. And yet politicians can garner extra votes by implicitly or explicitly equating international/interregional 'workers' with 'criminals', and states can openly devise blatantly differential treatment for them – as the children ripped away from their parents and the workers tear-gassed at the U.S. border can testify. This marks a significant development in recent years.

In short, we have to ask the question: what is it that enables many to characterise international



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

and even interregional workers as criminals, even as we know that most of them are crossing a border simply to seek work? No, the answer is not that there are more 'criminals' crossing over in the guise of workers now than there were in the past. There has been no difference in this regard. Most immigrants crossing a border are law-abiding and industrious workers, not 'criminals' – this remains the case today, as it was in the past.

The answer lies not with the workers crossing over or even with those citizens who brand them 'criminals'. The answer lies in the nature of capitalism, which no longer needs workers as much as it did in the past. Financial speculation has increasingly dwarfed international trade from the 1990s onwards. More than that, much of financial speculation is based on factors other than the productivity of a sector. When market speculators bend over their computer screens watching numbers flash by, they are not looking at the performance graphs of industries: they are just speculating with numbers. A world dominated by fi-

ancial speculation does not need workers in two ways: financial speculators are not workers, no matter what they think of their 'work', and financial speculation does not depend on the production of workers. Capital transactions are no longer tied predominantly to industry, productivity or trade of goods – and hence, to workers.

### Post-human future

There are other aspects to this snowballing change. In academia, for instance, there is the trend to talk about 'post-humanism'. Post-humanism has a respectable heritage. In fields like animal studies, it is often meant to suggest a world in which human beings do not occupy the centre. This is an interesting and necessary concept, for the earth has suffered much from our narcissism as a species and our inability to think of other animals as having biological rights too. But 'post-humanism' is mostly used in other ways: it is used to suggest a world after human beings, a world run by artificial intelligence.

Inevitably, for those in power – either in terms of a monopoly on wealth or a monopoly on knowledge – a world of financial speculation leads to a 'post-human' world run by artificial intelligence. Once workers become redundant and numbers are sufficient, then, inevitably, one can think complacently of replacing human intelligence with artificial intelligence.

In some ways, of course, much of financial speculation depends on exactly this: a kind of artificial intelligence, not human labour.

The reduction of workers to criminals is part of this change, and interestingly the solution is not just to insist on the right to work locally or even nationally. The insistence has to be 'universal' and global. Global political action is needed to ensure international working rights, linked to human status and not the caprice of state or capital.

Otherwise, as the right to work can currently be ensured only by national governments, it will always be used to define other – 'foreign' – workers as actual or potential criminals, as Mr. Trump and his putative wall have set out to do. The right to work has become a selective right; today it is controlled by governments in tandem with corporations. Soon it might well become the monopoly of corporations. It is basically being used to criminalise those workers who are not allowed – by nation-states or neoliberal capitalism or both – the legitimate identity of a worker.

And as this is a shrinking identity – there are fewer and fewer active workers under the impact of rampant financial speculation – it simply adds to the official metamorphosis of more workers into 'criminals'.

Tabish Khair is an Indian novelist and academic who teaches in Denmark

## 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.

### CJI and allegation

I believe the Chief Justice of India has the full right to place his side of the facts before the public (Page 1, "Former staff writes to SC judges, alleges sexual harassment by CJI", April 21). The incident also highlights how even the office of the CJI can easily be tarnished by a mere allegation, the authenticity of which is yet to be ascertained. This has not only blotted the image of the judiciary but also impacted the image of the country. I think a thorough investigation is the need of the hour. What if it exonerates the CJI? Who will restore the judiciary's loss of reputation?

NAGARAJAMANI M.V.,  
Hyderabad

■ What is at stake is the well-earned reputation of the

Supreme Court as a place of high talent and immaculate integrity. There are two ways of looking at this case. One, there is no smoke without fire and this is another instance of human frailty. Two, one has to agree with the CJI's view of some large force waiting to "deactivate the office of the CJI".

C.G. SIVAKUMARAN,  
Chennai

■ It was very inappropriate for the CJI to be a part of the "extraordinary session" to reject the allegations. He has violated the cardinal principle of 'no man shall be a judge in his own cause'. Even worse were his critical remarks, imputing motive, violating another rule of natural justice. Since the in-house procedure for dealing with such complaints is silent on the procedure to be followed in such cases, the most appropriate thing for

him to do would be to completely disassociate himself from the matter. With great respect to the CJI, he does not seem to have set the right precedent.

S.K. CHOUDHURY,  
Bengaluru

### New camp

The grand old party still lacks the art of managing good party members ("Priyanka Chaturvedi quits Cong., joins Shiv Sena", April 20). Its former spokesperson, Priyanka Chaturvedi, was one of its most articulate. By allowing her to exit, the Congress has given more ammunition to the NDA. Ms. Chaturvedi did talk tough against political opponents and may turn out to be a misfit in her new party. One hopes that in her case, it is not a case of out of the frying pan into the fire.

N. NAGARAJAN,  
Secunderabad

### Master chronicler

With the passing of writer, journalist and teacher S. Muthiah, good old Madras has lost its favourite son. His weekly column in *The Hindu*, about the past of this great city, was an eye-opener. His minute detailing made understanding the history of Madras a joy.

T. ANAND RAJ,  
Chennai

■ We have lost a great historian and one who successfully campaigned for the restoration of heritage buildings in Chennai. I once told him that he was a one-man army in his chosen field, and he just smiled. There was aesthetic excellence in his descriptions, and his documentation of Chennai's history will remain unparalleled. Once during 'Madras Week', I remember the film critic, Randor Guy,

saying that he had to be careful about names or else he was sure to have S. Muthiah question him.

R. SOUNDARARAJAN,  
Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu

■ There is now a deep void in the chronicling of the city's heritage. While preparing for a 'Madras Day' quiz during my school days, I visited his home to get my copy of *Madras Rediscovered* autographed. He took keen interest if youngsters wanted to learn their local history. His legacy will never fade.

ADRIAN DAVID,  
Chennai

■ The sights and smells of the vibrant city of Madras always came alive in the writings of

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The report, "Pragya breaks down at BJP meeting" (April 19, 2019), incorrectly translated dharmayuddha as religious war. It should have been war of righteousness.

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# Expropriation in the name of conservation

It is shocking that a democratic government is seeking to strengthen the colonial-era Indian Forest Act



AVI SINGH & PEEYUSH BHATIA

The Indian Forest Act, 1927 was a remarkable piece of expropriation in the name of conservation. The British government carried out one of the largest land expropriations in history, where the rights to occupy and use forests were transferred from communities with customary and historical property rights to the colonial Central government. The act offered a fig leaf that those who could establish their rights were exempted from this expropriation (of course, few could establish their rights, given that their rights were not property rights as per the British government's conception of property). These expropriations were ameliorated in some small measure in the Forest Rights Act of 2006, but they have remained the edifice of the relationship between the government and the Adivasis. It is the forest department that Adivasis must deal with as their primary government agency. That a democratic government almost a century later seeks to expand and strengthen the tools of the Indian Forest Act is remarkable and shocking at the same time.

The ostensible inspiration for the amendments proposed by the Central government is the same as that of the colonial regime: the protection of forests. However, the government goes a step further than the colonial government and seeks to criminalise the communities, primarily the Adivasis, who dwell in these forests. Forest rights activists have expressed concern that forests could turn into a 'police state'. A better description would be that they would become a more draconian police state.

## Proposed amendments

According to the draft amendments, the forest department will now be able to enforce the property rights of the government to forests at the exclusion of Adivasi dwelling there, through preventive arrest provisions. Certain offences will be made non-bailable. The presumption of innocence is reversed. Alleged encroach-



"The proposed amendments to the Indian Forest Act seek to turn communities into the problem." Kand tribal women in Odisha. \*ASHISH KOTHARI

ers can be arrested without warrant. Forest officials will be given the authority to use arms against tribals for "violation of laws".

The draft says the 'forest' will not be limited to land owned by the government; it will include any flora considered forest, as a 1996 Supreme Court order had expanded the definition of forest. The Central government will be able to change the classification from 'unprotected' to 'reserved' or 'protected', and the erstwhile land owners will be subjected to penal provisions for customary use of their land. The fears of a draconian police state are not alarmist. The criminal justice system in States such as Chhattisgarh is inundated with cases against Adivasis who exercise their forest rights. Yet, the amendments proposed seek to limit the discretion of officers to withdraw any offences, ensuring a protracted legal process, with prolonged incarceration.

It is an old adage that those who forget history are bound to repeat it. As a young editor in Germany, Karl Marx was radicalised by the use of penal provisions to prosecute people collecting firewood in the forests, an old custom. With increasing industrialisation, feudal property owners could monetise the firewood, and the customary rights of people to collect firewood was curtailed. Marx was incensed at the plight of those jailed for this infraction, which accounted for the majority of penal cases in the prosperous Rhineland.

The Forest Rights Act, a legislation mitigating the Indian Forest Act, already weakened by poor implementation, will be further limited by excluding 'village forests', ironically named, from its purview. In addition, the community's voice will also be excluded from a new category of 'production forest'. 'Production forest' may be handed over to private operators. This will corporatise forest resources. The problems with these provisions are self-evident.

A Section 26 has been proposed, which will allow forest department officers to suspend the right to pasture or collect forest produce from the primarily Adivasi communities residing in the forest. This will take away not only the livelihood of the forest dwellers, but also strike at the very root of their deep relationship with their environment, customs and traditions. The proposed Section 22(A)(2) is another example of gross injustice. It proposes that the government can acquire any right of a person which is "inconsistent with the conservation of the proposed reserved forest". No parameters have been given to decide what is "inconsistent", and the decision to declare the "inconsistent" use rests with the government.

States with large forest tracts with big tribal populations have tried in the past to settle forest land "encroached" by the tribal people and grant them pattas. The Forest Rights Act allows tribals present at the cut-off date, and non-tribals who can

show 75 years of possession, a quasi-property right, or patta, to be administered by the Tribal Affairs Ministry rather than the forest department. Activists expected that this proposed amendment would bring in legal provisions for such settlement. This so-called forest land has no trees on the ground, and has been cultivated by the tribals for a long time, but is still designated as forest. People are subjected to harassment year after year because they are treated as encroachers. The Chhattisgarh government had granted pattas to these "encroachers" to give them legal status, but recently the courts have cancelled these pattas, calling them illegal. It was expected that the proposed amendments would legalise these pattas, but the amendments proposed suggest the opposite.

## Managing forests

It is not only activists who are voicing their concerns; the Chhattisgarh government has expressed its concern at the taking away of the powers given to gram sabhas through the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.

The amendments will also further centralise the management of forest, as the legislation takes away the State governments' discretion to manage forests even further.

Given the correlation between Adivasi forest areas and the 'Red Corridor', the law is not only undemocratic, but also has implications for internal security. Adivasis are at the front line of the battle against Maoists, and the principal victims of war-waging in their communities. This Act, in seeking to criminalise their very economic existence, will be a boon for Maoist propaganda.

The proposed legislation seeks to turn communities into the problem. To paraphrase Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Adivasis, at the very least, need the Indian state to take its foot off their neck. In these elections, Adivasi and other communities would do well to ask those seeking their blessings their stance on the proposed amendments.

Avi Singh is the Additional Standing Counsel for criminal cases for the Government of the NCT of Delhi and Peeyush Bhatia is a lawyer practicing before the Chhattisgarh High Court and State President of the Youth Bar Association of India

## FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

# Internal resolve trumps external threats

What propels journalists to carry on with their job



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Last week, India dropped two places to rank 140 out of 180 countries on the Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index. The report says that the lead up to the ongoing Lok Sabha election was a particularly dangerous time for journalists in India. It observes that violence against journalists – police violence, attacks by Maoist fighters, and reprisals by criminal groups or corrupt politicians – is one of the most striking characteristics of the current state of press freedom in India. It points out how criminal prosecutions are often used to gag journalists critical of the authorities, with some prosecutors invoking Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code under which seditious is punishable by life imprisonment. It rightly concludes that the mere threat of such a prosecution encourages self-censorship.

## The spirit of reporters

The external environment is definitely hostile to free speech and good journalism. But journalists seem to be defiant of this hostility, as seen in the rush to seek admission to journalism schools and in the number of software professionals who switch careers to journalism. The idea of a public sphere and engagement with the common good has never wavered within the profession. Discussions among journalists are often about how to improve the quality of investigations, make methodologies more rigorous, and improve the style of communication. The external ecology fails to dampen the spirit of many reporters. What propels journalists to carry on with their mission?

Among the various tasks of being a journalist, the act of bearing witness brings in an element of empathy to the profession. Poet and journalist Kwame Dawes has documented for the Nieman Reports the interview roles he experienced as a witness – as a poet and as a journalist. Reflecting on his extensive work in Haiti, Mr. Dawes says his poems came from "grace moments" – moments of silence and seeming insignificance. He sees a difference between trying to understand in-

tellectually and witnessing emotionally events unfolding before one's eye. "I stand as a witness to the silences – to what goes unspoken and ignored – to the things that float away as if insubstantial but that are filled with the simple breaths of people trying to make sense of their existence. This act of witnessing allows us to reach to other levels of meaning that can only be reached through the poem," he writes.

Reyhan Harmanci, editor at First Look Media, poses an important question: "Bear witness – but then what?" She argues for a framework where there are possibilities for calls to action, or at least discussion, that give meaning to the reams of primary documents. Roger Cohen of *The New York Times* asserts that "to bear witness means being there – and that's not free." He writes: "No search engine gives you the smell of a crime, the tremor in the air, the eyes that smolder, or the cadence of a scream. No news aggregator tells of the ravaged city exhaling in the dusk, nor summons the defiant cries that rise into the night. No miracle of technology renders the lip-drying taste of fear. No algorithm captures the hush of dignity, nor evokes the adrenalin rush of courage coalescing, nor traces the fresh raw line of a welt."

## Bearing witness

P.V. Srividya's investigation into booth capturing, multiple voting and threats in a Pattali Makkal Katchi-dominated area called Nathamedu in Tamil Nadu vindicates all that is written about journalists being effective witnesses. The report, "Nathamedu makes a mockery of democracy" (April 19), captured the underbelly of the election process: deliberate fixing of the camera to avoid the voting compartment; capturing of the voting compartment; multiple voting; voting with no voter IDs and only booth slips; and open threats to the polling staff. The report had its effect. The Election Commission has sought a report on electoral malpractices, including booth capturing, in Nathamedu, which falls under the Dharmapuri parliamentary constituency, which incidentally recorded the highest turnout in the Lok Sabha election in the State. As long as journalism helps empower the general public with facts, no amount of external threat will rob its inherent agency to be an active witness.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

## SINGLE FILE

# Doordarshan's partiality

The committee that reviews political speeches should not only claim to be fair, but be seen as fair

BINOY VISWAM



The Election Commission (EC) allots telecast and broadcast time to political parties for carrying out their election campaign on Doordarshan and All India Radio during elections. I had submitted my speech to Doordarshan for vetting sufficiently in advance. It was only when I reached the office to record my speech that I was told that a paragraph of the speech referring to the nexus between the RSS and the NDA would have to be revised, apparently because it was "criticism based on unverified allegations". As this censoring of speech is against the basic tenets of democracy, I decided not to record my speech.

According to the order passed by the EC while allotting broadcast time to political parties on Doordarshan, the following should be avoided in speeches: criticism of other countries; attack on religions/communities; anything obscene or defamatory; incitement of violence; aspersions against the President or the judiciary; anything amounting to contempt of court; anything affecting the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the country; and criticism by names of persons. It is clear that the paragraph that was deemed objectionable was not covered under any of these grounds, nor was it based on unverified allegations – it is a fact that the ideological parent of the NDA is the RSS. It is also well documented that the RSS drew its basic ideology from fascist regimes. My intention was to show that the exclusionary actions of the NDA are based on its ideological roots.

Section 12(2)(b) of the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990 puts the onus on the broadcaster to safeguard citizens' right to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively on all matters of public interest, and to present a fair and balanced flow of information including contrasting views without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own. It is not enough to claim that the committee that reviewed the speech is an independent body; it must also be seen to be impartial.

This is not the first time that Doordarshan has been informed of its biased approach in favour of the ruling regime. In April, the EC took note of its disproportionate coverage of different political parties. For a month after elections were announced, the BJP got 160 hours of coverage; the Congress, 60 hours; and the CPI(M), eight. Doordarshan has already flouted a guideline of the EC which states that it should provide fair and balanced coverage of campaigning. The EC told Doordarshan to "desist from extending any preferential or disproportionate airtime coverage in favour of any party" and sought a reply for acting "not in accordance with the principle of maintaining neutrality and level-playing field". The EC is tasked with ensuring a level playing field for all parties. One hopes that it will take note of this violation of the freedom to talk about issues plaguing the country.

Binoy Viswam is a Rajya Sabha member representing the CPI



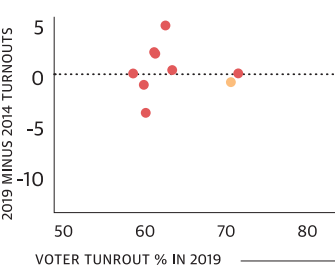
## DATA POINT

### A fractionally lower turnout

Voter turnout in 54% of the 95 seats in the second phase of this general election was lower than in 2014, according to provisional data released by the Election Commission. The overall turnout in these seats was 69.13%, compared to 69.56% in 2014. The graphs capture variations in turnout across regions. Seats above the horizontal zero line registered a better turnout in 2019 compared to 2014. By **The Hindu Data Team**

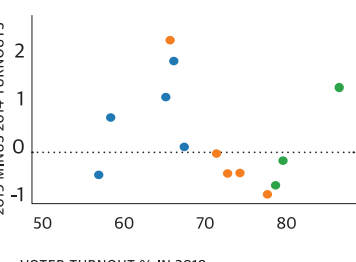
#### North

Both seats\* in Jammu and Kashmir registered a drop in turnout compared to 2014. Srinagar saw the lowest turnout in Phase 2 (14%). It also recorded the highest drop since 2014: -11.8% points. U.P.'s record was mixed: of the 8 seats, Fatehpur Sikri and Mathura saw a lower turnout, but others did better



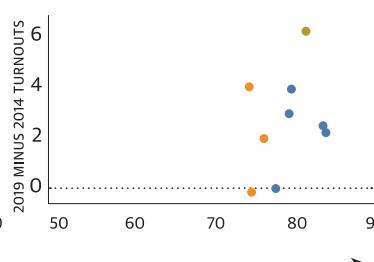
#### East

Seats in Bihar registered a poor turnout, but improved in 4 out of 5 seats since 2014. Seats in West Bengal recorded a healthy turnout, but dropped in 2 of the 3 seats. Odisha's turnout was middling, but lower in 4 seats



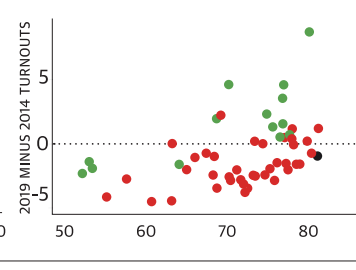
#### Northeast and Central

Seats in Assam and Manipur registered a good turnout and also improved from 2014. Chhattisgarh also saw a decent turnout this time. A marginal drop was registered in Mahasamund



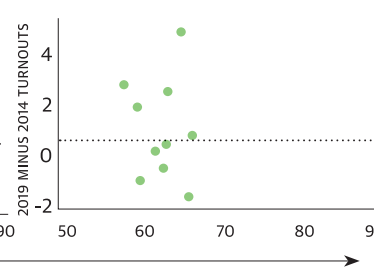
#### South

The Union Territory of Puducherry registered a good turnout (81.2%), but this was still lower than in 2014. Turnout in most seats in Tamil Nadu was lower, while many seats registered increases in Karnataka. Except seats in Chennai and Bengaluru metros, the others saw a decent to good turnout



#### West

The 10 seats which went to polls in Maharashtra recorded a lower turnout (average: 62.77%) than the overall average for all the constituencies that polled in Phase 2 (69.13%). Five of these seats registered a hike in turnout compared to 2014, while the rest recorded a drop



\*The Srinagar seat is not visible in the graphs as the 14% turnout was too low to be plotted within the ranges

## FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 22, 1969

### King's wait in vain for 'uthappam'

The desire of the King of Malaysia, Yang di Pertuan Agong, to taste "uthappam", one of the South Indian delicacies, could not be fulfilled late on Saturday night [April 19, Bombay] when he passed through Bombay on his way from Teheran to Kuala Lumpur. Soon after he landed in Bombay after midnight, the King expressed his wish to taste "uthappam" and as an alternative the "spaghetti", an Italian dish. The Government officials and others present to welcome the King during his two-hour halt at Santa Cruz airport were in a quandary as they could not arrange for the dish. The airport restaurant could not provide these eatables at that late hour nor could the authorities get the "uthappam" from outside hotels, as they were all closed. Later, the King, accompanied by his Queen and party left for Kuala Lumpur without relishing the "uthappam" or the "spaghetti".

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 22, 1919.

### A Sensational Caste Case.

Mr. A.A. Venkitarama Iyer, B.A., the local [Calicut] Sub-Magistrate, was engaged on Wednesday and Thursday last [April 16 and 17] in the hearing of the very interesting and sensational case of pollution against Dr. K.V. Choy and Mr. Sankara Iyer. Mr. M.S. Rama Iyer, B.A., B.L., assisted by Mr. P. Achuthan, defended the accused, while Mr. A.V. Govinda Menon, B.A., B.L., assisted by Mr. K.N. Subramania Iyer, B.A., B.L., conducted the prosecution. The accused had cited twenty-two witnesses for the defence of whom the first to be examined was Mr. P. Ramunni Menon, B.A., B.L., of the Ottapalam bar. He stated in the course of his evidence that in towns and Municipalities the custom of distance pollution was not really observed. He would say that the custom was practically dead. The vast majority of the people in rural parts also did not observe it. As a Home Ruler, it was not his view that social reform should precede political reform. But as a man, he believed in progress along all lines.

## POLL CALL

### Booth management

Referred to in some countries as 'Get out the vote', booth management or turnout management refers to the efforts made by political parties to increase voter turnout during elections. Such an effort is usually made by a political party to ensure that its core and potential voters turn out in large numbers to vote. Booth management can have a major impact on the number of seats a party wins in the election. Political parties manage booths by, say, appointing party workers and a booth manager to focus attention on every booth in a constituency.

## MORE ON THE WEB

Blasts rock Sri Lankan churches and hotels on Easter Sunday

<https://bit.ly/2ILTtHg>



# बिज्ञनेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 55

## जेट के सबक

**बोते** बुधवार को देर रात 12.30 बजे जब जेट एयरवेज (एक समय देश की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी निजी विमानन कंपनी) की अंतिम उड़ान मुंबई में उतरी तो विमान चालक ने अपने संदेश में कहा, 'हम आशा करते हैं कि हम दोबारा जल्द उड़ान भरेंगे। जब भी ऐसा हो, आप हमारी सेवा लें।' 25 वर्ष पहले शुरू हुई जेट एयरवेज के लिए यह एक मार्मिक क्षण

था लेकिन सेवाओं का अनिश्चित कालीन निलंबन कतई चौंकाने वाली बात नहीं थी क्योंकि वर्ष की शुरुआत 119 विमानों से करने वाली कंपनी के पास अब बमुश्किल पांच विमान परिचालन के लिए बचे थे। कंपनी पर 8,400 करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज है और मार्च में बनी सहमति के विपरीत कंपनी को कर्जदाताओं से परिचालन के लिए जरूरी ऋण

नहीं मिल सका। विमानन कंपनी की हालत निश्चित रूप से बेहद खराब है। बड़े हवाई अड्डों पर उसका बेहतरीन प्रस्थान समय अब या तो दूसरी विमानन सेवाओं को आवंटित हो चुका है या जल्दी ही ऐसा हो जाएगा। 25 मार्च को हिस्सेदारी बेचने और प्राथमिकता वाली फंडिंग की समझौता योजना की घोषणा करने के बाद जेट के कर्जदाताओं का रुख टंडा क्यों पड़ गया, इसे समझना कठिन नहीं है। पहला, कंपनी को नकदी आवक पर बहुत बुरा असर पड़ा था और दूसरा, सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के 12 फरवरी 2018 के सर्कुलर को निरस्त कर दिया जो फंसी परिसंपत्तियों के निपटारे से संबंधित था। निस्तारण योजना उसी सर्कुलर के आधार पर बनी थी। जांच एजंसियों का निशाना बनने की

आशंका ने भी बैंकों का मानस बदलने में भूमिका निभाई होगी। विमानन कंपनी ने 400 करोड़ रुपये की घटी हुई राशि की मांग की, वह भी अव्यवहार्य विकल्प था क्योंकि अधिकांश फंड वेतन और बकाया भुगतान के लिए मांगे गए थे। बैंकों ने कंपनी के प्रवर्तक नरेश गोगयल को लंबे समय तक रियायत दी, हालांकि जेट एक ऐसे भंडर में उलझ गई थी जिसका दूर-दूर तक कोई अंत नहीं नजर आ रहा था। वर्ष 2018 के अंत में जेट के देनदारी चूकने के पहले से कुप्रबंधन के संकेत नजर आने लगे थे। विमानन कंपनी निरंतर घाटे और नकदी की तंगी के चलते अपना नियंत्रण गंवा रही थी और जेट के अंकेक्षकों ने भी गत वर्ष अगस्त में उसके बचने को लेकर सवाल उठाए थे।

इसके बाद भी बैंकों ने गोगयल को स्ट्रेटिजिक निवेशकों के माध्यम से कंपनी को बचाने पर मजबूर नहीं किया। बल्कि उन्होंने खुद को यकीन दिलाया कि वे अपने ऋण को इक्विटी में बदल सकते हैं। यह बात अलग है कि अतीत में ऐसी कोशिशों का हश्र अच्छा नहीं रहा था। बैंकों ने ऋणशोधन अक्षमता एवं दिवालय संहिता का मार्ग अपनाने से भी इनकार कर दिया जबकि वह ऐसी ही स्थितियों के लिए बना है।

बैंकों ने गोगयल को इतने लंबे अरसे तक रियायत क्यों दी, इसकी वजह ज्ञात नहीं है लेकिन ऐसा शायद इसलिए हुआ क्योंकि जेट के प्रवर्तक के कई रसुखदार मित्र थे। राजनीतिक शक्तियों को नाराज करने के उर ने भी भूमिका निभाई होगी। शायद उन्हें अंदाजा

नहीं होगा कि इससे कितने बड़े पैमाने पर बेरोजगारी आएगी और हवाई किराये में कितना इजाफा होगा। हालांकि यह कहना होगा कि सरकार परिदृश्य से बाहर रही और उसने संकेत हल करने का काम बैंकों और विमानन कंपनी पर छोड़ दिया था। उसने एयरपोर्ट स्लॉट को अस्थायी तौर पर अन्य कंपनियों को देकर भी उथलपुथल को कम किया। फिलहाल जेट के बचने के लिए किसी चमत्कार की आवश्यकता है। निवेशक जुटाना भी आसान नहीं है क्योंकि कंपनी के पास कुछ उड़ान अधिकारों तथा लैंडिंग और पार्किंग के कुछ अधिकारों के सिवा ज्यादा कुछ है नहीं। उसकी ब्रांड वैल्यू भी तेजी से घट रही है। जेट की पूरी कहानी में अहम सबक यही है कि किसी प्रवर्तक को संस्थान से बड़ा नहीं समझना चाहिए।



विनय शिन्हा

# अंधराष्ट्रवाद और मोदी की कोशिश

मोदी-शाह की भाजपा ने अतीत के खतरों और शत्रु को नए सिरे से खड़ा किया है और एक डराने वाले अंधराष्ट्रवाद को जन्म दिया है। यह बांटने वाला तरीका है। इतिहास बताता है कि इसका अंत कभी सुखद नहीं होता।

हिंदी मीडिया की अपनी स्वाभाविक छानबीन के दौरान मैं अतीत के एक गीत पर ठहर सा गया। इस गीत में कवि प्रदीप ने देश के भीतर के गद्दारों से सावधान रहने की बात कही थी। राजेंद्र कुमार अभिनीत और मन्ना डे के गाए इस गीत में उन्होंने कहा था, 'झांक रहे हैं अपने दुश्मन, अपनी ही दीवारों से/संभल के रहना अपने घर में छुपे हुए गद्दारों से' वह आगे लिखते हैं कि 'होशियार तुमको अपने कश्मीर की रक्षा करनी है!'

यह गीत उन्होंने महेश कौल की फिल्म तलाक के लिए लिखा था। सन 1958 में रिलीज हुई यह फिल्म फिल्मफेयर पुरस्कार के लिए भी नामित हुई थी। परंतु हिंदी प्रदेश में होने वाली चर्चाओं में यह बात दोबारा क्यों उभर रही है?

आपको ऐसे संदर्भ भी मिलेंगे कि नेहरू को यह गीत बहुत नापसंद था क्योंकि इसमें कुछ भारतीयों को दुश्मन बताया गया था। इसलिए उन्होंने इसे प्रतिबंधित किया था। यह भी कि सन 1965 के युद्ध के वक्त लाल बहादुर शास्त्री ने यह प्रतिबंध हटा लिया। ताजा दलील यह है कि एक ओर शत्रु दरवाजे पर खड़ा है और दूसरी ओर हमारे घरों में गद्दार छिपे हुए हैं। तथ्यों की तो बात ही छोड़ दें।

इन 60 वर्षों में, ढाई युद्धों में जीत हासिल करने, पाकिस्तान को दो टुकड़ों में बांटने और 2.7 लाख करोड़ डॉलर को लगभग स्वस्थान बनने के बाद शायद आपको अर्थ होगा कि देश बहुत सुरक्षित है, समृद्धि की ओर बढ़ रहा है और ऐसे में यह आशावाद जाग सकता है कि हम अतीत के मोह से मुक्त हो सकें।

परंतु उत्तर और दक्षिण में देश के बड़े हिस्से को यात्रा करने के बाद मैं पूरी विनम्रता से यह कहना चाहूंगा कि नरेंद्र मोदी और अमित शाह के नेतृत्व में भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) इसका ठीक विपरीत हासिल कर

पाए हैं। ऐसे समय में जबकि भारत को आंतरिक और बाहरी स्तर पर सर्वाधिक सुरक्षित महसूस करना चाहिए था, तब वे मतदाताओं के एक बड़े तबके को यह यकीन दिलाने में कामयाब रहे हैं कि अतीत के खतरे लौट आए हैं। इनमें बड़ी तादाद उन युवाओं की है जो व्हाट्सएप से इतिहास की शिक्षा लेते हैं और यह मानते हैं कि भारत 2014 में अंधकार युग से बाहर आया। ऐसे में ऐसे मजबूत, आक्रामक और निर्भय नेता के अलावा आप किस पर यकीन करेंगे जो बिना पुनर्विचार किए कमांडो को सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक पर भेज देता हो या दुश्मन के क्षेत्र में विमानों से बमबारी करता हो?

अर्थव्यवस्था और रोजगार के मोर्चे पर इतने खराब हालात और संकट की स्थिति को प्रोपगंडा के जरिए दुरुस्त नहीं किया जा सकता है। हमें अनुमान था कि मोदी और शाह इस चुनाव को 'देश खतरे में है' के नारे के साथ राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के चुनाव में बदल देंगे। हम कह सकते हैं कि वे इसमें सफल रहे।

किसी चुनाव को 'राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा' के चुनाव में बदलने की तीन पूर्व शर्तें हैं। पहला, राष्ट्रीय हितों को आक्रामक और उन्मादी तरीके से नए सिरे से प्रस्तुत करना। दूसरा, एक मजबूत शत्रु हो जिससे सच्चे राष्ट्रवादी नफरत करें और आर्शकित रहें। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बात, उस दुश्मन से सांतांठ करने वाले और सहानुभूति रखने वाले देश में मौजूद हों केवल तभी आप उसके खिलाफ वोट मांग सकेंगे और नैतिक या राजनीतिक रूप से कोई विरोध नहीं कर सकेंगे। इसे केवल ध्रुवीकरण की राजनीति कहना कम समझ की बात होगी। यह काफी

प्रभावी और मारक है। राष्ट्रीय हित की ऐसी लोकप्रिय अवधारणा विकसित करने के लिए पहचान की तीव्र परिभाषा विकसित करनी होती है। अमेरिकी नीतिकार और हॉवर्ड के प्रोफेसर जोसेफ नाइ जूनियर ने फॉरेन पॉलिसी पत्रिका में लिखा है कि राष्ट्रवाद की अवधारणा फिसलन भरी है और इसका उपयोग विदेश नीति को व्याख्या करने में भी किया जाता है और उसे तय

करने में भी। आगे वह सैमुएल हर्टिगटन को उद्धृत करते हुए कहते हैं कि बिना राष्ट्रीय पहचान की सुरक्षित समझ के राष्ट्रीय हित को स्पष्ट नहीं किया जा सकता है। आप समझ ही गए होंगे कि मैं किस तरफ इशारा कर रहा हूँ। हिंदी की पहचान ही भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद का मूल है। जो हिंदुओं के लिए बेहतर है, वही राष्ट्र के लिए भी बेहतर है। हो सकता है कि इसका उलटा भी सच हो। अगर ऐसा नहीं है तो इसे सुधारना होगा। गैर हिंदुओं की बात करें तो उनको भी ऐसा ही लाभ मिलेगा। परंतु अगर वे शिकायत करते हैं या असंतुष्ट रहते हैं तो वे भी घायल दिल वाले उदारवादियों, सवाल करने वाले पत्रकारों, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं, शहरी नक्सल आदि की गद्दारों की सूची में शामिल हो जाएंगे। अब जरूरी कवि प्रदीप की उस चेतावनी को याद कर लें जो उन्होंने घर में छिपे गद्दारों के बारे में दी थी।

मोदी और शाह ने यह अभियान इसी प्रकार तैयार किया है। विपक्ष न्याय, रफेल, धर्मनिरपेक्षता, समता आदि के साथ एक अलग खेल खेल रहा है। यह वैसा ही है जैसे एक पक्ष फौजी धुन पर आगे बढ़ रहा है जबकि दूसरा तानपूरे पर आलाप ले रहा है। वे तमाम विचार भी हींदू हैं लेकिन सच

यही है कि अगर देश नहीं बचा तो कुछ भी नहीं बचेगा। चूंकि ऐसे खतरे आसन्न हैं तो आप देश किसके हाथों में सौंपना चाहेंगे? एक निर्णायक और मजबूत नेता के या एक 'पप्पू' के?

देश में कोई सर्वविजेता राष्ट्रवादी लहर नहीं है लेकिन ऐसा माहौल तो है कि आर्थिक निराशा और असंतोष की काट की जा सके। देश के दूरदराज इलाकों में आपको ऐसे युवा, बेरोजगार और नाउम्मीद लोग मिलते हैं जो कहते हैं उनके पास काम नहीं है और वे परेशान हो रहे हैं लेकिन वे देश के लिए थोड़ा कष्ट सहने को तैयार हैं। हमें भले ही यह सब बेवकूफाना और बेतुका लगे लेकिन इससे हकीकत नहीं बदल सकती।

दूसरा कारक है पहचान। यह लहर आबादी के एक बड़े हिस्से में कमजोर या नदारद है। यह आबादी का वह हिस्सा है जिसकी राजनीतिक पहचान हिंदू धर्म से कहीं अधिक मजबूत है। यह जाति भी हो सकती है। उदाहरण के लिए कर्नाटक में वोक्कालिंगा और उत्तर प्रदेश में यादव तथा देश के लगभग हर हिस्से में दलित। यह भाषा और जातीयता भी हो सकती है मसलन तमिल और तेलुगू। यह धर्म के आधार पर भी हो सकता है मसलन मुस्लिम और ईसाई। जहां भी ऐसे कुछ कारक मिलते हैं, खासतौर पर उत्तर प्रदेश में, तब यह स्थिति निर्मित हो सकती है।

यही कारण है कि सबसे अधिक नुकसान कांग्रेस को हुआ है। कई अन्य क्षेत्रीय दलों की तरह उसके पास वैकल्पिक पहचान का बचाव हासिल नहीं है। राहुल के इस दौर में पार्टी ने कट्टर राष्ट्रवाद का मुकाबला करने के लिए उदार शांतिवाद को राह चुनी है जो व्यावहारिक नहीं प्रतीत होती है। खासतौर पर यह देखते हुए कि पार्टी खुद भी कूट और निर्भय सरकार चला चुकी है। अगर आपको लगता है कि भाजपा के शत्रुओं और गद्दारों के खिलाफ अभियान की काट राजद्रोह विरोधी कानून का खात्मा है तो आपको पता ही नहीं है कि आपकी लड़ाई किस बात से है।

मोदी और शाह की भाजपा ने न केवल युवा मतदाताओं के मस्तिष्क में उन्मादी राष्ट्रवाद की भावना भरी है बल्कि उसने एक खतरनाक अंधराष्ट्रीयता को जन्म दिया है और इतिहास बताता है कि इसका अंत कभी भला नहीं होता। यहां शत्रु स्पष्ट है और हथियार चिह्नित हैं। पाकिस्तान के लिए हमारे पास जेट विमान और कमांडो हैं और देश के भीतरी दुश्मनों के लिए सोशल मीडिया और लांछन।

कवि प्रदीप ने जिन खतरों और शत्रुओं की पहचान की थी और जिनके बारे में लग रहा था कि हमने उन्हें समाप्त कर दिया है, वे दोबारा जिंदा हो गए हैं और हिंदी मीडिया ने सबसे पहले उस रझान को भांपा है। साठ वर्ष बाद अब एक नई पीढ़ी और नई शैली (रैप) के कवि ने मौजूदा मिजाज को प्रकट किया है।

रणवीर सिंह- आलिया भट्ट अभिनीत फिल्म गली ब्वॉय का यह गीत सुनिए: दो हजार अठारह है, देश को खतरा है/ हर तरफ आग है, तुम आग के बीच हो/जोर से चिल्ला दो, सब को डरा दो, अपनी जहरीली बीन बजा के, सबका ध्यान खींच लो। क्योंकि रैपर अपनी बात समाप्त करते हुए कहता है: हम सब अब जिंगोस्तान में रह रहे हैं।

# कल्याणकारी एजेंडे को कैसे दिया जाए आकार

देश की राजनीति में व्याप्त कल्याणकारी प्रतिस्पर्धा की आलोचना करना आम बात है। गत वर्ष के अंत में कुछ राज्यों के विधानसभा चुनाव आयोजित किए गए थे। कांग्रेस ने बकाया कृषि ऋण माफ करने का वादा किया था और उसे चुनाव में जीत मिली थी। मौजूदा आम चुनाव में सत्ताधारी भाजपा को उन्मादी है कि उसने अंतरिम बजट में किसानों को प्रत्यक्ष राशि अंतरण की जो घोषणा की है, उसका उसे फायदा मिलेगा। कांग्रेस ने न्यूनतम आय गारंटी योजना का ऐलान किया है जिसका दायरा अधिक है मगर उस पर अमल कठिन। राज्यों के दल इस मामले में और उदार रहे हैं। यह बात राजनेताओं की नजर से चूकी नहीं होगी कि तेलंगाना राष्ट्र समिति, जिसे विधानसभा चुनावों में जबरदस्त जीत मिली, वह सबसे अधिक कल्याण योजनाएं चलाती है।

प्रतिस्पर्धी कल्याण के खिलाफ दलीलें जगजाहिर हैं। इनके लिए संसाधन जुटाना आसान नहीं और इनकी भरपाई करों के माध्यम से ही होगी या फिर उधार लेकर। यानी यह मुद्रास्फीति को प्रभावित करेगा। प्रत्यक्ष कर अपेक्षाकृत कमजोर है। इसलिए कर में इजाफा करना कठिन है। अगर कर व्यवस्था में सुधार के बिना ऐसा किया गया तो कर वंचना को प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा और पूंजी दूसरी जगह जाएगी। इससे बचौं उत्पादक भारत की स्थिति कमजोर बनी रहेगी। यह बात लंबी अवधि में देश के कामगारों को परेशान करती है क्योंकि कंपनियों की स्थापना नहीं होती। देश का सार्वजनिक ऋण कागज पर अपेक्षाकृत कम है पर देनदारी बढ़ रही है। इससे भविष्य में संकट हो सकता है।

बढ़ता हुआ ऋण निजी निवेश में कमी की वजह बनेगा। इसका असर वृद्धि और रोजगार पर पड़ेगा। ऊंची मुद्रास्फीति भी निवेश को हतोत्साहित करती है। राज्य के स्तर पर प्रतिस्पर्धी लोक कल्याण देश के संघीय ढांचे को नुकसान पहुंचाता है क्योंकि राज्य इस बात पर सवाल उठाने लगते हैं कि वे केंद्र को कितना पैसा दे रहे हैं और बदले में उन्हें क्या मिल रहा है और सीधे बाजार तक पहुंच बनाने की राह में क्या बाधा है?

बहरहाल, लोकतांत्रिक राजनीति की अपनी गति होती है। यह समझना की आवश्यक है कि



नीति नियम मिहिर शर्मा

भारत ने अकारण लोककल्याणकारी युग में प्रवेश नहीं किया है बल्कि समावेशी विकास न कर पाने में विफलता इसकी वजह रही है। राज्यों के दल इस मामले में और उदार रहे हैं। यह बात राजनेताओं की नजर से चूकी नहीं होगी कि तेलंगाना राष्ट्र समिति, जिसे विधानसभा चुनावों में जबरदस्त जीत मिली, वह सबसे अधिक कल्याण योजनाएं चलाती है।

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में समावेशी विकास की नाकामी को स्वीकार किया जाए। इसके साथ ही मौजूदा राजनीति में लोककल्याण की आवश्यकता को भी समझा जाए। आवश्यकता यह भी है कि कल्याण योजनाओं को समझदारी से तैयार किया जाए। ऐसा करने से भविष्य के लिए मानव संसाधन और आवश्यकता तैयार करने में भी सहायता मिलेगी। यह सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि कल्याण योजनाओं को ऐसे तैयार किया जाए कि देश की श्रम शक्ति की संभावित उत्पादकता में इजाफा हो सके। इससे बड़े हुए व्यय के नकारात्मक वृद्ध आर्थिक प्रभाव को कम करने में भी सहायता मिलेगी।

यह भी तय नहीं है कि आय समर्थन योजना बेहतर है या नहीं। परंतु कम से कम यह व्यय क्षमता में सुधार लाने का काम करेगी। इससे मानव संसाधन तैयार करने, तलाश की लागत कम करने और श्रम बाजार में समता लाने में भी सहायता मिलेगी।

अगर सरकार स्वास्थ्य एवं मूलभूत शिक्षा पर व्यय बढ़ाएगी तो कहीं अधिक बेहतर होगा। इन नीतिगत प्राथमिकताओं के क्रियान्वयन के लिए आवश्यक सरकारी मशीनरी पर भी खर्च किया जाना चाहिए। सार्वभौमिक स्वास्थ्य सुविधा उत्पादकता बढ़ाएगी। यह काम सस्ती दर पर नहीं किया जा सकता है क्योंकि सरकार को निजी सेवाप्रदाताओं के काम पर करीबी निगाह रखनी होती है अथवा उसे अपने ही स्वास्थ्यकर्मियों को भुगतान करना होता है। प्राथमिक शिक्षा में नतीजों पर अधिक ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। शिक्षा का अधिकार अधिनियम इस दिशा में उचित दृष्टि साबित नहीं हुआ और यह हील वरिष्ठ के नकारा साबित नहीं होगा। वयस्क प्रशिक्षण, ऑनलाइन शिक्षा आदि पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है।

अगर सुधार को लेकर राजनीतिक सहमति के संकेत नहीं नजर आ रहे हैं या जवाबदेह आर्थिक नीति नहीं बनती दिख रही है। हमें यह समझना होगा कि यह बीते दशक में या उससे पहले भी आय में वृद्धि और आय सुरक्षा मुद्दा न करा पाने का दुष्परिणाम है। इस नाकामी पर विलाप करने के बजाय अब वक्त आ गया है कि हम यह सवाल उठाएं कि लोककल्याण के एजेंडे को कैसे आकार दिया जाए।

## कानाफूसी

### वेणुगोपाल पर नजर

कांग्रेस पार्टी में के सी वेणुगोपाल एक ऐसे नेता हैं जिन पर नजर रखने की आवश्यकता है। वह लोकसभा का चुनाव नहीं लड़ रहे हैं लेकिन देश भर में कहां से किसे कांग्रेस का टिकट मिलना चाहिए, इसमें उनकी खूब चल रही है। कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी के केरल के वायनाड से लोकसभा चुनाव मैदान में उतरने की एक वजह वेणुगोपाल भी हैं। वह निवर्तमान लोकसभा में अल्पसंख्यक से सांसद हैं। यह लोकसभा क्षेत्र करीब 100 किलोमीटर की लंबाई में 6 विधानसभा क्षेत्रों में फैला हुआ है। इसका एक हिस्सा कोल्लम जिले में आता है जो मछुआ समुदाय का केंद्र है। यह वाम धड़े के कई दिग्गज राजनेताओं का जन्मस्थान रहा है। जाहिर सी बात है कि अगर कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष आपकी सलाह पर आपके राज्य से निर्वाचित होते हैं तो इसके कई फायदे हैं।

### दोस्ती-दुश्मनी

राजद प्रमुख लालू प्रसाद की अनुपस्थिति में उनके बेटे तेजस्वी यादव पर बोझ कुछ ज्यादा ही बढ़ गया है। इस दौरान उन्हें अपने भाई तेज प्रताप से भी रिस्ते बनाकर रखने हैं जो बागी तेवर दिखा रहे हैं और अगले लालू होने का दम भर रहे हैं। टिकट वितरण को लेकर दोनों भाइयों की अनबन सामने आ गई। हाल में तेजस्वी ने एक तस्वीर ट्वीट की जिसमें दोनों भाई नजर आ रहे हैं। इस तस्वीर में तेज प्रताप के जन्मदिन का केक काटा जा रहा है। उन्होंने अपने भाई तेज प्रताप को टेग करते हुए उन्हें जन्मदिन की बधाई दी है। उन्होंने लिखा है कि तेज प्रताप उन्हें जीवन में अब तक मिले लोगों में सबसे अच्छे हैं। गौरतलब है कि अभी चंद्र रोज पहले तेज प्रताप ने लालू-राबड़ी मोर्चा बनाने की घोषणा की थी। वह टिकट वितरण में अपनी बात न सुने जाने से नाराज थे।



## आपका पक्ष

### शिक्षा के पाठ्यक्रम में बदलाव जरूरी

स्वामी विवेकानंद कहते थे कि शिक्षा का मतलब केवल विद्यार्थी को जानकारी देना नहीं होता बल्कि एक विद्यार्थी में व्यावहारिक ज्ञान, कुशलता, चरित्र, संवेदना, आत्मविश्वास होना चाहिए जिससे उसके ज्ञान से स्वयं को ही नहीं बल्कि समाज को भी लाभ हो। लेकिन देश की शिक्षा व्यवस्था स्वामी विवेकानंद के बताए रास्ते पर चलती नहीं दिखती है। हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था में एक विद्यार्थी का मूल्यांकन मूल्यांकन के आधार पर नहीं बल्कि अंकों के आधार पर किया जाता है। शिक्षक जब नैसर्गिक पर्यावरण विषय पढ़ाते हैं तब विद्यार्थी का मूल्यांकन उसके अंकों के आधार पर किया जाता है। आज भी शिक्षा व्यवस्था में विषय को समझने के बजाए रटवाया जाता है ताकि एक विद्यार्थी को अच्छे अंक मिल सके। इसके लिए मौजूदा पाठ्यक्रम जिम्मेदार हैं। यहाँ विद्यार्थी विषयों की संकल्पनाएँ समझने के बजाए उसे



किसी तरह परीक्षा तक याद रखकर पास हो जाता है। मौजूदा पाठ्यक्रम का उद्देश्य यही है कि अंक के सहारे उसे अच्छे विद्यालय में दाखिला मिल जाए और भविष्य में नौकरी लग जाए। जीवनयापन के लिए नौकरी जरूरी है लेकिन व्यावहारिक ज्ञान भी महत्वपूर्ण है। इसलिए पाठ्यक्रम के साथ-साथ शिक्षा व्यवस्था में बदलाव लाना

शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में स्कूल-कॉलेजों में बुनियादी स्तर पर बदलाव करने की जरूरत है

जरूरी है। सैद्धांतिक अध्ययन के अलावा व्यावसायिक पाठ्यक्रम को महत्व देना चाहिए। बच्चों को रचनात्मक कार्यों में प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए स्कूल में प्रतिदिन

### एक पीरियड रखना चाहिए।

कोशल शिक्षा का अर्थ और उसका महत्त्व विद्यार्थियों को समझाना चाहिए। योग्य और कुशल शिक्षकों की नियुक्ति होनी चाहिए। खेल को भी महत्त्व देना चाहिए ताकि देश में श्रेष्ठ खिलाड़ी तैयार हों और बच्चों का स्वास्थ्य ठीक रहे। अभिभावकों को भी बच्चों के अंकों के बजाय उनकी समझदारी और कुशलता के आधार पर उनका मूल्यांकन करना चाहिए। बच्चों में अवसाद दूर करने के लिए विशेषज्ञों द्वारा प्रशिक्षण देना चाहिए। जब हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था विद्यार्थी के भीतर की जानकारी के साथ-साथ, भावना, चरित्र, संवेदना, कोशल, व्यावहारिक और रचनात्मक ज्ञान के बीज बोने में सक्षम हो जाती है तो यही विद्यार्थी भविष्य में समाज को छाया देने वाले वृक्ष बन सकते हैं।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

### विवादित बयान से बचें नेतागण

हाल में भाजपा प्रत्याशी साध्वी प्रज्ञा की विवादित टिप्पणी से पार्टी ने अपना पल्ला झाड़ लिया है। साध्वी ने मुंबई में हुए आतंकी हमले में शहीद पुलिस अधिकारी के संदर्भ में बयान दिया था। विपक्षी दलों ने साध्वी के बयान की कड़ी आलोचना की है। चुनाव आयोग को साध्वी के बयान के खिलाफ शिकायत मिली है तथा आयोग ने मामले की जांच कराने का फैसला किया है। दरअसल मुंबई में हुए आतंकी हमले में पुलिस अधिकारी हेमंत करकरे शहीद हो गए थे। एक शहीद पर साध्वी ने विवादित बयान दे दिया। उनकी चौतरफा आलोचना हुई। अक्सर चुनाव के समय नेताओं के विवादास्पद बयान आते रहते हैं। नेताओं द्वारा आरोप-प्रत्यारोप के दौरान अपनी मर्यादा भूल जाना ठीक नहीं है। नेताओं को वोट पाने के लिए ऐसा कोई कदम नहीं उठाना चाहिए जिससे किसी को तकलीफ हो।



## मजबूरी की राजनीति

कहते हैं राजनीति में न कोई दोस्त होता है और न दुश्मन। दोस्त या दुश्मन जो भी होता है, राजनीतिक मजबूरियों, हितों और स्वार्थों की वजह से होता है। ये दोस्ती-दुश्मनी मौका-परस्त होती है। शुक्रवार को मैनपुरी में जब समाजवादी पार्टी के संरक्षक मुलायम सिंह यादव और बहुजन समाज पार्टी की प्रमुख मायावती मंच पर एक साथ आए तो लग ही नहीं रहा था दोनों के बीच लंबे समय से कोई गंभीर कटुता रही होगी या स्थायी दुश्मनी जैसी कोई बात थी। दोनों ने एक-दूसरे की तारीफ में जम कर कसीदे पढ़े, एक-दूसरे को जिताने के लिए वोट मांगे, मायावती ने मुलायम सिंह के प्रति जिस तरह से सम्मान दिखाया, उसके लिए उनकी जितनी तारीफ की जाए, कम होगी। मुलायम ने भी बड़प्पन दिखाने में कोई कसर नहीं छोड़ी। साथ मिल कर चुनाव लड़ने के लिए सपा और बसपा में गठबंधन तो पहले ही हो चुका था। लेकिन तबसे ये कयास लगाए जा रहे थे कि क्या मुलायम सिंह यादव और मायावती पुरानी बातों को भुला कर एक मंच पर आएंगे! हालांकि दोनों नेताओं ने गठबंधन बहुत ही मजबूरी में और सोच-समझ कर किया है। दोनों को अपने राजनीतिक अस्तित्व को लेकर खतरा साफ नजर आ रहा था। ऐसे में उत्तर प्रदेश की राजनीति से लेकर केंद्र तक में एक बड़ी चुनौती के लिए सपा-बसपा गठजोड़ की जरूरत महसूस की गई।

उत्तर प्रदेश में सपा-बसपा के गठबंधन की पहली सरकार 1993 में बनी थी। तब मुलायम सिंह मुख्यमंत्री थे। लेकिन, जैसा कि कहा जाता है, उन्हें इस बात का डर सता रहा था कि भाजपा बसपा को समर्थन देकर उन्हें हटा सकती है और मायावती को मुख्यमंत्री बनवा सकती है। सत्ता को लेकर इस तरह की आशंकाओं की परिणति दो जून 1995 को देखने को मिली, जब लखनऊ के राज्य अतिथि गृह में सपा विधायकों और कार्यकर्ताओं ने मायावती और उनके विधायकों पर हमला बोल दिया। मायावती ने तब किसी तरह अपनी जान बचाई। इस हिंसक घटना के बाद सपा और बसपा के रास्ते हमेशा के लिए अलग हो गए थे। दोनों दलों के प्रमुख एक-दूसरे को फूटी आंख नहीं सुहाते थे। ढाई दशक के दौरान सपा भी सत्ता में रही और बसपा भी, लेकिन कहीं कोई मेल-मिलाप की संभावना नहीं बनी, उल्टे एक-दूसरे को सबक सिखाने के संकल्प किए गए थे।

उत्तर प्रदेश में ढाई दशक तक सपा और बसपा पिछड़ों और दलितों के नाम पर सत्ता में आती-जाती रहीं। देश की दलित राजनीति को एक नया आयाम भी मिला। लेकिन जनता लंबे समय से इन दोनों दलों के शासन से उकता गई और पिछले लोकसभा और विधानसभा चुनाव में सपा-बसपा को उनकी हैसियत दिखा दी। सन् 2007 में पूर्ण बहुमत हासिल कर सत्ता में आने वाली बसपा को पिछले लोकसभा चुनाव में एक भी सीट नहीं मिली थी। 2017 में सुबे की सत्ता से सपा बाहर हो गई। इसके बाद से ही दोनों दल इस जमीनी हकीकत को समझने लगे थे कि अगर मिल कर चुनाव नहीं लड़ा तो स्थायी रूप से उत्तर प्रदेश की सत्ता से छुट्टी हो सकती है। दोनों दलों का पहला मकसद भाजपा को शिकस्त देना है। सब जानते हैं कि आज मुलायम सिंह और मायावती राजनीतिक मजबूरियों की वजह से एक-दूसरे का सम्मान कर रहे हैं। हालांकि दोनों नेताओं के लिए निजी दुश्मनी भी भुला देने के लिए इससे बेहतर और क्या वक्त हो सकता है!

## आतंक का दायरा

श्रीलंका में हुए बम धमाके आतंकवाद से लड़ने को प्रतिबद्ध विश्व विरादरी के लिए एक नई चुनौती है। श्रीलंका के तीन गिरजाघरों, तीन पांच सितारा होटलों और दो अन्य जगहों पर हुए शंखलाबद्ध बम धमाकों में अब तक दो सौ से ज्यादा लोग मारे जा चुके हैं और साढ़े चार सौ से ऊपर घायल हैं। अभी तक इन हमलों की जिम्मेदारी किसी संगठन ने नहीं ली है। पर हमलों की प्रकृति को देखते हुए अंदाजा लगाना मुश्किल नहीं है कि इसमें शामिल संगठन का मकसद क्या था। हालांकि श्रीलंका लंबे समय तक गृहयुद्ध की चपेट में रहा है। वहां तमिल समुदाय के लोगों में जब-तब अपने प्रति भेदभाव का दंश उभरता रहा है। पर अब तमिल लिबरेशन टाइगर जैसे संगठन ऐसी स्थिति में नहीं है कि इतने बड़े स्तर पर सुनियोजित हमले कर सकें। ताजा घटना के बारे में श्रीलंका सरकार ने कहा है कि ये हमले धार्मिक कट्टरपंथी संगठन ने किए हैं। रविवार को ईस्टर का त्योहार था। चर्चों में ईस्टर का उत्सव चल रहा था। इसी तरह होटलों में आयोजन हो रहे थे। इन धमाकों में कई विदेशी नागरिक भी मारे गए हैं। इसे देखते हुए साफ है कि हमलावरों का निशाना ईसाई समुदाय के लोग थे। इसलिए स्वाभाविक ही शक की सुई अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सक्रिय आतंकवादी संगठनों की तरफ जा रही है।

श्रीलंका में गृहयुद्ध समाप्त होने के बाद छिटपुट हिंसक झड़पें होती रही हैं। बहुसंख्यक सिंहली समुदाय के लोग वहां की मस्जिदों पर हमले करते रहे हैं। इसके चलते पिछले साल वहां आपातकाल भी लगाना पड़ा था। इस तरह यह आशंका हो सकती है कि वहां के अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय के लोगों में अपने ऊपर होने वाले अत्याचारों की टीस दबी होगी और वे इसके प्रतिकार की योजना बना रहे होंगे। पर ताजा हमलों में जितने बड़े पैमाने पर विस्फोटक और सुनियोजित रणनीति अपनाई गई है, वह सामान्य रूप से बदले की भावना की उपज नहीं हो सकती। श्रीलंका सरकार का कहना है कि सभी जगहों पर आत्मघाती हमले हुए। हालांकि अभी इन हमलों में इस्तेमाल किए गए विस्फोटकों की जांच बाकी है। पर यह सवाल अपनी जगह बना हुआ है कि इन आत्मघाती हमलावरों को साजो-सामान कहाँ से उपलब्ध हुआ होगा। उन्हें प्रशिक्षण कहाँ से मिला होगा। फिर किस तरह वे सुरक्षा एजेंसियों को चकमा देकर अपनी साजिशों को अंजाम देने में कामयाब हो गए। हालांकि श्रीलंका सरकार का कहना है कि इन हमलों की सूचना खुफिया एजेंसियों ने दी थी, पर जब तक काबू पाया जाता, तब तक विस्फोट हो गए। पर इससे उसके खुफिया और सुरक्षा इंतजामों की जवाबदेही पर सवाल समाप्त नहीं हो जाते।

श्रीलंका में हुए ताजा हमलों की प्रकृति से स्पष्ट है कि इसमें अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी संगठनों की मिलीभगत है। छिपी बात नहीं है कि आइएसआइएस जैसे संगठन किस तरह दुनिया के तमाम देशों में इस्लामी कट्टरपंथ की जड़ फैलाने में जुटे हुए हैं। खासकर जहां मुसलिम समुदाय पर अन्य समुदायों के हमले अधिक होते रहे हैं, वहां उनके लिए अपनी उपस्थिति बनाने में आसानी होती है। वे दुनिया के तमाम देशों में इसी तरह होटलों और भीड़भाड़ वाली जगहों पर आत्मघाती हमले कर चुनौती देते रहे हैं। श्रीलंका में भी इसी तरह उन्हींने घुसपैट बनाई हो, तो हेरानी की बात नहीं। हालांकि पूरी स्थिति जांच के बात ही स्पष्ट होगी, पर स्पष्ट है कि यह आतंकवाद से लड़ने वाले राष्ट्रों के लिए यह बड़ी चुनौती है।

## कल्पमेधा

**उस जीवन को नष्ट करने का कोई अधिकार नहीं, जिसको बनाने की शक्ति हममें न हो।**

**- महात्मा गांधी**

## जयंतीलाल भंडारी

अर्थ विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि छोटे और कमजोर सरकारी बैंकों में पूंजी डालने का फैसला बैंकिंग सुधार की दिशा में बड़ा कदम है। इससे सरकारी बैंकों की माली हालत सुधरेगी और बैंक फिर से खड़े हो सकेंगे। इस वक्त सबसे बड़ी चुनौती ही बैंकिंग व्यवस्था को मजबूत बनाने की है। इसके लिए सबसे बड़ी और पहली जरूरत गैर-निष्पादित आस्तियों (एनपीए) की समस्या का समाधान करना है। इसके लिए सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों की कर्ज वसूली प्रणाली को बेहतर बनाना होगा।

पिछले हफ्ते आई भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआइ) की एक शोध रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि बैंकों के विलय और कंप्यूटरीकरण के कारण बैंकों की दक्षता बढ़ी है। साथ ही बैंकों में नौकरियों में कटौती करने से जो खर्च बचा है उससे सरकारी बैंकों ही हालत में सुधार आया है। उल्लेखनीय है कि एक अप्रैल को बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा में विजया बैंक और देना बैंक के विलय के बाद भारत के सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों में बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा दूसरा सबसे बड़ा बैंक बन गया है। इसके साथ ही देना बैंक और विजया बैंक की सभी शाखाएं बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा की शाखा के रूप में काम करने लगीं। अब इस एकीकरण के बाद बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा के पास साढ़े नौ हजार से अधिक शाखाएं और करीब साढ़े तेरह हजार एटीएम हो गए हैं। एकीकरण के बाद बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा एक करोड़ बीस लाख से ज्यादा ग्राहकों को सेवाएं दे रहा है। इस एकीकरण

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के अध्यक्ष एन.एच. रॉय (बाएं) और आरबीआइ के गवर्नर वी.एस. नैतिकान्त (दाएं)

ललित कुमार

बचपन में हमें सिखाया गया था कि वाणी का एक पर्यायवाची शब्द ‘सरस्वती’ भी होता है। वैसे तो भारतीय संस्कृति की हिंदू परंपरा में किसी भी काम की शुरुआत ‘गणेश’ का नाम ले कर करने की परंपरा रही है। तुलसीदास अपने ग्रंथ ‘रामचरितमानस’ के आरंभ में वाणी यानी सरस्वती की आराधना गणेश से भी पहले करते हैं। इस काव्य के पहले श्लोक में सरस्वती और गणेश की वंदना करता हूं। भाषा और सरस्वती का यह विनिमेष न केवल भारतीय संस्कृति में भाषा की महत्ता को रेखांकित करता है, बल्कि आज के चुनावी दौर में काफी प्रासंगिक है। यह छिपा नहीं है कि भाषा का स्तर चुनावी सरगमों के बीच गिरता जा रहा है और कोई भी राजनीतिक दल इससे अछूता नहीं है।

जिस देश में आज से पांच सौ साल पहले से ही ऐसे ग्रंथों की रचना होती आई है, सामान्य व्यवहार में अक्सर ‘मीठी वाणी’ को बहुत महत्त्व दिया गया है, बोलने के लहजे को बेहतर या कमतर मुण्डा होने का रूपक माना जा, अक्सर दुश्मनों और नकारात्मक प्रवृति वाले लोगों

## अनाज की बर्बादी

किसान सालभर सर्दी, गर्मी और बरसात सहकर अन्न का उत्पादन करता है, लेकिन बेमौसम बारिश और भारी ओलावृष्टि उसकी सारी मेहनत पर पानी फेर रही है। बारिश के कारण फसलों को भारी नुकसान हुआ है। यह विडंबना ही है कि प्रकृति हमें भरपूर खाद्यान्न दे रही है, लेकिन हम उसका व्यवस्थित तरीके से भंडारण भी नहीं कर पा रहे हैं। हर साल भंडारण क्षमता की कमी के कारण बरसाती पानी से लाखों टन अनाज सड़ जाता है। अनाज की बर्बादी रोकना सरकार के साथ-साथ हमारा भी फर्ज है, ताकि हर जरूरतमंद को अनाज मिले। भारतीय संस्कृति में अन्न को भगवान के समान माना जाता है, तो फिर उसकी बर्बादी हम जिला कैसे सहन कर सकते हैं? भूख से लड़ाई जीतने के लिए हमें अन्न के संरक्षण के बारे में सोचना होगा। किसानों की मदद के साथ-साथ अनाज के भंडारण को अच्छी व्यवस्था किया जाना भी बहुत जरूरी है।

- डॉ राजेंद्र कुमावत, जयपुर**

### काम देखकर दें वोट

विश्व के सबसे बड़े लोकतंत्र के चुनावी महापर्व का आगाज हो चुका है। देश के दो मुख्य दलों के घोषणापत्रों पर नजर दौड़ाएं तो कोई भी वादों को पूरा करने वाला नहीं लगता। सत्ताधारी दल भाजपा जहां युवाओं से अपना पहला वोट शहीदों को देने की मांग कर रहा है। वहीं कांग्रेस जीडीपी का छह फीसद शिक्षा पर खर्च करने और 22 लाख खाली पदों को भरने की बात कर रही है। मतदाता को डर सता रहा है कहीं वो गलत सरकार न चुन ले और उसे फिर से पछताना पड़े। क्योंकि पिछली बार जो

# मजबूत बैंकों की जरूरत

के बाद बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा का महाराष्ट्र, गुजरात, केरल तमिलनाडु, कर्नाटक और आंध्रप्रदेश में पूरक शाखाओं का नेटवर्क बढ़ गया है।

गौरतलब है कि बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा में विजया बैंक और देना बैंक के विलय के बाद देश और दुनिया के अर्थविशेषज्ञ इसे बैंकिंग सुधार की दिशा में बड़े एवं मजबूत कदम के रूप में देख रहे हैं। पिछले दो वर्षों से सरकारी बैंकों को मजबूत बनाने के लिए लगातार प्रयास हो रहे हैं। 23 अगस्त, 2017 को कैबिनेट ने सार्वजनिक बैंकों के एकीकरण में तेजी लाने के प्रस्ताव को मंजूरी दी थी। पिछले वर्ष 24 जुलाई को केंद्र सरकार ने भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक से उन सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों (पीएसबी) के बारे में राय मांगी थी जिनका विलय किया जा सकता है। बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में दो तिहाई से ज्यादा हिस्सेदारी सरकारी बैंकों की है। सरकार की रणनीति अगले तीन वर्षों में सरकारी बैंकों की संख्या घटा कर दस से बारह के बीच लाने की है। उल्लेखनीय है कि छोटे बैंकों को बड़े बैंक में मिलाने का फार्मूला केंद्र सरकार पहले भी अपना चुकी है। दो साल पहले एक अप्रैल 2017 को भारतीय स्टेट बैंक (एसबीआइ) के पांच सहायक बैंकों और भारतीय महिला बैंक (बीएमबी) का एसबीआइ में विलय किया गया था। भारत में स्टेट बैंक ऑफ इंडिया जैसे बड़े बैंकों में सहायक बैंकों के विलय से उद्योग कारोबार व विभिन्न वर्गों की कर्ज की बड़ी जरूरतें पूरी करने में आसानी हुई है।

यह बात महत्त्वपूर्ण है कि सरकार ने बैंकिंग सुधारों के लिए जो कदम उठाए गए हैं, उनसे भी सरकारी बैंकों की स्थिति सुधरे लगी है। पिछले वर्ष 22 नवंबर को केंद्र सरकार ने बैंकों के साथ थोखाधड़ी करके विदेश भागने जैसी घटनाओं को रोकने के लिए सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के सभी बैंकों के अध्यक्ष, प्रबंध निदेशकों और मुख्य कार्यधिकारियों को अधिकार सम्पन्न बनाया है। इस अधिकार के बाद कर्ज चुकाने में जानबूझ कर चूक करने वाले कजदारीं के खिलाफ एफआइआर दर्ज करने और उनके लिए लुकआउट नोटिस जारी करने का आग्रह अब बैंक के शीर्ष अधिकारी सीधे गृह मंत्रालय से कर सकेंगे। बैंक प्रमुखों को ऐसा अधिकार पहले नहीं था। सामान्यतः जांच एजेंसियां जानबूझ कर चूक करने वाले कर्जदारों के खिलाफ शिकायत पर एफआइआर दर्ज करने में खासा समय ले लेती थीं। इस संबंध में केंद्र सरकार के नए अहम कदम से बैंक के चूककर्ताओं के लिए देश से भागने की कोई गुंजाइश नहीं होगी।

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के गवर्नर वी.एस. नैतिकान्त (बाएं) और आरबीआइ के गवर्नर वी.एस. नैतिकान्त (दाएं)

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के लिए भी सम्मानपूर्ण भाषा का इस्तेमाल किया जाता रहा हो, उसी देश के सार्वजनिक जीवन में भाषा का गिरता स्तर आश्चर्यकर क्या दर्शाता है! ब्रिटिश लेखक जॉर्ज ऑरवेल ने अपने प्रसिद्ध आलेख ‘पॉलिटिक्स एंड द इंग्लिश लैंग्वेज’ (1946) में कहा था कि अंग्रेजी भाषा के गिरते स्तर का सीधा संबंध राजनीतिक और सामाजिक मूल्यों में गिरावट से है।

ऐसा लगता है कि हमारे राजनेताओं और बुद्धिजीवियों की नजर में इस तरह की बातों का कोई मूल्य नहीं है। क्या हम कभी इस पर विचार करते हैं कि अपने विरोधियों के लिए जिस तरह की भाषा का इस्तेमाल अखबारों में, समाचार चैनलों पर और सोशल मीडिया में किया जाता है, उसका समाज पर और खास कर बच्चों पर क्या दुष्परिणाम होगा? क्या अपने विरोधियों को धराशायी कर किसी भी कीमत पर सत्ता हासिल करना ही राजनीति का एक मात्र लक्ष्य रह गया है? क्या हमारे यहां लोकतंत्र की परंपरा अब यह नया मानक चरचेगी कि हमारे भीतर की लोकतांत्रिक भावनाएं और विचार को खत्म होना होगा? क्या हम सभ्यता के उस दौर में कदम रखने जा रहे हैं जहां अपने से भिन्न मत रखने वाले और कमजोर तबकों के लोगों के अधिकारों के लिए कोई जगह नहीं होगी?

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के गवर्नर वी.एस. नैतिकान्त (बाएं) और आरबीआइ के गवर्नर वी.एस. नैतिकान्त (दाएं)

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पिछले दिनों वैश्विक रेटिंग एजेंसी मूडीज ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा कि भारत में सरकार सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों (पीएसबी) में जो अतिरिक्त पूंजी डाल रही है, उससे बैंकों में फंसे कर्ज (एनपीए) की समस्या से निपटने में मदद मिलेगी। इसमें कहा गया है कि वर्ष 2019 के बाद सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों को बहुत ज्यादा बाहरी पूंजी की जरूरत नहीं होगी। अर्थ विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि छोटे और कमजोर सरकारी बैंकों में पूंजी डालने का फैसला बैंकिंग सुधार की दिशा में बड़ा कदम है। इससे सरकारी बैंकों की माली हालत सुधरेगी और बैंक फिर से खड़े हो सकेंगे। इस वक्त सबसे बड़ी चुनौती ही बैंकिंग व्यवस्था को मजबूत बनाने की है। इसके लिए सबसे बड़ी और पहली



जरूरत गैर-निष्पादित आस्तियों (एनपीए) की समस्या का समाधान करना है। इसके लिए सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों की कर्ज वसूली प्रणाली को बेहतर बनाना होगा। रिजर्व बैंक के गवर्नर शक्तिकांत दास ने कहा है कि लंबे समय तक दबाव में रहने के बाद अब बैंकिंग क्षेत्र की स्थिति सुधार के रास्ते पर है। बैंकों पर मनपीए का बोझ कम होने लगा है। सितंबर 2018 तक की अवधि में सकल एनपीए अनुपात में कमी आई है। पिछले तीन साल के दौरान इसमें यह पहली गिरावट है। यह बढ़ते दबाव के समक्ष बैंकों की मजबूती से खड़े होने की क्षमता के तौर पर सकारात्मक संकेत है। वित्तीय स्थिरता रिपोर्ट 2019 के मुताबिक बैंकों का सकल एनपीए अनुपात सितंबर 2018 में घट कर 10.8 प्रतिशत रह गया, जो मार्च 2018 में 11.5 प्रतिशत पर पहुंच गया था। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि मौजूदा परिदृश्य को देखते हुए सभी बैंकों का सकल एनपीए मार्च 2019 तक कम होकर 10.3 प्रतिशत रह जाने का अनुमान है।

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रांची, सोमवार, 22.04.2019

## मजबूत होती साझेदारी

अमेरिका और जापान के रक्षा एवं विदेश विभाग के शीर्ष मंत्रियों ने द्विपक्षीय बातचीत में भारत के साथ बेहतर होते संबंधों पर संतोष जताया है। वाणिज्यिक तथा सामरिक दृष्टि से अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण हिंद-प्रशांत क्षेत्र में ये तीन देश ऑस्ट्रेलिया के साथ व्यापक साझेदारी बनाने की दिशा में अग्रसर हैं। भारत, जापान और अमेरिका की पहली त्रिपक्षीय बैठक नवंबर, 2018 में हुई थी तथा दो संयुक्त सैन्याभ्यास भी हो चुके हैं। जी-20 शिखर सम्मेलन के आयोजन में हुए उस त्रिपक्षीय बैठक में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने इस साझेदारी के महत्व को रेखांकित करते हुए तीनों देशों के नाम के अक्षरों को मिला कर 'जय' की संज्ञा दी थी. उल्लेखनीय यह है कि कभी एशिया-प्रशांत के नाम से इंगित किये जानेवाले क्षेत्र को अब हिंद-प्रशांत क्षेत्र कहा जाता है. यह भारत की बढ़ती भूमिका का सूचक है. सबसे पहले अमेरिका ने इस नाम का प्रयोग किया था, लेकिन आज इसे अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर प्रयुक्त किया जाता है. दक्षिण चीन सागर समुद्र में नियंत्रण तथा बेस्ट-रौड परियोजना एवं विविध निवेशों के माध्यम से चीन अपना वैश्विक वर्चस्व बढ़ाने की लगातार कोशिश कर रहा है. भारत, अमेरिका, चीन और ऑस्ट्रेलिया की पहल को चीन की काट के रूप में देखा जाता है. हालांकि ये देश ऐसी आशंकाओं को निराधार बताते रहे हैं, पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यापार और कूटनीतिक बहुपक्षीय स्वरूप को ठोस करने के लिए विभिन्न मंचों की आवश्यकता बढ गयी है. चीन के साथ भारत, अमेरिका और जापान के गहरे आर्थिक संबंध हैं तथा अलग-अलग मुद्दों पर तनाव के बाद भी परस्पर आर्थिक सहयोग को बढ़ाने के लिए ये सभी देश प्रयासरत रहे हैं,

लेकिन यह भी सच है कि चीन अपनी नीतियों को लेकर आक्रामक है तथा अमेरिका का जोर संरक्षणवाद पर है. ऐसे में भारत जैसी उभरती अर्थव्यवस्था तथा क्षेत्रीय राजनीतिक शक्ति को इस खींचतान में संतुलन बनाने की चुनौती है. बीते सालों में इस चुनौती से पार पाने की कोशिश में भारत ने अमेरिका, रूस और चीन के साथ यूरोपीय संघ, आसियान, जापान, दक्षिण कोरिया, अरब के देशों से भी द्विपक्षीय और बहुपक्षीय सहयोग को आगे बढ़ाया है. इसी प्रयास का परिणाम है कि बड़ी और विकसित शक्तियां भारत से निकटता को प्रमाद करने में लगी हुई हैं. चीन, रूस और अमेरिका आपसी सहयोग के बावजूद आर्थिक, सामरिक और कूटनीतिक प्रतिस्पर्द्धा में हैं. इस होड़ की ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि है और इसमें निकट भविष्य में बदलाव की संभावना नहीं है. इन देशों से भारत के संबंध भी उतार-चढ़ाव से प्रभावित होते हैं, लेकिन भारत के साथ की आवश्यकता भी इन देशों को है. भारत एक ऐसे स्थान पर खड़ा है, जहां से वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय वाणिज्य, समुद्री सुरक्षा तथा राजनीति को प्रभावित कर सकता है. जापान और अमेरिका के रुझान को इस दृष्टिकोण से भी देखा जाना चाहिए. इन तीन देशों की साझेदारी जहां वैश्विक स्तर पर सकारात्मक है, वहीं इन्हें चीन के साथ निरंतर संवाद से विवादित मसलों को सुलझाने का प्रयास भी करना चाहिए, ताकि व्यापक संतुलन स्थापित हो सके.



### बोधि वृक्ष हाउ ब्यूटीफूल !

एक बार एक मरीज एक चिकित्सक के पास आया. उस मरीज की बीमारी कभी करोड़ में एक आदमी को होती है. एक खास दंग का ट्यूमर था उसके पेट में. चिकित्सक ने उसका टैट काटा, ट्यूमर निकाला और नाचने लगा. चिकित्सक ने कहा, 'हाउ ब्यूटीफूल !' वह ट्यूमर उसके रोग की गांठ थी. कोहिनूर हीरा जैसा वह ट्यूमर था. कभी करोड़ों में एक आदमी को होती है वैसी बीमारी और कभी हजारों में एक चिकित्सक को मौका मिलता है उसका ऑपरेशन करने का. यह बड़ी सुंदर चीज है. चिकित्सक को बीमार से मतलब नहीं है, उसे मतलब ट्यूमर से है. अब तुम सोच ही नहीं सकते कि ट्यूमर कैसे सुंदर हो सकता है ! तुम्हारे पास चिकित्सक की आंख नहीं है. ट्यूमर और सुंदर ! बात ही बेहूदी लगती है. लेकिन चिकित्सक अलग है. उसे बीमारी और बीमारी को ठीक करने में ज्यादा रस है; बीमार से कोई प्रयोजन नहीं है. यह बड़ा भारी फर्क है. जब तुम्हारी उत्सुकता बीमार में है, तब बीमार बीच में आ जाता है, बीमारी पीछे हो जाती है. तुम्हारे सामने बीमार है, उसके पीछे बीमारी है. और यह बीमार से तुम्हारा अगर रस बहुत है, तो तुम्हारे हाथ-पैर कांप जायेंगे. तुम कितने ही कुशल चिकित्सक क्यों न हो, सब दुःखलता मिट्टी हो जायेगी. बीमारी पीछे हो जायेगी, बीमार आगे हो जायेगा. जब कोई चिकित्सक बिना किसी संबंध के किसी की चिकित्सा करता है, तो बीमार पीछे होता है, बीमारी सामने होती है. बीमार से कोई लेना-देना नहीं होता. बीमारी और चिकित्सक का सीधा साक्षात्कार होता है. तभी कुछ वैधानिक घटना घट सकती है, निदान हो सकता है. गुरु की उत्सुकता चिकित्सक की उत्सुकता है. यह बीमारी को सामने रखता है, तुम को सामने नहीं रखता. यह बीमारी को मिटा देने में उत्सुक है. पैम पीछे हो. तुम्हारे व्यक्तित्व लगाव, आसक्तियों का कोई भूष्य नहीं है. गुरु ठीक से देख पाता है कि तुम कहाँ हो. गुरु ठीक से तुम्हें चला पाता है. अतीत के इतिहास में बड़ी कठिनाइयाँ इस संबंध में पैदा हुई हैं.

**आचार्य रजनीश ओशो**

### कुछ अलग

## नेताओं की यात्रा मुनाफेदार

**चुनाव** नेता में भय और लज्जा का सखटा अभाव होता है। जैसे भय और लज्जा हो, तो बंदा पॉलिटिक्स में आने से पहले सौ बार सोचेगा. सोचनेवाला बुद्धिजीवी बन जाता है, बिल्कुल नहीं सोचनावाला टीवी पर एक्सपर्ट बन जाता है और सोच कर बोलने को अपनी प्रगति का विरोधी माननेवाला नेता बन जाता है. केजरीवाल कहते थे- कांग्रेस को निबटना ही अब कांग्रेस से कह रहे हैं- व्हीज हमें साथ लो, चरना देनों निबट जायेंगे. प्रियंका चतुर्वेदी भूतपूर्व कांग्रेस नेता अब उस शिवसेना में हैं, जिस पार्टी के बंदों को वह गुंडा बताया करती थीं. प्रियंका चतुर्वेदी के विचार कुछ घंटों में सेकुलर से राष्ट्रवादी हो जायेंगे. शत्रुघ्न सिन्हा जी कांग्रेस में हैं, पत्नी समाजवादी पार्टी में हैं. कांग्रेसी शत्रुघ्न सिन्हा समाजवादी पार्टी की नेता पत्नी के लिए प्रचार कर रहे हैं. खैर शत्रुघ्न सिन्हा की बात तो समझ में आती है, वह कह सकते हैं- सबका साथ, सबका विकास. शत्रुघ्न सिन्हा जी राष्ट्रीय व्यक्तित्व हैं, सबके हैं. पार्टी की सीमाएं उन्हें नहीं बांध सकतीं. जैसे ये चुनाव भी राष्ट्र की सीमाओं में कहाँ बंध रहे हैं. पाकिस्तान बार-बार आ रहा है. और नेताओं की क्या कहें, पब्लिक पाकिस्तान को पीटने की बात पर ताली बजाती है, साफ पानी और ठीक सड़क की बात हो, तो पब्लिक चुप हो जाती है. नेता भी क्या करें, जब नरेंद्र ही पाकिस्तान को पीटने के मिल रहे हैं, तो इम्तहान में साफ पानी और ठीक सड़क का जिन्न क्यों करें. पाकिस्तान में अगर

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ठीक-ठाक चुनाव हों, तो हिंदुस्तान बहुत आम आये. लेकिन, पाकिस्तान में आर्मी उतनी शराफत से स्वतंत्र चुनाव होने देती है, जितनी शराफत से वह हाफिज सईद से विधान में शांति प्रचार में लगी हुई है?  
खैर पुरानी बातें याद करना और करवाना कष्ट देता है. चुनावतुर नेता को सिर्फ वोट दिखते हैं. अभी कर्नाटक में राज्य सरकार के एक मंत्री नागिन डांस कर रहे थे. नागिन डांस के गीत के क्लासिक बोल हैं- तन डोलो, मेरा मन डोलो, मेरे दिल का गया करार... यह मूलतः राजनीतिक गीत है, जिसमें नेता कहना चाह रहा है कि इस चुनाव की बेला में मेरा-तन डोल रहा है, तन मुहल्ले-मुहल्ले में डोल कर वोट मांग रहा है. मेरा मन डोल रहा है कि चुनाव बाद सेंटिंग सही बैठ जाये, तो इस पार्टी में चला जाऊं या उस पार्टी में. और इस चक्कर में मेरे दिल का चैन, मेरे दिल का करार चला गया है कि दल बदलने के बाद भी हार गया, तो क्या होगा.  
नागिन डांस तक तो ठीक है, चुनावी मौसम में कुछ शरारती मतदाता कुत्ता नाच भी कराते हैं. इसमें नेताजी से चारों पैरों पर चलने के लिए कहा जाता है और नेताजी कर गुजरते हैं. इतने भर से काम चल जाये, तो बुया सौदा नहीं है. क्योंकि उसके बाद तो पांच साल तक सियाह, मगरमच्छ और गिद्ध बनने का लाइसेंस मिल जाता है. कुत्तव से मिट्टच की यात्रा बहुत मुनाफेवाली होती है नेताओं के लिए. और, हम पब्लिक का तो यह है भइया कि- कौन याद रखता है?



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**चुनाव आयोग की दयनीय दशा यह है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट उसे याद दिला रहा है कि वह शक्तिहीन नहीं है. सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा की गयी कार्रवाई के संबंध में पूछने पर उसने अपने को 'शक्तिहीन' बताया, जबकि संविधान के अनुच्छेद 324 के तहत आयोग के पास 'अधिकारों का भंडार' है.**

## देश दुनिया से

### नेत्र देम के पुनर्निर्माण के लिए चंदा इकट्ठा

**पेरिस** के नेत्र देम चर्च में लगी आग ने सदियों पुरानी विरासत को ध्वस्त कर दिया. इस चर्च को फिर से खड़ा करने के लिए चर्चा तेज हो गयी है. इसके पुनर्निर्माण के लिए अब तक 70 करोड़ यूरो की मदद आ भी गयी है. दुनिया की सबसे नामी कंपनियों में शामिल एपल के सीईओ टिम कुक ने दान करने की बात कही है. फ्रांसीसी अरबपति बर्नार्न आनो का परिवार और लखनौ सामान बनानेवाली उनकी कंपनी भी चर्च की मरम्मत के लिए बीस करोड़ यूरो देगी. लखनौ सामान बनानेवाली कंपनी केरिंग के मुखिया फ्रांसुआ ऑर्नरी पिनो ने दस करोड़ यूरो देने का वादा किया है. दुनियाभर में अपने सौंदर्य प्रसाधनों के लिए मशहूर लोरियाल ग्रुप बेटेनकूर मेयेर परिवार और बेटेनकूर शुलर फाउंडेशन के साथ मिल कर बीस करोड़ यूरो देगा. फ्रांस की एयरलाइन एयर फ्रांस ने नेत्र देम के पुनर्निर्माण के लिए सभी तरह के सामान का ट्रांसपोर्टेशन मुफ्त करने की पेशकश की है. फ्रांसीसी तेल कंपनी टोटल ने कहा है कि वह दस करोड़ यूरो देगी. एएक्सए फ्रांस की एक जानी पहचानी बीमा कंपनी है, जिसने इस प्राचीन चर्च के लिए एक करोड़ यूरो देने की बात कही है. इसी तरह कई अन्य कंपनियों ने भी पैसे देकर इस विरासत को संभालने के लिए आगे आयी हैं.

रतीय चुनाव आयोग की स्थापना 25 जनवरी, 1950 को जिस 'स्वतंत्र एवं निष्पक्ष चुनाव' को लेकर की गयी थी, उस पर सत्रहवें लोकसभा चुनाव में कई प्रश्न-चिह्न लग रहे हैं. चुनाव आयोग ने राजनीतिक दलों और प्रत्याशियों, अभ्यर्थियों के लिए मार्गदर्शन के लिए 'आदर्श आचार संहिता' का निर्माण किया था, उसका इस चुनाव में जितना उल्लंघन हुआ है, उतना पहले नहीं हुआ था. 'आदर्श आचार संहिता' में आचरण, सभाएं और जुलूस के संबंध में स्पष्ट निर्देश हैं. 'साधारण आचरण' के अंतर्गत साफ शब्दों में यह कहा गया है- 'किसी दल या अभ्यर्थी को ऐसा कोई कार्य नहीं करना चाहिए, जो विभिन्न जातियों और धार्मिक या भाषायी समुदायों के बीच विद्यमान मतभेदों को गहरे या घृणा की भावना उत्पन्न करे या तनाव पैदा करे.' आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन अब सामान्य बात है. धर्माधारित और जाति केंद्रित राजनीति में एक-दूसरे के धर्म और जाति पर हमले करके ही वोट बंटते जाते रहे हैं. राजनीति तो धर्म और जाति के सहारे चल कर ही आचार संहिता की धजियां उड़ती हैं.

मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के मुख्य न्यायाधीश के समकक्ष हैं. दसवें मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त टीएन शेपन ( 12 दिसंबर, 1990 - 11 दिसंबर, 1996 ) के पहले आचार संहिता केवल कागजों में थी, जिसे उन्होंने कड़ाई और सख्ती से लागू किया था. उनके समय यह कहा जाता था कि भारतीय राजनेता केवल दो से उरते हैं- ईश्वर से और शेपन से. राजीव गांधी की हत्या के बाद शेपन ने तत्कालीन सरकार से बिना पूछे ही लोकसभा चुनाव स्थगित करा दिये थे. चुनाव आयोग को उन्होंने शक्तिसंपन्न बनाया. उसकी स्वायत्तता बहाल की और इस संवैधानिक संस्था को पूरी गरिमा प्रदान की. उन्होंने चुनाव आयोग को सरकार का पिछलग्गू नहीं रहने दिया. चुनाव आयोग भारत सरकार का हिस्सा नहीं है. दो अगस्त, 1993 को शेपन ने सत्रह पृष्ठों का एक आदेश जारी किया था कि सरकार जब तक चुनाव आयोग की शक्तियों को मान्यता नहीं देती, तब तक देश में कोई भी चुनाव नहीं कराया जायेगा. के गोविंदन दुद्दी लिखित उनकी जीवनी 'शेषन- ऐन इंटीमेट स्टोरी' पढ़ कर उनके महत्वपूर्ण अवदानों को जाना जा सकता है. चुनाव आयोग को 'सेंटर-स्टेज' में लाने का श्रेय केवल शेपन को है. एक इंटरव्यू में उन्होंने राजनेतओं को नाश्ते में खाने की बात कही है.

भारत के 23 मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्तों में शेपन के बाद 12वें मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त जेएम लिंगावोह ( 14 जून, 2001 - 7 फरवरी, 2004 ) का नाम विशेष महत्वपूर्ण है. गुजरात नरसंहार ( फरवरी-मार्च 2002 ) के बाद तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने सरकार पर लगे आरोपों के

कारण आठ महीने पहले ही जुलाई 2002 में गुजरात विधानसभा भंग कर दी थी. अक्टूबर 2002 में चुनाव कराने की मांग चुनाव आयोग ने अस्वीकार कर दी. अन्य दो आयुक्तों- टीएस कृष्णमूर्ति और बीबी टंडन की सहमति से ही चुनाव आयोग ने यह निर्णय लिया था. इस निर्णय की नरेंद्र मोदी ने आलोचना की. साल 2002 में ही 20 अगस्त को वड़ोदरा के नजदीक बोडेली की एक जनसभा में उन्होंने लिंगावोह पर आक्रमण किया, उन्हें 'इटालियन' कहते हुए यह आरोप लगाया कि ईसाई होने की वजह से वे एक दूसरी ईसाई सोनिया गांधी की मदद के लिए गुजरात में चुनाव टाल रहे हैं. इस पर लिंगावोह ने कड़ी प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त की थी. वह कहा था कि उनका कोई धर्म नहीं है और अनेक समस्याओं के लिए 'धर्म' ही जिम्मेदार है. लिंगावोह ने घृणित, विगड़ और विवादस्पद राजनीति की बात कही थी. तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी और मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री मुरली मनोहर जोशी ने मोदी की अनुचित भाषा और टिप्पणी को आलोचना की थी.

अब चुनाव आयोग की दयनीय दशा यह है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट उसे याद दिला रहा है कि वह शक्तिहीन नहीं है. चुनाव आयोग की निष्क्रियता के कारण ही शारजाह ( संयुक्त अरब अमीरात ) के एक अनिवासी भारतीय योग शिक्षक हरप्रति मनसुखानी ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट में एक जनहित याचिका दायर कर कोर्ट से चुनाव आयोग को राजनीतिक दलों के विरुद्ध कड़ी कार्रवाई करने का अनुरोध किया. आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन हो रहा था और चुनाव आयोग शांत था. सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा की गयी कार्रवाई के संबंध में पूछने पर उसने अपने को 'शक्तिहीन' बताया, जबकि संविधान के अनुच्छेद 324 के तहत आयोग के पास 'अधिकारों का भंडार' है. सुप्रीम कोर्ट की डांड पर चुनाव आयोग की नींद टूटी और उसने योगी आदित्यनाथ, मायावती, आजम खान और मेनका गांधी पर 72 और 48 घंटे की भाषण देने और रैली करने पर रोक लगायी, जिसे योगेंद्र यादव ने 'सामने से सांड आने पर मक्खी मारने' जैसा कहा है. प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और भाजपा अध्यक्ष अमित शाह ने चुनाव आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन किया है, पर चुनाव आयोग ने कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की है. नरेंद्र मोदी केंद्रित फिल्म, वेब सीरीज और नमो चैनल पर चुनाव आयोग का रवैया ढीला-ढाला रहा है. पूर्व नौकरशाहों ने राष्ट्रपति को लिखे अपने पत्र में चुनाव आयोग की 'साख का संकट' की बात कही है. इस समय संवैधानिक संस्थाएं बुरी तरह हिल रही हैं. पिछले आम चुनाव में चुनाव आयोग ने गुजरात प्रशासन को नरेंद्र मोदी के खिलाफ प्राथमिकी दर्ज करने को कहा था. उस समय मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त बीएस संपत थे. अभी 2 दिसंबर, 2018 से मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त सुनील अरोड़ा हैं.

भारत के आसपास यदि कोई खिलाड़ी जा सकता है, तो वह केवल ऋषभ पंत ही हैं, पर पंत को विश्व कप में 15 खिलाड़ियों में स्थान नहीं दिया गया है. उनके स्थान पर दिनेश कार्तिक को विकेटकीपर के रूप में भारतीय टीम में शामिल किया गया है. दिनेश कार्तिक 33 साल के हैं और मुझे याद नहीं कि उन्होंने कभी अपनी ताबड़तोड़ बल्लेबाजी से किसी खेल का नतीजा पलटा दिया हो. दूसरी ओर अंबाली रायडू की भी दावेदारी बनती थी. लेकिन उनकी भी अनदेखी कर दी गयी है. जब कड़ी आलोचना हुई, तो चयनकर्ताओं की ओर से बयान आया कि ऋषभ पंत, अंबाली रायडू और तेज गेंदबाज नवदीप सैनी को विश्व कप के लिए स्टैंडबाय रखा गया है. अगर प्लेइंग इलेवन के खिलाड़ी चॉटल होते हैं, तो इन खिलाड़ियों को खेलने का मौका मिल सकता है. विश्व कप टीम में अपना नाम न होने के बाद रायडू का एक टवीट काफी चर्चित हुआ था. रायडू ने टवीट में लिखा था कि विश्व कप देखने के लिए अभी तत्काल 3डी चश्मे के लिए ऑर्डर किया है. दरअसल, चयन समिति की भी कोशिश हुई थी कि उन्हें विल कर का वक्त आ गया है, पर हर बार धोनी ने अपनी बल्लेबाजी और विकेटकीपिंग देनों से अपने आलोचकों को करारा जवाब दिया है. उन्होंने हर बार यह साबित किया है कि भारतीय टीम में अब भी उनका कोई विकल्प नहीं है. सब मानते से कि भविष्य में

धोनी के आसपास यदि कोई खिलाड़ी जा सकता है, तो वह केवल ऋषभ पंत ही हैं, लेकिन पंत को विश्व कप में 15 खिलाड़ियों में स्थान नहीं दिया गया है. दूसरी ओर, अंबाली रायडू की दावेदारी की भी अनदेखी कर दी गयी है .

## कार्टून कोना



सामार : कार्टूनमुवमेंटडॉटकॉम

## देश दुनिया से

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

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## आपके पत्र

**एसिड अटेक के लिए हो कड़ी सजा**  
एसिड अटेक की खबरें फिर पढ़ने को मिलने लगी हैं. सरकार कमेटी बना कर सुकून की सांस लेती है और सब कुछ फिर से एक बार अटैंक दरें पर लौट आता है. एसिड अटेक की वजह से बहुत सारी लड़कियां और महिलाओं की जान जा चुकी है. जो जीवित बच गयी हैं, उनकी जिंदगी बर्बाद हो चुकी है. एसिड पीड़िताओं की जिंदगी नारकीय बन गयी है. सरकार को कुछ और सखटा कानून बनाने चाहिए, जो एक नजीर साबित हो. साथ ही ऐसा कोई कानूनी प्रावधान भी होना चाहिए, जिसमें एसिड हमलों की शिकार महिलाओं को सभी तरह की सुरक्षा और सुविधाएं सुनिश्चित हों. मसलन, मुफ्त इलाज के साथ-साथ सरकारी नौकरी और सामाजिक सुरक्षा के लिए 'एसिड अटेक विक्टिम डेवलपमेंट फंड' भी. 'एसिड अटेक विक्टिम डेवलपमेंट सोसाइटी' जैसी संस्थाओं का गठन भी होना चाहिए, ताकि एसिड अटेक पीड़िता को कहीं से कुछ तो राहत मिल सके.

**प्रज्ञा मंडल**, कुर्मीचक, गोड्डा

**गायब होता चुनावी मुद्दा**  
जैसे-जैसे लोकसभा चुनाव आगे बढ़ते जा रहे हैं, वैसे-वैसे विकास से होते जा रहे हैं, क्योंकि पिछले कुछ दिनों से जिस प्रकार नेताओं के द्वारा चुनाव आयोग या इवोएम का जिक्र चुनावी रैली और जनसभाओं में हो रहा है, उससे ऐसा बिल्कुल नहीं लगता कि मौजूदा प्रत्याशियों को समाज की कोई निता भी है. अभी चुनाव के दो चरण ही हुए हैं कि इवोएम की गड़बड़ी की बातें शुरू हो गयी हैं. अतः ऐसा लग रहा है कि नेताओं को अभी से ही हार का दर खताने लगा है. तभी ये ऐसी बातें कर रहे हैं, ताकि हारने पर खुद के बचाव के लिए कुछ वैकल्पिक मुद्दे हर सके. आयोग की निष्पक्षता पर भी सवाल कर उसकी गरिमा को तार-तार किया जा रहा है. ऐसी संवैधानिक संस्थाओं पर दोषारोपण करने से कुछ नहीं होने वाला है.

**शुभम गुप्ता**, धनबाद  
**क्रिकेट का इक्का- माही**  
हिंदुस्तानी क्रिकेट के गहरे सागर से निकले ललकारने की काबिलियत है. बादशाह कोई भी हो हमारे पास माही के शक्ल में क्रिकेट का इक्का है. खेल के मैदान पर सफेद गेंद माही के इशारे पर घूमती है. सारा आलम माही के करिश्माई मौजूदगी का दीवाना है. माही क्रिकेट के कुरुक्षेत्र का वह सारथि हैं, जिसके हाथ में कमन नहीं, युद्ध की लगाम होती है. विकेट के पीछे खड़ा होने वाले माही ने कई उभरते खिलाड़ियों को अगली कतार में खड़ा कर दिखाया है. माही के क्रिकेट से रुखसत होने की बेवजह फैलाई गयी गफलत हर बार बेबुनियाद निकली है. 22 गज की पिच पर वर्षों लगातार दोड़ते हुए बार-बार धूम-धुंदाका जैसे नेताजों की उम्मीद सरासर नाईसाफी है. फिर भी हालिया आइपीएल में कम उम्र खिलाड़ियों के सामने मिसाल बने माही दुनिया की चुनौती देते दिखेंगे. उम्मीद है विराट सेना माही जैसे सिपहसालार के साथ पूरी कायनात पर हुकुमत कायम करने में कामयाब होगा.

**एकमे मिश्रा**, रातू, रांची