

RBI dollar swaps: Into the unknown

Compared to standard liquidity management tools that are usually profitable, RBI takes on considerable macro risk with the swaps



DIVA JAIN

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been the cynosure of media attention recently and financial commentators have heaped high praise on it for "innovative" liquidity management through a highly successful dollar swap auction. Emboldened by the response, the venerable central bank has now announced a second tranche to be auctioned today (April 23). Normally, one expects little attention to be given to routine liquidity operations of central banks but RBI's actions are neither routine nor limited to purely liquidity management. Under the innocuous wording of dollar swaps hides an exotic beast

rarely seen even in the densest jungles of developed capital markets.

The rarity of the beast unleashed by RBI and its attractiveness to many financial agents, as witnessed by the heavily oversubscribed offering in March, lies in two main features — tenure and structure. RBI's swaps are three years in tenure. This means that RBI is giving bidders rupee in return for dollars at current exchange rates with a promise to return those dollars in three years at the same exchange rate. In return for this facility, RBI is charging a fee, called the spread, to be determined at the auction. For the March auction, the spread was 776 paise and the spot exchange rate was ₹68.86 for each dollar. In other words, the RBI paid rupee to banks in exchange for dollar at the rate of 68.86 and promised to return those dollars in three years at the rate of 68.86+7.76 = ₹76.62 for each dollar. This is an economically complex transaction whose structuring and tenure can have significant financial ramifications for the RBI.

A sword of Damocles with interest rate and exchange rate risk as its two edges hangs over what is essentially a hedge fund trade by the RBI. By accepting dollar in return for rupee in the swap, RBI forgoes the income it could have earned by lending in rupee terms. If it deploys the dollar inflow, it will earn the dollar interest rate which is currently much lower than the rupee interest rate foregone for a period of three years. If the rupee interest rates rise in the next three years, RBI would have foregone higher potential income and thus suffer a loss. Conversely, if the dollar interest rate rises in the next three years, RBI will earn more on the dollar deployed and incur a gain. Therefore, by entering the swap the RBI is essentially betting against rising rupee interest rates and in favor of rising dollar interest rates.

This would have made sense if interest rates were predictable and stable. Unfortunately, modelling and forecast interest rates is one of the most challenging problems in finance. It is for this reason that only the most sophisticated hedge funds with armies of MIT PhDs

trade interest rate risk. Jointly modelling rupee and dollar rates is even more herculean and the long three-year-tenure of RBI's swaps makes it immensely more complicated thereby making one wonder what makes the RBI so confident about taking joint exposure to dollar and rupee rates.

The second source of risk is the exchange rate. The RBI has promised to pay back the same amount of dollars after three years. If there is a precipitous decline in the rupee against the dollar, RBI will end up losing a significant chunk of money. Thus with this trade, RBI is betting against rupee depreciation. Again, modelling exchange rates for three-year-tenure is a non trivial exercise for even the most hardened egg heads and jointly modeling it with interest rates is impossibly complex.

It is for these reasons and the "unique" structuring of this "swap" that such a transaction is rarely offered by seasoned hedge funds and investment banks. Most cross currency swaps are non deliverable — meaning no cash is exchanged either at initiation or completion of the swap term. Counterparties do not physically exchange the currencies being swapped. This is done to reduce transfer and counterparty risk.

RBI's swap on the other hand is deliverable, meaning that RBI will actually hand out rupee in exchange for dollar, thereby taking on counterparty risk (risk that banks may not pay back rupee after three years). This makes it a fairly rare beast in the swap world. While RBI is getting compensated in the form of the spread there is good reason why sophisticated investors rarely dabble in such transactions and limit their involvement to forwards and standard swaps.

Thus, compared to standard liquidity management tools like OMOs and repo transactions that are low risk and usually profitable, the RBI is taking on considerable macro risk with the swaps. While innovative, one can argue that this is high stakes casino style liquidity management which we saw the Fed indulge in at the peak of the 2008 financial crisis. By shunning its image as stodgy "babu bankers" and marching in to territory where hedge funds fear to tread, Mr Shaktikanta Das has boldly gone where no RBI chief has gone before. While the results of this enterprise will be clear only after three years, in the meantime, the behaviour of this exotic beast created by the RBI will continue to worry fans of Mary Shelley and students of financial history.

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CHINESE WHISPERS

A 'real' brother-in-law

Nakul Nath, the son of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, is contesting from the Chhindwara Lok Sabha constituency. Sanjay Singh Masani is a regular face in his election rallies. Masani is the brother-in-law of former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Nath introduces him as thus: "Yeh aapke nakli mama ke asli sale hain" (he is the real brother-in-law of your fake uncle). From being called "paan paan wale bhैया" (foot soldier), Chouhan came to be addressed as "mama" (maternal uncle) by the children in the state. For his part, Masani joined the Congress before the Assembly elections and contested the Waraseoni Assembly seat on the party ticket. He lost to independent candidate Pradeep Jaiswal. Jaiswal is now cabinet minister in the state government.

₹15 lakh vs surgical strike



The former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh and Congress candidate from Bhopal, Digvijaya Singh (pictured), was addressing a public gathering in the Berasia locality of the state capital when he targeted the government at the Centre for what he termed were its "fake promises". He asked the people gathered if any one of them had received the ₹15 lakh promised by the incumbent government. A young man from the crowd who raised his hand was called by Singh on the stage. The Congress leader even said that the youth would be honoured publicly if he was able to prove that he had received the money and handed over the microphone to him. The youth began by waxing eloquent about the surgical strike against Pakistan undertaken by the government. A visibly embarrassed Singh signalled to some Congress workers who dragged the youth away. In no time, a video of the episode went viral on social media.

Dubious distinction

Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have traditionally been engaged in healthy competition to project an investment-friendly image by assuring ease of doing business and attracting industries to set up shop in the state among other things. But these two states have found themselves competing for an unwanted record of late. Tamil Nadu has surpassed all other states in the country, including Gujarat, while unintentionally chasing this record. We are talking about the total value of cash seizures related to the Lok Sabha elections and the Assembly by-polls in the state. Till Monday, the amount stood at ₹935.54 crore in Tamil Nadu while Gujarat is at number 2 with seizures worth ₹545.29 crore. If in Gujarat drugs and narcotics worth ₹524 crore formed the biggest chunk of the seizures, in Tamil Nadu it was precious metals worth ₹708.69 crore. The National Capital Territory of Delhi came third with seizures at ₹395.71 crore so far.

Steel looks East for growth

Global demand remains tumultuous in the wake of US-China trade war and slowing car sales, but the rest of Asia will continue to drive demand

KUNAL BOSE

This is the time of year when demand forecasts by the World Steel Association, whose members represent around 85 per cent of global production of the ferrous metal and the industry leader ArcelorMittal, which with production of 92.5 million tonnes (mt) of crude steel in 2018 was not much behind India's 106.5 mt, are made available. Coming from establishments of such standing, their country-wise demand projections give some guidance to how the prices of steel and the principal raw materials that go into its making such as iron ore and metallurgical coal will behave for the rest of the year.

However, as we have seen recently with iron ore, a tailings dam collapse in January at an iron ore mine in Brazil owned by Vale and then the March tropical cyclone Veronica causing major disruptions in production in Australia's Pilbara region, prices could always rise to very lofty levels. As some contracts of the mineral are now made at multi-year highs of close to \$100 a tonne, the message goes that more than a demand story, iron ore is a supply story.

Lending credence to the observation, Federation of Indian Mineral Industries Director General R K Sharma says: "Iron ore prices fell to their lowest level at sub-\$40 a tonne in December 2015 since the commodity was moved to the spot mar-

ket away from annual contracts in 2009. This happened then because of supply side pressure emerging from big miners such as BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto who were pumping out larger and larger quantities of the mineral while the Chinese demand was faltering." In any case, Indian miners cannot take advantage of the strong rally in the commodity now because the 30 per cent export duty on ore with iron content of 58 per cent and more make Indian ore globally uncompetitive.

How the global broader economy will fare in the coming months will necessarily have a bearing on steel demand, subject to regional variations in growth in metal use. IMF has in its quarterly World Economic Outlook projection released earlier this month has once again scaled down global GDP growth to 3.3 per cent. Both WSA and ArcelorMittal also had to factor in continuing trade tensions the US is having with China in particular but also with other countries, including India.

US trade actions such as anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on all four flat products, 25 per cent customs duty on steel imports from most countries and ongoing investigation into anti-circumvention imports (that is, when a producing nation sends steel products through another country to benefit from concessional duty available to the latter) have hit all exporting countries across the board. Any demand forecast could



TOP TEN STEEL USING COUNTRIES

Country	2018	2019 (forecast)	2020 (forecast)
China	835.0	843.3	834.9
United States	100.2	101.4	101.7
India	96.0	102.8	110.2
Japan	65.4	64.7	64.2
South Korea	53.6	53.4	54.1
Russia	41.2	41.6	42.2
Germany	40.8	40.4	41.0
Turkey	30.6	29.1	31.4
Italy	26.4	26.7	27.0
Mexico	25.4	25.8	26.1

Source: WSA

not also have overlooked the slowdown in automobile production in China and India in 2018 and that continued through this year's first quarter. Globally, the automotive industry is user of 12 to 13 per cent of steel production.

It is a given that China, which alone had a share of 835 mt of the total world use of 1.712 billion tonnes (bt) of steel in

2018 will continue to make a profound impact on the rate at which global steel demand will move. According to WSA, China, even with the likely help of a higher level of government stimulus, will be able to lift steel consumption by just 1 per cent to 843.3 mt in the current year. But in 2019, Chinese demand is to slip 1 per cent. ArcelorMittal, however,

thinks Chinese steel demand could fall by up to 1.5 per cent in 2019, against 3.5 per cent growth in 2018. No wonder then, WSA is projecting global steel demand growth will moderate to 1.3 per cent to 1.735 bt in 2019 and then 1 per cent to 1.751.6 bt in 2020.

Both WSA and ArcelorMittal, which has secured the approval of committee of creditors for acquisition of Essar Steel, remain bullish about steel in India. According to WSA, India having overcome the "shocks" of demonetisation and initial chaos in implementation of goods & services tax should be seeing strong steel demand growth "starting in the second half of 2019 following the general elections." Both in 2019 and 2020, Indian steel use will be growing by over 7 per cent first to 102.8 mt and then to 110.2 mt. Developing Asia, excluding China will stay as the fastest growing region in the global steel industry with expected 2019 growth at 6.5 per cent followed by a slightly lower 6.4 per cent in 2020. Developed Japan will, however, experience demand shrinking on "moderation in construction activities and decelerating exports." South Korea continues to experience fall in steel demand as its shipbuilding and automobile sectors are facing difficult times.

India's per capita steel consumption of about 70 tonnes falls far short of the world average of 208 kg. Steel intensity here will get a boost if more steel is used in house building and construction reducing cement application as is the case in developed and emerging markets, the metal is used as replacement of wood as Tata Steel is doing with doors and windows and a push is given to its consumption in semi-urban and rural areas.

ON THE JOB

Elections & employment



MAHESH VYAS

Weekly estimates of labour statistics from CMIE's Consumer Pyramids Household Survey provide a good sense of the direction in which the labour markets are moving. They are, therefore, a good predictor of what would the direction of change be in the monthly estimates of labour market indicators.

Weekly estimates of the unemployment rate during March 2019 for example, did indicate a declining trend. The unemployment rate initially was high and rising. It was 6.9 per cent in the first week and 7 per cent in the second week. Then it fell in the last two weeks to 6.2 per cent and 6.4 per cent. As a result, March ended with an unemployment rate of 6.7 per cent, which was much lower compared to 7.2 per cent in February.

April weekly rates indicate a rise in the unemployment rate. The first three weeks of the month have seen the rate rise from 7.9 per cent to 8.1 per cent and then 8.4 per cent in the third week ended April 21. Each of these is higher than the unemployment rate in the weeks of March.

It is, therefore, very likely that the month of April will end with an unemployment rate that would be much higher than the 6.7 per cent print of March 2019.

Interestingly, the higher unemployment rate of April is accompanied by a higher employment rate. The average employment rate during the first three weeks of April was 40 per cent. This is a tad higher than the employment rate during the first three weeks of March, which was 39.5 per cent.

Evidently, we are likely to see an increase in employment and unemployment in April.

This is happening because there is an increase in the labour force participation rate. This merits some explanation.

An increase in the labour participation rate indicates that a greater proportion of the adult population is seeking jobs. Some of these already have jobs and some get jobs but some others don't. A serious problem that India faces is that its labour force participation rate is low compared to global standards. Fewer adults in India seek work compared to the rest of the world. So, it is good to know that there was a rise in the labour participation rate recently.

The labour force participation rate touched a recent peak of 44.3 per cent in the week of April 14. In fact, this is the highest labour participation rate seen in 59 weeks, that is, since the week ended February 25, 2018.

The average labour force participation rate during the first three weeks of April 2019 was 43.5 per cent compared to 42.3 per cent during the first three weeks of March 2019. This is a sharp jump. The labour participation rate started to rise in the third week of March, that is, the week ended March 24.

Now, we revert to the increase in the employment rate mentioned earlier. The employment rate is the proportion of the adult population that is employed. This proportion has increased marginally. It is worth celebrating that an increased

labour participation rate was accompanied by an increased employment rate.

But, we also see a rising unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is the proportion of the labour force that did not get jobs. Note that unlike the employment rate, the unemployment rate is not a ratio of the total adult population. It is a ratio of the labour force. This ratio has been rising.

So, we may summarise the current labour conditions as indicating a substantial increase in labour participation where some of the increased labour participation did meet with increased employment but, many others experienced unemployment.

It would be safe to conjecture that the increase in labour participation rate is an outcome of the current national election campaigns. Elections are labour intensive. There is a sharp increase in demand for labour to organise rallies and also attend to rallies, to campaign from house to house and to supervise booths, to manage social media etc.

As the demand for labour increased from electioneering, the labour participation rate increased and so did the employment rate. The increase in the unemployment rate indicates that many more people are willing to take up this temporary employment than there are on offer. This is very interesting. It could indicate that the wage rates being offered for this work is high. Electioneering never suffers because of insufficient supply of labour.

Farmers often complain of lack of labour on farms. Political parties seem to suggest that labour is available if you pay them well. But, the risk-adjusted returns from farming are, arguably, not as lucrative as they are from politics.

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LETTERS

False sense of security



This refers to the editorial "Lessons from Jet". The role of the banks in this sad saga is a matter of concern. First, the banks completely ignored the danger signals which were emanating over the past few months. Were there issues such as diversion of bank funds? Was income accruing to Jet Airways being booked in private, closely held firms of the promoters? Second, in the latter half of last year why didn't banks force the politically influential and well-networked promoters to bring in new investors in Jet Airways? Thirdly, all these months, why was the chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI) reassuring the public that fresh funds will be infused knowing fully well that bank funds could not be invested until serious investors were willing to buy stakes in the beleaguered airline, especially with promoters not willing to give up control? Such assurances gave false hope to the employees, suppliers, vendors of Jet Airways and not to mention members of the public who continued to book tickets on the airline whose steadily deteriorating financial situation would eventually ensure there would be no planes to fly and no money to buy fuel. Did the bankers give these assurances to give the false impression that this airline will be revived when the clear objective was

to ensure that the inevitable does not happen before the elections? Well it did happen and there is no real investor willing to put in money. So now the banks are saddled with 50 per cent of the equity of a dead airline and huge amount of unpaid loans. No lessons were learnt from what happened to Kingfisher.

It is imperative to look into the real reasons for the fall of this airline — the role of promoters and banks, the diversion of bank funds and accounting irregularities.

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

Unfortunate deadlock

This refers to "NCLT consults Centre, IBBI on Jaypee Infra deadlock". In response to the severe hardships faced by homebuyers due to incomplete real estate projects, the government amended the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) to recognise homebuyers as financial creditors and thereby provided them representation in the Committee of Creditors. Hence, it is disappointing to see the Jaypee Infracore resolution process at a virtual standstill due to the non-participation of home buyers. One solution would be to amend Section 30(4) of the aforesaid Code so as to stipulate that a resolution plan shall be approved by a vote of not less than 66 per cent of voting share of financial creditors actually present in the meeting.

Another suggestion is to revisit this

HAMBONE



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The supreme test case

Due process should be followed in the SC complaint case

Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi's response, in seeing the sexual harassment allegation against him as an attack on the judiciary, would obviously have been coloured by the manner in which the complaint has been made and spread to the public. The process adopted by the complainant has indeed been strange. She wrote to 26 judges and simultaneously to four news websites, as though seeking advance publicity which can only be with a view to destroying someone's reputation as an end in itself. As Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said in a blog post on Sunday, this raises questions about motive and therefore a larger undisclosed purpose. A direct complaint in the appropriate manner might well have evoked a completely different response from Justice Gogoi, who enjoys a completely clean reputation.

But it will surely be a test case of the procedural guidelines that the Supreme Court set out in a path-breaking case in 1997, which became law in 2013. The Vishakha Guidelines, as they were initially called, named after the non-government organisation that fought the case on the victim's behalf, defined sexual harassment for the first time and mandated complaints committees in organisations with more than 10 employees. The apex court set up its own Vishakha committee in 2013 — that is, after Parliament played the guidelines into law. But it has not been invoked in this case. Justice Gogoi's courageous participation in the unprecedented group protest against then Chief Justice Dipak Misra's procedural transgressions in January last year established his reputation for being a stickler for due process and the rule of law. Yet, he didn't apply these rules to himself. Instead of activating an investigation via the sexual harassment complaints committee mechanism, which would have been the proper thing to do, he chose the unusual route to defend himself. On being informed of the accusations by the solicitor general, Justice Gogoi called a special Bench hearing, which was attended by Justice Sanjeev Khanna and Justice Arun Mishra. The hearing, he said, was on a "matter of great public importance touching upon the independence of the judiciary". Then he spoke for half an hour to protest his innocence, which included information about the modest size of his bank balance and observations about the victim's reputation.

Several obvious questions arise about this course of action, one of them being why the complainant was not permitted a hearing at the special Bench. This question assumes importance because of a gap in the law that requires the chief justice's permission for the complaints committee to accept a complaint. There is no procedure for a complaint against the chief justice. In the absence of a hearing from the alleged victim, the court issued a statement, signed only by Justice Mishra and Justice Khanna, calling on the media to act responsibly and decide whether to publish "wild and scandalous" allegations. An independent investigation would have been a better course of action.

Unreasonable ban

TikTok has been unfairly targeted

The ban on TikTok, a video-creation and sharing app, has made its pool of 120 million Indian users unhappy. Users record short videos and watch videos by others. On April 3, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court imposed an interim ban on TikTok on the basis of a complaint that it was "degrading culture and encouraging pornography besides containing explicit, disturbing content and causing social stigma and medical health issue between teens". This is not the first time that TikTok has been caught up in a legal quagmire. A few months ago, it paid \$128 million to settle a US court case in which it was alleged that it enabled sexual predators to target minors. Bytedance, the Chinese company that owns it, claims that it has since put parental and privacy controls in place to ensure children can safely use it. It is, of course, imperative that minors should be protected. But a ban may not be effective in fulfilling that aim. Moreover, this ban itself may set a precedent of impinging on freedom of expression, and the freedom to earn a living, and infringement of privacy.

To begin with, "degrading culture" is a matter of opinion and not illegal. The other allegations in that complaint should be based on hard data. Banning an app or a software tool on the basis that it can be used to create objectionable, or obscene content, seems like an over-reaction. Any video-creation-cum-sharing platform — and there are many — could be used for such purposes. Moreover, when it comes to protecting children, some part of the responsibility devolves upon parents. Unfortunately, even though privacy and parental control tools exist, the generation gap often means that minors are more tech-savvy than their parents. There have indeed been a few disturbing incidents involving TikTok. For example, there have been accidents when youngsters have attempted to make videos while riding motorcycles. However, the lack of parental knowledge should not result in a ban, nor can the app be blamed for lack of caution, or common sense, on the part of users. In analogy, taking selfies in dangerous circumstances has resulted in many fatal accidents worldwide but nobody has suggested banning camera-mobiles.

TikTok is an important platform for the talented to showcase content and promote brands. These users could claim, and with justice, that their freedom to work is being infringed. Also, if a user creates and hosts explicit videos on a private account, that is really nobody else's business. A blanket ban infringes those rights. In practice, this ban is also an example of shutting the stable door long after the horse has bolted. There is no reasonable way to shut down 120 million users. Nor will the ban stop tech-savvy persons from downloading the app. Instead, the court might perhaps have asked the company to prominently feature its privacy controls and educate parents about safe usage. The court has appointed amicus curiae to help it to come to a decision by the next hearing on this matter. One only hopes the court considers the multiple precedents this case could create and come to a reasonable decision. In any case, bans hardly serve any purpose. After TikTok was banned in India, downloads of the Chinese social media app reportedly surged by 10-15 times on third-party sites.

India's consumption acceleration

To benefit from the spending boom, we need guideposts to understand which goods will see a surge in demand and when

Now that the Chinese economy has started to slow structurally, many investors are looking for the next driver of global consumption. In multiple products, be it smartphones or cars, Chinese demand has seemingly plateaued. Given that China was till recently driving global demand across products, the need for a new global consumption engine is obvious.

For most, India is the next frontier: A population of 1.3 billion people, median age below 30 and the world's fastest growing major economy. I have seen multiple reports recently from both financial analysts and consultants highlighting the India consumption potential. They all make use of a consumption acceleration framework loved by the consultant community, and used successfully to track and project consumption trajectories of multiple emerging economies at various stages of economic development.

The basic framework lays out the concept that demand, for certain goods and services, will grow disproportionately as incomes rise and the structure of demand shifts. Household spending on certain goods and services does not grow smoothly, despite steady income growth. Spending seems to accelerate on different products as we cross different income thresholds.

Here is an example taken from a recent Gavekal report: If an economy has a bell shaped income distribution curve and the average income of the economy were to grow by 25 per cent from \$10,000 to \$12,500, then the percentage of population earning more than \$15,000 would not increase by just 25 per cent. It would rise seven-fold from 2.3 per cent to 15.9 per cent. This is the acceleration dynamic at work. Obviously, demand for products consumed by this cohort would accelerate dramatically, much more than the 25 per cent headline growth in average incomes.

All the reports I have seen have tried to model this consumption acceleration phenomenon for India. To do so, one has to make certain modelling assumptions. First of all, one has to understand the income distribution curve of the country. While India does not have the bell shaped curve beloved of textbooks, there is limited data on the actual distribution. While we had a GDP per capita of \$2,000 in 2018, more than two-thirds of the population earned less than half of that. Therefore, income distribution in India has a very long tail. Most analysts look at proxies

like the consumption data from sample surveys and build out a distribution curve.

Then you have to project income growth for the economy. Will we continue growing for another decade at greater than 7 per cent? The growth assumed makes a big difference. Most of the reports have India growing at between 7.5 per cent and 8 per cent for the next five years and then gradually tapering to 7 per cent thereafter.

One has to also model urbanisation, as urban incomes are much higher than rural incomes. Faster urbanisation will lead to greater consumption. In order to understand the impact on demand for specific goods and services, we need to establish certain income thresholds, at which consumption tips and starts to grow rapidly. Once you have established the income thresholds, you can model how many new households are entering each income cohort over the coming decade and its likely impact on consumption.

The cleanest categorisation I have seen is in the Gavekal report. They have three buckets, the first, called the emerging consumer, has an income level between ₹2 lakh and ₹5 lakh based on 2016 prices. This category tends to buy entry level smartphones and two-wheelers. The second category is the aspiring consumer, with an income between ₹5 lakh and ₹12 lakh. They can buy an entry-level car and start vacationing overseas. The final category is the affluent consumer with an income over ₹12 lakh. They buy designer brands and prioritise experiences.

Looking through the various reports, their modelled income distribution and economic growth rates, with the above categorisation, certain conclusions are clear. Firstly, less than half of India's households are currently involved in the modern consumption economy. As per the Gavekal categorisation, today we have 71 million households in the emerging consumer bucket, 33 million as aspiring consumers and only 18 million in the affluent consumer bucket. That is only 120 million households, less than half the total economically engaged.

Using a scenario of nearly 8 per cent GDP growth till 2025, tapering to 7 per cent by 2030, combined with a continuation of current urbanisation trends, these number change drastically. Over the coming decade, we will see the number of households in the emerging consumer bucket double to 140 mil-



AKASH PRAKASH

Governing uncertainty in geoengineering

Imagine 2030. Faced with a decade of record-breaking temperatures and three years of consecutive drought, China deploys sulphate particles in the stratosphere to reflect sunlight and reduce temperatures. A year later, India's monsoons face a severe shock, resulting in significant crop losses. It is not clear if the Chinese intervention caused or influenced the monsoonal aberration. How would this issue be resolved? Would it be limited to climate negotiations? Would it warrant higher political intervention?

At the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) in Nairobi in March, a draft resolution "to prepare an assessment of the status of geoengineering technologies..." was withdrawn after parties failed to reach an agreement. "[D]eeply concerned about...potential global risks and adverse impacts...", Switzerland and 10 other countries (from Burkina Faso to Mexico to South Korea) had proposed the resolution to assess climate geoengineering (CGE) science, actors and activities involved, expected impacts, and options for governance. Its failure illustrates that lack of global governance of CGE is deeply rooted in uncertainties, affecting technological research, political intentions, legitimacy of forums, and public trust.

Climate geoengineering is deliberate large-scale intervention in Earth's climate system to limit adverse global warming. It involves two categories: Carbon-dioxide removal to reduce CO2 atmospheric concentrations; and solar radiation management to increase Earth's reflectivity and reduce the outgoing infrared radiation from Earth's surface that greenhouse gases (GHGs) absorb, resulting in warming.

The first lesson from the failed resolution is that we have no consensus on how to govern uncertainty. Uncertainties abound about the effectiveness, second-order impacts, safety and affordability of CGE technologies. The risks surrounding carbon removal are different from those related to solar geoengineering. For instance, bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (a carbon removal idea) raises concerns about

the vast land requirement. But injecting sulphate particles in the stratosphere has implications for rainfall in other regions.

Whereas the US opposed clubbing carbon removal and solar geoengineering together, the EU argued that all CGE technologies merited caution. The proposed resolution rightly adopted a precautionary approach in calling for an assessment. The Convention on Biological Diversity had been even more cautious in 2010 when parties imposed a moratorium on geoengineering activities that may affect biodiversity. But opponents of the Swiss resolution, in particular the US and Saudi Arabia, opposed even this weakly limiting framework. If governance has to enable research to plug gaps in our knowledge, there must be a minimum understanding about the need for caution.

Secondly, attempts to define thresholds between emissions mitigation, climate adaptation and geoengineering will remain fraught. Within academic circles, scientists have tried to separate computer modelling, small-scale field experiments, large-scale experiments and eventual deployment. But the real worry for many countries is that CGE research will reduce incentives for mitigation.

According to some sources, the US opposed the resolution because it suggested that geoengineering was not a substitute for emissions reduction. This is deeply problematic. Promised actions under the Paris Agreement on climate change are well below what is needed to stabilise temperature rise. If the largest polluters view CGE as even a potential substitute for mitigation, it signals grave injustice and an abandonment of any notion of historical responsibility.

Thirdly, there is no consensus about the forum at which to discuss geoengineering. Neither codes of conduct for scientists to self-govern themselves nor solely national-level governance will suffice. If we are willing to contemplate technological interventions at a planetary scale, eventually we would have to contemplate political interactions — and disputes — at a planetary scale as well.

Those opposing the UNEA resolution argued that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or

lion, the aspiring consumers triple to over 100 million and affluent consumers quadruple to 72 million. The number of households involved in the modern consumer economy will move from 120 million to over 310 million.

To get a sense of how important economic growth is to this equation, consider this: A difference of two percentage points in GDP growth over a decade (difference between a high growth and low growth scenario) will change the number of households in the upper two consumption buckets from 193 million to 136 million. That is almost 60 million fewer households uplifted because of slower growth for just a 10-year period.

To understand the real impact of accelerating consumption for certain goods and services, we need to see not just the net numbers being added to each of the above three categories (as some households enter and others leave) but the gross additions to each category from the cohort below. Looking at it from this perspective, the last decade was clearly the era of the emerging consumer cohort. In 2009, about 2.5 million new households entered the emerging consumer bucket per annum, this has continuously grown and in 2019 about 12 million new households will enter this bucket (data from Gavekal). This number will continue to grow, peaking at about 15 million by 2025. Thereafter, as India grows wealthier, the affluent consumer bucket will take leadership and start adding the most new households. From 4 million new consumers added in 2019, we will see almost 10 million new households being added annually to the affluent consumer grouping by 2025, and then 13 million by 2030. It will cross the emerging consumer grouping in new additions.

This switch from the emerging consumer grouping to the affluent consumer group in the coming decade as the biggest recipient of new consuming households will have some interesting implications.

Over the last decade, we saw a surge in consumption for those categories favoured by the emerging consumer grouping. Two-wheelers, for example, tripled in sales from seven million to over 21 million. Basic consumer goods also had strong growth as penetration rates improved across all categories.

Over the coming decade, as the aspiring consumer grouping gains more prominence, different categories should benefit — car sales, for one. Over the last decade, we have seen passenger vehicle sales grow from 1.2 million to 2.2 million, and the sales trajectory should accelerate in the coming decade, as by 2025, 10 million new consumers will enter the potential car purchasing income bucket per annum. Branded clothing and foreign travel are other categories poised to explode for exactly the same reasons.

India will grow through its own consumption acceleration dynamic just like we have seen in China and other emerging markets. It is critical to understand, however, what this acceleration will look like and which goods and services will be impacted in what time frame. An analysis like the one done by Gavekal and others are helpful guideposts in understanding this upcoming growth acceleration and how to position for it.

The writer is with Amansa Capital



INFLEXION POINTS

ARUNABHA GHOSH

Debating austerity



BOOK REVIEW

ISHAN BAKSHI

Under the basic Keynesian model, the impact of austerity measures on the economy is quite straightforward. Cuts in government spending reduces aggregate demand, which leads to a fall in output, lowering gross domestic product and private income. This creates a multiplier effect as a fall in private consumption translates to a further fall in output.

The greater the propensity to consume out of current income, in other words, the

lower the propensity to save, and the greater is the multiplier effect. This fall in aggregate demand also deters investments.

On the other hand, an increase in taxes negatively impacts output, though to a lesser degree. Higher taxes reduce personal disposable income thereby translating to lower consumption. But as consumers spend only a fraction of their disposable income, they also tend to save, so higher taxes have a smaller impact on output. Thus, under this model, austerity implemented through spending cuts is more harmful than that implemented through raising taxes.

This basic Keynesian framework continues to dominate popular discourse. However, economists Alberto Alesina, Carlo Favero and Francesco Giavazzi differ from their approach. In a new book titled

Austerity – When It Works and When It Doesn't the economists, who have long

researched the effects of austerity, argue that the typical anti-austerity argument that tax increases and expenditure cuts "cause long lasting recessions," does not present the complete picture for many reasons.

For one, "the effects of fiscal policy are not limited to the demand side of the economy." Rather, changes in tax structure and government spending also creates incentives that influence the supply side.

Second, "economic decisions of consumers, investors, workers and savers depend not just on the present but also on expectations of future." This is important "as decisions regarding taxes and spending made today affect the future."

At the crux of the book is the notion that when governments are facing an unsustainable debt position, it is much better to rein back deficits through spending cuts rather than tax increases. Marshalling decades of data, the authors argue that an "increase in labour taxes tends to reduce labour supply while simultaneously raising labour costs and thus prices". Further, high-

er taxes, also reduce disposable income thereby reducing aggregate demand.

On the other hand, even though spending cuts reduce aggregate demand, "if they are perceived as permanent, they will lead to expectations of lower taxes in the future." This, they argue, has ramifications for consumer spending today.

According to economists Milton Friedman and Franco Modigliani, consumption decisions are based not only on current incomes but also on long-term incomes. If consumers expect lower taxes in the future, then "private consumption may react immediately to the announcement of a permanent cut in government spending," the authors argue.

Then there's also the investment effect. The authors contend that if investors expect future taxes to go up to pay for government spending they are less likely to invest today for two reasons. First, they are likely to face higher taxes in the future. And second, higher taxes levied on consumers will also reduce demand in the future.

On the contrary, a cut in government spending signals a reduction in future taxes, which may stimulate investment today.

Thus, in their view, the negative effects of austerity are outweighed by the impact of austerity in boosting household and investor confidence — which in turn will get them to spend. They estimate that although tax-based austerity drives lead to "deep and prolonged recession" that lasts many years, the recessionary impact of expenditure-based austerity dissipates "within two years after a plan is introduced."

At the crux of their argument is the belief that expectations and confidence matter. This is a tall order. Also, much of the debate lies in estimating the magnitude of these fiscal multipliers. This is where analyses differs.

While economists will continue to debate on the merits and demerits of expansionary or contractionary fiscal policies, the fundamental question is whether austerity is a politically saleable proposition. Is austerity a bad word? Will voters

reward governments who boost spending or those who pivot to parsimony?

The authors note that "in academia and political circles the idea is that voters always punish incumbents who raise taxes or cut spending to reduce deficits."

This argument stems from the line of thinking that voters, guided by short-term imperatives, are more likely to vote for governments who increase spending, without an understanding of the future costs that such higher current spending entails. However, the authors disagree. According to their estimates, "the recent historical evidence on electoral effects of austerity, the results are much less clear cut than the conventional wisdom would suggest."

AUSTERITY: WHEN IT WORKS AND WHEN IT DOESN'T

Alberto Alesina, Carlo Favero, Francesco Giavazzi

Princeton University Press; Pages 276

Opinion

TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2019

CONCERTED GLOBAL ACTION

M Venkaiah Naidu, vice president of India

Mere condemnation and compensation will not suffice. We have to contain and root out terror in all its forms by going to the root cause



SELF-SUSTAINING

THE NATIONAL MINERAL POLICY OF 2019 RECOGNISES THAT MINERALS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT AND HAVE EXPORT POTENTIAL

Develop mining to improve national security

RANJAN MATHAI

Former Indian foreign secretary and Indian High Commissioner to the UK



THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED National Mineral Policy 2019, covering non-fuel and non-coal minerals, brings back into focus the crucial significance of vital raw materials for India's economy which is set to become the third-largest in the world over the decade ahead. India has a great historical legacy in mining and metallurgy, which enabled the development of advanced material civilisations on our soil from ancient times. Yet, mining and minerals have rarely been given an appropriate importance by policymakers or in the public imagination. If anything, mining has come to be associated with damage to the environment and tribal habitats, and unfair acquisition of natural resources. The release of the NMP 2019 is an opportunity to bring back a balance between such concerns and the undeniable need for minerals to sustain daily life in our modern economy. We have reached dangerously high levels of import dependency while less than 10% of India's potential has been explored. It is also time to understand the implications for national security of access to critical minerals.

The NMP 2019 recognises that minerals are essential for industry and employment and have export potential. Actually, the growth and diversification of our economy, combined with restrictions on domestic mining, have led to a surge in imports of minerals and metals—reaching over \$130 billion in the last year, contributing significantly to the current account deficit. A rational approach to sustainable mining at home will release resources for other essential imports.

A well-developed, sustainable mining industry has immense scope for employment generation and the NMP rightly targets human resource development for the sector, as well as

robotics and automation to assist in deep underground mining. Given the spread and diversity of India's geological potential, mining can create new centres of economic activity in various parts of the country, including some which face internal security threats. Mining contributes just over 2% of our GDP as against 5% in China and 7-8% in Australia and South Africa, with whom we share geological characteristics.

Minerals are required not just for the traditional manufacturing industries of our present (including defence industries that require large quantities of copper, aluminium, titanium, bismuth, etc) but are inextricably linked to our future hi-tech, digital economy and renewable energy sources. Our ubiquitous mobile phones require cobalt, graphite and aluminium as well as lithium. It is estimated that 62 elements are used in making high speed, high capacity, integrated circuits. The French expert Guillaume Pitron has written that the electric transport of the future will give up oil, but will be "dependent on some 30 rare metals which have outstanding electronic, optical or magnetic properties". Vehicle batteries may require 10kg of cobalt. Permanent magnets used in electronics and "smart" missiles consume up to 3.5kg of rare earth metals like samarium, and lasers use

neodymium and other rare metals. The "green tech" demand of tomorrow will require more exploration, mining and refining of rare earths. Currently, China controls over 90% of global rare earth supplies. It can, and has used this leverage to cut off supplies to customers abroad for geopolitical reasons; and it may do so again to keep its lead in the new technologies underpinning its Made in China 2025 vision.

NMP 2019 specifies that research will be directed towards the raw materials required for production of materials of high purity for use in advanced technology applications. We have to tap our substantial potential for mineral resources which will ensure we have the wherewithal to join in advanced manufacturing for the digital age, including hi-tech defence industries.

The NMP gives long overdue recognition to mineral security as an important issue with strategic as well as economic significance, and seeks long-term mineral security for the nation through enhanced exploration and development at home and acquisition of assets abroad. China has had a strategy on critical minerals since 2003. It has very little cobalt, but has moved fast in Africa, acquiring companies in the Democratic Republic of Congo which produce about 30% of the world's cobalt

production! After the Second World War, the US created a strategic mineral stockpile by law, and this is managed by the Defence Logistics Agency. Analysts suggest that the stockpile, which once held 3 years supply of as many as 75 minerals, began to decline after the Cold War ended, reaching just 18 minerals with a value of \$1 bn in 2016. President Trump has, however, identified the reliance on imports of minerals as a vulnerability, and enunciated a new strategy to ensure secure and reliable supplies of critical minerals. (Industry experts have identified China, Russia, South Africa and some other developing countries as being the key sources of many of the 50 minerals for which the US's import dependence exceeds 50%). The US president's executive order of December 2017 defined a "critical" mineral as one that i) is essential to the economic or national security of the US; ii) has a supply chain which is vulnerable to disruption; and iii) serves an essential function in the manufacturing of a product, the absence of which would have significant consequences for the economy or national security.

Focusing on security and prosperity, the US policy directive declares "an increase in private sector domestic exploration, production, recycling, and reprocessing of critical minerals, and support for efforts to identify more commonly available technological alternatives to these minerals will reduce our dependence on imports, preserve our leadership in technological innovation, support job creation, improve national security and the balance of trade, and enhance the technological superiority and readiness of our Armed Forces which are among the nation's most significant consumers of critical minerals". NMP 2019 should bring to bear a similar holistic vision for India's national security.

Investigate case against CJI first, don't pre-judge it

It is possible, as the CJI and FM Jaitley have argued, that this is a hit job, but a complete investigation of the facts is essential

GIVEN THE HIGH-PROFILE nature of cases in the Supreme Court (SC), and not just the obvious political ones involving the BJP (Rafale) and the Congress (Rahul Gandhi's citizenship and his Rafale comments), it is obvious there would be many who would like to see the Chief Justice of India (CJI) hobbled. But that goes for most people in influential positions across the country. That is why, it is difficult to understand why, when faced with a sexual harassment charge, the CJI chose not to delegate the inquiry to a body he was not in charge of; the SC's Prevention of Sexual Harassment committee, for instance, is not empowered to examine cases relating to sitting judges including the chief justice. Instead, he said this was a larger plot to 'deactivate' him; he was quoted by one website as saying the judiciary was under "very, very serious threat" and that, if judges had to "work under these conditions, good people will never come to this office". Equally astonishing was the manner in which the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and even the finance minister chose to back the CJI. In a blog post on the matter, finance minister Arun Jaitley seemed to suggest the allegations were part of the "assault on the institution" that was on since the 1970s and, while saying it should be left to the SC to decide how to deal with the allegations, he spoke of how this was "not the first case of the 'institutional destabilisers' nor will it be the last".

There have been, as the finance minister has said, some cases of influential members of the Bar trying to browbeat the judges, and it is certainly curious that, apart from the fact that the complainant's representation was distributed to judges of the SC, only some online news portals were given the details of the complaint even though all newspapers/TV channels have legal reporters; and this case is surely of relevance to more than just legal reporters? But surely these statements of support could have followed an independent inquiry? This is, after all, not the first time that an eminent person has been accused of sexual harassment, especially after the #MeToo movement gained momentum, and in many cases, the accusations have been found to be true. Indeed, by presiding over a bench that asked the media to exercise its judgment on publishing details of the case—"leave it to the media to take off such material which is undesirable"—even though his name was not on the brief order, the chief justice did act as a judge in his own cause.

Unlike many sexual harassment charges where, very often, it boils down to one person's word against another, in this case, the allegations made are very specific and involve many actions that can be independently verified; similarly, there are fairly detailed allegations about what fate befell the victim's family after the alleged incident, and these charges involve the action of some other organisations whose conduct has been alleged to be unfair. Each one of these allegations can, and must, be probed; and the results of the probe will go a long way in helping to arrive at a conclusion. This case, as is obvious, is very important from the point of view of the reputation of the chief justice of the country; it is even more important from the point of view of millions of women who face sexual harassment at work, so classifying it as a blackmail attempt without any investigation is unfair to all of them. While the CJI was wrong to preside over the bench that made some observations on the matter, he must do the right thing now by appointing a committee, perhaps of retired chief justices of India, to examine the allegations in detail. Asking the CJI to step aside till the enquiry is over, perhaps, would be succumbing to the "institution disruptors" the finance minister warned about; but giving the committee a tight deadline to investigate the matter, while the CJI continues to preside over SC, would perhaps be the best for all involved.

What Earth Day?

Most nations still unwilling to do what's needed to save planet

THETHEME OF this year's Earth Day (April 22) was protecting the planet's species diversity. The theme is a pertinent one, considering nearly half of 177 mammal species surveyed in a study by three researchers, from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Stanford University, saw their distribution fall by more than 80% between 1900 and 2015. Scientists strongly believe that the planet may be in the midst of the sixth mass extinction, and unlike other times in the past, this could be largely anthropogenic. Indeed, as per WWF's Living Planet Index that categorises the causes of decline of wildlife population, 37% of the wildlife population lost in the last 40 years can be attributed to exploitation by humans, 31% to habitat degradation, 13% to complete habitat loss and 7% to climate change. Current extinction, a paper published in Science says, is 1,000 times higher than what would have been if there were no people—a Duke University study estimates that while nearly a 1,000 species are lost every year due to anthropogenic reasons, less than one species a year was lost annually 200,000 years ago, before modern humans evolved. At the same time, another study estimates that, at the rate of average global consumption today, we need 1.5 planet Earths to sustain human life, while at the level of consumption in the US, we would need four planets. The worst offenders in the consumption & climate change problem, meanwhile, obstinately refuse to change course.

While rich nations have been stepping up conservation efforts, this is at the expense of the developing world—the developing world now undertakes production to cater for not only domestic needs, but also for exports, with an ever-growing ecological footprint. Indeed, between 1990 and 2008, a third of all the products of indiscriminate deforestation, viz. timber, beef and soya, were exported from developing nations to the EU. While China, Japan, and the US continue to over-exploit marine resources, West Asian nations, Kuwait, Qatar and UAE have the world's worst per capita ecological footprint—seventeen of the 21 nations that beat the world average in terms of ecological damage caused, are rich nations. The problem is exacerbated by the non-action on the climate change front. The Climate Action Tracker, which analyses individual countries' (those for which data is available) likelihood of meeting a lower-than-1.5°C-warming future, says the US and Russia's efforts are 'critically insufficient'. This means that if all governments were at a level similar to that of the two countries—both of which are fossil-fuel rich nations—a 4°C-plus warming is inevitable. While Canada and China are making "highly insufficient" efforts, the EU's performance is "insufficient". Indeed, only India, Ethiopia and the Philippines are making efforts compatible with a 2°C rise, while Morocco is the only nation in the world that is on a 1.5°C compatible pathway. So, Earth Day, unfortunately, is little other than tokenism if nations switch off their destructive ways just for a day every year.

Building Security

Kerala's housing project for the homeless is an initiative worth serious consideration

THE KERALA GOVERNMENT'S Mission LIFE (livelihood inclusion and financial empowerment) that aims to provide shelter and security to the homeless has been reaping some success. Under the initiative, the state will be providing shelter to 4.3 lakh families that are without a home. The first phase of this project has been completed—as per *The Indian Express* (IE), the newly built housing complex in Adimali contains 271 units in a total of seven floors. The complex offers decent living space to the homeless and has amenities that are now common in housing complexes elsewhere in the country, including waste management facilities and power back-up. Additionally, the complex also houses a health sub-centre and *anganwadis*.

The project will be implemented in coordination between the departments of local self-government and social welfare—Adimali complex, IE reports, cost ₹26 crore. The Kerala government estimates that if each of the 4.3 lakh target families were to be provided with independent housing, the total land requirement would have been 6,000 acres, which would have made the project unsustainably expensive and impossible to follow through with because of the paucity of land; thus, the decision to opt for apartment complexes and housing clusters that reduce the land requirement. The project website also lists the provision of social security and skill development schemes, making each recipient independent and empowering them to change and work for their own future. In addition, the construction of houses for that section of society which is supposed to receive the majority of government-provided aid enables officials to track the receipt of such benefits as the beneficiaries are not constantly on the move or are scattered. The fact is that taking the homeless off the streets has many gains for healthcare, delivery of government services, law and order, etc. Other states would do well to take a leaf from Kerala's book.

Transfer of excess RBI capital to the fisc will not impact liquidity/RBI open market operations (OMO) if it is deployed to recapitalise banks

MEDIA REPORTS SUGGEST that the expert committee, chaired by ex-RBI governor Bimal Jalan, to examine the RBI's economic capital framework, will submit its report soon. How much will the Jalan committee identify as excess RBI capital? Contingency reserves would release ₹1,282 bn if halved to 3.25% of RBI book from 6.5% now. This is still 50+% higher than BRICs' (ex India) average. A 4.5% yield hike cover releases ₹1,160 bn. It is estimated that the reserves would also release ₹1,170 bn if restricted to cover a yield rise of, say, 4.5%, from about 9% now.

Revaluation Reserves: ₹300-1,800 bn

Limiting the appreciation cover in RBI's currency and gold revaluation account (CGRA) to 25% (i.e., ₹52/USD) would release ₹357 bn to the fisc. The current CGRA balance is about ₹7,300 bn and covers ₹18.2/USD to a level of ₹51.15/USD, i.e., a 26.3% appreciation. A 20% appreciation cover releases ₹1,744 bn. Limiting the appreciation cover to 20% (i.e., ₹55.5/USD) would release about ₹1,744 bn to the fisc from the CGRA.

Overall cap: ₹2,000 bn

Capping reserves at 20% of RBI book (25.5% now) above the 2004 Thorat group's 18% and Economic Survey's 16%, releases ₹1,959 bn. Can RBI really transfer reserves to the fisc beyond its annual surplus? The 1934 RBI Act places no bar as long as the ministry of finance maintains ₹5 crore/\$0.7 mn of reserve funds under Section 46. While Section 47 enjoins RBI to credit its annual surplus to the fisc, after provisions, it does not place any restriction on further transfers.

Excess RBI capital OMO neutral if it recaps banks

Jalan report to help lending rate cuts

Transfer of excess RBI capital to the fisc will not impact liquidity/RBI open market operations (OMO) if it is deployed to recapitalise banks

INDRANIL SEN GUPTA

India economist, DSP Merrill Lynch (India)



RBI's surplus capital held in, say, contingency reserves in net non-monetary liabilities (NNML) (net worth) is transferred to government deposits with it. The government draws this down to inject capital into PSU banks. PSU banks invest the monies received from recapitalisation in a government account that is parked with RBI. The entire transaction set is liquidity neutral. In the government balance sheet, the ministry of finance draws down its balances with RBI to

infuse capital into banks. Banks, in turn, put these monies back in a government scheme that is held at RBI. The entire transaction set is fiscal deficit neutral. Finally, in the bank balance sheet, the bank invests the capital infused in a government scheme. This still relaxes its credit constraint by 10x at 9% CR. This should help to ease lending rates.

Edited excerpts from BofAML's *India Economic Watch* (April 22)

RBI's contingency reserves are highest amongst BRICs		200 bps jump in 10yr needs only 15% of CR today	
Central Bank	Ratio of contingency reserves to assets (%)	10 yr yield on Jun 30 2018	7.9
Brazil	3.7	10 yr yield today	7.26
Russia	1.1	Purchase price (at par)	100
India*	6.5	Coupon	7
China*	1.9	Yield today	9
S Africa	1.5	Price today	88.8
		Capital loss	-11.2
		Coupon accrued	7
		Total return due	-4.2
		RBI's G-sec holding (₹ bn)	7,119
		RBI's likely loss (₹ bn)	-299
		CR (₹ bn)	2,321
Govt uses surplus deposit with RBI to recapitalise PSU banks			
Inflow		Outflow	
Step 1			
RBI's excess capital	10	Infusion of capital into PSU banks	10
Total	10	Total	10
		Fiscal deficit	0
Step 2			
Banks invest capital in govt scheme	10	Gol holds these monies with RBI	10
Total	10	Total	10
		Fiscal deficit	0
Source: BofA Merrill Lynch Global Research estimates			

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sri Lanka attacks

Man's inhumanity to man could not have been demonstrated more vividly and dreadfully than in the blast sites—churches and hotels—in Sri Lanka. Of particular poignancy were the photographs of a blood-smeared Christ and the inconsolably wailing kin of the victims taken moments after the Easter Day tragedy. In the attacks on the luxury hotels was a dire warning to those who plan a sight-seeing tour of the island of indescribable scenic beauty. The perpetrators of the crime are said to be Sri Lankan nationals. The sophistication, coordination and meticulousness with which the attacks were carried out could possibly mean the involvement of those with expertise and resources beyond the shores of Sri Lanka. These appalling attacks underscore the destructive power of religious intolerance and hatred and the need to repudiate violence and replace it with non-violence tempered with love

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

Case against CJI

The sexual harassment complaint against Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi cannot simply be brushed as one aimed at maligning the reputation of CJI and the institution he heads. While the CJI had every reason to be aggrieved over the sexual complaint raised against him, he could have exercised restraint and refrained himself from publicly attributing motives to the sexual complaint. CJI's apprehensions about the need to protect and preserve the judicial independence are genuine and cannot be faulted, but the question now is whether the higher judiciary has the institutional resolve to look into the same (sexual complaint) with the fairness and objectivity it truly deserves

— M Jeyaram, Madurai

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



ILLUSTRATION: ROHINIT PHORE

ANUJ AGARWAL

The author is an economist. Views are personal.



Reading the clouds

A silver lining is the recent forecast for 2019 south-west monsoon. The MET has forecast a near-normal monsoon, and the Skymet has forecast south-west monsoon for 2019 at 93% of LPA. In case these forecasts fail to hold and the monsoon is deficient, certain states and regions can be in a difficult situation, coupled with adverse consequences for the rural economy

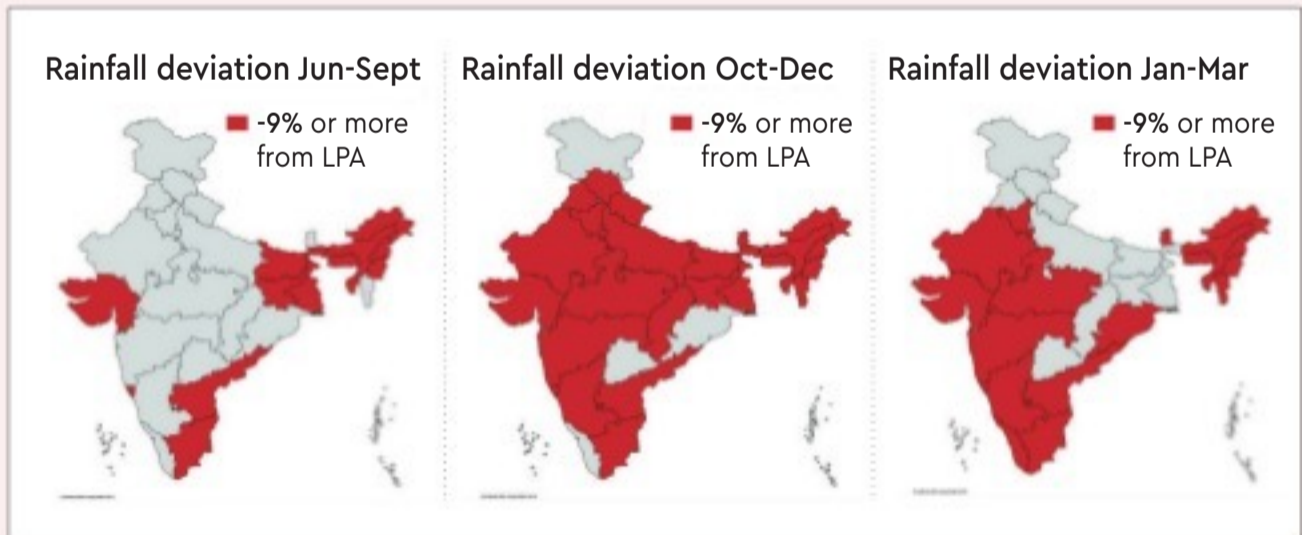
receives. Another 13% is accounted for by post-monsoon rains during October to December. These two spells of rain are very critical for the major cropping seasons in India—kharif and rabi. While the south-west monsoon is deficient, the crop growth during kharif season, it is also critical for soil moisture content and water in the reservoirs that irrigates and supports the rabi crop. While the south-west monsoon in 2018 was 9.9% below LPA (long period average), the October to December rains were deficient by almost 44%. At a regional level, the north-eastern states, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and parts of Telangana and Karnataka have had deficient rainfall throughout June 2018-March 2019. This has resulted in low reservoir levels, low ground water levels and low soil moisture content. A combination of all these factors has led to a drought-like situation in certain parts of these states.

Around 68% of India's cropped area is prone to drought. The impact of these weather conditions is exacerbated by the state of the rural economy. A major chunk of rural households are agricultural households, for whom agriculture is the primary economic activity. According to the NABARD All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey, the average agricultural household income was Rs 8,931 per month. A major share of this income is attributable to cultivation and wage labour. Both of these sources of income get adversely impacted by a poor monsoon. In fact, 52.5% of the agricultural households in the country are indebted and have an average debt of Rs 1,04,602. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka,

While the south-west monsoon in 2018 was 9.9% below LPA, the October to December rains were deficient by almost 44%

50% of the cultivated land is covered by irrigation. That leaves much of Indian agriculture and agricultural households at the mercy of monsoons.

Let's look at what 2018 has been like. The south-west monsoon season, which lasts from June to September, accounts for almost 73% of the rainfall India



Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan have declared droughts in many of their districts. All the above mentioned states have less than 60% of the cultivated area under irrigation. These states also have a significant share in India's foodgrain production. Barring Andhra Pradesh, more than 50% of the rural households in these states are agricultural households. Moreover, a significant share of agricultural households in these states is indebted. Amidst all this, a drought-like situation and an extension of the same can have a severe adverse impact on the rural economy. The demand from these rural households can take a hit, and there could be a sharp demand of farm loan waivers—adding to state's fiscal stress.

At a macro level, a poor monsoon seems to impact agricultural output. Years following a poor monsoon have generally seen a contraction in foodgrain output. By broad logic, a poor south-west monsoon will adversely impact kharif crop, which is dependent on rains. Subsequently, soil moisture level as well as reservoir levels will be low for the subsequent rabi crop, which depends on winter rains and irrigation, thereby impacting rabi output adversely. A poor winter rain will further add to the woes of rabi crop. With poor realisations in successive kharif and rabi seasons, the farmer is off to a start in the next kharif season in a poor financial health, thereby reducing his investment in quality inputs for the next crop. Unless there is a good monsoon, this vicious cycle will continue.

While the impact on agricultural output is negative, the same is not really true for food inflation. There have been years when despite a good monsoon food inflation has remained high and vice-versa. Food inflation has behaved differently on account of different factors over the years. In the last few years, food inflation has remained low. Reports suggest various actions by the government (such as limited increases in MSP, anti-hoarding initiatives, management of food stocks, stabilising the markets via exports and imports) have really been instrumental in taming food inflation, apart from the strong seasonal swings in certain food categories. A poor monsoon can also adversely impact water-intensive manufacturing industries and hydro-power generation.

According to DEWS, last year too, almost 41% of the country was under drought-like conditions. Reservoir levels historically around this time of the year have been low. While there is no denying the fact that situation in certain parts of the country is grim, publicising this situation in the current election season could also be in the interest of some political parties. Declaration of drought enables the affected districts to seek assistance from the state disaster response fund and the national disaster response fund. While the DEWS takes into account a lot of objective data, a subjective assessment of many socio-economic aspects at the ground level has a significant weightage in declaring a particular district as drought hit. And there are significant variations in the quality and approach of assessment across states.

A silver lining is the recent forecast for the 2019 south-west monsoon. The MET has forecast a near-normal monsoon, and the Skymet has forecast south-west monsoon for 2019 at 93% of LPA. While the Australian Bureau of Meteorology has retained its outlook on El Nino as 'alert', there is no conclusive evidence of the impact of El Nino on rains and drought in India. In case these forecasts fail to hold and the monsoon is deficient, certain states and regions can be in a difficult situation, coupled with adverse consequences for the rural economy. An evenly distributed normal monsoon is what the country could really use right now.

The benefits of interoperability

KUSHANKUR DEY

The author teaches finance at IIM Bodh Gaya. Views are personal



Can interoperability strengthen regulatory supervision for the market?

INTEROPERABILITY IN CLEARING and settlement services rendered by clearing corporations, which are subsidiaries of national-level stock exchanges, is likely to be in effect from June 1. This is a welcome move by the capital markets regulator. Interoperability can improve functioning of equity/commodity market and their derivative counterpart. The unification in clearing and settlement services can reduce chances of systematic default or trade disruption. Interoperability can bolster regulatory supervision.

SEBI has emerged as regulator of both stocks and commodities post the 2015 SEBI-FMC merger; it directed issuing of unified licences to brokers/members for trading on stocks and commodities simultaneously. The idea of interoperability dates to 2013, when a committee headed by KV Kamath was constituted, but its recommendation on effectuation of interoperability was conservative.

In 2014-15, with improvisation in trading architecture (high-frequency trading/algo trading and trading colocation), SEBI explored the feasibility of interoperability and invited proposals from clearing corporations, which were then placed before the 2017 Market Advisory Committee (SMAC) in December 2017. The reports of working sub-groups (on risk management, technology, and finance and taxation) were reviewed by SMAC in 2018. In agreement with the working group suggestions, SMAC gave the ascent for a phase-wise implementation, with interoperability of clearing corporations clearing securities in the first phase and corporations clearing commodity derivatives and long-dated options in the second.

So, what are the benefits of interoperability? First, interoperability of clearing corporations can reduce trading or impact costs, improve trade execution, and maintain optimal utilisation of margin and capital resources in securities market. It gives choices to trading member/market participants to consolidate and clear their trade through a clearing corporation of their choice instead of going through the concerned exchange where the trade is held.

Second, it may curb potential chances of trade disruption due to any systematic risk occurring on one exchange and the member would be able to trade on other exchanges without paying additional margin that can foster efficiency in the capital market and enable members participate in broad-based and product-driven trading platforms.

Third, it can catalyse competition among existing clearing houses in terms of prices and services they offer, and can affect their margin requirement from the members and commission they charge on clearing.

Fourth, execution risk can be decoupled from settlement risk as there can be an 'arm's length' relationship between the exchange and adjunct clearing corporation.

Fifth, it can potentially discourage the possibilities of inter-exchange arbitrage and agency risk since the working of clearing corporations together may bring down the inefficiency issue and improve market microstructure.

Sixth, exchanges and clearing corporations may not be required to maintain the settlement guarantee fund since the collateral margin deposited by members will be maintained by a unified account through an interoperable link among clearing corporations.

What framework of interoperability has SMAC suggested? As per the working sub-group proposal, peer-to-peer link is suggested. However, merits/demerits of the framework need to be understood. A peer-to-peer interoperable framework can potentially mitigate inter-clearing corporation default risk through existing margining system and deployment of additional financial resources. Additional capital may be required to maintain as a buffer and aid in the absorption of losses due to default by an inter-affiliated clearing corporation that is not linked to core settlement guarantee fund. Under interoperability arrangement, two clearing corporations are likely to interpose between the two counterparties that can potentially mitigate chance of credit default and improve the novation and risk management.

Going forward, are stock exchanges ready to implement a robust interoperable link among their clearing houses? Have they adequate bandwidth to implement it? Can commodity exchanges replicate interoperability for their clearing subsidiaries? We need to wait to review the development.

Are stock markets poised for a meltdown?

Investors should make their choices judiciously at this stage

HEMANT MANUJ

The author is associate professor and area head, Finance at SPIJMR



the Indian market. When the Indian equity market was opened to the foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), it led to a sharp rise in P/E, followed by equally sharp correction. It took a few years for the FPI regime to settle. My analysis is focused on the period after 1995. It may be noted that P/E of the Sensex (RHS of chart) has exceeded 26x just three times in the last 24 years.

April 2000: This was followed by the dot-com burst and the Sensex fell by 40% after that date.

December 2007: This was followed by the global financial crisis (GFC) and the Sensex fell by 56% after that date.

March 2019: Will history repeat itself?

The fact that P/Es here are based on historical earnings, and not forward earnings, should not affect our conclusions. P/Es have been computed consistently on the same

basis for the entire period. Also, forward P/E is merely a derivation of historical P/E, and any conclusion can be suitably adjusted based on expectations of forward earnings. The dividend yield (not plotted in chart) had dropped to under 1% in April 2000 and December 2007. It is currently at 1.15%.

The economy and earnings: The forecast for the global economy is not positive, to put it mildly. The IMF has, twice within the last few months, cut its forecast of global annual GDP growth rate for 2019 and 2020 to 3.3% and 3.6%, respectively. They may not yet be done with the cuts. All major central banks have signalled an accommodative stance for 2019, at the least.

Indian GDP growth rate has slowed down in the last two quarters, and the government has revised its estimated figure for FY19 to 7%. The fiscal deficit, adjusted for the government's obligations pushed



to FY20, should be close to 3.8%. Private investment is not showing any signs of picking up. While exports have picked up, it will be tested against the slowing global economic growth. Oil prices are again moving upward. Food inflation has been kept under control, primarily by keeping agriculture output prices low, but this may not be sustainable in the light of the unrest amongst farmers. On the whole, the economic picture looks hardly enthusing.

Corporate profitability has been subdued for several years. Market analysts are, once again, hoping profit will grow in high teens in FY20. But it is doubtful. The firms lack the pricing power in view of lacklustre growth in jobs and wages. Discretionary consumption expenditure in cars and motorcycles is sluggish. Industrial capacity utilisation has shown a marginal upward trend, but not enough to make a

positive impact on private investments in capacity expansion.

The IBC was, and still is, a singular glimmer of hope in unlocking the capital of banks. But the delay in the process of resolution of several large cases has been a disappointment. Banks are reluctant to fully adopt the IBC process and prefer bilateral negotiations with many large defaulting borrowers. Also, the losses of the power sector are building up, threatening to build up NPAs of banks.

So, why is the valuation high? One reason is central banks globally are back to creating more liquidity, which is flowing into financial assets rather than real assets. This has led to a sharp rise in FPI investments in emerging markets, including India, and helped sustain the dizzy valuation.

We also come up with appealing justifications for high valuations. We hope for a

sharp growth in corporate earnings and focus on a few statistics on the economic landscape, reflecting the brighter side of the same. We all suffer from a 'confirmation bias' and tend to selectively see the picture and justify our beliefs. The hope for a resurgence in the economy and politics, led by a second term by Modi, is also a self-fulfilling factor in keeping the valuation high.

So, what to expect? In the stock market parlance, a clichéd and often abused phrase is, "This time, it's different!" However, we need to look at the real picture. It is almost impossible to predict the time of burst of a market bubble (extreme over-valuation). But history has shown that the bubble does eventually burst, in spite of several voices justifying high valuations. A large section of institutional investors had continued to maintain a bullish view in 2000 and 2008, till the bubble burst in those years.

The risk of being wrong is doubly high this time. Even as high valuation indicates high risk of a meltdown, the correction is likely to be tougher this time around. Consider this: The real interest rates, in the past, sharply cut by central banks, after the meltdown in equity markets. This time, central banks in Europe, Japan and the US do not enjoy any significant bandwidth to reduce their nominal, or real, rates.

The high valuations of the Sensex and Nifty are not unsustainable, unless backed by a sharp rise in corporate earnings. That's a hope, balanced against an array of risks. A sharp correction is more likely than any significant rise from here. As Benjamin Graham would say, a market is a voting machine in the short term, but a weighing machine in the long term. Investors should make their choices judiciously at this stage.



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FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

DO AIRPLANES PUT YOU AT EXTRA RISK OF CATCHING DISEASE GERMS?

ISRAEL'S Ministry of Health said last week that a 43-year-old flight attendant with the country's national airline was comatose with encephalitis after she contracted measles on a flight from New York City to Tel Aviv, and asked all passengers on board the flight to see a doctor if they developed a fever, or showed other symptoms such as a cough, a runny nose, or a dark red rash.

In February, an adult contagious with measles infected two fellow passengers on a flight to San Francisco from an Asian airport, California health officials said this month.

A large number of cases of measles this year in the United States — which eliminated the virus in 2000, but is currently in the middle of a major outbreak — have been linked to people who flew into the country on airplanes. A total 81 flights were investigated in 2018 for carrying at least one infected person, up from 15 in 2017 and 10 in 2016.

Does flying increase the risk of contracting a communicable disease?

In general, according to the WHO, research shows "there is very little risk of any communicable disease being transmitted on board an aircraft". The quality of the air in the cabin is carefully controlled: ventilation rates provide a total change of air 20-30 times per hour, and recirculation systems recycle up to 50% of the air, with recirculated air being passed through filters similar to the ones used in hospital operating theatres and intensive care units. Also, the risk of infection from a passenger seated in the same area of the plane isn't any more compared to the risk in a train, bus, or other crowded places. During the SARS outbreak of 2003, the risk of transmission of the disease in aircraft was found to be very low, says the WHO.

That said, measles is among the world's most contagious viruses. Unlike influenza pathogens, which spread with sneezes or coughs, the measles virus hangs in air like dust for up to two hours. Also, as a report in *The New York Times* pointed out, while a person with influenza was likely to infect two unimmunised others, one infected with measles could give the disease to up to 19 individuals who had not received the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine.



Research has not provided conclusive evidence of airline passengers being at a greater risk of infection than people in other crowded places. Getty

In general, the unimmunised, the very young, and those with weakened immune systems due to cancer or other serious diseases, are more vulnerable. Exactly where in the aircraft you sit in relation to an infected person also matters greatly, research published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PANS) of the United States of America* in April 2018 showed.

According to the researchers, passengers seated one row in front, one row behind, or two seats of either side of an infected flier were within the "perimeter of risk"; those sitting farther away were much safer. Which underlined that the risk came from proximity to an infected person, and not from being on an aircraft *per se* with them. "Modern aircraft are becoming increasingly better about their air circulation, and it's changed actually much more frequently now than your average office building," lead researcher Vicki Stover Hertzberg was quoted as saying in media reports on the study.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICES

TIP FOR READING LIST

PERSPECTIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

THE HUMAN race has never faced a challenge bigger and more complex than climate change. It is a challenge that our politics and societies, organised around the interests of individuals and groups, are unable to take on — fighting climate change requires an entirely new paradigm, and ways of thinking and acting. Two new books capture the crisis dramatically and comprehensively.

The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming by David Wallace-Wells is, in the words of *The New York Times* reviewer, "a remorseless, near-unbearable account of what we are doing to our planet" — even if collective action manages to keep us to 2 degrees Celsius of warming, we would be facing a world in which "the ice sheets will begin their collapse, global GDP per capita will be cut by 13%, 400 million more people will suffer from water scarcity, major cities in the equatorial band of the planet will become unlivable, and even in the northern latitudes heat waves will kill thousands each summer".

In *Losing Earth: A Recent History*, Nathaniel Rich observes that "nearly every conversation we have in 2019 about climate change was being held in 1979". It is, says *The NYT* review, "an account of what went wrong — of how it was that a moment of growing awareness of climate change, and an apparent willingness to act on the knowledge, was allowed to dissipate into stasis and inaction". This happened due to several reasons — the failure of scientists to put across a clear message with sufficient force, and the actions of politicians and energy companies among them. In Rich's reading therefore, climate change is a tragedy, but it is also a crime.

Under the Public Security Ordinance (PSO) of 1947, the President can proclaim an emergency for all or parts of Sri Lanka, if "he is of the opinion that it is expedient to do so in the interests of public security and the preservation of public order or for the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community". Article 155(2) under Chapter XVIII (Public Security) of Sri Lanka's 1978 Constitution says that "the power to make Emergency Regulations under the Public Security Ordinance... shall include the power to make regulations having the legal effect of overriding, amending or suspending the operation of the provisions of any law, except the provisions of the Constitution".

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Easter attacks: the big picture

What is the background of the group suspected to have carried out the bombings? What jihadist impulses are brewing in Sri Lanka, and in the wider Indian Ocean region? Why were Christians targeted?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, APRIL 22

Who are the National Thowheeth Jama'ath, the group suspected to have carried out the coordinated terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter?

Not much is known about the NTJ, but it has been on the radar of Sri Lanka's police since about 2017, when the Sinhalese Buddhist fundamentalist group Bodu Bala Sena — which was formed in 2012 but had appeared to lose steam after the 2015 election defeat of President Mahinda Rajapakse — got second wind and heightened its anti-Muslim campaign. The NTJ, believed to be an extremely radical group, is said to be a breakaway faction of the Sri Lanka Thowheeth Jama'ath.

On December 26, 2018, some statues of the Buddha in Mawanella in the Kegalle district of central Sri Lanka were vandalised by men on motorcycles carrying hammers and other instruments. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe pledged to bring the culprits to book, and the police focussed on the NTJ as the main suspect and arrested seven people.

While searching for two other suspects, police stumbled upon a huge cache of explosives and detonators buried in an 80-acre coconut estate in Wanathawilluwa, Puttalam district, north of Colombo. Some 75 kg of ammonium nitrate and potassium chlorate, and six 20-litre cans of nitric acid were dug up, Sri Lanka's *Sunday Times* reported. Stashed in a warehouse in the estate were found a shotgun, an air rifle, two tents, religious publications, and dry rations. Four men were arrested, who police said were affiliated with a "radicalised local group of Muslims".

But none of this foretold the sophistication of the Easter attacks. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had passed through a learning curve from crude bank robberies and targeted shootings to more sophisticated kinds of terrorism, including inventing the human bomb. But the NTJ, if they indeed carried out Sunday's attacks, appear to have gone from being motorcycle-borne vandals to A-list fideyean attackers. This is a surprise — even though Cabinet Minister Rajitha Senarathne said the NTJ had received help from an unnamed "international" terror group.

Thowheeth means the oneness of God, which is the central theme of Islam. In this, Thowheeth groups are ideologically similar to the ISIS which has its origins in the Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, a group that later became part of al-Qaeda. In 2016, the Sri Lankan government told Parliament that 32 youth from well-to-do families had left the country to join the ISIS. In recent years, that number



Sri Lanka has seen Buddhist-Muslim tensions erupt in violence. Reuters

is said to have increased to over 100.

So, does Sri Lanka have an Islamist jihadist problem that has not been widely recognised so far? Is there a broader Muslim-Buddhist conflict in the country?

Sri Lanka's Muslims make up less than 10% of the country's 21 million people. An overwhelming 70% of the population is Sinhala-Buddhist. Christians are under 7%, and they are both Tamil and Sinhalese. Hindus are 12.6%, and are almost entirely Tamil.

While there were no instances of Sri Lankan jihadist groups, or individual Sri Lankan jihadists going to join the war in Bosnia or Afghanistan, there were concerns from time to time in the 1990s that Wahhabism was gaining ground in the country, especially in the Batticaloa and Ampara districts of eastern Sri Lanka, which have a significant Muslim population. In the entire Eastern district, which includes Trincomalee, Muslims are one-third of the population — Tamils and Sinhalese too, are a third each in the Eastern province.

Sri Lankan Muslims speak Tamil, and while they aligned themselves politically with the Tigers at one time, there was a break in relations in 1990, when the LTTE suspected that the Indian Army (which was present in Sri Lanka from 1987 to 1990 as the Indian Peace Keeping Force) had recruited members of the Muslim community as spies, and that they continued to work for the Sri Lankan armed forces. Overnight, the Tigers evicted some 90,000 Muslims from Jaffna. Many of them settled in refugee camps in Puttalam district, where many live to this day. A separate Muslim political consciousness

arose through the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress in that decade. The SLMC articulated a demand for separate Muslim enclaves within a Tamil North-East, but the Tamil political class, pushing for political autonomy in the North-East, did not encourage it. For its part, the LTTE carried out violent attacks on Muslims in Batticaloa's Kattankudy, killing hundreds in two mosque attacks in the early 1990s.

Soon afterward, new mosques came up in the area that were said to be funded from Saudi Arabia. Arabic words entered the Tamil dialect spoken by Muslims in the East. However, groups like the Sri Lanka Thowheeth Jama'ath and NTJ did not exist until a few years ago. Some observers see causality between the emergence of these groups and the rise of Buddhist fundamentalism in the militaristic atmosphere and triumphalism of post-war Sri Lanka. The unresolved post-war issues have added to the sharpening of Buddhist majoritarian consciousness. It was almost as if Buddhist extremists were looking for another "enemy" to take the place of Tamils, who they believed had been subjugated entirely with the defeat of the LTTE. This has led to at least one serious anti-Muslim incident every year since 2013. Last year, serious clashes erupted in March, fuelled by rumours on social media. That was the first time Sri Lanka reimposed Emergency regulations after lifting them at the end of the war.

If there is a Muslim-Buddhist problem in the country, why was the Christian minority targeted? What signals were being sent, and to whom?

This is where finding causality in local motives for Sunday's attacks comes up short.

The attack on Christians, who are an even smaller minority than Muslims, does not square up as a fallout of the Buddhist-Muslim tensions. Targeting churches on Easter seemed designed to attract maximum international attention, as was the targeting of five-star hotels, frequented by high-end international tourists, diplomats, professionals and wealthy Sri Lankans. All the hotels were hosting a customary and popular Easter brunch at the time of the attacks.

How does Islamist extremism in Sri Lanka sit with similar impulses in the wider Indian Ocean region, specifically the Maldives?

The Maldives has been a country of greater concern than Sri Lanka where Islamist radicalism is concerned. More than 200 Maldivian youth were believed to have joined the ISIS by the end of December 2015. Present estimates are not available, but the numbers have gone up. Considering that Maldives has a population of only 4,50,000, this is a huge number. The atolls have long been a playground for preachers of radical Islam, encouraged under the Gayoom dictatorship.

What are the takeaways for India from this situation with regard to jihadist extremism in the Indian Ocean region?

Domestically, India has been sanguine about its own multicultural success story, which has prevented radical Islamist ideologies from taking root. There have been fewer than 100 ISIS recruits from India. But the rise of militant Hindutva, the attacks on Muslims, and the gradual political marginalisation of the Indian Muslim population have been flagged by experts as potential flashpoints.

Strategically, the destabilisation, for whatever reason, of Sri Lanka, a country that India counts as a close friend and ally despite the problems arising from competing Chinese interests, undermines India's interests in the Indian Ocean region.

Is there any link between the blasts and the political instability in Sri Lanka?

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has said "prior information" existed about terrorist attacks being imminent in the country, but he was not kept in the loop. It is clear that the dysfunction at the highest levels of government, between the Prime Minister and President Maithripala Sirisena, prevented a studied and serious response to the intelligence inputs that Sri Lanka received from India, on the basis of which the Sri Lanka police sent out a nationwide alert warning of attacks on the Indian High Commission and churches across the country.

What an Emergency means in Sri Lanka

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

ASTATE of emergency was to go into force in Sri Lanka at midnight on Monday. "The government has decided to gazette the clauses related to prevention of terrorism to emergency regulation and gazette it by midnight," the office of President Maithripala Sirisena said in a statement in the afternoon. What does a state of emergency mean in the context of Sri Lanka?

Under the Public Security Ordinance (PSO) of 1947, the President can proclaim an emergency for all or parts of Sri Lanka, if "he is of the opinion that it is expedient to do so in the interests of public security and the preservation of public order or for the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community".

Article 155(2) under Chapter XVIII (Public Security) of Sri Lanka's 1978 Constitution says that "the power to make Emergency Regulations under the Public Security Ordinance... shall include the power to make

regulations having the legal effect of overriding, amending or suspending the operation of the provisions of any law, except the provisions of the Constitution".

Only the President can declare an emergency, and his decision is not subject to judicial review. However, he must summon Parliament immediately to inform it of his decision. Parliament must approve of the proclamation within 14 days, failing which the proclamation expires at the end of one month.

The Emergency Regulations are extraordinary because they are made by the President — and not the legislature — and because they supersede existing laws.

(Parliament can, however, revoke or change an Emergency Regulation, and courts can strike down a specific Emergency Regulation that violates the Constitution.)

Under the PSO, Emergency Regulations allow for detentions of individuals; entering, searching, and takeovers of private property; and for "amending any law, for suspending the operation of any law and for applying any law with or without modification". The Ordinance also grants "Special Powers" to the President to "call out all or any of the members of all or any of the armed forces for the maintenance of public order", and to put restrictions on people's movement.

SUGGESTED READING

- *Understanding a State of Emergency in Sri Lanka*: March 2018 Sri Lanka Brief prepared by Centre for Policy Alternatives Research Fellow Dr Asanga Welikala
- *Rule by Emergency: Sri Lanka's Postcolonial Constitutional Experience*, by Radhika Coomaraswamy and Charmaine de los Reyes: Oxford University Press and New York University School of Law (2004)

The Sri Lankan Constitution also permits restrictions on fundamental rights through the Emergency Regulations. According to a brief prepared by the Colombo-based independent advocacy and research nonprofit Centre for Policy Alternatives, among the fundamental rights that can be restricted in the interest of national security and public order are: "the presumption of innocence, the burden of proof, and retroactive penal sanctions; equality before the law and non-discrimination; the ordinary procedure for arrests and judicial sanction for detention; and the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association, movement, occupation, religion, culture and language".

The PSO is a piece of colonial legislation that has been criticised by several analysts. Sri Lanka, which first declared an emergency in 1958, remained under near-continuous emergency rule between 1983 and 2009 as it fought the LTTE. A 13-day state of emergency was declared in March 2018 to control deadly Buddhist-Muslim clashes, especially in the Kandy area.

Crude rising, rupee weakening: what to make of the tough US line on Iran

SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

BRENT CRUDE rose to an intra-day high of \$74.31 per barrel on Monday, and was trading at \$73.7 per barrel, up \$1.7 or 2.4%, from its previous closing. The Indian rupee fell 31 paise against the dollar, and was trading at \$69.67. A rise in the price of crude oil hurts the economy because crude accounts for a significant portion of India's overall imports. If crude rises further, it will not only impact the stability of the rupee and the rise in stock markets, but may also produce an inflationary effect.

What is leading to the rise in the price of Brent crude?

The spike in prices on Monday followed reports that the United States will stop

granting sanction waivers to any country importing Iranian crude or condensate beginning May 2, 2019. While the spike in prices was on account of this report, crude oil prices have been rising steadily since March on concerns over supply from OPEC, and the US sanctions on Venezuela. Over the last two months, Brent crude prices have risen 14.7% from a level of \$64.76 per barrel on February 25 to \$74.31 on Monday. Monday's prices were the highest in nearly six months. Brent crude closed at \$75.47 per barrel on October 31, 2018.

What is the impact on the rupee? Could it weaken further?

Inflow of funds from foreign portfolio investors led to a strong recovery in the rupee between January and March 2019. However, the rupee has been rising against the dollar since the reversal in the trend of



A gas flare on an oil production platform in the Soroush oil fields in the Persian Gulf, Iran. The US told Japan, South Korea, Turkey, China, and India Monday that they would no longer be exempt from US sanctions if they continued to import oil from Iran. Reuters file photo

crude prices. If Brent continues to rise, the rupee is likely to face additional pressure. While expectations of weakening global growth may temper its rise, the news of the end of waivers for the Iran sanctions has spooked the market.

Crude has traditionally been a big determinant of the way the rupee moves. In October 2018, the rupee fell to an all-time low of 74.34 against the dollar in line with rising oil prices. Brent crude had hit a level of \$86 per barrel in October, putting pressure on the rupee and on India's current account deficit. However, as crude prices declined over the following months to levels of around \$52 per barrel by the end of December 2018, it offered relief to both the rupee and the economy.

A weak rupee hurts the country on account of the higher import bill and current account deficit, and also tends to be infla-

tionary. The Reserve Bank of India will be watching the movement of crude and domestic inflation before going for another rate cut this year.

Does the US decision on Iran hurt India's imports?

In the 10-month period between April 2018 and January 2019, India imported \$97 billion worth of petroleum oil and oil obtained from bituminous minerals crude. Almost 11.2 per cent of petroleum oil, worth \$10.9 billion, were imported from Iran. The US decision to end waivers for countries importing crude from Iran beginning May 2 may hurt India's interests, as it will have to look for alternative sources of oil. The US sanctions on Venezuela are already restrictive for India. From April 2018 to January 2019, India imported almost 6.4% of its requirement from

Venezuela. If both countries are now pushed out of India's equation, almost 17.6% of its total imports will be impacted. Also, if the total supplies from these two big oil exporters is kept out of the market, it will lead to a supply crunch, and likely increase in overall crude oil prices.

What are the other sources of crude oil for India?

While Iraq is the biggest exporter, Saudi Arabia is a close second, and both of them account for 38% of India's total petroleum imports. UAE and Nigeria together account for 16.7%. However, the biggest change has been the entry of the US as a major player. While it did not figure in the list of top 10 petroleum exporters for India in 2017-18, in the 10 months of FY'19, the US stood at number 9 with an over 3% share of India's petroleum imports.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Rest in peace, Hemant

You do not need a certificate either from Sadhvi who cursed you or from the emissaries of Masood Azhar



S S VIRK

TERROR NEXT DOOR

The Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka could widen ethnic faultlines, threaten to disrupt a decade of calm

SRI LANKA'S DECADE of peace after the LTTE's military defeat in May 2009 has been shattered with a diabolical plan to drag the country back into its darkest days. The death toll is nearly 300 from the chain of eight bombings on Easter Sunday targeting churches and hotels across the island nation, worse than anything it has experienced at the hands of the LTTE in the three decades of civil war. The scale and the ferocity of the attack has no precedent in Sri Lanka's troubled history, one from which it believed it had finally emerged. In the last decade, a generation of Sri Lankans has come of age for whom conflict was history, who have no experience of curfews and emergency regulations or the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Now all this is threatening to engulf Sri Lanka again.

According to Sri Lankan authorities, the attacks were carried out by suicide bombers. Two dozen people have been arrested and the government spokesman has named the National Towheed Jamath as the group behind the attacks. Little is known about this organisation except that it preaches a puritanical form of Islam. But it is Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's acknowledgment that the country's security apparatus had "prior information" on the attacks that causes more anguish. The differences between President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe appear to have played a good part in the security warning not being taken seriously. The PM has alleged that he was not kept in the loop about the intelligence warnings. If so, the inability of the country's top functionaries to get along has had deadly consequences. It casts their leadership abilities in extremely poor light. However, the administration has done well to prevent any backlash on the Muslim community.

Why now, and why Sri Lanka? Given that investigators believe this was the handiwork of radicalised local Muslims, there have been straws in the wind of such radicalisation for years, as a reaction to attacks by the LTTE on Muslims through the 1990s, and after the war, to the rise of Buddhist fundamentalism that began targeting Muslims. Sri Lanka, where nearly 10 per cent of the 22 million population is Muslim, has also not been insulated from the global spread of Wahabism. Mainstream Muslim parties, major players in Sri Lanka's robust democratic political space, had managed to keep the radicals at bay all these years despite the failure of the political class to repair the ethnic faultlines. The targeting of Christians, who are an even smaller minority in Sri Lanka than Muslims, and in a manner similar to anti-Christian incidents in other parts of the world, also points to more than a local grievance. But it seems too early to say if the Easter bloodbath was the handiwork of ISIS, which would be searching for new spaces to compensate for its total loss of territory. Solving these puzzles will help Sri Lanka, also the rest of South Asia, to craft responses that ensure there will be no repetition of this nightmare.

A LITTLE TOXIC

Loose poll talk on nuclear weapons always undermines a nuclear weapon power

NATIONAL SECURITY HAS been a major focus of campaigning by the BJP this election season, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking the lead on the subject. He has held forth on military operations against Pakistan — the trans-LoC surgical strikes of 2016 and the recent air strikes at Balakot — under his watch. There has been discomfort about Modi's campaign thrust among a section of military veterans, who have appealed to the President to keep the armed forces out of politics. There is, however, a counter-view that a political leadership which envisages and orders military action must be allowed to highlight its decisiveness to the electorate. After all, the armed forces are an instrument of the state and operate under the democratically-elected political leadership of the country.

Even if this contention is accepted as occurring in an acrimonious election campaign, Sunday's speech by PM Modi in Rajasthan, where he invoked exchange of nuclear weapons with Pakistan, does cross a line. Modi said that "our newspapers also wrote, 'Pakistan, too, has a nuclear weapon'. So what do we have, is it kept for Diwali?". At one level, his statement merely reiterates India's no-first-use doctrine of retaliation to a nuclear attack, something which has been public since India became a declared nuclear weapon state in 1998. But the manner and context of his invocation doesn't serve any purpose for India. In fact, it has the potential of bringing the global spotlight on establishing a false equivalence between India and Pakistan, where both the countries are seen to be less than responsible with their nuclear arsenal.

Being seen as a responsible nuclear power has been the cornerstone of New Delhi's position historically, which has given it global credence, leading India to be treated as a de facto nuclear state. A credible and transparent nuclear doctrine, backed by sober talk from the country's political leadership, has earned India the respect which led to it being granted the exceptions by Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and signatory to the India-US nuclear deal. New Delhi's quest for membership of NSG under the BJP government has also been based on the same arguments. Despite opposition by a strong anti-India nuclear lobby in the West, it has taken a lot of time and effort for New Delhi to reach this stage. To undermine these strategic gains for votes is not a terribly smart idea.

AGE OF CLOWNS

In Ukraine, a professional comedian has won a landslide victory in the presidential election. It is a sign of the times

LIFE HAS IMITATED art. Volodymyr Zelensky, the comedian who has played an accidental president in the satirical Ukrainian TV serial *Servant of the People* for the last three years, has actually become president in a landslide. He will assume office in a month, and in that time, the laughing millionaire with absolutely no political, diplomatic or military experience will have to hammer out a policy direction for his government, which is no laughing matter. The moneybags of Kiev do not expect to be laughing all the way to the bank, either, because they have no idea about Zelensky's economic beliefs. If he has any, at all.

Zelensky has come to power with a margin of 73 per cent simply by marking himself apart, as an outsider to the system of corruption, lying and incompetence that people have grown to abhor. But as an outsider, he does not have a clearly articulated policy, either at home or abroad. He has avoided media interviews, preferring to promote himself and his *Servant of the People* party through internet videos. But now, he will have to take the reins of a nation which serves as the front in the ongoing battle between the Western powers and Russia. He is a comedian in urgent need of a policy.

But in an age of clowns, a professional comedian could have a fighting chance. Over the last couple of years, we have seen more than one instance of ballistic missile-rattling in international affairs, which is slapstick humour at its blackest. And there have been several instances, from South Asia to the US, of popular leaders being elected on the rather fuzzy promise of being radically different from their predecessors. But we'll all be laughing the other side of our faces if we only get the jokers in the pack.

SADHVI PRAGYA THAKUR, the BJP's candidate from the Bhopal parliamentary seat, made an irresponsible and controversial statement on April 18. While addressing a meeting of party workers, she targeted the late Hemant Karkare, who had arrested her for her alleged role in the Malegaon blast case in 2008. She claimed that it was her curse ("tera sarvash hoga"), which ended Karkare's life soon afterwards. The resultant controversy and its fallout in the press, including the withdrawal of her statement, took me back in time by nearly 11 years. About a month before his death, I discussed the issue of violence by Hindu reactionary groups and the so-called "saffron terror" with Hemant. I had known Hemant as my cadre-mate and he was posted to New Delhi on deputation. A fine officer, he had the reputation of being an outstanding and professional cop.

Having worked in Punjab and fought militancy/terrorism there for more than a decade, terrorism was surely a subject that interested me, irrespective of its hues. One day, in October 2008, I bumped into Hemant at the reception of Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi. I asked him about this new form of terrorism. Was it real? If so, how serious was the matter, what were its parameters and what was its potential? We sat for about two hours in my room where Karkare enlightened me about the acts of violence undertaken by groups consisting of radical Hindu youths, which were for quite some time, attributed to Muslim militant groups.

He told me that some blasts took place accidentally in some parts of Maharashtra without any reason, which set him thinking. Some of the blasts were in the rural areas of Marathwada in Hingoli and Nanded districts. These cases of accidental blasts had resulted in injuries to some persons but no satisfactory explanation for the blasts was forthcoming. So Karkare, as chief of the Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Maharashtra Police, visited some of the blast sites and also probed into the backgrounds of the persons who were injured. Interestingly, his enquiries revealed that the injured persons were close to some ultra Hindu groups closely associated with

the RSS. Probing deeper, Karkare widened the scope of his enquiries and started verifying similar cases in other parts of Maharashtra. These enquiries confirmed his earlier impression and deeper probes established the emergence and existence of radical Hindu groups forming terror modules to meet the challenges posed by pro-Islamic terror groups.

These groups had formed Abhinav Bharat, which began as a social organisation that engaged young Hindu boys, radicalised them and made them aware of threats posed by Islamic forces and the need to forge a hardened group from within the Hindu population which would pose a challenge to the hitherto dominant Islamic groups. It also created groups who indulged in blasts in Muslim areas and operated in such a manner that the needle of suspicion would point towards the Muslim groups. In fact, the police were already looking for the culprits among Muslims. But this revelation completely changed the direction of the investigation. In several cases, the complicity and participation of Hindu groups was clearly established soon.

Karkare successfully investigated the Malegaon blast case, in which the Hindu group was involved. It was established that the motorcycle used in the blast was registered in the name of Sadhvi Pragya, who was arrested. The investigation also established the active role of several other persons, including a serving officer of the Indian Army, holding the rank of lieutenant colonel. Karkare and his team collected evidence and arrested many of them including Lt Colonel Purohit.

Karkare also told me that several groups from political as well as administrative circles put pressure on him not to implicate these groups as these were the "forces of nationalism". But Karkare did not relent. Later, those who put pressure also tried to accuse him of being pro-Muslim or anti-Hindu, a charge that he vociferously countered, "Sir, I am a Maharashtrian Brahmin and a high-caste Hindu. But does it mean that only Muslims and Sikhs are terrorists and violent acts of Hindu groups needed to be condoned?" He took strong objection to such bulldozing for religious reasons. He stood his ground. Unfortunately, Karkare was killed on the

night of 26/11/2008 during the terrorist attack in Mumbai. Due to his sudden death, the dedication and commitment that he had put into the case slackened to some extent. Similarly, the changed political equations played their role and the investigation of the case was transferred to the NIA. Later, similar political changes took place in Maharashtra too and the grip on the case became loose.

Another development is that the main accused, Pragya Thakur, is out on bail. Not only that, the hidden forces which tried to pressure Karkare then have become more assertive now. They have not only accepted Thakur but have even adopted her as the candidate of the ruling party from Bhopal. The hidden hand is no longer hidden. I feel that blaming Hemant Karkare has just begun, it will pick up. Thakur said that it was her curse that killed Karkare. Condoning her own role, she tried to put the entire blame on a professional and duty-conscious officer who had sacrificed his life in the line of duty.

Thakur perhaps forgot that besides Karkare, 15 other officers and men of the Bombay police and dozens of innocent citizens were also killed on 26/11. Is it not strange that the fulfilment of her curse came through the bullets fired by emissaries of Masood Azhar? Truth is that Sadhvi and Masood Azhar both wanted to kill Karkare; both celebrated his death, though for different reasons.

In democracies, many wrong things do happen. But this is too blatant. An accused facing trial is presented as a party candidate and a national hero who sacrificed his life is denigrated. Will such irresponsible behaviour on the part of rulers not harm society or its secular fabric? How insensitive and apologetic do we want to make our society?

Rest in peace, Hemant. You surely do not need a certificate either from Sadhvi who cursed you or from the emissaries of Masood Azhar, whose bullet claimed your life. You gave the ultimate sacrifice. I am sure that coming generations of cops will always look to you to determine their direction and goals. My salute to you.

The writer is former DGP of Punjab and Maharashtra. Views are personal

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SANA HASHMI

SOVEREIGNTY AND A ROAD

India's response to China's BRI is linked to its territorial concerns

INDIA HAS, ONCE again, decided to not participate in China's second Belt and Road Forum (BRF) due on April 25, which is likely to be attended by around 40 heads of government. Not surprisingly, China has expressed its disappointment. Should this be seen as another symptom of the chronic differences the India-China bilateral relationship faces, or is this just a manifestation of China's lack of understanding of India's concerns? Was India's 2018 Wuhan rendezvous with China a mistake? These questions have overshadowed India's China policy debates lately.

The admiration of India's attempt to engage China through the Modi-Xi Wuhan informal meeting has faded away in recent months, prompting some to ask: Did the Wuhan Summit provide India with any tangible outcome? A cursory response to the question seems a no if recent developments are taken into consideration. For instance, for the fourth time in a row, China blocked India's bid to designate the Jaish-e-Mohammad Chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the UNSC, the CPEC is going on regardless of India's stern objections vis-à-vis PoK, and the balance of trade is still hugely in China's favour.

But such criticisms miss two key elements. First, thanks to the overpublicising of the Modi-Xi meeting, the expectation bar was set to an unrealistically high level. The Wuhan meeting was not about resetting India-China relations. It was an initiative to engage each other in a constructive dialogue. Wuhan and

subsequent steps were intended to only manage the differences and prevent relations from getting derailed. The popular perception in the Indian media that because of Wuhan, China would not go ahead with the CPEC or support India on Masood Azhar and the belief in the Chinese media that it would lead India to join the BRI, are misinformed at best.

Second, Wuhan was not a stand-alone dialogue, it was deeply embedded with the Doklam standoff. For the two countries, facing an eyeball-to-eyeball situation in Doklam, Wuhan came as an opportunity to re-start the dialogue. It was not a "Bhai-Bhai moment", it was a moment to realise that the two have to co-exist and peacefully so. For India and China, that are dealing with the protracted boundary dispute for the past more than half-a-century, one meeting would not have changed much considering that even more than 20 rounds of dedicated border talks spread over several years did not lead to significant gains.

India's response to the BRF is not linked with the Wuhan spirit. It is deeply rooted in its territorial sovereignty concerns vis-à-vis China and Pakistan. The Chinese investments in Pakistan are complicating the matter with each passing day. India's main concern remains the much-controversial CPEC that passes through the PoK. Seen from that perspective it is clear that India would not have openly supported the BRI or the BRF, even if China had refrained from blocking India's request at the UNSC.

It is clear that China has been selective in addressing India's concerns, and India too has adopted a similar approach. China is mindful of the fact that without India's participation, BRI will remain an incomplete project at best. That is perhaps why China is keen to have another Wuhan-like dialogue. We do need more such meetings but only to facilitate the negotiation processes.

Considering the asymmetry in its relationship with China, India needs to continue its pragmatic and balanced policy of engaging China through dialogues while actively looking for ways to deal with the possible scenarios. The quest to institutionalise the Quad and Indo-Pacific seems to be turning into reality with the restructuring of the MEA's ASEAN Multilateral Division and the Indian Ocean Region Division into the Indo-Pacific Division. Trilateral dialogues and search for avenues to normalise and improve regular healthy conversations with China are the best way forward.

Self-doubt over peace initiatives or hesitation in moving forward on the Quad are detrimental to India's interests. One should not happen at the cost of the other. A careful balancing of both tracks will contribute to India's stronger positioning in the region.

Hashmi is affiliated with Future Directions International, a Perth-based think-tank and author of China's Approach of Territorial Disputes: Lessons and Prospects

APRIL 23, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

VINOBA FASTS ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE began his fast unto death at 8 am after the "Sarva Dharma" (all religion) prayer to secure a total ban on cow slaughter in the country. In his five-minute speech after the prayer, the Acharya said that "I have nothing to add to what I have said already" and asked others, including the ashramites, not to fast beyond one day. He was informed earlier that many people in the country had expressed their desire to undertake indefinite fast with him. The Acharya said: "God will save the cow, but we have also a duty towards the cow whose milk we drink." He hoped that people from across the country would work for the total ban.

INDIRA'S SPEECH THE HIGHLIGHTS OF the AICC session were the passing of three resolutions — on the economic, communal and international situation — and a speech made by Mrs Indira Gandhi at the end of the two-day session. Mrs Gandhi said this was not the time for talking, but for action — to release the energy of the Congress. The party would stand up to all kinds of oppression — false cases, firing, imprisonment and so on — and it would win. And it would save the country from the "dark clouds" which had now enveloped it. She urged all to join the Congress (I) mass rally in Delhi on May 16 which is being organised against the "anti-people" policies of the

Janata government.

DHAKA FOOD SHORTAGE THE DELAY IN US food supplies to Bangladesh this year — western diplomats discourage the use of the word "embargo" — because of differences on the manner in which such aid was utilised by Dacca last year, combined with a shortfall in food production and poor procurement, is leading to a food crisis on a magnitude that could well threaten the stability of President Ziaur Rehman's rule. Starvation point could well be reached in June and July unless food supplies are urgently rushed to Bangladesh. Zia's political rivals may use the crisis as an opportunity.



13 THE IDEAS PAGE

Hate and healing

The Mahagathbandan hopes to repair the strained relations between Jats and Muslims in Western UP following the 2013 riots. The political experiment is pregnant with possibilities



SUDHA PAI

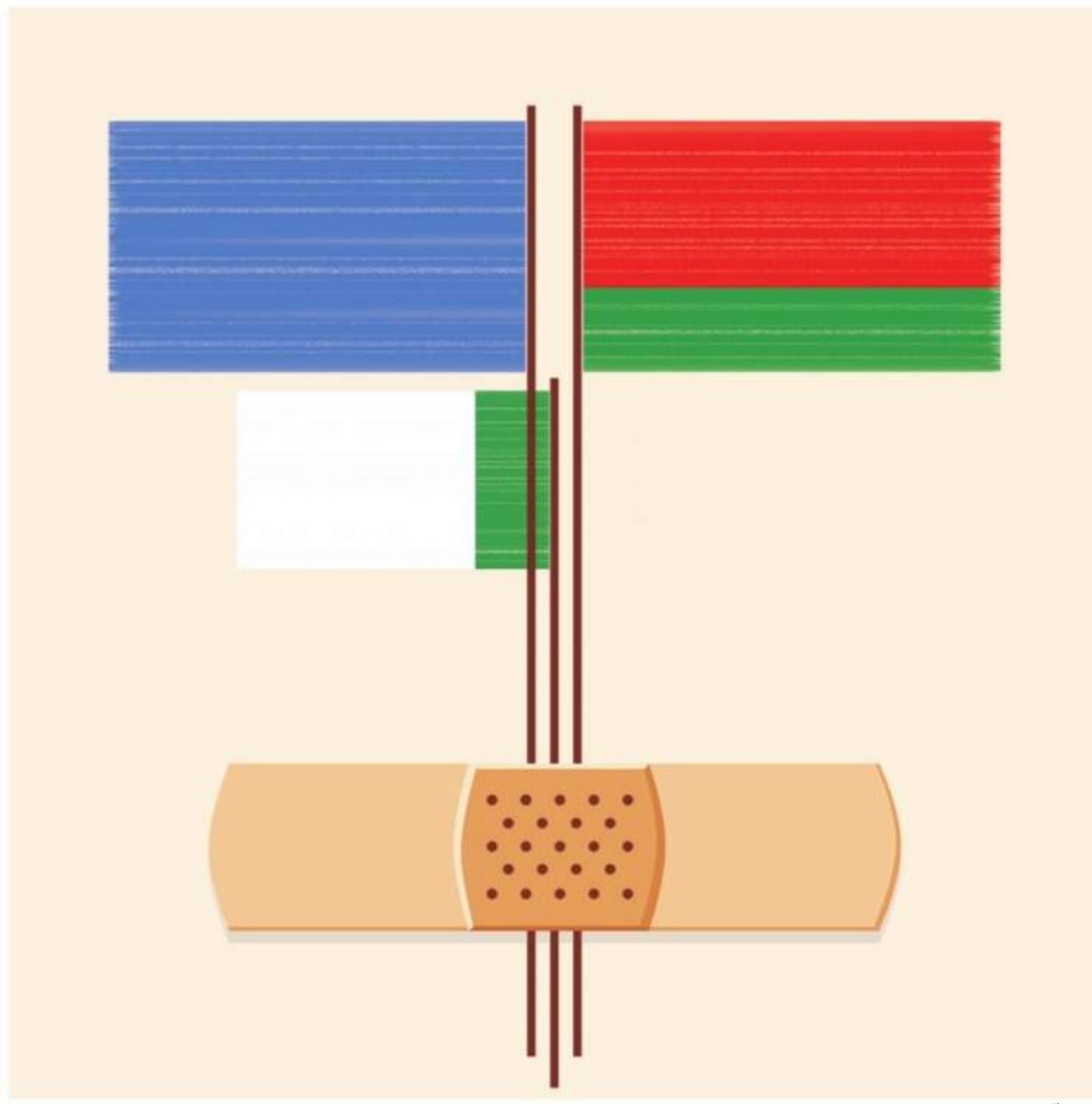
THE POLITICAL EXPERIMENT of the Mahagathbandan, a pre-poll alliance of former rivals the SP, BSP and the RLD, has introduced a new element in the electoral discourse of Western UP. The sweep by the Narendra Modi-led BJP in 2014, following the 2013 riots, was a turning point in the relationship between the Jats and Muslims, two prominent communities who have had close historical links and lived side-by-side in harmony for a long time.

It was here in Western UP, now a simmering communal cauldron, that Charan Singh, a peasant leader of the middle-castes from Baghpat, built a successful socio-political alliance of the Jats and Muslims. That the epicentre of the 2013 riots, Muzaffarnagar and Shamli, had not experienced a full-scale communal riot lasting many days until the 2000s, not even during the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid movement, barring once in Muzaffarnagar in 1988, is a testimony to the depth of that alliance.

The Jat-Muslim alliance became possible in Western UP in the mid-1960s because of the Green Revolution and backward castes mobilisation. The former created considerable prosperity among the big and medium-sized landowning Jat peasantry. The latter, simultaneously mobilised as a part of the backward caste movement, which swept these districts. Charan Singh was able to harness these developments and form the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) in 1967, based on a coalition of the Muslims, Ahirs, Jats, Gujars and Rajputs (MAJGAR), that gave centrality to agrarian politics from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s. The better-off Jats were the pivot and the Muslims, largely Muley Jats, actively participated in this mobilisation. This was possible because the BKD and later, the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), could build a base in western UP, where the Green Revolution had created a rich peasant class, and win elections.

Field studies in Muzaffarnagar in the late 1970s have shown that while the district was affected by forcible sterilisations during the Emergency, the fabric of social relations among Hindus and Muslims had remained intact. They had shared memories of common kinship relations in a distant past and could be found sitting on a *charpai*, sharing a hookah; social differences were accepted, there was little evidence of mutual recrimination and mistrust.

However, the MAJGAR has also been described as a "marriage of convenience" that lasted until groups within it benefitted. The Green Revolution plateaued in the 1980s and the agrarian crisis worsened through the 1990s, when liberalisation shifted focus to industry leading to a neglect of agriculture. Following Charan Singh's death in 1987, the Jats lost political prominence. The Bharatiya Kisan Union formed by Mahendra Singh Tikait in the wake of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid agitation, declined in the early 1990s. The RLD, formed in 1996 by Charan Singh's son Ajit Singh, though perceived as a Jat party, with Singh constantly shifting support from the BSP in 2002 to the SP in 2004, the BJP in 2009 and UPA in 2011, has little legitimacy among the Jats.



C R Sasikumar

Despite the destruction of the Babri Masjid, relations between Jats and Muslims had continued to be harmonious. However, the earlier closeness was replaced by a creeping communalism as the aggressive majority community began to dispute the ownership of graveyard land, use of loud-speakers in mosques, and common land owned by Muslims. A new negotiated boundary emerged; Jats continued to employ Muslims as agricultural labourers, but social relations between the two communities deteriorated.

Significant changes within the Muslim community also contributed to it. Loss of land due to urbanisation and improved educational attainments pushed the younger generation to take up petty businesses or learn new skills such as plumbing, carpentry, masonry, etc. Social jealousy among the Jats at the new-found entrepreneurship of Muslims, some of whom had worked their fields, and a perception that they are being pampered by the state, contributed to worsening of relations. Having lost their economic clout due to the agrarian crisis, particularly non-payment of sugarcane dues, fragmentation of land, lack of employment and reservation, younger Jats took recourse to cultural machismo. Supporting a dominant force like Hindutva provided them psychological empowerment. By the time of the 2014 elections, the community had become highly vulnerable to communal mobilisation by the BJP.

It is against this backdrop that the SP, BSP and RLD is hoping to unite the Jats, Dalits, backward castes and Muslims and redirect the discourse to social justice, secularism and agrarian concerns. They may succeed in Western UP because of the agrarian crisis. But can it mean a return to older social relationships in a more fundamental manner? The rapid socio-economic changes, the 2013 riots and continuing efforts at communal polarisation make this difficult.

It is against this backdrop that the SP, BSP and RLD is hoping to unite the Jats, Dalits, backward castes and Muslims and redirect the discourse to social justice, secularism and agrarian concerns. They may succeed in Western UP because of the agrarian crisis. But can it mean a return to older social relationships in a more fundamental manner? The rapid socio-economic changes, the 2013 riots and continuing efforts at communal polarisation make this difficult. Yet, there is regret, particularly among the older Jats over the riots and desire to renew old bonds. RLD leader Ajit Singh, in a recent interview, held that the Jats are once again seeing themselves as "farmers" and not so much as "Hindu"; the Kairana bypoll results being an indicator. Further, the agrarian crisis has brought agriculture to the centre stage of politics. He, however, agreed that a complete return to agrarianism of the past is impossible.

Thus, a victory of the Mahagathbandan in Western UP has the potential to heal at least some of the acrimony of the last past years. While the current elections are important for the country, their real significance lies in the possibility of peace between two communities that have suffered in the recent past. The political scene in UP is pregnant with possibilities.

Sudha Pai is co-author of *Everyday Communalism: Riots in Contemporary Uttar Pradesh (2018)*

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It is not only Sri Lankans and Catholics who feel the pain of this atrocity, and fear the further damage it could spawn. It is not only those of the Christian faith who believe that, even in the harshest of times, hope can and must endure."
—THE GUARDIAN

A silk road for the heavens

Even as it shuns the BRI, India is recognising that the corridors spreading out from China have connectivity in space and digital domain



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS THE SECOND iteration of China's Belt and Road Forum convenes this week in Beijing, India has a strange karma to cope with. Profound concerns about the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on India's territorial sovereignty and the geopolitics of its immediate neighbourhood compel India to resist its apparent charms. Delhi, which stayed away from the launch of the Forum in 2017 despite considerable pressure from Beijing, has announced that it will sit out again.

Yet, even as it shuns the BRI, India has no choice but to emulate China on connectivity of all kinds. Although India has adopted the mantra of connectivity more than a decade ago, China's BRI has pressed Delhi to get its act together on regional connectivity. The scale of the challenge has also encouraged India to shed its traditional "lone-ranger" mentality and consider working with others, especially Japan, Australia and the United States, in promoting regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific.

Meanwhile, India is coming to terms with the fact that the BRI is more than two-dimensional. Under the BRI, the "belt" was about overland connectivity and the "road" (in a peculiar twist) referred to the maritime corridors spreading out from China's eastern seaboard. The additional and inter-related dimensions of BRI are about connectivity in outer space and the digital domain.

Unlike the land and sea corridors, for India, it is not just a question of supporting or rejecting the space and digital silk roads. Delhi finds itself already tied into these initiatives, one way or another. India's deep dependence on Chinese telecom giants is now a reality. So is the growing reliance of India's neighbours — including Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka — on China's space services. The challenge for Delhi is to expand shall we say, India's "strategic autonomy" in a market that Beijing is poised to dominate.

At the heart of China's space silk road is the BeiDou satellite navigation system. Over the weekend, China launched a satellite for the BeiDou system that is expected to rival the American Global Positioning System (GPS), the Russian GLONASS and the European Galileo. BeiDou will consist of a number of satellites in the geostationary and intermediate earth orbits. The third generation BeiDou system will be operational by next year and is expected to provide better accuracy than the current Western and Russian systems.

Although the first BeiDou system goes back to 2000, it is now being presented as an important component of the Belt and Road Initiative that was launched in 2013. Some analysts have called BeiDou the digital glue that holds the BRI together. By connecting industries and infrastructure projects along the BRI, China's satellite navigation and communication system hopes to dominate the new digital infrastructure in the BRI space. As new ideas for

space-based internet services emerge, China is well ahead of the curve. Google, Amazon and SpaceX are all developing projects to provide broadband services around the world through networks of satellites numbering hundreds.

At the end of 2018, China launched the first of its planned constellation 320 satellites in the low-earth orbit. By the end of this year, a network of nine satellites is expected to demonstrate the possibilities for space based internet services. The entire fleet of 320 satellites under the Hongyan project is expected to be operational by 2025.

According to media reports, China is putting up a facility in Tianjin to assemble 130 Hongyan satellites annually. The Hongyan mega-constellation is designed to facilitate two-way communications at all times across all terrain, providing a wide range of civilian services such as ground data collection and exchange, ship identification and tracking, mobile broadcasting and navigation signal enhancement.

China has also launched a Big Earth Data initiative that will develop the generation of massive remote-sensing data and commercial products based on it for use across the entire spectrum of sustainable development — from agriculture to disaster management. China is not only into providing space-based services, but is also in the business of exporting satellites to a large number of countries, seeding space-related infrastructure and training space personnel. While China presents these dramatic advances as part of its effort to promote space and digital connectivity through international cooperation, there is no mistaking its geopolitical implications — especially in expanding Beijing's global surveillance and intelligence capabilities, upgrading the PLA's military effectiveness, and a big say in shaping the digital infrastructure of developing nations.

India's space programme too has grown by focusing on modernising national telecommunication, application of remote sensing data for national development and more recently on developing assets for national security. India has a satellite navigation system of its own, the GAGAN. India's remote sensing capability too is impressive. If India has missed a trick it is in the expansive scale that China has brought to its space programme.

While the origin and development of both space programmes was led by state entities, China has more recently opened up room for the participation of non-state entities and encouraged private innovators.

As the commercial and geopolitical stakes in outer space grow rapidly, the next government in Delhi has its task cut out: To reform India's space sector to allow private corporations to play a larger role, promote space startups, and rejuvenate India's international space collaboration, both civilian and military — with friends and allies.

Unlike in the traditional Belt and Road projects, India has significant capabilities in the space and digital domains. With policies that will lend them the necessary political support, commercial ambition and organisational scale, Delhi can surely shape the future of space and digital connectivity.

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



JAGANNATHAN SARAVANASAMY

Issued (not) in the public interest

Need is to empower banking regulator, not curb RBI's powers as SC has done

MOUNTING NON-PERFORMING Assets (NPAs) in the banking system due to corporate defaults is an issue of concern for many stakeholders. It has important consequences for the national economy. When such an issue of public interest is legally dealt with in the court as counter-claims between debtor and creditor, the interest of other stakeholders, especially of depositors, receives the least attention. This is the general feeling the common public is left with after the recent judgment of the Supreme Court (SC). It is the money of the depositors that creditors lend in their fiduciary capacity to debtors and hence, the expectation that the government, regulator and the adjudicating authorities will keep depositors' interests supreme.

The pace at which the long-accumulated corporate defaults were getting resolved through the mechanism established under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016 was too good to believe. We appeared to have found a magic wand to enforce the contractual obligation of debtors and sufficiently empower the creditors. Overall, the IBC has been able to resolve cases involving debt of Rs 3 lakh crore in the last two years. As per the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the mere threat of promoters losing control of their company or a legal proceeding under the IBC was sufficient to resolve debts worth Rs 1.2 lakh crore without even the need for the Code to kick in.

In the prevailing pessimistic perception of crony capitalism, the faith was restored that we are capable of administering a legal system in which corporate defaulters face the consequences. It was the absence of such an effective legal system that forced creditors to find solutions through criminal proceeding, which was not only time consuming but also took many genuine business failures along the criminal proceedings' path.

All this positivity has come to sudden halt with the SC striking down the circular issued by the RBI in February 2018 as *ultra vires* of the RBI Act. It appears that the manner in which the authority was sought to be exercised by the RBI — rather than the authority itself — was the reason for the order. The Court has taken a view that the regulatory authority exceeded the statutory authority.

The questions that ought to be answered in this judgment relate to the powers of the RBI in issuing directions to the bank to "initiate insolvency proceedings" against corporate defaulters after introduction of Sec 35AA of Banking Regulation (BR) Act through the 2017 amendment. The RBI's contention was that the impugned circular was issued drawing powers from Section 21 and Section 35A of the BR Act, which empower the RBI to issue general directions (generic circulars) to financial institutions. Section 21 empowers the RBI on policies and directions related to advances

and Section 35A to issue directions in public interest. In the eyes of the SC, the directions issued under the impugned circular are in the nature of a specific direction to the banks to take the IBC route to resolve defaults. And, after amendment to BR Act in 2017, the source of power to issue such specific direction is 35AA, and not Sections 21 and 35A.

Did the 2017 amendment that introduced 35AA and 35 AB to the BR Act expand the RBI's powers or restrict them? In the words of the SC, the RBI could have issued such directions (contained in the impugned circular) under 21 and 35A before the introduction of 35AA and 35AB, but not after. It is an admission that 35AA severely restricted the regulatory authority of the RBI. One wonders, whether that was the intention behind the IBC and NCLT.

Now, how easy, time-bound and practicable is it to follow 35AA in letter and spirit? The law as exists says, "the Central Government may, by order, authorise the Reserve Bank to issue directions to any banking company or banking companies to initiate insolvency resolution process in respect of a default, under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016." How did the central government authorise the RBI? The finance ministry when it issued the notification dated May 5, 2017, authorised the RBI to issue such directions only in respect of "a default" under the Code. What is the interpretation of "a de-

fault"? Is it a category of default or specific default by specific debtor? The SC order makes it clear that the RBI can direct banking institutions to move under the IBC only (a) if there is a central government authorisation to do so; and (b) that it should be in respect of specific default of specific debtor.

The statement of intent when enacting the BR Act in 1949 says it was meant for the protection of depositors' interests. Hence, the expansive and generic powers granted to the RBI under 21 and 35A. Alas, when the need of the hour is to affirm the authority of the regulator, the subsequent amendments, notifications issued and their legalistic interpretation have circumscribed the regulator. One can imagine the complexity of getting the authorisation of the Ministry of Finance specific to defaults and specific to defaulters. Does it not give undue discretion to the ministry to interpret defaults and defaulters? Will that eliminate or encourage crony capitalism? We have miles to go before we resolve the thousands of NPAs running to more than Rs 12 lakh crore. It is hoped that the authorities concerned will restore public confidence by assigning supremacy to public interest when it comes to regulating banking companies.

The writer, an IPS officer, is former head of banking and securities fraud cell of the CBI in Mumbai

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NOT JUST SECURITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Why Imran bats for Modi' (IE, April 22). The author views the conflict purely from the angle of the security establishments in the two countries. She makes the same blunder that Jinnah made in ignoring the vast number of Muslims left behind in India. Population projections predict the Indian Muslim population to be over 300 million by 2060. Can the generals in Pakistan and the saffron leaders in Nagpur ignore this huge community? In truth, Jinnah's idea of Muslims as a separate nation is collapsing.

J S Bandukwala, via e-mail

COURT'S HONOUR

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Your Honour' (IE, April 22). The Supreme Court convening an "extraordinary meeting" to defend the allegations made against the CJ brings to the fore, two points. First, by this impulsive act the apex court has given legitimacy to the media trial. Mere publication of allegations in some media outlets does not establish the crime, so the CJ should have exercised restraint. Second this is obstruction of justice on both sides.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

FARM AND MARKET

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Field les-

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

sons' (IE, April 22). India is self-sufficient in terms of its food requirements. But farmers seldom benefit as bumper crops often lead to markets crashing. The government needs to focus on supply-side reforms. The agricultural markets need to be de-regulated, warehousing and food-processing need to be given a major fillip.

Anirudh Parashar, Solan



Sunday, bloody Sunday

Preventing further attacks and keeping the peace are vital in Sri Lanka

The serial blasts on Easter Sunday rank as the worst bloodbath Sri Lanka has seen since the end of the civil war in 2009. It is a monumental tragedy for a country that is trying to live down the strife that lasted more than a quarter century. In what could be the handiwork of a local Islamist radical group, as many as 290 people are dead, and nearly 500 wounded in multiple blasts, a few of them involving suicide bombers. The targets chosen as well as the occasion suggest that the bombings were aimed at gaining maximum global attention. The coordinated blasts took place while guests were having breakfast in three luxury hotels frequented by foreign tourists close to the seafront in the capital, and worshippers had gathered for Easter in a church each in Colombo, Negombo on the western coast and the eastern town of Batticaloa. The most immediate impact will be on the economy, to which the well-run tourism industry is a huge contributor. Already the economy is going through a rough patch, as the country grapples with the aftermath of the political instability that prevailed a few months ago. The spectre of ethnic relations between various communities deteriorating also looms. The small Muslim minority, caught in the crosshairs of the conflict in the past, and Christians, an even smaller minority, have faced violent attacks by hardline Sinhala Buddhist groups. However, nothing in such incidents suggested any acrimony that could have led up to the sort of savagery seen on Easter day.

Reports that specific overseas intelligence inputs were not taken seriously are disturbing. The inquiry ordered by President Maithripala Sirisena will, it is hoped, address the concern voiced by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, that he and his ministers were kept in the dark about these inputs. However, the administration responded admirably to the situation, especially in preventing the spread of rumours and any backlash against sections of society. Possibly following the New Zealand example, the government and the security establishment sought to deny the group any immediate ideological mileage and any claim to putative martyrdom by not identifying the group involved. It has now been named as the 'National Thowheed Jamaat'. However, intriguingly, no group has owned responsibility for the blasts, something extremist outfits are wont to do to attract recruits and strike terror on a global scale. Given the scale and sophistication of the operation, which would have involved reconnoitring targets, assembling and transporting explosives and detonators, it does not seem likely that a solely indigenous group would have the wherewithal to carry it out. The neighbourhood will closely watch the investigation, as it may reveal the extent to which the shadow of the Islamic State is falling on the South Asian region.

Line of caution

The suspension of cross-LoC trade will cause hardship — it must be revoked

The Central government's decision to suspend trade across the Line of Control between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is bad in conception, and comes at a particularly fraught time. On April 18, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced the suspension from midnight of trade at the two designated points at Salamabad and Chakan-da-Bagh, citing concerns about "illegal weapons, narcotics and fake currency" being transported into India. It is also being argued that the zero-tariff barter arrangement is being violated through under-invoicing and the exchange of third party items such as U.S.-origin California almonds. The first is presumably a way to transfer funds; and the second would be to exploit the zero-tariff trade, something brought up by traders who operate via the Wagah border. The government's concerns may be well-founded, but the solution to violations of a trade agreement is to enforce the rules stringently, not stop exchange of goods and put at risk the livelihood of countless people on both sides of the LoC. At a protest in Srinagar against the trade suspension, for instance, a leader of the cross-LoC traders association argued that they had, in fact, themselves been seeking a "foolproof mechanism" to enforce the terms of the agreement.

The benefits to the local economies from the cross-LoC trade are beyond doubt. It is estimated that since the barter trade commenced along two routes across the LoC in October 2008, employment to the order of more than 1.6 lakh days had been created. The volume of trade over the decade has crossed ₹6,000 crore. It must be kept in mind that the trade is mostly of local goods, and those employed, including in the transportation, are from border communities. The opening of cross-LoC trade was among the confidence-building mechanisms that followed the 2003 India-Pakistan ceasefire along the line, and that included a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad (in PoK). The hope of the mid-2000s that people-to-people contact between those living in J&K and PoK would over time become obstruction-free has, for now, faded. But the LoC trade has held, with just the occasional disruption. The current suspension comes in the course of a shrill election campaign that the ruling BJP is relentlessly pulling towards its hard line on subjects such as Article 370 on the special status of J&K. The government has sent unsettling signals by closing the National Highway between Udhampur and Baramulla to civilian traffic for two days a week to secure the movement of troop convoys. To now summarily suspend LoC trade is to invite suspicion that the step has been taken without careful consideration of the consequences and also for political reasons. The suspension must be urgently revoked.

Down to earth on the ASAT test

India has neither achieved a higher level of deterrence nor enabled a more stable strategic security environment



M.K. NARAYANAN

Shortly before noon on March 27, India carried out a successful test of an Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapon, launching an interceptor missile from the Balasore range in Odisha to hit a live satellite in Low Earth Orbit. It thus became the fourth country in the world to develop an ASAT capability.

Not a game changer

An ASAT test is hardly a game-changer as far as space warfare is concerned. Yet, the element of triumphalism seen in the Prime Minister's announcement on television regarding the test seemed to send out a message that India was on the threshold of embarking on a new era of weaponisation of outer space. Official circles may have preferred to project the test as a technology demonstrator, but the Prime Minister's claim that India was now capable of performing as a 'chowkidar' in space, and several claims that India now had a "credible deterrence" against attacks on the country's growing number of space assets seemed to suggest that India was not averse to weaponisation of outer space.

India has, no doubt, sought to reassure the global community that it has not violated any international treaty or understanding with this test. India has also taken great pains to advertise the fact that the international community, especially the U.S., had not faulted India for carrying out this test, in marked contrast to what had happened when China had carried out an ASAT test in 2007. Nevertheless, it would be facile to think that the world endorses India's claims regarding its peaceful intentions.

India's demonstration of ASAT

capability comes a little more than a decade after China's, and nearly six decades after that of the U.S. and Russia. An ASAT test is, undoubtedly, less threatening than a nuclear explosion, but the world is likely to ask why India decided to demonstrate its capability at this time, though it possessed the ability much earlier. The implications of carrying out a test of this nature, as also the concerns that previously existed about doing so, are no secret from the global community of space experts. Why India chose to 'cross the Rubicon' by testing an ASAT weapon at this juncture is, hence, likely to cause consternation among many, given the tacit agreement among nations not to weaponise outer space. The international community cannot be faulted if it were to think that India had deliberately breached an unwritten convention against weaponisation or militarisation of outer space.

ASAT capabilities are generally perceived as integral to ballistic missile defence programmes. This clearly identifies an ASAT test as a military programme. In turn, it implies an intention to embark on weaponisation of outer space. It is, perhaps, for this reason that countries such as Israel and France, which are believed to have this capability, have so far refrained from carrying out such tests.

Cold War phenomenon

Given the hype surrounding ASAT weapons, it is also germane to mention that their strategic importance in providing effective deterrence in space is highly debatable today. ASAT was essentially a Cold War phenomenon whose strategic importance has declined over the years. Currently, none of the other three countries which possess an ASAT capability extol its strategic value and importance. The U.S., Russia and China, all seem to demonstrate less and less interest in pursuing ASAT weaponry. These countries are increasingly focussing



on laser and cyber capabilities to achieve the objective of neutralising killer satellites. Countries are experimenting with directed-energy weapons, radio frequency weapons, etc. rather than concentrating on shooting down satellites in space. The last named also carries the danger of hitting satellites that may not be on an offensive mission, apart from the issue of space debris.

It is again a moot point whether India's ASAT test, and its positioning as a critical element in India's strategic defence capability, will have the desired impact that the nation's leaders hope for. It could well result in something very different. It is almost certain, as was the case with India's nuclear test, that Pakistan will immediately try to acquire the same capability, in all likelihood with generous assistance from China. China can also be expected to become increasingly wary of India's intentions in space, and take appropriate counter-measures. The bottom line is that by carrying out the March 27 test, India has neither achieved a higher level of deterrence nor is it likely to lead to a more stable strategic security environment.

India would, hence, do well to play down the military objective of its ASAT test, all the more so given that the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) recently indicated that it has, of late, carried out certain new launches such as the Microsat-R and EMISAT satellites which are intended for 'strategic use'. More 'defence satellites' are

reportedly in the offing. This could only fuel concerns about where India is headed. Countries not too well disposed towards India such as Pakistan and China — and perhaps some others as well — may well be carried away by our professed capabilities, and be inclined to fear the worst. This could give a country such as Pakistan 'itchier trigger fingers'.

Neighbourhood concerns

India's strategic planners also would not be oblivious to the fact that it does not take much imagination, given the plethora of information coming from drone feeds, satellite data and claims made by responsible leaders, for countries to develop a totally distorted picture of an adversary's capabilities and threat. The mere existence of such a situation could lead to heightened tensions. Based in one of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the world, India needs to do everything in its power to convince other nations that space is not part of India's overt defence calculations.

Instead, India should highlight the fact that its enormously successful space programme, unlike those of many other countries, is notable for being conceived and implemented as a civilian programme, quite distinct and separate from any military programme or objective. It is this which distinguishes India's space programme from that of countries such as the U.S., Russia and China. India's space programme — totally civilian in nature — was conceived back in the 1960s. ISRO was set up in 1969, and the Space Commission came into existence in the early 1970s. Vikram Sarabhai is credited with creating India's vision for exploration of space and, following his untimely demise in 1971, the mantle fell on Satish Dhawan.

It would be useful to stress that both Sarabhai and Dhawan, especially the latter, were particular that India's space programme

should steer clear of any military dimension, and that it should solely concern itself with communications, weather forecasting and the like. Consequently, India's space programme had always steered clear of any military objectives.

India's achievements in space have been many and it has several milestones to its credit. ISRO launched its first Indian satellite, Aryabhata, in April 1975. In April 1982, ISRO launched the first Indian National Satellite System (INSAT-1A). The first Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) took off from Sriharikota in 2001. In October 2008, ISRO launched Chandrayaan-1, the first Indian planetary science and exploration mission to the moon. In November 2013, ISRO launched the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan) spacecraft. Since then there have been many more launches.

Sarabhai's legacy

A generation of internationally recognised Indian space scientists (among whom may be mentioned U.R. Rao and K. Kasturirangan) after Sarabhai and Dhawan have scrupulously adhered to the same peaceful mission of the earlier preceptors, and seen to it that India steered clear of weaponisation of space, remaining committed to non-military applications.

It is critically important for those in authority to take up this task in all earnestness lest the view prevails, as is already evident in some circles, that India is keen to embark on weaponisation and militarisation of outer space. There is little strategic advantage accruing from an ASAT test; on the other hand the damage that could be caused to India's image as a peaceful and responsible nation intent on, and committed to, peaceful uses of space could be immense.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and former Governor of West Bengal

A half-written promise

Political parties must steer public debate to crucial issues relating to women's health and reproductive rights

JAYNA KOTHARI, MAYA UNNITHAN & SIRI GLOPPEN

The 2019 general election has brought to the forefront hotly contested political issues and promises. But one area of reform that has just not been an important electoral issue is the sexual and reproductive rights of women. While all major parties make some piecemeal promises to women, the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights is almost negligible. This is despite the recent progressive legal work in courts.

The fine print

It is revealing to examine the narrow ways in which political parties have addressed reproductive rights. For example, the Congress manifesto says the party will pass suitable legislation to make registration of marriages compulsory and to enforce the law prohibiting child marriages. The Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto interestingly focusses on women's menstruation and says it will ensure that all reproductive and menstrual health services are easily available to all women across India. Further, with the expansion of the Suvridha scheme, sanitary pads at a cost of ₹1 will be provided to all women and girls. The CPI(M) has promised to make marital rape an offence and to ensure strict imple-

mentation of the Pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (PCPNDT) Act, which prohibits sex determination tests and female foeticide.

This is the extent to which reproductive rights are understood in India — child marriage, female foeticide, sex selection and menstrual health and hygiene. These are extremely important issues but are selective.

Sexual and reproductive rights in India must include a concern with maternal deaths, access to maternal care to safe abortions, access to contraceptives, adolescent sexuality, prohibition of forced medical procedures such as forced sterilisations and removal of stigma and discrimination against women, girls and LGBTI persons on the basis of their gender, sexuality and access to treatment.

Data on India

India has among the highest number of maternal deaths worldwide (which UNICEF India and World Bank data put at an estimated 45,000 maternal deaths every year, or an average of one maternal death every 12 minutes). Unsafe abortions are the third leading cause of maternal deaths in India. Research by Susheela Singh and others (*The Lancet*, January 2018) shows that half the pregnancies in



India are unintended and that a third result in abortion. Only 22% of abortions are done through public or private health facilities.

Lack of access to safe abortion clinics, particularly public hospitals, and stigma and attitudes toward women, especially young, unmarried women seeking abortion, contribute to this. Doctors refuse to perform abortions on young women or demand that they get consent from their parents or spouses despite no such requirement by law. This forces many women to turn to clandestine and often unsafe abortions. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 provides for termination only up to 20 weeks. If an unwanted pregnancy has proceeded beyond 20 weeks, women have to approach a medical board and courts to seek permission for termination, which is extremely difficult. The MTP Act is long overdue for a comprehensive reform.

The Supreme Court, on the other hand, has been extremely pro-

gressive on women's reproductive rights. The court in decriminalising adultery and in the *Navtej Johar* judgment striking down Section 377 held clearly, that women have a right to sexual autonomy, which is an important facet of their right to personal liberty. In the landmark *Puttaswamy* judgment in which the right to privacy was held to be a fundamental right, the Supreme Court held: "Privacy includes at its core the preservation of personal intimacies, the sanctity of family life, marriage, procreation, the home and sexual orientation... Privacy safeguards individual autonomy and recognises the ability of the individual to control vital aspects of his or her life."

In the case of *Independent Thought v. Union of India* in the context of reproductive rights of girls, Justices M.B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta held, "The human rights of a girl child are very much alive and kicking whether she is married or not and deserve recognition and acceptance." These judgments have an important bearing on the sexual and reproductive rights of women. The right of women and girls to safe abortion is an important facet of their right to bodily integrity, right to life and equality and needs to be protected.

Political parties, which also represent India's women, have an

obligation to take forward the debates on reproductive rights, equality, and access to abortion in political debates as well as in framing laws and policies.

Safe abortions

The responsibility also lies with civil society and development actors to bring up these issues for public debate and in demands. The silence around unsafe abortions is leading to deaths of women and hides important problems that lie at the intersection of these concerns, such as the formidable barriers for adolescent girls to access reproductive health services, including abortion services. The right to safe abortion is an important political issue that must be addressed and widely debated, particularly if parties and leaders are committed to women's human rights.

Access to legal and safe abortion is an integral dimension of sexual and reproductive equality, a public health issue, and must be seen as a crucial element in the contemporary debates on democracy.

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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.

Carnage in Sri Lanka

Terror has reared its ugly head in Sri Lanka again. The scale of Sunday's bloodshed goes back to the horror days of the war with the LTTE.

Did 10 years of no terror lull the defence authorities into a false sense of complacency? All those responsible for these senseless acts of savagery must be made to pay for their crimes and their outfits eliminated, root and branch (Page 1, "Serial blasts across Sri Lanka claim 200, several injured", April 22).

J.S. ACHARYA, Hyderabad

■ The well-defined and disturbing pattern to the terror attacks appears to be a coordinated attempt at

spreading enmity, ill-will and hatred. They should serve as an eye opener to global leaders to evolve a clear strategy in fighting terror.

B. SURESH KUMAR, Coimbatore

CJI and allegation

In the wake of sexual harassment allegations against the Chief Justice of India, two things stand out prominently. We are not on the merits of the issue which have yet to unfold. First, the CJI should not have been a party to the special sitting on Saturday because the complaint is against him. Second, top law officers, even before verifying the facts, should not have come to the support of the CJI. This is contrary to the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, of which the CJI

has so eloquently spoken. We would suggest an inquiry by a judge of stature such as a former CJI who enjoys the credibility of the people. The report should be submitted at the earliest so that there is a quick end to the ugly controversy, which would otherwise undermine the Constitution, the institution and democracy itself.

N.G.R. PRASAD, SATISH KUMAR, Chennai

The 'N' word

Just because Pakistan made a veiled threat against India by citing its nuclear arsenal, India does not need join it in a verbal duel, in attempting to portray who has superior nuclear weapon strength. The 'N' word is something everyone, especially our political leaders, should

avoid uttering. Pakistan's devious acts of terror need to be exposed to the wider world by India constantly and there are many other ways of doing this. The Prime Minister's comment is not humorous, leave alone in good taste ("Is our nuclear bomb for Diwali, asks PM", April 22).

C.K. SUBRAMANIAM, Navi Mumbai

Map in India

S. Muthiah's contribution to cartography in Indian textbook publishing houses is worth mentioning. Post-Independence, textbook publishers were dependent on reprints of school atlases through foreign publishers, which led to an outflow of huge royalties and other costs in foreign exchange. It was because of Muthiah

(who was then with TTK Maps) that Indian publishers such as OUP, Orient BlackSwan (formerly Orient Longman) and many others were able to publish and produce school atlases for the Indian market through an arrangement. This process also helped OUP and OBS to start their cartography divisions and also the publication of atlases in regional languages.

N. NAGARAJAN, Secunderabad

Remembering 'Maggie'

Margaret Amritraj, 92, was certainly the binding and illuminating force behind the success of her sons and the three great musketeers of tennis, Anand, Vijay and Ashok. In the 1960s, I often saw her accompanying Anand and Vijay every day to

the tennis court in Loyola College for a Madras University coaching camp. She waited till they finished and took them back even though they lived nearby. I was the manager of the Madras University team that won, after a gap, the all-India title, beating Osmania (Mishra Brothers), Poona (Ranade and Shashi Menon) and Calcutta (Lal and Mukherjee). CGK (Boopathy) was the captain. She hosted a dinner before the Championship at their home and wished us well. Anand and Vijay in particular owe a lot to their great mother ('Sport' page, "Maggie" Amritraj, "Maggie" Amritraj, April 21).

S. VISWANATHAN, Srirangam, Tamil Nadu

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The court is not above the Constitution

The expectation of citizens is that the Supreme Court will lead by example, not by arbitrary diktat



KALPANA KANNABIRAN

In the midst of the political turmoil of a testing election season, a former junior court assistant at the Supreme Court sent copies of a sworn affidavit to 22 judges of the Supreme Court alleging sexual harassment by the Chief Justice of India and intimidation of her family members. The nature of the allegations is serious, and for a lesser citizen, it would *prima facie* have set the ball rolling on investigations, inquiries and appropriate actions by duly appointed committees. The fact that this is the correct course of action need not in this case detract from the cardinal principle of criminal law on the burden of proof — innocent until proven guilty.

Derailing fair procedure

The immediate response of the Secretary General of the Supreme Court to the affidavit goes along predictable lines: “The allegations... are completely and absolutely false and scurrilous and are totally denied... The motive... is obviously mischievous... It would be extremely relevant to mention that the concerned individual and her family have criminal antecedents... It is not only mischievous but a complete afterthought (sic) of her to make these false allegations at this time... In fact there were complaints made against her... to the Secretary General on account of her inappropriate behaviour... Apart from the misconduct formally recorded, there were other counts of misconduct on her part... Its (sic) is also very possible that there are mischievous forces behind all this, with an intention to malign the institution.”

In her affidavit, the complainant spoke of specific incidents, harassment of a specific nature, and against a specific person. Nothing in her sworn affidavit can on the face of it be construed as a general derogatory statement of the Supreme Court as an institution, nor as the general behaviour of judges of the Supreme Court. If there is an allegation against a specific person who occupies a



SHANBER CHAKRABARTY

high office, it is not an assault on the office. Construing it as such would pave the way to arbitrariness and impunity, and would undermine the Constitution that binds the court in irredeemable ways. On the other hand, it is possible that a thorough, impartial and fair investigation that is mindful of the asymmetries of power between the complainant and the respondent might find the complaint without basis. Instead, we find the first response on behalf of the respondent taking easy resort to “criminal antecedents” of the complainant and her family, as if that by itself negates the possibility of her being subjected to sexual intimidation. To derail the mere possibility of fair procedure is unacceptable by any standards.

The order passed shows the case as a ‘Suo Motu Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1’ and lists the Advocate General and the Solicitor General as Parties. The result of the special hearing was a gag-like order on the media signed by two judges, Justices Arun Mishra and Sanjiv Khanna: “Having considered the matter, we refrain from passing any judicial order at this moment leaving it to the wisdom of the media to show restraint, act responsibly as is expected from them and accordingly decide what should or should not be published as wild and scandalous allegations undermine and irreparably damage reputation and negate independence of judiciary. We would therefore at this juncture leave it to the media to take off such material which is undesirable.” The CJJ was not one of the signatories, although he was present and

spoke at the hearing.

It is important to understand that although this issue has sent a shudder all around and gasps of disbelief and shock, the manner in which the complaint has been received and handled by sections of the Bench and sections of the Bar has been disconcerting to many in the legal profession. The Bar Council of India’s statement speaks eloquently of its own standard: “The cock and bull story has been cooked up to plot some big conspiracy against the institution. Bar is fully standing with our CJ and the Judges of Supreme Court.” The fact is that the Bar Council of India does not speak for all lawyers in the country, as the response of the Women in Criminal Law Association (WCLA) makes evident. The WCLA published a detailed statement demanding a free and fair investigation by a panel that excluded the three judges who constituted the Bench in the first sitting and demanded that the CJJ not hold office till the inquiry is completed. The Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association and the Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association passed resolutions on April 22 disapproving the manner in which the complaint was dealt with and asserting the urgency of an independent impartial inquiry. These resolutions must be viewed in the light of conspiracy theories alluded to by the Bar Council of India and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley’s statement that this was the work of “institution destabilisers” who represent “Left or ultra Left views”. This attempt to impute a conspiracy jeopardises the security

of the complainant, her family and anyone who provides support in securing redress.

The court is unlike other institutional settings — the Supreme Court is sequestered and the constitutional office of the Chief Justice of India is deemed sacred and inviolable. The argument is that an independent judiciary is indispensable to check arbitrariness on the part of the legislature and government. What is often forgotten is that an independent judiciary also importantly acts as a check on itself, and must apply the principles of natural justice and fair procedure to itself with greater rigour than it would to the parties that appear before the court. The expectation of citizens is that the court will lead by example, not by arbitrary diktat. The expectation also is that constitutional morality will guide the court, especially the Justices of the court, at all times; the constitutional presumption is that the court is not above the Constitution.

The time to dissent is now

This very court, in the judgment on the right to privacy, observed unequivocally that judges have in the past erred in judgment, in an understanding of their powers and in their understanding of the Constitution and the rule of law. Can we forget Justice Rohinton Nariman’s emotionally charged recall of the “three great dissents”? Can we forget Justice D.Y. Chandrachud’s statement, “When histories of nations are written and critiqued, there are judicial decisions at the forefront of liberty. Yet others have to be consigned to the archives, reflective of what was, but should never have been...”? And it is the thin line of judicial dissents that has moved centre stage in our understanding of India’s constitutional history today. Given the recent resurrection of dissents by the Supreme Court, it is important not to foreclose the possibility of judicial dissent by generalising the actions of the three justices to all the judges of the court. For, after all, to borrow in part from Justice Chandrachud, judicial dissent is the safety valve of constitutionalism. And dissent must be seen to be done. The time is now.

Kalpana Kannabiran is Professor and Director, Council for Social Development, Hyderabad

Talking with a different Modi

If he returns to power, as the Pakistan Prime Minister wants, Modi’s priorities would be different from those in his first term



SUBHASH RAI

Early this month, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said he thinks that there may be a better chance of peace talks with India and that “some kind of settlement in Kashmir could be reached” if the BJP wins this general election. This suggests that Mr. Khan, who is considered to be close to the guardians of the Pakistani state, possesses the ‘mandate’ to redraw borders and expects the leader of the BJP to have a similar mandate from the people after the election.

Attempts at rapprochement

Over several decades, India and Pakistan have fought wars, derided each other at international fora, and squandered away a few attempts at rapprochement. Yet this formulation of hard-line adversaries being able to arrive at genuine peace between the two countries is a tantalising possibility. There is proof from other countries of bitter adversaries being the best peacemakers. In 1972, the conservative U.S. President Richard Nixon’s visit to Beijing to meet Chairman Mao Zedong brought to an end years of tension between the U.S. and China. The most important consequence of the rapprochement was that the two Koreas agreed to reunification as a principle. And in February 1979, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as External Affairs Minister, revived India-China relations that had gone into a chill since the 1962 war. In 2001, Vajpayee, this time as Prime Minister, was reportedly on the brink of arriving at a resolution of the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf at the Agra Summit.

These examples show that conservatives can bring about peace. While at the Agra Summit, where a master politician like Vajpayee might have seen an opportunity to make an impact on the history of the subcontinent (only to have it scuttled by his arch-rival, yet fellow right-wing stalwart L.K. Advani), Nixon’s attempt was not focused on making peace with China’s ideology; it was an attempt to de-escalate tensions.

A different Modi

Expecting de-escalation of tensions from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, if he is voted back to power, would be different though. Mr. Modi made a surprise visit to Lahore in

December 2015 to wish his then-Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, on his birthday. Will he be inclined to do the same on Mr. Khan’s birthday this year? If Mr. Modi returns to power after this election campaign, which has been filled with invocations of Pulwama and Balakot, then it would be on the anti-Pakistan plank. In 2014, Mr. Modi wanted to be the leader who gave an opportunity to a recalcitrant neighbour. A re-elected Mr.



ANI

Modi might not be in the need for such gestures. His ideological predilections will dissuade him as well. Besides, at the core of the Modi phenomenon has been his uncompromising persona. His appeal is to a core base that is of his own making and not necessarily that of the RSS-BJP combine. The base he appeals to believes in bravado and machismo.

Arriving at peace

Mr. Modi has most often not felt the need to intervene and assuage the country on many issues that have been highly divisive. On the Gujarat riots in 2002, he compared his feelings to an occupant of a car involved in an accident. The travails of the people post-demonetisation and the poor implementation of the Goods and Services Tax were not even addressed, forget an apology being tendered. If that is the risk he was willing to take as Prime Minister in his first term, a rejuvenated Mr. Modi might even have the confidence to talk of the recreation of an Akhand Bharat. In the dream of Akhand Bharat, how can there be any compromise on a territorial dispute? There will be a collapse of many territories in such a dream and hence no territorial dispute to compromise on.

Mr. Khan might want the BJP back in power, but he will have to contend with a different Prime Minister Modi, if the latter does return. If there has to be durable peace in the subcontinent, the leaders who occupy high office should arrive at peace on the strength of political mandates that enjoin them to make peace.

Subhash Rai is Digital Editor, The India Forum

SINGLE FILE

The anatomy of beauty

Deconstructing the meaning of beauty today

MADHURIKA SANKAR



“With great hotness comes great responsibility,” says the adorably vapid Haley Dunphy on the hit U.S. sitcom *Modern Family*. Little does the character realise the hidden import of her casual assertion in today’s world.

Artists, scientists and philosophers concur that beauty is an inherently undefinable characteristic, combining the inward and the outward, the subjective and the objective, the evolutionary and the cultural. Indeed, ‘beauty’ is derived from the French word *beaute*, which means ‘physical attractiveness and goodness’. Right away, there is the suggestion of beauty and virtue as one and the same. Philosopher Francis Bacon theorised that “virtue is nothing but inward beauty; beauty nothing but outward virtue.” This notion is pervasive and finds expression everywhere.

But there are dark trade-offs. An empirically beautiful person might have an easier time getting a job, finding a mate, and being taken seriously, but beauty often inspires people rolling out the proverbial red carpet, robbing you of any incentive to develop inner depth. And let’s not forget the detrimental effect that the concept of beauty has on others who are perceived to lack the quality. The Western mass culture that predominates the world currently inspires anorexic, photoshopped ideals of beauty, instigating malcontent and insecurity in people. This insecurity often leads to detrimental personality changes, further marginalising the physically less-than-ideal individual.

Evolutionary aesthetics posits that the aesthetic preferences of human beings have evolved based on survival needs and are rooted more in biology than culture. The cultural dominance of the definition of beauty in the modern world is but a moment in time in relation to the sweep of socio-biological history. Nineteenth century sculptor Rodin was precocious in his understanding of our modern age: “Constantly I hear: ‘What an ugly age! That woman is plain. That dog is horrible.’ It is neither the age nor the woman nor the dog which is ugly, but your eyes, which do not understand.”

The nicest, most evolved person, who understands the empirical fact that beauty is skin deep, will probably still linger over a more attractive person than a more substantive one, finding excuses to rationalise his or her deep desire for facial symmetry, unblemished skin and lustrous hair.

Renaissance mastermind Leonardo da Vinci looked for scientific precision in art and nature, symmetry being a reflection of beauty. Indeed, the Golden Ratio refers to a mathematical formula for ideal aesthetics and that it remains constant across multiple disciplines of study is a humbling resolution of our inherent struggles over beauty, to this day.

The writer is based in Chennai



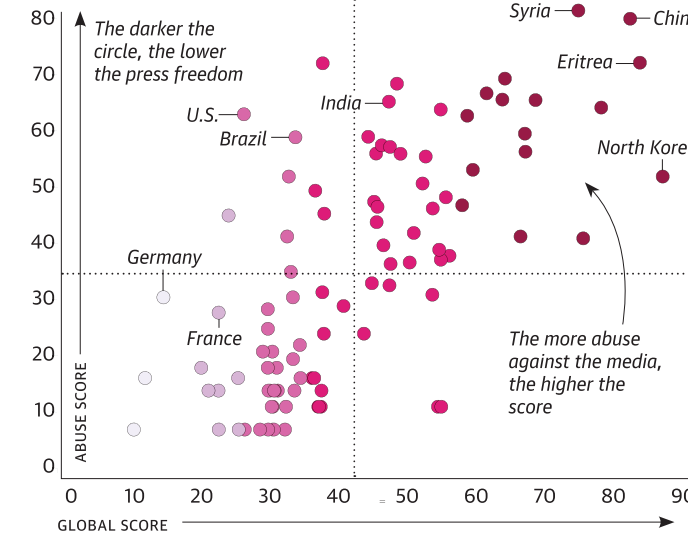
DATA POINT

Shaky fourth pillar?

India’s position fell two spots to 140 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index of 2019. The report observes that journalists have increasingly become targets of violence by police forces, Maoist radicals, criminal organisations and politicians. It also points to increased online threats against journalists. By Varun B. Krishnan

In poor company

India’s ‘abuse score’, a measure of the intensity of abuses and violence against journalists and the media, is much higher than the average. India’s overall score puts it in the ‘very serious’ category in terms of lack of press freedom



BRICS scores

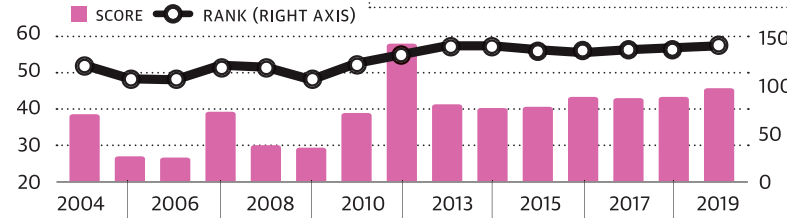
The rankings of all BRICS nations slipped by a few places in 2019. In the West, the U.S. moved from the ‘satisfactory’ to the ‘problematic’ category

Country	Rank	Rank change	Score
S. Africa	31	-3	22.19
U.S.	48	-3	25.69
Brazil	105	-3	32.79
India	140	-2	45.67
Pakistan	142	-3	45.83
Russia	149	-1	50.31
Bangladesh	150	-4	50.74
China	177	-1	78.92
North Korea	179	1	83.4
Turkmenistan	180	-2	85.44

Methodology: The degree of freedom in 180 countries is determined by compiling the responses of media professionals, lawyers and sociologists to a questionnaire. The no. of abuses against journalists and media is then weighted with qualitative feedback

Track record

India’s rank has never gone below 105 in the past 15 years (approximately 180 countries are studied each year). Higher ranks and scores indicate lower freedom of the press. India’s rank has consistently dropped in the past three years



Source: Reporters Sans Frontières

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 23, 1969

A scuffle averted in the Lok Sabha

A scuffle between the R.S.P. member, Mr. Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri, and the Congress member, Mr. N.P.C. Naidu, over the Calcutta Rabindra Sarobar Stadium incident was averted in the Lok Sabha to-day [April 22, New Delhi] by the timely intervention of their colleagues. The stadium incident crept into the proceedings of the House when the Defence Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh, was replying to a call-attention motion tabled by Mr. S.M. Banerjee and others on the refusal of army officials to surrender some of the sepoy to the civil authorities as directed by a Calcutta Magistrate. The exchanges between Mr. Chaudhuri and Mr. Naidu was drowned in the noise that marked the proceedings. An excited Mr. Chaudhuri rushed to the seat of Mr. Naidu who was making gesticulations at Mr. Chaudhuri. Fearing that a clash between the two members was inevitable, several members including Mr. A.S. Saigal, Mr. G.G. Swell and Mr. S.M. Banerjee prevailed upon Mr. Chaudhuri to calm down.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 23, 1919.

Indian Labour Conditions.

At the Plenary Session of the Peace Conference held in Paris to-day [April 11], Lord Sinha in course of his speech on the International Labour Convention, said that from the industrial standpoint, India was in an extremely backward condition, but they hoped in the next few years that a great impetus would be given to indigenous industries. If these industries were to be developed on sound foundations they must look to the welfare of their workers. Already something had been done in India, the Factory Act of some years ago had already had good results, but as regards India’s climatic, social, and other conditions, their own Factory Commission recommended that progress must be slow. They had watched the building up of this Convention with some misgiving fearing that allowance would not be made for peculiar conditions.

POLL CALL

Recount

An election recount is a repeat tabulation of votes cast in an election in order to determine the accuracy of the initial count. Political parties and candidates sometimes demand a recount in close contests if they believe there has been an error in the counting of votes. In India, provisions relating to recount are contained in Rule 63 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961. However, a recount is not possible if the election result has been declared and a candidate certified as the winner. In such cases, the only remedy is for an aggrieved candidate to challenge the election in court.

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संयुक्त राष्ट्र के पूर्व महासचिव

अंतर्ध्वनि

>> आगा शाहिद अली

प्रकृति के करीब होना मेरे लिए कोई मुद्दा नहीं रहा

मैंने पहली कविता नौ वर्ष की उम्र में लिखी और वह अंग्रेजी में थी। मैंने उसे अपनी मां को दिखाया, तो उन्होंने काफी उत्साह बढ़ाया। बारह वर्ष की उम्र में मैंने ईशा पर एक कविता लिखी। उसी मैंने अपने पिता को दिखाया, तो उन्होंने मुझे चमड़े की जिल्द वाली एक नोटबुक खरीदकर दी और कहा कि मैं अपनी सभी कविताएँ उसी में लिखूँ। उससे मुझे बहुत प्रोत्साहन मिला। दरअसल मेरे घर में फारसी, उर्दू, अंग्रेजी और कश्मीरी में अक्सर कविताएँ सुनी जाती थीं। जब मैं अकेला होता हूँ, तो लगता है कि मेरा कहीं कोई घर नहीं है। लेकिन जिस क्षण मैं लोगों के साथ होता हूँ, मुझे घर का एहसास होता है, क्योंकि लोगों को मैं बहुत प्यार करता हूँ। मुझे लोगों के साथ रहना, उनका मनोरंजन करना पसंद है। मुझे प्रकृति के बजाय किताबों की दुकानों, रेस्तराओं में जाने और लोगों से मिलने में अच्छा लगता है। निश्चित रूप से मैं प्रकृति के करीब नहीं होना चाहता। इसकी वजह शायद यह है कि मेरा बचपन कश्मीर में गुजरा है, जो आश्चर्यजनक रूप से बहुत ही खूबसूरत है। मैं कश्मीर से बहुत प्यार करता हूँ। कश्मीर इतना सुंदर है कि मेरे लिए प्रकृति के करीब जाना कोई मुद्दा ही नहीं रहा। प्रकृति हमेशा मेरे करीब रही। वह इतना मेरे जीवन का हिस्सा रहा है कि उसकी महत्ता मेरे लिए खत्म हो गई। जब मैं कश्मीर के बारे में सोचता हूँ, तो प्रकृति के बारे में नहीं, वहाँ के अपने दोस्तों के बारे में सोचता हूँ। मैं उन जगहों के बारे में सोचता हूँ, जहाँ मैं घूमता था, मैं पहाड़ों के बारे में सोचता हूँ। मैं कल्पना करता हूँ कि वहाँ मैं कहीं पर बैठकर सूर्यास्त देख रहा हूँ। मैं उन परिदृश्यों के करीब हूँ, जो मेरी भावनाओं का हिस्सा रहे हैं और निश्चित रूप से, उनमें से कुछ मेरी कविता में आते हैं। अगर आप मेरी कविता ध्यान से पढ़ेंगे, तो उनमें आपकी संगीत और संवेदनशीलता मिलेगी।



दिवंगत भारतीय-अमेरिकी कवि

राफेल सौदे से जुड़े अवमानना के मामले में अपने बयान पर राहुल गांधी ने खेद जताया है, क्योंकि उनके पास कोई और विकल्प था ही नहीं। सोशल मीडिया के इस दौर में तथ्यों को बिना परखे गलतबयानी करने से हमारी संस्थाओं की साख पर ही आंच आती है।

प्रचार की सीमाएं

कांग्रेस

अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी ने राफेल सौदे से जुड़े अदालत को अवमानना संबंधी मामले में अपने विवादित बयान पर खेद जताया है, क्योंकि उनके पास इसके अलावा कोई और विकल्प था ही नहीं। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने राफेल मामले में लीक दस्तावेजों को सुनवाई के लिए मंजूरी देते समय उन शब्दों का इस्तेमाल नहीं किया था, जिन्हें राहुल ने सर्वोच्च अदालत के हवाले से कहा था। 10 अप्रैल को सर्वोच्च अदालत द्वारा राफेल पर पुनर्विचार याचिका मंजूर करने के तुरंत बाद राहुल ने कहा था, कि 'सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने भी माना है कि चौकीदार ही चोर है।' इस पर भाजपा नेता और सांसद मीनाक्षी लेखी ने उनके खिलाफ अदालत की अवमानना

की याचिका दायर की थी, जिस पर आज सुनवाई होनी है। जाहिर है, राहुल के खेद जताए जाने के बावजूद उन पर अवमानना का मामला चलता या नहीं, यह अदालत को तय करना है। राहुल ने खेद जताते हुए कहा है कि उन्होंने यह बयान राजनीतिक आवेश में दिया था, और उन्हें उस समय अदालत के पूरे फैसले की जानकारी तक नहीं थी। यह दुखद है कि विपक्ष की सबसे बड़ी पार्टी के नेता ने भी बिना तथ्यों को परखे हुए ऐसा बयान दे दिया, जिससे सर्वोच्च अदालत की प्रतिष्ठा जुड़ी हुई है। दूसरी ओर सर्वोच्च अदालत के 14 दिसंबर, 2018 के फैसले को प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और भाजपा अध्यक्ष अमित शाह सहित कई केंद्रीय मंत्रियों ने राफेल सौदे में 'क्लीन चिट' करार दिया था। संदर्भों और तथ्यों को

अपनी सुविधा से प्रस्तुत करने की इस प्रवृत्ति से हमारी संस्थाओं की साख पर आंच आती है। ऐसे दौर में जब सोशल मीडिया के जरिये किसी भी खबर, सूचना या बयान को देश के एक छोर से दूसरे छोर तक पहुंचने में देर नहीं लगती, उसमें अपुष्ट या गलत बयानबाजी के खतरों को सहज समझा जा सकता है। चुनाव आयोग ने आदर्श आचार संहिता के जरिये प्रचार की सीमाएं तय कर रखी हैं, लेकिन स्थिति यह है कि मुख्यमंत्री, पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री और राष्ट्रीय पार्टियों के नेता तक इसका उल्लंघन करने से गुरेज नहीं करते। चुनावी प्रचार के दौरान तीखे आरोप-प्रत्यारोप होते रहते हैं, लेकिन इसमें तथ्यों को जिस तरह से तोड़-मरोड़ कर प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है, वह हमारे राजनीतिक विमर्श में आई गिरावट को ही दर्शाता है।

श्रीलंका पर आतंकी आंच

इस स्टर रविवार को श्रीलंका में हुए आतंकवादी हमले ने भारत के लोगों को 26/11 को हुए मुंबई हमले की याद दिला दी, जब लश्कर-ए-तैयबा के आतंकवादियों ने शहर के होटलों और यहूदी ठिकानों पर तीन सुनियोजित हमले किए थे। उनमें 165 लोग मारे गए थे और 300 लोग घायल हुए थे। आप श्रीलंका में हुए आतंकी हमले की गंभीरता का अंदाजा इस बात से लगा सकते हैं कि वहाँ लगभग 300 लोग मारे गए और 500 से ज्यादा लोग घायल हुए हैं। श्रीलंका से आ रही खबरें बताती हैं कि आत्मघाती हमलावरों द्वारा नेगंबो, कोलंबो और बट्टोकलोआ स्थित तीन चर्चों पर एक ही समय सुबह 8.45 बजे बम विस्फोट किए गए थे। इसके अलावा तीन प्रमुख होटलों पर भी हमले किए गए।



इस्लामी कट्टरपंथियों की दक्षिण पूर्वी एशिया में लंबे समय से मौजूदगी रही है और इस क्षेत्र के संकड़ों लड़ाके इस्लामिक स्टेट में शामिल हुए थे।



मनोज जोशी

अधिकारियों को यह नहीं पता कि वे बाहरी लोगों से जुड़े थे या नहीं। पुलिस ने गिरफ्तार लोगों की पहचान और संबद्धता का अभी खुलासा नहीं किया है।

सेनरत्ने ने इन हमलों को भारी खुफिया विफलता बताया है, क्योंकि विदेशी खुफिया एजेंसी से इस संबंध में चार अप्रैल को ही सूचना मिल गई थी, लेकिन पुलिस के अधिकारियों को इसके बारे में नौ अप्रैल को बताया गया और

संदिग्ध लोगों के नाम तक उपलब्ध कराए गए। 11 अप्रैल को डीआईजी प्रियालाल दासनायक ने कोलंबो में होटलों पर बमबारी, चर्चों और भारतीय उच्चायोग के कार्यालय पर हमले के संबंध में चेतावनी जारी की थी। उन्होंने बताया था कि इन हमलों का संचालन एनटीजे के प्रमुख मोहम्मद जहरान करीम हो सकता है कि इस चेतावनी से पूरे द्वीप में वीआईपी सुरक्षा मजबूत की गई हो, लेकिन पवित्र ईस्टर के त्योहार में

चर्चों और होटलों की सुरक्षा बढ़ाने के लिए कुछ नहीं किया गया।

वास्तव में समस्या श्रीलंका की विभाजित सरकार के कारण है, क्योंकि राष्ट्रपति और प्रधानमंत्री, दोनों में तालमेल नहीं है। प्रेस कांफ्रेंस में सेनरत्ने ने बताया कि दासनायक की चेतावनी के बारे में प्रधानमंत्री रानिल विक्रमसिंघे को नहीं बताया गया, जिन्हें सुरक्षा परिषद की बैठकों से भी बाहर रखा गया था। भले ही पुलिस का कहना है कि सभी स्थानीय लोग इसमें शामिल थे, लेकिन हमलों की भीषणता को देखते हुए इसकी काफी आशंका है कि इसके पीछे खूंखार आतंकी तत्वों, संभवतः इस्लामिक स्टेट का हाथ रहा हो। श्रीलंका की कुल आबादी में 70.2 प्रतिशत बौद्ध, 12.6 फीसदी हिंदू, करीब 9.7 फीसदी मुस्लिम और 7.4 फीसदी ईसाई हैं। श्रीलंका ने हिंदू और बौद्ध, दोनों तरह के कट्टरपंथ को देखा है, लेकिन मुस्लिम शांतिपूर्ण रहे हैं। हालांकि उनमें भी कुछ कट्टरवादी तत्व रहे हैं। वर्ष 2016 में श्रीलंका की संसद में बताया गया था कि देश के अछूते पढ़े-लिखे परिवारों के करीब 32 मुस्लिम इस्लामिक स्टेट में शामिल हो गए हैं।

एनटीजे एक अज्ञात संगठन है, जिसके आतंकवाद का कोई लंबा इतिहास नहीं है। पिछले वर्ष यह एक बौद्ध प्रतिमा को तोड़ने में सिल्लित रहा था और इसके सचिव अब्दुल रजिक को नस्लवादी भावनाएं भड़काने के लिए गिरफ्तार किया गया था। हालांकि एनटीजे बहुत से वैश्विक इस्लामी आंदोलनों का हिस्सा रही है, जो पूरे विश्व में अपनी तरह के इस्लाम का प्रसार करना चाहते हैं। इस बात की ज्यादा आशंका है कि एनटीजे में इस्लामिक स्टेट जैसे कुछ ज्यादा कट्टरपंथी तत्वों ने घुसपैठ की हो, जिनमें एनटीजे की आड़ में इन हमलों को अंजाम देने की क्षमता थी।

संयोग से एक तमिलनाडु तौहीद जमात भी है, यह भी एक इस्लामी संगठन है, लेकिन इसकी गतिविधियाँ सामाजिक क्षेत्रों में हैं, जो सामुदायिक रसोई चलाने और रक्तदान शिविर आयोजित करने का काम करता है। हालांकि हमेशा यह चिंता रहती है कि कभी-कभी ये संगठन वैचारिक आधार रखते हैं और उनके कुछ अपराध हिंसक होते हैं। भारत श्रीलंका की घटनाओं को बहुत ध्यान से देख रहा होगा। पिछले कुछ समय से, नई दिल्ली में कट्टरपंथी इस्लामी समूहों को लेकर चिंता है, जो दक्षिण और दक्षिण-पूर्व एशिया में फैलते जा रहे हैं। भारतीय खुफिया एजेंसियों ने कहा है कि भारत या उसके पड़ोस में इस्लामिक स्टेट का प्रभाव उतना महत्वपूर्ण नहीं है, लेकिन बांग्लादेश, पाकिस्तान और अफगानिस्तान जैसे देशों में इस्लामिक स्टेट की शाखाएं हैं। विशेष रूप से सीरिया में इस्लामिक स्टेट के खत्म होने के बाद सीरिया से लौटे कट्टरपंथियों को लेकर चिंता है। हालांकि भारत ने इस पर बहुत ज्यादा चिंता नहीं जताई है, लेकिन मालदीव जैसे देश सीरिया से लौटने वाले कट्टरपंथियों के कारण असुरक्षित हो सकते हैं। इसी तरह दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया में इस्लाम का पुनरुत्थान हुआ है, जहाँ 27 करोड़ मुसलमान रहते हैं। इस्लामी कट्टरपंथियों की दक्षिण पूर्वी एशिया में लंबे समय से मौजूदगी रही है और इस क्षेत्र के संकड़ों लड़ाके इस्लामिक स्टेट में शामिल हुए थे। मई, 2017 में फिलीपींस की सरकार ने मारवो शहर को इस्लामी तत्वों के कब्जे से बचाने के लिए पांच महीने तक सैन्य अभियान चलाया था। तब से इंडोनेशिया में कई चर्चों पर बम धमाके हुए हैं और इस क्षेत्र के देशों ने उनकी गतिविधियों को रोकने के लिए आपसी सहयोग बढ़ाया है।

लेखक आँबजरी रिसर्च फाउंडेशन के प्रतिष्ठित फेलो हैं।

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> श्रीमन नारायणन

युवा पीढ़ी को पेड़-पौधों और चिड़ियों से जोड़ा

जब भी मैं अपनी आंखें बंद करता हूँ, मेरे सामने बचपन के वे दिन सामने आ जाते हैं, जब सुबह पक्षियों के कलरव से मेरी आंखें खुलती थीं। और नाश्ते के समय मां के साथ मैं गैरियों और दूसरे पक्षियों को रोटी के टुकड़े और फल खिलाता था। मैं गांव के बजाय शहर में पला-बढ़ा। इसके बावजूद पेड़-पौधे और पक्षियों से बचपन से ही मेरा जिस तरह जुड़ाव रहा, उसके लिए मैं खुद को भाग्यशाली मानता हूँ, क्योंकि आज प्रकृति के वे दुर्घट शहरों और कस्बों में तो नहीं दिखते। अजीब संयोग है कि शहरों में अपना पूरा जीवन बिता चुकने के बाद बुढ़ापे में मैं गांव में रहने लगा हूँ। मैं केरल में एर्नाकुलम जिले के मुपथ्याडम गांव में रहता हूँ। यह वही गांव है, जिसे छोड़कर मेरे पिता शहर चले गए थे।

मैं जब इस गांव में आया था, तो यहाँ वैसी हरियाली नहीं दिखी, जैसी केरल के गांवों में अमूमन दिखती है। यहाँ तक कि गांव में पानी के सोते भी कम हैं। जो बात मुझे खटकी, वह यह कि हरियाली और पानी के अभाव में पक्षियों मेरे गांव में आते ही नहीं थे। बचपन में परिवार के साथ जब गांव आया था, तो एक-दो तालाबों के अलावा थोड़ी दूर पर एक छोटी-सी नदी भी थी। आज पानी के वे सारे सोत सूख चुके हैं। गांव में बसने के साथ ही मैंने कुछ अनूठा करने के बारे में सोचा। मैंने दस हजार पौधे खरीदकर पूरे गांव में बंटवा दिए। मैंने गांव के युवाओं को मेरे अभियान से जोड़ लिया है। उनके साथ पूरे गांव में घूम-घूमकर मैंने पौधे लगावाए और इसकी भी व्यवस्था की कि उन पौधों को लगातार पानी मिलता रहे। मेरे तीन बेटे हैं, जो नौकरी करते हैं और शहर में रहते हैं। नौकरी से रिटायर होने के बाद मेरा अपना रेट्रोस्टैंड और लॉटरी का व्यवसाय है, जिससे पर्याप्त आमदनी हो जाती है। चूँकि बेटों की जिम्मेदारी मैंने पूरी कर दी है, इसलिए अपने अभियान में मुझे पैसे की कमी नहीं होती। उल्टे जिन युवाओं को मैंने अपने साथ जोड़ा है, उनमें से कुछ की मैं आर्थिक सहायता करता रहता हूँ। चूँकि प्राकृतिक जलस्रोतों को पुनर्जीवित करना बड़ा काम है, इसलिए गर्मियों में पक्षियों को पानी पिलाने के लिए मैंने काम शुरू किया। इसके तहत मैंने कुल दस हजार से भी अधिक मिट्टी के बर्तन खरीदे। फिर अपने गांव में अलग-अलग उन बर्तनों को रखने के अलावा मैंने शहरों की सोसाइटियों में भी वे बर्तन बांटे। मैंने यह अभियान पूरे जिले में फैलाया, जिसमें मेरे कई लाख रुपये खर्च हुए। गांवों में रखे गए कुछ बर्तन तो इतने बड़े हैं कि उनमें सौ चिड़ियाँ एक साथ पानी पी सकती हैं। जिले के सभी गांवों में मैंने युवाओं को वॉलंटियर्स तैनात किया है, जो नियमित रूप से पौधों और पक्षियों के लिए पानी की व्यवस्था करते हैं। चूँकि यह पर्यावरण से जुड़ा काम है, इसलिए सभी जगहों में मेरे इस अभियान को भरपूर समर्थन मिला है। अनेक महिलाएं और बुजुर्ग खुशी-खुशी यह काम एक मिशन के तहत करते हैं। हाल ही में मैंने पूरे जिले में पचास हजार पौधे बांटे हैं।

मेरे गांव में अब सुबह से ही पक्षियों का कलरव सुनाई पड़ता है। सघन पौधरोपण के कारण हरियाली भी खूब दिखने लगी है। जल्दी ही मैं गांव के दो पुराने तालाबों के जीर्णोद्धार का काम शुरू करने वाला हूँ, जिसमें स्थानीय लोगों के साथ-साथ जिला प्रशासन ने भी सहयोग करने का आश्वासन दिया है।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

नौकरशाही का बदलता चेहरा

विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के नौ विशेषज्ञों को लैटरल एंट्री के जरिये केंद्र सरकार के विभिन्न मंत्रालयों में संयुक्त सचिव के पदों पर सीधी नियुक्ति दी गई है। इनका कार्यकाल तीन साल का होगा और अच्छा प्रदर्शन होने पर इसे पांच साल तक किया जा सकेगा।



जयंतीलाल भंडारी

है, विभिन्न असाधारण योग्यता वाले अनुभवी पेशेवरों को उनकी प्रतिभा और क्षमता के हिसाब से प्रशासन व देश के विकास में योगदान देने का मौका सुनिश्चित करना। बड़ी तादाद में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों से सरकार के साथ काम करने के लिए विशेषज्ञों और पेशेवरों के आवेदन आए थे।

मोदी सरकार से पहले भी विभिन्न प्रधानमंत्रियों द्वारा कुछ प्रतिभाओं और पेशेवरों को सरकार के कार्यों में सहयोग के लिए जिम्मेदारी सौंपी जाती रही है। यूपीए सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल में नंदन नीलेकणी को लाया गया और उन्हें आधार के लिए अधिकार दिए गए। इंदिरा गांधी भी नियमित रूप से कारोबारी जनत को प्रतिभाओं को बेहतर उपयोग में लाती रहीं। दूरसंचार में क्रांति के

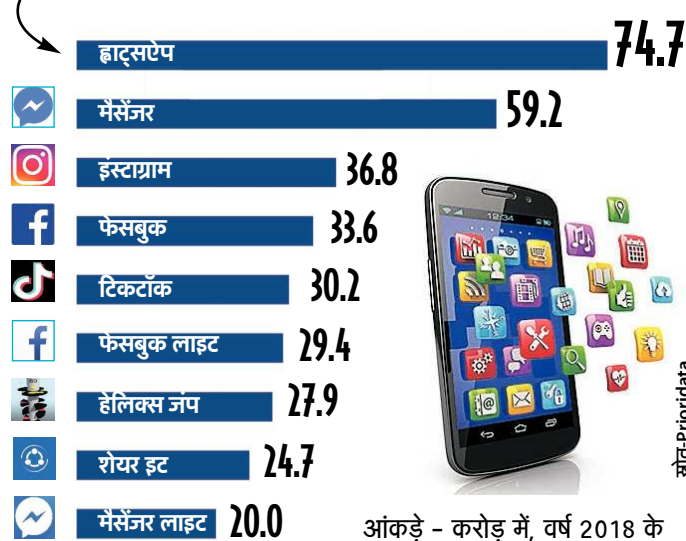
लिए राजीव गांधी सैम पित्रोदा को लेकर आए। अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने आर.वी. शाही को बिजली सचिव की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका दी थी। वी.पी. सिंह ने अरुण सिंह को जिम्मेदारी देकर देश के रक्षा संगठन का आधुनिकीकरण करने के कदम उठाए। नरसिंह राव मनमोहन सिंह को लेकर आए और उन्हें सीधे वित्त मंत्री बना दिया। मनमोहन सिंह के वित्त सचिव मोंटेक सिंह आहलूवालिया को भी महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया।

यद्यपि सरकारी तंत्र में निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों और क्षमतावान विशेषज्ञों की संयुक्त सचिव के पद पर नियुक्तियाँ लाभप्रद दिखाई दे रही हैं, पर इसके सामने कई चुनौतियाँ भी होंगी। इनमें से प्रमुख चुनौती नियुक्त विशेषज्ञों की गुणवत्ता संबंधी है। पेशेवर विशेषज्ञों को एक खास शैक्षणिक मानक पूरा करना होता है और जिन लोगों को चुना जाता है, उन्हें संघ लोक सेवा आयोग के साक्षात्कार से गुजरना होता है। उनके लिए कोई लिखित परीक्षा नहीं होती है। चूँकि संयुक्त सचिव पदों पर लैटरल एंट्री पहली बार हुई है, अतः अभी यह स्पष्ट नहीं है कि यह बाहरी विशेषज्ञों की नियुक्ति का सर्वश्रेष्ठ तरीका है या नहीं। दूसरी चुनौती यह है कि शुरुआत से ही विभिन्न संयुक्त सचिवों की नियुक्ति विवादों में आई है। ऐसे में यह देखा होगा कि सरकार इनकी विशेषज्ञताओं का कितना लाभ ले सकती है।

खुली खिड़की

ह्याट्सऐप सबसे लोकप्रिय

हाल के वर्षों में स्मार्टफोन के बढ़ते उपयोग के कारण एंड्रायड ऐप उपयोगकर्ताओं की संख्या भी तेजी से बढ़ी है। लेकिन इन एंड्रायड ऐप में सबसे ज्यादा ह्याट्सऐप का उपयोग किया जाता है।



कुछ भी अनुपयोगी नहीं

आयुर्वेद के महान ज्ञाता चरक के आश्रम के पास अनेक प्रकार की वनस्पतियाँ थीं। वह हर पूर्णिमा की रात अपने शिष्यों को लेकर वन में निकल जाते और वहाँ उन्हें विविध प्रकार की वनस्पतियों का ज्ञान कराते। रात में हिंस पशुओं की भयावह ध्वनि से डरकर कुछ शिष्य भाग जाते। तब चरक कहते, अच्छा हुआ कि कायर भाग गए। जो मालु से डर गया, वह क्या वैद्य बनेगा! वैद्य का तो काम ही मृत्यु से लड़ना है। चरक की परीक्षा अत्यंत कठिन होती थी, जिसमें कुछ ही छात्र उत्तीर्ण हो पाते थे। एक बार परीक्षा में चरक ने अपने छात्रों को एक महीने तक घूम-घूमकर उन वनस्पतियों को ढूँढकर लाने को कहा, जिनका आयुर्वेद में प्रयोग नहीं होता। कुछ छात्र घास-फूस और कटीली झाड़ू ले आए। कुछ पत्तियों और वृक्षों की छाल ले आए। कुछ ने अधिक परिश्रम कर विषैली फलियाँ और जड़ें ढूँढ निकालीं। उनतीसवें दिन ज्यादातर छात्रों ने अपनी वनस्पतियाँ गुरुदेव को दिखा दीं। चरक ने उनमें से कुछ वनस्पतियों से बनने वाली औषधियों के बारे में बताया, तो कुछ के बारे में उन्होंने कुछ नहीं कहा। तीसवें दिन एक छात्र खाली हाथ आया और कहने लगा, गुरुदेव, मुझे तो ऐसी एक भी वनस्पति नहीं मिली, जिसका आयुर्वेद में उपयोग न होता हो। इस पर सभी छात्र हंस पड़े। चरक ने कहा, इस बार की परीक्षा में सिर्फ यही एक छात्र उत्तीर्ण हुआ है।

-संकलित

हरियाली और रास्ता

जंगल, भूरी गाय और शेर

एक चतुर शेर की कहानी, जिसने शिकार करने के लिए भूरी गाय से दोस्ती गाँदी।



एक जंगल में तीन गाएँ थीं। उसमें से एक काली, एक सफेद और एक भूरी थी। तीनों हमेशा साथ रहती थीं। एक शेर को बड़े दिनों से उन पर नजर जमाए हुए था। पर वह उनमें से किसी एक पर झपट नहीं सकता था, क्योंकि वे अकेली होती ही नहीं थीं। ऐसे में शेर को यह तरकीब सूझी कि क्यों न उनमें से किसी एक गाय से दोस्ती की जाए। एक दिन भूरी गाय के पास जाकर उसने नरम स्वर में कहा, कैसी हो मित्र? भूरी गाय ने सहमते हुए एग से पूछा, महाराज, क्या आप मुझे जानते हैं? शेर मुस्कराते हुए बोला, भला क्यों न जानूँगा? तुम हमारे ही परिवार से हो। इसलिए तो तुम्हारा रंग भूरा है। धीरे-धीरे भूरी गाय और शेर के बीच बातचीत बढ़ने लगी। शेर का साथ पाकर भूरी गाय में अहंकार आ गया। काली और सफेद गाय ने उसे समझाने की बहुत कोशिश की कि शेर से दोस्ती उसके लिए ठीक नहीं। शिकार बनाने के लिए ही शेर उससे दोस्ती गाँठ रहा है। पर भूरी गाय को लगता कि दोनों गाएँ उससे जलती हैं, इसी कारण वे शेर से दोस्ती के लिए मना कर रही हैं। भूरी गाय का स्वभाव बदलने लगा। काली और सफेद गाय से उसके झगड़े बढ़ने लगे। एक दिन शेर भूरी गाय से बोला, चलो, तुम्हें जंगल की सैर कराने ले चलता हूँ। तुम्हें मैं अपना साम्राज्य दिखाता हूँ। भूरी गाय ने सोचा, हर बार की तरह इस बार भी सफेद और काली गाएँ मेरा साथ नहीं देंगी। इसलिए वह शेर के साथ अकेले ही जंगल में जाने को तैयार हो गई। बस फिर क्या था। घने जंगल में मौका देखते ही शेर ने भूरी गाय को अपना शिकार बना लिया। अपने अंतिम समय में भूरी गाय यही सोचती रही कि काश, मैंने उन दोनों की सलाह मानी होती, तो मुझे आज यह दिन न देखना पड़ता। शेर के यहकाले में आकर भूल ही गई थी कि मैं कौन हूँ।

हमारा अहंकार ही हमारे विनाश का कारण बनता है।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 56

सबसे बड़ी परीक्षा

सप्ताहांत पर देश के प्रधान न्यायाधीश पर लगे यौन शोषण के आरोप ने सर्वोच्च न्यायालय समेत पूरे देश में हलचल मचा दी। वह यौन शोषण के दोषी हैं या किसी राजनीतिक दुश्मनी के शिकार, यह तो जांच के बाद ही पता चलेगा। इन सारी बातों से परे देश के प्रधान न्यायाधीश रंजन गोगोई के विरुद्ध मामला सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के उन प्रक्रियागत दिशानिर्देशों का भी अहम

परीक्षण होगा जो सन 1997 में एक अहम मामले में तय किए गए थे। ये दिशानिर्देश 2013 में कानून में बदल गए। इन नियमों को शुरुआत में विशाखा गाइडलाइन का नाम दिया गया था। यह नाम एक गैर सरकारी संगठन से लिया गया था जिसने पीडित की ओर से मामले की पैरवी करते हुए पहली बार यौन शोषण को परिभाषित किया और जिसके बाद 10 से अधिक

कर्मचारियों वाले सभी संस्थानों में शिकायत समिति का होना अनिवार्य किया गया। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने 2013 में संसद से कानून बनाने के बाद अपनी विशाखा समिति भी गठित की। परंतु इस मामले में इसे अमल में नहीं लाया गया। इस संदर्भ में गोगोई के कदमों पर सवाल उठ सकते हैं।

गत वर्ष जनवरी में तत्कालीन प्रधान न्यायाधीश दीपक मिश्रा द्वारा प्रक्रियाओं के अतिक्रमण के खिलाफ हुए न्यायाधीशों के अप्रत्याशित सामूहिक विरोध प्रदर्शन में गोगोई ने भी शिरकत की थी। इस बात ने प्रक्रियाओं और नियम कायदों के पालन को लेकर उनकी छवि बहुत मजबूत की थी। चकित करने वाली बात है कि इसके बावजूद गोगोई खुद पर इन नियमों को लागू करने के अनिच्छुक दिखे।

यौन शोषण शिकायत समिति के माध्यम से जांच प्रक्रिया की शुरुआत करना इस मामले में एकदम उचित कदम होता लेकिन इसके बजाय उन्होंने अपने बचाव का एक अस्वाभाविक तरीका चुना। कथित पीडित की तुलना में उनकी शक्तिशाली स्थिति का भी बचाव नहीं किया जा सकता। सोलीसिटर जनरल द्वारा आरोपों की सूचना मिलने के बाद गोगोई ने सुनवाई के लिए एक विशेष पीठ बनाया जिसमें न्यायाधीश संजीव खन्ना और न्यायमूर्ति अरुण मिश्रा शामिल थे। उन्होंने कहा कि यह सुनवाई 'महत्वपूर्ण सार्वजनिक महत्त्व के मामले से जुड़ी है और यह न्यायपालिका की स्वायत्तता से संबंधित है।' इसके बाद वह आधे घंटे तक अपने निर्दोष होने के बारे में बोलते रहे। उन्होंने अपने मामूली बैंक बैलेंस और पीड़िता की

प्रतिष्ठा को लेकर भी बातें कीं।

इससे कई सवाल खड़े होते हैं। जिन 26 न्यायाधीशों को पीड़िता का हलफनामा मिला, उनमें से केवल दो न्यायाधीशों को इस 'विशेष पीठ की सुनवाई' में शामिल क्यों किया गया? जैसा कि गोगोई ने दावा किया यौन शोषण की शिकायत भला किस तरह न्यायपालिका की स्वायत्तता को प्रभावित करती है? शिकायतकर्ता को इस विशेष पीठ के समक्ष उपस्थित होने की इजाजत क्यों नहीं दी गई? अंतिम प्रश्न महत्त्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि कानून के मुताबिक शिकायत समिति के शिकायत स्वीकार करने के लिए प्रधान न्यायाधीश की इजाजत आवश्यक है। प्रधान न्यायाधीश के विरुद्ध सुनवाई के लिए कोई प्रक्रिया नहीं है। कथित पीड़ित की सुनवाई की अनुपस्थिति में अदालत

ने एक वक्तव्य जारी किया जिस पर केवल न्यायमूर्ति मिश्रा और खन्ना के हस्ताक्षर थे। मीडिया से कहा गया कि वह जिम्मेदारी भरा व्यवहार करें और विचार करें कि क्या ऐसे फिजूल और विवाद पैदा करने वाले आरोपों को प्रकाशित करना है? ध्यान रहे कि मामले का परीक्षण बिना पीड़ित से प्रश्न-प्रतिप्रश्न किए कर लिया गया। स्वतंत्र जांच का सुझाव क्यों नहीं दिया गया? शिकायतकर्ता के प्रक्रिया में शामिल न होने के बाद भी उसकी विश्वसनीयता का संदर्भ और उसके कथित आपराधिक रिकॉर्ड का जिक्र अस्वाभाविक था। इस बात की अनदेखी मुश्किल है कि सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने शिकायत को लेकर न्यूनतम कानूनी प्रक्रिया तक का पालन नहीं किया, जो उसे करना चाहिए था।



अजय मोहंती

फंसे कर्ज की निपटान प्रक्रिया पर हो पुनर्विचार

आरबीआई के फरवरी सर्कुलर पर आया उच्चतम न्यायालय का फैसला फंसे हुए कर्जों के निपटान को लेकर नया नजरिया अपनाने का मौका देता है। बता रहे हैं तमाल बंधोपाध्याय

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) के फरवरी 2018 में जारी सर्कुलर को निरस्त करने के उच्चतम न्यायालय के फैसले के बाद केंद्रीय बैंक फंसे कर्जों की समस्या से निपटने के लिए संशोधित सर्कुलर जारी करने वाला है। एशिया की तीसरी बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था भारत में कर्जों का पुनर्भूगतान न होना एक बड़ी समस्या बना हुआ है। इसी समस्या के हल के लिए बैंकिंग नियामक ने बैंकिंग अधिनियम की धारा 35ए के तहत मिली शक्तियों के तहत फरवरी 2018 में एक सर्कुलर जारी किया था। उसमें केंद्र सरकार को यह शक्ति दी गई थी कि वह बैंकों को फंसे कर्जों के निपटान प्रक्रिया शुरू करने का निर्देश देने के लिए आरबीआई को अधिकृत कर सकती है। मई 2017 में बैंकिंग अधिनियम में जोड़ी गई धारा 35ए की वैधता पर उच्चतम न्यायालय ने सवाल नहीं उठाए हैं लेकिन वह इसके इस्तेमाल के तरीके को लेकर संतुष्ट नहीं है। सरल शब्दों में कहें तो अधिनियम की यह धारा आरबीआई को बैंकों को फंसे कर्जों के निपटान का निर्देश देने का 'विवेकाधिकार' देती है लेकिन इसे एक 'नियम' के तौर पर नहीं देखा जा सकता है।

भले ही उच्चतम न्यायालय का यह फैसला कर्ज निपटान प्रक्रिया को बाधित करेगा लेकिन प्रक्रिया पटरी से नहीं उतरेगी। हालांकि कर्जों की वसूली के लिए सरकार को अधिकार दिए जाने के पहले भी बैंकिंग नियामक इस कानून की धारा 35 और 21 के तहत अपने स्तर पर बैंकों के अग्रिम भुगतान से संबंधित नीतियों में दखल एवं उनके बहीखाते की जांच कर सकता था।

सवाल है कि बैंकिंग अधिनियम में संशोधन की जरूरत क्या थी? शायद सरकार फंसे कर्जों के चलते पैदा हुई समस्या दूर करने और चूककर्ता कंपनियों को सबक सिखाने में सक्रिय भूमिका निभानी चाहती थी। या फिर सरकार कंपनी जगत को यह दिखाना चाहती थी कि कर्ज संकट के खिलाफ लड़ाई में आरबीआई अकेले नहीं है, उसे सरकार का भी समर्थन हासिल है। सरकार और आरबीआई दोनों के ही एक साथ खड़े होने से बैंकिंग प्रणाली का मजाक बनाकर रख देने वाले 'दोस्ताना पूंजीपतियों' को नियामक एवं सरकार के बीच पंचायत की कोशिश नहीं करनी चाहिए।

एक तरह से फरवरी सर्कुलर के निर्देशों ने आरबीआई को एक सूक्ष्म प्रबंधक की भूमिका में पुनर्स्थापित कर दिया था। इस बदलाव का यह कहते हुए बचाव किया जा सकता है कि असाधारण समय में असाधारण कदम की जरूरत होती है लेकिन अब यह निर्देश निरस्त किया जा चुका है, लिहाजा आरबीआई इसे फंसे कर्जों के निपटान प्रक्रिया पर नई नजर डालने के एक मौके के रूप में देख सकता है। इसका काम जमाकर्ताओं के हितों को सुरक्षित रखना है, कर्ज चूककर्ताओं का पीछा करना नहीं। यह काम बैंकरो पर ही छोड़ देना चाहिए। अगर वे अपना काम अच्छी तरह नहीं करते हैं तो उन पर कड़ी कार्रवाई नहीं होनी चाहिए?

कर्ज बांटने के धंधे में कुछ मामले निर्यात बाजार लुढ़कने, स्थानीय मुद्रा में अचानक गिरावट आने, नियामकीय मंजूरीयों में अनुचित विलंब और कच्चे माल की आपूर्ति या गलत कारोबारी मॉडल के चलते बिगड़

सकते हैं। कुछ भ्रष्ट प्रवर्तक भी हैं जो कर्ज इसीलिए लेते हैं क्योंकि उसे लौटाना नहीं है और भ्रष्ट बैंकर भी, जो रकम वापस न मिलने की आशंका होते हुए भी कर्ज बांट देते हैं। आरबीआई ने 1990 के दशक के मध्य में परियोजनाओं को वित्त देने वाले संस्थानों और वाणिज्यिक बैंकों के बीच की विभाजक रेखा हटा दी थी और सभी तरह के कर्ज देने वाली सार्वभौम बैंकिंग सुविधा की अवधारणा सामने आई थी। वाणिज्यिक बैंकों की विशेषज्ञता केवल कार्यशील पूंजी वाले कर्जों में ही होने से परियोजना वित्तपोषण के नए कारोबार में उनकी अंगुलियां जल गईं और यहाँ से कर्जों के फंसे का समूचा संकट शुरू हुआ। भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का स्वर्णिम दौर कहे जाने वाले वर्ष 2006-08 के दौरान बैंक ऋण देश के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) का तिगुना हो गया था। लेकिन अमेरिकी निवेश बैंक लीमन ब्रदर्स होल्डिंग्स इंक के धराशायी होने के बाद दुनिया भर में वित्तीय संकट पैदा हो गया था। उस स्थिति में अपनाई गई बेहद नरम मौद्रिक नीति ने बैंकों को अधिक कर्ज बांटने और उपभोग मांग बढ़ाने के लिए प्रोत्साहित किया।

ऐसे में अचरज नहीं है कि जल्द ही बैंकों के कर्ज पोर्टफोलियो में दरारें दिखने लगीं लेकिन बैंक उन्हें छुपाने की कोशिश करते रहे। बैंकिंग परिसंपत्तियों में करीब 70 फीसदी की हिस्सेदारी रखने वाले सार्वजनिक बैंकों के अधिकारी कर्ज पुनर्गठन के जरिये इस संकट को टालने की भरपूर कोशिश करते रहे लेकिन उससे फंसे कर्जों का ढेर ही बढ़ता रहा। दिवालिया कानून लागू होने तक तो काफी देर हो चुकी थी।

बैंकर उस समय भी हालात को नकारते रहे। कर्ज फंसे के मामले बढ़ने पर बैंकों को उनके लिए अलग प्रावधान करने पड़ते हैं क्योंकि उस पर उन्हें कोई ब्याज नहीं मिल रहा होता है। यह दोहरी मार की तरह है जिससे बैलेंस शीट भी प्रभावित होती है। भला कोई अपना घाटा क्यों दिखाना चाहेगा? ऊंचे प्रावधानों ने पूंजी को भी कम कर दिया। वह पूंजी कहाँ से आएगी? बैंकरो ने इस समस्या का एक आसान रास्ता निकाला। फंसे कर्जों से होने वाली ब्याज क्षति और वित्तीय प्रावधानों की भरपाई के लिए बैंकों ने अन्य कर्जदारों से ऊंचा ब्याज लेना और जमाकर्ताओं को कम ब्याज देना शुरू कर दिया। कर्ज फंसे की गंभीर समस्या से निपटने का यह विशुद्ध भारतीय 'जुगाडू' था।

अच्छे कर्जदारों और जमाकर्ताओं को बैंकों की इस नाकामी का खमियाजा क्यों भुगतान चाहिए? जब कोई कर्जदार कर्तों को अदा करना बंद कर देता है तो बैंक को वह खाता खराब घोषित करके उसके लिए अलग से धन का इंतजाम करना चाहिए। इस प्रक्रिया में अगर उसकी पूंजी में कमी आती है तो मालिक को नई पूंजी डालनी चाहिए। अगर बैंक जोखिम प्रबंधन, ऋण खातों की निगरानी और फंसे कर्जों की पहचान का अपना काम सही तरह से नहीं कर रहा है तो आरबीआई को उसके प्रबंधन को बाहर का रास्ता दिखा देना चाहिए।

भारत की दो अनुठी अवधारणाओं— 'इरादतन चूककर्ता' और 'तकनीकी रूप से बंदे खाते में डाल देना' (राइट-ऑफ) ने भी ऋण प्रबंधन को जटिल बना दिया। 'इरादतन चूककर्ता' का आशय उस कर्जदार से है जिसने आवंटित कर्ज का इस्तेमाल नहीं किया और 'तकनीकी रूप से बंदे खाते में डाल देना' (राइट-ऑफ) एक अकार्डिंग गतिविधि है जिसमें कर्ज को बंदे खाते में डालकर बैंक की बैलेंस शीट से हटा दिया जाता है लेकिन उसे कुछ शाखाओं में डाल दिया जाता है। जब उस कर्ज की वसूली हो जाती है तो वह राशि बैंक की लाभपरकता में जुड़ जाती है। ऐसे तकनीकी राइट-ऑफ के लिए कोई सर्वमान्य मानक नहीं है। प्रबंधन के अपने विवेक से किए जाने वाले ऐसे राइट-ऑफ ने ही बैंकों का कर्ज कम फंसे होने का भ्रम पैदा किया है जबकि बीते दशक में लाखों करोड़ रुपये बंदे खाते में डाले जा चुके हैं।

आरबीआई की दिसंबर में संपन्न बैंकिंग प्रणाली की छमाही समीक्षा के बाद जारी वित्तीय स्थिरता रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक फंसे कर्जों के ढेर में कुछ कमी आनी शुरू हो गई है। भारतीय बैंकिंग उद्योग की कुल लोन-बुक में फंसे कर्जों का प्रतिशत मार्च 2018 के 11.5 फीसदी से घटकर सितंबर 2018 में 10.8 फीसदी पर आ गया था। आरबीआई को उम्मीद है कि मार्च 2019 की छमाही में यह 10.3 फीसदी के स्तर पर आ जाएगा।

यह एक अच्छी खबर है लेकिन बैंकों और आरबीआई दोनों को ही यह भूलना नहीं चाहिए कि कंपनियों को नई जिंदगी देना दिवालिया कानून के केंद्र में है और बैंकों को उनका बकाया मिल जाना उसका उप-उत्पाद भर है।

(लेखक बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड के सलाहकार संपादक और जन स्मॉल फाइनेंस बैंक लिमिटेड के वरिष्ठ परामर्शदाता हैं)

धरती बचाने के लिए हमें खुद बनना होगा बदलाव का जरिया

अब यह साफ है कि इस 'एन्थ्रोपोसीन' युग में पर्यावरण सुरक्षा को सबसे ज्यादा नुकसान हुआ है। यह सर्वविदित है कि यह दुनिया निर्धारित सीमाओं के भीतर रहने की अपनी क्षमता तेजी से खोती जा रही है। स्वास्थ्य से जुड़े स्थानीय संकट की खबरें हमारे इर्दगिर्द छाने लगी हैं। ऐसा पर्यावरण के हमारे कुप्रबंधन और जलवायु परिवर्तन के असर के वैश्विक अस्तित्ववादी संकट के कारण हो रहा है।

ऐसे में हम क्या कर सकते हैं? हम सभी हालात बदलना चाहते हैं। हम पर्यावरण की साफ-सफाई और संरक्षण में योगदान चाहते हैं। हम शिदत से जरूरत महसूस किए जा रहे बदलावों का हिस्सा बनना चाहते हैं। हम जिस हवा में सांस लेते हैं वह इतनी दूषित हो चुकी है कि हमारे स्वास्थ्य के लिए खतरनाक है। हमारी नदियां कूड़े-कचरे और गंदे पानी से खत्म हो रही हैं। हमारे जंगलों पर भी खतरा मंडरा रहा है। हम जानते हैं कि अपना पर्यावरण बचाने के लिए काफी कुछ किया जाना है क्योंकि इसके बिना हमारी धरती का वजूद ही दांव पर होगा।

हम इन चीजों के बारे में जानते हैं लेकिन सवाल यह है कि किया क्या जा सकता है? क्या कुछ ऐसा है जो हम एक इंसान या स्कूल, कॉलेज, कॉलोनी एवं सोसाइटी के तौर पर सामूहिक रूप से कर सकते हैं? क्या हम भी अपना योगदान दे सकते हैं? अगर हां तो फिर कैसे? हम ऐसा कर सकते हैं। बहुत साल पहले महात्मा गांधी ने कहा था कि हम दुनिया में जो भी बदलाव लाना चाहते हैं, उसे पहले हमें खुद पर लागू करना चाहिए। हमें आज भी वही काम करने की जरूरत है।

यह साफ है कि हमारी जीवनशैली ने पर्यावरण पर खासा असर डाला है। हमारी गतिविधियों और उन्हें अंजाम देने के तरीकों का अहम फर्क होता है। इसीलिए बदलाव की दिशा में पहला कदम यह है कि हम अपने कार्यों को लेकर जागरूक हों। मसलन, हमें पता हो कि हम कितना पानी और बिजली इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं और उससे कितना अवशिष्ट पैदा होता है? ऐसा तभी हो सकता है जब हम अपने तौर-तरीके इस तरह बदलें कि संसाधनों का कम-से-कम इस्तेमाल हो और उससे अवशिष्ट



जमीनी हकीकत
सुनीता नारायण

भी कम-से-कम पैदा हों। 'धरती पर ज्यादा बोझ न डालना' ही हमारा आदर्श होना चाहिए। हमें बदलावों को आत्मसात करना होगा। पानी के ही मुद्दे पर गौर करें तो एक तरफ पानी का संकट बढ़ता जा रहा है तो दूसरी तरफ उपलब्ध जल दूषित होता जा रहा है। इसका जवाब इन पंक्तियों में निहित है:

पहला, पानी की हरेक बूंद बचाकर हमें अपने जल संसाधनों को बढ़ाना है। हम वर्षा-जल का इस तरह संचय करें कि हरेक छत और सतह जल संकलन के काम आए। केवल सरकार का ही काम नहीं है, हमें भी इस समाधान का अंग बनना होगा। ऐसा करना हमारी पहुंच में भी है। हरेक गांव, स्कूल, कॉलोनी और संस्थान को बचाकर का पानी रोकने, उसके संचयन और बारिश की हरेक बूंद को अहमियत देनी होगी।

हमें पानी की अपनी मांग कम करने पर भी ध्यान देना चाहिए। हम यह सुनिश्चित कर सकते हैं कि पानी व्यर्थ में नहीं बहाएगी और गंदे पानी को दोबारा इस्तेमाल में लाने लायक बनाया जा सके। हमें अपने रसोईघरों, स्नानघरों और बागीचों में पानी के कम-से-कम इस्तेमाल के तरीके भी निकालने होंगे। इनलाइफ ऐस का पाना हमेशा हमारे हाथ में नहीं होता है क्योंकि गंदा पानी घरों से निकलने के बाद सीवेज में चला जाता है।

लेकिन यह भी एक सच है कि कई घर खराब पानी के संग्रहण के मामले में आत्मनिर्भर भी होते हैं। उन घरों में सैप्टिक टैंक और अवशिष्ट जमा करने वाले बॉक्स बने होते हैं और वहां से उस कचरे को खुले नाले या जमीन तक ले जाया जाता है। इन प्रणालियों को गंदे पानी के शोषण, दोबारा इस्तेमाल के लिए बनाए गए और पानी के पुनर्चक्रण से स्थानीय स्तर पर जोड़ा जा सकता है। लेकिन

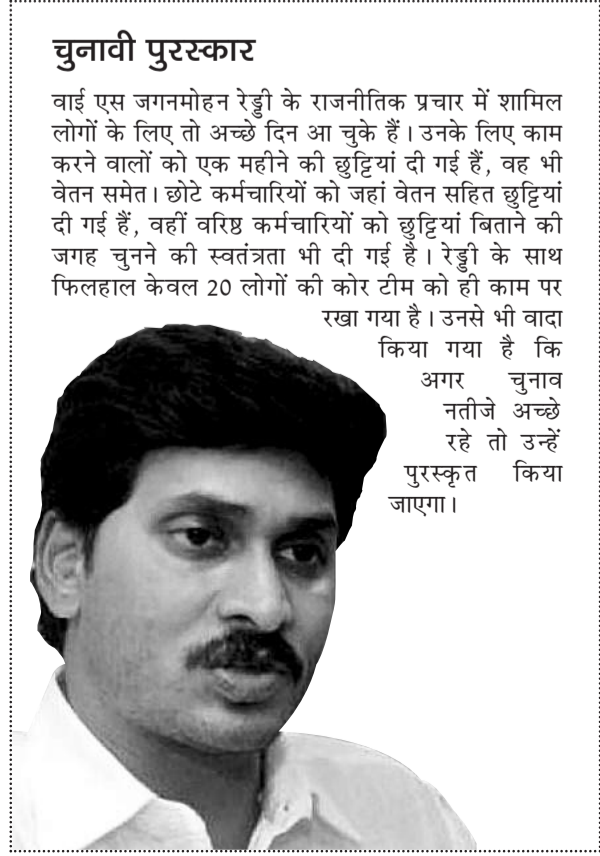
असली बात यह है कि हमें खराब पानी को दोबारा इस्तेमाल लायक बनाने के लिए काम करना होगा। कचरे के साथ भी यही बात है। अगर हम अपने कचरे का विश्लेषण करें तो पता चलेगा कि हम कितना कचरा पैदा करते हैं। लेकिन अगर हम गीले कचरे को अलग रखें तो हम अपने कचरे की संरचना समझ जाएंगे। प्लास्टिक, सीसा, धातु को एक तरफ और खानपान अवशिष्ट, पत्तियों और सड़क जैसी कचरे जैविक कचरों को एक तरफ रखा जाए। जब हम यह संरचना समझ लेंगे तो फिर हम उसका प्रबंधन भी कर सकते हैं। मसलन, जल नष्ट होने वाले जैविक कचरे से कंपोस्ट खाद बनाई जा सकती है। इसी तरह प्लास्टिक, सीसा और धातुओं को रिसाइकल किया जा सकता है। लेकिन अधिक अहम बात यह है कि इससे हमें यह पता चल जाएगा कि जल्दी नष्ट न होने वाला कचरा किन चीजों से पैदा होता है और फिर हम उसी हिसाब से अपनी योजना बना सकते हैं। हम ऐसा कर सकते हैं।

हम अपनी ऊर्जा जरूरतों में कटौती करते हुए भी योगदान दे सकते हैं। ऊर्जा उपकरणों की सक्षमता और प्रचुरता के जरिये हम ऊर्जा उपभोग में कटौती कर सकते हैं। वे अपने घरों और संस्थानों में नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा का इस्तेमाल बढ़ाने की दिशा में भी काम कर सकते हैं। ये छोटे-छोटे कदम बड़ी छलांग का आधार तैयार करते हैं।

मेरी संस्था सेंटर फॉर साइंस एंड एनवायरनमेंट (सीएएसई) ने एक हरित स्कूल कार्यक्रम तैयार किया है जिसमें स्कूल पर्यावरणीय बदलावों पर भाषण नहीं देते हैं बल्कि उनका पालन करते हैं। इस कार्यक्रम में छात्र और शिक्षक मिलकर अपने स्कूल का पर्यावरणीय बेचमार्क तय करते हैं। मसलन, वे कितना पानी, बिजली या वाहन इस्तेमाल करते हैं और कितना कचरा एवं प्रदूषण पैदा होता है? उस फुटप्रिंट के आधार पर वे अपने पर्यावरण को दुरुस्त करने के कदम उठा सकते हैं। वे बदलाव का सबब खुद बनते हैं। मुझे भरोसा है कि अगर हरेक स्कूल और घर इन गतिविधियों में सक्रिय हों तो उसका प्रभाव दूरगामी और अधिक होगा। हम जिंदगी के इन सबकों को खुद जिंदगी बना सकते हैं। यही हमारे लिए आगे की राह भी है।

कानाफूसी

शिकायतों की होड़
निर्वाचन आयोग की ओर से जारी एक रिपोर्ट दर्शाती है कि तमिलनाडु के राजनीतिक दल, खासतौर पर दोनों बड़े राजनीतिक दलों के बीच एक अलग किस्म की होड़ चल रही है। इसे सकारात्मक तो कतई नहीं कहा जा सकता है। दरअसल दोनों दल आदर्श आचार संहिता के उल्लंघन के मामलों को लेकर होड़ में नजर आ रहे हैं। राज्य में 19 अप्रैल तक उल्लंघन की कुल 4,690 शिकायतें दर्ज की गईं। इनमें से करीब 1,450 शिकायतें सत्ताधारी अखिल भारतीय अन्ना द्रमुक के खिलाफ की गई थीं। तो वहीं 1,694 शिकायतें प्रमुख विपक्षी दल द्रविड़ मुन्नेत्र कण्णम के खिलाफ की गईं। छोटे दल भी इस मामले में पीछे नहीं हैं और उनके खिलाफ कुल मिलाकर 1,546 शिकायतें दर्ज हैं। अधिकांश शिकायतें संपत्ति को नुकसान पहुंचाने की हैं। राज्य के दक्षिणी हिस्से से 1,368 शिकायतें आईं। इनमें मदुरै, रामनाथपुरम, शिवगंगा, तेनी, तुचुकुडी और कन्याकुमारी जैसे क्षेत्र शामिल हैं।



चुनावी पुरस्कार

वाई एस जगनमोहन रेड्डी के राजनीतिक प्रचार में शामिल लोगों के लिए तो अच्छे दिन आ चुके हैं। उनके लिए काम करने वालों को एक महीने की छुट्टियां दी गई हैं, वह भी वेतन समेत। छोटे कर्मचारियों को जहां वेतन सहित छुट्टियां दी गई हैं, वहीं वरिष्ठ कर्मचारियों को छुट्टियां बिताने की जगह चुनने की स्वतंत्रता भी दी गई है। रेड्डी के साथ फिलहाल केवल 20 लोगों की कोर टीम को ही काम पर रखा गया है। उनसे भी वादा किया गया है कि अगर चुनाव नतीजे अच्छे रहे तो उन्हें पुरस्कृत किया जाएगा।

आपका पक्ष

लिवर संबंधित रोग में जागरूकता जरूरी

विगत 19 अप्रैल को वर्ल्ड लिवर डे मनाया गया। लिवर मानव शरीर का एक महत्वपूर्ण अंग होने के साथ-साथ इससे जुड़ी बीमारियां दिन प्रतिदिन बढ़ती जा रही हैं। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के मुताबिक भारत में किसी बीमारी की वजह से मृत्यु होने की प्रमुख वजह लिवर है। उनके मुताबिक भारत में 10वें व्यक्ति की लिवर से जुड़ी बीमारी से मृत्यु हो जाती है। टाटा मेमोरियल के मुताबिक कैंसर मीठ में भारत में लिवर कैंसर तीसरे स्थान पर है। इसका अर्थ यह है कि लिवर से संबंधित बीमारियों में वृद्धि के साथ यह घातक बीमारी का रूप ले रही है। लिवर शरीर का सबसे बड़ा अंग है और यह पाचन क्रिया संपन्न करता है। इसके अलावा रक्त के थक्के में, खून का शुद्धीकरण, कोलेस्ट्रॉल को नियंत्रण करने में लिवर का प्रमुख योगदान है। लिवर ठीक नहीं होने पर मधुमेह जैसी बीमारियां जकड़



लेती हैं। अतः सरकार को इस बीमारी को दूर करने के लिए उपाय करने की जरूरत है। सरकारी अस्पतालों में लिवर विशेषज्ञों अथवा डॉक्टरों की नियुक्ति होनी चाहिए। मरीजों को लिवर से संबंधित बीमारियों को दवाएं मुफ्त में मुहैया करानी चाहिए। हर साल सरकारी अस्पतालों की ओर से ग्रामीण

डब्ल्यूएचओ के मुताबिक देश में 10वें व्यक्ति की मृत्यु लिवर से जुड़ी बीमारी से हो जाती है

इलाकों में कार्यक्रम और अभियान चलाना चाहिए ताकि लोग लिवर रोग के प्रति जागरूक हो सकें।
निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

झूठे वादों में न फंसे मतदाता

लोकसभा चुनाव के मद्देनजर दो प्रमुख दलों के घोषणा पत्र में कोई भी वादा पूर्ण होना संभव नहीं लगता है। ऐसे वादे किए गए हैं जिन्हें पूरा करने में कई अड़चनें आ सकती हैं। चुनाव की तारीख आने से पहले चुनावी सभाओं में नेताओं का एक दूसरे पर आरोप-प्रत्यारोप तथा बयानबाजी का दौर चरम पर है। हाल ही में कुछ नेताओं ने विवादित बयान दिए हैं जिसके बाद उनकी कड़ी आलोचना भी की गई है। हाल में आजम खान ने महिला संबंधित एक विवादित बयान दे दिया था जिसकी काफी आलोचना हुई। प्रत्येक लोकतांत्रिक देश के लिए चुनाव काफी महत्वपूर्ण होता है। भारत में पार्टी जनता के हितों से परे सिर्फ सत्ता के लिए लड़ते

विचार



दैनिक जागरण

जोखिम उठाए बिना लाभ कमाना असंभव है

खेद की बात

सच-झूठ की परवाह न करने के क्या नतीजे होते हैं, इसका ही उदाहरण है ग़हुल गांधी का खेद जताना। उन्हें सार्वजनिक तौर पर इसलिए खेद व्यक्त करना पड़ा, क्योंकि उन्होंने राफेल सौदे पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले का हवाला देते हुए यह कह दिया था कि देश की सबसे बड़ी अदालत ने भी मान लिया कि चौकीदार चोर है। चूँकि उन्हें अदालत की अवमानना का सामना करना पड़ता इसलिए उन्होंने बिना किसी देरे के खेद व्यक्त करके खुद को बचाया, लेकिन इससे उनकी विश्वसनीयता को जो चोट पहुंची उसकी भरपाई आसानी से नहीं होने वाली। भले ही वह झेंप मिटाने के लिए यह क्यों न कहें कि जनता के पैसे की चोरी की गई है और इसलिए कमलछाप चौकीदार चोर है, लेकिन उन्हें यह झूठ दोहराने में मुश्किल होने वाली है कि राफेल सौदे में चोरी की गई है। ऐसा नहीं है कि कांग्रेस के पास मोदी सरकार को कठघरे में खड़े करने के लिए कोई ठोस मुद्दे नहीं थे। सच तो यह है कि ऐसे एक नहीं अनेक मुद्दे थे और वे इसलिए थे, क्योंकि कोई भी सरकार इतने बड़े देश में पांच साल में जनता की सभी अपेक्षाओं को पूरा नहीं कर सकती। इसके अलावा यह भी किसी से छिपा नहीं कि मोदी सरकार अपने कई वाददे पूरे नहीं कर सकी, लेकिन कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष ने झूठ का सहारा लेना बेहतर समझा। पता नहीं कहां से वह यह खोज लाए कि राफेल सौदे में चोरी हुई है। यदि उनके पास इस सौदे में गड़बड़ी के कोई ठोस सुबुत थे तो वे सामने रखे जाने चाहिए, लेकिन ऐसा करने के बजाय वह लगातार यह झूठ दोहराते रहे कि अनिल अंबानी की जेब में इतनी रकम डाल दी गई।

ग़हुल गांधी राफेल विमान की कीमत के साथ ही अनिल अंबानी की जेब में डाली जानी वाली तथाकथित रकम में अपने मन मुताबिक हेरफेर करते रहे। आखिर उन्होंने यह कैसे समझ लिया कि आम जनता बिना सुबुत इस आरोप को सच मान लेगी कि राफेल सौदे में गड़बड़ी की गई है? शायद उन्हें अपने झूठ पर ज्यादा यकीन था इसलिए वह सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के साथ फ्रांस सरकार के स्पष्टीकरण और कैंग की रपट को भी नकारते रहे। ग़हुल गांधी प्रधानमंत्री पर निशाना साधने के लिए कुछ भी कहते रह सकते हैं, लेकिन जनता के मन में यह सवाल तो उठेगा ही कि आखिर उन्हें चौकीदार चोर है कहने के लिए सुप्रीम कोर्ट से माफी क्यों मांगनी पड़ी? इसमें दोगय नहीं कि ग़हुल गांधी बीते कुछ समय से बेबाकी से बोल रहे हैं, लेकिन मुश्किल यह है कि वह अपनी बातों से लोगों को भरोसा दिलाने में नाकाम है। इससे भी बड़ी समस्या यह है कि वह बिना सोचे-समझे कुछ भी बोल जाते हैं। चौकीदार चोर है कहने पर उन्होंने सफाई दी कि राजनीतिक गर्मी में वह ऐसा बोल गए। निःसंदेह ऐसा कई नेताओं के साथ हो जाता है, लेकिन क्या कोई राजनीतिक गर्मी में एक ही बात को सौ बार दोहराता है? सवाल यह भी है कि क्या वह अपने इस कथन के लिए भी राजनीतिक गर्मी को जिम्मेदार बताएंगे कि सारे मोदी चोर होते हैं?

कार्रवाई जरूरी

झारखंड में हर साल औसतन 5062 सड़क दुर्घटनाएं हो रही हैं, जिसमें 2600 से अधिक लोग असमय काल के गाल में समा रहे हैं। पिछले एक महीने की ही बात करें तो सिर्फ राष्ट्रीय उच्च पथ-33 पर हुई विभिन्न दुर्घटनाओं में 18 जानें जा चुकी हैं, दर्जनों लोग घायल हो चुके हैं। यह स्थिति तब है, जब दुर्घटनाओं में कमी लाने के कारणाों की पड़ताल और उसके समाधान के लिए जिला से लेकर राज्य स्तर तक पर सड़क सुरक्षा समिति गठित है। इसके बावजूद दुर्घटनाओं की बढ़ती रफ्तार कहीं न कहीं सरकार के सिस्टम और डिलीवरी मैकेनिज्म पर सवाल खड़ा करता है। सड़कों की मौजूदा संरचना, गाड़ियों की तेज रफ्तार और यातायात के स्थापित मानकों की अवहेलना प्रारंभिक तौर पर इन दुर्घटनाओं की मूल वजह मानी जा रही है। राष्ट्रीय उच्च पथों पर ट्रामा सेंटर की कमी तथा दुर्घटना के एक घंटे के अंदर घायलों को सही चिकित्सा नहीं मिल पाना भी मृत्यु का प्राक बढ़ाने का वाहक माना जा रहा है। सड़कों की सुरक्षा को लेकर हुए हालिया सर्वे की बात करें तो राज्य में कुल 167 एक्सीडेंट प्वाइंट हैं। इनमें से रामगढ़, कोडरमा और धनबाद के 21 प्वाइंट बेहद खतरनाक हैं। ये ऐसे प्वाइंट हैं, जहां एक साथ 10 से अधिक जानें जा चुकी हैं। इन सड़कों पर मौजूद 85 तीखे (शाप कर्व) व 43 अंध मोड़ (क्लाइड कर्व) तथा 16 संकरे पुल दुर्घटनाओं के सबब बन रहे हैं। इसी तरह 23 स्थल सड़क निर्माण के स्थापित मानकों के अनुरूप नहीं पाए गए हैं। बहरहाल सरकार के पास दुर्घटनाओं के तमाम कारणाों का लेखाजोखा मौजूद है। जरूरत है तो बस दुर्घटनाओं को रोकने के वैज्ञानिक उपायों को अमल में लाने की। इसके लिए जरूरी है कि यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन करने वाले वाहन चालकों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई की जाए। तेज रफ्तार पर रोक और नशापान कर गाड़ी चलाने वालों की पहचान के लिए जरूरी है कि स्पीडोमीटर और एक्नोमीटर के प्रयोग में बढ़ोतरी हो। राष्ट्रीय उच्च पथों पर बुलंसेल की संख्या बढ़ाई जाएं। जगह-जगह पर ट्रामा सेंटर स्थापित किए जाएं। निरोधात्मक कार्रवाई को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए यह जरूरी है कि यातायात नियम शैक्षणिक पाठ्यक्रमों का हिस्सा बने। सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में घायल लोगों की मदद करने वालों को पुलिस-प्रशासन और अस्पताल प्रबंधन नाहक परेशान न करें।

वक्त की रफ्तार

समय भी अजब शै है। जब हम चाहते हैं कि जल्दी से कट जाए तो ऐसा रुकता है कि पूछो मत और जब चाहते हैं कि थमा रहे तो ऐसा भगता है कि पकड़ ही नहीं आ पाता। बिल्कुल सिद्रोही व्यक्तिवत है समय का। कुछ दिन पहले दफ्तर से घर को निकला। उस रोज घर जरा जल्दी पहुंचना था। स्टेशन से ट्रेन छूटी और तुरंत ही कुछ दूर तक कर रुक गई। सुना कि अगले स्टेशन पर किसी ने ट्रेन के आगे कूद कर आत्महत्या कर ली है। पुलिस की जांच-पड़ताल जारी थी। उम्मीद थी कि जल्द ही ही झंडी मिलेगी और घंटी बजेगी ट्रेन चल देने की। यात्रियों का समय काटे नहीं कट रहा था। मैंने कुछ देर अखबार पलटया। कुछ देर इधर-उधर लोगों के चेहरों के ह्राव-भाव पढ़ता रहा। कोई परेशान दिख रहा था तो कोई मोबाइल पर बातचीत में मगन था। कुछ बातों में मशगुल थे और कुछ रेलवे को कसस रहे थे। अब कोई पटरी पर कूद गया तो रेलवे क्या करे? मगर मानते तो मानव है, चलती थोपी और खुश हो लिए। हर चीज के लिए सरकार को कोसने का यही तो आनंद है।

एक सज्जन अपने मित्र से बड़े मजाकिया अंदाज में बोले कि इनको भी रश अँवर में ही कूटना होता है। 12 या 1 बजे दिन में कूद



जी पार्थसारथी

श्रीलंका के भयावह घटनाक्रम ने नए संघर्षों की एक जमीन तैयार की है जो दक्षिण एशिया और दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया के लिए खतरे की घंटी से कम नहीं हैं

रविवार को श्रीलंका में हुए वीभत्स आतंकी हमले ने पूरी दुनिया को हिलाकर रख दिया है। इस हमले में अब तक 290 से अधिक लोग मौत का निवाला बन चुके हैं और सैकड़ों घायल लोगों में से तमाम अभी भी ज़िंदगी और मौत के बीच जूझ रहे हैं। मृतकों में भारतीय भी शामिल है। समूचा श्रीलंका गमगीन है। वहां राष्ट्रीय आपातकाल घोषित कर दिया गया है। राष्ट्रपति मैत्रीपाल सिरिसेने ने इन हमलों की जांच के लिए तीन सदस्यीय आयोग गठित कर दिया है। हालांकि अभी तक इस हमले से जुड़ी बहुत सी बातें स्पष्ट नहीं हुई हैं, लेकिन शुरुआती ब्योरे के अनुसार व्यापक रूप से इसे एक चरमपंथी हमला माना जा रहा है। इस हमले के बाद दक्षिण एशिया सहित समूची दुनिया में समीकरण बदल सकते हैं। अविश्वास, आशंका और असुखा का भाव और बढ़ सकता है। चूँकि श्रीलंका भारत का निकट पड़ोसी देश है तो उसके लिए इस घटना के और भी गहरे निहितार्थ हैं। दक्षिण एशिया में अपनी भौगोलिक एवं भू-राजनीतिक स्थिति के कारण भी भारत इससे जुड़े खतरों की अनदेखी नहीं कर सकता।

सबसे पहले तो इस हमले से जुड़ी कड़ियों को जोड़ना होगा। रविवार को श्रीलंका में चर्चों और होटलों में सिलसिलेवार आत्मघाती हमलों को अंजाम दिया गया। अभी तक इन हमलों की जिम्मेदारी औपचारिक रूप से किसी संघटन में नहीं ली है, लेकिन हिंसा के स्तर और उसके स्वरूप को देखते हुए इन्हें आतंकी हमला ही माना जा रहा है। इसके लिए ईसाइयों के त्योहार ईस्टर

सरकारी अनुदान से लड़े जाएं चुनाव

वर्तमान में चुनाव धनवानों का दंगल बनकर रह गया है। विधायक के चुनाव में पांच करोड़ और सांसद के चुनाव में पच्चीस करोड़ रुपये खर्च करना आम बात हो गई है। धन के अभाव में जनता के मुद्दे उठाने वाले स्वतंत्र प्रत्याशी चुनावी दंगल से बाहर हो रहे हैं। हमारे संविधान निर्माताओं को इसका भान था। उन्होंने इस समस्या के हल के लिए ही चुनाव आयोग की स्वतंत्रता बनाए रखने का प्रावधान किया, लेकिन आयोग धन के दुरुपयोग को रोकने में असमर्थ सिद्ध हुआ है। हमारे कानून में प्रत्याशियों द्वारा अधिकतम खर्च की सीमा बांध दी गई है, लेकिन विभिन्न तरीकों से इसका खुलेआम उल्लंघन किया जा रहा है। हमें विचार करना चाहिए कि अन्य देशों की तरह भारत में भी प्रत्याशियों को सरकारी अनुदान दिया जाए। ऐसा करने से आर्थिक दृष्टि से कमजोर व्यक्तियों के लिए चुनाव लड़ना कुछ आसान हो जाएगा। ऐसी व्यवस्था वर्तमान में करीब सौ देशों में उपलब्ध है। ऑस्ट्रेलिया में 1984 से प्रत्याशियों द्वारा हासिल किए गए वोट के अनुपात में सरकारी अनुदान दिया जाता है। शर्त है कि प्रत्याशी ने कम से कम चार प्रतिशत वोट हासिल किए हों। यदि वह भरोसा है कि आप चार प्रतिशत वोट हासिल कर लेंगे तो आप कर्ज लेकर चुनाव लड़ सकते हैं, फिर अनुदान से मिली राशि से ऋण अदा कर सकते हैं। अमेरिका के एूरिजोना प्रांत में व्यवस्था है कि यदि कोई प्रत्याशी 200 वोटों से पांच-पांच डॉलर यानी कुल 1000 डॉलर एकरित्र कर ले तो उसे सरकार द्वारा 25 हजार डॉलर की रकम चुनाव लड़ने के लिए उपलब्ध कराई जाती है। 200 मतदाताओं की शर्त इसलिए तय की गई है कि फर्जी प्रत्याशी अनुदान की मांग न करें। ऐसे ही प्रावधान हवाई, मिनिसोटा, विस्कॉंसिन आदि प्रांतों में भी बनाए गए हैं। इन प्रावधानों का उद्देश्य है कि सामान्य व्यक्ति चुनाव लड़ सके और सच्चे मायनों में लोकतंत्र स्थापित हो। इस व्यवस्था के सार्थक परिणाम आए हैं।

विनर्सिटि ऑफ विस्कॉंसिन द्वारा किए गए एक अध्ययन में पाया गया कि सरकारी अनुदान मिलने से तमाम ऐसे व्यक्ति जो चुनाव लड़ने के बारे में सोचते नहीं थे वे भी चुनाव लड़ने को तैयार हो जाते हैं। कमजोर प्रत्याशियों को अपने बल पर चुनाव लड़ने की क्षमता कम होती है। सरकारी अनुदान से उनका हौसला बढ़ जाता है। यह भी पाया गया कि सरकारी अनुदान से निवर्तमान प्रत्याशी के पुनः चुने जाने की संभावना कम हो जाती है, क्योंकि उन्हें नए प्रत्याशियों से प्रतिस्पर्धा का सामना करना पड़ता है। इसी प्रकार ड्युक यूनिवर्सिटी द्वारा किए एक अध्ययन में पाया गया कि सरकारी अनुदान से नए प्रत्याशियों की संख्या में



वृद्धि होती है। चुनाव में नए मुद्दे उठते हैं, भले ही प्रत्याशी जीते या हारे। चुनावी विमर्श बदलता है। इन अध्ययनों से पता लगता है कि सरकारी अनुदान से कमजोर व्यक्तियों को चुनावी दंगल में प्रवेश करने का अवसर मिलता है और लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था में विविधता बढ़ती है।

भारत में भी बार-बार यह सुझाव दिया गया है। 1998 में इंद्रजीत गुप्त समिति ने कहा था कि चुनाव में सरकारी अनुदान दिया जाना चाहिए। हालांकि उन्होंने केवल पंजीकृत पार्टियों को अनुदान देने की बात कही थी। निर्दलीयों के अनुदान देने का उन्होंने समर्थन नहीं दिया था। 1999 की विधि आयोग की रपट में सुझाव दिया गया था कि चुनाव पूरी तरह सरकारी अनुदान से लड़ा जाए और पार्टियों द्वारा दूसरे स्रोतों से चंदा लेने पर प्रतिबंध लगाया जाए। 2001 की संविधान समीक्षा समिति ने विधि आयोग की रपट का समर्थन किया, लेकिन यह भी कहा था कि पहले पार्टियों के नियंत्रण का कानून बनाना चाहिए। इसके बाद ही अनुदान देना चाहिए। 2008 में द्वितीय प्रशासनिक सुधार आयोग ने चुनाव में आंशिक सरकारी अनुदान देने की बात की थी। 2016 में संसद के शीतकालीन सत्र से पूर्व सर्वदलीय बैठक की संविधान करते हुए प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने कहा था कि अनुदान में सरकारी अनुदान पर खुली चर्चा होनी चाहिए। मोदी शायद पहले प्रधानमंत्री हैं जिन्होंने इसका समर्थन किया। इस सुझाव को लागू करने की दरकार है। वैश्विक अनुभवों और देश के

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

मतदान के फायदे

मताधिकार के इस्तेमाल से ही बनेगी बात शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में डॉ. महेश भारद्वाज ने देश के मतदाताओं को जागरूक करने के लिए कुछ सुझाव दिए हैं। लोकतंत्र में मतदान एक ऐसा शस्त्र है जिसके द्वारा आम जनता शांतिपूर्ण तरीके से सरकार की पुनर्स्थापना कर सकती है या इसे बदल सकती है। लोकतंत्र को जीवित रखने के लिए मतदान संजीवनी का काम करता है। अगर सोच-समझकर अपने मत का प्रयोग किया जाए तो पांच वर्ष तक पछताना नहीं पड़ता। चुनाव के दौरान लोगों को उसी तरह समझदारी बरतनी चाहिए, जिस तरह वे अपने लिए कोई सामान खरीदने के दौरान बरतते हैं। विज्ञापन की चकाचौंध में आकर जो कोई सामान खरीदता है उसको बाद में पछताना पड़ता है। इसलिए सही को चुनिए और देश का भविष्य उज्ज्वल बनाइए। देश का भविष्य तभी उज्ज्वल हो सकता है जब हम अपने मत का प्रयोग साफ-सुथरी छवि वाले उम्मीदवारों को चुनने के लिए करेंगे। कुछ लोग यह सोचते हैं कि अगर हम अपने वोट का प्रयोग नहीं करेंगे तो कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ेगा। ऐसे लोगों को एक बात यह रखनी चाहिए कि अगर आप वोट का प्रयोग नहीं करते हो तो अटक वोट का दुरुपयोग हो जाएगा। जिस कारण सत्ता गलत हथों में भी जा सकती है। और फिर पांच वर्षों तक पछतावा ही हथ लगता। मतदान द्वारा भ्रष्ट और दानी नेताओं को सबक भी सिखाया जा सकता है। अब तो चुनाव आयोग ने ईवीएम में नोटा का बटन भी उपलब्ध करा दिया है। अगर ईवीएम में कोई भी उम्मीदवार उचित नहीं लगता है तो नोटा का बटन दबाकर इसके बारे में चुनाव आयोग को अवगत करवाया जा सकता है।

विद्वानों के विवेचन के आधार पर कहा जा सकता है कि चुनाव में सरकारी अनुदान के सार्थक परिणाम सामने आते हैं। यह अनुदान किन शर्तों पर दिया जाए, कितना दिया जाए और कब दिया जाए, इसके लिए विभिन्न विकल्प हो सकते हैं। मगर यह स्पष्ट है कि लोकतंत्र को प्रभावी बनाने के लिए जरूरी है कि सामान्य व्यक्ति को चुनाव लड़ने के लिए सक्षम बनाया जाए ताकि चुनाव केवल अमीरों का शगल बनकर न रह जाए। यह कहा जा सकता है कि सरकारी अनुदान समृद्ध प्रत्याशियों को और समृद्ध बना देगा। ऐसा नहीं है। सरकारी अनुदान यदि वोट के अनुपात में दिया जाए तो जीतने वाले समृद्ध प्रत्याशियों को अधिक एवं हारने वाले कमजोर प्रत्याशियों को कम रकम मिलेगी। मान लीजिए कि जीतने वाले समृद्ध प्रत्याशी को 40 प्रतिशत वोट मिले और उसे 4,00,000 रुपये का अनुदान मिला। इसके उलट हारने वाले कमजोर प्रत्याशी को 10 प्रतिशत वोट और 1,00,000 रुपये का अनुदान मिला। मगर समृद्ध प्रत्याशी के लिए 4,00,000 रुपये की रकम ऊंट के मुंह में जीरा होगी, लेकिन कमजोर प्रत्याशी के लिए 1,00,000 रुपये की रकम बहुत उपयोगी सिद्ध होगी। लिहाज चुनावी प्रक्रिया को समृद्ध प्रत्याशियों के एकाधिकार से निकालने में अनुदान कारण रहेगा।

वर्तमान व्यवस्था में सांसद को सांसद निधि के अंतर्गत भी अप्रत्यक्ष अनुदान मिलता है जो नए प्रत्याशियों के लिए संकट पैदा करता है। प्रत्येक सांसद को पांच साल के कार्यकाल मे 25 करोड़ रुपये के कार्य कराने की छूट होती है। यह कार्य सरकारी विभागों द्वारा कराए जाते हैं, परंतु अक्सर देखा जाता है सांसद के संरक्षण में ठेकेदारों के माध्यम से इन कार्यों को संपादित किया जाता है। ठेकेदारों के माध्यम से सांसदों को इसमें कुछ रकम कमीशन के रूप में प्राप्त होती है। यह रकम भी चुनाव को प्रभावित करती है, लेकिन मेरी समझ से सांसद निधि को चुनावी दंगल की चपेट में नहीं लेना चाहिए। सांसद को अपने क्षेत्र में काम कराने की छूट होनी ही चाहिए। समृद्ध सांसदों को छोटा बनाने के स्थान पर हमारा ध्यान छोटे प्रत्याशियों को बढ़ा करने पर रहना चाहिए। आर्थिक दृष्टि से कमजोर प्रत्याशियों को सरकारी अनुदान मिले तो वे चुनावी प्रक्रिया में धनबल के वचस्व को चुनौती दे सकते हैं। लोकतंत्र को सुदृढ़ करने के लिए हमें प्रत्याशियों को सरकारी अनुदान देने पर गंभीरता से विचार करना चाहिए जैसा प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने कहा था।

(लेखक वरिष्ठ अर्थशास्त्री एवं आइआइएम बॉम्बेल्डर के पूर्व प्रोफेसर हैं)

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मेलवाक्स

मिले वापस बुलाने का अधिकार

वर्तमान में चुनाव के दौरान जनप्रतिनिधियों द्वारा लोकलुभावान घोषणाओं को झड़ी लगा दी जाती है, किंतु वास्तविक रूप से कितनी घोषणाओं पर अमल होता है और वे कितनी पूरी होती है इसका कोई विश्लेष नहीं होता है? जनप्रतिनिधि द्वारा घोषणाओं को पूरा न करना और जनहित में काम न करने से असंतुष्ट जनता को वापस बुलाने का अधिकार दिया जाना चाहिए। यदि मतदाता को चुनाव का अधिकार है तो अच्छा प्रदर्शन न करने पर प्रतिनिधि को पद से हटाने का अधिकार भी उसे मिलना चाहिए। अक्सर ये होता है कि जैसे-तैसे करके नेताजी चुनाव जीत जाते हैं और फिर जनता को अगले चुनाव तक के लिए भूल जाते हैं। समय-समय पर उनके द्वारा किए गए वादों की पूर्णता की समीक्षा होनी चाहिए और यदि एक बड़ा मतदाता वर्ग उनकी कार्यप्रणाली से असंतुष्ट होे तो उन्हें 5 साल का कार्यकाल पूर्ण करने से पहले ही विधिसम्मत तरीके से हटाने का हक मिलना चाहिए। कुछ लोगों का यह कहना कि इससे दोगा चुनाव अकमत पड़ेगा, उचित नहीं है। ऐसी स्थिति कुछ सौदागं पर ही आ सकता है। वैसे भी कई प्रत्याशी दो-दो सीटों से चुनाव लड़ते हैं। उनके दोनों जगह से जीतने की स्थिति में एक चुनाव जीतने से तो चुनाव होता ही है। कुछ लोग सांसद होते हुए विधायक का एवं विधायक होते हुए सांसद का चुनाव लड़ते हैं, वहां भी दोगाव चुनाव की स्थिति बनती है। यह पद्धति ठीक है तभी तो कई विकासित देशों में इसे अपनाया जा रहा है। राष्ट्र ट्रिंकोल पूरी तरह जनहितैषी है। चुनाव आयोग को इसे योजनाबद्ध तरीके से लागू करना चाहिए। इससे जनता के प्रतिनिधि का उत्तरदायित्व बढ़ेगा, भ्रष्टाचार खत्म होगा और

श्रीलंका के भयावह घटनाक्रम ने नए संघर्षों की एक जमीन तैयार की है जो दक्षिण एशिया और दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया के लिए खतरों की घंटी से कम नहीं हैं। इस इलाके से भारत के रिश्ते न केवल अहम हैं, बल्कि उनसे पुराना सांस्कृतिक जुड़ाव भी है। इस रूढ़ रूकपा देने वाले आतंकी हमले के तार विदेशों से भी जुड़ते दिख रहे हैं। श्रीलंका सरकार ने हमलों को साजिश का तानाबाना विदेश में बुने जाने की बात कही है। इससे आतंक को पालने-पोसने वाले देशों पर दबाव बढ़ाना स्वाभाविक है। आतंक के मामले में पाकिस्तान की सांध्य भूमिका से पूरी दुनिया परिचित है। श्रीलंका में कुछ लोगों को यह आशंका सताती रही है कि पाकिस्तानी तत्व स्थानीय मुसलमानों को भड़काते हैं। पाकिस्तान तत्वों से आशय डीप स्टेट यानी फौज और आइएसआइ की जुगलबंदी से है। जाहिर है कि इस जघन्य हमले के बाद पाकिस्तान पर पहरेदारी और कड़ी होगी। हालांकि पुलवामा हमले के बाद भारत ने पाकिस्तान पर शिकंजा कसा है जिसे पर्याप्त अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहयोग और समर्थन भी मिला है। इसमें कई देशों ने न केवल भारत का समर्थन किया, बल्कि पाकिस्तान को सुझा परिषद में घेरने का व्यूह भी दिया गया उनसे साफ है कि आतंकीयों को स्थानीय मदद जरूर मिली होगी। जिन लोगों के नाम सामने आ रहे हैं उनसे भी यह स्पष्ट है कि हमलों में स्थानीय लोगों की मिलीभगत रही। ऐसे में यह पड़ताल भी करनी होगी कि आखिर किन कारणों से उन्होंने ऐसा किया? क्या उन्हें धर्म के नाम पर बरालावा गया या फिर आर्थिक लोभ के चलते उन्होंने ऐसा किया?

राजनीतिक अस्थिरता के दौर से गुजर रहे श्रीलंका से बीते कुछ समय में मिले संकेत शुभ नहीं कहे जा सकते। बीते दिसंबर में यहां हिंसक वादादते हुई थीं। जहां तक इस्लामिक पहचान के आधार पर संघर्ष की बात है तो हाल में थाईलैंड और म्यांमार में भी ऐसा देखने को मिला। म्यांमार में तो मुसलमानों को खेदड़ने से पड़ोसी देशों में शरणार्थियों की एक ईद समस्या पैदा हो गई।

(लेखक पूर्व राजनयिक एवं जम्मू केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय के चोसलर हैं)

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आत्मानुशासन

आत्मानुशासन का तात्पर्य है अंतरात्मा का अनुशासन। श्रेष्ठ विचार पुष्पोद्यान की तरह लगाने और बढ़ाने पड़ते हैं। उनकी रखवाली का धर्म पूरा ध्यान रखना पड़ता है। असावधानी बरतने से हमें यह लाभ नहीं मिल पाता जो इस संपदा के बढ़ने पर मिलता है। सर्द्वचरों को उगाने के लिए पूरे परिश्रम के साथ जुटना पड़ता है। अंतरात्मा से हमारे जैसे-जैसे विचार दृढ़ होते हैं वैसे-वैसे उसके स्वरूप का प्रकाश भी अधिक होता है। अपने विचारों को अंतरात्मा के अनुशासन में चलाना चाहिए जिसे आत्मानुशासन कहते हैं। श्रद्धापूर्वक उनका अनुसरण करना चाहिए। जब यही विचार अंतरात्मा में पल कर इस भौतिक जगत में प्रकट होते हैं तो मनुष्य की अभूतपूर्व ऊर्णति होती है। जर्भी उसका अंतर्ज्ञान एवं अंतर्दृष्टि का पूर्ण विकास होता है। यही मनुष्य की सर्वोच्च निधि है। इसी के अंदर अखंड शांति का निवास स्थान है। अंतरात्मा का आझकारी बनकर विचार करना, विचार विज्ञान का महत्वपूर्ण अंग है।

अंतरात्मा के अनुशासन से विचार निर्मल हो जाते हैं। हमारा संसार वैसा ही है जैसा कि अपनी विचारशक्ति द्वारा हमने अपने अंतरात्मा में स्थापित कर लिया है। निराशा, खिन्नता, निरुत्साह आदि नकारात्मक विचार हैं, जो आपके अंतर्मन को कमजोर करते हैं। वहीं सर्द्विचार अंतर्मन में अंकित हो जाते हैं। हृदय के अंतर्मन कोने में उनका दिव्य प्रकाश छा जाता है। कुविचारों को जलदुःभी की बिरादरी का समझना चाहिए। वे न जाने कहां से आ जाते हैं और सहज ही फैलने लगते हैं तथा लड़ जमाने लगते हैं। मनुष्य के विचार मनश्चत्र में छाए रहते हैं। योजना बनाने हैं तथा जिस लक्ष्य तक पहुंचना है उसकी रूपरेखा गढ़ते हैं। विचारों की शक्ति महान है, उससे हमारा जीवन तो बदलता ही है, संसार का नक्शा भी बदल सकता है। जिस प्रकार से खेतों में अनाज, शाक, फूल आदि मूल्यवान फसलें उगाने के लिए उनकी जुताई करनी पड़ती है। नमी और खाद की आवश्यकता पूरी करनी पड़ती है। हमें अपने विचारों को कियात्मक स्वरूप प्रदान करना चाहिए। प्रिप्तभावान व्यक्तिवत सर्द्विचारों का ही प्रतिफल है। जिस प्रकार से सूर्य के विमल प्रकाश से समस्त अंधकार नष्ट हो जाता है, उसी प्रकार आत्मानुशासन में चलने से आपके जीवन का अंधकार खत्म हो जाता है।

अवधविहारी शुक्ल

राजनीतिक के बढ़ते अपराधीकरण पर भी रोक लेंगेगा।

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विकास में बाधक है जनसंख्या

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था की स्थिति दयनीय है। देश में गरीबी, अशिक्षा, बेरोजगारी, कुपोषण, कृषकों की दयनीय स्थिति, प्रदूषण, जाम की समस्या तथा लगातार बढ़ती असमानता कुछ ऐसे कारक है जो हमारे लिए गंभीर चुनौती बने हुए हैं। उपरोक्त सभी समस्याओं की एक ही जड़ है बढ़ती जनसंख्या। जब तक जनसंख्या पर नियंत्रण नहीं लगाया जाना तथा विकास अधूरा ही रहेगा। इस बात से भी इन्कार नहीं किया जा सकता कि भारत प्रयास न देश को प्रगति पथ पर अग्रसर करने के भरपूर प्रयास किए हैं, परंतु हम हर वर्ष जनसंख्या के नया ऑस्ट्रेलिया पैदा कर देते हैं जिसके कारण साधन स्थिर हो जाते हैं और जनसंख्या अस्थिर। सरकार को विकास को गति प्रदान करने के लिए जल्द ही जनसंख्या नियंत्रण कानून बनाना चाहिए। देश के नागरिकों को भी इस विषय पर चिंतन करना चाहिए।

हितेंद्र डेढ़ा, चिल्ला गांव, दिल्ली

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

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^[1] संध्याकर-स्व. पूर्णचंद्र गुप्त, पूर्व प्रधान संपादक-स्व.नरेंद्र मोहन, संपादकीय निदेशक-महेन्द्र मोहन गुप्त, प्रधान संपादक-संजय गुप्त, जागरण प्रकाशन लि, के लिए- नोएटा श्रौतवस्त्र द्वारा 501, आई.एन.एस. बिल्डिंग,एफकी मार्ग, नई दिल्ली से प्रकाशित और उन्ही के द्वारा डी-210, 211, सेक्टर-63 नोएडा से मुद्रित, संपादक (राष्ट्रीय संस्करण)-विष्णु प्रकाश त्रिपाठी * दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 23359961-62, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-3915800, E-mail: delhi@enda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 * इस संक में प्रकाशित समस्त समाचारों के चयन एवं संपादन हेतु पी.आर.जी. एच.के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अधीन ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

दागियों का दबदबा

इस बार भी दागी नेताओं को चुनाव लड़ने से रोकने की कवायद सिरें नहीं चढ़ पाई, नतीजतन लोकसभा चुनाव में खासी तादाद में ऐसे उम्मीदवार मैदान में हैं जो आपराधिक पृष्ठभूमि के हैं। सुप्रीम कोर्ट, चुनाव आयोग जैसी संस्थाएं तक राजनीति के इस अपराधीकरण को रोक पाने में एक तरह से बेबस साबित हुई हैं। हालांकि आपराधिक पृष्ठभूमि वाले नेताओं को लेकर इन दोनों ही संस्थाओं ने राजनीतिक दलों को कसने की काफी कोशिशें कीं, लेकिन हमारे राजनीतिक दलों की अनदेखी से इन संस्थाओं के प्रयास विफल ही रहे हैं। इतना जरूर हुआ है कि लोग अब समझने लगे हैं कि अगर ऐसे दागी नेताओं को वोट देंगे तो आने वाले वक्त में देश की राजनीति किस दिशा में जाएगी! दागी नेताओं को लेकर सर्वोच्च अदालत ने समय-समय पर जो आदेश दिए हैं, उनसे आम जनता के बीच बड़ा संदेश तो गया है और लोग वोट डालने से पहले उम्मीदवार के बारे में विचार जरूर कर रहे हैं। लेकिन असल मुद्दा तो ऐसे दागियों को चुनाव लड़ने से रोकने का है। मतदाताओं के सामने समस्या यह होती है कि उम्मीदवार के बारे में उन्हें ज्यादा जानकारी नहीं होती। खासतौर से उसकी आपराधिक पृष्ठभूमि के बारे में। इसी का फायदा उठा कर राजनीतिक दल ऐसे उम्मीदवारों को चुनाव मैदान में उतार देते हैं। ऐसे उम्मीदवार धन और बाहुबल की ताकत पर चुनाव लड़ते हैं और जनता के हितों, उससे जुड़े मुद्दों से उन्हें कोई सरोकार नहीं होता। इस बार भी सियासी मैदान में दागी नेताओं की फेहरिस्त लंबी है। एक्सिप्रेशन फॉर डेमोक्रेटिक रिफॉर्म्स (एडीआर) की रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि पहले चरण के चुनाव में सत्रह फीसद दागी उम्मीदवार मैदान में थे, इनमें भी बारह फीसद उम्मीदवार ऐसे थे जिनके खिलाफ संगीन मामले चल रहे हैं। हैरानी की बात यह कि इनमें से बारह उम्मीदवारों ने हलफनामे में बताया कि उन पर दोष साबित हो चुके हैं। आज तीसरे चरण का मतदान है और महाराष्ट्र में चौवन ऐसे उम्मीदवार चुनाव लड़ रहे हैं जिन पर गंभीर आपराधिक मामले चल रहे हैं।

सवाल है जब हमारे जनप्रतिनिधि हत्या, हत्या की कोशिश, अपहरण, बलात्कार जैसे संगीन अपराधों में लिप्त रहने वाले लोग होंगे तो उनसे देश किस तरह के भविष्य को उम्मीद करेगा। ऐसे दागी नेता सिर्फ जटिल और लंबी कानूनी प्रक्रिया का फायदा उठा कर ही सदनों को सुशोभित करते आए हैं। ऐसा नहीं है कि ऐसे दागी नेताओं से बचा नहीं जा सकता। अगर राजनीतिक दल ठान लें तो ऐसे अपराधियों के लिए राजनीति के दरवाजे हमेशा के लिए बंद हो सकते हैं। पहली बात तो यह कि राजनीतिक दलों को नैतिक रूप से आपराधिक पृष्ठभूमि वाले किसी उम्मीदवार को टिकट ही नहीं देना चाहिए। लेकिन चुनाव जीतने के लिए राजनीतिक दल नैतिकता के मानदंडों को ताक पर रख देते हैं। वे इसी घातक प्रवृति को अपनी कामयाबी की कुंजी मानते हैं। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने पिछले साल दागी नेताओं के मामले में सुनवाई के बाद यह व्यवस्था दी थी कि इस बारे में संसद को कानून बनाना चाहिए। लेकिन किसी भी दल ने इस दिशा में कोई पहल नहीं की। संसद में इस मुद्दे पर सारे दल एक साथ खड़े नजर आते हैं। राजनीति में शुचिता की बात करने वाले दलों को आखिर किस बात का डर है ऐसा कानून बन जाने से! अगर दागियों को राजनीति में आने से रोकना है तो इसके लिए राजनीतिक दलों को ही इच्छाशक्ति दिखानी होगी। वरना हमारे सदन अपराधियों का अड्डा ही नजर आएंगे। ऐसे में लोकतंत्र की मूल अवधारणा को किस स्तर की चोट पहुंचेगी, यह समझना मुश्किल नहीं है।

जानलेवा सड़कें

उत्तर प्रदेश के मैनपुरी जिले में हुए बड़े सड़क हादसे ने एक बार फिर इस गहराती समस्या की ओर ध्यान दिलाया है कि सड़क और रफ्तार के असंतुलन की वजह से कितने लोग नाहक ही अपनी जान गंवाएंगे! शनिवार की रात आगरा-लखनऊ एक्सप्रेस-वे पर दिल्ली से वाराणसी जा रही एक बस और ट्रक की भयानक टक्कर में एक बच्ची घायल सात लोगों की मौत हो गई और करीब छत्तीस लोग बुरी तरह सड़क हो गए। हो सकता है कि यह भी आए दिन होने वाले सड़क हादसों में शुमार कर लिया जाए, लेकिन क्या यह कोई अनदेखी करने लायक समस्या रह गई है? सच कहें तो सड़क पर रोजाना होने वाले हादसों और उनमें लोगों की मौत की घटनाओं को सामान्य सुरक्षा-इंतजाम और यातायात व्यवस्था में चौकसी और निगरानी के जरिए रोका जा सकता है। लेकिन अक्सर सड़कों पर वाहनों की छोटी या फिर बड़ी दुर्घटनाओं को भी सामान्य मान कर कागजी कार्रवाई और बाकी औपचारिकताएं पूरी कर ली जाती हैं और फिर अगले किसी गंभीर हादसे के सामने आने तक के लिए शायद इसी प्रक्रिया का इंतजार किया जाता है!

गौतलब है कि पिछले कुछ समय से एक्सप्रेस-वे पर लगातार हादसे और उनमें लोगों की मौत की खबरें आती रही हैं। आगरा-लखनऊ और दिल्ली-आगरा एक्सप्रेस वे पर हादसे जिस रफ्तार से हो रहे हैं, वह अब चिंता की एक बड़ी वजह चुकी है। हाल ही में सूचना का अधिकार कानून के तहत सामने आई एक जानकारी के मुताबिक पिछले अठारह महीनों में लगभग दो हजार हादसे हुए, जिनमें करीब दो सौ लोगों की जान चली गई। आंकड़ों के मुताबिक एक्सप्रेस-वे पर हर रोज औसतन चार हादसे हुए और तीन दिन में एक व्यक्ति की मौत हो गई। पिछले साल लगभग डेढ़ सौ हादसे अकेले पशुओं के अचानक सड़क पर आ जाने से हुए। जबकि एक्सप्रेस-वे पर दोनों तरफ पशुओं को रोकने के लिए बाड़ लगी है। आगरा-दिल्ली एक्सप्रेस-वे की हालत इससे अलग नहीं है। आरटीआई से ही यह सामने आया कि यमुना एक्सप्रेस-वे पर अगस्त 2012 से लेकर 31 मार्च, 2018 के बीच करीब पांच हजार हादसे हुए, जिनमें सात सौ से ज्यादा लोगों की जान चली गई और साढ़े सात हजार से ज्यादा लोग गंभीर रूप से घायल हो गए। सवाल है कि इतनी तादाद में लगातार हादसों के बावजूद सरकार और संबंधित महकमे की नींद क्यों नहीं खुलती! इन निर्बाध सड़कों पर हादसों की वजहों की पहचान भी हुई है। इनमें निर्धारित से काफी ज्यादा तेज गति से वाहन चलाना, गाड़ी चलाने के दौरान झपकी आना और कई बार अचानक पशुओं का सामने आ जाना मुख्य कारणों के रूप में दर्ज किए गए हैं। सवाल है कि इन चिह्नित कारणों के बावजूद इनके हल के लिए क्या इंतजाम किए गए हैं? अगर एक्सप्रेस-वे पर वाहन की रफ्तार बेलेगाम हो जाती है तो उन पर निगरानी या उन्हें रोकने के क्या इंतजाम हैं? पशु अचानक सड़क पर न आएँ, इसके लिए बाड़ हैं। फिर वे कैसे सड़क पर तेज रफ्तार वाहनों के सामने आ जाते हैं? लंबी दूरी तक खुली सड़कें ड्राइवर के ध्यान को स्थिर, लेकिन शरीर और दिमाग को सुस्त बना सकती हैं। इस पहलू के हल के क्या किया जा रहा है? बहुत अच्छी सड़कें यातायात या आवाजाही को आसान और सुगम बना सकती हैं, लेकिन उन पर सुरक्षित सफर के लिए सबसे ज्यादा सावधानी बरतना वाहन चालक की ही जिम्मेदारी है। इसके बावजूद यातायात की व्यवस्था के सुचारू रूप से संचालन के लिए जरूरी है कि संबंधित महकमे हर इंतजाम और जरूरी होने पर सख्त कार्रवाई करें, ताकि नाहक ही लोगों की जान जाने की घटनाओं पर काबू पाया जा सके।

कल्पमेधा

कवि होने के बाद दूसरी महानता है, कविता को समझना।

—लांगलेो

जनसत्ता

सुविज्ञा जैन

इस समय भारत में बांधों और जल संचयन के दूसरे साधनों की संख्या और क्षमता दोनों ही जरूरत से बहुत पीछे हैं। देश में उपलब्ध पांच हजार से ज्यादा छोटे-बड़े बांध इस समय वर्षा से मिल रहे पानी को रोक कर रखने के लिए अपर्याप्त साबित हो रहे हैं।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने वैश्विक जनसंख्या के आंकड़े जारी कर दिए हैं। भारत की जनसंख्या एक सौ छत्तीस करोड़ तक पहुंच गई है। पिछले नौ साल में बाकी सभी देशों की तुलना करें तो भारत की जनसंख्या सबसे तेज रफ्तार से बढ़ी। दुनिया में सबसे ज्यादा आबादी वाला देश अभी भी चीन ही है, जिसकी आबादी इस समय एक सौ बयालीस करोड़ का आंकड़ा पार कर आई है। अगर चीन की जनसंख्या बढ़ोतरी की रफ्तार देखें तो पिछले नौ साल में वह सिर्फ 0.5 फीसद सालाना की दर से बढ़ी, जबकि इसी दौरान भारत की जनसंख्या 1.2 फीसद की दर से बढ़ी।

भारत में बढ़ती जनसंख्या के साथ संसाधनों की जरूरत भी बढ़ती है। हर देश के पास अपनी आबादी की गुजर बसर के लिए संसाधन सीमित होते हैं। कुछ प्राकृतिक संसाधन तो स्थिर होते हैं जिन्हें बढ़ाया ही नहीं जा सकता, जैसे- जल

संसाधन। जल जीवन की अनिवार्य आवश्यकता है और भारत इस समय अगर सबसे ज्यादा किसी चीज की कमी से जूझ रहा है तो वह पानी ही है। जिस रफ्तार से भारत की आबादी बढ़ रही है उस रफ्तार से पानी का इंतजाम करने में हम साल दर साल नाकाम होते जा रहे हैं। यह एक तथ्य है कि प्रचुर वर्षा के कारण कभी भारत जल संपन्न देश समझा जाता था। लेकिन अब ऐसा नहीं है। आबादी बढ़ने के कारण अब हम जल संपन्न देशों की सूची से बाहर हो गए हैं। यह अलग बात है कि इस भयावह हकीकत का पता हमें इसलिए नहीं चल रहा है कि हम पानी की जरूरत पूरी करने के लिए भूजल पर निर्भरता बढ़ाते आए हैं। मौजूदा हालात ये हैं कि भूजल भी चुक जाने को आ गया है। भारत सरकार की एक रिपोर्ट आई है कि दो-तीन साल के भीतर ही देश के कई शहरों का भूजल स्तर हमारी पहुंच से नीचे गिर जाएगा।

इस समय विश्व में जितना भूजल निकाला जा रहा है उसका एक चौथाई यानी पच्चीस फीसद सिर्फ भारत निकाल रहा है। जबकि इस समय विश्व को प्रकृति से जितना ताजा पानी मिलता है उसमें भारत के हिस्से में सिर्फ चार फीसद आता है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की विशेषज्ञ एंजसी फूड एंड एग्रीकल्चर आर्गनाइजेशन (एफएओ) के हिसाब से प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति वर्ष कम से कम दो हजार घन मीटर पानी चाहिए। जिस देश में प्रति व्यक्ति इससे कम पानी उपलब्ध हो, उसे जल अभाव वाले देश की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है। अगर यह उपलब्धता एक हजार घन मीटर प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति वर्ष से कम हो तो उस देश को गंभीर जल अभाव की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है।

देश को आजादी मिलने के समय हमारी आबादी तैंतीस करोड़ थी और बारिश से हमें हर साल चार हजार अरब घन मीटर पानी मिलता था। तब प्रति व्यक्ति सालाना जल उपलब्धता पांच हजार छह सौ घन मीटर थी, यानी अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानदंड के लिहाज से पर्याप्त से कोई ढाई गुनी ज्यादा। लेकिन अब सन 2019 में हमारी आबादी एक अरब छत्तीस करोड़ हो चुकी है, यानी आजादी के बाद से आज तक आबादी चार गुना बढ़ गई। जबकि बारिश से मिलने वाले पानी की मात्रा वही है। इस तरह से इस वक्त भारत में प्रति व्यक्ति प्रतिवर्ष जल की उपलब्धता लगभग एक हजार चार सौ घनमीटर ही बची है। लेकिन यह आंकड़ा उपलब्ध पानी का है, इस्तेमाल होने लायक

छोटा-मोटा पेड़ भी नहीं। आखिर यह पेड़ सरकार लगाएगी तो उसकी छाया में केवल बच्चे नहीं, शिक्षक भी बैठ पाएंगे और उसकी ऑक्सीजन पूरे निठारी गांव तक फैलेगी। इस गांव में एक समर्थ, संपन्न और ताकतवर वर्ग की बहुलता है। वहां एक से एक बड़े पक्के मकान बने हुए हैं। बड़े-बड़े दरवाजे। कई-कई मंजिला घर देख कर कहीं से भी नहीं लगता कि यहां गरीबी है। गरीब है तो सरकारी स्कूल। निश्चित रूप से पास में कोई निजी स्कूल होगा, किसी चमकमाती इमारत में।

खैर, मैंने जिस निठारी की बात की, वहां मतदान केंद्र का स्कूल किसी भूत-बंगले की तरह दिख रहा था। धूल से अटे हुए कमरे। टूटी खिड़की। सिर्फ एक कमरे में पंखा लगा हुआ। मेज पर धूल, स्कूल की चारदिवारी भी ठीक-ठाक नहीं खोंची हुई। मानी कोई पढ़ने के लिए आता ही नहीं हो। उत्तर प्रदेश के ज्यादातर सरकारी स्कूलों की यही स्थिति है। मैदान जरूर हैं, लेकिन धूल से भरे हुए। कोई

रोजगार की खातिर

राष्ट्रीय नमूना सर्वेक्षण कार्यालय के मुताबिक 2017-2018 में देश के ग्यारह राज्यों में बेरोजगारी की दर राष्ट्रीय औसत से अधिक थी। इससे साफ है कि मांग के मुताबिक रोजगार का सृजन करने में हमारा देश विफल रहा है। हमारे यहां कृषि, सेवा और विनिर्माण क्षेत्रों में रोजगार के अवसर होते हैं। कृषि क्षेत्र में अल्प शिक्षित और अशिक्षित लोगों को मनरेगा के तहत प्लूज महीनों के लिए ही रोजगार मिल पाता है लेकिन उसमें भी परिश्रम के हिसाब से आय बहुत कम होती है। छुपी बेरोजगारी कृषि क्षेत्र में चरम पर है। विनिर्माण क्षेत्र उम्मीद के मुताबिक आगे नहीं बढ़ पा रहा हैं। मेक इन इंडिया जैसी कार्यक्रम हाशिये पर नजर पर आ रहे हैं। सेवा क्षेत्र प्रगति पर है लेकिन इसमें रोजगार के अवसर केवल प्रशिक्षित और उच्च शिक्षित लोगों को मिलते हैं। सरकारी नौकरियां महाराष्ट्र में अनुबंध के आधार पर निकाली जा रही हैं और केंद्र की नौकरियां उम्मीद के मुताबिक अब तक नहीं निकली हैं। राष्ट्रीय बैंकों में हर साल नौकरियां निकल रही हैं लेकिन घटते प्रतिशत में। देश के इंजीनियर अपने क्षेत्र में पर्याप्त रोजगार के अवसर न होने के कारण बैंक या किसी अन्य क्षेत्र में कार्य करने के लिए मजबूर हो गए हैं।

दिन-प्रतिदिन बेरोजगारी की समस्या बढ़ती जा रही है क्योंकि हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था युवाओं को कौशलभिमुख शिक्षा देने में अबतक विफल रही है। इस स्थिति से निपटने के लिए सरकार को शिक्षा व्यवस्था में बदलाव करके कौशल से संबंधित शिक्षा को पर्याप्त जगह देनी चाहिए। उद्योगों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए एक सटीक नीति बनाई जानी चाहिए और साथ ही मध्यम और लघु उद्योगों को बढ़ावा देना चाहिए ताकि अकुशल युवाओं को भी रोजगार के

बढ़ती आबादी, घटता पानी

संसाधन। जल जीवन की अनिवार्य आवश्यकता है और भारत इस समय अगर सबसे ज्यादा किसी चीज की कमी से जूझ रहा है तो वह पानी ही है। जिस रफ्तार से भारत की आबादी बढ़ रही है उस रफ्तार से पानी का इंतजाम करने में हम साल दर साल नाकाम होते जा रहे हैं। यह एक तथ्य है कि प्रचुर वर्षा के कारण कभी भारत जल संपन्न देश समझा जाता था। लेकिन अब ऐसा नहीं है। आबादी बढ़ने के कारण अब हम जल संपन्न देशों की सूची से बाहर हो गए हैं। यह अलग बात है कि इस भयावह हकीकत का पता हमें इसलिए नहीं चल रहा है कि हम पानी की जरूरत पूरी करने के लिए भूजल पर निर्भरता बढ़ाते आए हैं। मौजूदा हालात ये हैं कि भूजल भी चुक जाने को आ गया है। भारत सरकार की एक रिपोर्ट आई है कि दो-तीन साल के भीतर ही देश के कई शहरों का भूजल स्तर हमारी पहुंच से नीचे गिर जाएगा।

इस समय विश्व में जितना भूजल निकाला जा रहा है उसका एक चौथाई यानी पच्चीस फीसद सिर्फ भारत निकाल रहा है। जबकि इस समय विश्व को प्रकृति से जितना ताजा पानी मिलता है उसमें भारत के हिस्से में सिर्फ चार फीसद आता है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की विशेषज्ञ एंजसी फूड एंड एग्रीकल्चर आर्गनाइजेशन (एफएओ) के हिसाब से प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति वर्ष कम से कम दो हजार घन मीटर पानी चाहिए। जिस देश में प्रति व्यक्ति इससे कम पानी उपलब्ध हो, उसे जल अभाव वाले देश की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है। अगर यह उपलब्धता एक हजार घन मीटर प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति वर्ष से कम हो तो उस देश को गंभीर जल अभाव की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है।

देश को आजादी मिलने के समय हमारी आबादी तैंतीस करोड़ थी और बारिश से हमें हर साल चार हजार अरब घन मीटर पानी मिलता था। तब प्रति व्यक्ति सालाना जल उपलब्धता पांच हजार छह सौ घन मीटर थी, यानी अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानदंड के लिहाज से पर्याप्त से कोई ढाई गुनी ज्यादा। लेकिन अब सन 2019 में हमारी आबादी एक अरब छत्तीस करोड़ हो चुकी है, यानी आजादी के बाद से आज तक आबादी चार गुना बढ़ गई। जबकि बारिश से मिलने वाले पानी की मात्रा वही है। इस तरह से इस वक्त भारत में प्रति व्यक्ति प्रतिवर्ष जल की उपलब्धता लगभग एक हजार चार सौ घनमीटर ही बची है। लेकिन यह आंकड़ा उपलब्ध पानी का है, इस्तेमाल होने लायक

छोटा-मोटा पेड़ भी नहीं। आखिर यह पेड़ सरकार लगाएगी तो उसकी छाया में केवल बच्चे नहीं, शिक्षक भी बैठ पाएंगे और उसकी ऑक्सीजन पूरे निठारी गांव तक फैलेगी। इस गांव में एक समर्थ, संपन्न और ताकतवर वर्ग की बहुलता है। वहां एक से एक बड़े पक्के मकान बने हुए हैं। बड़े-बड़े दरवाजे। कई-कई मंजिला घर देख कर कहीं से भी नहीं लगता कि यहां गरीबी है। गरीब है तो सरकारी स्कूल। निश्चित रूप से पास में कोई निजी स्कूल होगा, किसी चमकमाती इमारत में।

खैर, मैंने जिस निठारी की बात की, वहां मतदान केंद्र का स्कूल किसी भूत-बंगले की तरह दिख रहा था। धूल से अटे हुए कमरे। टूटी खिड़की। सिर्फ एक कमरे में पंखा लगा हुआ। मेज पर धूल, स्कूल की चारदिवारी भी ठीक-ठाक नहीं खोंची हुई। मानी कोई पढ़ने के लिए आता ही नहीं हो। उत्तर प्रदेश के ज्यादातर सरकारी स्कूलों की यही स्थिति है। मैदान जरूर हैं, लेकिन धूल से भरे हुए। कोई

मेरा गांव मेरा देश

संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने वैश्विक जनसंख्या के आंकड़े जारी कर दिए हैं। भारत की जनसंख्या एक सौ छत्तीस करोड़ तक पहुंच गई है। पिछले नौ साल में बाकी सभी देशों की तुलना करें तो भारत की जनसंख्या सबसे तेज रफ्तार से बढ़ी। दुनिया में सबसे ज्यादा आबादी वाला देश अभी भी चीन ही है, जिसकी आबादी इस समय एक सौ बयालीस करोड़ का आंकड़ा पार कर आई है। अगर चीन की जनसंख्या बढ़ोतरी की रफ्तार देखें तो पिछले नौ साल में वह सिर्फ 0.5 फीसद सालाना की दर से बढ़ी, जबकि इसी दौरान भारत की जनसंख्या 1.2 फीसद की दर से बढ़ी।

भारत में बढ़ती जनसंख्या के साथ संसाधनों की जरूरत भी बढ़ती है। हर देश के पास अपनी आबादी की गुजर बसर के लिए संसाधन सीमित होते हैं। कुछ प्राकृतिक संसाधन तो स्थिर होते हैं जिन्हें बढ़ाया ही नहीं जा सकता, जैसे- जल

संसाधन। जल जीवन की अनिवार्य आवश्यकता है और भारत इस समय अगर सबसे ज्यादा किसी चीज की कमी से जूझ रहा है तो वह पानी ही है। जिस रफ्तार से भारत की आबादी बढ़ रही है उस रफ्तार से पानी का इंतजाम करने में हम साल दर साल नाकाम होते जा रहे हैं। यह एक तथ्य है कि प्रचुर वर्षा के कारण कभी भारत जल संपन्न देश समझा जाता था। लेकिन अब ऐसा नहीं है। आबादी बढ़ने के कारण अब हम जल संपन्न देशों की सूची से बाहर हो गए हैं। यह अलग बात है कि इस भयावह हकीकत का पता हमें इसलिए नहीं चल रहा है कि हम पानी की जरूरत पूरी करने के लिए भूजल पर निर्भरता बढ़ाते आए हैं। मौजूदा हालात ये हैं कि भूजल भी चुक जाने को आ गया है। भारत सरकार की एक रिपोर्ट आई है कि दो-तीन साल के भीतर ही देश के कई शहरों का भूजल स्तर हमारी पहुंच से नीचे गिर जाएगा।

इस समय विश्व में जितना भूजल निकाला जा रहा है उसका एक चौथाई यानी पच्चीस फीसद सिर्फ भारत निकाल रहा है। जबकि इस समय विश्व को प्रकृति से जितना ताजा पानी मिलता है उसमें भारत के हिस्से में सिर्फ चार फीसद आता है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की विशेषज्ञ एंजसी फूड एंड एग्रीकल्चर आर्गनाइजेशन (एफएओ) के हिसाब से प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति वर्ष कम से कम दो हजार घन मीटर पानी चाहिए। जिस देश में प्रति व्यक्ति इससे कम पानी उपलब्ध हो, उसे जल अभाव वाले देश की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है। अगर यह उपलब्धता एक हजार घन मीटर प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति वर्ष से कम हो तो उस देश को गंभीर जल अभाव की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है।

देश को आजादी मिलने के समय हमारी आबादी तैंतीस करोड़ थी और बारिश से हमें हर साल चार हजार अरब घन मीटर पानी मिलता था। तब प्रति व्यक्ति सालाना जल उपलब्धता पांच हजार छह सौ घन मीटर थी, यानी अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानदंड के लिहाज से पर्याप्त से कोई ढाई गुनी ज्यादा। लेकिन अब सन 2019 में हमारी आबादी एक अरब छत्तीस करोड़ हो चुकी है, यानी आजादी के बाद से आज तक आबादी चार गुना बढ़ गई। जबकि बारिश से मिलने वाले पानी की मात्रा वही है। इस तरह से इस वक्त भारत में प्रति व्यक्ति प्रतिवर्ष जल की उपलब्धता लगभग एक हजार चार सौ घनमीटर ही बची है। लेकिन यह आंकड़ा उपलब्ध पानी का है, इस्तेमाल होने लायक

छोटा-मोटा पेड़ भी नहीं। आखिर यह पेड़ सरकार लगाएगी तो उसकी छाया में केवल बच्चे नहीं, शिक्षक भी बैठ पाएंगे और उसकी ऑक्सीजन पूरे निठारी गांव तक फैलेगी। इस गांव में एक समर्थ, संपन्न और ताकतवर वर्ग की बहुलता है। वहां एक से एक बड़े पक्के मकान बने हुए हैं। बड़े-बड़े दरवाजे। कई-कई मंजिला घर देख कर कहीं से भी नहीं लगता कि यहां गरीबी है। गरीब है तो सरकारी स्कूल। निश्चित रूप से पास में कोई निजी स्कूल होगा, किसी चमकमाती इमारत में।

खैर, मैंने जिस निठारी की बात की, वहां मतदान केंद्र का स्कूल किसी भूत-बंगले की तरह दिख रहा था। धूल से अटे हुए कमरे। टूटी खिड़की। सिर्फ एक कमरे में पंखा लगा हुआ। मेज पर धूल, स्कूल की चारदिवारी भी ठीक-ठाक नहीं खोंची हुई। मानी कोई पढ़ने के लिए आता ही नहीं हो। उत्तर प्रदेश के ज्यादातर सरकारी स्कूलों की यही स्थिति है। मैदान जरूर हैं, लेकिन धूल से भरे हुए। कोई

अवसर मिल सकें। कर्ज की प्रक्रिया सुलभ की जानी चाहिए ताकि तकनीक के बल पर सस्ती कीमत पर उत्पादन हो जो विदेशी उत्पादों को भी टक्कर दे पाए। कृषि में कर्ज माफ़ी की राजनीति से परे सोच कर सरकार को तकनीकी निवेश के सहारे कृषि को बढ़ावा देना चाहिए ताकि किसान आत्मनिर्भर बन कर खेती कर पाएं। युवाओं को स्वरोजगार और उद्योग खोलने के लिए प्रेरित करने की खातिर ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में प्रशिक्षण केंद्र और कार्यशालाओं का प्रबंध करना चाहिए ताकि ग्रामीण युवाओं को कृषि के अलावा अन्य उद्योगों के बारे में जानकारी मिल

सके। इस तरह के कदम उठा कर बेरोजगारी के समस्या से छुटकारा पाया जा सकता है।

● *निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, कोडाली, महाराष्ट्र*

नेता बनाम जनता
हर बार की तरह इस बार के चुनाव में भी माननीयों के मुंह से सुविचार सुनने को मिल रहे हैं। पाकिस्तान, सेना, साधु-संतों का श्राप, किसी खास पार्टी को वोट न देने पर लगने वाले करंट के झटके, उससे डरी हुई जनता और तमाशबीन बना चुनाव आयोग! गनीमत है कि इस देश में सब नेता हैं। नेता घर-घर में, चाय की दुकान में आपको मिल जाएंगे राष्ट्रीय दलों की ही नहीं, क्षेत्रीय दलों के भी। अब लठमार सिर्फ होली तक सीमित नहीं रहा, यह चुनावी चलन बन गया है। हिंदू-मुसलिम हमारा राष्ट्रीय राजनीतिक का मुद्दा है। कुछ

पानी का नहीं। इसके लिए बारिश के पानी के सही-सही हिसाब-किताब पर गौर करना पड़ेगा।

भले ही देश की धरती पर वर्षा और हिमपात के रूप में चार हजार अरब घनमीटर पानी बरसता है, लेकिन यह पूरा का पूरा पानी इस्तेमाल के लिए उपलब्ध नहीं है। इस चार हजार अरब घनमीटर पानी में से आधे से ज्यादा यानी दो हजार एक सौ इकत्तीस घनमीटर पानी भाप बन कर उड़ जाने से और देश की विशिष्ट भू-आकृति के कारण इधर-उधर से बह कर समुद्र में चला जाता है। काफी कुछ पानी जमीन सोख लेती है। इसीलिए जल विज्ञानी हिसाब लगाते हैं कि सिर्फ एक हजार आठ सौ उनहत्तर अरब घनमीटर पानी हमें नदियों में और भूजल के पुनर्भरण के रूप में उपलब्ध है। लेकिन भारत की स्थलाकृति के कारण यह एक हजार आठ सौ उनहत्तर अरब घनमीटर पानी भी



पूरा का पूरा हमारी पहुंच में नहीं है। इस समय हमारी पहुंच सिर्फ एक हजार एक सौ तेईस अरब घनमीटर पानी तक है। इस आंकड़े में भी सतही जल सिर्फ छह सौ नब्बे अरब घनमीटर है। बाकी चार सौ तैंतीस अरब घनमीटर पानी भूजल के रूप में उपलब्ध है। बेशक यह भूजल एक प्रकार से वर्षा का ही पानी है जो रिस कर जमीन में जमा होता है, लेकिन चिंताजनक तथ्य यह है कि बारिश ज्यादा ही डरा रहे हैं। यह भी तय है कि पानी की कमी की समस्या अब साल दर साल और गंभीर होती जाएगी। अगर जल संचयन की क्षमता बढ़ाने में लगे हैं। अमेरिका अपने हर नागरिक के लिए प्रति वर्ष पांच हजार घन मीटर जल का संचयन

कर लेता है। मेक्सिको तक प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति वर्ष एक हजार घन मीटर जल संचयन कर रहा है। जबकि भारत में प्रति व्यक्ति सालाना दो सौ पच्चीस घन मीटर पानी का ही संचयन हो पा रहा है। यह आंकड़ा भी औसत लेकर निकाला गया है। इस समय भारत में बांधों और जल संचयन के दूसरे साधनों की संख्या और क्षमता दोनों ही जरूरत से बहुत पीछे है। देश में उपलब्ध पांच हजार से ज्यादा छोटे-बड़े बांध इस समय वर्षा से मिल रहे पानी को रोक कर रखने के लिए अपर्याप्त साबित हो रहे हैं। इसका सबसे बड़ा साक्ष्य पिछले साल के बारिश के आंकड़े हैं। पिछले साल सामान्य बारिश रहने के बावजूद कुछ ही महीनों के अंदर देश का सैंतालीस फीसद क्षेत्र सूखे की चपेट में आ गया था। सूखे के आंकड़े आइआइटी-गांधीनगर ने महीने भर पहले जारी किए हैं। मानसून के समय बाढ़ और कुछ ही

महीनों बाद देश में सूखा पड़ जाना जल प्रबंधन की नाकामी का जीता जागता सबूत है। पिछले साल ही नीति आयोग ने देश में पानी की स्थिति पर एक रिपोर्ट जारी की थी। रिपोर्ट में बताया गया था कि आने वाले दो-तीन साल में देश के इक्कीस शहरों का भूजल लगभग समाप्त हो जाएगा। इस समय सबसे ज्यादा भूजल का दोहन कृषि के लिए किया जा रहा है। नीति आयोग की रिपोर्ट में यह भी बताया गया था कि देश 2030 तक भारत में पानी की मांग आपूर्ति की तुलना में दुगुनी हो चुकी होगी। अब जनसंख्या के नवीनतम आंकड़ों के हिसाब से यह आफत 2030 के पहले भी आ सकती है।

हालत इतनी नाजुक है कि अगर किसी भी साल मौसम ने थोड़ी-सी भी ऊंच-नीच कर दी तो नतीजे कई गुने भयानक हो सकते हैं।

वैसे यह अंदेशा इसी साल खड़ा हो गया है। पिछले हफ्ते ही यह बताया गया है कि इस साल अल नीनो प्रभाव के कारण भारत में बारिश सात फीसद कम होगी। उसके बाद सरकारी मौसम विभाग ने भी इस साल तीन फीसद कम बारिश का अनुमान लगाया है। जब देश का आधे से ज्यादा हिस्सा पहले से ही सूखे की चपेट में हो, बांध और जलाशय खाली पड़े हों, वैसी हालत में कम बारिश के अनुमान कुछ ज्यादा ही डरा रहे हैं। यह भी तय है कि पानी की कमी की समस्या अब साल दर साल और गंभीर होती जाएगी। अगर जल संचयन की क्षमता बढ़ाने के काम को सर्वोच्च प्राथमिकता में न लाया गया तो बात हाथ से निकल जाएगी।

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