

## How many?



TICKER

MIHIR SHARMA

For months across India friends and colleagues have asked each other one question — a question that can substitute for a greeting, for an ice-breaker, to revive conversations that have stalled. It's a question that, in fact, doesn't even need to be spelled out in full. It is simply: How many?

How many seats will the BJP get? Nobody knows, of course, or may even be close — except the handful of pollsters sitting tight-lipped on exit polls from the first five phases. But most have a likely number in mind. More to the point, on that one number depends what the next five years will look like. So here is a rundown of what could happen, depending on that number.

**272+:** Another majority for the BJP alone means it will again have swept the Hindi heartland and probably made some major dents into the rest of India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's place in history will be unique. He might have the political capital to move even faster on his agenda than he did in his first term. Modi will continue to be unhindered by the need to consult allies or even his own party. That said, he will know the repeat job came less from "vikas" talk and more from nationalism and polarisation — which would help set that agenda.

**230-272:** Even if the BJP falls short of a majority by a couple of dozen seats, it will still be an undisputed victory for Modi. He won 90 per cent of the 194 seats in the six largest states of the north and west in 2014; winning 230-272 would mean only a minor erosion of popularity in this area, which would still look solidly loyal to him. But, presumably, the BJP's inroads into the south and east would not have been completely successful. While Modi would remain undisputed in the ruling coalition, fractures within India — between areas now solidly identified with Modi-tinged Hindutva and those that will have rejected it twice — will continue to deepen.

**210-230:** The upper end of this range has long been my own answer to the "how much" question. It's logical: it would mean that opposition unity in Uttar Pradesh has dented the BJP's advance sufficiently for it to lose about half its seats in India's largest state, and that it has suffered a visible but not severe decline of its support across the rest of north and west India — in keeping with its close defeats in three states towards the end of last year. Modi's popularity will be seen as greater than that of his party, an argument he will use to try and remain firmly in command. Allies will line up, aside from those already in the NDA: most likely to join are the TRS in Telangana and perhaps Naveen Patnaik in Odisha and the YSR Congress in Andhra. But if Modi stays as PM, he will have less scope to manoeuvre. The allies will want to demonstrate to their voters that they are at least near-equal partners in governance. The PMO's centralisation of power within the Union government will have to be diluted.

**190-210:** More dicey territory. If the BJP just passes 200 or dips below it, Modi will find it hard to claim a resounding victory. The BJP and Congress fought head-to-head in about 200 constituencies in 2014; about 200 for the BJP in 2019 would mean that the Congress will have done much better than its 10 per cent strike-rate last time. In 2014, Modi won a majority on the back of decimating the Congress in head-to-head fights and on his spectacular sweep of both Bihar and UP. A total of 200 means neither of those has been repeated. However, given deep pockets and the BJP's still-commanding numbers — Modi may remain prime minister if he wishes. But a much broader alliance would be needed, probably including at least one component of the UP *mahagathbandan*, probably the Bahujan Samaj Party. This would be difficult to manage and organise, and Modi himself would have to credibly commit to reducing some of his power in office.

**170-190:** If the BJP falls significantly below the 200 mark — which I think is unlikely — it can still claim power, but in a genuine, Vajpayee-style coalition. In this case I suspect the allies will demand Modi be replaced as PM. Will he allow this? Or would he prefer to stay on the Opposition benches with these numbers? Nobody can predict his mind. But the Congress probably believes that if he takes power the coalition will be fractious enough that there will be another election in a couple of years, with Modi's image of strength significantly dented.

**Below 170:** Some believe this previously unthinkable result is possible. If so, then it would be an unmistakable defeat for the NDA generally, with the UPA likely rivalling its numbers or exceeding them. The question is: what now? Can the UPA, with say 160 on its own, put together a government? Perhaps not. In which case, we might be in a Third Front world. But who will support it from outside — Modi or Rahul Gandhi? My bet would be on Modi pulling a Rajiv — both supporting and destabilising such a government, in the expectation that another election would throw up a vote for stability and he would romp back to power.

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## Saffron is a different colour now

The colour has been rendered to activities that would have astonished Swami Vivekananda



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K DATTA RAY

The censors forced Utpal Dutt to re-shoot some scenes in his film *Ghoom Bhangar Gaan* so that it was clear the goons attacking factory workers who hadn't been paid their wages were not Congressmen. He had to replace what might have been mistaken for Gandhi caps on their heads with the headgear of a private company's security guards replete with the company's badge of which a close-up had to be shown.

Today's censors would probably be equally solicitous about saffron. But for the comparison to be valid it must also be made clear that

in the absence of any rigorous all-India Hindu authority, any crook or criminal is at liberty to wrap himself in saffron. What was once the colour of purity is now the badge of a particular brand of politics. Adityanath, Uma Bharti, Pragna Singh Thakur, who is an accused in the 2008 Malegaon bombings, and Ramdev of Patanjali Ayurved Ltd have taken the colour to activities that would have astonished Swami Vivekananda.

Nor would Vivekananda have regarded "sant" and "saint" as synonymous, as many sants seem to do. They have been a power in the land since 18 May 2014 which, Britain's *Guardian* wrote, would "go down in history as the day when Britain finally left India". It wasn't a dirge for the passing of the Raj which would have been unthinkable for a left-liberal anti-monarchy newspaper. *The Guardian* exulted that Narendra Modi's triumph marked "the end of a long era in which the structures of power did not differ greatly from those through which Britain ruled the sub-continent" because "India under the Congress was in many ways a continuation of the British Raj by other means".

There was some truth in that for the methods, processes and institutions of effective and orderly administration remain the same when the political authority changes. But in its innocent idealism, *The Guardian* failed to realise that

the return to the grassroots it exalted could mean the end of rational thinking and a victory for the prejudices, superstitions and myths that sustain the impoverished and uneducated multitudes.

I recall a public discussion where a retired army general stormed in angrily to complain that unruly processions had delayed his journey by three hours. "Is this democracy?" he shouted in exasperation. "That's exactly what it is!" I explained from the platform. Two Greek words, *demos*, (the people) and *kratein* (to rule) make up the word democracy. What the general wanted was efficient management. That is not necessarily anti-democracy but the two go together only when the people — the beneficiaries of democracy — recognise the merit of discipline and voluntarily practise it.

They cannot do so without education, an adequate income, a decent standard of living and a sense of security. Security does not come from flamboyant boasting about "surgical strikes" against Pakistan. It comes from a stable peace which, in turn, demands wise governance and constructive diplomacy, in addition to economic well-being.

Disciplined democracy will remain elusive if instead of setting an example, the political leadership panders to the masses by adopting its worst instincts and values. Public havans and pujas are as characteristic of that back-

wardness as lynching, ghar wapsi, attacks on churches, love jihad vigilantes and gau rakhshaks. Namdeo Das Tyagi, better known as Computer Baba, complains that the "saffron brigade (meaning the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party) has only exploited *sadhus* and nothing else". He should know. A man for all seasons, Computer Baba sports both saffron and white. He was a junior minister under the BJP's Shivraj Singh Chouhan, sought an Aam Aadmi Party nomination in 2014, and was appointed chairman of "Ma Narmada, Ma Kshira and Ma Mandakini River Trust" by Madhya Pradesh's current Congress Chief Minister Kamal Nath.

Winston Churchill, that arch-imperialist whom Indians love to hate, didn't mean it as a compliment when he declaimed in the House of Commons during the debate on the Indian Independence Bill that "Indian political parties and political classes do not represent the Indian masses".

Thank heavens they didn't in those days. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee or K M Munshi wouldn't have dreamt of strutting around in monogrammed suits. Nor would the civilised C Rajagopalachari or erudite Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan obscenely abuse or invent lies about a prime minister who was cruelly murdered at the height of promise. Political leaders like Abul Kalam Azad or John Mathai, to pick two members of the Constituent Assembly at random, were men of education, refinement and sensibility for whom politics was a mission.

Under their successors, majority rule is becoming indistinguishable from mob rule.

LUNCH WITH BS ► RAJIV LALL | CHAIRMAN | IDFC FIRST BANK

## A finger in many pies

Lall talks to Anjali Bhargava about his stint in teaching, working with governments and the private sector and his tryst with impact investing

He's taught economics at the Florida Atlantic University, dabbled in private equity with Morgan Stanley and Warburg Pincus, worked with the governments of Chad, Gabon and China during a stint with the World Bank, associated closely with people he affectionately refers to as "Andhrpreneurs" as CEO of IDFC, converted IDFC into a bank and led it through its recent merger with Capital First, set up Lok Capital (as a philanthropic initiative in 2004) and is in the process of setting up Social Finance India to create an ecosystem for impact investing in the country. He's also adding the finishing touches to a detailed essay that he hopes will morph into his first book at some stage.

So how precisely does one describe Rajiv Lall, chairman of IDFC First Bank? Is he an economist, academician or an advisor? Is he an equity shark or a do-gooder with a hyperactive social conscience? Is he driven by capitalism and the urgent desire to create untold wealth or is socialism his path to salvation? It would appear there's little he's left untouched in his 61 years. Do people like this do anything else, I think to myself, as I smile at him politely while listening to his story.

I am meeting Lall for lunch at Mumbai's popular eatery Yauatcha, minutes away from his office in the Bandra Kurla complex. The restaurant is packed with office groups and is far noisier than I had anticipated. We change places to avoid the din. He starts with a helping of chives dumpling. We order a spicy stir fried rice (for me) and a Singapore stir fried vermicelli (for him) and some stir-fried beans and a pak choy, which we decide to share.

A Modern School pass-out, Lall finished the last two years of school in the UK before heading to Oxford for a degree in politics, philosophy and economics. After completing his PhD from the Columbia University, he taught economics at

Florida Atlantic for a couple of years before heading to the Asian Development Bank in the Philippines. Soon after, he moved to the World Bank in Washington and found himself thrown in at the deep end.

Africa, back then, was an experimental ground even for the World Bank but for Lall, it was a totally alien animal. Many countries he was working with — from Equatorial Guinea to Chad — were emerging from civil war and were highly fragile states. He was totally out of his comfort zone, spending four months of the year in the field and functioning in French, a language he knew enough of to get by. To say those times were unpredictable is putting it mildly. He recalls making over 60 trips to these countries, often finding that government counterparts he met during a visit in a country were dead by the time he visited the country next, so widespread was the AIDS epidemic in the region at the time (1985-89).

He went from the frying pan to the fire, landing up in China for the first time only a few weeks before the Tiananmen Square protests. He worked closely with the Chinese government — including with Zhu Rongji, first vice-premier and then premier of the People's Republic of China from 1998 to 2003 — as it prepared for a WTO entry, and also on financial sector reforms with the country's central bank.

China was a great learning experience for him. As late as in 1993 the People's Bank of China did not have control over the country's monetary space. Each province was flying its own kite and even issuing its own currency, he says. "Considering where they were as late as 1993, the scale and speed at which they have transformed themselves never fails to amaze me," Lall adds. He's deeply impressed by how the country used the World Bank and its inputs strategically. He says he has many "very close friends in China", reflecting on a certain "open-

ness" often missing in India.

This experience brought him to the notice of Vikram Pandit, then with Morgan Stanley, who was looking for someone with experience and knowledge of China. Lall ended up running the Asia Economic Research wing for Morgan Stanley — albeit for a short stint — and conducted some of the early India-China comparisons as a self-styled analyst. In 1997, he joined Warburg Pincus, spending the next eight-odd years in the world of private equity and finance.

It was during this time — in 2004 specifically — that he set up Lok Capital in India, a philanthropic initiative to demonstrate the feasibility of raising and deploying capital for impact investing in India, particularly to support the micro finance sector. At that time, the idea of social impact investing was still new. Although he set up the organisation, he is no longer engaged with Lok Capital, leaving its running to a professional team.

We are distracted as our food arrives but quickly get back on course. It was not before 2005 that Lall would finally return to India. While working at Warburg Pincus, he met Deepak Parekh, then chairman of IDFC, a 1997 private-public initiative that aimed to catalyse private financing of infrastructure. By then, Lall had seen both worlds — government and private sector — inside out and was the perfect candidate for the post of CEO of IDFC. He was posted in Mumbai and not Delhi, his city of choice. Even at the outset, Lall was not convinced about the basic tenets that defined IDFC and its role. "IDFC was to serve public good by lending to long-gestation infrastructure projects. Yet, it was going public," he says. The economist in him spotted a contradiction in terms.

Nonetheless, he went on a tumultuous journey with IDFC, brushing shoulders with the "Andhrpreneurs", who dominated India's infrastructure scene that



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

time. The size of IDFC's balance sheet grew many times but it had its share of vulnerabilities. The financial crisis of 2008 convinced him that a wholesale, funded finance enterprise with no financial legs of its own is limited in how much it can grow relative to the rest of the financial system. "Any kind of macro instability can lead to a total collapse," he realised.

That's when he started lobbying with the Reserve Bank of India to convert IDFC into a bank, a request that was turned down at the time. It took the subsequent unraveling of India's infrastructure sector — a collapse that began in 2011 and went on

till 2016, one from which the sector is yet to recover and that left the IDFC balance sheet highly stressed — that the stakeholders began to realise the advantages of converting the company into a bank. In 2014, IDFC and Bandhan were the two bank licences handed out by the RBI. IDFC Bank has recently merged with Capital First and Lall has now donned the hat of chairman, IDFC First Bank.

This fits in with his plan to extricate himself from mainstream finance because "there's so much else to be done". "India is the largest stomping ground in the world for impact investing as we have an extraordinary combination of entrepreneurial drive with huge, absolute demand for all kinds of social services," he elaborates. "Yet, it lacks any advocacy platform or ecosystem for such capital to thrive."

Social Finance India (SFI) will fill this gap. Ashish Dhawan (Central Square Foundation), Vikram Gandhi (Asha Impact) and Lall have together set up SFI (the search for a CEO is on), an organisation that will work to build an ecosystem for social outcome-based investing in India. The plan is to begin with a narrow focus — social impact bonds will be offered for financing in the public education space by bringing keen investors in contact with change makers. Eventually SFI will straddle every sphere of impact investing. Lall also has a solution for how to use CSR funds to finance the delivery of social services. He says "social outcome certificates" should be introduced in the country that can be purchased with CSR funds. This can be done at a district level. Define outcomes, get the official machinery to achieve the goals and raise money for the district by selling the outcome certificates.

Towards the end of our lunch, before Lall rushes off, he tells me he's working on an essay — which may end up as a book — on the trilemma of the political economy and argues one cannot have prosperity, freedom and justice at the same time. A trade-off is inevitable.

Well, that's another pie he has a finger in. No wonder time is at such a premium for Lall.

## Travails of a 'priority' customer



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

KEYA SARKAR

I don't know what exactly to attribute it to: The small town nature or the changing times. For banking, as I knew it in Mumbai over a decade and a half ago, doesn't seem to be the same now in Bolpur, Santiniketan.

Immediately after I had relocated from Mumbai, one of the largest private sector banks opened a branch here. Having seen the insides of the other public sector banks before that, I was thrilled to open an account at a branch, the milieu of which was familiar to my Mumbai returned eyes.

Now thanks to electronic banking, I hardly ever visit the bank. Recently, however, I had reason to. First was an inward

remittance I had received from a Swiss customer that had not been credited to my account even after three days. The second was a mismatch in my credit card sales amount on a particular day from my shop and the corresponding credit that appeared in my current account. The latter was less.

One of the pleasures of visiting your bank branch in a small town is that you are immediately shown into the manager's room. My plea that the matter was not significant enough for the branch manager fell on deaf ears. My husband and I were seated in the manager's cabin and offered tea.

The manager could offer no reason for the inward remittance not showing up but offered to Whatsapp my transaction printout to his foreign exchange office. On the second problem, he had a few ideas. When I said I did not understand why the credit against my credit card sales was falling short he said, it "may be" because they had deducted the monthly rental.

When I said that the amount seemed to be too large for a month's rental, he suggested that it may be for a couple of months because I had not paid earlier. If it was a direct automatic deduction by the bank, how could I have failed to pay

earlier? Confused, I asked the manager whether or not the bank would have to show this deduction separately in my account instead of just subtracting it from my sales? How do I maintain my cash book?

He assured me that he would get back on both the issues and I left the branch satisfied. At the end of the work day, the manager called to say that the uncredited remittance was still a mystery because the "head office" had not found anything but he assured me that he would keep at it.

I reminded him that my credit card issue still remained unresolved and he said someone from that department would follow it through. I did get an email the following day explaining the deductions. One was the rental and another was for "LTC", which apparently is a charge which the bank levies on total credit card transactions lower than ₹5,000 transactions a month. This was surely not the case for my shop.

I know margins are under pressure but have banks begin to stoop so low to enhance their floats or slip in strange charges? As an individual customer, I did what I could. I asked the bank for a form to become an ordinary customer. Being a "priority" customer seems too fraught with risk.

## Pet obligations



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

Coaxing the dog to leave the air-conditioned room to come for a walk in the heat wasn't working so I thought to attach a leash to his collar and drag him out for his constitutional. Increasingly grumpy in old age, the pooch snapped, sinking his canines into the fleshiest part of my palm. As I attempted to staunch the blood with a pail of iced water and dabbed antiseptics on the wound, the dog continued to slumber on, unmindful of the kerfuffle he had caused. In the evening, with the hand stinging — and swelling — I went to a general practitioner for a tetanus shot and dressing. A painkiller was prescribed.

Two days later, on a family break in

the hills, the wound showed no signs of healing, and the pain became increasingly intolerable. The gathered clan, when it wasn't sarcastic, was mocking. Didn't I have the sense to take anti-rabies shots? What was I thinking not asking for antibiotics? Everyone had a theory and a slew of medicines to prescribe. Clutching at any possibility of relief, I took whatever cocktail of pills and unguents were offered, replaced bandages, daubed creams, but nothing helped. While the rest of the group partied, eating and drinking and making merry, I drew increasingly into myself. Nobody likes misery for company, especially on a holiday, suspecting it might be contagious — and I was anything if not miserable.

Unable to bear the agony, and banned from the consumption of alcohol, I retired to bed early one evening. Somewhere in the distance I could hear the family's revels as their libations increased. Half-dozing, I could barely make out as they dropped in occasionally, in groups or singly, to check on me. Prodding the palm, one would ask, "Is it paining here?" No. "Here?" Yes. "Here?" Yes, yes, yes. "Here too?" Just go. A hot cognac was brought to my room — but not for consumption. It was pressed into the wound to "draw out the poison" but only ended up throbbing some more.

Eyes closed against the ache, I wafted in and out of troubled sleep, disturbed by these encounters. "How are you feeling?" Whisky breath over my face — my son, definitely. "Are you okay?" Onion fumes and charred meat this time — my brother, most likely. "Let him sleep," a symphony of garlic and wine, extremely unpleasant, one of the ladies of the clan. "He'll be fine, let him be" — if only! — someone who had been quaffing gin said. Despite them, blessed sleep followed. But morning brought little relief.

Back home, my ordeal was far from over with diagnosis and information flying fast and furiously amidst the temporary bonhomie of the ex-vacationers. Something had to be done about me. *Done?* I was to be marched off to a doctor. Even though the pet was vaccinated, and it was a week since the bite, I was to be inoculated "just in case". A prescription for five injections spread over 21 days was shared between the group like a trophy, a moral victory of the majority against the lonely sufferer. Instead of sympathy, or empathy, what I was getting was one-upmanship. As I write this, two shots have been administered with three more to go. Blame it on my hallucinations, but I can't help wondering if I can persuade the dog to oblige my wildest fantasies.



WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

An unreal campaign

India's largest, most acrimonious elections are about to get into their final phase. Most people might have expected that voters would be presented these past few weeks with a record of the Narendra Modi government's term in office, what it promises for the future, and the alternatives that the opposition offers. The campaign did indeed begin that way, with the BJP's slogan of "The impossible is now possible" (*Namumkin ab mumkin hai*), Rahul Gandhi's Nyay hand-out scheme, and arguments about the relative advantages and disadvantages of strong governments and coalition rule. It turns out though that few have heard of Nyay, while opposition coalescence is very partial. In turn the BJP discovered that its development record was not evocative enough and, using the Pulwama-Balakot strike-counterstrike, switched focus to national security. That's when reality and campaign rhetoric began their divergence.

Mr Modi's uncanny ability to turn liability into asset was now in evidence. The *chowkidar's* failure to act on intelligence warnings about a terrorist strike against army convoys, the embarrassment of having a fighter plane shot down and (worse) a helicopter brought down by own-side fire, the discovery that Pakistan's air force with a fraction of the Indian air force's budget can deploy better planes and better missiles and has more secure communications links — all this uncomfortable realisation was buried under a full-throated campaign that focused on two high points: The Balakot strike and getting Masood Azhar declared a terrorist. The Congress' belated bleats that its own track record had surgical strikes and other successes to show were, as usual, pusillanimous.

The national security debate took another curious turn, as though the country is in danger of being broken up by the "tukde-tukde gang" of secessionists. Nationalists should have greater confidence in their country's strengths. If indeed there is danger, what of government strategy? The escalating levels of violence in both Naxal-infested areas and Jammu & Kashmir point to policy failure. And China's security challenge gets no mention even as Beijing's tentacles reach into India's neighbourhood.

Now we have descended to the level of farce, with the campaign veering off into accusations against a prime minister dead for more than a quarter century, and before that the actions of another prime minister dead for more than a half century. Whatever the sins of commission and omission of Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi, are they election issues in 2019? Or are these deliberately escapist diversions?

Note that the economy has been given a convenient by-pass by the BJP, except for the frequent assertion that no development took place for 70 years till Mr Modi came along. The Congress in its usual ineffective way points to slowing growth, flat exports and declining investment, and new revelations about statistical fiction. More has been said on the stump about jobs and rural distress, but Mr Modi is yet to respond.

How much of this matters to the voter? In partisan politics people choose facts to suit bias or belief, more so when there is identification with a strong leader. For millions of voters, Mr Modi's record may not be the best, but he remains the best bet. Or, they have bought into his Hindutva nationalism. Meanwhile, Mr Modi demonstrated yet again his ability to turn the tables on his critics by switching around the charge of tasteless criticism, and listing the multiple terms of abuse hurled at him over the years. Rahul Gandhi's "love dictionary", he called it with typical panache.

If anything has become clear during this campaign, it is this: Mr Modi can bat on almost any wicket and hit the ball over the ropes. He will do it with a selective use of facts, play on emotion, and tropes about *naamdars* and *kaamdars*. Should he lose his party's majority, as the pollsters say, or (more drastically) the chance to govern further, it will be less because of the opposition and more on his own account and because, despite an assiduous image build-up over five years, aggressive social media trolling and impressive histrionics on the stump, voters in the heartland prove to be disappointed with what he has delivered.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



Modi's new 'mandir' project

Modi has boldly ventured to redevelop Varanasi's messy, filthy inner city. It's a restoration project that can delight his large Hindu constituency

*Writings on the Wall is metaphor that grew out of my travels, mostly through the poll-bounded regions of India and the neighbourhood over the past 15 years. Because, even more than its big festivals, the subcontinent comes to life during its elections. And what's on people's minds, their aspirations, joys, concerns and fears, you can pretty much understand by reading these writings on the wall. These can be graffiti, advertising, skylines, fences, or, even rubble.*

You want to see change in Varanasi, you walk on fresh rubble, a lone bulldozer is labouring on yards away, and look at the walls. Don't read. Because there is nothing to read. Just take a close look at the remnants of what used to be there.

These are remnants of doors, windows, ventilators, cupboards, as if these were pasted on these walls with some adhesive and somebody rudely pulled them out. If you were airdropped here, you might for a moment think you've landed in the middle of some zany art installation. Or, it could also be the setting of another madcap Fevilcol ad: You join two houses with it, knock them with a bulldozer, our joints will survive.

This is precisely what has happened here. About 300 houses, temples and other buildings stood in this area of just 4.6 hectares (11.4 acres), most of them so close to each other that over time they had become conjoined as if constructed together. Beneath these somehow survived Varanasi's famous — or infamous — byzantine "galis" (lanes), some so narrow that not more than two average-sized adults could pass them. It's now history.

Modi critics say that the cloistered neighbourhood that concealed the Kashi Vishwanath temple, among Hinduism's holiest and oldest, has been broken down so the entire Hindu world could now see the temple from the ghats of the Ganga. More important, as they see the relatively modest temple, they will notice the more imposing domes of the Gyanvapi mosque, which Aurangzeb apparently built in 1669 after demolishing

the original Kashi Vishwanath temple. This will be militant Hindutva's eyesore and next target.

I would find it less alarming and not just because officials, including Vishal Singh, 36, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Kashi Vishwanath Development Authority (KVDA), remind me that the mosque is already well-protected with 30-foot-high solid steel pillars and CRPF armed with automatics. Mine is a realistic view that even if the rulers of the day were violent majoritarian malcontents and the institutions had become so malleable that they could no longer protect the Constitution, a building with easy access and view will be harder to harm than one hidden in a maze.

So, just the redevelopment of the area, clearing of the 300 metres to the riverfront for an un hindered view of the temple from the ghats and vice-versa, doesn't add to the threat. Some local Muslims leaders filed a petition in the Supreme Court, expressing these apprehensions on behalf of the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid but it was rejected.

The greater opposition, in fact, comes from Varanasi's Hindu conservatives. Walk down the narrow lane connecting the temple precinct's Neelkanth gate to the holiest Manikarnika Ghat, where cremations take place, and we run into well-known local writer and journalist/intellectual Trilochan Prasad. He's furious. Who can dare to change what was never destined to change? They have destroyed our heritage, everything that was sacred, hundreds of crores have been wasted, a way of life has been destroyed and more.

Like him or not, Narendra Modi is a risk-taker. This — the redevelopment of a mere 4.6 hectares, involving the demolition of 296 buildings — is among the greatest risks he has taken in his constituency. Because this means annoying not just the liberal but the most conservative residents of the Brahmin heartland, which takes pride in being eternal and unchanging. Almost 90 per cent of those shifted are



WRITINGS ON THE WALL

SHEKHAR GUPTA

Testosterone times for sport



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which is the highest legal body in sport, recently made a judgment that throws women's athletics into chaos. To boil it down, women can compete in any men's event (referred to as "open events" out of political correctness). This includes women who have "transitioned" and become men.

But transgender men are allowed to compete in women's events (notably in races between 400 metres and 1600 metres) only if their levels of testosterone are below a prescribed limit. What's more, women can compete in these events only if their testosterone levels are also below those limits.

The CAS ruling is based on an interpretation of complex and controversial science, and it is an apparent reaction to growing social trends of gender fluidity. It follows upon a two-year-old appeal by the brilliant South African runner, Caster Semenya, who was appealing against a ban from competing in her favourite events.

It used to be an article of faith for the International Olympic Association (IOA) and the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) to gender-segregate events, with few exceptions such as shooting and equestrian events. This segregation was so rigid that chess, snooker and bridge have had trouble winning IOA affiliation! Until the 1970s, women athletes literally had to undergo a nude physical exam before competition. That later changed to hormonal and chromosomal tests. The IOA allowed transgenders to compete after 2016.

Sex and gender are complicated issues, biologically and sociologically. Sex is typically determined by the possession of male or female reproductive organs. But some babies are born with both. It is further determined by the possession of two XX chromosome in females, or paired XY chromosomes in males. However, there are individuals with female reproductive

organs, who possess Y chromosomes.

Gender is determined by even more complex psychological and sociological factors. An individual who is biologically one sex may think of themselves as belonging to the other gender. As medical science has advanced, and social attitudes liberalised, there has been more "transitioning" with people going through the complicated, long-drawn process of changing sex medically via hormone treatment and surgery, to align with their mental gender.

Another determining factor for sex is supposed to be testosterone levels. This hormone is produced naturally by both sexes, but in a much larger volume by males. High levels are linked to more muscle mass, higher libido, more aggressive attitudes, deeper voices, more body hair, and so on. Semenya (and India's Dutee Chand) and many other high-performing women athletes have naturally high levels of testosterone. Many women athletes may possess a Y chromosome, which is linked to high testosterone production. Testosterone production can also be stimulated by doping, or exercise and dietary changes.

Men who transition and become women also have higher levels of testosterone, more muscle mass, etc. This can be a major advantage in a whole range of ath-

letics. By forcing them to cut testosterone levels to 5 nanolitres per litre of blood (lower than typical male levels of 8-30 nl, but higher than typical female levels of 1.8 nl), the IAAF is supposedly trying to level the track. But this punishes Semenya, Chand, and other non-trans women with naturally high levels of the hormone.

"Temporary transitioning" first happened decades ago, when East German women athletes (and some Bulgarians and Russians) were pumped with artificial testosterone and other stimulants. It became rarer after artificial testosterone was banned.

When Semenya started blitzing world records and was banned, she appealed. The CAS asked the IAAF, IOC *et al* to "prove" natural testosterone was a performance-enhancer. A recent study was cited by the IAAF to demonstrate that higher levels gave a 1.8 per cent performance advantage. This is huge, except that the study itself is still disputed.

This is a patchwork and unsatisfactory solution. As more "transitioning" occurs, other disciplines will also be affected. Given the rewards for sports performance, and the cachet that sporting success brings to nations, it would be naïve to imagine that people will not seek workarounds. We might just be entering a new era of "gender-doping".

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What the next government must do



LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

By the end of this month a new government will have been formed. Regardless of which political combination forms it, it will have to deal with three very basic questions because by the time its term ends, a quarter of the 21st century will already have gone by.

The first is what the nature and shape of the Indian state will be in the 21st century. How much more coercive will it be — or have to be to survive as a viable entity?

The second is about the nature and form of the Indian economy. How free will it be of the state? As we shall see, this is closely related to the first question.

The third question is about the overall political arrangement. On the principle

that it is better to hang together than to hang separately, will the BJP and the Congress come together in order to prevent power from passing permanently into the hands of the regional and small parties who are emerging as alternatives to the two national parties? This is not fat-fetched and let's therefore start with the political parties.

The BJP is contesting 437 seats and the Congress 423. This means that by their own reckoning they don't exist as a political force in 120-125 seats. In reality, this number is probably around 220 because remember that in 2004 the BJP and the Congress won only 282 seats between them, leaving the rest for the other parties.

In 2009 the BJP and the Congress won 322, leaving the rest for the others. In 2014 these two parties won 326, leaving the remaining seats to the rest. That's roughly how the cookie has been crumbling.

The question now is whether the anti-BJP and anti-Congress mood has gained more momentum. If it has, the BJP and the Congress may need to come together. This ought to be the biggest political development to watch out for in the next decade. For this to happen, the BJP will have to give up Hindutva and the Congress will have to mothball the Gandhi family.

The economy

But a mere readjustment of the political parties will not help the country. The economy will also have to grow really strong.

Recently a Harvard-trained Indian economist asked why, despite the complete absence of democracy, China has done well economically while India, with its all its democratic credentials, has done so poorly. He attributed the difference to the strong Chinese state and the weak Indian state.

This has been known since 1967. Gunnar Myrdal, the Nobel laureate, politely said India had a "soft" state. Since then we have fatalistically taken it for granted. But the time has come to ask the extent of coercive power the state must arrogate to itself to achieve economic ends. Clearly, what it has is insufficient.

If anything, the state's coercive powers have been hugely reduced, as a result of which all factors of production are either very costly or unavailable or both. To make them cheaper we need to debate if the state has to become more coercive as in other countries, including those of the Western hemisphere.

Given the structural, constitutional and political opposition to this, striking a balance is going to be a very tough challenge. One way of doing it would be to allow far

greater autonomy to the states by deleting the concurrent list of the Constitution and moving many of the items from the Central List to the States List. The states should then pay a fixed amount, revisable upwards every five years to the Centre.

This will not be easy but, then, the 21st century has only just begun. The next decade should be spent addressing these very basic problems.

The state

Reforming the state, as so many other countries have found, is the hardest thing to do because the principle of independence means that only those who need to reform the most can reform themselves. This is the old turf problem between parliament, executive and judiciary.

To abridge this self-defeating interpretation of independence, the other two must reform the third. Without this no reform will be possible.

That is why the next government should figure out a way by which any two of the three can propose reforms for the third. These must be made binding. If this requires an amendment to the Constitution, that is what the next government should work towards. After all it has been amended over a 100 times for far less.

Brahmins. Like its priests, Varanasi also must have the highest per capita population of political pundits. And many would tell you, with the greatest conviction, that this Modi-Yogi "misadventure" will cost them anything between 60,000 and 75,000 votes.

To understand the before-and-after you need to see the charts and plastic models in the office of CEO, who, incidentally, has a master's in administration from the University of Maryland. A sum of ₹600 crore has been sanctioned for the authority and the old buildings acquired after making a law in the UP Assembly. The owners have been given twice the circle rate and they seem happy by and large, with a total of a little over ₹200 crore paid out. Another ₹15 crore has been paid to residents who didn't own the buildings but claimed tenancy rights. Only 12 owners are still holding out, in the vicinity of the temple.

Demolition work is mostly over. Mr Modi performed the *bhumi puja* for the new precinct on March 8 and work should finish in another year or so. By now 43 temples have been discovered, entombed earlier in houses built over them, mostly as encroachment. When it is completed, this temple complex will become what almost nothing in old Varanasi can still claim to be, even after five years of having the prime minister as its MP: Clean, modern, and accessible. The point is, was it a risk worth taking?

Inner city development is one of India's greatest challenges. Most of our leaders have stayed clear of this minefield. The first who attempted it was a reckless tyrant who asked no questions (Sanjay Gandhi, Turkman Gate and Jama Masjid) and the other is the spiritual head of his sect whom nobody would ask a question: The Syedna of the Bohris now leading the ₹4,000 crore rebuilding of Central Mumbai's Bhandi Bazaar. Mr Modi is the third, but the first to try and do this using the laws, persuasion, and a wide open purse.

While we question his commitment to secularism and often enough expose the hollowness of his "sab ka saath, sab ka vikas" slogan, we also need to acknowledge that in some important ways he has challenged Hinduism's social conservatism. The Swachh Bharat and anti-open defecation campaigns are one aspect of it. The other, forgotten by now, was his removal of a large number of temples encroaching public spaces in Gujarat, which put him at odds with his original VHP hatchet-men. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor is his "panga" with Varanasi's conservative Brahminism.

Many wise and famous men have spoken immortal lines about Varanasi. Probably the most quoted are Mark Twain's: "Benaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together." But must it continue to be twice as messy and filthy as that? Surely, Hinduism deserves better for its holiest, oldest city, supposedly of salvation. Twain would be surprised reading the walls around the new, bulldozed emptiness at the temple today. They speak of change.

Few doubt that Mr Modi will be re-elected in Varanasi. We will also be able to guess on May 23 if it makes Mr Modi lose those tens of thousands of conservative votes pundits of Banaras predict. But in a year, if he completes the project, it could work wonders with his much larger, pan-national Hindu constituency. And you know what, I'm happy to say I am enthused by this project. It will be a great precedent for other old cities, hopefully for the restoration and pedestrianisation of Delhi's Chandni Chowk to its old glory. And if Mr Modi continues growing as a Hindu Hriday Samrat, better that it is done by restoring ancient temples than demolishing medieval mosques.

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Incredible comebacks

EYE CULTURE

SUHIT K SEN

It's literally unprecedented. Four English clubs have entered the finals of the two elite football tournaments in Europe. Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspurs will face off in the Champions League final in Madrid, while Arsenal and Chelsea will sort matters out in the Europa League final in Baku, Azerbaijan. The clubs are currently ranked second, fourth, fifth and third, respectively, in the English Premier League.

League leaders and current champions Manchester City and cross-town rivals Manchester United, lying sixth, miss out on this English party.

A brief look at the history of the tournaments is necessary to bring home the full significance of this amazing situation. Let's begin with the Champions League, which came into existence in 1955-56 as the European Champion Clubs' Cup, or just European Cup. It was renamed the Champions League in 1992 after its format was revamped. Since its inception in 1955, until this year, clubs from the same country have featured in the final only thrice: Real Madrid and Valencia in 1999-2000; Manchester United and Chelsea in 2007-08; and, Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund in 2012-13.

The Europa Cup began life as UEFA Cup in 1971-72. Again, after a change of format, it was renamed the Europa League in 2009-10. It has recorded clubs from the same country contesting the final five times: in 1971-72, the inaugural year, Tottenham Hotspurs played Wolverhampton Wanderers; Eintracht Frankfurt played Borussia Mönchengladbach in 1979-80; Internazionale played Roma in 1990-91; Internazionale played Lazio in 1997-98; and, Sevilla played Espanyol in 2006-07.

As is obvious, no country has sent four clubs to the finals of these elite tournaments in the same year, ever. Since the re-branding of the tournaments and the change in formats, the Champions League has had finalists from the same country thrice, while the Europa League has not yet registered that outcome. In this century, between them, the two tournaments have had clubs from the same country contesting the finals just thrice.

The significance of the 2018-19 finals lineup cannot, thus, be overemphasised. These statistics do not, however, even begin to tell the incredible footballing story that has gone into this achievement. The Europa League results might be seen as par for the course: Chelsea went into the second leg of their semi-final against Frankfurt at Stamford Bridge on the back of a 1-1 away result. Ultimately, they won on penalties, but were generally expected to win. Arsenal went into the second leg

against Valencia away on the back of a 3-1 home win. On the night in Valencia, they registered a credible 4-2 win, but it wasn't that big a deal.

The two second legs of the Champions League semi-finals were, on the other hand, very big deals. Liverpool had played well against Barcelona away in the first leg but had, nevertheless lost 0-3, undone by the kind of magic only one man can conjure. It was in reality Lionel Messi against Liverpool, and Messi won. Nobody other than Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp really gave Liverpool a chance of overturning that deficit. But Liverpool did it, pumping in four goals against the runaway La Liga champions without their two talismanic strikers, Mohammed Salah and Roberto Firmino. The latter has scored 16 times this season for Liverpool in all competitions, while Salah has scored 23 times for the club.

Despite missing these two "indispensable" members of its potent strike force, Liverpool went into the home game against Barcelona with just one thing on their mind: attack. Klopp's teams always look to attack and seize the initiative; they are not afraid of conceding. With only Sadio Mané available from their first-pick forward line, Liverpool chose to ramp up the pressure. Surprisingly, Mané, who has scored 26 goals for Liverpool this season, did not score as Liverpool won the tie 4-0. The goals were divided between midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum, who came on as a second-half substitute and scored twice, and squad striker Divock Origi, who opened the scoring and finished it off with a late winner.

Spurs' win against Ajax was no less a triumph of the spirit, though it was playing a young side who were making it to a European final after almost a quarter of a century. Nevertheless, Spurs were playing away on the back of a 0-1 home defeat. On the night in Amsterdam, Ajax had scored two goals in the first half to take their lead to 3-0. Spurs had just the second half to mount a challenge. Enter Lucas Moura, the Brazilian who had been off-loaded by Paris Saint-Germain as being surplus to requirements in January last year. He popped up with a second-half hat-trick, the first in a Champions League semi-final, to equalise. Spurs went to the finals via the away-goals rule.

Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino, like Klopp, believes in playing attacking football. In the second half of the tie, he succeeded in instilling enough self-belief in his team, despite missing their most potent weapon, striker Harry Kane, for his players to go for the kill.

So, the Champions League final will be played between two teams who just don't know when they are beaten. Unfortunately, one of them will have to lose.



# Opinion

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2019



## THREAT TO THE JUDICIARY

Union finance minister Arun Jaitley

The mass intimidation through social media is the single greatest threat to judicial independence... and the judiciary of the country has survived because of honour... Judges are gracious and take it with a smile

## US's H-1B fee hike, local hiring rules hurt Indian IT

Indian IT companies must now focus on emerging areas like automation, AI, cloud, etc

**I**T COMPANIES WILL have no option but to cough up more for H-1B visas if the US increases the visa application fee as US labour secretary Alexander Acosta has said it would. To be sure, they would not mind the additional costs even if these impact their margins because the US is, after all, their biggest market. What is worrying, however, is that Indian companies may not get the number of visas they are looking for. In April, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said it had received enough applications for fiscal 2019 which starts in October, reflecting the enormous demand for these permits. This was the seventh year in a row in which the visa cap was reached in the first five business days. However, while the number of visa applications has steadily declined over past three years—last year, USCIS received 190,000 cap-subjected H-1B petitions, 199,000 in 2018 and 236,000 in 2017—that hasn't helped India. Industry experts point out the rejection rate for H1B visas for Indian IT companies has been rising in the last few years with some exceptions. Moreover, the scrutiny too has increased. Data released by USCIS shows that 'request for further evidence' (RFE) for H-1B applications from Indians increased to 72.4% in Q4CY17 from 18.2% in Q1CY17.

An analysis by Axis Securities shows the denial rate for H-1B applications increased to 23.6% in Q4CY17 from 18.3% in Q1CY17, possibly due to the US government's order issued in April 2017 that more Americans be hired. The higher rate of denials and RFE for skilled visas continued in CY18. The H-1B approval rate was approximately 75% in Q1FY19 against the five-year average of around 90%, while the approval rate for L1 (A/B) dropped to about 74% in Q1FY19 against five-year average of ~82%—a trend similar to that seen for H-1B visas. That is worrying because exports of software services in FY18 were \$77.3 billion, not much higher than the \$74.3 billion in FY17. While demand should pick up over the long term—Nasscom predicts global technology services spends will go up to \$4 trillion by 2025 from \$2.8 trillion in 2014—and Indian IT companies are well-positioned to cater for the demand, they must have enough visas to be able to do so. This is the first season of H-1B petitions after USCIS announced the new rules. The new rules give preference to professionals with a post-graduate degree from US educational institutions; such professionals would get an opportunity in the 65,000 general category and, if they fail, in the 20,000 advanced degree pool. While IT companies will attempt to step up local hiring, it is not easy to find talent, especially for mid-level positions, and besides, local talent is expensive. The increase in costs is already visible and comes at a time when spends on key verticals such as banking could stay subdued in 2019, especially in important geographies such as the US. Where Indian firms can score is by focussing on the emerging areas such as AI, analytics, automation and cloud. Moreover, inorganic initiatives can help them grow faster. Given the fast-increasing competitive intensity in the industry, such opportunities may emerge. Given the headwinds overseas the governments back home—state and central—must make sure the IT industry faces no disruptions whatsoever. Else, the pace of growth could slow, hurting India's forex earnings.

## HIV & the ART of the possible

Studies show ART could help eliminate transmission

**A** NEW LANCET study should make India rethink how it extends anti-retroviral therapy (ART) support to those infected with HIV. Results from its PARTNER studies show that viral suppression brought about treatment with ART (plasma HIV-1 RNA <200 copies per ml) in the HIV-positive partner in a serodifferent couple (one partner HIV-positive, the other uninfected) translates into a zero risk of transmission in the case of unprotected sex between the couple—that is, the study backs a wider dissemination of the 'Undetectable equals Untransmittable' (U=U) message. While the message works to remove stigma and discrimination surrounding the disease, another inference from the study is that extending ART outreach with early testing and support for treatment could help eradicate the disease.

The Lancet study was conducted in two phases across 75 sites in 14 European nations. PARTNER 1 involved both heterosexual and gay couples and PARTNER 2 recruited only gay couples. The findings from both phases show condomless sex between serodifferent couples in which the HIV-positive partner was receiving virally suppressive ART didn't result in HIV transmission from seropositive partner to the seronegative one—some of the seronegative partners reported having condomless sex with others outside the pairing being studied, and, in the 15 cases of new infection, none of these could be phylogenetically linked to the seropositive partner. ART intervention at an early stage, when the viral load in a seropositive person is likely to be much lower than in an advanced stage of the infection or where the infection has led to AIDS, could help stop transmission, and thus, preventing new infections altogether could become easier.

Of India's 2.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA), only 79% are aware of their HIV status—and just 56% receive ART. To qualify for ART from the government hospitals, earlier, a seropositive person had to have a CD4 count less than/equal to 500 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>. In 2017, India moved to the 'test and treat' protocol prescribed by the WHO, which meant every HIV-positive individual within the country was to be put on ART treatment, regardless of her/his CD4 count. India had adopted the UNAIDS 90-90-90 goal, under which, by 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status, 90% of all people with HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression. Clearly, India is far from realising these targets. Despite a marked rise in ART coverage, many PLHA are unable to access the clinics. NACO's Link Workers Scheme under which volunteers from at-risk groups were trained to link their communities with HIV information, commodities and services. This has had some success, with 80% of those testing positive in these at-risk groups getting linked to ART centres. Adherence level, while at an encouraging 71% amongst adults receiving ART and 77% of among children, needs to be brought up to 100%. Centring the HIV/AIDS strategy on ART will thus also need to tackle lack of adherence, which could be due to fear of disclosure and social stigma, low social support, inadequate communication and education, and depression amongst PLHA. Given how drug-resistant HIV is being flagged by experts as the emerging threat, India needs to make the most of ART by ensuring a 100% outreach, and adherence.

## Fighting FAT

As a study published in *Nature* shows, the action must shift to rural areas now

**R**URAL OBESITY IS driving the global obesity epidemic, posits a paper published in *Nature*. The study conducted by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration challenge the popular belief that, with wealth concentration in urban areas, these are the major contributors to global obesity. The research, using Body Mass Index (BMI) data, bases its findings on reports that cover around 30 years of data (1985-2017). The BMI data covers nearly 112 million adults from 200 countries. The data reveals that the BMI levels rose by an average of 2.2 kg/m<sup>2</sup> for men and 2 kg/m<sup>2</sup> for women resulting in each person becoming 5-6 kg heavier. This rise has mainly been occurred in the rural areas.

The report shows that the BMI in higher income countries' rural areas was always high as compared to the urban areas. However, while the rural areas in low- and middle-income countries usually had it low, over the last 30 years, it has increased tremendously. The report states that this increase has been due to higher incomes, availability of transport and a general transition from labour-intensive work like agriculture to other forms of work. Even in agriculture, mechanisation has substituted human labour use. All these factors and the spread of MNCs producing processed, low-nutritional value snacks have contributed to rising obesity. In India, the average BMI for women went up by 2.4 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (to 22.1 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) in 2017 from 19.7 kg/m<sup>2</sup> in 1985. Average rise in BMI for rural men was 2.6 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, and for women 2.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. The research shows that health interventions in rural areas need to also consider obesity as a major issue; this can be tamed if a campaign against poor-quality, low nutritional value diets are made a part of the plan to fight malnourishment. Also, public health professionals need to ensure that children in rural areas, have access to and awareness of high-quality nutrition as household incomes go up and lifestyles changes begin to occur.

OPINIONS VARY, BUT NOT THE REALITY. 2014 ELECTION WAS CONTESTED AROUND THE ECONOMY—2019 ELECTION IS BEING FOUGHT ALONG SIMILAR LINES. WILL THE RESULT BE SIMILAR?

## NO PROOF REQUIRED

# Election 2019: Another black swan?

**T**HIS IS A polarised election. No, this is a presidential election. Wrong, this is a caste election. In any case, it is manifestly different from the 2014 "wave" election in which Narendra Modi won 282 seats with just 31% of the vote. So goes Conventional Wisdom-Delhi (hereafter, CWD).

This fact is cited most often, i.e., in 2014, Modi won the lowest percentage of any majority-elected PM in India. Extrapolating, scholars have derived the conclusion that Modi was a minority winner (only 31% vote), that he did not win a popular mandate, that 2014 was a black swan (very unusual event) election and therefore unlikely to be repeated again. Hence, the expert view that since black swans do not come in pairs, 2019 would revert back to a "normal" election.

What would the results of such a normal election look like? Between 1996 and 2009, the number of seats held by Congress wavered around 145, with a dip to 114 in 1999 and a bounce to 206 in 2009. Hence, the common refrain (or estimate) is that Congress is likely to obtain around 140-150 seats and thus be in a strong position to form the next government. Recall that in 2004, Congress obtained 145 seats and ran the government for the next 10 years.

For those arguing that 2014 was a black swan, and unusual, here are some sober (and sobering) statistics. Peruse through election history (short-cut, read my book *Citizen Raj*). Nehru and Indira Gandhi won six elections between them and garnered, on average, a vote share of around 42%. In 2014, the BJP contested 426 seats and obtained 31% of the vote. The NDA obtained 38.5% of the vote and won 336 seats.

The centre of gravity of the big Nehru-Indira wins was around 350 seats and 42% of the vote. The CSDS March opinion poll has the BJP increasing its vote share to 34%, and they are contesting about the same number of seats. With Nitish Kumar of Bihar replacing Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh, the forecast vote share of the NDA might well reach the Nehru-Indira average of 1952-1971 (and 1980). No respectable scholar, or historian, called those elections as unrepresentative of a democracy—then, why so "serious" about the NDA in 2014, and

## SURJIT S BHALLA

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possibly 2019?

I had the occasion to travel to both West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh from May 1 to May 7. Full disclosure—I am a card-carrying member of the Limousine Liberals (LL) team which, around major election time, farms out to the countryside to find out how real India is voting. The LL group is diverse—what follows are my observations, and interpretations, about Election 2019.

**CWD-Polarisation:** This is commonly understood as division between communities separated by caste (and religion). My travels suggested that while polarisation is there, it is more on the basis of whether you are pro-BJP or pro-Congress. In UP, the pro-Congress vote is not reflected in a vote for Congress, but a vote for the Mahagathbandhan. Indeed, possibly the most striking statistic from West Bengal and UP is that there was nary a mention of the Congress. Whether the centre of gravity of the Indian polity held by the Congress from Independence to 2014 has permanently shifted to the BJP we will only know on May 23rd. Conclusion—polarisation yes, but not in the Delhi sense.

**CWD-Development not a concern in 2019:** A certified CWD conclusion is that somewhat surprisingly, after 2014, Election 2019 is emphatically not about economic development. It is ostensibly about everything but. Regardless of the election result, this conclusion is certified wrong. Every journalist has her own style of soliciting a view from the potential voter. Mine is to never ask who the individual, or group of individuals, are going to vote for. I like to find out indirectly, i.e., what are the issues, what is the thinking on the problems being faced, etc. I then enjoy engaging the voter in a discussion about the issues. If one believes that there is no truth, just opinions about an "expected truth", then it is relatively less

difficult to infer voting preferences of the potential voter.

In an UP village, one of my fellow travellers asked me to talk to a group of youngish men about the "no jobs economy" they were facing. I readily jumped into the conversation (not being an angel, I had no fear) and asked the group about what had been happening to the economy overall. Is it true that it is difficult to find jobs? Yes, very difficult. This obviously happened because of Modi's economic policies, right? A worsened economic environment, right? Yes, the emphatic reply to both questions. But comparing today with 2014, is the situation worse, or the same, in terms of job availability? Here, unlike his highly educated counterparts in urban India (the old elite), the rural voter does not believe in arguments for the sake of argument. He admitted that the situation, in terms of jobs, was no worse than 2014, and may even be better.

The LL group arrives in large vans and enters villages, and constructs interviews by the roadside. I worry always, especially post 2014, as to how does the rural/semi-urban voter see us. Do they see us as part of the old elite (associated with the Congress) or as the new upwardly mobile elite (associated with the BJP)? Do they tailor their responses according to what they think we want to hear? Many seasoned journalists have come to the conclusion that Election 2019 will unleash the punishment of the silent voter. Is the silent voter pro-BJP or pro-Congress? Again, another defining view which will become known on May 23.

What nearly everyone admitted is

that their broadly defined income levels had gone up. There was construction of roads and delivery of nearly 24/7 electricity. Add toilets and LPG cylinders and bank accounts, mostly benefiting women. The beginnings of national health insurance. Motorcycles (and scooters) have increased manifold. Some even have got houses—don't know about West Bengal, but average welfare seems to have increased substantially in UP. The favourite explanation for the preponderance of motorcycle usage—given that there were (ostensibly) no jobs—was dowry demands for motorcycles. Still, progress.

**CWD-The fearful voter:** Did not see any evidence of fear on the part of the voter. She might be lying but she is not fearful in giving an opinion. At one roadside conversation, on the one-side were OBC's emphasising support for Modi; on the other side of the highway, barely 20 yards away, was a group of Muslims complaining about the bias against Muslims, and why they would definitely vote against the BJP (but not for the Congress).

**Farmer distress and cow politics:** If there is

one unanimous view emanating from the UP travel, it is that farmer distress is real, and that cow politics has deepened the distress among all, farmers and non-farmers. I have yet to come across anyone defending this policy, whether a BJP supporter or not. (I did not meet a self-confessed RSS man who might have a different view). Can anyone come up with a defence of this lose-lose policy? The poor Hindu farmer is hurt; Muslims lose their jobs, and in some instances, their life; the rural economy is hurt. Yet, the Hindu constitution, and Hindu India, continues to support this madness. Platitudes about gashalas are heard. What does this imply for voting in UP? Modi does not get the blame, Yogi does.

**Conclusion:** The number one policy concern of the new government should be a completely revamped policy towards agriculture, and animal husbandry.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PM Modi must talk about real issues

It is heartening to read that the top retired naval officers have rejected prime minister Narendra Modi's allegations that former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and his family used the aircraft carrier INS Viraat as a personal taxi for holidays in Lakshadweep in December 1987. The fact of the matter is that the former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was on officials visit, as clarified by vice-admiral Vinod Pasricha and former Navy chief admiral L Ramdas, and he did not misuse his position for enjoying a holiday! This exposes Narendra Modi's lie, who is misguiding the people with wrong information for his selfish political gain. It is high time Modi stopped this calumny and talked about the serious issues like lack of jobs, slowing growth, farm distress, etc. — Bhagwan Thadani, on e-mail

### Rise above caste

Caste and creed are defining features of Indian polity and politics. Needless to say, they are at play in elections and influence their outcome. Caste is weightier as it confers theological sanction to the hierarchical social order and sanctity to the notions of superiority and inferiority and purity and pollution based on the accident of birth. The overarching appeal of Hindutva is exploited to the hilt by the elitist and privileged upper castes to maintain their political dominance. The Hindu Right sometimes co-opts leaders from the lower castes on condition that they subscribe to upper caste supremacy. The only concession is that they can do so in the name of 'culture', 'nationalism' or the like. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

• Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

## Crazy to turn away skilled immigrants

The Trump school of thought doesn't realise that welcoming engineers, doctors and other such skilled foreigners is a win-win policy

## NOAH SMITH

Bloomberg



**US PRESIDENT DONALD** Trump has done a lot to scare high-skilled immigrants away from the US. He has made it harder for them to get green cards. He has blocked some foreign students from entering and discouraged others from working during school. He is considering banning the spouses of H-1B visa holders from working in the country at all. The harassment campaign appears to be working. H-1B applications are down, as is the number of visas being issued to overseas students.

It is hard to see what this accomplishes other than whipping up enthusiasm from Trump's anti-immigrant base. It stifles the flow of foreign students to the research universities that are the best hope for an economic revival in declining regions. It starves the tech industry of talented workers. It hurts native-born workers: Evidence suggests that skilled immigration actually raises wages for Americans of all skill levels, by strengthening the local tech industry. It drains government coffers, because skilled immigrants pay much more in taxes than they use in government benefits.

Nonetheless, some restrictionists seek an economic rationale. For example, on both the right and the left, opponents of skilled immigration have claimed that allowing the best and the brightest into the US hurts developing countries by robbing them of badly needed talent. This is the so-called "brain drain" argument.

The argument has some superficial plausibility. Growth in poor countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam and

Ethiopia matters for global welfare. Therefore, while it might benefit the US to have more smart Bangladeshis, Vietnamese and Ethiopians, putting their talents to use building next-generation factories in their home countries instead of designing apps for wealthy Americans seems like it would serve humanity better overall.

But this ignores all the good things that can happen to a developing country when its smart people move to the US. First of all, skilled immigrants and their diasporic descendants often invest in their ancestral countries—providing not just capital but also rich-country ideas and technology. Sometimes, members of diasporas even move to their ancestral countries to start businesses, a phenomenon known as brain gain. Sociologist AnnaLee Saxenian has chronicled how this process has benefited countries such as China and India.

That's not all. The number of educated people in poor countries isn't fixed—lots of smart people probably fail to get a good education because economic opportunities for graduates are so limited. Harvard Business School economist William Kerr has documented how, when the US admits more skilled immigrants from a country, more people in that country tend to seek out higher education in the hope of emigrating, too. Many never

make it to the US, but instead apply their skills in their home countries.

In other words, the US can actually increase a country's education level—and boost its economy—by taking in more of its educated people. A 2017 paper by economists Gaurav Khanna and Nicolas Morales theorises that skilled immigration to the US in the 1990s—specifically, the boom in H-1B visas—jump-started India's information technology boom in the following decade. Noting that the IT industry jumped from 1.2% of India's economy to 7.5% by 2012, the authors write: "Many [H-1b] workers returned to India...this educated workforce in India enabled the Indian IT sector to grow rapidly...and over time, India became a major producer of software[.]"

Growth in India is one of the most important forces behind world poverty reduction. Thus, the US probably did the human race a great service by welcoming high-skilled immigrants from India in the 1990s.

Now, it is time for the US to do other countries a similar service. Nigeria, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Indonesia and other poor countries have enormous reserves of underused talent. Welcoming this talent is as close to a win-win policy as the US will ever find.

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



# US steadily upping the game to counter China

The US has claimed that China's coast guard and fishing boats are not harmless, benign entities, but de facto maritime militia expanding China's presence in the seas. The new US position is that hostile behaviour from the coast guard and fishing boats will no longer be treated benign, but on a par with the Chinese navy

**ANURAG VISWANATH**

The author is a Singapore-based Sinologist, and adjunct fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. Views are personal



**C**HINA'S RECENTLY CONCLUDED Belt and Road Forum (BRF)—the second (2019) following the first (2017)—has hogged limelight and stoked debate on its virtue and vice alike. The din surrounding the BRF has been so loud that it glosses key strategic moves in Asia. On April 24, a day before the BRF, China's aircraft carrier Liaoning conducted a combat drill in the East China Sea with 'anti-aircraft and anti-submarine warfare training'. In tandem, the US announced that it will unveil a new Indo-Pacific strategy at the upcoming Shangri-La Dialogue (May 31-June 2, in Singapore). China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) pragmatism about China nor dented China's global ambitions—including that on the high seas. Despite the best intents of China's economic diplomacy, is the US steadily upping the game to counter China?

At the BRI Summit, China came clean unveiling the old BRI in a new avatar, repackaging as Green BRI (green investments, green projects) and Clean BRI (corruption free, transparent and level-playing field where Chinese and non-Chinese companies can compete). This honed China's 'peaceful rise' as a conscientious global player whose trillions of forex surplus would be used for greater common good. The BRI also received copious press devoted to the recent rethinking by American researchers that China may not be a loan shark (given that several of its loans have sunk, with no or little payback). Yet the BRF sounded out the political fracture—between those who attended (5,000 participants from 150 countries and leaders from 36 coun-

tries) and those who didn't (among others, US, India, Australia, Japan, South Korea and North Korea).

US actions can be explained in the context that China is not helping its own case. China's live drills in the East China Sea and China's actions in the 3.5 million square km South China Sea have been controversial, to say the least.

Historically, China was not a great naval power in the manner of the La Royale (French Navy, 17th century) or the Royal Navy (UK Navy, 16th century). To be fair, the 15th century Ming dynasty explorer—the Muslim eunuch He's seven voyages reaching the Horn of Africa and Persian Gulf are famed. But rather than naval ships, China's merchant ships, junks and dhows traced their footprint on the economy, demography and culture in South East Asia with migration, trade and exchange.

But in the last decades as China has become richer, there has been a resurgence of nationalism that is drifting China back to history citing historical not legal claims in the seas—the reefs, atolls, islets and islands of the East China Sea and South China Sea. The Chinese



ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

want to escape being a continental power and the First Island Chain (East Asian Coastline) with the Second Island Chain and Third Island Chain under the US umbrella.

But it's how China is going about it, that has become contentious. In the East China Sea, the dispute is between China and Japan, but in the South China Sea, there are other claimants including the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and Brunei.

China's drills in the East China Sea are one thing between Japan and China, but in the South China Sea with several claimants, China's actions are being perceived as belligerent. China's reclamation efforts and land acquisition have resulted in artificial islands. Reports and satellite images suggest military fortification and military installations, surveillance aircraft, guided missile destroyers and airport runways. China-watchers say China is consolidating a 'strategic triangle' in the seas. In fact, the US Naval Institute has characterised China's actions as 'maritime grey zone operations' that ride the thin line between war and peace. In other words, China may be narrowly engaging in war without war.

The case of the Philippines vacillating between ally US and aid-giver China illustrates the stakes in the high seas. The issue of Scarborough Shoal (disputed between China and the Philippines, seized by China in 2012) is alive. In 2016, the Philippines took China to The Hague, which ruled that China's claims had no legal basis. But China's commitment to

invest in President Rodrigo Duterte's proposed 75 infrastructure projects under the rubric of 'Build, Build, Build' managed to let the sleeping dogs lie.

But in early April, President Duterte protested China's fishing vessels swarming in on the disputed Pag-asa (Thitu) Island, warning that Philippine troops would resort to 'suicide missions' if China touched it. The US said that it would come to the aid of the Philippines in case of any attack, which the Philippines did not refute.

The US has claimed that China's coast guard and fishing boats are not harmless, benign entities, but de facto maritime militia expanding China's presence in the seas. The new US position is that hostile behaviour from the coast guard and fishing boats will no longer be treated benign, but on a par with the Chinese navy.

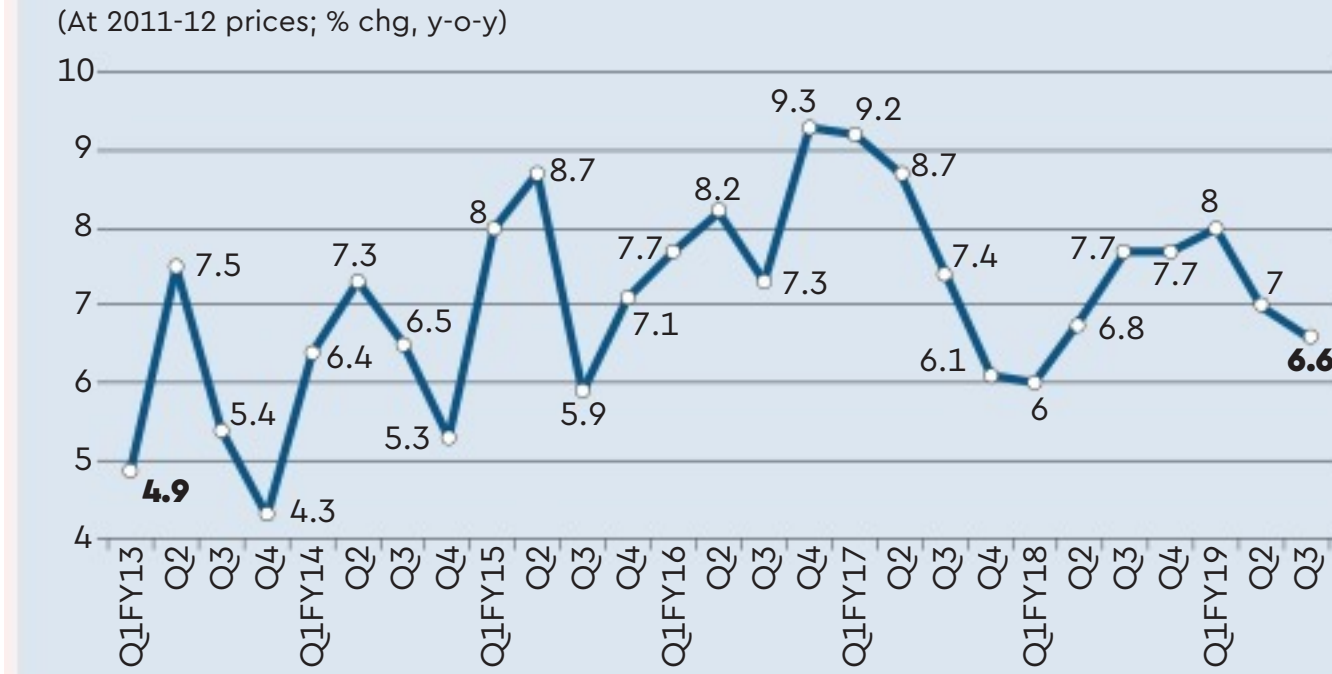
The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, Randall Schriver, has indicated that the US would back the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for a code of conduct (COC) 'consistent with existing international laws and norms' applicable to all.

It is no accident, too, that the US has stepped up Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) with two warships sailing through the Taiwan Strait, bringing the total number of transits to 92 (since 2007). In 2018, British navy warship conducted a FONOP and in 2019 a French warship made a transit through the Taiwan Strait. The British and French actions are turning points that indicate a growing consensus on the strategic implications of China's rise.

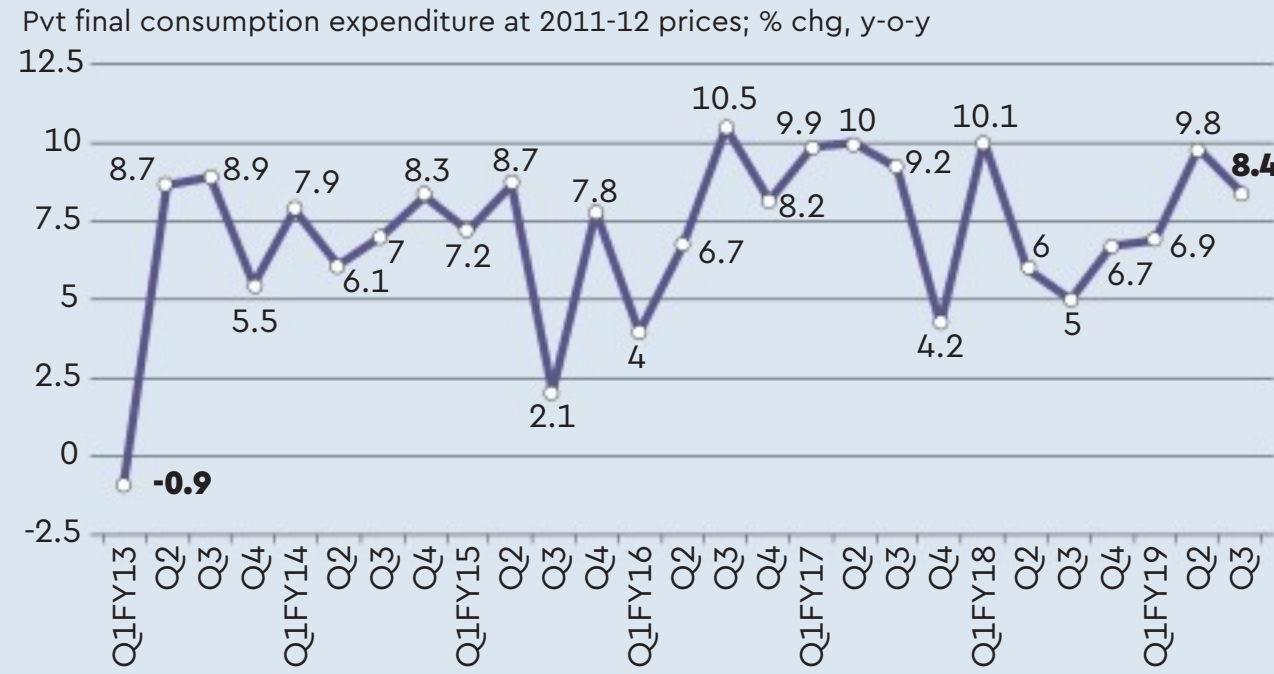
China's BRF party has ended on a high, what with cooperation agreements worth \$64 billion signed, a nod to greater multilateralism and participation, but the ground seems shifting. Platitudes of trade and cooperation aside, the storm is brewing in the seas. What's more, in the polarised political spectrum of the US, President Donald Trump has bipartisan support on this. It's obviously the issue.

## DATA DRIVE

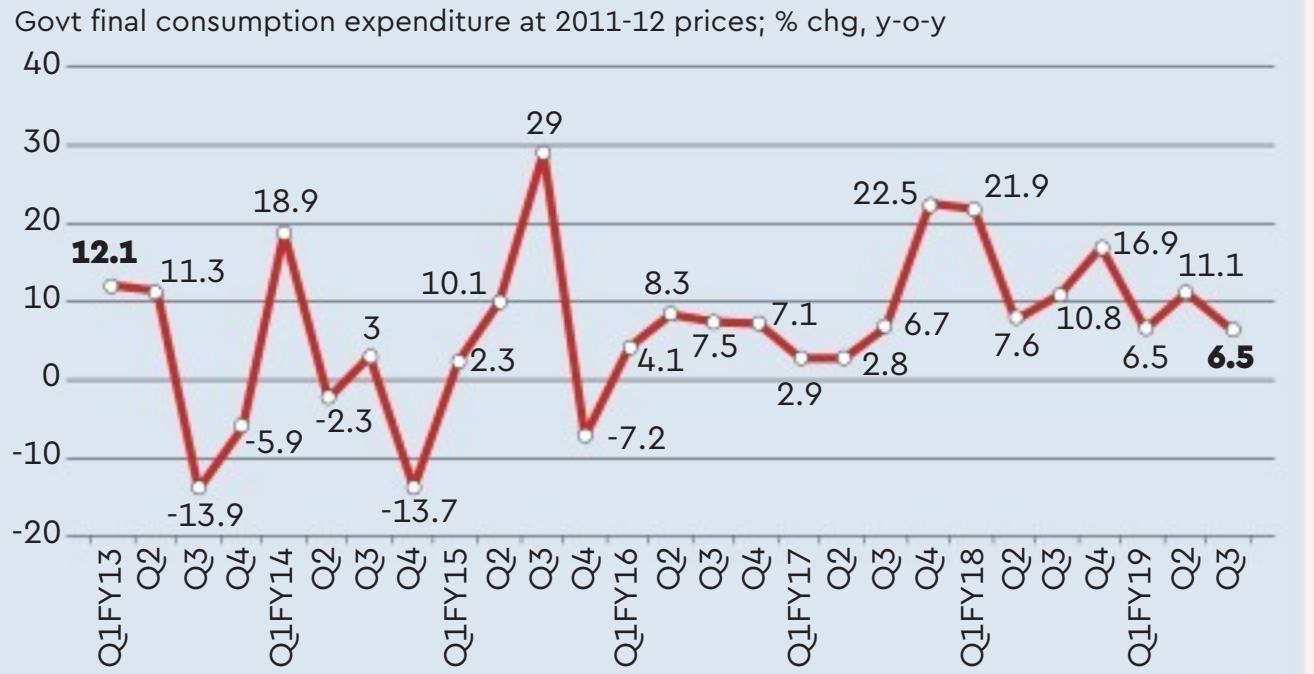
### As GDP growth slows down...



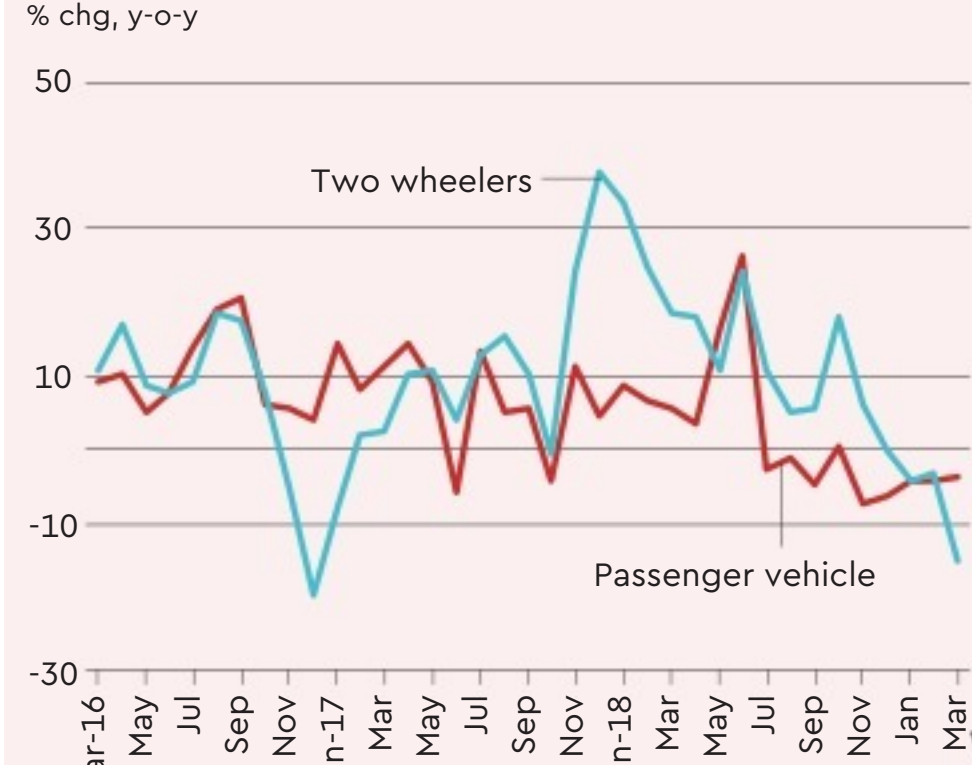
### ...private consumption takes a hit



### Even govt spending slows down



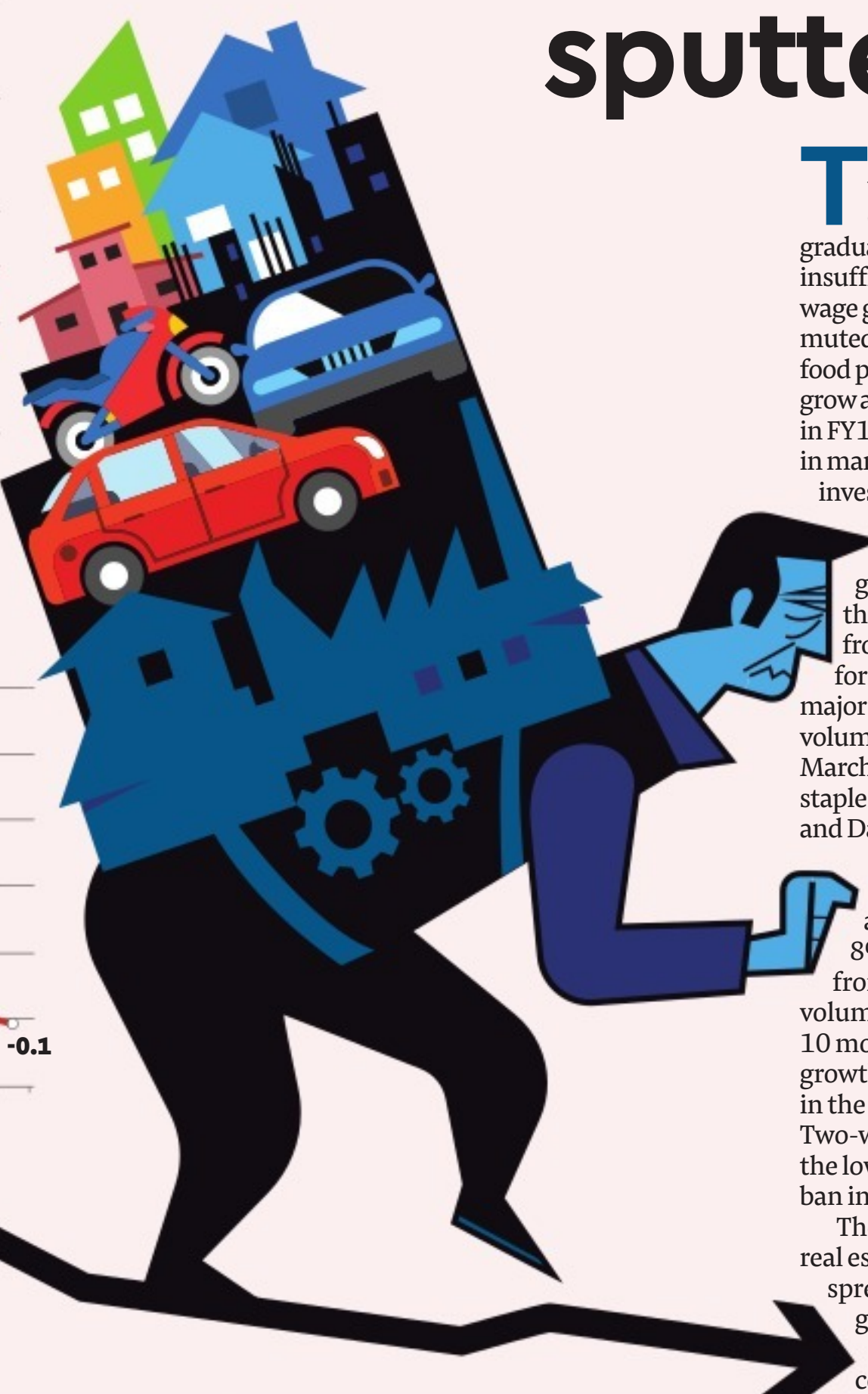
### Auto sales tumble



### Factory output growth drops to 21-month low



## Consumption sputters



**T**HE RISING RURAL distress has led to slowdown in private consumption as households have gradually reduced consumption due to insufficient income growth. Agricultural wage growth remains depressed due to muted growth in domestic and global food prices. The economy, which is likely to grow at 7% in FY19 as compared to 8.2% in FY17, has been battered by a slowdown in manufacturing output, tepid growth in investment, declining household savings and muted credit. Volume growth at leading FMCG companies that derive more than a third of sales from rural areas has dropped. In fact, for the first time in five quarters, FMCG major HUL reported single digit (7%) volume growth in the three months to March this year. Even other consumer staple companies such as Britannia, GSPL and Dabur are witnessing slowdown.

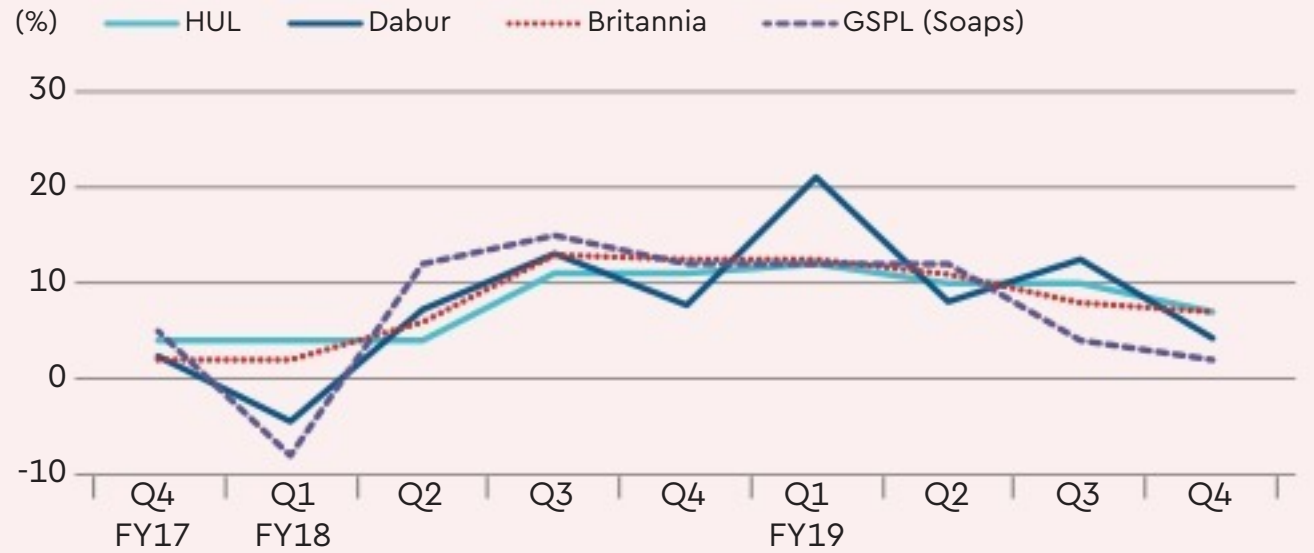
Automobile sales have seen a sharp slowdown in recent months as retail sales of motor vehicles fell 8% to 1.64 million units in April from a year. In fact, passenger car volumes have dropped in nine of the past 10 months. As consumers curb spending growth in sales of passenger cars was 2% in the last fiscal year, the lowest in five. Two-wheeler volume growth, too, fell to the lowest since Narendra Modi's note ban in November 2016.

The slowdown, which started with real estate sales five years ago, has now spread across. The priority of the next government will be to revive the economic growth and pump up consumption to boost investment.

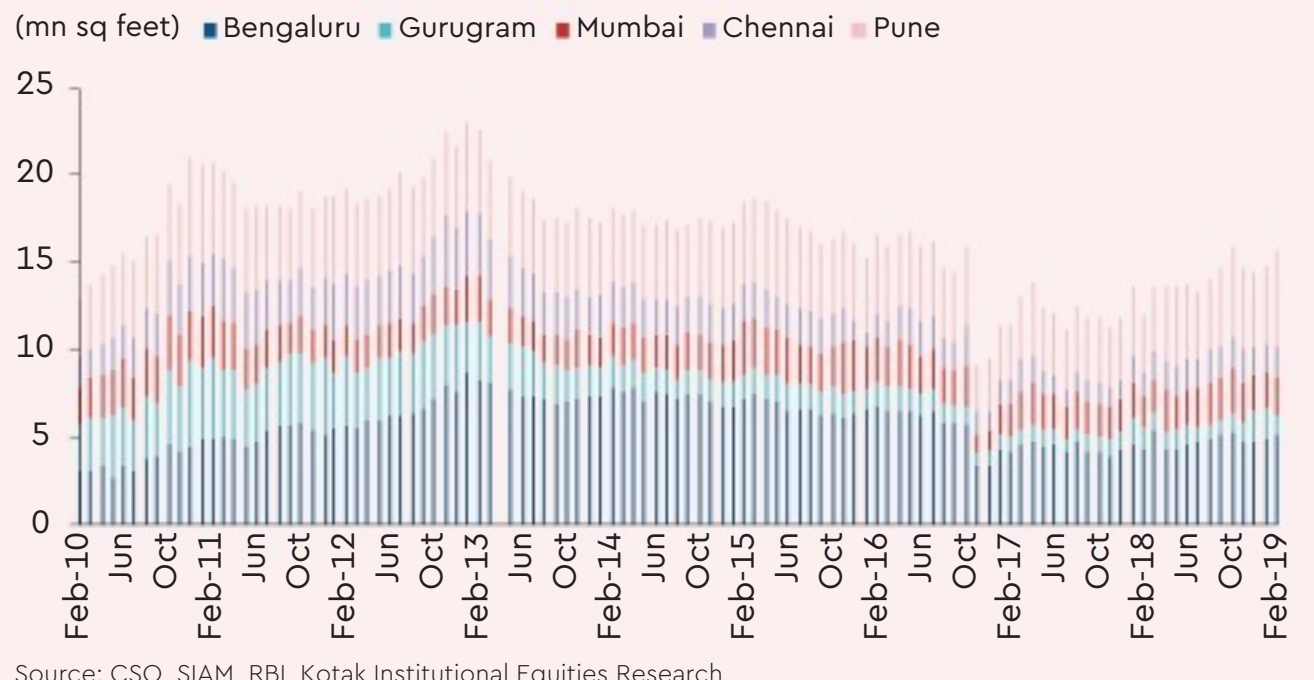
### Savings have declined over the past few years



### Consumer staples companies are witnessing slowdown



### Real estate demand has picked up but still below FY13 peak level



Source: CSO, SIAM, RBI, Kotak Institutional Equities Research





## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# The Sadhvi portent

BJP's move to field Pragma Thakur in Bhopal underlines an ominous political paradigm shift



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND MALVIKA MAHESHWARI

## GULF WARNING

Iran's partial withdrawal from nuclear deal is a signal: Iran-US conflict may become a costly showdown

TEHRAN'S DECISION to stop adhering to some of the provisions of the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement with the international community is a sharp reminder that dark clouds are gathering again in the Middle East. When US President Donald Trump pulled out last year from the nuclear deal negotiated by his predecessor, Barack Obama, Iran had the option of walking out too. It did not. Tehran had hoped that the European powers as well as Russia and China might help limit the effects of America's renewed hostility. The Europeans had criticised the US withdrawal, affirmed that Iran was in compliance with the nuclear agreement, and offered to sustain economic engagement with Iran if Tehran stayed true to the deal. China and Russia had criticised the US decision as unilateral and arbitrary. But Iran's hopes of exploiting the cracks among the great powers are looking increasingly unreal as the actions of Europe, China and Russia have not matched their words. Iran's "strategic patience", in the words of President Hassan Rouhani, is wearing thin.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration is ratcheting up pressure on Iran. Last month, it designated the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation. This is the first time the US has labeled the entire wing of a country's armed force as "terrorist". Citing an unexplained threat from Iran, President Trump has despatched the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group towards the Gulf. Meanwhile, US sanctions aimed at choking Iran's oil exports and squeezing its finances are beginning to bite. Tehran has no reason to believe that the Trump Administration is open to a reasonable compromise that might include a revised nuclear deal to address any real US concerns. It is no secret in Washington that regime change in Tehran is the Trump Administration's real goal.

Iran's partial withdrawal from the nuclear agreement is aimed at convincing Washington's allies in Europe as well as its competitors that time is running out to save the deal. Tehran is conscious of Europe's difficulty in effecting a real break with the US in the Middle East. It also knows that China and Russia have their own fish to fry with America and are unlikely to challenge the US on Iran. Worse still, Moscow and Beijing could use Tehran as a lever in their bargaining with the US. Iran might lack real friends among the major powers, but it has the capacity to bring the house down in the Middle East. With armed proxies across the region, Tehran is well placed to launch an asymmetric war against the US and its allies. Iran has also threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz — the strategic waterway that moves oil from inside the Gulf to the rest of the world — if its own oil sales remain blocked. With neither side ready to step back, the conflict between the US and Iran might well be headed for a costly showdown.

## ATTACKING ATISHI

Her predicament is not an isolated instance in a political system where women must struggle daily against misogyny

A PAMPHLET CONTAINING a series of derogatory statements about the Aam Aadmi Party's East Delhi candidate, Atishi, has once again brought to the fore the ugliness of gender bias in Indian politics. The unsigned and unclaimed pamphlet, written in English, cast aspersions not just on the Rhodes scholar's educational qualifications but also on her personal life. While the AAP has accused Atishi's opponent, BJP candidate Gautam Gambhir, of issuing the pamphlet, the BJP has dismissed it as the AAP's bid to defame the party.

Atishi, who is credited with contributing to the AAP government's attempts to reform Delhi's government school system, has had a taste of the rough and tumble of Indian politics. In August last year, after her candidature was announced, she decided to drop her second name — Marlena — in a bid to keep the attention focussed on her work and not her identity. Yet, even as the political discourse in the country hits a new low, it's difficult to see Atishi's current predicament as an isolated instance of political skulduggery. Women who enter politics in India find themselves in an unequal struggle to make their voice — and their work — carry. Over and over again, they are put down by a patriarchal order that refuses to recognise their efforts. From actor Jaya Prada, denigrated time and again by Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan to the BJP's Smriti Irani, from the BSP's Mayawati to Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, from the AIADMK's Jayalalithaa to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, women politicians across the spectrum have been at the receiving end of targeted abuse that is viciously personal and cuts through any pretence of decorum. While a handful of leaders such as the BJP's Naveen Patnaik and the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee have now recognised the importance of addressing this unequal power dynamics by incorporating more women in their ranks, many political parties still treat their women colleagues as props for electoral gains, with no room of their own.

Yet, this is also a time when political parties across the spectrum have recognised the power of increasing women turnouts and are wooing women voters with promises and schemes. Greater participation of women in the electoral process is being lauded as a decisive factor in the ongoing general elections. At such a defining cusp, it is all the more imperative to call out toxic misogyny every time it rears its head in public life or private, to push back against a system that must be held accountable, not just selectively but each and every time.

## THE RIGHT SWIPE

Searches for dating sites are outpacing those for matrimonials. But let's not sound death-knell of Indian conservatism just yet

LOVE FINDS A way — or at least an algorithm. Google's recently released report, based on a survey of the queries its search engine has received in India, shows that the interest in dating sites and apps has been growing at a far more rapid rate — 40 per cent — than in matrimonial portals (14 per cent) in 2018. One can imagine, already, the dated detractors of romance fuming at this turn of events. After all, vandalising people and places on Valentine's Day is far easier than trying to police the hormones and hyperbole of young love on the world wide web. But they need not worry.

Indian culture, and business, has proved to be more than a match for the consumer and lifestyle choices that global conglomerations have sought to market here. And Tinder, Bumble and all the other dating apps have been no exception to the "McAloo tikification" phenomenon. Tinder, meant broadly for "hooking up" in much of the first world, bears testimony to this in its advertisements: A concerned mother ensures her daughter is dressed in Indian chic, bindi included, before she is off to meet Mr Right (swipe).

In many contexts in India, love — or even just the assertion of agency that dating implies — can be a truly rebellious act. It has the power to transcend boundaries of religion, caste and class and of women and even men taking control of their physical and emotional destiny. But much like McDonald's and its satvik burgers, dating apps — and dating in general — threaten to give in to consumerism, backed by regressive tradition. Soon, if things go ill, dating apps will have filters for caste, income, skin colour, educational qualifications. But perhaps we are being too pessimistic. According to the survey, people's searches about food doubled in 2018, and pizza topped the list, with biryani up there as well.

DEMOCRACY, WHILE A robust political form, is one whose actual mechanisms might not necessarily be about principle-driven behaviour or perfection of governance. High levels of corruption, political violence, the entry of criminals into Parliament, are examples pertinent to many democracies today. In India, mafia leaders and those accused of gruesome crimes have chosen to contest elections with the aim of converting their catalogue of criminality into something more respectable.

Despite such muddled waters, elections in India had until now remained essentially separated from at least some varieties of public violence and those accused of it. Terrorism and terror-related offences are examples of violence that were still considered to weaken, not aid, access to power. Designating certain forms of violence as terrorism, bombings on civilians included, is done not simply on the basis of the idea that they are attacks on the government or law enforcement, but also on the basis of a belief that the state and its institutions cannot provide implicit or explicit cooperation to such violence undertaken by sub-national groups against non-combatant targets. If so, how do we explain the shift in democratic politics when those arrested on charges of terrorism and out on bail are now beginning to contest elections? What sort of a moral force are they able to wield?

One striking example in the 2019 general election is the candidature of Pragma Singh Thakur. According to the FIR prepared by Hemant Karkare in the 2008 Malegaon case, she took part in the Bhopal meeting of Abhinav Bharat where Himani Savarkar (the daughter of Gopal Godse) became president of the organisation and in the course of which the accused "conspired together to take revenge against Muslims in Malegaon by exploding a bomb at a thickly populated area. Accused (Lt. Colonel) Purohit took the responsibility of providing explosives. Accused Pragma Singh Thakur took the responsibility of providing men for the explosion. In this meeting all the participants agreed and consented to commit the explosion at Malegaon." On June 11, 2008, Thakur allegedly introduced Ramchandra Kalasangra and Sandip Dange to Amritananda Dev Tirtha, another accused,

Even as its own campaign is designed around 'national security', the current BJP leadership's encouragement to Thakur, her comment on cursing ATS chief Hemant Karkare to death, all convey less about their ideas of democracy than about the way in which they have contributed to the decline of the basic social etiquette and political norms.

as two reliable persons who would plant the bomb in Malegaon. In early July, she allegedly asked Tirtha to direct Purohit "to give explosives" to Kalsangra and Dange in Pune.

After the blast, another member of Abhinav Bharat, Major Ramesh Upadhyay, a former defence services officer, was arrested. He admitted that he had taken part in three meetings with Thakur and other accomplices on the Bhonsala Military School, Nashik premises to plan the Malegaon blast. Ajay Misra, the public prosecutor, declared: "Upadhyay, who was posted in the artillery department while working with the Indian military, is suspected to have guided the arrested accused on how to assemble a bomb and procure RDX." Today, Upadhyay is the Hindu Mahasabha candidate from Ballia and another accused mentioned in Karkare's FIR, Sudhakar Chaturvedi, is contesting as an independent in Mirzapur.

Thakur, on bail for medical reasons, is currently under trial for several terrorism-related charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Her entry in electoral politics under the aegis of the BJP underlines striking shifts in India's democracy. First, it points to the widening of the already rich assortment of candidates who are accused of criminal offences. What this means is not that even the murkiest forms of criminality simply have become more acceptable, but that its expansion occurs more or less in tandem with the eroding legitimacy of public office, severance of trust reposed in elected representatives, and the elevation of ethnic and religious persecution.

Second, it is also a comment on the Hindu nationalists. The use and normalisation of various forms of violence — riots, demolition of the Babri Masjid, vigilantism etc — has cemented not just their electoral and ideological position, but also turned the brutal hostility against minorities into a routine affair. However, the extent to which the Hindu nationalist old guard would have gone to support those accused of terrorism is less straightforward. Even as its own campaign is designed around "national security", the current BJP leadership's encouragement to Thakur, her comment on cursing ATS chief Hemant Karkare to death, all convey less about their ideas of democracy than about the way in

which they have contributed to the decline of basic social etiquette and political norms of a diverse society.

Third, one of their tactics in the pursuit of such politics is to claim victimhood. Thakur's campaign has claimed that her fight is against the "conspiracy to insult Hindu religion," against those who "give a bad name to the entire country," who "insult(ed) a woman, a sadhvi, and a patriot," who put her in jail "illegally and tortured (her) physically, mentally and in every way". While the Human Rights Commission that probed into her allegations of torture in August 2014 had to close the case because it could not find any evidence, the discourse of victimisation reflects an attempt at legitimising majoritarian backlash and suggests a perversion of the language of the law and liberalism. It is perverse not simply in the sense that fact checking might be compromised or in the sense of embarrassing those in whose name they seem to be fighting. But most importantly, it is perverse in the sense that convenience and malleability of victimhood have regularly begun to shape political and ideological agendas.

Finally, the electoral arithmetic that has informed Thakur's entry in politics accompanies deep institutional malaise. A decade since the bombings, people know little about the perpetrators. What does the state make of the "evidences", the "FIRs", and the lists of "prime accused"? The NIA, judiciary, police, and government represent aspects of state power: How do they justify the power they wield in the absence of any commitment to security and justice for its citizens?

The implications seem to be that the more deadly the crimes people are associated with, higher are their chances for a career in politics; the more the business of elections relies on crime, the more is the depreciation of any meaningful claims of being a democracy; the more the electorate assimilates this as banal and logical, the more they deprive themselves of the means of justice.

*Jaffrelot is senior research fellow at CERIS-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, and professor at King's India Institute, London. Maheshwari is assistant professor of political science at Ashoka University*



KHALED AHMED

PRIME MINISTER IMRAN Khan was in Iran on April 22, mending fences with Tehran over cross-border terrorism, which bothers both the countries. His statement that "Iran also suffered from terrorism from Pakistan" has upset many Pakistanis. Khan had also requested Tehran to stop the terrorists on its side, who recently killed 14 Pakistanis on the Karachi-Gwadar highway. The PPP-PMNLN opposition in parliament and the media cried that Khan's statement had put Pakistan at risk by admitting to terrorism.

There was nothing wrong with Khan's "confession". That the Iranian Baloch terrorists organise themselves in Karachi's underworld is globally known. And that Pakistan has helped Iran capture members of the big terrorist outfit, Jundallah al-Adl, also is no secret. In fact, President Hassan Rouhani could have realised on hearing Khan that Tehran too needed to deal with the Pakistani Baloch rebels who flee into Iran. (Khan didn't mention Kulbhushan Jadhav.) Secessionism could create a sovereign Greater Balochistan by breaking up both Iran and Pakistan.

The case that allowed PM Khan to "confess to terrorism" in Tehran is interesting. Abdolmalek Rigi, the head of Jundallah al-Adl, was born in Sistan-Balochistan province in Iran in 1983, from the Regi tribe of Baloch ethnicity. He was a teenager when he founded his outfit. He never went to school but fled across the border to Karachi where he joined the infamous Jamia Banuria, the madrasa where the UN-accused terrorist Masood

## A CONFESSION IN IRAN

Pak PM admitting to his country harbouring terrorists is a significant moment

Azhar was trained. Pakistan cannot absolve itself from the guilt of allowing this nursery of anti-Shia terrorism to train killers who today threaten the state of Pakistan. Banuria's chief, Mufti Shamzai, was killed by a Shia youth.

Pakistan's indifference about Rigi is questionable and Imran Khan is clearly bothered by that. Read this: "US cable channel HDNet's television news magazine Dan Rather Reports, interviewed Rigi and showed a video of him personally cutting off his brother-in-law Shahab Mansouri's head. In the same interview, Rigi described himself as 'an Iranian' and denied that his goal is to form a separate Baloch state. He claimed that his goal is to 'improve conditions for the ethnic Baloch [in Iran]', and that his group is fighting exclusively for the rights of Sunni Muslims in Iran."

When the Persian service of Voice of America, in 2007, introduced Rigi as "the leader of popular Iranian resistance movement" and used the title of "Doctor" with his name, there was public condemnation by the Iranian-American community in the US, many of whom were opponents of the Iranian government. Pakistan still sat back and allowed him to muster his group in Karachi and Balochistan.

In 2010, Pakistan woke up or changed policy. A Tehran-based news analysis site disclosed that "Rigi was arrested by, or with the help of, Pakistani intelligence officials, who took action after consulting with the United States". Pakistan's ambassador to Tehran, Mohammad Abbas, also claimed that "the

arrest could not happen without Pakistan's help". On May 24, 2010, Abdolmalek's brother, Abdolhamid Rigi, too was executed.

The PMNLN opposition, now beating their chests over Imran Khan's "confession", should recall what happened to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif when he told the Pakistan army in 2016 that harbouring terrorists and training them was isolating Pakistan. This appeared in the infamous *Dawn* leak that finally got rid of the prime minister. Reporter Cyril Almeida, now taken off his job, revealed what Pakistan's foreign secretary had told the Sharif-ISI meeting: "Mr Aizaz Chaudhry stated that the completion of the Pathankot investigation and some visible action against Jaish-e-Mohammad were the principal (American) demands. Chaudhry suggested that while China had reiterated its support for Pakistan, it too indicated a preference for a change in course by Pakistan. Specifically, while the Chinese authorities have conveyed their willingness to keep putting on technical hold a UN ban on Masood Azhar, they have questioned the logic of doing so repeatedly."

Under Imran Khan, Pakistan has developed a consensus — not without input from China — of getting rid of the "terrorists" trained and sheltered by it. Without this consensus, Khan wouldn't have "made a clean breast" of it like that in Tehran.

*The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan*



## MAY 11, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

### AMU ATTACKS

HOME MINISTER H M Patel today assured an agitated Lok Sabha that the government would go "thoroughly and fully" into various aspects of the attack on the students of Aligarh Muslim University during their train journey to Delhi yesterday. He rejected the near-unanimous demand for a judicial, parliamentary or a high-level independent probe into the incident. An "official inquiry" would be sufficient, Patel asserted.

### IRAN OIL HIKE

IRAN HAS DECIDED to increase the price of a barrel of crude oil by 60 US cents effective from May 15 due to market demands, a

National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) official announced in Tehran today. The 60 US cents affects all existing contracts, the official said, and was in addition to a surcharge imposed on April 15. The 3.6 per cent increase on all grades of oil came as a surprise and was expected to bother the tenuous stability into which oil prices had settled. The increase came as post-revolutionary Iran was producing well below its potential, as a matter of government policy.

### SUING MOYNIHAN

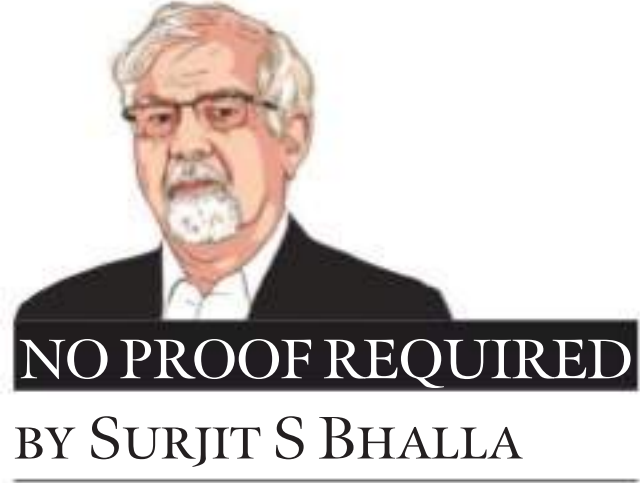
UNION HOME MINISTER H M Patel advised Indira Gandhi to sue the Indian publishers of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's book, which

speaks of CIA pay-off to the Congress party and once to her for election purposes. Patel said this during a three-hour discussion on a call-attention motion in the Rajya Sabha today. While he denied that there was collaboration between Indian intelligence agencies and those of other countries, Patel added that they kept each other informed. There was also a plea for the placement of a report prepared in 1967 by the Central Bureau of Investigation on the subject, on the table of the Rajya Sabha. Members of the Communist Party of India described Moynihan as a Zionist and imperialist. Mody, however, claimed Moynihan as his friend whom he respected.



## Another Black Swan?

Opinions vary, but not reality. The 2014 election was contested around the economy, the 2019 election is being fought along similar lines. Will the result be similar?



**NO PROOF REQUIRED**  
BY SURJIT S BHALLA

THIS IS A polarised election. No, this is a presidential election. Wrong, this is a caste election. In any case, it is manifestly different from the 2014 "wave" election in which Narendra Modi won 282 seats with just 31 per cent of the vote. So goes Conventional Wisdom-Delhi (hereafter CWD).

That Modi became prime minister with the lowest percentage of vote share any winning party in India has got in a general election is cited often. Extrapolating, scholars have derived the conclusion that Modi was a minority winner (only 31 per cent vote), that he did not win a popular mandate, that 2014 was a Black Swan (very unusual event) election and, therefore, unlikely to be repeated again. Hence, the expert view that since Black Swans do not come in pairs, 2019 would revert back to a "normal" election.

What would the results of such a normal election look like? Between 1996 and 2009, the number of seats held by the Congress wavered around 145, with a dip to 114 in 1999 and a bounce to 206 in 2009. Hence, the common refrain (or estimate) that the Congress is likely to obtain around 140-150 seats and thus be in a strong position to form the next government. Recall that in 2004, the Congress obtained 145 seats and ran the government for the next 10 years.

For those arguing that 2014 was Black Swan, and unusual, here are some sober (and sobering) statistics. Peruse through election history (short cut, read my book *Citizen Raj!*). Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi won six elections between them and garnered, on average, a vote share of around 42 per cent. In 2014, the BJP contested 426 seats and obtained 31 per cent of the vote. The NDA obtained 38.5 per cent of the vote and won 336 seats.

The centre of gravity of the big Nehru-Indira wins was around 350 seats and 42 per cent of the vote. The CSDS March opinion poll has the BJP increasing its vote share to 34 per cent and they are contesting about the same number of seats. With Nitish Kumar of Bihar replacing Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh, the forecast vote share of the NDA might well reach the Nehru-Indira average of 1952-1971 (and 1980). No respectable scholar, or historian, called those elections as unrepresentative of a democracy. Then why so "serious" about the NDA in 2014, and possibly 2019?

I had the occasion to travel in West Bengal and UP between May 1 and May 7. (Full disclosure: I am a card-carrying member of the Limousine Liberals (LL) team which, around major election time, farms out to the countryside to find out how real India is voting. The LL group is diverse and what follows are my observations, and interpretations, about Election 2019.)

**Polarisation:** This is commonly understood as division between communities separated by caste (and religion). My travels suggested that while polarisation exists, it is more on the basis of whether you are pro-BJP or pro-Congress. In UP, the pro-Congress vote is not reflected in a vote for the Congress, but as a vote for the Mahagathbandhan. Indeed, possibly the most striking statistic from West Bengal and UP is there was nary a mention of the Congress. Whether the centre of gravity of the Indian polity, held by the Congress



CR Sasikumar

from Independence to 2014, has permanently shifted to the BJP we will only know on May 23. The conclusion is there is polarisation, but not in the Delhi sense.

**Development not a concern in 2019:** A certified CW-Delhi conclusion is that somewhat surprisingly, after 2014, 2019 is emphatically *not* about economic development. It is ostensibly about everything but. Regardless of the election result, this conclusion is certified wrong. Every journalist has her own style of soliciting a view from the potential voter. Mine is to never ask who the individual, or group of individuals, are going to vote for. I like to find out indirectly, that is, which way is the *hawa*, what are the issues, what is the thinking on the problems being faced, etc. I then enjoy engaging the voter in a *discussion* about the issues. If one believes that there is no truth, just opinions about an "expected truth", then it is relatively less difficult to infer voting preferences of the potential voter.

In an UP village, one of my fellow travellers asked me to talk to a group of youngish men about the "no-jobs economy" they were facing. I readily jumped into the conversation and asked the group what had been happening to the economy overall. Is it true that it is difficult to find jobs? Yes, very difficult. This obviously happened because of Modi's economic policies, right? A worsened economic environment, right? Yes, the emphatic reply to both questions. But comparing today with 2014, is the situation worse, or the same, in terms of job availability? Here, unlike his highly educated counterparts in urban India (the old elite!), the rural voter does not believe in arguments for the sake of argument. He admitted that the situation, in terms of jobs, was no worse than 2014, and may even be better.

The LL group arrives in large vans and enters villages, and constructs interviews by the roadside. I worry always, especially post 2014, as to how does the rural semi-urban voter see us. Do they see us as part of the old elite (associated with the Congress) or as the new upwardly mobile elite (associated with the BJP)? Do they tailor their responses according to what they think we want to hear? Many seasoned journalists have come to the conclusion that Election 2019 will unleash the punishment of the silent voter. Is the

If there is one unanimous view emanating from UP travel, it is that farmer distress is real, and that cow politics has deepened the distress among all, farmers and non-farmers. I have yet to come across anyone defending this policy, whether a BJP supporter or not. (I did not meet a self-confessed RSS man, who might have a different view). Can anyone come up with a defence about this lose-lose policy? The poor Hindu farmer is hurt; Muslims have lost jobs, and in some instances, life; the rural economy is hurt. Yet Hindu India continues to support this madness. Platitudes about *gaushalas* are heard. What does this imply for voting in UP? Modi does not get the blame, Yogi does.

silent voter pro-BJP or pro-Congress? Again, another defining view which will become known on May 23.

What nearly everyone admitted is that their broadly defined income levels had gone up. Construction of roads and delivery of nearly 24/7 electricity. Add toilets and LPG cylinders and bank accounts, mostly benefiting women. The beginnings of national health insurance. Motorcycles (and scooters) have increased manifold. Some even have got houses — average welfare seems to have increased substantially in UP. The favourite explanation for the preponderance of motor-cycle usage given that there were (ostensibly) no jobs is dowry demands for motorcycles. Still, a sign of progress.

**The fearful voter:** Did not see any evidence of fear on the part of the voter. She might be lying, but she is not fearful in giving an opinion. At one roadside conversation, on the one side were OBCs emphasising support for Modi; on the other side of the highway, barely 20 yards away, was a group of Muslims complaining about the bias against Muslims, and why they would definitely vote against the BJP (but not for the Congress).

**Farmer distress and cow politics:** If there is one unanimous view emanating from UP travel, it is that farmer distress is real, and that cow politics has deepened the distress among all, farmers and non-farmers. I have yet to come across anyone defending this policy, whether a BJP supporter or not. (I did not meet a self-confessed RSS man, who might have a different view). Can anyone come up with a defence about this lose-lose policy? The poor Hindu farmer is hurt; Muslims have lost jobs, and in some instances, life; the rural economy is hurt. Yet Hindu India continues to support this madness. Platitudes about *gaushalas* are heard. What does this imply for voting in UP? Modi does not get the blame, Yogi does.

**Conclusion:** The number one policy concern of the new government should be a completely revamped policy towards agriculture and animal husbandry.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express and consultant, Network 18. Views are personal

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The undisguised overbearing and capricious manner of the US has affected the world. Such behavior is targeted at Iran today, and it may be another country tomorrow."  
— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

## Lies and loopholes

Non-disclosure of information and filing of falsities in election affidavits cannot be treated equally



SHRADDHA GOME AND HARPREET SINGH GUPTA

ON APRIL 15, 2019, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Supreme Court against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for filing a false affidavit. The petitioner, Saket Gokhale, a former journalist, has alleged irregularities regarding a plot of land, which, as per the land records, still belongs to the PM — but it has been omitted from his recent election affidavits. Recently, Union minister Smriti Irani was accused of falsifying her educational records in her affidavit. Surprisingly, despite the upsurge in the number of complaints of false affidavits, we are yet to see any strict action taken in this regard. Hence, it is important to look into the law governing false affidavits under the Representation of People's Act, 1951 ("RPA") and examine its effectiveness in curbing this malpractice.

Section 33 of the RPA, read with Rule 4A of the Conduct of the Election Rules, mandates all candidates contesting national/state assembly elections to furnish an affidavit comprising basic information such as their assets, liabilities, educational qualifications and criminal antecedents (if any). Failure to furnish information or filing false information in the affidavit is a penal offence under Section 125A of the RPA which prescribes a penalty of maximum six months or fine or both. However, unlike conviction for offences like bribery, conviction under Section 125A does not result in disqualification of candidate.

Another relevant provision is Section 8A which disqualifies any candidate found guilty of corrupt practice from contesting the election. Section 123 of the RPA defines "Corrupt Practices" to include "bribery", "undue influence", appealing to vote or not on grounds of caste, religion etc. What is baffling is that non-disclosure of information has been interpreted as a corrupt practice amounting to disqualification under section 8A, but, the courts' silent stance in the treatment of filing false information has led to the understanding that filing false information does not amount to corrupt practice. This means that candidates who do not disclose certain information can be disqualified, but those who file false information can only be punished for maximum six months.

In *Krishnamoorthy v. Sivakumar & Ors* (February 6, 2015), the issue before the SC was whether non-disclosure of criminal antecedents by a candidate in his affidavit amounts to corrupt practice under Section 260 of Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act (which is similar to section 123(2) of RPA). The court ruled that the voter's right to know the candidate who represents him in Parliament is an integral part of his freedom of speech and expression, guaranteed under the Constitution. Suppressing information about any criminal antecedents creates an impediment to the free exercise of the right to freedom of speech and expression. Therefore, non-disclosure amounts to an undue influence and corrupt practice under Section

123(2) of RPA.

A similar question came up before the SC in *Lok Prahari v. Union of India & Ors* (February 16, 2018), wherein the court followed the *Krishnamoorthy* judgment. It held that non-disclosure of information relating to source of income and assets by candidates and their associates, is a corrupt practice. The court laid emphasis on the following paragraph from *Krishnamoorthy*: "While filing the nomination form, if the requisite information, as has been highlighted by us, relating to criminal antecedents, is not given, indubitably, there is an attempt to suppress, effort to misguide and keep the people in dark. This attempt undeniably and undisputedly is undue influence and, therefore, amounts to corrupt practice."

Evidently then, furnishing false information which misguides and violates the voters' right to know their representative is a corrupt practice under the RPA. To reaffirm the same, a petition was filed in the SC in September 2018, seeking directions from the court to declare the filing of false affidavits a corrupt practice, and to direct the legislature towards implementing the recommendations of the 244th Law Commission Report. While the SC agreed in principle that filing a false affidavit for elections is a corrupt practice, it expressed its inability to direct a relevant legislation. It failed to realise that the mere absence of a separate clause declaring the filing of false information as a corrupt practice, does not stop the court from interpreting "undue influence" to include filing of false information. The court should have relied on its earlier judgments in *Lok Prahari* and *Krishnamoorthy* to rule that similar to non-disclosure of information, false affidavits will also constitute "undue influence" as they also try to misguide people.

Thus, the SC missed a golden opportunity to prevent the abuse of process and cure a gross error — of treating non-disclosure and filing false information differently. If at all, deliberately filing false information should be dealt with more strictly. In the absence of any specific direction from the SC, there is no clarity on the filing of false affidavits. Candidates are incentivised to file false information since the risk of disqualification exists only in cases of non-disclosure.

The lack of legal clarity relating to false affidavits has led to multiple candidates, including prominent leaders, getting away by filing false information in their election affidavits. It is high time the SC clarifies that filing false affidavits (similar to non-disclosure of certain information) constitutes "undue influence", which is a "corrupt practice". Further, to add clarity and discourage false affidavits, the legislature must incorporate threefold changes suggested by the Law Commission in the RPA. First, increase the punishment under Section 125-A to a minimum of two years; second, conviction under this provision should be a ground for disqualification of candidates under Section 8(1) of the RPA; and, third, falsification of affidavits by candidates must also be separately included in section 123 of the RPA as a corrupt practice. These changes are needed to ensure that the voter's right to information remains paramount, and the candidate's constitutional right to contest is subservient to it.

The writers are Mumbai-based lawyers and alumni of National Law School of India University, Bengaluru

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### OUT OF ORDER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'An unfair process' (IE, May 10). An in-house panel appointed in haste delivered a verdict on the charges against the CJI without giving a copy to the complainant. The Vishaka guidelines enjoins all companies to have a committee to probe sexual harassment charges. Such a committee should have a member who is not from the institution. Why was this rule not followed when the committee to probe charges against the CJI was constituted? The haste with which the CJI was exonerated has given rise to "suspicions".  
**Bholey Bharadwaj, Mumbai**

#### OTHER ASIA BIBIS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Stranger in her home' (IE, May 10). Asia Bibi is among the few whose story reaches the world. Many more are victims of religious orthodoxy. Governments across the world need to do some hard thinking on issues pertaining to religious minorities. Otherwise, people whose "solution" derives from religion might end up causing problems for them.  
**Rahul Singh, Vadodara**

#### US'S HUBRIS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Give and take' (IE, May 9). Trump is a of deception. He wants to divert attention from a possible impeachment over the

#### LETTER OF THE WEEK

#### GOOD JOB

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Taming the tempest' (IE, May 7). Much has changed since the super cyclone of 1999, which killed around 10,000 people in Odisha. Much of it owes to the high level of preparedness of the state government and other agencies. Accurate updates about the cyclone's path by the India Meteorological Department helped in containing the cyclone's possibly devastating effects. But there's no room for complacency. With extreme weather phenomena increasing due to climate change, there's a need to constantly expand disaster management capacities.  
**Sanjay Chopra, Mohali**

Mueller report. His criticisms of India over the Harley Davidson motorbike issue is well known, though India has corrected the duty long time back. With an highly imbalanced trade with India, US will be hurting itself more than India if they chose to raise tariffs.  
**Ashok Goswami, Mumbai**



SAMBIT PATRA

## Under cover of a story

'Time' article on PM Modi omits his achievements, presents a false narrative

BIAS CAN BE recognised not only from what is visible, but also from what is missing. There is a crucial word missing from the rambling lead article in *Time* magazine, which purports to be an analysis of five years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. The missing word is "corruption".

Any balanced report would have mentioned, even if it was only grudgingly, that one of the most important reasons for Narendra Modi's victory in 2014 was the pervasive corruption that had become synonymous with Congress rule between 2004 and 2014, bolstered by smaller parties who picked up their share, through a voiceless Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who paid the price of his office with silence. You can rest assured that if there had been even an iota of credible evidence of corruption against PM Modi or his ministers, it would have dominated the diatribe that has been published under the guise of journalism by *Time*.

For the Indian voter in 2019, this is an exceptional achievement. Modi famously said, after being sworn in, "na khaonga, na khaaney doonga" ("I will not take money; and I will let no one else take money"). He has delivered. This is a principal reason, along

with many others, why "Modi! Modi! Modi!" has become a signature chant at the massive crowds that gather to hear him on the campaign trail in 2019. It is unsurprising that the magazine found neither the time nor the space to even mention the extraordinary turnout when PM Modi went to file his nomination at Varanasi. To do so would have interfered with a false narrative.

You also will find no mention of "Swachh Bharat" or "Jan Dhan" or "Mudra", or indeed any of the economic welfare programmes that have transformed the lives of the poor. Nearly 50 years ago, Mrs Indira Gandhi won a remarkable victory in the general elections of 1971 with a simple but powerful slogan: "garibi hatao" (remove poverty). But Mrs Gandhi could not find the ideas or the mechanisms that would eliminate this dire tragedy. When Modi became PM, a quarter of India was still mired in harsh poverty. Modi did not bracket poverty into statistics. He viewed this historic curse through the lens of lived experience, largely because he had once been there himself. He devised a set of programmes that aimed to improve the daily lives of the poorest of the poor.

What observers seem to miss, or choose

to miss, is that there has been absolutely no caste or communal bias in this colossal drive against poverty. Any opposition party during a general election is not kind towards government in its rhetoric. Why should it be? This is a free country. But no opposition party has accused the Modi government of discrimination on the basis of caste or creed in implementing its social empowerment policies.

It is one of the fantasies of the post-Independence Indian elite to believe that secularism has been one of its gifts; and without them India would never have been a secular state. Our syncretism is not manna from the privileged; it comes from the basic faith and philosophy of our land. Indeed, one of the reasons why communalism slowly became entrenched into political consciousness during the British era was because the vote then was limited to only the top 10 or 11 per cent. It is the poor, and indeed Indians of all shades and classes, who have protected the shared religious and cultural space.

Five years ago, parties campaigning for the Muslim vote ceaselessly proclaimed that if Modi came to power there would be riots every week. That has not happened. There have been a few terrible incidents of lynch-

ing, and they have been resolutely condemned. But you would need either a very short, or a very convenient, memory to forget the riots that took place in Uttar Pradesh during the UPA decade.

Democracy is, at its root, a popularity contest; it is a question of who gets more votes. As has been famously, there might be a hundred things wrong with democracy, but every other option is infinitely worse. Democracy is deeply rooted in India's psyche. Our great generation of freedom fighters, led by Mahatma Gandhi, did not win freedom from the British in order to deny freedom to Indians. Narendra Modi is a product of democracy; for only democracy finds a map for the journey from a hut to the prime minister's residence. The poor, and those who emerge from poverty, have a far greater vested interest in democracy than the elite, who will remain in power no matter what system prevails.

The proof of this pudding called elections lies in the voting. You can hear the voice of the people at Narendra Modi's rallies.

The writer is a national spokesperson of the BJP





## For a full bench

Progress in judicial appointment is welcome, but it is time for systemic change

The government and the Supreme Court collegium seem to disagree on recommendations for judicial appointments quite frequently these days. It has become routine to hear that some recommendations for High Court appointments, as well as elevation to the Supreme Court, have met with disapproval from the government. In such instances, it requires reiteration by the collegium for the names to be cleared. This need not always be a cause for concern if it is a sign of some serious consultation on the suitability of those recommended. However, it acquires the character of a controversy if the government's objections suggest an oblique motive to thwart or delay the appointment of particular nominees. The latest development concerns Jharkhand High Court Chief Justice Aniruddha Bose and Gauhati High Court Chief Justice A.S. Bopanna, who were on April 12 recommended for elevation to the Supreme Court. The government had sought a reconsideration of the two names. The collegium has now repeated its recommendations, emphasising that there is nothing adverse against the two judges in terms of their "conduct, competence and integrity" and that there is no reason to agree with the government. Under the present procedure, the government is now bound to accept the recommendation. The Supreme Court is keen to fill up the current vacancies. It has also recommended two more judges, Justice B.R. Gavai of the Bombay High Court and Chief Justice Surya Kant of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, for appointment to the apex court. If all these four recommendations go through, the court will have its full complement of 31 judges.

While this will be welcome, some issues persist. In systemic terms, the advisability of retaining the collegium system of appointments is a major concern; and in terms of process, the huge number of vacancies in the various High Courts and lower courts is another. The process of filling up vacancies depends on the relative speed with which the collegium initiates proposals for appointments and makes its recommendations after internal deliberations, and the time the government takes to process the names. As on May 1, the total number of vacancies in all the High Courts is 396. It is true that the filling up of vacancies is a continuous and collaborative process involving the executive and the judiciary, and there cannot be a time frame for it. However, it is time to think of a permanent, independent body to institutionalise the process. The known inadequacies of the collegium system and the mystery over whether a new memorandum of procedure is in the offing are reasons why the proposal for a constitutionally empowered council to make judicial appointments ought to be revived – of course, with adequate safeguards to preserve the judiciary's independence. The time may have come for a systemic and processual overhaul.

## A fraught moment

The U.S. and China need to take sustained steps to de-escalate tensions over tariffs

The U.S.-China trade war has flared up again after a deceptive lull over the last few months, when both sides were trying to negotiate a deal. Out of nowhere, President Donald Trump tweeted that he would raise the 10% tariff imposed on \$200-billion worth of Chinese goods to 25%, starting Friday. That the Trump administration pressed ahead with the increase even as China's Vice Premier Liu He was still in Washington for a second day of talks with U.S. trade officials only underscores the businessman-turned-President's "take no prisoners" approach to negotiations. China promptly promised retaliatory action, but was yet to spell out the measures. With Mr. Trump tweeting that "the process has begun to place additional tariffs at 25% on the remaining" Chinese goods worth \$325 billion, the U.S. administration unambiguously signalled it was not going to be the first to blink. The latest revival in tensions between the world's two largest economies elevates the risk of a global trade war to its highest level since the first signs emerged in 2018. The increase in tariffs imposed on goods crossing international borders essentially represents a new tax on a global economy already facing a slowdown. Last month, the International Monetary Fund trimmed its projection for global growth in 2019 to 3.3%, from a 3.5% forecast made in January, citing slowing momentum in "70% of the world economy". IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath had at the time projected a pick-up in global growth momentum in the second half, predicated substantially on the "improved" outlook for U.S.-China trade tensions.

IMF chief Christine Lagarde and Ms. Gopinath, however, presciently warned that the world economy was poised at "a delicate moment". Were tensions in trade policy to flare up again, it could result in large disruptions to global supply chains and pose downside risks to global growth, the IMF warned. Barely a month later, the world economy faces the very real risk of an escalation in this trade war where other countries, including India, can largely only wait and watch as the U.S. and China raise the pitch. While the U.S. may have genuine concerns about Chinese protectionism, the overall economic logic behind Mr. Trump's trade policy still remains weak. The cost of these tariffs will, after all, eventually be borne by American consumers and could result in U.S. job losses too as the import of Chinese parts become uneconomical for smaller businesses. Indian policymakers would do well to closely monitor how the latest escalation in trade tensions pans out for global demand and international energy prices, given that the RBI has flagged oil price volatility as a factor that would have a bearing on India's inflation outlook.

# Resolving India's banking crisis

Acceleration in economic growth is not possible without addressing the problem of non-performing assets



C. RANGARAJAN & T.T. RAM MOHAN

The government that assumes office after the general election will have to crack a serious and unresolved problem: India's banking sector. To do so, it needs clarity on how the problem arose in the first place. Only then can it discard simplistic and ideologically-driven solutions in favour of those that can be effective.

Non-performing assets (NPAs) at commercial banks amounted to ₹10.3 trillion, or 11.2% of advances, in March 2018. Public sector banks (PSBs) accounted for ₹8.9 trillion, or 86%, of the total NPAs. The ratio of gross NPA to advances in PSBs was 14.6%. These are levels typically associated with a banking crisis. In 2007-08, NPAs totalled ₹566 billion (a little over half a trillion), or 2.26% of gross advances. The increase in NPAs since then has been staggering. How did this come about?

### Origin of the crisis

The answer lies partly in the credit boom of the years 2004-05 to 2008-09. In that period, commercial credit (or what is called "non-food credit") doubled. It was a period in which the world economy as well as the Indian economy were booming. Indian firms borrowed furiously in order to avail of the growth opportunities they saw coming. Most of the investment went into infrastructure and related areas – telecom, power, roads, aviation, steel. Businessmen were overcome with exuberance, partly rational and partly irrational. They believed, as many others did, that India had entered an era of 9% growth.

Thereafter, as the Economic Survey of 2016-17 notes, many things began to go wrong. Thanks to problems in acquiring land and getting environmental clearances, several projects got stalled. Their costs soared. At the same time, with the onset of the global financial crisis in 2007-08 and the slowdown in growth after 2011-12, revenues fell well short of forecasts. Financing costs rose as policy rates were tightened in India in response to the crisis. The depreciation of the rupee meant higher outflows for companies that had borrowed in foreign currency. This combination of adverse factors made it difficult for companies to service their loans to Indian banks.

### Tightening norms

The year 2014-15 marked a watershed. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), acting in the belief that NPAs were being under-stated, introduced tougher norms for NPA recognition under an Asset Quality Review. NPAs in 2015-16 almost doubled over the previous year as a result. It is not as if bad decisions had suddenly happened. It's just that the cumulative bad decisions of the past were now coming to be more accurately captured.

Higher NPAs mean higher provisions on the part of banks. Provisions rose to a level where banks, especially PSBs, started making losses. Their capital got eroded as a result. Capital from the government was slow in coming and it was barely adequate to meet regulatory norms for minimum capital. Without adequate capital, bank credit cannot grow. Even as the numerator in the ratio of gross NPAs/advances rose sharply, growth in the denominator fell. Both these movements caused the ratio to shoot up to a crisis level. Once NPAs happen, it is important to effect to resolve them quickly. Otherwise, the interest on dues causes NPAs to rise relentlessly.



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

This, in brief, is the story of the NPA problem. Since the problem is more concentrated in PSBs, some have argued that public ownership must be the problem. Public ownership of banks, according to them, is beset with corruption and incompetence (reflected in poor appraisal of credit risk). The solution, therefore, is to privatise the PSBs, at least the weaker ones.

There are problems with this formulation. There are wide variations within each ownership category. In 2018, the State Bank of India's (SBI's) gross NPA/gross advances ratio was 10.9%. This was not much higher than that of the second largest private bank, ICICI Bank, 9.9%. The ratio at a foreign bank, Standard Chartered Bank, 11.7%, was higher than that of SBI. Moreover, private and foreign banks were part of consortia that are now exposed to some of the largest NPAs.

The explanation lies elsewhere. PSBs had a higher exposure to the five most affected sectors – mining, iron and steel, textiles, infrastructure and aviation. These sectors accounted for 29% of advances and 53% of stressed advances at PSBs in December 2014. (The RBI's Financial Stability Report does not provide similar data for the period thereafter.) For private sector banks, the comparable figures were 13.9% and 34.1%. Our rough calculations show that PSBs accounted for 86% of advances in these five sectors. By an interesting coincidence, this number is exactly the same as the PSBs' share

in total NPAs.

As mentioned earlier, infrastructure projects were impacted by the global financial crisis and environmental and land acquisition issues. In addition, mining and telecom were impacted by adverse court judgments. Steel was impacted by dumping from China. Thus, the sectors to which PSBs were heavily exposed were impacted by factors beyond the control of bank management.

### Plans to prevent such crises

Wholesale privatisation of PSBs is thus not the answer to a complex problem. We need a broad set of actions, some immediate and others over the medium-term and aimed at preventing the recurrence of such crises.

One immediate action that is required is resolving the NPAs. Banks have to accept losses on loans (or "haircuts"). They should be able to do so without any fear of harassment by the investigative agencies. The Indian Banks' Association has set up a six-member panel to oversee resolution plans of lead lenders. To expedite resolution, more such panels may be required. An alternative is to set up a Loan Resolution Authority, if necessary through an Act of Parliament. Second, the government must infuse at one go whatever additional capital is needed to recapitalise banks – providing such capital in multiple instalments is not helpful.

Over the medium term, the RBI needs to develop better mechanisms for monitoring macro-prudential indicators. It especially needs to look out for credit bubbles. True, it's not easy to tell a bubble when one is building up. Perhaps, a simple indicator would be a rate of credit growth that is way out of line with the trend rate of growth of credit or with the broad growth rate of the economy.

Actions need to be taken to strengthen the functioning of

banks in general and, more particularly, PSBs. Governance at PSBs boards, can certainly improve. One important lesson from the past decade's experience with NPAs is that management of concentration risk – that is, excessive exposure to any business group, sector, geography, etc. – is too important to be left entirely to bank boards. The RBI has drawn this lesson to some extent. Effective April 1, 2019, the limit for exposure to any business group has been reduced from 40% of total capital to 25% of tier I capital (which consists of equity and quasi-equity instruments). The limit for a single borrower will be 20% of tier I capital (instead of 20% of total capital).

### Risk management

Other aspects of concentration risk remain to be addressed. Overall risk management at PSBs needs to be taken to a higher level. This certainly requires strengthening of PSB boards. We need to induct more high-quality professionals on PSB boards and compensate them better.

Succession planning at PSBs also needs to improve. Despite the constitution of the Banks Board Bureau to advise on selection of top management, the appointment of Managing Directors and Executive Directors continues to be plagued by long delays. This must end.

The task of accelerating economic growth is urgent. This is not possible without finding a solution to the problems that confront the banking system. There is ample scope for improving performance within the framework of public ownership. It can be done. What is needed is a steely focus on the part of the government.

C. Rangarajan is a former Governor, RBI. T.T. Ram Mohan is a professor at IIM, Ahmedabad. The authors are grateful to Siddharth Purohit for data support

## New clouds over the Persian Gulf

Iran's decision to withdraw partially from the nuclear deal is risky, and could play into U.S. plans



RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced on Wednesday that Iran will withdraw partially from the landmark nuclear deal of 2015. Iran's decision to reduce its commitments to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known as the P5+1 agreement, comes as a reaction to the U.S.'s attempts in recent weeks to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero. As a response to U.S. sanctions, Iran is demanding that the remaining signatories of the deal – the U.K., China, France, Germany and Russia – ease the restrictions on its banking and oil sectors in the next 60 days. In case the five endorser of the deal decide not to act in favour of Iran, the authorities of Tehran will remove the caps on uranium enrichment levels and resume work on the Arak nuclear facility.

### Loss of patience

Iran's plans are very clear, and they put an end to long and laborious multilateral negotiations which put strict limits on Iran's nuclear activities in return for lifting

most international sanctions. Undoubtedly, Iran's decision comes as an expression of loss of patience with a deal that is providing very few of the promised economic benefits. But by resuming its uranium enrichment operations, Iran could be taking a huge risk, putting at danger its diplomatic relations with Europe and playing the game of the Trump administration that has been taking a hard line against Tehran.

Consequently, Iran might be economically isolated, but the message coming out from Russia is that Iran is not alone. The Kremlin has joined Tehran to accuse the U.S. of retreating from the nuclear deal, while approving Iran's rolling back of some of the terms of the deal due to pressure from the U.S. Of course, the Russian gesture is not without some long-term interests for the Kremlin. U.S. sanctions against Iran will certainly result in the development of cooperation between Moscow and Tehran, but also with countries like Turkey which are important to American foreign policy.

This said, the goal of the Trump administration in applying the new series of sanctions is likely to hit the earnings of Iran's major metals companies, such as Mobarakeh Steel and the National Iranian Copper Industries Company. This will have an immediate im-



HASAN ROUHANI - AP

pact on the Iranian government's revenues, but it will also deteriorate the balance sheets of Iran's heavily indebted metals and mining companies. No doubt, this situation will be followed by mass unemployment, especially among blue-collar workers employed by state-owned enterprises who form the backbone of Iran's economy.

### Stoking unrest

It is no secret that last year the 2.5-million-strong government workforce did not get a raise while prices accelerated. To this end, the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy on Iran aims directly to stoke social unrest in Iranian cities by creating labour strikes (in the Polish style of Solidarity back in the 1980s) within the metals industry. For Donald Trump and his aides, the outcome of their confrontation with Iran is clearly to deprive the Iranian regime of the funds it can use to impose its hegemony around West

Asia, but also to put pressure on the everyday life of Iranian citizens. From the Trump administration's perspective, the economic malaise in Iran should stoke protests sooner or later. But does this mean the beginning of the end of the regime of the Ayatollahs?

Things are more complex than they might appear. If we take a close look at the geostrategic situation of West Asia, Iran's threat to violate the JCPOA is a very worrisome decision. Let us not forget that from Iran's perspective, Mr. Trump's America is considered a rogue state. As for the Trump administration, it considers the Islamic regime in Tehran as its Enemy Number One in West Asia. The recent announcement by John Bolton, Mr. Trump's National Security Adviser, that the U.S. was dispatching an aircraft-carrier strike group and bombers to West Asia to protect American allies and their interests is an unmistakable attempt to intimidate the Iranian regime. Over the past few weeks, the White House has intensified its campaign of pressure and threats against the authorities in Tehran and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). In Washington's eyes, Iran is a rogue state because of its support of militant groups, its violations of human rights, and its pursuit of nuclear-related technologies.

But despite the sanctions, Iran continues to fund its proxies in the region, prepare missile tests and support the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad. Thus, at the point where things stand, it is very hard to imagine a turn towards negotiations, although some European countries might continue encouraging a return to diplomatic management of the Iranian crisis. There is little likelihood of any flexibility towards the Iranian regime from the American side till the November 2020 U.S. presidential election. Iran will certainly look for ways to inflict a cost on the U.S. directly or through militia proxies in the region. In that case, the scene will be set for military confrontation between Iran and the U.S.

Last but not the least, if Iran's leadership is to successfully resist U.S. "maximum pressure", it must do more than choose the military path. Those who oppose any unilateral U.S. military action against Iran can only hope that the Ayatollahs and the IRGC will not react violently to U.S. forces in the region and to its allies. In case that happens, troubled times are ahead for Iran, West Asia and the global market.

Ramin Jahanbegloo is Director, Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Peace, Jindal Global University, Sonapat

## 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.

### Low public discourse

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has referred to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as "Bhrashtachari No.1" ("Abusing a martyred PM is ultimate cowardice: Congress", May 10). Earlier, Congress president Rahul Gandhi called Mr. Modi a "chor". Interestingly, the courts have found no evidence against either Rajiv Gandhi or Mr. Modi in the Bofors and Rafale cases, respectively. This only shows how low our public discourse is today – accusations and name-calling are rampant with no basis in facts. I have a couple of questions for Mr. Modi, though. Why talk about Rajiv Gandhi at the end of this election?

Why is this important for this election? Why did he keep quiet all this time? Why is his party talking about Pakistan, Balakot and Rajiv Gandhi instead of its five years in power?

MOHAN ARIMBOOR, Thiruvallur

Mr. Modi's strategy is to divert our attention from the crucial problems we face today. He seems to be maintaining a stoic silence on the fallout of demonetisation, unemployment, and the problems of GST, while harping on the anti-Sikh riots and Rajiv Gandhi.

N.C. SREEDHARAN, Kannur

The shameful remarks

made against the Aam Aadmi Party's Atishi show yet again how low we have descended as a society ("AAP candidate accuses Gambhir of slander", May 10). Why should anyone talk of Ms. Atishi's past relationships instead of her work? Why should the Prime Minister drag an assassinated Prime Minister into an unsavoury controversy? Rajiv Gandhi isn't alive to defend himself. How can politicians ask for votes in the name of the defence forces? This is a dangerous trend that will affect the apolitical character of the forces. Where are the statesmen of this country? Elections come and go but we can't afford to lose the

soul of the nation. R.D. SINGH, Ambala

### Ground realities

BJP president Amit Shah, in his assertion that the NDA will better its 2014 performance, seems to ignore the ground realities ("We will increase seats, improve our margins of victory and expand", May 10). Opposition alliances in U.P., Karnataka and Maharashtra are new in this election. Even if anti-incumbency is marginal, it could affect the NDA's vote share and seat share. The BJP's uneasy alliance with the Shiv Sena is not going to improve its tally in Maharashtra. Mr. Modi is not able to create the awe

that he could in the last general election. That is why he is busy talking about Rajiv Gandhi.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

### Gogoi case

The most important requirement of any inquiry is that the person conducting the inquiry must be independent, i.e., he or she can have no relationship, including a professional one, with the parties to the inquiry ("By established law and procedure," May 10). That principle was grossly violated in the inquiry against the Chief Justice of India. It is natural for those working together to be constrained by professional

brotherhood. This point has been missed in the analysis.

VASANT NARAYAN DESHMUKH, Bengaluru

It is difficult to agree with the views expressed by the writer. There were several issues apart from sexual harassment that cannot be overlooked in this case, such as frequent transfers of the complainant, actions taken against her family and intimidation, as reported by her. Justice must not just be done, but must be seen as done. This unfortunately has not happened in this case.

V. NARAYNEN, Chennai

MORE LETTERS ONLINE: www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/



# Picking up the pieces after Cyclone Fani

The cyclone battered Bhubaneswar and Puri last week, leaving behind a trail of destruction. **Jacob Koshy** and **Satyasundar Barik** report on the efforts by the government and relief teams to restore normalcy

Shattered windowpanes, sturdy trees lying flat on the roads, and downed power lines are the prominent markers of Cyclone Fani, which pounded Puri and Bhubaneswar in Odisha on May 3. Three days after Fani, categorised as an 'extremely severe cyclonic storm', ploughed through the State killing at least 40 people and injuring 160, the streets of Bhubaneswar are filled with workers of the National Disaster Response Force, dressed in bright orange. Senthil Rao, 28, and five others have spent all morning trying to remove an uprooted banyan tree. "It is an old tree and has blocked an entire stretch of the main road. My work seems interminable," Rao groans during a tea break.

This is Rao's tenth tree since early morning. It's largely due to the efforts of 600 teams of the State and Central disaster response forces that the city roads are navigable now. Tree trunks and branches have been swept into mounds and line the sidewalks and street corners. There are so many of them that the government has permitted anyone, with the means and the men, to cart them away and use them as fit without the usual tendering and bureaucracy.

There is little public and private transport on the streets; only the bulky JCBs can be seen in corners and inner streets. They are clawing out crumbled billboards and the remnants of carts and tyres from the rubble, and lifting logs. Santosh Rout, who manages a fleet of JCBs, says that he has been charging a 30% premium for the use of his machines. "The demand is very high. However, I hear there are nearly 30 teams of JCBs commissioned, so it looks like things will be normal in less than a week," he says.

Fani, which started out in the Bay of Bengal in the last week of April, was quite unlike the typical storms that Odisha is accustomed to. From 1965 to 2017, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea collectively registered 46 'severe cyclonic storms'. More than half of them occurred between October and December. Seven of them occurred in May and only two (in 1966 and 1976) were recorded in April, according to data from the India Meteorological Department's cyclone statistics unit. Before Fani, only one of them (in 1966) had actually made landfall over India.

While modern, meteorological record-keeping dates furious cyclones in Odisha to as far as back to 1831, to the average citizen, in contemporary times 1999 marked the turning point for the State. The cyclone that hit that year was catastrophic: it killed thousands, obliterated homes, and left a trail of destruction. The State was cut off from the rest of the country, and it was weeks before the magnitude of the tragedy hit home. Since then, Odisha has prepared itself in various ways to face such cyclones – by building specially crafted storm shelters and commissioning electric poles that are designed to withstand strong gales.

By May 1, the weather department was confident that Fani would be unforgiving, but not as powerful as BOB 06 (cyclones then didn't have names) that had hit the port town of Paradip in 1999.

## Capital without power

Since Bhubaneswar is bald without tree cover after Fani, the heat and humidity are more palpable than before. There is no power, to add to the woes, so the city after dusk is both dark and uncomfortable. While city-specific figures aren't available, the State Disaster Management Authority estimates that at least 45,000 km of power lines and 11,000 distribution transformers have been destroyed by the cyclone.

Sarath Chandra, a hotel manager, says that normally in early May, when the tourist season is just beginning, his hotel is only about 60% full. "This time we're nearly 85% full," he says. "There are no outstation tourists. All of them are locals escaping the heat of their homes." Chandra's hotel is among those equipped with a diesel-generation set, which means that there is a steady supply of water and electricity.

"The air conditioner in the room doesn't cool but being here is better than being at home," says Dolly Patra, who is staying with her family at Chandra's hotel. Her second floor flat, barely 3 km from the hotel, is a cauldron, she explains. Power is expected to return only after a fortnight, and water supply is irregular. When the cyclone howled through her apartment complex, she was scared for herself and her infant. "I was terrified that the asbestos sheets nearby would smash into my bedroom," she says. After the storm she stayed put at home, but mosquitoes entered her home in droves and she was afraid that her child would fall sick. "I hope to get back home soon or move to a relative's place. Staying in a hotel is expensive for us," she says.

At the Secretariat of the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), Bishnupada Sethi presides over a crew of officers who compile and coor-



Cyclone Fani killed at least 40 people in Odisha and injured 160. Penthakata village in Puri after the storm. (Below) Debris on train tracks at a railway station in Puri. ■ BISWANJAN ROUT/AFP



dinate information with district centres and the IMD. Details of damage, relief dispensed and lacunae are continually wired to Sethi's office. While the unit's coordination has earned plaudits – from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United Nations – Sethi says that in spite of the preparation and the "memories of 1999", citizens were "mentally unprepared" for the impending disaster. "This is a State where cyclones recur. At the State level, there are plans and a standard operating procedure to deal with the eventuality. However, many were unprepared. In fact, many people refused to leave their thatched houses and go to shelters," he notes.

**Anger in Puri**  
Its stature as a capital city and the prevalence of concrete houses may have contributed to zero casualties, according to official figures, in Bhubaneswar, but the temple town of Puri, which is about 60 km away, presents a vastly different picture.

National Highway 316 that connects the two cities is smooth; it was spared Fani's wrath. However, on both sides of the highway lie uprooted coconut trees and houses with holes in their tiled roofs. At least 21 deaths have been reported in Puri district.

Not far from the beach, where the sea is now placid, anger is growing at the government shelter near Talabaniya in Puri town. This pink building is one among the 879 constructed by the Odisha government across Puri, Cuttack and Khordha. The two-storey buildings, designed in 2004 with assistance from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, are low-cost and capable of accommodating about 3,000 people. They are resilient to wind speeds greater than 200 kmph. The Talabaniya shelter is also equipped with an alarm and a horn. In the event of an impending storm, instructions are relayed to those living in thatched houses, or the homeless, to come to the shelter.

"There were warnings on the day before the cyclone struck and many of us came to the shelter," says Pintu Pradhan, who works in a nearby hotel. "A day before the storm, we were given rice and dal. On the day of the storm we were given packed dry fruits, chuda (flattened rice) and gur (jaggery).

There's been no food ever since." Pradhan's house, along with the houses of about 700 others of the Biju Nagar slum, was reduced to rubble. Only those with "food security cards" says Pradhan, were eligible for the Chief Minister's relief package of ₹2,000 and 50 kg of rice per month as well as polythene sheets that could be used as roofs. There were families who lost everything in the storm and now have no food, water or jobs, he says.

While Pradhan and several men, most of them daily wage labourers, rue the absence of primarily benefits, the women of Biju Nagar trek a kilometre to the grounds of the government technical training institute to collect fallen branches and twigs to use as firewood. The trunks are also useful to rebuild houses, one of them points out. Another group of women has congregated at the Puri Collectorate to protest against the unavailability of food and water. Due to the absence of an effective communication system, the promised welfare and supplies are not making their way to the people, says Shanti, one of the protesters. As part of relief measures, residents are eligible for up to ₹95,000 for 'fully damaged' structures and compensation for damage to agricultural and horticultural crop, and fisheries.

Balwant Singh, the Puri District Collector, who assumed charge on May 7, says the lack of power and telecommunication has hampered access to supplies. "There's a standard operating procedure in place. Setting up free kitchens near shelters and restoring road connectivity are our immediate priorities. For all that we need to have

the communication system with Bhubaneswar running smoothly," he adds.



the communication system with Bhubaneswar running smoothly," he adds.

## The problem of communication

With mobile phone connection down, the Collectorate, with its compound walls and plantations hit, is relying on a ham radio network. Ramesh Kuthumbaka, a Hyderabad-based advocate and an amateur ham operator, says he was called by OSDMA on May 1. "Two ham radio colleagues and I left Hyderabad and travelled 1,200 km by road in a Qualis to reach OSDMA and set up a ham network. We struggled to come here, there were strong winds. We reached on May 3," he recounts. Another team of ham operators from Kolkata reached the Puri Collectorate and installed a radio station. "Since then we've been helping the State authorities with transmitting and receiving instructions. The Chief Secretary relied on our network. There was nothing else," he claims. Kuthumbaka has skipped many meals. He complains of the lack of support from the district administration. "There doesn't seem to be a well-thought-out plan. For instance, in spite of knowing fairly reliably by April 27 that Odisha would be hit, we were told only on the 1st," he says. However, he will be present in Puri "as long as he is needed".

Sethi points out that the "operational difficulties" and the sheer magnitude of the devastation would mean that returning to normalcy will take weeks. Nearly 100 million kg of rice was readied beforehand, yet distribution is tardy, he says. "We had to evacuate about 1.4 million people within 12 hours. Nearly 200 lakh SMSes were sent to various levels of administration – right down to

**We had to evacuate about 1.4 million people within 12 hours. Nearly 200 lakh SMSes were sent to various levels of administration. Remember, this was after the election exercise, itself an arduous task.**

BISHNUPADA SETHI  
Odisha State Disaster Management Authority

the village heads of 14 districts," he says. He explains why people were mobilised into action only by May 1: "Remember, this was after the election exercise, itself an arduous task, had just concluded on April 29. Officers and the administration are human too."

Another challenge, adds Sethi, was to convince people to leave their homes and rush to the shelters. "Often they wouldn't listen. We have seen it here every time there has been a cyclone. People say they will weather the storm and then they all suffer."

In Brahmagiri town in Puri, a block-level official says that in the administrative block of Bhagawat Patna, nearly 27,289 people had to be evacuated. "Many of them refused to come, saying Lord Jagannath would keep them safe," he recounts. "There were four deaths, but it's not confirmed if they were specifically due to the cyclone."

The custodians of Jagannath say they are dealing with their own worries. Fani didn't spare the Jagannath temple in Puri, the mainstay of the town. One of the key idols is damaged and losses to some of the temple's property amount to ₹5 crore, reckons S. Chatterjee, a temple administration official. However, the temple itself is not participating in any

relief work or donating any of its corpus to the State to help with rehabilitation. The temple administration receives, on average, ₹2 lakh per day as donation but was expecting help from the government and individuals to prepare for the annual Rath Yatra in July. The long stretch of road, where the idols are carted, is largely clear. "Since the cyclone hit, daily offerings have plummeted. In the first two days, after the storm we barely got ₹700 on an average," Chatterjee says.

In the artisanal village of Raghurajpur, on the outskirts of Puri, the 100-odd families skilled in the art of *pattachitra* (painting on palm leaf) while away their time. In their part of town, Cyclone Fani brought rain and destroyed some of the paintings. Each painting takes about a day to make, says Gauranga Maharana, an artist who is in the midst of painting a wood-carved swan when we meet him. "The winds and the rain were so strong that my paintings got soaked. Paintings worth nearly ₹20,000 have been damaged," he says. Maharana, who traces his artistry to "several generations", estimates that a usual summer day brings in close to a thousand tourists (Raghurajpur is a heritage village), but now with the State battered, the number of tourists, both Indians and foreigners, has dwindled.

**The cyclones of May**  
Housed in a single-storey building, the walls of which are plastered with charts describing El Nino, warming seas and other climate phenomena, the scientists at the State headquarters of the IMD are working in the corridors and verandahs to escape the stifling heat. Habibur Rehman Biswas, the chief scientist of the department, says he hadn't left the office for 72 hours straight after May 1. "Initially, we thought it would be a typical summer cyclone of the Bay of Bengal. We thought it would go either towards Andhra Pradesh or turn towards Bangladesh and Myanmar and miss the Odisha coast. We were wrong."

Meteorologists note with worry that so-called recurring cyclones – ones that sharply turn eastwards – are becoming more frequent around the Indian Ocean. The IMD publicly disseminates information via a WhatsApp group that has senior district administration officials and media representatives. "We're always getting inputs, but with power gone, it's a bit slow. Still, there are other IMD agencies that pick up inputs and relay them. There will always be regular inputs, come what may," he says.

With Cyclone Fani gone, Rehman doesn't rule out the possibility of another strong cyclone. "There's nothing which says that such a strong storm won't lead to another one in a few weeks, though there aren't immediate indications yet. May is usually when there are many more cyclones."



# प्रवाह

विर्भीक पत्रकारिता का आठवां दशक

स्थापना वर्ष : 1948



किस्ती मिशन में सफल होने के लिए, आपके पास लक्ष्य के प्रति एकनिष्ठ समर्पण की भावना होनी चाहिए।

...डॉ. एपीजे अब्दुल कलाम

रेरा जैसे कानून से बेशक घर खरीदारों के हितों की कमोबेश रक्षा हो रही है, पर रियल एस्टेट की बड़ी कंपनियां अब भी अपनी ताकत के बल पर व्यवस्था की विसंगतियों का जिस तरह फायदा उठा रही हैं, वह वास्तव में बेहद चिंतनीय है।

## ताकतवरों पर शिकंजा

रियल एस्टेट क्षेत्र की बड़ी कंपनियां घर खरीदने वालों से वादाखिलाफी करने के अलावा अपने मुनाफे के लिए किस तरह कानून का उल्लंघन करती हैं, इसका ज्वलंत उदाहरण आम्रपाली समूह है, जिस पर अब अपनी सभी परियोजनाओं से बाहर हो जाने का खतरा मंडरा रहा है। इस समूह पर घर खरीदने वालों की रकम दूसरी जगह लगाने का आरोप है, जिस कारण इसके निदेशक विगत अक्टूबर से ही जेल में हैं। इस समूह ने उन पैसों से बेधुमार संपत्तियां बनाईं, जबकि चालीस हजार से अधिक लोग पिछले कई साल से फ्लैट का इंतजार कर रहे हैं। यह समूह इतनी भारी आर्थिक अनियमितता कर पाया, तो इसके लिए बैंक भी जिम्मेदार थे, जिन्होंने इसे मोटे कर्ज तो दिए, पर यह जांचने की जहमत नहीं उठाई कि वह पैसा सही जगह पर लग रहा है या नहीं। यही नहीं, पिछले दिनों इस मामले की सुनवाई के दौरान

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने यह चौंकाने वाला खुलासा किया कि कुछ शक्तिशाली लोग खुद को बचाने की कोशिश में अदालत के आदेश को बदलने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं। दरअसल अदालत ने इस समूह के आधिकारिक प्रतिनिधि को लोहा और स्टील आपूर्ति करने वालों के खातों के ब्योरे के साथ एक खास फॉरेंसिक ऑडिटर के सामने पेश होने को कहा था, पर जो आदेश सामने आया, उसमें दूसरे फॉरेंसिक ऑडिटर का नाम था! यानी दुस्साहसी विचौलिये अदालत की प्रक्रिया तक को बाधित करने में युरेज नहीं कर रहे। ऐसा ही मामला दो साल से तिहाड़ में बंद यूनिटेक के दो प्रमोटर्स का है, शीर्ष अदालत ने जिन्हें जेल में दी जा रही फोन, लैपटॉप और कॉन्फ्रेंस रूम मुहैया कराने जैसी विशेष सुविधाएं वापस लेने का आदेश दिया है, क्योंकि वे जांच में सहयोग नहीं कर रहे। इन दोनों पर भी घर खरीदारों से लिए गए पैसे गलत तरीके से दूसरी जगह लगाने का आरोप है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट अब इस मामले की



सीबीआई जांच कराने के बारे में भी विचार कर रहा है। बेशक रera (रियल एस्टेट विनियमन और विकास अधिनियम, 2016) के आने के बाद घर खरीदारों के हितों की कमोबेश रक्षा हो रही है और कानून तोड़ने वाले बिल्डरों को खामियाजा भुगताना पड़ रहा है, पर रियल एस्टेट की बड़ी कंपनियां अब भी अपनी ताकत के बल पर व्यवस्था की विसंगतियों का जिस तरह फायदा उठा रही हैं, वह वास्तव में बेहद चिंतनीय है।

# जेट के जमीन पर आने के बाद

जो लोग जेट एयरवेज के बंद होने पर दुख जता रहे हैं और याद कर रहे हैं कि वे इसकी मसाला चाय की कमी महसूस करेंगे, उन्होंने शायद ही कभी कम आकर्षक पेशों के कर्मचारियों की पीड़ा के बारे में लिखा हो।

जेट एयरवेज के अचानक बंद हो जाने से इसके कर्मचारियों, कर्जदाताओं यहां तक कि यात्रियों में भी काफी नाराजगी है। भारत की सबसे पुरानी निजी विमानन कंपनी के बंद होने का व्यापक असर इसके कर्मचारियों पर पड़ा है। अनेक लोगों ने इसकी वजह से बड़ी संख्या में नौकरियां खोने और इसके आर्थिक प्रभाव के बारे में चिंता जताई है। पच्चीस साल पहले जब विमानन उद्योग को निजी क्षेत्र के लिए खोला गया था, तबसे यह क्षेत्र काफी हद तक संगठित रहा है। वास्तव में जेट के साथ ईस्ट-वेस्ट एयरलाइन नामक विमानन कंपनी ने भी सबसे पहले उड़ान भरी थी, मगर इसके प्रबंध निदेशक की हत्या के बाद बंद होने वाली भी यह पहली कंपनी थी।

पिछले पच्चीस वर्षों के दौरान ईस्ट-वेस्ट, दमानिया, मोदीलुफ्त, एमडीएलआर, सहारा, एयर डक्कन, पैरामाउंट, पवन हंस और किंगफिशर जैसी अनेक विमानन कंपनियां शुरू होकर बंद हुईं। इनमें से कुछ या तो बिक गईं या फिर उसका किसी बड़ी विमानन कंपनी में विलय हो गया, लेकिन एक स्वतंत्र विमानन कंपनी के रूप में उनका अस्तित्व खत्म हो गया। मगर पहले कभी किसी विमानन कंपनी के बंद होने पर इतना शोर-शराबा नहीं हुआ या फिर ऐसी सहानुभूति नहीं जताई गई, जैसा जेट एयरवेज के मामले में देखा जा रहा है। वास्तव में जब किंगफिशर अपना कोराबार समेट रही थी, तब अनेक लोग मजे ले रहे थे कि

इसका यह हस इसके रंगीन मिजाज मालिक विजय माल्या के कारण हुआ। उस समय एयरलाइंस के बंद होने से नौकरियां खत्म होने जैसे मुद्दे पर आम तौर पर कोई खास चर्चा नहीं हुई थी। बंद होने वाली दूसरी विमानन कंपनियों की तुलना में जेट के पास कहीं अधिक विमान और कर्मचारी थे, मगर कंपनी के बंद होने पर इन कर्मचारियों के भविष्य को लेकर उनके प्रति उमड़ी सहानुभूति की सिर्फ यही



वजह नहीं होनी चाहिए। विमानन क्षेत्र की वृद्धि और मांग की स्थिति ऐसी है कि पायलटों और प्रशिक्षित कर्मचारियों की हमेशा उच्च मांग रहती है। इसके अलावा नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्रालय के हस्तक्षेप के कारण इसके अनेक कर्मचारियों को स्पाइसजेट और इंडिगो एयरलाइंस जैसी कंपनियों ने अपने साथ रख लिया।

जेट एयरलाइंस में नौकरियों को लेकर उपजी स्थिति से ठीक उलट आईटी (सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी) जैसे क्षेत्र में सबको एक साथ हटाना जाना बहुत सामान्य है। यहां तक कि स्किल इंडिया पहल के तहत पीएमकेवीआई (प्रधानमंत्री कौशल विकास योजना) का प्रदर्शन भी अच्छा नहीं रहा, जहां या तो प्रशिक्षित लोगों को नौकरियां नहीं मिलीं या फिर ट्रेनिंग एजेंसी द्वारा उपलब्ध कराई गई नौकरियों से उन्हें जल्द ही हाथ धोना पड़ा। यदि कोई मैनुफैक्चरिंग हब जाकर देखे, तो वहां प्रशिक्षित फैक्टरी मजदूरों को स्थायी कर्मचारी के बजाय अनुबंध पर रखा जाना बहुत आम है। कर्मचारियों या श्रमिकों को अनुबंध या ठेके पर रखने से कंपनियों के धन की तो बचत होती ही है, पीएफ और ईएसआई जैसी बाध्यताएं भी नहीं रहतीं।

यह दुखद है कि असंगठित क्षेत्र के कर्मचारियों की तकलीफों की ओर शायद ही ध्यान जाता है या फिर उनकी नौकरियां जाने पर सार्वजनिक तौर पर उनके प्रति समर्थन जताया जाता है, जैसा कि जेट

जैसी एयरलाइंस के कर्मचारियों के मामले में अभी देखा जा रहा है। जेट एयरवेज के शीर्ष 70 फीसदी कर्मचारी स्थायी नौकरी पर थे और जिन्हें अन्य लोगों की तुलना में अच्छा वेतन और अन्य सुविधाएं मिल रही थीं। अब उनके पास पीएफ, बीमा और मेडिकल बीमा के रूप में कई सुविधाएं उपलब्ध हैं, इसके विपरीत अनेक कम आकर्षक क्षेत्रों के कर्मशील कर्मचारियों को यह सब उपलब्ध नहीं होता और उन्हें बदतर वित्तीय हालात का सामना करना पड़ता है। जेट कर्मचारियों की आवाज इसलिए भी सुनी जा रही है, क्योंकि उनका अपना संगठन है। इसके विपरीत अनेक क्षेत्रों में, खासतौर से सेवा क्षेत्र में, तो व्यावहारिक रूप में कर्मचारी संगठनों का कोई अस्तित्व ही नहीं बचा है। अनेक क्षेत्र प्रबंधन और कर्मचारियों के स्तर पर अनुबंध पर नौकरियों को अनुकूल पाते हैं, क्योंकि इससे उन्हें यूनिशन का दबाव नहीं झेलना पड़ता। उदाहरण के लिए, आईटी कंपनियों में या वित्तीय सेवा से जुड़े उद्योगों में कोई यूनिशन नहीं है। बैंकों के कर्मचारी संगठन सिर्फ सरकारी बैंकों में हैं, निजी क्षेत्र में नहीं।

अनेक संगठन श्रम कानूनों को ताक पर रखकर चल रहे हैं और यूनिशन न होने से कर्मचारी अपनी आवाज भी नहीं उठा सकते। उदाहरण के लिए, निजी क्षेत्र की सिक्वोरिटी एजेंसी की ही देखें, जो ठेके पर गार्ड्स उपलब्ध कराती हैं, जिन्हें बेहद खराब परिस्थितियों में मासिक छह हजार से आठ हजार के वेतन पर 12 से 14 घंटे की पाली में काम करना पड़ता है। ये गार्ड्स कम वेतन या खराब काम के घंटों को लेकर कुछ बोल नहीं सकते। यही स्थिति अनेक मैनुफैक्चरिंग इकाइयों की है, जहां कर्मचारियों को आठ घंटे से भी अधिक समय तक काम करना पड़ता है और इसके एवज में उन्हें शायद ही कुछ अतिरिक्त लाभ मिलता है। ऐसा लगता है कि कर्मचारियों की संगठित आवाज के अभाव में, प्रबंधन 1950 और 1960 के दशक की फिल्मों में चित्रित मालिक-दास संबंधों की याद ताजा करते हुए अपनी कंपनियों को चलाते हैं।

जो लोग अभी जेट एयरवेज के बंद होने पर दुख जता रहे हैं और याद कर रहे हैं कि वे हवाई सफर में इसकी मसाला चाय की कमी महसूस करेंगे, उन्होंने शायद ही कभी कम आकर्षक पेशों की बेहद विकट काम की परिस्थितियों और वहां काम करने वाले कर्मचारियों की पीड़ा के बारे में लिखा हो। सीवर की सफाई करने वाले कर्मचारियों पर ध्यान तभी जाता है, जब उनकी सीवर में मौत हो जाती है। कुशल और अकुशल कर्मचारियों के प्रति नजरिया बदलने का समय आ गया है, भारत को काम की परिस्थितियों के मानक तय करने चाहिए, ताकि कर्मचारियों को चाहे वे किसी भी क्षेत्र में क्यों न हों, कार्यस्थल पर किसी तरह के भेदभाव का सामना न करना पड़े।



नारायण कृष्णमूर्ति  
वरिष्ठ पत्रकार

## फैक्ट फाइल

### माया बे बीच



माया बे बीच का दृश्य  
वर्ष 2000 में आई फिल्म द बीच से इस द्वीप को प्रसिद्धि मिली थी।

दक्षिणी थाईलैंड के फी फी ले द्वीप पर मौजूद माया बे बीच को वर्ष 2021 तक पर्यटकों के लिए बंद कर दिया गया है। हलांकि पिछले साल इसे अस्थायी रूप से बंद कर दिया गया था, जब आधिकारिक रिपोर्टों में बताया गया था कि भारी संख्या में पर्यटकों के आने से बीच व द्वीप के पर्यावरण और प्रवाल भित्तियों को बहुत नुकसान पहुंचा है, जिसके ठीक होने के लिए इस पर पर्यटकों की आवाजाही रोकने की आवश्यकता थी। वर्ष 2000 में आई फिल्म द बीच से इस द्वीप को प्रसिद्धि मिली थी। बंद होने से पहले यहां हर दिन 5,000 लोग आवाजाही कर रहे थे, जिससे मृगे की चट्टानों को खासा नुकसान हुआ। 6.6 वर्ग किलोमीटर में फैला यह फी फी ले का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा द्वीप है। द्वीप में दो उथले खंड, माया बे और लोह समाह के आसपास खड़ी चूना पत्थर की पहाड़ियों का एक छल्ला है। ये द्वीप अपने रेतिले समुद्र तटों, गर्म पानी के लिए प्रसिद्ध हैं। कम ज्वार के दौरान, उथले पानी और प्रवाल के कारण माया बे बीच तक समुद्र से होकर सीधे नाव के माध्यम से नहीं पहुंचा जा सकता है। माया खाड़ी तक पहुंचने के लिए लोह समाह की चट्टानों के बीच और जंगल के एक छोटे हिस्से से गुजरना पड़ता है। माया बे को प्रकाश उत्सर्जित करने वाले समुद्री जीवों का आश्रयगृह भी माना जाता है। अक्टूबर 2015 से मई 2016 तक इस द्वीप पर लगभग 12 लाख पर्यटकों से, जिनमें 36 प्रतिशत विदेशी शामिल थे, 36.2 करोड़ थाई बहत का राजस्व प्राप्त हुआ।

# जोनास भाइयों का अलग अंदाज

प्रियंका चोपड़ा के साथ निक की शादी की चर्चा थमी भी नहीं थी कि निक के बड़े भाई की शादी चर्चा में है।

न्यूयॉर्क टाइम्स के लिए टेमी ले गोर्स

एक दशक पहले एक के बाद एक सुरिली धुन बनाकर पॉप म्यूजिक में चर्चित हुए जोनास ब्रदर्स ने अपनी अलग पहचान के लिए खास रिंग पहननी शुरू कर दी। तीनों भाइयों ने अपनी रिंग को शादी के ब्रांड में बदल दिया। तीनों की रिंग बेशक एक ही तरह की थी, पर उनकी शादी की रिंग में काफी फर्क रहा, यह खासकर मझले भाई जो जोनास के बारे में सच है, जिनकी शादी अभिनेत्री और गेम ऑफ थ्रोस की स्टार सोफी टर्नर के साथ विगत एक मार्च को लास वेगास के अ लिटल व्हाइट वेडिंग चैपल में हुई।

जैस गेरॉन का, जिन्होंने पिछले साल लास वेगास में 600 से ज्यादा शादियां कराई थीं, कहना था कि जो जोनास की शादी में जितनी भीड़ थी, उतनी उन्होंने इससे पहले नहीं देखी। जोनास की शादी में 40 लोग थे, जो पांच से 10 लोगों के समूह में बंटे हुए थे। इस शादी समारोह का अंत भी यादगार था। 'वे बखूबी जानते थे कि मस्ती कैसे की जाती है', गेरॉन कहते हैं, 'जब हम बीवा लास वेगास गा रहे थे, तब मेहमानों ने



भी हमारा साथ दिया।' अचानक हुई यह सनसनीखेज शादी रॉक स्टार जो जोनास की छवि से सट करती थी, जिन्हें डब्ल्यू मैगजीन ने हाल ही में जोनास ब्रदर्स का निर्विवाद नेता कहा था। पर टर्नर से उनका रोमांस छिपा हुआ नहीं था। वर्ष 2016 से ही उनके प्रशंसक इंस्टाग्राम पर दोनों की तस्वीरें पोस्ट करने लगे थे। अक्टूबर 2017 में दोनों ने इंस्टाग्राम पर अपनी सगाई की घोषणा की। अब चूँकि दोनों ने अमेरिका में शादी

कर ली है, ऐसे में उनके प्रशंसक इसी गर्मी में फ्रांस में उनके शादी समारोह की उम्मीद कर रहे हैं। जो ने विगत मार्च में ही एक इंटरव्यू में फ्रांस में विवाह समारोह आयोजित करने की बात कही थी।

अगर जो जोनास दूसरी बार शादी समारोह का आयोजन करते हैं, तो वह अपने छोटे भाई के नक्शे कदम पर ही चलेंगे। विगत दिसंबर में निक जोनास ने अभिनेत्री और पूर्व विश्व सुंदरी प्रियंका चोपड़ा के साथ शादी के बाद भारत में दो शानदार समारोहों का आयोजन किया था। पहले एक दिसंबर को उन्होंने जोधपुर के उमेद भवन पैलेस में ईसाई रीति-रिवाजों के साथ शादी की। अगले दिन वहीं हिंदू रीति-रिवाजों से विवाह हुआ, जिसमें कुल 400 मेहमान आमंत्रित थे। दोनों समारोहों से पहले मेहंदी और संगीत का समारोह हुआ था। इन दोनों की शादी का रिसेप्शन नॉर्थ कैरोलिना के बेलमोन्ट स्थित एक रेस्टोरेंट नेलीस सदर्न किचन में विगत जनवरी में हुआ, जिसके पीछे निक की स्वर्गीया दादी की प्रेरणा थी।

इस लिहाज से देखें, तो बड़े भाई केल्विन जोनास की 2009 में डेविली से हुई शादी अपेक्षाकृत अचर्चित रही। पर इसमें केल्विन की कोई गलती नहीं। वह नहीं जानते थे कि अगले एक दशक में उनके दो भाइयों की शादी इतनी चर्चित रहेगी।

## सूत्र

ली शाउ की

# पैसे खर्च करने की कला भी है कारोबार

मैं चीन के दक्षिणी प्रांत गुआन्तोंग में पैदा हुआ था। हमारा परिवार इतना गरीब था कि हम महीने में दो बार ही मांसाहार कर सकते थे। मेरा बचपन हांगकांग में बीता। पढ़ाई के बाद अपने परे जमाने के लिए मैंने छोटे-मोटे काम किए, फिर प्रॉपर्टी के कारोबार में आ गया। मैं अपने भाइयों में चौथे नंबर पर था। इसी आधार पर बाद में नई पीढ़ी ने मुझे 'अंकल फोर' कहना शुरू किया, क्योंकि अपने भाइयों में मैं अकेला था, जो गरीबी में पलकर बड़े तक पहुंचे।

शुरुआत में तो मुझे प्रॉपर्टी से जुड़ी कंपनियों में सहायक का काम ही मिला, लेकिन अपनी मेहनत और दूरदर्शिता से मैंने धीरे-धीरे इस क्षेत्र में अपनी पहचान बनानी शुरू की। मैं अपना कारोबार शुरू करना चाहता था। इसी सिलसिले में मैं क्वोक तांग सेंग से मिला और सफल प्रॉपर्टी डेवलेपमेंट कंपनी सन हुंग काई का सह-संस्थापक बना। वर्ष 1976 में मैंने हैंडरसन लैंड डेवलेपमेंट समूह की स्थापना की। यह समूह सिर्फ प्रॉपर्टी तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि होटल, रेस्टोरेंट और इंटरनेट सेवा के क्षेत्र में भी काम करता है। मुझे हांगकांग का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा अमीर अंका जाता है। लेकिन मैं धन के प्रदर्शन में नहीं, बल्कि परोपकार के लिए धन के इस्तेमाल में विश्वास करता हूँ। मैंने चीन के शेयर बाजार में निवेश कर भारी पैसा कमाया, जिस कारण कभी मुझे स्टॉक गॉड कहा जाता था। पर मौजूदा दौर में मैं शेयर बाजार को बेहद जोखिम भरा मानता हूँ। मैंने देश में शिक्षा के प्रसार के लिए अब तक करीब चालीस करोड़ डॉलर की मदद की है। मैं गरीब छात्रों को छात्रवृत्ति देता हूँ। मैं पैसे कमाने की कला जानता हूँ। वह इतनी मुश्किल कला भी नहीं है। पर मैं चाहता हूँ कि पैसे को अर्थपूर्ण ढंग से खर्च किया जाए। मैं चर्चा से भी दूर भागता हूँ, और एनुअल जनरल मीटिंग के अलावा कभी मीडिया के सामने नहीं आता। मुझे चुपचाप अपना काम करना पसंद है। चूँकि मेरी उम्र अधिक हो गई है, इसलिए मैं अब कामकाज की पूरी जिम्मेदारी नई पीढ़ी पर छोड़कर पूरी तरह परोपकार के काम में लगना चाहता हूँ। फिलहाल मैं युवाओं के लिए 1,500 कम्प्रे के एक हॉस्टल तैयार करवा रहा हूँ। मैं लोगों की मदद करना चाहता हूँ, ताकि वे दूसरों की मदद कर सकें। मुझे लोग हांगकांग का वॉरन वफेट कहते हैं, जो मेरे लिए बड़ा सम्मान है। मैं अपने बेटों को भी कहता हूँ कि कारोबार की केवल कारोबार के तौर पर नहीं लेना चाहिए।

आपमें सिर्फ पैसे कमाने की कला होना काफी नहीं है। आपको यह भी जानना चाहिए कि पैसे को कैसे अर्थपूर्ण तरीके से खर्च किया जाए।

# एक कप पानी बन गया पाकिस्तान छोड़ने की वजह

अपनी कहानी  
आसिया बीबी

वर्ष 2018 में पाकिस्तान की सर्वोच्च अदालत ने दोबारा मेरे मामले की सुनवाई की और मेरी रिहाई का फैसला सुनाया। इसके बावजूद जिस तरह से कट्टरपंथी विरोध कर रहे थे उसमें मुझे पाकिस्तान छोड़ कनाडा में बसने का फैसला करना पड़ा।



मुझे मौत की सजा सिर्फ इसलिए दी गई, क्योंकि मैंने उसी कप से पानी पिया जिससे मुस्लिम महिलाएं पानी पीती थीं। एक ईसाई महिला के हाथ से दिया हुआ पानी पीना मेरे साथ काम करने वाली महिलाओं के मुताबिक गलत था, जिस वजह से मेरे साथ एक क्रूर व सामाजिक अन्याय किया गया। मेरा जन्म पाकिस्तान प्रशासित पंजाब के शेखपुरा जिले के इत्तन वाली गांव में हुआ। हमारा परिवार रोमन कैथोलिक धर्म को मानता है, अपने गांव में हम एकमात्र ईसाई परिवार थे। मैं और मेरा परिवार गांव में खेती-मजदूरी करते थे। मेरे साथ काम करने वालों ने अनेक बार मुझे इस्लाम धर्म अपनाने के लिए कहा।

### वह एक कप पानी

वह 14 जून 2009 का दिन था, मैं उस दिन फालसा बटोरने के लिए खेत में गई थी। दोपहर तक गरमी तेज हो गई। पसीने से सराबोर मुझे बेहोशी जैसा महसूस होने लगा। मैं खेत से निकलकर पास ही एक कुएं पर पहुंची और कुएं से पानी निकाला। इसे एक कप में डालकर पीने लगी। तभी वहां एक महिला पहुंची जिसकी हालत मेरे जैसी ही हो रही थी। मैंने उसे भी कप में पानी निकालकर दिया, लेकिन तभी दूर खड़ी एक महिला ने चिल्लाकर कहा, यह पानी मत पियो, 'ये हाराम है' क्योंकि इसे एक ईसाई महिला ने अशुद्ध कर दिया है। इस पर मैंने जवाब दिया, मुझे लगता है कि ईसा मसीह इस काम को पैगंबर मोहम्मद से अलग नजर से देखेंगे।

### शुरू हुआ उत्पीड़न, मिली सजा

इसके बाद वहां और लोग इकट्ठा हो गए। उन्होंने मुझेसे कहा, तुम्हारी हिम्मत कैसे है मुझे पैगंबर मोहम्मद के बारे में कुछ बोलने की। साथ ही धमकी दी कि, इस पाप से मुक्त होने के लिए मुझे इस्लाम स्वीकार करना होगा। मुझे यह सुनकर बहुत बुरा लगा। मैंने उनसे कहा- मैं धर्म परिवर्तन नहीं करूंगी, क्योंकि मुझे ईसाई धर्म पर भरोसा है। ईसा मसीह ने मानवता के लिए अपनी जान दी। इस पर खेतों में ही उन्होंने मुझे मारना शुरू कर दिया। मैं उनसे बचकर गांव की ओर चली आई। हफ्ते भर बाद मुझे गिरफ्तार कर अदालत ले जाया गया जहां ईशानिया का दोषी ठहराकर जेल भेज दिया। मुझेसे मिलने के लिए पंजाब के तत्कालीन राज्यपाल सलमान तासीर आए, उन्होंने ईशानिया कानून की निंदा की। लेकिन इसके कुछ दिन बाद ही उनके अंगरक्षक ने उनकी हत्या कर दी।

### मैंने पाकिस्तान छोड़ दिया

मेरी सजा के खिलाफ 2014 में मेरे पति ने लाहौर में याचिका दाखिल की जिसे खारिज कर दिया गया। वर्ष 2015 में पाकिस्तान की सुप्रीम कोर्ट में अपील करने के बाद मेरी सजा पर रोक लगा दी गई। वर्ष 2018 में अदालत ने दोबारा मेरे मामले की सुनवाई की और मेरी रिहाई का फैसला सुनाया। इसके बाद पाकिस्तान में बग़ावत की लहर दौड़ पड़ी। मुझे और मेरे परिवार को खुलेआम धमकी दी जाने लगी। हालांकि अबतक दुनिया में मेरे बारे में चर्चा शुरू हो गई थी जिसके चलते कई देशों ने मुझे शरण देने की पेशकश की। पाकिस्तान में मौजूद एक वर्ष जिसमें कुछ सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता, विदेशी राजनयिक शामिल थे, ने मेरा सहयोग किया। इसके बावजूद जिस तरह से कट्टरपंथी विरोध कर रहे थे उसमें मुझे पाकिस्तान छोड़ कनाडा में बसने का फैसला करना पड़ा।

-आसिया बीबी के संस्मरणों व साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित



## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 72

### हकीकत से दूर

देश के सबसे बड़े और कटुता से भरे हुए आम चुनाव अपने अंतिम चरण की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं। अधिकांश लोगों ने यह उम्मीद की होगी कि इन अंतिम कुछ सप्ताह में मतदाताओं के समक्ष नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार के कार्यकाल की उपलब्धियां प्रस्तुत की जाएंगी, भविष्य को लेकर उसके वादे सामने रखे जाएंगे और विपक्ष अपनी ओर से विकल्प की पेशकश करेगा। प्रचार अभियान की शुरुआत इसी तर्ज पर हुई। भाजपा ने 'नामुमकिन अब मुमकिन है' का नारा दिया। राहुल गांधी ने न्याय योजना प्रस्तुत की और मजबूत सरकार और गठबंधन सरकार के संभावित लाभ और हानि पर चर्चा

हुई। परंतु ऐसा लगता है कि कम ही लोगों ने न्याय के बारे में सुना है जबकि विपक्ष एकजुट नजर आ रहा है। भाजपा को संभवतः यह अहसास हुआ कि उसका विकास संबंधी प्रदर्शन उतना उत्साहजनक नहीं है। उसने पुलवामा हमले और बालाकोट में की गई बदले की कार्रवाई को एजेंडा बनाया और पूरी बहस राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा की ओर मोड़ दी। यही वह वक्त था जब हकीकत और प्रचार अभियान में अंतर पैदा होने लगा। मोदी की खासियत है कि वह अपनी कमजोरियों को खूबी में बदल देते हैं। यह देखने को भी मिला। चौकीदार सेना पर आतंकी हमले को

लेकर मिल रही खुफिया विभाग की चेतावनियों पर कार्रवाई करने में नाकाम रहा, एक लड़ाकू विमान को मार गिराने से शर्मिंदगी झेलनी पड़ी, इससे भी बुरी बात कि एक हेलीकॉप्टर अपने ही हमले में मार गिराया गया, यह सच सामने आया कि भारतीय वायुसेना की तुलना में अत्यंत मामूली बजट से संचालित पाकिस्तानी वायुसेना के पास बेहतर लड़ाकू विमान और बेहतर मिसाइलें तो हैं ही, उसका संचार लिंक भी हमसे अधिक सुरक्षित है। इन तमाम असहज करने वाली हकीकतों को एक तेजतर्र अभियान के नीचे दबा दिया गया। यह अभियान दो बातों पर केंद्रित था: बालाकोट हमला और मसूद अजहर को आतंकी घोषित करवाना। कांग्रेस ने बहुत देर से यह घोषणा शुरू की कि उसने भी सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक समेत अन्य सफलताएं हासिल की हैं लेकिन वह हमेशा की तरह डरपोक साबित कर दी गई।

राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के मुद्दे को एक अन्य दिलचस्प मोड़ देते हुए कहा गया कि इस

बात का खतरा है कि देशद्रोहियों का 'टुकड़े-टुकड़े गैंग' देश को तोड़ सकता है। राष्ट्रवादियों को अपने मुल्क की ताकत में कहीं ज्यादा भरोसा होना चाहिए था। अगर कोई खतरा है भी तो इससे निपटने की सरकार की नीति क्या है? नक्सल प्रभावित इलाकों और जम्मू और कश्मीर में हिंसा का बढ़ता स्तर नीतिगत नाकामी को दर्शाता है। चीन की ओर से सुरक्षा को जो चुनौती मिल

रही है, उसका उल्लेख तक नहीं है जबकि चीन हमारे पड़ोस में पहुंच रहा है। अब पूरी चर्चा हास्यास्पद स्तर तक गिर चुकी है। एक ऐसे प्रधानमंत्री पर आरोप लगाए जा रहे हैं जिसका निधन हुए चौथाई सदी बीत चुकी है। इससे पहले एक ऐसे प्रधानमंत्री के कदमों पर सवाल उठाया जा रहा था जो 50 वर्ष से भी अधिक पहले गुजर गए। नेहरू और राजीव गांधी की जो भी गलतियां या चूक रही हों, क्या वे 2019 के चुनाव में मुद्दा हैं या फिर यह जनता का ध्यान भटकाने की कोशिश है?

यह ध्यान रहे कि भाजपा ने अर्थव्यवस्था की बात ही नहीं की है। बार-बार यही इल्जाम लगाया जाता रहा है कि मोदी के आने से पहले के 70 वर्ष में कोई विकास नहीं हुआ। कांग्रेस निष्प्रभावी तरीके से वृद्धि में धीमापन आने, निर्यात में उधराव और निवेश में कमी का जिक्र करती है। आंकड़ों से छेड़छाड़ का मसला भी हाल में उठा है। रोजगार और ग्रामीण संकट को लेकर काफी कुछ कहा गया लेकिन मोदी ने अब तक इस पर प्रतिक्रिया नहीं दी है।

ये बातें मतदाताओं के लिए कितनी अहम हैं? दलगत राजनीति में लोग ऐसे तथ्य चुनते हैं जो उनके पूर्वग्रह या उनकी मान्यता पर सटीक बैठते हों, खासकर तब जब एक मजबूत नेता सामने हो। लाखों लोगों के लिए मोदी का प्रदर्शन सर्वश्रेष्ठ भले नहीं हो लेकिन वह उपलब्ध विकल्पों में सबसे बेहतर है। या कहें लोगों को उनका हिंदूवादी राष्ट्रवाद रास आया है। इस बीच मोदी ने एक बार फिर यह दर्शाया

है कि कैसे वह अपने आलोचकों की बाजी पलट सकते हैं। उन्होंने उन अपशब्दों का जिक्र किया जो बीते सालों के दौरान उन्हें कहे गए। उन्होंने तंज भरे लहजे में राहुल गांधी की 'लव डिविजनरी' का जिक्र किया। इस अभियान के दौरान एक बात स्पष्ट हो गई कि मोदी किसी भी विकेट पर बल्लेबाजी कर सकते हैं और गेंद को सीमारेखा के पार पहुंचा सकते हैं। इस काम में वे तथ्यों का हवाला इस्तेमाल करते हैं, भावनाओं से खिलवाड़ करते हैं और आलंकारिक शैली में नामदार और कामदार का जिक्र करते हैं।

चुनाव विश्लेषकों का कहना है कि उनकी पार्टी बहुमत गंवा सकती है और उनके दोबारा प्रधानमंत्री बनने की संभावना कम होगी। अगर ऐसा हुआ तो यह विपक्ष के कारण कम और उनकी वजह से अधिक होगा क्योंकि पांच साल तक छवि निर्माण, आक्रामक सोशल मीडिया ट्रोलिंग और नाटकीय अंदाज में लोगों का ध्यान आकर्षित करने के बावजूद हिंदी प्रदेश के मतदाता उनके प्रदर्शन से निराश हैं।



विनय सिन्हा

# आईआईटी रुड़की और जेम्स थॉमसन

आईआईटी रुड़की की यात्रा से औपनिवेशिक युग के एक ऐसे इंजीनियर के बारे में पता चला जिनके नाम पर एक शैक्षणिक संस्थान और एक रेल इंजन दोनों हैं। जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं विवेक देवराय

हाल ही में मैं कुछ परिचर्चाओं में हिस्सा लेने के लिए आईआईटी रुड़की गया था। रुड़की कॉलेज को आईआईटी रुड़की का पूर्ववर्ती माना जा सकता है। वहां मुझे एक विशेष लेख देखने को मिला, जो सन 1851 में प्रकाशित हुआ था। उस लेख का शीर्षक था, 'रुड़की कॉलेज का लेखा, जिसकी स्थापना सिविल इंजीनियरों के निर्देशन हेतु की गई, इसकी विस्तार योजना भी साथ ही बनी।'

देश में सिविल इंजीनियरों के व्यवस्थित प्रशिक्षण की आवश्यकता बहुत लंबे समय से महसूस की जा रही थी। पश्चिमी यमुना नहर की शुरुआत सन 1817 में हुई। पूर्वी यमुना नहर की शुरुआत सन 1822 में हुई।

देहरादून में, रुहेलखंड में और दिल्ली के निकट नजफगढ़ में सरकार ही लंबे समय से नालियों और सिंचाई आदि का काम संभाल रही थी।

पिछले 20 या 30 वर्ष में सरकार ने अपने खर्च पर कई बेहतरीन सड़कों का निर्माण किया है। आपात परिस्थितियों से निपटने के लिए तात्कालिक उपाय करने आवश्यक थे।

बेहतर प्रशिक्षण वाले अनुभवी सिविल इंजीनियरों की निरंतर उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित करने के लिए भी यह आवश्यक था। इन इंजीनियरों की ऐसी तैयारी आवश्यक थी जिसकी बढौतल वे उन कठिनाइयों से जुड़ सकें जो बेहतर प्रबंधन की राह में सामने आतीं। कहने का तात्पर्य यह है कि रुड़की कॉलेज का निर्माण ऐसी ही आपातकालीन परिस्थितियों में हुई। यह कॉलेज 25 नवंबर 1847 को औपचारिक रूप से अस्तित्व में आया। गर्जेटियर से हमें यह भी पता चला कि अनौपचारिक तौर एक कक्षा 1845 में ही शुरू हो गई थी, जहां स्थानीय युवाओं को इंजीनियरिंग का प्रशिक्षण दिया जाने लगा था। यह शुरुआत थी। जेम्स थॉमसन पश्चिमोत्तर प्रंत के तत्कालीन लेफ्टिनेंट गवर्नर थे। यही कारण है कि उनके निधन के बाद रुड़की कॉलेज को थॉमसन कॉलेज ऑफ सिविल इंजीनियरिंग का नाम दिया गया। बाद में यह आईआईटी रुड़की बन गया और इसके प्रमुख प्रशासनिक भवन को थॉमसन भवन का नाम दिया गया।

आश्चर्य नहीं कि वहां मेरी मुलाकात जिन छात्रों से हुई, उनको इस इतिहास के बारे में

कोई जानकारी नहीं थी। यही कारण है कि उनको उस प्रस्तावित विस्तार के बारे में भी कोई जानकारी नहीं थी, जिसका उल्लेख सन 1851 के आलेख में था। उसमें रुड़की से 40-50 मील के दायरे में आने वाले गांवों के विद्यालयों की स्थिति में सुधार करने की बात शामिल थी। योजना यह थी कि कुछ आदर्श ग्रामीण विद्यालय स्थापित किए जाएं और आगतुकों के लिए एक प्रतिष्ठान बनाया जाए जिनका काम होगा उनको आर्वाइत गांवों में जाना तथा वहां के विद्यालयों का स्तर आंकना तथा उनमें कार्यरत शिक्षकों को सलाह देना और उनकी सहायता करना। इस काम में निर्देशन, पुस्तकों और पुस्तक आदि का इस्तेमाल किया जाना था हुआ था।

सन 1935 में लेफ्टिनेंट कर्नल ई.डब्ल्यू.सी. सैंड्स की एक पुस्तक प्रकाशित हुई जिसका शीर्षक था- द मिलिट्री इंजीनियर इन इंडिया। अपनी इस पुस्तक में उन्होंने रुड़की कॉलेज को देश का सबसे पुराना इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज बताया। उन्होंने लिखा कि रुड़की का थॉमसन सिविल इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज दरअसल सबसे पुराना है और यह भारत में अपनी तरह का अनूठा कॉलेज है।

उन्होंने लिखा कि थॉमसन कॉलेज अपने अस्तित्व के लिए गंगा नदी का ऋणी है क्योंकि इस पवित्र नदी के बगैर न तो गंग नहर होती और न ही बिना नहर के यह कॉलेज अस्तित्व में आता।

हालांकि यह अपने आप में बहस का विषय है क्योंकि चेन्नई स्थित कॉलेज ऑफ इंजीनियरिंग सन 1859 में औपचारिक रूप से कॉलेज बना जबकि उसके पहले सन 1794 में ही स्कूल ऑफ सर्वे की स्थापना की जा चुकी थी। परंतु जेम्स थॉमसन की विशिष्टता के बारे में कहीं किसी बहस की गुंजाइश नहीं है। मुझे ऐसे किसी अन्य व्यक्ति के बारे में जानकारी नहीं है, जिसके नाम पर शैक्षणिक संस्थान भी हो और रेल इंजन भी। कर्नल प्रॉवी टी कॉटेली वह इंजीनियर थे, जिन्होंने गंग नहर के निर्माण की निगरानी की। उन्होंने इस नहर के निर्माण कार्य पर एक रिपोर्ट भी लिखी। अपनी इस रिपोर्ट में वह कहते हैं, 'रेलगां और वैगन के निर्माण से हमें व्हील बैरो और बास्केट से राहत मिली, लेकिन काफी लंबे समय तक हमारा मानव संसाधन खुदाई और वैगनों को धकेलने के काम में भी लगा।'

'समय बीतने के साथ कुछ स्थानों पर मनुष्य का स्थान घोड़े ने लिया। 22 दिसंबर 1851 को रेल इंजन की शुरुआत हुई। मेरा मानना है कि भारत में इस्तेमाल किया गया वह अपनी तरह का अनूठा इंजन था।' उनकी यह बात सही है क्योंकि आयातित भाप इंजन भारत में इस्तेमाल किया गया पहला रेल इंजन था। रुड़की रेलवे स्टेशन पर इसका एक मॉडल मौजूद है जो परिचालन योग्य है। उस वक्त जेनी लिंड किसी ओपरा गायक की तरह मशहूर थीं। वह अपनी ख्याति के शिखर पर थीं।

ऐसे में इस इंजन को शुरुआत में जेनी लिंड के नाम से जाना जाता था और यह रुड़की और पीर कलियर के बीच निर्माण सामग्री ढोने का काम करता था। जेनी लिंड को लंदन में प्रसिद्धि हासिल थी, थॉमसन पूर्वोत्तर प्रंत में ख्यात थे। यही कारण था कि इस इंजन का नाम बदलकर थॉमसन कर दिया गया। दुर्भाग्यवश 1852 में बॉयलर में विस्फोट हो गया और थॉमसन इंजन नहीं बच सका।

रिचर्ड बेयर्ड नामक एक इंजीनियर रुड़की में गंग नहर के कामकाज के प्रभारी हुआ करते थे। सन 1857 में उनसे कहा गया कि वह मुख्य इंजीनियर के रूप में दिल्ली जाएं। कर्नल वाइबर्ट ने अपनी पुस्तक में रिचर्ड बेयर्ड स्मिथ को सन 1857 में दिल्ली के नायकों के नेता के रूप में याद किया है। उन्होंने लिखा है कि दिल्ली जाने से पहले रुड़की में खंदक खोदने वाले सिपाहियों की दो कंपनियां मजबूती के बजाय कमजोरी का सबब बनीं। उनमें शामिल तमाम सिपाही स्थानीय थे। उनमें काफी हद तक अस्हजता का भाव था जिसने प्रदर्शन को प्रभावित किया। बेयर्ड ने उनको दो ऐसे अधिकारियों के अधीन रखा जो एक दूसरे से परिचित थे थे और उपलब्ध अधिकारियों में सबसे उत्कृष्ट भी थे। उन्होंने थॉमसन कॉलेज की इमारतों की देखरेख का काम भी उनको ही सौंपा। (लेखक प्रधानमंत्री की आर्थिक सलाहकार परिषद के अध्यक्ष हैं)

## समाचारपत्रों की लोकप्रियता और विश्वसनीयता बरकरार

सबसे पहले अच्छी खबर। वर्ष

2019 की पहली तिमाही में 42.5 करोड़ से भी ज्यादा हिंदुस्तानियों ने समाचार पत्र पढ़े। यह तादाद वर्ष 2017 की पहली तिमाही के 40.7 करोड़ लोगों से अधिक है। यह आंकड़े इंडियन रीडरशिप सर्वे (आईआरएस) 2019 ने अप्रैल के पहले सप्ताह में जारी किए। दुनिया के अधिकांश बाजारों के उलट भारत में समाचार पत्रों के पाठकों की तादाद और उनका प्रसार बीते दशक में लगातार बढ़ा है। वर्ष 2016 के अंत तक अगर ऑडिटेड ब्यूरो ऑफ सर्कुलेशन के 10 वर्ष के आंकड़ों का अध्ययन किया जाए तो औसत प्रसार 4.87 फीसदी बढ़कर 6.3 करोड़ के स्तर तक पहुंच गया। प्रिंट मीडिया 1,67,400 करोड़ रुपये के कारोबार वाले मीडिया और मनोरंजन उद्योग का सबसे अधिक मुनाफे वाला क्षेत्र बना रहा।

प्रश्न यह है कि बीते तीन वर्ष से उसका राजस्व उठरा हुआ क्यों है? यहाँ पर अवश्य चिंतित होने की बात है। वर्ष 2018 तक के 10 वर्ष में मीडिया के कुल राजस्व में प्रिंट के हिस्सेदारी 30 फीसदी से घटकर 18 फीसदी से थोड़ी ज्यादा रह गई है। चूंकि इसका आधार बढ़ रहा था इसलिए वास्तव में देखें तो प्रिंट मीडिया का आकार करीब दोगुना हो गया। परंतु इन 10 वर्षों में से बीते तीन वर्ष वास्तव में कठिन रहे। आंकड़ों पर गौर करें तो वर्ष 2016 के 30,330 करोड़ रुपये (विज्ञापन एवं स्वसक्रियण) से बढ़कर समाचार पत्रों और पत्रिकाओं का राजस्व 2018 तक केवल 30,550 करोड़ रुपये तक ही पहुंचा। दिलचस्प बात यह है कि इसकी वजह इंटरनेट कतई नहीं रहा है। बल्कि इसके लिए काफी हद तक यह उद्योग स्वयं जिम्मेदार रहा।

सबसे बड़ी जिम्मेदारी पाठकों की संख्या पर आती है। समाचार पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में विज्ञापनों के लिए निर्धारित स्थान, इस उद्योग के 70 फीसदी राजस्व के लिए उत्तरदायी होता है। वर्ष 2013 से 2017 तक चार वर्ष की अवधि में प्रकाशकों ने जमकर कमाई की और उसके बाद वे इस राजस्व लक्ष्य को हासिल करने की जद्दोजहद में



मीडिया मंत्र वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

लगे रहे। उस दौर में आंकड़ों की इस कदर उपलब्धता नहीं थी और विज्ञापनदाताओं ने अपनी राशि अन्य मीडिया माध्यमों में व्यय करनी शुरू कर दी। इसमें डिजिटल मीडिया भी शामिल है। नोटबंदी और वस्तु एवं सेवा कर के प्रिंट मीडिया उद्योग पर बुरे असर के बावजूद यह सिलसिला जारी रहा। सिलयांस ने जियो की शुरुआत और डेटा कोमतेतें औंधे मुंह गिर पड़ी। इस कारण डेटा खपत में इजाफा हुआ। वर्ष 2016 में जहां प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति माह 0.8 जीबी डेटा खपत होती थी वहीं 2018 में यह बढ़कर 8 जीबी प्रति व्यक्ति प्रति माह हो गई।

इसे दूसरी तरह से देखें तो एक फिल्म एक जीबी डेटा लेती है। यानी करीब 5.5 करोड़ भारतीय ब्रॉडबैंड उपभोक्ता हर महीने कम से कम 8 फिल्म डाउनलोड करने के बराबर डेटा इस्तेमाल करते हैं। डाउनलोड की जाने वाली सामग्री में फिल्म, टीवी शो, खेल या समाचार के कार्यक्रम कुछ भी हो सकती है। कुछ ओटीटी या वीडियो स्ट्रीमिंग ऐप के पास फिल्हाल 10 से 20 करोड़ उपभोक्ता हैं। अब उपभोक्ताओं के पास ध्यान बांटने के लिए 2013 की तुलना में कहीं अधिक उपाय मौजूद हैं।

वर्ष 2018 में जब सबको स्वीकार्य आईआरएस आंकड़े सामने आए तब तक संभवतः बहुत अधिक देर हो चुकी थी। विज्ञापनों से मिलने वाले राजस्व में कोई बढ़ोतरी नहीं हुई है। विज्ञापन से जुड़े लोगों का कहना है कि इसकी एक वजह यह भी हो सकती है कि आईआरएस कुल पाठक संख्या की बात करता है बजाय कि औसत पाठक संख्या के। औसत पाठक संख्या में बहुत अधिक इजाफा नहीं

हुआ है। विज्ञापनदाता अभी भी औसत पाठक संख्या के आधार पर ही विज्ञापन के लिए स्थान खरीदते हैं।

आप यह दलील दे सकते हैं कि विज्ञापनदाता काफी हद तक ऐसे माफक इस्तेमाल करने में रुचि रखते हैं जिनके चलते कम दर पर विज्ञापन दिए जा सकें। फिर चाहे मामला टेलीविजन पर प्रति रेटिंग चार्ट लागत की हो या प्रिंट में एआईआर की। इसके अलावा एआईआर सभी विज्ञापनदाताओं के लिए काम नहीं करता। लंबी अवधि के दौरान ब्रांड तैयार करने के लक्ष्य की दृष्टि से समग्र पाठक संख्या बेहतर विकल्प है। अधिकांश प्रकाशक और विज्ञापनदाता इस बात से परिचित होते हैं। मानक के नहीं होने से उनको यह अवसर मिल जाता है कि वे दरों को कम रखें। वे ऐसा चाहते भी हैं।

कुल पाठक संख्या में हो रहा इजाफा और ऑनलाइन में आ रही उछाल उम्मीद बंधाती है। आईआरएस 2019 के अनुसार करीब 5.4 करोड़ लोग ऑनलाइन समाचार पत्र पढ़ते हैं। कॉम्स्कोर जो डिजिटल मीडिया पर ध्यान केंद्रित करता है, उसके मुताबिक करीब 27.9 करोड़ लोग ऑनलाइन समाचार पत्र पढ़ते हैं। देश के शीर्ष 20 ऑनलाइन प्रकाशकों में से 11 मुख्य धारा के मीडिया संस्थान हैं। उदाहरण के लिए टाइम्स इंटरनेट, एचटी मीडिया, इंडिया टुडे समूह और इंडियन एक्सप्रेस समूह आदि। प्रकाशक डिजिटल माध्यम पर बहुत अधिक ध्यान दे रहे हैं। मैंने हाल ही में ऑनलाइन राजस्व और मुनाफे के आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण किया और ये दोनों ही काफी बेहतर नजर आ रहे हैं। डिजिटल क्षेत्र के स्वसक्रियण के शुरुआती रुझान भी बहुत उत्साहित करने वाले हैं। ऑनलाइन और ऑफलाइन पाठकों की तादाद में हो रहे इजाफे से राजस्व में भी बढ़ोतरी होनी चाहिए, खासतौर पर इस चुनावी वर्ष में। ऐसे में राजस्व वृद्धि दोबारा 7 से 9 फीसदी के स्तर पर वापस आ सकती है। उम्मीद की जा सकती है कि आईआरएस 2020 समाचार पत्रों के कारोबार के लिए और बेहतर साबित होगा।

## कानाफूसी

### कर्ज माफी की पहली

मध्य प्रदेश में कृषि ऋण माफी लंबे समय से चुनावी मुद्दा बनी हुई है। एक ओर कांग्रेस सरकार का दावा है कि उसने 21 लाख से अधिक किसानों का कर्ज माफ कर दिया है तो वहीं भाजपा का दावा है कि कर्ज माफी के नाम पर किसानों को ठगा जा रहा है। पिछले दिनों एक बार फिर इस पहली में नया मोड़ आया। कांग्रेस के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी ने एक जनसभा के दौरान मंच से ही इस योजना के कुछ लाभार्थियों के नाम की घोषणा कर दी। इनमें से दो नाम बहुत खास थे। एक नाम प्रदेश के पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान के भाई रविशंकर सिंह का था तो दूसरा उनके चाचा के बेटे निरंजन सिंह का। गांधी ने दावा किया कि इन दोनों लोगों का भी कर्ज माफ किया गया है। हालांकि चौहान ने इस दावे को पूरी तरह फर्जी बताते हुए कहा कि उनके परिवार के किसी सदस्य ने कर्ज माफी का फार्म ही नहीं भरा तो कर्ज कैसे माफ कर दिया गया? चौहान ने कहा कि कांग्रेस सरकार कर्ज माफी के नाम पर कृषि विभागों के दस्तावेज पेश कर रही है जबकि उसे बैंकों की ओर से दो गई सूची जारी करनी चाहिए जिसमें कर्ज माफी की राशि और किसानों का ब्योरा हो।



## आपका पक्ष

### भारत का परमाणु संपन्न देश होना

विज्ञान और प्रद्योगिकी मंत्रालय द्वारा हर सा 11 मई को नैशनल टेक्नोलॉजी दिवस मनाया जाता है। 11 मई और 13 मई 1998 को पोखरण में भारत ने सफल परमाणु परीक्षण किए थे। इस परीक्षण के बाद देश ने अपना नाम परमाणु संपन्न देशों में दर्ज करा लिया। इस उपलब्धि के बाद देश ने स्पष्ट कर दिया कि भारत गैर परमाणु देशों पर नाभिकीय हमला नहीं करेगा और युद्ध के दौरान देश कभी परमाणु हथियारों का प्रयोग नहीं करेगा। इस ऐतिहासिक घटना के बाद सही मायने में देश ने दुनिया के सामने विज्ञान, तकनीक और अपनी प्रौद्योगिकी का लोहा मनवाया। जहां तक देश की रक्षा तकनीक की बात है तो भारत ने अपने दम पर पृथ्वी, आकाश, त्रिशूल, नाग, अग्नि जैसी मिसाइल विकसित की हैं जो



परमाणु हथियार ले जाने में सक्षम हैं और लंबी दूरी तक मार कर सकती हैं। आईएनएस विक्रान्त भी स्वदेशी एयरक्राफ्ट कैरियर 1 के रूप में जाना जाता है। भारतीय नौसेना के लिए कोच्चि में कोचीन शिपयार्ड एक विमान वाहक पोत बना रही है। यह भारत में निर्मित

### पोखरण में 11 और 13 मई को भारत ने सफल परमाणु परीक्षण किया था

होने वाला पहला विमानवाहक पोत होगा। भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन हर महीने विभिन्न उपग्रह

परीक्षण की वजह से सुखियों में रहता है। वर्ष 2017 में उसने एक साथ 104 उपग्रहों को सफलतापूर्वक प्रक्षेपित कर अपनी क्षमता का दुनियाभर को अहसास करा दिया था। इन उपलब्धियों के बावजूद देश को अभी अन्य तकनीक और प्रौद्योगिकी क्षेत्र में काफी कुछ करने की जरूरत है। ग्लोबल इनोवेशन इंडेक्स में 126 देशों की सूची में भारत 57वें स्थान पर है। आज भी भारत को स्वदेशी वस्तुओं की तकनीकी खामियों की वजह से महंगी विदेशी तकनीक पर भरोसा करना पड़ता है। इस पर विदेशी मुद्रा भी खर्च करनी पड़ती है। भारत में उन्नतशील प्रौद्योगिकी देश बनने की पूरी क्षमता है बशर्त सरकार और शिक्षा संस्थान स्पष्ट

नीतियां बनाकर इस क्षेत्र में ध्यान केंद्रित करें।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

### राजनीतिक बयानों का गिरता स्तर

देश में राजनीति का स्तर लगातार गिरता जा रहा है। राजनेता बगैर सोचे-समझे आरोप-प्रत्यारोप लगा रहे हैं। कुछ भी बोलने से पहले वे यह नहीं सोचते हैं कि इससे उन लोगों पर क्या असर पड़ेगा जो उनके भाषण सुन रहे हैं। एक चुनावी सभा में प्रधानमंत्री ने पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री स्व राजीव गांधी को भ्रष्टाचारी कह दिया। पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री की मृत्यु के बाद उनके लिए इस तरह के शब्द इस्तेमाल करना प्रधानमंत्री को शोभा नहीं देता है। इस तरह के शब्दों का इस्तेमाल करके वह अन्य नेताओं को इस तरह की बयानबाजी करने के लिए बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं।

मनीषा मेहलावत

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



## दबाव और चुनौती

सुप्रीम कोर्ट में जजों की नियुक्ति को लेकर कालेजियम और सरकार के बीच एक बार जिस तरह का गतिरोध देखने को मिल रहा है, वह स्वतंत्र न्यायपालिका के लिए अच्छा संकेत नहीं कहा जा सकता। सरकार और न्यायपालिका के बीच इस तरह का टकराव लोकतंत्र के लिए घातक होता है। लोकतंत्र के महत्त्वपूर्ण स्तंभों- न्यायपालिका और कार्यपालिका के बीच ऐसे विवादों से देश की जनता में अच्छा संदेश नहीं जाता। हाल का ताजा विवाद यह है कि कालेजियम ने सरकार के पास बारह अप्रैल को जिन दो जजों को सुप्रीम कोर्ट में जज बनाने के लिए सिफारिश भेजी थी, वह सरकार ने पुनर्विचार के लिए लौटा दी थी। इनमें एक जज झारखंड हाईकोर्ट के मुख्य न्यायाधीश अनिरुद्ध बोस हैं और दूसरे गुवाहाटी हाईकोर्ट के मुख्य न्यायाधीश एएस बोपान्ना हैं। अब कालेजियम ने फिर से इन्हीं दोनों नामों को सरकार के पास इस टिप्पणी के साथ भेजा है कि सरकार ने दोनों न्यायाधीशों की योग्यता, आचरण और निष्ठा के बारे में कोई टिप्पणी नहीं की है। सरकार की ओर से जो आपत्ति आई थी वह इन जजों की वरिष्ठता को लेकर थी। ऐसे में सवाल उठता है कि अगर वरिष्ठता से संबंधित कोई मुद्दा सामने आता है तो उसमें सरकार की मानी जाए या फिर कालेजियम की।

सुप्रीम कोर्ट और उच्च न्यायालयों में न्यायाधीशों की नियुक्ति, तरक्की और तबादले संबंधी काम कालेजियम ही देखता है। कालेजियम प्रधान न्यायाधीश सहित पांच वरिष्ठ जजों का समूह होता है। कालेजियम व्यवस्था की शुरुआत 1993 में हुई थी। तत्कालीन मुख्य न्यायाधीश जेएस वर्मा के नेतृत्व वाली सुप्रीम कोर्ट की नौ सदस्यीय संवैधानिक खंडपीठ ने छह अक्टूबर 1993 को तय किया था कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीश का रुतबा कार्यपालिका से ऊपर है, इसलिए जजों की नियुक्तियां और तबादले कालेजियम द्वारा ही होने चाहिए। कालेजियम व्यवस्था लाने का मकसद न्यायपालिका को राजनीतिक दखल से मुक्त कर स्वतंत्र बनाना था। लेकिन पिछले दो दशकों में जब-तब ऐसे आरोप भी सामने आए जब कालेजियम व्यवस्था पर सवालिया निशान लगाए गए और कहा गया कि कालेजियम प्रणाली से जजों की नियुक्ति में भाई-भतीजावाद को बढ़ावा मिल रहा है और उच्च न्यायपालिका में नियुक्तियों को लेकर पारदर्शिता नहीं रह गई है। इसी की आड़ बना कर सरकार ने न्यायिक नियुक्तियों में दखल बढ़ाया।

कालेजियम व्यवस्था लागू होने के बाद सामान्य तौर पर यह परंपरा रही कि जजों की नियुक्ति के लिए जो नाम सरकार के पास भेजे जाते थे, उन्हें बिना किसी नुस्तानीचीनी या काट-छांट के हरी झंडी दे दी जाती थी। लेकिन पिछले कुछ सालों में सरकार ने कालेजियम की सिफारिशों पर जिस तरह का रुख दिखाना शुरू किया है वह न्यायपालिका के लिए अच्छा संकेत नहीं माना जा रहा। पिछले साल उत्तराखंड हाई कोर्ट के मुख्य न्यायाधीश केएम जोसेफ के नाम को लेकर सरकार और कालेजियम के बीच लंबा टकराव चला था। हालांकि अंततः झुकना सरकार को पड़ा, लेकिन उनकी वरिष्ठता कम हो गई। यह टकराव परोक्ष रूप से न्यायपालिका को नियंत्रित करने का संकेत था। जजों की नियुक्ति के लिए प्रस्तावित राष्ट्रीय न्यायिक नियुक्ति आयोग का गठन भी खटाई में पड़ा है। आयोग के गठन के प्रारूप से स्पष्ट है कि जजों की नियुक्तियों में सरकार का पूरा दखल रहेगा। हालांकि न्यायपालिका में जजों की वरिष्ठता और नियुक्ति संबंधी मामलों में सरकार के दखल के उदाहरण पहले भी देखने को मिलते रहे हैं और इसी को खत्म करने के लिए कालेजियम व्यवस्था बनी थी। अगर लोकतंत्र के स्तंभों में संतुलन नहीं बनेगा तो संस्थाएं खतरे में पड़ेंगी। आज न्यायपालिका भी ऐसी ही चुनौती का सामना कर रही है। सवाल है कि तब कैसे वह अपने को स्वतंत्र बनाए रख सकती है !

## खुदकुशी की खोह

आर्थिक तंगी, कर्ज का बोझ, पारिवारिक कलह, परीक्षा या प्रेम में विफलता आदि के चलते खुदकुशी की घटनाएं पिछले कुछ सालों में लगातार बढ़ती गई हैं। इसे लेकर अनेक समाज-मनोवैज्ञानिक अध्ययन हो चुके हैं। पर यह सवाल अपनी जगह बना हुआ है कि लोग मानसिक रूप से इतने कमजोर कैसे होते जा रहे हैं कि संघर्ष के बजाय मामूली विफलता के बाद खुदकुशी को आसान विकल्प के तौर पर चुन लेते हैं। हमारा समाज भी इतना आत्मकेंद्रित कैसे होता गया है कि ऐसे प्रेशान लोगों को किसी तरह का संबल नहीं दे पाता। आइपीएल सट्टे में भारी नुकसान उठाने के बाद वाराणसी और मुरादाबाद में दो लोगों की खुदकुशी ने एक बार फिर इन सवालों को रेखांकित किया है। वाराणसी में जिस व्यक्ति ने आत्महत्या की, उसने अपनी तीन बेटियों को भी जहर खिला दिया। वह रेड्डी पर कपड़े बेचने का काम करता था। मुरादाबाद के व्यक्ति ने खुद को फांसी लगा ली। आप्ादि ऐसी खबरें मिल जाती हैं। इसके पीछे बड़ा कारण शहरी दबाव है। बहुत सारे लोग गांवों, कस्बों, छोटी जगहों से पलायन कर बड़े शहरों में इस उम्मीद के साथ आते हैं कि वे वहां जीवन यापन के कुछ बेहतर साधन तलाश लेंगे, मगर जब विफल होते हैं, तो निराशा में खुदकुशी जैसे कदम उठाते हैं।

आर्थिक तंगी की वजह से जितनी भी आत्महत्याएं होती हैं, उनमें आमतौर पर परिवार पालने के लिए संघर्ष कर रहे लोग होते हैं। उन्हें जीवन की जरूरी चीजें जुटाने के लिए भी काफी संघर्ष करना पड़ता है। वाराणसी के जिस व्यक्ति ने खुदकुशी की उसने अपनी तीन बेटियों को भी जहर दे दिया। इससे अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि उस पर उनके पालन-पोषण, पढ़ाई-लिखाई, विवाह आदि को लेकर कितना दबाव रहा होगा। इसी के चलते उसने आसानी से खूब सारा पैसा कमाने की ललक में सट्टेबाजी का रास्ता चुना होगा। मगर वहां भी उसे विफलता मिली, कर्ज में डूबता गया, तो स्वाभाविक रूप से निराश हुआ होगा और अपनी विफलता से पार पाने का रास्ता उसे आत्महत्या में नजर आया होगा। इसी तरह मुरादाबाद वाला व्यक्ति महाराष्ट्र से चल कर किसी उद्यम के सिलसिले में मुरादाबाद आकर बस गया था। उसने भी इसी तरह पारिवारिक दायित्वों का निर्वाह न कर पाने की वजह से सट्टेबाजी का रास्ता चुना और फिर विफल होने पर खुदकुशी कर ली।

इन दिनों परिवार का भरण-पोषण, शिक्षा, विवाह आदि जैसी जरूरी आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति कर पाना भी बहुत सारे लोगों के लिए मुश्किल होता गया है। खासकर शहरी जीवन पर अभी तक गंभीरता से विचार नहीं हुआ है। इस दिशा में संजीदगी से सोचने की जरूरत है।

## कल्पमेधा

ईश्वर ने तुम्हें सिर्फ एक चेहरा दिया है और दूसरा तुम खुद बना लेते हो।

–शेक्सपियर

ब्रह्मदीप अलूनै

व्यवस्थापक निदेशक, राष्ट्रीय समाज पार्टी

अध्यक्ष, राष्ट्रीय समाज आन्दोलन

अध्यक्ष, राष्ट्रीय समाज आन्दोलन

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# 14 महीने में ही बढहाल हो गया दो करोड़ से बनाव कोकर का डिस्टिलरी पार्क

29 जनवरी 2018 को हुआ था इस पार्क का उदघाटन

मेन गेट दिखावा बना धिल काट कर पार्क में घुस रहे हैं लोग

संवाददाता ▶ रांची

रांची नगर निगम ने करीब 14 महीने पहले कोकर डिस्टिलरी पुल के समीप स्वामी विवेकानंद स्मृति पार्क का निर्माण कराया था. पार्क के निर्माण करने में करीब दो करोड़ रुपये खर्च किये गये हैं. मौजूदा समय में इस पार्क की हालत खस्ता हो चुकी है. पार्क में

चारों ओर झाड़ियां उग आयी हैं. पाथ वे के ऊपर में नाली पानी बह रहा है, लेकिन इस पर किसी का ध्यान नहीं है. पार्क की सुरक्षा के लिए इसके चारों ओर तार से घेराबंदी की गयी थी. लेकिन असामाजिक तत्वों ने तार को ही काट दिया गया है. बाहर से आनेवाले लोग प्रवेश शुल्क से बचने के लिए अब इसी रास्ते से पार्क में प्रवेश करते हैं. इससे पार्क का ठेका लेनेवाले संवेदक को भी नुकसान हो रहा है. शौचालयों पर लगा रहता है तालास्वच्छ भारत मिशन के तहत रांची नगर निगम शहरवासियों को खुले में शौच करने से रोक रहा है. लेकिन, निगम के इस पार्क में ही स्वच्छ भारत मिशन का मखौल उड़ाया जा रहा

मुझे पार्क की स्थिति की जानकारी है. अभी आचार संहिता लगी हुई है. आचार संहिता के समाप्त होने के बाद अभियंताओं के टीम के साथ पार्क का निरीक्षण किया जायेगा. इस दौरान जो भी खामियां मिलेंगी उन्हें प्राथमिकता से सुधारा जायेगा.

संजीव विजयवर्गीय, डिप्टी मेयर

है. पार्क में महिला और पुरुष के लिए शौचालय तो बनाये गये हैं. लेकिन, अधिकतर समय इन शौचालयों में ताला ही बंद रहता है. इससे पार्क में आनेवाले लोगों को इसका लाभ नहीं मिल पाता है.



कोकर डिस्टिलरी पुल के समीप स्वामी विवेकानंद स्मृति पार्क के अंदर उग आयी हैं झाड़ियां और टूटी घेराबंदी को पार कर अंदर जाता युवक .



को-ऑपरेटिव बैंक के चेयरमैन पर केस

धनबाद. धनबाद सेंट्रल को-ऑपरेटिव बैंक के चेयरमैन सुरेश चौधरी व एमडी एंजी कुजूर के खिलाफ आदर्श चुनाव आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन करने का मामला सामने आया है. बैंक एमडी व चेयरमैन पर चुनाव आचार संहिता के दौरान एकमुश्त ऋण समझौता योजना को लागू करने का आरोप है. मामले में उपायुक्त सह जिला निर्वाचन पदाधिकारी ए दोड्डे ने शुक्रवार को को-ऑपरेटिव बैंक के चेयरमैन सुरेश चौधरी के खिलाफ एफआइआर करने व एमडी एंजी कुजूर के खिलाफ विभागीय कार्रवाई करने का निर्देश दिया है. साथ ही, बैंक की एकमुश्त ऋण समझौता योजना को स्थगित करने का निर्देश दिया गया है. मामले में बैंक का लाभभंग 25 करोड़ रुपये एनपीए है. चार हजार लोगों ने बैंक से लोन लिया और चुकता नहीं किया. बैंक की ओर से नोटिस पर नोटिस दिया गया, लेकिन एनपीए की स्थिति में सुधार नहीं हुआ. 2006 से बैंक सुपरशेड था. पिछले साल चुनाव हुआ और 21 सदस्यीय बोर्ड का गठन किया गया. बोर्ड के गठन के बाद ऋण योजनाओं में काफी तब्दिल की गयी.

## 2500 करोड़ की योजनाओं पर जल्द शुरू होगा काम

विशेष संवाददाता ▶ रांची

आचार संहिता समाप्त होते ही करीब 2500 करोड़ की सड़क निर्माण योजनाओं पर काम शुरू हो जायेगा. इसके तहत करीब 600 सड़कों का निर्माण किया जाना है. इनमें ज्यादातर ग्रामीण सड़कें हैं. अधिकतर योजनाओं का टेंडर हो गया है. आचार संहिता के बाद केवल टेंडर निष्पादन करना है.

वहीं, बड़ी संख्या में ऐसी योजनाएं हैं, जिसकी प्रशासनिक स्वीकृति हो गयी है, लेकिन आचार संहिता के कारण टेंडर नहीं किया जा सकता था. अब उन पर टेंडर किया जायेगा. इस तरह सारी योजनाओं पर एक साथ जून-जुलाई में काम शुरू करने की तैयारी की जा रही है. मुख्य सचिव के निर्देश के बाद संबंधित विभाग और सखिया हो गये हैं. मुख्य सचिव ने कहा है कि आचार संहिता समाप्त होते ही काम शुरू करा दिया जाये. इसके पहले की सारी प्रक्रियाएं कर ली जायें, जो आचार संहिता के कारण प्रभावित नहीं होते हैं. इन पर शुरू होगा काम

जानकारी के मुताबिक ज्यादातर काम प्रधानमंत्री ग्राम सड़क योजना से संबंधित है. योजना के तहत करीब 300 सड़क योजनाओं का टेंडर हो गया है. इन पर टेंडर पड़ा हुआ है. केवल इसका निष्पादन करना है. वहीं करीब

## ठेकेदारों ने पीएमजीएसवाड की ओर किया अपना रुख

वरीय संवाददाता ▶ रांची

राज्य के ठेकेदारों ने प्रधानमंत्री ग्राम सड़क योजना की ओर अपना रुख किया है. यानी वे अब पीएमजीएसवाड के कार्यों में टेंडर भरने में ज्यादा दिलचस्पी दिखा रहे हैं. इतना ही नहीं पीएमजीएसवाड के काम से परहेज करनेवाले ठेकेदार भी अब वहां टेंडर भर रहे हैं. खासकर पथ निर्माण विभाग का काम लेनेवाले ठेकेदार इस ओर जा रहे हैं.

इस पर ठेकेदारों का कहना है कि पीएमजीएसवाड का धुतान बेहतर है. ठेकेदारों का पैसा नहीं फंस रहा है. विपश्त के विरुद्ध तत्काल भुगतान होता है. इस वजह से वहां काम करना आसान हो रहा है. वहीं पथ निर्माण विभाग में स्थिति इसके उलट हो गयी है. वहां भुगतान की स्थिति महीनों से खराब है. ऐसे में ठेकेदार फंसे रह जा रहे हैं. आर्थिक संकट से उन्हें जुझना पड़ रहा है.

रेट में हुआ है संशोधन

गौरतलब है कि रेट के दिनों में पीएमजीएसवाड के रेट में भी संशोधन हुआ है. पहले इसका रेट काफी कम

नहीं हो सका बीज खरीद का टेंडर, विभाग ने कमेटी के पास भेजा

# राज्य में चुनाव आचार संहिता में फंसी खरीफ की योजना

मनोज सिंह ▶ रांची

राज्य में खरीफ मौसम में चलायी जाने वाली योजना चुनाव आचार संहिता में फंस गयी है. आचार संहिता के कारण किसानों को बीज व अन्य उपकरण मिलने में देरी होगी. मई माह के अंत से किसानों के बीज बीज और अन्य उपकरणों का वितरण शुरू हो जाता है. टेंडर व अन्य वितरण स्कीम में चुनाव आचार संहिता के कारण रोक है. राज्य में सबसे अधिक खेती खरीफ के मौसम में ही होती है. इसमें धान व अन्य खाद्यान्न सामग्री लगायी जाती है. राज्य में सबसे अधिक किसान धान की खेती ही करते हैं. विभाग ने बीज व अन्य उपकरणों

शॉर्ट टेंडर कर सकता है विभाग

कृषि विभाग चुनाव आचार संहिता को देखते हुए बीज वितरण के लिए शॉर्ट टेंडर की तैयारी कर रहा है. विभागीय अधिकारियों का मानना है कि अगर चुनाव के बीच में निर्वाचन आयोग से अनुमति नहीं मिली तो शॉर्ट टेंडर किया जायेगा. शॉर्ट टेंडर के बाद आपूर्तिकर्ताओं से समय से बीज उपलब्ध कराने का आग्रह होगा. कंपनियों को टेंडर के बाद आपूर्ति आदेश दिया जाता है. आपूर्ति आदेश मिलने के बाद कंपनियां एक सप्ताह से लेकर 10 दिनों तक संबंधित जिलों में बीज पहुंचाने में समय लगती हैं.

की जरूरत के हिसाब से स्कीम तैयार कर लिया है. स्कीम राज्य से स्क्रॉनिंग

15 जून के बाद शुरू हो जाती है खेती

खरीफ की खेती राज्य में 15 जून के बाद शुरू हो जाती है. राज्य में मॉनसून आगमन का तय समय 15 जून के आसपास है. बिड़ला लगाने का समय इसी समय से शुरू हो जाता है.

सूखा झेल चुके हैं किसान

झारखंड के किसान पिछले खरीफ मौसम में सूखा की मार झेल चुके हैं. राज्य के करीब 129 प्रखंड पूरी तरह सूखाग्रस्त थे. इसमें 93 प्रखंडों में स्थिति ज्यादा खराब थी. इसे देखते हुए भारत सरकार की टीम ने झारखंड का दौरा भी किया था. दोरे के बाद राज्य सरकार ने राहत कार्य चलाने का आदेश दिया था. इसके लिए राज्य के आपदा कोष में पड़े पैसे को खर्च करने की अनुमति राज्य सरकार को दी गयी है.

कमेटी के पास भेजा गया है. स्क्रॉनिंग कमेटी से अनुमोदन मिलने के बाद यह चुनाव आयोग जायेगा. चुनाव आयोग की अनुमति के बाद ही टेंडर हो पायेगा.

## आधार में सुधार के लिए 80 हजार आवेदन, कम पड़ रही मशीन

वरीय संवाददाता ▶ रांची

आधार कार्ड में सुधार करवाने के लिए लोगों की बढ़ती तादाद यूआइडीएआह के लिए परेशानी बनती जा रही है. रोजाना एक आधार सेवा केंद्र में आधार नंबर एनरोलमेंट से ज्यादा आधार कार्ड अपडेट करने के लिए लोग आ रहे हैं. कार्ड में नाम, पता और उम्र में संशोधन करने के लिए बैंक और पोस्ट ऑफिस में आधार कार्ड बनाने से ज्यादा इसमें संशोधन के लिए भीड़ जुट रही है. अकेले डाकघर के आधार केंद्रों पर बड़ी संख्या में आधार अपडेट का काम किया जा रहा है. इसी तब, केंद्रों पर मशीनों की संख्या कम होने और भीड़ ज्यादा होने के चलते लोगों को घंटों इंतजार करना पड़ रहा है. वहीं इस काम में लगे कर्मियों को भी परेशानी हो रही है. जीपीओ में बने सेंटर पर सुधार के लिए पहुंचे एक दंपती ने कहा कि वह किराये के मकान में रहते हैं. हर छह महीने-साल भर में

## आधार में सुधार के लिए उमड़ रही भीड़

डाकघर में सुधार के लिए 80 हजार आवेदन, कम पड़ रही मशीन

वरीय संवाददाता ▶ रांची

आधार कार्ड में सुधार करवाने के लिए लोगों की बढ़ती तादाद यूआइडीएआह के लिए परेशानी बनती जा रही है. रोजाना एक आधार सेवा केंद्र में आधार नंबर एनरोलमेंट से ज्यादा आधार कार्ड अपडेट करने के लिए लोग आ रहे हैं. कार्ड में नाम, पता और उम्र में संशोधन करने के लिए बैंक और पोस्ट ऑफिस में आधार कार्ड बनाने से ज्यादा इसमें संशोधन के लिए भीड़ जुट रही है. अकेले डाकघर के आधार केंद्रों पर बड़ी संख्या में आधार अपडेट का काम किया जा रहा है. इसी तब, केंद्रों पर मशीनों की संख्या कम होने और भीड़ ज्यादा होने के चलते लोगों को घंटों इंतजार करना पड़ रहा है. वहीं इस काम में लगे कर्मियों को भी परेशानी हो रही है. जीपीओ में बने सेंटर पर सुधार के लिए पहुंचे एक दंपती ने कहा कि वह किराये के मकान में रहते हैं. हर छह महीने-साल भर में



आधार कार्ड में सुधार के लिए पहुंचे लोग .

उनका पता बदल जाता है, ऐसे में सुधार करना उनकी मजबूरी है. आपको बता दें कि इसके पहले शहर के करीब 250 से ज्यादा ऑनलाइन क्रियोस्क सेंटरों पर आधार का काम किया जा रहा था, लेकिन यूआइडीएआह ने क्रियोस्क सेंटरों पर आधार का काम बंद कर दिया है, जिसके बाद अब सरकारी दफ्तरों में आधार एनरोलमेंट काम किया जा रहा है.

चतरा में सबसे अधिक मतदान प्रतिशत में वृद्धि

रांची. लोकसभा के चुनाव में सबसे अधिक मतदान प्रतिशत की वृद्धि चतरा संसदीय क्षेत्र में हुई है. यहां करीब 10.52 फीसदी की वृद्धि हुई है. सबसे कम वृद्धि 0.73 फीसदी रॉंची संसदीय क्षेत्र में हुई है. हजारीबाग में करीब 1.15 फीसदी की वृद्धि हुई है.

चतरा 10.52

लोहरदगा 8.03

पलामू 4.94

कोडरमा 4.17

खूंटी 2.84

हजारीबाग 1.15

रांची 0.73

सावधानी • झारखंड के चार लोकसभा क्षेत्र चाईबासा, गिरिडीह, धनबाद व जमशेदपुर में मतदान कल

## चाईबासा व गिरिडीह में शांतिपूर्ण चुनाव कराना चुनौती

वरीय संवाददाता ▶ रांची

लोकसभा के सातवें और झारखंड में तीसरे चरण में चार लोकसभा क्षेत्रों चाईबासा, गिरिडीह, धनबाद और जमशेदपुर में 12 मई को मतदान होना है. चारों लोकसभा क्षेत्रों में चाईबासा जिले में एक-दो थाना क्षेत्रों को छोड़ दिया जाये, तो अधिकांश थाना क्षेत्र नक्सल प्रभावित हैं. इनमें सोनुआ, गोहलकेरा, युद्री, बड़गाँव, किराँवुख, जरायकेला, छोटा नागप, मनोहरपुर, चिड़िया माइंस ओपी व टोटो आदि थाना क्षेत्र अति नक्सल प्रभावित थाना क्षेत्रों की श्रेणी में आता है. इसी तरह गिरिडीह

● चाईबासा में इनामी मिसिर बेसरा, किशन दा व अनल दा जैसे कई खूबखार नक्सली

● गिरिडीह में नूनूचंद महतो, प्रशांत मांझी और बच्चन दा का दस्ता एक्टिव

● धनबाद में नूनूचंद महतो और जमशेदपुर में आकाश मंडल व सचिन दस्ता

● धनबाद में नूनूचंद महतो, प्रशांत मांझी और बच्चन दा का दस्ता एक्टिव है. इसके पड़ोसी जिले धनबाद

में भी नूनूचंद महतो दस्ता का प्रभाव माना जाता है. इसी तरह चाईबासा और सरायकेला जिले की सीमा पर हार्डकोर नक्सली विवेक उर्फ प्रयाग दा अपने दस्ते के साथ बताया जाता है. ऐसे में लोकतंत्र के महापर्व को शांतिपूर्ण संपन्न कराना पुलिस प्रशासन के लिए की चुनौतीपूर्ण है. खासकर चाईबासा और गिरिडीह लोकसभा के क्षेत्र में. वर्तमान में चाईबासा और गिरिडीह ही

## मोदी जाति-धर्म को देखे बिना गरीबों का घर रोशन करने में जुटे हैं : नीरा

शिक्षा मंत्री नीरा यादव ने जमशेदपुर में किया भाजपा प्रत्याशी विद्युत वरणा महतो का प्रचार

प्रेस वार्ता में कहा : सरकार ने स्कूल बंद नहीं किया, शिक्षा का माहौल और बेहतर बनाया

प्रमुख संवाददाता ▶ रांची/जमशेदपुर

शिक्षा मंत्री नीरा यादव ने कहा कि पीएम नरेंद्र मोदी वह सूर्य हैं, जो जाति-धर्म आगमन का तय समय 15 जून के आसपास है. बिड़ला लगाने का समय इसी समय से शुरू हो जाता है. शिक्षा मंत्री नीरा यादव ने कहा कि पीएम नरेंद्र मोदी वह सूर्य हैं, जो जाति-धर्म आगमन का तय समय 15 जून के आसपास है. बिड़ला लगाने का समय इसी समय से शुरू हो जाता है. शिक्षा मंत्री नीरा यादव ने कहा कि पीएम नरेंद्र मोदी वह सूर्य हैं, जो जाति-धर्म आगमन का तय समय 15 जून के आसपास है. बिड़ला लगाने का समय इसी समय से शुरू हो जाता है.

चुनाव प्रचार अभियान के दौरान साकची स्थित एक होटल में आयोजित संवाददाता सम्मेलन में नीरा यादव ने



पत्रकारों को संबोधित करती शिक्षा मंत्री डॉ नीरा यादव व अन्य .

कहा कि महागठबंधन का न तो नेता तय है और न ही एजेंडा. ऐसे में उनके हार्थों में देश की बागडोर जनता कतई नहीं सौंप सकती. एनडीए प्रत्याशी विद्युत वरणा महतो के पक्ष में नीरा यादव ने दो दिनों तक चुनाव प्रचार किया. स्कूल विलय पर शिक्षा मंत्रों ने कहा कि राजनीतिक लाभ लेने के लिए विपक्ष स्कूल विलय के मामले को दुष्चारित किया. राज्य सरकार ने भवनों को स्कूल के रूप में विकसित किया. उन्होंने कहा कि पूर्व की सरकारों में रहते झामुमो

ने केवल भवन निर्माण किया था और इसमें कमीशन का खेल चलता रहा. भाजपा सरकार के आते ही झामुमो और महागठबंधन में शामिल पार्टियों को कमीशनखोरी बंद हो गयी. सरकार ने किसी स्कूल को बंद नहीं कराया. बल्कि बच्चों को बेहतर शैक्षणिक माहौल देने के लिए नजदीक के स्कूलों में समायोजित किया गया. संवाददाता सम्मेलन में भाजपा जिलाध्यक्ष दिनेश कुमार, कुलवंत सिंह बंदी और मीडिया प्रवक्ता अंकित आनंद मौजूद थे.

## देवघर में मालवाहक वाहनों से अवैध वसूली की शिकायत

दुमका आइजी को मिली शिकायत, जांच के लिए आइजी ने पुलिस अफसर को दिया

वरीय संवाददाता ▶ रांची

एक एएसआइ और एक बड़े पुलिस अफसर के कार्यालय में तेनात पुलिसकर्मियों के साथ गौतम नामक व्यक्ति मालवाहक वाहनों की पार्सिंग का काम देवघर में करवाता है. पार्सिंग के दौरान हाइवा और ट्रक पर लदे ओवर लोडेड सामग्री के बदले मोटी रकम वसूल करता है. सूत्र बताते हैं कि पाकुड़ और दुमका की ओर से आनेवाले गिट्टी लदे वाहनों से वसूली की जाती है. पूर्व में उक्त एएसआइ निलंबित भी किया गया था. लेकिन निलंबन मुक्त होने के बाद फिर से वसूली के धंधे में शामिल हो गया है. इस मामले में देवघर के वैधान्यूपूर निवासी अमोद कुमार नामक व्यक्ति ने दुमका प्रभेक्ष के आइजी सह सीआइडी आइजी से इसकी शिकायत की है. साथ

ही इसकी प्रतिलिपि एंटी करप्शन ब्यूरो को भी भेजी है. इन नंबर के वाहनों से अवैध वसूली का आरोप : शिकायत करनेवाले ने कुल 46 वाहनों की सूची आइजी को भेजी है. इन्में जेएच-12सी-8306, बी आर - 01 जी ए - 5177, बी आर - 21 जी बी - 8981, बी आर - 21 जी ए - 2785, बी आर - 21 जी ए - 8981, बी आर - 01 जी ए - 8921, जेएच-04एच-9688, जेएच-04एच-7527, बीआर-10जी-7751, जेएच-15टी-5777, जेएच-15टी-9287, जेएच-15एल-1575, बीआर-52जी-1321, बीआर-52जी-2584, बीआर-52जी-4280, बीआर-52जी-1406, बीआर-52जी-1763, बीआर-52जी-2503, बीआर-52जी-3071, बीआर-27जी-2307, बी आर - 01 जी डी - 3553, बीआर-52जी-2959, बीआर-21जीबी-2009 सहित अन्य शामिल हैं.

## धनबाद में प्रचार खत्म, अब डोर टू डोर कैंपेन शुरू

बृथ मैनेजमेंट में जुटे प्रत्याशी, 2539 बूथों पर 20.48 लाख मतदाता कल डालेंगे वोट

विशेष संवाददाता ▶ धनबाद .

धनबाद लोकसभा सीट के लिए चुनाव प्रचार शुक्रवार को समाप्त हो गया. शाम पांच बजे के बाद यहां डोर टू डोर कैंपेन शुरू हो गया है. साथ ही अधिकांश प्रत्याशियों बृथ मैनेजमेंट में जुट गये हैं. 2539 बूथों पर 20.48 लाख मतदाता रिविथर को वोट डालेंगे. चुनाव प्रचार के अंतिम दिन शुक्रवार को भाजपा प्रत्याशी

महागठबंधन के पक्ष में पहुंचे बाबूलाल मरांडी

महागठबंधन की तरफ से लड़ रहे कांग्रेस प्रत्याशी कीर्ति आजाद के समर्थन में शुक्रवार को पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री बाबूलाल मरांडी धनबाद पहुंचे. उन्होंने वरिष्ठ नेताओं के साथ बैठक की. साथ ही लोगों से महागठबंधन के पक्ष में मतदान करने की अपील की. कांग्रेस प्रत्याशी व पार्टी के वरिष्ठ नेताओं ने जगह-जगह जनसंपर्क अभियान चलाया. पार्टी का पूरा फोकस बृथ मैनेजमेंट पर लगा है. देर रात तक बृथ कमेटीयों के साथ बैठकों का दौर चलता रहा.

सह भाजपा प्रत्याशी पीएम सिंह ने किया. श्री मुंडा ने कार्यकर्ताओं से कहा कि अबको बार पांच लाख पार के तारों को चरितार्थ करें. विरोधियों की जमानत जल्द करा दें. थोड़ी दूर तक चल कर श्री मुंडा

जालदा निकल गये. सांसद श्री सिंह भी निरसा निकल गये. इसके बाद धनबाद विधायक के नेतृत्व में बाइक जुलूस रणधीर वर्मा चौक, कंबाईड बिल्डिंग, पूजा टॉकीज, बैंक मोड, करकेड, पुटकी

होते हुए मुनीडीह पहुंच कर समाप्त हुआ. जुलूस में भाजपा नेता नजितन भट्ट, मनोज मालाकार, ललन मश्री, राजकुमार मंडल, दिलीप सिंह, नर्मिल प्रधान, मनोज गुप्ता सहित बड़ी संख्या में समर्थक शामिल थे.

सीएम ने कार्यकर्ताओं को दिया जीत का मंत्र

जामताड़ा. सीएम रघुवर दास ने शुक्रवार को जामताड़ा की धरती से सताल परगना के चुनाव प्रचार के लिए शंखनाद कर दिया है. शुक्रवार को साढ़े चार बजे सीएम रघुवर दास हेलीकॉप्टर से जामताड़ा पहुंचे. उसके बाद सुभाष चौक स्थित एकता श्री होटल में सीएम पहुंच कर नाला, जामताड़ा एवं सारठ चुनाव के दौरान आने-जाने में सावधानी बरतनी होगी. हालांकि इससे पूर्व 2014 में हुए लोकसभा चुनाव के दौरान उक्त चारों लोकसभा क्षेत्रों से किसी तरह की बड़ी वारदात नक्सलियों द्वारा किये जाने की खबर सामने नहीं आयी थी. अब तक पुलिस प्रशासन ने दो चरणों का चुनाव शांतिपूर्ण संपन्न कराने में सफलता पायी है. लिहाजा माना जाना चाहिए कि तीसरा चरण का चुनाव भी शांतिपूर्ण संपन्न होगा.