

The lure of floating solar plants

Water is emerging as the new land for solar plants in India, and around the world



VANDANA GOMBAR

The concept is simple. Since large parcels of land are not easy to acquire, or are just not available in some countries (think Bangladesh, Japan or Singapore), why not use the real estate presented by water bodies to set up floating solar plants. This technology has given four advantages.

These are that the water has a cooling effect on the system and therefore may increase generation, that the existing transmission infrastructure of the reservoir can be put to good use, that evaporation of a scarce resource like water can be prevented, and that knotty people displacement issues can be avoided. To top that, the cost of floating solar is coming down fast.

According to Xiao Fuqin, deputy general manager at Sungrow Floating, a unit of Sungrow Power, floating solar costs have fallen by 44 per cent over the last two years. He was speaking at a conference in Shanghai earlier this month.

NTPC has plans for several hundred megawatts of floating solar plants in the country, and aims to take a lead in the sector.

In November last year, Shapoorji Pallonji Group bagged 50 megawatts in

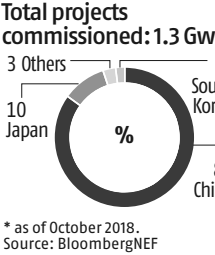
the floating solar auction on the Rihand reservoir in Uttar Pradesh by the state-run Solar Energy Corp of India at a tariff of ₹3.29 per unit.

Last week, Singapore sought proposals for a 50 megawatts plant that “will be one of the largest single floating solar PV systems in the world when it is completed.”

Norway’s biggest utility, Statkraft, began construction of its first floating solar plant earlier this year, in Albania, and is currently scouting for project opportunities in India. A competitive tariff remains the key consideration, however.

Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) has an operational 0.5 megawatts floating plant in the reservoir contained by the Banasura Sagar dam that survived the 2018 floods. It stands on a hollow ferro-cement floater that almost replicates land on water — no ripples are felt on the platform — though its high cost would prevent it from becoming the platform of choice for new plants.

FLOATING SOLAR INSTALLATIONS*



There are over 1.3 gigawatts of floating solar plants globally, according to BloombergNEF. China leads installations, though India is expected to become another of the big four markets.

In Chile, a small floating solar plant has been installed by Anglo American on top of the tailings dam that holds liquid waste from copper mining operations. Thermal power generation companies with reservoirs at the plant site are also looking at the option of using the surface area of the water to generate power.

It is possible that floating solar ends up becoming cheaper than ground-mounted solar. KSEB’s executive engi-

neer, Ayyub Kunnanolli, was confident that it would be so: “Land cost will go up as availability goes down. Float cost will (ultimately) become lower than land cost.”

The Solar Energy Corporation of India has issued a tender for a 20 megawatts of floating solar plants, with 60 megawatt-hours of storage, spread across 11 Lakshadweep islands. The closing date has been extended to August 5, 2019.

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5G’s multiple conundrums

Limited availability and high prices may deter telcos, but 4G may no longer be adequate for meeting customer needs

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

First the good news. Last week, newly-appointed communications minister Ravi Shankar Prasad pushed the pedal on 5G and made two announcements: permission for the long-delayed trial runs by telcos will be given in 100 days; and, the much-anticipated sale of spectrum, which would include 5G spectrum, will be conducted this year.

But here’s the not-so-good news: Telecom operators, reeling under ₹500,000 crore of debt are not all that enthusiastic about buying 5G spectrum principally on account of limited availability and unaffordable pricing.

where margins for telcos will be very low. So where is the business case,” Matthew points out.

Operators will have to pay over ₹50,000 crore to get all India 5G spectrum in this band, and they with infrastructure providers might have to invest \$25-30 billion to build a pan Indian network, increase tower density and convert microwave backbone of towers with fibre. There are other bands such as 2,600-2,800 for which infrastructure to support 5G is proliferating, but it is not in Trai’s list for auction.

Vodafone-Idea has publicly stated that it wants auctions to be pushed beyond 2020, as they are busy rolling out 4G now after the merger. And Airtel has made it clear it will mainly be interested in picking up 4G spectrum and will look at 5G only if prices are reasonable.

Telcos say for most mobile customers 4G is enough for her needs, such as watching movies, downloading videos or gaming. The number of subscribers who want to see augmented and virtual reality content that will require 5G spectrum is very limited in India. Plus, 5G phones cost a whooper at \$1,000 currently, which is likely to deter India’s innately cost-conscious customers.

At the same time, it is also true that 4G data quality is deteriorating with increased usage. A study by Ericsson points out that as much as 60 per cent of mobile consumers in India on smart phones in metros are facing congestion (in other cities, it is 50 per cent). With the huge data explosion, 60 per cent of the 4G spectrum has been used



DISCONNECTED A study by Ericsson points out that as much as 60 per cent of mobile consumers in India on smart phones in metros are facing congestion

already. Surely getting substantial chunks of 5G spectrum with large bandwidths between 25 MHz and 100 MHz could ease the congestion. That apart, says Ericsson’s Thomas Noren, head of 5G commercialisation at Ericsson: “The other plus is that operating cost of delivering one gigabits of data in 5G is one tenth of that of 4G, a large cost advantage.”

There is another valid reason to use 5G: it could power enhanced mobile broadband at homes, where the last mile is wireless. That is much cheaper and faster to deploy than fibre-to-home broadband, a route Reliance Jio has taken with cumbersome delays in getting right-of-way to lay down fibre lines. Of course, the jury is still out as to which is a better route in the long term. But the domination of broadband at home

is clearly the next big battle for which Jio and Airtel are readying.

5G, with its low latency, offers myriad of new opportunities for revenue generation, such as remote robotic surgery, scanning millions of faces in the airport for security, or enabling smart cities by helping to connect a millions of devices together in one go. But says a senior executive of a leading telco: “But it would take at least three to five years for these test cases, which we have displayed at exhibitions, to be commercialised and for telcos to make substantial revenues. So why should we sit on spectrum for so long?”

Matthew says that the focus of the auction for government might be 5G, but without a sharp decrease in price, the focus for telcos would be to grab more 4G spectrum (50-75 Mhz will be avail-

able) in order to augment their capacity in metros and cities to combat congestion. This means that the government could well face the spectre of unsold 5G spectrum. Until of course Reliance Jio which has kept in the background changes the dynamics.

However, if 5G prices are cut, some incumbent operators might roll out limited 5G services in key cities such as Mumbai and Delhi and offer a high-speed, no-congestion service at a premium. Or they could use the spectrum to launch limited enhanced mobile broadband services for customers in the larger cities where laying fibre in the last mile is a challenge.

All in all, the future of 5G in India will depend on how the government chooses to structure its first 5G spectrum sale.



INSIGHT

Effects of the US-China tariff escalation



ANIRUDH SHINGAL

In the last one year, the US has imposed tariffs worth \$250 billion on Chinese imports and China has retaliated by covering US imports worth \$110 billion under higher tariffs. It began with the imposition of safeguard tariffs by the US on imports of solar panels and washing machines in January 2018 following USITC findings on injury to US industry in October 2017 under Section 201 of the 1974 Trade Act. This was followed by US President Donald Trump’s announcement to impose 25 per cent tariff on steel and 10 per cent tariff on aluminum on all trading partners on national security grounds under the seldom-used Section 232 of the 1962 Trade Expansion Act. These tariffs came into effect in March 2018. Canada, Mexico, the European Union, South Korea, Brazil, Argentina, and Australia were initially exempted from the steel and aluminum tariffs, but the exemptions ended in June 2018.

This led to a flurry of retaliatory tariffs on US exports imposed by China, the EU, Canada and Turkey. In fact, Harley-Davidson announced on June 25, 2018, that it was shifting additional motorcycle production

outside the United States to avoid the retaliatory tariffs.

Before 2018, average US tariffs on Chinese imports were 3 per cent compared to average Chinese tariffs on US imports of 8 per cent. Post the tariff escalation on either side, the average tariffs have increased to 12 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. Thus, both countries are suffering the costs of applying higher tariffs. One immediate fallout of tariff imposition is the wedge between the prices that producers receive and the prices that consumers pay in the importing countries. Recent academic research on this subject suggests that importers in both the countries have borne most of the tariff incidence imposed in 2018 and there have been few terms of trade gains from these tariffs. Another study from the Peterson Institute of International Economics (PIIE) finds that Trump tariffs have raised steel prices by 9 per cent, creating 8,700 jobs in the US steel industry, but steel users pay an extra \$650,000 for each job created.

Note that tariff costs get inflated in a world of global value chains (GVCs) as firms import intermediate inputs, add value, export semi-finished products for another (multiple) layer(s) of value addition leading to the final product, with each cross-border flow of goods entailing tariff costs. Significantly, the bulk of US tariffs on China have been imposed on intermediate goods, which have a greater adverse effect on firms, including in the US, that are large and steady importers of Chinese intermediate

inputs. In contrast, China has been wary of not hurting its own supply chains as most of its own tariffs on US imports are imposed on consumer goods. Even so, this tariff escalation has rendered GVC-integration challenging not just for these two countries but also for their significant GVC-trading partners. In the case of China, for instance, eight of its top 10 GVC-trading partners are based in South-East Asia, which paves the way for regional spillover effects.

These trade wars have also caused political risks and uncertainty, which coupled with the stagnation in growth of GVCs, have also led to an adverse effect on foreign direct investment (FDI), as also acknowledged by UNCTAD’s 2017 World Investment Report. In fact, global FDI flow fell by 23 per cent in 2017 relative to 2016 with both cross-border M&As and announced greenfield investment projects witnessing significant double-digit declines in the respective year-on-year growth rates.

But there are other important indirect fallouts. The imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs on national security grounds has seriously undermined the multilateral trading system and set a dangerous precedent that other WTO members can follow. This can be particularly problematic for less developed and small and poor developing countries whose trade-related development concerns have so far been sought to be addressed via the WTO. In fact, some other PIIE research suggests that Trump’s steel tariffs have had a disproportionately adverse effect on small and poor

countries that have seen a 12 per cent decline in steel export volumes to the US and 15.5 per cent less revenue, compared to the six months preceding the tariffs, even as strong economic growth actually increased US imports of steel by 2.2 per cent. Ironically, had these tariffs been imposed under Section 201 of the 1974 Trade Act, that is, on grounds of injury to US domestic industry instead of for national security reasons, small and poor countries would have been automatically exempted as their exports would not have been large enough to hurt US domestic industry.

What is likely to happen next? Initial reports suggest that the tariffs imposed during 2018 are likely to stay even in the event of a successful deal between these two economies, which suggests a new higher-cost equilibrium for global trade. Some actions of the past year such as imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs on national security grounds and renegotiating past trade agreements like NAFTA are clearly Trump-specific (POTUS has scant respect for rules of the game) and are likely to erode the US’ credibility in international policy-making. However, other measures are consistent with broader US policy (even the Obama regime blocked appointment of WTO appellate body members; concerns about Chinese export subsidies to state-owned enterprises and the undervalued Chinese currency have preceded Trump). It would have been much better if Trump had used the US’ clout and built relationship with allies to address such concerns rather than alienating US’ important trading partners and allies via tariffs.

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LETTERS

Illogical opposition

Apropos your editorial “Digital tax breakthrough” (June 11), however long and arduous the road to a common tax code may be, it is a goal well worth pursuing. Of course, there will be several hurdles but then, all good reforms face those. The biggest rogue — USA — is expectedly against the move. Not only does the giant stands, the they must disagree with anything that everyone else in the world thinks is good. We are already witness to his illogical opposition to efforts for containing climate change and now, he will find another reform to disagree with. Notwithstanding the US’ opposition, the UK and France and others must do their best to push it through.

To see that our trillion dollar m-cap companies like Amazon, Apple, Google and others are getting richer by avoiding taxes through means not entirely kosher is certainly not a comforting thought. These mega conglomerates already have the world — minus China — in their grips and they will continue to make the hold tighter as they become obscenely richer. This must stop. They must pay taxes where their revenue is generated and not merely where their notional regional headquarters are located.

The 2020 deadline certainly seems unrealistic; but the work on achieving a consensus must continue. Even if the common tax code comes into practice five years later, it would still be well worth the wait. I would go to the extent of sug-

gesting that India, China, Russia and other nations over-protective about storage of data collected from their citizens within their national borders must relent on their stand for the specific objective of making the G20 communicate a reality.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

A true liberal

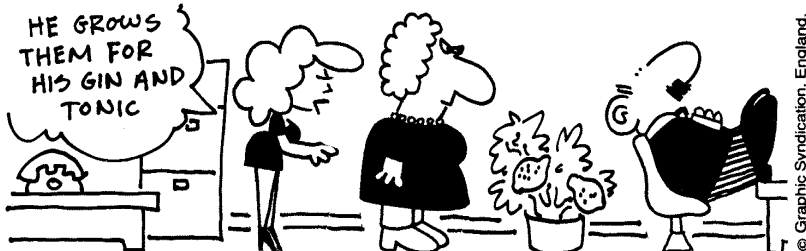
In the passing away of actor, author, filmmaker and playwright, Girish Karnad (*pictured*), Karnataka has lost a colossus. His plays like Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-

Mandala, Tale-Danda and many others are recognised as one of the main pillars of the Nayya literary movement. Never afraid of holding up a mirror to the society, the ‘Urban Naxal’ stood for every cause that could be considered liberal. True to his wishes, he was cremated with a simple ceremony sans rituals and a state funeral. His death is a huge loss to the world of modern Indian theatre and literature.

N J Ravi Chander Bengaluru

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HAMBONE



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A shift eastward

But Bimstec and Saarc need not be exclusive of each other

What can be discerned about the second Narendra Modi-led government's foreign policy, and how might it differ from the first? The initial signs are encouraging. The last government was sworn in in the presence of leaders of the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc). But this year, the swearing in was observed by the leaders of a different regional grouping: The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec). This grouping, headquartered in Dhaka, includes Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan. The leaders of the Mauritius and Kyrgyzstan were also invited. This is a slight shift from the first term's initial emphasis, and reflects some of the learning from the first term. In particular, the confrontation with Pakistan earlier this year will have changed the calculus for New Delhi, although the shift away from Saarc could perhaps be dated to the Uri attack in September 2016. The government's priorities were underlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the Maldives and Sri Lanka. A day earlier, the new foreign minister, S Jaishankar, travelled northeast, to the Kingdom of Bhutan, for his first overseas visit. Between the two of them, the focus of India's neighbourhood policy was unmistakable.

Mr Jaishankar, speaking during his first major policy discussion since he took office, said that Bimstec was "full of energy", as distinct from the problematic Saarc grouping. He also indicated a major and welcome principle for India's relations with its neighbours: "We need to incentivise cooperation in the neighbourhood by stepping out ourselves. The one thing in this domain that I would not like to see is that it has to be somehow reciprocal." In other words, the foreign minister is clearly stating that India will have to take the lead, if necessary unilaterally, in improving and firming up relations with its neighbours, particularly to the east. This is a vitally important perspective. Any rising power such as India must ensure that its neighbours are supportive of its quest for growth, or that quest may constantly be held back by numerous little irritants. The best way to ensure their cooperation is to move beyond a transactional relation with the neighbours and ensure that they are in a position to profit from the shared growth of the region. Operationally, the government will now have to ensure that pan-Bimstec plans such as transit permission for commercial vehicles get put into place at the earliest. A greater commitment to timely delivery of promises on infrastructure development is also needed in this term.

The government's focus on Bimstec is understandable, and the principle of unilateral leadership is also a very important one. However, it would be unwise and premature to abandon hopes for Saarc. Investment in both of the groupings is possible — one does not cancel out the other. It is true that Indo-Pakistan relations have always bedevilled Saarc. But it is also true that Saarc is the stepping stone to Central Asia, another area — just like Southeast Asia — where India can hope to play a role and to build partnerships for growth. Any opportunity to breathe new life into Saarc, in spite of the troubled bilateral relationship, should not be disdained.

Ambitious move

The challenges before the Jal Shakti ministry are huge

As the chosen one for the newly-minted Jal Shakti Ministry, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has one of the toughest jobs in the second edition of the Narendra Modi government. Apart from the responsibility of rolling out the government's ambitious plans to provide piped water connections — the *nal se jal* scheme — to every household in India by 2024, Mr Shekhawat will also have to address international and inter-state water disputes and the Namami Gange project — the flagship initiative to clean the river Ganga, its tributaries and sub-tributaries. This is in line with the BJP's election manifesto, which promises to address water-related issues in the country in an integrated manner.

The idea behind the creation of the ministry is salutary because it has the potential of bringing about a transformational change. A NITI Aayog report in 2018 noted that around 600 million people in India face high-to-extreme water stress. Around 75 per cent of the households do not have drinking water on their premises, 84 per cent rural households do not get piped water, and 200,000 die every year because of inadequate access to safe water. With 70 per cent of the water contaminated, India holds the dubious position of 120th among 122 countries on the water quality index.

Around 21 cities, including New Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad, are set to run out of groundwater by 2020, affecting an estimated 100 million people. By 2020, India will be formally categorised as a "water-stressed" country, where per capita availability of water is less than 1,000 cubic metres. And by 2030, water demand is expected to be twice the available supply and the country could lose up to 6 per cent of its gross domestic product.

One of the main reasons for this crisis is that India's river systems are suffering badly from water scarcity. Take the example of the river Yamuna — the largest tributary of the river Ganga in North India. The river was once described as the lifeline of Delhi. But today, it has become one of the dirtiest rivers in the country. According to the Central Pollution Control Board, the water quality of the Yamuna is fit only for recreation and industrial cooling, completely ruling out the possibility for underwater life.

Agriculture is another issue. India has 18 per cent of the world's population with 4 per cent of the world's fresh water. Of this, 80 per cent is used in agriculture. India's farmers prefer water-guzzling crops like rice, cotton, wheat and sugarcane. Rice, an important export crop, consumes as much as 3,500 litres of water for a kilogram of grain. But convincing farmers to cultivate other crops would be a tough job.

India's annual rainfall is mostly received between July and September. In the absence of storage procedure, lack of adequate infrastructure, and inappropriate water management, around 20 per cent of the water is used. An exclusive water ministry at the Centre also has to face more than just the water challenge. Infrastructure, which is critical to the distribution of piped water, is in a shambles in rural India. It needs to be rebuilt along modern lines. Besides, water is a state subject, and in most states, lakes and ponds have been altered for urbanisation and industrialisation. The water mafias, real estate lobby and even farmers will loathe any Central intervention. The only way the Centre can intervene is through inter-state rivers if Parliament legislates it in the public interest.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

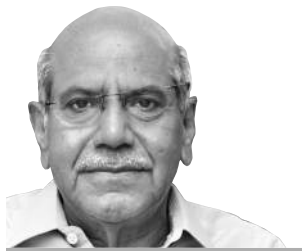


Technology will drive the new Cold War

It is now the currency of power — one with ominous implications for India

The US and China are locked in a sharpening strategic confrontation that is likely to dominate international relations for the foreseeable future. There may well be phases of remission just as there had been in the Cold War of the previous century between the US and Soviet Union but these will be tactical and temporary. The rivalry will not be played out in military and ideological terms only as in the previous Cold War. The new Cold War will be centred on mastery of technology as the currency of power.

The US is currently engaged in constructing a range of technology denial measures against China and is mobilising its allies and friends to do the same. This is not easy since China is embedded in a densely inter-connected global economy and is part of several critical supply chains which cannot be unravelled in a hurry. Over the past two decades, China has been engaged in a large scale and systematic effort to acquire, adopt and assimilate advanced technologies from Western countries, in particular the US. Since embarking on its reform and liberalisation policy in 1978, it has been able to send several hundred thousand Chinese to study in top Western institutions, bringing back to the country a formidable pool of knowledge. This has served as the foundation for China's transformation from a technology seeker to a technology generator. This has not only enabled China to sustain a high rate of economic growth over the past four decades but has enabled it to build a modern and technologically sophisticated military machine. While US actions may slow down China's accumulation of power, a reversal is unlikely unless domestic political disruption intervenes. This appears unlikely given the fact that technological capabilities



SHYAM SARAN

now extend to mass surveillance and virtually instant response to domestic security threats.

China's response to denial of technology has been "doubling down on indigenous innovation and developing "core technologies" which are precisely the domains identified in the China 2025 plan and include IT, machine learning, quantum computing and artificial intelligence (AI). At present, China lags behind in semi-conductors and imported \$300 billion worth in 2018. Now huge investments have been announced in this sector, estimated at \$100-150 billion in public and private funds over the next few years. Major Chinese firms like Baidu, Alibaba and Huawei have been working to design and produce their own microchips. Alibaba launched its own semi-conductor division, Pingtoug, in September last year to develop AI chips for cloud computing and internet connected devices. Huawei will spend \$300 million each year over the next five years to design and produce new generation chips. It unveiled a 7nm microchip in August last year. China is ahead of the US, in quantum computing and as of 2017

had filed twice as many patents as US companies. Taking advantage of having a massive pool of citizens' data, with no concerns over privacy, China has accorded the highest priority to developing its capabilities in AI. Its Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan seeks to make the country the world leader in AI and associated technologies by 2030. Chinese overall spending on R&D was \$376 billion in 2015, as compared to \$13 billion in 1991 and exceeded the R&D expenditure of Japan, Germany and South Korea combined.

Technology is also at the centre of China's military strategy. One key feature is that over the past two

A new India

Economic systems can be broadly classified between market and non-market. A market system is one in which the market freely trades resources such as time, effort, land, materials, capital and energy, allowing these resources to be appropriately priced and be converted into usable things or services. Market systems have succeeded because they are efficient in allocating resources and generating maximum possible wealth. However, markets can be unfair. They invariably lead to wealth concentration since random outcomes are an important ingredient in outcomes.

This doesn't mean that non-market systems, where governments determine results, have been better because they are woefully inefficient. Contrary to popular discourse, non-market systems are also almost always unfair since they concentrate power and resources in a few hands. Given the greater efficiency of a market system, it is almost the choice du jour to run economies.

The question then is: Can we make market systems fair? This issue of lack of fairness of markets became stark in the aftermath of the Great Depression in the US in the 1930s, and gave birth to a revolutionary thought process by one of the brightest economists of the past 100 years, Kenneth Arrow. He argued that we could make markets fair by adjusting the starting position without altering their efficiency for worse. Arrow's theory proposed that governments collect taxes from rich people and distribute some of that money to poor people via subsidy programmes. This "head start" strategy neutralises the role of random positive outcomes in market systems, giving the left out or disadvantaged people a chance to compete. Kenneth Arrow won a Noble Prize for this theory.

As appealing as Kenneth Arrow's theory was, putting it in practice has proved challenging. Governments are neither good at collecting taxes nor at distributing subsidies — especially in poor countries. Corruption at all levels makes fairness very difficult



RIDHAM DESAI

to deliver. So while India has pursued the Kenneth Arrow model, the results have been far from satisfactory. India's subsidies have totalled around \$500 billion over the past 30 years with a limited impact on poverty. The key reason is the way these subsidies have been distributed. India's subsidy programme has been run largely on paper and documented in handwritten ledgers, and has combined with deep rooted corruption. Consequently, it did not reach the intended recipients. The government in the past also decided what poor people needed — cheap rice or fertilisers — and that is what poor people got — usually governments are not good at figuring individual priorities.

Three major changes have set the stage for greater fairness in India's market model. First, Aadhaar, the world's largest biometric ID project to uniquely identify each and every Indian using biometric data of finger prints and iris scans, has now registered 1.2 billion Indians — an unprecedented success in world history for any public programme.

Aadhaar allows individuals to verify their identities at almost zero cost — very important to any mass scale distribution programme.

The second change was India's financial inclusion programme, Jan Dhan, which opened bank accounts for the unserved. Since 2014, 300 mil-

lion bank accounts have been opened, bringing a completely new class of previously unbanked people into the banking system. These people are largely the intended beneficiaries of government transfers. Now armed with bank accounts, they were in a position to receive benefits directly from the government, bypassing agents and avoiding leakage. Aadhaar enables such transfers, since it can uniquely identify beneficiaries.

The third change is in India's taxation system on goods and services. The Goods and Services Tax, or GST, is set to change compliance due to its online nature and the way input taxation works. The GST should help boost revenue by reducing evasion of taxes on both goods and services and income. The government will then become a more

decades, China has pursued "civil-military fusion", consciously applying technologies from the civilian sector, including those acquired from abroad for commercial purposes, to military applications. It has also utilised its cyber capabilities to gain access, through hacking, to cutting edge military technologies developed through years of research by US firms. US citizens of Chinese origin and Chinese scholars working in sensitive facilities have often been mobilised to clandestinely transfer confidential plans and blueprints to Chinese entities. However, this should not detract from the advances China is making in generating advanced technologies in its own research and technical institutions based on the vast knowledge pool that it has acquired over the years from multiple engagements with the US, Japan and Europe. As its technological capabilities have progressed, its military strategy has also undergone changes. In the first phase, China drew lessons from Operation Desert Storm in 1991, in which the US forces used Precision Guided Missiles (PGM) and integrated information networks to overwhelm the formidable conventional forces deployed by Iraq. This led to the concept of "informationised warfare" which impressed Chinese military planners who then determined to master it over time. The restructuring of the PLA to achieve "jointedness" among the land, sea and air forces and the integration of space, cyber and electronic warfare capabilities have enabled seamless system platforms. In 1996, the Chinese felt humiliated by their powerlessness against the two US carrier groups that steamed into the Taiwan Straits after China began lobbing missiles around Taiwan as a show of force. China began developing asymmetric capabilities to make any similar US move in the future both risky and costly. The DF-21 D anti-carrier ballistic missile with a 1,000 mile range was the result. That the US acquiesced in China's artificial island building in the South China Sea and its subsequent militarisation of these islands, may have convinced China that it now has those asymmetric capabilities in place. More recently, Chinese military strategists have been talking about moving towards "intelligentised warfare" using AI in weapons development and military tactics. If the earlier contestation was between informationised systems, the future they claim would be marked by "algorithmic competition" in which China believes it is racing ahead of the US.

The US is currently debating a credible and effective counter-strategy but there are even more ominous implications for India's security. These need to be assessed carefully and comprehensively and an appropriate strategy crafted to deal with the challenge posed by these developments. Like China in an earlier phase, we need to develop and deploy asymmetric capabilities in the short term to deter an assertive China even while focussing on mastering, over time, emerging technological capabilities which are now the basis for geopolitical influence.

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efficient collector of taxes.

While GST will cause tax revenues to rise, Aadhaar and Jan Dhan have already been successful in transferring money to poor people. Over the past three years, the government has significantly scaled direct benefits transfers or DBT. There are now 439 government schemes conducting transfers via DBT. Cumulatively since F2014, DBT transfers have amounted to ₹32 billion, saving the country about ₹142 billion in leakages. The breadth of delivery is unprecedented in world history. A lot of the DBT is in cash. This opens up opportunity for the recipient to decide how to spend the cash rather than the government deciding. Thus, recipients may choose to educate their children or upgrade their homes instead of buying more rice. DBT ensures intended people receive the money and dis-intermediates middle men, reducing leakage and saving billions of dollars of tax payers' money.

Of course Aadhaar is not flawless. Several people — especially those most needing DBT — have suffered authentication problems. In October 2018, the Supreme Court verdict on Aadhaar delivered the punchline: The Court observed that while it is possible that there is some unfortunate exclusion of close to 0.2 per cent, it is better to work towards reducing the 0.2 per cent to 0 than to jeopardise the 99.8 per cent, many of whom are among the most marginalised and biggest beneficiaries of Aadhaar.

For the first time in India's history, there is an opportunity for the government to induce fairness in a market system by collecting taxes more efficiently without evasion and distributing them to poor people in a targeted fashion without leakages. This sets the stage for a virtuous cycle, which is that such fairness allows India to become more market oriented, which in turn makes India more efficient. This virtuous cycle of efficiency and fairness means higher growth, further reducing poverty. We dare say India is on its way to once again becoming a dominant global economy. Indeed, we are forecasting that in 10 years, India will become the world's third-largest economy. Fingers crossed.

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Why intellectual humility pays



BOOK REVIEW

SANJAY KUMAR SINGH

People of a certain vintage would have observed no doubt one major difference between the time they came of age and now — the obsession with looking good that leads many young men and women to make a beeline for gyms and beauty parlours. There's nothing wrong with this, except that if some of their time and resources were to be also devoted to burnishing the mind, the benefits over a lifetime would perhaps be far greater.

We humans have a well-documented tendency to overestimate our prowess at different activities. We regard ourselves to be better at driving, cooking, swimming and a host of other skills than we actually are. This overestimation is especially stark in the case of thinking, where the consequences of lack of skill can be disastrous, though this is not apparent immediately.

The good news is that a lot of research now exists that can help one become a better thinker. Edward de Bono's books are a good place to begin with. According to him, most errors in thinking are the result of errors of perception. He offers extremely simple tools like CORT thinking technique and six thinking hats that allow one to examine an issue from several angles. His TO-LO-PO-SO-GO framework can be useful to anyone trying to make a decision in a structured manner.

In the book under review, author David Robson asserts that intelligence cannot be equated with good thinking skills. A highly intelligent person is like a car equipped with a powerful engine. But whether that car will reach its destination or veer off a cliff depends on the driver's skills. Therefore intelligence, he emphasises, needs to be deployed with care.

Furthermore, intelligence alone may not be adequate for being successful. IQ (intelligence quotient) testing gained a lot of popularity in the twentieth century as a tool for selecting future leaders. A researcher named Lewis Terman administered this test to a large number of American children and then followed their lives across decades to see how they — especially the ones with stratospheric scores of 190 and above — fared. Although those with high IQ scores did on an average do better than those with poor scores, many

of the top rankers did not fare as well as expected.

To explain this, one can draw an analogy with basketball, where a player needs to have a basic minimum height to be competitive. But thereafter other factors become important for determining success. According to the author, while IQ tests may be able to evaluate the kind of intelligence that enables students to do well at academics, success in life depends on a person possessing a host of other forms of intelligence, such as creative, practical and execution intelligence.

The book's second chapter makes the point that people possessing the highest level of intelligence often espouse completely irrational views. Mr Robson refers to this as "dysrationalia". Arthur Canon Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, the character that epitomises intelligence and logical reasoning, believed in seances and after-life. Thomas Edison, who had more than a thousand patents to his name, fought an utterly pigheaded and long-drawn battle with a rival in favour of the direct current, long after it

had become apparent that alternating current was the superior technology. Einstein wasted the last 25 years of his life developing a unified theory of the universe that failed to stand up to scrutiny, when he could have devoted his fertile mind to more productive pursuits. More recently, Steve Jobs may perhaps have lived had he stuck to doctors' counsel, instead of trying to cure his cancer through herbal remedies, spiritual healing and fruit juice-based diet.

One reason for an inordinate level of irrationality among the intelligent is that people adopt beliefs and positions that are emotionally comforting to them. Then, instead of examining their validity dispassionately, they use their high intelligence to garner evidence in support of their viewpoint, ignoring all evidence to the contrary.

How can one overcome this pitfall? One way is to cultivate intellectual humility. Avoid being rigid and dogmatic. Be open to other peoples' views, and if required, change your position in the light of new evidence.

Benjamin Franklin's method called the "moral algebra" can also help. When Franklin had a crucial decision to make, he would write down the points in favour and against on a piece of paper. He would then assign weights to each of these points, and finally make a decision based on which side carried more cumulative weight. This exercise was conducted deliberately over a couple of days.

Many of the other chapters in this book, such as the ones on how to deal with fake news, get better at learning new skills, and prevent hierarchy and ego from thwarting good decision-making in a corporate setup are insightful. Anyone keen to become a more evolved thinker will profit from reading this deeply-researched book.

THE INTELLIGENCE TRAP: Why Smart People Do Stupid Things And How To Make Wiser Decisions

David Robson

Hodder & Stoughton; 337 pages; ₹322

India's growth mystery deepens even more

Former CEA Arvind Subramanian estimates India’s GDP grew by just 4.5%, not the 7% that official data claim

INDIA'S OFFICIAL DATA, whether on jobs or GDP, has come in for severe criticism in the recent past, not just because there seemed to be a political angle to it—witness how NDA-2 growth trumped that in UPA- 1 and UPA- 2 as a result of the back-series—but also because the data seemed to fly in the face of common sense. How could jobs, for instance, be growing at the pace the government claimed if private consumption expenditure growth was slowing so fast? And how could GDP growth in NDA-2 average 7.7% as compared to UPA- 2's 6.7% if bank credit grew at roughly half the pace (8.6% in NDA-2 vs 16.3% in UPA- 2) and investment levels also fell to around 29% of GDP from around 33.2% in the same period? The latest blow to the integrity of India's data system comes from a study by former chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian; the former CEA has argued that, as compared to the official estimates of around 7% per year, GDP is likely to have grown by just around 4.5% per year between 2011-12 and 2016-17.

Given how the period Subramanian has chosen spans both the UPA as well as the NDA, of course, his analysis cannot be seen as a critique of the statistical system only under the NDA though many will interpret it as such. Indeed, even the original rebasing exercise—this is what led to the first controversy over GDP estimates—was started during the UPA period and the methodology was finalised before the NDA came to power; the results may have benefitted the NDA, but that was coincidental. Subramanian comes to his conclusion by, first, establishing that the GDP estimates are not *kosher* and, having done that, he constructs several alternative indices—such as power consumption, vehicle sales, petroleum consumption etc.—and runs regressions with them to see how well they correlate with GDP. As Subramanian asks, how can GDP growth be roughly the same in 2011-02 to 2011-12 (7.5%) and 2012-13 to 2017-18 (6.9%) if other indices are so different? Exports of goods and services grew 14.5% before 2011 but just 3.4% thereafter, while the growth for imports were 15.6% and 2.5% respectively! Production of commercial vehicles, similarly, grew at 19.1% before 2011 and -0.1% after 2011; a host of such examples can be given.

The first concern for the re-elected government, then, has to be getting India's statistical system back in order; if the data is faulty, how can any government or RBI even conduct policy? If the government knew that, as Subramanian says, growth was doing so badly, it would have been faster to address both the farm stress, as well as NPA crisis with faster bank recapitalisation; RBI too would have been quicker to cut repo rates if economic distress was so palpable. On the flip side, while the numbers suggest monetary policy was too tight, it shows fiscal policy was too loose since, with a lower GDP number, the fiscal deficit will look even higher in relative terms. While part of the reason for the data being problematic has to do with the collapse in inflation, a larger reason could be due to the use of MCA-21 data in place of volume-based data like the IIP or proxying informal sector growth by formal sector activity. Though recent events make it look as if the statistical system has been undermined by the NDA, as Subramanian points out, the problem is more deep-seated.

A tax on cash is a bad idea

Govt has enough data on tax evaders to be able to track them

THE GOVERNMENT IS reportedly considering bringing back a banking cash transaction tax (BCTT), of the type introduced in 2005 when P Chidambaram was the finance minister. And, just as Chidambaram said the idea of the tax was not so much to generate revenue—it collected just ₹350 crore in FY06—as it was to establish 'remarkable tax trails' since a large part of the cash found its way into the black economy, the government's reported plan is also linked to trying to disincentivise the use of cash and crack down on evasion. The fact that there was no stunning increase in tax buoyancy after Chidambaram's cash tax suggests it wasn't very successful; besides, since the government has a lot more information on taxpayers than it did earlier, it is not clear what a tax on cash withdrawals—it is actually unfair to honest taxpayers—will achieve.

After GST, the government has a mine of information on people's incomes and revenues which needs to be mined assiduously. Then, there is the data the taxman gets from Operation Insight which is a linking of various databases—on the purchases of jewellery, automobiles, property, credit card payments, airline tickets, etc.—and with each bank account in the country mandatorily linked to a PAN, the government can always ask the banks to generate a list of cash withdrawals beyond a certain amount from banks. There are, it is true, a large number of fake PAN cards; but since each PAN card has to be linked to an Aadhaar number, bank managers can be asked to conduct periodic scans to weed out fake PANs. More important, the government claimed that, as a result of demonetisation, it had collected a wealth of information on people; so why isn't this being used to track tax evaders? At the time of demonetisation, the government claimed it had identified 23.5 lakh PANs that appeared suspicious—the cash deposited wasn't in keeping with their known sources of income; two years down the line, if just around ₹6,600 crore of taxes has been collected from these people, it doesn't suggest the exercise was very effective. With just around ₹6,900 crore of *benami* property attached so far, it is clear the government hasn't been able to unearth serious amounts of black money; so, what is to be achieved with yet another information source when not enough is being done with the existing information?

Indeed, the sharp slowing of personal income tax collections in FY19 shows the demonetisation bump has also exhausted itself despite all the information this gave the taxman. An *FE* analysis by Sumit Jha showed that, for every taxpayer reporting an income of ₹5+ crore, 13 others outwit the taxman; while there are likely to be around 68,000 Indians who earn more than ₹5 crore a year, the official tax data shows just 5,000 people in this income bracket; indeed, in most cases of people earning more than ₹20 lakh, just around 10-15% of potential taxpayers are in the tax net. The taxman has more than enough tools to catch these evaders; a banking cash transaction tax is not going to materially add to the wealth of information the government either already has or has access to.

FirePOWER

Govt does well to fire corrupt and inefficient tax officials, move signals transparent conduct and performance matter

THE UNION GOVERNMENT forcing 12 senior tax officials to retire because of misconduct and inefficiency is a step towards clean and effective bureaucracy. However, that the action comes almost a decade after the instances of misconduct were first reported is disappointing—especially given how serious the charges were, ranging from corruption and extortion to sexual harassment. Indeed, one of the 12, a top-ranking official, had allegedly acquired ₹12 crore of unaccounted-for assets and had remained suspended from 1999 to 2014. In the interim, he had initiated over 40 legal cases to thwart action against him and had, most recently, moved a High Court to force the Centre to appoint him as a member of the Central Board of Direct Taxation. Quite a few of the sacked tax officials had engaged high-profile lawyers who charged fat fees—contrast this with the case of former coal secretary HC Gupta, who had once submitted that he would have to fight his case in the coal-block allocation scam from jail as he couldn't afford the advocate's fee; he later withdrew the submission, reportedly with friends and well-wishers pitching in to help.

Delays in acting against tainted officials erodes administrative accountability and efficiency. That said, by firing a senior tax official for not having proved effective in a supervisory role, since he failed to assign high-tax-implication cases to seasoned officers, the government has set a new benchmark for efficiency. By the same logic, officers who habitually levy large penalties that don't get upheld in courts should also be shown the door. If the government were to adopt a similar 'perform or get ousted' rule for other departments as well, it would signal a premium on bureaucratic efficiency and get rid of the rust that has beset India's steel frame. In the longer run, to ensure that only upright and efficient officers comprise India's executive, the government must exit functions that the private sector can execute competently and areas that are best left to the market to regulate. If, for instance, the government were to appoint a bureau to keep tabs on price arbitrage in the civil aviation sector—where competition can do a much better job—chances are there will be officials willing to look the other way, in exchange for some old-school palm greasing.

INCOME LEVEL
NOTHING IS GAINED BY MUDDYING WATERS THROUGH EXPRESSIONS THAT SOUND PROFOUND, WITHOUT CONVEYING ANYTHING OF IMPORT

Understanding India's middle-income trap

THERE A MIDDLE income trap? Words have multiple meanings. The word "trap" has three major meanings—Trap(1), a situation one can't get out of (trap shoot- ing comes from that); Trap(2), mouth; and Trap(3), a horse-drawn carriage. Outside literature (often old), I have not come across Trap(3) being used for a long time, certainly not in India. Trap(2), as in, "shut your trap" is colloquial and also rare in India. There certainly is a middle income trap, interpreted as Trap(2), though people who use the expression mean it in the sense of Trap(1). Economists are usually known for their precision. When they use the expression "middle-income trap", they should define what they mean by "middle income", "trap" having hopefully been defined. I said economists should be precise. They aren't always and presume, like "Khan market consensus", there is a "middle-income trap consensus". World Bank has a definition of middle income; it is a range of per capita income between \$996 and \$12,055, with \$996 to \$3,895 defined as lower middle income, and \$3,895 to \$12,055 defined as upper middle income. (The thresholds are often changed, these are 2019 levels). With a per capita income of around \$2,000, India is still lower middle income. \$12,055 is a long way off and with a per capita income of \$12,055 India's economy and society will be vastly transformed. Nevertheless, like *Vitalstatistix*, we must worry about these vital statistics. What happens when we cross that threshold? What happens if the sky falls on our head tomorrow?

These numbers are based on official exchange rates, the so-called nominal per capita GDP or Atlas



method figures. But a country's per capita income is in local currency, that is, rupees. For purposes of cross-country comparisons, they have been converted through a common numeraire, the US dollar. For the sake of sheer perversity, just before 1991 reforms, there were roughly 20 rupees to a dollar and right now, there are roughly 70 rupees to a dollar. Had that exchange rate continued, under an economist's favourite expression of *ceteris paribus* (everything else remaining unchanged), the per capita income would have been around \$7,000 now—closer to the threshold and perhaps a reason to worry even more. Typically, when economists use the trap idea, they mean purchasing power parity (PPP) dollars, using PPP exchange rates, not official exchange rates. India's PPP per capita income is now around \$7,000. Through sheer coincidence, it is identical to the number obtained by using 20 rupees to a dollar as the exchange rate. Do countries get stuck in the middle income range, PPP or otherwise? Might India get stuck?

The grist to the mill is usually provided by empirical research, documenting development experience of a diverse range of countries. I know of two such recent surveys of literature on the middle income trap proposition. The first was by Fernando Gabriel Im



and David Rosenblatt, published as a World Bank Policy Paper in 2013. The second was in, 2017-18 Economic Survey. Both found no evidence. Economic Survey also said, "But, recently doubts about the convergence process have been articulated around the notion of a "middle-income trap." Definitions can themselves be traps so it is important to be careful about them." Who pays attention to such advice when Trap(2) beckons? Survey added, "The reasons for the trap/stall were supposed to be two-fold, operating as a kind of pincer. On the one hand, as countries attained middle income status, they would be squeezed out of manufacturing and other dynamic sectors by poorer, lower-cost competitors. On the other hand, they would lack the institutional, human, and technological capital to carve out niches higher up the value-added chain. Thus, pushed from below and unable to grasp the top, they would find themselves doomed to, well, middle income status. As it turned out, there was neither a middle income trap nor stall. Middle-income countries as a group continued to grow as fast or faster than the con-

vergence standard demanded."

In this quote, conceptual arguments behind the middle-income trap are also mentioned. The burden of empirical evidence is that there is no such trap. Note two further points. First, a trap cannot be defined without referring to a time-frame. Time series on PPP per capita is a bit more difficult to get than official exchange rate per capita. With that caveat, take a look at the time series of any relatively more advanced country. Until a few decades ago (a cut-off in 1960 or 1970 will suffice), all these countries were stuck in middle-income traps. Second, middle-income trap is sometimes defined not with respect to an absolute threshold level of per capita income, but with per capita income expressed as a share of US per capita income. Even if one uses this relative notion, the case of a middle-income trap existing is not proven. Does that mean there are no issues with the Indian economy? Certainly not. After the elections, with a new government in place, plenty of people have come up with agendas for reform. In most instances, these are not short-term quick fixes, but medium-term changes in structure. Therefore, they can rightly be called structural reforms and the suggestions should be debated, accepted and implemented. Having granted that, the limited point is that nothing is gained by muddying waters through expressions that sound profound, without conveying anything of import.

Even if one uses this relative notion, the case of a middle income trap existing is not proven. Does that mean there are no issues with the Indian economy? Certainly not

Donald and the delusion discount

Not having a destructive trade war is a good thing. But what the world learned from this climbdown is that Trump's threats are as empty as his promises



THE EVENTS OF the past few weeks destroyed whatever credibility Donald Trump may still have had on economic policy. And investors are celebrating. At this point, evidences that Trump tweets are sound and fury signifying nothing is, in effect, good news.

Let's review what happened. First, having gone to great lengths to get a new trade agreement with Mexico and Canada—an agreement that was very similar to the existing agreement, but one he could slap his own name on—Trump basically blew up his position by threatening to impose new tariffs unless Mexico did something about border issues that have nothing to do with trade.

This obviously weakens if it doesn't destroy Trump's ability to negotiate future agreements, on trade or anything else. After all, what's the point of making deals with an administration that reneges on its promises whenever it feels like it?

But then, barely a week later, Trump called the whole thing off in return for a statement by Mexico that it would do... things it had already agreed to months earlier.

We don't know exactly what caused Trump to back down, but a good guess is that the warnings of U.S. manufacturers—horrified at the possibility that Trump's tariff tantrum would disrupt their supply chains—finally made it through to the Oval Office, or the golf course, or wherever he was when they finally got his ear.

Now, not having a destructive trade war is a good thing. But what the world learned from this climbdown is that Trump's threats are as empty as his promises.

An aside: Recent events have surely reduced the chances that Congress will ever approve the U.S.M.C.A., the Trump-negotiated replacement for Nafta.

Democrats in the House were already reluctant to pass enabling legislation, giving Trump something to boast about, unless they got some seri-

ous concessions on issues that matter to them, like labour rights.

Trump's counter was a threat to withdraw from Nafta with no replacement. But this would have catastrophic economic effects, leading into an election year. After last week's climbdown, who believes that he would carry through on that threat?

Trump was, of course, unhappy at news reports that accurately described his deal with Mexico over migrants as the nothingburger (nothingtaco?) it actually was. So in addition to lashing out at "fake news," he introduced a whole new claim: "MEXICO HAS AGREED TO IMMEDIATELY BEGIN BUYING LARGE QUANTITIES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT FROM OUR GREAT PATRIOT FARMERS!"

There were a few peculiar things about that claim, despite the extra persuasiveness that always comes when YOU MAKE YOUR ASSERTIONS IN CAPITAL LETTERS.

Like many Trump tweets, it reads like a clumsy translation from the original Russian ("great patriot farmers"?). More to the point, there was nothing at all about agriculture in the official agreement. And at the most basic level, that's just not something the Mexican government could deliver, even if it wanted to.

Some readers may recall that a few months ago China tried to avert trade conflict by promising to buy 10 million tons of U.S. soybeans. The ploy didn't work, but it was at least feasible: State-owned enterprises make up a large part of the Chinese economy, and Beijing can just order them to buy stuff. Mexico, however, is a market economy, in which the private sector, not the government, decides how much Iowa corn to import.

So was Trump confusing Mexico

with China? Did he forget that the China deal he was touting months ago actually fell through? Who knows?

What's clear, however, is that on trade policy—his signature issue—the president of the United States is seriously out to lunch. And you might think that this would worry investors.

But as I said, markets appear to be celebrating: As I write this, stock markets are up, while long-term interest rates—a better barometer of investor views about economic prospects—are off their recent lows. What's going on?

The answer, I'd suggest, is that financial markets are basically discounting Trump's rants; they've stopped treating evidence of his unfitness for office as news.

Yes, he's deeply ignorant about policy. Yes, his rage-tweets constantly remind us of his egomania and insecurity. But we've known all that for a while; Trump's personality is, in effect, already priced in.

What investors want to know instead, is the extent to which his character flaws will actually lead to destructive economic policy. Legally, Trump faces remarkably few constraints: U.S. trade law gives the president enormous discretion to impose tariffs at will, and given a spineless Senate, there are a lot of other things he can do in the name of national security.

But as of right now, markets appear to be betting that he tweets loudly but carries a small stick.

Is this a good bet? I have my doubts. The trade war with China still seems to be on, and Europe may be next. More generally, when you have an attention-seeking president, ignoring his antics could well provoke him into even more extreme behaviour. But for now, investors are effectively treating Trump as crazy but harmless. Is America great, or what?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Girish Karnad's demise

With the loss of Girish Karnad, the country has lost an extraordinary playwright who never shied away from embracing progressive ideas, and produced path-breaking plays in the language of Kannada; besides speaking up boldly against the pernicious trend of stifling dissent and climate of intolerance till the end. Starting from his early plays such as *Tughlaq* and *Yayati*, which were considered as powerful commentaries on contemporary India; Karnad drew heavily on history and mythology to speak the unspeakable truth. Karnad used his mother tongue Kannada for creative pursuits. The void left by him will be difficult to fill.

— M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

RBI relaxes norm

This refers to news regarding RBI relaxes norms for basic account holders. Since time memorial savings bank account is attached with having a pass book and cheque book in general public perception. The importance of cheque book cannot be undermined. It makes saving account holder entitled and motivates account holder to use it to settle his dealings. It works as an additional tool for senior villagers and traders with limited crops trading for selling merchandises and crops and adjust their dues be it. Further it will encourage rural folk to visit banks to deposit cheques and boost financial literacy movement. Women folk owning a cheque book will be prompted to keep more balance in their BSBD accounts. BSBD accounts will become more popular as these facilities already include four withdrawals from ATMs in a month, deposit of cash at bank branch, and ATM Card or ATM-cum-Debit Card. Also there is no limit on number and value of deposits that can be made in a month in BSBD. Good business deals will positively scale up balances in saving bank accounts and pave the way for other financial products including current account and fixed deposits.

— NK Bakshi, Vadodara

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ASTHE NEW GOVERNMENT settles in, one of its early agendas would be to get the skill development roadmap for the next five years right. It is an opportune moment to conduct an assessment of the past decade of skill development and contribute to discussion for future policy initiatives. The first National Policy on Skill Development launched in 2009 marked the beginning of competency-based skill development in the country. The initiative is based on the twin pillars of short-term modular training and involvement of the private sector in training delivery. The first was necessitated as India had 250-300 million youth in the 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) category in 2009, with 8-9 million being added every year (with 12 million entering the workforce every year and an annual total training capacity of 3-4 million, the NEET segment keeps growing at a rate of 8-9 million every year). This was ironically in a fast-growing economy that reported skill shortages. Since long-term training was not a viable solution for this ballooning problem, the short-term modular training system where youth would be trained enough to be provided jobs in industry as semi-skilled workers was envisaged. The youth could then pick up further skills on the job and, through an effective work-based learning mechanism, become fully skilled. Similarly, it was practically impossible for the government to set up these training capacities in a short span of time. Hence policies and schemes were designed to incentivise the private sector to do so swiftly.

Much has happened since then—the setting up of the ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship (MSDE) in 2014, adoption of National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), strengthening of the fledgling National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and its enabling ecosystem of training partners and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), the establishment of State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs), the launch of the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) in 2015, and training of over 35 million people through various central and state-sponsored skilling schemes.

Even though the macro socio-economic context for skill development remains largely the same as in 2009, there is renewed urgency to respond to four key trends.

First, India is racing against time to become rich before it gets old. We are paradoxically both a nation of young and old. There would more old Indians than young beyond 2035. We need to grow our per capita incomes before we age. Second, we are a young nation in an ageing world. This provides an opportunity to be a global source for skilled manpower for nations with skill shortages. Third, India's economy is growing fast, but as it becomes more efficient, much of the output growth cannot be expected to be accompanied by job creation due to falling elasticity of labour to output. Fostering entrepreneurship amongst the youth becomes imperative for creating gainful employment opportunities for many. Lastly, the Indian economy needs to accelerate its transition to a technology-led, knowledge and innovation economy, if per capita incomes are to rise rather than stagnate at current levels. There is need for skilling, reskilling and upskilling of persons to participate in the global knowledge economy driven by emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics.

Over the last few years, we have responded to these trends with mixed results. To begin with, there is denying that the skill development agenda has been successful on three counts—institution building, increasing the training capacity and improving access, and creating awareness for the need to be skilled. No sector can be expected to have long-term sustenance unless the policies, operations and monitoring are



ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

RAJESH AGRAWAL & ARUNKUMAR PILLAI

Agrawal is joint secretary, MSDE, and Pillai is partner, Government & Public Services, EY. Views are personal

Towards a skilled nation by 2030

The skill development ecosystem is at a crossroads.

While the foundations for a sustainable skill development ecosystem have been laid over last five years, it's time to build on it to create a skilled nation by 2030. Anything less than that would be a grave injustice to the potential of the youth of this nation

institutionalised. As noted previously, the last decade has seen the setting up of various institutions and this phase continues with the restructuring of some of them and reconfiguring of roles between them. There has also been a 3-4 fold increase in training capacity with widespread geographic access—600 model training centres called the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK) and over 5,000 scheme-based training centres have been established—as over 10 million people get trained annually under various skill development initia-

tives. Finally, there is growing awareness of the need for skilling amongst the youth and employers, and skills is a buzzword today that none can ignore.

Notwithstanding these positives, there are major performance outcome challenges. Some of the key ones are less than desirable quality of skills training, low participation of women and marginalised groups, need for higher industry engagement and higher trainee motivation, and less dependence on grant funding.

These performance outcome chal-

lenges stem principally from two factors. The first is related to the inherent behaviours of both the trainee and industry. Vocational training is perceived as training for the less educated and for those who have not fared well in the education system. Also, industry's willingness to skill or pay a premium for a skilled person is absent as it perceives no market-place benefits for the costs incurred. The second is related to policy design issues that have been less than successful in breaking the impedance of these stakeholder behavioural motivations. The design problem on the policy level must be resolved so that the key stakeholders see more value in skill development.

To begin with, a new policy design needs to first focus on transforming the current push system into a pull-based one. This would call for the following:

- Empower the trainee, so that she makes an informed choice about the programme she wishes to pursue, through counselling support and making payment through skill vouchers;
- Conduct a rigorous quality-grading of skill training institutions to weed out undesirable ones to support the empowered trainee in making this choice;
- Strengthen the assessment and certification system to make it robust and hence credible;
- Find ways and means to incentivise industry through a light-touch approach to participate in the skill development agenda especially through apprenticeships;
- Decentralise the skill development initiative by building capacity at the district and state level for planning and

There is need for skilling, reskilling and upskilling of persons to participate in the global knowledge economy driven by emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics

monitoring the implementation of schemes; and

- Provide enabling support for embedding skills in education and lifelong learning. This calls for initiatives focused on vocationalisation of school and college curricula. There is also a need to operationalise NSQF as a framework for lifelong learning and developing pathways between the skill development system and the current academic system. Second, to address the challenge of low pace of job creation, the policy has to focus on:
- Skilling and providing enabling support for entrepreneurship; and
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of the skilled but uncertified persons for transitioning them from the unorganised to the organised sector.

Third, to address the overseas opportunity for skilled Indians, the policy needs to build on its current initiatives for placements in Japan with similar government-to-government (G2G) approaches to other overseas markets like the EU. For traditional overseas markets like GCC countries, creating capacities to assess competencies of the emigrants is imperative.

Finally, the policy should focus on skilling in emerging technologies to enable India to transition into a global knowledge economy and support mission mode initiatives like Make in India, Smart Cities, doubling farmers' incomes, etc.

The skill development ecosystem is at a crossroads. While the foundations for a sustainable skill development ecosystem have been laid over last five years, the time has come to build on it and work over the current decade to create a skilled nation by 2030. Anything less than that would be a grave injustice to the potential of the youth of this nation.

Deepening of digital payments

ARUNA SHARMA

Former secretary, ministry of steel and MelTY, Government of India, and member, RBI committee on digital payments

The thought-process behind Nilekani Committee recommendations



THE RESERVE BANK of India has taken a major step to boost digital transactions by scrapping the charges on fund transfers through RTGS and NEFT. The removal of transaction fee on digital payments was one of the recommendations of the high-level committee constituted by the RBI for deepening of digital payment. The five-member committee chaired by Nandan Nilekani was set up in January to study the level of digitisation of payments in the country, identify problems in the payments ecosystem and recommend ways to resolve them.

The Modi government's focus on Digital India was not just about digitising the system of governance, but also for developing technologies and efficiencies in the payment system. The committee deliberated on the existing reports on the issue and discussed with all stakeholders to understand the hurdles faced in digital payment modes.

The committee was tasked with segregating payment modes—government to merchant, government to people and vice versa from people to people and people to merchant interfaces. As far as the transactions involving the government are concerned, the system is in place to an extent after the spread of Jan Dhan accounts, RuPay cards and direct benefit transfers. However, the last mile connectivity needs some fine-tuning. Thus, payments to and from the government can be fully digitised in a two-year timeline.

In the case of other categories of payments—people to people and people to merchant—the supply-side is ready, but there are some impediments to digital payments, viz., interchange charges, taxes, connectivity issues, time bands for digital windows and amount restrictions. By scrapping fees on few modes of digital transactions, RBI has signaled the removal of major irritants. It will be easier to popularise PoS and UPI platforms if these issues are addressed effectively.

The committee also flagged the need for an improvement in financial literacy by making user understand that how digital payment history enhances their credit worthiness. The role of state-level banking committees and district and block-level committees was also deliberated in detail. The SLBCs are the right forum to plan and monitor deepening of digital payment structures.

The Nilekani Committee, of which I was a member, also had Harun Khan, former director at the RBI, Kishore Sansi, former CMD of Vijaya Bank, and Sanjay Jain of IIM-Ahmedabad. The committee made recommendations in the areas of increasing digital payments, easing KYC norms, providing solutions to feature phone users, grievance redresses and connectivity. The card and phone payment modes were deliberated separately. The report has not only recommended solutions, but also has explained the modalities and even suggested some medium-term strategies for achieving the goals.

Payments to and from the government can be fully digitised in a two-year timeline with the spread of Jan Dhan, DBT & RuPay cards

AN ASPECT OF INDIAN banking crisis that hasn't gotten much attention is HR mismanagement in state-owned banks. Poor people management is equally responsible, if not more, for the lack of customer focus, operational inefficiency and, in turn, low profitability of government banks vis-a-vis their private sector counterparts. Unless it is addressed, things will not improve, whether we recapitalise these banks or reduce government stakes in them, or not.

Like many things in government banks, HR is one of the most mismanaged. Post bank nationalisation, hiring of personnel was done through banking service recruitment boards (BSRBs), which brought in a national cadre of competent people. Foreign banks having presence in India as well banks in the Gulf region used to lure away employees of state-owned banks to work for them. Yet public sector banks were not short of quality staff. However, with the full-fledged entry of private banks in the 1990s, things started to change, with talent moving on to better paying private banks.

With declining quality, HR in government banks is no longer about merit, but about bureaucracy and its inherent flaws. A culture of pleasing one-up the hierarchical ladder prevails. So, rather than focusing on business growth, a branch manager (BM) tries to keep his regional manager (RM) in good humour, an RM his GM, and the GM tries his best to manage executive directors (ED) or chairperson for improving his promotional prospects, says an industry veteran. Similarly, a typ-

Towards good HR practices in PSBs

How poor people management is adding to India's banking woes

RITESH KUMAR SINGH

CEO of Indonomics Consulting Views are personal

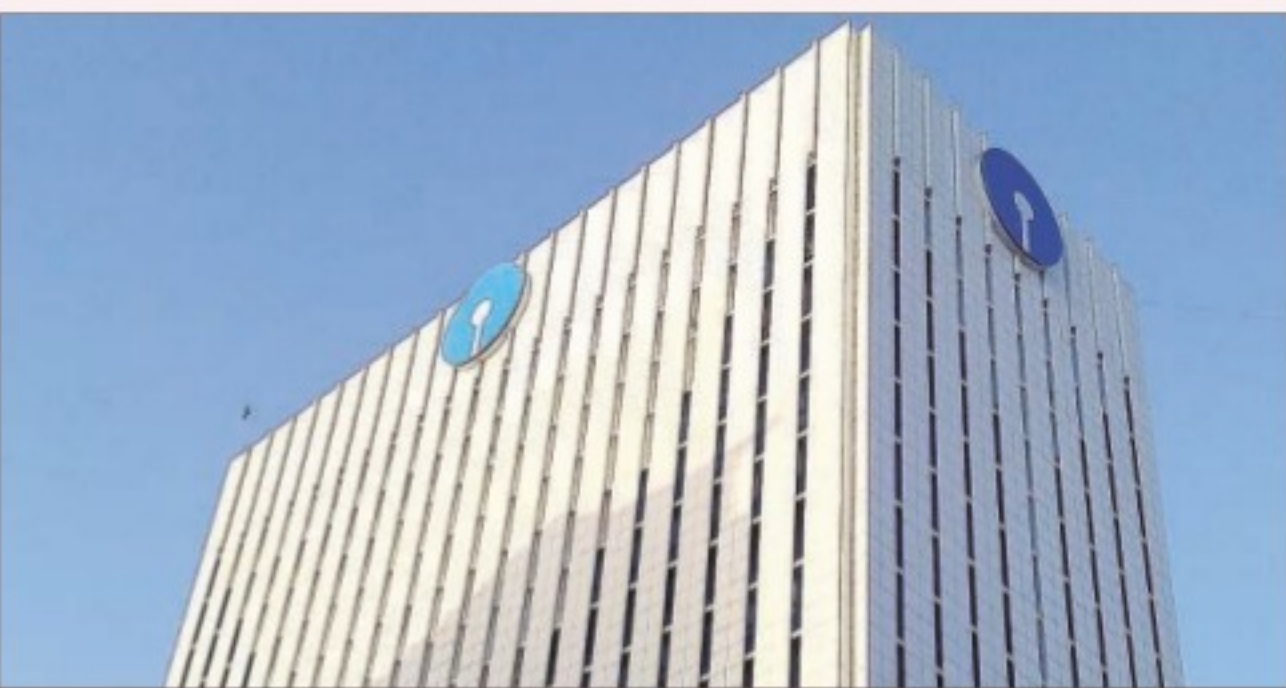


ical bank chairman is often appointed because of right connection rather than right competencies. Hence, he tries to keep those people (who got him the job in the first place) happy by being useful.

In a thriving culture of sycophancy and nepotism, personnels are transferred on whims and fancies of top bosses or influenced by bank unions or on recommendations from bureaucrats or politicians, but not often on merit. And certainly not after any serious deliberation about the suitability of transferees to specific roles. There is more emphasis on matching the hierarchical ranks. Thus, when an assistant general manager (AGM) leaves or is transferred, another AGM is asked to replace him irrespective of the gentleman's specialisation or previous work. Thus, an HR or legal specialist with no experience in commercial banking can be asked to head a bank branch. Once appointed as the

branch head, he or she at once becomes a jack of all trade and is expected to lead every function from sales and marketing to credit appraisal and loan sanction. The result is mis-employment and under-employment. In such a scenario, intended (or unintended) sub-prime lending is bound to happen. Directed lending, and/or loans to politically connected cronies, adds to the problem.

The system of promotion and career progression in government banks is good only in theory. A person who has got a bad rating (which are often assigned arbitrarily with no detailing of justification) or reprimand for poor performance this year, can be promoted the next year if he or she is able to manage the right people. Though there are sales targets such as number of accounts to be opened, deposits accumulated or number of mudra and other loans sold in a month or



quarter, they are not strictly enforced unless an employee is really in the bad book of top bosses. Variable pay or monetary rewards based on performance are given only to ED and chairpersons. For the rest, there's no performance-linked pay, so in practice performance is not incentivised.

To make matters worse, a typical low to mid-level bank employee can't be transferred if he or she doesn't want promotion or career growth. Sadly, there could be many employees who are fine with that as they might not be looking for promotion but local posting nearer to their hometowns so they could take care of family business from the side. Thus, for such non-performers, no promotion combined with no transfer is not actually a punishment, but this is how it is.

Sincere hard work doesn't pay well in government banks—one is not punished

for inaction, but even for simple mistakes, punishments could be harsh. On a day-to-day basis, when any wrong happens, the priority is to find a scapegoat rather than fixing accountability through proper investigation or introducing preventive reforms, in an environment of uninspiring leadership. This promotes risk-avoidance rather than risk-management among bank employees.

Each state-owned bank has its own training institute where employees are imparted minimal training by insiders. Outside voices or experiences are not shared. Forget private banks, deputation to other government banks or government departments or PSUs is strongly discouraged. As a result, a typical government banker doesn't know what's happening outside (in other Indian banks or foreign banks, for that matter). Jobs become monotonous and employ-

ees demotivated.

The way forward

It's time to introduce 360-degree appraisal for managerial staff including compulsory feedback from top customers. That will discourage complacency and lead to focus on improving customer service. Further, to infuse a culture of performance, the use of carrot-and-stick policy is urgently called for. Thus, introduction of a measurable performance-based reward and recognition system including the provision for monetary incentives for all performing employees could improve motivation and customer focus. Similarly, non-performers should compulsorily be transferred out of their preferred branch or region while top performers should be given choice postings. Deputation to all kinds of organisations should be encouraged by doing away with the need for any official approval. That will bring fresh ideas into the near-closed state-owned banking system.

To ensure employee buy-in, big-picture financial targets and major organisational plans should be shared with all employees on a regular basis. Training by both internal and external experts including motivational speakers will help improve employee morale and performance. Again, any transfer and posting must be based on right fit—matching position with suitably-skilled employees, and not based on whims and fancies of top bosses or under influence from vested interests. These changes can help transform the work environment in state-owned banks, aid efficiency and improve profitability.

LISTEN TO HIM

Instead of looking for ex-CEA’s motives, all sides would do well to address the key questions his paper raises on the slowdown

THE INDIAN ECONOMY may have grown at an annual rate of just around 4.5 per cent during 2011-12 to 2016-17, according to an article written in this newspaper by Arvind Subramanian. This figure is much lower than the official estimate of 7 per cent for the same period. The growth overestimation of 2.5 percentage points is significant not only for its coming from the former chief economic adviser, but also for the fresh questions it raises over the new methodology followed in computation of GDP. Subramanian has consciously sought to steer away from any political controversy by pointing out the fact that the period for this analysis covers both the UPA-2 and the NDA-2 government. Moreover, the shift in methodology — from a predominantly volume-based to a value-based measurement of GDP to better capture qualitative changes in a modern, dynamic economy — were initiated under the UPA regime, resulting in a bump-up of growth in its last year (2013-14). In other words, nothing “political” should be read into Subramanian’s piece, which provides a strong case for a relook of the new GDP estimation process as well as the high-growth assumptions guiding policymaking in the last few years.

What Subramanian has done is to track the performance of 17 indicators — electricity, steel, cement and petro-products consumption; two-wheeler and commercial vehicles sales; exports and imports of goods and services; and bank credit growth, among others — that are considered reliable proxies for economic activity. The interesting finding is that while in the period before 2011-12, these indicators strongly correlated with GDP growth, the one-to-one relationship broke down subsequently. That this negative correlation is coterminous with the introduction of the new GDP series from 2011-12 cannot be baulked at. Subramanian traces the overestimation of GDP primarily to the manufacturing sector. In pre 2011-12, value added in manufacturing tended to move in line with the index of industrial production and exports for this segment. But there is very little connection between these post 2011-12. The Central Statistics Office’s use of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs’ (MCA) financial data for companies, as opposed to establishment-based production data, has been questioned by many researchers for a lack of transparency and consistency.

Subramanian’s analysis should help generate useful debate over the current methodology for computation of GDP. The CSO should, as a first step, invite independent economists and statisticians to deliberate on it. The MCA, too, should provide access to its companies’ database to researchers for independent validation. Equally important, if the economy has indeed been growing at well below what the official GDP data shows, it raises concern over what seems to have been an overly tight monetary policy since the time of Raghuram Rajan as Reserve Bank of India governor. That the RBI has in the past few months displayed more flexibility is probably an encouraging sign.

HEALING A WOUND

Verdict in Kathua case is a reassurance that the criminal justice system can hold its own in a politically fraught moment

AN INNOCENT EIGHT-YEAR-OLD minor girl has been kidnapped, wrongfully confined, drugged, raped and ultimately murdered. The perpetrators of this crime have acted in such a manner as if there is a ‘law of jungle’ in society,” Pathankot Sessions Court Judge Tejwinder Singh said on Monday, marking a closure of sorts to a case that had stunned the nation about 17 months ago. The heinous crime was committed in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir. But the Supreme Court (SC) had to step in and transfer the trial from the Kathua District Court to a court in neighbouring Punjab after a series of unprecedented developments — lawyers obstructed the filing of the chargesheet and cast communal slurs on the investigating team, protests were held in support of the accused and two BJP ministers in the then PDP-BJP coalition government in J&K demanded a CBI investigation. The apex court, aptly, refused to accede to the demand for such a probe. Doing so would have undermined the sanctity of due process and, more dangerously, amounted to accepting the argument that the investigating officers were influenced by religious considerations.

The victim, from the nomadic Bakarwal community, had gone missing on January 10, last year. An FIR was registered two days later, following a complaint by her father. But by all accounts, the probe was taken up in right earnest 10 days later, after the case was handed over to the J&K crime branch. This investigating team had to work against difficult odds, and in a challenging milieu. The accused had reportedly destroyed crucial evidence. More worryingly, the communalisation of the sordid incident by pro-Hindutva elements aggravated the polarisation in Jammu between Hindus and Muslims, and threatened to widen the faultline between Jammu and Kashmir regions.

Since May last year, the in-camera trial was conducted on a daily basis. The J&K government had opposed the transfer of the case, but the SC’s stand was actually a vote of confidence for the state’s crime branch that was put under duress by the communal taints. The sessions court has sentenced three of the accused to life imprisonment and three policemen to five years in prison for destruction of evidence. The verdict — and the investigation process — is a reassurance that the country’s criminal justice system can hold its own in a communally-charged and politically-fraught moment.

CHARITY, FOR \$58,000

Young billionaires can now learn how to take on the task of governments — redistributing wealth

GIVING AWAY MONEY, it turns out, is an expensive proposition. Or, to be less blunt, if you stand to inherit billions and yet, your conscience eats away at you at the inequality in the world, it will cost a mere \$58,000 (Rs 40,29,463 as of June 11) and a few weeks at Harvard University and the University of

Zurich to learn the intricacies of “impact capitalism”. Essentially, the course appears to be a primer to get rich while doing good, and presumably, preening with self-congratulation as you have an “impact” while making the big bucks.

Now, those who haven’t been to Harvard to learn how to spend their inheritance may ask the obvious question: If the millennial billionaires are so torn up about poverty, wouldn’t it just be easier to give away \$58,000? And those who don’t have an inheritance to speak of will ask: Does the pull of conscience need to buttressed by proof of profits? In fact, the course on offer at Harvard and Zurich (shame on those seeking a cheap punchline around Swiss bank accounts) is not only a waste, it’s redundant. As far back as 1988, the Hindi film industry tackled the question of spending money to make in *Malamaal* and all young billionaires need to do is invest in subtitled the film before watching Naseeruddin Shah hilariously overcome all manner of obstacles in getting rid of his money.

According to James Gilford, the founder of the course at Harvard, “the heavy lifting of say, pulling a billion people out of poverty, has to be through sustainable capitalism”. The billionaire bleeding hearts, whether knowingly or unknowingly, seem to want to eliminate the middle man: After all, the task of taking from the (super) rich, and redistributing some of their excess wealth into social wealth and public goods is the traditional arena of governments. Who would have thought that there was a profitable market in making anarchists out of the super-rich.



SHYAM SARAN

WHAT BEGAN AS a trade dispute between the US and China has now morphed into a full spectrum strategic contest which is unlikely to abate any time soon. The one point the two sides agree upon is precisely that they are locked in a geopolitical contest and that its resolution will have to be the unquestioned dominance of one or the other. Neither accepts that multi-polarity is feasible in the sense that a cluster of major powers could construct a loosely structured but stable international order as a contemporary version of the European order set in place by Congress of Vienna in 1815.

The new hegemon, it is predicted, will be a rejuvenated US, which has seen off the Chinese challenge as it did the Soviet challenge in the Cold War. Or China will overtake the US and emerge as the undisputed hegemon in the current millennium. The resolution of the contest may take time so there will be a bi-polar world in the interim. Chinese analysts envision a process in which China will initially establish predominance in the Western Pacific pushing the US out towards the outer oceanic rim and then proceed to establish global pre-eminence. It is no coincidence that in its first ever Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (IPSR) released by the US on June 1, it is explicitly stated that China is a revisionist power which “seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and ultimately global pre-eminence in the long term”.

If an extended period of inconclusive contestation between the two countries is likely, how will it be different from the US-Soviet stand-off after World War II? China and the US are more evenly matched in economic terms, with China almost certain to overtake US GDP in nominal terms by 2030. China is also catching up with the US in technological prowess, with massive investments in new technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and advanced electronics. Soviet GDP never exceeded 40 per cent of US GDP and its technological capabilities, though impressive, were no match to the US. Further, there were hardly any trade and investment relations between the two while

As US-China competition intensifies, why India should refrain from taking sides



India’s relationship with the US will carry greater weight than relations with China which remains an adversarial power and is unwilling to change this equation. It would be natural for India to seek to compensate for its power asymmetry with China by strengthening its partnership with other countries which share its concern over the propensity of China to assert power unilaterally. China is not looking at India to be its ally. It is enough that India does not become an ally of its adversary. That should suit India.

China and the US are joined at the hip in a dense investment and trade relationship which will be difficult and painful to unwind for both.

China does not have allies and a string of bases across the globe like the US but the infrastructure being created through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) across the globe could be transformed into a security platform over time. Russia may move closer to an alliance with China and this could tip the balance in favour of the latter. Furthermore, the US-led alliance systems are under strain as a result of policies adopted by the current Trump Administration and its actions do not always align with the intent displayed in the IPSR. Therefore, the progressive polarisation of US-China relations, interspersed with phases of remission, is likely to persist. There may be a stalemate overall at least over the next decade and beyond. Will this stalemate define the global order or will there still be spaces for other emerging powers like India to advance their interests?

While China and the US may find it in their interest to define the new world order as a binary contest between their competing visions and capabilities, the defining characteristic of the current international trend is the steady diffusion of political, economic and military power rather than its concentration in this or that country. China’s emergence is in itself the consequence of such diffusion inherent in the process of globalisation, which in turn is a creature of rapid technological advance. Thomas Friedman’s flat world is a reality though he himself has doubts about it now. The limits of coercive power have been made sharply apparent in failed and costly wars in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. China too confronts countervailing winds whenever it steps beyond a threshold of assertion. Therefore, the shadow of the US-China confrontation will not fall across all other relationships with the rigid harshness of the previous Cold War.

India should be successful in resisting demands to choose one side of the fence or the other, because the fence itself will be rickety and shifting. Appropriate to the diffused

geopolitical landscape is a policy which enables promotion of India’s interests through multiple circles of engagement. The old East-West, North-South divides have become progressively less and less relevant though they still influence our foreign policy perspective. We will have to actively seek partnerships which are more issue based and hold the promise of advancing India’s economic and security interests. In this sense, some partnerships will be more valued than others but need not be exclusive.

India’s relationship with the US will carry greater weight than relations with China which remains an adversarial power and is unwilling to change this equation. It would be natural for India to seek to compensate for its power asymmetry with China by strengthening its partnership with other countries which share its concern over the propensity of China to assert power unilaterally. China is not looking at India to be its ally. It is enough that India does not become an ally of its adversary. That should suit India.

In our contemporary world, most of the challenges we face are cross-cutting in nature and global in dimension. They cannot be solved through national efforts alone. Nations cannot be coerced into joining international responses directed by major powers. It is only through collaborative platforms based on consent and multilateral processes which respect the principle of equity that solutions are likely to be found to the looming threats of climate change, global health pandemics, the unregulated development of cyber, bio-tech and space capabilities and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Coercion will remain indispensable but not sufficient to enhance a country’s influence. Leadership in mobilising international responses to such challenges may be more important. As India grapples with a changing world, it would be wise to retain the internationalist spirit which marked its foreign policy in the early years after Independence.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and is currently senior fellow, CPR



SANJAY KANVINDE AND GAUTAM BAMBAWALE

THE FIFTH GENERATION (5G) of wireless technology provides mobile internet speeds 10 times faster and will connect billions of new devices to the internet that will in turn help transform a wide range of services and industries. It is estimated that the total economic impact from 5G in India can exceed \$1 trillion by 2035. India is considered a prized market for global 5G manufacturers — Ericsson of Sweden, Nokia of Finland, Samsung of South Korea, and Huawei and ZTE of China. Considering the enormous size of the global 5G market, an economy’s deep dependency on modern telecom infrastructure, and national security imperatives, some countries have expressed concerns about Chinese companies, and the US has gone to the extent of banning Huawei and setting up a “5G Rivalry”.

As the “5G Rivalry” plays out and draws other countries into it, India needs to take a long-term view and place its interest front and centre. India’s interests are threefold.

First, bring the full benefits of 5G to the people and economy at the lowest cost and in the shortest time possible. It is in India’s benefit to not exclude any players from the small set of 5G equipment vendors. It is to our advantage to keep competition high, telecom equipment pricing low, and access to the full range of technology options open.

Second, minimise any security risks to critical telecom infrastructure. To do this, the nation should perform an integrated threat assessment that provides a “common threat perception picture” — this is best done by a multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary (pri-

THE 5G GAME

If it plays its cards right, includes stakeholders, India stands to gain



The government should encourage capacity building in Indian companies for ‘5G deployment services’ such that Indian talent can be used across the world. For vendors winning large 5G contracts in India, preferential agreements with Indian software companies could be considered.

vate-sector led) task force. This assessment should be followed by a realistic risk mitigation programme orchestrated by an empowered and accountable institution such as the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC). India has gained solid experience from 3G and 4G deployments that will be useful in 5G. However, all stakeholders will have to augment existing structures and capacities for testing, audits and equipment validation to cover the new risks from billions of new devices connecting to the 5G network. India can also consider forming a techno-diplomatic alliance with countries at risk from the same telecom products and create an information sharing and competency building agreement with them — Russia, Japan, France, and Germany are some of the potential partner countries. For extremely sensitive applications or geographical concerns, of course the government always has a last-resort choice to establish “no-go” zones for specific equipment on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that as much of the 5G investments and implementation in India will be by private entities, balancing their short to medium term corporate objectives with long-term national concerns around cyber-security and infrastructure protection will require policies and a collaborative approach to implement these policies.

Third, maximise India’s opportunities for value creation from the global 5G revolution. India has limited intellectual property in 5G technologies and is largely going to be a buyer of this technology. However, the size

of the Indian market and our strengths in services and software create some opportunities for symmetric dependencies and value creation. For example, global deployments of 5G are expected to continue over the next decade and will require skilled labour to design, install, and monitor these networks. The government should encourage capacity building in Indian companies for “5G deployment services” such that Indian talent can be used across the world. For vendors winning large 5G contracts in India, preferential agreements with Indian software companies could be considered. Additionally, setting up “use-case validation and development centres” should be incentivised to develop new applications of 5G that are most relevant to India’s social development such as health, education, agriculture, transportation and Water. These solutions can also be exported.

Telecom technology generations evolve in decade time-frames. It will take foresight and strong execution of a national plan to make India a relevant player in the next evolution of telecom technology.

If India plays this situation right and plays to win, we can not only bring timely and affordable 5G to India, but do it with due consideration to our security concerns and even get an upside from our engagement with the global 5G revolution.

Kanvinde is with the Pune International Centre, Bambawale, a former Indian ambassador to China and Pakistan, is also with PIC



JUNE 12, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM IN MOSCOW
PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai flew into Moscow to a warm reception by the Soviet leadership with Leonid Brezhnev driving up to the Vnekova airport to receive him. Also present at the airport were Soviet Prime Minister Alexie Kosygin, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and other leaders of the Soviet Union. Those who keenly watch the subtleties of Soviet protocol say Brezhnev’s decision to receive the Indian PM indicates the importance Moscow is attaching to the talks with Desai. This will be the first time Brezhnev and Desai are meeting since the Indian prime minister visited the Soviet Union two years ago, although Kosygin had

long talks with Desai only in March this year.

CURBING FREE PRESS
THE RECENT EXTENSION of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act to the printing industry has dismayed the votaries of press freedom. They view the amendment of the Act as a backdoor method to strengthen the government’s stranglehold on newspapers in utter disregard of the pledge given in the Janata Party manifesto — to safeguard the freedom of the press by repealing the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Act and restoring immunity in reporting legislative proceedings. While the draconian legislation has been repealed, the

amendment of IRDA has given the government powers to control every aspect of the newspaper industry, including production, distribution and management.

INDIA-USSR SPACE TRIP
SOVIET PRESIDENT LEONID Brezhnev proposed that India and the Soviet Union should carry out a joint space flight with an Indian cosmonaut in the 1980s. Brezhnev made the offer at the summit meeting with PM Morarji Desai at the Kremlin. Desai said India will give deep consideration to the proposal. He thanked the Soviet Union for assistance it had given to India in the past in space and other scientific and technical fields.



THE IDEAS PAGE

Must’ve been glove, but it’s over now

MS Dhoni has always pushed for the sport to remain just a sport. His army-logo glove has needlessly raised the stakes of what is just another India-Pakistan game at the World Cup this weekend



SANDEEP DWIVEDI

MAHENDRA SINGH DHONI is a very private person. He doesn’t take phone calls, avoids in-depth interviews, didn’t invite teammates for his wedding and was hyper-secretive about quitting Test captaincy. A uni-expression recluse, India’s most-famous and least-understood superstar has kept the world at arm’s length.

Of late, he has changed. Admired for bottling up those inexpressible emotions — anger, anxiety and elation — inside him for close to a decade and a half, Dhoni, these days, has been unusually open about his fanboydom for the fatigues. After initiating the Indian team’s move to wear military hats for a home one-dayer few months back, Dhoni chose the World Cup stage to put the commando dagger para-military insignia on his wicket-keeping gloves.

Long before he pushed the envelope in England, got ICC to google “Balidan badge” and made the moustaches of the television studios to ramp up their angry act, Dhoni had always been an obsessive army adherent. His armed forces fixation is as old as his long-haired Tarzan look.

On the cricket circuit, they say, the best way to engage the cagey cricketer is to mention the army. Not quite a reader, Dhoni is said to be an avid student of military history and tactical warfare. He chose Neeraj Pandey, a movie-maker who weaves covert military operations stories with fatigue intrigue (*Baby, Aiyaa, Rustom and Naam Shabana*), to helm his biopic. Among his closest friends is an ex-armyman.

On one England tour, he met a local hot-shot politician. They got talking about tanks and fighter planes. Folklore has it that the stumped Englishman, after the chat, said Dhoni had it in him to be defence minister.

His captaincy too had a bit of army leadership to it. There were no long team meetings and one-on-one with freshers were rare. The team worked on a strictly need-to-know basis. Dhoni kept his mind and team uncluttered; his clear thinking giving India two World Cups and a long stint as the No 1 Test team.

Back in the day, Dhoni would often go incommunicado between series. After persistent pestering about his whereabouts, his minders would reveal, “He was at an Army unit, he loves spending time with them. Not for writing, he does not do it for publicity.”

In 2011, the World Cup winning captain was made a lieutenant colonel in the Territorial Army. He got his own olive greens. Those close to him say, he couldn’t sleep that night. Now, he was more public about his love for troops. He posted pictures with guns, visited J&K in uniform, and then, his fascination for the fatigue sneaked on to his glove. The Balidan emblem he fashioned belongs to the elite special forces of the parachute regiment, who undergo arduous impossible-to-imagine-for-a-civilian training — both physical and psychological — to earn that badge.

Mind you, Dhoni wasn’t pretending to be one of them. His act needs to be firmly seen as that of an earnest fan-boy who looks up to the elite soldiers with unabashed star-struck reverence. Probably, similar to a football fan piously donning a ManU jersey or a Marvel buff sneaking to school a geometry box with a Thor sticker on it.

It’s not too different from that never-out-of-fashion Top Gun hat-tip — bomber jackets, aviators and dog tags. Picked from the merchandise shops, this paraphernalia has for years been popular with SSB rejects, and



CR Sasikumar

over-protective mother’s pets kept away from defence services or plain war-movie or Tom Cruise buffs.

Last year, for the Padma Bhushan ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Dhoni wore his army uniform with all its accompanying glitter. So used to seeing him in cricket gear, it felt mildly awkward to see him in the new “officer” avatar. Dhoni’s makeover wasn’t cosmetic. Inside the intimidatingly grand Durbar Hall, with the prime minister in audience, he marched towards the dais. While his sparking cricketing achievements were being read out, the most-popular awardee that day went left-right-left-right, half-step turn, left-right-left-right.

A revered Indian captain wearing the much-respected uniform for an august occasion, the frame was too distinguished to be brutally dissected. But there was no denying it looked awkward and out-of-place. A blazer with a BCCI logo would have been apt. It was like turning up for your medical school convocation wearing an advocate’s gown or sporting NCC khakhis while getting a medal-lion for academic excellence.

But by bringing his fanhood for the fatigues to the cricket field, Dhoni crossed the line. Maybe, in his uncomplicated mind, this was a novel gesture to support armed forces, a grandiose follow-up after the team’s heart-felt financial support to families of the men in uniform killed in the line of duty.

But he was missing an important point. The military look of cricketers was blurring that very important line that separates a sporting contest between neighbours and a cross-border skirmish where men lose lives. Wearing military hats on the 22 yards was a knotty issue and downright hostile to a foreign land. It wasn’t some fauji theme-party. This had layers.

Dhoni, for one, has always pushed for the sport to remain just that, a sport. Before every India-Pakistan game, he would be guarded with his words. The then captain would bore you to death by repeating the classic pre-match day de-escalation cliché “it’s just another game of cricket”. Contrary to that, in these hyper-sensitive times for Indo-Pak relations, Dhoni’s army logo glove has changed the context of the World Cup’s most-anticipated match next Sunday. It has needlessly raised the stakes of what is actually “just another India-Pakistan game”.

Militarising machismo can be easily perceived as unwarranted baiting. Combat caps for a game in Ranchi against an indifferent Australia was something the ICC had let pass.

Military symbols aren’t just about valour and patriotism; commando daggers are also reminders of war, death, orphans and widows. Sport is also about winning and losing but it’s also about shaking hands at the end of the contest. And do India’s forces need validation frankly, piggybacking on the popularity of a cricket hero? His fandom of the fatigues notwithstanding, Dhoni should have known — cricket has the luxury of reviews, wars are grim affairs with no second chance.

Expecting to be allowed a special forces badge days before an Indo-Pak square off was always fraught. Imagine Pakistan launching a tit-for-tat logo war, or worse, England strapping on SAS symbols or Australia brandishing their insignia when playing Afghanistan. This muddies the water, it brings on field those unwanted non-cricket actors.

In days to come, voices of cricket pundits will be drowned by bickering professional war-mongers on either side of the border, each jostling for their 15 minutes of fame. Quick on the button, Pakistan’s science and technology minister has set the tone. He didn’t miss the chance to show his mythological proficiency by saying that Dhoni was not in England for Mahabharat. It was enough for television studios to conduct cross border shout-athons, send reporters to the Wagah border and invoke the inner Sunny Deol of unsuspecting morning walkers who were suddenly live on national television.

This happens every time India plays Pakistan, but this weekend things will be different. On the television screens, when those nauseating rabid debates are on, will be the face of India’s least-provocative cricketer with cult status.

The olive green hue to India-Pakistan cricket contest was outrightly avoidable. The result of an India-Pakistan game doesn’t just decide the mood of the nation, but it unfortunately becomes the commentary on the assertion and aspiration of the two countries. The scoreboard that isn’t even a reliable assessment of the skills and athleticism of the 22 on field, gets treated as a nation’s report card. So, in this backdrop, imagine if the ball pops out of Dhoni’s Balidan gloves and the edge is from the bat of Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman, who is also wearing his employer Pakistan Navy’s crescent and star on top of an anchor logo. Mixing sport and the armed forces isn’t good for either’s reputation.

Dhoni should have known this. Military symbols aren’t just about valour and patriotism; commando daggers are also reminders of war, death, orphans and widows. Sport is also about winning and losing but it’s also about shaking hands at the end of the contest. And do India’s forces need validation frankly, piggybacking on the popularity of a cricket hero? His fandom of the fatigues notwithstanding, Dhoni should have known — cricket has the luxury of reviews, wars are grim affairs with no second chance.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Just when the [Pakistan] government is about to undertake one of the most intense economic adjustments in our history, it finds itself embroiled in a clash of wills with the political opposition, the lawyer fraternity, and the business community of the country.” — DAWN

The middle income illusion

There is no economic evidence to support the notion of middle income trap



BIBEK DEBROY

IS THERE A middle income trap? Words have multiple meanings. The word “trap” has three major meanings — trap(1), a situation one can’t get out of (trap shooting comes from that); trap(2), mouth; and trap(3), a horse-drawn carriage. Outside of literature (often old), I have not come across trap(3) being used for a long time, certainly not in India. Trap(2), as in, “shut your trap” is colloquial and also rare in India. There certainly is a middle income trap, interpreted as trap(2), though people who use the expression mean it in the sense of trap(1).

Economists are usually known for their precision. When they use the expression “middle income trap”, they should define what they mean by “middle income”, “trap” having hopefully been defined. I have said that economists should be precise. They aren’t always, and presume that like the “Khan Market consensus”, there is a “middle income trap consensus”. The World Bank has a definition of middle income. It is a range of per capita income between \$996 and \$12,055, with \$996 to \$3,895 defined as lower-middle income and \$3,895 to \$12,055 defined as upper-middle income (the thresholds are often changed, these are 2019 levels). With a per capita income of around \$2,000, India is still a lower-middle income country and \$12,055 is a long way off. With a per capita income of \$12,055, India’s economy and society will be vastly transformed. Nevertheless, like Vitalstatistix, we must worry about these vital statistics. What happens when we cross that threshold? What happens if the sky falls on our head tomorrow?

These numbers are based on official exchange rates, the so-called nominal per capita GDP or Atlas method figures. But a country’s per capita income is in local currency, that is, rupees. For purposes of cross-country comparisons, they have been converted through a common numeraire, the US dollar. For the sake of sheer perversity, just before 1991 reforms, it was Rs 20 a dollar and right now, it is about Rs 70 a dollar. Had that exchange rate continued, under an economist’s favourite expression of *ceteris paribus* (everything else remaining unchanged), the per capita income would have been around \$7,000 now — closer to the threshold and perhaps, a reason to worry even more. Typically, when economists use the trap idea, they at PPP (purchasing power parity) dollars, using PPP exchange rates, not official exchange rates. India’s PPP per capita income is now around \$7,000. Through sheer coincidence, it is identical to the number obtained by using Rs 20 a dol-

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ROADMAP FOR FARMS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘A New India for farmers, (IE, June 11). The author has highlighted almost every issue affecting the farm sector. The overall growth of agriculture and its allied activities was about 2.7 per cent in fiscal 2018-19, this is lower than the year before. The PM Kisan scheme should be extended along with ensuring adequate provisions of irrigation in this drought season. A broad roadmap should be prepared in consultation with all the ministries concerning agriculture to help mitigate the agrarian crisis.

Archana Sharma, Nadia

SOFT POWER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Neighbours first,’ (IE, June 11). Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Male and Colombo underlines the importance of these island states in India’s foreign policy. It seems a subtle tactic to wean away these countries from Chinese influence. While India cannot compete with China economically, it can use its soft power for influence. It can also extend generous lines of credit, step up initiatives such as joint counter-terror drills and enhance maritime trade and commerce.

Pranay Kumar Shome, Kolkata

CHAMPION NADAL

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Dozen get any better: Rafa extends reign with 12th French Open title’ (IE, June 10). Rafael Nadal’s 12th title at Roland Garros on Sunday bears testament to his lasting prowess as an athlete. The manner in

lar as the exchange rate. Do countries get stuck in the middle income range, PPP or otherwise? Might India get stuck?

The grist to the mill is usually provided by empirical research, documenting the development experience of a diverse range of countries. I know of two such recent surveys of literature on the middle income trap proposition. The first was by Fernando Gabriel Im and David Rosenblatt, published as a World Bank Policy Paper in 2013. The second was in the Economic Survey 2017-18. Both found no evidence. The Economic Survey also said, “But, recently doubts about the convergence process have been articulated around the notion of a ‘middle income trap’, can themselves be traps so it is important to be careful about them.” Who pays attention to such advice when trap(2) beckons? The Survey added: “The reasons for the trap/stall were supposed to be twofold, operating as a kind of pincer. On the one hand, as countries attained middle income status, they would be squeezed out of manufacturing and other dynamic sectors by poorer, lower-cost competitors. On the other hand, they would lack the institutional, human, and technological capital to carve out niches higher up the value-added chain. Thus, pushed from below and unable to grasp the top, they would find themselves doomed to, well, middle income status. As it turned out, there was neither a middle income trap nor stall. Middle income countries as a group continued to grow as fast or faster than the convergence standard demanded.”

In this quote, conceptual arguments behind the middle income trap are also mentioned. The burden of empirical evidence is — there is no such trap. Note two further points. First, a trap cannot be defined without referring to a time-frame. The time series on PPP per capita is a bit more difficult to get than the official rate per capita. With that caveat, take a look at the time series of any relatively more advanced country. Until a few decades ago (a cut-off in 1960 or 1970 will suffice), all these countries were stuck in middle income traps. Second, the middle income trap is sometimes defined not with respect to an absolute threshold level of per capita income, but with per capita income expressed as a share of US per capita income. Even if one uses this relative notion, the case of a middle income trap existing has not been proven.

Does this mean there are no issues with the Indian economy? Certainly not. After the elections, with a new government in place, plenty of people have come up with agendas for reform. In most instances, these are not short-term quick fixes, but medium-term changes. Therefore, they can rightly be called structural reforms, and the suggestions should be debated, accepted and implemented. Having granted that, the limited point is that nothing is gained by muddying waters through expressions that sound profound, without conveying anything of import.

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



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

EDUCATION REFORM

AS THE LONG-AWAITED draft of the National Education Policy has been released for public suggestions and inputs, the editorial in *Organiser* says that surprisingly, almost after a week of the draft being made public, barring a fake uproar over “Hindi imposition”, no serious public debate is taking place. The editorial adds that thankfully, there is none of the usual rhetoric over saffronisation or undermining institutions. (“That) there is no negative reaction most probably means the draft craftily addressed the issues of nationalising the education system and the reforms suggested are showing the right direction,” the editorial asserts. It adds that the draft policy is reformist and to some extent, ambitious. It seeks to create a National Education Commission through an act of Parliament to implement the policy in

an integrated fashion.

“The recommendations such as national textbooks with local content and flavour, Lok Vidya — knowledge developed in India — to be an integral part of vocational education, setting up of the Special Education Zones in disadvantaged regions across the country and creation of the National Research Foundation are not just path-breaking but in tune with national needs. The best part is without missing the global context, millennium development goals and changing technology, the policy does not neglect the rich and ancient heritage we inherit as a nation,” the editorial claims.

Executing all these recommendations will not be easy and making the financial allocation for “investment in education” will be the big challenge.

KASHMIR’S DOMINANCE

AN ARTICLE in *Organiser* weighs in on the proposal for a fresh delimitation of electoral constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir. It says that while the whole nation is up in arms against Article 370 and 35A, “most us are not aware that there is something equally important, if not more important,” than these

provisions of the Constitution. This has led to abject marginalisation and subjugation of one region of the state over another. “Today we are talking about delimitation of electoral constituencies in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the scope it carries in addressing majority of the ills the entire State is suffering from. We firmly believe that the discrimination caused by holding up ‘Delimitation’ has caused colossal marginalisation of one region and exceedingly benefited the other,” the article claims. It adds that what is a normal exercise in the rest of India is always loaded with biases and preferences in J&K.

According to the article, “right from Independence” one region has been favoured over the other. It says that the last delimitation in the state took place 25 years ago and that too during Governor’s rule in the state. It adds that the state government run by the National Conference 2002 froze delimitation until 2026 by amending the Jammu & Kashmir Representation of the People Act 1957 and Section 47(3) of the Constitution of Jammu & Kashmir. “This has practically frozen the possibility not only of delimitation but the prospect of development and growth of Jammu region which would have naturally

come through more constituencies.”

MAYAWATI’S EXIT

IN THE CONTEXT of BSP chief Mayawati’s decision to contest bypolls in Uttar Pradesh separately from Samajwadi Party (SP), an article in *Panchjanya* says that while the unravelling of the alliance was certain, no one had expected that both parties will break the coalition so soon.

It claims that “Mayawati has shown her political farsightedness and proved that SP President Akhilesh Yadav is a ‘babua’.” It adds that Dalit votes were not transferred and hurt the SP and even three members of the “Yadav family” lost the elections. The article contends that like Congress President Rahul Gandhi, the political career of Akhilesh Yadav is also at stake, given his party’s defeat in three elections since 2014. “Actually, SP’s voters voted for BSP candidates but BSP voters did not cast their vote for SP nominees. Mayawati was aware that Dalits have not voted for SP and so, without any delay, she alleged that Yadavs did not vote for the BSP,” the article says.

Compiled by Lalmani Verma

which he overcame 25-year-old Dominic Thiem in the final was a sight to behold. He has rendered age insignificant by playing like a champion.

SS Paul Nadia

DIFFERENT TIMES

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The original Khan Market gang’ (IE, June 10). The piece evokes memories of a time when consumerism had not cast its sway on adolescence. It also takes back to an era when malls were not the predominant commercial arena.

Kartik Bakshi, Delhi

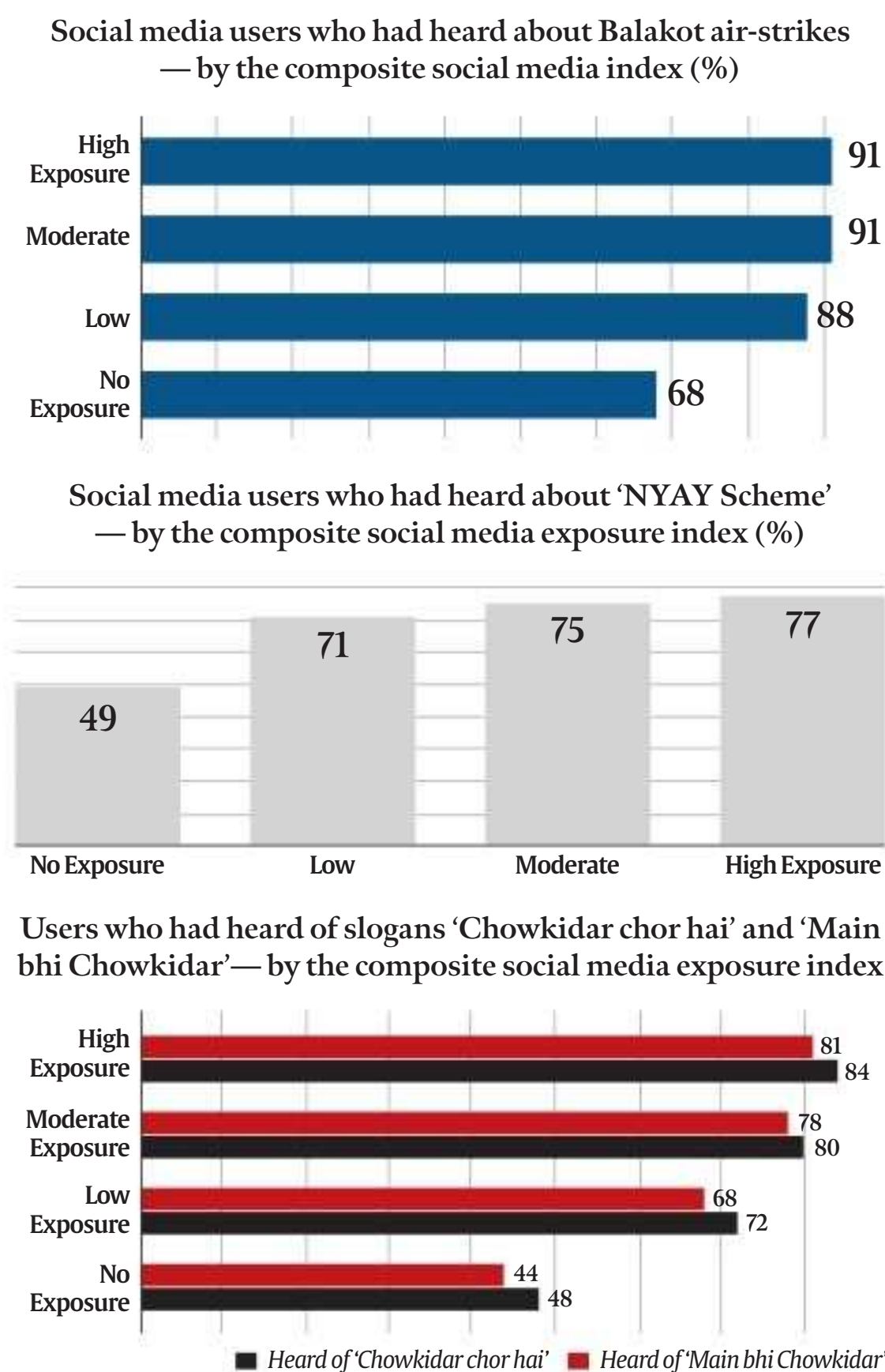


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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@expressindia.com

TELLING NUMBERS

How social media use relates to knowledge of Chowkidar slogans



IN A new study by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies that suggested social media did not influence the BJP's Lok Sabha victory very heavily — the party's vote share among non-users of social media was comparable to its overall share — one finding was that social media did enhance the reach of the election planks of the main two parties.

For example, almost half the respondents who did not use social media had no knowledge of the BJP slogan "Main bhi Chowkidar" and the Congress counter "Chowkidar chor hai" while four in every five respondents who had a high social media exposure had heard about them. The

overall awareness of "Main bhi Chowkidar" was found to be slightly less than that of "Chowkidar chor hai".

Almost half the non-social media user, again, were found to be unaware about the Congress's promised NYAY scheme, but the Congress did manage to communicate about the scheme to about three-fourth of users with high/moderate exposure to social media. The knowledge about the Balakot air-strikes, meanwhile, was very high across all the sections but the gap between social media users and non-users was found to be more than 20 percentage points.

Source for text and data: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

SIMPLY PUT

Little rain, just one key river

In a state that depends hugely on Narmada and where large regions have limited water resources, rainfall shortage has led to drought or water scarcity in parts of 17 districts. A look at the situation on the ground

PARIMAL DABHI & GOPAL KATESHIYA
AHMEDABAD, JUNE 11

GUJARAT IS facing a severe water crisis this year with 96 of the state's 250 tehsils, spanning 17 districts, having been declared either drought-affected or scarcity-hit, a majority of these in Saurashtra and North Gujarat. The Gujarat government has declared that there is enough water for drinking until July 31, but water for irrigation is critically unavailable.

What is behind the crisis?
NARMADASHARE: There was a water crisis last year too, but that was largely because of low rainfall in the river Narmada's catchment area in Madhya Pradesh. Instead of its share of 9 MAF (million acre feet) following a normal monsoon as decided by the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal, Gujarat got only 4.71 MAF last year. Gujarat itself had not been short of rain in 2017, and most dams were filled up in 2018. This year, though the availability of Narmada water for Gujarat has increased to 6.6 MAF, 6.35 MAF of it has already been released for irrigation, drinking and industry.

LOW RAINFALL: Saurashtra received just 317 mm in 2018 (38% below the normal of 511.3 mm) while the rest of Gujarat got 687.6 mm (28% short of 956.3 mm). The rainfall distribution too has been skewed. Kutch district received the lowest at 111 mm, against 464 mm in 2017. In North Gujarat, Patan, Banaskantha, Mehsana, Sabarkantha and Gandhinagar districts recorded significantly lower rainfall than during last year. In Saurashtra, Surendranagar received the least rainfall at 247 mm in 2018, a third of the 856 mm in 2017. Districts like Rajkot, Morbi, Jamnagar, Devbhumi Dwarka and Botad too received significantly less rain.

Why is the crisis so severe in Saurashtra and Kutch regions?

These two regions, together 55% of Gujarat's area, hold only 20% of its water resources, with Saurashtra (33% of the geographical area) holding 17% of the resources, and Kutch (22%) holding just 3%. Most of the rivers here run short courses. Except in coastal patches in Mangrol, Mahuva and Talaja and parts of Surendranagar and Morbi districts, quality groundwater is very limited, making the region largely rain-dependent. A number of herdsmen have migrated out of Kutch in search of fodder and water. Though it has huge agricultural potential, Saurashtra sees a drought almost every four years.

How much water is stored in the state's reservoirs?

According to a Central Water Commission bulletin of June 5, the live storage in the 10 major reservoirs of Gujarat was 2.568 billion cubic metres (1 BMC = 0.81 MAF) against their total storage capacity of 17.191 BCM, or just 15%. Only Kadana (34%), Panam (35%) and Karjan (32%) were close to one-third of capacity.



Villagers draw water from a shallow well in a tribal area of Navsari in south Gujarat. Javed Raja

In dams, live storage was only 4.52% in 59 dams of Bhavnagar irrigation circle and 5.28% in 79 dams of Rajkot irrigation circle. Water Resources Department officers pointed out, however, that for drinking water, one accounts for gross storage which includes live and dead storage. When live storage is short of capacity, authorities only restrict release of water for irrigation, they explained. Thus, they said, the present gross storage in dams (6.13 MAF, 30% of capacity) in the state is sufficient to last till July-end.

How does the government plan to address the water problem?

The state government's strategy has revolved largely around the Narmada Dam project. The project is designed to irrigate 5.15 lakh hectares in Saurashtra and 1.12 lakh hectares in Kutch. This is about one-third of the 18 lakh hectares that is the total culturable command area of the Dam project.

IRRIGATION: To augment irrigation facilities in areas not under the Narmada project command area, the government plans to implement the Saurashtra Narmada Avataran Irrigation Yojana. The Rs 16,000-crore project envisages filling up 115 major dams of Saurashtra by channeling floodwaters of Narmada to Saurashtra through existing canals and pumping it to these 115 dams by laying a 1300-km network of pipelines. The project is still incomplete.

DRINKING WATER: In this aspect, too, the government has looked largely at the Narmada for Saurashtra, Kutch and North



96 TEHSILS
In 17 districts (marked red) declared drought or scarcity-affected

15%
Live storage in the state's 10 major reservoirs

38%
Rainfall shortage in Saurashtra (28% in rest of state)

Gujarat. The government has laid an extensive network of pipelines connecting almost every village, town and city of the regions of Saurashtra and Kutch. However, all pipelines invariably draw water from one Narmada canal or the other. Bulk pipelines have also been laid for North Gujarat.

Although Narmada water is not routed for irrigation of summer crops, many people pilfer water from the bulk pipelines that carry the river's water to Saurashtra and Kutch. Officials have lodged around 70 police complaints, mainly in Saurashtra and North Gujarat.

What steps have been taken to counter the drought?

The state government has declared 51 tehsils drought-affected and 45 tehsils scarcity-hit. The first 51 have received less than 250 mm rainfall, and the other 45 have received rain in the range 251-400 mm. The government is providing tankers to areas short of drinking water, with 850 tankers making 3,800 trips every day.

The government is providing crop input subsidy to farmers in these regions, besides financial assistance to 493 cattle camps, 419 *gaushalas* and 88 *panjrapols* (cattle pounds) as of now. This is helping farmers maintain over 5.34 lakh cattle.

Fodder is being provided at a subsidised rate of Rs 2 per kg. The government has set up 299 fodder depots at various places, issued 3.68 lakh fodder cards, and distributed over 11.50 crore kg fodder.

What are the alternatives to Narmada?

The government is exploring ways to conserve fresh water. Gujarat is the first state to introduce a Water Reuse policy under which treated waste-water will be provided for industrial and domestic use and for gardens and parks. The government is also exploring an option of seawater desalination plants.

Recently, the government has started looking at more options. In March, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of 100 million-litres-per-day seawater desalination plant at Jodiya in Jamnagar and more such plants are in the pipeline. The Jodiya plant, which is being set up at the cost of Rs 800 crore on a public-private-partnership, is likely to be commissioned by end-2021.

Behind rise of BJP: polarisation, violence, erosion of Left & Cong base



NEELANJANA SIRCAR

UNTIL RECENTLY, the BJP's entry into West Bengal electoral politics seemed like a long shot. Yet, despite a challenging electoral terrain in 2019, the BJP garnered 40% of the vote share and 18 out of a possible 42 seats in West Bengal — uncharted territory for the party.

There is now an open power struggle between the Trinamool Congress and the BJP in West Bengal. After the election, a number of grisly murders have been reported between party cadres across the state, and the Governor of West Bengal is threatening to declare President's Rule in the state. The BJP has done the unthinkable — it has become a formidable force in West Bengal.

How do we understand the rapid rise of the BJP in West Bengal?

■ First, there is an erosion of support among parties that have traditionally been strong in West Bengal, the Congress and the Left Front. These parties dropped from a combined vote share of 39% in 2014 to a combined 13% in 2019. While the BJP had scored a significant 16.8% vote share in 2014, the erosion in support for traditionally strong parties, especially Left parties, provided a reservoir of voters for the BJP to increase its vote share to the levels of 2019.

■ Second, there has been growing frustration with levels of local violence allegedly

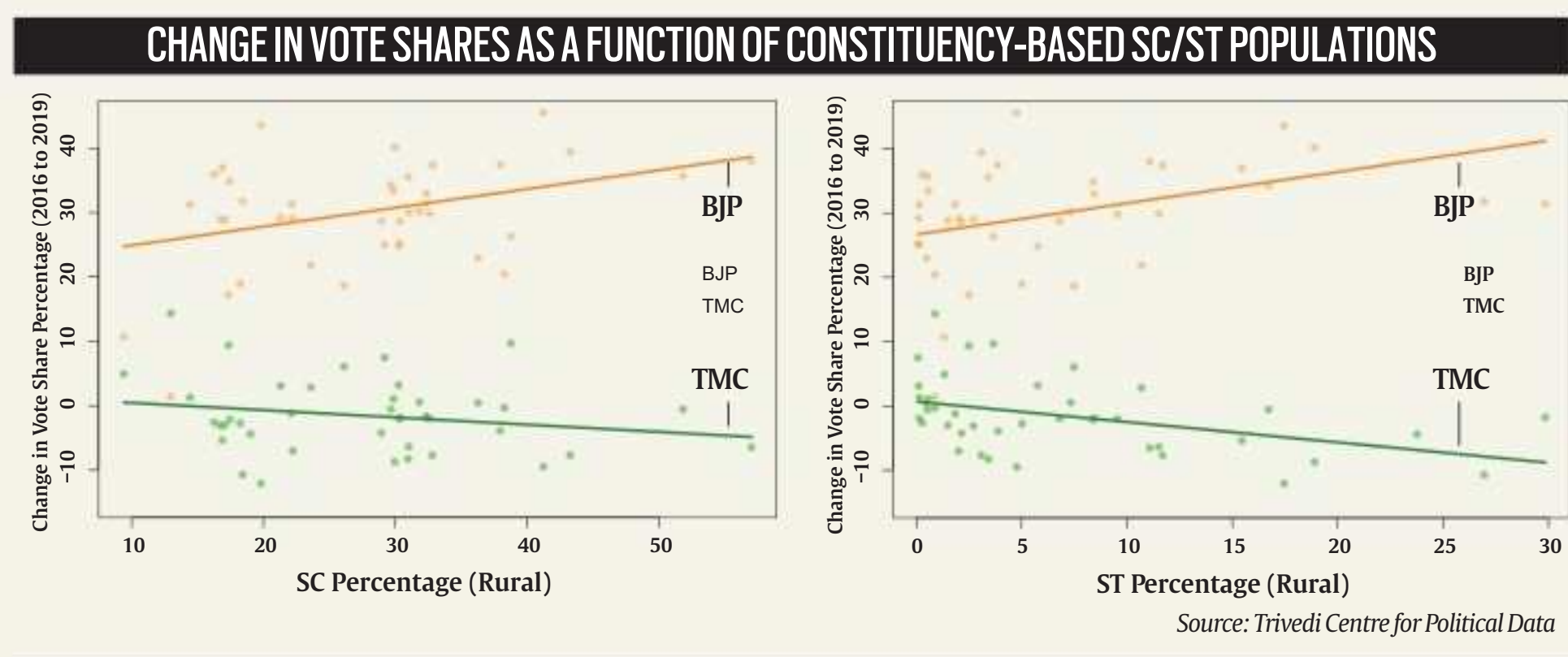
perpetrated by TMC cadres. Things came to a head in the panchayat elections, where almost 34% of seats were left uncontested due to intimidation of TMC's opposition candidates. This created a restive electorate that was determined to vote in the national election even in the face of local intimidation.

■ Finally, and most importantly, the BJP was able to generate significant Hindu-Muslim polarisation. The BJP mounted a formidable social media campaign to paint Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as biased toward the Muslim community (the most prominent among these was a video of her angry response to BJP workers chanting "Jai Shri Ram" at her).

Congress as spoiler for TMC

The Congress has historically had a small number of strongholds in the districts of Malda and Murshidabad alongside a large Muslim support base. A weakening Congress and Hindu-Muslim polarisation triggered significant defection from the Congress to the TMC in many places, but the significant overlap in support bases created many opportunities for the Congress to play spoiler for the TMC.

If one simply adds the vote shares of TMC and Congress, this hypothetical combine would have won 30 out of 42 seats in West Bengal. Moreover, the BJP would have lost 6 seats it won in 2019 (one-third of its total haul) to this TMC-Congress alliance: Balurghat, Barrackpore, Bardhaman-Durgapur, Jhargram, Maldaha Uttar, and Raiganj. The Congress-TMC alliance has shown the ability to be effective in the past, e.g. in ousting the Left from West Bengal, and the concentrated geographical base with strong Muslim support of the Congress



makes it a natural partner for the TMC. However, talks broke down as the Bengal House of the Congress party was strongly opposed to the alliance.

A new identity game

The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes populations have not figured signif-

icantly in the political discourse of West Bengal — somewhat surprising given that, according to the 2011 Census, West Bengal sports the third-highest SC population in India at 23% and a significant population of STs at 5.5%. This naturally created an opportunity for the BJP to mobilise these groups under the umbrella of Hindu nationalism.

The impact of the BJP's strategy can be assessed from data. Using data from the Trivedi Centre for Political Data at Ashoka University, census demographics from 2011 have been matched to parliamentary constituencies for rural areas only, providing reliable numbers for all but a handful of constituencies.

In the constituencies where the SC population is less than 17% of the total population (the bottom quintile of constituency-wise SC population), the BJP had an average vote share of 32%, but where the SC popu-

lation is more than 32% of the total population (the top quintile of constituency-wise SC population) the BJP had an average vote share of 42%. Similarly, in constituencies where the ST population is less than 0.5% (the bottom quintile), the average BJP vote share was 37%, while when the ST population is above 11% (the top quintile), the average BJP vote share was 50%.

The shift to BJP

The 2014 national election is not a good benchmark to assess this election as the TMC had yet to fully consolidate its electoral base. In the subsequent 2016 state election, even with the Left and Congress in pre-electoral alliance, it was clear the TMC had become the dominant party and consolidated its electoral support. In the 2016 state election, the TMC won 211 out of 294 seats, with

a 45% vote share.

In 2016, the BJP's vote share dropped to 10%, but after the election it was clear that BJP would emerge as the principal challenger to the TMC in the state. In 2019, the TMC saw a slight dip in vote share as compared to 2016 with 43% of the vote, while the BJP received 40% vote share, a massive gain of 30 percentage points.

The two graphs show trends in the change in vote share (in percentage points) for the BJP and the TMC as a function of the percentage of SCs and STs in a constituency. Two key observations emerge from these figures. First, in areas with little to no SC and ST presence, the BJP gained around 25 percentage points, while TMC effectively lost no vote share, suggesting significant consolidation of TMC's opposition around the BJP. Second, as the share of SCs and STs grew in a constituency, the percentage point gain to the BJP grew as well, while TMC actually lost part of its vote share. This suggests that the BJP consolidated SC and ST votes in particular, even taking away some previous TMC supporters.

Several questions remain about the electoral future of West Bengal. While the BJP has become the chief opposition to the TMC, will it break through in the 2021 state elections? Is this a momentary rise in the BJP's electoral fortunes, or will it consistently remain a competitive party in West Bengal? Whatever be the answers to these questions, we can safely say we have entered a new era in West Bengal's electoral politics.

Neelanjana Sircar is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Ashoka University and Senior Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research



Thin-skinned masters

Arbitrary arrest for a social media post reflects a disregard for law and liberty

The Supreme Court order granting immediate bail to journalist Prashant Kanojia, arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Police for sharing on Twitter a video pertaining to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, was not unexpected. It was obvious that the arrest was arbitrary, unwarranted and without any basis in law. The State government's attempt to justify its action smacked of perversity and malice. The vacation Bench, comprising Justices Indira Banerjee and Ajay Rastogi, made the right call in ignoring technical objections by counsel for the State government that the apex court should not intervene as only a regular bail petition could secure relief to someone remanded by the jurisdictional magistrate. The Bench did not consider the controversial tweets as sufficient grounds for abridging personal liberty. In observing that the order of release would not amount to an endorsement of Mr. Kanojia's tweets, the court was only making a minor concession to the police claim that he was making inflammatory comments on social media. It is difficult to believe that at a time when social media networks are full of rampant abuse and distasteful material, the police can be allowed to choose one or two that appear to target political functionaries and incarcerate those airing such views, disregarding well-established norms for arrest and remand. In Mr. Kanojia's case, defamation, a non-cognisable offence, and Section 66 of the Information Technology Act were cited initially. The latter relates to damaging computer systems, and is inapplicable to a social media post. It was quite clear that there was no case for remand.

There was a more flagrant illegality when Mr. Kanojia was taken out of Delhi without a transit remand from a local magistrate, mandatory when an accused is taken from one State to another. Faced with criticism, the U.P. Police added a section dealing with the offence of causing public mischief and disturbing public tranquillity, besides Section 67 of the IT Act, which relates to sharing of obscene or prurient material, with the motive of obtaining a remand order. A few other journalists have been arrested for discussing the content of the video clip, in which a woman is seen expressing her wish to marry the Chief Minister. What is disquieting, but unsurprising, is the perfunctory attitude of civil servants towards the personal liberty of citizens. It is one thing to pursue violations through legal action, but quite another to lock up people for posts they deem offensive to their political masters and conjure up justifications for their arrest. It is time magistrates who pass mechanical orders without application of mind and officers who carry out illegal instructions from the political leadership are made to face exemplary disciplinary action.

A welcome verdict

The Kathua case represents a triumph of justice over communal propaganda

The trial court verdict finding three men guilty of the horrific gang-rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district last year must be seen as the victory of justice over communal propaganda. It is the answer that due process has given to sectarian interlopers who sought to derail the investigation and trial by projecting the heinous crime against a girl belonging to the nomadic Bakerwal tribe as a plot to implicate Hindus. It is also a triumph for the justice system, as the Pathankot district and sessions court has lived up to the faith reposed in it by the Supreme Court last year, when the case was transferred from J&K to Punjab for a fair trial. The apex court had taken note of the hindrances to a fair trial in the jurisdictional court, especially the hostile atmosphere against the prosecution. The formation of a group called the Hindu Ekta Manch in support of those arrested and the role played by members of the Bharatiya Janata Party, including two Ministers in the then J&K government, had whipped up communal frenzy. It is commendable that the Crime Branch of the J&K Police and the prosecutors have brought home the guilt of Sanji Ram, Parvesh Kumar and Deepak Khajuria, who have been sentenced to life for murder and 25 years in prison for gang-rape. Further, the role of some police personnel in trying to destroy evidence has also been exposed. Sub Inspector Anand Dutta, Special Police Officer Surrender Verma and Head Constable Tilak Raj get a five-year term for washing some blood-stained clothes, concealing the victim's necklace and hair band, and misleading the investigating police team about the place of occurrence of the crime.

The investigation had been fairly quick, and the charge-sheet was prepared in two months. The trial lasted a year, and the verdict has been delivered within 17 months of the occurrence. Appeals by the convicts are only to be expected, and the Judge Tejwinder Singh's approach and the manner in which he appreciated the evidence would be determined by higher courts. Even the prosecution may appeal against the acquittal of one of the accused, whose alibi that he was appearing in an examination in Uttar Pradesh at the time of the incident has been accepted. Some may question the verdict for not imposing the death penalty in what was presented as a crime aimed at dislodging the Bakerwal community from the territory. However, it is a needless cavil, as what matters is that criminal liability has been established and a life term, which ought to mean the remainder of the convicts' natural life, has been awarded. The larger takeaway is that efficient investigation, diligent prosecution and judicial sensitivity can ensure speedy justice in all cases, and more particularly in cases of ghastly crimes that cause widespread revulsion and outrage. It is indeed a judgment that will inspire confidence in the justice system.

Squandering the gender dividend

It is a national tragedy that women unable to find work are dropping out of the labour force



SONALDE DESAI

If labour force survey data are to be believed, rural India is in the midst of a gender revolution in which nearly half the women who were in the workforce in 2004-5 had dropped out in 2017-18. The 61st round of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) recorded 48.5% rural women above the age of 15 as being employed either as their major activity or as their subsidiary activity – but this number dropped to 23.7% in the recently released report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). Is this part of a massive transformation of rural lifestyles or are our surveys presenting a skewed picture? If this change is real, does it offer a cause for worry?

Incremental decline

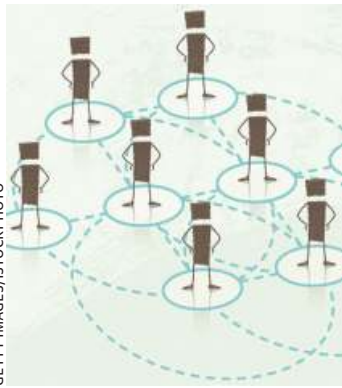
Before we turn to examining these changes, it is important to note that the drop in work participation by rural women is not sudden. The latest data from the PLFS simply continue a trend that was well in place by 2011-12. Worker to population ratio (WPR) for rural women aged 15 and above had dropped from 48.5% in 2004-5 to 35.2% in 2011-12, and then to 23.7% in 2017-18. In contrast, the WPR for urban women aged 15 and above declined only mildly, changing from 22.7% in 2004-5 to 19.5% in 2011-12, and to 18.2% in 2017-18.

One can view this drop in the rural female WPR both positively and negatively. If rising incomes lead households to decide that women's time is better spent caring for home and children, that is

their choice. However, if women are unable to find work in a crowded labour market, reflecting disguised unemployment, that is a national tragedy.

If the WPR is declining due to rising incomes, we would expect it to be located in richer households – households with higher monthly per capita expenditure and among women with higher education. A comparison of rural female WPRs between 2004-5 and 2017-18 does not suggest that the decline is located primarily among the privileged sections of the rural population. Between 2004-5 and 2017-18, women's WPR declined from 30.6% to 16.5% for the poorest expenditure decile, and from 31.8% to 19.7% for the richest expenditure decile. More importantly, most of the decline in the WPR has taken place among women with low levels of education. For illiterate women, the WPR fell from 55% to 29.1% while that for women with secondary education fell from 30.5% to 15.6%.

This broad-based decline with somewhat higher concentration among the least educated and the poorest is consistent with the industries and occupations in which it has occurred. Decomposing the 24.8 percentage point decline in women's WPR between 2004-5 and 2011-12, the decline in work on family farms and allied activities contributed the most (14.8 percentage points), followed by casual wage labour (8.9 percentage points) and in work on family enterprises in other industries (2.4 percentage points). These were counter-balanced by a 0.7 percentage point increase in regular salaried work and a 0.5 percentage point increase in engagement in public works programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act



(MGNREGA). Most of the decline – 23.1 percentage points out of 24.8 – came from reduced participation in agriculture and allied activities.

Men's participation in agriculture has also declined. Among men aged 15 and above, 56.1% participated in agriculture in 2004-5, while only 39.6% did so in 2017-18. However, men were able to pick up work in other industries whereas women reduced their participation in other industries as well as agriculture – resulting in a lower WPR. Therein lies the conundrum for rural women. Mechanisation and land fragmentation have reduced agricultural work opportunities for both men and women. Other work opportunities, except for work in public works programmes, are not easily open to women. This challenge is particularly severe for rural women with moderate levels of education. A man with class 10 education can be a postal carrier, a truck driver or a mechanic; these opportunities are not open to women. Hence, it is not surprising that education is associated with a lower WPR for women; in 2016-17, 29.1% illiterate women were employed, compared to only 16% women with at least secondary education.

The playwright against the Right

Garish Karnad's commitment to democratic values meant that he often took a vocal stand on issues



SUDHANVA DESHPANDE

It is both apt and reductive that two images dominate others as Garish Karnad is remembered on social media: one, with Gauri Lankesh, protesting the killing of Karnad's fellow Dharwadian, Prof. M.M. Kalburgi; the other, wearing the #MeTooUrbanNaxal placard, at the memorial to mark the first anniversary of Lankesh's own killing. Over the past few years, Karnad was seen as one of the most consistent, fearless and principled defenders of freedom of speech, cultural diversity and democracy. In the face of death threats, he remained unfazed, and even in his frail health, he made it a point to attend protest gatherings.

Even though Karnad, unlike his older contemporary and fellow Jnanpith awardee U.R. Ananthamurthy, did not belong to a particular political tendency (Ananthamurthy was an avowed socialist, inspired by Lohia), his commitment to democratic values meant that he often took vocal stands on issues. While many tributes to Karnad have noted that he was Director of the Film and Television Institute of India in 1974-75, not

everyone noted that he resigned after the Emergency was imposed. And his taking vocal stands against the Hindu Right didn't start in the last few years; he spoke up at least from the early 1990s onwards.

Remarkable pre-eminence

Karnad was perhaps India's most pre-eminent playwright. He was certainly something of a prodigy. It is a truism that Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Karnad form the quartet that shaped India's post-Independence theatrical canon. Karnad was the youngest by a decade. Rakesh's first great play, *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, appeared in 1958, Sircar's *Ebong Indrajit* in 1962, and Tendulkar's *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* in 1967. Karnad's *Yayati* dates to 1961, when he was a mere lad of 22. Generally, playwrights take a little longer to mature as compared to other writers. Good dramatic writing is almost impossible to achieve without the experience of working in, or writing for, a real, active theatre. Having a director take your text apart and reassemble it, hearing actors speak your lines, observing scenographers imagine the setting, having a live audience respond to your text, all teach you as much, if not more, about playwrighting as watching or reading plays.

That he wrote *Yayati* without virtually any previous theatre experience is remarkable enough, but that he wrote it in Kannada



FILE PHOTO/V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

makes it doubly remarkable. As Karnad recalled, when he set sail on a Rhodes Scholarship to England, he had fancied himself a poet who had 'trained myself to write in English, in preparation for the conquest of the West'. Karnad knew at least five languages – Konkani, Kannada, Marathi, Hindi and English – but in a sense it did take some 'unlearning' for him to rediscover the language of his childhood. But clearly the ambition to conquer the West never quite left him – he not only translated his own plays into English, he also wrote original plays in English and translated them into Kannada.

And yet, for most of his playwrighting career, Kannada purists scoffed at Karnad's writing, considering it, and the author, too Anglicised. It was only when he wrote *Tale-Danda*, about the medieval poet revolutionary Basavanna, in a north Karnataka dialect, that finally the murmurs went down.

Karnad's playwrighting oeuvre is

so substantial and varied, both in form and content, that it is impossible to reduce it to neat generalisations. For instance, he is generally thought of as someone who worked with material drawn from mythology and folklore, as well as history, initially, and only turned to an entirely different style with contemporary urban settings in his late work. However, he wrote *Anju Mallige*, set in England and about an incestuous relationship between a brother and sister, in an entirely naturalistic style, early in his career.

Many of Karnad's plays are acknowledged as masterpieces. *Yayati* is the story of a king who pleads with his son to take on a curse given to him, the curse of old age. The son, then, for no fault of his, becomes an old man, older than his own father. *Tughlaq* is a study of a king so far ahead of his time that he is considered mad, and who ends his reign in bloodshed and chaos. In a sense, the play reflected the confusion that Karnad's generation felt a decade or so after Independence, and in some ways it also presaged the Emergency. *Hayavadana* is the tale of a woman with a jealous husband who beheads himself, his friend who also beheads himself fearing that he will be suspected of murder, and the woman preparing to behead herself when the goddess takes pity on her and grants her a boon. She can get both men

Economic Research's National Data Innovation Centre (NCAER-NDIC) suggests a tremendous undercount of women's work using standard labour force questions, particularly in rural areas.

This is not to suggest that fixing the problem of undercount in surveys is the solution to declining WPRs. The undercount is a symptom of the unfulfilled demand for work. Although women try to find whatever work they can, they are unable to gain employment at an intensive level that rises above our labour force survey thresholds. This suggests an enormous untapped pool of female workers that should not be ignored.

Possible solutions

Establishment of the Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development is a welcome move by the new government. It is to be hoped that this committee will take the issue of declining female employment as seriously as it does the issue of rising unemployment among the youth. Not all policies need to be gender focussed. One of the most powerful ways in which public policies affect rural women's participation in non-agricultural work is via development of transportation infrastructure that allows rural women to seek work as sales clerks, nurses and factory workers in nearby towns. If the cabinet committee were to focus on multi-sectoral reforms that have a positive impact on women's work opportunities, the potential gender dividend could be far greater than the much celebrated demographic dividend.

Sonalde Desai is Professor of Sociology, University of Maryland, U.S., and Professor and Centre Director, NCAER-National Data Innovation Centre. The views expressed are personal

back to life if she only attaches the heads to the bodies. In her confusion, she mixes up the heads, attaching them to the wrong bodies. Which of the two is her husband, now? The man with the head, or the man with the body? *Nagaman-dala* is a story of a woman with an uncaring husband, who is visited by a cobra at night, who takes her husband's form. The woman is surprised to find her husband loving, tender and erotic at night, but brutish and apathetic in the day. She has to prove her fidelity to the husband, and the cobra again comes to her rescue.

Student of power play

Two overarching themes stand out in Garish Karnad's playwrighting career. One is power – how it opens possibilities but also corrupts, how men fail to use it for the greater good, how it leads to brutality. The other is female desire, women's aspirations, and the inability of men to come to terms with it. Both are political themes, and today more charged than ever.

Garish Karnad stood up and spoke out against the Hindu Right. It would only be fitting if his plays are now re-interpreted with contemporary sensibilities by younger theatre makers to fight the good fight.

Sudhanva Deshpande is an actor and director with Jana Natya Manch, Delhi, and an editor with LeftWord Books

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.

Garish Karnad

Jnanpith and Padma awardee Garish Karnad, who was also one of India's finest playwrights, was a multifaceted personality (Inside pages - "Garish Karnad - actor with a conscience", "Unapologetic critic of the rightwing" and Editorial page - "The script writer of culture", all June 11). He had a modern mind yet was rooted. Karnad was an intellectual giant who always had the courage to speak his mind and wear his heart on his sleeve. He was unconventionally conventional, classy and original. India will miss him deeply as he was a rarity.

C.G. KURIKOSE,
Kothamangalam, Kerala

■ India has lost a strong voice in support of social causes and the freedom of expression. He was known to many, being a versatile writer, actor and an

intellectual, and on account of the serial 'Malgudi Days' and the science magazine programme on Doordarshan, 'Turning Point'. He stood for his convictions, inspired by our rich cultural values and heritage.

As an artist with a conscience, he synthesised India and Bharat as a whole. The best way to keep his memory alive is to keep our institutions alive.

R.D. SINGH,
Ambala Cantt, Haryana

■ Karnad's passing has brought down the curtain on a glittering career and a life that was dedicated to art and literature. In a way, he was a rebel both in cinema and life. His was a prominent social voice, and there was rarely a social cause or a burning issue of the day that he had not commented on. It is a great loss for India.

J.S. ACHARYA,
Hyderabad

■ The country has lost an extraordinary playwright who never shied away from embracing progressive ideas besides speaking out boldly against the pernicious trend of stifling dissent and the climate of intolerance. He always took care to ensure that Indian theatre organically linked itself to its performative traditions. The void he has left will be difficult to fill.

M. JEYARAM,
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

■ Many of us feel his passing as a personal loss. He belongs to every one of us as he was connected to the pan-Indian audience through literature. An era of ethical and intellectual inspiration has ended, which is painful.

ANANTHI SANTHAIVAN,
Pune

Kathua verdict

The verdict in the Kathua case, of life imprisonment, is

grossly inadequate considering the gravity of the offence (Page 1, "Three get life sentence for rape, murder of 8-year-old in Kathua", June 11). A child was abducted, raped and killed. There was also attempt to destroy the evidence. All these ingredients speak about the *mens rea* of the perpetrators. The State government should appeal against the verdict. The punishment seems too lenient.

T. ANAND RAJ,
Chennai

■ Justice has finally been served. Yet it is a travesty of justice that those who should have been preventing it were themselves involved in the crime. Another point is that the images of rallies organised to shield the perpetrators will scar our conscience for a long time. Clearly, we are not an ideal civil society as yet. The case

held a mirror to us exposing the ugly truth of society.

MEGHANA A.,
Shell Cove, NSW, Australia

Great humorist

The passing, in Chennai, of 'Crazy' Mohan, prominent Tamil theatre artiste and scriptwriter for Tamil films, is shocking (Page 1, "Crazy Mohan is no more", June 11). An excellent stage actor, prolific story writer, and a humorist par-excellence, he ensured without fail that his audience burst into peals of innocent laughter in every scene. His mastery over the art of communication in an astonishingly humorous way also had messages for society.

N. VISVESWARAN,
Chennai

■ His special bonding with actor Kamal Haasan resulted in absolute rib-ticklers. Mr. Haasan's comic timing and Mohan's impeccable word

play have produced a body of work that still has amazing recall value.

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

Kohli's gesture

Virat Kohli's special gesture ('Sport' page, "Don't boo, cheer Smith", June 10) – to be there for the underdog, more so one with a player he has clashed with and whose star is on the ascendant – is a special gesture, which perhaps represents the kind of Indian our founding fathers had in mind. Kohli has shown that his heart beats for the other India – the one where, in lore, gods, kings and the commoner arrayed themselves on the side of what is right. He has shown the sporting world an inspiring, transformative vision.

B.G. KRISHNAN,
Chennai

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Truth, technology and the teacher

Remembering Vijaya Mulay means admitting how wrong India has gone on the issue of technology



Vijaya Mulay, who died last month at the age of 98, was an icon of educational technology. She was a pioneer of animated films for children. Her short film, ‘Ek, Anek Aur Ekta’, continues to be an Internet hit many decades after it was made in National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)’s newly set up unit on educational technology, which she led for many years. She chaired the National Focus Group which drafted the policy on technology included in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005.

Some members were unhappy that a filmmaker was leading a group that covered the use of computers in education. Mulay’s own vision of educational technology offered no exception to the general rule that technology must promote plurality of use and creative endeavour. That is not the direction that educational technology took in India. She often warned against schools and colleges becoming graveyards of equipment. In an age when schools are perceived as hostage markets, remembering Mulay means admitting how terribly and expensively wrong our system has gone on the issue of technology – and not just technology.

Teachers at the margins

That admission, however, is hardly a tribute to her. Nor is it a tribute to the India that she, like many others of her generation, symbolised. India was an ongoing invention, and you were part of it. The India she signified and carried with her everywhere told you to find new ways to relate to old problems. Togetherness meant that you will not dominate, no matter how much you know. Technology was supposed to enable people to solve their own problems and feel that they could manage the machine on their own. For Mulay, the danger of educational technology leading to centralised decision-making was as great as the attraction that it would bring life into classrooms. How to avoid the risk of making the teacher feel marginal and dependent was the



MECARA GOPAL

key challenge for policy.

The fight between the machine and the teacher is an unequal one. Instead of being together, they have been placed in a state of conflict. At the moment, teachers are at the losing end. They are told to use a range of new gadgets and material to improve teaching. Smart classes are equipped with industrially manufactured lessons and tests. All that the teacher has to do is to facilitate the delivery of these pre-planned lessons. To add to this loss of intellectual autonomy and dignity, surveillance gadgetry is being applied to monitor teachers, to assess what they are doing in the classroom.

From the other end too, namely that of children and their parents, the teacher faces impossible challenges on a daily basis. At a recent conference I met several teachers discussing the difficulties they face when children bring information they have accessed through the Internet or through an app. A teacher from Haryana talked about a child bringing an image with a well-written description of a nuclear test India conducted 3,000 years ago. The teacher asked, how should I explain to this Class VI child that this information cannot be true? She was aware, she said, that information of this kind has political value as it conveys, and also enhances, a certain kind of patriotism. She said many children in her class were convinced that the information was correct. Moreover, they believed that many of the things she told them during her lessons were doubtful although they were aware that for passing the monthly tests, they should write whatever the teacher had told them.

At a young age, these children had developed the capacity to maintain two separate repertoires of knowledge: one for personal conviction and the other for doing well at school.

A double-edged sword

In this new technological environment, it is easy to forget everything Mulay said and ignore her warnings. The dominant tendency today is to perceive technology as a source of all solutions, not as an aid. The biggest hurdle to reforms in education today is the marginalisation of teachers. They have been at the receiving end of one move after another. They had no choice but to follow whatever they were told to do. Regimented and compliant they always were; being repeatedly told to shift gears has made them cynical. This is a far cry from how Mulay defined the purpose of using educational technology. The National Focus Group paper written under her leadership explained how the latest communication technology was a double-edged sword. While it had the potential to enable common causes to create new communities, it also enabled globally dominant corporate power to discourage intellectual autonomy. To survive with sanity in the new technological environment, our children “must know that nothing is value-free (not even Donald Duck).” Learning at school must promote “a sense of discernment”, and this is no easy aim to pursue in the prevailing technological environment.

Mulay lived for nearly a century, yet her passing away makes one feel as if we have lost a robust, young voice we urgently need. To keep her

memory alive, we must ask why our system of education has failed to benefit from new technologies of storage and communication of knowledge. Many people may not agree with my assessment and insist that our record of using technology – radio, television, computer, Internet – for improving education is not bad. I might have agreed if I were not a frequent listener of Gyan Vani. The programmes it offers to students enrolled in distance education courses are mostly just as wooden as the lectures they would have heard at a college or university. Mulay had warned against precisely this tendency of using technology for replicating and magnifying entrenched systemic weaknesses.

What knowledge means

Mulay was neither revolutionary nor radical. She worked inside systems and softened people committed to hard lines and tough remedies. One of her extraordinary attempts at persuasion was to join French film director Louis Malle in writing to Indira Gandhi to convince her that she must watch his films. They were banned in India because they were critical and hurt national pride.

As a bridge between the world of films and education, Mulay set a silent example of persistence in her belief that schools could be softened. Had she been directly asked how, she would have said, by working with teachers, giving them status and the experience of taking decisions. Few people today might agree with her. Contempt for school teachers and suspicion in their competence are widespread, and not merely in the bureaucracy. The so-called aspirational middle class has little patience for the teacher. Its demands from children are as ruthless as the parents’ determination to hound the principal and her staff. They perceive themselves as consumers, and they will go to any length to get the best value. They trust the drill master at the coaching institute because he delivers what he promises. Knowledge brought to life through technology is irrelevant in this scenario. So is its value as truth. What matters is its instrumental value, to let you get on to the next stage of the entrance process.

Krishna Kumar is a former director of the NCERT

The importance of being neighbourly

India is subtly adding four new elements in the policy matrix



RAJIV BHATIA

The Modi government has acted swiftly to pursue its foreign policy priorities. Focused on strengthening India’s place in the world, it has begun by shoring up the country’s position in the immediate neighbourhood. This message emanated from Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visits to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar’s trip to Bhutan.

Ties with South Asian neighbours were a priority even earlier, as seen in the invitation extended to SAARC leaders to attend Mr. Modi’s swearing-in ceremony in 2014. After that there were some difficulties. India’s relations with Pakistan soured, while China continued to expand its footprint in Nepal, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. However, India’s cooperation with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Myanmar showed tangible progress. As a result, attention was consciously shifted from SAARC to BIMSTEC, thereby giving an eastward shift to India’s neighbourhood policy. In 2016, BIMSTEC leaders were invited to the BRICS summit in Goa. BIMSTEC leaders also attended Mr. Modi’s swearing-in last month.

Three visits

A week thereafter, Mr. Jaishankar was in Bhutan holding comprehensive discussions with his counterpart and the Prime Minister. He also met King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. The visit was perhaps meant to assess the current thinking in Thimphu about Chinese overtures to open diplomatic relations and the border issue before Mr. Modi’s meeting with President Xi Jinping at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit.

Mr. Modi’s visit to the Maldives was astutely designed to showcase that a dramatic turnaround has taken place in India-Maldives relations. Former Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen gave a blatantly pro-China tilt to his foreign policy. The result was that Mr. Modi had to wait until Mr. Yameen’s ouster before he could visit the Maldives in November 2018. Working in concert, the two governments have succeeded in deepening mutual understanding. While visiting India in December 2018, President Ibrahim Solih was still somewhat cautious as he spoke of balancing friends, old and new. But by the time Mr. Modi landed in the Maldives last

week, Male had become more receptive. The President and the Majlis speaker reiterated the Maldives’ commitment to its ‘India first policy’. The Majlis invited Mr. Modi to deliver a special address. The President conferred the nation’s highest honour on Mr. Modi.

This visit demonstrated how India has begun to implement recent decisions to extend ample financial assistance, move ahead with projects to be funded through a new \$800 million Line of Credit, and focus on people-centric welfare measures in accordance with the priorities of the Maldives. This is in sharp contrast with China’s approach of extending massive loans for mega infrastructure projects that end up in debt traps. Mr. Modi hit all the right buttons, highlighting India’s resolve to assist the Maldives in every possible manner. He identified countering terrorism, addressing climate change, and promoting an integrated and balanced Indo-Pacific as the key challenges for the region.

Mr. Modi’s visit to Colombo was prudent. It conveyed India’s solidarity with Sri Lanka as the latter struggles to overcome the overwhelming effects of the Easter Sunday attacks. Mr. Modi held discussions with all the main actors: the President, the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, and Tamil leaders. President Maithripala Sirisena reflected the nation’s view as he publicly thanked Mr. Modi for a productive visit.

Policy essence

New Delhi has clearly indicated that the neighbourhood will continue to be a priority, but four subtle elements are being introduced in the policy matrix. First, without always insisting on reciprocity, India may get into a proactive mode and adopt measures “to incentivise cooperation in the neighbourhood”, as Mr. Jaishankar put it. Second, India will prefer to work on quick impact projects that bring socio-economic benefits to the people. Third, recognising its “limited capabilities”, as Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale disclosed, New Delhi would have no objection in forging a trilateral development partnership, involving India and Japan in a neighbouring country. Fourth, SAARC’s drawbacks have caused India’s conscious shift to BIMSTEC. Mr. Jaishankar explained that India sees a mix of “energy, mindset and possibility” in the latter grouping. The government is moving in the right direction. It could also consider bringing the Maldives into BIMSTEC, at least as an observer. Finally, Mr. Jaishankar should visit other neighbours soon, particularly Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Rajiv Bhatia is Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, and a former Ambassador

SINGLE FILE

Saving childhoods

Steps India could take to eliminate child labour

DAGMAR WALTER



S. R. RAGHUNATHAN

On World Day Against Child Labour (June 12) in 2017, India ratified two core conventions of the International Labour Organization on child labour. It now has to double its efforts to ensure that the benefit of those conventions reach the most vulnerable children.

Although comprehensive data on child labour are not available for India, as per the 2011 Census, in the age group 5-14 years, 10.1 million of 259.6 million constituted working children. Even though there was a decline in the number of working children to 3.9% in 2011 from 5% in 2001, the decline rate is grossly insufficient to meet target 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to end child labour in all forms by 2025. India therefore needs to embark on new and innovative approaches in its fight against child labour.

The ratification of the core conventions on child labour gives rise to a range of priorities such as strengthening policy and legislative enforcement, and building the capacities of government, workers’ and employers’ organisations as well as other partners at national, State and community levels. It is worthy of mention that India had taken important steps to eliminate child labour even before ratifying these conventions. In addition, there are a few more important steps that the country can take in this direction.

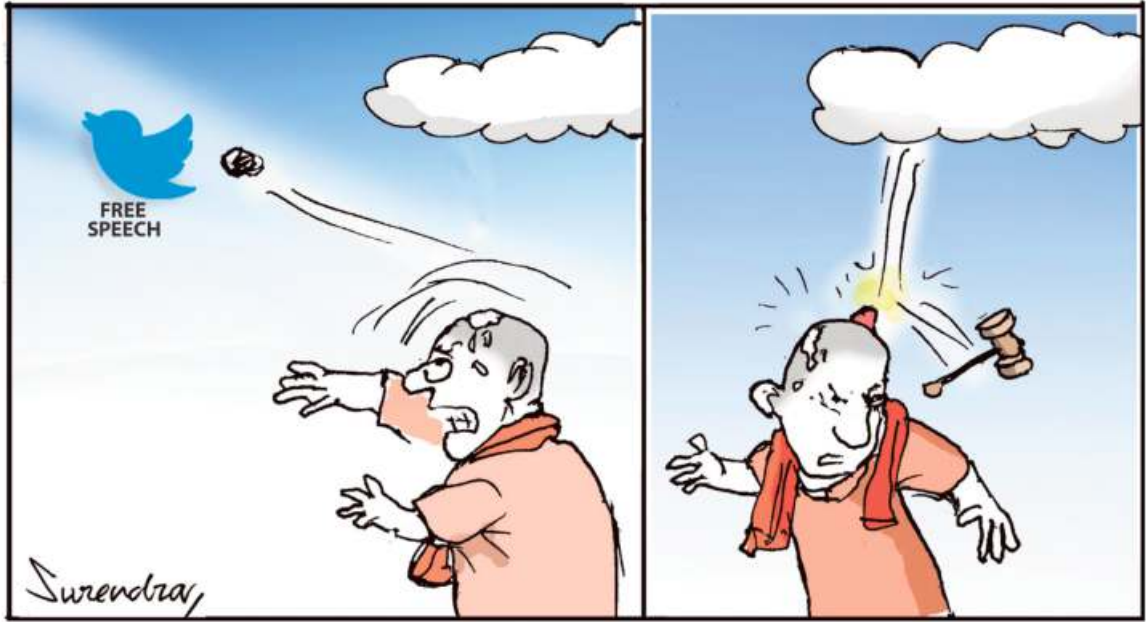
India should invest in enhancing its body of knowledge on child labour, emphasising quantitative information. While there are many common factors across the spectrum, each sector and each demographical segment will have its own set of factors and drivers that push children into the labour market. These have to be addressed. Such factors and drivers can only be identified and analysed through proper research, surveys and assessments.

Eliminating child labour is firmly placed within Goal 8 of the SDGs. A stronger nexus between the discourse on SDGs and the discourse on eliminating child labour can take the advantage of complementarities and synergies of a wide range of actors engaged in both areas of work.

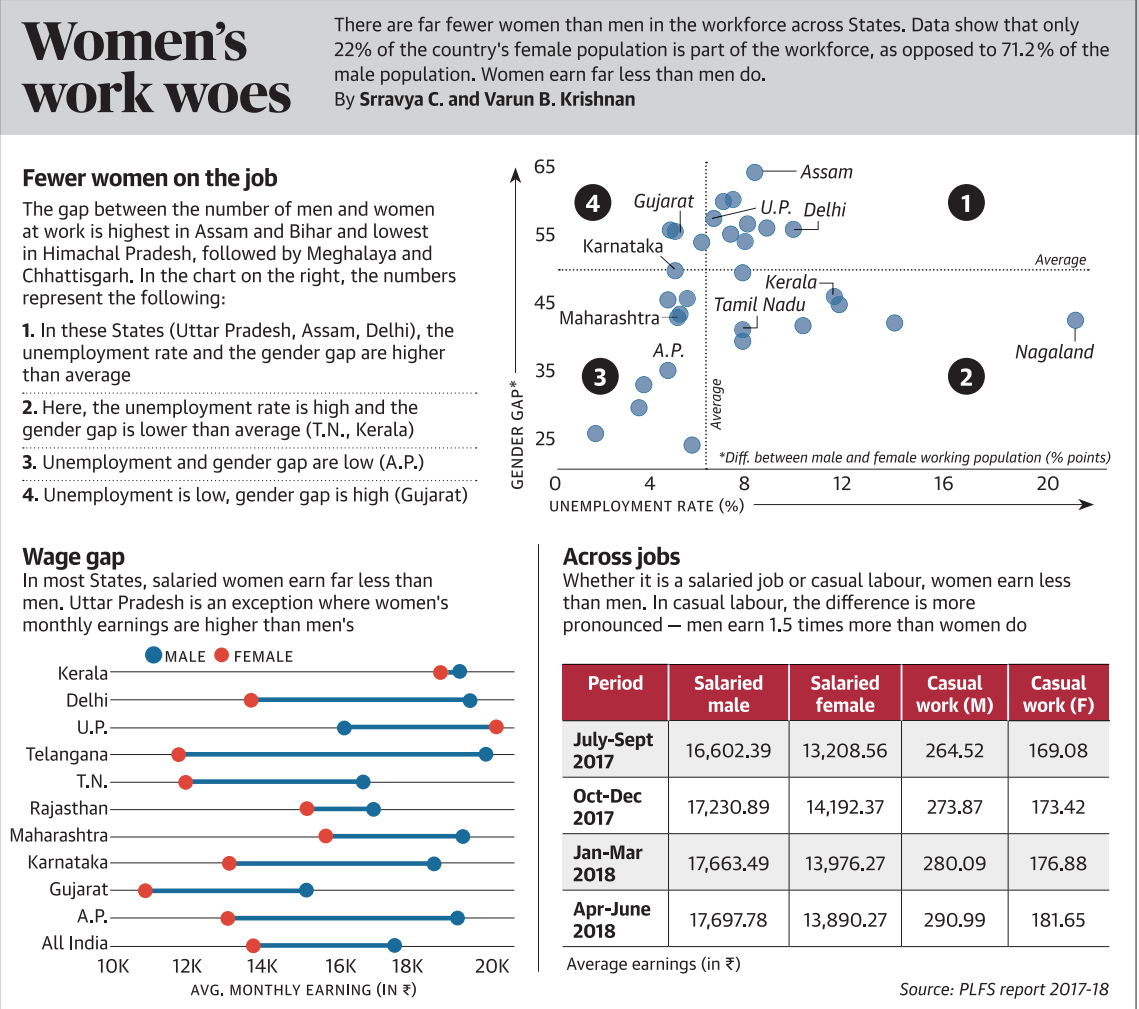
The growing interest of the private sector is a great opportunity that has to be further utilised, particularly to leverage key influencers in domestic and multinational supply chains. It is also a matter of competitive advantage for multinationals to ensure that child labour is effectively eliminated in their supply chains. A sector-wide culture of child labour-free businesses has to be nurtured.

As the world of work is transforming and new actors are emerging, one cannot underestimate the importance of creating a sound and vibrant platform to bring together these actors. The fight against child labour is not just the responsibility of one, it is the responsibility of all.

Dagmar Walter is Director, ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for South Asia and Country Office for India



DATA POINT



FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 12, 1969

Centre against hasty decision on Telengana

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had consultations with her Cabinet colleagues this evening [June 11, New Delhi] on the Telengana issue. No definite line of action seems to have emerged from these consultations at which Ministers of State from Andhra – Mr. K. Raghuramaiah, Mr. B. S. Murthy and Dr. K. L. Rao – participated by special invitation. The only indication available after the meeting of the Cabinet was that the Centre would not take any hasty decision. There is a feeling that no decision may be taken until after the return of the Prime Minister from her Japanese tour in the third week of this month. At to-day’s meeting, Mr. Y. B. Chavan, Home Minister, is reported to have given the impressions he had gained from his fact-finding mission to Hyderabad last week-end. The consensus is understood to be in favour of finding a solution within the framework of a united Andhra Pradesh with the concrete assurance that the people of Telengana would have voice in the administration and all other walks of life.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 12, 1919.

Mysore Economic Conference.

Since last year the question of making the Mysore Economic Conference permanent received great attention both from the officials and non-officials and opinions varied considerably on the question. At the birthday session last year the matter was discussed but His Highness the Maharaja announced that it would be made permanent in one form or another, the details of the constitution being left to the conference itself. Since then at various committee meetings the matter was discussed but arrived at no decision. The Government instead of committing to any scheme formulated certain proposals as basis for reorganisation of the constitution of the conference. These proposals were discussed the whole of to-day [June 11].

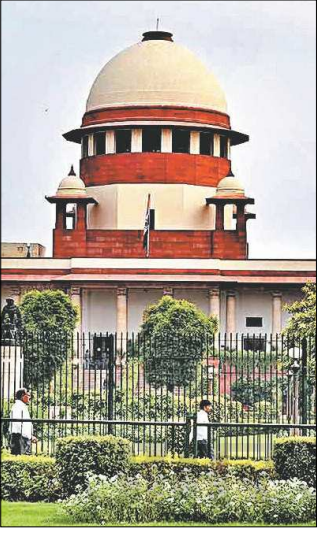
CONCEPTUAL Budget-maximising model

This refers to an economic model which tries to depict the typical behaviour of bureaucrats who work for the government. A government bureaucrat, according to this model, will constantly try to expand the amount of money and other resources that are under his control. The greater the amount of resources under his control, the greater the chances of him wielding power over people who are dependent on these resources. The budget-maximising model of bureaucratic behaviour was first proposed by American economist William Niskanen in the 1968 paper, “The peculiar economics of bureaucracy”.

MORE ON THE WEB

Tamil Isai Sangam museum in Chennai

<http://bit.ly/chennaiuseum>



सर्वोच्च अदालत ने उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री से संबंधित एक टवीट के कारण गिरफ्तार किए गए पत्रकार की जमानत पर रिहाई के आदेश दिए हैं और स्पष्ट किया है कि संविधान के तहत मिले मौलिक अधिकारों के साथ कोई समझौता नहीं हो सकता।

नागरिक स्वतंत्रता और सीमाएं

सर्वोच्च

अदालत को एक पीठ ने उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ से संबंधित एक टवीट की वजह से गिरफ्तार किए गए पत्रकार प्रशांत कनौजिया की जमानत पर तुरंत रिहाई का आदेश देकर स्पष्ट किया है कि संविधान में मौलिक अधिकारों के तहत दी गई व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता का राज्य उल्लंघन नहीं कर सकता। अदालत ने यह भी स्पष्ट किया है कि उसका यह आदेश पत्रकार द्वारा किए गए टवीट की पुष्टि नहीं है, बल्कि उसके खिलाफ कानून के मुताबिक कार्रवाई हो। दरअसल कनौजिया को उत्तर प्रदेश की पुलिस ने दिल्ली से उनके घर से जिस तरह से गिरफ्तार किया था, उससे उसकी नीयत पर सवाल उठ रहे थे। यह मामला एक महिला के वीडियो से संबंधित है, जिसमें कथित तौर पर वह योगी

आदित्यनाथ को शादी का प्रस्ताव भेजने का दावा कर रही है। इस मामले में पुलिस ने एक टीवी चैनल के दो पत्रकारों सहित कुछ और लोगों को भी गिरफ्तार किया। गिरफ्तारी के समय सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा तय निर्देशों का पालन नहीं करने का यह कोई पहला मामला नहीं है, लेकिन कनौजिया को जिस आरोप में गिरफ्तार किया गया और उनके खिलाफ जिस तरह की धाराएं लगाई गईं, वह राज्य की ताकत के अतिशय दुरुपयोग को ही रेखांकित करता है। सरकारें और राजनेता एक ओर तो संविधान की दुहाई देते नहीं थकते, लेकिन दूसरी ओर नागरिक आजादी को खुद की प्रतिष्ठा से जोड़ने लगते हैं। कर्नाटक पुलिस ने तो मुख्यमंत्री कुमारस्वामी के बेटे के लोकसभा चुनाव में पराजित होने से संबंधित एक खबर प्रकाशित करने पर एक कन्नड़ अखबार के संपादक के खिलाफ एफआईआर दर्ज की थी।

कुमारस्वामी कथित गैरजिज्जदारा रिपोर्टिंग को रोकने के लिए कड़ा कानून लागू जाने की बात कर ही चुके हैं। परिचय बंगाल की ममता सरकार ने कुछ वर्ष पहले मुख्यमंत्री का कार्टून सोशल मीडिया में साझा करने वाले एक प्रोफेसर को गिरफ्तार किया ही था। वास्तव में अब समय आ गया है, जब आपराधिक अवमानना से संबंधित अंग्रेजों के जमाने के कानून पर फिर से विचार किया जाए। इस संदर्भ में सर्वोच्च अदालत की इस टिप्पणी पर गौर किया जाना चाहिए, 'संविधान के अनुच्छेद 19 (अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता) और अनुच्छेद 21 (जीने का अधिकार और स्वतंत्रता) के तहत मिले मौलिक अधिकारों से कोई समझौता नहीं हो सकता।' कहने की जरूरत नहीं एक परिपक्व लोकतंत्र में राज्य सत्ता के दुरुपयोग की कोई जगह नहीं होनी चाहिए।



अंतर्ध्वनि

>> हाना आरेंट

विचारहीनता व बुराई के बीच अजीब तरह की परस्पर निर्भरता है

पूर्णातावादी शासन का आदर्श विषय वे लोग हैं, जिनके लिए तथ्य और कल्पना: सच और झूठ के बीच भेद खत्म हो गया है। जब बुराई को अच्छाई के साथ प्रतिस्पर्धा करने दी जाती है, तो बुराई में भावात्मक जनवादी गुहार होती है, जो तब तक जीतती रहती है, जब तक कि अच्छे पुरुष और स्त्रियाँ दुर्व्यवहार के खिलाफ एक अग्रणी-दल के रूप में खड़े न हो जाएं। राजनीतिक रूप से, तर्क की कमजोरी हमेशा से यह रही है कि जो लोग कम बुराई को चुनते हैं, वे बहुत जल्द भूल जाते हैं कि उन्होंने बुराई को चुना है। यह दुःखद सच्चाई है कि सबसे ज्यादा बुराई उन लोगों द्वारा की जाती है, जो कभी भी अच्छे या बुरे होने का मन नहीं बना पाते हैं। मैं इस नियम का पालन करती हूँ : सबसे खराब के लिए तैयार रहो, सबसे अच्छे की उम्मीद रखो; और जो होता है, उसे स्वीकार कर लो। जब आप विदेश में होते हैं, तो जीवन को प्यार करना आसान होता है, जहाँ आपको कोई नहीं जानता और आपके जीवन पर सिर्फ आपका नियंत्रण होता है। कोई विचार खतरनाक नहीं है, सोचना खुद में ही खतरनाक है। विचारहीनता और बुराई के बीच अजीब तरह की परस्पर निर्भरता है। एकपक्षीय शिक्षा का उद्देश्य कभी भी धारणा को मन में बिठा देना नहीं, बल्कि किसी भी प्रकार की धारणा बनाने की क्षमता को नष्ट कर देना रहा है। रूढ़ीवादी, सामान्य वाक्यांशों, अभिव्यक्ति और आचरण के पारंपरिक, मानसिक संकेतों के अनुपालन को वास्तविकता से बचाने के लिए हमें सामाजिक रूप से मान्यता प्राप्त है। क्षमा कार्य और आजादी की कुंजी है। आजकल भले मानव का अस्तित्व केवल समाज के संघर्ष पर ही संभव है, जहाँ आदमी को भूखे मरने या मौत तक परतारवाजी का जोखिम उठाना पड़ता है। इन परिस्थितियों में, विनोदपूर्णता बहुत मदद करती है। बुराई उदासीनता पर फलती-फूलती है और इसके बिना अस्तित्व में नहीं हो सकती है।

-जर्मन मूल की अमेरिकी दार्शनिक

हरियाली और रास्ता

शैतान लड़का और आम का पेड़

एक शैतान लड़के की कहानी, जिसे उसी की भाषा में जवाब मिला।



परवेज भाई मलिहाबाद के जाने-माने व्यक्ति थे। उनके पास आम के कई बाग थे। वह हर पेड़ से बेहद प्रेम करते थे और उसकी देखभाल अपने परिवार की तरह करते थे। हर वर्ष की तरह इस बार भी आम बहुत अच्छे आए थे। उन्होंने अपने सभी कर्मचारियों को बुलावा भेज दिया था। समय आ गया था कि आम को पेड़ियों में भरकर बाजार ले जाया जाए। वह अपने कुछ सहयोगियों के साथ बाग का जायजा लेने निकले ही थे कि एक पेड़ पर उन्हें एक शैतान लड़का आम तोड़ते हुए दिखा। उसने आम खाने के लिए आसपास की सारी शाखाएं खराब कर दी थीं या तोड़ दी थीं। पेड़ों को काफी नुकसान पहुंच रहा था। परवेज भाई और उनके सहयोगियों ने नीचे से उसे काफी आवाज लगाई और चेतावनी भी दी। लड़का परवेज भाई से बोला, यह जमीन जरूर आपकी होगी, लेकिन यह संसार और यह प्रकृति आपकी नहीं है। आपको मुझे रोकने का कोई हक नहीं है। परवेज भाई सोचने लगे, क्या मैं इतना बुरा हूँ? क्या मैं प्रकृति के नियमों को तोड़ रहा हूँ? वह उस वक्त तो वहां से चले गए। थोड़ी देर बाद वह फिर लौटे, तो देखा कि वह लड़का अब भी मजे से आम खा रहा है। उन्होंने वहीं लड़के को पिटाई शुरू कर दी। लड़का बोला, आपको शर्म नहीं आती एक बेसहारा लड़के को मारते हुए? परवेज भाई बोले, मैं भी प्रकृति का हिस्सा हूँ, मेरे हाथ में जो लकड़ी है, यह भी और तुम भी प्रकृति का हिस्सा हो। मैं तो बस वही कर रहा हूँ, जो प्रकृति के प्रति मेरा कर्तव्य है। लड़के ने कहा, मुझसे गलती हो गई। मुझे माफ कर दीजिए। परवेज भाई बोले, यह तुमने सही कहा कि प्रकृति हम सबके लिए समान है। हम सबका प्रकृति पर बराबर का हक है, लेकिन इसका यह मतलब नहीं कि हम इस बात का गलत फायदा उठाएं।

प्रकृति के साथ खिलवाड़ करने का हमें कोई हक नहीं।

-संकलित

य

ह कितना दिलचस्प है कि एक देश, जो इन वर्षों में दलों का प्रमुख आयातक रहा है, वह दलों का निर्यातक भी रहा है! दलों का निर्यात वास्तव में नवंबर, 2018 से बढ़ा है, जब सरकार ने दशकों से लागू कुछ नियंत्रण में ढील दी है। जहां दलों का आयात वर्ष 2018-2019 में 25 लाख टन तक गिर गया है, जो दो साल पहले 66 लाख टन के उच्च स्तर पर था, वहीं निर्यात 2018-19 में पांच लाख टन तक बढ़ गया है। केंद्र ने बंगाल के चना निर्यात के लिए सात फीसदी प्रोत्साहन की भी घोषणा की है।

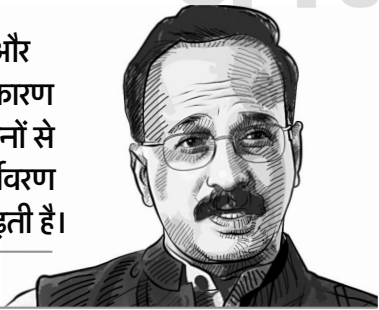
दुनिया भर के देशों में खाद्य व्यापार में एक ही उत्पाद का आयात और निर्यात, दोनों हो रहा है। भारत कोई अपवाद नहीं है। ब्रिटेन स्थित लोकल फ्यूचर समूह के अनुसार, कैलिफोर्निया उतने ही बादाम का आयात करता है, जितना निर्यात करता है। वर्ष 2007 में ब्रिटेन और ऑस्ट्रेलिया ने 20 टन बोतलबंद पानी का कारोबार किया। इस अनावश्यक आयात-निर्यात का मौसमी खाद्य की कमी से कोई लेना-देना नहीं होता है, लेकिन ऐसा किया जाता है, क्योंकि इससे कृषि व्यवसाय करने वाली बड़ी कंपनियों को मुनाफा कमाने में मदद मिलती है।

सबसे बुरी बात यह है कि गैर सरकारी संगठन लोकल फ्यूचर्स के अनुसार, माल ढोने वाले हजारों जहाजों और दुनिया भर का चक्कर लगाने वाले विमानों द्वारा उत्सर्जित कार्बन को पेरिस जलवायु संधि में शामिल नहीं किया गया है। वर्ष 2012 में व्यावसायिक जहाजों द्वारा दस लाख टन से भी ज्यादा कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड का उत्सर्जन किया गया, जो ब्राजील या कनाडा के उत्सर्जन से ज्यादा है।



खाद्य पदार्थों का उत्पादन, प्रसंस्करण और पैकेजिंग अलग-अलग देशों में होने के कारण उत्पादों को ढोने वाले जहाजों और विमानों से काफी कार्बन उत्सर्जन होता है, जो पर्यावरण के लिए खतरनाक है और लागत भी बढ़ती है।

देविंदर शर्मा, कृषि नीति विशेषज्ञ



मुझे याद है कि कुछ साल पहले वर्ष 1994 में मैंने ब्रिटेन स्थित सरटेन द्वारा तैयार एक उत्कृष्ट रिपोर्ट फूड माइलस पढ़ी थी। इसमें महाद्वीपों में भेजे गए खाद्य पदार्थों के खतरों के बारे में बताया गया था, जिसमें कहा गया था कि खाद्य पदार्थों का प्रसंस्करण और पैकेजिंग कहीं और होती है, तथा उसे फिर उसी देश को भेजा जाता है, जहां से इसकी शुरुआत हुई थी। आपकी थाली में पहुंचने से पहले खाद्य पदार्थ औसतन 3,000 मील की

दूरी तय करता है। यह अपने आप में एक ऐसा चौंकाने वाला रहस्योद्घाटन था, जिस पर उपभोक्ताओं और नीति निर्माताओं को पुनर्विचार करना चाहिए था, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ। उस रिपोर्ट को अद्यतन करके फिर से प्रकाशित किया गया है, अब भी गंभीरता से उस पर ध्यान नहीं दिया जा रहा है। सुपरमार्केट खाद्य पदार्थों का दुनिया भर में व्यवसाय करने में अग्रगण्य हैं। वे न केवल सस्ते प्रसंस्करण का लाभ उठाते हैं, बल्कि

बड़े पैमाने पर तेल सब्सिडी का भी फायदा उठाते हैं और इस प्रक्रिया में होने वाले कार्बन उत्सर्जन से अनभिज्ञ बने रहते हैं। वैश्विक जीवाश्म तेल सब्सिडी प्रति वर्ष पचास खरब डॉलर को पार कर जाता है, जो व्यवसाय करने वाली इन कंपनियों को दुनिया भर में सस्ते खाद्य आपूर्ति में मदद करता है।

एक दूसरा उदाहरण लीजिए। ट्रेडक्राफ्ट कॉफी जिसे सेन्सबरी चैन अपने स्टोर्स में बेचती है, वह तंजानिया के बुकोबा में उगाई जाती है। फिर कॉफी बीन्स 656 किलोमीटर की दूरी तय कर दार-एस-सलाम से करीब 3,250 मील दूर है। विजयवाड़ा में कॉफी बीन्स को पैक किया जाता है। इसे फिर ब्रिटेन के साउथम्प्टन भेजा जाता है, जो करीब 5000 मील दूर है। साउथम्प्टन से यह लौटस जाता है, जहां से इसे दुनिया भर के सेन्सबरी स्टोर्स में पुनः भेजा जाता है। मुझे यकीन है कि एक बार जब भारत में रिटेल में एफडीआई के लिए मंजूरी मिल जाएगी, तो सेन्सबरी को लौटस से नई दिल्ली पैक कॉफी जहाज से भेजने में सुविधा होगी। मेरी समझ में कभी यह नहीं आया कि न्यूजीलैंड, चिली, फिजी से भारत में सेब को आयात करने की अनुमति क्यों दी गई, जबकि यहां हिमाचल प्रदेश और कश्मीर के सेब खरीदने वाला कोई नहीं है। इस समय भारत में 44 देशों से सेब का आयात होता है।

कुछ दशक पहले मैंने लिखा था कि कैसे पेप्सी इस्तेमाल की गई पीईटी बोतलों को, जिसका उपयोग शीतल पेय पैकिंग के लिए होता है, भारत के चेन्नई में रीसाइक्लिंग के लिए भेजती है। इन बोतलों को फिर से उपयोग के लिए अमेरिका भेज दिया जाएगा। बोतलों की रीसाइक्लिंग के लिए पेप्सी इसलिए इतने चक्कर लगाती है, क्योंकि प्लास्टिक कचरे की रीसाइक्लिंग की अनुमति

अमेरिका में स्वास्थ्य एवं पर्यावरणीय कारणों से आसानी से नहीं मिलती है। इसको लेकर वहां बहुत सख्त कानून है, इससे लागत भी बढ़ती है। हाल ही में मुझे तब खुशी हुई, जब चीन ने 28 तरह के प्लास्टिक कचरों के आयात पर रोक लगा दी। भारत ने भी प्लास्टिक कचरे के आयात पर रोक लगाई है। यह तब हुआ, जब चीन द्वारा प्रतिबंध लगाने के बाद कचरा निर्यातकों की भारत में बाढ़ आ गई, और भारत ने जहरीले और गंदे कचरे के आयात पर रोक लगाने की जरूरत महसूस की।

क्या अब वह समय नहीं आ गया है कि हम अपनी अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यापार नीति पर पुनर्विचार करें? मैं लंबे समय से कह रहा हूँ कि विश्व व्यापार संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) और जलवायु वातावरण वास्तव में विपरीत उद्देश्यों के लिए काम कर रहे हैं। डब्ल्यूटीओ ऐसे व्यापार पर और जोर डाल रहा है, जबकि इससे होने वाले कार्बन उत्सर्जन और ग्लोबल वार्मिंग पर पड़ने वाले असर पर उसका ध्यान नहीं है।

इसी तरह जलवायु वातावरण जलवायु नियंत्रण मानकों के रूप में ऐसे अवांछित व्यापार पर प्रतिबंध लगाने की बात नहीं करते हैं। इसका एक मात्र उपाय है कि दुनिया भर में खाद्य पदार्थों की पागल दौड़ के बजाय स्थानीय बाजारों को लोकप्रिय बनाया जाए। इसमें उपभोक्ताओं की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण होगी। उन उत्पादों के तालच से बचने की कोशिश करें, जो दूर कहीं प्रसंस्कृत होने का दावा करते हैं, जो आपके पड़ोस में उगाया जाता है। चिली या अमेरिका से प्रसंस्कृत नारंगी का जूस पीने के लिए क्यों जाएं, जब आपके स्थानीय बाजार में ताजा और स्वादिष्ट जूस उपलब्ध है? इस तरह का समझदार विकल्प अपनाने से आप कार्बन उत्सर्जन कम करने में छोटा ही सही, लेकिन प्रभावी भूमिका निभाएंगे।

रोजगार पैदा करने का कौशल

रोजगार संकट से निपटने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने रोजगार एवं कौशल विकास पर 10 सदस्यीय मंत्रिमंडलीय समिति का गठन किया है, जो रोजगार चिंताओं के परिप्रेक्ष्य में रोजगार अवसर तथा कौशल विकास बढ़ाने के लिए कार्ययोजना प्रस्तुत करेगी।



जयंतीलाल भंडारी

नीति (इमिग्रेशन पॉलिसी) पेश की है, उसके तहत मौजूदा ग्रीन कार्ड की जगह 'बिल्ड अमेरिका' वीजा लाने का प्रस्ताव रखा गया है। इससे उन हजारों भारतीय पेशेवरों और दक्ष कर्मियों को लाभ होने की उम्मीद है, जो औसतन करीब एक दशक से अधिक समय से ग्रीन कार्ड के लिए इंतजार कर रहे हैं। इसी तरह जापान के प्रसिद्ध उद्यमी हिरियोकी तायकुची सान ने कहा कि जापान की नौचौागिक और कारोबार आवश्यकताओं में तकनीक और नवाचार का इस्तेमाल तेज होने की वजह से जापान में सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी (आईटी) के साथ ही कई अन्य क्षेत्रों में मसलन हेल्थकेयर, कृषि, अनुसंधान और विकास, सेवा व वित्त आदि क्षेत्र में कौशल प्रशिक्षित कार्यबल की भारी कमी अनुभव की जा रही है। खासतौर से बुजुर्ग होती

कें

द्रीय सांख्यिकीय कार्यालय के श्रमबल के नवीनतम आंकड़ों के मुताबिक वर्ष 2017-18 के दौरान देश में बेरोजगारी की दर 6.1 फीसदी रही है। कई आर्थिक विश्लेषकों का कहना है कि देश में बेरोजगारी की दर 45 साल में सर्वाधिक है। ऐसे में पांच जून को रोजगार में कमी की चुनौती से निपटने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने रोजगार एवं कौशल विकास पर 10 सदस्यीय मंत्रिमंडलीय समिति का गठन किया है। यह समिति देश में बढ़ती रोजगार चिंताओं के परिप्रेक्ष्य में रोजगार अवसर तथा कौशल विकास बढ़ाने के लिए अहम सुझाव और कार्ययोजना प्रस्तुत करेगी।

भारत में रोजगार अवसरों पर आधारित रिपोर्टों में यह कहा जा रहा है कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में श्रम का आधिक्य है, लेकिन कौशल की काफी कमी है। अमेरिका और जापान सहित दुनिया के कई विकसित और विकासशील देशों में मॉरिट और टैलेंट के आधार पर विदेशी युवाओं के लिए रोजगार की संभावनाओं का जो नया परिदृश्य उभरकर सामने आया है, उसमें भारतीय प्रतिभाओं के लिए अच्छी संभावनाएं हैं। अब तक अमेरिका सहित कई देशों में लंबे समय से निवास करने वाले, उन निवासियों के पारिवारिक संबंधों के आधार पर तथा सस्ती मजदूरी पर काम करने वाले लोगों को नागरिकता और वीजा दिए जाने में प्राथमिकता दी जाती थी। लेकिन अब अमेरिका और जापान सहित विभिन्न देशों में उनके नवनिर्माण और विकास में योगदान दे सकने वाली विदेशी प्रतिभावान नई पीढ़ी को प्राथमिकता दिए जाने के साफ संकेत हैं।

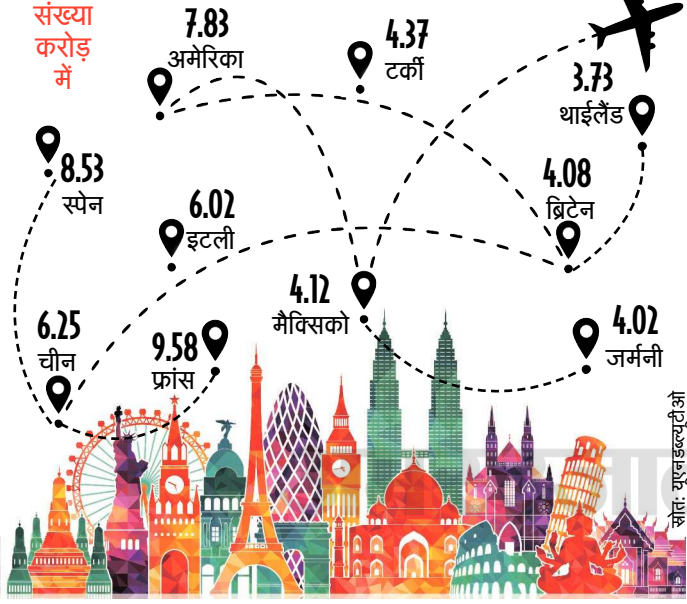
17 मई को अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने योग्यता आधारित एवं अंक आधारित जो नई आब्रजन



खुली खिड़की

पर्यटकों के सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय देश

यात्राएं हमारे जीवन का अहम हिस्सा हैं। दुनिया के विभिन्न देशों में पर्यटक आवाजाही करते हैं। 2018 में आई एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक पर्यटकों ने यात्रा के लिए फ्रांस को ज्यादा तवज्जो दी है।



जहां पिता को इलाज नहीं मिल सका वहीं लगाया कैप

यू तो मैं दिल्ली का रहने वाला हूँ पर मेरा जन्म नैनीताल स्थित ननिहाल में हुआ। बचपन में गर्मियों की छुट्टियां वहीं बीतती थीं, इसलिए वहां के लोगों की परेशानियों के बारे में मुझे पता भी था और उनके लिए कुछ करने की इच्छा थी। अभी मैं कोशीश के यशोदा अस्पताल में कार्डियोलॉजिस्ट के पद पर कार्यरत हूँ। वर्ष 2012 में मैं और मेरा परिवार नैनीताल घूमने के लिए गए हुए थे। हम वहां पैरागलाइडिंग कर रहे थे कि अचानक मेरे पिता गिर गए और उनको गंभीर चोट लग गई। मैंने उन्हें संभाला और फिर हम उपचार के लिए आसपास अस्पताल खोजने लगे। घंटों इधर-उधर घूमने के बाद भी कोई अस्पताल नहीं मिला और जो मिला भी, वह बहुत ही साधारण स्तर का था। तब मुझे लगा कि अगर नैनीताल जैसे शहर का यह हाल है, तो उत्तराखंड के गांवों में लोग कैसे रहते होंगे, उनकी स्वास्थ्य जरूरतें कैसे पूरी होती होंगी! फिर वर्ष 2014 में मैंने अपने चार डॉक्टर साथियों के साथ भीमताल के पास नौकुचियाताल में पहला मेडिकल कैप लगाया। पहले ही कैप में लगभग एक हजार लोग आए। तीन दिन तक चले इस कैप में मैंने चेकअप के साथ लोगों को जरूरी दवाइयां उपलब्ध करवाईं।



मुझे खुशी होती है, जब स्कूलों में बच्चे कहते हैं कि वे डॉक्टर बनकर अपने गांव में ही क्लीनिक खोलेंगे।

ज्यादा पौधे लगाने पर स्कूल बैग, जूते पुरस्कार के रूप में दिए जाते हैं। मानसुन के मौसम में जिन जगहों पर नहीं जाया जा सकता, वहां सीड बम का उपयोग करते हैं। इस बार मैंने पैरागलाइडिंग के माध्यम से सीड बोम्बिंग करवाने का फैसला लिया है, ताकि दुर्गम क्षेत्रों में भी हमारी पहुंच हो सके। जैसे भी संभव हो सकता है, हम पहाड़ी की स्थिति बदलने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। यहां पर बहुत कम ऐसे लोग मिलते हैं, जो अच्छी पढ़ाई-लिखाई करने के बाद अपने गांव वापस आकर कुछ रचनात्मक काम करना चाहते हैं। वर्ष 2017 में मैंने हाॅप फाउंडेशन के जरिये शिक्षा के लिए कई अभियान शुरू किए। इसके माध्यम से जरूरतमंद छात्रों की फीस भरना, स्कूलों की सुविधाएं बढ़ाने में मदद करना, होनहार छात्रों का बाहर एडमिशन करवाना शुरू कर दिया। इस काम में मेरे परिवार, दोस्त और रिश्तेदारों ने आर्थिक रूप से सहयोग दिया। महज चार-पांच डॉक्टरों के साथ शुरू हुए इस सफर में अब 35 से ज्यादा डॉक्टर शामिल हैं। हम प्रतिवर्ष जुलाई और दिसंबर के महीने में यहां आकर मेडिकल कैप लगाते हैं। टीम की महिला डॉक्टर अलग-अलग स्कूलों में जाकर छात्र-छात्राओं को स्वास्थ्य से जुड़े विषयों पर जागरूक भी करती हैं। हमारा उद्देश्य यहां के युवाओं को बुरे जैसी बुराइयों से दूर कर बेहतर भविष्य देना है। मुझे खुशी होती है, जब स्कूलों में बच्चे कहते हैं कि वे मेरी तरह डॉक्टर बनना चाहते हैं और डॉक्टर बन कर वे अपने गांवों में ही क्लीनिक खोलेंगे। मेरा प्रयास है कि इन बच्चों के सपनों को पूरा करने में हर संभव सहयोग कर सकूँ।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 99

महत्वाकांक्षी कदम

नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व वाली नई सरकार में गजेन्द्र सिंह शेखावत को नवगठित जलशक्ति मंत्रालय सौंपा गया है। उनका काम अत्यंत कठिन होने वाला है। सरकार की महत्वाकांक्षी योजना नल से जल के तहत 2024 तक हर परिवार को जलापूर्ति उपलब्ध कराने के अलावा शेखावत को अंतरराष्ट्रीय और अंतरराज्यीय जल विवादों और नमामि

गंगे परियोजना पर भी काम करना होगा। नमामि गंगे योजना गंगा तथा उसकी सहायक नदियों की सफाई की प्रमुख योजना है। ये सारी योजनाएं भारतीय जनता पार्टी के चुनावी घोषणापत्र के अनुरूप ही हैं। घोषणापत्र में देश के जल संबंधी मसलों से एकीकृत तरीके से निपटने की बात कही गई है।

मंत्रालय के गठन का विचार सराहनीय

है क्योंकि इसमें बड़े बदलाव लाने की क्षमता है। नीति आयोग की 2018 की एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक देश में करीब 60 करोड़ लोग भारी जल संकट से जूझ रहे हैं। करीब तीन चौथाई परिवारों के घर पीने का साफ पानी नहीं आता, 84 फीसदी ग्रामीण परिवारों को नल से पानी नहीं मिलता और 2,00,000 लोग हर वर्ष इसलिए मर जाते हैं क्योंकि उनको पहुंच सुरक्षित पानी तक नहीं है। 70 फीसदी पानी प्रदूषित है और जल गुणवत्ता के मामले में 122 देशों की सूची में भारत को 120वां स्थान प्राप्त है।

नई दिल्ली, बेंगलूर, चेन्नई और हैदराबाद समेत 21 शहरों में सन 2020 तक भूजल समाप्त हो जाएगा। इसका असर करीब 10 करोड़ लोगों पर पड़ेगा। सन 2020 तक भारत

औपचारिक तौर पर पानी की कमी वाला देश घोषित हो जाएगा जहां प्रति व्यक्ति पानी की उपलब्धता 1,000 घन मीटर से कम है। सन 2030 तक पानी की मांग उपलब्ध आपूर्ति का दोगुना हो जाएगी और देश के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में छह फीसदी तक की गिरावट आ सकती है।

इस संकट की एक प्रमुख वजह यह है कि देश का नदी तंत्र भारी जल संकट से जूझ रहा है। गंगा की प्रमुख सहायक नदी यमुना का उदाहरण लें तो एक वक्त इसे दिल्ली की जीवनरेखा कहा जाता था। परंतु आज यह देश की सबसे दूषित नदियों में से एक है। केंद्रीय प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड के मुताबिक यमुना के पानी की गुणवत्ता केवल औद्योगिक इस्तेमाल के लायक बची है और

उसके पानी में जलीय जीवन की संभावना बिल्कुल नहीं है।

कृषि एक अन्य मसला है। दुनिया की कुल आबादी का 18 फीसदी भारत में है जबकि शुद्ध जल का केवल 4 फीसदी हमारे यहां है। इसमें से 80 फीसदी का इस्तेमाल खेती में होता है। देश के किसान चावल, कपास, गेहूं और गन्ने जैसी पानी की खपत वाली फसल पसंद करते हैं। चावल निर्यात की जाने वाली प्रमुख फसल है। एक किलो चावल उगाने में करीब 3,500 लीटर पानी लगता है। परंतु किसानों को दूसरी फसल उगाने के लिए मनावा आसान नहीं है।

देश में अधिकांश बारिश जुलाई से सितंबर के दरमियान होती है। भंडारण और समुचित बुनियादी ढांचे या जल प्रबंधन के

अभाव में कुल बारिश का बमुश्किल 20 फीसदी इस्तेमाल हो पाता है। केंद्र में जल मंत्रालय को भी पानी के अलावा अन्य चुनौतियों का सामना करना होगा। नल से पानी के वितरण के लिए बुनियादी सुविधाएं बहुत अहम हैं। ग्रामीण इलाकों में इसकी हालत खस्ता है। इसका आधुनिकीकरण करने की आवश्यकता है। पानी राज्य की विषयवस्तु है और अधिकांश राज्यों में झील और तालाब शहरीकरण और औद्योगीकरण की भेंट चढ़ गए हैं। पानी माफिया, अचल संपत्ति लांबी और यहां तक कि किसान भी केंद्र का हस्तक्षेप पसंद नहीं करते। केंद्र केवल अंतरराज्यीय नदियों के माध्यम से हस्तक्षेप कर सकता है वह भी तब जब संसद जनहित में कानून बना दे।



विनय सिन्हा

राजकोषीय नहीं मौद्रिक प्रोत्साहन की जरूरत

मुद्रास्फीति के शेष बचे कुछे निशान के साथ हमारी लड़ाई के चलते उज महत्त्वपूर्ण नीतिगत लाभ को गंवाने का खतरा उत्पन्न हो गया है जो हमने हाल के वर्षों में हासिल किए हैं। जानकारी दे रहे हैं **नीलकंठ मिश्रा**

लाखों-करोड़ों मनुष्यों के बीच सहमति कायम करना आसान नहीं है। जब ऐसा होता है (हमने हालिया आम चुनाव में ऐसा देखा) तो बड़े आर्थिक सुधारों की आकांक्षा होना भी स्वाभाविक है। अब जबकि इन उम्मीदों के आधार पर अनुमान प्रकट किए जाने लगे हैं तो सरकार के ऊपर भी मौजूदा आर्थिक मंदी से निपटने के लिए ‘कुछ कर दिखाने’ की भावना हावी हो रही है।

लोगों को अपनी आकांक्षाओं के प्रति सजग रहना चाहिए। ऐसे स्पष्ट उपाय हैं जो सरकार उठा सकती है लेकिन फिलवक्त महत्त्वपूर्ण राजकोषीय प्रोत्साहन को सही नहीं माना जा सकता। मौजूदा समस्या का हल मौद्रिक है।

बीते कई दशकों के दौरान देश की कमजोर विनिर्माण प्रतिस्पर्धा का विश्लेषण करने वाली रिपोर्टों में नियामकीय गतिरोध, कमजोर बुनियादी ढांचे और श्रमिकों की अकुशलता की शिकायत के अलावा उच्च ब्याज दरों की भी आलोचना की गई। अगर देश के विनिर्माता 12 फीसदी की दर पर उधार लेते हैं और चीन के विनिर्माता 6 फीसदी की दर पर उधार लेते हैं तथा भारत में फैक्टरियां स्थापित करने में अधिक वक्त

लगता है (इससे ब्याज बढ़ता जाता है) तो देश की फैक्टरियां प्रतिस्पर्धी कैसे हो सकती हैं? ऐसे में दलील यही कहती है कि उच्च मुद्रास्फीति (सन 1960 के दशक से ही खुदरा महंगाई औसत 7.5 फीसदी रही है) और उच्च राजकोषीय घाटे के कारण भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक को उनका मुद्रीकरण करना पड़ा और ब्याज दरें नीचे नहीं आ सकीं।

ऐसे में दरों में गिरावट के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि मुद्रास्फीति और राजकोषीय घाटे में कमी आए। ये दोनों आपस में भी संबंधित हैं। उच्च राजकोषीय घाटे का संबंध अक्सर उच्च मुद्रास्फीति से भी होता है। ऐसे में पहले राजकोषीय स्थिति में सुधार की आवश्यकता थी लेकिन इसके साथ ही खाद्य उत्पादन अधिशेष की भी आवश्यकता थी।

बीते तीन वर्ष में मुद्रास्फीति की दर औसतन 3.5 फीसदी रही है। बीते चार वर्ष का औसत भी 4 फीसदी से कम रहा है। राजकोषीय घाटे का अनुपात देश के इतिहास का तीसरा सबसे कम है, हालांकि अन्य देशों की तुलना में यह अभी भी अधिक है। एक बार वेतन आयोग चक्र के लिए समायोजन के पश्चात तो शायद यह देश

के इतिहास में भी न्यूनतम है। उच्च ब्याज दर की हिमायत के कारण ही राज्यों और केंद्र सरकारों का बजट से इतर व्यय होता है। निस्संदेह यह मामला अपारदर्शिता का है। परंतु यह व्यय असामान्य रूप से अधिक नहीं है। यह उत्पादक व्यय है और हमारी नजर में यह अर्थव्यवस्था में कर्जदारों के लिए उच्च ब्याज दर को उचित ठहराता है।

इन उल्लेखनीय उपलब्धियों के बावजूद और असमायोजित वृद्धि के धीमा पड़ने के बावजूद मौजूदा ब्याज दर माहौल कर्जदारों के लिए काफी सख्त बना हुआ है। धीमी मुद्रास्फीति के माहौल में कंपनियों की राजस्व वृद्धि में भले ही धीमापन आया हो लेकिन उनका ब्याज लागत में कमी नहीं आई। इसका असर मुनाफे और निवेश करने योग्य पूंजी पर भी पड़ रहा है। मुद्रास्फीति के अलावा ब्याज दर के अन्य घटक: वास्तविक रीपो दर, 10 वर्ष के सरकारी बॉन्ड के प्रतिफल और रीपो दर के बीच का अंतर यानी टर्म प्रीमियम और ऋण का विस्तार आदि बड़े स्तर पर हैं।

कम खाद्य महंगाई का भी हमें नकारात्मक असर देखने को मिला है। कृषि क्षेत्र की आय कमजोर हुई है क्योंकि अमीरों से गरीबों की ओर स्थानांतरण नहीं हो रहा

है। इस बीच उधारी की दर में कमी नहीं आने से कोई लाभ नहीं हो रहा। इस तरह वेतन आयोग के माध्यम से खपत प्रोत्साहन भी सातवें वेतन आयोग में काफी कमजोर रहा। छठे वेतन आयोग में जहां कई वर्ष तक व्यवस्था में भारी प्रोत्साहन चलता रहा था, वहीं सातवें वेतन आयोग से वृद्धि को मिला इजाफा अब समाप्त होने लगा है। इसके बावजूद कोई समांतर लाभ नहीं हैं और टर्म प्रीमियम में कोई बदलाव नहीं है। गत सितंबर में गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों के नाटकीय पतन से भी पहले वृद्धि कमजोर पड़ने लगी थी। यह आठ फीसदी से नीचे रही लेकिन अभी समस्या अधिक है। इसमें दो राय नहीं कि मुद्रास्फीति के दोबारा जोखिम पकड़ने का संकट है। दूध की कीमतों में हालिया बढ़ोतरी और कुछ हद तक मुद्रास्फीति की महंगाई पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। हालांकि इस बीच राजनीतिक अर्थव्यवस्था के निहितार्थ और उनके जोखिम को भी ध्यान में रखना होगा। अगर लंबे समय तक वृद्धि धीमी रही और ब्याज दरों में अहम कटौती नहीं हुई तो राजनीतिक दबाव सरकार को उच्च राजकोषीय घाटे की स्थिति में धकेल सकता है। इससे बीते कई वर्ष के दौरान मिले नीतिगत लाभ गंवा दिए जाएंगे। स्वतंत्र भारत के इतिहास में अधिकांश वक्त मुद्रास्फीति ऊंची और अस्थिर रही है। ऐसा शायद इसलिए हुआ क्योंकि यह राजनीतिक आवश्यकता थी। सन 1960 के बाद से कृषि क्षेत्र की वास्तविक उत्पादन वृद्धि दर औसतन 2.5 फीसदी वार्षिक रही। इसके बावजूद कृषि श्रमिकों की तादाद सालाना केवल 1.6 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ी। उच्च खाद्य कीमतों ने आय को अमीरों से गरीबों तक पहुंचाया वरना काफी सामाजिक तनाव उत्पन्न हो सकता था।

ब्याज दर सुधार की प्रक्रिया आरंभ हो चुकी है। सरकारी बॉन्ड प्रतिफल में बीते कुछ सप्ताह में तकरीबन 40 आधार अंक की गिरावट आ चुकी है। गत 6 जून को रीपो दर में कटौती की जा चुकी है। बॉन्ड निवेशकों में इस बात को लेकर भी राहत है कि चुनाव से केंद्र में सत्ता परिवर्तन नहीं हुआ। राजनीतिक बदलाव से सरकारी व्यय में भी इजाफा होता। अभी लंबी दूरी तय करनी है। जैसा कि हमने पहले भी कहा है अगर रीपो दर, टर्म प्रीमियम और ऋण का दायरा सभी घटक सामान्य स्तर पर हो जाते हैं तो उधारी दर 2 फीसदी तक अधिक हो सकती है। भले ही भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था कुछ अन्य अर्थव्यवस्थाओं की तरह दरों के लिहाज से संवेदशील नहीं हो लेकिन दरों में गिरावट प्रोत्साहन दे सकती है। दलील के लिए अगर मॉर्गेज दर में दो फीसदी अंकों की गिरावट आ जाती तो यह अचल संपत्ति क्षेत्र के लिए बेहतर होता।

दरों में इस हद तक गिरावट आने के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि वास्तविक रीपो दर पूरी तरह सामान्य हो बल्कि वित्तीय तंत्र की क्षमता में सुधार का संकेत भी जाए। इन कदमों को नीतिगत एजेंडे पर रखना होगा। इस बीच सरकार द्वारा खपत आधारित व्यय बढ़ाने का दबाव भी नहीं होना चाहिए।

आईबीसी में सुधार और प्रतिस्पर्धा कानून की समीक्षा जरूरी

नई मंत्री ने वित्त मंत्रालय का प्रभार संभाल लिया है और वह केंद्रीय बजट बनाने में व्यस्त हैं। उनके पास वित्त और कंपनी मामलों के मंत्रालयों का प्रभार है, इसलिए उन्हें बजट के बाद इन मंत्रालयों से जुड़े बहुत से अहम काम करने होंगे। इन मंत्रालयों में बदलावों का प्रबंधन करना उतना ही बड़ा काम है, जितना कांग्रेस पार्टी के लिए उसके अध्यक्ष के हार स्वीकार करते हुए इस्तीफा देने के बाद के बदलावों को संभालना।

निस्संदेह केंद्रीय बजट भाषण में भी इन कार्यों में से कुछ का जिक्र किया जा सकता है। आम तौर पर बजट भाषण सत्तारूढ़ सरकार का न केवल कर नीति बल्कि आर्थिक नीति का दस्तावेज होता है। केंद्रीय बजट में बड़े सुधारों को कम शब्दों में लिखा जाता रहा है।

कई बार इन भाषणों की घोषणाओं में कुछ ठोस नहीं होता है। उदाहरण के लिए कॉरपोरेट बॉन्ड बाजार बनाने पर ध्यान देना। लेकिन कई बार ये घोषणाएं बड़े सुधारों का रास्ता साफ करती हैं, भले ही उनका बजट में थोड़े शब्दों में जिक्र किया जाए। ऋण शोधन अक्षमता एवं दिवालिया संहिता (आईबीसी), 2016 पिछली सरकार की सबसे बड़ी उपलब्धि है। इसका केंद्रीय बजट भाषण के एक छोटे से पैराग्राफ में जिक्र किया गया था। इस पैराग्राफ में कहा गया था कि लघु उद्योगों की मदद के लिए एक ऋण शोधन प्रणाली की जरूरत है।

अगर बजट भाषण को अलग रख दें तो दो ऐसे क्षेत्र हैं, जिन पर गंभीरता से ध्यान दिए जाने की जरूरत है।

पहला, बड़ी बदलावकारी बताई जा रही आईबीसी में गंभीरता से सुधार किए जाने की जरूरत है। उच्चतम न्यायालय ने इसकी अपरिपक्वता और असममानता को स्वीकार करने योग्य माना है और इसकी संवैधानिक वैधता को बरकरार रखा है। हालांकि इन तथ्यों में छिपी बात यह है कि दोनों मंत्रालयों के बीच फंसे इस कानून और इसके प्रशासन में सुधार की सख्त जरूरत है। वित्तीय क्षेत्र में बढ़ते फंसे ऋण वित्त मंत्रालय की रिसर्ददी है। वहीं आईबीसी का प्रशासन कंपनी मामलों के मंत्रालय के जिम्मे है।

इस कानून में संशोधन से भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक



बाअदब

सोमशेखर सुंदरेशन

वित्तीय क्षेत्र में बढ़ते फंसे ऋण वित्त मंत्रालय की रिसर्ददी है। वहीं आईबीसी का प्रशासन कंपनी मामलों के मंत्रालय के जिम्मे है।

(आरबीआई) को यह ताकत मिल जाएगी कि वह बैंकों को यह निर्देश दे सकेगा कि आईबीसी का कैसे इस्तेमाल किया जाए और आईबीसी के तहत सभी कर्जदारों के साथ एकसमान व्यवहार करने में दिक्कत है। एक नियामक ने रेफरी की भूमिका छोड़ खुद खेल में हिस्सा लेना शुरू कर दिया। विनियमित बैंकों को कर्जदारों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई के जो विकल्प चुनने थे, अब उनका निर्देश नियामक की तरफ से दिया जा सकता है। यह अपने आप में एक गलत नीति का चयन है।

इस शक्ति का इस्तेमाल कर आरबीआई ने कर्जदारों की संपत्ति पर बैंकों के दावे के प्रवर्तन में एकसमान नीति अपनाई। इसने उन उद्योगों को प्रभावित करने वाले कारणों में विभेद नहीं किया, जिनसे विभिन्न ऋणी जुड़े थे। प्रत्येक उद्योग की परिस्थितियों पर गौर किए बिना एकसमान नीति अपनाने के आरबीआई के कदम को मनमाना और संवैधानिक रूप से अमान्य करार दिया गया। अगर बैंक खुद व्यावसायिक आधार पर ऐसा कदम उठाते तो यह पूरी तरह गलत होता। इसे सरकार के फैसले-तर्कसगत या गैर-मनमानेपन के मापदंड पर नहीं कसा जाता। माना जाता है कि बैंक सभी कर्जदारों के खिलाफ आंख मूंदकर एक जैसी कार्रवाई करने के पक्ष में नहीं थे। मगर उनका फैसला आरबीआई ने लिया, लेकिन अदालत की दहलीज नहीं पार कर

पाया। यह अपरिपक्व असमानता का अच्छा उदाहरण है। लेकिन यह उस स्थिति में नहीं होता, जब बैंक की तरफ से ऋणी के खिलाफ कदम उठाया गया होता। प्रवर्तन फैसलों को नीतिगत विकल्प पर प्रमुखता देना विवेकसम्मत नहीं था और इसे दुरुस्त किया जाना चाहिए।

दूसरा, प्रतिस्पर्धा कानून की बहुत से कार्यसमूह और सुधार समितियां समीक्षा कर रही हैं। इस दिशा में गंभीर प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं और इसे सफल बनाया जाना चाहिए। प्रतिस्पर्धा कानून शुरू करना भी अपने आप में बिना अधिक शोरगुल के किया गया सुधार था। इसे ऐसे समय लागू किया गया, जब उद्यमों के कारोबार करने के तरीके को नियंत्रित करने का विरोध हो रहा था। इसमें बदलावों के लिए बहुत सी सिफारिशें आएंगी। लेकिन किन्हें चुनें और किन्हें छोड़ें, यह अपने आप में एक अजीब समस्या पैदा कर देगा। यहां कुछ अहम नीतिगत विकल्प चुनने होंगे।

प्रतिस्पर्धी कानून में सहायक नियमों में निहित बहुत सी प्रक्रियाओं की गंभीरता से समीक्षा और सुधार की जरूरत होगी। यह याद रखा जाना चाहिए कि अगर एक कारोबार कड़े प्रतिस्पर्धी कानूनों से प्रभावित होता है तो बहुत से कारोबार ऐसे भी हैं, जो कड़े प्रतिस्पर्धी कानून न होने से प्रभावित होते हैं। प्रत्येक कारोबारी प्रतिस्पर्धी को कानून का संरक्षण मिलता है और जब कोई गैर-प्रतिस्पर्धी व्यवहार में लिप्त होता है तो इससे न केवल बाजार में ग्राहक बल्कि प्रतिस्पर्धी भी प्रभावित होते हैं।

नियामकों के बीच कड़ी जंग से भी प्रतिस्पर्धी कानून कमजोर हो रहा है। जो किसी एक क्षेत्र में विनियमित होते हैं, वे उस क्षेत्र के नियामक के साथ स्वाभाविक रूप से सहज हो जाते हैं। जब प्रतिस्पर्धी नियामक सवाल पूछता है तो क्षेत्रीय नियामक प्रतिस्पर्धा नियामक के खिलाफ काम करते हैं। नियामकों की भूमिका में कोई तालमेल न होने से अदालत में उम्मीद के विपरीत नतीजे आ सकते हैं। इसके नतीजतन किसी नियमित कारोबारी क्षेत्र में कोई खिलाफ प्रक्रिया भी नियामक के खिलाफ कुछ राहत मिलने की उम्मीद कर सकता है।

(लेखक वकील और स्वतंत्र सलाहकार हैं।)

कानाफूसी

चुप्पी की नसीहत

ऑल इंडिया अन्ना द्रविड़ मुन्नेत्र कषगम (अन्नाद्रमुक) के कुछ विधायकों द्वारा सार्वजनिक रूप से दोहरे नेतृत्व ढांचे की आलोचना किए जाने के बाद तमिलनाडु के मुख्यमंत्री ई पलनिस्वामी और उपमुख्यमंत्री ओ पनीरसेल्वम ने पार्टी के नेताओं को चुप रहने की नसीहत दे डाली है। दोनों प्रमुख नेताओं की ओर से जारी किए गए एक साझा वक्तव्य में कहा गया कि अगर कोई भी अन्नाद्रमुक की भलाई के लिए अपना नजरिया रखना चाहते है तो उसे पार्टी मंच का इस्तेमाल करना चाहिए। उन्होंने कहा कि ऐसे नेता सामान्य परिषद और कार्यकारी परिषदों में अपनी बात रख सकते हैं।

इसके अतिरिक्त वे मशविरा सत्रों का प्रयोग भी कर सकते हैं। गौरतलब है कि पार्टी में दोहरे नेतृत्व की व्यवस्था नई नहीं है। जब पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री जे जयललिता जीवित थीं तब वह राज्य प्रशासन संभालती थीं जबकि उनकी मित्र और करीबी सहयोगी वी के शशिकला पार्टी के निर्णय लिया करती थीं। इनमें मंत्रियों की नियुक्ति के निर्णय भी शामिल थे। जयललिता के निधन के बाद शशिकला ने पार्टी पर पूरा नियंत्रण कायम करने का प्रयास किया लेकिन पलनिस्वामी और पनीरसेल्वम ने हाथ मिलाकर उन्हें और टीटी दिनाकरन समेत उनके परिजनों को परिदृश्य से बाहर ही कर दिया।



ई पलजित्वामी

आपका पक्ष

लू की चपेट में राजधानी दिल्ली

राजधानी दिल्ली में तापमान सोमवार को 48 डिग्री सेल्सियस तक पहुंच गया। मौसम विभाग के अनुसार अगर किसी क्षेत्र में लगातार दो दिन तक तापमान 45 डिग्री से ऊपर पहुंच जाता है तो वहां लू की स्थिति घोषित कर दी जाती है। अगर तापमान 47 डिग्री से ऊपर पहुंच जाता है तो लू की गंभीर स्थिति बन जाती है। राजधानी दिल्ली में 9 जून, 2014 को 47.8 डिग्री तापमान दर्ज किया गया था। इस समय दिल्ली में पारा 48 डिग्री तक पहुंच गया है तो गंभीर स्थिति को दर्शाता है। हालांकि केरल में मॉनसून ने शनिवार को दस्तक दे दी है लेकिन उसके मध्य भारत तक पहुंचने में संभवतः 15 से 20 दिन का समय लग सकता है। दिल्ली के अलावा दिल्ली से सटे नोएडा तथा गुडगांव में भी पारा काफी चढ़ गया है। दिन में तपती धूप और गर्म हवा की तपिश से लोग परेशान हैं। सरकार को सड़कों



राजधानी दिल्ली में सोमवार को तापमान 48 डिग्री सेल्सियस तक पहुंच गया था -पीटीआई

की भी नियुक्ति करनी चाहिए जो समय-समय पर पौधों को सींच सके। सरकार के साथ लोगों को भी स्वयं पौधे लगाने चाहिए। इससे अलावा लगाए गए पौधों की देखभाल के लिए माली

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@bsmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

पौधों से किसी एक व्यक्ति को भी राहत मिल सके।

मोहित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

इंटरनेट-मोबाइल का अधिकतम इस्तेमाल

रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान के अलावा अब इंटरनेट भी आम जरूरत की चीज बन गई है। तकनीक के विकास के साथ इंटरनेट उपयोग करने की संख्या तथा इस्तेमाल करने की अवधि तेजी से बढ़ रही है। एक मीडिया एजेंसी की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार मोबाइल इंटरनेट पर मीडिया उपभोग वर्ष 2013 में 9.4 मिनट प्रतिदिन था जो वर्ष 2019 में बढ़कर 54 मिनट हो गया है। एजेंसी के अनुमान के मुताबिक वर्ष 2021 तक मोबाइल इंटरनेट पर मीडिया का उपभोग 79 मिनट प्रतिदिन हो जाएगा। एजेंसी के मुताबिक टेलीविजन मीडिया का प्रमुख

माध्यम रहेगा और वर्ष 2021 तक एक व्यक्ति प्रतिदिन टीवी पर 144 मिनट समय व्यतीत करेगे जो वर्ष 2013 में 140 मिनट था। एजेंसी का यह भी अनुमान है कि एक व्यक्ति इस साल औसतन 320 मिनट प्रतिदिन मीडिया पर समय व्यतीत करेगे। यह आंकड़ा वर्ष 2013 में 270 मिनट था जो वर्ष 2021 में बढ़कर 348 मिनट तक पहुंच जाएगा। देश में मोबाइल सेवा प्रदाता कंपनियों के बीच प्रतिस्पर्धा के कारण डेटा की दर में काफी गिरावट आई है। इसके अलावा स्मार्टफोन के सस्ते होने के कारण भी लोग डेटा का खूब इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं। डेटा के इस्तेमाल में बढ़ोतरी का दूसरा कारण मोबाइल में फिल्म, वीडियो तथा वेब सीरीज का आना भी है। लोग सार्वजनिक परिवहन में छोटी यात्रा के दौरान मोबाइल पर वेब सीरीज या न्यूज देख रहे हैं। इसमें सबसे बड़ा योगदान तकनीक तथा डेटा के दाम का सस्ता होना है। इंटरनेट या मोबाइल अधिक इस्तेमाल करने के खते भी हैं जिससे संभलकर रहना चाहिए।

6 नई दिल्ली

12 जून, 2019

हड़बड़ी का हासिल

दिल्ली में एक पत्रकार की गिरफ्तारी के मसले पर सुनवाई के दौरान सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने जो टिप्पणी की है, उससे एक बार फिर यही स्पष्ट हुआ है कि सरकारों और खासतौर पर उनकी पुलिस को किसी मसले पर कार्रवाई के दौरान किन मानकों का ध्यान रखना चाहिए। गौरतलब है कि हाल में एक पत्रकार प्रशांत कनौजिया ने अपने ट्विटर अकाउंट पर उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ के बारे में कुछ टिप्पणी करती हुई एक महिला के वीडियो के साथ-साथ एक निजी टिप्पणी भी कर दी थी। इसे अभद्र और योगी आदित्यनाथ को बदनाम करने वाला बताते हुए इसके खिलाफ शिकायत दर्ज की गई। इस पर उत्तर प्रदेश की पुलिस ने जिस तरह आनन-फानन में कार्रवाई करते हुए दिल्ली से प्रशांत को गिरफ्तार कर लिया, वह अपने आप में यह बताने के लिए काफी था कि इस मामले में संवैधानिक व्यवस्था या कानून का खयाल कम किया गया था और धौंस जमाने को ज्यादा तरजीह दी गई थी। इस जल्दबाजी पर पहला सवाल यही उठा कि सरकार के तहत संगठित और पेशेवर तरीके से काम करने वाली पुलिस इतने अंगंभीर तरीके से हड़बड़ी कैसे कर सकती है। क्या गिरफ्तारी के बिना इस मसले पर कानून प्रक्रिया नहीं अपनाई जा सकती थी?

जाहिर है, इस पर समूचे पत्रकारिता जगत में तीखे सवाल उठे और लोगों ने सरकार के कामकाज के तौर-तरीके को कठघरे में खड़ा किया। इस मामले में सुप्रीम कोर्ट में दायर याचिका पर सुनवाई के दौरान अदालत ने साफ राय जाहिर की है कि ट्विटर पर की गई उस टिप्पणी के गुण-दोष का सवाल अलग है, लेकिन किसी भी राय के आधार पर इस तरह गिरफ्तारी सही नहीं है। अदालत ने कहा कि नागरिक की स्वतंत्रता उनका अधिकार है और उससे कोई समझौता नहीं किया जा सकता। इसकी गारंटी संविधान में दी गई है और इसका हनन नहीं किया जा सकता। हालांकि इस मामले में दर्ज शिकायत पर मुकदमा चलता रहेगा। यानी सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने सरकार या उसकी पुलिस को यह बताने की कोशिश की है कि उसे अपनी संवैधानिक या कानूनी जिम्मेदारियों का निर्वहन करते हुए जरूरी गंभीरता बरतनी चाहिए। लेकिन यह समझना मुश्किल है कि कई बार सोशल मीडिया पर की जाने वाली टिप्पणियों पर दर्ज शिकायतों पर पुलिस की ओर से गैरजरूरी हड़बड़ी का प्रदर्शन क्यों किया जाता है। जबकि ऐसी हड़बड़ी का खमियाजा इस रूप में उठाना पड़ता है कि अदालत में कानूनी कसौटी पर ऐसे मामले कमजोर साबित होते हैं।

यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि ट्विटर या फेसबुक जैसे सोशल मीडिया के मंचों पर की जाने वाली हल्की-फुल्की टिप्पणियां बेहद आम हैं और उनमें से ज्यादातर अपने असर में कोई खास अहमियत नहीं रखती। इन मंचों पर जो राय जाहिर की जाती है, उसमें किसी अनुशासन की उम्मीद इसलिए बेमानी है कि उसे किसी निजी जगह के रूप में देखा जाता रहा है और वहां लोग किसी सीमा का खयाल रखना जरूरी नहीं समझते। हालांकि निश्चित रूप से यह अपेक्षा वाजिब है कि जानबूझ कर किसी की छवि को नुकसान पहुंचाने की मंशा से कोई गैरजिम्मेदाराना टिप्पणी नहीं की जाए। मगर सच यह है कि वहां कोई व्यक्ति बहुत सलीके से एक जरूरी बात भी कहता है तो दूसरा शख्स बेहद अंगंभीर तरीके से सतही टिप्पणी कर देता है। वहां अक्सर बड़े नेताओं या राजनीतिक गतिविधियों पर हल्के-फुल्के अंदाज में बातें की जाती हैं। लेकिन शासन का अपना एक ढांचा है और उसके कामकाज करने के तौर-तरीके निर्धारित हैं। संवैधानिक नियम-कायदों से बंधे शासन को उसकी गरिमा का खयाल रखना चाहिए। नेताओं और राजनीतिकों को भी देश की लोकतांत्रिक परंपरा और नागरिक स्वतंत्रता की संवैधानिक व्यवस्था को ध्यान में रखते हुए उदार रवैये का परिचय देना चाहिए।

चैंपियन का संन्यास

युवराज सिंह ने अंतरराष्ट्रीय क्रिकेट से संन्यास भले ले लिया हो, वे आइपीएल भी न खेलें, लेकिन क्रिकेट की दुनिया में उनकी मौजूदगी हमेशा बनी रहेगी। युवराज क्रिकेट के सवश्रेष्ठ भारतीय ऑलराउंडरों में शुमार रहे। उम्मीद है कि वे अब विदेशी लीग में जलवा बिखेरेंगे। सत्रह साल के अपने क्रिकेट-जीवन में उन्होंने जो उपलब्धियां हासिल कीं, वे अपने में रेकार्ड हैं। चाहे मैचों की संख्या हो, रनों का आंकड़ा हो या विकेट या फिर आइपीएल मैच के खिलाड़ी की कीमत हो, युवराज हमेशा एक चैंपियन के रूप में ही रहे, मैदान में भी और मैदान के बाहर भी। उन्नीस साल की उम्र में क्रिकेट की दुनिया में कदम रखने वाले युवराज की उपलब्धि का सिलसिला 2004 से ही शुरू हो गया था जब उन्होंने लाहौर में पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ पहली टेस्ट सेंचुरी लगाई थी। इसके बाद 2007 में उन्होंने टी-20 विश्व कप में इंग्लैंड के खिलाफ एक ओवर में छह छक्के जड़े थे। इसीलिए उन्हें सिक्सर किंग भी कहा जाता है। इसके अलावा बारह गेंदों में सबसे तेज अर्धशतक भी लगाया था। विश्व कप में तीन सौ से ज्यादा रन और पंद्रह विकेट लेने वाले वे पहले ऑलराउंडर बने और 2011 में विश्व कप में ‘मैन ऑफ द सीरीज’ भी उन्हें मिला था। बाजार में कीमत के हिसाब से देखें तो 2015 की आइपीएल नीलामी में वे सबसे महंगे खिलाड़ी के रूप में सामने आए थे।

युवराज का जीवन दूसरे क्रिकेट खिलाड़ियों से हट कर रहा है। उनके जीवन में सबसे बड़ा मोड़ 2011 में उस वक्त आया था, जब पता चला कि उन्हें फेफड़े का कैंसर हो गया है। यह कठिन वक्त था जब वे अपने करिअर के शीर्ष पर थे। लड़ना, गिरना और फिर उठ जाना युवराज की हमेशा से खूबी रही है। वे इस बात को स्वीकार भी करते हैं कि क्रिकेट मेरे लिए एक ऐसा खेल रहा है जिसने मुझे लड़ना, गिरना और फिर उठ जाना सिखाया। उनके भीतर के इसी जुझारूपन और जज्बे ने कैंसर जैसी बीमारी से मुक्ति दिलाने में बड़ी भूमिका निभाई। युवराज ने कहा भी था कि कैंसर से ठीक होने के बाद वे एक तरह के भारी दबाव में थे, हर किसी को लग रहा था कि अब वे पहले वाला युवराज नहीं रहेगा। लेकिन युवराज ने इस दबाव को बड़ी चुनौती मानते हुए एक बार फिर साबित किया कि उनमें वही पुराना वाला दमखम आज भी है। इसके बाद ही युवराज ने 2012 में इंग्लैंड के खिलाफ टेस्ट खेला था। यह उनका आखिरी टेस्ट था। लेकिन वन डे, टी-20 और आइपीएल वे लगातार खेलते रहे।

युवराज की सत्रह साल की अंतरराष्ट्रीय क्रिकेट की यात्रा वाकई शानदार रही। लेकिन पिछले कुछ समय से युवराज मैदान पर वैसा जलवा नहीं दिखा पा रहे थे जैसी उन्हें उम्मीद थी। इसीलिए बार-बार उनके मन में संन्यास को लेकर मंथन चल रहा था। भारतीय क्रिकेट कंट्रोल बोर्ड (बीसीसीआइ) के रुख से भी वे आहत रहे। उन पर यो-यो टेस्ट पास करने को शर्त लगा दी गई और इसमें पास न होने पर विदाई मैच तक की बात कह दी गई। हालांकि युवराज इस टेस्ट में पास हो गए थे और आखिरी टी-20 खेला। पिछले दो सालों में उनमें बेहतर प्रदर्शन का अभाव रहा, इसलिए इस बार की विश्व कप टीम में जगह बनने का सवाल ही नहीं था। हालांकि निश्चित ही युवराज के मन में इस बार का विश्व कप खेलने की इच्छा रही होगी। इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि युवराज का क्रिकेट-जीवन आने वाली पीढ़ियों के लिए किसी प्रेरणा से कम नहीं होगा।

कल्पमेधा

धर्म केवल लोगों की सेवा करने में है,
माला फेरने या पूजा में नहीं।
—शेख सादी

जन्मसन्तान — 400

जनसत्ता

सोशल मीडिया और चुनौतियां

ज्योति सिडाना

सोशल मीडिया और गैजेटों की लत के कारण युवाओं में शारीरिक और मानसिक व्याधियां तेजी से बढ़ रही हैं। इससे उनमें निराशा व कुंठा पनप रही हैं और एक नए प्रकार की सांस्कृतिक विसंगति को जन्म दे रही हैं। यह संस्कृति न केवल सामाजिक संबंधों में उनकी सहभागिता को कम करती है अपितु उन्हें भय एवं आक्रामकता का शिकार बनाती है।

सहस्राब्दि जनसंख्या का अस्सी फीसद हिस्सा संदेश लिख कर या ऑनलाइन संवाद करना ज्यादा पसंद करता है। यह खुलासा ऑफकॉम के एक अध्ययन में हुआ है। इसके अनुसार सोलह से चौबीस वर्ष की आयु के पंद्रह फीसद युवा अपने फोन का इस्तेमाल लोगों से बातचीत के लिए नहीं करना चाहते, बल्कि मौखिक बातचीत के स्थान पर वे संदेश भेजना अधिक पसंद करते हैं। आज की किशोर पीढ़ी एक ही कमरे में अपने आसपास बैठे लोगों से बात करने के बजाय संदेश ही भेजती है। दरअसल, हम एक शोर रहित और आवाज रहित विश्व का हिस्सा बन चुके हैं। सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर होते हुए भी एक निजी विश्व निर्मित हो जाता है, जैसे भीड़ में, ट्रेन में, सड़क पर कहीं भी चलते हुए या बैठ कर हम ईअरफोन के जरिए अपना प्रिय संगीत सुन सकते हैं। जबकि एक-दो दशक पहले तक ट्रेन या बस में यात्रा करते समय

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अमित चमड़िया

कुछ समय पहले देश की एक राजनीतिक पार्टी में शामिल हुई बॉलीवुड की मशहूर अभिनेत्री जब मुंबई में चुनाव के दौरान उम्मीदवार के रूप में प्रचार कर रही थीं, तो उसका एक टीवी चैनल पर सीधा प्रसारण हो रहा था। इससे संबंधित खबर प्रसारित करने वाले बहुत जोर देकर कह रहे थे कि अभिनेत्री आज भारतीय परिधान में आम लोगों को ‘गुड़ीपड़वा’ की बधाई दे रही हैं। गौरतलब है कि ‘गुड़ीपड़वा’ आमतौर पर महाराष्ट्र में मनाया जाने वाला एक त्योहार है। प्रसंगवश यह बताना जरूरी है कि अभिनेत्री ने उस समय साड़ी पहन रखी थी। हाथों में हरे रंग की चूड़ी और बालों में सफेद फूलों का गुच्छा लटक रहा था। आम रुचि के मुताबिक देखें और साधारण लोगों के बीच बोलचाल की भाषा में भी इसी तरह के पहनावे को हम शुद्ध भारतीय परिधान के रूप में स्वीकार करते हैं। जब कभी किसी माध्यम में इस तरह के पहनावे वाले दृश्य नजर आते हैं तो हम तुरंत कह देते हैं कि यह तो शुद्ध भारतीय है। बॉलीवुड की फिल्मों में ऐसे पहनावे वाले दृश्य खूब नजर आते हैं।

सवाल है कि भारतीय परिधान का मतलब क्या

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हार की सीख

देश की सबसे पुरानी पार्टी लगातार दो लोकसभा चुनावों में मुख्य विपक्षी दल बनने लायक सीटें भी नहीं जीत सकी है। ऐसे में पार्टी की रीति-नीति पर सवाल तो उठेंगे ही। कांग्रेस वह संगठन है जिसके खाते में देश की आजादी में अग्रणी होने की भूमिका दर्ज रही है। चुनाव दर चुनाव पार्टी ने इसे भुनाया भी है और भुनाते-भुनाते अपने मतदाताओं को बुरी तरह से ऊबा दिया है। भूमंडलीकरण, मंडल और कर्मंडल के बाद से देश की सियासत जमीन से लेकर शीर्ष तक पूरी तरह बदल चुकी है लेकिन कांग्रेस आज भी अपने पुराने मुद्दों को बेचने में लगी हुई है जबकि देश में उन मतदाताओं की संख्या अब मुट्ठी भर ही रह गई है जिन्होंने आजादी की लड़ाई को देखा होगा और उस दौर के आदर्शों में जीते रहे होंगे।

आज मतदान में हिस्सा लेने वाली बहुसंख्यक आबादी वह है जिसने बाबरी ढांचा टूटने, बाजार के खुलने और अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग के सियासी ऊभार के बाद जन्म लिया है या होश संभाला है। इस वर्ग की आकांक्षाएं दूसरी हैं जिन्हें संबोधित करने में कांग्रेस अब विफल साबित हो रही है। कांग्रेस का सबसे बड़ा संकट है 134 सालों का इसका इतिहास, जिसके बोझ से वह निकल नहीं पा रही है बल्कि दब कर खत्म होती जा रही है। अगर 134 साल की विरासत का दावा करना ही है तो वही परंपरा दोबारा शुरू करे जब साल भर पर कांग्रेस का अधिवेशन बुलाया जाता था और लोकतांत्रिक तरीके से एक साल के लिए ही अध्यक्ष का चुनाव होता था। तब इसके ढेर सारे अनुयायिक संगठन हुआ करते थे और उनमें काम कर-के आए लोगों को टिकट दिए जाते थे। आज जरूरत है कि नेहरू-गांधी परिवार मोह छोड़े और बिना पद के काम करे। इससे न सिर्फ एकरसता टूटेगी बल्कि एक परिवार से इतर कांग्रेस अधिक बड़ी भी दिखाई देगी। अगर उनमें (गांधी-नेहरू परिवार) क्षमता हुई तब नए

लोग एक-दूसरे से बातचीत करके परिचय बढ़ाने में रुचि रखते थे, राजनीतिक व गैर-राजनीतिक विषयों पर चर्चा करते थे, खाना-पीना साझा करते थे, लेकिन अब यात्रा के दौरान ऐसा कोई शोर नहीं सुनाई देता, कोई अनुभव नहीं होता। अधिकांश लोगों के कानों में ईअरफोन या हेडफोन नजर आता है, या फिर मोबाइल, लैपटॉप पर वीडियो देखने में व्यस्त होते हैं। संभवतः इसलिए इस पीढ़ी को ‘खामोश पीढ़ी’ की संज्ञा दी जाती है।

अब इस बात से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि सोशल मीडिया ने संचार और संवाद करने के तरीके को पूरी तरह से बदल दिया है। एक समय था जब लोग देर तक लैंडलाइन फोन पर अपने दोस्तों, परिवारजनों से बातचीत करते थे, विशेष अवसरों जैसे सालगिरह, त्योहार, पदोन्नति, नया सामान खरीदने इत्यादि पर फोन पर बधाई का तांता लग जाता था। पर अब हर अवसर पर केवल संदेश भेज कर काम चल जाता है। कितना अजीब है कि एक ही संदेश हम सबको भेज देते हैं? यह कैसे संभव है कि सबके लिए हमारी भावनाएं, हमारा प्यार या दुआएं एक जैसी हों? और यह भी सच है कि आमने-सामने या फोन की आवाज पर जो बधाई मिलती है, उसमें अलग ही आनंद आता है क्योंकि उसमें हंसी-मजाक और बहुत सारी दुआएं भी शामिल होती हैं। सोशल मीडिया ने इन सब चीजों को सामाजिक जीवन से गायब कर दिया है। मनुष्य केवल खुद तक सीमित हो गया है, इसलिए शायद अब सेल्फी का जमाना है, समूह फोटो का नहीं। फिर चाहे होटल में खाना खाते समय या किसी मॉल में घूमते समय, या शादी पार्टी के लिए तैयार होते समय सेल्फी लीजिए और तुरंत फेसबुक अथवा सोशल मीडिया पर अपलोड कर दीजिए, ताकि आपकी फोटो पर अधिक से अधिक कमेंट और लाइक मिल सकें। यदि आप यह सब नहीं करते तो आज के युग में आप सामाजिक प्राणी नहीं हैं, आपकी सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा तुलनात्मक रूप से कम हो सकती है।

सामाजिक प्राणी और विकसित मस्तिष्क का स्वामी होने के नाते मनुष्य के लिए भाषा को संपर्क एवं संवाद स्थापित करने का सबसे प्रचलित और प्रभावी माध्यम माना जाता है। भाषा विज्ञानी सॉसर के अनुसार भाषा एक सामाजिक उत्पाद और वैयक्तिक व्यवहार दोनों है। अब सोशल मीडिया का उपयोग बढ़ने के बाद लोगों में संवाद या तो कम हो गया है

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पहनावे, खानपान और बीसी, जीवन पद्धति आदि को ही केवल भारतीय मानना क्या इस देश के दूसरी अन्य संस्कृति को मानने वाले लोगों के साथ भेदभाव नहीं है? और क्या इस तरह का भेदभाव उनमें अकेले या अलग होने की भावना नहीं पैदा करता है? खासकर तब जब देश की एक बड़ी आबादी की संस्कृति हाशिये पर हो। हमारा संविधान भी इस बात की इजाजत नहीं देता है कि केवल किसी खास पहनावे और खानपान को भारतीय माना जाए। क्या एक खास तरह की संस्कृति को ही भारतीय मानना भारतीय होने को संकीर्ण नजरिये से देखना नहीं है? हम देश के आदिवासी समुदाय के परिधानों या उत्तर-पूर्व के राज्यों

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दल में भी उनकी मजबूत स्थिति बनी रहेगी अन्यथा अपने आभामंडल के इर्द-गिर्द पार्टी खड़ी करने और दिल्ली के ड्राइंग रूम में बैठने वाले बुद्धिजीवियों के सहारे अब सियासी दल नहीं चल सकेंगे। बुद्धिजीवियों के सहारे चलने वाले साम्यवादी दलों का हथ्र हम देख चुके हैं, परिवार प्रधान दलों की हालत भी देख ही रहे हैं। आज भारत की राजनीति का भाजपा युग है जिसमें मोटी-मोटी किताबें पढ़ कर भारत का विचार समझने-समझाने वाले लोग नहीं बल्कि घर-चौपालों तक काम करने वाले समर्पित कार्यकर्ताओं की फौज है। वहां नेताओं का व्याकरण और भाषा कोई नहीं जांचता क्योंकि गलतियां करते इसके नेता इस दल को वोट देने वाली

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किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश
आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com

बहुसंख्यक जनता को अपने जैसे लगते हैं जहां पार्टी हित में पीढ़ी परिवर्तन हो गया और इसके समर्थकों को यह बुरा भी नहीं लगता। दूसरी ओर कांग्रेस अब भी धर्मनिरपेक्षता-समाजवाद पर अटकड़ी हुई है। इन सत्तर सालों में कांग्रेस ने भारत को परिभाषित किया तो दूसरी ओर इन्हीं सालों में भारत ने भी खुद को नए ढंग से समझा है, व्यावहार किया है। इन दोनों परिभाषाओं और व्यवहारों में एक बड़ा अंतर है। आज कांग्रेस को सत्तर साल में बने भारत और उसके अनुभवों के आधार पर खुद को नए ढंग से परिभाषित और पेश करने की जरूरत है।

● *अंकित दूबे, आंबेडकर विश्वविद्यालय, दिल्ली*

इंसानियत के शत्रु

मासूम कन्याओं के साथ ज्यादती और तत्पश्चात उनकी बर्बरता पूर्वक हत्या कर देना पाशविकता की

या संदेशों में बदल गया है। जैसे-जैसे संवाद खत्म हो रहा है, वैसे-वैसे संस्कृति खत्म हो रही है, क्योंकि संस्कृति का पतन संवादहीनता से ही होता है। संस्कृति के भीतर संवेदनाएं, भावनाएं, अनौपचारिकता और अपनत्व की भावना होती है। संदेश-संस्कृति से जन साहित्य खत्म हो रहा है, इससे संस्कृति मर रही है। चूंकि संस्कृति जीवंत अनुभव होती है। यह टेक्नोलाजी निर्देशित सभ्यता आने वाले दौर में संस्कृति की हत्या का औजार बनेगी। क्या प्रौद्योगिकी का मनुष्य पर हावी होना विश्व युद्ध की आहट का संकेत दे रहा है? मौखिक संचार करने की शैली से व्यक्ति में भाषा विशेषज्ञता उत्पन्न होती है और उसमें अनुवाद करने की भी समझ विकसित होती है। संदेशों के माध्यम से नीरसता उत्पन्न हो रही है क्योंकि एक ही संदेश सबको भेज दिया जाता है, यहां तक कि अधिकांशतः बिना पढ़े ही संदेश दूसरों के आगे सरका (फॉरवर्ड) दिए जाते हैं, बिना जांच किए कि वे सही हैं या गलत।

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ऐसा नहीं है कि सोशल मीडिया ने सकारात्मक पक्षों को उत्पन्न नहीं किया। आज ऐसे बहुत से लोग हैं जो बोलना चाहते थे, पर उन्हें कोई मंच

भ्रष्टाचार पर नकेल

केंद्र सरकार ने आयकर विभाग के 12 भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों को जबरन सेवानिवृत्त करने का सराहनीय निर्णय लिया है. बरिष्ठ और अहम पदों पर बैठे भारतीय राजस्व सेवा के इन दंडित अधिकारियों पर रिश्ततखोरी, उगाही, यौन शोषण जैसे गंभीर आरोप हैं. वित्त मंत्रालय के अंतर्गत कार्यरत आयकर विभाग आर्थिक और वित्तीय संरचना में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है. मेहनत और ईमानदारी से अर्जित आय पर कर का भुगतान करनेवाले करदाताओं के बरक्स एक श्रेणी ऐसे लोगों की भी है, जो भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों से सांत-गांठ कर करोड़ों रुपये की कर चोरी करते हैं. वित्तीय लेन-देन और कराधान की प्रक्रिया को सुगम, सक्षम और पारदर्शी बनाने के लिए हाल के वर्षों में सरकार द्वारा अनेक पहलें हुई हैं. लेकिन, प्रशासनिक तंत्र में अगर भ्रष्टाचार और कदाचार का माहौल बरकरार रहेगा, तो सरकार की पहलकदमी बेअसर हो सकती है. ऐसे में केंद्र सरकार ने संकेत दे दिया है कि न तो भ्रष्टाचार को बर्दाश्त किया जायेगा और न ही भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों को बख्शा जायेगा. केंद्रीय जांच ब्यूरो द्वारा 2018 में जनवरी से नवंबर तक

आयकर विभाग के 12 भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों की छुट्टी करके केंद्र सरकार ने संकेत दे दिया है कि न तो भ्रष्टाचार को बर्दाश्त किया जायेगा और न ही भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों को.

भ्रष्टाचार की जड़ें बहुत गहरी हैं, जिससे निपटना आसान नहीं है. सरकार को कार्रवाई करने में ज्यादा मुत्सैदी दिखाने की जरूरत है. केंद्रीय जांच ब्यूरो आधे से भी कम मामलों में सालभर के भीतर अभियोग पत्र दाखिल कर पाती है. अभी राजस्व सेवा के जिन अधिकारियों की आयकर विभाग से छुट्टी हुई है, उनमें से ज्यादातर लंबे समय से गंभीर आरोपों के घेरे में हैं. उधर कानूनी पचड़ों में मामले लटके रहते हैं और इधर दग़ी अधिकारी पदों पर भी जमे रहते हैं. केंद्रीय सतर्कता आयोग भ्रष्टाचार के आरोपी 123 सरकारी अधिकारियों के विरुद्ध कार्रवाई के लिए सरकार की हरी झंडी का इंतजार कर रहा है. नियमों के मुताबिक, चार महीने के भीतर सरकार के संबद्ध विभागों को मंजूरी पर फैसला कर लेना चाहिए. इन अधिकारियों में प्रशासनिक सेवा में कार्यरत लोगों के अलावा केंद्रीय जांच ब्यूरो, प्रवर्तन निदेशालय, आयकर विभाग, सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों के कर्मचारी हैं. देश के पहले लोकपाल के रूप में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के पूर्व न्यायाधीश पिनार्की चंद्र घोष की नियुक्ति से भ्रष्टाचार पर अंकुश लगाने की उम्मीदों को बल मिला है. परंतु, चार महीने बीत जाने के बाद भी इस संस्था में शिकायत दर्ज कराने की प्रक्रिया का निर्धारण नहीं हो सका है. सेवा से हटाने जैसे कड़े फैसलों के साथ मामलों के निपटारे की व्यवस्था को भी दुरुस्त किया जाना चाहिए.



पर्यावरण चिंता

एक समय था, दुनिया में जब लोगों के पास कोई काम नहीं होता था, तब वे मौसम की चर्चा करते थे. लेकिन आजकल कोई मौसम की चर्चा नहीं करता. आप चाहे जहां जायें, आप की दादी, नानी से लेकर आप के नाती-पोतों तक, हर कोई केवल अर्थव्यवस्था के बारे में बात करता है. अर्थव्यवस्था ही मुख्य मुद्दा बन गया है. अर्थव्यवस्था हमारे जीवन जीने की प्रक्रिया का एक अधिक पेचीदा रूप है. साधारण रूप से जीवन जीने का मतलब है बस खाना, सोना, बच्चे पैदा करना और एक दिन मर जाना. इसे अब बहुत ज्यादा जटिल बना दिया गया है. मैं इसके खिलाफ नहीं हूं, पर लोग सोचते हैं कि अर्थव्यवस्था आज की चिंता है और पर्यावरण भविष्य का मुद्दा है. ये विचार बदलना जरूरी है. पर्यावरण आज की समस्या है और आज की ही चिंता का विषय भी. अगर आज हमारा जीवन अद्भुत है, तो इसलिए नहीं कि शेरार बाजार में उथल-पुथल हो रही है या फिर किसी विशेष देश या समाज में विकास दर का प्रतिशत अच्छा है. हमारा जीवन अच्छा इसलिए है कि हम पोषक खाना खा रहे हैं, स्वच्छ जल पी रहे हैं, और शुद्ध हवा में सांस ले रहे हैं. ये पूरी तरह से भुला दिया गया है. आज जो भोजन हम खा रहे हैं, वह रसायनों से भरा हुआ है. जो पानी हम पी रहे हैं, वह जहर से भरा है, और जरूर, हवा तो जहरीली है ही. मिट्टी में ही जीवन पनपता है. मैं और आप, कुछ और नहीं, बस थोड़ी सी मिट्टी हैं. जो मिट्टी वन भोजन बन गया, जो भोजन था वह मांस और रक्त बन गया. अगर यह बात हमें आज समझ नहीं आती, तो उस दिन समझ में आ ही जायेगी, जब हम दफना दिये जायेंगे. अधिकतर लोगों को यह बहुत देर से समझ आती है, लेकिन हर किसी को कभी न कभी तो आ ही जाता है. दुर्भाग्यवश, मिट्टी एक ऐसी चीज है, जिसे अधिकतर लोग पर्यावरण की दृष्टि से नजरअंदाज कर देते हैं. हमने अपनी धरती की उपजाऊ मिट्टी को जबरदस्त नुकसान पहुंचाया है. बर्फ का पिघलना, शायद जल्दी नजर आ जाता हो, पर हमने मिट्टी को जो नुकसान पहुंचाया है, वह ज्यादा खतरनाक है. **रादगुप्त जग्गी वासुदेव**

कुछ अलग

अयोध्या नगर के सिंदूरिया

वर्षों पहले किसी पत्रिका में एक लेख पढ़ा था- शादी हो तो मिथिला में. जाहिर है, इस लेख में जानकी और पुरुषोत्तम राम की शादी की चर्चा के साथ मिथिला की मेहमाननवाजी और संस्कृति का जिक्र था. पिछले कुछ दशकों में मिथिला क्षेत्र से भारी मात्रा में विस्थापन और पलायन हुआ है, लेकिन शादी-विवाह के लिए मध्यमर्ग वापस गांव-घर लौटना रहा है. पिछले दिनों जब ऐसे ही एक शादी में भाग लेने का मौका मिला, तो इस लेख की याद हो आयी. मिथिला की संस्कृति शादी-विवाह के अवसर पर अपनी संपूर्णता में निखरकर आती है. बात गीत-संगीत की हो, मिथिला पेंटिंग-सिक्की कला की हो या खान-पान में विन्यास की. इनमें एक निरंतरता दिखती है, पर ऐसा नहीं है कि इनमें बदलाव नहीं आया है. अस्सी के दशक में ही ‘कैसेट कल्चर’ ने शादी-विवाह में ‘लाउड स्पीकर’ और तकनीक का प्रचलन बढ़ा दिया था. यही दौर था जब पत्र भूषण से सम्मानित शारदा सिन्हा के गाये लोक गीतों की धूम मची थी. आज भी शादी-विवाह का आान उनके गाये गीतों से गूंजता रहता है. बात चाहे ‘माय हे अयोध्या नगर के सिंदूरिया सिंदूर बचे आलल हे’ की हो या ‘मोहे लेखिनस सजनी मोर मनवा पहनुवा राघो’ की. प्रसंगवश, शारदा सिन्हा अपनी ‘मैथिल पहचान’ को बार-बार खोजावित करती रही हैं. वैसे भोजपुरी भाषा-भाषियों के बीच और हिंदी फिल्मों में गाये चर्चित गीतों के माध्यम से उनकी पहुंच राष्ट्रीय

संपादकीय प्रभात

केंद्रीय बजट में क्या न करें

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण आगामी पांच जुलाई को केंद्र का अपना पहला बजट संसद में पेश करनेवाली हैं. सीतारमण ने, नागरिकों को यह आश्वासन देते हुए कि उनके प्रत्येक सुझाव पर गौर किया जायेगा, बजट के लिए अपने सुझाव देने का आह्वान भी किया है. यह प्रक्रिया निश्चित रूप से अधिक समावेशी है, जो सामूहिक बुद्धिमता पर भरोसा करती है. मगर, इसमें एक विडंबना भी संभावित है कि ज्यादातर सुझाव ‘क्या नहीं किया जाना चाहिए’ की बजाय ‘क्या किया जाना है’ पर केंद्रित रहेंगे.

इसलिए, पहले बिंदु पर आगे बढ़ने के पहले कुछ अवलोकनों पर गौर कर लेना प्रासंगिक होगा. प्रथमतः, यह बजट पूरे वर्ष का बजट नहीं होगा, क्योंकि उसे तो आगामी फरवरी में ही पेश किया जायेगा. दूसरे, चूंकि यह इस नवनिर्वाचित सरकार का पहला वर्ष है, इसलिए वित्तमंत्री तथा सरकार दोनों के लिए ही यह एक अवसर है कि वे अपने एजेंडे के फलसफे का खाका सामने रखें. प्रधानमंत्री को हासिल विशाल बहुमत उन्हें वह प्रभूत सियासी पूंजी प्रदान करता है, जिसके बल पर वे अल्पावधि में आर्थिक पीड़ा देने वाले, पर दीर्घावधि में लाभदायक फैसले ले सकते हैं. तीसरा बिंदु यह है कि यह बजट परवान चढ़ते व्यापार युद्ध, कठिन सुखाड़-सी स्थिति, जीडीपी वृद्धि में तीन वर्षों से जारी मंदी, राजकोष एवं चालू खाते के घाटे की बिगड़ती स्थिति के साथ ही रोजगार विहीन विकास के संकेतों की पीठिका में लाया जा रहा है. ये सभी कठिन चुनौतियां हैं और यह सही है कि कोई एक बजट इन सभी के लिए जादू की छड़ी नहीं बन सकता. पर वह आर्थिक वृद्धि की दिशा में आगे की राह का जमीनी आकलन कर राजस्व तथा व्यय की तदनु रूप दिशा अवश्य निर्धारित कर सकता है. उसे उपभोग में वृद्धि, निजी निवेश के पुनर्जीवन, उद्यमी गतिविधियों में तेजी तथा खाते के संतुलन के संकेत तो

देने ही चाहिए.

क्या नहीं किया जाना चाहिए, इस दिशा में कुछ सुझाव इस प्रकार हैं: पहला, कर जाल को व्यापक करने की दिशा से पीछे जाने की प्रवृत्ति छोड़ी जानी चाहिए. प्रधानमंत्री स्वयं यह सार्वजनिक घोषणा कर चुके हैं कि वे 10 करोड़ लोगों को कर दायरे में लाना चाहेंगे. जीडीपी की तुलना में कर, खासकर प्रत्यक्ष कर का भारतीय अनुपात विश्व में सर्वाधिक निम्न है. कुछ ही वर्षों पूर्व आर्थिक सर्वेक्षण ने यह खुलासा किया कि मतदाताओं की तुलना में करदाताओं का अनुपात देखने पर भारत विश्व में निम्नतम पायदान पर है, क्योंकि यहां प्रत्येक सौ मतदाताओं पर सिर्फ सात करदाता हैं. बहुत से उत्तर यूरोपीय देशों में शत प्रतिशत मतदाता करदाता भी हैं. हमें इस असंतुलन में कमी लानी ही चाहिए. इस वर्ष फरवरी में पेश अंतरिम बजट ने कर सीमा इतनी बढ़ा डाली कि तकरीबन तीन करोड़ करदाता उससे बाहर हो गये. संभव है, ऐसा चुनावी नजरिये अथवा उपभोग बढ़ाने के उद्देश्य से किया गया हो, पर यह उक गलत संकेत देता है. यह सही है कि निम्न आय वर्गों के लिए प्रत्यक्ष कर का बोझ हल्का रखा जाये, पर इस जाल से बाहर वालों की तादाद कम होनी ही चाहिए. भारत को प्रत्यक्ष करों में वृद्धि तथा उसकी तुलना में ऊंचे अप्रत्यक्ष करों में कमी लाने की ओर भी प्रगति



भारत में आय तथा संपदा संबंधी असंतुलन पहले से ही गंभीर चिंता की वजह रही है . अब हमें प्रत्यक्ष करों की अधिक हिस्सेदारी की ओर बढ़ना है . अतः जीएसटी दरों को और तार्किक तथा निम्नतर किया जाना चाहिए .

करने की मंशा है, जो खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति में बढ़ोतरी हो लायेगी. ये परस्पर विरोधी इशारे लागतें कम करने अथवा जलवायु एवं जलविज्ञान अनुकूल उपजों को बढ़ावा देने के संकेत तो नहीं ही देते हैं. क्या यह उचित है कि एक

सांस्कृतिक मुहिम की जरूरत

प्राचीन भारत में मगध की धरती ने तर्क और बुद्धि की बात को पूरी दुनिया में आंदोलन की तरह प्रसारित किया था. प्राचीन भारत में वैदिकों की आस्थावादी कर्मकांडी व्यवस्था के खिलाफ आंदोलन करनेवाले बुद्धिवादी दर्शन की जन्मस्थली मगध ही रही है. बुद्ध, जैन और आजीवक जैसे नास्तिकवादी संप्रदायों की तपोभूमि मगध रही है. राजगीर और उसके आस-पास की धरती इसकी ऐतिहासिक गवाह है. 483 ईपू प्रथम बौद्ध संगीति भी राजगीर में ही हुई थी. पिछले कुछ वर्षों से सवाल उठता रहा है कि आज जब उपर्युक्त संप्रदाय जनता के बीच लगभग प्रभाव में नहीं हैं, तब क्या मगध की वह तार्किकता और बौद्धिकता समाप्त हो गयी है? क्या वह विचार और दर्शन अब नहीं रह गया है?

पिछले दिनों एक कार्यक्रम के सिलसिले में राजगीर जाना हुआ था. मगध के कुछ सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं ने इस आग्रह के साथ एक वैवाहिक कार्यक्रम में शामिल होने का निवेदन किया था कि यह केवल वैवाहिक कार्यक्रम नहीं है, बल्कि ‘सांस्कृतिक मुहिम’ है. उस वैवाहिक कार्यक्रम में शामिल होने के बाद मुझे फिर से मगध की तार्किकता और बौद्धिकता के इतिहास पर विचार करने के लिए विवश होना पड़ा है. भारतीय सामाजिक जीवन में ‘विवाह’ सामाजिक ढांचे के अंदर की मजबूत संस्था है. हमारे यहां पुराने समय से ही विवाह की कई पद्धतियां रही हैं. आज भी विवाह की कई पद्धतियां हैं, लेकिन उन सबमें कर्मकांड, प्रदर्शनप्रियता और फिजूलखर्च है. वर-वधू के रिश्ते की बात की शुरुआत से लेकर विवाह के सम्पान तक कर्मकांड, अंधविश्वास और पाखंड की जड़ें इतनी गहरी हैं, और उन्हें इस तरह आत्मसात किया गया है कि वे सामान्य तौर पर हमें दिखायी ही नहीं देती हैं. ब्राह्मण परंपरा में तो ‘कुंडली’ ही रिश्ते की प्राथमिक कड़ी है. कुंडली मिलेगी तो बात बनेगी, अन्यथा नहीं. अगर कुंडली मिलान के दौरान लड़की ‘मांगलिक’ निकली तो लड़की के साथ ही उसके परिवार वालों पर आफत आ जाती है. मांगलिक लड़कियों के विवाह के जो उपाय ब्राह्मण पद्धति में बताये जाते हैं, उसमें न तार्किकता है और न ही कोई वैज्ञानिकता. उत्तर भारतीय समाजों में तो विवाह व्यवस्था ही अन्यायपूर्ण एवं सामंती लक्षणों से भरी हुई है. बाराती ऐसे आते हैं जैसे कि वे सामंत हों. उनके नाज-नखरों के तले लड़की वाले दबे रहते हैं. केवल धर्म और संस्कृति के नाम पर इस तरह के रस्मों का पालन किया जाता है. ‘तिलक-दहेज’ को तो अब लगभग सभी पद्धतियों, धर्मों और समुदायों ने स्वीकार कर लिया है. यहां तक कि वैवाहिक मामलों में सहज और उन्मुक्त रहनेवाले आदिवासी समाज की ‘गोनोंग’ प्रथा में भी अब कुरीतियां घुसने लगी हैं. यह

देश दुनिया से

चीन-अमेरिका व्यापार युद्ध के मायने

चीन-अमेरिका व्यापार युद्ध गतिरोध की स्थिति में है. दोनों देशों के बीच रणनीतिक अविश्वास गहरा रहा है. इस गतिरोध को तोड़ने के लिए जो राजनीतिक कदम उठाने चाहिए, उसकी कमी है. यहां प्रश्न यह उठता है कि क्या पारंपरिक अर्थों में यह एक व्यापार युद्ध है? शुरुआत में, दोनों पक्ष मानते थे कि अमेरिका व्यापार युद्ध के माध्यम से चीन-अमेरिका संबंधों को फिर से परिभाषित करने की कोशिश कर रहा है. लेकिन, ऐसे दृष्टिकोण इतने ठोस नहीं थे. पहले ऐसा प्रतीत हुआ कि डोनाल्ड ट्रंप का उद्देश्य दोनों देशों के बीच व्यापार असंतुलन को हल करना था और अमेरिकी बौद्धिक संपदा अधिकारों की रक्षा करने के लिए एक तरह से वे उपयुक्त थे. लेकिन, चीन की दिग्गज तकनीक कंपनी हुआवेई पर अमेरिका की सख्ती चीनी समाज की इस समझ को पुष्ट करती है कि अमेरिका का इरादा सिर्फ व्यापार असंतुलन को दूर करने का नहीं था, बल्कि वह चीन की उच्च तकनीक विकास क्षमता को भारी झटका भी देना चाहता था. अगर चीन समझौता करता है, तो इसका मतलब हुआ कि वह अमेरिका को भविष्य में चीन-अमेरिका संबंधों को परिभाषित करने और फिर से उसे आकार देने का अधिकार प्रदान करता है. इससे चीन की राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा प्रभावित हो सकती है.

मुख्यधारा की पद्धति से इस मामले में भिन्न है कि इसमें लड़की वालों को लड़के वाले मूल्य चुकाते हैं. इस तरह की वैवाहिक रस्में कर्मकांड और अंधविश्वास की उपज हैं. पुरोहितां का तर्क यह होता है कि रस्म पूरा किये बिना जीवन सुखी नहीं होता है. लेकिन, इस तर्क का क्या किया जाये, जिसमें पूरा परिवार ही बोझ से दब जाये? हमारे समाज में स्त्री उपीड़न और भ्रष्टाचार की जड़ें हमारी विवाह पद्धतियों से भी जुड़ी हुई हैं.

आमतौर पर माना जाता है कि गरीब और अशिक्षित लोग ही अंधविश्वास और पाखंड को बढ़ावा देते हैं, लेकिन कथित सभ्य और शिक्षित लोग भी इससे मुक्त नहीं है. कितनी बड़ी विडंबना है कि जो लोग दहेज प्रथा के विरुद्ध निबंध लिखकर अफसर बनते हैं, वे तक दहेज से मुक्त नहीं है. अब तो जो जिलता बड़ा ओहदा वाला अधिकारी होता है, उसके दहेज की रकम भी उतनी ही भारी-भरकम होती है. दहेज निरोधक कानून के बावजूद समाज में यह धड़ल्ले से न केवल प्रचलित है, बल्कि इसे लोग ‘स्टेटस सिंबल’ की तरह देखते हैं.

ऐसे दौर में राजगीर में संपन्न उस वैवाहिक कार्यक्रम की तार्किकता और सार्थकता अच्छी लगती है. थकाऊ और उलझाऊ कर्मकांड के बजाय सीधे सरल तरीके से वर-वधू को बाराती-और सराती ने मिलकर शुभकामनाएं दीं. वर-वधू समेत दोनों पक्षों ने सामाजिक असामनता, अंधविश्वास और गरीबी दूर करने की प्रतिज्ञा की. सबसे विलक्षण तो स्त्रियों द्वारा गाये जा रहे विवाह के गीत थे, जिनमें शोषण से मुक्ति, गरीबी, अशिक्षा दूर करने और समानता लाने के बोल थे. ऑर्किस्ट्रा या मंचीय नाच जैसी सामंती अश्लीलता के बजाय जनता को जागरूक बनानेवाले नाटकों का मंचन दुर्लभ था. फिल्मी गीतों के बजाय जनगीत ज्यादा सार्थक थे. उपहारों की जगह वहां उपस्थित जन संप्रदायिकता एवं जातिवाद के विरुद्ध समतामूलक समाज के निर्माण के लिए अपना पक्ष रखकर वर-वधू को शुभकामनाएं दे रहे थे. मगध क्षेत्र में अर्जक संघ एवं युवक संघ जैसी सामाजिक संस्थाएं इस तरह की सांस्कृतिक मुहिम चला रही हैं. इनके द्वारा संचालित विवाह पद्धति दहेज मुक्त होती है. महिलाएं भी विवाह करा सकती हैं. प्रतिज्ञा, माल्यार्पण, शुभकामना जैसे तीन सामान्य चरणों में विवाह पूरा हो जाता है. अर्जक संघ का जातिवाद के खिलाफ आंदोलन का अपना इतिहास है. बिहार में यह शहीद जगदेव प्रसाद के नेतृत्व में अपने रैंडिकल विचार के साथ प्रसारित हुआ है. इसे देख लगता है कि मगध की धरती में अब भी तार्किकों का अस्तित्व है. मानववादी होने की बात कहनेवाली ये संस्थाएं भले ही कम हों, लेकिन उनके इतिहास की जड़ें मजबूत हैं. हम इनसे तर्क और विचार लेकर मौजूदा कर्मकांडों और पाखंडों से मुक्त होने की लड़ाई लड़ सकते हैं.

कार्टून कोना



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भौषण गर्मी और पावर कट

इस वर्ष भीषण गर्मी की मार से लोग काफी परेशानी का सामना कर रहे हैं और उस पर बिजली की सही आपूर्ति भी नहीं हो रही है. पलामू के पोलपोल गांव में बीते 20 दिनों से बिजली आम लोगों के साथ लुका छिपी का खेल खेल रही है. इस क्षेत्र में राजहरा ग्रिड से बिजली आपूर्ति की जाती है, पर इसकी सेवा पिछले कुछ दिनों से काफी दयनीय हो गयी है. लोग इस भयंकर गर्मी में झुलसने को मजबूर हो गये हैं. साधन रहते हुए भी बिजली के आभाव में उसका लाभ नहीं ले पा रहे हैं. यहां पर बिजली की अनियमित आपूर्ति का एक प्रमुख कारण यह भी है कि स्थानीय कल-कारखानों को चलाने के लिए आम जनता के हिस्से की बिजली काट कर उन व्यावसायिक संस्थानों को आपूर्ति करायी जा रही है. ऐसे में प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों से यही अनुरोध है कि इस मसले में गंभीरता से लेते हुए इस क्षेत्र के लोगों को पावर कट से राहत पहुंचाएं.

बीरज पाठक, पलामू

पेड़ लगाना फैशन नहीं, है गंभीर मुद्दा

इस बार भी विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस कई जगहों पर काफी हर्षोल्लास के साथ मनाया गया. कई लोगों ने पेड़ लगाते समय अच्छी-अच्छी सेलफ़ी भी ली. सोशल मीडिया पर इसके लिए खूब तारीफ भी मिली. हजारों लाइक मिले. इसमें कई नेतागण भी पीछे नहीं रहे. फोटो करवा कर उसे अखबारों में भी छपवाया गया. पर सबसे बड़ा सवाल रह गया कि क्या सिर्फ यह एक ही दिन पर्यावरण दिवस मनायी जानी चाहिए या पूरे साल मनाया जाना चाहिए? वास्तविकता है कि ग्लोबल वार्मिंग के कारण धरती जल रही है. ग्लेशियर तेजी से पिघल रहे हैं. इसकी रफ्तार इतनी तेज है कि 2100 तक 50 से 100 देश विश्व मानचित्र से गायब हो जायेंगे या फिर उनका कुछ ही हिस्सा बचा होगा. काफी देर तो हो ही चुकी है, पर इतना नहीं कि इसे न रोका जा सके. लेकिन यह भी सच है कि इस तरह साल में एक या दो दिन पेड़ लगा कर छोड़ देने से कुछ नहीं होगा.

पालूराम हेंबर, सलगाझारी

अमेरिकी निरंकुशता को चुनौती देते रूस और चीन

आज अमेरिका अपने स्वार्थ की पूर्ति के लिए दुनियाभर के कमजोर और गरीब राष्ट्रों के खिलाफ बात-बात पर आर्थिक प्रतिबंध लगा रहा है. ब्रिटिश साम्राज्यवाद के पतन के बाद अमेरिकी वर्चस्ववादी स्वभाव ने पूरे विश्व को एक अमेरिकी उपनिवेश बनाकर रख दिया है. जिसे चाहो धमका दो, उस पर अनावश्यक और झूठा आरोप लगाकर उस पर युद्ध धोषाकर किसी भी देश, उसकी सभ्यता, उसकी संस्कृति आदि सभी कुछ नष्ट कर देना, अमेरिकी साम्राज्यवादियों के बायें हाथ का खेल बन कर रह गया है. अब रूस और चीन आपस में संधि करके अमेरिकी रवैये का विरोध करने के लिए एक संयुक्त सैन्य अभ्यास करने जा रहे हैं. अगर रूस, चीन और भारत का एक संगठन बन जाये, तो यह संगठन 'नाटो ' पर भारी पड़ेगा. रूस और चीन का एक साथ आना अमेरिकी निरंकुशता की नकेल कसने के लिए बहुत जरूरी है.

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद