

Lessons from HK



TICKER
MIHIR SHARMA

It has been a fairly crowded fortnight in terms of news, and so some might have missed what, for me, has been the most interesting and perhaps important story of the past fortnight. This is a story that comes neither from India nor from Europe or from America, but from tiny Hong Kong, which has once again taken to the streets to protest interference by Beijing in the self-administering city's affairs.

When I say "interference by Beijing" and "self-administering", I am not being strictly accurate, of course, but that is because normal language cannot quite manage the shades of truth and falsehood that are necessary when dealing with authoritarian regimes. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is technically self-governing, but its parliament and chief executive are not exactly democratically elected. The current chief executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, was picked by an electoral college of 1,200 people that is essentially stacked with pro-Beijing members. A chief executive of Hong Kong cannot be associated with any political party.

Thus what the people of Hong Kong are protesting is the decisions of their own chief executive, which they say are serving Beijing's interests and not their own. In fact, they are protesting one decision in particular: A new extradition law that might allow the government to extradite residents of Hong Kong to mainland China for trial. In the sort of absurdity one expects under such systems, the Hong Kong government's claimed reason for this new law is to ensure that a particular extradition of a murder suspect takes place — but not to the People's Republic of China, but to the Republic of China or Taiwan. To add to the absurdity, Taipei has said that it will not recognise extraditions under the law, in solidarity with Hong Kong's protestors.

Perhaps all such demonstrations are futile. We don't know how strong the pro- and anti-Beijing factions within Hong Kong are, because it has never been allowed to hold a free and fair election. Further, the notion of a single unarmed town challenging the might of the People's Republic is a little absurd. Hong Kong's time is running out, after all. Beijing promised to honour "one country, two systems" for 50 years after it was handed Hong Kong by Britain in 1997. Soon, half that period will be up, and the freedoms of Hong Kong residents — including their freedoms of speech and assembly — are already under threat. Recently, for the first time, uniformed soldiers owing allegiance to Beijing were posted in the city, ostensibly to guard the Hong Kong end of a high-speed train line. Most importantly, the government of Xi Jinping has shown that it believes that Beijing's new strength means that it does not have to respect previously agreed on terms or norms. Given that, one could well say that "one country, two systems" is on its way out in practice even if not on paper.

Yet there is something worth considering about Hong Kong's anger. First, it is a useful reminder of the limits to the popularity of Beijing's systems and controls. At a time when many hitherto democratic countries appear to be degenerating into "managed", illiberal democracies, Hong Kong serves as a reminder that such managed democracies are hardly more popular.

Second, it serves notice to all large countries that they must be careful about sub-nationalism. Hong Kong is a Cantonese city. And yet its evening news is now being broadcast in Mandarin. A majority of primary schools in the city use Mandarin. It's easy to see why this might happen even without political involvement: Mandarin is useful for business with China, and Cantonese itself has long been denied traditional structures of support and derided as only a "spoken" language, without even an official dictionary. But identities that form around language are resilient to political pressure. Again, something that seems relevant to us in India.

Third, it allows one to consider the fact that the acceptance of the Chinese Communist Party's right to rule all Chinese people remains contested. Shorn of all historicist mumbo-jumbo, the "one China" policy means essentially that: It conceals a power grab by Beijing's leaders. The question is how long the rest of the world will pay lip service to such a naked piece of political manipulation. Given that the notion that Taiwan should hold a formal referendum on the question of independence from the mainland is gaining ground, this is not an empty question. At some point, governments might be forced to take a stand to defend Taiwan. For almost five decades, the world has backed Beijing's claims — from India's restraint of Tibetan activists, to Britain's decision to hand Hong Kong back to Beijing. As Xi grows in power, there is no telling how long this forbearance will last.

m.s.sharma@gmail.com; Twitter: @mihirsharma

PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

I miss them," sighs Rita Devi, gazing into her now empty cowshed. We are in her house in Kandhbari, a sleepy hamlet in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. "There was a time when many people kept cows in the village," she says. Today, most of us find it easier and cheaper to buy milk at ₹25 per litre from a local dairy. She runs the village Anganwadi but spends her mornings in her fields, where her family grows onions, garlic, corn and wheat. "It's a hobby, not a necessity," she says. "Farming gives me something constructive to do when I'm back from the Anganwadi." However, this "hobby" too may not last long.

Rajnath Singh's dilemma

The new defence minister has to correct a major asymmetry. Will his discipline come in the way?



PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

If Rajnath Singh was upset about being dropped from two cabinet committees — the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs and the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs — he gave no public hint of it. The only indication that he was a bit hurt at being de jure number two in the government but not considered important enough to be included in the committees was an off-hand remark, made with a smile. "Kya mein tumhe chhe foot sey paanch foot ke lagne laga hoon" (do you think I now measure five feet instead of six), he asked an aide as TV channels chattered on loudly about how Rajnath Singh *ka kad gir gaya hai* (Rajnath Singh has lost his stature). By the evening, the government had reversed the decision and reissued the notification. Not once did he suggest/offer/threaten/to resign.

Discipline has served him well. From a nondescript Member of the Legislative Council of Uttar Pradesh (UP) to a second term as a member of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has been punctuated by important milestones. Rajnath Singh was UP's education minister, chief of the state unit of the party, president of the central BJP and a minister in the union cabinet several times. To say nothing of the overt and covert roles he has performed on the orders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the parent body of the BJP.

He was elected an MLA from Mirzapur in 1977 when he was just 26, a result of being associated with the student wing of the Jana Sangh during the Emergency and being jailed. The late 1980s and early 1990s in UP were the years of the rise of Kalyan Singh who appointed Rajnath Singh education minister in 1991. One of his first moves as minister was to bring, through an ordinance, the anti-copying law, making copying a non-bailable offence — which meant the onus of

proving oneself innocent was on the accused. Fourteen and 15-year olds were sent to jail on charges of copying. The pass percentage in the UP High School Board examination for Class X in 1991 was 58.03. In 1992, after the anti-copying law was put in place, it slipped to 14.7. Singh had to pay for his convictions: He contested the Assembly election from Mohana, a student-dominated constituency near Lucknow in 1993, and was defeated comprehensively. He was sent to the Rajya Sabha in 1994. He became a minister in the Vajpayee and later the Modi government.

Now he has become defence minister for that very quality: Discipline. He is representing a BJP government which has come to power promising to champion the cause of soldiers afflicted by prolonged neglect, bureaucratic interference and marginalisation in defence policy-making.

The seeds of the deformed national security and defence architecture, and mistrust in civil-military relations were sown at the time of Independence when the British Indian armed forces were converting from an imperial garrison of a theatre command to a national army. The origin of these uncivil relations is the oft-quoted dispute between C-in-C Kitchener and Viceroy Curzon. The insistence by Curzon to introduce an additional member in his executive council to exercise financial control was opposed by Kitchener. 150 years later, the legacy of that dispute lingers.

Except for Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi who did not survive the aftermath of Independence, India's political leaders lacked military experience. Their sin-

gle biggest fear, patently unfounded, was a military coup. The existing army department was turned first into the department of defence and later the MoD. At the time, defence secretary H M Patel and his successor twice offered to integrate the service headquarters with MoD. But General Rajindersinhji and General K S Thimayya refused, fearing they would lose operational command and the panoply of pomp and pageantry by joining the ministerial whirlpool.

Soon, the army got fully involved in J&K, Junagadh, Hyderabad and Goa operations. While its prestige rose, its clout gradually declined. It was not even consulted in deciding crucial operational issues. Civilian bureaucracy, in cahoots with the political leadership, cut the services down to size. The generals were careless and naïve not to notice the diminution in their stature and status. But the civilian bureaucracy at once grasped the import of civilian control and went about following a policy of divide and rule: keeping divided the three wings of the armed forces and parrying proposals of their integration with the ministry, not without assistance from the services themselves. From the stunning decline in the Warrant of Precedence to the erosion of financial and operational autonomy, the decline corroded promotions, postings, ceremonial functions and even distribution of canteen profits. At one stage, the MoD also asked to scrutinise promotion exams and was told it was a professional matter.

It is this asymmetry that Rajnath Singh has to correct as defence minister. Will discipline come in the way?

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ SABYASACHI MUKHERJEE | DIRECTOR GENERAL | CSMVS

The people's curator

Mukherjee tells Arundhati Dasgupta how he plans to bring down the walls between people and their culture

Food is not on his mind as Sabyasachi Mukherjee casts a perfunctory look at the menu before suggesting that we sample the buffet, popular with office goers in the area. We are at Kala Ghoda, Mumbai's art district where Mukherjee works and lives, a stone's throw away from Copper Chimney, where we have seated ourselves in a quiet nook. Once an iconic restaurant for the rich and famous and a Bollywood favourite, the restaurant is a long way off its heydays.

Not too many people stop in for a bite here anymore and the restaurant has quietly dropped its tony status to sit inside the food courts of malls where it draws much more custom. For us however, its quiet confines are a plus; in a city where noisy restaurants are the norm, we have few choices and Mukherjee has even suggested a boardroom meet over a meal. I gently shot that down, hoping to draw him into a more candid conversation outside the oppressive demands of his workspace.

I needn't have bothered. Mukherjee speaks from the heart, even if he hesitates to shoot from the hip. Despite having spent his entire working life in the city, in south Mumbai, which may well qualify for the gangster status recently awarded to New Delhi's Khan Market, he has not picked up the fine art of privilege, doublespeak.

Originally from Santiniketan, where he schooled in the Bengali medium before studying museology and museum studies from M S University in Baroda, he came to the Mumbai as an intern with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya or CSMVS. "I fell in love," he says. One look at the magnificent Indo-Saracenic structure that rose above everything else in the vicinity and he, a 25-year old who had wanted to become a social worker, was hooked. "I fell in love

and everything changed from there," he says.

He has been two decades (and some more) at the helm. Under him, the museum has undergone a dramatic change, shedding its old elitist form with mothballed artefacts and slow whirling fans into an open, well-lit structure bringing in exhibitions from all over the world. He has just set up a children's museum, a glass structure built around the old and majestic trees in the museum's three-acre campus. This is his most rewarding project he says. Keen on giving something to the children, by them and for them, he ensured that the first collections have been curated by a group of children too.

A few years ago, CSMVS drew much applause from peers across the world for another first, its 'museum on wheels', also a pet project of Mukherjee. "I used to wonder if the role of the museum is to enlighten the enlightened," he says softly, referring obliquely to the fact that CSMVS, like most major art and culture institutions in the city is situated in south Mumbai. In a way the people who come to the museum are mostly privileged city residents; although there are tourists from all over the country and the world coming in today, it was not always the case. "I used to question myself, what am I doing for the underprivileged and since 2009, I think the shift began. We reached out to NGOs and identified a strategy to take the museum to the people, whose culture we celebrate," he says.

The city has good people, he says and "if you have a good idea and can implement it, the money comes." The museum on wheels and the children's museum have found generous private and corporate donors. "There is a huge cultural hunger in the country and we do not know how to feed them,

everyone is curious but we don't have enough people to take this forward," he says. Mukherjee is a strong advocate for setting up dedicated Indian heritage management institutes and training people to look after what could be a goldmine for the country's exchequer, in terms of tourism revenue.

The food comes to the table, the attendants finally giving up on us making our way to spread. A few chicken and paneer tikkas and some biryani that Mukherjee asks for, specifically. No surprises as Copper Chimney sticks to the tried and tasted onion-tomato gravy routine that was once the norm in all city restaurants, but has long lost its taste. Mukherjee is a small eater, eats without spending much time over his plate. I wonder if it would have been better if we had organised a cook-in with home chefs, perhaps more in keeping with the style of a man who wears his accent and roots on his sleeve.

Mukherjee sees his role as that of a culture manager, a custodian of people's culture. This is a different approach in a world where museums are seen as sterile spaces, meant to educate children and foreign nationals about past glory. Mukherjee was also rankled by the criticism leveled at Indian cultural institutions from all over the world, that the buildings with some of the most priceless objects in their custody were extremely cavalier about their privilege.

So what does a museum mean to him, having spent his entire life working in one? He takes no time to answer this one. "An open space for conversation, it is not a building or an object but an idea." The answer may sound glib but Mukherjee approached it with the drive of a research scholar. He began by defining what a museum must mean to the people and then worked his way backwards to draw up a strategy for

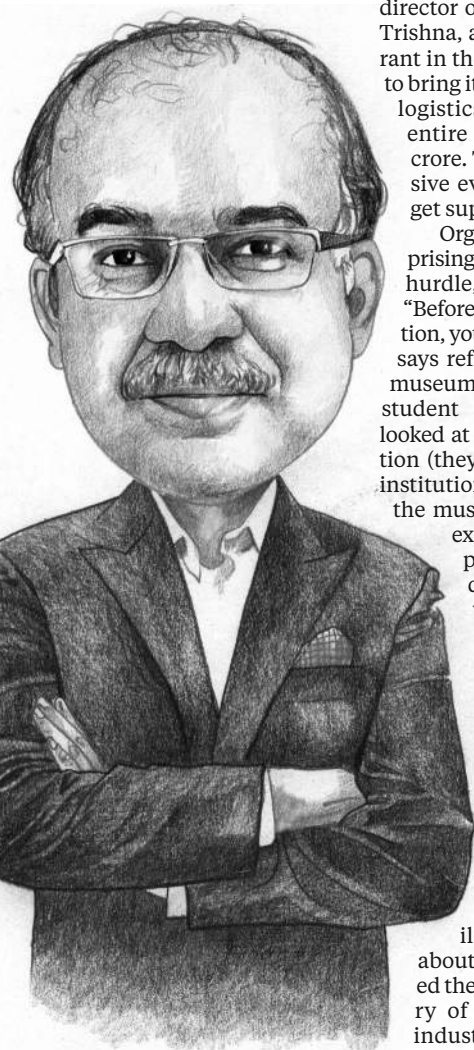


ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

engagement and involvement.

He is ambitious he says but never really thought he would hold the top job. "A curator writing a few odd academic papers that is what I saw life as." And yet, he is the first museum director to have attempted anything as big as the India and the World exhibition in partnership with the British Museum. It took three years of planning and execution, but the beginning was over a meal with Neil MacGregor, a former

director of the British Museum, at Trishna, a popular seafood restaurant in the vicinity. "We were keen to bring it here but the cost and the logistics were daunting. The entire project cost close to ₹14 crore. This was the most expensive ever for us and we had to get support."

Organising the funds was surprisingly easy. Money is not the hurdle, mindsets are, he says. "Before you transform an institution, you transform its people," he says referring to his work at the museum. It helped that he was a student of history. Because he looked at the history of the institution (they have recently set up an institutional archive to document the museum's storied history) to explain himself better to his people. The idea was to demonstrate to those now working in the cavernous insides of the sprawling structure that they were walking on the shoulders of giants.

The museum was set up with contribution from wealthy industrialists, by people who wanted to give back to their city. Not just its founders, the collections carry a similar story. Mukherjee talks about the many who have gifted their collections, but the story of Sir Ratan Tata (son of industrialist Jamsetji N Tata), collector, lover of art, good food, music and interesting conversations, resonates the deepest with him. Most of the collection at the museum today is his donation, picked off the cultural hothouses of London (he died there in 1918) in the early 1900s. "He was collecting Indian antiquities and art objects in London at a time when they were being taken out of the country quite freely (as the property of the British rulers) and he gave it all to the museum as a gift," he marvels. It is a gift Mukherjee is determined to keep giving back.

PDS and the decline of farming



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

Under National Food Security Act, 2013, up to 75 per cent of village population can be identified as eligible for food security. Consequently, with wheat being available in the government ration shop for less than ₹6 or less per kilo; rice at ₹8 or less (depending on the household's level of poverty) — it seems to have become cheaper for people like her to buy, than to grow their own food here.

Later, while out on a walk in the village, I realise that many locals have already done the math. Many of the fields look like they've been lying fallow for a while. This is the first year when the pre-monsoon rains have been very poor, so water scarcity is on top of everyone's mind. Most people I chat with while walking tell me that farming has now become too labour intensive. "My patch of beans is already half dead in this uncharacteristically hot and dry weather," says an old lady, who is watering her plants with a bucket. "Perhaps next year, I'll simply buy them from the local shop."

Education and the consequent rise in aspirations has also resulted in many veering away from agriculture. Villagers are now looking outward for jobs, and bemoan the lack of available farm labour to manage their fields. "Most people who used to work in the fields earlier have

found other more lucrative jobs mostly in the tourism sector," explains Hans Raj, who runs the local photography shop. He reminisces about the time when his family's fields used to be cultivated by farmers from a neighbouring village. "My grandfather, like everyone else in the village, had little money," he says. "So he would pay their wages in potatoes." The barter system worked perfectly until the ration shop opened. "We also started buying our food grain from there and today, we plant green vegetables, onion, garlic and maize for our own consumption only in a portion of our land," he says.

Meanwhile, it's getting late and time to end my leisurely evening ramble. I muse that the government's strong push for education and food security has resulted in more and more villagers opting out of farming. These schemes are important no doubt, but there has to be a parallel effort to incentivise farmers to till their fields. Else, many more could be headed in the same direction as Rita and Hans Raj. I wonder what will happen if all farmers stopped cultivating their land. I ask Hans Raj: Where will our food come from then? He has no answer. Instead, we watch the sun dip behind a hill; he lost in his thoughts, me in mine.

A break from chicken



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

Boarding schools teach you a thing or two about eating everything that's on your plate fast while keeping it away from predatory seniors and dorm bunnies. Growing up in a *fauji* household meant having to adapt to an equal opportunity palate — never forgetting your table manners while at it. Saying no to any food was never an option. Leftovers — a 21st century malaise — isn't something I recall from my childhood, not because there wasn't enough on the table, but because you weren't allowed a smaller portion of bitter *karela* because you wanted more of the mutton curry.

Our kids, growing up, were a little

more indulged, but they grew up with the same creed — nothing to be wasted, everything to be tasted, minus fuss or tantrums. Past their teenage years, they steered clear of junk food. Nor did they demur at carrying packed lunches to work — even though, sometimes, perversely, the cook would pack *lauki* with *tori*. There were occasional outbursts, but largely the household ate what it was served — and was thankful for it. Then my son married.

A list of things his wife does not eat would fill a page of this newspaper, so it might be simpler to list the only thing she does — which is chicken. She tries, poor child, but it's no easier for her. "Watermelon," my acerbic wife informed her, "is not salad." We eat — *ate* — a lot of salad because — surprise! — we liked it. Like most Indians, our meals are — *were* — primarily vegetarian, though we liked fish and fowl well enough to include it in our dietary plan. Now, though, it's not enough to have if for every other meal, it must be the only meal.

We were never partial to chicken or *paneer*, both reminding us of blotting paper with no taste to call its own. Given peer pressure about avoiding red meat, chicken entered our kitchen but remained at its periphery. We ate fish, prawns, pork, buffalo, squid, crab, mussels, quail, duck,

farm grown partridge, hare — and in the dim past, venison. The variety of vegetables was varied, there were pulses to pick from, and all manner of foods we took for granted. It was an echo of most middle-class homes that I am now forced to view through the lens of nostalgia.

Last week, my daughter and I accompanied my son's bride and her young nephew for an afternoon at the mall. Let me skip over the excessive hours spent in the stores to arrive at our menu for lunch. We began with starters that included honey chilli chicken and, in deference to my daughter-in-law's preference, salad marked less by greens and more by — right, chicken. Having pandered to so much fowl, who would have thought our main course would include a street curry *with chicken* and — while I distinctly remember saying the words "lamb", "pork" and "prawns" out loud — we had udon noodles with chicken, and wouldn't you know it, a late order of chicken dimsums.

My son and his wife are now spending a holiday in pursuit of chicken in Istanbul, giving us a week to spoil ourselves with helpings of broccoli, corn, beet, brinjals, mushrooms, zucchini, bokchoy, cluster-beans, peppers, lettuce. I'm making the most of it — for next week, we will be on a detox diet of chicken, *again*.

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Budget for five years, not one day

The finance minister is holding pre-Budget meetings with specific groups. Invitees proffer dozens of ideas at such meetings, from good to bad and positively zany. Inevitably, therefore, very few of the suggestions aired at such meetings make their way into any Budget. But finance ministers can and do get influenced by the kind of issues that are raised, since they are seen to indicate what people in general are concerned about — whether inflation or the deficit, or economic growth. This time may be no different.

The fiscal situation is stressed (when is it not?!), economic growth has slowed, tax revenue has fallen short and the deficit is high if it is properly accounted. Government debt too is about 20 per cent higher than it should be, and fresh borrowing is swallowing up almost all of household savings (partly because these savings have shrunk). Almost no household savings are therefore available to the private sector. Naturally, the Reserve Bank finds it difficult to force down interest rates in the market. On account of both the shortage of funds as well as their cost, investment has suffered.

The average rate of inflation has come down over the years from 7 per cent to 3 per cent, but savings schemes like the provident funds continue to offer zero-risk, tax-free returns of more than 8 per cent. This is ridiculously high and out of line with the money market. Naturally, real lending rates (ie after adjustment for inflation) are also among the highest in the world. If the government wants interest rates to fall and facilitate private investment, among the things it has to do is remove tax incentives on small savings. On the spending side, it should be doing as little as possible.

Neither bit of advice is what a newly elected government, with a massive mandate and promises to keep, wants to hear. Compared to last year, new or larger commitments for this year already include the cost of Ayushman Bharat and the ₹6,000 annual payout to all farmers — at a time when tax revenue is well short of the Budget numbers. Defence spending has been squeezed over the years and, as the finance minister would know from her previous perch in the defence ministry, the forces make do with lots of obsolete equipment. Further neglect could prove costly. Then, various unpaid bills from last year have to be paid. The approach to the expenditure side of the Budget, therefore, has to be one of extreme moderation. Any new or additional expenditure must be limited to the extent of matching savings under other heads. Such savings are always possible.

On the revenue side, the room for raising fresh taxes is limited in a slowing economy. The hard fact is that there is no fiscal space for the finance minister to manoeuvre — other than what will become available from the Reserve Bank through transfer of what is deemed to be its excess reserves. Given that the financial sector's troubles continue to impact economic activity, and the cleaning up of balance sheets is still a work in progress, the RBI windfall should be used to re-capitalise government-owned banks, and/or provide a special finance window for otherwise sound shadow banks that face liquidity problems because their existing sources of funding have dried up.

The best strategy would be for the minister to state the reality upfront (honest acceptance of the facts can be reassuring). She should make clear that she is playing a five-year Test match, not a one-day event. Her focus, therefore, should be on restoring fiscal sanctity and control (which financial markets will welcome), while energising her audience with reform policy initiatives for the long term. The subsidy bill can be tamed by reforming the public food procurement system; there is no need for an expensive buffer stock when each year delivers a grain surplus. And infrastructure investment can be funded by hawking existing assets (roads, discoms, etc) to long-term investors in operation and maintenance contracts, and using the money thus garnered to create new assets where the initial project risk is assumed by the government.

Return of the Gujarat Model

Narendra Modi's new PMO resembles the US President's Executive Office and he will govern through his 'cabinet' of hand-picked super-bureaucrats

The Modi-Shah-BJP establishment has an aversion to anyone but the faithful using the expression “Gujarat Model” to characterise their methods. We can see where they are coming from. Their critics have trade-marked that expression to mean their post-2002 politics of polarisation.

There is, however, a less contentious manifestation of the Gujarat Model as well: Centralised governance. Watch the latest changes in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), with three of his key aides

This is natural progression from the way Narendra Modi ran Gujarat. But, for everyone's comfort, let's simply call it the Modi Model of Governance. It was unveiled in Gujarat in 2001-02, evolved through his two full terms (2002-12) and two part terms (2001-02, 2012-14), and accompanied him to New Delhi. His second term as PM is its reinforced version.

If you are risk-averse, you might wish to borrow that statutory warning from mutual funds: Past performance is not a guarantee of future performance. Such caveats are not available to us, political analysts, as our published word lives on for public scrutiny. With Mr Modi, however, it has so far been quite safe to apply his past to his future action. Much can change, but in detail. The fundamentals remain firm.

Here are the five important pillars of this Modi Model:

1. “Supremo” chief executive with total control of the party through trusted lieutenants;
2. Governance through hand-picked civil servants, and retirement won't come in the way;
3. Mission-mode governance with a few ideas where visible results are possible within one term, to be executed by a few chosen people;
4. Never lose the ideological big picture;
5. Neutralise all opposition, within and outside, through reason, rent, pressure and intrigue (the ancient *saam, daam, dand, bhed*).

It worked brilliantly in Gujarat, a medium-sized and less diverse state. There were doubts if it would work for all of India. It did threaten to unravel a few times: Demonetisation, some foreign policy setbacks, especially in the neighbourhood after the initial euphoria, growth decline, job losses and the 2017 Gujarat election near-thing. But in the end, what matters is the bottom line. The 303 there settled it.

Like all capital cities, New Delhi's first instinct is bureaucratic: Mr Modi had no choice but to elevate his three aides. After he chose former IFS officer S Jaishankar to be his external affairs minister, he was under compulsion to upgrade National Security Advisor and former IPS officer Ajit Doval to avoid an

awkward rank-reversal.

Having promoted Mr Doval, in turn, Mr Modi was forced to give parity to Nripendra Misra and P K Mishra from the IAS. You should be careful to read too much in these, mere protocol compulsions. Other non-ministers have been given Cabinet rank in the past, notably the heads of the Planning Commission and NITI Aayog and, under UPA-2, even Nandan Nilekani as the head of the UIDAI.

This explanation fails for three reasons. First, because it is so obvious that in the Modi world it is illogical. Second, because it presumes Mr Modi had to make these changes under compulsion. There is nothing on Mr Modi's record yet that says he is prone to acting under compulsion, definitely not of bureaucratic protocol. Why would he do it now after winning an enhanced majority? And third, that nothing compelled him to pick Mr Jaishankar in the first place. He did that to a larger plan and the follow-on changes are merely elements of it.

This PMO, accordingly, is resembling the US President's Executive Office with the power of key cabinet officers (ministers) exercised from here. The PMO grew in Mr Modi's first term and controlled the ministries of his focus directly, from foreign affairs to sanitation.

Now, its leaders have grown, to the level of the cabinet ministers they hold to account on their boss's behalf. So even the pretence of a Westminster-style cabinet system, where the PM is the first among equals, is over. Think of a particularly hands-on American President running the State and Defense departments through a trusted NSA straddling both and an equally powerful White House Chief of Staff. Except, that in Mr Modi's case now he has two chiefs of staff.

Indira Gandhi invented the position of Principal Secretary in 1971 and appointed P N Haksar there. Haksar was followed by V Shankar under Prime Minister Morarji Desai. The position was then briefly abolished as Charan Singh's Janata Government detested centralisation. It returned with Mrs Gandhi in 1980 with P C Alexander. There was one more difference now. Pre-1977, she still had some powerful ministers in her cabinet, including Jagjivan Ram. Now she had almost none. The only minister with some power was probably a young Pranab Mukherjee.

This is what comes closest to Mr Modi in his second term with some differences. First, he doesn't lead his party directly but through Amit Shah. Second, unlike Mrs Gandhi, whose ideological objective was continuity, his is change, especially in the way Indian secularism has been defined by the Gandhi family.



NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

He told us that in his first speech to his party on the day of the results. And third, he has no family or dynasty. In that sense too, he is comparable with a US president. Not entitled to infinite terms, although not limited to two like him either. After him, there may be another party leader. Not other Modis.

A legitimate criticism of Mr Modi's first government has been its lack of talent. I too have fretted about it, describing it as the most talent-averse establishment in independent India. The reason those close to him gave then was, so what if we do not have talent and experience. We will learn. But we aren't going to win power and gift it to others.

That, in a way, was a repudiation of the Vajpayee school of team-building. He had drawn talent from everywhere. Jaswant Singh was non-RSS, Yashwant Sinha and Rangarajan Kumaramangalam were recent entrants to the BJP, George Fernandes was the first and last non-BJP, non-Congress minister in the Cabinet Committee of Security yet in a coalition led by either. Arun Shourie was a powerful change agent who brought the force of his intellect and integrity from outside.

Mr Modi and Mr Shah did the opposite in their first term. They were averse to giving any political space to outsiders. They also had a deep distrust of professionals, specialists and technocrats. The fate of the two RBI governors with a formidable academic reputation is evidence.

Critics like us were dismissed as being outdated in our thinking, or unwilling to accept that a government could be run well without faces familiar to Anglicised Delhi elites. By the fourth year, however, as the economy floundered, and after some state election

and by-election setbacks, there were signs of change. The latter reshuffles saw the lateral entry of retired civil servants, like former IAS officer R K Singh and former IFS officer Hardeep Puri.

They've both risen in stature. See the induction of Mr Jaishankar at such a high level as a logical progression from there. And ditto for the elevation of the PMO trio. The two programmes closest to Mr Modi's heart and politics — sanitation-

water (combined now) and Ayushman Bharat — are with two empowered former civil servants, Parameswaran Iyer and Indu Bhushan, respectively, brought back from the World Bank/ADB and re-employed.

The Modi Model we see now is still the old Gujarat Model. But with an acknowledgement that governing India is more challenging than governing Gujarat, the talent it needs isn't all available in the BJP, and he will now reach outside. But only to those he has known and trusted over time within their career services. Keep a close watch in this term on a presidential Prime Minister Modi, governing through his “cabinet” of super-bureaucrats.

By Special Arrangement with ThePrint

A bibliophile's summer reading



AL FRESCO

SUNIL SETHI

For me the long, languorous days of summer and the arrival of the rains are inextricably associated with books and reading. In pre-television and digital times, when power cuts were more frequent and entertainment restricted to transistors and movie halls, books were an escape, a stimulant, a soothing elixir. It is a habit that has not faded. Here is my best list to fend off seasonal torpor and other disturbances.

The most applauded and talked about book of the year is *Early Indians* (Juggernaut; ₹699) by former business journalist Tony Joseph. In a lucid and enthralling narrative that combines forensic examination with the compelling twists and turns of an unfolding mystery, Mr Joseph unearths the story of our ancestors from 65,000 years ago. Sifting through up-to-date research in archaeology, linguistics

and recent advances in ancient DNA testing — often the province of opaque scholarship — he answers unsettling, controversial questions: Who were the Harappans? Did the “Aryans” migrate to India? Are north Indians, south Indians and tribals genetically different from each other? He challenges the notion, unshakably dear to Hindu chauvinists, that “Aryan” or “Sanskrit” or “Vedic” culture is synonymous with Indian culture — that it “was imported flat-packed and then reassembled here”. It was but one of several migrations, he argues, supported by robust evidence, since the origin of *Homo sapiens* out of Africa. If his conclusion is plain (but not simple with its ugly, present-day ramifications) it is this: “We are all migrants. And we are all mixed.”

One of the invigorating pleasures of reading about the past is the way history is retold as an ongoing serial, weaving travelogue, memoir, architectural or political churning.

Giles Tillotson, the British but Gurgaon-based architectural historian, is a dab hand at this cross-fertilisation of genres. For fans of his earlier books on Agra and Jaipur, he now completes the Golden Triangle trilogy with *Delhi Darshan: The History and Monuments of India's Capital* (Penguin; ₹499). His knowledge is wide yet his dissemination often elegant and deftly diverting. Here is how he describes the disquiet of Delhi's populace at the advent of the

young Akbar in 1556: “Anyone born just before the [Mughal] conquest had seen such change that it must have left them reeling in dizziness. First the Mughals come and knock out the Lodis; then the Surs come and knock out the Mughals; then the Mughals come back and knock out the Surs; and now the emperor falls downstairs and is succeeded by a teenager.”

The layered history of old cities is not seamless; it is a saga of disruption, political revision and tectonic social shifts. I have come to the Pakistani anthropologist Haroon Khalid's *Imagining Lahore: The City That Is, The City That Was* (Penguin; ₹599) late but what a treasure trove of storied Seat of empires, adored city of the Mughals, the capital of Ranjit Singh's Khalsa raj, and the beating heart of Punjab, its frontiers at times stretched from the outskirts of Delhi to Peshawar. Mr Khalid's wanderings take in Sufi shrines, the ruins of Hindu havelis and temples, and encounters with Lahore's endangered minorities. He does not follow a structured design but creates a luminous, captivating tapestry.

Empress of the Taj: In Search of Mumtaz Mahal by Timeri N Murari (Speaking Tiger; ₹350) is another kind of journey. Mr Murari carts his family — two sisters and wife — in Arjumand Banu's footsteps as she trails her husband on ceaseless campaigns in the 17th century. Little remains; and in Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh, where the young queen, who evoked such peerless passion, breathed

her last, not a trace. It is a moving chronicle of the maelstrom of history.

Rescuing once-prominent figures from the margins to shed new light on modern history is also the job of the archivist and reporter. British journalist Andrew Whitehead's *The Lives of Freda: The Political, Spiritual and Personal Journeys of Freda Bedi* (Speaking Tiger; ₹499) is the remarkable story of an Oxford graduate who married a handsome Sikh B P L Bedi in 1933, moved to Punjab, and adopted Indian dress and custom. Together, the Bedis defied convention, lived a spartan life of leftwing intellectual and political rigour, organising trade unions, throwing themselves into the *satyagraha* movement, and going to jail. Later Freda Bedi joined Sheikh Abdullah's Naya Kashmir movement and became a high-ranking Buddhist nun. (There is a touching photograph of her young son, actor Kabir Bedi, being ordained a Buddhist monk in Rangoon.)

And for those wishing to celebrate Girish Karnad, his collected plays in three volumes by Oxford University Press (where he once worked in Chennai in the 1960s) have gone through numerous reprints. Few explored aspects of Indian history, myth and folklore in drama, film and public debate as vigorously to hold up a mirror to our times.

Missing one volume on my bookshelf, I rang my reliable, well-stocked south Delhi bookshop for a copy. “Sorry, Sir, all sold but we're taking orders.” Mr Karnad, I imagine, would have chuckled and feigned mild surprise. Even so, a bibliophile's summer can run into dry patches.

Shikhar Dhawan get only a handful even today, and the likes of VVS Laxman, Zaheer Khan, and R Ashwin got nearly none. But Yuvraj defied all such mundane thumb-rules and apparent marketing logic (if any), commanding his own price for brand endorsements on a par with Dhoni.

Brand Yuvi is not just about some of the biggest sizes ever hit by an Indian — his 125-metre-six heaved off Brett Lee at his peak in the 2007 T20 WC; or the stratospheric prices commanded by him at IPL auctions — ₹14 crore in 2014 and ₹16 crore in 2015. His brand today is about his compassion and his charity post his successful fight with cancer. It is the caring, concerned, and considerate Yuvraj spending his own money under the YouWeCan Foundation for societal good — very rare to see among celebrities.

But whereto from here? Yuvraj had famously once said in an autobiographical insurance ad, “*Jab tak balla chalta hai, thaata hai...*”. Well, given his popularity and appeal, he could follow in father Yograj's illustrious steps and star in a few Punjabi movies! Or emulate Sidhu — join politics. Follow his first captain Ganguly — become a cricket administrator. Do a Sehwaig — try commentating. Copy Dravid — coach budding cricketers. But what I would love him to do most is to become a life coach and share his incredible story of struggle, success, and survival with all. Viva la Yuvi!

The writer is an advertising and media veteran sandeep@goyalmail.com

When Britney posts on Instagram

EYE CULTURE

CAITY WEAVER

However meagre our lives, celebrity Instagram accounts offer certain reliable comforts: front-facing studio-quality portraits of our favourite stars standing or sitting alone in careful outfits; most photos taken from the manubrium up, so that our entire phone screen is dominated by their proportional features. And, if the celebrity is Beyoncé-level famous, a gorgeous unending colour story we can fall through forever: a block of white, silver, gold and indigo clearly curated by someone with the patience to learn colour theory. This is the fame trade-off in 2019: We give them attention and a lightly engaged readership with the potential to translate to advertising revenue; they give us stylised, intimate glimpses of a life more elegant and photogenic than our own.

On Spears's Instagram, the light is uncalibrated — as likely to charge in from floor-to-ceiling windows offering 360-degree California views as to issue from a single overhead light bulb located behind her, casting her face in shadow. Her feed is a place where Britney can share her favourite quotes, be it a typographical exhortation to stay “extra sparkly” or a musing from Nietzsche about an artist's inability to endure what is known as “reality.” But her most memorable, jolting posts are ones that crop up every once in a while, seemingly with no rhyme or reason to their frequency: Britney, alone, pretending to be walking on a runway inside her home.

The plot of each is roughly the same: Spears quickly struts straight-as-an-arrow toward the camera in a selection of outfits that are not particularly fancy — the sort of clothes a woman might have in her closet, if she had one: a red off-shoulder minidress with glittering embroidery; a red off-shoulder minidress with flamenco sleeves. The editing is fast, amateurish and jarring; frequently Spears is back at her point of origin striding forward in a new outfit before she has finished walking out of frame in her old one. The footage presents her as a human GIF, repeating small motions with minute adjustments ad infinitum in the hallways, passages, corridors and loggias of the Italianate airplane-hangar where she lives.

Because the videos are a kind of art brut expressionism, empty of context, they fill viewers with questions. Who is filming? Why these clothes? Did Spears learn how to edit video clips? And, most perplexing, what does she want us to feel when we watch? Is she to be viewed as an inno-

cent girl playing dress-up? A sexy human Barbie with an infinite closet? Regardless of intention, the clips are illegible, generating primarily a voyeur's guilty, mystified confusion.

Spears's mental and physical well-being has been a subject of renewed speculation in recent months, ever since she cancelled a planned Las Vegas residency and announced an “indefinite work hiatus” in January. In April, *TMZ* reported that she had checked into a mental health facility. An hour before the *TMZ* story was published, her Instagram account featured its first new post in months (an unusually long fallow period; before the hiatus announcement, a typical rate was several posts per week). It was an image of an inspirational quote, alongside the caption “We all need to take time for a little ‘me time.’ :)” She made a series of funny faces at the camera “after therapy.”

But rather than deterring gossip, each new post has only watered the conspiracy theories flowering in the tens of thousands of comments beneath it. Would a message authored by Spears really feature an emoticon smiley, when history has demonstrated her preference for emoji? Would Spears really post herself working out to a Michael Jackson song two months after her former choreographer Wade Robson accused Jackson of years of sexual abuse in a well-publicised documentary — with a hairstyle and outfit identical to those in a video she posted 13 months earlier? Do apple emoji mean the legend Britney Jean Spears is about to release a single called “Apple Pie” or does that song not exist?

It's widely known that Spears's adult welfare is under the conservatorship of her father. Inevitably, this arrangement leads people to wonder if Spears is slapping on a smiley face because she wants to or because she has been ordered to by the entity in charge of her. In recent months, the hashtag #FreeBritney has gained popularity on social media among fans who suspect the latter.

Spears's most recent runaway video opened with a phone camera angled from above. In a perky voice edged with exasperation, she addressed the lens. “For those of you who don't think I post my own videos, I did this video yesterday. So, you're wrong! But I hope you like it.” Decades of performing have given Spears uncommon poise in heels, but the display is slightly off-kilter. She doesn't smile. Because Spears is on a “hiatus,” this was ostensibly a peek at her free time. But it certainly looks like a job.

©2019 The New York Times News Service

Vi Vi Vi Vi Vi Vi Viva la Yuvi!



YES, BUT...

SANDEEP GOYAL

I was at Lord's on July 13, 2002, during the NatWest Series final between India and England. Sachin Tendulkar was out fifth at 146. Virender Sehwag, Sourav Ganguly, and Rahul Dravid were already gone. India still needed 180 runs to win. The situation was pretty grim. In walked a tall, well-built, handsome 19-year-old Punjabi lad. Over the next 18 overs, the gutsy young batter partnered with an equally gritty Mohd Kaif to score a masterly 69 runs and take India almost to the doorstep of victory. A star was born that day. The one and only, Yuvraj Singh, India's Warrior Prince.

I saw him on television at the 2007 ICC World Twenty20 loft Stuart Broad for those

six savage (but sublime) sixes. Incredible! Unbelievable! I was at the Wankhede on April 2, 2011, as Yuvraj ran from the non-striker end to hug his captain M S Dhoni after that legendary lofted maximum that won India the World Cup. And I saw Yuvraj step up to receive the coveted Man of the Series award. There were tears in his eyes. The prince had come of age.

In the Dentsu Celesta celebrity study of 2008, Yuvraj had the highest scores on research attributes like unique, innovative, prestigious, distinctive, stylish, cool, tough, fearless, sexy, and macho. His brand map back then dwarfed all his cricketing colleagues, bar Dhoni. And he was miles ahead of the Khans, and almost all of Bollywood. Outside of the brand tracking study, my own description of Yuvraj would use different adjectives: Aggressive, daring, dashing, entertaining, flamboyant, and fun. Maybe even charming. But if I were to describe him in just one word, it would have to be mercurial. And if I would be allowed to add just one more, it would surely be swashbuckling.

Actually, ‘mercurial’ has been both the making and the un-making of Yuvraj Singh. Both as a player, and as a brand. Definition of ‘mercurial’ as per the *Cambridge English* dictionary is 1. changing suddenly and often 2. intelligent, enthusiastic, and quick. But the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary lists capri-

cious, fickle, temperamental, unpredictable, and volatile as synonyms of ‘mercurial’. When Yuvraj was a serious candidate to helm India as captain of the cricket team just before the World Cup in 2007, the selectors chose to go with the *Merriam-Webster* version, preferring a more ‘dependable’ and less-excitable Dhoni for the job.

But Yuvraj is someone you could never afford to ignore. It was the sheer force of his personality — go-getter, groovy, gregarious — that got so many brands to use him as their ambassador. Over the years, Yuvraj endorsed a long list of well-known brands: Microsoft Xbox 360, Reebok, Pepsi, Puma, Parachute, MTS, UC Browser, Revital, Lakshmi Vatika, Birla Sun Life, Royal Stag, Laureaus, Benz, and most recently Cadbury Fuse. He is, of course, also the face of his own ‘YouWeCan (YWC)’ line of apparel and accessories. Contrary to popular belief, not very many of us understand or appreciate how difficult it is to get brand endorsements in cricket if you are not a reigning captain or an ex-captain. Statistics show that brand owners have favoured team captains — Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Tendulkar, Ganguly, Dravid, Dhoni, and Virat Kohli — for more than 80 per cent of all cricketer endorsements ever. Which is why Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, and Navjot Sidhu got so few in their heydays, Rohit Sharma and

Arbitration Hub that challenges arbitration!

The govt frequently challenges global arbitration awards but still hopes India can emerge as a global centre for arbitration

INDIA'S 3-CRORE-PLUS pending cases in various courts, and the decades it takes to get justice, is both a source of immense hardship for those unlucky enough to have legal trouble as well as one of the main reasons for India's low Doing Business rankings. While the government-Supreme Court standoff is seen as one of the reasons for this, it is just a small part of the picture. Indeed, if the standoff has delayed filling up judges' posts in the Supreme Court as well as various high courts, it doesn't explain why there are around 4,000-odd posts empty in the subordinate judiciary which are not appointed by the central government. The real reasons include lack of money to build more courts, not enough digitisation etc.

Given this, it is not surprising that the government—and not just this one—has been keen to push arbitration and conciliation as an alternative means of dispute resolution. Since there are enough retired judges as well as domain experts, and the arbitration doesn't have to be done in court rooms, this is an obvious solution. Earlier this week, the Cabinet cleared the setting up of the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill. As part of this, not only will an international arbitration centre be set up in Delhi but also the Centre will set up a Chamber of Arbitration that will empanel arbitrators and maintain a permanent panel; an Arbitration Academy to train arbitrators may also be established. Over time, it is entirely possible that, as the government plans, India could become a leading centre for global arbitration; indeed, once there is global arbitration, even if the law does not allow foreign lawyers to practice in Indian courts, this should open up a lucrative window of practice for them.

There is, though, a fly in the ointment, and that is the attitude of the government towards arbitration. The government is, today, one of the biggest litigants in the country so, should it desire, by acting in a sensible manner to begin with, a large part of the problem will be taken care of. More worrying, however, is the attitude towards arbitration, especially that done internationally. In several cases like Reliance-ONGC and Antrix-Devas where the government (or PSU) has lost an arbitration case, instead of paying up, the government has challenged this in a local court; ideally, arbitration awards should be implemented immediately, and only challenged under extreme circumstances. Indeed, in the Tata-Docomo case, where the government was not even a party, it argued that while it was true that an arbitration court had asked Tatas to pay Docomo damages based on a contract they had signed, since the contract was not permitted under Indian law, the damages couldn't be paid. Fortunately for Docomo, the Delhi high court said that even if paying the damages meant the Tatas were violating the Fema law, the contract was sacrosanct and, if need be, the Tatas could pay the Fema penalties as well. And in several cases involving Cairn Energy and Vodafone, the government stand has been that the cases cannot even be arbitrated; in some others involving Reliance Industries, the government tried to delay the appointment of arbitrators on one ground or another. If the government is not going to respect international arbitration, it is difficult to see how international investors are going to be convinced that India is a viable location for arbitration.

Where is the NMC?

End reliance on stop-gap medical watchdogs

IT IS DIFFICULT to see why the government says in a recent press release that the Indian Medical Council Bill 2019 will "ensure transparency, accountability and quality in the governance of medical education in the country." Were it indeed so, why should the Bill simply provide for the extended supersession of the Medical Council of India (MCI) by the Board of Governors (BoG) for a further two years, with effect retrospectively from September 26, 2018, and for increasing the board strength from 7 to 12? If the BoG is the solution, then surely it should be instituted to provide regulation to the healthcare and medical education sector permanently, instead of being given periodic extensions? To be sure, the government did well to shut down the MCI—the erstwhile regulator's was a terminal case of graft malignancy, so much so that a Parliamentary Standing Committee noted that the "MCI cannot be remedied"—and replace it with the BoG via an ordinance. Yet, the BoG was never meant to be the end. Indeed, the government had proposed the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 29, 2017, and referred to a Standing Committee of Parliament on January 4, 2018. The Standing Committee presented its report in Parliament on March 20, 2018. More than a year after, the Bill is still hanging fire, and with the BoG's term ending only in September 26, 2020, it would seem that the government believes that the NMC is unlikely to come any time before that.

The problems with the MCI have been known for a long time—it was labelled a "den of corruption" by the Delhi High Court in 2001 and the allegations of graft being in the body's DNA, with its former president Ketan Desai at the centre of these allegations, have been around since the late 1990s. However, bumbling governments at the Centre, over the last couple of decades, have only relied on hackneyed stop-gap solutions instead of administering a curative. The UPA, after Desai's arrest on graft related charges in April 2010, first promulgated an ordinance to put in place a BoG to supersede the MCI for a year, and later, in July 2010, enacted a law to extend the BoG's term till May 2013. The MCI was reconstituted in 2013 after the BoG's term ended, but that was marred by the fact that Desai managed a nomination to the Council from his home state, Gujarat; he later had to resign. In May 2016, the Supreme Court set up an oversight committee to guide the MCI, with a tenure of one year. At the end of its term, the committee submitted a scathing report on the deep rot in MCI and how it summarily defied the committee's directives. In July 2017, the Centre insisted on a second oversight committee that resigned in protest, against the MCI ignoring its directives, before its term ended.

The NMC Bill, as was presented in Parliament, was not without points of concern, but it still was a radical change from the past—it was designed to bring in experts from non-medical domains that have intersections with healthcare regulation from a patient's point of view. Yet, given the Standing Committee report was submitted a year ago, with a rich array of recommendations to correct the flaws in the Bill, the fact that NMC is nowhere on the horizon yet seems like allowing festering.

Energising EMPLOYMENT

A report by IRENA shows the renewable energy sector created 11 mn jobs in 2018

A RECENT REPORT BY the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) says around 11 million jobs were created by the global renewable energy sector in 2018. The report highlights the various sectors—solar, biofuels and hydropower—to assess the employment generation by the sector; 3.6 million jobs were created in solar PV industry, 2.1 million in biofuels (6% increase from 2017) and hydropower. Asia accounts for 60% of the total global employment generated, with China generating the highest—around 39% of the total global employment. The report says that 32% of the new jobs because of renewables growth went to women.

India's largest renewable-sector employment generation was in the labour-intensive hydro-power segment, with 17% of the global hydro-power employment generation being from the country. India could perhaps tackle its unemployment problem via the renewable energy sector—the report puts India in the top 10 countries that are generating renewables employment. A report published in 2017, *Greening India's Workforce: Gearing up for expansion of solar and wind power in India*, says, in the rooftop solar segment, a more labour-intensive area, 24.72 job years per mega-watt (MW) were created. In comparison, ground-mounted solar accounts for 3.45 job years per MW, and wind power for 1.27 job years per MW. For India, it makes sense to focus on labour-intensive renewables segments. Post-installation, the worker should be absorbed as an employee for maintenance and should not seep back into unemployment. Tying the jobs vision, or at least a part of it, to the renewables vision will reap rich dividends for India. Indeed, given the country's ambitious Paris commitments, jobs could bloom in thousands in the solar and hydro sector if the right policy environment is provided.

NO PROOF REQUIRED

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT GDP GROWTH WAS OVER-ESTIMATED BY 250 BPS/YEAR BETWEEN 2012 & 2016 AND NO ONE KNEW ABOUT IT, INCLUDING THOSE TASKED WITH MAKING GROWTH AND POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS?

Reinterpreting GDP growth—again!

FORMER CHIEF ECONOMIC Adviser to the Ministry of Finance, Arvind Subramanian (hereafter AS) contends in a working paper at the prestigious Harvard University that India's GDP growth between 2012 and 2016 (period II) likely averaged somewhere between 3.5 and 5.5%, yielding an average growth of 4.5%. Given that the official GDP growth for this period was 7%, there is an average overstatement in the official GDP statistics of around 2.5 percentage points (ppt) a year. You can search far and wide, in journals and in newspapers, but no one, absolutely no one, has made such a calculation and assertion as AS has done for any non hyper-inflation economy for such a long period of time (except for one China estimate—see below).

Co-incidentally, AS's assertion is similar to the contention of two Hong Kong based economists that for the nine year period 2008-2016, official statistics reported GDP growth for China was higher by an average 1.7 ppt a year. However, there is one paper by History and Economics Professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Thomas Rawski, that asserted that cumulative GDP growth in China averaged just 3% over the four years 1998-2001 compared to the official estimates of 8%+. Rawski based his calculations on electricity consumption and his estimates were soon discarded by experts who used trade data to demolish his thesis. The question remains whether the same fate awaits AS's estimates.

We examine AS's computational method below, but first, a few general comments. One had thought that post Election 2019, politics would not encroach upon the substantive mis-measurement conclusions reached by AS. Unfortunately, there are still journalists and "experts" congratulating themselves that their election-oriented assertion that the Modi government had presented lies about the economy has now been proven right by AS's paper.

Two points need emphasis. For the period studied, 2001-2016, is there any additional data that AS now has that he did not have when he was CEA from Oct. 2014 to June 2018? The answer is no and while we all have doubts about all forms of data (in India, China, the US and the world), the fact remains that there are no known revisions of the data post 2018 (and post 2017) for the data used by AS. Given this fact, the question obviously arises that if no new information is avail-

SURJIT BHALLA

Contributing editor, Financial Express
Twitter: @surjitbhalla Views are personal

able, then what is the point of AS's contention regarding mis-measurement of GDP growth for the period 2012-2016?

The second point relates to GDP revisions involved with the base-year change from 2004-5 to 2011-12. This is a routine exercise, undertaken for most economies (especially developing economies) of the world from time-to-time. The normal occasion for this revision is the availability of new household survey data on expenditure (or components of income). The consumer expenditure survey data for 2017-18 is expected to be released shortly; so brace yourself for another round of base-year revisions over the next year or two.

However, it is relevant to point out, and AS is well aware of this fact, that 2014-15 base year revisions had important components of "structural change" in data collection and interpretation. In particular, balance-sheet data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) was used to estimate value added in manufacturing and service industries. Previously, CSO used the index of industrial production and the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) data (available with a two-year lag) to estimate value added in industry. For an important part of the service sector (wholesale and retail trade (WRT) accounting for 10-15% of GDP) the CSO used the previous growth rate in employment as observed via the Employment and Unemployment Surveys. For example, CSO used employment growth trends for 1999-00 to 2004-5 to assume WRT employment (and hence value added) trend between 2004-5 and 2011-12. It turns out that this estimation led to gross overestimate of the WRT sector since employment growth was less than 1% between 2004-5 and 2011-12, a big decline from the near 3% annual employment growth observed between 1999/00-2004/5.

All of this was well known by all statistical experts when they sat down, in multiple committees, to design a new method for estimation of GDP for industry and services. It is important to emphasise that international



experts from the UN, World Bank and IMF were involved in the review exercise and most of which was completed before Modi became PM in May 2014. The CSO report and method was finalised in January 2015, when AS was already 4 months in office. Since all major economists were privy to this revision method (along with the National Statistical Commission—again, all appointees of the Manmohan Singh government!) it is a bit unexpected for AS to now claim that he had doubts about the new method of estimating GDP. For the period 2011-2016, there is the whole statistical world (and UPA) approving of the new method—and AS has now positioned himself against these experts and himself (pre-2019 AS). To finish this line of argument, what would have been most useful is if AS had documented the source of the new data (information) and how this new data has changed his interpretation of reality. Note that GDP revisions undergo revisions, around the world, of 10-50 basis points, but a revision of 250 bp, annually, is unheard of, at least since Rawski made a parallel attempt two decades ago.

What about the statistical method that AS uses to reach his conclusions about gross-estimation? Perhaps mindful of Rawski's fate (AS has written a laudatory book on China's GDP growth) AS's estimation is based on four major variables—export and import growth, real credit growth and electricity consumption. He chooses two time-periods—2001-2011 and 2012-2016. I have absolutely no disagreement with his choice of time-periods. The High Level Advisory Group (HLAG) to the Commerce Minister, which I had the privilege and honour of heading, used precisely these break points to measure trade

performance in the world, the reason being that world trade literally fell off a cliff in 2012. Between 2001 and 2011, world exports grew at double digit levels (in nominal dollars) and collapsed to -1.5% pa in the 2012-16 period. In real terms, the fall in world exports was from 4.6 to -1%.

The world has changed in many ways since 2011; world trade is down, drastically, and world inflation is now at 3% levels (distributed roughly at 1-2% levels for the developed world and around 2-4% levels for the developing world). In a detailed research note, I will be examining the AS methodology regarding GDP over-estimation in some detail. For the moment, let me point out a few salient facts which suggest that AS may not have got it correct in his over-estimation prediction of 250 bp of annual growth.

Manufacturing—Value-added vs IIP growth: In period I, the two growth rates are virtually identical: 7.7 vs 7.3% pa. In period II, value added in manufacturing increased at 7.2% pa and IIP increased at only a 3.1% rate. If the MCA data for period II are considered problematic, and IIP correct, then there is an over-estimation of 4.1% per year. With a weight of 15%, this will lead to an over-estimation of GDP of 60 bp per year in period II.

Wages in manufacturing (ASI data): Real wage per day growth was only 0.4% an annum in period I, which accelerated to 2.2% pa in period II.

Agricultural wage growth: For (unskilled) ploughmen, this accelerated from 1.9% in period I to 3.3% in period II; for (semi-skilled) rural carpenters, the acceleration was much sharper—from 0.9% to 4.5%.

Real wage growth is an important component of GDP growth, and both ASI and rural wage growth indicators suggest that the second 2012-16 period (spanning both UPA and NDA) contributed a higher portion to aggregate GDP growth. Trend in wages conflicts with AS's derivation of over-estimation of GDP growth. A meaningful analysis of AS's assumptions, and cross-country estimation methods, deserves serious investigation—especially a comparison of how other countries performed for the two growth periods.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GDP mis-estimation

Former CEA Arvind Subramanian's revelation that India's GDP growth was grossly overestimated nailed the government's lie. According to the eminent economist, GDP growth during 2011-12 to 2016-17 was actually 4.5% rather than the 7% flaunted by the government data. It was a telling argument by him that the growth numbers did not match or correlate with key indicators of economic growth such as electricity, consumption, automobile sales, investment and index of industrial production and export earnings, among others. It was common sense that the growth rates could not be high as claimed by the government when demonetisation and GST had debilitated economic activities. If the claimed growth were real, unemployment rate would not have been all-time high. It is now quite clear that the government exaggerated the growth numbers to create the 'feel-good' factor in the run-up to the election. BJP was never tired of telling the nation that ours was a 'fast-growing' economy and claiming credit. It is better to accept reality sooner than later. Instead of treating it as a prestige issue and rebutting Subramanian's well-reasoned thesis, the government should be open to corrections. Now that the election has been won, partly by false propaganda, the government should have no difficulty in acknowledging the incorrectness of the growth numbers.

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

India's WTO ASCM conundrum

Immediate removal of export subsidies would hurt India, eight-year phase out period under special and differential flexibilities must stay

SAMUEL JOSEPH RAHUL MAZUMDAR

Authors are with EXIM Bank, India Views are personal

RECENTLY IN DELHI, a few WTO economies met to discuss trade rules in the context of least developed and developing countries. The G20 is going to meet again this month to discuss, amongst others, this issue.

The last few years have been contentious for India as developed countries, led by the US, have upped the ante. Widely used incentives given to Indian exporters have been challenged on the grounds that India has exceeded the time period within which these benefits could be given. These kinds of export contingent subsidies are prohibited under Article 27 of the WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM) for their trade-distorting effects. The basic tenet is that a subsidy that alters the allocation of resources within an economy should be subject to discipline. Under this, select least-developed and developing countries, whose gross national income (GNI) per capita is below \$1,000 a year (at the 1990 exchange rate), are allowed to provide export incentives to any sector with a share below 3.25% in global exports. However, they must stop these if the figure is breached for three straight years.

Given that India's GNI has continued to remain above \$1,000 since 2015, the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS), which is extended to 7,914 tariff lines, has come under scrutiny. Phasing out subsidies impacts India's competitiveness, especially of SMEs accounting for 40% of exports.

As far as product share of exports is concerned, ASCM says that if the export

share of a product is at least 3.25% in world trade for two consecutive calendar years, subsidies have to be phased out for that product. India's textile exports crossed the 3.25% mark in 2010, requiring export incentives to the sector to end by December 2018.

Rough estimates show that 1,063 of 6,110 HS code 6-digits products exported by India have already exceeded 3.25% share in world exports—however, not all necessarily receive subsidies. Taking off subsidies in the case of agriculture products and textiles could impact the sectors significantly—around 33% products by value in agriculture and 88% in textiles have breached the share.

While the dichotomy between developed and developing is a foregone conclusion, amongst the developing economies too there is a stark contrast. For example, in 2017, the per capita GNI of India was just \$1,800, much below that of China (\$8,690). The figures get more dismal for India, with 21.2% of the population being classified as poor, against 7.9% in China. The extent of poverty in India led to almost 15% of the population remaining undernourished, compared to 8.7% in China. In the 2017 HDI Report, India occupied the 130th position, while China ranked 86th.

Most importantly, India needs to continue to up the ante and confront the dichotomy amongst nations. The special and differential treatment flexibilities under WTO, which include various export subsidies to developing countries, are being disputed by the US, EU, and Japan. Benchmarking development assistance against GNI alone, and not

including human development, would defeat the aim of the Development Assistance Committee of 1961, which was convinced of the need to help the less-developed countries extend loans and grants on concessional terms.

Secondly, India needs to continue to impress upon the WTO to have an 8 year phase-out period for export subsidies, from the time a country crosses the GNI threshold, which would be the same benefit as what accrued to countries that had benefited from the same at the time the WTO's ASCM was implemented in 1994. This would allow Indian exporters in particular to prepare accordingly.

Lastly, policymakers need to work on a contingency plan to replace existing export incentive schemes, with WTO-compliant, production-oriented schemes targeting R&D and modernisation. This could be in the form of establishing technology upgradation funds or capital incentive schemes. At the same time, embedded taxes and unrebated levies outside GST, like electricity duty, duty on petroleum products, and raw materials in agri and allied activities, should be rebated. In fact, the MEIS can be transformed into an embedded duty neutralisation scheme.

Though India is amongst the largest market globally, its social parameters are not encouraging. Much required is such change in the WTO framework—which is almost 25 years old—as would take cognisance of these contradictions. The new government may also like to resolve the WTO conundrum by introducing appropriate solutions in the new trade policy.

US-CHINA RELATIONS

After tariffs and Huawei, will Hong Kong be the next flashpoint?

Pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong say that the US Congress should reconsider the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. They also hope that the US-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 is re-evaluated, which treats Hong Kong as “fully autonomous”

HONG KONG IS in the spotlight once again, thanks to Hongkongers—and no thanks to China. The current imbroglio in Hong Kong, of protests that snowballed into violence, is over a proposed extradition Bill (sans public consultation) that Chief Executive Carrie Lam’s government (elected in 2017) wants to expedite. If passed, the Bill will allow extraditions to China. Hong Kong’s critics fear this will erode Hong Kong’s judicial independence, and fear China’s opaque legal system and capital punishment.

Last weekend, more than a million Hongkongers, a seventh of the population, gathered peacefully to protest. When the government did not buckle down, Hong Kong businesses and pro-democracy parties called for a general strike on Wednesday.

On that day, the protesters gathered in large numbers, blocking roads to Hong Kong’s Legislative Council (LegCo, the unicameral legislature) to protest against the second reading of the Bill. The violence that followed, with the police resorting to water cannons, rubber bullets, tear gas shells and the protesters running for cover, has since been chronicled by television worldwide. Reports say that 72 people have been injured.

While Lam called the strike “an organised riot,” the *China Daily* called out the “opposition camp and its foreign masters” for politicising the Bill. But those on the opposite side of the fence saw it differently, hailing it as a collec-

tive effort for democracy in Hong Kong.

The protests came ahead of Hong Kong’s 22nd handover anniversary (July 1, 1997) when the city state reverted to China after 150 years of British rule. Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) with a high degree of autonomy, own legislature and judicial independence, and its capitalist system intact for 50 years, until 2047. But what will happen after 2047—likened to “year 2047 problem”—is an open question.

Since 1997, there have been several flashpoints between China and Hong Kong. So much so that the waters of the newly opened Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge (the longest sea bridge in the world connecting Hong Kong and mainland China) run deep. Neither is

the (extradition) Bill as simple as it appears, nor is the Bill the only friction and cause of protests.

That the Bill is not as simple as it appears is the leitmotif of the protesters. In fact, and strangely so, it was a Valentine’s Day tragedy in Taipei that sparked the government’s interest in the Bill. Earlier in February this year, a Hongkonger strangled his pregnant girlfriend (in Taipei) and fled to Hong

Kong. The government stepped in to propose that fugitives be transferred to jurisdictions that Hong Kong lacks an agreement with, such as Taiwan, Macau and China.

Although the extradition was proposed on a case-by-case basis, Hong Kong’s Chief Executive is widely seen as pro-Beijing, “hand-picked” as it were. The government announced 66 hours of debate and a final vote on June 20, but

to no avail. The general reading was that the Bill was nothing but a caveat, a pretext to arm-twist dissenters, protesters, opposition and pan-democrats into submission. Activist Nathan Law (founder of pro-democracy party Demosisto) described the Bill as that which would normalise and legalise cross-border kidnapping.

Since 1997, Hong Kong is no stranger to sporadic unrest. In 2003, Hongkongers protested against a security law that purported to prohibit treason, secession, sedition and subversion, citing its proclivity for misuse. In 2013 came Occupy Central. In 2014, came the student-led Umbrella Movement. Both protested the manner in which the Chief Executive is elected (by an election committee manned by pro-Beijing loy-

alists), that which Hongkongers dismiss as “fake suffrage.”

In 2016 came the Fishball Revolution (fishball noodles is a popular street food) targeted against street hawkers. Hongkongers were up in arms as street hawkers have been an intrinsic part of Hong Kong’s social landscape and everyday life. In 2018, the pro-independence Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) was banned. And in 2018, the *Financial Times Asia* news editor Victor Mallet’s work visa was not renewed. Mallet had chaired an event at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club (FCC) where Andy Chan, the founder of the HKNP, had spoken. This was the first instance when a member of the press was expelled from Hong Kong after 1997.

So, what are the ramifications of these protests? For one, after tariffs and Huawei, Hong Kong has the potential to be the latest flashpoint in US-China relations. Pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong say that the US Congress should reconsider the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act (proposed by Chris Smith and Marco Rubio, Congressional Executive Committee on China in 2015). This would “empower the US President to hold Beijing accountable” and not deny visas to activists associated with Occupy Central and Umbrella Movement. Activists hope that the US-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 is also re-evaluated. This Act treats Hong Kong as “fully autonomous”—a re-evaluation would assess Hong Kong’s autonomy.

In the US, there appears to be bipartisan support for Hong Kong. In a statement to the press, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Democrat) indicated that the Democrats look forward to reconsidering the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Republican) has also expressed his reservations about “...Beijing’s grip on their (Hong Kong’s) imperiled autonomy.”

Just two decades ago, for China, Hong Kong was nothing short of a diplomatic coup, the poster-child of China’s grand political experiment “one country, two systems.” This was an experiment that China believed could not only showcase how benign China was, but also serve to coax Taiwan into its fold.

But the upheavals in Hong Kong in the last 20-odd years raise questions whether the “one country, two systems” experiment was hogwash for “one country, one system.” If anything, despite China’s copious economic gifts to Hong Kong, and irrespective of the outcome of the protests, it appears that China’s political experiment of Hong Kong being a “model” for Taiwan is going awry, unravelling with Hong Kong aspiring its own political destiny.

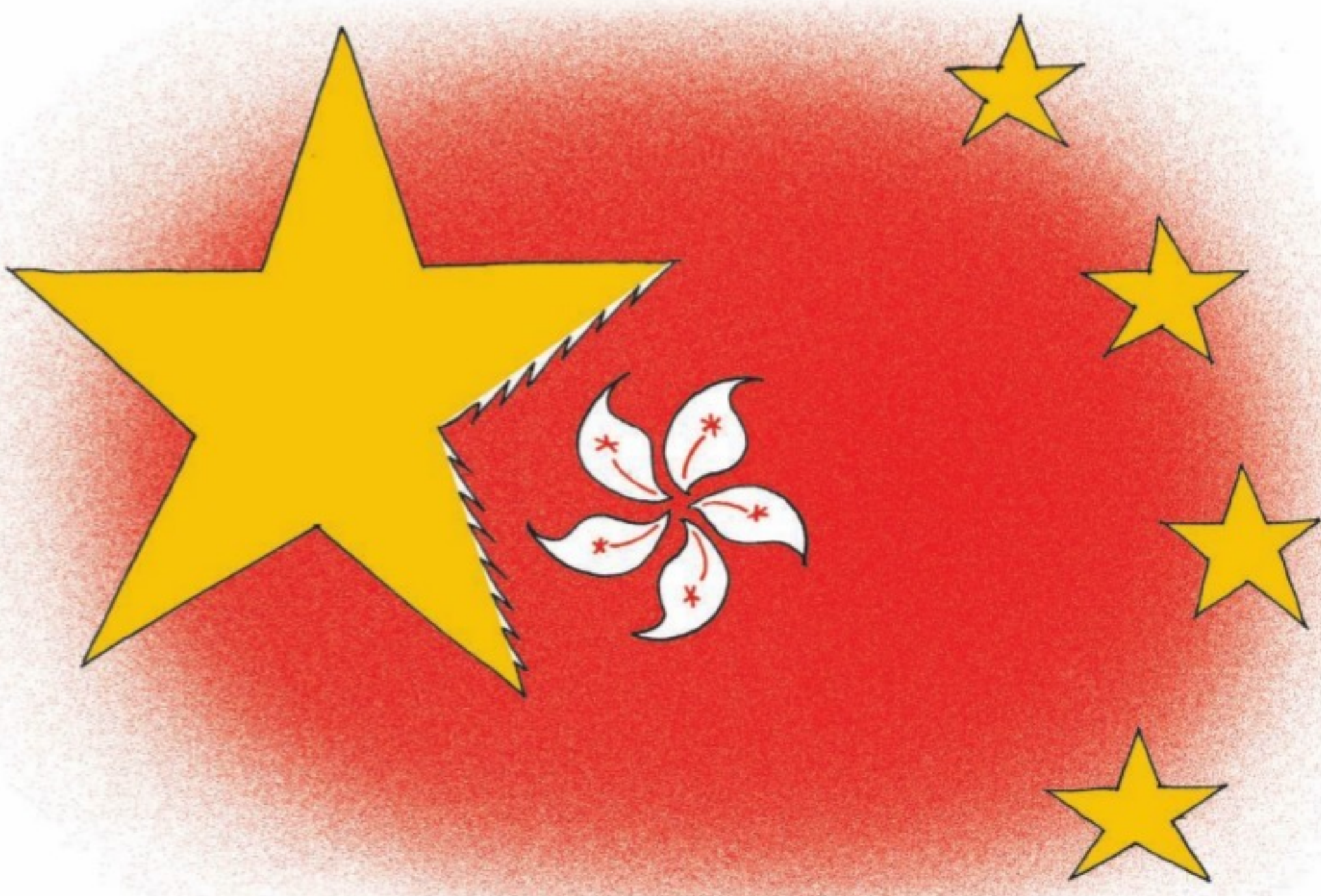


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

ANURAG VISWANATH

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



DATA DRIVE

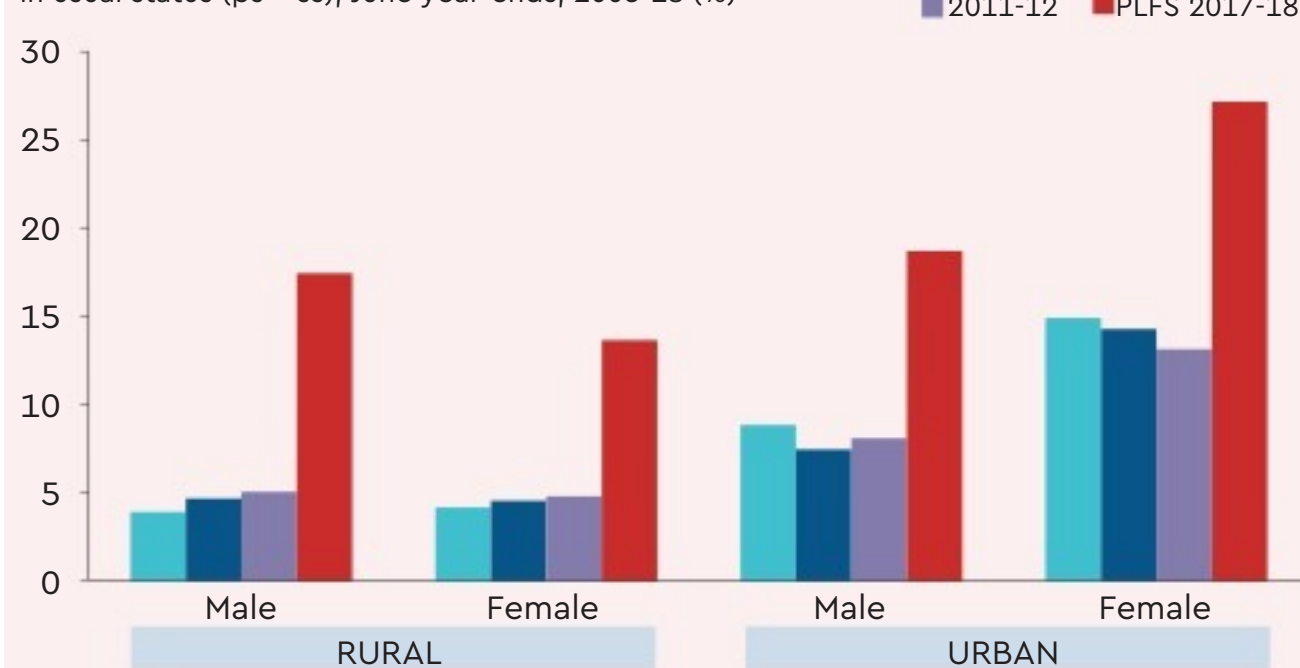
Where are the jobs?

THE PERIODIC LABOUR Force Survey conducted by the NSSO shows that, of India’s labour force of 487 million, about 458 million are gainfully employed—i.e. 29 million of the labour force is unemployed, making for an unemployment rate of 6%. The NSSO data reveals a few interesting aspects. While the labour force participation rate (LFPR) was 39.5% in June 2012, it came down to 36.95% in June 2018, which meant the number of unemployed increased by 18 million between 2012 and 2018, despite the number of people looking for jobs falling by 260bps over the period. What’s worse, the female labour force contracted by 13 million and the youth (15-29 years) PLFR fell by 650bps. The slide was more pronounced in rural areas.

One of the positives that the NSSO data throws up, as per a Kotak Institutional Equities analysis, is that though agriculture remains the main employment provider despite accounting for a relatively smaller share of the GVA, employment, particularly in rural areas, is moving away from it and towards services. A host of factors are likely responsible, from improved rural infrastructure to availability of credit. Another positive is the shrinking informal employment and the rising formal employment—while casual employment slid by 510bps, salaried employment rose by 480bps. A part of the slide in informal employment can perhaps be explained by the effects of the demonetisation and GST shocks.

High unemployment rate among youth

Unemployment rate among the youth (15 to 29 years) in usual status (ps + ss), June year-ends, 2005-18 (%)



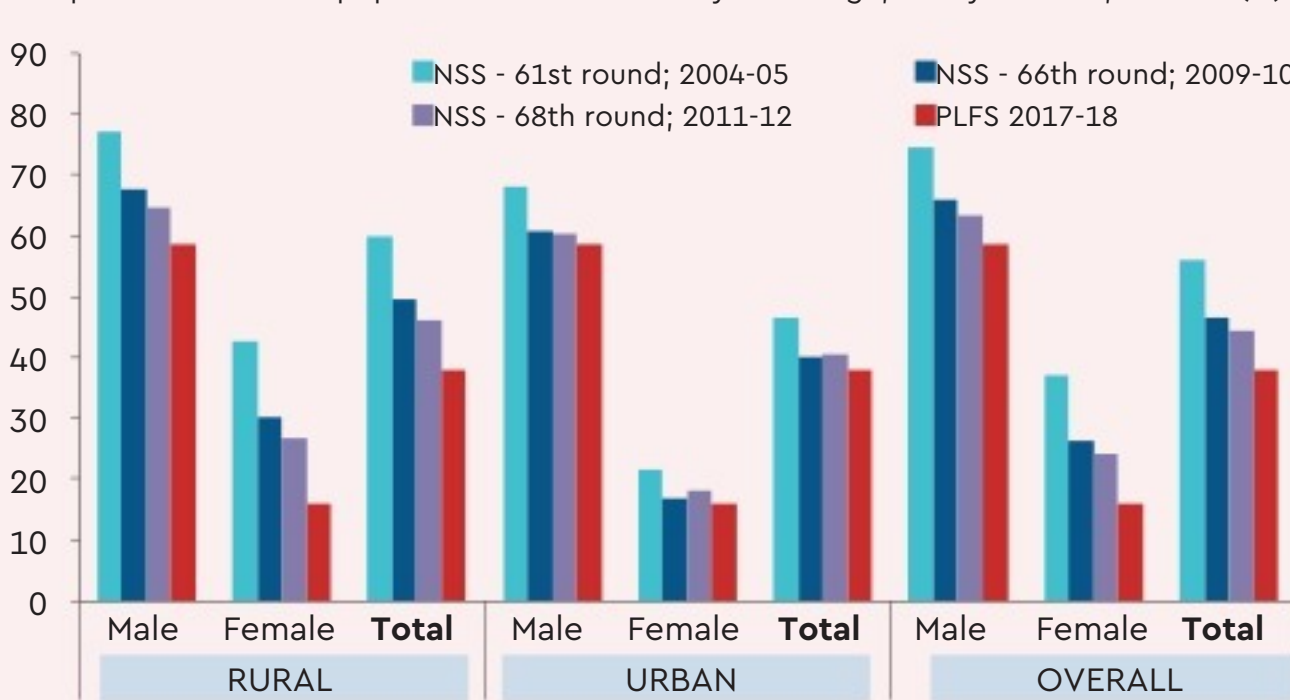
Unemployment has increased sharply according to the latest survey

Unemployment rates according to usual status (ps + ss), June year-ends, 2000-18 (%)



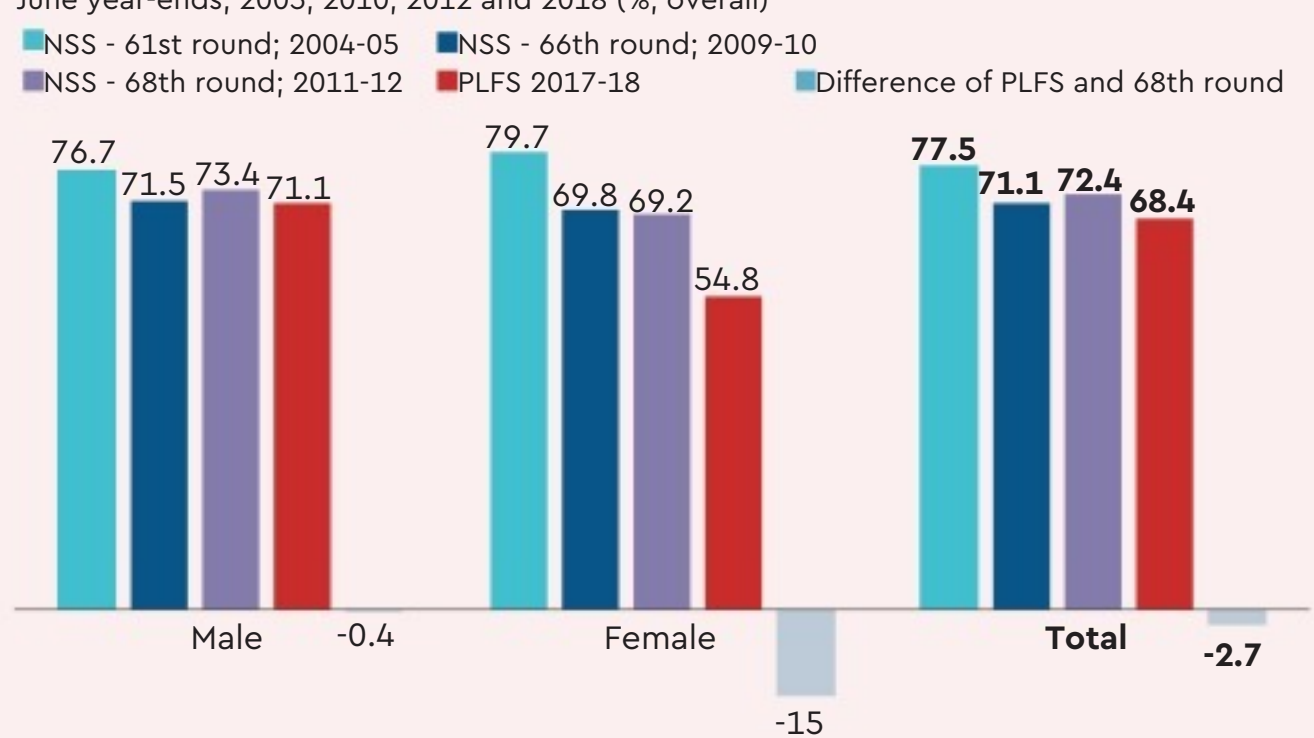
Decline in youth LFPR

Comparison of LFPR for population between 15-29 years of age, June year-ends, 2005-18 (%)



Steady drop in employment in informal enterprises

Percentage of workers engaged in informal enterprises, various NSSO rounds, June year-ends, 2005, 2010, 2012 and 2018 (%)



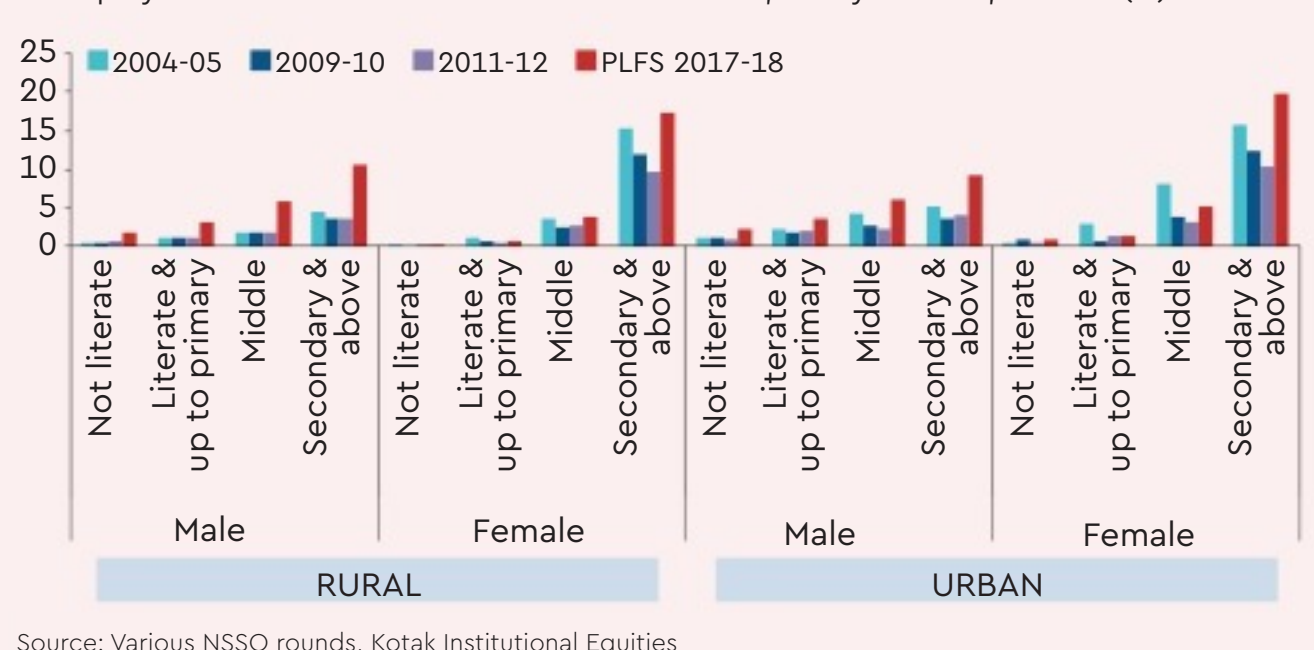
Increase in formalization

Employment status, various NSSO rounds, June year-ends, 2005, 2010, 2012 and 2018 (%)

	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban
Periodic Labor Force Survey; July 2017-June 2018			
Self employed	58	38	52
Casual labor	29	15	25
Regular wage/salaried	13	47	23
Total	100	100	100
NSS - 68th round; July 2011-June 2012			
Self employed	56	42	52
Casual labor	35	15	30
Regular wage/salaried	9	43	18
Total	100	100	100
NSS - 66th round; July 2009-June 2010			
Self employed	54	41	51
Casual labor	39	18	34
Regular wage/salaried	7	41	16
Total	100	100	100
NSS - 61st round; July 2004-June 2005			
Self employed	57	43	51
Casual labor	35	12	34
Regular wage/salaried	9	45	16
Total	100	100	100
Difference of PLFS and 68th round			
Self employed	1.8	-3.7	0.2
Casual labor	-5.9	-0.3	-5.1
Regular wage/salaried	4.1	4	4.8

Unemployment rate is the worst among the educated; has worsened significantly in the latest survey

Unemployment rate across various levels of education, June year-ends, 2005-18 (%)



Source: Various NSSO rounds, Kotak Institutional Equities

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A HOME IN SPACE

ISRO's plan to build a permanent space station is a natural progression of the vision to expand its footprint beyond earth

ISRO HAS DECLARED its intention to build a permanent space station for itself, possibly in the next five to seven years. After the mission to moon and Mars and a proposed manned space flight before 2022, this is the next logical step for the agency. What the step seems to suggest is that, in the coming years, ISRO would be undertaking many prolonged space exploration projects and sending many astronauts into space, such that it would require a permanent station for itself.

For four decades since its inception in the early 1960s, ISRO had, apart from building its capacities, focused primarily on harnessing space technologies for societal benefits. Yash Pal, the first director of Space Application Centre in Ahmedabad, once described India's space mission as "almost a sociological programme" as much as a technological programme. Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme, used to repeatedly make the point that India must be second to none in the application of advanced technologies to "the real problems of man and society". Even as late as in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi got all government departments to sit down with ISRO and identify the areas where space technology could help them achieve their objectives. In the next phase, beginning this century, ISRO established itself as a reliable and economical launcher of commercial satellites. It demonstrated its capabilities to launch all kinds of satellites, and delivered close to 300 payloads of foreign countries in space in the last 12 years. This service is likely to continue since it generates the much-needed revenue to fund ISRO's various missions.

However, ISRO is signalling that it is now ready to take a leap into space exploration. Chandrayaan-2 and Gaganyaan are, in fact, heralding ISRO into this new phase. There is a mission to the sun coming up next year, while another to Venus has also been announced. More inter-planetary explorations, and possibly a human flight to the moon, are also in the pipeline. The space station is a facility India would need in the context of missions such as these and more. NASA's International Space Station, the only one functional right now, is slated to retire by 2025, or latest by 2028, and no replacement for it has been confirmed so far. It is likely that future space stations would be commercial facilities, available to anyone for a fee. For an agency that is still to execute a successful human space flight, all this might seem a little premature. And the proposed five to seven-year timeline to achieve it, surely, is ambitious. But ISRO is known to set ambitious targets, and achieve them as well.

WELCOME MEASURE

Lower contributions to employees' state insurance could boost formalisation further

IN A WELCOME move, the Union government has announced a significant reduction in the contribution by workers and employers towards the employees' state insurance (ESI) scheme. From July 1, the overall contribution to ESI is slated to decline from 6.5 per cent to 4 per cent, with employers' contribution falling from 4.75 per cent to 3.25 per cent, and that of employees from 1.75 per cent to 0.75 per cent. This decision, which lowers the cost of hiring for employers, should be seen in conjunction with recent initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojna (PMRPPY) that aim to boost the creation of formal jobs by lowering the costs associated with formalisation.

The ESI Act provides for medical care and cash benefits in case of contingencies to employees drawing a salary up to Rs 21,000 per month. It is one of the pillars of the social security architecture in the country. But, its current cost structure is prohibitive. A look at its accounts shows that the current levels of contribution far exceed the benefits disbursed by it — in fact, only around half of the contributions are paid out as benefits. For instance, in 2016-17, while total contributions stood at Rs 16,852 crore (including interest income of Rs 3,069 crore), total expenditure incurred for medical benefits was only a fraction at Rs 6,409 crore. This growing divergence between collections and disbursement has led to a substantial build up of its reserves. At the end of March 2018, its corpus stood at Rs 73,303 crore, up Rs 13,920 crore from last year. Between 2012 and 2017, it earned Rs 19,993 crore as interest income alone on this corpus. But this rise in income hasn't translated to greater benefits. As the standing committee on labour noted in a report last year, people continue to be deprived of the benefits of the ESI scheme "due to lack of coverage of ESIC scheme, poor functioning of hospitals, etc". This suggests that contributions can be substantially lowered, while maintaining benefits at current levels.

Prohibitive mandatory contributions such as the provident fund/employee state insurance tend to act as deterrents to formalisation. As the experience of PMRPPY has shown, lowering these costs tends to have a positive impact on formalisation. In fact, much of the recent rise in the EPFO subscriber base is on account of PMRPPY. Lowering costs further, or offering employees the choice of who handles their contributions, could accelerate the process further.

ONE SMALL STEP

NASA's recognition of African American women's role in the first moon mission is a welcome act of contrition

IN 1969, THREE of the people who were an essential part of Neil Armstrong taking "a giant leap for mankind", each working at the cutting edge of mathematics and astrophysics, were not allowed to eat, study or even use the same bathroom as their white peers. The seminal contribution of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson — among several other African-Americans — to the Apollo 11 mission was little known until the 2016 book, *Hidden Figures*, brought it to light for the general public. NASA has now renamed the street outside its Washington headquarters Hidden Figures, to honour those that were once treated as second-class citizens even as they literally shot for the moon, and managed to hit the target.

The whitewashing of the role that Black Americans had in the moon-landing and their suffering under segregation only brings to focus the many petty cruelties — the institutionalised inequalities — that have been as much a part of modernity as the great achievements of our times. That one of the great advances in modern science and technology can exist, almost without comment, with as immoral and counter-intuitive a practice as segregation on the basis of skin colour presents a disturbing contradiction.

There is some evidence, though, that things in 2019 have progressed since 1969. While the contradiction between modernity and deeply retrograde systems of discrimination abide, the acknowledgment by the world's leading space agency of those that helped it become so is a welcome correction. And perhaps a much-needed attempt at expressing contrition. Meanwhile, it appears that the ISRO is unlikely to repeat NASA's mistakes: Chandrayaan 2, India's second exploration of the moon, is being headed by two women — Ritu Karidhal and Muthayya Vanitha — and ISRO has been only too keen to publicise their role. As space exploration moves to new horizons, it appears, thankfully, that there are no more hidden figures.



JASMINE SHAH

THE DELHI GOVERNMENT'S decision to make public transport free for women in the national capital has ignited a welcome debate on safety and mobility of women in Indian cities. The policy is being debated on two fronts: Whether it is desirable at all to adopt such a policy, and if it is feasible for the Delhi government to implement it at present.

Any discussion on the desirability of this or any subsidy targeted at women must begin by accepting the shocking gender divide that exists in India and particularly, Delhi. India ranks a lowly 95 out of 129 countries in the recently released SDG Gender Index. A survey by Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2017 ranked Delhi as the most unsafe megacity in the world for women. Official data shows that crimes against women in Delhi have seen a phenomenal increase of 83 per cent between 2007 and 2016. Analysis abounds on factors that contribute to this — ineffective policing, poor conviction rates, dark spots, unsafe modes of transport, social norms towards women, among others — but there is hardly any talk of transformative solutions.

The Delhi government's decision solves an important part of this problem by making public transport the default mode of transport for the city's women. Experts across the globe vouch that public transport is the safest mode of transport — there's safety in numbers. In Delhi, a large fraction of women from poor and lower middle classes, often living at the margins of existence, are constrained to walk long distances or use unsafe modes of transport than buying a bus ticket. The metro is not even an option for most of them.

By providing unrestricted access to public transport, the Delhi government's decision also provides women an opportunity to reclaim public spaces. Besides further enhancing safety, this directly impacts the second objective of the Delhi's government's decision — economic empowerment of women by significantly improving access to education and job opportunities.

A detailed study published last year by the Sustainable Urban Transport Project (SUTP) and backed by the Government of India shows how women forego opportunities to work outside their neighbourhoods if they perceive transport fares and services to be expensive and unreliable. A 2017 study by a World Bank

Metro bonanza

Free rides for women in public transport is a part of Delhi government's push to make the city safe, inclusive



This is important since India is among the few countries globally that has seen decreasing participation of women in workforce in the past decade despite stellar economic growth. In Delhi, women account for only 11 per cent of the workforce - perhaps the least among Indian cities. India cannot aspire to be global superpower by ignoring the constraints faced by 50 per cent of its population to access work opportunities.

economist, Girija Borker, in Delhi's colleges covering 4,000 students shows that female students are willing to choose a lower quality college, travel longer and spend much more than men in order to travel by safer route.

This is important since India is among the few countries globally that has seen decreasing participation of women in the workforce in the past decade, despite stellar economic growth. In Delhi, women account for only 11 per cent of the workforce — perhaps the least among Indian cities. India cannot aspire to be global superpower by ignoring the constraints faced by 50 per cent of its population.

This brings us to the feasibility of implementing the free public transport policy. Majority of the critiques offered so far suggest that public transport system may get choked or that last-mile connectivity and pedestrian safety also matter. Some have advised the Delhi government to spend public money on buying more buses and improving their reliability, while some others have invoked fancy economic theories like "broken window fallacy" that are completely irrelevant to this debate.

The big problem with all these critiques is they frame these policy choices as an either/or debate. The Delhi government has never claimed that making public transport free is a silver bullet to ensuring women's safety — a lot more should and must be done by all public agencies concerned, especially the Delhi Police, which reports to the Centre.

On its part, the Delhi government has been making necessary financial allocations and implementing all the above policy measures year-on-year. Delhi's 5,576 buses currently operate on average at 80 per cent of their passenger carrying capacity and can easily handle an estimated 10 per cent additional load due to this policy. Further, Delhi's bus fleet is all set to increase by 1,000 in the next six months — an increase by 18 per cent. Another 2,000 buses are at different stages of procurement.

Delhi government has deployed dedicated bus marshalls in 60 per cent of its buses to exclusively deal with women safety issues, a first such effort by any city in India. The same is being extended to cover the remaining buses. Connect Delhi, the most ambitious reform so far to improve the reliability of Delhi's buses, is also under way. The initiative promises to

rationalise the bus and feeder services in Delhi so that all parts of Delhi are connected with a reliable public transport facility within 500-metre walking distance and at every 15 minutes. In March, the first leg of this reform was launched in Najafgarh covering 17 bus routes that are now seeing schedule adherence upwards of 90 per cent.

The present decision of making public transport for women free comes in the backdrop of these multiple reform efforts, and backed by the fiscal space the Delhi government has created for itself by sound management of state finances: Delhi's budget has doubled from Rs 30,900 crore to Rs 60,000 crore in the last five years. That's also the reason why all doomsday predictions of the AAP government ruining the state exchequer by its decision to give free water and power subsidy have proven to be untrue.

In fact, by carefully-targeted subsidies and an unprecedented expansion of social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, what the AAP government has managed to achieve is build the economy from below by investing in people — what Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia calls as "Trickle Up Economics". The current decision of making public transport free for women is designed to work in a similar fashion.

Meanwhile, accountability must also be fixed on the Central government whose flawed decision of doubling fares of the Delhi metro in 2017 has seen a shock decrease in metro ridership from 28 lakh per day in 2017 to 25 lakh per day today even as the total length of metro network has increased by 55 per cent in the same period. This single move has upended all ridership targets of Delhi metro that was designed to reach 40 lakh by end of Phase 3, hitting the economically disadvantaged sections the most, including women.

The worsening state of women safety and workforce participation in Indian cities in the past decade are the result of a policy failure. Delhi government's decision to make public transport free for women is a welcome policy innovation in this context — something the rest of the country can learn from.

The writer is vice-chairperson, Dialogue and Development Commission, a Delhi government think-tank



KHALED AHMED

DOES CRICKET LEAD to religious piety? Or is religious piety so deeply ingrained in certain players that they go "pious", which in Pakistan means growing a flowing beard, shaving off the moustache and putting a cap on? In Pakistan it is not a "phase" that you outgrow — it is a permanent transformation. And, it seems to pay off. In India, former cricketer Gautam Gambhir has embraced Hindutva but it is not the same thing. In Pakistan, you can even become the prime minister.

In the case of Imran Khan, it is all explained in his book *Pakistan: A Personal History* (2011), where he recalls the "early signs" of being "chosen". He writes: "Pir Gi from Sahiwal said I would be very famous and make my mother a household name." But the man who stood by him as his spiritual mentor was Mian Bashir, who shocked him by naming the Quranic verse his mother used to read to baby Imran. Bashir also predicted that Allah had turned the tables in Khan's favour in the Allan Lamb-Ian Botham libel suit whose reparations would have pauperised Khan.

Till the 1992 World Cup, no one prostrated before Allah Almighty after getting a rival player out or scoring a century. Today, it is an unspoken rule. The selector, former captain Inzamam-ul-Haq, is today heavily bearded. He was the one who "changed" during his captaincy and "persuaded" the entire team to "embrace Islam". In the book, *White on*

ON A STICKY WICKET

Cricket and religion have combined to impose a disturbing piety in Pakistan



Is religious piety so deeply ingrained in certain players that they go 'pious', which in Pakistan means growing a flowing beard, shaving off the moustache and putting a cap on? In Pakistan it is not a 'phase' that you outgrow — it is a permanent transformation. And, it seems to pay off. In Pakistan you can even become the prime minister.

Green (2016), Richard Heller and Peter Osborne note the "piety" trend gaining ground after preachers like Dr Israr of Lahore called cricket a lascivious anti-Islam entertainment with Khan rubbing the cricket ball "sinfully" in the "groin area".

Before Khan, another captain, Fazal Mahmood, had suddenly become Islamic after retirement from the police department, writing a book, *Urge to Faith* (1970), indicating that something indeed happens to famous sportsmen forced to stay away from normal life during their careers. Before Khan, there was the former captain Saeed Ahmad who first "played around", marrying and divorcing a "society girl", before growing a beard and joining tableeghi jamaat that has transformed many other cricketers since: Ahmad himself often barged into dressing rooms and treated the team to sermons of piety.

The case of leg-break bowler and test player S F Rehman is serious. He is now Maulana Sheikh Fazlur Rahman Al Azhari following the Wahhabbi path of Islam — this after an MA degree and a PhD in Islamiyat, and going to Cairo to embrace the "hard Islam" of Wahhabism, which rejects the "imitative" jurisprudence of Pakistani Islam. He defended the killer of Punjab governor, Salmaan Taseer, saying that the act represented a reaction against "liberalism" that aims "to destroy all faiths". Taseer had defended a Christian woman wrongly accused and convicted to

death for blasphemy.

Ex-captain and Christian Yusuf Yohanna secured himself against trouble by converting to Islam during his career as a batsman. He benefitted from conversion but many Christian men who tried to follow his example were not similarly rewarded. Though, leg-spinner and Hindu test-player, Danish Kaneria, usefully cultivated the habit of saying inshallah and mashallah as part of his conversation in a state increasingly hostile to non-Muslims, something like what India is in the process of becoming.

Tableeghi Jamaat seduced Shahid Afridi too but this was nothing compared to the marvelously gifted opener Saeed Anwar who, understandably, succumbed to Inzamam's evangelism after a tragedy in his family.

Osborne refers to an article in the 2006 edition of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*: "Rare today in the Pakistani cricket is the soundbite or even private utterance not bracketed by Bismillah (in the name of Allah) or inshallah (God willing). The team prays together fastidiously, recites ayats (Quranic verses) in its huddles and celebrates personal and collective milestones with sajda (the act of kneeling in Muslim prayers); they all fast during Ramadhan, some even during games."

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan



JUNE 17, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

LABOUR NUMBERS UP DESPITE THE EMPHASIS on rural development, the number of landless workers in India has increased by 220 lakh in 14 years, at the rate of nearly 15 lakh per year. Their daily earnings have also gone down from Re 1 to 88 paise. These figures have been culled partly from the rural labour enquiry reports of 1964-65 and 1974-75, and partly from the latest data the Planning Commission has collected for the Sixth Plan. According to these sources, agricultural labourers numbered 310 lakhs in 1964-65, but this figure increased to 460 lakhs in 1974-75 and to 530 lakhs in 1977-78. This means that marginal farmers have been swelling the labour force. They

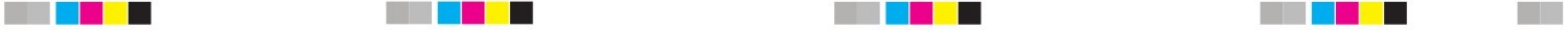
have been forced to part with their land either because of new burdens or old debts. Apparently, the thousands of crores channelled to rural areas has gone to big farmers.

INDO-SOVIET BOND

INDIA AND THE Soviet Union voiced their opposition to "any interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of Afghanistan". A joint statement, signed by Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev was released in Leningrad at the end of Desai's visit to the Soviet Union. The statement did not mention Pakistan by name but it is clear that the message was primarily meant for Islamabad.

AVIATION CENSORSHIP

FACED WITH A spate of adverse publicity in recent months, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation has imposed strict censorship on the departments and public sector undertakings under its charge. Officers of Air India, Indian Airlines and the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation have been forbidden from speaking to the press. Even the directors of public relations have been asked to remain mum. So scared are officials that copies of any press statement are immediately dispatched to the ministry by special messengers, so that the ministry's mandarins do not complain that they learn of developments from the morning newspapers.



THE IDEAS PAGE

GDP growth, again!

Is it possible that growth was over-estimated by a large 250 bps a year for five years and no one knew about it, including economists in government?



NO PROOF REQUIRED

BY SURJIT S BHALLA

FORMER CHIEF ECONOMIC Adviser to the Ministry of Finance, Arvind Subramanian (hereafter AS) contends in a working paper at the prestigious Harvard University that India's GDP growth between 2012 and 2016 (period II) likely averaged somewhere between 3.5 and 5.5 per cent yielding an average AS growth of 4.5 per cent. Given that the official GDP growth for this period was 7 per cent, there is an average overstatement in the official GDP statistics of around 2.5 percentage points (ppt) a year. You can search far and wide, in journals and in newspapers, but no one, absolutely no one, has made such a calculation, and assertion, that AS has done for any non hyper-inflation economy for such a long period of time (except for one China estimate — see below).

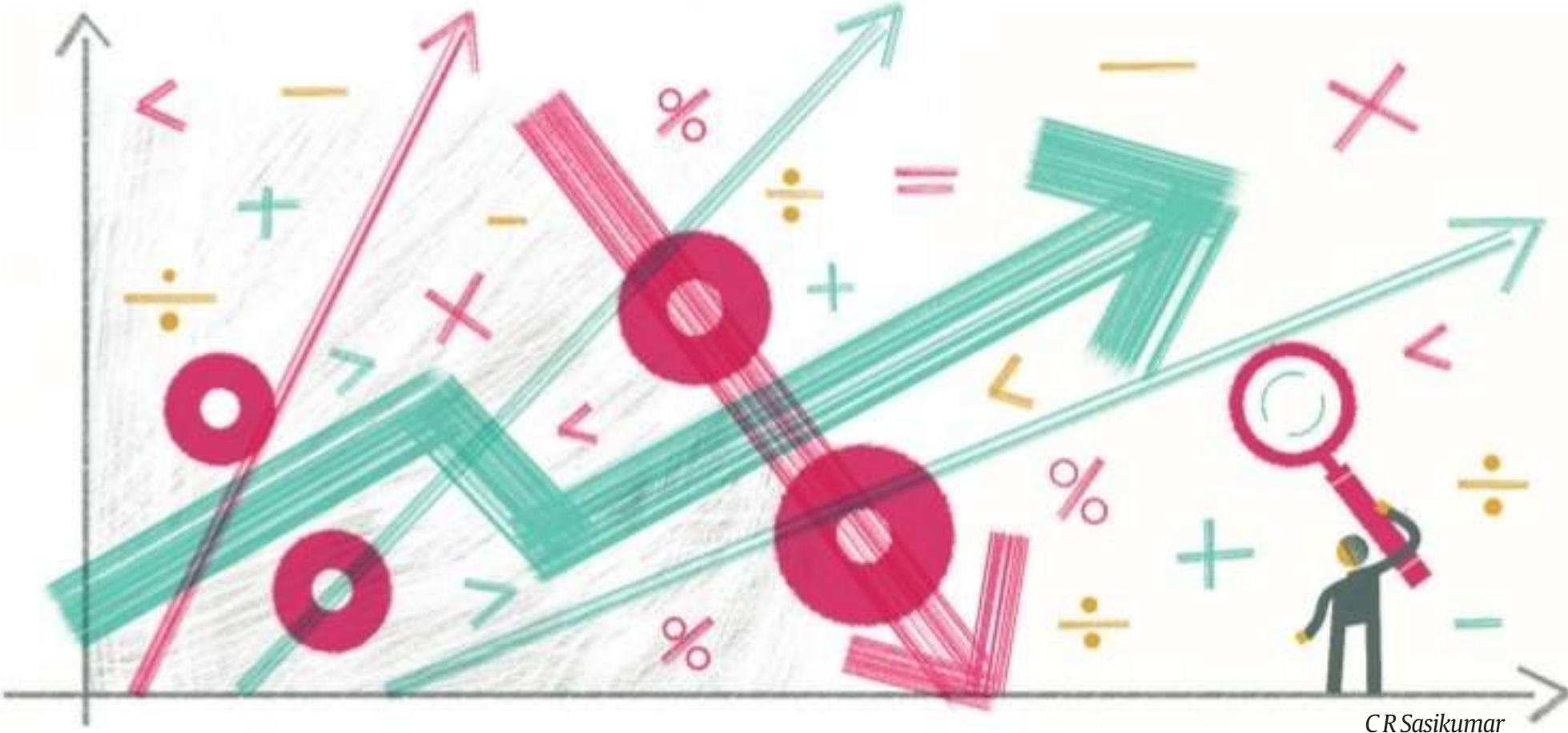
Coincidentally, AS's assertion is similar to the contention of two Hong Kong-based economists, that for the nine-year period 2008-2016, official statistics-reported GDP growth for China was higher by an average 1.7 ppt a year. However, there is one paper by history and economics professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Thomas Rawski, who asserted that cumulative GDP growth in China between 1998 and 2001 averaged just 3 per cent over the four years 1998-2001, compared to the official estimates of 8 per cent-plus. Rawski based his calculations on electricity consumption and his estimates were soon discarded by experts who used trade data to demolish his thesis. The question remains whether the same fate awaits AS's estimates.

We examine AS's computational method below, but first a few general comments. One had thought that post election 2019, politics would not encroach upon the substantive mis-measurement conclusions reached by AS. Unfortunately, there are still journalists and "experts" congratulating themselves that their election-oriented assertion that the Narendra Modi government had presented lies about the economy has now been proven right by AS's paper.

Two points need emphasis. For the period studied 2001-2016, is there any additional data that AS now has that he did not have when he was CEA from October 2014 to June 2018? The answer is no and while we all have doubts about all forms of data (in India, China, the US and the world) the fact remains that there are no known revisions of the data post 2018 (and post 2017) for the data used by AS. Given this fact, the question obviously arises that if no new information is available, then what is the point about AS's contention about mis-measurement of GDP growth for the period 2012-2016?

The second point relates to GDP revisions involved with the base-year change from 2004-5 to 2011-12. This is a routine exercise, undertaken for most economies (especially developing economies) from time-to-time. The normal occasion for this revision is the availability of new household survey data on expenditure (or components of income). The consumer expenditure survey data for 2017-18 is expected to be released shortly; so brace yourself for another round of base-year revisions over the next year or two.

However, it is relevant to point out, and AS is well aware of this fact, that 2014-15 base-year revisions had important components of



"structural change" in data collection and interpretation. In particular, balance-sheet data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) was used to estimate value-added in manufacturing and service industries. Previously, the CSO used the index of industrial production and the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) data (available with a two-year lag) to estimate value-added in industry. For an important part of the service sector — wholesale and retail trade (WRT) — accounting for 10-15 per cent of GDP, the CSO used the previous growth rate in employment as observed via the Employment and Unemployment Surveys. For example, for the years 2004-5 to 2011-12, the CSO used employment growth trends for 1999-00 to 2004-5 to assume WRT employment (and hence value-added) trend between 2004-5 and 2011-12. It turns out that this estimation led to a gross overestimate of the WRT sector since employment growth was less than 1 per cent between 2004-5 and 2011-12, a big decline from the near 3 per cent annual employment growth observed between 1999-00-2004-5.

All of this was well known by all the statistical experts when they sat down, in multiple committees, to design a new method of estimation for GDP for industry and services. It is important to emphasise that international experts from the UN, World Bank and IMF were involved in the review exercise and most of this was completed before Modi became PM. The CSO report and method was finalised in January 2015, when AS was already in office for four months. Since all major economists were privy to this revision method (along with the National Statistical Commission — again, all appointees of the Manmohan Singh government) it is a bit unexpected for AS to now claim that he had doubts about the new method of estimating GDP.

For the period 2011-2016, there is the whole statistical world (and UPA) approving of the new method — and AS has now positioned himself against these experts and himself (pre-2019 AS). To finish this line of argument, what would have been most useful if AS had documented the source of the new data (information) and how this new data has changed his interpretation of reality. Note that GDP revisions undergo revisions, around the world, of 10-50 basis points, but a revision of 250 bps, annually, is unheard of, at least since Rawski made a parallel attempt two decades ago.

What about the statistical method that AS uses to reach his conclusions about gross-estimation? Perhaps mindful of Rawski's fate (AS has written a laudatory book on China's GDP growth), AS's estimation is based on four major variables — export and import growth, real credit growth and electricity consump-

It is relevant to point out, and AS is well aware of this fact, that 2014-15 base year revisions had important components of 'structural change' in data collection and interpretation. In particular, balance-sheet data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) was used to estimate value-added in manufacturing and service industries. Previously, the CSO used the index of industrial production and the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) data (available with a two-year lag) to estimate value-added in industry. For an important part of the service sector — wholesale and retail trade (WRT) — accounting for 10-15 per cent of GDP, the CSO used the previous growth rate in employment as observed via the Employment and Unemployment Surveys.

tion. He chooses two time-periods — 2001-2011 and 2012-2016. I have absolutely no disagreement with his choice of time-periods. The High Level Advisory Group (HLAG) to the commerce minister, which I had the privilege and honour of heading, used precisely these break points to measure trade performance in the world. The reason being that world trade literally fell off a cliff in 2012. Between 2001 and 2011, world exports grew at double digit levels (in nominal dollars) and collapsed to -1.5 per cent pa in the 2012-16 period. In real terms, the fall in world exports was from 4.6 to 1 per cent.

The world has changed in many ways since 2011: World trade is down, drastically, and world inflation is now at 3 per cent levels (distributed roughly at 1-2 per cent levels for the developed world and around 2-4 per cent levels for the developing world). I will be examining the AS methodology regarding GDP over-estimation in a detailed research note. For the moment, let me point out a few salient facts which suggest that AS may not have got it right in his over-estimation prediction of 250 bps of annual growth.

Manufacturing — value-added vs IIP growth: In period I, the two growth rates are virtually identical: 7.7 vs 7.3 per cent pa. In period II value-added in manufacturing increased at 7.2 per cent pa and IIP increased at only a 3.1 per cent rate. If the MCA data for period II are considered problematic, and IIP correct, then there is an over-estimation of 4.1 per cent per year. With a weight of 15 per cent, this will lead to an over-estimation of GDP of 60 bp per year in period II.

Wages in manufacturing (ASI data): Real wage per day growth was only 0.4 per cent an annum in period I which accelerated to 2.2 per cent pa in period II.

Agricultural wage growth: For (unskilled) ploughmen, this accelerated from 1.9 per cent in period I to 3.3 per cent in period II; for (semi-skilled) rural carpenters, the acceleration was much sharper — from 0.9 per cent to 4.5 per cent.

Real wage growth is an important component of GDP growth, and both Annual Survey of Industries and rural wage growth indicators suggest that the second 2012-16 period (spanning both UPA and NDA) contributed a higher portion to aggregate GDP growth. The trend in wages conflicts with AS's derivation of over-estimation of GDP growth. A meaningful analysis of AS's assumptions, and cross-country estimation methods, deserves serious investigation — especially a comparison of how other countries performed for the two growth periods.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Americans should be concerned by anything that might diminish the Federal Reserve's political independence, actual or perceived."

— THE WASHINGTON POST

Preening nationalism

India has gone from false hopes in 2014 to false pride in 2019



PRANAB BARDHAN

NARENDRA MODI'S STUNNING victory in the recent general elections is no doubt a great personal achievement for a leader whose oratorical and political skills (often tinged with a bit of venom) are indeed impressive and matched by indefatigable energy. Of course, he has been helped by disproportionately large corporate donations that gave him a megaphone to drown other voices, by a largely supine media that, apart from allowing him to escape hard questioning, became used to blowing his trumpet, by a fragmentary Opposition with immature leadership, by an army of volunteers canvassing both door-to-door and via WhatsApp, and, of course, a last-stage unexpected gift from Masood Azhar in the form of a terrorist incident to "boldly" respond to. But all this is not enough to fully explain the victory that Indian voters have handed him.

These are early days to carry out a full analysis of the electoral data for deciphering the range of explanatory factors, but there are enough straws in the wind to venture some guesses. First, it is unlikely that the economic achievements of the Modi regime played much of a role, and it is not a coincidence that the ruling party campaigns, particularly in periods of apparent desperation, did not much emphasise them either. Some did talk about toilets (though the actual use of those toilets lagged far behind their bureaucratic targets of construction) and gas cylinders for the poor (though evidence suggests refills of those cylinders lagged far behind their initial acquisition), but their impact on voting behaviour was likely to have been marginal (as suggested by the opinion polls by mid-February). One, of course, did not hear much about the slaying of the dragon of corruption through demonetisation, the grand hoax of November 2016. The stories of agrarian distress, which led to the hurried start of the PM-KISAN scheme, did not melt away and with the current state of land records, the two-hackle limit in the scheme must have been a block in implementation in large parts of the country. The other economic concern about the lack of good jobs for young people remained uppermost in many a mind, a promise of 2014 obviously belied.

People often talked about Modi's incorruptibility, but the same was true of Manmohan Singh, the leader of a regime associated with corruption scandals. Corruption is not necessarily associated with dynastic politics. Even if it were, the latter is not completely absent in the ruling party (a significant fraction of its MPs are "dynasts"), and its NDA partners. More importantly, there is only a thin line between public corruption and crony capitalism which has been rampant in both UPA and NDA regimes. Besides, in India's system of highly secretive election funding — made murkier by electoral bonds — a party

far ahead of others in benefiting from that system cannot deny complicity.

There have been many accounts of young people telling press reporters that they may not have jobs, but Modi has ensured that India is respected in the league of nations: Undoubtedly, this has been important to many voters. This kind of preening nationalism is based on a deep inferiority complex, that the rest of the world does not give us enough respect. Many people abroad have not been much impressed by India's actions in the Balakot airstrike, and, many in India are unaware that India's reputation abroad has substantially declined as well in several respects under the Modi regime. India used to be respected for its pluralism and democracy. In the widely-cited report of the Economist Intelligence Unit on the State of Democracy in the World for 2018, India's rank declined sharply in just four years since 2014. The lynchings of Muslims, atrocities on Dalits, the assault on some universities by goons and politicians, the repression of dissent, and the prominence given by the regime to Hindu supremacists (like Yogi Adityanath or Pragna Thakur) have brought us disgrace in the civilised world. Politicians pontificating on plastic surgery or test-tube babies by ancient Hindus, or rants against evolution or the cancer-curing properties of cow urine, have made us a laughing stock in the world. Yet, in our echo-chambers, there will be non-stop hype about the Modi regime raising our national prestige.

Yes, nationalism can have a positive role in unifying people and transcending inter-cast group conflicts, but the kind of ethnic pseudo-nationalism that the RSS/BJP propagates is highly divisive, not unifying. If it is really the case that, as some people believe, Modi's appeal can cut across castes and regions, and therefore is a positive step for India, then this nationalism has to transcend majoritarian ethnicity. It has to be, instead, a kind of "constitutional nationalism", based on our constitutional values and norms. Modi once called the Constitution his "holy book", but that has been mere empty rhetoric; in reality he has connived with his party members and associates, frequently violating the Constitution in letter and spirit. Majoritarianism is not democracy — I don't like the oxymoronic term "illiberal democracy", used by many people, from Fared Zakaria to Viktor Orban, as this ignores in some sense the essence of democracy. Effectively turning nearly 200 million people in our country into intimidated, second-class citizens is a violation of that constitutional nationalism, however impressive Modi's electoral victory may be. Concentration of power in one person, intimidation of critics and dissenters, weakening of institutions of checks and balances and misuse of police, bureaucracy, tax and investigative agencies against political opponents, are all gross violations of the Constitution which can put the world's largest democracy to shame.

If the victory in 2014 was partly based on false hope, then that of 2019 seems based on false pride.

The writer is professor of graduate school at the department of economics, University of California, Berkeley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UNHEALTHY STRIFE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Get back to work' (IE, June 13). The developments related to the doctor's strike in West Bengal are nothing new in our country. There is a tendency in India to give a political colour to what is otherwise a completely non-political issue. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee should not threaten the striking doctors. The BJP should avoid trying to gain political mileage out of this unfortunate incident. The patients and their families need to have complete faith in the doctors. And lastly, the doctors need to get back to work, though their anger is justified.

Bal Govind, Noida

ROT IN CONGRESS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Let him go' (IE, June 14). Rahul Gandhi has shown some character by owning up the Congress's debacle, but the party does not seem to have the gumption to accept his resignation. The Congress must show courage and try to be a party of substance rather than a party of sycophants. It's high time the Grand Old Party develops inner-party democracy and involves grass root workers in electing its working committee.

Ashok Goswami, Mumbai

LANGUAGE, WISDOM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The enigma of English' (IE, June 13). The approach when it comes to language must not be to devalue English. Rather, it must be to work to develop the language and culture of non-English

LETTER OF THE WEEK

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 the soft power approach. It can also extend generous lines of credit, step up initiatives such as joint counter terror drills and enhance maritime trade and commerce, which can help India to exercise its influence in the Indian Ocean regions.

Pranay Kumar Shome, Kolkata

speakers. Mother tongue is the only way to inculcate values and basic knowledge. The Constitution's Article 343(1) lays down that: "Over a period of 15 years from enactment, use of English as an official language is to cease, unless Parliament decides otherwise." But it still holds the status of the "subsidiary official language" of the Union. English emerged as a lingua franca for commercial, diplomatic and administrative convenience. But the language one is born into is apt for foundation knowledge.

Ashpreet S Ekhnour, Fazilka



G S BAJPAI

ABOUT FOUR MONTHS ago, when news about a district court in Madhya Pradesh sentencing a person to death under the POCSO (Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences) Act was doing the rounds, research conducted by the Counsel to Secure Justice (CSJ) and National Law University Delhi (NLUD) offered significant insights. Drawing from a survey conducted with the survivors and family members, as well as the accused, in child sexual assault cases in areas in and around Delhi, this study revealed that the meanings of "justice" tend to vary for the victim, offender, family, and community. The survivors or their families did not necessarily want the death penalty — or even strict punishment — for the accused. Rather, in many cases, they wanted the offenders to acknowledge their wrongdoing or tender an apology for their act.

These ideas are a part of "restorative justice", which is emerging as a powerful tool in the criminal justice process, especially with regard to conciliation and mediation. The concept involves bringing the victim and offender together to remedy the harm — it makes the offender accept his/her offence. Criminologist Howard Zehr notes that crime violates both people and relationships. Restorative justice involves the victim, offender and the commu-

Justice that heals

Why cases under POCSO law should deploy restorative justice

nity in its quest for solutions, which are about repairing, reconciliation, and reassurance.

Punitive options, including the death penalty, are not the product of the concerns of victims or their families — they are notions of the state and therefore, driven by political considerations. Punishment seldom matches with the idea of justice held by the victims, their families or the community. Victimisation leads to trauma, shame, insecurity, and several other social and emotional consequences. Most people who were interviewed in the CSJ-NLUD study felt that the offenders need to go through similar pain and trauma. The victims wanted society to punish the offenders by shaming them as "rapists" or "molesters". Other victims wanted the offender to tender an apology as it gives them a sense of empowerment. The survivors felt that the criminal justice process is inconsequential if it doesn't drive the offender to experience regret, a sense of guilt and an obligation of reparation.

The study revealed that families of victims often felt that the offenders usually do not experience any remorse or guilt even after undergoing the severest of punishments. The stakeholders in these communities felt that, apart from harsh punishment, measures like community service, education — or even

treatment for the offender — and restorative programmes ought to be initiated.

Does the criminal justice system repair the harm done and heal relationships? Communities often perceive the system as corrupt, dismissive of the poor and insensitive towards victims and their families. The CSJ-NLUD study presents a powerful case for applying restorative justice, especially because re-victimisation and secondary victimisation, including discrediting crime victims during cross-examination, results in more harm than good — they discourage victims from reporting abuse. Victims believe that the system shares the society's victim-blaming culture.

Restorative justice programmes enable the victim, the offender and affected members of the community to be directly involved in addressing the situation that arises after a crime. They become central to the criminal justice process, with government officers and legal professionals serving as facilitators of a system that aims at offender accountability and reparation. This restorative process — that often involves face-to-face interactions between all parties — is a powerful way of addressing not only the material loss as a result of the crime, but the social and emotional trauma caused by it.

A restorative justice approach would require the POCSO Act to concentrate on the victims' needs — material, financial, emotional and social. POCSO ought to recreate or restore a community that supports the rehabilitation of victims and offenders — and in doing so, prevent crime. Adoption of such strategies will also obviate the costs and delays associated with the current legal justice system.

In 90 per cent cases of child sexual abuse, the offender is not only known to the victim but is also a close relative. Many organisations worldwide have "victim offender reconciliation programmes" or "sentencing circles". These involve trained facilitators who make the parties discuss possible solutions by driving the offenders to own up to their offence.

The current justice system often ignores the need to restore relationships that were broken, because family members blamed victims and failed to support them. The aim of the criminal justice process ought to be the creation of peace and, more importantly, enabling the community to deal with the effects of crime — as well as preventing it.

The writer is chairperson, Centre for Criminology & Victimology, National Law University Delhi



Beyond the wall

In defeat, the Gandhi family is looking for scapegoats without owning responsibility

Failure is always an orphan, but the scramble among Congress leaders to stick the genesis of the party's devastating collapse in the Lok Sabha election on someone else is comical. What gives it a dark edge is that this evasiveness is being condoned, even promoted, by the reigning supremos. The Gandhis, Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka, were apparently shocked that the party lost as it did in the election. They would not be, had they been in touch with the political situation on the ground that they keep themselves ferociously insulated from, with the help of self-serving aides. This collapse was long in the making, and on their watch – and the signs were all around. It is true that the party was up against factors that were loaded in favour of its principal opponent, the BJP, such as money power and the partisan conduct of the Election Commission. Cataloguing only this is not, however, an honest route to an objective understanding of the party's degeneration. The lack of maturity, egocentrism, and sense of entitlement underlying Congress president Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's response in the aftermath of the defeat are disheartening for sympathisers and a boon for the BJP. Mr. Gandhi called out senior leaders for not supporting him and resigned as party president – but he should know that in politics, victory and power are commanded, not sought as a favour; Ms. Vadra told a meeting of Congress workers in Uttar Pradesh that they were responsible for the setback – she should know there is hardly any reason why anyone should be working for the party at all in U.P., unless the leadership inspires them to do so.

Blaming subordinates is bad leadership; simply threatening to walk away in the face of a setback is irresponsible brinkmanship. This is why it is revealing that in the midst of all this, the brother-sister duo met Navjot Singh Sidhu, a recent entrant from the BJP to the Congress who is publicly challenging Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, who led the campaign from the front and held the State for the party. Mr. Sidhu's photo-op gave sufficient grounds to assume that even in this moment of existential crisis, the Congress leadership is susceptible to machinations by courtiers who have a history of undermining strong regional leaders. On a more self-reflective note, Mr. Gandhi would realise that his obsession, to the exclusion of almost everything else, with elections in the party's student and youth wings was meaningless and self-indulgent. Good leaders know there is only one way to go when pushed to the wall. For that he needs to hold himself accountable to his party persons, and openly so. The Congress today needs a strong leader; and Indian democracy needs the leader of the largest Opposition party to be mindful of the responsibility that the position carries. Mr. Gandhi must decide whether he can be that leader.

Full disclosure

SEBI's new framework for financial disclosure by credit rating agencies may not be enough

Amidst the rising number of defaults by companies, the chief markets regulator is taking the fight to what it thinks is the enemy: ratings agencies. The Securities and Exchange Board of India has asked credit rating agencies in the country to, among other things, clearly state the "probability of default" of the instruments they rate for the benefit of investors. There have been a record 163 downgrades of debt instruments this year, according to data released by Prime Database this week. This is more than double the number of defaults over the whole of last year. Debt instruments issued by prominent companies including Yes Bank, Essel and Jet Airways have been downgraded this year. This spate of defaults, which may well be a sign of the turning of the credit cycle in the broader economy, may have forced SEBI to crack the whip on credit rating agencies. In a circular released on Thursday, SEBI laid down a new standard framework for financial disclosure by credit rating agencies that it believes will enhance the quality of information made available by these agencies to investors. Notably, the agencies will have to publish information on how their performance in the rating of debt instruments compares with a benchmark created in consultation with SEBI. The regulator believes this will help investors to better gauge the performance of credit rating agencies.

SEBI's aggressive regulatory approach seems to suggest a certain disappointment with credit rating agencies, which may not be unfounded. They have been caught napping on several occasions, including during the recent default by Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services on its debt commitments. They are also seen by many as being more loyal to companies whose instruments they rate rather than to investors who provide precious capital. These concerns need to be addressed. SEBI's attempt seems to be to align ratings methodologies with global best practices. The suggestion to revise the method of computing default rates and the precise definition of terms that raters should use in describing a client's liquidity position – strong, adequate, stretched and poor – are aimed at sharpening disclosure and leaving little room for raters to be ambiguous. What is not clear, though, is how the new framework will effectively resolve the conflict of interest issue that plagues the rating industry. The issuer-pays model where the ratings agency is paid by the issuer of the instrument that it rates is not a healthy one. But the problem is that a viable alternative is yet to be proposed. The bottomline is that the poor track record of credit rating agencies is known to most investors and is appropriately discounted by market participants.

Reversing the scale of priorities

The Chennai-Salem highway case will test the judiciary's assessment of environmental and economic interests



SUHRITH PARTHASARTHY

In the weeks ahead, the Supreme Court will hear arguments on an appeal filed against a judgment of the Madras High Court in *P.V. Krishnamoorthy v. The Government of India*. There, a series of notifications acquiring land for a proposed eight-lane expressway connecting Chennai to Salem were quashed. The Supreme Court has already denied, with good reason, the National Highway Authority of India's urgent request for a stay of the judgment. Such an order would have rendered unavailing the High Court's lucidly reasoned ruling. Indeed, the quality of the High Court's verdict is such that, when the appeal made against it is heard, the Supreme Court could find that the judgment demands a wider, national embracing.

Question of procedure

The eight-lane highway is part of the "Bharatmala Pariyojana", a centrally sponsored highways programme, aimed chiefly as a corridor for more efficient freight movement. The intended highway between Chennai and Salem will cover more than 250 km, and, once constructed, will cut its way through a slew of agricultural and reserve forest lands. Although the High Court framed a series of questions that required answering, the ultimate controversy in the case came down to this: was an environmental impact assessment (EIA) required before efforts were made to acquire land for the highway project? If not, at what stage of the project was such an assessment required?

According to the petitioners, many of them landowners, the state had failed to obtain an environmental clearance for the project before acquiring land and had thereby violated its responsibilities. What is more, in any event, such permission, they argued, could hardly be obtained since it was clear that the project would have a deleterious impact on the forests, the surrounding water bodies and the wildlife of the region.

The government denied this. It argued that its power to acquire land under the National Highways Act, 1956, was unconditional. There was, it said, no law mandating an EIA before efforts are made to acquire private land. In its belief, a notification under the Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986, which required an EIA for the construction of a new highway, did not decree such an assessment for the purposes of securing the land.

Sustainable development

For some time now, it's been evident that the environment is in a state of utter ruin. Recognising this, in 1987, a United Nations-backed committee led by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Brundtland proposed a long-term strategy which called for sustainable development, among other things. This programme, radical at the time, titled "Our Common Future", defined the principle as an endeavour to ensure that any development "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs." Since then, sustainable development has been viewed as something of a mantra in environmental jurisprudence. So much so that in India, even before the principle crystallised into a binding international norm, the Supreme Court in *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum* (1996) read the idea as intrinsic to India's constitutional structure.



E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

"The traditional concept that development and ecology are opposed to each other is no longer acceptable," wrote Justice Kuldeep Singh. "Sustainable Development" is the answer."

But grand as this statement sounds, in practice it's proved scarcely useful. For the courts have invariably seen sustainable development as demanding a balancing exercise, as requiring a calculation of trade-offs between the environment and the economy. What this has meant, as Nivedita Menon has argued, is that the courts of neoliberal India wound up fashioning a sliding scale of priorities in which the environment, particularly the urban ecosystem, always trumped people, but where eventually development trumped it all. This approach, she showed, was typified in the Supreme Court judgment in a case concerning industrialisation at the Kudremukh National Park (*Godavaram*, 2002). Holding that any development would have an adverse effect on the ecology and the environment, a balance, wrote Justice Arijit Pasayat, had to be struck. "Where the commercial venture or enterprise would bring in results which are far more useful for the people, difficulty of a small number of people has to be bypassed," he wrote. "The comparative hardships have to be balanced and the convenience and benefit to a larger section of the people has to get primacy over comparatively lesser hardship."

Utilitarian reckonings of this

kind, perhaps, represent a problem inherent in seeing sustainable development as a virtuous model. It could easily be argued that by its very design the principle calls for a form of calculation that tends to see growth as outplaying all other concerns. As Amartya Sen wrote, while the prominence accorded to sustainable development may be laudable, we must equally ask whether "the conception of human beings implicit in it is sufficiently capacious". A project, for example, which might defer future generations the opportunity to breathe fresh air may well be defended on a simple application of the norm if those future generations are likely to be rich enough to enable them to live comfortably without breathing fresh air. In this illustration, the principle overlooks, as Prof. Sen wrote, "the need for anti-emission policies that could help future generations to have the freedom to enjoy the fresh air that earlier generations enjoyed."

Primacy to the environment

Sustainable development can, therefore, work only if the environment is seen as valuable for its own sake. The Madras High Court does this in its judgment in *Krishnamoorthy*. To argue, as the government did, that an EIA wasn't required before land was acquired for a highway, as the court recognised, was to effectively place the cart before the horse. As the court pointed out, the highway in question here was a greenfield project that was intended as an altogether new road to be constructed on virgin land. In such a case, to eschew an EIA before land was obtained would have created irreversible effects that would have had a bearing not only on the environment, but also on the social and economic life of the landowners.

"The land of an agriculturist," wrote Justice T.S. Sivagnanam, for

the court, "is vital to sustain his livelihood... The land provides dignity for the person." The judgment, therefore, not only holds the state accountable for the violation of basic notions of due process, in exercising the power of eminent domain, but also sees the possession of farmlands by farmers as an article of faith. But most importantly, the ruling deepens a commitment to the protection of forests and waterbodies. It places the environment in a position of primacy over unthinking measures of ostensible development.

When a highway passes through a reserve forest would it not, the court asks, "pave way for establishments in the near vicinity"? Would it not "pave way for poaching of endangered species of birds and animals"? Would it not "pave way for illicit felling and transportation of valuable timber"? The rigours of the country's environmental laws, the judgment therefore holds, ought to outweigh those of procedural laws concerning acquisition of land, for "the protection of environment stands in a higher pedestal when placed on scale with that of the economic interest."

By so holding, the Madras High Court has effectively reversed the prevailing scale of priorities. This is especially remarkable since it comes at a time when the government is seeking to further weaken the existing norms for environmental clearance. That such efforts at diluting environmental protections are underway when it has become increasingly apparent that climate change represents an existential threat ought to alarm us into action. One way to act is to compel the state to look beyond exercises of balancing, as the High Court does, and to see nature as intrinsically valuable.

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

Shaky building blocks

The draft National Education Policy reinforces outdated ideas about the goals of a foundational literacy programme



SHAILAJA MENON

Many children in elementary classrooms across India cannot read and write proficiently, as demonstrated on an annual basis by the Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER). This affects other school-based learning, as well as functioning in societies and economies that prize literacy.

Capabilities of young children

It was heartening, therefore, to see a chapter devoted to "Foundational Literacy and Numeracy" in the draft National Education Policy, 2019. The focus it places on the early years is welcome, and the continuity it recommends between the pre-primary and primary years is necessary. Likewise, its emphasis on mother tongue-based education and oral language development are critical. However, the analysis presented on why children fail to learn to read and write largely points to factors surrounding the teaching and learning process – the health and nutritional status of children, high student-teacher ratios, and so on.

While each of these factors is undoubtedly important, they do not address with sufficient clarity curricular, pedagogical and teacher education-related issues that plague the teaching and learning of early literacy in many Indian classrooms.

Most classrooms across India view the task of foundational literacy as teaching children to master the script, and being able to read simple words and passages with comprehension. Higher order meaning making, critical thinking, reading and responding to literature, and writing are typically reserved for later years of schooling. This draft reinforces such restrictive and outdated ideas about the goals of a foundational literacy programme.

Research evidence from around the globe demonstrates unequivocally that even very young children are capable of using early forms of reading, writing and drawing to express themselves and to communicate; they are also capable of inferential meaning-making, critical thinking, and so on. This entire body of scholarship, referred to as "emergent literacy", has been ignored in the draft. This has powerful consequences for the recommendations that follow, which propose largely oral activities for the pre-primary grades, reading hours for Grades 1-3, with an additional hour for



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

writing starting only in Grades 4 and 5. It contradicts evidence suggesting that young children be taught listening, speaking, reading and writing simultaneously and not sequentially.

Many pedagogical approaches

Another concern is that the recommendations are based on generic theories of early childhood education, such as multiple age groups learning together in flexible, play- and activity-based ways. They don't draw upon ideas specific to the teaching and learning of early literacy. Early literacy requires a "balance" between helping children to acquire the script, and engaging them with higher order meaning making. It also requires knowledge of a variety of pedagogical approaches, such as reading aloud to children, guiding children in their efforts to read and write, encouraging independent exploration, helping them learn about different genres of texts, and so on. Further, it needs

a balance of materials – moving beyond textbooks and workbooks to high quality children's literature, material created by the children themselves, and the like.

Teachers need to know how to differentiate instruction for learners at different levels and how to provide specific help to students who are struggling. This also requires sufficient time – an average of two-three hours per day, as per the recommendations of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). While it may be beyond the scope of a policy document to detail specific curricular and pedagogical approaches, it must provide sufficient direction for a national curriculum framework to pick up from – in this case, it should signal the need for a balanced and comprehensive approach to foundational literacy and knowledgeable teachers for its implementation. Earlier documents addressing this issue (for example, MHRD's Padhe Bharat, Badhe Bharat, 2014, and Ambedkar University's position paper on Early Language and Literacy in India, 2016) have been far more specific in recommending a comprehensive approach with expanded time, and a balance of goals, methods and materials.

Teaching literacy

This brings me to a third concern, which is a lack of discussion about

what it takes to prepare teachers to successfully teach foundational literacy in a multilingual country. Instead, the document recommends recruiting volunteers and community members to support the acquisition of early literacy (even remedial instruction!) in the primary grades, albeit under the guidance of teachers. This lends credence to a dangerous and erroneous idea that any literate person can teach literacy, and undercuts sophisticated understandings related to children's development and literacy learning that teachers ideally bring to their jobs. Volunteers can be used, but cannot be a primary mechanism that a national policy relies upon to deliver foundational literacy to students.

In focusing on the limitations of the non-academic nature of anganwadi experiences on the one hand, and the inappropriate curricular and pedagogic practices followed by many private pre-schools on the other, the authors of the draft appear to have not engaged with the advances made by scholars, practitioners and policymakers in the field of early literacy.

Shailaja Menon is Professor and Programme-in-Charge, Early Literacy Initiative, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad, and Faculty, School of Education, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

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.

State of the media

Over the years, political parties in power have learned how to influence and even silence the media ("Democracy can die in daylight too", June 14). More than print media, it is mostly TV channels that have lent themselves to easy manipulation. Facts and real issues have been relegated to the margins and only biases are perpetuated. It is sad to see many intelligent people falling for fake news and propaganda. Since 2014, one sees TV channels targeting not the government for its failures but the Opposition. Even the Rafale disclosures in this newspaper were not

picked up by much of the media for further analysis.
V. NAGARAJAN,
Chennai

The disdain that some sections in the country have for the judgment of the common people is only too evident in sentences like "the BJP's logic-defying triumph...". The party has the people's support. What other logic is required to understand the BJP's victory?

M.S. SAGAR REDDY,
Hyderabad

The narrative reinforced by the media that there is no alternative, or the TINA factor as it is called, was accepted by most people

who wanted a "powerful" Prime Minister and not a performing democratic government.

G.B. SIVANANDAM,
Coimbatore

No free will

One cannot be forced to accept a custom and then call it 'free will' ("Liberals need to think again", June 14). It is an entrenched system of domination that led to the institutionalisation of many regressive social customs. Men at the forefront of society always decided what women must do. Every time we justify such customs by calling them acts of 'free will', we are letting down the women

who suffered silently and even gave up their lives because of following these customs and practices.

VRINDA RAJVANSHI,
New Delhi

When a nation is confronted with terror attacks, it adopts strong measures to tighten its national security. We must be unified in our fight against terrorism. If we argue that certain measures being taken hurt for safety hurt our religious sentiments, it will dilute our fight against terrorism.

SNEHA THAKUR,
New Delhi

Take responsibility

Congress general secretary

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's castigation of party workers for the dismal performance of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh is really unfortunate ("You let party down, Priyanka Gandhi tells Congress workers", June 13). It shows that Congress leaders squarely place the blame on the workers if they lose, but if they win, then all credit goes to the Gandhi family and the leadership.

ARUN MALANKAR,
Mumbai

Water conservation

Singapore is known to conserve water in multiple ways, Israel's water management has made its agriculture less dependent

on rain and freshwater resources, and China is making huge investments in water conservation projects. In comparison, policymakers in India have consistently failed to accord due importance to water conservation initiatives ("Rainwater harvesting could have saved city from crisis", June 14). Mindless exploitation of groundwater resources and failure to recharge existing water aquifers are why many parts of Tamil Nadu are facing severe water shortage. It is high time we made this issue a priority.

M. JEVARAM,
Sholavandan

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:
www.hindu.co.in/opinion/letters/



Ishar Saini prepares his field to sow the season's kharif crop after uprooting and destroying the GM brinjal crop that he had planted on his farm in Nathwan village, Fatehabad district, Haryana. (Below): Seeds of various vegetables are sold in a shop in Dabwali. Ishar's son bought the brinjal saplings from a vendor in the vicinity. ■ AKHILESH KUMAR

The mysterious case of GM brinjal cultivation

Last month, genetically modified brinjal was found in a farm in Haryana. While the government insists that this is a one-off case, activists wonder how widespread the problem could be. The spotlight is back on an old debate, reports **Vikas Vasudeva**

Braving the stifling June heat, Ishar Saini is busy preparing his half-acre field to sow the season's kharif crop. Ishar has unwittingly been in the limelight in Haryana for over a month, ever since genetically modified brinjal, the cultivation of which is illegal in India, was found planted on his rented farm. Saini was forced to destroy the crop in the presence of local officials and activists in Nathwan village, Fatehabad district. What remains a mystery is the source of the seeds of the transgenic variety.

Ishar asserts that neither he nor his son Jeevan Saini, who bought the saplings of brinjal in December 2017, was aware that the saplings were of a genetically modified variety. The Sainis had procured them from a roadside vendor in Dabwali, a town nearly 100 km from Nathwan.

Samples were collected from Ishar's field by the Haryana horticulture department on April 29 this year, following a complaint by activists. They were then sent to the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) in New Delhi for testing.

In the eye of the storm

"What is our fault? My son bought saplings that were available in the market. If they were of an illegal variety, it's for the government agencies to answer how this variety came to be sold in the market. We are the victims here, not the culprits," says Ishar. After the brinjal crop was uprooted, Ishar sowed Bt cotton in his field. Apart from the half acre that the Sainis have rented, they also own one acre of land.

"First, we had to bear the loss caused by the uprooting of the brinjal crop, which was ready to be plucked. We had spent about ₹25,000 on the crop's maintenance this season. Now we have to spend additional money on sowing the new crop. This will cost us at least another ₹5,000. The government should compensate us for this as farming is the main source of our livelihood," says Ishar.

Jeevan, 33, pleads ignorance. He says he had no idea that sowing this variety of brinjal was illegal: "How could I possibly know whether the saplings were a genetically modified variety or not? The vendor told me that the brinjal plant would be free from insects. The price, though, was high. It cost me seven to eight times more than the regular varieties, but because he assured me of better quality produce and good returns, I decided to cultivate it." Jeevan was a motor mechanic for 20 years. It was only a couple of years ago that he joined his family occupation of farming.

"In April and May last year, I harvested the first produce of the crop," says Jeevan, as he assists his father on the farm. "The quality was good, though I had to spray pesticides. I sold the brinjal in the local markets of Ratia and Tohana



My son bought saplings that were available in the market. If they were of an illegal variety, it's for the government agencies to answer how this variety came to be sold in the market. We are the victims, not the culprits.

ISHAR SAINI
Farmer

and they fetched good returns. We consumed the same brinjal at home and it seemed fine. One of my friends in the neighbourhood had also procured the saplings along with me, but he destroyed the crop in 2018 after he found that it got infested."

Jeevan says he has not met the vendor from whom he purchased the saplings after that one time. "Most of the vendors come with saplings during the sowing season. They leave after selling the saplings. It's difficult to track them," he says.

Beeru, 60, who has three and a half acres of farmland adjacent to Ishar's land, says: "Though I have not seen anyone else apart from Sainis sowing this variety of brinjal in the village, it can't be ruled out that this variety is not being cultivated elsewhere. I am sure those vendors or dealers must have sold the saplings and seedlings to many other farmers. Government agencies should ensure that such seeds are not sold in the market. They must find out the origin of the seed supply."

'A one-off case'

Samples from Ishar's farm that were sent to the NBPGR in Delhi for testing were shown to be of a genetically modified variety. Soon after, a committee of experts was set up by the Haryana government and chaired by the Vice Chancellor of the Haryana Agricultural University to analyse the NBPGR's findings. They government confirmed the findings and said genetically modified brinjal had been sold in the market.

Ranbir Singh, joint director at Haryana's horticulture department, insists that this is a one-off case, however. "The crop from Ishar's field was destroyed

and buried deep inside the earth to avoid any contamination. Growing and selling genetically modified brinjal is a violation under the rules of the Union Environment Ministry. We have also surveyed fields across the State and we have found no trace of genetically modified brinjal anywhere else. A report in this regard has been sent to the Union Agriculture Ministry," he says. R.K. Chauhan, joint director in Haryana's environment department, says an interim report based on the observations of the expert committee has been sent to the Union Environment Ministry.

The test results of the sample collected from Ratia's fields establish that genetically modified brinjal did not come from the line that was developed by Mahyco, the Maharashtra-based seed company that developed Bt brinjal. Mahyco's Bt brinjal is commercially grown in Bangladesh. In India, Mahyco's Bt brinjal was cleared in 2009 for commercial cultivation by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, the apex body that decides on genetically modified organisms in the country. But in 2010, former Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh put an indefinite moratorium on Bt brinjal on the grounds that there was scientific and public disagreement on its safety.

The extent of illegal cultivation

While the government insists that this is a one-off case, activists are anxious over the extent of genetically modified crop cultivation in India and blame government agencies for adopting a casual attitude in dealing with the situation. Rajinder Chaudhary, a former professor in the Department of Economics at M.D. University, Rohtak, says: "If the government was really serious about protecting India's biodiversity and consumer health, it should undertake an extensive strip-testing of brinjal and map the extent of genetically modified brinjal cultivation in the country," he says. "It should get further tests done, such as an

'event test'. [Event is a term used to describe the point on a chromosome where a genetic tweaking has happened – an addition or deletion, for instance. By identifying the 'event', scientists can say exactly which line the crop came from.] But neither the State government nor the Central government has done this." Chaudhary is associated with Kudrati Kheti Abhiyan which conducted the preliminary tests, using the 'lateral flow strip method', on the brinjal produced in Ishar's farm.

He cautions that if immediate and stringent steps are not taken, the story of Bt cotton could very well be repeated in the country. "Bt cotton entered Indian fields illegally and then was accorded post-facto approval. Today non-Bt cotton seeds are practically out of the market and can only be procured with great difficulty. Moreover, the adverse impacts of genetically modified food are not evident immediately, they are evident only in the long run. So, the fact that the Sainis have been consuming genetically modified brinjal without any visible adverse effects does not mean it is safe," he says. Chaudhury adds that there is a grave danger of illegal genetically modified brinjal cultivation proliferating if the Central and State governments do not act swiftly. "The seedling supply of this suspected genetically modified brinjal happened last year. It is not clear what the extent of illegal cultivation of this unapproved crop is."

Chaudhary narrates how he was able to trace the field where the suspected cultivation of genetically modified brinjal had taken place. "A resident of Ratia town went to a local nursery to fetch saplings of brinjal. When he was discussing the shoot and fruit borer [the most destructive pest of brinjal], the nursery merchant told him about a local farmer [Saini] who had planted a brinjal variety that is resistant to the shoot and fruit borer. When he tipped us off about the variety, I visited the farm in April this year and bought a few kgs of the sus-

pected brinjal. A lateral flow strip test [a preliminary test conducted using a kit] was conducted and it indicated that the sample was of genetically modified brinjal. The lateral strip method is not a confirmatory test though. So I sent samples to the Ahmedabad-based SGS Private Limited, a laboratory accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories. A report on May 8 by the laboratory confirmed that the brinjal samples were genetically modified."

Unable to differentiate crops

In Dabwali, where Jeevan bought the seeds, seed suppliers and dealers say they do not know about the sale or availability of illegal genetically modified seedlings in regulated markets. Some, however, do not rule out the possibility of such saplings or seedlings being sold in unregulated markets.

"If a genetically modified crop has been found on one farm, it means that saplings or seedlings are being sold. Saplings are sold in nurseries. Many mobile vendors sell seedlings. This means anyone can be involved in selling the banned seeds. We have the example of Bt cotton before us," says Rakesh Garg, a vegetable seed dealer who has been in the business for over 15 years in Dabwali's vegetable market. Garg adds that it is important for government agencies to trace the entire supply chain – from seed developers to intermediaries – to find out the origin of seed and sapling supply.

At Garg's store, Ram Swarup, a farmer from a nearby village called Rajpur Majra, points out that it's difficult to differentiate between saplings of a genetically modified plant and those of a normal variety plant. Hence it's not difficult to sell genetically modified seeds in the market, he says. "Also, when a farmer grows genetically modified brinjal, the harvested crop is similar to any other variety. Even the consumer can't make out the difference," says Swarup, who has 11 acres of farmland.

Umendra Dutt of Kheti Virasat Mission, an organisation promoting organic farming, says the government should take legal action against the suppliers of these seedlings or saplings. "Curbing the supply network of illegal genetically modified brinjal is something that should not be ignored at all. However, it's equally important that no penal action should be taken against farmers who have been duped into cultivating these illegal seeds. Instead, they must be fully compensated for the destruction of their standing crop," he says.

Support for GM brinjal

Meanwhile, others are demanding that the Central government should allow cultivation of genetically modified crops, including of brinjal, across the country as they claim that the crops are absolutely safe for consumption. Also,

The crop from Ishar's field was destroyed and buried deep inside the earth to avoid any contamination. We have also surveyed fields across the State and we have found no trace of genetically modified brinjal anywhere else.

RANBIR SINGH
Joint director, Haryana horticulture department

they put forth the argument that farmers should be allowed to reap the benefits of modern technology, which would help them boost their income by fetching better returns.

On June 10, a few hundred farmers gathered at Akot village in Maharashtra's Akola district to protest against the ban of cultivation of genetically modified crops. "To show our anguish against the ban we sowed herbicide-tolerant Bt cotton in the field of one of our fellow farmers," says Gun Parkash, Bharatiya Kisan Union's Haryana unit president, who participated in the protest. The protest was spearheaded by Shetkari Sanghatana, a farmer body which has been opposing the government's ban of genetically modified crops.

Stating that a similar kind of protest will be launched in Haryana and Punjab in the days to come, Parkash says, "These genetically modified crops are in use in many parts of the world. Countries like the U.S. and Canada are using this technology. With the use of genetically modified technology, costs are reduced, pest attacks are lower and production is higher. Farmers who are in distress in our country are not able to reap the benefits of genetically modified crops because these crops are banned." He adds that farmers and consumers in Bangladesh have been safely reaping the benefits of Bt brinjal, but in India successive governments have preferred to keep quiet.

"The ban on genetically modified crops is not just restricting farmers from accessing technology but is also promoting an illegal market to flourish. The adverse consequences of an unregulated market are far more dangerous. Even though in our country no genetically modified food crop has been given a nod due to bio-safety issues, genetically modified substances have already entered our food chain," he says.

Therein lies the irony. "Bt cotton cultivation is allowed in India as a non-food crop but then cotton seed oil is extracted from these plants and is being consumed in parts of the country, especially in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Not only this, canola oil and soybean oil are both extracted from imported seeds, which are produced from genetically modified crops abroad. It's high time our government realises that genetically modified crops have already entered the food chain," Parkash says.

The debate is far from settled.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 102

पांच वर्ष का बजट

वित्त मंत्री चुनिंदा समूहों के साथ बजट पूर्व चर्चा कर रही हैं। ऐसी बैठकों में आमंत्रित व्यक्ति या समूह ढेर सारे विचार प्रकट करते हैं। इनमें अच्छे विचार भी होते हैं और बुरे भी। यही कारण है कि ऐसी बैठकों में प्रस्तुत विचारों में से बहुत कम विचार बजट का हिस्सा बन पाते हैं। परंतु यहां उठाए जाने वाले मुद्दों से वित्त मंत्री प्रभावित अवश्य होते हैं क्योंकि इन मुद्दों को मुद्रास्फ़ीति, घाटे या आर्थिक वृद्धि जैसे विषयों पर आम जनता के विचार माना जाता है।

राजकोषीय स्थिति तनावपूर्ण है, आर्थिक वृद्धि में धीमापन आया है, कर राजस्व अनुमान से कम है और उचित आकलन किया जाए तो घाटा ज्यादा है। सरकार का कर्ज भी अपेक्षित स्तर से 20 फीसदी अधिक है और नई उधारी तमाम आम बचत को समाप्त कर रही है। ऐसा इसलिए भी हुआ है क्योंकि इस बचत में कमी आई है। निजी क्षेत्र के लिए कोई बचत उपलब्ध नहीं है। स्वाभाविक बात है कि रिजर्व बैंक के लिए बाजार में ब्याज दर कम करना कठिन है। फंड की कमी और उसकी लागत के चलते

निवेश प्रभावित हुआ है।

मुद्रास्फ़ीति की औसत दर बीते वर्षों में 7 फीसदी से घटकर 3 फीसदी हो गई है लेकिन भविष्य निधि जैसी बचत योजनाएं अभी भी शून्य जोखिम पर 8 फीसदी से अधिक का करमुक्त प्रतिफल दे रही हैं। यह दर बहुत ज्यादा है और मुद्रा बाजार के साथ सुसंगत नहीं है। स्वाभाविक सी बात है कि मुद्रास्फ़ीति के समायोजन के बाद वास्तविक ऋण दर दुनिया की सर्वोच्च दरों में शामिल है। अगर सरकार ब्याज दरों में कमी चाहती है और निजी निवेश को सुविधा देती है तो उसे कुछ अन्य कदम उठाने के साथ अल्प बचत पर कर प्रोत्साहन समाप्त करना होगा। व्यव क्षेत्र में उसे न्यूनतम हस्तक्षेप करना चाहिए।

भारी बहुमत से चुनकर आई हुई नई सरकार किसी तरह की सलाह सुनना नहीं चाहती। पिछले वर्ष से तुलना की जाए तो इस वर्ष की नई या बड़ी प्रतिबद्धताओं में

आयुष्मान भारत योजना की लागत और किसानों को 6,000 रुपये वार्षिक देने जैसी बात शामिल है। ऐसा तब है जबकि कर राजस्व बजट में उल्लिखित आंकड़ों से बेहद कम है। बीते वर्षों के दौरान रक्षा व्यय संकुचित हुआ है और वित्त मंत्री को रक्षा मंत्रालय में अपने पिछले कार्यकाल से यह पता ही होगा कि सेनाओं को उपकरणों के मामले में कितनी दिक्कतों का सामना

करना पड़ रहा है। इसकी अनदेखी आगे भारी पड़ सकती है। पिछले वर्ष के तमाम ऐसे बिल हैं जिन्हें चुकता किया जाना है। बजट के व्यय क्षेत्र को लेकर रुख में नरमी लानी होगी। कोई भी नया या अतिरिक्त व्यय अन्य मद की बचत के अनुरूप होना चाहिए। ऐसी बचत हमेशा संभव रहती है।

राजस्व पक्ष की बात करें तो धीमी पड़ती अर्थव्यवस्था में नए कर बढ़ाने की संभावना

सीमित है। कठोर यथार्थ यह है कि वित्त मंत्री के पास कुछ खास राजकोषीय गुंजाइश नहीं है। उनके पास केवल रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा अतिरिक्त भंडार के रूप में स्थानांतरित राशि ही अतिरिक्त होगी। चूंकि वित्तीय क्षेत्र की दिक्कत अर्थव्यवस्था को प्रभावित करती रहेगी और बैलेंस शीट सुधार का

काम अभी प्रक्रिया के अधीन है इसलिए आरबीआई से मिलने

वाली राशि का इस्तेमाल सरकारी बैंकों के पुनर्पूजीकरण में किया जाना चाहिए। इसके अतिरिक्त इस राशि का इस्तेमाल अन्यथा मजबूत शैंडो बैंकों को विशेष वित्त मुहैया कराने के लिए किया जाना चाहिए। ये संस्थान नकदी की तंगी से जूझ रहे हैं।

सबसे बेहतर नीति यह होगी कि वित्त मंत्री आगे बढ़कर सच्चाई को सामने रखें। उन्हें यह स्पष्ट करना चाहिए कि वह पंचवर्षीय



5 जी की आकांक्षा और हकीकत

सरकार 5 जी सेवाओं और डिजिटल इंडिया के लिए क्या कुछ कर सकती है, इस विषय पर विस्तार से प्रकाश डाल रहे हैं श्याम पोनप्पा

देश में 5जी सेवाओं की शुरुआत का विचार हममें से कई को उत्साहित कर सकता है। 5जी तकनीक आखिर है क्या? यह दरअसल दूरसंचार प्रौद्योगिकी का मिश्रण है जहां कहीं अधिक तेज गति वाले डेटा को व्यापक गहन और बेहतर संचार के साथ उपलब्ध कराया जाता है। जबकि इस दौरान ऊर्जा की खपत होती है और बैटरी की अवधि में इजाफा होता है। जाहिर तौर पर यह विकिरण भी कम करता है। लब्धोलुआब यह कि इसकी सहायता से लोग सहज ढंग से और किफायत से अपने काम कर सकेंगे। इसकी सहायता से स्मार्ट फोन से लेकर कंप्यूटर तक, अध्ययन, कार्यालयीन कार्य, शोध, मनोरंजन से लेकर घर-दफ्तर में विभिन्न उपकरणों और मशीनों का इस्तेमाल सहज और सुविधाजनक हो सकता है। आगे बात करें तो यह रेफ्रिजरेटorों, खाना पकाने के उपकरण, औद्योगिक उपकरण, परिवहन आदि के क्षेत्र में भी जीवन को कहीं अधिक आसान बना सकता है। 5जी एक लंबी प्रक्रिया के शुरुआती चरण में है। शायद देश में इसका व्यापक परीक्षण होने में अभी कुछ वर्ष का समय लग जाए। व्यापक उपलब्धता में इससे भी अधिक वक्त लग सकता है। एक अनुमान के मुताबिक इसमें करीब 100 अरब डॉलर का निवेश करना होगा।

इसके अलावा तमाम ऐसी वजह हैं जिनके चलते देश की क्षमताओं में इजाफा जरूरी है। अब यह आवश्यक हो चला है कि हम

आयात पर निर्भर रहने के बजाय अपनी जरूरतें खुद पूरी करें। अगर हम चाहते हैं कि पेट्रोलियम आयात हमारे भुगतान संतुलन पर नकारात्मक असर नहीं डाले तो उसके लिए घरेलू क्षमताओं का विकास करना एक तरह की पूर्व शर्त है। बिना घरेलू क्षमताओं के ऊर्जा आयात इलेक्ट्रॉनिक आयात को भी सीमित करेगा। इससे पता चलता है कि हमें सौर ऊर्जा विकास की किस कदर आवश्यकता है।

बहरहाल, देश के संचार उद्योग की वित्तीय स्थिति भी बहुत अच्छी नहीं है। क्षमताओं के विकास के लिए राजस्व अर्जित करना और इक्विटी और डेट के संदर्भ में पूंजी तक पहुंच सुनिश्चित करना, दोनों आवश्यक हैं। यह भी अनुकूल दर पर होना चाहिए। दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में कीमतों की जंग के बाद रिलायंस जियो भी अपने कर्मचारियों की तादाद कम कर रही है। इस बीच एयरटेल ने 4जी के बुनियादी ढांचे में काफी निवेश किया है लेकिन वह तब तक 5जी स्पेक्ट्रम के लिए बोली लगाने का अनिच्छुक नजर आता है जब तक कि कीमतों में कमी नहीं आती है।

सरकार ने सितंबर 2015 में 5जी के लिए एक समिति गठित की थी। इसकी अध्यक्षता स्टैनफर्ड विश्वविद्यालय के मानद प्रोफेसर आरोग्यस्वामी पलराज को दी गई थी जो बेतार संचार विषय में प्रवीण हैं। इस समिति ने अपनी अनुशंसा में कहा कि नेटवर्क तात्कालिक प्राथमिकता है। उसके अनुसार

ऐसा करके ही 5जी नेटवर्क को शीघ्र और किफायती अंदाज में शुरू किया जा सकेगा। बाद के चरणों के लिए प्रौद्योगिकी डिजाइन और निर्माण क्षमता की अनुशंसा की गई।

नेटवर्क तैयार करने के लिए नीतिगत समर्थन आवश्यक होता है। खासतौर पर कर्ज के बोझ तले दबे क्षेत्र के लिए जिसका प्रति उपभोक्ता राजस्व लगातार कम हो रहा हो, स्पेक्ट्रम तक जिसकी पहुंच नहीं हो। हालांकि इस बीच अन्य देशों ने अपनी स्थिति मजबूत कर ली है। यह विडंबना ही है क्योंकि भारत इस क्षेत्र में एक बड़ी शक्ति और बड़ा बाजार है। इसके बावजूद सरकार की नीतियां बहुत अधिक सफल साबित नहीं हुई हैं।

सरकार ने 5जी के लिए में बढ़त बनाने की बात कही थी। इसके बावजूद भारत इस क्षेत्र में पिछड़ा हुआ है।

स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन अभी बड़े परीक्षण 2019 के अंत तक होने थे जबकि नीलामी 2020 तक होनी थी। बहरहाल, सरकार ने कहा है कि सितंबर तक 5जी परीक्षण और 2019 के अंत तक नीलामी की जाएगी। चूंकि अभी स्पेक्ट्रम बैंड के विकल्प और परीक्षण के लिए आवंटन अभी होना है इसलिए ऐसे तमाम मसलों को हल किए बिना इस दिशा में आगे बढ़ना दिक्कतदेह हो सकता है।

इसके अलावा हमारे देश में स्पेक्ट्रम का आरक्षित मूल्य कोरिया की तुलना में सात गुना है। क्षेत्रवार नकद प्रवाह कमजोर है और ग्राहक ऐसे हैं जो बहुत सस्ती सेवाएं चाहते हैं। एकाधिकार वाली व्यवस्था सार्वजनिक

5 जी आकांक्षाएं और

हकीकत

भारत में इस संदर्भ में हुआवे की भूमिका विवादस्पद है। एक मसला गैरभेदकारी कारोबारी शर्त या प्रतिस्पर्धा में स्पष्टता का है। अगर हुआवे जैसी संस्था सरकार की मदद से वैश्विक दबदबा कायम करती है तो वह उन शर्तों पर संचालन कर सकती है जिनका मुकाबला कोई और नहीं कर पाएगा।

ऐसे संस्थान बहुत आसानी से किसी भी मुल्क में दबदबा कायम कर सकते हैं। हुआवे भले ही नोकिया या एरिक्सन से अलग कुछ नहीं कर रही है लेकिन उसे हमारे ऐसे पड़ोसी देश का समर्थन हासिल है जिसका व्यवहार दबदबे वाला है। ऐसे में उस पर निर्भरता ठीक नहीं।

डिजिटल इंडिया और 5जी में सफलता पाने के लिए सरकार संचार क्षेत्र को बुनियादी क्षेत्र के रूप में वर्गीकृत करके शुरुआत कर सकती है। उसे स्पेक्ट्रम और नेटवर्क साझेदारी का इस्तेमाल करते हुए संसाधनों का भरपूर प्रयोग करना चाहिए तथा स्थानीय तकनीक का भरपूर सहयोग लेना चाहिए।



संभावना है। इसरो ने इसकी लागत का खुलासा नहीं किया है। तकनीक के क्षेत्र में भारत काफी तेजी से आगे बढ़ रहा है। अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान के मामलों में इसरो भी काफी तेजी से कार्य कर रहा है। कई देशों के सैटेलाइट इसरो की मदद से प्रक्षेपित किए जाते हैं।

राजनाथ आपातकाल के दौरान जनसंघ की छात्र इकाई से जुड़े रहे और मात्र 26 वर्ष की उम्र में 1977 में मिर्जापुर से विधायक चुने गए थे। 1980 के दशक के आखिरी दौर और 1990 के दशक के शुरुआती वर्षों में उत्तर प्रदेश में कल्याण सिंह का जोर था और उन्होंने 1991 में राजनाथ को शिक्षा मंत्री बनाया था। शिक्षा मंत्री के तौर पर उन्होंने सबसे पहले एक अध्यादेश के जरिये ऐंटी-कांपिंग (नकल रोधी) कानून लेकर आए, जिससे सामग्री चोरी करना गैर-जमानती अपराध हो गया। इसका मतलब यह था कि स्वयं को निर्दोष साबित करने की जिम्मेदारी आरोपी पर थी। यह कानून आने के बाद 14 से 15 वर्ष के बच्चे नकल करने के जुर्म में जेल भेजे जा रहे थे।



भारत ने खुद का अंतरिक्ष केंद्र बनाने की घोषणा की है
फोटो - पीटीआई

इसरो का एक बार में 105 सैटेलाइट प्रक्षेपण का रिकॉर्ड भी है। अंतरिक्ष के मामले में भारत

राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा और रक्षा ताने-बाने के अपभंग और नागरिक समाज और सेना के बीच संबंधों में अविश्वास के बीज स्वतंत्रता के समय बोए गए थे जब ब्रिटिश काल की सेना की औपनिवेशिक एकीकृत कमान एक राष्ट्रीय सेना में तब्दील हो रही थी। संबंधों में अविश्वास की जड़ कमांडर - इन-चीफ किचनर और वायसराय कर्जन के बीच बार-बार पैदा होने वाले विवाद से जुड़ी है। कर्जन वित्तीय नियंत्रण अपने कार्यकारी परिषद में एक अतिरिक्त सदस्य रखना चाहते थे, लेकिन किचनर इसके खिलाफ थे। अब करीब 150 वर्ष बाद भी उस विवाद की विरासत पीछा नहीं छोड़ रही है।

अन्य देशों से पीछे नहीं है। भारत ने भी चांद और मंगल ग्रह पर अपना उपग्रह भेजा है। इसके अलावा भारत ने इसी साल अंतरिक्ष में एक सक्रिय उपग्रह को मिसाइल से मार गिराने का सफल परीक्षण भी किया है।

मोहित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

डॉक्टरों की सुरक्षा करे सरकार पश्चिम बंगाल में डॉक्टर अपनी सुरक्षा को लेकर पिछले चार दिन से हड़ताल पर हैं। पूरे देश के डॉक्टर इस हड़ताल का समर्थन कर रहे हैं। डॉक्टरों की हड़ताल के तीसरे दिन मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने डॉक्टरों को काम पर लौटने की चेतावनी दी थी लेकिन डॉक्टरों की सुरक्षा पर शायद ही कोई बात की हो। देश में डॉक्टरों से दुर्व्यवहार तथा हिंसा की खबरें आती रहती हैं। सरकार डॉक्टरों की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित नहीं कर पा रही लेकिन सरकार एम्सा लगा देती है जिससे कि वे अपनी मांगों के समर्थन में हड़ताल भी नहीं कर सकते हैं। डॉक्टर को भगवान माना जाता है क्योंकि वे मरीजों को नया जीवन देने में अपना योगदान देते हैं। डॉक्टरों के साथ हिंसा कभी नहीं होनी चाहिए। लेकिन कई मौकों पर जब डॉक्टर अपना फर्ज निभाने में असफल हो जाते हों तब शायद मरीज के परिजन ऐसा कदम उठाते हों। सरकार को सर्वप्रथम डॉक्टरों की सुरक्षा पर विशेष ध्यान देना चाहिए और फर्जी डॉक्टरों की पहचान कर कड़ी कार्रवाई करनी चाहिए।

सुभाष चंद्र बोस और महात्मा गांधी को छोड़कर भारत के किसी भी नेता के पास सैन्य अनुभव नहीं था। स्वतंत्रता के बाद एक बात जिसका सबसे डर सता रहा था वह था तख्तापलट का। मौजूदा सेना विभाग सबसे पहले रक्षा विभाग और बाद में रक्षा मंत्रालय में तब्दील किया गया। उस समय रक्षा सचिव एच एम पटेल और उनके दो अन्य उत्तराधिकारियों ने सेना मुख्यालय को रक्षा मंत्रालय के साथ जोड़ने की पेशकश की। जनरल राजिंदरसिंहजी और जनरल के एस थिमैया ने इसके लिए हामी नहीं भरी, क्योंकि उन्हें डर सता रहा था कि मंत्रालय के साथ जुड़ने से उनके हाथ से परिचालन नियंत्रण फिसल जाएगा।

जव्द ही सेना जम्मू कश्मीर, जूनागढ़, हैदराबाद और गोवा कार्रवाई में लग गई। हालांकि इसकी प्रतिष्ठा जरूर बढ़ी, लेकिन प्रभाव कम होता गया। बात यहां तक पहुंच गई कि महत्वपूर्ण कार्रवाई से जुड़े विषयों में सेना की राय भी नहीं ली गई। नागरिक अफसरशाही और राजनीतिक नेतृत्व ने सेना के तीनों अंगों को छोटा कर दिया। उस समय सेना के जनरल अपना कद छोटा होने की कवायद से बेफिक्र और अनजान थे, जबकि दूसरी तरफ मजबूरत शाही अपना नियंत्रण अफसर शाही चली गई और ‘फूट डालो और राज करो’ की नीति पर काम करने लगी। उन्होंने सेना के तीनों अंगों में आपसी समन्वय और सहमति पनपने नहीं दी और मंत्रालय के साथ इनके एकीकरण के प्रस्ताव को आगे बढ़ने नहीं दिया।

इस तरह, सेना में स्थिति बन गई कि वरीयता क्रम में गिरावट से लेकर वित्तीय एवं परिचालन स्वायत्तता में कमी आई। पदोन्नति, पदस्थापना और यहां तक कि कैंटीन के मुनाफे का वितरण भी बदतर होते हालात की चपेट में आ गए। एक समय रक्षा मंत्रालय ने पदोन्नति परीक्षा की भी जांच करने को कहा, लेकिन मंत्रालय को बताया गया कि यह एक पेशे से जुड़ा मामला है।

राजनाथ को रक्षा मंत्री के रूप में इन अनियमितताओं को दुरुस्त करना है, लेकिन सवाल है कि क्या अनुशासन आड़े आएगा?

कानाफूसी

राज्यपाल कौन?

अगले तीन महीनों में देश भर के नौ राज्यपाल सेवानिवृत्त होने वाले हैं क्योंकि उनका पांच वर्ष का कार्यकाल पूरा होने वाला है। इनमें कर्नाटक, उत्तर प्रदेश और पश्चिम बंगाल के राज्यपाल शामिल हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त छत्तीसगढ़ और मिजोरम में यह पद रिक्त है। आंध्र प्रदेश और तेलंगाना में एक ही राज्यपाल है। संभावना यह है कि कुछ राज्यपाल दोबारा नियुक्त किए जाएं। अटकलें तो यह भी हैं कि भाजपा के वरिष्ठ नेताओं मसलन सुषमा स्वराज, उमा भारती और सुमित्रा महाजन को राज्यपाल बनाया जा सकता है। इन तीनों नेताओं ने लोकसभा चुनाव नहीं लड़ा था। स्वराज का नाम उस समय चर्चा में आ गया था जब केंद्रीय मंत्री हर्षवर्धन ने दिवटर पर उन्हें आंध्र प्रदेश का राज्यपाल ‘नियुक्त’ किए जाने की बधाई दे दी थी। हालांकि उन्होंने अपना ट्वीट हटा दिया था।

कमलनाथ पर सवाल

मध्य प्रदेश सरकार ने पिछले दिनों एक आधिकारिक वक्तव्य जारी करके कहा कि उसने 4,000 करोड़ रुपये के छह निवेश प्रस्तावों को सात दिन से भी कम समय में मंजूरी दी है। इसी बीच आरटीआई कार्यकर्ता अजय दुबे ने सरकार को आड़े हाथों ले लिया। कांग्रेस ने दुबे को विधानसभा चुनाव के पहले आरटीआई इकाई का अध्यक्ष बनाया था जिन्होंने बाद में इस्तीफा दे दिया था। उन्होंने फेसबुक पर एक पोस्ट लिखकर मुख्यमंत्री से कहा कि वह जनवरी 2019 में अपनी दावोस यात्रा के बाद से प्रदेश में

आए निवेश की जानकारी साझा करें। कमलनाथ ने दावोस में विश्व आर्थिक मंच की बैठक के दौरान तमाम उद्योगपतियों से मुलाकात की थी। दुबे ने कहा कि मुख्यमंत्री ने वहां से आने के बाद काफी निवेश आने की बात कही थी लेकिन हकीकत में ऐसा कुछ नहीं हुआ।

आपका पक्ष

अंतरिक्ष में भी भारत का होगा दबदबा

भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन (इसरो) ने कहा है कि भारत अंतरिक्ष में अपना केंद्र स्थापित करने की योजना बना रहा है। अगर यह योजना सफल होती है तो अगले पांच से सात साल में भारत का अपना अंतरिक्ष केंद्र होगा। इससे भारत अधिक से अधिक मानव मिशन अंतरिक्ष में भेज सकेगा। अभी अंतरराष्ट्रीय अंतरिक्ष केंद्र (आईएसएस) कई देशों के सहयोग से चल रहा है लेकिन मुख्य भूमिका अमेरिका की है। आईएसएस को चलाने में काफी राशि खर्च होती है जिसमें कई देश सहयोग करते हैं। चीन भी अपना अंतरिक्ष केंद्र स्थापित करने की योजना बना रहा है। इसरो के मुताबिक भारत का अंतरिक्ष केंद्र 20 टन होने की

आतंक के खिलाफ

किर्गिस्तान की राजधानी बिश्केक में चल रहे शंघाई सहयोग संगठन (एससीओ) के सम्मेलन से भारत ने आतंकवाद के खिलाफ जो आवाज बुलंद की है, उसका संदेश साफ है कि अब और आतंकवाद बर्दाश्त नहीं किया जाएगा। भारत का यह संदेश पड़ोसी देश पाकिस्तान को खुली चेतावनी है। एनडीए सरकार के लगातार दूसरी बार सत्ता में आने के बाद यह पहला मौका है जब प्रधानमंत्री ने एक बड़े अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंच से पाकिस्तान को चेताया है। इतना ही नहीं, भारत ने पाकिस्तान की हिमायत करने वाले और उसके मददगार चीन को भी दो-टुक कह दिया है कि पाकिस्तान सुधर नहीं रहा है और उसकी आंतकी गतिविधियां जारी हैं। सम्मेलन से इतर भारत के प्रधानमंत्री की चीन और रूस के राष्ट्रपतियों के साथ अलग-अलग मुलाकात भी हुई। यह एससीओ में भारत की बढ़ती हैसियत को बताता है। एससीओ की बैठक में पाकिस्तान के प्रधामंत्री इमरान खान से कोई बातचीत या मुलाकात नहीं करने का फैसला भारत के कड़े रुख को दिखाता है।

बिश्केक सम्मेलन में भारत का प्रमुख एजेंडा ही आतंकवाद के खिलाफ आवाज उठाना है। यों भारत पहले भी वैश्विक मंचों से आतंकवाद के खिलाफ लड़ाई की बात कहने के साथ-साथ इस मसले पर वैश्विक सम्मेलन की बुलाने की मांग करता रहा है। लेकिन इस मामले में कई राष्ट्रों के दोहरे व्यवहार के कारण ठोस नतीजे देखने को नहीं मिले। इसीलिए एससीओ की इस बैठक से इतर चीन के राष्ट्रपति से मुलाकात में भारत ने इस बात के लिए दबाव डाला है कि वे पाकिस्तान को समझाएं कि वह भारत के खिलाफ आतंकवादी गतिविधियों को शह देना बंद करे। भारत को चीन से यह उम्मीद इसलिए भी बंधी है कि उसने इस बार जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के सरगना मौलाना मसूद अजहर के मामले में अपना रुख बदला, जिसकी वजह से संयुक्त राष्ट्र मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी घोषित कर पाया। इससे पहले चीन उसे आतंकवादी मानने तक को तैयार नहीं हो रहा था। अगर सीमा विवाद को छोड़ दें तो चीन के लिए भारत अपरिहार्य है, खासतौर से भारत का विशालकाय बाजार। इसके अलावा, चीन भारत के साथ अच्छे रिश्तों की दुहाई देकर अमेरिका से भी संतुलन साधने की रणनीति पर चल रहा है। यानी चीन के लिए यह परीक्षा की घड़ी है कि वह आतंकवाद के मुद्दे पर भारत का कितना साथ देता है और पाकिस्तान के प्रति रुख में क्या बदलाव लाता है।

सवाल है जो देश आतंकवाद को अपना स्थायी कारोबार बना बैठे हैं, उनसे कैसे निपटा जाए ? इस काम में एससीओ के सदस्य देश, खासतौर से चीन और रूस, भारत का कितना और कैसे समर्थन करते हैं और पाकिस्तान पर आतंकी संगठनों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई के दबाव बना पाते हैं, यह देखने की बात होगी। पिछले कुछ समय में रूस की भी पाकिस्तान के साथ नजदीकियां बढ़ी हैं। खासतौर से रक्षा क्षेत्र में सहयोग को लेकर। चीन तो पाकिस्तान का खुला दोस्त है ही। हालांकि भारत के सख्त रुख को देखते हुए पाकिस्तान पर दबाव बना है और उसका असर भी दिखा है। पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री ने बातचीत शुरू करने के लिए भारत को दो बार पत्र भी लिखे। लेकिन भारत की सबसे बड़ी और पहली शर्त यही है कि पाकिस्तान पहले आतंकवाद को शह देना बंद करे। इमरान खान ने खुद माना है कि इस वक्त भारत और पाकिस्तान के रिश्ते न्यूनतम स्तर पर हैं। पुलवामा कांड के बाद भारत ने पाकिस्तान से सारे संवाद बंद कर दिए हैं। पाकिस्तान और उसके हमदardों को भारत के इस कड़े रुख का मतलब समझना चाहिए।

हौसले की उड़ान

यों भारत में विज्ञान की दुनिया में काम कर रहे हमारे वैज्ञानिकों की कामयाबियों की एक लंबी शृंखला है और वे लगातार इस क्षेत्र में नए और चुनौतीपूर्ण काम को पूरा करके अपनी क्षमताएं साबित करते रहे हैं। मगर अंतरिक्ष में अपने अभियानों को नई उड़ान देने की जो ताजा घोषणा हुई है, वह जमीन पर उतरने के बाद आने वाले वक्त में भारत की वैज्ञानिक उपलब्धियों में नया और शानदार अध्याय जोड़ेगी। दरअसल, गुग्वार को इसरो के प्रमुख के. सिवन ने इस योजना के बारे में बताया कि अगले पांच-सात सालों में भारत अंतरिक्ष में अपना एक स्टेशन बना लेगा। आजादी के बाद से अब तक चांद पर अपना यात्री भेजने से लेकर मंगलयान और चंद्रयान जैसे तमाम अभियानों में निश्चित रूप से भारत ने यह साबित किया है कि अंतरिक्ष में उसके प्रयोग और कौशल की गुणवत्ता अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानकों के समांतर खड़ी है। लेकिन अब इससे आगे अंतरिक्ष में अपना स्टेशन बनाने की ओर कदम बढ़ा कर उसने यह भी संकेत दे दिया है कि इस क्षेत्र में भारत अब अमेरिका, रूस और चीन जैसी महाशक्ति के समकक्ष होने के लिए तैयार है।

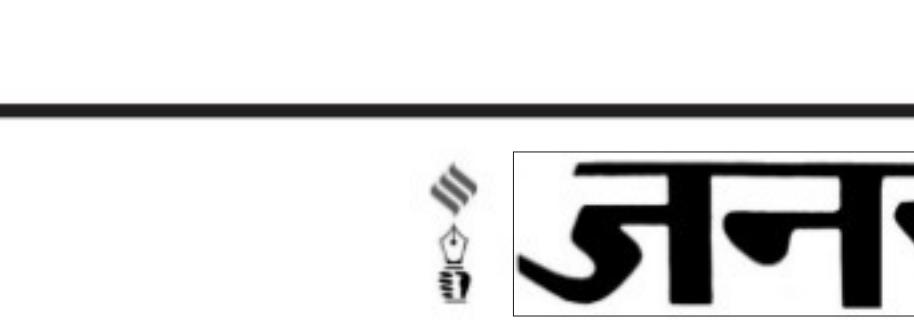
फिलहाल अंतरिक्ष में कुल दो स्टेशन काम कर रहे हैं, जिसमें एक अमेरिका, रूस, यूरोपीय संघ और जापान के आपसी सहयोग के साथ चल रहा आइएसएस यानी अंतरराष्ट्रीय अंतरिक्ष स्टेशन है और दूसरा है तिआनगोंग-2, जो अकेले चीन का है। हालांकि चीन का तिआनगोंग-2 आइएसएस से काफी छोटा है, लेकिन इससे इतना तो साफ है ही कि छोटे से शुरुआत करके बड़ी कामयाबी हासिल की जा सकती है। अपनी इसी क्षमता के बूते चीन यह कह सकने की स्थिति में है कि अंतरिक्ष में उसका अपना स्टेशन है। इसी तर्ज पर इसरो प्रमुख के. सिवन ने कहा कि हम भी अभी एक छोटे मॉड्यूल का ही प्रक्षेपण करेंगे, लेकिन हमारी यह महत्वाकांक्षा है कि हमारा अपना एक अंतरिक्ष स्टेशन हो; कोई भी छोटे से शुरू करके ही बाद में उसे विस्तार देता है। आकार और क्षमता में भारत का स्टेशन जो भी होगा, मगर वह भारत का अपना होगा और वह आइएसएस का हिस्सा नहीं होगा। एक तरह से गगनयान अभियान का ही विस्तार होगा, जिसके तहत भारत अंतरिक्ष में मानवयुक्त मिशन भेजने की योजना पर काम कर रहा है। इस बड़ी और महत्वाकांक्षी योजना के मूर्त रूप लेने के बाद देश अब ज्यादा संख्या में मानव मिशन अंतरिक्ष में भेज सकेगा।

जाहिर है, यह कदम बढ़ाने का हौसला है और यह बना रहा तो इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि कुछ सालों बाद हम अंतरिक्ष में स्टेशन कायम करने वाले विकसित देशों के बराबर खड़े होंगे। इसका सबसे बड़ा फायदा यह होने वाला है कि भारत भी अपने स्टेशन के जरिए न केवल अंतरिक्ष में होने वाले प्रयोग, अध्ययन और निष्कर्षों के बूते अपने भविष्य की कार्य-योजना बनाएगा, बल्कि पृथ्वी पर नजर रखने के क्रम में दुश्मन देशों की गतिविधियों की निगरानी भी कर सकेगा। हालांकि अंतरिक्ष में बाकी गतिविधियों और प्रयोग के स्तर पर इसरो ने अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर के मानकों पर खुद को खरा साबित किया है और अलग-अलग स्वरूप और जरूरत वाले यानों के कामयाब प्रक्षेपण से अपनी वैज्ञानिक क्षमताओं को साबित किया है। हाल के वर्षों में इसरो की व्यावसायिक शाखा ने ध्रुवीय उपग्रह प्रक्षेपण यान के जरिए कई देशों के दर्जनों उपग्रह प्रक्षेपित किए हैं और इस क्षेत्र में दुनिया का ध्यान अपनी ओर खींचा है। इसलिए अंतरिक्ष में अपने स्टेशन की महत्वाकांक्षा की ओर बढ़ते कदम को वैज्ञानिक कामयाबियों के उसी सफर के अगले पड़ाव के रूप में देखा जा सकता है।

कल्पमेधा

नशा तात्कालिक आत्महत्या है। उसका सुख सिर्फ नकारात्मक है, दुख का क्षण भर भूलना।

- बर्ट्रैंड रसेल



जन्सत्ता

जन्सत्ता एक हिन्दी भाषा का दैनिकीय समाचार पत्र है। यह पत्र उत्तर प्रदेश के गौतम बुद्धनगर में प्रकाशित होता है।

प्रदीप श्रीवास्तव

शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं। लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं। लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं। लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

वैश्विक स्तर पर शहरीकरण तेजी से बढ़ रहा है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2030 तक विश्व की जनसंख्या करीब दो अरब के आसपास हो जाएगी। शहरीकरण का सबसे अधिक असर एशिया और अफ्रीका के देशों में हो रहा है। इन दोनों महाद्वीपों की बुनियादी व्यवस्था नब्बे फीसद शहरीकरण के कारण प्रभावित हो रही है। जबकि, यूरोप व अमेरिका आदि के देशों में शहरीकरण थप-सा गया है। 2030 तक भारत में चालीस करोड़ से अधिक लोग शहरों में बसे होंगे, जो शहरीकरण की नई-नई समस्याओं को जन्म देंगे। मौजूदा समय में शहरों में बसे प्रत्येक छह परिवारों में से एक परिवार गंदी बस्तियों में रहता है और आने वाले वर्षों में यह संख्या बढ़ने का अनुमान है। भले ही आर्थिक प्रगति अंकों के हिसाब से प्रभावशाली दिख रही हो, लेकिन भारत में गैरबराबरी अब भी विकास की दिशा में सबसे बड़ी चुनौती है। विश्व स्तर पर सतत विकास लक्ष्य (एसडीजी) को हासिल करने

शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं। लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

वर्षा

हमारे आसपास मौजूद कई ऐसी बातें हकीकत की शकल में हमसे सवाल पृष्ठ रही होती हैं और या तो हम उनकी आदतन अनदेखी करते हैं या फिर खुद को कठपंरे में देख कर उसका जवाब तलाशने की जरूरत नहीं समझते हैं। हम सब बराबर हैं, ईसान हैं और हमें किसी भी तरह का भेदभाव नहीं करना चाहिए- यह कहते और सुनते हुए सालों और दशकों गुजर गए, लेकिन आज भी अक्सर ऐसी घटनाएं सामने आती हैं जो हमारे सामने परोसे गए उपदेश को मुंह चिढ़ा जाती हैं। जाति की बुनियाद पर खड़े पूर्वाग्रह एक ऐसी ही बीमारी है, जिनकी वजह से हमारे समाज को सभ्य होने के दर्ज में देखना मुमकिन नहीं हो पाता है। जब पहली बार मेरा दुराग्रह आधारित घृणा से साक्षात्कार हुआ था, तब मैं बहुत छोटी थी। मेरी दादी ने मुझे साफ-सफाई करने वाली लड़की को दोपहर में रोटी देने को कहा था। वह लड़की मुझसे कुछ साल बड़ी रही होगी। मैंने रोटी ले गई और उसके हाथ में टंगी टोकरी में रख दी। तुरंत दादी की कड़क आवाज कानों में गूंजी कि 'टोकरी को हाथ क्यों लगाया तूने!' मैं एकदम सहम गई। मैंने उस लड़की

संकट और सवाल

कांग्रेस का संकट, वैयक्तिक नहीं, वैचारिक है। ऐतिहासिक दो महान पराजयों के बावजूद अब भी कांग्रेस की जाजम, वैयक्तिक मनुहार में रत है, जबकि कांग्रेस का वास्तविक संकट वैयक्तिक है ही नहीं। इसीलिए सवाल उठता है कि क्या राहुल गांधी बतौर कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष सन 2024 का चुनाव जितवा पाएंगे। रायबरेली में पराजित और वायनाड में लोकप्रियता से नहीं, गणित से राहुल की जीत अपराजेय कांग्रेसियत तो नहीं है। सन 1985 के बाद वंशवाद से नियंत्रित कांग्रेस, समाजवाद, राष्ट्रवाद और भ्रष्टाचार उन्मूलन हेतु कितने कदम चलीं, कांग्रेस का शासन चला, किंतु कांग्रेसियत डूबती रही। मान भी लिया जाए कि राजीव गांधी को वोफर्स मामले में झूठा बदनाम किया गया था, किन्तु उनकी श्रेष्ठ कर्मठता उन्हें चुनाव क्यों नहीं जिता सकी? वीपी सिंह और वायनाड में रूपधारी समाजवादी मंडलिया मंडल आयोग की सिफारिशों के बावजूद डूब गईं। हास्यास्पद है कि आरक्षण के जातीय फार्मूलों से राजनीति करने वाले पूर्व के कांग्रेसहंताओ के बल पर कांग्रेस प्रधानमंत्री का पद चाहती थी। आरक्षण मूलतः वोट बैंक बनाने का सूत्र है, यह मतदाता समझ गया है। कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी रहें या प्रियंका गांधी वाड़ा, अब मतदाता फोटो के नीचे लिखी कर्म कहानी पढ़ कर वोट देता है।

अरविंद पुरोहित, अलकापुरी, रत्‍नाम

जनप्रतिनिधियों का आचरण

निर्वाचित नेताओं को कम से कम यह मालुम होना चाहिए कि उनके संसदीय क्षेत्र की समस्याएं क्या हैं, किस समस्या को प्रमुखता से उठाना है, जिस आम आदमी ने संसद तक पहुंचाया है और जो जिम्मेदारी दी है, उसका निर्वहन कैसे करना चाहिए, समस्याओं की प्राथमिकता

बढ़ती झुगियां, गहराते सवाल

के लिए शहरी गरीबों के हालात बदलने की जरूरत है। शहरी क्षेत्रों में रोजगार की संभावनाएं अधिक होती हैं, इसलिए वहां ज्यादा लोग रोजगार की तलाश में गांवों या छोटे शहरों से पलायन करके आते हैं। यहां आकर वे ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों की तुलना में अधिक धन कमाते हैं और राष्ट्रीय आय में अपना महत्वपूर्ण योगदान देते हैं। और वे विगत दशकों में पलायन की दर विश्व की तुलना में बढ़ी है। शहरी क्षेत्रों में प्रवासियों का अनुपात आसमान छूने लगा है। आवास और शहरी गरीबी उन्मूलन मंत्रालय की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 1983 में शहरी क्षेत्रों में प्रवासियों का अनुपात 31.6 फीसद था, जो 2007-08 में बढ़ कर 35.4 फीसद हो गया। यह मामूली वृद्धि है, लेकिन यह अभी भी आबादी का एक तिहाई से अधिक है। अगले कुछ दशकों में इस प्रक्रिया में तेजी आएगी। आंकड़ों के हिसाब से 2001 तक भारत की आबादी का 27.81 फीसद हिस्सा शहरों में रहता था। 2011 तक यह 31.16 फीसद और 2018 में 33.6 फीसद हो गया। वहीं, 2001 की जनगणना में शहरों और कस्बों की कुल संख्या 5161 थी, जो 2011 में बढ़ कर 7936 हो गई। यानी शहरों का विस्तार तेजी होता जा रहा है। इसका नतीजा यह हुआ कि झुग्गी बस्तियों में रहने वालों की संख्या भी तेजी से बढ़ रही है। भारत का छोटा-बड़ा शायद ही कोई ऐसा शहर हो जहां ये बस्तियां न हों। बड़े शहरों और महानगरों में तो झुग्गी बस्तियों के क्षेत्रफल तेजी से बढ़ रहे हैं। आज हर तीन भारतीयों में से एक शहरों और कस्बों में रहने लगा है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, वर्तमान में विश्व की आधी आबादी शहरों में रहने लगी है और 2050 तक भारत की आधी आबादी महानगरों और शहरों में रहने लगेगी। एक अनुमान है कि 2025 तक विकासशील देशों में शहरी आबादी में तीन गुना वृद्धि हो चुकी होगी और यह कुल जनसंख्या के इतसट फीसद के बराबर हो जाएगी।

सरकार ने गरीबों के लिए, खासतौर से शहरी गरीबों के लिए आवास योजना, अटल नवीकरण और शहरी परिवर्तन मिशन (अमृत), स्मार्ट सिटी मिशन, डिजिटल इंडिया, जनधन योजना और मेक इन इंडिया आदि सहित कई योजनाएं शुरू हैं। स्थानीय जिला प्रशासन की इकाइयां भी कई तरह की योजनाओं को संचालित करती हैं, जिससे शहरी गरीबों खासतौर पर झुग्गी बस्तियों में रहने वाले गरीबों को बुनियादी सार्वजनिक सेवाएं, जैसे पानी, साफ-सफाई, स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा आदि उपलब्ध हो सके। लेकिन बढ़ती हुई शहरी आबादी को देखते हुए अभी भी सरकार को पानी, साफ हवा, सीवर व्यवस्था, स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं, शिक्षा, रोजगार

के लिए आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करते हैं, परंतु वे खुद न केवल गरीबी के शिकार हैं, बल्कि बुनियादी सुविधाओं से भी वंचित हैं। शहरों की सड़कों पर गड्ढे, सीवर प्रणाली का अभाव एवं जल-जमाव से होने वाली परेशानियां और बीमारियां, बिजली, पानी एवं संचार सुविधाओं का अस्त-व्यस्त व असमान वितरण इन बस्तियों को ज्यादा समस्यामूलक बना देता है। ऐसी बस्तियों के निवासी अनेक जटिल रोगों सहित कई प्रकार

के स्वास्थ्य संबंधी समस्याओं के शिकार होते हैं। शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं, लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

आज देश में लगभग सात करोड़ लोग शहरी झुग्गी बस्तियों में रहते हैं, जहां न तो साफ पानी है, न सफाई और न अन्य बुनियादी सुविधाएं। इसके अलावा बड़ी संख्या में लोग पुलों के नीचे, सड़कों पर और जहां-तहां जीवनयापन को मजबूर हैं। वर्ष 2001 में अधिकतर बेघर परिवार ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में थे। लेकिन

शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं। लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

जड़ता की दीवारें

शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं। लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

तड़वी की खुदकुशी ने उन सवालों को और गहरा किया है। खबरों के मुताबिक पायल को उसकी कुछ वरिष्ठ सहयोगियों ने जाति और आरक्षण को आधार बना कर लगातार अपमानित किया था। कुछ लोगों को ऐसी बातों पर विश्वास करना मुश्किल होता है। साथ ही उच्च कही जाने वाली जाति से आने वाले लोग अधिकतर आरक्षण और आरक्षण की सुविधा पाने वालों से हद दर्ज की नफरत करते हैं। उन्हें ऐसा लगता है कि आरक्षण उनके हकों पर डाका है। मैं उनके बीच कई बार जा चुकी हूं, क्योंकि मुझे लगता है कि आरक्षण प्राप्त समूह की पृष्ठभूमि से मान लिया था। लेकिन जब उन्हें पता चला कि मैं आरक्षण के दायरे से बाहर हूं, फिर भी आरक्षण पर मेरा रुख उनके उलट है, तब वे मुझसे भी नफरत करने लगे। उन लोगों की नफरत और अपने प्रति उनकी आंखों में छलकती हिकारत को देख कर यह महसूस कर पाती हूं कि पायल तड़वी या उनके जैसी तमाम लड़कियों या दलित-वंचित जातियों की पृष्ठभूमि वालों

अग्रिय स्थिति में पड़ जाती हूं, क्योंकि मुझे लगता है कि आरक्षण वैसे समूहों का अधिकार है, जिन्हें महज जाति की वजह से अवसरों से वंचित किया गया था। मेरे इस विचार की वजह से कुछ लोगों ने मुझे आरक्षण प्राप्त समूह की पृष्ठभूमि से मान लिया था। लेकिन जब उन्हें पता चला कि मैं आरक्षण के दायरे से बाहर हूं, फिर भी आरक्षण पर मेरा रुख उनके उलट है, तब वे मुझसे भी नफरत करने लगे। उन लोगों की नफरत और अपने प्रति उनकी आंखों में छलकती हिकारत को देख कर यह महसूस कर पाती हूं कि पायल तड़वी या उनके जैसी तमाम लड़कियों या दलित-वंचित जातियों की पृष्ठभूमि वालों

उच्च कौशल प्रशिक्षित भारत की नई पीढ़ी को देश और दुनिया में अपार मौके मिलने की संभावना रहेगी। निश्चित रूप से उच्च शिक्षा और कौशल विकास पर उपयुक्त ध्यान देकर रोजगार की चुनौतियों के बीच रोजगार की नई संभावनाओं को साकार किया जा सकेगा। युवाओं की संख्या को देखते हुए हर साल 81 लाख नई नौकरियां और नए रोजगार अवसर पैदा करने की जरूरत है। इतने रोजगार सृजन के लिए शिक्षण-प्रशिक्षण की गुणवत्ता में सुधार और सार्वजनिक व निजी निवेश में भारी वृद्धि करनी होगी। विनिर्माण क्षेत्र की गतिशील करना

जैसी 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

जरूरत तो इस बात की है कि केंद्र सरकार जनप्रतिनिधियों के लिए एक अलग आयोग गठित करे जो राजनेताओं के आचरण पर विशेष निगरानी रखे। कौन नेता कहां, कब और क्या बोलते हैं। सदाचार के रास्ते पर चल कर ही राजनीति को साफ-सुथरा बनाया जा सकता है।

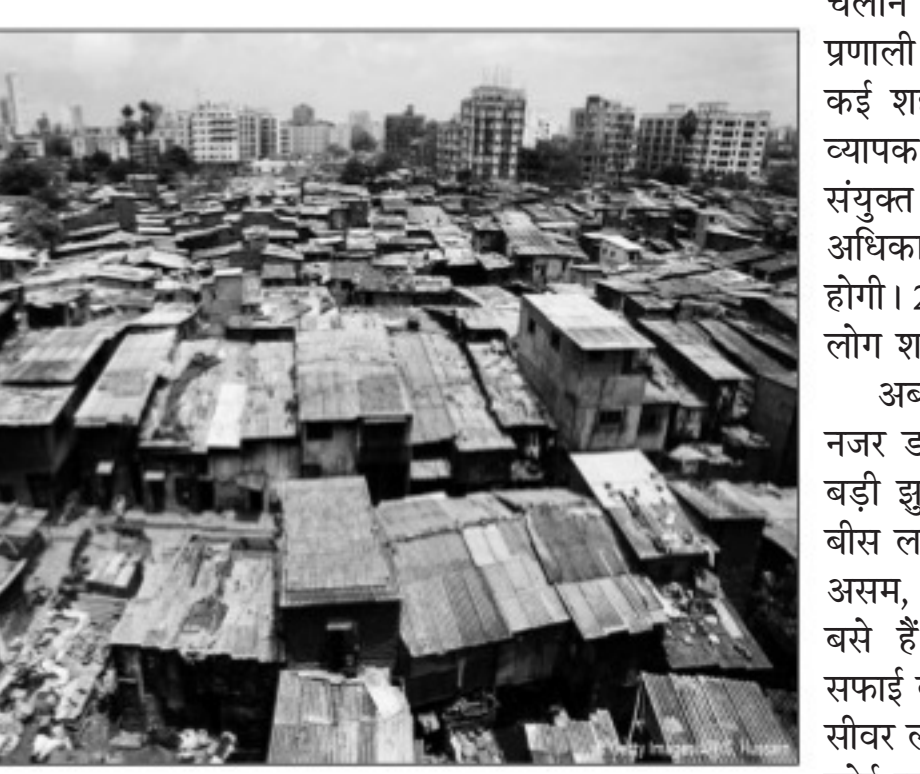
● *रितेश कुमार उपाध्याय, संत कबीर नगर*

कौशल और रोजगार

विश्व बैंक की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि 2030 तक दुनिया के 19 विकसित और विकासशील देशों में साढ़े आठ करोड़ से ज्यादा कुशल श्रमशक्ति की कमी होगी। जबकि अकेले भारत के पास 2030 तक जरूरत से ज्यादा कुशल कामगार होंगे। भारत के लिए यह आर्थिक कमाई का प्रभावी साधन सिद्ध हो सकता है।

के अवसर आदि उपलब्ध कराने में अनेक चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। पर्यावरण की सुरक्षा भी शहरों के लिए एक बड़ी चुनौती बनती जा रही है, क्योंकि शहरों के विकास के लिए सबसे ज्यादा बलि हरित क्षेत्र की ही चढ़ाई जाती है।

आज हालत यह है कि देश के सभी बड़े शहरों और महानगरों में बड़ी संख्या में झुग्गी बस्तियां हैं। इनमें रहने वाले लोग शहरी जनसंख्या से संबंधित उच्च एवं मध्य वर्ग की अनेक आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करते हैं, परंतु वे खुद न केवल गरीबी के शिकार हैं, बल्कि बुनियादी सुविधाओं से भी वंचित हैं। शहरों की सड़कों पर गड्ढे, सीवर प्रणाली का अभाव एवं जल-जमाव से होने वाली परेशानियां और बीमारियां, बिजली, पानी एवं संचार सुविधाओं का अस्त-व्यस्त व असमान वितरण इन बस्तियों को ज्यादा समस्यामूलक बना देता है। ऐसी बस्तियों के निवासी अनेक जटिल रोगों सहित कई प्रकार



की स्वास्थ्य संबंधी समस्याओं के शिकार होते हैं। शहरी क्षेत्रों में बढ़ती आबादी स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा बुनियादी सेवाएं प्रदान करने की क्षमता पर भारी दबाव डालती है। वैध-अवैध रूप से बसने वाली ये बस्तियां शहरों का अविभाज्य हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं, लेकिन हालत यह है कि इनमें रहने वाले लोगों को पेयजल, शौचालय और कचरे के निपटान जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं तक नहीं नसीब हैं।

आज देश में लगभग सात करोड़ लोग शहरी झुग्गी बस्तियों में रहते हैं, जहां न तो साफ पानी है, न सफाई और न अन्य बुनियादी सुविधाएं। इसके अलावा बड़ी संख्या में लोग पुलों के नीचे, सड़कों पर और जहां-तहां जीवनयापन को मजबूर हैं। वर्ष 2001 में अधिकतर बेघर परिवार ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में थे। लेकिन

2010 आते-आते बढ़ती शहरी बेघरों की संख्या गांवों के बेघरों से ज्यादा हो गई। इन बेघरों की सबसे बड़ी विडंबना तो यह है कि अपनी एक-दो बीघे की जमीन को गांवों में छोड़ कर ये खुले आकाश के नीचे या छोटी-छोटी झुगियां पांच-पांच लोगों के साथ गुजर-बसर करते हैं। शहरों में अमीरों और गरीबों के बीच आवासीय स्थितियों और सामाजिक हैसियत के बीच एक निर्मम विभाजन दिखने लगा है।

एक अन्य समस्या जो गरीबों के सामने आती है, वह है शहरों की तकनीक पर बढ़ती निर्भरता। शहर या स्मार्ट सिटी में पैर पसारती उन्नत तकनीक के सामने गांव से बड़ी संख्या में आए निम्न-कौशल वाले कारीगरों के लिए औपचारिक उद्योगों या आधुनिक सेवाओं में कोई जगह नहीं है। इसलिए ये बेगारी करने के लिए मजबूर हैं। सुदूर गांव के बेहतरीन हस्तशिल्प के कारीगर हमारे शहरों में रिक्षा चलाने को बाध्य हैं। भारत की वर्तमान शहरी प्रणाली में लगभग आठ हजार शहर शामिल हैं। कई शहरों और कस्बों को शहरी विकास के व्यापक विस्तार में शामिल किया जा रहा है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र का अनुमान है कि भविष्य में अधिकांश जनसंख्या वृद्धि शहरी क्षेत्रों से ही होगी। 2030 तक साढ़े सोलह करोड़ अतिरिक्त लोग शहरी क्षेत्रों की ओर रुख करेंगे।

अब जरा देश की राजधानी के हालात पर नजर डालें। दिल्ली में नौ सी से ज्यादा छोटी-बड़ी झुग्गी बस्तियां हैं, जिनकी आबादी करीब बीस लाख है। यहां उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, बंगाल, असम, छत्तीसगढ़ आदि राज्यों से लोग आकर बसे हैं। अधिकतर मलिन बस्तियां में साफ सफाई का कोई इंतजाम नहीं है। यहां शौचालय, सीवर लाइन, नालियां और कूड़े के निस्सारण की कोई व्यवस्था नहीं है। प्राथमिक शिक्षा के लिए

इन बस्तियों में या उनके नजदीक स्कूल तो खोले गए हैं, लेकिन ये स्कूल भी सामाजिक भेदभाव, सरकारी उपेक्षा और अव्यवस्था का शिकार हैं। स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के बावजूद यहां पर कोई सीवर व्यवस्था नहीं है, जिस कारण से घरों में शौचालय नहीं बनाए जा सकते हैं। जहां पर शौचालय बने होते हैं, वहां मल-मूत्र व गंदा पानी नालियों में बहाया जाता है, जो वहीं के लोगों को बीमार बनाता है। इन बस्तियों के लोगों को इलाज के लिए नजदीक के स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों पर ही आश्रित रहना पड़ता है। दुर्भाग्य यह है कि इन बस्तियों को साफ रखने और एक बेहतर जिंदगी की तलाश में आए लोगों को सचमुच की बेहतर जिंदगी देने की कोई व्यवस्था सरकारी तंत्र के पास नहीं है।

इन बस्तियों में या उनके नजदीक स्कूल तो खोले गए हैं, लेकिन ये स्कूल भी सामाजिक भेदभाव, सरकारी उपेक्षा और अव्यवस्था का शिकार हैं। स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के बावजूद यहां पर कोई सीवर व्यवस्था नहीं है, जिस कारण से घरों में शौचालय नहीं बनाए जा सकते हैं। जहां पर शौचालय बने होते हैं, वहां मल-मूत्र व गंदा पानी नालियों में बहाया जाता है, जो वहीं के लोगों को बीमार बनाता है। इन बस्तियों के लोगों को इलाज के लिए नजदीक के स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों पर ही आश्रित रहना पड़ता है। दुर्भाग्य यह है कि इन बस्तियों को साफ रखने और एक बेहतर जिंदगी की तलाश में आए लोगों को सचमुच की बेहतर जिंदगी देने की कोई व्यवस्था सरकारी तंत्र के पास नहीं है।

एक व्यक्ति और उनकी बातों से मैं काफी प्रभावित हो गई थी तो एक अन्य व्यक्ति ने उनकी जाति के बारे में बता कर मेरे भीतर उनके प्रति उपेक्षा भरने की कोशिश की। लेकिन मैंने कहा कि इससे क्या फर्क पड़ता है! आरक्षण का विरोध करने वालों से कहती हूं कि सदियों से हमारे पूर्वजों ने कमजोर जातियों का शोषण किया है... और अब जाकर उन्हें बराबरी का मौका मिला है तो हमें सहदयता दिखानी चाहिए। इसके क्या फर्क पड़ता है! आरक्षण का विरोध करने वालों से कहती हूं कि सदियों से हमारे पूर्वजों ने कमजोर जातियों का शोषण किया है... और अब जाकर उन्हें बराबरी का मौका मिला है तो हमें सहदयता दिखानी चाहिए। इसके क्या फर्क पड़ता है! आरक्षण का विरोध करने वालों से कहती हूं कि सदियों से हमारे पूर्वजों ने कमजोर जातियों का शोषण किया है... और अब जाकर उन्हें बराबरी का मौका मिला है तो हमें सहदयता दिखानी चाहिए। इसके क्या फर्क पड़ता है! मैं लगातार इस उम्मीद में काम करती हूं कि जातियों के बंधन टूट जाएं, हम सब बस ईसान बन जाएं। शायद एक दिन जाति की दीवार पिघल जाए!

मुताबिक बावन प्रतिशत से अधिक श्रमिक वास्तव में रूत-रोजगार से जुड़े हैं। यानी ये बड़े पैमाने पर खेती या छोटी दुकानें चला रहे हैं या फिर ऐसे उपक्रम जो उनके खुद के श्रम पर आधारित हैं, या विभिन्न प्रकार के सेवा प्रदाताओं के रूप में काम कर रहे हैं। लगभग एक चौथाई कामकाजी लोग दैनिक आधार पर काम पाते हैं और रोजाना मजदूरी कमाते हैं, जबकि लगभग एक चौथाई नियमित वेतन या वेतन-कमाने वाले कर्मचारी हैं। आवधिक श्रम बल सर्वेक्षण (पीएलएफएस) नामक रिपोर्ट, राष्ट्रीय नमूना सर्वेक्षण संगठन (एनएसएसओ) द्वारा किए गए लगभग एक लाख घरों (4.33 लाख व्यक्तियों) के सर्वेक्षण पर आधारित हैं।

● *प्रियंवदा, गोरखपुर*

शिक्षकों की कमी

बिहार के सरकारी स्कूलों में शिक्षकों की घोर कमी है, जिससे बच्चों का पठन-पाठन सुचारू ढंग से नहीं हो पाता है। दूसरी ओर, बेरोजगारी से जूझ रहे टीईटी, एसटीईटी उत्तीर्ण अभ्यर्थी अपनी शीघ्र बहाली को लेकर आंदोलन कर रहे हैं। बिहार सरकार उनकी मांगों को नजरअंदाज करते हुए तरह-तरह के बहाने बना रही है। कभी सुप्रीम कोर्ट में लंबित ‘समान काम के लिए समान वेतन’ के मुद्दे को बहाली की राह में अड़चन बताया, तो कभी आम चुनाव के कारण आचार संहिता की दुहाई दी गई। अब जबकि दोनों मामले साफ हो गए हैं तो फिर टान मटोल क्यों? गत दिनों धरना-प्रदर्शन कर रहे आंदोलनकारी अभ्यर्थियों पर बर्बतापूर्वक लाठीचार्ज किया गया, महिलाओं तक को नहीं बख्शा गया। बिहार सरकार को यथाशीघ्र शिक्षकों की बहाली करनी चाहिए। एक ओर शिक्षित बेरोजगारों में निराशा बढ़ रही है, वहीं सरकारी स्कूलों में अधिकांशतः आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े समाज के बच्चे ही तालीम पाते हैं।

● *मंजर आलम, रामपुर डेहरू, मधेपुरा*

नई दिल्ली

चीन पाकिस्तान की राष्ट्रीय आतंकवाद रोधी योजना को लागू करने में उसका समर्थन करता है और वह उसकी आतंकवाद रोधी क्षमताओं को मजबूत करने के लिए देश की मदद को तैयार है .
शो जिनपिंग, राष्ट्रपति, चीन

अशरफ गनी, राष्ट्रपति, अफगानिस्तान

नरेंद्र मोदी प्रधानमंत्री भारत

कासिम टोकायेव, राष्ट्रपति, कजाखस्तान

सुरोनबे जीनबेकोव, राष्ट्रपति, किर्गिस्तान

व्लादिमिर पुतिन, राष्ट्रपति, रूस

इमरान खान प्रधानमंत्री पाकिस्तान

इमोमाली राखमोन, राष्ट्रपति, ताजिकिस्तान

हसन रुहानी, राष्ट्रपति, ईरान

शौकत मिर्ज़ीयायेव, राष्ट्रपति, उज्बेकिस्तान

करा जायेगा. अगर सभी पक्ष तैयार होते हैं तो मनरेगा योजना की समीक्षा भी की जा सकती है.