Scoringanother owngoal



COUNTRY CODE

RAHUL JACOB

he fable of the hare and the tortoise has long been used by many liberal foreign observers of India's economy. The hope has been that democratic India, with its sluggish reforms process, might eventually catch up with the bold pace of reforms and growth that dictatorial China has set in the past four decades. This story, along

with assorted magazine cover images of India as an uncaged tiger or a purposeful elephant, has helped policymakers in New Delhi believe India's turn will come... well, some time in the next millennium. China is now a \$13 trillion economy and India's GDP is at \$2.8 trillion, but who's counting?

In no industry is the gap between the two countries, exacerbated by the missed opportunities and policy failures of successive governments, as glaring as in apparel. China's exports, despite much higher factory wage costs, are several multiples of India's. India's share of the global apparel export market is today just 3 per cent. This must count as the largest self-inflicted wound in the history of the World Trade Organisation, given that India has the most unskilled labour in the world.

Happily, in this respect, the Bharatiya Janata Party government has a chance to make amends for past mistakes by streamlining India's web of inflexible labour laws that handicap apparel and other labour-intensive industries. The timing couldn't be better. The US-China trade war is opening up opportunities even for late starters such as India. Just a couple of days ago, Apple was reported to be completing a final evaluation of countries as diverse as Vietnam, Mexico and India as it prepares to move large parts of its supply chain away from China. Apple's as well as Foxconn's investment in India, however, will only become sizeable if this government actually makes radical changes to India's labour laws, especially those that require state governments' permission for firing workers in factories with more than one hundred workers. "Who is the state to decide when you can hire and fire," says Naresh Guiral. who built a successful garments export company before becoming a Rajya Sabha MP. "The government will not take

To its credit, in its first term the Modi government gave employers in apparel and textiles greater latitude to hire workers on short-term contracts, but other than a couple of states such as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the suffocating restrictions on laying off workers remained untouched. Even the changes in these two then BJP-ruled states were tiny. Raising the threshold for enterprises to lay off workers without government permission from those with 100 workers to those with 300 is minimalist in its ambition. When I was covering the dynamic factories in southern China at the start of this decade as a correspondent for the FT, one of my most memorable moments was finding myself outside the gigantic Shenzhen factory of Foxconn, Apple's largest manufacturer of iPhones. It was more a township than a factory, with about 250,000 workers.

In its second term, this government seems poised to make changes to labour laws but if this past week is any indication, it will be timid and effectively forfeit to Vietnam this huge opportunity offered by the migration of manufacturing from China. On Monday, the government approved a redrafting of the laws on social security and working conditions but postponed revisions to the codes on industrial relations -- tellingly

Meanwhile, the gains to flexibility in hiring contract workers introduced by the government in the first term, have to be weighed against the aggressive enforcement of provident fund requirements that end up slowing rather than rapidly enlarging the formalised labour force. Nagesh Sharma runs a successful sourcing company that supplies retailers in countries such as the US and Europe with apparel from Africa, Jordan and India. He complains that two people in his office are almost exclusively assigned to tackling the whims of bureaucrats who enforce rules on provident funds and whether a company is liable for the contributions of employees of its labour cor he praises state governments in Orissa and Jharkhand for subsidising training for apparel workers, often women.

When I spoke this week to Harish Ahuja, who heads Shahi Exports, the largest garments maker in the country with 60 factories and 115,000 workers, he seemed more concerned by reports that the government is considering an increase in the national minimum wage than by India's rigid labour laws. which his company has learned to live with. Most of Shahi's employees are women. The only contract labour used at its factories is for security guards and housekeeping.

But margins in apparel are razor-thin; an arbitrary national hike in wages would be another blow to an industry. In the past couple of years, India's apparel exports declined to \$15.7 bn. from \$17 bn in 2016. Tiny Cambodia, with a population less than Mumbai's, has seen its apparel exports almost double over the same period to \$12.2 bn in 2018. Bangladesh's stand at \$37 bn. The tortoise that is the Indian government still appears to be sleepy and sluggish while our competitors win this all-important race for populous, developing nations.

When Ram became a battering ram

It was not uncommon in the 1920s and 1930s for communal riots to start with just the kind of provocation evident in the Lok Sabha when members took the oath



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K DATTA-RAY

he past is creeping in on us. Hindu-Muslim conflict followed a certain pattern in the bad old days when the uncouth British still ruled India. This week's proceedings in the Lok Sabha when members took the oath showed that shaking off what Narendra Modi deplored as "1,200 years of slave mentality", undying India is springing back to proud manhood, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) style.

A TV panellist claimed the other evening that in her innocence, poor little Pragya Singh Thakur, added the august name of her guru to her own because she didn't know better. Perhaps the saffron-swathed, bead-festooned, tilak-marked terror-accused really hadn't been advised of the form, but this can hardly be said of the other causes of tumult at what should have been a solemn ceremony. The chants of Vande Mataram and Jai Sri Ram, Har Har Mahadev and Bharat Mata ki Jai that erupted as a bearded Asaduddin Owaisi of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen walked in his skull cap to the well of the house to take his oath could have been battle cries from some medieval field of religious conflict.

It was not uncommon in the 1920s and 1930s for communal riots to start with just this kind of provocation, at least in undivided Bengal. A Hindu procession from the temple would wind its way to the clash of cymbals and beat of drums past a mosque where the faithful were at their prayers. Or elaborate tazias, representing the tombs of Hasan and Hussain, grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, would be carried in procession past a prominent temple. Both sides sometimes refined on their provocations. The Hindu procession might be organised during the Muslims' Friday prayers. The tazia could be too tall to pass without lopping off a branch or two of a tree that Hindus regarded as sacred. The most offensive weapon in the

armoury of communal hostility was to leave some part of a dead pig or cow outside a mosque or temple.

Shades of that past lived again as those who are supposed to uphold what they proudly boast is the world's largest democracy heckled and intimidated colleagues of a different political or religious persuasion. The jeering and taunting of Opposition members wasn't merely a breach of parliamentary propriety. Unruly members were mocking the very idea of an inclusive India while the pro-tem speaker, Virendra Kumar, looked on.

Watching the disgraceful exhibition on TV, I felt Owaisi handled the situation well. His retaliatory "Jai Bhim" honoured the author of the Constitution, B R Ambedkar, while his "Allah ho Akbar", God is Great, was a stern reminder that no matter how many ghar wapsis are forced on timid or vulnerable Indians, no Muslim worth his salt denies his faith. It was also noticeable that while the Samaiwadi Party's Shafigur Rahman Barg responded to chants of "Jai Sri Ram" with "Constitution zindabad", his Samajwadi Party colleague, ST Hasan, preferred "Hindustan zindabad."

Muslims alone were not barracked. Sonia Gandhi must have resented it bitterly when saffron stalwarts patronisingly thanked her for taking the oath in Hindi. Almost every

Trinamool Congress representative from West Bengal also faced taunting slogans, as did some Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam parliamentarians from Tamil Nadu. It was clear the BJP has appropriated Ram as the party's own victory symbol, to be used as a battering ram against opponents.

The entire boorish upsurge scene reminded me of a conversation some 60 years ago with the writer, Nirad C Chaudhuri. Taking me out on the balcony of his Kashmere Gate flat he pointed to a vacant plot opposite where there were a few shacks and some people pottering about. Asked to define the scene, I replied it was a temporary building site. I was wrong, Chaudhuri retorted triumphantly. It wasn't temporary. It was permanent. It was Hindu India coming back into

The analogy he painted was of a heavy metal piston that India's British rulers had dragged out and somehow held in place with their brute strength. They had gone, and we were trying desperately to cling on to the piston. But we didn't have the strength. There was no hook or handle to which it could be attached. Our weak muscles were already aching with the pain of the effort. They would fail one day, and the piston ram home with a resoundingly destructive clang. It wasn't until nearly 30 years later that I realised he had been outlining the theme of his magnum opus which takes its inspiration from Pope's "Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall/And Universal Darkness buries All.'

It's just as well the old man was spared the distressing spectacle of the 17th Lok Sabha screaming its fulfilment of his grim prophecy.

COFFEE WITH BS ▶ AMITAV GHOSH | AUTHOR

Champion of possibilities

GHOSH tells **Uttaran Das Gupta** why it is impossible to not write about climate change today

The Stein Auditorium in New Delhi can accommodate a few hundred people, and during the launch of Amitav Ghosh's new novel, Gun Island, not one seat in the house was empty. I was sitting in the third or fourth row; whenever the doors to the auditorium opened during the discussion, you could hear the murmur of voices outside. Later, a long, serpentine queue of readers waited patiently to get their copies signed. During the post-launch discussion, people in the audience asked erudite questions to Ghosh, ranging from subaltern themes to the availability of opium in Varanasi.

But does Ghosh remember all his novels well enough to engage with readers like that? This is one of the first questions I ask him when we meet a couple of days later. "You know, honestly, I don't remember my novels that well," he replies, smiling. "Someone who read it yesterday remembers it

Is Gun Island an

fiction, you alway

vulnerable."

much better than I, who wrote it 30 years back." He confesses to being invitation to the stumped by readers reader to be who often come up to vulnerable? "When him quoting passages you start writing him to explain. "When people make yourself quote a passage, I am often like: 'Oh my god,

when did I write that?'." Ghosh's novels, as he knows, have been included in school and university syllabuses, making him popular beyond the usual readers of Indian literature in English.

We meet at a coffee shop at the Taj Mahal Hotel on Mansingh Road. Ghosh strolls in punctually, wearing a chic blue shirt with its sleeves folded back casually. He is, of course, a familiar figure, but what is unfamiliar is a new goatee he is sporting, as white as his hair. He is possibly aware that it adds a touch of quirkiness to his otherwise calm personality; in the course of our rendezvous, he frequently touches it with his fingers. He orders a decaf espresso; I order a regular one.

My name betrays my origins. "Are you from Calcutta?" he wants to know, and when I provide the confirmation, he also enquires about where I studied. "So, do you like Delhi? How long have you lived here?" he asks. When I confirm my undiluted love for the city, he wonders, "How do you live in this heat?"

The rising heat — not only in Delhi but all over the world — is as much the theme of Gun Island as it is of his previous book, *The Great* Derangement. In the previous book, a work of non-fiction, he had written that literature on climate change is always in danger of being pigeonholed into genres of fantasy or science fiction, as literary fiction rarely ever deals with it. So is Gun Island Ghosh's attempt to address this? He has, after all, been engaged

> with the issue; if you scroll through his Twitter feed you will find retweets of news reports on how the cataclysmic climate events are wreaking havoc all across the world. "In Gun Island, I was

trying to write about the realities of the world we live in." he says. "And climate change is now an undeniable fact of our lives. Just look outside: This incredible heat wave, the drought." The temperature in Delhi had soared to 48 degrees Celsius just a few days ago; there is news of a severe water crisis in Chennai. A delayed monsoon and the fears of a drought are very real this year. With the situation worsening, it is obvious that climate change will displace more and more people. Ghosh's novel also has several characters who are social, economic, and climate

"A lot of the migrants end up in Italy, where I spent a lot of time," says Ghosh, adding that he went to several refugee camps and processing centres for migrants, interviewing people who were there. "There were of course many Arabs and people from North Africa. but also many South Asians, especially Bengalis from both West Bengal and Bangladesh." This, Ghosh says, significantly changed his perspective about things. "The

is really very complicated." Italy does play a major part in Gun Island — one key character, Cinta, is an Italian historian; the book is dedicated to two Italians: Anna Nadotti and Irene Bignardi. While Bignardi is a friend of Ghosh — "Since 1986", he adds — Nadotti is his Italian translator. "You know, my books are very successful in Italy and one of the reasons for that is because she is such a good translator.' Though this is the first time writing about Mediterranean nation, Ghosh claims Italy has played a very important part in his life for

strange kind of a gravitational pull." In the course of researching this book, Ghosh learned Italian. "It opened up Europe in a new way to me. If Italy is new in Gun Island, the Sundarbans is old. Anyone who has followed Ghosh's career over the years will experience a sense of déjà vu while reading it. A

novel, The Hungry Tide (2004),

reappear. There is also the figure of

a goddess and her cult — in this

about 30 years. "Italy is a mys-

terious kind of a place in a

way," he says. "It exercises a

situation we are faced with today

number of characters of a previous

case Manasa Devi, the deity of snakes — that seems to hark back even further to The Calcutta Chromosome (1995). "When I finished the book, I realised that all the themes I have been interested in — Sundarbans, dolphins — all of them are in this book. Also, etymology, history, the past... it is

nice really how all these threads have come back but in a new way." Ghosh says reading medieval Bengali poems, especially Manasamangal Kavya

planted the seed of this novel If the themes are somewhat familiar, there are other things that are not. For

instance, unlike Ghosh's earlier novels which are intricately plotted in the realistic mode, in this, the narrative often moves forward through chances and coincidences. A character gets a call, someone gets bitten by a snake... and so on. "Isn't this a bit convenient?" I ask him. "Well, you could say that," says Ghosh, "but there are no novels without such events. He describes how he was warned in Bengali by someone as he was walking down the street in New York in the mid-1980s as a

chunk of concrete came crashing down. "Such things happen, you know, and if a critic feels there are too many coincidences in my novel, says Ghosh, "well, so be it." I finished reading Gun

and the night before

coffee date and I felt it was a love story. I also thought that perhaps the novel was an invitation to the reader to be vulnerable, like one often is when in love; it was an invitation to eschew the rigid principles of the realistic world and explore a different kind of a narrative. "When you start writing fiction, you always make yourself vulnerable," says Ghosh. This also links in very well with the migrants, setting off on very difficult but incredible journeys, disproving the certainties of the nation state, the immigration rules. "It's absolutely staggering," he says. "And that's what Gun Island is about — possibilities present in our world but which we often deny."

Ode to a pavement dweller



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

is name was Mohammed Abdul Kasim Ali Shaikh. He'd run away I from home at the age of eight, been sexually abused repeatedly and soon realised that the best way to survive was to engage in sex work. Later, when he contracted HIV, doctors assured him of treatment as long as he furnished his Aadhaar card. He didn't have one. So he came to the shelter for the homeless run by Aman Biradari in Geeta Ghat on the Yamuna's banks where he received medical treatment and embarked on a quest for a dignified life. He gave up sex work and started plying a rickshaw. But less than a month ago, an errant vehicle mowed him down while he was asleep on the pavement.

However, Shaikh's end turned out to be different from the fate that awaits most of his homeless brethren. A couple of months before his death, Karwan-e-Mohabbat, the movement to awaken humanity and develop solidarity among different communities, had made a short film on him as part of an ongoing series on the lives of working-class people. Consequently, many have watched his video and mourned him. In stark contrast, most of Delhi's estimated 1.8 lakh

population faces a bleaker, lonelier end. A few weeks ago in Yamuna Pushta, I had some macabre conversations with the homeless living there. We met a man too weak to even pull himself into shade and out of the scorching sun. "In a day or two, he'll be dead," said Vijay Kumar, desensitised as only someone who has lived long enough on the streets can be. 'We'll complain to the municipality, they'll take their own sweet time to come while he festers in the heat. Then they'll arrive with that ominous plastic bag that we all know is likely to be our eventual fate..." Others with him spoke of how long the unclaimed bodies of the homeless lie in the morgue. "In fact, we all joke that the only time we'll make it into newspapers is when the municipality publishes a photo of our corpses in the hope that someone comes forward to identify us," said Rajesh Kumar, a rickshaw puller who has lived in Yamuna

change migrants.

Pushta for 40 years. Death, it seemed, was never far from anyone's mind here. The hard life, exacerbated (or eased, depending on one's standpoint) by alcohol, drugs and gambling, shaved off years from their life expectancy. Access to medical care was another issue - as in Shaikh's case, hospitals often ask for Aadhaar before offering treatment. Later, this was brought home to us when we met a 20-year-old boy too weakened by tuberculosis to even walk. "I don't have the strength to stand up," he said, "let alone go to a hospital and expect treatment without an ID card."

I left Yamuna Pushta alone that day, as my companion Gufran Alam of Aman Biradari stayed behind to ensure help and treatment for the two sick people we'd encountered. "Nobody cares about the homeless," said Rajesh Kumar as I left. "We're faceless while we're alive, invisible when we die.'

In that sense, Shaikh was lucky. The Karwan-e-Mohabbat video has ensured that at least his death was noticed even though he'd been faceless, invisible and alone when he was alive.

My Yoga Day moment



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

here were anxious moments as we examined the spoils we'd managed to assemble for International Yoga Day. My wife's yoga mat was worn out in parts. She hadn't exercised in a while so the mat was used for things it was never intended for — repotting plants, handwashing clothes, drying vegetables for making pickles, bathing the dog. My daughter's yoga mat was pretty and pink, almost new, but she insisted on its replacement as it was no longer trendy. I'd never owned a yoga mat. And now here was an invitation to participate in a yoga event to which I'd said yes. The Italian embassy had kindly invited

spouses, and children over 13, so I persuaded my daughter to agree to accompany us, even though it was the crack of dawn.

Mv wife volunteered to buy the yoga mats, one for each of us. The embassy had suggested round neck Ts of the kind I didn't own, and "stretchable" shorts, so my wife took a measuring tape to my expanding girth. "It's all that junk food you eat," she announced grimly. My daughter contended that if was to get new clothes, so would she. "Seeing how I'm doing you a favour," my wife pointed out, "I'll need the car and driver." I could understand her not wanting to drive and park in the heat, but most days when my wife purloins the chauffeur, I have to Uber it home

from work. My wife has a fear of missing out on things. If she "borrows" the driver for a lunch appointment with pals, she might ask to be taken to a salon first to get her hair done. Her itinerary will be erratic: Drop by to say hello to a friend's cousin who's in town for a day, careen off to an exhibition to post photographs with the artist on Facebook, stop by at a pop-up, decide on coffee and cake with another friend she hasn't met in a fortnight, squeeze in a film because... why not? And then call

to say the rest of us shouldn't wait up for dinner, she just happened to have a change of clothes and shoes in the car and decided to meet a bunch of "girls" for wine and gossip.

So, on the day before our yoga rendezvous, I'd reconciled to managing the commute on my own. According to the driver, my wife started with coffee at a friend's mother's home because she saves iars of homemade marmalade for her, then dropped it at a saree sale, decided on an unscheduled potluck with another girlfriend, went shopping for veggies and meats at INA Market, drove to some far corner for organic fertiliser for her plants. At home, appearing remarkably guilt-free, she observed, "What with all the errands I ran for all of you, I didn't have the time to get you the oga stuff.'

In previous years, I'd looked on enviously as acquaintances attended one or another voga event. Now, here, finally, I had a chance to be a participant, no longer a voyeur. "I do hope you don't mind too much, darling," said my wife, carting her worn out mat to the embassy, while I looked on. "Don't worry," I sighed — for, truthfully, even with a mat and yoga wear, I wouldn't have known what to do anyway.

Missing the dividend

very country in the course of its development sees drops in its birth and death rates. Since the two drops take place at different speeds and the death rate falls before the birth rate, the transition period is marked by high population growth before things stabilise. The transition also sees a change in the age-wise population mix: The percentage of people in the working age (usually taken at 15-65 years) begins to rise, peaks and then falls.

If a greater percentage of the total population is working, it gives the economy a boost in its income, savings and productivity, and brings with it other benefits. Countries that use the transition period successfully therefore enjoy an economic boom. Between a quarter and 40 per cent of the rapid growth that the countries of East Asia enjoyed in the second half of the last century has been attributed to what has come to be called the demographic dividend.

The demographic transition is measured with the dependency ratio, ie those outside the working age (young and old) as a percentage of those in the working age. India's ratio in 1980 was more or less the same as in 1960, at about 75 per cent. This period was marked by the low, so-called Hindu rate of growth. The ratio or percentage began dropping after that, just as the economic growth rate picked up. The fall in the dependency ratio accelerated from the mid-1990s, from roughly 70 per cent to 60 per cent in a decade, and to a little above 50 per cent in the subsequent decade. It is unlikely to be a pure coincidence that these have been the years of India's fastest economic growth.

Some projections suggest that the country's dependency ratio will flatten for the next two decades before it starts going up. Such a trajectory would be different from those of some of the countries in East Asia, including China, which managed to reduce their dependency ratio to 40 per cent or less before reversing gear. India is unlikely to manage that because its birth rate did not fall fast enough — a failure of its health and nutrition policy. That may well come in the way of the country achieving the sustained growth rates of between 8 per cent and 10 per cent that some East Asians achieved.

The question has to be asked: Is India going to miss some more of its potential demographic dividend? If so, it would be for two reasons: The demographic dividend can be fully exploited only if the people in the working age are actually working. And second, if those working have proper education and skills, making them productive in the workplace. On both counts, as everyone knows, the country has fallen short. An employment survey recently released by the government says that only half of those in the working age are actually working; that figure used to be 64 per cent in 2004-05. As for education and skills, the education surveys by Pratham and the patchy progress of the skills programme tell their unhappy stories.

Nevertheless, if India's dependency ratio remains in the low-50 per cent range for the coming two decades before starting to climb, the window of opportunity is still open to make up for egregious failures on the health, education and employment fronts, and to reap what remains of the demographic dividend. The problem is that the southern states, West Bengal and one or two others — ahead of the northern states on the demographic transition — have already seen the window of opportunity close, or will see it close in the next five years. The window will remain open for another decade or so for a bunch of other states, while laggards like Bihar will continue to experience the demographic transition for much longer.

These last happen to be the states where the health and education attainments are the poorest, so how much of a dividend awaits them is an open question. Remember that the demographic dividend is available only once in a country's time trajectory, because the population transition occurs only once. Time is a luxury the country does not have.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



The Trumpification of the Fed reserve

Like it or not, its next move will be political

PAUL KRUGMAN

n late 2015 then-candidate Donald Trump accused Janet Yellen, chair of the Federal Reserve, of being part of a political conspiracy. Yellen, he insisted, was keeping interest rates unjustifiably low in an attempt to help Hillary Clinton win the presidency.

As it happens, there were very good reasons for the Fed to keep rates low at the time. Some measures of the job market, notably prime-age

employment, were still well below precrisis levels, and business investment was going through a significant slump - a sort of mini-recession.

Fast forward to the present. The employment picture is much stronger now than it was then. There are hints of an economic slowdown, partly because of the uncertainty created by Trump's trade war, but they're considerably fainter than those of 2015-16. And Trump himself keeps boasting about the economy's strength.

Yet he is openly pressuring the Fed to cut rates, and is reportedly looking for ways to demote Jay Powell, the man he himself chose to replace Yellen — declining to reappoint Yellen, according

to some reports, because he didn't think she was tall enough. But wait, there's more. While there are, as I said, hints of a slowdown here, there are much stronger warning signs in Europe, where manu-

facturing is slumping and recession worries are

on the rise. Yet even as he tries to bully the Fed into cutting rates, Trump flew into a rage over reports that the European Central Bank, Europe's counterpart to the Fed, is considering rate cuts of its own, which would weaken the euro and make US industry less competitive.

If these various positions sound inconsistent to you, you're just not thinking about them in the right way. The common principle is simple:

> Monetary policy should be whatever serves Donald Trump's interests. Nothing else matters. And Trump's current rage at

the Fed should be understood mainly as an expression of frustration over the failure of his 2017 tax cut.

Yes, the tax cut gave the economy a boost, as you'd expect from policies that widened the annual full-employment budget deficit by about \$400 billion. (Imagine what the Obama economy would have looked like if Congress had let him spend

\$400 billion a year on, say, infrastructure.) But it was a pretty modest boost, considering, with much of the tax cut being used just to buy back corporate stock.

More to the point, the tax cut was a political bust: Trump isn't getting much credit for good economic numbers, and a plurality of the white working-class voters on whom the tweeter in chief depends believe (correctly) that his policies main ly benefit people richer than themselves.

So Trump is, in effect, demanding that the Fed

bail him out of the consequences of his own policy failures. And if that were the whole story, the appropriate response would be some polite, Fedspeak version of "Go to hell."

But as it happens, Trump and his tantrums aren't the whole story. There is, in fact, a strong case that the Fed was too quick to raise interest rates from 2015 to 2019 — that it underestimated how much slack there still was in the US economy and overestimated the economy's underlying strength (which it has done consistently over the past decade).

And there is correspondingly a case for partially reversing recent Fed rate hikes, and cutting rates now as insurance against a possible future slump — getting ahead of the curve. Donald Trump is the worst possible person to be making this argument, but that doesn't mean that the argument is wrong.

So what should the Fed do?

Central bankers, like those running the Fed, try to portray themselves as apolitical and technocratic. This is never quite true in practice, but it's an ideal toward which they strive. Thanks to Trump, however, whatever the Fed does next will be seen as deeply political. If it does cut rates despite low unemployment, this will be seen as giving up its independence and letting Trump dictate policy. If it doesn't, Trump will lash out even harder.

And if I were Powell. I'd be worried about an even worse scenario. Suppose the Fed were to cut rates, and growth and inflation end up being higher than expected. Conventional policy would then call for reversing the rate cut — right on the eve of the 2020 election. The political firestorm would

And I'm sorry, but in Trump's America no institution can ignore the political ramifications of its actions, if only because these ramifications will affect its ability to do its job in the future.

What this means for monetary policy, I think, is that while straight economics says that the Fed should try to get ahead of the curve, the political trap Trump has created argues that it should hold off — that it should insist that its policy is "datadependent," and wait for clear evidence of a serious slowdown before acting.

Now, this might mean that if the Fed does eventually cut rates, whatever boost this gives the economy (which would be limited in any case, since rates are already quite low) will come too late to help Trump in the 2020 election. But if that's what happens, Trump will have only himself to blame.

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Shekhar Gupta's column 'National Interest' will resume

When prime time is not for prime news



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

f India was a sitcom, it would be considered absurdly scripted, to well L beyond the point of fantasy. In the past few weeks, hundreds of children have died, in government hospitals, of causes that are neither new, nor untreatable. This is a replay of similar mass deaths that have occurred in the past few years in the same

An Air Force plane disappeared in the North-East and the wreckage was discovered only days later. There were no survivors. There were multiple gunfights and ambushes in Kashmir during this period, with several paramilitary servicemen being killed. Chennai, Marathwada and several other regions of the country went dry, as water became a really scarce commodity due to the coincidence of a delayed monsoon and the hottest summer on record.

One would have thought that these events would have monopolised the headlines, and dominated the mindspace of a nation that seems to obsessively consume news and views. There should questions asked in Parliament about the outrageous deaths of those children.

There should have been outrage at the deaths of soldiers fighting a forever war. There should have been emergency measures taken weeks ago to ease the drought conditions and enquiries made as to why such relief was delayed. There should have been hard questions asked about how the Air Force plane disappeared off the radar and crashed, without being located for so many days, in a highly sensitive border state.

However, the headlines really consisted of the deep analysis of religious slogans being shouted by newly elected MPs in Parliament, the parsing of sundry remarks made by godmen displaying their ignorance about evolution, one idiot's assertion that encephalitis can be cured by homeopathy, weird advertisements for "vegan water", and the triumphant celebrations of India's cricket victory over Pakistan in the ICC World Cup. The last, at least, was a rare event in that it was a slice of good news in the middle of a flaming, hot summer.

A free press is not necessarily an unbiased press. The media curates what it presents to the public, and that curation is drivfree or not, depends on advertisements. A substantial chunk of advertisements comes from the government.

So the media is sensitive to what the government wants to see, and, more importantly, does not want to see. In addition, the media highlights what it thinks the public wants to see because advertisement rates depend on TRP and page-views

Hence, the priorities of the media will always be shaped by what it thinks will draw the largest audiences, and attract the highest advertisement rates, rather than by the "importance" of news. So the events highlighted on prime time reflect what the media thinks the paying public wants to see, and the events not highlighted indicate what the media thinks the government would rather not have on display.

Of course, it's not as though the events I

considered headline-worthy didn't make it to the news. There were reporters on those beats who diligently reported on those children's deaths. The media followed up on the crash and the encounters. The water crisis was reported on, in grim detail. But this was considered less worth headlining than the slogan shouting.

It is not as though the press in India is tirely free Both aneco the hard data suggest that the press has seen its independence eroded in the past few years. Indeed, freedom of expression in the broader sense had been curtailed. Journalists have been jailed on flimsy grounds. Social media posters have been charged with sedition and the Indian government has registered a vast number of complaints against posts on Twitter and Facebook. At least one journalist covering

a rail accident has been tortured India has dropped lower and lower in global media rankings such as the World Press Freedom Index. The Indian media continues to cover unpleasant events and reports on things that don't necessarily show the government in a good light. But the erosion of independence shows up in the things that make prime time and the

wheels on one side — political liberalism

— and scooter wheels — economic illiber-

alism — on the other. It moves like a man

are now lamenting the passing of

The irony is that the very liberals who

Thus, we have confusion at every stage

in the Left liberal minds. They are well-

meaning people no doubt. But they still

need to stop cherry picking from the

to copy: The British Labour party of the late

1990s, namely, New Labour. Nehruvian lib-

erals can, likewise, can become the New

Liberals. They need to strike a balance

between political liberalism and economic

illiberalism by abridging the former and

I can offer them one model from which

with aggravated hydrocele.

EYE CULTURE

Boredom is bliss

KUMAR ABISHEK

et's discuss boredom. I know it's boring — you would rather scroll **⊿**through your Twitter or Instagram account (I would prefer hinge-watching videos on YouTube or OTT platforms).

Yet, we must admit that with an endless array of information and entertainment, boredom has become something of a rarity — perhaps, even, a luxury. And, it's bliss, least sometimes.

First, what creates boredom?

According to the authors of 'The Unengaged Mind: Defining Boredom in Terms of Attention', a paper published in September 2012 in Perspectives on Psychological Science, boredom is the aversive state that occurs when we (a) are not able to successfully engage attention with internal (thoughts or feelings) or external (environmental stimuli) information required for participating in a satisfying activity; (b) are focused on the fact that we are not

Boredom felt

activities

effect" on

could be

during passive

heightens the

"daydreaming

creativity - the

more passive the

creative a person

boredom, the more

able to engage attention and participate in a satisfying activity; (c) attribute the cause of our aversive state to the environment.

Basically, boredom is a state of feeling underwhelmed. Studies show that a person would probably rather choose to be shocked than be alone with

Still, boredom is essential for happiness in our lives. Research has found that it activates areas of our brain that link to negative emotions like fear and disgust, as well as, areas that govern our ability to plan

Researchers Sandi Mann and ies. In both rounds, participants were Cadman found that the participants pair of plastic cups.

The findings suggested that boredom felt during passive activities heightens the "daydreaming effect" on creativity - the more passive the boredom, the more likely the daydreaming and the more creative a person could be afterwards.

American writer and filmmaker Susan Sontag had once said: "The life of the creative man is led, directed and controlled by boredom."

According to American and European researchers, when people's minds wander, they're more likely to think about their future. In a process known as "autobiographical planning", they most frequently plan and anticipate their while daydreaming.

Daydreaming actually involves more than just beating back boredom - in fact, according to a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, scientists at Bar-Ilan University demonstrated not only daydreams offer a welcome "mental escape" from boring tasks, they also have a positive, simultaneous effect on task performance.

Actually, feeling bored is like an alarm bell in a person's brain, sending a warning that something isn't right. And in the search for a solution, we upgrade ourselves.

The sense of disillusionment that accompanies boredom also encourages a person to re-establish a sense of purpose and helps connect with someone by acting altruistically.

Besides, there is a growing body of research which shows just how important boredom is for a child's devel-

opment. "When confronted with wails of 'I'm bored!' adults don't need to rush in with an organised activity or a new toy or game. Encouraging the child to find his or her own solution will help them develop autonomy, creativity and coping skills," Teresa Belton of the University of East Anglia, and author of Happier People Healthier Planet, wrote in an online article.

So, next time when you have nothing to do, don't take out your smartphone and jump into social media, but allow your mind to wander. Boredom is precious. And with this, I'm bored. It's time I

checked my phone and dove into that

Nehruvian political values and ideals are afterwards. also demanding the dismantling of his rare his/her thoughts for as economic liberalism. For instance, even Dr little as six minutes. Manmohan Singh has, from time to time, said that Indian labour laws need to be made more "flexible", meaning less liberal.

Likewise, the same set of people who brought in the MGNREGA in 2006 have thought nothing of asking for abolishing subsidies for the poor. These were the cornerand behave in a goal-driven way. stone of Indira Gandhi's economic policies.

> Rebekah Cadman, both at the University of Central Lancashire. explained the creativity-boosting power of boredom in two rounds of studeither assigned the boring task of copying numbers from a phone book or assigned to a control group, which skipped the phone book assignment. All participants were then asked to generate as many uses as they could for a pair of plastic cups. Mann and who had intentionally led to boredom through the phone book task had generated significantly more uses for the

LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

few days ago, in a Chennai newspaper, which is also one of India's leading newspapers, there was an article full of gloom and doom for India's future. The predictions were dire.

The author, Harsh Mander Singh, who was once in the IAS, is now a full-time social activist. He has always been a severe critic of governments, regardless of which political parties are in power. More often than not, he is in the right, morally as well as in a practical sense.

The article, however, is a perfect example of the disarray in which, for want of a better name, the Nehruvian liberals find themselves after the overwhelming victory of the BJP in the 2019 election. Their world has come to an end.

By a strange coincidence, there was

another article, this time in Dawn, which is published from Karachi, by a well-regarded Pakistani economist called Anjum Altaf. Like the Indian writer, he also summed up the Indian liberal anguish.

Politically liberal, economically illiberal

He says that the Nehruvian project was always an elite one in which a small group of brown Englishmen sought to impose British political values upon India. He quotes Sunil Khilnani, author of the bestselling book Idea of India.

Khilnani had written that, in 1947, the majority of Indians had no idea of what they had been handed. So Nehru and his descendants had fought hard to tell them what it was, namely, religious tolerance, liberal values, and, overall, a very upper class but liberal English way of conducting national affairs — only for the English, of course.

Altaf says all that is now history because underneath the veneer of secularism and other democratic values, Indians are basically intolerant and undemocratic. In short, India has reverted to type. The hidden message to Indians is "we went before you, that's the only difference".

Politics, yes; economics, no?

Such views have been expressed by a whole range of scholars, activists and laypersons, among whom we must also count Amartya Sen, whose scholarship is not in doubt but, increasingly, his interpretations and fears are. That said, an opinion doesn't become good or bad depending on who holds it. So it is a pity that that's exactly how many liberals think.

To all these people, I want to ask the question: How is political liberalism consistent with economic illiberalism? How do we explain the brutal suppression of Article 19(G) of the Constitution since 1950 — I should add — which guarantees the right to every citizen to freely carry on any business in any way he wants?

The Left liberal answer has always been that if by economic illiberalism is meant direct state participation and persistent intervention in economic activity, it is necessary to achieve egalitarian economic outcomes, such as the mitigation of poverty. Really?

But should we then not also ask why the opposite, namely, political illiberalism, should be inconsistent with economically egalitarian outcomes. After all, China's political illiberalism — and before that of all of South East Asia — has delivered highly egalitarian economic outcomes that the Left liberals admire.

Thus, those who rightly extol the virtues of Nehruvian political liberalism wrongly ignore Nehruvian economic illiberalism. Take any piece of Nehru-era economic legislation and you will find illiberalism is writ As a result, the Indian economy has

expanding the latter. become like a car that has the appropriate

lehruvian bush.

It is such a pity that Rahul Gandhi didn't

ask me because I would have told him that the BJP is trying to do exactly this — and once again stealing the liberal thunder.

Every week, Eye Culture features writers with an entertaining critical take on art, music, dance, film and sport





ON REDUCING CRIME

Chief minister of UP, Yogi Adityanath

Statistics are not a parameter for crime control. The actual standard is the faith of people, and we have to prove ourselves on this front

Double farm incomes by investments, not subsidies

WTO scrutiny will prevent a big hike in farm subsidies by govt, but fixing markets is a far more efficient solution anyway

FANYONE THOUGHT the government could double farmers' income by 2022—a Narendra Modi promise—by a sharp hike in farm subsidies or in PM Kisan-type income transfer schemes, they just need to look at the global reaction to the government's plan to spend ₹25 lakh crore on agriculture and rural development to know this is impossible. As FE reported a few days ago, after the government announced its ₹25lakh-cr plan, a host of countries have begun asking whether or not this will affect India's WTO commitments that put a cap on how much farm support the government can give. Since the WTO principle is that government policy shouldn't distort export markets, the US has, for instance, asked what step India is taking to ensure its large wheat stocks won't distort global markets. Thanks to the high MSPs fixed by the government, FCI accumulates stocks far in excess of what is needed and, in order to clear them, FCI usually sells them at a discount later; to the extent the stock is bought by traders who export it, this gets counted as distorting export markets through subsidies. Right now, India has breached WTO norms of 10% subsidy/support in crops like wheat and rice. It is true, as Icrier professors Anwarul Hoda and Ashok Gulati point out, that the WTO is not taking into account inflation since the agreement was signed—once this is done, India's support levels fall dramatically, from 26%, in the case of rice, to 2.9% (bit.ly/2XiVNgL), but till the WTO accepts India's interpretation, the argument is moot.

Fortunately, increasing subsidies—such as those on MSP-based procurement—is not the only way to boost farmer income, and that is why Modi's ₹25 lakh crore plan can coexist with India's WTO commitments. Public capital formation in agriculture fell from 3.9% of agri-GDP in 1980-81 to 2.2% in 2014-15, before recovering a bit to 2.6% in 2015-16 while, at the same time, input subsidies rose from 2.8% to 8%. So, if Modi were to switch expenditure from subsidies towards investment, that would help raise farmer incomes while not affecting the WTO equation. According to Gulati, every rupee spent on agricultural R&D adds ₹11.2 to agriculture GDP while the same amount spent on roads adds a much smaller ₹1.1; and just 88 paise gets added if the money is spent on fertiliser subsidy. That means if the government spends on R&D and on roads instead of on various input subsidies, doubling farmers' income while staying WTO-compliant will not prove difficult since such spending is in the 'GreenBox'. And while India hardly has much of a government R&D budget, a friendly policy towards seedtech firms like Monsanto, as opposed to today's outright hostility, would boost productivity without any extra government investment.

And, according to an ICRIER-OECD study on agricultural policies in India, by not allowing farmers to get global prices, India taxed its farmers by 14% (of gross farm receipts) for the years 2000-01 to 2016-17. For the entire period, that means farmers lost ₹45 lakh crore (at 2017-18 prices), or around ₹2.6 lakh crore per year. While this is why Modi has been trying to push the pan-India electronic or eNAM market, it has not been successful; but were a successful attempt to be made, farmers can get 10-14% more income right away. The other advantage of supporting farmers the smart way is that if, for instance, subsidies aren't given on water and electricity—and MSP not used to dictate what farmers grow—this will also ensure farmers don't grow the wrong crop; as a result, with less damage to the soil, overall productivity will rise. Agriculture reform is a big agenda item for the government, and, if is done right, the impact on farmers and the economy will be huge.

Not learning the right lessons

Higher education regulations still anchored to outdated norms

ODI 1.0 WASTED the opportunity to reform higher education regulation in the country. To be sure, it did introduce the Higher Education Commission (HECI) Bill in June last year, which talked of ending the the failed University Grants Commission (UGC)/All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) system and replace it with the HECI. But, it did precious little after. The draft National Education Policy (NEP) that has recently been put up for public feedback proposes a different regulatory ecosystem. It advises reforms, but these aren't bold enough. And some recommendations steer higher education regulation into dangerous terrain. There is also the problem of the time it foresees will be consumed—5-7 years—in shifting from the existing regulatory set-up to the one it proposes; India simply can't wait as long, with, say, a China that lagged in world-class higher education infrastructure and delivery having since caught up and shot past.

The ethos, as worded by the draft's authors, seems to be "light but tight" regulation meaning rigorous and effective regulation in certain areas but much greater autonomy for higher education institutions in others. It envisages a National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) that will be the sole regulator for all fields of higher education, including professional and vocational education. The ecosystem, as per the NEP, must consist of NHERA and separate bodies for funding, standard-setting, outlining educational outcomes and accreditation. The license to operate universities will be given by NHERA based on meeting the standards set by these independent bodies. All higher education institutions, thus, will have the autonomy to decide on matters that should have always been in their purview—from opening new departments/programmes to foreign collaborations and distance learning. This is a change from the earlier regime, beset with unwieldy centralisation of almost all regulatory functions under the UGC system, and regulatory overlap between, say, UGC and AICTE; while this system had a lot of inspectors and regulation, it failed to achieve the higher standards it was supposed to. While the system will be accreditation-based, and licences will be granted to some public and not-for-profit private institutions to function as the accreditation bodies, why not simply move to a system where students, parents, educationists and employers assess colleges in the manner markets do? The NEP acknowledges the role of public-opinion/market-forces, but outlines no path for incorporating this. Since the capabilities of existing colleges/universities are, in any case, well established, such a system will really have to deal only with the new entrants; over time, both old and new institutions will get ranked in this manner.

As Modi 2.0 looks at NEP to inspire its higher education regulation vision, it must also be careful to avoid the risk inherent in some recommendations. The NEP proposes to make the NHERA a quasi-judicial body, with powers to shut down, derecognise or penalise institutions. While the power to shut down would have served well in the case of a fly-by-night university/college set up to swindle unaware students and parents, the chances of an overreach will always remain. It would be just as effective if the regulator was to stick to derecognition of the institution—and publicise this widely—along with monetary penalties. After all, the NEP does talk about the regulatory system also functioning as a supplement to the "court of public opinion".

JobsPATH

A World Bank report on PMGSY shows rural roads have helped non-farm employment rise in three states

RECENTWORLD BANK report highlights the job-creation potential of improving road connectivity to, and in, rural areas through the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). Analysing relevant data between 2009 and 2017, the report states that non-farm employment in rural areas improved by 12 percentage points in the habitations studied in three states, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, due to better road connectivity. Not only employment, the acces-

sibility to schools and institutional deliveries have also increased. The report, however, states that women are now more engaged in agrarian activities compared to earlier. This may indicate a disproportionate benefit to men in accessing nonfarm jobs. Icrier's Ashok Gulati, in a book edited along with two Syngenta Foundation researchers, notes that while subsidies to agriculture have increased, government-funded capital formation in agriculture has slid. Given how every rupee spent on rural roads returns ₹1.1 to the agri-GDP, while the primary agri-subsidies add less than ₹1, there is a case for the government to look at long-term investments in roads, rural education, and agricultural research. The World Bank report is further evidence of this. At a time when job-creation is limping badly, the government must spend wisely, and move away from agri-subsidies to creation of infrastructure that supports rural growth.

NO PROOF REQUIRED

ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN'S METHOD OF ESTIMATING GDP SUGGESTS THAT GERMANY OVERESTIMATES THE MOST; BRAZIL UNDERESTIMATES GDPTHE MOST—INDIA ONLY A MILD OUTLIER

Germany overestimating GDP the most

SURJIT

S BHALLA

ECENTLY MEASURED GDP statistics for India (and the world) suggest trouble. No mis-estimation here. Indian GDP growth has declined from 8.2% in 2Q2018 to 5.8% in 1Q2019—one of the largest threequarter declines in the last 15 years—and if fiscal years 2009, 2010 and 2012 are excluded, it is the third worst decline.

In the recent debate over ex-CEA Arvind Subramanian's (AS) allegations that GDP growth in India was overestimated by an average 2.5% a year, many commentators have commended AS for his astuteness and bravery in making a much-needed and correct call over the "fudging" (there is no other word) of official GDP statistics in India. The argument goes as follows—motor vehicle sales down, two-wheeler inventory at highest levels ever, no private investment, animal spirits have disappeared; see, AS is right, GDP growth is being overstated. But, as just documented above, official GDP data is documenting the reality of GDP growth being way down.

The government also gets it. Every day, there is an announcement of concern and admission that the economy is in trouble. All eyes are rightly on the Budget to be presented on July 5. It is to be seen whether the finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman listens to the voices of "old" economists and bureaucrats who want to continue with business as usual, be concerned with the minutiae of the fiscal deficit, and ask for restraint on changing course on three world-records that India holds—highest real interest rates, highest effective corporate tax rates, and the worst labour laws.

The same "experts", bureaucratic or otherwise, asserting and demanding that international experts be called in to look at Indian statistics (because they are allegedly not capturing one of the worst domestic, and global, downturns!) also argue for restraint on any policy action, e.g.,don't change policy rates,don't lower tax rates—indeed, raise them to gather more revenue to finance the increased fiscal deficit brought about by the slowing economy. It doesn't get any crazier.

But, maybe it does, in the form of AS's "academic" calculation that Indian GDP growth is being overstated since 2011. Before looking at this AS miscalculation, I must remind readers that AS was among the few (along with self!) who had the courage to point out that the MPC under Governor Urjit Patel was leading India on a downward growth spiral; that real policy rates in India needed to be 200 bps lower than where Patel's MPC had kept them. That was in June 2017; in June 2018, the Patel MPC was busy hiking rates and expecting growth (and inflation) to accelerate; a year later, Governor Shaktikanta Das's MPC has cut rates by 75 bps, but real rates, at 3%+, are where they have been for >2 years.

Real interest rates in India are



not be opened up to foreign investors. GDP growth is low because of policy failures—true today as well as before. Hopefully, recognised by all. But, now to AS's allegation that Indian GDP between 2012 & 2017 had been mis-estimated and that the "actual" GDP growth in these years was as little as 3.5-5.5%, not the official 7%, i.e., an overestimation of 2.5% a year (7% - 4.5%).

including well-capitalised NBFCs, must

I want to examine AS's hypothesis and results with the assumption/view that AS is entirely correct in his assumptions, and method of analysis. AS's assertions rests on three pillars:

Pillar 1: Growth in four real variables (exports, imports, credit and electricityhereafter X variables) can more than adequately *proxy* real GDP growth for all non-oil exporting countries with population greater than 1 million;

Pillar 2: That, for all countries, the relationship is robust for two different time-periods; period I being 2001-2011 and period II being 2012-2017;

Pillar 3: Only for India is there a problem with official GDP data. Hence, AS's analysis is geared to examine how much Indian GDP in period II veered off the (AS) predicted path. AS brings all his statistical acumen to

confirm that the gap between actual and predicted GDP was as much as 2.5% and that this gap was statistically significant (i.e., could not have happened by chance). Since AS believes his model can proxy growth, he is broadly right in also believing that the "only" explanation for the gap between official and predicted GDP growth is that the former, and not the latter, is in error—fudged either by political masters, or incompetence of statistical authorities around the world that vetted India's GDP measurement, or both. I want to accept AS's method and conclusions, if only because the two of us were lonely warriors against the Patel MPC crusade against inflation and growth. For 89 countries, I relied on World Bank data for the four AS variables (as does AS). I successfully reproduced his estimate of 2.5% (baseline, column 1, page 11 of his paper, India's GDP Mis-estimation...).

When I first read AS's paper a week

ago, I was struck by the absence of any discussion on the statistical possibility that his method could yield mis-estimation errors for other countries. He does have a throwaway line that there were four outlier countries (Cambodia, Tajikistan, Ireland and Ukraine) excluded from analysis, but no more. What is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander; utilising that truth, I decided to estimate the AS model for all 89 countries, i.e., estimated the gap between measured GDP and AS predicted GDP in period II.

Here is what I found. Out of 89 countries, for 46, the AS country dummy was not significant. For 22 of these 46, the individual country effect was negative, i.e., measured GDP was less than predicted GDP by an average 0.5 ppt; for the remaining 24 countries, measured GDP growth was above predicted growth by 0.4 ppt. The remaining 43 countries, with significant individual country effects, were almost equally divided between overestimation (1.7 ppt) and underestimation (1.8 ppt).

This last result is significant. There is

equal overestimation and underestimation of GDP in the world (at least for 43 countries). AS is concerned with overestimation. There are 21 such countries, and Germany tops the list, i.e., according to AS, German (ECB take note) GDP data is being overestimated the most. AS (and his "intellectual" supporters) should train their statistical guns at Germany for systematically overestimating GDP by an average of 1.8 ppt a year in period II.

One final calculation. Reported GDP growth for Germany in period II was 1.3%; AS overestimation number, 1.8%; hence, excess GDP over reported GDP (ratio of 1.8 and 1.3) is 135%, the highest in the world. Number 8 is Bangladesh with an excess of 60%; India is 16th (out of 21 countries) with an excess magnitude of 38% (ratio of 2.5 and 6.7%).

The accompanying table also reports the excess magnitude, etc, calculation for several other countries. For example, reported GDP growth in Brazil was −0.4%; AS method suggests that Brazil growth is underestimated by as much as 3%; Jamaica has a positive average growth in period II of 0.6% and AS deems it to have underestimated growth each year by 2.4%. Maybe, a happiness index can be constructed on the basis of the AS methodology, rather than a GDP mis-estimate.One strong result—Brazilians are a lot happier than the Portuguese; and Jamaicans are the happiest. I would have believed that if the West Indies were doing well in the World Cup.

Mis-estimating GDP Rank Country Growth (%) Excess (%) Excess (%)

Rank	(all)	coeff (%)	2012-16	Selected	All
2	3	4	5	6	7
	1	-2.4	0.6		436.2
1	2	1.8	1.3	134.8	134.8
3	8	2.2	2	107.8	107.8
	13	-2.8	3.2		85.8
7	16	1.5	2.1	71.1	71.1
	17	-2.8	4.3		64.9
8	18	3.8	6.3	60.4	60.4
11	23	0.6	1.2	47.8	47.8
	26	-1	2.6		40.2
13	27	1.1	2.8	39.8	39.8
16	31	2.5	6.7	37.5	37.5
18	37	0.6	1.8	31.5	31.5
20	47	1.3	5.4	24.5	24.5
	48	-0.6	2.4		23.3
21	49	0.7	3.3	21.4	21.4
	50	0.5	2.5		20.6
	51	-0.3	1.6		19.8
	55	0.4	2.1		17.5
	56	-0.4	2.6		15.4
	82	0.1	5.2		1.1
	87	-0.4	-0.2		-210
	88	0.9	-0.2		-443.7
	89	-3	-0.4		-694
	1 3 7 8 11 13 16 18 20	2 3 1 1 2 3 8 3 8 13 7 16 17 8 18 11 23 26 13 27 16 31 27 16 31 18 37 20 47 48 21 49 50 51 55 56 82 87 88	2 3 4 1 -2.4 1 2 1.8 3 8 2.2 13 -2.8 7 16 1.5 17 -2.8 8 18 3.8 11 23 0.6 26 -1 1.1 16 31 2.5 18 37 0.6 20 47 1.3 48 -0.6 21 49 0.7 50 0.5 51 -0.3 55 0.4 82 0.1 87 -0.4 88 0.9	2 3 4 5 1 -2.4 0.6 1 2 1.8 1.3 3 8 2.2 2 13 -2.8 3.2 7 16 1.5 2.1 17 -2.8 4.3 8 18 3.8 6.3 11 23 0.6 1.2 26 -1 2.6 13 27 1.1 2.8 16 31 2.5 6.7 18 37 0.6 1.8 20 47 1.3 5.4 48 -0.6 2.4 21 49 0.7 3.3 50 0.5 2.5 51 -0.3 1.6 55 0.4 2.1 56 -0.4 2.6 82 0.1 5.2 87 -0.4 -0.2 88 0.9 -0.2	2 3 4 5 6 1 -2.4 0.6 1 1.3 134.8 3 8 2.2 2 107.8 13 -2.8 3.2 7 16 1.5 2.1 71.1 17 -2.8 4.3 4.3 4.3 60.4<

Source: World Bank data used as in Arvind Subramanian (AS) article

Column 2 refers to rank for overestimation countries with statistically significant overestimation, Column 3 refers to rank for all countries, Column 4 is the country coefficient as estimated according to AS paper, Column 5 is GDP growth, 2012-2016 Column 6 is excess growth (ratio of column 4 to column 3) for overestimation countries, Column 6 and 7 is excess growth

The case for a financial transaction tax

It would favour longer-term investors over speculators and put a little useful resistance into the financial system

MICHAEL EDESESS

It is a good conservative principle that where possible, the government should recover the cost of its services from the people who use them, rather than from taxpayers at large. It is also pretty uncontroversial that the government must oversee financial markets, to ensure that they are free and fair. It, thus, makes sense that the govern-

ment should charge a user fee for financial transactions. So why has the idea—as proposed by various politicians, including presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, Senator Brian Schatz and Representative Peter DeFazio—encountered so much opposition? It is not as if this were radical socialism. Hong Kong, rated the world's freest economy by the Heritage Foundation, has had a 0.1% tax on financial transactions for years. The levy has had no discernible negative effect on its economy, though it might be responsible for a relative lack of high-frequency trading. Many other countries have financial transaction taxes, including the UK, Switzerland and Taiwan.

Opponents of the tax offer two main arguments. First, they say the burden will fall mostly on small investors. Second, they say it will undermine the ease of buying and selling—or liquidity—that makes US markets so attractive, and impair

those markets' ability to determine the proper prices of securities. Let's examine the first claim. The idea is that regular folks mostly invest through mutual funds, which trade a lot and hence will get hit hard by the tax. Specifically, in a letter to legislators, the Investment Company Institute estimated that the tax would impose a 60% average cost increase on investors in equity index funds.

That calculation is specious at best. It implies, for example, that the typical investor holds an index fund for less than six years. According to the ICI, this is based on purchase and sale data from 2018—a year in which the funds experienced large redemptions from retiring baby boomers and vast inflows from investors looking to reduce their fees.

Actually, people who invest in index funds for retirement tend to be longterm buy-and-hold investors. An investment at age 35 might be withdrawn at 65, which suggests a holding period of about 30 years—or even longer, if the money is funding a bequest. Given that horizon, the average tax per year is less than a hundredth of 1%, which would increase the typical index-fund fee by only 8%. The tax on the funds' own trading might add a little to this, not much.

What about liquidity? True, the tax

would put the brakes on the high-frequency outfits, proprietary traders and hedge funds whose chief mission is to profit via swarms of lightning trades at the expense of slower-moving "whales" such as MFs and pension funds. But that should be good for retail investors, on whose behalf the latter institutions are supposed to be investing. It should also be good for markets, reducing the threat of high-frequency algorithms gone wrong causing a systemic crisis—as they almost did in the "flash crash" of 2010.

All told, the benefits of a tax on trading far outweigh the costs. It would generate much-needed revenue. It would favour longer-term investors over speculators. It would put a little useful resistance into the financial system, preventing it from overheating or spinning out of control. And it would pass the fairness test by placing the cost of running the system on the people who use it most.

So why do the tax's opponents mostly from investment management make mountains out of molehills, exaggerating its burdens and dangers? It is hard not to conclude that they're really trying to protect their already ample profits against any and all constraints. That's completely understandable, but a terrible foundation for making policy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Clarification This is with reference to our

editorial StandFIRM on Friday where we castigated the US for advising the Indian government not to take firm action against audit firm Deloitte by arguing that this would affect US investment into India. As the editorial mentioned, this was based on a Business Standard news story which said this was discussed in a meeting between the US Ambassador Kenneth Juster and Deloitte global CEO Punit Renien. Business Standard subsequently withdrew the story since the US Ambassador never met the Deloitte chief and was, in fact, not even in the country when the reported meeting is supposed to have taken place. We have since learned, the US hasn't taken up the issue with the Indian government either. While we retain our view on Deloitte not having done justice to its audit, we withdraw our comments on the US government and apologise for this.

Simultaneous elections Synchronised Lok Sabha and Assembly elections are anti-federal and strike at the roots of the parliamentary democratic system.

— Managing Editor

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

— K.V. Seetharamaiah, Hassan

R.N.l. Reg. No. 6188/61 Printed for the proprietors, The Indian Express (P) Ltd by Vaidehi Chintaman Thakar at The Indian Express Towers, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021. Editorial & Administrative Offices: Express Towers, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021. Phone: 22022627/67440000. Fax: 022-22856323. Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Managing Editor: Sunil Jain, Deputy Managing Editor: Shobhana Subramanian* (*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act) © Copyright: The Indian Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

One of the key factors behind China withdrawing is Taiwan, what with China still hopeful and dangling the reunification carrot. By suspending the extradition Bill, China indicated its willingness to give the people of Hong Kong a listen, somewhat attest to the 'one country, two systems' rhetoric, and address Taiwan's increasing misgivings about reunification

Why did China back down in Hong Kong?

N EXTRADITION BILL that made an allowance for the extradition of criminals in Hong Kong (and those criminals who passed by the city) to mainland China sparked off large-scale mass protests in Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. In the face of the Bill, a million (some estimates say 2 million) people took to the streets. In a surprise move, not only was the Bill suspended, but also the Beijingbacked Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, apologised twice over. Why did China, the quintessential 'strongman', back down in Hong Kong?

The protests were hardly unexpected, given that the Bill could criminalise dissenters and opposition, subsuming them under China's opaque 'rule of law'. Disturbingly, the press has reported instances of miscarriage of justice, where China's capital punishment system has erroneously executed suspects. This includes the case of Nie Shubin, a 21-year-old man convicted of rape (in 1995), who turned out to be innocent after he had been executed. The abduction and disappearance of publishers in Hong Kong (in 2015), including ones who published 'grapevine' stories of money and mistresses of high-ranking Communist Party officials, and abduction of a Chinese tycoon (in 2017) from the Four Seasons hotel, had taken Hong Kong by surprise.

China backing down has to do with several factors. For one, the sheer magnitude, scale and demographic profile of the protesters—without a leader was an eye-opener of sorts, even to Beijing. In terms of numbers, 1 million protesters translated as one in seven (Hong Kong's population is 7.4 million), a scathing statistic, given that the city has an estimated 3.8 million registered voters. Even after the Bill was suspended, an estimated 2 million (according to Hong Kong's Civil Human Rights Front) took to the streets, demanding Lam's resignation.

China is cognisant of the fact that while previous decades of civil disobedience in Hong Kong witnessed a large turnout of teenage students and the middle class, the recent protests sug-

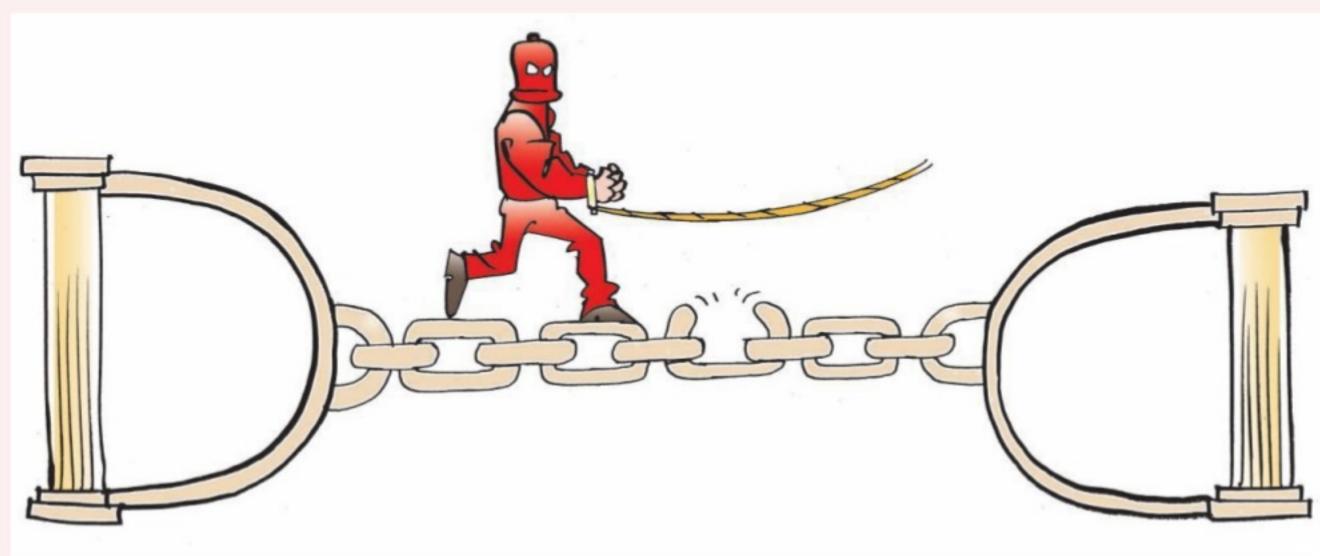


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

gest participation by sizeable numbers of the upper middle class and the elite. The Economist magazine called the protests an "organic movement, backed by local lawyers, priests, scholars and business lobbies that usually shun politics" (italics, author). It appears that the protest is greater than the sum of numbers may suggest, with representation across the demographic profile, where masses and classes, young and old, have come in unison.

That the protest went beyond the extradition Bill was more than evident to China. If anything, the extradition Bill was the proverbial "spark that lit up the prairie fire." The undercurrent against China's tightening political and economic grip in the last decades snowballed into the protest. Since 1997, when Hong Kong reverted to China as semi-autonomous with defence and foreign policy under China's purview (but free speech and press), there has been a build-up of grievances.

In these two decades, Hong Kong, the 'pearl of the orient', has been dis-



placed by a slew of brash new and old rich Chinese cities that have reinvented themselves. Although Hong Kong hosts the world's fourth-largest stock market and an estimated 1,300 global firms are headquartered here, Hong Kong is losing its edge. Shenzhen and Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing are no less dynamic, the newfangled, millennial version of Hong Kong—or at least in the making. Hong Kong, straining with limited land resources, old-style 'matchbox housing'and increasing dependence on China, is increasingly viewed even by the average Chinese mainlander as an average Chinese mainland city.

Among several critical issues at stake that Hongkongers want to be addressed includes universal suffrage (one man, one vote) to elect the Chief Executive (currently elected by the Election Committee; Lam was elected by 777 votes out of 1,194). The Umbrella Movement that raised universal suffrage threw up student leaders such as Joshua Wong and Nathan Law, but the movement died out. But not before the student leaders pledged that they would be back. In that sense, the 'We Are Back'resounding in Hong Kong streets today holds water.

Also, China cannot be impervious to Hongkongers' increasing discomfort with China's Greater Bay Area—Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau as an integrated hub—which portends that Hong

Kong be viewed as a part and parcel of this area, a blow to Hong Kong's identity. And as much as China can take pride in stepping up connectivity to Hong Kong, this has come at a price. The Hong Kong-Shenzhen bullet train and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge brings Chinese mainlanders to Hong Kong. It also entices Hongkongers to move to the mainland with cheaper and better housing, offices, co-working spaces and career opportunities—all of which can take a toll on Hong Kong's identity.

ern district of Hong Kong headed by representative Wang Zhimin, who supports 'zero tolerance' and 'zero space' for independence advocacy, garners little respect, unlike the British sense of justice and fair play. Finally, one of the key factors behind

Beijing's Liaison Office in the west-

China withdrawing is Taiwan, what with China still hopeful and dangling the reunification carrot. By suspending the Bill, China indicated its willingness to give the people of Hong Kong a lis-

The protesters are in no mood for reconciliation. Perhaps China's missteps in Hong Kong have led to this, where China cannot but watch with dismay the candle of reunification flickering in the wind. As it is turns out, 'Hong Kong Can Say No'

ten, somewhat attest to the 'one country, two systems' rhetoric, and address Taiwan's increasing misgivings about reunification. This was no mean climbdown for China, where nationalist fervour can reach a feverish pitch. One of China's bestsellers, 'China Can Say No', honed China's glory and also believed that foreign (western) powers plot and prevent China from reaching its influence (read Hong Kong, Taiwan).

The current scenario in Taiwan where presidential elections will be held in 2020 indicates the sheer precariousness of the China dream for reunification. President Tsai Ing-wen, who belongs to the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, and the one who strongly opposed the extradition Bill, has been approved as the candidate. As Tsai said, "This incident has made Taiwanese people feel that one country, two systems isn't feasible." Even Terry Gou (founder, Foxconn

Technology Group) who is seeking nomination as a candidate to challenge Tsai from the pro-China Kuomintang Party had to say on social media: "The one country, two systems practised in Hong Kong is a failure."

Going back to protesters, who have given time to the Hong Kong government to retract the extradition Bill or else strike, they are in no mood for reconciliation. Perhaps China's missteps in Hong Kong have led to this, where China cannot but watch with dismay that candle of reunification flickering in the wind. As it is turns out, 'Hong Kong Can Say No'.

DATA DRIVE

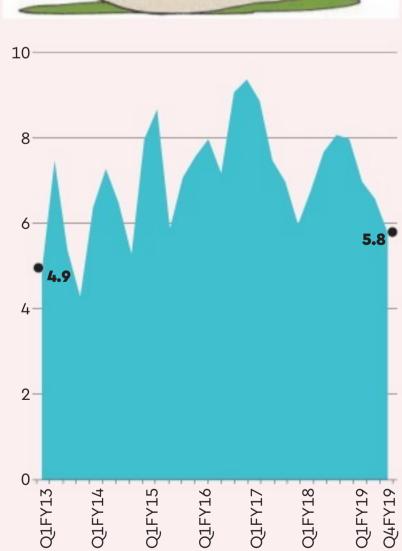
Budget maths

N JULY 5, FINANCE minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the first budget of the second term of Narendra Modi government against the backdrop of a sharp economic slowdown. In FY19, GDP growth has slipped to 6.8%, a five-year low, because of weak rural demand, slowdown in investment and impact of higher borrowing costs. Aggregate demand is slowing down as

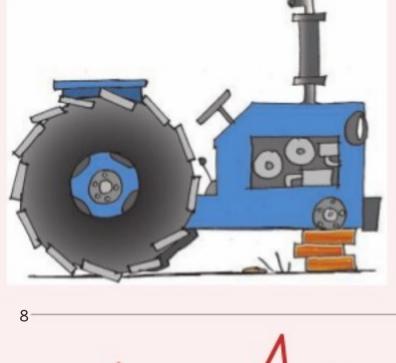
rising rural distress has led to slowdown in private consumption, and households have gradually reduced consumption due to insufficient income growth. The growth in investment demand in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2019 has dropped to 30.7% of GDP, a eight-quarter low. Even household investment has reported a steep fall—from 15.7% of GDP in FY12 to 10.3% in FY18.

Given the fact that the overall tax collections grew just 8.4% y-o-y in FY19 as compared to 18.4% budgeted, and were later revised to 17.2%, the Centre will have to tone down the tax revenue target for this financial year. A sputtering economy cannot generate 23% growth in gross tax revenue as targeted in the interim budget, or a 34% growth in personal income tax. The Budget will have to do a balancing act to revive investment, increase farm productivity, drive consumption and keep the fiscal deficit under control.

Economy is slowing (GDP at 2011-12 prices; % chg, y-o-y)

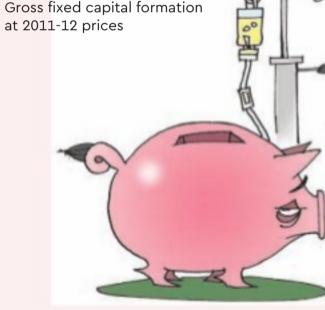


Agriculture growth collapses (GVA at 2011-12 prices; % chg, y-o-y)





Investment weakens Gross fixed capital formation





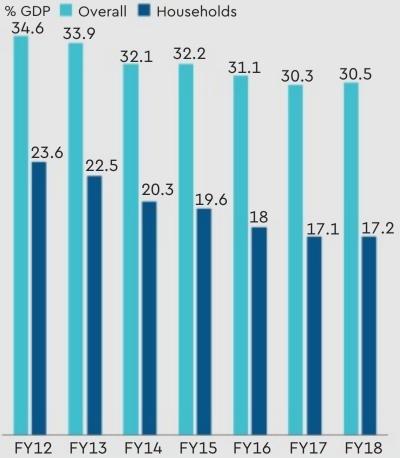
Private consumption tapering off Pvt final consumption expenditure at 2011-12 prices



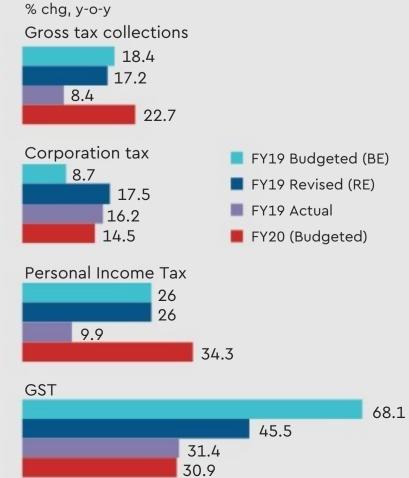
Current account deficit rising

(% of GDP) -1.7 -1.9 -2.6 -4.3 *Average of three quarters

Savings have declined over the past few years



Tax collections fall short

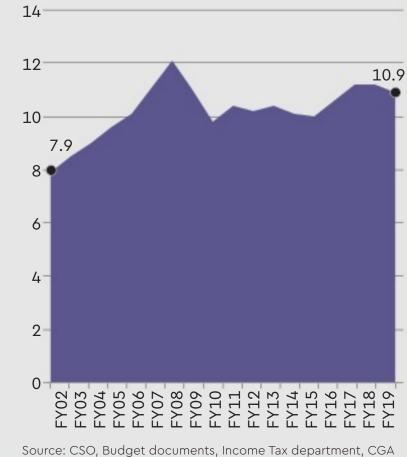


Tax buoyancy drops to a 9-year low (Gross tax revenue)

2.5

2.0 1.0 0.7 0.5 0.0-• -0.1

Tax-to-GDP ratio too, slips in FY19



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

AT BOTTOM, YOU SEE, WE ARE NOT HOMO SAPIENS AS ALL. OUR CORE IS MADNESS.

— STEPHEN KING

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

STIRRINGS IN HOUSE

Crossing of TDP MPs to BJP in Rajya Sabha raises questions, puts parties under watch

HE CROSSING OVER of four of the six Rajya Sabha MPs from the Telugu Desam to the BJP passes the anti-defection test — the law treats more than one-third of legislators leaving a party as a split. The splinter group has also merged with the BJP. According to paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution, "the merger of the original political party of a member of a House shall be deemed to have taken place if, and only if, not less than two-thirds of the members of the legislature party concerned have agreed to such merger." The group that crossed over to the BJP has the numbers to pass this test as well. One of them, YS Chowdary, justified his move as a step to facilitate "the development of Andhra Pradesh", which he believes can be achieved only by cooperation, and not confrontation, with the Centre. This may well be the case. It may even be a coincidence that the Income Tax department had raided the residential and official premises of Chowdary and CM Ramesh, another one of the MPs in question, last year for alleged financial misdeeds, prompting BJP MP GVL Narasimha Rao, ironically, to write to the Ethics Committee of the Rajya Sabha demanding action against them.

It could be argued that the movement of legislators across the aisle is part of the churn in politics in states including Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, after the general elections. The Congress and TDP were decimated in the polls and the few legislators who won on these party tickets seem to be exploring greener pastures — 12 of the 18 Congress MLAs in Telangana crossed over to the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti soon after the May 23 verdict. Even so, these movements of legislators will be under watch, and especially so in the Rajya Sabha, where the BJP is keen to address its lack of numbers, and which, in recent years, is being seen as a bulwark against the attempts by a government with a large majority in the Lok Sabha to have its way. The importance of the Upper House, which is also home to the voice of the states, has only grown in times when the federal character of the republic is seen to be increasingly under strain from centralising tendencies.

The Rajya Sabha has been in progressive decline since many years now, with political parties regularly accused of selling their nominations to the highest bidders. However, the House also witnesses debates of the highest order and acts as an important check on the government. It is in the interest of all parties, and important for the sake of the democratic process, that the dignity of the Rajya Sabha is upheld, especially in times when it performs a more crucial role than before.

AUGUST EASING?

A rate cut seems to be in the offing. Primary objective appears to be reviving growth, discounting concerns of fiscal slippage

NITS LAST meeting, the six members of the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had voted unanimously in favour of a 25 bps cut in the benchmark reporate and for a shift in the policy stance from neutral to accomodative. But the minutes of that meeting, released on June 20, suggest that members are divided on the future course of action. Deputy RBI governor Viral Acharya and economist Chetan Ghate continue to be perturbed by the upside risks to food inflation and a likely fiscal slippage. But the other members seem to have discounted these concerns, placing more weightage on arresting the slowdown in economic activity. They have indicated that a minor fiscal slippage is unlikely to have a bearing on their vote in the next policy meeting in August. In the run-up to the budget, there has been debate over the government's revenue

numbers, the true extent of the fiscal slippage, off-budget borrowings by public sector companies, and their impact on monetary policy. Tax collection data shows that central goods and services tax collections (CGST) would have to grow by 34 per cent in FY20, and income tax collections would have to rise by 35 per cent to meet the FY20 interim budget targets. Meeting these targets is a tall order. While the finance minister could consider revising the interim budget targets, adhering to expenditure targets could imply a minor fiscal slippage resulting in higher government borrowings. Apart from the possible inflationary consequences, higher government borrowings could crowd-out the private sector in the face of declining household savings. This concern was articulated by Deputy Governor Acharya in the last MPC meeting. Chetan Ghate, too, flagged these risks. But MPC member Ravindra Dholakia has argued the opposite. Making the case for counter-cyclical policy – greater government spending during a cyclical downturn – Dholakia has argued that a minor fiscal slippage is unlikely to be inflationary in the current environment when demand continues to be subdued.

Dholakia's view seems to resonate with other MPC members, including RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das. Other members, Pami Dua and Michael Patra, too, appear to be more mindful of growth concerns. With the slowdown in economic activity more entrenched than was previously believed, clearly the primary objective appears to be that of reviving growth, discounting concerns of fiscal slippage and upside risks to inflation. On balance, it appears that the committee may end up voting 4-2 in favour of a further easing in August, irrespective of the fiscal slippage.

NO HORN, PLEASE

Reaction to research that points to physiological changes due to excessive smartphone use reveals deeper anxieties

HE FIRST HOMO sapiens — anatomically the same as their descendants that populate the earth today — evolved around 2,00,000 years ago. The first call on a cellphone was made in 1973. But technology, it seems, is giving evolution a run for its money. Recently published biomechanics research by two Australian scholars suggests that the extensive use of hand-held devices — smartphones, tablets, etc — is causing "horns" to grow in the skulls and necks of young people, among various other musculo-skeletal growths. Essentially, there appears to be a possibility, even a likelihood, that hunching over screens is ruining posture and in the developing frames of children and adolescents, this can cause permanent changes.

Those who see permanence in change argue that the science behind the panic is weak, that all technology since human beings first settled down has caused various stresses and changes in the body. So, while orthopaedists may be treating an increasing number of patients for "text thumbs", why should this cause more panic than carpal tunnel syndrome? Or, they argue, should there be anxiety over keyboards and typewriters too? The reason for the seeming over-reaction to the physiological consequences of contemporary technology may lie in anxieties beyond just biology.

The true consequence of the personal computing revolution has been that it has turned human beings into cyborgs, the half-man half-machine that once belonged in science fiction. People do not remember phone numbers any more, nor birthdays. The compendium of human knowledge is not tucked away behind the Dewey Decimal System just call on Siri. Even the burden of child-rearing is being shared by screens and games. The anxiety around horns and thumbs and stressed neck muscles is likely because the denial of these fundamental changes is becoming more difficult. It's hard to ignore a teenager with horns.

From the heart of a crowd



What I wrote was never meant as neutral commentary... My contribution to our collective refusal to obediently fade away

ARUNDHATI ROY

I FIND MYSELF thinking of the essays in this book as pieces of laundry — poor people's washing — strung out across the land-scape between these two monuments, interrupting the good news bulletins and spoiling the view.

They were written over a period of twenty years during which India was changing faster than ever before. The opening of the Indian markets to international finance had created a new middle class — a market of millions and had investors falling over themselves to find a foothold. The international media, for the most part, was at pains to portray the world's favourite new finance destination in the best possible light. But the news was certainly not all good. India's fleet of brand new billionaires and its new consumers was being created at an immense cost to its environment and to an even larger underclass. Backstage, away from the razzle-dazzle, labour laws were dismantled, trade unions disbanded. The state was withdrawing from its responsibilities to provide food, education, and healthcare. Public assets were turned over to private corporations, massive infrastructure and mining projects were pushing hundreds of thousands of rural people off their lands into cities that didn't want them. The poor were in free fall.

At the very same time that it unlocked the protected market, the Congress government of the day (which calls itself liberal and secular on its CV), with an eye to the "Hindu vote", opened another lock, too. The lock on an old sixteenth-century mosque. The Babri Masjid in Ayodhya had been sealed by the courts in 1949 following a dispute between Hindus and Muslims, who both laid claim to the land — Muslims asserting it was a historical place of worship, Hindus that it was the birthplace of Lord Ram. Opening the Babri Masjid, purportedly to allow Hindus to worship at the site, changed India forever. The Congress was swept aside. Leaders of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) travelled the length and breadth of the country orchestrating a storm of religious frenzy. On 6 December 1992, they, along with members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, gathered in Ayodhya and, while a shocked country and a spineless

They were written when a certain political space closed down, when a false consensus was being broadcast, when I could no longer endure the relentless propaganda and the sheer vicious bullying of vulnerable people by an increasingly corporatised media and its increasingly privatised commentators. Most often I wrote because it became easier to do that than to put up with the angry, persistent hum of my own silence.

Congress prime minister watched, exhorted a mob of 150,000 "volunteers" to storm the structure and bring down the Babri Masjid.

The demolition of the mosque and the simultaneous opening of the markets was the beginning of a complicated waltz between corporate globalisation and medieval religious fundamentalism. It was obvious quite early on that, far from being antagonistic forces that represented Old and New India, they were actually lovers performing an elaborate ritual of seduction and coquetry that could sometimes be misread as hostility. For me, personally it was a time of odd

disquiet. As I watched the great drama unfold, my own fortunes seemed to have been touched by magic. My first novel, The God of Small Things, had won a big international prize. I was a front-runner in the line-up of people who were chosen to personify the confident, new, market-friendly India that was finally taking its place at the high table. It was flattering in a way, but deeply disturbing, too. As I watched people being pushed into penury, my book was selling millions of copies. My bank account was burgeoning. Money on that scale confused me. What did it really mean to be a writer in times such as these?

As I thought about this, almost without meaning to, I began to write a long, bewildering, episodic, astonishingly violent story about the courting ritual of these unusual lovers and the trail of destruction they were leaving in their wake. And of the remarkable people who had risen to resist them.

The backlash to almost every one of the essays when I first published them — in the form of police cases, legal notices, court appearances, and even a short jail sentence – was often so wearying that I would resolve never to write another. But equally, almost every one of them — each a broken promise to myself – took me on journeys deeper and deeper into worlds that enriched my understanding, and complicated my view, of the times we live in. They opened doors for me to secret places where few are trusted, led me into the very heart of insurrections, into

places of pain, rage, and ferocious irreverence. On these journeys, I found my dearest friends and my truest loves. These are my real royalties, my greatest reward. Although writers usually walk alone, most of what I wrote rose from the heart of a crowd. It was never meant as neutral commentary, pretending to be observations of a bystander. It was just another stream that flowed into the quick, immense, rushing currents that I was writing about. My contribution to our collective refusal to obediently fade away...

What I wish I could have done for the readers of this book is to recreate the prevailing atmosphere in which I published each essay. They were written when a certain political space closed down, when a false consensus was being broadcast, when I could no longer endure the relentless propaganda and the sheer vicious bullying of vulnerable people by an increasingly corporatised media and its increasingly privatised commentators. Most often I wrote because it became easier to do that than to put up with the angry, persistent hum of my own silence. I also wrote to reclaim language. Because it was distressing to see words being deployed to mean the opposite of what they really meant. ("Deepening democracy" meant destroying it. "A level playing field" actually meant a very steep slope, the "free market" a rigged market. "Empowering women" meant undermining them in every possible way.) I wrote because I saw that what I needed to do would challenge my abilities as a writer. I had in the past written screenplays and a novel. I had written about love and loss, about childhood, caste, violence, and families — the eternal preoccupations of writers and poets. Could I write equally compellingly about irrigation? About the salinisation of soil? About drainage? Dams? Crop patterns? About the per unit cost of electricity? About the law? About things that affect ordinary people's lives? Could I turn these topics into literature? I tried.

> Excerpted with permission from Arundhati Roy's My Seditious Heart (PenguinRandom House)



Pakistan's First Lady

A recent book frames the life and legacy of Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan

KHALED AHMED

IFTHERE IS anyone in Pakistan's history who is bypassed by state historians, it is the wife of Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first prime minister who was assassinated in 1951. Her ignored life is being recalled by a muchawaited book, and the facts revealed about Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan will bemuse most Pakistanis.

The story is told in the biography, *The* Begum: A Portrait of Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's Pioneering First Lady (OUP 2019) by Namita Gokhale and Tahmina Aziz Ayub. She was born as Irene Ruth-Margaret in 1905, in a Brahmin clan whose founder, Taradutt Pant, her grandfather, had turned Christian, dooming his offspring to lifelong ostracism by the Hindu upper caste community.

Pushing back against this legacy, Irene grew up as a fiercely independent person unafraid of challenges. She went to Lal Bagh High School in Lucknow, and passed school standing first in her class before moving to college. Here she was in outstanding company: Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Hyder, Rashid Jahan and Attia Hosain.

Irene passed BA in first class and joined MA economics, for which she had to move to Lucknow University where her thesis on "Women's Labour in Agriculture in the United Provinces", was adjudged the best in the university. After MA, she entered the Diocesan College in Calcutta for the Graduate Teachers' Training Course. Here too, she stood first, both in the theory and practice of teaching in the Licentiate of Teaching Examination of the Calcutta University. After that, in 1930, she got apIn 1954, Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan was sent to The Hague as Pakistan's first ambassador to Holland where she was to spend two tenures lasting six years before being sent to Italy on her second posting. Back in Pakistan after her diplomatic stint, Ra'ana was made the governor of Sindh and Chancellor of Karachi University in 1973 by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

pointed as a lecturer in economics at Indraprastha College for Women, Delhi, at a salary of Rs 200.

This was the year when she met the upcoming politician from Karnal, Liaquat Ali Khan, deputy president of the UP legislative council, who was, needless to say, struck by her personality and ready wit. They were married in 1930, Ra'ana converting to Islam, changing her name from Irene to Ra'ana. At Partition in 1947, the Liaguat Alis, instead of selling their grand Delhi residence on Hardinge Road, willed it to Pakistan as the permanent ambassadorial residence, now renamed Pakistan House.

In Pakistan, things got off to a bad start. Jinnah went back on earlier pledges and declared, on August 11, 1947, that Pakistan would be a secular state and Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan had to live with it. After his assassination in 1951, Ra'ana devoted herself to social work and created the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) in 1969 on Jail Road Lahore. As economist of the All-India Muslim League — appointed by Jinnah — she knew the nitty-gritty of running organisations, and was indefatigably devoted to the upliftment of women in Pakistan. Her husband, the late prime minister, had left her precious little to survive on.

In 1954, Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan was sent to The Hague as Pakistan's first ambassador to Holland where she was to spend two tenures lasting six years before being sent to Italy on her second posting.

Back in Pakistan after her diplomatic stint, Ra'ana was made the governor of

transit camps for the thousands of

in 1973 by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In 1980, she fell and suffered a hip fracture while travelling abroad and never recovered her health after that. It didn't stop General Zia from suspending her monthly official support of Rs 2,000 which compounded her problems. She witnessed the Islamisation of Pakistan in the years that followed, and was able to comment on it before she died in 1990, when she was buried alongside Liaquat Ali Khan next to the mausoleum of Jinnah in Karachi:

Sindh and Chancellor of Karachi University

"The idea of Pakistan when it first started was completely different from what we see today. There was no question of religion coming into politics. Everybody was free to follow their worship as they pleased, nobody interfered; it was between you and your God. We never talked of religion: there were Shias and Sunnis, we didn't know who was who; we were just working together. Quaid-e-Azam himself said the basis was religious but Pakistan was visualised as secular and democratic.'

Way back in 1950, she had clarified in Town Hall, New York: "In Pakistan, we are not going in for any sort of domination by priests or fanaticism or intolerance. What we wish to emphasise are the basic Islamic principles of equality, brotherhood, and social and economic justice."

Alas, she was wrong. Pakistan went the way she didn't want it to go and betrayed her.

> The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

JUNE 22, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



Vietnamese Kampuchean and Laotian THAILAND HAS SUSPENDED its plan to send refugees now flooding South East Asia. more than 40,000 Kampuchean refugees back across the border into Kampuchea, with MIZO UNREST negotiations under way to resettle them else-THE MIZORAM GOVERNMENT has sent an where, BBC reports. A Thai military SOS to the regional headquarters of the spokesman told newsmen in Bangkok that Border Security Force as well as the Central the repatriation plan was halted after the United States ambassador agreed to resettle Reserve Police Force in Shillong to rush reinmore than 1,000 refugees and promised to forcements of Para Military Forces. The govurge France, Canada and Australia to increase ernment has also started a phased protheir intake of refugees. At a news conference gramme to repatriate the non-Mizos from in Paris addressed by many prominent the curfew-bound Aizawl town under a tight French personalities, including philosopher security cover, as the underground Mizo National Front (MNF) "quit notice" to all non-Jean-Paul Sartre, on Wednesday, France and other European nations were urged to set up Mizos neared the deadline of July 1.

PAK N-BOMB

PAKISTAN IS EXPECTED to explode a nuclear device this autumn, possibly in Multan, 475 km south of Islamabad, according to a weekly magazine, 8 days, published every Thursday in London. In its cover story, the magazine explains how, for five years, the Pakistanis fooled the nuclear powers into believing that they had neither the scientists, the material, nor the know-how to make the bomb. All the while, using a series of "front" companies, bogus purchasing orders, shadowy intermediaries, and foreign trained scientists, the Pakistanis got all they needed to out-trump the world and build a hydrogen

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"For the first time, a prime minister of the UK will be chosen by Conservative party grassroots activists. This means the new leader will largely be the choice of middle-class white men over 55."

—THE GUARDIAN

The most off-track of them all

Arvind Subramanian's method of estimating GDP suggests that Germany over-estimates and Brazil under-estimates it the most. India is only a mild outlier



BY SURJIT S BHALLA

SI SURJII S DHALLA

RECENT MEASURED GDP statistics for India (and the world) suggest trouble. No misestimation here. Indian GDP growth has declined from the 8.2 per cent recorded in 2018 Q2 to 5.8 per cent in 2019Q1 — one of the largest three-quarter declines in the last 15 years — and if fiscal years 2009, 2010 and 2012 are excluded, it is the third-worst decline.

In the recent debate over ex-CEA Arvind Subramanian's (AS) allegations that GDP growth in India was over-estimated by an average 2.5 per cent a year, many commentators have commended AS for his astuteness and bravery in making a much-needed call over the "fudging" (there is no other word) of India's official GDP statistics. The argument goes as follows. Motor vehicle sales are down, two-wheeler inventory are at the highest levels ever, no private investment and animal spirits have disappeared: See, AS is right, GDP growth is being overstated. But as just documented above, official GDP data is documenting the reality of GDP growth being way down.

The government also gets it. Every day there is an announcement of concern and the admission that the economy is in trouble. All eyes (and ears) are rightly on the Budget to be presented on July 5. It is to be seen whether Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman listens to the voices of the "old" economists and bureaucrats who want to continue with business as usual, be concerned with the minutiae of the fiscal deficit, and ask for restraint on changing course on three world records that India holds — highest real interest rates, highest effective corporate tax rates, and the worst labour laws.

The same "experts", bureaucratic or otherwise, who are demanding that international experts be called in to look at Indian statistics (because they are allegedly not capturing one of the worst domestic, and global, downturns) are also arguing for restraint on any policy action — for example, don't change policy rates, don't lower tax rates, and indeed raise them to gather more revenue to finance the increased fiscal deficit brought about by the slowing economy. It does not get crazier than this.

But maybe it does, in the form of AS's "academic" calculation that Indian GDP growth is being overstated since 2011. Before looking at this miscalculation, I have to remind readers that AS was among the very few (along with self) who had the courage to point out that the MPC under the then RBI Governor Urjit Patel was leading India to a downward growth spiral and real policy rates needed to be 200 bp lower than where Patel's MPC had kept them. That was in June 2017. In June 2018, Patel and the MPC were busy hiking interest rates and expecting growth (and inflation) to accelerate; a year later, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das's MPC has reduced rates by 75 bp but real rates, at 3 per cent+, have been where they have been for more than two years.

Real interest rates in India are high(est) because of three policy failures — failure on the part of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to not reduce government-controlled deposit rates (for example, rates on small savings), the RBI for keeping repo rates so high in the hugely mistaken belief that there is an inflation dragon waiting to be slayed, and the policy makers' belief that we should not open up our capital markets, including well capitalised NBFCs, to investment from foreign individuals and institutional investors.

stitutional investors.

GDP growth is low because of policy failures — true today as well as before and hope-

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Country	Rank	Rank(all)	Country coeff (%)	Growth (%) 2012-16	Excess (%) Selected	Excess (%) All
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jamaica		1	-2.4	0.6		436.2
Germany	1	2	1.8	1.3	134.8	134.8
Hungary	3	8	2.2	2	107.8	107.8
Singapore		13	-2.8	3.2		85.8
United Kingdom	7	16	1.5	2.1	71.1	71.1
Botswana		17	-2.8	4.3		64.9
Bangladesh	8	18	3.8	6.3	60.4	60.4
Japan	11	23	0.6	1.2	47.8	47.8
Poland		26	-1	2.6		40.2
Australia	13	27	1.1	2.8	39.8	39.8
India	16	31	2.5	6.7	37.5	37.5
Czech Republic	18	37	0.6	1.8	31.5	31.5
Turkey	20	47	1.3	5.4	24.5	24.5
Hong Kong SAR		48	-0.6	2.4		23.3
Israel	21	49	0.7	3.3	21.4	21.4
Mexico		50	0.5	2.5		20.6
South Africa		51	-0.3	1.6		19.8
United States		55	0.4	2.1		17.5
Uruguay		56	-0.4	2.6		15.4
Indonesia		82	0.1	5.2		1.1
Finland		87	-0.4	-0.2		-210
Portugal		88	0.9	-0.2		-443.7
Brazil		89	-3	-0.4		-694

Source: World Bank data used as in Arvind Subramanian (AS) article; Column 2 refers to rank for over-estimation countries with statistically significant over-estimation; Column 3 refers to rank for all countries; Column 4 is the country coefficient as estimated according to AS paper; Column 5 is GDP growth, 2012-2016; Column 6 is excess growth (ratio of column 4 to column 3) for over-estimation countries; Column 6 and 7 is excess growth (ratio of column 5) for all countries

fully, recognised by all. But now to AS's allegation that the Indian GDP during 2012-17 had been misestimated and that the "correct" or "actual" GDP growth between 2012-16 was as little as 3.5-5.5 per cent, rather than officially reported 7 per cent — an over-estimation of 2.5 per cent a year. I want to examine AS's hypothesis and results with the view that he is entirely correct in his assumptions, and method of analysis. AS's model/assertions rests on the following three pillars:

Pillar 1: Growth in four real variables (exports, imports, credit and electricity—hereafter X variables) can more than adequately *proxy* real GDP growth for all non-oil exporting countries with a population greater than 1 million. Pillar 2: That for all countries, the relationship is robust for two different time-periods — Period I, 2001-2011 and Period II, 2012-16. Pillar 3: Only for India is there a problem with official GDP data. Hence, AS's entire analysis is geared to examine how much Indian GDP in Period II veered of the (AS) predicted path.

AS brings all his statistical acumen to confirm that the gap between actual and predicted GDP was as much as 2.5 per cent and that this gap was statistically significant (it could not have happened by chance). Since AS believes that he has a model which can proxy growth, he is broadly right in also believing the "only" explanation for the gap between official and predicted GDP growth is that the former, and not the latter, is in error—either fudged by the political masters, or via the incompetence of statistical authorities around the world that vetted India's GDP measurement, or both.

I want to accept AS's method and conclusions if only because the two of us were lonely warriors against the Patel RBI/MPC crusade against inflation and growth. For 89 countries, I collected the data for the four AS variables from the World Bank website (as he does). I successfully reproduced his preferred estimate of 2.5 per cent.

When I first read AS's paper a week ago, I was struck by the absence of any discussion on the statistical possibility that his method could yield mis-estimation errors for other countries. He does have a throwaway line that there were four outlier countries — Cambodia, Tajikistan, Ireland and Ukraine — which were excluded from analysis, but no more. I decided

to estimate the AS model for all 89 countries

— that is, estimated the gap between measured GDP and AS predicted GDP in Period II.

Here is what I found, Out of 89 countries.

Here is what I found. Out of 89 countries, for 46 countries the AS country dummy was not significant. For 22 of these 46 countries, the individual country effect was negative — the measured GDP was less than predicted GDP, by an average 0.5 ppt; for the remaining 24 countries, measured GDP growth was above predicted growth by 0.4 ppt. The remaining 43 countries, with significant individual country effects, were almost equally divided between over-estimation (1.7 ppt) and under-estimation (1.8 ppt).

This last result is significant. There is equal over-estimation and under-estimation of GDP in the world (at least for 43 countries). AS is concerned with overestimation. There are 21 such countries, and Germany tops the list, that is, according to AS, German (ECB take note), GDP data is being over-estimated the most. AS should fire his statistical guns at Germany for systematically overestimating GDP by an average of 1.8 ppt a year in Period II.

One final calculation. Reported GDP growth for Germany in Period II was 1.3 per cent; AS's over-estimation number is 1.8 per cent; hence, excess GDP over reported GDP (ratio of 1.8 and 1.3) is a high 135 per cent, the highest in the world. Number 8 on the list is Bangladesh with an excess magnitude of 60 per cent; India is 16th (out of 21 countries) with an excess magnitude of 38 per cent (ratio of 2.5 and 6.7 per cent).

The table also reports the excess magnitude calculation for several other countries. For example, reported GDP growth in Brazil was -0.4 per cent; the AS method suggests that Brazil GDP growth is under-estimated by as much as 3 per cent. Jamaica has a positive average GDP growth in Period II of 0.6 per cent and AS seems to have under-estimated growth each year by 2.4 per cent.

Maybe a happiness index can be constructed on the basis of the AS methodology, rather than a GDP misestimate. One strong result — Brazilians are a lot happier than the Portuguese and the Jamaicans are the happiest. I would have believed that if the West Indies were playing well in the World Cup.

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

The litchis of wrath

Muzaffarpur is a national tragedy, as much as Gujarat earthquake was, or Kerala floods. But has anyone given thought to next year, a long-term policy?



Narayani Gupta

THE BITTER CRY of Children was the title of a book (1906) by the American writer, John Spargo, one of the group labelled "The Muckrakers". It described in graphic detail the conditions of child labourers. Earlier, in 1883, Mearns and Preston had published *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*. History can be written as the tragedy of little children — subject to abuse by relatives and by employers, frightened and lonely in war and exile and, at the moment, felled by a disease that viciously targets only them.

Today, one does not have to wait for the definitive book. There are short-cuts to gathering information which bypass long spells of interaction as was done by Charles Dickens, and door-to-door surveys by social workers and academics (like Sidney and Beatrice Webb) and later by committed middle-class women in India in the 1930s and 1940s. Communications are faster, day-to-day news, statistics, videos are immediately available. But has this speeded up response? In the stillness of the night, the sobbing of the parents of Muzaffarpur gets no relief.

And what we see is only the tip of the iceberg — the children who actually got a few inches of bed-space in the hospital. What of those who could not make the journey? The shadow gets bigger, goes further. And before the deaths, there was the infection. And before that, there was hunger. The assumption that we are ahead of Africa in every way is given the lie by the statistics on malnutrition.

The Vellore doctors explained that litchis eaten after having had a full meal before bedtime does no harm, but eaten on a pitifully hungry stomach can be fatal. Reading that really hurts. I was reminded of Oxfam lunches for volunteers — the charge was 2 pounds, for which you got a slice of bread and a thin slice of cheese. It is not enough to give money to the hungry, they explained. You must experience hunger yourself.

Maybe it is the short-cuts that are the reason for us not showing any insaniyat (untranslatable). We talk, we write, and assume someone else somewhere is doing what officials refer to as "the needful".

There was a report about the deputy

chief minister of another state offering help to Muzaffarpur. The rest, including those of Bihar, resort to a standard answer, or rather, a counter-question: What did earlier political leaders do for 70 years? Or, what did the preceding government do? They hallucinate about the past, and fantasise about the future, while the present slips away under their feet. When the tsunami strikes, they will be standing on the beach, holding forth about an earlier tsunami, another time.

Officials and ministers are not over-eager to go and see the situation for themselves, photo-op though it is. And if they do, there is a lack of empathy — a telling phrase used by a TV commentator was "vyavhaar ka ahankaar". Has it to do with age — are younger people, whose children are still small, more likely to react with passion? Does a long life spent thinking, acting, talking politics, inure you to the suffering of children? It is too much of an effort for tired minds and limbs, particularly when the World Cup matches are in progress. And, after all, to wish to defeat Pakistan at cricket makes you a true nationalist, to comment on official apathy makes you anti-national.

It was not always so. In the 1940s, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was a one-person National Disaster Management Agency. And how she galvanised middle-class women during the Bengal Famine, giving them a sense of exhilaration as they devised ways to help the hungry villagers (my mother-in-law told me how she started to rear poultry in the garden of their government bungalow, so that the children at Shishu Sadan could have an egg a day. Try to imagine the well-guarded sarkari bungalows in Patna or New Delhi doing that now!).

Social work was a vocation. For some years now, it has been a profession. Can we look to the students enrolled for under-graduate and post-graduate degrees in Social Work, and the volunteers of the National Service Scheme? In these vacation weeks, students could get some first-hand experience of how to make the life of the parents bearable, console the grieving, counsel the others?

The NDMA was set up in 1999. Its brief is to co-ordinate the response to "manmade and natural disasters". Muzaffarpur is facing a disaster which is partly natural and certainly aggravated by being manmade. But it does not qualify. "Disaster" has to be dramatic. Floods and earthquakes elicit immediate response, but not long epidemics or drought.

Muzaffarpur is a national tragedy, as much as the Gujarat earthquake was, or the Kerala floods. Has anyone given thought to next year, to a long-term policy? Or will June 2020 newspapers echo those of 2019?

(If the NDMA or the NSS is active in Muzaffarpur, and I have missed reading about it, I apologise. And the Ramakrishna Mission or KhalsaAid?)

The writer is a historian of Delhi

for restraint on changing irst read AS's paper a week ago, I by the absence of any discussion for restraint on changing course on three world structed on the basis of the AS methodology, rather than a GDP misestimate. One strong result — Brazilians are a lot happier than the THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Pollarising' LETTER OF

(IE, June 21). The "one country, one election" concept does have the advantage of obviating frequent elections which often disrupt governance. It will also lead to savings on time, energy and money. At the same time, for a nation of India's size and diversity, holding such elections would be a Herculean task. Moreover, we would be back to square one if the ruling party loses majority before the completion of its tenure. The idea puts regional parties at a disadvantage. There is genuine fear of local issues getting suppressed by the national narrative. A dilution of the Model Code of Conduct allowing some sort of leeway for policy execution during state election time would be a better idea.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Patriotism, love

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'Campus control' (IE, June 20). Patriotism cannot be taught in educational institutions. Neither can it be inculcated as a value. It is a sentiment that can only be inspired. True patriotic sentiment can only mean absolute well-being of people in the country without discrimination. The moment we judge others on a self-defined scale of patriotism, we ourselves are being less than patriotic. Patriotism can only co-exist with love.

Anirudh Bhatjiwale, Indore

ELECTION WEEK

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The next structural change' (IE, June 20). Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and state legislatures is premised on the grounds that national resources are

THE WEEK LANGUAGE, WISDOM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The enigma of English' (IE JUNE 13). The approach must not be to devalue English rather it must be to work for language and culture of the non-English speakers. We can't deny the fact that mother tongue only inculcate values and basic knowledge. Constitution's Article 343(1) laid down that: "Over period of 15 years from enactment, use of English as an official language was 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.

Arshpreet S Ekhnoor, Fazilka

scarce and need to be deployed efficiently. But the existing constitutional scheme demands flexibility on account of unforeseen political development that might necessitate untimely elections. The imposition of the model code of conduct around the year to facilitate the electoral process is detrimental to the developmental projects. A pre-decided election week along the lines of that in the US could be a suggestion to ponder upon.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata



Assumptions about politics have been overturned. Opposition must unite

K M Chandrasekhar

TO ME, THE 2019 election has been a unique, rather disturbing, experience. It was back in 1991 that a similar shake up of my thinking occurred when the socialist, anti-rich, prolabour, protectionist mindset to which I had been accustomed had to suddenly re-adjust to an entirely new economic thought process.

The most obvious change is the shift from an all-encompassing approach to policy, built carefully into our Constitution. In this election, consolidation of the majority community and aligning it to nationalism played a larger role than ever before, particularly in the Hindi heartland. What effect this will have on policy and legislation remains to be seen.

Clear divergences across states could be perceived. The North-South divide was pronounced, except in Karnataka. The states in which minorities were stronger voted one way while another process of choice prevailed in areas in which the majority community formed the bulk of the population. Caste divisions do not seem to have influenced the voter as much as Hindu consolidation, as in Uttar Pradesh. Regional parties have gained

in strength, which augurs well for federalism.

The vote seems to have been for stability.

The vote seems to have been for stability. Economic issues, such as declining growth rates, higher unemployment, low rate of domestic investment and farmer distress did not create any impact. Indians, by and large, seem to be used to the fluctuations in the economy and hence do not pay much attention to them.

The Congress manifesto, compiled by many experts, did not cut much ice, probably because of its complexity and the fact that it came too late. NYAY was a good concept but it got lost in the cacophony on the economy, Rafale, untruth and on love juxtaposed to hate. The ruling front had a clear agenda and uncontested leadership. The Opposition seemed confused and cut into each others' votes.

Most of what I have said above is based on wisdom gained from hindsight. During the elections, there was no indication of a "wave", unlike in 2014. Most opinion polls, non-aligned media and commentators predicted a hard battle, even a hung Parliament. It is astonishing that a swing of such dramatic proportions went unnoticed. This could well be

an indication of a new pattern of voter behaviour with a large proportion of voters deciding only towards the end of the campaign.

The government also gets it.

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Every day there is an

The elections are now behind us and it is time for both the ruling parties and Opposition to look ahead. The government has the greater responsibility. This has been an ill-tempered, bruising election. It is necessary now to heal the wounds. India is a land of many cultures and our rulers must accept such diversity. The beginning gives hope. The choice of Maldives, a predominantly Muslim country, for the PM's first visit, preceded by worship at the prominent Guruvayur temple, located in a state that voted heavily against the BJP, his utterances both in Kerala and in the Maldivian Majlis — all this sends subliminal messages both to the apprehensive and extremist elements.

In this election, disparity in money power between the ruling parties and the Opposition was visible. This disparity will widen over the next five years. With less money, the Opposition will have no choice but to go to the people in old Gandhian ways, tramping on foot to remote villages with their message,

winning the hearts of people. Rahul Gandhi could initiate the process in his own beautiful constituency.

The Opposition has also to units setting.

The Opposition has also to unite, setting aside their differences, eschewing claims to leadership for a larger cause. This cannot be an on-off affair. Sustained effort is required, spanning perhaps even more than five years. In the interim, some of them will win state elections. This is no indication of a national trend. The people have proved, time and again, that they think and vote differently at different levels of governance.

Voter behaviour in the present political milieu needs to be studied and understood. The ruling parties obviously have a clearer understanding presently, but the opposition parties have the time to regroup. That they have the will to do so is not apparent from the decision to fight the UP Assembly by polls from different platforms.

The writer is a former Cabinet Secretary and currently chairman, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram



A new course

President's address should have fleshed out PM Modi's agenda of winning the trust of all

resident Ram Nath Kovind's address to the joint sitting of Parliament set out the philosophy and priorities of the Narendra Modi government that has been re-elected. It outlined the rupture that has come to characterise Mr. Modi's politics, marked by his 2014 victory, and pointedly ignored the progress India had made during earlier years. The President said his government was "committed to that very idea of nationbuilding, the foundation for which was laid in 2014." Harnessing the thoughts of social reformer Sree Narayana Guru and Rabindranath Tagore to emphasise brotherhood among all sections and the celebration of the human spirit would have been uplifting if only the rest of the speech dwelt on those ideas in some detail and with force. In the absence of elaboration, such grand intent in the initial paragraphs was not reassuring. The Prime Minister's newly added objective of winning the trust of all governed, Sabka vishwas, was not fleshed out meaningfully. Sardar Patel, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi found mention, but not Jawaharlal Nehru, the founding Prime Minister whose vision and unfailing commitment to secularism, pluralism and progress set the Republic on a sustainable course.

The 'New India' that the President mentioned is a departure from that founding vision, and there was no ambiguity on that aspect. He struck a chord with the constituency of the government, but not with all. The notion that there is a non-sectarian development agenda that is impervious to identity politics is good to have, and the Prime Minister's evangelical fervour in driving its schemes is laudable. But triumphalism around many schemes such as the Swachh Bharat Mission has deflected public attention from the serious tasks ahead and an honest discussion on achievements. New focus on water conservation and management and the rural economy is not a moment too early. These are critical areas. Mr. Kovind also spoke of the government's intent to expand scientific research and higher education. A speech by the President is significant not for the technical details it offers, but for the vision. The cultural nationalist agenda of the ruling dispensation that has made intellectual curiosity and academic integrity dangerous in India is not the route to any of these goals. The restrictions on cattle trade and violence against those employed in it - mostly Muslims and Dalits have not merely become a protracted communal conflict but are also among the factors that have pushed the rural economy off the rails. Announcing yet another scheme for cattle, as the President did, is not confronting the real, self-inflicted problem. What differentiates one dispensation from another is not the material ambitions but the social purpose and direction of such pursuits. The clarity on that aspect in the address may be stimulating for many, but certainly not good for India.

A stable planet

India is set to become the most populous nation; improving the quality of life is crucial

The key message from the UN's World Population Prospects 2019 report is that national leaders must redouble their efforts to raise education, health and living standards for people everywhere. India is projected to become the most populous country by 2027 surpassing China, and host 1.64 billion people by 2050; the world as a whole could be home to 8.5 billion people in just over a decade from now, and the number could go up to 9.7 billion by mid-century. The projections should be viewed in perspective, considering that alarmist Malthusian fears of inability to provide for more than a billion people on earth did not come true. Yet, there are strong arguments in favour of stabilising population numbers by raising the quality of life of people, and achieving sustainable development that will not destroy the environment. The UN report shows migration to countries with a falling ratio of workingage people to those above 65 will be steady, as those economies open up to workers to sustain economic production. Japan has the lowest such ratio, followed by Europe and the Caribbean; in over three decades, North America, Eastern and Southeastern Asia will join this group. India meanwhile will have a vast number of young people and insufficient natural resources left for exploitation. Preparing for the changes and opportunities migration offers will depend on a skills revolution.

At the national level, achieving a reduction in fertility rates in States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh – which are high as per Sample Registration System data - is a challenge for India as it seeks to stabilise population growth. This is possible if the State governments set their minds to it. They must singularly focus on improving education and health access for women, both of which will help them be gainfully employed. On the other hand, a rise in life expectancy has brought with it a policy imperative that is bound to become even more important in coming decades. A growing population of older adults is a certainty, and it opens up prospects for employment in many new services catering to them. Urban facilities have to be reimagined, with an emphasis on access to good, affordable housing and mobility. The Sustainable Development Goals framework provides a roadmap to this new era. But progress in poverty reduction, greater equality, better nutrition, universal education and health care, needs state support and strong civil society institutions. Making agriculture remunerative and keeping food prices stable are crucial to ensure nutrition for all. India is set to become the most populous nation. For its leaders, improving the quality of life for its people will be a test of political will.

Smart diplomacy in five moves

India needs to see through many balancing acts to deal with regional tensions



HAPPYMON JACOB

The nature and dynamics of Southern Asian geopolitics are undergoing a radical transformation, slowly, steadily and in an irrevocable manner. One of the world's most volatile regions and hitherto dominated by the United States, Southern Asia is today at an inflection point with farreaching implications for the states in the region, and for India in particular. Is New Delhi adequately prepared to weather the incoming geopolitical storm?

To begin with, there is a sharp, though often understated, great power competition in the region with the U.S. caught between its reluctance to part with its quickly fading glory on the one hand and unwillingness to do what it takes to maintain its regional influence on the other. And yet, when challenged by China and Russia in the regional geopolitical landscape, the U.S.'s superpower instinct is to push back, often leading to shortsighted decisions and confused policies. The resultant geopolitical competition for space, power and influence in the regional scheme of things is undoing the traditional geopolitical certainties in Southern Asia. Russia and China are jointly and individually challenging the U.S.'s pre-eminence and drafting smaller countries of the region into their bandwagon/s.

Despite our unease and traditional suspicion towards great power system shapers and manag-

ers, the simple fact is that a benign unipolarity or a balanced multipolarity with some amount of great power concert is generally better than unbalanced multipolarity. Unbalanced multipolarity when combined with a situation of power transition in the regional subsystem, as is perhaps the case today, might prove to be destabilising. We are perhaps at the cusp of such a moment in Southern Asia.

The China pivot

Then there is the emergence of the 'China pivot' in the region. Washington's role as the regional pivot and power manager is becoming a thing of the past with Beijing increasingly able and willing to assume that role. Regional geopolitics, from Iran to Central Asia and from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean region, is increasingly being shaped by China. China is the new regional hegemon with states in the region jumping on its bandwagon without much resistance. When new powers are on an ascendance, its neighbours tend to recalibrate their policies and old partnerships and alliances. Regional holdouts and challengers such as India will need to balance themselves tactfully to steer clear of the rising hegemon's ire.

Yet another feature of the current regional sub-system is the presence of an extreme trust deficit among the various actors in the region. That India and Pakistan, or China and India do not trust each other is not news, but a trust deficit exists between even seemingly congenial partners such as the U.S. and India, Russia and China, and among traditional partners such as Iran and India, and Russia and India. The varying degrees of trust

flicts, misunderstandings or the occurrence of a crisis could easily push the region towards more conflict and friction, and obviously less cooperation and regional in-

The rising war talk in the region is yet another contemporary feature of the Southern Asian regional sub-system. The possibility of a military conflict between Iran and the U.S. (a path the hawks in Washington are pushing U.S. President Donald Trump to pursue) which in turn would draw many more countries in the region into it leading to widespread instability, potential for India-Pakistan border skirmishes and possible escalation, an escalating China-U.S. trade war, and the many proxy and cold wars in Afghanistan and West Asia will keep the temperature high in the region for the foreseeable future.

In sum, a power transition in the Southern Asian sub-system, an extreme trust deficit and the escalating war talk pose ominous signs for the region.

The layers

This is not a pretty picture; certainly not for India, a country that is caught right in the middle of these tectonic developments and that habitually reacts to geopolitideficit when combined with other cal developments with characte-

ristic tardiness. And yet, true to its DNA, India is likely to adopt a slew of balancing acts. This is perhaps the most appropriate strategy to adopt under the circumstances provided it does so with a sense of clarity and purpose instead of merely reacting. There are at least five layers of balancing acts that India would need to adopt in order to weather the incoming geopolitical storm. At level one, it would need to balance its innate desire to get closer to the U.S. with the unavoidable necessities of not excessively provoking China both in the maritime and continental domains. Clearly, getting too close to the U.S. will provoke China, and

vice versa. The second layer of this balancing game should drive India's West Asia policy. Here it would have to take care of its energy and other interests (including the Chabahar project) with Iran and not alienate the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Israel by doing so. While Iran's share in India's energy imports is steadily decreasing, alienating Iran might not suit India's strategic interests in

the longer run. As a third balancing act, dealing with the Russia-China partnership will be crucial for India's continental strategy, be it with regard to arms sales, the Afghan question or checking Chinese dominance of the region. New Delhi should be clever enough to exploit the notso-apparent fissures between Beijing and Moscow. A related concern should be the growing relationship between Pakistan and Russia which must be dealt with by smart diplomacy rather than

Yet another layer that requires careful balancing by India is the strategic partnership between Pa-

kistan and China. While Pakistan is the revisionist power in the region, China, being a rising superpower and an already status quoist power in the region, could potentially be persuaded to check Pakistan's revisionist tendencies. This again requires a great deal of subtle effort from New Delhi to convince Beijing that it has great stakes in regional strategic stability. What must be noted is that both Beijing and New Delhi, despite their sharp differences and unavoidable strategic competition, share a stake in the region's stability. Therefore even a small measure of rapprochement between them, as it seemingly exists today, could stabilise the region to a great

Handling Afghanistan

Finally, if India is serious about having a say in Afghanistan's future, it would need to enact several balancing acts there: between Russia and China, China and Pakistan, the Taliban and Kabul, and the Taliban and Pakistan. In a constantly changing Afghan geopolitical landscape, the contents of India's interests should also evolve.

New Delhi should keep in mind that it must, by all means, be careful to avoid getting caught in a nutcracker geopolitical situation in the region. Engaging in a delicate balancing game is undeniably the need of the hour, and let us remember that balancing such seeming contradictions is what smart diplomacy is meant to achieve.

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Why South Asia must cooperate

A shared vision is essential to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals



SYED MUNIR KHASRU

outh Asia covers only about 3.5% of the world's land surface area but hosts a fourth of its population, making it a region of significant importance for international development. In spite of the geographic proximity countries in this region enjoy and their this is one of the world's least integrated regions. Intra-regional trade is a meagre 5% of the total trade these countries do globally, while intra-regional investment is less than 1% of the region's overall global investment. South Asia's average GDP per capita is only about 9.64% of the global average. Accounting for more than 30% of the world's poor, the region faces myriad economic and environmental challenges.

Lack of initiatives

While the countries share a host of common development challenges, economic cooperation remains less than adequate. While A few noteworthy regional initiatives such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Initiative have

been undertaken to bring the countries closer together, economically and socially, there is scope for much more. For a region with common development challenges of inequality, poverty, weak governance and poor infrastructure, a shared vision of attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides enormous opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, and convergence (3C).

Compared to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were a set of eight objectives to be achieved by developing nations with support loped nations by 2015, the SDGs are more universal, inclusive and integrated in nature. The 17 goals and their 169 targets are inter-connected and cannot be implemented by countries working in isolation. Many are transnational in nature and require regional efforts. South Asian countries could benefit a lot by adopting a regional framework of cooperation that can support, strengthen and stimulate the SDGs. The SDGs highlight not only the importance of regional approach towards achieving the goals but also the regional synergy and resulting positive value additions towards achieving the SDG 2030 Agenda. In the SDG Index 2018, which is an assessment of countries' progress, among 156 countries only two South Asian countries, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, are in the top 100. India is ranked



Most South Asian countries have made good progress in ending extreme poverty, but they face persistent challenges to goals related to industry, innovation and infrastructure, zero hunger, gender equality, education, sustainable cities and communities and decent work and economic growth. These apart, most of South Asia continues to be vulnerable to climate change and climate-induced natural disasters.

Varying performances A closer look at the country-level data shows that India is performing well in Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 12 (sustainable consumption and production), Goal 13 (climate action) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) while doing poorly in goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Like India, Bangladesh is doing well in Goals 1, 6, 12 and 13 but poorly in Goals 2 and 9, and lagging behind

in Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy). While doing well in Goals 1 and 12, Pakistan needs improvement in Goals 2, 4, 5 and 9, similar to India and Bangladesh. It also needs improved performance with respect to Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth). There are a lot of similarities among these three big economies of South Asia with respect to achieving some specific SDGs as well as exhibiting poor performance in some common goals.

A regional strategic approach to tackle common development challenges can bring enormous beneenergy, biodiversity, infrastructure, climate resilience and capacity development are transnational, and here policy harmonisation can play a pivotal role in reducing duplication and increasing efficiency. In a study titled 'SDGs Needs Assessment and Financing Strategy: Bangladesh Perspective', Bangladesh has undertaken exemplary initiatives for analysing its available resources and additional funding requirements for SDG implementation, suggesting that the country requires an additional \$928 billion to fully implement the SDGs. The study identifies five possible sources for SDGs financing: public sector, private sector, public-private partnership, external sector and non-government organisations. On the other hand, data for many of the SDG targets and indicators for the Maldives are unavailable. Similarly, India has

formulated some pragmatic plans and initiatives to improve food and nutrition security from which many of the neighbouring countries can benefit.

To address institutional and infrastructural deficits, South Asian countries need deeper regional cooperation. On financing the SDGs in South Asia, countries can work towards increasing the flow of intra-regional FDI. The private sector too can play a vital role in resource mobilisation.

Taking everyone along

The South Asian Association for the platform for regional economic cooperation in this region, has become moribund and remains unsuccessful in promoting regional economic cooperation. If the countries of South Asia, the fastest growing region of the world, can come to a common understanding on regional integration and cooperation in achieving the SDGs, it can unleash a powerful synergistic force that can finally make South Asia converge. A convergence towards achieving a common socioeconomic agenda gives hope that no one in South Asia will be left behind in the journey towards eradicating poverty and enduring dignitv to all.

Syed Munir Khasru is chairman of the think-tank, the Institute for Policy. Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG), with a presence in Dhaka, Melbourne, Vienna,

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.

The yoga way

The article, "What yoga can teach us" (Editorial page, June 17) suggests that if international negotiations started with the practice of yoga, it could result in a calm ambience and allow for wise decisions to evolve. My take on this is that as the land of science, we in India should implement and demonstrate to the world how our discussions in Parliament and elsewhere take place in a calm and quiet ambience created by its practice and how wise and mature decisions are churned out. In the current situation, many of the ardent advocates of yoga in India are not found to be in a state of calm and maturity. in turn provoking divisive tendencies in society. More often than not they are found to make emotionally explosive remarks to instigate disquiet rather

than peace. A theory of science has to be proven for its acceptance. P.G. MATHEW,

Party hopping India needs a stringent anti-defection law more than a 'one nation, one poll'. There may be reasons for those in the Opposition moving over to the ruling party, but the perception is that there is more to it than meets the eye (Page 1, "Four TDP Rajya Sabha members join BJP", June 21). People have high expectations from Modi 2.0 when there are core issues such as a faltering economy and agriculture. The BJP must encourage healthy democratic practices. U.A PRAVEEN, Warangal, Telangana

■ The Prime Minister's statesman-like pronouncements after

assuming office raised hopes of a refreshing new era. However the cross-over confirms that political morality remains as low as ever. The fact that the MPs are under the scanner points to what could be at play. The BJP's dire need for a majority in the Rajya Sabha is understandable but not at the cost of democratic principles. The antidefection laws need to be revisited.

Doctors' safety

MANOHAR ALEMBATH,

Kannur, Kerala

In his article, "Doctors and patients deserve better' (OpEd page, June 19), Dr. Nagral has given us an understanding of the roots of the pervasive evil of violence against doctors and nurses in India. But as a medical practitioner working overseas for the last 18 years, I can say that such violence is not unusual in western

countries. It has become the subject of discussion in medical literature and the lay press in the U.S. The common feature of these attacks is "victim shaming" by administrators and senior management in hospitals. In other words, the doctor or nurse concerned is made to feel that it is they who brought on the attack due to a 'lack of proper communication', or 'insensitivity at a time of bereavement/emotional distress'.

There is now a call for these attitudes to change and to bring in an atmosphere of caring for the victim of the attack. Nothing changes unless systems change. The writer would agree that this dictum is the basis for a lot of the work that follows audits of unexpected or poor outcomes after surgery. The surgeon cannot be made to shoulder the entire blame, or

make the corrections

principle it would behove us to look at what systemic changes would help prevent violence in hospitals Parliament has to pass laws or amend the Code of Criminal Procedure appropriately to make violence against doctors, nurses and hospital personnel in the line of duty a cognisable offence. Appropriate changes in the Evidence Act that would make video-recorded evidence adequate to prosecute a violent offender and extending the statute of limitations to allow such prosecution to happen up to five years would also be necessary. The prescribed punishment should also be made clear and based on other such laws currently in place in Commonwealth countries.

necessary to prevent

recurrences. Based on this

DR. PHILIP G. THOMAS, McAllen, Texas, U.S.

Seek foreign assistance The Chennai urban

agglomeration is reported to have a population of around 9 million, and receives an average annual rainfall of about 50 inches. The Dallas Fortworth metro area in the U.S. has a population of 6.8 million and receives an annual rainfall of only 36 inches. I have lived in a Dallas suburb for a few years without experiencing any drinking water scarcity. If at all there was any shortfall in water supply, it was restricted to the operation of sprinklers to water lawns. Many residences have private swimming pools. The main reason for this happy situation can be ascribed to excellent planning. The Tamil Nadu government could seek the assistance of the U.S. government. V. NAGARAJAN,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

A hundred deaths, and no answers

Cases of acute encephalitis syndrome have seen a spike in Muzaffarpur this year, already claiming more than a hundred lives. **Jacob Koshy** reports on the appalling state of health care in Bihar, even as the debate on what is causing the deaths rages on

For three days, Bihari Mahato and Shyam Babu Saha's families have shared a hospital bed. The two daily-wage labourers, who have had to give up work for three days, haven't exchanged a word, though they have much in common. Both have a boy and a girl each. And their children are battling for life.

Sundar, Mahato's three-and-a-halfyear-old son, is naked, emaciated, delirious and has a distended stomach. Himanshi, six months old and in a striped shirt and shorts, looks bigger and healthier than Sundar. She sleeps longer – fitfully, her mother Vimla says. Both families are from different districts of Bihar. Mahato is from Muzaffarpur and Saha is from Sitamarhi district. Their children were suddenly taken ill. When the children were convulsing and feverish, they were rushed to the Sri Krishna Medical College and Hospital (SKMCH) in Muzaffarpur. The doctors noted that their blood sugar had dropped precipitously.

Both children are being given dextrose saline (a sugar solution often administered intravenously), but their parents are nervous. "The fever has subsided but it keeps returning," says Saha. "The doctors aren't paying us much attention." But that's a quibble given that many other ailing children are sprawled out on mattresses on the floor. Amidst peeling plaster, strewn banana peels, stomping doctors, nurses, journalists and television crew, the children's ward at SKMCH is symptomatic of the confusion and panic that has gripped Muzaffarpur since early June.

The floor above the general ward is home to the Intensive Care Units (ICUs). Each of the five ICUs has eight beds. Not one of the beds has fewer than three children hooked to bleeping monitors and intravenous lines. Unusually for an ICU, there's little restriction on non-hospital staff shuttling in and out, but unlike the squalid paediatric wards below, there are no patients sprawled on the floor. The floor is clean, the air-conditioners work, the nurses are extra vigilant, and yet here's where death lurks around the corner.

Season of trouble

There is a protocol for doctors. As soon as children are wheeled in, they are monitored for fever, convulsions and signs of confusion or loss of consciousness. "What I've seen is that several children are brought too late. Unfortunately we lose them," says J.P. Mandal, a resident doctor at SKMCH. Between June 1 and 17, 312 children were admitted to the hospital under the umbrella diagnosis of acute encephalitis syndrome (AES). According to the Bihar health department, 85 died. The bulk of the dead, 48, were children aged three to seven. Twenty-nine children were less than three years of age. As of June 21, 104 of the 424 children admitted since January 1 had died. Encephalitis, which refers to an inflammation in the brain due to a viral or bacterial attack, causes fever and almost never a drop in blood sugar. In the current epidemic, as well as in previous ones in Muzaffarpur, the doctors have marked cases of and deaths by hypoglycaemia (drop in

blood sugar), which is unusual. While Bihar loses hundreds of children to AES every year, there were sharp spikes in 2012 and 2014, when 395 and 372 children, respectively, lost their lives. Through the years, AES cases have been reported from several districts in Bihar: Gaya, Patna, Aurangabad, Saran, East Champaran, Sitamarhi and Vaishali. Government figures show that the peak years of 2012 and 2014 saw Muzaffarpur account for 35-40% of hospital admissions. While this year's incidences and deaths are fewer in comparison, the season of trouble is far from over. The outbreak in 2012 took place between May and November. In 2014, it was from May to July. There's no saying how long the current outbreak will last. A common refrain among district administration officials and some doctors is that the yearly outbreak ceases in intensity soon after the monsoon rains begin in Bihar. Why is that? Nobody ventures an explanation.

Sanjay Kumar, the State's top civil servant in charge of health, says he cannot quite put a finger on a "single, determining factor" that is responsible for 2019 turning out to be a bad year. It could be the ongoing heatwave - several parts of Patna, Gaya and even Muzaffarpur have recorded temperatures in excess of 4-5°C over what's normal for this time of the year. At least 80 people have succumbed to the heatwave. "The added heat and humidity could have made young children particularly susceptible to dehydration," he reckons. "It could also be an infectious disease. It could also be because of children eating

Kumar says all the children who are admitted belong to the lowest socioeconomic rung; there are no instances of infection in cities or even semi-urban localities. He emphasises that the government had been prepared this year



Children with acute encephalitis syndrome undergo treatment at the Sri Krishna Medical College and Hospital in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. As of June 21, 104 of the 424 children admitted since January 1 had died due to AES. (Below): Parents of Dileep Kumar, who died in SKMCH, in front of their home in Manika Bishunpur Chand village, Muzaffarpur. • RANJEET KUMAR



We work in the fields and there are litchi orchards aplenty where we live. But this boy isn't capable of plucking fruit on his own. We do feed him some fruit as well as other food but we don't starve him.

INDAL PASWAN

too, like in the past, for the outbreak. It stocked up and supplied oral rehydration solution, ensured that medicine and equipment were provided at medical colleges and district health centres, and conducted public awareness campaigns about the imminent outbreak. However, he admits that the district's key referral hospital, SKMCH, wasn't equipped to deal with the deluge of patients. "This year will be a turning point. The bed capacity will be increased to 1,500 and we will have a virology lab [to better investigate vitals of patients and determine disease causes]."

Debating the litchi link

Arun Shah, a paediatrician and private practitioner who has been working in the city since 1984, insists that the spike in AES cases and in fatalities is a result of malnourished children suffering brain damage after eating litchis, particularly unripe or overripe ones. In a 2014 paper, Shah and virologist T. Jacob John had argued that the children in Shah's clinic in Muzaffarpur were found to have extremely low blood sugar levels and signs of brain damage. While viral or bacterial infections that cause encephalitis (an inflammation of brain cells due to an infection) were well known in Muzaffarpur and neighbouring districts, many of them were taking sick and dying due to encephalopathy (brain damage, in this case, due to an environmental toxin). In 2016, a detailed investigation, published in The Lancet Global Health by the National Centre for Disease Control, India, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found "confirmation" that litchis contained a chemical called methylene cyclopropyl glycine (MCPG). These are naturally occurring toxins that cause hypoglycaemia and metabolic derangement in children

When a child is malnourished, her body, having exhausted its reserves of glucose from the digestive tract and the liver, typically turns to fatty acids in biochemical desperation to supply blood sugar to the brain. MCPG, the theory

goes, thwarts this mechanism. This can send the brain into hypoglycaemic shock triggering convulsions and, if unaddressed, even death. "But please don't blame litchis," stresses Shah. "It is the pride of Muzaffarpur." At a press conference two years ago,

to underline that the litchi fruit was only a triggering factor and sickened only malnourished children, Shah and John ate a bowlful of the fruit in front of television cameras to emphasise that it was malnutrition, and not the fruit, that was the dominant cause of the disease. Shah is unambiguous that the children are suffering because the government didn't do enough. The recently concluded Lok Sabha election distracted the government from adequately preparing for the outbreak, he says. In 2016, he was part of a government-constituted committee that prescribed guidelines: Children shouldn't be allowed to skip their evening meal, they should avoid stepping out in the heat, and local public healthcare centres must stock up on anti-convulsion drugs as well as dextrose. These were adhered to in 2017 and 2018. And that's why there were relatively fewer reports of AES, he argues.

While encephalitis outbreaks in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur were due to other causes, and children from Muzaffarpur and neighbouring districts have battled viruses such as the Japanese encephalitis virus, the large-scale litchi cultivation in Muzaffarpur, which contributes about 40% of the State's litchi production, "can't be ignored as a triggering factor," he points out.

At SKMCH, several parents of the ailing children are categorical that their children did not eat litchis. The authors of *The Lancet* study found that two-thirds of children who were sick had eaten litchis. "We work in the fields and there are litchi orchards aplenty where

we live," says Indal Paswan, whose twoand-a-half-year-old son is prostrate on a hospital bed. "But this boy isn't capable of plucking fruit on his own. We do feed him some fruit as well as other food but we don't starve him."

Mandal is insistent that there is a virus or some biological agent that is responsible for the recurrent outbreaks. He scoffs at suggestions of the litchi's complicity. Children who were brought to the hospital were "poor but not classically malnourished," he says. If malnutrition and litchi consumption were the causes, then there ought to have been a fairly constant number of deaths every year. This has not been observed, he says. "A peak and an ebb in cases and deaths is what we see. And that's more typical of a biological agent."

That no virus or bacteria has been isolated yet in Muzaffarpur is because the hospital lacks adequate facilities to collect tissue and blood samples from patients and preserve them adequately for examination. "I'm confident that at some point this will be found and there will be no mystery," Mandal says. The focus of treatment, he adds, is to ensure that convulsions are brought under control and blood sugar levels are restored.

What Shah and Mandal do agree on is that the vast majority of deaths could have been prevented if the children had made it to a hospital on time. The most important medicines were easily available, and most of the primary health care centres were well stocked and equipped to deal with AES cases.

No time to grieve

Yet, four-year-old Mohammed Jahid lost his life. Until he fell sick, Jahid had spent his days playing with his older siblings and cousins in the village of Bishnupur Chand, Musahari. His home was a single room thatched hut that did not have a toilet. His and his cousins' houses lay at the edge of an orchard that had several rows of tall, stout litchi trees. In June, there were only a few fruits that clung to the trees. Most had been plucked and carted away for sale by the owner of the orchard who lives in Patna. "He didn't show any signs of illness. He had a fever for two days," recounts Jahid's aunt, Asha Khatoon. "We took him to a private doctor nearby." One night, Jahid became delirious, and his father Mohammed Idris rushed to get an autorickshaw to take him to a hospital. He didn't find one immediately as the roads had been dug up. When they made it to SKMCH, Jahid was immediately taken to the ICU, but he didn't survive beyond three hours. A day after burying Jahid, Idris was away to find work as a daily-wage labourer. There were still two boys, two girls and a wife

Dinesh Ram, who lives half a kilometre away from Jahid's house, mourns the loss of his three-year-old son, Dileep Kumar. The boy had complained of stomach pain for three days and the local doctor had prescribed a tonic. That didn't work. When the child turned febrile, Ram scrambled to get him to SKMCH that was about 20 km away.

The Bihar government has announced ₹4 lakh as compensation to every family that has lost a child to AES. Ram didn't know that. He was unaware that he had to collect a death certificate from the hospital to claim the compensation. He'd thrown away the medical receipt after he had his son cremated. "We are poor and unaware. I really don't know what to do. There are other children to take care of," he says.

Poor health record

Irrespective of whether a biological agent or malnutrition is to blame, Bi-

is cousins' houses lay at prichard that had several and a medical college-cumhospital. We have our limitations. Encephalitis is not the only thing we deal with. Several primary health centres are well-equipped and well-staffed, but people somehow believe that they can only be saved here.

J.P. MANDAL Resident doctor at SKMCH

har's poor track record in ensuring that the poorest have access to adequate nutrition and distrust in the public health care system are major causes for the deaths. "SKMCH is a tertiary care centre and is a medical college-cum-hospital. We have our limitations. Encephalitis is not the only thing we deal with. Several primary health centres are well equipped and well staffed, but people somehow believe that they can only be saved here," says Mandal. "There are clear state-directed guidelines on what signs and symptoms doctors have to watch out for, and there is a clear action plan. Just following it is adequate." A senior government official, who

A senior government official, who doesn't want to be identified, says doctors in several primary health care centres are "afraid" of doing anything beyond the bare minimum to rescue a child. "Because the primary health care centres and health centres are located in a village or community, there's a greater chance of violence in case a child dies. Over the years, this has led to a lack of trust among people in their nearest health facility and they opt for tertiary care. Solving this remains among the government's key worries," he says.

Moreover, Bihar's position at the bottom of national health indices makes novel diseases harder to detect and known diseases harder to treat. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2015-2016, 48% of children in Bihar were stunted, compared to the national average of 38%. Bihar also performed poorly in terms of its ability to spend and implement schemes that provided nutritious food to children and expectant mothers. Two-thirds of eligible children did not get healthy meals, the NHFS report noted.

Shah says he's decided to embark on an experiment to conclusively prove that malnutrition is the single biggest cause of Muzaffarpur's tragedy. Along with a team, he will be identifying villages in blocks that show maximum mortality. He says before the litchi season next year, he will personally ensure that children are well fed and that they don't eat too many litchis or loiter about in the heat. "I promise you there will be zero deaths. Then perhaps the State administration can become more serious about addressing hunger and malnutrition," he says.

But today, the State has failed Muzaffarpur's children.



M K A ND-NDE

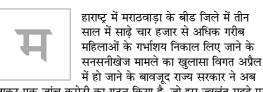


समय और स्वास्थ्य दो अनमोल संपत्ति हैं, जिन्हें हम तब तक पहचानते, जब तक कि वे समाप्त नहीं हो जाते...

डेनिस वेटली, अमेरिकी लेखक

मराठवाड़ा के बीड में पिछले तीन साल में साढ़े चार हजार से अधिक महिला मजदूरों के गर्भाशय निकाल लिए जाने के मामले में जांच रिपोर्ट आने के बाद राज्य सरकार को दोषी डॉक्टरों और लालची ठेकेदारों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई करनी ही होगी।

अमानवीयता का चरम



जाकर एक जांच कमेटी का गठन किया है, जो इस ज्वलंत मुद्दे पर उसकी उदासीनता का ही प्रमाण है। राज्य सरकार का यह रवैया तब है, जब गन्ना मजदूरों पर मीडिया रिपोर्टों के आधार पर राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग महाराष्ट्र सरकार को विगत अप्रैल में ही नोटिस दे चुका है। तब सरकार ने डिस्ट्रिक्ट सिविल सर्जन की अध्यक्षता में एक कमेटी गठित की थी, जिसके मुताबिक, तीन साल में बीड में 4,605 महिलाओं के गर्भाशय निजी अस्पतालों में निकाले गए। दरअसल मीडिया रिपोर्टों में मराठवाड़ा के गन्ना मजदूरों के शोषण के जो ब्योरे आए, उसके बाद ही सरकार को हरकत में आ जाना चाहिए

था। पता यह चलता है कि चार से पांच महीने तक चलने वाले गन्ना कटाई के बेहद व्यस्त सीजन में ठेकेदार मजदूरों को एक दिन भी छुट्टी न देने की शर्त पर काम पर रखते हैं। एक दिन छुट्टी लेने पर मजदूरों को पांच सौ रुपये जुर्माना देना पड़ता है! काम के दौरान महिलाओं को माहवारी न हो या वे गर्भधारण न कर सकें, इसलिए उन पर गर्भाशय निकलवा देने का दबाव बनाया जाता है। कई बार गर्भाशय निकलवाने के ऑपरेशन के लिए ठेकेदार महिला मजदूरों को अग्रिम धनराशि देते हैं, जिसे उनकी मजदूरी से काट लिया जाता है। बेहद कम उम्र में शादी कर मां बन जाने वाली ये गरीब महिलाएं गर्भाशय निकलवा कर गन्ना कटाई के सीजन में लगातार काम तो पा लेती हैं, पर पूरी उम्र हार्मीन असंतुलन, मोटापे, मानसिक अवसाद आदि से जूझती रहती हैं। एक तरफ केंद्र में भाजपा के नेतृत्व वाली एनडीए सरकार ने महिलाओं का प्रसूति अवकाश बढ़ाकर 26 सप्ताह कर दिया है, दूसरी ओर, महाराष्ट्र में भाजपा-शिवसेना की



गठबंधन सरकार की नाक के नीचे पिछले तीन साल से महिला कामगारों के साथ इस किस्म की अमानवीयता जारी है। लिहाजा सिर्फ निजी अस्पतालों की शिनाख्त करना काफी नहीं है, इस सुनियोजित अपराध में लिप्त डॉक्टरों, अस्पतालों और ठेकेदारों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई होने के साथ पीड़ित महिलाओं को हर्जाना दिया जाना चाहिए, और इसका भी ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि भविष्य में ऐसी एक भी घटना न घटने पाए।

मुजफ्फरपुर का सबक

बाल कुपोषण न केवल हमारे वर्तमान को प्रभावित करता है, बल्कि अगर हमने ध्यान नहीं दिया तो यह हमारे भविष्य को भी प्रभावित करेगा। मुजफ्फरपुर के सबक पर तत्काल ध्यान दिए जाने की जरूरत है।



हार में लीची उगाने के लिए मशहर मुजफ्फरपुर में सौ से अधिक बच्चों की मौत एक्यूट इन्सेफेलाइटिस सिंड्रोम (एईएस) से क्यों हुई? इसको लेकर कई तरह की बातें कही जाती हैं, लेकिन अब हम जानते हैं कि ऐसा सिर्फ ढेर सारी लीची खाने के कारण नहीं

हुआ, जैसा कि शुरुआती दिनों में अनुमान लगाया जा रहा था। विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि ऐसा कई कारणों से हुआ है-लीची में विषाक्त पदार्थ, अत्यधिक गर्मी, आर्द्रता, कुपोषण और बदहाल सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य सेवा। इनमें से अंतिम दो कारणों पर विशेष ध्यान देने की जरूरत है, क्योंकि ये हमारी राजनीतिक प्राथमिकताओं और इच्छाशक्ति के बारे में असहज



वरिष्ठ पत्रकार

करने वाले सवाल उठाते हैं। किनके बच्चे भूखे सो जाते हैं? व्यापक स्वास्थ्य सुधारों के मौजूदा समय में स्वास्थ्य सेवा तक किनकी पहुंच है? सामाजिक और आर्थिक विषमताओं से भरे देश में भूख एक गंभीर राजनीतिक मुद्दा है, जिसे कई लोग झुठलाना चाहेंगे। बिहार भारत के सर्वाधिक गरीब राज्यों में से एक है। जो बच्चे मुजफ्फरपुर में बेवजह मर गए, वे बिहार के अत्यंत निर्धन

परिवारों से थे।

जमीनी रिपोर्ट बताती है कि एईएस से मरने वाले ज्यादातर बच्चे महादलित समुदाय के हैं, जिनमें मुसहर और अनुसूचित जाति के लोग शामिल हैं। उनमें से ज्यादातर कुपोषित थे। यह याद रखने वाली बात है कि अच्छी तरह से पोषित बच्चे लीची का सेवन करने से आम तौर पर जोखिम का सामना नहीं करते हैं। मुजफ्फरपुर में अब

तक हुई ज्यादातर मौतों के लिए हाइपोग्लाइकेमिया या खून में ग्लूकोज का स्तर कम होने को जिम्मेदार बताया गया है। जब कुपोषित बच्चे लीची का सेवन करते हैं और खाली पेट सो जाते हैं, तो उन्हें नुकसान होता है। लीची में पाए जाने वाले विषाक्त पदार्थ के कारण विशेष रूप से ऐसे मामलों में कई तरह की रासायनिक प्रतिक्रियाएं होती हैं, जो हाइपोग्लाइकेमिक एन्सेफैलोपैथी (खून में ग्लूकोज का स्तर बहुत कम



हो जाना) का कारण बनती हैं।

बिहार में एईएस कोई नई बात नहीं है। तीव्र इन्सेफेलाइटिस सिंड्रोम का प्रकोप राज्य के उत्तरी क्षेत्रों और उत्तर प्रदेश के पूर्वी भागों में पहले भी हुआ है, जो समान रूप से गरीबी से ग्रस्त है। ध्यान देने वाली बात यह है कि इसकी पुनरावृत्ति आम तौर पर उन क्षेत्रों में होती है, जो गरीब होते हैं और जहां बड़ी संख्या में बच्चे कुपोषित होते हैं और जहां सक्रिय प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य देखभाल प्रणाली का अभाव होता है।

बिहार में बाल कुपोषण की कहानी कोई नई बात नहीं है। कुछ वर्ष पहले एक विशेषज्ञ रिपोर्ट में बताया गया था कि राज्य में पाँच साल से कम उम्र के आधे से अधिक बच्चे कम वजन वाले या छोटे कद के थे, जो राष्ट्रीय परिवार स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण-3 के अनुसार कुपोषण के पुराने होने के संकेत देते थे। इसे स्वीकार करते हुए, बिहार सरकार और केंद्र सरकार ने एकीकृत बाल विकास सेवा निदेशालय (आईसीडीएस) द्वारा प्रशासित पूरक पोषण कार्यक्रम (एसएनपी) के लिए प्रति वर्ष 1,100 करोड़ रुपये देने की प्रतिबद्धता जताई थी। विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि कार्यक्रम के आवंटित फंड का नियमित रूप से घपला होता है और जमीनी स्तर पर सार्वजनिक सेवा वितरण का अभाव है। रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि बिहार के तीन जिलों में 200 आंगनवाड़ियों में औचक दौरा करने पर पाया गया कि उनमें से 24 फीसदी दिन के समय बंद थे, जबकि उन्हें खुला होना चाहिए था, और भोजन केवल 59 फीसदी दिनों में दिया जाता था, जबकि उन्हें सब दिन दिया जाना चाहिए था। जब आंगनवाड़ियां खुली थीं और भोजन दिया गया था, तब 40 में से औसतन 22 बच्चे ही उपस्थित थे। और इन भोजन में, निर्धारित पौष्टिक तत्वों का केवल तीन चौथाई

हालांकि इस स्थिति में सुधार आया है, लेकिन बहुत कम। राष्ट्रीय परिवार स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण-4 का आधिकारिक आंकड़ा बताता है कि बिहार में पांच साल से कम उम्र के 48 फीसदी बच्चे (शहरी और ग्रामीण) छोटे कद हैं। बाल कुपोषण की यह घिनौनी कहानी माताओं और किशोर उम्र की गर्भावतियों के खराब पोषण की स्थिति से और जटिल हो जाती है। यह शर्मनाक तस्वीर केवल बिहार की ही नहीं है, बल्कि हिंदी भाषी क्षेत्र के कई अन्य राज्यों की भी है।

मुजफ्फरपुर में हाल ही में हुई बच्चों की मौत के सही कारणों का अभी पता नहीं चल पाया है, लेकिन हम जानते हैं कि अत्यधिक गर्मी, कुपोषण और लीची के अत्यधिक सेवन के बावजूद उन बच्चों को बचाया जा सकता था। यहां दूसरा परेशान करने वाला सच सामने आता है। उनमें से बहुत से बच्चे आज जीवित होते, अगर उन्हें समय पर इलाज मिल पाता। लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ, क्योंकि प्रभावित क्षेत्र में स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रणाली लगभग बेकार है।

बच्चों को रात में भोजन और समय पर पर्याप्त ग्लूकोज की आवश्यकता होती है। लेकिन दुखद है कि ऐसी व्यवस्था किए जाने के बावजूद अनियमितता की वजह से वर्ष 2016-18 में संकट और गहरा गया। इस वर्ष अग्रणी स्वास्थ्य कार्यकर्ताओं द्वारा चलाए जाने वाले बेहद जरूरी जागरूकता अभियान में भी कमी आई है। हम अनुमान लगा सकते हैं कि ऐसा लोकसभा चुनाव की वजह से हुआ होगा। बिहार के मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार ने एईएस के कारण मरने वाले बच्चों के प्रत्येक परिवार को चार लाख रुपये की अनग्रह राशि देने की घोषणा की है, लेकिन मुजफ्फरपुर और अन्य जगहों पर, जहां बच्चे मर रहे हैं, रोकथाम के उपाय पर ध्यान केंद्रित करने और दीर्घकालीन उपाय तलाशने की जरूरत है।

बाल कुपोषण बच्चों के लिए जीवित रहने की संभावना को प्रभावित करता है, उनकी प्रतिरक्षा और साथ ही सीखने की क्षमता को कम करता है। यह बाद के जीवन में उनकी उत्पादकता को प्रभावित करता है। बाल कृपोषण न केवल हमारे वर्तमान को प्रभावित करता है, बल्कि अगर हमने ध्यान नहीं दिया तो यह हमारे भविष्य को भी प्रभावित करेगा। मुजफ्फरपुर के सबक पर तत्काल ध्यान दिए जाने की जरूरत है।



हांगकांग की स्वायत्तता की यह अंतिम लड़ाई नहीं है



अंब्रेला मुवमेंट समाप्त होने के बाद लोग उदास थे, क्योंकि हम वह नहीं प्राप्त कर सके जो हम चाहते थे, पर आगे जबर्दस्त बदलाव है। भले ही कैरी लैम ने प्रस्ताव वापस ले अलिया, पर अगला नेता अब भी बीजिंग द्वारा ही चुना गया है। यही कारण है कि हमारा प्रदर्शन जारी है।



मेरा जन्म वर्ष 1996 में ब्रिटिश हांगकांग में हुआ। बचपन से ही मैं डिस्लेक्सिया जैसी बीमारी से पीड़ित हूं। मेरे माता-पिता एक प्रोटेस्टेंट ईसाई हैं। मेरे पिता सेवानिवृत्त आईटी पेशेवर हैं। वह अक्सर मुझे वंचित लोगों के इलाके में घुमाने ले जाते थे। समाज में जागरूकता लाने की प्रेरणा मुझे उन्हीं से मिली।

मैंने युनाइटेड क्रिश्चियन कॉलेज में पढाई की। मेरे अंदर संगठनात्मक और बोलने के कौशल का विकास कॉव्लून में ही चर्च समूहों में शामिल होने के बाद हुआ। मैंने और इवान लैम-यिन ने 2011 में एक छात्र कार्यकर्ता समूह, स्कॉलरवाद की स्थापना की। मैं 17 वर्ष का था, जब वर्ष 2014 में अंब्रेला मूर्वमेंट की शुरुआत हुई। यह आंदोलन हांगकांग की अर्ध स्वायत्त राजनीति में बीजिंग के अतिक्रमण के खिलाफ हुआ था और लोकतंत्र की बहाली का यह आह्वान केंद्र सरकार को सीधी चुनौती था। जून 2014 में, स्कॉलरवाद ने एक देश, दो प्रणालियों के तहत सार्वभौमिक मताधिकार के लिए हांगकांग की चुनावी प्रणाली में सुधार का मसौदा तैयार किया। इसके बाद हांगकांग के मुख्य कार्यकारी चुनाव में नागरिक नामांकन को शामिल करने की मैंने पुरजोर वकालत की और स्कूल की कक्षाओं का बहिष्कार करते हुए बीजिंग को लोकतंत्र समर्थक संदेश भेजा।

जेल भेज दिया गया

हांगकांग में हम सभी लोगों के बीच, केवल एक ही व्यक्ति था, जो यह तय कर सकता है कि वर्तमान आंदोलन चलेगा और वह लेउंग (क्षेत्र का मुख्य कार्यकारी) थे। यदि लेउंग हमारी मांगों को स्वीकार करते तो आंदोलन स्वाभाविक रूप से समाप्त हो जाता, पर वह नहीं माने। 27 सितंबर 2014 को, लोकतंत्र विरोधी प्रदर्शन के दौरान पुलिस ने मुझे गिरफ्तार किया। हालांकि बाद में विरोध-प्रदर्शन होने पर रिहा कर दिया गया। इसके बाद भी हांगकांग की आजादी के लिए हमारा प्रदर्शन जारी रहा। मई 2019 में अदालत की अवमानना में दोषी ठहराते हुए मुझे दोबारा दो महीने के लिए जेल भेज दिया गया। जेल में पूछताछ के दौरान मुझे नग्न रखने के साथ अपमानित किया गया। लेकिन एक महीने बाद मुझे छोड़ दिया गया।

मेरा इरादा मजबूत हुआ है

यह अंतिम लड़ाई नहीं है, क्योंकि हांगकांग की सरकार और बीजिंग ने नागरिको व छात्रों की एक पूरी पीढ़ी को असंतुष्ट कर दिया है। मुझे लगता है कि सरकार मुझ पर दोबारा मकदमा चलाकर जेल भेज सकती है। लेकिन ये चीजें मझे पराजित नही कर सकतीं, बल्कि मजबूत बनाती हैं। कम से कम मैं यह साबित करने की उम्मीद करता हूं ताकि लोगों को पता चल जाए, कि भले ही मुझे जेल हो गई हो, फिर भी मै पीछे नहीं हटा हूं। मैं अब भी हांगकांग में लोगों के साथ विरोध की पहली पंक्ति मे खड़ा हूं। हम अपनी स्वतंत्रता की रक्षा के लिए अपने शहर के नेता का चुनाव करने के लिए स्वतंत्र चुनाव की मांग करते हैं। जून के अंतिम हफ्ते में आयोजित जी -20 शिखर सम्मेलन में शामिल होने वाले विश्व के नेताओं से मैं आग्रह करता हूं, कि चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी जिनपिंग के साथ एक बैठक करें और पूछें कि उन्होंने हांगकांग पुलिस को लोगों पर रबर की गोलियों का उपयोग करने की अनुमित कैसे दे दी। लोगों को अपनी सरकार से डरना नहीं चाहिए, सरकार को अपने लोगों से डरना चाहिए।

-हांगकांग स्वायत्तता प्रदर्शन के अगुवा के विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।



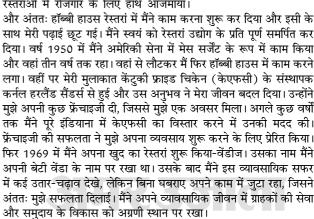


कोई एक मुलाकात भी दिशा बदल देती है

मेरा जन्म न्यूजर्सी के अटलांटा सिटी में एक अविवाहित मां से हुआ था। लेकिन जब मैं मात्र छह हफ्ते का था. तो मझे रेक्स और एयलेवा थॉमस ने गोद ले लिया। मुझे गोद लेने वाली मां के देहांत के बाद मैं कुछ समय तक मिशिगन में एक छोटे से फॉर्म में अपनी दादी के साथ रहा, जिन्होंने मुझे जीवन में ईमानदार और विनम्र रहना सिखाया। उन्होंने ही मुझे ग्राहकों की सेवा करना, सम्मान करना और जीवन में कभी आसान राह न अपनाने की सलाह दी, जो बाद में मेरे जीवन में काम आई। मैं अपने पिता से ज्यादातर समय दूर ही रहा, क्योंकि वह पूरे

अमेरिका में नए अवसरों की खोज करते हुए भटकते रहते थे। बारह वर्ष की उम्र में मैंने एक रेस्तरां में काम करना शुरू कर दिया। लेकिन रेस्तरां के मालिक से झड़प होने के कारण मैंने काम छोड़ दिया। लेकिन इस घटना के बावजूद रेस्तरां उद्योग के प्रति अपने समर्पण और जुनून को मैंने खत्म नहीं होने दिया। हालांकि मेरी निष्ठा से रेस्तरां के मालिक प्रभावित थे। पंद्रह वर्ष की उम्र में मैं अपने गोद लेने वाले पिता

के साथ इंडियाना चला गया, जहां मैंने कई रेस्तराओं में रोजगार के लिए हाथ आजमाया।



आपको वही काम करना चाहिए, जिसमें दिलचस्पी हो, अन्यथा सफलता मिलने में मुश्किल होती है।

डेढ़ सी साल बाद मिली बाइबिल



होर्मुज जलंडमरूमध्य की तस्वीर

यह जलडमरूमध्य 55 से 95 किलोमीटर तक चौड़ा है जो ईरान को अरब प्रायद्वीप से अलग करता है। हाल ही में ओमान की खाड़ी में दो तेल टैंकरों पर

होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य

और 12 मई को संयुक्त अरब अमीरात की ओर जा रहे चार टैंकरों पर हुए हमलों के बाद से अमेरिका ईरान के रिश्ते और खराब हो गए हैं। कुछ समय पूर्व ही अमेरिका ने ईरान पर कड़े प्रतिबंध लगाए थे और महत्त्वपूर्ण कटौती छूट भी हटा दी थी। ईरान ने अमेरिका को चेतावनी देते हुए कहा है कि वह होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य को समुद्री यातायात के लिए बंद कर सकता है। होर्मुज जल डमरूमध्य को बंद करने के प्रयास से अमेरिकी हितों को गंभीर खतरा पैदा होगा, भले ही इसमें कोई अमेरिकी जहाज शामिल न हों। होर्मुज को ओरमुज जलडमरूमध्य के नाम से भी जानां जाता है। यह फारस की खाड़ी को ओमान की खाड़ी और अरब सागर से जोड़ता है। यह

जलडमरूमध्य ५५ से ९५ किलोमीटर तक चौड़ा है और ईरान को अरब प्रायद्वीप से अलग करता है। इसमें कीश्म, होर्मुज व हेंजम (हेंग्म) द्वीप स्थित हैं। ऊर्जा स्रोतों पर निर्भर सभी खाड़ी देशों का जलमार्गीय व्यापार इसी रास्ते से होता है। कच्चा तेल और तरल प्राकृतिक गैस का निर्यात ईरान, इराक, कुवैत, बहरीन, सऊदी अरब और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात द्वारा इसी मार्ग से किया जाता है। विश्व के करीब 30% कच्चे तेल का व्यापार इसी रास्ते से होता है। तरल प्राकृतिक गैस का मुख्य निर्यातक कतर है, जो प्राकृतिक गैस को दूसरे देशों में भेजने के लिए इसी जलडमरूमध्य का प्रयोग करता है। वाणिज्यिक महत्त्व के साथ-साथ अपनी अवस्थिति के कारण यह सामरिक रूप से भी महत्त्वपूर्ण हो जाता है।

हाल ही में अब्राहम लिंकन की एक बाइबिल मिली है, जो उन्हें 1864 में फिलाडेल्फिया में भेंट की गई थी।

व्ययॉर्क टाइम्स के लिए पीटर बेकर



उन्होंने ही उनके अंतिम संस्कार में बाइबिल के कुछ अंश पढ़े थे। लिंकन की हत्या के बाद माइनर मैरी लिंकन के लगातार संपर्क में भी रहे। एक पीढ़ी से दूसरी पीढ़ी के हाथों तक पहुंचती रही यह किताब लगभग डेढ़ सौ वर्षों तक नेपथ्य में पड़ी रही। यहां तक कि अब्राहम लिंकन के जीवन पर काम करने वालों और किताब लिखने वालों को भी इस बारे में कुछ मालूम नहीं था।

बृहस्पतिवार को स्प्रिंगफील्ड, इलिनोइस स्थित

अब्राहम लिंकन प्रेसिडेंशियल लाइब्रेरी ऐंड म्युजियम में पहली बार इसे प्रदर्शनी के लिए रखा गया। रेवरेंड नोइस डब्ल्यू माइनर के वंशजों ने इतने वर्षों तक बाइबिल को अपने पास रखने के बाद इसे सार्वजनिक करने का फैसला किया। 'मेरे लिए यह बाइबिल अब्राहम लिंकन को स्पर्श करने का माध्यम है। लिंकन से जुड़ी इस महत्वपूर्ण कलाकृति को हम इसके ऐतिहासिक महत्व के कारण तो संरक्षित करेंगे ही. यह बाइबिल लिंकन के जीवन में धर्म की भिमका को समझने के लिए भी महत्वपर्ण है.' एलेन लोव कहते हैं, जो लाइब्रेरी ऐंड म्यूजियम के

कार्यकारी निदेशक हैं। यह छठी बाइबिल है, जो लिंकन या उनके परिवार के पास थी। सबसे प्रसिद्ध बाइबिल वह है, जिस पर हाथ रखकर लिंकन ने 1861 में राष्ट्रपति पद की शपथ ली थी, और जो वाशिंगटन स्थित लाइब्रेरी ऑफ कांग्रेस में सुरक्षित है। बराक ओबामा ने 2009 और 2013 में और डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने 2017 में इसी बाइबिल को हाथ में रखकर राष्ट्रपति पद की शपथ ली थी। लिंकन की धार्मिक आस्था के बारे में बहुत सारी कहानियां हैं। युवावस्था में उन्होंने अपने माता-पिता के बैपटिस्ट धर्म को खारिज कर दिया था और चर्च नहीं जाते थे। लेकिन अपने दो बेटों की असमय मृत्यु और दूसरी कुछ घटनाओं ने बाद में उन्हें धार्मिक सोच का बना दिया। 1864 में फिलाडेल्फिया में यह बाइबिल लेने के समय तो धर्म के प्रति उनका भरोसा बहुत बढ़ गया था।



इस हफ्ते के शब्द

वर्ष 1864 के युद्धकाल में अब्राहम लिंकन ने

घायल सैनिकों के लिए आयोजित एक चैरिटी शो में

भाग लेने के लिए फिलाडेल्फिया का दौरा किया था।

उन्होंने सैनिकों के इलाज के उद्देश्य से धन जुटाने

के लिए अपनी चर्चित 'मुक्ति उद्घोषणा' की 48

प्रतियां वितरित की थीं। बदले में लिंकन को भी एक

उपहार मिला था। वह एक बाइबिल थी, जिसके

पन्नों पर सोने के पानी का काम था और जिन पर

'विश्वास', 'उम्मीद' और 'सहायता' लिखा था। उस

घटना के डेढ़ सौ से भी अधिक वर्षों के बाद

इतिहासकारों ने पहली बार उस बाइबिल को खोज

निकाला। अमेरिका के सोलहवें राष्ट्रपति से जुड़ी

इस अनोखी कलाकृति के बारे में उन्हें पता भी नहीं

था। लिंकन की हत्या के सात साल बाद उनकी

विधवा ने यह किताब उनके दोस्त रेवरेंड नोइस

माइनर लिंकन के घनिष्ठ मित्र थे और स्प्रिंगफील्ड

में रहने के दौरान लिंकन रोज ही माइनर के घर जाते

थे। लिंकन की हत्या के बाद उनके शव को शिकागो

डब्ल्यू माइनर को भेंट कर दी थीं।

पहले इराक युद्ध में हिस्सा लेने वाले पूर्व सैनिक मार्क एस्पर को



लिब्रा (LIBRA) फेसबुक द्वारा क्रिप्टोकरेंसी लिंब्रा लांच करने की घोषणा की चर्चा हो रही है। इस शब्द का अर्थ होता है- तराजू।



दुनिया में विस्थापित लोग

७ करोड

लोग बीते वर्ष दुनिया भर में विस्थापित हुए, संयुक्त राष्ट्र शरणार्थी एजेंसी की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 108

जनांकीय लाभांश और हम

अपनी विकास यात्रा के दौरान दुनिया के हर है और फिर उसमें गिरावट आती है। देश की जन्म दर और मृत्यु दर में गिरावट आती है। चूंकि इन दोनों दरों में गिरावट की गति अलग-अलग होती है और मृत्यु दर, जन्म दर के पहले घटती है। ऐसे में हालात के स्थिर होने के पहले एक समय ऐसा भी आता है जब आबादी में बहुत तेजी से बढोतरी होती है। आबादी में विभिन्न उम्र के लोगों की तादाद भी इसी हिसाब से बदलती है। कामगार उम्र (15 वर्ष से 65 वर्ष) के लोगों की तादाद बढ़ती है, उच्चतम स्तर पर पहुंचती

अगर आबादी का बड़ा प्रतिशत कामगार उम्र का होता है तो अर्थव्यवस्था में आय, बचत और उत्पादकता बढती है। इसके अलावा भी अन्य कई लाभ होते हैं। जो देश बदलाव के इस दौर का सफलतापर्वक इस्तेमाल करते हैं उन्हें आर्थिक तेजी का लाभ मिलता है। पूर्वी एशिया के देशों ने बीती सदी के उत्तरार्द्ध में जो तेज वृद्धि हासिल की उसका 25 फीसदी से लेकर 40 फीसदी तक हिस्सा इसी जनांकीय लाभ से हासिल हुआ।

जनांकीय बदलाव का आकलन निर्भरता अनपात के आधार पर किया जाता है। यानी श्रम शक्ति से बाहर के लोगों (युवा एवं बुजुर्ग) के कामगार उम्र के लोगों के प्रतिशत के रूप में। सन 1980 में भारत में यह अनुपात करीब 75 फीसदी था जो कि सन 1960 के बराबर ही था। इस अवधि को धीमी, तथाकथित हिंदू वृद्धि दर कहा गया। इसके बाद आर्थिक वृद्धि दर में इजाफा होने लगा और उस अनुपात या प्रतिशत में गिरावट आने लगी। निर्भरता अनुपात में सन 1990 के मध्य से एक बार फिर गिरावट आने लगी और एक दशक में यह 70 फीसदी से घटकर 60 फीसदी रह गया। बाद के दशक में इसमें और गिरावट आई और यह 50 फीसदी रह गया। यह केवल संयोग नहीं हो सकता कि यही वे वर्ष थे जब भारत की आर्थिक वृद्धि में सबसे तेज इजाफा हुआ।

कुछ अनुमान बताते हैं कि देश का निर्भरता

अनुपात अगले दो दशक तक स्थिर रहेगा और उसके बाद ही इसमें इजाफा शुरू होगा। यह दायरा चीन समेत तमाम पूर्वी एशियाई देशों के दायरों से अलग है। ये देश अपने निर्भरता अनुपात को कम करने में सफल रहे और बदलाव के पहले वे इसे 40 फीसदी या उससे कम पर ले आए। भारत ऐसा प्रबंधन नहीं कर पाएगा

क्योंकि हमारी जन्म दर तेजी से नहीं घट रही। यह स्वास्थ्य एवं पोषण नीति की विफलता है। इसके कारण 2004-05 में यह आंकड़ा 64 फीसदी था। हमें 8 से 10 फीसदी की वह वृद्धि दर हासिल करने में समस्या आ सकती है जो कुछ पूर्वी

यह सवाल पूछना होगा कि क्या भारत संभावित जनांकीय लाभांश का कछ हिस्सा गंवाने वाला है ? अगर ऐसा होता है तो इसकी दो वजह होंगी: जनांकीय लाभांश का पूरा लाभ तभी उठाया जा सकता है जबकि

एशियाई देशों ने हासिल की है।

कामगार उम्र के लोग वाकई काम कर रहे हों। दूसरा, क्या काम करने वालों के पास उचित शिक्षा और कौशल है, जो कार्यस्थल पर उन्हें अधिक उत्पादक बनाता है। हम सभी जानते हैं कि हमारा देश इन मानकों पर पीछे रहा है। सरकार द्वारा हाल ही में जारी एक

रोजगार सर्वेक्षण से पता साप्ताहिक मंथन चला है कि श्रमिक उम्र के लोगों में से केवल टी. एन. नाइनन आधे ही काम कर रहे हैं।

> जहां तक शिक्षा और कौशल की बात है, प्रथम का शिक्षा सर्वेक्षण तथा कौशल विकास कार्यक्रमों की धीमी प्रगति अपनी दखद कथा

> बहरहाल, अगर देश का निर्भरता अनपात आने वाले दो दशक तक 50 फीसदी से कम के दायरे में बना रहता है तो हमारे पास अभी भी यह अवसर है कि हम स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा

और रोजगार के मोर्चे पर हाथ लगी नाकामी को दर कर सकें और जनांकीय लाभांश का फायदा उठा सकें। दिक्कत यह है कि दक्षिण भारत के प्रांत, पश्चिम बंगाल और एक-दो अन्य राज्य जनांकीय बदलाव की गति में उत्तर भारत के राज्यों से आगे हैं। वहां यह अवसर पहले ही समाप्त हो चुका है या अगले पांच वर्ष में समाप्त हो जाएगा। कुछ राज्यों में यह अवसर एक दशक तक और रहेगा और बिहार जैसे राज्यों में जनांकीय बदलाव का यह सिलसिला लंबा चलेगा।

यही वे राज्य हैं जहां स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा की स्थिति सबसे खराब है। ऐसे में यह सवाल बरकरार है कि वे इसका कितना फायदा उठा पाएंगे। याद रहे कि जनांकीय लाभांश किसी देश के लिए एक खास अवधि में केवल एक बार ही उपलब्ध होता है क्योंकि आबादी में यह बदलाव भी एक ही बार होता है। हमारे पास वक्त की कमी है।



बुनियादी ढांचे में प्रगति के वास्ते कार्यसूची

नए भारत के निर्माण के लिए बुनियादी ढांचागत क्षेत्र की अनेक समस्याओं को दूर करना होगा। इस सिलसिले में 10 प्राथमिकताएं बता रहे हैं विनायक चटर्जी

[♣]नियादी ढांचा क्षेत्र में बहुत सी समस्याओं को दूर करना होगा। नई ᅺ सरकार की प्राथमिकताओं में ये 10 विशेष पहल शामिल होनी चाहिए।

■ **सरकारी संपत्तियों की बिकी**: सरकारी खर्च की बुनियादी ढांचा निवेश और अर्थव्यवस्था को प्रोत्साहन देने में प्रमख भूमिका बनी रहेगी। इस उद्देश्य के लिए उपलब्ध राजकोषीय गुंजाइश बहुत कम है। इस गंजाइश को केंद्र और राज्यों के स्तर पर चल रही सरकारी कंपनियों में फंसे पैसे को मुक्त कर बढ़ाया जाना चाहिए। यह पहले से प्रमाणित है कि विदेशी संस्थागत निवेशक लंबी अवधि में प्रतिफल देने वाली इन परिसंपत्तियों में निवेश के इच्छुक हैं। हालांकि इससे प्राप्त होने वाली रकम को भारत की संचित निधि में नहीं मिलाया जाना चाहिए, बल्कि इस राशि को एक अलग राष्ट्रीय बुनियादी ढांचा विकास कोष में डाला जाना चाहिए।

 पीपीपी प्लग ऐंड प्ले मॉडल को बहाल करना: भाजपा ने अपने घोषणापत्र में वर्ष 2024 तक बनियादी ढांचे पर 1 लाख करोड रुपये के निवेश का महत्त्वाकांक्षी लक्ष्य रखा है, जिसे केवल सरकारी खर्च से हासिल नहीं किया जा सकेगा। तत्काल निजी निवेश लाया जाना चाहिए और इसमें प्लग ऐंड प्ले से बेहतर तरीका अन्य कोई नहीं हो सकता। इस मॉडल में सरकार के 100 फीसदी स्वामित्व वाली एसपीवी (विशेष उद्देश्य

इकाई) बनाई जाती है, जो जमीन अधिग्रहण समेत सभी मंजूरियां, लाइसेंस और स्वीकतियां लेती है। इसके बाद इस एसपीवी के लिए निजी डेवलपर बोली लगाते हैं। यह जोखिम को बांटने का संभवतया सबसे उपयुक्त तरीका है और इसमें सरकार को सबसे ऊंची बोलियां मिलती हैं। इसके अलावा पीपीपी को उबारने पर केलकर समिति की रिपोर्ट की सिफारिशों पर काम

■ नल से जल : यह भाजपा के घोषणापत्र में आम आदमी के लिए सबसे अधिक लुभावना वादा है। नल से जल के तहत देश के प्रत्येक घर को 2024 तक पाइपलाइन से जलापूर्ति सुनिश्चित की जाएगी। इसे पूरी तरह लागु करने से करोड़ों लोगों, विशेष रूप से महिलाओं के जीवन में बड़ा बदलाव आएगा। इसे सौभाग्य योजना को तेजी से लागू करने के बाद शुरू किया जा रहा है, इसलिए योजना को लेकर लोगों की बड़ी उम्मीदें हैं। सौभाग्य योजना के तहत सभी परिवारों को बिजली कनेक्शन दिए गए हैं। नल से जल योजना से 2024 के चुनावों में

तगडा चुनावी लाभ मिल सकता है। राष्ट्रीय बिजली खरीद एवं वितरण कंपनी: उदय के नतीजों के बाद राष्ट्रीय बिजली खरीद एवं वितरण कंपनी (एनपीपीडीसी) की स्थापना और ज्यादा तर्कसंगत नजर आने लगी है। भारत को एक एनपीपीडीसी की जरूरत इसलिए है क्योंकि यह न केवल मश्किल दौर से गजर रहीं डिस्कॉम की प्रभावी विकल्प होगी बल्कि बिजली खरीद एवं शुल्कों के लिए एक राष्ट्रीय कीमत तय करने में भी मददगार होगी। एनपीपीडीसी इस स्थिति में होनी चाहिए कि वह खस्ताहाल बिजली उत्पादक कंपनियों को नियमित खरीद की गारंटी दे सके, समय पर भुगतान कर सके और बिखरे हुए बिजली क्षेत्र में खरीद और बिक्री को एक मंच महैया

■ निदयों को जोड़ना : पूर्व राष्ट्रपति अब्दुल कलाम ने 14 अगस्त, 2002 को राष्ट्र को अपने संबोधन में इस विचार का समर्थन किया था और इस पर अमल करने का आग्रह किया था। इससे बाढ और सुखे का समाधान मिलेगा। निदयों को जोडने से 3.4 करोड हेक्टेयर जमीन की सिंचाई की जा सकेगी, ग्रामीण एवं शहरी क्षेत्रों में पेयजल मुहैया कराया जा सकेगा. 34,000 मेगावॉट जल विद्युत का उत्पादन किया जा सकेगा, देश के भीतर जलमार्ग विकसित होंगे और बड़े स्तर पर रोजगार का सृजन होगा। सरकार ने वर्ष 2003 में उच्चस्तरीय कार्यदल गठित किया था, जिसने 9 सितंबर, 2003 को अपनी रिपोर्ट सौंपी थी। इसमें अनुमान जताया गया था कि निदयों को जोड़ने की लागत 5.6 लाख करोड़ रुपये आने का अनुमान है। संभव है कि अब यह लागत बढ़कर 10 लाख करोड़ रुपये पर

पहुंच गई हो। ■ वर्ष 2024 तक बुलेट ट्रेन चलाने के

काम को पुरा करना : प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और जापानी प्रधानमंत्री शिंजो आबे ने मुंबई-अहमदाबाद बुलेट ट्रेन का 12 सितंबर, 2017 को शिलान्यास किया था। भारत किसी चीज के अनुभव के बाद काम करता है। उदाहरण के लिए दिल्ली मेट्टो और दिल्ली/मुंबई हवाई अड्डे। इस परियोजना के समय पर पूरा होने से रेल यात्रा को लेकर धारणा बिल्कुल बदल जाएगी, भले ही यह रफ्तार, सेवा, आराम या सुरक्षा हो। देश भर में नई पीढ़ी के बीच रेल यात्रा की मांग बढ़ेगी।

 तटीय आार्थिक जोन (सीईजेड) को लागू करना : यह अरविंद पानगड़िया का एक शानदार सुझाव था, जो उन्होंने नीति आयोग का प्रमुख रहते हुए दिया था। प्रस्तावित सीईजेड में परिधान, फुटवियर, इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स, हल्की इंजीनियरिंग, चमड़े जैसे श्रम बहुल एवं निर्यात आधारित उद्योगों को लक्षित किया जाएगा। जहाजरानी मंत्रालय ने सागरमाला कार्यक्रम की राष्ट्रीय दृष्टिकोण योजना के तहत तटीय क्षेत्रों में 14 सीईजेड की पहचान की है। केंद्र में मददगार सरकार होने से ये सीईजेड भारत की निर्यात प्रतिस्पर्धी क्षमता में सुधार ला सकते हैं।

 यूएमटीए (एकीकृत महानगरीय परिवहन प्राधिकरण): भारतीय शहरों को परिवहन से संबंधित फैसलों में रोजाना आवाजाही करने वाले लोगों को केंद्र में रखना चाहिए। यएमटीए अनिवार्य और तात्कालिक पूर्व शर्त है। केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने अगस्त 2017 में नई मेट्रो रेल नीति को मंजूरी दी थी। इसके तहत अगर कोई शहर अपनी मेट्रो रेल परियोजना के लिए केंद्र की सहायता लेना चाहता है तो उसकी राज्य सरकार को यूएमटीए की स्थापना एवं परिचालन को लेकर प्रतिबद्धता जतानी होगी। यूएमटीए के विभिन्न विकल्पों को प्रभावी तरीके से जोड देने की संभावना है।

बुनियादी ढांचे के लिए एक डीएफआई की दरकार : सरकारी स्वामित्व वाली इंडिया इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर फाइनैंस कंपनी लिमिटेड को इस क्षेत्र के लिए डीएफआई (विकास वित्त संस्थान) का दर्जा दिया जाना चाहिए। वाणिज्यिक बैंकों और एनबीएफसी ने परियोजनाओं को लंबी अवधि का कर्ज देने से दूरी बना ली है और बॉन्ड, इनविट, रीट और डेट फंड जैसी बाजार की वैकल्पिक योजनाएं अभी पूर्ण परिपक्वता के स्तर पर नहीं पहुंची हैं। इसलिए निजी घरेलू बाजार में निजी ऋण उपलब्ध नहीं है और लंबी अवधि के विकास उद्देश्य अनिश्चित स्थिति में हैं।

म्युनिसिपल बॉन्ड : दुनियाभर में म्युनिसिपल बॉन्डों का चलन है और ये शहरी बुनियादी ढांचे एवं सुविधाओं के लिए धन जुटाने का प्रमुख स्रोत हैं। अमेरिका इस समय म्युनिसिपल बॉन्ड बाजार का आकार 3.8 लांख करोड़ डॉलर से अधिक है। जनगृह की एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक भारत में शहरी निकाय महज 19.1 करोड़ डॉलर जुटा पाए हैं। नगर निकायों की अकाउंटिंग, रेटिंग, स्वायत्तता और नागरिक संस्थानों को बढावा देना होगा जैसा कि संविधान के ऐतिहासिक 74वें संविधान संशोधन में कहा गया है। ऐसा करने के बाद ही म्युनिसिपल बॉन्डों के जरिये पर्याप्त राशि जुटाई जा सकेगी और हम असली स्मार्ट शहर हासिल कर सकेंगे।

(लेखक फीडबैक इन्फ्रा के चेयरमैन हैं।)

वैश्विक मीडिया और विज्ञापन उद्योग के गढ़ से कुछ अनुभव

पिछले सोमवार की सुबह हम अमेरिका से तीन सप्ताह की छुट्टियां बिताकर स्वदेश लौटे। दुनिया भर में अपनी छाप छोड़ने वाले विश्व के सबसे बड़े मीडिया और मनोरंजन बाजार की इस पहली यात्रा में मैंने मोटे तौर पर तीन बातों पर गौर किया।

पहला, वहां स्थानीय समाचारों का दबदबा है। इसमें दो राय नहीं कि स्थानीय समाचार पत्र खत्म हो रहे हैं और राष्ट्रीय समाचार पत्रों पर भी काफी दबाव है। परंतु आप अमेरिका के किसी भी शहर में हों, टेलीविजन चालु करते ही स्थानीय समाचारों के ढेरों विकल्प नजर आने लगते हैं। नियाग्रा के समाचार चैनलों में हर खबर वहीं के बारे में थी। आगे बफेलो जाने पर वहां के समाचारों का दबदबा था। शिकागो, ह्यस्टन या न्यूयॉर्क में भी यही हील था। हर जगह स्थानीय समाचारों का दबदबा। कहीं दुर्घटना का समाचार तो कहीं किसी मॉल में दो महिलाओं के झगड़े का समाचार या मौसम का समाचार प्रमुखता से दिखाया जा रहा था। इसके अलावा वैज्ञानिक खोज, शोध, संवाददाताओं द्वारा छुट्टियों से जुड़े समाचार आदि शामिल थे। यह सही है कि राजनीतिक

समाचार भी होते हैं लेकिन केवल राजनीतिक समाचार ही नहीं होते। अमेरिकी चैनलों पर 10-10 विंडो बनाकर परिचर्चाओं का आयोजन भी नहीं किया जाता। भारत मे समाचार चैनल जिस प्रकार मुनाफे के बिना काम कर रहे हैं क्या हमारे यहां के कुछ चैनल विशद्ध स्थानीय समाचारों का प्रसारण करने का प्रयोग करेंगे? आप कह सकते हैं कि भारत में 400 समाचार चैनल हैं, उनमें से अनेक स्थानीय हैं। उदाहरण के लिए आंध्र प्रदेश या केरल में कई तेलुगू या मलयालम चैनल हैं। बहरहाल भारत में स्थानीय का तात्पर्य स्थानीय भाषाओं से ज्यादा है। इसके अलावा कछ क्षेत्रीय समाचार अधिकांश राजनीतिक। राजनीतिक समाचारों के अलावा अन्य समाचारों की तलाश करना पहला कदम हो सकता है। भारतीय समाचार चैनलों में



मीडिया मंत्र

वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

एक बात यह भी है कि मेरे लिए दशकों तक अमेरिका को जानने का जरिया हॉलीवुड की सैकड़ों फिल्में ही रही हैं। वास्तविक अमेरिकियों का उच्चारण और उनकी शैली, उनकी फिल्मों से ही निकली है। मैं जो कुछ देख और सुन रही थी वह हकीकत था। कला जीवन में इस कदर युस आई है कि असली जीवन भी मुझे किसी कला की तरह नजर आ रहा था।

शोध, विज्ञान या अन्य दिलचस्प स्थानीय विषयों की चर्चा शायद ही दिखती हो।

दुसरा, अमेरिका में किसी भी वस्तु का विपणन या विज्ञापन अलग स्तर पर होता है। हमने पूरे सफर में यूनाइटेड एयरलांइस का इस्तेमाल किया। इस विमानन कंपनी का जल्द ही रिलीज होने वाली फिल्म स्पाइडर मैन: फार फ्रॉम होम से करार है। उड़ान की नैपकिन से लेकर विमान की स्क्रीन पर उसके ट्रेलर और हवाई अड्डे पर फिल्म के पोस्टर तक सभी स्पाइडर मैन के ही थे। ऐसा हो ही नहीं सकता था कि सफर के दौरान आपको यह बात कंठस्थ नहीं हो जाए कि स्पाइडर मैन: फार फ्रॉम होम आगामी 2 जुलाई को रिलीज हो रही है और इस फिल्म में भी यूनाइटेड एयरलाइंस की भूमिका है।

हमने जिन छह शहरों की यात्रा की वहां हर शहर में स्पाइडर मैन से जुड़ी कुछ न कुछ बात मिली। केवल स्पाइडर मैन ही नहीं बल्कि स्थानीय अचल संपत्ति कारोबारी, वकील, दवा केंद्र आदि सभी बड़े विज्ञापनदाता हैं। ये सभी पोस्टरों, टेलीविजन चैनलों या टैक्सियों के भीतर स्क्रीन पर विज्ञापन करते हैं। हमारे देश में बडे ब्रांड भी वैसी पहुंच नहीं बना पाते जैसी अमेरिका में स्थानीय कारोबारी। शायद इसका संबंध कुछ हद तक मीडिया के नियोजन या स्थानीय मीडिया की ताकत से है।

तीसरा, मुझे यह देखकर

आश्चर्य हुआ कि अमेरिका के

लोग यूरोप के लोगों की तुलना में अधिक विनम्र और मित्रवत थे। हमने जितने भी लोगों से बात की या सहायता मांगी, उन सभी ने आगे बढ़कर हमारी सहायता की। परंतु एक बात जो मुझे बार-बार खटकती रही वह यह कि हर कोई ऐसे बात कर रहा था जैसे कि वह किसी फिल्म में काम कर रहा हो। उनकी गहरी आवाज और उच्चारण बिल्कुल हॉलीवुड की फिल्मों जैसे थे। उस समय मुझे यह अहसास हुआ कि भले ही हॉलीवुड की फिल्में अपनी दोतिहाई कमाई अमेरिका के बाहर करती हों लेकिन उनमें काम करने वाले ज्यादातर कलाकार अमेरिकी हैं। एक बात यह भी है कि मेरे लिए दशकों तक अमेरिका को जानने का जरिया हॉलीवुड की सैकड़ों फिल्में ही रही हैं। वास्तविक अमेरिकियों का उच्चारण और उनकी शैली, उनकी फिल्मों से ही निकली है। मैं जो कुछ देख और सुन रही थी वह हकीकत था। कला जीवन में इस कदर घुस आई है कि असली जीवन भी मुझे किसी कला की तरह नजर आ रहा था।

कानाफूसी

चिह्न बदलने की गुजारिश

भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) की युवा शाखा भारतीय जनता युवा मोर्चा और उसके छात्र संगठन अखिल भारतीय विद्यार्थी परिषद के नेताओं ने पिछले दिनों नागरिक विमानन मंत्री

हरदीप पुरी से एक खास मकसद से मुलाकात की। इन नेताओं ने मंत्री से यह मांग की कि भारतीय विमानों पर लगे पुराने कॉल साइन को बदला जाए। दरअसल फिलहाल भारतीय विमानों पर वीटी का कॉल साइन लगा है जो वायसराय/ विक्टोरियन टेरिटरी को इंगित करता है। उनका कहना है कि यह 200 वर्ष पुरानी दासता का प्रतीक है। उन्होंने कहा कि हमारे प्रधानमंत्री जिस बोइंग 747-437 विमान में बैठकर दुनिया के बड़े नेताओं से मुलाकात के लिए सफर करते हैं उस पर भी वीटी-ईवीबी का संकेत चिह्न लगा हुआ है। इन नेताओं ने दलील दी कि नेपाल, श्रीलंका और जिंबाब्वे जैसे देशों ने आजादी के बाद अपने कॉल साइन बदल दिए लेकिन हमारे देश में ऐसा नहीं हो सका। इन नेताओं ने कहा कि दुनिया का सबसे जीवंत लोकतांत्रिक देश ब्रिटिश युग के संकेत चिह्नों का प्रयोग कर रहा है, यह अपने आप में बहुत शर्मनाक बात है।

आपका पक्ष

देश की स्वास्थ्य प्रणाली चिंताजनक

बिहार के मुजफ्फरपुर में दिमागी

(चमकी) बुखार से बच्चों की मौत देश की लचर स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का बखान करती है। एक आंकड़े के मुताबिक केंद्र सरकार वर्ष 2017 में स्वास्थ्य पर 2.13 लाख करोड़ रुपये खर्च कर चुकी है जो जीडीपी का 167 लाख करोड़ रुपये है। इसमें प्रति व्यक्ति खर्च 1,657 रुपये है। डब्ल्यूएचओ के अनुसार 1,000 आबादी पर एक डॉक्टर होना चाहिए जबिक बिहार में 28,000 की आबादी पर एक डॉक्टर है। बिहार में 57 फीसदी डॉक्टर के पद खाली हैं। सरकार द्वारा आर्थिक सहायता देने के बावजूद अस्पतालों की स्थिति चिंताजनक बनी हुई है। बिहार में 110 से अधिक बच्चों की मौत हो चुकी है। लोकसभा चुनाव से पहले विभिन्न राजनीतिक दलों द्वारा बिहार में प्रतिदिन 20 से 30



रैली की जा रही थीं। अब जब लगातार बच्चों की मौत हो रही तो सरकार द्वारा विशेष डॉक्टरों की टीम भेजने में इतनी देरी क्यों की जा रही है। सरकार और प्रशासन निरुत्तर बन चुके हैं। देश में आज भी सरकारी अस्पतालों की स्थिति खराब है। मरीजों के लिए दवाई

बिहार के मुजफ्फरपुर में दिमागी बुखार से अनेक बद्यों की मौत हो गई है -पीटीआर्ड

और अन्य सुविधाओं का अभाव है। सरकार द्वारा सिर्फ करोडों रुपये ं का बजट दे देना ही समस्या का

स्तर पर सही क्रियान्वयन कराना भी सरकार की जिम्मेदारी है। देश में डॉक्टरों की ज्यादा से ज्यादा संख्या बढ़ाना और सरकारी अस्पतालों में अव्यवस्था को दूर करना सरकार की पहली प्राथमिकता होनी चाहिए। स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में कुछ परिवर्तन करने की जरूरत है।

समाधान नहीं है। इसका जमीनी

अमित पांडेय, बिलासपुर

पेट्रोल पंप के बदले चार्जिंग स्टेशन बने

सरकार देश भर में पेट्रोल पंपों की संख्या दोगुना करने पर विचार कर रही है। इसके तहत 78,000 नए पेट्रोल पंप खोलने की योजना है। एक आंकड़े के मुताबिक देश में

है तो ई-वाहन चलाने की योजना का क्या होगा? बीएस-6 वाहनों से भले ही प्रदुषण कम होगा लेकिन इससे बेहतर ई-वाहनों को बढ़ावा देना नहीं होगा। क्रिसिल ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि देश में पेट्रोल पंपों की संख्या बढ़ाना व्यावहारिक नहीं है। इससे एक पेट्रोल पंप दूसरे पंप की बिक्री को प्रभावित करेगा। सरकार को वर्तमान में चल रहे पेट्रोल पंप में चार्जिंग स्टेशन लगाने चाहिए। इससे ई-वाहनों को बढ़ावा मिलेगा जिससे प्रदूषण नहीं होगा। इसके अलावा पेट्रोल में खर्च होने वाले पैसे भी बचेंगे।

करीब 64,000 पेट्रोल पंप

परिचालन में हैं। देश में प्रदूषण कम

करने के लिए सरकार कई कवायद

कर रही हैं। इसमें से पहला बीएस

6 मानक वाले वाहनों का निर्माण

है। दूसरा देश में ई-वाहनों को

प्रोत्साहित करना है। अगर देश में

पेट्रोल पंप की संख्या बढ़ाई जाती

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



परिवर्तन में कोई बुराई नहीं अगर यह सही दिशा में हो

फिर वही बेजा विरोध

तत्काल तीन तलाक की बुराई को रोकने के लिए लोकसभा में पेश मुस्लिम महिला विवाह अधिकार संरक्षण विधेयक का कांग्रेस, जद-यू समेत कुछ अन्य दलों की ओर से विरोध किए जाने पर हैरानी नहीं। इन दलों ने पहले से ही यह स्पष्ट कर दिया था कि वे इस मसले पर विरोध की राह पर ही चलना पसंद करेंगे। तत्काल तीन तलाक से संबंधित विधेयक का विरोध करने वाले दल यह तर्क दे रहे हैं कि आखिर एक सामाजिक बुराई को रोकने के लिए कानून का सहारा क्यों लिया जा रहा है? यह इसलिए एक खोखला तर्क है कि अतीत में भारत ही नहीं, अन्य अनेक देश भी सामाजिक कुरीतियों पर रोक लगाने के लिए कानून का सहारा ले चुके हैं। क्या दहेज और बाल विवाह पर कानून नहीं बनाए गए? पता नहीं क्यों तत्काल तीन तलाक संबंधी विधेयक का विरोध कर रहे राजनीतिक दल यह साधारण सी बात समझने को तैयार नहीं कि कुछ कुरीतियां ऐसी होती हैं जिन्हें रोकने के लिए कानून का सहारा लेना ही पड़ता है। इन राजनीतिक दलों को इस तथ्य से परिचित होना चाहिए कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट की ओर से तत्काल तीन तलाक को अवैध ठहरा दिए जाने के बाद भी इस तरह से तलाक देने का सिलसिला कायम है। क्या लोकसभा में मस्लिम महिला विवाह अधिकार संरक्षण विधेयक पेश करते हुए कानन मंत्री रविशंकर प्रसाद की ओर से दी गई यह जानकारी चौंकाने वाली नहीं कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के बाद एक झटके में तलाक देने के 229 मामले सामने आ चुके हैं? क्या यह अदालत की अवमानना के साथ विधि के शासन को चुनौती नहीं?

चिंताजनक केवल यह नहीं कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले की परवाह नहीं की जा रही है, बल्कि यह भी है कि तत्काल तीन तलाक को दंडनीय अपराध ठहराने वाले अध्यादेश के बाद भी इसी तरह से तलाक देने का काम किया गया। एक आंकड़े के अनुसार उक्त अध्यादेश के बाद एक झटके में तलाक देने के 31 मामले सामने आ चुके हैं। स्पष्ट है कि ऐसे आंकड़ों के बाद यह दलील भी बहुत दमदार नहीं रह जाती कि आनन-फानन तलाक देकर पत्नी को छोड़ देने के मामलों में कमी आ रही है। इसकी भी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि कई मुस्लिम संगठन ऐसे हैं जो तत्काल तीन तलाक को कुरान सम्मत न मानते हुए भी यह चाह रहे थे कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट और सरकार इस मामले में दखल न दे। शायद यही कारण है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के बाद भी यकायक तलाक देने के मामले थमे नहीं। जब समाज किसी सामाजिक बुराई को खत्म करने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध न दिखे तब फिर सरकार के पास इसके अलावा और कोई चारा नहीं कि वह दंडात्मक उपायों का सहारा ले। मुस्लिम महिला विवाह अधिकार संरक्षण विधेयक लाकर सरकार ने यही किया है। क्या इस विधेयक का विरोध कर रहे दल ऐसा कोई उपाय सुझा सकते हैं जिससे दंडात्मक प्रावधानों वाले कानून के बगैर इस सामाजिक बुराई को रोका जा सके ? बेहतर हो कि वे यह समझें उनकी ओर से वही गलती की जा रही है जो शाहबानो मामले में राजीव गांधी सरकार ने की थी।

दिनचर्या में हो योग

अंतरराष्ट्रीय योग दिवस के अवसर पर झारखंड के रांची के प्रभात तारा मैदान में योग प्रेमियों का सैलाब उमड़ पड़ा। यह दर्शाता है कि योग को लेकर लोगों में जागरूकता बढ़ी है। लोग अपनी सेहत को लेकर सजग हुए हैं। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के आह्वान पर दिसंबर 2014 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा में प्रत्येक वर्ष 21 जून को अंतरराष्ट्रीय योग दिवस मनाने के प्रस्ताव पारित होने के बाद जहां पूरी दुनिया में योग के प्रति आकर्षण बढ़ा है, वहीं झारखंड में भी योग प्रेमियों की संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है। धुर्वा के इस मैदान में उमड़ी योगप्रेमियों की भीड़ से यह भी स्पष्ट हो गया हैं कि सभी को आयुष्मान बनाने के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के सपने को पूरा करने के लिए लोग योग को माध्यम बनाने को तैयार हैं। योग के प्रति यह आकर्षण और लगाव केवल खास दिवस पर ही नहीं होना चाहिए। यह दिनचर्या में शामिल हो, क्योंकि यह सेहत से जुड़ा विषय है। प्रधानमंत्री ने भी इस राष्ट्रीय कार्यक्रम में कहा कि योग से ही बीमारियों को दूर रखा जा सकता है। उत्तम स्वास्थ्य से ही नई ऊंचाइयों को प्राप्त करने की लालसा होती है। निश्चित रूप से चिकित्सकों और अस्पतालों के खर्च काफी महंगे हो गए हैं। ऐसे में बीमारियों से बचाव में योग माध्यम बनता है तो इसे अपनी दिनचर्या का हिस्सा बना ही लेना चाहिए। जहां तक झारखंड की बात है तो प्रधानमंत्री ने भी स्वीकार किया कि झारखंड में योग शुरू से ही यहां की संस्कृति का हिस्सा रहा है। देश-विदेश में प्रचलित यहां छऊ नृत्य की शैली और मुद्राएं योग का आभास कराती हैं। वहीं मुख्यमंत्री ने भी कहा है कि झारखंड के जनजातीय समुदाय अपने सांस्कृतिक एवं दैनिक जीवन में योग को अपनाए हुए हैं। यहां तक कि करमा, सरहुल जैसे त्योहारों में भी योग की झलक मिलती है। निश्चित रूप से योग प्रकृति से जुड़ा है और झारखंड प्रकृति का अनुपम उपहार है। ऐसे में यहां के गांव-गांव, हर वर्ग और समुदाय में आधुनिक योग की पहुंच यहां की संस्कृति को बचाने का भी काम करेगी। प्रधानमंत्री का दूरदराज के गांवों में भी योग को पहुंचाने का सपना तभी पूरा होगा जब योग की समझ विकसित करने के लिए साधन भी उन तक पहुंचेंगे।

कश्मीर में कुछ नया करने की जरूरत



राजनीतिक दूरदर्शिता यही सुनिश्चित करने में निहित है कि मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल के दौरान तिरंगे में लिपटे सैनिकों के ताबूत सरकार की पहचान न बनने पाएं

म्मु-कश्मीर के राज्यपाल सत्यपाल मलिक ने भले ही बीती 15 जून को यह कहा हो कि राज्य में आतंकी गतिविधियां कम हुई हैं और हालात में 'काफी' सुधार हुआ है, लेकिन हकीकत इससे उलट दिखती है। कुछ हालिया घटनाएं संकेत करती हैं कि हिंसा फिर से सिर उठा रही है। 17 जून को हिंसक वारदात में सेना के एक मेजर शहीद हो गए। इसके कुछ दिन पहले अनंतनाग में सीआरपीएफ के पांच जवान शहीद हुए और कई घायल हो गए थे। राष्ट्रीय राइफल्स के मेजर केतन शर्मा और सीआरपीएफ के जवानों ने देश की रक्षा के लिए अपने प्राण न्योछावर करके सुरक्षाकर्मियों की उस सूची में जगह बना ली जिनका जीवन उस छद्म युद्ध की भेंट चढ़ गया जिसका भारत जनवरी 1990 से ही सामना कर रहा है। जम्मू-कश्मीर इस जंग का अखाडा बना हुआ है। इन आतंकी हमलों की भर्त्सना करते हुए राज्यपाल मलिक ने 20 जून को कहा, 'जब भी सुरक्षा बलों द्वारा शांतिपूर्ण चुनाव कराने या आतंकियों का लगातार सफाया करने जैसे सफल अभियान चलाए जाते हैं तब सीमा पार बैठे आतंकियों के आका उन्हें फिदायीन हमले करने का हुक्म देते है और अनंतनाग जिले में हुआ हमला फिदायीन हमला ही था।' उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि आतंकी और उनके आकाओं को यह पता होना चाहिए कि आतंक के इस उन्माद को खत्म करने का हमारा

कश्मीर में आतंकी हमलों के बीच एक अजीबोगरीब घटना भी सामने आई। 16 जून को दावा किया गया कि पाकिस्तान ने भारत और अमेरिका के साथ एक सूचना साझा की जिसमें पुलवामा में आइईडी से लैस वाहन से धमाके की आशंका व्यक्त की गई थी। हालांकि भारतीय खुफिया एजेंसियों ने स्पष्ट किया कि यह जानकारी पाकिस्तान स्थित भारतीय उच्चायोग में अज्ञात व्यक्ति द्वारा कॉल के जरिये दी गई थी। यह किसी विश्वसनीय स्नोत द्वारा दी गई आधिकारिक जानकारी नहीं थी।

जम्म-कश्मीर में यह छद्म युद्ध तमाम अनमोल जिंदगियों को लील रहा है। इस साल के आंकड़े तो और चिंताजनक हैं। जनवरी से अब तक 62 सुरक्षाकर्मी आतंकी हिंसा के चलते अपना जीवन गंवा चुके हैं। मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल में इसमें नौ का इजाफा और हो चुका है जिससे यह आंकड़ा 71 तक पहुंच गया है। तमाम आम नागरिक भी इसकी तिपश झेल रहे हैं। इससे निपटने के लिए राज्यपाल मलिक ने जो हल सुझाया वह काफी महंगा साबित हो रहा है। याद दिला दें कि राज्य में 20 जून, 2018 को राज्यपाल शासन लगा जब पीडीपी-भाजपा का असहज गठबंधन टूट गया। छह महीनों के राज्यपाल शासन की अवधि के बाद यह राष्ट्रपति शासन में तब्दील हो गया। एक साल बीत गया, लेकिन राज्य में चुनाव के कोई संकेत नहीं दिख रहे। स्थानीय राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया जस की तस शिथिल पड़ी हुई है। ऐसे में मौजूदा व्यवस्था कायम रहने के ही आसार हैं।

अक्टूबर, 1947 से ही कश्मीर मुद्दा पहेली की तरह उलझा हुआ है। भारत-पाकिस्तान द्विपक्षीय



रिश्तों में यह लगातार अहम बना हुआ है। 1950 के दशक में नेहरू-अयूब खान से लेकर मोदी-इमरान खान के दौर में इस मोर्चे पर कुछ नहीं बदला। कश्मीर मुद्दा कई परतों में उलझा हुआ है। इसे भौगोलिक स्थिति, भू-राजनीतिक विशेषता और जनसांख्यिकी मिश्रण जैसे पहलुओं पर देखा जाता है। याद रहे कि यह इकलौता मुस्लिम बहुल राज्य था जो भारतीय संघ में शामिल हुआ जिसमें भारत और पाकिस्तानी दोनों पहचानें समाहित हैं। विलय की संधि के तहत जहां इसे विशेष दर्जा हासिल है वहीं भारतीय संविधान में अनुच्छेद 370 के अंतर्गत इसे विशिष्ट स्वायत्तता भी

जम्मू-कश्मीर की जनसांख्यिकी अगर राज्य की राजनीति को दिशा देती है तो दिल्ली-श्रीनगर के समीकरण राजनीतिक दिशा के मुख्य निर्धारक बनते हैं। पाकिस्तान बाहुबल से राज्य को हड़पने की कोशिशें करता रहा है। दो सीधे युद्धों में नाकाम होने के बाद उसने रणनीति बदलते हुए 1990 से राज्य में घुसपैठ और आतंकवाद का रास्ता पकड़कर छद्म युद्ध शुरू कर दिया। 1999 का कारगिल भी इसमें शामिल है। फरवरी 2019 में हुआ पुलवामा हमला तनातनी की हालिया मिसाल है। इसके बाद भारत ने बालाकोट में हवाई हमला किया। यह एक नया पड़ाव है। मोदी की दूसरी बार जबरदस्त जीत ने ऐसे मजबूत भारत की छवि बनाई है जिसकी कमान एक बहुत सशक्त एवं दुढ़ नेता के हाथ में है। चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान अपने बयानों से मोदी ने यही धारणा बनाई कि किसी भी तरह के आतंकी हमले में भारत चुप होकर बैठने वाला नहीं। ऐसे में इस्लामाबाद में भारतीय मिशन को किया गया अज्ञात कॉल शायद पाकिस्तान की नई एहतियाती

कश्मीर मुद्दे पर पाकिस्तानी पहलू से निपटना जटिल होगा और इसमें काफी समय भी लगेगा, क्योंकि चीन, अमेरिका, रूस, ईरान, अफगानिस्तान और जिहादी धड़ों जैसी बाहरी ताकतें भी इसमें जुड़ी हैं। जम्मू-कश्मीर के घरेलू हालात में दिल्ली अहम कारक है और मोदी के पास भी 2014 की तुलना में ज्यादा राजनीतिक ताकत है। मोदी सरकार के लिए तात्कालिक चुनौती यही होगी कि वह एक जुलाई से शुरू होने जा रही अमरनाथ यात्रा को अभेद्य सुरक्षा उपलब्ध

में भी आतंकी इस वार्षिक धार्मिक आयोजन को निशाना बनाते रहे हैं। जुलाई 2017 में आतंकियो ने आठ श्रद्धालुओं की हत्या कर दी थी और उससे पहले 2000, 2001 और 2002 में और बड़े आतंकी हमले हुए थे। अमरनाथ यात्रा कश्मीर के बहुलतावाद एवं धार्मिक सौहार्द का प्रतीक रही है। स्थानीय मुस्लिम हिंदुओं के इस बड़े आयोजन को सुरक्षित रूप से संपन्न कराते रहे हैं। यह अफसोसजनक है कि कश्मीर की युवा आबादी केवल बीते ढाई दशकों के बुरे अनुभवो और भेदभाव से ही वाकिफ है। पिछले साल तो स्थानीय सामाजिक-राजनीतिक परिवेश और भी शुष्क हो गया था।

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने अपने दम पर भाजपा को जबरदस्त जनादेश दिलाया है। उनकी राजनीतिक विरासत के लिहाज से यह एक अहम मोड है क्या वह वाजपेयी की राह पर चल सकते है जिसमें पहले तो स्थानीय कश्मीरी भावनाओ पर मरहम लगाया जाए और फिर उनमें आशंक और अलगाव के भाव को खत्म किया जाए वह विधानसभा चुनावों का एलान करके शिथिल पड़ी घरेलू राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया को प्रोत्साहन देंगे या फिर सुरक्षा बलों के दम पर सख्त रवैया अपनाएंगे और केवल आतंकवाद के दमन पर ही पुरा ध्यान केंद्रित करेंगे? बाद वाले उपाय पर ध्यान देने से उन नरम और स्मार्ट कदमों की अनदेखी हो जाएगी जिनकी कश्मीर को सख्त

साल की पहली छमाही में 71 सैनिकों की शहादत इस कडवी हकीकत का प्रमाण है कि भारतीय सैनिकों को कितनी बड़ी कीमत चुकानी पड़ रही है। राजनीतिक दूरदर्शिता यही सुनिश्चित करने में निहित है कि मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल के दौरान तिरंगे में लिपटे सैनिकों के ताबूत सरकार की पहचान न बनने पाएं।

(लेखक सामरिक मामलों के विशेषज्ञ एवं सोसायटी फॉर पॉलिसी स्टडीज के निदेशक हैं response@jagran.com

सुधारों के इंतजार में कारागार

भारत में जेलों की हालत क्या है, इसे देखने की फुरसत किसी के पास नहीं है। बंदियों के पास चुनाव में वोट देने का अधिकार होता तो शायद स्थितियां अलग होतीं। चूंकि ऐसा नहीं है, इसलिए जेल की बुरी खबरें ही अक्सर सुर्खियां बनती हैं, जेल की जिंदगियां और उनकी गुजर-बसर नहीं। यह बात बहुत कम ही लोग जानते हैं कि पुरुष कैदियों को जेलों में आउटडोर गेम्स खलने की काफी सुविधाएं मिल जाती हैं। वे बैडमिंटन, वॉलीबॉल, क्रिकेट जैसे खेलों में हिस्सा ले सकते हैं। उनके सामने बड़ा मैदान होता है, जबिक महिला बंदियों को छोटी-छोटी जगहों में बंद कर दिया जाता है। जहां किसी तरह की उनकी न्यूनतम सुविधाएं पूरी हो सकती हैं। भारतीय जेलें अभी तक इस विचार को स्वीकार ही नहीं कर पाई हैं कि महिलाओं को जेल में अपनी सेहत को ठीक रखने के लिए खेलने की जरूरत भी पड़ सकती है। खेलों के मैदानों के न होने की वजह से महिलाओं की मानसिक और शारीरिक सेहत पर बहुत बुरा असर पड़ता है। पुरुष बंदियों को अक्सर टूर्नामेंट में हिस्सा लेने की सहूलियत भी मिल जाती है। वे कई बार जेल स्टाफ के साथ अलग-अलग खेलों में हिस्सा लेते हैं, जबिक महिला बंदियों के सामने इस तरह के विकल्प तकरीबन न के बराबर होते हैं। उन पर अलग तरह के नियम थोप दिए जाते हैं जो पहले से ही बनी उनकी परिस्थितियों को और भी बदतर बना देते हैं। महिला बंदियों के लिए मैदान के मौजूद न होने का

मतलब यह कर्ता नहीं है कि उन्हें इनडोर गेम्स खेलने की बेहतर सहूलियतें दी जाती हैं। बंदियों को न तो कारागारों के मैदान में खेलने की कोई सुविधा होती है और न ही बैरक में। जेलों प्रशासकों को उनके लिए ये जरूरतें बहुत ही गैर-जरूरी दिखाई देती हैं। यही वजह है कि जेल के बाहर भी हाशिये पर रहने वाली महिलाएं जब जेल के अंदर आती हैं

तथ्य-कथ्य

लोकसभा

का स्तर

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सदस्यों की शिक्षा 🕬



उनमें कैद बंदियों में अपेक्षित सुधार कैसे ला पाएंगी?

नहीं सुधरी तो

अगर हमारी जेलों

तो उनके हाशिये और भी सिमट जाते हैं। महाराष्ट्र के एक जेल अधिकारी ने मुझे बताया कि उनके राज्य की एक जेल की महिला बंदियों की स्थिति बेहद खराब हो चुकी है। इसकी वजह यह है कि उस जेल में महिलाओं का दायरा बेहद सीमित है और उनके सामने सिर्फ एक सफेद दीवार है। नतीजतन जो महिलाएं लंबे समय से बंदी हैं, उनकी नजर धीरे-धीरे कमजोर होती जा रही है, क्योंकि उनके सामने अब देखने के लिए सफेद रंग के अलावा और कोई रंग नहीं है।

जरूरत भी हो सकती है। जेल के अंदर का रख-रखाव जेल के अंदर बंदी ही करते हैं। बाहर से कोई नहीं आता। जेल में आने वाले बंदियों की आर्थिक, सामाजिक, शैक्षिक, पारिवारिक और सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमि अलग भी हो सकती है, लेकिन जेलें कैदियों की संख्या और जरूरतों के मुताबिक अपनी बनी-बनाई संरचना

इस जेल में चलने की जगह का बेहद सीमित होना एक दूसरी

दिक्कत है। उसका नतीजा यह हुआ है कि अब इन महिला

बंदियों को चलने में भी समस्या होने लगी है। उनके घुटने

जवाब देने लगे हैं। जेलों ने यह सोचा ही नहीं कि जो महिलाएं

जेल के अंदर आई हैं, उन्हें चलने के लिए कुछ जगह की

में बदलाव पसंद नहीं करतीं। वहां ठहराव ही बना हुआ है। जेल में आने वाले बंदी भी अलग-अलग अपराधों के तहत यहां पहुंचते हैं। इनमें कुछ विचारधीन होते हैं, कुछ सजायाप्ता। उनकी मानसिक परिस्थितियां भी अलग होती हैं। इसी तरह जेल अधिकारियों के कामकाज करने के रवैये से भी जेलों की संस्कृति बनती-बिगड़ती है। जेल के बंदी का सबसे अधिक वास्ता जेल के अधिकारी से ही पड़ता है। इसलिए भीड़ से लदी भारत की जेलों को सोचना होगा कि वे कैसे बंदियों के सकारात्मक रुझान बढ़ाएं। जेलें सुजन की दुनिया से परे एक अलग टापू की तरह संचालित होने की अपनी एक आदत बना चुकी हैं। वे बंदियों को परंपरागत तरह के कामकाज तो देती हैं, लेकिन नए बदलावों को आत्मसात करने में कोई जल्दी नहीं दिखातीं। देश की बड़ी संस्थाएं जिन्हें मानवाधिकार का काम सौंपा गया है वे भी न तो तत्परता के साथ आगे बढ़कर काम करने में कोई रुचि दिखती हैं और न ही किसी जेल के अच्छे काम को आगे बढ़ाने में उनका कोई योगदान होता है। एक तरफ भारत का समाज बंदियों को वापस अपने समाज में स्वीकार करने में हिचकता है ओर दूसरी तरफ वह यह भी चाहता है जो जेल में गया है वह पूरी तरह से एक सुधरे हुए इंसान की तरह लौट के आए, लेकिन इस परी प्रक्रिया में समाज अपनी भिमका निभाने में कतराता है। अदालत से सजा मिलने की प्रक्रिया के दौरान जेल का काम इन लोगों के घावों पर मरहम लगाना या फिर उन्हें सधार के रास्ते पर ले जाना होता है, लेकिन अगर जेलें खुद ही नहीं सुधरेंगी तो बंदियों को क्या सुधार पाएंगी? यह एक वाजिब

सवाल है, लेकिन इसका कोई जवाब नहीं दिखता। (लेखिका जेल सुधार के लिए सक्रिय संगठन तिनका-तिनका की संस्थापक हैं) response@jagran.com



स्तर पर उपेक्षा का पात्र हो गया है। आज जब हम आंख उठाकर अपने चारों ओर देखते हैं तो अनेक ऐसे लोग भी लोलुप भाव से अपना जीवन जी रहे हैं, जिनसे समाज सदा शुचिता की दृष्टि पाता था और जो कभी अपने आदर्श जीवन के कारण समाज के अगुआ हुआ करते थे। शासक या नीति-निर्धारक, अधिकारी, शिक्षक, डॉक्टर, व्यापारी आचार्य और विरागी आदि समाज और देश के लिए सत्यनिष्ठा और समर्पित भाव से कार्य करें तो देश और समाज के लिए इससे बेहतर कोई बात नहीं हो सकती सौभाग्यवश उपरोक्त क्षेत्रों से जुड़े अनेक लोग अपने दायित्वों का ईमानदारी से निर्वाह कर रहे हैं, पर ऐसे कुछ लोग लोलुपता के जाल में फंस जाते हैं, तब जनता का नुकसान होता है और इससे पूरा समाज प्रभावित होता है। आज की स्थिति यह है कि अनेक राजनीतिक दल अपनी सत्ता को बनाए रखने के लिए कभी जातिवाद का

मुद्दा और कभी संप्रदायवाद का मुद्दा उठाकर इस देश को क्षति पहुंचा रहे हैं। चुनाव के समय में अनेक राजनीतिक दलों के लोग जनता के समक्ष ऐसी विनम्रता का प्रदर्शन करते हैं, जैसे इनका पूरा का पूरा जीवन केवल समाज के लिए ही समर्पित है। अनेक अधिकारी भी आज की व्यवस्था में अपने दायित्वों का सम्यक निर्वाह नहीं कर रहे हैं। इससे भी बहुत क्षति पहुंच रही है। एक वक्त था जब शिक्षकों का आम तौर पर समाज में बहुत सम्मान था सम्मान तो अब भी है, लेकिन अब पहले जैसी बात नही है। यही बात समाज के अन्य वर्गों के नीति-निर्धारकों पर भी लागू होती है। किसी ऊंचे पद पर आसीन होना या किसी कल्याणकारी व्यवसाय से जुडे होने में कोई खराबी नहीं है, लेकिन जो लोग समाज और देश के नीति-निर्धारक हैं, उनके आदर्श व्यक्तित्व से आम जनता को भी प्रेरणा मिलती है। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि ऐसे नीति-निर्धारक जो कुछ करेंगे, उसका असर आम जनता पर पड़ेगा।

डॉ. गदाधर त्रिपाठी

रोकना होगा इंटरनेट का दुरुपयोग

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

हाल ही में वर्ल्ड वाइड वेब के खोजकर्ता एवं ब्रिटिश वैज्ञानिक सर टिम बर्नर्स ने इंटरनेट के दुरुपयोग को लेकर चिंता जाहिर करते हुए दुनियाभर की सरकारों को चिट्ठी लिखकर इसे रोकने के लिए एकजुट होने की बात कही है। सर टिम बर्नर्स का कहना कि यदि हम अभी सचेत नहीं हुए तो दुनिया के लिए बड़ी हार होगी। सच है कि इंटरनेट ने विश्व ग्राम की अवधारणा को मूर्त रूप देकर सूचनाओं का व्यापक तंत्र विकसित कर दुनिया को एक स्क्रीन पर लाने का काम किया है, लेकिन यह भी सच है कि इंटरनेट के दुरुपयोग ने हम

वैचारिक क्षमता, तारी स्वस्थ चिंतन प्रणाली, र्क शक्ति का ह्रास कर हमें

इंटरनेट आपकी कमजोरी न बने और अन्य रचनात्मक कार्यों की जगह न ले ले, इस पर ध्यान देना जरूरी है

ओर गमन कर रहा है, जो बेहद चिंताजनक है। गौरतलब है कि दुनिया में 3.9 अरब लोग इंटरनेट का इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं। भारत में 56 करोड़ यूजर्स हैं। इंटरनेट भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में सालाना 7.10 लाख करोड़ रुपये का योगदान देता है। हर साल औसतन 14 हजार करोड़

बाइल बिक रहे हैं। भारत में साइबर लत को मोकर किए गए एक सर्वे के अनुसार 18 से 30 लाल के बीच 5 में से 3 युवा ऐसे हैं, जो अपने समार्टफोन के बगैर इस तरह बेचैन होने लगते हैं जैसे उनका कोई अंग गायब हो गया हो।इनमें 96 फीसद सुबह उठकर सबसे पहले सोशल मीडिया पर जाते हैं। 70 फीसद युवाओं का कहना है कि वे ई-मेल और सोशल मीडिया को चेक किए बगैर जी नहीं सकते। दस देशों के 10,000 लोगों पर वैश्विक प्रबंधन परामर्श कंपनी एटी कियनी द्वारा किए गए शोध में यह बात सामने आई है कि

53 फीसद भारतीय हर घंटे इंटरनेट से जुड़े रहते हैं, जो कि वैश्विक औसत 51 फीसद से ज्यादा है। इनमें 77 फीसद लोग सोशल नेटवर्किंग साइटों पर रोजाना लॉगइन करते हैं। भारत में बेहद सस्ती दरों में उपलब्ध डाटा की वजह से कम आय वर्ग वाले लोगों के पास भी स्मार्टफोन उपलब्ध हैं जिसका सदुपयोग के बजाय दुरुपयोग भी होने लगा है।

40%-

20%

इंटरनेट का अत्यधिक उपयोग हर किसी के जीवन को बाधित कर रहा है। इसकी लत से लोग अधिक तनावपूर्ण, उदास और भ्रमित हो रहे हैं। इंटरनेट का अत्यधिक उपयोग युवाओं की शैक्षणिक और सामाजिक गतिविधियों को भी नुकसान पहुंचा रहा है। इसके शिकार युवा सामाजिक मूल्यों और मानदंडों को भूल रहे हैं। वे सनकी और नर्वस हो गए हैं। इस संबंध में माता-पिता की भूमिका प्रभावी होनी चाहिए। उन्हें इस बात पर ध्यान देना चाहिए कि उनके बच्चे इंटरनेट पर क्या कर रहे हैं। इंटरनेट आपकी कमजोरी न बने और यह अन्य रचनात्मक कार्यों की जगह न ले ले, इस पर ध्यान देना जरूरी है। लिहाजा इंटरनेट इस्तेमाल करने के संबंध में कुछ स्वनिर्धारित नियम काम में लाए जा सकते हैं। (लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

चित्त वृत्तियों का निरोध ही योग है

1952 1957 1962 1967 1971 1977 1980 1984 1989 1991 1996 1998 1999 2004 2009 2014 2019

योग का उपयोग बढ़ाने की जरूरत शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में डॉ. मोनिका शर्मा ने जिस योग की उपयोगिता को रेखांकित किया है, वह भारतीय जीवन शैली का प्रमुख अंग माना जाता है। योग दर्शन के प्रणेता महर्षि पतंजलि ने अपने 'योग-सूत्र' नामक ग्रंथ में 'योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः' के रूप में योग को परिभाषित किया है। शरीर की अंतःक्रिया के तीन प्रमुख कारक माने गए हैं-मन अर्थात चित्त, बुद्धि और आत्मा। मनुष्य की चित्त वृत्तियां बुद्धि से परिचालित होती हैं। बुद्धि यदि विवेकशील है तो मन को सकारात्मक दिशा मिलती है और विवेकशून्य बुद्धि मन को नकारात्मक दिशा में प्रवृत्त करती है। योग साधना मन की इसी नकारात्मकता को नियंत्रित करती है। यम, नियम, आसन, प्राणायाम, प्रत्याहार, धारणा, ध्यान और समाधि योग साधना के आठ अंग हैं। इस अष्टांग मार्ग से योग साधना में लीन होने वाला साधक ही ब्रह्म का साक्षात्कार करने में सफल हो पाता है। अलौकिक आनंद से युक्त आत्मानुभूति प्राप्त करने की यह अष्टांग योग साधना असाधारण योग साधकों के लिए है। सामान्य जीवन में तो इस अष्टांग मार्ग के दो अंग-आसन और प्राणायाम ही पर्याप्त हैं। यह आम धारणा है कि नियमित योग करने से शरीर निरोगी रहता है। विभिन्न प्रकार की शारीरिक व्याधियों का कारगर निदान योग में निहित है, लेकिन अप्राकृतिक जीवन शैली, अनियमित दिनचर्या और प्रदूषित खान-पान के चलते आम आदमी का शरीर अल्पायु में ही विभिन्न रोगों का घर बन जाता है। जिसके कारण मनुष्य की औसत आयु 65 से 70 वर्ष के बीच रह गई है। यह विडंबना ही है घटती औसत आयु के प्रति लापरवाह भारतीयजन प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का न केवल बुरी तरह से दोहन कर रहे हैं, अपितु जीवन के प्रमुख आधार जल और वायु को प्रदूषित करने से भी

मेलबाक्स

बाज नहीं आ रहे। मनुष्य की इस स्वार्थी प्रवृत्ति पर चित्तवृत्तियों का निरोध करने वाला योग ही अंकुश लगा सकता है। शायद इसीलिए भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की पहल पर संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघ द्वारा 21 जून को अंतरराष्ट्रीय योग दिवस घोषित किया गया है।

डॉ. वीपी पाण्डेय, अलीगढ़

कांग्रेस नेतृत्व की कमजोरी

दैनिक जागरण के 21 जून के अंक में प्रकाशित सुरेंद्र किशोर का लेख, हकीकत से मुंह मोड़ती कांग्रेस, में सही निष्कर्ष निकाला है कि दाग चेहरे पर है और कांग्रेस नेतृत्व आईना साफ करने में जुटा है। निरंतर पराजय से कांग्रेस का कार्यकर्ता भी हतोत्साहित है, लेकिन वह नेतृत्व के लिए परिवार से बाहर झांकने की हिम्मत नहीं जुटा पा रहा है। परिवारवाद कहिए या वंशवाद, इसकी नींव तो जवाहरलाल नेहरू के जमाने में ही पड़ गई थी। लाल बहादुर शास्त्री के असमय निधन के बाद इंदिरा गांधी के प्रधानमंत्री बनने पर कांग्रेस नेतृत्व के लिए पूरी तरह परिवार पर आश्रित हो गई थी। राजीव गांधी के निधन के बाद परिवारिक निष्ठा के कारण फिर कांग्रेस की कमान सोनिया गांधी को सौंप दी गई। आज नेहरू-गांधी परिवार की विरासत को राहुल गांधी संभाल रहे हैं। इतिहास साक्षी है कि आज तक ऐसा संयोग कभी नहीं हुआ कि किसी भी राजवंश में सभी उत्तराधिकारी योग्य ही हुए हों, जब भी कोई अयोग्य शासक आया तो सत्ता बिखर गई। आज कांग्रेस की स्थिति भी ऐसी ही हो गई है। सक्षम नेतृत्व के अभाव में कांग्रेस बिखराव की राह पर है। कांग्रेस पार्टी आज भी नेतृत्व के लिए परिवार

की तरफ निहार रही है। अब उसकी उम्मीदें प्रियंका पर टिकी

हैं, लेकिन प्रियंका भी लोकसभा चुनाव में कोई चमत्कार नहीं दिखा सर्की। वास्तविकता यह है कि कार्यकर्ता हमेशा मार्गदर्शन के लिए अपने नेतृत्व पर निर्भर रहता है। जय-पराजय के लिए नेतत्व जिम्मेदार है। कांग्रेस की दुर्गति के लिए नेतृत्व ही जवाबदेह है, इसलिए कांग्रेस के उत्थान के लिए जरूरी है कि नेतृत्व अपनी कमियों का संज्ञान लेकर उसे दूर करे।

रणजीत वर्मा, फरीदाबाद

लचर स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं

एक्यूट इंसेफलाइटिस सिंड्रोम (एईएस) पर पिछले 24 वर्षी में कोई खास शोध नहीं हुआ। यही कारण है इसकी रोकथाम के लिए किसी वैक्सीन को ईजाद नहीं किया जा सका। बिहार में हर साल इस बीमारी से तमाम बच्चे मौत के शिकार हो रहे हैं। इस समय राज्य के करीब 12 जिलों में यह बीमारी फैली हुई है। हम सुरक्षा मामलों में विश्व की चौथी महाशक्ति हैं और आर्थिक रूप से विश्व की छठी सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था बन चुके हैं, लेकिन आज भी स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं बेहद लचर हैं। केंद्र व राज्य सरकारों को ऐसे क्षेत्रों पर विशेष ध्यान देना चाहिए। दीपक गौतम, सोनीपत

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

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हादसा आर सवाल

माचल प्रदेश के कुल्लू जिले में गुरुवार को हुए बस हादसे में चवालीस लोगों की मौत दहला देने वाली घटना है। इस हादसे ने एक बार फिर सरकार की लापरवाही को उजागर किया है। इतनी बड़ी संख्या में लोगों का मारा जाना बता रहा है कि राज्य सरकार के लिए लोगों की जान की कोई कीमत नहीं है। सड़क सुरक्षा को लेकर सरकार ने आंखें मूंद रखी हैं। राज्य में पिछले पांच साल के दौरान जितने सड़क हादसे हुए, जांच में उनका बड़ा कारण सुरक्षा में चूक और लापरवाही ही सामने आई। लेकिन सरकार बेपरवाह है। हकीकत तो यह है कि सरकार ने पिछले हादसों से कोई सबक नहीं सीखा और सड़क यात्रा को सुरक्षित बनाने की दिशा में कोई कदम नहीं उठाया। इसी का नतीजा है कि आए दिन राज्य में सड़क हादसे हो रहे हैं और लोग मर रहे हैं। जब-जब ऐसे बड़े हादसे होते हैं, मृतकों को मुआवजा देकर मामला खत्म दिया जाता है, लेकिन पिछले हादसों से कोई सबक नहीं लिया जाता। इसलिए सड़क हादसों में हिमाचल प्रदेश का ग्राफ ऊपर जा रहा है।

कुल्लू में जो हादसा हुआ, उसके भी कारण वही हैं जो पूर्व में हुए बड़े हादसों के रहे हैं। यह एक निजी ऑपरेटर की बस थी, जो रोजाना बंजार से गाड़ागुशैणी कस्बे तक सवारियां ले जाती थी। जांच में पता चला है कि यह बस काफी पुरानी थी। हादसा उस वक्त हुआ जब यह चढ़ाई पर थी और ड्राइवर ने गियर बदलने की कोशिश की, लेकिन गियर बदल नहीं पाया। इससे बस पीछे जाने लगी और पांच सौ फीट गहरी खाई में जा गिरी। जांच में दूसरी बात यह सामने आई कि बस की क्षमता तो सिर्फ बयालीस सवारियों की थी, लेकिन इसमें अस्सी लोग सवार थे, यानी निर्धारित क्षमता से ठीक दोगुने। ऐसे में तो हादसा होना ही था! इस घटना से यह बात साफ हुई है कि निजी बसें किस तरह लोगों के लिए जानलेवा बन गई हैं, निजी बस ऑपरेटर किस तरह से नियम-कायदों को धता बताते हुए धड़ल्ले से बसें दौड़ा रहे हैं और राज्य का परिवहन विभाग, जिसकी जिम्मेदारी सड़कों पर चलने वाले सभी वाहनों पर निगरानी से लेकर नियमों की पालना सुनिश्चित कराने की है, भी नियम-कायदे तोड़ने वालों और अवैध वाहन संचालन को बढ़ावा दे रहा है। यह कोई छिपी बात नहीं है कि परिवहन विभाग भ्रष्टाचार के बड़े अड्डे हैं। ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस से लेकर, वाहनों के परिमट और फिटनेस जैसे काम बिना घूस के संभव नहीं होते। हर स्तर पर भ्रष्टाचार है। निजी बसों में क्षमता से ज्यादा सवारियां ठुंसना तो आम है। लेकिन कभी ऐसा देखने में नहीं आया कि पुलिस या परिवहन विभाग के दस्ते क्षमता से भरी बसों से सवारियां उतरवाते हों और बस मालिक के खिलाफ कार्रवाई करते हों।

दो साल पहले भी शिमला के पास नेरवा में एक बस के नदी में गिर जाने से पैंतालीस लोग मारे गए थे। वह बस भी निजी ऑपरेटर की थी। पिछले साल अप्रैल में सिरमौर जिले में एक स्कूली बस गहरी खाई में गिर जाने से तेईस बच्चों सिहत सत्ताईस लोगों की मौत हो गई थी। इन दोनों ही हादसों में ड्राइवर की लापरवाही सामने आई थी। हिमाचल प्रदेश पहाड़ी राज्य है और यहां के रास्ते जोखिम भरे हैं। इसलिए संकरे रास्तों पर मोड़ते वक्त या खड़ी चढ़ाई के दौरान ही हादसे ज्यादा होते हैं, खासतौर से जब बसों में क्षमता से ज्यादा लोग भरे हों और वाहन पुराने व खराब हों। सवाल है, निजी बस ऑपरेटरों पर लगाम कसने में सरकार लाचार क्यों है। हादसे रोकने

के लिए सरकारी तंत्र को सजग तो होना ही पड़ेगा!

याग-बल

अ तरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर योग का महत्त्व तो पांच साल पहले ही स्वीकार कर लिया गया था, जब अंतरराष्ट्रीय योग दिवस के रूप में इक्कीस जून का दिन तय कर दिया गया। पर अब योग के लाभ भी लोगों को समझ में आने लगे हैं। इसी का नतीजा है कि पांचवें अंतरराष्ट्रीय योग दिवस पर दुनिया भर से बड़ी संख्या में लोगों के हिस्सा लेने की खबरें मिलीं। यह भारत के लिए गर्व का विषय है कि भारतीय योग विद्या का प्रसार अब दुनिया भर में हो चुका है। योग नीरोग रहने का सबसे वैज्ञानिक तरीका है। इसका महत्त्व बहुत पहले भारतीय ऋषियों-मुनियों ने समझा था और अब यह इक्कीसवीं सदी तक पहुंच कर चिकित्सा विज्ञान का भी हिस्सा बन चुका है। योग दरअसल, शरीर और मन को स्वस्थ रखने की एक आध्यात्मिक पद्धति है। इसमें सिर्फ व्यायाम नहीं, दैनंदिन जीवन की गतिविधियों को भी संतुलित और संयमित करने का प्रयास किया जाता है। पर फिलहाल इसका आसन वाला पक्ष ही अधिक लोगों की समझ में आया है। इसके नियमित व्यवहार से लोगों को अनेक जीवनशैली संबंधी रोगों में लाभ मिला है, इसलिए दुनिया भर में लोग इसकी तरफ तेजी से आकर्षित हो रहे हैं। इस तरह यह उम्मीद भी जगती है कि वे योग की संपूर्ण पद्धति को जानने और अमल में लाने का प्रयास करेंगे।

आज जिस तरह दुनिया भर में बीमारियों से पार पाना एक बड़ी चुनौती है, उसमें सबसे अधिक चिंता मधुमेह, रक्तचाप, तनाव, अवसाद, अनिद्रा आदि जैसी जीवन-शैली संबंधी बीमारियों पर काबू पाने को लेकर व्यक्त की जा रही है। सबसे अधिक लोग इन्हीं रोगों से परेशान हैं और सरकारों को इन्हीं पर सबसे अधिक धन व्यय करना पड़ता है। इसलिए माना जा रहा है कि अगर लोग योग को अपनाएंगे तो न सिर्फ वे स्वस्थ रहेंगे, बल्कि जीवन-शैली संबंधी रोगों पर होने वाला खर्च भी बचेगा, जो विकास संबंधी दूसरे कामों में लगाया जा सकेगा। अब तो चिकित्सा संबंधी शोधों से जाहिर हो चुका है कि जीवन-शैली संबंधी अनेक समस्याएं योग के जरिए समाप्त की जा सकती हैं, इसलिए चिकित्सक दवाओं और परहेज आदि के साथ-साथ योग करने का भी निर्देश देते हैं। बहुत सारे अस्पतालों में योग चिकित्सा के विभाग खोल दिए गए हैं। इस तरह प्राचीन भारतीय स्वास्थ्य विज्ञान के रूप में योग ने न सिर्फ आधुनिक चिकित्सा पद्धति के सामने भी अपने महत्त्व को रेखांकित किया है, बल्कि दुनिया भर के लोगों में इसके जरिए भारतीय संस्कृति के प्रति आदर भाव भी विकसित करना शुरू किया है।

योग पद्धति के विकास और विस्तार ने देश और दुनिया में रोजगार के नए अवसर भी पैदा किए हैं। अब तमाम देशों में योग शिक्षा के केंद्र खुलने लगे हैं, जहां भारतीय योग शिक्षकों की भारी मांग है। ये शिक्षक विदेशों में जाकर न सिर्फ योग के आसन वाले पक्ष का प्रशिक्षण देते हैं, बल्कि आहार-विहार संबंधी आदतों में बदलाव की भी चेष्टा करते हैं। इस तरह अतार्किक खानपान के चलते दुनिया भर में फैल रहे प्रदूषण पर भी काबू पाए जा सकने की उम्मीद बनती है। पर केवल इस पद्धति को अपनाने से पूरी तरह शारीरिक समस्याओं पर काबू पाए जा सकने की उम्मीद तब तक पूरी नहीं हो सकती, जब तक कि परिवेश संबंधी समस्याओं पर भी काबू न पाया जाए। प्रधानमंत्री ने इस अवसर पर कहा भी कि पानी, पोषण, पर्यावरण और परिश्रम से ही उत्तम स्वास्थ्य का लक्ष्य प्राप्त किया जा सकता है।

कल्पमेधा

सभ्यता, शिष्टाचार और खुशामद में फर्क करने की आदत डालिए। -सरदार पटेल

रक्षा बजट और पाक की रणनीति

संजीव पांडेय

पाकिस्तानी सैन्य बजट में इजाफा न होना भविष्य के लिए अच्छे संकेत माने जा सकते हैं। इससे एशियाई मुल्कों में हथियार खरीद को लेकर मची होड़ में कमी आ सकती है। पिछले कुछ दशकों में एशियाई देशों में सैन्य बजट जिस तेजी से बढ़ा है, उससे सैन्यीकरण को तेजी से बढ़ावा मिला है और एशिया क्षेत्र को भारी नुकसान हुआ है।

च पूरे दक्षिण एशिया और पश्चिम एशिया में सैन्यीकरण पर भारी जोर हो, तब भी अगर कोई मुल्क अपना रक्षा बजट नहीं बढ़ाता है तो यह चौंकाने वाली बात हो सकती है। बेशक इसका मुख्य कारण आर्थिक संकट है। पर भविष्य में शायद यही फैसला कुछ संकेत लेकर आए। आज एशिया ही सैन्यीकरण का प्रमुख केंद्र बन गया है। चीन, भारत, जापान, उत्तर कोरिया, पाकिस्तान, सऊदी अरब और ईरान जैसे देश सैन्यीकरण को बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं। भारत, पाकिस्तान, ईरान और उत्तर कोरिया जैसे देश तो भारी सैन्यीकरण का नतीजा भुगत रहे हैं, क्योंकि ये मुल्क क्षेत्रीय आर्थिक सहयोग को बढ़ाए जाने के बजाय अभी तक सैन्य शक्ति बढ़ाने में लगे रहे। भारत, पाकिस्तान और चीन तो इसकी शुरुआत काफी पहले कर चुके थे।

खराब आर्थिक हालात के मद्देनजर पाकिस्तान ने इस साल रक्षा बजट में बढोतरी नहीं की। अगर डॉलर के नजरिए से देखें तो पाकिस्तानी रक्षा बजट में

कटौती हो गई है। हालांकि लोग पाकिस्तान के रक्षा बजट में कटौती को लेकर उसका मजाक भी उड़ा रहे हैं। लेकिन अगर इसे दूसरे नजरिए से देखा जाए तो भविष्य में यह क्षेत्रीय शांति के लिए अच्छे संकेत भी हो सकते हैं। पाकिस्तान में वर्ष 2019-20 के लिए पेश बजट में रक्षा बजट के लिए 1152 अरब रुपए का प्रावधान किया गया है। 2018-19 में पाकिस्तान का रक्षा बजट 1137 अरब रुपए था। अमेरिकी डॉलर के मुकाबले पाकिस्तानी रुपया गिर गया है। इस कारण डॉलर के नजरिए से पाकिस्तानी रक्षा बजट में इस साल लगभग दो अरब डॉलर की कटौती हो गई। इससे दुनिया भर के हथियार कारोबारी मायूस हो गए हैं, क्योंकि डॉलर में रक्षा बजट कम होने से पाकिस्तान की हथियार खरीद क्षमता पर असर पडेगा। डॉलर के नजरिए से पाकिस्तानी रक्षा बजट 7.6 अरब डॉलर का रह गया है, जबकि वर्ष 2018-19 में यह 9.6 अरब डॉलर का था।

पाकिस्तानी सैन्य बजट में इजाफा न होना भविष्य के लिए अच्छे संकेत माने जा सकते हैं। इससे एशियाई मुल्कों में हथियार खरीद को लेकर मची होड़ में कमी आ सकती है। पिछले कुछ दशकों में एशियाई देशों में सैन्य बजट जिस तेजी से बढ़ा है, उससे सैन्यीकरण को तेजी से बढ़ावा मिला है और एशिया क्षेत्र को भारी नुकसान हुआ है। जबिक रूस, अमेरिका और पश्चिमी देशों के हथियार उद्योग को एशियाई मुल्कों के इस सैन्यीकरण से खासा लाभ मिला है। दुनिया में सबसे ज्यादा हथियार एशियाई देश ही खरीदते हैं। उत्तर कोरिया के भय से जापान ने अपनी सैन्य ताकत बढ़ाई। भारत-पाकिस्तान के बीच तनाव के कारण लगातार दोनों मुल्कों का रक्षा बजट लगातार बढ़ा है। 2009 से 2019 के बीच पाकिस्तान

दुनिया के कई देशों के रक्षा बजट के मुकाबले काफी ज्यादा है। इस अवधि में भारत के रक्षा बजट में भी उनतीस फीसद की बढोतरी हुई। भारत और पाकिस्तान दोनों अपने रक्षा बजट का बड़ा हिस्सा हथियारों की खरीद पर लगाते हैं। इसका सीधा लाभ अमेरिका, फ्रांस, रूस और चीन जैसे देशों के रक्षा उद्योग को मिलता है। पाकिस्तान अभी तक सबसे ज्यादा हथियार अमेरिका से खरीदता था। लेकिन अब चीनी रक्षा उधोग ने पाकिस्तान में अपनी हिस्सेदारी बढ़ाई है।

पाकिस्तान अगर सैन्यीकरण के बजाय अपने आंतरिक विकास पर ध्यान देता तो शायद आज पाकिस्तान को यह दिन नहीं देखने पड़ते। पाकिस्तान

के भारत. अफगानिस्तान और ईरान विरोधी रवैए ने पाकिस्तान में सैन्यीकरण को बढ़ावा दिया। भारत के खिलाफ पाकिस्तान का छद्म युद्ध आज तक जारी है। इसके लिए पाकिस्तान ने सैन्यीकरण को बढ़ावा दिया। इसी का परिणाम है कि आज पाकिस्तान की गंभीर आर्थिक संकट में है। उसकी भुगतान संतुलन की स्थिति खराब है। आयात बिल चुकाने में पाकिस्तान को दिक्कत आ रही है। विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार दस अरब डॉलर के करीब रह गया है। एक सौ पांच अरब डॉलर का विदेशी कर्ज है। विदेश व्यापार घाटा तीस अरब डॉलर तक पहुंच गया है। पाकिस्तान बड़े पैमाने पर तेल और गैस का आयात करता है। निर्यात के मामले में हालत खराब है। पिछले साल इमरान खान ने जब सत्ता संभाली थी, उस समय पाकिस्तान की आर्थिक स्थिति डांवाडोल थी। तब सऊदी अरब ने मदद की और छह अरब डॉलर का पैकेज दिया। संयुक्त अरब



के रक्षा बजट में तिहत्तर फीसद की बढ़ोतरी हुई। यह अमीरात ने भी तीन अरब डॉलर की मदद दी। चीन ने शांत के लिए हाल ही में इमरान खान ने ईरान का दौरा पाकिस्तान को दो अरब डॉलर से ज्यादा दिए। पाकिस्तान ने कर्ज के लिए अंतराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (आइएमएफ) से भी संपर्क साधा। लेकिन उसने पाकिस्तान के सामने कई कड़ी शर्तें रखीं। इन शर्तों में कर सुधारों की बात थी जिसे पाकिस्तान को मानना पडा। कई खर्चों में कटौती के लिए भी पाकिस्तान तैयार हो गया। जनता को दी जाने वाली कुछ सबसिडी भी खत्म करने की बात मानी। हालांकि इससे इमरान खान के मंत्रिमंडल में ही गतिरोध पैदा हो गया। वित्त मंत्री असद उमर ने इस्तीफा दे दिया। वे आइएमएफ की कडी शर्तों को मानने के लिए राजी नहीं थे। आइएमएफ की शर्तों को देखते हुए सेना भी आगे आई

और सैन्य बजट को पिछले साल के बराबर ही रखने का प्रस्ताव सरकार को दिया।

पाकिस्तान के निर्माण के साथ ही पाकिस्तान का सैन्यीकरण शुरू हो गया था। वर्तमान में पाकिस्तान का रक्षा बजट कुल राष्ट्रीय बजट का लगभग बीस फीसद है। किसी जमाने में रक्षा बजट कुल बजट का पचास फीसद तक होता था। लेकिन धीरे-धीरे रक्षा बजट में कटौती की जाने लगी। पाकिस्तानी सैन्य प्रतिष्ठान ने हमेशा तर्क दिया कि तीन तरफ से दुश्मन मुल्कों से घिरे होने के कारण पाकिस्तान का सैन्यीकरण जरूरी है। डूरंड लाइन को लेकर अफगानिस्तान से विवाद था। अफगानिस्तान में सोवियत सेना का प्रवेश, उसके बाद तालिबान के शासन ने पाकिस्तान की पश्चिमी सीमा पर सैन्य खर्च बढ़ाया। 2007 के बाद पाकिस्तानी तालिबान की पश्चिमी सीमा पर आतंकी सिक्रयता ने पाकिस्तानी सेना की परेशानी और बढा

> दी। पाकिस्तानी सेना ने अफगान सीमा पर कई बड़े सैन्य अभियान चलाए। इसमें पाकिस्तानी सेना के लगभग तीन अरब डॉलर खर्च हुए।

> पाकिस्तान के सैन्य बजट का बड़ा खर्च भारतीय सीमा पर होता है। पाकिस्तानी सेना के बजट निर्धारण में भारतीय सीमा की भूमिका बड़ी है। पर पाकिस्तान के दक्षिणी सीमा पर ईरान से भी लंबे समय तक संबंध खराब रहे हैं। इसका कारण शिया-सुन्नी विवाद है। दोनों मुल्क एक दूसरे पर आतंकी संगठनों को संरक्षण देने का आरोप भी लगाते रहे हैं। ईरान पाकिस्तान की सीमा पर बसे ईरानी राज्य सीस्तान-बलुचिस्तान और पाकिस्तानी बलूचिस्तान में लगातार आतंकी संगठन लगातार हमले करते हैं। इसलिए दक्षिणी सीमा पर भी पाकिस्तान को अपना सैन्य बजट का अच्छा

हिस्सा खर्च करना पडता है। दक्षिणी सीमा पर किया था। इसके अच्छे परिणाम निकलने की उम्मीद दोनों मुल्कों को है। हालांकि पाकिस्तान के रक्षा बजट में बढ़ोतरी न होने और पाकिस्तान के ऊपर संभावित खतरों पर चर्चा हो रही है। चूंकि पाकिस्तान एक परमाणु शक्ति-संपन्न राष्ट्र है, इसलिए परंपरागत रक्षा खर्चों में कुछ समय के लिए पाकिस्तान कटौती कर सकता है। परमाणु शक्ति-संपन्न होने के कारण पाकिस्तान के पर फिलहाल कोई बड़ा खतरा नहीं है। लेकिन सिर्फ परमाण हथियारों के बल पर राष्ट्र की सुरक्षा भविष्य के लिए अच्छे संकेत नहीं है। इसलिए पाकिस्तान को पूर्वी सीमा पर भारत से भी संबंधों को ठीक करने के लिए प्रयास करने होंगे।

अंधेरे की चमक जुगनू

अंशुमाली रस्तोगी

आ खिरी बार जुगनुओं को कब देखा था, मुझे याद नहीं। न ही शायद आपको याद होगा। जुगनू हमारी बचपन की यादों और कहानियों में ही बचे रह गए हैं अब। आज बच्चों से जुगनुओं के बारे में पूछा जाए तो वे इतना भर कह देते हैं- 'हां, क्लास की किताब में देखा-पढ़ा था लाइट वाले कीड़े के बारे में!'

मुझे खूब याद है कि जब हम छोटे थे, तब कितने ही जुगनुओं को रात के अंधेरे में उड़ते देखते थे। रोशनी जलाते-बुझाते नन्हे-नन्हे जुगनू कितने आकर्षक लगते थे! एकाध दफा तो ऐसा भी किया कि सिर्फ यह जानने के लिए कि जुगनुओं में ये बत्ती-सी जलती कैसे और कहां से है। उन्हें पकड़ कर डिब्बी में बंद कर लिया था। गरमी की उन रातों में सिर्फ उस 'लाइट वाले कीडे' को देखने का मन करता था। तब जुगनू ही हमारे खेल और मनोरंजन का साधन हुआ करते थे। एक साथ कई-कई जुगनुओं को हल्की जलती-बुझती लाइट के साथ देखना बड़ा खूबसूरत लगता था।

देखते ही देखते जुगनू हमारे बीच से ऐसे गायब हुए कि अब वे शहर तो क्या, गांव में भी शायद ही नजर

आते होंगे! जूगनुओं को गायब करने के दोषी दरअसल हम ही हैं। निरंतर बढ़ता शहरीकरण, खेतों का खत्म होना, जंगलों-पेड़ों का कटना अकेले जुगनुओं को ही नहीं और भी न जाने कितने जीव-जंतुओं को लील गया है। बढ़ते प्रदुषण ने जब इंसानों का जीना मुहाल कर रखा है, तो जीव-जंतुओं और जानवरों की क्या बिसात। हमने जुगनुओं को नहीं, गौरैया को भी अपने बीच से लगभग गायब कर दिया है। अब जोर लगाया जा रहा है कि गौरैया फिर से

लौट आए। आलम यह है कि हर रोज सुबह मीठी तान सुनाने वाले कोयल तक अब कम ही नजर आते हैं। भूले-भटके ही उसकी आवाज कानों में पडती है।

प्रकृति और पर्यावरण से छीनने की होड़ यहीं खत्म नहीं हुई है। यह लगातार जारी है। नदियों–तालाबों को पाट कर रोज नई-नई कॉलोनियां और अपार्टमेंट विकसित किए जा रहे हैं। खेतों को खत्म किया जा रहा है। धरती न रहने लायक बची है, न जीने लायक। ऐसे में जुगनुओं का विलुप्त होना अधिक आश्चर्य पैदा नहीं करता। बच्चों को जो बचपन हमें जुगनुओं को देखने, उनके बारे में जानने के लिए देना चाहिए था, उसे हम मोबाइल और कार्ट्न चैनलों में दे रहे हैं। बच्चे अपना बचपन जी नहीं, बल्कि ढो रहे हैं।

प्रकृति के आचरण को हमने कुछ ऐसा बना और बदल दिया है कि अब यहां कुछ भी सुरक्षित नहीं बचा। यह परिवर्तन जितना खतरनाक इंसानों के स्वास्थ्य के लिए है, उतना ही जानलेवा पशु-पक्षियों और जीव-जंतुओं के जीवन के लिए है। प्रदूषण और जलवायु परिवर्तन की जद में हम इस कदर आ चुके हैं कि आने वाले सालों में धरती के हर प्राणी का जीवन कठिन से कठिनतम होगा।

दुनिया मेरे आगे ऐसा भी गुजरा है, जब जुगनुओं को रात में देखना आम बात हुआ करती थी। तब किसी ने कल्पना तक न की होगी कि एक समय ऐसा भी आएगा जब हम इस खुबसुरत जीव को देखने को ही तरस जाएंगे। जो है या जो पीढ़ी आगे आ रही है, उसके लिए तो जुगन शायद किस्से-कहानियों की बातें ही

एक दौर हमारे बचपन का

रह जाएंगी। आज भी जब बच्चे लुप्तप्राय हो चुके जीवों के बारे में पूछते हैं, तब हमारे पास कोई उचित जवाब नहीं होता उन्हें देने के लिए। बाकी इधर-उधर की बातें कर दिल आप उनका कितना ही बहला लीजिए. लेकिन जो हकीकत है, उससे हम मुंह नहीं मोड़ सकते।

मगर इतना तो तय है कि जुगनू हर उम्र के व्यक्ति

के लिए कौतृहल का कारण रह हैं। खासकर उनके भीतर से प्रकाश का निकलना। यह भी पढ़ा है कि पुराने जमाने में लोग जुगनुओं को एक डिब्बे में बंद कर उससे रात में राह देखने की कोशिश की जाती थी और स्त्रियां घर को अंधेरे से मुक्त रखने का काम लेती थीं। जुगनू रात के अंधकार में क्यों चमकते हैं, इसके अपने वैज्ञानिक कारण हैं। पर हमें उनका यों लाइट की मानिंद जलना-बुझना आकर्षित तो करता ही है।

जुगनुओं पर लिखा भी खूब गया है। प्रेमचंद की तो एक कहानी ही है 'जुगनू की चमक'। हरिवंशराय बच्चन की कविता है 'जुगनू'। इकबाल की एक कविता 'जुगनू' की पंक्तियां हैं- 'सुनाऊं तुम्हें बात एक रात की/ कि वो रात अंधेरी थी बरसात की/ चमकने से जुगनू के था इक समां/ हवा में उड़े जैसे चिंगारियां/ पड़ी एक बच्चे की उस पर नजर/ पकड़ ही लिया एक को दौड़ कर/ चमकदार कीड़ा जो भाया उसे/ तो टोपी में झटपट छुपाया उसे...!'

ज्गनुओं के साथ बीता बचपन यादों में रहेगा हमेशा। अब जबिक जुगनुओं का संसार लगभग विदा ले चुका है शहरों से, तो क्या हमें कुछ ऐसे प्रयास नहीं करने चाहिए कि वे वापस आ सकें हमारे बीच? ताकि हम अपने बच्चों को दिखा सकें कि देखो, ऐसा होता है 'लाइट वाला कीड़ा' जुगनू!

१ चारत में जीन संवर्धित फसलों का शुरू से ही विरोध होता रहा है। विशेषज्ञों द्वारा इनके पक्ष-विपक्ष में कई तर्क भी दिए जाते रहे हैं, लेकिन इन फसलों और बीजों के दूसरे पहलू पर भी विचार करने की आज सख्त जरूरत है। दरअसल, इस बात से भी मुंह नहीं मोडा जा सकता कि जीन संवर्धित फसलें कम पैदावार की समस्या और सूखे की मार से निपटने में बहुत सहायक हैं। 1996 के बाद से अब तक इन फसलों की खेती में सौ गुना से ज्यादा का इजाफा हो चुका है। एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार आज लगभग 35 से अधिक देशों में 21.5 करोड़ हेक्टेयर से अधिक क्षेत्र

में इस खेती का दायरा फैल चुका है। सन 2002-03 में कपास की पैदावार लगभग 191 किलोग्राम प्रति हेक्टेयर थी, जो 2002 में बीटी कपास की खेती की अनुमित के बाद अब लगभग 513 किलोग्राम प्रति हेक्टेयर से अधिक हो चुकी है। इसकी बदौलत भारत दुनिया का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा कपास निर्यातक देश बन कर उभरा है। आज अमेरिका और चीन के बाद कपास का सबसे ज्यादा उत्पादन भारत में होता है। गौर से देखा जाए तो देश में जनसंख्या वृद्धि के साथ-साथ खाद्य सुरक्षा के मद्देनजर जीन संवर्धित फसलों की खेती समय की मांग है।

अमेरिका में आनुवंशिक तरीके से फसलों में मक्का. सोयाबीन और कपास से लेकर पपीता जैसी कई और फसलों की खेती सफलतापूर्वक की जा रही है। चीन भी इस दिशा में काफी आगे बढ़ चुका है। इस बात से भी मुंह नहीं मोड़ा जा सकता कि जीन संवर्धित फसलों के बीज (जीएम बीज) काफी महंगे होते हैं, नतीजतन वे आम किसान की पहुंच से काफी दूर होते हैं। इसके अलावा वैज्ञानिक परीक्षण के बाद इनकी प्रजनन क्षमता भी खत्म हो जाती है,

जिससे इन जीन संवर्धित फसलों को पुनः बीज के उनकी पेयजल की समस्या दूर हो जाएगी। रूप में इस्तेमाल करना भी संभव नहीं होता है।

निर्भर है। देश-विदेश के कई वैज्ञानिकों की जीन संवर्धित फसलों पर सहमति है। दुनिया के अनेक देशों में इस तकनीक के उपयोग से साफ है कि बढ़ती जनसंख्या की जरूरतों और कृषि की खस्ता हालत के मद्देनजर जीन संवर्धित फसलें किसानों के लिए कितनी आवश्यक हैं। ऐसे में देश में आनुवंशिक तौर पर फसलों को विकसित करने तथा देश में कृषि, खाद्यान्न और पोषण सुरक्षा के लिए इस

दुनिया इक्कीसवीं सदी से गुजर रही है। कई आज भी भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था कृषि पर ही तकनीकी और अहम बदलावों ने पृथ्वी पर सभी जीवों जीवन को प्रभावित किया है। तकनीक और बदलावा के दौर में हम कहां पहुच गए हैं! यदि विकसित देशों को छोड़ दें तो आज भी एशिया, अफ्रीका और तीसरी दुनिया के देश मूलभूत सुविधाओं से वंचित हैं। यहां साफ हवा, पानी, भोजन, शिक्षा, अस्पताल और रोजगार से जुड़ी समस्याएं आज भी विकराल रूप में दीवार की तरह खड़ी हैं। ऐसे में सवाल उठना लाजमी है कि

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com

महत्त्वपूर्ण विकल्प के उपयुक्त तथ्यों पर गौर कर सरकार द्वारा इस दिशा में जरूरी कदम उठाए जाने और आम किसानों तक इसकी पहुंच को आसान बनाने की सख्त आवश्यकता है।

• शुभम शर्मा, नोएडा, उत्तर प्रदेश संसाधनों का ध्रुवीकरण

दुनिया में पर्यावरणीय बदलाव किस कदर हो रहा है, इसका अंदाजा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि इन दिनों भारत के कई राज्यों में पीने योग्य साफ पानी की जबर्दस्त किल्लत हो रही है। भीषण गर्मी में लोग सूख रही नदियों, दम तोड़ रहे नलकूप-हैंडपंपों और अन्य जल स्रोतों के भरोसे इस उम्मीद में दिन गुजार रहे हैं कि जल्द ही बरसात आएगी और

आखिर सुविधाओं और संसाधनों का ध्रुवीकरण और इन पर कुछ देशों का एकाधिकार क्यों है! क्या यही वैश्विक गांव की खुशहाली और शांति के प्रतीक हैं?

काफी वर्ष बीत जाने के बाद सैकड़ों देश पर्यावरण, पानी, शिक्षा, अस्पताल और रोजगार के संकट से जुझ रहे हैं। आखिर कब तक तीसरी दुनिया के देशों को मूलभूत सुविधाओं के अभाव में जीना पड़ेगा?

• पवन कुमार मौर्य, नई दिल्ली मौत को न्योता

राष्ट्रीय आपदा मोचन बल ने पंजाब के संगरूर जिले में 150 फुट गहरे बोरवेल में गिरे दो वर्षीय बच्चे को बचाने की 108 घंटे तक कोशिश की, लेकिन सफलता हाथ नहीं लगी। पहला प्रश्न है कि बोरवेल को खुला छोड़ने वाले पर क्या कार्रवाई की जाएगी? दुसरा प्रश्न यह कि राष्ट्रीय आपदा मोचन बल द्वारा बच्चे को बचाने के प्रयास में क्या कमी रह गई कि इतने लंबे समय तक कारवाई करने के बाद भी कामयाबी नहीं मिली? आखिर उन मासुमों का क्या गुनाह था जो बोरवेल में गिर कर अकाल मृत्यु का ग्रास बन गए? गुनाह तो उन्होंने किया जिन्होंने बोरवेल खुला छोड़कर मासूमों की मृत्यु को आमंत्रण दिया। जिनके घर मातम पसरा है, उनके दिल पर क्या गुजर रही है, बोरवेल को खुला छोड़ने वालों में यह संवेदनशीलता पैदा हो जाए तो ऐसी घटनाएं घटित ही न हों। एनडीआरएफ को भी अपनी कार्यशैली में कुशलता लाने की आवश्यकता है।

• सतप्रकाश सनोठिया, रोहिणी, नई दिल्ली

परमाणु अप्रसार

विश्व में पिछले साल परमाणु हथियारों की संख्या में कमी जरूर आई है, लेकिन अब सभी देश अपने हथियारों का आधुनिकीकरण कर रहे हैं। स्टॉकहोम अंतरराष्ट्रीय शांति अनुसंधान संस्थान (सिपरी) की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार सबसे ज्यादा परमाण हथियार अमेरिका और रूस के पास हैं। चिंता की बात है कि इसे विस्तारित करने के लिए कोई गंभीर चर्चा नहीं हो रही है। भारत, पाकिस्तान और चीन जैसे देश अपने परमाणु हथियारों को आधुनिक बनाने के साथ-साथ उन्हें बढ़ा भी रहे हैं। इनके अलावा भी अन्य देश अपने परमाणु हथियारों को सीमित करने की बजाय उनकी संख्या में इजाफा कर रहे हैं, जिसके चलते परमाणु अप्रसार संधि और स्टार्ट संधि जैसे विकल्प भी पूरी तरह से सफल नहीं हो पा रहे हैं। परमाणु हथियारों की बढ़ती हुई संख्या के कारण पूरी दुनिया पर संकट मंडरा रहा है, जो कि एक गंभीर विषय बन गया है।

• संजू कुमार, चौबारा, हनुमानगढ़, राजस्थान