

Education in business suit

In the absence of a broad policy, courts have to step in to protect students



OUT OF COURT

M J ANTONY

This is the time when youth are frantically running for admission to professional colleges, making it almost an academic e-battlefield. Shortly, the scene will shift to the courts. This was going on for more than three decades. In 1989, the Supreme Court wrote that “Indian civilisation recognises education as

one of the pious obligations of the human society. To establish and administer educational institutions is considered a religious and charitable object. Education in India has never been a commodity for sale.” That was said when a private medical college in Bengaluru sought ₹60,000 as capitation fee from a girl candidate. Times have changed so much that education has become crass business. The Supreme Court has gradually admitted this reality. Recent judgements talk about higher education as part of the right to carry on trade and business, not philanthropy. Politicians and entrepreneurs flaunt the number of professional colleges they own as their badge of eminence. Websites advise you how to start a million-dollar education business in 10 steps. As a result, courts are flooded with petitions challenging the admission practices of various universities and colleges. Two judgements of the Supreme

Court, delivered by vacation benches last week, are warnings of litigation yet to come once the admission season is over and the courts reopen after the summer vacation. The most serious and recurring issue before the courts is the quality of medical and engineering colleges. The regulators grant recognition to sub-standard or ‘shell’ colleges; the managements are said to collect up to ₹1 crore for a full course; they admit more than the permitted number of students. This breeds rampant corruption. Last week, the chief justice of India wrote to the prime minister to remove a judge of the Allahabad High Court for granting recognition to ineligible medical colleges. Though the judgements on professional colleges are in scores, they are not consistent and the orders are ad hoc, solving only the problem of that season for particular institutions. Therefore, more petitions are filed cit-

ing earlier orders and seeking clarification of the previous ones. Clarificatory orders telescope back decades and are a rich harvest for lawyers. Students who get admission in low-grade colleges often take a calculated risk. Their continuance in the course is a matter of chance. In some cases, the Supreme Court has allowed them to complete the course but in some others, the managements have been told to return huge amounts as compensation. In last week’s judgement in the case, *Foundation for School of Management vs AICTE*, the educational institution sought more seats but permission was not given. Despite that, the college admitted students far in excess of the sanctioned seats. The management then moved court for approval of the excess seats on the ground of investments already made and shortage of doctors. The court initially directed it to deposit ₹4 crore. AICTE on its part imposed ₹23 crore as penalty for flouting its policy. The court approved of it stating that the college had illegally admitted excess students endangering their careers. In fact, the college was “let off lightly when more stringent punish-

ments were available.” Showing mercy to the affected students, they were allowed to complete the course and take the degree. In the second case, *Education Promotion Society vs Union of India*, the umbrella body of professional colleges sought more time to carry out counselling as many seats are lying vacant. The court observed that there was no consistency in fixing the schedule for admissions and such irregularities were being exploited by many private managements. They admit undeserved students and charge high fees. The court ruled that if some seats remained vacant, it could not be helped. It would take iron will for the new government to bring order in higher professional education. It is bound to face immense pressure because the tainted money raised through the business of education is one of the tributaries flowing into politics and the electoral process. Courts can only adjudicate disputes over admissions and recognition of institutions, but it is for the government to lay down a comprehensive policy and oversee its implementation.

Low expectations at the global high table

India’s agenda could be limited by the US–China trade war and advanced countries’ reluctance to tax digital imports

SUBHOMOY BHATTACHARJEE

India had plenty to put on the table at the Osaka summit of the heads of state of G20 nations on June 28 and 29. But the overarching reach of US-China trade war and a clubbing of agendas could limit the gains for New Delhi. The US-China trade war, which is assuming a scale comparable to the global financial crisis of 2008 that led to the creation of the G20, will dominate the talks. *Euromonitor* estimates that in 2008 about \$3 trillion was shaved off global GDP by the financial meltdown. A Bloomberg estimate notes that “global GDP will take a \$600 billion hit in 2021, the year of peak impact” as a result of the current trade meltdown. Either way, the ranks of sceptics who had questioned the G20’s role, are thinning. G20 seems the only forum where Donald Trump and Xi Jinping will meet face to face as equals instead of letting their aides fight. Osaka could, therefore, be remembered for decades as the summit where they made peace or set the world on a disastrous economic path. The G20, as former Indian sherpa and now central bank Governor Shaktikanta Das has noted, remains the only forum to provide the broad global political directions that would not have been available otherwise. “All the stakeholders from the multilateral organisations sit around the table with the country leaders at the G20 meeting and that helps to single out concerns,” he said

in a chat with *Business Standard* in December last year (<https://mybs.in/2VsGSrl>). And it is how these meetings are arranged that often decides what finally gets said. In the run up to the leaders’ meet, India’s major concerns are a throwback to its World Trade Organization (WTO) agenda. It is in the linkage between trade and the digital economy that it has difficult domestic constituencies to please. For the first time the meeting of trade ministers was clubbed with that of digital economy by the Japanese, which holds the presidency for this summit. The clubbing demonstrates the overpowering presence of digital issues in global trade talks, which India is most reluctant to hyphenate. So although the G20 finance ministers meeting at Fukuoka in Japan on June 8, saw India with countries like Indonesia secure an international commitment to finally tax imports of digital business, it has secured a less-than-clear commitment on data protection at the joint meeting of commerce ministers at Tsukuba on the same date. The former set have agreed that rules for taxing global trade in e-commerce would be settled by 2020. This is important, since from May 1998 India has been part of a WTO Declaration on global electronic commerce that states that countries will extend the practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions. It essentially set a moratorium that is at risk of turning into a permanent agreement. There are



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conflicting reports from the WTO and UN Conference on Trade and development (Unctad) about the extent of possible revenue that countries forego by not taxing electronic trade. One puts it \$756 million, the other at over \$8 billion. But both agree that over 90 per cent of this tariff revenue loss is borne by developing countries. India has also claimed that one reason it cannot reduce domestic GST rates is to compensate for customs revenues foregone. On data protection, India is likely to get more muted support at Osaka. The issues here are as follows. Who owns data — a nation or the global commons? In February 2019, the India government released a draft national e-commerce policy with links to flagship schemes such as Make in India, Digital India, Skill India, Smart Cities and Startup India. The strategy includes

measures on data localisation to ensure local or sovereign ownership and control of data generated within the country with mandatory disclosure of source code by companies. This essentially means if two Indians share data on a mobile app that is developed by a foreign company, the India government will have the rights to the technology to develop the app (this includes sharing source codes). Japan takes the polar opposite position that disclosure of trade secrets, including source codes and proprietary algorithms, as well as mandatory introduction of particular technologies including encryption technology by a government should be prohibited. Taking advantage of the clubbing of the trade agenda with that of digital economy, the final statement of the G20 commerce ministers at Tsukuba slips

in plenty of reference to the concept of free data flow, which inclines favourably towards the Japanese position. “Cross-border flow of data, information, ideas and knowledge generates higher productivity, greater innovation, and improved sustainable development. At the same time, we recognise that the free flow of data raises certain challenges... Interoperable standards, frameworks and regulatory cooperation can help in this regard”. It is quite a step forward from the Buenos Aires digital ministers’ meet last year on November 30 and December 1 where the reference to “cross border” was only in the appendix to the main statement. Given this lay of the land, the endorsement of India’s data localisation agenda could come with clear riders in the G20 final communiqué.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Taking voter soundings

With bitterness between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Trinamool Congress (TMC), especially between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, being very great, a move by the TMC may further stoke the fire. It is learnt that some prominent traffic crossings and public places in Kolkata have started broadcasting Banerjee’s speeches in which she is critical of Modi. Such screens have been placed near the Dakshineswar, Sonagachi and Hazra crossings, areas in which a significant proportion of the lower income group, the traditional voter base of the party, resides. It is being done to gauge the erosion the BJP has caused in the TMC’s vote bank in these areas. Sources suggest it could be the idea of an analyst Banerjee met recently.

Demanding godman



Self-styled godman Namdeo Das Tyagi, popularly known as Computer Baba, has hit the headlines once again. The Madhya Pradesh government has appointed him chairman of the Narmada River Trust. Just after his appointment, Tyagi asked for a chopper. The reason? “He will have to supervise the work being done on the Narmada.” The state government was taken aback and refused to accede to his request. Now, Tyagi has asked for a room in the secretariat and a drone camera for keeping an eye on illegal sand mining in the Narmada and other rivers. This time his argument is that he needs modern *ashtra-shastra* (weaponry) to save the rivers.

No adjournment

If a member of Parliament dies, it is customary for the House which she or he was a member of to read an obituary reference to her or him and adjourn for the day. There have been exceptions to this and so was it on Tuesday. After the Bharatiya Janata Party’s Rajya Sabha MP Madan Lal Saini passed away in New Delhi on Monday, it was thought the RS could adjourn for the day on Tuesday after the obituary reference to him. However, at a meeting of party leaders of the RS on Tuesday morning, Opposition leaders were informed that the RS would adjourn until 2 pm and then continue with its discussion on the motion of thanks on the President’s address. It was argued that Saini had passed away in Delhi and therefore members could pay their respects to him by lunch time. Adjournment of an entire day would have delayed the PM’s departure to Osaka in Japan to attend the G20 Summit. With the RS taking up the discussion after 2 pm on Tuesday, it has paved the way for the PM to reply in the Upper House on Wednesday afternoon. He replied to the motion in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday evening.

INSIGHT

Good bank, bad bank

This market driven model of tackling liquidity crises has successfully been implemented in several countries and can benefit the NBFC sector



DIVA JAIN

As the liquidity crunch continues unabated for India’s non-banking financial corporations (NBFCs), a plethora of steps have been suggested by market participants and policy experts. These include extending special credit lines, tighter regulation, imposing liquidity ratios and access to depositor funding. While all these measures have some merit, it is critical to triangulate the root cause of the crisis before applying any of the above remedies to avoid a situation where the cure turns out to be more deadly than the disease. That NBFCs have been operating like shadow banks and running an asset liability mismatch is well known and that this mismatch became problematic in the aftermath of the IL&FS crisis, has been discussed to death. But the question is why should the demise of a single large NBFC that took unnecessary risks and possibly indulged in fraudulent activities affect the liquidity for an entire sector. The answer lies in the economic interplay between insolvency and liquidity. While it is widely known that illiquidity can cause insolvency (Diamond-Dybvig model), it is

less known that insolvency of a single large shadow bank can also cause illiquidity (Diamond and Rajan, NBER [2002]). This happens because expectations of investors change due to a prominent insolvency and they now doubt the quality of assets on the books of other NBFCs and refuse to roll over short term financing thereby leading to a liquidity crisis for the entire sector. This is exactly what seems to have happened to the NBFC sector in the aftermath of IL&FS and DHFL incidents. The problem lies in the asset side of the NBFCs where investors who provided them with short term funds (largely Mutual Funds) have lost faith that has led to a flight of liquidity from the sector. Thus the root of the NBFC crisis lies in doubts about their solvency and not because, liquidity that was abundant for them till recently, has magically evaporated. Most of the remedial measures that have been suggested miss this point. Solutions such as imposing liquidity ratios and tighter regulation are long term measures that will not alleviate the immediate liquidity concerns of NBFCs. Special credit lines and access to depositor funding, on the other hand, are designed to shore up the liability side of the NBFCs ignoring the fact that the crisis is emanating from a lack of confidence in the asset side. These measures would be like treating a life threatening disease with palliatives and will only lead to moral hazard with the potential of causing greater problems in the future. Although the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) did try to tackle the asset side by relaxing (somewhat) secu-

ritisation norms for NBFCs, this has had a limited salutary impact on the liquidity position of the NBFCs. This also suggests that all may not be well with the asset side of the NBFCs because under normal circumstances, good assets can be securitised and offloaded quickly to meet liquidity requirements. Thankfully several precedents exist about tackling insolvency driven illiquidity in banking. The earliest example is from 1988 when Mellon Bank split itself into a “good” bank and a “bad” bank where the good bank held its valuable assets while the bad bank held assets whose quality was in doubt. Existing shareholders were issued new shares in both the banks and new debt was issued to support the bad bank separate from the good bank. This experiment was successful with creditors of the bad bank recovering their debt in full and initial investors in the bad bank accruing handsome returns as the value of “doubtful assets” recovered with time. A similar model was employed very successfully by Swedish regulators during the Swedish financial crisis of 1992. Ben Bernanke was also a vocal proponent of this model during the financial crisis of 2008-2009 as were prominent macroeconomists Paul Krugman and Brad DeLong. During the same period, Irish regulators used it successfully to repair their banking system as well. A somewhat similar scheme was employed in India to tackle the UTI crisis in 2002 when Indian regulators warehoused the guaranteed returns scheme, US 64, in SUUTI to insulate the mutual fund business of UTI from being dragged down by the guaranteed returns commitment

of US 64 units. There are several other examples of this model being used successfully to tackle insolvency driven liquidity crises. A key advantage of this model is that it is organic and market driven instead of being interventionist and loaded with “bail out” risk as the proposed liability side measures of NBFC rescue are. The doubtful assets are transferred to the bad bank at market value and are managed by specialists who have a mandate to maximise their recovery value for creditors. This has the dual effect of dis-infecting balance sheets of all institutions by exposing them to the sunlight scrutiny of the market and completely removing any sort of ambiguity about asset quality thereby leading to a resuscitation of credit to the good banks and the overall economy. Indian NBFCs are a critical conduit in the flow of credit to the real economy. They have increasingly played a stellar role in funding home/auto purchases and discretionary expenditure, all of which lie at the core of the economy and its growth. If some of these pipelines of credit (which is what shadow banks are) are rotten, the optimal solution is to separate them from those that are sound. Pumping more liquidity through liability side measures will only lead to a greater leakage and compound the shadow banking problem instead of allowing market forces to resolve it. Warren Buffet says that using short term financing for long term projects is like depending on the kindness of strangers. Since Indian NBFCs remain at the mercy of strangers in the short term, the RBI should focus on isolating bad assets and restoring the markets’ kindness to beleaguered but sound NBFCs instead of becoming a kind but naive stranger by allowing all of them to access liquidity unconditionally.

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LETTERS

Unhealthy disruptions

This refers to “Viral Acharya’s last day at RBI will be July 23” (June 25). The Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor Viral Acharya is the third among those entrusted with management of the country’s economy, quitting their posts before expiry of their terms, in past one year. It started with Arvind Subramanian, former chief economic adviser, who put in his papers in June 2018, three months before his term was to expire at the end of September that year. The next was former governor Urjit Patel, who sought to be relieved in December 2018 though he still had nine months to go. Now, it is Acharya. Earlier, Raghuram Rajan had to go at 53 when his brief three-year term expired. He went on record saying he would have considered continuing, if an extension had been offered to him. Obviously, the authorities were either indifferent to his continuation or actually wanted him to go. When the country is passing through a critical phase presently, politically and economically, economy is not growing at an adequate rate and unemployment is at an all-time high, it needs continuity in personnel entrusted with the management of the economy. Authorities may consider examining the causes underlying the ongoing frequent disruptions that are not healthy and not in the country’s interest. Steps must be taken to ensure they don’t occur any more.

R C Mody New Delhi

RBI needs independence

This refers to “Viral Acharya’s last day at RBI will be July 23” (June 25). It seems nobody should question the RBI’s policy making as it will be taken as dissent against the government. The monetary policy committee dominated by outside members now is supreme and no arguments will stand against their decision. We have high expectations from the second term of the Modi government and are eagerly waiting to see the next steps that will be taken to ensure independence of the RBI in the long run.

Partha Sarathi Mukhopadhyay Nagpur

A wise bird

The resignation of Deputy Governor Viral Acharya is not surprising. What, in fact, is surprising is it did not come months ago, with the exit of former governor Urjit Patel. Whether he was a dove or hawk will be debated by interested parties including the media, but Acharya would no doubt hold that he has been neither but a wise bird that chose what is good for the economy and the country.

C V Subbaraman Mysuru

HAMBONE



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Relief for MSMEs

Plan to double collateral-free loans can, however, be a spoiler

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) committee set up to look at the problems of domestic micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) has suggested welcome measures, including creating a ₹5,000-crore stressed asset fund that could operate on the lines of the Textile [Upgrade] Fund Scheme. The committee also said instead of making MSMEs register with various authorities, the permanent account number (PAN) should be made sufficient for most of the activities and the focus should be on market facilitation and promoting ease of doing business for the sector. The committee suggested that to eliminate the delayed payments problems faced by MSMEs, which they also cannot take up legally because of low bargaining power, the MSME Development Act (MSMED Act) should be amended, requiring all MSMEs to mandatorily upload their invoices above an amount to an information utility. In another interesting suggestion, the panel has recommended a government-sponsored fund of ₹10,000 crore to support investment by venture capital and private equity funds investing in the MSME sector. The Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi) should play the role of a facilitator to create such a platform. This is expected to help MSMEs that largely rely on informal sources for equity, which includes own saved funds and funding from family and friends.

The broad suggestions of the committee make ample sense because there is no doubt that the MSME sector needs help. An inequitable distribution of funds has been one of the most persistent problems that the economy has been facing. Too little of the capital is distributed to MSMEs, as commercial banks have considered them to be highly risky to lend. That is understandable because the RBI's latest Financial Stability Report itself highlighted concern with the growing number of loans that were going to small businesses. In 2017 and 2018, more and more loans had been given to MSMEs. The RBI report highlighted these loans and suggested that "such a sharp increase [in loans] may require examination of possible dilution of credit standards further and additions to supervisory strategy for PCA banks".

In that context, however, the panel's suggestion to double collateral-free loans to the segment, including for the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) and Self-Help Group-based entities, can be risky, if accepted. Consider the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (Mudra) loans, where too many best practices in loan origination have been neglected while authorising and disbursing loans. Ensuring repayment has also been a challenge. The Mudra loans scheme is showing signs of becoming the next source of major non-performing assets (NPAs). Gross NPAs in the scheme reportedly went up by 69 per cent to ₹16,480.87 crore for the fiscal year ended March 2019 from ₹9,769 crore a year-ago. According to credit-rating agencies, the ratio of NPAs in the scheme is now being under-estimated and may be between 10 and 15 per cent of advances. While the very nature of the business of borrowers under Mudra is susceptible to volatility and annual cycles, the surge in NPAs shows banks are not putting in efforts to monitor them to ensure timely repayment. It is noteworthy that private sector banks, which have generally been better at minimising NPAs, have not gone all in on such lending the way that public sector banks have. A hike in the collateral-free loans would hardly solve the problem.

Tearing hurry

EV move will backfire if the industry doesn't get transition time

The government's plan to ban sales of fossil fuel-driven two- and three-wheeler vehicles by 2025 could not have come at a more inopportune time. Sales of two-wheelers grew at a meagre 4.86 per cent in FY19, and the outlook for FY20 isn't very encouraging. At the same time, the industry is coping with the transformation to meet the Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) emission regulations, which will come into effect on April 1, 2020. Against this backdrop, it isn't surprising that the NITI Aayog's two-week deadline to the industry to come up with a comprehensive plan for introducing electric vehicles (EVs) in the next five-odd years has been met with considerable scepticism. Industry leaders have questioned the urgency and have pointed out the increase in the cost of vehicles and inadequacy of the existing supply chain. Batteries, which constitute 40 per cent of the cost of vehicles, would increase the price of two-wheelers. In addition, considerable planning and execution are required to simultaneously develop a complete ecosystem around EVs, including charging stations.

In the NITI Aayog's worldview, however, the transition will address two main concerns: According to a report by Greenpeace and Airvisual, India has 22 of the most polluted cities in the world, with Gurugram being the world's most polluted. And two-thirds of the pollution load is due to two-wheelers running on the internal combustion engine (ICE) in major cities. Two-wheelers account for 79 per cent of the number of vehicles whereas economy and premium cars have only a 14 per cent share. Another cause for worry is India's growing dependence on oil imports. The NITI Aayog estimates savings of ₹1.2 trillion (at ₹70 per litre) in the oil bill if the transition takes place.

Both sides need to take a more rational approach now. While a move to EVs is inevitable, the industry should be given a reasonable time. China took the EV route as early as in the 1990s by classifying electric two-wheelers that move at 20 km per hour as bicycles. Beijing made them attractive by doing away with registration and allowing it to be ridden in bicycle lanes. Soon, it restricted the ownership of gasoline-powered two-wheelers in some cities. And it has been giving tax benefits and other subsidies to carmakers for almost a decade. China, the US, and Europe have up to 40 per cent "all-in" subsidies.

To spruce up their supply chain, Chinese companies have been aggressively buying lithium mines — the critical component for making batteries — in countries like Australia, Mexico, Argentina and others. Today, it is both the biggest manufacturer and biggest consumer for EVs globally. And some estimates suggest that the EV market share will be 50 per cent by 2025. In comparison, India seems to be in a tearing hurry in its EV transition without the required infrastructure. For some reason, the NITI Aayog believes an ecosystem of either fast-charging or swapping of batteries can be created by 2023. That is almost impossible as the challenges — from acquiring minerals to installing charging stations across the country to reducing the cost of the vehicle — are manifold. The threat of a ban can't be the answer.

Rulers and information



BOOK REVIEW

AAKAR PATEL

How does one square the reality that we live in an era in which there is almost an excess of information but a scarcity of good data?

India has no accurate means of measuring its levels of unemployment or its gross domestic product, and this is according to the government. There is almost no good data on inequality or wealth in India either. Are we doing well or poorly as a nation? We do not have answers or agreement on such basic questions.

And then, how does one deal with the

idea that history can be rewritten in such violent terms that what for generations had been posited for all Indians as a blow against humanity — Godse's assassination of Gandhi — can today be projected in electoral politics as a victory of the Hindu nation?

In the absence of data and the willingness to gather and engage with it (as is manifest in even the India of 2019), author Sanjoy Chakravorty's argument in *The Truth About Us: The Politics of Information from Manu to Modi* is that in India, it is the rulers and their manipulation of information that has produced our truths. Information is key to knowledge. What is information? Who decides what it is? How it is organised and categorised? These are the important issues. Truths and identities are created from the manipulation of these. Where there isn't enough information, a reality can be created.

For example, very little data or informa-

tion on India existed before the British. Nirad Chaudhuri in his book *Hinduism* has also referred to this. The Raj began structuring the identity of India and Indians by interpreting what they encountered.

In the author's opinion, "India" the nation did not exist before the British. There were communities but these were distinct and they did not amount to a nation. In some ways, then, this book and this sort of thinking is a response to V D Savarkar's book written about 100 years ago, *Hindutva*. There are, however, things in this book that Savarkar and other Hindutvawallahs will approve.

For example, Mr Chakravorty examines the history of caste and asks whether it existed in the form that we know before the British Raj and particularly the census series, which began in the last quarter of 19th century. He does not, of course, deny the reality of social stratification through *jati*. He does not deny discrimination

either. But he does ask whether it existed in the Smritic form that we now take for granted before the British. Was it the product of amateur Indologists engaging with material they translated and took as gospel? The texts were, the author tells, all in Sanskrit and the interlocutors all Brahmin. The texts were relevant mostly or only for them. Even within Brahmins, in fact, most were only aware of ritual and not text.

On the other hand, the presence in Indian history of many non-Kshatriya warrior-rulers (like Hakka and Bukka in Vijayanagar) seems to indicate that this rigidity of *varna* may be more recent. Even the Buddha in one of his discourses gets a Brahmin to accept that he is lower in caste than the Buddha, who is, of course, Kshatriya, something that Manu would have disapproved of. Mr Chakravorty goes to the non-Sanskrit texts of India, and the travelogues written by foreigners going back to Hieu Tsang and finds that there is almost no reference to caste. He concludes that *chaturvarna* did not exist in India, and this is actually true. Even in our time, Kshatriya and Vaishya identity are

quite problematic and contested and while there is a positive Dalit identity, no peasant community accepts it is Shudra.

The book also engages with the term Hindu, a favourite theme of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its ideologues and friends, again going back to Savarkar. It is a modern term that has acquired political and even militaristic dimensions. Hinduism was not a recognised category internally but a definition that came from the outside. So then how could the word "conversion" be applied to an act when there was no formal religion that one was converting out of?

The book also looks at the crisis of the present, and that is Hindu nationalism. British intervention ensured that any nationalism generated in the middle class was for a century directed at the outsider. The internal aspects, meaning that of the problems of Hindu society, were to some extent taken up by Ambedkar. Today we live in an era in which the internal is not addressed for the most part. And the external enemy has been replaced by the Muslim. The rise of Hindutva in our time

is a redirection of nationalism.

The politics of information has seen an enormous change in the last two decades, between the election in which Atal Bihari Vajpayee won in 1998 and the one that Narendra Modi won in 2019. It is no longer possible to have a single truth or narrative even about so basic and obvious a thing as the economy or employment. Confirmation bias is easy and comforting given the abundance of material.

With an overwhelming amount and sources of information, there is according to the author actually a demand for simple stories that interpret this maze. The word *chowkidar* captures this spirit. This is a fine book for our times and must be read for those who have been in a daze for the past five years.

THE TRUTH ABOUT US: The Politics of Information From Manu to Modi

Sanjoy Chakravorty
Hachette, 302 pages, ₹499

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



China's Hong Kong conundrum

As during the Tiananmen protests, China is once again faced with a choice between repression and liberalisation

It was in Beijing in April 1989, lecturing at Peking University, when many of its students were encamped in Tiananmen Square demanding political liberalisation. Zhao Ziyang, the Chinese Communist Party's General Secretary, whom I had met a few years previously, had come out to plead with the young demonstrators to go home, as he knew of Deng Tsiao Ping's decision to declare martial law and order the army to clear the square. Fortunately, I had left China well before the massacre of early June. The rest is history

In August 2014, attending a meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society in Hong Kong, staying in the Shangri La hotel in Kowloon, we directly looked across the bay to the square with the yellow umbrella protestors. At the meeting, Hong Kong's chief executive denounced the demonstrators, emphasising that there had been no breach of the Sino-British joint agreement of 1997, which established the Hong Kong Special Administrative region as "one country, two systems" for 50 years from July 1, 1997. As Hong Kong had never been democratic as a British colony, the yellow umbrella protests demanding democracy soon petered out. The Sino-British agreement had also enshrined the British Common Law in Hong Kong to protect property rights and personal liberties.

The recent crisis was sparked by Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam, introducing an extradition Bill allowing both residents and visitors in Hong Kong to be sent to China for trial if deemed to be breaking the law. As Hugh Davies, the British ambassador who

negotiated the Sino-British agreement has pointed out (in a letter in the *Daily Telegraph*, 14 June 2019) this undermines the Common Law liberties underwritten in the agreement which is "an international treaty between the two countries registered at the UN," under which China cannot unilaterally exclude Britain from its joint obligations to Hong Kong as China is now asserting. With Britain currently embroiled in the Brexit mess, there has been a deafening silence so far from the UK. So, will China get away with its unilateral attempt to undermine the Common Law protections in Hong Kong?

It appears that Carrie Lam acted unilaterally to curry favour with Beijing. But her actions have backfired, much to Beijing's fury with the mass demonstrations it has provoked, and Lam has been forced to suspend the Bill for the time being.

Moreover, the erosion of civil liberties in Hong Kong has led the US to threaten to strip it of its special status under the US Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992, which recognises the territory as an independent member of the WTO. The bipartisan Hong Kong Rights and Democracy Act recently introduced in the US Congress "cocks the trigger on what amounts to a sanctions regime covering trade, finance and technology", turning Hong Kong into just another Chinese city, and part of the current US-China trade wars. (Ambrose Evan-Pritchard, "*US may strip Hong Kong's Special Status*", *Daily Telegraph*, June 2019). The exodus of the wealthy and foreign companies to Singapore has already begun, and if the extradition Bill is implemented it could be the end of Hong Kong as the major



DEEPAK LAL

India's China syndrome

Those who are aware of the intense debate on the reliability of China's economic data should find many familiar elements in the face off between former chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian's (AS) and the keepers of the faith in India's official data machine. They include the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (the PMEAC), which has issued a rather stern riposte ("*GDP estimation in India- Perspectives and Facts*", 19 June 2019) to AS's claim that the new methodology for measuring India's GDP with 2011-12 as the base year significantly overstates its growth rate ("*India's GDP Mis-estimation: Likelihood, Magnitudes, Mechanisms, and Implications*", Arvind Subramanian, CID Harvard University, June 2019). Instead of the average growth of 7 per cent that the official data shows in the period between 2011-12 and 2016-17, AS's estimate is a meagre 4.5 per cent.

Where does China fit into all this? China data-sceptics have long claimed that if the indicators that should prima facie correlate with GDP growth are used as proxies, the growth rate would be very different. The most well-known of them is current premier Li Keqiang (LK). After dismissing official statistics as "man-made" he provided his own measure of growth (the Keqiang index) using a combination of three things — electricity consumption, railway freight, and bank lending. Estimates based on this index and its most sophisticated variants show much lower growth than the official releases. While the government currently pegs growth in the ballpark of 6.5 per cent, the sceptic estimates vary from 2.5 to 4.5 per cent.

There's a twist to this tale though. Over the last few years, L-K type measures have come in for severe criticism. The new China, the critics claim, is very different from the old "industrial" China when investments and exports were the main engines of growth. A change in economic policy direction (articulated in its 12th Five-year plan of 2011) drove a profound shift in China's economic structure to a more inward-look-

ing, consumer-driven economy. Thus, using an old economy measure like the LK index fails to capture this structural shift and produce a systematic downward bias in the growth rates. The defence's case for India's official data is similar.

At its core, AS's argument revolves around L-K type proxies for GDP. Instead of Li Keqiang's measly three, he produces a bagful of 17 and frets over the fact that while in the 2001-02 to 2011-12 period, they correlate well with GDP, these correlations break down in the subsequent period. AS also uses a four-variable index (credit, electricity, exports and imports) and pools this with similar indices for 70 countries. Since the relationship between GDP and this index bucks the general trend, AS concludes that the new methodology is flawed and biases GDP estimates up.

One can pick many nits in AS's 17 as the PMEAC paper does. For one thing, many of them like cement and the IIP measure volume rather than value. It is not surprising that they moved closely with the old GDP series. The major grouse with the old estimation method was that it relied (partly due to data paucity) too much on volume measures when it should have used value-addition instead. The new methodology attempts to correct this and it is not surprising that the volume-GDP link weakens.

The PMEAC's rebuttal is comprehensive but in the middle of technical minutiae, the two central critiques of AS's approach seem to lose their sting.

First, AS's declining correlations captures a shift in the structure of India's national income. India's growth patterns over the last few years have been surprisingly similar to China's with domestic consumption emerging as the principal driver, and investment as well as exports getting short shrift. While this is widely known, a couple of data points might drive this point home more convincingly. The average annual contribution or share of investment in the expansion of GDP from 2001 to 2011 period was 51 per cent. In the subsequent period it dropped to 28 per cent. The



ABHEEK BARUA & TUSHAR ARORA

East Asian financial hub.

Along with these current dangers from the crisis, there is the incipient danger for President Xi from appeasing the young protesters. These are illuminated in the recent revelations of the "*New Tiananmen Papers*" (see Andrew J. Nathan, *www.foreignaffairs.com*) which provide the party's response to the 1989 crisis. A post-Tiananmen special meeting of party leaders and elders analysed the causes of the disturbance, revealing a profound paranoia about domestic and fictional foreign enemies. A telling comment relevant to the current Hong Kong crisis was by Song Renqiong, the vice chair of the Central Advisory Commission who said "forty years ago [US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles] said that the hope for the restoration [of capitalism] in China rested on the third or fourth [post communist] generation. Now, the state of political ideology among a portion of the youth is worrisome. We must not let Dulles' prediction come true." This does not augur well for the young yellow umbrellas.

Furthermore, the old argument of the economic importance of Hong Kong to China's economic prosperity has also diminished over time, as from providing about 20 per cent of China's GDP in 1997, it now accounts for just 3 per cent. But for the princelings in mainland China and many foreign companies, the proposed extradition Bill threatens not only their property rights but also their personal safety. The movement of companies and the mainland elite resident in Hong Kong to Singapore, which began after the 2014 umbrella demonstrations, has grown. (see "*Beijing grip alarms mainland elite in Hong Kong*" *FT*, 21 June 2019). But, given his assault on many of the princelings in his anti-corruption campaign, this exodus is unlikely to give President Xi many sleepless nights. He is more likely to be concerned about the effects on the populace of the continuing economic slowdown and crippling pollution.

It is in this context that the fateful decision that Deng took in May/June 1989 to turn the guns on the Tiananmen protestors should be seen. As Andrew J. Nathan has argued (in "*China's Original Sin*", *www.foreignaffairs.com*) in April 1989, Deng faced the choice of liberalisation or repression. Zhao Ziyang argued for dialogue with the students who "were patriotic and shared the regime's goal of opposing corruption", and would leave peacefully if the regime accepted their demands. Li Peng, the Prime Minister argued that if the Chinese Communist Party "legitimised opposition voices by negotiating with them, the party's political rule, based on a monopoly of power would crumble". Deng sided with Li. The government has ever since had to tighten repression, whilst enforcing a silence on Tiananmen to eliminate its memory. This growing repression has created a surveillance state and a million Uighur Muslims interned in the new Gulag in Sinkiang. It has also created the authoritarian crony capitalist model of growth. But, above all, argues Nathan, Deng's fateful decision leading to a state dependent on repression, also shows the fragility of repression, as demonstrated by its viewing the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo as an existential threat to it. By silencing any memory of Tiananmen "it is trying to outrun history, but history cannot be outrun. It can only be confronted". As the old men discussing China's future in the new Tiananmen Papers feared, history is on the side of the youth marching through Hong Kong, and that is the conundrum President Xi now faces.

share of consumption (as a driver of GDP growth) went up from 48 to 58 per cent. The contribution of exports fell by as much as 24 percentage points. For China, this was intentional and driven by policy. For India, it was the product of local and global circumstance.

Second, both China and India saw a credit binge in the previous decade that spilled over to the current one. For India, it resulted in the well-known NPA crisis. For China, it manifested in investor concerns over stability and episodes of large capital flight. Regulators in both the countries began responding with policy measures from 2015 onwards. The move towards the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) mechanism and Asset Quality Review (AQR) began at this time in India; China began its policy of "de-risking" its financial system.

Thus the second or allegedly "doggy" phase of AS's data series for India saw a major moderation in credit growth. This impacted investment and was responsible for the change in growth composition as well. Retail credit was unaffected and is consistent with the consumption boom story. However, with a relatively low share (around 18 per cent in 2012) in aggregate loans, it could not pull headline credit growth up.

To add to this, Indian companies turned more to the markets for their funding needs. Between 2011 and 2017, while the outstanding credit of banks in India doubled, the value of outstanding corporate bonds trebled with a 30 per cent annual average growth in issuances. Working capital funding through commercial paper also saw a boom, and more so in the recent years on the back of a wave of liquidity created by demonetisation.

All these factors put together could explain why something apparently as simple as the relationship between credit and GDP growth could have changed substantially between the two periods. AS suspects a flaw in the estimation methodology whenever he encounters a change in the way economic variables relate to each other. In his paper he spares little time to listen to the stories that explain these changes, a habit rampant among China's data sceptics. We wonder why.

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Electrifying vision, sobering reality

2-wheeler firms being asked to junk current plans for a hazy EV future; if that fails to materialise, will govt compensate them?

GIVEN INDIA'S AMBITIOUS emission-reduction targets at the Paris climate meet, it is not surprising that the government should have an equally ambitious electric vehicle (EV) strategy. According to the plan, all fresh production of three-wheelers are to be based on electric engines by 2023, and the changeover date will be 2025 in the case of all two-wheelers below 150cc. There was also talk of a certain share of the fleet of taxi operators like Uber/Ola being electric by a certain date, but that seems to have been put on the backburner for now. Given India's leadership position in the traditional two-wheeler industry—India exports 3 million two-wheelers a year—and how the advantage will now probably shift to countries like China, it is not surprising that the proposal mooted by NITI Aayog has come in for a lot of flak from manufacturers like Bajaj Auto and TVS Motor Company. But, more than that, what is worrying is the near absence of any concrete plan to make the shift, and to even think through the rationale. If the electric power on which these two-wheelers are to run is based on coal instead of gas or solar/wind, all that the move achieves is emission-shifting, not reduction; that is, the emission will not take place in big metros but in the areas where power plants are located. At the outset, then, the government needed to put out information on the emissions that will be saved, if at all.

There is, as yet, no concrete plan to produce enough batteries or to reduce their costs. Bajaj Auto managing director Rajiv Bajaj told *The Hindu Business Line* (HBL) that there wasn't one battery manufacturer present at the NITI meeting on this last week; China accounts for around 60% of global battery manufacturing right now. India, in contrast, has very small battery assembly facility and no manufacturing capacity. So, if the plan to go EV is just a few years away, for it to have any credibility, by now leading manufacturers should have started constructing their factories in India. And, as compared to China's 3-4 lakh public charging stations, India has a mere 150 and has a target of 5,000 in a few years. Since batteries are very expensive right now, and comprise around half the price of an EV, the government should have gone public with how much subsidy will be given each year to make the 2-wheelers affordable. While nothing of the sort has been done, the government is asking two- and three-wheeler manufacturers to prepare for an EV future in just a few years. Given how the current internal combustion engines are so different from EVs, this means manufacturers will have to virtually start over from scratch, redesign their production, come up with new vendors, etc. But what happens if, as they abandon their current production lines, the government is not able to switch from coal-based to clean power, or to get enough battery manufacturers or charging stations, or to fund a big subsidy programme? Will the government compensate manufacturers for the loss in business? Indeed, this talk of a sharply advanced EV schedule will also play havoc with manufacturers' plans to switch from the existing BS-IV emission norms to BS-VI, since it is possible a large number of buyers will prefer to wait to buy EVs instead. If the government is serious about moving to EVs, it needs to demonstrate this by laying out a concrete plan to get battery manufacturing in India and to detail how it plans to subsidise this. Else, it is just asking Indian manufacturers to trade their leadership position for an uncertain future.

RBI's problems go Viral!

Sadly, DG's exits strengthens view that govt uneasy with dissent

VARIOUS INDIAN GOVERNMENTS have had, from time to time, top economists who have been educated abroad—indeed, many of Dr Manmohan Singh's team when he was finance minister were educated abroad—but thanks to an unseemly controversy over the past few years, the Narendra Modi government gave the impression that *videshi-bhagao* was high on its agenda. So, before RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan decided not to seek an extension, there was talk of how he was "mentally not fully Indian" and, later, when Arvind Panagariya left NITI Aayog, there was talk of how, under Modi, the foreign influence on policy-making was reducing. If it wasn't bad enough that this made the government look xenophobic, the government constantly, and publicly, attacked Urjit Patel when he was RBI Governor, appointed a well-known critic to the central bank's board, tried to ensure a part of RBI's reserves were handed over to it and even tried to alter the governance structure of RBI to reduce the Governor's powers; indeed, the tussle over RBI's reserves is still carrying on and, if news reports are to be believed, the finance secretary is going to write a dissent note in the Bimal Jalan committee's report on this.

It is true that most expected Deputy Governor Viral Acharya to quit when Patel did, since it was he that delivered the speech talking of how, in Argentina, the bond market taught the government a lesson when it fired the central bank's chief and then transferred a third of its 'excess reserves' to itself; to many, it appeared he was asking Indian bond markets to do something similar since the government here too was looking to sequester a part of RBI's reserves. But when Acharya stayed on after Patel resigned, it appeared as if the new Governor Shaktikanta Das had managed to convince him that the government bore no ill will towards him; the fact that Acharya has now tendered his resignation before his term came to an end, however, suggests the peace was just temporary. As it happened, over the past few months, Acharya has been more hawkish about inflation than others on the monetary policy committee including the Governor. This is not to say that Acharya's view is right—indeed, *FE* has been critical of RBI for not lowering repo rates aggressively in the face of a benign inflation outlook—but his quitting strengthens the view, rightly or wrongly, of the government being uncomfortable with dissent. This is unfortunate and should be a lesson to the government in how to handle criticism; certainly its officials and those associated with it should refrain from berating those with a different point of view.

SouthsideSTORY

Residents of the southern states spend more on tertiary education and choose STEM degrees over general ones

THE SOUTHERN STATES outperform most of their counterparts elsewhere in the country in terms of human development. Recent research, however, has found that regional differences exist not only in educational outcomes but also in educational choices and household expenditure on education. Using data from two sets of NSSO surveys, researchers from the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai, found that individuals residing in the southern states are more likely to pursue higher education, especially in technical streams like medicine and engineering, than those residing in northern states. Even among rural populations, who are less likely to pursue tertiary education than urban residents, those who do pursue it tend to opt for technical courses over general education, and science and commerce over humanities within general education. The study also found that students from South Indian states are more likely than their North Indian counterparts to enroll in private, unaided institutions, thereby adding significantly to their educational expenses, especially through educational loans—southern states were found to account for over 70% of all education loans in India.

A large part of this regional variation is explained by the differences in levels of economic development between northern and southern states—along with finding a positive association between this spatial pattern in education and urbanisation levels, researchers argued that poorer households, being risk-averse, are unlikely to invest in the longer-term gains from higher education over immediate benefits. Yet, differences between the infrastructural and policy environment surrounding higher education—quality of educational institutes and instructors, seat capacity, prospects of future employability, ease of obtaining loans, etc—too, are a contributing factor. If the North wishes to catch up with the South, it is in these regards that it must take a leaf out of the latter's book.

INDIA'S TELECOM JOURNEY

SPECTACULAR CHANGES IN INDIAN TELECOM SINCE THE 1990s OFFER VITAL INSIGHTS FOR SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EMERGING SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY

The missed-call capital becomes the selfie capital

RAJAT KATHURIA

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Views are personal



lation made popular by Anglo-Saxons for the telecom sector at that point in time. Thus, SOP was eventually achieved by creating TRAI separate from service providers, by limiting DoT to policymaking and by creating an appellate tribunal (TDSAT) that resembled a judicial body in form and character. The 'unbundling' of the erstwhile public-sector monopoly was complete—SOP, with an irrefutably Indian personality was achieved, in theory if not in practice.

Prior to TRAI's entry, mobile telephony was the preserve of private players and peak mobile tariffs were extraordinarily high—₹16.80 for both incoming and outgoing calls. DoT had perhaps intended to price the private entrants out of the nascent market but underestimated Indian ingenuity. The excessive price inspired the Indian consumer to be thrifty. Thus, 'missed calling' became a necessity with pre-set interpretations of number of rings and timing of calls. While India now has one of the lowest tariffs in the world, it is still the 'missed-call' capital of the world.

Structural reform of the sector has no doubt borne much desired dividends, alongside offering rare insights into our political economy. Meanwhile, and relatively unobtrusively, the foreign direct investment (FDI) regime for the sector has been liberalised to keep pace with structural reform. The caps on the maximum foreign equity participation in telecom companies incorporated in India have been gradually eased. In November 2005, the Government, through Press Note 5 of 2005, raised the FDI limit applicable to the sector from 49% to 74%, subject to compliance with certain conditions, including that the majority of the directors, and selective key senior management personnel be resident Indian citizens and that a resident Indian pro-

moter hold at least 10% equity of the company. In August 2013, 100% FDI in the telecom sector was permitted for all services. Cumulative FDI inflows to India in the sector until June 2018 were over \$31 billion.

As Indian telecom liberalised, it became a darling with foreign telcos wishing to offset slowing growth in their home markets. Over the years, many came and exited while others came and stayed and, if you will, conquered the market. SingTel and Vodafone invested in India directly or through local operators. On the other hand, AT&T, which previously owned one-third equity in a telecom joint venture, exited along with Telenor, Swisscom, Belgacom and Japan's NTT DoCoMo. Recently, Vodafone India merged with Idea Cellular while Bharti Airtel continues to be backed by SingTel. Reliance Jio's success lies, in large part, in alliances—such as those with BT Group Plc and Deutsche Telekom AG among several others. Equipment makers Huawei, ZTE, Alcatel, Nokia and Ericsson have been the source of advanced technology while IBM has been a solutions provider to many telcos. Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that behind every successful Indian telco there is a foreign hand! As a corollary, one could assert that Indian computer scientists and coders have played key roles in many telco successes abroad.

Structural reform expressed in the SOP principle and liberalisation, manifested in easing FDI norms, jointly transformed telecoms in India. Besides a billion-plus mobile subscribers, there are over 600 million internet users, of

which 493 million use the internet regularly. Smartphone ownership is a staggering 450 million and rapidly growing. On social media, India surpassed United States in active Facebook usage (260 million vs 190 million). Instagram, a rising social media platform, has an Indian user base of 72 million. The rising tide of Instagram Influencers in India helps brands grow awareness and, increasingly, drive sales. LinkedIn, with 56 million Indian users, has facilitated job market search and matching. From being the missed call capital, India is well and truly 'posing' to become the selfie capital, embracing, regrettably, its dark side as well. But, let's keep that story for another day.

A collaborative strategy that combines respective comparative advantages of various actors across space (and time) works better than an 'India first strategy'

The change in Indian telecom, especially for those who lived through the 1980s and 1990s, has been spectacular and offers vital insights, which can be usefully transported to present-day India even as the new government attempts to shape the future of emerging sectors of the economy. The primary lesson is this—a collaborative strategy that combines respective comparative advantages of various actors across space (and time) works better than an 'India-first strategy'. To use a hackneyed turn of phrase, India *will* become first if it adopts a collaborative rather than a protective approach. Let's we be deliberately misunderstood or misinterpreted, collaboration does not mean throwing India under the bus or selling out to foreign interests; rather, it implies recognising our negotiating strengths and doing what's best for collective welfare. Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia, among other countries, are waiting and watching for us to move the wrong piece. But, if we make the right move, as the poet Majrooh Sultanpuri reminds us, we will be joined by others to create the extensive agglomeration effects mentioned in this article. '*Main akela hi chala tha janib-e-manzil magar, Log saath aate gaye aur karwaan banta gaya*'.

Ankita Sharma, research intern, ICRIR, assisted with the article

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kashmir imbroglio

The call for dialogue from Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a moderate leader in the Kashmir separatist group of Hurriyat Conference, is welcome. Absence of sustained dialogue and engagement with the stakeholders of Kashmir imbroglio, including the separatist elements, and the policy of quelling protests on the streets through force by Modi 1.0 had done more harm than good to the larger cause of peace in Jammu and Kashmir. Rise in militancy in the last five years is a case in point. The political vacuum that presently exists in the state, manifests itself in the absence of elected government; this prolonged absence of engagement with the political class of the state cannot be allowed to persist for long. It is time the Centre shed its intransigent attitude and ushered in measures to arrest the deepening sense of alienation among Kashmiris, particularly its youth, to prevent militancy from gaining upper hand in the state. — M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

Removal of HC Judge

The present procedure of removal of HC judges through impeachment by Parliament is cumbersome, especially in the case of Justice SN Shukla of Allahabad HC, who was indicted by an in-house panel and has declined to resign or take voluntary retirement. GOI must constitute a permanent National Judicial Commission as the final authority in appointments and probes against HC

— Subhash C Agarwal, Delhi

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Business must fight climate change

Businesses and investors thinking of what assets to build and finance, and where, are signaling that they are aligning themselves with ambitious climate goals

NATHANIEL BULLARD

Bloomberg

LAST WEEK, THE New York State Assembly passed the most aggressive clean-energy target in the United States, requiring New York to get 100% of its electricity from zero-emissions sources by 2040. Governor Andrew Cuomo, who is expected to sign the bill into law, called it "the most aggressive in the country." On the other side of the country, Oregon's state Legislature is attempting to pass another ambitious climate bill, an effort now stalled by the fact that Republican senators have walked off the job. In the absence of federal action on decarbonising the power sector, states are taking action on their own.

These state goals are ambitious, and they're potentially unachievable using current technologies. But they are becoming policy reality, not political rhetoric. Businesses and investors thinking of what assets to build and finance, and where, are signaling that they are aligning themselves with these ambitious climate goals. The Network for Greening the Financial System, a group of central banks and supervisors that assesses climate risk and mobilises climate finance, doesn't see climate change as abstract. Rather, it is of a "foreseeable nature," and "while the exact outcomes, time horizon and future pathway are uncertain, there is a high degree of certainty that some combination of physical and transition risks" will eventually materialise.

If those risks are foreseeable, then they can be priced. And if those risks manifest themselves financially, then they should be disclosed as well. In its most recent status report, the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial

Disclosures said that it now has almost 800 supporters, up from just over 100 only two years ago. The group's disclosure framework has been appearing as corporate commitments to reduce exposure to climate change or curtail business activities that cause it. Crédit Agricole recently published its 2022 Medium-Term Plan, which not only aligns itself with the TCFD, but also goes directly after its own book of business in thermal coal used for power generation. The bank says it will be exiting from thermal coal production in EU and OECD countries by 2030 (no new business relations with companies for which thermal coal accounts for over 25% of their revenues except those that have announced plans to close their thermal coal activities or which intend to announce such plans by 2021).

In a separate news release, the bank said it would also double its green loan portfolio to 13 billion euros by 2022. Its planned increase tracks an expanding market that could top 2018's record of \$182 billion of green bond issuance. Credit Agricole and its peers are typical green bond issuers, and as Brian Chappatta of *Bloomberg Opinion* noted, the green bond field is not only growing, but it is also becoming more diverse. That's a welcome change from last year, when Chappatta said the market "appeared to be stuck in infancy because of self-designating and a general lack of enforcement".

It's not entirely clear what changed. Maybe countries and companies truly

Climate change is all that most people have ever known, as I wrote last week, and it's the same story for global corporations

are reacting to the U.N.'s October report, which argued that the world has 12 years to avert catastrophic climate damage, and just needed time to get their financing in order. Regardless, the diversity of borrowers coming to market stands out as an important trend. About 39% of issuance in the first five months of 2019 came from countries other than China, France, the US, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, the most since at least 2014, *Bloomberg* data show.

It is important to note two things about how the corporate world is adapting to a changing climate beyond the here and now. First, working to combat it has financial rewards, encouraging more of these efforts; second, almost every big business is building climate change into its forecasts.

We can see this in the CDP's recent *Global Climate Change Analysis 2018*. As *Bloomberg's* Eric Roston reported, the world's 500 largest companies tallied \$970 billion in risks from climate change, as well as \$2.1 trillion of "potential good news" in doing something about those risks. Businesses and investors like certainty. Long-term and extremely ambitious policies such as New York's ensure a bit more certainty, even if the, exact mechanisms of achieving those policies remains uncertain. Climate change is *all that most people have ever known*, as I wrote last week, and it's the same story for global corporations.

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

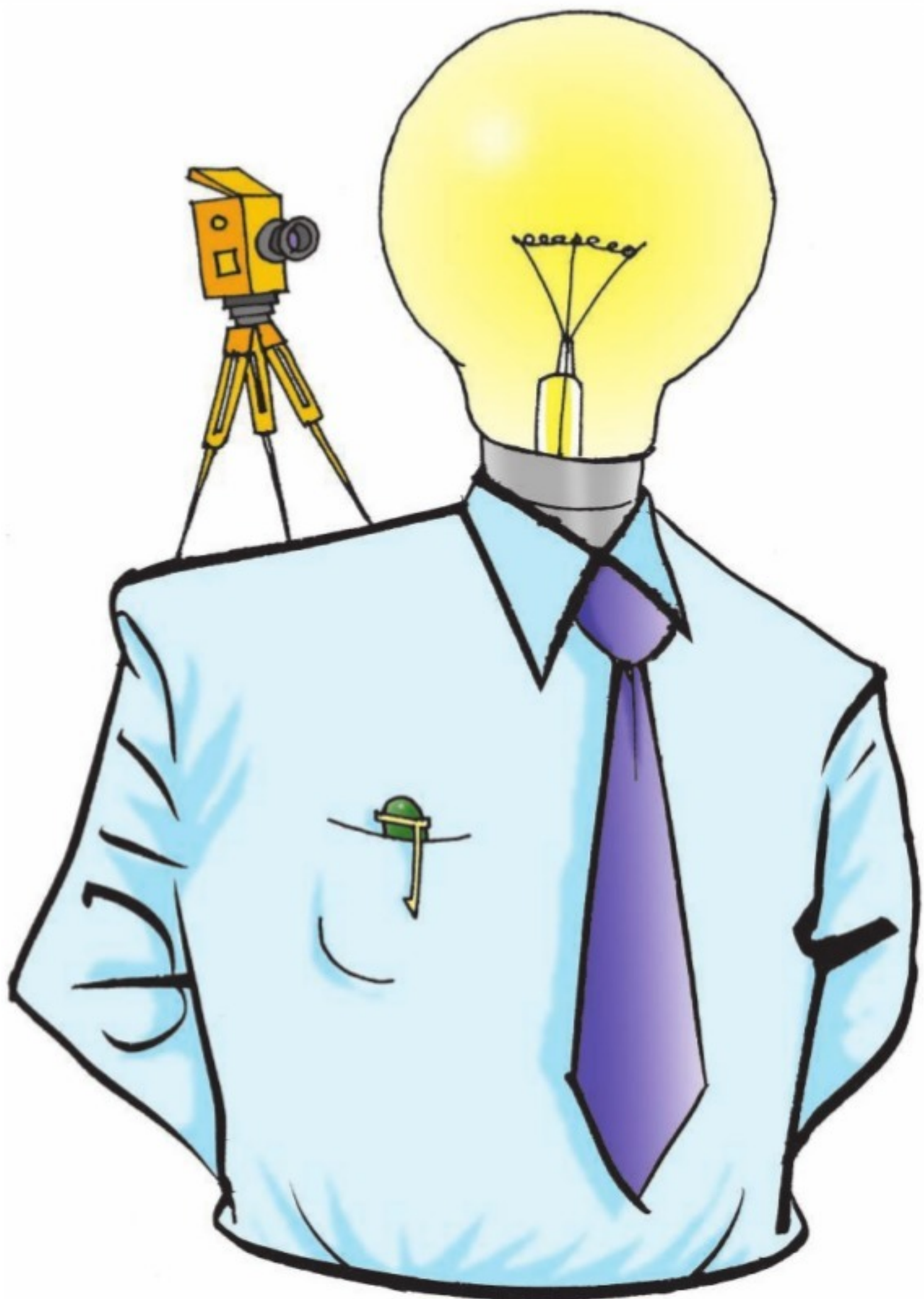


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

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The many pitfalls of employment surveys

Validity and reliability of statistical panel surveys, which enable researchers to study of individual behaviour change over time, are severely limited by methodological factors

IN 1726, AT AGE 3, Adam Smith was kidnapped by gypsies. His rescue was lucky for the world, as the discipline of economics would have been significantly different otherwise. Incidentally, the rescue is also described as lucky for the gypsies since Smith was extremely forgetful and it would have a huge burden for the gypsies to keep him captive for a long time!

Readers must be wondering why this sudden reference to Adam Smith in this article. Well, the kidnapping incident reminds us of the necessity as well as the futility of statistical surveys globally and in India. Damned if one does, damned if one does not—a necessary evil, so to say.

Statistical panel surveys involve the collection of data over time from a base-line sample of respondents. Unlike other forms of longitudinal studies, such surveys allow for the study of individual behavior change over time as the same sampling units are followed over time.

The advantage of such surveys is that they enable researchers to measure and analyze changes over time in socio-demographic and economic situations, as well as the attitudes, opinions and behaviors of individuals or aggregates of individuals. The unit of observation of household-based panels is the household and its members. Household panels enable researchers to study household change and the changing dynamics of the individuals within it. A typical example is the CMIE Household Survey.

However, though data used in such surveys have opened up avenues of research that simply could not have been pursued otherwise, their power depends on the extent and reliability of the data as well as on the validity of the restrictions upon which the statistical methods have been built. Otherwise, such data may provide a solution for one problem, but aggravate another.

Limitations of such datasets include, but are not limited to, problems in the design, collection, and management of

date for panel surveys. These include the problems of coverage (incomplete account of the population of interest), nonresponse (due to lack of cooperation of the respondent or because of interviewer's error), recall (respondent not remembering correctly), frequency of interviewing, interview spacing, reference period, the use of bounding to prevent the shifting of events from outside the recall period into the recall period, time-in-sample bias etc.

Another limitation of such datasets is the distortion due to measurement errors, which may arise because of faulty response due to unclear questions, memory errors, deliberate distortion of responses (e.g., prestige bias), inappropriate informants, wrong recording of responses, and interviewer effects. Although these problems can also occur in cross-sectional studies, they are typically aggravated in panel data studies due to their very nature.

Such datasets may also exhibit bias due to sample selection problems. For the initial wave of the panel, respondents may refuse to participate, or the interviewer may not find anybody at home. This may cause bias in the inference drawn from this sample. Although this nonresponse can also occur in cross-sectional data sets, it is more serious with panels because subsequent waves of the panel are still subject to nonresponse. Respondents may die, move, or find that the cost of responding is high.

Additionally, the data suffers from the intrinsic deficiency of reactivity. For example, if we ask people questions about the status of women at two or more points in time, the questioning process itself might produce opinion shifts. Perhaps the act of asking people about the status of women makes them more sensitive to women's issues. This increased sensitivity might mean they are more likely to favor or oppose changes in the status of women during later surveys. This is called reactivity, because the respondents are reacting to the initial questioning.

Last, but not the least, one of the most significant problems associated with panel data is the issue of attrition (i.e., respondents dropping out of the study). Attrition is a general problem for any study that draws on a panel survey. But, because of the strong correlation of attrition with residential mobility, it is a particularly severe issue for demographic analysis. Marriage, cohabitation, separation, divorce, or childbirth may lead to a residential move, and survey institutes are often unable to keep track of people as they move. A similar issue arises at higher ages, as respondents may be unavailable for an interview because they have moved into an elder-care facility, been hospitalised, or been unable to answer questions for other reasons (such as disability).

The analysis of mortality risks using a survey is also contingent on the availability of information on the reasons why a respondent dropped out. Some panel studies (like the PSID and the US Health and Retirement Survey) are able to verify that a respondent dropped out due to death by linking his or her information to official death registers. In other countries, it is not always possible to confirm deaths in this way.

Thus, such surveys, undertaken with grandiose plans and high hopes, frequently fail to live up to the expectations of the initiators of the research. Practical problems, such as continuity of personnel, institutional commitment, funding, design and substance of the databank, changing of facilities and equipment, and many others may interfere with the success of the project. We are not sure whether the surveys done by CMIE and even NSSO live up to all such challenges. A case in point is that the University of Michigan, in their Consumer Surveys, always asks consumers about their anticipation of unemployment rate changes, and that is subsequently validated. We are not sure whether the CMIE Survey, which is modelled along the lines of the University of Michigan Consumer Survey, even addresses such an issue!

GOLD SCHEMES

Don't just tweak, revamp them

SP KETKAR

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Both the monetisation and the bond schemes must be made perpetual, transferrable, and tradable as D-MAT bonds, denominated in grams

WORLD GOLD COUNCIL, US Geological Survey and other agencies estimate that the total quantity of yellow metal on this planet is around 245,000 tonnes. Of this, 190,000 tonnes is 'above the ground stock' and 55,000 tonnes is 'below the ground'—being mined at the rate of around 3,500 tonnes per year. Break-up of 190,000 tonnes shows that 17% is official holdings of the IMF and central banks around the world, 14% is industry stock-in-trade, 21% is private investment in the form of coins and bars and the balance 48% is held as jewellery.

In India, besides the 612 tonnes' reserves with RBI, gold ownership details are not readily available. However, based on our imports in the past 30~35 years, agencies estimate that Indian households and religious institutions hold over 20,000 tonnes in coins/bars and jewellery. Our average stock-in-trade is 10,000 tonnes and we import around 800 tonnes each year.

Against this backdrop, the government launched three gold schemes in November 2015—India Gold Coins (IGC), Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGB) and Gold Monetization Scheme (GMS). Three years since, the performance of these schemes has been no match for the lure of the actual metal.

To start with, IGC sells physical gold, adding to the idle gold volume and works contrary to the overall aim of our gold policy. In any case, banks and jewellers have been selling gold coins for several years, so IGC merely means another player in that market. Moreover, given that around 100,000 IGCs—aggregating to about a tonne—have been sold in three years, net impact of the scheme on idle gold is insignificant.

For SGBs, public response has been lukewarm. From the launch of scheme, RBI has issued twenty-seven franchises of SGBs valued at ₹ 7,286 crore, which amount to around 24.8 tonnes of yellow metal. Thus, SGBs have reduced our gold imports by an average of 8 tonnes a year—which is just 1% of the annual import.

GMS has been tweaked a few times from its launch and further tweaking is reported to have been discussed last week. However, most changes such as revision of interest rates, allowing deposit for broken periods, premature withdrawal, etc, have been cosmetic, and the scheme—over three years—could bring only around 22 tonnes or 0.1% of the idle gold, into circulation. Such lacklustre performance calls for a revamp and not mere tweaking of the gold schemes.

First, gold owned by a person does not have any lock-in period and a maturity date. It continues to be with the owner, till the person sells it or gifts it. Therefore, SGBs and GDCs (Gold Deposit Certificates, issued under GMS) must mimic these characteristics of physical gold. Both need to be redefined as perpetual, transferrable, tradable D-MAT bonds, denominated in grams. The value of these bonds could be updated as per price movements in the bullion market and interest could be computed on daily balance at rates to be fixed every quarter. In fact, SGBs and GDCs could be merged into a single instrument that is realizable in rupees only, at prevailing gold prices.

Second, except for SBI and few others, banks do not mention GMS on their websites and employees are not even aware of the scheme. Banks need to share the details of GMS, such as account opening procedure, various formats, document requirements, etc, on their websites and adequately train their customer-facing employees.

Third, while banks are aggressively promoting SGBs, particularly to their D-MAT customers, they are not marketing the GMS at all. Banks need to mine their databases and promote GMS to every customer, who ever held a locker in the bank or has bought gold coins or bars from the bank in the past 10~15 years. Also, banks must educate their potential customers that just like holding gold in physical form, the quantity of gold in their SGBs and GDCs will always remain intact. Only the value of their holding will change according to changes in gold prices.

Finally, no scheme can succeed in India, by offering it through 10~15 designated branches in metros and making the customers run from a branch to a CPTC (Collection and Purity Testing Center) and back to the branch, for each monetisation request. There is an urgent need for banks to collectively cover all the 53 million-plus towns, by operating at least one branch per town that is equipped with on-premise CPTC, to offer single-window service for gold monetisation.

NEW ECONOMY

FINANCE MINISTER'S ADDRESS to G20 reaffirmed India's steadfast approach to taxing digital companies. The issue of large multinationals not paying their fair share of taxation has been explicitly acknowledged, and work on this has been undertaken under aegis of the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Program. The program, however, has taken an interesting turn. Fissures have appeared in the international tax cooperation carved out nearly a century ago. The cause for this is the re-examination of international tax rules that could potentially reallocate taxing rights. The proposals being suggested can potentially shake up the source-residence balance crafted into law. Much to the dismay of developed countries, OECD has suggested the various proposals will be examined and developed without prejudice. This is also in contrast to the beginning of the century, when the rules were first designed. Developing countries, such as India, are now at the forefront of discussions.

Digital companies, unlike brick-and-mortar companies, can sustain significant economic relations with the market jurisdictions without physical presence. Imagine an e-commerce platform. It can bring together buyers and sellers with just a website that can be hosted through a server located anywhere in the world. Tax

Taxing the digitalised economy

Discussion on economic digitalisation must precede changes in law to ensure a level playing field and protect tax base of digital companies

SURANJALI TANDON

Assistant Professor, Tax Research Team, NIPFP

authorities have been riddled by such dislocation of taxable presence. It is a challenge to identify what qualifies as taxable presence. This question is being examined in detail by policy-makers. While developing countries, such as India, consider user participation or digital revenues as economic presence, others, such as USA, consider only a fraction of the economic profit to be attributable to market's contribution. As countries try to resolve these disagreements to find a long-term solution, India has moved ahead on its own by

implementing a series of measures. In 2016, India introduced the equalisation levy through the Finance Act. This levy is withholding on payments to non-resident companies by resident companies in lieu of digital advertising services. India is among the first to introduce this. However, the levy has been criticised widely, primarily, since it is not creditable in the country of residence. As a result, it could lead to over-taxation. As of now, for the thresholds prescribed, the tax is applicable to limited companies offering digital



advertising services.

To be able to tax digital companies appropriately in India, the Income Tax Act was amended to add an explanation to the definition of business connection, in 2018. The definition prescribes economic presence based on the user base and sales revenue. Known as the test for significant economic presence, it has so far not been operationalised. The bigger challenge is that even if it were operationalised, it would not apply unless India's tax treaties, too, are suitably amended. Further,

if a company is considered as having a taxable presence in India, it remains to be determined how much of its income is attributable to India. For example, hiring platforms may have one of the transactions located abroad. Would the entire value, then, be attributed to India? If not, then how much is the contribution of the Indian user?

Pre-empting such issues and in an effort to move ahead, CBDT recently called for comments on its discussion draft that recommends apportionment

profits on various factors such as sales, assets and users. The draft proposes that in a situation where it is difficult to ascertain the income of a company, the tax department can use existing rules of the Income Tax Act to compute tax as a percentage of turnover, or in a manner it deems suitable. A seemingly simple solution, it comes with its own set of challenges. First, this rule would be triggered only under the condition that the income is not ascertainable. To add to that, where such exact language does not appear, relevant treaties will still have to be amended. More importantly, it is necessary to develop a consistent and nuanced methodology for an acceptable apportionment.

It is commendable that India is leading discussions on digital taxes. Undoubtedly, it is important to create a level playing field and protect the tax base. However, the progress of such measures, taken unilaterally, is not unfettered. A network of treaties based on international conventions supersede the domestic law. To find agreeable solutions to overhaul this outdated system, it is necessary that the discussion on economics of digitalisation precedes the change in law. If the question of what constitutes a taxable nexus remains unanswered, businesses may get caught in the crosshairs of unilateral measures.



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

TELLING NUMBERS

State divide in unemployment: Nagaland 21.4%, Meghalaya 1.5%

NAGALAND HAS the highest unemployment rate among the states at 21.4%, and Meghalaya the lowest at 1.5%, figures tabled by the government in Parliament during the current session show. The Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18, other aspects of which have been reported earlier, shows huge variations among the states. Besides Nagaland, states with high unemployment are Goa and Manipur. Chhattisgarh and Sikkim are among those with the lowest rates. If Union Territories are included in the comparison, Nagaland still tops the list while Dadra and Nagar Haveli replaces Meghalaya with a low of 0.6%.

Country-wide, PLFS pegs the unemployment rate at 6.1%, with the rate lower among females than males. Among the states, Nagaland and Meghalaya again take the top and bottom positions in both the female and the male lists. Goa and Kerala are high in female unemployment (respectively 26.0% and 23.3%) but their re-

	Female	Male	Overall
Rural	3.8	5.8	5.3
Urban	10.8	5.7	7.8
Rural + urban	5.7	6.2	6.1

Source: PLFS 2017-18 via Labour & Employment Ministry, in Lok Sabha

spective male unemployment rates are three times lower (8.1% and 6.2%), giving them overall rates of 13.9% and 11.4%. States showing the opposite trend — female unemployment lower than male unemployment by at least half — include Bihar (2.8% to 7.4%, overall 7.2%), Madhya Pradesh (2.1% to 5.3%, overall 4.5%), Rajasthan (2.3% to 6.0%, overall 5.0%) and Uttar Pradesh (3.1% to 6.9%, overall 6.4%). Union Territories included, Lakshadweep has a 50.5% female unemployment rate, while Andaman & Nicobar has 42.8%.

THE STATES*

(Unemployment rate in % for persons of all ages according to usual status (ps+ss) approach during 2017-18)

Highest rate	Nagaland 21.4	Goa 13.9	Manipur 11.6
Lowest rate	Meghalaya 1.5	Chhattisgarh 3.3	Sikkim 3.5
Female, highest	Nagaland 34.4	Goa 26.0	Kerala 23.3
Female, lowest	Meghalaya 1.9	MP 2.1	Rajasthan 2.3
Male, highest	Nagaland 18.3	Manipur 10.2	Delhi 9.4
Male, lowest	Meghalaya 1.3	Sikkim 2.6	Chhattisgarh 3.3

*Excluding UTs other than Delhi

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18 via Ministry for Labour & Employment (reply tabled in Lok Sabha)

THIS WORD MEANS

PAROLE

Release of a convict while serving his or her sentence. Why is it granted, what are the conditions to fulfil?

CURMEET RAM Rahim Singh, the Dera Sacha Sauda chief convicted of rape and murder, has applied to the Haryana government for parole. Parole is a system of releasing a prisoner with suspension of the sentence. The release is conditional, usually subject to behaviour, and requires periodic reporting to the authorities for a set period of time. A broadly similar but subtly different concept is furlough, which is given in case of long-term imprisonment. While furlough is seen as a matter of right, to be granted periodically irrespective of any reason and merely to enable the prisoner to retain family and social ties, parole is not a matter of right and may be denied to a prisoner even when he makes out a sufficient case.

Parole is considered a reformatory process, and the provision (along with furlough) was introduced with a view to humanising the prison system. In the US and Britain, every sentence above 18 months is eligible for parole, after completion of one-third of prison time. In India, parole and furlough are covered under the Prison Act of 1894. Prisoners convicted of multiple murders or under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act are not eligible for parole.

Since prison is a subject of the state, the Prison Act of the particular state gov-

ernment defines the rules under which parole is granted. State governments have their own Prisoner Release on Parole Rules. For instance, in Rajasthan, initial parole is granted for 20 days; a second parole is for 30 days and a third for 40 days. Thereafter, the prisoner can apply for permanent parole.

Parole is granted by the state executive — the jail authorities submit the report to state government — and competent authority takes a final decision on grant of parole on humanitarian considerations. If parole is rejected, the convict can move the High Court challenging the order of the competent authority. Also, apart from regular parole, the superintendent of a jail can also grant parole up to a period of seven days in emergent cases. For instance, actor Sanjay Dutt was granted parole on medical grounds; and Santosh Kumar Singh, who is serving a life term for the 1996 rape and murder of law student Priyadarshini Mattoo, was granted three weeks' parole to write his LLM examination. In recent times, one of the most high-profile cases of parole granted was that to former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif — for 12 hours for his wife's funeral.

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M



AMITABH SINHA

PUNE, JUNE 25

ON MONDAY, the Cabinet cleared the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill once again, paving the way for its reintroduction in Parliament. The Bill had been passed by Lok Sabha in January this year, but could not get the approval of Rajya Sabha. As a result, it lapsed once the tenure of the previous Lok Sabha expired last month.

The fresh clearance by the Cabinet is the third attempt by the government to enact a law to regulate the use of DNA technology in the country. An earlier version of the Bill had been finalised in 2015 but could not be introduced in Parliament. The proposed law has been in the making since at least 2003.

The purpose

The Bill seeks to create a regulatory framework for obtaining, storing and testing of DNA samples of human beings, mainly for the purposes of criminal investigations, and with the objective of establishing the identity of a person. DNA testing is already being used for a variety of purposes, such as criminal investigations, establishment of parentage, and search for missing people. The proposed law seeks to bring in a supervisory structure to oversee these practices, and frame guidelines and rules so that the DNA technology is not misused.

To achieve these objectives, the bill proposes to set up two institutional structures — a DNA regulatory board, and a DNA data bank — at the national level. Regional centres of the board as well as the data bank can be set up at the state level as well.

The board, which is proposed to be the main regulatory authority, would frame the rules and guidelines for DNA collection, testing and storage, while the data bank would be the repository of all DNA samples collected from various people under specified rules.

The Bill proposes that testing of DNA

LALMANI VERMA

NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

ON MONDAY, BSP chief Mayawati snapped an unsuccessful alliance with the Samajwadi Party, saying her party would contest future elections on its own. Weeks earlier, she had announced that the BSP would go solo in 11 Assembly seats that are scheduled to witness byelections on account of the MLAs having become MPs.

The stated reasons

Mayawati has cited a review that reportedly found that the BSP did not gain from the alliance as it had expected. The SP's attitude after the Lok Sabha elections, she said, suggests that it will not be possible for the alliance to defeat the BJP.

Earlier this month, she had said the SP's core voters, the Yadavs, had drifted away from the alliance, even in SP strongholds. The claim is based on the fact that in five seats where the SP fielded Yadav candidates (Jhansi, Kannauj, Mainpuri, Badaun and Firozabad), their vote count was less than half the combined votes polled by the SP and BSP candidates in 2014. In Mainpuri, SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav had polled 5.95 lakh votes in 2014 and the BSP 1.42 lakh, but Mulayam's count dropped to 5.24 lakh in 2019 despite the alliance with the BSP.

While the BSP cites such examples, the fact remains that the party's votes rose in most of the 38 seats it contested, which could not have been possible without the votes of

samples can be carried out only at laboratories that are authorised to do so by the regulatory board. It also specifies the circumstances under which a person can be asked to submit DNA samples, the purposes for which such requests can be made, and the exact procedure for handling, storing and accessing these samples.

The process

According to the provisions of the proposed law, police can ask for DNA samples of the person accused of an offence to facilitate their investigation. But unless the offence is of a very serious nature, punishable by death or by imprisonment for at least seven years, the DNA sample can be obtained only on the written consent of the accused. It can be also be obtained if an authorised magistrate is satisfied that a DNA test is absolutely necessary for investigation of the crime.

People who are witness to a crime, or want to locate their missing relatives, or in similar other circumstances, can volunteer

Why BSP sees merit in splitting with SP

In failed alliance arithmetic, BSP gained more than SP, now looks at building platform for 2022 elections

many traditional SP supporters.

Eye on 2022

Beyond the stated reasons, the election brought bigger gains to the BSP (10 of 80 seats) than the SP (5). It has provided the BSP an opportunity to present itself as a viable alternative for Muslims, the SP's other vote bank. While Mayawati claimed Yadav votes drifted away from the SP, she has thanked Muslims for supporting BSP, and appointed Kunwar Danish Ali as party leader in Lok Sabha.

Also, an alliance would have brought additional problems in the 2022 Assembly elections. One is the question of a chief ministerial candidate, with both parties aiming for the seat, while seat-sharing could raise local rebellion in some of the 403 seats, sources in both parties said.

On the flip side, the BSP stares at a possible loss of credibility. It risks losing the goodwill of Yadav voters, whom it has blamed for the alliance's poor showing. The announcement having come before the 11 Assembly byelections, it also carries the risk of turning a number of voters towards the BJP.

But to the BSP, which does not have the numbers to even elect Mayawati to Rajya Sabha, the Assembly elections offer the only immediate route for a possible revival.

How they got together

The BSP and the SP had joined hands after over two decades, with the aim of pooling their votes against BJP. The footprints of both were shrinking as the BJP had swept most of the state's Lok Sabha seats in 2014 and 80% of the



BSP chief Mayawati and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on campaign for the 2019 LS elections. The BSP won 10 of 80 seats, the SP just 5.
Vishal Srivastav/Express Archive

Party	2014 LS	2017 VS	2019 LS
SP	22%	22%	18%
BSP	20%	22%	19%
SP + BSP	42%	44%	37%
BJP	43%	40%	50%

scene index can be stored permanently, entries in other indices can be removed through processes prescribed.

People whose DNA samples have been collected, either from the crime scene, or through voluntary written consent, can also request the removal of their information from the index. DNA samples of people who are not suspects or undertrials cannot be matched with already stored information in the suspects/undertrial index or the offenders' index.

The debate

The main debate over the proposed law has been around three issues — whether the DNA technology is foolproof, whether the provisions adequately address the possibility of abuse of DNA information, and whether the privacy of the individual is protected.

DNA information can be extremely revelatory. It can not only establish a person's identity but also reveal a lot about physical and biological attributes of the person like eye, hair or skin colour, susceptibility to diseases, possible medical history, and possible clues to biological relatives. For years, critics of the Bill have been claiming that collecting and storing such intrusive information could lead to abuse, besides being violative of a person's privacy.

The government, on the other hand, has been arguing that since DNA tests are already happening, and frequently used as the most reliable tool to establish identity, it would be better to have regulatory safeguards so that it is carried out only in prescribed manner and by authorised personnel and institutions. The text of the Bill has undergone several changes over the years to address some of the concerns on privacy and the possibility of abuse. The government has also claimed that very limited information is proposed to be stored in the indices — just 17 sets of numbers out of billions that DNA samples can reveal. These can tell nothing about the individual except to act as a unique identifier, it has said.

Assembly in 2017. Their individual vote shares, however, added up to more than the BJP's in 2017 (44% against BJP's 39.7%) and was fractionally behind in 2014 (42% against 42.6%).

From constituency-wise data of 2017, projected to 2019, SP and BSP leaders figured that by pooling their votes they could defeat the BJP in 50 Lok Sabha seats. They joined hands in 2018, and won Lok Sabha bypolls in Gorakhpur, Phulpur and Kairana (the last with RLD support). But in 2019, these calculations failed to work as the BJP won 62 seats and its ally Apna Dal (S) won two.

The earlier break-up

The SP and the BSP had contested the 1993 Assembly elections together. They polled over 29% votes and won 176 seats — the SP 109 and the BSP 67 — against the BJP's 33% and 177 seats. Mulayam became Chief Minister of the SP-BSP alliance. Frequent conflict followed, however, and on June 2, 1995, Mayawati decided to withdraw support. That evening, some SP MLAs and district-level leaders reached the State Guest House in Lucknow, where Mayawati was meeting her MLAs to discuss their next step. SP MLAs and workers surrounded the guesthouse and went on the rampage, forcing Mayawati to lock herself into a room while they detained several of her MLAs. Then BJP MLA Brahm Dutt Dwivedi, who was present, is widely acknowledged as having stepped in to protect Mayawati against possible physical assault. Mulayam's government was sacked on June 3 and that same evening, Mayawati took oath as CM with outside support from the BJP and the Janata Dal.

Atomic clock, green fuel, ashes: what's aboard Falcon Heavy, what for

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

ON TUESDAY, Elon Musk's SpaceX launched its Falcon Heavy spacecraft on its third mission, and the most complex one yet by the company. Among the various reasons which make the mission important, one is its huge payload — 24 satellites from various organisations, including government agencies. These will be launched in three different orbits. What are these satellites for?

■ **Deep Space Atomic Clock.** Sent by NASA and collaborators on one of the 24 satellites, DSAC is incredibly precise and compact, and the size of a toaster. Accurate timekeeping is crucial to the performance of GPS, and atomic clocks work by observing the behav-

our of atoms as precisely as possible. The NASA website says DSAC is expected to be stable to better than one microsecond per decade (one second per 10 million years), which would be about 50 times more accurate than atomic clocks already abroad GPS satellites. At present, satellites rely on an exchange of signals with Earth, where atomic clocks calculate the time it takes for the signals to arrive. The new technology targets aims at helping spacecraft navigate by themselves, relying on the new atomic clock in space. The DSAC project will perform a year-long demonstration in space.

■ **ASCENT green fuel.** One of the satellites will be a test spacecraft for a safer rocket fuel. The traditional fuel used in satellites is hydrazine, which is extremely toxic to humans as well as the environment. The



Deep Space Atomic Clock, satellite for testing ASCENT green fuel, solar-powered satellite LightSail2. NASA, Planetary Society

new alternative is called ASCENT (Advanced Spacecraft Energetic Non-toxic Propellant), formerly called AF-M315E, which is a hydroxyl ammonium nitrate fuel/oxidiser blend. First developed by the US Air Force and now launched as part of a NASA-led col-



laboration, ASCENT is described as a fuel with significantly reduced toxicity levels compared to hydrazine, and potentially shorter launch processing times, resulting in lower costs.

■ **Solar-powered sail.** LightSail 2 is a



crowd-funded solar sail project from the Planetary Society. It seeks to become the first orbiting spacecraft to be propelled solely by sunlight. In 2005, the Planetary Society launched the world's first solar sailing spacecraft, Cosmos 1, which was lost

due to a rocket failure. In 2015, LightSail 1 spacecraft successfully completed a test flight. LightSail 2, which is aimed to go into orbit, is enclosed within Prox-1, a small satellite built by Georgia Tech students, which is scheduled to deploy the sail on July 2, the Planetary Society website says.

■ **Ashes of the dead.** Falcon Heavy's payload includes the ashes of over 150 deceased persons, one of those being astronaut Bill Pogue, who flew on Skylab in the 1970s and died in 2014. Among other items aboard, the US Air Force Research Laboratory had space weather experiments, while the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has six small atmospheric experimental satellites for weather forecasting.

Source: NASA, Planetary Society, Reuters





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

EASE THE TENSION

Viral Acharya's exit from RBI brings institution's relations with government into focus, issues he flagged must be discussed

THE EXIT OF Reserve Bank deputy governor, Viral Acharya, caps an unhappy sequence of three top central bankers moving out over the last three years — governors Urjit Patel and Raghuram Rajan being the other two. This is a record of sorts and reflects their uneasy relationship with the government. What's unfortunate is the manner of their departure. Acharya's decision to quit six months ahead of the completion of his three-year term may not have come as a surprise in the backdrop of the tensions between the RBI and the government towards the fag end of last year and culminating in the A D Shroff Memorial Lecture, where Acharya warned of the wrath of the financial markets if governments failed to respect the independence of the central bank. That riled the government. Acharya had also argued against easing the Prompt Corrective Framework for weak banks in the face of requests from the government, saying the first priority ought to be to limit losses and prevent further erosion of capital; he also made the point that there was no strong case for the RBI to help the crisis-ridden NBFCs by acting as a lender of last resort. Acharya had also opposed cutting interest rates until the recent monetary policy review.

Central banks the world over are encountering political pressure with the prospect of the slowdown deepening. Acharya's resignation raises the larger issue of not just autonomy or the de facto independence of the RBI, but also the enabling environment for policymakers who are outsiders and with foreign credentials. It's not as if the country's establishment has been always hostile to the entry of technocrats and professionals going by the experience of the mid 1970s, 80s and 90s, when an array of them led by Manmohan Singh helped put the building blocks for a modern economy. If many of them succeeded, it had much to do with political backing, a better understanding of the country context or ethos and perhaps, a less dogmatic approach to tackling economic issues. The exit of three central bankers and two senior economic policymakers including chief economic adviser, Arvind Subramanian, is bound to reignite the debate on how welcoming is the system of "outsiders". At a time when the government is keen to promote lateral entry of specialists in the bureaucracy, these resignations send out the wrong message.

Acharya himself had warned earlier of the dangers of attrition of human capital and deterioration of the efficiency and expertise of the central bank if its governance was undermined. Surely, a government which hopes to helm a \$5-trillion economy over the next few years and engage more with the world wouldn't want to be seen as inward looking or insecure about policymakers who aren't insiders or part of the career policy establishment or who do not share a political ideology.

FAMILY FIRM

Mayawati's choice of kin to revive BSP could be the wrong tactic when political dynasties are on the decline

THE FAILURE OF the gathbandhan to make an impression in the general election has prompted BSP chief Mayawati to rethink her party's priorities in Uttar Pradesh. Her first step was to break the alliance with the SP after accusing it of failing to consolidate even its core caste vote. Over the weekend, she inducted her brother, Anand Kumar, as national vice-president and nephew, Akash Anand, as national coordinator. While it is refreshing that the BSP supremo, unlike most other leaders in the Opposition, has been quick to accept the election verdict and move on, her decision to fall back on family to shore up her party's fortunes follows a predictable path that many outfits have taken. None of them, however, has been better off for it.

One of the takeaways of the May 23 verdict is that the electorate rejected candidates whose primary claim to nomination was their dynastic legacy. An effective campaign weapon that the BJP wielded against the Congress was that it had become a party of dynasts and the Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's sole claim to office was his lineage. Members of political dynasties linked to the SP, RJD, RLD, TRS, TDP and JD(S) also lost out in the hostile climate. It is a reasonable assumption that a relatively young electorate has rejected candidates who want to ride the coat-tails of family over their own achievements. Mayawati, however, seems to believe that the BSP cadre is immune to this trend and will accept her choices for leadership positions, irrespective of their record. Ironically, her confidence stems from the understanding that the BSP is essentially a political movement and its ideals and goals override all other factors, including who its faces are at the time of elections. While this is partly true, founders and supremos of similar movement-parties have misused the trust reposed by cadres in the leadership to turn the outfits into family fiefs. This affliction is the singular factor that has caused the decline of parties that emerged from movements that championed social justice across the country. The BSP too appears to face a similar prospect.

Mayawati's attempt to entrust the BSP with her family has come at a time when her claim to be the sole leader of the Dalits is tested by a new crop of young, militant politicians. These leaders too have emerged from the crucible of agitational politics. Mayawati's refusal to engage with them could cost the BSP dearly.

NATURE VS NUPTIALS

A pristine Himalayan meadow stood no chance against the might of the Big Fat NRI wedding

IT WAS ALWAYS a losing battle. The tide has not turned since *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* Even at 3,000 metres above sea-level, despite having the higher ground, once-pristine Auli has fallen to the Big Fat (Non-Resident) Indian Wedding. After all, what chance do the Himalayas have against Rs 200 crore? And, isn't it the case, as Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said, that the massive five-day affair — in which two scions of the Gupta family, the controversial industrialists from South Africa were married — has put Auli on the map?

A 16-hour drive from Delhi, Auli had hitherto been visited only by a small and dedicated groups of adventure sports enthusiasts and those looking to be as far as possible from the madding crowd. Rawat, who attended the wedding, also remarked that it would help boost tourism in the region. The Uttarakhand High Court, however, was less optimistic — it had ordered the Guptas to deposit Rs 3 crore to ensure that the effects on the fragile ecosystem be mitigated. Quite apart from the vast amounts of plastic used as packaging to transport various perishable and non-perishable items to the alpine meadow, the area is ecologically fragile and the effects of such a massive event are difficult to predict. The five-day party left behind 220 quintals of waste, while the daily garbage from the entire district is usually about 20 quintals. Incidentally, Uttarakhand has a ban on single-use plastics.

Against the potential and actual damage to the environment in a part of the country that is essential to maintaining the delicate balance of nature in the era of climate change, stand the musical stylings of Badshah, performances by Katrina Kaif and Javed Akhtar and a host of others. Against the pristine privacy, natural beauty and laws protecting it, stood the might of consumerism at its height, of an opulent excess only vast wealth can buy. Of course, Auli never stood a chance.

Revisiting the Emergency



COOMI KAPOOR

It is unlikely that it will return, but eternal vigilance is the price for freedom

FORTY-FOUR YEARS ago, Indira Gandhi introduced an internal Emergency in India. In establishing her authoritarian regime, she used sledgehammer tactics, devoid of any finesse or pretensions of keeping up a democratic façade. She was guided by her spoilt and willful son, Sanjay, who in turn, was advised by men such as Bansilal, R K Dhawan and V C Shukla, who were at heart bullies and believed that everyone should do their bidding and there was no room for such high-minded principles as respecting dissent, the rule of law and the freedom of thought and expression. Bansilal as Chief Minister of Haryana had, in fact, set the blueprint for an unofficial emergency in his own state prior to June 26, 1975. He ruled with despotic ruthlessness. When the Emergency plans were being drawn up in the countdown to June 26, Bansilal had famously advised Mrs Gandhi to send all the troublesome Opposition leaders to his jails and he would know how to set them straight.

Indira Gandhi, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, considered the fountainhead of humanism, liberalism, tolerance and democratic traditions, ignored all the principles which her father held dear. In order to save her own position as prime minister, following a court case which declared her election void, she turned India into a fascist state. Opposition leaders were arrested and whisked away in the dead of night to jail without any recourse to appeal to the courts. The Press was muzzled, with blanket censorship imposed. Even the speeches of the few dissenters left in Parliament could not be reported by the media, only the summary of the proceedings authorised by the Speaker. The dreaded Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) law meant the summary arrest of tens of thousands for an indefinite period. Many of the MISA detainees filed habeas corpus petitions under Article 226 of the Constitution demanding that their fundamental right to life and liberty be upheld by the court. While most high courts accepted their plea, the five-member Supreme Court bench, where it was sent in appeal, struck it down, with the exception of Justice H R Khanna. Judges, who had once been eloquent about civil liberties

A spirited Opposition, for example, keeps a ruling party on its toes. Brute majorities tend to operate unilaterally. The depleted numbers and the total demoralisation in the Opposition ranks in today's Lok Sabha does not augur well for a system of checks and balances. The ruling party instead of being content to rest upon its laurels has unhealthy predatory instincts. Anti-defection laws make it near impossible for a legislator to jump from one party to another without being disqualified, but sometimes interpretation of laws are in the hands of constitutional authorities who tend to become flexible in favour of the ruling dispensation. Government bodies can be misused to target political foes.

and human rights, sang a different tune when it came to the crunch.

As one who has witnessed Indira Gandhi's government first hand and has written a book, *The Emergency*, based on those experiences, I am often posed the question: Can a state of Emergency ever happen again? On the face of it, it appears unlikely. After the Emergency, the 44th amendment of the Constitution was passed by Parliament, which decrees that Article 19 and 21 of the Constitution, concerning personal liberty and protection of life, cannot be tampered by Parliament. Information minister V C Shukla could control the dissemination of news in 1975 with ease. There were, after all, only a few thousand publications and a solitary state-controlled television channel, Doordarshan. Foreign publications were censored or prohibited. In the 21st century, with the huge flood of messages on the social media apart from a constantly proliferating media, a news blackout is simply not possible. And yet some sceptics still voice fears that the country may be heading towards an Emergency-like situation.

Authoritarianism does not necessarily come about like Indira Gandhi's Emergency in one fell swoop. Dictatorships sometimes creep in slowly and insidiously without any official declaration. The health of a democracy is judged by several parameters. The most basic being whether free and fair elections are held and the people's choice gets to rule. On this score, India ranks high, the carping about the EVMs smacks of sour grapes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has won a huge mandate and clearly has the people's confidence.

But there are other hallmarks of a healthy democracy which should not be forgotten. A spirited Opposition, for example, keeps a ruling party on its toes. Brute majorities tend to operate unilaterally. The depleted numbers and the total demoralisation in the Opposition ranks in today's Lok Sabha does not augur well for a system of checks and balances. The ruling party, instead of being content to rest upon its laurels, has unhealthy predatory instincts. Anti-defection laws make it near impossible for a legislator to jump from

one party to another without being disqualified, but sometimes the interpretation of laws is in the hands of constitutional authorities who tend to become flexible in favour of the ruling dispensation. Government bodies can be misused to target political foes.

The makers of our Constitution envisaged India as a parliamentary democracy on the lines of Great Britain. Under Prime Minister Modi, increasingly, the government has acquired the traits of a presidential form of government, which may not necessarily be a bad thing. The recent poll was very much a presidential contest with the voters electing Modi as PM and unconcerned with individual MPs. Today Modi wields power unmatched by any previous PM, other than Indira Gandhi. If Indira Gandhi was called the only man in a cabinet of women, similarly, no one doubts that Modi, along with his deputy Amit Shah, takes all major decisions. Ministerial appointments are often window-dressing, selections made for considerations of political strategy and loyalty, not concern for suitability for the post. As in Indira Gandhi's time, the PMO is the nerve centre of the government, nothing can be done without its endorsement. Modi's office is burgeoning with highly motivated and driven officials and technocrats, who are entrusted with working out the blueprints for ministries and supervising the implementation.

On the question of media freedom, those who grumble about lack of access to the PM and denial of information, are often the same ones who expect special privileges and the presence of government representatives at their functions. It is a PM's prerogative to decide who he speaks to and who he does not, but arm-twisting the media is another matter. And when the sources of government information are not available, transparency becomes a casualty. For a vibrant democracy, transparency is an important requisite. India today may not yet be heading for an Emergency, as some doomsday sayers predict, but it is always good to remember that eternal vigilance is the price for freedom.

The writer is consulting editor, The Indian Express



ARUN ANAND

THE ROLE OF the Indian press during the Emergency, imposed at midnight on June 25-26, 1975, by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, has been discussed in detail. But the little-known fact is the foreign press played an important role by highlighting how democracy was getting throttled by Indira Gandhi, her son Sanjay and the Congress.

Initially, on the night of June 25-26, most of the foreign press members in Delhi thought martial law had been imposed. The result was that Jonathan Dimbleby of the *Sunday Times* took the first plane out of Delhi and landed in Addis Ababa to file his despatch about the rapidly developing situation in India.

The first foreign casualty was the correspondent from *The Washington Post*, who was expelled from India four days after Emergency was imposed. The correspondents from *The Times* (London), *Daily Telegraph*, *Newsweek* and *Far Eastern Economic Review* had to leave the country within the next few days as they refused to adhere to "Press Censorship Guidelines" and the diktats issued by the Information and Broadcasting ministry, headed by Vidya Charan Shukla. The BBC also had to shut down its office in August, 1975, due to the lack of freedom to report. Some Indian representatives of the foreign media organisations suffered even worse. Not only were their accreditations were cancelled, one of them, K R Sunder Rajan, was detained under the draconian Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA).

The foreign correspondents were treated roughly by the government and many of

THE FOREIGN HAND

How the international Press stood by Indian democracy during Emergency

Initially, on the night of June 25-26, most of the foreign press members in Delhi thought martial law had been imposed. The result was that Jonathan Dimbleby of the *Sunday Times* took the first plane out of Delhi and landed in Addis Ababa to file his despatch about the rapidly developing situation in India after the proclamation of Emergency had been made.

them had to leave India. An article, published on July 31, 1976, in *The Guardian* titled 'A rough Passage from India' begins with an editorial note: "A month ago Christopher Sweeney went to New Delhi on behalf of the 'The Guardian' and 'The Economist'. This week he was obliged to leave under the threat to his physical safety. Here he details his treatment by the Indian authorities."

Sweeney gave an account of his experience: "...I came under obvious suspicion within days of my arrival in the country (India)... After arranging meetings by telephone, odd characters would turn up to observe who I was seeing each morning, others would be waiting in red settees in the entrance of the Delphi Hotel. People I spoke to openly would be later stopped and questioned. At least twice my hotel room was broken into and searched..." Sweeney further recounted: "When I complained of the continued harassment by Government agents and asked Mr Haksar (A N D Haksar was the chief government spokesperson) to explain why it had been necessary to organise breakings to my hotel rooms, he replied that unless I left the country, as soon as possible, there would be a 'further prospect of physical inconvenience'."

Despite such hostility, the foreign press continued to send despatches that highlighted two important things — the communists' support to the Emergency and the stellar role played by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its ideological offshoot in politics, Bharatiya Jana Sangh. In January, 1976, *The Economist* published an

article titled 'Yes, there is an underground'. The article mentions, "The shock troops of the movement largely come from Jana Sangh and its ideological affiliate, the RSS, which claim a combined membership of 10 million (of whom 80,000, including 6000 full-time party workers, are in prison)."

Highlighting the pro-government role played by the communists, *The Guardian* wrote in August 1976 in an article titled "The Empress Reigns Supreme": "...Pro-CPI (Communist Party of India) journals in India are being given some latitude by the censors because the party is in favour of even stronger measures to suppress the non-communist opposition." The same article also highlights how the Indian government was pressurising King Birendra of Nepal to hand over some of the RSS members who were running the underground movement against the Emergency from Nepal. The article, quoting a source close to the Nepalese embassy in India said, "...Kathmandu will never hand over to the Indian government members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)... banned by the Gandhi regime shortly after the promulgation of Emergency."

It is clear that the saga of struggle against Emergency would never be complete without recognising the role of foreign press during that era. The country will remain indebted to them for their contribution towards saving Indian democracy.

The writer is CEO of Indraprastha Vishwa Samvad Kendra. Views are personal



JUNE 26, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

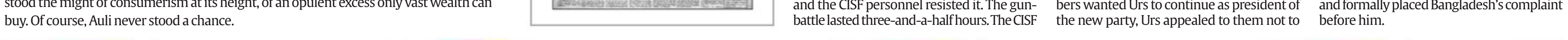
ARMY VS CISF
AT LEAST 22 persons were killed and nearly 100 injured in a pitched battle between the army and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel at Bokaro in the early hours of this morning, according to reports received in Patna. The condition of 17 of the injured persons is stated to be serious. Curfew has been clamped over the CISF area, necessitating the closure of the head offices of the Bokaro steel plant and Hindustan Steel Construction Ltd. The trouble began at 3 am when the army personnel swung into action to disarm the CISF and take over the armoury and the CISF personnel resisted it. The gun-battle lasted three-and-a-half hours. The CISF

personnel reportedly surrendered only after the army blew up the armoury from which they were drawing arms and ammunition

KARNATAKA CONGRESS
SIDDARAMA REDDY, MP and vice-president of the dissolved KFCC (I) was unanimously elected president of the newly formed "Karnataka Congress" in Bangalore. The chief minister, Devaraj Urs, who had earlier announced his resignation from the post of the PCC (I), himself proposed Reddy's name at the specially convened general body meeting of the erstwhile KPCC (I). While some members wanted Urs to continue as president of the new party, Urs appealed to them not to

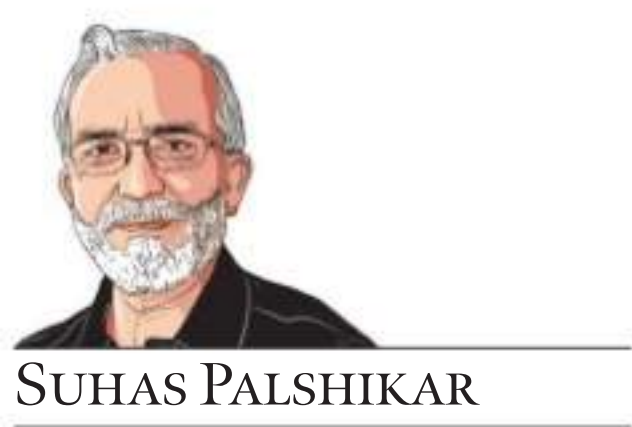
press him on this issue.

BENGAL BORDER SEALED
THE BORDER BETWEEN Nadia district in West Bengal and Bangladesh has been virtually sealed to prevent movement of people across the border. The BSF stationed along the border have been reinforced by an additional four companies. This step followed the complaint by Bangladesh that about 25,000 people had migrated to Kushtia district from riot-torn Nadia. Atiquzaaman Khan, Bangladesh deputy high commissioner, called on Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, and formally placed Bangladesh's complaint before him.



Slippery slopes of democracy

People’s demand for a strong leader feeds into the BJP’s majoritarian politics perfectly



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

ANALYSES OF THE factors that contributed to the handsome victory of the BJP in the 2019 elections will continue to compete for attention and popular as well as scholarly acceptance. The political spectrum, however, appears to be hopelessly divided and oblivious to reality. If proponents of Narendra Modi have been reading in the BJP’s electoral success the role of governance, foreign policy, anti-terror aggression and, as a footnote, the many welfare programmes implemented by the Modi government, the anti-BJP forces continue to sulk in the argument that this victory hinged on an almost fraudulent exercise of money power and the consequent use of image projection.

What both sides refuse to publicly acknowledge is the extraordinary coincidence of the demand side of political culture and the supply side of the BJP’s politics almost matching each other neatly — and feeding on each other. The continued dominance of the Modi-led BJP, and the rise of a new majoritarian grammar of politics, needs to be understood in the context of two distinct but not-so-curiously linked characteristics of what I have elsewhere called the “political culture of new India” (essay of the same title in Niraja Gopal Jayal’s edited volume: *Re-forming India*, Penguin, 2019).

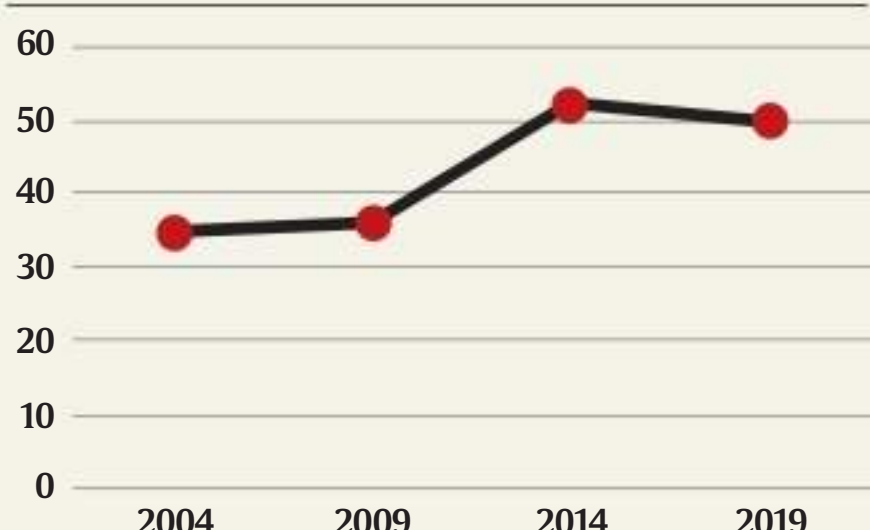
Looking back at the two decades since Congress’s decline began in 1989, one unmistakably comes across the intertwined narratives of victimhood and dominance. Collectively, and also in parts, Indian society has chosen to construct and nurse a sense of victimhood, of having lost the initiative, of being left behind despite the chimera of welfare and equality on the one hand and the lures of the competitive market economy on the other. This sense of victimhood swiftly permeated into the inter-community arena. Obviously, it could easily inflate the pre-existing mega narrative of Hindu victimhood. The other narrative that was shaped almost simultaneously was one seeking self-assertion and dominance. One version of this narrative revolved around the idea of “dreaming”. This involved the grand dream of India becoming a global power but in the arena of intra-societal relations, this resulted in competitive assertion. Shifting away from searching for soft-power assertions, this gave rise to a politics of identity and numeric claims.

The two narratives suitably gave a fillip to the politics of Hindu assertion and the dream of a Hindu millennium. Through adroit political manoeuvring, the framework of “us and them” got popularised in the backdrop of these narratives. This framework of Hindus as victims, Hindus as majority and Hindus as claimants to Indian nationhood finds resonance with one particular understanding of democracy — the idea that claims made by the majority are a natural corollary of democracy. Over the past decade-and-a-half, this idea of democracy has settled itself quite comfortably in India’s collective imagination of democracy (see Graph 1).

Not surprisingly, the BJP not only contributed to the shaping of this majoritarian sentiment but also articulated it politically. Of course, the moment of the Congress’s decline and the inability of the Mandal constituency to consolidate politically did contribute to the BJP’s success. Even in 2019, its success can be attributed sociologically to the support it received among the OBCs and Adivasis. But over the years, the proportion of majoritarian voters among the BJP’s voters

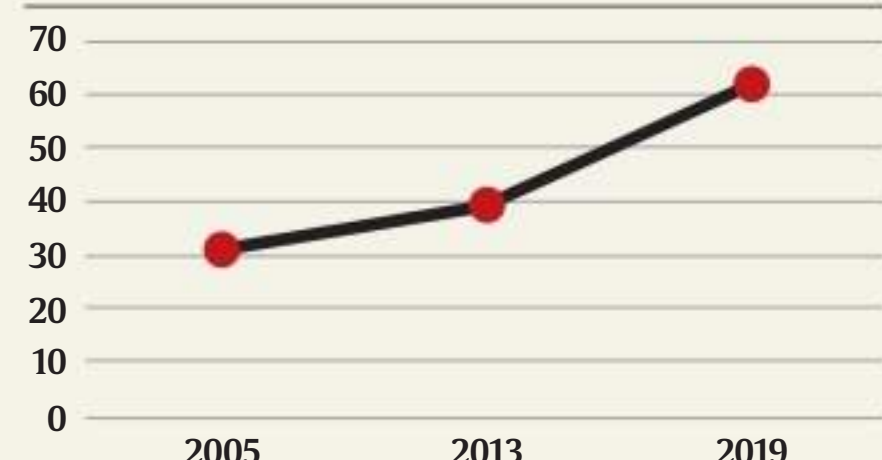


GRAPH 1: IN A DEMOCRACY, WILL OF MAJORITY COMMUNITY SHOULD PREVAIL; DO YOU AGREE?



Source: Based on Lokniti’s National Election Studies: NES 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019

GRAPH 2: THE COUNTRY SHOULD BE GOVERNED BY A STRONG LEADER WHO DOES NOT HAVE TO BOTHER ABOUT WINNING ELECTIONS. DO YOU AGREE?



Source: Data for 2005 and 2013 is from Lokniti’s study, State of Democracy in South Asia, data for 2019 is based on NES2019

CR Sasikumar

what alarming proportion of two in every three by 2019 (see Graph 2).

Interestingly, 40 per cent of the sample in the 2019 study agreed with both propositions — that democracy means an assertion of will of the majority community and that we need a strong leader unencumbered by elections. What complicates matters further is the fact that though the BJP does get larger share among this group, this social section is fairly spread across political parties in terms of its vote preference. This overlap and its cross-party existence suggests that both these emerging political cultural traits are not only interconnected but they also represent a common challenge for conceptualising and practicing democracy. One dimension assumes that community dominance is compatible with democracy if the numbers favour a given community. The other assumes that “popularity” of the leader is the sole source of authority, making democracy and popularity coterminous.

Thus, the two traits comprising the political culture of contemporary India not only help us partially unravel the secret of the BJP’s second victory, they also alert us to the difficult route being taken by India’s democracy — a route where it is not easy to convince many voters that majoritarianism and overdependence on a strong leader are slippery curves in the journey of democracy.

The writer is co-director, Lokniti and chief editor, Studies in Indian Politics

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The Tory membership will decide whether Boris Johnson reaches Downing Street. Their judgment is not a representative one and may not be a good one, but should be an informed one.” — THE GUARDIAN

The savings dilemma

Focus should be on lifting savings rate, else there is a risk of private investments being crowded out



DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI AND ADHISH VERMA

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE shows that developing economies have a positive long-term correlation between savings and growth. In a fast-growing economy like India, investments generally outpace domestic savings, and the gap gets funded by foreign savings. This shows up as current account deficit. Maintaining adequate domestic savings, therefore, is essential to sound macroeconomic management — more so in today’s challenging global environment.

Unfortunately, Indians have been saving less. Worse, our rate of savings has fallen sharply. The overall savings rate (households, public sector and private sector), or the proportion of gross domestic savings in the GDP, plunged to 30.5 per cent in fiscal 2018 from a peak of 36.8 per cent in fiscal 2008, rising marginally in the interim. It has been downhill since fiscal 2012. The external shock of the global financial crisis led to a sharp slowdown in public savings in fiscal 2009, with the government resorting to fiscal stimulus. The savings rate recovered marginally in the next three years, only to lose momentum thereafter. This could compound India’s problem of slowing growth.

Understanding the granular trends in the savings rate helps us pinpoint solutions. The largest savers in the economy, household savings, (the government and the corporate sector being the other two categories) fell from 23.1 per cent as a per cent of the GDP in fiscal 2010 to 17.2 per cent in fiscal 2018. As a result, its share in gross savings fell from 68.2 per cent to 56.3 per cent. Household savings in physical form (largely in real estate and also referred to as physical savings), declined from 15.9 per cent to 10.3 per cent. Financial savings declined too, from 7.4 per cent to 6.6 per cent. That’s a major source of concern because households have been traditionally net suppliers of funds to the private corporate sector as well as the public sector. This means that excess of household sector savings over their investments is used to fund the saving-investment gap of the other two sectors. That level of financial savings is just about enough to finance the combined fiscal deficit of the Centre and the states. A continuation of this trend will shrink the pool of savings available to facilitate private investments. Put another way, it could lead to a “crowding out” of private investments.

What explains the decline in household savings? A part of the answer lies in the consumption trend. National accounts data shows that over the past few years, private consumption as a percentage of the GDP has risen — in a reversal of the trend seen till the early 2000s. From around 65 per cent at the beginning of 2000s, private consumption as a percentage of the GDP fell to 55 per cent towards the end of that decade. It has rebounded since then to 59.4 per cent

in fiscal 2019.

Given favourable demographics, households are becoming consumption-centric, and their financial liabilities have been rising, as evidenced in retail credit, which, at 17 per cent annually, is the fastest-growing loans segment in the past five years. Pertinently, this has happened in tandem with a moderation in household disposable incomes. This fall in household savings rate is also corroborated by a sharp fall in household saving elasticity (the proportional change in savings to a change in income) since the beginning of this decade.

So what are the reasons for the fall in the household savings rate? Franco Modigliani’s life cycle hypothesis says a youthful population typically tends to consume more than they earn. Individuals seek to smoothen their consumption over the course of a lifetime — borrowing in times of low-income (initial working years) and saving during periods of higher income. In India, about 70 per cent of the working age population falls in the 20–40 years category. On the other hand, savings of government corporations (departmental and non-departmental enterprises) are largely offset by government dis-saving (as it runs a revenue deficit), which keeps the overall public savings rate low.

But the private corporate sector savings bucked this trend, surging to 11.6 per cent of the GDP in fiscal 2018 from 7.4 per cent about a decade ago. Part of this is the result of a change in the base year to 2011–12, which led to physical assets of quasi-corporations being excluded from households and included in private corporations. So while private corporate savings surged, household savings declined commensurately. Yet, the rise in private corporate savings is in line with evolving global trends in savings after the global financial crisis. According to research, “Whereas in the early 1980s most of global investment was funded by household saving, nowadays nearly two-thirds of global investment is funded by corporate saving.”

In India too, rising corporate savings could be channelled for financing private corporate investment when the opportunity arises. Beyond these domestic sources, an increase in private sector investment will need to be financed by foreign savings, which carries its own set of risks beyond a point. It is noteworthy that the expansion of the Indian economy before the global financial crisis coincided with a significant lift in both savings and investments. With the election-related uncertainty behind us, a softer monetary policy stance, and the government’s resolve to push growth up, investments are likely to increase in the future. But if savings do not rise commensurately, India’s current account deficit could come under stress. Clearly, it’s time to reignite the virtuous cycle of high savings, investment, and growth so that the country returns to the high-growth trajectory of the past. Pushing up household financial savings would require greater efforts towards financial inclusion, and possibly, incentives for saving. These must be complemented by productivity-enhancing reforms that encourage private sector investments.

Joshi is chief economist, and Verma is senior economist at CRISIL

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

END THE IMPASSE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Time to talk’ (IE, June 25). The persistence of the Kashmir problem is not surprising. Some leaders of the BJP seem to be vying with each other in order to be seen as more patriotic and nationalist. Now as a section of militants is ready to come on board to discuss the problem, and more importantly the state’s governor has also support talks, the government must reciprocate.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

MILIEU MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Power play’ (IE, June 25). I disagree with the contention that a national distribution company shall bring a paradigm shift in the power sector. The chronic issues plaguing the state discoms such as inadequate tariff hikes, high technical and commercial losses could well be ultra vires for the new agency. Second, it would be wrong to assume that it shall promote competition and benefit the end consumer. The government has always held a sway over the energy sector. When the administered price mechanism was annulled, it was believed that the oil marketing companies shall be free to decide the pricing and private and public sector shall be provided level-playing field. However, this has not happened till date.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

TWO TO TANGO

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Nurturing a friendship’ (IE, June 25). The visit of US Secretary of State Michael R Pompeo comes at a time when India-US relations are going through a rocky phase. The US must acknowledge India as an important trade partner and New Delhi must reciprocate.

Pranay K Shome, Kolkata



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

CHIMERA OF ALLIANCE

THE EDITORIAL IN *Organiser* notes that there were social media posts and opinion articles on the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi being greeted with “Jai Shri Ram” and “Bharat Mata Ki Jai” during the oath-taking in Parliament. But what was not discussed, notes the editorial, is that Owaisi ended his oath by raising slogans, “Jai-Bhim,” “Jai-MIM,” “Takbeer-Allahu Akbar,” and “Jai Hind”. The editorial points out that this was not the first that the reincarnated avatar of the Razakars, the AIMIM, has invoked slogans that speak of a Muslim-Scheduled Caste alliance. It notes that the party’s tactical alliance with Prakash Ambedkar in Maharashtra was part of a grand design. Its outcome, asserts the editorial, was that the SC candidates lost while the MIM candidate won in Aurangabad. The forging of the alliance was not merely a result of immediate electoral considerations, there were ideological reasons behind it, the editorial contends. It further argues that this was not the

first attempt to forge a caste-based communal alliance. “To Babasaheb Ambedkar himself, many Muslim clerics, including the representative of Nizam offered not just the alliance but also tried to convince him to convert to Islam. The reply of nationalist Ambedkar was clear and blunt. Jinnah also tried the similar trick, but Dr BR Ambedkar was critical of the so-called Dalit-Muslim unity being fostered in politics today. If it is the likes of Owaisi today, it was Jinnah then,” the editorial argues, and points out that the real followers of Babasaheb will always be sceptical about such an unholy alliance. The editorial asks a few questions: “Now you are saying, ‘Jai-Bhim, Jai-MIM,’ in the same order. When you have a problem with Bharat Mata, Vande Mataram in the name of Islam, how will the same Islam allow reverence to Babasaheb? Babasaheb believed in Buddhism as a thought and not just as a religion. Buddha was the greatest spiritual reformist for him. Will MIM consider Tathagat Buddha of the same stature as Babasaheb used to give, or there also Islam will become a problem?”

AIRCRAFT UPGRADE

AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* about the AN-32 aircraft crash demands an inquiry into the incident and calls for corrective measures. It also asks the government to expedite the procure-

ment process for the armed forces. The article argues that that excessive discussion in the media, especially the negative opinions, affects the morale of the air warriors. “We need to wait for the inquiry to be completed... and the effort put in by various agencies in SAR (Search and Rescue) needs to be complimented”. The article points out that the IAF has over 100 AN-32 aircraft of which only 46 have been upgraded. The turmoil in Ukraine, the country that produces these aircraft, is the main reason for the delay in upgrading, the article notes. It adds that upgrading a large number of aircraft is a long-drawn process and it is a moot point whether the aircraft need to be grounded till they are upgraded. The article says that IAF cannot afford to keep over 50 per cent of its workhorse aircraft on the ground, especially when there is an operational requirement of maintaining troops and civil population in the high-altitudes of North/Northeast India. The article points out that the procurement process in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) makes acquisition/upgradation/modernisation a long-drawn affair.

STATES AND CENTRE

AN EDITORIAL IN *Panchjanya* comes out in support of the idea of “one nation, one election”. It argues that the government has shown its resolve on this issue by convening a meeting of political parties and forming a

committee to remove confusions. The editorial stresses the need to make the electoral system concise, integrated and connected. It points out that the Lok Sabha and assembly elections had been held simultaneously till 1967 and the Election Commission gave a suggestion to this effect in 1983. The editorial says that certain political parties may have the wrong apprehension that the idea of “one nation, one election” could be a conspiracy to impose the President’s rule in the states via the backdoor. “Political parties get such apprehensions... because of their experiences during Congress rule,” the editorial contends. It also contends that there is weight in the argument that national issues can be raised effectively in regions as well if the Lok Sabha and assembly elections are held simultaneously. “Raising national issues gives an opportunity to think and approve decisions like a grand family. Local issues do make their space. When has border security suppressed issues of roads and schools?” the editorial questions. Holding Lok Sabha and assembly elections separately in Bihar and Karnataka cost Rs 9,500 crore. If that money had been spent on hospitals in Bihar, number of deaths of newborns would have been averted, the editorial says in an apparent reference to the deaths of children in Bihar due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).

Compiled by Lalmani Verma



Lynching redux

In Jharkhand, another instance of mob mentality combining with a communal motive

The death of a 24-year-old man in Jharkhand days after he was brutally beaten by a mob is a sordid reminder that the disturbing phenomenon of lynching is not going away any time soon. The assault on Tabrez Ansari also followed a recognisable pattern. The victim was Muslim and came under the suspicion of a mob, which chose to mete out vigilante justice, and someone in the crowd recorded trophy footage. This one was not motivated by cow vigilantism or suspicion of transporting cattle for slaughter or possessing beef. Yet, the communal angle was on display, with the crowd forcing him to shout 'Jai Sri Ram' and 'Jai Hanuman', confirming that vigilante justice and mob lynch mentality are invariably accompanied by a sectarian motive in the present context. Following a public outcry, some of the villagers allegedly involved were arrested on suspicion of murder. However, the conduct of the police typifies the official apathy and tacit acceptance of mob justice as a way of life in some parts of the country. Ansari was tied to a tree and beaten for hours before they came to his aid. They merely took him into custody based on a complaint of theft, and neither recorded his injuries nor mentioned in the FIR that he was assaulted. It was only after his condition worsened in jail that he was taken to hospital, where he died.

It is distressing that lynching, as a consequence of vigilantism, communal bigotry and the dissemination of hate messages and rumours on social media, has acquired the status of a preponderant social trend. The Supreme Court noted this when it observed in a judgment last year that "rising intolerance and growing polarisation expressed through [a] spate of incidents of mob violence cannot be permitted to become the normal way of life or the normal state of law and order". It directed States to take specific preventive, punitive and remedial measures. It mooted a special law to deal with lynching and the appointment of a nodal officer in each district to combat the threat. While these measures are not yet in place, the latest incident must be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to book. However, the larger issue has to be faced squarely by the political leadership. Organised vigilantism by cow protection groups was initially behind a wave of lynchings; rumour-mongering through social media platforms came next. The Ansari incident shows that the problem has transmogrified into a sinister form of enforcing the chanting of Hindu slogans by citizens professing other religions. It may well be that the unseemly political use of the religious chant of 'Jai Shri Ram' in Parliament by some ruling party members to heckle those in the Opposition ranks is finding its echo on the streets.

A city gone dry

The water crisis in Chennai needs holistic and widely resonant solutions

Chennai's aspirations to grow into a global economic hub appear considerably weakened as it struggles to find water. The shadow of drought from 2018 has stretched into the torrid summer this year, evaporating not just the city's reservoirs, but the prosperity of its residents who are forced to hunt for tankers, pay bribes and spend hours even at night waiting for trucks to dispense some water. Ironically, Tamil Nadu's capital, which in a normal year gets anything between 1,300 mm and 1,400 mm of rainfall, has been laid low by the indifference of successive governments. That residents are now given minimum piped water and meagre tanker supplies totalling a third of the installed capacity of 1,494 million litres a day, that too mainly from desalination plants, faraway lakes and farm wells, is proof of the neglect of water governance. Yet, even searching questions posed by the Madras High Court to the AIADMK government have elicited only vague assurances on meeting basic requirements and restoring 210 waterbodies to augment future storage, rather than a firm timeline. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami was wrong to dismiss reports on water scarcity as "an exaggeration", and he must end this business-as-usual approach. A time-bound plan is needed to augment the resources in the Greater Chennai region encompassing the neighbouring districts of Thiruvallur and Kancheepuram. This plan should be tasked to a Special Officer, to be framed by officials in consultation with credentialed experts in research and academia, and public comments invited before it is finalised.

Given the large base of tanks and reservoirs in Greater Chennai – over 4,000 waterbodies of significance – prudent rainfall management can help it through withering summers and weak monsoons. A white paper with a full assessment of these wetlands and their storage potential should be a priority for the State's Sustainable Water Security Mission. Deepening storage in the four major reservoirs must get priority. Such a project must quantify the increase in storage and set an early deadline of a year. These measures can harvest the bulk of the rain in a good year, and prove superior to the fire-fighting approach of installing expensive desalination plants and bringing small quantities by rail from another district. Tamil Nadu made rainwater harvesting mandatory quite early, but failed to follow it up with an institutional mechanism to help citizens implement it. The government should give monetary incentives to NGOs, as NITI Aayog proposed in its Water Index report, to encourage them to install systems and show quantifiable recharge outcomes. On the consumer side, devices and practices to reduce wastage should be promoted, especially on commercial premises. Droughts are bottlenecks for profit, and several actors have developed a vested interest in transferring water to the city at high cost. Long-term solutions can end this cycle.

The future of parliamentary democracy

When any individual eclipses his party in a parliamentary election, it is uncharted terrain for the system



M.K. NARAYANAN

Weeks after the nation gave a decisive mandate to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), political analysts are yet to come up with plausible reasons for what happened. No one had forecast this kind of majority, though there are many who now claim they saw it coming.

The magnitude of victory

The figures say it all. First and foremost, in 2019 the NDA eclipsed its performance of 2014. It secured 352 seats, while the Congress-led alliance came next with 91 seats. The BJP tally of seats was 303 while the Congress secured 52. Regional parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, All India Trinamool Congress, YSR Congress Party, Shiv Sena, Janata Dal (United), Biju Janata Dal and Bahujan Samaj Party each secured 10-23 seats, demonstrating the overwhelming nature of the Modi victory. In 224 of the 303 seats it won, the BJP vote share exceeded 50%, compared to 136 in 2014. The BJP retained over 81% of the seats it had won previously.

With regard to voting percentages, the BJP vote share this time was around 37.4%, while that of the Congress was 19.5%. Analysing the results on the basis of seats won and voting percentages conveys an impression that the BJP had enlarged its reach not only in Gujarat, but also in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (which only a few months earlier had dealt the BJP a resounding defeat in the Assembly elections). The reality may, however, be different. What is more true, perhaps, is that the BJP's vote share among the Scheduled Castes

and Scheduled Tribes appears to have gone up. Also interesting is an analysis that first-time voters and younger sections among the electorate revealed a clear preference for the BJP.

Mundane statistics still do not explain the scale of victory. Various theories have been floated, viz. that India was entering a new epoch in which Mandir-Mandal politics had no place; caste and subaltern politics had receded into the background; and we are seeing a new India. These are mere facile arguments being put forward to explain an unprecedented victory which no one saw coming. Certain strategists meanwhile have speculated that the "victory" could be attributed to: the adoption of a new revolutionary approach to 'data-driven' communications; the utilisation of 'influence politics'; and the employment of new 'social media tactics', which had the potential to change the behaviour of the electorate. This again makes for good copy, but the truth of what led to such a massive victory for the BJP still eludes everyone.

Without issues

What, perhaps, is nearer the truth is that 'issues' as such had little resonance in the just concluded elections. The Opposition concentrated its attack on the weakening economy, but it is conventional wisdom that the true state of the economy or the lack of jobs is often irrelevant to voters when other matters of greater significance intrude. The Prime Minister, knowingly or unknowingly, never entered into a debate on the economic aspects, thus denying the Opposition a platform. The Opposition also had little occasion to bring up the Mandir issue, since the BJP never projected it as a major election card this time. Mandal politics has long since lost its edge, as the benefits to be derived from it have since become part and parcel of the political philosophy of every party in the country. The



Opposition, hence, had little ammunition to deploy against the ruling dispensation.

For its part, the BJP (as also some analysts) has argued that it was people-friendly policies such as the cooking gas subsidy, the Atal Pension Yojana, and the Ujjwala scheme that had created a wave in their favour. This again is more illusory than real.

This election was one of a kind, in which issues did not matter. This may seem like an 'anomaly', but in much the same manner as 'anomalies' during revolutions in science led to new paradigms, the Opposition failed to recognise the change that had taken place this time. This, together with the unparalleled polarisation and a Hindu consolidation, meant that the Opposition had probably lost the election even before the majority of the electorate had got to the polling booths.

It is hardly surprising in these circumstances that the grand Opposition alliance proved to be a damp squib, and not only because of their internal squabbles. Whether in Uttar Pradesh or across other States, the Mahagathabandhan was doomed from its inception. The electorate could not quite understand what the Mahagathabandhan was opposing. This was an extraordinary situation, the like of which has not been seen previously.

The ruling dispensation was, perhaps, as clueless as the Opposition about the changes taking place. Bereft of any grand strategy,

by default it took a leaf from the strategy of the most consummate politician in the ranks of the BJP, L.K. Advani, viz. whipping up nationalist fervour and passions, and employing high decibel rhetoric towards this end, not excluding the demonisation of Pakistan. This created an atmosphere in which the BJP stood for patriotism, one by which the Opposition could be branded as anti-national if they contested the arguments put forward by the ruling party. Pulwama and Balakot were critical to the success of this strategy and the BJP employed both to the hilt. Vast segments, especially in the northern belt of the country, were swayed by this type of propaganda, and there was hardly any requirement for the BJP faithful to spread this message.

Policy orientation of this nature required a towering symbol and voice. Mr. Modi with his powerful oratory was the quintessential person for this task. He did his part splendidly, addressing over a 100 rallies in the space of six weeks, covering over one lakh kilometres, in which economic issues, unemployment, farmers' distress, Mandal-Mandir were conspicuous by their absence. Nationalism was the theme, and defending the nation's integrity from threats of every kind, especially terror attacks from Pakistan, was the line of propaganda. The strategy succeeded far beyond the expectations of the BJP. One person alone was the architect responsible for this victory. The 2019 verdict was, hence, a verdict for Mr. Modi, and not for the BJP.

What does the 2019 election victory of Prime Minister Modi presage for parliamentary democracy? Parliamentary democracy is the cornerstone of the edifice sanctified by the Constitution. If any part of the edifice, and especially its cornerstone, is affected or diminished, it could spell damage to what we have come to believe since 1950. The question is not

rhetorical, but requires a well-considered answer.

When any individual, the Prime Minister included, eclipses his party that is notionally responsible for victory in a parliamentary election, then we are entering uncharted waters, where current rules do not apply. Across the world, there is a wave today in favour of tall and powerful leaders – from Donald Trump to Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping – but they do not head parliamentary democracies. In a parliamentary democracy, the Prime Minister is clearly the first among equals, but is not larger or bigger than the party.

Presidential-style vote

In 2014, Mr. Modi had crested the wave of disillusionment against the then ruling dispensation, which had been in office for a decade. This was not, however, the case in 2019, where incumbency and the inability to deal with a variety of issues had led to a degree of disillusionment with the BJP. Yet, Mr. Modi proved invincible, and the party benefited from it. Few among the electorate possibly voted for the BJP; they voted for Mr. Modi and what Mr. Modi stood for. The reality is that the electorate voted as if it were a presidential election to elect Mr. Modi.

Where does this leave parliamentary democracy? If political parties are redundant, can parliamentary democracy survive? If the current trend is maintained, it could well mean the end of parliamentary democracy. Now that the elections are over, it might be worthwhile to look dispassionately at the growing trend of favouring 'maximum leaders' to the detriment of the parties they lead, and to the policies and practices the latter espouse. This does carry risks for the future of parliamentary democracy.

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

The state of Indian prisons

The National Crime Records Bureau must be more prompt and open in releasing data



MRINAL SHARMA

Indian prisons make news when there is a jail break, a prison riot or when the lawyers of high-profile businessmen or economic evaders fight against their extradition to India. And in the midst of the election process this year, the release of the data-driven report, the *Prison Statistics India 2016*, published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in April went largely unnoticed.

This edition of the report is different from its earlier versions on account of its omission of certain key demographic data. Despite these gaps, the report raises a number of red flags signalling the rot in India's prison system. But before we go forward, a simple question needs to be asked. Who are our prisoners?

The report tells us that at the end of 2016, there were 4,33,033 people in prison; of them 68% were undertrials, or people who have yet to be found guilty of the crimes they are accused of. India's under-trial population remains among the highest in the world

and more than half of all undertrials were detained for less than six months in 2016. This suggests that the high proportion of undertrials in the overall prison population may be the result of unnecessary arrests and ineffective legal aid during remand hearings.

No demographic details

The most significant shortcoming of the report lies in the NCRB's failure to include demographic details of religion and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe status of prisoners, which are crucial to understanding India's prison population. This information was consistently published for the last 20 years and instrumental in revealing the problematic overrepresentation of Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis among under-trials in prisons.

The report of 2015, for instance, said that Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis accounted for 55% of the under-trial population even though they made up only 50% of the convict population and 38% of the total Indian population.

Another disturbing point is the rise in the number of people held under administrative (or 'preventive') detention laws in Jammu and Kashmir (a 300% increase), with 431 detainees in 2016, compared to 90 in 2015. Administrative, or 'preventive', detention is



used by authorities in J&K and other States to unfairly detain persons without charge or trial and circumvent regular criminal justice procedures.

Data on prisoner release

But a new and important addition to the report is the number of prisoners eligible to be released and actually released, under Section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows undertrials to be released on a personal bond if they have undergone half of the maximum term of imprisonment they would have faced if convicted. In 2016, out of 1,557 undertrials found eligible for release under Section 436A, only 929 were released. Research by Amnesty India has found that prison officials are frequently unaware of this section and unwilling to apply it.

In 2017, the Law Commission of India had recommended that undertrials who have completed a third of their maximum sentence

for offences attracting up to seven years of imprisonment be released on bail. Perhaps the NCRB should consider including the number of such undertrials in its upcoming report for informing the policy on the use of undertrial detention.

The 2016 prison statistics do not mention the number of prison visits by official and non-official visitors which typically include district magistrates and judges, social workers and researchers. This number, while not as disaggregated as it should be, must nevertheless be used to provide some information on independent monitoring of prisons. This is essential to uncover torture and other forms of ill-treatment, increase transparency and balance the power asymmetry in prisons.

Mental health concerns

The relevance of prison visits is underlined by the number of "unnatural" deaths in prisons, which doubled between 2015 and 2016, from 115 to 231. The rate of suicide among prisoners also increased by 28%, from 77 suicides in 2015 to 102 in 2016. For context, the National Human Rights Commission in 2014 had stated that on average, a person is one-and-a-half times more likely to commit suicide in prison than outside, which is an indicator perhaps of the magnitude of mental health concerns

within prisons.

The NCRB has said that about 6,013 individuals with mental illness were in jail in 2016. It does not provide information on whether these prisoners were diagnosed with mental illness before entering prison, making it difficult to determine whether prison conditions worsened their plight.

The report states that there was only one mental health professional for every 21,650 prisoners in 2016, with only six States and one Union Territory having psychologists/psychiatrists. Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the three States with the most prisoners with mental illness, did not have a single psychologist or psychiatrist.

All things considered, the report has important information which can be used to facilitate a dialogue on improving prison policies. But these conversations will be limited and the public's right to know about the functioning of the criminal justice system thwarted if critical information is delayed inordinately or withheld without credible reason. The NCRB's apparent reluctance to be prompt and open about its prison statistics does not bode well for the democratic discourse in India.

Mrinal Sharma is Policy Adviser, Amnesty International India

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.

Minimally decent life

It has been proved time and again that mere recognition of a right and enacting it as a law does not translate into necessary action on the ground (Editorial page, "Basic needs, basic rights", June 25). The basic duty of a democratic government, which is "of the people, by the people, and for the people", is to meet the basic needs. If this basic duty, for which the democratic form of government exists, cannot be performed without it being reminded by means of a law, then the very purpose of electing that government becomes meaningless. Every political party in its election manifesto routinely promises all these basic needs. But once elected, its agenda appears

to be dictated by big businesses and political interests. Earlier, food security and the right to education were enacted as laws. But they have made little difference. In the absence of a real and firm commitment to address basic needs, mere recognition of a need as right and enacting it as a law will remain on paper. Instances such as Muzaffarpur will keep repeating themselves.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI, Hyderabad

The writer may have made a point with some of his arguments (Editorial page, "Basic needs, basic rights", June 25), but making the Directive Principles of State Policy enforceable to some extent can address the issue in simpler ways. As a mature

democracy, people are expected to find a way out against all odds, as there are also constitutional and legal provisions in place. The government cannot be expected to do everything. It only 'helps' people to achieve what they want and what they 'need'. Being unable to meet our needs is perhaps a reflection of our failures as a cooperative unit.

BITRA RAGHUVIEER, Mangalagiri, Andhra Pradesh

There have been numerous instances of government apathy and neglect as far as our basic needs and rights are concerned, especially when it concerns those in the lowest strata. Governments, State or Central, do not feel threatened or worried as they seem to have developed a system which revolves

around issues that can be stoked at periodical intervals and are enough to win the confidence of the masses. Above all is an illusory pride in achieving global standing in some areas which matters more than basic rights. The writer's justifiable demand, that erring governments should be held responsible and accountable for their inabilities and incompetence, will not strike a chord as governments have a hold over the minds of most people.

G.B. SIVANANDAM, Coimbatore

Defection and ethics

It is well-known that in India, politics and opportunism go hand in hand (Editorial, June 25). Scruples, ethics, principles, honesty and service to the electorate are fast-fading political traits. N.

Chandrababu Naidu did the same by toppling his father-in-law, N.T. Rama Rao, while K. Chandrashekar Rao, the Chief Minister of Telangana, appears determined to decimate the Opposition. Unfortunately, even the Speakers in Assemblies turn a Nelson's eye to constitutional mandates. In the present case, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha should have made an attempt to curb this unethical practice. Finally, money, numbers, and a warped vision to implement a political agenda determine the future of this country.

BHASKARA RAO SUDDAPALLI, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

A water vision

Many readers ("Letters to the Editor" column) seem to be looking at the water crisis in

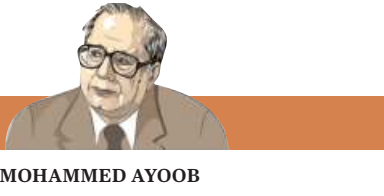
peninsular India where most of the rivers in this part of India are rain-fed. But contrary to belief, the Gangetic regions and large parts of northern India are facing a water crisis. The government's move to have a Jal Shakti Ministry should look at water management in a holistic manner. Steps to build the water pipeline infrastructure should also promote safeguarding precious freshwater. We cannot pass the next five to 10 years relying on the government's promises on environmental protection. Citizen's movements need to start picking up the leads. The participation of every citizen is vital.

KIRTI WADHAWAN, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

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The loss is not just Istanbul

Why Recep Tayyip Erdogan's grip on Turkey is weakening



MOHAMMED AYOOB

Turkish President Recep 'Tayyip' Erdogan has often said, "Whoever wins Istanbul wins Turkey." This must have come to haunt him last Sunday when Ekrem Imamoglu, the Opposition CHP (Republican People's Party) nominee, defeated Binali Yildirim, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) candidate, decisively in Istanbul's mayoral election. What must have added insult to injury was the fact that Mr. Imamoglu garnered close to 55% of the votes, thus increasing his vote share by seven percentage points compared to the March 31 result when he had barely managed to defeat Mr. Yildirim. Under pressure from Mr. Erdogan and his party, the High Election Board annulled the March 31 election result on flimsy technical grounds. It is clear that many AKP supporters switched to supporting Mr. Imamoglu this time, punishing Mr. Erdogan and his party for their high-handedness.

The beginning of the end?
Does this mean the beginning of the end of Mr. Erdogan's semi-authoritarian rule in Turkey? If one accepts the fact that the Istanbul verdict is a bellwether for what could happen in the rest of the country when the national election is held, then it is good news for the Opposition. The verdict is very important because one-fifth of the Turkish population lives in Istanbul and the city contributes over 30% of the national wealth to the country's GDP. Moreover, Istanbul is not alone in sending the signal that large segments of the population are disenchanted with Mr. Erdogan and the AKP. The second and third largest cities in the country, Ankara and Izmir, also elected Opposition candidates in the March 31 election, as did several other urban concentrations. It is the Anatolian heartland with its conservative and religious orientation that has so far stood by the AKP. But even there Mr. Erdogan's popularity seems to be waning.

One of the main reasons for this is the very visible downturn in the economy and the precipitate fall of the Turkish currency over the past year. Some



REUTERS

of this is the result of Mr. Erdogan's continuing feud with the U.S. More important, the AKP government has grossly mismanaged the economy by spending unwisely on giant and prestigious projects like a new airport in Istanbul, which is slated to be the world's largest, and constructing bridges and gigantic mosques that have depleted resources and driven the government into debts of huge proportions. With the building boom turning into bust and inflation rising, the average voter has been hit hard. This has also begun to alienate the religiously observant bourgeoisie in the towns and cities of interior Anatolia who had formed the financial backbone of the AKP and the engine of growth during Mr. Erdogan's long tenure first as Prime Minister and then as President.

Simultaneously, Mr. Erdogan has alienated a section of his Islamist base by constantly quarrelling with Fethullah Gulen, the leader of the Gulen movement. Following the abortive military coup of July 2016, thousands of Gulen supporters, the most educated and skilled among the religiously observant population, are in jail and thousands of others have been sacked from their jobs. Several universities and schools run by the Gulen movement have been closed and this has affected the quality of education in the country.

Alienating the Kurds
Mr. Erdogan's popularity has also diminished because his recently cultivated ultranationalism seems to have boomeranged. This ultranationalism was intended to placate his allies in the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which provides the AKP government crucial support in Parliament, but it

seems to have driven many moderates to side with the Opposition instead. This is particularly true of the Kurdish population – and Istanbul with about three million Kurds is the largest Kurdish city in the world – that has been alienated by Mr. Erdogan's stridently anti-Kurdish rhetoric and the resurgence of conflict between the state and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). Mr. Erdogan's military campaign against the Syrian Kurdish enclave has added to Kurdish disenchantment with him.

Ankara's ill-conceived involvement in the Syrian civil war has cost Turkey hugely. A massive inflow of refugees and an expanding defence budget have added to its economic woes. At the same time, the Turkish government has been engaged in a running feud with its principal NATO ally, the U.S., over trade issues, differences regarding the Syrian Kurds, and the Turkish decision to buy the S-400 anti-missile systems from Russia. The U.S. has threatened economic sanctions if Ankara acquires the S-400 systems. Turkey has been defiant on this issue, and the first S-400 deliveries are scheduled for July. Experts believe that these sanctions will kick in automatically under the CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), a 2017 Congressional law penalising any country that has purchased military equipment from an American foe. The continuing spat with the U.S. threatens to negatively affect the Turkish economy further, with the lira plummeting to new lows following the U.S.'s threats of sanctions.

Some good news

While all these factors point to a gradual but certain weakening of Mr. Erdogan's hold on power, it is too early to say that it will lead to him being unseating in the next election. Parliamentary and presidential elections are more than four years away and much can happen in between to reverse the Istanbul verdict, especially given the way Mr. Erdogan has concentrated power in his hands and misused it to muzzle the media and harass opponents of all hues. Nonetheless, the Istanbul election does indicate that the President's semi-authoritarian rule has not been successful in quashing the democratic spirit among Turkey's voters. This is good news.

Mohammed Ayoob is Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington, DC, and University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University

An indecent settlement

Johnson & Johnson's paltry settlement for faulty hip transplants is problematic



PRASHANT REDDY T.

There have been no mass tort cases in India like the Acetabular Surface Replacement (ASR) hip implant case. In this, Johnson & Johnson has been accused of selling its faulty ASR hip implants to approximately 4,700 Indian patients between 2004 and 2010. The company announced a global recall of the ASR hip implants in 2010 after doctors in the U.K. and Australia reported an extremely high failure rate for the implant. The metal in the implant was apparently degenerating, causing damage to the bone and tissue, apart from leaching dangerous metals like cobalt and chromium into the blood stream of the patient. By 2013, J&J announced a \$4 billion settlement to cover the claims raised by 12,000 patients in the U.S.

Meanwhile, in India, individual patients filed cases against the company before consumer courts. There was no governmental response till 2017 when the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) set up a committee of experts to probe the matter. This committee stated that J&J, as part of its global recall, had published advertisements in two English language newspapers informing patients that it was effecting a recall of the ASR hip implants and would pay for the revision surgery of those patients who required the implant replaced. Apparently 1,032 Indian patients contacted the company in response to these advertisements. And of these patients, the company paid for revision surgeries of 254 patients, while another 774 patients were kept on monitoring. The remaining 3,600 patients are likely not even aware of the issues with their hip implants because J&J did not contact each patient individually.

The challenge before court

In 2018, an expert committee under Dr. R.K. Arya recommended that J&J be ordered to pay each patient a baseline compensation of ₹20 lakh and additional compensation based on the age of the patient and disability suffered by him. When the DCGI ordered J&J to pay compensation as per the formula laid down by the expert committee, its order was challenged before the Delhi High Court



PRASHANT MAKHE

on April 8, 2019 by J&J which argued, and rightly so, that only courts of law and not regulators like the DCGI could order payment of compensation.

In May, the company struck an entirely different chord, claiming that it was willing to pay ₹25 lakh to patients who had a revision surgery and approached the government's committee, provided that the payment was not construed as an acceptance of any liability. As per the court's order, this settlement offer would not affect the patient's right to claim further compensation subject to the fact that any possible future award of compensation from a court would have to be adjusted with the ₹25 lakh already paid. The order records that J&J was in effect extending this offer to merely 67 of the 289 patients who had approached the 'expert committee' of the Central government because only these 67 patients had been "verified" and had received revision surgeries.

Problems with the settlement

There are several problems with this settlement. The first is that the patients who are the most important stakeholders are not party to this litigation. One of the fundamental tenets of law is that no order, not even one that is perceived to be a favourable order, should be passed by a court of law without hearing the parties who are going to be impacted by the order. The only way patient interests can be protected is to invite patients to be part of the process. This is not merely an issue of abstract theory but one of practical implications. For instance, if there was even one lawyer for the patients present in court, he or she would have informed the court that most patients have not approached the expert committee of the government because it was as clear

as day that the committee did not have any legal powers to award damages. Instead, most patients moved consumer courts seeking compensation. Thus, dealing with the claims of only the 289 who contacted the committee is pointless. The same lawyers would have also informed the court that as per the expert committee report, J&J has knowledge of at least 254 patients who have had revision surgery. Why then is J&J prepared to pay only 67 patients who had the revision surgery? Also, what of the remaining 3,600 patients who have not been informed of problems with the implant?

The perfect smokescreen

The second problem with this payment of ₹25 lakh per patient is that there is no theory of damages supporting the payment of this amount. Normally damages are split under different heads such as loss of future earnings and solatium for hardship – all of which will be calculated on the basis of the age of the patient. A 40-year-old patient who has a much higher earning potential than a 60-year-old patient deserves to be compensated at a higher rate. J&J needs to explain the basis of treating all the patients equally. The expert committee had recommended ₹20 lakh as a baseline compensation to which more could be added as per a formula it proposed. Going by this formula, the compensation payable to these patients would depend on age and disability and would be far in excess of the ₹25 lakh proposed by J&J. The High Court needs to guarantee some transparency in this regard since there are pending cases before the consumer courts which will be dealing with similar questions.

The third tragedy with this settlement is that it provides the perfect smokescreen to both J&J and the DCGI who have so far had to deal with intense media scrutiny over their failure to take care of patient interests. By presenting to the media a deal that has the blessings of the Delhi High Court, both J&J and the DCGI will get away with the appearance of having taken care of patients even when it is clear that ₹25 lakh is a pittance of a compensation. The image of this settlement which costs J&J a paltry sum of ₹16.75 crore will end the public pressure on the company despite no justice being done to the patients.

Prashant Reddy T. is a Senior Resident Fellow at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy

SINGLE FILE

Wayanad's hope

Rahul Gandhi has his task cut out in Wayanad, which is among the poorest performing districts in Kerala

P.K. AJITH KUMAR



The hilly district in northern Kerala has suddenly become a familiar name across the country thanks to the Congress president contesting the parliamentary election from there. And what a wise decision it turned out to be.

Ever since making its debut as a Lok Sabha constituency in 2009, Wayanad has been one of the safest bets in Kerala for the Congress, due largely to the unwavering support enjoyed by the party's ally, the Indian Union Muslim League. The late M.I. Shanavas from the Congress had won both the previous Lok Sabha elections from Wayanad, after losing all the five he had contested elsewhere.

Given Mr. Gandhi's stature and the response to his campaign, he was expected to significantly improve Shanavas's victory margin of 20,870 in 2014. He lived up to the expectations by winning 4.31 lakh votes.

Earlier this month, Mr. Gandhi came to Wayanad to thank the voters, ensuring it continues to stay featured in national news.

There was a time when it hardly figured even in State news. I remember having to tell someone, when I was a student in Thiruvananthapuram, where exactly Wayanad was located. Most people then imagined Wayanad as a place full of forests and tribal settlements. This is sadly not true anymore. Wayanad continues to lag behind many districts on most indices. It has among the lowest per capita incomes in the State. It has poor infrastructure. It only ranks high on tourism, which has paved the way for the mushrooming of a large number of hotels and a real estate boom. But this has come at a heavy cost to the environment. Wayanad is nowhere near as green it used to be, nor is it as cold. There was a time when very few shops used to sell fans. Now people switch on air conditioners during the summer. Earlier, we would see much heavier showers during the monsoon. Lakshidi, the gateway to Wayanad district, once recorded among the highest average rainfall in the country. That has now become a distant memory.

What hasn't changed is the quality of medical care, which remains as poor as before. Even now, a seriously ill patient in Wayanad has to go to Kozhikode, some two and a half hours away. During his campaign, Mr. Gandhi had talked about setting up a new medical college. Given the Congress's poor show this election and reports about Amethi's disappointment with Mr. Gandhi's performance, Wayanad is hoping for more from its new MP.

P.K. Ajith Kumar is Senior Assistant Editor with The Hindu



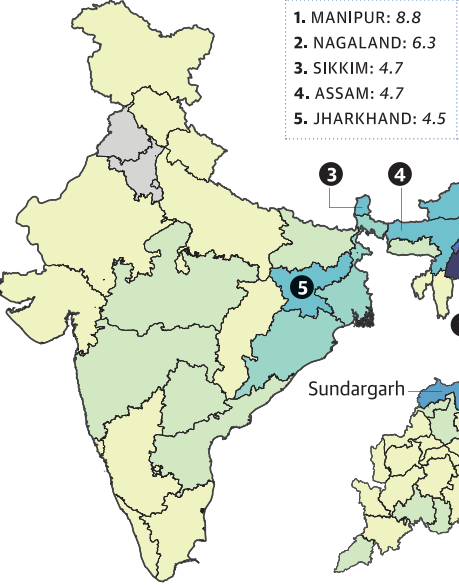
DATA POINT

Many tongues

In many northeastern and eastern States, at least three languages are spoken by a significant proportion of the tribal population, while in the rest of India the effective* number of languages is fewer. Effectiveness depends on how widely a language is spoken in a State. **By Srravya C. & Vignesh Radhakrishnan**

State-wise split

As many as nine languages have a significant number of speakers among the tribal people in Manipur, while in Uttar Pradesh only one language is widely spoken



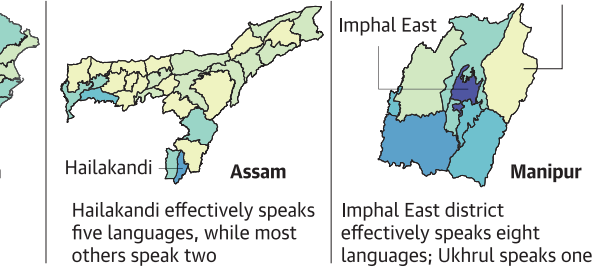
Languages galore in the Northeast

The table lists the States where five or more languages have a significant number of speakers among their tribal populations

State	Languages effectively spoken
Assam	Bodo, Assamese, Miri/Mishing, Karbi/Mikir, Garo
Jharkhand	Santali, Hindi, Ho, Kurukh/Oraon, Mundari
Manipur	Thado, Mao, Tangkhul, Kabui, Paite, Himar, Liangmei, Vaiphei, Kuki
Nagaland	Konyak, Ao, Lotha, Ngami, Chakru/Chokri
Sikkim	Nepali, Bhutia, Lepcha, Limbu, Sherpa

Variations at the district level

There is high variation in the effective number of languages spoken across districts in most States. For instance, there are effectively five languages spoken in Sundargarh, Odisha, while only one is effectively spoken in most other districts of the State



Source: Census 2011 *To know how the effective number of languages is calculated using the Laakso and Taagepera method, see <https://bit.ly/2LhyFZA>

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 26, 1969

High yielding tapioca and sweet potato

The Central Government is expected to release nine high yielding tapioca hybrids and three sweet potato hybrids shortly. These hybrids have recorded two to three times more yield than the existing varieties. They were evolved at the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, Trivandrum, and their release was recommended by a two-day workshop on tuber crops held here [New Delhi]. The Director of the Institute, Dr. M. L. Magoon, explained at the meeting the salient features, including production potentials, of the tapioca and sweet potato hybrids. The workshop felt that early release of these new varieties would bring about a major breakthrough in tuber crops production in the country. Noting the lack of attention to the problem of collection of valuable germ plasm of the different tuber crops, the workshop recommended that a co-ordinating unit be established to undertake intensive survey and collection from different parts of the country.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 26, 1919.

Protest against Repression. Mr. Gandhi's Speech.

A public meeting was held on Tuesday night [June 24] in Bombay under the auspices of the Satyagraha Sabha at which resolutions were passed protesting against the Rowlatt Bills and praying the Viceroy and the Secretary of State to withdraw the legislation. Another resolution moved by Mrs. Avantikabai Gokhale prayed for withdrawal of the deportation order against Mr. Horniman in view of the fact that the reason given by the Secretary of State in justification of the said order was found to be not capable of being substantiated. Mr. Gandhi in his concluding remarks said that if they could hold similar orderly meetings all over India the Government would have to cancel the orders against Mr. Horniman. If the people of India did their duty the Government would have to do their duty.

CONCEPTUAL Bond vigilante

FINANCE

This refers to any of the large bond market investors who aggressively sell government bonds in the open market as a mark of protest against the policies adopted by the government or the central bank of a country. The huge selling of government bonds can cause the price of these bonds to witness a sharp drop in price, thus leading to a significant rise in their yields. In other words, bond investors can cause a considerable rise in the borrowing rates of governments, thus exerting significant pressure on them. While some view bond vigilantes as harmful speculators, others see them as an essential force disciplining governments that spend beyond their means.

MORE ON THE WEB

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अंतर्ध्वनि

>>> डोनाल्ड हॉल

इलियट को पढ़ने के बाद मेरा कवि बनना तय हो चुका था

बारह साल की उम्र में अचानक ही मुझे हॉरर फिल्मों में दिलचस्पी पैदा हो गई थी। पड़ोस के लड़के ने मुझसे कहा कि डरावनी फिल्में अच्छी लगती हैं, तो एडगर एलन पो को पढ़ो। पो को पढ़ने के बाद मैं सचमुच उनका मुरीद बन गया। अब मैं उन्हीं की तरह बनना चाहता था। मैंने पहली कविता लिखी, वह पो की तरह नहीं थी, लेकिन मुझे आश्चस्त करती थी। उसी समय संयोग से एक लड़के से मेरी मुलाकात हुई, जिसने कविता लिखने के लिए स्कूल की पढ़ाई छोड़ दी थी। उसने मुझे येल के कुछ छात्रों के बारे में बताया, जो साहित्य और कविता की गंभीर जानकारी रखते थे। उन छात्रों ने, जिन्हें मैं भैया कहता था, मुझे टी.एस. इलियट के बारे में बताया। अपनी सारी जमा पूंजी जोड़कर दो डॉलर, पचास सेंट्स में मैं इलियट समग्र ले आया। इलियट की उन रचनाओं ने मुझे बताया कि कविता क्या होती है। अब मेरे जीवन का लक्ष्य तय हो चुका था। अब स्कूल से लौटने के बाद रोज मैं एक से दो घंटे कविता लिखने का काम करता था। मैं सौभाग्यशाली था कि मेरे माता-पिता कविता के प्रति मेरी दिलचस्पी को प्रोत्साहित करते थे। मेरे जन्मदिन और क्रिसमस के मौकों पर वे हमेशा मुझे कविता की कोई नई किताब उपहार में देते थे। सोलह की उम्र में लघु पत्रिका में मेरी पहली कविता प्रकाशित हुई। मुझे आज भी वह दिन याद है, जब मैंने रॉबर्ट फ्रॉस्ट को देखा था। बाद में मेरी कई बार उनसे बात हुई। कभी-कभी शाम को वह पीएटी वर्कशॉप का आयोजन करते थे। शुक्र है कि तब उन्होंने मेरी कविताएं नहीं पढ़ी थीं, क्योंकि वह बेहद मुंहफट थे। वैसे तो एक कवि के रूप में मेरे जीवन में आनंद के अनेक अवसर आए हैं। लेकिन मेरे लिए वे अवसर सबसे यादगार थे, जब मैंने टी.एस. इलियट, एब्राहम लिंक्न और मैरिएन मूर का द पेरिस रिव्यू के लिए इंटरव्यू किया था। शुरू में मैंने गद्य को गंभीरता से नहीं लिया था, पर बाद में गद्य भी खूब लिखा।

-चर्चित अमेरिकी कवि और आलोचक।

हरियाली और रास्ता

दो सहेलियां और पानी का प्रयोग

दो सहेलियों की कहानी, जिन्हें उनके शिक्षक ने जीवन का महत्वपूर्ण पाठ सिखाया।



सोमा और विनीता दो सहेलियां थीं। एक दूसरे के प्रति उनमें बहुत प्यार और लगाव था। दोनों बचपन से एक-दूसरे के साथ बड़ी हुई थीं। उनके बीच दोस्ती इतनी गहरी थी कि लोग उनकी दोस्ती की मिसालें दिया करते थे। वे एक साथ पढ़ती थीं और एक साथ ही कॉलेज जाती थीं। लेकिन एक दिन उनकी जिंदगी में ऐसा तूफान आया, जिसने उनकी जिंदगी बदल कर रख दी। किसी ने उनके बीच गलतफहमी की ऐसी दीवार खड़ी कर दी कि उन दोनों ने बिना एक-दूसरे से बात किए खुद को एक-दूसरे से अलग कर लिया। दोनों मन ही मन बहुत दुखी थीं, लेकिन वे अपने अहम की वजह से वह एक-दूसरे से बात नहीं कर पा रही थीं। एक दिन उनके एक प्रोफेसर ने उन दोनों के बदले स्थाभाव को थाप लिया। उन्होंने दोनों सहेलियों के बीच के दुराव को खत्म करने का फैसला किया। उन्होंने दोनों को लैब में बुलाया और दोनों को एक कटोरे में पानी उबालने के लिए कहा। पानी उबलने पर कहा, अब इसका ऐसे इस्तेमाल करो कि पानी का स्वरूप न बदले, लेकिन जो इस पानी में पड़े, उसका स्वरूप बदल जाए। सोमा ने पानी में दो आलू डाल दिए, जो पहले सख्त थे, और पानी में उबलने के बाद नरम हो गए। वहीं विनीता ने पानी में दो अंडे डाल दिए, जो उबलने के बाद सख्त हो गए। प्रोफेसर दोनों से बहुत खुश हुए और बोले, तुम दोनों ने बहुत अच्छा काम किया। अगर तुम दोनों ने एक ही जैसे पदार्थ पानी में डाले होते, तो पानी के विपरीत लक्षणों को नहीं पहचान पाते। एक तरफ पानी सख्त को नरम बना देता है और दूसरी तरफ वही पानी नरम को सख्त। यह शक्ति तुम दोनों के विपरीत नजरियों की वजह से हुआ है। सोमा और विनीता को प्रोफेसर की बात तुरंत समझ में आ गई। उन दोनों ने एक दूसरे से क्षमा मांगी और पुनः दोस्त बन गईं।

दूसरों के नजरियों को समझने से अपने नजरिये का भी विस्तार होता है।

भारत में अल्पसंख्यकों की धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता पर सवाल उठाने वाली अमेरिकी रिपोर्ट न केवल अतिरेक है, बल्कि यह हमारे अंदरूनी मामले में दखल भी है। हालांकि भीड़ की हिंसा से कारगर ढंग से निपटने के उपाय भी किए जाने चाहिए।

अमेरिका की नसीहत

विदेश मंत्रालय ने अपनी अंतरराष्ट्रीय धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता रिपोर्ट में भारत में अल्पसंख्यकों की असुरक्षा और धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता पर हमले को लेकर जो खाका खींचा है, वह जमीनी सच्चाई से व्यापक रूप से मेल नहीं खाता। ध्यान रहे, इस रिपोर्ट में अमेरिका के धार्मिक मामलों के आयोग ने जिन 16 देशों में स्थिति को विशेषरूप से चिंताजनक बताया है, उनमें भारत नहीं है। इन देशों में म्यांमार, चीन, एरिट्रिया, ईरान, सऊदी अरब, सूडान, ताजिकिस्तान, तुर्कमेनिस्तान, उज्बेकिस्तान, सेंट्रल अफ्रीकन रिपब्लिक, नाइजीरिया, पाकिस्तान, रूस, सीरिया और वियतनाम शामिल हैं। ऐसा लगता है कि बदलती-भू-राजनीति के बावजूद अमेरिका वैश्विक व्यवस्था में

अपनी चौधराहत कायम रखना चाहता है, जबकि नस्लीय भेदभाव और शरणार्थियों के उत्पीड़न के मामले में उसका अपना रिकॉर्ड कोई अच्छा नहीं है। रिपोर्ट में भारत के बारे में की गई टिप्पणियां न केवल अतिरेक है, बल्कि इन्हें देश के आंतरिक मामलों में दखल माना जाना चाहिए। भारत ने अमेरिका की इस एकरतफा रिपोर्ट को पूरी तरह से खारिज किया है और विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता ने स्पष्ट शब्दों में कहा है, 'भारत को अपनी धर्मनिरपेक्ष साख, सबसे बड़ा लोकतंत्र और बहुलतावादी समाज होने पर गर्व है, जोकि लंबे समय से सहिष्णुता और समावेश को लेकर प्रतिबद्ध है। भारतीय संविधान ने अपने सभी नागरिकों को मौलिक अधिकार दिए हैं, जिनमें अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय भी शामिल हैं।' हालांकि यह भी सच है कि हाल के वर्षों में गोरक्षा और धर्म के नाम पर हिंसा और हत्या

की घटनाएं हुई हैं और ऐसे मामलों में न्यायपालिका तक को दखल देना पड़ा है। हाल ही में झारखंड में एक मुस्लिम युवक को कथित रूप से मोटरसाइकिल चोरी करने के आरोप में भीड़ ने मार डाला। उससे जबर्दस्ती 'जय श्री राम' के नारे लगवाने का वीडियो भी वायरल हुआ है। आज के भारत में इस तरह की हिंसा और धार्मिक आधार पर उत्पीड़न की कोई जगह नहीं होनी चाहिए। बेशक, ऐसे मामलों में पुलिस को बिना किसी दबाव के अपना काम करना चाहिए, लेकिन ऐसे मामले भी सामने आए हैं, जब उसने राजनीतिक निर्देशों पर काम किया है। इस रिपोर्ट से हमें नसीहत लेने की भले ही जरूरत न हो, लेकिन इससे इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि धार्मिक या लैंगिक आधार पर की जाने वाली ऐसी हिंसा से अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर देश की नकारात्मक छवि बनती है।

चौतरफा दबाव से घिरीं दीदी



तृणमूल कांग्रेस की जो तेजतर्रार नेता कभी चुनौतियों से टकराने में पीछे नहीं रहती थीं, आज ऐसा लगता है कि अपने विपक्षियों से मुकाबला करने को लेकर दुविधा में हैं



अजय बोस, वरिष्ठ पत्रकार

वास्तव में 2011 में ताकतवर मार्क्सवादी साम्राज्य को परास्त करने के बाद से ममता बनर्जी ने पश्चिम बंगाल के राजनीतिक परिदृश्य पर इस तरह से प्रभुत्व कायम कर लिया था कि वह अब यह स्वीकार करने को तैयार नहीं दिख रही हैं कि राजनीतिक नियति का पहिया एक बार फिर घूम रहा है और इस बार उसके नीचे वह खुद और उनकी पार्टी आ गई है। पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री दोहरे

जोखिम का सामना कर रही हैं। उन्हें न केवल स्थानीय स्तर पर गंभीर चुनौती का सामना करना पड़ रहा है, क्योंकि राज्य की आबादी के विभिन्न तबके उन्हें बेदखल करने के लिए भाजपा के पीछे गोलबंद हो रहे हैं। वहीं वह भाजपा की अगुआई वाली केंद्र सरकार के निशाने पर भी हैं, जो कि ऐसा लगता है कि ऐसे हर संस्थान का इस्तेमाल कर रही है, जो उन्हें नुकसान पहुंचा सकता है। नगरपालिका से

लेकर विधानसभा स्तर तक के नेताओं के पार्टी छोड़कर भाजपा का दामन थामने का जो सिलसिला चल रहा है, उससे तृणमूल को खासा नुकसान हुआ है। पार्टी के रोजाना हो रहे इस क्षरण से ममता बेबस नजर आ रही हैं और भारत में आज जिस तरह की राजनीतिक हवा बह रही है, उसमें दल बदल कानून निष्प्रभावी हो गया है। अपनी पार्टी की दुर्दशा को लेकर दीदी शिकायत करने की स्थिति में भी नहीं हैं, क्योंकि अतीत में मार्क्सवादियों और कांग्रेस को कमजोर करने के लिए उन्होंने खुद यही कौशल अपनाया था।

पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री को कानून व्यवस्था की स्थिति को नियंत्रित रखने का भी लगातार दबाव झेलना पड़ रहा है, क्योंकि वहां उनकी पार्टी और भाजपा के कार्यकर्ताओं के बीच टकराव बढ़ रहा है। ऐसा इसलिए भी है, क्योंकि भाजपा ने चुनाव में राज्य में अच्छा प्रदर्शन तो किया ही है और वह लगातार दूसरी बार मजबूती के साथ केंद्र की सत्ता में भी आ गई है। अमित शाह के गृह मंत्री बनने और राज्य में ऐसे रायपाल के होने से, जो लगता नहीं कि ममता के प्रति बहुत सहानुभूति रखते हैं, चौतरफा घिरी राज्य सरकार का प्रशासनिक सिरदर्द बढ़ना ही है।

दिल्ली की मजबूत केंद्र सरकार के खिलाफ बंगालियों में प्रांतीय उप राष्ट्रवाद का आह्वान कर भाजपा को घेरने की ममता की कोशिश सिरें नहीं चढ़ पा रही है। दक्षिणी राज्यों तमिलनाडु, आंध्र प्रदेश और केरल में जहां भाजपा को बाहरी बताकर किनारे किया जा सकता है, इसके उलट पश्चिम बंगाल में पार्टी असाधारण ढंग से उभर रही है, जैसा कि हाल के लोकसभा चुनाव में उसके मत प्रतिशत और सीटों में हुई वृद्धि दिखाती है। मुख्यमंत्री ने राज्य

में रह रहे लोगों से बांग्ला सीखने की मांग कर भावनात्मक भाषायी मुद्दा छेड़ने और भाजपा को हिंदी पट्टी की पार्टी बताने की कोशिश की, लेकिन उनके इस कदम को ज्यादा समर्थन नहीं मिला।

वास्तविकता यह है कि पश्चिम बंगाल में गरीब लोगों की बड़ी आबादी जिनमें संथाल आदिवासी, दलित और पिछड़ी जातियों के साथ ही अच्छी खासी संख्या में मौजूद गैर बंगाली आबादी के लिए बांग्ला भाषा या संस्कृति शायद ही भावनात्मक मुद्दा है और क्षेत्रीय उप राष्ट्रवाद में ऐसे पर नहीं लगे हैं कि वह सियासी उड़ान भर सके। जहां तक उच्च जाति के बंगाली भद्रलोक मध्य वर्ग की बात है, जो कि अपनी पारंपरिक भाषा और संस्कृति से अधिक जुड़ाव महसूस करता है, तो वह दीदी का बहुत समर्थन नहीं करता। बल्कि बंगाली भद्रलोक में पिछले कुछ समय से मुस्लिम मौलवियों की पैरवी करने और अल्पसंख्यक वोट बैंक की उनकी राजनीति के कारण उनके प्रति बेरुखी है।

लगातार बढ़ती राजनीतिक चुनौतियों के बीच राज्य में उनके एकमात्र राजनीतिक विपक्ष को लेकर ममता बनर्जी के पक्ष में एक बात है। भाजपा को अभी कोई ऐसा स्थानीय नेता पलाशना है, जिसका कद और विरुसनीयता ऐसी हो कि वह दूर से ही सही मुख्यमंत्री को चुनौती दे सके। ऐसे दौर में जब आदमकद राजनीतिक हस्तियां देश में शासन कर रही हों, यही एक बात ममता बनर्जी के पक्ष में हो सकती है। यदि केंद्र की भाजपा सरकार ने राज्य में कानून व्यवस्था की बिगड़ती स्थिति को लेकर उन्हें सत्ता से बेदखल किया, तो इससे ममता को ही मदद मिलेगी और वह खुद को पीड़ित बताएंगी।

जम्मू-कश्मीर की भाषा नीति

यहां त्रिभाषा नीति उल्टी बह रही है। जिस मातृभाषा को सबसे ज्यादा अहमियत दी जानी चाहिए, वह सबसे पीछे है, और जो पराई भाषा सबसे बाद में होनी चाहिए, वह सबसे आगे है। इससे बच्चों की पढ़ाई पर असर पड़ रहा है और वह देश की मुख्यधारा में नहीं आ पा रहे।



गोविंद सिंह

जरिये लोगों को उनकी जड़ों से काटने का सिलसिला शुरू हो गया। शिक्षा में यहां अंग्रेजी सर्वोपरि है। पहली कक्षा से ही यह अनिवार्य कर दी गई। दूसरी भाषा हिंदी या उर्दू है। मुस्लिम इलाकों में जो स्कूल हैं, वहां उर्दू और हिंदू बहुल इलाकों में हिंदी पढ़ाई जाती है। एक साथ दोनों पढ़ाने की व्यवस्था नहीं है। हाल के वर्षों में डोगरी, कश्मीरी और लदाखी की व्यवस्था कुछ-कुछ स्कूलों में शुरू हुई है, लेकिन यह बहुत कम है। इस मामले में गोजरी और पहाड़ी अभी बहुत पीछे हैं। प्रथम भाषा होने के बावजूद अंग्रेजी की हालत भी अच्छी नहीं है। जम्मू और लद्दाख क्षेत्र में हिंदी वैसे ही बोली और समझी जाती है, जैसे हिंदी भाषी इलाकों में। पढ़ाई का माध्यम मातृभाषा न होने से बच्चों की अवधारणाएं स्पष्ट नहीं हो पातीं। इसलिए उच्च शिक्षा में

जम्मू-कश्मीर इन दिनों कई तरह के बदलावों से गुजर रहा है। उम्मीद की बहुत-सी किरणें दिखाई पड़ रही हैं। ऐसे में यहां की भाषा नीति पर चर्चा होनी चाहिए। किसी भी समाज के निर्माण में भाषा की अहम भूमिका होती है। आज जो हाल जम्मू-कश्मीर का है, उसमें कहीं न कहीं इसकी भाषा नीति का भी दोष है। इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य की भाषा नीति निहायत ही असंगत और अविवेकपूर्ण रही है।

आज जो भाषा नीति यहां लागू है, उसकी जड़ें वर्ष 1944 के आस पास शेख अब्दुल्ला की नेशनल कांफ्रेंस द्वारा प्रस्तुत 'नया कश्मीर' नामक दस्तावेज में दिखाई पड़ती हैं। हालांकि उससे पहले महाराज के दौर में भी उर्दू यहां की राजभाषा थी। तब यहां की शिक्षा और भाषा नीति देश के अन्य प्रांतों, खासकर पड़ोसी पंजाब की तर्ज पर थी। कायदे से आजादी के बाद कश्मीरी और डोगरी की यहां की राजभाषा होना चाहिए था, लेकिन शेख अब्दुल्ला ने उर्दू को यहां की राजभाषा बनाए रखा। जम्मू-कश्मीर में मुख्यतः कश्मीरी, डोगरी और लदाखी या भोटी भाषाएं प्रचलन में हैं। वैसे इनके अलावा शीना, गोजरी, पंजाबी, पहाड़ी, भद्रवाही और किरतवाड़ी भाषाएं भी हैं, जिनके बोलने वालों की अच्छी खासी संख्या है।

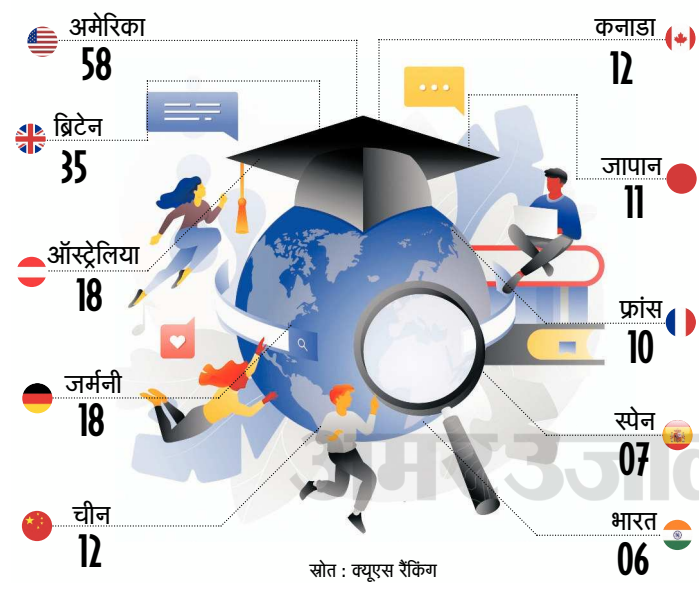
कश्मीरी भाषा पहले शारदा लिपि में लिखी जाती थी। यह देवनागरी की ही बहन है। लेकिन धीरे-धीरे मुसलमानों ने इसके लिए अरबी लिपि को अपनाना शुरू कर दिया, जिसके चलते शारदा लिपि विलोपन की ओर बढ़ चली। कश्मीरी भाषा भी धार्मिक आधार पर बंट गई। हाल के वर्षों में कश्मीर से बाहर रहने वाले कश्मीरी पंडित देवनागरी में कश्मीरी को लिखने लगे, जबकि घाटी के मुसलमान अरबी लिपि में इसे लिखते हैं। यानी भाषा और लिपि के



खुली खिड़की

शीर्ष विश्वविद्यालयों की संख्या

उच्च शिक्षा के लिए छात्र विश्वविद्यालयों में पढ़ने जाते हैं। विभिन्न देशों में मौजूद विश्व के शीर्ष 300 विश्वविद्यालयों की गुणवत्ता को लेकर एक रिपोर्ट आई है, जिसके मुताबिक सबसे ज्यादा गुणवत्तापूर्ण विश्वविद्यालय अमेरिका में हैं।



सहनशक्ति

उन दिनों स्वामी दयानंद फरूखाबाद में गंगातट पर ठहरे हुए थे। उनकी कुटिया से थोड़ी दूरी पर एक झोपड़ी थी, जिसमें एक साधु रहता था। पता नहीं क्यों वह साधु स्वामी जी से बहुत क्रोधित था। हर रोज वह स्वामी जी की कुटिया के पास आकर गाली दिया करता था। जब वह गालियां देकर थक जाता तो वापस अपनी झोपड़ी में आ जाता। दयानंद उसकी गालियां सुनकर मुस्कराते थे

और कोई जवाब नहीं देते थे। एक दिन किसी शिष्य ने स्वामी जी को फलों का टोकरा भेजा उन्होंने टोकरे में से कुछ फल निकाले और उन्हें एक कपड़े में बांधा और बोले, यह फल ले जाकर उस साधु को दे दो। वह व्यक्ति फल लेकर साधु के पास पहुंचा और बोला, यह फल स्वामी जी ने आपके लिए भेजे हैं। साधु दयानंद का नाम सुनते ही चिल्लाते हुए कहा, मैं तो रोज उसे गालियां देता हूँ, यह फल उसने मेरे नहीं

किसी और के लिए भेजे होंगे। यह सुनकर वह व्यक्ति वापस चला गया, वहां जाकर स्वामी जी की पूरी बात बताई। स्वामी जी उस व्यक्ति से बोले तुम वापस उस साधु के पास जाओ और बोले कि आप प्रतिदिन जो अमृत वर्षा करते हो उसमें निश्चित ही आपकी शक्ति लगती होगी। यह फल उस शक्ति को बनाए रखने के लिए ही मैंने भेजे हैं ताकि, अमृत वर्षा में कमी न आए। यह सुनकर साधु बहुत लज्जित हुआ। इसके बाद उसने स्वामी दयानंद की कुटिया पर जाकर क्षमा मांगी।

-संकलित

पिछले हफ्ते राज्य के हड़ताली डॉक्टरों को आंदोलन खत्म करने के लिए राजी करने के वास्ते पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी को जिस तरह से उनके आगे झुकना पड़ा, उससे पता चलता है कि भारतीय राजनीति में तूफान खड़ा कर देने वाली नेता कितनी कमजोर हो चुकी हैं। कुछ दिन पहले ही उन्होंने डॉक्टरों से कहा था कि वे काम पर नहीं लौटें, तो उन्हें बर्खास्त कर दिया जाएगा। ऐसे में यह कदम उस नेता के लिए अपमानजनक कहा जा सकता, जिन्हें किसी टकराव में पीछे हटते नहीं देखा गया। यह दिखाता है कि हाल ही में हुए लोकसभा चुनाव में उनकी पार्टी के खाबख प्रदर्शन और राज्य में भाजपा से मिल रही कड़ी चुनौती के कारण किस तरह से उनका आत्मविश्वास डगमगा गया है।

पिछले कई वर्षों से दीदी के करीबी रहे एक नेता ने निजी बातचीत में स्वीकार किया कि उनके लंबे उतार-चढ़ाव से भरे करियर में वह कभी ऐसे दबाव में नहीं दिखीं, जैसी वह आज नजर आ रही हैं। यह गौर करने लायक है कि तृणमूल कांग्रेस की जो तेजतर्रार नेता कभी चुनौतियों से टकराने में पीछे नहीं रहती थीं, आज ऐसा लगता है कि अपने विपक्षियों से मुकाबला करने को लेकर दुविधा में हैं। डॉक्टरों की हड़ताल को लेकर पहले तो उन्होंने अनवश्यक रूप से अड़ंगा लगाया और फिर जिस तरह से उन्होंने उनके आगे समर्पण किया, उससे पता चलता है कि उनकी ढीली होती पकड़ किस तरह से उनके प्रशासनिक नियंत्रण और राजनीतिक इच्छा शक्ति दोनों को ही प्रभावित कर रही है।

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>>> राघवेंद्र कुमार

दुर्घटना में दोस्त की मौत के बाद बांटने लगा हेलमेट

सड़क पर गलत दिशा में गाड़ी चलाना, लाल बत्ती को दरकिनार करके ट्रैफिक नियमों की अवहेलना आम बात हो गई है। आए दिन इन छोटी-छोटी लापरवाहियों की वजह से हुई दुर्घटनाओं में मौत की खबरें आती रहती हैं। ऐसी ही एक दुर्घटना में मेरे दोस्त की जान चली गई। मैं मूल रूप से बिहार का हूँ, और अभी उत्तर प्रदेश के नोएडा में रहता हूँ। यह वर्ष 2014 की बात है। मेरे दोस्त कृष्ण कुमार ठाकुर मोटरसाइकिल से कहीं जा रहे थे, रास्ते में किसी बड़े वाहन ने पीछे से उन्हें टक्कर मार दी, उनके सिर में गंभीर चोट आई और इलाज के दौरान उनकी मौत हो गई। अस्पताल में जब डॉक्टरों से मेरी बात हुई, तो उन्होंने कहा कि अगर कृष्ण ने हेलमेट पहना होता तो शायद वह बच जाता। इस बात ने मुझे सोचने पर मजबूर कर दिया। कृष्ण अपने मां-बाप का इकलौता बेटा था। उनकी इस हालत ने मुझे अंदर तक हिला दिया, तभी से मैंने हेलमेट के प्रति जागरूकता को लेकर कुछ करने की ठानी। इसके बाद हर शनिवार और रविवार मैंने आस-पास की जगहों पर जाकर लोगों को हेलमेट बांटना शुरू कर दिया। ट्रैफिक सिग्नल पार करते समय जो भी मुझे बिना हेलमेट के दिख जाता, मैं उसे जाकर मुफ्त में हेलमेट देता और मोटरसाइकिल चलाते वक़्त उसे पहनने की सलाह भी देता।

जब मैं कृष्ण के माता-पिता से मिलने के लिए उनके घर गया था, तो उसकी किताबें अपने साथ ले आया। वो किताबें मैंने एक जरूरतमंद बच्चे को दे दी। एक दिन मुझे एक फोन आया। फोन पर दूसरी तरफ उस बच्चे की मां थी, जिसे मैंने कृष्ण की किताबें दी थीं। बच्चे की मां ने कहा कि उन किताबों की मदद से उनके बेटे ने न सिर्फ टीक से पढ़ाई की है, बल्कि उसने स्कूल में टॉप भी किया है। उनकी बातें सुनकर मुझे सुकून मिला। तभी मुझे लगा कि अगर हर जरूरतमंद बच्चे को समय पर किताबें मिल जाएं तो बेशक बड़ा बदलाव लाया जा सकता है। फिर मैंने संकल्प लिया कि जिस किसी के भी पास

पुरानी किताबें हैं और अब उनके काम की नहीं हैं, वह शख्स वो किताबें मुझे दे और मैं किताबों के बदले में हेलमेट दूंगा। इस अभियान का असर यह हुआ कि स्कूल से लेकर कॉलेज की पढ़ाई तक, सभी तरह की किताबें मेरे पास हैं और वह जरूरतमंद तक पहुंच भी रही हैं। किताबों के बदले हेलमेट देने की कोशिश अब रंग ला रही है। अब जो कोई भी मेरे पास हेलमेट लेने आता है, तो वह पहले से ही किताबें लेकर आता है। अब मेरी इस मुहिम से स्कूल-कॉलेज के छात्र भी जुड़ने लगे हैं। अपने स्कूल-कॉलेज में वह 'किताब दान अभियान' आयोजित करके मेरे लिए बहुत-सी किताबें इकट्ठा भी कर देते हैं। देश के करीब 23 शहरों में मैंने 'बुक डोनेशन बॉक्स' लगाए हैं, ताकि लोग यहां पर किताबें दे सकें। एक तरफ जहां गरीब माता-पिता और बच्चे मेरी इस पहल से खुश हैं, वहीं प्राइवेट स्कूलों में मेरे इस अभियान को लेकर नाराजगी भी है। इसलिए बहुत बार स्कूलों के प्रबंधन ने मुझे अपने यहां बच्चों से मिलने या सेमिनार करने की इजाजत नहीं दी। मैंने अपनी कमाई से एक घर भी खरीदा, लेकिन इस अभियान में धन की कमी आड़े न आए इसलिए मुझे उसे बेचना पड़ा। इस अभियान की फंडिंग मैं नौकरी के दौरान की गई वक़्त से ही कर रहा हूँ। मेरी कोशिश है कि एक दिन ऐसा आए, जब हर एक बच्चे के पास पढ़ने के लिए किताबें हों और कोई भी व्यक्ति बिना हेलमेट के दुपहिया वाहन नहीं चलाए। मैं चाहता हूँ कि ऐसा कोई नियम बने, जिससे बिना हेलमेट पहने हुए कोई भी शख्स टेल पर नहीं कर पाए। यदि हम पूरे देश में ऐसा कर पाए, तो निश्चित तौर पर लोगों की मानसिकता में बदलाव आएगा।

संरक्षणवाद के विरुद्ध

दो दिन बाद जापान के शहर ओसाका में जी-20 देशों की बैठक के मुद्दे और प्राथमिकताएं भले कुछ हों, लेकिन इतना तय है कि कारोबारी जंग के मसले पर अमेरिका के खिलाफ आवाज उठेगी। पिछले दो साल में अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने जिस तरह से संरक्षणवादी नीतियों की खुल कर पैरवी की है और अमेरिकी उद्योगों को बचाने के नाम पर चीन, भारत और यूरोपीय संघ के सदस्य देशों के साथ जो कारोबारी रुख अपनाया है, वह चिंताजनक है। इसलिए इस बार बैठक से अलग इस मुद्दे पर भारत, रूस और चीन के बीच बात होगी और भविष्य की रणनीति का खाका तैयार हो सकता है। अमेरिका की संरक्षणवादी नीतियों का सबसे ज्यादा असर चीन पर पड़ रहा है। यों चीन भी ऐसी ही नीतियों को बढ़ावा देने में पीछे नहीं है। इसलिए असली कारोबारी जंग अमेरिका और चीन के बीच ही है। भारत और अमेरिका के बीच भी कई वस्तुओं पर शुल्क लगाने को लेकर तनातनी हुई है। ज्यादातर देश अब महसूस कर रहे हैं कि वक्त रहते अमेरिकी संरक्षणवादी नीतियों का विरोध नहीं किया गया तो वैश्विक कारोबार पर अमेरिकी दादागिरी हावी हो जाएगी और दुनिया के कई देश इससे बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो सकते हैं और उनकी अर्थव्यवस्था को खतरा पैदा हो सकता है।

चीन और अमेरिका के बीच व्यापार युद्ध की शुरुआत पिछले साल तब हुई थी जब अमेरिका ने चीन से आयात होने वाले इस्पात और अल्युमीनियम पर भारी आयात शुल्क लगा दिया था। इसकी प्रतिक्रिया में चीन ने भी अमेरिकी उत्पादों पर भारी आयात शुल्क लगा कर संदेश दिया कि वह कारोबारी जंग में पीछे नहीं हटेगा। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ने तब तर्क दिया था कि चीनी आयात के कारण अमेरिकी कारोबारियों को नुकसान हो रहा है और अमेरिका को पौने चार सौ अरब डॉलर सालाना का नुकसान उठाना पड़ रहा है, इसलिए इसकी भरपाई चीन से ही की जानी चाहिए। अमेरिका ने पड़ोसी देश कनाडा और यूरोपीय संघ के सहयोगी देशों को भी नहीं बख्शा। इन देशों पर भी व्यापार युद्ध की इस रणनीति के तहत आयात शुल्क थोपे गए। हालांकि बदले में उसे भी ऐसी ही कार्वाई का सामना कर पड़ा। अब जी-20 के सदस्य देशों के सामने यह बड़ा सवाल है कि वे इस बैठक में अमेरिका की संरक्षणवादी नीति के खिलाफ कितनी ताकत से आवाज उठा पाते हैं। फिलहाल भारत, रूस और चीन ने अमेरिकाकी कारोबारी नीतियों के विरोध का फैसला कर लिया है।

दरअसल, भारत और अमेरिका के बीच भी कारोबारी विवाद तब पैदा हुआ जब भारत ने हालें डेविडसन की मोटरसाइकिल पर आयात शुल्क पचास फीसद बढ़ाने की बात कही थी। इससे अमेरिका भड़क गया और उसके बाद ही भारत से आयात होने वाले इस्पात और अल्युमीनियम पर भारी उत्पाद शुल्क लगा दिया। फिर जवाबी कार्रवाई में भारत ने भी अमेरिका से खरीदे जाने वाले उन्तीस उत्पादों पर शुल्क लगा दिया। सवाल है कि अगर अमेरिका अगर अपने हितों को सर्वोपरि रखता है तो दूसरे देश कैसे अपने हितों से समझौता कर सकते हैं। अगर सारे ताकतवर देश इसी रास्ते पर चलने लगें तो इससे तो वैश्विक व्यापार संतुलन बिगड़ जाएगा और मंदी जैसे बड़े खतरे मंडराते रहेंगे। ट्रंप की निगाहें इस समय अगले राष्ट्रपति चुनाव पर हैं और फिर से राष्ट्रपति बनने के लिए वे तमाम ऐसे कदम उठाएंगे जिनसे अमेरिकी जनता के भीतर उनकी एक मजबूत राष्ट्रपति की छवि बने। ईरान के साथ युद्ध, चीन और अन्य देशों के साथ व्यापार युद्ध ऐसे ही कदम हैं। अब जी-20 की बैठक में अगर ट्रंप पर कोई दबाव बनता है तो यह संतुलन की दिशा में बड़ा कदम हो सकता है।

सुरक्षा का सफर

सड़कों पर यातायात से संबंधित जितने भी नियम-कानून बनाए गए हैं, उसका मकसद मुसाफिरों या वाहन चालकों की सुरक्षा और सुविधा ही सुनिश्चित करना है। लेकिन यह विचित्र विडंबना है कि बेहद मामूली सुविधा से लेकर महज शान बघारने के लिए कुछ लोग उन नियम-कायदों को धता बताते से नहीं हिचकते। जबकि इससे पैदा जोखिम का शिकार वे भी होते हैं। हालांकि इन नियमों का पालन करने के लिए संबंधित महकमे कई बार सख्ती बरतते हैं और इनका उल्लंघन करने वालों को कानूनी तौर पर कैद या आर्थिक रूप से दंडित भी किया जाता है, लेकिन आज भी सड़क पर नियमों के उल्लंघन को रोक पाना मुश्किल काम है। हैरानी है कि लापरवाही बरतने वाले पकड़ में आते हैं तो कई बार बिना किसी संकोच के निर्धारित आर्थिक दंड चुका देते हैं, मगर नियम तोड़ने पर कोई अफसोस जताना जरूरी नहीं समझते। इसलिए अक्सर ऐसे सुझाव सामने आते रहे हैं कि सड़क यातायात नियमों के उल्लंघन पर तय जुर्माने की रकम को इतना कर दिया जाना चाहिए, ताकि आरोपी के लिए उसे चुकाना भारी पड़े और वह भविष्य में ऐसी गलती करने से बचे।

शायद यही वजह है कि सोमवार को केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने मोटर वाहन (संशोधन) विधेयक के जिस मसौदे में मरीज को ले जाती एंबुलेंस में मोटर वाहन अब यातायात नियमों के उल्लंघन पर भारी जुर्माना लगाने का प्रावधान किया है। मसलन, बिना लाइसेंस, शराब के नशे में, निर्धारित सीमा से तेज और तय मानकों से ज्यादा लोगों को बिठा कर खतरनाक तरीके से गाड़ी चलाने जैसे नियमों के उल्लंघन पर कड़े जुर्माने का प्रावधान किया गया है। हालांकि जुर्माने की रकम पहले भी कम नहीं थी, फिर भी नियमों को तोड़ने और आर्थिक दंड चुका कर वही गलती दोहराने की प्रवृत्ति में कोई फर्क नहीं आ रहा था। अंदाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि किसी मरीज को आपात स्थिति में ले जाने वाली एंबुलेंस तक के लिए लोग रास्ता छोड़ने को तैयार नहीं होते। जबकि एंबुलेंस के रास्ते में बहुत कम वक्त के लिए भी बाधा बनाना उसमे मौजूद मरीज के लिए जानलेवा साबित हो सकता है। दुनिया के कई देशों में मरीज को ले जाती एंबुलेंस का संकेत भर मिलने पर सड़क पर मौजूद लगभग सभी गाड़ियां रास्ता पूरा खाली कर देती हैं, ताकि एंबुलेंस आसानी से आगे निकल जाए।

इसके अलावा, नाबालिगों और किशोरों के वाहन चलाने और नियम तोड़ने की स्थिति में अब वाहन के मालिक या फिर अभिभावक को दोषी माना जाएगा और तीन साल की सजा के साथ-साथ पच्चीस हजार रुपए तक का जुर्माना वसूला जाएगा। यातायात नियमों का खयाल नहीं रखना बुनियादी रूप से लापरवाही और दिखावे के रोग से जुड़ी समस्या है, जिसका न केवल आर्थिक तौर पर, बल्कि कई बार अपने जीवन को भी भारी नुकसान वाहन चलाने वालों को ही भुगतना पड़ता है। कई बार लगता है कि इस मसले पर व्यापक जन-जागरूकता और ऐसे संदेश प्रसारित करने की जरूरत है कि सड़कों पर नियमों का पालन करना सभ्य और बेहतर इंसान होने का परिचायक है, जबकि उसे तोड़ना असभ्यता के साथ-साथ अपराधिक आचरण भी है। चूंकि समाज के ज्यादातर लोग आपराधिक प्रवृत्ति के नहीं होते हैं, इसलिए शायद ही कोई व्यक्ति अपने लिए असभ्य और अपराधिक पहचान को पसंद कर पाएगा। यह कोई छिपी बात नहीं है कि हेलमेट पहनने, सीट बेल्ट बांधने, चौराहे की लालबत्ती पर रुकने जैसे तमाम साधारण यातायात नियमों का पालन नहीं करने की वजह से देश भर में रोजाना न जाने कितने हादसे होते हैं और लोगों की जान चली जाती है। इसलिए नई कानूनी व्यवस्था के जरिए अगर इस पर रोक लगाई जा सकी तो यह सबके हित में होगा।

कल्पमेधा

भूतकाल के अनुभव से समझदार व्यक्ति
भविष्य का अनुमान कर लेते हैं ।
- सोफ़ोक्लीज

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

सरकार में पेशेवरों की भूमिका

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हालांकि सरकारी तंत्र में निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों और विशेषज्ञों की नियुक्तियां लाभप्रद दिखाई दे रही हैं, लेकिन इसके सामने कई चुनौतियां भी होंगी। इनमें से प्रमुख चुनौती नियुक्त विशेषज्ञों की गुणवत्ता संबंधी है। दूसरी चुनौती यह है कि विशेषज्ञों और आम नौकरशाहों के बीच तनाव अनिवार्य है। बाहरी पेशेवरों के लिए प्रशासनिक सेवा के नौकरशाहों के साथ मिल कर काम करना आसान नहीं है।

सरकार में पेशेवरों की भूमिका

सरकार नौकरशाही के स्वरूप में बदलाव की डगर पर बढ़ रही है। हाल में कार्मिक और प्रशिक्षण विभाग ने अधिकारियों को विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में विशेषज्ञता रखने वाले निजी क्षेत्र के अधिकारियों को उपसचिव और निदेशक स्तर के पदों पर भर्ती करने के औपचारिक प्रस्ताव तैयार करने को कहा है। सरकारी निर्णय प्रक्रिया में ये पद काफी महत्वपूर्ण माने जाते हैं। शुरू में ऐसे कुल चालीस अधिकारियों को नियुक्त किया जा सकता है। ये नियुक्तियां नीति आयोग करेगा। नीति आयोग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि यह जरूरी है कि विशेषज्ञों को सीधे उच्च पदों पर निश्चित अवधि के अनुबंध पर व्यवस्था में शामिल किया जाए। इसी प्रकार कॉरपोरेट मामलों के मंत्रालय ने भी कहा है कि सरकार कंपनियों में निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों को स्वतंत्र निदेशक बनने के लिए ऑनलाइन परीक्षा कराने की तैयारी कर रही है। इससे कंपनी कानून, नीतिशास्त्र और पूंजी बाजार की जानकारी रखने वाले ही कंपनी में

सरकारी तंत्र में निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों की भूमिका

आधुनिक जीवनशैली अपने साथ कुछ विकारों को भी साथ ले आई है। मनुष्य को कैरियर और रिश्तों को बनाए रखने के लिए भारी ज़होज़हद करनी पड़ रही है। उसकी सहनशीलता और धैर्य का पैराना भौतिकता की तुलना में उस गति से नहीं बढ़ा है, जिस गति से बढ़ना चाहिए था। आमतौर पर हरेक मनुष्य की आकांक्षा होती है कि उसे उसी रूप में स्वीकार कर लिया जाए, जिस रूप में वह इस समय मौजूद है। लेकिन ज्यादातर मामलों में ऐसा होता नहीं है। हरेक व्यक्ति बेहतर की तलाश में है। फिर वह साथी की तलाश हो या उम्मीदवार की। जब चयन करने वाला अपने उपयुक्त व्यक्ति को नहीं पाता तो परीक्षा या प्रत्यक्ष रूप से अपनी असहमति व्यक्त कर देता है। यही वह बिंदु है जहां ‘अस्वीकृत’ व्यक्ति अपने अंदर कुछ दरकता हुआ महसूस करता है।

कुछ लोग इसे जीवन का नियम मानते हुए स्वीकार कर आगे बढ़ जाते हैं, लेकिन बहुत सारे इस इनकार को आसानी से नहीं पचा पाते। समय आगे बढ़ जाता है, मगर वे उसी लम्हे में फंस कर रह जाते हैं। यह एक ऐसी मनोवैज्ञानिक स्थिति होती है जब

संस्कृत की उपेक्षा

हाल में नई शिक्षा नीति के मसौदे में तीन भाषा फॉर्मूले के अंतर्गत हिंदी भाषा को अनिवार्य बनाने पर दक्षिणी राज्यों समेत अन्य जगह पर जिस प्रकार विरोध हुआ और सरकार को हिंदी अनिवार्य न करने का आश्वासन देना पड़ा, ठीक उसी प्रकार सीबीएसई ने अगस्त 2014 में हफ्ते भर तक सभी स्कूलों में संस्कृत सप्ताह मनाने और संस्कृत भाषा से बच्चों को रूबरू कराने को कहा था। इस पर भी काफी विवाद हुआ था और कई राजनीतिक दलों ने तो इसे कट्टरपंथ तक कह डाला था। इससे यह पता चलता है कि हमारा वर्तमान समाज इस अनुरूप ढल चुका है कि हम सुधारात्मक प्रक्रिया में नहीं, बल्कि निजी हित और क्षणिक लाभ में विश्वास करने लगे हैं। सामुदायिक सोच का दायरा सिमट चुका है। वैश्वीकरण के आधुनिक प्रगतिशील समय में बाजारवाद हम पर हावी हो चुका है जो हमें संरक्षण के स्थान पर उपभोग को तवज्जो देता है। यही मूल वजह है कि वर्तमान में हमारी परंपरागत भाषाओं पर अन्य भाषाएं हावी होती जा रही हैं और लोग उन्हें तव्वजो भी दे रहे हैं। वर्तमान समय में संस्कृत भाषा के प्रति भारतीय छात्रों के मन में हीन भावना और ‘अनुपयोगी’ भाषा की छवि बन चुकी है। बेहतर कैरियर और अवसर के अभाव की भावना के कारण वे इस भाषा से विमुख होते जा रहे हैं। स्कूलों में भी संस्कृत भाषा पढ़ाने पर बिल्कुल भी पहल नहीं की जा रही है। आज देश के चौदह प्रमुख संस्कृत विश्वविद्यालयों की हालत बदतर है। उनमें पैसे की कमी के साथ साथ आवश्यक सुविधाएं, शिक्षकों और छात्रों का अभाव है।

इन सारी कमियों के पीछे बुनियादी कारण यह है कि आजादी के सात दशक बाद भी सरकार द्वारा संस्कृत को कोई प्रोत्साहन नहीं दिया गया। संस्कृत को रोजगारोन्मुख बनाने के लिए नीति नहीं बनाई गई, आधुनिक शिक्षा प्रणाली से संस्कृत भाषा को जोड़ा नहीं गया, विश्वविद्यालयों में पैसे की कमी से शिक्षक नहीं

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

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सरकार में पेशेवरों की भूमिका

स्वतंत्र निदेशक बन पाएंगे। आइएलएंडएफएस जैसे घोटालों पर गौर करते हुए सरकार कंपनियों में सुशासन को लागू करने और गड़बड़ियां रोकने के लिए यह कदम उठाने जा रही है। सरकार का मानना है कि विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के विशेषज्ञ अपने क्षेत्रों में प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों की तुलना में अच्छे परिणाम दे सकते हैं। अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन, न्यूजीलैंड जैसे कई देशों में निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों का प्रयोग पर्याप्त रूप में सफल दिखाई दिया है।

यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों को सरकारी क्षेत्र में लेने के अभियान का उद्देश्य विभिन्न असाधारण योग्यता वाले अनुभवी पेशेवरों को उनकी प्रतिभा और क्षमता के हिसाब से प्रशासन व देश के विकास में योगदान देने का अवसर सुनिश्चित करना है। इसी वर्ष लोकसभा चुनाव के पहले संघ लोक सेवा आयोग (यूपीएससी) के द्वारा चयनित नौ विभिन्न असाधारण योग्यता वाले अनुभवी पेशेवर विशेषज्ञों को केंद्र सरकार के विभिन्न विभागों में संयुक्त सचिव के पदों पर नियुक्ति दी गई है। सरकारी तंत्र में शुरू हुए निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों के उपयोग के इस अभियान के तहत अपनी सेवाएं देने के लिए देश और विदेश में रहने वाले बड़ी संख्या में भारतीय पेशेवरों ने आवेदन किए थे। इनमें सॉफ्टवेयर डवलपर, डाटा साइंटिस्ट, ग्राफिक डिजाइनर, वीडियो एडिटर, डिजिटल कंटेंट स्क्रिप्ट राइटर, एडवर्टइजिंग पेशेवर, अकादमिक विशेषज्ञ, सोशल मीडिया विशेषज्ञ और ऐप डवलपर थे। आवेदकों में अमेरिका के कोलंबिया, कॉर्नेल और येल जैसे विश्वविद्यालयों के प्रोफेसर्स, एप्पल, गूगल, फेसबुक सहित अन्य प्रमुख वैश्विक कंपनियों ने काम करने वाले पेशेवर और वैज्ञानिक भी शामिल हैं।

देश में पहली बार निजी क्षेत्र से पेशेवर योग्यताओं के चलते नियुक्ति पाने वाले संयुक्त सचिवों को नागर विमानन, कृषि, वित्त, नौवहन के साथ-साथ नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा और पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन जैसे मंत्रालयों की जिम्मेदारी दी गई है। अभी इन पदों पर आइएसएस अधिकारी करीब पच्चीस साल की सेवा के बाद पहुंच पाते हैं। संयुक्त सचिव के पद पर नियुक्ति का कार्यकाल तीन साल का होगा और अच्छा प्रदर्शन होने पर इसे पांच साल तक किया जा सकेगा। इन पदों पर आवेदन के लिए न्यूनतम उम्र चालीस साल रखी गई थी। वेतन और अन्य सुविधाएं केंद्र सरकार के संयुक्त सचिव के समान हैं।

देश में नौकरशाही में इस तरह कती नियुक्तियों का पहला प्रस्ताव 2005 में आया था। प्रशासनिक सुधार पर पहली रिपोर्ट में इसकी अनुशंसा की गई थी। तब इसे

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आप अपनी मनोव्यथा किसी को बता कर मन का बोझ हल्का नहीं कर सकते। मन में यही विचार बार-बार कौंधता है कि आप अपनी ‘पराजय’ को सार्वजनिक चर्चा बनाने का मौका दे रहे हैं। आपको लगता है कि अब से आप एक पराजित व्यक्ति मान लिए जाएंगे। आखिर वे कौन-सी परिस्थितियां रहीं और ऐसा क्यों हुआ होगा कि अपना दुख साझा करने को हमने अपने पराजित होने के रूप में देखना शुरू कर दिया होगा!

मनोवैज्ञानिकों का मानना है कि हम सबसे पहले जिस विचार को हवा देते हैं, वह उसी तरह के सैकड़ों विचारों को हमारे दिमाग का रास्ता दिखा देगा। पहला विचार सकारात्मक या नकारात्मक कुछ भी हो सकता है। इस उलझन को समझने के लिए खुद के साथ प्रयोग किया जा सकता है। हम अपने दिमाग में यह बात लाएं कि हम कल सुबह पांच बजे उठेंगे। इसी क्षण के साथ हमारा दिमाग हमें सकारात्मक विचारों की शृंखला से भर देगा। हरेक नया विचार हमें सुबह जल्द उठने के फायदे से लेकर सुबह के सदुपयोग जैसे विचारों से भर देगा। इसके विपरीत हम सोचें कि मैं आज तक तो जल्दी नहीं उठा, अब जल्दी उठ कर क्या होगा? ऐसा सोचने के बाद हम

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हैं, प्राथमिक स्तर पर स्कूली शिक्षा में संस्कृत को अध्ययन की भाषा के रूप में बढ़ावा नहीं दिया और अंग्रेजी माध्यम के स्कूलों में भी संस्कृत को अनिवार्य नहीं किया गया। हमें समझना चाहिए कि संस्कृत वैज्ञानिक भाषा ही नहीं, बल्कि विचार, संस्कृति और भारतीय संस्कार हैं जिसमे विश्व-कल्याण, शांति-सहयोग, एकता, समरसता, बंधुत्व और वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम की भावना निहित है। बाबा साहब भीमराव आंबेडकर ने कहा था कि संस्कृत ही पूरे भारत को भाषाई एकता में बांध सकती है।

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खारिज कर दिया गया था। इसके बाद सन 2010 में प्रशासनिक सुधार अयोग की दूसरी रिपोर्ट में भी इसकी अनुशंसा की गई। 2014 में केंद्र में एनडीए सरकार बनने के बाद 2016 में इसकी संभावना तलाशने के लिए एक कमेटी बनाई गई। इस कमेटी ने इस पर आगे बढ़ने की अनुशंसा की। जुलाई, 2017 में केंद्रीय कार्मिक एवं प्रशिक्षण विभाग ने इस संबंध में प्रस्ताव तैयार करने का निर्देश जारी किया था। तब कहा गया था कि नौकरशाही में बाद में शामिल होने वाली इस तरह की पेशेवर प्रतिभाओं के माध्यम से मध्यम स्तर के अधिकारियों की कमी को दूर किया जा सकेगा। इसमें कहा गया था कि इनके चयन के लिए सिर्फ साक्षात्कार होगा और कैबिनेट सचिव के नेतृत्व में कमेटी इनका इंटरव्यू लेगी। सामान्य ग्रेजुएट और किसी सरकारी, पब्लिक सेक्टर ग्रुिंट, ग्रूनिवर्सिटी के अलावा किसी प्राइवेट कंपनी में पंद्रह साल काम का अनुभव रखने वाले इन पदों के लिए

आवेदन दे सकते हैं। यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों को सरकारी क्षेत्र में लेने के इस नए अभियान का उद्देश्य विभिन्न असाधारण योग्यता वाले अनुभवी पेशेवरों को उनकी प्रतिभा और क्षमता के हिसाब से प्रशासन व देश के विकास में योगदान देने का मौका सुनिश्चित करना है। निजी क्षेत्र के विशेषज्ञों को विशिष्ट वेतन भत्तों के साथ नौकरशाही में सीधे शामिल करने को विभिन्न सरकारों के उन प्रयासों की निरंतरता के साथ देखा जा सकता है जिसके तहत सरकारें शासन में बाहर से विशेषज्ञता लाना चाहती थीं। अब निश्चित रूप से अनुभवी कुशल पेशेवर प्रशासन का सक्रिय भाग बन कर देश के विकास को गति दे सकते हैं। पहले भी

आवेदन दे सकते हैं। यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों को सरकारी क्षेत्र में लेने के इस नए अभियान का उद्देश्य विभिन्न असाधारण योग्यता वाले अनुभवी पेशेवरों को उनकी प्रतिभा और क्षमता के हिसाब से प्रशासन व देश के विकास में योगदान देने का मौका सुनिश्चित करना है। निजी क्षेत्र के विशेषज्ञों को विशिष्ट वेतन भत्तों के साथ नौकरशाही में सीधे शामिल करने को विभिन्न सरकारों के उन प्रयासों की निरंतरता के साथ देखा जा सकता है जिसके तहत सरकारें शासन में बाहर से विशेषज्ञता लाना चाहती थीं। अब निश्चित रूप से अनुभवी कुशल पेशेवर प्रशासन का सक्रिय भाग बन कर देश के विकास को गति दे सकते हैं। पहले भी

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पाएंगे कि हमारा दिमाग कितनी दृढ़ता से हमारे विचार के समर्थन में ठोस तर्कों की चौखार कर देगा। हम यह मानने को तैयार हो जाएंगे कि हमारा दिमाग सही राय दे रहा है। जबकि विचार-शृंखला की शुरुआत हमने ही की थी। हालांकि इस बात का हमें शायद अहसास भी नहीं होगा!

किसी व्यक्ति से अस्वीकृति या ‘रिजेक्शन’ के कुछ क्षणों या दिनों को ही गंभीरता से लेने की आवश्यकता है। समय के इस दौर में उठाया गया कोई भी गलत कदम हमें गहरी निराशा का फल दे सकता है। इसके संकेतों को समझने के लिए ‘अस्वीकृत’ व्यक्ति पर गहरी नजर रखना जरूरी है। सबसे पहली बात जो उसके स्वभाव में नजर आएगी वह यह कि सबसे पहले उसकी उन कामों में दिलचस्पी खत्म होने लगेगी, जिनमें वह पारंगत था। उसका व्यवहार लापरवाह हो जाएगा और रहन-सहन में चुस्ती-फुत्ती गायब हो जाएगी। इस मोड़ पर ही उसे मदद की सबसे ज्यादा जरूरत होगी। ऐसे समय में उसकी मदद उसके सबसे निकटस्थ साथी से आ सकती है। अक्सर परीक्षा परिणामों के बाद कुछ विद्यार्थी अपने को नहीं संभाल पाते हैं और अपनी जीवन लीला समाप्त कर

लेते हैं। आमतौर पर व्यक्ति अपने आप से इतनी अपेक्षा कर लेता है कि जो तर्कसंगत नहीं होती। जीवन के सामने सारी भौतिक और मानसिक आकांक्षाएं गौण हैं। अथक प्रयासों के बाद भी कुछ हासिल न हो तो अपने को दोष न दें। व्यावहारिकता यह सिखाती है कि शिखर पर सब नहीं पहुंच सकते, क्योंकि वहां इतनी जगह ही नहीं है। निचले पायदान का व्यक्ति अपने काम को बेहतर करने नहीं निकाल सकता। विदित हो कि ललिताना पंवार द्वारा निभाए गए क्रूर सास के पात्र आज भी लोगों के जेहन में मौजूद हैं।

ख़्वायत गायक रिंकी मार्टिन ने क्या खूब कहा है।

'आर कोई आपको खारिज कर दे, तो निराश न हो। लोग अक्सर मूल्यावान चीजों को नकार देते हैं, क्योंकि वे उनका भार नहीं उठा सकते।' यह बात सकारात्मक विचारों को अपनाने में मदद कर सकती है।

परिचय दे रहे हैं, स्वयं उनका धर्म ऐसे कृत्यों को घृणित समझता है। भारत एक ऐसा पंथनिपेक्ष देश है जो हिंदू, जैन, बौद्ध जैसे धर्मों का उद्गम स्थल रहा है और यहां की संस्कृति सभी धर्मों को सम्मान की देती है। परंतु कुछ संकीर्ण सोच के लोग इसकी छवि को धूमिल करने में लगे हैं जो चिंताजनक और शर्मनाक है। देश व प्रदेश की सरकारों को ऐसे मामलों में कठोर कदम उठाने चाहिए। समाज को भी ऐसे लोगों का बहिष्कार करना होगा जो सामाजिक तानेबानों को कमजोर करने पर तुले हैं।

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मंजर आलम, रामपुर डेहरू, मथेपुरा

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

विभिन्न प्रधानमंत्रियों के द्वारा कुछ-कुछ प्रतिभाओं और पेशेवरों को सरकार के कार्यों में सहयोग के लिए जिम्मेदारी सौंपी जाती रही है। यूपीए सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल में नंदन नीलेकणि को लाया गया था और उन्हें आधार कार्ड पर काम करने के लिए अधिकार दिए गए। इंदिरा गांधी भी नियमित रूप से कारोबारी जगत की प्रतिभाओं को बेहतर उपयोग में लाती रही थीं। दूरसंचार में क्रांति के लिए राजीव गांधी सैम पित्रोदा को लाए थे। अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने आरवी शाही को बिजली सचिव की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका दी थी, जिसके बेहतर नतीजे देखने को मिल रहे हैं। वीपी सिंह ने अरुण सिंह को देश के रक्षा संगठन का आधुनिकीकरण करने की जिम्मेदारी सौंपी थी। पीवी नरसिम्हा राव भी हरसंभव बेहतरीन प्रतिभाएं जुटाने में सफल हुए। वे मनमोहन सिंह को लाए और उन्हें सीधे वित्त मंत्री बना दिया। मनमोहन सिंह के वित्त सचिव मॉर्टेकसिंह आहलुवालिया ने भी महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया। ऐसे में अब सरकारी सेवा में देरी से प्रवेश से देश और विदेश की कुशल प्रतिभाओं और पेशेवरों का प्रशासन व सरकारी कार्य में सहयोग लेने का जो अभियान चलाया गया है, वह अवश्य लाभप्रद होगा।

हालांकि सरकारी तंत्र में निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों और विशेषज्ञों की नियुक्तियां लाभप्रद दिखाई दे रही हैं, लेकिन इसके सामने कई चुनौतियां भी होंगी। इनमें से प्रमुख चुनौती नियुक्त विशेषज्ञों की गुणवत्ता संबंधी है। दूसरी चुनौती यह है कि विशेषज्ञों और आम नौकरशाहों के बीच तनाव अनिवार्य है। बाहरी पेशेवरों के लिए प्रशासनिक सेवा के नौकरशाहों के साथ मिल कर काम करना आसान नहीं है। जिन लोगों को विशेषज्ञों और पेशेवरों के रूप में चुना जा रहा है, उनके लिए फाइलों और मंत्रियों की बैठक तक पहुंच बनाना भी आसान नहीं है। ऐसे में काफी कुछ इस बात पर निर्भर करता है कि राजनीतिक कार्यपालिका इन बाहरी विशेषज्ञों को किस हद तक काम करने देती है। पिछली बार इस तरह की सरकारी नियुक्ति की जो प्रक्रिया शुरू हुई है, उसकी उपयुक्तता पाई गई है। अब सरकार द्वारा नियामकीय प्रमुखों की खोज का दायरा बढ़ाया जा रहा है। देश के निजी क्षेत्र में प्रतिभाओं की भरमार है। सरकार इनकी सहायता से अपने नीतिगत निर्णयों की प्रक्रिया में सुधार कर सकती है। उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि सरकार देश और विदेश में गहरा कार्य अनुभव रखने वाली प्रतिभाओं का प्रशासन में पूरा लाभ उठाएगी। अनुभवी प्रतिभाओं और पेशेवरों की नियुक्ति के लिए जो अभियान शुरू हुआ है, उससे प्रशासन में अच्छे पेशेवर आएंगे और देश को आर्थिक शक्ति बनाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएंगे।

सरकारी तंत्र में निजी क्षेत्र के पेशेवरों की भूमिका

लेते हैं। आमतौर पर व्यक्ति अपने आप से इतनी अपेक्षा कर लेता है कि जो तर्कसंगत नहीं होती। जीवन के सामने सारी भौतिक और मानसिक आकांक्षाएं गौण हैं। अथक प्रयासों के बाद भी कुछ हासिल न हो तो अपने को दोष न दें। व्यावहारिकता यह सिखाती है कि शिखर पर सब नहीं पहुंच सकते, क्योंकि वहां इतनी जगह ही नहीं है। निचले पायदान का व्यक्ति अपने काम को बेहतर करने नहीं निकाल सकता। विदित हो कि ललिताना पंवार निभाए गए क्रूर सास के पात्र आज भी लोगों के जेहन में मौजूद हैं।

ख़्वायत गायक रिंकी मार्टिन ने क्या खूब कहा है।

'आर कोई आपको खारिज कर दे, तो निराश न हो। लोग अक्सर मूल्यावान चीजों को नकार देते हैं, क्योंकि वे उनका भार नहीं उठा सकते।' यह बात सकारात्मक विचारों को अपनाने में मदद कर सकती है।

साफ-साफ जुड़े नजर आते हैं। अनेक बार दलबदल कानून लाने के लिए आवाजें उठी हैं, किंतु स्वार्थ की राजनीति के चलते और अवसरवादी भावना के मद्देनजर यह आवाज उठे बरसे में ही चली गई। देखा जाए तो दलबदल लोकतंत्र के लिए ठीक नहीं है और न ही लाभकारी। अवसरवादियों के लिए भले ही ये फायदेमंद हो। इस पर खुली बहस होना चाहिए और अवसरवादिता के खिलाफ व लोकतंत्र की मजबूती के लिए यह बंद होना चाहिए, क्योंकि मतदाता जिन्हें, जिस पार्टी के लिए और जिस उद्देश्य हेतु चुनते हैं, यह उनके मतों और विचारों के प्रति कुठाराघात ही माना जाना चाहिए।

- महेश नेनावा, इंदौर*

प्रदूषित नदियां

आज भारत में प्रदूषण एक बड़ी समस्या बन गई है। नदी जल प्रदूषण भी ऐसी ही गंभीर समस्या है। उद्योगों से निकलने वाली जहरीला जल और सास्यन नदियों को ज्यादा प्रदूषित कर रहे हैं। इस दूषित जल की वजह से नदियों के कई जीव-जंतु, पशु-पक्षी और सीधे प्रभावित हो रहे हैं। आज इस दूषित जल को पीने की वजह से कई जानलेवा बीमारियां फैल रही हैं, जैसे- टाइफाइड, पीलिया, पेट से संबंधित अन्य बीमारियां आदि। सबसे बड़ी बात तो यह है कि इस पानी को साफ करने के नाम हर साल करोड़ों रुपए खर्च किए जाते हैं। लेकिन नतीजा कुछ नहीं निकलता। गंदे पानी से हर साल देश में सात लाख से ज्यादा लोग मर जाते हैं। विडंबना यह है कि विकसित देशों में प्रदूषित जल व गंदगी से मरने वालों की तादाद एक फीसदी से भी कम है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की रिपोर्ट की मानें तो पीने के साफ पानी और साफ-सफाई की उचित व्यवस्था करने पर सभी दुनिया में तकरीब सात अरब 34 करोड़ डालर बचाए जा सकते हैं। साथ ही दस अरब डालर की सालाना उत्पादकता बढ़ाई जा सकती है।

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