

The Beijing question



TICKER
MIHIR SHARMA

Even as Donald Trump prepares to meet his counterpart from the People's Republic of China (PRC), Xi Jinping, the attention of most Americans is focused on Trump's real opponents: The 20 or so politicians seeking the nomination of the Democratic party for president of the United States. There were so many of them that the debates are being staggered — half of them debated each other on Wednesday night, and the other half on Thursday.

Trump, typically, declared early on that the first debate was “BORING!”, and we cannot assume he was paying attention, even though he might have learned something useful. But the real question is whether Xi was listening. Because it came through in the debate that, even if Trump's methods are questionable, his reorientation of the US foreign policy towards Beijing may well be permanent.

When asked about how he would deal with the PRC, for example, the young Democratic from Indian, Pete Buttigieg, declared that “their authoritarian model is being held up as an alternative to ours because ours looks so chaotic”, but that the severity of the challenge from Beijing should not be underestimated or minimised by the Democrats. “They're using technology for the perfection of dictatorship,” he said. Another Democrat warned of what he called “Chinese malfeasance in the trade relationship”. Yet another accused them of “cheating”.

Fortunately for Xi, the only Democrat who looks soft on Beijing is also the one who has — at the moment — a comfortable lead in opinion polls. Joe Biden, who has been part of the establishment forever, is a paid-up member of the older bloc of Democrats who first saw the PRC through a Cold War prism and then through the ultimately deceptive lens of “engagement” leading to democracy and rule of law. Biden controversially said at a recent rally that “You know, they're not bad folks... but, guess what, they're not competition for us”. The Republicans are prepared to make Biden's stand on Beijing an issue — armed in particular with an accusation that the then vice president's son, Hunter Biden, flew on Air Force Two with his father to Beijing in December 2013 and then became professionally involved with a firm seeking to raise \$1.5 billion from state-connected lenders in the PRC.

So intense was the response, however, to Biden's remarks that he had to walk them back a bit, admitting that the PRC was “a problem”. And even if he himself appears to be relatively unconvinced of the threat, there is every likelihood that, if he elected, whichever Democrat he picks as Secretary of State will carry out what appears to be the new Washington consensus. Many there disagree with Trump's approach — trade wars are expensive, and painful, and often unproductive. But an attempt to isolate Beijing on trade, on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), technology transfer, freedom of navigation and other similar issues is extremely likely to continue under a Democratic administration.

India needs to adjust to this reality. The time for “balance” is running out. When the current US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, visited New Delhi this week he stood next to Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and declared that the BRI came not just with strings attached but with “shackles”. (Beijing officials declared that Pompeo was “under a spell or something” because he kept “slandering” the BRI. *The Global Times*, with its usual calm restraint, said that Pompeo's attitude was “phenomenally abominable”). The Trump administration has not yet figured out, unfortunately, that gaining ground against Beijing would require it to be nicer to other powers — too much effort has been expended undermining the US-India relationship of late, with trade issues being raised from “irritants” to “obstacles” over the past year. But New Delhi, too, has been nothing if not short-sighted. It needs to not just get the US on-side but to stop imagining that the PRC will behave like any other, docile developing country. Why, for example, did the Union commerce ministry include an envoy from the PRC in discussions on how to fix the multilateral trading system recently? Given the actual problems that are destabilising the trading system emerge essentially from the economic system of the PRC, that seemed a patently illogical decision.

Even if the Osaka G-20 summit ends with some sort of apparent rapprochement between Xi and Trump, there is no reason to suppose it will last. Both leaders are responding now to strong domestic pressures that have boxed them into a confrontational attitude. And even if Trump leaves the Oval Office in 2021, his Democratic successor may change the method by which this confrontation is carried on, but cannot alter its momentum. India prides itself on its “strategic autonomy”, but there will come a time, soon, when it should pick a side.

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The hail-fellow-well-met man of BJP

Because of his all-India appointments, J P Nadda knows the BJP organisation intimately. Workers know him well and he knows the chemistry of being a worker



PLAIN POLITICS
ADITI PHADNIS

Jagat Prakash Nadda has been appointed working president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh) unit of the BJP is ecstatic that their boy has made good. The general impression is that even when he becomes a full-fledged president six months hence (that, apparently is the deal, for the BJP's constitution has no provision for a working president), he will work under the overall supervision of

éminence grise, Amit Shah. In any case, the BJP faces few electoral challenges for the next 18 months: Once the Maharashtra, Haryana and Delhi assembly elections are behind us. So it is argued that Shah's absence will not really be felt and Nadda can't do much harm. The BJP has had four presidents in the years the party has been in government. There was Kushabhau Thakre, who was a representative of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) heading the party when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was prime minister. Thakre was a pracharak and it is unlikely that the BJP will have any such individual heading the party in the foreseeable future. M Venkaiah Naidu was also president of the BJP during Vajpayee's prime ministership. There was the disgraced Bangaru Lakshman, who represented the BJP's experiment with social engineering (a Dalit, he was sacked caught taking a bribe and had to step down) and the irascible Jana Krishnamurthy. All the presidents had their own style of running the BJP. Of all, Nadda will probably be closest to Venkaiah Naidu when it comes to choosing a role model. He is probably not as astute as Naidu but he has the same expansive style.

This in turn comes from a long, long innings in the BJP as a worker and organisational man. Look around you. You don't see too many at that level and of that generation. Leaders high up in the government like Piyush Goyal and Bhupender Yadav have no experience of running the BJP as an organisation. Among his contemporaries, there is no one who has the organisational experience of Nadda: Nearly 40 years. He began life as a student activist in Himachal University in the early 1980s and won the students union election for the first time for the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). That election was a tie and he had to share the presidency with his rival so he served only half his term. He went on to become the all India organising secretary of the ABVP and then became president of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM). At that time, the other big BJP leader from the Himachal Pradesh unit of the BJP, PK Dhimal was not on the scene. He was in Delhi in the Lok Sabha and Nadda was the colossus in the assembly, second only to the legend of the BJP in Himachal, Shanta Kumar. The turning point was the 1998 Assembly election in Himachal Pradesh. Narendra Modi

had taken over as BJP general secretary. The BJP had just eight seats in the outgoing assembly. After the election, the party won 31. In the outgoing assembly, Nadda had been the leader of Opposition. He expected to be made chief minister. But it was PK Dhimal who became CM. Modi may have had a role in that appointment. Anyway, Nadda swallowed his disappointment and became health minister in the Dhimal-led government. His affability and hail-fellow-well-met mien was summarised in what his colleagues used to say about him: Apparently when he met workers he would say ‘*kaam ke alaava koi kaam batao*’ (order me to do some work other than work). When the BJP went out of power in Himachal, Nadda became a deputy to Nitin Gadkari who was then the party president. Gadkari got him to Rajya Sabha and promoted him. Eventually — and few people remember this — he became secretary to the BJP's highest body, the parliamentary board that has just eight members. He has served in that capacity more than seven years. Because of his all-India appointments, Nadda knows the BJP organisation intimately. He is no longer a threat to anyone. He may not be able to draw crowds by his oratory but workers know him well and he knows the chemistry of being a worker. Becoming national president of the BJP makes him overqualified to become chief minister of Himachal Pradesh. But who knows, that goal should be attainable one day. JP Nadda is a man to watch in the BJP.

LUNCH WITH BS ► DHIRENDRA K JHA | AUTHOR

Hindutva's ground realities

Jha, a close observer of this religio-political movement, tells Kanika Datta why the world of *sadhus* is an expanding enterprise

Dhirendra K Jha says he doesn't know much about eating out beyond the Press Club, so could I choose a place, preferably somewhere central? Mindful of the subject of his latest book, *Ascetic Games*, an expose of the murky world of *sadhus* and its connections with right-wing politics, and Narendra Modi's expressed aversion to the westernised elite, I gleefully select The Big Chill Café in Khan Market. Sadly, my attempt at personal subversion falls flat: Jha says he is unfamiliar with Khan Market's restaurants but agrees to the venue. At the noisy restaurant, he expresses no interest in the elaborate Hollywood Classics-themed menu either. A cheese sandwich and cappuccino will do, he says indifferently. Naturally, The Big Chill Café does not produce something so mundane, so cheese and tomato panini it has to be. Regretfully eschewing the opportunity to dig into lamb chops on *Business Standard's* dime, I select a tuna melt sandwich and black coffee. Jha, rail-thin and so low key it is hard to believe he is an important commentator on right-wing politics, has been a careful chronicler of the Hindutva project, putting in the slog of exhaustive ground reporting to write two well-received books. *Ayodhya: The Dark Night*, co-authored with journalist Krishna Jha in 2012, remains the go-to, much-quoted text every time the Babri Masjid controversy rears its head. *Shadow Armies: Fringe Organisations and Foot Soldiers of Hindutva*, published in 2017, traces the rise of Hindutva's semi-lawless para-organisations. *Ascetic Games: Sadhus, Akharas and the Making of the Hindutva Vote* published in April, focuses on a less publicised aspect of the Hindutva universe. The *sadhus'* world is, to quote Jha in the introduction, “not... formed by the spiritual strengths of its ascetics but one formed by the brute force of syndicates of armed *sadhus* who fight among themselves — sometimes even engaging in open battles — for wealth and power.”

This profane world of murder, forgery and related criminality that flourishes under the veil of spirituality merges seamlessly with the “business end of things, the state and the openly communalist Hindu Right”. The somewhat menacing bohemianism that is routinely on display for the world press at the Kumbh is central to their MO. Most people assume that these *sadhus* return to lives of devout ascetic contemplation afterwards, so Jha's revelations are eye-opening. He describes how he came to write this book in the introduction. He and Krishna Jha were returning from a visit to Ayodhya while researching *The Dark Night* to trace how the *sadhu* Abhiram Das, a resident of Hanumangarhi, seat of one of the powerful *Vaishnav akharas* (or order), planted the idol of Ram on that fateful night of December 22, 1949. Outside the temple, he witnessed a group of *sadhus* viciously assaulting an elderly man while policemen nearby feigned disinterest and a small crowd watched but did not intervene. The man, a flower vendor for the temple, had been unable to pay rent for the past two months so the *sadhus* of Hanumangarhi decided to teach him a lesson. “This blatant display of violence by supposed ascetics was the first interaction with these people and forced me to examine it more closely,” he says. Once he finished *The Dark Night*, he started to try entering that world. By ideology, Jha is leftist — a paid-up member of the All India Students' Federation in his student days “but Delhi University, not JNU,” he laughingly clarifies — and an atheist and his books suggest that he is no fan of Hindu nationalism. So how did he gain such access to these *sadhus*? “I had to assume a different kind of identity most of the time,” he admits with a guilty grin. His credentials as a Maithil Brahmin from Darbhanga in northern Bihar proved useful in gaining access to Hanumangarhi, for instance. “Abhiram Das happened to be a Maithil Brahmin, and one of his disciples, who was the main priest in

the makeshift Ram temple, gave me the name of his village, Rarhi. I found three villages of that name: One in Samastipur and two in Darbhanga. The last one was actually Das' home, where I located his youngest brother who was still alive. This gave me an advantage.” Later, he went to Haridwar, the main centre for the *Shaiva akharas*, which is heavily influenced by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). “They helped because I told them I wanted to write about the Sangh mahatmas. I gave them the impression that I would make them world famous. Becoming famous is very important for these *sadhus* because it brings them followers, money and so on. So that is when they started revealing things to me.” But didn't they read his writing, I ask incredulously as the food arrives with disconcerting promptness. He shakes his head. “They don't read, even today. But the RSS guys have started reading me now so I am finding things a bit difficult...” he trails off as he doubtfully eyes the outsized sandwich oozing goeey cheese. A fork and knife are ineffective against the thick untoasted bread so I suggest he simply use his fingers as I was doing with the giant tuna melt. All the same, he admits, reporting in the Hindutva heartland is a risky business, which is why he never gives on-camera interviews and has a Twitter handle only to follow what others are saying. As he manfully tackles the panini, I ask him about the political mobilisation for Hindutva. In *The Dark Night*, he and his co-author recount how an attempt to hold a *Sita Kirtan* as a build-up to installing the Ram idol in the Babri Masjid flopped because devotees were uninterested. How did Hindutva become such a fervent political movement just four decades later? The choice of Ram as a symbol of Hindutva politics changed everything: “It is very difficult for political organisations to attract people on the basis of religion,” he says, “so they chose this

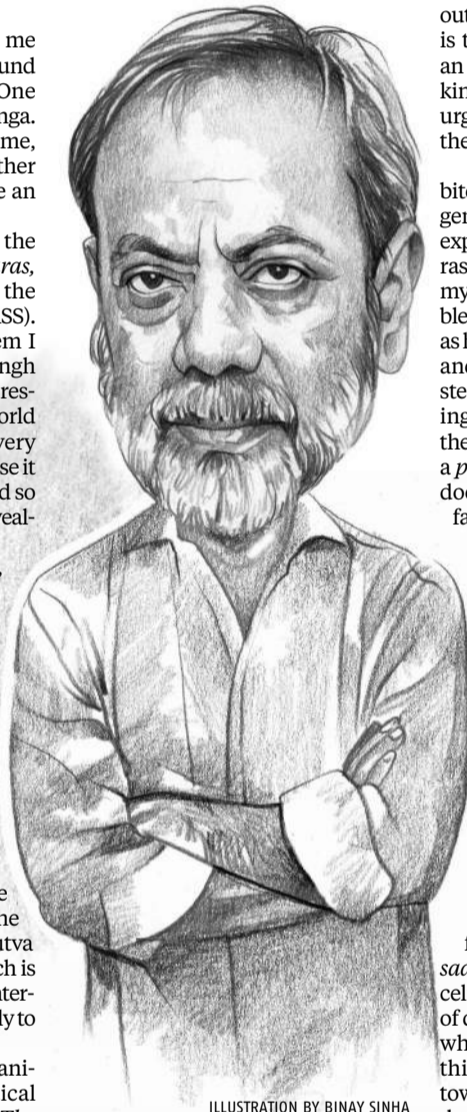


ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

out. “The most important technique is the way the Kumbh is staged” — an interesting verb to use. “It's just a kind of drama, you know,” he says, urging me to go to see “madness in the name of religion”. Jha, having managed a couple of bites, abandons the panini — “I don't generally eat this kind of thing,” he explains apologetically. I am embarrassed because I have wolfed down my sandwich. He declines a more edible substitute so we order more coffee as he explains why the *sadhu* network and its money-making empires is steadily expanding and consolidating. “The RSS cadres have become the recruiting ground for *sadhus*. See, a *pracharak* gives up everything. He does not marry, is cut off from his family, gives his whole life to RSS, work in close association with religion and in constant touch with *sadhus*.” As they start ageing, they can't go back home because they haven't earned anything. So they have two options. One, join politics but few people can do that. For the majority *sadhu*-dom is the only fallback. “When they enter then they use their connections to leverage their position and become part of that establishment,” he says. One collateral revelation from *Ascetic Games* is the fact that *sadhus* may be unmarried but hardly celibate, preying on the large cohorts of destitute women to be seen everywhere in India. One consequence of this is the presence in key temple towns of sizeable numbers of abandoned women. Male children are usually adopted by the *mahants* but girls fall prey to the same cycle of forced prostitution as their mothers. Their condition is worse than the widows of Vrindavan. That should be his next book, I suggest as the bill arrives. But he says his immediate project is a study of RSS' activities around independence and how Gandhi countered the movement. Pragna Thakur's recent campaign bloopers suggest that that is a timely subject if there ever was one.

Are you a ‘voluntourist’?



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
KEYA SARKAR

In order to avoid the extreme heat of Santiniketan from mid-May to mid-June, this year too, we took off for cooler climes. Although we wanted to go to Uttarakhand or Himachal we did not want to be anywhere near the tourist spots. So, after many hours on the internet, we chose a small village in Chamoli district in Uttarakhand for our respite. We decided we would divide our time between there and another little hamlet 30 kms from Dehradun. We rented two houses in the two places and our summer was sorted early in the year, by March in fact. We decided to get off the train at Haridwar and take the road to our desti-

nation in Chamoli, a run of almost 250 kms. Thanks to the Modi government's grand plan of a four lane highway all the way to the sacred *char dhams*, the entire stretch from Haridwar to Rudrapur was a driving hell filled with loaders, tractors, bulldozers and just piles of rubble. Added to this, of course, was the traffic caused by pilgrims, tourists getting away from the heat of the plains and river rafters. We arrived at our destination in nine hours having left Haridwar early morning. As we got out of the car and stretched our stiff legs, we realised that from the road the house that we had rented was a bit of a climb downhill. While the caretaker of the property dealt with the luggage, we braced ourselves for the descent worried that our wobbly legs would give way suddenly. As we were almost there, a young woman appeared and asked whether we needed help with any of the handbags that we were carrying. We were wondering who she was when she surprised us by speaking in *Bengali*. She said that she was from Bengal and was happy to have met us. Weary from long hours of travel in the constricted space of the car, we were so happy to unpack and change and look out at the snow clad peaks that we forgot all about her till we met her again at din-

ner. It was then we learnt that she was a “voluntourist” there. Never having heard of the concept, we listened attentively as she explained. She was interested in travel writing and to pay for that, she was volunteering to stay here and help with the business of the homestay. She was given boarding and lodging but no money. Apparently, after the stint here was over, she had a few more such offers lined up where the deal was no money or barely some. Over the next few days, we tried to figure her key performance areas. She said she was supposed to help the caretaker in his duties to serve the guests. As she warmed up to us a bit, she let us know that since the caretaker was older in age and experience (she was 21), he didn't take kindly to any instructions from her. Since the caretaker did not stay on the premises, when there were no guests, she was completely alone on the property. A property with no fencing that neighbours could access easily. I asked her how she thought this experience would add to her resume. That I think triggered a reaction. Next morning, she declared she was going to leave the day we were to go, back to her home in Bengal. We had managed to unshackle another youngster from the chains of buzzwords.



PEOPLE LIKE US
KISHORE SINGH

Some years ago, I mentioned to my wife that I would freeze mint leaves, lemon rinds and olives — a party trick from my bachelor days. There were two fallouts from this conversation. One, my wife accused me of not treating her as well as I would my alleged girlfriends. And, two, she said that anything I could do, she could do better. Which is why guests began to discover odd additions to their beverages. “Most people do not enjoy chocolate in their whisky,” I said to her. “Tomatoes do not lend flavour to Coke,” I pointed out. “Cocktail onions can be served alongside but not in mixed

drinks,” I suggested. It wasn't till her friend Sarla told her to cease that my wife stopped further experiments with ice and incongruous ingredients. I thought she had rediscovered that mojo last week when I popped ice into my sundowner and found it contained some manner of nuts and seeds. It also muddled the drink, so I had to throw it away and make myself a fresh one. What was in the ice was soon resolved. My wife likes to store peels, pips and other detritus from the kitchen for composting. In this heat, if it isn't taken immediately out, it begins to rot. To keep it from smelling, my wife had popped a bag of fresh garbage into the freezer that had leached into the ice-trays. If you thought that was the grossest thing to come out of the fridge, you'd be wrong. A few years ago, caught on the wrong foot by guests who stayed for dinner when we had invited them for drinks, my wife ferreted around for things to thaw into a quick meal. But the frosting on the packets made it difficult to tell their content, so she decided to chuck one into the microwave oven. Soon, an odour not unlike a laundry filled the kitchen. The packet turned out to be a bag, long thought lost, of my son's briefs that he liked to

keep in the fridge to keep cool before wearing. We ordered takeout. You'd think that might have taught us a lesson, but cracked bottles of beer and wine are routinely removed from the freezer. My daughter, who enjoys bursts of deep cleaning once every blue moon, will pull out jars of preserves, condiments and sauces, packets of imported salmon, chocolates and cheese, all long past their expiry dates. You'd think that might free up space and allow fresh produce in. You'd also think my wife would be hostile, but her reaction is strangely gleeful. “Oh, salmon,” she'll exult, “let's invite Sarla for dinner.” “I'm not touching the salmon, Mom,” my daughter will say. “You can have the potatoes,” my wife will suggest, “but I'm not wasting the salmon. And Sarla served me stale food last time.” She likes us to eat our food cooked fresh from ingredients that aren't. Only, she forgets what's in the deep-freeze too often. Last night's risotto caused soap bubbles to form in my mouth because the cheese my wife thought she'd used was actually laundry soap she'd put away. And to think I had to wash my mouth out with it when I hadn't even said a bad word — only thought it.

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Imported horsemen

And so the fourth and final horseman is heading back across the Atlantic. Viral Acharya will soon follow in the retraced footsteps of Arvind Subramanian, Raghuram Rajan, and Arvind Panagariya. Media comment projects the country as the loser, but no one is alarmist in the way some were when Dr Rajan headed back to Chicago. Nor does current comment reflect the extreme fears raised by Dr Acharya in his famous speech about central bank independence. But then, neither do too many people reflect the view reportedly expressed by Arun Jaitley as finance minister, that one of the mistakes the Modi government made was to import economists from abroad.

Let's be clear: The country IS the loser when it loses top-flight economists. But before we come to that, consider the possibility that experts can be wrong. Dr Acharya's academic qualifications and expertise in central banking are widely acknowledged, but he does have to answer questions on his record at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). On his watch, the RBI's macro-economic analysis has been wrong on the inflation rate as well as the economic growth rate — over-estimating both. Flowing from those misjudgments, he has been wrong also in his advocacy of interest rate policy, opposing two of the recent rate cuts announced by the RBI.

There is the question of cultural fit. Foreigners doing business with Indians find that Indians don't say "No" when they disagree, preferring to shift ground or resort to indirect signalling. That's unlike in the US, say, where you are expected to bluntly say "No" if that is your position. Similarly, those within the Indian government system do not speak out publicly against the government they serve. When you are governor or deputy governor, you do not have the freedom of speech that an ordinary citizen enjoys. Differences are aired only internally. On the occasions when someone feels the need to start a public debate, it is not done in apocalyptic terms. Naturally, when Dr Rajan and Dr Acharya spoke out bluntly (in the case of the former, on issues with which he was not officially concerned), it did not go down well. And yet, on the one issue (demonetisation) on which one might have expected Dr Rajan to take a stand, he became a homegrown Indian: He advised against, then went along.

Still, it was not a mistake to hire these economists. Dr Rajan's determination to clean up banking led to the asset quality review, which exposed the extent of the hidden rot. Next, while it is no secret that Dr Rajan and his deputy (later successor) Urjit Patel did not get along, it was under Dr Rajan that Dr Patel formulated a policy framework for the RBI, making inflation control the primary goal of monetary policy. This reflected international thinking on the issue, but was contrary to the view of previous, homegrown governors like Y V Reddy and Bimal Jalan. Still, monetary policy has been recast.

In the finance ministry, Arvind Subramanian's many policy prescriptions were usually ignored by the government despite his strenuous advocacy. But his report on the modal rate for the goods and services tax did get indirect acceptance, while his opposition to multiple rates has found partial purchase after his departure. Dr Subramanian has also been recognised for raising the quality of analysis in the government's annual Economic Surveys. But after his recent questioning of the official growth numbers, he must be *persona non grata*.

At the NITI Aayog, Arvind Panagariya came early and left two years ago. He did not get as much face time with the prime minister as he may have expected, perhaps because his reformist thinking on macro-economic policy was tangential to the approach of the Modi government, which has been more interested in programmes and projects, and in specific issues like how to reform medical education. The NITI Aayog played its part here, but Dr Panagariya's big ideas like coastal economic zones have not materialised.

Today, with growth having slowed and macro-economic challenges in every direction, would the government have benefited from the advice of "Harvard" economists? Perhaps, but judging by past record it probably would not have paid much heed.

When Modi's fans & foes agree he's unbeatable

Modi loyalists believe they've destroyed Congress by being better at their game: Welfarism, national security obsession bordering on jingoism, and an almighty personality cult

Even in times so polarised that we fight over the colours of our cricket team's kit, there is one thing both fans and critics of Narendra Modi agree on: That he is unbeatable. Now, and in any foreseeable future.

First, the BJP loyalists. They think their hold on power is now unshakable for a quarter of a century. Broadly, that would make it about equal to the Congress rule during 1952-89, broken only by the short period between 1977 and 1979. This is only fair, they say, as the nationalist Right must have the same opportunity to mould India as the secular Left did after Independence.

In five years, they've already shown how fragile the old socio-political formulations, especially of hard secularism, are and how easy it is to take away socialism and welfarism from the old Centre-Left — only to execute it better, and convert this efficient delivery to the poor into votes. The project to change the ideological and philosophical colour of gathering academia and intelligentsia is already progressing well.

With repeated majorities, they believe, they will have the time to achieve much of their ideological objectives by 2025, early in Mr Modi's third term. The remodelling of India into their concept of Hindu Rashtra, they believe, can be achieved in the next six years, within the ambit of the same Constitution, basic character and all. That year also happens to be the 100th anniversary of the founding of the RSS.

Modi loyalists now believe they have established a social contract with India's poor, much as Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi had done.

They believe they have destroyed the Congress not by Hindu nationalism, but through being better at old Congressism: Welfarism, a national security obsession bordering on jingoism, and an almighty personality cult. This new social contract with the poor has made Mr Modi unbeatable, they think.

The best armies can lose wars, but they are tested for their nerve in orderly retreats as much as in heady victories. The Opposition, led by the Congress, is breaking ranks and retreating into self-destruction much like our army in 1962, commanded by cowardly generals who fled first, and bumbling politicians.

The mood is characterised by their sanctimonious outrage at the voters. The Congress believes "Modi

has won but India has lost", which the PM brought up in Parliament this week to taunt the Opposition. Allies of the Congress and others fare worse. For example, Karnataka Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy's outburst at job-seekers: "You voted for Modi, ask him for jobs" is typical of this bankruptcy. And Mayawati blaming her own ally Akhilesh for her defeat — hers is the most panicky politics



NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

now, followed closely by Mamata Banerjee. The Bengal chief minister's call to the Congress and Left to join her in a common front against the BJP is morally bankrupt, politically nutty and psephologically unwise. It is as if Mamata has already conceded defeat in the next assembly elections. Others — from the Left to Naveen Patnaik, Jagan, KCR and Stalin — do not count.

It is tempting to buy into the Opposition's mood — that Mr Modi is unbeatable, particularly with his 95:5 superiority in resources, tightening control over the institutions and an increasingly supplicant media. What can you do if the voters want an elected dictatorship?

Historically, post-Rajiv Gandhi, this has been the approach of the Congress. It gets so contemptuous of people who reject it overwhelmingly that it doesn't even go back and ask them why. Yogendra Yadav, in his psephologist avatar, made a startling finding: That the Congress never makes a recovery in a state once its vote share has fallen below 20 per cent there.

It just gets so angry with the voters' "stupidity", as if to say, ok guys, you don't deserve us and we don't need ungrateful people like you. This, the outrage of the spurned feudal, is a reasonable explanation for Rahul Gandhi not showing up in Amethi in even five weeks after he lost the loyal family bastion. You can't be so dismissive unless you've concluded that Mr Modi is now unbeatable. So, the opposition to Mr Modi is better left to "liberal" activists, intellectuals and PIL warriors. The challenge of a political reversal, therefore, is diminished into the heady but collegiate idea of "resistance".

If both the Modi backers and opponents are right and he's permanently unbeatable, the first casualty will be political commentators like us. There

will be nothing more to say. The fact is, politics never becomes frozen or static for long. It is mostly cyclical, though the wheel can sometimes take really long to turn, as it did with the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

The history of democracies is filled with examples of the self-destruction of both, who declared victory or defeat too early. But there are also many of those who refuse to give up, absorb the shock and lessons of defeat and rebuild — but with patience. The best examples are both Indira's Congress after the Emergency and then the Advani-Vajpayee BJP.

Indira Gandhi rebuilt herself within two and a half years, via jail and riding an elephant to Belchi. When she saw a weakness in the Janata government, notably national security, she attacked it devastatingly and succeeded.

In 1980, the Janata Party, which included the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, disintegrated in humiliation and Indira Gandhi made a thumping return. But the Vajpayee-Advani duo led their defeated troops into an organised retreat and regrouped into a new party, the BJP. Within four years, it suffered a bigger setback, reduced to two in Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 landslide. As did the rest of the Opposition.

But they didn't go into a sulk. They analysed their weaknesses and put their heads down with determination and humility. And, remember, Rajiv had won 414 seats then. Mr Modi still has only 303.

Within three years, that same devastated opposition had reduced Rajiv to a lame duck. Rajiv's errors helped, but the opposition, especially the BJP, did a brilliant job inside Parliament and outside, aligning with Congress dissidents and Opposition leaders it had fought with, and worked with activists and the media to unravel Bofors and other scandals.

The real reason why it raised itself to power in 1998 was that it found a big idea the Congress and Socialists couldn't counter: Ram Mandir and new Hindutva. You can test it, but a big idea was needed as an alternative idea. It's taken 35 years, but the BJP is now as dominant as the Congress in the past.

The best way to learn lessons in politics, in victory or defeat, is from evidence from your own times. Mr Modi may have the aura of an irresistible conquistador now but he is human. He isn't an "avatar" (or "autar" as they'd say in the heartland). Within months of his 2014 landslide, Arvind Kejriwal beat him 67-3 in Delhi. Only because his AAP then was a big new idea. Political change of that kind needs radical surgery. Homeopathy won't do.

This is the season of cricket, and I will invoke a brilliant Asaduddin Owaisi description for Mr Modi: He walks into Parliament with the nonchalance of a Vivian Richards coming out to bat in supreme contempt of the bowlers. Then

there's the "solution" England found for their Richards problem: Just set a deep, defensive field, let him keep hitting and you block his shots until he gets bored and makes a mistake. Endless patience, self-preservation, waiting for the adversary to make errors is also a strategy. The first prerequisite, even more than intellect, is a bunch of guts and some fire in the belly.

By special arrangement with ThePrint

Our permanently stunted children



AL FRESCO

SUNIL SETHI

A pet theme of Bollywood's separated-at-birth plots is of the one brother who grows up to be a good cop, and the other an underworld criminal. The reality couldn't be more distant from this lost-and-found pop fantasy. For instance, if they happened to be born around the villages of Muzaffarpur and other districts of Bihar and adjacent Uttar Pradesh, chances are they'd be lost early on from dire illness, malnutrition and impoverishment; and were they to survive the trauma, they would likely develop into physically stunted and emotionally deprived specimens.

An example of this is the recent hit Netflix series *Delhi Crime*, a gritty, dramatised reprisal of the brutal gang rape of 2012 that paralysed the nation and stunned the world. In the serial the police

— from officer to constable — are valorised as made of sterling stuff, but it's the rapists and killers in the bus that transfix us: Glassy-eyed, unrepentant, meagre, and morally wasted youth — escapees from the grinding deprivation of the Hindi heartland, adrift in the crevices of the metropolis. Of the six, one killed himself in jail, four are on death row and the sixth, a juvenile, was let off after three years.

As the police track the criminals to their families in villages, it requires no quantum leap of the imagination to link their likes to the distraught, destitute families who dragged their encephalitis-afflicted children to the dysfunctional, desperately understaffed rural clinics and district hospitals in Muzaffarpur this month, and in Gorakhpur last year.

"*Garmi, garibi aur gaon*" is how one newspaper summed up the cause of the current outbreak of children's deaths, a death knell that tolls louder and is a glaring aberration in the prime minister's ambition of transforming India into a \$5-trillion economy by 2024.

"And what do you know about hunger and poverty?" the 19th century novelist and social reformer Charles Dickens was known to rhetorically ask audiences of wealthy Victorian burghers who quizzed him about his cautionary stories of burnt-out childhoods — of starving children put to flight, worked to the bone in toxic fac-

tories, and taking to crime in their short, brutish lives. (Dickens's had first-hand experience when his father ended up in a debtors' prison.)

The trouble is that there is no dearth of information and research on malnutrition and child mortality in India. Other than the copious district-wise analysis available in the National Family Health Survey 2015-2016, here is what Unicef's Global Nutrition Report for 2018 states: "More than half of the world's children impacted by wasting (26.9 million) live in South Asia. Of the three countries that are home to almost half (47.2%) of all stunted children, two are in Asia: India (46.6 million) and Pakistan (10.7 million) ... India holds almost a third (31%) of the world's burden for stunting, so researchers at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) used district-level data to understand spatial differences in the distribution of stunting across India's districts — with 239 of 604 districts having stunting levels above 40%. This data was then used to inform policies and action."

The last two words — "policy and action" — that are operative. Given the informed context, and cause and effect of the recurring deaths, scant investment is quoted as the primary reason of a sham-bolic health care system. This may be the case but it is inefficient use of resources, no clear chain of delivery, and an overriding lack of accountability that are at the

root of the persisting evil.

Legislators zip in and out, mouthing empty words and proffering bereavement cheques; district administrators spring into action only when the crisis explodes in television headlines. No one is sacked. On the contrary struggling medical staff are besieged by intrusive journalists and — as in Gorakhpur in 2017 — even jailed for shortage of emergency oxygen supply. In Muzaffarpur, an uneasy ruling alliance between Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) and the BJP shadowed the unfolding disaster in execrable political point-scoring.

Blighted childhoods are an urban reality as much as in the hinterland's perilous zones. Close by my house in a middle-class south Delhi neighbourhood is a large (usually overflowing) municipal garbage dump; alongside is a makeshift shack where the local "press-wallah" and his family irons laundry day in and out. It is a ubiquitous Delhi scene, with one difference: When not delivering crisply ironed clothes to local customers, their children play on, and pay their keep, by picking through plastic bags of garbage. Their main companions are a group of fierce street dogs that howl through the night.

Dickens would have taken the situation and spun fiction, mapping the children's future in a twisted tale of prostitution, abuse, theft and jail. If they survived they would be immortalised as Artful Dodgers and if they perished, they would end up in forgotten graves like a thousand others.

nate to pick up the voucher from my office while I took the flight!

I would credit Mr Goyal, despite all his current troubles, for all that Brand Jet stood for: Top-class service deliveries, a charming crew, a nice, friendly airline. Better still he never imposed his own personal brand, his own personality, on the airline brand. Kingfisher was a spitting image of Vijay Mallya: Loud, garrulous, opulent. Virgin is what Richard Branson is. Vistara is in many ways Ratan Tata ... genial, up-market.

I have met Mr Goyal a few times. He always comes across as someone earthy, somewhat middle-class, surely nowhere as classy as the airline he built. His sartorial style too is pretty ordinary; he speaks chaste Punjabi and he has no airs that characterise the rich-and-famous. The Jet brand was, however, in no way tied down, or held back by the personal brand of the promoter. It happens often enough — owner-promoters or trophy CEOs invariably bring their own personality traits to bear upon the corporate brand they helm. Mr Goyal thankfully let Jet flourish as a brand independent of what he personally stood for or represented.

Jet may no longer fly again. It may have got grounded for various business reasons ... bad management, bad loans, bad karma. But bad service, no. Even in ruin, Jet retained its one essential brand quality: Dignity.

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English comeback

EYE CULTURE

AMOL AGRAWAL

One cannot escape the recent performance of the English cricket team in one-day internationals (ODIs). After pioneering the game, the focus of the English has been mostly on Test cricket, particularly the Ashes. But they are beginning to take an interest in the shorter form of the game too.

Since playing the first ODI in 1971, England have played 737 of this variety of the game, won 371, and lost 331, with a win-loss (W/L) ratio of 1.12. Analysts say England's performance was reasonable till the 1992 World Cup. They reached the final three times (1979, 1987, and 1992) in the five World Cups till then. This is reflected in the results as the W/L ratio in 1971-92 was 1.22 (203 matches) and then declined to 0.93 (457 matches) at the time of the 2015 World Cup.

It was their early exit in the 2015 World Cup which forced the authorities to act. They completely changed the team, and infused specialists and fresh blood. Above all, they asked the cricketers to play fearless cricket and developed a team spirit. In 2016-19, we see a spectacular turnaround with a W/L ratio of 3, leading to their rise to number one rank in ODIs. Eoin Morgan has been captain since 2011 and instrumental in bringing about the change.

The real impetus came from the batsmen. Just like Sri Lanka batsmen of yore, the English batsmen have blazed their way to breaking not just old records but their own too. The runs per over have improved from 4.97 to 6.34, leading the team to hold the record of the most consecutive 300-plus scores. They also hold the record for the highest team score (481) and most analysts believe they will break the barrier of 500. In the recent World Cup match against Afghanistan, they hit 25 sixes, breaking their own record of 24. In the same match, Morgan scored 17 sixes, which is another record. Compare this to former England captain Alistair Cook, who scored 10 sixes in his entire ODI career!

Their real test is the current World Cup, which is being played in England. Starting as the favourites to win the cup, they made a blistering start, only to lose to Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Now that they have lost to Australia, it could be really difficult to even qualify for the semis! But whatever may be the results, the English ODI team has put its stamp on ODI cricket.

Apart from English cricket, there is another English institution that is trying to reclaim its lost status. This is the Bank of England.

Sweden's Riksbank, born in 1668, may have been the first central bank, but it is the Bank of England that shaped central banks and their practices the world over. However, the Bank of England lost the race, first to the Federal Reserve as the US

The Jet brand that Naresh Goyal built



YES, BUT...

SANDEEP GOYAL

Jet Airways may be gone, but I remain a loyal fan of the brand and the airline. It was, without doubt, one of the best Indian brands to have been born, and built, after liberalisation in the 1990s. If I were to describe Jet Airways in just one word, I would choose to describe it as "dignified". And that is saying a lot.

I was one of the passengers on Jet Airways' first ever flight, 9W 321, from Bombay to Ahmedabad on May 5, 1993. On that hot summer day, as the first Jet aircraft with a distinct blue and ochre livery and an oblong serrated sun denoted speed, slowly taxied for take-off, it ignited my love affair with an airline that I flew as my first choice for well over 25 years, logging a few

million Jet Privilege miles, criss-crossing India and the world.

Naresh Goyal, Jet's promoter, a genial, mild-mannered Punjabi from Patiala, was almost unknown in corporate circles back then. Not very many folks took him seriously when he promised that Jet Airways would deliver "a new and superior air travel experience on the ground and in the air". The core values of the brand were even back then built into the brand colours: Blue for professionalism and yellow representing warmth. Similarly, the chosen corporate symbol — the Flying Sun — was conceptualised as a graphic representation of an aircraft's tail-wing speeding past the sun.

Jet, without doubt, built a world-class airline. At least for me as an Indian, the professionalism and customer friendliness matched, in fact most times exceeded, the best in the world. Jet was not just about a professional, elegant and friendly cabin crew or efficient ground staff. Or about on-time arrivals and punctuality. Or clean aircraft with clean loos. Or good food and good wine. It was just a flying experience you were comfortable with. The piping hot *masala chai* served at the Jet lounge in Brussels (their European hub at one time), for example, was just a small joy that made you feel good after hours of travel. I would look forward to a pot-full of the *chai* before embark-

ing on the next leg of the flight. Yes, a small touch, but a very relevant, very endearing one. Similarly, the *dal* served with the Indian meal choice on every flight was just right. The *aam panna* welcome drink too always had the right taste, the right consistency. The *imli goli* digestive was a unique, and very welcome, Jet introduction. Jet was Indian. Quintessentially Indian. Classy Indian.

On Singapore Airlines the *rotis* served with the Indian meal choice, even in Business Class, are always refrigerator-cold. I have mentioned that to my friend Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, who curates their Indian menu, many many times, without any change or improvement. In the years I used to fly Lufthansa frequently, my enduring image of the stewardess in First Class was that of a stern, superannuated school teacher. On Emirates, honestly, I always have this feeling that the staff are very condescending, maybe because of the colour of my skin.

On Jet, somehow, I always felt very much at ease. I remember once checking in at Delhi airport, only to discover that the 4-voucher business ticket I was carrying had no more flight coupons! The girl at the counter just smiled at me, handed me my boarding card, and just asked me for my secretary's number so that she could co-ordi-

RationalExpectations

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Farmers guilty in GM, but so is govt

Govt wants to arrest farmers planting illegal GM cotton, but it did nothing when 35 lakh illegal seed packs were sold in FY18

THERE CAN BE little doubt that *Shetkari Sangathana* farmers sowing certain GM seeds—both Herbicide Tolerant (HT) cotton as well as Bt brinjal—are breaking the law since, as of now, these haven’t been approved by the government. But, while the state police have been quick to register FIRs against some farmers—based on a complaint made by the central government’s environment ministry—the central government needs to think about its own role in this sordid tale and how it has prevented Indian farmers from getting cutting-edge technology that farmers in other countries have access to; if farmers then chose to break the law to draw attention to their plight, they are not the only ones to blame.

It is important to keep in mind that this is not just a case of farmers being unreasonable while the government is in the right. In the case of Bt Brinjal, for instance, it was after seven years of field trials and tests that the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), the highest body for certifying GM crops, approved its usage as fit for human consumption. But with activists protesting, then environment minister Jairam Ramesh decided to hold back the approval in what he called the ‘public interest’. Bt Brinjal is approved for use in various countries, including neighbouring Bangladesh, and farmers benefit as they use less pesticides and have higher productivity; the fruit and shoot borer, the pest that is controlled by introducing the Cry1Ac gene in the plant, affects 30-50% of the brinjal crop and cuts pesticide use by 60%.

Given this history, and the fact that the apex body of scientists approved the crop, it is difficult to argue the farmers are in the wrong. And sowing seeds that are not approved is illegal, but given that no minister in the last nine years—Ramesh’s ban took place in 2010—has had the guts to lift the ban (in the case of the BJP, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch is opposed to GM crops), surely the farmers couldn’t have chosen a more effective way to draw attention to their problem?

Nor was this the only victory of the anti-GM brigade. A team of Delhi University scientists led by former vice-chancellor Deepak Pental developed GM mustard and the GEAC approved this in May 2017—so this was no longer a foreign company that had developed the technology and Pental was not even looking for royalty since NDDB had funded his research—but the BJP government has not cleared it for commercial use for more than two years now. If decisions that are to be taken on the basis of scientific tests are, instead, made on political grounds, why not abolish the GEAC?

In the case of HT cotton, the government’s actions have been even worse. In this case, the government cleared the use of the first generation of Bt cotton, and this resulted in a sharp increase in production and helped India become the world’s largest exporter of cotton. But after the BJP came to power at the centre—Bt cotton was a major reason for strong agriculture growth when Narendra Modi was chief minister of Gujarat—it decided to go after Monsanto, the primary supplier of GM cotton seeds. While few farmers were complaining about the price of Monsanto seeds—at that point, though, a few of Monsanto’s licensees didn’t want to pay it licence fees—the government fixed the price of the seeds and, within this, on the royalty that Monsanto could charge per bag; this was lowered again last March. An attempt was even made to cap the royalty Monsanto could charge, but though this was scrapped, the cotton seed price control effectively ensures that anyway. To top the government’s hostility, Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta even told the court that the patent the Indian Patent Office had granted Monsanto was illegal!

Govt right to arrest farmers who plant illegal GM seeds, but what about its own role in delaying the OK for cotton, brinjal & maize? And what action did it take when 15% of cotton crop used this seed in FY18?

Not surprisingly, Monsanto decided to abandon its plans to introduce the next generation of seeds (including HT ones) in India; HT seeds do away with the need for labour-intensive weeding. Meanwhile, however, local seed companies started producing illegal knockoffs of these seeds. While the government initially suspected Monsanto was behind the illegal seeds, a body of experts was mandated to investigate the matter. The Field Inspection and Scientific Evaluation Committee (Fisec)—chaired by the co-chair of the GEAC—did an on-the-spot inspection of cotton fields and found that around 15% of the seeds being used in major cotton-growing states comprised unapproved HT ones. Fisec ruled out these seeds being sold by Monsanto on the basis of their genetic signatures and said that tests suggested some local seed firms were involved. The Andhra Pradesh government then found that several local seed-producing firms were involved in this and, in March this year, it suspended the licenses of 14 firms for a year; given the crime, the punishment does seem quite trivial.

If the central government didn’t take any major action after its own panel found evidence of large-scale selling of illegal knockoffs—against either those growing and selling the seeds or the farmers who used them till now—it is difficult to understand why it is pushing for action against the *Shetkari Sangathana* now. More important, it needs to answer why farmers should be penalised for its failure to approve world-class technology in time. If the government is forced to give an explanation for its anti-seedtech policies, the *Shetkari Sangathana* has done the country a big favour.

MissingWOMEN

Conditions that create unemployment affect women disproportionately, policy must take note of this

THE NARRATIVE ON jobless growth is, by now, a well-known one—at 6.1%, India is witnessing its highest unemployment rate in almost half a century. Less talked about is the differential—and more adverse—impact this slump has on women. With lower labour force participation—according to a recent UN report, women’s labour force participation in India fell by 6.9 percentage points between 1997 and 2018—and higher unemployment rates, women are worse affected than men. The trend of shifting away from the agricultural sector—which, in India, is predominated by women—and toward the industries and services sector, and shrinking of the informal economy (according to PLFS data, in 2017-18, the informal sector’s share in the economy was 68.4%, down from 72.5% in 2011-12) was bound to dampen employment of rural women. But, urban women aren’t faring much better. According to a report by the Centre for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University, graduate urban women, who make up 10% of the working-age population, constitute 34% of the unemployed. Employed women aren’t spared the effects of the economic slowdown either. While in September 2018, it was reported that 92% of the female workers in India earn less than ₹10,000 per month, the UN report finds that marriage leads women to drop out of the labour force. Staying single being a rarity in India, it isn’t surprising that, in South Asia, the average participation of married women in the labour force is just 29.1%, trailing the global average of 50%.

While gender discrimination, and the many ways in which this manifests, is perhaps responsible for the low participation of women in the workforce, the lack of a legal and policy environment that provides them targeted skill training, ensures equal rights in the workplace, and encourages female entrepreneurship is also a significant contributing factor. Policy must pave the way for women to enter and remain in the labour force.

● NO PROOF REQUIRED

GIVEN THE ESTIMATED LARGE POVERTY DECLINE IN INDIA OVER FY12-FY17, OUR ECONOMIC POLICIES MUST FOCUS ON WHAT CAUSES GROWTH, NOT WHAT CAUSES POVERTY TO DECLINE

Rethinking poverty—and policy

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Views are personal

TODAY IS NATIONAL Statistics Day and there is a reasonable chance that the NSSO Consumer Expenditure Survey report for agricultural year (July-June) 2017-18 will be released over the next couple of weeks. Based on our analysis of existing trends in consumer expenditure and consumer prices, we predict that this will (should) unleash seismic changes in the way Indians (obviously including the Indian government) think about absolute poverty and its alleviation, macro growth policies and micro (especially agriculture) policy.

First rethink—we are not a poor country anymore, not with just 4.5 % of the population classified as poor (Tendulkar poverty line of ₹44 per person per day in FY18 prices). And given that there has been very low inflation since then, consider this as the poverty line today.

Second rethink—we have always considered food consumption as the ultimate criterion of poverty. Hence, we have built up an elaborate (too elaborate) ecosystem of food production, consumption, and distribution. Time has come to dismantle this ecosystem—an ecosystem that is biased against the poor farmer, is biased against climate change, and is biased against the use of water and energy.

Third rethink—4.5 % of the population as poor is not right, does not sound right, and isn’t right. The rethink has to be about defining poverty in relative, not absolute terms. Most European nations have a relative definition of poverty, for instance, a fixed proportion of median income. We should move towards that by the end of 2024, when India will likely be a \$5 trillion economy, or around \$3,500-4,000 per capita income. This is where Indonesia is today, and where China was in FY09 (in terms of per capita income). But before we move to a relative definition, India should forthwith move towards an updated poverty line, a poverty line consistent with our income status today as a lower middle income country—note, no longer a poor economy.

Fourth rethink and something we believe that the Modi government has been involved in for the last five years—poverty is now not just about food but living standards (sanitation, housing, piped water, electricity, education, health, and jobs). And on each of these elements, the focus should shift to quality, not quantity.

Fifth rethink—recognise that we

have a messed up and archaic agricultural policy—a policy that was not even fit for earlier poor economy times. But no reason to blame the past—the emphasis should be in reforming the present for a better future. Poverty is no longer about food, so free up the food producers rather than keeping them as prisoners of policy (and politicians and bureaucrats). No Essential Commodities Act, no Food Corporation of India [whoever named this bureaucratic-political-corrupt delivery of food as a Corporation?], and no Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee now called the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act 2017 (APLM). Notice how little we have developed—farming and trade (marketing) are the oldest activities known to man and woman, and we need an Act of Parliament in 2017 to keep regulating it?! Alternative “Act”—farmers are free to buy, sell, hoard, export, import, like the rest of the 7 billion residents of this planet. And no bans please—we are no longer a poor economy.

The above rethink is not based on idle speculation but rather on analysis of trends in consumer expenditure since FY12. Consumption is 60 % of GDP, and poverty is defined in terms of per capita consumption. The latest NSSO survey is likely to show a sizeable reduction in poverty rates across the country. Our estimates for FY18 are based on the estimation of poverty line in FY18. This estimate is based on the increase in poverty line or price level (over FY12) for each state, and each urban and rural area of each state. We use the NSSO distribution for FY12, and increase the average per individual nominal consumption for each individual by the all India constant magnitude of 89%. The per individual poverty line for everyone is estimated as above. The 3.25 middle income poverty line is obtained from the Tendulkar poverty line by multiplying the latter by 3.2/1.9 (given that the Tendulkar poverty line in FY12 is equal to PPP\$1.9). We will update our analysis in the form of a research paper once the 2017 consumption survey data is released but the find-

ings are likely to be identical.

According to Tendulkar poverty line, poverty is today around 4.5% of the population or less than 70 million. According to a 70% higher in real terms poverty line (equivalent to PPP\$ 3.2 per person per day (pppd), the World Bank poverty line for middle income economies or ₹75 pppd), poverty in India is estimated at 31% down from 57% in FY12. Half of these poor reside in three Hindi heartland “old” states (before reclassification) of Bihar, MP and UP. Therefore, there is a 26 ppt decline in poverty over 6 years. That is above a 4% ppt decline per year—the fastest pace of poverty decline India has ever experienced, and that to with a 70% higher poverty line.

What happened to set this record decline amidst demonetisation, GST, two drought years, and lower than potential GDP growth? We believe a large part of this decline took place due to better targeting of government programs, better targeting made possible through expanded (and extensive) use of direct benefit transfers (DBT).

Therefore, the new approach towards poverty alleviation should involve targeted income transfers. Under our proposed targeted basic income program, which is a top-up scheme, the government transfers the poverty gap (difference between per capita consumption of the household and the poverty line faced by the household) into the bank account of the poor. The cost of such a programme is likely to be between ₹2.5-3 trillion and it will ensure nobody has consumption below the poverty line. India’s current expense on poverty alleviation programs is approximately ₹3.4 trillion and the cost to make one person non-poor due to the PDS in FY12 was ₹24,000. The same for MGNREGA was ₹40,500. Therefore, assuming perfect targeting, a basic income program is likely to cost sub-

stantially lower than the current policies and it will ensure that poverty rate is reduced to zero based on the higher poverty line.

The direct benefit transfer mechanism of the government has been able to resolve targeting problems for a bulk of the 430 government schemes and subsidies. The current PM-Kisan program provides income support to approximately 14 crore farmers is an example of how through DBT the government can provide direct income support as its focal policy towards poverty alleviation. Such a policy is likely to help government in rationalising and consolidating its poverty reduction programs, thereby freeing up resources for other sectors in the economy.

India’s recent growth has led to a sizeable expansion in the number of taxpayers, and successive reforms over the last five years have simultaneously improved tax compliance in the country. The increase in number of individual return filers from 3.5 crore in FY13 to 6.4 crore FY17 and the improvement in revenue realisation from direct taxes reflects this improvement.

However, now the government should focus on bringing more people under the tax net at the higher income brackets. Our recommendation towards achieving the same would be to reduce both Corporate Income Tax rate and the highest Personal Income Tax rate to a flat 25%. Therefore, to improve revenue realisation from direct taxes the government should focus on improving compliance by reducing the highest slabs of the tax rate. This rethink is necessary if we are to achieve accelerated growth, and higher tax revenues.

The Indian economy requires adequate investments in critical areas such as road, railways and water. Therefore, the government needs to rationalise its expenditure and tax rates to ensure that reallocation of resources. While our pace of poverty reduction has improved over the last five years, we can augment it further through a targeted basic income policy and free up additional resources for other sectors of the economy. Times have changed and so should our policies towards poverty alleviation.

Currency wars: Easy to start, tough to win

DANIEL MOSS
Bloomberg

Trump’s talk about currency manipulation has serious people considering the prospect that the US could sell dollars in the market, a practice mothballed years ago

TO PRESIDENT DONALD Trump, and any other Group of 20 chief thinking about waging a currency war: It’s basically impossible to win.

That’s partly because they don’t really happen in practice. If they did, everybody would lose because everyone would play. The surest way to affect the relative value of an exchange rate is through nudging interest rates up or down. These days, monetary policy among most major economies is so aligned that any one country would be hard-pressed to notch any kind of victory for very long.

Failing to grasp this risks misunderstanding how interconnected global capital flows and commerce have become—regardless of spat about tariffs and talk of a technological cold war between the US and China.

The term “currency wars” was popularised by former Brazilian finance minister Guido Mantega in 2010. It captured a global anxiety that gathered pace in the aftermath of the financial crisis, when the world’s biggest central banks pumped billions of dollars into the economy through quantitative easing. The concept has been in remission over the past few years, as monetary policy started returning to normal.

Leave it to Trump to revive it. Over the course of his presidency, Trump has railed against what he sees as the dollar’s strength. To his credit, a model by the International Monetary Fund suggests the dollar is overvalued by 8% to 16%. This criticism has only been compounded by his complaints that the Federal Reserve isn’t cutting rates—a move

that tends to make the dollar less attractive. To this end, Trump slammed European Central Bank President Mario Draghi for flagging rate cuts, which could weaken the euro relative to the dollar. The president then appeared to fantasise about hiring him to replace Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, tweeting: “Mario Draghi just announced more stimulus could come, which immediately dropped the Euro against the Dollar, making it unfairly easier for them to compete against the USA. They have been getting away with this for years, along with China and others.”

Trump’s condemnation of Powell obscures the fact that most central banks have tilted toward easing because economic circumstances, risks to growth and benign inflation warrant it. Trump will get his cut, economists predict, as soon as next month. But rate reductions are on the menu around the world for much the same reasons; when it comes to monetary policy, differences are largely matters of degree, not kind. That’s not to say that weaker exchange rates don’t have their benefits, or aren’t a byproduct of rate cuts. But it’s important to understand that currency management is rarely, if ever, the sole motivation.

Exchange rates are an “important channel” through which easing stimulates growth, Reserve Bank of Australia Governor Philip Lowe said this week. “But if everyone is easing, there is no exchange-rate channel,” he told the Crawford Leadership Forum at the Australian National University, in which I participated. “We trade with one another,

we don’t trade with Mars, so if everyone’s easing, the effect that we get from exchange-rate depreciation via the transmission mechanism isn’t there.”

As far-fetched it may seem, all of Trump’s talk about currency manipulation has serious people considering the prospect that the US could directly and unilaterally sell dollars in the market, a practice mothballed years ago.

Direct interventions only tend to work when allies cooperate to achieve common aims. In 2000, the world’s major central banks bought euros to boost the common currency, which was floundering in its infant stage. A similar team intervened to stem the yen’s surge after Japan’s 2011 tsunami, and its slide during a banking crisis in 1998. Each was broadly successful. In the modern era, interventions have also helped emerging markets stabilise their currencies, Bank of America noted in a report this week.

It is hard to conceive Europe or Japan going along with a Trump tantrum that serves no goal other than making the dollar cheaper against the euro, yen or British pound. If Trump’s target is China, the rest of the G-7 have zero interest in being seen to gang up against Beijing. Solo maneuvers don’t stand much of a chance of fundamentally altering a currency’s trajectory—or defying monetary-policy logic.

Trump would do well to bear all this in mind. There’s no commerce on Mars.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tariff heat

The US President Donald Trump is red-faced with the tariff hike by India on 28 US exports in a tit-for-tat trade war. He has called the hike “unacceptable”, and wants the it withdrawn. Talks between US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and his Indian counterpart have failed to produce solutions.

According to top commerce ministry officials, the hikes were within the maximum rate that WTO allows its members to levy on imports. US’s unilateral scrapping of duty-free export facility to over 2000 Indian product categories prompted India to raise duties on 28 American exports, conveying to the US that India cannot be taken for granted. The big brother attitude of the US is not conducive for talks.

— KV Seetharamaiah, Hassan

Sikh leader statue

Amid the ‘tu-tu, main-main’ of India and Pakistan, it’s not only heartening but another milestone of the Pakistan government that on June 27, on the eve of 180th death anniversary of the Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in a colourful ceremony, a nine feet tall statue of him was unveiled outside the Sikh Gallery of the Lahore Fort t, Mai Jinda’s Haveli (from where Ranjit Singh ruled over Punjab from 1801-1839).

— Bidyut K Chatterjee, Faridabad

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New basmati to boost exports

A new basmati variety, called Pusa 1718—which is an improved version of the iconic Pusa 1121—is set to sustain India’s aromatic and long-grained rice exports through higher yield and the ability to fight bacterial blight disease

SANDIP DAS

The author is a senior consultant with ICRIER. Views are personal

LAST FEW WEEKS have been quite busy for Preetam Singh, who lives in the Uraland Khurd village, part of Panipat district, Haryana, as farmers like him from nearby villages make a beeline for buying paddy seed of a new basmati rice variety, called Pusa basmati 1718 (PB1718) developed by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI). Singh owns 32 acres of agricultural land—he has also taken 100 acres of land on lease for farming—and he is mostly engaged in producing seeds for basmati rice variety. This new basmati variety, which draws its parentage from the widely-grown Pusa 1121 (PB1121), has been endowed with two extra genes to fight the bacterial leaf blight disease, thus preventing lodging, besides increasing the yield. “Farmers who had sown this new basmati variety (PB1718) in the kharif season (2018) say that it did not flatten during rain and hailstorm owing to its comparatively shorter length,” farmer Singh said.

Notified in 2017 by the agriculture ministry, PB1718 is gradually being accepted by farmers across Haryana and Punjab—the key aromatic and long-grain rice-producing region of the country. “The new paddy variety is characterised by its ability to fight bacterial blight, it prevents lodging and also increases the yield,” AK Singh, head, Department of Genetics, IARI, said. Farmers who have grown this new variety in the previous kharif season (2018) claim that the yield has increased to around 25 quintals per acre, as against around 18 quintals achieved for the widely-grown PB1121 (also developed by IARI).

Singh added that while traditional varieties of basmati had a yield of around nine quintals per acre, the short-duration variety Pusa 1509 (PB1509, developed by IARI) gives a yield of around 20 quin-

tals per acre. According to official estimates, PB1121 was grown in around 10 lakh hectares of land, of the total basmati acreage of around 15 lakh hectares in the key growing states last year. The short-duration variety PB1509 was grown in around 3 lakh hectares and the new PB1718 in around 1 lakh hectares. The traditional variety of basmati was grown in less than 1 lakh hectares during last year’s kharif season.

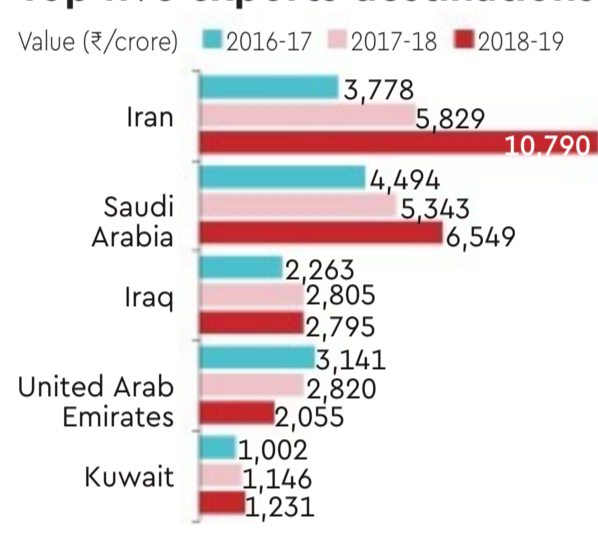
Ritesh Sharma, principal scientist, Basmati Export Development Foundation (BEDF)—an affiliate body of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)—said there were no effective pesticides available to deal with the bacterial leaf blight disease in PB1121 variety, which has a major share in India’s exports of aromatic and long-grained rice. “We have been dependent

Basmati rice exports



Source: Apeda

Top five exports destinations



on one variety of basmati rice (PB1121) for many years for sustaining our exports. With PB1718, we have an alternate variety in case of exigency,” Sharma said.

Another unique characteristic of the new basmati variety is that there is less grain-loss or lodging while harvesting at maturity, as compared to PB1121, which results in higher yield for farmers. “A new

variety also takes 5-6 years to get the desired results; PB1718 has been introduced at the right time, and in the next couple of years is going to be widely cultivated by farmers,” Sharma added. More than a decade after the introduction of PB1121, which gave a boost to India’s basmati rice exports, PB1718 is expected to help the country dominate the global trade in aromatic and long-grain rice market in the coming years. Commerce ministry officials said that the new variety could not have come at a better time, because due to the bacterial leaf blight disease in PB1121, the yield has been adversely impacted and farmers are increasingly using pesticides to curb pests.

PB1121, a landmark rice variety having basmati-quality traits drawn from traditional varieties, was formally released for commercial cultivation in

2003. Singh of IARI said the new variety possesses extra-long and slender milled grains, aroma, and high-cooked kernel and taste. Owing to its exceptional quality characteristics, it has set new standards in the basmati global rice market. According to commerce ministry officials, the cumulative foreign exchange earnings from PB1121 since 2008 have been around \$21 billion. This has given a boost to incomes of basmati growers. India has around 85% share in the global basmati rice trade, while Pakistan has a share of 15%.

India had achieved record basmati rice shipment, both in terms of value as well as volume, in the last financial year. According to APEDA data, India exported basmati rice worth ₹32,806 crore in 2018-19, which is 22% higher than the ₹26,870 crore achieved during 2017-18. Volume-wise also, India shipped 4.88 million tonnes of aromatic long-grained rice, which is a record in itself. Today, India exports basmati mostly to countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the UK, besides several other countries. “PB1718 would definitely help sustain India’s dominant position in the global basmati rice trade,” a commerce ministry official added.

Meanwhile, exporters of India’s aromatic and long-grained basmati rice and officials from the commerce ministry have been deliberating on the complexities arising from the stringent import norms imposed by the European Union (EU), which sharply slashed the level of a commonly-used fungicide, Tricyclazole, in the rice that the EU imports. Tricyclazole is a fungicide used in India to protect the paddy crop from a disease called ‘blast’, and the EU had cut the maximum residue limit for Tricyclazole from 1 PPM to 0.01 PPM from December 31, 2017, onwards. This has put basmati rice exporters in a tough position.

“Two to three crop cycles are required to effect the desired change. Moreover, there is no scientific evidence that the concerned chemical is harmful to human health,” Vijay Setia, president, All India Rice Exporters’ Association (AIREA), said. The EU and the US are high-value markets for basmati rice exporters, even though a major chunk of aromatic and long-grained rice is shipped to Gulf countries.

Official data says that there are 16 lakh farmers, mostly in Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and a few pockets of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, engaged in basmati rice cultivation. During the previous kharif season (2018), to curb the use of fungicides, AIREA, in association with APEDA, conducted campaigns among basmati rice growers in many districts of Punjab.

DATA DRIVE

FDI inflows fall

FOR THE FIRST time in six years, foreign direct investment equity inflows dropped 1% year-on-year, to \$44.4 billion, which could put pressure on the country’s balance of payments. While the government had initiated several measures to boost FDI, lower inflows in FY19 were because of tax reforms in the US, increase in interest rates by some of the major global central banks, and anxiety over trade war between the US and China.

Globally, FDI inflows contracted in the past three years. In 2018, FDI inflows were \$1301 billion—16% lower than the \$1,554 billion in 2017. The US and China were the preferred destinations for investment by foreign investors and the US continued to receive the highest FDI inflows for the past four years. These two nations accounted for 36% of the total

world FDI inflows last year.

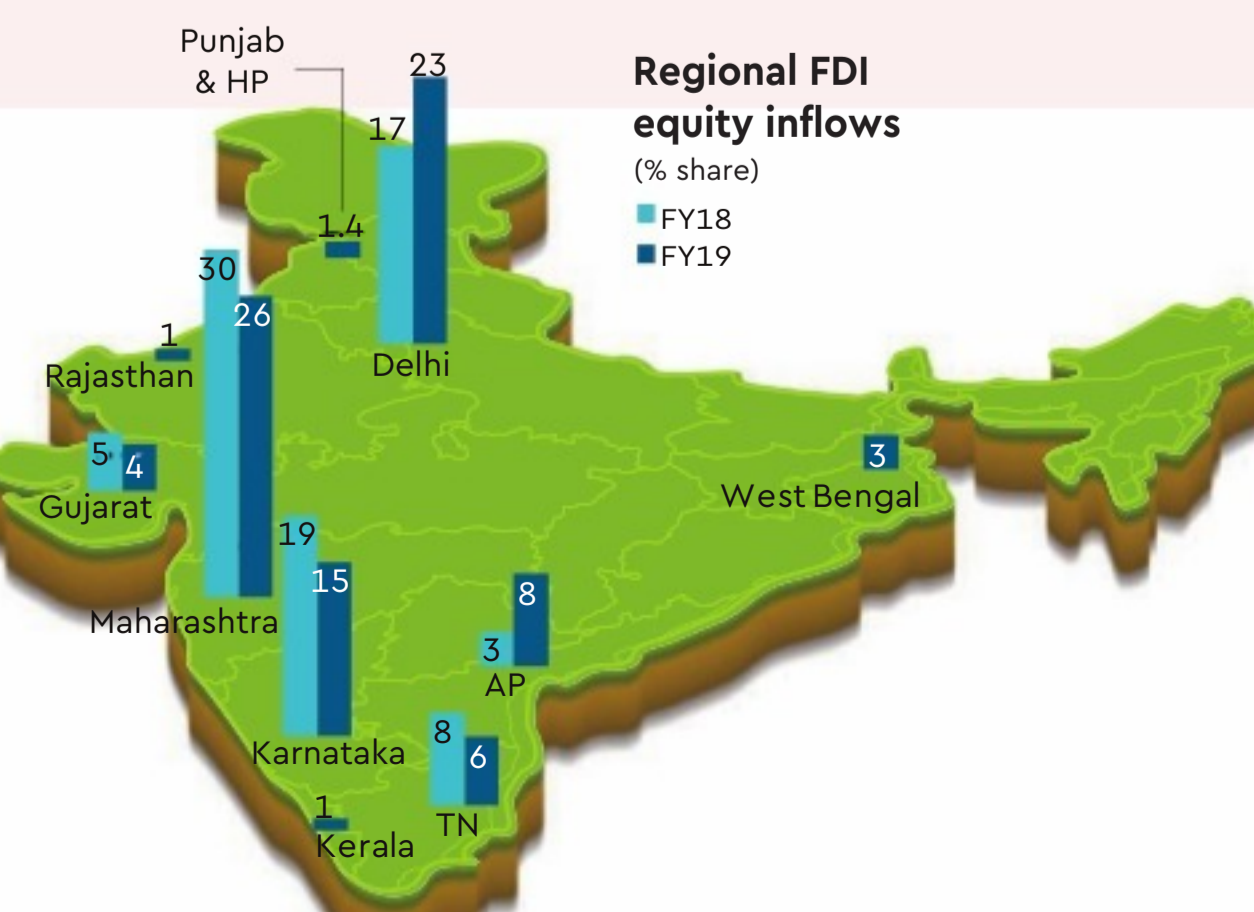
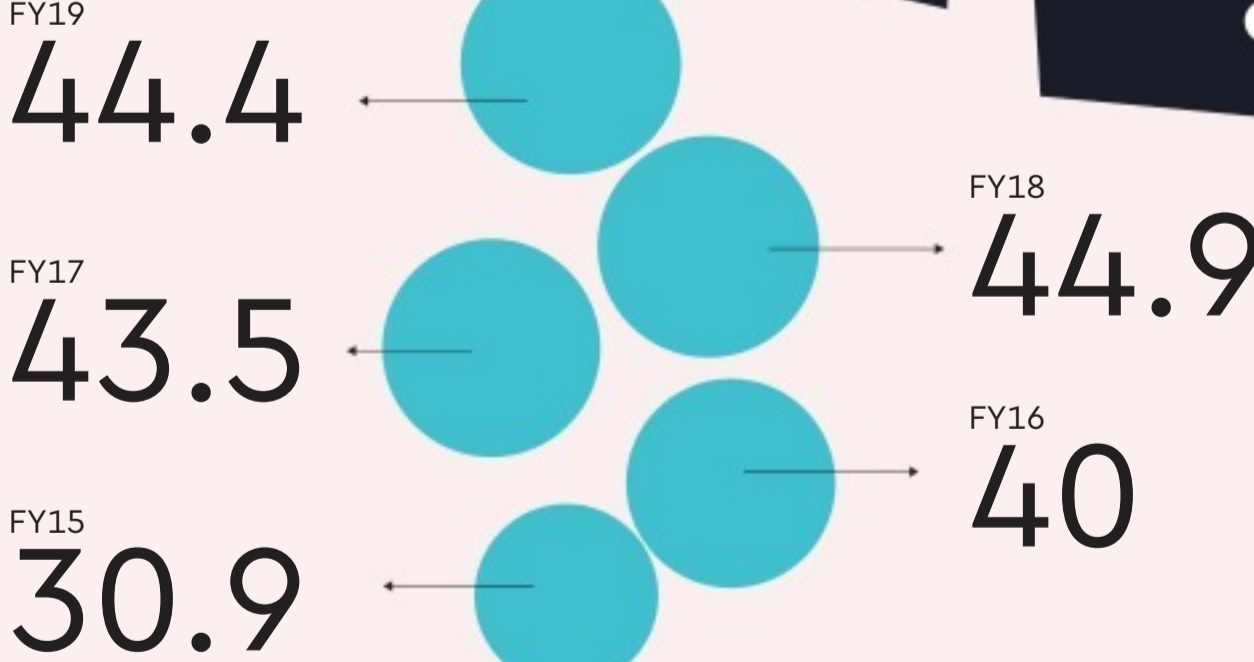
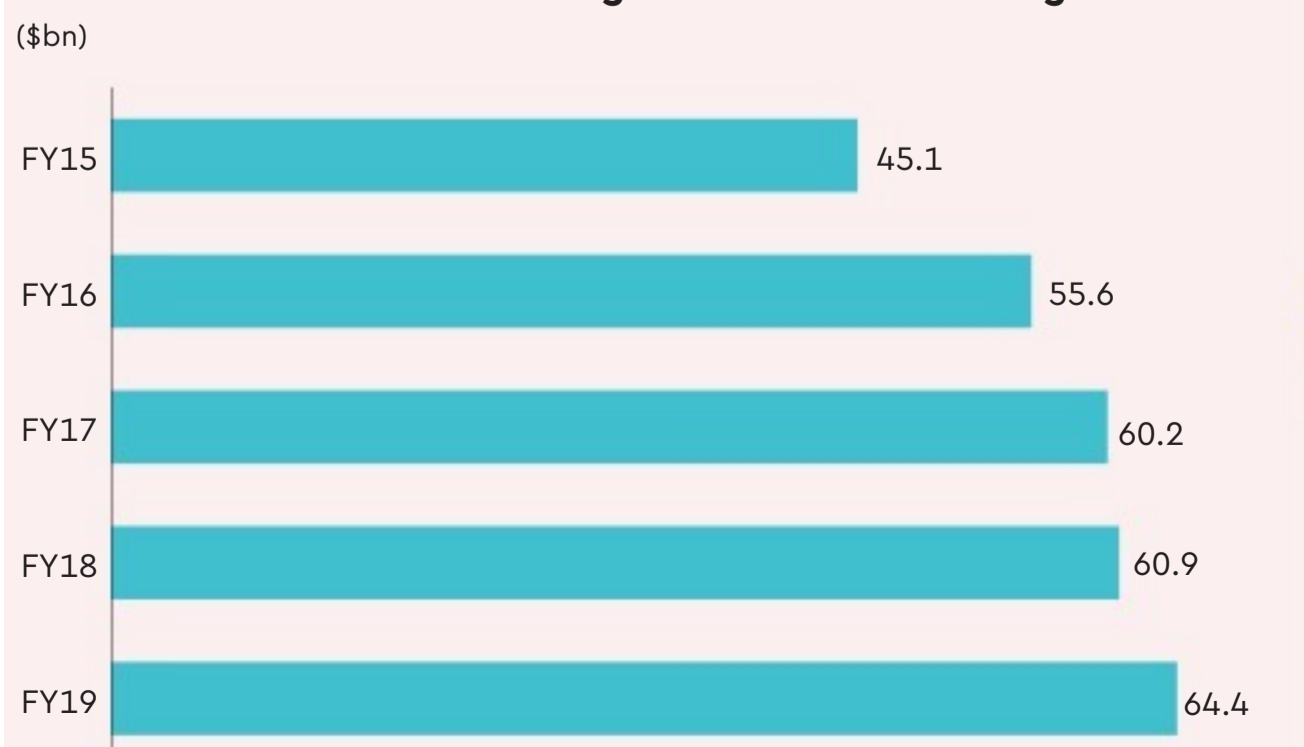
In India, the top three sectors that received the highest equity inflows were services, computer hardware and software, and trading. These accounted for 45% of total equity inflows in FY19. Inflows in services sector grew 37% in FY19 to \$9.2 billion. Equity inflows in the automobile sector witnessed a growth of 26%. In contrast, equity inflows contracted 5% in the telecom sector.

Maharashtra retained the top position in FDI inflows with 26% share, followed by Delhi (23%) and Karnataka (15%). In FY19, equity inflows in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab and Rajasthan more than doubled as compared with the previous year, whereas Tamil Nadu and Gujarat registered a decline in inflows as compared with the previous year.

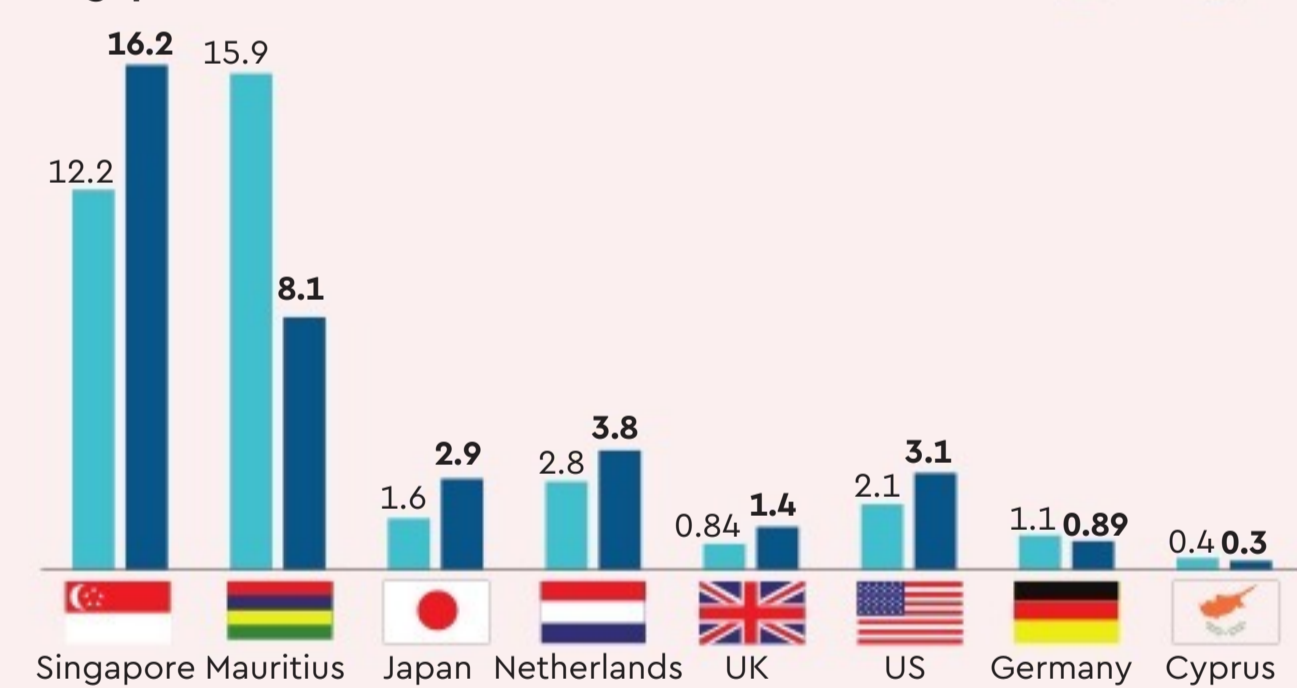
Equity FDI as share of GDP contracts



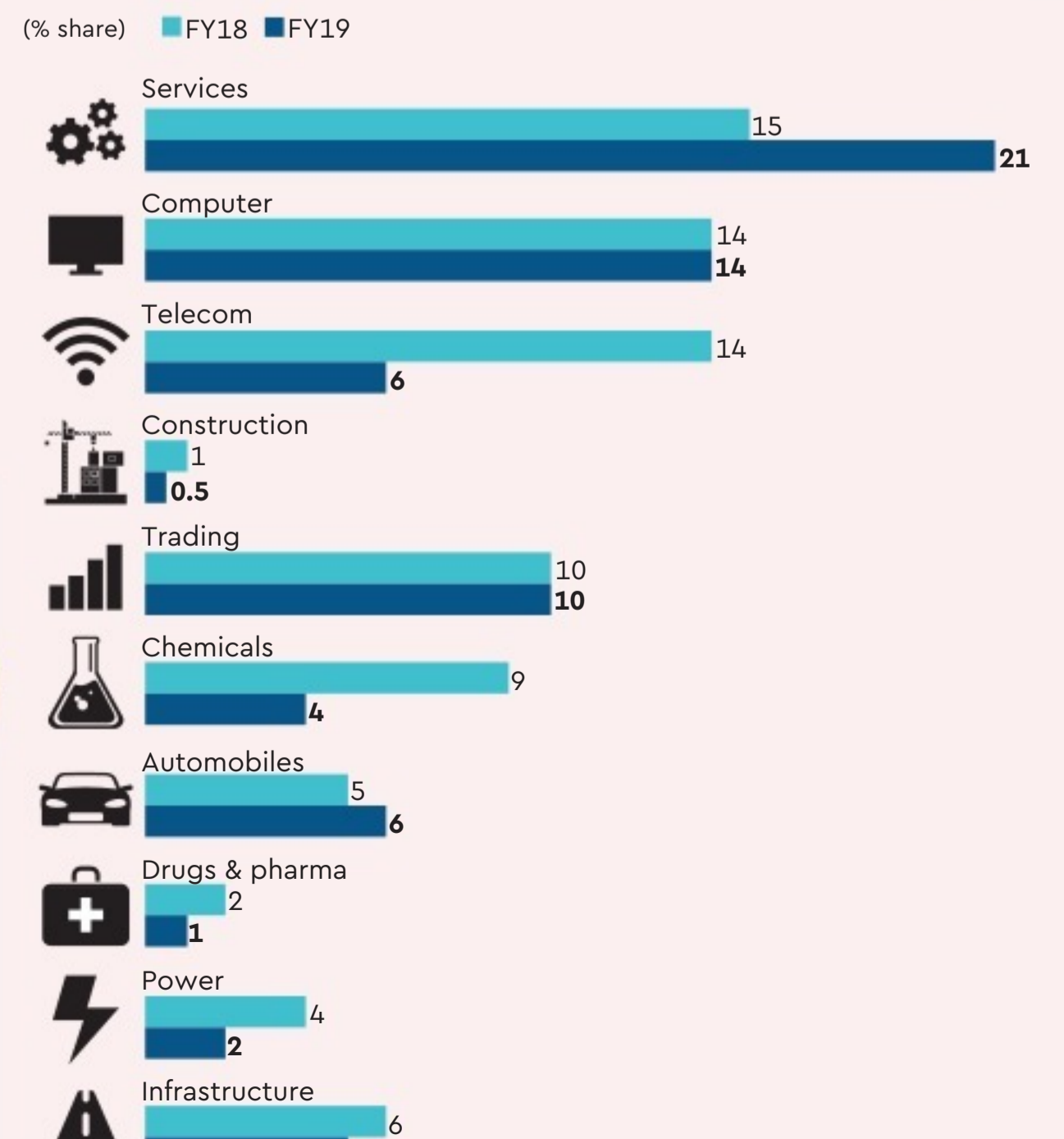
Total inflows rise because of higher re-invested earnings



Singapore leads in FDI inflows



Sectoral FDI inflows



Source: DIPI

The Indian **EXPRESS**

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

DOLING OUT QUOTAS

Bombay HC clears reservation for Marathas. But more quotas are a blunt instrument, don't answer complex problems

THE BOMBAY HIGH Court has upheld the Maharashtra government's decision to extend reservation in education and employment to the Maratha community on the basis of a report submitted by the Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission. While it pared down the proposed quota from 16 per cent to 12 per cent in education and 13 per cent in government jobs, the Court said it was convinced that the Marathas, a politically dominant community, were educationally backward. The Maratha quota takes reservation in Maharashtra to 65 per cent, beyond the 50 per cent limit imposed by the Supreme Court following the 1992 *Indra Sawhney* judgment. The HC has justified this transgression of the SC benchmark citing "exceptional circumstances and extraordinary situation" and the "legislative competence" of the Maharashtra government to enact the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act, 2018.

The law is likely to be challenged in the apex court. And the outcome has implications for the architecture of the politically fraught OBC reservation system in the country. The Patidars in Gujarat, Jats in Haryana and Kapus in Andhra Pradesh — all socially and politically powerful communities — have been demanding quotas on the basis of claims similar to those of the Marathas. The concerned state governments may now be forced to engage with the issue afresh, and even legislate favourably. Though the "legislative competence" of the state governments must be respected, it is important to recognise that numerically strong, socially dominant and politically powerful intermediate castes now covet the "quota" as a convenient option to advance their economic interests. Caste constituents are mobilised in large numbers — the Marathas did it and so have the Patidars, Jats and Kapus — to press their case and to signal to political parties that there will be consequences if their demands are ignored. These political mobilisations, even when peaceful, bring pressure to bear upon governments to acquiesce. This approach is far removed from the radical, constitutionally-mandated policy and purpose of caste reservation, anchored by a moral argument for fair representation of historically marginalised castes and communities in educational institutions and the bureaucracy.

The government gives in to the "quota" claims since it helps assuage the restive intermediate castes. The crisis in the agrarian sector and slowdown in the rural economy have turned many rural communities insecure. The absence of social security nets, employment stagnation in the formal sector, limited opportunities in higher education, underlie the demand for reservation among them. These issues call for imaginative interventions from the state. Providing quotas may temporarily address the insecurity among socially dominant communities, but it is no remedy to a complex structural problem.

STATE OF STABILITY

The good news is that bank NPAs have fallen. But NBFC troubles continue to pose risks

THE BROAD MESSAGE from the RBI's latest financial stability report is that, despite some recent dislocation, the financial system is stable. Specifically, the problem of bad loans that has plagued the banking system appears to have been arrested. Gross NPAs of banks declined to 9.3 per cent of advances at the end of March 2019, from 11.5 per cent the year before. The central bank expects them to fall to 9 per cent by March 2020. Further, the number of banks with more than 20 per cent NPAs — mostly public sector banks — has also come down. The provision coverage ratio has also improved, indicating an improvement in asset quality. This is good news. Quick resolution of cases that are currently stuck in the IBC process would further aid the sector's recovery.

But the liquidity and solvency issues of non-banking financial companies continue to pose risks to the financial system. According to the RBI, NPAs of NBFCs have risen to 6.6 per cent in FY19, from 5.8 per cent in FY18. This is likely to be an underestimate. While an asset quality review could reveal the true extent of bad loans, and help identify the bad apples, the process will only delay an end to the uncertainty surrounding the sector. Already, the ripple effects of the crisis are being felt in the larger economy. Data released by the finance industry development council shows that loans sanctioned by NBFCs (excluding HFCS) fell by 31 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2018-19.

So far, the RBI has resisted calls to set up a special liquidity window for NBFCs. The central bank is rightly worried about issues of moral hazard. And the sector, which has seen unsustainable growth, requires a shakeout. But the situation appears to be worsening. Recent reports suggest that some of the bigger players in this segment are struggling to meet their loan obligations. It might be a mistake to assume that this poses no systemic risk. RBI's own tests show that failure of the largest NBFC/HFC will not only erode part of the banking system's tier 1 capital, but will also lead to the failure of one bank. Given the interlinkages in the financial system, that is built on trust, this could have cascading effects. The shortterm consideration should thus be to prevent the situation from worsening further. Perhaps backstopping the 263 systematically important non-deposit taking NBFCs could be a start, while putting in place a turnaround plan, and tighter regulations.

BOWLED OVER

Three deliveries in the cricket World Cup will leave behind three memories

NOTHING EXPLODES LIKE a magical delivery. A graceful cover drive fleetingly enthralls, like a feathery leg glance or a text-book straight-drive. But they can't have cult status like an artiste's single — like John Lennon's *Imagine* or Bob Dylan's *Like a Rolling Stone*. That's the reason there exists a ball of the century, and not a shot of the century. They evoke an immediate mental reel — a casual reference and the entire sequence plays out in front of the eyes. In that sense, this World Cup is blessed. In no particular order, Mohammad Shami's nip-backer to Shai Hope, Mitchell Starc's yorker to Ben Stokes and Kuldeep Yadav's floating beauty that foxed Babar Azam.

Generally, it is the quality of the ball and context of the game when it is bowled that determines how long they are remembered. So, first the quality. Shami's ball swerved in the air before it seamed in. More dramatically, Starc got it to curl away with the angle before it swung back deviously. As for Kuldeep, his flighted delivery drifted away before spitting back into Babar. Now the context. India weren't defending a formidable total and Shami nailed West Indies's anchorman. Stokes was digging England out of trouble when Starc struck. Babar had added 104 runs with Fakhar Zaman when Kuldeep beat him.

These game-changing deliveries gave a fillip that this World Cup desperately required. Disturbed by showers and disenchanted by one-sided matches, monotony had been gnawing at cricket's biggest event. Some felt it was too long, some quibbled at the quality, others called for revoking super sixes and eights. Interest in the slow-burning tournament was dying a slow death. But before the clouds cleared up, the meek started fighting and the bowlers began to turn on the magic, so much so that even if the World Cup is long forgotten, these three balls (maybe a few more) would live to tell the tale.



HARISH DAMODARAN

"NOBODY EVER IS an entrepreneur all the time, and nobody can ever be only an entrepreneur", wrote Joseph A Schumpeter in his 1939 classic *Business Cycles*. Equally famous is the passage from John Maynard Keynes' *A Treatise on Money* (1930): "If Enterprise is afoot, wealth accumulates. and if Enterprise is asleep, wealth decays".

Truth be told, entrepreneurship in India is today comatose, if not dead. And it has been for much of this decade. For proof, one need just look at the first two decades after economic reforms. That period after 1991 saw the emergence of new capitalists, and also the rise of the old not-so-big, on an unprecedented scale.

Their firms belonged to diverse sectors: IT (Infosys, Wipro, HCL, Satyam); pharmaceuticals (Sun Pharma, Dr Reddy's, Aurobindo Pharma, Biocon, Serum Institute); automotive components (Motherson Sumi, Amtek Auto); aviation (Jet, IndiGo); telecom (Airtel); infrastructure & mining (Adani, Vedanta, GMR, GVK, Lanco, Navayuga, IRB, IVRCL, Soma Enterprise); banking & financial services (Kotak Mahindra, Yes Bank, Indiabulls, Shriram Group, Dewan Housing, Edelweiss, Motilal Oswal, JM Financial, India Infoline); media (Zee/Essel, Sun Group, Network 18, NDTV); gems & jewelry (Rajesh Exports, Su-Raj/Winsome Diamonds, Gitanjali); modern retail (Future Group, Kalyan); and renewable energy (Suzlon). Many of these were relatively new industries that had benefitted from globalisation or been liberalised for the entry of private players.

But this period was also about "new" entrepreneurs in "old" sectors: textiles (Alok Industries, Welspun, Trident); sugar (Shree Renuka); dairy (Hatsun Agro); rice milling (KRBL); and farm solutions (UPL, Jain Irrigation, Mahyco, Nuziveedu Seeds). Besides, there were "old" corporate houses that did things no less entrepreneurial by going global or foraying into new areas: Tata's, Reliance, Aditya Birla, Mahindra, Hero, Bajaj, Essar, Godrej, RP Goenka, Thapar, TVS, Amalgamations and Murugappa. Even the likes of Jaypee and DLF were middling concerns till the 1980s; they became big — the former in cement, power and construction, the latter in real estate — only during the Nineties and Noughties.

The current decade, by contrast, has been marked by a general decline in the supply of what Schumpeter called New Men. Such en-

The Indian economy's crisis is not of GDP growth, but a drying up of animal spirits

Since around October, even the big guns have been feeling the heat, with sales of everything — from cars, two-wheelers and trucks to consumer staples — slowing down. Worse, nobody knows when growth is returning. The slowdown now clearly visible could be the cumulative result of an extended investment famine, which, together with demonetisation, GST, agrarian distress and high real interest rates, has taken a toll on incomes and spending.

trepreneurs, whose growth is a phenomenon of not beyond 10 years, can be counted on the fingers of, maybe, three hands: Patanjali Ayurved, Flipkart, Paytm, Snapdeal, OYO Rooms, Ola Cabs, BigBasket, Byju's, Zomato, Swiggy, InMobi, Bandhan Bank, TeamLease, Dilip Buildcon and Ashoka Buildcon. Most — barring Patanjali (FMCG), Bandhan (banking), TeamLease (human resources outsourcing) and the last two names (construction) — straddle a narrow business segment of e-commerce or mobile-enabled services.

However, the real story of the third decade of reform isn't about new but destruction of existing enterprise. For that, one has to merely identify companies/groups that have been neck deep in debt or gone belly-up in the last 6-7 years. An illustrative list, by no means exhaustive, includes Essar, Jaypee, Videocon, Reliance (Anil Ambani), UB, Jet Airways, Zee, Ballarpur Industries (Thapar), GMR, GVK, Lanco, IVRCL, Soma, Jindal Steel & Power, Bhushan, Electrosteel, Braj Binani, Ruchi Soya, Alok Industries, S Kumars, Amtek Auto, Suzlon, Moser Baer, Nagarjuna Fertilisers, Punj Lloyd, KSK Energy, Era Infra, Dewan Housing, Hindustan Construction, Bajaj Hindusthan, Shree Renuka Sugars, JBF Industries, Unitech, Gitanjali Gems, Winsome Diamonds, Jain Irrigation and Sintex Industries. Many of their promoters are reforms' children, whose capital, accumulated in the first two decades after liberalisation, has undergone destruction.

The above destruction isn't of the "creative" kind that Schumpeter referred to, as there's very little new capital or enterprise replacing what has suffered ruination. Arvind Subramanian has recently claimed that India's annual GDP growth during 2011-12 to 2016-17 may have averaged just 4.5 per cent, as against the official estimate of about 7 per cent. The crisis after 2011-12, though, is not about growth slowdown or credibility of the new GDP measurement methodology. It's about the death of enterprise and a drying up of animal spirits that Keynes defined as "a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction". When there are no New Men and the old still-surviving ones have gone into their shell — even Reliance Industries and Tata Sons are engaged in deleveraging and consolidation, as opposed to investing — this is an existential crisis for Indian capitalism, no less.

The present crisis hasn't suddenly come

like a heart attack, but spread silently like a cancer. The warnings were there. The "twin balance sheet" problem, a UPA regime legacy, was diagnosed in the Finance Ministry's Mid-Year Economic Analysis report of December 2014. Yet, only in June 2017 did the Reserve Bank push banks to refer the first lot of highly-indebted companies for bankruptcy proceedings. By then, the "stressed" loans of state-owned banks had crossed 16 per cent of their outstanding advances. In the meantime, we had the twin shocks of demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST). However, according to government data, average GDP growth during January-September 2017 — the period when these would have caused significant disruptions — was a decent 6.6 per cent year-on-year, rebounding to 7.7 per cent and 8.1 per cent by the October-December 2017 and January-March 2018 quarters.

Whether it was demonetisation, GST or crash in agricultural produce realisations, the dominant discourse in policy circles as well as India Inc was that their effects were, at worst, temporary. Low farm prices, if anything, helped slay the food inflation monster. Inflation, as the Prime Minister correctly noted, was "absent" as an election issue for the first time. Demonetisation and GST's impact was primarily on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that did business in cash and paid no tax. Organised players, including listed companies, were expected to weather the storm better and even gain market share ceded by the informal sector.

But since around October, even the big guns have been feeling the heat, with sales of everything — from cars, two-wheelers and trucks to consumer staples — slowing down. Worse, nobody knows when growth is returning. The slowdown now clearly visible could be the cumulative result of an extended investment famine, which, together with demonetisation, GST, agrarian distress and high real interest rates, has taken a toll on incomes and spending. Behind it all, like an insidious cancer, has been the death of enterprise.

While Schumpeter was right that everyone cannot be an entrepreneur all the time, reviving the animal spirits of those who can be is important. Without such men and women, willing to put money in projects not yielding immediate returns, there can be no sustainable recovery.

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INDIA-PAK, A PIVOTAL MOMENT

India can start negotiating to inaugurate an era of peace, to transform South Asia



KHALED AHMED

PRIME MINISTER IMRAN Khan is trying to cleanse Pakistan of corruption and set up a new equation with India at the same time. With the first, he refuses to change his style; with the second, he honestly strives for change but is expected to get nowhere for the time being. The military establishment is behind both projects. Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said so. Khan's political opposition wants relief from the corruption cases against them; and the PM's aggressive but unattractive style of public address ends up giving them some relief.

Pakistan has a long history of ignoring its economy while concentrating on Islamising an already non-secular state. Decades of state evolution has moulded the nation in a direction favouring militarisation aimed at revisionist adventure against India. Few can challenge this direction because of the textbook indoctrination of "homo Pakistanicus", from school onwards.

India didn't reject the Raj completely. Shashi Tharoor embraces the pluralism of an Indian Constitution showing "continuity" with the legacy of the Raj despite his remarkable case-building against its exploitative aspects. Indians living under Ambedkar's constitution have gotten used to accepting the non-Hindus of India as equals. If Prime

Has India decided, through its election of Modi, to teach a lesson to revisionist Pakistan by becoming just like Pakistan? It may have, but with one difference: Pakistan is economically belly-up while India is still doing well. The retreat into religion by India is going to be different from the way the Middle East and Turkey have accomplished it.

Minister Modi has any obstacle standing in the way of his Hindutva drive, it is this experience. In contrast, Pakistan has aspired to the consolidation of the identity of the Muslims.

PM Modi should look closely at what Pakistan has done to itself. Laws target its unthreatening, minuscule non-Muslim minorities and make their lives untenable, targeting them through what is called the Sharia and special legislation such as the Anti-Blasphemy Law. Pakistan kills its Christians on the pretext of blasphemy. The Hindus of Sindh — some of whom belong to the same Gujarati community as that of the founder of the nation — are being subjected to persecution that the state can do nothing about. It is killing the Muslims, too, because they are Shia; and the world watches the genocide of the Hazaras of Quetta. Is the Modi government going to do the same kind of thing to the non-Hindus? Pakistan has been lynching; now India lynches too. In Pakistan people are scared of protesting against this lynching; in India, too, the secularists are frightened by what is happening in the streets while the state institutions look the other way, just as in Pakistan.

Has India decided, through its election of Modi, to teach a lesson to revisionist Pakistan by becoming just like Pakistan? It may have, but with one difference: Pakistan is econom-

ically belly-up while India is still doing well. The retreat into religion by India is going to be different from the way the Middle East and Turkey have accomplished it.

India under Modi will hopefully be pragmatic, if only to reap the advantage of being the big and economically dominant state of South Asia. Bangladesh, has prospered by not antagonising it through any kind of revisionism; and has done so well economically that Pakistan has had to take note of it. By changing its current stance of "no-truck" with Pakistan, India can start negotiating to inaugurate an era of peace that may transform South Asia with India as its central power.

If China can be India's largest trading partner why can't India be Pakistan's, burying the issue of Kashmir through free movement of capital and people? It is no longer a secret that behind Imran Khan's peace overtures — so far unsuccessful — stands China, increasingly conscious of the dangers posed to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor by India's aggressive proxies on the Durand Line. If an Indo-Pakistan normalisation begins, it will transform South Asia and bring prosperity to its impoverished population.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

JUNE 29, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

OPEC RAISES PRICE

THE ORGANISATION OF Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) today raised the base price of its crude oil to \$18 a barrel. The cartel also said members could add surcharges of as much as two dollars a barrel as market conditions permit, but set the maximum price of a barrel of OPEC oil, including allowances for quality, at \$23.50. The new price structure in fact leaves OPEC a two-tiered system of prices, much like the one the cartel had in the first half of 1977. Saudi Arabia, which had held out for a low price, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, will be the only countries actually charging \$18 a barrel.

MP RIVER POLLUTION

EVEN WHILE LARGE-SCALE pollution of rivers and streams in Madhya Pradesh is fast turning them into virtual septic drains, proving a serious health hazard to millions of people, the MP Prevention and Control of Water Pollution Board seems reluctant to take action against erring industries releasing untreated chemical pollutants into the rivers. Only 32 of the 170 industries, which have been given consent by the board, have bothered to install treatment plants to check their pollutants. But even after five years' wait - the board was set up in 1974 - the authorities responsible for checking water pollution in the state have failed to use their sweeping

powers against erring industries.

OPEC IMPACTS INDIA

THE LATEST INCREASE in crude prices announced on June 28 by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) will impose an additional burden of Rs1,200 crore a year in foreign exchange. This volume of impact will be at the current level of crude imports totalling 16.5 million tonnes in 1979. Speaking at a meeting of the MPs Consultative Committee attached to his ministry, the petroleum and chemicals minister, H N Bahuguna, voiced his grave concern at the 35 per cent rise in the prices of crude approved by the OPEC at its meeting in Geneva.



Rethink poverty — and policy

Given the estimated poverty decline in India between 2011-12 and 2016-17, time has come to change our economic policies — concentrate on what causes growth, not what causes poverty to decline



BY SURJIT S BHALLA AND KARAN BHASIN

TODAY IS NATIONAL Statistics Day and there is a reasonable chance that the NSSO Consumer Expenditure Survey report for agricultural year (July-June) 2017-18 will be released over the next couple of weeks. Based on our analysis of existing trends in consumer expenditure and consumer prices, we predict that this will (should) unleash seismic changes in the way Indians (including the Union government) think about absolute poverty and its alleviation, macro-growth policies and micro policies, especially those on agriculture.

First rethink: We are not a poor country any more, not with just 4.5 per cent of the population classified as poor (the Tendulkar poverty line of Rs 44 per person per day in 2017-18 prices). Given that there has been very low inflation since then, consider this as the poverty line today.

Second rethink: We have always considered food consumption as the ultimate criterion of poverty. Hence, we have built up an elaborate (too elaborate) ecosystem of food production, consumption, and distribution. Time has come to dismantle this ecosystem — an ecosystem that is biased against the poor farmer, against climate change mitigation and also against efficient use of water and energy.

Third rethink: 4.5 per cent of the population as poor is not right, does not sound right, and isn't right. The rethink has to be about defining poverty in relative, not absolute terms. Most European nations have a relative definition of poverty — that is, a fixed proportion of the median income. We should move towards that by the end of 2024, when India will likely be a \$5 trillion economy — with a per capita income of around \$3,500-\$4,000. This is where Indonesia is today, and where China was in 2008-9 (in terms of per capita income). But before we move to a relative definition, India should forthwith move towards an updated poverty line, a poverty line consistent with our income status today as a lower-middle income country — note, no longer a poor economy.

Fourth rethink: This is something we believe that the Narendra Modi government has been involved in for the last five years. Poverty is now not just about food but living standards — sanitation, housing, piped water, electricity, education, health, and jobs. And on each of these elements, the focus should shift to quality, not quantity.

Fifth rethink: We should recognise that the country has a messed up and archaic agricultural policy, one that was not even fit for the earlier poor economy times. But no reason to blame the past — the emphasis should be in reforming the present for a better future. Poverty is no longer about food, so free up the food producers rather than keeping them as prisoners of policy (and politicians and bureaucrats). No Essential Commodities Act, no Food Corporation of India (whoever named this bureaucratic-political-corrupt delivery of food as a corporation?), and no Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee — now called the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act 2017 (APLM). Notice how little we have developed: Farming and trade (marketing) are the oldest activities known to man and woman and we need an Act of Parliament in 2017 to *keep* regulating it? Alternative "Act" — farmers are free to buy, sell, hoard, export, import, like the rest of the seven billion residents of this planet. And no bans please, we are no longer a poor economy.

The above rethink is not based on idle



Suvajit Dey

speculation but rather on an analysis of trends in consumer expenditure since 2011/12. Consumption is 60 per cent of the GDP, and poverty is defined in terms of per capita consumption. The latest NSSO survey is likely to show a sizeable reduction in poverty rates across the country. Our estimates for 2017-18 are based on the estimation of poverty line in 2017-18. This estimate is based on the increase in poverty line or price level (over 2011/12) for each state, and every urban and rural area of all states. We use the NSSO distribution for 2011/12 and increase the average per individual nominal consumption for each individual by the all-India constant magnitude of 89 per cent. The per individual poverty line for everyone is estimated as above. The \$3.2 middle-income poverty line is obtained from the Tendulkar poverty line by multiplying the latter by 3.2/1.9 (given that the Tendulkar poverty line in 2011-12 is equal to PPP \$1.9). We will update our analysis in the form of a research paper once the 2017 consumption survey data is released but the findings are likely to be identical.

According to the Tendulkar poverty line, poverty is today around 4.5 per cent of the population or less than 70 million. According to a 70 per cent higher in real terms poverty line [equivalent to PPP\$ 3.2 dollars per person per day (pppd), the World Bank poverty line for middle-income economies or Rs 75 pppd], poverty in India is estimated at 31 per cent down from 57 per cent in 2011/12. Half of these poor reside in three Hindi heartland "old" states (before reclassification) of Bihar, MP and UP. Therefore, there is a 26 ppt decline in poverty over six years. That is above a 4 ppt decline per year — the fastest pace of poverty decline India has ever experienced, and that to with a 70 per cent higher poverty line.

What happened to set this record decline amidst demonetisation, GST, two drought years, and lower than potential GDP growth? We believe a large part of this decline took place due to better targeting of government programmes — made possible by expanded (and extensive) use of direct benefit transfers (DBT).

Therefore, the new approach towards poverty alleviation should involve targeted income transfers. Under our proposed targeted basic income programme, which is a top-up scheme, the government transfers the poverty gap (difference between per capita consumption of the household and the poverty line faced by the household) into the bank account of the poor. The cost of such a programme is likely to be between Rs 2.5 and 3 trillion and it will ensure nobody has a consumption below the poverty line. India's cur-

The new approach towards poverty alleviation should involve targeted income transfers. Under our proposed targeted basic income programme, which is a top-up scheme, the government transfers the poverty gap (difference between per capita consumption of the household and the poverty line faced by the household) into the bank account of the poor. The cost of such a programme is likely to be between Rs 2.5 and 3 trillion and it will ensure nobody has consumption below the poverty line.

rent expense on poverty alleviation programmes is approximately Rs 3.4 trillion and the cost to make one person non-poor through the PDS in 2011-12 was Rs 24,000. The same for MGNREGA was Rs 40,500. Therefore, assuming perfect targeting, a basic income programme is likely to cost substantially less than the current policies and it will ensure that the poverty rate is reduced to zero based on the higher poverty line.

The direct benefit transfer mechanism of the government has been able to resolve targeting problems for a bulk of the 430 government schemes and subsidies. The current PM-Kisan programme that provides income support to approximately 14 crore farmers is an example of how, through DBT, the government can provide direct income support as its focal policy towards poverty alleviation. Such a policy is likely to help the government in rationalising and consolidating its poverty reduction programmes, thereby freeing up resources for other sectors in the economy.

India's recent growth has led to a sizeable expansion in the number of taxpayers, and successive reforms over the last five years have simultaneously improved tax compliance in the country. The increase in number of individual return filers from 3.5 crore in FY2013 to 6.4 crores FY2017 and the improvement in revenue realisation from direct taxes reflects this.

However, now the government should focus on bringing more people under the tax net at the higher income brackets. Our recommendation towards achieving the same would be to reduce both corporate income tax rate and the highest personal income tax rate to a flat 25 per cent. Therefore, to improve revenue realisation from direct taxes, the government should focus on improving compliance by reducing the highest slabs of the tax rate. This rethink is necessary if we are to achieve accelerated growth, and higher tax revenues.

The Indian economy requires adequate investments in critical areas such as road, railways and water. Therefore, the government needs to rationalise its expenditure and tax rates to ensure reallocation of resources. Our pace of poverty reduction has improved over the last five years. We can augment this through a targeted basic income policy and free up resources for other sectors of the economy. Times have changed and so should our policies towards poverty alleviation.

Bhalla is contributing editor, The Indian Express. Bhasin is a New Delhi based policy researcher

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The climate crisis underlines the need for effective global economic leadership. The US president makes this harder, but so do China and several others."

— THE GUARDIAN

Where's the big liberal idea?

The 2019 defeat puts a question mark on what we believe India stands for. The onus to find answers is not just on the Congress



PAWAN KHERA

IT HAS BEEN a month since India witnessed a decisive mandate in favour of the BJP. Of the post facto commentary, the most revealing has been the one by the "liberals". It reveals the larger and more serious ailment that afflicts us all — seeking easy answers to complex questions.

From the messenger to the message, the liberal commentary has attacked everything about the Congress. Their reasons would have been easy to believe, had this been a marginal defeat. Blaming the rout on one individual or any one aspect of the campaign comes easy and it also helps avoid tough questions that face what is loosely labelled as the liberal worldview.

Do we have empirical evidence on exactly which aspects of our message got rejected? Can we safely, confidently say that our entire message got rejected? If we were told that through this mandate, India has rejected the need for jobs, for hassle-free business or the need for safety of women, would we agree? Are we confident that the voters of Bhopal voted against Hemant Karkare and voted for Nathuram Godse? Is India homogeneous in its voting behaviour?

On the one hand, our liberal friends expect the Congress to be their national political voice, on the other hand they do everything to weaken the party. They want the Congress to "show a large heart" and cede space to regional parties — reducing the party to be neither national, nor political and definitely not a voice. When we look for their support, we definitely do not expect the liberal-intellectual space to be full of doting, unquestioning imbeciles. We do not wish to have replicas of bhakts on our side. Question us, but also strengthen the liberal-plural voice by thinking of effective ways to question and demolish the ideology that now looks comfortably ensconced in every institutional nook and corner of India.

You were out there on the streets and in the TV studios against UPA 2, and why not? Have you shown the same grit to bring this government to its knees every time it showed signs of betraying the mandate? Where was the push back when you were lampooned as the "award-waapsi gang"? This is not a skirmish where you can hit and run. This is a war of civilisation and we are a generation lucky to be participating in it.

Talk to a Narendra Modi bhakt. She will forgive him everything, overlook all his faults and thinks, so much so that you will find experts actually defending his bizarre cloud-radar theory. But a liberal will not be so tolerant. A liberal will be the first to attack the party for an extra word said by Rahul Gandhi, or a tweet by him or a slip up by a leader. A well known ambassador of liberal discourse advises us not to celebrate Rahul Gandhi's birthday because according

to him, those who fail their exams do not deserve to even have their birthdays. Another comes on television and first calls us a party obsessed with dynasty and then starts attacking Rahul for his decision to quit. Those who want Rahul to quit also want Rahul to decide his successor and then will also want to complain about Rahul controlling the party through a proxy.

Ideas that capture the collective imagination of a people do not necessarily come from the political space, they come from the intellectual space. Politics, through its idiom, helps in pedestrianising these ideas. What has been the contribution of the liberal-intellectual space in terms of a potent idea in this century? The counter argument to plural India has always had a voice. And it was always shrill. That voice now appears to have acquired legitimacy through electoral muscle. It can only be defeated by a more captivating idea and a sharper if not shriller voice.

The concept of secularism, for example, has been under systematic and sustained attack since L K Advani coined the term "pseudo secularism". Secularism was never a political construct. It was a worldview in consonance with Hinduism and India. Liberals must either help us reclaim the founding idea of the Republic or help us reinvent it or throw in a new theory which captures the minds of the millennial. Or would you just be happy to counter what is happening out there on the street through a tweet?

Much of what is going on in India and the Congress party is similar to what is going on in the Democratic Party in the US. There is the Nancy Pelosi end of the Democratic Party that is centrist, conciliatory and is not as fiercely anti-corporate as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Abdullahi Omar are. Is this a generational shift in the party or is this a Leftward turn in the party as a reaction to Trump and the Republican Party on the extreme right?

The Congress has traditionally been a harbour for all economic and political ideologies — much like India — without being defined by any one. Over time, critics have viewed it as being ideology-less, they say the Congress does not offer any one strong narrative. But that is precisely its strength. The Congress can, to quote Walt Whitman, contain multitudes. Just like India can. It just needs to learn how to articulate this for the 21st century voter.

This defeat is not of a party, an individual, a campaign, an assessment or an ideology. The result of Lok Sabha 2019 puts a huge question mark on the very existence of what we largely believe India, with all its diversity, stands for. The onus to find answers to the question is not just on a political party but on each one of us from under the debris of lethargic liberal snobbery.

Postscript : This is not a critique of the liberal class. In the words of Ahmed Faraz, *tui khuda hai, na mera ishq farishton jaisa/ dono insaan hain/ toh kyun itne hijaabon mein milein.* (You are not God, and my love isn't angelic/ We are both human/So why meet hidden behind the veil?)

The writer is a national spokesperson for the Congress

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COSMETIC GESTURES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Past and present' (IE, June 7). Recent gestures such as supporting India's candidature as a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council and the unveiling of a statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore might make it seem that Pakistan is softening its attitude towards India. However, the real test will be how soon it stops terrorist attacks from its soil and supplying arms, money and providing training to local terrorists. Being under the global glare for sheltering terrorists, these moves may be mere cosmetic gestures.

YG Chouksey, Pune

BALANCE TRADE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Osaka opportunity' (IE, June 28). Indian foreign policy is increasingly becoming more independent. However, of late, it has been following a protectionist trade policy, by imposing tariffs on US goods and dragging the US to the WTO. India's sluggish economic and trade reforms have not gone down well with its trading partners. The G20 Summit is an excellent opportunity for India to explain its stance on trade to the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's majority in Parliament will enable better diplomacy in this regard.

Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata

MIDDLE GROUND

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Valeria

LETTER OF THE WEEK

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. Chronic issues plaguing the state discoms could well be ultra vires for the new agency. It would be wrong to assume that it shall promote competition and benefit the end consumer. 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 would be provided level playing field. However this has not happened till date.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

and Gurupreet.' (IE, June 28). Immigration spurs growth but it also causes resentment amongst the majority regarding cultural erosion. Balancing the two extremes with an approach of merit-based controlled immigration and a compassionate policy for refugees is essential to ensure that no one suffers as Valeria and Gurupreet did.

Anish Manchanda, Delhi



FAUZAN ALAVI

INDIA IS HOME to the largest livestock population in the world. The country is also the biggest producer of milk in the world, apart from being the third largest bovine meat exporter to almost 70 countries. There are links between the two sectors. The spent buffaloes are utilised by the bovine meat sector. That is why it's extremely rare to see a stray buffalo in most parts of the country. The farmer can sell his unproductive buffalo in the open market and get almost 40 per cent of his original investment as the termination value — this he can utilise to purchase buffaloes.

In the last few years, there has been much talk about stray cattle causing distress to farmers, especially in UP and the NCR. This narrative ascribes the problem to the ban on cow slaughter. However, the ban on cattle slaughter has been in place for decades —

Stray cattle issue, a reality check

Don't lay blame, analyse consequences of enforcing laws against cattle slaughter

Maharashtra allowed bulls to be slaughtered but this practice was stopped in 2014. It seems that a large number of people are ill informed — their views in favour of the farmer or against the current dispensation lacks an appreciation of the issues at hand.

What nobody is asking is why was there no such issue before 2015? Most people assume that illegal slaughtering of cows was rampant before 2015 and this cattle was being exported. Nothing could be further from the truth. What is being exported is buffalo meat. To link legitimate trade to cow slaughter would be grossly incorrect and damaging to a trade which is the backbone of the dairy and leather industry.

What has caused the stray cattle problem, then? For decades, the entire population of spent animals would move to Bangladesh

and Myanmar via the country's Northeast. According to unofficial records, almost 25-28 lakh cattle used to cross the border every year — the trade is estimated to be above Rs 20,000 crore. Since 2014, the Ministry of Home Affairs has conducted operations to put an end to this illegal trade — rightly so, keeping the religious sentiments of people in mind. But no one thought about or advised on how the consequences of this enforcement would be dealt with in a country that is perennially short of fodder. About 10 per cent of the country's livestock becomes unproductive every year. Given that the country's cattle population is over 250 million, finding out the number of these spent animals is no rocket science. There are more than a crore stray cattle while there is shelter and food for not even 10 per cent of these animals — and no re-

sources for this purpose. In the Delhi-NCR region, more than 200 cows and bulls die every year due to lack of such resources.

It is important that we get the correct perspective on the problem of stray cattle rather than blame a community or a trade. We should analyse the result of stopping the movement of cattle into the Northeast and Bangladesh. There are a number of reports on this aspect of the cattle trade in the public domain. It will also be pertinent for the policymakers to review the livestock policies of the country and ask why farmers are moving to buffaloes in place of cows. What must be kept in mind is that a farmer's decision-making is guided by economic factors.

The writer is spokesperson for the All India Meat and Livestock Exporters Association



Boost for Marathas

The Bombay High Court verdict in favour of the quota needs examination

The Bombay High Court verdict upholding reservation for Marathas in public employment and education must come as a major relief to the Maharashtra government, which has faced strident agitations from the community in the past for reservation benefits. When Maharashtra enacted special legislation to confer reservation benefits in education and public employment on the Maratha community last year, a formidable legal challenge was expected. The law created a group called 'Socially and Educationally Backward Class' and included Marathas as the sole group under the category, and extended 16% reservation outside the existing quotas for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and other tribes and backward classes. The foremost hurdle was the fact that the additional Maratha component would take the reservation up to 68%, thus going beyond the limit of 50% imposed by the Supreme Court. Secondly, there were doubts whether one particular caste group could constitute a special class. The 487-page judgment is a brave effort at answering these difficult questions. Significantly, it has ruled that there were "exceptional circumstances and an extraordinary situation" to warrant the crossing of the 50% limit. It has upheld the government's decision to accept the Maharashtra Backward Classes Commission's report on the backwardness of the Maratha community, faulted it for exceeding the panel's recommendation for 12-13% reservation and pulled back the figure to the recommended level. The failure to treat this group as backward for decades has pushed its members deeper into social and educational backwardness. Thus, it says, an extraordinary situation has been created wherein the State had to treat them as a separate category.

The High Court's reasoning may not convince many. For one thing, it is doubtful whether a politically influential and dominant community can be treated as a special category in itself, even if it is educationally backward and under-represented in the services owing to lack of reservation benefits. The uplift of the Marathas can be achieved by including it in the OBC list. If there were concerns about too large a population sharing too small a quota, the existing OBC reservation could have been expanded, instead of Marathas being given separate reservation. Further, Marathas have been classified as the only member of the newly created 'SEBC'. The court seems to have ignored the fact that being socially and educationally backward is the constitutional reason for OBC reservation. It is befuddling how 'SEBC' can be a separate category outside the OBCs. Further, whether adequate grounds have been established to make an exception to the 50% limit will likely be examined by the Supreme Court closely. Mere expansion of the reservation pool is unlikely to be a constitutional-permissible reason for it.

Primary colours

The Democratic Party is struggling to provide an alternative to xenophobic populism

The crowded stage of 24 aspirants for the Democratic nomination for the 2020 U.S. presidential election is indicative of a larger crisis that has gripped the party. The first primary debate took place over two days this week. The fragmentation of the Democratic constituency, which is increasingly less than the sum of its parts, is evident. The frontrunner is former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, who, at 76, is 30 years older than the average age of three Democratic Presidents who reinvented the party at critical junctures — John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Carrying the burden of his 50 years in politics, Mr. Biden was in the crossfire of his rivals. Mr. Biden was accused of clinging on, and compromising with, racist positions and segregationists in the past. His positions, indefensible by the present standards of justice and progress, were taken in a different era and century. That the Democratic Party is re-litigating these issues in a 21st century primary contest with the same man at the centre is a sign of its inability to evolve a forward-looking agenda articulated in appealing and inspiring idioms.

California Senator Kamala Harris gained significant momentum for her bid with narrations of moving personal experiences that echoed the protracted struggles for justice and equality in America. Ms. Harris and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren are two women candidates in the fray with comparable agendas that propose some fundamental restructuring of the American political economy. They will be competing with Bernie Sanders, who nearly felled Hillary Clinton in the 2016 primaries, to be the flag-bearer of the progressive strain within the Democratic spectrum, and potentially the candidate. Mr. Sanders's trailblazing campaign in 2016 de-stigmatised socialism for many, but that has not resolved the central question that baffles American Democrats: how to deal with globalised capitalism. Resolutions to a number of issues such as border security, immigration, healthcare, global trade and minimum wages are predicated on renegotiating the terms of American capitalism and its democracy. The New Deal politics of Franklin Roosevelt that built American welfareism withered over the decades and the tensions between capitalism and democracy came to the fore. The challenge before American Democrats is to confront this question head on and offer futuristic solutions rather than lamenting over the lost order, which is far more arduous than harping on cultural questions. Attempts in that direction were feeble and guarded during the first primary debate. Whether or not the U.S. will have a platform other than xenophobic populism to regroup will depend on how Democrats get their act together.

Even central banks need 'capital' infusion

The RBI must function independently and not be a slave to outdated ideas



PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

The central bank of a country sits at the pinnacle of its financial system and is mandated with ensuring its stability. From time to time central banks are directly or indirectly involved in shoring up stressed commercial banks with capital infusion. So it may appear odd to suggest that occasionally even the central bank may need some of its own medicine. After all central banks make a surplus from their operations, and indeed pay a dividend to their governments. The puzzle is resolved, however, when we recognise that capital is not only funds but also ideas.

Time to reflect on role

In the context, one of the ideas is related to the role of the central bank in the economy. That this issue is being brought up more than half a century after a central bank was instituted in India need not be interpreted as some weakness in the original conception. An economic arrangement once made cannot be treated as settled for all time to come. This also holds true for central banks, often considered venerable beyond querying. It's time to reflect on the role of the central bank in India as we hear of impending changes in the higher echelons of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The media coverage has focused on differences among

some of its functionaries and the government of India but this is besides the point as there has been complete agreement between them on the role of monetary policy. Moreover for about five years now, the government and the RBI have, as though in concert, implemented a deflationary macroeconomic policy via fiscal contraction and monetary tightening, respectively. One of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's finance ministers claimed credit for the government for having ushered in a period of macroeconomic stability. What this achieved for the economy is a different matter.

A combination of low inflation and small budget deficits was among the prescriptions of the Washington Consensus that reigned for about a decade and a half from the 1990s. With the implosion of the former Soviet Union and the folding up of its east European satellites, this consensus had, via the clout of the U.S., placed a straitjacket on policy makers in the so-called emerging markets, like India. In that moment of triumph it had been thought that the business cycle, or the oscillating trend in market economies, had been permanently tamed. However, as is so often the case in the life of economies, the cunning of history can derail progress with nary a warning. This arrived in the form of the global financial crisis in 2008, which originating in the U.S. soon spread across the world including India. Growth slowed and unemployment rose. The Obama Administration did not hesitate to intervene drastically, strongly



supported by the Federal Reserve Bank. The fiscal deficit rose threefold and the money supply ballooned. Interestingly, inflation did not rise.

A rethink in macroeconomics

The global financial crisis has led to a substantial re-thinking of macroeconomics. The main revisions are that monetary policy defined by inflation targeting can no longer be treated as the centrepiece of macroeconomic policy, that fiscal policy should be used to stabilise the economy when needed and that financial regulation is a must. The limitation of inflation targeting was understood when the 'great moderation', an extended period of low inflation in the west, ended in the financial crisis. It is this that has led to the view that light regulation of the financial sector, as advised by the then Governor of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan, can be a recipe for disaster. Finally, it has come to be recognised that assertions of the impotence of fiscal policy may be exaggerated. There could be times when the private sector is held back by the state of the economy. In a recession this would delay recovery. Now fiscal expansion would be necessary. Apart from

theoretical demonstration of the stabilising potential of fiscal policy the belief that the explosion of the U.S. fiscal deficit following the crisis actually saved the day has very likely contributed to the rethinking. The general consensus now is that there should be no going back to the pre-crisis practices of narrow inflation targeting, inflexible fiscal policy, and kid gloves for the financial sector.

Lessons to learn

It is hoped that the Reserve Bank of India and the economic policymaking establishment will take into account the evolving understanding of macroeconomics globally. It is unfortunate that policymaking in India has been stuck in the past. This would not have mattered if the consequences were benign. The government has taken credit for attainment of macroeconomic stability, defined by low inflation, even as unemployment has been rising since 2011. A continuously declining fiscal deficit has not restrained the RBI leadership from paying hawk-eyed attention to it, constantly lecturing the elected government of the perils of even the slightest deviation from the path of fiscal consolidation, when strictly it is not its business to do so. It should instead focus on putting its own house in order. Two instances of a failure to do so may be mentioned. Ever since we have had de facto inflation targeting in India, from around 2013, the real policy rate has risen very substantially. This has been accompanied by declining borrowing in the formal sector likely affecting investment. Infla-

tion has come down but it was already trending downward, possibly due to the slowing growth. Subsequent inflation reduction has been assisted by the declining price of oil. Evidence of the role of inflation targeting in reducing inflation in India is weak, as summarised in the study 'The dynamics of inflation in India' (Working Paper 485, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, May 2019) by M. Parameswaran and myself. Ironically, we have had in India the replay of a scene from the global financial crisis where a central bank focusing on inflation loses sight of brewing financial instability. The crisis at IL&FS, with a group company defaulting on its payment obligations jeopardising the interests of hundreds of investors, banks and mutual funds is only a specific case in point. The larger story is of the steady rise in the non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks even as inflation was abating.

A popular reading is that recently the RBI has had to face some pressure exerted by the government's nominees. This may well have been the case. But what we need is not just a central bank that is left to function independently, but also one that is not a slave to some defunct school of thought. It has many mandated functions, among them ensuring an adequate supply of clean currency notes in denominations sought after by the ordinary Indian.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor of Ashoka University and Senior Fellow of the Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode

Things to do to avoid another water crisis

The Chennai water problem must result not in fire-fighting strategies but in systematised solutions



'AMERICAI' V. NARAYANAN & KAVYA NARAYANAN

Chennai has been reeling under its worst water crisis in decades with its four main reservoirs (Sholavaram, Chembarambakkam, Poondi and Red Hills) nearly empty. The city has not had rain in nearly 200 days; only over the past few days has the city seen light rainfall. Groundwater too has been over-extracted. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has announced that 10 MLD (million litres a day) of water will be transported to the city for the next six months from Jolarpettai, Vellore district. The Tamil Nadu government has also accepted Kerala's offer to provide water.

At the political level, rainwater harvesting (RWH) was initiated in 2000 at Sathyamurthy Bhavan. Subsequently the government under J. Jayalalithaa mandated RWH in Tamil Nadu, from 2003 onwards. This meant that building approval for new apartments and dwellings were not to be granted by the Chennai City Corporation unless the building plan included a RWH component. The order also mandated that all existing buildings in Tamil Nadu install RWH structures.

Sixteen years later, we are back

to square one. An audit by the non-governmental organisation Rain Centre has shown that most government buildings in Chennai do not have a functioning RWH structure; these include several police stations and municipality buildings. Now, the Greater Corporation of Chennai has ordered the inspection of RWH structures, much after the crisis.

The issue with any crisis in India is the fire-fighting strategy that we adopt as a response as opposed to systematised solutions. These stop-gap arrangements are soon forgotten when things temporarily go back to normal instead of making an attempt to deeply engrain these practices in the system. This level of action, especially during the floods, is usually undertaken at the level of the National Disaster Management Authority and the National Disaster Response Force. Local follow-up measures that are necessary to sustain results are ignored. During the floods in Chennai in December 2015, the encroachment of wetlands was widely cited as a key issue. Vanishing catchment areas had resulted in floods. Three-and-a-half years later, no formal mechanism has been put in place to check whether wetlands are being desilted and whether we can avoid a similar flood-like situation again.

Need for water governance

According to a recent NITI Aayog report, 21 Indian cities will run out of groundwater by 2020 if usage continues at the current rate. Wa-



B. JOTHIRAMALINGAM

ter governance in cities across India has been ad hoc. Learning their lessons from the Chennai crisis, other metropolitan cities should now set up urban water planning and management boards, a permanent body similar to urban development authorities, that regulate the supply, demand and maintenance of water services and structures.

On the supply side, this authority should monitor and regulate groundwater in Chennai. Water supply by private tankers must also be regulated with pricing for their services having reached exorbitant levels. This year, a tanker of approximately 12,000 litres cost ₹6,000 in several places, almost seven times the cost of water supplied by Chennai Metro Water. Last year, the same amount of water cost ₹2,000. Additional desalination plants should also be commissioned as this water can result in water prices reaching to below 6 paise a litre. Experts are of the opinion that the beds of existing lakes can be deepened for greater

water storage and better water percolation. Desalinated water is less expensive than water supplied by private tankers. However, since Chennai Metro Water charges a flat rate for use of this water, there is no incentive for judicious use.

Thus, on the demand side of things, Metro Water and groundwater use should be measured and priced progressively, similar to the electricity tariff, where the quantity of use determines the price. The board can practise differential pricing and cross-subsidise those households with a lower per capita income use of water. For this to be implemented effectively, water meters are a must.

Stakeholder coordination

The urban water management board should also oversee the desilting of lakes in the city on a regular basis. The management of lakes comes under the Public Works Department, which works in isolation from Chennai Metro Water. This lack of coordination leads to a water policy that operates in silos. The board must also have regulatory powers to monitor the maintenance of RWH structures at homes and in offices. In existing RWH structures, pipes are either broken or clogged, filtration equipment is not cleaned, bore pits have too much silt and drains are poorly maintained.

The body also needs to work in coordination with governments on granting approvals to new mass working spaces. Water scarcity has resulted in the IT corridor in Chen-

nai suffering, with most companies even asking employees to work from home. The myopic policies of the government in providing incentives to the IT corridor without looking at their water-use necessities and asking them to make provisions for this has cost them dearly. This is in contrast to the manufacturing sector around the Sriperumbudur-Oragadam belt, where a number of companies and large manufacturing units have been able to maintain production due to efficient water management practices. For example, in one unit, there is a rainwater harvesting pond and all buildings inside the complex are equipped with facilities for artificial ground water recharge.

The scarcity of essential resources not only leads to economic losses but also social unrest; an extreme case in Chennai resulted in a woman being attacked over water troubles. We must also learn from the experiences of other cities across the world such as Cape Town, South Africa, where water saving is being driven through the concepts such as Day Zero, thus prompting better and more efficient use of water. A sustainable governance solution to this problem along with public participation is essential to ensure that our future generations do not suffer as a result of our failures.

'Americai' V. Narayanan is a Tamil Nadu Congress spokesperson. Kavya Narayanan is a commerce graduate pursuing entrepreneurship

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Tariff issue

The U.S. appears to be blowing hot and cold, deliberately ("Trump terms India's high tariffs on U.S. products unacceptable", June 28). The conciliatory signals that emerged from U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in New Delhi have been swept aside by the U.S. President's diatribe. It is strange that the U.S. needs India as a long-term strategic partner but is not ready to make any concessions when and where its commercial interests are involved. U.S. President Donald Trump has time and again proved that he does not believe in the diplomatic principle of give-and-take. An expression of India's readiness to forge a closer relationship with Russia and China could perhaps be the best way to make a whimsical Trump

administration see reason.

MANOHAR ALEMBATH,
Kannur

Coaching institutes

Parallel educational intervention has hampered the ingenuity and creativity of students ("A policy to regulate coaching centres", June 28). There was a time when tuition and coaching were only for weak students. But today, coaching is fashionable, starting with pre-primary aspirants who may be coached on how to walk in a straight line, catch a ball or identify the colour of smoke or sand. The only way out of this is to strengthen teaching in schools by filling up vacancies, and training and empowering teachers. School administrations should be tough with teachers who neglect classroom teaching. In

parts of India, leading coaching institutions have links with schools. Unfortunately, market forces are too strong to allow course correction.

SAURABH SINHA,
Bhilai

■ The role of coaching institutions in undermining mainstream education is somewhat true. But why are such centres flourishing? Most of them teach the same lessons that are taught in mainstream classes. In States such as Kerala, sending students to coaching centres is a status symbol. Before enacting laws to regulate these centres, the government should make mainstream teaching more effective.

VIKAS BALAN,
Kannur

■ The writer's fears seem a bit exaggerated. Coaching

institutes do not supplant schools, and creativity and novelty can be nurtured. The point is that our education system is in a shambles and has failed to provide basic education as prescribed by the syllabus. Also, with the advent of technology, the lion's share of coaching is drifting from the classrooms to online systems. Coaching institutes provide gainful employment to many.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida

Nowhere people

The heart-rending image of a father and daughter lying dead on the banks of the Rio Grande after failing to cross into the U.S. tells the horrific plight of migrants fleeing their homelands ("Drowned dream", June 27). The trend of perceiving refugees as a threat to national security and local cultures is saddening. U.S. President

Donald Trump's description of Hispanic immigrants in derogatory terms sums up his attitude towards immigrants. The politics that seeks to prop up the bogey of the migrant with a poor understanding of citizenship across the globe needs to change. Germany is an example the world must emulate as it has not only embraced refugees from Syria but also integrated them into the mainstream.

M. JEVARAM,
Sholavandan

Deadly selfie

The report, "Selfies are five times deadlier than shark attacks" (June 28) was an eye-opener. One often sees youngsters obsessed with taking selfies, oblivious to the great risk they are putting themselves. As the number of cellphone users is growing in India, one hopes that the authorities conduct

an awareness campaign to highlight the negative side to the selfie mania. Tourist havens should also have 'no selfie zones'.

C.A.C. MURUGAPPAN,
Kothamangalam

Support for UNSC bid

The unanimous support India has won from the Asia-Pacific Group at the UN in support of its bid for a non-permanent seat at the UNSC could spell a paradigm shift in the country's foreign relations as well for the economic sector ("54 nations back India for UNSC non-permanent seat", June 27). Regional cooperation and collaboration are vital in ushering in regional development and economic prosperity. A new world order is also possible.

MAYUKH DEVADAS,
Thiruvir

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The unravelling of an investment fraud

When the Bengaluru-based IMA Group of Companies wound up its operations, it not only left thousands of investors in the lurch but also raised questions on political patronage to Ponzi schemes that are being run in the name of Islamic banking. **Imran Gowhar** and **K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj** report on the scam

On a hot day in June, shortly after Eid, software engineer Naveed Ahmed found himself standing next to homemaker Nazim Begum and electrician Abbas Ali in a serpentine queue. In the queue were thousands of people – homemakers, salaried white-collared workers, businessmen and hawkers – who had lined up in front of Bengaluru’s Commercial Street Police Station, all victims of an investment fraud allegedly perpetrated by the Monetary Advisory (IMA) Group of Companies and its founder and managing director, Mohammed Mansoor Khan, who is in his late forties. Investigators estimate that the fraud has already crossed ₹2,500 crore in terms of loss to investors, most of whom are Muslims.

Mansoor was involved in the real estate, jewellery, healthcare and education sectors and fashioned his company as a ‘halal trading firm’, allegedly with the blessings of local political and religious leaders. His modus operandi was similar to that of a Ponzi scam where customers were lured by high dividends. “Such a scam operates on the constant circulation of money where old investors are paid from the funds put in by new customers. Money is ploughed into various businesses, in this case gold bullion, jewellery and real estate, among others. If any chunk of investment gets stuck, or there is a lack of new investors, it will disrupt the cycle. This is what appears to have happened with IMA,” explained a senior police officer investigating the matter.

As IMA started to unravel, Mansoor disappeared. Outside the Commercial Street Police Station, the crowd that began to gather on June 10 only grew larger over the days. In a video recording released on June 23, his second clip since the scam broke, Mansoor claimed to have fled the country on June 8, but expressed willingness to return. “At last count, 51,500 complaints had been registered across Karnataka; a majority of them from Bengaluru. The number could be much higher,” said a local police officer trying to make sense of the magnitude of the scam. The case has since been handed over to a Special Investigation Team (SIT), amidst a growing clamour for the Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate the matter.

Cynicism and defeat were rife among citizens that morning as they went through the motions of lodging a police complaint. “Defaulters like Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya have fled taking loans from public sector banks and we know what happened. I have no hope of getting my money back,” said Syed Tanzeem, who has lost around ₹5 lakh.

Outrage against IMA and the politicians who patronised Mansoor was palpable. “Religious leaders, politicians and the police all are hand in glove in such schemes. They cheated the community,” claimed another complainant, Syed Rehman.

Patronage from leaders

As the case unravelled, it transpired that members of the Muslim community had fallen prey to what was called ‘Mudarabah’, commonly referred to as ‘halal investment’ by a section of ulema (religious heads). They were apparently taken in by the visible political patronage and the company’s promise of high returns, which it reportedly met for the last 13 years.

To adhere to ‘Mudarabah’, I Monetary Advisory Pvt Ltd, which was founded in 2006, took investors as Limited Liability Partners in the firm and invested the money in a range of businesses. “The IMA Group did not take ‘deposits’ or give out ‘interest’. Instead, it sought investments from the public and issued Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) to investors, thereby making them partners. It paid investors or partners ‘dividends’ every month and marketed itself as ‘halal,’” the senior police officer said. Customers got high dividends, allegedly 36% annually.

On June 10, Mansoor left his first message that went viral on WhatsApp. The managing director who ran IMA for 13 years, with no complaints from investors, said he wanted to end his life as he was in deep financial trouble. He blamed R. Koshan Baig, the Shivajinagar MLA, for his situation claiming that the Congress leader had yet to return the ₹400 crore that he had taken from him. Baig denied the allegations. That was when clients began to panic and started approaching the police. Within days, the trickle of complaints became a torrent.

Faced with scathing criticism for the alleged involvement of its leaders, the Congress-JDS coalition government in Karnataka formed a SIT to probe the case. So far, raids on Mansoor’s offices and businesses have yielded over ₹30 crore in gold, diamonds, silver jewellery and bullion. The Enforcement Directorate, which has also launched a probe, has attached 20 properties worth ₹197 crore.

In the second video, which he released soon after his passport was blocked, Mansoor blamed politicians,



“Investigators estimate that the IMA fraud has already crossed ₹2,500 crore in terms of loss to investors, most of whom are Muslims.” (Clockwise from top): Investors submit documents at the A.S. Convention Centre, which was converted into a temporary police station, in Bengaluru on June 11, 2019; IMA founder Mansoor Khan; investors wait in front of the IMA office. •V. SREENIVASA MURTHY



businessmen and builders for the losses IMA suffered. He said he would hand over the list of those who had taken money from him to agencies once he returned. He urged investigators to recover the money from them, and claimed that IMA had assets worth ₹1,350 crore, which he would liquidate.

Mansoor had also ensured that he had the blessings of Bengaluru’s top ulema. There are videos of at least six clergy endorsing IMA as ‘halal’ and denouncing allegations of cheating. This, say the police, provided a veneer of “religious justification and endorsement” within the community. One well-known religious leader, Mohammed Maqsood Imran Rashadi of the Jamia Masjid near Bengaluru’s City Market, denied allegations that he patronised or endorsed IMA, claiming he had only spoken about the donations Mansoor made.

Community members, however, don’t make this distinction. There is la-

Thousands of investors who have lost money in such firms are also part of the financial banking system, which has been declared ‘haram’ by the orthodox clergy within the community.

BOLWAR MAHAMMAD KUNHI
Kannada writer



tent anger against a section of the ulema for misleading their flock. IMA has always enjoyed visible political patronage by leaders from the community. At least two Chief Ministers have been guests at Mansoor’s functions and iftar dinners. “Every time there were allegations or IT raids, Mansoor held a function that was attended by prominent leaders,” said Ateeq Khan, an investor who lost money.

Use of local media

Mansoor had invested heavily in two Urdu YouTube news portals after a deal to buy a Kannada news channel fell through. IMA allegedly funded an Urdu daily as well. “Mansoor also influenced the local print media as the IMA Group was one of the bigger advertisers. These papers regularly carried articles by influential members of the ulema denouncing the banking system as haram and exhorting people to invest in halal trading, but stopped short of naming a particular company. Many companies benefited from this, including IMA,” a senior Urdu journalist said.

IMA’s stranglehold on the Urdu print media was such that when L.C. Nagaraj, assistant commissioner, Bengaluru North Taluk, issued a public notice on November 16, 2018, alerting people that the Group was possibly perpetrating a fraud and appealed to citizens to file complaints, no one stepped forward. A prominent Urdu daily allegedly refused to publish the advertisement issued in public interest. “We tried publishing the public notice in Urdu newspapers to reach out to the community, but with little success,” Nagaraj said.

Courting the media or even media ownership was a tried and tested route and Mansoor was no stranger to this. Two more companies that sank – Heera Group and Injaz International Group – that claimed to be ‘halal’ trading firms owned and operated Kannada news channels at the height of their popularity.

A tale of lax regulation

The IMA group scam is only the latest in a series of 14 such ‘halal trading firms’ in Bengaluru that have unravelled or simply vanished over the last year and a half, leaving customers running from pillar to post trying to get their money back.

Some of the more infamous cases in the past involved Ambidant Marketing, Injaz International, Heera Group and Ajmera Group. Conservative estimates put the number of customers cheated at nearly 1.25 lakh, and losses at over ₹5,000 crore.

Such firms were able to perpetuate scams for years, drawing investors from the Muslim community in droves, with relative impunity. “The community, which is relatively insulated, seems to have turned into a sort of an echo chamber for these firms. The so-called halal firms relied primarily on word of mouth,” said Mohammed Rafiq, a social worker.

All 14 ‘halal firms’ that were exposed for alleged scams were flagged by economic enforcement agencies in the State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) over the past two years. However, police action followed only after these companies went bankrupt, and people started clamouring for justice.

“There has been a mushrooming of halal trading firms in the city. Most of these are Ponzi schemes and as the flow of new investors ebbed, they went broke. Only IMA Group and Heera Group are older. These firms are also linked. Fareed Ahmed of Ambidant Marketing was earlier working with the IMA Group and Mansoor Khan of the IMA Group started his career with the Heera Group. They seem to have learnt the ropes there before branching out to form independent companies,” said a senior economic enforcement official.

Of the 20-plus halal investment firms that were flagged by the SLCC over the last two years, 14 have since shut shop, but the remaining are still collecting investments, sources said. After the IMA scam broke, community leaders have listed 42 such firms in the city, which include the 14 that are no longer active. “Only proactive regulation of these firms can save the community from taking further hits,” a senior official said.

If many of these companies were already under the scanner of investigative agencies, how did they get away with it? In the case of the IMA Group, despite a public notice in November 2018, not one complaint came forward as the firm was, at the time, still paying its investors monthly instalments, said a senior police officer.

The LLP model allowed IMA to be excluded from the definition of deposit under the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Institutions Act (KPID), 2004 and The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019. Though the State Revenue Department and Economic Offences Wing of the Criminal Investigation Department initiated probes between November 2018 and March 2019, these did not end in punitive action, as officials concluded that the KPID Act did not apply to IMA.

Not without pitfalls

Some Islamic scholars argue that the non-availability of interest-free financial instruments in the banking system is one of the main reasons for the relative exclusion of the Muslim community from formal commercial banking, pushing them to Ponzi-like schemes in the unregulated private sector.

A 2008 Planning Commission Report

authored by a committee chaired by former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan also arrived at a similar conclusion. The report, ‘A Hundred Small steps: Report of the Committee on Financial Sector Reforms’, said: “Certain faiths prohibit the use of financial instruments that pay interest. The non-availability of interest-free banking products results in some Indians, including those in the economically disadvantaged strata of society, not being able to access banking products and services due to reasons of faith.”

Both the 2008 Planning Commission Report and a Report of the Committee on Medium-term Path on Financial Inclusion, 2015, submitted to the RBI governor, recommended that “measures be taken to permit the delivery of interest-free finance on a larger scale, including through the banking system” and “commercial banks in India may be enabled to open specialised interest-free windows”, respectively.

However, in a reply to an RTI query by Press Trust of India in 2017, the RBI said it had decided not to pursue the proposal to introduce Islamic banking, “taking into account, the wider and equal opportunities available to all citizens to access banking and financial services.”

Defaulters like Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya have fled taking loans from public sector banks and we know what happened. I have no hope of getting my money back.

SYED TANZEEM
Investor

The decision drew criticism from Islamic banking experts and intellectuals in the community, who pointed out that other countries – the U.S., the U.K., Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and most of West Asia – have implemented it successfully. “Profit sharing banking is based on sound economics and ethical principles. If nomenclature is the issue, one need not call it Islamic banking, like it is done in several countries. The RBI report has called it interest-free banking,” said Mumbai-based Islamic finance expert Shariq Nisar.

He believes that a vacuum of interest-free banking in the formal sector has allowed companies like IMA to thrive. “There is a section of consumers demanding a certain product which the market will provide, if not by the formal sector, then by fly-by-night operators. But isn’t the government as a regulator responsible for not letting consumers be cheated?”

Other experts argue that citing Islamic banking as the reason for such scams to thrive is simplistic. Kannada writer Bolwar Mohammad Kunhi, a two-time Sahitya Akademi awardee, who worked for over three decades in a nationalised bank, said that simply assuming Muslims were investing in ‘halal’ firms due to religious reasons was “stereotyping the community”.

“Thousands of those investors who lost money in such firms are also part of the financial banking system holding accounts and availing loans with interest, which have been declared ‘haram’ by the orthodox clergy within the community. Investment in these firms are



driven by greed, with only a fig leaf of religion cynically used to rationalise it, by both the investors and the company,” said Kunhi.

Naveed Ahmed Khan, 42, an engineer who lost money in both Ambidant Marketing and the IMA Group, was candid about his motives: the firms promised higher returns and their businesses were visible. “I did not invest for any religious reasons. I am part of the formal banking system as well. This was an investment that went wrong,” he said.

The ‘Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India’, 2006, or the Sachar Committee Report, in its chapter, Access to Bank Credit, observed: “The Muslim community is not averse to banking and more improvements can be brought about with specific measures.”

Scholars and economists say there is a need for ulemas to denounce these firms. “It is the ulema’s voice that has resonance in the community. We need to convince people that the interest we get in banks is also fair and not *haram*. The Islamic tenet is against usury which is being interpreted in a very orthodox fashion,” said Professor Abdul Aziz, a Bengaluru-based economist. Most Ponzi schemes have led to allegations of political patronage and funding. Reports suggest that Mansoor extensively funded politicians during the 2018 Assembly and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, though parties have denied these allegations. “Lack of proactive enforcement has its roots in political corruption and weakened and politicised enforcement agencies,” said advocate and anti-corruption activist Prashant Bhushan.

The impact on the customers is not just economic, but social as well. “A large number of families of the community have lost all their savings. Women have pledged gold to invest money in some of these firms without the knowledge of their families, which has now come in the open creating family conflicts. A large section of the community has effectively socio-economically regressed by a decade,” said Muzaaffar Assadi, political scientist and special officer, Raichur University, Karnataka.

For now, investors continue to approach the police. Few believe that they will get their money back, as they watch the SIT carry away cartloads of wealth from the three-storeyed office in the city’s Shivaji Nagar area that was the nerve centre of Mansoor’s operations.

यह संभव है कि हम सबके पास बराबर प्रतिभा न हो पर अपनी प्रतिभाओं को विकसित करने का मौका सभी को बराबर मिलता है...
डॉ. एपीजे अब्दुल कलाम



आदिवासी क्षेत्रों से निकलेंगे खेल जगत के कई सितारे



अपनी कहानी

>> **सुमित्रा नायक**

मां के साथ बिताए शुरुआती वर्षों ने सिखाया कि हिम्मत के साथ खराब परिस्थितियों से कैसे सामना किया जाता है। मुझे अब परिस्थितियों से डर नहीं लगता, क्योंकि मेरी मां की तरह, मेरे पास मजबूत दिल है।



मेरा जन्म ओडिशा के जाजपुर जिले में एक निर्धन आदिवासी परिवार में हुआ। मेरे पिता ने मेरी मां को छोड़कर किसी और से शादी कर ली। मेरी मां ज्यादा पढ़ी-लिखी नहीं थीं, पर वह साहसी थीं। गरीबी से तंग आकर वह भुवनेश्वर आ गईं और लोगों के घरों में काम करने लगीं। हालांकि वह मुझे और मेरे भाई-बहनों को पढ़ाना चाहती थीं। मेरी मां जिस घर में काम कर रही थीं, उसके मालिक ने उन्हें कलिंगा इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ सोशल साइंसेज के बारे में बताते हुए कहा कि वहां पढ़ने-लिखने के साथ खाने-पीने, खेलकूद की सुविधा मुफ्त में मिलती है। इसके बाद मेरी मां ने मुझे वहां भेज दिया।

मां का मिला प्रोत्साहन
कलिंगा इंस्टीट्यूट से जुड़ने के बाद रम्बी पहली नजर का प्यार था। हलांकि बचपन में मुझे अन्य शारीरिक खेल पसंद थे, लेकिन गांव में नहीं खेल सकती थी, क्योंकि वहां लड़कियों को खेलने की आजादी नहीं दी जाती थी। किसी खेल में दिलचस्पी दिखाने पर कहा जाता था कि यह लड़कियों के लिए नहीं है। सौभाग्य से मुझे मां का समर्थन मिला, जिसने समाज की धारणाओं को तोड़ने और दिल के सपनों को पूरा करने के लिए कहा। शुरुआत में मैं डर गई, किसी ने कहा इस खेल में कुछ भी हो सकता है। पर मेरी मां ने कहा कि कुछ भी नहीं होगा, वे घेरने की कोशिश करेंगे, मुझे बस तेजी से दौड़ना सीखना चाहिए। मां के साथ बिताए शुरुआती वर्षों ने सिखाया कि हिम्मत के साथ खराब परिस्थितियों से कैसे सामना किया जाता है। मुझे अब परिस्थितियों से डर नहीं लगता, क्योंकि मेरी मां की तरह, मेरे पास मजबूत दिल है।

ऐसे हुई शुरुआत
रम्बी के प्रति मेरा अकर्षण बढ़ा तो मैंने खेलना शुरू कर दिया। अगले साल ही इंस्टीट्यूट की टीम ने लंदन में कम आयु वर्ग की विश्व चैंपियनशिप का खिताब जीता। इसके बाद इस खेल में मैं महारत हासिल करने के लिए जी जान से जुट गई। फिलीपींस में सिंगापुर के खिलाफ मिली जीत से पहले खिलाड़ियों के प्रशिक्षण के लिए दक्षिण अफ्रीका से कोच आए। उस प्रशिक्षण सत्र से सभी खिलाड़ियों को काफी हुआ है। हमारी जीत का सबसे ज्यादा श्रेय कलिंगा इंस्टीट्यूट के फाउंडर डॉ. अच्युत सामंत को जाता है। उन्होंने न केवल हमें मुफ्त पढ़ने-लिखने का अवसर दिया, बल्कि अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर की ट्रेनिंग और बुनियादी सहूलियतें भी मुहैया करवाईं।

बेहद भावुक क्षण था
हमारे लिए सिंगापुर के खिलाफ स्कोर करना मुश्किल हो रहा था, क्योंकि वह तगड़ी टीम है और पिछली बार हमें बहुत बुरी तरह हरा चुकी थी। मैच खत्म होने में बस दो मिनट बाकी थे, जब मैंने तय किया की एक पेनल्टी ली जाए। तब मेरे मन में विश्वास था, लेकिन कुछ डर भी। मैंने पेनल्टी ली और स्कोर किया। लेकिन अभी भी दो मिनट बचे थे और सिंगापुर की टीम इतनी आसानी से हार मानने वाली नहीं थी। जब हूटर बजा और हम जीत गए, उस समय की अनुभूति मैं शब्दों में बयान नहीं कर सकती। मुझे उम्मीद है कि करीब 27 हजार आदिवासी बच्चों के बीच में से खेलकूद की दुनिया में कई और सितारे उभरने वाले हैं। मेरा मानना है कि इस दुनिया का हर बच्चा बड़ा होकर एक बदलाव लाने वाला होता है, जिसका उद्देश्य लगातार आसपास की समस्याओं को हल करना है। इससे दुनिया बदल जाएगी।

-रम्बी टीम की खिलाड़ी के विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।



सूत्र

>> **राडिया पर्लमैन**

आत्मविश्वास भी दिलाता है सफलता

मैं एक नेटवर्क इंजीनियर और सॉफ्टवेयर डिजाइनर हूँ। मैं न्यू जर्सी के पास एसब्युरी पार्क में पैदा हुई। मेरे माता-पिता, दोनों ही इंजीनियर थे। मेरे पिता ने रडार से संबंधित कुछ काम किया था। जबकि मेरी गणितज्ञ मां ने कंप्यूटर प्रोग्रामर के तौर पर काम किया। चाहे इसे मेरा आनुवांशिक गुण कहें या कुछ और, गणित और विज्ञान मेरे लिए सबसे आसान और दिलचस्प विषयों में से थे। घर पर मेरी मां गणित के होमवर्क में मेरी मदद करती थी। लेकिन गणित और विज्ञान से बाहर मैं साहित्य और संगीत में रस ले पाई, तो इसका श्रेय मेरी मां को जाता है। हाई स्कूल में रहते हुए ही मैंने कंप्यूटर साइंस में करियर बनाने का फैसला कर लिया था। एमआईटी में अंडरग्रेजुएट क्लासों में मैंने प्रोग्रामिंग के बारे में समझा। गणित से बीएस और एमएस करने के बाद मैंने कंप्यूटर साइंस में पीएच.डी की। वर्ष 1985 में मैं डिजिटल इक्विपमेंट कॉर्पोरेशन में काम कर रही थी, जहां कंप्यूटरों में फाइल शेयरिंग की समस्या के समाधान निकालने में काम चल रहा था। मैंने एसटीपी (स्प्रेनिंग ट्री प्रोटोकॉल) के रूप में इसका समाधान निकाला। इंटरनेट से जुड़े सौ से अधिक पेटेंट मेरे नाम हैं। शायद इसीलिए लोग मुझे 'मदर ऑफ इंटरनेट' कहकर भी संबोधित करते हैं। हालांकि मुझे अपने लिए यह संबोधन पसंद नहीं है, क्योंकि इंटरनेट का आविष्कार किसी एक व्यक्ति ने नहीं किया है। अध्ययन और शोध के दौरान मैंने पाया कि कंप्यूटर साइंस में महिलाओं की संख्या बहुत कम है। उस दौरान कई प्रोफेसरों ने मुझे कंप्यूटर साइंस के क्षेत्र में काम करने से हतोत्साहित करने की कोशिश की, लेकिन मैं अपने लक्ष्य पर डटी रही। बीती सदी के साठ के दशक में मैं जब एमआईटी में पढ़ती थी, तो करीब एक हजार छात्रों की कक्षा में मुश्किल से पचास लड़कियां होती थीं। उस दौर में कई-कई दिनों तक मुझे क्लास में एक भी लड़की के दर्शन नहीं होते थे। आज कोई ऐसा छात्र नहीं बचा है, जिसमें महिलाओं की प्रभावी मौजूदगी न हो। जिस विषय में हमारी रुचि हो, उसमें लाने के साथ काम करने से सफलता अवश्य मिलती है। इसके अलावा आत्मविश्वास ज्यादा जरूरी है। एमआईटी में मेरे एक सीनियर ने मुझसे प्रोग्रामर के पार्ट टाइम जॉब की पेशकश की, तो मैं इस बारे में बहुत नहीं जानती थी। पर मेरा सीनियर मेरे प्रति आश्चर्य था। इसलिए मेरा मानना है कि जीवन में सफलता के लिए आत्मविश्वास बहुत जरूरी है।

जिस क्षेत्र में हमारी रुचि हो, उस क्षेत्र में लगन के साथ काम करना आवश्यक है।

विर्भीक पत्रकारिता का आठवां दशक

स्थापना वर्ष : 1948

जी-20 शिखर सम्मेलन में भारत को खुद की स्थिति को मजबूती से पेश करने और वैश्विक समीकरण में संतुलन बनाने का अवसर भी मिला है, जैसा कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की द्विपक्षीय तथा विभिन्न क्षेत्रीय गुटों के नेताओं से हुई मुलाकातों से स्पष्ट है।

ओसाका में अवसर

जलवायु परिवर्तन के बढ़ते जोखिम, ईरान के परमाणु संकट और अमेरिका तथा चीन के बीच व्यापार और प्रौद्योगिकी को लेकर चल रहे टकराव के बीच जापान के ओसाका में चल रहे जी-20 शिखर सम्मेलन में एक बड़ी उत्सुकता प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप की मुलाकात को लेकर भी थी, क्योंकि दोनों देशों के बीच पिछले कुछ समय से व्यापारिक रिश्ते में खिंचाव आया है। दरअसल इस मुलाकात से ऐन पहले ट्रंप ने दबाव बनाते हुए कहा था कि भारत ने हाल ही में जो शुल्क बढ़ाया है, वह उन्हें अस्वीकार्य है और इसे वापस लेना ही होगा। यही नहीं, अमेरिका यह भी चाहता है कि भारत को ईरान से तेल नहीं लेना चाहिए और चीनी कंपनी हुवावे की 5जी तकनीक को मंजूरी नहीं देनी चाहिए। ध्यान रहे कुछ महीने पहले जब अमेरिका ने भारत से

व्यापारिक वरीयता छीन ली थी, तब भारत ने जवाब में अमेरिका से आयात होने वाली 28 वस्तुओं पर शुल्क बढ़ाया था। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी और राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप की मुलाकात के बाद दोनों देशों ने व्यापारिक गतिरोध को दूर करने के लिए वाणिज्य मंत्रियों की बैठक शीघ्र बुलाने का जो फैसला किया है, उसे भारत की कूटनीतिक जीत के तौर पर ही देखा जाना चाहिए। फिर भूलना नहीं चाहिए कि इस मुलाकात में रूस से खरीदी जानी वाली एस-400 मिसाइल रक्षा प्रणाली पर कोई बात नहीं हुई, जिसे लेकर अमेरिका पहले एतराज कर चुका है। वहीं भारत ने एक बार फिर स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि खाड़ी में वह अपने हितों से समझौता नहीं करेगा। वास्तव में जी-20 शिखर सम्मेलन में भारत को खुद की स्थिति को मजबूती से पेश करने और वैश्विक समीकरण में संतुलन बनाने का अवसर भी मिला है, जैसा कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की द्विपक्षीय तथा विभिन्न क्षेत्रीय गुटों के नेताओं से हुई मुलाकातों



से स्पष्ट है। मसलन, ब्रिक्स के नेताओं की बैठक के बाद भारत की चिंता से साझा करते हुए संयुक्त बयान में इस संगठन के सदस्य देशों के साथ ही जहां कहीं भी आतंकी हमले हुए हैं उनकी तीखे शब्दों में निंदा की गई है और आतंकवाद से निपटने की प्रतिबद्धता जताई गई है। इसके अलावा रूस-भारत-चीन (आरआईसी) तथा जापान-अमेरिका-भारत (जेएआईयानी जय) की बैठकों ने भारत के बढ़ते महत्व को ही रेखांकित किया है।

आरक्षण की बैसाखी और न्यू इंडिया

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने संघीय व्यवस्था में केंद्र को इंजन और राज्यों को डिब्बा बताया है। तो फिर केंद्र में प्रशासनिक कुशलता और राज्यों में आरक्षण की बंदरबांट के विरोधाभास से 'एक भारत-श्रेष्ठ भारत' कैसे बनेगा?

पिछली शताब्दी में मंडल आयोग की रिपोर्ट ने पूरे देश में आग लगा दी थी, जिसे सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के बाद विराम मिला। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के आठ जजों की पीठ ने नवंबर, 1992 में कहा था कि सामाजिक न्याय जरूरी होने के बावजूद प्रशासनिक कुशलता की दृष्टि से 50 फीसदी से ज्यादा आरक्षण नहीं होना चाहिए। 27 साल बाद अब राज्य में चुनावों के पहले, बॉम्बे हाई कोर्ट के दो जजों ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले की नई व्याख्या करते हुए मराठा आरक्षण को वैध ठहरा कर आरक्षण के जिन्न को फिर से जगा दिया है। गायकवाड़ आयोग ने शिक्षण संस्थाओं में 12 फीसदी और सरकारी नौकरियों में 13 फीसदी आरक्षण की अनुशंसा की थी, जिसे महाराष्ट्र सरकार ने बढ़ाकर 16 फीसदी कर दिया था। हाई कोर्ट ने सरकार के फैसले को बदलते हुए आयोग की अनुशंसा को बहाल कर दिया। महाराष्ट्र में मराठों को 72,000 नई सरकारी नौकरियों में नियुक्ति पत्र जारी होने हैं, लेकिन तीन फीसदी की कमी होने से नए विवाद पैदा हो सकते हैं।

मंडल आयोग और परवर्ती आयोगों ने मराठों को पिछड़ा मानने से इनकार कर दिया था। इंदिरा साहनी मामले के फैसले के बाद केंद्र और सभी राज्यों को पिछड़ा वर्ग आयोग का गठन करना था। महाराष्ट्र सरकार ने तेरह साल बाद वर्ष 2006 में इस पर अमल किया, पर मराठों को आरक्षण का लाभ देने के लिए बनाए कानून को नवंबर, 2018 में आनन-फानन में मंजूरी मिल गई। राष्ट्रपति की मंजूरी के बौर इस कानून को

लागू करने पर सांविधानिक विवाद है, जिस पर अब सुप्रीम कोर्ट में ही फैसला होगा। महाराष्ट्र में 2001 के कानून से 52 फीसदी आरक्षण का प्रावधान है। केंद्र सरकार ने भी आर्थिक तौर पर पिछड़ों को 10 फीसदी आरक्षण देने के लिए कानून बनाकर 50 फीसदी के नियम का उल्लंघन किया, जिस पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने रोक लगाने से इनकार कर दिया है। तमिलनाडु में 50 फीसदी से ज्यादा आरक्षण देने के लिए बहुत पहले से



कानून है। खबरों के अनुसार, तमिलनाडु के मेडिकल कॉलेजों में अधिक आरक्षण को चुनौती देने वाली याचिका पिछले 25 वर्षों से लंबित है। आरक्षण और प्रोन्नति से संबंधित अनेक अन्य मामले भी सुप्रीम कोर्ट में लंबित हैं, तो फिर इस पर जल्द फैसला कैसे होगा? महाराष्ट्र में 32 फीसदी आबादी मराठों की है, जिन्हें सरकार द्वारा 16 फीसदी आरक्षण से लुभाने की कोशिश की गई। गायकवाड़ आयोग ने इस बारे में पांच संगठनों को सर्वेक्षण हेतु नियुक्त किया, जिनमें कई सदस्य मराठा आरक्षण के पक्षधर थे। इसे हितों का विरोधाभास माना जाए, तो सर्वेक्षण पर ही सवाल खड़े हो जाएंगे। समिति ने लगभग 46,629 परिवारों का सर्वेक्षण किया, जिनमें से 29,813 मराठा परिवार थे। पिछड़ेपन को निर्धारित करने के लिए 25 अंकों का मापदंड बनाया गया, जिसमें सामाजिक, शैक्षणिक और आर्थिक फैक्टर शामिल थे। आयोग की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, मराठों को 12.5 यानी आधे अंक मिले, फिर भी उन्हें पिछड़ा मान लिया गया। पिछड़ेपन के इस पैमाने पर मराठों की तर्ज पर अन्य जातियों में भी पिछड़ेपन की होड़ लग सकती है, जिसकी शुरुआत महाराष्ट्र में ब्राम्हण महासभा ने कर दी है। महाराष्ट्र के साथ हरियाणा में भी विधानसभा चुनाव होने हैं, जहां पर जाट और गुज्जरां द्वारा ऐसे आरक्षण की मांग परचाव चढ़ेगी।

अंग्रेजों ने भारत को जाति और धर्म के आधार पर विभाजित किया।



फैक्ट फाइल

अनुच्छेद 15



>> **प्रतीकात्मक तस्वीर**

संविधान का अनुच्छेद 15 भारत के समस्त नागरिकों को समानता का अधिकार देता है।

सामाजिक संदेश देने के उद्देश्य से अनुभव सिन्हा द्वारा निर्देशित व आणुमान खुराना अभिनीत फिल्म *आर्टिकल 15* रिलीज हो गई है। रिलीज होने से पहले ही फिल्म को लेकर सोशल मीडिया में विवादों का दौर शुरू हो गया, साथ ही संविधान के अनुच्छेद 15 पर चर्चाएं भी जोरों पर हैं। भारतीय संविधान के मूल अधिकार (भाग तीन) में मौजूद अनुच्छेद 15 भारत के समस्त नागरिकों को समानता का अधिकार देता है। अनुच्छेद 15 (1) के अनुसार राज्य, किसी नागरिक के विरुद्ध केवल धर्म, मूलवंश, जाति, लिंग, जन्मस्थान या इनमें से किसी के आधार पर कोई विभेद नहीं करेगा। इसी में (2) बताया गया है कि कोई नागरिक (क) दुकानों, सार्वजनिक भोजनालयों, होटलों और सार्वजनिक मनोरंजन के स्थानों में प्रवेश, या (ख) राज्य-निधि से पोषित या साधारण जनता के प्रयोग के लिए समर्पित कुओं, तालाबों, स्नानघाटों, सड़कों और सार्वजनिक सामागम के स्थानों के उपयोग, के संबंध में किसी भी नियंत्रणता, या शर्त के अधीन नहीं होगा। अनुच्छेद 15 (3) में संविधान सुरक्षा के लिहाज से भेदभावा की गुंजाइश छोड़ता है जिसमें उल्लेख है कि महिलाओं और बच्चों की सुरक्षा के मद्देनजर राज्य विषय प्रावधान कर सकता है। अनुच्छेद (15) या अनुच्छेद (29) के खंड दो की कोई भी बात राज्य को सामाजिक व शैक्षिक दृष्टि से पिछड़े हुए नागरिकों के किन्हीं वर्गों की उन्नति के लिए या अनुसूचित जातियों और अनुसूचित जनजातियों को यह विशेष प्रावधान करने से नहीं रोकेगी।

अफगानिस्तान के एक स्कूल में लड़कों से ज्यादा लड़कियां शिक्षा के प्रति गंभीर हैं और बेहतर प्रदर्शन कर रही हैं।

न्यूयॉर्क टाइम्स के लिए रॉड नोर्डेड

सुबह सात बजे के करीब लड़कियां दिखाई देने लगीं। दूर से देखने पर वे बंजर पहाड़ के किनारे पतली नीली रेखा सी दिखाई दे रही थीं। विभिन्न दिशाओं से गंदी और संकरी पगडंडियों से होकर वे चाटी में स्थित एक छोटे से स्कूल आ रही थीं। लगभग सात से 18 वर्ष की नीली यूनिफार्म और सिर पर सफेद स्कार्फ बांधे ये लड़कियां एक घंटे या उससे ज्यादा पैदल चलकर समय पर स्कूल पहुंचती हैं। कुछ लड़कों के भी समूह हैं, जो लड़कियों से अलग चल रहे हैं। 7.45 बजे तक वे सभी रुस्तम स्कूल के यार्ड में असेंबली के लिए इकट्ठा हुए, जो अफगानिस्तान के सुदूर इलाके में यकवलांग जिले में है। यह इस इलाके का एकमात्र हाई स्कूल है, जहां पहली से लेकर बारहवीं कक्षा तक की पढ़ाई होती है। यहां 330 लड़कियां और 146 लड़के पढ़ते हैं। यह उस देश के लिए आश्चर्यजनक है, जहां मात्र एक तिहाई लड़कियां ही स्कूल जाती हैं।

स्कूल के प्रिंसिपल मोहम्मद सादिक नासिरी कहते हैं, विश्वविद्यालय में दाखिला पाना पहले की अपेक्षा इस वर्ष ज्यादा कठिन है, इसलिए वे पहले से ज्यादा अच्छा करने जा रहे हैं। कॉलेज जाने के सपनों को



प्रोत्साहित करने के लिहाज से रुस्तम स्कूल एक असंभव जगह लग सकती है। सात कक्षाओं और छह बड़े तंबुओं में पढ़ाई कराने वाले इस स्कूल में इतने छात्र हैं कि चार-चार घंटे के सुबह और दोपहर के दो सत्रों में पढ़ाई होती है। यहां न बिजली है, न कक्षा गर्म करने की व्यवस्था है और न ही काम करने लायक कंप्यूटर और फोटो कॉपी मशीन है। ज्यादातर शिक्षण सामग्री शिक्षक स्वयं अपने हाथों से लिखते हैं। एक बार विदेशी सहायता मिली थी, लेकिन वह फिर बंद



इस हफ्ते के शब्द

सामंत गोयल

पंजाब कैंडर के आईपीएस सामंत गोयल को भारतीय खुफिया एजेंसी रिसर्च एंड एनालिसिस विंग (रॉ) का नया प्रमुख नियुक्त किया गया है।



थंप (THUMP)

विश्वकप में अफगानिस्तान पर भारत की जीत के लिए

इस शब्द का इस्तेमाल करने पर बीसीसीआई की काफी आलोचना हुई। इस शब्द का

अर्थ होता है-प्रहार।



काले धन का पहाड़

34 लाख करोड़

रुपये का काला धन जमा कर रखा है भारतीयों ने विदेशों में, लोकसभा में पेश फाइनेंस पर रैंडिंग कमेटी की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक।



बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 114

आयातित अर्थशास्त्री

चौथे और अंतिम अर्थशास्त्री भी अटलांटिक पार की दुनिया में लौट रहे हैं। विरल आचार्य बहुत जल्दी अरविंद सुब्रमण्यन, रघुराम राजन और अरविंद पानगड्डिया की तरह पश्चिमी जगत में लौट जाएंगे। मीडिया में आई टिप्पणियों में देश को पराजित पेश किया गया है लेकिन कोई भी उतना चिंतित नहीं है जितनी चिंता राजन की शिकागो वापसी के वक्त देखने को मिली थी। उस चिंता को भी उतनी तवज्जो नहीं मिल रही है जो आचार्य ने केंद्रीय बैंक की स्वायत्तता को लेकर दिए अपने मशहूर भाषण में जताई

थी। लेकिन लोगों ने तो बतौर वित्त मंत्री दिए गए अरुण जेटली के उस बयान पर भी अपना नजरिया नहीं रखा था जिसमें उन्होंने कहा था कि मोदी सरकार की गलतियों में से एक विदेशों से अर्थशास्त्रियों को लाना भी थी।

जब भी देश से कोई शीर्ष अर्थशास्त्री बाहर जाता है तो इसका नुकसान देश को होता है। परंतु इस पर चर्चा से पहले इस संभावना पर विचार करते हैं कि विशेषज्ञ गलत भी हो सकते हैं। आचार्य की अकादमिक काबिलियत और केंद्रीय बैंक के कामकाज में उनकी विशेषज्ञता

को व्यापक तौर पर स्वीकार किया गया लेकिन रिजर्व बैंक में उनके प्रदर्शन पर उठे सवालों का उन्हें जवाब देना चाहिए। उनकी निगरानी में आरबीआई का वृहद आर्थिक विश्लेषण मुद्रास्फीति और आर्थिक वृद्धि दर के मामले में गलत साबित हुआ। इन दोनों का अतिरंजित अनुमान लगाया गया। इसी कारण ब्याज दर नीति के मामले में भी उनकी सलाह गलत थी। उन्होंने आरबीआई द्वारा की गई दो हालिया कठौतियों का विरोध किया था।

सवाल सांस्कृतिक पहलुओं का भी है। भारतीयों के साथ कारोबार कर रहे विदेशी पाते हैं कि भारतीय असहमत होने पर कभी सीधे ना नहीं कहते। इसके बजाय वे बात बदल देते हैं या अप्रत्यक्ष संकेत देने लगते हैं। यह अमेरिका से एकदम उलट है जहां अपनी स्थिति को स्पष्ट करने के लिए सीधे नकार का इस्तेमाल किया जाता है। भारत सरकार के साथ काम करने वाले लोग भी उसके खिलाफ सार्वजनिक रूप

से कुछ नहीं कहते। अगर आप रिजर्व बैंक के गवर्नर या डिप्टी गवर्नर हों तो आपको आम नागरिक के समान अभिव्यक्ति की आजादी हासिल नहीं होती। तब मतभेदों पर आंतरिक बातचीत ही होती है। ऐसे में जब राजन और आचार्य ने खुलकर अपनी बातें कहीं तो इसे ठीक नहीं माना गया। नोटबंदी जैसे मसले पर जहां राजन को अपनी राय साफ तौर पर रखनी थी वहां वह प्रतिकूल सलाह देने के बाद साथ हो गए।

फिर भी इन अर्थशास्त्रियों की सेवा लेना गलती नहीं थी। राजन की बैंकों की साफ-सफाई की प्रतिबद्धता की वजह से ही परिसंपत्ति गुणवत्ता की समीक्षा हुई और गड़बड़ियां सामने आईं। दूसरा, राजन और उनके डिप्टी (बाद में उत्तराधिकारी) ऊर्जित पटेल में तालमेल नहीं था यह सब जानते हैं लेकिन इन दोनों ने ही आरबीआई का नया मौद्रिक ढांचा तैयार किया

और मुद्रास्फीति नियंत्रण को मौद्रिक नीति का प्राथमिक लक्ष्य बनाया। यह सोच अंतरराष्ट्रीय थी लेकिन वाईबी रेड्डी और बिमल जालान जैसे पुराने देशी गवर्नरों से एकदम उलट थी।

वित्त मंत्रालय में अरविंद सुब्रमण्यन के कई नीतिगत नुस्खों की सरकार ने अनदेखी कर दी। परंतु वस्तु एवं सेवा कर की आदर्श दर पर उनकी रिपोर्ट को परोक्ष स्वीकृति मिल गई। कई दरों के उनके विरोध को भी उनकी विदाई के बाद आंशिक रूप से स्वीकार कर लिया गया। सुब्रमण्यन को सरकार की वार्षिक आर्थिक समीक्षा के विश्लेषण की गुणवत्ता में सुधार करने के लिए भी जाना जाता है। हाल ही में उन्होंने वृद्धि के आधिकारिक आंकड़ों पर सवाल उठाया है, उसके बाद संभवतः उनको अवार्छित ही माना जाएगा।

नीति आयोग में अरविंद पनगड्डिया जल्दी

आए और दो वर्ष पहले उन्होंने उससे दूरी भी बना ली। उन्हें प्रधानमंत्री के साथ उतना समय बिताने का मौका नहीं मिला जितनी उन्होंने अपेक्षा की होगी। शायद वृहद आर्थिक नीति को लेकर उनकी सुधारवादी सोच मोदी सरकार से मेल नहीं खाती थी। मोदी सरकार की रुचि कार्यक्रमों और परियोजनाओं में अधिक थी। वह मुद्दों पर आधारित सुधार में रुचित नहीं हो सके।

आज, जबकि वृद्धि दर में गिरावट है और हर दिशा से वृहद आर्थिक चुनौतियां आ रही हैं, क्या सरकार को हार्वर्ड शिक्षित अर्थशास्त्रियों की राय से लाभ होता? शायद होता, मिसाल पुराने रिकॉर्ड पर ध्यान दें तो शायद उनकी बातों को अधिक तवज्जो ही नहीं मिली होती।

जेपी नड्डा को भली-भांति जानते पहचानते हैं भाजपा कार्यकर्ता



सियासी हलचल आदिति फडणीस

अपनी अखिल भारतीय नियुक्तियों के कारण नड्डा भाजपा संगठन को करीब से जानते हैं। वह अपनी वाक कला से भीड़ भले ही न जुटा पाएं लेकिन कार्यकर्ता उनको अच्छी तरह जानते हैं और दोनों का तालमेल बहुत अच्छा है। भाजपा का राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष बनने के बाद वह हिमाचल प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री के कद से कहीं ऊपर निकल गए हैं। जेपी नड्डा भाजपा के ऐसे नेता हैं जिन पर नजर रखी जानी चाहिए

जिन नेताओं को सरकार में ऊंचे पद मिले हुए हैं, उन्हें पार्टी संगठन का कोई खास अनुभव नहीं है। नड्डा को 40 वर्ष का संगठनात्मक अनुभव है जो उनके समकालीनों में शायद ही किसी के पास हो। उन्होंने सन 1980 के दशक में हिमाचल विश्वविद्यालय से छात्र राजनीति की शुरुआत की और अखिल भारतीय विद्यार्थी परिषद (एबीवीपी) के लिए पहली बार छात्र संघ का चुनाव जीता। वह चुनाव बराबरी पर छूटा था और उन्हें अध्यक्ष पद अपने प्रतिद्वंद्वी के साथ साझा करना पड़ा। यही कारण है कि वह आधे कार्यकाल तक ही पद पर रह सके। बाद में वह एबीवीपी के अखिल भारतीय संगठनात्मक सचिव बन गए और आगे चलकर भारतीय जनता युवा

जिन नेताओं को सरकार में ऊंचे पद मिले हुए हैं, उन्हें पार्टी संगठन का कोई खास अनुभव नहीं है। नड्डा को 40 वर्ष का संगठनात्मक अनुभव है जो उनके समकालीनों में शायद ही किसी के पास हो। उन्होंने सन 1980 के दशक में हिमाचल विश्वविद्यालय से छात्र राजनीति की शुरुआत की और अखिल भारतीय विद्यार्थी परिषद (एबीवीपी) के लिए पहली बार छात्र संघ का चुनाव जीता। वह चुनाव बराबरी पर छूटा था और उन्हें अध्यक्ष पद अपने प्रतिद्वंद्वी के साथ साझा करना पड़ा। यही कारण है कि वह आधे कार्यकाल तक ही पद पर रह सके। बाद में वह एबीवीपी के अखिल भारतीय संगठनात्मक सचिव बन गए और आगे चलकर भारतीय जनता युवा

अंकेक्षक का पेशा और मौजूदा हालात

अंकेक्षण रिपोर्ट केवल एक विचार होती है। उसे किसी चीज का प्रमाण या गारंटी नहीं मानना चाहिए। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं देवाशिष बसु

इस महीने के आरंभ तक अंकेक्षण उन पेशों में से एक था जिनका बहुत मजाक उड़ाया जाता था। कंपनी अधिनियम के तहत हर कंपनी को अंकेक्षण कराना होता है। पहली की शुरुआत इसके बाद होती है। अपेक्षा होती है कि अंकेक्षक की नियुक्ति कंपनी का मालिक/अंशधारक करे, न कि प्रबंधन। परंतु हम सभी जानते हैं कि हर निजी कंपनी में और अधिकांश सरकारी कंपनियों में प्रवर्तक परिवार का प्रबंधन और अंशधारिता दोनों पर नियंत्रण होता है। बहुत कम ऐसी सूचीबद्ध कंपनियां होती हैं जहां प्रवर्तक के पास बहुलांश हिस्सेदारी नहीं होती और केवल प्रबंधन ही अंकेक्षक का चयन करता है। बाहरी अंशधारकों की अंकेक्षक नियुक्त करने या बदलने में कोई खास रुचि नहीं होती। अंकेक्षण का पहला आधारभूत नियम यही है कि प्रबंधन को खिझाने का काम नहीं करें।

दूसरा आधारभूत नियम अंकेक्षकों के लिए राहत लाता है। सन 1896 में किंग्सटन कांटेन मिल्स कंपनी के मामले में निर्णय देने वाले लॉर्ड जरिस्ट्स लोप्स के शब्द उधार लें तो आशा की जाती है कि वे निगरानी का काम करें, न कि शिकार करने का। तीसरा नियम चीजों को और आसान बना

देता है: अंकेक्षकों से अपेक्षा की जाती है कि वे बही खातों को लेकर सच्ची और निष्पक्ष तस्वीर पेश करेंगे। अंकेक्षण रिपोर्ट केवल एक विचार होती है, न कि किसी चीज का प्रमाणपत्र अथवा गारंटी। इन तीनों नियमों के आधार पर ही पीढ़ियों से अंकेक्षकों के प्रभाव का आकलन किया जाता रहा है।

यह केवल छोटी कंपनियों और छोटे अंकेक्षकों का मामला नहीं है। सन 2000 के दशक के आरंभ में जब टाटा फाइनेंस बड़े पैमाने पर सटोरिया बाजार की गतिविधियों, सर्कुलर लेनदेन और अन्य संदेहास्पद सौदों में शामिल थी, तब टाटा ने ए फर्गुसन को खास अंकेक्षण के लिए नियुक्त किया था। वरिष्ठ साझेदार वाई एम काले की निगरानी में तैयार फर्गुसन रिपोर्ट में टाटा के निदेशकों को क्लोन चिट नहीं दी गई। टाटा ने रिपोर्ट को खारिज कर दिया और अपने राजस्व के लिए काफी हद तक टाटा पर निर्भर फर्गुसन ने काले को नौकरी से निकाल दिया।

व्यवस्था में अपराध को सुधारने की इजाजत है लेकिन केवल कागज पर। ऐसे मामलों में आप भारतीय सनदी लेखाकार संस्थान (आईसीएआई) के समक्ष पेशेवर के गलत आचरण की शिकायत कर सकते

हैं। परंतु मैं बहुत सारे ऐसे मामलों के बारे में भी जानता हूं जहां आईसीएआई की अनुशासन परिषद अंकेक्षक के साथ मिल गई। जानकारों को पता है कि यह कैसे काम करता है। ऐसे में कई अच्छे सनदी लेखाकार अंकेक्षण के काम से दूर ही रहते हैं। अधिक नैतिक लोग हताश महसूस करते हैं।

इस माह के आरंभ में एक नाटकीय घटनाक्रम में अक्सर सुसुप्त रहने वाली सरकार की दो ताकतवर शाखाओं ने इस खेल के नियम बदल दिए। 11 जून को कंपनी मामलों के मंत्रालय ने राष्ट्रीय कंपनी लॉ पंचाट की शरण में जाकर आईएलएंडेडएफएस के अंकेक्षकों डेलॉयट हस्किंस और सेल्स एंड बीएसआर एंड एसोसिएट्स पर पांच वर्ष तक प्रतिबंध लगाने की मांग की। ऐसा उनकी आईएलएंडेडएफएस प्रबंधन के साथ कथित मिलीभगत के चलते किया गया। बीएसआर अंकेक्षण कंपनियों बड़े नेटवर्क केपीएमजी का हिस्सा है। मंत्रालय का यह कदम एक ऐसे संस्थान के शानदार प्रदर्शन के बाद उठाया गया है, जिसे हम भुलाते रहते हैं। वह संगठन है गंभीर धोखाधड़ी जांच कार्यालय (एसएफआईओ)। संगठन ने आरोप लगाया कि आईएलएंडेडएफएस

बरकरार रहे गतिशीलता

अंकेक्षक केवल अंशधारकों की नहीं बल्कि नियामकों, सरकार, निवेशकों, बैंकरों और व्यापक तौर पर जनता की मदद करते हैं। ऐसे में मौजूदा साफ-सफाई की आवश्यकता थी और यह सुनिश्चित किया जाना चाहिए कि यह सिलसिला केवल हाई प्रोफाइल अंकेक्षकों तक सीमित न रह जाए। पहला कदम होगा ऐसे हजारों छोटे सनदी लेखाकारों को सशक्त बनाना जो स्वतंत्र रूप से काम करना चाहते हैं लेकिन प्रवर्तकों या प्रबंधन की दया पर हैं। मैं निजी रूप से जानता हूं कि ऐसे सभी लेखाकार शुरुआत में पेशेवर काम करना चाहते हैं। वे अंकेक्षण में उलझना ही नहीं चाहते। उन्हें देखना होगा कि एनएफआरए की सफलता उनके पेशे में स्वच्छता और निष्पक्षता लाती है।

दूसरा कदम होगा अंकेक्षण के मानकों को बेहतर बनाना। मिसाल के तौर पर भारतीय प्रतिभूति एवं विनियम बोर्ड मूल कंपनी के अंकेक्षकों को अनुषंगी कंपनियों के बही खातों के लिए भी जिम्मेदार बनाने पर विचार कर रहा है। अन्य देशों ने भी धीरे-धीरे निगरानी वाले रूपक से दूरी बनाई है और बेहतर दायित्व की ओर बढ़े हैं। तीसरा कदम होगा वित्तीय कंपनियों के अंकेक्षकों के लिए विशेष मानक तय करना। ऐसा इसलिए जरूरी है क्योंकि ये अंकेक्षक दूसरों की भारी भरकम धनराशि से जुड़ा काम करते हैं। लॉर्ड डेनिंग ने सन 1958 में अंकेक्षकों के बारे में लिखा था, ‘अपने काम को उचित ढंग से अंजाम देने के लिए उसके पास जिज्ञासु मस्तिष्क होना चाहिए, न कि बेईमानी की आशंका।’ हालांकि मुझे संदेह ही है कि अगर डेनिंग और लोप्स आद होते तो वे शायद यही कहते हैं कि बैंकों और वित्तीय संस्थानों के मामले में अंकेक्षकों को शिकारी की भूमिका में होना चाहिए और उनके दिमाग में जांच परख के अलावा संदेह भी भरा होना चाहिए।

कानाफूसी

स्वच्छता पर जोर

केंद्र सरकार ने महात्मा गांधी की 150वीं वर्षगांठ मनाने के लिए एक महत्वाकांक्षी योजना बनाई है। सन 2014 में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने 2 अक्टूबर को गांधी जयंती के दिन ही स्वच्छता अभियान की शुरुआत की थी। अब सूचना एवं प्रसारण मंत्रालय ने स्वच्छता को लेकर प्रधानमंत्री के उद्धरणों की 20,000 प्रतियां प्रकाशित कराई हैं। सूर्यों के मुताबिक जलशक्ति मंत्रालय जिसमें पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता, जल संसाधन एवं गंगा सफाई मंत्रालय शामिल हैं, वह इन पुस्तिकाओं को वितरित करने की योजना बना रहा है। संसद में इस सप्ताह के आरंभ में राष्ट्रपति के अभिभाषण पर धन्यवाद ज्ञापन के दौरान प्रधानमंत्री ने जल संरक्षण और स्वच्छता अभियानों को आगे बढ़ाने की अपील की थी। माना जा रहा है कि रविवार को प्रसारित होने वाले कार्यक्रम मन की बात में भी वह इन्हीं मसलों पर बात करेंगे।

‘पबजी कूटनीति’

देश के शहरी युवाओं के बीच तेजी से लोकप्रिय हुए मोबाइल गेम पबजी ने अब दूसरे देशों में भी अच्छी खासी पैठ बना ली है। एक ओर जहां माता-पिता और नीति निर्माता इस हिंसात्मक खेल के नकारात्मक प्रभाव से परेशान हैं, वहीं मोबाइल गेम का गढ़ माने जाने वाले देश ताइवान ने इसका प्रयोग आर्थिक रिश्ते मजबूत करने में किया है। बुधवार को भारत में ताइवान के शीर्ष अधिकारी यानी प्रतिनिधि राजदूत थ्यान चुंग क्वांग ने युवाओं के एक समूह से चर्चा में कहा कि भारत के लोग इस खेल में काफी बेहतर प्रदर्शन कर रहे हैं। ताइवान अपने गेमिंग सॉफ्टवेयर और हार्डवेयर का प्रचार कर रहा है और भारत के छोटे शहरों में 60 दिनों तक ताइवान के मोबाइल गेमों का प्रचार किया जाएगा। उन्होंने युवाओं से कहा कि हाथों और आंख के बीच सही तालमेल और तेज विकसित होती संस्कृति राष्ट्रीय विकास के लिए आवश्यक हैं। उन्होंने आशा जताई कि भारतीय युवा जीतना जारी रखेंगे।



आपका पक्ष

वन क्षेत्र बढ़ने से प्रदूषण में राहत

केंद्रीय पर्यावरण मंत्री प्रकाश जावड़ेकर ने लोकसभा में बताया है कि पिछले एक वर्ष में देश के वन क्षेत्र में एक प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है। अब भारत के कुल क्षेत्रफल का 24.39 प्रतिशत हिस्सा हरित क्षेत्र के तहत है। संसद में प्रश्न काल के दौरान प्रकाश जावड़ेकर ने कहा कि यदि किसी विकास कार्य के लिए एक पेड़ काटा जाता है तो उसके बदले उसी स्थान या किसी अन्य स्थान पर 3-4 पौधे लगाए जाते हैं। संबंधित आंकड़ों में किसी तरह की गलती से बचने के लिए नियमित अंतराल के बाद सैटेलाइट से चित्र लिए गए, जिससे पेटु तथा फसलों के बीच विभेद किया जा सके। ताजा रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक भारत के कुल क्षेत्रफल के दिन प्रति दिन आबादी बढ़ रही है जिसके चलते निवास, खेती एवं अन्य



कारणों के लिए वन क्षेत्र तबाह किये जा रहे हैं। इसलिए देश में केवल 25 फीसदी से कम वन क्षेत्र बचे हैं एवं देश को पर्यावरण संतुलन के लिए लगभग 8 प्रतिशत वन क्षेत्र की और आवश्यकता है। देश में वन क्षेत्र बढ़ने के मुकाबले सड़क पर गाड़ियां तेजी से बढ़ रही हैं

पिछले एक वर्ष में भारत के वन क्षेत्रफल में करीब एक प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी हुई है

इसलिए दिन प्रति दिन दोपहिया और निजी वाहनों की संख्या तेजी से बढ़ी है। इससे बड़े और छोटे

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

दिल्ली में भी लागू हो आयुष्मान योजना

दिल्ली सरकार को भी आयुष्मान भारत योजना लागू करनी चाहिए। यह स्वास्थ्य योजना देश के करीब 10 करोड़ परिवारों के 50 करोड़ लोगों को 5 लाख रुपये तक मुफ्त इलाज मुहैया कराती है। दिल्ली सरकार तर्क दे रही है कि आयुष्मान योजना से दिल्ली के कम ही लोगों को लाभ होगा और इस योजना से बेहतर दिल्ली सरकार की स्वास्थ्य योजना है। सवाल यह है कि अगर किसी योजना से एक भी व्यक्ति को लाभ पहुंचे तो सरकारों को उस योजना को अपनाना चाहिए। किसी योजना से कम लोगों को लाभ मिलने का हवाला देकर उसे लागू नहीं करने का फैसला उचित नहीं है। इसलिए दिल्ली सरकार को अविलंब आयुष्मान भारत योजना को दिल्ली में लागू करना चाहिए।



दैनिक जागरण

बाधा जितनी बड़ी होती है, विजय भी उतनी ही बड़ी होती है

कांग्रेस का असमंजस

रहुल गांधी की ओर से कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष पद से इस्तीफे की पेशकश किए जाने के एक माह बाद भी यह जानना कठिन है कि पार्टी में क्या हो रहा है और उसका नेतृत्व कौन संभालने वाला है? रहुल गांधी एक ओर यह कह रहे हैं कि वह अपने फैसले पर अडिग हैं और दूसरी ओर बतौर अध्यक्ष बैठकें और फैसले भी करने में लगे हुए हैं। गत दिवस उन्होंने विभिन्न राज्यों के नेताओं के साथ बैठक करने के साथ छत्तीसगढ़ में कांग्रेस के नए अध्यक्ष की नियुक्ति भी की। उन्होंने यह भी दर्द बयान किया कि उनकी ओर से इस्तीफे की पेशकश किए जाने के बाद भी कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेता अपनी जिम्मेदारी का अहसास नहीं कर रहे हैं। आखिर वह इन वरिष्ठ नेताओं से क्या चाह रहे हैं? क्या वह यह चाहते हैं कि सभी वरिष्ठ नेता और खासकर वे नेता अपना पद छोड़ दें जिनके प्रति वह अपनी नाखुशी प्रकट कर चुके हैं? अगर रहुल गांधी ऐसा ही चाह रहे हैं तो इसका मतलब यही निकलता है कि वह लोकसभा चुनाव में हार के लिए अपने साथ-साथ इन नेताओं को भी जिम्मेदार मान रहे हैं। पता नहीं वह क्या सोच रहे हैं, लेकिन पार्टी के संविधान के मुताबिक तो कुछ होता हुआ दिखता नहीं। कांग्रेस के संविधान के अनुसार पार्टी अध्यक्ष के त्यागपत्र की स्थिति में नए अध्यक्ष की नियुक्ति होने तक कार्यसमिति किसी को अंतरिम अध्यक्ष बनाएगी। कहीं इसमें इसलिए देरी तो नहीं हो रही है, क्योंकि रहुल गांधी अपने इस्तीफे की पेशकश तक ही सीमित हैं और यह स्पष्ट नहीं कि अध्यक्ष न रहने की स्थिति में पार्टी में उनकी क्या भूमिका होगी? अभी तो यही लग रहा है कि अगर वह अध्यक्ष पद छोड़ भी देते हैं तो पद के पीछे से पार्टी वही चलाते रहेंगे। इस सिलसिले में इसकी भी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकते कि वह पार्टी में सक्रिय बने रहने और जनता की लड़ाई लड़ते रहने की बात कर रहे हैं।

विश्व राजनीति में ऐसे उदाहरण कम ही मिलते हैं कि किसी नेता ने पार्टी की कमान छोड़ने के बाद फिर से उसकी कमान संभाली हो, लेकिन भारतीय राजनीति में कई ऐसे नेता रहे जिन्होंने पार्टी की अध्यक्षता छोड़ने के कुछ समय बाद फिर से उसकी कमान अपने हाथ में ले ली। यह काम इंदिरा गांधी भी कर चुकी हैं। पहली बार वह नेहरू के समय ही कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष बन गई थीं। दोबारा उन्होंने 1970 के दशक में पार्टी की कमान संभाली और फिर उसके बाद से कांग्रेस पूरी तौर पर गांधी परिवार की पार्टी बनकर रह गई। यह किसी से छिपा नहीं कि नरसिंह राव और सीताराम केसरी को किस तरह गांधी परिवार के दबाव में काम करना पड़ा। इसी दबाव का सामना मनमोहन सरकार को भी करना पड़ा। अगर कांग्रेस को गांधी परिवार के हिसाब से ही चलना है तो फिर रहुल गांधी के अध्यक्ष पद छोड़ने का कोई मतलब नहीं। यह भी ध्यान रहे कि जहां सोनिया गांधी संग्रम अध्यक्ष हैं वहीं प्रियंका गांधी वाड़ा महासचिव के रूप में सक्रिय हैं। क्या यह संभव है कि गांधी परिवार के बाहर का कोई पार्टी अध्यक्ष प्रियंका गांधी को आदेश-निर्देश दे सके?

महागटबंधन और ममता

पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री एवं तृणमूल प्रमुख ममता बनर्जी ने बुधवार को विधानसभा में कहा कि देश एवं राज्य हित में भाजपा से लड़ने के लिए तृणमूल, वाममोर्चा और कांग्रेस एकजुट हों। विधानसभा के मासूम सत्र में बुधवार को पहली बार भाग लेने के लिए पहुंची ममता ने राज्यपाल के आभिभाषण पर जवाब देते हुए नेता विपक्ष अब्दुल मन्नान और वाममोर्चा विधायक दल के नेता सुजन चक्रवर्ती से कहा कि वृहतर स्वा्थं के लिए हम सभी को एकजुट होने की आवश्यकता है। हालांकि ममता ने यह भी कहा कि इसका वह मतलब नहीं कि हम राजनीतिक रूप से कोई गठजोड़ करें, लेकिन राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर जो हमारे साझा मुद्दे हैं, उन पर हम साथ आ सकते हैं। ममता की इस अपील को तुरंत वाममोर्चा और कांग्रेस ने खारिज कर दिया था। ऐसा नहीं है कि तृणमूल प्रमुख ने पहली बार वाममोर्चा एवं कांग्रेस को एकजुट करने की बात कही है। इससे पहले पिछले वर्ष 21 जुलाई की अपनी रैली से ममता ने सभी भाजपा विरोधी दलों को एकजुट होने की अपील की थी, यहां तक कि अपने धुरविरोधी माकपा को भी साथ आने के लिए कहा था। इसके लिए भाजपा विरोधी विपक्षी दलों की लोकसभा चुनाव से पहले 19 जनवरी को ब्रिगेड परेड मैदान में संयुक्त रैली आयोजित की थी। जिसमें कांग्रेस समेत 23 दलों के नेता पहुंचे थे, लेकिन वामदल शामिल नहीं हुए थे। इसीलिए ममता को भी पता है कि उनकी यह अपील काम नहीं करने वाली है। ऐसे में भाजपा हमलावर हो गई और कहने लगी कि सुश्री बनर्जी ने भी मान लिया है कि वह अकेले भाजपा से मुकाबला नहीं कर सकतीं। ऐसे में तृणमूल के लिए ममता का यह बयान काफी उल्टा न पड़ जाए इसको देखते हुए गुरुवार को तृणमूल की ओर से विधानसभा में संसदीय कार्यों के राज्यमंत्री तापस राय ने कहा कि मुख्यमंत्री ने वाम एवं कांग्रेस से गठबंधन की बातें नहीं कही है। मीडिया ने उनकी बातों की गलत व्याख्या की है। इस पर वाममोर्चा एवं कांग्रेस के विधायकों ने विरोध किया और कहा कि मीडिया ने गलत नहीं कहा है इसके बाद ने लोग वाकआउट कर गए, परंतु यहाँ एक बड़ा सवाल यह उठ रहा है कि आखिर मीडिया ने अपने मन से तो ऐसी खबरें नहीं प्रकाशित-प्रचारित की है?

स्वास्थ्य के मोर्चे पर सुधार की दरकार

सुधीर कुमार

नीति आयोग ने ‘स्वस्थ राज्य, प्रगतिशील भारत’ शीर्षक से एक रिपोर्ट जारी की है। शिशु मृत्यु दर, जन्म दर एवं प्रजनन दर सहित कुल 23 संकेतकों के आधार पर तैयार की गई इस स्वास्थ्य सूचकांक में केरल पहले, आंध्र प्रदेश दूसरे और महाराष्ट्र तीसरे स्थान पर है, जबकि 21 बड़े राज्यों की सूची में बिहार 21वें, उत्तर प्रदेश 20वें, उत्तराखंड 19वें और ओडिशा 18वें स्थान पर है। इस स्वास्थ्य सूचकांक का उद्देश्य राज्यों को गुणवत्तापूर्ण स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं में सुधार के लिए प्रेरित करने तथा उनमें प्रतिस्पर्धा की भावना का विकास करना है।

स्वस्थ भारत के सपने को साकार करने के लिए स्वास्थ्य सूचकांक में निचले पायदान पर खड़े राज्यों को स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं में सुधार करने की जरूरत है। बिहार में चमकी बुखार की वजह से सैकड़ों बच्चे काल कलियंत्र हो गए। स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में पर्याप्त निवेश तथा बुनियादी स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं में सुधार करके ऐसे मामलों में कमी लाई जा सकती है। गौरतलब है कि स्वास्थ्य पर सरकारी खर्च के मामले में भारत विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के मानक से काफी पीछे

स्वास्थ्य पर सरकारी खर्च के मामले में भारत विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के मानक से काफी पीछे है

है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने सकल घरेलू उत्पाद का करीबन 5 फीसद हिस्सा स्वास्थ्य पर खर्च करने का मानक बनाया हुआ है। चिंताजनक यह है कि स्वास्थ्य पर सरकारी खर्च के मामले में हम श्रीलंका, बांग्लादेश एवं नेपाल से भी पीछे हैं। चीन में सकल घरेलू उत्पाद का 3 फीसद, अमेरिका और ब्रिटेन में क्रमशः 8.3 और 9.6 फीसद व्यय किया जाता है, जबकि भारत में जीडीपी का एक से डेढ़ फीसद हिस्सा ही स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं पर खर्च किया जाता है। वहीं आबादी के अनुपात में डॉक्टरों की संख्या के मामले में भी हम काफी पिछड़े हुए हैं। एक लाख की आबादी पर भारत में महज 80 डॉक्टर हैं, जबकि चीन में 130 डॉक्टर हैं।

इसी तरह भारत में एक लाख की आबादी पर मात्र 61 नर्स कार्यरत हैं, जबकि चीन में यह संख्या 96 है। देश में अच्छे और प्रशिक्षित

शिक्षा को भारत केंद्रित बनाने का अवसर



गिरीश्वर मिश्र

त्रिभाषा सूत्र बहुभाषा भाषी भारतीय समाज के लिए सर्वथा उपयुक्त है। भाषा के संस्कार द्वारा ही संस्कृति एवं ज्ञान की समस्त विधाओं में प्रवेश और विचार की दृष्टि मिलती है

भारत सरकार द्वारा नई शिक्षा नीति-2019 का मसौदा 21वीं सदी के लिए ‘भारत केंद्रित’ और ‘जीवंत ज्ञान समाज’ के निर्माण के संकल्प के साथ प्रस्तुत हुआ है। भारत को केंद्र में रख कर शिक्षा पर विचार करना उन सभी लोगों के लिए सुखद और संतोषदायी अनुभूति है जो उसके विस्मरण, उपेक्षा या अवांछित प्रस्तुति से खिन्न रह करते थे। ऐसे ही ‘ज्ञान केंद्रित समाज’ का विचार भी भारतीयों के लिए संतोषदायी प्रतीत होता है जो ज्ञान को पवित्र, क्लेश दूर करने, मुक्ति देने वाला मानते हैं। यह जरूर आवश्यक है कि स्वामी विवेकानंद के आधे-अधूरे वक्तव्य के अलावा कोई सार्थक भारतीय विचार उल्लेख करने योग्य नहीं मिला। समृद्ध ज्ञान की शंकराचार्य, तिरुवल्लीर से लेकर कबीर कवि शायरी और लोक-प्रचलित अनेक परंपराएं भी पूरे भारत में मौजूद हैं। शिक्षा की मानवीय परिकल्पना को साकर करने वाले दो महापुरुषों का स्मरण किए बिना मन नहीं मानता। एक तो नोबेल विजेता पाने वाले गुरुदेव रबींद्रनाथ टैगोर हैं, जिन्होंने ऐसे भारत की कल्पना की थी ‘जहां चित्त भय शून्य हो, जहां सिर उन्नत हो, जहां ज्ञान मुक्त हो।’ गुरुदेव के हिसाब से शिक्षा मुक्त करती है और ज्ञान के आंतरिक प्रकाश से परिपूर्ण कर देती है। रचना और सुजन से भरी शिक्षा वासनाओं और स्वाहसों से मुक्त कर विश्व को स्वीकार करने का साहस देती है और अनुभव करने के लिए सहजगुंथित देती है। दूसरे महापुरुष हैं महात्मा गांधी, उनके विचार में ‘शिक्षा का मूल उद्देश्य

मनुष्य को सच्चे अर्थ में मनुष्य बनाना है। जो शिक्षा मानवीय सदगुणों के विकास में योग नहीं देती और व्यक्ति के सर्वांगीण विकास का मार्ग नहीं प्रशस्त करती वह शिक्षाअनुपयोगी है।’ वह यह भी कहते थे कि ‘बालक की आध्यात्मिक, मानसिक और शारीरिक क्षमताओं के पूर्ण विकास का दायित्व शिक्षा पर है।’ जब तक शरीर, मस्तिष्क और आत्मा का विकास एक साथ नहीं हो जाता तब तक केवल बौद्धिक विकास एकांगी ही रहेगा। दोनों ही महापुरुष शिक्षा को भारत, ज्ञान और मनुष्यता के व्यापक परिप्रेक्ष्य में देख रहे थे। शिक्षा नीति ने प्रकट रूप से भारत के बाहर के चिंतन को ही भारत को समझने का प्रमुख आधार बनाया है।

21वीं सदी की दुनिया में खड़े होकर भारत केंद्रित विचार ही इस नीति का खांचा और ढांचा है। यह भी उल्लेखनीय है कि 21 वीं सदी की अवधारणा सिर्फ वैश्वीकरण, प्रौद्योगिकीकरण विशेषत डिजिटलीकरण के अर्थ में लेी गई है जो भारत को एक बड़ी आर्थिक शक्ति के रूप रूपान्तरित करने के लिए जरूरी है। ज्ञान-समाज का आशय भी वही से लिया गया है। ज्ञान केंद्रित समाज सूचना और ज्ञान आधारित सामाजिक-आर्थिक संगठन को न्योता देता है। सूचना, ज्ञान के उत्पादन और प्रसार से उपजे नवाचार को आत्मसात करने के लिए जरूरी है आर्थिक और सामाजिक विकास की संतुलित सार्वजनिक नीति का विकास करना, उसे लागू करना और उसे निरंतर तरीे-लाजा करते रहना। आशा की जाती है कि डिजिटल तकनीक के उपयोग द्वारा



अवधेश राजपूत

पारदर्शिता आएगी, व्यापार की क्षमता बढ़ेगी, नागरिक सुविधाओं को बढ़ाना संभव होगा।

पश्चिमी दुनिया में औद्योगिक क्रांति के बाद सूचना का युग आया और अब ज्ञान का युग घोषित हुआ है जो उत्तर आधुनिकता की निशानी है। ज्ञान-समाज में सूचना नहीं ज्ञान सबसे बड़ी संपदा है। लोगों के मन मस्तिष्क में क्या बसा है और क्या भौतिक रूप में आ सकता है वही अर्थव्यवस्था को आगे ले चलेगा। उच्च विकास की स्थिति वाले समाज में ज्ञान के उत्पादन और उपयोग से समृद्धि और खुशहाली लाने का स्वप्न जा रहा है। वस्तुतः ज्ञान-समाज उन समाजों को व्यक्त करता है जो आर्थिक और सांस्कृतिक रूप से वैज्ञानिक और तकनीकी ज्ञान पैदा करने की क्षमता पर निर्भर हैं। ज्ञान अब बाजार में एक खास व्यापारिक उत्पाद है। ज्ञान-समाज रचना और विधि की दृष्टि से एक वैचारिक चेतना को व्यक्त करते हैं। ऐसे समाज में शिक्षा जीवनपर्यंत चलती रहेगी, क्योंकि पुराना व्यर्थ होता रहेगा नया अर्जित करते रहना होगा। ज्ञान की जटिलता निरंतर बढ़ती जाएगी। तीव्र गति से मिलती सूचना के अर्थ को ग्रहण करने

और जटिल ज्ञान के प्रति एक नए दृष्टिकोण की जरूरत होगी। सीखने की व्यक्तिनिष्ठता और ज्ञान-वितरण के वैश्वीकरण के बीच अध्यापक को फिर से परिभाषित करना होगा।

ज्ञान और सूचना आज आम आदमी की जिंदगी पर असर डाल रहे हैं। सूचना और संचार की प्रौद्योगिकी को साझा करना अर्थव्यवस्था और समाज को बदलने की शक्ति रखता है। समावेशी ज्ञान समाज के निर्माण के लिए सूचना तक सबकी पहुंच बनाना प्रमुख आधार है। माना जा रहा है कि सूचना तक सार्वभौम पहुंच होने से शांति होगी और साथ ही टिकाऊ आर्थिक विकास होगा। शिक्षा नीति-2019 का मसौदा भारत में शिक्षा की प्रचलित विसंगतियों का गहन विश्लेषण करने के उपरांत भ्रष्टाचारमुक्त व्यवस्था की वकालत करता है। भविष्य की अपेक्षाओं का आकलन कर महत्वपूर्ण संस्तुतियां की गई हैं। यह संतोष का विषय है कि इसमें भाषा और संस्कृति के महत्व को भी केंद्रीय स्थान दिया गया है। शिक्षा की व्यवस्था से जुड़े कई व्यावहारिक प्रश्नों पर पहली बार विचार करते हुए उसके बहुस्तरीय पुनर्गठन और तदनुसार

बाल संरक्षण कानूनों में बदलाव जरूरी



सुरन्धा अय्यर

बाल अधिकार क्षेत्र एक बड़ा उदाहरण है कि कैसे बुद्धिजीवी और विशेषज्ञ अपनी विद्वता के बावजूद गलत हो सकते हैं

लिए गए ऐसे बच्चों को जबरदस्ती 18 साल की उम्र तक फोस्टर केयर या अनाथालयों में रखा जा सकता है।

फोस्टर केयर संबंधी दिशानिर्देशों में कहा गया है कि फोस्टर प्लेसमेंट के लिए जैविक माता-पिता की सहमति अनिवार्य नहीं है और इसका दारोमदार केवल ‘जरूरत’ और ‘मौके के हिसाब’ से तय किया जाएगा। दिशानिर्देशों में हिदायत दी गई है कि ‘बच्चे के परिवारों को यह नहीं बताया जाना चाहिए कि फोस्टर फैमिली या फोस्टर चाइल्ड कहां रह रहे हैं... ताकि फोस्टर फैमिली पर कोई नकारात्मक प्रभाव न पड़े।’ पैदाइशी परिवार के प्रति यह नकारात्मक रवैया फोस्टर व्यवस्था के इरादों को अच्छी तरह जाहिर कर देता है। पश्चिमी फोस्टर केयर कानूनों की तरह ही भारतीय फोस्टर केयर कानून में भी बच्चों को मां-बाप से अलग करने के लिए यह जरूरी नहीं है कि बच्चे गंभीर उत्पीड़न या उपेक्षा के शिकार हों। इसके लिए माता-पिता की ‘उपयुक्तता’ और ‘जुबानी उत्पीड़न’, मसलन डंट-डपट एवं ‘भावनात्मक उत्पीड़न’ जैसी वजहों का सहारा लिया जा सकता है।

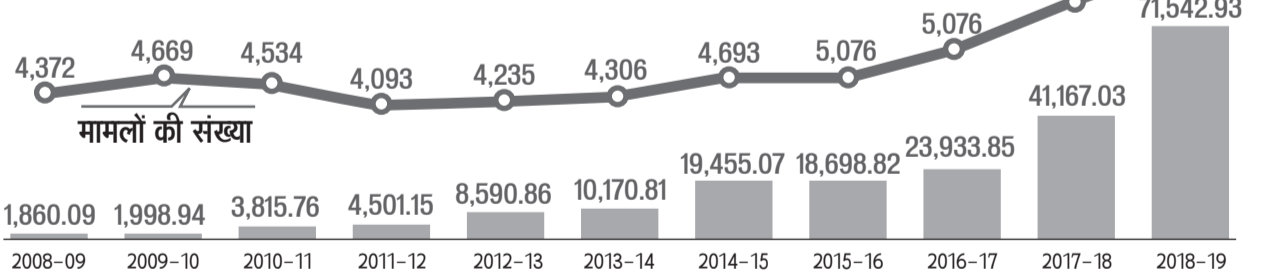
बाल अधिकार क्षेत्र पूरी तरह से पश्चिमी देशों में उत्पादित किया गया है। चाहे वे भारत में हों या विदेश में,

बाल अधिकार पेशेवरों और संगठनों को पश्चिमी प्रणाली में प्रशिक्षित किया जाता है। पश्चिमी बाल संरक्षण मॉडल की विफलताओं के बावजूद वे इससे परे सोचने में असमर्थ हैं। इस विफलता के दो कारण हैं। पहला ऐसे लोग हैं, जो अपने प्रशिक्षण के कारण पश्चिमी परिवार-विरोधी सोच के इतने पक्षपाती हैं कि वे बाल संरक्षण के आलोचकों को रूढ़िवादी बताकर खारिज कर देते हैं। दूसरों के लिए, बाल संरक्षण के पश्चिमी मॉडल का समर्थन करना उनके व्यवसाय में प्रगति का विषय है। बाल अधिकारों की पश्चिमी प्रायोजित दुनिया में पश्चिमी दृष्टिकोण की वकालत किए बिना स्थापित होना मुश्किल है। यह केवल फीडा का नहीं, मान्यता का भी विषय है। इस माहौल में महिला एवं बाल विकास मंत्री के पद पर स्मृति ईरानी की नियुक्ति, जो बाल अधिकार विशेषज्ञों के क्षेत्र से जुड़ी नहीं हैं, एक अच्छा बदलाव लाने का कारण बन सकता है। इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि बाल संरक्षण पेशेवरों द्वारा माताओं के रूप में आम महिलाओं की आवाज को नज़रअंदाज किया गया है। बाल अधिकार क्षेत्र इस बात का एक बड़ा उदाहरण है कि कैसे बुद्धिजीवी और विशेषज्ञ अपनी विद्वता के बावजूद गलत हो सकते हैं।

हम माताओं और बच्चों को निर्दयी विशेषज्ञों की जरूरत नहीं हैं। महिला एवं बाल विकास मंत्री के रूप में हमें एक ऐसी महिला की जरूरत है जो भारतीय परिवारों की गलतियों को स्वीकार कर सकती है, लेकिन जो हमारे दक्षिण एशियाई परिवारों के उन तीर-तरीकों को भी स्वीकार कर सकती है जो बच्चों की परवरिश के लिए अच्छे हैं। एक मां के रूप में मेरी उम्मीद है कि स्मृति ईरानी पश्चिमी बाल संरक्षण के काले बादलों को दूर हटाएंगी

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तथ्य-कथ्य | बैंक जालसाजी के बढ़ते मामले (करोड़ रुपये में)



महिला-विरोधी प्रथा

तत्काल तीन तलाक पर फिर वही बहने शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में क्षमा शर्मा ने मुस्लिम महिलाओं के प्रति संवेदना का परिचय दिया है। तीन तलाक चालू रखने के पक्ष में दिए जाने वाले तर्क ज्यादातर असत्य पर आधारित हैं। बताया जाएगा कि तीन तलाक तो होता ही बहुत कम है। मानो कम संख्या में अन्याय होना कोई बुरी बात नहीं। किंतु आरिफ मोहम्मद खान द्वारा उपलब्ध कराए गए आंकड़ों के अनुसार लगभग 46 प्रतिशत मुस्लिम औरतें अपने जीवन में तीन तलाक का शिकार बनती हैं। यह आंकड़ा व्यावहारिक आधार पर सच दिखाता है। हर दूसरी मुस्लिम महिला इसकी गवाही देगी। तीन तलाक बिल द्वारा मनीमान तलाक देने वाले मुस्लिम मर्द के लिए निर्धारित तीन माह के दंड पर इसी तबके ने बहुत हल्ला मचा रखा है। क्या इन्हें पता है कि एक पत्नी के रहते दूसरा विवाह करने वाले हिंदू पुरुष को क्या दंड मिलता है? उसकी दूसरी शादी निरस्त की जाती है, एक वर्ष का कारावास कानून के अंतर्गत मिलता है, उसे व्याभिचार का दोषी मानकर आइपीसी की धारा 497 में 6 वर्ष का कारावास और मिलता है। साथ ही सरकारी सर्विस में हो तो बर्खास्त भी किया जाता है। हिंदू कानून की इन व्यवस्थाओं का कोई विरोध कभी नहीं सुना गया। हिंदू को कुल 7 साल की जेल के मुकाबले मुस्लिम के लिए प्रस्तावित 3 साल की सजा को नाकाबिलेबर्दशत क्यों समझा जा रहा है? कारावास के बिना कानून को निवारक या निरोधक कैसे बनाया जा सकता है? तमाम अपराधों हेतु जेल की सजाएं मौजूद हैं। कभी किसी ने नहीं कहा कि अपराधी के जेल जाने के बाद उसके परिवार को कौन पालेगा? इसी मामले में यह तर्क क्यों दिया जा रहा है? वस्तुतः यह तर्क तीन तलाक के समर्थकों की दिमागी उमज है। इसे विचार-योग्य न

मेलबक्स

मानते हुए औरतों पर सदियों से होते आ रहे जुल्म को दूर किया हो जाना चाहिए।

आस्था गर्ग, बागपत रोड, मेरठ

सीट बढ़ाने पर भी होनी चाहिए बात

भारत का केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय यानी दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय इस समय 2020 की प्रवेश प्रणाली को लेकर समाचार पत्रों में चर्चा का विषय बना हुआ है। दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय प्रशासन ने अपने निर्धारित प्रवेश प्रणाली कार्यक्रम को लेकर पहली सूची जारी कर दी है। विभिन्न पाठ्यक्रमों के सित तरह से अंकों के प्रतिशत की सूची जारी की गई है, उसमें 98-99 फीसद अंकों वाले छात्र-छात्राओं के लिए प्रवेश के दरवाजे खोले गए। ऐसे में सवाल यह उठता है कि दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय भारत का केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय है और यहां पर प्रवेश लेने के लिए विभिन्न प्रदेशों से बच्चे आते हैं। लेकिन लंबे समय से विश्वविद्यालय के कॉलेजों में कई तरह की मांगे की जाती रही हैं, जिस पर न तो विश्वविद्यालय प्रशासन ध्यान दे रहा और न ही केंद्र सरकार। विभिन्न कॉलेजों को साथ कालीन बनाने की मांग लंबे समय से जोर पकड़ रही है। दिल्ली में निवास करने वाले छात्र-छात्राओं के लिए अलग से निर्धारित कोटा बनाने की बात भी कई वर्षों से ठंडे बस्ते में है। सीटों को बढ़ाने पर भी ध्यान नहीं दिया जा रहा है। इसके साथ-साथ लंबे समय से कुछ ऐसे पाठ्यक्रम भी हैं, जिस पर सीटों में इजाफा करने की बात कभी नहीं की गई। लगातार अंकों का प्रतिशत बढ़ता जा रहा है और सीटें घटती जा रही हैं। विश्वविद्यालय प्रशासन इस विषय पर आवश्यक रूप से ध्यान दे।

विजय कुमार धनिया, नई दिल्ली

देशहित में हो गठबंधन

बीते लोकसभा चुनावों में समाजवादी पार्टी एवं बहुजन समाज पार्टी का गठबंधन खासा चर्चा का विषय रहा। कई धाराों पर आधारित इस गठबंधन से उत्तर प्रदेश की दोनों क्षेत्रीय पार्टियों को काफी उम्मीदें थीं, परंतु प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की लहर में सभी आशा-अकांक्षाएं धूमिल हो गईं। धर्म, जाति, स्वा्थं एवं अहंकार पर आधारित इस गठजोड़ के गणित को जागरूक जनता पहले ही भांप गई थी, जिसकी परिणति चुनाव परिणाम में हार के रूप में हुई। तम्र 21वीं सदी में की रहे हैं। देश में जागरूक मतदाताओं की एक नई जमात तैयार हो गई है। अब धर्म, जाति के फेर में फंसाकर जनता को बेवकूफ नहीं बनाया जा सकता। भविष्य में भी राजनीतिक दलों को एक बात ध्यान में जरूर रखना चाहिए कि गठबंधन का मूल उद्देश्य देश की प्रगति और विकास होना चाहिए। अपनी स्वा्थं सिद्धि एवं पद प्रतिष्ठा की लालसा रखने वाले गठबंधन को देश की जनता अब स्वीकार नहीं करेगी। भविष्य में भी गठबंधन से पूर्व क्षेत्रीय दलों को इस विषय पर विचार जरूर करना चाहिए।

हितेंद्र डेढ़ा, पिल्ला गांव

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

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