

# Leadership mindset hazards

The only solution is for CEOs to behave at exemplary standards, well above the legal prescription



### THE WISE LEADER

R GOPALAKRISHNAN

Success can make a person rich but can also pose personal and reputational risks. After my book was published recently, a few readers expressed incredulity about how power could actually “damage” the brain. Unfortunately, bad things do happen to excellent CEOs. The causes arise from: (i) behaviour of the CEO/board, (ii) politics of the country, (iii) judgements of

the judiciary, (iv) public perception, and (v) bad luck. Here are some recent incidents, exemplifying these causes, each with a cautionary lesson.

First, there is Rajat Gupta, the effervescent Indian-origin business leader who attended IIT, HBS and went on to lead McKinsey globally. At the peak of his professional accomplishments and friendship with the who's who of the world, he was trapped in a saga of cell phone calls and others' share dealings; Gupta was convicted in 2012 on insider trading charges and sentenced to prison. After release, Gupta wrote Mind Without Fear, wherein he stated, on the advice of his lawyers, what he earlier did not. Acts like calling his business partner, Raj Rajaratnam, within 16 seconds of a board meeting probably nailed the circumstantial evidence. He has argued that making calls within 16 seconds of the conclusion of a board meeting is normal. Some who heard him wondered whether he might have

lost touch with reality.

High profile Thomas Middelhoff had led the largest German publishing group, Bertelsmann, with great distinction until 2002 when he was eased out. By then, Middelhoff was an international business icon. He then joined German retailer, Arcandor, which had fallen into troubled times. After some years of leading Arcandor, he was accused of inappropriate corporate conduct such as taking private trips on company-chartered aircraft and lavishly redecorating the office. A judge in an Essen court sentenced him to three years in prison for embezzlement and tax evasion in 2014. Middelhoff was jailed despite his intention to appeal.

Released from jail in 2018, he said that he did not feel ashamed because, according to him, “99 per cent of the German people already know that I am a convict.” He denied that he was wrongfully convicted. He did not regard himself as a criminal, but he fully accepted

his sentence. He had never wanted to enrich himself, but, regrettably, he had been neglectful of not following proper procedures. Middelhoff stated that he had “become out of touch with reality.” Nightmarish! Auch in Deutschland?

Eike Batista, a Brazilian mining tycoon, was a daring and fabulously successful entrepreneur, a symbol of flair in Brazil. He was well connected, worked incredibly hard and was the seventh richest person in the world in 2012. Dilma Rousseff, former president of Brazil, had hailed Batista as ‘a national pride’. However, the popular perception was that Batista had connections with all political parties, hence his empire was also sinister. In the changed scenario after Rousseff’s regime, in July 2018, Batista was sentenced to 30 years in jail. He was allotted an ordinary prison cell with a squat toilet and cold water without recourse to ‘Mallya in British courts’ tactics. Nightmarish!

Zhang Wenzhong, the high-profile and successful promoter of Chinese supermarket, Wumart, was convicted in 2009 on charges of fraud, bribery and embezzlement. After 10 years of incarceration, in a different political environment, the Chinese supreme court ordered his release with the judgement that he was innocent in the first place.

High profile and undulating politics make nightmarish bedfellows, *jinfang* (beware, in Chinese).

Former Nissan-Renault CEO, Carlos Ghosn, has already spent more time in Japanese jails than he ever imagined. All the facts are not yet known, at least they are not clear to this writer. But it disturbs the peace of mind that he was held in jail without trial for several weeks. In polite Japan? *Nihon demo?*

The mind of the leader has a delicate equilibrium. In his book, *The Wisdom of Psychopaths*, psychiatrist Kevin Dutton describes one of the leadership mindset hazards as psychopathic behaviour, a condition combining ruthless power, oozing charm and gratification — like James Bond, according to the author.

A CEO is under intense public scrutiny, and can be convicted in the public perception long before the legal processes. The only solution is for CEOs to behave at exemplary standards, well above the legal prescription. More about this aspect in the column next month.

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# The markets couldn't have asked for more!

More than the rate cut, change in the stance of the policy and RBI's commitment to ensure “adequate” liquidity will encourage banks to cut loan rates



### BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

The suspense is over. Staring at a faltering growth and encouraged by tamed inflation, the central bank in Asia's third largest economy yet again announced a 25 basis points rate cut on Thursday at the end of three-day meeting of its rate-setting committee — the third time in a row. One basis point (bps) is a hundredth of a percentage point. It has also changed the stance of the monetary policy, from neutral to accommodative.

More than the rate cut, the bigger takeaway from the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) second bi-monthly monetary policy in fiscal year 2020 is the change in the stance of the policy. It had changed the stance from “calibrated tightening” to “neutral” in February while making the first rate cut in the current cycle.

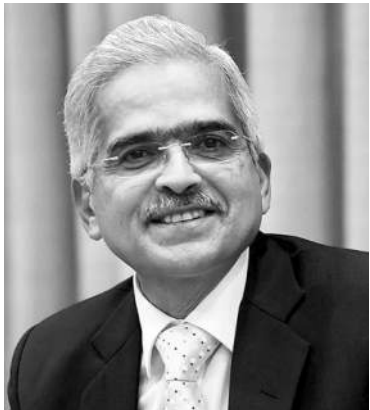
Theoretically, a neutral stance means the policy direction can be either way — the rate can go up or down, depending on the incoming data. Going by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das' explanation of the

accommodative stance in his post-policy media conference, any rate hike is “off the table” for now. He couldn't be more explicit but it's clear that there could be more rate cuts, depending on the estimated fiscal deficit in the current financial year (we will get know this on July 5 when the Union Budget is presented) and the trajectory of the monsoon (which will have a bearing on the inflation).

Another key takeaway, again, more important than the rate cut, is the governor's statement that the RBI “will ensure that adequate liquidity is available in the system for all productive purposes”. This is for the first time in recent history the Indian central bank is committing to ensure “adequate liquidity” in the system. In the earlier policies, it had listed actions taken to infuse liquidity in the system in the form of buying government bonds from the market under the so-called open market purchase operations (OMOs), longer term variable-rate repo auction, foreign exchange buy/sell swaps and tweaking the so-called liquidity coverage ratio norms, among others, but it had not given any forward guidance so explicitly.

This will soothe many frayed nerves and help in monetary transmission. For the record, liquidity in the system turned into an average daily surplus in early June after remaining in deficit during April and most of May due to restrained government spending.

The 25 bps rate cut has brought down the RBI's policy rate to 5.75 per cent, a level last seen in July 2010 when the central bank was cutting the policy rate and flooding the system



**CLEAR CUT** Going by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das' explanation of the accommodative stance in his post-policy media conference, any rate hike is “off the table” for now

with liquidity to ward off the impact of depression that enveloped large part of the world, following the collapse of iconic US investment bank Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. We had seen such a series of rate cuts twice in recent past — in January-July 2015, when then governor Raghuram Rajan brought the rate down from 8 per cent to 7.25 per cent and, also in January-June 2013, when D Subbarao cut the rate by an identical margin — from 8 per cent to 7.25 per cent.

Subbarao had done it to spur economic growth, estimated to have slumped to 5 per cent in the year ended March 31, 2013, the slowest pace in a decade. However, unlike now when RBI has changed the stance of the pol-

icy to accommodative, Subbarao had sought to temper expectations of further rate cuts with a warning that the risk of a resurgence in inflation left “little space for further monetary easing”. In 2015, the rate cuts did happen outside the policy meetings too. And, of course, unlike now when the monetary policy committee (MPC) is taking the call on interest rate, on both occasions in the past, it was the governor's call.

Importantly, unlike the past two rate cuts in February and April, the June rate cut decision has been unanimous by all six members of the MPC. There has been no dissent. Also, all six have been in favour of the change in the policy stance.

This strengthens the belief that if the fiscal deficit and inflation are under control, there could be more rate cuts later this year to prop up growth. The RBI has pared its estimate of gross domestic product (GDP) growth by 20 bps to 7 per cent for fiscal year 2020 and it has also cut down its inflation projection. The retail inflation inched up marginally to 2.9 per cent in April but the so-called core or non-food, non-oil manufacturing inflation fell sharply. Assuming a normal monsoon, retail inflation is being projected at 3.4-3.7 per cent for the second half of 2020, marginally lower than the earlier estimate of 3.5-3.8 per cent.

India has lost the tag of the world's fastest growing major economy to China in the March quarter. The economic growth in the last quarter of 2019, ending March, dropped to 5.8 per cent, the lowest in the past 20 quarters.

This also pulled down the annual growth in India's GDP to 6.8 per cent, the slowest in the Modi 1.0 regime.

The market gave a thumbs up to the RBI policy with the 10-year bond yield rallying. The yield dropped from around 7.01 per cent to 6.88 per cent intra-day. Will it last? Will the downward movement spill over to the shorter end of the bond market and to the corporate bonds? Will the commercial banks start cutting their loan rates?

In the current rate cut cycle between February and now, only 21 per cent of the 50 basis points rate cut has been transmitted by the banks. It may take a little while to see the full transmission but this policy, by emphasising on ensuring liquidity and changing the stance, has made efforts to address the issue of monetary transmission. Once we have a concrete framework in place on RBI's liquidity management strategy, the transmission will be faster. The RBI has set up of an internal working group to review the liquidity management framework. The last time such a review took place was in 2014. The committee, which will submit its report in mid-July, is to suggest measures to simplify the current liquidity management framework; clearly communicate the objectives, quantitative measures and liquidity tools to be used by the central bank.

For the time being, what RBI has announced on Thursday is par for the course. The markets could not have asked for more.

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### CHINESE WHISPERS

#### Eco-friendly yoga

The government has a new theme for International Yoga Day 2019. It wants to promote the use of eco-friendly accessories and products during the celebrations. The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy, or AYUSH, has prepared a concept note to raise public awareness on opting for eco-friendly yoga accessories. The note urges ministries to not use PVC mats with a “large-scale presence of cheap varieties” available in the domestic market because they are not recyclable, has contaminants, and adds to air pollution. It has asked ministries to use yoga mats made from jute, rubber and other materials. “Government bodies, yoga institutions and yoga teachers are all potential influencers who can help create more awareness about the same,” the concept note, circulated in various ministries, said.

#### Yoga Day in Ranchi



The main event for this year's Yoga Day is set to be held in Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand. Prime Minister Narendra Modi (*pictured*) will perform yoga and deliver a short address there.

Interestingly, Jharkhand is scheduled for Assembly polls in October. The PM on Thursday tweeted a video clip with the hashtag Yoga Day 2019. “Doing Tadasana properly would enable you to practice many other asanas with ease. Know more about this asana and its benefits,” he tweeted. The main event of the first Yoga Day in 2015 was held in New Delhi. In 2016, it was held in Chandigarh. Punjab was slated to go to the polls in early 2017. The PM attended the 2017 Yoga Day event in Lucknow. UP had elected a Bharatiya Janata Party government just a couple of months before that. In 2018, Dehradun hosted the main event with the PM underlining the importance of the state of Uttarakhand as the birthplace of yoga.

#### No kissing up to the boss

Guna Sub-Divisional Magistrate Shivani Garg issued an intriguing order to her subordinates: “All patwaris, revenue inspectors, nayab tehsildars and tehsildars, please note: If any one of you provide liquor or chicken to additional district magistrate (ADM), I will have to take action against you. I will propose an action for providing undue advantage to your senior officer,” she said in the official WhatsApp group. After the message went viral on social media, she issued a clarification. The ADM would frequently demand that her subordinates bring liquor and non-vegetarian food for him. Fed up, they submitted a memorandum to the district magistrate, which elicited no response. So Garg took it upon herself to issue the warning. Meanwhile, the Madhya Pradesh government has issued immediate transfer orders for the ADM, Dilip Mandavi.

### INSIGHT

## How *jal* can become *shakti*



JYOTI MUKUL

While the debate on air pollution peaks only during winters, especially in the National Capital Region (NCR), thoughts on water contamination and wildlife protection largely remain under the radar in the country, with no visible concerns being expressed either by government functionaries or the citizenry. Debate on these issues remain in the periphery, and certainly outside the NCR.

That said, the BJP's manifesto promise of providing safe drinking water is being speculated to be the reason that a Jal Shakti ministry was formed. This year, when the Indian Meteorological Department has predicted 47 per cent deficit or below normal rainfall in its second forecast, how Jal Shakti rolls out will be important.

The newly christened ministry is expected to work on harnessing the potential of rivers, settling inter-state water disputes and other functions of the erstwhile water resources ministry. Added to these will be the larger work of managing demand and supply of water as a resource. Prime Minister Narendra Modi appointed Gajendra Singh Shekhawat as the Union minister of Jal Shakti, who after taking charge said, “All the water related works will be merged under one ministry.”

Another step taken earlier, before the ruling alliance took the break for elections, was to have a hydropower policy in place which again banks on



istries in Jan Shakti seems the best thing to do for better execution, it is the conservation of river and water bodies that seems to have fallen between the creases over past few decades. Why it is that conservation is secondary to meeting the immediate requirements of people, when it is conservation alone that can ensure future requirements are provided for in the present itself?

India has eight major Himalayan and peninsular rivers and an endless number of smaller and seasonal rivers. Putting everything concerning them under the Jal Shakti umbrella might

in the immediate course lead to a tussle among ministries because of administrative legacy. But if this ministry has to be relevant, it needs to focus on macro-level river conservation which is beyond just Swachh Bharat. Agreed, treating sewage and preventing dumping of waste into rivers is important, but equally urgent is a big plan for conservation.

The plan should mean not just seeing a river in a completely traditional sense but preventing over harnessing, right from the mouth till its tip. This should translate into counting the number of planned megawatts on a river or putting in pump storage capacities within existing hydropower projects to match renewable power generation. It means ensuring that the health of aquatic life is maintained, if inland water transport is to be promoted. And, most importantly drinking water projects for rural areas under Swajal Yojana where the drinking water and sanitation ministry pays 90 per cent of the cost and the panchayat concerned bears the remaining 10 per cent, has a robust user charge structure to prevent wastage and ensure viability.

Now, projects will be scaled up under “Jal se Nal” programme, but these should come up without harm to the local population which will see its resource being transported to other areas. The erstwhile union ministry of water resources had estimated the country's current annual water requirement to be around 1,100 billion cubic which is estimated to go up to around 1,200 billion cubic metre by 2025 and 1,447 billion cubic metre by 2050. For this, banking on public private models or panchayats will not be enough since it would need constant oversight and regulations coupled with viability gap funding.

Jal can become *shakti* only if it is revered, not just on religious grounds but also with conservation in mind.

### LETTERS

#### A stitch in time



This refers to “DHFL assigned default ratings, MFs bleed” (June 6). I would like to reiterate the need for an asset quality review (AQR) of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs), both from the point of view of financial stability and stakeholder awareness. The former chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian had also spoken about the need for AQR of NBFCs. Banks, mutual funds, pension funds, NBFCs and HFCs are closely connected. The credit exposure of NBFCs and HFCs to low rated borrowers or group entities often ends in default that impacts the other entities mentioned.

Keeping in mind the large volume of stressed assets of public sector banks, the last thing the public would like to know is growing stressed asset portfolios of NBFCs and HFCs. It is time for transparency about their credit and investment portfolios as well as their lending and investment practices. Both these sets of entities have large asset portfolios and the depositors, investors and the public at large need to know about their health. Avoiding AQRs will only result in bigger problems at a later stage. It is important from the point of view of financial stability that banks, financial institutions and financial markets are well regulated and supervised. As they say a stitch in time saves nine.

**Arun Pasricha** New Delhi

#### Long-term motive

Apropos V Jayaraman's letter “Learn Hindi” (June 6), the south's aversion to Hindi has a post-Nehru era origin, when a fear psychosis about compulsory imposition of Hindi enveloped the non-Hindi-speaking states. Till then, the three language formula (mother tongue, English and Hindi) was under implementation across the country with reasonable success.

The Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha based in Chennai was and is still doing commendable job in propagating Hindi in the entire south. Most of the literate south Indians have working knowledge of Hindi. The best option today would be to revisit the three language formula, guiding all citizens to familiarise three languages including English, Hindi and a third Indian/foreign language. Social media users in India have been using English or Devanagari scripts for communicating in a language of their choice. Even if not perfect, Google helps in translating content from one language to another.

**M G Warriar** Mumbai

Encourage women

Apropos the news item “Swiping right on digital payments” (June 6), the high level committee on deepening digital payments has listed timely and well-crafted measures to accelerate the growth of digital transactions. Inculcating trust and awareness in the village folk will do wonders. Having

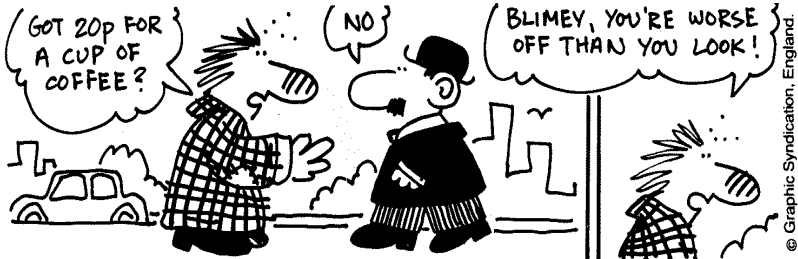


said that, it is imperative to note that women in villages find it difficult to move out as they are tied up with household chores. The distance of an ATM from their dwellings also may stand in the way. Therefore, to rope in women, it is important they learn withdrawal, deposit and sending remittance on a mobile device. The neighbourhood kirana shop's micro ATM is a good bet, but we will have to ensure the secrecy of their accounts/transactions. It will prompt them to use it and learn how to operate it.

**N K Bakshi** Vadodara

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### HAMBONE



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## RBI votes for growth

The central bank is clearly not done yet on rate cuts

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) Monetary Policy Committee has done exactly what the doctor ordered: It reduced the benchmark repo rate by 25 basis points for the third successive time in line with majority market expectations. And unlike the last two policy decisions, this one was unanimous, with all six MPC members voting for a cut in rates. The benchmark rate at 5.75 per cent is now the lowest in the last nine years. Thursday's reduction in the repo rate underscores the theme: Growth impulses have weakened significantly and a sharp slowdown in investment activity, along with a continuing moderation in private consumption growth, is a matter of concern. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das set the tone when he said at the post-policy press conference that the "decision is driven by growth concerns and inflation concerns, in that order". The reason for the concern is obvious as economic growth has lost momentum, slowing for a fourth straight quarter, prompting the MPC to lower its growth projections to 7 per cent in the current fiscal year, down from an earlier forecast of 7.2 per cent.

More than the rate cut, however, the markets were looking for the stance the MPC takes. There was cheer on that front too. By changing the stance from "neutral" to "accommodative" unanimously, the MPC sent a strong message on the shift in preference towards growth, as inflation indicators were likely to remain within the targeted band. Going by Mr Das' strong message that rate hikes are "off the table", it is now clear that the RBI is not done yet on rate cuts.

While Mr Das and his colleagues at the MPC have ticked almost all the right boxes, the only disappointment is that the policy did little to address the concerns over weak transmission of interest rates. This, when the central bank has itself admitted that of the 50 basis points of easing in the first two rate actions this year, only 21 basis points have been passed on to new borrowers so far. A pick-up in the pace of monetary transmission would obviously be one of the key drivers in supporting even the revised growth estimates for the current year. In that context, the markets were clearly hoping for more than just a general assurance that adequate liquidity would be provided to the banking system. The announcement of an internal working group to review the liquidity management framework is welcome, but does little to shore up confidence in the short term at least.

Of course, the government needs to play an important role here. At the core of this mismatch between the RBI's action and the banks' inability to pass on the benefit to borrowers is their inability to cut deposit rates. That's because banks compete for deposits with small savings schemes, which offer around a 7.7 per cent interest rate. There is considerable merit in the suggestions from many quarters that the small savings rates should be linked to the repo rate rather than the 10-year bonds. Another reason for the disappointment in the markets was the absence of specific announcements on the crisis faced by non-banking finance companies. Mr Das did not go beyond saying that the central bank would do whatever it took to ensure financial stability in the system. This is, however, a welcome approach as the central bank should not be seen to bail out a large number of companies which have been slipshod in implementing prudential norms or risk mitigation standards.

## Drought scare

Isolated water conservation measures offer limited gains

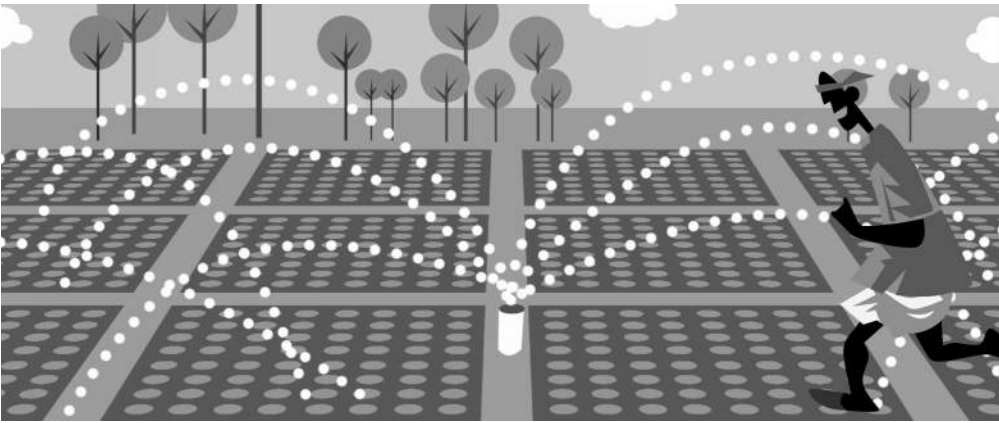
A series of reports published in this newspaper clearly indicates that nearly 40 per cent of the country is facing an acute paucity of pre-monsoon rain, causing severe water distress in scorching heat. Though summer droughts of this kind are not uncommon, the extent and intensity of aridity witnessed this year are rare. The rain deficit has been as high as 48 per cent in the southern peninsula, especially Tamil Nadu and coastal Karnataka; nearly 30 per cent in western India, notably Gujarat and large parts of Maharashtra; 17 per cent in the Central region; and 12 per cent in the north-east. Shortfalls of 70 to 80 per cent have also been reported from some places. The overall countrywide average rainfall between March and May remained 23 per cent below normal.

This is a matter of grave concern. The redeeming factor is that the onset of the monsoon is round the corner and the rain during the four-month monsoon season (June to September) is anticipated to be well spread out and quantitatively normal or somewhat below normal. While the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted the likely rainfall to be around 96 per cent of the long-period average, private weather forecaster Skymet has put it at 91 per cent. But the problem is the forecast made by both of them — that the monsoon would be sluggish to begin with, thus, portending a possible delay in relief from water crisis in some areas. The reason cited for this is the existence of El Nino (warming up of the Pacific Ocean), which often impairs the monsoon performance. However, they differ on the progression of El Nino. While the IMD expects it to turn neutral in the second half of the rainy season, Skymet reckons it to last the whole season, even if in a weaker form.

There is, however, a silver lining to this otherwise perturbing situation. Of the three main facets of drought — meteorological, hydrological and agricultural — the present conditions conform chiefly to the meteorological drought (rainfall inadequacy). Only in some pockets, aridity has accentuated to cause hydrological desiccation as reflected in exhaustion of the surface and groundwater resources. The overall hydrological profile of the country is still positive with the total water stock in 91 major reservoirs monitored by the Central Water Commission being around 14 per cent above the last year's corresponding level and 3 per cent higher than the long-period average (May 30 data). Agricultural drought has, by and large, been averted as the rabi crops have mostly been harvested and the kharif ones are yet to be planted.

An enduring solution to the recurring water crunch lies, indeed, in drought-proofing the vulnerable areas. In-situ conservation of rainwater is the main mantra to do so. The need is to construct rainwater-harvesting structures at the field, village and watershed levels by digging ponds or putting up check dams at suitable sites on the natural water drainage routes. This is a time-tested water management practice that has helped people survive even in the chronically arid areas. But it requires broad-based planning, keeping in view the whole watershed which may transgress village, district or even state boundaries. Piecemeal moves like taking up isolated water conservation works under the rural employment programmes can, at best, offer limited gains.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



## Water reform must begin at the farm

Building a more resilient, diverse and less water-consuming farm system has multiple collateral win-wins

India's water crisis has now assumed mind-boggling proportions. When some of our children in Punjab drink water laced with uranium and more and more groundwater in Bengal and Bihar has arsenic, we need to be seriously worried. With growing rates of urbanisation, the miserable state of urban water supply and sewage treatment is a matter of grave concern. The recurrent droughts and floods afflicting millions every year must surely bring into question the way we have been managing our water resources. No wonder, then, conflicts over water are now commonplace, not merely among states, but across town and country, farm and factory and among those living within the same village or urban locality.

During my presentation to the Prime Minister's Office in 2017, summarising the main recommendations of the committee I chaired on Restructuring the Central Water Commission and Central Ground Water Board, I described the present conjuncture as "India's 1991 moment in water". These are reforms that needed to have happened decades ago. Of course, water reforms would not follow the 1991 template, as they must necessarily and carefully factor in the specifics of water. But the urgency of a paradigm shift is indisputable. I first proposed this in 2012 in the chapter on water in the 12th Plan document. But in the seven years since, the country has seen only faltering progress in this direction.

Over the next four months, every fortnight, this column will address multiple dimensions of India's water crisis and suggest the reforms we need to initiate. I will argue that India appears a water-short country

primarily because we have not transitioned to a new way of managing the fairly abundant water we have. What is not often recognised is that water is India's most important, yet unreformed, infrastructure sector. Without far-reaching reforms, we cannot possibly hope to sustain the rates of growth the economy aspires for.

The reform package must begin with farming. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization's latest AQUASTAT database, agriculture takes up 90 per cent of India's water use. Without reducing this figure dramatically, we can never release enough water for rural and urban domestic needs, as also industry. Even more importantly, without water reform, we cannot address the snowballing agrarian crisis, with 300,000 farmers committing suicide over the past three decades, something without precedent in Indian history.

Irrigation in India is monopolised by a few water-intensive crops like wheat, rice and sugarcane, even in chronically drought-prone states like Maharashtra and Karnataka. Occupying just 4 per cent of cropped area, sugarcane uses up 65 per cent of irrigation water in Maharashtra. In Karnataka, rice and sugarcane, 20 per cent of cropped area, consume 70 per cent of irrigation water. Even a small reduction in the area under these crops, in a region-specific manner, that does not endanger food security, would go a long way in addressing India's water problem.

Farmers, even in water-scarce regions, continue to grow water-intensive crops mainly because these are the only crops with an assured market, either thanks to government procurement or private purchase. An



**WATER: REFORM OR PERISH**

MIHIR SHAH

## Some medium-term fiscal arithmetic

There is little doubt that the central government is constrained for fiscal space and it is, therefore, important to think about solutions going forward. I offer a medium-term macro-fiscal exercise that makes clear the analytical choices and trade-offs that government faces. I hope that this will demonstrate the value of a medium-term approach to budgeting, and the pressing need to shift to an operational medium-term fiscal framework (MTFF), which is how budgeting is now done in most major economies.

### The baseline scenario

The baseline is built on the premise that all fiscal numbers, as well as GDP growth, over the next three years will be exactly the same as the average of the preceding three years. The medium-term baseline scenario is the foundational building block of a MTFF.

If the baseline continues into the future, then net tax and non-tax revenues to the centre will be 9 per cent of GDP. Add to this a further 0.55 per cent from non-debt capital receipts. Thus total revenue receipts average 9.55 per cent.

Baseline committed expenditures (GST compensation, establishment expenditure, interest payments and finance commission and other statutory grants) account for 6.87 per cent of GDP. Subtracting this from total receipts, we are left with a surplus of about 2.7 per cent of GDP.

If the 3 per cent target fiscal deficit/GDP is to be achieved, this allows 5.7 per cent of GDP for all other expenditures. Expenditure on "core of the core", and on central sector schemes amount to 4.5 per cent of GDP. That leaves just 1.2 per cent of GDP for all other expenditures, including important centrally sponsored schemes such as the national health and education missions, mid-day meals, Integrated Child Development Services, smart cities etc.

In these circumstances, it is understandable that



RATHIN ROY

the central government is constrained on account of inadequate fiscal space. As a result, underfunding of schemes is ubiquitous, expenditure liabilities are transferred to public sector entities, and it is difficult to enhance investments in important areas where the central government has sole responsibility like defence, internal security and railways.

The centre's constrained fiscal space in this baseline scenario could relax if (a) the Fifteenth Finance Commission recommends a historically unprecedented increase in the centre's share of the divisible pool, (b) the centre drastically cuts its outlays on schemes. The first is not within the control of the central government. The second involves drastic austerity measures which would have a negative impact on growth and development. The low hanging fruit have already been harvested, and even with drastic cuts in subsidies and winding up loss making public enterprises, it is not going to be the case that the fiscal target is met without expenditure austerity in areas that impact national interest. It is also not prudent to treat disinvestment receipts as a source of medium-term financing.

The baseline scenario therefore reveals that if business as usual continues, then it is impractical to imagine that the fiscal deficit could be reduced to 3 per cent of GDP, without forcing government to undertake unacceptable austerity measures, disinvest only to fill a fiscal gap, or resort to off-budget fiscal procedures which only postpone the problem, not resolve it.

### Moving forward from the baseline

In a medium-term fiscal framework, it is possible to budget scenarios that are better (or worse) than the baseline. I consider three scenarios:

1. Nominal GDP growth increases to 13 per cent. The revenue-GDP ratio remains constant at 9.5 per cent. But committed expenditure only increases at the old GDP growth rate— that is, 11.5 per cent.

integral element of the Green Revolution of the late 20th century was public procurement of wheat and rice. This is what enabled us to move towards food self-sufficiency.

But the wheels had already begun to come off the Green Revolution by the turn of the century. Highly water-consuming chemical agriculture, which is high-cost and high-risk, has become increasingly unviable for a majority of India's farmers, whose net incomes have started to turn negative, due to both diminishing returns and rising input costs. Any player in the stock market knows that to counter market volatility, we have to diversify our stock portfolio. Farming faces an additional risk: Unpredictability of the weather. For such a risky enterprise to adopt monoculture is patently suicidal. But that is what policy has implicitly driven farmers to do. We have failed to incentivise crop diversification.

For this to happen, public procurement must include more location-specific, less water-consuming crops, such as traditional millets and pulses. These include what the government now correctly calls "nutri-cereals", such as *bajra*, *ragi*, *jowar*, *navane* and Chhattisgarh's *kodon-kutki*, an effective anti-diabetic remedy. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, foxtail millet has 81 per cent more protein than rice. Millets have higher fibre and iron content, and a low Glycemic Index. Millets also are climate-resilient crops suited for the drylands of India. If we were to introduce them into the diets of the Integrated Child Development Services and Mid-day Meal Programmes, globally the largest nutrition initiatives for children ever, we would create a large and steady demand for these crops, while also generating multiple win-wins: Greater water security, better soil health, higher, more stable net incomes for farmers and robust consumer health.

For the farm crisis is also a health emergency. Diabetics increased in every Indian state between 1990 and 2016, even among the poor, rising from 26 million in 1990 to 65 million in 2016. This number is projected to double by 2030. A key contributor: Displacement of whole foods in our diets by energy dense and nutrient-poor, ultra-processed food products. At the same time, excessive fertilisers and pesticides are being transported into our body *via* food and water. Recent research shows that they cause cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma, brain tumors, Wilm's tumors, Ewing's sarcoma and germ cell tumors. Cancer is the second most common disease in India, responsible for about 3 million deaths every year.

A move towards a more diversified cropping pattern must, therefore, also be accompanied by a rigorous search for alternatives to chemical agriculture, with a thrust towards water-saving technologies, especially for the water-intensive crops. This is already happening, most notably in Andhra Pradesh, which has resolved to shift its entire cultivable area of 80 lakh hectares to natural farming by 2027. A move that has been strongly commended by the Niti Aayog.

Building a more resilient, diverse and less water-consuming farm system is the first and single most important reform India must undertake in its water sector. It is also the most quickly implementable change, with multiple collateral win-wins.

*The writer is Distinguished Professor, Shiv Nadar University and former Member, Planning Commission, Government of India. Every fortnight, he will outline multiple dimensions of long overdue reforms in the water sector*

Thus, it falls from 6.87 to 6.1 per cent of GDP. This gives 0.77 extra fiscal space which can be used, without any improvement in revenue performance, to significantly enhance expenditure outlays.

2. The revenue-GDP ratio (assuming no change in the vertical devolution by the Fifteenth Finance Commission) increases, but the GDP growth rate is the same. Presently, transfers to states account for 31 per cent of total revenue receipts. Therefore, if the revenue-GDP ratio increases by 0.5 per cent, the centre's revenues will increase by 0.35. This is not sufficient to achieve the 3 per cent fiscal deficit target. But, in the medium term, it is unrealistic to expect sustainable increases in the ratio beyond 0.5 per cent, without significantly increasing the tax burden.

3. The revenue-GDP ratio and the GDP growth rate both increase. The government will then of course have sufficient fiscal space to achieve its fiscal consolidation and development objectives.

In the baseline scenario, it is difficult to achieve the fiscal consolidation target and maintain spending on policy priorities without resorting to imprudent or impractical measures. The baseline implies either a smaller (as share of GDP) central government or quantum increases in the productivity of public spending. Increasing the nominal growth rate (including through aligning fiscal and monetary policy objectives) secures significant fiscal space. Increases in the revenue-GDP ratio secures limited fiscal space unless the tax burden and/or disinvestment receipts increase significantly. If a separate exercise pinpoints the medium-term requirements for financing the centre's core and sole responsibilities (internal security, defence, and railways), then there is further clarity on the space for other development activities.

This is the kernel of a medium-term fiscal exercise that would necessarily be more complex if operationalised as a MTFF. I would hope that the benefits of doing so to secure better fiscal policy coherence are apparent.

*The writer is director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. Views are personal*

## Ranjit Singh's eccentric empire



### BOOK REVIEW

SAI MANISH

Sarabpreet Singh's book on Maharaja Ranjit Singh could well have been named "The Dancing Girl of Lahore, From Waterloo to Lahore" or "A Woman of Substance". These are chapters in Mr Singh's book that chronicle unusual and unheard stories from the court of Ranjit Singh. Instead, the book bears the title of its first chapter — *The Camel Merchant of Philadelphia* — which also happens to be one of the most eccentric and outlandish

stories in the book. The title of book and the chapter describes the adventures of an American named Josiah Harlan and his tryst with the first Sikh king.

It has comical details of how a heart broken Quaker (Harlan) sets sails to Calcutta (now Kolkata) to start a new life after his lady love deserts him for another man. Lured by the handsome salaries paid to European officers in Punjab, Harlan on his quest for the good life, lands in Lahore and gains the trust of Ranjit Singh by attending to his hypochondria. Sent on a mission by the king, the self-taught doctor and lobbyist successfully stages a coup among the Afghans that allows Ranjit Singh to continue his occupation of Peshawar. Rewarded with a governorship for his efforts, only to be expelled from the empire next year by Ranjit Singh in a fit

of rage, Harlan embarks on a mission to seek revenge.

Harlan finds his way back to Kabul where he convinces the Emir to wage jihad against the Sikhs. On Harlan's advice, Emir Dost Mohammad galvanises his army to breach the Khyber Pass and take Peshawar from the Sikhs — a battle the Afghans would lose and retreat back to Kabul. During his Afghan expeditions, Harlan stumbles on a tribe whose chief makes him a prince. Harlan's dream of being a sovereign is smashed with the start of the Anglo-Afghan War the very next year. The British supported by Ranjit Singh's army overthrow Dost Mohammad and install their proxy. Harlan is forced to return to America where he lobbies to supply camels to the US Army by leveraging his Indian connections. He fails at that too.

A few years later in 1861, he answers

Abraham Lincoln's call to raise an army against the Confederate rebellion. But Harlan's military experience in the Sikh Empire would come to naught. As Mr Singh notes in his book, "Used to commanding soldiers in Punjab and Afghanistan where being a white 'sahib' conferred upon one a fair amount of authority, Harlan must have come across abrasive, authoritarian and condescending to his regiment. His men mutinied and levelled several charges against him."

Harlan died in San Francisco in 1871. Mr Singh writes his obituary as follows; "Thus ended the career of General Josiah Harlan, Adventurer, Surgeon, Governor of Gujrat, Prince of Ghor, Mukarrib-ul-Khakan, Unness ud-Dowlah Bahadur of Shah Shuja and Sir-I-Lushker and Musahib of Amir Dost Mohammad, putative camel merchant and Colonel of Pennsylvania 11th. Josiah Harlan had rubbed shoulders with giants who are remembered to this day, but he himself has been mostly forgotten."

Harlan's story is the highlight of the

book, but Mr Singh's book is replete with unusual tales from the empire of Ranjit Singh. Mr Singh's account is largely told through his military exploits with numerous references to Sikh military strategy. The book, though not always gripping, manages to give the reader a vivid picture of how the different clans of horse riding Sikhs consolidated themselves as a kingdom under Ranjit Singh. Mr Singh depicts Ranjit Singh's Punjab as a land of plenty where debauchery coexisted with religiosity; diplomacy complemented territorial aggression and cosmopolitans thrived alongside barbarians. The Sikh empire and Ranjit Singh's own life are presented as pinnacles of secularism and multi-culturalism which none of the other Indian kingdoms were known for. From a plethora of European officers in Ranjit Singh's service, the king's own fascination for a Muslim courtesan (the dancing girl of Lahore named Moran) over his other wives, the role of the Gorkhas of Nepal in the Sikh army — the book is an academic account

of all these and lot more.

Shoddy copy editing and mixed-up chronology, however, mar the book. For instance, the book mentions WL McGregor, the doctor sent by the British to treat Ranjit Singh, visiting Lahore in 1936, a hundred years after the event. But such minor irritants don't detract from Singh's research and penchant for weaving a narrative of Sikh militarism while chronicling the times of Ranjit Singh. The book might not impress those well versed with Khushwant Singh's *A History of Sikhs* or for that matter William Dalrymple's works. But Mr Singh has written a readable book for those who wish to understand in 200 pages how the Sikh empire germinated, blossomed and disappeared within 50 years.

### THE CAMEL MERCHANT OF PHILADELPHIA

Sarabpreet Singh

Tranquebar, Rs 699, 242 pages



## RBI tries to help, but govt needs to do its bit as well

The cut in the repo was expected, though the shift in the stance was an unexpected surprise; real interest rates are still too high

**GIVEN HOW GROWTH** has collapsed and inflation stayed benign, RBI had both reason and the room to be accommodative. While a 25-basis-points cut in the repo rate, to 5.75%, had been pencilled in, the shift in stance to ‘accommodative’ was a surprise and thrilled the bond markets. Not only are rate hikes off the table for now, liquidity too will likely be in surplus from now on. RBI’s recent liquidity infusing measures—open market operations—have already seen wholesale rates in the money markets trending down by 25-50 basis points.

However, bankers are not sure the abundant liquidity alone will translate into very meaningful cuts in deposit rates or, therefore, loan rates. To be sure, both deposit rates and loan rates could be trimmed by 10-15 basis points, but, taken together, with the 20 basis points weighted average fall since February, this would add up to a fall of only 30-35 basis points in loan rates, as against a much steeper 75 basis points cut in the repo. Governor Shaktikanta Das’s belief that transmission will be faster this time around seems optimistic. The fact is banks have been apprehensive of lowering interest rates on deposits because the returns from small savings are more attractive. Also, there is evidence that household savings are slowing since incomes aren’t growing fast enough. Governor Das must impress upon the government the need to lower rates on small savings so as to make deposits more attractive, else, banks won’t have the room to cut deposit rates. Repo rates may be at their lowest in nine years but real rates remain high—around 5.4%—so even if industry believes demand is looking up, it might be unwilling to invest at these levels.

Inflation is unlikely to go up too much—food inflation is rising but core inflation is softening—and, therefore, most economists believe the central bank would cut rates again either in August or October. The MPC now expects inflation in H1FY20 at 3.0-3.1%, slightly higher than the earlier 2.9-3.0%, and H2FY20 inflation at 3.4-3.7%, a shade lower than the earlier forecast of 3.5-3.8%, with risks broadly balanced. However, these estimates suggest the government will be fiscally prudent and that the deficit will be reined in at levels of 3.3-3.4%. Governor Das was appreciative of the Centre having stayed on the fiscal glide path and did not seem concerned about the large extra budgetary resources which threaten to crowd out private sector borrowings. Indeed, not so long ago, the bond markets were positively nervous about the large quantum of off-balance-sheet borrowings the government had resorted to in FY19. Das chose to speak about public sector undertakings which repay their market loans from internal accruals, and did not dwell on the rollovers of subsidy payments. However, given how the tax collections have fallen short of the targets, there is every chance the government will be compelled to tap non-budgetary sources this year too, since strategic sales may not yield too much. So, the risk of the private sector getting crowded out remains unless foreign portfolio investors retain their appetite for Indian bonds, which is a distinct possibility. Right now, though, RBI’s growth forecast of 7% for FY20 is a bit of a stretch.

## The right message

Nuance key to Madras HC’s ruling on forwarded messages

**THE PRECEDENT SET** by the Madras High Court ruling that a ‘forwarded message is equal to accepting the message and endorsing the message’, in a case against a BJP leader in Tamil Nadu who shared a derogatory public post on women journalists on a social media platform, is a double-edged sword. It is simultaneously a dangerous legal precedent and a way to rein in indiscriminate sharing of fake information, often with an intent to whip up divisive sentiments. Social media and instant-messaging services have been wielded as amplifiers of misinformation to whip up polarising sentiments, and this has often triggered assaults and law and order situations. Recall the child-kidnapping rumours forwarded via WhatsApp that fed mass paranoia in Assam and resulted in the lynching of two youths or the assault on African youths in the national capital region over rumours of cannibalism, again spread via WhatsApp. In a scenario where Facebook posts and WhatsApp forwards are used to harvest bigotry and xenophobia, the High Court affixing responsibility of the impact, manifest or otherwise, to sharing of such posts/messages should spur more cautious and circumspect sharing. Thus, the order would seem a welcome one if it proves an effective curb on hateful content “going viral”.

The High Court’s order rejecting the anticipatory bail petition of journalist-turned-BJP leader S Ve Shekher tries to bring in some nuance to its ‘forward equals endorsement’ stand, noting that while what is said in message/post is important, “who has said it, is very important... When a celebrity-like person forwards messages like this, the common public will start (to) believe it that this type of things are going on.” However, chances are this nuance will be lost in politicised cases like that of the arrest of the West Bengal BJP worker for sharing a meme on chief minister Mamata Banerjee or that of the two Mumbai girls who criticised the funeral arrangements made for former Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray. Even in cases where a news-report or opinion piece is shared, deemed to have been put out after due diligence by the publication, if the content is deemed polarising or used to fuel bigotry, those who share can be held accountable under the precedent set by the HC judgment. Also, in cases where an organised network is used to spread fake news and hate-fuelling content, how will the ‘who said (shared) it’ touchstone be nuanced for those forming the hub of the hate-wheel? After all, they may not always be public personalities—or even persons (bots are used to increase tweet-reach).

While there is no denying that social media has allowed users to channel and publicise their prejudices with the cover of relative anonymity—and, therefore, accountability—it is also true that these are also being used to voice dissent. The Madras High Court ruling, with necessary nuance brought in, can become a catalyst for restraint and more prudent usage of social media. Sans any context-based modulation, it can prove a draconian muzzling of freedom of expression.

## Nailing NIPAH

A second outbreak, just a year after the first, shows how ill-prepared Kerala is in terms of preventing recurrence

**ONLY A YEAR** after India dealt with its first outbreak of the deadly Nipah virus infection (NIV)—it had claimed 17 lives between late May and early June 2018—another case of the infection was confirmed in a 23-year-old from Kerala. As many as 314 people with whom the patient is supposed to have come in contact have been placed under quarantine; eight districts in Karnataka and seven in Tamil Nadu have been put on high alert. While government response across states has been swift, ensuring inter-departmental coordination for administration, and preparing isolation and intensive care wards, the second outbreak shows very little has happened on containing infection and preventing recurrence after last year’s outbreak. Given the limitations of the public healthcare infrastructure, the virulence of the pathogen and the deadly nature of the infection, prevention can mean the difference between a freak, solitary infection and an epidemic.

A major cause of Nipah’s return is a lag in government surveillance. Once the outbreak in Kerala last year was controlled, state and central authorities declared it a local occurrence and discontinued monitoring the virus. The government, however, has neither a vaccine nor a fail-safe cure for Nipah, which means such inaction is dangerous—2018 was not the first outbreak of Nipah virus in India; in 2001, the virus claimed the lives of 49 people in Siliguri, West Bengal, although the cause for these deaths was only identified post the fact. Ideally, Kerala should not only have monitored the virus but also tracked movement of persons from regions where the disease is endemic, such as Bangladesh where regular cases of NIV encephalitis have been recorded since 2001. The scramble to identify the source of the virus this time around speaks only to the state of unpreparedness of authorities to deal with a public medical emergency of this nature and magnitude.

**DEBATES ABOUT INFLATION** in advanced economies have changed remarkably over the past decades. Setting aside (mis)measurement issues, concerns about debilitatingly high inflation and the excessive power of bond markets are long gone, and the worry now is that excessively low inflation may hamper growth.

Moreover, while persistently subdued—and, on nearly \$11 trillion of global bonds, negative—interest rates may be causing resource misallocations and undercutting long-term financial security for households, elevated asset prices have heightened the risk of future financial instability. Also, investors have become highly (and happily) dependent on central banks, when they should be prudently more fearful of them.

In search of new ways to produce higher inflation, the major central banks have tended to favour a cyclical mindset, making frequent references to insufficient aggregate demand. But what if that is the wrong lens through which to view current conditions, and we are actually in the middle of a multi-stage process in which strong disinflationary supply-side forces eventually give way to the return of higher inflation? In that case, monetary policymakers and market participants would need to consider quite a different opportunity-risk paradigm than the one currently being pursued.

To be sure, after coming close to central banks’ 2% target in 2018, core inflation rates in Europe and the United States have since been declining. The conventional measure of market expectations for inflation—the break-even rate on five-year US Treasuries—remains stubbornly below target, even though the six-month moving average pace of job creation is almost 50% above the historical level needed to absorb new labour-market entrants so deep in the economic cycle. Though the US unemployment rate (3.6%) is at its lowest level in around five decades, the labour-force participation rate (62.8%) also remains relatively low.

Owing to the persistence of low

### ● SHIFTING PARADIGM?

WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF A MULTI-STAGE PROCESS IN WHICH STRONG DISINFLATIONARY SUPPLY-SIDE FORCES EVENTUALLY GIVE WAY TO THE RETURN OF HIGHER INFLATION

# How inflation could return

MOHAMED A EL-ERIAN

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inflation, monetary policies have remained ultra-loose for an unusually long time, raising concerns that the US or Europe may succumb to “Japanification” as consumers postpone purchases and companies reduce investment outlays. So far, that risk has led to protractedly low or negative (in the case of the European Central Bank) policy rates and bloated central-bank balance sheets, despite the potentially deleterious effects of such policies on the integrity of the financial system.

In fact, some economic observers favour the ECB not just maintaining negative interest rates, but also restarting asset purchases under its quantitative-easing (QE) programme. Likewise, there are those who want the US Federal Reserve to implement an “insurance cut,” despite indicators suggesting that this will be another year of solid economic growth and job creation. Meanwhile, central banks have begun to look beyond their existing tool-kits (traditional and unconventional) for new ways to spur economy-wide price increases, such as by raising the inflation target, either directly or by pursuing an average and allowing for deviations over time.

But today’s surprisingly low inflation also appears to be linked to larger structural forces, which means that it’s not rooted only in insufficient aggregate demand. Technological innovations—particularly those related to artificial intelligence, big data, and mobility—have ushered in a more generalised breakdown of traditional economic relationships and an erosion of pricing power.

Taken together, I call these structural forces the Amazon/Google/Uber effect. While the Amazon model pushes down prices by allowing consumers to

bypass more expensive intermediaries, Google undercuts companies’ pricing power by reducing search costs, and Uber brings existing assets into the marketplace, further eroding established firms’ pricing power.

The Amazon/Google/Uber effect has turbocharged a disinflationary process that began with the acceleration of globalisation, bringing far more low-cost production online and reducing the power of organized labour in advanced economies (as has the gig economy more recently). But while these trends will mostly continue for now, they are likely to confront countervailing inflationary influences

that have yet to reach critical mass: the slack in the labour market is diminishing every month, and increased industrial concentration is giving some companies, especially in the technology sector, far greater pricing power.

Now, consider those trends in the context of today’s changing political landscape. Fuelled by understandable anger over inequality (of income, wealth, and opportunity), more politicians are embracing populism, with promises of more active fiscal management and measures to curb the power of capital in favour of labour. At the same time, there is growing political pressure on central banks to bypass the asset channel (that is, QE bond purchases) and inject liquidity directly into the economy.

Economic anxieties are also driving anti-globalisation politics. The weaponisation of economic-policy tools such as tariffs and other trade

Central banks have begun to look beyond their existing toolkits for new ways to spur economy-wide price increases

measures is risking a fragmentation of global economic and financial relationships, favouring higher prices, and compelling a greater degree of more costly self-insurance by companies and consumers. At the same time, as expectations of continued low inflation become more entrenched, an upward price shock could expose vulnerabilities and increase the risk of policy mistakes and market accidents.

Considering how these competing forces are likely to play out over time, policymakers and investors should not rule out a return of inflation over time. Looking ahead, we will likely continue experiencing an initial stage in which the Amazon/Google/Uber effect remains dominant. But that may well be followed by a second stage in which tight labour markets, populist nationalism, and industry concentration begin to offset the one-time structural effects of new technologies being widely adopted. And in a third stage, the possible onset of higher inflation may catch policymakers and investors by surprise, producing excessive reactions that make a bad situation worse.

As with most paradigm shifts, there can be little certainty regarding the timing of this scenario. But, either way, policymakers in advanced economies must recognize that their inflation outlook is subject to a wider range of dynamic possibilities than they have considered so far. Focusing too much on the cyclical, rather than the structural, could pose serious risks to future economic well-being and financial stability. The longer we wait to broaden the prevailing mindset, the more likely we are to advance to the next stages of an inflationary process in which the impact of an exciting one-and-done technological event gives way to some old and more familiar tendencies.

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### BJP-TMC clashes in West Bengal

There seems to be no end to the clashes between BJP and TMC in West Bengal. The Sangh Parivar is demonstrating that it would go to any lengths to tap religious identity for political gain. BJP cadres shout the sacred chant ‘Jai Sri Ram’ in front of West Bengal Chief Minister to provoke her and not to praise Ram. It is most unfortunate that Hindu Right is reducing ‘Jai Sri Ram’ to an emblem of Hindutva and finding nothing wrong in mixing religion with politics. By chanting ‘Jai Sri Ram’ in an inappropriate time and place from base motives the Hindutva zealots are devaluing and de-sanctifying the evocative religious phrase. Chanting the words should be an act of piety. It must be bona-fide and not mala-fide. Shouting it belligerently at the time of commission of hate crimes is not worthy of devotees of Ram. Hatred lays religion waste. Nothing can be more ungodly than deliberately misusing Bhagwan’s name to stir up political division and social strife. Still the Hindutva brigade does it as part of a wider design to narcotize the underclass and deny them a share in power and resources and a better material life. One wonders how any Hindutva neta would react to the chanting of ‘Praise the Lord’ by an Indian Christian or ‘Allahu Akbar’ by an Indian Muslim in the manner BJP cadres shouted ‘Jai Sri Ram’ in front of Mamata Banerjee. One also wonders how it would look and go down with us if in a predominately Christian or Islamic country ‘Praise the Lord’ or ‘Allahu Akbar’ is made a political slogan to shore up political or electoral support. Perhaps enlightened political consciousness, coupled with humanity, is the antidote to the misuse of religion.  
— G David Milton, Maruthancode

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## Simplify the GST structure

The govt is about to kick off the pilot for the new GST compliance mechanism. It is hoped that this time around, the systems are tested rigorously before they are rolled out

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Views are personal



**NOW THAT THE** new government is in place, it is time for fixing GST glitches, and further simplifying its structure and administration. It is heartening to note that both the ruling party and the Opposition were very vocal during the election campaign on the need to simplify the GST structure and mechanism. The very fact that India is, perhaps, the only country in the world where a government that introduced GST came back to power (and how!) should give enough boost to the newly formed government to take some radical decisions in re-hauling the GST system.

The foremost structural change must be to bring electricity, oil & gas, and real estate fully into the GST net. It is simply not done to expect robust GST collections while keeping the majority of economic transactions out of the GST net. The tax cascading caused by keeping these products beyond the GST ambit and continuing to levy other taxes, such as excise and value added tax, not only increases the cost of these products but also is an additional tax compliance burden for taxpayers in this space. Inducting a taxpayer from any of the sectors mentioned before as part of the “Ease of Doing Business” study has the potential to drag down India’s ranking. GST collections have, for the first time since July 2017, reached the ₹1 lakh crore mark consecutively for two months, and the government should take steps to bring all constituents of the economy within GST’s ambit.

The next area for change is GST rates. Given India’s diverse economic and social structure, the inadvisability of a single rate GST is a foregone conclusion as it can become regressive for many consumers. It is, hence, prudent to have only two GST rates instead of the many GST rates that we currently have.

A third GST rate, strictly for de-merit goods/services, can also be introduced to dissuade consumers from buying them. Having said that, the government can look at implementing a two-rate GST structure, viz. a low of 6/8% and a high of 12/16%.

Next in line is the GST compliance mechanism. It has been almost two years since GST was rolled out, and the government has been nimble and agile while dealing with compliance requirements. The due dates for filing GST returns and other compliance have often been revised to accommodate delays in filing for a variety of reasons. As expected, the start of the GST compliance cycle has been a rough ride, for both taxpayers as well as tax administrators. The government is about to kick off the pilot for the new GST compliance mechanism that is expected to be simple and robust for tax registrants. It is hoped that this time around, the systems are tested rigorously before they are rolled out for the general public. The government also intends to roll out an e-invoicing system for B2B supplies, a hugely successful mechanism in the European Union. While all this is expected to make compliance easier for taxpayers, there still remains a lot of GST compliance backlog. In fact, most taxpayers, especially the small and medium ones, are struggling to meet the revised deadline (June 30) for filing of GST annual return for the nine-month period ending March 31, 2018. The reconciliation between purchase data as accounted by the taxpayer and invoice data as uploaded by vendors itself is causing tremendous anxiety, not to mention reconciliation of other data points. Frequent changes to GST rates and forms, a raft of clarifications and orders, conflicting advance rulings

pronounced by various state GST authorities, etc., have eroded the charm of the simplistic GST structure..

The government has recently announced its intent to have a single authority for processing GST refunds—a very welcome move—and it should also look at a unified function for GST audits/assessments. As a pilot, the GST Policy Wing at the Centre and those in the respective states can be merged to form a National GST Policy Wing where central and state officials can discuss/debate GST policy issues and ensure their uniform interpretation across the country. This step alone will save a lot of avoidable litigation and hassles for the government and taxpayers.

In case of import of goods by a GST-registered person, the government can consider the option to link the GST payable on such import of goods to the GST return due to be filed by the taxpayer without requiring the GST-registered taxpayer to pay the GST on imports at the time of clearing goods for home consumption. As most GST-registered taxpayers claim input tax credit of the GST paid on goods imported almost immediately (wherever eligible), the working capital requirement for these taxpayers can be optimised by deferring and linking the GST on import of goods to the GST return filed in the subsequent month. This can be initially rolled out for large taxpayers with significant imports.

While many such simplification measures can be rolled out, one should remember that the GST is a journey that has its highs and lows and the government can certainly make it smoother for honest taxpayers and harder for dishonest ones!





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Views are personal

FOOD PROCESSING

# The untapped growth opportunity

The food processing industry is of enormous significance as it provides vital linkages and synergies that it promotes between the two pillars of the economy, i.e. agriculture and industry

**F**OOD PROCESSING HAS become an integral part of the food supply chain in the global economy, and India has also seen growth in this sector in the last few years. The sector contributes around 11% of agricultural value-added and 9% of manufacturing value-added. According to the ministry of food processing industries annual report, the sector employs 12.8% of the workforce in the organised sector (factories registered under Factories Act, 1948), and 13.7% of the workforce in the unorganised sector. Despite being one of the largest producers of agricultural and food products in the world, India ranks fairly low in the global food processing value chains. In fact, as with the rest of India (most other sectors), this sector is also largely unorganised and informal.

Processing can be further delineated into primary and secondary processing. Rice, sugar, edible oil and flour mills are examples of primary processing. Secondary processing includes the processing of fruits and vegetables, dairy, bakery, chocolates and other items. Most processing in India can be classified as primary processing, which has lower value-addition compared to secondary processing. There is a need to move up the value chain in processed food products to boost farmer incomes. For instance, horticulture products, such as fruits and vegetables, carry the potential for higher value-addition when compared to cereal crops.

Food processing exports

At present, India's agricultural exports predominantly consist of raw materials, which are then processed in other countries, again indicating the space to move up the value chain. Despite India being one of the largest producers of agricultural commodities in the world, agricultural exports as a share of GDP are fairly low in India relative to the rest of the world. The same proportion is around 4% for Brazil, 7% for Argentina, 9% for Thailand, while for India it is just 2%. Food processing provides an opportunity to utilise excess production efficiently. Not just from a growth perspective, food processing is also important from the point of reducing food waste. In fact, the United Nations estimates that 40% of production is wasted. Similarly, the NITI Aayog cited a study that estimated annual post-harvest losses of close to ₹90,000 crore. With greater thrust on proper sorting and grading close to the farm gate, this wastage could also be

reduced, leading to better price realisation for farmers.

Improving the supply chain

Gaps in the supply chain are perhaps the biggest challenge faced by this industry. Preprocessing losses occur due to lack of awareness and a dearth of storage and pack-house facilities close to the farm gate. The shortage of refrigerated vehicles is reflected through losses occurring at the transport stage. Losses occur at the storage level as well. While at an aggregate level, India's cold storage capacity is at the required levels, the reality is that 60% of these cold storages are located in just four states—Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal and Gujarat. Variation in quality is another impediment. Lack of avenues to adequately grade, sort and pack perishable produce is a major culprit in this regard. Therefore, pack-houses are of extreme importance.

The upgrading of 22,000 rural *haats* into Gramin Agriculture Markets (GrAMS) was announced in the 2018-19 Budget. These are largely informal markets, but are close to the farm gate. A preliminary survey has revealed that close to 70% of these rural *haats* are owned by local bodies—such as urban local bodies, rural local bodies or gram panchayats. Bringing in social entrepreneurs or the private sector to develop these markets into modern centres for aggregating and sorting produce may be considered, through appropriate public-private partnership (PPP) models.

Similarly, these local bodies could also explore partnerships with cooperatives and farmer producer organisations for the development of these markets. The NITI Aayog, in the *Strategy for New India @ 75* document, recommended village-level procurement centres for perishables such as fruits, vegetables and dairy. These procurement centres could then be linked to these GrAMS.

Farmer training and extension

Although building infrastructure is a requisite for enhancing the processing capacity, what is also of immense importance is to have enough skills to be able to use that capacity. Backward linkages to farmers need to be made more robust. Contract farming is an attractive avenue in this regard. According to the Model Contract Farming Act, 2018, the contract will specify the quantity, quality and price of produce being supplied. This would shield farmers from price volatility, subject to quality commitments. The *Strategy for New India @ 75* recommends that states take the lead in passing this enabling legislation.

Skilling is required at two levels. First at the farm gate in promoting agricultural best practices and in processing activities. Revamped extension services are critical at the farm gate, which have been written about in the past. Similarly, skill training in the food processing industry must be stepped up. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) estimated the need to skill 17.8 million persons in the food processing industry by 2022.

The food processing industry is of enormous significance as it provides vital linkages and synergies that it promotes between the two pillars of the economy, i.e. agriculture and industry. Although still at a nascent stage, the sector has been growing at a robust pace and several steps have been taken in the past few years to accelerate this sector. The launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana is aimed at bridging the infrastructure gap. In fact, 100% foreign direct investment in food processing units has been allowed.

In order to ensure sustained growth in the sector, the priority for the new government is enhancing the cold-chain capacity, logistics infrastructure, proper ways of marketing commodities, farmer training and skilling of the workforce.

The priority must be on enhancing cold-chain capacity, logistics, proper ways of marketing commodities, and farmers' training and skilling

US-INDIA TRADE TIES

## The GSP gambit

**RV ANURADHA**

The author is partner, Clarus Law Associates, New Delhi



It's the second time the US has hit India with its unilateral measures

**T**HE GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF Preferences (GSP), as being accorded by the US to imports from India since 1976, stood terminated as on June 5, 2019. India has indicated that the fiscal impact of this withdrawal—\$5.6 billion of India's exports—is not significant. Perhaps it is not when seen against the overall exports to the US valued at \$230 billion. But the issue is not one of mere numbers, but one of legal principles as the systemic impact of US's brazen unilateral actions. It is also one of the impact this move would have on exporters of several goods such as jewellery, building materials, solar cells and processed foods, which will face increase of up to 10% in the US tariffs, not all of which exporters can absorb by increasing prices of products in their struggle to remain competitive. Spillover effects in terms of downsizing in export firms, diversification, exploring newer markets, and all the accompanying uncertainties seems inevitable.

**The law behind GSP:** There is no right or entitlement that India or any other developing country has to GSP benefits from any developed country. GSP is a voluntary exercise of preferential market access that developed countries have the discretion to provide. However, the laws of the WTO provide very clear legal that a country that chooses to administer GSP, needs to adhere to. This includes the legal requirement that GSP shall be available for all developing countries on a non-discriminatory basis, and they need to be accorded on a non-reciprocal basis, i.e. such preferences cannot be given or restricted on the ground of equivalence of some benefit from a developing country.

The US has unabashedly confirmed that GSP benefits to India have been terminated solely on account of its unilateral assessment that India does not provide "equitable and reasonable market access" to it. This is an admitted violation of the mandate that GSP needs to be based on the principle of "non-reciprocity". The object of US's trade concerns against India include requirements under Indian law for certification of dairy products, norms on pricing for medical devices, and India's laws on patenting which apply, in the view of the US, strict criteria for grant of patents for products and also allow for compulsory licensing. Each of these is a legitimate exercise of sovereign legislative and policy choices by India. The US has expressed concerns on imposition of high tariffs by India in sectors including automobile, textiles, pharma and distilled spirits, which, again, are all within the realm of India's WTO's commitments.

In other words, India's actions are all WTO-consistent domestic policy actions. But the US perceives these as limiting its market access, and instead of playing by multilateral rules, which would require trade negotiations on a reciprocal basis, it is resorting to the one tool that it is mandated to provide on non-reciprocal basis, i.e. GSP benefits.

**Beyond playing by the rules:** The US action is an extension of its recent approach of unilateral actions and strong-arm tactics to extract concessions. In a measured response, India has indicated that, like the US, it too believes in maintaining its national interest and addressing development imperatives. It has indicated the hope of arriving at a mutual resolution of the issues. While amicable solutions are the desirable objective in international relations, the approach with the US cannot be pegged on this expectation alone. In fact, there is no better example than the US itself that has used a combined strategy of bilateral dialogue, coupled with unilateral action, and most interestingly recourse to the beleaguered WTO's dispute settlement system.

It's the second time the US has hit India with its unilateral measures. First was on June 1, 2018, when the US imposed tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium imported into the US. India has initiated a WTO dispute against this, as have several other WTO members. The EU and China also imposed retaliatory tariffs on certain imports from the US, against which the US initiated WTO disputes. While India announced retaliatory tariffs against the US several months back, it has been deferring the imposition of such tariffs.

It is important for India to raise a challenge against US's GSP termination before the WTO. There are three reasons for this: (1) India is on a strong legal footing with regard to such a challenge; (2) the GSP issue is one of systemic significance within the framework of multilateral trade rules, and one country cannot be allowed to derail the fundamental planks on which it stands; and (3) contesting a country's action through dispute settlement, and simultaneously holding bilateral negotiations, are not antithetical to each other, and can help a country leverage its advantages better.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

## Next trade-war casualty may be M&A market

Whether it's the sale of a Boeing jetliner or a tech takeover, trade tensions spell bad news for megadeals

**TARA LACHAPELLE**  
Bloomberg

**A**READY, ONE MEGADEAL is at risk because of the US-China trade spat: a massive order by Chinese airlines for Boeing planes that may be worth more than \$30 billion.

A Bloomberg News story on Wednesday detailed how important the deal is to both sides, and how the talks may take a precarious turn because of escalating tensions between their countries. But the Boeing matter draws attention to an even a bigger risk: namely, that the trade war could complicate giant M&A deals, the kind that have kept the market together even as other types of dealmaking have slowed.

This year, there have been an unusually high number of mergers and acquisitions in the \$20-billion-and-up range, such as Bristol-Myers Squibb's takeover of Celgene Corp and last week's announced deal between Global Payments and Total System Services. In fact, the average M&A transaction

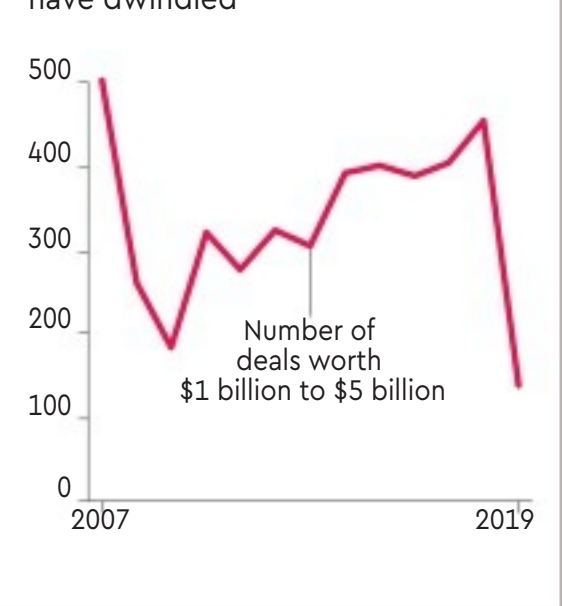
Deal inflation

The average M&A transaction size has surged this year, especially in the US, as megamergers drive dealmaking in an otherwise slowing market



Missing deals

The mid-size transactions that normally carry the M&A market have dwindled



size so far in 2019 is a record. The trend is even more pronounced when looking at combinations involving only US companies, as the accompanying chart shows.

Despite a steady flow of large mergers, global dealmaking is down 16% overall. That's because transactions in the \$1 billion to \$5 billion range—typically considered the bread and butter of the M&A market—

have slowed significantly in every region.

Boeing's possible deal with the Chinese airlines doesn't fall under M&A, but it shows corporate decision-making being influenced by geopolitical conflict. If influenced by the scale of a \$30-billion airplane order were to get derailed, so, too, could megamergers highly sensitive to things like CEO confidence, open markets

and cross-border supply chains. And without these big transactions, the M&A market might really dry up.

"If the big deals start to taper off and you don't get a pick-up in the sweet spot (the \$1 billion to \$5 billion deals), then I think the second half of the year could be more problematic," Mark Shafir, co-head of global M&A at Citigroup, said at the Bloomberg Invest New York conference on Wednesday. As companies study their supply chains, "it's starting to become a confidence issue," he said. Many are dependent on parts from China and Mexico or sales in those nations.

One year after Donald Trump was elected president, I wrote about how acquirers were spending a lot less money than usual on American companies, perhaps on account of the White House's more isolationist views making the US a slightly less attractive place to make acquisitions. The trade war, along with the larger policing role that the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US (known as CFIUS) seems to be playing, could again stymie cross-border merger considerations.

Whether it's the sale of a Boeing jetliner or a tech takeover, trade tensions spell bad news for megadeals.

## Rate cut to boost growth

**SHANTI EKAMBARAM**  
The author is president, Consumer Banking, Kotak Mahindra Bank. Views are personal

**R**BI'S MPC AGREED to reduce the policy repo rate by 25bps to 5.75% and change the policy stance to 'accommodative' from 'neutral'. This was broadly in line with market expectations.

From a monetary policy perspective, the stated objective of RBI has been inflation-targeting and supporting growth. The tone of the policy statement indicates RBI is concerned about slowing growth, while being adequately comfortable about inflation estimates. This being the case, RBI highlighted there is scope for MPC to support efforts to boost growth and consumption; in particular private investment activity.

Global growth remained sluggish across both advanced and emerging markets. Global yields have fallen significantly. Crude has also fallen from its highs and is likely to be range-bound in the near-term.

Domestic economic activity decelerated sharply to 5.8% in Q4FY19 from 6.6% in Q3FY19 and 8.1% in Q4FY18, with growth in private consumption also slowing. Also, high frequency indicators point to a slowdown in the services sector. Exports have been impacted due to weak

global demand, partly due to the uncertainties surrounding trade wars. Thus, GDP growth in FY19 was at 6.8%, coming in lower than estimates.

RBI estimated FY20 GDP growth at 7% (7.2% earlier), 6.4-6.7% in 1HFY20 (6.8-7.1% earlier) and 7.2-7.5% in 2HFY20 (7.3-7.4% earlier). Upside risks to inflation include uncertainties related to monsoon, increase in vegetable prices and higher crude oil prices amid geopolitical tensions.

RBI has ensured adequate liquidity in the system; it said it would conduct OMO purchase auction of ₹15,000 crore to inject liquidity into the system on June 13.

To maintain financial stability, RBI has set the minimum leverage ratio at 3.5% for all Indian banks and 4% for systemically-important banks. This is higher than the minimum leverage ratio of 3% mandated by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) and will inspire confidence in India's banking sector.

RBI announced it will issue draft guidelines for 'on tap' licensing of small finance banks and a committee will be formed to look into ATM charges.

Overall, against the backdrop of a stable government, higher capacity utilisation and expectations of fiscal stimulus to boost growth, RBI will keep a close watch on the Budget, as well as other key data points including the monsoon, global economic indicators, geopolitical equations, crude oil prices as well as domestic growth and inflation estimates to plan its next move.



# RBI Monetary Policy

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2019



The change in the policy stance to 'accommodative' will simultaneously help the financial system to navigate to a lower term structure of interest rates and also accommodate growth concerns. Also, the move to scrap transaction charges for RTGS & NEFT will boost digital transactions.

RAJNISH KUMAR, CHAIRMAN, STATE BANK OF INDIA



Major part of the statement was the change of stance to 'accommodative', which rules out any rate hikes in future. Suppressed inflation and real sector performance were the major parameters behind this decision.

DINABANDHU MOHAPATRA, MD & CEO, BANK OF INDIA



RBI delivers the first hat-trick during 2019 edition of the World Cup! While the rate cut and stance is good, the transmission and execution will make it great and help the country to rise.

VS PARTHASARATHY, CFO, MAHINDRA GROUP



The repo rate cut, the change in stance and the resolve to provide adequate liquidity will provide the impetus to counter growth and investment headwinds. The review of liquidity framework should aid monetary transmission.

ZARIN DARUWALA, STANDARD CHARTERED BANK INDIA CEO

## TRANSMISSION CHALLENGE

# Loan rates unlikely to fall post repo cut

**Improved liquidity situation may not translate into lower deposit rates as banks remain wary in an environment of slow deposit growth**

SHRITAMA BOSE  
Mumbai, June 6

**LOAN RATES MAY** not come down immediately even though the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday cut the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) for the third time in 2019. Bankers say the improved liquidity situation may not translate into lower deposit rates as banks remain wary in an environment of slow deposit growth. That, in turn, could result in lending rates remaining close to where they are now.

A senior executive at a large state-owned bank told *FE*: “It’s difficult to say whether deposit rates will fall. Our deposit rates are lower than that of most other banks. The banks who have much higher rates may have to start cutting the rates.”

Large public-sector banks (PSBs) and private banks may adopt separate strategies, as the latter set pays out relatively more for deposits, leaving them with greater room to cut deposit rates.

State Bank of India (SBI) pays 7% per annum for one-year retail term deposits. While the monetary policy committee (MPC) has lowered the repo rate in each of its meetings in 2019, SBI has actually raised the rate on one-year deposits by 20 bps between February and May this year.

Bank of Baroda (BoB) pays an even lower 6.7% on one-year retail deposits, while HDFC Bank offers 7.3%.

■ Large public-sector banks and private banks may adopt separate strategies

■ Private banks pay out relatively more for deposits, leaving them with greater room to cut deposit rates

■ State Bank of India pays 7% per annum for one-year retail term deposits

■ SBI has in fact raised the rate on one-year deposits by 20 bps between February and May 2019

■ Bank of Baroda pays an even lower 6.7% on one-year retail deposits, while HDFC Bank offers 7.3%

■ Monetary policy committee has lowered the repo rate in each of its meetings in 2019



**RBI governor Shaktikanta Das observed that the weighted average lending rates across the system show that banks have transmitted to the extent of 21 bps on fresh rupee loans the 50 bps worth of rate cuts in 2019**

RBI governor Shaktikanta Das observed that the weighted average lending rates (WALRs) across the system show that banks have transmitted to the extent of 21 bps on fresh rupee loans the 50 bps worth of rate cuts in 2019. “Interest rates on lower-tenor money market instruments remain broadly aligned with the overnight WACR (weighted average call rate), reflecting near-full transmission of the reduction in policy rates,” Das said at

the post-policy press conference, adding that the yield on the benchmark 10-year government security has also declined by about 40 bps from its average in April 2019 to about 7%.

However, the monetary policy statement highlighted that the WALR on older rupee loans increased by 4 bps as the past loans continue to be priced at high rates.

On the RBI’s older proposal to link lending rates to one of three external benchmarks for better transmission, Das said the matter needs further examination. “We are monitoring the transmission. So as soon as we take some decision in that regard, we will announce that.” In its April policy, the RBI had deferred the implementation of the new external benchmark-linked framework for pricing of loans, which was earlier supposed to come into force on April 1, 2019.

# Draft norms for 'on-tap' licensing of small finance banks by August end

**RBI seeks to enhance supply of credit to small borrowers and encourage competition**

FE BUREAU  
Mumbai, June 6

**THE RESERVE BANK** of India (RBI) will issue draft guidelines for 'on-tap' licensing of Small Finance Banks (SFB) by the end of August 2019 with a view to enhance supply of credit to small borrowers and encourage competition.

On-tap licensing is a time-efficient feature that will allow parties to obtain the licence on-demand basis and eligible parties won’t have to wait.

In September 2015, the RBI had granted ‘in-principle’ approval to 10 applicants for SFBs, including entities such as Ujjivan Financial Services, Equitas Holdings and Au Financiers (India). The RBI had also expressed its intention to use the learning from the licensing round to appropriately revise the guidelines and move to giving licences more regularly or virtually ‘on tap’.

Eight of the ten small finance banks have also been included in the second schedule of the RBI Act, 1934.

“A review of the performance of small finance banks reveals that they have achieved their priority sector targets and thus attained their mandate for furthering financial inclusion. Hence, there is a case for more players to be included to enhance access to banking facilities to the small borrowers and to encourage competition,” the RBI statement on Developmental and Reg-

## EASY ACCESS

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ulatory Policies read. However, the RBI indicated more time is needed to review the performance of payments banks before considering the licensing of this category of banks could be put ‘on tap’.

In November 2014, the regulator had issued guidelines for licensing of payments banks and SFBs in the private sector. As per the guidelines, resident individuals/professionals with 10-year experience in banking and finance; and companies and societies owned and controlled by residents would be eligible to set up SFBs.

Existing non-banking financial companies, micro-finance institutions and local area banks that are owned and controlled by residents could also opt for the conversion into SFBs. The minimum paid-up equity capital for small finance banks should be ₹100 crore, while the promoter’s minimum initial contribution to be at least 40%, the guidelines stated.

**The RBI surprisingly changed its stance to 'accommodative' after previously maintaining its stance at 'neutral'. This is the third rate cut of 2019, representing a cumulative 75 bps of cuts so far**

stance. Its accommodative stance suggests the RBI has become more concerned about the growth slowdown, while acknowledging that inflation remains capped despite its ongoing easing.

We believe the RBI’s growth projections remain optimistic, as our FY20 GDP



## Governor and his deputies

Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das and his deputies arrive for the central bank's bi-monthly policy review, in Mumbai on Thursday

EXPRESS PHOTO: GANESH SHIRSEKAR

## Revised circular on resolution of stressed assets in 3-4 days: Das

FE BUREAU  
Mumbai, June 6

**THE RBI WILL** finally issue a revised circular on resolution of stressed assets within the next three to four days after legal and internal examinations delayed the release beyond earlier expectations. “It has taken a little more time than we had originally anticipated but it will be issued very shortly. And very shortly means in a matter of 3 or 4 days,”

RBI governor Shaktikanta Das told reporters at a post-monetary policy conference.

Das suggested the delay was “because it involved examining various legal issues, it involved very detailed and wide-ranging stakeholder consultations and then internally we had to examine it in detail.”

The revised circular will replace the regulator’s original framework on resolution of stressed assets that introduced the concept of one-day default and directed banks

to refer large account of Rs 2,000 crore and above to bankruptcy court unless a resolution plan was agreed upon within 180 days. The circular was declared as “ultra vires” by the Supreme Court in April this year.

The circular issued in 2018, also popularly referred to as the ‘Feb.12 circular’ was intended to be a simplified generic framework for resolution of stressed assets that was in harmony with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

# RBI monitoring developments in NBFC sector: Das

**Markets have been hoping for a special liquidity window for some troubled NBFCs, HFCs which have asset-liability mismatches and have been unable to repay lenders**

MITALI SALIAN  
Mumbai, June 6

**WHILE NOT ANNOUNCING** any specific measures to help stressed non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) or housing finance companies, the Reserve Bank of India said on Thursday it would take all steps to ensure financial stability. The markets have been hoping for a special liquidity window for some NBFCs and HFCs which have been in trouble due to asset-liability mismatches and have been unable to repay their lenders.

The central bank said it is closely monitoring developments within the NBFC sector, including HFCs, even as individual entities work towards mobilising additional liquidity and resources to meet liabilities and commitments.

“The RBI does not regulate the housing finance companies. Nonetheless, the banks have significant exposure to the housing finance companies and the RBI in any case is mandated to look after the financial stability of the entire economy. And in that background, at RBI, we have been closely monitoring the activity and the performance and the developments in the NBFC sector, including the HFCs,” RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said at a post-policy conference.

Das further added, “We are also mon-



itoring major entities in this universe of NBFCs and HFCs and, as you pointed out, the individual entities are themselves resorting to various measures using market mechanisms to mobilise additional resources to meet their liabilities and commitments.”

Das further emphasised that the regulator was committed to ensuring a robust, well-functioning NBFC sector and willing to take required steps to ensure financial stability is not adversely impacted by any development.

Das’ comments come at a time when several credit rating agencies, including Crisil and Ica, as recently as Wednesday, downgraded Dewan Housing Finance Corporation’s commercial papers after it delayed interest payments.

NBFCs have been in hot water ever since Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services defaulted on debt obligations last year, which in turn triggered a liquidity crisis within the financial services market with banks unwilling to lend to NCFs, overall rise in finance costs and market borrowing becoming tougher.

The governor also emphasised that the NBFC supervision periodicity, about 18 months earlier, had been reduced to 12 months, adding that major entities were being monitored within the RBI.

“RBI will not delay to take any action if and when such action is required,” the RBI governor added.

## Industry upbeat about RBI move

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi, June 6

**HAILING THE RBI’S** decision to cut lending rate by 25 basis points as a welcome step to boost demand and revive economy, industry chambers said there is more room to slash rates further. “There is room for further rate cut...this third consecutive rate cut in repo rate will lead to effective transmission, encouraging banks to lower their lending rates for both retail and corporate credit,” said Sandip Somany, president, Ficci.

Reviving business confidence, consumer confidence and triggering animal spirits in the economy is the need of the hour, the chamber said in a statement.

Assocham said the shift in policy stance from neutral to accommodative is looking significant and these measures would

rekindle economic growth and improve business sentiments. “The credit policy resolution and the RBI governor’s emphasis on faster and higher transfer of rate cuts will be reassuring if done by the banks. This, when coupled with improved liquidity, would reduce the cost of borrowing,” said Assocham president B K Goenka.

PHD Chamber also welcomed the rate cut and said it will help to stimulate demand, boost investments, enhance exporters’ competitiveness and growth of the industrial sector. “At this juncture, the transmission of the policy rate cut by the banking sector in terms of reduced lending rates would be crucial to boost liquidity. Going ahead, we expect repo rate to come down to 5% in the coming quarters for adequate availability of credit to the industry especially to the MSMEs sector,” the chamber said.





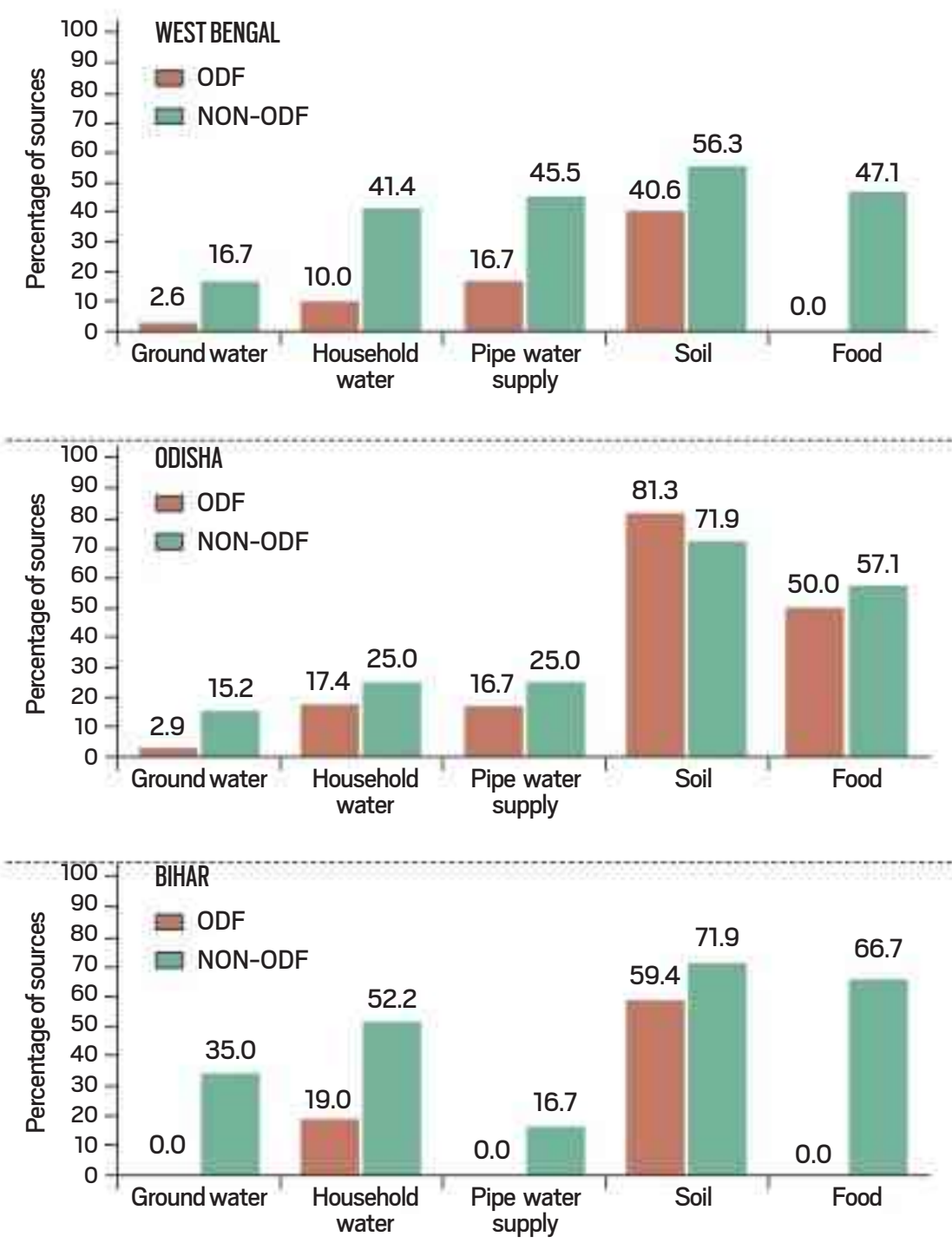
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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@expressindia.com](mailto:explained@expressindia.com)

## TELLING NUMBERS

### In 3 states, how the absence of toilets contaminates water, soil

CONTAMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEDIUMS WITH HuBac (FAECAL INDICATOR BACTERIA OF HUMAN ORIGIN)



Source: UNICEF report via Swachh Bharat Mission

A STUDY released by the central government has found that villages that are not yet open defecation-free (non-ODF) is 12 times more likely than ODF villages to carry the risk of faecal contamination of groundwater (*The Indian Express*, June 6). The study, carried out by UNICEF, looked at the environmental impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission in 12 ODF and 12 non-ODF villages in three states — West Bengal, Odisha and Bihar — and was based on 725 samples of water, soil, and food. The overall findings were that non-ODF villages are:

**12.7 TIMES** more likely to have their groundwater sources contaminated (from contaminants traceable to humans alone)  
**2.40 TIMES** more likely to have their piped water contaminated  
**2.48 TIMES** more likely to have their household water (stored) contaminated  
**1.1 TIMES** more likely to have their soil contaminated  
**2.16 TIMES** more likely to have food contaminated and 2.48 TIMES more likely to have household drinking water contaminated

Among the three states, the levels were the worst in Bihar where non-ODF villages showed 35.7 times

higher groundwater contamination than ODF villages, as compared to 6.6 times higher in West Bengal and 5.3 times higher in Odisha. For piped water, the relative risk of contamination (non-ODF to ODF) was 1.33 times more in Bihar, 2.73 times more in West Bengal and 1.50 times more in Odisha. For household water (stored), the relative risk was 2.74 times more in Bihar, 4.14 times more in West Bengal and 1.44 times more in Odisha.

For soil, the relative risk of faecal contamination traceable to humans, in non-ODF villages as compared to ODF villages, was 1.21 times more in Bihar, 1.39 times more in West Bengal and 0.89 times more in Odisha. And for food, the relative risk was 6.67 times more in Bihar; 8.47 times more in West Bengal and 1.14 times more in Odisha.

In its interpretation of the variations observed among states, the UNICEF report stated that in Odisha, the sudden onset of rain during sampling resulted in decreased impact. It said this indicates that systems for solid and liquid waste management, including faecal sludge management and drainage need improvement to realise the full benefits of residing in ODF environments.

## SIMPLY PUT

# Free rides, fare perspective

Delhi government's proposal to make bus and Metro rides free for women has drawn reactions ranging from approval to rejection. What are the precedents for the idea; what do studies on other cities show?

MALLICA JOSHI  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

MINISTER FOR Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri described the Aam Aadmi Party as "disruptionist", and spoke mockingly of "broken window economics" and "broken window fraud" while criticising the Delhi government's proposal to make buses and the Metro free for women Thursday. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, however, insisted that the government has both a concrete plan and the funds to implement the proposal.

Under the proposal announced by the Delhi government Monday, women will have the option to not pay for rides. The move, which is at the stage of feedback and planning, has drawn reactions ranging from enthusiastic approval to vehement rejection.

### Government's logic

Cities in the United States and Europe have experimented with the idea of free public transport since at least the 1950s. Germany, France, Belgium, and Estonia have taken initiatives to make public transport free, either for the entire population or for sections such as students or senior citizens. Luxembourg has pledged to become the first country to make public transport free for everybody by 2020. The most common reason for any city incentivising the use of public transport has been to tackle congestion on the roads.

The reasons given by the Delhi government are different.

One, to make it easier for women to move from informal and more unsafe modes of transport such as shared autos and cabs to more formal and safer modes such as the Metro.

Two, to help more women enter the workforce. A report prepared by the Delhi Labour Department in 2018 found that of the 19.6 lakh workers engaged in trading, service and the manufacturing sector in the city, only 11.4% were women, and nearly half of them worked as "informal hired workers". The government hopes that with women being able to travel for free, more of them, especially from the economically disadvantaged groups, would start working.

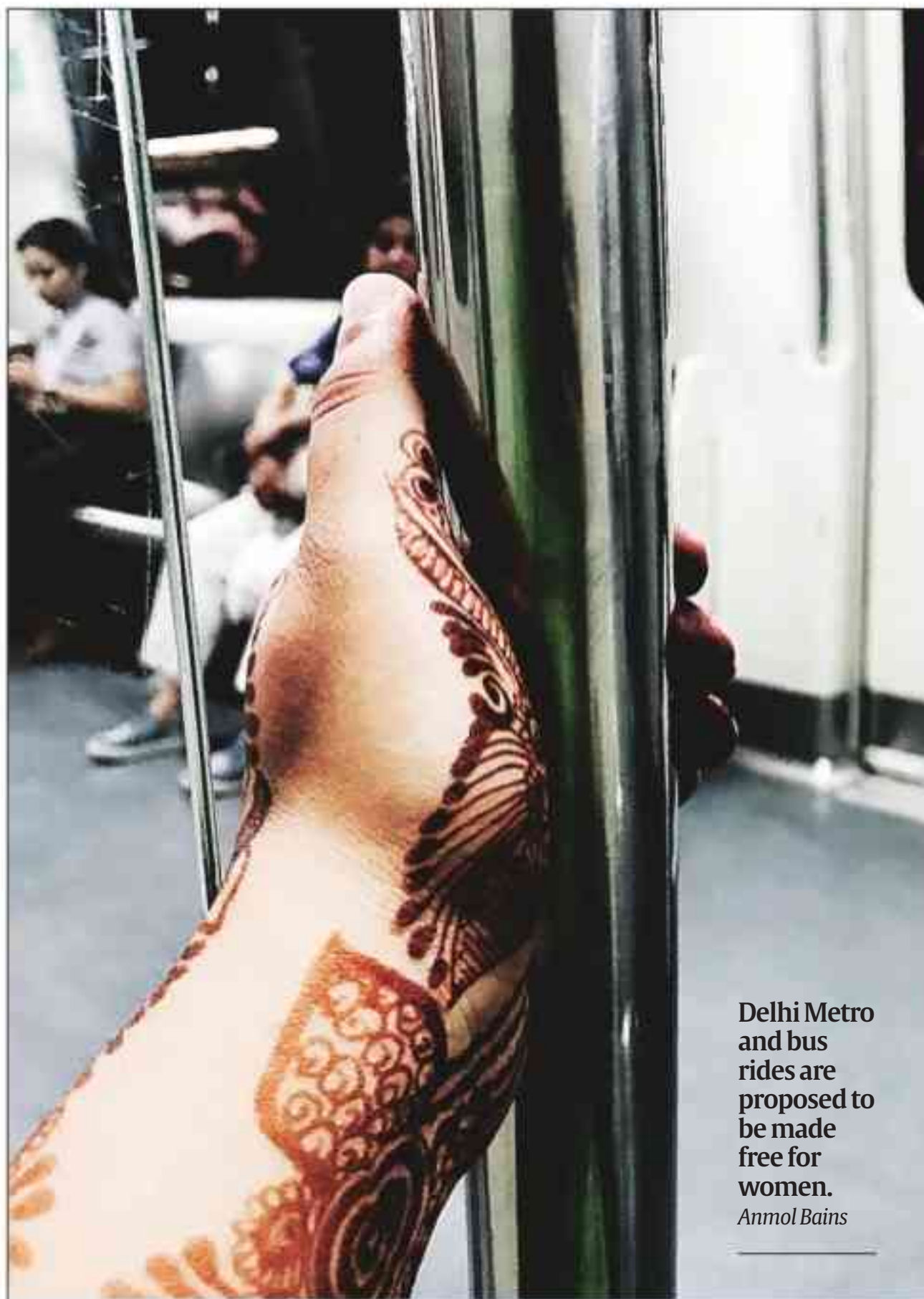
Globally, conversations around free public transport have revolved around decongestion and affordability, rather than safety. One reason is that many of these experiments have been carried out in highly advanced Scandinavian countries with mostly safe public spaces and better reporting rates of crime against women.

A November 2017 study of 4,000 Delhi University students by Brown University PhD candidate Girija Borker (Safety First: Perceived Risk of Street Harassment and Educational Choices of Women) found that women were willing to choose a lower ranking college if it ensured a safer commute.

"... For the average woman, selecting a safe travel route will require her to choose a college that is lower quality, leading to trade-offs between travel safety and college quality. Women also face similar tradeoffs between travel time and college quality... Alternatively, women are willing to spend an additional Rs 18,800 (USD 290) per year, relative to men, for a route that is... safer," Borker wrote.

### Precedents elsewhere

The proposal to make public transport free for women has no well known precedent anywhere in the world, and could be



Delhi Metro and bus rides are proposed to be made free for women.  
Anmol Bains

### BELGIUM

The Belgian city of Hasselt made public transport free for residents and visitors in 1996. A decade later, it was reported

that ridership had increased tenfold, with more than half the new users taking public transport instead of walking or cycling. The city finally concluded that the

## HOW FREE TRANSPORT HAS FARED

### NORWAY

The Norwegian city of Stavanger experimented with free public transport between August and December 2011. An evaluation found no evidence of reduced car use, and the increase in ridership was attributed to more walkers getting on, as well as more 'fun riders'.

### SWEDEN

In 2008 and 2013, Gothenburg offered tens of thousands of motorists free public transport for a limited period. Later, 25% of motorists were recorded as having moved to public transport as primary commuting mode. Long-term effects were not measured.

### DENMARK

In 2009, 373 car owners in Copenhagen were given a free month travel card. The share of participants who used public transport doubled from 5% to 10%, but six months later, fell to 7%.

### UNITED STATES

In Ashville, North Carolina, in 2006, ridership rose 59% when public transport was made free. An increase of 9% was retained after the experiment ended.

scheme was unviable and withdrew it with effect from January 1, 2014, leaving only some specific concessions. The scheme had no long-term impact on car ownership.

the first of its kind. Studies on fully free public transport systems have underlined both positives and challenges.

Hasselt, Belgium, made public transport free in 1996, and also expanded its transport fleet. A decade later, a study reported a ten-fold increase in ridership ['Subsidies in Public Transport': *European Transport* (2006), by Cees van Goeverden and others, quoted in 'The Prospects of Fare-Free Public Transport: Evidence From Tallinn': *Transportation* (2017), by Oded Cats and others]; however, rising operational costs forced Hasselt to do away with the scheme in 2014.

The small German town of Templin made public transport free in 1997, and continues with the policy even today. Within three years, ridership increased 1,200%, with children and the youth making up the vast majority of the increased numbers. This, however, led to increased vandalism. Also, "the vast majority of the substitution effects were due to shift from soft modes — 30-40% from biking and 35-50% from walking. Only 10-20% of the substitution effects were associated with previous car trips." [Cats *et al.* (2017)]

In 1991, the Netherlands introduced a seasonal free-fare travel card for higher education students, which led to the share of trips made by students rising from 11% to

21%. Fifty-two per cent of cyclists, and 34% of car users moved. [van Goeverden *et al.* (2006)]

However, small European cities can hardly be an indicator for Delhi. The population of all of the Netherlands is around 1.7 crore, much less than Delhi's estimated 2 crore. Average income levels are not comparable, and the public transportation system in Delhi is weaker than in most European countries.

Jasmine Shah, vice-chairperson of Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi, where the proposal was framed, said: "There is very little academic data to go by when it comes to a scheme like this in our context. The West has done it to battle road congestion and pollution. We haven't really found a similar project in developing countries. But perhaps this will make us the pioneers."

### The way forward

The challenge for the Delhi government is to find the funds for the project — which it says it has. According to the Delhi government, the cost of subsidising women's travel will be around Rs 1,200 crore annually. However, studies show that operational costs frequently rise in the long run, and schemes become increasingly less viable.

Then there are the challenges of implementation. Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) is looking at special passes for women. But the Metro has automated fare collection (AFC) gates that require tokens or Metro cards — the Metro will have to either isolate entry and exit points for women where AFC gates can be done away with, or come up with special cards or tokens for women.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has said that the move is primarily to ensure that women can travel safely. The Metro network has CCTV cover, guards, marshals, Metro police and the CISF, and is the safest mode of transport in the city. The Delhi government had announced CCTV cameras and marshals for buses too, but the plan is hanging fire.

Along with safety on public transport, last mile connectivity is a big issue. For women, walking to and from the nearest bus stop or Metro station, especially during the early mornings and late evenings, remains unsafe in many places in the city.

Sewa Ram, transport expert at the School of Planning and Architecture, has suggested that the Delhi government start a last-mile connectivity pilot project in one neighbourhood by ensuring adequate street lighting and making available modes such as smaller buses to commuters.

# Why Cabinet Committees are formed, what are the functions of each

PRADEEP KAUSHAL  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 6

ON THURSDAY, the Union government released the composition of eight Cabinet Committees, including two new ones — one on Investment, the other on Employment and Skill Development. What are these Cabinet Committees for?

### Transaction of Business

The executive works under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961. These Rules emerge out of Article 77(3) of the Constitution, which states: "The President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business." The Rules mandate the minister-in-charge of a department (ministry) to dispose of "all business allotted to a department under" him or her.

However, "when the subject of a case concerns more than one department", no decision can be taken "until all such departments have concurred, or, failing such concurrence, a decision thereon has been taken by or under the authority of the Cabinet".

The Prime Minister constitutes Standing

Committees of the Cabinet and sets out the specific functions assigned to them. He can add or reduce the number of committees.

*Ad hoc* committees of ministers, including Groups of Ministers, may be appointed by the Cabinet or by the Prime Minister for specific matters. A policy paralysis had hit the UPA-II government because it had passed on numerous issues to Groups of Ministers.

### Key Committees

**APPOINTMENTS:** Of the eight panels constituted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, the most vital is the Cabinet Committee on Appointments. This panel makes appointments to posts of the three service chiefs, Director General of Military Operations, chiefs of all Air and Army Commands, Director General of Defence Intelligence Agency, Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister, Director General of Armed Forces Medical Services, Director General of Ordnance Factories, Director General of Defence Estates, Controller General of Defence Accounts, Director of Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Solicitor-General, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Chairman and Members of the Railway Board, Chief Vigilance Officers in Public Sector Undertakings and Secretariat posts of and above the rank of Joint Secretary in the Central



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his newly formed Cabinet on May 31, 2019

Government. This Committee decides on all important empanelments and shift of officers serving on Central deputation.

**ACCOMMODATION:** The Cabinet Committee on Accommodation determines the guidelines or rules with regard to the allotment of government accommodation. It also takes a call on the allotment of government accommodation to non-eligible persons and organisations as also the rent to be charged from them. It can consider the allotment of accommodation from the General Pool to Members of Parliament. It can consider proposals for shifting existing

Central Government Offices to locations outside the capital.

**ECONOMIC AFFAIRS:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is supposed to review economic trends, problems and prospects "for evolving a consistent and integrated economic policy", coordinate all activities requiring policy decisions at the highest level, deal with fixation of prices of agricultural produce and prices of essential commodities. It considers proposals for investment of more than Rs 1,000 crore, deal with industrial licensing policies and review rural development and the Public

Distribution System.

**PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS:** The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs draws the schedule for Parliament sessions and monitors the progress of government business in Parliament. It scrutinises non-government business and decides which official Bills and resolutions are to be presented.

**POLITICAL AFFAIRS:** The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs addresses problems related to Centre-state relations. It also examines economic and political issues that require a wider perspective but have no internal or external security implications.

**SECURITY:** The Cabinet Committee on Security deals with issues relating to law and order, internal security and policy matters concerning foreign affairs with internal or external security implications. It also goes into economic and political issues related to national security. It considers all cases involving capital defence expenditure more than Rs 1,000 crore. It considers issues related to the Department of Defence Production and the Department of Defence Research and Development, Services Capital Acquisition plans and schemes for procurement of security-related equipment.

### The new panels

**INVESTMENT:** The Cabinet Committee





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

EYE ON GROWTH

RBI cuts rates, but its impact on economic activity depends on banks transmitting it to borrowers

AS WAS EXPECTED, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India delivered its third consecutive rate cut of 25 basis points, citing significant weakness in growth impulses. The repo rate now stands at 5.75 per cent. Significantly, all six members of the MPC, including Viral Acharya and Chetan Ghate who had earlier voted against monetary easing, opted not only for a loose monetary policy, but also a shift in stance from neutral to accommodative, opening the door for more rate cuts in the future. The message is clear: Inflation remains contained, while the slowdown in economic activity is deeper than what was believed.

On the inflation front, recent data points towards a broad-based pick up in prices of several food items, increasing the prospects of higher retail inflation in the coming months. However, the MPC isn't perturbed, as it expects a larger reversal in prices during autumn and winter. Further, with demand weakening, core inflation has moderated, as have household expectations of three months ahead inflation. The RBI now expects retail inflation at 3-3.1 per cent in the first half of FY20, rising thereafter to 3.4-3.7 per cent in the second half, well within the 4 (+/-) 2 per cent band. In the economy though, there is reason to worry. In February, the RBI had projected the economy to grow at 7.4 per cent in FY20. It then lowered its forecast to 7.2 per cent in the April, and has now cut it to 7 per cent. But with the underlying drivers of growth sputtering, private consumption, investment and export growth remain subdued, and with limited fiscal space, achieving even this may be difficult.

The fundamental question of transmission remains. Will cuts in the repo rate translate to lower lending rates? Will it boost consumption and investment demand? In the policy document, the RBI noted that while the transmission of the previous two repo cuts was 21 bps to the lending rate on fresh rupee loans, the lending rate on outstanding loans increased by 4 bps as "past loans continue to be priced at higher rates". This is indeed worrying as it suggests limited capacity to stimulate the economy. Perhaps, with liquidity moving into surplus mode — liquidity in the system turned into an average daily surplus of Rs 66,000 crore after being in deficit in April and most of May — transmission will improve. The decision to review the liquidity management framework by constituting an internal working group is a positive signal. The dovish tone of the policy increases the likelihood of another rate cut in August, presumably once concerns over fiscal slippage are addressed after the budget is presented, and greater clarity emerges on the monsoon. Further rate cuts though will depend on the extent of the growth slowdown and the trajectory of inflation.

LIVING IN DENIAL

President Trump deploys familiar rhetoric against China, India and Russia. He must know world has left behind climate deniers

ANY HOPE THAT Donald Trump would tone down his global warming-related rhetoric against India, China and Russia after pulling his country out of the Paris Climate Change Pact, two years ago, was extinguished on Wednesday. In an interview to a British TV channel, the US President said these countries "don't have good air and water and don't fulfill their responsibility to the environment". It would be easy to laugh off Trump's performance as another display of his illiteracy on textbook environmental knowledge — at one point he even said, "I believe that there is a change in the weather and I think it changes both ways". The world has, after all, come to accept that the US president is clueless about the difference between weather and climate, let alone the distinction between pollution and global-warming. Even then, it's worrying that the president of arguably the most powerful nation in the world continues to be ill-informed of basic facts about his country's track record on climate change. His assertion that "US is amongst the cleanest climes in the world" — rather rich coming from the head of a country that emits the second-most amount of GHGs — is another signal that the US will continue to be stingy in funding climate initiatives in the developing world.

Much like the then US President George W Bush, who walked out of the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 — or the senior Bush whose statement that American lifestyle is not negotiable once topped the list of infamous climate quotes — Trump has denied his country's culpability in climate change. However, the world has changed much from the times of senior and junior Bush. While Trump has been giving a new lease of life to his country's coal industry, India and China have made long-term plans to decarbonise their economies. India's target of producing 40 per cent of its installed electricity capacity by 2030 from non-fossil fuels outstrips that of the US by more than 10 per cent. The EU also has a set of binding emission targets for 2030. And, even in the US, governors of at least 14 states have reassured the world that that they would keep up the country's climate progress despite Trump upturning Obama-era federal programmes.

At the international level, groups such as the India-helmed International Solar Alliance hold the promise of global technology cooperation despite US braggadocio. The trouble, however, is that arresting global warming problem deserves concerted global action — climate rogues such as Trump stymie it.

D-DAY LESSONS

The 75th anniversary of Normandy Landings brings to focus erosion of values and systems set in place after World War II

AS LEADERS FROM across Europe, the US and beyond came together in France to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings on Thursday, they were understandably effusive in their praise for the veterans and the fallen on D-Day for "saving freedom" and the sacrifices made for a democratic, liberal world order. And, as much as the anniversary provides an occasion to remember and celebrate, it is also an opportunity to pause and reflect on the state of Europe and the West as a whole in terms of how much the values and systems set in place after World War II are now being eroded.

The elections to the European Parliament saw a strengthening of right-wing populist forces, such as the European Alliance of Peoples and Nations, and far-right groups increased their presence within more "mainstream" parties and alliances. While many expected the tide of populism in Europe to be far more sweeping, the decline of liberal values, internationalism and the consensus around it, is no doubt increasing. And one of the reasons could well be that D-Day, and the most devastating war and the political backdrop that led to it, are fading from memory to become the lessons of history that few seem willing to learn.

The end of World War II was marked by fatigue. The results of a parochial and militarised nationalism were that the large part of an entire generation was either killed or injured, mighty economies were in tatters and the boasts of my nation right or wrong were faced with the gruesome realities of nuclear devastation and the Holocaust. Those who saw the war in Britain, for example, did not re-elect their victorious leader, Winston Churchill, but preferred a man who wanted peace and to put an end to the empire of exploitation. As that generation has almost entirely passed on, people seem to be once again taking refuge in ideas of borders and race, and turning to strongmen who fan their insecurities. But this time, hopefully, it won't come to another D-Day to turn the tide.



C RAJA MOHAN

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi's first visit abroad in his second term to Maldives and Sri Lanka is being billed as the reaffirmation of Delhi's traditional diplomatic emphasis on "neighbourhood first". Hopefully, it is a little more than that — an effort to redefine what our neighbourhood is.

The visit to Male and Colombo offers the opportunity to firmly place the Indian Ocean island states into India's regional geography. A beginning was indeed made in his first term, when Modi travelled to Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka in early 2015 and outlined an Indian Ocean strategy called SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region). Modi must now expand the ambit of the strategy to draw in Madagascar, Comoros, Reunion and Diego Garcia. Reunion is part of France and Diego Garcia hosts a major American military facility.

Similarly, Delhi should focus on a number of small islands that dot the sea lines of communication in the eastern Indian Ocean — the Cocos and Keeling islands belonging to Australia come readily to mind. In both the east and the west, India's own island territories — the Andaman and Lakshadweep — have a critical role in reshaping our maritime neighbourhood.

But first to the conceptions of India's strategic geography. Nothing has diminished India's geopolitical thinking than the idea of South Asia. The shrinking of India's regional vision was also reinforced by India's inward economic orientation and the sundering of historic commercial ties with the maritime neighbours.

Maps of the neighbourhood, those of the Foreign Office, barely showed countries like Myanmar, Thailand, or Indonesia with whom India shared land and/or maritime boundaries. The unfortunate conflation of "neighbourhood" with "South Asia" and SAARC was complete.

When he came to power in 2014, Modi seemed to go by the traditional South Asian framework. He invited all the leaders of the SAARC for his swearing-in-ceremony to signal the commitment to putting the neighbourhood first. There was one exception though — it was the invitation to the political leadership of Mauritius to join the swearing-

PM Modi's visit to Male and Colombo is an opportunity to affirm the salience of the Indian Ocean island states

in. The invitation probably reflected Modi's sensibility to India's deep diasporic connection with the Indian Ocean island republic.

Whatever the intent might have been, it set the stage for visualising a region that transcends South Asia and puts the maritime neighbourhood back into India's strategic consciousness.

At the only SAARC summit during his first term, held in Kathmandu at the end of 2014, Modi saw the forum's dysfunction. It could not wrap up regional connectivity agreements negotiated for years before, thanks to Pakistan's decision to pull the plug at the last minute. With SAARC going nowhere, Modi turned to the BIMSTEC grouping, invited its leaders to join the BRICS summit at Goa during 2016, and again last month for the inauguration of Modi's second term.

The limitations of SAARC are structural and enduring. Before "South Asia" became the dominant moniker, our region was known as "the Indian Subcontinent". Many of the problems afflicting SAARC today are a legacy of the Subcontinent's tragic Partition in 1947. As new sovereignties emerged out of undivided India, there were problems aplenty to deal with.

Any number of SAARC summits are not going to resolve the quarrels in the post-Partition Subcontinent. Most of them are bilateral between India and each of its neighbours. The one exception is the nature of the disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Answers to these quarrels too will have to largely come through bilateralism. Where there has been progress in addressing these problems — for example with Bangladesh — the consequences have been huge and positive.

Delhi should have no problem recognising that Islamabad is not ready for economic integration with India; it wants a settlement of the Kashmir question to precede any economic and political cooperation with India. That might take a while. But should we hold up the rest of the region until Pakistan is comfortable with India-centred regionalism?

Modi's focus on BIMSTEC was as much about rediscovering a forgotten regional organisation as it was about putting the Bay of Bengal on India's mental map. Equally im-

portant was Modi's focus on the Indian Ocean islands. His 2015 trip to Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka was to include Maldives, but had to be cancelled at the last minute because of the crackdown on opposition leaders. Modi travelled briefly to Maldives at the end of last year to celebrate the restoration of democracy in the island state.

Over the last few years, Colombo has been persistent in claiming an "Indian Ocean identity" rather than a South Asian identity. The future of the Maldives, sitting astride one of the world's busiest sea lines of communication, is in the Indian Ocean. Both of them are acutely conscious of their growing maritime salience and have not been hesitant to develop all-round political leverage.

As Modi travels to the southern seas, Delhi must come to terms with a number of realities. First, it needs to recognise that island states and territories — including the smallest pieces of real estate — are coming into strategic play amidst the return of great power rivalry to the littoral. Second, the island states in the south western Indian Ocean form a coherent group and must be dealt within an integrated framework. In eastern Indian Ocean, a focus on developing the Andaman Islands opens up possibilities for sub-regional cooperation with Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. Third, India needs to develop its own national capabilities — especially in the delivery of strategic economic and security assistance to the island states. Without that the ambitious goals identified under the SAGAR vision will remain elusive.

Finally, in his SAGAR vision, Modi signalled India's readiness to work with other powers in promoting regional prosperity and security. There are big possibilities for collaboration with France, the US, Australia and Japan in different corners of the Indian Ocean. The joint bidding by India and Japan for the development of East Container Terminal in the Colombo port underlines the potential.

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BREAKING THE ALGORITHM

Public policy must regulate algorithms and AI to avoid adverse impact on society



SIMRIT KAUR AND KAMALDEEP KAUR SARMA

BUSINESSES ARE INCREASINGLY utilising algorithms to improve their pricing models, enhance customer experience and optimise business processes. Governments are employing algorithms to detect crime and determine fines. Consumers are benefitting from personalised services and lower prices. However, algorithms have also raised concerns such as collusions and malfunctioning, privacy, competition issues, and information asymmetry.

Automated systems have now made it easier for firms to achieve collusive outcomes without formal agreement or human interaction, thereby signalling anti-competitive behaviour. This results in "tacit algorithmic collusion", an outcome which is still not covered by existing competition law. This can occur in non-oligopolistic markets too. In 2015, US Federal Trade Commission fined David Topkins (former e-commerce executive of a company selling online posters and frames), for fixing the price of certain posters sold through Amazon Marketplace using complex algorithms, impacting consumer welfare and competition adversely. In 2011, two third-party Amazon merchants, Bordebook and Profnath, attempted to use algorithmic pricing to sell an out-of-print version of Peter Lawrence's *The Making of a Fly*. The first seller algorithmically priced the book at 1.27059 times the price of the second seller. The second seller's price was thus automatically set at 0.9983 times the price of the first seller. Over

time, the price shot up to an unimaginable high of over \$23 million — before dropping to \$106.23 and \$106.05 respectively! But, the relative pricing between the booksellers remained unchanged, indicating endless possibilities for both "collusion" and "chaos". Security concerns too remain paramount. In order to enjoy services at low or zero price, consumers neglect the value of their personal data. Access to easily procurable data such as Facebook "likes" can be used to target only advantageous customers circumventing anti-discrimination mechanisms. Application of advanced algorithms have also resulted in substantial increase in ransomware attacks.

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platforms, not only more data, but data with greater reliability is collected, allowing firms to more effectively target customers. Consequently, more users feedback into this loop. Such feedback loops have the potential of creating entry barriers which are a cause of concern for competition authorities. Also, better monetisation of platforms reinforces such loops as the additional revenues generated are reinvested to improve services, thereby, further attracting more users — leading to dominance. That Google has been estimated to charge a higher cost-per-click (CPC) than Bing, a competitor, suggests that advertisers attribute a higher probability of converting a viewer of Google's ads into a customer. Then, we have evolving machine-learning algorithms ranging from voice recognition systems to self-driving cars. Even high-profile programmers/developers may not be able to trace the working of such algorithms making nearly impossible the identification of any anti-competitive practice. Such algorithms may have the capacity to identify a dominant strategy on their own to maximise profits. A rethink of public policy is absolutely essential if non-desirable impacts of artificial intelligence on human race are to be arrested.

*Kaur is principal, Shri Ram College of Commerce and professor of economics and public policy, University of Delhi. Sarma is assistant professor, department of commerce, SRCC*



JUNE 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

STATE CMS' MEET  
STATE CHIEF MINISTERS met at a conference in New Delhi and broadly agreed on a series of steps to improve the working conditions of policemen. They accepted the central guidelines on the formation and recognition of associations of policemen and endorsed the move to provide institutional arrangements at district and state levels for the consideration of their grievances. No time-bound programme was evolved to implement the plan. The one-day conference accepted the Centre's approach to six major problems which were reviewed in depth. The Union home minister, H M Patel, presided over the deliberations.

NON-ALIGNED UNITY  
SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT J R Jayewardene formally opened what has the makings to be the most controversial non-aligned conclave yet: The conference of the foreign ministers of the co-ordinating bureau of non-aligned countries. Jayewardene struck a hopeful note in his address: "It is argued that the bipolar world does not exist any longer and that non-alignment as a middle course between two contending power blocs is no longer relevant." He went on to add that, "The end of bipolarity as the dominant feature of international relations makes non-alignment to my mind even more relevant than before, because the existence of different centres of

power makes it all the more necessary that the non-aligned countries pursue even-handed relationships with all of them."

ASGHAR ASSERTIONS  
AIR MARSHAL ASGHAR Khan has given an interesting account of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war for which, he said, his country was not adequately prepared and yet the late president, Ayub Khan, agreed to launch an adventure against India on the advice of the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He said he was convinced that Bhutto deliberately misguided Ayub Khan expecting that Pakistan would suffer a defeat. Khan made these assertions in his book *The First Round: Indo-Pakistan War 1965*.





WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Pakistan’s stunning victory over favourites England in the crucial World Cup match at Nottingham on Monday has turned the tournament on its head.” —DAWN

The liberal professional?

The idea of energising professional education with elements of liberal education in draft education policy hints at some possibilities of resolution of conflict between the two streams



SAIKAT MAJUMDAR

A FEW YEARS ago, Yale president Peter Salovey explained the rationale behind the Singapore government’s investment in the Yale-NUS College, a liberal arts institution co-founded by Yale and the National University of Singapore. As I had described in these very pages, Salovey had credited the politicians with recognising that the impending arrival of a messy democracy in Singapore made a more open, liberal-arts education essential for the country’s citizens.

The ground reality of the relation between the government and liberal education in India, especially of the public universities of arts and sciences, has been an ironic opposite, never more so under the government led by the current political alliance, in power since 2014 and now more powerful than ever since the electoral mandate on May 23.

Liberal thought is exactly what has made these universities suspect in the eyes of the government, and this mistrust has spread far and wide in the general population, deepening the perception of universities as bastions of “anti-national” ideologies, propaganda, and action. Leading the charge of the reputation of “anti-nationalism” are the three universities which have been bastions of academic excellence in India — Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, Jadavpur University in Kolkata, and Hyderabad Central University in Hyderabad.

While the dominant model of the Indian public university is traceable to the British colonial model ushered in the three Presidencies in 1857 — Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay — it is not coincidental that these three universities were either set up as part of an anti-colonial movement (Jadavpur) or as parts of a wholly different educational enterprise in independent India (JNU and HCU). But the enmity with the government is simply emblematic of their loss of favour with the Indian population at large, which has, of late, upheld the rhetoric of nationalism that has brought the NDA government back to power and has doubtlessly also led to the electoral defeat of young, radical student leaders such as Kanhaiya Kumar.

It is in the light of this government’s troubled relation with liberal thought that a particular feature stands out in the draft New Education Policy submitted to the Ministry of Human Resource Development by the Kasturirangan Committee. This is its foregrounding of liberal arts education. It comes as striking news not only in the context of India but the world today that the policy imagines the liberal arts as foundational to higher education of any kind. “The needs of the 21st century,” the draft states, “require that liberal broad-based multidisciplinary education become the basis for all higher education.” This includes fields of training that are usually held in direct contrast to liberal arts education: “Such a liberal education would be, in the long run, the approach across all undergraduate programmes, including those in professional, technical, and vocational disciplines.”

This is a welcome hue of innovation in a nation trapped in a sharp binary between an antiquated colonial model of general education in the arts and sciences on one hand, and on the other, a fevered fetish of professional,



CR Sasikumar

mainly engineering education. Even champions of liberal education, myself included, have tended to define it against professional education. This is the continued acknowledgement of the binary that goes back to Cardinal Newman’s idea of liberal knowledge as its own end and Immanuel Kant’s formulation of the “higher faculty” of clergy, law and medicine against the “lower faculty” of “philosophy” — which, in today’s formulation, would be the faculty of general arts and sciences. However, here is where the NEP committee has gone beyond the modern western notion of the liberal arts. It has traced the liberal arts as a “liberal definition of the arts” that goes back to the idea of the 64 “kalas” or arts canonised in India’s ancient books, which included singing, playing musical instruments, and painting, but also “scientific fields’ such as engineering, medicine, and mathematics”.

Sometimes I worry that the expansive definition of the arts obtained from “kala” threatens to make it almost shapeless. But I can also see that the committee’s understanding of the symbiotic relation between the liberal and the professional stems from this very expansive definition. It helps this narrative of the arts go beyond the modern western notion of the opposition between the two. As such, even as it recognises the liberal and the professional as two different tracks of education, it is able to imagine their mutual energisation as and when possible.

The idea of energising professional education with elements of liberal education is not far from the original vision behind the IITs, which were always meant to go beyond mere technological competence and create a holistically educated technocrat. But this vision has tended to fall by the wayside in the feverish dream of quick upward mobility offered by an engineering degree from an elite

The idea of energising professional education with elements of liberal education is not far from the original vision behind the IITs, which were always meant to go beyond mere technological competence and create a holistically educated technocrat. But this vision has tended to fall by the wayside in the feverish dream of quick upward mobility offered by an engineering degree from an elite

institute. “Given that professional and vocational fields are also better served in many cases by those obtaining a liberal education,” the policy states, “professional, technical, and vocational education programmes will arrange to enable arrangements and room for students to pursue a truly liberal undergraduate education.” It is common in the US for professional training in law and medicine to follow a foundational education in the liberal arts and sciences. Whether a developing nation like India can approach this longer and more expensive route is debatable; however, a policy that makes a strong recommendation to bolster professional with liberal education might go some distance to dissolve what has become sharply polarised tracks of Indian higher education.

The policy also recommends the reverse: “All undergraduate liberal education programmes shall have a robust element of skills and professional competence.” It is important not to see this not as an instrumentalisation of liberal education, which would defeat its very purpose — but rather as a broadening of its range to include aspects of experiential learning and community service, that would denude the rarefied, elitist aura around the classical western meaning of liberal education as that meant for the privileged gentleman of leisure.

The unwitting subtext of the bitter conflict between the liberal university and anti-liberal nationalism around the world has often been that between an expansive humanistic education and a sharply instrumentalist one. The proposal of mutual symbiosis between professional and liberal education in the draft of the New Education Policy hints at some possibilities of resolution.

The writer is professor of English and creative writing at Ashoka University

Lessons from the verdict

The idea of India may have lost its political currency



RAVINDER KAUR

THE SHEER SCALE and size of Narendra Modi’s electoral victory poses fundamental questions beyond the usual election analysis. The BJP has not only defied anti-incumbency to increase its overall voteshare, but has also made inroads into new regions and constituencies to consolidate its grip on power across large parts of India. What has been puzzling is that the time-tested “it’s the economy, stupid” argument does not fully explain this political outcome. Unlike the 2014 general election, where the BJP tapped into the simmering discontent against corruption and accusations of “policy paralysis” of the UPA government, the 2019 election was fought against ill-thought policy interventions like demonetisation, farmer distress, and an overall shaky economic performance of the NDA government. The prime minister’s (well publicised) micro-welfare schemes are not an adequate explanation because the UPA government too had invested substantially in pro-poor policy measures. According to the material logic, then, the voters should have penalised the BJP. Yet, the voters have not only not penalised the BJP but also decided to give it a second chance. The repeat performance is a critical indicator that the 2014 election was most likely not a chance occurrence but perhaps the first signpost of a more persistent trend.

If 2019 is indeed an affirmation of the 2014 verdict, then what precisely is being affirmed? What futures does the emergence of a majoritarian coalition portend for India’s minorities? Put differently, what remains of the “idea of India”, to invoke a familiar and over-used phrase, in the face of unabashed majoritarian politics? These questions are critical primarily because the voters have given near carte blanche powers of legislation and government to the BJP. This in itself is a cause of anxiety in a democratic order where the Opposition is too marginal to make a difference or play a meaningful role. So what kind of India is emerging in this shifting political landscape?

The debate has naturally turned to the realm of ideas. While some worry that the soul of India risks being corroded, others contend that it is not an ideological preference for Hindu nationalism as such but “money, media, and tech” which upset the balance. Amartya Sen has recently stated that what Hindu nationalism has won is power but not the battle of ideas. Implicit in this range of responses is the assumption that the “idea of India” is intact and untarnished even in this momentous change —

the people have been merely hoodwinked through a dazzling spectacle produced through unfair means. A part of this belief is correct — the BJP’s media machinery oiled by nearly unlimited funds is without parallel in the history of contemporary India. That the party does not hesitate to forge a victory through all available means is too well known. The other part is incorrect — that the idea of India is stable and constant. Ideas are never permanent; they are always work-in-progress that require constant attention and nurturing. The assumption that a permanent core of India — secular and inclusive — exists, and will continue to exist despite all challenges, is part of the problem. It presumes a spiritual core of the nation that is unalterable, and one that exists outside the material world (money, media, tech). This presumed unmediated stability of the idea of India, I propose, is a barrier to any new political imaginaries.

Take a look at how the story of the idea of India has unfolded thus far.

The glue which bound the postcolonial nation together has long been “unity in diversity”, a powerful principle that tried to accommodate a vast range of competing interests and identities into a singular fold. The model wasn’t without its flaws or critique but it did create a potential framework in which multiplicity could cohere. As India shifted towards capitalist reforms in the 1990s, the idea of India became the key articulation of the nation’s story of survival and emergence from colonialism. Increasingly, the idea of India came to be seen as an inalienable quality shared by its people — Indians were naturally argumentative, they squabbled sometimes but came together to celebrate democracy. India’s DNA was different than Pakistan’s, or so was the claim repeated alternately with relief and pleasure. This abiding belief in the permanence of the idea of India was on display in the 2014 election. A number of liberal commentators believed that India’s political institutions will constrain the actions of any government in power. The idea of India came to be seen as the bulwark that would automatically check the majoritarian impulse. In other words, actors may change but the script will remain the same.

The 2019 election hints at the possibility that the script too can change. Pay attention to how the term “majoritarianism” has quietly tip-toed into our political lexicon. It not only articulates the new reality of political-cultural assertion of the majority groups, but also the passing of the old unity-in-diversity era. If anything, the past five years have shown that no idea, no matter how powerful, is immortal.

But the thing about ideas is that they can be unmade and made. This impermanence is precisely what opens up the possibility of new political imagination. The first step is to recognise that, this time round, the idea of India may have lost its political currency.

The writer is a Copenhagen-based historian

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOR SURVIVAL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘UP shows the way?’ (IE, June 6). National and state elections are very different. The rout of opposition alliances in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections does not necessarily mean that such alliances will not work in future and that votebank politics on caste and religious lines has seen its demise. Notwithstanding the fact that the Bahujan Samaj Party has chosen to go it alone in the Uttar Pradesh bypolls, alliances will remain a force to reckon with at the state level. On the national stage, it will, however, be a question of survival for the regional parties. They would prefer to assert their independence.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

LANKA TURMOIL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Forgotten lessons’ (IE, June 5). The resignation of nine Muslim ministers and two Muslim governors in Sri Lanka is a testament to the policy of appeasement being followed by the country’s current government. Pressure exerted by extremist Buddhist and Hindu monks following the Easter blasts is being cited as the reason for the resignations. This pandering to extremist and conservative voices within the Sinhala community was a reason for Sri Lanka’s Tamil problem, which led to years of civil war and turmoil.

Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata

CASTE AND POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Attack the system’ (IE, June 6). The caste-based stratification of Indian society has taken new forms in contemporary

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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times. Caste hierarchy has now become a tool to fulfill the political aspirations of many. It has become easy for the political parties to identify people on the basis of their castes and target the vulnerable communities with freebies before the elections. This is the major reason behind political parties being consistently unwilling to enact legislation to abolish the caste-based hierarchy in all its forms. Stratification based on caste has also been a reason for lynchings and riots at various times in Independent India. The need of the times is to target welfare programmes to the economically weak sections of the society, irrespective of their caste and formulate policies to bring them into the economic mainstream.

Sukhpreet Singh, Gurdaspur



ASHISH KUNdra

ON MAY 23, the people of India delivered their verdict in electing members of Parliament, who would echo their voice in the Lok Sabha. In the biggest democratic exercise of the world, 613 million people, nearly twice the population of the US, exercised their franchise. It was the culmination of a prolonged and acrimonious election campaign, which is expected in a democracy of the scale and complexity of India. Yet, this time around, the political rhetoric dragged even the Election Commission into the battlefield. Players of the game sought to question not only the referee, but also the instruments and the rules of the game. Now that the exercise is over, it is perhaps germane to ponder over some key issues raised during this election.

First, let us address the tool of elections — the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). Aspersions were cast on its integrity, and by implication, on the whole election machinery. Some people even argued for a reversion to the paper ballot, jettisoning decades of reform in the conduct of elections. Questions were raised on the statistically correct sample of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines to be counted for certainty of results. The matter went up to the Supreme Court, which ordered a mandatory count of five randomly selected VVPAT machines per

The burden of elections

Debate electoral reforms, but refrain from sullyng the reputation of institutions

assembly segment. In smaller states like Mizoram, it amounted to nearly a fifth of machines being validated. The results were astounding. In over 20,000 counts, there wasn’t even a single instance of mismatch between the EVM and VVPAT count. This wasn’t just an endorsement of the humble EVM, but also a tribute to the 12 million officials engaged in the conduct of elections. It should be a matter of pride for all Indians that no nation has taken a bold leap of faith in venturing into the use of such machines for elections at such a scale.

Second, let us look at the integrity of electoral rolls, which is the basis of entitlement for franchise. This time around, the EC intensified the use of technology for greater transparency. The ERONET is an integrated national electors database, armed with data analytic tools to throw up cases of data inconsistency, redundancy and duplication, which became red flags for the Electoral Registration Officers, requiring mandatory physical verifications. Acknowledging that there may still be room for error, the Commission passed on the onus of verification to the voters. A Voter Helpline app was launched, empowering all voters to apply online for registration. This was linked with a universal toll-free number (1950), which allowed voters to verify the entries in the rolls. A special emphasis was given

to enroll physically challenged voters and a PwD (persons with disabilities) app was launched to enable people to mark themselves on electoral rolls. In order to ensure “accessible elections”, special arrangements were made across the country for voter facilitation, including provision of ramps at polling stations, training of polling parties in sign language, braille ballot papers etc. More than 6 million persons with disabilities (those who had marked themselves on the electoral rolls) cast their ballot across the country.

Last, the “Model Code of Conduct” and its enforcement by the EC. The Model Code draws upon the powers vested in the EC under Article 324 of the Constitution for “superintendence, direction and control” of elections to Parliament and legislature of every state. It lays down the guiding principles for conduct of political parties, especially the party in power, to ensure that there is a level-playing field during elections. However, for most part, since the code is issued by way of an executive order, only certain cases of violation invite action under the Representation of Peoples Act, 1951 and the Indian Penal Code. Perhaps, the debate around enforceability of the code could be a trigger for a wider discussion on according statutory backing to the code, with clearly

defined penalties for violation.

However, during this election, as a step towards greater citizen empowerment, the “C-vigil” app was launched. Citizens could geotag pictures and report cases of violation on the portal, with assured action within 100 minutes of reporting. For the first time, there was a decentralisation of reporting, which saw thousands of cases being reported and redressed through this portal.

The degree and nature of electoral reforms will require wider debate and political consensus. The EC can be an enabler of this dialogue, which must embrace not only the processes required for ensuring greater fairness in the conduct of elections but also transparency in electoral funding, measures to curb the use of money power. In the meantime, let us not sully the reputation of institutions or question the hard work of millions of officials who work tirelessly for their national duty. For all the doubting Thomases, let us lean on the words of Charles Dickens: “Men who look on nature, and their fellow-men, and cry that all is dark and gloomy, are in the right; but the sombre colours are reflections from their own jaundiced eyes and hearts.”

The writer is an IAS officer. Views are personal





## No surprises

The RBI has played conservative in announcing a rate cut of just 25 basis points

There were no surprises in the second bimonthly monetary policy announcement by the Reserve Bank of India. A 25 basis point (0.25 percentage point) cut was widely expected, and the RBI delivered that. Whether a deeper 50 basis point cut was necessary, given the sharp slowdown in the economy, is now a purely scholastic question. With inflation well under the benchmark figure of 4%, the stage was probably set for the RBI to spring a surprise but it chose to play conservative. Maybe the idea is to keep the powder dry for a further rate cut, if needed, in the next policy. If the economy fails to recover well enough from its slumber by August, the onus will, after all, shift back to the RBI. That said, there is enough in the latest policy to indicate that the RBI's focus is now on growth. The change of stance to 'accommodative' from 'neutral', the statements by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das at the press conference that ensuring systemic liquidity will remain a priority for the central bank, and the setting up of an internal working group to review the existing liquidity management framework, all clearly point to a central bank that is not only listening to the demands of the key stakeholders in the economy, but also acting on them.

The one area where the RBI has some work to do is in the transmission of rates. By its own admission, only 21 of the cumulative 50 basis points rate cut effected by the RBI in the February and April policies has been passed on to borrowers by banks. The excuse from banks, at least in the last few months, was that liquidity was tight and so deposit rates could not be cut. However, liquidity has considerably improved in the last week, and more so with the new government loosening the purse strings. There cannot be any more excuses from banks to not pass on the cuts fully. The RBI's decision to do away with its charges on RTGS/ NEFT (Real Time Gross Settlement System/ National Electronic Funds Transfer) transactions is welcome provided it can, again, ensure that banks pass on the benefit to customers. The central bank has also proposed measures such as a reduction in the leverage ratio under Basel norms for banks, which will increase their lendable resources. The projected growth rate for this fiscal has been lowered to 7% from the 7.2% projected in April, and the first-half growth is estimated at 6.4-6.7%, which by itself appears ambitious given the current trends in the economy. With the RBI having done its bit, the focus shifts to the Finance Ministry. There are tremendous expectations from the government over the next round of reforms, backed as it is by a strong mandate. The onus is now on the budget, to be presented on July 5, to unleash the animal spirits again in the economy.

## Sudan on the brink

The military rulers must climb down and transfer power to a civilian government

When Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir was toppled on April 11 after a months-long popular uprising, the generals had two options before them. One was the Tunisian model in which the army allowed a smooth transition of power to a civilian government after Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was removed from power in 2011. The other was the Egyptian model in which the army, after losing power to a civilian ruler following Hosni Mubarak's ouster as President in 2011, staged a coup in 2013 and reinstalled itself at the helm. Unfortunately, the Sudanese generals chose the latter, setting the stage for a prolonged showdown. The protesters had demanded a transfer of power to a transitional civilian government, followed by free and fair elections. But the generals used the crisis to concentrate more powers in their own hands. They established a military council which took over governance, while angry protesters continued a sit-in in front of the Defence Ministry in Khartoum. As talks between pro-democracy activists and the military rulers collapsed, paramilitary groups unleashed deadly violence this week to break the sit-in, killing at least 100 people and injuring hundreds. The Rapid Support Forces, the paramilitary troops notorious for atrocities committed in the impoverished western province of Darfur in the early 2000s, reportedly threw the dead into the Nile.

It is evident that the military will not easily give up power. After the crackdown, Lt. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the military ruler, has offered to hold elections in nine months, upturning an earlier plan of a two-year transition. But there is no immediate plan to transfer power to a civilian transitional government, a key demand of the protesters. Unsurprisingly, they have rejected the military's offer. At present, Sudan's generals enjoy regional and international support. The UN Security Council couldn't even condemn the violence as China, backed by Russia, blocked the move. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which offered financial aid to the junta as soon as Mr. Bashir was removed from power, also support the generals. This gives the military rulers a sense of impunity even when they unleash murderous paramilitaries on peaceful protesters. This has to change. Arab countries as well as the UN should put meaningful pressure on the military council to pay heed to popular demands and hold those responsible for the June 3 massacre accountable. There is no easy solution to the crisis. If the military wants to keep its grip on power, there could be more bloodshed as the protesters are defiant. It will have to necessarily build a more oppressive regime, as in Egypt after the 2013 coup. The other, wiser option is to compromise, resume talks with the protesters and facilitate a quick and orderly transition to civilian rule. The choice the generals make will determine the future of Sudan.

# Language, the opening move

The 'Hindi' controversy foretells the larger political narrative for the coming years



G.N. DEVY

Language makes us human. During the process of natural evolution, the human brain acquired the ability to engage with the world primarily through linguistic transactions. Language, therefore, has become the mode of knowing for Homo sapiens. Being the foundation of knowledge, language plays a pivotal role in formal institutions of knowledge. It is as necessary for thought and knowledge to exist as are air and water for the survival of life.

Scientific evidence shows that humans came to use language, a semiotic system made of verbal icons, some 70,000 years ago. The species continued to develop the brain's linguistic ability as well as the semantic complexity of languages in use throughout these millennia. The intermittent prolonged spells of the ice ages did not deter the species in its language pursuit. We are now at a stage when a newborn manages to learn the entire language capability of the brain developed over the last 70,000 years.

By the time a child enters school, she already has the language competence that schools promise to give her. This is not to undermine the importance of formal education. Schooling can indeed bring a greater self-awareness of the language one uses. It

can, under ideal conditions, help the learner in acquiring a greater ease in processing abstraction and judgment, the two highest cognitive abilities that the human brain has developed. It is now established beyond doubt that if a child receives formal instruction in the language of its home environment, the ease of doing cognitive transactions is enhanced.

### The second language

As one tries to understand the nature of the language controversy that erupted last week, it should be instructive to ask how many languages children in most other countries are required to learn. The answer to this question can leave us ashamed and angry. In England, Germany and most European Union countries, children are required to study only one language in primary school and another language of their choice in middle school. In the U.S., it is English and Spanish or some other language as a 'second language'. In Japan, it is Japanese and English from the primary level. In Hong Kong, it is primarily English, but also Mandarin and, if children wish, some Cantonese. In Egypt, Arabic is the primary language of instruction with a six-year stint in English as a 'second language'. Almost all over the world, with the exception of some former colonies, children are required to study primarily one language and another one as a 'second language'. In India they are asked to tackle three languages, and if their home language happens to have no formal status, they are faced with the daunting task of having to



cope with four languages.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Global Education Monitoring had reported in 2016 that there were 47 million drop-outs by the 10th standard in India. Of course, gender discrimination, absence of toilets for girls, economic marginalisation, poor infrastructure, inadequate teacher training and lack of employment at the end of high-school education contribute to the 'expulsion' of young learners from schools. But equally crucial a reason is the language challenge. If we have to bring this great injustice to an end, sooner or later India will have to accept the scientific premise that education in the mother tongue is the key to the life of the mind. 'Mother tongue' does not, however, mean the language determined by the state as a desirable 'first' language but a language that parents think will give the child the ease of learning.

### A colonial legacy

The question of language education as well as that of the language for education has three important facets – linguistic (including neurological and pedagogical), political and administrative. Since Independence, we have laid a disproportionately high emphasis on the administrative side of this

# Pakistan's blasphemy ordeal

Just the accusation of blasphemy can be punishment for the accused and their defenders



FARAHNAZ ISPAHANI

Barely two weeks after Pakistani Christian Asia Naureen (usually referred to as Asia Bibi), whose ordeal over false blasphemy charges attracted international attention, was allowed to leave the country, Pakistan's blasphemy laws claimed new victims.

### In Mirpurkhas

A Hindu veterinary doctor, Ramesh Kumar, was arrested in Sindh province on May 27 after a local cleric filed a police complaint accusing him of committing blasphemy. Mr. Kumar's village Phulhadiyon, in Mirpurkhas district, has a population of about 7,000 people, the majority of whom are Hindus. As is often the case when blasphemy allegations are made in Pakistan, riots broke out in the area and an angry mob burnt down Mr. Kumar's establishment as well as other property belonging to him and his family. The mob also tried to attack the police station and caused some damage in the process. Although six suspects were soon taken into custody for rioting and damaging the vet's property, it is Mr. Kumar's family that will now be living in fear while his prosecution meanders through Pakistan's judicial system.

Ms. Bibi's experience highlights the difficult path ahead for Mr. Kumar. Her relocation to Canada does not reflect substantive

change in the persecuted state of Pakistan's religious minorities. Pakistan's draconian blasphemy laws remain in force, and there is no sign that the authorities plan to drop prosecution of hundreds of blasphemy cases.

Between 1987 and 2012, Pakistani authorities prosecuted 1,170 people for blasphemy. That number has only increased over the years. The Pakistani legal system offers little protection to someone charged with blasphemy and mere accusation is tantamount to punishment. Judges and lawyers fear religious vigilantes who violently attack anyone they deem to be supporting a blasphemer.

Salmaan Taseer, Governor of Pakistan's Punjab province, was killed by his own bodyguard in 2011 for supporting reconsideration of blasphemy laws; the judge who convicted his murderer had to flee the country; and a shrine was built for the assassin after his execution.

Ms. Bibi's case attracted international attention. She was an unlettered berry-picker convicted by a Pakistani court of insulting Prophet Mohammed after being framed by neighbours who objected to her, as a Christian, drinking water from the same glass as them. She was sentenced to death for her comments in response to her neighbours' mistreatment. Support from church-goers and human rights defenders around the world meant that the U.S. government and the Pope paid attention to her case. Parallel efforts were initiated by the EU's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief to secure her release.

Last year Pakistan's Supreme



Court decided to hear her appeal after having ignored it for years. She had spent more than eight years in solitary confinement before being acquitted by the Supreme Court in October 2018. But Islamist groups took to the streets to protest that decision, and a review petition against her release was put in to block the Supreme Court's decision. Even after the review petition was dismissed, Ms. Bibi remained under 'protective custody' at an unknown location. Eventually, pressure from Western governments and the Vatican, coupled with threats of EU sanctions at a time when Pakistan sought its thirteenth bailout from the International Monetary Fund in three decades, worked.

Pakistan's all-powerful military and the civilian government installed last year are obsessed with improving Pakistan's international image, without really changing its reality. They wanted Ms. Bibi's flight to safety to be projected as reflecting a change in Pakistan's treatment of its minorities. It is nothing of the sort, as the persecution of Mr. Kumar amply indicates.

### Lonely struggle?

Unlike Ms. Bibi, Mr. Kumar is unlikely to have the support of West-

ern governments and the Vatican. Any action by Hindu organisations in India or abroad on his behalf will only be misrepresented in Pakistan's officially directed media as part of the 'ongoing conspiracies' against the country that are used as an excuse to maintain Pakistan's semi-authoritarian power structure.

Ms. Bibi was eventually smuggled out of Pakistan. Those who fought for her freedom for over eight years rejoiced in a way usually reserved for a member of one's own family. We all hope that she may know peace and happiness for her remaining life abroad. But we must not forget that, without major reform in its legal and political environment, Pakistan continues to have one of the worst track records in protecting its religious minorities.

### The BJP's zeal

The zeal of the BJP to spread Hindi in non-Hindi States is based on deeply flawed premises. To begin with, the government does not have any authentic data on the linguistic composition of the country. The 2011 Census data on languages, published last year, was heavily doctored. It presents Hindi as the 'mother tongue' of over 52 crore people by subsuming more than 5 crore claimants of Bhojpuri

and more than 9 crore speakers of nearly 61 other languages – claimed as 'other' by their speech communities – from Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. 'The Hindi' is probably spoken by not more than 30% of the population, but it is not the mother tongue for the remaining 70%. Knowingly causing risk to any indigenous language has been described by the UNESCO as 'an act amounting to genocide'. I will use the term 'phonoicide' to describe the expansionist aspirations in the name of nationalism. The aspirations are not to be attributed to the speakers of Hindi, but to the politics of the pseudo-nationalists who have no patience with the cultural diversity of India, so sensitively enshrined in the Constitution.

The sharp reaction that came up reflects democratic aspirations of the non-Hindi languages. The sparks that flew – before the controversy was hurriedly doused, probably temporarily so – foretell the larger political narrative for the coming years. In numerous ways, it is likely to be a conflict between the pseudo-nationalists and the constitutional democrats, a conflict over culture, language, knowledge, faith, history, world-views and approaches to modernity. One hopes it does not take the form of a north against south conflict. Language, being the foundation of both civilisation and knowledge, has naturally become the opening move in what is to come.

G.N. Devy is Chairman, the People's Linguistic Survey of India

University in Multan, has been in prison for the last six years after being accused of blasphemy by Islamist student activists. He was charged because he invited a speaker to a seminar who had allegedly "penned blasphemous passages in her book".

His lawyer dropped him as a client after being mobbed by over 200 fellow lawyers; when human rights defender Rashid Rehman took up his case, he was shot dead in his office. The killer has never been apprehended and judges do not want to hear the case, which has been transferred from one court since 2013.

For Pakistan's religious minorities to feel safe, Pakistan's blasphemy laws must be tackled, amended or removed as a crucial first step. After that, or alongside, must begin the decades-long process of removing the seed of hatred sowed soon after the death of Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah. That would involve an effort of mammoth proportions starting with the defanging of terrorist groups, changing school curriculum, and banning hate speech in all public venues. Political and religious leaders as well as the mass media must become a partner in confronting hate. So far, it seems that they would rather benefit from spreading the poison of communal hatred than confronting it.

Farahnaz Isphahani, a former member of Pakistan's Parliament, is author of 'Purifying The Land of the Pure: Pakistan's Religious Minorities'. She is Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC and Senior Fellow of the Religious Freedom Institute

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Slow growth

With the World Bank forecasting slow global growth, it is necessary for the government to take proactive economic measures ("PM to head committee in economic growth," June 6). With the balance sheets of corporates and banks deteriorating, there is concern about the fiscal policies that are being pursued by the government. Apart from this, data transparency is found wanting, as seen in the delay in releasing figures on unemployment. There should be a proper briefing on the deliberations of these committees so that citizens

can distinguish between rhetoric and reality.  
V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

After suggesting that all is well through his pakoda example and refusing to talk about unemployment in his election campaign, the Prime Minister has now constituted a Cabinet committee to look into the problem. Problems like these cannot be solved overnight. If sincere efforts are taken now, it may yield results after three or four years, perhaps to enhance confidence in the campaign for the next general election.

A.G. RAJMOHAN,  
Anantapur

### Language problems

The main argument of those advocating Hindi is that it would help in national integration ("Hindi or English, comparing apples and oranges", June 6). India is already a well integrated country. In fact, it is the fear of imposition of Hindi by the Central government that is seen as discriminatory and that is causing disquiet in non-Hindi speaking regions. Our language policy's primary objective of replacing English with Hindi will be counterproductive in a globalised world. It would be in the larger national interest if English is adopted as a compulsory second language in all

schools and colleges. Hindi may be offered as an optional subject for students who wish to learn a third language.  
KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,  
Hyderabad

In 1965, as a young boy I had participated in the anti-Hindi agitation only to realise years later the mistake of refusing to learn Hindi. I got a job in a public sector undertaking in Bombay and in a batch of 35 officers, only four of us from Tamil Nadu could not understand Hindi. This was a great handicap. Students of Tamil Nadu should be provided an opportunity to learn Hindi as they only stand to benefit from

learning the language.  
V.J. SINGH,  
Tirunelveli

### Breathing clean air

This year's theme for World Environment Day, 'Beat air pollution', must be taken seriously by India ("Make ecological problems a political issue: Rahul," June 6). It would be irresponsible to completely put the onus on the

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: The report headlined "Studying Olive Ridley's" (some editions, June 6, 2019) had erroneously referred to them as *endangered* marine turtles. They should have been described as *vulnerable*.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 855 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com



# Is this the end of the road for the Congress party?

PARLEY

It needs an organisational reboot and a firm ideology to differentiate itself from other parties

*The BJP's massive victory in the Lok Sabha election has thrown the Congress into disarray. With Rahul Gandhi insisting that he does not want to continue as the president of the party, Mridula Mukherjee and Rahul Verma talk about the Congress's ideology and what could keep it afloat today. Edited excerpts of a conversation moderated by Varghese K. George:*

Is the Congress history?

**Mridula Mukherjee:** No, the Congress has a long history but it is not history. I think it has a future. I think we need the Congress more than the Congress needs us at this crucial juncture, to provide ideological and organisational leadership to the forces that are now tasked with the job of defending the basic idea of India, which is in the Constitution. I don't think we can afford to let the Congress become history.

Rahul, does the Congress have an ideology and is it relevant?

**Rahul Verma:** I think that's the biggest challenge the Congress is facing. It does not have a clear ideological vision. Whenever you discuss them on what their ideological vision is, Congress leaders say they are focusing on welfare policies and that the party is going to lift people out of poverty. This cannot be an ideological vision because no political party is going to take an opposing stand on some of these issues. On the question of social justice and secularism, the Congress fails to distinguish itself from many of the State-level parties. Say, in U.P., how is the Congress different on the issue of social justice from the BSP? Or the RJD in Bihar?

So, what do you think could be a distinguishing ideological character for the Congress, particularly in a society polarised on religious lines?

**RV:** See, on many questions related to social justice, the Congress has not been clear from the beginning. Even the granting of SC/ST reservation happened under historical compromise. The Congress did

nothing on OBC reservation for a long time. The Kaka Kalelkar Commission was formed, submitted reports in 1955, nothing happened till Indira Gandhi came to the scene, Emergency happened. The Mandal Commission came to the fore. So, the Congress can hang on to issues of social justice and secularism, but because it does not have a clear line on these questions it fails to distinguish itself from other parties.

On the question of social justice, particularly on accommodating the rights of lower caste movements, the Congress has been very slow, if at all responsive. Do you think the Congress's dominance by upper caste groups has led to the party losing its grip on rural India, particularly in places where lower caste politics became an appealing tool of mobilisation?

**MM:** In the struggle for freedom, which is the bedrock of the Congress and I don't think we can understand it even today without that background, this is not true. Mahatma Gandhi, from the time he took charge of the Congress, made the most important issue of untouchability a basic plank of the Congress. Then through the 1920s and '30s, not only did we have movements such as the Vaikom Satyagraha and the Guruvayur Satyagraha, but also many other movements for social reform. Gandhiji himself devoted almost two years of his life almost exclusively to the issue of caste and the struggle against caste oppression. He went on a tour, which lasted almost a year, and visited the most remote, rural parts of India. He travelled by train, by foot, and sat in village compounds and argued with village pandits and the upper castes. The point I am trying to make is, it's not true that the Congress leadership has not grappled with the issue of social justice. Obviously Gandhi's way and the Congress's way was different from Ambedkar's way, but that happens very often. A party which is appealing to the whole electorate cannot take a plank of either a leader of a group or a party which by necessity appeals



only to one section of the electorate.

That's a fair point. However, a logical question that follows from that is regardless of what Gandhi may have done and what Nehru may have believed, the fact is that power under Congress regimes was invariably in the hands of upper caste people.

**MM:** In various parts of the country, the middle caste movements, non-Brahmin movements merged with the Congress from the late 1930s and threw up many leaders.

But has the party been willing to share power adequately with upper castes and Dalits since 1947?

**MM:** I think the trouble is that we are looking at things from today's lens and essentially a lens that started in the 1980s and '90s. The earlier perspective was not so much a question of sharing power at individual levels. It was not a question of representation, it was more a question of programmes and policies. And there, of course, was the Congress perspective, the Nehru perspective, with the focus on economic development and poverty alleviation. Now, you can argue that it was not right or wrong but that does not mean that there was no perspective.

Rahul, Mridula is saying you should judge a political party by the programmes and policies it advocates. Do you

Secularism cannot be an ideological vision out of compulsion or convenience. There must be some sort of conviction that secularism is the only way to go about believing in the idea of India or whatever the Congress's vision of India is.

think that will be a good enough case to get backward caste and Dalit votes in India?

**RV:** I don't know whether policies and programmes can bring votes for the Congress. I partially agree with the argument that one should not judge a political dispensation just by looking at whether it managed to provide representation to groups or not. But you cannot deny the fact that the making of the Indian Constitution at its very heart had group representation, and even the Congress party was not advocating individual rights during the making of the Constitution. Representational blockage of certain groups became the starting point of the rise of socialist parties, which in some cases became the backward caste parties in the '60s and '70s. Even on the question of economic policies and programmes, what I think is that the Nehruvian era was in some ways contested. We equate it with the idea of India but even in those times, in the '50s and '60s, the Nehruvian idea was contested from the right as well as from the left. And what we see is that once you stop giving representation to

groups, the left and the right get an opportunity to mobilise groups. So, in the '30s and '40s, there was the socialist left. Once Indira Gandhi came to power, she started moving the Congress towards the left of centre, which opened the space for right-wing parties to coalesce there, and also right-wing groups within the Congress started moving out of the Congress. You would remember that the interim Prime Minister Gulzarilal Nanda was also one of the founding members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. So, the point I'm trying to make is, if the model you are building is based on group representation and you fail to provide that in the policies or within the party organisation or in the government, then this is bound to happen.

What should the Congress do to get renewed ideological identity and focus?

**MM:** I still believe that secularism is at the core of the Congress's ideology but I, of course, see that there are many deviations from it and I would argue that here you have to get back on firmer ground. One should not get frightened by accusations of appeasement. One must come out very clearly against communalism of all kinds, whether Sikh or Christian or Muslim or Hindu. And one's secularism has to be clearly asserted. You can define it in various ways, you can talk about social harmony, you can talk about love and peace, but secularism has to be at the core.

**RV:** One needs to understand what the ideological space of Indian politics looks like today. The BJP now has become the dominant party. It occupies the space from the centre-right to the extreme right. The Congress cannot be playing a little bit here and a little bit there. It has to be very clear that if it is about the question of inclusivity, diversity and secularism, it needs to have a very clear position on that. Secularism cannot be an ideological vision out of compulsion, out of convenience. There must be some sort of conviction that secularism is the only way to go about believing in the idea of India or whatever the Congress's vision of India is.

Second, even on the question of social justice, how do you want to accommodate various groups into the body politic? This is a challenge

even the BJP is going to face sooner or later. Once you become an umbrella party, if you fail to give representation to people who are voting for you, they are going to find new political entrepreneurs who will be mobilising on the issue of giving exclusive representation.

Do you think there is a Congress without the Gandhis?

**MM:** In the short run, no, because you cannot displace established political leadership. And this is true for all political parties. No party undergoes this kind of a complete overhaul. There is a certain leadership in place. It always takes time for an alternative leadership to emerge. So, I think going away from Rahul Gandhi's leadership would not be wise at all today; it would be suicidal for the Congress. They should not come under pressure, they should look at the interests of the party and not what others are talking. Every party in India virtually has dynasty now at its core, but somehow it's pure for them and impure for the Congress.

**RV:** The Congress is in real trouble. The problems are intertwined in a way which makes it hard to see. The party has an ideological crisis. It does not have an organisation in most parts of the country. If you look at the bigger States, it has not been in power for 30-odd years and the States are also facing leadership challenges. All of this is tied to the idea that they have a dynasty sitting at the national level and in many States. Now, you cannot have a new ideological vision without a new leadership and you cannot have troops on the ground who can mobilise and change a party structure from the bottom to the top without an ideological vision that they are convinced about. So, in a way, I don't know what the solution is. But the problems are intertwined in a way that there are two ways of going about it. Dismantle the whole structure and think afresh, or wait for some time and think that there will be some miracle that will change all of these three or four variables. I agree with this argument that perhaps the Gandhi family has the authority within the Congress party to get it to overcome the crisis of ideological vision, but can the dynasty or the first family think of a new ideological vision for India?



Mridula Mukherjee is a historian and former director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library



Rahul Verma is a political scientist and co-author of 'Ideology and Identity: The Changing Party Systems of India'



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## SINGLE FILE

### A new Bengal?

We ought to preserve the old Bengal that was inclusive and did not tell people what to wear or eat

KUNAL RAY



turned to is deeply polarised.

Political consciousness was part of our upbringing. Animated political discussions were the norm at home. I saw my father regularly disagree with my grandfather. They voted for different parties. My grandfather would taunt my father before going to vote. These discussions were issue- and ideology-based. The criticism was primarily based upon the performance of a candidate or the party she represented. Religion never featured in these discussions. We didn't even know that religion could be an election issue, a site for contestation of the kind we saw in this election.

I don't want to get into evocations of the 'intellectual, progressive Bengali'. Having grown up here and then lived away, I have come to realise that a certain kind of conservatism was always part of the social fabric of the State. Some of the literature, music, films and art of West Bengal helped counter that conservatism and aided in the creation of a distinct cultural identity.

The closest that Bengal got to experiencing religious fervour was during the Durga Puja festivities. More than religiosity, it was a social occasion for friends and families to meet. Muslim friends and neighbours did not stay away from the celebrations either. Categories such as 'them' and 'us' didn't exist. Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti didn't feature in the religious calendar of the State until a few years ago.

Today, I see 'them' and 'us' as the new narrative of the State. From tea shops to bazaars to metro stations, everybody seems to be talking about how a certain community is being appeased by the current political dispensation in the State, succumbing to vote-bank politics. The majority feel threatened because their wishes have been ignored. Their religious identity is apparently endangered.

Somebody recently took to social media to complain that two recently elected women parliamentarians posing in front of Parliament wearing western outfits were not dressed appropriately, that their behaviour was not fitting of Bengalis. The Bengal that I knew and grew up in was inclusive and did not tell people what to wear or eat or how to behave in public. It is that Bengal we ought to restore and preserve.

The writer teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



## NOTEBOOK

### Turning the tables: when respondents ask reporters questions

A dilemma journalists grapple with during election time

SOBHANA K. NAIR

As reporters sometimes we take for granted our licence to probe the political views of strangers. We demand to know their castes as well as their voting preferences.

I have forgotten the number of times I pushed gates, sat cross-legged on verandahs, interrupted tea sessions and caught hold of people while they were working in the fields in the run-up to the recent election. I cajoled them into conversation and most of them obliged.

But what happens when an interviewee turns the tables on you and asks, "Who did you vote for? Which side are you on? What ideology do you subscribe to? Who according to you is the right candidate this election?"

I was speechless when an insistent group in a village near Ajmer asked me these questions while pointing at my left index

finger which was freshly marked with indelible ink.

Next came nervous laughter. I tried to evade the question using humour. Then I replied that I was a mere observer who was sent to record their reactions; that I had no views of my own. The group would not buy any of it. They were adamant. In the political war that was playing out across the country, they wanted to know which side I was on.

I then tried giving vague replies about the race in the Lok Sabha constituency that I voted in. Not satisfied with my response, a young man in the group decided for himself my ideology and my political inclination. With the spread of fake news on WhatsApp and the derisive use of the term 'left liberals' while referring to the media, I was an easy target. "If you can ask us, why can't we ask you?" he demanded. A fair request, after all.

I deflected the question by asking them about the board game they were playing. The cement floor had a frame drawn on it with chalk, and rounded grey pebbles. The game was called *char-maar* or *naukante*, they explained. I still don't know anything about the game, but asking about it did get me off the hook.

Of course, not everyone is always so persistent. On the same trip, I sought out a beautiful Rajasthani woman dressed in a parrot-coloured dupatta, silver bangles, armlets, a necklace and a nose ring. We did not speak each other's language, yet we managed to converse. In a thick Rajasthani dialect she asked, "You tell me, who should I vote for?" I redirected the conversation to the everyday rigours of life.

Many respondents ask this question indirectly but politely to learn about a journalist's views.

From the first day in the

newsroom, we reporters are told that we are not the story. We are told that we have to try to fade into the background and imagine that we are wearing Harry Potter's invisibility cloak while our ears do most of the work. We must probe a little and provoke a little in order to ensure that the conversation goes on. We are told to keep a tight lid on our own opinions and not let the 'confirmation bias' creep in. We are told to honestly reflect what we hear.

I have started questioning this age-old wisdom though, especially with Twitter being ablaze with opinions and forcing reporters to pick a side.

Why should journalists not be entitled to their own views? As a respected journalist recently said, in divisive times you can't be neutral; you have to be objective.

I am still looking for answers.

## FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 7, 1969

### Stowaway's freezing ordeal

Doctors and aircraft technicians to-day [June 6] puzzled over the apparently impossible feat of a young Cuban who survived the freezing ordeal of an 8-hour flight to Spain squeezed in the undercarriage of a DC-8 jetliner. The man, an 18-year-old welder A. Socarras, hid in the wheel compartment before the aircraft left Havana, and eight hours later tumbled unconscious and half-frozen onto the runway of Madrid's Barajas airport. He appears to have survived virtually unscathed after flying 5,600 miles at heights of up to 29,000 feet in an unpressurised and unheated compartment, with temperatures dropping below minus 40°C. One medical theory to-day was that Socarras spent the entire flight in a state of frozen hibernation similar to that induced in patients prior to complicated heart operations or transplants. This state is produced in operating theatres at minus 28°C. The heart stops, leaving the patient frozen in suspended animation during the operation.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 7, 1919.

### Prohibition Movement

The Lord Bishop of Madras yesterday [in Coonoor on June 5] presided at the annual conference of Missionaries in connection with the South Indian Missionary Association at Stanes School. The Rev. J. M. Baker read the report of the last year's work. The following resolution was adopted: Believing that the consumption of alcohol in India is on the increase and is causing injury to the Indian people; and believing that in spite of all regulations the injury is sure to increase unless there is prohibition; and sympathising with the aspirations of Hindu and Mahomedan reformers to make all India dry, the Coonoor Conference of the S.I.M.A. records its hearty approval of this association uniting with other bodies throughout the land in the effort to make India a prohibition country in the fullest sense of that term, and that as a step towards that ultimate goal the Government should be requested to give a wide extension in the principle of local option.

## CONCEPTUAL

### Cultural learning

SOCIOLOGY

This refers to how people living in a society learn various things from others around them and further spread such knowledge to more people. Children, for instance, learn new things by socialising with other children they meet as well as with adults around them. So the kind of culture into which they are born influences the behaviour of people right from their childhood. Many believe that human beings and other organisms may be naturally wired to engage in cultural learning as it helps them to better adapt to the environment around them, thus improving their chances of survival.

## MORE ON THE WEB

Jungle Jewels: promoting eco-friendly jewellery

<http://bit.ly/EcofriendlyJewels>





## देश

का बड़ा हिस्सा जहां भीषण गर्मी की मार झेल रहा है, वहीं मानसून के आगमन में हो रही देरी ने बड़ी आबादी की तकलीफ और बढ़ा दी है। मौसम विभाग ने पहले अनुमान व्यवक्त किया था कि दक्षिण पश्चिम मानसून इस वर्ष एक के बजाय छह जून तक केरल के तट से टकरा सकता है, लेकिन अब इसमें 48 घंटे की और देर बताई जा रही है। इसका असर देश के दूसरे हिस्सों खासतौर से उत्तर भारत पर भी पड़ेगा, जहां पारा नित नए रिकॉर्ड तोड़ रहा है। केरल से लेकर पंजाब और राजस्थान से लेकर ओडिशा तक सारा देश इस समय भीषण गर्मी की चपेट में है। जलवायु परिवर्तन पर हो रही चर्चाओं से इतर मानो पारा सारी कवायदों को झुटलाता जा

### निर्भीक पत्रकारिता का आठवां दशक

स्थापना वर्ष - 1948

मौसम चक्र में आ रहे परिवर्तन के कारण वर्ष दर वर्ष गर्मी के मौसम में तापमान में तेजी से बढ़ोतरी हो रही है और गर्म हवाओं या लू से बढ़ते क्षेत्रों का दायरा बढ़ता जा रहा है, जिसकी वजह से जल संकट भी बढ़ता जा रहा है।

# गर्मी की मार

रहा है। नतीजतन राजस्थान के चुरू में रविवार को तापमान 50.8 डिग्री सेल्सियस तक जा पहुंचा था, तो विदर्भ के चंद्रपुर में 49 डिग्री सेल्सियस तापमान रिकॉर्ड किया गया। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप भले ही जलवायु परिवर्तन के खतरे को काल्पनिक बताएं, लेकिन मौसम चक्र में आ रहे परिवर्तन के कारण वर्ष दर वर्ष गर्मी के मौसम में तापमान में तेजी से बढ़ोतरी हो रही है और गर्म हवाओं या लू से प्रभावित क्षेत्रों का दायरा बढ़ता जा रहा है। अपने देश का रिकॉर्ड बताता है कि इस मौसम में पिछले कुछ दशकों के दौरान अधिकतम तापमान में तीन से छह डिग्री सेल्सियस तक की बढ़ोतरी हो चुकी है। हालात यह हैं कि शिमला और नैनीताल जैसे ठंडे शहरों में इस हफ्ते तापमान 32 से 34 डिग्री सेल्सियस तक

दर्ज किया गया है। राजस्थान, महाराष्ट्र और तेलंगाना सहित अनेक प्रभावित राज्यों में तीस लोगों की गर्मी या लू की वजह से मौत हो चुकी है। भीषण गर्मी का असर जल स्रोतों और भू-जल पर भी पड़ रहा है, जैसा कि रिपोर्ट बताती हैं कि पिछले कुछ वर्षों से सूखा से प्रभावित दक्षिण और मध्य भारत के अनेक राज्यों में भू-जल स्तर में तेजी से गिरावट आई है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों के दौरान नए कालाहांडी के रूप में उभरा मराठवाड़ा तो मार्च से ही जल संकट से जूझ रहा है और इस क्षेत्र के बांधों और जलाशयों में मुश्किल से तीन फीसदी संचित जल बचा है! ऐसे हालात में एक सूकून की बात यही है कि मौसम विभाग का अनुमान है कि इस वर्ष मानसून देर से भले आए पर यह सामान्य रहेगा।

# पाक का रक्षा बजट



जहां तक मुझे याद है, पाक सेना ने पहली बार रक्षा बजट में कटौती की हैं। बहुत मुमकिन है कि कर्ज देने के एवज में आईएमएफ ने पाकिस्तान के सामने यह रार्त रखी हो।



मरिआना बाबर, पाकिस्तानी पत्रकार

लेकर शर्मनाक प्रतिक्रिया थी कि अगर परमाणु रहस्यों को सेना सुरक्षित नहीं रख सकती, तो कोन रख सकता है?

लोकतांत्रिक सरकार के सामने फिर यह समस्या आई है कि सेना कुछ और ताकत चाहती है। इमरान खान यह जानते हैं, पर उन्हें किसी तरह की मुश्किल नहीं हो रही। बेनजीर भुट्टो और नवाज शरीफ की तरह वह सेना पर पलटवार करने के लिए तैयार नहीं हैं। सेना

मुख्यालय को खुश करने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री नेशनल एसेंबली के स्पीकर को दो सांसदों का प्रोडक्शन ऑर्डर (संदिग्ध सांसदों के बारे में जानकारी और दस्तावेजों का खुलासा करना) लिखने की अनुमति नहीं दे रहे हैं, जो पुलिस हिरासत में हैं। ये दोनों सांसद मोहसिन डकार और अली वजीर निर्वलीय सदस्यों के रूप में चुने गए थे, लेकिन ये पख्तून तहफ्फुज मुचमेंट (पीटीएम) के समर्थक हैं। ये दोनों अफगानिस्तान

सीमा से लगे वजीरिस्तान में एक छोटे से विरोध प्रदर्शन का नेतृत्व कर रहे थे। सेना के एक चेक पोस्ट पर हालात तब काबू से बाहर हो गए, जब प्रदर्शनकारियों को आगे बढ़ने की अनुमति नहीं दी गई। नतीजतन पीटीएम के तेरह प्रदर्शनकारी मारे गए, कई घायल हुए, जबकि सेना के भी कुछ जवान मारे गए। उनकी गिरफ्तारी के बाद संसद में उनकी मौजूदगी के लिए आवाज उठने के बावजूद स्पीकर ने अपने फैसले से हटने से इनकार कर दिया। संसद में सबसे जोरदार आवाज पाकिस्तान पीपुल्स पार्टी के नेता बिलावल भुट्टो की थी, जिन्होंने कई बार सरकार का विरोध किया है।

ईद के दौरान भारत और पाकिस्तान से कुछ बड़ी खबरें आईं। भारत के नए नौसेना प्रमुख ने नौसेना में मितव्ययिता से संबंधित कुछ नए उपायों की घोषणा की, जिनमें संस्कृति और धर्म से संबंधित कुछ पुरानी परंपराओं को खत्म करना भी शामिल हैं। इससे पाकिस्तान में ऐसा लगा कि नौसेना प्रमुख धर्मानिरपेक्ष भारत की झलक वापस लाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं, जिसे भाजपा द्वारा हिंदुत्व की राजनीति कर सता में आने से पहले दुनिया भर में सराहा जाता रहा है।

ईद की छुट्टी के दौरान पाकिस्तान के सेना प्रमुख ने नेशनल एसेंबली में नए वित्त मंत्री हाफिज शेख द्वारा बजट की घोषणा से पहले रक्षा बजट में स्वेच्छिक कटौतियों की घोषणा की। इससे हर कोई पूरी तरह आश्चर्यचकित था, क्योंकि जहां तक मुझे याद है, पाकिस्तानी सेना ने पहली बार रक्षा बजट में कटौती की घोषणा की है। तुरंत सैन्य प्रचार विंग आईएसपीआर के महानिदेशक जनरल आसिफ गफूर ने घोषणा की कि 'साल भर के लिए रक्षा बजट में स्वेच्छिक कटौती रक्षा और सुरक्षा की कीमत पर नहीं होगी। हम सभी संभावित खतरों के लिए प्रभावी

# रोहित के बाद पायल

मुंबई के नायर अस्पताल में तैनात डॉ पायल तड़वी ने 22 मई को फांसी लगाकर अपनी जान दे दी। इस मुस्लिम भील आदिवासी लड़की ने डॉक्टर बनकर एक बड़ी लड़ाई जीत ली थी, लेकिन कुछ सवर्ण महिला डॉक्टरों के उत्पीड़न के आगे वह हार गई।



सुभाषिनी सहगल अली

पायल को मुंबई के नायर अस्पताल में काम पर लगाया गया। वहां उसे हॉस्टल में ही एक अन्य महिला डॉक्टर के साथ कमरा मिला। कई महीनों तक वह जमीन पर सोती थी और दूसरी महिला पलंग पर सोती थी। इस तरह का दुर्व्यवहार उसके साथ बढ़ता गया। तीन महिला डॉक्टरों ने उसे लगातार परेशान किया। उसकी जाति को लेकर वे टिप्पणियां करतीं, उसे बेहूदे मैसेज फोन पर भेजती और उसके काम की हमेशा आलोचना करतीं। पायल को आरक्षण का फायदा जरूर मिला था, लेकिन आजकल आरक्षित और अनारक्षित छात्रों के बीच केवल पांच फीसदी का ही अंतर रह गया है। पायल का उरीीडन बढ़ता गया। उसकी आत्मनिर्भरता घटने लगी, उसकी हसी भी बंद होने लगी। उसने विभागाध्यक्ष से शिकायत

की, तो उन्होंने भी कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की। अंत में हारकर पायल ने फांसी से लटक कर जान दे दी। रोहित वेमुला की तरह। इस घटना के खिलाफ काफी विरोध प्रदर्शन हुए। पायल का उरीीडन करने वाली तीन डॉक्टरों को एससी/एसटी कानून के अंतर्गत गिरफ्तार करने की मांग उठाई गई। शुरू में आना-कानी होती रही, लेकिन जब विरोध तेज हुआ, तो सरकार को कार्रवाई करनी पड़ी। इस तरह की घटनाएं घटती हैं, तो दो तरह की प्रतिक्रियाएं देखने को मिलती हैं। एक तरफ तो लोग जाति व्यवस्था में निहित अन्याय को समाप्त करने की बात करते हैं। दूसरी ओर, अजीब प्रतिक्रिया देखने को मिलती हैं। एक तरह की सोच के बहुत सारे लोग एक साथ चिल्ला-चिल्लाकर यह साबित करने की कोशिश करते हैं कि पायल की आत्महत्या जैसी वीभत्स घटना का जाति-द्वेष से कोई संबंध ही नहीं है। जो लोग वर्णव्यवस्था की आलोचना करते हैं, उन्हें वे देशद्रोही, धर्मद्रोही और समाज को तोड़ने वाले के रूप में कोसते हैं। रोहित वेमुला के जीने के अधिकांश के साथ, उसकी पहचान भी छीन ली गई थी। डॉ आंबेडकर ने कहा था कि अगर हमारे समाज का प्रभावशाली हिस्सा अपनी अमानवीय सोच को पहचानकर उसे बदलने के लिए प्रेरित नहीं होगा, तो फिर पूरा समाज अमानवीय ही कहलाएगा और हममें से कोई भी सच्चा मानक का दावा नहीं कर पाएगा।

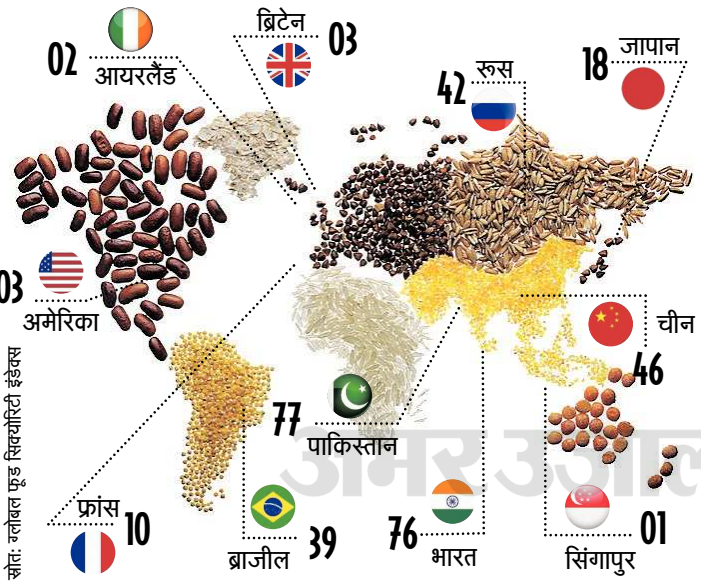
-लेखिका माक़ा पोलित ब्यूरो की सदस्य हैं।



### खुली खिड़की

## खाद्य सुरक्षा

विश्व की कई समस्याओं में अब भी खाद्य सुरक्षा प्रमुख है। वर्ष 1974 में विश्व खाद्य सम्मेलन में खाद्य आपूर्ति पर बल दिया गया। 2018 में आई एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक वैश्विक खाद्य सुरक्षा रैंकिंग में भारत का 76वां स्थान है।



## कल की कल सोचेंगे

सेठ जमनालाल बजाज ने संकल्प लिया था कि वह रोज किसी संत या विद्वान से सत्संग करेंगे। एक दिन वह एक संत के पास पहुंचे। बातचीत के दौरान उन्होंने कहा, महाराज आप जैसे संतों के दिए आशीर्वाद से मैंने अपने जीवन में आय के इतने साधन अर्जित कर लिए हैं कि मेरी सात पीढ़ियों को कमाने की चिंता नहीं करनी पड़ेगी। हां, आठवीं पीढ़ी की कभी-कभी मुझे चिंता होती है। संत ने कहा, सेठजी आठवीं पीढ़ी की चिंता आप न करें। कल सवेरे आप यहीं आइए। आपकी चिंताओं का समाधान हो जाएगा। सेठ अगली सुबह उनकी कुटिया पर जा पहुंचे। संत ने कहा, सेठ जी, मंदिर के पास झाड़ू बनाने वाला एक परिवार झोपड़पट्टी में रहता है। पहले आप उसे एक दिन के भोजन के लिए दाल-आटा दे आओ। सेठ आटा-दाल लेकर झोपड़ी पर पहुंचे। आवाज देते ही एक वृद्धा बाहर आई। सेठजी ने उसे खाद्यान्न थमाया, तो वह बोली, बेटा इसे वापस ले जा। आज का दाना-पानी आ गया है। सेठ ने कहा, तो कल के लिए इसे रख लो। वृद्धा बोली, ईश्वर ने आज का ईतजाम कर दिया है, तो कल का भी अवश्य करेगा। आप इसे किसी जरूरतमंद को दे देना। वृद्धा के शब्द सुन सेठ पानी-पानी हो गए। उन्होंने विरक्ति की मूर्ति उस वृद्धा के चरण छूकर आशीर्वाद मांगा और वापस हो गए। बाद में वह कहा करते थे, कर्म करते रहो, ईश्वर की कृपा से आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति होती रहेगी।

-संकलित



### मंजिलें और भी हैं

>>> स्वनिल तिवारी

# आत्महत्या के ख्याल से निकल जी रहा नई जिंदगी

मैंने लुप्तप्राय कारीगरों की कला बचाने के लिए एक मंच दिया, कलाकृतियों को संजोने का काम किया, ताकि कलाकार खुश रह सकें और कला संरक्षित हो सकें। मैं उत्तर प्रदेश के लखनऊ का रहने वाला हूं। बचपन से ही डिस्लेक्सिया से ग्रसित होने के कारण जिंदगी काफी उतार चढ़ाव भरी रही। अन्य छात्रों की अपेक्षा स्कूल में कुछ भी सीखने के लिए मुझे काफी मेहनत करनी पड़ती थी। शब्दों को एक साथ जोड़कर पूरा वाक्य पढ़ना बुरे सपने के जैसा था। सहपाठी मुझे ताने देते थे और पागल कहते थे। इन सबका सामना करते हुए मैं आगे बढ़ ही रहा था कि एक दुर्घटना में मेरे पिता की मृत्यु हो गई। तब मेरी उम्र सिर्फ 12 साल थी। पिता की मौत के बाद मैं बेहद निराश हो गया। सोने के लिए मैं नौद की गोलियां खाने लगा। स्थिति कुछ ऐसी हो गई कि आत्महत्या के ख्याल आने लगे। फिर मेरा मन बदला और खुद को दोबारा एक मौका देने के बारे में सोचा। इसके बाद मैंने एमबीए किया, और बैंक ऑफ इंडिया में नौकरी मिल गई। वहां से रिजर्व बैंक गया, जहां कुछ दिन काम



बिजनेस मॉडल ऐसा था कि कुल मुनाफे का एक तिहाई कारीगरों को दिया जाता था।

दिल्ली भेजा। इस दौरान मुझे कई तरह की मुश्किलों का सामना करना पड़ा। अब उस परिवार की आजीविका चलनी जरूरी थी। इसके लिए मैंने नेकेड कर्लस नाम से पहल शुरू की, जिसका उद्देश्य कारीगरों द्वारा बनाई गई कला और शिल्प को कॉरपोरेट गिफ्टिंग मार्केट से जोड़कर बेचना था। बिजनेस मॉडल ऐसा था कि कुल मुनाफे का एक तिहाई कारीगरों को दिया जाता था, एक-तिहाई का उपयोग कंपनी को बनाए रखने के लिए किया जाता था, और शेष अनाथों को दान कर दिया जाता था। इससे मधुबनी के साथ तंजावुर और गोंड कारीगरों को भी लाभ हुआ। इस बीच, एक बार मैं सतपुड़ा के जंगलों में पहुंच गया। हालांकि वहां मैं गया तो लोगों को जागरूक करने के लिए था, लेकिन मेरा अपहरण कर लिया गया। बाद में उन्होंने मुझे छोड़ दिया। मैंने वहां स्वास्थ्य, स्वच्छता और शिक्षा जैसी कुछ बुनियादी चीजों पर काम किया। 2015 में वापस दिल्ली आया और लिवमैड मूवमेंट शुरू किया। मेरा पहला प्रोजेक्ट महिलाओं की सुरक्षा पर था। मैंने पिक व्हिसल प्रोजेक्ट शुरू किया, और एक सीटी डिजाइन की, जिसे कंगन की तरह पहना जा सकता है, और किसी भी खतरे में, एक बटन दबाने पर, यह दो इंच के चाकू में बदल जाती है। इसके साथ ही मिलांडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन के साथ एड्स के खिलाफ जागरूकता फैलाने का काम कर रहा हूं। मैं अपने जीवन के प्रत्येक क्षण को ऐसे जीना चाहता हूं जैसे कि वह अंतिम हो। मैं चाहता हूं कि हर कोई मेरे द्वारा साझा किए गए प्यार के लिए मुझे याद रखे।

-2018 में यूनेस्को अवैसाडर के विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

### हरियाली और रास्ता

## राजा, मानक और उबले हुए बीज

एक युवक की कहानी, जो सच्चाई के बल पर अडिग रहा।



राजा बड़े हो रहे थे। उन्होंने तय किया कि वह एक प्रतियोगिता घोषित करेंगे और जो भी युवक उसमें जीतेंगे, वह राज्य का उत्तराधिकारी बनेगा। राज्य के सभी युवा राजमहल में इकट्ठा हुए। राजा ने सबको एक-एक बीज दिया और कहा, आप सब यह बीज अपने घर ले जाकर गमलों में बो दीजिए, और इसकी खूब सेवा करिए। ठीक एक साल बाद मैं गमले देखूंगा और जिसका भी पौधा मुझे सबसे ज्यादा पसंद आएगा, वही राज्य का उत्तराधिकारी होगा। सभी युवक बीज लेकर घर चले गए। मानक उन्हीं में से एक युवा था। उसने घर जाकर गमले में बीज बो दिया। वह रोज उसमें पानी डालता, उसे धूप दिखाता। वो हफ्ते बीत गए, पर उसके बीज में कोई प्रगति नहीं हुई। जबकि मानक के दोस्तों के बीज बढ़ने लगे थे। मां ने समझाया, हो सकता है, तुम्हारा बीज देर से उगे। कई महीने गुजर गए। सभी के बीज पौधों का रूप लेने लगे। पर मानक का बीज वैसा ही था। फिर भी उसने हिम्मत नहीं हारी। आखिरी दिन सभी अपना-अपना पौधा लेकर राजमहल पहुंचे। मां के कहने पर मानक भी खाली गमला लेकर पहुंचा। अन्य युवकों के गमलों में खूबसूरत पौड़े निकल आए थे। कड़वां में फूल, तो कुछ में छोटे-छोटे फल भी दिख रहे थे। राजा ने सबके गमलों को देख खूब तारीफ की। उनकी नजर पीछे मानक के गमले पर पड़ी। राजा ने मानक को आवाज दी, पर वह पीछे छिप गया। राजा ने पूछा, तुम छिप क्यों रहे हो? मानक बोला, महाराज, आपने जो बीज दिया था, मैंने उसकी बहुत सेवा की, पर उससे कुछ भी न निकला। राजा ने कहा, आज से मानक ही मेरा उत्तराधिकारी होगा। राजा बोले, मैंने जो बीज दिए थे, वे उबले हुए थे। आप सबने उस बीज को किसी और बीज से बदल दिया। सिर्फ मानक में वह सच्चाई थी कि उसने आकर मुझे असलियत बता दी।

सच्चाई भले हारती दिखे, पर अंततः वही सफल होती है।



## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 95

## वृद्धि को महत्त्व

**भारतीय** रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) की मौद्रिक नीति समिति ने वही किया जिसकी अपेक्षा थी। उसने लगातार तीसरी बार मानक रीपो दर में 25 आधार अंकों की कमी की। पिछले दो नीतिगत निर्णयों के उलट यह एकमत से लिया गया निर्णय था क्योंकि समिति के सभी छह सदस्यों ने कटौती की वकालत की। 5.75 फीसदी की मानक दर

अब बीते नौ वर्षों की न्यूनतम है। गुरुवार को रीपो दर में की गई कटौती कुछ बातों को रेखांकित करती है। वृद्धि में उल्लेखनीय कमी आई है और निवेश कमजोर पड़ा है। निजी खपत व्यय का लगातार कम होना भी चिंता का विषय है।

आरबीआई के गवर्नर शक्तिकांत दास ने नीतिगत समीक्षा के बाद आयोजित

सम्मेलन में यह कहकर परिदृश्य स्पष्ट कर दिया कि यह निर्णय वृद्धि और मुद्रास्फीति की चिंता को ध्यान में रखकर लिया गया है। चिंता की वजह स्वाभाविक है। आर्थिक वृद्धि अपनी गति खो चुकी है और लगातार चौथी तिमाही में धीमापन आया है। इससे मौद्रिक नीति समिति को चालू वित्त वर्ष में वृद्धि का अनुमान घटाकर 7 फीसदी करना पड़ा है। पहले यह 7.2 फीसदी था।

दरों में कटौती के अलावा भी बाजार की नजर समिति के कदमों पर थी। बाजार को उन मोर्चों पर भी प्रसन्नता ही मिली। समिति ने एकमत से अपने रुख को निष्पक्ष से समायोजन वाला कर दिया। इससे इस बात का गहरा संदेश गया कि उसकी

प्राथमिकता वृद्धि की ओर है क्योंकि मुद्रास्फीति के संकेतकों के तथ्यशुदा सीमा में रहने का अनुमान है। ऐसे में गवर्नर शक्तिकांत दास की बातों से यह भी स्पष्ट है कि दरों में कटौती का सिलसिला थमा नहीं है।

दास तथा समिति के अन्य सदस्यों ने जहां अधिकांश कदम सही उठाए हैं, वहाँ इकलौती निराशा की बात यह है कि नीति में ब्याज दर के कमजोर पारेषण की समस्या का हल नहीं किया गया है। केंद्रीय बैंक स्वयं स्वीकार कर चुका है कि 50 आधार अंक की पिछली दो कटौतियों में से केवल 21 आधार अंक की कटौती का लाभ नए कर्ज लेने वालों तक पहुंचा है। ऐसे में अगर चालू वर्ष के संशोधित वृद्धि अनुमानों को

सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि एफसीआई जैसे वैध बजट भुगतानों को बैलेंस शीट से बाहर नहीं किया जाना चाहिए।

बॉन्ड बाजारों की फिर से चिंता बढ़ने के आसार हैं। बॉन्ड प्रतिलफल बढ़ेगा, जिससे आगे पूंजी की लागत और बढ़ेगी। हालांकि एक भरोसेमंद बजट जीएसटी राजस्व में अहम बढ़ोतरी पर निर्भर करता है। इससे जीएसटी की और आसान बनाने और कड़ी अनुपालना व्यवस्था बनाने की जरूरत होगी।

एक भरोसेमंद बजट मौद्रिक नीति का लाभ ग्राहकों तक पहुंचाने में मदद करेगा। पहला, यह बॉन्ड प्रतिलफल को कम करेगा और वित्तीय स्थितियों को आसान बनाएगा। दूसरा, अगर बॉन्ड प्रतिलफल घट जाता है तो बॉन्ड प्रतिलफल से जुड़ी लघु बचत दरें भी नीचे आएंगी। इससे बैंक जमाएं और आकर्षक हो जाएंगी, जमा वृद्धि को बढ़ावा मिलेगा और बैंकिंग प्रणाली में मौद्रिक नीति का लाभ ग्राहकों को मिलेगा। तीसरा, जीएसटी की गैर-अनुपालना से 2018-19 में प्रचलन में मौजूद मुद्रा (सीआईसी) में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। अगर जीएसटी की अनुपालना को सख्त बनाया जाता है तो सीआईसी की वृद्धि घटेगी, जमा वृद्धि बढ़ेगी और मौद्रिक नीति के लाभ को ग्राहकों तक पहुंचाने में सहारा मिलेगा।

चौथा, वृद्धि के लिए यह बहुत मायने रखता है कि राजकोषीय घाटे को कैसे पूरा किया जाता है। सार्वजनिक निवेश घटाकर चांटे को पूरा करना बनाम अप्रत्यक्ष कर संग्रह को सख्त बनाने का वृद्धि पर महत्वपूर्ण असर पड़ेगा।

इसके विपरीत अगर बाजार राजकोषीय विश्वसनीयता को लेकर चिंतित होते हैं और मौद्रिक नीति में ढील दी जाती है तो अल्पावधि और दीर्घावधि की ब्याज दरों में अंतर बढ़ेगा। इससे वित्तीय क्षेत्र को अल्पावधि के लिए ऋण लेने और लंबी अवधि के लिए ऋण देने के लिए प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा, लेकिन इससे वित्तीय क्षेत्र पर खतरा बढ़ेगा।

**3. आयात-निर्यात के समीकरण पलटना**
निकट भविष्य की तीसरी प्राथमिकता कृषि संकट से निपटना होनी चाहिए। आयात-निर्यात के समीकरण को सही बनाने की कोशिश की जानी चाहिए। देश में मांग के लिए बहुत कम गुंजाइश है। पीएम किसान योजना से खाद्य की मांग बढ़ेगी, लेकिन कुल खर्च जीडीपी का महज 0.4 फीसदी है और इसके अलावा राजकोषीय गुंजाइश नहीं है। इसके बजाय जवाब आपूर्ति पक्ष में छिपा है। इस बात के शुरुआती संकेत मिल रहे हैं कि कुछ खाद्य उत्पादों की थोक कीमतें बढ़ने लगी हैं। स्टॉक रखने की सीमा, समय-समय पर निर्यात पर प्रतिबंध और आवश्यक वस्तु अधिनियम जैसी हस्तक्षेपकारी नीतियों से बचा जाना चाहिए ताकि खाद्य कीमतें सामान्य स्तर पर आएँ। नई सरकार को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि घरेलू स्तर पर जरूरत से अधिक आपूर्ति की स्थिति से बचने के लिए सरप्लस उत्पादन का तुरंत निर्यात किया जाना चाहिए। बाजार प्रोत्साहनों की मांग कर रहे हैं और बड़े सुधारों को लेकर उत्साहित हैं। लेकिन नई सरकार की तात्कालिक प्राथमिकता बुनियादी चीजों को दुरुस्त कर आर्थिक नाव को स्थिर करना होना चाहिए।

*(लेखक जेपी मॉर्गन में चीफ इंडिया इकॉनमिस्ट हैं)*

भी हासिल करना है तो मौद्रिक पारेषण की प्रक्रिया का तेज होना बहुत आवश्यक है। उस संदर्भ में देखें तो बाजार को बैंकिंग व्यवस्था में नकदी की उपलब्धता को लेकर आश्वस्ती से इतर किसी बड़े कदम की अपेक्षा थी। नकदी प्रबंधन ढांचे की समीक्षा के लिए आंतरिक कार्य समूह की घोषणा अच्छा कदम है लेकिन इससे अल्पावधि में भरोसा बढ़ता नहीं दिखता।

यकीनन सरकार को यहां अहम भूमिका निभानी होगी। आरबीआई के कदमों और बैंकों द्वारा इससे होने वाले लाभ को कर्जदारों तक नहीं पहुंचा पाना एक बड़ी समस्या है। ऐसा काफी हद तक इसलिए है क्योंकि बैंक छोटी बचत योजनाओं से प्रतिस्पर्धा करते हैं जो करीब 7.7 फीसदी

की ब्याज दर मुहैया कराती हैं।

कई धड़ों से यह सुझाव भी आ रहा है कि अल्प बचत दरों को 10 वर्ष के बॉन्ड के बजाय रीपो दर से जोड़ दिया जाना चाहिए। बाजार में निराशा की एक अन्य वजह रही संकट के दौर से गुजर रहे गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय क्षेत्र को लेकर किसी विशिष्ट घोषणा का नहीं होना।

दास ने केवल यह कहा कि केंद्रीय बैंक वित्तीय स्थिरता सुनिश्चित करने के लिए हरसंभव कदम उठाएगा। यह भी अच्छा कदम है क्योंकि केंद्रीय बैंक को ढेरों कंपनियों को संकट से उबारने वाला नहीं माना जाना चाहिए। वह भी ऐसी कंपनियां जो जोखिम कम करने के तथ्यशुदा मानकों में क्रियान्वयन के कारण दिक्कत में हैं।

# सरकारी प्रणाली के लिए ई-सुरक्षा को करें पुरस्त्ता



**तकनीकी तंत्र**

देवांगशु दत्ता

**नगर निकाय या दूसरी सरकारी प्रणाली पर साइबर हमला करना अधिक प्रचलित होता जा रहा है। बहुत से ऐसे कारण हैं जिनके चलते नगर निकायों पर हमला करना काफी आसान हो जाता है**

धन (विशेषकर क्रिप्टोकॉंसी के रूप में) की मांग करते हैं।

हमला झेलने वाला व्यक्ति या संस्था पूरी प्रणाली को दोबारा बनाने की लागत और हैकर को भुगतान (इस उम्मीद में कि वह आंकड़े डिफ्रिक्ट कर देगा) के बारे में विचार करते हैं। हो सकता है कि संस्था के पास पूरे बैकअप के साथ डेटा रिकवरी की योजना मौजूद हो, जिसरी सरकार की नजरअंदाज किया जा सके। हालांकि यह पूरी प्रणाली स्वयं काफी खर्चीली प्रणाली है।

पहले साइबर-रैनसम हमले कारोबारियों और कंपनियों पर किए जाते थे। फिलहाल नगर निकायों या दूसरी सरकारी प्रणाली पर हमला करना अधिक प्रचलित होता जा रहा है। इसके बहुत से ऐसे कारण हैं जिनके चलते नगर निकायों पर हमला करना काफी आसान हो जाता है।

कारोबारी अक्सर अपने डेटा के लिए कड़ी सुरक्षा और बैकअप प्लान तैयार रखते हैं। इसके विपरीत, अपनी परिभाषा की तरह, नगर निकाय की प्रणाली को सार्वजनिक संपर्क के आधार पर और कम सुरक्षा

उपायों के साथ बनाया जाता है। इसे कई बार हजारों ऐसे कंप्यूटरों से जोड़ा जाता है जिसे कम क्षमता वाले क्लर्क ऑफ़रेट करते हैं। यहां तक पहुंच बनाना काफी आसान होता है। महत्वपूर्ण सेवाएं देने वाले किसी नगर निकाय के लिए डिफ़जिटल हो जाना काफी शर्मनाक है।

इसकी तुलना में आंकड़ों का एनक्रिप्शन काफी आसान होता है। एनक्रिप्टेड आंकड़ों तक पहुंच बनाना काफी मुश्किल है। अधिकांश नए ऑपरेटिंग सिस्टम में एनक्रिप्शन स्वतः हो जाता है जिससे उपयोगकर्ता की निजता और सुरक्षा प्रभावित ना हो। हैकर मालवेयर के जरिये भी पहुंच बनाने का प्रयास करते हैं। हालांकि बेहतर तरीके से एनक्रिप्ट किए गए डेटा में संध लगाकर उसे डिफ्रिक्ट करना लगभग नामुमकिन होता है।

बाल्टीमोर में ‘रॉबिनहुड’ रैनसम से हमला किया गया जो किसी प्रणाली को चलाने वाले सर्वर को एनक्रिप्ट कर देता है और वहां तक पहुंच बनाने के लिए डिजिटल-की की जरूरत होती है। इसके बाद ग्राहक को हैकर से संपर्क करने वाली जानकारी का एक संदेश मिलता है, जिसमें भुगतान प्रक्रिया और डिफ्रिक्ट करने वाली ‘की’ के बारे में बताया जाता है। बिटकॉइन का चलन इसलिए बढ़ रहा है क्योंकि इस तरह की क्रिप्टोकॉंसी को ट्रेस करना काफी मुश्किल है और इसे आसानी से किसी भी मुद्रा में परिवर्तित किया जा सकता है।

बाल्टीमोर वाले मामले में हैकरों ने प्रत्येक अतिरिक्त डिजिटल-की के लिए 10,000 डॉलर की मांग की थी और दावा किया था कि 10 दिन के भीतर डेटा उपलब्ध हो जाएगा। हालांकि यह समयसीमा काफी पहले बीत चुकी है। शहर ने अपनी प्रणाली दोबारा विकसित की है और इस बात की भी जांच की कि मालवेयर किस तरह प्रणाली में आया था।

पूरे विश्व के नगर निकायों के लिए यह एक संदेश है। नगर निकायों को ना सिर्फ सुरक्षित प्रणाली अपनानी होगी बल्कि आकस्मिक उपाय के तौर पर डिजास्टर रिकवरी प्लान भी तैयार किया जाए।

### कानाफूसी

**कांग्रेस को अवसर**

मध्य प्रदेश में सपा और बसपा के सहारे मामूली बहुमत वाली सरकार चला रही सत्ताधारी कांग्रेस के पास अपनी स्थिति मजबूत करने का एक अवसर है। दरअसल भाजपा नेता जीएस डामोर ने रतलाम लोकसभा सीट में जीत हासिल करने के बाद झाबुआ विधानसभा सीट से इस्तीफा दे दिया है। डामोर ने लोकसभा चुनाव में कांतिलाल भूरिया को हराया जबकि 2018 के विधानसभा चुनाव में उन्होंने भूरिया के बेटे विक्रांत भूरिया को पराजित किया था। अब अगर कांग्रेस झाबुआ विधानसभा सीट के लिए होने वाले उपचुनाव में जीत जाती है तो विधानसभा में उसके 115 विधायक हो जाएंगे। प्रदेश विधानसभा में बहुमत के लिए 116 विधायकों की आवश्यकता है। वहीं डामोर के इस्तीफे के बाद भाजपा विधायकों की तादाद घटकर 108 रह गई है। कांग्रेस को उम्मीद है कि उपचुनाव में जीतकर वह अपनी स्थिति मजबूत कर लेगी।

**ईद मिलन**

अल्पसंख्यक मामलों के मंत्री मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी और भारतीय जनता पार्टी के ही बिहार के नेता सैयद शाहनवाज हुसैन ने ईद के अवसर पर अपने-अपने घर पर दोपहर भोज का आयोजन किया। भाजपा के वरिष्ठ नेताओं और केंद्रीय मंत्रियों समेत तमाम लोग इन भोज में शिरकत करने पहुंचे। जानकारों के मुताबिक दोनों नेताओं के यहां इस साल ईद पर पिछले साल की तुलना में अधिक मेहमान पहुंचे। पार्टी सूत्रों के मुताबिक पार्टी अध्यक्ष अमित शाह ने मंगलवार को पार्टी के नेता और केंद्रीय मंत्री गिरिराज सिंह को बिहार में मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार के पटना में एक इस्तेम पार्टी में शामिल होने का मजाक उड़ाने पर नाराजगी जाहिर की थी। इससे संकेत लेते हुए भी बड़ी तादाद में पार्टी नेता नकवी और हुसैन के घर पहुंचे। नकवी राज्यसभा के सदस्य हैं और उन्हें मंत्रिमंडल में शामिल किया गया है जबकि हुसैन पार्टी के प्रवक्ता हैं।



**सूखते जलाशयों से पेयजल संकट**

इन दिनों पानी की समस्या से कमोबेश पूरा भारत ही जूझ रहा है। मौनसून से पहले गर्मी की मार ने इस संकट को और बढ़ा दिया है। केंद्रीय जल आयोग की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश के कुल 91 जलाशय पानी की भारी किल्लत से जूझ रहे हैं। इन जलाशयों में पानी संग्रहित करने की कुल क्षमता 161.25 अरब घन मीटर है जबकि इनमें से करीब 31.5 अरब घन यानी 20 प्रतिशत पानी ही जलाशयों में शेष बचा है। अगर स्थितियों में बदलाव नहीं हुआ तो मौनसून से पहले दिक्कत और बढ़ सकती है। महाराष्ट्र, तमिलनाडु, कर्नाटक, ओडिशा, गुजरात, तेलंगाना और राजस्थान जैसे राज्य सूखे का सामना कर रहे हैं। किसानों के खेतों से लेकर घरों में पीने के पानी की आपूर्ति तक में भारी कमी देखी जा रही है। मई के आखिरी दिनों में चेनाई के तमाम जलाशयों के सूखने के कारण पानी की आपूर्ति में 40 प्रतिशत तक की कटौती की गई



है। टैंकरों द्वारा आपूर्ति किए जाने वाले पानी के दाम दोगुने कर दिए गए हैं। महाराष्ट्र के मराठवाड़ा, विदर्भ और उत्तर महाराष्ट्र में पेयजल संकट ने किसानों पर जमकर कहर ढाया है। तमाम सरकारी योजनाओं के बावजूद इससे निपटने में विफलता ही हाथ लगी है। नीति आयोग के समग्र जल सूचकांक के मुताबिक भारत के 21 प्रमुख शहरों

**केंद्र और राज्यों को जल संरक्षण नीतियों का कारगर अनुपालन सुनिश्चित करना होगा**

के 10 करोड़ नागरिक भू-जल की समस्या से प्रभावित होंगे। वर्ष 2030 तक देश की 40 प्रतिशत आबादी यानी तकरीबन 50 करोड़ लोगों को सीधे तौर पर पीने का

पानी उपलब्ध होने में मुश्किल होगी। भारत सरकार ने पेयजल संकट से निपटने के लिए अलग मंत्रालय बनाया है। लेकिन फिलहाल मौनसून आने से पहले इस मंत्रालय के सामने मौजूद चुनौतियां कम होती नहीं दिख रही हैं।

*उद्देश्य कुमार, मणिपाल*

**दो भाषा की शिक्षा नीति ही व्यावहारिक**

इसरो के पूर्व प्रमुख के कस्तुरीरंगन की अध्यक्षता वाली नौ सदस्यों की समिति की राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति- 2019 के मसौदे से स्पष्ट होता है कि यह शिक्षा नीति किसी राज्य, भाषा विशेष, क्षेत्र, धर्म, संप्रदाय का ध्यान रख कर नहीं बनाई गई है। इसे भारत की भावी पीढ़ी के भविष्य के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय शैक्षणिक गुणवत्ता को ध्यान में रख कर तैयार किया गया

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





दैनिक जागरण

पहले कार्य की योजना बनाएं और फिर योजना अनुरूप कार्य करें

## दिशाहीन कांग्रेस

लोकसभा चुनावों के नतीजे आने के बाद जब यह उम्मीद की जा रही थी कि कांग्रेस अपनी रीति-नीति में व्यापक बदलाव लाएगी तब वह दिशाहीनता से ग्रस्त दिख रही है। किसी को नहीं पता कि रहलुल गांधी ने अध्यक्ष पद छोड़ने की जो पेशकश की थी उसका क्या हुआ? इस बारे में भी कोई खबर नहीं कि एक और करारी हार पर कोई आत्ममंथन किया जा रहा है या नहीं? चूंकि यह पता नहीं कि कांग्रेस में शीर्ष स्तर पर क्या हो रहा है इसलिए इस पर हैरानी नहीं कि रण्यों में भी उठापटक तेज होती दिख रही है। तेलंगाना में कांग्रेस के 18 में से 12 विधायक सत्ताधारी तेलंगाना राष्ट्र समिति में शामिल होने को तैयार हैं। पता नहीं कांग्रेस से मुक्त होने को तैयार इन विधायकों की यह इच्छा पूरी होगी या नहीं कि राज्य कांग्रेस का विलय तेलंगाना राष्ट्र समिति में हो जाए, लेकिन अगर वे पार्टी छोड़ देते हैं तो एक और राज्य में कांग्रेस अस्तित्व के संकट से जूझती दिखाई देगी। कांग्रेस के लिए यह भी शुभ संकेत नहीं कि पंजाब में मुख्यमंत्री अमरिंदर सिंह और उनके बड़बोले मंत्री नवजोत सिंह सिद्धू के बीच तनातनी बढ़ती जा रही है। यदि यह तनातनी और अधिक बढ़ी तो इसका असर कांग्रेस की एकजुटता और साथ ही उसकी छवि पर भी पड़ेगा। पार्टी नेतृत्व को इसकी चिंता करनी चाहिए कि पंजाब में कांग्रेस आपसी आपसी कलह का शिकार न होने पाए। कांग्रेस नेतृत्व को यह समझना होगा कि अगर मुख्यमंत्री अमरिंदर सिंह क्रिकेटर से नेता बने नवजोत सिंह सिद्धू के रुख-रेवेंचे से नाखुश हैं तो इसके लिए उन्हें दोष नहीं दिया जा सकता। नवजोत सिंह सिद्धू एक अर्से से यह दिखाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं कि उन्हें अमरिंदर सिंह की परवाह नहीं है। भले ही नवजोत सिंह यह कह रहे हों कि उन्हें हल्के में लिया जा रहा है, लेकिन सच यही है कि वह खुद मुख्यमंत्री को यथोचित महत्व देने को तैयार नहीं दिख रहे हैं। क्या ऐसा इसलिए है, क्योंकि कांग्रेस नेतृत्व उनकी पीठ पर हाथ रखे हुए है? सच्चाई जो भी हो, इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि पंजाब के साथ-साथ अन्य अनेक रण्यों में भी कांग्रेस गुटबाजी और दिशाहीनता से ग्रस्त है। राजस्थान में मुख्यमंत्री अशोक गहलोत और उप मुख्यमंत्री सचिन पायलट के बीच सब कुछ सही नहीं दिख रहा है। जैसे यह नहीं पता कि रहलुल गांधी पार्टी अध्यक्ष बने रहेंगे या नहीं वैसे ही इस बारे में भी संशय ही अधिक है कि विभिन्न रण्यों के पार्टी अध्यक्ष अपने-अपने पद पर बने रहेंगे या नहीं? सबसे खराब बात यह है कि कांग्रेस नेतृत्व और खासकर गांधी परिवार की ओर से ऐसे संकेत दिए जा रहे हैं जैसे लोकसभा चुनावों में पराजय के लिए उसके अलावा अन्य सब जिम्मेदार हैं। कहीं रण्यों के नेतृत्व पर दोष मढ़ा जा रहा है तो कहीं सहयोगी दलों पर। इसके अतिरिक्त यह भी प्रतीति कराई जा रही है कि भाजपा गलत तौर-तरीके अपनाकर चुनाव जीत गई। इस सबसे तो यही लगता है कि कांग्रेस नेतृत्व हार के मूल कारणों से जानबूझकर मुंह मोड़ रहा है। ऐसा करना मुसीबत मोल लेना ही है।

## सिक्थोर हिमालय

चीन और नेपाल की सीमा से सटे उत्तराखंड के उच्च हिमालयी क्षेत्र में चल रही सिक्थोर हिमालय परियोजना में महिलाओं की भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करने की उत्तराक्षी के डीएम की पहल सराहनीय मानी जा सकती है। इससे जहां इस क्षेत्र के निवासियों के हितों के संरक्षण में मदद मिलेगी, वहीं आजीविका के साधन भी विकसित होंगे। जाहिर है कि इससे स्थानीय निवासियों की आर्थिकी संस्तर के साथ ही उनके जीवनस्तर में सुधार आएगा। साथ ही वे हिमालयी क्षेत्र में वन एवं वन्यजीवों के संरक्षण में सक्रिय रूप से भागीदारी भी करेंगे। फिर वन एवं वन्यजीवों के संरक्षण के साथ ही आजीविका विकास सिक्थोर हिमालय परियोजना का अहम हिस्सा भी है। बता दें कि उत्तराखंड सहित देश के चार हिमालयी रण्यों में संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम (यूएनडीपी) के सहयोग से दो अक्टूबर, 2017 से इस परियोजना की शुरुआत की गई। उत्तराखंड में गंगोत्री राष्ट्रीय उद्यान एवं गोविंद वन्यजीव विहार से लेकर अस्कोट अभयारण्य तक के उच्च हिमालयी क्षेत्र को इस परियोजना में शामिल किया गया है। इस क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत 60 गांव भी हैं, जिनमें गोविंद वन्यजीव विहार में आने वाले 43 और अस्कोट अभयारण्य के 17 गांव शामिल हैं। इन गांवों के बाशिंदे भी राज्य के अन्य क्षेत्रों की भांति वन कानूनों की बंदिशों से जूझ रहे हैं। ऐसे में सिक्थोर हिमालय परियोजना के शुरु होने से वहां के निवासियों की उम्मीदें परवान चढ़ी हैं। असल में परियोजना के अंतर्गत इन उच्च हिमालयी क्षेत्रों में जैवविविधता के साथ ही हिम तेंदुओं के संरक्षण के अलावा स्थानीय निवासियों के लिए आजीविका विकास को प्रभावी कदम उठाए जाने हैं। इसके लिए एक्शन प्लान को अंतिम रूप दिया जा रहा है। गंगोत्री से लेकर अस्कोट तक के संरक्षित क्षेत्र में पड़ने वाले गांवों में आजीविका विकास के तहत ईको टूरिज्म, जड़ी-बूटी और फलोत्पादन, रोजगारपरक प्रशिक्षण, चारा विकास से संबंधित कार्यक्रम विभिन्न विभागों के सहयोग से संचालित किए जाएंगे। ऐसे में यह आश्चर्य है कि स्थानीय निवासियों को केंद्र में रखकर आजीविका विकास के कार्यक्रम तय किए जाएं। इसके लिए वहां के लोगों विशेषकर महिलाओं से सुझाव और जानकारीयें ली जानी आवश्यक हैं कि वे क्या चाहते हैं। वजह ये कि ग्रामीण इलाकों में महिलाएं ही पर्यावरण से सीधे तौर पर जुड़ी होती हैं।

## बेरोजगारी की बढ़ती समस्या

सुधीर कुमार

सांख्यिकी और कार्यक्रम कार्यान्वयन मंत्रालय द्वारा हाल में जारी आंकड़ों के अनुसार 2017-18 के दौरान देश में बेरोजगारी की दर पिछले 45 सालों में सबसे अधिक 6.1 फीसद रही। आंकड़ों के मुताबिक देश में 15 से 29 साल के युवा बेरोजगारी की समस्या से सर्वाधिक प्रभावित हैं। शहरी युवाओं में बेरोजगारी की दर 7.8 फीसद, जबकि ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में यह दर 5.3 फीसद है। बेरोजगारी की बढ़ती समस्या को लेकर विश्व जहां मोदी सरकार को घेरने की कोशिश कर रहा है, वहीं सरकार ने घटती विकास दर और बढ़ती बेरोजगारी जैसी आर्थिक समस्याओं के समाधान को लेकर गंभीरता दिखाते हुए केबिनेट समितियों का गठन किया है।

हालांकि देश में सरकार चाहे किसी भी दल की रही हो, बेरोजगारी की समस्या सदैव बरकरार ही रही है। क्योंकि इतनी बड़ी जनसंख्या को रोजगार उपलब्ध कराना किसी भी सरकार के लिए मुश्किल भरा कार्य रहा है। दरअसल बढ़ती जनसंख्या और तदनुसार रोजगार सृजन नहीं हो पाने से देश में बेरोजगारी दर का ग्राफ दिनोंदिन बढ़ता ही गया है। मौजूदा समय में भारत

**बढ़ती जनसंख्या और तदनुसार रोजगार सृजन नहीं हो पाने से देश में बेरोजगारी का ग्राफ दिनोंदिन बढ़ता ही गया है**

की गिनती दुनिया के सर्वाधिक बेरोजगार आबादी वाले देशों में की जाने लगी है। बेरोजगारी ऐसी आग है, जिसकी लौ में दिन-रात युवाओं को जलना पड़ रहा है। वहीं कई प्रतिभा संपन्न युवाओं का देश में सम्मान नहीं हो पाने के कारण उनका पलायन विदेशों की ओर हो रहा है। आमतौर पर योग्यता के अनुसार काम न मिलने की दशा को बेरोजगारी कहा जाता है। प्रच्छन्न, खुली, चक्रीय, मौसमी और शिक्षित आदि बेरोजगारी के ही प्रकार हैं। इनमें शिक्षित बेरोजगारी राष्ट्र की प्रगति में सबसे बड़ी बाधक साबित होती है। बेरोजगारी की यह स्थिति भुक्तभोगी युवा के मन में सरकार के प्रति आक्रोश का भाव जगाती है। क्षमता एवं संभावना से परिपूर्ण युवा जब नौकरी के लिए बहाली की बाट जोहता है या फिर अपनी योग्यता से नीचे की नौकरी करने को लाचार होता है तो वह क्षुब्ध मन

से काम करना प्रारंभ कर देता है। विडंबना यह है कि एक तरफ देश में रोजगार के अवसरों की भारी कमी है तो दूसरी तरफ बेरोजगारी का दंश झेल रहे भुक्तभोगियों को उचित मार्गदर्शन नहीं मिल पा रहा है। फलस्वरूप बेरोजगारी की गति में फसे रहना उनकी विवशता हो गई है। इसी बेबसी की आड़ में कई युवा नकारात्मक मार्ग अख्तियार कर लेते हैं, जो एक खतरनाक स्थिति को जन्म देती है। विश्व के सबसे बड़े युवा राष्ट्र में शिक्षित और डिग्रीधारी बेरोजगार युवाओं की फौज भविष्य के लिए शुभ संकेत नहीं है। यह चिंतन का देश का समय है कि कहीं हमारी मौजूदा शिक्षा व्यवस्था में खोत तो नहीं। क्योंकि ऐसी शिक्षा ग्रहण करने से क्या फायदा, जो कल युवाओं को जीविकोपार्जन के लिए दर-दर भटकने को मजबूर करे!

बहरहाल बेरोजगारी की समस्या से निपटने के लिए सरकार को जहां ठोस नीति के जरिये बेकारी उन्मूलन और अवसरों के सृजन के प्रति संजीदा होना चाहिए, वहीं नौकरी के लिए केवल सरकार पर आश्रित न होकर एवरोजगार की ओर कदम बढ़ाना युवाओं के लिए भी फायदेमंद हो सकता है।

(लेखक बीएचयू में अध्येता हैं)

जीएन वाजपेयी

**मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल में कामकाज की शुरुआती सफलता ही मंत्रियों के उनके पदों पर बने रहने का पैमाना बनाई जानी चाहिए**



प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में नई मंत्रिपरिषद के गठन के बाद से तमाम जानकार मोदी सरकार को सलाह देने में लगे हुए हैं। एक भारतीय नागरिक के रूप में मैं भी सरकार को यह सुझाव देना चाहता हूं कि शुरुआती सौ दिनों के लिए उसका एजेंडा क्या होना चाहिए। भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती के संकेत स्पष्ट रूप से झलकते हैं। रोजगार के अवसर नहीं बढ़ रहे हैं। मांग के मोर्चे पर भी फिसलन है। अमेरिका और चीन के बीच व्यापार युद्ध से वैश्विक अनिश्चितता, मंदी और मुश्किल हालात पैदा होंगे। पहले कार्यकाल में मोदी ने जीएसटी, आइबीसी, रेा और एमपीसी जैसे कुछ एकल सुधारों पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया था। दूसरे कार्यकाल में मोदी को श्रम और भूमि सुधारों जैसे उन सुधारों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए ताकि उत्पादकता में वृद्धि हो और भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को दहशैं अंकों वाली जीडीपी वृद्धि के दौर में दखिल किया जा सके। शुरुआती सौ दिनों का समग्र एजेंडा मुख्य रूप से अर्थव्यवस्था को मंदी की जकड़न से बाहर निकालने पर केंद्रित होना चाहिए।

अर्थव्यवस्था के तीन भाग होते हैं। प्राथमिक, द्वितीयक और तृतीयक। प्राथमिक अर्थव्यवस्था में कृषि, द्वितीयक में विनिर्माण और तृतीयक में सेवा क्षेत्र को शामिल किया जाता है। भारत में विनिर्माण और सेवा से जुड़े बैंकिंग, बीमा, वाणिज्य, उद्योग और यह तक कि रेल और सड़क परिवहन जैसे मंत्रालयों की गिनती भी आर्थिक मंत्रालयों में की जाती है।

जीडीपी में कृषि का योगदान भले ही 15.7 प्रतिशत हो, लेकिन देश में रोजगार के 60 प्रतिशत साधन और तकरीबन 70 प्रतिशत लोग कृषि पर निर्भर हैं। इसके बावजूद न तो इसे आर्थिक मंत्रालय का दर्जा दिया जाता है और न ही इसे खास तवज्जो दी जाती है। एक को छोड़कर किसी भी आर्थिक अखबार ने नवनिर्भुक्त कृषि मंत्री का प्रोफाइल भी प्रकाशित नहीं किया। कृषि अर्थव्यवस्था की सुस्ती और ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में बदहाली स्पष्ट रूप से झलक रही है और इससे समग्र मांग बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो रही है। नई सरकार कृषि अर्थव्यवस्था की अनदेखी करने का जोखिम नहीं ले सकती। यदि उसने इसे नजरअंदाज किया तो ग्रामीण बाजार के हालात और खराब होकर अर्थव्यवस्था की तस्वीर और विगाड़ेंगे। कृषि मंत्रालय को भी आर्थिक मंत्रालय का दर्जा दिया जाना चाहिए और उसके विचारों, सुझावों और प्रस्तावों को भी अन्य आर्थिक मंत्रालयों जितनी तवज्जो मिलनी चाहिए। प्रधानमंत्री ने कृषि मंत्री नरेंद्र सिंह तोमर को सीसीईए में शामिल कर एकदम सही किया। माना जा रहा है कि पिछली सरकार में अधामोहन सिंह अपने काम से कोई खास छाप नहीं छोड़ पाए, तो इस बार प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने तोमर को कृषि मंत्री बनाया है। ऐसे में नए मंत्री को भी वैसे ही सक्रिय हो जाना चाहिए जैसे त्वरित प्रभाव डालने के लिए विना मंत्री को सक्रिय होना होता है। कृषि मंत्रालय की समीक्षा भी पूरी सतर्कता के साथ निरंतर की जानी चाहिए।

बीते चार वर्षों से कंस्ट्रक्शन उद्योग कुछ



अवधेश राजपूत

ठहराव का शिकार रहा है। इसके लिए जीएसटी और रेरा जैसे सुधार भी कुछ जिम्मेदार रहे हैं। इस उद्योग का तुरंत कायाकल्प करना होगा। यह भारत में दूसरा सबसे बड़ा रोजगार प्रदाता क्षेत्र है। इस क्षेत्र को मदद पहुंचाने के लिए किफायती आवास योजना को अतिरिक्त सहारा दिया जाना चाहिए। आवासीय कंपनियों सहित इस पूरे क्षेत्र के लिए वित्तीय प्रवाह सुनिश्चित किया जाए। हालांकि 2014 के चुनाव के बाद निजी कंस्ट्रक्शन उद्योग करीब 150 से अधिक अन्य उद्योगों को प्रभावित करता है और कृषि क्षेत्र के साथ मिलकर यह रोजगार सृजन के मामले में बड़ा प्रभाव पैदा कर सकता है। सड़क, बंदरगाह, रेलवे, हवाई अड्डे और अस्पताल इत्यादि के रूप में विकसित किए जा रहे बुनियादी ढांचे के विकास को और अधिक रफ्तार दी जानी चाहिए। इससे कई खाताहाल क्षेत्रों के हालात सुधरेंगे और नई नौकरियों के तमाम अवसर पैदा होंगे। साथ ही साथ बुनियादी ढांचे के विकास में निजी क्षेत्र को जोड़ने के प्रयास करने होंगे। बीते पांच वर्षों से इसका बीड़ा अकेले सरकार ने ही उठा रखा है। अमले पांच वर्षों के दौरान भारत को बुनियादी ढांचे में दस लाख करोड़ डॉलर से अधिक के

निवेश की दरकार है। इसकी पूर्ति सरकारी खर्च से होना असंभव है। बुनियादी ढांचे की परियोजनाओं के मामले में एक सख्त समयसीमा निर्धारित करना अनिवार्य होगा ताकि उनके क्रियान्वयन में देरी की गुंजाइश न रहे। परियोजनाओं में देरी पर दंडित करने और समय से पहले पूरी करने पर पुरस्कृत करने की व्यवस्था बनानी होगी। हालांकि 2014 के चुनाव के बाद निजी निवेश में तेजी आई थी, मगर शुरुआती तेजी के बाद तमाम कारणों के चलते उसमें गतिरोध आ गया। शिथिल पड़े उद्योगपतियों में गर्मजोशी का भाव भरा जाना चाहिए। जब तक उनके भरोसे में बहाली नहीं होती और निजी निवेश रफ्तार नहीं पकड़ता तब तक सरकार को अपने खर्च से वृद्धि को गति देना जारी रखना चाहिए। इसके साथ ही अब समय आ गया है कि भारत राजकोपीय घाटे के बजाय संरचनागत ढांचे पर ध्यान केंद्रित करे। यह अधिक स्थायित्व वाली व्यवस्था होगी। साथ ही वित्त मंत्री को संसाधन जुटाने के मसले का भी समाधान तलाशना होगा। जीएसटी की कमियों को दूर करना और आसान एवं सरल प्रत्यक्ष कर संहिता भी सौ दिनों के एजेंडे में शामिल होनी

## राजनीतिक सबक सिखाने वाले नतीजे

लोकसभा चुनावों के नतीजे सामने आने के बाद से ही इस पर हैरानी जताई जा रही है कि अस्थिर 80 लोकसभा सीटों वाले उत्तर प्रदेश में सामाजिक केमिस्ट्री के आगे जातीय अंकगणित कामयाबी क्यों नहीं हो सका? इस सवाल का जवाब देने के लिए दो प्रश्नों का उल्लेख आवश्यक है। पहला, गोरखपुर से आगे महाराजगंज का है। एक कार्यक्रम के लिए मैं वहां गई थी। वहां ग्रामीण महिलाओं की हालत पर बात चल निकली तो 20-22 बरस की एक युवती कहने लगी, 'दीदी, मोदी जी घर-घर शौचालय बनवाएंगे। पहले तो सब हंसत रहे, लेकिन ई समझ ल्यो ई बहुत बड़ा काम हुआ है।' उसका आसमी रामायीन भी बोल उठा, 'हमारे गांव में अब एक भी घर ऐसा नहीं बचा जहां शौचालय न बना हो। एक आदमी ने शौचालय की जगह कमरा बनवा लिया तो हमारे गांव प्रधान ने मोबाइल से फोटो खींच कर मोदी जी से शिकायत करने की धमकी दे बली।' यह सुनकर उसकी पत्नी बड़े आत्मसंतोष के साथ बोली, 'चार दिन में उई पड़ोसी ठीक हुईं गे, शौचालय बन गइल गे।' फिर उन्होंने पूछने लगी, 'दीदी जीत त जइहें न मोदी जी?' ऐसे तमाम अनुभवों से मेरा सामना हुआ।

दूसरा प्रसंग लखनऊ से बलिया जाते समय झाड़वर आबिद से चुनावी चर्चा का है। आबिद से बातचीत के दौरान एक रोचक तथ्य उजागर हुआ। आबिद बोला, 'मैंडम, हमारी अम्मी ने हमारे अब्बू की ही बात नहीं मानी और मोदी को वोट डाल आई है। इस पर मैंने पूछा-आबिद, मोदी को वोट क्यों दिया अम्मी ने? अब आबिद नहीं, एक भावुक बेटा बोल रहा था-कहने लग्यो- 'जबसे हमने हेश सभाला, अम्मी को घर में खटते ही देखा। हमारी अम्मी को पहली बार सोने के लिए उल नसीब हुई। अम्मी कहती हैं, 'अपना घर भी होगा, ऐसा सोचना बंद कर दिया था, तो जिसने हमारे लिए किया, उसका हक अदा करना ही चाहिए।'

इन दो प्रसंगों में उत्तर प्रदेश और शायद देश के भी वोटर के मन की थाह छिपी है, लेकिन यह बात दिल्ली का बुद्धिजीवी और वहां का मीडिया नहीं समझ पा रहा था। शौचालय निर्माण पर हंसने वाला बुद्धिजीवी जमीन से इतना कटा हुआ था कि वह समझ ही नहीं सका कि घर में बना शौचालय, एक स्त्री के लिए सुरक्षा और आत्मसम्मान का कितना बड़ा संबल बन चुका था। दिल्ली के बड़े-बड़े पत्रकार मानने को ही तैयार नहीं होते थे कि उत्तर प्रदेश में गठबंधन के सामने भाजपा खड़ी भी हो सकेगी। उन्होंने बताया कि सपा-बसपा मिलकर भाजपा को बीस सीटों पर रोक लेंगे। दिल्ली के राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं पत्रकार सब यही मानते थे कि समाजवादी पार्टी और बहुजन समाज पार्टी के



वोट प्रतिशत को जोड़ने से भाजपा का सफाया हो जाएगा। वे भूल गए कि राजनीति गणित नहीं होती है, राजनीति केमिस्ट्री होती है और जिस प्रदेश की जनता ने फिर साबित किया।

मुझे लोगों से मिलते और उनको सुनते हुए एक लंबा समय गुजर गया। लोक में भ्रमण करने के दौरान खेत-खलिहान, घर-आंगन से लेकर चाय-पान की गुमटी की चर्चाएं मेरे कान में पड़ती हैं। इस दौरान मैं उनका मन पढ़ने की कोशिश करती हूं। उत्तर प्रदेश में चुनाव परिणाम को लेकर मुझे कभी कोई शंका नहीं थी। मैं देख रही थी कि गठबंधन की मजबूती के दावे मीडिया में चल रहे हैं, जबकि जनता तो उसका नाम ही नहीं ले रही थी। इसलिए मुझे नतीजे अलग दिख रहे थे। दूरस्थ गांवों में पहुंची बिजली और बुनियादी सुविधाओं का असर भी बोल रहा था। पहली बार गरीबों को अपना घर नसीब हुआ था। उनके अपने बड़े खाते खुल गए थे जिनमें बिना किसी बीचौलिए के सीधे धनराशि पहुंच रही थी। घर-घर बने शौचालयों और उज्ज्वला गैस योजना ने महिलाओं को एक बेहतर जीवनशैली प्रदान की थी। गरीब आदमी के लिए इलाज बेहद खर्चीला होता है। इलाज का भारी-भरकम खर्च किसी भी आम आदमी को जैसे जान

हिंदी की अनिवार्यता

हिंदी के प्रति अनावश्यक दुराग्रह शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में प्रोफेसर निरंजन कुमार ने नई शिक्षा नीति में हिंदी की अनिवार्यता को लेकर उठे विवाद को अनुचित एवं अनावश्यक ठहराया है। सभी जानते हैं कि हिंदी हमारे देश की सबसे बड़ी संपर्क भाषा है। ऐसे में हिंदी को अनिवार्य कर दिया जाए तो भाषा के स्तर पर राष्ट्रीय एकता ही स्थापित होगी। वहीं अंतरराष्ट्रीय भाषा अंग्रेजी होने के नाते उसे भी नई शिक्षा नीति में अहम स्थान मिलना ही चाहिए। भाषा में एकरूपता होने से राष्ट्रीय एकीकरण में मदद मिलती है। अब चूंकि युवा रोजगार, व्यापार, शिक्षा एवं पर्यटन के लिए एक राज्य से दूसरे रण्यों में जा रहे हैं तो भाषा ही एक ऐसा माध्यम होती है जो एक-दूसरे को जोड़ने में सक्षम होती है। अतः पूरे देश में एक भाषा तो ऐसी होनी ही चाहिए जो लोगों को जोड़ने का कार्य करे और वह हिंदी से बेहतर कोई दूसरी भाषा नहीं हो सकती। हिंदी की अनिवार्यता से किसी तरह की कोई विषमता नजर नहीं आती और इसलिए इसे राजनीतिक तूल देना उचित प्रतीत नहीं होता। उम्मीद है कि नई शिक्षा नीति देश को आगे ले जाने एवं राष्ट्रीय एकता स्थापित करने में अहम भूमिका निभाएगी।

सर्वप्रति आर्पा, कन्नौज, उत्तर प्रदेश

**कल्पनाओं से परे है संघ**

संघ से वैचारिक संघर्ष की अधूरी तैयारी शीर्षक से प्रकाशित अपने आलेख में लेखक बन्नी नारायण ने पश्चिमो बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी के आरएसएस से मुकाबला करने के लिए जहर्दित वाहिनी और दूसरी बंग जननी वाहिनी के बनाए जाने का उल्लेख किया है। संघ के मुकाबले इस तरह के संगठन बनाने का एक मात्र संकेत पार्टी की खिसक

**मेलपाक्स**

रही राजनीतिक जमीन को सुदृढ़ करना है। यह किसी भी राजनीतिक पार्टी के लिए अनिवार्य भी है। परंतु दूसरी अन्य राजनीतिक पार्टियों की तरह दीदी की भी यही सोच है कि आरएसएस राजनीतिक आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति के लिए संगठनात्मक कार्य करता है। शायद देश की राजनीतिक पार्टियों की भी यह बहुत बड़ी भूल है। संघ का उद्देश्य केवल राजनीतिक नहीं है। संघ का असली उद्देश्य राष्ट्रीय शक्ति को मजबूत कर राष्ट्र का संपूर्ण विकास करना है। विश्व का सबसे बड़ा समाजसेवी संगठन 'संघ' लाठी डंडे व हिंसा के सहारे स्थापित नहीं हुआ है। संघ के संस्थापक डॉ. हेडगेवार ने संघ की स्थापना से पूर्व संकड़ों के इतिहास व भविष्य का गौरवशाली भारत का निर्माण कैसे हो, इसका गहन अध्यन व चिंतन किया तब जाकर संघ की स्थापना की थी। अपने देश को केवल संस्कृति, धर्म, परंपराओं के द्वारा ही देश के जन जन को एक साथ जोड़ जा सकता है। संघ आज अपने उसी उद्देश्य में आगे बढ़ता हुआ दिखाई दे रहा है। ऐसे संगठन की कल्पना दीदी तो क्या विश्व में कहीं भी करना बहुत मुश्किल कार्य है।

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**दो टूक जवाब**

भारत हमेशा पड़ोसी देश का अपना फर्ज निभाता रहता है और बातचीत के लिए पाक को आमंत्रित भी करता है, लेकिन पाकिस्तान विश्वासघात की नाव पर हमेशा सवारी करने के लिए तैयार रहता है। पाक का आतंक प्रेम इस कदर उस पर हावी है कि ये इस रास्ते को छोड़ना नहीं चाहता। इस वजह से विश्व में पाकिस्तान को सबसे ज्यादा खतरनाक देशों की श्रेणी में गिना जाने लगा है। इसी कारण पाक की अर्थव्यवस्था

चाहिए। शुरुआती सौ दिनों में नकदी और तस्लता की स्थिति बेहतर बनाने पर भी काम करना होगा। आइएलएंडएफ संकट के बाद से खासकर एनबीएफसी और हार्जिसंग फाइनेंस कंपनियों और यहां तक कि सामान्य कंपनियों के लिए तस्लता का संकट पैदा हो गया है। उधारी में भारी कमी आई है। आरबीआई ने जरूर कुछ कदम उठाए हैं जिससे कुछ तात्कालिक राहत मिली है। हालांकि मध्यम और दीर्घावधिक उपायों के अभाव में इसका लाभ नहीं मिल पा रहा है।

सरकारी बैंकों के बहीखातों में सुधार दूर व कोड़ी लगता है, लेकिन इसे युद्ध स्तर अंजाम देना होगा। फिलहाल महंगाई मुंह नहीं फैला रही है और काबू में है। इससे रिजर्व बैंक को वास्तविक ब्याज दरें 2.5 प्रतिशत तक कम करनी चाहिए। वर्ष 2003-04 में जब भारत की जीडीपी वृद्धि नौ प्रतिशत के आसपास थी तब आवासीय ऋण पर ब्याज दर 7.5 प्रतिशत और कारोबारियों को भी 7.5 से 7.75 प्रतिशत की दर पर कर्ज मिल रहा था।

अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यापार युद्ध से भारत के लिए बने अवसरों को भुनाने के लिए वाणिज्य मंत्री पीयूष गोयल को तेजी से प्रयास करने चाहिए। साथ ही अमेरिकी प्रतिबंधों का भी तोड़ निकालना होगा। अवसरों की यह खिड़की हमेशा नहीं खुली रहेगी। गोयल काबिल मंत्री रहे हैं, लेकिन अब उन्हें एक कुशल राजनयिक वाली भूमिका भी निभानी होगी। राज्य मंत्री के रूप में हरदीप पुरी उनके बहुत काम आएंगे।

सौ दिवसीय एजेंडे की सफलता ही मंत्रियों के उनके पदों पर बने रहने का पैमाना बनाई जानी चाहिए। खराब प्रदर्शन करने वालों को बाहर का रस्ता दिखाना होगा। व्याकुल भारत ने मोदी में भारी भरोसा दिखाया है और उसे उम्मीद है कि मोदी उम्मीदों पर खरे उतरेंगे। सौ दिनों का प्रदर्शन इस भरोसे पर खरा उतरना चाहिए।

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सदियों से धर्मग्रंथों का उद्धोष है कि सत्य को जीवन में धारण करके ही मनुष्य परम लक्ष्य की प्राप्ति कर सकता है। सत्य एक भाव है जो निश्चलता, पवित्रता और अहिंसा का प्रतीक है। गुरुदेव टैगोर ने कहा था कि जो व्यक्ति सत्य के साथ जीवन जी सके, अपने कर्तव्यों के प्रति सचेत एवं सजग रहता है, उसके मार्ग का बाधक बनना इतना सरल नहीं होता है, क्योंकि सत्य के साथ तो स्वयं सच्चिदानंद परमात्मा होता है। जो लोग सत्यनिष्ठ होते हैं, वे परमात्मा के प्यारे होते हैं। कथन और आचरण दोनों का जब तक समन्वय नहीं होगा, सत्य का दर्शन दुर्लभ होगा। मन पहली बार ही अपनी आवाज सुनकर अन्य और असत्य का भेद बताता है। इस राह में कठिनाइयां अनेक आती हैं, लेकिन जो दृढ़ संकल्पित होते हैं, वे इन्हें भी पार कर ही जाते हैं। असत्य ज्यादा समय तक नहीं टिका रह सकता है।

यह देश सत्यवादी राजा हरिश्चंद्र का है, धर्मराज युधिष्ठिर का है। सत्य को अनुभूत किया जा सकता है, लेकिन उसके लिए हमारा हृदय मंदिर पवित्र हो। आध्यात्मिक दृष्टि से हम कह सकते हैं कि सत्य मात्र परमात्मा है, बाकी सारा संसार नश्वर है। जो व्यक्ति सत्यनिष्ठ होगा, उसकी यात्रा शून्य से महाशून्य की होगी। अधकार से प्रकाश की तरफ होगी। अमृतत्व प्राप्ति की होगी। वह हमेशा असत्य को जीवन से निकालने का प्रयास करेगा। जो बुरे काम का बुरा नतीजा मानकर जीवन को जिए और समझते हैं, वे सदैव सत्य का अनुपालन करते हैं। सत्य चर्चा नहीं, चर्चा का विषय है।

स्वामी रामतीर्थ ने भी कहा है कि सत्य का जीवन में अनुपालन करके मनुष्य असीम ऊंचाइयों को प्राप्त कर सकता है, क्योंकि असत्य का कोई पैर नहीं होता है। अंततः सत्य ही विजयी होता है। दुनिया के सारे ताने-बाने और सपने झूठे हैं, मनुष्य को जिस दिन यह आध्यात्मिक बोध हो जाए, वह सत्य के करीब पहुंचता है। सत्य को मानना या समझना इतना आसान भी नहीं है। सत्य बोलें, सत्य का आचरण करें, सत्य ही जीवन का आधार बन जाए। तब जाकर कहीं बात बनती है। तभी मनुष्य के अंदर देवत्व भी आता है। अनेक विधाओं और पुण्य-पाठ की पद्धतियों को अपनाकर भी यदि जीवन में सत्य नहीं उतरा तो समझें सब निरर्थक है।

शंभू नाथ पांडेय

भी खराब होती जा रही है। इसीलिए अब पाक हर हाल में भारत के साथ अच्छे संबंध बनाना चाहता है, लेकिन भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने पाक को दो दृढ़ शब्दों में बता दिया है कि पाकिस्तान जब तक आतंक का रास्ता नहीं छोड़ता तब तक भारत के साथ बात नहीं हो सकती।

नीरज कुमार पाटक, नोएडा

**बिजली विभाग की लापरवाही**

हर दिन के साथ गर्मी का पाग बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। लोग घरों में कैद रहने को मजबूर हैं। गर्मी के कारण बिजली की खपत भी बढ़ रही है। ऐसे में बिजली विभाग की जिम्मेदारी और अधिक बढ़ जाती है, लेकिन वो यह नहीं है कि विभाग के कर्मचारियों की गलती का खामियाजा लोगों को गर्मी में झुलस कर भुगतना पड़ रहा है। हाल ही में एक महिला के घर साठ लाख का भारीभरकम बिजली का बिल आया। इस मामले में जांच-पड़ताल होती, उससे पहली ही महिला के घर की बिजली काट दी गई। उसका समस्त परिवार इस जानलेवा गर्मी को झेलने को मजबूर है।

निशांत रावत, डॉ. भीमराव आंबेडकर कॉलेज

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

अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें : दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: [mailbox@jagran.com](mailto:mailbox@jagran.com)



## अर्थव्यवस्था की गति

रिजर्व बैंक का रेपो दरों में पच्चीस आधार अंक की कटौती का फैसला सरकार के अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत बनाने के प्रयासों की ही एक कड़ी है। रेपो दरों में कटौती से बाजार में पूंजी का प्रवाह बढ़ने की उम्मीद बनती है। इसलिए माना जा रहा है कि इस फैसले से बाजार में कुछ रैनक लौटेगी। एनडीए सरकार ने अपने दूसरे कार्यकाल में रोजगार और अर्थव्यवस्था पर गंभीरता से ध्यान केंद्रित किया है। इसके लिए मंत्रियों की दो समितियां गठित की गई हैं। इनमें से एक समिति विकास की रफ्तार और निवेश बढ़ाने पर ध्यान केंद्रित करेगी। दूसरी समिति रोजगार कौशल के विकास संबंधी उपायों पर सुझाव देगी। इसी क्रम में रिजर्व बैंक ने अपनी मौद्रिक नीति की समीक्षा की और कर्ज सस्ता करने और बाजार में पूंजी का प्रवाह बढ़ाने के मकसद से रेपो दरों में कटौती का फैसला किया। रेपो दर पर ही सारे बैंक रिजर्व बैंक से कर्ज लेते और अपने कारोबार में वृद्धि करते हैं। चूंकि पिछले कुछ समय से बैंकों का कारोबार लगातार नीचे की तरफ का रुख किए हुए है, इसलिए रेपो दरों में कटौती से उन्हें कुछ बल मिलने की उम्मीद की जाती है।

यों भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था दुनिया की तेज रफ्तार अर्थव्यवस्थाओं में गिनी जाती है, पर पिछले कुछ समय से देश की विकास दर अपेक्षित लक्ष्य से काफी दूर है। निवेश जुटाना अब भी चुनौती बना हुआ है। बाजार में पैसे का प्रवाह कम होने से उत्पादन में भी गति नहीं आ पा रही। महंगाई पर काबू पाना कठिन बना हुआ है। इन सबको देखते हुए सरकार ने विशेष रूप से अर्थव्यवस्था पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया है। अर्थव्यवस्था की गति बाजार में मांग और निवेश पर निर्भर करती है। इन दोनों मोर्चों पर पिछले कुछ सालों से शिथिलता नजर आ रही है। मांग तब बढ़ती है, जब लोगों की क्रयशक्ति बढ़ती है। क्रयशक्ति बढ़ाने के लिए रोजगार बढ़ाने की जरूरत होती है। जब लोगों की क्रयशक्ति बढ़ती है, बाजार में पूंजी का प्रवाह बढ़ता है और उत्पादन में गति आती है, तो निवेशक भी आकर्षित होते हैं। बाजार में सुस्ती रहती है तो निवेशक भी अपना हाथ आगे नहीं बढ़ाते, जैसा कि पिछले कुछ सालों से देखा जा रहा है। इस तरह अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत बनाने के मकसद से बनी समिति को स्वाभाविक ही इन सभी पहलुओं पर ध्यान देना होगा। इसी से जुड़ी दूसरी समिति, जो रोजगार संबंधी विषयों पर अपने विचार देगी, उसकी भी जिम्मेदारी अहम होगी क्योंकि रोजगार को लेकर सरकार पर विपक्ष लगातार हमलावर रहा है और नए रोजगार उपलब्ध न करा पाने का असर बाजार पर साफ नजर आ रहा है। अर्थव्यवस्था कोई एकल इकाई नहीं होती। वह तमाम चीजों से जुड़ी होती है। इसलिए उस मजबूत बनाने के लिए अनेक दिशाओं में काम करना पड़ता है। नई सरकार ने इस बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए विभिन्न महकमों के मंत्रियों को आर्थिक विषयों और रोजगार संबंधी पहलुओं पर विचार के लिए जिम्मेदारी सौंपी है। अकेले रिजर्व बैंक के अपनी दरों में बदलाव करने से न तो बाजार में गति आने की उम्मीद की जा सकती है और न अर्थव्यवस्था के पटरी पर लौट आने की। अगर ऐसा होता तो फरवरी और अप्रैल में भी उसने दो बार पच्चीस आधार अंक की कटौती की थी, पर बाजार को उसका अपेक्षित लाभ नहीं मिल पाया। रोजगार के नए अवसर पैदा करके इस दिशा में अधिक गति हासिल की जा सकती है।

## पिघलते ग्लेशियर

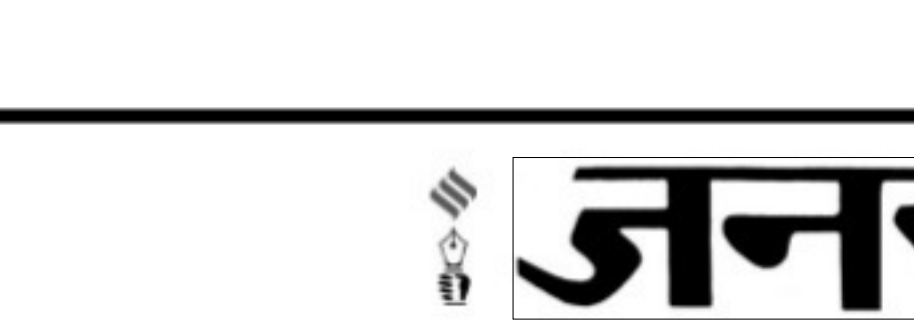
इससे बड़ी विडंबना क्या होगी कि जिस प्रकृति के बूते मानव इभ्यता ने इतनी ऊंचाइयां हासिल की हैं, उसी को अपनी सुविधाओं के लिए न केवल हाशिये पर छोड़ दिया गया, बल्कि उसके नष्ट होने की भूमिका तैयार करने में भी कोई कमी नहीं की गई। आज हालत यह है कि पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र में नित नए असंतुलन की वजह से समूची दुनिया पर कई तरह के खतरे मंडरा रहे हैं। इसका अंदाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि दुनिया भर में प्रदूषण के मसले पर चिंता जताने में सभी देश आगे रहते हैं, लेकिन उस पर काबू पाने के मामले में सबसे बुनियादी उपायों की भी अनदेखी करते हैं। यही वजह है कि पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में ग्लेशियरों पर संकट लगातार बढ़ रहा है। गौरतलब है कि देहरादून स्थित वाडिया इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ हिमालयन जियोलॉजी के वैज्ञानिकों की ओर से संयुक्त रूप से हिमालय के बढ़ते प्रदूषण पर किए गए शोध के निष्कर्षों के मुताबिक पश्चिमी देशों और खासकर यूरोपीय देशों में बढ़ते प्रदूषण का प्रभाव तेजी के साथ हिमालयी देशों पर पड़ रहा है। इस समूचे इलाके में कार्बन की मात्रा में जिस तेजी से इजाफा हो रहा है, उससे ग्लेशियरों के पिघलने का खतरा पैदा हो गया है।

हालांकि ऐसी आशंका पहली बार नहीं जताई गई है। पर मुश्किल है कि बार-बार के अध्ययनों में पर्यावरण के सामने खड़ी होने वाली चुनौतियों के बारे में स्पष्ट संकेत मिलने के बावजूद दुनिया भर में इस मसले पर कोई ठोस पहलकदमी नहीं हो सकी है। समय-समय पर पर्यावरण संकट को लेकर अंतरराष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन होते हैं और उनमें कार्बन उत्सर्जन कम करने से लेकर हर स्तर पर प्रदूषण पर काबू पाने का संकल्प लिया जाता है। पर आज भी यूरोपीय देशों में तेजी से बढ़ते प्रदूषण की वजह से हिमालयी इलाकों में पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो रहा है और उसके चलते वायुमंडल में कई बदलाव आ रहे हैं तो यह उन सम्मेलनों में जताई गई चिंता के खोखले होने का ही सबूत है। सवाल है कि आखिर किन वजहों से दुनिया भर में कार्बन उत्सर्जन कम करने पर जोर देने वाले यूरोपीय देशों में प्रदूषण का स्तर ऐसी खतरनाक स्थिति में पहुंच गया कि उससे अब हिमालयी क्षेत्र बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो रहे हैं? गौरतलब है कि जलवायु में बढ़ता तापमान हिमालयी ग्लेशियर से ढके हिंदुकुश पहाड़ों की चोटी को लगातार गला रहा है। कुछ समय पहले हिंदुकुश हिमालय एसेसमेंट नाम से किए गए एक अध्ययन के मुताबिक अगर मौजूदा गति बनी रही तो इस सदी के अंत तक हिमालय पर्वत के ग्लेशियरों का करीब दो-तिहाई हिस्सा खत्म हो जाएगा। माना जाता है कि इतना हिस्सा करीब दो अरब लोगों के पीने के पानी के स्रोत के रूप में काम आ सकता है। इस बड़े संकट से पार पाने के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय पर्यावरण सम्मेलनों में प्रस्ताव तैयार किए जाते हैं, मगर उन पर गंभीरता से अमल नहीं हो पाता। फिलहाल अगर जलवायु परिवर्तन को रोकने की कोशिशें एक हद तक कामयाब होती हैं तो भी हिमालयी ग्लेशियर का एक बड़ा हिस्सा नहीं बचाया जा सकेगा। सिर्फ इतने से यह समझा जा सकता है कि पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र में आने वाले इस असंतुलन से कैसे संकट पैदा हो सकते हैं और इसका समूची दुनिया में मानव जीवन पर कितना घातक असर पड़ेगा। अगर समय रहते अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर ठोस पहल नहीं की गई तो इसका खमियाजा समूची दुनिया को उठाना पड़ सकता है।

## कल्पमेधा

**मनुष्य जितना छोटा होता है, उसका अहंकार उतना ही बड़ा होता है।**

**–वाल्तेयर**



### सतीश सिंह

**एअर इंडिया की माली हालत लंबे समय से खस्ता है। जेट एअरवेज भी जमीन पर आ चुकी है। जेट का भविष्य अनिश्चित है। पूर्व में एअर सहारा, किंग फिशर, ईस्ट-वेस्ट एअरलाइन, स्काईलाइन एनईपीसी, मोदीलुफ्त आदि हवाई सेवा कंपनियां बंद हो चुकी हैं। बंद होने के समय एअर सहारा की बाजार में सत्रह फीसद हिस्सेदारी थी। ऐसे में सवाल उठना लाजिमी है कि क्या चमक-दमक वाले विमानन क्षेत्र की हालत उतनी अच्छी नहीं है, जितनी बाहर से दिखती है!**

एअर इंडिया संकट का समाधान उसके विनिवेश में तलाश जा रहा है। नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्रालय और वित्त मंत्रालय के निवेश एवं लोक परिसंपत्ति प्रबंधन विभाग ने एअर इंडिया के विनिवेश पर काम शुरू कर दिया है। एअर इंडिया पर फिलहाल तकरीबन सत्ताईस हजार करोड़ रुपए का कर्ज है। एअर इंडिया को बेचने के लिए निविदा के जरिए बोलियां आमंत्रित की जाएंगी। एअर इंडिया में पनच्यानवे फीसद हिस्सेदारी बेचने और पांच फीसद कर्मचारियों के लिए इंप्लाइन स्टॉक ऑप्शन प्लान (ईएसओपी) के रूप में रखने पर विचार चल रहा है। विनिवेश के समय स्थायी कर्मचारियों को कंपनी में शेष विकल्प और एक साल नौकरी का आश्वासन देने की योजना है। पिछली बार सरकार ने कंपनी में चौबीस फीसद हिस्सेदारी अपने पास रखने की योजना बनाई थी, जिसके कारण किसी भी खरीदार ने इसमें दिलचस्पी नहीं दिखाई थी। खरीदार के आगे नहीं आने पर सरकार को बिक्री बंद करनी पड़ी, लेकिन एअर इंडिया के भारी कर्ज की समस्या

#### मोनिका अग्रवाल

कितना मुश्किल है शब्दों के बारे में दो शब्द कहना! खासकर उन शब्दों के बारे में जो हमारे अपने ही होते हैं। जिन शब्दों के साथ हम जागते हैं, बढ़ते हैं, खेलते हैं और सोते हैं। ये शब्द सबको संबोधित करते हैं, संप्रेषित करते हैं। लेकिन जब खुद की बात चलती है तो उस नन्ही गुड़िया हमारे अस्तित्व का अंग हैं। निःशब्द से शब्द की ओर बढ़ते हुए पहला शब्द जो कंठ से निकलता है, वह शायद ‘...म्म्’ है जो समय के साथ मां के रूप में विराट अस्तित्व धारण कर लेता है। शब्द चाहते हैं पूरी तन्मयता और पूरा आकर्षण। आकार मात्र से महत्त्व नहीं है शब्दों का। कई बार आकार बदलने से भी अर्थ नहीं बदलता। कभी शशि कहे या शशांक, रहेगा चंद्रमा ही और कई बार आकार वही रहे तो भी अर्थ बदल जाता है। जैसे

### खुलती गांठें

महागठबंधन राजनीतिक दृष्टि से अखिलेश यादव की एक बहुत बड़ी भूल थी। दो विपरीत विचारधाराओं की पार्टियां लंबे समय तक साथ नहीं रह सकती यह स्वयंसिद्ध है। यदि देखा जाए तो इस पूरे आम चुनाव में राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर ऐसे दो नेता रहे जिन्होंने अपने आधार पर ध्यान न देकर भद्द पिटवा ली लिहाजा, इसका खमियाजा पार्टी को भुगतना पड़ा। उनमें एक अखिलेश यादव और दूसरे चंद्रबाबू नायडू हैं। बाकी सबको अपने-अपने हिस्से का कुछ न कुछ जरूर मिला। किसी को एक, किसी को दो या किसी को शून्य मिला तो भी उसे पता था कि हम इतने भर के ही थे! लेकिन इन दोनों नेताओं ने तो अपनी करनी से अपने हिस्से का भी गंवा दिया।

मृतप्राय हो चुकी बहुजन समाज पार्टी को कंधा देकर जीवित करने वाली अखिलेश यादव की पार्टी अब स्वयं मरणान्न अवस्था में आ गई है। बसपा के वोट सपा में ट्रांसफर नहीं हुए इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं हैं नहीं तो सीटों की संख्या में इजाफा देखने को अवश्य मिलता। इसके उलट यह आरोप भी अखिलेश के सिर मढ़ दिया गया कि सपा के वोट बसपा में ट्रांसफर नहीं हो पाए। शून्य सीटों वाली बसपा दहाई अंकों में पहुंचने के बाद यह कह रही है कि वोट नहीं मिला! अखिलेश यादव ने महागठबंधन को बचाने और कुशलता से उसे चलाने के लिए क्या कुछ नहीं किया। इन चुनावों में कई अवसरों पर उन्होंने समझौता किया चाहे वह पार्टी को मिली सीटों की संख्या हो या सामाजिक संदेश देने के लिए मायावती का सम्मान हो। लेकिन फिर भी मायावती की नजरों में चूक अखिलेश की तरफ से ही रही। यह तो तय था कि महागठबंधन से कोई खुश नहीं था लेकिन फिर भी विचारधारा को तिलांजलि देकर दोनों पार्टियां साथ आई जरूर लेकिन ज्यादा दिन तक साथ रह नहीं पाई।

# उड़ान की चुनौती

उड़ान की चुनौती उड़ान की चुनौती उड़ान की चुनौती

का समाधान करने के लिए सरकार ने एक अलग कंपनी बनाकर एअर इंडिया के साढ़े सत्ताईस हजार करोड़ रुपए के कर्ज को कम किया था। लेकिन इसे पर्याप्त नहीं माना जा सकता है। एअर इंडिया के कर्ज में और कमी लाने की जरूरत है, ताकि दूसरी कंपनियां इसे खरीदने में दिलचस्पी लें।

इसके पहले भी पिछले साल मई में सरकार एअर इंडिया में अपनी छिहतर फीसद हिस्सेदारी बेचना चाह रही थी। लेकिन किसी कंपनी ने बोली नहीं लगाई। मार्च 2018 तक एअर इंडिया अड्डातालीस हजार करोड़ रुपए कर्ज के बोझ से दबी थी। एअर इंडिया को बेचने के लिए अन्स्ट एंड यंग (ईएंडवाई) को सलाहकार नियुक्त किया गया है। विनिवेश प्रक्रिया के तहत एअर इंडिया के अलावा इसकी सस्ती विमानन सेवा इकाई एअर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस और एअर इंडिया एस्पर्टीएस एअरपोर्ट सर्विसेज प्राइवेट लिमिटेड की भी बिक्री की जाएगी। एस्पर्टीएस एअरपोर्ट सर्विसेज एअर इंडिया और सिंगापुर की एस्पर्टीएस लिमिटेड का संयुक्त उद्यम है। एअर इंडिया को बेचने के लिए सलाहकार कंपनी- ईवाई की नियुक्ति की गई है। इस कंपनी के अनुसार एअर इंडिया के नहीं बिकने के कई बड़े कारण हैं, जैसे- सरकार द्वारा सी फीसद हिस्सेदारी नहीं बेचना, एक साल तक कर्मचारियों को कंपनी के साथ बनाए रखने का प्रावधान, तीन साल तक विमानन कंपनी का परिचालन बिना किसी दखल के करने पर जोर और कंपनी के विस्तार के लिए इच्छुक नहीं होना आदि।

जahir है, खरीदार आसान शर्तें चाहेंगे। अप्रैल, 2012 में घोषित बेलआउट पैकेज के तहत एअर इंडिया को सरकार अब तक छब्बीस हजार करोड़ रुपए से अधिक की पूंजी दे चुकी है। एअर इंडिया में नए सिरे से पूंजी डालना इसलिए जरूरी है कि कर्जदाता कंसोर्टियम के तीन बैंकों ने इसे ‘लाइन ऑफ क्रेडिट’ देने से मना कर दिया है। ‘लाइन ऑफ क्रेडिट’ बैंक और कर्जदार के बीच का ऐसा समझौता होता है, जिसके तहत कर्जदार कभी भी तय सीमा के मुताबिक उधारी ले सकता है।

एअर इंडिया की माली हालत लंबे समय से खस्ता है। जेट एअरवेज भी जमीन पर आ चुकी है। जेट का भविष्य अनिश्चित है। पूर्व में एअर सहारा, किंग फिशर, ईस्ट-वेस्ट एअरलाइन, स्काईलाइन एनईपीसी, मोदीलुफ्त आदि हवाई सेवा कंपनियां बंद हो चुकी हैं। बंद होने के समय एअर सहारा की बाजार में सत्रह फीसद हिस्सेदारी थी। ऐसे में सवाल उठना लाजिमी है कि क्या चमक-दमक वाले विमानन क्षेत्र की हालत

## शब्दों का सौंदर्य

शब्दों का सौंदर्य शब्दों का सौंदर्य शब्दों का सौंदर्य

‘प्रकार’ कहीं ‘भेद’ के अर्थ में आता है तो कहीं ‘रीति’ के अर्थ में। कहीं यह ‘सद्‌श्रुतता’ दर्शाता है, तो कहीं ‘विशेषता’ बताता है।

हर रोज प्रयोग किए जाने वाले बहुत से शब्द हम बस बोल देते हैं। हम शायद उनके अर्थ से वाकिए नहीं होते या उसे गहराई के साथ अनुभूत नहीं करते और एक औपचारिकता मात्र निभाते ही जाते हैं। जैसे गांव हो या शहर, एक शब्द अत्यधिक प्रचलित है- ‘सॉरी’। बड़े से

लेकर बच्चे तक इस शब्द का प्रयोग बेधड़क और थड़ल्ले से करते हैं। पर कम ही लोग ऐसे हैं जो ‘सॉरीहू कहने के साथ अपनी गलती महसूस कर शर्मिंदा होने का भाव भी प्रदर्शित कर पाते हों। भाव प्रदर्शित करना तो दूर, अधिकतर मामलों में तो शर्मिंदगी महसूस भी नहीं की जाती। सवाल है कि फिर औपचारिकता के लिए सॉरी बोलने का क्या मतलब! शायद इसलिए कि एक मजबूरी का काम निपट जाए!

शब्द मन या बुद्धि से निकलते हैं! यानी दिल और दिमाग की जैसी अवस्था, वैसा ही शब्द का रूप! किसका है दोष? शायद हमारी सोच का! असल में बिखरे हुए मन से बिखरे हुए ही शब्द निकल पाते हैं।

बिहार में पहले से ही एक स्थापित उदाहरण होने के बावजूद पार्टियों ने उससे कुछ नहीं सीखा सो अब भुगत रहे हैं। इसके साथ ही भाजपा को यह कहने का मौका भी मिल गया कि महागठबंधन दरअसल टगबंधन है। इसका फायदा कम बल्कि नुकसान ज्यादा हुआ। आगामी विधानसभा चुनावों में भी इसका असर अवश्य पड़ेगा। उपचुनाव से पहले ही दोनों पार्टियों ने अलग होने का फैसला कर लिया है। पिछले चुनाव में पारिवारिक कलह और अबकी यह गठबंधन अखिलेश यादव के लिए दोनों ही अच्छे नहीं रहे। सपा, बसपा, रालोद, राजद या उनके जैसी अन्य पार्टियों को चुनाव के लिए चले आ रहे अपने

अलगवाद ने एक धंधे का रूप ले लिया है। जम्मू-कश्मीर में नए सिरे से परिसीमन की तैयारियों के पीछे का सच जो भी हो, उपद्रवग्रस्त घाटी को पटरी पर लाने के लिए हरसंभव कदम उठाने का समय आ गया है।
● *हेमंत कुमार, गोराडीह, भागलपुर, बिहार*

**कब्जे का हक!**
मुल्क बड़ा हो या छोटा विदेशों की सड़कें जाने हमें क्यों लुभाती हैं। हमारा देश किसित राष्ट्र बनने की तरफ तेजी से बढ़ रहा है मगर क्या हम तरक्की के राजमागों के लिए वाकई तैयार हैं? दुनिया के मुकाबले पिछड़ने की वजह हमारी

किस्सी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

उतनी अच्छी नहीं है, जितनी बाहर से दिखती है?

एअर इंडिया और इंडियन एअर लाईंस के विलय के वक्त यह कंपनी सौ करोड़ रुपए के लाभ में थी। लेकिन अनियमितता, कुप्रबंधन और अंदरूनी गड़बड़ियों के कारण एअर इंडिया खस्ताहाल स्थिति में आ गई। अदालत में दायर एक जनहित याचिका के मुताबिक वर्ष 2004 से वर्ष 2008 के दौरान विदेशी विनिर्माताओं को फायदा पहुंचाने के लिए सड़सठ हजार करोड़ रुपए में एक सौ ग्यारह विमान खरीदे गए, करोड़ों-अरबों रुपए खर्च करके विमानों को पट्टे पर लिया गया और निजी विमानन कंपनियों को फायदा पहुंचाने के लिए फायदे वाले हवाई मार्गों पर एअर इंडिया की उड़ानों को जानबूझ कर बंद किया गया। इन गड़बड़ियों की पुष्टि नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (केग) ने भी अपनी रिपोर्ट में की है।



एअर इंडिया की स्थापना टाटा संस लिमिटेड की एक इकाई के रूप में हुई थी। सन 1946 तक इसका संचालन टाटा एअरलाईंस कर रही थी, जो बाद में सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की लिमिटेड कंपनी में तब्दील हो गई। एक समय विमानन कंपनियों में एअर इंडिया की हैसियत महाराजा की थी। एअर इंडिया बेड़े में हर तरह के विमान थे। के-787 ड्रीमलाइनर को सितंबर, 2012 में एअर इंडिया के बेड़े में शामिल किया गया था। दो सी छप्पन सीटों वाला ड्रीमलाइनर दस से तेरह घंटे बिना किसी परेशानी के उड़ान भर सकता है। सीटों की डिजाइनिंग और ईंधन क्षमता के मामले में यह बोईंग 777-200 एलआर से बेहतर है। एअर इंडिया ड्रीमलाइनर की बेहतर क्षमता का उपयोग करके एअर इंडिया ज्यादा लाभ कमा सकती है। बड़े विमानों में एअर इंडिया के पास 777-200 एलआर के आठ, 777-300 ईआर के बारह और बी 747-

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फिर जब मन सधेगा, तब वे शब्द सार्थक हो जाते हैं! हर कोई इन शब्दों के खेल से वाकिफ है। सरकारों और उनकी संस्थाएं, हमारे समाज के नेता और अभिनेता शब्दों का खेल जानते हैं। सारी व्यवस्था शब्दों के आधार पर ही तो चल रही है!

वक्त के साथ कितना कुछ बदल जाता है। कई बार आदतन कुछ शब्द पक कर जड़ी हो जाते हैं या फिर आधुनिक रंग का जामा पहन लेते हैं। ऐसे में

उन्हें बदलने के लिए आत्मबल और निरंतर प्रयास की जरूरत होती है! अब आप ही देखिए

कि समय के साथ-साथ पाठशाला की जगह स्कूल ने ले ली और पुस्कूल की जगह हॉस्टल या छात्रावास ने। किसी को बुलाने के लिए आवाज देने का विकल्प अब पिछड़ा माना जाने लगा और उसकी जगह ‘बेल’ बजने लगी और स्कूल की शिक्षिकाएं ‘मैडम’ से घट कर ‘मैम’ रह गईं। इस तरह न जाने कितने रोजमर्रा के इस्तेमाल में आने वाले शब्दों की जगहें बदलीं और पुराने शब्दों के प्रयोग खत्म हो गए।

ये सारी बातें दर्शाती हैं कि हमारी मानसिकता में कितना बदलाव आ गया है। किस प्रकार हम अपने चारों ओर खिड़कियां खोल कर नई हवा के स्वागत

400 के तीन विमान हैं। छोटे विमानों में एअर इंडिया के पास ए-320 के बारह, ए-319 के उन्नीस और ए 321 के बीस विमान हैं। इसके अलावा कंपनी ने उन्नीस छोटे व बड़े विमानों को लीज पर ले रखा है।

विमानों के बुद्धिमतापूर्ण इस्तेमाल से राजस्व में इजाफा किया जा सकता है। जैसे, जिस मार्ग पर यात्रियों का आवागमन अधिक है, वहां विमानों के फेरे बढ़ाए जा सकते हैं। वैसे विमानों का ज्यादा उपयोग किया जा सकता है, जिनमें कम ईंधन का खपत होती है। आज भी एअर इंडिया में विमानों का इस्तेमाल तार्किक तरीके से नहीं किया जा रहा है। लंबी दूरी वाले विमानों का उपयोग मध्यम तथा छोटी दूरी वाले मार्गों में उड़ानों के लिए हो रहा है। बोईंग 777-200 एलआर लंबी दूरी तय करने वाला विमान है। यह लगातार सोलह घंटे तक उड़ान भर सकता है, लेकिन इसका इस्तेमाल मध्यम दूरी वाले

स्थानों के लिए ही हो रहा है। इससे विमानों में ईंधन की ज्यादा खपत हो रही है। फ्रैंकफर्ट, पेरिस, हांगकांग, शंघाई जैसे शहरों, जहां पहुंचने में दस घंटे लगते हैं, की उड़ान में अगर ड्रीमलाइनर का प्रयोग किया जाता है तो यात्रा की लागत प्रति किलोमीटर पच्चीस फीसद तक कम हो सकती है। यात्री किराए में कमी करना भी एक अच्छा विकल्प है। निजी विमानन कंपनियों को लाभ पहुंचाने वाली नीतियों के कारण इंडिगो, स्पाइसजेट, गो एअर आदि ने कमाई में एअर इंडिया से बहुत हासिल की। विदेशी विमानन कंपनियों में लुप्तहंसा समूह, ब्रिटिश एअरवेज, केएलाएम इत्यादि से भी एअर इंडिया को कड़ी चुनौती मिल रही है। एअर इंडिया को घाटे से उबारने की कोशिशें

तो की गईं, लेकिन ये कोशिशें सिरे नहीं चढ़ पाईं। भले ही एअर इंडिया को निजी हाथों में सौंपने की तैयारी चल रही हो, लेकिन यह तय है कि कुशल प्रबंधन से एअर इंडिया को मुनाफे में लाया जा सकता है। कुशल नेतृत्व एवं संसाधनों के बेहतर प्रबंध से पूल में यह कंपनी लाभ में आई भी थी। भारतीय रेल, यूको बैंक, पंजाब नेशनल बैंक आदि भी पूर्व में ऐसा करिश्मा कर चुके हैं। सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की अनेक कंपनियां आज मुनाफे में चल रही हैं। बीमा और सरकारी तेल कंपनियां भी मुनाफे में हैं। देखा जाए तो लाभ कमाने वाली सरकारी कंपनियों की एक लंबी फेहरिस्त है। ऐसे में एअर इंडिया को लाभ में लाना नामुमकिन नहीं है, क्योंकि इसकी बदहाली के लिए मूल रूप से कुप्रबंध जिम्मेदार है। इसलिए योजनाबद्ध तरीके से काम करके इसे फिर से मुनाफे में लाया जा सकता है।

शब्दों का सौंदर्य शब्दों का सौंदर्य शब्दों का सौंदर्य

के लिए खुद को तैयार किए बैठे हैं। नए बदलाव, नए दौर, विकास के नए मोर्चे पर कुछ नया करने के लिए नई राह बना रहे हैं। शायद यह शब्दों की ही कला है कि हम इनके सहारे किसी के दोस्त बन जाते हैं और किसी के दुश्मन। ऐसा भी अक्सर होता है कि कुछ शब्दों की वजह से माहौल बोझिल हो जाता है तो कभी खुशनुमा। क्यों हम अक्सर कहते हैं- ‘कितना जिंदादिल ईसान है?’ क्या हम ऐसे व्यक्ति का दिल देखते हैं? नहीं! हम अक्सर उस व्यक्ति के बोले गए शब्दों की री में बह जाते हैं। उसके साथ बातें करना हमें अच्छा लगता है जो रीते को हंसा दे, मुस्कुराते को खिलखिला दे। पत्थर में भी फूल खिला दे, यह शब्दों की ही कला है।

शब्द हमारी शक्ति है। हम उमड़ती भावनाओं के उफान में शब्दों को तोल नहीं पाते। बोल देते हैं जो मन में आता है। बना बनाया काम एक झटके में बिगड़ जाता है। बचपन की दोस्ती बदल जाती है दुश्मनी में। बुजुर्गों ने कहा है कि सत्य बोले, प्रिय बोले, पर अप्रिय करना कभी न बोले। जिसने सन रहस्य को पा लिया, समझिए संसार में कोई उसका बैरी नहीं हो सकता। एक शब्द से ‘क्षय’, एक शब्द से ‘जय’, कितनी शक्ति है शब्दों में!

#### बैंकों से धोखाधड़ी

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक यानी आरबीआई की तमाम कोशिशों के बावजूद हमारे देश में बैंकों से धोखाधड़ी पर लगाम नहीं लग पा रही है। आरबीआई ने सूचनाधिकार कानून के तहत पढ़ गए एक सवाल के जवाब में कहा कि अनुसूचित वाणिज्यिक बैंकों और चुनिंदा वित्तीय संस्थाओं ने 71542.93 करोड़ रुपए की धोखाधड़ी के 6801 मामलों की सूचना दी है। केंद्रीय बैंक ने बताया कि धोखाधड़ी वाली राशि में 73 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दर्ज की गई है। पिछले 11 वित्तीय वर्षों में 2.05 लाख करोड़ रुपए की बैंकिंग धोखाधड़ी के कुल 53334 मामले दर्ज किए गए। तमाम सतर्कता और कड़े बैंकिंग नियम-कानूनों के बावजूद इतने बड़े पैमाने पर धोखाधड़ी के मामले सामने आना समूची बैंकिंग प्रणाली पर सवालिया निशान लगाने के लिए काफी है।

गौरतलब है कि धोखाधड़ी के बारे में प्राप्त जानकारी को लेकर बैंकों द्वारा कानून प्रवर्तन एजेंसियों के समक्ष आपराधिक शिकायत दर्ज कराना आवश्यक होता है लेकिन कार्रवाई के बारे में किसी तरह की सूचना उपलब्ध नहीं है। बैंक धोखाधड़ी के कई बड़े मामलों में भगोड़े आपूषण कारोबारी नीरव मोदी और शराब कारोबारी विजय माल्या से जुड़े मामले भी शामिल हैं। आरबीआई ने फजीवाड़े का विश्लेषण कर सबसे ज्यादा प्रभावित तेरह क्षेत्रों की पहचान की है। सीबीआई ने कई बैंकों के मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, महाप्रबंधक और मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी के खिलाफ फजीवाड़े में शामिल होने का मामला दर्ज किया है लेकिन इन मामलों में क्या कार्रवाई हो रही है इस बाबत किसी तरह की सूचना नहीं मिल पाई है। आखिर बैंकों के साथ फजीवाड़े में शामिल लोगों के खिलाफ आपराधिक मामले दर्ज कर सख्त कदम कब उठाए जाएंगे?

● *अमन सिंह, प्रेमनगर, बरेली, उत्तर प्रदेश*





पटना, शुक्रवार, 7.06.2019

## ठोस पहल जरूरी

घरेलू और अंतरराष्ट्रीय कारकों की वजह से भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था के विकास दर में कमी आयी है. कमजोर मॉनसून और देश के कई हिस्सों में जल संकट भी चिंताजनक संकेत दे रहे हैं. ऐसे में सरकार के सामने आर्थिक बढ़ोतरी को गति देने की बड़ी चुनौती है. वर्ष 2018-19 की चौथी तिमाही में वृद्धि दर 5.8 फीसदी रही थी तथा पूरे साल का आंकड़ा सात फीसदी से भी घटकर 6.8 फीसदी के स्तर पर आ गया. इस अवधि में हर तिमाही में आर्थिक नरमी का रक़ाना रहा. इसके साथ बड़े पैमाने पर बेरोजगारी की चुनौती भी सामने है, जो कि श्रम शक्ति के हर भाग-कुशल, अर्द्ध कुशल और अकुशल- में है. ये चिंताएं सरकार की प्राथमिकता में हैं. प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने इन चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए दो कैबिनेट समितियों का गठन किया है. एक समिति निवेश और वृद्धि से संबद्ध होगी, जबकि दूसरी समिति रोजगार एवं कौशल विकास पर केंद्रित होगी. संभवतः यह पहला मौका है, लेकिन चौथी तिमाही समितियां बनायी गयी हैं. इन दोनों समितियों की अध्यक्षता स्वयं प्रधानमंत्री करेंगे. इससे स्पष्ट इंगित होता है कि सरकार ने अर्थव्यवस्था को पटरी पर लाने तथा रोजगार के समुचित अवसर पैदा करने के लिए हर संभव प्रयास करने का निश्चय कर लिया है. आर्थिक नरमी का एक कारण निवेश में कमी है. वर्ष 2018-19 की पहली तिमाही में कुल फिक्स्ड पूंजी निर्माण सकल घरेलू उत्पादन के 32.8 फीसदी के स्तर पर था, लेकिन चौथी तिमाही में यह घटकर 30.7 फीसदी हो गया. कृषि क्षेत्र में तो विकास दर पहली तिमाही के 5.1 फीसदी

से गिर कर चौथी तिमाही में ऋणात्मक 0.1 फीसदी हो गयी. औद्योगिक उत्पादन में भी नकारात्मक संकेत हैं. ऐसे में अर्थव्यवस्था के हर महत्वपूर्ण पहलू पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है. बैंकों के संरचनात्मक पुनर्गठन तथा सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों के विनिवेश की योजनाओं पर गंभीरता से पहल करने की दरकार है. कृषि संकट से निबटने के लिए सरकार ने अनेक कदम उठाये हैं, पर मॉनसून की बारिश अगर पर्याप्त नहीं हुई, तो किसानों को राहत पहुंचाने तथा खाद्य उत्पादन कम होने की मुश्किलों के हल के लिए तैयारी की जानी चाहिए. अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति और आर्थिकी की उथल-पुथल से तेल और मुद्रा की कीमतों में उतार-चढ़ाव पर भी नजर रखी जानी चाहिए. घरेलू बाजार में मांग घटने तथा निर्यात में अपेक्षित बढ़ोतरी न हो पाना भी अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए नुकसानदेह है. मांग, उत्पादन और रोजगार के समीकरण पर ही आर्थिक वृद्धि निर्भर करती है. अनेक साहसी आर्थिक निर्णय लेना मोदी सरकार के पिछले कार्यकाल की सबसे बड़ी उपलब्धि रही थी. इससे आर्थिक गतिविधियों को औपचारिक दायरे में लाने में कामयाबी मिली है तथा कराधान की प्रक्रिया सरल व प्रभावी हुई है. उम्मीद है कि प्रधानमंत्री के नेतृत्व में कैबिनेट समितियां जल्दी ठोस सुधार व उपाय तय कर उन्हें अमल में लाने की कोशिश करेंगी.

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समर्पण तनाव-मुक्ति का एकमात्र साधन है. सब कुछ परमात्मा को समर्पित कर देने से हमारा बोझ कम हो जाता है. सच तो यही है कि होनी हमारे वश में नहीं. इस ज्ञान के साथ हम अपने सभी कर्म कर, उन्हें ईश्वर को अर्पित कर दें, परंतु कर्तुत्व न लें. हमारा भाव यह रहे कि हम सब कर्म उसकी कृपा से कर रहे हैं. यही समर्पण का भाव हमें विकसित करना होगा. परमात्मा प्रतिक्रण हमें सरल, मधुर शब्दों द्वारा राह दिखलाता है, परंतु दुर्भाग्य, कि हम में सुनने का धैर्य ही नहीं, हम उसकी कही बात को सुनते ही नहीं. तभी तो हम बारंबार गलतियों को दोहराते रहते हैं और फिर दुःख पाते हैं. हमें शिष्यत्व के एक आवश्यक गुण आज्ञा पालन को विकसित करना चाहिए. जब वह भाव जागृत हो जाता है, जब हम ध्याने से सुनते हैं, श्रद्धा तथा विनम्रतापूर्वक उसके शरणागत होते हैं, तब ही वह गुरु बन कर हमारा मार्गदर्शन करने का दाखित्व लेता है. जैसा कि अर्जुन के साथ हुआ. समर्पण की बात चले तो मन में राधा का विचार आता है. जब कृष्ण वृंदावन छोड़ कर मथुरा गये, तो वो राधा अथवा किसी गोपी को साथ नहीं ले गये थे. अतः वे सब अति-निराश हो गयीं. एक बार जब उद्धव मथुरा से आये तो राधा से मिल कर बोले कि, ‘सभी गोपियों ने कृष्ण के लिए अपने संदेश में पूछा है कि अब वह मथुरावासी ही हो जायेगे अथवा उन्हें भी वहां बुला लेंगे ? तुमने मुझे कृष्ण के लिए ऐसा कोई संदेश क्यों नहीं दिया ? राधा ने उत्तर दिया, ‘जब घर का स्वामी बाहर जाता है, तो या तो वह दास को साथ ले जाता है या नहीं ले जाता. यदि न ले जाए, तो इसमें दास क्या करता है ? घर की चाकरी करते हुए स्वामी के लौट आने की प्रतीक्षा करता है. मैं कृष्ण की दासी हूं. अतः उन्हें अधिकार है कि मुझे साथ ले जाएं अथवा यहां छोड़ जाएं. मेरे हृदय में जो उनके प्रेम की ज्योति है, मैं उसे दुःख से भंद नहीं पड़ने दूंगी. यही एक सच्चे भक्त का, दास का भाव है ! इसी भाव के मध्यम से हम आत्मबोध की प्राप्ति कर सकते हैं.

**श्री माता अमृतानंदमयी देवी**

## कुछ अलग

# सेब के मुकाबिल केला

**भले ही** आम फलों का राजा हो, पर स्वास्थ्य के मामले में जो लोकप्रियता सेब की है, वह आम की नहीं. लगता है, उसने अपनी बिक्री बढ़ाने का काम किसी विज्ञापन-एजेंसी को दिया था. एजेंसी ने पहला काम किया, एक बंदि्या नारा बनाने का, क्योंकि नारा है तो सब-कुछ है. नारा भी बनाया अंग्रेजी में, क्योंकि अंग्रेजी भी तो सब-कुछ है. लोग तो उसके पीछे अपनी मातृभाषा भी कुर्बान करने को तैयार रहते हैं और दूसरे की भी, बल्कि दूसरे की कुर्बान करने के लिए ज्यादा तैयार रहते हैं. भले ही इस चक्कर में अपनी भी कुर्बान हो जाये. अंग्रेजी में स्लोगन बना- ‘एन एप्पल ए डे कीप्स डॉक्टर्स अवे.’ इस स्लोगन ने चमत्कार किया. परिणाम यह हुआ कि सुबह नाश्ते की मेज पर बाकी सारे फल पड़े के पड़े रह जाते हैं, लोग सेब पर ही हाथ साफ करते हैं. पपीता तो बीमारों के फल के रूप में बदनाम है ही, अंगूर भी सेब के सामने कहीं नहीं टिकता. रहा केला, तो जैसे स्त्री दलितों में भी दलित है, केला उपेक्षितों में भी उपेक्षित रहा. लेकिन वही केला अब सेब से टक्कर लेने की तैयारी में दिखता है. ताजा शोध यह है- दो केले खाइए, रक्तचाप और तनाव भगाइए. जरूर केले ने भी किसी विज्ञापन-एजेंसी का सहारा लिया है, वरना ऐसा मर्मस्पर्शी नारा न बनता. यह तो दुखती राग पर हाथ रखने जैसा हो गया. जैसी कि परंपरा है, पहले चुनें पर केले का असर परका गया. चूहे वैसे किन्नेने भी खुरफातीं हों, इस मामले में मानवता के खूब काम आते हैं.



# संपादकीय प्रभात

# विचारहीन राजनीति का अवसान

चुनाव परिणाम आने के बाद देश की राजनीति में बड़े परिवर्तन देखने को मिल रहे हैं. देश के सबसे बड़े राज्य उत्तर प्रदेश में चुनाव पूर्व बना समाजवादी पार्टी और बहुजन समाज पार्टी का महागठबंधन टूट गया. हालांकि, यह गठबंधन टिकने वाला नहीं है, इसको लेकर चुनाव से पहले ही सभी को अंदाजा था. चुनाव से पहले बेमेल की एकजुटता का राग अलापने वाले दलों के इस गठबंधन की नियति यही थी. हालांकि, साझा गठबंधन की हार का ठीकरा समाजवादी पार्टी के माथे फोड़ेत हुए गठबंधन से अलग होने का निर्णय बसपा ने एकतरफा लिया है. बहुजन समाज पार्टी सुप्रीमो का यह निर्णय दर्शाता है कि विपक्ष की राजनीति समाज में होनेवाले परिवर्तन के मूल मुद्दों और विचारों से भटक गयी है. विचारधारा की अस्पष्टता और दृष्टिकोण में असमानता के साथ जब राजनीतिक गठबंधन सिर्फ सत्ता के अवसरवाद में बनेते हैं, तो उनका स्वाभाविक हथ्र कुछ इसी तरह का होता है.

भारत की राजनीति को लंबे समय तक प्रभावित करनेवाले नेताओं में बाबा साहेब भीमराव आंबेडकर, डॉक्टर राममनोहर लोहिया और पंडित दीन दयाल उपाध्याय प्रमुख हैं. डॉ राममनोहर लोहिया ने राजनीति में सप्तक्रांति का विचार दिया. लोहिया द्वारा दिया गया सप्तक्रांति का विचार सामाजिक परिवर्तन एवं सुधारों के बुनियादी आवश्यकताओं को परिभाषित करनेवाले बिंदु की तरह है.

सप्तक्रांति की बात करते हुए डॉक्टर लोहिया ने लैंगिक भेदभाव से मुक्ति तथा स्त्री-पुरुष समानता की जरूरत पर बल दिया. उन्होंने राजकीय, आर्थिक और मानसिक स्तर पर भेदभाव से मुक्त होने की जरूरत का विचार दिया है. सप्तक्रांति के विचारों में जन्मजात रूप से जातिगत पिछड़ापन को सामाजिक समस्या के रूप में चिह्नित करते हुए, इसके निराकरण की बात की गयी

है. पैदावार बढ़ाने, पूंजीगत विषमता, आर्थिक असमानता आदि विषयों को डॉ राममनोहर लोहिया ने अपने विचारों में सही ढंग से रेखांकित किया है.

इन विचारों के जरिये लोहिया की दृष्टि समाज के वंचित और गरीब को न्याय दिला कर समाज और राजनीति की मुख्यधारा में शामिल करने की थी. किंतु वर्तमान में लोहिया और आंबेडकर के नाम पर राजनीति करनेवाले ऐसे अवसरवादी राजनीतिक दलों का आचरण उनके विचारों से ठीक उलट है. यही कारण है कि समाजवादी पार्टी के वर्तमान अध्यक्ष राम मनोहर लोहिया की वैचारिक विरासत तो दूर, अपने पिता की राजनीतिक विरासत को भी नहीं सहेज पाये. राजनीति की जो धारा सामाजिक न्याय के उद्देश्य से चली थी, सपा के वर्तमान अध्यक्ष ने उसे संकीर्ण राजनीति का रूप देकर अपने दल का भी नुकसान किया, अपने समाज का भी नुकसान किया और देश की राजनीति में डॉ राम मनोहर लोहिया जी के विचारों का तो सबसे बड़ा नुकसान किया ही.

यह भी सच है कि राजनीति को केवल किसी एक व्यक्ति या परिवार के सत्ता हितों का साधन बनाकर एक उपकरण की तरह इस्तेमाल करने की इजाजत अब देश की जनता नहीं देने वाली.



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राजनीति करते समय हमें महात्मा गांधी की उस ताबीज को याद करना चाहिए, जो उन्होंने ‘सतर साल’ पहले दी थी, ‘जब भी कोई निर्णय लो, तो समाज के अंतिम व्यक्ति का भला कैसे हो सकता है, यह सोच कर निर्णय करो.’

सुरक्षा, विदेशनीति, अर्थनीति जैसे मूल मुद्दों पर किसी भी दल का राजनीतिक चिंतन उभर कर आना चाहिए.

# विश्व सिनेमा का बदलता भूगोल



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कान का फिल्म बाजार इस समय दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा फिल्म बाजार बन चुका है, जहां 31,819 फिल्म कंपनियां पंजीकृत हैं. इस बार 114 देशों के 12 हजार एजेंट फिल्मों की खरीद-बिक्री के लिए पहुंचे.

कान फिल्म बाजार के इतिहास में पहली बार इस आयोजन में मैक्सिको के किसी फिल्मकार को जूरी का अध्यक्ष बनाया गया था. यूरोप में बढ़ते इस्लामोफोबिया के दौर में लेबनान की नदिन लाबाकी को ‘अनसर्टेन रिगार्ड’ खंड के निर्णायक मंडल का अध्यक्ष बनाया गया था. साल 1979 में कंबोडिया में हुए भीषण जनसंहार से किसी तरह बचकर पेरिस में शरणार्थी का जीवन जी रहे रिथि पांह ‘केमरा डि ओर’ की जूरी का मुखिया बने थे. हॉलीवुड की दैत्यकार संरचना को अपनी फिल्मों से चुनौती देनेवाले और अमेरिका में इंफैंटेड सिनेमा आंदोलन के अगुवा जिम जारमुश की फंतासी ‘डेड डोंट डाइ’ के प्रदर्शन से 72वें कान फिल्म समारोह की शुरुआत हुई थी. इन संकेतों

## देश दुनिया से

### सूडान में प्रदर्शनकारियों पर नृशंसता

**खार्तूम** की सड़कों पर 60 सूडानी प्रदर्शनकारियों की हत्या के बाद, यहां सामंजस्य बिठाना मुश्किल हो जायेगा, क्योंकि यह देश नागरिक शासन स्थापित करने के लिए पहले से संघर्षत है. बीते अप्रैल में विरोध प्रदर्शनों के बाद पूर्व राष्ट्रपति ओमार अल बशीर को सत्ताच्युत करने के साथ ही विपक्षी लोकतांत्रित कार्यकर्ताओं में आशा जगी थी. हालिया हत्या से यह साफ हो जाता है कि बशीर के खिलाफ विरोध प्रदर्शन का जो लाभ प्राप्त हुआ था, वह खून से लथपथ हो रहा है. मिलिशिया गुप्त के इसमें शामिल होने से मृतकों की संख्या बढ़ रही है. यह गुप्त सेना का हिस्सा था और सड़कों पर घूम कर निदोषों को गोली मार रहा था. जांजावीड मिलिशिया, जो दार्फुल में नृशंसता के लिए जिम्मेदार था, अर्धसैनिक इकाई इन मौतों के लिए जिम्मेदार है. असल में यह विपक्षियों को आतंकित करने की योजना है, ताकि वे सत्ता पक्ष की शर्तों को स्वीकार कर लें. हत्याओं को लेकर हंगामा होने के बाद ट्रांजिशनल मिलिटरी कौंसिल ने नौ महीने में चुनाव कराने की घोषणा की. हालांकि, उकसावे और हत्याओं के बावजूद, लोकतंत्र समर्थक प्रदर्शनकारी अहिंसक रहे हैं. इन प्रदर्शनकारियों का लक्ष्य है लोकतंत्र, चुनाव और लोकप्रिय जनादेश का शासन, न कि सैन्य शासन.

# प्रभात खबर 08

विपक्ष ऐसे किसी भी चिंतन को रखने का प्रयास करता भी नहीं दिखा. इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि विचारधारा विहीन और राष्ट्रीय महत्व के मुद्दों से विमुख होकर अगर राजनीति को हमने महज वोट ट्रांसफर के चुनाव में तब्दील कर लिया, तो ये राष्ट्र की नहीं बल्कि कबीलों की राजनीति बनकर रह जायेगी. लेकिन, एक स्वस्थ एवं परिपक्व लोकतंत्र के रूप में देश ने डॉ राममनोहर लोहिया, बाबा साहेब भीमराव आंबेडकर और दीन दयाल उपाध्याय जैसे विचारकों के चिंतन के अनुरूप गरीब आदमी को ताकत देने की राजनीति को इस देश ने स्वीकार किया है. यह भारत के लोकतंत्र के लिए उत्कर्ष का विषय है.

वैसे बेमेल गठबंधन में हाल तक रहे राजनीतिक दलों की बौखलाहट से किसी की निराश होने की जरूरत नहीं है, क्योंकि आज भारतीय जनता पार्टी सरकार ने प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी जी के नेतृत्व में देश के गरीबों को सम्मान से जीवन जीने का मार्ग दिखाया है और लगातार इस दिशा में कार्य कर रही है. लोग अपनी सहज सामाजिक परंपरा, अपनी वेशभूषा, खान-पान और रहन-सहन जैसी चीजों के साथ नये भारत की आकांक्षा के लिए आगे बढ़ सकते हैं, यह रास्ता भारतीय जनता पार्टी ने दिखाया है.

वहीं, विपक्षी राजनीतिक दलों की बिखराव की राजनीति यह दिखाती है कि भारत की जनता द्वारा नकरी गयी ताकतें अपना वोट ट्रांसफर न होने से हलाश हैं. हर गरीब भी अब भारत निर्माण में अपनी भूमिका के साथ आगे बढ़ रहा है.

राजनीति करते समय हमें महात्मा गांधी की उस ताबीज को याद करना चाहिए, जो उन्होंने देश की दिशा देते हुए की ‘सत्तर साल पहले दी थी, ‘जब भी कोई निर्णय लो, तो समाज के अंतिम व्यक्ति का भला कैसे हो सकता है, ये सोच कर निर्णय करो.’



### शहरीकरण से बढ़ रही ग्लोबल वार्मिंग की समस्या

हमने पांच जून को विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस मनाया. विश्व भर में बढ़ रही ग्लोबल वार्मिंग का कारण सिर्फ पेड़ों की कटाई अथवा प्लास्टिक बैगों का इस्तेमाल नहीं है. झारखंड, असम और मध्यप्रदेश में वनों की संख्या देश में ज्यादा है, बावजूद वहां भी ग्लोबल वार्मिंग का असर देखने को मिल रहा है. गांवों की जमीन को बेचकर शहरों की तरफ पलायन, आबादी वृद्धि और कारों की संख्या में भी अप्रत्याशित वृद्धि, दाढ़ी बनाने की क्रीम, लिपस्टिक और सुंदरता बढ़ाने के क्रीम का रसायन, गगनचुंबी इमारतें, गड्डे और पोखरों को भरकर इमारत खड़ा करना, एसी कार और इमारत, सभी धर्मस्थलों में बजते लाउडस्पीकर, शहरों में कचरा प्रबंधन का अभाव इत्यादि भी ग्लोबल वार्मिंग के कारक हैं. ग्लोबल वार्मिंग से बचने के लिए इन बिंदुओं पर भी ध्यान देना होगा.

**प्रो सदानंद पॉल**, नवाबगंज, मंिहारी (कटिहार)

### मजबूत इच्छाशक्ति हो, तो दिव्यांगता नहीं बनेगी बाधा

कामयाबी पाने के लिए मजबूत शरीर नहीं, मजबूत इच्छाशक्ति की जरूरत होती है. अगर हमारे होसले बुलंद हों और इरादे चट्टान की तरह, तो दुनिया की हर बाधा पार की जा सकती है. मानसिक सुदृढ़ता के आगे शारीरिक कमी बौनी हो जाती है और लक्ष्य आसान हो जाता है. हमारे आसपास ऐसे कई उदाहरण हैं, जिससे हम सीख ले सकते हैं. जैसे, बिहार की अरुणिमा सिन्हा ने एक ट्रेन दुर्घटना में अपने पांव गवां दिये थे. लेकिन, उन्होंने अपनी मजबूत इच्छाशक्ति से दुनिया की सबसे ऊंची चोटी माउंट एवरेस्ट को फतह कर यह साबित कर दिया कि अपंगता शरीर में नहीं दिमाग होती है. उन्होंने यह उपलब्धि हासिल कर उन सभी लोगों के लिए एक उदाहरण प्रस्तुत किया है, जो अपनी शारीरिक अक्षमता के आगे घुटने टेक देते हैं.

**मोनू कुमार**, छत्र, पटना कॉलेज (पटना)

### स्कूलों में शिक्षकों की कमी को दूर करे सरकार

जिस राज्य को शिक्षा का केंद्र समझा जाता था, जहां नालंदा और विक्रमशिला जैसे शिक्षण संस्थान पूरे विश्व में विख्यात थे, आज उसी राज्य की शिक्षा व्यवस्था बहाल हो चुकी है, जो कि चिंता का विषय है. पूरे बिहार में प्राथमिक और उच्च प्राथमिक स्कूलों में शिक्षकों की काफी कमी है. लगभग दो लाख शिक्षकों के पद रिक्त हैं, लेकिन अब तक इस दिशा में कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाया गया है, जिससे विद्यार्थियों को गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा नहीं मिल पा रही है. राज्य की शिक्षा व्यवस्था को पटरी पर लाने के लिए बिहार सरकार को संपूर्ण रिक्त पदों पर जल्द से जल्द बहाली शुरू करनी चाहिए, ताकि छात्र-छात्राओं को गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा मिल सके.

**प्रीतम राजू**, कौआकौल (नरदा)

**पोस्ट करें :** प्रभात खबर, अद्वैता भवन, बोरिंग रोड चौराहा, पटना, **मेल करें :** patna@prabhatkhabar.in

ध्यान रखें, इ-मेल संक्षिप्त व हिंदी में हो. लिपि रोमन भी हो सकती है. **फैक्स करें :** 0612-2540610 पर

