

The irresistible charm of electric mobility

Solar was to India’s 2014 Budget what electric vehicles is to the 2019 Budget



VANDANA GOMBAR

An ambitious target that envisions “India as a global hub of manufacturing of electric vehicles” has been announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Economic Survey earlier proclaimed boldly: “It may not be unrealistic to visualise one of the Indian cities emerging as the Detroit of EVs in the future.”

The word “leapfrog” is used often for electric mobility in India. Just as many people’s first phone was wireless, so can their first vehicle be electric, is the thinking behind those who want a radical shift in our commute patterns. NITI Aayog has already been pushing for electrifying all three-wheelers by 2023, and all two-wheelers by 2025, and has run into expected opposition from industry incumbents. An earlier proposal to have all cars electric by 2030 was watered down in the face of resistance from various groups. On the other side of the fence, younger companies are impatient to electrify mobility in India. In an interview with BloombergNEF, Anand Shah, co-founder of Ola Electric, outlined plans to focus on electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers to ferry passengers or packages. “In our view, they are the low-hanging fruit,” he said, as he talked about relying on a model where the vehi-

CHANGING PRIORITIES

India Budget speech mentions

	2014	2019		2014	2019
Electric vehicles	0	14	Wind	5	0
Solar	11	4	Water	20+	20+
			Pollution	0	1

Source: India Budget 2019

cle battery is promptly swapped rather than patiently charged. The company secured \$250 million from SoftBank earlier this month, and is being dubbed as India’s latest unicorn. It would be challenging for India to create a competitive advantage in EV manufacturing. For one thing, it is not the easiest place to conduct business. India ranks 77 in the World Bank’s ease of doing business rankings and can only provide capital subsidy or other support in a limited manner. Its largest competitor would be China,

which has had quite a head start in this race. There are 486 electric vehicle manufacturers registered in China, according to a Bloomberg News report in April. The country is the world’s largest manufacturer and buyer of EVs and also has the world’s largest network of public charging stations. Additionally, China accounts for 75 per cent of the world’s lithium cell manufacturing capacity. Fans of Tesla would know that the company chose to set up a manufacturing plant in China, which happens to be the company’s biggest market after the US. Production is expected to start by the end of this year. Meanwhile, there are some encouraging signs of impending changes in the transport sector in India: ■ 10,000 charging stations target: Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL), the company that bulk-procured LED lights and brought down their prices, plans to set up 10,000 EV charging sta-

tions in the next two years. Other companies that have announced their intentions to set up charging stations include NTPC and Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. EESL has also procured EVs from Tata and Mahindra for government offices. As of May 2019, about 1,000 vehicles were already running, and another 2,500 were in the process of being delivered. ■ What range anxiety? A few hours ago, Hyundai India launched an electric SUV in the country that can travel 452 kilometers on a single charge. However, with a price of Rs25.30 lakhs (approximately \$37,000), it remains to be seen whether sufficient market traction will develop. Many more electric car launches are in the pipeline. ■ Solar with EVs: Solar module manufacturer Waaree Energies has been selling customised flexible solar modules for use on the roofs of railway coaches, in addition to trucks, buses, and yachts. The marriage of solar with EVs makes for a compelling business case.

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Mining in the deep end

With leases expiring in March, and little time left for fresh auction, iron ore and manganese miners are staring at mayhem

KUNAL BOSE

The non-captive merchant iron ore and manganese ore miners that meet as much as 45 per cent of the requirement of critical raw materials of the steel industry in the eastern sector are staring at mayhem as their leases expire on March 31, 2020. Production shutdown at a number of mines in Odisha and Jharkhand, leading to massive unemployment and social unrest that are fodder to extremist movement will inevitably coincide with the start of the next financial year. There is no way the two states will be able to complete the arduous process of completing the auction of mines, whose leases under the law are to expire in March. In the exceptional event that new lessees emerge from the auction, it will take them a long time to get all the sanctions and then install machinery and equipment to start mining. The genesis of the impending crisis is found in the January 2015 amendment of the 1957 Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act. The amended Act, for the first time, made a distinction between merchant, captive and government-owned mines. Earlier, the three groups of mines received identical treatment in all respects, including the terms of leases. Now, merchant miners say they have got a raw deal: Their leases will be valid till March 2020, whereas the lease tenure of captive mines will be up to March 2030, with the right of first refusal when fresh auctions are held. The most favoured are mining agencies belong-

ing to the centre and states. They are allowed extension of leases for 20 years beyond the stipulated period of 50 years. There is, however, no economic justification for treating the three sets of owners differently on validity period of mining leases. Perhaps, the authors of the amended Act did not foresee the chaos that will inevitably follow the expiry of merchant mining leases in March 2020. Steelmakers with financial muscle to make bids for iron ore mines at hefty premiums are pressuring the government to hold auction of mines belonging to non-captive owners that are to expire in nine months. After all, auctions will give them a chance to bid for 24 working and 208 non-working iron ore mines. Moreover, seven working and 14 non-working manganese ore mines are also to come under hammer as the present owners will have their mining rights extinguished in March 2020. Unlike their counterparts abroad, big Indian steelmakers are obsessive about ownership of iron ore and manganese ore mines, knowing full well that the skill sets required for running the two businesses are different. In any case, captive mine owners in India will not claim that their mine work matches the best in the trade, their focus being on making steel and steel products. Yes, the world’s largest steelmaker ArcelorMittal has a significant portfolio of mining assets that principally include iron ore and coking coal. Iron ore production of 58.5 million tonnes (mt) in 2018 gives an idea of how big a miner ArcelorMittal is. In comparison, India’s largest miner NMDC’s ore output in

OUT OF BUSINESS

Mining leases of minerals expiring on March 31, 2020 are set to affect the industry in Odisha and Jharkhand

Mineral	Working	Non-working	Total
Iron ore	24	208	232
Manganese	7	14	21
Bauxite	6	8	14
Limestone	2	21	23
Chromite	4	0	4
Others	5	30	2
Total	48	281	329

Source: CCEC meeting of Ministry of Mines



2018-19 was 32.4 mt. None of the mines owned by ArcelorMittal is captive to any of its steel mills. Mining is a separate profit centre for the company. When iron ore and coal are shipped to its own plants, these are done mostly at market prices and to a small extent on a cost plus basis. Unlike ArcelorMittal, captive mine owners here provide scanty information about their mining activities. Surprisingly, some steelmakers’ campaign for expediting auction of mines that are to run their course in nine months is not tempered by their recent disappointing experience of only half the earmarked non-coal mineral blocks being actually auctioned and the follow-up sanctions needed to start mining not coming through. What is particularly upsetting is that for the 34 auctioned greenfield mineral blocks, not even one mining licence is executed. The Supreme Court gave a ruling that the new lessees of auctioned mines that were operational earlier would automatically get the environment and

forest clearances transferred to them from earlier lessees. But as it would happen, the new lessees of the three ‘C’ category mines in Karnataka are kept waiting for the clearances to come to them. Clarity is in absence in the government as to how to go about auctioning the merchant mines whose tenure ends in March 2020, particularly the functioning ones. For example, at a recent coordination-cum-empowered committee (CCEC) meeting of the mines ministry, it was mentioned that the concerned states were advised to start auctioning mines expeditiously “so that the incoming miners have time to take preparatory steps to make the mines functional.” But the law clearly states that auction can happen only “on the expiry of lease period.” A spokesperson for an Odisha-based major mining group says by proposing auction before lease expiry, the CCEC is walking into a minefield. The existing lessees may take recourse to law to “stop prospective bidders from carrying out due diligence

which will inevitably interfere with mining work,” he says. Any anarchy in mining in Odisha and Jharkhand will shrink iron ore supply by at least 60 mt, resulting in foreign ore filling the vacuum. The miners have a strong case as under the minerals concessions rules, 2016, lessees are allowed seven months to remove excavated minerals and plant and machinery. Besides the legal issues, there is the issue of the iron ore stocks of 127 mt, mostly fines that the mines in Odisha (85 mt) and Jharkhand (42 mt) are saddled with. The mines are unable to liquidate the stocks for two reasons. First, local steel mills will buy ore that has higher iron (fe) content than found in mountains of unsold stocks at pitheads. Second, because of the 30 per cent export duty on iron ore with 58 per cent plus fe content, there is no demand for the stocks in the global market. The question then is: Will the prospective new lessees be willing to buy the pit-head stocks?

CHINESE WHISPERS

‘Anything can happen’ in MP

Amid the high-voltage drama in Karnataka, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has instructed its MLAs in Madhya Pradesh to ensure 100 per cent attendance in the state assembly during the ongoing session. Senior party leaders have said if a member wants leave, he/she will have to inform in advance and furnish valid reason for absence. Former chief minister of the state and senior leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan met party MLAs recently and reportedly told them that the Congress government and its ministers are “not serious about the affairs of the state” and that “anything can happen” in the coming days.

When cricket won



There was an uproar in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday over the political crisis in Karnataka, with Congress members storming the well of the House and raising slogans, leading to an adjournment of the proceedings. The Trinamool Congress and the Left parties protested the Narendra Modi government’s plans of disinvesting public sector undertakings. Deputy Chairman Harivansh adjourned the House for the day within three minutes of it reconvening at 2 pm because of unabated protests. “I am convinced the Congress and Trinamool Congress disrupted the Rajya Sabha and had it adjourned for the day because they wanted to watch the cricket. No other explanation is in sight,” said nominated MP Swapan Dasgupta. Opposition members, however, said they would continue disruption on the issue of disinvestment on Wednesday also.

Room No 53

Even with their dwindling presence in Parliament since 2009, the Left parties, particularly the Communist Party of India (Marxist), have religiously raised issues of public interest. Both during the years of the UPA 2 government and the previous term of the Narendra Modi regime, the CPI(M) routinely held press conferences in room number 53 of Parliament House when Parliament was in session, to demand answers from the government of the day on social and economic issues. With CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury no longer an MP, the CPI’s D Raja set to retire, and no articulate successor in sight, the Trinamool Congress’s Derek O’Brien has sought to fill the breach. O’Brien held a press conference in the same room on Tuesday on electoral funding and promised a weekly press conference on a burning issue. Unlike the frugal refreshments the Left parties offered journalists, the Trinamool served fried chicken and fish.

INSIGHT

Endgame for Indian logistics?



NEELESH MUNDRA & HANISH YADAV

Thanks to India’s rapid economic growth, our middle class has grown, fueling growth in personal consumption, e-commerce, and data consumption. Meanwhile, the government is investing in infrastructure and may have eased the regulatory environment especially through roll out of a unified tax structure under GST. Looking back, these trends have created an exciting period of expansion for the Indian logistics industry over the past decade. Looking ahead, we believe three trends will define the sector for the next decade. Disintermediation is the process of cutting out the intermediaries from the process of matching demand from users of logistics services, such as businesses, with suppliers. The use of digital technologies and analytics has already started to change the rules of the game. For example, digital freight aggregators do not need to use brokers; they can connect shippers straight to truck owners. New logistics players connect manufacturers directly to retail stores, cutting out dealers and distributors. This de-layering of the value chain will cut costs; it will also require these middlemen either to reconsider their business model or go bust. Platformisation is when shippers can access all the services they need through a single platform. Initially, many digital platforms simply matched supply and demand for

long-haul and last-mile deliveries. Now they are moving towards complete digitisation of both the shipper’s and fleet owner’s journeys — from track and trace and digitised book-keeping to digital payments, order booking, spares purchases, and even fleet maintenance. An implication of this trend is that with the right platform, logistics providers do not need to own all the assets needed to provide quality service at competitive costs. Experience in other countries, such as China, has shown that it is a winner-takes-all market. That’s because massive scale is required to build procurement efficiencies and hence pass on the benefit to the end user. This idea is already gaining traction in India, where fast-growing players in specific sectors are using their clout to add services. It is likely, then, that there will be a shake-out among the dozens of freight aggregators and even food-delivery players. Multi-modal logistics refers to the use of more than one kind of transportation to deliver the goods while improving efficiency and cutting costs. India is investing in large-scale infrastructure projects, and many of these should be finished by 2030 — for example, the dedicated rail freight corridors connecting the eastern mineral-rich states and western ports to production and consumption centers clustered in the north. These projects, when completed, will allow freight trains to more than double their capacity (to 13,000 tonne per rake load versus 5,400 tonne now) while running almost three times as fast (70 km/hour versus 26 km/h) and at prices competitive with trucking. In addition, the Sagarmala and Bharatmala projects will have similar effects on ports and highways. These projects, and others in the works, could transform India’s modal-mix from one that is now dominated by moving goods by road, to one that



is more balanced and flexible. For example, the waterways (both inland and coastal) could be used more for slow-moving bulk cargo; high-speed dedicated rail for long-distance freight movement; and the roads for last-mile delivery. This in itself could cut overall logistics costs by 3 per cent per cent of GDP. Few Indian logistics providers are ready to harness this potential, due to either lack of strategic intent or capability to move cargo between different kinds of transport. Those who invest in the necessary infrastructure, such as logistics parks, which allow aggregation, disbursement and trans-shipment of cargo from one mode to another will have a significant competitive advantage. Combined, these three trends will translate into greater growth for Indian logistics, which could reach as much as \$500 billion in revenues by 2030, compared to \$200 billion now. The result is also likely to be lower costs for the national economy; logistics accounts for about 13 to 14 per cent of GDP once you include direct and indirect costs to companies. Efficiency gains are also likely to come from lower indirect costs, such as better inventory management, and less theft and damage. According to our estimates, these now account for almost 30 per

cent of the total logistics costs. We estimate that the greater efficiency and better infrastructure that is on the way means that this logistics cost could decline to 10 per cent of GDP by 2030. In terms of the structure of the industry, there could be significant consolidation as new business models emerge. Traditional logistics companies that have built businesses around warehousing operations and owning fleets of trucks may need to re-consider their operating models. It’s possible a whole new set of technology-first players will emerge and scale up fast. There could be newer opportunities, for example, in targeting inefficiencies, such as trucks with empty spaces; digitisation of logistics transaction flows across modes; automated distribution centers to support same-day deliveries; and eventually last-mile deliveries using crowd-sourced platforms that are more efficient and cost effective. The evolution of the India’s logistics sector is overdue. The journey is likely to be difficult, and there will be pain along the way. But we believe that as this chaotic industry becomes more organised and efficient, the gains will be greater.

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LETTERS

Bell the cat

Apropos the editorial “Taxing the super-rich” (July 9), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman’s proposal to significantly increase the marginal tax rate for those earning more than Rs 2 crore may be sound in principle but fails on the grounds of fairness and equity. To begin with, Rs 2 crore per annum is too low a threshold in the present context, especially when our corporate sector has to attract talent at globally comparable salaries. Second, her target perhaps was the promoters of family-owned and managed enterprises. But the FM’s failure to distinguish them from the professionals has led to a situation that might encourage (a) the return of ‘white envelopes’ with huge amounts of cash and consequently, tax evasion and generation of black money and (b) more executives becoming NRIs. The hardest — and most unfairly — hit are the salaried CXOs earning decent packages related to their performance. Self-employed professionals wouldn’t worry because they, most of the time, take recourse to “showing” huge expenses by including every possible spend — house rent and maintenance, personal staff, travel, eating out et al — as official. Perhaps upping the withholding tax and some sort of ceiling on salaries of promoters would’ve been a better solution. Of course — as you have so elegantly argued — a long-term solution lies in “a system where a large number of people pay a moderate rate of tax”. The present government has the desired majority to

bite the bullet and bring agricultural income in the tax net. But will the government muster up the political will to take this unpopular step?

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

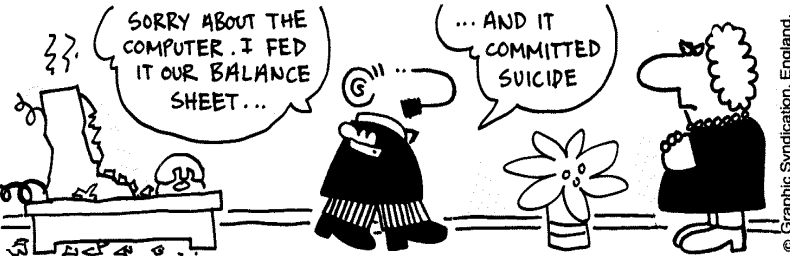
Don't worry, be happy

This refers to your news item “Bengaluru to London: Deutsche Bank layoffs leave many careers’ hopeless” (July 9). In a global economy, such massive job losses are becoming a regular feature. Lifelong job security has become non-existent, except perhaps in government jobs. While every job loss is traumatic, in the case of layoffs, it is even more so. One needs to quickly regroup and move forward. The mistake that most commit is in looking for a job similar to the one that was lost. It is here that one needs to be flexible. There are a number of part-time and freelance opportunities available in various industries, which one can locate by referring to job portals. Depending on one’s financial position, one may even consider reskilling oneself to make a mid-life career change. As Helen Keller succinctly put it, “When one door of happiness closes another opens but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.”

V Jayaraman Chennai

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HAMBONE



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More protectionism

Budget continues the mistake of raising tariffs

The Union Budget for 2019-20 continued the recent tradition of having a long section in which import tariffs were arbitrarily changed. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was quite clear about the motive behind these changes: “On the Customs side, my proposals are driven with the objectives of securing our borders, achieving higher domestic value addition through Make in India, reducing import dependence, protection to the MSME sector, promoting clean energy, curbing non-essential imports, and correcting inversions.” This is an explicit statement of import substitution as a strategy for growth, carried out through the blunt instrument of customs duties.

The Budget raised tariffs on a variety of imports — from cashews to marble slabs to furniture parts to auto components. An observer might well ask how this set of goods was identified. There is likely only one answer: In response to requests or complaints from domestic producers. The problem is that this is a clear invitation to all other domestic industries and sectors to step up lobbying for similar protection. In the process, the voice of the consumer, who in the end pays these tariffs, will be forgotten. India does not have a happy history of import substitution, and it is a mystery why it is staging a comeback within living memory of the liberalisation of 1991. Raising tariffs purely to protect industries merely leads to high-cost and uncompetitive production, and depresses the broader standard of living.

It is true that some countries profited in the past from tariff walls. But that was a time when it was conceivable for developing countries to grow exports even as domestic industry was protected. In today's world of global supply chains, that happy outcome is even less likely than it was earlier. Global value chains require the ability to shift production and intermediate goods across frontiers easily and quickly, amid a stable trade policy. A country that shifts its trade policy arbitrarily, or shows itself vulnerable to sudden tariff impositions, thanks to domestic lobbying, will not be able to embed itself in global value chains. The goal of raising India's share in world trade above its current abysmal level of about 2 per cent is not being well served by this policy.

Import substitution of the sort on display in the Budget has as its policy sibling industrial policy, in which the government picks “winners” among possible sectors and directs investment to those sectors. The government has clearly decided that consumer electronics and electric vehicles (EVs) are two such sectors. The finance minister said that “considering our large consumer base, we aim to leapfrog and envision India as a global hub of manufacturing of Electric Vehicles”. Customs duty on certain components of electric vehicles was lowered to this end. Creating a “Detroit for EVs” in India, to paraphrase the Economic Survey, might well be a worthy aim.

But concessional imports, mega battery manufacturing plants (another Budget idea), or special subsidies is not the way to go about it. Set direct emissions targets, improve business competitiveness, create charging infrastructure — and production will take off on its own. As it stands, why would anyone trust lower duties on EV components if the government has shown itself willing to raise tariffs on a whim?

Tight-fisted on water

The meagre increase in budgetary allocation for Jal Shakti is a surprise

Only a marginal increase in the budgetary allocation for the water resources sector came as a surprise, given that some recent moves of the government displayed a strong resolve to mitigate the country's water woes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself pleaded in his “Mann ki Baat” address, just days ahead of the Budget, to make water conservation a mass movement on the lines of the Swachh Bharat cleanliness campaign. But the meagre increase in budgetary allocation for such a vital task makes it doubtful whether the government intends to walk the talk. Though Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has indicated that additional resources of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund could be diverted to water development programmes, this move seems contentious and may even be challenged in court by environment activists.

The extraordinary water scarcity experienced in recent months in many parts of the country was attributable partly to the scanty pre-monsoon rain, but the genesis of India's unrelenting water crisis lies in the indiscriminate spurge and mismanagement of water. Since the monsoon is now underway and good showers in July and August have been predicted, it is the best time to start conserving rainwater. The Jal Shakti Abhiyan, targeted at harvesting rainwater in over 1,590 water-stressed blocks of 256 critically water-starved districts, should, therefore, get going without any further delay or resource constraint.

The point to ponder is that India is not an innately water-deficit country, though per capita water availability is on the decline due to the rise in population and inappropriate management of this renewable natural resource. India's average annual precipitation (rain plus snowfall) of 120 cm is markedly higher than the global average of around 100 cm. However, the bulk of this water is allowed to flow into the seas. Only a small proportion is utilised for agriculture, industry, and domestic purposes. Worse still, just a fraction of it, merely 8 per cent, is saved in surface water bodies and underground aquifers for subsequent use. No wonder, therefore, that about 600 million people face perpetual water crunch in India. Some 21 cities, including metros such as Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai, are anticipated to run out of groundwater in the next few years.

Clearly, every drop of rainwater needs to be conserved *in situ* and used prudently. Fortunately, the Jal Shakti ministry's proposed water management drive intends to do that by creating rainwater-gathering infrastructure, wherever necessary, and rejuvenating the existing ponds, reservoirs, and other water bodies that are defunct due to neglect. However, not many result-oriented steps are being taken to curb wasteful use of water in agriculture, industry, and domestic sectors. The lack of proper pricing of water is a key reason for this extravagance. The National Water Policy of 2012 categorically states that water is an “economic good” and needs to be priced appropriately to promote its efficient use. Sadly, this stipulation has remained unattended. Unless such issues are suitably addressed and the water conservation programmes are adequately funded, the water crisis is unlikely to abate.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



Budget's flawed swadeshi objective

Only a more globalised Indian economy can deliver GDP of \$5 trillion by 2024, not a protectionist one

It is good to have high ambition and the goal of a \$5-trillion Indian economy by 2024 is welcome. What is more, it is achievable. The key ingredients are in place. India is still in its most productive demographic phase, although not for long. It has a comprehensive and relatively sophisticated industrial base and dynamic entrepreneurship. It has sectors such as space and IT, which are world standard. India is advancing rapidly in the use of digital technologies and has large and expanding data resources that could enable rapid progress in new areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning. The sheer size of the Indian market may be leveraged not only to attract significant foreign capital and technology flows, but to also seek advantageous terms of trade and investment. India is in a sweet spot in its growth trajectory. We need a bold economic strategy to leverage these assets while recognising that this is a window of opportunity which will close sooner rather than later.

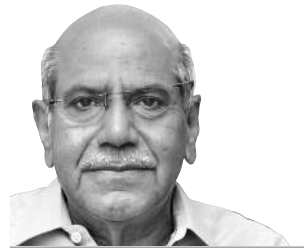
The recent Budget has several positive features. There is an emphasis on revival of investment, including foreign investment, building of infrastructure, promotion of exports, deepening of financial markets and job creation. What is worrying is the reappearance of import substitution as a policy objective. The latest Budget has followed two earlier ones in raising tariffs on a range of imports. This has now become a trend. We are in danger of slipping back to the pre-1991 sub-optimal strategy of growth based implicitly on import substitution and protected domestic production. There are other worrying signs. After several free

trade agreements were concluded in the first decade of the current millennium, sentiment has veered against them. While these may have led to an increase in the overall volume of India's trade, they have also resulted in higher trade deficits. There is criticism that our trade partners have benefited more than we have from these agreements. This is behind India's reluctance to sign on to the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which would make India a partner in a large trading arrangement composed of Japan, China and the

Republic of Korea, the 10 ASEAN countries and Australia and New Zealand. It is right for India to seek reciprocal market access and a level playing field for its companies, and this may need a review of the terms of some of the free trade agreements. Switching to an import substitution strategy is not the answer.

The problem with raising tariffs selectively on some products is that it creates vested interests, which are difficult to unknot once they are in place. It may be better to decrease the exchange rate of the Indian rupee, which would achieve the same impact as higher tariff but without sectoral effects favouring some industries over others. Some economists have argued that the rupee is overvalued.

With respect to existing free trade agreements, studies carried out by my colleague V S Seshadri have shown that the Indian industry has looked upon them chiefly to preserve market access for their existing exports rather than instruments for seeking expanded and more diversified market access. Provisions in the agreements, which could be used



SHYAM SARAN

Thumbs down to Facebook's cryptocurrency

Facebook and some of its corporate allies have decided that what the world really needs is another cryptocurrency, and that launching one is the best way to use the vast talents at their disposal. The fact that Facebook thinks so reveals much about what is wrong with 21st century American capitalism.

In some ways, it's a curious time to be launching an alternative currency. In the past, the main complaint about traditional currencies was their instability, with rapid and uncertain inflation making them a poor store of value. But the dollar, the euro, the yen, and the renminbi have all been remarkably stable. If anything, the worry today is about deflation, not inflation.

The world has also made progress on financial transparency, making it more difficult for the banking system to be used to launder money and for other nefarious activities. And technology has enabled us to complete transactions efficiently, moving money from customers' accounts into those of retailers in nanoseconds, with remarkably good fraud protection. The last thing we need is a new vehicle for nurturing illicit activities and laundering the proceeds, which another cryptocurrency will almost certainly turn out to be.

The real problem with our existing currencies and financial arrangements, which serve as a means of payment as well as a store of value, is the lack of competition among and regulation of the companies that control transactions. As a result, consumers — especially in the United States — pay a multiple of what payments should cost, lining the pockets of Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and banks with tens of billions of dollars of “rents” — excessive profits — every year. The Durbin Amendment to the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial-reform legislation curbs the excessive fees charged for debit cards only to a very limited extent, and it did nothing about the much bigger problem of excessive fees associated with credit cards.

Other countries, like Australia, have done a much better job, including by forbidding credit card companies from using contractual provisions to restrain

competition, whereas the US Supreme Court, in another of its five-four decisions, seemed to turn a blind eye to such provisions' anti-competitive effects. But even if the US decides to have a non-competitive secondary financial system, Europe and the rest of the world should say no: It is not anti-American to be pro-competition, as Trump seems to have recently suggested in his criticism of European Commissioner for Competition Margrethe Vestager.

One might well ask: What is Facebook's business model, and why do so many seem so interested in its new venture? It could be that they want a cut of the rents accruing to the platforms through which transactions are processed. The fact that they believe that more competition won't drive down profits to near zero attests to the corporate sector's confidence in its ability to wield market power — and in its



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

political power to ensure that government won't intervene to curb these excesses.

With the US Supreme Court's renewed commitment to undermining American democracy, Facebook and its friends might think they have little to fear. But regulators, entrusted not just with maintaining stability, but also with ensuring competition in the financial sector, should step in. And elsewhere in the world, there is less enthusiasm for America's tech dominance with its anticompetitive practices.

Supposedly, the new Libra currency's value will be fixed in terms of a global basket of currencies and 100 per cent backed — presumably by a mix of government treasuries. So here's another possible source of revenue: Paying no interest on “deposits” (traditional currencies exchanged for Libra), Facebook can reap an arbitrage profit from the interest it receives on those “deposits.” But why would anyone give Facebook a zero-interest deposit, when they could put their money in an even safer US Treasury bill, or in a money-market fund? (The recording of capital gains and losses each time a transaction occurs, as the Libra is converted back into local currency, and the taxes due seem to be an important impediment, unless Facebook believes it can ride roughshod over our tax system, as it has over privacy

by Indian exporters to overcome non-tariff barriers or to raise value addition, were not taken advantage of. The agreement with Japan contains a commitment to help India's pharmaceutical industry navigate the complex registration process without which Indian drugs could not enter the Japanese market despite being competitive. It was never used. The overall impression is that Indian industry treated the free trade agreements defensively rather than as opportunities for market expansion. Import substitution is unlikely to change this mindset.

Pursuit of protectionist policies will make Indian industry less, not more competitive. This would go against the declared policy of promoting exports. Our experience of the pre-1991 period provides ample evidence that protectionism breeds low-quality and inferior service because consumer choices are limited. The argument that high tariffs would give Indian industry some time and space to become more competitive is patently false. Even a foreign investor is happy to be able to sell sub-standard and low-quality goods in the Indian market because of a lack of competition. There is less incentive to bring in high technology goods and services. India would be unable to leverage the size of its market to get high-quality investment. That would be a lost opportunity. A word of caution is also required on the proposal for foreign borrowing through sovereign bonds. These could create expanding liabilities if, as expected, the rupee's value declines over time. Exports have remained stagnant over the past five years and, if they remain sluggish, we could face a balance of payments challenge once again. Since exports today are also dependent on imports of crucial components and intermediates, import substitution may under-cut export promotion.

I served in the Prime Minister's Office during the first two years of Narasimha Rao's government in 1991-92 and witnessed sharp debates over whether it was prudent on India's part to jettison the import substitution and self-reliance strategy pursued since independence. Prominent industrialists warned of the hollowing out of Indian industry, given its inability to compete in international markets. They were proved wrong and India embarked on a high-growth trajectory, thanks to the bold reforms and liberalisation measures that were adopted. Indian industry became more not less competitive and proved more than capable of taking on more established international rivals. It would be a pity if these lessons of the past are unlearned and we regress into an autarkic “swadeshi” mode. This is a recipe for slower, not accelerated growth. This will neither deliver a \$5-trillion economy nor sustain India's greater geopolitical salience. India cannot pursue an expanded geopolitical role as a leading power while moving to the margins of the global economy. Globalisation is driven by technology and will advance irrespective of our preferences. The future will lie with countries that stay ahead of the globalisation curve and pursue excellence in all aspects. The hedging of bets that characterises the Budget falls short of expectations.

The writer is a former Foreign Secretary and is Senior Fellow CPR

and competition concerns.)

There are two obvious answers to the question of the business model: One is that people who engage in nefarious activities (possibly including America's current president) are willing to pay a pretty penny to have their nefarious activities — corruption, tax avoidance, drug dealing, or terrorism — go undetected. But, having made so much progress in impeding the use of the financial system to facilitate crime, why would anyone — let alone the government or financial regulators — condone such a tool simply because it bears the label “tech”?

If this is Libra's business model, governments should shut it down immediately. At the very least, Libra should be subject to the same transparency regulations that apply to the rest of the financial sector. But then it wouldn't be a cryptocurrency.

Alternatively, the data Libra transactions provide could be mined, like all the other data that's come into Facebook's possession — reinforcing its market power and profits, and further undermining our security and privacy. Facebook (or Libra) might promise not to do that, but who would believe it?

Then there is the broader question of trust. Every currency is based on confidence that the hard-earned “deposited” into it will be redeemable on demand. The private banking sector has long shown that it is untrustworthy in this respect, which is why new prudential regulations have been necessary.

But, in just a few short years, Facebook has earned a level of distrust that took the banking sector much longer to achieve. Time and again, Facebook's leaders, faced with a choice between money and honoring their promises, have grabbed the money. And nothing could be more about money than creating a new currency. Only a fool would trust Facebook with his or her financial wellbeing. But maybe that's the point: With so much personal data on some 2.4 billion monthly active users, who knows better than Facebook just how many suckers are born every minute?

The writer is University Professor at Columbia University, co-winner of the 2001 Nobel Memorial Prize, former chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, and former Chief Economist of the World Bank. His most recent book is People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent. ©Project Syndicate, 2019.

Why Nehru matters



BOOK REVIEW

MAHESH RANGARAJAN

Jawaharlal Nehru is not a man for all seasons, at least not in India 2019. But it was striking in the course of the election campaign, given the way his legacy was reviled by critics and defended by admirers, that his mark on the Indian polity, society and culture is undeniable. It is a pity that few in the public realm have bothered to delve deep enough into his vast corpus of writings, speeches and letters to do justice to his many-faceted public persona.

This gap is being remedied to a great

extent since 2011 with the regular publication, at the rate of one volume a month of *The Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*. Each volume is about 750 pages long and till October 1962, the rate at which he spoke or wrote remained remarkable. Each letter, no matter from whom, was answered within three days.

But only the scholar or the student of history will pore over these tomes. For intelligent lay person, there is the gift of a fine volume of Nehruana by a leading scholar of Indian languages, of Hindi literature in particular, Professor Purushottam Agrawal.

The volume has two parts, texts by Nehru and writings about him. It is here that another Nehru emerges, a freedom fighter inspired by his mentor, Mahatma Gandhi (with whom he differed on much) and a state builder which he became from 1946 as Vice-chair of the Executive Council of the Viceroy and then as Prime

Minister of independent India for 17 years.

When Andre Malraux, the Gaullist Minister of Culture of France, was asked what his greatest challenge was, he named not one but two. Forging a secular state in a religious society was one. Creating a just state by just means was the other. It is fascinating more than half a century on, these two themes run through the selection put together by Prof Agrawal.

This leads to a more revealing insight: The deep roots in and familiarity with Indian traditions. Many know that in the course of the early 1920s, Nehru immersed himself in the Kisan or peasant movement in Awadh. It was in one such meeting that he asked a crowd who Bharat Mata was. It was in response to their queries that he asserted that the country was made up not only of rivers, mountains and other physical features but of its very people.

What is more important is the varieties

of the Indian self that Nehru was at ease with. He read and studied the *Rama Charit Manas* of Goswami Tulsidas in Agra jail with the litterateur Ram Naresch Tripathi by his side. His *Discovery of India*, written in long hand in Aurangabad Fort drew from fellow political prisoners including Maulana Azad who was versed in a dozen languages. The tributes to Nehru by a Ramanandi sage, Bhagavadacharya and by no less than Rashtra Kavi Nam Dhari Singh Dinkar show a man familiar with the many worlds of Hindi as much as of Hinduism.

This may be a discovery for many, given how Nehru is now often seen as a Westernised elitist ill at ease in a vernacular India. The tributes in the volume stand out for their clarity and warm appreciation. Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad were of an older generation, with an association with Gandhiji that was deeper and longer. Both record Nehru's central contribution in giving democracy a firm base.

The excerpts from his own works draw home a message he repeated to all who cared to listen: There was no

such thing as a Nehruvian. He was, as he said in an interview to Russi Karanjia (of the magazine *Blitz*), included in the book, a follower of Gandhiji. But he was adapting approaches in the face of new challenges.

This explains why the fascination with modern technology and calls for a “scientific temper” went with respect for faiths, cultures and traditions. India was not and never tried to be like, say, Mao's China. There is a remarkable letter in 1949 from *Shankar's Weekly* to children where he asks they enter forests not with a gun in hand or intent to harm animals. Were they to do so, they would not only conquer fear but find animals and birds to be their friends and neighbours. Change the terms and he could be writing not about humans and animals but the diversity of cultures within, the comity of nations without.

Nehru's tragedy was not his achievements but the standard he was held to then as now. His first major election campaign was in 1937: As Congress President he was the lead speaker in the provinces of British India. He played the same role

in 1946. In independent India, he led his party to a two-thirds majority in three successive general elections.

But as much as his political record (including controversial choices), or his economic performance, he was also instrumental in trying to forge a new democratic ethos in a society marked by privilege.

This is a timely volume. The introduction does a fine job of locating Nehru in the context of his times. It is as much a reminder that, in some ways, he remains one for all times and places. None perhaps more than our own.

The reviewer teaches History and Environmental Studies at Ashoka University

WHO IS BHARAT MATA? ON HISTORY, CULTURE AND THE IDEA OF INDIA

Purushottam Agrawal (Ed)

Speaking Tiger, pages 474, ₹699

Telcos need help, govt will decide on penalties first!

With Trai not lowering ₹3,050-cr fine, telecom panel must decide penalty; it should have been totally focused on a relief package

IT MAY HAVE been nothing but a coincidence, but at a time when the government needed to be finalising a relief package for an industry bleeding from excessive government levies, one of the first things the Digital Communications Commission—DCC includes finance and industry secretaries apart from the telecom one—did after the new government came to power was to decide, last month, on Trai’s ₹3,050-crore penalty recommendation for the older telcos like Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and Idea (BVI). For context, keep in mind the DCC had been sitting on Trai’s recommendation for over two-and-a-half years—presumably because it thought it made little sense, so it could have continued to ignore it after the NDA came to power again. As it happened, while DCC disagreed with Trai on the quantum of the penalty—Trai wanted the maximum of ₹50 crore per telecom circle—it didn’t want to actually decide the amount; any decision it took would open it up to criticism of being pro- or anti- the older telcos. So, it (incorrectly) agreed with Trai on the need for a penalty, but asked it to relook the amount. Not surprisingly, Trai has stuck to its original recommendation, so it should be interesting to see what DCC does.

In this particular case, Rjio wanted Points of Interconnection (PoI) from BVI to run its network in June 2016. BVI, however, argued that the number of PoIs that Rjio wanted were excessive for a network that was in a test phase; later, when Rjio announced a launch date, BVI argued that Rjio’s free services meant customers were flocking to its network and this, in turn, created a need for more PoIs. While BVI raised these issues, including that of predatory pricing, the government never really gave a reply; even so, BVI gave Rjio the PoIs within the specified time period. So, it is not too clear as to what the penalty was for. Indeed, Trai later even had a consultation on whether the time allowed for providing PoIs was too excessive! While both SC and TDSAT have used terms like “manifestly arbitrary and unreasonable” and “arbitrary without any deliberation and effective consultation” to describe other Trai recommendations, even the DCC had asked Trai to justify its spectrum pricing recommendations—on many occasions, Trai has used the bid of the previous auction round as the base price for the next round—but Trai refused to provide this.

DCC can choose to rubber-stamp what Trai is saying, knowing full well the final decision will be taken by the courts since the telcos will petition them on the penalty; if that happens, it will be unfortunate since, as this newspaper has consistently argued, Trai was not just wrong on the penalty, it has consistently been wrong on many important issues and it has been pulled up by even the Supreme Court and the TDSAT in the past. In any case, the job of the DCC is not just to go along with Trai’s recommendations, it is to modify them if the need arises. So far, sadly, DCC hasn’t really done too much to temper Trai’s suggestions which is a pity since, apart from the government’s unconscionably high annual levies, Trai’s high reserve prices for various auction rounds has played a big role in bankrupting the industry. In the bargain, the government has also lost out because large amounts of spectrum have remained unused.

Just free up producers

Too many curbs in single-brand retail kept out serious investors

WHILE FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman has said in her Budget speech that sourcing norms for single-brand retail will be eased, media reports suggest the government is planning to allow exports by a single-brand retailer out of India to be set off against the local sourcing norms. The current policy allows a single brand trading entity (SBTE) to set off its incremental sourcing of goods from India for global operations during the initial five years against the mandatory 30% sourcing requirement. From the looks of it, the policy is being re-framed to accommodate the likes of Apple, which has, for long, resisted local sourcing rules on the grounds that there is little it can buy locally right now; it can procure locally only after a vendor base is established, and that will take time. It is not just Apple, which makes very high technology products, that is finding it difficult to comply with these rules; any global brand wanting to maintain certain production standards would not find it easy.

Imposing onerous local-sourcing conditions on global corporations sounds tempting, but it does not really help. Single-brand retailers may be tempted by the large Indian market, but they are not going to be willing to compromise on production standards. Instead, let MNCs set up businesses here without any restrictions. Over time, since it is always better to have local suppliers—to be able to lower costs, to shorten the time-to-market, etc—the vendor ecosystem will develop, a supply chain will get built and exports will also get a boost. A look at how Suzuki’s operations have grown in India is testimony to this. Indeed, encouraging single-brand retailers can also help boost India’s exports. Once big companies start operating out of India, and find it easy and cost-effective to do so, they will also work towards developing vendors, creating business opportunities for locals and jobs.

Rules that compel companies to buy from artisans, cottage industries and so on are stifling, and should be altogether scrapped. It is no surprise that the investment in India by single-brand retailers over the last five or six years is negligible. In fact, apart from Ikea, most of the single-brand players—like a Marks & Spencers—that have set up shop in India have done so via the joint venture route with Indian companies. Had the sourcing norms not been so onerous, they might have brought in more capital. It is not just the single-brand retail sector, rules for other sectors too need to be eased. With global growth slowing, it will not be easy to attract FDI except perhaps in the e-commerce sector. At just over \$44 billion, FDI flows into India were stagnant. Tweaking the norms every six months doesn’t help, the controls must go.

ClassMONITOR

The Delhi govt's proposal to instal CCTV cameras in classrooms for parents to monitor teachers is misguided and counter-productive

THE AAP GOVERNMENT in Delhi has undeniably done a commendable job of rebuilding the national capital’s broken public education system—infrastructure has been modernised, capacity of teaching staff increased, and learning outcomes improved. However, the government’s latest endeavour, of installing CCTV cameras in every classroom in a thousand government schools and allowing parents to monitor footage in real-time, has divagated into the territory of extremes. Even if one keeps privacy aside—chief minister Arvind Kejriwal insists it is not a valid concern for school-going students in comparison to their primary goals of gaining education and learning discipline—the adverse impacts of the panopticism it would foster cannot be disregarded. Kejriwal’s dependence on technology as the one-stop solution to systemic problems is not only misguided but also counter-productive in more ways than one.

The decision to install CCTV cameras in classrooms is perhaps informed by the desire to increase accountability of both teachers and students, with regard to whether and how well they dispense of their respective duties. Yet, it fails to take into account the sheer logistical burden of continually monitoring the goings-on of each classroom. Even with the DGS Live app, which allows parents to monitor only those classes in which their children study, it is absurd to expect that all parents will be equipped to judge pedagogy and performance or to be glued to their mobile screens for as long as the school-day lasts. And, if this is the expectation, the government is encouraging behaviour that would end up stifling students’ personality development—a critical component of holistic education. Further, it neglects the notion of creative and personal teaching and learning styles, thereby cramping the space available for young minds to be critical, explorative and truly nurtured. To the contrary, in fact, it encourages dry pedagogy and rote learning, resulting neither in improved outcomes on standardised testing nor in the development of any love for learning.

GLOBAL TRADE

A PLURILATERAL APPROACH FOR LIBERALISATION AGREEMENTS IS THE WAY FORWARD, EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF CONSENSUS, IN THE NEGOTIATION OF LIBERALISATION AGREEMENTS

Making a start for WTO reforms

THERE IS A sense around the world that the WTO is deep in trouble. The last round of multilateral trade negotiations, the Doha Development

Agenda, sponsored by the members in 2001, was virtually abandoned in 2015. And, now, the dispute settlement function has been put in jeopardy by the action of one member in refusing to allow vacancies to be filled up in the Appellate Body (AB). The AB will become dysfunctional after December 10, 2019, when the next retirements occur and it ceases to have the required quorum of three members. This would mean that dispute resolution would not progress beyond the panel process and there would be no final decision in disputes raised before the body. If disputes cannot be settled in the WTO, enforcement of existing rules will be difficult and negotiation of new rules pointless.

The language used in the Osaka Summit Declaration on June 28-29, 2019, does not reflect deep anxiety at the troubled state of the multilateral trading system and the leaders merely affirm support for ‘the necessary reform’ of the WTO. The muted language of the G20 declaration probably reflects the fact that the aim of the current presidency in the US is to weaken the system and not strengthen it. Fortunately, most, if not all, other WTO members hold a different view and want to strengthen the multilateral trading system. They have made proposals for reform, some as formal submissions in the WTO, and others outside formal meetings.

In the contentious environment that has prevailed in the WTO Agreement from the outset, it is not going to be easy to agree on WTO reform. So, members must focus on selected issues on which deficiencies strike deep at the functioning of the WTO. Two issues need attention as a matter of priority. First, steps need to be taken to keep alive the appellate process. Second, a new life must be breathed into the negotiating process, whereby new areas can be taken up for liberalisation without fear of deadlock because of lack of consensus. In this context, we explore how we can make progress on these two issues.

We take up the Appellate Body issue first. The US has raised some legitimate points on the working of the AB and a



Author is professor at ICRIER Views are personal

number of members, including India, have proposed credible solutions to the issues raised. But the problem is that the US has refused to engage on the matter. The not-so-hidden agenda of the US appears to be to overturn the quasi-judicial format of the WTO and revive the structure of the GATT (1947) days when negotiation was the norm for resolving differences. This enabled the member with economic strength and political clout to prevail, and while rules existed, they did not help clinch decisions.

One way out that is being discussed informally among delegations is a proposal to use Article 25 of the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) of the WTO Agreement, which provides for arbitration as an alternative means of dispute settlement. The idea behind the proposal is that members desirous of preventing disruption of the appellate process in WTO disputes would enter into a plurilateral accord providing for appeal arbitration in all cases of appeal from a final panel report. It would be an interim arrangement that would apply during the period in which the AB is unable to function due to non-appointment to vacancies in it. The agreement would clone the provisions of the DSU on appeals and incorporate the agreed working procedures for appellate review. The Director General of the WTO will be authorised to select the arbitrators from among former AB members. Such a plurilateral agreement would not be a perfect substitute for the existing arrangement and would not apply to members, like the US, that are not willing to sign on to it. Nevertheless, it would still be invaluable in helping to maintain continuity in the functioning of the dispute settlement system in respect of members that agree to the interim solution.

The second issue of dealing with the need for consensus among 164 WTO members in initiating new liberalisation



negotiations and successfully concluding them is also challenging. In 2017, at the Buenos Aires ministerial meeting of the WTO, different groups of members adopted joint ministerial statements, calling for negotiations on a motley group of four subjects, viz., domestic regulation on services, electronic commerce, investment facilitation for development and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Members are divided not only on whether the time is ripe for an agreement on these subjects but also on the disciplines that should go into them. At any rate, out of the four, there has been a groundswell of support only on electronic commerce. On January 25, 2019, at Davos, 76 WTO members decided to launch talks to establish a comprehensive set of rules on the subject. Subsequently, the Osaka G20 Summit gave a significant push to the negotiation of an international agreement on e-commerce by launching talks on free cross-border flow of data. G20 remains divided on the issue and three members—India, Indonesia and South Africa—did not support the free data flow initiative at Osaka.

There is no need to despair here. If certain governments do not see any advantage in participating in negotiations for an international agreement on e-commerce at this stage, it is their sovereign choice. If they have policies for data localisation and restriction of cross-border movement of data, their hesitancy is understandable. However, two past plurilateral initiatives for the liberalisation of trade—the information technology agreement in 1996 and declaration on the expansion of trade in information technology products—in

Members desirous of preventing disruption of the appellate process in WTO disputes would enter into a plurilateral accord providing for appeal arbitration

2015 show us the way in situations in which there is disagreement on liberalisation initiatives. They were both negotiated on an open-ended basis, that is, those who wanted to participate in the negotiations did so and those who did not want to participate did not. At the end of the negotiations, there was another opportunity for participants to become a signatory or to withdraw if they were not satisfied with the result. An important feature of these agreements is that they entered into effect when participants with a predefined critical mass of share of world trade (90%) accepted the outcome. An even more important feature of these agreements was that their benefits were extended on an MFN

basis to all WTO members, whether or not they participated in the negotiations or accepted the agreement. This attribute is imperative for such plurilateral agreements to be consistent with the requirements of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation. The advantage of such plurilateral initiatives is that they can go forward even in the

absence of consensus, provided the critical mass of trade shares is achieved. The two plurilateral agreements of 1996 and 2015 provide the template for the negotiations of future agreements as well, on e-commerce, for instance. There seems no need for a formal decision in a WTO body for this model to be followed in future. Members can just move resolutely forward, negotiate an agreement and adopt it at the next ministerial meeting.

The suggestions for WTO reform that we make here are not ideal outcomes. The objective of the interim appeal arbitration arrangement is rather to defend the multilateral trading system from an onslaught that is designed to bring about its downfall. The intention behind advocating a plurilateral approach for liberalisation agreements is to find the way forward, even in the absence of consensus, in cases in which the negotiation of liberalisation agreements takes place on an open-ended basis and the benefits are extended to all WTO members.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Foreign borrowings

Foreign borrowings to cover a part of deficit has its own advantages. Interest rates are lower abroad, thus borrowing cost is less. Also it overcomes the 'crowding-out' effect of budgetary deficit, whereby private investments are discouraged due to fund shortage created by massive government borrowing domestically. But it's quite dangerous becoming indebted to other countries, as experienced by some nations in recent past. To overcome the potential vulnerability problem, we must diversify borrowing from more countries than just one. Secondly, the FRBM body and the Reserve Bank must monitor and regulate the proportion of deficit we borrow from abroad, even if it is by selling sovereign bonds in the open market.
— Shubhada Sabade, Pune

Tightening noose

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the multi-crore IMA Ponzi scam in Bengaluru appears to be making good headway. Close on the heels of the arrest of Village Accountant Manjunath and Bengaluru-North Assistant Commissioner L C Nagaraj, Deputy Commissioner of Bengaluru District (Urban) B M Vijay Kumar has also fallen into the SIT dragnet on charges of accepting ₹1.5 crore cash from Mohammed Mansoor Khan, the founder of IMA, through an intermediary. With the SIT making searches and raids and the Enforcement Directorate attaching assets worth ₹209 crore, the noose is tightening around IMA's neck.
— NJ Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

Greece is Europe’s good news story

Greek resilience through crisis demonstrates that reports of democracy’s demise are exaggerated

IF YOU ARE looking for an optimistic story in Europe, try Greece. Yes, you read that right. Having lost a quarter of its economy in a devastating recession, Greece has turned the corner, its democracy intact, its extremist temptations defeated and its anti-Americanism defunct. The landslide election on Sunday of Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the dynamic leader of the center-right New Democracy party, marked the end of a chapter. Greece rejected Alexis Tsipras, the leftist leader who took the country to the brink of ruin in 2015 before discovering a pragmatic streak. It also voted the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn out of Parliament. At the height of the crisis, Golden Dawn had become the country’s third-largest party.

First into populism, Greece is now first out. For a country in free fall, the anchors of the European Union and NATO are not so negligible after all. Europe is not simply a story of growing nationalism and xenophobia. It’s a continent in violent flux, torn between liberal democratic and nativist currents.

Despite unemployment that reached almost 30%, a chaotic near-exit from the euro, huge bailouts to save it from bankruptcy, mandated austerity programs and a wave of desperate refugees from Syria, Greece stabilised itself. It is a reminder that reports of democracy’s demise are exaggerated.

The kolotoumpa, or “somersault,” is the term used for Greece’s volte-face in 2015 when it voted in a referendum to reject the terms for an international bailout, only for Tsipras, the leader of the far-left Syriza party, to ignore the results and conclude a bailout on even tougher terms. Yes, Britain, democracies do change their minds from time to time when they make disastrous decisions.

That somersault is now completed. Mitsotakis is a Harvard- and Stanford-

educated former McKinsey man from one of Greece’s pre-eminent political families. To be elected, he had to overcome perceptions that he was too “American” and too technocratic.

Through a hard-driving campaign in which he promised to cut corporate taxes, unblock privatisation, deliver a digital transformation of the economy, attract investment and bring efficiency to the public sector, Mitsotakis convinced Greeks he was the man to turn glimmerings of recovery into sustainable growth. With an absolute majority in Parliament, he has the means to fast-forward his programme.

It won’t be easy. Although unemployment has fallen to about 18% and modest growth has been achieved, Greece is still bound by the fiscal constraints imposed by Germany and other creditors that oblige it to produce a primary budget surplus. Mitsotakis will need to perform a delicate balancing act to deliver on his promise of spurring growth and investment by slashing corporate taxes.

He will have to rein in New Democracy’s legacy forces of cronyism and prioritise entrepreneurship and innovation. The old model won’t work.

The new prime minister is used to such challenges. Back in 2013, when he was minister of administrative reform and I met him in a building besieged by protesters opposed to the cuts in public employees demanded by Greece’s creditors, Mitsotakis told me, “The country has been stretched to its limits.” It could have crumpled, like the Weimar Republic. If Greece did not, it was because of European institutions built to resist nationalism and avert catastrophe.

By helping Greece through its agony, the United States nullified resentments that went back to its support for the military junta between 1967 and 1974.

ROGER COHEN

NYT

The Obama administration won Tsipras over and so dragged him toward the center. Joe Biden, as vice president, told the then-prime minister not to take rash decisions—such as leaving the euro—that would be irreversible. A breakup of the eurozone, with other countries possibly following Greece, was avoided.

Greek anti-Americanism has now largely died, buried by a leftist government. It once took violent form in the November 17 group, responsible for a number of assassinations. But several factors—Germany replacing the United States as the Greek boogymen with its austerity demands, new tensions with Turkey that have reminded Greece of the importance of American support, the fading into history of the junta era, a strong sense of American solidarity through the crisis—have altered Greek views. The election of Mitsotakis is consistent with this shift.

Mitsotakis will take office with Turkey and the Greek Cypriot government embroiled in conflict over offshore oil and gas in the eastern Mediterranean. In May, the state department said it was “deeply concerned” by Turkish plans to begin drilling in an area claimed by Cyprus, calling the step “highly provocative” and urging Turkish authorities to “halt these operations.”

The new prime minister will want to keep things calm in the region. He is a man who believes deeply in the trans-Atlantic bond that president Trump has often belittled. Tourism has been surging and is vital to the Greek economy. Greece wants a Turkey anchored in the West, not a Turkey veering toward Vladimir Putin’s Russia and acting bellicose.

It is a new day in Greece. Now all that’s needed for the European Union is a British somersault on Brexit.

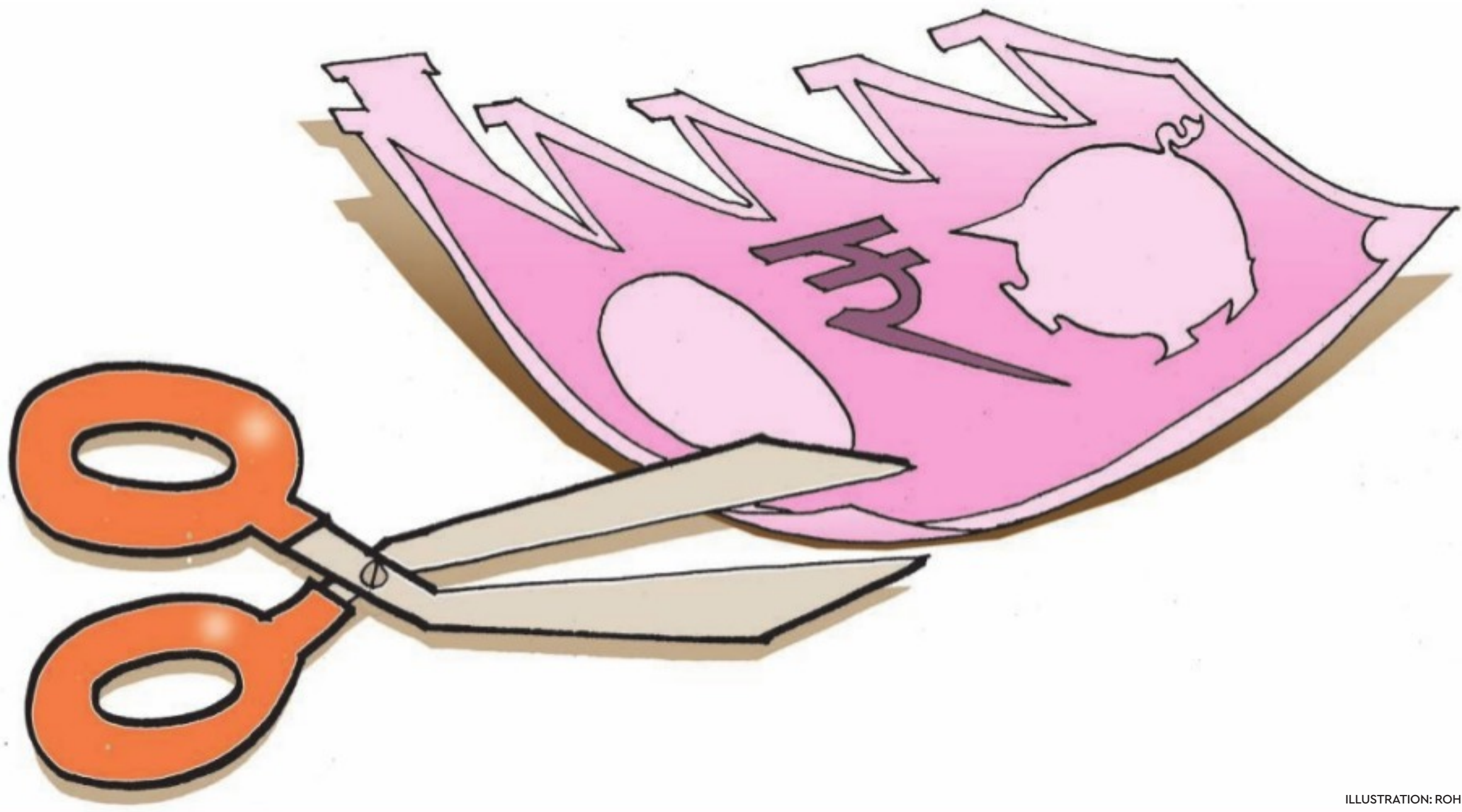


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

RAHUL BHASIN

Managing Partner, Baring Private Equity Partners India



BUDGET 2019

The missing reforms

On divestments of PSUs, it is disappointing to seeing continued incrementalism. The proposed divestment of ₹1.05 lakh crore is less than 15% of the government's annual interest costs

TRYING TO RAISE resources to achieve its very ambitious social intervention, the government is taking taxes to too high a level, which is impeding entrepreneurship, investment growth and jobs. It is making the classical mistake of first delineating its spending list and then looking for resources, instead of defining the optimally available resources and then prioritising allocations.

The good intention of doing the maximum for the most and, consequently, living beyond its means—this leads to desperation and irrationality in raising resources.

Taxing dividend distribution is damaging. It is not a tax on income, but an impediment to capital mobility. It curtails the proclivity to move capital from an inefficient allocator to an efficient

one. When you have a problem of transmission from M1 to M3 in the economy, not abrogating it was a big miss.

Introducing a tax on buybacks from listed companies compounds the harm as it makes a bad extortion charge more comprehensive. It is difficult to understand how such an economically harmful and distorting charge can pass through the in-house economists within the system.

Another miss in the capital gains tax regime correcting the capital gains tax regime. That too should not be distorting capital mobility. To the extent capital gains is reinvested, it should attract a zero tax rate, else, it should simply be added to the investors' income and attract the tax rate depending on the assessee's slab. The tax on dividends in the hands of investors should have been similarly treated.

When trying to revive private investment that has been declining since 2013, the taxation philosophy guiding these actions is incredibly retrograde as it impedes domestic capital formation.

When entrepreneurs are migrating out of your country in droves annually, increasing taxation at the top level makes no sense from a signalling perspective, even though it is the cleanest, least-distorting tax. Investing more in data mining and AI analytics to curtail avoidance and broadening the tax base was a preferable way to go at this juncture.

An impediment in reviving the private sector investment cycle is the credibility- problem of government as a counter-party. Permitting the oil-and-gas sector access to market prices—the regime that they were promised when they invested matters—is yet to happen in the true measure. The long-festering Vodaphone, Cairn, Telenor, Nokia issues need settling. An empowered committee to settle all disputes with vendors and taxpayers was an urgent need that was bypassed.

This government had promised to end tax terrorism. Sadly, because of the extreme pressure to raise resources, it has been unable to do anything. However, this is truly being penny-wise and pound-foolish

This government had promised to end tax terrorism. Sadly, because of the extreme pressure to raise resources, it has been unable to do anything. However, this is truly being penny-wise and pound-foolish

After such a strong mandate, a government which has had the political will to bring in the bankruptcy code, GST, RERA, DBT, and the wisdom to abrogate Octroi, etc, should have been more decisive on divestments of PSUs. It is disappointing to see continued incrementalism. The proposed divestment of ₹1.05 lakh crore is less than 15% of the government's annual interest costs.

The temptation to borrow in foreign currencies at low rates is deceptively benign. The government should only resort to it if the currency swapped cost is attractive and/or if it is used to facilitate export growth. Not facilitating the participation of the corporate sector into agriculture and thereby facilitating technology adoption diffusion is a huge miss. Not migrating the government accounting to an accrual basis is a large reform miss. This would have killed the problem of perpetually delayed payments and refunds to all vendors and tax assesses.

Rectifying the badly drafted Act meant to inhibit money laundering that ended up inhibiting startup funding is a positive. Making Aadhaar and pan interchangeable is a positive, too. It would have been even better if a path had been laid out to subsume all other IDs (voter ID, driving licence, etc) into Aadhaar. Allowing tax deferment for uncertainty created by delayed repayments to NBFCs is a positive, but there was no logic in discriminating between the large and small NBFCs, especially since the smaller ones are more vulnerable. The first- loss guarantee to banks to incentivise purchase of assets from NBFCs is creative and apposite for the situation.

The merging of NRI portfolio investments with FPI is positive. The proposed steps taken to increase India's weight in the MSCIs, is another positive. Increasing the tax deducted to 150,000 for the interest paid on affordable housing loans is good and germane to helping revive real estate demand. The tax clarification on AIF category 2 is a positive. Not doing the same for category 3 is a miss. Streamlining and automating tax interface is a welcome move. Consolidating the many labour laws into four is a step in the right direction.

The government's intent to incentivise electronic, EV, semiconductor and other technology industries is a positive, but to succeed in engendering these industries, we need a comprehensive policy to create clusters. Introducing one card to pay for all public transportation is a big plus. The spending priorities on ubiquitous sanitation and harvesting rain water access is excellent. In healthcare, social spending on capacity creation in vaccination and treatment of infectious diseases is the right step forward; however, nutrition, education and access should be facilitated ahead of comprehensive coverage for lifestyle and old-age diseases.

One wishes one saw more capital outlays and initiatives in reforming the institutional architecture to facilitate planned urban growth under the smart city initiative.

Ultimately, the budgeting exercise has been a sincere work-in-progress, but it needs to tilt the balance back to encouraging income and wealth generation back from the sharp focus on redistributive allocations. The government's track record in efficient execution and in cleaning the system, and sincerity of purpose gives hope that the necessary course corrections will be taken.

UNION BUDGET

Stage set for \$5-trn economy

AJAY ROTTI

Partner, Dhruva Advisors LLP



The key to sustaining the reforms proposed will be revenue mobilisation

ACKNOWLEDGED by the finance minister, the Union Budget 2019 was presented on the back of an unprecedented large mandate granted by the Indian electorate. The expectation was for announcement of big reforms leading to employment generation and growth of the economy. The FM set the tone by announcing that the economy was on course to be a \$3 trillion economy this year and \$5 trillion economy in a few years.

The FM made some significant announcements relating to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) regime, including a proposal to consider relaxation of FDI in sectors such as aviation, media and insurance. There was a clear thrust on moving towards a cashless economy.

From a tax perspective, while the headline income-tax rates and the slabs for individuals are proposed to be retained, high net-worth individuals earning more than ₹5 crore will now have to pay a tax in excess of 42% in light of a proposed increased surcharge of 37%. While progressive taxation is one way to tax varying income-groups, especially in a country like India, the rate of 42.74% is exceptionally high and comparable to countries like Belgium and Germany. This rate of tax coupled with changes like bringing in LTCG (for shares sold on the stock exchange) and dividend tax on dividends of more than ₹10 lakh per annum brought in the last couple of years will lead to significant changes in the cash tax outflows for high net-worth individuals.

The Union Budget also focussed on measures for promoting a cashless economy to reduce generation/circulation of black money. Furnishing of returns by individuals have been made mandatory under certain circumstances even in absence of taxable income. Further, banks will now have to deduct a tax of 2% on cash withdrawals exceeding ₹1 crore per annum. This will lead to greater compliance and disclosures by taxpayers.

For companies, the tax rate of 25% has now been extended to companies with turnover or gross receipts of upto ₹400 crore in FY18. Faceless e-assessments will also be launched [in phases]. Further, much-needed clarity has also been provided in the context of disallowances for non-deduction of taxes on payments to non-residents and no disallowance would be required if the non-resident recipient has offered such income to tax while furnishing return of income.

Measures have also been proposed to boost the Make-in-India initiative by providing investment linked income-tax deductions. Further significant benefits have been proposed to IFSCs to promote development of world-class financial infrastructure in India. The finance minister spoke of resolving the 'angel tax' issue with the ultimate objective that startups will not be subjected to scrutiny in respect of valuations. These proposals, though spoken about extensively in the Budget, do not reflect in the fine print and would possibly be brought in by way of administrative measures.

For corporates facing transfer pricing disputes leading to secondary adjustments, it has been clarified that monies shall be repatriated to India by the taxpayer from any of its overseas associated enterprises. In addition to the above, taxpayers shall have the option of paying a one-time additional income-tax of 18% on the primary adjustment or part thereof that was not repatriated from the affiliates within the prescribed time frame. This aligns our laws to the internationally followed practice.

From a GST perspective, the National Appellate Authority has been introduced which will apply in situations where conflicting advance rulings are given by appellate authorities of two or more states. A Legacy Dispute Resolution Scheme has also been introduced which will facilitate quick closure of all past disputes, prior to the introduction of GST.

The key to sustaining the reforms proposed and notable growth and development plans will be revenue mobilisation.

FM spoke of resolving the 'angel tax' issue. These proposals, though spoken about extensively in the Budget, do not reflect in the fine print

THIS CONTINUES OUR previous attempt to model a non-market intervention where in an alternate price support model that is both fiscally prudent and administratively feasible is proposed. The alternate model focuses on connecting farmers/farmer collectives (FPOs) with institutions that provide storage and finance. Our analysis of select crops and their prices during the arrival and lean season clearly indicates that improving the holding power will help farm incomes go up by 9-11% assuming that there is a policy support to carry this forward.

Under the proposed alternative, farmers are enabled to hold produce in regulated warehouses with financial support from the government covering costs of holding them for a minimum of four months. Farmers are expected to be connected to formal financial institutions through electronic negotiable warehouse receipts (eNWRs) issued by the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) regulated warehouses to meet immediate spending requirements by linking e-NWRs to Kisan credit card (KCC) accounts. This process, apart from enabling farmers to fulfil timely financial necessities, can be a potential step forward in the direction of digital payments and cashless economy. In terms of costs and fiscal burden, the proposed financial support from the government covering all costs involved in holding the crop output for four months is much lower compared to the

Rethinking agri support

Working to increase farmers' holding power for produce works better than price support

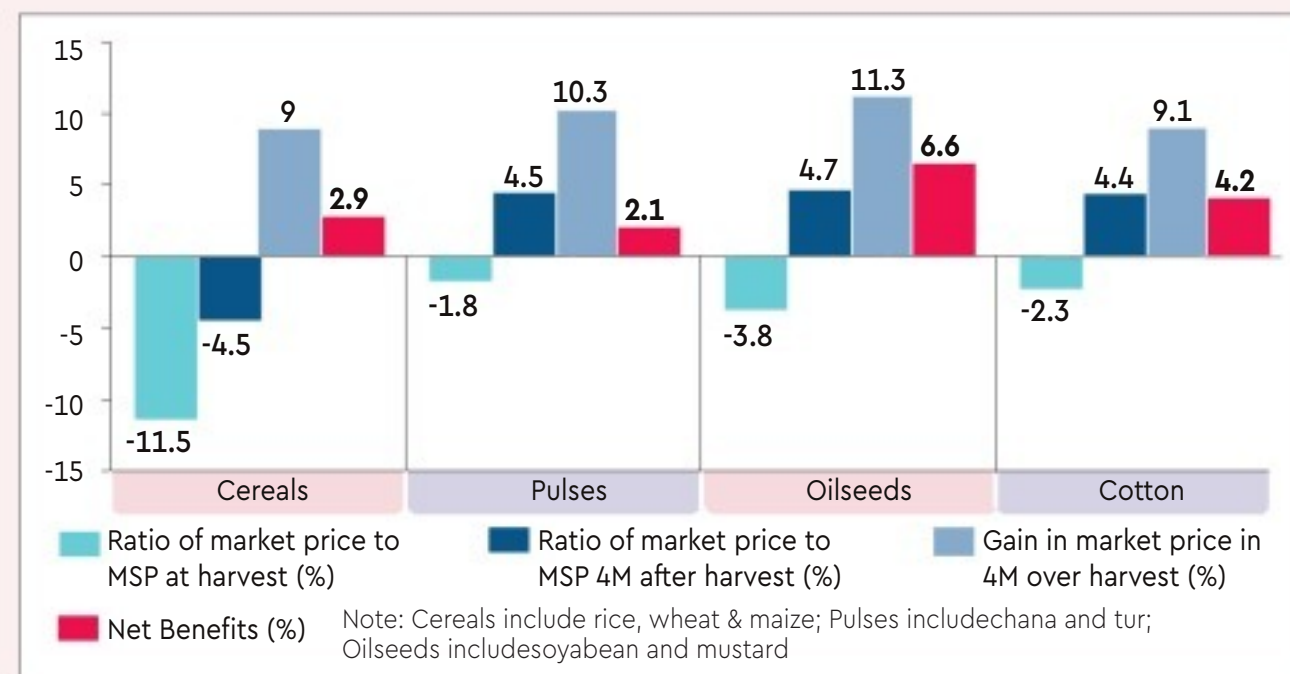
V SHUNMUGAM & TULSI LINGAREDDY

Shunmugam is head (research), and Lingareddy is senior analyst, MCX Views are personal

spend in the existing price support model. Based on our indicative cost analysis, the rough estimate of financial support for holding the crop produce for four months is ₹45,000 crore for select crops and about ₹55,000-66,000 crore for all crops produced in the country assuming a marketed surplus of about 80%. On the other hand, the cost of current support stands at around ₹1.52 lakh crore even if it covers about 80% of rice and wheat. With this alternate model, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) can limit its procurement operations, limiting storage needs and storage losses. In addition, FCI can make extra storage space available for enhancing the holding power of the farmers, earning rent in the bargain.

However, while the alternate model has

the potential to bring down government support, there are two major challenges to effective implementation. The first is to bring in adequate storage capacity under WDRA norms so that the warehousing services providers, public or private, can issue eNWRs. The existing warehousing capacity in the country, at 158.5 million metric tons (mmt), is significantly lower than the required capacity of 252 mmt (@80% of 315 mmt of foodgrains and oilseeds produced annually). More than half of the existing storage capacity is used by FCI for storing foodgrain stocks in the central pool, leaving very limited space for other storage. Efforts to enhance storage capacity started about two decades ago with the Grameen Bhandaran Yojana (2001). But, the progress



is limited, with addition of just about 57.6 mmt till the end of March 2018. The number of WDRA-registered warehouses is quite low, at 697, with an aggregate capacity of 7.91 mmt, concentrated in six states (MP, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh). Thus, efforts to expand storage capacity and bring all warehouses under WDRA are needed. It will also connect stored commodities to the formal financial institutions through eNWRs. It should happen simultaneously with development of quality-testing and certification agencies.

The second important challenge is ensuring the outreach of institutional financial services to rural areas so that the objective of connecting farmers to financial sys-

tem is met. In this regard, it is disheartening to note that despite constant policy efforts, the outreach of formal banking services in rural areas remained low, with only 19% of total ATMs in the country located in the rural areas that serve 19,561 residents per ATM as against 2,104 residents per ATM in urban areas (RBI and Census Reports). Banking and regulatory efforts must also focus on enhancing other additional proven modes of connectivity to the farmers in remote rural areas such as business correspondents, mobile banking branches, etc. Existing bank branches may extend banking services to the rural areas, leveraging facilities and infrastructural assistance that may be provided by the local government institutions.

While we argue for holding power aug-

mentation, it should be synced with farmers being empowered to take sowing decisions based on best possible market information about best possible prices. It is essential to augment efforts to collect authentic and exhaustive crop sowing, and growth status reports to feed the derivative markets and strengthen price discovery to provide advance guidance to the farmers on what to sow. Hence, agricultural market information services must be streamlined with provision of comprehensive and authentic information covering demand, supply and prices of all the crops. Public efforts shall also be focused on taking the market discovered crop prices to the farmers, leveraging current developments in ICT, besides strengthening the price discovery process through appropriate market-friendly and transparent policy regime.

This proposed model will be a win-win for all the stakeholders including the government. Besides, initiative such as Jan-Dhan can be leveraged under the proposed support model. The storage ecosystem development, if stimulated under this model, will generate additional employment opportunities for the rural workforce in construction and maintenance of warehousing, quality testing and grading/standardisation, and expansion of financial services. Further efforts, if taken to increase the POS availability at all rural commercial establishments, will provide an impetus to the efforts towards formalisation of rural economy.



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TELLING NUMBERS

Mostly electoral trusts: where major parties got donations from

DONATIONS DECLARED IN 2016-17 & 2017-18

Party	Total donations	From corporate sector	Corporate donations share
BJP	969.31	915.59	94%
Cong	68.56	55.36	81%
NCP	8.43	7.74	92%
CPM	8.01	4.42	55%
AITC	2.35	2.03	86%
CPI	2.59	0.04	2%
Total	1059.25	985.18	93%

Donation figures in Rs crore. Source for all data: ADR

OF THE donations that national political parties received from the corporate sector in the last two years, just under half came from electoral trusts, an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) shows.

The ADR analysis is based on the income declarations of six national parties for 2016-17 and 2017-18. While parties are required to submit details of donors have made contributions above Rs 20,000, the BSP declared that it received no voluntary contributions above Rs 20,000 from any donor during this period, the ADR said in a statement.

The six parties covered in the analysis — BJP, Congress, NCP, CPI, CPI(M) and Trinamool Congress — declared donations of Rs 985.18 crore from the corporate sector, out of which Rs 488.42 crore (49.58 per cent) came from electoral trusts. The BJP received Rs 458.02 crore of this, the Congress another Rs 29.40 crore, and the NCP and Trinamool Congress Rs 50 lakh each. Another 12 per cent came from the manufacturing sector, and 9 per cent from the real estate sector.

Prudent/Satya Electoral Trust was the top donor with Rs 429.42 crore, all of which went to two parties. It donated 46 times in two years, contributing Rs 405.52 crore to the BJP in 33 donations and Rs 23.90 crore to the Congress in 13 donations.

The total contribution from the corporate sector constitutes 93 per

TOP FIVE CONTRIBUTORS AMONG CORPORATE DONORS	
Electoral trusts	49.6% (Rs 488.42 crore)
Manufacturing	12.2% (Rs 120 crore)
Real estate	9.2% (Rs 90.57 cr)
Mining, construction export/import	4.8% (Rs 47.63 crore)
Healthcare	4.3% (Rs 42.33 crore)

WHERE THE ELECTORAL TRUSTS DONATED

BJP	458.02
Congress	29.40
NCP	0.50
Trinamool	0.50

Figures in Rs crore

cent of all donations received by the six political parties from known sources (Rs 1,059.25 crore), the ADR said. Such contributions accounted for 94 per cent of donations to the BJP and 81 per cent of those to the Congress.

Of the six parties, BJP received Rs 915.596 crore from 1,731 corporate donors, followed by the Congress which received Rs 55.36 crore from 151 corporate donors.

THIS WORD MEANS
WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Jaipur is now one. How is the status earned?

LAST WEEK, Jaipur earned the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, becoming the 38th Indian entry in a list of 1,121 such sites across the world - 869 of which are cultural, 213 natural, and 39 mixed. Under the World Heritage Convention's operational guidelines, a World Heritage Site is one that is found to have an "Outstanding Universal Value", which signifies "cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity".

The selection is done by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which meets at least once every year, generally in June-July, to deliberate the addition, removal, or modification of sites on the list. The Committee comprises 21 members se-

lected from among the 192 signatories to the 1972 World Heritage Convention. These states prepare a tentative list, followed by a nomination document, based on which the application is considered by the Committee for possible inclusion. India is represented by the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (INCCU) and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Inclusion in the list affords the location a coveted status, driving up demand for tourism. At the same time, an onus is placed on the government of the country for conservation. The Committee conducts regular audits at declared sites, and can consider deleting it from the list.

OM MARATHE
Detailed report:
www.indianexpress.com

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Why a corporate bond market

FM has announced fresh measures for developing such a market, after previous budgets and a number of panels had failed to work out a plan. Why does India need such a market, and what are the new measures?

SHAJI VIKRAMAN
CHENNAI, JULY 9

INDIA'S ECONOMIC reforms since 1991 have led to seismic changes in many areas and sectors. But one segment where growth has been stunted in spite of the efforts by policymakers over the last three decades has been the development of the corporate bond market. Successive budgets and at least half a dozen committees mandated by the government, the RBI and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to work out measures to develop this market have largely failed. In this year's Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced fresh measures to boost the development of India's corporate bond market.

What are these measures?

In her Budget speech, the FM had said that an action plan to deepen the market for long term bonds including for deepening markets for corporate bond repos, credit default swaps etc, with a specific focus on the infrastructure sector, will be put in place. She said Foreign Portfolio Investors (or FPIs) will also be allowed to invest in debt securities issued by Infrastructure Debt Funds. The FM also stated that a Credit Guarantee Enhancement Corporation, for which regulations have been notified by the RBI, will be set up in 2019-20.

How will some of these measures help?

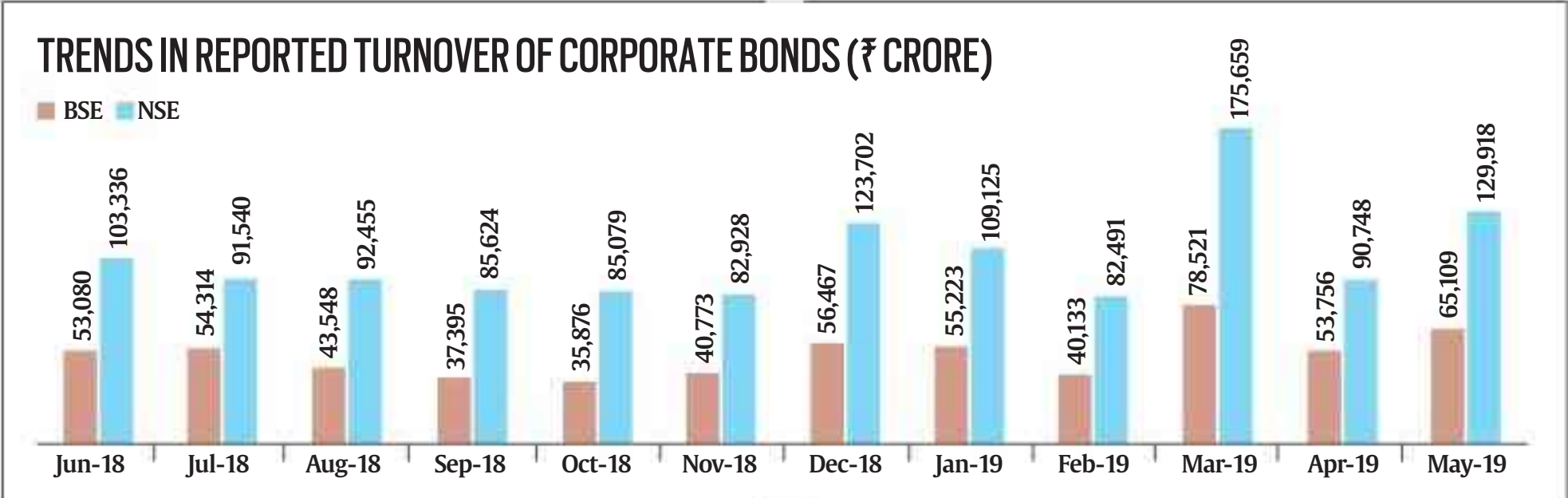
Unlike the Indian equities market where the daily volumes of traded stocks are high, signifying liquidity or enough opportunity for both buyers and sellers, the debt market is dominated more by trading in government bonds or securities. Most of the demand for these securities is from investors such as banks that have to mandatorily hold these bonds as part of regulatory norms. Over time, more Indian companies — both listed and unlisted ones — have started issuing bonds that offer semi-annual interest payments to investors. But these bonds aren't traded much, thanks to a limited investor base and low liquidity. This, in turn, leads to lower volumes of their trades compared to the other segment of the capital market. The aim of the government and regulators is to boost the liquidity and volumes and make the debt market more vibrant.

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

LAST WEEK, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) gave an unexpected order in the case pertaining to the resolution plan of Essar Steel. A two-member Bench of NCLAT approved the resolution plan suggested by ArcelorMittal but also introduced a key change that is likely to have significant ramifications for the resolution process under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

What is the change ordered by NCLAT?

The resolution plan proposed by ArcelorMittal was questioned by both operational creditors, who alleged that they were not treated on par with financial creditors, as well as some financial creditors such as Standard Chartered Bank that alleged that its claims were not honoured adequately. As it happened, the NCLAT ruled that the Committee of Creditors (CoC) had discriminated between creditors. The NCLAT order



Source: Sebi

What is the importance of a corporate debt market?

In most international markets including the US, trading volumes in the debt market are much higher than those in stocks. Liquidity, too, is quite high with enough buyers and sellers willing to buy bonds with low credit ratings in the hope of receiving a big payoff. This enables companies to raise funds across different maturities including for infrastructure projects with long gestation periods.

In India, given the absence of a well functioning corporate bond market, the burden of financing infrastructure projects such as roads, ports, and airports is more on banks and the general government. This, in turn, puts lenders such as the banks under pressure as reflected in the ballooning of bad loans. For instance, in banks, such investments create an asset-liability mismatch. In other words, they are buying into long-term assets, such as a highway, with short term liabilities, that is deposits of three- to five-year maturities. Eventually, this not only results in inefficient resource allocation but also weakens the bank balance sheets.

How will a Credit Guarantee Enhancement Corporation help?

The proposed new corporation will help companies to boost their credit rating, which, in turn, will enable them to raise funds at cheaper rates. By allowing repurchase agreements or repos (that allow a company to raise funds by offering its securities and agreeing to repurchase it later) in AA rated bonds or securities, volumes could go up in the corporate bond market. More importantly, it can help improve liquidity especially if the RBI, like many other central banks of the world,

uses it for its repo operations. The other measure — of allowing investments made by FPIs in debt securities issued by Infrastructure Debt Funds to be sold to a domestic investor within a specified lock-in period — should help offer an exit option for such investors and improve liquidity. Similarly, policymakers want to develop the segment for credit default swaps. This will mean protection against the possibility of a company or issuer defaulting on a repayment option and thus offering comfort to an investor willing to take a risky bet and, in the process, adding volumes.

Beyond the Budget, what else has been done to boost the bond market in the recent past?

Since 2016, the RBI has made the point that the bigger companies would have to raise part of their long-term borrowings from the corporate bonds market rather than from banks. New norms since then make it mandatory for companies with large exposures to raise 25 per cent of their incremental or fresh borrowings from the bond market. This policy has been put in place to force corporates to go to the bond market and to ease the pressure on banks. Regulatory rules also make it necessary for any company that plans to raise debt funds of over Rs 200 crore to execute it on an electronic platform. This is expected to improve transparency as well.

Why has the Indian corporate bond market failed to take off?

For years, the investor base in the corporate bond market has been narrow — marked by banks, insurance companies, pension retirement funds and now mutual funds. The

FPIs are now prominent buyers of top-rated bonds given the attractive returns especially in the backdrop of a strong rupee. Most of these investors do not trade but hold these investments until maturity. With few buyers in the market or market makers who offer buy or sell quotes constantly, there is little liquidity. There is little or no incentive for market making. A majority of the bonds issued by companies are privately placed with a select set of investors in India rather than through a public issue; this is done to both save time as well as avoid greater disclosures. Foreign investors can now invest up to Rs 3,03,100 crore in these bonds and so far only a little over 67 per cent of this limit has been utilised. In 2019-20, investments by foreign funds in stocks have aggregated Rs 28,268 crore and Rs 10,949 crore in debt. Another peeve has been the varied stamp duty in states on debt transactions. But this will soon be sorted out with a uniform rate.

Have the recent corporate defaults been a dampener?

Indeed, an II&FS subsidiary that had the highest rating defaulted on its obligations exposing credit rating agencies and, in turn, hurting institutional investors who bought into these and other similar bonds. The investors included the EPFO — India's largest retirement fund — and many mutual funds too. This is likely to dissuade investors, who may prefer to invest in safer avenues only. The new insolvency law was supposed to provide an extra layer of comfort too with a speedier resolution of stressed assets and a return of funds to bondholders. But that has not been the case with the deadline of 270 days being breached in many cases.

Why NCLAT ruling on Essar Steel matters

stated: "... we hold that the 'Committee of Creditors' has no role to play in the matter of distribution of amount amongst the Creditors including the 'Financial Creditors' or the 'Operational Creditors'..." As such, the NCLAT amended the resolution plan in a way that both financial and operational creditors would receive roughly 61 per cent of their claims. The NCLAT logic was: financial creditors, being claimants at par with each other and claimants like the operational creditors, face a conflict of interest when deciding whose claims should be honoured and to what extent. This is more so the case when the maximum amount of money is allocated in favour of one financial creditor and minimum (or nil) for other financial creditors and operational creditors.

Should financial and operational creditors be treated on par?

On the face of it, the NCLAT's argument that there is no difference between two financial creditors stands to reason. But the NCLAT also observed that there is no difference between financial creditors and oper-

ational creditors when it relates to the "resolution" plan under IBC. Referring to Section 53 of the IBC that deals with the distribution of assets, the NCLAT argued that "the distribution of debts to the 'Financial Creditors' and the 'Operational Creditors' during the 'Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process' cannot be equated with [the] distribution of debts to all stakeholders after the liquidation."

In other words, NCLAT sought to distinguish between distribution of assets under a "resolution" process as against under a "liquidation" process. It argued that Section 53 of the IBC lays out the order of priority for the proceeds from the sale of the "liquidation" assets. This order of priority favours financial creditors over operational creditors. However, the NCLAT pointed out, this is not a liquidation and as such the differentiation between financial creditors and operation creditors is not merited.

Why is this ruling problematic?

The NCLAT ruling goes against the January 25 ruling by a two-judge Bench of

the Supreme Court that had clarified why, under the IBC process, paying off financial debts, which are secured, needs to be prioritised over operational debts, which are unsecured. "We have already seen that repayment of financial debts infuses capital into the economy inasmuch as banks and financial institutions are able, with the money that has been paid back, to further lend such money to other entrepreneurs for their businesses." The SC had favoured prioritising financial creditors because they generally lend finance on a term loan or for working capital that enables the corporate debtor to either set up and/or operate its business. On the other hand, contracts with operational creditors are relatable to supply of goods and services in the operation of a business. The SC had concluded that "while ensuring maximum recovery for all creditors being the objective of the Code, financial creditors are clearly different from operational creditors and therefore, there is obviously an intelligible differentia between the two which has a direct relation to the objects sought to be achieved by the Code."

Automated facial recognition: what NCRB proposes, what are the concerns

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

ON JUNE 28, the National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB) released a Request for Proposal for an Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) to be used by police officers across the country.

What is automated facial recognition?

AFRS works by maintaining a large database with photos and videos of peoples' faces. Then, a new image of an unidentified person — often taken from CCTV footage — is compared to the existing database to find a match and identify the person. The artificial intelligence technology used for pattern-finding and matching is called "neural networks".

A senior former Home Ministry official said current facial recognition in India is done manually. While fingerprints and iris scans provide far more accurate matching results, automatic facial recognition is an easier solution especially for identification

amongst crowds, he said.

Are there any automated facial recognition systems in use in India?

It is a new idea the country has started to experiment with. On July 1, the Ministry of Civil Aviation's "DigiYatra" using facial recognition for airport entry was trialled in the Hyderabad airport. State governments have also taken their own steps towards facial recognition. Telangana police launched their own system in August 2018.

What does the NCRB request call for?

The NCRB, which manages crime data for police, would like to use automated facial recognition to identify criminals, missing people, and unidentified dead bodies, as well as for "crime prevention". Its Request for Proposal calls for gathering CCTV footage, as well as photos from newspapers, raids, and sketches. The project is aimed at being compatible with other biometrics such as iris and fingerprints. It will be a mobile and web application hosted in NCRB's



Getty Images

Data Centre in Delhi, but used by all police stations in the country. "Automated Facial Recognition System can play a very vital role in improving outcomes in the area of Criminal identification and verification by facilitating easy recording, analysis, retrieval and sharing of Information between different organisations."

How will the new database fit in what already exists?

NCRB has proposed integrating this facial recognition system with multiple existing databases. The most prominent is the NCRB-managed Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS). Facial recognition has been proposed in the CCTNS program since its origin.

"The idea is that integration of fingerprint database, face recognition software and iris scans will massively boost the police department's crime investigation capabilities. It will also help civilian verification when needed. No one will be able to get away with a fake ID," a Home Ministry official had told *The Indian Express* a year ago.

In 2009, following the Mumbai terror attacks, CCTNS was envisaged as a country-wide integrated database on crime incidents and suspects, connecting FIR registrations, investigations, and chargesheets of all 15,500 police stations and 6,000 higher offices. It also plans to offer citizen services, such as passport verification, crime reporting, online

tracking of case progress, grievance reporting against police officers, and more.

The new facial recognition system will also be integrated with Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS), as well as state-specific systems, the Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT), and the Koya Paya portal on missing children.

How far has CCTNS progressed?

The Rs 2,000-crore project is accessible to the CBI, Intelligence Bureau, National Investigation Agency, Enforcement Directorate and the Narcotics Control Bureau. The project did not meet its initial 2015 deadline and was extended to March 2017.

In August 2018, the first phase of connecting the police stations was nearly complete. In the second phase, the Home Ministry proposed integrating the database with the fingerprint database of the Central Finger Print Bureau (CFPB). NCRB is currently rolling out the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) and its integration with CCTNS.

WORDLY WISE
THE MEASURE OF A MAN IS WHAT HE DOES
WITH POWER.
— PLATO

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

One more quota

We are moving away from the constitutional logic behind enabling clauses such as Articles 15 and 16



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

CAUTION ON SPECTRUM

Government should assess implications of Trai’s recommendations on pricing on the health of the telecom sector

ON MONDAY, THE Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) reiterated its stance on the issue of spectrum pricing, including that of 5G, for the upcoming auctions. This was in response to the Digital Communications Commission, the apex decision-making body of the Department of Telecommunications, which had sought a review of the Trai’s August 2018 recommendations on the auction of spectrum. The commission’s call for reviewing the Trai’s recommendations came amid concerns over the financial health of telcos, and worries that demand for spectrum is likely to be muted as consolidation in the sector has effectively left only three private telecom service providers. But, in its response, Trai has stayed with its earlier position, stating that all relevant factors, such as the methodology, assumptions, as well as developments between the spectrum auction held in October 2016 and its recommendations, released in August 2018, have been considered.

Over the years, the telecom sector has been a major source of revenue for the government. And at a time when the Centre is struggling to meet its revenue targets, higher proceeds from spectrum auctions could provide the much-needed boost to government coffers. But the temptation of revenue maximisation should be resisted when there are legitimate concerns over the financial health of the sector. Aggressive bidding by telcos in the 3G auctions in 2010 marked a turning point in the industry’s fortunes. As a result of the pile-up in debt, highly indebted telcos exercised restraint in the 2016 spectrum sale, with the government realising only Rs 65,789 crore as revenue against Rs 5.63 trillion (base price) worth of spectrum that had been put up for sale. The price war, which began in September 2016, only exacerbated the already precarious financial position of incumbents. Their deteriorating finances have also taken a toll on the government’s revenue. In 2018-19, the Centre was able to collect only Rs 39,245 crore through licence fees and spectrum usage charges, as against the initial target of Rs 48,661 crore. In comparison, it had collected Rs 70,241 crore in 2016-17. While average revenues per user (ARPU) have risen of late, a turnaround is still some time away. With precarious finances, a repeat of the 2016 auction is a possibility.

At such high prices, cash-strapped operators will find it difficult to bid, without sinking even more into debt. This could impact their capital expenditure, leaving them with fewer resources to invest in towers and fibre optics. Acknowledging the issues plaguing the sector, the telecom minister, Ravi Shankar Prasad, has recently set up a panel to rationalise levies, and to look into other issues. While it might be difficult to set aside Trai’s recommendations, the government would do well to think carefully through the implications of the recommendations, before rushing to auction high-priced spectrum.

SPOOKED BY VAASTU

Telangana Chief Minister should stop using public funds to finance expensive personal whims

THE TELANGANA HIGH Court has stalled Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao’s plans to demolish the present secretariat complex and the Errum Manzil Palace, a heritage structure, and build a new “vaastu compliant” office complex and assembly building in Hyderabad. The HC stayed the proposal, while hearing a clutch of petitions against the government’s move, which many, including the Opposition, have rightly called a waste of public funds. Rao’s whim would cost the exchequer Rs 500 crore — Rs 400 crore for the new secretariat and Rs 100 crore for the assembly building — a substantial amount that could help the Telangana government to address, for instance, rural distress following a deficient monsoon.

The “vaastu” of the secretariat has apparently spooked KCR so much that he has spent very little time in the building since he assumed the office of chief minister in 2014. Two years later, he moved into a new residence-cum-office complex built over nine acres, at the reported cost of Rs 50 crore. Incidentally, KCR’s predecessors, especially N T Rama Rao, had also fussed over the “vaastu” of the secretariat, but none of them felt the necessity to pull down the buildings, the seat of the Andhra Pradesh government since the state was formed in 1956. What evidently sets KCR apart is that he, as the undisputed supremo of the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti, and thereby the state, believes it kosher to use public funds to indulge and address his personal anxieties. The chief minister seems to think that his personal well-being and the public good are the same. A couple of years ago, his family in tow, he had offered gold ornaments worth Rs 5.5 crore to the Tirupati shrine. These ornaments had been procured with funds drawn from the Common Good Fund, a public fund meant for renovation of dilapidated temples. At that time, KCR justified making donations and offerings to temples in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh using public funds as meeting vows made by him on behalf of the people of Telangana to the gods.

It’s time KCR drew a clear line between his personal beliefs and constitutional role. As a private citizen, he has the choice of believing in “vaastu”. But as a public figure he

AEGEAN LESSONS

Election results in Greece shine a light on the limits of radical politics without a programme and roadmap of governance

BEFORE BREXIT, BEFORE the election of Donald Trump, the crisis of globalisation, global liberalism and capitalism had found expression in Greece. In January 2015, Alexis Tsipras, leader of the radical-left Syriza, rode a popular wave against the austerity measures imposed on Athens by the European Union, oligarchs and income inequality, to become president. In 2019, as Greece has emerged from the crisis — but with unemployment (18 per cent) and inequality still at record highs — the shoe is on the other foot. Kyriakos Mitsotakis and his centre-right New Democracy have won about 40 per cent of the vote, far ahead of Syriza.

Five years ago, Syriza promised that “hope is coming”. But like other radical movements without an ideology of state and roadmap for government, it was unable to govern according to the principles it campaigned on. Once president, Tsipras gave sops to oligarchs, withdrew even more welfare programmes and came across as anti-immigrant and anti-poor with measures like the eviction of families unable to repay loans and his refusal to intervene after reports of inhuman conditions at refugee camps surfaced. In essence, as the movement against the establishment became the establishment, it mimicked, even outdid, its predecessor.

The fact remains that political movements that take to the streets often articulate the entrenched shortcomings of systems of state and governance. But the task of actually governing cannot be achieved just by the charisma of a leader and the promise of “hope” and “revolution”. In France, Emmanuel Macron has had to face this reality with the Yellow Jacket protests, which severely dented his image as the young, charismatic face of a liberal West. Closer home, the Aam Aadmi Party, which began as a protest against corruption and traditional ways of doing politics, has struggled with the art of political compromise, of working not on the street but quietly behind the scenes. Meanwhile, in Greece, the burden of “hope” is now back on the centre.

EVER SINCE THE Supreme Court gave its ruling in the *Indra Sawhney* case, the complications surrounding the issue of OBC reservations have defied solutions. As I have argued, identifying backwardness, periodic scrutiny of claims to being backward and ensuring fair treatment of those included in the list of backward communities, constituted three challenges emanating from the Mandal discourse (*EPW*, April 26, 2008). Subsequently, this list of key issues became more complicated by claims from many regionally important peasant communities that they are backward, resulting in crossing the 50 per cent threshold.

Some states have chosen the Ninth Schedule to circumvent the Mandal ruling while others like Haryana, Gujarat or Maharashtra have grappled with ways to overcome the limitations prescribed by it. The latest ruling of the Bombay High Court is bound to lead to a new route for states to accommodate demands of various communities.

At least four questions arise from the Bombay High Court’s ruling. The Court has approved the report of the M G Gaikwad Commission which undertook studies to examine the status of Marathas and made recommendations about the quantum of reservation. The fact that there were earlier commissions, which had a different conclusion, does not seem to have weighed on the Court.

Curiously, the Gaikwad Commission report was not discussed in the public realm and thus the Court did not have the benefit of arguments and counterarguments about approach, method and interpretation. The first question regarding such a policy instrument is this: Can such a far-reaching policy be undertaken without the public having access to the findings of the Commission and without the courts having the benefit of public discussions? Can secrecy and urgency be the basis for policies? For instance, the projected calculations of the population of backward communities, as is quoted in the HC ruling, appear to be tricky, if not altogether problematic. The veil of secrecy has resulted in a non-transparent way of deciding backwardness and arriving at the conclusion about whether a community is adequately represented in administration.

Secondly, the argument of exceptionality is brought into sharp focus by this ruling. It is not clear what constitutes an exceptional sit-

The issue of the Maratha quota has brought forward an even more serious issue that the Court has not addressed. Suppose a community is found to be backward and it is not included in the present list of OBCs, what is the justification for creating a separate quota for it? Even if the state were to accept the exceptional situation, necessitating crossing the 50 per cent limit, why is it that one community gets a separate quota? Ostensibly, this would be done in order not to disturb the existing social balance. However, such a strategy effectively means that one community is assured of a guaranteed quota while all others have to compete within the quota.



DOMINIC ASQUITH

IT’S FAIR TO say that India has been on every Briton’s mind this summer — even if the predominant emotion, until recently, was envy. The World Cup in England and Wales is shaping up to be the biggest cricket tournament to date with more than 80,000 fans from India expected to visit throughout the summer. Cricket stadiums across the country have been dominated by a sea of blue, as we are reminded that this joint passion is one of the many ties that bind us.

Alongside the cricket, we’ve welcomed investors and government representatives at a series of events celebrating the UK-India relationship, including at the London Tech Week and UK-India Week. Next week, at the annual Joint Economic and Trade Committee meeting, our international trade minister Liam Fox and his Indian counterpart, Piyush Goyal, will discuss how to further reduce trade barriers and agree to work towards a more ambitious trading relationship. On July 16, we’ll mark India Day at Mansion House — the official residence of the Lord Mayor. This will be a landmark event celebrating our financial services links, in particular the central role the City of London could perform in raising funds for Indian infrastructure development.

All this activity speaks to the health of the UK-India relationship. Brexit has given the UK a compelling reason to re-evaluate its relationships beyond its nearest 27 neighbours — and

BOWLED OVER BY A SEA OF BLUE

India and the UK are bound by ties beyond cricket. We must strive to build on them

Brexit has given the UK a compelling reason to re-evaluate its relationships beyond its nearest 27 neighbours — and India is in the spotlight. It is a priority because we recognise its fundamental role in shaping the world that we live in. It’s a rare partner whose economic priorities and assessment of global challenges mirror our own.

India is in the spotlight. It is a priority because we recognise its fundamental role in shaping the world that we live in. It’s a rare partner whose economic priorities and assessment of global challenges mirror our own. It’s one of our most thriving trading and investment relationships, central to UK’s growth strategy.

Critics might point to a recent report, introduced in British Parliament, which suggested that the UK could do more to develop its relationship with India. Far from being a criticism, I see that report as a demonstration of the cross-party support that exists for deeper ties — and a vindication of my own firm belief that the UK’s relationship with India is one of the most important that we hold. After all, PM May’s first official visit upon taking office was to India and 27 ministers have visited since. The UK has a bigger diplomatic presence in India than anywhere else in the world.

Of course there is always room to do more. Given its size, global challenges uniquely affect India and so it’s right that our partnership is focused on tackling universal issues like climate change, renewable energy, cyber threats and antimicrobial resistance. With the UK’s bid to host the next UN Climate Conference COP26, our legal commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050, and our membership of the International Solar Alliance, the UK and India are particularly well placed to join forces on promoting sustainable energy,

and building resilient, smart cities.

PM Modi has an ambitious vision for India on the world stage and the UK is the partner to support that ambition. Since 2010, the UK has been the largest G20 investor in India. More than 400 British companies operate here, creating over 450,000 jobs. For nine consecutive quarters, our bilateral trade has grown, usually at double digit rates. We are now India’s second biggest research partner with joint research expected to be worth £400 million by 2021. The number of Indians studying in the UK has almost doubled in the last three years, and Indian nationals continue to receive more skilled work visas from us than the rest of the world combined. Our bilateral relationship is already uniquely strong owing to the incomparable living bridge connecting our people — but the scale of that is set to grow.

As a diplomat, I sometimes have to be mindful of what I say. So I stay well away from cricket predictions — other than to be sure it will come to pass as the great Neville Cardus put it: “Dear, lovely game of cricket that can stir us so profoundly, that can lift up our hearts and break them.” However, regardless of who takes home the Cup, this isn’t just an Indian summer. We’re here for the long term — and there’s a great deal more to do.

The writer is the British High Commissioner to India

JULY 10, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

GOVT ON BACKFOOT
OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT demanded the resignation of the prime minister and the home minister for the government’s inept handling of the agitation by the police and paramilitary forces. In the Rajya Sabha, two Janata members, S C Jha and Rameshwar Singh, supported the Opposition demand. In the Lok Sabha, an adjournment motion on the issue moved by CPM MP, Samar Makherjee, was rejected.

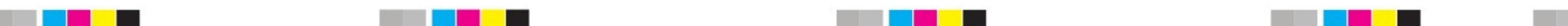
JANATA DEFECTIONS
AS MANY AS 10 Lok Sabha members walked out of the ruling Janata P arty to sit on the Opposition benches with Raj Narain. In the

process they reduced the ruling party’s strength to 288 in a house of 543. Narain’s camp predicted more resignations from the Janata Party, but a party spokesman said there was no danger to the stability of the government considering that it continued to have a majority in the lower House.

RIGHT TO DISSENT
SOCIALIST STRATEGY WITHIN the Janata Party, chalked out by their two-day conclave, declares that they will oppose such government measures, introduced in the legislatures, which “violate the spirit” of the election manifesto and other policy resolutions of the Janata Party. The meeting in New Delhi specifically

mentioned in the context, “any suggestion to bring forward a preventive detention bill or any other measure which curtails civil liberties as also the Industrial Relations Bill”.

AMNESTY IN IRAN
AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI announced a general amnesty covering “all those people who committed offences under the past regime,” excluding those involved in murder or torture. Khomeini’s announcement said the measure also applied to armed forces members. The announcement came on the eve of the birthday of Imam Mehdi, an ancient Shiite Muslim patriarch whose birthday is celebrated across Iran.



Once upon a stage called Delhi

In the 1970s, theatre in the city helped define a wider political imagination. Now, the young must accomplish that task without the aid of the likes of Girish Karnad and Habib Tanvir



KRISHNA KUMAR

TILL THE MID-1970s, New Delhi felt quite different from how it feels now. This feeling is not necessarily a reflection of the pleasure that old, familiar images are known to give. Many things have changed, but some have changed more radically than others. No one can imagine how active and endearing theatre in Delhi was in the early 1970s. The roundabout near Bengali Market and the buildings around it are still there, but the life inside them is altogether different now. The National School of Drama, Triveni, and Kamani routinely offered the very best in contemporary drama.

Several plays I saw in these theatres became a part of my mental world, and some of the actors who performed in them continue to remain associated in my mind with the roles they had played. Om Shivpuri in *Aadhe Adhoore* (written by Mohan Rakesh), Sudha Shivpuri in *Khamosh! Adaalat Jaari Hai* (by Vijay Tendulkar) and Manohar Singh in *Tughlaq* (by Girish Karnad) are three such faces. When I learned that Karnad had died, I recalled Manohar Singh acting as Tughlaq, bringing him out of medieval history into contemporary Delhi. Ebrahim Alkazi, who directed the play, had the gift of making every script feel contemporary and relevant, no matter what its content was or whether it was Indian, Greek or German. Living in Delhi meant living in a large, very wide world in the 1970s. It was an exuberant feeling, and drama was its source.

I had forgotten some episodes of Karnad's *Tughlaq*, so I turned to the internet to revive my memory. There was a lot to look at. Within a few minutes of browsing, I realised that the inevitable had happened. Tughlaq had entered the college syllabus, so it had gathered a vast amount of exam-worthy commentary. Its allegorical meanings, Karnad's ability to use history to throw light on the present, his sense of the stage as a space, and several such points were elaborated upon on several sites. There were videos, too, telling the student how to answer exam questions about the play. There were some good commentaries but as I don't have to prepare for an exam, I decided to switch off, sit back and just recall the time when dramatists like Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Habib Tanvir were routinely injecting a new kind of awareness into Delhi's ethos. After the end of the 1971 Bangladesh war as it was called, there was little left of the Nehru era. Image-wise, Indira Gandhi had acquired greatness without shedding her closeness to common citizens.

The open-air theatre at Triveni had steps with cushions placed on them. Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhoore* was running as a daily show for several evenings. Sitting in one of front rows in a packed show, I briefly heard some commotion which subsided in a few seconds. In the intermission, when I looked back, I was startled to notice Indira Gandhi sitting in one of the middle rows. That the prime minister could find time to see a play and was interested in *Aadhe Adhoore* meant a lot, in a city that, for older, native residents, had already grown beyond recognition.

Theatre, cinema, literature and magazines were involved in a larger, political struggle, to define the nation, bridging its endemic divisions. In his short story, 'Dilli mein ek maut' (A death in Delhi), Kamleshwar had created a symbol of the



Suvajit Dey

outsider's experience of the urban jungle. Karnad and Tanvir had used rural aesthetic resources that made Bengali Market feel like the hinterland of a village. Tragic or otherwise, these plays conveyed the feeling that as Indians we could still make sense of ourselves, without surrendering to comparisons or false pride. Tughlaq, in particular, made disillusionment acceptable, as a moment of truth. Well before the end, you knew there was no hope for the king, but you also felt that the struggle will not end with him. One had the same feeling at the end of *Aadhe Adhoore*. Struck by pathos, you still felt the urge to trace the cracks in a family to larger, complex sources.

That urge is what seems to have slipped away. Few want to relate to the complexity of an obvious truth; denying it is considered a more obvious choice. The subject does not matter. It can be air pollution, politics, health or education. Accepting that the news is bad, even ominous, gets you nowhere. Truth seems distant and fundamentally inaccessible, like one's political representatives in the assembly and Parliament. A rich supply of alternate resources of news and viewpoints is constantly in circulation, but none look capable of healing the injury that the urge to face the truth has endured.

The open-air theatre at Triveni had steps with cushions placed on them. Mohan Rakesh's 'Aadhe Adhoore' was running as a daily show for several evenings. Sitting in one of front rows in a packed show, I briefly heard some commotion which subsided in a few seconds. In the intermission, when I looked back, I was startled to notice Indira Gandhi sitting in one of the middle rows. That the prime minister could find time to see a play and was interested in 'Aadhe Adhoore' meant a lot, in a city that, for older, native residents, had already grown beyond recognition.

By the 1970s, Delhi's bubble of a truth-seeking theatre was ready to break. Ambitious though it was, the universe of ideas and images proved too small and fragile. Post-Emergency Delhi was a different city. It was more vast, difficult to know and grasp, not just to manage. There was no centre of aesthetic gravity left in it. The question why it proved so vulnerable is not easy to answer. People say our institutions were weak; some say the individuals chosen to run them were not right. Both arguments can claim substance and the matter must wait longer for the verdict.

Recently, one of my former students asked whether the Emergency was the worst crisis that Indian democracy had suffered. I found the question difficult and a bit out of the syllabus. I failed to convince her that the Emergency was mainly a crisis of the state. Except for short periods and in different specific regions, we have not experienced a social crisis and we don't know exactly how the state might handle it. The young Delhi-ites of today must assess, without the aid of great artists like Karnad, Tanvir and Rakesh, whether a nostalgic view of the past is justified.

Kumar is a former director of NCERT and writer

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"China needs to be highly confident in the cause of human rights... Human rights should be a joint cause for mankind rather than a topic for geopolitical competition." — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Vigilantism 2.0

And the centrality, in it, of the slogan 'Jai Shri Ram'



PAMELA PHILIPOSE

THE LYNCHING OF Mohammad Akhlaq of Bisara village, Uttar Pradesh, for the meat in his refrigerator, proved to be the decisive marker in the sharply rising graph of Muslim-targeted hate crimes that followed the BJP's victory of 2014. The thrashing to death of Tabrez Ansari, in Saraiela village, Jharkhand, barely 24 days after the BJP government was sworn in for a second term, signposts changing patterns in the ecology of hate crimes in the country.

How do we assess Vigilantism 2.0 against the backdrop of Modi Sarkar 2.0? The first aspect in the Ansari killing was that, in contrast to that of Akhlaq, it did not involve beef. The act was pared down to its fundamentals — the Muslim identity of the subject, with the charge of theft being applied as a masking agent. In fact, it reflected a certain impatience with the elaborate charade of cow protection being used to justify attacks on Muslims. How often can a potential vigilante produce hard evidence of meat possession in order to launch such assaults? Isn't it so much easier to target someone for resisting the evocation of Lord Ram; someone on whose tongue the words "Jai Shri Ram" arrive unwillingly?

This brings us to another characteristic of the Ansari killing. It was part of a triumphalist upsurge that followed the May 23 verdict that manifested itself within hours of the BJP victory, and continues to the present day. The celebrants, impervious to the anguished cries of their victims, sought to make the Modi victory their own, playing out their own fantasies of power by forcing random people to pronounce one of the central slogans of political Hindutva. How random these victims were can be judged by the geographical spread of the most recent attacks. They included a group of Muslim men in Barpeta, Assam, a skull-cap wearing teenager in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, a cab driver in Thane, Maharashtra, a cleric aboard a train from Gaya, Bihar, young men in Delhi's Rohini area and Haryana's Gurgaon. Only two commonalities were evident: The religion of the assaulter and assaulted, and the central slogan of "Jai Shri Ram".

"Jai Shri Ram" has more of a marked presence in contemporary India thanks to social media, than it had in its heyday during the Ram Jannabhoomi movement. But melodious renderings of it, soothing to the ear and heart, are not the ones that garner the most "likes". It is the visceral, gut-spilling, high decibel variations that are "favourited" over and over again. Take

the 'Bajrang Dal song' from Swapnil Murlidhar Barphe: It's a mass of floating super monsters and super heroes hurling themselves at each other, with special effects borrowed from the Bahubali and Chhatrapati Shivaji playbooks. What is conspicuous in this version, which claims over 150 million views, is the way English words are used in a posh accent — "Everybody put your hands up" is spliced into the violence, lending it a certain coolness, an urbane acceptability. The subliminal message is clear: Listeners are enjoined to foist their will on a hated minority, use the mace of angry Hanuman as a hammer of death, with the cry "Jai Shri Ram" denatured from being a general salutation to a communal war cry.

Much blood has flowed down the subterranean culverts linking the Akhlaq and Ansari killings. Public realisation has grown of how the criminal-justice and political costs of such vigilantism are minimal, if at all, and can, in fact, deliver major dividends. There is now a more pronounced public articulation of the previously unthinkable; more demonstrations of the previously undoable. The veneration accorded to a Godse by Pragma Thakur, which helped cement her handsome Lok Sabha victory this time, is striking. While in 2014, Jayant Sinha won his Hazaribagh seat in Jharkhand by a margin of 1,59,128 votes, in 2019 — after his much discussed garlanding of a vigilante killer — he won by a margin of 4,79,548 votes. If the first instance indicated a glorification of the politics of assassination, the second provided tacit stimulus to the politics of vigilantism. If the Akhlaq felling had evoked widespread horror and shock, the eight-hour torture of Ansari four years later brings on public outrage in a few quarters, and sadness in others. But, all of it is now tinged with a certain acceptance that stuff happens, and targeting an entire state for such developments is not fair.

The Reliance Dhirubhai Ambani Professor in South Asian Studies and Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University, Thomas Blom Hansen, writes that the "mightiest socio-political force in India" today is not the state or the law but "deeply embedded vernacular ideas of popular sovereignty". He goes on to add that one of the crucial enabling conditions for public violence is the lack of the "application of the force of law in the face of such exertions of 'the law of force'".

The profoundly disturbing question that he raises should give us pause as we recall young Ansari's terrorised face while being forced to repeat the words, "Jai Shri Ram" yet another time: Is India's democratic revolution devouring democracy?

Philipose has recently authored Media's Shifting Terrain: Five Years that Transformed the Way India Communicates

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CAMERA IN CLASS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Classroom and eye' (IE, July 9). The Delhi government's decision to make classrooms accessible to parents in real-time through a smartphone app is a flawed idea which would dangerously regulate the teaching learning process. It could lead to conditioned behaviour and stem creativity. It would not only put teachers under undue stress, but even the children would be worse off with their classroom privacy eroded.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

SPACE BORDERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'When countries moonwalk' (IE, July 9). The exploration of outer space has progressed as a collective effort of mankind to challenge our territorial limitations and expand our horizons beyond the known universe. Associating successful space missions with national pride could result in a 21st-century space race, which will be detrimental to the overall idea of longing to comprehend the dynamics of various celestial bodies, energy, and the dark matter.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

WATER WOES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'On the water front' (IE, July 9). India is an over-populated country and most of its citizens depend on agriculture, which requires huge amounts of water. Though India enjoys a four-month-long monsoon, it suffers from scarcity of water due to mismanagement and over-exploitation. The water crisis is a challenge not only to farmers but for all citizens. The new Union government has emphasised the importance of water and merged various ministries to form the new Jalashakti ministry. This is a welcome move.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Katwa

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

INDIA LEADS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Budget and the world' (IE, July 9). There is currently subdued growth and muted global sentiments over global GDP growth, which has been lowered by the World Bank due to the protracted trade war between major powers. The announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to raise fiscal resources by drawing sovereign bonds from abroad is a signal that in this era of protectionism, which has characterised the global economy for the past two years, India is chartering a new discourse. India's total external debt is \$543 billion as of March 2019, which is lower than other developing and developed economies. New Delhi can, therefore, lead the way for other economies by embracing globalisation.

Pranay Kumar Shome, Kolkata



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

CONGRESS AND VIOLENCE

THE RECENT CASE of violence in Old Delhi, which started with a parking fight and later acquired communal overtones, is the focus of this week's *Organiser*. The editorial of the magazine connects the vandalism of a "Durga Temple" in the area to Rahul Gandhi's recent resignation from the post of Congress president. Though it "may look like" the two events have "no correlation", the magazine says, "if we go into the nuances of the mindset behind the incidents and the reasons for the downfall of the Congress, there is direct correlation which Rahul Gandhi failed to understand".

It says that vandalism of any place of worship is "unacceptable" but this has happened "because it has been happening in the history and the mindset of iconoclasm was systematically neglected and nurtured" says the editorial, first by the British and then "the Congress led by Nehru-Gandhi family" which overlooked it in the "name of Secularism". Since turning into a "dynas-

tic party" the editorial notes, the Congress has been "piggybacking communists" on ideology "who again defend all ways and means that desecrate the idea of Bharat and actually provide cover to the Iconoclasm practiced by the fundamentalists, is the easy route that the dynasty followed".

Another article on the topic, which too blames the Congress, is titled, 'Mob lynching of idea of Bharat' and claims that the "desecration" of the temple "is part of a political conspiracy to disrupt the functioning of the healthy trend, which is steering the New Bharat". The piece by Satish Kumar states that "the conspiracy smacked to start the blame game against the BJP". The Congress, Kumar says "has started the political narratives against BJP-led national government" that it is "not protecting the Hindu Temple".

Kumar adds: "Certain things are very clear. The overwhelming political mandate in 2019 has frustrated the Congress and other camps of (the) opposition. Their caste card failed so did their unholy alliances. Now, little space is left to create communal disharmony and slap the blame on the ruling party."

A third article in the magazine also discusses the "continuing affair" of the "Islamic destruction of Hindu temples". Rati Hegde, who has written the article, says that "the ardent followers of Islam are perpetuating

what they inherited from the legacy of Muslim invaders — iconoclasm — demolishing Hindu temples".

In *Panchajanya* too the issue has been picked up by Tarun Vijay. He writes that Hindus must be thanked for their patience in Delhi, in light of the incident. He says that "Jihadi Muslims want that a spark somewhere can be used to launch Jihadi attacks on the Narendra Modi government and then go whining around the world, 'look at the injustice towards us'".

PAKISTAN MUST PAY

PANCHAJANYA'S EDITORIAL FOR the week is on how Pakistan must pay for terrorism emanating from its soil. In an issue that it largely focused on international affairs, Pakistan is the main topic. Drawing parallels between the poor performance of Pakistan's cricket team and the state of its economy, the editorial says that "if Pakistan's run rate in the World Cup was negative, then an international rating agency like Fitch has estimated that the country's economy grew at an annual rate of 3.2 per cent".

It says that Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, who was also the captain of the cricket team when it won the World Cup in 1992, had "demolished" the innings of several ace teams, but now he has the respon-

sibility of saving the "demolishing" economy of his country. Taking forward the cricket simile, the magazine says that it is easy to "reverse swing" a ball that has become rough on one side, but a big challenge to forget swing, even keeping a decent "line" and "length" of an economy that has not only become rough on all sides, but has also lost all its shine.

It adds that why India and the world needs to pay attention to Pakistan's economy is because it has nurtured terrorism like a child and has spent on it. A weak Pakistan, it says, is known to be a threat to the world, because in a weakened state the country's weapons of mass destruction can fall into the hands of "Islamic maniacs". It says the question is not of the destitute state of Pakistan, but it is about its "addiction" to "jihad", which it holds close to its chest and wants the help of a progressive world to help its economy.

Another article in the issue, the cover story is about Pakistan having to pay the price for terrorism. It says that "Pakistan is busy spreading terrorist activities among its neighbours" and how "India is its biggest victim". The article talks about the steps to put Pakistan in the FATF blacklist, along with stringent financial sanctions for its role as a terror-sponsor.

Compiled by Krishn Kaushik





Going electric

The budgetary measures can speed up India's plans to switch to electric vehicles

The Union Budget has announced a bold move to make a transition to electric vehicles, and offered a tax incentive for the early adopters. Its stated vision to leapfrog into an era of electric mobility and domestic vehicle manufacturing, led by public transport and commercial vehicles, is forward-looking. It is also inevitable because poor air quality and noise pollution have sharply affected the quality of life, and pose a serious public health challenge. As the NITI Aayog has stated, the goal of shifting to electric vehicles cannot make progress without deadlines, and a market-driven approach sought by some sections of the automotive industry will leave India's capabilities and infrastructure for e-mobility trailing others, notably China. With 2030 as the outer limit, the imperative is to fix a realistic time-frame by which scooters, motorcycles, three-wheel carriages and, later, all new vehicles will be battery powered. An additional income tax deduction of ₹1.5 lakh is now offered on interest paid on loans to purchase electric vehicles, and the GST Council has been moved to cut the tax on e-vehicles to 5% from 12%. Both demands were made by the industry earlier. There is a significant outlay under the second iteration of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing (of Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles (FAME) plan of ₹10,000 crore, to give a fillip to commercial vehicles and to set up charging stations.

The budgetary measures will have an immediate impact on the pricing of electric vehicles and bring in more models, but it will take a sustained effort by the Centre, in partnership with State governments, to enable a fast rollout of charging infrastructure. The Ministry of Power issued guidelines and standards for this in December last year, setting technical parameters for public charging stations that can enable normal and fast charging. With price competition, a speedy spread of electric two-wheelers can be expected, given that over 80% of conventional vehicles sold in India come under that category. Affordable charging will make these vehicles and commercial three-wheelers attractive because operating costs are a fraction of petrol and diesel equivalents. Yet, longer range travel will require more than a charge-at-home facility, and this would have to be in the form of fast charging at parking lots, retrofitted fuel outlets, new public charging stations, hotels, offices and so on. Swapping the battery at convenient locations with one that is pre-charged, especially for commercial vehicles that run longer and need a quick turnaround, is worth considering. A longer-term policy priority has to be the setting up of lithium battery production and solar charging infrastructure of a scale that matches the ambition. The Centre has accepted some of the demands of the auto industry to popularise EVs.

Losing steam

Markets react negatively to the Budget's populism and inability to force reforms

Many investors who were hoping for business-friendly reforms were not too impressed by the maiden Budget of the second Narendra Modi government. After a moderate negative reaction when the Budget was presented in Parliament on Friday, both the Sensex and the Nifty witnessed their biggest fall in over two years on Monday. The Sensex incurred a huge loss of 792.82 points while the Nifty shed about 250 points. Sectors such as banking, automobiles and power were the worst-hit, each witnessing a loss of over 3%. Investors were spooked by a variety of proposals made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that are expected to increase the tax burden on them. These include the proposal to increase long term capital gains tax on foreign portfolio investors and to tax the buy-back of shares by companies at 20%. The negative signal sent by the increased surcharge on people earning over ₹2 crore a year also weighed on markets. This tax on the "super-rich" is unlikely to make much of a difference to the government's fiscal position. However, it does damage the image of the present government as a pro-business one and can affect fund flow into the country if the wealthy prefer to move to other countries. The proposal to raise minimum public shareholding in listed companies from 25% to 35% is also seen as an unnecessary intervention in markets. Global factors like strong jobs data coming from the United States which lowers the chances of an interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve, and the potential systemic risk posed by the troubles faced by Deutsche Bank may have also weighed on the markets. However, the losses experienced by western markets on Monday were nowhere as heavy as the losses faced by the Indian markets.

All these aside, the larger issue bothering the Indian investor may be the Budget's supposed tilt towards populism as the government expands the size of its welfare projects instead of taking steps to revive private investment in the slowing economy. Apart from a few words from the Finance Minister on simplifying labour laws and relieving start-up investors from the regressive "angel tax", the Budget was largely bereft of any major structural reforms that could instil confidence among investors. The trajectory of markets in the coming months will depend on the kind of reforms the government manages to push through, and on the actions of central banks across the globe. While the Reserve Bank of India looks to be easing its policy, any global liquidity tightening can affect foreign fund inflows. Despite lacklustre company earnings and other fundamental issues, markets in the past have been pushed up aggressively by the ample liquidity provided by central banks. But without enough reforms to strengthen the fundamentals that can back lofty valuations, it may be only a matter of time before markets begin to lose steam.

The growing power of the lumpen

The national bar against hate crime has been lowered, but resolute corrective action is possible



RADHA KUMAR

Once again, the first weeks of the Narendra Modi administration have been marked by hate crimes – two Muslim men beaten by mobs in Jharkhand and Mumbai, demanding they shout 'Jai Shri Ram', one so mercilessly that he died. Another man, a tribal, lynched in Tripura on suspicion of being a cattle thief. Most recently, 24 men accused of being cattle smugglers, beaten and made to shout 'Gau Mata ki Jai', in Rajasthan.

This time, however, there is a rising tide of concern, both domestically and internationally. Domestically, there have been a number of editorials, OpEds and talk shows calling for action; internationally, India has begun to feature prominently on a growing list of countries marked by hate crime, including hate speech in electoral campaigns.

A rising graph

Studies of hate crimes in India show that they have steadily risen over the past five years. Amnesty International India documented 721 such incidents between 2015 and 2018. Last year alone, it tracked 218 hate crimes, 142 of which were against Dalits, 50 against Muslims, 40 against women, and eight each against Christians, Adivasis, and transgenders. The more common hate crimes, they found, were honour killings – that have sadly occurred for decades – and 'cow-related violence', that was rare earlier but has become more frequent over

the past five years.

According to Hate Crime Watch, crimes based on religious identity were in single digits until 2014, when they surged from nine in 2013 to 92 in 2018. Of the 291 incidents mentioned by the website, 152 occurred in Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled States, 40 in Congress-ruled States and the rest in States ruled by regional parties or coalitions. Rarely, if ever, did bystanders attempt to stop the violence or police arrive on time to do so. In both studies, Uttar Pradesh topped the list of States with the largest number of hate crimes for the third year, followed by Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

These facts are striking enough to concern any government. The Prime Minister expressed pain at the sickening murder of Tabrez Ansari in Jharkhand, but clearly far more is required. The Rajasthan administration is introducing a Bill prohibiting cow vigilantism, but that deals with only one hate crime. An omnibus act against all hate crimes, including hate speech, is required across India and should be a priority of the 17th Lok Sabha. Germany, for example, amended Section 46 of its Criminal Procedure Code, dealing with sentencing in violent crime, to say the sentence must be based on consideration of 'the motives and aims of the offender, particularly where they are of a racist or xenophobic nature or where they show contempt for human dignity'.

We have a number of sections in the Indian Penal Code that can be used to punish or even prevent hate crime, but they are disparate and few policemen are aware of them. Those that are, fear to use them in areas whose political leaders mobilise through hate speech. Though some Indian analysts debate whether there is a correlation between hate speech and hate



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crime, worldwide data show that hate speech encourages or legitimises acts of violence and a climate of impunity. France has a draft Bill to prohibit hate speech, and Germany has already enacted one.

According to a study by NDTV there are at least 45 politicians in our newly elected union legislature who have indulged in hate speech over the past five years; 35 of them belong to the BJP. No action has been taken as yet by the party, though it is in such a position of strength electorally that it would lose little by acting against them.

Court directives

In 2018, the Supreme Court directed Central and State governments to make it widely known that lynching and mob violence would 'invite serious consequence under the law' (*Tehseen S. Poonawalla v. Union of India & Ors*). Then Home Minister Rajnath Singh told Parliament that the government had formed a panel to suggest measures to tackle mob violence, and would enact a law if necessary. The panel's recommendations are not in the public domain, and acts of hate crime do not appear to have diminished in the year since Mr. Singh's promise.

In a May 2019 report, Human Rights Watch India pointed out

More appeasement than justice

Maratha reservation borders on class legislation rather than signifying reasonable classification



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), once considered to be just a party of upper caste Hindus, is beginning to expand its social base. And a party that has consistently criticised the Indian National Congress for its so-called appeasement policies including sub-quotas for minorities within Other Backward Classes (OBC) and reservation for OBC Muslims is no longer hesitant in extending reservation to newer castes.

In keeping with this line, one has seen it introduce reservation for politically dominant castes such as the Gujjars in Rajasthan, Patidars in Gujarat and the Marathas in Maharashtra. The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh has included 17 OBC castes in the Scheduled Castes list. Even the judiciary that has so far been quite concerned about the 'merit', 'efficiency in administration' and interests of 'general candidates', has sent out mixed signals on invoking the strict scrutiny test in examining the constitutionality of a reser-

vation policy. The Supreme Court has refused to stay the Central government's decision to grant 10% quota in jobs and education to the economically-weaker sections and the Bombay High Court has now upheld reservation for the Maratha community.

Influential reach

Anyone familiar with Maharashtra will know that the Maratha community is an influential and politically dominant caste which has not faced any systematic social discrimination or exclusion. Most of the State's Chief Ministers have been Marathas. While the Mandal Commission identified Marathas to be a 'forward' community, two State Backward Class Commissions, namely the Khatri Commission (1995) and Bapat Commission (2008), recommended not to include them within the OBC category. After the High Court had stayed the 16% reservation made on the basis of the recommendations of non-statutory Narayan Rane Commission (2015), the matter was referred to the M.G. Gaikwad Commission in 2017, which submitted its report in 2018. The Bill was passed and brought into force in less than two weeks.

The Mandal Commission had 11 yardsticks to determine backwardness. On certain parameters, the Gaikwad Commission did go beyond Mandal; some of the yard-



FILE PHOTO

sticks it adopted were controversial. For example, the Commission noted that of the total farmer suicides of 13,368) 2,152 Maratha farmers had ended their lives. It ignored the fact that these were not due to backwardness but because of agrarian crises. The Commission also attached great importance to its finding that while 69% Maratha families sought medical treatment for jaundice, 9.65% sought treatment from tantriks while 0.54% left it 'to the mercy of god'; superstition, and 'blind vows' were factored in as proof of backwardness though such irrational practices or beliefs are prevalent even among the higher castes as well. The Commission also found that a large number of Marathas in Mumbai are engaged in the business of dabbawallas. Acceptance of food from them shows that people do not consider them low caste. The finding of 71% Marathas owning land of less than 2.5 acres was considered a sign of backwardness but such small holdings are due to fragmentation

that only some States had complied with the Supreme Court's orders to designate a senior police officer in every district to prevent incidents of mob violence and ensure that the police take prompt action, including safety for witnesses; set up fast-track courts in such cases; and take action against policemen or officials who failed to comply. Those State governments that did comply, the report commented, did so only partially. In several instances, the police actually obstructed investigations, even filing charges against the victims.

Whether it is political hate speech or police bias on the ground, there is little doubt that the national bar against hate crime has been lowered. On television, we see replays of hate speech and videos of lynching. Though the accompanying commentary is critical, repeated iterations normalise the hateful. Indeed, anchors themselves resort to invective far more often than before – note how Kashmiris are routinely heckled and abused on talk shows. The print media too is failing. Several newspapers now publish triumphalist opinion articles, including comments to articles that are hate speech by any definition. Criticism of blatantly communal government actions such as extension of refugee and citizenship on religious identity has grown increasingly muted.

Key steps needed

One of the policy issues that is high on the Modi administration's list is dealing with incitement to violence through social media. But the focus is on hate in relation to terrorism, and it is unclear whether government policy will extend to cover hate crime. Important as it is to do so, the digital media is not the only offender. In fact,

there are several obvious steps which would be easier to take and yield more immediate results than regulation of the digital media. Parliament could enact an omnibus act against hate crime, and the Home Minister could set benchmarks for policemen and administrators to deal with hate crime. The legislature and political parties could suspend or dismiss members who are implicated in hate crimes or practise hate speech. The electronic and print media could stop showing or publishing hateful comments and threats. Priests could preach the values of tolerance and respect that are common to all religions and schools could revitalise courses on the directive principles of our Constitution.

For Mr. Modi, there is an additional challenge. He has twice spoken out against hate crime, but his words of pain have not been backed by action, either by his party or by BJP-led administrations. Does he have so little influence over his own? We have to hope not.

For a demographically diverse country such as India, hate crimes – including crimes of contempt – are a disaster. Each of our religious and caste communities number in the millions, and crimes that are directed against any of these groups could result in a magnitude of disaffection that impels violence, even terrorism. Far less diverse countries than India are already suffering the result of hate 'moving into the mainstream', as UN Secretary General António Guterres recently highlighted. We can still contain its spread if we act resolutely. Or else our political leaders might find the lumpen tail wagging their dog.

Radha Kumar is a writer and policy analyst

of land as a result of inheritance laws rather than it being a sign of backwardness. The Maratha share of 19.5% in government jobs too cannot satisfy the constitutional requirement of inadequacy of representation; even the finding that Marathas constitute 30% of the State's population is suspect as the Commission excluded Muslims, Jains, Sikhs and unreserved categories in its population count. In fact on most parameters, Marathas are on a par with other forward castes and the OBCs. Singling them out for reservation is appeasement and not justice. Moreover, the Commission had recommended 12% to 13% reservation which the BJP government enhanced to 16%. The sample size was too small and it considered just 950 urban families; it also excluded Mumbai.

On classification

After all, social and educational backwardness are but an aspect of backwardness and must therefore fall within the OBC classification. Even conceding that Marathas are backward and need reservation, they should have ideally been included within the OBC. But the High Court upheld the creation of a distinct class of socially and educationally backward class with just one caste (Marathas) included under it. The issue of Gujjar reservation was struck down in *Captain*

Gurvinder Singh (2016) though along with Gujjars, four other castes were also given the benefit. Jat reservation, in *Ram Singh* (2015), was declared unconstitutional because only one caste was favoured. Maratha reservation thus borders on class legislation rather than reasonable classification. Article 14 prohibits class legislation.

Since the National Commission for Backward Classes was not consulted, the constitutionality of Maratha reservation is suspect but the High Court observed that the NBCC had in no way taken away the powers of the State commission. Similarly, the Uttar Pradesh government has ignored the National Commission for Scheduled Castes in according SC status to 17 castes.

The weakest part of the judgment is ignoring the 50% upper limit of reservation by relying on the small window of exception permitted in *Indra Sawhney*, i.e. the factor of remote or far flung areas and an absence from national main stream. None is available to the Marathas.

Let the BJP not deviate from its stated policy on appeasement and do justice to all including Marathas and Muslims.

Faizan Mustafa is Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. The views expressed are personal

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.

Karnataka crisis

The political charade in Karnataka has come to such a pass that the Bharatiya Janata Party that had unsuccessfully formed the first government after the election is at government formation again by trial and error and subverting the will of the people of Karnataka (Editorial, "The visible hand", July 9). Both the party and its State party president and former Karnataka Chief Minister, B.S. Yeddyurappa, have a yen to wrest power even if they lose elections.

Consequently, the party with a difference has metamorphosed into a party of defectors and the MLAs who are raring to cross over have betrayed the trust of the people. If the JD(S) and the Congress give rebel MLAs ministerial berths, it will be a surefire way for others to rebel. This is a vicious circle. Even if the BJP manages to form a

government with floating MLAs, its longevity will be suspect again. This will give rise to a piquant situation. One can safely conclude that democracy in Karnataka is at the mercy of power-hungry politicians.

ABDUL ASSIS P.A.,
Kandassankadavu, Thrissur, Kerala

■ Even if the BJP forms the government through the back door, it would not be the government of, for and by the people, but of, for and by defectors. The party leadership in Delhi may claim that it has nothing to do with the crisis but the acts of their State leaders make it crystal clear that these cannot be without clearance from Delhi. Perhaps the time has come to dissolve the House and let voters decide who they want.

N. NAGARAJAN,
Secunderabad

■ If the party leadership somehow succeeds in

appeasing the disgruntled MLAs they can never be trusted. Amidst political uncertainty the administration will be in a state of inertia. Parties must think about dealing with horse trading and shifting allegiance in a serious manner. Existing anti-defection laws are ineffective and law-makers find out ample loopholes to escape disqualification. Those who vitiate democratic credibility must be debarred from accessing all benefits as elected representatives.

DR. GEORGE VAREEKAL,
Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh

Quota and caste

The assertion in the article, "Reinforcing caste hierarchies" (Editorial page, July 9) is that "reservation is not the real answer" though in the context of its latest avatar, the Maratha quota, is a good enough reason to revisit the time when it was first introduced. At that time,

this short-term special measure was intended to bring the 'backward' sections to a level that was on a par with others. That it continues and expands is an indication of the failure of the scheme. Instead of there being a scientific assessment, the issue has been treated politically. To perpetuate the short-term plan and to expand it in all directions are the hallmarks of vote-bank politics. How it reduces the 'merit' element in education, the bureaucracy, legislature and other sections is a governance issue. This is the reason why caste hierarchies continue and are reinforced. Only proper Constitutional amendments to delete discriminatory provisions can help progress.

P.R.V. RAJA,
Pandalam, Kerala

■ The objective of reservation was to uplift the 'downtrodden' and not to encourage indiscriminate

profiteering at the expense of deserving candidates. The system today not only strengthens the caste divide but also creates resentment in communities unable to reap the benefits of reservation. It may not be an exaggeration to say that 'brain drain' is a consequence of the reservation system. Capable students prefer to move abroad where their work and capabilities are rewarded.

KSHITIJ MANI TRIPATHI,
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Road safety

Though the human factor is often cited in fatal road accidents, one cannot

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The report headlined "Shutdown in Valley on Wani's death anniversary" (July 9, 2019) referred to Burhan Wani's killing on June 8, 2016. It should have been July 8, 2016. Also, it talked about slowing down of internet speeds on Tuesday. It should have been Monday.

An Editorial page article titled "A shot at economic logic" (July 9, 2019) talked about the creation of an African common market with a GDP of \$3.4 billion. It should have been \$3.4 trillion.

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The malaise of malnutrition

India needs to double yearly rate of fall in stunting cases to achieve its 2022 target



THOMAS ABRAHAM

A new report, ‘Food and Nutrition Security Analysis, India, 2019’, authored by the Government of India and the United Nations World Food Programme, paints a picture of hunger and malnutrition amongst children in large pockets of India. This punctures the image of a nation marching towards prosperity. It raises moral and ethical questions about the nature of a state and society that, after 70 years of independence, still condemns hundreds of millions of its poorest and vulnerable citizens to lives of hunger and desperation. And it once again forces us to ask why despite rapid economic growth, declining levels of poverty, enough food to export, and a multiplicity of government programmes, malnutrition amongst the poorest remains high.

A trap of poverty, malnutrition

The report shows the poorest sections of society caught in a trap of poverty and malnutrition, which is being passed on from generation to generation. Mothers who are hungry and malnourished produce children who are stunted, underweight and unlikely to develop to achieve their full human potential.

The effects of malnourishment in a small child are not merely physical. A developing brain that is deprived of nutrients does not reach its full mental potential. A study in the *Lancet* notes, “Undernutrition can affect cognitive development by causing direct structural damage to the brain and by impairing infant motor development.” This in turn affects the child’s ability to learn at school, leading to a lifetime of poverty and lack of opportunity.

Another study in the *Lancet* observes, “These disadvantaged children are likely to do poorly in school and subsequently have low incomes, high fertility, and provide poor care for their children, thus contributing to the inter-generational transmission of poverty.” In other words, today’s poor hungry children are likely to be tomorrow’s hungry, unemployed and undereducated adults.

The findings in the report are not new: many studies over the last five



REUTERS

years have exposed the failure of the Indian state to ensure that its most vulnerable citizens are provided adequate nutrition in their early years. India has long been home to the largest number of malnourished children in the world. Some progress has been made in reducing the extent of malnutrition. The proportion of children with chronic malnutrition decreased from 48% percent in 2005-06 to 38.4% in 2015-16. The percentage of underweight children decreased from 42.5% to 35.7% over the same period. Anaemia in young children decreased from 69.5% to 58.5% during this period. But this progress is small.

An ambitious target

The government’s National Nutrition Mission (renamed as Poshan Abhiyaan) aims to reduce stunting (a measure of malnutrition that is defined as height that is significantly below the norm for age) by 2% a year, bringing down the proportion of stunted children in the population to 25% by 2022. But even this modest target will require doubling the current annual rate of reduction in stunting.

The minutes of recent meetings of the Executive Committee of Poshan Abhiyaan do not inspire much confidence about whether this can be achieved. A year after it was launched, State and Union Territory governments have only used 16% of the funds allocated to them. Fortified rice and milk were to be introduced in one district per State by March this year. But the minutes of a March 29 meeting showed that this had not been done, and officials in charge of public distribution had not yet got their act together. Or, as the minutes put it, “The matter is under active consideration of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution”. Anganwadis are key to the distribution of services to mothers and children. But many States, including Bihar and Od-

isha, which have large vulnerable populations, are struggling to set up functioning anganwadis, and recruit staff.

The key to ending the tragedy of child nutrition lies with a handful of State governments: the highest levels of stunted and underweight children are found in Jharkand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Malnutrition is a reflection of age-old patterns of social and economic exclusion. Over 40% of children from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are stunted. Close to 40% of children from the Other Backward Classes are stunted. The lack of nutrition in their childhood years can reduce their mental as well as physical development and condemn them to a life in the margins of society.

Stunting and malnourishment starts not with the child, but with the mother. An adolescent girl who is malnourished and anaemic tends to be a mother who is malnourished and anaemic. This in turn increased the chances of her child being stunted.

The problem is access to food

As Amartya Sen noted, famines are caused not by shortages of food, but by inadequate access to food. And for the poor and marginalised, access to food is impeded by social, administrative and economic barriers. In the case of children and their mothers, this could be anything from non-functioning or neglectful governments at the State, district and local levels to entrenched social attitudes that see the poor and marginalised as less than equal citizens who are meant to be an underclass and are undeserving of government efforts to provide them food and lift them out of poverty.

A lot of attention has focussed on the government’s aim of turning India into a \$5 trillion economy in the next five years. Whether this will achieved is a matter for debate. But these declarations only serve to obscure a larger reality. There is a large section of society, the poorest two-fifths of the country’s population, that is still largely untouched by the modern economy which the rest of the country inhabits. As one part of the country lives in a 21st century economy, ordering exotic cuisines over apps, another part struggles with the most ancient of realities: finding enough to eat to tide them over till the next day.

Thomas Abraham is a Bengaluru-based writer on social issues. He is the author of ‘Polio: The Odyssey of Eradication’

A pre-election strike on Iran?

Why a purportedly ‘limited’ attack by the U.S. is likely — and worrying



TABISH KHAIR

Is Iran being set up for a ‘limited scale conflict’ just before the U.S. presidential election? This is a suspicion that might be far from the minds of North and West European leaders, hailing from countries that, since World War II, have been sceptical of war, especially in their own neighbourhoods. But Iran is not really in their neighbourhood. Will countries like Germany, France or Brexiting-U.K. have the conviction or coherence to stand up for Iran, which has been pushed into a corner by the one-sided withdrawal of Donald Trump’s U.S. from the international nuclear deal brokered under former U.S. President Barack Obama? It remains one of the great ironies of politics today that Mr. Trump is such good friends with North Korea, which seems to have no intention of abandoning its nuclear weapons, and so belligerent towards Iran, which did sign an international nuclear deal!

Liberal Europe might have trouble imagining the effect of a ‘limited scale conflict’ on a national electorate just before elections, but surely we Indians have larger imaginations? I am not saying that Mr. Trump and his publicity troops are planning a ‘hot’, instead of the currently ‘cold’, conflict with Iran. What I am saying is that there are very good ‘factors’ which may lead to it.

Demonstration of ‘greatness’

Mr. Trump needs a ‘patriotic’ surge to be certain of victory in the coming presidential election, and he is a politician not averse to chest-thumping heroics at the cost of other people’s sons. Not surprisingly, this year marked the first 4th of July celebration in recent memory that was highly politicised and in which the U.S. armed forces were clearly inserted into the current Republican slogan of ‘Make America Great Again’. It was also a far more military show than in the past. This overlap of the ‘greatness’ of the American military — U.S. military expenditure in 2018 was around \$650 billion (China was second with \$250 billion, and Saudi Arabia and India, hurrah, were third and fourth with about \$67 billion each) — with the political rhetoric of ‘greatness’ pursued



AFP

by Mr. Trump’s Republicans can lead to a ‘demonstration’ of ‘greatness’ on Iran. Such a ‘demonstration’ is likely in other ways too. For instance, the U.S.’s two best friends — Saudi Arabia and Israel — clearly want Iran dismantled as much as possible. The rhetoric of ‘Islamist terror’ can be used to effect this, particularly because most Americans cannot distinguish between Shia and Sunni Muslims, and hence do not know that the hated Islamic State and al Qaeda are Sunni, while Iran is Shia.

To this will be added a certain section of the liberal voice in the ‘free’ West: people who have good reasons to dislike the clerical regime in Iran, people who would like to see Iran become democratic. While their reasons are good, many of them are too idealistic or too removed from Iran to think of what might happen once the conflict begins — and escalates. Perhaps I am being pessimistic, but I have seen a number of countries go to pieces under the flag of ‘freedom’ in recent years: Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan. In every case, there was hope and many good arguments for a change of regime. In every case, the hopes have been belied and, looking back, the earlier status quo seems to have been a relative mercy.

Moreover, North and West European states are bogged down in a post-Brexit situation, have highly developed but stagnant economies, and pacifist but increasingly parochial electorates. They would not be willing to do much to stop a conflict. Given the fact that the two biggest industries in the world — weapons and oil — might have vested interests in a ‘limited conflict’ in Iran, and these industries are not voiceless in Europe either, one can also expect the worst.

Finally, the ‘national ethos’ of Iran will contribute to it too. Iran is one of the major nations of the world, the core of an ancient civilisation. Many Ira-

nians would be too proud to eat humble pie in the face of American might. They are likely to be encouraged into war-like sentiments by the more radical Iranian mullahs, with their own Islamic suspicion of the U.S. and the West. The ability of the religious to believe that God will intervene on their behalf is not a reassuring element either.

A different matter

The likelihood of a staged conflict just before the U.S. presidential election getting out of hand ought to worry India. A conflict between the U.S. and Iran would not be like a conflict between India and Pakistan, which are neighbours. They can inflict some damage on each other. And the only likelihood — victory by India, which is the greater military power — would leave matters unresolved for the victor: India will not only have to control much of hostile captured territory but still be exposed to ‘Islamist’ attacks from other Muslim countries, because even beyond Pakistan there lie other Muslim nations and regions. Incidentally, these other neighbours do not desire major trouble between India and Pakistan; they prefer the current status quo. There will also be no ‘global’ or ‘liberal’ cheerleading for either India or Pakistan in the case of a conflict.

But a purportedly ‘limited’ attack by the U.S. on Iran is a different matter: the U.S. would remain largely unaffected, because it is too far away and far too strong. Iran has neighbours — not just Saudi Arabia and Israel — who would love to see it bombed a few decades back into the past. And there will even be a degree of ‘global’ and ‘liberal’ cheerleading for a presumed ‘return to democracy’ in Iran. The prospects, to say the least, are worrying.

Tabish Khair is an Indian novelist and academic who works in Denmark

Global problem, local solutions

Forest dwellers and farmers are the best hope to preserve biodiversity and ensure food security

SOUMYA SARKAR

The Dongria Kondh tribe of Niyamgiri Hills are among the best conservationists in the world. Known for the spirited defence of their forested habitat against short-sighted industrialisation, they have through millennia evolved a lifestyle that is in perfect harmony with nature. Across India, there are scores of indigenous people who have managed to lead meaningful lives without wanton destruction of natural ecosystems.



These tribes, along with marginalised communities living on the fringes of forests and millions of smallholder farmers, are the best hope that India has to preserve biodiversity and ensure food security. At a time when nature faces the threat of another mass extinction of species, their importance cannot be emphasised enough because they offer us solutions to avert an imminent meltdown.

The first global assessment of biodiversity by a UN-backed panel, which released its report in May, held humans squarely responsible for the looming mass extinction of species. Without radical efforts towards conservation, the rate of species extinction will only gather momentum. The red flag comes close on the heels of a February report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). A loss in biodiversity simply means that plants and animals are more vulnerable to pests and diseases, and it puts food security and nutrition at risk, the FAO said.

At a higher risk

Although biodiversity loss is a global problem, it can be countered only with local solutions. There’s no one-size-fits-all approach. A solution that has succeeded in a temperate, wealthy nation may not be suitable for a country like India. Our tropical homeland is rich in biodiversity, but the imperatives of relentless economic growth, urbanisation, deforestation and overpopulation place it at risk more than many other places. Nothing can be achieved without

the active participation of communities that live close to nature — farmers and forest dwellers. It is now obvious that intensive agriculture, exploitative forestry and overfishing are the main threats to biodiversity in India and the world. In their prognosis, UN agencies are unanimous that the best way to correct the present course is to heed the accumulated wisdom of indigenous peoples, fishers and farmers.

The situation with our forests is even more dire. Instead of evicting forest dwellers from their homes, we should be encouraging them to conserve and nurture their habitats.

Pressure from industrialisation does not care too much about conservation and biodiversity. The same holds true for the overexploitation of our rivers and seas.

For solutions one has to just look at the growing movement of zero-budget natural farming in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, or the community-driven forest conservation initiatives in Odisha and the Northeast, to realise that there is hope for the natural ecosystem, if only we act on the advice of local communities.

No silver bullet

There is no silver bullet to solve the problem of crop and biodiversity loss at the national level. The natural farming movement in Andhra Pradesh may not be suitable for, say, Punjab. Fortunately, India’s farmers and tribes are nothing if not innovative and they do have local solutions.

Loss of biodiversity and the threat of species extinction along with the alarming changes wrought by global warming are the primary concerns of our times. Our best bet for survival depends on how well we address these issues. We can do that only if we put people at the centre of our actions. If we continue to ride roughshod over the people who are essential to revitalising nature, we do so only at our peril.

Soumya Sarkar is Managing Editor of IndiaClimateDialogue.net



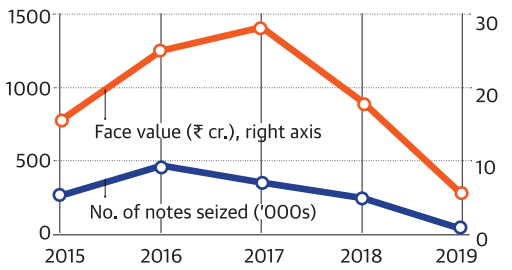
DATA POINT

Money, but not really

The number of seized fake currency notes and the cumulative face value of these notes declined from 2015 to 2019*. Delhi accounted for the highest quantum of fake currency notes seized between 2015 and 2019. The ₹500 note is the most counterfeited note in terms of numbers. By Varun B. Krishnan

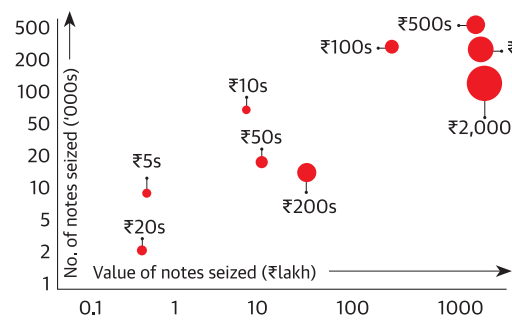
Decline across the board

The year 2017 (after demonetisation) saw a dip in the number of fake currency notes but an upsurge in the face value of notes seized



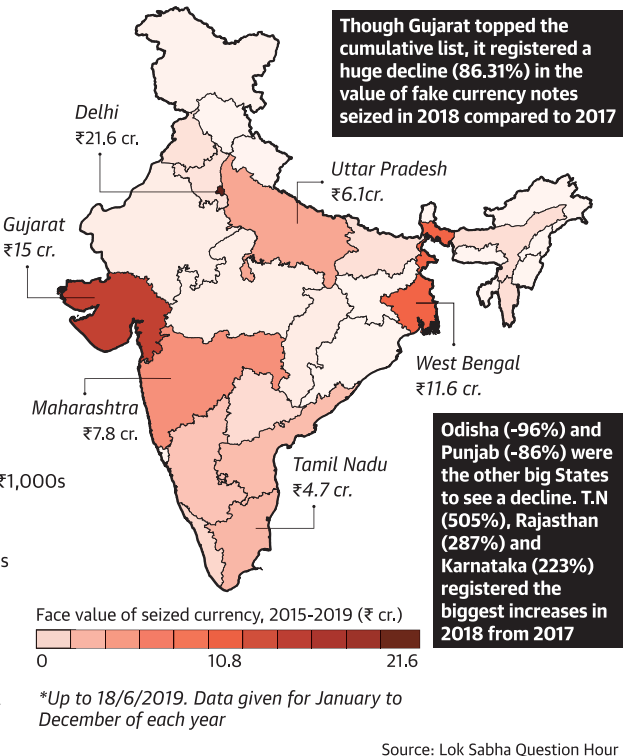
₹2,000 notes catch up

Fake ₹1,000 notes continued to be seized post-demonetisation. The number and face value of fake ₹2,000s seized were high despite being introduced later



Fake currency hotspots

Apart from the national capital, Gujarat and West Bengal registered the highest quantum of fake currency seized in the past five years



FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 10, 1969

P.M. wants selective bank take-over

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, sprung a major surprise to-night [July 9] by sending a note to the Congress Working Committee - through a special messenger from Delhi - more or less associating herself with the Leftist demand for bank nationalisation. When the Working Committee was discussing the draft on economic policy, prepared by Mr. C. Subramaniam and Mr. Sadiq Ali, the Prime Minister’s note was received spelling out her broad approach to problems of agriculture, industry and financial institutions. Mrs. Gandhi did not plead for bank nationalisation as such but expressed the view that the suggestion for selective nationalisation of some of the major banks was worth considering in the context of the larger economic objectives of the Congress Party. The Prime Minister’s note was not considered in detail by the Working Committee since there was not enough time before the members adjourned for the dinner given in their honour by the Mysore Pradesh Congress Reception Committee. But it will be discussed at length in Mrs. Gandhi’s presence when the Working Committee meets again to-morrow night.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 10, 1919.

German Gold for Indian Sediton.

The mail papers from England bring the sensational news that Mrs. [Annie] Besant in interviews to the Press has made the definite statement that, to her own certain knowledge, German gold energised sediton and unrest in India. Speaking to an interviewer of the London ‘Times’ she declared that “the revolutionary party in India was supported largely by German money, which had been used for many years in the effort to cause unrest. Even before the war, money had been spent freely on German propaganda work, which was carried on largely by German missionaries who taught children to ‘call for the German Kaiser’, instead of for our own King-Emperor. The first results of German propaganda were the revolutionary movements in Punjab and Bengal. Impatience at the slow progress made towards freedom by the old peaceful methods had caused the younger men in India, particularly the student class, to despair of those methods ever proving successful. Their participation in revolution was an act of despair, but the number of this class associated with the purely revolutionary movement, who wanted separation, was small.”



कलात्मकता को पकड़ पाने का बूता सबमें नहीं होता है

साहित्य हर भाषा, हर देश, हर युग में सीमित व्यक्तियों की चीज रही है, क्योंकि जो कलात्मकता होती है, उसको पकड़ पाने का बूता सबमें नहीं होता है। हर रचना को पाठक विस्तार देता है। साहित्य को उस ढंग से लोकप्रिय नहीं बनाया जा सकता, जिस ढंग से सिनेमा है। यदि वैसा ही किया गया, तो साहित्य का स्तर भी सिनेमा की तरह गिरता चला जाएगा। साहित्य अपनी विशिष्टता, प्रयोगधर्मिता और बारीकीयत के कारण सीमित दायरे की चीज है। आप इसे उसकी सीमा भी कह सकते हैं। साहित्य में आम जनता और उसकी जिंदगी को केंद्र बनाकर कथाएं लिखी जा सकती हैं, लेकिन वह साहित्य लेखक की संवेदना के बल पर ही होगा, सिर्फ जानकारी के

अंवार से साहित्य नहीं बनता। सिर्फ जनवाद या प्रगतिवाद के नाम पर संवेदना से कटी कहानियों का कोई साहित्यिक मूल्य नहीं हो सकता। मैं मानता हूँ कि साहित्य व्यक्ति के अंदर बदलाव लाता है। इसका प्रभाव अंतरिक और बहुत गहरा होता है। लेकिन साहित्य के कारण सामाजिक स्तर पर बदलाव होता है या साहित्य परिवर्तन का एक अंजार है- यह मैं नहीं मानता। प्रेमचंद ने सामाजिक बुराइयों पर कितना लिखा, लेकिन कहां दहेज खत्म हुआ, कहां जातिवाद खत्म हुआ और कहां सूदखोरी गई? शोषण आज भी कई रूपों में जारी है। सामाजिक शक्तियों ही बदलाव लाती हैं। जैसे उदाहरण दूँ कि आपको नारी की स्थिति में बदलाव दिखता होगा, सही है। लेकिन वह लेखन के कारण नहीं है। समय और उसके दबाव ने उसकी स्थिति को बदला है। समय बदला तो समाज का ढांचा बदला, परिवार का स्वरूप बदला। परिवार की जरूरतें और आकांक्षाएं बढ़ीं। स्त्री शिक्षित होने लगी। शिक्षित हो गईं, तो नौकरी और कामकाज से जुड़ी, वह आर्थिक रूप से सक्षम हो गईं। सक्षम हो गईं तो उसकी पुरानी स्थिति बदल गई, वह थोड़ा स्वतंत्र हुई।

-वरिष्ठ हिंदी साहित्यकार



कान्हा, गुरुजी और उनकी सीख

यह कान्हा की कहानी है, जिसका नजरिया गुरुजी की बात से बदल गया।



कान्हा हमेशा से फौजी बनना चाहता था। गुरुकुल में बचपन से ही उसके हुनर की वाहवाही होती थी। लोग कहते थे कि वह जो भी सोच ले, वह करके दिखाता था। दसवीं और बाहर्वी में प्रथम आने के बाद अब उसका लक्ष्य सिर्फ फौजी बनना था। इसके लिए उसे एनटीए (नेशनल डिफेंस एकेडमी) में दाखिला चाहिए था। लेकिन कई बार प्रयास करने के बाद भी वह एनटीए की परीक्षा नहीं पास कर पाया। इस तरह तीन साल गुजर गए। इस बार गुरुजी के कहने पर उसने एनटीए के साथ-साथ मेडिकल का फॉर्म भी भरा। एनटीए में तो उसका दाखिला नहीं हुआ, लेकिन मेडिकल में उसके बहुत अच्छे नंबर आए। गुरुजी के कहने पर उसने मेडिकल की पढ़ाई शुरू कर दी। शुरू से ही कान्हा का हाथ सर्जरी में काफी स्थिर और साफ था। हालांकि कान्हा का काफी नाम होने लगा, लेकिन कान्हा अब भी मायूस रहता था। एक दिन कान्हा ने अस्पताल फोन करके कहा कि वह सर्जरी के लिए नहीं आ पाएगा। कान्हा के सहायक ने उसे बताया कि कई मरीज सर्जरी के लिए इंतजार कर रहे हैं, लेकिन कान्हा का जरा भी मन नहीं था जाने का। सहायक ने सारी बात गुरुजी को बताई। जब गुरुजी कान्हा के घर पहुंचे, तो कान्हा ने कहा, गुरुजी आपके कहने पर ही मैंने डॉक्टरी की पढ़ाई की। लेकिन मेरा मन तो देश सेवा में लगा रहता है। गुरुजी बोले, बेटा, जरूरी नहीं कि जो हम देखें, वही सही हो। क्या पता, शायद तुम्हें फौज में कुछ अच्छा ही न लगता। लेकिन यहां तुम्हें रोज ढेरों लोगों की जिंदगी बचाने का मौका मिल रहा है। जो तुम कर पा रहे हो, वह क्या हर कोई कर पाता है? इस तरह से तुम देश की सेवा ही तो कर रहे हो। चाहो तो खुद को सफल मानकर, अपने बीते हुए कल को धुलाकर अपने देशवासियों की सेवा कर सकते हो।

सिर्फ नजरिया बदल लेने से हमारी दुनिया बदल सकती है।



दिल्ली

-आगरा यमुना एक्सप्रेस-वे पर सोमवार तड़के उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य परिवहन निगम की एक बस के दुर्घटनाग्रस्त होने को सिर्फ एक और सड़क हादसा मानकर टाला नहीं जा सकता। यह भीषण हादसा जिस समय हुआ, अधिकांश यात्री नींद में थे और जब तक वे कुछ समझ पाते, बस बेकाबू होकर एक नाले में जा गिरी, जिसमें 29 यात्री मारे गए और 27 घायल हो गए। संदेह है कि यह हादसा बस ड्राइवर को झपकी आ जाने से हुआ और अंदाजा है कि उस समय बस की रफ्तार तकरीबन 120 किलोमीटर प्रति घंटे थी, जो कि सौ किलोमीटर प्रति घंटे की मान्य सीमा से काफी अधिक थी। यह विडंबना ही है कि जिन एक्सप्रेस-वे को विकास के आधुनिकतम प्रतीक के रूप में

बी

ते 27 जून को लाहौर किले में महाराजा रणजीत सिंह की प्रतिमा स्थापित की गई, जहां से उन्होंने पश्चिमोत्तर भारत के एक बड़े हिस्से पर शासन किया, इससे हो सकता है कि भारत और पाकिस्तान, दोनों के पंजाब प्रांत में खुशी की थोड़ी लहर चले। लेकिन पाकिस्तान में इस अभूतपूर्व घटना ने एक वास्तविक बहस छेड़ दी है। इस पर उठाए जा रहे कई सवालों में से एक सवाल यह है कि एक इस्लामी गणराज्य को क्यों एक ऐसे शासक की प्रतिमा स्थापित करनी चाहिए, जो 18वीं शताब्दी के पंजाब की तीन मुख्यधाराओं-मुस्लिम, हिंदू और सिख में से एक का प्रतिनिधित्व करता था।

स्थानीय स्तर पर तैयार इस प्रतिमा का खर्च ब्रिटेन स्थित एक सिख संगठन ने वहन किया है। महाराजा की 180वीं पुण्यतिथि पर इसका अनावरण पाकिस्तान में किया गया, जो भारत के साथ करतारपुर सिख गुरुद्वारे तक एक गलियारा बनाने का काम कर रहा है, लेकिन भारत को व्यापाक द्विपक्षीय वार्ता की मेज पर लाने में अक्षम रहा है। पाकिस्तान के विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री ने उक्त अवसर पर ट्वीट किया कि आज पंजाब के महान राजा महाराजा रणजीत सिंह की 180वीं पुण्यतिथि है, जिन्होंने काबुल से दिल्ली तक जुझारूपन के साथ शासन किया, पंजाबी वर्चस्व के प्रतीक महाराजा को शासन में सुधारों के लिए याद किया जाएगा। इस ट्वीट के 'जश्न वाले' लहजे पर सवाल उठाते हुए लाहौर स्थित एक शिक्षाविद अली उस्मान कासमी ने मंत्री के ट्वीट की 'तथ्यात्मक त्रुटियों' की ओर इशारा किया। महाराजा रणजीत सिंह ने अविभाजित पंजाब, जम्मू, कश्मीर और लद्दाख के ज्यादातर हिस्सों (संपूर्ण हिस्से पर



महाराजा रणजीत सिंह की 180वीं पुण्यतिथि पर लाहौर किले में उनकी प्रतिमा स्थापित की गई है, जिस पर बहस छिड़ गई है। कुछ लोगों का मानना है कि इसका मकसद व्यावसायिक है।

महेंद्र वेद, वरिष्ठ पत्रकार



नहीं) पर शासन किया, लेकिन उन्होंने कभी काबुल और दिल्ली पर शासन नहीं किया।

प्रतिमा ने कोई विवाद नहीं फैलाया है और न ही इस पर कोई सार्वजनिक बहस है, हालांकि किले के शहर लाहौर के प्राधिकरण ने व्यापक परामर्श के बिना इसे स्थापित करने का फैसला लिया। कासमी का मानना है कि इसका मकसद व्यावसायिक है कि किले को देखने के लिए आने वाले पर्यटक प्रतिमा को देखने के लिए भुगतान करेंगे। इस बात

को लेकर लोगों की राय अलग-अलग है कि क्या यह अच्छा है और पाकिस्तान के बाहर इसका क्या संदेश जाएगा। कासमी पंजाब में परस्पर विरोधी आख्यानो की तरफ इशारा करते हैं। कुछ लोगों के लिए, जिनमें ज्यादातर सिख हैं, रणजीत सिंह मुगल, तुर्क, ईरानी और अन्यो की तुलना में एक स्थानीय नायक-मोटी के लाल थे, जिन्होंने उत्तर के आक्रांताओं को सफलता पूर्व नाकाम किया और एक मजबूत केंद्रीकृत सरकार की स्थापना की,

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रकारों और पर्यटन व्यवसायी विश्व स्तर पर विभिन्न आस्थाओं के श्रद्धालुओं से मुनाफा कमाने के लिए 'पिलग्रिमेज टूरिज्म' या तीर्थयात्रिक पर्यटन पर जोर दे रहे हैं। तीर्थयात्रियों को पर्यटक मोड में ढालना इसकी रणनीति होती है। तीर्थ स्थलों के प्राकृतिक संसाधन आधार पर बढ़ती भीड़ का क्या प्रभाव होगा, इसकी चिंता पर्यटन व्यवसायियों और सरकारों में दिखाई नहीं देती। कस्बाई तीर्थस्थलों की सीमित ढांचगत संरचना तथा प्राकृतिक संसाधन आधार अपनी स्थायी आबादी से कई गुणा भीड़ की जरूरतों के बोझ से चरमरा जाते हैं। नतीजतन स्थानीय पर्यावरण व पारिस्थितिकी को नुकसान की आशंका बढ़ जाती है। जल संसाधनों को तीर्थयात्रियों की भीड़ में प्रदूषण मुक्त रखना तीर्थस्थलों की एक प्रमुख समस्या है।

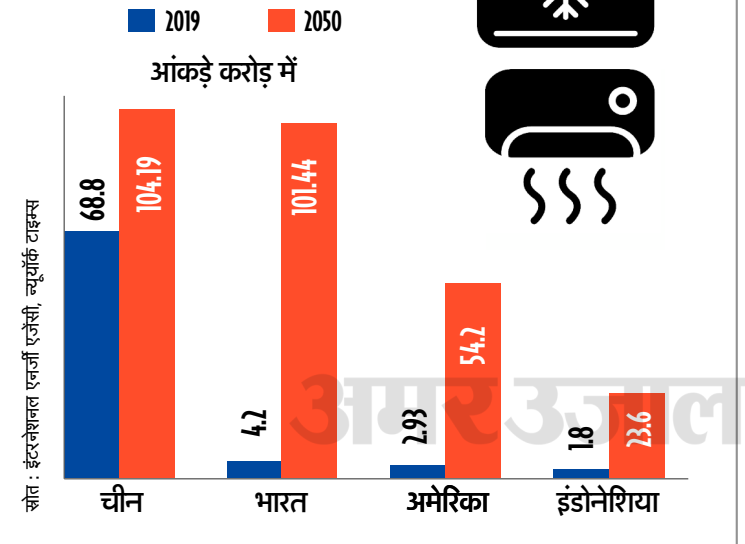
उत्तराखंड की ही बात लें, तो सौ से ज्यादा स्थानों पर गंगा और उसकी सहायक नदियों में गंगोत्री से हरिद्वार तक अनुपचारित जल-मल पहुंच रहा है। आचमन व स्नान भी इसी जल से हो रहा है। वाहनों से पैदा होने वाला प्रदूषण और प्लास्टिक कचरा भी समस्याएं पैदा कर रहा है। ऐसे में क्या पर्यटन प्रेरित स्थानीय पारिस्थितिकी व पर्यावरण पर पड़ने वाले दुष्प्रभावों को कम करने के लिए जिस तरह से इको टूरिज्म अपनाने का सुझाव दिया जाता है, क्या उसी तरह से संवेदनशील क्षेत्रों में 'पिलग्रिमेज टूरिज्म' के दबावों को कम करने के लिए 'इको पिलग्रिमेज' या इको तीर्थाटन की अवधारणा और रणनीति स्थापित करने के लिए ध्यान नहीं दिया जाना चाहिए?



खुली खिड़की

एसी का बढ़ता उपयोग

पर्यावरण असंतुलन से उत्पन्न गर्मी से बचाव के लिए दुनिया वातानुकूलित संयंत्रों पर निर्भर हो रही है। घर, दफ्तर या परिवहन के संसाधनों में एयर कंडीशनर का उपयोग बढ़ रहा है। एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 2050 तक चीन में एसी की सबसे ज्यादा यूनिटें होंगी।



स्रोत : इंटरनेशनल एनर्जी एजेंसी, न्यूयॉर्क टाइम्स

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

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बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 123

ज्यादा सरस्वी

सरकार ने वर्ष 2019–20 के बजट में भी देश की अर्थव्यवस्था का डिजिटलीकरण करने पर जोर बरकरार रखा है, खासतौर पर डिजिटल भुगतान के मामलों में। अर्थव्यवस्था के जिन हिस्सों में अभी नकदी आधारित लेनदेन हो रहा है, उसे सीमित करने की कोशिश में वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने कहा कि अगर किसी एक बैंक खाते से एक वर्ष में एक करोड़ रुपये से

अधिक की निकासी होती है तो उसके स्रोत पर कर लगेगा। हालांकि इसे लेकर बहुत अधिक आपत्ति की गुंजाइश नहीं है क्योंकि यह नोटबंदी के समय प्रस्तावित कई अन्य प्रावधानों की तुलना में काफी कम कठोर है। बहरहाल, बजट में डिजिटल भुगतान को लेकर जो नीतिगत रूप रेखा प्रस्तुत की गई है उनका नए सिरे से परीक्षण किया जाना चाहिए।

वित्त मंत्री ने संकेत दिया है कि कम लागत वाले डिजिटल भुगतान माध्यम मसलन भीम यूपीआई, यूपीआई क्यूआर कोड, आधार पे, कुछ डेबिट कार्ड, एनईएफटी, आरटीजीएस आदि का इस्तेमाल करके नकदी रहित अर्थव्यवस्था को बढ़ावा दिया जा सकता है। ऐसा करके अर्थव्यवस्था में नकदी का प्रयोग कम होगा। यह प्रस्ताव भी रखा गया कि सालाना 50 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक के कारोबार वाले कारोबारी प्रतिष्ठानों को ऐसे कम लागत वाले डिजिटल भुगतान माध्यमों की सुविधा अपने ग्राहकों को देनी चाहिए और ग्राहकों तथा कारोबारियों पर मर्चेंट डिस्काउंट रेट (एमडीआर) या कोई अन्य शुल्क नहीं लगाया जाना चाहिए।

ऐसा करने से मझोले आकार की दुकानों

पर ऐसी डिजिटल भुगतान प्रणाली उपलब्ध कराने का दबाव बनेगा। पहली बात तो यह कि इसे लेकर लॉबीइंग की काफी संभावना है और सैद्धांतिक रूप से ही इससे दूरी बनाई जानी चाहिए। परंतु ज्यादा अहम बात यह है कि यह दुकानदारों, भुगतान कंपनियों और वित्तीय संस्थानों खासकर बैंकों पर छोड़ दिया जाना चाहिए कि वे अपने वाणिज्यिक हितों को ध्यान में रखकर निर्णय लें। केवल तभी एक स्थायी डिजिटल भुगतान व्यवस्था कायम हो सकेगी। एक ऐसा भुगतान ढांचा जो सरकार के आदेश और नियमन पर आधारित हो, वह अक्षम और अनाकर्षक साबित होगा। इकलौता स्थायी डिजिटल वित्तीय ढांचा वह होगा जहां श्रृंखला की हर कड़ी पर यानी ग्राहक और व्यापारी से लेकर बैंक और कंपनियों तक

मौद्रिक लाभ सक्षम तरीके से साझा किया जाए। इसके लिए स्वैच्छिक रूप से डिजिटल लेनदेन को अपनाना होगा, न कि दबाव में।

यह कहा जा सकता है कि सरकार के कम नकदी वाली अर्थव्यवस्था को बढ़ावा देने के कई लाभ हैं और एक बार ऐसा लेनदेन पूरा होने के बाद इसके लाभ खुद ब खुद सामने आएंगे। ऐसी दलीलें खासतौर पर नोटबंदी के बाद ऐसी दलीलों को लेकर सावधानी बरतनी होगी। इतना ही नहीं ऐसे किसी भी आदेश की लागत का भी भलीभांति आकलन किया जाना चाहिए।

अगर सरकार को लगता है कि कम नकदी वाली अर्थव्यवस्था को अपनाने के अधिक लाभ हैं तो आर्थिक दलील यह कहती है कि उसे इसकी लागत खुद उठानी चाहिए।



अजय मोहंती

नए बजट में शामिल हैं वही पुरानी बातें

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण द्वारा प्रस्तुत केंद्रीय बजट में कोई नई बात

शामिल नहीं है। बजट भाषण में तमाम ऐसी बातें कही गईं जिनका बजट

से कोई लेनादेना ही नहीं है। विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं देवाशिष बसु

आम बजट आकर चला गया। यह भी तमाम अन्य बजट की तरह ही है। हर वर्ष की तरह इस वर्ष भी उद्योग जगत ने बजट से अपनी मांग जाहिर करते हुए ज्ञापन सौंपे, कारोबारियों ने अपनी इच्छाएं प्रकट कीं और वित्तीय विशेषज्ञों, विश्लेषकों और फंड प्रबंधकों ने उम्मीद जताई कि संसद में जबरदस्त बहुमत वाली नई सरकार सुधारों को अंजाम देगी। जाहिर तौर पर बीते 25 वर्ष से देश में सुधारों का आगमन हो ही रहा है। ठीक सैमुएल बेकेट के नाटक गॉडॉट की तरह।

बजट के दिन हमने सामान्य प्रक्रिया के तहत यह देखना शुरू किया कि वित्त मंत्री ने प्रस्तावों, विचारों और कर बदलावों के रूप में क्या पेशकश की है। आइए देखते हैं कि बाजार और कारोबारी क्या उम्मीद कर रहे थे और उन्हें वास्तव में क्या मिला? कारोबारी जगत की कई उम्मीदें थीं। मिसाल के तौर पर दीर्घावधि के पूंजीगत लाभ कर को समाप्त करना, वित्तीय कंपनियों के लिए प्रोत्साहन पैकेज, आय कर स्लैब में बदलाव और निजीकरण को बढ़ावा देना आदि। परंतु इसके बदले हमें जो मिला उनमें शेरयों की पुनर्खरीद

और प्रवर्तक अंशधारिता का जबरन नकदीकरण 25 फीसदी से बढ़ाकर 35 फीसदी करने जैसे प्रतिगामी कदम शामिल हैं। यह दशकों से लंबित था।

उनके भाषण के मुख्य हिस्सों का केंद्रीय बजट से कोई लेनादेना नहीं था। ये नीतिगत घोषणाएं और वक्तव्य थे जिनको कभी भी घोषित किया जा सकता था। उदाहरण के लिए वित्त मंत्री ने बैंकों में 70,000 करोड़ रुपये की पूंजी डालने की घोषणा की। वित्त मंत्री रहते हुए अरुण जेटली ने अक्टूबर 2017 में बैंकों में 2.11 लाख करोड़ रुपये की पूंजी डालने की घोषणा की थी। यह घोषणा बजट में नहीं की गई थी। वित्त मंत्री के बजट भाषण का कुछ हिस्सा तो केवल घोषणाएं था। सूचीबद्ध कंपनियों के प्रवर्तकों को अपनी हिस्सेदारी बेचकर 65 फीसदी या उससे कम करना न तो व्यव्य है और न ही संसाधन बढ़ाने वाला प्रस्ताव। हकीकत में तो यह किसी तरह का प्रस्ताव भी नहीं है। यह भारतीय प्रतिभूति एवं विनिमय बोर्ड (सेबी) को दिया गया एक सुझाव भर था। इससे भी बुरी बात यह है कि यह विचार 2006 का है लेकिन सेबी द्वारा तारीख तय करने के बावजूद इसे लागू

करने की तारीख आती और जाती रही। हालांकि सरकार अब तक सरकारी कंपनियों में अपनी हिस्सेदारी को 75 फीसदी से कम नहीं कर सकी है लेकिन बजट भाषण में बढ़चढ़कर इसकी हिस्सेदारी 65 फीसदी तक कम करने की बात कही जा रही है।

तमाम और ऐसे विचार हैं जिनका आम बजट से कोई लेनादेना नहीं है। उदाहरण के लिए नई शिक्षा नीति, यात्री माल वहन सेवाओं के तेज विकास के लिए निजी-सार्वजनिक भागीदारी, राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग ग्रिड तैयार करने के लिए राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग कार्यक्रम का पुनर्गठन और सड़कों तथा रेल पर से भीड़भाड़ कम करने के क्रम में माल ढुलाई के लिए नदियों का इस्तेमाल करना आदि। ये बातें में सन 1985 से सुन रहा हूँ जब मैं पत्रकारिता में आया था। इसके बाद बात आती है 100 लाख करोड़ रुपये की जिसे अगले पांच वर्ष में बुनियादी क्षेत्र में निवेश किया जाना है। इन बड़े आंकड़ों का जिक्र करने के बाद वित्त मंत्री ने कहा कि विकास वित्त संस्थानों (डीएफआई) के जरिये फंड की आवक और ढांचा सुनिश्चित करने के लिए विशेषज्ञ समिति का गठन किया जाएगा।

कर राजनेतओं को यह सुविधा भी देते हैं कि वे अपनी समाजवादी योजनाओं को चलाते रह सकें। ये योजनाएं उन्हें चुनाव जिताने में मददगार साबित होती हैं। अब तक किसी बजट में सरकार की पूंजीगत व्यय की समस्या को हल नहीं किया गया जबकि इसमें सुधार होने से काफी बदलाव आ सकता है। परंतु कारोबारों, बैंक, शिक्षा और परिवहन, बुनियादी ढांचा और स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं के क्षेत्र में सरकार की मजबूत पकड़ के चलते साल दर साल पूंजी भारी पैमाने पर नष्ट हो रही है। यही कारण है कि लोगों से अधिक से अधिक संसाधन जुटाए जा रहे हैं। इसका असर उपभोक्ता मांग और कारोबारी व्यय पर पड़ रहा है। जबकि यह क्षेत्र वृद्धि और रोजगार तैयार कर सकता है।

हम यह सब देखते हैं और कई बार इसका विरोध भी करते हैं। इसके बावजूद साल दर साल लोग इस अक्षम ढांचे को स्वीकार करते आ रहे हैं। यह आशा करना बेमानी है कि मामूली छेड़छाड़ से कोई बड़ा बदलाव देखने को मिलेगा। एक कहावत है जिसका अर्थ है कि यदि आपने एक बार मुझे बेवकूफ बनाया तो आपको शर्म आनी चाहिए लेकिन अगर मैं दोबारा बेवकूफ बना तो यह मेरे लिए शर्म की बात है। यहां तो हम बार-बार बेवकूफ बन रहे हैं।

न्यायपालिका के लिए नहीं है ‘बही-खाते’ में कोई नई बात

धन की कमी से जूझ रही न्यायपालिका के वित्तीय संसाधन जटिल एवं अलग-अलग हैं। अदालतों का कामकाज चलाने के लिए केंद्र या राज्यो के बजट में अलग से कोई प्रावधान नहीं होता है। इसके चलते केंद्र एवं राज्यो के विभिन्न अधिकरणों के बीच काफी सौदेबाजी और दोषारोपण होता रहता है।

केंद्रीय बजट सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के लिए फंड आवंटित करता है लेकिन इज्यों के बजटों के वेतन एवं प्रशासनिक खर्च भी शामिल होते हैं। नए बजट में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के खर्च के लिए 269.48 करोड़ रुपये का प्रावधान किया गया है और इतनी ही राशि न्याय प्रशासन के लिए दी गई है। न्यायाधीशों के अनुरोध के बावजूद बजट में मामूली वृद्धि ही की गई है। पहले के तीन बजटों में 258.53 करोड़, 251.06 करोड़ और 255 करोड़ रुपये दिए गए थे। न्यायाधीशों का कहना है कि यह राशि समूचे बजट का महज 0.2 फीसदी ही है।

वर्ष 2019-20 के आम बजट में कानून एवं न्याय मंत्रालय को 3,055 करोड़ रुपये देने का जिक्र है जो गत दो वर्षों में आवंटित 6,326 करोड़ और 4,386 करोड़ रुपये से काफी कम है। इस राशि को सचिवालय, कर अधिकरणों, ई-अदालतों के दूसरे चरण, न्यायिक सुधारों पर अध्ययन एवं शोध योजना और आम लोगों की पहुंच बढ़ाने के अभियान पर खर्च किया जाना है। इसकी तुलना में कपड़ा मंत्रालय को 4,831 करोड़ रुपये और सांख्यिकी मंत्रालय को 5,231 करोड़ रुपये देने का प्रावधान है। कानून मंत्रालय को आवंटित फंड का कुछ हिस्सा चुनाव आयोग को भी जाता है लेकिन उसके लिए बजट में अलग मद है।

उच्च न्यायालयों और निचली अदालतों का संचालन राज्य सरकारों करती है। लेकिन केंद्रीय बजट के मॉडल होने से राज्यों से कुछ अलग की कल्पना शायद ही की जा सकती है। मुकदमे दायर करने के मामले में केंद्र एवं राज्य सरकारों सबसे आगे हैं। करीब 60 फीसदी विचाराधीन मामले केंद्रीय कानूनों के बारे में हैं। लेकिन राज्यों में इन अदालतों के लिए केंद्र अपनी तरफ से समुचित अंशदान नहीं देता है।

जहां दूसरे विभाग अपना खर्च आवंटित राशि से ही चलाते हैं



अदालती आईना

एम जे एंटनी

वहीं न्यायपालिका अपने व्यय की आधे से अधिक राशि का इंतजाम अदालती फीस, स्टॉप शुल्क, जमाओं पर ब्याज और अन्य साधनों से कर लेती है। उसके बाद भी अदालतों के रजिस्ट्रार को बुनियादी जरूरतों के लिए विधि सचिवों के समक्ष याचना करनी पड़ती है।

भले ही संविधान की समवर्ती सूची केंद्र को नए कानून का वित्तीय बोझ उठाने के लिए बाध्यकारी बनाती है लेकिन असल में यह भार राज्यों पर ही डाला गया है क्योंकि अधीनस्थ अदालतों के देखरेख राज्य सरकारों के जिम्मे होता है।

अपर्याप्त आवंटन के दुष्परिणाम हर जगह दिखते हैं। आर्थिक समीक्षा में भी इस संकेतपूर्ण स्थिति के बारे में उल्लेख है। समीक्षा में अदालतों के भीतर लंबित करोड़ों मुकदमों का भी जिक्र है। जिला अदालतों में 3.04 करोड़ मामले विचाराधीन हैं जो कुल अदालती मामलों का 87 फीसदी हैं। न्यायाधीशों के लिए कुल 22,750 पद स्वीकृत हैं लेकिन केवल 17,891 पद ही भरे गए हैं। हर साल 746 पद रिक्त हो जाते हैं। सौ फीसदी निपटान का लक्ष्य हासिल करने के लिए एक साल में 2,279 अतिरिक्त न्यायाधीशों की जरूरत है। पुराने लंबित मामलों का पांच वर्षों में निपटारा करने के लिए 8,152 अतिरिक्त न्यायाधीशों की जरूरत होगी। इन सभी मोर्चों पर उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, ओडिशा और पश्चिम बंगाल की स्थिति सबसे खराब है। विधि आयोग ने प्रति 10 लाख आबादी पर 50 न्यायाधीश रखे जाने की अनुशंसा की हुई है लेकिन वर्तमान में यह अनुपात 10 लाख पर 10 न्यायाधीश का ही है।

आर्थिक समीक्षा के मुताबिक अनुबंध प्रवर्तन और फैसले आने में लगने वाला लंबा समय में विलंबता के साथ आम तौर पर एक वित्तीय ज्ञापन ही होता है जो उस कानून के लागू होने से पड़ने वाले बोझ की तरफ इशारा करता है। लेकिन उन ज्ञापनों में भी नए कानून से न्यायिक प्रणाली पर पड़ने वाले अतिरिक्त बोझ का ब्योरा नहीं होता है। ऐसे में नए कानून से अदालतों में आने वाले नए मामलों के लिए जरूरी व्यय का अनुमान लगाकर समुचित बजट प्रावधान भी किया जाना चाहिए। कुछ न्यायविदों का मानना है कि सरकार के तीसरे स्तंभ न्यायपालिका के लिए एक अलग बजट लाया जाना चाहिए। इस बारे में चर्चा कभी और करते हैं।

कानाफूसी

हेल्पलाइन से मदद नहीं

जुलाई के अंत में आय कर रिटर्न दाखिल करने की समय सीमा भी समाप्त हो जाएगी। जैसे-जैसे यह तारीख करीब आ रही है, कर विभाग को करदाताओं से अजीबोगरीब फोन आने शुरू हो गए हैं। इस बीच आयकर संपर्क केंद्र का हेल्पलाइन नंबर भी उनकी मदद नहीं कर पा रहा है। इस नंबर पर फोन करने पर आगे बढ़ने के लिए लगातार हिंदी और अंग्रेजी भाषा के बीच चयन करने का विकल्प पूछा जाता रहता है। फोन करने वाला चाहे जिस भाषा का चयन करे, हेल्पलाइन से कोई मदद नहीं मिलती। अगर गलती से कोई करदाता देर रात या सुबह जल्दी फोन कर देता है तो स्वचालित प्रक्रिया उससे सुबह 8 से रात 10 बजे के बीच फोन करने को कहती है। कर विभाग को चाहिए कि अमेरिका के तर्ज पर लोगों की समस्याओं के जवाब ई-मेल के माध्यम से दे। अमेरिका में यह प्रक्रिया साल भर चलती रहती है।

व्यापम और राज्य-सम्मान

मध्य प्रदेश की कांग्रेस सरकार ने व्यावसायिक परीक्षा मंडल (व्यापम), जिसे बाद में प्रोफेशनल एक्जामिनेशन बोर्ड (पीईबी) का नाम दे दिया गया था, को बंद करने का निर्णय लिया है। प्रदेश सरकार इसकी जगह राज्य कर्मचारी चयन आयोग की स्थापना करने जा रही है। मुख्यमंत्री कमलनाथ के अनुसार व्यापम भारतीय जनता पार्टी के घोटालों का प्रतीक रहा है, इसलिए इसे बंद करना ही उचित होगा। यह पहला मौका नहीं है जब राज्य सरकार इस संस्थान से दूरी बनाने का प्रयास कर रही है। इससे पहले 2015 में तत्कालीन भाजपा सरकार ने इसका नाम बदलकर पीईबी रख दिया था। तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान ने कहा था कि व्यापम नाम राज्य के सम्मान को कम कर रहा है, इसलिए इसे बदला जा रहा है।



आपका पक्ष

बढ़ती आबादी पर नियंत्रण जरूरी

दुनिया में विश्व जनसंख्या दिवस के रूप में एक अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर का जागरूकता अभियान मनाया जाता है। दक्षिण एशिया तथा अफ्रीकी महाद्वीप और विशेष रूप से भारत जनसंख्या विस्फोट से त्रस्त है। भारत में तेजी से बढ़ती जनसंख्या आज की सबसे बड़ी समस्या है। जनसंख्या विस्फोट नकारात्मक व सकारात्मक दोनों ही कारणों से हुआ है। जहां शिक्षा का अभाव, परिवार नियोजन के साधन या उनके सही उपयोग का पता न होना, संतान को ईश्वरीय देन मानना, वर्ग संघर्ष में संख्या बल से विजय पाने की चाह और दूरदृष्टि की कमी आदि कई कारण हैं, जिन्होंने जनसंख्या को तेजी से बढ़ाया है। इसे रोकने के लिए जन जागरूकता बहुत जरूरी है। आम आदमी को बताना व समझाना होगा ही तरक्की के लिए कम बच्चे पैदा करना जरूरी है। कम संतान मतलब कम ज़िमेदारी व अच्छा पालन पोषण है जो अपनी व बच्चों की योग्यता से समाज में



मिलता है और समृद्धि के रास्ते खुलते हैं। जरूरी है कि देश की बढ़ती जनसंख्या को कुशल बनाया जाए। जब तक देश को कुशल श्रम नहीं मिलेगा, तकनीकी का प्रशिक्षण कारगर तरीके से नहीं मिलेगा तब तक जनसंख्या एक बोझ लगती रहेगी। हमें चीन और जापान से सीखना होगा कि मानव संसाधनों का बेहतर व प्रभावशाली उपयोग

जनसंख्या नियंत्रण के लिए सरकार को नए कदम उठाने की जरूरत है

कैसे किया जा सकता है। चीन ने तो अपनी बढ़ती आबादी का उपयोग इस कदर किया कि वह आज विश्व की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था बन चुका है। वास्तव

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।

अलावा किसी अपराध स्थल से मिले जैव नमूनों के स्रोत को पहचान करने में अत्यधिक प्रभावी है। डीएनए प्रौद्योगिकी से न्याय प्रक्रिया में विस्तृत उपयोग की संभावना है। दंडिक मामले में इससे जैविक साक्ष्य के माध्यम से अपराधों के अन्वेषण में सहायता मिलेगी। वर्तमान में कई देशों में अपराध से जुड़े मामले में डीएनए काफी प्रभावशाली सबूत माना जाता है। किसी अपराध स्थल से मिले जैविक नमूने से डीएनए की जांच कर अपराधी को पकड़ने में काफी सहायता मिलती है। अमेरिका जैसे विकसित देशों में डीएनए जांच से अपराधी को पहचान करने तथा उसे पकड़ने में काफी मदद मिलती है। आधुनिक दौर में भारत को भी तकनीक का बेहतर उपयोग करना चाहिए। बहरहाल डीएनए एक जैविक डेटा है तथा इसके दुरुपयोग के खतरे की संभावना से इनकार नहीं किया जा सता है। सरकार की यह पहल अच्छी है लेकिन साथ ही इसकी पुष्टा सुरक्षा भी जरूरी है।



शिक्षा में किया निवेश जीवनपर्यंत लाभ देता है

घुसपैट में कमी

लोकसभा में गृह राज्य मंत्री नित्यानंद राय की ओर से दी गई यह जानकारी संतोष प्रदान करने वाली है कि पाकिस्तान से होने वाली घुसपैठ में कमी आई है। उनके अनुसार बीते छह माह में सीमा पार से आतंकियों की घुसपैठ में कमी आने के साथ ही जम्मू-कश्मीर के हालात भी सुधरते दिख रहे हैं। घुसपैठ के साथ उसके प्रयासों में भी कमी दर्ज होना यह बताता है कि आतंकियों का दुस्साहस परत पड़ा है। निःसंदेह इसकी एक बड़ी वजह बालाकोट में भारतीय वायुसेना की ओर से की गई एयर स्ट्राइक रही। इस एयर स्ट्राइक ने पाकिस्तान के होश ठिकाने लगाने का काम किया, इसका प्रमाण इससे भी मिलता है कि नियंत्रण रेखा पर संघर्ष वियम उल्लंघन की घटनाओं में कमी देखने को मिल रही है। यह भी उल्लेखनीय है कि कश्मीरियों के बंदूक उठाने यानी आतंक के रस्ते पर जाने का सिलसिला भी कुछ धीमा पड़ा है। इस सबके बावजूद चैन से नहीं बैठा जा सकता और न ही यह माना जा सकता है कि पाकिस्तान नर सिरे से कश्मीर को अशांत करने की कोशिश नहीं करेगा। चूंकि आसार इसी के हैं कि वह आसानी से अपनी हरकतों से बाज नहीं आने वाला इसलिए उस पर दबाव बनाए रखा जाना चाहिए। इसके लिए न केवल सीमा पर सतर्कता दिखाने की जरूरत है, बल्कि पाकिस्तान को यह संदेश देने की भी कि अगर उसने कश्मीर में हस्तक्षेप किया तो बालाकोट दोहराया भी जा सकता है। वास्तव में पाकिस्तान पर तब तक भरोसा नहीं किया जा सकता जब तक वह भारत के लिए खतरा बने आतंकी संगठनों को पालने-पोसने की अपनी नीति का परित्याग नहीं करता।

यह अच्छा है कि भारत ने इस बात को स्पष्ट करने में देर नहीं की कि वह आतंकी सरनाा हाफिज सईद के खिलाफ की गई हालािया कार्रवाई को दिखावटी ही मानता है। भारत इसकी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकता कि पाकिस्तान मुंबई और साथ ही पठानकोट में हमले के गुनहवारों के खिलाफ कोई ठोस कदम उसने से इन्कार ही कर रहा है। भारत को इस पर भी निगाह रखनी होगी कि अमेरिका और अफगान तालिबान के बीच जारी बातचीत किस नतीजे की ओर बढ़ रही है। अगर दोनों में कोई समझौता होता है तो अफगानिस्तान में पाकिस्तान का दखल बढ़ सकता है। यह भारत के हित में नहीं होगा। अब जब यह स्पष्ट है कि अमेरिका एक सीमा तक ही भारत के हितों की चिंता कर रहा है वह फिर यह आवश्यक है कि भारतीय नेतृत्व अपने बलबूते पाकिस्तान पर अंकुश लगाने के उपाय करे। इसी तरह कश्मीर के हालात में सुधार दिखने के बावजूद यह सुनिश्चित करने की जरूरत है कि यहां सक्रिय पाकिस्तानपरस्त तत्व परत पड़ें। यह ठीक नहीं कि ऐसे तत्व खुले आम अपने को पाकिस्तानी बताते हुए आतंकियों का गुणगान कर रहे हैं। यह भी चिंताजनक है कि मुख्यधारा के नेता अलगाववादियों जैसी भाषा बोल रहे हैं। चूंकि कश्मीर घाटी के हालात में उत्तार-चढ़ाव कोई नई बात नहीं इसलिए वहां सीमा पर और सीमा के अंदर की गतिविधियों को लेकर सतर्क रहने की जरूरत है। यह जरूरत इसलिए और भी है, क्योंकि वहां के हालात आसानी से सामान्य नहीं होने वाले।

अस्पतालों की बदहाली

गरीब की इलाज के अभाव में मौत न हो, कुछ ऐसी ही सोच के साथ केंद्र सरकार ने आयुष्मान योजना धरातल पर उतारी, पर एक बात तो सर्वविदित है कि जब तक संसाधन दुरुस्त नहीं होंगे, गरीबों का पुख्ता इलाज नहीं हो सकेगा। झारखंड के हर जिले में आए दिन अस्पतालों की कुव्ववस्था और संसाधनों की कमी के कारण मौत के मामले सामने आते हैं। धनबाद की बात करें तो यहां के सबसे बड़े पाटलिपुत्र मेडिकल कॉलेज अस्पताल में ऑक्सीजन तक की बेहतर व्यवस्था नहीं है। अक्सर इसकी कमी के कारण हंगामे होते हैं। यहां 15 करोड़ की लागत से डेढ़ वर्ष से कैथ लेब बनकर तैयार है, यह कब खुलेगी पता नहीं। यह खुल जाती तो हृदय रोगियों के इलाज में राहत होती। यहां दो वर्ष से बर्न यूनिट बनकर तैयार है। 45 लाख रुपये खर्च हुए, लेकिन उसका उपयोग नहीं हुआ। जिले के सबसे बड़े अस्पताल में खून की कमी के कारण भी कई लोगों की जान जा चुकी है। दवाओं की कमी तो पूरे साल रहती है। ट्रॉमा सेंटर की आवाज वर्षों से उठ रही है। गत वर्ष केंद्रीय स्वास्थ्य मंत्री अश्विनी चौबे का धनबाद दौरा हुआ था। उनके सामने भी ट्रॉमा सेंटर की बात उठी थी, पर वह नकारखाने में तूती बनकर रह गई। यह हाल तब है जब इस अस्पताल के ओपीडी में प्रतिदिन करीब 18 सौ मरीज आते हैं। जब जिले के सबसे बड़े अस्पताल का यह हाल है तो दूर-दराज गांव के सामुदायिक स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों और प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों की क्या स्थिति होगी, इसे आसानी से समझा जा सकता है। और तो और, यहां प्रोफेसर, एंर्सोसिएट प्रोफेसर, असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर, सीनियर रंजिडेंट, जूनियर रंजिडेंट की संख्या में करीब 40 प्रतिशत की कमी है। इसका भी विपरीत प्रभाव पड़ रहा है। इन गंभीर समस्याओं पर सरकार को ध्यान देना होगा। शहर के बड़े सरकारी अस्पतालों की व्यवस्था में आमूलचूल परिवर्तन करना होगा। उनको समुचित संसाधनों से लैस करना होगा, ताकि गरीबों को उचित उपचार मिल सके। इसके लिए सिलिल सेंजस के लेक्टर अन्य अधिकारियों की जवाबदेही तय करनी होगी। संसाधन की कमी न हो, इसपर भी ध्यान देना होगा। जनता को सरकार से बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की आस है।

इन हालातों में कैसे बचेंगे बाघ

ज्ञानेंद्र रावत

देश में बाघ संरक्षण और बाघों की बढ़ोतरी का दावा करते सरकार थक नहीं रही है, लेकिन मौजूदा हालात इसकी कतई गवाही नहीं दे रहे। राष्ट्रीय बाघ संरक्षण प्राधिकरण के दावों पर यकीन करें तो 2012 से लेकर 2018 के बीच देश में 656 बाघों की मौत हुई। इनमें 31.5 फीसद यानी 207 बाघों की मौत के पीछे अवैध शिकार तो अहम है ही, करंट का लगना भी एक प्रमुख कारण रह है। प्राकृतिक रूप से हुई बाघों की मौत का आंकड़ा 295 के करीब है, जबकि 36 बाघ सड़क हादसे या रेल दुर्घटना में मारे गए। देश में 2014 की जनगणना अनुसार अनुमानतः 2226 बाघ हैं। इनमें से 40 फीसद अपने मुख्य निवास स्थानों के अलावा बाहर के इलाकों में रहते हैं। यदि देश के टॉप चार टाइगर रिजर्व की बात करें तो उत्तराखंड के जिम कॉर्बेट नेशनल पार्क में 215 बाघ, कर्नाटक के बंदिपुर में 120 और नागरहोले में 101, असम के काजीरंगा में 103 बाघ हैं। अपने निवास स्थान के बाहर रहने वाले बाघ अक्सर अवैध शिकार की चपेट में आ जाते हैं या फिर इंसानी टकसल के कारण मारे जाते हैं। वैसे असलियत यह है कि बाघ संरक्षित

दुनिया में आज बाघों की कुल पांच प्रजातियां ही बची हैं। जबकि एक समय इनकी नौ प्रजातियां थीं

क्षेत्र हें या फिर अभयारण्य, कहीं भी सुरक्षित नहीं हैं। बाघों का अवैध शिकार करने वाले शिकारी हें या फिर बाघों के अंगों का व्यापार करने वाले तस्कर, वन माफिया, वन विभाग के अधिकारी-कर्मचारियों और पुलिस की साठगांठ के चलते बाघों को मारने में कामयाब हो जाते हैं। सच्चाई यह है कि बीते तीन वर्षों में तकरीब 300 करोड़ से अधिक की वन्यजीव उत्पादों की बरामदगी यह साबित करती है कि वन्यजीव तस्करों को किसी का भय नहीं है।

दुनिया में आज बाघों की कुल पांच प्रजातियां बची हैं। जबकि एक समय नौ प्रजातियां थीं। इस समय बंगाल टाइगर जिसे हम रॉयल बंगाल टाइगर भी कहते हैं, साइबेरियन, साउथ-चाइन, इंडो-चाइनीज एवं सुमात्रा प्रजाति के टाइगर अभी बचे हैं। जबकि बाली, जावा एवं एक अन्य प्रजाति के टाइगर अब विलुप्त हो चुके हैं।



सुरेंद्र किशोर

इसमें कौन सी होशियारी है कि विरोधियों पर निराधार आरोप लगाकर राहुल अदालतों के चक्कर काटते रहें और खुद को अन्य महत्वपूर्ण कार्यों से वंचित रखें ?

पटना की अदालत से मानहानि के मामले में जमानत मिलने के बाद राहुल गांधी ने कहा कि ‘मैं संविधान बचाने की लड़ाई लड़ रहा हूं।’ क्या किसी पर मानहानि का मुकदमा करना संविधान के खिलाफ है? इससे पहले मुंबई की एक अदालत ने भी मानहानि के एक अन्य मुकदमे में उन्हें हार में जमानत दी है। पटना के मामले में जमानत मिलने के बाद छह जुलाई को राहुल गांधी ने कहा कि ‘भाजपा और राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ के लोग मुझे तंग कर रहे हैं।’ आप किसी की मानहानि करें और पीड़ित पक्ष मामला दायर कर दे तो यह कौन सा तर्क हुआ कि आपको तंग किया जा रहा है? यह तो वही बात हुई कि आप किसी की पिटाई भी कर दें और उसे रोने का भी अधिकार न दें। मानहानि के ऐसे मुकदमों में होता यह है कि या तो आप अपने आरोपों को अदालत में सिद्ध करें या प्रार्थी से माफी मांग कर समझौता कर लें। अदालतें समझौते की अनुमति आसानी से दे देती हैं। उससे अमूमन मामला सुलझ जाता है, लेकिन माफी मांगने की जगह राहुल गांधी खुद को पीड़ित बता रहे हैं। अभी वह समझौते की मुद्रा में नहीं दिखते। संभवतः वह उसका राजनीतिक लाभ उठाना चाहते हैं।

राहुल गांधी ने कहा है कि ‘जो लोग नरेंद्र मोदी के खिलाफ खड़े होते हैं, उन्हें फंसाया जाता है, परेशान किया जाता है। राहुल की मानें तो राजनीतिक कार्यों से उन पर मुकदमे किए जा रहे हैं। आखिर इस बात में कौन सी होशियारी है कि किसी पर निराधार आरोप लगाकर आप देश की कचहरियों के चक्कर काटते रहें और अन्य

महत्वपूर्ण कार्यों से खुद को वंचित रखें? क्या राहुल गांधी देश में आपातकाल जैसी व्यवस्था की उम्मीद कर रहे हैं या उसकी इच्छा रखते हैं। या फिर वह किसी के खिलाफ कुछ भी आरोप लगाकर बच निकलना चाहते हैं? कांग्रेस में ऐसी प्रवृत्ति आपातकाल में दिखती थी। तब अपनी गद्दी बचाने के लिए देश में आपातकाल लगा दिया गया था। जयप्रकाश नारायण सहित एक लाख से अधिक नेताओं और कार्यकर्ताओं को विभिन्न जेलों में दंस दिया गया। उन्हें अदालत जाने से वंचित करने के साथ प्रेस का मुंह बंद कर दिया गया। यह कानूनी-प्रशासनिक प्रबंध भी कर दिया गया था कि कहीं से न तो कोई लोकतांत्रिक आवाज उठे और न ही किसी अखबार में सरकार की हल्की आलोचना भी छपे। इतना ही नहीं, तब इंदिरा गांधी सरकार ने 10 अगस्त 1975 को संसद से संविधान में 39 वॉ संशोधन पास करवा दिया। इसके तहत राष्ट्रपति, उप-राष्ट्रपति, प्रधानमंत्री और स्पीकर के खिलाफ चुनाव याचिका की सुनवाई से अदालतों को वंचित कर दिया गया था। यह बिल्कुल असामान्य बात थी। याद रहे कि इसी अधिकार से 12 जून 1975 को इलाहबाद हाईकोर्ट ने इंदिरा गांधी के रायबरेली से चुनाव को अवैध करार दिया था। गनीमत रही कि बाद में मोरारजी देसाई सरकार ने इस संशोधन को निस्त कग दिया।

आपातकाल में चुपके-चुपके एक और संवैधानिक संशोधन का मौसदा तैयार हो रहा था। उसके तहत यह प्राधान किया जाने वाला था कि राष्ट्रपति और प्रधानमंत्री जैसी कुछ बड़ी हस्तियां

कानून के शासन पर गंभीर सवाल

इस पर कोई भी यकीन के साथ कह सकता है कि प्रबल बहुमत से सत्ता में लौटी मोदी सरकार का रक्षा-सुरक्षा पर खासा जोर है, लेकिन यह सरोसे के साथ कहना कठिन है कि आंतरिक सुरक्षा तंत्र को मजबूत करना भी उसके एजेंडे में है। आंतरिक सुरक्षा की पहली कड़ी है पुलिस और वह किस तरह संसाधनों एवं संख्याबल से हीन है, इसका ताजा प्रमाण पिछले दिनों गृह मंत्रालय की ओर से सामने आया वह आंकड़ा है जो यह कहता है कि विभिन्न राज्यों में पुलिसकर्मियों के 5 लाख 28 हजार पद रिक्त हैं। ऐसा आंकड़ा पहली बार सामने नहीं आया। 2017 में एक याचिका की सुनवाई करते हुए सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने यह पाया था कि विभिन्न राज्यों में पुलिसकर्मियों के तमाम पद खाली पड़ें हैं। खुद सुप्रीम कोर्ट के प्रधान न्यायाधीश जेएफ खेहर की अध्यक्षता वाली पीठ ने बिहार, उत्तर प्रदेश, झारखंड, कर्नाटक, तमिलनाडु और पश्चिम बंगाल को यह आदेश दिया था कि वे इन रिक्तियों को प्राथमिकता के आधार पर भरें। पीठ ने इस भर्ती प्रक्रिया की निगरानी का काम भी अपने हाथ लिया। उक्त याचिका में 2015 तक के आंकड़ों का जिक्र था और उनके अनुसार देश में 5 लाख 52 हजार पुलिस कर्मियों की कमी है। ताजा आंकड़ा कह रहा है कि पुलिस कर्मियों के रिक्त पदों की संख्या 5 लाख 28 हजार है। इसका मतलब है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट के दखल के बाद भी केवल 24 हजार पुलिस कर्मियों की भर्ती की जा सकी। इसमें एक बड़ा हिस्सा उत्तर प्रदेश में की गई पुलिस भर्तियों का रहा। इससे इसी भ्रम का निवारण होता है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट सब चीजों को ठीक कर सकता है। इसकी पुष्टि पुलिस सुधार संबंधी उसके दिशा निर्देशों पर अमल न होने से होती है। ये दिशानिर्देश 2006 में दिए गए थे, लेकिन उन पर न तो केंद्र सरकारों ने ध्यान दिया और न ही राज्य सरकारों ने। 2014 में यह जो उम्मीद बंधी थी कि मोदी सरकार कम से कम केंद्र शासित और भाजपा शासित राज्यों में तो इन दिशा निर्देशों को लागू कराने का काम ही करेगी, लेकिन बीते पांच सालों में ऐसा नहीं हुआ। कहना कठिन है कि मोदी सरकार के इस कार्यकाल में यह उम्मीद पूरी होती है या नहीं।

सुप्रीम कोर्ट की ओर से तय किए गए पुलिस सुधारों संबंधी दिशा निर्देशों पर सही तरह से अमल न हो पाने और पुलिस के संख्याबल के अभाव से जुझने का सबसे अधिक दुष्परिणाम कानून के शासन को उठाना रहा है। यह स्वाभाविक भी है, क्योंकि समय के साथ पुलिस पर काम का बोझ बढ़ता जा रहा है। बतौर उदाहरण अब उसे सोशल मीडिया के जरिये की जाने वाली खुराफत से भी



यह एक खतरनाक चलन है कि अन्याय, अराजकता का विरोध करने वाली भीड़ भी उपद्रव करती दिख रही है

निपटना पड़ता है, लेकिन ऐसा लगता है कि हमारे नीति-नियंता यह समझने को तैयार नहीं कि संसाधनहीन पुलिस कानून एवं व्यवस्था की सही तरह रखवाली कैसे कर सकती है? इन दिनों भीड़ की हिंसा चर्चा में है। यह होनी भी चाहिए, क्योंकि ऐसी हिंसा देश की बदनामी का कारण बनती है, लेकिन भीड़ की हिंसा वहीं नहीं जो झारखंड के सरयकेला-खरसावां जिले में चोरी के आरोप में पिते तबरेज अंसारी की मौत से सामने आई। कोलकाता के एक सरकारी अस्पताल में डॉक्टरों पर धावा बोलकर उन्हें अधमरा करना भी भीड़ की हिंसा थी। इसके बाद दिल्ली में एक कार कोर की हकत से गुस्साए लोगों की ओर से वाहनों में की गई तोड़फोड़ भी भीड़ की हिंसा थी। इसी तरह दिल्ली में ही एक मंदिर में की गई तोड़फोड़ भी भीड़ की हिंसा थी।

वास्तव में यह एक नया चलन बन रहा है कि न्याय मांगने, अन्याय का विरोध करने या फिर अपनी नागरजी जाहिर करने के नाम पर लोगों की भीड़ हिंसा का सहारा ले रही है। इसका ताजा उदाहरण जयपुर में तब देखने को मिला जब एक बच्ची से दुर्कर्म की घटना के विरोध में हिंसा का सहारा लिया गया। यह विरोध इतने हिंसक तरीके से किया गया कि कई इलाकों में कर्फ्यू जैसे हालात बन गए और हालात काबू में करने के लिए जयपुर के 13 थाना

भारतीय मन दर्शन को समझें नेता

धर्म की महत्ता से अनजान वामपंथी शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में केसी त्यागी ने वामपंथी सरकारों की धर्म के प्रति अनभिज्ञता के साथ नकारात्मकता को रेखांकित किया है। सर्वप्रथम धर्म को समझना जरूरी है, धर्म की परिभाषा इस प्रकार है कि ‘धर्त्यते इति धर्मः’ अर्थात जो धारण किया जाए वहीं धर्म है। धारण क्या करना है, वे गुण जो असल में मानवीय आभूषण कहे जाते हैं। भारत जैसे धार्मिक व सांस्कृतिक देश के संदर्भ में यदि इतिहास उठाकर देखें तो धर्म भारतीयों के अंतर्स में व्याप्त है, यह व्यवहार जगत में परिलक्षित भी होता है इसलिए भारत को धर्म से अलग करके देखना संभव ही नहीं है। वामपंथी विचारधारा पश्चिमी जगत से आयातित है जहां धर्म के अंग्रेजी रूपांतरण रिलीजन की परिभाषा भारतीय संदर्भ से सर्वथा भिन्न है इसलिए संभवतः वामपंथियों को भारत के धार्मिक स्वभाव का ज्ञान नहीं हो सका। वामपंथियों ने आरंभ से ही यहाँ लोगों के भीतर सदियों से भरे राष्ट्रवाद व धर्मभाव को दुष्प्रचारित करने का प्रयास किया। भारत के इतिहास में जनता सदा ही सत्ता और धर्म को अलग-अलग लेकर बढ़ी है। किसका राज्य रही और किसका गया इस बात ने भारत के मन को अधिक प्रभावित नहीं किया, क्योंकि अलग-अलग समय पर भारतीय जनमानस को संतों-महात्माओं ने दिशा दी है। राजनीतिक सत्ता भले किसी के भी हाथ चली जाए, लेकिन धार्मिक सत्ता सदा से कबीरदास, सूरदास, तुलसीदास, रहीमदास, तुकाराम से लेकर देवरहा बाबा जैसे संतों के पास रही और इसने समाज को ज्ञान व भक्ति प्रदान कर मानवता के उच्च शिखर तक पहुँचाया। वामपंथी भारतीय जनमानस के इस दर्शन को समझने में असफल रहे हैं।

प्रखरदित्य द्विवेदी, गोरखपुर



अवधेश राजपूत

पर किसी भी तरह के मुकदमे नहीं चलाए जा सकेंगे, मगर बाद में इंदिरा सरकार ने वह विचार त्याग दिया। यह आपातकालीन मानसिकता ही है कि किसी बड़ी हस्ती को कानून के दायरे से ऊपर कर दिया जाए यानी उस पर किसी तरह का कोई कानून लागू ही न हो। किसी व्यक्ति की आप सब सार्वजनिक रूप से चाहे जितनी भी मानहानि कर दें, पर आपके खिलाफ कानून का सहारा न लिया जाए। लिया जाएगा तो आप आरोप लगाएंगे कि मुझे नाहक परेशान किया जा रहा है। क्या आप कानून से ऊपर हैं जिस तरह आपातकाल में इंदिरा गांधी ने खुद को कर लिया था?

आज देश में लोकतंत्र है। कानून का शासन है। लोगों को अपनी जान और प्रतिष्ठा की रक्षा का अधिकार है, लेकिन कुछ लोग चाहते हैं कि वे सरेआम किसी की इज्जत उतारते चलें और जिसका अपमान हो वह अदालत भी न जा सके। क्या राहुल यही चाहते हैं? आपातकाल में अर्दोंनी जनरल नीरन डे ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट में कहा था कि यदि शासन किसी की जान ले ले तब

भी उसके खिलाफ किसी अदालत में सुनवाई नहीं हो सकती। क्या राहुल का मौजूदा रुख त्याग दिया। यह आपातकालीन मानसिकता नहीं क्या इसे आपातकाल वाली मानसिकता नहीं कहा जाएगा? गौरी लंकेश की हत्या की चर्चा करते हुए राहुल गांधी ने कहा था कि कोई जब भाजपा और संघ की विचारधारा के खिलाफ जाए। लिया जाएगा तो आप आरोप लगाएंगे कि मुझे नाहक परेशान किया जा रहा है। इस बयान के बाद मुंबई की अदालत में आरएसएस कार्यकर्ता और वकील धृतिमान जोशी ने सोनिया गांधी, राहुल गांधी और सीताराम वेचुरी के खिलाफ 2017 में मानहानि का मुकदमा दायर किया। उसी सिलसिले में राहुल गांधी और सीताराम वेचुरी ने 4 जुलाई को मुंबई की अदालत में हाजिर होकर जमानत ली। आम चुनाव के दौरान 13 अप्रैल को कर्नाटक के कोलार की चुनाव सभा में राहुल गांधी ने कहा था कि ‘नीरव मोदी हो, ललित मोदी हो या नरेंद्र मोदी हो, सारे चोरों का नाम मोदी ही क्यों होता

है?’ जब प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने खुद को चौकीदार कहा तो राहुल गांधी पूरे चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान लगातार यह कहते रहे, ‘चौकीदार चोर है।’ यही बात वह श्रोताओं से भी बुलवाते रहे। यह गनीमत है कि खुद प्रधानमंत्री ने उन पर मानहानि का मुकदमा नहीं किया। हाँ, देश के अधिकांश मतदाताओं ने राहुल गांधी के इस आरोप पर विश्वास नहीं किया, पर बिहार के उप-मुख्यमंत्री और भाजपा नेता सुशील मोदी ने पटना की अदालत में जरूर राहुल गांधी पर मानहानि का मुकदमा कर दिया। अब उसकी सुनवाई चलेगी। सुशील मोदी के अनुसार, ‘चुनाव जीतने के लिए राहुल ने सारी मर्यादाओं को तोड़ दिया। ईमानदार प्रधानमंत्री को चाहिए। माफी मांगने के बदले खुद को पीड़ित बता रहे हैं और आरोप लगा रहे हैं कि भाजपा उन्हें परेशान कर रही है।’

अब राहुल गांधी के समक्ष विकल्प सीमित हैं। या तो वह मोदी उपनाम वाले सभी लोगों को अदालती सुनवाई के दौरान चोर साबित कर दें जो एक असंभव बात है या फिर सुशील मोदी से माफी मांग लें। यदि वह ऐसा नहीं करते तो अदालती फैसले का इंतजार करें, क्योंकि संकेत हैं कि माफी के बिना सुशील मोदी मुकदमा वापस लेने को तैयार नहीं हैं। इस मुकदमे के साथ एक बड़ा मुद्दा भी जुड़ा हुआ है। आम सार्वजनिक संवाद और राजनीतिक आरोप-प्रत्यारोप का स्तर काफी नीचे गिर गया है। विरोधकर चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान बड़े-बड़े नेता भी आए दिन मर्यादा लांघ जाते हैं। कई साल पहले एक बड़े नेता ने कहा था कि चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान के अशालीन आरोप-प्रत्यारोपों को हेली की गाली मानकर भुला दिया जाना चाहिए। मगर लगता है कि 2019 के लोकसभा चुनाव प्रचार के संवाद का स्तर उस सीमा रेखा को भी लांघ गया। अच्छा होगा यदि मौजूदा मुकदमा सार्वजनिक जीवन में बोली की मर्यादा कायम करने में मदद करे।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं) response@jagran.com



अहिंसा से लाभ

किसी को मारना-पीटना, खून-खराबा और उसका विचार करना भी हिंसा है। मारपीट, खून-खराबे के चलते तो बड़े-बड़े राजा-महाराजा बर्बाद हो गए तो सामान्य व्यक्ति की क्या औकात? शास्त्रों में क्रोध, द्वेष, कटुवचन, निंदा, घात-प्रतिघात आदि तमाम अशुभगुण की श्रेणी में गिनाए गए हैं, वे सब हिंसा के ही अस्त्र-शस्त्र हैं। व्यक्ति जब इनका प्रयोग करता है तो दूसरों से ज्यादा क्षति उसकी अपनी होती है। क्रोध तो वह घातक हथियार है जो क्रोध करने वाले का पहले खून जलाता है। इसी प्रकार क्रोध में तेज-तेज चिल्लाने और कटुवचन बोलने से जिह्वा के सेक्स (जीवाणु) नष्ट होते हैं। इस स्थिति में जीभ पर अयोध्यावासियों ने भी किया जब श्रीराम को पिता दशरथ ने वनवास दे दिया तो अयोध्यावासी हिंसा के बजाय सविनय अवज्ञा का रास्ता अपनाते हुए अन्न-जल त्याग देते हैं। अयोध्या में कहीं भी दशरथ के निर्णय के विरोध में हिंसात्मक घटनाएं नहीं हुईं। जनता के भीड़-विरोध को दशरथ झेल नहीं पाते हैं। भगवान कृष्ण भी गीता में अर्जुन को ज्ञान देते हुए अभिय और कटु वचन से बचने की सलाह देते हैं। अतः हर व्यक्ति को उन नकारात्मक प्रवृत्तियों से बचना चाहिए और क्रोध, कटुवचन आदि की जगह गीत-संगीत, भजन-कीर्तन करते हुए तन-मन को सशान्त बनाने का कार्य करना चाहिए।

सलिल पांडेय

की पहले के मुकाबले वही सीटें चली आ रही हैं। ऐसे में बाहर से आने वाले छात्र-छात्राओं को परेशानी झेलनी पड़ती है। vijaykumardhania@gmail.com

सलिल पांडेय

मेलवारस

वेमेल गठबंधन विकास में बाधक

कहने को नेता जनसेवक होते हैं, लेकिन समयानुसार स्वयंसेवक भी बन जाते हैं। कर्नाटक में 10 कांग्रेस और 3 जद (एस) के बागी विधायकों को मनाने, सभी को मंत्री बनाने के स्पष्ट ऑफर में सभी वर्तमान मंत्रियों के इस्तीफे और नये मंत्रिमंडल गठन का आकर्षण सरकार को रिचार्ज करने के लिए बाध्य करता है, लेकिन ऐसी स्थिति में जनता के आदरणीय जनादेश व लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों का उपहास उड़ाने के अलावा और क्या औचित्य रह जाता है? बकील नेतागण जनता का काम सिर्फ वोट देना होता है। त्रिशूक जनादेश की स्थिति में सत्ता की खातिर जुगाड़ कर सरकार चलाने का काम जुझारू नेताओं के बाहुबल को ही जाता है? स्वाथी, बेबेल, बाबिल व असामर्थिय गठबंधन को जो आम जनजीवन में ठगवाव ले आए, राज्य की उन्नति में बाधक बने, प्रशासन को पंगु बनाए उसे सबक सिखाना अत्यंत आवश्यक है।

दीपक गौतम, सोनीपत

ताकि छात्र-छात्राओं को न हो दिक्कत

दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय की तीसरी सूची जारी हो चुकी है। इस बार ऐसे छात्र भी हैं, जो अच्छे अंक प्रतिशत लाने के बाद भी प्रवेश से वंचित हैं। उनको मन पसंद विषय नहीं मिल पा रहा है। दूरदराज से आने वाले छात्र-छात्राओं को सबसे अधिक परेशानी इस बात की हो रही है कि उन्हें छात्रावास में जगह नहीं मिल रही है। जिस तरह से जनसंख्या का अनुपात बढ़ा है और जिस हिसाब से सीटों में इजाफा हुआ उस प्रकार से छात्रावास में सीटों की वृद्धि नहीं की गई है। आज

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

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तिरिका।

कैसे रुकें हादसे

उत्तर प्रदेश में यमुना एक्सप्रेस-वे पर हुई हृदयविदारक बस दुर्घटना ने एक बार फिर यह सवाल खड़ा कर दिया है कि आखिर ऐसे हादसों को कैसे रोका जाए, पिछले महीने हिमाचल प्रदेश के कुल्लू में बस के खाई में गिर जाने से 44 लोगों की मौत हो गयी थी. दुर्घटना स्थल पर सड़क भी खराब थी और घुमावदार मोड़ पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय घोषणापत्र पर हस्ताक्षर किया था, चालकों की लापरवाही कई दुर्घटनाओं के लिए जिम्मेदार है, परंतु विभिन्न जांच रिपोर्टों को देखें, तो सड़कों की कमजोर इंजीनियरिंग, लचर रख-रखाव और सूचनापटों की कमी भी जानलेवा साबित होती हैं. साल 2015 से 2017 के आधिकारिक आंकड़ों के मुताबिक, हर साल 11 हजार से अधिक लोग बस दुर्घटनाओं में मारे जाते हैं. हर तरह की सड़क दुर्घटनाओं का संज्ञान लें, तो 2017 में 1.47 लाख मौतें हुई थीं. हमारे देश के कई शहरों की आबादी भी इससे कम है. साल 2015 में भारत ने 2020 तक सड़क हादसों में होनेवाली मौतों की संख्या आधी करने के अंतरराष्ट्रीय घोषणापत्र पर हस्ताक्षर किया था, लेकिन ऐसा होने की स्थिति दूर-दूर तक नहीं दिखायी देती है. किसी

जानकार कहते रहे हैं कि अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन और जर्मनी की तरह भारत में भी हर दुर्घटना की अनिवार्य वैज्ञानिक जांच का नियम बनना चाहिए .ऐसा करना बहुत जरूरी है .

बनना चाहिए. ऐसा करना इसलिए भी जरूरी है कि जिन राज्यों में सड़कों का नेटवर्क बड़ा है, वहां बस दुर्घटनाएं अधिक होती हैं. मोटर वाहन कानून में भी दुर्घटनाओं की जांच के लिए तंत्र बनाने का निर्देश है, पर अधिकतर राज्यों में ऐसी कोई व्यवस्था नहीं है. यह भी विडंबना ही है कि सड़क बनाने के नाम पर राजनीति होती है, पर सुरक्षा को लेकर कोई ठोस पहल या चर्चा नहीं होती है. पिछले साल सरकार ने दुर्घटना की जगहों पर कमियों को दूर करने के लिए 11 हजार करोड़ रुपये मंजूर किये थे, लेकिन हादसों की बड़ी संख्या को देखते हुए यह धन नाकافی ही माना जायेगा. लंबी दूरी की बसों में दो चालकों की व्यवस्था करने तथा उनकी सुस्ती दूर करने के उपायों के साथ चुंगी नाका पर उन्हें आगाह भी किया जाना चाहिए. विकास की गति के साथ ही सड़कों का भी लगातार विस्तार हो रहा है और वाहनों की संख्या भी बढ़ रही है. लोगों के आवागमन में भी बढ़ोतरी हुई है. ऐसे में सड़क बनाने के तकनीकी पहलुओं पर पूरा ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए. खतरनाक मोड़ों और पुलों के दोनों तरफ अवरोधक लगाना अनिवार्य कर दिया जाना चाहिए. जगह-जगह सूचना पट लगाना भी बहुत अहम है. इन उपायों से दुर्घटनाओं की भयावहता को कम किया जा सकता है और हजारों कीमती जानों की रक्षा की जा सकती है.



बोधि वृक्ष

तुम नदी बनो

एक गांव के एक धनपति ने मुझसे कहा- मैं अपनी मां को भी लाना चाहता हूं आपको सुनने, लेकिन उसकी उम्र नब्बे वर्ष है और पिछले चालीस वर्षों से वह चौबीस घंटे माला जपती रहती है, मुझे डर लग रहा है कि कहीं आपकी बातों से उसे चोट न पहुंच जाए, तो मैं लाऊं या न लाऊं ? मैंने उनसे कहा- अगर तुम्हारी मां जवान होती, तो मैं कहता न भी लाओ तो कोई हर्ज नहीं है, अभी वक्त है, लेकिन तुम्हारी मां के आगे कोई वक्त नहीं है, इसलिए तुम जल्दी ले आओ, क्योंकि कुछ हो सकता हो, तो हो जाना चाहिए. वह अपनी मां को डरते हुए लेकर आया. सभा के बाद वह मुझसे मिला. कहने लगा, मैं बहुत हैरान हूं, सभा से उठने के बाद मां से पूछा, कैसा लगा ? मां ने कहा- चालीस साल से मैं माला जपती आ रही हूं. आज सुना, माला जपने से कुछ नहीं होता. मेरा भी अनुभव कहता है कि कुछ भी नहीं होता. सो, मैं माला वहीं छोड़ आयी हूं. उसी सभा में . जब वह आदमी अपनी बात कह चुका, तब मैंने उससे कहा- वास्तव में बूढ़े तो तुम हो. तुम्हारी मां जवान है. नब्बे साल की उम्र में वह माला छोड़ आयी. इस स्त्री को कोई बूढ़ा कह सकता है ? नहीं, लेकिन जवान आदमी जब विद्रोह और क्रांति से डरे, तो उसे कोई जवान कहेगा ? जवानी का मतलब क्या है ? जवानी का मतलब है- जिसका हृदय परिवर्तन के लिए तैयार हो. जो नये की खोज में निकल सकता है. जो नये की खोज का साहस कर सकता है. वह जवान है. जो नये से भयभीत होता है और पुराने से चिपट जाता है, समझ लो कि वह बूढ़ा हो गया, मन से बूढ़ा हो गया. हिंदुस्तान में जवान बहुत दिनों से पैदा होने बंद हो गये हैं. यहां बूढ़े ही पैदा होते हैं. हमारी सारी भाषाएं बूढ़ी हैं. क्रांति से क्या घबराना ? क्रांति तो होनी चाहिए. जरूर होनी चाहिए, क्योंकि क्रांति तो जिंदगी को रोज नया-नया करने की प्रक्रिया का नाम है. ठहरना नहीं चाहिए. जीवन एक प्रवाह है. एक तालाब में प्रवाह रुक गया होता है, लेकिन एक नदी में प्रवाह खुला और मुक्त होता है. नदी बड़ी क्रांतिकारी है, जो नये-नये रास्ते खोजती रहती है. तुम नदी बनो.

आचार्य रजनीश ओशो

स्मृति शेष

शमीम फैजी : एक प्रतिबद्ध त्यक्तित्व

न्यू एज और हयात के संपादक शमीम फैजी भारतीय कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी (सीपीआइ) के राष्ट्रीय सचिव मंडल के सदस्य थे. उनका निधन इसी पांच जुलाई की रात साढ़े ग्यारह बजे दिल्ली में हो गया. वह कैसर से प्रसित थे. उनका निधन ऐसे वक्त में हुआ है, जब भारत को प्रगतिशील विद्वानों, लेखकों और पत्रकारों की सख्त जरूरत है. पत्रकारिता की जिम्मेदारियों के एतबार से देखते हैं, तो हम पाते हैं कि शमीम फैजी एक बड़े पत्रकार थे.

शमीम फैजी का लालन-पालन और उनकी शिक्षा नागपुर में हुई. नागपुर से प्रकाशित होनेवाला दैनिक अंग्रेजी अखबार ‘हितवाद’ में उप संपादक की हैसियत से 1965 में उन्होंने पत्रकारिता की शुरुआत की. उन्होंने उस अखबार को ख्याति दिलाने का भरपूर प्रयास किया. चूंकि उन्होंने जर्नलिज्म की शिक्षा प्राप्त की थी, इसलिए कई अखबारों में उन्हें जगह मिली. वह वाम विचार मार्क्सवाद से प्रभावित थे. इसलिए 1965 में ही भारतीय कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी की सदस्यता ले ली थी. आगे चल कर उनसे दिल्ली के अत्यय भवन में रह कर काम करने का आग्रह किया गया, जिसके चलते वह पार्टी का काम भी देखने लगे. शमीम पार्टी के 1979 में राष्ट्रीय परिपद के सदस्य और 1997 में राष्ट्रीय सचिव मंडल के सदस्य बन गये. वह अंतिम सांस तक इस दायित्व से बंधे रहे.

शमीम फैजी साहब हिंदी, उर्दू और अंग्रेजी के उद्भट विद्वान थे. भाषा पर उनका पूरा कमांड था. साल 1979 में कॉमरेड शमीम फैजी उर्दू में प्रकाशित होनेवाली पत्रिका

संपादकीय प्रभात

जड़ों की ओर लौटने की मजबूरी

इस देश में सक्रिय समाजवादी पृष्ठभूमि वाले राजनीतिक दल इन दिनों दोराहे पर हैं. इस साल के लोकसभा चुनाव में भारी पराजय के बाद सोच में हैं कि अब वे किधर जाएं ? उनमें से कुछ नेता कह रहे हैं कि हम जनता के बीच जायेंगे. पर, क्या लेकर उसके पास जायेंगे ? जब कुछ देने के लिए आपके पास सरकार थी, तो जिसको जो कुछ दिया, या नहीं दिया, उसका परिणाम तो इस चुनाव में मिल गया. राहुल गांधी भी ग्रामीण महिला कलावती के पास गये थे, उसका क्या असर हुआ ? दरअसल जब आप सत्ता में होते हैं, तो आपके पास देने के लिए एक सरकार होती है. पर उस समय जब आप अंधे की रेवड़ी की तरह अपनों को ही बांटने में लगे रहे, तो अब आपके पास व्यापक जनता का विश्वास पाने के क्या उपाय हैं ?

अब उन स्थितियों पर आपको विचार करना होगा कि आप व्यापक जनता से सिमट कर सीमित वोट बैंक तक क्यों रह गये. यदि ऐसा ही बना रहा तो आपका भी वही हाल होगा, जो हाल कुछ राजनीतिक दलों का इस देश में हो चुका है. राज गोपालाचारी की स्वतंत्र पार्टी और राजा कामाख्या नारायण सिंह के जन क्रांति दल की तरह कई दल समय के साथ विलुप्त हो गये. बड़ा सवाल यही है कि क्या आपकी मौजूदा कार्य नीति-रणनीति के सहारे आपके पुराने दिन लौट सकते हैं ? लगता तो नहीं है !

राजग खासकर भाजपा ने उनकी राह में अनेक कंठे बो दिये हैं. अब आपको यानी समाजवादी धारा के दलों को भाजपा से मुकाबला कर उससे वह वोट छीनना है, जो कभी आपका था, तो इसके लिए जरूरी है कि आप अपनी शैली बदलें. समाजवादी धारा की राजनीति को पहले समझना होगा. स्वातंत्र्योत्तर समाजवादी राजनीति को तीन कालावधियों में बांटा जा सकता है. आजादी के तत्काल बाद की समाजवादी राजनीति मुख्यतः आचार्य नरेंद्र देव, जेपी, डॉं लोहिया की आदर्शवादी राजनीति थी.

उत्तर प्रदेश में राजनारायण के बाद मुलायम सिंह यादव ने समाजवादी राजनीति की कमान संभाल ली. मुलायम-लालू की राजनीति कमोवेश एक समान रही है. साल 1990 का मंडल आरक्षण का जमाना था. मंदिर आंदोलन भी उसी दौरान चला. वह भावनाओं का दौर था. आरक्षण विरोधियों के आंदोलन को बिहार में मुख्यमंत्री के रूप में लालू प्रसाद ने बेरहमी और दबंगियत से दबाया. सामाजिक न्याय के आंदोलन में सफलता का लाभ लालू प्रसाद को सबसे अधिक मिला. इससे लालू प्रसाद सभो पिछड़ों के बीच काफी लोकप्रिय हो गये. मुलायम सिंह यादव को भी उस दौर का लाभ मिला, जिसमें मंदिर आंदोलन का भी दौर शामिल था. लालू की सरकार ने लाल कृष्ण आडवाणी की रथ यात्रा को रोका और उन्हें समस्तीपुर में गिरफ्तार करवाया. इसका लाभ भी मिला.

साल 1991 के लोकसभा चुनाव और 1995 के बिहार विधानसभा चुनाव में लालू प्रसाद के नेतृत्व वाले दल को भारी सफलता मिली. पर उसी के साथ भटकाव भी शुरू हो गया. यादव और मुस्लिम मतदाता तो फिर भी लालू के साथ बने रहे, पर अन्य वोट धीरे-धीरे कटने लगे. साल 2015 के बिहार विधानसभा चुनाव के समय तो जदयू से तालमेल का लाभ राजद को बिहार में मिल गया, पर इस बार उसकी अनुपस्थिति में लोकसभा



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समाजवादी पृष्ठभूमि वाले दलों को अपने बीच से निःस्वार्थी व कर्मट कार्यकर्ताओं की जमात तैयार करनी होगी. तब शायद धीरे-धीरे समाजवादी धारा के दल अपनी पिछली ताकत हासिल कर सकें .

जरीये भी मतदाताओं को अपनी ओर खींचा है. अपवादों को छोड़ दें, तो ऐसे सम्यक विकास कार्यों से समाजवादी धारा की राजनीति को कम ही मतलब रहा है. राजग शासन काल में बिजलीकरण का भारी विस्तार हुआ है.

के पास दिखाने के लिए कुछ नहीं है.

ऐसे कुछ अन्य तथ्य बताते हैं कि आविष्कार और नवोन्मेष के लिहाज से बाकी दुनिया की तुलना में हम कहां हैं. पिछले वर्ष चीन ने 20 ऐसे शीर्ष देशों की सूची में प्रवेश पा लिया, जो विश्व की सर्वाधिक नवोन्मेपी अर्थव्यवस्थाएं हैं. विश्व नवोन्मेप सूचकांक पर 10 शीर्ष राष्ट्र हैं: स्विट्जरलैंड, नीदरलैंड्स, स्वीडन, यूनाइटेड किंगडम, सिंगापुर, अमेरिका, फिनलैंड, डेनमार्क, जर्मनी तथा आयरलैंड. इस सूची में चीन की 17वीं स्थिति ‘एक ऐसी अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए अहम उपलब्धि है, जो शोध तथा विकास-सघन मौलिकता की प्राथमिकता पर केंद्रित सरकारी नीतियों से निर्देशित तीव्र परिवर्तनों के दौर से गुजर रही है.’

आज आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस के आविर्भाव के साथ हम विश्व इतिहास के सबसे बड़े संक्रमण काल से गुजर रहे हैं. दुनियाभर में सबसे अचरजभरी चीजें विकसित हो रही हैं, जिनमें स्वचालित कारें तथा औषधियों एवं जेनेटिक्स के क्षेत्र में उपलब्धियां शामिल हैं. हमारे देश के लिए क्या यह चिंताजनक नहीं कि हमारे पास इसमें योगदान करने को कुछ भी नहीं है ? इस वैश्विक नवोन्मेष सूचकांक पर भारत अभी 57वें पायदान पर है. ये तथ्य कुछ दूसरी ओर इंगित करते हैं और यही वजह है कि मूर्ति की उक्ति को गंभीरता से लेने की जरूरत है.

यदि भारतीय युवा पाश्चात्य विश्वविद्यालयों के अपने समकालीनों जितनी ही बुद्धिमत्ता रखते हैं और उनके पास अवसर हैं, तो आखिर क्या वजह है कि हम वैसे ईजादें नहीं कर सकते, जिन्हें वैश्विक पहचान मिले ? क्यों इस प्रश्न पर कोई शोध नहीं हो सका है ? आप कोई भी ऐसा अध्ययन नहीं पा सकते, जिसने इस मुद्दे की खोज-खबर ली हो, जबकि यह एक जाहिर-सी वजह दिखती है.

मुझे ऐसा नहीं लगता कि यह सरकार द्वारा गौर किये जाने का कोई मुद्दा हो अथवा यह हाल-फिलहाल या सुदूर पूर्व काल में सरकार की किसी विफलता से उज्जा परिणाम है. इसका संबंध हमारे समाज और हमारे उन मूल्यों से है, जिन्हें हम पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी हस्तांतरित करते रहते हैं. यह देखते हुए कि हमारे चहुंओर का संसार कितनी तेजी से परिवर्तित हो रहा है, यह एक ऐसी चीज है, हम जिसकी और अधिक दिनों तक उपेक्षा नहीं कर सकते, क्योंकि हम इस प्रक्रिया में बगैर किसी योगदान के हो. और इसके नतीजान, बगैर कोई हस्तक्षेप किये बदलने की बाध्य हो रहे हैं. इस स्थिति में सुधार लाने के अपने प्रयासों में हमारा पहला कदम स्वयं के साथ ईमानदार होना है. किसी समस्या के समाधान के बारे में तभी कुछ सोचा जा सकता है, जब हम उस समस्या को स्वीकार करें.

(अनुवाद : विजय नंदन)

कार्टून कोना



साम्भार : बीबीसी

पोस्ट करें : प्रभात खबर, 15 पी. इंडस्ट्रियल एरिया, कोकर, रांची 834001, **फैक्स करें :** 0651-2544006, **मेल करें :** eletter@prabhatkhabar.in पर ई-मेल संक्षिप्त व हिंदी में हो. लिपि रोमन भी हो सकती है



आपके पत्र

अनुच्छेद 370 पर बहस

आजकल देश में अनुच्छेद 370 को लेकर बहस छिड़ी हुई है. यह अनुच्छेद जम्मू-कश्मीर को विशेष दर्जा प्रदान करता है. जिसे राष्ट्रपति के आदेश पर 1954 में संविधान में शामिल किया गया था. इसकी वैधता पर लंबे समय से बहस चलती आ रही है, पर राजनीति के सिवा और कुछ नहीं हुआ. गृह मंत्री के बयान के बाद इस पर बहस को एक नयी हवा मिली है. बयानबाजी का दौर शुरू हो गया है. कुछ इसे जम्मू-कश्मीर को शेष भारत से जोड़ने वाली संवैधानिक कड़ी बता रहे हैं, तो कुछ इसे अस्थायी एवं कश्मीर के विकास में बाधक. इसके पक्ष में यह तर्क भी दिया जाता है कि अनुच्छेद हटते ही अलगाववादी जनमत संग्रह के मुद्दे को तलु देंगे और जम्मू-कश्मीर विवाद के अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण का प्रयास करेंगे. इसलिए हमारी पहली प्राथमिकता कश्मीर में शांति की बहाली होनी चाहिए और कोई भी महत्वपूर्ण निर्णय लेने से पहले कश्मीर के अवाम का विश्वास जीतना चाहिए.

शेर मोहम्मद, दिल्ली

एक ओर विश्वयुद्ध की ओर

ब्रिटिश साम्राज्यवादियों द्वारा अमेरिका के इशारे पर सीरिया जा रहे ईरान के एक बड़े तेल टैंकर को जिब्राल्टर के पास रोक लिया गया है. स्पेन के आग्रह के बावजूद उसे छोड़ नहीं जा रहा है. ईरानी विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता ने इसे एक समुद्री लूट जैसा चिनीना कृत्रिम बताते हुए अपने टैंकर को तुरंत छोड़ने की मांग की है. स्पेन के कार्यवाहक विदेश मंत्री ने भी इसे अमेरिकी इशारे पर की गयी ब्रिटिश कार्रवाई बताया है. सीरिया और ईरान की अर्थव्यवस्था को अमेरिका और ब्रिटेन ने व्यापारिक स्वार्थ के लिए नारकीय बना दिया है. संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ और मानवाधिकार आयोग को समदर्शी एवं न्यायोचित दृष्टिकोण से इस अमानवीय और बर्बर व्यवहार को रोकना चाहिए. नहीं तो वे इन देशों की जेबी संस्था बन कर रह जायेंगे और धीरे-धीरे पूरी दुनिया एक और युद्ध की ओर बढ़ जायेगी.

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

देश में गहराता जल संकट

आज के समय में जल संकट एक देशव्यापी मुद्दा बन गया है. बात चेन्नई की हो या देश के अन्य भागों की, जल संकट धीरे-धीरे देश को अपने चपेट में ले रहा है. ऐसा नहीं था कि हमारा देश हमेशा से ही जल संकट से ग्रस्त था. पर बढ़ती जनसंख्या और देश के संसाधनों का सही उपयोग नहीं करने की वजह से आज हमें ये दिन देखना पड़ रहा है. आज इस जल संकट के लिए सरकार के साथ-साथ जनता भी जिम्मेवार है. अगर सरकार सबके घर पर पानी पहुंचाने में सफल होती तो आज हर दूसरे घर में बोरिंग की नौबत नहीं आती और ना ही भूजल का स्तर इतना नीचे गिरता. अगर अब भी जल संकट को लेकर सचेत नहीं होते हैं और जल संरक्षण नहीं करते हैं तो हमारी आनेवाली पीढ़ी तो छाँड़िए हम खुद एक बूंद पानी के लिए लरस जायेंगे. अतः सिर्फ चिंता करने से नहीं होगा, जल संरक्षण के लिए ठोस कदम उठाना अनिवार्य है.

आलोक कुमार, पण्डुड़