

How to ensure media freedom

Incentivising good ownership structures, reportage and media literacy can be some of the first steps to take



MEDIASCOPE
VANITA KOHLI-KHANDEKAR

The fear was palpable. One journalist from Ghana spoke with his face under a veil of beads. Many others whispered their worry, fear and frustration on the sidelines of the Global Conference on Media Freedom 2019, held jointly by the British and Canadian governments in London last week. Lawyers, politicians, ministers, ambassadors and lots of jour-

nalists among others were saying the same thing — the world has become a more hostile place for journalists. Reporters Without Borders called 2018 the deadliest year on record for journalists. UNESCO confirms that at least 99 journalists were killed, a further 348 imprisoned and 60 held hostage, according to a UK government website. The reasons range from totalitarian regimes to lack of institutional backups. Even in democratic countries with a strong institutional back up, like the US, journalists are now routinely abused and threatened. India with its proclivity to abuse female journalists found a mention. There was talk of WhatsApp fuelled lynchings and the murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh in 2017. The role of social media in amplifying hate, spreading fake news and in polarising countries was discussed too. But it was not all hand-wringing. The idea behind the conference was to come up with ways to defend media freedom. One significant one was the

formation of global legal panel. “Stemming the tide of violence against journalists requires political will, diplomatic pressure and a legal framework to support countries to improve. The independent high level panel of experts consists of the best legal minds from across the globe. Together they will develop and promote legal mechanisms to help prevent and reverse media abuses,” said the UK’s foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt. On the media sustainability side, one of the discussions I took part in came up with interesting insights. Rasmus Kliens Nielsen, director, research, at the Oxford-based Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, spoke emphatically about the business conundrum. He reckons tackling the demand and supply of quality news is critical. He is right. Good quality journalism costs a lot of money to produce and readers don’t always pay for it. The rare exceptions are *The Financial Times* or *The Economist*.

While newspapers in India do a reasonably good job editorially and are profitable, their abject dependence on advertising means they fall apart at the first sign of advertiser pressure. Roughly half of India’s 400 news channels are owned by people who want a tool of influence, extortion or favour. Their idea of reportage is lots of shrill, argumentative anchors sitting in a studio and screaming out their opinions on the irrelevant issues. Note that globally ownership structures play a huge role in creating a robust news ecosystem — *The Economist* and *The Guardian* are owned partially by trusts. The BBC is funded through licence fee TV owners in the UK pay. Some of the best media brands around the world have ownership structures that make them financially independent. Till we incentivise good ownership structures and disincentivise bad ones the problem will persist. For instance, frowning on certain types of owners — politicians, state bodies, religious organisations or government — might help. So would insisting on transparency through details on revenues, costs, ownership, and shareholding pattern. Make it easier for newspapers, websites and news channels to invest in hard-on-the-ground reportage — whether this is

through tax breaks or through grants for high quality journalism schools. There could be special incentives for schools and institutes that offer media literacy courses for everyone. And in my book, a really special incentive for advertiser literacy courses. If advertisers could separate real news from fake news and withdraw money from the latter, it should reduce if not die. Some of these recommendation have been made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India in a 2014 paper. None of these, however, can be brought about by any government. A parliament-backed independent-of-the-government regulatory body, a la Ofcom is what could work in India. (A point this column has made often). To foster media freedom and good journalism, media owners must accept that self-regulation has failed. They must start considering the alternatives, quickly. If physical infrastructure has a multiplier effect on economic growth of a country then the information and news infrastructure has a similar effect on its intellectual capital — people. If the quality of our democracy is being messed up by weaponised misinformation then media needs to fight it by weaponising good journalism.

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Blowing smoke on e-cigarettes

Lobbying and counter-lobbying by big tobacco and e-cigarette makers has the govt formulating contradictory laws

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

Big tobacco in India is facing a new challenge — global manufacturers and Indian importers of e-cigarettes, or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). At stake is a 110 billion per annum sticks cigarette market. India is home to 11.3 per cent of the world’s cigarette smokers with the market dominated by ITC. Tough taxation policies have slowed the growth to be sure, it is still a huge market. Yet ENDS is not even a ₹300 crore market — mostly coming through the grey market — so many manufacturers of e-cigarettes like Juul and Philip Morris see a large potential.

But regulation has been a tangled web, the result of hectic lobbying and counter-lobbying, that leaves ENDS manufacturers and sellers in limbo between an outright ban and a classification that will put them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis regular cigarettes.

At first, ENDS proponents had lobbied the government for a separate federal regulations on grounds that e-cigarettes (a) did not fall under any specific jurisdiction, central, state or concurrent; and (b) are a different product altogether, far superior to combustible cigarettes — lacking cancer-causing tar and with a lower nicotine content that could help wean smokers off cigarettes. Now they want their products to be defined on a par with cigarettes.

If these changing demands have been confusing, the government’s reaction

has been no less so. Late last year the health ministry sent an advisory to all states asking them to ban e-cigarettes. Nearly 14 states complied with the order, which included Maharashtra, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. However, consumer forums and individuals went to court against the order in various states where hearings are still on. In Delhi, ENDS manufacturers got a reprieve when the high court passed an interim stay against the ban. Though the cases are still being heard, the health ministry sought to reiterate its ban in May this year and went a step further by sending all government health research institutes an advisory not to conduct any research, workshop, or publish articles on e-cigarettes without consulting the tobacco control division. It also received an endorsement from the ICMR suggesting a ban on ENDS.

Last fortnight, another act in this drama opened with the Drug Technical Advisory Board endorsing a proposal to include ENDS as a “drug” under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. E-cigarette makers and importers say this is another way for the government to ban their products without impacting regular cigarettes, which do not come under the purview of this Act.

The Act has two sections (10A and 26A) that give the government powers to prohibit import or manufacture of any drug if it is satisfied that its use will involve risk to life or has no therapeutic value. So potentially, ENDS can be



banned under this. “Even if it is not, the manufacturers will have to get clearance from the drug controller for the product, sell it only through pharmacies and after a doctor writes a prescription,” says a senior executive of a leading ENDS manufacturer.

E-cigarette manufacturers and importers also say this classification is contradictory. On the one hand, the government believes nicotine is bad for health and addictive; on the other, it has no hesitation in considering it a drug, which by definition is supposed to cure or mitigate illness. “ENDS is a recreational product and is a nicotine consumption choice with less harmful effects than combustible cigarettes. It is not a therapeutic product for mitigating disease,” says one of them. He also argues that inhaling nicotine cannot be called a sickness, yet that is how it has been defined under the law. As he points out, if smoking e-cigarettes is a sickness then how can combustible cigarettes be excluded from the list?

The conclusion ENDS companies

have drawn from this latest controversy is that it is a move to kill the fledgling industry. But proponents of legislating e-cigarettes under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act say they are merely emulating the US Foods and Drug Administration. True, the FDA extended its authority to include ENDS, hookah tobacco and pipes. But the crucial difference is that the FDA also regulates regular cigarettes. It recently gave Philip Morris, which also makes cigarettes, approval to sell “heated tobacco devices”.

The move to declare e-cigarettes a drug would also mean the government overturning its earlier conclusion by the Drugs Consultative committee in 2015 that e-cigarettes cannot be defined as a drug.

Manufacturers and importers are not the only players in this drama. There are consumers who believe e-cigarettes are healthier and the Association of Vapers India argue that they should be given the freedom to choose. There is an equally strong but quiet anti-smoking lobby —

for them a ban on e-cigarettes through legislation is the first step to pushing for a ban or severe restrictions on cigarette smoking as well.

Says Praveen Rikhy convener of Trade Representatives of ENDS Devices in India, an association of importers, distributors and marketers of the product: “We don’t think that the big tobacco companies in India are lobbying for a ban on us. If they ban ENDS through legislation, anti-smoking groups will find a strong legal base to ban combustible smoking too. So the big tobacco companies have to watch out too.”

Tobacco players blame this strident move by the central government on misguided lobbying by some of the ENDS players. Their contention that e-cigarettes were a healthier alternative to regular cigarettes positioned the product as something of therapeutic value. “And now they are saying please treat it no differently from combustible cigarettes, it is as unhealthy. Then you have a problem,” says a senior executive of a tobacco company.

Most experts admit regulation is key since an outright ban will only increase operations in the grey market, spur sale of spurious products with no control of their usage by children. Nearly 69 countries across the world have put in regulation on ENDS. But the central health ministry is determined to ban e-cigarettes. And many anti-smoking NGOs endorse the move as they believe that global regulations, such as identity proof at the point of sale to prevent children from buying the product and policing of retailers on compliance will fail in India. The issues still lie behind a smokescreen of competing interests.

CHINESE WHISPERS

More may jump ship

Former Samajwadi Party (SP) Rajya Sabha member Neeraj Shekhar officially joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday. Shekhar had quit the Rajya Sabha on Monday. Sources said a couple of Bahujan Samaj Party Rajya Sabha MPs could also join the BJP. On Tuesday, Shekhar was seen talking to current and former SP MPs, including Naresh Agarwal, who had crossed over from the SP to the BJP last year. As other SP MPs ribbed Shekhar, Agarwal ominously said more SP leaders were queuing up to join the BJP.

Landless roads



Opposition members in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday praised Union Roads and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari (pictured) during a discussion on demands for grants for the road transport and highways

ministry. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said Gadkari was an “informative and innovative personality”, and the Revolutionary Socialist Party’s N K Premchandran said he was withdrawing all the 21 cut motions he had moved against the demands for grants as a tribute to Gadkari’s “exemplary performance”. However, the Trinamool Congress’s Sudip Bandyopadhyay, alluding to Gadkari’s detailing of his plans, including an overhead double decker bus service in cities, said the minister was a “sapnon ka saudagar”, or a merchant of dreams. When Badhyopadhyay requested more road construction in the eastern region, Gadkari hit back, saying the most difficult state to work in in terms of acquiring land for road projects was West Bengal.

Inspired by Kennedy

Underlining his commitment to building better roads and highways, Gadkari told the Lok Sabha in his chambers he had hung on the wall a quote from former US president John F Kennedy that “American roads are not good because America is rich, but America is rich because American roads are good”. He also ruled out ending toll tax charged from road users. “Toll zindagi bhar band nahin ho sakti, kam-zyada ho sakti hai, toll ka janmadata main hoon” (charging of toll tax can never end though toll tax rates may vary from time to time. Toll is my brainchild), the minister said. Gadkari introduced the toll system as a minister in the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra in the mid-1990s. An MP later quipped that Gadkari got much praise because several MPs, or their families, either had a stake in the toll-tax business or were road contractors.

INSIGHT

Bypassing Parliament scrutiny

The inclusion of non-tax proposals in the Finance Bill undermines the legislative process



CHAKSHU ROY & MANDIRA KALA

The first Budget session of the 17th Lok Sabha is underway. Earlier this month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman outlined the government’s budgetary proposals in her speech in the Lok Sabha. After finishing her speech she introduced the Finance Bill. The rules of procedure of the Lok Sabha refer to the Finance Bill as a Bill which is introduced each year to give effect to the financial proposals of the government for the next financial year. It ordinarily contains the details of the changes in the tax rates and other consequential changes in the tax laws of the country. However, the Finance Bill of 2019, in addition to amending the tax laws, also amends several other laws unrelated to taxation in the country. For example, it amends the Reserve Bank of India Act, the National Housing Bank Act and the Insurance Act to change the net worth requirements of non-banking finance companies, housing finance companies and foreign insurance companies engaged in reinsurance. In addition, it proposes amendments to enable RBI to take measures for the management of NBFCs. Even in the 16th Lok Sabha, some Finance Bills amended laws which



The Finance Bill of 2019, in addition to amending the tax laws, also amends several other laws unrelated to taxation

were not connected to the taxation regime in the country. The Finance Bill of 2016 amended the RBI Act to establish the Monetary Policy Committee as a statutory body responsible for inflation targeting. The 2017 Finance Bill, changed the composition of 19 tribunals such as the Securities Appellate Tribunal, the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal, the National Green Tribunal and repealed seven other authorities including the Competition Appellate Tribunal. The Finance Bill, 2018, had 218 clauses, half of which were matters unrelated to the imposition of taxes. In our parliamentary system, all Bills go through a detailed scrutiny process. This scrutiny process is multi-tiered. First MPs have the opportunity to oppose the introduction of a Bill. Thereafter a Bill is referred to a Parliamentary Committee composed of MPs from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha which examines in detail each

clause of a Bill. It also invites government and other experts to share with the committee their views on the Bill. Thereafter the Bill is debated extensively on the floor of both Houses of Parliament. However, the Finance Bill, which falls in the category of a Money Bill, does not go through a similar process. For one, it is the exclusive preserve of the Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha can only make suggestions for amending the Finance Bill. Also, its suggestions are not binding on the Lok Sabha. In addition, Finance Bills do not go through the detailed scrutiny of a Parliamentary Standing Committee. Which means that if a Finance Bill contains provisions other than those related to taxation they escape the scrutiny process of Parliament. The first speaker of the Lok Sabha, G V Mavalankar, was of the opinion that a Money Bill could contain provisions other than those related to the imposition of taxes if such provisions

were necessary for the administration of that tax. His successor, M A Ayyangar, provided a more specific interpretation of what could be included in the Finance Bill. In 1956 he said, “I would normally urge upon the Finance Minister, not only he but also all his successors, to see to it that only those provisions which relate to the raising of taxation should be included in the Bill. The procedure should be followed and no other provisions should be given attention to unless they are absolutely consequential.” In 2017, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha also suggested that every effort should be made to separate taxation measures from other matters.

Changes in the taxation regime of a country may vary depending on the economic policies being followed by a popularly elected government. Such changes can only be done by the directly elected house as long as the government enjoys the confidence of that house. However, structural changes in our legal system, which are unrelated to taxation, should only be done through the established mechanism of scrutiny and deliberation by both houses of Parliament. There is no reason to exclude the Rajya Sabha from deliberating on the changes of a permanent nature to the legal system and having its opinion addressed. Such changes should only be made through separate Bills which go through the full scrutiny of Parliament.

Bypassing of this process results in such changes getting embroiled in litigation. Currently, the Supreme Court is hearing several petitions that question the constitutional validity of changes made to the structure and composition of tribunals as was done by the Finance Bill, 2017. More importantly, when substantive structural and regulatory changes to laws are included in the Finance Bill, it sets a bad precedent and undermines the role of Parliament in ensuring that the lawmaking process is rigorous as well as consultative.

The authors are with PRS Legislative Research

LETTERS

All eyes on the SC

This refers to “Crisis for IBC” (July 16). It seems that the NCLT and the NCLAT, through the recent judgments on stressed IL&FS and Essar Steel respectively, have shaken the confidence of the creditors in the financial market. The concept of the financial market has been shaken due to the treatment of secured and unsecured creditors. The secured creditors enjoy the rights of faster payout in case something goes wrong, they accept a low rate of interest and thereby low return on investment. The trust of the financial market is built on this simple rule that is not followed in this case. If this trend continues, the total credit architecture will break down because of trust deficit in the financial markets and the purpose of IBC is going to be defeated in the long run.

This would also result in a lack of foreign investment in the stressed assets making IBC futile in the long run. I agree that PF might make a loss in exposure to IL&FS but it is up to the guarantors and also the regulator to ensure the right of the beneficiaries. Everything now depends on the judgement of the Supreme Court.

Partha Sarathi Mukhopadhyay
Nagpur

The real picture

This refers to “Celebrating 50 years of bank nationalisation” (July 15). The writer says that the RBI governor was not kept in loop. This reminds me how and

when the governor was brought into picture.

I was working in the central office of RBI at Mumbai then. The rumours were afloat for some days in the wake of Morarji Desai’s virtual dismissal from finance ministry and takeover of the finance portfolio by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that banks were likely to be nationalised any day. In the midst of these rumours, governor L K Jha at Mumbai received a call from the prime minister’s office in Delhi that the PM wanted to meet him urgently. Presuming that she wanted to discuss the issue of bank nationalisation, Jha sent for his secretary and dictated a detailed note saying that banks were already under comprehensive “social control” and nationalisation would not serve any purpose; on the other hand, it would cast an unnecessary responsibility on the government and the RBI.

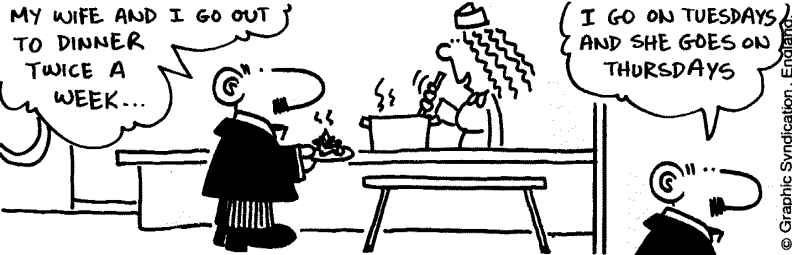
With that note in hand, Jha entered the PM’s chamber, a day later. Just as he was at the entry door, she addressed him saying, “I see you are carrying a fat note. You may leave it here”, pointing to a small table by her side, “and join the team in the adjoining room and help them in drafting an ordinance to nationalise all the private sector banks with deposits exceeding ₹50 crore”.

The rest is history.

RC Mody New Delhi

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HAMBONE



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Dealing with DHFL

Asset destruction should be minimised

Dewan Housing Finance Limited (DHFL) has released its unaudited and uninspected financial results for the March quarter, setting off fears for its continued survival. Its stock tanked after the markets opened this week to the lowest point in years, as the results reported a loss of ₹2,223 crore in the March quarter. Earlier in July, DHFL defaulted on its obligations to repay ₹2,858 crore. The company also reported major possible stress in its wholesale loan book. It further said that regulators found its capital adequacy ratio below the required 12 per cent, and there were “gaps” in documentation for loans worth more than ₹20,000 crore. Since DHFL is a listed company, it has raised money from retail investors, including through public deposits. Almost 30 banks have lent it almost ₹40,000 crore of its total loan book of over ₹90,000 crore, and 10 mutual fund houses have lent it about ₹5,000 crore under 165 schemes.

The banks have come up with an inter-creditor agreement (ICA) to restructure DHFL’s loan book. The issue here, however, is that banks have less than 75 per cent of the outstanding loans to DHFL — which means that the ICA is not binding on other creditors. Mutual funds are rightly concerned about two aspects of the ICA. For one, they are reluctant after their experience with a standstill agreement that was offered to the promoters of Essel earlier this year which attracted adverse regulatory attention. In addition, the banks’ plan to pay off retail investors and provident funds with exposure to DHFL. Presumably, this is a consequence of the nationalised banks’ political concerns. However, the mutual funds correctly point out that such unsecured investors cannot be treated at par with secured investments by debt funds. This would severely undermine the credit markets, already shaken by legal decisions that appear to de-prioritise the repayment of secured loans.

The crisis in DHFL is a regulatory error, and also reflects poorly on the credit rating agencies. In dealing with the consequences of the default, three ordered principles should be kept in mind. First, the stability of financial markets — in particular, secured creditors should be given preference. Second, the viability of the housing finance market. The difference between the wholesale and retail loan books of DHFL — the former far less secure than the latter — needs to be taken into consideration. And, finally, asset destruction should be minimised. That last principle means that if DHFL is merely illiquid and not insolvent, it should ideally be saved by an infusion of capital. The question is whether that is true — and, if it is, why banks are not insisting on a closer probe of its books, or threatening a change in management unless the promoters infuse cash into the company.

Crucially, when it comes to the question of evaluating the usefulness of additional capital, banks must not take an over-optimistic view of the possibility of completing projects. The DHFL crisis is also a reminder that a legal framework for the resolution of financial companies should not be further delayed.

A road map for PSUs

Time to address the bigger underlying issues

Debt in public sector undertakings (PSUs) is on the rise. As reported by this newspaper on Monday, the average debt-equity ratio in a sample of 40 listed non-financial PSUs went up by 10 basis points, year-on-year, to a new high of 0.68 in FY19. The ratio has worsened for the third consecutive year. The balance sheet of the private sector also deteriorated, partly because of unfavourable earnings, marking a reversal in the deleveraging process. While this could affect revival in investment, weakening PSU balance sheet will have implications for government finance as well.

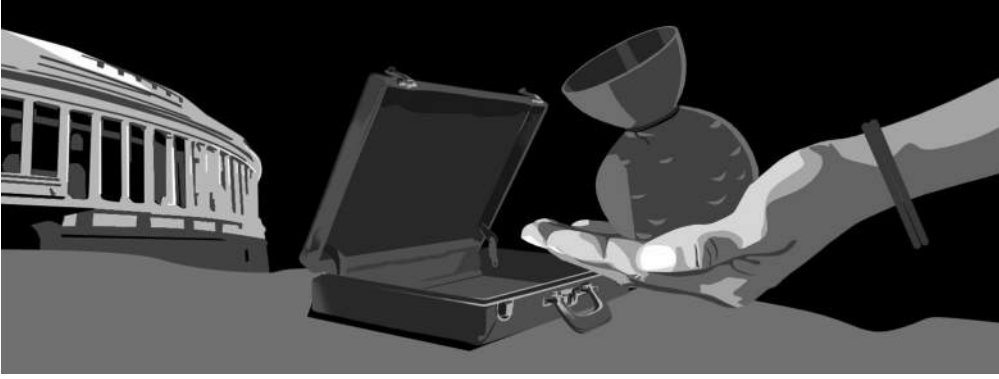
The combined borrowing by PSUs went up by 13.5 per cent, while their cash balance declined by 12.8 per cent during the last financial year, to a large extent because of the government’s dependence on dividend payments to balance the Budget. This could lead to multiple problems for PSUs, and the government being the largest shareholder would also suffer. For instance, given their lower cash balance, these firms will not be in the best position to make investments, which will affect growth prospects and the ability to generate cash. This would not only be a drag on the flow of dividend in future, but also on tax collection. Further, continuous government interference affects investor sentiment, resulting in lower valuations of listed PSUs. Depressed valuations weigh on resource mobilisation through disinvestment. Therefore, the government would do well to reduce its dependence on PSUs to fund expenditure. This will, perhaps, be possible only if it has a broad policy for the PSUs.

To be fair, problems in the context of managing PSUs and the need for a broader framework are not new. Governments in the past have also used cash-rich state-run firms to supplement revenue collection. As a result, the bigger underlying issues remained unaddressed. For instance, as a 2018 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India showed, out of 212 companies that declared profits in 2016-17, about 75 per cent of the contribution came from 49 companies in three sectors — coal and lignite, petroleum and power. This clearly shows that most profitable state-run enterprises are in sectors where the government has excessive control. Further, there were 188 government companies with accumulated losses in excess of ₹1.23 trillion, and the net worth of 71 companies had been totally eroded.

Evidently, these PSUs are a drag on government finances. To its credit, the government has reiterated its commitment to strategic disinvestment. It needs to accelerate the process. This will enable the government to recycle assets and push investment. It is important to note that proceeds from disinvestment should ideally be used to fund capital expenditure and create new assets. NITI Aayog has a list of PSUs for strategic disinvestment and this could be a good starting point. However, the government should not stop at loss-making ones and aim to get out of all non-strategic PSUs over time.

In this context, it would help if the government has a clear medium-term road map, so that disinvestment is not used just to bridge the shortfall in revenue collection. A road map would also enable market participants to plan for the kind of assets they want to bid. In the interim, PSUs should be given full functional autonomy, which will help improve valuations.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



A well-being fiscal Budget

There are lessons for India in New Zealand’s path-breaking attempt at taking a philosophical approach to budgeting

India just presented its annual Budget along traditional lines. New Zealand just presented its Annual Budget using a well-being framework. It is a path-breaking first attempt. What New Zealand has essentially done is to adopt an “overarching philosophical approach” as its conceptual basis and world view. It has used indicators contained in a Living Standards Framework (LSF) to assess well-being, and has used carefully delineated information for technical definitions and laborious data sets for chosen indicators that are currently accepted internationally as well-being criteria’.

As I have explained earlier, “subjective well-being” has become a concept that is currently quite widespread. It comprises overall life satisfaction and sense of meaning and self. It is reflected in the use of time or the quality and quantity of people’s leisure and recreation time, in other words, people’s free time when they are not working or doing chores. Reflecting India’s low international well-being or happiness ranking (see my columns *Indians and their unhappiness* of April 15, 2019 and *Policy-making with happiness* of May 15, 2019), should India too attempt to adopt a well-being approach for its future Budgets? That would make India’s prevailing challenges transparent during the Budget process. Secrecy behind Indian Budgets has lost any useful role.

To achieve such an objective, we need to examine New Zealand’s approach — LSF and its instruments. The social foundation of LSF is civic engagement and assurance of governance. Better governance is reflected, among other things, by the proportion of the population reporting discrimination, and every group with its distinct cultural identity exerting the ability to be itself. This would be an appropriate recognition for

incorporation in India as well.

The five priorities that were set by New Zealand in its 2019 Budget comprised a sustainable and low-emissions economy, support of digital participation, lifting Maori and Pacific incomes and skills opportunities, reducing child poverty and family violence, and improving child well-being, and supporting mental well-being. These were then broken up into measurable criteria.

Regarding selected microeconomic criteria in LSF, quality of environment comprised a central concern.

This included scientifically measured air quality, satisfaction with water quality and natural space footprint within a 1km radius of dwelling. Criteria included under health comprised life expectancy at birth, self-reported health status, limitations in daily activities, and proportion of population with poor mental health. Another criterion, housing, included rooms per person, housing cost overburden, and housing quality. Knowledge and skills were reflected in the educational attainment of

adults (upper secondary and tertiary) as well as cognitive skills at age 15.

Macroeconomic criteria such as income and consumption were, of course, not ignored, including people’s disposable income from all sources, how much people spend and the material possessions they have. Within jobs and earnings were included unemployment rate, median hourly earnings, work accidents rate and job strain.

Next were societal conditions. Safety and security included intentional homicide rate per 100,000, self-reported victimisation and feelings of safety. Social connections include social network support, loneliness and time spent in positive social activities. The methodology included questionnaires and



PARTHASARATHI SHOME

Back to more govt staff, more PSU outlay

In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inherited from his predecessor, Manmohan Singh, a government whose manpower size was about 3.45 million. A little-known fact is that in the first three years of his first term, Mr Modi did remarkably well in reducing that headcount of government staff in various central ministries to 3.23 million.

Predictably, the pace of reduction slowed with each passing year. After effecting a 4 per cent cut in the government’s manpower size to 3.31 million in 2014-15, the pace of reduction fell to 1.6 per cent at 3.25 million in 2015-16 and even further to 0.44 per cent at 3.23 million in 2016-17.

Yet, the reduction in the government’s headcount by a little less than a quarter of a million in just three years was creditable. The magnitude of the squeeze was also quite substantial, though it was lower than the reduction of about 13 per cent in 2000-01 under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime and 6.5 per cent in 2011-12 under Manmohan Singh.

Worryingly, however, more than the entire gain from the manpower reduction in the first three years of the Modi regime was frittered away through an addition to the headcount in the last two years. From 3.23 million in 2016-17, the government headcount rose by 7.8 per cent to 3.49 million in 2017-18 and further by 3.7 per cent to 3.61 million in 2018-19.

What led to the surge? Of the increase in the manpower size by about 250,000 in 2017-18, the bulk was on account of a headcount rise in the government’s tax department by about 70,000, the civilian defence staff by about 45,000 and in the police department of the home affairs ministry by about 61,000. The total increase of about 128,000 in 2018-19 was largely due to the manpower size of the Indian Railways growing by about 99,000 to 1.37 million.

It may be sheer coincidence that the decline in the government headcount took place in three years after the formation of the Modi government in 2014 and the trend reversed when just two years were left before the next general elections. Were the elections a factor in the surge in the manpower?

Whatever may be the reason, there is now clear evidence that the Modi regime is not averse to the idea of a large government. In other words, it may talk about providing maximum governance through minimum government, but it does not actually consistently and sustainably work towards shrinking the size of the government. An indication of this approach is evident from its manpower headcount as also from the nature of its engagement with the public sector. Just as the manpower size in the last two years went up, the Modi government’s engagement with the public sector also increased.

In the last five years of the Modi government, for instance, the government pumped in fresh equity into public sector undertakings or PSUs to the tune of ₹6.26 trillion. The Manmohan Singh government, between 2009 and 2014, invested only about ₹2.33 trillion through equity. Of course, the bulk of the fresh equity invested by the Modi government in PSUs is on account of public sector banks — as much as ₹2.52 trillion. But in addition to that, the Modi government also invested ₹2 trillion in the Indian Railways, ₹1.14 trillion in the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and ₹17,320 crore in Air India.

It is reasonable to argue that the Modi government had little option other than raising government equity in public sector undertakings at a time when private-sector investment flows had slowed significantly and government investments were necessary to keep the growth momentum intact. A total investment of ₹3.14 trillion in the Indian Railways and the NHAI could



NEW DELHI DIARY

A K BHATTACHARYA

data on couples with and without children.

The LSF framework is not static. It recognises that there are four capitals whose growth, distribution and sustainability have ramifications on inter-generational well-being. The four capitals comprise, first, natural capital—assets of natural environment, including land, soil, water, plants, and animals. Second is social capital—trust, rule of law, cultural identity, connections between people and community—norms and values underpinning society. In it are embedded the rudiments of preservation of the Maori culture, that of the original New Zealanders. Third is human capital—people’s skills, knowledge, physical and mental health—enablement to work, study and enjoy recreation. And fourth is financial and physical capital—houses, roads, buildings, hospitals, factories, equipment, vehicles — having direct roles in supporting incomes and material living conditions. The capitals are interdependent and work together to support well-being.

The process was complex. Ministerial decisions were made based on, to begin, government priority setting and value judgements. The above government priorities were informed through data, analysis, advice, and involved various ministries such as environment, social development, child well-being unit, treasury (finance), and other agencies. Then it went to the full Cabinet and Cabinet Committees that checked adherence to overall Budget strategy and regulation. Finally the Budget was agreed by the Cabinet.

New Zealand admitted some risks. These included limits on the prevailing state of knowledge of the wider range of government activity that it proposes to cover. Service line agencies may be expected to view well-being as an exercise justifying what they already do, though the exercise should be about doing something different.

No doubt international leadership is needed to underline the importance of well-being Budgets in elaborating and justifying expenditure components and allocations. It would also indicate the direction of inter-generational sustainability of government expenditure. Countries could take unilateral steps. India faces massive problems of environmental sustainability as well as slower than acceptable reduction of poverty, extreme poverty and its socio-economic indicators. There is not much justification needed in this observation as revealed in an array of global cross-country indicators that I have been pointing over two years. A new approach by government is needed to enhance transparency in priority setting through open and participatory consultation, and then introduce authentic monitoring and evaluation.

Adopting the LSF by India would require massive efforts but it can be done. So much statistics is gathered in India anyway. Now an approach with new components and careful attention to detail would be needed. Perhaps India can become the first emerging economy to present a well-being Budget or at least announce its intention to do so in the next three years? Only then government expenditures to improve and hasten the well-being of the Indian population could be transparently tracked and corrected. That is the only way India can truthfully improve its near bottom global position on well-being.

[1]Our people, our country and our future, Living Standards Dashboard Report 2018, Government of New Zealand, illustrated by Tony Burton of New Zealand Treasury at London School of Economics last week.

be justified on that ground alone. Even the need for infusing ₹2.52 trillion of equity into public sector banks could be justified on the ground that these banks, burdened by huge non-performing loans, had to be rescued with more capital so that they could get back into the business of prudent lending and promote economic activity.

Thus, the public sector capital outlay (including their internal resources, loans and government equity) jumped from ₹2.96 trillion in 2014-15 to ₹8.43 trillion in 2018-19, the last year of the Modi government’s first term. How steep this rise was can be gauged from the fact that the share of public sector outlay in total expenditure of the Union government went up from about 18 per cent in 2014-15 to 34 per cent in 2018-19.

Even as the public sector outlay kept rising, the government also began dipping into the reserves of PSUs. In 2014-15, the government took credit of ₹31,692 crore by way of dividends from PSUs. The dividends receipt kept rising in the following years and was estimated at ₹45,124 crore in 2018-19, even though the PSUs’ profitability or financial health did not show any extraordinary improvement.

The Modi government’s increased engagement with the public sector had another dimension. In the five years, between 2014-15 and 2018-19, the government sold PSU shares through a variety of methods (including the sale of one PSU’s shares to another PSU) to raise about ₹2.88 trillion, but without any single instance of privatisation. The Manmohan Singh government had raised only ₹99,367 crore in its five years from 2009-10 to 2013-14 and that, too, was without any privatisation.

There could be many reasons for the way the Modi government has increased its manpower size or improved its engagement with the public sector, either through higher outlays or by raking in more revenues from PSUs in the form of dividends or disinvestment. But this is an aspect of the Modi government, where it differs from the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government and which is not often recognised.

Darkness in the trading ecosystem



BOOK REVIEW

NAMIT GUPTA

What’s the difference between, say, 30.79 milliseconds and 29.29 milliseconds, where one millisecond is one-thousandth of the smallest unit of time on your wristwatch? One-and-a-half milliseconds and a few million dollars or more, made or lost, Walter Mattli would have you know in his book *Darkness By Design: The Hidden Power In Global Capital Markets* as he takes you on a trip into the sinister world of stock market deals based on algorithmic trading.

Mr Mattli, a professor of international political economy and a fellow of St John’s College, Oxford, paints a gloomy picture of

the state of affairs in securities trading and laments the systematic decimation of the traditional floor-based co-operative stock exchange model, and its subsequent replacement with opaque, greed-driven, supercomputer-based split-second buying and selling of instruments. The author also blames unabated market fragmentation, brought on by rapid globalisation and the spate of M&As and corporate restructuring, for handing over the reins of the trading business to a few players.

This clutch has been using both its financial muscle to frenetically invest millions of dollars in fibre-optic networks to stay ahead of the competition and its political clout to change the core membership structure of the stock exchange. Obsessed with speed, these corporations, to whom membership to a platform like the New York Stock Exchange was off limits by decree at one point, were willing to pay top dollar for speed once they got one foot in after years of lobbying and silently calling the shots on the preambles of the exchanges that once

regarded them as persona non grata. In 2010, for instance, traders were paying as much as \$14 million for a leased line that gave them a 1.5 millisecond information edge over their immediate rivals who were hooked onto a Chicago-New York network. The arithmetic made sense simply because a one millisecond advantage could translate into a gain of \$100 million a year, the author explains.

If that hasn’t left you astounded, Mr Mattli informs you that milliseconds are now passe, and that microchips today capable of doing trades in just about 740 nanoseconds — one nanosecond is a billionth of a second — and efforts are on to achieving speeds in picoseconds, or one-trillionth of a second.

The quantum leap in automation has also rendered political boundaries redundant, allowing for trading across markets the world over, fostering fierce competition in domestic and cross-border arbitrage, and giving rise to a slew of financially engineered products in the trading universe.

So how has all this changed the trading landscape? Mr Mattli convincingly argues that it has eradicated what he calls the honest broker-partner model and replaced it with a handful of giant corporations that strictly cater to a wealthy clientele while simultaneously cornering the profits in off-market deals using supercomputers in locations miles away from the trading floor. In effect, this lot has virtually killed traditional stock exchange. The author buttresses his argument with statistics and other evidence. Consider this: The New York Stock Exchange, the global leader in securities trading for much of the 20th century, saw its overall share in the domestic market decline from 80 per cent to about 24 per cent in the past decade, even as there was a spike in the number of orders from a few million daily to several billions today.

In all of this, the small investor seems to have lost out, despite the quantum leap in efficiency and rationalisation of brokerage costs. Mr Mattli cites a 2014 US survey in which a staggering 70 per cent of financial industry participants believe that the current capital market ecosystem is unfair to investors, while only 18 per cent believe it is fair.

The author comes down heavily on what he describes as bad market governance, in which “scammers will scam as long as deception, manipulation, or misrepresentation pays”. While he comes down particularly hard on collocation for concentrating power in the hands of a few, Mr Mattli also points out to more disturbing signs of this transition to an entry-barrier-driven business, such as the series of flash crashes in which markets nosedive for no apparent reason, only to recover within minutes. Within this domain, there are large erratic price swings in individual stocks over milliseconds, which he explains are daily occurrences in today’s markets. He adds that one source identified as many as 18,500 such mini flash crashes between 2006 and 2010 in the US stock exchanges alone.

But there is a pinhole in Mr Mattli’s dark world that lets in a little bit of sunlight to dispel the gloom. The author praises recent regulatory initiatives by the US SEC to monitor alternative trading systems, although he does mention that its response to the so-called dark pools has been delayed. But the US isn’t alone in clamping down on opaque trading practices.

References have also been made to the initiatives by other regulators, such as the 2012 expansion of market integrity rules by the Australian Securities Investment Commission and the adoption in 2014 by European regulators of the Market in Financial Instruments Directive reforms, which came into effect in 2018.

Mr Mattli’s book is a delightful chronicle of the changes in the way trading-related information has flowed, right from the days of America’s first stock exchange in Philadelphia, when express coaches were used to deliver news, to the advent of wire services, courtesy a certain Mr Paul Reuter, to the present era of nanoseconds. You don’t necessarily have to be an investment buff to want to pick up this one, and even a mild interest in modern American history is sufficient for one to buy it.

DARKNESS BY DESIGN: The Hidden Power In Global Capital Markets

Walter Mattli
Princeton University Press, 248 pages, \$29.95

Indira Gandhi killed banks, no one there to fix her folly

The sad part is not Indira Gandhi nationalising banks, but that five decades later, no one wants to reverse this

WITH MOST INDIANS today possessing a bank account and large amounts of credit flowing to groups like farmers or MSMEs, it is easy to declare that Indira Gandhi's bank nationalisation 50 years ago this Friday has served India well. Around 80% of the Jan Dhan accounts opened for the poor by prime minister Narendra Modi were, for instance, with PSU banks and, while 68% of priority sector lending has been made by PSU banks, just 26% was done by private banks. Proving this was a folly is difficult since it isn't possible to go back in time and create a counterfactual, but certainly privately-run NBFCs lend a lot to MSMEs and other under-served parts of the population; NBFCs served this population because they could charge higher rates of interest and it is reasonable to assume that, were the government not to put curbs on interest rates, private sector banks would have lent more to these segments as well. To the extent the government wanted the loans to be low-cost, it could have paid the subsidy directly to the borrowers.

While there is no doubt PSU banks have done better in creating Jan Dhan accounts than their private sector counterparts, things would have been different had the government either paid banks for servicing these accounts or guaranteed enough incomes from them in the way Modi did when he promised to give the poor money each month via the DBT scheme; the same PSU banks, keep in mind, opened millions of 'no-frills' accounts in the past, but few of these were serviced over a sustained period since the accounts had no money in them. In the case of rural telephony, by way of example, where it was always assumed that it was the public sector BSNL which would provide phones—and not private firms like Airtel or Vodafone—the fact is that the private firms overtook BSNL several years ago. In the airline space, it is not Air India (AI), but airlines like Indigo that are allowing middle class Indians to fly, despite ₹32,809 crore of cash given to AI since FY10; indeed, in a year where Jet Airways was cancelling flights in the run-up to shutting operations, AI's losses rose 38% to ₹7,365 crore in FY19 and its net debt rose 6% to ₹58,352 crore. Wherever the private sector was allowed, it has done a better job.

PSU banks, keep in mind, lost ₹2.97 lakh crore of value since even when Modi first came to power in May 2014, as their share of banking market-cap fell from 40% to 26%. And they are today so cash-strapped due to a rapid build-up of bad loans, they are unable to continue their growth; in the March 2019 quarter, their loans grew just 9.6% versus 21% for private banks and their deposits grew 6.5% versus 17.5% for private banks. An equally specious argument is that, while private banks didn't lend to Indian industry, especially to infrastructure, PSU banks did. Apart from the fact that private banks didn't have the same access to (taxpayer-funded) free cash as PSU banks have had for decades, surely the massive build-up of NPAs makes it clear that private banks judged risk better; this same free cash, in the case of AI, is what allowed it to charge low fares and led most to believe it was a more pro-consumer airline. In March 2019, 12.6% of all PSU lending had turned NPA versus just 3.7% for private banks; indeed, the near hollowing out of PSU bank balance sheets has played a major role in India's current investment crisis. While the taxpayer-funded bailout will help PSU banks lend at a faster pace, what is worrying is that no politician over the years has dared to repair the damage done by Indira Gandhi, not even someone from the economic right like Modi. The way chosen, of allowing PSU banks to shrink in relative terms, appears less painful than undoing bank nationalisation, but given the loss in market-cap of these banks, that is an unforgivable destruction of public wealth.

And now, exports plunge

Global trade war, and poor competitiveness take a toll

EXPORTS FROM INDIA have been unexciting for the last 6-7 years now. With no government really able to fix the issues that make India uncompetitive—the latest budget, to cite one example, once again refused to cut corporate taxes for large firms—it is no surprise exports continue to languish; exports in June hit a 41-month low. At just \$27.7 billion, that was a near-10% year-on-year (y-o-y) drop. Even if you remove oil exports which were affected by a temporary shutdown of a crude distillation unit in Reliance's Jamnagar refinery, the near-6% y-o-y contraction in non-oil exports is a clear indication that India hasn't been able to make much headway in a competitive market. One can make some allowances for listless global growth and dull trade, exacerbated by the US-China trade war. But, the writing has been on the wall for a long time now and the government needed to have been far more responsive. In fact, India's exports were slowing even when global growth and trade were perking up.

A Nomura analysis shows that on a three-month moving average basis, core export volumes dipped sharply in June, with manufacturing, agriculture and non-agri commodity sectors all doing badly. In the absence of specific measures to help labour-intensive sectors—textiles and jewellery—large job losses would not come as a surprise. The stumbling blocks are well-known: HSBC economist Pranjul Bhandari had written, in May 2016, that domestic bottlenecks were the biggest hurdle, and were the cause for 50% of the export slowdown since 2008. The remaining 50% can be explained by sluggish global demand and the currency. If the government is serious about pushing exports, it must raise productivity levels and that requires, among others, changes in labour laws. Not the kind of cosmetic changes being contemplated, but game-changing ones that will give exporting companies confidence to hire. Exporters must be given the flexibility to pay what they feel is a reasonable wage, to enforce a certain number of working hours and be allowed to fire workers who are inefficient. India is already uncompetitive where wages are concerned, which is why its share of the market is being taken away by countries such as Bangladesh or Philippines.

Crisil, too, has pointed out that there are deep-rooted structural issues and while GST may have disrupted the sectors—especially due to long delays in tax refunds—the ratings agency has observed that competitiveness in the labour-intensive sectors had begun to erode even before GST. In the decade between 2006 and 2016, the RCA—revealed comparative advantage—declined for three important export areas: demonetisation and GST added to the problem. For instance, the RCA for gems and jewellery dropped from 6.38 in 2006 to 3.96 in 2016, from 3.12 to 1.97 for leather and from 2.43 to 2.22 for readymade garments. So, while slowing global trade is undoubtedly an issue, the government must accept that it is the lack of cost advantages—both in capital and labour—that is hurting exporters. Unless these are tackled, exports will continue to fare badly.

Reproductive FAILURE

Tourism induced stress is affecting the reproductive health of tigers in India

A STUDY BY Hyderabad's Centre for Cell and Molecular Biology found that tourism had negative effects on the reproductive health of tigers in Bandhavgarh, Kanha and Sariska reserves. Researchers studying the impact of anthropogenic disturbances on stress levels in the felines, calculated from the concentration of female glucocorticoid metabolite (FGCM) in fecal matter, over a year found that these were significantly higher during peak tourist season, which lasts for about eight to nine months, than in the off-season. Further, a distinct correlation was found between stress levels in the feline population and the number of vehicles entering the reserves.

Given that any physiological stress adversely affects the reproductive health and capacity of big cats—stress-induced failure of effective reproduction among tigers has previously been recorded in relocated populations—the present, unsustainable wildlife tourism industry does not bode well for the species already classified as 'endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Not only is tourism directly detrimental for the physiological well-being of tigers, it also increases the risk of animal-human conflict and poaching, both of which, along with reduced core forest cover, endanger tiger populations nationwide. As of 2014, the tiger population in India was estimated to be 2,226, and a census is underway to arrive at a more current number. In the meanwhile, it is clear that state efforts must be directed towards ensuring not only that the natural habitats of tigers are expanded but also that they remain as anthropogenically untouched as possible to encourage a sustainable growth in the species' numbers.

THE REAL MAINSTREAM

IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE CONSUMERS, THE FOOD INDUSTRY AND THE NATION THAT THE DANGERS OF JUNK FOOD ARE DISCLOSED AND WIDELY DISSEMINATED

Junk food must carry warning labels

THE FOOD SAFETY and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) recently published a draft of the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019, for public comments. This draft has been strongly opposed by the food industry. The All India Food Processors' Association has termed it as 'not scientific or practical enough to be implemented'. The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories has termed the regulations as 'a wrong move at a wrong time'. Its managing director, Prakash Naiknavare, is reported to have said, 'One cannot club sugar in the same class as alcohol, cigarettes and white cocaine.'

So what is the reason why this draft regulation is attracting the ire of the industry? And is the industry's displeasure reasonable? First, let's understand the draft Labelling and Display Regulations and then its rationale.

The draft proposes to mandatorily declare amount of calories, salt, added sugar, saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol on the package of food. The draft further proposes that companies must also disclose information on the serving size and the per serve percentage contribution of a particular ingredient (like salt or trans fats) to the recommended dietary allowance (RDA). 'Serving size' is the maximum quantity of food that a person should consume from a package of food. For example, the serving size declared on the package of the Lay's Chips in the US and Europe is 28 grams or 15 chips. That is, according to PepsiCo, the makers of Lay's Chips, one should not consume more than 15 potato chips in one sitting. The RDA is the recommended daily intake of calories, salt, sugar and fats for a normal person; consuming more than this in a day is considered unhealthy. The idea of putting serving size and the per serve percentage contribution to RDA is to inform the consumers about the 'unhealthiness' of

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packaged and processed food.

Under the current Packaging and Labelling Regulations, enacted in 2011, most of the above is not mandatory. Companies are not required to declare the amount of salt, added sugar, trans fats, cholesterol, etc on the label. Serving size and per serve nutrient declaration is not mandatory. However, if a company claims that its product is 'healthy', it has to declare the amount of nutrients, serving size, per serve nutrient etc. So, our current food labelling rules are based on the principle that if a product is bad don't tell the customer, but if it is good then advertise. But, this principle is not commonly used by the food regulators of other countries. In countries such as the US, Canada, Israel, Singapore and Brazil, most of the information is mandatorily required to be declared. Multinational corporations operating in India are already declaring this information in other countries. But, most of the information is declared on the back-of-the-package (BoP). What the draft regulation is proposing is the front-of-the-package (FoP) labelling and a warning label for food item with very high salt, sugar or fats content. This is riling the industry.

The draft rules are essentially proposing that apart from BoP information disclosure, some of the most important information should also be put on FoP. In addition, it is proposing that a 'red-coloured' warning symbol should also be put on FoP if saturated fats, trans fats, added sugar and salt exceed a certain threshold level individually. The more the number of the red warning symbols, the healthier the food is.

The industry feels that the warning label would unfairly club junk food in the same category as alcohol and tobacco. The question is: Is it unfair to consider junk food as similarly unhealthy as alcohol and tobacco? Let's look at the data.

In 2016, the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems, an independent international group of leaders and stakeholders set up to help governments in low- and middle-income countries develop evidence-based food policies, found that six of the top 11 risk factors driving the global burden of disease were related to diet. Their most startling finding was that the risk of death and disease due to poor diets was far higher than those posed by alcohol, tobacco, drugs and unsafe sex combined. They found that obesity, which is largely due to poor diet, is as risky as smoking or alcoholism. They defined a poor diet as one containing insufficient calories, vitamins and minerals, or too many calories, saturated fats, salt or sugar.

The data from India is equally worrying. For example, overweight/obesity levels among the 15-49-year-old population have doubled in a decade. In urban areas, about one-third of the population is overweight/obese. Obesity is the primary trigger for hypertension and type-2 diabetes. Likewise, about two-thirds of Indians now die because of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like cardio-

vascular disease, cancer and diabetes. Many NCDs are associated with an unhealthy diet. So, there is now enough evidence to support the fact that bad food is as bad as alcohol and tobacco. And, like alcohol and tobacco, people must be made aware of the dangers of poor diets and junk foods.

The FoP and the red-coloured warning symbol are the best ways to inform consumers and enable them to make informed choices. The warning labels will overcome the huge literacy and language barriers in the country. It is not easy for even the most educated to interpret the labels. A symbol, however, is easily interpretable and easy to understand. The most important aspect of the warning symbol is that it incentivises companies to reformulate their products and make them healthier. So, a company can make its food healthy and eliminate the need to label.

It is clear that if no action is taken on the bad food, the burden of NCDs will overwhelm our health infrastructure and economy. Some estimates suggest that about 50% of India can become obese by 2030. India is already the diabetes capital of the world and hypertension is a household phenomenon in the country. One shudders to think of the consequences when half the country is obese. It is, therefore, time for concerted action. The draft regulation is a move in the right direction. It is in the interest of consumers and the nation that the dangers of junk food are disclosed and widely disseminated. It is in the interest of the food industry as well. If they can successfully market bad food, surely they can more successfully market good food. As responsible businesses, the food industry should, therefore, support this law.

The industry feels that the warning label would unfairly club junk food in the same category as alcohol and tobacco

Surveying India's economic strategy

The protectionist aspects of the Budget, with higher tariffs on many goods, seem to be at odds with the kind of economic openness to the world that would support higher growth

NIRVIKAR SINGH

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Views are personal



MY LAST COLUMN, on India's Union Budget, attempted to bring out some general themes underlying the detailed revenue and expenditure proposals of that exercise. Those themes are straightforward: higher growth through higher private and public sector investment, along with concern for equity through continued social protections. The Budget proposals do lack coherence in places, especially when rich individuals, large corporations or foreigners are singled out for higher taxes in ways that undermine the larger growth objective.

Not surprisingly, the Economic Survey of India (ESI) has a similar focus on investment, along with some frills about "virtuous cycles" of investment, demand, exports, growth and jobs. If we compare the two documents, it seems that the ESI emphasises exports in a way that the Budget does not. Indeed, the protectionist aspects of the Budget, with higher tariffs on many goods, seem to be at odds with the kind of economic openness to the world that would support higher growth.

The ESI also differs in emphasis from the Budget by providing a significant chapter on growth dynamics of firms. When a group of prominent economists produced a report on an economic strategy for India, covering all the usual issues of infrastructure, exports, education, agriculture, labour markets, and jobs, I suggested (*bit.ly/30tPhS2*) that what was missing in this otherwise excellent analysis was a focus on the role of firms and their growth in promoting overall economic growth. The ESI provides evidence that older small firms are less productive than younger small firms, and that policies which distort labour markets and which favour small size lead to firms that are less productive and less likely to grow. The ESI also offers indicators of which sectors are more likely to generate higher numbers of jobs

as they grow, in manufacturing as well as in services.

The ESI makes a good start on this issue, though there is much more analysis that needs to be done, and existing analysis that needs to be incorporated into policy making. Issues of economies of agglomeration (clustering), management efficiency, and integration into domestic and global supply chains, among others, all need to be tackled in the context of enabling the growth of efficient firms.

There are more basic issues as well, because it is not clear that the MSME category makes sense from a policy perspective. Lumping together micro, small and medium enterprises under a single policy umbrella does not have sound economic logic behind it. A second issue is that some small firms have characteristics such that their size is going to be limited—the "mom-and-pop store," for example. Their growth cannot be forced, although they can still become more productive and efficient with improvements in economic structure (such as logistics), or in technology. Finally, firm dynamics is not just about small firms growing, but also efficient large firms becoming larger. And often these large firms will support an ecosystem of small suppliers. The ESI makes only a beginning in understanding what will make Indian firms more productive.

The ESI also offers some innovations in Indian economic policy thinking that cannot be incorporated in a Budget speech. These include designing policies to take advantage of insights from behavioural economics, fixing the problem of judicial delay, and expanding access to certain types of data that has public good characteristics. Each issue is different in nature, but each can have significant positive impacts. Given the current government's shyness over some of its eco-

nomics data, the ESI view on data as a public good is especially welcome.

In addition to the above three takes on economic strategy (Budget, expert group and ESI), a fourth essay deserves mention. Rakesh Mohan, one of India's most seasoned, has produced an analysis for Brookings India that returns to the decades-old metaphor of a "big push" for India to get to a new growth trajectory. Some analysts thought the Budget lacked this kind of big vision and urgency, and Dr Mohan provides a corrective. Of course, investment is central to the projected growth story, and Dr Mohan rightly emphasises labour-intensive manufacturing and exports, much as Arvind Panagariya did while at NITI Aayog. Some of the special insights provided that may not receive enough attention elsewhere are policies for higher household financial savings, renewed attention to agricultural research and development and extension activities, and infrastructure investment in transport and logistics. On the last of these areas, of course, Dr Mohan headed a committee that produced a major report outlining needed policies in great detail.

Dr Mohan's report also covers the most challenging area of all, that of governance. Perhaps the most important aspect of his recommendations is to remind everyone of the need to emphasise and incorporate technical competence in policy making. This is something that has been a staple of Indian economic policy making, but may be in danger of being eroded in the current political climate. A more specific recommendation is in the call for NITI Aayog to step up its capabilities and to become a technically competent coordinator for a "big push" economic strategy. That would certainly help if done well: it is still unclear if the government's economic strategy has the coherence and consistency that is ultimately needed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On inter-caste marriage

The inter-caste marriage of Sakshi Mishra and Ajitesh, a Dalit in Uttar Pradesh provoked the girl's father (a BJP MLA) to threaten the couple. Now all sorts of non-existent or flimsy reasons are cooked up to establish why the father was uncomfortable and unhappy with her daughter's choice of a Dalit as her husband. 'Age difference' (not more than 5 years between them) and lack of a good job are cited to portray him as an unsuitable son-in-law. In this day and age that a legally-wedded couple need police protection for not sharing a 'common descent' in a limited sense (actually, we share a 'common descent' and are all the same under the skin) is a damning indictment of our society. The 'annihilation of caste' is still an unfulfilled dream. The Constitution that gives primacy to personal liberties, guarantees the citizens who are of a certain age to marry persons of their choice. It is not conditional on the consent of parents or anyone else. What BR Ambedkar said on inter-caste marriage is worth quoting here: "I am convinced that the real remedy is intermarriage. Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin, and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount, the separatist feeling—the feeling of being aliens—created by caste will not vanish. The real remedy for breaking caste is intermarriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste". The upper castes—the natural constituency and core supporters of Hindu right—can promote inter-caste marriages to forge larger Hindu unity, if nothing else. The repudiation of those parts of the religious texts or scriptures that sanctify caste is only a very small price to pay.

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

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Sovereign bonds arrive, but will these conquer?

Issuance of sovereign bonds involves a gamut of factors that have to be weighed before launching them

THE IDEA OF THE INDIAN government borrowing from the overseas markets to partly finance the fiscal deficit for FY20 is interesting, because it will be the first time that such a thing is being done. There are foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) investing in government bonds, but the amounts involved are in rupees and, hence, they are like any other holder of government securities (G-Secs). In the past, there have been ideas of the government issuing sovereign bonds when there were problems on the external account, with forex reserves declin-

ing amidst a weakening rupee. The schemes used to shore up dollars—Resurgent India Bonds (RIB) and India Millennium Deposit (IMD)—through bonds or swaps targeting the NRI community and, hence, it was never a case of the government borrowing in overseas markets. This will change now.

It has been indicated that the government could borrow up to \$10 billion, or 10% of the overall borrowing programme of ₹7 lakh crore from the global market. Prima facie, it sounds like a good idea because of the attractiveness of this source, just like, say, external commercial

borrowings (ECBs) for corporates. The LCF factor is in operation—liquidity, cost and forex earnings.

Domestic liquidity is protected in a way when the government borrows from international markets, and the so-called crowding-out effect is eschewed. Hence, banks will now have to invest less in such securities and can use their funds for lending. The cost of borrowing is always lower here as domestic rates are considered to be very high at even, say, 6.8% for a 10-year bond. This helps lower the interest outgo, which helps the budget, as the size of the borrowing increases.

Last, as the borrowing is in dollars, it adds to forex reserves and, hence, in a very unobtrusive manner steadies the exchange rate. The loans will have to be repaid only after, say, 10 years or more and, therefore, there are no pressures of outflows for this period.

Now, let us look at the counterpoint. We do not really require forex reserves badly enough to justify such borrowings from the currency standpoint. Therefore, this cannot be an argument, though it is a collateral benefit that comes along. Besides, the dollars (bonds) have to be redeemed at some point of time and, thus, holding a naked position will not do, and just like how RBI has been exhorting companies to hedge part of their exposure, the government has to follow suit. The six-month forward rate is around 4.5%, and even if one uses the swap rate of 3.5% that was reckoned when the 2014 crisis erupted, this becomes an in-built cost that cannot be wished away.

Next will be the cost of borrowing. Will it really be that low? The US 10-year bond goes for around 2%, but India remains a just-above-investment-grade country with a rating in the BBB category, which is similar to that of Italy. Therefore, the cost will be greater than 2% for sure and, if one uses the 10-year yield of Italy, which is in the same bracket, the basic cost will be around 3%, unless the rating improves dramatically. To this must be added the credit default swap (CDS), which is something that investors would look at when investing. Currently, for Italy, the CDS rate is around 1.75% for five-year bonds and, hence, the total return that the investor will look for at these levels would be at least 4.75-5%. To this must be added the hedging cost that can give a higher aggregate number than the current level of 6.8%. Hence, the cost

factor has to be examined in greater detail before launching such issues.

A related problem with such borrowing is credit rating. India does get a sovereign credit rating from the Big Three and has always put forward a case for an upgrade on account of the steady progress made in terms of growth, inflation, external account, FDI and FPI, ease of doing business, fiscal management, etc. There is a valid argument in the financial world today that the rating agencies tend to be biased against emerging markets, and tend to give a lower rating as yardsticks of developed countries are used when modifications are required, given the specific economic conditions that prevail, like poverty, unemployment, population, etc. But, so far, the rating did not really matter in the practical sense for Indian governments as we had no external sovereign borrowing and, thus, it did not affect the state. Indian companies got affected due to this rating as it became a floor for them when looking to borrow overseas.

From now onwards, this rating will matter as it will alter the cost dynamics. Also, one has to be more tuned-in to what these agencies look at—such as aggregate fiscal deficit (Centre, state, municipal, PSUs, off-government, subsidies, cash transfers, etc). Every announcement that is against their scales gets recorded in their outlook, and events like sudden departures of RBI/government officials become events that are looked at more closely. In a way, almost everything can be a material event that has a bearing on the rating. This will be a perennial challenge.

At the market level, the dynamics will change. Currently, bond yields are largely driven by RBI policy. Lower repo rates will affect these yields instantaneously and OMOs can steady them. Often, it is felt that central bank intervention ensures that yields are low and that the government can borrow at more hospitable rates. But this will change in the global market where yields will be truly market-determined and be influenced more by what happens in the US. The Federal Reserve action will be more important than RBI action on rates and, hence, the matrix of influence will undergo a change. This is but natural when liquidity builds up, which, of course, is a precondition for any successful market.

Interestingly, market volatility will take a different course. While \$10 billion in circulation in the US may not affect the overall yields in India, as volumes build up, there will be more volatility as players would tend to arbitrage. FPIs, in particular, will weigh the same G-Sec bond in the US and India and, in a way, would enhance efficient price discovery as yields equalise. At some point of time, when volumes are sizeable in overseas markets, depending on the interest in Indian G-Secs, price discovery would also take place on global exchanges. This, of course, is a matter of conjecture, but has to be kept in mind.

Therefore, issuance of sovereign bonds involves a gamut of factors that have to be weighed before launching them. Higher levels of borrowing will also increase the size of external debt, which, so far, is more of a private sector concern ever since India became virtually free from the loans of multilateral agencies in the 1970s and 1980s. On balance, one may take a view that going for such borrowing may send a different kind of signal to the global community that will be open for interpretation, especially so as the attainment of fiscal deficit targets seems to be getting elusive over time. With domestic savings not increasing and interest rates being driven lower, the available reservoir of funds is not adequate to meet various borrowing requirements. This could be the way the market would see it, considering that the foreign exchange position looks more than comfortable and is, hence, not the driving factor behind this move.

We do not really require forex reserves badly enough to justify such borrowings from the currency standpoint. Also, the cost factor has to be examined in greater detail before launching such issues

We've to look beyond ZBNF

**SEEMA BATHLA &
ANJANI KUMAR**

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There are bigger challenges to deal with

OVEREMPHASIS ON ZERO Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) to reduce cost of production and double farmer incomes must be analysed critically and holistically. The adoption of high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds along with irrigation, chemical fertilisers, associated package of practices and strong policy support (credit, MSP, etc) ushered in Green Revolution during the 1960s. Consequently, Indian agriculture transformed from low-investment subsistence natural farming to high-investment modern and commercial farming. This enabled India to achieve not only self-sufficiency in foodgrains for the growing population, but also to emerge as a net exporter of agricultural commodities. The country boasted of elimination of hunger and be at top position in the world in the production of wheat, rice, pulses, milk and various horticultural crops. Since then, capital along with labour have been viewed as key drivers of agricultural growth, which is in consonance with the economic theory.

After 60 years of reaping the benefits of technology, a dramatic policy shift towards ZBNF as announced in the Budget is perplexing, though the coexistence of alternative options and technologies are always rewarding.

ZBNF is done using natural ingredients that reduce cost of production on inputs. In other words, farmers go back to a system followed by their parents during pre-Green Revolution period. Such practices adopt *jiwamrita*, *bijamrita* and *acchadana* (natural mulching) based on cow urine, earthworms and other biological functions. Not only such practices lessen the input cost, they also contribute to sustainable practices in terms of health of soil and the environment.

The questions, however, are: Will ZBNF reduce the cost of production and raise farmers' net returns from cultivation? How much output per hectare this practice yields in comparison to chemical farming under varied agro-ecological conditions across states? Are farmers equipped with appropriate training and availability of livestock for urine and dung? How can farmers be encouraged to adopt ZBNF and what would be its scalability over time? Will ZBNF be appropriate for high-value commodities, the demand of which is increasing by the day? There are no concrete answers, as little research has been done on these so far. The successful cases of ZBNF are too less to make it a policy mandate.

Beyond ZBNF

There are bigger issues that inflict Indian agriculture and should have been taken up in the Budget. First, 50% of net sown area is rain-fed. Farmers cannot remain dependent on rain, which is becoming erratic owing to climatic variations. Public investment in irrigation is a must. We witnessed massive increase in investments during the last decade in the major-medium-minor irrigation systems across states, with much greater share of investment in rain-fed and eastern states. But these have not led to a commensurate increase in the net irrigated area by canals, whose share in total irrigated area continues to hover at 17%. Apparently, the failure of the government to provide adequate irrigation has led to a sizeable increase in private investment (mainly by farmers) in tube wells and other sources, and hence a much higher share in net irrigated area. It may imply that the government expenditure is more on the operation and maintenance of 5,264 dams operational in the country and considerably less towards capital intensity. Thus, it is important that the government encourages private investment through provision of subsidised credit and subsidy on capital.

Second, farmers are usually oblivious to tech interventions and newer farming practices. The NSSO 70th round (2012-13) noted that government extension programmes have not been able to reach most farmers. Third, production of agricultural commodities is intertwined with their marketing, which has hardly progressed. Farmers receive a small share of the consumer rupee due to a long chain of intermediaries in marketing. Sale of produce in APMC-run regulated markets hardly provides solace even though commodity prices are determined as per the forces of demand and supply in these. The survey divulges that a majority of farmers prefer to sell their produce to village traders and also they receive prices below MSP for wheat and rice in most states.

Even if the idea of ZBNF is accepted through aggressive extension and training programmes, and bridging knowledge gaps, these challenges call for immediate attention. The organically produced commodities under ZBNF will also face marketing problems unless the government extends price support and comes to their rescue when prices fall. The government should increase public investment in irrigation and agriculture markets, which can propel farmers to make investments and achieve higher incomes from farming.

THAT THIS GOVERNMENT has a penchant for springing surprises was evident with the sudden moves of demonetisation, surgical strikes after the Uri attacks, and the Balakot air strike. But when the action has to be taken internally, preparing of a robust legal ground is indispensable. The provision of Bills and amending legislations are indications that, along with ground-level policing action, the legal framework is available to tighten the screws on nefarious designs of terrorists and their supporters. While certain laws do exist for this purpose—the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, was the most effective instrument to suck out the finances of terrorist supporters—hardly anything was being done to book and investigate cases in terrorist-hit areas in the Northeast, Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Odisha. Sleeper units of ISI are known to exist even in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. One reason could be the clout that such outfits wield in such areas, which negates the influence of government machinery and renders intelligence gathering very difficult.

Now, the legislative changes being brought at one go are unprecedented. Just to list the major ones:

► The Unlawful Activities Amendment Bill, 2019, is being amended to proceed against an individual to be declared terrorist instead of just an organisation,

Curbing terrorism financing

Are we ready for a big bang legal action against terrorism?

**SOMESH
ARORA**

The author is an advocate (Amicus Rarus) and former commissioner of Customs & Excise



which was the case earlier;

► Another amendment seeks to allow the investigation to be conducted by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) with prior approval of the director general even at a place other than that where the property representing the proceeds of terrorism is situated.

Second, to strengthen the mechanism of reporting of transactions by reporting entities, the PMLA, 2002, has been amended by seeking to insert Section 12AA by virtue of Clause 189 of the Finance Bill, 2019. It provides that reporting entities shall authenticate the identity of clients be it gold purchaser or property purchaser, etc, through additional means

like Aadhaar or as may be prescribed, and such entities shall be required to take additional steps to determine the ownership, financial position, sources of funds of the client as well as the purpose behind the transaction and the intended nature of the transaction between the parties.

On such information not having being provided, the reporting entities can refuse to carry out transaction for such a person. It is also expected that in case the transaction is considered suspicious or is likely to involve any proceeds of crime, the scrutiny level of the reporting entity will correspondingly go up. This effectively means that the reporting entities shall act as the first level of scrutiny of suspect transac-

tions under the PMLA.

Thirdly, the National Investigation Agency Act has been sought to be amended by allowing to probe cybercrime cases as well as cases of human trafficking. Similarly, the NIA shall be authorised and competent to also investigate 'individual' suspects' links to terror along with terrorist organisations.

The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988, is being amended by adding Section 54(B) to permit entries in the records or other documents in the custody of any authority to be admitted as evidence in any prosecution or attachment proceedings. Even certified copies henceforth shall be allowed to be adduced where

originals, for some reason, cannot be produced. The net effect will be that the records of the registrar of properties or of any other body on the production of such record or attested copies can be taken as evidence and its authenticity allowed as proved. It is amply clear that this strengthening of provisions can facilitate action against property attachments and confiscations even through remote investigations, and therefore terrorists activities can be financially paralysed and their supporters crippled.

Further, Section 72(A) PMLA is being inserted to provide for an inter-ministerial coordination committee with statutory backing, to allow various agencies dealing

with money laundering, counter terrorism, financial sector crimes, etc, to act in synergy with others. Although such arrangements were earlier also available in the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Economic Intelligence Bureau, now they have been legally structured and cooperation shall be required to be statutorily provided by all regulators and agencies. In the 1980s, the government had created the Economic Intelligence Council under the chairmanship of the finance minister to encourage collation and dissemination of information—but the avowed purpose couldn't be achieved. Whether the new legislation can surmount individual organisations' quest for glory is something the current dispensation should focus on. However, with the stated resolve and the past experience of 3-4 years, maybe things will be done differently now.

While legislative intent can provide muscle to the efforts of ground-level officers, it is eventually the righteous officers who make or mar the effects of a legislation. Too many cases are quashed by courts for lack of proper investigation. Conviction is always dependent on tying up evidence and within all fours of the law. At the same time, fundamental right violations have to be curbed. Too free a hand and that too without exacting supervision can create cavalier investigators with disregard to extant laws. One must remember the adage: 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'.



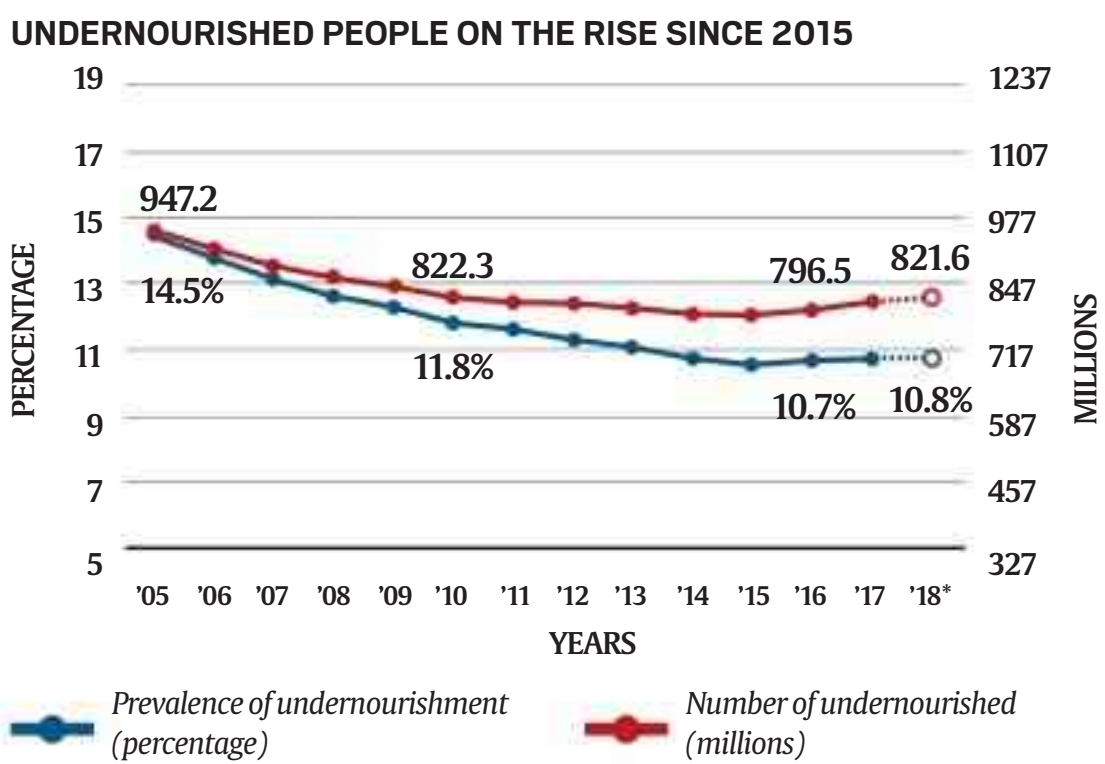


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TELLING NUMBERS

More obesity in India and world, but global count of hungry rising



THE NUMBER of obese adults in India has risen by a fourth in four years, from 24.1 million in 2012 to 32.8 million in 2016, while the country's undernourished population has dropped by roughly the same fraction in 12 years, from 253.9 million in 2004-06 to 194.4 million in 2016-18, according to a new United Nations report.

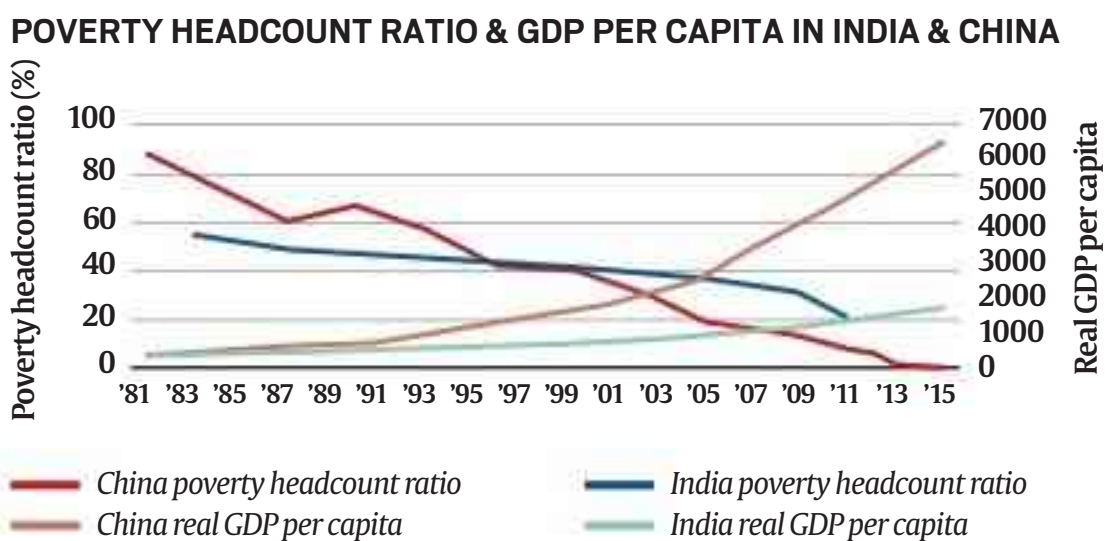
The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019 report, released by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), estimated that 820 million people worldwide did not have enough to eat in 2018, up from 811 million in the previous year. At the same time, the number of overweight individuals and obesity continue to increase in all regions, the report said.

The report has a section on economic growth in China and India, and its effect on poverty. Between 1990 and 2017, the two countries had an average GDP per capita growth rate of 8.6 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively, the report said, citing World Bank figures.

In both countries, the increase in GDP per capita has been accompanied by poverty reduction. While China's poverty rate declined from 88 per cent in 1981 to 0.7 per cent in 2015, India's poverty reduction appeared to be relatively more modest, moving from 48.9 per cent in 1987 to 21.2 per cent in 2011, or to 13.4 per cent in 2015 if another World Bank source is used, the report said.

HOW INDIA COMPARES WITH THE WORLD

	Headcount (million)		Prevalence in population (%)	
	India	World	India	World
UNDERNOURISHED 2004-06	253.9	940.0	22.2	14.4
2016-18	194.4	809.9	14.5	10.7
WASTING (UNDER-5) 2018	25.2	49.5	20.8	7.3
STUNTING (UNDER-5) 2018	46.0	149.0	37.9	21.9
OVERWEIGHT (UNDER-5) 2018	2.9	40.1	2.4	5.9
OBESE ADULTS 2012	24.1	563.7	3.0	11.7
2016	32.8	672.3	3.8	13.2



Poverty headcount ratio in China and India (left axis) refers to \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP); GDP per capita (right axis) is expressed in constant \$ (2010)
Source: FAO elaboration based on World Bank, 2019; PovcalNet, an online analysis tool for global poverty monitoring

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Kulbhushan Jadhav case file

Ahead of International Court of Justice ruling on death sentence awarded by Pakistan, a look at India's arguments for annulment of the execution and Pakistan's defence of its military court ruling

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JULY 16

AT 6.30 PM IST on Wednesday, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, will deliver its verdict in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case between India and Pakistan. Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, President of the court, will read out the decision at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

Jadhav, 49, a retired Navy officer, was arrested allegedly on March 3, 2016, and India was informed on March 25. He was sentenced to death on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

When did the case reach the ICJ?

India first approached the ICJ on May 8, 2017, over Pakistan's "egregious violation" of provisions of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963, by repeatedly denying it consular access to Jadhav. India argued that it had not been informed of Jadhav's detention until long after his arrest and that Pakistan had failed to inform him of his rights. India also alleged that it had learned about the death sentence against Jadhav from a press release.

Referring to "the extreme gravity and immediacy of the threat that authorities in Pakistan would execute an Indian citizen", India asked for the execution to be put on hold.

On May 9, 2017, the ICJ asked the two countries to present their arguments and until such time, asked Pakistan not to do anything.

On May 15, the two sides presented their arguments; on May 18, the 10-member bench of the ICJ restrained Pakistan from executing Jadhav until a final verdict is given.

On June 13, the court fixed September 13 for filing of memorial (petition) by India and December 13, 2017 as the time-limit for a counter-memorial by Pakistan. These were filed within the time-limits. The court fixed April 17 and July 17, 2018 as the respective time-limits for written replies by India and Pakistan. These too were filed within the deadlines.

Has there been no contact with Jadhav?

In December 2017, Pakistan allowed Jadhav's mother Avanti and wife Chetna to meet him on what it called "humanitarian grounds". India, however, said the Pakistan government created an "intimidating" atmosphere where Jadhav's mother and wife were "harassed" and "hectorated". India said they were asked to change their attire as well as remove their *mangalsutra*, *bindis* and bangles, and repeatedly interrupted from speaking in Marathi and Hindi. Contrary to the understanding, Indian Deputy High Commissioner J P Singh was initially separated from the meeting; it was only after his insistence that he was allowed to observe the proceedings from behind a glass partition and he could hardly hear anything. The family members said Jadhav was not his usual self and gave "tutored answers". According to the External Affairs Ministry, he gave scripted answers "designed to perpetuate the false narrative of his alleged activities in Pakistan".

What happened after the written submissions in the ICJ?

The court fixed oral arguments from February 18 to 21, 2019. As it turned out, the hearings took place in the backdrop of the Pulwama terrorist attack on February 14, 2019.

While India argued on February 18 and 20, Pakistan responded on February 19 and 21. India was represented by former Solicitor General Harish Salve and External Affairs Ministry Joint Secretary (Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran) Deepak Mittal, and Pakistan by Attorney General Anwar Mansoor Khan while Khawar Qureshi was legal counsel.

Since there was a former Supreme Court of India judge, Justice Dalveer Bhandari, on the 10-

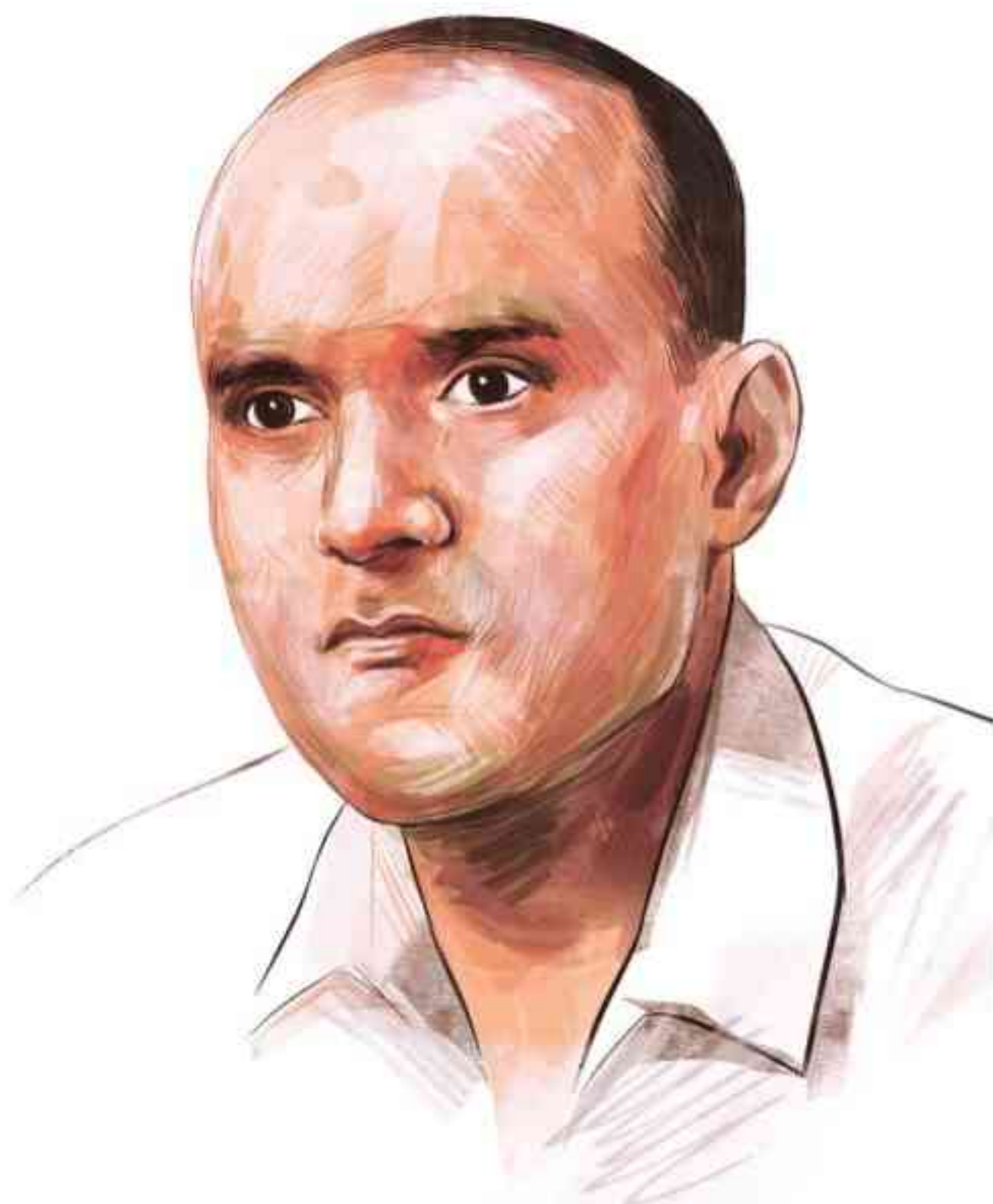


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

member ICJ Bench, Pakistan was allowed an *ad hoc* judge on the Bench — Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, a former Chief Justice of Pakistan.

What arguments has India made?

India has said the sentence is based on an "extracted confession". Citing international bodies like the European Parliament and the International Committee of Jurists, Salve questioned military courts in Pakistan, saying they do not follow due process. He argued that the Vienna Convention, which guarantees consular access, cannot be selectively given and the ICJ should make it a "human right". He said Article 36 of the Vienna Convention doesn't exclude espionage.

Broadly, India has argued:
■ The sentence violates international law and provisions of the Vienna Convention;
■ India is entitled to *restitutio in integrum* (restoration to original condition);
■ The ICJ should annul the military court decision and restrain Pakistan from giving effect to the sentence or conviction; and
■ Pakistan should be directed to release Jadhav immediately and facilitate his safe passage to India.

If the ICJ were to find that Jadhav is not to be released, then India has requested:

■ Annul the military court decision and restrain Pakistan from giving effect to the sentence; or
■ Direct it to take steps to annul the military court decision; or
■ Direct a trial under ordinary law in civilian courts, after excluding his confession and in strict conformity with provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, with full consular access and a right to India to arrange for his legal representation.

And what has Pakistan argued?

Pakistan has asked the ICJ to "dismiss or declare inadmissible" India's claim. It rejected India's argument that the military courts don't have officers with judicial expertise and experience, and said Pakistan's

courts are "extremely independent". Pakistan's Attorney General said, "India seeks relief which they cannot claim from this court." He assured the ICJ that the process of judicial review in Pakistan was robust and Jadhav can avail it if he chooses.

"The military courts have sufficient proof of espionage and the said military court on the available evidence and the judicial confession proceeded to convict him despite he being given the option of going for a judicial review, he has refused to do so," the AG told the court.

On India's claims of consular access, he said: "Surely (it) was not allowed for good reason in terms of the agreement of 2008, specially for the reason that commander Jadhav being involved in espionage."

How binding are ICJ judgments?

According to ICJ, judgments delivered by the court (or by one of its chambers) in disputes between states are binding upon the parties concerned. Article 94 of the United Nations Charter provides that "each Member of the United Nations undertakes to comply with the decision of [the court] in any case to which it is a party". Judgments are final and without appeal. If there is a dispute about the meaning or scope of a judgment, the only possibility is for one of the parties to make a request to the court for an interpretation. In the event of the discovery of a fact hitherto unknown to the court which might be a decisive factor, either party may apply for revision of the judgment.

However, there have been instances when the ICJ's rulings have not been followed. The most famous one was in 1986, when the ICJ ruled in a petition by Nicaragua, which alleged that the US had waged a covert war against it by supporting a rebellion. The ICJ ordered reparations from the US in favour of Nicaragua. The US, in response, cancelled its declaration of the ICJ's jurisdiction. It then went to the UN Security Council against the ICJ order and succeeded.

So, whatever the ICJ decides, both governments will have to be prepared for a long haul.

BATTLE IN THE HAGUE

2016-17

India told ICJ that Kulbhushan Jadhav was "kidnapped from Iran, where he was carrying on business after retiring from the Indian Navy, and was then shown to have been arrested in Baluchistan" on March 3, 2016. Pak informed India only on March 25, 2016. India sought consular access that same day, and repeatedly afterward. On January 23, 2017, Pak requested assistance in an investigation concerning Jadhav. On March 21, 2017, it issued a *note verbale* saying consular access would be considered in the light of India's response to its request for assistance in the probe.

MAY 8, 2017

India began proceedings against Pak "for egregious violations of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963" in detaining Jadhav, and in his sentencing to death by a military court. India asked that the death sentence be declared violative of international law and suspended, and that Pak be restrained from giving effect to it and directed to annul the decision — failing which ICJ should declare the conviction and sentencing illegal, and direct Pak to release Jadhav immediately. India also asked for a direction to Pak to not execute Jadhav until the ICJ disposes of the case. Pak must keep the Court informed of its actions, and does nothing to prejudice his or India's rights with respect to any decision the court might make.

MAY 9, 2017

President of the Court asked Pak, pending the Court's decision, "to act in such a way as will enable any order the Court may make... to have its appropriate effects".

MAY 15, 2017

In public hearings, India confirmed the measures it had sought; Pak asked the Court to reject request.

MAY 18, 2017

Court directed Pak to not execute Jadhav till it takes a final view, and to keep it informed; decided that until the decision, "it shall remain seized of the matters which form the subject matter of this Order".

JUNE 13, 2017

September 13 and December 13 were fixed as the deadlines for India's Memorial and Pak's Counter Memorial respectively.

JANUARY 17, 2018

April 17 and July 17 fixed as deadlines for India's Reply and Pak's Rejoinder respectively.

FEBRUARY 18-21, 2019

India and Pak made two rounds of oral arguments at The Hague.

JULY 4, 2019

ICJ announced that the President of the Court, Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, will read the Court's decision at 3pm on July 17.

What's changing in NIA: wider jurisdiction, more offences, faster trial

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 16

ON MONDAY, Lok Sabha passed the NIA Act Amendment Bill, which gives more powers to the National Investigation Agency and extends its jurisdiction beyond India's borders. The Bill was hotly debated, with the Opposition accusing the government of misusing the agency for political vendetta and turning India into a police state. Home Minister Amit Shah assured the House that the Act would never be misused, but would be used to finish terrorism, irrespective of the terrorist's religion.

The NIA Act

The NIA Act, 2008, governs the functioning of India's premier counterterror agency. It was introduced by then Home Minister P Chidambaram in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks, and was passed with very little opposition.

The Act makes NIA the only truly federal

agency in the country, along the lines of the FBI in the United States, and more powerful than the CBI. The CBI has to seek the permission of a state government before investigating a case against a central government employee in that state. If a crime is committed in a state, it has to wait for that state government or a court to call it in to investigate. The NIA Act, on the other hand, gives the NIA powers to take *suo motu* cognisance of terrorist activity in any part of India and to register a case, to enter any state without needing permission from its government, and to investigate and arrest people.

The NIA can, however, only investigate cases which are listed in the Act's schedule, which largely deal with the security and integrity of the country. This means the NIA cannot probe murder and rape cases, which come under the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Now beyond borders

The new Bill makes three broad additions to the NIA Act. It gives NIA extra-territorial jurisdiction; adds four more sched-



Home Minister Amit Shah in Lok Sabha on Monday. PTI/TV grab

uled offences to the list of eight offences in the original Act; and gives powers to the government to designate sessions courts as special courts for trial of NIA cases.

In giving NIA extra-territorial jurisdiction, the Bill allows the agency to register a case

when Indians living abroad or India's assets based in a foreign country come under attack from terrorists.

"All major countries have this provision for their concerned agencies. The US was able to prosecute David Coleman Headley in the 26/11 attacks because they had powers to register a case in a terror attack that had happened in a foreign country. Their nationals had been killed in the attack, and they took cognisance of the case. NIA does not have such powers," former NIA special director NR Wasan, who had prepared the proposal for the Bill, said.

This lacuna was a reason why the case against the Italian Marines who had shot dead an Indian fisherman off the coast of Kerala in 2012 hit an initial spot of rough weather. The accused argued that the offence had taken place in international waters, and thus NIA had no jurisdiction. It was after India proved that the offence had taken place in Indian waters that the case could proceed.

The new provision will allow the NIA to register cases if an Indian embassy comes

under attack abroad, or if Indian underwater cables of communication in international waters are sabotaged. While the outcome of such cases will continue to depend on how much diplomatic leverage India has with that country, the Bill empowers it to begin the process.

The IPC does have provisions of extra-territorial jurisdiction, but it is limited to Indians committing crime abroad.

Special courts, new offences

Earlier, setting up special courts in any state would take six to nine months since a proposal had to be made, High Courts' concurrence had to be obtained, a judge had to be nominated, and a court had to be set up. With existing sessions courts allowed to function as special courts, trial can start immediately.

The offences added to the NIA Act Schedule are human trafficking (Sections 370, 370A of IPC, 1860); manufacture or sale of prohibited arms (Section 25[1AA] of Arms Act, 1959); cyber crimes (Section 66F of IT Act



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE SHRINKING

With exports continuing to underperform, government must step up efforts to embed India in global supply chains

CONTINUING THE SUBDUED performance, India's merchandise exports shrank by 9.7 per cent in June, registering the first contraction since September last year. For the quarter ended June, exports contracted by 1.7 per cent, after growing by 14.2 per cent over the same period last year. This lacklustre export growth, coupled with weak domestic demand and subdued investment activity, indicates a continuing weakness of the primary drivers of growth. It increases the likelihood of further rate cuts by the monetary policy committee which is scheduled to meet in the first week of August.

Much of the decline in the headline export numbers can be traced to lower oil exports. Oil exports declined by 32.8 per cent in June, in part due to lower crude oil prices and the temporary shutdown of oil refineries for maintenance. But worryingly, non-oil exports also contracted by 5.7 per cent, suggesting weak global demand. A closer look at the data reveals that major labour intensive export segments such as gems and jewellery, leather and textiles, have continued to under-perform, contracting in June. The trade data also shows that imports contracted by 9.1 per cent in June. In part, the decline is due to lower crude prices. But it is cause for concern that imports, excluding oil and gold, which give a sense of domestic demand, continue to shrink. Moreover, the pace of contraction has accelerated in the past few months. These numbers should be read in conjunction with other economic indicators which suggest that both private demand, in rural and urban areas, as well as investment activity, remain subdued. For instance, domestic passenger car sales fell for the eighth consecutive month in June, falling by 17.5 per cent, with both car and two-wheeler sales witnessing a double digit decline. Investment activity also remains moribund with capital goods growing by a mere 1 per cent in the first two months of FY20.

The signals emanating from the US Federal Reserve as well as the European Central Bank indicate that growth is likely to be slower than expected, indicating less buoyancy for India's exports. The growth data of the Chinese economy isn't encouraging either. A slowdown in global trade and the ongoing trade wars will only complicate matters for India, making it harder to grab additional market share. At such a time, raising tariffs on imports, a move that signals protectionism, will only complicate India's much desired integration with global supply chains, which is critical for boosting exports. With exports being one of the primary drivers of growth — much of the growth spurt during the boom years of the mid 2000s was due to higher exports — the government must facilitate India's integration in global supply chains by lowering tariffs and rationalising the tariff structure.

A HEALTHY BALANCE

Project to digitise Ayushman Bharat records should be alive to concerns of privacy and rights of patients

THE UNION MINISTRY of Health and Family Welfare has released a National Digital Health Blueprint (NDHB) to "manage and analyse" the big data generated by the Centre's flagship health programme, Ayushman Bharat. Released by the MoHFW Minister, Harsh Vardhan, on Monday, the document recommends the "setting up of a National Digital Health Mission" to create an "ecosystem" that would bring together the health records of people who have benefited from Ayushman Bharat. Given that doctors in both the public and private sectors regularly complain about the lack of comprehensive records of their patients, the digital registry envisaged by the NDHB could fulfill a longstanding requirement of the health sector. The proposed data compendium is also in keeping with global trends in healthcare where digital technology is used to make treatment options more personalised and precise. Big data can also be used to prevent epidemics and improve the efficiency of drugs.

Concerns about the large-scale creation, collection and sharing of health data are, however, pressing. The most serious of these pertain to the privacy of patients, and data breaches. Sections 43(a) and 72 of the Information Technology Act do provide the broad framework for the protection of personal information in India, including medical data. However, data breaches in the digital domain are not uncommon. In 2016, for example, the electronic medical records of over 35,000 patients held by a Maharashtra-based pathology lab were leaked. The NDHB does seem to be alive to such concerns. It states that the architecture of the digital systems will have in-built safeguards to ensure privacy. However, it must also be kept in mind that Ayushman Bharat targets the poorest section of the country's population with low levels of digital literacy. In such a context, a system that places the onus of control on the user, with an assumption that they can control the flow of information, can end up doing more harm than good.

Last year, the MoHFW framed a draft Digital Information Security in Healthcare Act (DISHA). The proposed legislation recognised that existing laws were inadequate to protect the privacy of patients in the digital domain. In contrast with the blueprint released on Monday, DISHA placed the onus of data protection on the service provider. The draft was criticised by industry bodies, which feared the stifling of medical research. DISHA never made it to Parliament. In view of its recent emphasis on digital medical data, the MoHFW would do well to revisit this draft legislation — and seek a balance between the concerns of industry and the rights of patients.

THEY'RE NOT AFRAID

Donald Trump's racist, xenophobic politics is being met head on by a group of women legislators

IT'S ALMOST IMPRESSIVE, the array of bigotries that US President Donald Trump usually manages to exhibit within a 280-character limit. On Monday, however, it took three tweets for Trump to ask elected legislators, four women of colour, to "go back to the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came". First, the facts: Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib were born in the US. Ilhan Omar was born in Somalia and is an American citizen. Second, for the kind of politics Trump seeks to engage in, the facts don't matter.

The four legislators, "the squad", are part of a new breed of Democrats that is unabashedly pro-diversity, and stands for a welfare state that guarantees healthcare and education. Within the Democratic Party, they have been taking on the embedded, centrist leadership. Trump has sought to reduce this internal dialogue, even battle, between Centre and Left, old and young to White and non-White, American and un-American. His aim: To pander to the insecurities of a class of voters that feels left behind by the march of globalisation and the decline of the industrial economy. But Trump's attack has not put "the squad" on the defensive. All four Congresswomen have taken on Trump, asserting their right to protest and be heard in the country they belong to.

The liberal consensus, shattered by the election of populist right-wing leaders across the globe, often relied on "capturing the middle ground", afraid of alienating either the Left or Right. It is this fear, perhaps, that allows calls of "go back to where you came from" — whether in Pakistan, Syria, Burma, Bangladesh, or even in India — to go unanswered. But it appears the new breed of politician in America has an appropriate response. Ocasio-Cortez tweeted: "But you know what's the rub of it all, Mr President? On top of not accepting an America that elected us, you cannot accept that we don't fear you, either."



AVIJIT PATHAK

EVEN THOUGH DELHI Government's decision to install CCTV cameras in school classrooms has generated an interesting debate, it is important to see beyond the classrooms, and reflect more intensely on the meaning of living in a society that normalises and sanctifies surveillance. As an ideology that seeks to become hegemonic, the practice of surveillance justifies itself through the discourse of "safety", "security" and "transparency". And, possibly, we have accepted it.

Hence, we no longer feel humiliated or insulted when at airports and railway stations we allow the security guards and cops to objectify us with a gaze of doubt, and touch every part of our body. In fact, we demand more and more surveillance. From shops to schools, from housing societies to office corridors, and from the living rooms to the elevators in high rise buildings — the all-pervading presence of CCTV cameras proves one thing: We love to be controlled, observed, normalised and disciplined. Even if the likes of George Orwell and Michel Foucault express their anxiety over these technologies of surveillance, most of us seem to be quite happy with it.

For me, this "escape from freedom", to use social psychologist Erich Fromm's vocabulary, is most dangerous. To begin with, let us see the way we have begun to define ourselves in an age that otherwise boasts of progress and development. Everyone, we are induced to think, is a potential suspect — a criminal, a terrorist, a suicide bomber, a rapist, a murderer. Trust is naive and idiotic. Doubt everybody. Scrutinise everybody. Not only that, we have also begun to believe that we are inherently irresponsible. That given an opportunity, we would escape from our responsibilities and hence we must allow ourselves to be perpetually monitored, observed and disciplined. In other words, we are incapable of living responsibly, peacefully and freely. And then, a terrorist attack somewhere, a young girl's suicide in the

Normalisation of surveillance destroys what sustains a civilisation — human interaction filled with trust, care

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washroom of a school, or a psychopath insulting the dignity of a woman in his office cubicle: The recurrence of ugliness shatters our confidence, and convinces us further that surveillance is good and desirable. Big Boss must control us for our own safety.

Well, it is always possible to say that the world we live in is not full of saints and noble souls. Instead, the darker side of the human condition — brute instincts, crude temptations, lust, greed, and naked will to power — haunts us. Hence, as is believed by many, social order means social control through a meticulously designed machinery of observation, documentation, classification and the cycles of discipline and punishment. Yes, modern technology has given yet another meaning to these disciplinary practices. From Jeremy Bentham's panopticon to the CCTV camera — the process of surveillance has become more refined and subtle.

However, this faith in surveillance, I would argue, is problematic for three reasons. First, there is no ground to believe that surveillance — the visual act of identifying the criminal — necessarily leads to the elimination of criminality. There is no empirical proof. Instead, we see more violence, more blasts, more destruction. The reason is that instead of working on the roots of our wounded consciousness — say, the gross inequality that an asymmetrical global order with aggressive techno-capitalism generates, the violence perpetuated by the rich and the privileged through the politico-economic power they hold, and the stimulant culture industry promoting a pornographic mindset — the establishment remains preoccupied with mere symptoms. Yes, the camera can capture the last moment of the suicide bomber; but it cannot comprehend why he chose to play with death in such a strange fashion.

Second, with techno-hallucination — a superstition prevailing in modern times — we begin to believe that technology can solve everything. Take, for instance, the engage-

ment between the teacher and the taught in a classroom. We need to recruit and sensitise teachers who love the vocation and make the culture of learning dialogic and participatory. We need a classroom of not more than 20 students for a meaningful interaction. Only then is it possible to have a truly life-affirming engagement between the teacher and the student; creative learning, responsible freedom and self-discipline would evolve automatically. But then, instead of working on these deeply cultural/psychic and pedagogic issues, techno-managers and bureaucrats would think that the eyes of the CCTV camera would invariably bring good teaching and good behaviour. This is nothing but a sort of false consciousness perpetuated through the arrogance of power.

And third, the normalisation of surveillance destroys what is needed for any civilisation to sustain itself — the possibility of human interaction filled with the spirit of trust and care, a pedagogy that reconciles freedom and inner discipline, and a higher ideal to strive for. The tragedy is that, today, we have the latest technologies of surveillance; but from inside we are deserted, empty and spiritually impoverished. "Love thy neighbour", spoke Jesus. Today the cops ask us to suspect everybody. Who knows, as my suspicious/cynical self begins to ask, my neighbour can prove to be a "Pakistani agent"?

Every child, Kahlil Gibran might have thought, is a possibility. No, school principals and parents do not think so; they trust the CCTV camera. Yes, as fear, doubt and suspicion become normal, and negate all higher ideals, we lose the possibility of a critically nuanced, aesthetically enriched and spiritually elevated human communication.

With obsessive doubt, we become lonely. We lose our sanity. Our spirit dies as the technologies of surveillance triumph.

The writer is professor of sociology at JNU



BADRI NARAYAN

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi recently made a case for social politics or politics that is sensitive to social activism. Modi's intervention is timely since Indian democracy has been shifting towards the politics of power and state-led control and governance.

At the time of the national movement and even during the early years after Independence, electoral politics overlapped with social politics. Many great leaders of the national movement, namely Mahatma Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Sardar Patel and so on, extended their battles to win political freedom to social movements and vice versa. In fact, the leaders of social reform movements were much respected during the time of the national movement and the immediate years after India won freedom. Simply put, the politics of state and nation-building was closely linked to social politics. The boundaries between social politics and electoral politics were flexible and were often blurred.

Until the 1970s, leaders such as Ram Manohar Lohia, Indira Gandhi, Chaudhary Charan Singh, Chandrashekhar, Deendayal Upadhyaya and many leaders of regional parties were involved with various social movements. They recognised that political mobilisation that emerges from the womb of the society leads to social rejuvenation, which is needed for good politics. These leaders had acquired direct connect with the public through their involvement in social politics. Their charisma and public acceptance emerged from their engagement with social politics.

Since the 1970s, mafias, criminals and capitalists began to enter politics. However, they were not considered as the main force

TOWARDS SOCIAL POLITICS

PM Modi is nudging electoral politics in a new direction

Modi's emphasis on social politics, in a sense, emerges from the recent discourse of the RSS. The RSS defines politics mostly as social politics. One can hold a critical view of the 'social' in Hindutva politics, but in a broader sense, social politics has an expansive meaning. One hopes that the social politics the prime minister talks about will be inclusive.

in politics. Things began to change in the 1990s. After the launch of economic liberalisation, market forces began to influence politics. All politics became the politics of governance. The domain of politics began to be dominated by specialists like technocrats, financial managers and legal experts.

This politics of governance submerged in the politics of development. The politics of development was a complex affair that needed experts of various kinds. Many of these experts began to acquire key positions in government due to their proximity to politicians. These politicians had become dependent on these experts, since on their own they lacked the expertise to run the development machinery. However, these experts-turned-leaders were disconnected with the public and in the name of doing the politics of governance, emerged as arm-chair politicians. Thus, politics in the time of the neo-liberal state became a politics of power, governance and development and in the process, lost its social moorings. Many politicians stopped having a direct connect with the people. They became dependent on experts and white-collar political advisers. These political pundits of Lutyen's Delhi, the term used by PM Modi extensively during the election campaign, had no connect with the people. Social media, TV debates and big rallies at the time of elections were their only channel of communication to the public.

The task of working in the society was outsourced to a new institution, namely the NGO, and politicians stayed aloof from the society. The social responsibilities of corporates were outlined, but no attempt was made by anyone to ascribe social responsibilities for politicians. The politics of democracy turned into

politics of state and power and thereby, lost its social connect. The fact is politics in its real sense is the politics of doing social work and strengthening values of democracy.

Modi was alluding to a lost tradition in Indian politics when he spoke about the need to do social politics. It was in remembrance of this tradition that the prime minister appreciated the work of Om Birla, the new Speaker of Lok Sabha, during the 2001 Gujarat earthquake and the 2013 Uttarakhand floods and for differently-abled children and women. In a way, Modi is arguing for transforming our politics of power and state to the politics of forging a new society. The politics of development, a term frequently used in our political discourse, ought to be extended to social politics since the former does not place enough emphasis on social ethics, responsibilities and morality.

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Prime Minister Modi's is evolving his vision of the Indian state from the intellectual resources of thinkers such as Vivekananda, popular Hindu traditions, Deendayal Upadhyaya and from the RSS's own intellectual sources. He is also trying to include radical thinkers like Ambedkar and Lohia in his statecraft to build what he calls, "New India".

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JULY 17, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CHARAN STAKES CLAIM THE BREAKAWAY JANATA Party (Secular), which has staked its claim to form a government, was busy till late night mobilising the support of various parties and small groups to form a coalition with dominant role for itself. The party leader, Charan Singh, who met the President in the morning to lodge his claim, held several rounds of discussions with his trusted lieutenants and leaders of other parties including the Congress, and erstwhile socialists and other blocs. The possibilities of Congress collaboration with the Secular Janata coalition were discussed at a meeting between representatives of the two sides. According to a Secular Janata leader,

the talks were of exploratory nature and further meetings were expected before the coalition move concretised

UNCERTAINTY REMAINS DESPITE HECTIC ACTIVITY in the Capital, the political crisis gripping the nation continued to remain unresolved. President N Sanjiva Reddy began weighing the rival claims of contenders for power, but no clear candidate for the prime ministership has emerged. With Jagjivan Ram having been outmaneuvered by Morarji Desai, who is holding on to the leadership of the Janata Party in Parliament, Charan Singh claimed the right to be invited to form a coalition government with the help of

the Congress and an assortment of small political groups that have surprisingly gained in bargaining power at the Centre.

PRODIGAL RETURN?

JAGJIVAN RAM REPORTEDLY sent word to Y B Chavan that he would like to join the Congress. A senior Congress leader said he would be welcome. Answering newsmen's questions, Swaran Singh, Congress president, said: "No contact has yet been established on behalf of Mr Jagjivan Ram with me. We will greatly welcome the return of all erstwhile Congressmen to the Congress fold." He said Jagjivan Ram might have contacted some other leaders but he had no details.



Her own space to pray

Unlike men, women in Islam do not have a religious obligation to offer the Friday or five daily prayers in mosques. But all mosques should have a designated place for women



FAIZAN MUSTAFA AND JAGTESHWAR SOHI

THE SUPREME COURT has dismissed a PIL filed by Swamy Dethathreya Sai Swaroop Nath, president of Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha (Kerala), seeking entry of women into mosques. A division bench of the Kerala High Court on October 11, 2018, had also dismissed this petition as the petitioner failed to demonstrate the existence of a practice of denying entry to women. A bench led by Chief Justice of India said let a Muslim woman challenge the practice. But a Muslim woman is already in the apex court. As a matter of fact, the Supreme Court, in April, had issued a notice on a petition by a Muslim couple from Pune, which sought to quash what they termed as prohibition on the entry of Muslim women in the mosques of the Hanafi sect. No one raised the fundamental issue that mosques are not statutory authorities or “state” within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution and therefore, writ jurisdiction cannot be invoked against them.

We must make a distinction between theology and law. Dalit entry into temples, women’s entry into the Sabarimala temple and mosques do involve legal issues because of the right to equality and non-discrimination. But as far as women entry in mosques is concerned, it is to be kept in mind that the Supreme Court held in *Ismail Farooqui* (1994) that mosque is not even an essential feature of Islam. The Supreme Court refused to reconsider this erroneous finding of the court in *M Siddiq* (2018). The issue will again indirectly come up when the court starts hearing the Babri masjid appeals. In any case, in Gurugram, Muslims were not permitted to pray even in open fields.

Freedom of religion in India is confined to only essential religious practices. Moreover, the validity of prayers is a purely theological question. No one will go to the temple if her/his prayer is not acceptable to her/his god or deity. That’s why only a handful of women went to Sabarimala. No court has the power to pass judgment on the validity of prayers.

Islam, unlike Hinduism, at least in theory, does not consider anybody untouchable. Therefore, the concept of one person polluting another is unknown in Islam. Islam does not have anything like Dalit exclusion from temples. Surprisingly, the petitioners are not able to distinguish between a Hindu temple and a Muslim mosque. The sanctum sanctorum is all important in the former, whereas there is no such thing in the latter. It is not necessary for even men to have auditory access to *musalla* that has been wrongly called the main sanctuary in the petition. Even the men who stand in the last row or on the upper floors of the mosques can validly pray though they neither see the imam nor (in some cases) hear his recitations.

Article 26 of the Constitution gives the freedom of religion not only to religions but even to sects thereof. Most Indian Muslims belong to the Hanafi sect of Sunnis. While the Shafi’i sect does permit women to pray in mosques if they so desire, the Hanafi and Maliki sects are opposed to it. Going to the mosque five times a day is quite an ordeal even for men in today’s hectic life. There is a consensus amongst schools that unlike men, women in Islam do not have a religious obligation to offer the Friday or the five daily prayers in mosques. They are permitted to offer prayers in their homes and get the same reward in life hereafter. Women are thus not



Suvajit Dey

in any religious disadvantage. Islam does make an exception even in obligations. Thus, while *zakat* (2.5 per cent mandatory annual charity) and *haj* (pilgrimage) are obligations on the rich, poor people are exempt from these. Similarly, women, children and elderly are exempt from jihad (fight against injustices and oppression).

Interestingly, the Quran nowhere prohibits women from praying in the mosques. There is concrete evidence that during the Prophet’s lifetime, women used to pray in mosques. Prophet had said that “do not bar God’s handmaidens from God’s places of worship”. Abu Hanifa, on the authority of Ibn Umar, quoted a tradition wherein the Prophet permitted women to attend *fajr* (early morning) and *isha* (late evening) prayers. As far as Eid prayers were concerned, women were asked by the Prophet to join congregations outside the city called Eidgah, even if they were in their menstrual cycle. They could join the supplications before and after the prayer, but stay away from the Eid prayer. Abu Hanifa and Abu Yusuf acknowledged this position, though the former disapproved all women going out for prayers and tried to confine this permission only to the older women. Al Shaybani and Al Tahawi too restricted this permission to the older women as they were not comfortable with younger women going to mosques.

The moot question is when women and men pray together in mosques without any barrier, whose prayer gets invalidated. Hanafi jurist Al-Sarakhsi explicitly says that “if a woman prays behind an imam who has ‘resolved’ to lead mixed communal prayer and she stands in the middle of the row, then she invalidates the prayer of the one man to her right, the one to her left, and the one immediately behind her.” Thus such a woman’s own prayer remains valid, and the prayer of men praying in front of her remains valid. It is clear that even the Hanafi school does not forbid women from entering and praying in

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mosques. They may pray in mosques, and their prayers remain valid. If women pray in their rows in the mosques at the place designated for them, even men’s prayers are not invalidated

There can also be all women prayers led by a woman. It seems the Prophet himself had appointed one Umm Waraqa, who was a scholar of the Quran, as imam of her household and even asked someone to act as muezzin. Of course, some jurists doubt the authenticity of this tradition. Reportedly, the Prophet’s wives, Aisha and Umma Salama, also led all women prayers in their homes. Ibn Hazm says that while Aisha led the sunset prayer, Umm Salama led the afternoon prayer. Many jurists permit women to lead supererogatory prayers, particularly, in Ramadan.

Hanafi jurists started opposing women going to mosques because of the possibility of men harassing them. Al Zalai says even Aisha, the Prophet’s wife, had said “had the Messenger of God seen what we have seen, he would have barred women from the mosque as the children of Israel (Jews) had barred their women”. Women had begun to adorn themselves and wear perfume and jewellery. For this reason, second caliph “Umar barred them”.

In a number of Muslim countries, women are allowed to pray in a designated area. We live in a modern and liberal world and therefore, let all mosques have a designated space for women so that they can utilise the permission given to them by the Prophet. Due to the possibility that they may be harassed, they cannot be stopped from praying in mosques in designated spaces reserved for them. Let Muslim men learn to behave. Let mosques’ management create facilities of washrooms and ablutions for them.

Mustafa is Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University of Law and Sohi teaches at NALSAR University of Law

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Donald Trump’s Sunday tweets are among the most despicable comments from any president in recent memory – with the only competition coming from other comments by Mr. Trump.” — THE WASHINGTON POST

The great dollar gamble

Union Budget’s proposal to issue sovereign bonds is ill-thought out, will make Indian economy susceptible to global headwinds



M VEERAPPA MOILY

FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA Sitharaman’s maiden budget attempts to kick-start growth. But what will happen if this is at the cost of fiscal discipline? The government’s decision to opt for sovereign bonds or external borrowing is intended to one, lower the cost of interest and two, bring about fiscal discipline. The government expects to keep fiscal deficit at 3.3 per cent of the GDP. This is because of the Rs 90,000 crore of excess capital expected to be transferred from the RBI, along with the higher cesses on petrol and diesel.

There is a total disconnect between the FM’s budget speech and ground realities. Sitharaman asserted that India is set to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2024. Does the budget spell out the trajectory to this goal? There is neither any mention in the budget of public investment nor any steps to stimulate private investment. Since 2014, the so-called “ease of doing business” has hardly garnered any private investment. In fact, private investment has declined between 2014-2019. Government finances have been over stretched. Despite interest rate cuts, there has not been any significant improvement in the investment rate. The budget sets a target of Rs 100 lakh crore investments in infrastructure through the PPP mode. To achieve this, savings must be augmented and the savings rate should be higher than the investment rate. Budget 2019 has no specific proposals to incentivise savings.

The Bimal Jalan Committee is yet to give its report on the question of the transfer of the RBI’s excess capital to the Centre. This can, at best, be a window dressing in the name of fiscal management.

The economy grew at 5.8 per cent in the last quarter of 2018-19. Yet, Budget 2019 assumes that the economy will grow by 12 per cent this year in nominal terms and 7-8 per cent in real terms. To achieve the government’s ambition of a \$5trillion economy by 2024, means that the \$2.8 trillion economy will have to double in five years — this means the present trend of 5.8 to 6 per cent growth will have to grow by 10 to 11 per cent.

Globally, there is a slump in trade, rising protectionism, sanctions against Iran and others and the US-China trade conflict. Will the policies and schemes announced in the budget withstand these pressures? External borrowings will amount to a gamble and open up the economy to volatility in the event of oil prices going up and a fall in the rupee. Further, we will fall into the trap of dollarising the Indian economy while the attempt should be to strengthen the rupee.

Many experts and former Indian central bank officials have opined against the government’s plan to sell sovereign bonds overseas. Former RBI Governor C Rangarajan has said that “the plan to borrow in foreign currency, to supplement domestic borrowings is a bad idea. External

borrowing also means contending with exchange rate risks, i.e. the uncertainties associated with the value of dollar versus rupee.” An analysis by Motilal Oswal had found that “India had the second worst debt-GDP ratio among emerging markets. India’s debt-GDP ratio stands at 68.4 per cent, next only to Brazil. India’s total debt has risen by almost 50 per cent under the Modi government since 2014”.

The fundamentals of our economy have always been sound and external upheavals have had a subdued impact. India has shied away from raising sovereign debt in global money markets and has shielded itself from being impacted by global financial crises even during the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. The current gamble may be one which the Indian economy cannot afford. Such a proposal can only be mooted by bureaucrats who intend to wash their hands of their responsibility to mobilise resources. The absence of economists and professional bankers like Raghuram Rajan and Urjit Patel is strongly felt when such ideas are coined to control the fiscal deficit.

Ideas like raising sovereign debt were mooted in 1997 and 2003 and also by the Planning Commission during UPA 1 and UPA 2 but were shot down. To raise funds, one of the first things the then RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan did was to launch a scheme for foreign currency non-resident (FCNR) deposits, which helped to raise \$33 billion.

The government’s assumption that external borrowing will keep interest rates low may not be accurate. Despite lowering of interest rates by RBI, overall interest rates haven’t come down much. At less than 5 per cent, India’s sovereign external debt to GDP ratio is among the lowest globally.

This country has built its own capability in the private sector be it in power or infrastructure. Even 30 per cent of the installed capacity in the power sector has not been utilised. Many of the roads and infrastructure projects have been successfully built under PPP models by private entrepreneurs. But the collapse of term loan lenders like IL&FS has crippled them. We had institutions like IDBI and NABARD and other excellent banking institutions to lend term capital. The country now does not have a single lending institution to sustain the private or public sector. The banks have been lending to retailers and the term loans have not been disbursed for completion of projects. The external borrowings will only bring in more chaos. When we do not trust our own capital, how can we trust the capital from abroad? The entire concept will have to be appropriately calibrated.

We have institutions like IMF, World Bank and others who have funded the state governments, like in Karnataka. While this author was the Finance Minister of Karnataka in the 1980s, we had to pay for escalating costs without spending even a single paisa on irrigation and power projects. We strongly feel that the present Finance Minister of India has not been apprised of the havocs of external borrowing. It will be more appropriate for the FM to bring out a white paper on the nuances of external borrowing in this country.

The writer is a Congress leader and former Union minister

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

HIGH SEAS MATTER

THIS REFERS TO the article ‘Maritime challenges and opportunities’, (IE, July 16). The growing tension in the Persian Gulf and multiple foreign military bases near the Gulf of Aden signal that the Indian Ocean Region could be the theatre for global power rivalry in the near future. Sea lines of communication (SLOCs) that pass through the region are the collective responsibility of all the stakeholders engaged in maritime trade. A collective security model should be conceptualised to secure the SLOCs. India’s geographical advantage in the Indian Ocean Region gives the country strategic leverage.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

MONETISE CAREFULLY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Public and private’ (IE, July 16). It welcomes the policy of the monetisation of public goods to raise money for infrastructure and cites the case of the NHA as a success in this respect. But the conversion of “free lane” to “toll lane” meant that the citizen has to bear the financial burden. It’s regressive that owners of the Nano and BMW have to pay the same toll tax. There is also talk of the entry of private operators in the Indian railway. This could lead to an increase in fares. We need investment in infrastructure but the move to monetise public resources needs scrutiny.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

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

ELUSIVE DALIT HERO

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘An upper caste gaze’ (IE, July 16). The writer has depicted the varied dimensions of the Dalit struggle. Narratives have concentrated on helplessness and repression of Dalits, which means that mainstream cinema is still looking for its Dalit hero. There are hardly any Dalit artists in the Hindi film industry.

Naila Nasir, Noida



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

MINORITY BURDEN

ORGANISER THIS WEEK has put the issue of the country’s ever-burgeoning population on its cover. The package has multiple pieces on the topic. The lead article titled ‘Perform or perish’ says that while talking about “Bharat being the nation of youth, the multifaceted problem of population explosion cannot be neglected”. It argues for a National Population Policy to tackle the problem, which strains “natural resources, addressing claims and aspirations though democratic means, illegal migration, environmental concerns, imbalanced growth, etc”. The article discusses several population control methods, including access to contraceptives. It says that “enormous population is the biggest challenge” and the lack of “development implies high poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, lack of awareness, lack of medical facilities and this in turn increased population growth”. It also says that “child labour, slave trading and human trafficking is highly prevalent”. It adds that “people give birth to kids and sell

them to rich people who in turn employ these kids in various laborious and unethical tasks”. If family planning and use of contraceptives is not made mandatory, the article says, “not much result can be achieved”.

Another article blames a section of the minority community for the problem and states that “uncontrolled and unbalanced population growth, especially by a section of minority community actively supported by the unprecedented rise of fundamentalist Islamic ideology, is fueling the problem of exponential population growth”. Titled ‘Out of Proportion’, the article says that across the world the highest rate of population growth between 2010 and 2018 was in “three Islamic countries” — Nigeria, Pakistan and Indonesia. “Conclusion can be easily drawn from the figures by the United Nations that the Islamic countries are making the least efforts to control population rise,” it says. The “exponential rise of Muslims in Bharat too resembles with the world over the trend of the status f Muslims which is influenced by manipulated postulates of Quran and Wahhabi culture”. The “political implications” of this “disproportionate population” increase of Muslims and “their communal agenda in Bharat are very long lasting and alarming since owing to unequivocal tolerance and soft, kind-hearted attitude of Hindus,” the article says. It cautions that wherever the Muslims are over 20 per cent of the population “if they consolidated there in sup-

port of one Muslims candidate no Hindu candidate can win” and claims that there are 101 such seats in the Lok Sabha.

UN’S HYPOCRISY

THE EDITOR OF *Organiser* writes in a signed editorial in this week’s issue about the recently released report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the situation of human rights in “Indian-administered Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir”. He says that the report “is a bunch of contradiction mocking human rights on every count”. He calls into question the human rights record of some of the members of the organisation. The report, the editorial states mentions 19 recommendations to India and just 10 to Pakistan, none of those 10, it says, “talks about either dismantling the terror infrastructure or human rights violations that takes place because of Pakistan’s terror promotion policy” and asks, “what can be bigger hypocrisy than this?” The editorial mentions that the Union Ministry of External Affairs “thrashed the report in the harshest possible words” and the response also “reiterated the rightful legal position of Bharat claiming” that all of Kashmir is an integral part of India. It ends by saying that “unless we explore this possibility of internationalising Bhartiya narrative, which is just, truthful and

legal, with all possible force and resources, the arsenal of ‘human rights’ will be used to target Bharat by perpetrators of terror”.

IDEOLOGY OPPOSING RSS

THE OPPOSITION TO the RSS, starting from it being banned after the murder of Mahatma Gandhi to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi blaming its ideology for the Mahatma’s killing, is what *Panchajanya* focuses on in its latest editorial. What has prompted the discussion, the editorial mentions, is that some people are “flustered” because a university in Nagpur has decided to introduce a course on the RSS for third-year BA students. Those opposing it, the magazine says, “are the same people who keep firing sorties at the RSS” and says that “it is important to try and find the essence behind this noise”. It goes back to Jawaharlal Nehru and says that though the Supreme Court had given the RSS a clean chit in the case of Mahatma Gandhi’s murder, yet the first prime minister of the country wanted to connect VD Savarkar to it and also wanted the RSS banned. This is because, says *Panchajanya*, Nehru view was through the lens of communism, which blocked the spirit of India.

It adds that the same thought process exists even today and mentions West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Compiled by Krishn Kaushik





Chinese check

China's famed model of growth is under pressure due to fall in exports and investment

The Chinese economy is seeing the first signs of trouble after long years of sustained growth that rode on cheap labour and high volumes of exports. Data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday revealed that the economy grew by 6.2% in the second quarter, its slowest pace in 27 years. This is in contrast to the growth rates of 6.4% and 6.6% reported for the first quarter and the full year of 2018, respectively. The faltering growth rate was due to a slump in exports in June amidst China's ongoing trade war with the United States and the downturn witnessed by sectors such as housing construction, where investor sentiments play a major role. Many economists believe that the worst may not yet be over for China and that economic growth could further worsen in the coming quarters. But just as growth seems to be faltering, the latest growth figures also showed that the retail sales and industrial output components of the growth numbers witnessed steady growth, suggesting that domestic demand may be compensating for the dropping appetite for Chinese exports weighed down by high tariffs. But with China still heavily reliant on exports and its trade war with the U.S. showing no signs of coming to an end, the pressure on growth is likely to remain for some more time. So the Chinese government, which has tried to boost the economy through measures such as tax cuts, increased public spending and a relaxation in bank reserve requirements to encourage banks to increase lending, will hope that domestic demand for its goods will hold up the economy.

China's quarterly GDP numbers, while useful in many ways, don't reveal very much about the underlying challenges facing the country. One is the need to improve the credibility of data released by the Chinese government. An even larger challenge is the urgent need to restructure the Chinese economy from one that is driven heavily by state-led investment and exports to one that is driven primarily by market forces. The high-growth years of the Chinese economy were made possible by the huge amount of liquidity provided by the Chinese state and the large and affordable workforce that helped build China into an export powerhouse. But now, with China's tried and tested growth model facing the threat of getting derailed as the export and investment boom comes to an end, the Chinese will have to build a more sustainable model, or forfeit hopes of double-digit economic growth in the future. As of now, there are no signs to suggest that the Chinese authorities are looking at implementing deep-seated structural reforms reminiscent of its early decades of liberalisation that can help fundamentally restructure the economy. There might not be a need for radical macroeconomic changes, but China's economic troubles will not go away unless the government boosts domestic consumption and reduces the reliance on exports.

One for the ages

Alongside Federer and Nadal, Djokovic is ensuring tennis is at its competitive best

No player in the last decade has so thrillingly disrupted the Roger Federer-Rafael Nadal binary quite like World No.1 Novak Djokovic. Back in 2008, when Federer and Nadal met at Wimbledon in that iconic final, the contest had a definitive feel to it – to crown that era's best. The two met again this year, eleven summers since, just to earn the right to challenge Djokovic. Such has been the Serb's excellence that in the time between the two Federer-Nadal meetings, he increased his Grand Slam count from one to 15. Sunday's pulsating five-set victory over Federer brought him his fifth Wimbledon to put him just two shy of Nadal (18) and four behind Federer (20) in the all-time list. At times, his on-court demeanour and his grinding style of tennis have detracted from the perception of his success. To not celebrate his greatness, however, would be a severe disservice. Nadal and Federer are still ranked two and three in the world and are playing at near-peak levels. But even at their best, Djokovic has left them short of breath. In fact, starting from the 2011 Australian Open – his second Major – Djokovic has triumphed at nearly every second slam he has entered (15 of 34). Federer in the same period has accumulated four and Nadal nine, of which seven have come at the French Open. Remarkably, Djokovic has vanquished either Federer or Nadal in 12 of the 16 slams he has won. Eight of those victories have come in finals.

That Federer, just three weeks shy of turning 38, came within one stroke of upstaging Djokovic is credit to the Swiss's genius. Even in a career as storied as his, it would have been more than just a normal data point if he had clinched his ninth Wimbledon by beating Nadal and Djokovic – two of his greatest rivals – back-to-back. It is a testament to Djokovic's supreme mental strength that he did not flinch, even under extreme pressure, and despite not being the better player on the day. When he started out, Djokovic was among the most emotionally fragile. Questions abounded as recently as last July when he slipped outside the top-20. But by securing four of the past five Majors, he has truly rediscovered the mind of a champion. Among women, it was the turn of Simona Halep to display similar powers, by adding Wimbledon to her 2018 French Open win. There was a feeling that following her breakthrough in Paris she had suffered a meltdown, as she had not progressed beyond the quarter-finals at any Major since then. However, the way she mowed down one formidable opponent after another at SW19, including the legendary Serena Williams in the final for the loss of just four games, was enough proof of her strong mental make-up.

Making sense of Karnataka's politics

Castes and communities are the key players, where gain to one's community becomes an overriding consideration



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

A distinct genre of political theatrics in which elected representatives play 'hide and seek' in plush resorts to escape poaching by their very own and rival party leaders is currently playing out in Karnataka. While the dramatist personae, the layout of the plot, the resources deployed, and the message conveyed are distinct this round, this mode of doing politics is not new to the State.

In fact, following the State elections last year, leaders of the ruling coalition enacted a similar play almost 14 months ago by shepherding the elected representatives of their respective parties to safe havens; this was done ostensibly to stop them from being poached by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which laid claim to power as the largest party in the House and needed a few more legislators to secure a majority.

The bare sketch

Such mimetic displays have not been rare in the past either. They make room for extended invention of sub-plots and even erasure of a few, often delving deep into the rich folklore Karnataka is known for. Analogical practices are there in other States too, although Karnataka can claim a certain expertise in this regard by now. While such theatrics may have tactical political purpose at times, the question to be asked is the purpose for which such a political tactic is employed; the bearing it has on electoral representation, and the affront such political means offer to nurture a democratic culture.

In Karnataka, there is a coali-

tion government of the Indian National Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular), or JD(S). The Chief Minister, H.D. Kumaraswamy, is from the JD(S) that has 37 members, while its majority partner, the Congress, has 78 members in the 224-member House. While there are two independents, the BJP, which is in the opposition, has 105 members. From the beginning, the relationship between the coalition partners has been very uneasy, with the media constantly abuzz with rumours of a breakdown. On its part, the BJP has made umpteen attempts to wean away a few members from the coalition, widely termed 'Operation Kamala (lotus)'. After the Lok Sabha election, and the BJP's resounding victory where it got 25 Lok Sabha seats out of 28, the rumblings within the coalition have become louder; moving to the greener side, i.e. the BJP, has become more tempting for the fence-sitters.

A few days ago, there was drama when 16 members of the Assembly, three from the JD(S) and 13 of the Congress, most of them sheltered in a luxury hotel in Mumbai, announced that they had resigned from the Assembly. Two independents, who were made ministers earlier in order to retain them within the coalition fold, resigned from the cabinet and extended support to the BJP. The Speaker of the House, however, faulted the procedure adopted by 10 legislators to tender their resignations, dragging in the Supreme Court to decide its rectitude. While receiving these resignations afresh, following the court's directive, the Speaker stood his ground on ascertaining their constitutional and legal validity.

In Parliament, the Opposition accused the ruling BJP of employing unfair means to bring down an elected government. With the Karnataka government having decided to convene the Budget session, the coalition partners issued a whip to its members to attend,



holding out the threat of disqualification for non-compliance. The Supreme Court was made to step in in order to decide the relative status of resignation and disqualification of elected members and their precedence, given their widely different political implications. On the floor of the Assembly, the Chief Minister announced that he would move a trust motion on his government, which has made the issue of status and precedence crucial to the ambitions and designs of the rebels, and also placing them in a quandary. The unfolding of these events has been laced with several subplots: lavish living, private jet-hops, invocation of divine help, political "attempts" to cajole the rebels to return to the party-fold, and a roughing up of party colleagues, and each party moving its Assembly members to well-secured and lavish resorts.

Disaffection within coalition

While the coalition government and the parties supporting them have targeted the BJP for attempting to pull down the government, the first group is primarily responsible for allowing disaffection within its fold to spread for three reasons.

First, for reasons known to itself, the Congress did not include the most important leaders from Northern Karnataka in the ministry for months; a small coterie of Vokkaliga leaders in the coalition from the erstwhile Mysore region have attempted to direct the course of political developments. The Lingayat-dominated northern region, already smarting under

years of neglect and drought, has consolidated itself as a bloc to resist the encroaching dominance of its traditional rival, and has gravitated wholesale towards the BJP which has been nursing it for years. Second, the JD(S) with the Chief Minister at the helm and with the support of a section of the State Congress leadership, has systematically attempted to undercut the lucrative wheeler-dealer network that the Siddaramaiah government of the Congress (2013-18) had built – it involves mining, land, construction and transport – and which directed those resources to its henchmen. It led to interference in departments and transfer of employees which the ministers concerned regarded as their fiefdoms. It made Mr. Siddaramaiah, the pre-eminent leader of the Congress in the State, to blow hot and cold occasionally against the coalition.

Third, the Congress and JD(S) are traditional political rivals in the southern region of the State and over the years, a significant section of the Vokkaligas, the pronounced social base of the JD(S), have been attracted to the Hindutva agenda. The inability of the coalition to forge an overlapping voting base is what has led to its overwhelming defeat in the very region of its strength.

The data is telling. In the Assembly elections of April 2018, the BJP, the Congress and the JD(S) secured 36.34%, 38.14% and 18.3% of the voteshare respectively, while in the Lok Sabha elections, it was 51.4%, 31.88% and 9.67%, respectively. The disaffection has led a large number of Congressmen to question the utility of the coalition on grounds of sectarian loyalties, personal interests, and future electoral prospects; some of them with large interests at stake have decided to jump ship. The hand of the BJP has always been there with the bait and offering promises.

The disaffection mentioned above have little to do with repre-

sentational logic, i.e., upholding the interests of one's constituency, striving to further the interests of the political community of the State, or even the objectives of one's own party. Due to a number of historical reasons, castes and communities are key players on the political scene in Karnataka. Hindutva has been attempting to fill this vacuum in recent years but has a very tentative hold still.

Personal gain, sectarianism

Even today, the elected representatives primarily consider themselves as members of castes and communities, and in the distribution of public resources, the gain to one's community becomes an overriding consideration. Therefore, elected representatives form a clique with a powerful leader with access to public resources, and strive to tilt the scales in their favour. Being elected as a member of the Legislature is often perceived as an entry point to seek other goodies such as a ministerial berth through which the member can channelise public resources for personal gain and to extend patronage. In the context of the weakening party leadership of coalition partners, since a representative may have to largely fend for himself or herself, the temptation to accumulate as much as possible during one's stint is seen as a mark of political common sense.

It is time Karnataka politics discovers not merely its egalitarian and pluralistic traditions and sets out to reconstruct its political architecture to reflect them. A public culture imbued by such a perspective may not eliminate all differences but there would be some yardsticks to hold elected representatives to accountability. But for the time being, it seems a mirage.

Valerian Rodrigues taught Political Science at Mangalore University and Jawaharlal Nehru University

The wheels to a low-carbon transport system

It rests on accessing public service, choosing rapid transit over car driving and supporting electric vehicle transition



SOHAIL AHMAD & FELIX CREUTZIG

Congested streets and polluted air are common experiences in India's metropolises, although the average Indian contributes only minuscule amounts of transport-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions to global climate change. Patterns of road transport, however, diverge wildly between cities and districts. Delhi tops the charts and emissions are more than twice as high as other Indian megacities, such as Mumbai, Bengaluru or Ahmedabad.

Studies show that India's road transport emissions are small in global comparison but increasing exponentially. In fact, the Global Carbon Project reports that India's carbon emissions are rising more than two times as fast as the global rise in 2018. Globally, the transport sector accounts for a quarter of total emissions, out of which three quarters are from road transport. Reducing CO₂ emissions of road transport leverages multiple co-benefits, for example, improving air quality and increasing physical activity, which are critical for well-being, particularly in urban areas.

Climate action also requires an understanding of how emissions vary with spatial context. In India, we find in our new study (published in *Environmental Research Letters*), that income and urbanisation are the key determinants of travel distance and travel mode choice and, therefore, commuting emissions. The way cities are built and the design of public transit are critical for low-carbon mobility systems. The study is based on the most recent results of the Indian Census in 2011.

Average commuting emissions in high-emitting districts (Delhi) are 16 times higher than low-emitting districts (most districts in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh). Average per capita commuting emissions are highest for the most affluent districts, which are predominantly urban, and that heavily use four-wheelers for commuting. This is a surprising result, as in other parts of the world such as the United States, commuting emissions are low in urban areas but high in sub-urban or ex-urban settings. In contrast, average per capita commuting emissions are lowest for Indian districts that are poor, and commuting distances are short and rarely use three-wheelers.

Focus on well-being

Two policy implications follow. First, mayors and town planners should organise cities around public transport and cycling, thereby improving mobility for many, while limiting car use. Uptake of



non-motorised transport emerges as a sweet spot of sustainable development, resulting in both lower emissions and better public health in cities. According to the recent National Family Health Survey (2015-16), nearly 30% of all men are overweight or obese in south-west Delhi, but only 25% in Thiruvananthapuram and 13% in Allahabad. These data correlate with high reliance of car use in Delhi and low demand for walking.

Another of our studies that investigates data from the India Human Development Survey shows that a 10% increase in cycling could lower chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases for 0.3 million people, while also abating emissions. Car use, in contrast, correlates with higher rates of diabetes. Therefore, fuel price increases, congestion charges or parking management could be a strategy that improves the well-being of individuals living in urban areas. In contrast, fuel price increases would be detrimental in poorer rural areas, impairing mo-

bility where there is a lack of alternatives.

Technology transition

Second, India should double down in its strategy to transition to electric two and three-wheelers. India is the third-largest market for automobiles; about 25 million internal combustion engines were sold in 2017, including about 20 million two-wheelers. A recent study reports that India has 1.5 million battery-powered three-wheeler rickshaw (over 300,000 e-rickshaws sold in 2018). In the coming years, experts judge that the electric three-wheeler market is expected to grow by at least 10% per year. In 2019, nearly 110,000 electric two-wheelers were also sold, and the annual growth rate may be above 40% per year.

The current statistics even suggest that electric three-wheelers and electric two-wheelers, rather than electric cars, will drive the electric vehicle market in India. Electric car sales are minuscule and even falling (dropping from 2,000 in 2017 to 1,200 in 2018). Consumers realise the practical advantages of lighter in weight two- and three-wheelers that require much smaller and less powerful batteries and are easily plugged in at home.

India is one of the world's largest producers and consumers in two- and three-wheelers and Indian companies can take a leading role in switching to electric vehicles. This will also help in trans-

forming India's vision of 'Make in India'.

Compact cities improve accessibility and reduce emissions from transport and even the building sector. Most Indian cities are already very dense, with few benefits expected by further high-rise. City managers should ensure that existing urban areas provide short routes and fast access to schools, hospitals and jobs, otherwise, residents would be required to travel long distances. To achieve this aim, mayors and decision-makers need to rethink how to deliver basic services such as education and health. Building schools and hospitals matters especially for informal settlements and are critical in achieving low carbon development as well as improving the quality of life.

Providing access to public service, choosing rapid transit over car driving in cities and supporting the rise of electric two and three-wheelers will help drive India to a modern and low-carbon transport system fit for the 21st century.

Sohail Ahmad is a Research Fellow at the GCRF Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC), University of Glasgow. Prof. Dr. Felix Creutzig is the head of the working group Land Use, Infrastructures and Transport at the Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change, and Chair of Sustainability Economics at Technische Universität Berlin

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.

103rd amendment

In *M.R. Balaji* (AIR 1963 SC 649), the Supreme Court made a significant observation by saying, "social backwardness is, in the ultimate analysis, the result of poverty". For the writer (Editorial page, "A test of law and justice", July 16) "to say that there cannot be reservation for the economically weaker sections of society unless they are socially backward" may not be wholly right. To say that reservation for the economically weaker sections goes against the basic structure of the Constitution is to ignore/dilute the significance of Article 14. The very purpose of reservation is to achieve

equality as envisaged under Article 14. However, if the process of reservation gets over-heated so as to deprive the economically weaker sections a more proportionate share in the administration and access to opportunities, then it would be a violation of their fundamental rights. One has to see how reservation has worked to the detriment of economically weaker sections so that they don't become socially backward also.

N.G.R. PRASAD,
K.K. RAM SIDDHARTHA,
Chennai

In court

The resolution moved by the Rajasthan High Court

advising advocates to refrain from addressing its judges as "My Lord" and "Your Lordship" must be encouraged across the judiciary. There were directions over a decade ago, to settle for "Your Honour", "Honourable Court" and "Sir", but it does not seem to have caught on. In fact, a little more is required to be done to maintain gender equality especially when female judges hold court as a single bench. Besides this, it would also be more appropriate if the use of archaic and colonial terms in law suits is also amended. For instance any petition filed in courts or judicial tribunals often

resorts to the use of phrases such as "the petitioner/applicant most humbly sheweth that"

S.K. KHOSLA,
Chandigarh

Final outcome

New Zealand's Kane Williamson was all grace while fielding questions from the media. As the underdogs, the Kiwis deserve accolades and empathy for the way they handled the post-match situation, despite losing the final match to England and the unconvincing rules. It is heart-breaking to lose due to some extraneous reasons. The composure shown by Ben Stokes after reaching his 50 was in quiet

contrast to the sword celebration by Ravindra Jadeja in the semi-finals. Players should realise that wild gestures sometimes take away the focus from the main target of winning a game. Finally, one hopes that with its victory, England is able to rejuvenate the game.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

■ True fans of cricket will never accept the result of the ICC World Cup. Apart from

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
A Sports page report headlined "DPR Korea downs Tajikistan" (some editions, July 16, 2019) erroneously said both Tajikistan and DPR Korea had six points from two wins and a draw. Actually it should be two wins and a loss for each team.

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बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 129

पीएसई का विनिवेश

लोक उपक्रमों (पीएसई) में कर्ज का स्तर बढ़ रहा है। इस समाचार पत्र में गत सोमवार को प्रकाशित एक खबर के मुताबिक 40 सूचीबद्ध गैर वित्त क्षेत्र के पीएसई में औसत डेट-इक्विटी अनुपात में सालाना आधार पर 10 फीसदी का इजाफा हुआ और यह वित्त वर्ष 2019 में 0.68 फीसदी की नई ऊंचाई पर पहुंच गया। यह लगातार तीसरा वर्ष है जब यह अनुपात बिगड़ा

है। निजी क्षेत्र की बैलेंस शीट भी खराब हुई है। इसके लिए आंशिक तौर पर प्रतिकूल आय और नकदीकरण की प्रक्रिया का प्रतिकूल चक्र वजह हैं। इसका जहां निवेश में सुधार पर बुरा असर पड़ सकता है, वहीं पीएसई की कमजोर बैलेंस शीट देश के सार्वजनिक वित्त को भी प्रभावित करेगी।

गत वित्त वर्ष के दौरान पीएसई का संयुक्त

ऋण बढ़कर 13.5 फीसदी हो गया जबकि उनका नकदी संतुलन 12.8 फीसदी गिर गया। ऐसा आंशिक तौर पर इसलिए हुआ क्योंकि सरकार बजट संतुलन के लिए लाभांश भुगतान पर निर्भर है। इससे सरकारी उपक्रमों के लिए कई समस्याएं पैदा हो सकती हैं। इनमें बहुलांश हिस्सेदार होने के कारण सरकार का प्रभावित होना लाजिमी है। उदाहरण के लिए कम नकदी संतुलन के साथ ये कंपनियां निवेश के लिए सबसे बेहतर स्थिति में नहीं रहेंगी। इसका असर वृद्धि की संभावनाओं और नकदी कमाने पर भी पड़ेगा। यह भविष्य के लाभांश और कर संग्रह दोनों के लिए नुकसानदेह होगा। इतना ही नहीं सरकार का निरंतर हस्तक्षेप निवेशकों के रुख को प्रभावित करता है और सूचीबद्ध पीएसई का मूल्यांकन भी कमजोर होगा।

कमजोर मूल्यांकन विनिवेश के जरिये संसाधनों के आवंटन को प्रभावित करता है। ऐसे में सरकार अगर फंडिंग के लिए पीएसई पर निर्भरता कम करेगी तो बेहतर होगा। तभी संभव होगा जब सरकार पीएसई को लेकर एक व्यापक नीति तैयार करेगी।

साफ कहा जाए तो पीएसई के प्रबंधन की समस्या और व्यापक ढांचे की आवश्यकता दोनों ही नए नहीं हैं। अतीत में सरकार ने प्रचुर नकदी वाले सार्वजनिक संस्थानों का इस्तेमाल राजस्व संग्रह की कमी दूर करने में भी किया है। ऐसे में हुआ यह कि व्यापक मुद्दे हल नहीं किए गए। उदाहरण के लिए भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक की 2018 की एकरिपोर्ट के मुताबिक सन 2016-17 में मुनाफा घोषित करने वाली 212 कंपनियों में से 75 फीसदी

योगदान केवल 49 कंपनियों से आया था और ये कोयला एवं लिग्नाइट, पेट्रोलियम और बिजली जैसे तीन क्षेत्रों की कंपनियां थीं। यह बताता है कि ज्यादा लाभदायक सरकारी उपक्रम उन क्षेत्रों में हैं जिन पर सरकार का अत्यधिक नियंत्रण है। इसके अलावा 188 सरकारी कंपनियां ऐसी थीं जिनका कुल नुकसान 1.23 लाख करोड़ रुपये था। 71 कंपनियां तो ऐसी थीं जिनकी परिसंपत्ति पूरी तरह नुकसान में चली गई। ये पीएसई देश के सार्वजनिक वित्त पर बोझ हैं। सरकार ने रणनीतिक विनिवेश की प्रतिबद्धता दोहराई है लेकिन उसे इस प्रक्रिया को तेज करना चाहिए। ऐसा करने से सरकार परिसंपत्तियों का पुनर्चक्रण कर सकेगी और निवेश को गति दे सकेगी। यह बात ध्यान देने वाली है कि विनिवेश से हासिल पूंजी का

इस्तेमाल पूंजीगत व्यय तथा नई परिसंपत्ति के निर्माण में किया जाना चाहिए। नीति आयोग के पास उन पीएसई की सूची है जहां रणनीतिक निवेश किया जा सकता है और यह अच्छी शुरुआत होगी। बहरहाल, सरकार को न केवल घाटे वाली बल्कि समय के साथ उन सभी पीएसई से बाहर हो जाना चाहिए जिनका कोई रणनीतिक महत्व नहीं है।

इस संदर्भ में सरकार अगर मध्यम अवधि का स्पष्ट खाका लेकर चले तो बेहतर होगा। ताकि विनिवेश का इस्तेमाल राजस्व की कमी पूरी करने भर के लिए न हो। ऐसा खाका बाजार प्रतिभागियों को भी जरूरत के मुताबिक बोली लगाने में मदद करेगा। इस बीच इन पीएसई को पूर्ण स्वायत्तता दी जानी चाहिए ताकि उनका मूल्यांकन बेहतर हो सके।



अजय मोहंती

सभी घरों को नल से जल आपूर्ति का काम जटिल

हर घर तक जलापूर्ति का लक्ष्य हासिल करने के लिए जलशक्ति मंत्रालय के सामने सबसे बड़ी चुनौती राज्यों को एक मंच पर लाने की होगी। इसकी चुनौतियों के बारे में बता रहे हैं विनायक चटर्जी

जल शक्ति मंत्रालय का गठन पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता मंत्रालय के साथ जल संसाधन, नदी विकास एवं गंगा पुनरुद्धार मंत्रालय का विलय कर 31 मई, 2019 को किया गया था। सरकार ने आम आदमी से अपना सबसे बड़ा वादा भी किया है। वर्ष 2024 तक सभी घरों तक पाइप से पानी पहुंचाने का यह वादा जल शक्ति मंत्रालय को पूरा करना है। अपने पहले कार्यकाल में राजमार्ग, रेलवे और नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा पर जोर दे चुकी यह सरकार अपनी दूसरी पारी में ढांचागत प्राथमिकताओं खासकर पानी पर जोर देने का इशारा कर चुकी है।

‘नल से जल’ कार्यक्रम (बजट 2019-20 में ‘हर घर जल’ के तौर पर उल्लिखित) बेहद महत्वाकांक्षी है। भारत जैसे विशाल आकार और विभिन्नता वाले देश में सुदूर इलाकों तक ऐसी बुनियादी सुविधाएं मुहैया करा पाना सबसे मुश्किल काम माना जाता है। इसके पहले सौभाग्य योजना में करीब 2.5 करोड़ परिवारों को बिजली ग्रिड से जोड़ने का वादा किया गया था। इसकी तुलना में नीति आयोग की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया था कि करीब तीन-चौथाई घरों तक पेयजल की आपूर्ति नहीं हो पाई है। वर्ष 2011 की जनगणना के मुताबिक, देश में करीब 25

करोड़ परिवार थे और इस आंकड़े में कोई बदलाव न होने की धारणा रखें तो ‘नल से जल’ कार्यक्रम के दायरे में करीब 19 करोड़ घरों को लाना होगा।

नीति आयोग की रिपोर्ट ने जल प्रबंधन का एक संयुक्त सूचकांक भी तैयार किया है जिसमें जल स्रोतों के पुनरुद्धार, भूमिगत जल का स्तर सुधारने, सिंचाई और शहरी एवं ग्रामीण पेयजल जैसे मानकों पर विभिन्न राज्यों की तुलना की गई है। राज्यों का आकलन 100 के पैमाने पर किया गया था लेकिन अधिकांश राज्य 50 अंक के नीचे ही रहे। उन राज्यों के जल प्रबंधन के तरीकों में ‘खास सुधार’ की जरूरत बताई गई। नीति आयोग की रिपोर्ट भूमिगत जल की वास्तविक उपलब्धता के बारे में सीमित आंकड़ों का जिक्र करते हुए कहती है कि देश के कुल 1.2 करोड़ कुओं में से केवल 55,000 कुओं में से लिए गए नमूने के ही आधार पर भूमिगत उपलब्धता का अनुमान लगाया गया है। पुराना कानूनी ढांचा जमीन के मालिक को वहां के भूमिगत जल का भी अधिकारी बताता है। इससे सार्वजनिक संसाधन होते हुए भी पानी की बेरह निकाली की मंजूरी मिल जाती है लेकिन उसका नतीजा भूमिगत जल स्तर में भारी गिरावट के रूप में सामने आता है।

जल क्षेत्र का आकार काफी सीमित है।

भारत के पास पूरी दुनिया की पेयजल उपलब्धता का महज चार फीसदी ही है और यह भूमिगत जल दोहन के मामले में सबसे आगे है। भारत का करीब 30 फीसदी हिस्सा रेगिस्तान बनने के मुहाने पर खड़ा है। योजना आयोग के पूर्व सदस्य मिहिर शाह ने बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड में प्रकाशित अपने एक लेख में कहा है कि करीब 2.4 करोड़ हेक्टेयर जमीन अभी तक अर्सिंचित है जो पिछले कुछ दशकों में सिंचाई प्रबंधन की नाकामी को दर्शाता है।

जल शक्ति मंत्रालय की कमान संभालने वाले मंत्री की सबसे बड़ी चुनौती कूटनीतिक मिजाज की होगी। पानी के राज्य सूची का विषय होने से जल शक्ति मंत्री को जल बंटवारा विवादों में उलझे राज्यों को साथ लाना होगा ताकि सबको पेयजल मुहैया कराने का लक्ष्य हासिल किया जा सके। केंद्र सरकार ने राष्ट्रीय जल प्रारूप विधेयक 2016 लाने का प्रस्ताव रखा था लेकिन अब भी एयर राज्यों के साथ विचार-विमर्श ही हो रहा है और क्रियान्वयन का जरूरी ढांचा तैयार करने के लिए इसे जल्द लागू करने की जरूरत है। देश भर में परिवारों की संख्या को ध्यान में रखें तो लगता है कि नल से जल कार्यक्रम सौभाग्य योजना से आठ गुना अधिक बड़ा है। सौभाग्य में जहां 2.5 करोड़ परिवारों को बिजली कनेक्शन दिया जाना था, वहीं नल

से जल में 19 करोड़ परिवारों तक पाइपबंद पानी पहुंचाना है। यह आंकड़ा भी हालात का सरलीकरण ही करता है। असल में, 100 फीसदी परिवारों को पाइप जलापूर्ति कर पाना कई गुना अधिक जटिल काम है। इन बिंदुओं पर गौर कीजिए:

■ देश भर में और हर घर तक पाइपलाइन बिछाने के दौरान खुदाई, पाइप डालने और रास्ता मिलने जैसे मसले सामने आएंगे। बिजली कनेक्शन देने के लिए तो खंभे गाड़ने और मोटर लगाने की ही जरूरत थी।

■ बड़े पैमाने पर पंप, वॉल्व और फिल्टर जैसे उपकरणों की जरूरत होगी जिससे पाइप बिछाने की जटिलताएं भी बढ़ेंगी।

■ बिजली की आपूर्ति कभी भी कोई मसला नहीं थी लेकिन यहां आपूर्ति के लिए पानी जुटाने की समस्या होगी।

■ बिजली वितरण बाजार में कीमत-निर्धारण, मोटर लगाने, बिल तैयार करने और राजस्व संग्रह का एक स्थापित आर्थिक मॉडल है लेकिन जल क्षेत्र इस मामले में अपरिपक्व है।

■ महाराष्ट्र इकलौता ऐसा राज्य है जहां एक सक्रिय जल नियामक मौजूद है। गुणवत्ता मानक, शुल्क, लक्षित सब्सिडी प्रणाली, विवादों का अधिनिर्णयन और क्रॉस शेयरधारिता के मसलों के समाधान के लिए निष्पक्ष एवं सक्रिय नियामकों की जरूरत है।

■ जलापूर्ति परियोजनाओं के परिचालन एवं रखरखाव के लिए एक दीर्घकालिक टिकाऊ मॉडल अपनाने की जरूरत है। बिजली वितरण कंपनियों की समस्या दिखाती है कि ऐसा कर पाना कितना मुश्किल है?

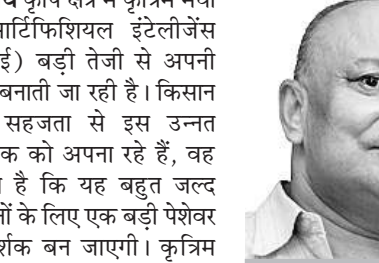
आखिरकार, इतनी विशाल योजना के लिए फंड जुटाने का सवाल है। हालांकि जरूरी फंड के बारे में फिलहाल कोई भी

स्पष्ट अनुमान उपलब्ध नहीं है लेकिन यह साफ है कि इस कार्यक्रम पर व्यय एक लाख करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की बुलेट ट्रेन परियोजना से कई गुना अधिक होगा। अगर बुलेट परियोजना के लिए सरकार को जापान से बहुत ही उदार शर्तों पर 90,000 करोड़ रुपये का विकास फंड लेना पड़ा तो नल से जल कार्यक्रम के लिए भी सरकार को केंद्रीय एवं राज्यों के बजट प्रावधानों से कोई अलग रास्ता ही निकालना होगा। इक्कीसवीं सदी में भी बुनियादी जरूरत वाले इस विकास कार्यक्रम को बेहद उदार शर्तों पर लंबी अवधि का फंड मुहैया कराने के लिए बहुआयामी एवं द्विपक्षीय विकास वित्त संस्थानों को प्रेरित होकर आगे आना चाहिए। जल क्षेत्र के लिए समर्पित एक वित्तीय संस्थान की जरूरत महसूस होती है और वर्ष 2008-09 के बजट में सिंचाई एवं जल संसाधन वित्त निगम बनाने के प्रस्ताव पर अमल में लाने का यह बढ़िया मौका है।

इन तमाम बातों के साथ ही जल शक्ति मंत्रालय को समय के साथ भी जंग लड़नी होगी। बहुत आशावादी ढंग से भी देखें तो नेटवर्क इंजीनियरिंग एवं ठेके देने में ही एक साल बीत जाएगा और सरकार को जमीनी स्तर पर काम करने के लिए महज चार साल ही मिलेंगे। इस हिसाब से देश अगर वर्ष 2024 तक लक्ष्य का 50 फीसदी भी हासिल कर लेता है तो भी उसकी गिनती उल्लेखनीय उपलब्धि के तौर पर की जाएगी।

(लेखक ढांचागत सलाहकार फर्म फीडबैक इन्फ्रा के चेयरमैन हैं)

कृत्रिम मेधा से कृषि क्षेत्र में भी हो सकता है चमत्कार



खेती-बाड़ी

सुरिंदर सूद

और महाराष्ट्र के एक-एक जिले में चलाई जाएगी।

इसके अलावा बड़े पैमाने पर स्टार्टअप भी कृषि से जुड़े कई अहम क्षेत्रों में अगली पीढ़ी की तकनीकों को प्रसारित करने में लगे हुए हैं। कुछ स्टार्टअप सेंसर एवं सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी साधनों का इस्तेमाल कर फसलों एवं मिट्टी की सेहत पर नजर रख रही हैं जिससे किसानों को ही लाभ हो रहा है। वहीं कुछ स्टार्टअप फसलों की बुआई के सही समय के बारे में डेटा-आधारित सलाह देने और फसल से जुड़े जोखिमों के बारे में चेतावनी दे रहे हैं। वहीं

कृषि स्टार्टअप का एक समूह कृषि गतिविधियों को इनपुट आपूर्ति और आउटपुट मार्केटिंग थ्रूखलों के बारे में जानकारी देने के लिए विरलेषण और सूचनाएं का काम कर रहे हैं। खास बात यह है कि कृषि मंत्रालय की तरह भारतीय कृषि अनुसंधान परिषद (आईसीएआर) और राज्यों के कृषि विश्वविद्यालय भी किसानों की उपज बढ़ाने और उनके मुनाफे में बढ़ोतरी में संभावना बढ़ाने के लिए कृत्रिम मेधा तकनीक को लोकप्रिय बनाने के लिए विशेष प्रयास कर रहे हैं।

किसानों की आय दोगुनी करने के लिए साधन एवं तरीके सुझाने के मकसद से गठित की गई अंतर-मंत्रालय समिति ने इस बात पर बल दिया है कि भारतीय कृषि को तुलनावा नबाने में डिजिटल तकनीक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा सकती है। कृषि मंत्रालय द्वारा गठित इस समिति ने यह लक्ष्य हासिल करने के लिए कृत्रिम मेधा, डेटा एनालिटिक्स, ब्लॉकचेन तकनीक और इंटरनेट ऑफ थिंग्स (आईओटी) को मददगार बताया है। आईसीएआर ने हाल ही में अपने लोकप्रिय प्रकाशन ‘इंडियन फार्मिंग’ का एक विशेष संस्करण निकाला था जिसे खास तौर पर कृत्रिम मेधा

कानाफूसी

कितने खुश हैं आप?

मुख्यमंत्री कमलनाथ के नेतृत्व वाली मध्य प्रदेश की कांग्रेस सरकार प्रसन्नता सूचकांक सर्वेक्षण के माध्यम से अपने कामकाज के स्तर का आकलन करेगी। इसे अंजाम देने के लिए राज्य सरकार ने भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, खड़गपुर से एक प्रश्नावली तैयार कराई है। इस प्रश्नावली में प्रदेश की जनता से प्रसन्नता संबंधी प्रश्न तो पूछे ही जाएंगे, साथ ही उनसे सरकार के शासन-प्रशासन के स्तर पर प्रदर्शन से जुड़े प्रश्न भी किए जाएंगे। यह पूरी प्रक्रिया राज्य शासन के आनंद विभाग द्वारा पूरी की जाएगी जिसे पिछली शिवराज सिंह चौहान सरकार ने गठित किया था। इस पर उस वक्त काफी विवाद भी हुआ था। सरकार की ओर से सर्वेक्षण की प्रक्रिया सितंबर 2019 से मार्च 2020 के मध्य पूरी कर ली जाएगी। राज्य सरकार जनता से मिली प्रतिपुष्टि के आधार पर ही अपनी भविष्य की नीतियां और कार्यक्रम तय करेगी।

नीरज शेखर ने बदल ही लिया पाला

समाजवादी पार्टी के राज्यसभा सदस्य रह चुके नीरज शेखर मंगलवार को भारतीय जनता पार्टी में शामिल हो गए। जब उन्होंने राज्य सभा से इस्तीफा दिया था तभी से इस बात की अटकलें लगाई जा रही थीं। 50 वर्षीय नीरज शेखर पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री चंद्रशेखर के बेटे हैं और दो बार उत्तर प्रदेश को बलिया लोकसभा सीट का प्रतिनिधित्व कर चुके हैं। इस बार भी वह समाजवादी पार्टी से टिकट के दावेदार थे लेकिन उनहें टिकट नहीं मिल सका। नवंबर 2014 में राज्यसभा सदस्य बने नीरज शेखर का कार्यकाल 25 नवंबर, 2020 को समाप्त हो रहा है। माना जा रहा है कि भाजपा उन्हें दोबारा राज्य सभा में भेजेगी।



देश में प्रदूषित जल बड़ी समस्या

पृथ्वी में दो-तिहाई भाग जल है और उस जल का मात्र 2.8 प्रतिशत ही पीने के योग्य है। लेकिन बढ़ती आबादी, बढ़ते औद्योगीकरण तथा शहरीकरण ने इसे भी प्रदूषित कर दिया है। जल के सभी स्रोत या तो दूषित हो गए हैं या होते जा रहे हैं। औद्योगिक क्रांति के फलस्वरूप नदियों और समुद्रों का ही नहीं, भूजल भी पीने योग्य नहीं रहने दिया गया। इसके दुष्परिणाम मनुष्यों, पशुओं, जल-जंतुओं तथा फसलों पर पड़ रहा है। एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश के 76 फीसदी लोग प्रदूषित जल पी रहे हैं जिससे लोगों को कई गंभीर बीमारियां हो रही हैं। अकार्बनिक पदार्थ एवं अपशिष्ट का जैविक प्रक्रिया द्वारा विघटन नहीं हो पाता है और मनुष्य द्वारा दिन प्रतिदिन अकार्बनिक पदार्थ का उपयोग सबसे अधिक किया जा रहा है। इन अकार्बनिक अपशिष्टों में प्लास्टिक सबसे ज्यादा पाया जाता है। गौरतलब है कि विश्व में भारत सबसे ज्यादा प्लास्टिक अपशिष्ट



समुद्र में बहाता है। इस वजह समुद्री जैव विविधता खतरे में पड़ गया है। कृषि में किसान रासायनिक पदार्थों का उपयोग बड़े पैमाने में करते हैं परिणामस्वरूप बारिश के दिनों में यह रासायनिक पदार्थ बहकर जलाशयों में आ जाते हैं। कारखानों का अपशिष्ट भी जल प्रदूषण के लिए जिम्मेदार है। खनन, रसायन, बिजली से जुड़े कारखाने सबसे

एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में 76 फीसदी लोग प्रदूषित जल पी रहे हैं

ज्यादा जल प्रदूषित करता है। देश में खुले में शौच से भी जल प्रदूषण हो रहा था लेकिन पिछले साल हुए विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (डब्ल्यूएचओ) के एक अध्ययन

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।

के मुताबिक, स्वच्छ भारत मिशन की वजह से तीन लाख लोगों की जान बच गई। लेकिन यूनिसेफ के अनुसार जो गांव खुले में शौच से मुक्त नहीं हुए वहां भूजल 12.7 प्रतिशत ज्यादा प्रदूषित पाया गया है। केंद्र सरकार ने इस बार जनता तक स्वच्छ पेयजल पहुंचाने का लक्ष्य रखा है। देश के हर नागरिक को स्वच्छ जल मिलना जरूरी है क्योंकि विशेषज्ञों के अनुसार किसी भी बीमारी की मुख्य जड़ अशुद्ध जल है।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

बजट में युवाओं को मिली निराशा
मोदी सरकार के नए कार्यकाल के पहले आम बजट में देश की अर्थव्यवस्था और भविष्य को नए सांभे में ढालने के लिए 27.86 लाख करोड़ रुपये का बजट पेश किया गया है। यह पिछले आम बजट से 13.48 प्रतिशत से अधिक है। जब भी सरकार द्वारा बजट पेश किया जाता है तो उस पर आम आदमी की निगाह सबसे ज्यादा टिकी होती है। बजट 2019-20 में कई अहम घोषणाएं की गई हैं। हालांकि कृषि, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य जैसे क्षेत्रों के आवंटन में वृद्धि की गई है, लेकिन नीतिगत ढांचे के अनुसार यह पर्याप्त नहीं है। इस बार बजट में फिर पेट्रोल और डीजल पर शुल्क और सड़क उपकर में वृद्धि की गई है जिससे पेट्रोल और डीजल के दामों में वृद्धि होने से इसका सबसे ज्यादा प्रभाव आम आदमी में बॉयस संदेश है। बजट से मध्य वर्ग को इस बार भी निराशा हाथ लगी है। प्रत्यक्ष कर में किसी भी प्रकार की कोई छूट नहीं दी गई है। पांच लाख करोड़ डॉलर की अर्थव्यवस्था का लक्ष्य अगले पांच सालों में हासिल करने का वादा किया गया है लेकिन यह किस तरह मुमकिन होगा इसका जिक्र नहीं किया गया। युवाओं को लेकर इस बजट में कोई घोषणा नहीं की गई।



दैनिक जागरण

जो चीजें कष्ट पहुंचाती हैं, वही सिखाती भी हैं

पाकिस्तान की मजबूरी

आखिरकार पाकिस्तान भारत के असैन्य विमानों के लिए अपना हवाई क्षेत्र खोलने के लिए विवश हुआ। ऐसा करना उसकी मजबूरी ही रही, क्योंकि अभी कल तक वह यह कह रहा था कि भारत पहले अपने लड़ाकू विमानों को सीमांत इलाकों से पीछे हटाए। यही नहीं उसने अपने हवाई क्षेत्र को बंद रखने की समय सीमा 26 जुलाई तक बढ़ा भी दी थी। चूंकि भारत ने पाकिस्तान की मांग पर गौर करने से इन्कार कर दिया था इसलिए यह माना जा रहा था कि वह भारतीय विमानों के लिए अपने हवाई क्षेत्र को बंद ही रखेगा, लेकिन अब उसने यकायक अपने फैसले को बदलना बेहतर समझा। पाकिस्तान ने फरवरी में बालाकोट में हवाई हमले के बाद से ही भारतीय यात्री विमानों के लिए अपना हवाई क्षेत्र बंद कर दिया था। इस तरह के और हवाई हमले की आशंका के चलते उसने अपने हवाई क्षेत्र को बंद रखने में ही भलाई समझी। निःसंदेह इस पाबंदी के चलते भारतीय विमानन कंपनियों को नुकसान उठाना पड़ा रहा था। यूरोप जाने वाले उनके विमानों को अधिक दूरी तय करनी पड़ रही थी। निःसंदेह इस पाबंदी का सबसे अधिक नुकसान एयर इंडिया को उठाना पड़ रहा था, लेकिन खुद पाकिस्तान भी पेशान था। उसे हवाई पथ संबंधी शुल्क से वंचित होना पड़ रहा था। यह किसी से छिपा नहीं कि बीते कुछ समय से पाकिस्तान किस तरह गंभीर आर्थिक संकट से जूझ रहा है। यह मानने के अच्छे-भले कारण हैं कि इसी आर्थिक संकट ने पाकिस्तान को भारतीय विमानों के लिए अपना हवाई क्षेत्र खोलने के लिए मजबूर किया।

यह अच्छा हुआ कि भारत ने पाकिस्तान को ऐसा कोई आश्वासन देने से इन्कार किया कि उसकी हवाई सीमा का सैन्य अतिक्रमण नहीं किया जाएगा। ऐसा आश्वासन तो तभी दिया जा सकता है कि जब पाकिस्तान भारत विरोधी गतिविधियों को खत्म करने का न केवल आश्वासन दे, बल्कि उसे पूरा भी करे। उसके आश्वासन पर यकीन इसलिए नहीं किया जा सकता, क्योंकि आतंकवाद पर लागू लागाने के मामले में उसकी कथनी और करनी के अंतर से पूरी दुनिया परिचित है। पाकिस्तान आतंकवाद पर लागूा लगाने के मामले में किनना अंगंभीर है, इसका पता इससे चलता है कि वह रह-रह कर उन्हीं आतंकी संगठनों पर पाबंदी लगाने की घोषणा करता है जिन्हें पहले ही कथित तौर पर प्रतिबंधित किया जा चुका होता है। यह भी जग जाहिर है कि वह भारत और साथ ही अफगानिस्तान के लिए खतरा बने आतंकी संगठनों को खुले-छिपे तौर पर समर्थन देता रहता है। आर्थिक संकट के साथ अन्य गंभीर समस्याओं से दो-चार होने के बाद भी पाकिस्तान आतंकवाद को संरक्षण देने से बाज नहीं आ रहा है। यह समय पाकिस्तान पर किसी तरह की नरमी बरतने का नहीं, बल्कि उस पर दबाव बढ़ाने का है ताकि वह अपने रवैये में सचमुच तब्दीली लाए। भले ही पाकिस्तान यह रेना रो रहा हो कि संबंध सुधार में भारत का रवैया बाधक है, लेकिन सच्चाई यही है कि खुद उसकी अपनी हरकतों के कारण भारत उससे बातचीत करने की जरूरत नहीं समझ रहा है। बेहतर होगा कि पाकिस्तान को यह संदेश बार-बार दिया जाए कि रिश्तों में बिगाड़ के लिए वही जिम्मेदार है।

आरक्षण को हरी झंडी

केंद्र की मोदी सरकार ने अपने पिछले कार्यकाल में देश में आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े सर्वाण जाति के लोगों के लिए 10 फीसद आरक्षण लागू कर दिया था, परंतु कई रज्यों ने केंद्र के उक्त आरक्षण को लागू नहीं किया था। खासकर वैसे रज्य जहां भाजपा का शासन नहीं है। ऐसा ही एक रज्य बंगाल भी है। जब इसका एलान हुआ तो मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने इस आरक्षण को लेकर मोदी सरकार पर कई सवाल खड़े करते हुए जमकर हमला बोला था, लेकिन इसके बाद लोकसभा चुनाव में जब पीएम मोदी भारी बहुमत के साथ सत्ता में वापसी हुई तो ममता को लगा कि इस आरक्षण को लागू नहीं करने का आने वाले चुनावों और खासकर 2021 विधानसभा चुनाव में नुकसान हो सकता है। इसी के मद्देनजर कुछ दिन पहले आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े सर्वाणों को दस फीसद आरक्षण देने की घोषणा कर दी और किन्हें यह आरक्षण मिलेगा इसकी अधिसूचना भी जारी कर दी गई। ममता सरकार ने आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े सामान्य वर्ग (सर्वाणों) को आरक्षण पर केंद्र की मोदी सरकार के मानदंडों को ही अपनाया है। कुछ दिन पहले रज्य सचिवालय नवान ने इस बाबत अधिसूचना जारी की गई। अधिसूचना के मुताबिक जिन परिवारों की सालाना आय आठ लाख रुपये या उससे कम होगी, सामान्य वर्ग के उन्हीं परिवारों के लड़के-लड़कियों को शिक्षा व रोजगार के क्षेत्र में आरक्षण की सुविधा मिलेगी। ऐसे परिवारों के मालिकाना हक वाली जमीन का परिमाण पांच एकड़ से अधिक भी नहीं होना चाहिए। शहर व उपनगरीय इलाकों में एक हजार वर्गफुट या उससे बड़ा प्लॉट होने पर आरक्षण का लाभ नहीं मिलेगा। इसके अलावा जो पहले से एससी, एसटी, ओबीसी से जुड़े आरक्षण के दायरे में आते हैं, उन्हें इसका लाभ नहीं मिलेगा। अधिसूचना में कहा गया कि बताए गए सारे मानदंडों को पूरा करने वालों को ही इस आरक्षण का लाभ मिलेगा। अधिसूचना जारी होने के बाद तब हो गया है कि ममता सरकार भी इस मामले में केंद्र के नक्शेकदम पर ही चली है और आरक्षण को हरी झंडी दे दी है।

भक्ति और प्रेम का पवित्र महीना

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

सावन का महीना दस्तक दे चुका है। बेशक! मौसम मानव को अत्यधिक प्रभावित करता है। जहां ग्रीष्म में अलगाव दिखता है तो सावन और शीत में वही अलगाव लगाम में परिवर्तित हो जाता है। जहां तक सावन की बात करें तो एक अजीब-सी आकर्षण शक्ति है इसमें। जिसके जादू से हर कोई इसमें मोहपाश में बरबस ही दौड़ा जाता आता है। गर्मी के तीखे तेवर से व्यथित लोगों को झामझम बारिश की बूंदें शांत कर देती हैं। सर्वत्र शीतलता का स्पंदन होने लगता है। आखिर प्रकृति इस समय अपने चरमोत्कर्ष पर होती है। मानव मन तो आदिकाल से ही हरियाली और हरा देखने के लिए बेचैन रहा है। प्रकृति की अनुपम छटाएं भला किसे नहीं भाएंगी ? सावन के इस माह में मनुष्य और प्रकृति के मध्य की दूरी कम हो गया है। मानव प्रकृति के अधीन शरणागत हो जाता है। वैसे भी मानव प्रकृति के अधीन ही तो रहा है। शायद! मशीनी युग ने इस बात में भी विरोधाभास उत्पन्न कर दिया है।

सावन को बरसते देख भूली-बिसरी स्मृतियों का कारवां मानस पटल पर पुनर्जीवित हो उठता है। शिव पर वेलपत्र चढ़ाती और दुःखाभिषेक

जहां ग्रीष्म में अलग है तो सावन और श अलगाव लगाव में प जाता है

करती नवयुवती को देख ल केवल शिव को ही प्रसन्न है। शिव के प्रसन्न होने से मनचाह पति मिलने की बा से होती आई है। इसमें शिव के लिए अपनाया जा रहा ह भगवान को भी नहीं छोड़ पशु-पक्षी, मानव के साथ हर स्तंभ और घटक पर अ फिल्म जगत का गढ़ बॉलीवूड प्रशंसा करते नहीं थका है। सावन को खुश करने और सावन से खुश होकर कितने और कैसे-कैसे गीत लिखे गए हैं।

चाहे वह हिंदी साहित्य का मध्ययुग हो जिसमें तुलसी, सूर, जायसी आदि कवियों ने पावस ऋतु का सुंदर और सरस चित्रण किया है या आधुनिक हिंदी साहित्य में छायावादी कवियों में जयशंकर

प्रसाद, सुमित्रानंदन पंत, सुर्वकांत त्रिपाठी निराला या महदेवी वर्मा द्वारा लिखीं वर्षा संबंधी कविताएं हों सबने जैसे साक्षात बारिश को जीने के गुर दिए हैं। यह सच है कि घाघ कवि की कहवतों वाला सावन आज कहीं दिख नहीं रहा है। इंटरनेट और आधुनिकता ने सावन का असली आनंद गायब कर दिया है। आज के इस इंटरनेट के युग में अब कोई यक्ष अपनी प्रेयसी यक्षिणी को मेघ के माध्यम से संदेशों भेजने का साहस नहीं दिखाता है। अब तो मेघों का माध्यम से संदेशा भेजना तो दूर की कौड़ी चिड़ियों के दौर को भी आधुनिकता ने निगल लिया है। अब तो सावन मोबाइल की सात ईश की स्क्रीन तक सिमट कर रह गया है। वन और वृक्षों का इस गति से सफाया होता गया कि सावन की हरियाली नदारद होती गई। भगवान शिव को भी जंगल की गुफाओं से लाकर अट्रालिकाओं के गृहगर्भ में शिंपट कर दिया गया। लगता है रूठ गया है सावन। इसलिए भी कि जिन अंग्रेजों की तपती जुलूम की गर्मी से राहत दिलवाकर शहीदों ने भारतवर्ष में सावन लाया था, उस सावन का तथ्यकथित जनसेवक ने सत्यानाश कर दिया। लगता है कि अब भारतीय जनता के भाग्य में केवल तपना ही लिखा है।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)



आरिफ मोहम्मद खान

देवबंद वाले हिदाया में जो कुछ लिखा

है उसे शरीअत कहते हैं। दूसरी तरफ

कुरान इंसानों की राय को नहीं, बल्कि अपनी आयतों को शरीअत कहता है

पिछले कई दशक से जिहाद को लेकर एक बहस चल रही है। ऐसा इसलिए है, क्योंकि वे संगठन जो आतंक और हिंसा की गतिविधियों में लिप्त हैं, अपने आप को मुजाहिद यानी जिहाद करने वाले कहते हैं और अपने संगठनों के लिए इस्लामी शब्दावली का प्रयोग करते हैं। यह स्वाभाविक है कि दूसरे लोग उनकी बात मानकर उनकी गतिविधियों को इस्लाम से प्रेरित मान लेते हैं। ये दोनों बातें उन लोगों के लिए कष्टदायक हैं जिन्होंने इस्लामी परंपरा का अध्ययन कुरान के माध्यम से किया है जहां जिहाद का तात्पर्य अपने अहम और स्वाथी इच्छाओं के विरुद्ध संघर्ष है जिसे जिहाद अकबर (महान संघर्ष) कहा गया है। कुरान हथियार उठाने की भी इजाजत देता है और कहता है, अनुमति दी गई है उन लोगों को जिनके विरुद्ध युद्ध किया जा रहा है, क्योंकि उनके ऊपर जुल्म किया गया है और निश्चय ही अल्लाह उनकी सहायता की पूरी सामर्थ्य रखते हैं। ये वही लोग हैं जो अपने घरों से नाहक निकाले गए.. केवल इसलिए कि वह कहते हैं कि हमारा रव अल्लाह है। यदि अल्लाह लोगों को एक-दूसरे के द्वारा हटाना न रहता तो मठ और चर्च और वहुदी प्राधान्य भवन और मस्जिदें, जिनमें अल्लाह का अधिक नाम लिया जाता है सब ढह दिा जाते। (22.39-40)

कुरान की इस आवत से साफ है कि हथियार उठाने की इजाजत केवल उन लोगों को है जिन पर जुल्म किया गया हो, जिन्हें उनकी आस्था के

आधार पर बेघर किया गया हो। इसके साथ ही कुरान उस सनातन सिद्धांत की भी बात करता है कि समय का चक्र बदलता रहता है और अगर दुनिया में शक्ति का संतुलन बनाकर न रखा गया होता तो सभी परंपराओं के पूजा घरों जहां ईश वंदना होती है, को ध्वस्त कर दिया गया होता।

मैंने जब तक मुस्लिम कानून की 800 वर्ष पूर्व इमाम मरगीनीनी द्वारा लिखी गई पुस्तक हिदाया नहीं पढ़ी थी तो मुझे आश्चर्य होता था कि जो लोग हिंसा और आतंकवाद कर रहे हैं वे अपने आप को इस्लाम से कैसे जोड़ते हैं? यह पुस्तक आज भी देवबंद, नदवा और दूसरे मदरसों के पाठ्यक्रम का हिस्सा है। इस किताब को पढ़कर मैं हैरान रह गया कि इसमें हर उस बात या काम को जो आतंकी करते हैं, सही ठहराया गया है, बल्कि इससे आगे बढ़कर देवबंद के उलमा ने किताब के प्रावधानों पर जो टीका लिखी है वह तो हिदाया के अपने प्रावधानों को भी पीछे छोड़ देती है।

उदाहरणतया अशरफुल हिदाया (हिदाया की टीका) में मुरतिदों (धर्मभ्रष्ट मुसलमान) के बारे यह लिखा है कि उनसे तौबा करने की मांग की जाएगी और तौबा से इन्कार की सूत में मुरतिद को कत्ल कर दिया जाएगा। इस पर टिप्पणी करते हुए मौलाना सैयद अमीर अली और मौलाना मोहम्मद अजमतुल्ला (देवबंदी उलमा) ने लिखा है और थोड़ी मुश्किल भाषा के बावजूद मैं उन्ही के शब्दों का प्रयोग करूंगा: ‘वाजह रहे कि दौरे हाजिर में फितना कादियानियत, आगा खानियत, राफजियत, बहाइयत का यही हुकम

गरीबी की पहचान का तरीका



एनके सिंह



अपनी सबसे बड़ी समस्या यानी गरीबी से लड़ने के लिए हम आज तक उसकी सही तरह से पहचान भी नहीं कर सके हैं

प्रतिशत। दक्षिण अमेरिका के हेली में 41.4 फीसद, लेकिन त्रिनादो एंड टोबैगो में केवल 0.6 प्रतिशत। यह भी पाया गया कि किसी देश में पुराने पैमाने के आधार पर गरीबों की संख्या अधिक हो, लेकिन तीव्रता कम जैसे पाकिस्तान और म्यांमार में गरीबी का प्रतिशत (38.3) एक है, मगर उसकी तीव्रता पाकिस्तान में 51.7 प्रतिशत जबकि म्यांमार में 45.9 प्रतिशत है। यानी पाकिस्तान में जो गरीब है वह हर पैमाने पर अभाव का दर्श झेल रहा है।

कुछ देशों में पाया गया कि एक ही गरीब घर का एक बच्चा कुपोषित है और दूसरा पोषित। इसका कारण सामाजिक है और परिवारों की सोच का स्तर है। एक ही क्षेत्र में कुछ सौ किलोमीटर के अंतर पर गरीबों में भवावह गरीबी है और दूसरे ऐसे ही क्षेत्र में यह अंतर काफी कम है। इस ताजा अध्ययन की खास बात यह है कि इसमें गरीबी को न केवल

स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा और जीवन की गुणवत्ता के दस पैमानों पर मापा गया है, बल्कि उस क्षेत्र के लोगों में पानी की अलग-अलग उपलब्धता या हासिल करने में कठिनाई, शिक्षा के लिए स्कूल की दूरी, खाना बनाने के लिए रसोई गैस, स्वच्छ पानी, बिजली आदि को भी शामिल किया गया है। गरीबी की तीव्रता यानी इंटेसिटी और गरीबी की कमी में फर्क यह है कि संभव है एक व्यक्ति को बिजली या गैस की सुविधा मिल जाए, परंतु स्वच्छ पानी के लिए उसे दो किलोमीटर दूर जाना पड़ता हो या बीमारी की वजह से उसने अपने बच्चे का नाम स्कूल से कटवा दिया हो।

अध्ययन में पाया गया कि दुनिया के 123 करोड़ बहुआयामी गरीबों में 88 करोड़ यानी लगभग दो-तिहाई मध्यम आय वाले देशों में हैं और बाकी निम्न आय वाले देशों में। इसका अर्थ है कि सरकारों का केवल जीडीपी बढ़ाने पर जोर देना अक्सर हानिकारक परिणाम भी दे सकता है, अगर उसका चोतरफा लाभ आम लोगों तक नहीं पहुंचाया गया। वैसे तो वर्ष 2010 से 2015 तक विश्व बैंक और यूनस्डीपी में वास्तविक गरीबी मापने के लिए बहुआयामी सूचकांक बनाए, पर उनसे सही आकलन नहीं हो पा रहा था। ताजा अध्ययन में जब गरीबी की तीव्रता और बहुआयामी गरीबी के आंकड़ों को विखंडित करके देखा गया तब पता चला कि कोई व्यक्ति एक आंकड़े में ऊपर है, लेकिन अन्य मापदंड में काफी नीचे। जैसे मित्र और पराग्वे में बहुआयामी गरीबी तो एक ही स्तर पर है, लेकिन गरीबी की तीव्रता यानी एक ही व्यक्ति का तमाम अन्य पैमाने पर अक्षम होना पराग्वे में काफी अधिक है।

इन नए आंकड़ों के आधार पर दुनिया के कुल 130 करोड़ गरीबों में आधे 18 साल से कम उम्र के बच्चे हैं और उनमें भी दस साल से कम उम्र वाले बच्चों का तादाद लगभग एक तिहाई है। क्या इन नए आंकड़ों के आलोक में भारत सरकार अपनी आर्थिक विकास पर आधारित नीतियों की जगह समेकित विकास की नीति लाने की कोशिश करेगी। ऐसा करने का मतलब होगा किसी गांव या शहर की गरीब बस्ती में आय बढ़ाने के साथ ही बिजली, पानी, शिक्षा, रसोई गैस, अस्पताल मुहैया करना। हरानी की बात यह है कि नई परिभाषा के तहत गरीबी केवल निर्धन, निम्न या निम्न-मध्यम आय वाले देशों में नहीं माध्यम आय वाले देशों में भी बड़ी संख्या में है यानी 130 करोड़ में 88.6 करोड़ गरीब हैं। यह सरकारों के लिए संदेश है कि आज को बढ़ाएं, लेकिन इससे बहुआयामी अभाव को भी कम करने के उपक्रम करें।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ पत्रकार हैं)

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शिक्षा का निजीकरण नहीं सामाजीकरण हो

निजीकरण की चपेट में शिक्षा शीर्षक से गत दिनों लिखे अपने लेख में गिरिश्वर मिश्र ने देश में पर पसरती स्वचित पोषित शिक्षा व्यवस्था को लेकर जो चिंता व्यक्त की है, वह केवल एक शिक्षाविद की पीड़ा मात्र न होकर भारत के विकास को अवरुद्ध करने वाली एक ऐसी रूण व्यवस्था है, जिसका समय रहते निदान जरूरी है। माना कि बढ़ती जनसंख्या की दृष्टि से शिक्षा का निजीकरण इस देश की मजबूरी है, लेकिन आज निजीकरण की ओट में फलने-फूलने वाले शैक्षिक उद्योग को जिस तरह से अनदेखा किया जा रहा है, वह उचित नहीं है। शिक्षा का निजीकरण बुग नहीं है, बुराई इसके नियमन और प्रबंधन में है। एक ही विश्वविद्यालय के प्रशासन में सरकार द्वारा अनुदानित शिक्षण संस्थाओं के साथ-साथ स्वचित पोषित शिक्षण संस्थाओं के धारितियों के संसाधनों के अंतर का भी अनुदानित शिक्षण संस्थाओं की गुणवत्ता प्रभावित हो रही है। नई शिक्षा नीति में इस और विशेष ध्यान देने की जरूरत है। स्वचित पोषित शिक्षा व्यवस्था के लिए अलग से प्रशासनिक व्यवस्था की जाए जो इन संस्थाओं पर प्रभावी नियंत्रण रखकर इनकी मनमानी पर अंकुश लगा सके। व्यापारिक दृष्टि से निजीकरण हो रही निजी शिक्षण संस्थाओं के लिए अलग अलग निर्यंत्रण की आवश्यकता है। राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर स्वचित पोषित शिक्षा के नियमन और निर्यंत्रण के लिए एक निकाय स्थापित कर अखिल भारतीय स्तर पर निजी शिक्षण संस्थाओं के लिए श्रेष्ठ प्रबंधन और प्रशासन को एकरूपता विकसित की जाए। इस प्रकार सरकार से अनुदानित शिक्षण संस्थाओं और स्वचित पोषित शिक्षा व्यवस्था के लिए अलग-अलग प्रबंधन और प्रशासन की व्यवस्था निर्धारित करके शिक्षा के निजीकरण को सामाजीकरण में परिवर्तित कर शिक्षा की निरंकुश होती

मेलबाक्स

निजीकरण व्यवस्था पर अंकुश लगाया जा सकता है। निजता की पर्याय बन रही स्वचित पोषित शिक्षा व्यवस्था का प्रबंधकीय और प्रशासनिक दृष्टि से सामाजीकरण होना शिक्षा के सुदृढ़ीकरण के लिए जरूरी है।

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कोलेजियम प्रणाली खत्म हो

संपादकीय ‘कोलेजियम पर सही सवाल’ पढ़ा। न्यायाधीशों की नियुक्ति की मौजूदा कोलेजियम व्यवस्था को लेकर पहले भी सवाल उठते रहे हैं। लेकिन हमारे यहां न्यायाधीश को ईश्वर तुल्य माना जाता है। उनके खिलाफ बोलना और लिखना भी अपराध माना जाता है। लेकिन अब उन पर संसद में भी सवाल उठने शुरू हो गए हैं। एक सांसद ने कोलेजियम पर सवाल उठाते हुए कहा कि इसमें जातिवाद, परिवारवाद से लेकर पेशेवर निरंकटता जैसे पहलुओं का बोलबाला रहता है।इसलिए सामान्य परिवार से कानून के क्षेत्र में आए लोगों के लिए हाई कोर्ट से सुप्रीम कोर्ट तक का जज बनना बड़ा मुश्किल है। तात्कालीन सरकारों भी अपने पसंदीदा व्यक्ति को ही इस पद में नियुक्त करवाती रही हैं। अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से कई जज भी विशेष राजनीतिक दल को सपोर्ट करते रहे हैं। हाल ही में इलाहबाद हाई कोर्ट के एक जज ने प्रधानमंत्री को पत्र लिख कर इस प्रणाली को समाप्त उठाया था। उनका कहना था नियुक्तियां योग्यता के आधार पर नहीं की जा रही। उन्होंने सुझाव दिया था कि सिविल सेवा की तरह संघ लोक सेवा आयोग द्वारा आयोजित केंद्रीय न्यायिक सेवा के जरिये नियुक्तियां की जाएं ताकि सामान्य लोग भी शीर्ष न्यायपालिका में जा सकें।

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दैनिक जागरण

बुधवार

17 जुलाई 2019

तुम्हारा रब चाहता तो धरती में जितने लोग हैं सबके सब ईमान ले आते, फिर क्यों तुम लोगों को विवश करोगे कि वे ईमान वाले हो जाएं (10.99)। इसी के साथ कुरान कहता है: हमने तुममें से हर एक के लिए एक कानून और खुला रास्ता बनाया है। यदि अल्लाह चाहता तो तुम सबको एक समुदाय बना देता। (5.48)

कुरान की इन बहुत सी आयतों को ध्यान में रखकर अब आप एक नजर उस पर डालें जो देवबंदी उलमा ने अशरफुल हिदाया में लिखा है: शरीअत में जिहाद दीने हक की तरफ बुलाने और जो उसे कुबूल न करे उससे किताल (लड़ाई) करने को कहते हैं। (खंड 7 पृष्ठ 17) इसी तरह जिहाद का जो मकसद है यानी मुल्क से फसाद, बुराइयां शिर्क (बुतों की पूजा) और कुफ्र के फितने को दूर करके अल्लाह ताला की तौहिद और अदल को कायम करना। (खंड 7 पृष्ठ 18)

और हमारी दलील यह है कि बुत परस्ती को गुलाम बनाना जायज है इसलिए उन पर जिज्या लाजिम करना भी जायज हुआ, क्योंकि गुलाम बनाने और जिजया वसूल करने में से हर एक काम से उनकी हैसियत और शिश्कियत को छीनना लाजिम आता है ताकि वे फसाद न करें। (खंड 7 पृष्ठ 111)

यह किताब इसी तरह की बातों से भरी पड़ी है और देवबंद वाले इसे शरीअत कहते हैं। दूसरी तरफ कुरान इंसानों की रायों को नहीं, बल्कि अपनी आयतों को शरीअत कहता है। मैंने 22 मार्च 2008 में देवबंद वालों को खत लिखकर अनुरोध किया था कि आज हिदाया किसी देश का कानून नहीं है इसलिए या तो इसे पाठ्यक्रम से निकाल दें या फिर इसको मुस्लिम कानून के इतिहास के रूप में पढ़ाएं और इसे शरीअत न करें। देवबंद ने मुझे पावती की रसीद भेजी और जबब देने का वादा किया, लेकिन मैं आज तक उनके जवाब का इंतजार कर रहा हूं।

(लेखक पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री हैं)

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जीवन में सफलता और अपने सपनों को साकार करने के लिए धैर्य की सबसे अधिक आवश्यकता होती है। मनुष्य जीवन में अनेक दुश्चारियां आती हैं जिससे व्यक्ति का मन विचलित होने लगता है। हिम्मत और साहस टूटने लगते हैं, पर धैर्य ही एक ऐसा अस्त्र होता है जो उम्मीदों को मन में दृढ़ता से संजोए रखता है। मानवीय जीवन महत्वाकांक्षाओं से भरा हुआ होता है। ऐसे में महत्वाकांक्षाओं को जल्दी पूरा करना भी मनुष्य का लक्ष्य होता है। यही उतावलापन उसे अनेक गलतियों की धकेलता है जिससे व्यक्ति अपेक्षित परिणाम न मिलने से टूट जाता है। इस अवस्था में भी धैर्य व्यक्ति को बंद्स दिए रहता है। दुनिया में इसके तमाम उदाहरण हैं। थॉमस अल्वा एडिसन ने बल्ब का आविष्कार करने से पहले दस हजार बार असफल प्रयास किया था। बावजूद इसके जब उन्होंने सफलता पाई तो उनके शब्द थे ‘ मैं हारा नहीं, बल्कि मैंने ऐसे हजार रास्ते छोड़े जिनसे सफलता नहीं मिली सकती।’

धैर्य अनेक मानवीय गुणों की जननी है। धैर्य व्यक्ति में अपने लक्ष्य के प्रति संकल्प की भावना को जीवित करता है। सफलित व्यक्ति अपने लक्ष्य से कभी विचलित नहीं होता। संकल्प का भाव व्यक्ति के अंदर अपने लक्ष्य को हासिल करने तक आत्मविश्वास को जगाए रखता है, परंतु इसका उद्गम स्त्रीत धैर्य ही माना जाता है। इस प्रकार धैर्य और संकल्प दोनों एक-दूसरे के पूरक हैं जो मनुष्य के अंदर आत्मविश्वास को जगाते हैं जिसके कारण व्यक्ति सर्मापित भाव से अपनी ऊर्जा को लक्ष्य-प्राप्ति की ओर लगाता है।

धैर्य व्यक्ति में अतिमहत्वाकांक्षा को भी कम किए रहता है जिससे व्यक्ति पथ भ्रष्ट होने से बचा रहता है। धैर्य अंतरात्मा में विश्वास बनाए रखता है जो मन को एकत्रित किए हुए रहता है जिससे ध्यान-केंद्रित करने में सहायता होती है। इसके द्वारा मन में उठती प्रबल इच्छाओं को संतुलित किया जा सकता है। चाणक्य ने भी कहा है कि ‘धैर्य हो तो वरिष्ठता भी शोभा देती है, धुले हुए हों तो फटे वस्त्र भी अच्छे लगते हैं और सुंदर स्वभाव के कारण कुरूपता भी शोभा देती हैं।’ अतः सफलता पाने के लिए यह अति आवश्यक है कि व्यक्ति अपने अंदर धैर्य उत्पन्न करे जो आज के प्रतिस्पर्धी युग में खत्म होता जा रहा है।

शिवांशु राय

भाषा पर न हो राजनीति

हिंदी हिंदुस्तान की राष्ट्रभाषा बेशक न हो, राजभाषा जरूर है। देश में सर्वाधिक 57 फीसद लोगों द्वारा हिंदी बोली जाती है, जबकि 10 फीसद ही लोग अंग्रेजी समझ व बोल पाते हैं। ऐसे में एमपीएमके दल के अध्यक्ष व राज्यसभा के सदस्य अश्वतोष का ये कहना कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के हिंदी प्रयोग से सदन में बहस का स्तर छोटा हो गया है, मानसिक गुलामी को दर्शाता है। वायको को ये नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी विदेशी दौरों सहित संयुक्त राष्ट्र सम्मेलनों में भी ज्यादातर हिंदी में ही भाषण देते हैं। साथ ही देश के प्रधानमंत्री को पिकनिक प्रधानमंत्री कहना राजनीतिक द्वेष व क्षुद्र राजनीति को ज्यादा उजागर करता है। हळउस ऑफ लॉर्ड्स का सदस्य होने के नाते नेताओं की जिम्मेदारी बन जाती है कि वे विभिन्न भाषाओं का आदर सम्मान करने के साथ ही देश के किसी भी छोटे-बड़े नेताओं के प्रति अमर्यादित शब्दों के चयन से बचें। राजनीति में दलीय रणनीति का समावेश तो होता है, लेकिन आवश्यक विहीनता राजनीति के स्तर को जरूर छोटा कर देती है।

दीपक गौतम, सोनीपत

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

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चंद्रयान की राह

अंतरिक्ष में प्रयोग और परीक्षण के मामले में भारत ने जिस तरह अपनी जगह बनाई है, उसे देखते हुए किसी नए अभियान को लेकर देश और दुनिया में अपेक्षाएं स्वाभाविक हैं। अब तक के कम्बोबेश हर प्रक्षेपण में भारत ने साबित किया है कि इस कसौटी पर हम दुनिया के विकसित देशों के समांतर खड़े हो चुके हैं। अंतरिक्ष में व्यावसायिक प्रक्षेपण के मामले में बेहतर सुविधाओं के लिहाज से कई देशों ने भारत की ओर देखा है। लेकिन यह भी ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि तकनीक की दुनिया में कभी-कभार ऐसी स्थिति पैदा हो सकती है कि पूरी तैयारी से शुरू होने वाले किसी प्रक्षेपण को अचानक ही टाल देना पड़े। रविवार की रात चंद्रयान-2 के प्रक्षेपण में तकनीकी अड़चन अचानक ही खड़ी हो गई, जिसकी वजह से फिलहाल इस अभियान को स्थगित कर देना पड़ा है। खबरों के मुताबिक जीएसएलवी मार्क-3 रॉकेट के स्वदेशी क्रायोजेनिक इंजन के तरल ईंधन में रिसाव होने लगा था। प्रक्षेपण के लिए जितने दबाव की जरूरत थी, वह नहीं बन पा रहा था। ऐसे में अगर इसकी अनदेखी करके यान का प्रक्षेपण कर दिया जाता तो इसके विफल होने की ही आशंका कई गुना ज्यादा थी। लिहाजा, फिलहाल इसे टाल देना बेहतर रास्ता था।

इसके बावजूद यह तथ्य है कि चंद्रयान-2 को चांद पर भेजने के लिए जिस स्तर की तैयारी हो चुकी है, वह किसी मामूली कारण से भी रद्द नहीं हो सकता। इसलिए इसरो की ओर से अब यह खबर आई है कि जिन वजहों से यह मिशन टालना पड़ा, उनका पता लगाने और उन्हें पूरी तरह दुरुस्त करने के बाद संभवतः इसी महीने चंद्रयान-2 को फिर से अपने लक्ष्य की ओर रवाना किया जा सकेगा। पहली नजर में चंद्रयान-2 के प्रक्षेपण को टालने को एक कमी के तौर पर देखा जा सकता है, जिसमें सफलता के लिए सौ फीसद सुरक्षित अनिवार्य मानकों के आकलन में थोड़ी चूक हुई। लेकिन इसरो के वैज्ञानिकों की इस बात के लिए तारीफ़ की भी जानी चाहिए कि उन्होंने उड़ान के पहले ही उस मुख्य वजह की पहचान कर ली और इस तरह एक बड़ी नाकामी और नुकसान से देश को बचाया जा सका। वरना इस खामी के रहते अगर किसी तरह प्रक्षेपण को अंजाम दे दिया जाता और उड़ान के बाद गड़बड़ी की वजह से हादसा होता तो होने वाले नुकसान का अंदाजा पर लगाया जा सकता है। इसलिए चंद्रयान-2 के प्रक्षेपण को फिलहाल टालने को एक सही फैसला कहा जाना चाहिए।

दरअसल, चंद्रयान-2 अभियान की सबसे खास बात यह है कि इसके लैंडर और रोवर सत्तर डिग्री के अक्षांश पर चंद्रमा के दक्षिणी ध्रुव पर जा रहे हैं। अब तक किसी और देश ने चंद्रमा के इस क्षेत्र में जाने की हिम्मत नहीं की है। इस यान की एक खासियत यह है कि इसके ऑर्बिटर, लैंडर और रोवर भारत में ही निर्मित हैं। इसरो के मुताबिक इस यान के जरिए वहां की चट्टानों को देख कर मैग्निशियम, कैल्शियम और लोहें जैसे खनिज को खोजने की कोशिश की जाएगी। इसके अलावा, वहां पानी होने के संकेत की तलाश और चांद की बाहरी परत की जांच की जाएगी। गौरतलब है कि भारत ने इससे पहले 2008 में चंद्रयान-1 को चंद्रमा की कक्षा में भेजने में कामयाबी हासिल की थी। हालांकि वह यान चंद्रमा की सतह पर उतरा नहीं था। अब तक चांद की सतह पर केवल अमेरिका, रूस और चीन उतर सके हैं। अगर चंद्रयान-2 मिशन कामयाब हो जाता है तो भारत भी इन देशों की सूची में शामिल चौथा देश हो जाएगा। जाहिर है, इसरो एक और इतिहास रचने की ओर कदम बढ़ा रहा है।

सुरक्षा और सवाल

देश में सड़क हादसों का ग्राफ जिस तेजी से ऊपर जा रहा है वह इस हकीकत को बताने के लिए काफी है कि सड़क सुरक्षा के प्रति हमारी सरकारें कितनी लापरवाह हैं। पिछले महीने हिमाचल प्रदेश और जम्मू में हुए बस हादसों में बड़ी संख्या में लोग मारे गए थे। दोनों हादसों में एक समानता यह थी कि इन बसों में निर्धारित क्षमता से तीन गुना ज्यादा लोग सवार थे। दिल्ली-आगरा के बीच यमुना एक्सप्रेस-वे तो मौत के हाड़वे में तब्दली हो चुका है। हाल में इस एक्सप्रेस-वे पर एक बस हादसे में उन्तीस लोगों की मौत हो गई थी। बस के ड्राइवर को झपकी आ जाने की वजह से यह दुर्घटना हुई थी। ऐसे हादसे देशभर में रोजाना हो रहे हैं और सैकड़ों लोग मारे जा रहे हैं। ज्यादातर हादसे वाहन चालकों की लापरवाही और चूक से होते हैं। सवाल है कि इस समस्या से निपटा कैसे जाए?

भारत में सड़क सुरक्षा और परिवहन संबंधी कायदे-कानून वर्षों पुराने चले आ रहे हैं। इससे भी गंभीर बात यह है कि लोग इन नियम-कायदों को भी ताक पर रख कर चल रहे हैं। कानून का कोई भय नहीं रह गया है। इसलिए जब तक कानूनों का पुराना ढांचा बदला नहीं जाएगा और नए कानून सख्ती से लागू नहीं किए जाएंगे, तब तक न सड़क हादसों में कमी आएगी और न लोगों को मरने से बचाया जा सकेगा। सोमवार को लोकसभा में पेश ‘मोटर वाहन संशोधन विधेयक 2019’ में पहली बार कड़े प्रावधान किए गए हैं, ताकि वाहन, सड़क और चालक तीनों को सुरक्षित बनाने के उपाय किए जा सकें। खास बात यह है कि इस विधेयक में ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस संबंधी नियमों को और सख्त बनाने का प्रावधान है। सड़क परिवहन मंत्री ने खुद माना है कि देश में तीस फीसद से ज्यादा ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस फर्जी हैं। हकीकत में यह आंकड़ा इससे भी ज्यादा ही निकलेगा। संशोधित विधेयक में अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानकों को लागू करते हुए यह व्यवस्था की गई है कि अगर कोई वाहन तकनीकी या यांत्रिक रूप से खराब निकलता है तो संबंधित निर्माता कंपनी को उसे वापस मंगाना होगा। नए वाहनों की जांच प्रणाली को बदल कर और दुरुस्त किया जाएगा। टायर कंपनियों पर भी नकेल कसने की बात है। अगर गाड़ी या टायर की खराबी की वजह से कोई हादसा होता है तो संबंधित कंपनियां जिम्मेदार होंगी। इसी तरह राजमार्ग बनाने वाली कंपनियों पर भी शिकंजा कसा गया है।

फर्जी लाइसेंस बनने का कारोबार जिस पैमाने पर होता है, वह आरटीओ दफ्तरों के भीतर पैटे भ्रष्टाचार की पोल खोलने के लिए काफी है। नए कानून में जिस तरह भारी-भरकम जुर्माने और सजा का प्रावधान है, उससे लोगों में कुछ भय जरूर पैदा होगा। लेकिन इससे भी ज्यादा जरूरी यह है कि कानून पर ईमानदारी से अमल सुनिश्चित कराने वाले तंत्र का कार्याकल्प हो वरना कानून धरा रह जाता है। गंभीर बात तो यह है कि सड़क सुरक्षा जैसे अहम मसले पर केंद्र और राज्यों के बीच सहमति का अभाव है जिसकी वजह से नए मोटर वाहन विधेयक का काम आगे नहीं सरक पा रहा है। राज्यों का कहना है कि यह कानून उनके अधिकारों को छीनने वाला है। पिछली बार भी लोकसभा में यह विधेयक पास हो गया था लेकिन राज्यसभा में अटक गया। हालांकि केंद्रीय सड़क परिवहन मंत्री ने तो साफ कहा है कि जो राज्य इसे लागू नहीं करना चाहे वह नहीं करे। सवाल है कि अगर अधिकारों को लेकर ही गतिरोध बना रहेगा तो सड़क सुरक्षा पर कैसे सख्त कानून बन पाएंगे और लागू हो पाएंगे?

कल्पमेधा

जरा रूप को, आशा धैर्य को, मृत्यु प्राण को,
क्रोध श्री को और काम लज्जा को हरता
है, पर अभिमान सबको हरता है।
—महाभारत

जनसत्ता

मनीष वैद्य

हमारे देश में होने वाली पारंपरिक खेती में मिट्टी की उर्वरता बनाए रखने पर खास ध्यान दिया जाता रहा है। लेकिन बीते पचास सालों में जिस तरह हमने प्राकृतिक व्यवस्था को तहस-नहस कर उत्पाद आधारित खेती व्यवस्था को अपना लिया है, खेती में अधिक से अधिक पैदावार के लिए अब रासायनिक खाद और कीटनाशकों का अंधाधुंध इस्तेमाल शुरू कर दिया है, उससे मिट्टी की उर्वरता क्षीण हो गई है।

देश के कई इलाकों में खेतों की मिट्टी अपनी ताकत खोती जा रही है। यह पर्यावरण के साथ हमारी खेती और सेहत के लिए बड़े खतरे की घंटी है। इससे खेती का रकबा घट कर बंजर जमीन का इलाका बढ़ने की आशंका जताई जा रही है। वहीं हमारी सेहत पर भी इसका बुरा असर पड़ रहा है। इससे भी बड़ी चिंता यह है कि इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर कहीं कोई बात नहीं हो रही है। न तो सरकारें और न ही समाज इसे लेकर चिंतित नजर आ रहा है।

दरअसल, खेतों की मिट्टी सैकड़ों सालों से अपनी उर्वरा शक्ति को बनाए हुए हमारे लिए अन्न और अन्य तरह के खाद्य पदार्थ उपजाती रही है। साल दर साल किसान अपने परंपरागत ज्ञान के आधार पर खेती की जमीन को पोषक तत्वों से युक्त बनाए रखते रहे हैं। इसके लिए वे प्राकृतिक खाद, फसल चक्र आदि कई पारंपरिक और प्राकृतिक तौर-तरीकों से खेतों की मिट्टी को सहेजते थे। विशेषज्ञ भी मानते हैं

विनय मोघे

पिछले दिनों एक शादी का न्योता मिलने पर इंदौर जाना हुआ। मेरी तरह दूसरे शहरों से भी कई रिश्तेदार इस कार्यक्रम में शामिल होने आए थे। दो दिन तक शादी के रस्मो-रिवाज में किसी को इतना समय नहीं मिला कि दूरदराज से आए रिश्तेदारों से बैठ कर बातचीत कर ले। सिर्फ ‘हाय-हेलो’ हो पाई। कुछ रिश्तेदार तो कई साल बाद एक-दूसरे से मिल रहे थे। उनके बच्चे भी अब बड़े हो चुके थे। सब अपने बड़े हो चुके बच्चों को भी अन्य रिश्तेदारों से मिलवाने की औपचारिकता निभा रहे थे।

दो दिन के व्यस्त कार्यक्रम के बाद तीसरे दिन जब सभी को थोड़ा समय मिला, तब दोपहर के खाने के बाद सब घर के हॉल में एकत्रित हुए कि अब कुछ गपशप हो जाए। पर वहां बैठे पंद्रह-बीस लोगों में से कुछ बुजुर्गों को छोड़ कर सभी अपने मोबाइल में लगे हुए थे। खासकर बच्चे, जो कई साल बाद या शायद पहली बार किसी से मिल रहे थे, वे भी किसी से बात करना छोड़ कर अपने मोबाइल में ही घुसे हुए थे। मैंने और दूसरे कुछ

जाति की जंजीरें

पाटीं ने उन्हें टिकट इसलिए दिया कि वे जाति विशेष के पैसे वाले थे; क्योंकि सीट पर उनकी जाति के मतदाता बहुसंख्यक थे। उनकी जीत में भी जाति विशेष के मतदाताओं की भूमिका बहुत बड़ी थी। इसके बाद अगर आप और हम उनसे जातीय अस्मिता या जातिवादी मानसिकता से ऊपर उठने की उम्मीद करते हैं तो हम सब अंधाकचरे हैं। बाबा साहब ने जातियों को तोड़ने का सपना देखा था और उसमें अंतरजातीय शादियों के बड़े रोल की हिमायत की थी। लेकिन आज जातियों को कौन तोड़ना चाहता है ? कम से कम हमें तो ऐसा कोई वर्ग दिखाई नहीं पड़ रहा जिसका हित जातियों को तोड़ने में निहित हो। जनमत के जरिए हम जिस व्यवस्था का चुनाव करते हैं, वह टिकट वितरण से लेकर मंत्रिमंडल और सरकार में भागीदारी तक जातीय अस्मिता का विशेषतम ध्यान रखती है। लिहाजा, इस सियासी व्यवस्था से जाति तोड़ने की अपेक्षा रखना बेमानी है। इसका हित तो उसे बनाए रखने में है। धर्म, मूल वंश, जाति, लिंग या जन्म स्थान के आधार पर भेदभाव के प्रतिषेध की घोषणा करने वाला संविधान भी अंत में जाति के आधार पर बहुत से तबकों को आरक्षण देने का अस्थायी प्रावधान कर देता है! एक दशक के लिए आने वाला यह अस्थायी प्रावधान छह दहाइयों पार करके तकरीबन स्थायी रूप धारण कर लेता है और हम मासूम बने देखते रहते हैं। आरक्षण के मजबूत किले में दशकों से विराजमान जातियां या उनके नुमाइंदे क्यों चाहेंगे कि जाति टूटे ? हर क्षण संविधान के इन स्थायी बन चुके अस्थायी प्रावधानों से खुद को पीड़ित मानने वाली उद्बेलित और आक्रोशित समूह जातियां अगर खुद को सामाजिक स्तर पर मिथ्या जातीय दंभ और श्रेष्ठता के सामंती खोल में बंद कर लेती हैं तो यह बेहद स्वाभाविक है। इनकी पूरी जीवन शैली ही ही जाति व्यवस्था से खाद-पानी लेती रही है।

उर्वरता खोती खेतों की मिट्टी

कि मिट्टी में बारह तरह के पोषक तत्त्व होते हैं जो मिट्टी में पैदा होने वाले खाद्य पदार्थों में भी पहुंचते हैं और इनका उपयोग करने वाले व्यक्ति को सेहतमंद बनाए रखते हैं। हमारे देश में होने वाली पारंपरिक खेती में मिट्टी की ताकत बनाए रखने पर खास ध्यान दिया जाता रहा है। लेकिन बीते पचास सालों में जिस तरह हमने प्राकृतिक व्यवस्था को तहस-नहस कर उत्पाद आधारित खेती व्यवस्था को अपना लिया है, खेती में अधिक से अधिक पैदावार के लिए अब रासायनिक खाद और कीटनाशकों का अंधाधुंध इस्तेमाल शुरू कर दिया है, उससे खेतों की मिट्टी की ताकत क्षीण हो गई है।

भारत सरकार का कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्रालय देशभर में मिट्टी की जांच कर किसानों को बता रहे हैं कि उनके खेतों की मिट्टी की सेहत कैसी है। मिट्टी की सेहत खराब होने से फसलें तो प्रभावित होती ही हैं, उनमें पर्याप्त पोषक तत्वों का संतुलन भी बिगड़ जाता है। इसके लिए खेतों की मिट्टी के नमूने की जांच कर संबंधित किसान को उसके खेत की जमीन की रिपोर्ट (मृदा स्वास्थ्य कार्ड) भी सौंपी जा रही है। देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में मिट्टी की जांच में चौंकाने वाले आंकड़े सामने आए हैं। इसमें हुए खुलासे से पता चला है कि खेतों की मिट्टी में मौजूद बारह तत्वों में से अधिकांश तत्त्व या तो बहुत कम हैं या फिर बहुत ज्यादा हैं। यहां तक कि इनमें से छह तत्त्व पूरी तरह असंतुलित हैं। ऐसी मिट्टी में उपजे खाद्य पदार्थ खाने से लोगों में कुपोषण और कई तरह की बीमारियां घर कर रही हैं। मिट्टी के असंतुलित पोषक तत्वों में नाइट्रोजन, फास्फोरस, पोटेशियम, सल्फर और ज़िंक शामिल हैं। जाहिर है, इन जरूरी पोषक तत्वों की कमी के कारण ही कुपोषण और खतरनाक बीमारियां तेजी से पैर पसार रही हैं। शरीर को जिस तरह पोषक तत्वों की जरूरत होती है, ठीक उसी तरह एक पौधे और फसल के लिए भी मिट्टी में तमाम तरह के तत्वों की जरूरत होती है। इन दिनों शरीर के लिए जरूरी अनाज, सब्जियों में पोषक तत्वों की कमी मिट्टी में आई पोषक तत्वों की कमी का नतीजा है। मिट्टी में ज़िक की कमी से अनाज में भी इसकी कमी पाई जाती है। शरीर में ज़िक की कमी के कारण रोग प्रतिरोधात्मक क्षमता घटती है। इससे निमोनिया, जुकाम, सांस संबंधी समस्याएं हो जाती हैं। सल्फर की कमी के कारण शरीर में नाखून और बालों की



पाया गया। इसके असंतुलन से दिमागी रोग होते हैं।

मिट्टी में सभी जरूरी तत्वों का अपना-अपना काम होता है। बीजों के अंकुरण से लगा कर उनके विकास और खाद्यान्न का पोषक होना इन्हीं तत्वों पर निर्भर करता है। मिट्टी के पर्याप्त तत्वों वाले अनाज को खाने से ही हमारे शरीर में भी पोषण मिलता है। ज्यादातर बीमारियां इसीलिए हो रही हैं कि रासायनिक खाद, कीटनाशक और फसल चक्र बिगड़ने से जमीन की उर्वरता यानी मिट्टी में मौजूद पोषक तत्त्व खत्म हो रहे हैं। मध्यप्रदेश के डिंडौरी जैसे ठेठ आदिवासी और जंगल से सटे इलाके में भी मिट्टी में घटते पोषक तत्वों की वजह से इस इलाके में होने वाले अनाज और सब्जियों में भी

बिखरते-बचते पल

लोगों ने कहा कि मोबाइल को परे रख कर कुछ गपशप, कुछ मजाक-मस्ती कर ली जाए, पर इस बात पर किसी ने कुछ ध्यान नहीं दिया। मुझे एक विचार सूझा। मैं किचेन से एक बड़ा बर्तन ले आया और जितने भी लोगों के हाथ में मोबाइल थे, उन सभी से कहा कि वे अपने मोबाइल उस बर्तन में रख दें। कुछ लोग आसानी से मान गए, कुछ ने नखरे दिखाए, जिनमें

दुनिया मेरे आगे

फिर मैंने कहा कि मोबाइल को परे रख कर कुछ गपशप, कुछ मजाक-मस्ती कर ली जाए, पर इस बात पर किसी ने कुछ ध्यान नहीं दिया। मुझे एक विचार सूझा। मैं किचेन से एक बड़ा बर्तन ले आया और जितने भी लोगों के हाथ में मोबाइल थे, उन सभी से कहा कि वे अपने मोबाइल उस बर्तन में रख दें। कुछ लोग आसानी से मान गए, कुछ ने नखरे दिखाए, जिनमें

मैंने सभी से कहा या तो आपस में गप्पे लड़ाएं या कोई गेम खेलें। सभी बच्चों ने एक साथ गेम खेलने को कहा तब मैंने उनसे ही सुझाव मांगा कि उन्हें कौन-सा गेम पसंद है। सभी ने अपनी पसंद बताई। कुछ गेम सभी के लिए नए थे, क्योंकि वे अलग प्रांत से आए लोगों ने सुझाए थे। सभी गेम पर विचार-विमर्श के बाद तय हुआ की ‘पारिंग द पार्सल’ खेला जाए। इस खेल में सभी गोलाकार बैठते हैं और एक तकिया एक-दूसरे को पास करते है। कोई गीत या संगीत बजाया जाता है। जिस समय संगीत रुकता है, उस समय जिसके पास तकिया हो, उसे कुछ पेश करना होता है। करीब तीन घंटे तक यह गेम चला, जिसमें सभी ने बढ़-चढ़ कर हिस्सा लिया। कई लोगों की ऐसी छिपी प्रतिभा अन्य लोगों के सामने आई जो खुद उनके करीबी लोगों को भी नहीं पता थी। कुछ लोगों ने गाना गाया, कुछ ने डांस प्रदर्शन किया। कुछ प्रस्तुतियां तो इतनी शानदार थीं, जैसे कोई मंजा हुआ कलाकार ही प्रदर्शन कर रहा हो। कुछ लोगों ने इतना हंसाया कि हंसते-हंसते लोगों के आंखों से आंसू निकल आए। बच्चों को तो इस गेम में इतना मजा आने लगा कि उन्हें तीन घंटे तक अपने मोबाइल की याद भी नहीं आई। कुछ देर बाद न चाहते हुए भी गेम बंद करना पड़ा क्योंकि बहुत देर हो चुकी थी। पर उसके बाद भी जो लोग फुर्सत में थे वे

इस तरह के दुस्साहसी जोड़ों से हमें यही कहना है कि तुम एक ऐसे पाखंडी समाज में जाति को तोड़ना चाहते हो जहां अवाम से लेकर निजाम तक सभी उसे बचाने में लगे पड़े हैं। बल्कि अब तो यह समाज जातीय घृणा में मजा लेने लगा है। तुम्हारे साथ चाय पीते, खाना खाते और हंसते-बोलते भी वह तुम्हें बहुत हिकारत से देखता है और तुम समझ नहीं पाते हो। जब तक बातें समझ में आती हैं तब तक बहुत देर हो चुकी होती है। और तुम असमय ही शारीरिक या सामाजिक मौत के शिकार बन चुके होते हो।

- राहुल मिश्रा, चिरगांव, झांसी*

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

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

सकते क्योंकि बाजार तो समाज की मांग का ही अनुसरण करता है। लिहाजा, बड़ी हास्यास्पद बात है कि जिस समाज में आवाम से लेकर निजाम तक कोई तबका जाति के सम्मोहन से मुक्त नहीं है उस समाज में जातिवाद को खत्म करने का भ्रम पाला जा रहा है!

और अंत में यह कि साक्षी और अजितेश के लिए क्या कहा जा सकता है! अलग-अलग समूहों और मीडिया द्वारा रोज नई-नई बातों का खुलासा हो रहा है, जिनमें सियासत और शरारत दोनों शामिल दिखाई पड़ती हैं। वैसे भी ये भाग्यशाली हैं क्योंकि जिंदा हैं। हो सकता है कि मीडिया के सामने आने का फैसला उनके लिए जीवनदायी बना हो। वरना हरियाणे से लेकर राजपूताने तक ऐसे न जाने कितने दुस्साहसी जोड़े और उनकी कहानियां जमीन के बहुत नीचे दफन पड़ी हैं। अफसोस, यह सिलसिला अभी भी जारी है।

पोषक तत्वों की भारी कमी हो रही है। हैरानी की बात यह है कि अरबों-खरबों रुपए लगा कर सरकार मृदा स्वास्थ्य कार्ड तैयार करवा कर मिट्टी की सेहत की जांच तो करवा रही है, लेकिन जांच में मिट्टी के कमजोर मिलने पर संबंधित किसानों को मिट्टी की सेहत सुधारने के लिए फिर से रासायनिक खाद डालने की सलाह दी जा रही है जो बेहद खतरनाक साबित हो सकती है। डिंडौरी स्थित मिट्टी परीक्षण प्रयोगशाला में अब तक जिले के एक लाख तियालीस हजार खसरों (जमीन खात) के अट्‌टाईस हजार मृदा स्वास्थ्य कार्ड तैयार किए जा चुके हैं। यहां के अधिकांश खेतों की मिट्टी में पोषक तत्वों का भारी असंतुलन देखने को मिला।

इस जिले में गौँड, सहारिया, बेगा और अगरिया सहित महत्वपूर्ण और दुर्लभ जनजातियों के लोग बड़ी संख्या में रह रहे हैं। इन जनजातियों में कुपोषण तेजी से फैल रहा है। यहां के ठेठ आदिवासी इलाके में अगरिया जनजाति बहुल गांव बरगा कुरैली में लोगों के पास दो वक्त के खाने का बंदोबस्त तो है। स्कूल और आंगनबाड़ियों में सरकारी खाना भी मिल रहा है। कुछ लोग आज भी उनके खेतों का अनाज ही खा रहे हैं। यहां ज्यादातर अगरिया औरतों में एनिमिया यानी खून की कमी है। यहां के कुछ नौजवानों को मधुमेह और रक्तचाप जैसी बीमारियां हैं। डिंडौरी के खेतों की मिट्टी में जरूरी तत्वों का बेहद असंतुलन है। इन्हें संतुलित करने के लिए रासायनिक खाद डालने की सलाह दी जाती है। इसके साथ जैविक खाद को मिलाने की सलाह भी देते हैं। जो लोग पूरी तरह जैविक खाद के इच्छुक होते हैं उन्हें वैसी सलाह देते हैं लेकिन ऐसे लोग कम ही मिलते हैं। सभी प्रयोगशाला वाले

रासायनिक खाद की सलाह ही देते हैं। इस सबमें बुरी बात यह है कि हर किसान रासायनिक खाद के दुष्परिणामों को जानने-समझने के बाद भी इन उर्वरकों का लगातार उपयोग अपने खेतों में कर रहा है। इससे मिट्टी कमजोर से कमजोर होती जा रही है और उत्पादन भी कम होता जा रहा है। किसानों के पास उर्वरकों के विकल्प नहीं हैं। जैविक खाद और जैविक खेती के लिए लगातार किए जा रहे प्रयासों के बावजूद अब तक अधिकांश किसान अब भी इससे गुरेज करते नजर आते हैं। न तो किसानों को इस बारे में यथोचित जानकारी है और न ही अब तक सरकार ने भी इसके लिए कोई ठोस कदम उठाए हैं।

आपस में बतियाते रहे। ठहाके लगते रहे। इस बात पर सभी एकमत थे कि अगर आज हम अपने मोबाइल में ही लगे रहते तो बहुत कुछ ‘मिस’ कर देते। अक्सर हम देखते हैं कि अपने घरों में तो लोग मोबाइल में घुसे ही रहते हैं, पर जब सबके साथ होते हैं, तब भी मोबाइल से ही निपके रहते हैं। जब बड़े लोग ही ऐसा करते हैं तो बच्चे करेंगे ही। हमें चाहिए कि जब भी हम सबके साथ हों, तभी से कम तब अपने मोबाइल का इस्तेमाल कम करें। अपने आसपास के लोगों से मिलें। उनसे बातचीत करें। कोई ऐसी गतिविधि करें जिसमें सबका शामिल होना जरूरी हो। जैसे कोई गेम आदि! आजकल परिवार के हर सदस्य के पास मोबाइल होता है। होना भी चाहिए, क्योंकि यह जरूरी है, पर हर वक्त मोबाइल पर ही लगे रहना जरूरी नहीं है। हमें खुद ही यह समझना होगा कि कब मोबाइल को जब में रखना है और कब हाथ में। जब हम खुद समझेंगे तभी अपने बच्चों को भी समझा पाएंगे। अगर बच्चे समझाने से नहीं समझाते हैं तो उन्हें रचनात्मक तरीके से समझाना होगा। जब लोगों को यकीन होगा कि मोबाइल पकड़े रहने से वे क्या खो कर रहे हैं, तभी उनके हाथ से मोबाइल छूटेगा।

खामियों का खेल

इंग्लैंड के रूप में विश्वक्रिकेट को अपना नया विजेता मिल चुका है लेकिन विश्वकप के इस बारहवें संस्करण ने आईसीसी (अंतरराष्ट्रीय क्रिकेट काउंसिल) की खामियों को दुनिया के सामने ला रखा है। ऑपरिंग्स का स्तर बेहद विवादस्पद रहा, जिसके कारण पूरी अंक तालिका ही बदल गई। आईसीसी को सवालों के घेरे में लेने का बड़ा कारण मैदान भी है, क्योंकि आईसीसी ने विश्वकप स्तर पर भी ताजा पिच से ज्यादा इस्तेमाल पिच पर मैच करवाए। इंग्लैंड-न्यूजीलैंड के बीच फाइनल मैच भी खराब ऑपरिंग्स से अछूता नहीं रहा। न्यूजीलैंड के बल्लेबाज रॉस टेलर को गलत आउट दिया गया। साथ ही मैच के निर्णायक मौके पर, जब श्रो करने के बाद स्टोस के बल्ले से बॉल लगकर बाउंड्री पर चली गई तो उसे चौका दिया गया, न कि विश्वकप जैसे सबसे बड़े मंच की अहमियत को याद रखते हुए डेड बाल। अगर उस समय इस बात पर ध्यान दिया जाता तो विश्वविजेता कौसी टीम होती। बहरहाल, आईसीसी को अपनी कमियां स्वीकार कर उनमें सुधार के पूरे प्रयास करने चाहिए।

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कैसे जनप्रतिनिधि
तेलंगाणा में वन विभाग की अधिकारी को टीआरएस के विधायक के भाई की अगुवाई वाली भीड़ ने बुरी तरह पीट डाला। यह पहला मामला नहीं था। इससे पहले भाजपा के एक विधायक ने नगर निगम के अधिकारी को बल्ले से बुरी तरह पीट दिया था। भीड़ को कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता कि सामने वाला आदमी है या औरत। उसे तो केवल जानवरों की तरह व्यवहार करना आता है। सवाल है कि कब तक जनप्रतिनिधियों को गुंडागिरी चलेगी? पुलिस प्रशासन को भीड़ के साथ-साथ ऐसे लोगों के विरुद्ध कड़ी कार्रवाई करनी चाहिए ताकि इस तरह की अमानवीय घटनाओं को रोका जा सके।

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