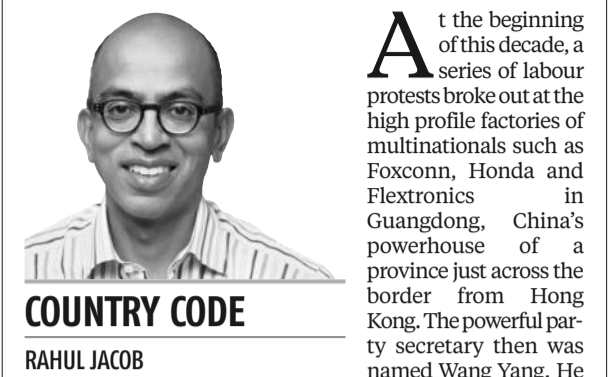


A demographic time bomb



COUNTRY CODE

RAHUL JACOB

At the beginning of this decade, a series of labour protests broke out at the high profile factories of multinationals such as Foxconn, Honda and Flextronics in Guangdong, China's powerhouse of a province just across the border from Hong Kong. The powerful party secretary then was named Wang Yang. He took a gamble and, in consultation with Beijing, mandated double-digit raises for workers for the next five years, including pay hikes of 20 per cent that year itself. Instead of sanctioning Communist Party led disciplining and beatings at the first sign of worker protests as is paradoxically the norm in other provinces, Wang said it was time to use the crisis to move into higher tech exports and via the wage hike push toy, plastic and shoe manufacturers to move elsewhere. "Empty the cage and let the right birds in," said Wang, drawing criticism from free market economists within China who believed he would upset the export equilibrium that had made Guangdong the factory of the world.

I had just arrived as a correspondent for the *FT* in the region and was skeptical that the liberal party secretary's industrial policy would work. Still, it was an opportune time to write about China's huge demographic transition. Usually referred to as the the Lewis turning point — that moment when factory owners see their returns fall because surplus cheap labour have dried up. Due to the one-child policy, the working-age population peaked earlier than it should have in China in 2015. As businesses began to relocate from Guangdong to other Asian countries, this seemed the moment when India's fabled demographic dividend of an abundant young workforce would surely be reaped.

The rest is history, a familiar Indian story of missed opportunities and own goals. India's exports peaked in 2013 at 25 per cent of GDP before faltering. As Sajjid Chinoy pointed out in a paper for last year's India Policy Forum, India's GDP growth rate surged between 2003 and 2008 because net exports grew by 18 per cent annually between those years. "Exports were driving investment... India had briefly turned Asian," Chinoy noted. By contrast, in the past year or so, the economic research firm I now work for, Wigram Capital Advisors, has calculated that on a compounded five year average India's export growth rate has fallen to the low single digits, comparable in India's history only to the doldrums of the 1950s when the licence raj was being put in place. I recently checked Guangdong's exports tally to see if Wang's bet to move it up the value chain had paid off. Exports grew 4 per cent in 2018 — not a bad showing amid trade tensions — to almost \$650 billion in 2018, or twice India's annual total of manufactured exports.

With Indian companies still tackling the fallout of the triple shocks of demonetisation, a badly implemented GST and India's shadow banking crisis, this trifecta of trouble has ensured that even in the aftermath of a clear victory for the Modi government, companies show little sign of kickstarting investment. Rural spending is yet to pick up fast-moving consumer goods companies tell us, auto sellers are complaining of record drops in sales and the death watch about which shadow bank will go under continues on Dalal Street.

2019 is shaping up not as a new beginning but as a summer and winter of discontent. This week, the new government in what was once globally lauded as business-friendly Andhra Pradesh pushed through a directive that will force private companies to reserve jobs for locals. Also this week, a cross-section of film-makers and writers banded together to call on the Modi government to punish and condemn those accused of mob lynchings. These two seemingly unrelated events are two sides of the same cancelled cheque for India's much hyped demographic dividend that we never succeeded in cashing. Now, our alternatives are grimmer: our leaders will exploit the situation for political gain even if it means encouraging violence or at best resort to reservations and increased subsidies through variations of income support.

Recurrent mob attacks on minorities and the South's newest leader resorting to reservations are examples of what might be called the Thackerayisation of India's politics after the late Shiv Sena leader. After years and years of anemic export and job growth, millions of bored or frustrated young men remain under-employed or unemployed.

Thinking about the seminal events of this disturbing week with the revised Right To Information weakening institutional independence further, I chanced upon an article in *The Economist* that observed, "It is possible that population is destiny, other things being equal, but other things are never equal. A plague here or a fateful decision by a Chinese emperor there can set a region down a path that wipes out the advantages of population. Perhaps those advantages must be harnessed by the right sorts of institutions." With weaker government institutions than most of our Asian neighbours, and myriad looming challenges ranging from water shortages across this unfortunate country to the consequences of picking on minorities in Parliament elevated to a de facto national sport, the ticking of India's demographic time bomb only gets louder.

Yediyurappa's time has come... again

But one thing is certain: he will head a government that will be in a state of permanent flux and uncertainty



PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

Bookanakere Siddalingappa Yediyurappa (he changed the spelling of his last name on astrological advice) is set to become chief minister of Karnataka for a fourth time. He has never been able to complete a full term as CM and this time might be no different.

Here's why.

First, the factual configuration of the Karnataka Assembly. Out of 225 members (224 elected and one nominated), there is one independent MLA, one from the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and one from the Karnataka Pragyanvantha Janatha Party (KPJP).

These three are H Nagesh from Mulbagal, N Mahesh from Kollegal and R Shankar from Ranebennur. All three are opposed to HD Kumaraswamy (HDK) and have been disqualified by the Speaker: which means they cannot contest the by elections. For all intents and purposes they have been knocked out of the race. This also means that till the by elections take place, the effective strength of the assembly is down by three to 222 and the halfway mark in 112.

After the 2018 assembly elections, the BJP had 105 MLAs; the Congress 78; the Janata Dal Secular 37. BJP tried to form a government, failed and Congress and JDS cobbled together a precarious majority. The signs of trouble were clear from day 1. Yeddyurappa was clear that he should have been CM. The Congress wanted its pound of flesh for allowing a junior partner to become CM. Outgoing Congress CM Siddaramaiah felt he had been diddled out of his job and had no interest in ensuring HDK stayed in power. Hence Rahul Gandhi's tweet: "From its first day, the Congress-JDS alliance in Karnataka was a target for vested interests, both within and outside, who saw the alliance as a threat and an obstacle in their path to power..." DK Shivakumar (who was one of the few Congress

leaders to speak in English during the trust vote, many feel, because he wanted 10 Janpath to hear his speech) quoted Voltaire: "May God defend me from my friends; I can defend myself from my enemies."

Congress MLA from Basavakalyan, B Narayana Rao said while speaking in the trust vote: "How can you expect to reap mangoes when you sow neem seeds? With folded hands I beseech the sitting Chief Minister, the past Chief Minister and the one who may occupy the chair tomorrow: please surround yourself with good people. You give tickets to real estate agents, builders and excise contractors and expect them to stay loyal to a political ideal?"

When voting day came around, 20 MLAs skipped voting. 14 were from the Congress, three from JDS, one from BSP and two independents. Now there are three problems.

The first is the Speaker. The Speaker may have disqualified three but he is the one who will have to decide whether to accept the resignation of the "rebel" MLAs. He also has to consider the plea of Siddaramaiah and the Congress that those who did not obey the party whip should be disqualified. If the Speaker accepts the resignations, by-elections will be ordered and the BJP will likely get majority. But what if the Speaker disqualifies the errant MLAs instead of accepting their resignations? There is hardly any doubt that they will then knock on the doors of the Supreme Court. And so it will go on...

TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH BS ▶ PRIYANKA CHOPRA-JONAS | ACTOR, INVESTOR

Straddling different worlds

Empowering women, celebrating death, cross pollination—these are some of the big ideas swirling in her head, Chopra-Jonas tells Arundhuti Dasgupta and Urvi Malvania

By now we have some experience in the art of celebrity lunches. Having starved our way through a few earlier interactions, we know that the best thing to do is go well stuffed. So we eat earlier, a big sandwich and a juice at Bombay Baking Company, a bakery cum café at the Marriott Hotel where we are to meet with Priyanka Chopra-Jonas.

The meeting has been through a fair amount of shuffle and tweak. In the weeks leading up to it, the time and venue have seen a few changes and on the appointed day, despite some frantic readjustments to our schedule by Chopra-Jonas's efficient schedule assistants, we end up waiting over an hour before we are squeezed into a tight 20-minute engagement. And the only thing on the table is bottled water.

Chopra-Jonas fills the large room that we have been ushered into; in a bright yellow outfit with a delicate mangalsutra (the traditional mark of a married woman in many parts of the country) around her neck, she puts everything and everyone else in the shade. She is wearing the brand colours of Bumble, the dating cum networking app that she is promoting in India and in the manner of a practiced brand ambassador, she admires the Bumble merchandise strewn across the room, gasping at the sheer loveliness of it all.

She points to the Bumble branded pens and notebooks and asks, "Why don't I ever get these?" Her team is indulgent, they tell her she is sure to find some, when she goes back in to her room. Assuaged, she turns her gaze firmly upon us and apologises about how her insane schedule has kept this meeting on hold for so long. So sincere is her contrition that we end up feeling sorry for our imposition.

"I hope I have an understanding to give you an explanation into the business side of my life," Chopra-Jonas says as she leans back into her chair. Her aides stand by, looming over our shoulders. A few sit quietly at the back of the room. This is the most crowded table ever for a lunch with BS, also one where there is no food and all business. But then there is little that one can do — our time is subject to the punishing schedule that Chopra-Jonas has to live with and the army of minders. Well that is the price of global fame-hood.

Chopra-Jonas's journey from Miss World to Bollywood to a singer and then American television and finally investor in tech businesses and marriage with Nick Jonas has been remark-

able. It is close to eight years since she turned her gaze to the West and she seems to move seamlessly between her many worlds. She is in India promoting Bumble and wrapping up her next film (now ready for release) *The Sky is Pink*. Chopra-Jonas is an investor in Bumble (apart from a few other consumer-facing tech companies) and has become its face in India since bringing it here in December 2018. She also has a production company in India called Purple Pebble Pictures and has said in several interviews that she is minutely involved with the running of all her businesses, from the interns they hire to the look of the final product.

How did a girl from the East find her groove in the West, or perhaps more appropriately, manage to keep her feet in both?

"There is no precedent to what has happened with me," says Chopra-Jonas. Her American expedition started with a song, *In my city*, that she recorded with producer Jimmy Iovine (Interscope Records), which featured rapper will.i.am. She had another one featuring Pitbull soon after. She was also the brand ambassador for Guess (besides representing India at the Cannes festival for several years) before finally making it to prime time US TV with *Quantico*. And then it was Hollywood calling with the latest edition of *Baywatch* and a romantic comedy, *Isn't it Romantic*.

"I am a very intuitive person," she says. Her business decisions are always in the moment. She follows her gut and of course, the wisdom of her manager-cum-close friend Anjula Acharia. Acharia is a venture capitalist who lives and works in the US and manages Chopra-Jonas.

Business is not trapped in a silo for Chopra-Jonas, the investments are more than just business decisions, they are an extension of her personality. She explains: "I have this extremely unique position where I can collide my worlds together. I am all about cross pollination. It's my life's dream. Like my movie with Mindy (Kaling) that I am doing with Universal. That's exactly what it is."

She has walked on a bridge that links the US with India and lived to tell the tale, and her businesses and movies must do the same. An honourable idea, but really? Chopra-Jonas is not one to let scepticism get in the way of her words and her confidence stems from the manner in which people have been reacting to her, to her wedding with pop icon, Nick Jonas and the movies she makes. Her wedding she says is an



ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

example of how the two cultures can come together in a beautiful amalgam.

Her role is to bring down the boundaries between India and the world (read America). "When Nick and his family, they came down to India, they saw the India that I know. It changed them. And I want to show the world the India that I know. The beauty of it. The culture, the inclusiveness, the richness of our history."

She is also moved by the thought of women in positions of power, the power to control their own lives and be independent entities. Bumble, she says fulfils that role. "I was at an event for Bumble with founder Whitney Wolfe Herd in

The second is the state of mind of the "rebels". Uncertain about their future and in the absence of any guarantees whether they will become ministers or not, they are under a lot of pressure. Some could decide to return to their parent party. What happens in that eventuality? Siddaramaiah has declared that on no account will they be allowed to return. But things can change.

The third is the dilemma before the BJP itself. The party knows that if the Speaker accepts the resignation of the MLAs and by elections are ordered, the rebel MLAs will demand they be given the BJP nominations. But they were instrumental in defeating the BJP. Whose claim will the party entertain? Its own defeated MLAs? Or the defectors?

That's not the only issue. BJP's internal stability is in doubt. One of the biggest detractors of Yediyurappa, BL Santhosh, has been shifted to the party's central unit. Those who can't get on with Yediyurappa — and they are in significant numbers — now have a court of appeal in Delhi. There is nothing a chief minister dreads more than this.

Beset with all these problems, one way out for the central party is to acknowledge the reality — that it is a classic hung house, the constitutional machinery has broken down and central rule must be imposed with fresh elections. But that is not an option because the MLAs will have a hysterical hissy fit. Another election within a year of being elected?

That's why whatever might happen in Karnataka, one thing is certain: no matter who heads the government, it will be in a state of permanent flux and uncertainty.

2017. We were sitting at dinner and I was listening to Whitney talk about what Bumble means to her and why she started the company. The reason was to put women first, to put them in the driver's seat. I just love the fact that it empowers women." She has been hands-on in customising the app for India. And the result is 1.5 million subscriptions in four months. For India, the app has built-in special safety features and has handed over more power to its women users, she adds.

Technology fascinates her too, she tells us and given its scope to bring people on to a common platform, that is where she is keen to put her money in. "I was an engineering aspirant and I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer when I was in school," she says, adding she is a science geek and loves social media.

What about the hate spewing trolls on social media driving people apart, even as she wants to bring them together? "I feel like we pay attention to the wrong things. I'm sorry but I put a lot of the blame on the media for this (for giving trolls undue importance). The fact that we can sit here and send a message to someone in America and they get it instantly in exactly the format you sent it — pictures, videos, FaceTime — that is technology. Why are we giving importance to people creating negativity? I don't."

We are running close to the end of our time and there is also a movie to talk about. (Her minders are reluctant to let the conversation stray and one stands fiercely beside her, swatting out unwanted questions). The new movie with Shonali Bose that she has just finished working on is about death, something she has spent a lot of time thinking about, she says. "This film says instead of mourning someone's death, celebrate their life. And I love that perspective." Being tragic and morose about death can diminish a person's life, she says. "We celebrated my dad (when he passed away). We celebrated his life, we played his favourite music, laughed and talked about him. And this movie, when Shonali — who has also had a very close sort of encounter with death — narrated it to me we really bonded on that."

She also gets to play a woman from the ages 26 to about 55-60, which excited the actor in her, says Chopra-Jonas. She is on the clock and it is time for us to leave. As we pick our way out of the room full of people and merchandise, there is a hushed scramble behind us as her team gets ready to usher her into her next appointment. Chopra-Jonas's calendar is buzzing, but her time, unfortunately, is running out.

A world cup with a difference



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

I have long believed in the transformative power of sports. A recent conversation with a 19-year-old Mumbai girl has reinforced this belief.

Sapna has lived all her life in a slum in Malad surrounded by high rises. "As a child, I would play football with a tennis ball with the boys of my slum," she recounts. "Few girls wanted, or were expected, to play." They were never allowed to play with the children in the fancy buildings. "But sports taught me that I could be better than others on my own merit," she says. "And I practised long and hard until I became a better player than any of them."

Sapna's life took a turn for the worse when in 2017, her elder brother, an engineering student, died in an accident. "My father started drinking heavily," she says. "He forced me and my two sisters to stop our studies and sent us to our village." This was the darkest time in her life, she adds, but football came to her aid. Her elder sister started working to support Sapna's passion for the game, even giving tuitions to earn a little extra money. Meanwhile, Sapna had become associated with Slum Soccer, a non-profit that uses football training as a tool for empowerment of slum children, girls in particular. When she was selected to represent India in the 17th Homeless World Cup to be held in Cardiff, Wales, from July 27 to August 3, this year, it was a dream come true.

"I barely knew the world outside my slum," she says. "I'd never dreamt that a day would come when I would board an aircraft and travel out of India." When she went to Nagpur on July 1, 2019, to train on Slum Soccer's Diversity Pitch, Sapna was awed to find herself playing with girls from Manipur, Gujarat, West Bengal and other parts of the country. "I realised for the first time that there were people my age in difficult circumstances across the country, not just in my little

slum in Mumbai," she says. "Initially, we found it hard to communicate with each other but soon we found our common language was football."

"I want to be a role model for slum children," says Sapna. "Slums are a storehouse of untapped talent and many children languish there because of the lack of opportunities." She wants to enable more slum children to play sports and through sports, develop their self-esteem. "On the football field, or any sports arena for that matter, there is no judgement — Dalits, Christians, Muslims and upper castes all play together," she says. "For someone who has grown up being reviled for being a girl, being poor, being low caste, it's an amazing feeling."

Sponsored by BookASmile Foundation (the charity arm of the e-entertainment platform BookMyShow) and supported by Slum Soccer, Sapna, along with 15 teammates, is in Cardiff now playing friendly matches. At the time of writing this column, Slum Soccer has shared images of Sapna and her teammates in Wales. An image of them jubilantly posing with the Indian Tricolour is particularly heart-warming. For these unusual young women have beaten life's odds to earn their place on Team India and that's a well-deserved achievement.

'Vegetating' at home



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

Several years ago, my wife and I came to an arrangement regarding her social life. As family care-giver and home-based entrepreneur, she wished to step out in the evenings to experience the city's bright lights and fraternise with the rich and famous, no matter that their pecking order changed frequently. Dear reader, you will know me for my shy and retiring nature, while my wife craved the excessive hedonism of Delhi's jet-set. I acquiesced for two reasons — a) as a loving husband I did not wish to deny her some excitement; b) and, because, why provoke marital discord?

No sooner would I return from work than my wife would say we must get

ready to head out because a) there was a play for which she had passes; b) followed by cocktails at an acquaintance's farmhouse in Chhattarpur to celebrate something or other; c) then a soiree at a celebrity's home where the city's A-listers would be present; d) and if we had the energy, we might stop by at her bestie Sarla's home to apologise for not attending her birthday festivities because we simply couldn't decline the other invitations, "you understand, don't you, darling".

We did not always go to four, or three, or even two, places, but, yes, we did party-hop, and when we weren't going out, friends were coming home, till, well, age — *mine*, dear reader, let me hasten to assure you, my wife remains ageless — began to take its toll. I started to invent excuses to stay home, pleading a) an overload of work and crippling deadlines; b) cooking up false early morning appointments; c) a charade of late night con-calls impossible to take at loud dinner parties; d) inventing fatigue, if not quite ill-health, as pretext for last minute cancellations; e) while telling her to go ahead as planned and on no account ruin her evening for lack of participation from me.

In recent times, my wife has decided to embrace that independence, no

longer bothering me with her social calendar. Nor does she care to share her plans that might include a) doing the rounds of couture week; b) going to parties as a friend's friend; c) taking selfies at openings and lunches, of which there are several each day. At times, she even carries a change in the car, informing me she must attend a "handloom type gig" first, before changing into a "cosmopolitan outfit" for somebody's anniversary bash.

I no more know the friends with whom she ties up for picks and drops and to keep her company en route. Increasingly, now, I return to a quiet house, unsure whether my wife will be in, or have left to join in revelries elsewhere in town. Odd bits and bobs on the bedroom chest provide clues to her social peregrinations. This week alone she has attended luncheons and dinners, been to spiritual thingummies, been glimpsed at cocktails, photographed at college alumni get-togethers and sundry other celebrations. I, meanwhile, have my evenings chalked out too — a) pour myself a drink (or two); b) find a quiet corner; c) curl up with a book; d) have dinner (alone); e) open the door to let my wife in; f) listen to the triumph of her visits while I — her word, dear reader — opt to "vegetate" at home.

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Dream targets

The Modi government does not make life easy for itself when it sets itself ambitious targets that most people would consider unachievable. Among them: Taking up the share of manufacturing in GDP from 17 per cent now to 25 per cent by 2022; doubling farmers’ incomes, also by 2022; doubling exports by 2025; and of course getting GDP from \$2.7 trillion last year to \$5 trillion by 2025 (implying 8 per cent average annual growth on the back of 4 per cent inflation). The government is doubtless encouraged in its ambitions by the fact that it has managed enormous progress on, if not quite achieved, some other stretch targets — to do with cooking gas availability, highway construction, renewable power, banking inclusion, and ending open defecation.

But it is one thing to achieve specific targets, like building toilets (concentrating effort and resources, combined with dedicated project leadership, can deliver a lot). And quite another to deliver on ambitious macro-economic goals that require a loosely controlled system to coordinate phased action within tight deadlines and the right policy framework. The government has been good on the first, not so good on the second.

Take export growth, which in the last five years has been all of 5 per cent. What kind of changes and effort will it take to deliver 100 per cent growth in the next six, when the global trading environment has deteriorated? Manufacturing as a share of GDP has been stagnant through the life of the first Modi government (other than the change in share that followed the re-jigging of GDP numbers), so why should one expect a 50 per cent increase in share in the next few years? As for doubling farmers’ incomes, the government simply does not have the policy tools and the financial wherewithal to deliver.

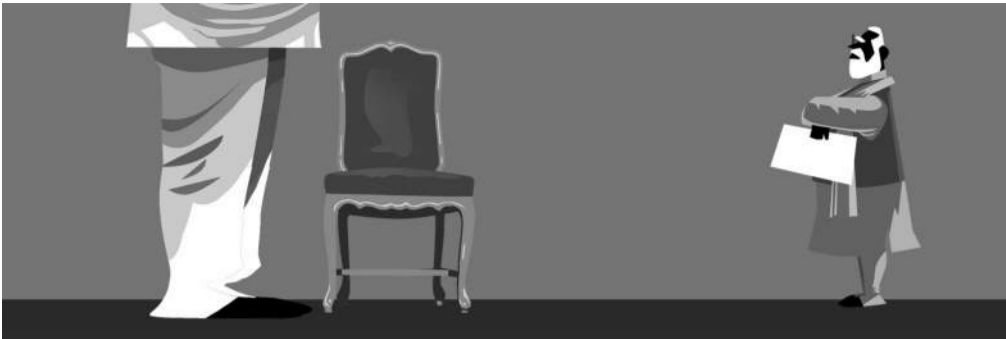
Some of the unreal goal-setting dates back a few years, and is possibly of a piece with the foolish talk in the initial years of the first Modi government that GDP growth would soon be in double digits. In today’s more realistic mood, even if one sets aside the issues raised by Arvind Subramanian and accepts the GDP numbers as officially recorded, growth has dropped to an average of 7 per cent in the last couple of years. Most forecasts say (somewhat optimistically) that growth will stay at or around that level this year and the next. If the goal of \$5 trillion by 2024-25 is taken seriously, subsequent GDP growth will have to accelerate to an average of 8.5 per cent — something that hasn’t happened since the 2008 financial crisis. Those daunted by this could argue that little is lost with a year’s slippage in reaching the target. But then it would be as P Chidambaram said: A mere compounding of the existing growth rate.

The real issue is the direction of government policy. On protectionism and tariff policy, for instance, it is moving in the direction exactly opposite to that recommended by the High Level Advisory Group on exports. Some labour law issues are being addressed through the two labour codes that have been finalised; the core issue of delivering a more flexible labour market remains only partially addressed. And little has been done to achieve greater integration with global supply chains.

That the path ahead won’t be smooth becomes clear from the report last December by the Logistics Advisory Committee of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. This spells out the formidable infrastructure constraints and costs imposed on exporters from India, compared to their counterparts in other countries. Port logistics (including shipping) impose an additional cost equal to 7-8 per cent of consignment value, which is crippling enough. Other costs are high, too: Transport, capital, electricity. Much work remains to be done to simplify and streamline procedures and documentation.

It is early days in the new government’s life. While there is talk of 100-day action plans, it is known that the prime minister prefers sustained incrementalism to a big-bang approach. Still, his government will need to show greater purpose quickly if the macro targets set out are not to become embarrassments.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



The Karnataka exception

Yediyurappa has provided the first challenge to the unfettered, unquestioned authority of Modi & Shah. BJP leaders in other states could take inspiration from him

Karnataka isn’t politically the most important state in India. In terms of its contribution to the Lok Sabha, it is a mid-sized state — in the Kerala (20) to Madhya Pradesh (29) ballpark. Yet, Karnataka has beaten any of these several times over in its domination of the headline space for the past many months.

Now, with the BJP in power again you’d expect a smug sense of victory and calm. Scratch the surface, you will see much disquiet and dissonance instead.

We can go so far as to say that mid-sized Karnataka has provided the first challenge to the unfettered, unquestioned authority of Amit Shah and Narendra Modi.

We should finesse it further. It isn’t Karnataka, but B S Yediyurappa who has brought that unlikely power coup in his own party. For the first time, an individual has forced his high command to make compromises it wouldn’t make to any other in the party.

Defying the age limit of 75 years is only one of these. Mr Yediyurappa is 76, well past the age at which the party under Mr Modi and Mr Shah have insisted everybody go to a Raj Bhawan or to the Margdarshak Mandal. As we run our eyes over the entire BJP star cast since 2014, probably only two leaders may have survived in a cabinet job beyond 75, and that too very briefly. The first, Najma Heptulla, ended up in the Raj Bhawan in Imphal and the second, Kalraj Mishra, has now landed in Shimla after a sizeable quarantine through which he dutifully tweeted praises for Mr Modi until the “call” came.

No other in the BJP, at least none of consequence, has been able to defy that age limit. To the extent that even those BJP leaders who would otherwise demand Mr Modi as India’s prime minister for life

have found it safe to speculate on his likely successor once he crosses 75 in his “third term”. That underlines the special power of Mr Yediyurappa. Of course, it might also mean that the notion of Mr Modi retiring at 75 may also become obsolete. If the rule can be relaxed for a relatively minor state leader, why not for the much fitter and powerful Mr Modi?



NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

In so many ways, Mr Yediyurappa is everything an ideal Modi-Shah chief minister isn’t. List the chief ministers of important states appointed by them since 2014. None of these was the dominant leader in his state and a natural claimant, or even a front-runner for chief ministership. Not even Yogi Adityanath. None of these was from a dominant caste in the state. Manohar Lal Khattar

was a far-out Punjabi in Haryana where Jats ruled. In Jharkhand, power was denied to the tribals. In Maharashtra, the choice of a young and Brahmin Devendra Fadnavis was like a finger in the eye of the Marathas. Even in Assam, the most powerful leader, Himanta Biswa Sarma, was made to work under a much less powerful Sarbananda Sonowal.

The model so far has been that there are only two leaders needed by the BJP and they live in Delhi. The rest serve faithfully at their sufferance. Mr Yediyurappa has beaten that rule. He has declared himself a leader in his own right.

Not only is he a dominant caste leader, he has been a chronic dissident and defier of his high command. Denied power in the past, he forced the party to appoint his protege Sadananda Gowda in his place, and when he too was destabilised, he rebelled, left the BJP, formed his own regional party, and contested the 2013 assembly election against

example, when she lost in 2013 to AAP’s sweep — she maintained her composure, moving back to the small Nizamuddin flat that she owned, near her sister Romila Dhawan’s home. “It was Arvind Kejriwal’s promises of free water and slashed electricity rates that got her. She knew they were not sustainable,” recalls Ms Dhawan.

Few who knocked on her door were turned away. Although I met her in the course of professional assignments.

I once visited to thank her for the swift dispatch of a corrupt municipal official notorious for his dilatory, money-grubbing ways. On the contrary, she said, she wished to thank me for bringing his misdemeanors, which she had confirmed, to her attention. “How can I hope to clean up the city without such feedback?”

In contrast to the current anti-culture and anti-media environment she was adept at keeping channels wide open. Her media relations were excellent, thanks to aides likes Pawan Kherra, continually on call like his boss. Her interest in the arts was genuine. Occasionally spotted at plays, art shows and book launches, she helped start a series of music and dance festivals. When Laila Tyabji, head of the craftspeople society Dastkar, was denied exhibition space by obdurate officials she turned to Sheila Dikshit. “She tried but couldn’t convince her bureaucrats,” recalls Ms Tyabji. “But she would visit, was appreciative and encouraging — it was the same for anyone in the arts, culture and NGO sphere who asked her.”

Sheila Dikshit received the heartfelt send-off she did because she was truly a daughter of Delhi who never stopped building bridges.

over a vast budget, nothing was proven.

As someone acquainted with her since her first (and only non-Delhi) election from Kannauj in Rajiv Gandhi’s landslide of 1984, her transformation as a force in Delhi sprang from the patronage of the Gandhi family. But she rose above being a mere pawn, and posed no threat, at their court.

It was her adroit handling of vicious Congress factions, outreach to BJP leaders, and ceaseless bridge-building among all sections in the city — the young and old, *bastidwellers* and multiple elites — that cemented her durability. She became a hand-holding nanny, motherly drawing room ornament and shrewd administrator all rolled in one.

“*Mann lagaa key padna, zaroor acchey number qaayengey*,” (Concentrate hard, you’ll get good numbers), rang out her convent-tinged voice on radio as children prepped for their exams. Initiatives such as the Metro’s expansion, or converting public transport to clean fuel, were not her ideas. But she pushed for them, and being no pushover, took the laurels. Other important reforms — the painful privatisation of power supply, for example, or empowering neighbourhoods through *bhagidari* or stakeholders’ schemes — were spearheaded by her.

It is a widely accepted truth that political leaders become accessible (and suddenly acquire congenial human attributes) once they lose power. The opposite was true of Sheila Dikshit.

During periods of political eclipse — for

How this diminutive, convent-educated daughter-in-law of an old-style Brahmin Congress Party boss and wife of a 1960 batch IAS officer became a universally loved “Auntiji” to Delhi’s notoriously fickle and demanding electorate offers a master class in political management and governance. Riven with a myriad conflicting class and power interests, the national capital is no melting pot. It is a place that belongs to everybody and to nobody, from its waves of rootless migrants living in pockets of abject squalor to the noblesse oblige of VIP elites that are deeply embedded in its DNA.

As political leaders go, Sheila Dikshit was Exhibit A of the city’s urban elite. She was neither a rabble-rousing street fighter like Mamata Banerjee, nor a caste leader like Mayawati, nor a remote, ruthless Lady Bountiful type like Jayalalithaa. She went to a smart women’s college, Miranda House, and married a Stephanian, a text book romance sealed by a proposal on a “U special” bus to Delhi University. Her anglicised Punjabi father (a civilian officer in the army) had named his three daughters musically, their names ending in “la” — Sheila, Pamela and Romila — and she grew up in the heart of Lutyens’ Delhi, in government bungalows with street names like Rouse Avenue and Duplex Lane. Yet the slur of “Lutyens’ elitist” never stuck to her during her long innings. Later, despite the opposition’s noisy campaign alleging corruption, particularly during the Commonwealth Games when she presided

default if they fail to repay principal, since required interest payments are small or non-existent. As the world has seen in Japan, weakened profitability from negative interest rates discourages banks from trying to collect on bad debts. Instead they count on those negative rates to allow zombie companies to continue operating. Emerging signs of debt distress — including deteriorating credit quality and a weakened ability to service debts, as well as a growing number of problem loans — may thus be less worrying than otherwise.

At the same time, a less-appreciated shift in credit markets should be setting off alarms. Since 2008, banks have become less important as providers of debt. This reflects increased capital charges, lower leverage and consolidation within the banking sector. Investors have replaced them — not just traditional debt providers such as insurance companies and pension funds, but newer participants including mutual funds, exchange-traded funds or ETFs, hedge or private credit funds and foreign investors.

ETF holdings of corporate bonds, for instance, have doubled since 2009 to around 20 per cent of outstandings. The banks’ share of US leveraged loans has shrunk to around 8 per cent, whereas collateralised loan obligations, managed by specialist fund managers, have increased to 60 per cent of total issu-



AL FRESCO

SUNIL SETHI

Inaugurating a long-delayed flyover in Delhi on July 16 — the cause of endless traffic jams to the airport — Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal patted himself on the back and said, in that point-scoring way politicians have, “In 15 years, the Sheila Dikshit government built 70 flyovers. In the last four-and-a-half years, our (AAP) government has built 23 flyovers.”

Four days later he leapt in to order a state funeral and two days’ mourning when Sheila Dikshit, the city-state’s most famous chief minister, quietly passed away. And the prime minister rushed to her house for a condolence visit and paid fulsome tributes.

A Delhi election is due in early 2020 and, as her bitter foes, neither dared not offend the memory of a hugely popular, politically bipartisan figure who ran the city-state for 15 years.



SATYAJIT DAS

Some investors are fretting that the massive global buildup of debt since the financial crisis a decade ago can’t be sustained. It can, at least for a bit longer — but only at the risk of a more severe correction in the future. That’s because this particular credit cycle may not be typical. The current expansion is largely policy-driven. Governments and central banks have actively encouraged debt-driven consumption and investment in order to prop up growth. Abundant liquidity, central bank debt purchases, and zero or negative interest rates have allowed surprisingly high levels of debt to be sustained and serviced.

Such policies fundamentally alter the dynamics of credit markets. For example, under negative rates, borrowers can only

it. He won only six seats, but took away much of the Lingayat vote, reducing the BJP to a humiliating 40 in a house of 224.

He has also forced his party to break the other key principle it claims to live by: Zero tolerance for corruption. In his first term, he lost power because of corruption allegations and an adverse Lokayukta report, spent some time in jail, and was exonerated later. But because he was made to step down, nobody could live in peace and the BJP ended up having three chief ministers in the 2008-13 term of its rule.

This mess greatly contributed to a clear Congress win even in 2013. But not only was he taken back, but restored to his old position as a regional satrap, which is anathema to the Modi-Shah BJP. For comparisons, think of Shankarsinh Vaghela in Gujarat, the tallest BJP leader and a diehard RSS man who quit to form his own party and become chief minister of Gujarat with Congress support. Could the BJP have ever handed the state back over to him?

Defying age, caste, corruption and the test of loyalty, Mr Yediyurappa has also forced his party’s hand in pulling down the Congress-JD(S) government and replacing it immediately with its own. The BJP may not have minded giving the coalition a little more time to self-destruct, but we cannot say that for sure.

It is quite likely, however, that Mr Modi and Mr Shah may have preferred to let the state be under President’s Rule for some time and install their government after mopping up the stragglers. The haste with which they were forced to swear-in Mr Yediyurappa was uncharacteristic and ungainly.

Because, the “tamasha” isn’t over yet if the speaker takes his mission to disqualify all defectors to a logical conclusion, barring them from contesting in the term of this assembly and leaves everybody to wait as the courts take their time. This game has not yet ended. At least not as neatly as this BJP prefers.

What is it that gives this grand old man (by the standards of today’s BJP) such power, and what does his victory mean for the BJP and national politics? First of all, it shows that the BJP has failed to build a younger leadership in the state. That his key detractor, Ananth Kumar, died prematurely helped Mr Yediyurappa. But most importantly, the BJP realised that in Karnataka, they can’t swing the Assembly purely on Mr Modi’s strength. It’s the only state yet where the BJP has faced the challenge of its own leader’s caste vote bank within its Hindu vote bank.

BJP leaders in other states will also note this. If you look around, you do not see anybody in the other states in the same league as Mr Yediyurappa. Vasundhara Raje in Rajasthan must be seething seeing her loyalists cornered and detractors elevated. Shivraj Singh Chouhan has not been given the leeway or the resources, at least not yet, to pull down Kamal Nath. But there are leaders, we can be sure, especially in Maharashtra and Jharkhand and, why, even Yogi Adityanath who might take inspiration from the Karnataka exception.

Postscript: If you’ve noted the unfamiliar new spelling of “Yediyurappa”, it is just that he had changed it to Yeddyurappa during his bad days for reasons of numerology. But since it didn’t work, he has restored the original. I am not sure, though, that he has become any less superstitious than before.

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Beware digital promise

EYE CULTURE

AMOL AGRAWAL

This year marks 70 years of George Orwell’s evergreen book: 1984. Published in 1949, the book has tremendous appeal today. The premise of the book is based on dystopia where the central authority controls everything related to how people think and act. The authority gives instructions to people from a head mounted on the wall making people think that they are being watched from all corners. Least did Orwell realise how 70 years later, his dystopian vision of the world is close to realisation, thanks to sheer digitisation of world economy.

With digitisation, people leave a trail of their choices which can be used by the State, making Orwellian world a close reality. This trail was always present in the digital world, but was not considered a problem until now. However, two developments have made this a danger which should make us weary.

First, the earlier form of digitisation was limited to information seeking but is now gradually including all walks of life. By knowing the payment trail, the State can pretty much manipulate and pressurise its citizens in following its orders. While discussing economics of money, we narrowly focus just on the value of money. However, two highly important attributes of money but least discussed aspects are privacy and anonymity.

Privacy means how much money one has in the wallet is known only to that person. Anonymity means that in a transaction what matters is the payments are honoured but the identity of the persons remain anonymous.

In a cash-driven economy, both attributes are present. This explains the huge success of the humble notes and coins. However, in a digital world, not only are both factors missing, but also exposes the holder of money.

Second, the digital trail captured by many small players is now increasingly being captured by a few large ones. These large players, also called FAANG (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google), have become the centre of our economic and social world. A more worrying issue, connected to the first point, is that they are entering the payments world too.

With these big firms keeping data of whatever we do and increasingly of our spending as well, the society is becoming more vulnerable.

Coming back to Orwell. It is not clear who will be the big boss here, the

BigTechs or the State that pressurises for data sharing.

Given this, it is deeply worrying that Indian policymakers continue to be obsessed with virtues of digitisation while ignoring the voices. India’s approach is different from developed countries where digitisation is demand driven, compared to India’s supply driven push. Sweden being the best example, where cash demand has declined significantly. In fact, they are seeking a legal intervention to ensure people do not refuse transactions in cash. In a demand driven approach public is better prepared as it has experimented enough with the options. Compare this to a supply driven approach where State is pushing public to use digital methods.

Ever since government pushed demonetisation in November 2016, digital payments and cashless economy have become buzzwords and top priorities for policymakers. This was seen when the RBI instituted a committee in the first week of January 2019 to deepen digital payments in India.

The Committee recently submitted its report. It has suggested a roadmap to make India a digital nation. It proposed to increase per capita digital transactions from 22 to 220 by March 2022.

It is odd that the Committee pays lip-service to central issues of privacy and anonymity. They point to a 2016 survey done by Visa which says users recognise that cash has benefits of privacy and anonymity. However, it pays little attention on what RBI and the government should do to ensure the two central attributes in digital payments.

Charles Kahn of St Louis Fed in a must read paper (*Payment Systems and Privacy*) writes, “Proposals to abolish cash take inadequate account of these legitimate demands for privacy.” Further, he notes that though central banks can set standards, they do not have comparative advantage at providing privacy. This implies the private sector will have to come with solutions to solve specific privacy problems.

In a country with weak institutions, increased digitisation is akin to creating a Jurassic Park with technology becoming dinosaurs once systems are compromised. The policymakers always highlight black money, counterfeiting and money laundering to highlight disadvantages of cash. But they forget that digital payments brings its own set of problems.

This does not mean that we stop the rise of digital world as it is inevitable. It just means we have to be aware of what we are stepping into and be better prepared.

RationalExpectations



Decision-making takes a big hit

Only the fear of CAG/CBI/CVC can explain why telecom panel okayed a ₹3,050-cr penalty after it asked Trai to cut this

IS THE NARENDRA MODI-government, so early in its second term, falling victim to policy-paralysis due to the inability to take decisions? It is difficult to come to a firm conclusion, but certainly the Digital Communications Commission (DCC)—its members include the telecom, industry and finance secretaries along with the CEO of Niti Aayog—decision to rubber-stamp Trai’s original ₹3,050 crore penalty recommendation on Airtel, Vodafone and Idea (AVI) suggests this may be the case since, just last month, DCC was of the view that the penalty was way too high and asked Trai to reduce it to a nominal amount.

Given Trai doesn’t have the powers to levy fines, and that its recommendation—based on a complaint by RJio—was *suo motu*, the DCC was well within its rights to reject Trai’s recommendation or to impose a dramatically lower fine; indeed, DCC even told Trai that, given the precarious health of the industry, a token fine was really the best. If the DCC didn’t do this once Trai refused to lower its fine-recommendation, the only plausible reason is that it feared lowering the fine could open it to scrutiny by CBI, CVC, or the CAG; the matter, it is true, will now be decided by the courts, but if every decision has to be ratified by the courts, policy-making will suffer a huge setback.

Lowering the Trai penalty, as this newspaper has argued earlier, also made sense since the telecom regulator has not distinguished itself in the past; not only has bad decision-making by it ensured India’s spectrum prices went through the roof (*bit.ly/30Thy4H*), it has even been pulled by the Supreme Court and the Telecom Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (*bit.ly/2yc2blm*) for being arbitrary and unreasonable. While DCC has asked Trai to explain its recommendations on spectrum pricing in the past, this newspaper has shown the lack of logic, inconsistencies and mathematical fallacies in Trai’s approach.

Nor was, in this particular case, the evidence against AVI crystal clear. For one, RJio wanted points of inter-connection (Pol) that, AVI argued, were far in excess of what anyone wanted in the past; they said that RJio’s free services were illegal and, because of this, it was getting millions of subscribers which, in turn, hiked the need for more Pols. AVI raised all these issues, including that of predatory pricing, but got no answer from the government. Despite this, they gave the Pols within the specified period, evidence of which is the fact that Trai later came out with a consultation paper on whether the 90-days allowed for Pols was too long! Even the Bombay High Court commented on the terms and obligations for granting Pols not being very clear.

If a body packed with as many top bureaucrats as the DCC can’t take a decision that it wanted to take, how will the government take other decisions that have been pending for over five years? Even before RJio disrupted the market, telcos were in deep trouble since the government was taking away 11-13% of their top-line in the form of license/spectrum levies while, at the same time, charging them astronomical amounts for spectrum; Trai’s recommended reserve price for 5G spectrum, for instance, is effectively 54 times that in Germany. The high annual levies were charged when spectrum was given almost free, but should have been made near zero when the spectrum was market-priced. It is difficult to see that call being taken now, given how DCC ducked even a simple decision.

What contributes to the delay in the government slashing annual levies is the view, also expressed recently in a newspaper article, that while Airtel’s debt is primarily related to its expensive acquisition of Zain for \$10.7 billion in 2010, Vodafone’s debt is related to its expensive purchase of Hutch’s India operations; indeed, the logic goes, RJio has a debt of just around ₹70,000 crore and started making profits within just two years of launch. While it is true the Zain acquisition didn’t work out, less than a third of Airtel’s current debt is due to the Africa acquisition; in the case of Vodafone, the cost of acquiring the India assets are on the parent’s balance sheet, not on the India balance sheet. And a Kotak Institutional Equities analysis put RJio’s real debt at ₹216,300 crore some months ago; even if you reduce the debt offloaded via the recent deals the firm concluded, the net debt should still be around ₹145,000 crore. In other words, the industry is in dire shape.

In the case of sectors like oil and gas—or mining for that matter—where import dependence has been rising despite the PM’s targets for lowering it, the key to fixing this is allowing firms marketing freedom; once they get higher prices, and more profits, they will invest more. While the government has allowed more marketing/pricing freedom, the decision pertains to just new finds while the bulk of production comes from old discoveries; the government knows that higher prices should apply to existing finds as well if more investment is to be made, but taking that decision can mean potential queries from CBI/CVC/CAG ... Ditto in the case of the non-oil minerals—these account for a fourth of India’s import bill—where Indian levies are 2-3 times as high as those internationally.

The short point is that, if investment is to revive, the government has to take decisions which will seem to favour a class of investors. Not taking decisions and palming them off to courts (as in the case of the promised repeal of the UPA’s retrospective tax) or even reversing policies (as happened in ecommerce after Wal-Mart bought Flipkart for \$16bn) is going to drive investors away; that is why investment levels have fallen from 34.3% of GDP in FY12 to 28.6% in FY18 and, within this, FDI from 2.5% to 2.3%.

InnovativeINDIA

A better showing in the innovation index is great, but India must do more

THE FACT THAT India rose five places in the Global Innovation Index in 2019 over 2018 is heartening. Innovation in India has thrived on the back of a large talent pool in STEM subjects, increased investment in the Indian innovation ecosystem by MNCs such as GE, IBM, etc, a jump in international patent applications filed—India saw the sharpest rise globally, as per filings with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), in 2018—top-notch institutes and its phenomenal strength in ICT. The scale of the domestic market and the GDP-growth per phenomenon have been important drivers of India’s improved showing.

But, while India was one of the eight countries that received 82% of the private investment in innovation in 2017, its share has increased less sharply than that of other Asian nations. Moreover, while our top-rung universities and institutes (IITs Delhi & Mumbai, IISc) do well regionally, they have consistently remained out of the global top-100. Although the STEM talent pool in India is large, a large section of this pool may not be of high-quality. Moreover, the GER at the tertiary education level in India is a low 26% meaning, a vast reserve of potential research talent is lost. Thus, while India is within touching distance of breaking into the top-50 innovator countries in the world, it is still quite far from a China, which filed, for instance, 53,345 patent applications with the WIPO in 2018 versus India’s 2,013. India is an odd juxtaposition of stellar successes like the Chandrayaan and digital payments and a large number of unemployable engineering graduates and institutes that have virtually no autonomy. The government is trying to change this picture, foremost through the recommendations of the draft National Education Policy. The need, now, is to reform a host of sectors to make sure India breaks into the top-20 soon.

B RITAIN’S NEW PRIME minister, Boris Johnson, won the job promising to do something Europe’s leaders have long refused to allow: renegotiate the Brexit withdrawal agreement. The EU should think again—not to help Johnson, but for strictly selfish reasons.

The constant sticking point in the Brexit saga has been the so-called backstop—the plan to avoid new border infrastructure between Ireland, which will remain part of the EU, and Northern Ireland, which won’t. This ties the UK into a customs union with the EU and requires compliance with much of Europe’s single-market regulation. It would be a kind of second-class membership, with no say in the rules, and no exit clause. The UK can devise alternative border arrangements, but Europe gets to decide whether they suffice, and Britain can’t quit the arrangement unilaterally.

You can see why Brexiters are unimpressed. Opposition to this part of the Brexit deal is the main reason Theresa May’s government failed, three times, to get the agreement through parliament. It is why Johnson is now in charge. Amid the current political chaos, rule nothing out—but the chance that the deal as it stands can be revived in the next 100 days (the Brexit deadline is October 31) and might pass at a fourth attempt seems vanishingly small.

Other possibilities are much more likely—a deliberate no-deal Brexit of the kind Johnson has promised as a last resort, an accidental no-deal Brexit if Brexiters and Remainers in Parliament continue fighting each other to a standstill, a second referendum, a general election—even, conceivably, unilateral revocation of the decision to quit the union. Here’s the thing: All of these possibilities are worse for the EU than agreeing to a new deal with no backstop. A no-deal Brexit would hurt

JOHNSON’S CHOICE

IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CHAOS, THE CHANCE THAT THE BREXIT DEAL AS IT STANDS CAN BE REVIVED WITHIN THE NEXT 100 DAYS SEEMS VANISHINGLY SMALL

EU must give Johnson a new Brexit deal

CLIVE CROOK

Bloomberg



Britain severely, no doubt—but it would also damage the EU’s economies at a time when their prospects aren’t bright. A referendum, general election or revocation of the UK’s Article 50 notice to quit would each cause further protracted delay and uncertainty, quite likely with a constitutional crisis (or crises) thrown in for good measure. Again, the UK would be the principal victim of the ongoing turmoil—but, again, Europe would suffer collateral damage. A Britain’s that’s half in and half out of the EU is a paralysing distraction.

None of these alternatives offers closure, or even a foreseeable outcome. Europe’s leaders are already sick, justifiably, of the Brexit saga. And that’s why they should be helping to push it toward, rather than away from, an orderly resolution.

The form this should take is simple: Take the backstop out of the withdrawal agreement and replace it with an undertaking to avoid, by whatever means, installing physical infrastructure at the Northern Irish border. Exactly how much of a challenge it will be to devise an invisible border depends on the specifics of the long-term trade deal that Britain and the EU eventually strike. Formal negotiations on that long-term deal have barely begun, because Europe insisted on settling the details of the exit deal first. The withdrawal agreement provides for a transitional period where trade arrangements don’t change, pending agreement on the long-term deal. The backstop issues can therefore be

tabled and dealt with later.

There are two main objections, both seemingly accepted as self-evident truths. In fact, both are plainly wrong.

First is the idea that this solution would betray the people of Ireland, north and south of the border, by leaving a vital question affecting their futures unresolved. But whether one likes it or not, the border issues cannot be fully resolved until the long-term trade deal is finished and the exact nature of the problem laid bare.

True, technological and administrative solutions will take time and money to work out—but they aren’t impossible and shouldn’t be dismissed as magical thinking. Bear in mind that EU members apply different rates of value-added tax, which would ordinarily require border checks; these are avoided using exchanges of information, registration schemes, and behind-the-border procedures. The challenge posed by a UK that stood outside the customs union and single market would be much greater, but the problem isn’t insuperable.

Also, Britain and Ireland both have a compelling security interest in maintaining a low-friction border: A post-Brexit Britain is most unlikely to shirk this obligation. Bear in mind, as well, that in the case of a no-deal Brexit—the alternative that the EU seems willing to con-

UK would be the principal victim of the ongoing turmoil—but, again, Europe would suffer collateral damage

template—it is Brussels, not London, that will be calling for new infrastructure on the border to curb smuggling and protect the integrity of the EU’s single market. The claim that Europe’s insistence on the backstop arises from its overriding concern to maintain an invisible border and peace in the North is more than a little disingenuous.

The second objection is that Johnson would seize on any concession as a victory—and the EU, eager to discourage further defections, can’t allow the UK anything that looks like success. But if this was ever a danger, the events of the last three years have dispelled it. No other member of the European Union could look at what has happened in Britain since the referendum passed in 2016 and think, “That’s the way to go.”

The country’s politics is shattered. The economy has taken a serious hit, with more to come. Two prime ministers have lost their jobs. And the country’s standing in the world seems damaged beyond repair. Is that not a sufficient deterrent? Allowing

an orderly exit wouldn’t undo the economic and political harm that Britain has already inflicted on itself. Nor would it assure Brexit’s success—assuming, of course, that Europe’s leaders are right that the EU confers great benefits on its members.

Talks and refusals to talk are matters of strategy, and the best course isn’t always obvious. In this case, though, it is. Europe should think again. Insisting on the backstop and refusing to reopen the withdrawal agreement is just plain irrational.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trident of initiatives

Appropos of “*With consumption, investment flagging, even a 7% growth looks a bit of a stretch now*,” datd July 25, our decade-old middle class driven economy is clearly getting consumption-neutral. Given the drift in the global economic scenario, as also in our domestic policy environs, neither is there an urge for investment nor for savings due to lack of incentives. Consumption is no longer fuelled by the lower-income segment, which is losing its purchasing power, the middle one keeps away from white goods on uncertainties of the future and the upper strata is waiting for billowing sail winds. Spending does not create wealth, production does, and that needs a healthy pool of savings to add wealth and jobs. An astute mix in policy approach that channels funds to the lower strata and enables savings to the next, and calibrated tax incentives for job-creating capital, could be our optimum way ahead. Additional debt-fueled consumer stimulation will make things worse. — R Narayanan, Navi Mumbai

Karnataka crisis

After the fall of the Congress-JD(S) government in Karnataka due to the dirty-money/power game played by the BJP by purchasing ruling MLAs with huge amounts, the fact of the matter is that no party has the majority to form the government, and if they form it, it will not survive for long, making a mess of the state in all sectors while the people suffer. I strongly feel that given the unstable political situation, the Governor must dissolve the assembly and impose the President’s rule until fresh elections are held to enable the people of Karnataka to choose again. The party that then wins must get the absolute majority to survive for a full term and allow the state to stabilise, progress and develop. The only option left for Karnataka is to have fresh elections. — Bhagwan Thadani, on email

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Data protection: Putting people first

MISHI CHOUDHARY

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Views are personal

Data safety regulation is not a barrier to India’s role as a global destination for data processing. Rather, it will expand our attractiveness

NOW THAT THE election is over and we have heard about India’s upcoming Data Protection legislation, it’s time to recap what we expect from this framework. India is writing its data protection legislation on a clean slate. It has the advantage of the experience of the European Union (EU) in the creation of its General Data Protection Regulation and the dithering of the United States Congress on the issue, with California taking the lead. But, the national opportunity for India is not to follow in any other society’s footsteps. We have the technical knowledge and the social commitment to build a new pathway of our own that will be important as an example to others throughout humanity.

The last draft we saw was a result of the report submitted by the nine-member expert committee headed by Justice BN Srikrishna, titled The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018. That draft was not cast in stone, but what gets passed by the Parliament will be. We should begin by understanding that the purpose of the legislation is not to protect data, but to protect people. This simple shift of focus affects the details of drafting, for we are making a statute to protect people, not to regulate the general data economy. It affects the scope of application, which must be as transnational as necessary to protect every person to whom digital services involving data collection or processing are offered, no matter where in the world the data is actually stored or how it is processed, aggregated or modified. Protecting people means concentrating attention on the harm that can flow from data collection and retention, and providing remedies against them. An architectural mistake India does not want to copy from the EU is the attempt to centre the legislative design around *types* of data, rather than types of harm against which law should provide remedy. What we are making, then, is data safety regulation, protecting not data but people, drawing its categories from the harms against which people should be

made safe, and the remedies for failures of safety, not primarily legislation for the protection of data as a basis for industrial activity. Therefore:

■ Data safety legislation should define the harms that people can suffer, against which the law’s remedies are directed. Harms of disclosure, harms of unpermitted aggregation or use for impermissible inferences or discrimination, harms of facilitation of crime or civil wrong—all should be given specific definition and characterisation.

■ In general, the principle of safety is control—people should know when data about them is being requested, how that data is being processed, that the results of aggregations and combinations of their data with others data are being returned to them, as well as being used by others.

■ In addition to rules giving people control over their data, there should be rules of accountability and safe handling. Parties responsible for the management of personal data on a large scale should be required to give people real-time access to information about the use and handling of their data—who has requested it, what was requested, what rules or agreements govern how it can be used downstream, and how long it can be retained there. Safe storage practices (concerning encryption to protect against accidental or criminal disclosure, and access by judicial process in India or abroad, requiring accountability for all disclosures including disclosures to government) should also be defined by regulation and updated by ongoing government administrative process.

■ Remedies must be provided that give swift recourse for people whose data is harmfully disseminated or mishandled. Indian legal system is notorious for the prolonged delays to decide matters, any recourse cannot work effectively if it is not swift and urgent. Large-scale processors of information should be required to post bond or otherwise ensure prompt recourse. We should not expect multi-tier litigation, following on

administrative action, by a “data protection commission” or agency to provide realistic remedies for injured parties unless it has a fund for compensation based on taxation of the affected industry, similar to safety regulators in the financial industry around the world.

■ A primary goal of data safety regulation should be to inform people of their risks and available remedies. It is crucial that the law itself, as well as the subordinate legislation to which it gives rise, be as simple as possible. Data protection legislation is often devised to hide all the trees in the complexity of the forest. That must not happen here.

■ Abandon the misguided obsession with data-localisation while recognising the realities of a cloud-to-mobile architecture.

■ Penal provisions, if necessary, must not be all non-bailable, otherwise they would lead to a scenario similar to arrests under Section 66A of the IT Act.

Data safety regulation is not a barrier to India’s role as a global destination for data processing. On the contrary, our current success in that competition for global data service business has come *despite* international customers’ concerns about unsafe Indian data practices. Making India a global leader in data safety will expand rather than reducing our attractiveness in the world market.

Similarly, Indian data safety can be a strong value for start-ups and innovative small businesses, which can operate with certainty that their own reputations and market access will not be undermined by data safety crises and exposure episodes of the kind that are now routinely experienced by companies, large and small, around the world. Data privacy and safety regulations protecting individuals are an export industry for Digital India. Indian companies can provide to consumers around the world a commercial product that guarantees comprehensive privacy and near-complete data safety, unlike the American platform companies. It’s only a matter of smart policy and quick execution.

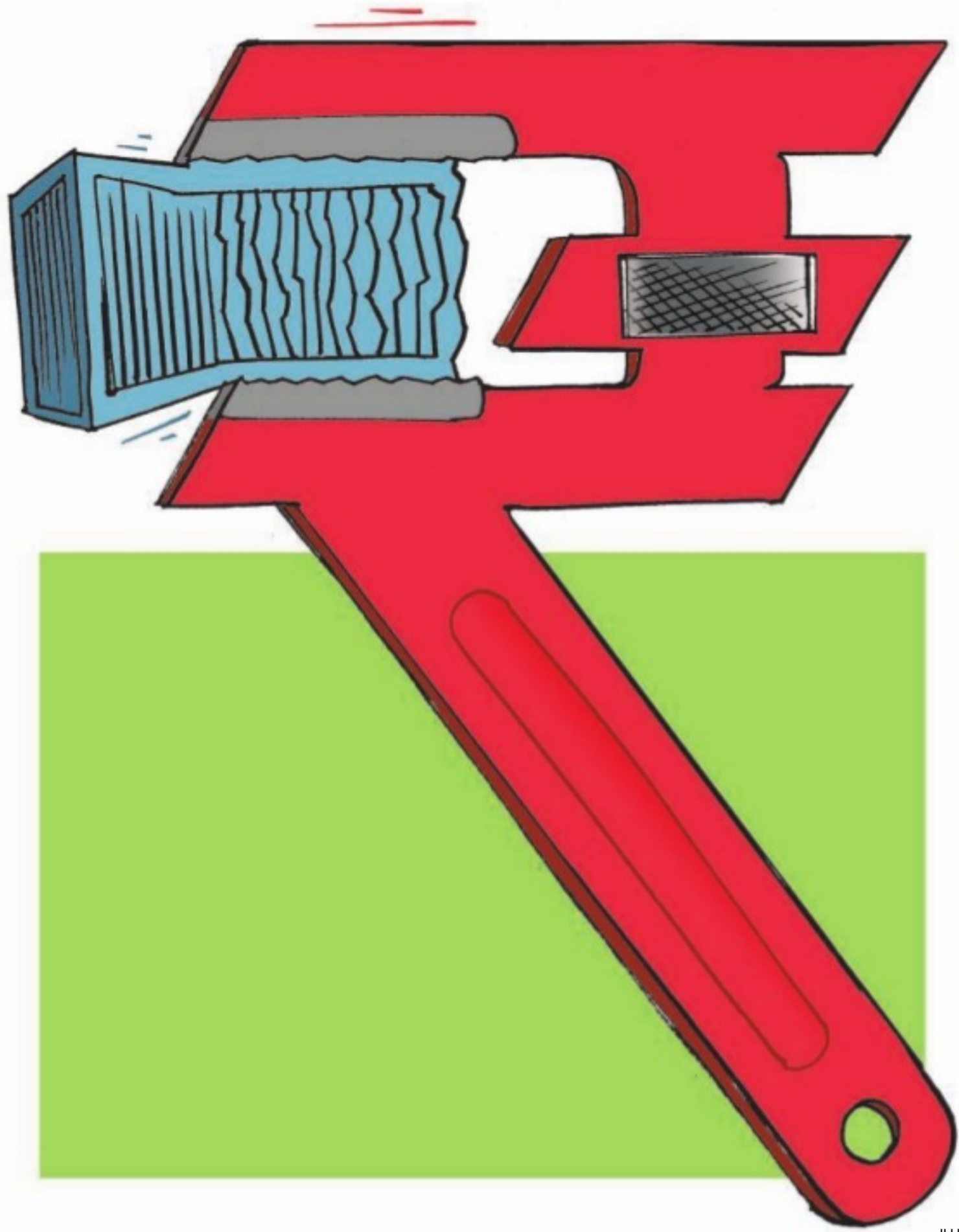


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India is indeed a 'tariff king'

There is very little by way of analytical comparison of tariff structures that would negate the impression of India being a high-tariff economy, at least among the emerging market developing countries

THE FLOW OF BAD BLOOD between India and the United States (US) on trade doesn't look like ebbing. The latest in the saga is the challenge mounted by the US at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on India's hike in customs duties on as many as 28 US products, imposed on June 15, 2019. The US contends that by acting the way India has, it has accorded less favourable treatment to products imported from the US, as opposed to those from other WTO members. This move came on the back of the US President Donald Trump again describing India's tariffs as "not acceptable."

The description of India as a high-tariff economy is familiar and commonplace. However, is it correct? Whether India is a high-tariff economy or not should be judged vis-à-vis the tariffs charged by other large major emerging market developing countries, which are structurally comparable to India. Indonesia and Brazil might be the relevant examples.

According to the WTO, India's simple average MFN (most favoured nation) applied tariff rate was 17.1% in 2018, with an average agricultural tariff of 38.8% and non-agricultural tariff of 13.6%. The comparable tariffs for Indonesia were 8.1%, 8.6% (agriculture) and 8% (non-agriculture); and for Brazil these were 13.4%, 10.1% (agriculture) and 13.9% (non-agricultural), respectively. Going by simple averages, Indian tariffs faced by other WTO members are higher than those they face in Indonesia and Brazil. The higher overall Indian tariffs are primarily a result of the high agricultural tariffs. Both Indonesia and Brazil have much lower applied agricultural tariffs than India. On the other hand, India's average applied non-agricultural tariffs are slightly lower than Brazil's, while being

higher than Indonesia's.

A particular feature of India's import tariffs is the high 'bound' rates. Bound rates—these are the maximum rates up to which WTO members can push up tariffs—are noticeably high for several categories for India. For fruits and vegetables, for example, India's tariffs are bound at an average of 101.1% with a maximum of 150%. Such rates for Indonesia and Brazil are 45.6% and 60%, and 34.1% and 37.1%, respectively. India's average applied tariffs for fruits and vegetables are 32.4% with a maximum applied rate of 105%. The similar rates for Indonesia and Brazil are 5.7% and 20%, and 9.7% and 35%, respectively. Therefore, India's much higher bound rates, as well as the high maximum applied rates, leave little scope other than concluding India to be a much higher tariff economy than Indonesia and Brazil in fruits and vegetables.

The other feature reinforcing impressions of India being a high-tariff economy is the 'binding overhang', i.e. the difference between the bound and applied rates. Large differences tend to create uncertainties about an economy among its partners with respect to its trade policy actions. Such uncertainties lead to strong demand for deep tariff cuts in bilateral and regional negotiations. In hypothetical India-Indonesia tariff talks, for example, India's binding overhang of 68.7% in fruits and vegetables, as opposed to 39.9% for Indonesia, would encourage the latter to demand deeper cuts. Agreeing on an equivalent slice of tariff cuts, say 20% on the bound and applied tariffs, would mean India cutting the average bound and applied tariffs on fruits and vegetables to 79% and 25%, from 101.1% and 32.4%. For Indonesia, similar cuts would mean the average bound rates dropping to 36% from 45.6% and the applied rate to 4.5% from 5.7%. Relative market access to be given up to India would be much more. Furthermore, the binding overhang would still remain much high for India, leaving the room for demand for further cuts in the future. India, though, might not be able to demand the same.

Like most other countries, the American perceptions on Indian tariffs are guided significantly by the high bound rates and the binding overhang, particularly in agricultural products, contributing to the 'tariff king' perceptions. The other factor contributing to such perceptions is to leave products outside the 'binding' coverage of the WTO. These are the products where countries wish

to have the flexibility of applying tariffs higher than the bound rates they commit to at the WTO for the sector. For India, this is mostly noticeable in the manufacturing sector. In transport equipment, for example, while the WTO bound tariff rate is 40%, almost 30% of the disaggregated tariff lines for transport equipment products are outside the binding coverage. Tariffs for this excluded segment can be conspicuously high.

Indeed, in India's case, the applied maximum tariff of 125% is well above the bound rate of 40% for transport equipment. The 'unbound' tariff lines are far less for Indonesia, while Brazil has bound all its imports to the rates committed to the WTO.

There is, unfortunately, little room to dispute that India is a far higher 'tariffed' economy than its counterparts such as Indonesia and Brazil. Other comparisons might lead to somewhat different conclusions, but only in magnitude. There is very little by way of analytical comparison of tariff structures that would negate the impression of India being a high-tariff economy, at least among the emerging market developing countries. The 'tariff king' label is there to stick.

A particular feature of India's import tariffs is high 'bound' rates, which are noticeably high for several categories for India, such as for fruits and vegetables

Mining can be sustainable

RAHUL SHARMA

CEO, Alumina, Vedanta Ltd



How to bring back the excavated land to original land-use in the mined-out area

THE MINING SECTOR is witnessing a green revolution in India. Hundreds of acres of spent mines are being restored into fertile fields. With the potential of these mines tapped, lands are being scientifically refilled for local communities to generate food and fodder. This is the modern face of mining that involves maximum economic development with minimum environmental impact.

Aluminium, the second-most used metal in the world, has a vital role to play in India's economic growth. It's used in energy security, national defence, infrastructure, electrification, aerospace, automobile, consumer durables and packaging, and is a key element for the government's initiatives like Make in India, Smart Cities, Power for All, indigenous space programme.

The aluminium industry also has the potential to yield huge economic dividend and help generate millions of jobs. Termed as a 'green metal' for its eco-friendliness (it can be completely recycled), aluminium is already a significant contributor to India's GDP, and yet there is a potential for growth as India's aluminium consumption is hardly one-fifth of global average.

The Indian aluminium industry has generated over 8 lakh jobs directly and indirectly, and helped develop over 4,000 SMEs in the downstream sector over the last few decades. It also has a strong output and employment multiplier effect (backward and forward linkages) on other key sectors.

Most aluminium smelters in India are located in underdeveloped areas where they have generated peripheral employment, have aided in the development of the region and improved the per capita income of the area. These areas within the 'aluminium ecosystem' are entirely dependent, socio-economically, on the aluminium industry.

Bauxite is the primary ore used in the production of alumina, which, in turn, is the raw material in the aluminium manufacturing process. India, with a reserve base of over 2.2 billion tonnes, is home to the sixth-largest bauxite deposits in the world, with the mineral-rich state of Odisha having some of the world's best and largest reserves. Indian bauxite is largely located on a single plateau, thus making bulk open-cast mining possible, resulting in opportunities to implement technology-driven scientific mining techniques. Also, close proximity between bauxite mines and alumina refineries affords Indian manufacturers the opportunity to manufacture high-quality aluminium at globally-competitive costs.

Sustainability initiatives have in place to bring back the excavated land to original land-use in the mined-out area for rehabilitation and livelihood. After the mined-out area is reclaimed by backfilling of the top layer soil, the surface is brought back to the original ground level. Today, mining commitment includes extensive re-greening of the mined land and participation in the socio-economic development of communities around.

The mining and metals sector has historically been at the receiving end of protest campaigns that have derailed projects or even shut existing operations. But there is empirical evidence of how mining has transformed the fortunes of states and countries. In fact, the surface-mining operations for bauxite are among the most eco-friendly and sustainable, involving extraction of bauxite ore from the surface and upper layer of the mine, without digging deep trenches or underground blasting.

A pragmatic approach would be to put a scientific plan to tap the country's bauxite mining potential, putting adequate riders and safeguards in place to protect the interests of all the stakeholders driven by sustainability and socio-economic growth. While the mining industry has evolved from its earlier unsustainable practices, it is time the stakeholders and naysayers come together and agree on acceptable globally-established practices. As a growing nation, we need to balance the interests of the nation with the local communities using a fact-based approach that leads to growth at all levels in a sustainable way.

Modern tech coupled with integrated sustainability can make domestic bauxite mining a viable option for India

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

AMONG A VARIETY OF challenges that the newly-formed government at the Centre can envisage, the economic challenge is possibly going to be at the centre stage for quite some time. Witnessing a slowdown in the economy in terms of experiencing reduction in GDP growth from 8.1% in March FY18 to 5.8% in March FY2019 indicates that the economy is genuinely not in good shape, and the government has a tough job at hand. It is precisely because GDP is connected to productivity, and productivity is overwhelmingly connected to participation of human labour and engagement. With the slowdown in the economy, unemployment is going to turn its ugly head once again, even though this has been one of the key pressing issues during the 2019 election campaign.

The recent NSO report adequately corroborates this by stating that the unemployment rate is currently above 6%. Data suggest that half the youth in India are aged 25, of which 19 million are expected to be jobless by the end of 2019, according to a 2018 report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Challenges are, therefore, humongous, and the government needs to engage itself in serious introspection; it must also set up a willing competent taskforce to address the issues at the ground level. Already reeling under consumption slowdown, liquidity crisis in the non-

Govt has a tough job at hand

A balance between fiscal prudence and investment-driven growth is needed

ANIL K KANUNGO

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banking financial company (NBFC) sector, fall in exports and lower terms of trade in the agricultural sector, optimism around India's economic growth has taken some beating. With the GST not living up to expectations and fiscal expenditure rising amid compelling priorities, the economic growth seems difficult to accelerate.

Weaker consumer demand and slower growth in investments were blamed for the slowdown in India's economy. Consumption constituted about 60% of GDP (at current prices) during 2017-18 and 2018-19. A decline in consumption indicates that the demand has dried up and needs to be revived immediately. It is in this context that raising

the income of the bottom quintile of population assumes significance. This could be achieved through direct income transfers and a host of other income support mechanisms that need to be worked out through wider deliberations and consultations. Secondly, investment, which is another major driver of economic growth, also witnessed a bumpy ride. Private investment grew 7.2% in the March quarter, down from 8.4% in the previous quarter, while investment growth slowed to 3.6% from 10.6%. The slowdown would put pressure on for fiscal stimulus, including tax cuts on fuel products to boost consumption.

The farm sector contracted 0.1% in the March quarter, compared with 2.7%



growth in the previous quarter, while manufacturing grew 3.1%, slower than 6.7% in the previous quarter. Several indicators such as automobile sales, rail freight, petroleum product consumption, domestic air traffic and imports are indicating a slowdown in domestic consumption. Corporate earnings hit a six-quarter low growth rate of 10.7% during January-March 2019 on weakening consumer sentiment and softening commodity prices. Stress in the NBFC sector has largely affected consumption finance. Weak rural activities have also been impeding growth recovery. Low rural wages, slowdown in credit from low to medium scale industries, and weak demand in two-wheeler and commercial

vehicle sales have also contributed to low economic activity and thus economic growth.

Unlike during the first five years of this government, the solution to the problems this time around is complex and requires a radical shift in economic policy. If the first term of the government was dominated by housing, roads, skill India, digital India and toilets, the second term would have to be dominated by investment, jobs and resurrection of the dislocated financial sector. Among immediate priorities, one would expect the second term of this government should focus on measures to revive consumption, address financial sector dislocation by recapitalising PSU banks, boost

the manufacturing sector to ensure job creation, and address the issue of skill shortage in the country to ensure employability.

Likewise, on the rural front, where farm distress has been acute and is threatening farmers' productivity and livelihood, the government should sincerely attempt to reverse terms of trade in agriculture. The government must strengthen e-NAM, enhance micro-irrigation facilities, increase credit to agriculture and boost farm prices through effective implementation of some relevant schemes. Not just welfare schemes, but the government now has to adopt a balancing act between development and consolidation.

The government needs to ensure that it maintains a balance between fiscal prudence and investment-driven growth; an imbalance could either lead to a slowdown or rise in inflation. It is possible for the government to go for an option such as to increase investments to provide a temporary boost, but it has to proceed with extreme caution especially as direct tax collections—a key source of investment—have not been satisfactory during the year.

Now all eyes will be on the new Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who has to implement quick measures to balance growth and consolidation—a key blend to achieving double-digit growth in the future.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

UNCERTAIN AGAIN

To attract investors, government needs to ensure consistency and predictability of economic policies

THE RECENT ECONOMIC Survey made a strong case for reducing uncertainty in economic policy. Investors, both domestic and foreign, favour consistent and predictable policy regimes. As the Survey noted, “surges in economic policy uncertainty increase the systematic risk, and thereby the cost of capital in the economy. As a result, higher economic policy uncertainty lowers investment, especially because of the irreversibility of investment.” The Survey also pointed out that policy uncertainty has steadily declined in India since the days when the term “policy paralysis” dominated public discourse. Recent events seem to have, unfortunately, reversed the trend.

Take, for instance, the tax proposals in the Union budget. In an attempt to raise resources, the finance minister proposed to increase the income tax surcharge on super rich individuals and association of persons (AOPs). As many foreign portfolio investors are structured as AOPs, limited liability partnerships or trusts, the proposal effectively increased the tax liability of foreign investors as well. Faced with a backlash, the government reportedly considered issuing a clarification on the matter. But, later on, it stood its ground, instead advising FPIs to structure themselves as corporate entities. Amid the confusion, foreign investors pulled out thousands of crores in the weeks thereafter. Another such proposal was the decision to raise tariffs on several import items, with a view to protecting the domestic industry. The decision marks a departure from the post-1991 trend of a gradual lowering of tariffs — hardly a positive signal to send, especially at a time when India aims for greater integration with global supply chains. Such unpredictable tax policies, driven by short-term revenue considerations, will have long-term repercussions.

Another example is that of the proposal to raise a part of the government’s borrowing through foreign currency loans. The domestic bond market welcomed the move, notwithstanding concerns raised by former RBI governors. Bond yields fell by more than 30 basis points in the weeks following the announcement. But the manner in which the top bureaucrat of the finance ministry, who was reportedly spearheading the initiative, was shifted out of the ministry, and his subsequent decision to seek voluntary retirement, only fuels speculation. While there has been no official announcement on the bond issuance following the bureaucratic reshuffle, the uncertainty surrounding it has pushed bond yields by as much as 12 basis points. Such uncertainty undermines the ability of investors to take informed decisions. Reducing policy uncertainty is critical for maintaining the country’s attractiveness as an investment decision, else capital will simply move elsewhere. The government would do well to pay heed to its chief economic adviser.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

Undertaking reforms in the spirit of the Kargil committee report will be the best tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives

INDIA AND PAKISTAN had fought three wars before the Kargil War 20 years ago: In 1948, 1965 and 1971. But there was something different about the Kargil War. The two countries had become declared nuclear weapon states in 1998, a war was never formally declared in 1999 and it ended without a ceasefire, as in 1948 or 1965, or a surrender document, as in 1971. Moreover, it was limited to about a 150-km frontage of the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government by choice, contrary to what Lal Bahadur Shastri did in 1965 when he chose to open a front in Punjab. Fought in the full glare of the media, it was a war which captured the Indian imagination. As it occurred during the 1999 election campaign, the military victory was closely enmeshed with the political narrative of the period.

In late 1998, four generals in Pakistan conspired to launch intrusions on the LoC in the Kargil-Dras sector for the purpose of internationalising the Kashmir issue — remember, this was before 9/11 — and cutting the India lifeline to Siachen glacier. By the first four months of 1999, Pakistani soldiers established approximately 140 posts and pickets. The intrusions went undetected till early May when they were grossly underestimated by the Army, which thus pushed soldiers piecemeal, leading to heavy losses with no breakthrough in the initial stages. The army eventually pushed more than 30,000 soldiers in the area, flooded it with Bofors guns and attained some initial success as the Indian Air Force was also brought in. Eventually half of the Pakistani pickets and posts were captured by the Indian military. Under huge global diplomatic pressure, Pakistan vacated the rest of the posts, which almost restored the status quo ante.

In the final analysis, it was a humiliating military and diplomatic loss for Pakistan. While it is true that Pakistan achieved initial tactical surprise, it failed abysmally when confronted by a determined Indian military. Globally, Pakistan came to be seen as an irresponsible country despite possessing nuclear weapons. The Kargil war also punctured the Pakistani myth that no conventional conflict was possible under a nuclear umbrella. It demonstrated that there was enough space for a limited conflict, and that principle has only been buttressed since, as seen at Balakot. Pakistan refused to learn the lessons but India established a review committee under K Subrahmanyam and followed up on most of the recommendations. Twenty years on, undertaking reforms in the spirit of the Kargil review committee to prepare for the challenges for the future will be the best tribute to the 527 soldiers who lost their lives on the icy heights of Kargil.

30 PER CENT LESS

Cadbury’s Dairy Milk has a diet version.
What a travesty

CHOCOLATE, MILK, SUGAR. For 114 years, the three ingredients — in the right proportion — have been a source of comfort and delight for millions. But now, in the country of its birth, Dairy Milk, the flagship product from Cadbury, has been diluted by precisely 30 per cent. Diet Dairy Milk, launched last week and described as an “innovation” by its manufacturers, has been described more aptly by Britons chagrined at the desecration of the most basic of confections. The diluted chocolate is, in fact, a travesty.

The ostensible reason behind the “innovation” is the British government’s plan to reduce sugar in snacks by 20 per cent in the next year in a bid to combat childhood obesity. But, given that the diet chocolate is smaller, and costs as much, the motive behind it might be more than purely altruistic. Then there’s the fact that the Dairy Milk is Britain’s version of apple pie: It was a taste of home for soldiers campaigning on distant shores during the World Wars; a simple combination of flavours, unpretentious and meant for the masses, unlike its German and Swiss counterparts.

The fact that the people taking the decisions at Cadbury are now American — the company was bought by the US giant, Mondelez International — may have something to do with this apparent disregard for the subtle tastes of history and culture. Since it took over in 2010, Mondelez has tinkered, in its appetite for change, with the Crème Egg and had earlier “rounded out” the corners of the Dairy Milk. Perhaps someone needs to point out to them that chocolate, even when reduced by a third, is not likely to be a diet food. Meanwhile, it is likely that the trans-Atlantic “innovation” will reach India just in time for the festive season. Imagine saying during Diwali, “kuchh meetha ho jaye, par 30 per cent kam”.



SUGATA SRINIVASARAJU

IF YOU RUMMAGE through the 1972 proceedings of the Karnataka Assembly, you’ll discover an intervention related to Shantaveri Gopala Gowda. He was a Socialist leader and a three-time member of the House, who had passed away in June that year. The intervention, which sounds more like petitioning Chief Minister Devaraj Urs, is made by H D Deve Gowda, the then Leader of Opposition. He says Gopala Gowda’s family is in fragile economic health, and as colleagues, they had a duty towards the family. Urs, a mentee of Gopala Gowda, responds positively.

What was a simple act of fraternal concern 48 years ago has great significance today.

Gopala Gowda, an associate of Ram Manohar Lohia, was an influential figure in Karnataka politics in the 1950s and ’60s. He had sparked a new wave of idealism. He not only inspired farmer movements, social justice ideas, renaming of the state, land reforms, but, as an intellectual lodestar, became an intrepid and anarchic protagonist for writers like Gopalakrishna Adiga (Jana Sangh LS candidate in 1971), UR Ananthamurthy and P Lankesh. In fact, Ananthamurthy wrote *Awaste*, a novel largely based on his life.

Why is it important to summon Gopala Gowda in these politically unhinged times in Karnataka? Does he have the power to offer a corrective? The answer is unreservedly in the negative. But it plays a trick on the minds of the people. His penury offers a glorious contrast to today’s Karnataka legislators who are being measured in dollar millions. He functions as a convenient instrument to measure the slide of intent and values in public life. Never mind that Gowda himself was not a norm in his times, but an exception.

This decontextualised resurrection of memory is a kind of hope-medicine. It calms the guilt-filled moral nerves by inducing a message that it is possible to restore order, it is possible to regain poise, and it is possible to recover idealism. It helps to rebuild the campaign to vote again. It helps to put democ-

Why it is important to invoke Gopala Gowda in these politically unhinged times in Karnataka

racy on a clever loop.

Perhaps this was why the sanctimonious Speaker of the Karnataka Assembly, K R Ramesh Kumar, more than once made Gopala Gowda a totem, and told what he imagined as his degenerate audience: “Is this the same House that once had the likes of Gopala Gowda? A simple, honest man, committed for the cause of the people. He never became a chief minister or a minister. He never sat on the treasury benches. But see what you are fighting for?” To this sermon, he added: “People are watching, everything is going live, everything is going on record, you are being exposed.” This last sentence became a refrain through the proceedings.

The entire trust vote deliberations that were being telecast live on local channels were like a public trial of a politician’s probity. As the alluring details of private jets ferrying rebel legislators to a Mumbai hideout did the rounds, the only thing that one saw BS Yeddyurappa, the puppeteer-in-chief of the defection drama, do, was reluctantly press ear phones to his cheeks. It made one wonder what message echoed in his ears, and what noise was cancelled out.

The BJP’s entire floor strategy was flawed. Even as Congress-JDS legislators stretched the debate by miles, they responded with either a patient smile, a pregnant silence or a loo break. Perhaps they didn’t want unruly scenes as an impediment to the last mile of their power trip. They took all the abuse and allegations hurled at them. But, how much can a self-respecting political party really afford to ignore and condone?

Consider this: Three BJP MLAs who apparently tried to lure a JDS legislator were named, shamed and the amount was disclosed. They were not provoked, they did not protest, and it went on record. Their national leaders were called names, they did not stand up to defend. When the character of the rebels who were helping them claim the throne was ransacked, they allowed the assassination. When their alleged nexus with the media to carry out this operation was un-

raveled, they did not challenge. Interestingly, even when there was a positive reference to the stellar personal habits of some Jana Sangh and RSS leaders in the past, they didn’t as much as acknowledge their own legacy. It was not their sangfroid, it was being cold and transactional. There was power to be won and power to be lost. Nothing else truly mattered. In people’s memory, this was a trait that the Congress exhibited, not the BJP.

While this was happening, some old conscientious hands of the party were furiously tapping keys on their smart phones. One message sent to the BJP central leadership read somewhat like this: “Party should seriously study the antecedents of these rebels, for whom Yeddyurappaji has claimed moral victory after the SC’s interim order. They are scamsters, real estate agents and land sharks. If we form a government with them, public will not approve. Their crimes and indiscretions will be attributed to us.” For those heavily invested in the game, this would sound naive.

Yeddyurappa has always played an independent game. He credits himself with the BJP’s success in Karnataka, something that pre-dates Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. This has made him only reluctantly acknowledge the party’s new avatar and order. In fact, the former BJP CM is so self-reliant that he was neither close to Atal Bihari Vajpayee nor was he accepted in L K Advani’s durbar. He is the stuff that feudal, dynastic, regional lords are made of.

Anyway, after the trust vote, there is candid appraisal in some political corners. They have acknowledged the simmering tide of public opprobrium. For instance, Congress minister Priyank Kharge tweeted: “All politicians have lost credibility. Public has lost faith in politicians irrespective of party. The way things have unfolded here over two weeks has damaged our reputation further.”

But can we expect Chief Minister Yeddyurappa to concern himself with this?

The writer is a senior journalist and author



CHAKSHU ROY

EARLIER THIS WEEK, the Rajya Sabha was witness to acrimonious scenes during the discussion on the RTI Amendment Bill, which amends the RTI Act of 2005. It provides that the term of office and remuneration of information commissioners (both at the Centre and states) will be prescribed by the central government. The original law specified both of these in the law rather than delegating the power to the central government. Opposition parties were demanding that the Bill be referred to a committee of the House for detailed scrutiny before being passed. The treasury benches and a few other parties were of the opinion that the Bill should be passed after debating it on the floor of the House. Ultimately, the House passed the RTI Amendment after voting down the demand for sending it to a committee. So far, none of the 13 bills passed by Parliament in this session have been referred to a parliamentary committee.

Our Parliament broadly has two forums for discussion. One is on the floor of the House where the debate is televised and MPs take positions based on their parties’ stand on a subject. The other is the closed-door forum of parliamentary committees. These committees are made up of MPs either from one or both Houses. Their meetings are not televised and the record of the meetings does not reflect the position taken by an individual MP. Both these forums have their own advantages and disadvantages. A debate on the floor of the House allows for the cut and thrust of political debate and can be wrapped up in a few hours. Debates in committees are

A MATTER OF DELIBERATION

To ensure legislative scrutiny, every bill must be sent to a parliamentary committee

more technical but the deliberations require time and stretch for a few months.

The idea behind the establishment of the committee system in Parliament was to provide a specialised forum for deliberation on national policy issues, which was not constrained by the limited number of sitting days (less than three months a year) of Parliament. In 1993, when this modern subject committee system took shape, the then the Vice President of India summed up the objectives of parliamentary committees: “...the main purpose, of course, is to ensure the accountability of Government to Parliament through more detailed consideration of measures in these committees. The purpose is not to weaken or criticise the administration but to strengthen it by investing it with more meaningful parliamentary support.” The committee, over the years, has worked well in strengthening our legislative process.

The scrutiny of a bill by a committee usually takes a few months. If a bill is referred to a committee, its legislative journey slows down as it can only be debated after the committee has submitted its report. This slow down of legislation has been a source of continued tension between the ruling party and Opposition over the last five years. A bill can usually be referred to a parliamentary committee in three ways. First, the minister piloting the bill can seek the permission of the House to refer the Bill to a committee. Second, the Chairman/Speaker has the discretion in referring the bill to a committee. When ministers are trying to build political consensus on a bill, they welcome its refer-

ring to a committee. However, when they are in a hurry to get their legislative proposals approved by Parliament, they impress upon the Chairman/Speaker not to refer the bill to a committee. This is when the third mechanism kicks in. When a bill reaches a House where the government does not have a majority, the MPs of the House can marshal the numbers to move a motion to refer the bill to a committee. This leads to the government blaming the Opposition for the slowdown, which counters by accusing the government of trying to bulldoze legislation through Parliament. However, there is an additional dimension to the scrutiny of bills by committees. Whenever the government and Opposition see eye to eye on a subject, bills are not referred to a committee.

A robust lawmaking process requires thorough scrutiny by Parliament. Such scrutiny should not be impacted by either the strength of numbers in Parliament or political agreement on issues. This robustness can be ensured by requiring that all Bills be referred to Parliamentary committees. Exceptions to this rule should be strictly defined and the exceptions explained to Parliament. In addition, the committees should be strengthened to scrutinise and present their reports in a timely fashion. These mechanisms will ensure that all bills passed by Parliament, irrespective of the party in power, go through a well laid-out process of debate.

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JULY 27, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NEW PRIME MINISTER

CHARAN SINGH WILL be India’s new Prime Minister. He has carried the day with 262 members, and the President has invited him to form the government which, Singh says, he will do in a day or so. The President has, however, asked him to seek a vote of confidence from the Lok Sabha “at the earliest possible opportunity, say, by the third week of August 1979.”

CHARAN’S DREAM

CHARAN SINGH SAID that with the President’s invitation to him to form the government, “the ambition of my life has been fulfilled”. He told a big crowd of admirers,

gathered at his house that every politician desired that he should either attain the office of a chief minister or a prime minister. “If a politician does not have such an ambition then he is lying,” he added.

CONGRESS’S DILEMMA

CONGRESS HAS NOW been hurled into Hamlet’s dilemma: To join or not to join — that is the question. Some Congress leaders think the party should participate, others think it should not. The MPs, too, are divided on the issue. Some MPs from the south are opposed to the idea of joining the government headed by Charan Singh: They think he is pro-Hindi and anti-Dalit. The people of

the south do not know him at all. Many others are against participation in a government which will depend on Indira Gandhi.

JANATA’S CRITICISM

JANATA PARTY PRESIDENT, Chandra Shekhar, described President N Sanjeeva Reddy’s decision to ask Charan Singh to form the government as “an extraordinary one which tantamounts to putting premium on defections.” Talking to newsmen, he however said since the President had now exercised his discretion, it should be accepted gracefully. “Let us hope the new government would be able to give an administration with dignity and responsibility,” he added.



THE IDEAS PAGE

Let big data analysis begin

It is time we recognised that survey data, and the economic environment, cannot be interpreted in the way it used to be



NO PROOF REQUIRED

BY SURJIT S BHALLA

CORRECT ANALYSIS OF data is imperative for appropriate policy response. This is obvious. The reason I am repeating the obvious is that there are serious problems with the data that we, policymakers and academics, are basing our policy decisions on. Problems with methods and accuracy of data collection. The discussion on data for policy has been across the board — socio-economic (riots, infant mortality rates, sex ratio etc) and economic (GDP growth, exchange rate, poverty etc.). In this article, I would like to point to some of the perils of poor data quality and often erroneous interpretation.

As we all know, and appreciate, India was a pioneer in data collection some 70 years ago. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) was set up in 1950 and has been providing important information about most of our everyday concerns — consumption, employment and prices. It should be recalled, and remembered, that GDP data in the first 30-odd years was based on the consumption data collected by the NSSO. Poverty rates, and policies, were based on NSSO data.

In my 2002 book, *Imagine There's No Country*, I reported that something was amiss with the then recent NSSO data on consumption. The 1999-2000 NSSO consumption survey (S) reported average per capita consumption to be only 56 per cent of consumption as measured by national accounts (NA) — this was termed survey capture or S/NA. In China, close to the same year, the S/NA ratio was as high as 96 per cent; in Korea 85 per cent; in India in 1960, 92 per cent. Only 10 per cent of some 700 consumer expenditure surveys in the world had a S/NA ratio less than India in 1999.

We do not know *a priori* whether the NSSO data are a correct reflection of the underlying reality, or the national accounts data produced by the CSO are a better proxy. This has to be based on hard empirics (what is now fashionably called Big Data Analysis) and not on ideological or other predilections.

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The demotion of NSSO data became a hard reality at the time of the GDP revision in 2015. Until this revision, the *growth* of employment as revealed by the Employment and Unemployment Surveys of the NSSO (now called PLFS) was used to estimate growth in value-added in the wholesale and retail trade sector of the economy (accounting for some 15-20 per cent of the GDP). For example, employment growth in the wholesale sector during 1999-2004 was 3.2 per cent per annum. This rate of growth was assumed to be the same rate — that is 3.2 per cent for every subsequent year between 2004 and 2011. Post the availability of the 2011-12 NSSO employment survey in 2013, the new employment growth “reality” hit the CSO — employment



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The CSO, as a responsible statistical outfit, had to come out with a new method to estimate GDP growth in the wholesale trade sector — they came up with the eminently sensible idea of deriving employment growth via the (real) growth in state value-added taxes.

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How inaccurate is the consumption growth recorded by the employment surveys in 2011/12 and 2017/18? Grotesquely inaccurate. And, the reasons for this ever-declining

INDIA WAS A PIONEER IN DATA COLLECTION SOME 70 YEARS AGO. THE NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY ORGANISATION (NSSO) WAS SET UP IN 1950 AND HAS BEEN PROVIDING IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT MOST OF OUR EVERYDAY CONCERNS — CONSUMPTION, EMPLOYMENT AND PRICES. IT SHOULD BE RECALLED, AND REMEMBERED, THAT GDP DATA IN THE FIRST 30-ODD YEARS WAS BASED ON THE CONSUMPTION DATA COLLECTED BY THE NSSO. POVERTY RATES, AND POLICIES, WERE BASED ON NSSO DATA.

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YASHWANT SINHA

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP has done it again. He has spoken a complete falsehood, without thinking about the consequences, out of turn and without knowledge of the issue on which he was pontificating. Prime Minister Narendra Modi deserves to be criticised on many counts but I cannot believe that he could ever have made such a preposterous suggestion to Trump. Even a child in India knows the country's position on a dialogue with Pakistan. But I was disappointed by the external affairs minister's statement in Parliament on this issue on July 23. He referred to the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, but failed to mention the very important January 6, 2004 Joint Press Statement issued in Islamabad after a meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf. I would place this statement in the same league as the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

The statement was issued almost at the end of Vajpayee's second term as prime minister. In the six years before that, India-Pakistan relations had gone through a roller-coaster ride starting with his bus yatra to Lahore followed by the Kargil war; then there was the failed Agra summit followed by the attack on the Indian Parliament. This led to Operation Parakram when our troops were eyeball-to-

Lost in a Trump-ed up row

In 2004, Pakistan made significant commitments to end cross-border terror

eyeball with the Pakistani forces along our border and the LoC. But Vajpayee was genuinely interested in peace with Pakistan. So, after a year of the confrontation, he made his peace offer again, this time from Srinagar. This led to gradual disengagement of the two armies and a number of confidence building measures were announced unilaterally by India. Pakistan reciprocated. So, when the SAARC summit was due to take place in Islamabad, India took a calculated risk and Vajpayee travelled there. The visit was a great success bilaterally and the outcome was the Joint Press Statement of January 6, 2004. A part of it is reproduced below:

“The President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India met during the SAARC Summit in Islamabad...Both leaders welcomed the recent steps towards the normalisation of relations between the two countries... Prime Minister Vajpayee said that in order to take forward and sustain the dialogue process, violence, hostility and terrorism must be prevented. President Musharraf reassured Prime Minister Vajpayee that he will not permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism in any manner. To carry the process of normalisation forward, the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India agreed to commence the process of composite dialogue in

February 2004. The two leaders are confident that the resumption of the dialogue would lead to peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides. The two leaders agreed that constructive dialogue would promote progress towards the common objective of peace, security and economic development of our peoples.”

Musharraf had spoken of not allowing the territory under the control of Pakistan to be used for violence and terrorism against India even earlier but this was the first time he agreed to include it in a bilateral document. It was also a clear admission by Pakistan that the territory under its control (read Pak-Occupied-Kashmir) was indeed being used for terrorism against India. This was a unilateral commitment given by Pakistan which did not demand any such commitment from India as it did at Sharm-el-Sheikh where it insisted and succeeded in including a reference to Balochistan in the joint statement. The January 6, 2004 statement also clearly established the principle that resumption of dialogue with Pakistan was not automatic but was contingent upon Pakistan stopping cross-border terrorism against India.

Musharraf must have realised the importance of the statement and the commitment Pakistan had made in it. Therefore, no sooner

did the Vajpayee government demit office that he tried to wriggle out of these commitments. Unfortunately, the UPA government, like the present NDA government, failed to realise the value of this statement and allowed it to get buried under the weight of the not-so-significant statements issued subsequently. Pakistan could not have asked for more.

Relations with Pakistan should not be a partisan issue. An all-party consensus has always guided our policy towards Pakistan barring a few differences with regard to nuances. But the problem is that not only does Pakistan go back on the promises it makes, but every prime minister in India also forgets history and starts from the beginning. One would have expected a foreign service professional who is now the external affairs minister to remember the not-so-ancient history and refer to the 2004 statement in his speech in Parliament. Amnesia is a good virtue at times but not when you are dealing with an extremely sensitive issue like India-Pakistan relations.

Trump is a bull in a china shop. We do not have to bother much about what he says. But the PM should have appeared in both Houses and set the matter at rest.

The writer is a former Union external affairs and finance minister

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This disenfranchisement of voters is likely due to four factors. First, several people are unable to register to vote, for reasons ranging from not being aware of the registration methodology, to the process itself being inconvenient to not even knowing there is one. It is the responsibility of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to inform those that have not registered to vote yet but are otherwise eligible. The ECI does this via mass campaigns since it is not possible for it to exclusively identify unregistered adult citizens. Currently, the easiest way to freshly apply to be registered as a voter is to fill out a Form 6 on the NVSP (National Voters' Service Portal) or the ECI's app. This is an extremely cumbersome exercise and potentially an impediment to comprehensive voter registration efforts. Aadhaar can significantly simplify the process, once the ECI has ascertained that a resident is eligible to vote. This whole process could be replaced with a single step Aadhaar based e-KYC.

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Several government functionaries have discretionary powers that empower them to remove names from voter lists. Additionally, the ECI has the right to disqualify citizens from voting under certain conditions as per the Constitution. The ECI maintains and is indeed mandated to publish a list of people disqualified from voting in each state, but the reasons for their disqualifications is not included and likely not recorded either. The most sinister factor is the political adventurism of parties (and politicians) and voters alike. There have been cases reported, for example, of voters that are registered to vote in multiple booths and, thus, can vote multiple times. More worryingly, there has long been speculation that there is incentive for

political agents to use their influence to omit people, and indeed whole communities, from the voter rolls. These factors need to be made transparent so that any misuse is fixed. The illegality and perniciousness of private and political actors needs to be checked. Here, Aadhaar's anti-fraud and deduplication features can be put to use.

Third, several people have been turned away due to discrepancies between their details as listed on the rolls and the ID documents they present for validation. It is common for people who get married or have recently changed other demographic parameters to make the necessary changes to their Aadhaars and neglect other IDs. In such cases, reliance on Aadhaar will mitigate the risks of exclusion that are a consequence of demographic data mismatches.

Fourth, and the most easily addressable cause of this disenfranchisement, is relocation. It is far more likely for people to update Aadhaar rather than their EPIC: The Constitution grants the right to every citizen to cast her vote in the constituency where she is ordinarily residing. There are a number of constitutional stipulations that must be addressed to achieve ordinary residence, but the ECI will accept such documents as a proof of residence (as an electricity or water bill) along with a prescribed form completed. It is often the case that people who have made the requisite changes will feature both on the voter list of their new residence as well as that of their previous residence. This was the very problem for the ECI's most recent ambassador in Karnataka, Rahul Dravid, who, having only recently changed residences, was turned away from his new booth on polling day.

Many of the exclusions discussed here can be remedied with Aadhaar: It uniquely identifies every individual in the country through all of the same details as the EPIC. Unlike EPIC, Aadhaar captures biometric data, which is generally benign information and only useful in validating uniqueness. The EPIC, however, captures additional information such as familial details — it was a crucial source of identification or proof of residence, but that was before Aadhaar. Ironically, the EPIC does not guarantee a vote: If a name does not appear on the voter rolls, she will not be permitted to vote under any circumstances. Even if a person's name does appear on the voter rolls, the EPIC is not the only document that is accepted as proof of identity: A considerable portion of voters likely use their Aadhaars to identify themselves. Therefore, the very existence of the EPIC is worth reconsidering today.

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

HERO OR VILLAIN

THIS REFERS to the article, 'Clinging to patriarchy' (IE, July 25). The issues raised by the author do exist in society and young girls have to bear the brunt of the patriarchal retaliation against women's empowerment. That explains much of the harassment faced by women. Arjun Reddy's character actually typifies hooliganism.

Gajendra Saini, via e-mail

in the editorial: The so called non-state actors are committing acts of terror in India. Pakistan suspended operations Zarbe-Arz and Ruddul-Fissad because of the military-militant nexus.

Bhaskar Bhusari, Pune

RAY IN HD

THIS REFERS to the article, 'A timeless tale' (IE, July 25). The writer asks if the government would "take some initiative" to make Satyajit Ray's films "accessible far and wide". It will not be out-of-place to mention the new high-definition digital restoration with uncompressed monoaural soundtrack of 12 Ray masterpieces. These include the Apu trilogy. Each edition is enriched with material such as interviews with actors, filmmakers and scholars.

Subhamay Ray, Kolkata



Let big data analysis begin

It is time we recognised that survey data, and the economic environment, cannot be interpreted in the way it used to be



NO PROOF REQUIRED

BY SURJIT S BHALLA

CORRECT ANALYSIS OF data is imperative for appropriate policy response. This is obvious. The reason I am repeating the obvious is that there are serious problems with the data that we, policymakers and academics, are basing our policy decisions on. Problems with methods and accuracy of data collection. The discussion on data for policy has been across the board — socio-economic (riots, infant mortality rates, sex ratio etc) and economic (GDP growth, exchange rate, poverty etc.). In this article, I would like to point to some of the perils of poor data quality and often erroneous interpretation.

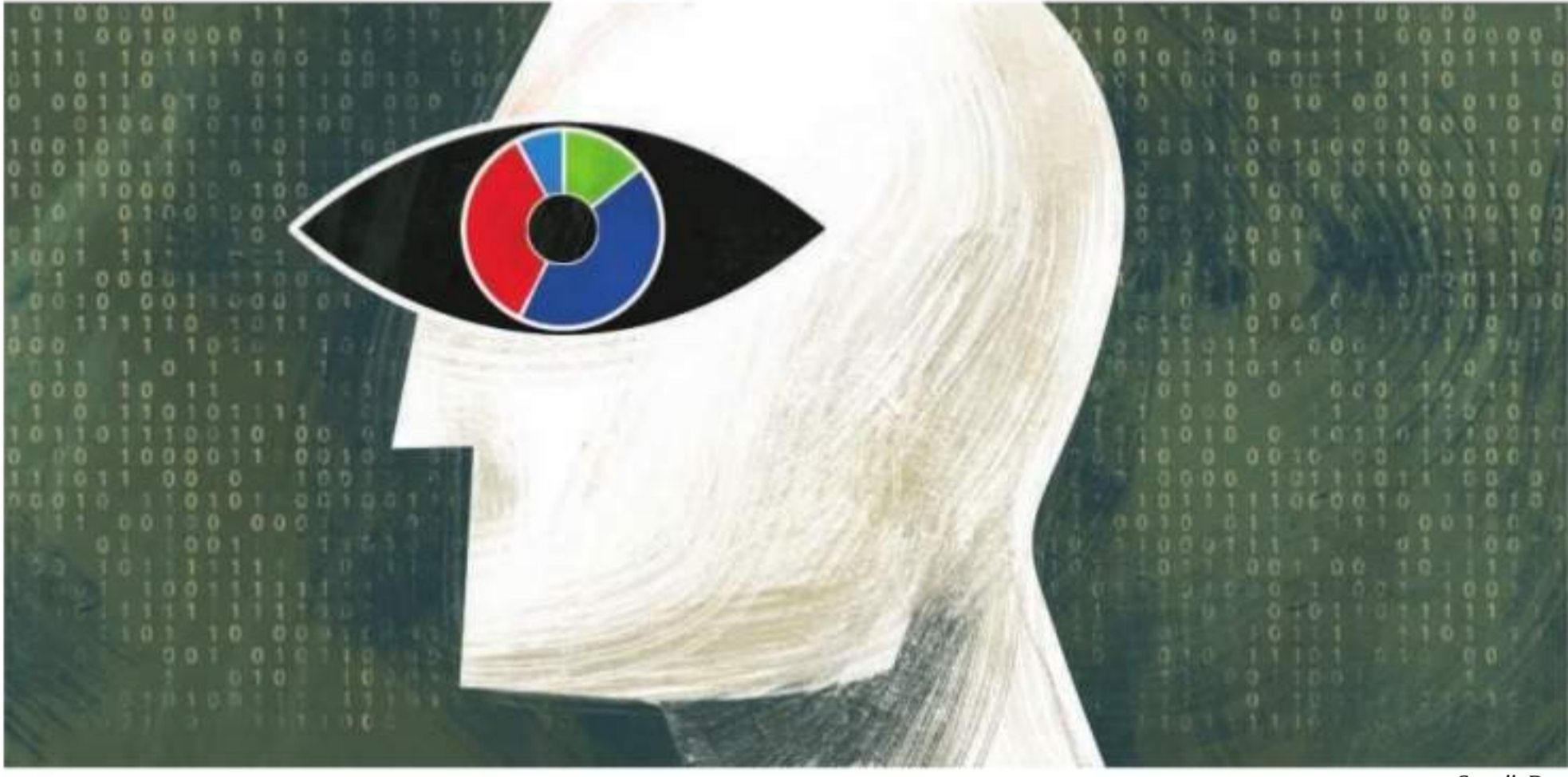
As we all know, and appreciate, India was a pioneer in data collection some 70 years ago. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) was set up in 1950 and has been providing important information about most of our everyday concerns — consumption, employment and prices. It should be recalled, and remembered, that GDP data in the first 30-odd years was based on the consumption data collected by the NSSO. Poverty rates, and policies, were based on NSSO data.

In my 2002 book, *Imagine There's No Country*, I reported that something was amiss with the then recent NSSO data on consumption. The 1999-2000 NSSO consumption survey (S) reported average per capita consumption to be only 56 per cent of consumption as measured by national accounts (NA) — this was termed survey capture or S/NA. In China, close to the same year, the S/NA ratio was as high as 96 per cent; in Korea 85 per cent; in India in 1960, 92 per cent. Only 10 per cent of some 700 consumer expenditure surveys in the world had a S/NA ratio less than India in 1999.

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survey capture is something that the new CSO/NSSO combine should seriously examine. In contrast, note the per capita growth in selected (consumption related) items: Total NA consumption is 34 per cent; agriculture is 11 per cent; oil is 25 per cent; electricity is 29 per cent; mobile users 29 per cent; passenger cars 31 per cent. I am leaving this for discussion at a later date, several items of greater use and declining prices (for example, telecommunications, banking services, insurance) — all point to a significant increase in real consumption and above a 6.5 per cent growth in GDP.

What is going on? Why are sample survey data missing out on underlying trends? I can think of two major explanations. (For regular readers of my columns, this will be repeating myself for the umpteenth time.) Please, please, recognise that the world economic environment has changed, and changed radically over the last 20-odd years. In particular, Indian inflation is now structurally down to the world inflation levels from being significantly above during the period 2004-2015. All of us need to understand the implications of long-term two to three per cent inflation levels. When I went to graduate school in the 1970s, this was considered frictional inflation. Just a year ago, almost to the date, the RBI/MPC raised policy rates to 6.5 per cent, warning of impending higher GDP growth (sustained above 7.5 per cent) and higher (sustained >5 per cent) inflation levels. All of us make mistakes, but the changed economic environment means that we have to stop doing old-fashioned and/or knee-jerk analysis and policy.

The second changed reality is technological change. And, the mother of all changes, of course, is climate change — and in case those caught in the past (the 1970s or even the 1990s) haven't caught on, climate change is the *most* deflationary. Within technological change, there are newer methods of gathering information. In addition, modern techniques of computer-aided surveys suffer from interview bias — the same question, asked of the same person by two different computer-supervised individuals, can elicit radically different responses.

Let us all embark on a new mission. Collect good quality data and analyse it in a dispassionate manner with one over-riding objective — what policy will enhance and accelerate GDP growth so that we can redistribute better. All else is old-style *garam hawa*.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express. Views are personal

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

HERO OR VILLAIN

THIS REFERS to the article, 'Clinging to patriarchy' (IE, July 25). The issues raised by the author do exist in society and young girls have to bear the brunt of the patriarchal retaliation against women's empowerment. That explains much of the harassment faced by women. Arjun Reddy's character actually typifies hooliganism. **Gajendra Saini, via e-mail**

in the editorial: The so called non-state actors are committing acts of terror in India. Pakistan suspended operations Zarbe-Arz and Ruddul-Fissad because of the military-militant nexus. **Bhaskar Bhusari, Pune**

RAY IN HD

THIS REFERS to the article, 'A timeless tale' (IE, July 25). The writer asks if the government would "take some initiative" to make Satyajit Ray's films "accessible far and wide". It will not be out-of-place to mention the new high-definition digital restoration with uncompressed monoaural soundtrack of 12 Ray masterpieces. These include the Apu trilogy. Each edition is enriched with material such as interviews with actors, filmmakers and scholars. **Subhamay Ray, Kolkata**



YASHWANT SINHA

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP has done it again. He has spoken a complete falsehood, without thinking about the consequences, out of turn and without knowledge of the issue on which he was pontificating. Prime Minister Narendra Modi deserves to be criticised on many counts but I cannot believe that he could ever have made such a preposterous suggestion to Trump. Even a child in India knows the country's position on a dialogue with Pakistan. But I was disappointed by the external affairs minister's statement in Parliament on this issue on July 23. He referred to the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, but failed to mention the very important January 6, 2004 Joint Press Statement issued in Islamabad after a meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf. I would place this statement in the same league as the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

The statement was issued almost at the end of Vajpayee's second term as prime minister. In the six years before that, India-Pakistan relations had gone through a roller-coaster ride starting with his bus yatra to Lahore followed by the Kargil war; then there was the failed Agra summit followed by the attack on the Indian Parliament. This led to Operation Parakram when our troops were eyeball-to-

Lost in a Trump-ed up row

In 2004, Pakistan made significant commitments to end cross-border terror

eyeball with the Pakistani forces along our border and the LoC. But Vajpayee was genuinely interested in peace with Pakistan. So, after a year of the confrontation, he made his peace offer again, this time from Srinagar. This led to gradual disengagement of the two armies and a number of confidence building measures were announced unilaterally by India. Pakistan reciprocated. So, when the SAARC summit was due to take place in Islamabad, India took a calculated risk and Vajpayee travelled there. The visit was a great success bilaterally and the outcome was the Joint Press Statement of January 6, 2004. A part of it is reproduced below:

"The President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India met during the SAARC Summit in Islamabad... Both leaders welcomed the recent steps towards the normalisation of relations between the two countries... Prime Minister Vajpayee said that in order to take forward and sustain the dialogue process, violence, hostility and terrorism must be prevented. President Musharraf reassured Prime Minister Vajpayee that he will not permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism in any manner. To carry the process of normalisation forward, the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India agreed to commence the process of composite dialogue in

February 2004. The two leaders are confident that the resumption of the dialogue would lead to peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides. The two leaders agreed that constructive dialogue would promote progress towards the common objective of peace, security and economic development of our peoples."

Musharraf had spoken of not allowing the territory under the control of Pakistan to be used for violence and terrorism against India even earlier but this was the first time he agreed to include it in a bilateral document. It was also a clear admission by Pakistan that the territory under its control (read Pak-Occupied-Kashmir) was indeed being used for terrorism against India. This was a unilateral commitment given by Pakistan which did not demand any such commitment from India as it did at Sharm-el-Sheikh where it insisted and succeeded in including a reference to Balochistan in the joint statement. The January 6, 2004 statement also clearly established the principle that resumption of dialogue with Pakistan was not automatic but was contingent upon Pakistan stopping cross-border terrorism against India.

Musharraf must have realised the importance of the statement and the commitment Pakistan had made in it. Therefore, no sooner

did the Vajpayee government demit office that he tried to wriggle out of these commitments. Unfortunately, the UPA government, like the present NDA government, failed to realise the value of this statement and allowed it to get buried under the weight of the not-so-significant statements issued subsequently. Pakistan could not have asked for more.

Relations with Pakistan should not be a partisan issue. An all-party consensus has always guided our policy towards Pakistan barring a few differences with regard to nuances. But the problem is that not only does Pakistan go back on the promises it makes, but every prime minister in India also forgets history and starts from the beginning. One would have expected a foreign service professional who is now the external affairs minister to remember the not-so-ancient history and refer to the 2004 statement in his speech in Parliament. Amnesia is a good virtue at times but not when you are dealing with an extremely sensitive issue like India-Pakistan relations.

Trump is a bull in a china shop. We do not have to bother much about what he says. But the PM should have appeared in both Houses and set the matter at rest.

The writer is a former Union external affairs and finance minister





Second shot at power

Constitution is under strain in Karnataka, as an impatient Yediyurappa rushes to take oath

Giving a second opportunity to a person who could not prove his majority on the floor of the House earlier may seem unusual. And when one remembers that B.S. Yediyurappa's last term lasted only three days, it may even seem amusing. However, Governor Vajubhai Vala's invitation to Mr. Yediyurappa to form a government in Karnataka is understandable. A coalition regime has just been voted out. In a House that is only 14 months old, it was to be expected that the Governor would again ask the leader of the largest party to explore the possibility of forming an alternative regime. Yet, questions abound on whether Mr. Yediyurappa should have been in such haste to stake his claim, given that there is profound uncertainty over the status of at least 13 of the legislators, and consequently, about the strength of the House. Consider the situation: one government has been voted out only because of the absence of 15 legislators who were given an unusual exemption by the Supreme Court from the constitutional bar on defying the party's whip; the Speaker is yet to accept their resignations, but has disqualified three dissident MLAs under the anti-defection law, and the strength of the State Assembly stands at 222, including a nominated member. No one can dispute that the fall of the Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) coalition was supposed to be caused by a set of tactical resignations, but the move was stalled when it became a question of possible disqualification. One would presume that the Governor would have wanted to be doubly sure about the ability of the appointee to form a durable government. The BJP has the support of 106 MLAs, while the majority mark is 112. This means that when the Governor formed his opinion that Mr. Yediyurappa is in a position to command a majority, he was either counting on the remaining 13 rebel legislators vacating their seats soon, or was assured of their support to the incoming regime.

The Assembly election of May 2018 threw up a hung Assembly, and resulted in the second- and third-placed parties forming a post-poll coalition. Now that the coalition has unravelled, the Speaker's decision becomes crucial to determining the strength of the House. The BJP, for its part, ought to have exercised restraint rather than rushing in to fill the power vacuum. After all, three seats are now vacant, and the figure may go up to 16. The new Chief Minister may win the trust vote, but to remain in power for the current Assembly's term the party would have to win eight more seats in the resulting by-elections. The party has to live down the image of having engineered the fall of the H.D. Kumaraswamy government by getting Congress and JD(S) MLAs to resign. However, its leaders ran into an unusual roadblock when the two parties and the Speaker took the view that they were quitting only with the intent of defecting to the BJP. Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar reminded them that they could be disqualified, rather than be allowed to resign. He asserted that he was empowered to examine whether their resignations were voluntary or induced. And sensing that some of them may become Ministers in the next regime even without being members of the House, he reminded them that under Article 164(1B) of the Constitution, a person who is disqualified for defection could not become a minister without being re-elected to the House.

Regardless of the amoral politics and skulduggery behind the toppling of the regime, the role of the Speaker has been no less questionable. As a means of blocking moves to bring down the government some tactical decisions are understandable, but the manner in which the Speaker has used the law poses a threat to the autonomy of legislators in a general sense. First, can a legislator intending to quit his seat be accused of defection at all, when the penalty for crossing over to another party is the loss of that very seat? Given the propensity of presiding officers in the country to avoid deciding matters within a time frame, it is perilous to allow them to delay the acceptance of resignations until a point when the members concerned are seen as "voluntarily giving up their party membership", which is the first ground on which a member can be disqualified for defection. This is precisely what has happened in the current case. Secondly, does the power to scrutinise a resignation letter for its voluntary nature extend to rejecting it even if it is in the correct format and is handed over in person?

Even the disqualification of the three MLAs does not appear to be in order. Two of them, Ramesh Jarkiholi and Mahesh Kumathalli, have been disqualified on a petition seeking action against them that was submitted in February. It was not acted on for months, but revived in the wake of the resignation controversy. Secondly, it is a moot question whether sufficient opportunity was given to them, as the matter was decided after they were absent on the day they were due to appear. Further, the Speaker appears to have assumed the power to fix a period during which a member will remain disqualified, and barred the three MLAs for the remainder of the current Assembly's term. No such power is conferred on the Speaker by the 10th Schedule to the Constitution. Under the law, the Speaker may only declare a person as having incurred disqualification. Unlike other forms of disqualification, the one under the anti-defection provisions is not accompanied by any ineligibility to contest. One who is disqualified may contest in the very by-election caused by one's own disqualification. All in all, the goings-on in Karnataka show that the Constitution can be twisted and misread to suit anyone's political interests. In an atmosphere in which political loyalties swing like a pendulum, constitutional functionaries appear to be inclined to give self-serving interpretations to the founding law and let the web of confusion be disentangled by the judiciary.

Gaffeur, entertainer, Brexiteer, Premier

The rise of Johnson, U.K.'s 20th Etonian PM, marks not just the 'celebrification' of politics, but also its poisonous triviality



RICHARD SEYMOUR

Give it a few years, U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the House of Commons, and Britain will be "the greatest place on earth". The new Conservative leader, overwhelmingly elected by party activists, is the consummate confidence man. With a patter that makes the British media swoon, Mr. Johnson promises that he will deliver Brexit by October 31. Britain, of whose colonial past he is a bombastic champion, will be on top again.

Yet, everyone knows, including the backbenchers roaring and hawing with delight at his every word, that he can't deliver. There is no time for him to reach a new deal with the European Union (EU), even if it offers a new deal. The current Parliament will not pass the deal that is on offer. And if Mr. Johnson tries to leave without a deal, he will split his party and probably bring down his government.

There has been much frantic discussion in the British press about Mr. Johnson's appointed Cabinet members and advisers, stuffed full of Brexiteers and gurus from the 'Vote Leave' campaign. Yet, he doesn't get his way merely by surrounding himself with right-wing ideologues. To get the parliamentary numbers he needs to deliver Brexit, he would have to call a snap general election. And he spent much of his leadership campaign assuring fellow Tory MPs that they wouldn't have to face an election. Why? Because, since June 2017, it has been clear that Jeremy Corbyn could win a general election. Because, since the European elections, the new hard-right Brexit Party has almost cut the Conservative vote in half. The first poll since Mr. Johnson took the leadership put the Conservatives on 25% of the vote, exactly what it was before. If a new leader was supposed to result in a polling 'bounce' for the Tories, this must be very disappointing.

Farage offers a 'deal'

There is only one circumstance in which Mr. Johnson could risk an election. The leader of the Brexit Party, rightist enragé and former City trader Nigel Farage, has offered Mr. Johnson a "sensible deal". If he called an election before October 31 on the promise of quitting the EU on a 'no deal' basis, Mr. Farage might just stand down his Brexit Party candidates. But by cutting such a deal right now, Mr. Johnson would empower and legitimise a competitor, someone who has done enormous damage to the Conservative Party. Even if his colleagues were to permit such a deal, which is unlikely, he would be weakening his own position, confirming his party's terminal descent, and risking Jeremy Corbyn in Downing Street.

The most likely scenario is that Mr. Johnson will seek yet another Brexit delay to negotiate the terms of a new deal. And yet the only deal he could possibly get would be unacceptable to much of his party. He would need to build cross-party support, which would mean having discussions with Mr. Corbyn. That, he cannot do: one of the breaking points of Theresa May's reign was when she entered into formal talks with Mr. Corbyn, a man whom she and many of her colleagues bait as a 'traitor' to the country. Mr. Johnson, among the first to condemn her for it, would be hoist by his own petard if he risked such negotiations.

So what, then, is the point of Mr. Johnson's charade? Why did Conservative MPs overwhelmingly choose him as the best leadership candidate? Why did party activists trust him? Why did the Conservative press, from the pro-Brexit *Daily Telegraph* to the pro-Europe



Evening Standard, back him? Why are right-wing tabloids so delirious about their new leader? The short answer is that after two years of disarray, defeats and demoralisation, Mr. Johnson offers that seductive opiate: optimism.

Lacking answers to the constitutional crisis, underlying crisis of legitimacy for the political system, and stalemated economy, and well out of options, the Right is hankering for the 'hope-ium'. As the *Daily Mail's* front page beseeched, referencing a famous song by the old British comedy duo Morecambe and Wise, "Bring Us Sunshine".

Such a bathetic plea, just over a couple of years after the same paper hopefully exhorted Prime Minister May to "Crush The Saboteurs", shows how deep the depression goes. Indeed, Brexit was itself partly a placebo answer to a long-brewing melancholia on the British Right over the loss of empire: chauvinist self-assertion as national therapy.

Mr. Johnson is the right person to benefit from this because, like Donald Trump, he is a product of the entertainment industry. It is through his self-clowning appearances on the satirical show, 'Have I Got News For You', that he invented his public persona as a harmless gaffeur, stumbling through political life. That persona shrouded his politics in ambiguity.

It won him the matey, gently mocking affection of correspondents, who uniformly call him 'Boris'. It enabled him to become London Mayor twice, despite achieving staggeringly little, and wasting money on vanity projects like water cannons. It saw him through scandals that might have crushed other politicians.

Erring and apologising

In his political columns, written for the Thatcherite faithful, he is a provocateur, who refers to black people as "piccaninnies" with "watermelon smiles", equates Papua New Guineans with cannibals, refers to gay men as "tank-topped bum boys", and suggests that the colonial powers should reconquer their former empires. If ever caught out in one of these statements, he plays up the clowning, knowingly adding one more entry to his "global itinerary of apology".

His stint as Foreign Secretary was less kind to him. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office being a residue of the empire, Mr. Johnson felt compelled to remind people of the fact. On a trip to Myanmar, for example, he thoughtlessly recited Rudyard Kipling's pro-colonial poem, 'The Road to Mandalay'. Many Britons, particularly older conservatives, would have enjoyed Mr. Johnson's display of

chauvinism. More seriously, his laziness and refusal to understand his brief scuppered negotiations with Iran over the release of a detained British journalist, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. She is still in prison.

Yet these scandals didn't hinder his progress. Why? Because, like Mr. Trump, he made his base feel good. He was entertaining copy for editors, producers and his social media following. And in a leadership election in which no one had any answers, Mr. Johnson at least had star power.

In part, this is an old story about the Eton-educated rich dominating politics. Mr. Johnson is the 20th Etonian Prime Minister. Legend has it that W.H. Auden, when told by his schoolmaster that only the 'cream' attended his school, replied: "yes, I know what you mean: thick and rich". The preparation of the thick and rich for rule has been the vocation of the U.K.'s public schools for centuries. Yet, Mr. Johnson also embodies, not just the 'celebrification' of politics, but also its relentless and poisonous triviality. It is noticeable that new right-wing tendencies are thriving in cultures of flippancy, contrarianism and on-line irony.

The pervasive lack of seriousness in Britain's political culture, which has internalised the values of mass entertainment, has enabled the new celebrity-politician to evade consistency and accountability, and revive discredited ideologies.

To what effect? In this case, the main result of Mr. Johnson's ascent is to store up yet another meltdown at the top of government, and a bitter backlash among the base. This may be a terminal crisis for the Conservative Party. And it is not likely to end well for the country either.

Richard Seymour is a London-based writer, a founding editor of *Salvage* magazine, and author of the book *The Twittering Machine*

From 'being different' to 'being dishonourable'

Under Advani, being a 'party with a difference' was BJP's article of faith; under Modi, the claim is just a nostalgic memory



KARAN THAPAR

These days, I find myself increasingly thinking of Lal Krishna Advani. He was the president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1990 when I returned to India and started working as a journalist. In those days, privately owned news channels did not exist. Doordarshan was a monopoly. The only way independent current affairs was possible was through video magazines. There were two that were best known: Newstrack and Eyewitness. I was the editor of the latter.

I did many interviews with Mr. Advani, probably more than I did of any other politician in that *fin de siècle* period. The common thread that ran through the interviews was a ploy I was rather fond of. Whenever my focus was on an issue or a decision that smelt of realpolitik and appeared less than ethical, I would counter Mr. Advani's defensive answers with a set statement, which I delivered with a grin: "That answer may be okay for other leaders but how can it be acceptable for the president of a

party that calls itself 'a party with a difference'?"

There wasn't a single occasion when this didn't make Mr. Advani wince. It wasn't just embarrassment that I could discern but pain, of the sort that's self-inflicted and, therefore, more hurtful. Whenever that happened, I knew I had made my point. Mr. Advani was too shrewd a politician to verbally concede but the look on his face said it all.

Part of moral core

In those days, the BJP genuinely believed that it was different from every other party. This difference was its moral core. It convinced the party that it was superior to others. At that time, it had 85 MPs in the Lok Sabha but even when six years earlier it just had two, it drew its strength from its moral conviction as much as from its legislative numbers.

I wonder what Mr. Advani would make of his party's behaviour today? Since the swearing in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a second term, the BJP has been on an unparalleled – and, it seems, unstoppable – spree of luring MPs, MLAs and even corporators. This has happened in Karnataka, West Bengal, Goa, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. And it has happened by a variety of no-



vel methods. On one occasion, two-thirds of a party's strength in the legislature defected; on another, a sizeable number of MLAs resigned to enable the BJP to cross the majority mark.

Not only is the BJP unconcerned about what this has done to its moral image, but also, perhaps more surprisingly, it is indifferent to what this will do to its internal cohesion and ideology. Consider Goa. The 10 Congress MLAs who switched to the BJP had been elected to oppose it but three of them are now members of its government. One is the Deputy Chief Minister. Just two months ago, they were strong opponents of Hindutva. Today, they are its champions. No doubt this says a lot about

them but it also speaks volumes about the sincerity of the BJP's Hindutva message.

Embracing the defectors

Let me go one step further. Atanasio 'Babush' Monserrate faces several serious criminal charges, including over the rape of a minor in 2016. This was forcefully raised by the BJP in the Panaji byelection just two months ago. 'Save Goa from Babush' was the party's slogan. On that occasion, he won and defeated the BJP candidate. Today, the BJP has opened its arms and embraced him. His wife Jennifer is a Minister in its government. The charges he faces have been forgotten and forgiven.

It seems that in its inexorable march to a comprehensive domination of Indian politics, the BJP is trampling upon its own moral principles and ethical values. No doubt this first happened in Karnataka in 2008 with 'Operation Lotus' but, at the time, that was a one-off and the BJP was not proud of it. Now, there's a brazen defiance of ethics and unconcern with the consequences. The party wants to form a government or gain legislative strength no matter what the cost. It's the end that matters not the means. Success is its own justification.

So where does this leave the

BJP's vaunted claim of being a 'party with a difference'? The truth is that under Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, the BJP feels like any other party. In 1980, when members of the Haryana Janata Party under Bhajan Lal defected *en masse* to Indira Gandhi's Congress, Mr. Advani would have called it the worst example of 'Congressisation of Indian politics'. Today we're witnessing the 'Congressisation of the BJP'.

There is, however, a deeper irony here. Few would deny that Mr. Advani is a founding architect of the BJP. He took it from two seats in 1984 to six years in power beginning 1998. During those three decades (1984 to 2004), the claim of being a 'party with a difference' was not just meaningful but, for many, an article of faith. A mere decade and a half later, Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah have taken the BJP to another level altogether. Mr. Advani could only have dreamed of where it has got to. But, in the process, the party's proud claim of 'being different' has been scrubbed. Today, that is just a nostalgic memory for Mr. Advani's generation. I bet the modern BJP doesn't even know what it means or, if it does, considers it a foolish commitment.

Karan Thapar is a broadcast journalist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Karnataka imbroglio

The proposal, by K.R. Ramesh Kumar, Speaker of Karnataka Legislative Assembly, to include 'opinion of voters' as a factor to take into account, before deciding on 'resignations by Members', is worth discussing ("Karnataka Speaker disqualifies three rebel Congress MLAs," July 26). However, voters cannot insist on a particular person to be their representative, against the person's own concurrence. Ultimately, resigning must be one's personal right. Alternatively, Mr. Ramesh Kumar's suggestion can also be interpreted as an allusion to possibly giving

the voters the right to recall elected representatives. Nevertheless, some improvements to the rules governing defections and disqualifications are needed. MLAs/MPs can be assumed to have the people's mandate only to follow their party's policies and programmes. But their right to subscribe to other ideologies, policies and programmes can be allowed on the sole condition that they resign and seek a fresh mandate before crossing over. If any Member violates this requirement, the Speaker should have the right to disqualify him/her.

P.R.V. RAJA,
Pandalam

H.D. Kumaraswamy never had the mandate to rule Karnataka. He was the leader of the Janata Dal (Secular), a party which finished third in the Assembly elections. The parliamentary poll results were a further affirmation that Congress-JD(S) combine didn't have the mandate. Under the circumstances, it was understandable that so many of coalition MLAs raised a banner of revolt. People of Karnataka suffered for one month as there was no government and governance was on an autopilot mode. No one outside Mr. Kumaraswamy's core support base will mourn his exit.

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

Disgust gives way to anger as we observe the disgraceful behaviour of the elected representatives in Karnataka. Not just these unprincipled and selfish politicians, the electorate should also take the blame for these shameful scenes. Just like in Rajasthan High Court, the appellation 'My Lord' has been dispensed with, it is high time the appellation 'Honourable' is dropped while addressing our MLAs and MPs as it is a misnomer in most of the cases.

S. RAJAGOPALAN,
Chennai

Diluting the RTI

The unseemly haste with which the amendments to the Right to Information

(RTI) Act were pushed through Parliament even in the face of stiff opposition from several political parties and widespread resentment in the civil society betrays the authoritarian mindset of the ruling coalition ("RTI Amendment Bill passed in Rajya Sabha amid protests," July 27). It is ironical that despite enjoying huge majority, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) feels insecure when it comes to transparency and probity. The RTI became possible not through the generosity of any one political party but because of a prolonged people's movement. That a sudden political fiat seeks to destroy its spirit is most unfortunate. The

amendments done should be forthwith withdrawn or the Bill should be sent to a Select Committee of Parliament.

SATISH C. AIKANT,
Mussoorie

One of the worrisome features of the Amendment Bill is that it encroaches upon the rights of the State Governments to appoint State Information Commissioners and gives this power to the Central government. This amounts to an assault on the principle of federalism which is a basic feature of the Constitution.

M. JAMEEL AHMED,
Mysuru

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The unravelling of a kidney racket

The National Capital Region is the epicentre of a well-organised illegal organ trade.
Bindu Shajan Perappadan and **Saurabh Trivedi** report on the web of criminals and their modus operandi

Months after the monsoon hit the small town of Saket Nagar in Kanpur last year, Sangeeta Kashyap*, 33, packed her bags for Delhi where she had been promised a good job. She was excited; she had never stepped out of Kanpur before. “My husband’s friend had promised us ₹40 lakh. We dreamt of a ‘pakka’ house, a good education for our children, and even some savings to help us through illnesses. We also planned for old age,” says Sangeeta. On reaching the city that promised to fulfil her dreams, Sangeeta was given accommodation in a guest house in Ghaziabad. “The next day I was taken to a small clinic,” she says, unable to recall the location. “There, the doctors ran a series of tests on me. My husband’s friend told me that this was important because my employer wanted me to submit a medical clearance certificate before employing me as a maid and a cook. But then he took my Aadhaar card and told me that I have to assume a Muslim name and identity. I refused. I realised that something was amiss. Later during the week, when I was taken to a hospital, I overheard people describe me as a kidney donor. I panicked and raised a hue and cry at the hospital. I insisted that I be sent back home immediately. They packed me off to Kanpur and I thought the worst was over,” she recalls. But the nightmare had only begun. “My husband’s friend came home and tried to convince me to sell my kidney,” says Sangeeta. “He told me that he has been living a good life after

The cops tell us that they will catch those who exploited us. But will we get our entire promised money or the organs we sold? No one is ready to answer these questions.

SONU
Prime witness

selling his. When I refused, he along with some other men threatened and assaulted me. They demanded that I pay them ₹50,000 as part of my travel and medical expenses. Frightened and broke, I approached the police. A senior officer asked me to file a complaint. An FIR was registered on February 1 against six persons in the Barra Police Station in Kanpur under Section 420 [cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property] of the Indian Penal Code and sections of the Human Organ Transplant Act.” Sangeeta was unaware that her complaint would blow the lid off a massive organ racket.

High demand, low supply
The epicentre of this massive illegal organ trade is the National Capital Region. The web of criminals includes police personnel, doctors, hospital administration staff, medical support staff, and kidney and liver donors – all catering to patients with end-stage kidney and liver failure. These patients can’t be treated with medicines or dialysis and therefore require a transplant. A dozen leading private surgeons are under the scanner now. These include top urologists in Delhi who allegedly worked in nexus with some police personnel from the Uttar Pradesh Police as well as brokers (some of whom were previous donors themselves) to ensure a smoothly running profitable trade, the value of which some people peg at over a ₹100 crore. So far, 15 people, including the CEO of Pushpawati Singhania Research Institute (PSRI), Deepak Shukla, have been arrested, and notices have been served to two leading doctors

at Fortis Hospital in Delhi for violation of the Transplantation of Human Organs (and Tissue) Act, 1994. This legislation was brought in with the objective of “regulating the removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes and for the prevention of commercial dealings in human organs.” These arrests and notices could prove to be only the tip of the iceberg. “Investigations against another leading hospital in central Delhi are currently under way and more arrests are likely,” says a senior Delhi police officer who is investigating the case. “The industry is thriving despite several raids and laws against it because those who sell their organs are desperate for money. It is a trade that guarantees high profit. Plus, it’s easy to do business in India,” says a senior Health Ministry official who did not wish to come on record. Impoverished donors are pushed into the trade as organ donations from cadavers and brain-dead patients in India are not enough to meet the requirement of over a lakh citizens annually who require a kidney transplant.

In 2016, in its reply to a Lok Sabha question, the Union Health Ministry noted that there is a huge gap between the demand and supply of human organs for transplant even though the precise numbers of premature deaths due to heart, liver, lung and pancreas failures have not been compiled. The Ministry noted that against the demand of 2 lakh kidneys, only 6,000 were available. Similarly, against the demand of 30,000 livers only 1,500 were available, and against the demand of 50,000 hearts merely 15 were available across the country. According to the Multi Organ Harvesting Aid Network Foundation (Mohan Foundation), a Chennai-based NGO working on organ donation, only about 3% of the demand is met. The Indian Transplant Registry notes that live transplants account for the majority of kidney transplants in India; cadaver transplants account for a very small number. “In India, [the] deceased organ donation programme is largely restricted to big institutions and the private sector which makes it less accessible for all. The deceased donation rate in 2013 was 0.26/million population and this went up to 0.36/million population in 2014,” it says.

Modus operandi
In the case that the police is investigating at the moment, patients who needed transplants were admitted in large and well-known private hospitals that are protected by a battery of lawyers and administrators, says a senior Delhi police official. “Donors, all of whom are from very poor families, are brought to these hospitals for initial testing and matching with patients,” explains Lucknow-based Vardhan, a prime witness in the case. “We are then trained to face the interview board of the competent authority [which evaluates transplant of organs between near relatives related genetically] or the Authorisation Committee [which evaluates transplant of organs between those related emotionally and where the donor’s intentions are altruistic] of the hospital for clearance for donation. Then we are housed in guest houses in Delhi. There we are tutored to tell the hospital board that we are relatives of the patients we are donating organs to. At this point, the payment too is partially made.”

Like Sangeeta, Vardhan’s story began around August last year. He desperately needed money to pay for the operation of his two-and-a-half-year-old child who was born with a hole in the heart. He decided to sell one of his kidneys. “An old friend told me about this offer. He made it out to be a noble deed. He said I would get ₹2 lakh – enough to pay for my child’s surgery and for setting up a small shop for myself. It seemed like a good option. I thought God has given the poor two organs as personal insurance against bad times,” he says. He breaks down while showing large surgery scars on his abdomen. Following the surgery, Vardhan has one kidney and no child. He is without a job. And to make matters worse, he has been receiving death threats from those in the illegal organ trade. “Life has become unbearably

lowing the investigation,” he says. His only mistake, he says, was his refusal to become a headhunter himself. “They call me daily to tell me that I will be ‘accidentally’ killed in an accident soon. They stole my money after I refused to work with them,” he says. **Attractive to the poor** “While there are many layers of control to prevent exploitation, the fact that there are a negligible number of organ donations makes finding a matching donor for the patients a tough task,” notes the Mohan Foundation. Under the law, only those related to the patient are allowed to donate organs. This further reduces the number of prospective organ donors. In 2013, the medical journal, *Indian Journal of Anesthesia*, stated that of the 205 patients declared brain-dead at AIIMS in Delhi in the trauma



ILLUSTRATION:
DEEPAK
HARICHANDAN

centre over the last five years, only 10 were potential organ donors. The reasons were varied. There was lack of awareness about organ donation among family members. Many believed that donating a person’s organs after death would affect the person in his or her ‘next life’. And processes were simply not in place to help such donations. “Indian organs are being sold thanks to advertising by word of mouth. We are dealing with an underground mafia of organ traders. In this case, the gang managed to create fake identities. And with the help of medical persons, they managed to manipulate medical tests and documents,” says a senior official from the Uttar Pradesh police who is involved in inter-State investigation. “Those in the business had created a large database of those who were ready to donate their kidneys and livers. These people were then recruited into the business to find more sellers. And with every new racket being busted, we also find that the age of the donors/sellers is rapidly falling. Younger men are being recruited or are coming forward to donate their kidney or liver. This is really worrying,” says a Delhi police officer. A witness in the case, Sonu*, admits that he is only 18-20 years old. “According to my official papers, I am much older though,” he says. “I decided to sell my organ to help my family which was on the verge of starving to death. But today, even after selling my kidney, my life is no better. Policemen and laws don’t understand that we sell our organs just to ensure that we are able to stay alive.” Sonu and Vardhan were admitted in the same hospital at the same time for kidney removal. Like Vardhan, Sonu too was cheated by middlemen, who only gave him a portion of the promised sum of ₹2 lakh. “When I close my eyes, I dream of blotches of blood. The cops tell us that they will catch those who exploited us. But will we get our entire promised money or the organs we sold? No one is ready to answer these questions,” he says. The investigating agencies claim that they are fully aware of the reasons that compel people to sell or donate organs. “A kidney is sold for anything between ₹70 lakh and ₹1 crore depending on how urgent the need is. The donor/seller never gets over ₹3 lakh. The rest of the amount is distributed among those who run the business,” says a senior official officer from the Uttar Pradesh Police. **Expanding the web** It was when a police team from Kanpur approached the Delhi police regarding a kidney racket that they stumbled on T. Rajkumar Rao, 40, alleged to be the kingpin of an international kidney racket. Rao himself was a donor. But unlike other donors, Rao was ambitious and built his own empire. He had been arrested before and sent to prison. But after being released, he resumed his activities and changed his base from West Bengal and its neighbouring States to central India. He got donors and sellers from Unnao, Kanpur, Lucknow and Fatehpur. A police officer who once interrogated him recalls Rao as being very sharp and knowing how to influence donors and later make them part of his racket. “There were around 12 permanent members in the gang. They would prepare fake documents, coordinate with hos-

pitals and donors, transfer money and prepare donors for interviews,” he says. Rao used to keep a large portion of the money for himself in every deal. The rest was shared among the others, including the donor. “He never paid the promised amount to the donor. And when the donor asked for it, Rao would urge him/her to bring more donors with the promise of more money. Regardless of the deal, the donors get only between ₹2 lakh and ₹4 lakh of the promised ₹5 lakh,” says the officer. Donors who refused to co-operate were threatened with legal cases of cheating. Suresh Singh* got a kidney transplant in 2016, and was chagrined for demanding money for it. “After a prolonged kidney treatment my doctor recommended a kidney transplant. He told me that my kidney would stop functioning soon,” he says. “I discussed it with the personal staff of the doctor and offered to pay for a kidney if I could get a donor. I got a call from the doctor’s secretary, who gave my family members the contact of a man who could arrange a donor for me. After several rounds of negotiations, the deal was fixed at ₹20 lakh.” Suresh was asked to pay immediately, he says, while the paperwork was taken care of by the ‘staff member’. “I paid the amount before the operation and it went off smoothly. I met the donor only once during the interview. I was introduced as his elder brother to the hospital,” he says. He explains that a major part of the

An old friend told me that I would get ₹2 lakh – enough to pay for my child’s surgery. It seemed like a good option. I thought God has given the poor two organs as personal insurance against bad times.

VARDHAN
Prime witness

payment was made through cash and rest was transferred to a bank account. Rajesh Yadav, Superintendent of Police (Crime), Kanpur Police, says that a Special Investigation Team has been formed to investigate the case. “Till now we have arrested 15 people in the case including doctors and middlemen. We are in touch with the Delhi and Faridabad Police to get information regarding the whereabouts of other suspects,” says Yadav. “To make this a watertight case we have ensured that the donors and recipients are prime witnesses and not the accused. During the investigation, we found that the hospitals and middlemen had prepared a fake profile of donors. The coordinators at PSRI hospital had forged DNA reports to present the donors as blood relatives of the recipient. We are also looking at how the organ transplant clearance committee of hospitals ignored all the facts and never cross-examined donors and recipients,” says a police officer who is part of the SIT team and did not wish to be identified. A 2003 report in the *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* is a chilling postscript to the story. “If the organ trade is not controlled, disappearances, especially among street children [and] kidnapping rackets may flourish along with the theft of organs of executed criminals in future. The people may lose trust in the medical community and may suspect their involvement in the premature declaration of death on seeing a signed donor card.”

*Names have been changed to protect identities

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 138

दिवास्वप्न जैसे लक्ष्य

मोदी सरकार अपने लिए ऐसे महत्वाकांक्षी लक्ष्य तय करती है जिनके बारे में अधिकांश लोगों की लगता है कि इन्हें हासिल नहीं किया जा सकता है। ऐसे कुछ लक्ष्यों की बात करें तो जीडीपी में विनिर्माण की हिस्सेदारी को 2022 तक 17 फीसदी से बढ़ाकर 25 फीसदी करना, 2022 तक ही किसानों की आय दोगुनी करना, 2025 तक निर्यात दोगुना करना और 2025 तक जीडीपी का आकार 5 लाख करोड़ डॉलर करना शामिल हैं । गत वर्ष तक इसका आकार 2.7 लाख करोड़ डॉलर था। लक्ष्य को

हासिल करने के लिए जीडीपी में 8 फीसदी की औसत वार्षिक वृद्धि की जरूरत होगी, वह भी तब जबकि मुद्रास्फ़ीति 4 फीसदी हो। सरकार को ये महत्त्वाकांक्षी लक्ष्य तय करने का प्रोत्साहन इस बात से मिलता होगा कि उसने ऐसे ही कुछ लक्ष्य हासिल करने की दिशा में अहम प्रगति की है। इनमें घरेलू गैस की उपलब्धता, राजमार्ग निर्माण, नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा, बैंकिंग समावेशन और खुले में शौच से मुक्ति शामिल हैं। परंतु शौचालय बनाने जैसे लक्ष्य हासिल करना एक बात है और महत्त्वाकांक्षी

वृहद आर्थिक लक्ष्यों को हासिल करना एकदम अलग बात है। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि इसके लिए शिथिल नियंत्रण वाली व्यवस्था, तालमेल भरे कदम और उचित नीतिगत ढांचे के साथ समय-सीमा का मजबूती से पालन आवश्यक हैं। सरकार पहले मोर्चे पर तो सफल है लेकिन बाद वाले मुद्दों पर नहीं।

निर्यात वृद्धि की बात करें तो गत पांच वर्षों में इसमें 5 फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हुई है। ऐसे समय में जबकि वैश्विक कारोबारी माहौल में गिरावट आ रही है, अगले छह वर्ष में इसमें 100 फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी लाने के लिए कितने बदलाव और प्रयास की आवश्यकता पड़ेगी, यह अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है। जीडीपी में विनिर्माण की हिस्सेदारी मोदी सरकार के पहले कार्यकाल से ही थमी हुई है। ऐसे में अगले कुछ वर्ष में इसमें 50 फीसदी सुधार की अपेक्षा कैसे की जाए? किसानों की आय दोगुनी करने के लिए सरकार के पास नीतिगत उपाय नहीं

हैं और वित्तीय हालात भी अनुकूल नहीं हैं।

अवास्तविक लक्ष्य तय करने का सिलसिला मोदी सरकार के शुरुआती वर्षों तक जाता है। तब कहा गया था कि जीडीपी वृद्धि दर को दो अंकों में ले जाया जाएगा। आज जब हम हकीकत के करीब हैं तो अगर हम अरविंद सुब्रमण्यन की चिंताओं को किनारे कर आधिकारिक

जीडीपी आंकड़ों को स्वीकार कर लें तो भी विगत कुछ वर्षों में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर औसतन 7 फीसदी रही है। अधिकांश पूर्वानुमान कहते हैं कि वृद्धि इस वर्ष और अगले वर्ष इसके आसपास ही रहेगी। अगर 5 लाख करोड़ डॉलर के लक्ष्य को गंभीरता से लिया जाए तो जीडीपी वृद्धि दर को बढ़ाकर औसतन 8.5 फीसदी करना होगा। वर्ष 2008 के वित्तीय संकट के बाद से हम इस लक्ष्य को हासिल नहीं कर सके हैं। कहने वाले कह सकते हैं कि इस लक्ष्य को हासिल करने में

एक वर्ष की देरी से कुछ खास नुकसान नहीं होगा। ऐसे में चिदंबरम की बात याद आती है कि तब यह मौजूदा वृद्धि दर का संयुक्तीकरण रह जाएगा। असल मसला है सरकार की नीतिगत दिशा का। उदाहरण के लिए संरक्षणवाद और शुल्क नीति के मामले में सरकार निर्यात मामलों के उच्च स्तरीय सलाहकार समूह की अनुशंसा के एकदम विपरीत काम कर रही है।

दो श्रम संहिताओं से श्रम कानून संबंधी कुछ मुद्दों से निबटा जा रहा है जिन्हें अंतिम रूप दिया जा चुका है। अधिक लचीले श्रम बाजार का मूल मुद्दा आंशिक रूप से ही हल हुआ है। वैश्विक आपूर्ति श्रृंखला से एकीकरण बढ़ाने की दिशा में भी कुछ खास नहीं हुआ।

आगे की राह आसान नहीं रहने वाली है, यह बात प्रधानमंत्री की आर्थिक सलाहकार परिषद की लॉजिस्टिक सलाहकार समिति की

गत दिसंबर की रिपोर्ट से पता लग चुकी है। रिपोर्ट देश के निर्यातकों की लागत की समस्या और बुनियादी सुविधाओं की कमी का जिक्र करती है और अन्य देशों के निर्यातकों से उनकी तुलना प्रस्तुत करती है। पोर्ट लॉजिस्टिक्स (नौपरिवहन समेत) के कारण कुल लागत 7 से 8 फीसदी बढ़ जाती है। परिवहन, पूंजी, बिजली आदि अन्य लागत भी दूसरे देशों से अधिक हैं। प्रक्रियाओं और दस्तावेजीकरण को सुसंगत और आसान बनाने की दिशा में भी अभी काफी कुछ किया जाना है। यह नई सरकार के कार्यकाल के शुरुआती दिन हैं। एक ओर जहां 100 दिन की कार्य योजना की बात हो रही है, वहीं सबको पता है कि प्रधानमंत्री भारी भरकम कदम के बजाय चरणबद्ध तरीके से आगे बढ़ना पसंद करते हैं। इसके बावजूद अगर उनकी सरकार औरती रहने वाली है, कि तय किए गए महत्त्वाकांक्षी लक्ष्य शर्मिंदगी का सबब न बन जाएं तो उसे तेजी से कदम उठाने होंगे।



अजय मोहंती

खराब नजीर पेश करता पंचाट का फैसला

भारत को खराब दिवालिया निर्णयों से बचाव की आवश्यकता है। एस्सार स्टील मामले में न्यायमूर्ति मुखोपाध्याय द्वारा दिया गया निर्णय ऐसा ही एक फैसला है। विस्तार से बता रहे हैं ओंकार गोस्वामी

राष्ट्रीय कंपनी लॉ अपील पंचाट (एनसीएलएटी) द्वारा एस्सार स्टील मामले में दिए गए फैसले के बाद देश के कानूनी और बैंकिंग हलकों में मानो आफत सी आ गई है। गत 4 जुलाई को दिए गए इस 116 पन्नों के निर्णय में एनसीएलएटी प्रमुख न्यायधीश सुधांशु मुखोपाध्याय ने दिवालिया पुनर्गठन के सिद्धांतों को मानो सर के बल उलट दिया है।

इसे लेकर की गई टिप्पणियां भी नकारात्मक थीं। एक खबर की सुखी थी, ‘एनसीएलएटी का एस्सार स्टील संबंधी फैसला सुरक्षित ऋणदाताओं के अधिकार का हनन करता है, आईबीसी का मजाक उड़ाता है।’ एक अन्य खबर में लिखा गया कि एस्सार स्टील मामले में एनसीएलएटी का निर्णय एकदम गलत है। भारतीय स्टेट बैंक के चेयरमैन रजनीश कुमार ने कहा कि ऋणदाता इस निर्णय के खिलाफ सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का रुख करेंगे।

सवाल यह उठता है कि उक्त आदेश क्या है और आईबीसी तथा दिवालिया प्रक्रिया के वैश्विक मानकों के समक्ष यह कहां टिकता है?

दिवालिया का संबंध ऋण डिफॉल्ट से है। चूंकि ऋण में कर्जदार और कर्जदाता के बीच अनुबंध होता है। कर्ज चुकाने से जुड़ी तमाम बातों से इतर दिवालिया प्रक्रिया का एक सर्वमान्य सिद्धांत यह है कि कर्जदाता के बकाया कर्ज का निस्तारण अन्य दावेदारों से पहले किया जाएगा।

कर्ज के मामलों में दावेदारों का एक पदसोपान होता है। पहला दावा सुरक्षित

कर्जदारों का होता है। इसमें बैंक और वित्तीय संस्थान आते हैं। आईबीसी इन्हें सुरक्षित वित्तीय कर्जदाता कहता है। अगर उनके दावों के निपटान के बाद कुछ बच जाता है तो असुरक्षित कर्जदाताओं की बारी आती है। ये होते हैं व्यापारिक कर्जदाता, सरकारी एजेंसियां और कर्मचारी आदि। इन सबके पास कर्जदाता के अधिकार होते हैं लेकिन इनका ऋण असुरक्षित होता है। आईबीसी में इन्हें परिचालन ऋण दाता कहा जाता है।

सुरक्षित वित्तीय ऋणदाताओं को दावे में वरीयता देने की दो वजह हैं। वैधानिक नजरिये से सबसे पहले सुरक्षित ऋणदाताओं का दावा निपटाय़ा जाना चाहिए। इससे भी अहम यह कि ये सुरक्षित ऋणदाता यानी बैंक और वित्तीय संस्थान सार्वजनिक और जमाकर्ताओं के फंड का इस्तेमाल करते हैं। बिना वरीयता के दावे के पूरे बैंकिंग तंत्र को जोखिम पैदा हो जाएगा। बैंक अपने सुरक्षित कर्जदार की दर कम रखते हैं क्योंकि उन्हें कर्जदार की परिसंपत्ति का भरोसा रहता है। बिना इसके वे ज्यादा ब्याज वसूलेंगे।

आईबीसी के अधीन दिवालिया निस्तारण की बात करें तो इसकी दो धाराएं अधिक महत्वपूर्ण हैं। पहली है धारा 30, जिसमें कहा गया है कि दिवालिया निस्तारण के लिए नियुक्त पेशेवर को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि कतिपय शर्तों का पालन हो। एक शर्त यह है कि योजना में असुरक्षित परिचालन ऋणदाताओं का कर्ज चुकाने के लिए अलग रखी गई राशि

उस राशि से कम नहीं होनी चाहिए जो नकदीकरण की स्थिति में चुकाई जाती।

धारा 30 की अन्य शर्तों के अनुसार: (1) निस्तारण पेशेवर को योजना मंजूरी के लिए ऋणदाता समिति के समक्ष पेश करनी चाहिए (2) यदि वित्तीय ऋणदताओं की कुल मत हिस्सेदारी का 75 फीसदी पूरा होता है तो मंजूरी दी जाती है, बशर्ते कि यह बकाया सुरक्षित ऋण की हिस्सेदारी का प्रतिनिधित्व करता हो और (3) ऋणदाता समिति की मंजूरी हासिल हो और यह योजना समुचित प्राधिकार के समक्ष प्रस्तुत हो जो कि एनसीएलएटी या अपील के मामलों में एनसीएलएटी है।

धारा 31 में कहा गया है कि सक्षम प्राधिकार संतुष्ट है कि ऋणदाता समिति की निस्तारण योजना धारा 30 के अधीन सारी जरूरतों को पूरा करती है तो यह योजना को मंजूरी देते हुए आदेश पारित कर सकता है जो तमाम पक्षकारों पर लागू होगा।

न्यायमूर्ति मुखर्जी ने धारा 31 का इस्तेमाल करते हुए यह दर्शाया कि एनसीएलएटी केवल ऋणदाताओं की समिति की योजना को मंजूरी देने वाला प्राधिकार नहीं है बल्कि वह उसमें तब्दली भी ला सकता है।

सबसे पहले उन्होंने पैरा 148 में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्णय की मनमानी व्याख्या करते हुए कहा कि परिचालन ऋणदाताओं और वित्तीय ऋणदाताओं के साथ समान व्यवहार होना चाहिए। यह आईबीसी और दिवालिया के नियमों

के खिलाफ है।

दूसरा, पैराग्राफ 149 और उसके बाद उन्होंने कहा कि आर्सेलर मित्तल द्वारा एस्सार स्टील के अधिग्रहण के बाद दी गई 42,000 करोड़ रुपये की राशि के वितरण में परिचालन और वित्तीय ऋणदाताओं में काफी भेदभाव किया गया। तीसरा, मुखोपाध्याय आईबीसी की धाराओं 5 (7) और 5 (8) में वित्तीय ऋणदाताओं और वित्तीय कर्ज की अजीब परिभाषा देते हुए कहते हैं कि निस्तारण योजना में वित्तीय ऋणदाता को सुरक्षित या असुरक्षित में नहीं बांटा जा सकता। यह बात नकदीकरण या दिवालिया पुनर्गठन के तमाम सिद्धांतों को ध्ता बताती है।

मुखोपाध्याय कहते हैं कि जहां परिचालन ऋणदाता को पुनर्गठन में नकदीकरण की तुलना में कम भुगतान नहीं किया जा सकता वहीं इसका यह अर्थ नहीं कि उन्हें अधिक राशि भी नहीं दी जा सकती। इस आधार पर उन्होंने ऋणदाता समिति द्वारा किए गए आवंटन को रद्द कर दिया और एक नई व्याख्या प्रस्तुत की जहां सभी ऋणदाताओं से समान व्यवहार किया जाना था।

उनका आदेश नुकसान पहुंचाने वाला है क्योंकि यह दिवालिया पुनर्गठन के नियमों के खिलाफ है। 2017 में विश्व बैंक के कारोबारी सुगमता सूचकांक में भारत की रैंकिंग 190 देशों में 130वीं थी। ऋणशोधन के मामले हल करने में हम 136वें स्थान पर थे। आईबीसी की बदौलत 2019 में हम इस मामले में 108वें स्थान पर आ गए और हमारी कुल रैंकिंग सुधरकर 77वीं हो गई। अगर मुखोपाध्याय के नियमों को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय भी स्वीकार कर लेता है तो हम न केवल आधुनिक दिवालिया पुनर्गठन में पिछड़ जाएंगे बल्कि कारोबारी सुगमता में भी हमारी रैंकिंग कमजोर हो जाएगी।

यह इसलिए भी खतरनाक है क्योंकि अगर यह दिवालिया मामलों की न्यायिक व्याख्या का उदाहरण बन गया तो देश में विदेशी पूंजी का आगमन या दिवालिया फर्म के लिए उनका बोली लगाना मुश्किल हो जाएगा।

ऐसे परिदृश्य में मुझे नहीं लगता कि बैंक अपने फंडसे हुए कर्ज की समस्या को जल्दी निपटा पाएंगे। अच्छी बात यह है कि भारत सरकार ने तेजी दिखाते हुए 17 जुलाई को आईबीसी में संशोधन का प्रस्ताव रख दिया जो कुछ अहम खामियों को दूर करेंगे। इससे मदद मिलनी चाहिए। चाहे जो भी हो लेकिन हमें सावधानी बरतनी होगी कि भविष्य में न्यायिक सक्रियता के उदाहरण स्वरूप ऐसे फैसले न आए जो दिवालिया प्रक्रिया की बिल्कुल समझ न रखते हों।

यह इसलिए भी खतरनाक है क्योंकि यहां भी ‘किंतु भारत जैसे देश में...’ जैसी दलील इस्तेमाल की गई। याद रहे सन 1991 तक देश में सैकड़ों मूर्खतापूर्ण आर्थिक निर्णय लिए गए और उन्हें ऐसी ही दलील के माध्यम से उचित ठहराया गया। बीते 28 वर्षों में इसमें नाटकीय रूप से कमी आई है। फिर भी यह दबे छिपे ढंग से सामने आ ही जाता है। न्यायमूर्ति मुखोपाध्याय का निर्णय ऐसा ही मामला है।

कर्नाटक की राजनीति में बनी रहेगी अनिश्चय की स्थिति

बूकानाके सिद्धलिङ्गप्पा येदियुरप्पा (उन्होंने ज्योतिषियों की सलाह पर आखिरी नाम में बदलाव किया है) चौथी बार कर्नाटक के मुख्यमंत्री बनने को तैयार हैं। वह इससे पहले कभी बतौर मुख्यमंत्री कार्यकाल पूरा नहीं कर पाए और इस बार भी ऐसा ही लगता है।

इसकी वजह एकदम स्पष्ट है। सबसे पहले देखते हैं कि कर्नाटक विधानसभा का अंक गणित क्या कहता है? प्रदेश विधानसभा में कुल 225 सदस्य हैं जिनमें 224 निर्वाचित और एक नामित सदस्य है। एक स्वतंत्र समाज पार्टी (बसपा) का एक और कर्नाटक प्रज्ञावंत जनता पार्टी (बीपीजेपी) का भी एक विधायक है।

ये हैं मूलबगल से एच नागेश, कोल्लेगल से एन महेश और रानेबेन्नूर से आर शंकर। ये तीनों कुमारस्वामी के विरोध में हैं और विधानसभा में कुल 222 सदस्य रह जाएंगे और बहुमत के लिए 112 विधायकों के समर्थन की आवश्यकता होगा।

वर्ष 2018 के विधानसभा चुनाव के बाद भाजपा के पास 105 विधायक थे, कांग्रेस के पास 78 और जनता दल सेक्युलर के पास 37 विधायक। भाजपा ने सरकार बनाने की कोशिश की लेकिन वह नाकाम रही और कांग्रेस और जनता दल सेक्युलर ने साथ मिलकर बहुमत हासिल कर लिया।

संकट के संकेत तो पहले दिन से स्पष्ट थे। येदियुरप्पा को लग रहा था कि उन्हें ही मुख्यमंत्री बनना चाहिए था। कांग्रेस ने एक छोटे दल को मुख्यमंत्री का पद सौंपा था, वह इसका लाभ चाहती थी। कांग्रेस के निवर्तमान मुख्यमंत्री सिद्धरमैया को लग रहा था कि उन्हें पद से हटाया गया है और उनकी कुमारस्वामी सरकार की स्थिरता में कोई रुचि नहीं थी। यही वजह है कि राहुल गांधी ने ट्वीट किया, ‘पहले दिन से कर्नाटक में कांग्रेस-जनता दल सेक्युलर गठजोड़ भीतर और बाहर एक वर्ष की देरी से कुछ खास नुकसान नहीं होगा। ऐसे में चिदंबरम की बात याद आती है कि तब यह मौजूदा वृद्धि दर का संयुक्तीकरण रह जाएगा। असल मसला है सरकार की नीतिगत दिशा का। उदाहरण के लिए संरक्षणवाद और शुल्क नीति के मामले में सरकार निर्यात मामलों के उच्च स्तरीय सलाहकार समूह की अनुशंसा के एकदम विपरीत काम कर रही है। दो श्रम संहिताओं से श्रम कानून संबंधी कुछ मुद्दों से निबटा जा रहा है जिन्हें अंतिम रूप दिया जा चुका है। अधिक लचीले श्रम बाजार का मूल मुद्दा आंशिक रूप से ही हल हुआ है। वैश्विक आपूर्ति श्रृंखला से एकीकरण बढ़ाने की दिशा में भी कुछ खास नहीं हुआ। आगे की राह आसान नहीं रहने वाली है, यह बात प्रधानमंत्री की आर्थिक सलाहकार परिषद की लॉजिस्टिक सलाहकार समिति की



सिरासी हलचल
आदिति फडणीस

बाहर से निहित स्वार्थी तत्त्वों के निशाने पर था। ये वे लोग थे जो इस गठबंधन को अपनी सत्ता को राह की बाधा मानते थे।’ डीके शिवकुमार (उन चुनिंदा कांग्रेस नेताओं में से एक जो विश्वास मत पर अंग्रेजी में बोले, कई लोगों के मुताबिक ऐसा इसलिए किया गया था कि 10 जनपथ उनकी बात सुने) ने वोल्तायर को उद्धृत करते हुए कहा, : ईश्वर मुझे मेरे मित्रों से बचाए। अपने दुश्मनों से मैं स्वयं बचाव कर सकता हूं।

बासवकल्याण के कांग्रेस विधायक बी नारायण राव ने भूमिका थी। पार्टी किसका दावा मानेगी? अपने पराजित विधायकों का या बागियों का? वह इकलौता मुद्दा नहीं है। भाजपा की आंतरिक स्थिति भी संदेह के घेरे में है। येदियुरप्पा के सबसे बड़े विरोधियों में से एक बीएल संतोष को पार्टी की केंद्रीय इकाई में स्थानांतरित कर दिया गया है। जो लोग येदियुरप्पा के साथ नहीं हैं, वे दिल्ली में अपील कर सकते हैं। उनकी तादाद बहुत ज्यादा है। एक मुख्यमंत्री के लिए इससे बड़ा भय और क्या हो सकता है?

इन तमाम समस्याओं के बीच केंद्र के पास एक तरीका यह है कि वह इस हकीकत को स्वीकार करे कि विधानसभा में विशंकु की स्थिति है, संवैधानिक मोशनरी ध्वस्त हो चुकी है और ऐसे में केंद्र को नए चुनाव की घोषणा करनी होगी। परंतु यह कोई विकल्प नहीं है क्योंकि विधायक इस बात पर बवाल मचा देंगे कि चुने जाने के एक वर्ष के भीतर दोबारा चुनाव क्यों?

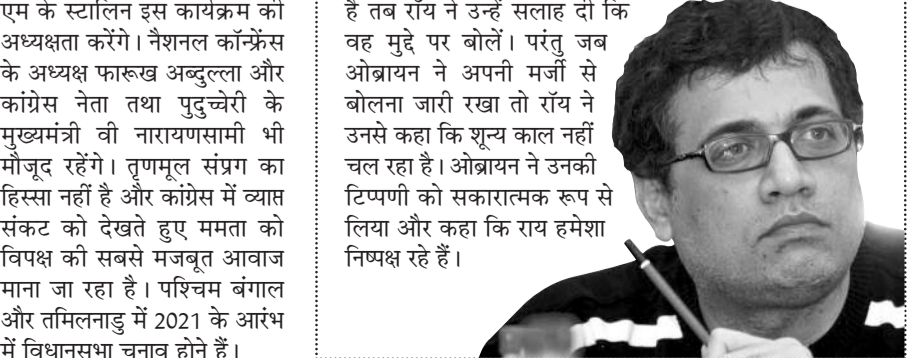
यही कारण है कि कर्नाटक में चाहे जो भी हो लेकिन एक बात तो निश्चित है: जो भी सत्ता में आएगा वह एक ऐसी सरकार चलाएगा जो निरंतर अनिश्चय की स्थिति में रहेगी।

कानाफूसी

सशक्त आवाज
तृणमूल कांग्रेस ने एक मामले में कांग्रेस पर बहुत कायम कर ली है। दरअसल संप्रग की साझेदार द्रविड़ मुन्नेत्र कणमम ने पार्टी के नेता स्व एम करुणानिधि की मूर्ति के अनावरण के लिए तृणमूल कांग्रेस की प्रमुख ममता बनर्जी को आमंत्रित किया है। मूर्ति का अनावरण करुणानिधि की पहली पुण्यतिथि पर 7 अगस्त को किया जाएगा। पार्टी के मौजूदा अध्यक्ष एम के स्टालिन इस कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता करेंगे। नैशनल कॉन्फ्रेंस के अध्यक्ष फारूख अब्दुल्ला और कांग्रेस नेता तथा पुदुच्चेरी के मुख्यमंत्री वी नारायणसामी भी मौजूद रहेंगे। तृणमूल संप्रग का हिस्सा नहीं है और कांग्रेस में व्यास संकट को देखते हुए ममता को विपक्ष की सबसे मजबूत आवाज माना जा रहा है। पश्चिम बंगाल और तमिलनाडु में 2021 के आरंभ में विधानसभा चुनाव होने हैं।

मुद्दे की बात

सूचना का अधिकार संशोधन विधेयक पर चर्चा के दौरान तृणमूल कांग्रेस के राज्यसभा सदस्य डेरेक ओब्रायन अपनी पार्टी की ओर से मुख्य वक्ता थे। जब ओब्रायन बोलने के लिए खड़े हुए तो उनकी पार्टी के ही एक अन्य सदस्य सुखेंद्र शंखर रॉय सदन की कार्यवाही का संचालन कर रहे थे। रॉय राज्य सभा के उपसभापतियों के छह सदस्यीय पैनल के सदस्य हैं। सभापति और उपसभापति की अनुपस्थिति में इन्हीं में से कोई एक कार्यवाही का संचालन करता है। जब ओब्रायन ने यह बोलना शुरू किया कि किस प्रकार सरकार सदन की प्रभुता खत्म कर रही है तब रॉय ने उन्हें सलाह दी कि वह मुद्दे पर बोलें। परंतु जब ओब्रायन ने अपनी मर्जी से बोलना जारी रखा तो रॉय ने उनसे कहा कि शून्य काल नहीं चल रहा है। ओब्रायन ने उनकी टिप्पणी को सकारात्मक रूप से लिया और कहा कि राय हमेशा निष्पक्ष रहे हैं।



आपका पक्ष

वाहनों की बढ़ती संख्या बड़ी समस्या

देश की आबादी बढ़ती जा रही है और इसके साथ ही सड़कों पर वाहनों की संख्या तेजी से बढ़ रही है। इससे ट्रैफिक जाम की समस्या आम हो गई है। सड़कों पर अधिक वाहनों का होना कई समस्याएं भी उत्पन्न करता है जिनमें ध्वनि तथा वायु प्रदूषण प्रमुख हैं। वर्ष 1950 में देश में कुल वाहनों की संख्या 30 लाख थी। इसमें 27 हजार दोपहिया, लाख 59 हजार कार, जीप और टैक्सी, 82 हजार ट्रक और 34 हजार बसें थीं। देश की प्रगति के साथ 2018 तक देश में कुल वाहनों की संख्या 24 करोड़ से अधिक हो गई हैं। इसमें दोपहिया 18 करोड़, चार पहिया करीब 5 करोड़ हैं जिनमें कार, टैक्सी, बसें और ट्रक शामिल हैं। वाहनों की इस संख्या से ध्वनि प्रदूषण तथा वायु प्रदूषण की कल्पना की जा सकती है। ध्वनि



प्रदूषण से लोग अवसादग्रस्त हो रहे हैं जिससे अनिद्रा एवं हृदय घात जैसी गंभीर बीमारी हो रही है। देश के कई शहरों में पार्किंग व्यवस्था नहीं होने से लोगों को काफी परेशानी का सामना करना पड़ता है। सरकारी आंकड़ों के अनुसार एक वर्ष में देश में लगभग डेढ़ लाख

देश में वाहनों की बढ़ती संख्या से वायु और ध्वनि प्रदूषण भी बढ़ रहा है

लोगों की सड़क हादसे में मौत हो जाती है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश में लगभग

एक वर्ष में 3 लाख लोगों की सड़क हादसे में मौत हुई है। सरकार सड़क हादसे को कम करने के लिए कदम उठा रही है। लोगों की भी जिम्मेदारी है कि वे सार्वजनिक परिवहन का इस्तेमाल करें जिससे यातायात कम हो और ध्वनि तथा वायु प्रदूषण में भी कमी आए। लोगों को यातायात नियमों का पालन करना चाहिए।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

झोला छाप डॉक्टरों पर रोक की जरूरत

केंद्र सरकार ने क्लिनिकल संस्थाओं के लिए न्यूनतम मानकों का प्रस्ताव किया है जिससे शायद अब देश में झोला छाप डॉक्टरों, फर्जी दवाखाने

और क्लिनिक बंद हो सकेंगे। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में झोला छाप डॉक्टरों तथा फर्जी दवाखानों से लोग इलाज कराते हैं जिससे उन्हें भी नुकसान की जोखिम भी रहता है। कई ऐसे दवाखाने हैं जो पुरुषों की भ्रमित करते हैं और उनका काफी प्रचार किया जाता है। ऐसे दवाखानों के इश्तेहार दीवारों पर हर जगह लगाए जाते हैं। स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय के निर्देश के अनुसार अब एलोपैथी और आयुष्य विधि से इलाज करने वाली संस्थाओं या क्लिनिकों को नए मानकों के मुताबिक पंजीकरण कराना जरूरी होगा। पंजीकरण से वे किसी जिम्मेदारी से भाग नहीं सकेंगे तथा सरकार की नजर भी उन पर रहेगी। फर्जी दवाखाने तथा क्लिनिक बंद करदने के लिए सरकार को कठोर कदम उठाने चाहिए। इन जगहों पर इलाज के नाम पर लोगों को भ्रमित किया जाता है तथा उनसे पैसे ऐंट लिए जाते हैं।

अश्विनी सिंह, गाजियाबाद

मासूमों की सुरक्षा

यह एक आम राय है कि इंसाफ में देरी नाइंसाफी के बराबर है। यह अदालत में पहुंचे सभी मामलों के बारे में माना जा सकता है, लेकिन खासतौर पर बच्चों के खिलाफ होने वाले अपराधों के मुकदमों में सुनवाई और फैसले में देरी पीड़ित बच्चे की मन-स्थिति को तो बुरी तरह प्रभावित करती ही है, ऐसे अपराधों की रोकथाम के उपायों को भी कमजोर करती है। यों बच्चों की सुरक्षा के लिए तमाम नियम-कायदे बनाए गए हैं, विशेष पॉक्सो कानून है, जिसे हाल ही में और मजबूत किया गया है। इसके बावजूद आज भी बच्चे अगर खतरनाक हालात में जी रहे हैं तो इसकी वजह समाज की संरचना, कुंठित लोगों की अपराधिक मानसिकता, न्याय-प्रक्रिया की जटिलता और फैसलों में देरी है। इसी के मदेनजर सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने बच्चों के मुकदमों में इंसाफ की रफ्तार को तेज करने का निर्देश दिया है। अदालत ने कहा है कि जिस जिले में बच्चों से बलात्कार और पॉक्सो कानून के तहत सौ से ज्यादा मुकदमे लंबित हैं, वहां साठ दिनों के भीतर विशेष पॉक्सो कोर्ट का गठन किया जाए।

हालांकि मुकदमों की सुनवाई और फैसलों में देरी की एक सबसे बड़ी वजह अदालतों में जजों की कमी और मुकदमों का अंबार होता है। इसीलिए मुकदमे सालों-साल चलते रहते हैं और अपराधियों की प्रवृत्ति और उनके मनोबल पर कोई खास असर नहीं पड़ता है। बच्चों के खिलाफ होने वाले अपराध जटिल प्रकृति के होते हैं। ऐसे तथ्य अनेक बार सामने आ चुके हैं कि बच्चों के यौन उत्पीड़न के ज्यादातर मामलों में आरोपी उनके नजदीकी या परिचित ही होते हैं। जान-पहचान का या रिश्तेदार होने से लेकर धमकी और प्रलोभन जैसे कई कारक होते हैं, जिनकी वजह से बच्चे वक्त पर किसी को भी अपने खिलाफ होने वाले अपराध के बारे में बता नहीं पाते हैं। बच्चों के सदमे में जाने और इस तरह के मामलों को बताने के लिए सहज तौर-तरीकों से अनजान रहने की वजह से भी काफी मुश्किल होती है। हालत यह है कि अगर कभी कोई बच्चा माता-पिता को अपने साथ हुई किसी गलत हरकत के बारे में बताना भी चाहता है तो उसे उचित शब्द नहीं मिल पाते। लेकिन विडंबना यह है कि हमारे समाज से लेकर समूचा तंत्र इस मसले पर साहसपूर्ण तरीके से सोचने की कोशिश नहीं करता है।

इस मसले पर समाजशास्त्रियों ने कई बार इस तरह के सुझाव दिए हैं कि स्कूली पाठ्यक्रमों में यौन शिक्षा को शामिल किया जाए। लेकिन संस्कृति और परंपरा आदि का हवाला देकर इस तरह के विचारों को दारकिनार किया जाता रहा है। जबकि संवेदनशील तरीके से की गई यौन शिक्षा की व्यवस्था बच्चों को अपने शरीर और उसके साथ होने वाली हरकत को समझने और समय पर उससे बचने या विरोध करने में मददगार साबित हो सकती है। अब कोर्ट सलाहकार ने भी बच्चों को यौन अपराधों के बारे में जानकारी देने, यौन शिक्षा को स्कूली पाठ्यक्रमों में शामिल करने और स्कूल सहित सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर भी बच्चों की सहायता के लिए विशेष प्रशिक्षित कर्मचारियों और हेल्पलाइन नंबर की व्यवस्था सहित कई उपयोगी सुझाव दिए हैं। इसके अलावा, कानूनी मोर्चे पर भी बच्चों के कोमल मन-मस्तिष्क का खयाल रखते हुए उनके सहयोग की व्यवस्था करने की जरूरत है। बच्चों के खिलाफ होने वाले अपराधों से निपटने के मुद्दे पर टालमटोल का ही नतीजा है कि देश भर में इस साल जनवरी से जून के बीच बच्चियों से बलात्कार के करीब ढाई हजार मामले दर्ज हुए। यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि बच्चों के खिलाफ होने वाले अपराधों की रफ्तार को नहीं रोका गया तो उसका असर समूचे समाज के भविष्य पर पड़ेगा।

वसूली का संकट

आम्रपाली समूह ने फ्लैट खरीदने वालों के पैसों का अपने दूसरे धंधों के लिए किस तरह से इस्तेमाल किया, इसकी परतें अब खुल रही हैं। इस समूह के खिलाफ प्रवर्तन निदेशालय में दर्ज मामलों और उनकी जांच में यह सामने आया है कि लोग फ्लैट खरीदने के लिए जो पैसा दे रहे थे, उसे समूह की दूसरी कंपनियां और कुछ बड़े-बड़े लोगों की कंपनियों में डाल दिया जाता था। ऐसे में कैसे परियोजनाएं पूरी होतीं और लोगों को फ्लैट मिलते? जाहिर है, निवेशकों के साथ धोखाधड़ी का यह खेल लंबे समय से चल रहा था। प्रवर्तन निदेशालय की जांच बता रही है कि समूह ने निवेशकों का पैसा आइसीसी के प्रमुख शशांक मनोहर के खाते और क्रिकेट खिलाड़ी महेंद्र सिंह धोनी की कंपनी में भी स्थानांतरित किया। संभव है, जांच में ऐसे कई और नाम आएँ। आम्रपाली समूह की अपनी छिपावलीस पंजीकृत कंपनियां हैं। इस तरह आम्रपाली समूह निवेशकों की रकम डकारता रहा और बाद में उसने फ्लैट खरीदारों को ठेंगा दिखा दिया। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने अगर इस मामले में सख्त रुख नहीं दिखाया होता तो निवेशकों को न्याय मिलना संभव नहीं था।

इस हफ्ते के शुरू में सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने आम्रपाली समूह के खिलाफ बड़ा फैसला देते हुए फ्लैट खरीदारों को बड़ी राहत दी। अब इस समूह के सारे अधूरे फ्लैटों का काम पूरा करने की जिम्मेदारी सरकारी कंपनी नेशनल बिल्डिंग कंस्ट्रक्शन कॉरपोरेशन (एनबीसीसी) को सौंपी गई है। यानी बयालीस हजार से ज्यादा निवेशकों को फ्लैट तैयार करके देना अब एनबीसीसी की जिम्मेदारी है। लेकिन सबसे बड़ी चुनौती यह है कि अधूरे निर्माण को पूरा करने के लिए पैसा कहाँ से लाया जाए। हालाँकि एनबीसीसी ने पैसा जुटाने का जो खास सुप्रीम कोर्ट के समक्ष रखा है, उससे कुछ उम्मीद बंधती है, लेकिन यह सब इतना आसान नहीं है। एनबीसीसी का कहना है कि बिना बिके फ्लैटों और आम्रपाली की व्यावसायिक जायदाद को बेच कर यह रकम जुटाई जाएगी और अधूरे निर्माण पूरे किए जाएंगे। कुछ पैसा मौजूदा फ्लैट खरीदारों से भी मिलेगा। लेकिन सवाल यह है कि खरीदारों की जिस रकम को आम्रपाली समूह ने दूसरी कंपनियों और निवेशकों के खाते में डाल दिया था, उसकी वसूली कैसे होगी? यह कोई आसान काम नहीं है। सारे मामले को अभी लंबी जांच और कानूनी प्रक्रिया से गुजरना है। जबकि एनबीसीसी को फ्लैट जल्दी ही खरीदारों को सौंपने होंगे। लोगों को हकीकत में न्याय तभी मिल पाएगा। अगर पैसे के अभाव में एनबीसीसी फ्लैटों का निर्माण नहीं करा पाया तो फिर से नया संकट खड़ा हो सकता है।

आम्रपाली बिल्डर ने सिर्फ खरीदारों को नहीं, बैंकों और नोएडा और ग्रेटर नोएडा प्राधिकरण को जो नुकसान पहुंचाया है, उसकी भरपाई आसान नहीं है। आम्रपाली बिल्डर पर ग्रेटर नोएडा प्राधिकरण का साढ़े तीन हजार करोड़ रुपए से ज्यादा बकाया है। इसी तरह नोएडा प्राधिकरण का बिल्डरों पर सत्रह हजार करोड़ रुपया बकाया है, इसमें बाईस सौ करोड़ रुपया आम्रपाली समूह का है। सवाल है कि ये दोनों प्राधिकरण अरबों-खरबों की रकम बिल्डरों से कैसे वसूल पाएंगे! यह बिल्डरों और प्राधिकरणों के अधिकारियों के गठजोड़ का ही नतीजा है कि बिल्डर अरबों रुपए डकारते गए और सरकारी महकमों को चपत लगाते चले गए। प्राधिकरण कितने लाचार हो चुके हैं, इसका सबसे बड़ा उदाहरण यह है कि बड़े बकाएदारों की जमीन का आबंटन रद्द कर जमीन को कब्जे में लेने तक की उनकी हिम्मत नहीं हुई। ऐसा इसलिए है कि प्राधिकरण भ्रष्टाचार के अड्डे बने हुए हैं। इसीलिए फ्लैट खरीदारों की यह दुर्गति हुई।

कल्पमेधा

प्रसन्नता को जितना लुटाएंगे उतनी ही अधिक हमारे पास आएगी। -विक्टर ह्यूगो

जनसत्ता

होर्मुज की आंच में तपती खाड़ी

ब्रह्मदीप अलूने

ईरान को लेकर खाड़ी में उत्पन्न हुए इस संकट के पीछे अमेरिका और सऊदी अरब की साझा रणनीति और हिंसक कूटनीति रही है। इसके दूरगामी परिणाम बेहद घातक हो सकते हैं। सऊदी अरब अपने पारंपरिक और धार्मिक (शिया) प्रतिद्वंद्वी ईरान को आर्थिक रूप से तबाह करने के साथ ही उसे मिटा देने पर आमादा है। अरब दुनिया में एकछत्र आधिपत्य का खाब पूरा करने को प्रतिबद्ध सऊदी अरब अमेरिका-ईरान के बीच तनाव को अपने लिए एक बड़े अवसर के रूप में देख रहा है।

ईरान को अरब प्रायद्वीप से अलग करने वाला होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य युद्ध के मुहाने पर खड़ा है। अमेरिका का जंगी बेड़ा अब्राहम लिंकन बी-52 युद्ध पोतों के साथ मध्यपूर्व को युद्ध की आग में झोंकने को तैयार है। दूसरी ओर आर्थिक प्रतिबंधों से जूझ रहा ईरान महाशक्ति के आगे रुकने और झुकने को तैयार नहीं है। अपने जहाज को जिब्राल्टर में ब्रितानी बलों द्वारा पकड़े जाने से खफा होकर ईरान ने होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य से एक ब्रितानी टैंकर को पकड़ कर अपने खतरनाक इरादे जाहिर भी कर दिए हैं। अरब दुनिया का इतिहास रहा है कि यहां शांति और अशांति महाशक्तियां ही तय करती रही हैं। मध्य पूर्व के तेल और प्राकृतिक संसाधनों से भरपूर इन देशों में वैधानिक सत्ता को अस्थिर करके और गृह युद्ध की आग में झोंक कर महाशक्तियां अपने हित संवर्धन करती रही हैं और अमेरिका इसमें अग्रणी रहा है। तमाम परेशानियों और चुनौतियों के बीच ईरान, अमेरिका की नव उपनिवेश

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अरविंद दास

समकालीन मीडिया परिदृश्य पर सोशल मीडिया और टेलीविजन हावी हैं। सूचना क्रांति से लैस इन माध्यमों में खबरों के उत्पादन और प्रसारण की हमेशा हड़बड़ाहट रहती है। ‘ब्रेकिंग न्यूज’, ‘फास्ट न्यूज’ पर जोर रहता है। हालांकि मीडिया विमर्शकारों के बीच प्रिंट मीडिया या समाचार-पत्र जैसे पारंपरिक माध्यम की अहमियत फिर से बढ़ी है। ऐसे में डेढ़ सौवें जयंती वर्ष में महात्मा गांधी की पत्रकारिता और उनके मूल्यों को याद करना जरूरी लगता है। वे राजनेता, विचारक के साथ-साथ एक कुशल पत्रकार भी थे। जब वे बैरिस्टर की पढ़ाई करने लंदन गए तब कानून के एक छात्र के रूप में पत्रकारिता से उनका सामना हुआ। साथ ही, सन 1890 में ‘द वेजिटेरियन’ में छह लेखों की एक शृंखला से उनके पत्रकारिता कर्म की शुरुआत हुई। इन लेखों में उनके एक सजग आलोचक रूप के दर्शन होते हैं। बाद में स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन के दौरान गांधीजी ने पत्रकारिता के माध्यम से जो भूमिका निभाई, भारतीय जनमानस और पत्रकारों को जिस रूप में उद्दे़लित किया, वह भारतीय पत्रकारिता के इतिहास की एक धरोहर है। गांधीजी के सत्य और अहिंसा के विचारों की गहरी छाप

चांद का सफर

भारत ने अपने अब तक के सबसे प्रतिष्ठित और जटिल अंतरिक्ष अभियान चंद्रयान-2 को चंद्रमा के सफर पर सफलतापूर्वक भेज दिया। यह हमारे लिए बहुत हर्ष और गर्व की बात है क्योंकि इस उपलब्धि के कारण आज हम अंतरिक्ष के क्षेत्र में अमेरिका, रूस और चीन के बराबर जा पहुंचे हैं। निश्चित रूप से इस अभियान की सफलता का श्रेय हमारे उन सभी वैज्ञानिकों को जाता है जिन्होंने इस जटिल मिशन को अपने दिन-रात के अथक परिश्रम के बूते अंजाम दिया और सफल किया। खास बात यह भी है कि हमारा चंद्रयान-2 पूर्णतः स्वदेशी तकनीक से बनाया गया है।

चंद्रमा पर मौजूद ऊर्जा के अपार भंडार के विषय में इसरो के अध्यक्ष के. सिवन का एक बयान बेहद प्रेरित करने वाला रहा। उन्होंने कहा, ‘जिस देश के पास ऊर्जा के इस अकूत स्रोत को चंद्रमा से धरती पर लाने की क्षमता होगी, वह इस पूरी प्रक्रिया पर राज करेगा। मैं केवल इस प्रक्रिया का हिस्सा नहीं बनना चाहता बल्कि इसका नेतृत्व करना चाहता हूं।’ सिवनजी का यह बयान संसार के सभी देशों को साफ संदेश देता है कि भारत अंतरिक्ष के क्षेत्र में किसी भी देश से पीछे रहने वाला नहीं है बल्कि उनकी अगुवाई के लिए तत्पर है। अमेरिका के ‘नासा’ समेत विश्व की तमाम अंतरिक्ष एजेंसियां हमारी अंतरिक्ष एजेंसी इसरो का लोहा मान चुकी हैं।

अब इंतजार है उस क्षण का जब आगामी सात सितंबर को हमारा चंद्रयान-2 चंद्रमा की उस सबसे दुर्गम जगह दक्षिणी ध्रुव पर उतरेंगा जहां पहुंचने का अभी तक किसी भी देश ने साहस नहीं किया है। उम्मीद है कि चंद्रयान-2 चंद्रा मामा के ऐसे अनछुए पहलुओं को उजागर करेगा, जो अभी तक रहस्य

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बनाने की कोशिशें को पिछले कुछ सालों से लगातार असफल करने के लिए संघर्षरत है। दरअसल, मध्यपूर्व का तेल दुनिया के आर्थिक जीवन का प्राण है। पश्चिमी यूरोप अपना तीन चौथाई तेल अरब देशों से ही आयात करता है। कच्चे तेल का सबसे बड़ा मार्ग होर्मुज की खाड़ी को माना जाता है। यह इलाका अब गहरे तनाव में है। दुनिया की सैन्य शक्ति में ईरान भले ही बहुत पीछे हो लेकिन भौगोलिक परिस्थितियां उसके अनुकूल हैं। इसीलिए होर्मुज में उसके तेवरों से दुनिया में खलबली मची हुई है। इस समुद्री इलाके से ही मध्यपूर्व से निकलने वाला तेल अमेरिका, एशिया, यूरोप, अफ्रीका और दुनिया के अन्य बाजारों में पहुंचता है और इसे ईरान बाधित कर दे तो दुनिया की अर्थव्यवस्था बहुत कम समय में चौपट हो सकती है। इस खाड़ी से रोजाना एक करोड़ नब्बे लाख बैरल तेल गुजरता है, यानी दुनिया का बीस फीसद कच्चा तेल यहीं से होकर जाता है।

ईरान को लेकर खाड़ी में उत्पन्न हुए इस संकट के पीछे अमेरिका और सऊदी अरब की साझा रणनीति और हिंसक कूटनीति रही है। इसके दूरगामी परिणाम बेहद घातक हो सकते हैं। सऊदी अरब अपने पारंपरिक और धार्मिक (शिया) प्रतिद्वंद्वी ईरान को आर्थिक रूप से तबाह करने के साथ ही उसे मिटा देने पर आमादा है। अरब दुनिया में एकछत्र आधिपत्य का खाब पूरा करने को प्रतिबद्ध सऊदी अरब अमेरिका-ईरान के बीच तनाव को अपने लिए एक बड़े अवसर के रूप में देख रहा है। पिछले कई सालों से सऊदी अरब और ईरान की आपसी लड़ाई से पूरा अरब बेहाल है। ईरान एक मजबूत और शिया बहुल देश है जो अमेरिका, इजराइल और सऊदी अरब की आंखों की किरकिरी होने के बाद भी अपने मजबूत राष्ट्रवाद के बूते जिंदा और आबाद है। ईरान के रिवोल्यूशनरी गार्ड सीरिया और ईरान में कट्टरपंथी सुन्नी एकाधिकार को चुनौती दे रहे हैं, वहीं लेबनान का हिजबुल्ला आतंकी संगठन इजराइल की नाक में दम किए हुए है। यमन के हूती विद्रोही शिया प्रभाव को उस इलाके में काबिज रखे हुए हैं।

ईरान पर अमेरिका के ताजा प्रतिबंधों को लेकर कोई वैधानिक कारण तो नजर नहीं आता, बल्कि अरब में ट्रंप की नाकामियों से उपजी हाताशा ही ज्यादा प्रतिबिंबित हो रही है। तमाम कोशिशों के बावजूद सीरिया और इराक में अमेरिकी फौजों को अपेक्षित सफलता न मिल पाना ट्रंप के लिए असहनीय हो गया है। इसके पूर्व ओबामा प्रशासन ने साल 2015 में अपने

प्रयोग की कसौटी

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हिंदी अखबारों पर खासतौर पर पड़ी। उस दौर में हिंदी के अधिकतर पत्रकार-संपादक स्वतंत्रता सेनानी भी थे। जहां गांधीजी के द्वारा संपादित पत्रों- ‘यंग इंडिया’, ‘नवजीवन’, ‘हरिजन’ आदि की चर्चा होती है, वहीं ‘इंडियन ओपिनियन’ पत्र के साथ उनका जुड़ाव हमारे विचार-विमर्श में शामिल नहीं हो पाता। कहीं न कहीं छूट जाता है। असल में दक्षिण अफ्रीका में अपने प्रवास (1893-1914) के दौरान गांधीजी ने ‘इंडियन ओपिनियन’ के साथ जुड़ कर अपने विचारों की धार को तेज

किया जो बाद के उनके सत्याग्रह और पत्रकारीय कर्म में काफी महत्त्वपूर्ण साबित हुआ था। गांधीजी ने अपनी आत्मकथा में इस पत्र के बारे में लिखा है- ‘मनुसुखलाल नाजर इसके संपादक बने। पर संपादन का सच्चा बोझ तो मुझ पर ही पड़ा।’ दक्षिण अफ्रीका में सत्याग्रह की लड़ाई, भारतीयों के अस्मिता संघर्ष में इस पत्र की केंद्रीय भूमिका थी। उन्होंने इस बात को रेखांकित किया है कि ‘इंडियन ओपिनियन’के बिना सत्याग्रह असंभव होता। 1903 में इंडियन प्रिंटिंग प्रेस से निकलने वाला यह एक बहुभाषी पत्र था। अंग्रेजी के अलावा गुजराती में यह पत्र प्रकाशित होता था। साथ ही कुछ समय तक यह तमिल और हिंदी में भी छपा। इतिहासकार उमा

बने हुए हैं। निश्चित रूप से चंद्रयान-2 संपूर्ण मानवता के लिए बहुत बड़ा कदम साबित होगा।
● *अंकित रजक, दतिया, मध्यप्रदेश*

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बाल यौन शोषण की बढ़ती घटनाओं को देखते हुए सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने यह आदेश देकर सही किया कि उन जिलों में विशेष अदालतों का गठन करके ऐसे मामलों का निस्तारण किया जाए जहां इस तरह की सौ से अधिक वारदात सामने आ चुकी हैं। कहना कठिन है कि ऐसे जिले कितने हैं, लेकिन इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि बालक-बालिकाओं से दुष्कर्म

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश
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की घटनाएं तेजी से बढ़ रही हैं। यह भी देखना होगा कि ये विशेष अदालतें फैसला देने में तत्परता का परिचय दें। यह अपेक्षा इसलिए कि कई बार विशेष अदालतें भी धीमी गति पकड़ लेती हैं। देश में एक के बाद एक बर्बरता के ऐसे मामले सामने आ रहे हैं जिनसे दिल दहल जाता है, खासकर नाबालिगों के साथ दुष्कर्म के मामले। कटुआ बलात्कार फांसे में दोषियों को सजा मिली थी, पर अभी तक फांसी नहीं दी गई। इसी कारण आज इन हैवानों में कानून का डर नहीं है। ऊना के स्कूल में शिक्षक ने नाबालिग छात्रा के साथ दुष्कर्म किया और नकोदर में एक बाप ने ही अपनी नाबालिग बेटी को हवस का शिकार बनाया। कोई बाप, कोई गुरु आखिर ऐसी बर्बरता कैसे कर सकता है। ऐसे मामले समाज को शर्मसार करते हैं।

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सहयोगियों के साथ ईरान से एक समझौता किया था, जिसके तहत साल 2016 में अमेरिका और अन्य पांच देशों से ईरान को तेल बेचने और उसके केंद्रीय बैंक को अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कारोबार की अनुमति मिली थी। ओबामा के इस समझौते को ईरान के परमाणु कार्यक्रम को सीमित करने की कोशिशों के तौर पर देखा गया था। लेकिन पिछले साल ट्रंप प्रशासन ने इस समझौते को तोड़ दिया और अमेरिका समझौते से अलग हो गया। इसके साथ ही इस इलाके में शांति की कोशिशें भी धराशायी हो गईं।

ईरान को दबाने की ट्रंप प्रशासन की गतिविधियों से दुनिया के कई देश खुश नहीं हैं। दुनिया भर में परमाणु कार्यक्रमों पर नजर रखने वाली संस्था इंटरनेशनल एटॉमिक एनर्जी एजेंसी (आइएफ़ए) के अनुसार ईरान 2015 के समझौते का पालन कर रहा था, ऐसे में उस पर परमाणु हथियार बनाने के ट्रंप के आरोप पूरी तरह

महत्त्वपूर्ण क्षेत्र अल्जीरिया और ट्यूनीशिया की पूर्वी सीमा से लेकर अफगानिस्तान और पाकिस्तान तक फैला हुआ है। मध्यपूर्व की राजनीति को तेल की अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति से अलग कर देखना असंभव है। अमेरिका की नजर ईरान के तेल कुंओं पर है और वह उस पर दबाव डालने के लिए वैश्विक समझौतों और भावनाओं को लगातार दरकिनार कर रहा है। तेल का भाव डॉलर से तय होता है और अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में कच्चे तेल के भाव में उतार-चढ़ाव पर अमेरिका का नियंत्रण होता है। ईरान के राष्ट्रपति हसन रूहानी ताजा संकट में होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य को डाल की तरह इस्तेमाल करने की रणनीति पर चल रहे हैं। रूहानी ने अपने इरादे साफ कर दिए हैं कि ‘अगर किसी दिन अमेरिका तो फिर फारस की खाड़ी से रोकने की कोशिश की तो फिर फारस की खाड़ी से किसी का तेल निर्यात नहीं हो पाएगा।’ सऊदी अरब, ईरान, संयुक्त अरब अमीरात, कुवैत और इराक से निर्यात किए जाने वाले अधिकांश कच्चे तेल को इसी जलमार्ग से भेजा जाता है।

बहरहाल, होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य में उठा ज्वार फिलहाल थमता दिखाई नहीं दे रहा है। इसके प्रभाव को तुरंत रोकने की जरूरत है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र को इस मामले में हस्तक्षेप कर युद्ध टालने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए। युद्ध की दशा में ईरान का तबाह होना और तेल के बेतहाशा दाम बढ़ना तय है। इससे अरब में अस्थिरता आएगी, दुनियाभर के कई देशों की अर्थव्यवस्था चौपट हो सकती है और आतंकवाद और भयावह रूप में सामने आ सकता है।

गति की पत्रकारिता पर जोर दिया। वे अपने लेखों में पाठकों को समाचारपत्र पढ़ने की गति धीमी रखने और पाठ को बार-बार पढ़ने को कहते थे। पाठकों का मनन और चिंतन उनकी चिंता के केंद्र में था। यह सब गांधीजी के सत्याग्रही तेवर को दिखाता है। वे हर पाठक में एक सत्याग्रही की संभावना देखते थे। उल्लेखनीय है कि गांधी ने ‘इंडियन ओपिनियन’ के गुजराती के पाठकों के लिए ही ‘हिंद स्वराज’ की रचना की थी, जहां पाठक और संपादक के बीच संवाद प्रमुख है। सवाल है कि गांधीजी की ‘धीमी पत्रकारिता’ के प्रयोग को हम किस रूप में देखें। सोशल मीडिया और टीवी समाचार चैनल आज भी सच दिखाते, सच के साथ खड़े होने, सत्ता से सच बोलने की बात करते हैं। जाहिर है, उनका आग्रह भी सत्य के साथ ही है, पर गांधी के सत्याग्रह के ये कितने करीब कहे जा सकते हैं? ‘फेक न्यूज’ के इस दौर में मुख्यधारा की पत्रकारिता की जवाबदेही राष्ट्र-राज्य और नागरिक समाज के प्रति पहले से कहीं ज्यादा है। पर क्या तथ्य से सत्य की प्राप्ति पर उनका जोर है? गांधीजी ने ऐसी पत्रकारिता की परिकल्पना की थी जो राज्य और बाजार के दबाव से मुक्त हो। सवाल यह भी है कि आज का पाठक खुद को पत्रकारिता के पूरे परिदृश्य में कहाँ खड़ा पाता है?

गति की पत्रकारिता पर जोर दिया। वे अपने लेखों में पाठकों को समाचारपत्र पढ़ने की गति धीमी रखने और पाठ को बार-बार पढ़ने को कहते थे। पाठकों का मनन और चिंतन उनकी चिंता के केंद्र में था। यह सब गांधीजी के सत्याग्रही तेवर को दिखाता है। वे हर पाठक में एक सत्याग्रही की संभावना देखते थे। उल्लेखनीय है कि गांधी ने ‘इंडियन ओपिनियन’ के गुजराती के पाठकों के लिए ही ‘हिंद स्वराज’ की रचना की थी, जहां पाठक और संपादक के बीच संवाद प्रमुख है। सवाल है कि गांधीजी की ‘धीमी पत्रकारिता’ के प्रयोग को हम किस रूप में देखें। सोशल मीडिया और टीवी समाचार चैनल आज भी सच दिखाते, सच के साथ खड़े होने, सत्ता से सच बोलने की बात करते हैं। जाहिर है, उनका आग्रह भी सत्य के साथ ही है, पर गांधी के सत्याग्रह के ये कितने करीब कहे जा सकते हैं? ‘फेक न्यूज’ के इस दौर में मुख्यधारा की पत्रकारिता की जवाबदेही राष्ट्र-राज्य और नागरिक समाज के प्रति पहले से कहीं ज्यादा है। पर क्या तथ्य से सत्य की प्राप्ति पर उनका जोर है? गांधीजी ने ऐसी पत्रकारिता की परिकल्पना की थी जो राज्य और बाजार के दबाव से मुक्त हो। सवाल यह भी है कि आज का पाठक खुद को पत्रकारिता के पूरे परिदृश्य में कहाँ खड़ा पाता है?

खुशहाल होगा और दुनिया की आर्थिक महाशक्ति बनने के लक्ष्य को कैसे हासिल कर पाएगा?

● *कपिल एम वड़ियार, पाली, राजस्थान*
बेलछी और सोनभद्र
अनेक राजनीतिक प्रेक्षकों का मत है कि प्रियंका गांधी वाड़ा ने सोनभद्र जाकर राजनीति करने का फैसला इंदिरा गांधी द्वारा 1977 में बेलछी (बिहार) जाने की घटना से प्रेरित होकर लिया। जिस प्रकार इंदिराजी की राजनीतिक वापसी बेलछी से शुरू हुई, वैसी चमकदार वापसी की उम्मीद प्रियंका और उनके सलाहकारों ने सोनभद्र से पाली हुई थी। लेकिन मामला वैसा फलदायी नहीं बना, यह साफ दिखने लगा है। इसके कुछ स्पष्ट कारण हैं। जब इंदिरा गांधी 1977 में बेलछी हत्याकांड के बाद वहां गईं थी तब तक सरकार ने पीड़ितों के लिए कुछ नहीं किया था। इसलिए लोगों के जख्म हरे थे। पर अब प्रियंका द्वारा सोनभद्र का मामला उठाने से पूर्व ही प्रदेश सरकार 34 अभियुक्तों को पकड़ चुकी थी। फिर प्रियंका के अभियान की हवा इसलिए भी निकली कि मुख्य आरोपी के तौर पर कथित सपा नेता का नाम आया। कांग्रेस व सपा के बीच कुछ न कुछ दोस्ती रहती आई है। तीसरी बात यह कि जहां इंदिराजी ने बेलछी जाने के लिए बाढ़ में डूबी सड़कों को हाथी द्वारा पार करके वहां और देश भर के लोगों को चकित कर दिया था, यहां तक कि खुद यजप्रकाश नारायण ने उनकी प्रशंसा की थी लेकिन प्रियंका की कोशिश का तो उनकी निकट सहयोगी राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस पार्टी ने भी मजाक उड़ा दिया। उसके वरिष्ठ नेता माजिद मेनन ने इसे अवसरवाद की संज्ञा दी। सब मिलाकर देखें तो जहां बेलछी ने इंदिरा की वापसी का मार्ग प्रशस्त किया, वहीं सोनभद्र ने प्रियंका को दिखाया कि अभी दिल्ली दूर है।

● *पुनम मितल, मोहनपुरी, मेरठ*

नई दिल्ली

एचइसी का लेनिन हॉल विधानसभा के रूप में झारखंड के संसदीय इतिहास का अतीत बनने की ओर है. वर्ष 2000 में झारखंड राज्य गठन के बाद यह भवन लोकतंत्र की आस्था का मंदिर बना. नयी उम्मीदों से भरे झारखंडियों का भविष्य गढ़ने जनप्रतिनिधि इसी हॉल में बैठने लगे. इस हॉल ने कई सरकार को बनते व बिगड़ते देखा. झारखंडी मानस के सपनों को ऊंचाई दी, तो राजनीतिक मान्यताएं और परंपरा भी इस छोटे से हॉल में ध्वस्त हुई. राजनीति के उतार-चढ़ाव के साथ राजनीतिक रोमांच की पटकथा भी इसी हॉल में लिखी गयी. इस हॉल में पहली बैठक 21 नवंबर 2000 को हुई. मौनसून सत्र का समापन 27 जुलाई 2019 को इस हॉल में हुआ.

इसी लेनिन हॉल में 19 साल तक झारखंड का गढ़ा गया भविष्य, कई खट्टी-मीठी यादों का बना गवाह



झारखंड गठन के बाद इसी लेनिन हॉल को विधानसभा भवन बनाया गया. 19 वर्षों तक इस भवन में सदन की कार्यवाही चली. अब यह भवन याद बन कर रह जायेगा.



धुर्वि स्थित निर्माणाधीन विधानसभा भवन. अब विधानसभा का अगला सत्र इसी भवन में शुरू कराने की तैयारी चल रही है.



20 नवंबर 2000 : झारखंड विधानसभा की पहली बैठक को लेकर तैयार सदन व सुरक्षा में तैनात जवान.



21 नवंबर 2000 : झारखंड विधानसभा भवन में पहली बैठक हुई. 80 विधायकों को शपथ दिलायी गयी थी.



20-12-2013

विधानसभा के सत्र में शामिल होने कई विधायक बैलगाड़ी से पहुंचे.

सत्र के दौरान मांगों को लेकर धरना पर बैठे विधायकों को उठा कर ले जाते मार्शल.



18-07-2018

23 नवंबर 2016 : झारखंड विधानसभा का शर्मनाक दिन



रांची. 23 नवंबर 2016 झारखंड विधानसभा के लिए शर्मनाक दिन था. इस दिन भूमि संशोधन बिल पर विपक्ष ने जमकर हंगामा किया था. मर्यादा तार-तार हुई. स्पीकर पर जुते, पेपर पिन व कुर्सीयां फेंकी गयीं. झामुमो विधायकों ने सीएनटी-एसपीटी एक्ट में संशोधन के खिलाफ विरोध की सारी सीमाएं लांघ दी. बिल की कोपी फाड़ दी गयी. कांग्रेस विधायक सदन के अंदर स्प्रेंग लेकर पहुंच गये थे. कांग्रेस-झामुमो के रिपोर्टर टेबल पर चढ़ गये. खूब हंगामा किया. इस मामले में स्पीकर ने चार विधायकों को आगे की कार्यवाही से सस्पेंड कर दिया था. पक्ष-विपक्ष के बीच तकरार होता रहा. मार्शल भी कुछ नहीं कर पाये. विधायकों के इस कृत्य से विधानसभा पर दाग लगा. लेनिन हॉल इस दृश्य का गवाह बना.



साढ़े तीन वर्षों से सही तरीके से नहीं चल रही है विधानसभा की कार्यवाही

ब्यूरो प्रमुख ▶ रांची

चलना जनता के साथ धोखा है.

2016 में 51 दिन चला सत्र, 39 दिन हो-हंगामा

2016 के मौनसून सत्र से अब तक 51 दिन विधानसभा का सत्र आहत किया गया था. इनमें दो बार निर्धारित तिथि से 12 दिन पहले सत्रावसान कर दिया गया. शेष 39 दिन में भी सदन की कार्यवाही सुचारु रूप से नहीं चली. मिनटों में विधेयक और बजट पास हो रहे हैं. सरकार ने किसी तरह अपना विधायी काम निबटा लिया.

बिना विपक्ष के भी चली कार्यवाही सिर्फ सत्ता पक्ष के प्रश्न आये

2016 में 15 फरवरी से लेकर 18 मार्च तक के लिए सत्र बुलाया गया था. सदन में जेपीएससी के मुद्दे पर विपक्ष का हंगामा चलता रहा. दो मार्च को सदन की कार्यवाही बिना विपक्ष के चली. केवल सत्ता पक्ष के प्रश्न ही सदन में आये. 2016 के अंतिम सत्र से सीएनटी-एसपीटी का मामला तूल पकड़ा. नवंबर में शीतकालीन सत्र में तो मर्यादाएं तार-तार हुई. स्पीकर पर कुर्सी और करोड़ों खर्च के बाद भी सदन का ठीक से नहीं

वर्ष 2016 : मौनसून सत्र : 22 जुलाई से 29 जुलाई (6 दिन कार्य दिवस)

22 जुलाई : शोक प्रकाश के बाद कार्यवाही स्थगित
19 नवंबर : सदन नहीं चला
21 नवंबर : विधानसभा ठप
23 नवंबर : स्पीकर पर जुते व कुर्सी फेंके गये. सीएनटी-एसपीटी में संशोधन तीन मिनट में पास हुआ.

वर्ष 2017 : बजट सत्र : 17 जनवरी से 7 फरवरी तक (11 दिन कार्य दिवस)

17 जनवरी : राज्यपाल का अभिभाषण, विपक्ष का वाक आउट.
18 जनवरी : विधायक अनिल मुर्मू के निधन पर कार्यवाही स्थगित

पिछले साढ़े तीन साल में ऐसे चली विधानसभा

19 जनवरी : हंगामा, झामुमो के चार विधायक निर्लंबित
20 जनवरी : सीएनटी-एसपीटी को लेकर हंगामा
21 जनवरी : हंगामा के कारण नहीं चला सदन
23 जनवरी : सीएनटी-एसपीटी को लेकर हंगामा.
24 जनवरी : केवल 10 मिनट सदन चला.
28 जनवरी : सिर्फ 17 मिनट चला सदन, कार्यवाही बाधित
30 जनवरी : चार मिनट में सरकार ने अपना काम निबटाया, नहीं चला प्रश्नकाल
31 जनवरी : सदन बाधित
3 फरवरी : चार दिन पहले ही बजट सत्र खत्म

2017 विशेष सत्र : 27 मार्च (1 दिन)

जीएसटी पर चर्चा की गयी

2017 : मौनसून सत्र : 8 अगस्त से 12 अगस्त (5 दिन)

8 अगस्त : शोक प्रकाश, नहीं चला प्रश्नकाल
9 अगस्त : सीएनटी-एसपीटी एक्ट में संशोधन वापस. पहली पाली में हंगामा. दूसरी पाली में काम नहीं
10 अगस्त : हंगामा, पक्ष-विपक्ष में तकरार
11 अगस्त : मेडिकल प्रोटेक्शन बिल नहीं हुआ पास. कोई काम नहीं हुआ.
12 अगस्त : भूमि संशोधन विधेयक, धर्म स्वतंत्र विधेयक पारित, हंगामा.

2017 शीतकालीन सत्र : 12 दिसंबर से 15 दिसंबर तक (4 दिन कार्य दिवस)

12 दिसंबर : शोक प्रकाश के बाद कार्यवाही स्थगित
13 दिसंबर : सरकार ने दो मिनट में काम निबटाया, हंगामा
14 दिसंबर : हंगामा व नारेबाजी के कारण नहीं चला सदन
15 दिसंबर : दोनों पाली में हंगामा

2018 बजट सत्र : 17 जनवरी से सात फरवरी (8 दिन कार्य दिवस)

(सत्र सात फरवरी तक निर्धारित था, हंगामे के कारण आठ दिन पहले 30 जनवरी को ही स्थगित)

17 जनवरी : 10 मिनट में राज्यपाल ने भाषण पूरा किया, हंगामा
18 जनवरी : तीन आला अधिकांशों को लेकर हंगामा
19 जनवरी : तीन आला अधिकांशों को लेकर हंगामा
20 जनवरी : हंगामा
23 जनवरी : बजट पेश, विधानसभा स्थगित
24 जनवरी : हंगामा के कारण 10 मिनट चला सदन
29 जनवरी : नहीं चला सदन
30 जनवरी : नहीं चला सदन, पक्ष-विपक्ष में तकरार
2019 का बजट सत्र : मौनसून सत्र में भी गतिरोध जारी रहा.
2019 के मौनसून सत्र के अंतिम दिन, 27 जुलाई को ही प्रश्नकाल चल पाया