

When media consolidation is good

More screens, consolidation and transparency have been good for India's beleaguered film industry



MEDIASCOPE
VANITA KOHLI-KHANDEKAR

Now here is an industry where consolidation has been a force for good. In the financial year ending March 2019, the total number of tickets sold by the top three multiplex chains in India — PVR Cinemas, Inox Leisure and

Cinepolis — rose 23 per cent over the previous year to more than 200 million. For many years now the cinema going habit has been in decline. The box-office growth you read about has come, largely, from raising ticket prices. Going by back-of-the-envelope calculations Indian films sell close to a billion tickets. But in the absence of any proper numbers, the big three multiplex chains offer a robust sample. Then there is the anecdotal evidence. Across India single screens and smaller multiplex chains are reporting a rise of anywhere from 20-40 per cent in ticket sales in 2018-19. This rise then is the biggest indicator that the graph is changing — from declining screens and footfalls to a rising one. Last year was an exceptional-

ly good one with a slew of hits — *Raazi*, *Sanju*, *Bharat*, *Ane Nenu* and *Rangasthalam*, among others. But good films are a cyclical phenomenon. There are three basic reasons why ticket sales have risen and will continue to do so. One, since all theatres have to be goods and service tax or GST compliant, everyone now sells computerised tickets. This has meant more transparency — unaccounted for revenues and tickets are also being counted. Two, multiplexes have been adding close to 150-odd screens a year. For years the theory was the rate of addition to total screens was way lower than the ones shutting down. And that more screens don't translate into more revenues or tickets. But they do. China's jump from 9,000 screens in 2011 to just over

60,000 currently has made it the second largest film market in the world after the US/Canada. In India new screens are now adding up to impact ticket sales. And three, streaming video apps such as Netflix or Voot are exposing audiences to different cinemas thereby whetting their appetite for more from theatres. Since these three reasons are not cyclical, I reckon the rise will hold. The bigger point this much awaited rise in footfalls makes, however, is on the benefits of consolidation. It is a much-needed force in so many segments of India's the ₹1,67,400 crore media and entertainment business — newspapers, television production and cable. Film exhibition is a great case in point. At the turn of the millennium

India had around 12,000 screens each with a different owner. The release and marketing of a film was a nightmare. In those pre-digital print days you needed 12,000 prints at ₹60,000 per copy for an all-India release. Nobody could afford that. The top films released with 400-700 prints. Ticketing was opaque so you really didn't know how many people actually saw the film. Most producers, yes there were individual producers then, sold films for a minimum guarantee or MG. They might have got something over and above the MG if the film was a huge success, but for most average films there was no hope of getting revenue overflows. This fragmented, opaque retail side of the business brought in more than 80 per cent of the measly (and unprofitable) ₹2,500 crore in revenues that the world's largest film-making country made. When multiplexes came in with a cleaner, better experience, it forced single screens to either refurbish or to become part of a chain. It also brought trans-

parency bringing money back into the business to finance better films. Almost 18 years after the first multiplex opened the industry has grown over seven times, returns are better across films and more importantly there is phenomenal variety. The ₹3,119 crore PVR, the privately-held Cinepolis and the ₹1,692 crore Inox account for three-fourth of the 2,500 multiplex screens in India. These 2,500 screens, out of a total of 9,000, bring in, on an average, half of the total box office revenues of ₹10,000 crore. The box office, incidentally, brings in roughly two-thirds of the ₹17,500 crore the Indian film industry made in 2018. It may seem like they have a disproportionately large share of the box office. But moving from the fragmented, broken model and bringing in scale, process and transparency wouldn't have been possible without consolidation. If it was then the remaining 6,500 screens should have brought in a bigger share of revenues.

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OTT players opt for creative construction

Original content is the next big bet to expand a modest base of paid subscribers

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

Last year Netflix founder and CEO Reed Hastings created a flutter when he said he sees the company's next 100 million subscribers coming from India. Wishful thinking, given that Netflix has just 1.3 million subscribers currently in India, according to IHS Markit data. Perhaps, but the US-based company took the first major step to expand its limited consumer base since its 2016 launch last week when it announced a new package, an only-mobile or -tablet subscription for ₹199 per month. Currently subscribers pay between ₹499 and ₹799 for various packs to watch on TV, mobile or laptop. Netflix executives say data showed that more members in India watch the service on mobile phones than anywhere in the world.

This is an aggressively competitive move in the nascent but crowded over-the-top or OTT media service industry in India. There are already 32 players (up from 12 in 2012), and Netflix and Amazon Prime are the two principal subscription-based ones — others such as Hotstar, now part of Disney, Zee 5, Sony and Voot from Viacom 18 offer a large part of their content free, supported by only advertisements.

The first challenge is retaining cus-

tomers. Fifty per cent of users uninstall their OTT apps within the first seven days, according to a report by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG). And with 81 per cent of consumers having a maximum of three OTT apps on their smartphones, the battle for making it to the top three is getting fiercer.

At another level, the big boys are splurging to provide compelling content, the only key differentiator in this business. The problem is this content is five to 10 times more expensive than TV content. The six big players together invested ₹2,700-₹3,000 crore on original content (including sports content such as

Hotstar's on IPL last year. That figure will rise exponentially since most OTT players are expanding the number of original content offerings. "OTT companies that were producing three to five original programmes a year will now do 15 to 20 and the focus will be on quality and innovation," says Rajiv Bakshi, CEO of content producer Big

Synergy Media.

This could be a risk. The BCG report says the industry rustled up just \$500 million in revenues, of which advertising accounted for 82 per cent. If paid subscription remains the challenge, so do ad revenues. There are 300 million active subscribers every month on OTT platforms. But advertisers look for average



APPS AND DOWNS	
Annual revenues of OTT players	: 500 million
% of paid subscribers	: 18
No. of monthly active subscribers	: 300 million
No of daily active subscribers	: 20-25 million
Projection	: Five-fold revenue increase between 2018 & 2023
50% of users uninstall apps within first 7 days	

Source: BCG & Industry

daily active subscribers — which is 20 to 25 million, according to industry estimates, a fraction of what social media giants rack up.

"OTT platforms have to compete with the Facebooks and Googles, which get the bulk of the digital advertising pie because of huge numbers of daily active users. Until average daily active users go up in OTT, their share will be small," says a senior executive of an advertising agency.

Still, there are upsides to the business for OTT players to tap creatively. One is online consumption habits. "There is no debate that video is the preferred mode of consumption on mobiles, so any consumption increase will always be followed by monetisation," says Gourav Rakshit, COO of Viacom 18 Digital

Ventures, which runs the Voot channel.

BCG's reports predicts that over five years (from 2018-2023), revenues will jump tenfold, and subscriptions will account for 32 per cent (almost double its current share). Most companies expect to break even in the next four years, if not earlier.

The potential for growth is robust — currently only 16 per cent of media consumption is on digital (25 per cent among the youth). Smartphone subscriber numbers are also expected to grow and so will data consumption. And the number of annual households with annual income of over \$15,400, who can easily afford an OTT subscription, is expected to double from 8 per cent in 2016 to 16 per cent in 2025, BCG says. But differentiated content will be the

key to success. Zee 5, for instance, has focused on regional content and offers options in 12 languages. "We have 76 million active monthly subscribers and half of them see content in regional language. We are among the few to have produced original content in all the languages," says Tarun Katial CEO of Zee 5 India. The company is also expanding its customer base through tie ups — like with Airtel and Vodafone who offer it free to some customers. It has also collaborated with travel portal makemytrip, which offer discounts on member subscriptions.

Voot, which plans to go the subscription route soon, is producing original content focusing on two segments — women and the youth. "We want to over-serve the two segments in which we have a lot of experience. Our conclusion is that it is big enough in the foreseeable future," says Rakshit.

Meanwhile, Netflix and Amazon are betting on Indian content. Netflix has announced nine new original series and 13 new films and Amazon has been a big player in acquiring movie rights — *Gully Boy* is one example.

Jio from the Reliance stable is creating a bouquet of OTT offerings primarily aggregating content in music (it bought Saavn), cinema, TV and news. Most of this content is tied only to its 300 million-plus customer base (except music) and is free. But it is also taking the first cautious steps towards building original content for its subscribers through Jio Studios, say company sources.

Clearly, the next few years will determine the big boys of the game.

CHINESE WHISPERS

About tigers, bears and bulls



The Indian government is earning bouquets for doing well in growing the country's tiger population. However, one set of animals appears unhappy

— the bulls, those seen on Dalal Street, to be precise. Many stockbrokers and investors attempted to trend #savethebull amid a continuous downward slide in the equities market. "India is now home to 2,967 tigers, 33 per cent more than the last count. India is now home to just a few bulls, 20.5 million less than the last count," tweeted one broker. To add insult to injury, Discovery TV released a promo of an episode of Man Vs Wild, featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi with adventurer Bear Grylls, in which they are seen making what appears to be a wooden spear or rafting oar. This prompted another set of memes such as "PM and Bear hunting for any remaining bulls in the market".

Naidu cracks the whip

As the Rajya Sabha prepared to vote on whether the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill is to be referred to a select committee of the House, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu instructed members to remain seated during the voting process. His reference was to last week's vote on the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill when CM Ramesh, who has recently quit the Telugu Desam Party to join the Bharatiya Janata Party, was seen instructing colleagues on how to vote and collected their voting slips. Naidu quipped that everyone — be it C M Ramesh or Jairam Ramesh — should be in his or her assigned seat. Borrowing a word made famous by his former party colleague and actor Shatrughan Sinha, Naidu declared, "*khamosh, khamosh, khamosh* (silence, silence, silence)". While CM Ramesh looked sheepish at the scolding and remained in his seat, Jairam Ramesh of the Congress, one of the most disciplined MPs, gave Naidu an informal salute.

Seat sharing

As Congress Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Gowda on Monday waited for a vacant chair at the MPs' canteen on the Parliament premises to have his lunch, the Bharatiya Janata Party's Alphons Kannanthanam, who was having his food, told Gowda — albeit good-humouredly — that he would vacate his chair if his Congress friend would agree to support the Triple Talaq Bill. Elsewhere, a Union minister met a bunch of journalists for an off-the-record chat. The room was short of chairs. The minister suggested to his staff that they procure chairs on loan from the neighbouring room of a Congress leader because he would not need them, given that his party had only a few MPs.

INSIGHT

Sovereign bonds & credit ratings



JAIMINI BHAGWATI

The announcement in the latest Budget of the central government's intention to borrow \$10 billion from international capital markets through sovereign bonds was a startling revelation. Such off-shore bond issuance would purportedly be in lieu of domestic borrowings. To that extent it would lead to less crowding out of non-government borrowers from domestic financial markets. A number of commentaries have appeared in the media including one on July 26 indicating that perhaps the Prime Minister's Office is opposed to this Ministry of Finance (MoF) proposal to issue sovereign hard currency bonds.

According to some media reports, it was lobbying by investment banks which convinced MoF to take this decision. Investment bankers have lobbied with MoF officials in the past to issue such bonds. I can confirm this from my personal experience as joint secretary (capital markets) in the Department of Economic Affairs in 1999. At that time there was concern about shortage of hard currency in the run up to potential Y2K problems. The arguments against government issuance of hard currency bonds prevailed on the grounds that it may become a habit and could lead to a sovereign debt crisis. The MoF finally decided to authorise State Bank of India to issue five year India Millennium Deposits (IMDs) amounting to \$5 billion. The all-in-cost of those hard currency deposits marketed to NRIs was about 100 basis points more than the proposed sovereign bonds of the same maturity.

The logic put out by current proponents of sovereign hard currency bonds is that given the ultra-low interest rates in hard currencies, the government should be able to issue bonds amounting to \$10 billion at

maturities of up to 30 years at low interest rates. A better benchmark to assess whether India's cost of borrowing abroad would be low would be the spread to a floating rate index such as six month LIBOR not absolute rates of interest. Although \$10 billion of debt should be relatively easy to access from international markets, it is less obvious that foreign creditors would be willing to provide 30-year money. And, interest rates on government bonds trading in domestic markets would go up if spreads on proposed sovereign bonds were to rise with respect to bonds issued by developed countries.

At the end June 2019, the RBI's foreign exchange (FX) reserves amounted to about \$422 billion. This is around 15 per cent of GDP way below the 26 per cent of GDP level of FX reserves in 2007-08. India's total hard currency debt as of end March 2019 was \$543 billion of which \$235.7 billion, debt with residual maturity of one year and due for repayment by end March 2020, amounts to 56 per cent of FX reserves. Such a high proportion of short-term debt highlights India's vulnerability to any protracted reduction in FX inflows. This risk metric needs to be kept in mind when considering the issuance of sovereign hard currency bonds.

Multilateral development financial institutions such as IBRD and IFC and Indian sub-sovereigns such as NTPC and HDFC Bank have issued rupee masala bonds to investors based outside India. Foreign investors in such bonds are prepared to take the currency risk of investing in Indian rupee denominated bonds. The Indian sovereign could access this market to borrow rupees from international investors rather than taking the foreign exchange risk of issuing hard currency bonds. On the downside, masala rupee bonds could reduce investments in Indian government debt which comes via foreign portfolio investors (FPIs). Further, the interest rates on masala rupee bonds may need to be higher than on government's domestically issued bonds for the same maturities. Foreign investors would probably want masala bonds to be traded in secondary markets much in the same way as government bonds are traded domestically. Lead managers of masala bonds would need to include the cost for making secondary markets raising the cost of issuing such bonds.

The rupee is currently hugely overvalued. Bringing in hard currency through sovereign bonds would be a net addition since this route has not been used in the past. At the margin this would exacerbate rupee appreciation. The current overvaluation of the rupee is mostly a reflection of India's need to access foreign capital to make up for inadequate domestic savings. Consequently, some may argue that the only way to reduce rupee overvaluation is by compressing consumption and investment and that may not be feasible or appropriate.

Another way to correct rupee overvaluation is to gradually relax controls on capital account convertibility. If the government decides it can borrow from international sources using sovereign bonds, the country should be able to reduce controls on the capital account. An objective yardstick would be a higher sovereign credit rating. The major rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's and Moody's are at arms-length from the Indian government even if they were not with respect to US financial institutions prior to the financial sector meltdown of 2008.

The point repeatedly stressed by several commentators is that if sovereign bonds are issued in limited quantities there is no danger of a hard currency debt crisis at a later date. Dr Y.V. Reddy, former RBI governor, has suggested in a recent column that issuance of sovereign hard currency bonds could be linked to steps towards capital account convertibility. This is an eminently practical and technically appropriate suggestion. \$10 billion is neither here nor there in terms of the amounts required to recapitalise public sector banks or fund pending infrastructure projects. In this context, the MoF should provide a white paper to Parliament on where the country is in its glide path towards greater capital account convertibility.

Standard & Poor's current sovereign rating for India is triple BBB minus. To conclude, any future decision to issue sovereign bonds should be linked to an improvement in the India's credit rating to single A along with further opening up of the capital account.

(Series concluded)

The writer is a former government of India and World Bank professional

LETTERS



Act now

This refers to "Slowdown and NBFC crisis pose fresh NPA scare for banks: Moody's" (July 29). It's true that while public sector banks (PSBs) are coming out of stressful situations, a number of NBFCs and HFCs could be slipping into problems. The overall slowdown in the economy plus lending to the now problematic real estate sector will impact the asset quality of the non-banking institutions. Already there are strong indications of a slowdown in auto and FMCG sectors. Besides slower retail loan off-takes, defaults will probably increase as the job markets are contracting and incomes are not rising. MSME loans, especially the NPAs in the Mudra loans, is a cause for concern. The impact of loans stuck in real estate and infrastructure projects will show up in the balance sheets of NBFCs/HFCs and eventually banks since the latter were doing a lot of lending through the former, in the last few years.

Reports about the asset quality and amount of stressed assets of some large NBFCs/HFCs is causing concern. It may be advantageous in the short term to let things lie low, but it may be disastrous in the medium term if the NPAs of these institutions grow uncomfortably high on account of the interconnectedness of lending/investments in banks, NBFCs, HFCs and so on. The time to carry out a asset quality review of NBFCs/HFCs has come. Based on revelations, it may be easier to fix the problem now

rather than postponing it.

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

Double standards

The time has come to cut down the huge bureaucracy built up under the CIC and in various arms of the government just to handle RTI queries. RTI not only jams up government work but also that of the courts. And RTI does not result in any improvement in outcomes; be it the "cut money" scandal in Bengal or the premeditated political violence in Kerala or the rampant violence against Dalits in Periyarist Tamil Nadu. RTI has been of no help in addressing these severe social problems. Incidentally, NGOs are strongly against RTI being made applicable to them though they were the first and foremost in criticising its amendment.

G Vijayaraghavan via email

A great start

It is sad that your editorial (30 July) looks at only the dark and negative side of the government's audacious plan to stop production of all petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030. Coming from an opinion making and highly respected economic daily, it is bound to create serious doubts in the thinking of the people and will further erode the chances of success of this programme that promises huge long term benefits of containing pollution and mitigating the deadly march of climate change. A strong media can seriously alter

public opinion and you — I am sorry to say — are doing a national disservice by not taking a holistic view in the matter. You seem to be going way beyond mere pragmatism.

A revolutionary switch like this will surely have hurdles; it certainly requires supporting ecosystem as your sub-title itself says. Yet, making only the past performance in case of CNG a benchmark and admitting defeat before the race begins is — let me submit — not the right thing. Major changes require dreaming big and setting the bar higher. It needs support from all stakeholders. It is a doable project. The government has made a great beginning by drastically reducing GST on electric vehicles and chargers. It has also announced exemption from GST for hiring of electric buses. Added to the tax break announced earlier in the Budget — on interest paid on loans for buying EVs — it is virtually bending backwards to incentivise both buyers and manufacturers. Leading auto makers have already lauded the steps. Pradhan's announcement to add 10,000 new CNG stations is yet another positive signal.

We should view the situation from all angles.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

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HAMBONE



Creating political risk

Andhra Pradesh should maintain the sanctity of contracts

The Andhra Pradesh government, under Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, wants to renegotiate various agreements decided under the previous Telugu Desam Party government. The government has set up a high-level negotiation committee to “review, negotiate and bring down” the power tariffs agreed upon with various renewable energy power projects in both the wind and solar sectors. The government claims that state distribution companies, or discoms, are in such poor financial health that it cannot honour its agreements. This will affect both private- and public- sector power producers. For now, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has stayed the government’s action. But the state has continued to push, writing to the Centre and even reducing the amount of offtake from wind farms unilaterally.

According to ratings agency CRISIL, this review would stress 5.2 gigawatt of renewable energy projects, which had taken a debt of ₹21,000 crore to build this crucial infrastructure. At a time when non-performing assets (NPAs) in the power sector continue to be a problem, the Andhra Pradesh government’s decision will make them considerably worse — especially if other states follow suit.

The government has blamed “abnormally priced wind and solar power purchase agreements in recent years” for this status. But a lot of the government’s argument does not hold up. For one, the health of utilities like the Andhra Pradesh South discom, while still poor, has improved of late. It is also true that many of the power purchase agreements (PPAs) were signed at an earlier stage of the development in the sector, when the prices were higher across the board in the country. If they have fallen since then, that is a straightforward risk that the government had agreed to bear under the 25-year PPA scheme. What would be the implications of forcing a renegotiation of PPAs when prices have fallen? It would severely increase the uncertainty in the sector. Investors will no longer take the word of a state government seriously if they believe that after an election the successor will come in and force a renegotiation. This is particularly dangerous because in this case the YSR Congress, the ruling party, is clearly playing politics, seeking to imply that these agreements were signed with “malafide intentions”. The political risk in this sector would thus increase considerably, with a chilling effect on future investments. Today it the power sector, tomorrow it could be something else.

The sanctity of contracts must be upheld because no one would invest if they can be breached unilaterally. If the Andhra Pradesh government is of the opinion that there is corruption in the signing of previous PPAs, then it must make a case to that effect and prove it in a court of law. Investors might then not take as harsh a lesson from the cancellation of PPAs as they would from this wholesale attempt to rewrite the past. As it stands, the AP government is playing with fire. This decision has the power to completely undermine the Centre’s commitment to a renewable energy build-up. Earlier, a number of power distribution utilities in other states had also sought to renege on their PPAs, on the grounds that the tariffs of new renewable power had come down subsequent to signing the PPA. That move was thwarted; the move by Andhra Pradesh should also meet a similar fate.

Detention deficit

Centres to house illegal migrants is a bad idea

The home ministry’s order to state governments to set up at least one detention centre in a city or district where an immigration check post is located, as reported by *The Economic Times*, raises afresh discomfiting questions about the government’s broader social agenda centred on citizenship. The order in the form of a “Model Detention Manual” comes ahead of the August 31 deadline for the controversial exercise in Assam to finalise its citizens’ register and raises the spectre of a nationwide national citizens’ register, which the first Modi government had proposed. Home ministry officials say the idea behind the order is to keep alleged illegal aliens readily at hand while their cases are being heard and make it easier for the state to deport them if necessary. But the move has dangers that attend any selective detention policy. Rampant human rights violations at such centres in Assam should raise red signals for state administrations. It places in the hands of the state security apparatus unwarranted powers over the citizenry.

For sure, the government must not tolerate illegal immigration, but as the Assam exercise has demonstrated, incontrovertible proof of citizenship is a problematic exercise. Under the Citizenship Act, somebody is either born in India (or his/her father was) or has become a citizen through a (somewhat long-drawn) application process, having lived in the country for a specified number of years. Millions of Indians born before the mid-eighties do not have birth certificates. They may have other documents – such as a passport or an Aadhaar card or voter ID. None of these can be considered incontrovertible proof of citizenship (the established practice of Bangladeshi immigrants being furnished with voter ID and Aadhaar cards shows why).

That leaves considerable discretion in the hands of the state police to harass people, and the detention centres will amplify that menace. The order also raises misgivings about fanning the embers of communalism. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2016 had sought to offer a path to Indian citizenship for people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh so long as they are not Muslim. Though the Bill lapsed, it remains high on the Bharatiya Janata Party’s priorities. It is also unlikely that the recommendations for humane conditions specified in the order will be followed in letter or spirit. Indian prison manuals specify similar conditions, which are quite at odds with the medieval squalor that characterises the jails.

Initiatives like this fuel divisiveness. As in the US or Europe, they offer unscrupulous politicians opportunities to raise false bogeys. In fact, this order stirs up suspicions that are belied by the government’s own data. Numbers collated from the 2011 census show that the immigration rate has fallen from 0.6 per cent to 0.4 per cent. This rate may be even lower in the next census as Bangladeshis either return to their own fast-growing nation or look to West Asia for better job opportunities. At a time when better-off Indians, too, are looking to leave India in larger numbers than ever before, the government would do well to speedily rescind this order.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



The misuse of language and Brexit

Two words ‘populist’ and ‘illiberal’ are being used by those enraged by the words and actions of Trump and Brexiteers

In Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*, we read “When I use a word”, Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful voice “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less”. This Humpty Dumpty adage is now rife in what we read in the print media, hear on radio and see on our TV screens. This Newspeak, as I had argued in an earlier column (“Rights, stakes and Newspeak”, February 18, 2012) is an avenue (and mask) for sloppy thinking. It has become rampant with the Trump and Brexit traumas in the US and the UK.

It is, therefore, nice to see that in the new Boris Johnson UK government, Jacob Rees-Mogg — often parodied as the MP for the 18th century — has been made Leader of the House of Commons. He is renowned for upholding the Queen’s English. In his first official action, he has issued a style guide to his ministerial staff. “It’s just a list of banned words which are sort of New Labour words like ‘unacceptable’,” he says. The rules “include referring to all ‘non-titled’ male MPs as ‘Esq.’, using imperial measurements and banning words and phrases such as ‘meet with’ and ‘ongoing’. And ‘impacted’ — unless it’s a wisdom tooth (‘Minister for Queen’s English has last word on style’, *Daily Telegraph*, July 25, 2019).” I am only sorry that his reported list does not include the vile world ‘stakeholder’ discussed in my earlier column.

In the misuse of language, two words “populist” and “illiberal” are used by those enraged by the words and actions of US President Donald Trump and Brexiteers. First, consider ‘populism’. A recent

survey of scholarly books on populism in Europe by Erik Jones (*Survival*, vol. 61 no.4 2019) demonstrates the lack of any academic consensus on the definition, causes and consequences of ‘populism’. Any change from the political status quo is labelled as being populist. But as I argued (“On Populism” November 29, 2016) based on SE Finer’s *The History of Government*, the enlightenment idea of popular sovereignty as the legitimising principle of all political authority was instituted in two distinct political forms. The first was in the UK and the US constitutions, with representative — not direct — democracy, with checks and balances to protect citizen’s liberties and embodying the classical liberal principle of limited government with the rule of law. The other was the continental European tradition embodying Rousseau’s General Will, legitimising direct democracy and the combination of legislative executive and judicial powers in a single person or authority whose will is always legal, and where citizen

rights instead of being based on John Stuart Mill’s principles of liberty (where citizens are free to do what they like as long as it does not infringe someone else’s liberties) are granted as favours in explicit ‘bills of rights’, with all private actions not included in these forbidden. To consider Brexit as equivalent to the populist antics of Italy’s Lega and Five Star Movement or the anti-EU movements in Hungary and Poland is maladroitness. For though all these are against the undemocratic centralising bureaucracy of the EU, the Brexit demands are based on the realisation that instead of a free-trade area they thought



DEEPAK LAL

The transfer of a bureaucrat

Transferring a finance secretary to another ministry, which is relatively less important, is unusual. For any government official, in particular, an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, becoming a finance secretary is considered to be a hard-earned achievement. The finance ministry has five secretaries. Only one of them becomes the finance secretary, who is the first among equals. Most finance secretaries don’t end their careers with superannuation; their services are used in various capacities as heads of committees or regulatory bodies and sometimes as members of other government institutions.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Narendra Modi government’s decision on July 24 to transfer Subhash Garg, who was then the finance secretary, to the power ministry as its secretary became a talking point in government and political circles. The obvious question was what went wrong for Mr Garg all of a sudden after having served the finance ministry for about two years?

Mr Garg was known for his comments, which his critics would often describe as bold but also irresponsible. His relation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was stressful. Regulators like the RBI and even the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) were reportedly apprehensive of how Mr Garg would moot ideas that would dilute their jurisdictional power. The markets, too, were concerned about Mr Garg’s announcements on the government’s borrowing plans in the middle of the year.

But as in the case of most senior bureaucrats, there was never any doubt that Mr Garg was not sticking to his brief. He appeared to be all the time carrying out instructions that the government had

issued to him. So, if Mr Garg appeared to be keen on securing a large share of the RBI’s surplus reserves or upset the RBI governor through his statements or tweets, nobody concluded that his actions did not have the tacit backing of the government. In the government system, bureaucrats don’t do things on their own. They do what the political leadership wants them to do. Mr Garg was no exception. Even when Mr Garg outlined the action plan to implement the Budget idea of the government floating sovereign bonds to borrow from external markets, the finance secretary was following the government brief.

So, why did the government think it was necessary to shift Mr Garg from the finance ministry to the power ministry? More importantly, why did Mr Garg let it be known a day after his transfer that he had sought voluntary retirement from government service? These developments make it clear that the government had a purpose in mind when it decided to transfer Mr Garg to the power ministry. And equally important, these developments show that Mr Garg had no hesitation in making public his decision to leave the government. Was Mr Garg lodging his protests against the government’s transfer move?

Two dates are important to note in this context. On July 17, a committee, headed by former RBI Governor Bimal Jalan, met to discuss the manner in which the central bank’s surplus reserves could be shared with the government. One of the members of this committee was Mr Garg, who, according to reports, declined to sign on the report and its recommendations. The very next day, July 18, Mr Garg had a meeting at the Prime Minister’s Office, where, according to him, he discussed his voluntary retirement plans. Mr Garg himself revealed that he dis-



NEW DELHI DIARY

A K BHATTACHARYA

they had joined, they were being frog-marched into a federal state in which its representative democracy and sovereign liberties as enshrined in its Common Law would be submerged.

The word ‘liberal’ has been misused since about 1900, and especially since 1930 as Schumpeter pointed out (in his *History of Economic Analysis*) as “the term classical liberal or economic liberalism has acquired a different — in fact almost opposite meaning — as a supreme if unintended compliment, the enemies of the system of private enterprise have thought it wise to appropriate the label (p.394).” Ironically, the shift came from what has been called the “manna from heaven” distributivism of Mill, the codifier of the classical liberal principles emanating from Adam Smith and David Hume. Mill argued that whilst these principles applied to production, the resultant wealth could be distributed as the authorities chose. This was, of course, against the classical liberal (and Marxist) claim that production and distribution were parts of a single economic system and could not be separated as Mill claimed. The classical position has been reinstated by the modern theory of institutional economics (see my *Reviving the Invisible Hand*, Chp.2).

But, this move from classical liberalism as the definition of liberalism to what is in effect social-democratic began politically with Otto von Bismarck’s social insurance scheme in Germany and the ‘liberal’ welfare reforms under Lloyd George’s government in Britain in 1906-14. Following the Great Depression, it spread to the United States through Franklin D Roosevelt’s New Deal. This social democratic system, which has been called ‘embedded liberalism’, became the dominant ideology, not least because of the scribbling of economists. By the end of the Second World War, the classical liberalism of the 19th century was replaced by the Dirigiste Dogma (see my *Poverty of Development Economics*). It is this social democracy which is the ‘liberal’ order which is being referred to by those who charge Trump and Brexit as being anti-liberal.

But classical liberalism was kept alive by the Republicans in the US under Regan and by Margaret Thatcher in the UK. She asked her cabinet to read Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty* for the basis of the programme called Thatcherism. Her enemies and those of classical liberalism in the US, instead of calling this return to classical liberalism by its proper name, called it ‘neo-liberalism’. But as Polonius would have said: “That’s an ill phrase a vile phrase.” It is a meaningless phrase. As the Peruvian novelist and politician Mario Vargas Llosa has argued: “To say neo-liberal is the same as saying ‘semi-liberal’ or ‘pseudo-liberal’. It is pure nonsense. Either one is in favour of liberty or against it, but one cannot be semi-in-favour or pseudo -in-favour of liberty, just as one cannot be ‘semi-pregnant’, ‘semi-living’, or ‘semi-dead’. The term has not been invented to express a conceptual reality, but rather as a corrosive weapon of derision, it has been designed to semantically devalue the doctrine of liberalism (p.16) (‘Liberalism in New Millennium’ in I. Vasquez (ed): *Global Fortune*, Cato, 2000).”

cussed his plan to retire early — more than a year before he would turn 60 — at the PMO on July 18.

The answer to the question on why Mr Garg was shifted to the power ministry and why he later made public his decision on seeking early retirement has to be found in the meetings that took place on July 17 and 18. It appears that Mr Garg’s approach to the Jalan Committee’s deliberations did not win him any friends either among its members or in the government. Indeed, his tough line was not appreciated by even the government. Most likely, Mr Garg’s transfer was a consequence of what happened on these two days.

There was yet another factor that complicated the situation for Mr Garg. The Indian economy was slowing, facing many headwinds. Many of the provisions in the Budget had upset the markets and industry. In such a situation, the government deciding to send its finance secretary to the power ministry was also construed as a signal to those who were worried about the economic situation and the Budget provisions. So, the departure of Mr Garg was seen as a punishment for the officer in charge of the economy’s management. And Mr Garg’s announcement of having sought voluntary retirement was seen as his protest against his transfer.

In the last two decades, only three finance secretaries have been transferred to less important ministries. In 2000, Piyush Mankad was sent off to the ministry of industry. In 2014, Arvind Mayaram was sent to the tourism ministry, initially, and later to the minority affairs ministry. And now Mr Garg has been sent to the power ministry. All the transfers were ordered when the government was led by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Neither Mr Mankad nor Mr Mayaram chose to seek voluntary retirement from service and completed their remaining months in service. But Mr Garg has followed a different path and hence speculation over why the government shifted him and why he has sought voluntary retirement will remain intense.

RSS’ selective world view



BOOK REVIEW

C P BHAMBHRI

Raoasheb Kasbe’s critique of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was published in Marathi in 1978, and this translated version was published this year. The book lacks, therefore, the stigma of western elitism that the Sangh Parivar invariably mobilises to discredit criticism against it. No less importantly, Mr Kasbe, a political scientist and scholar of Ambedkar and Dalit movements, challenges the organisation’s ideology not from the standpoint of western liberalism —

another bone of Parivar contention — but within the framework of Hinduism and India’s cultural history.

The author needs just six chapters to substantiate his basic argument that the RSS’ vision of Hinduism is Brahmanical, anti-Dalit and anti-women, and that its claim to appropriate Hinduism in its totality is deceptive. This clinical demystification includes a close analysis for the writings of the RSS’ pre-eminent ideologue and longest-serving supreme leader or Sarsangchalak (between 1940 and 1973) M S Golwalkar, especially his well-known treatise *Bunch of Thoughts* (1966).

The essence of these six chapters in the words of the author is to show that “the RSS does not stand for an egalitarian India but a Hindustan (Hindu Nation) under Brahmanical hegemony, (which) harks back to the times of (the) Peshwas”. Baji Rao II, Mr Kasbe writes, was regarded by the

votaries of Hindutva as “the ideal Peshwa” because he adopted the policy of helping only Brahmins during the drought of 1803-04 and “openly denied his responsibility towards the welfare of non-Brahmins”.

The author, thus, contextualises the RSS’ ideology and politics by connecting it with the intellectual and political developments of Maharashtra. On one hand, there was a resurgence of the Shudra challenge to Brahmanism spearheaded by activists such as Jyotiba Phule and Sahuji Maharaj, and on the other, K B Hedgewar talked only of Hindu mobilisation. This mobilisation was led by a closed caste that sought to control society and politics. The foundational philosophy of the Sangh’s nationalism, therefore, was casteist.

On Golwalkar’s *Bunch of Thoughts*, Mr Kasbe’s contention is that the ideologue’s thinking was essentially political. This becomes clearer from Chapter 5 titled

“Enemies” that shows how Golwalkar identifies Muslims, Christians and Communists as the Other. This exposes the claim — heard with increasing frequency these days — that the RSS is a cultural, not a political organisation. When an organisation targets “enemies”, isn’t that a political agenda? In 1948, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel called the RSS’ bluff and asked it to write its constitution if its leaders wanted to be released from jail.

The RSS uses an emotive core message to mobilise Hindus to target non-Hindus: That Hindus have been “victims” of history. The RSS mission was, as Mr Kasbe explains, “reorganising the Hindu people on the lines of their unique national genius”, which the broader Sangh Parivar has taken up. “This is not only a great process of true national regeneration of Bharat but also the precondition to realise the dream of world unity and human welfare,” he writes. Hindus have to be made courageous and assertive. In the debate over materialism and idealism, Golwalkar opts for the dubious idea of spiritualism.

This apart, says Mr Kasbe, Golwalkar

attaches great importance to the earth in the form of Mother India and ignores the fact that the earth is inhabited by people. According to Golwalkar, “every particle of the geographical region of India, even dust, contains godliness and so the land is holy to us... nothing can be holier to us than this holy land”. If the land is holy, then Hinduism is nationalism, that is Golwalkar’s logic. By using Hindu and Bharatiya interchangeably in the context of Indian nationalism, Mr Kasbe says, the Sangh organisations implicitly define Hinduism as nationalism. The author also scrutinises the RSS’ role during the freedom struggle and comes to the conclusion that the RSS had nothing to do with it.

If the RSS talks of Hindu traditions, Mr Kasbe says, then what about Charvaka, which is said to be the first school of materialist philosophy in Indian history? This leads him to observe that the perceptions of history encapsulated in *Bunch of Thoughts* is deceptive. Which era of history was glorious? Without mentioning specific dates, Golwalkar selectively glorifies the culture, customs and tra-

ditions of India’s past. If Golwalkar had critically examined India’s past, Mr Kasbe says, he would have had to defend Shankaracharya’s philosophy prohibiting the Shudras from studying the Vedas.

Underlining the innately inequitable nature of its philosophy and the deliberate falsification of Indian history and culture is the structure of the organisation. Mr Kasbe completes the picture of this influential organisation with a chapter on the para-military, hierarchical secretive structure of the RSS and its affiliates. The organisation reflects its idea of Hindu Rashtra by indoctrinating the Hindu youth and making them hate the “enemies”. The concern, perhaps, is that in the four decades since Mr Kasbe wrote this book, the RSS’ ideology has been amplified.

DECODING THE RSS: Its Tradition and Politics
Raoasheb Kasbe (translated by Deepak Borgave)

Leftword; Pages: 173; Price: ₹250

Continuing old sugar policy is unfortunate

Govt did well to keep the sugar FRP unchanged, but lost a chance to come up with a more appropriate policy

WHILE THE CENTRAL government did well to not raise the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane from last year's ₹275 per quintal for the next procurement season, the good news stops here; mills have to buy all cane at this price unless the state government has a higher State Advised Price (SAP) as states like Uttar Pradesh normally have. The central government has done nothing to stop the cycle of rising dues followed up by farmer protests and then arrests of sugar mill managers and owners. As in the past, since the arrests, while popular politically, do nothing to make it possible for the mills to pay farmers for their cane—the cane costs a lot more than is justified by the price at which sugar can be sold—the government has also come out with a relief package. This time around, the package comprises a 4 million tonne buffer stock of sugar—it was 3 million last year—so this ensures the government will pay the mills ₹1,674 crore as the carrying costs of the cane; also, since the 4 million tonnes is a buffer, this stock will no longer be available for sale this year, so this will raise the market price of sugar.

The basic problem arising out of the higher sugar price, however, is a more serious one. If mills have to buy cane at ₹275 per quintal—and in UP, the SAP is an even higher ₹315—they need to be able to sell the sugar at around ₹35 per kg; yet, the market price is just around ₹31-32. This loss, when applied at an industry level, works out to around ₹12,000 crore; it will be higher depending upon how much cane is bought at SAPs that are higher than the central FRP. Given this, it is hardly surprising that the outstanding dues of mills to farmers on July 15 were ₹15,200 crore. This is lower than the ₹30,000 crore on March 31, but that is what the sugar cycle looks like; dues typically peak in March and start reducing later as the mills are able to sell the sugar they produce and clear farmer dues.

So while the government did well not to hike the FRP, in the last two years, ex-mill prices of sugar fell by around 15% while the FRP rose by 19%. Between FY10 and FY19, the FRP rose 2.1 times while the ex-mill price rose by around 5%. This is obviously a recipe for disaster; and while the central government had come up with a formula—based on a committee headed by former RBI Governor C Rangarajan—this has not been implemented in states like Uttar Pradesh and, even at the central level, the FRP is above the Rangarajan price. Without any serious attention being paid to coming up with a long-term solution, apart from the buffer stock solution—which is a temporary fix—the government has tried to get oil marketing firms to buy more ethanol. But there is a limit to how much more ethanol can be produced by the mills—this requires more capital investment—in the short run; also corn-based ethanol is a less water-intensive solution than sugarcane-based ethanol. Until the government gets its cane-pricing right, the cycle of rising dues and rising farm protests will continue; with stricter RBI norms on repayment of dues, the game cannot continue indefinitely either.

Quota rush won't help

Now, 73% reservations in Madhya Pradesh

AFTER MAHARASHTRA DID it with its Maratha quota, Madhya Pradesh (MP) has now trashed the 50% reservation cap set by the Supreme Court (SC) in the *Indra Sawhney* judgement. By raising the reservation for OBCs from 14% to 27%, the state now provides 73% reservation overall, factoring in the 10% quota the Centre is offering to the “poor”. Such disregard for the apex court's ruling means not just a death knell for merit, the future of millions of general category students and even India's competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy is at risk. This also makes it clear that the executive can ride roughshod over judicial opinion, and that the courts may choose to keep quiet as they have in the past. Nor is it clear whether judicial intervention will help. In the past, the government has amended the Constitution to negate the effect of various court judgments on quotas and tried to give carve-outs to policies that violate such judgements under the Ninth Schedule, despite the SC, in *IR Coelho*, saying that the Ninth Schedule was not sacrosanct if it violated constitutional provisions on fundamental rights. It doesn't help that, as *FE* has pointed out before, the judiciary has also inflicted serious damage on merit, with various high court and SC judgements and rulings distorting notions of “backwardness”, “inclusion”, “representation” and even “efficiency”. Between the judiciary and the political class constantly pushing the limit, the general categories keep ceding space.

There is, no doubt, a need to ensure that equal opportunities and equal access are made available to all communities. But, if this comes at the cost of one or the other section of the population—in the MP instance, just 27% of seats are available to those belonging to general categories, and there is no saying that this will not shrink further in the future—the government and the political class must realise that they are playing with a tinderbox. With ultras within the general category communities harvesting resentment because of reservation pressure, all sorts of extremism will come to the fore. In the latest instance, a sitting judge of the Kerala High Court spoke of how Brahmins are superior and “should always rule”, and called for the Brahmin community to agitate against “caste or communal reservation”, with some disclaimers about holding a constitutional post himself. But, prominent members across communities, including political leadership of the mainline parties, must realise that deepening caste divides is a fraught proposition. Instead of turning to reservation as a crutch, policy must consider the fact that it is access to education and improved learning outcomes—and PRICE data proves this—that becomes a great equaliser. The fact that reservation needs to be accorded at each step, from higher education to jobs to promotion, shows that quotas are simply not working. If the government were to invest more in early-life health and nutrition and invest in improving education infrastructure, with a focus on improving learning outcomes, India can get off the quota horse and its mad gallop.

LoudestRoar

India is now home to 2,967 wild tigers. But, there is need for better data collection and enhanced conservation efforts

ASPER THE results of the all-India estimates released by PM Modi on Monday, India is now home to 2,967 wild tigers—75% of the global population of the felines. The census reflects a 33% increase from the animal's 2014 strength, reported to be 2,226. Significantly, the increase since 2006—when the national census reported 1,411 surviving tigers in the country—is of 210%. Since over 80% of the tigers were camera-trapped, the improved credibility of the latest numbers, too, is a positive improvement. However, these results do not give an unqualified reason to cheer as they are accompanied by several caveats and concerns. For one, while absolute numbers have seen a rise the overall area occupied by the big cats in fact shrunk by 17,881 sq km. In three tiger reserves—Buxa in West Bengal, Dampa in Mizoram, and Palamau in Jharkhand—no tiger presence was detected. The Shivaliks, Western Ghats, and the North East registered loss of tiger presence over 469 sq km, 527 sq km, and 6,589 sq km, respectively.

Experts have criticised the report for not including information crucial for the meta-health of Indian tigers, such as the percentage of tigers outside tiger reserves, which gives an indication of the status of tiger corridors—expected to have reduced by 8-10% from 28% in 2014. The methodology of the report, too, has been questioned, citing the usage of the double-sampling method, which tends to lead to overestimation, and discrepancy in the ages of the tigers that were deemed qualified for counting. Moreover, Rajesh Gopal, former member secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority warned that India might be saturating its carrying capacity for tigers, raising the risk of human-animal conflicts. Future conservation efforts, therefore, need to focus not only on increasing the numerical strength of the big cats but also ensure the availability of their natural habitats and ecosystems.

● THE REAL MAINSTREAM

THE WORLD HAS REACHED ITS LIMIT FOR NITROGEN; INDIA'S NITROGEN POLLUTION COSTS ARE FOUR TIMES THE UREA INDUSTRY'S TURNOVER. SO WE NEED TO MAKE UREA FROM RENEWABLES

Only decontrol can solve urea's problems

CHANDRA BHUSHAN

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Views are personal



Award. Urea is only the second sector to get the Three Leaves Award, the other being the cement sector. The other sectors have received the Two Leaves Award or below.

Grasim Industries Ltd's Indo Gulf Fertilisers, Jagdishpur, Uttar Pradesh, was rated as the greenest urea plant in the country. This plant, with a 61% score, received the coveted Four Leaves Award. It is only the second company out of 250+ companies rated by GRP so far to receive the Four Leaves Award.

The next three winners have all received the Three Leaves Award—these are KRIBHCO, Hazira, Gujarat, Mangalore Chemicals & Fertilizers Ltd, Mangalore, Karnataka and Yara Fertilisers India Pvt. Ltd., Babrala. Uttar Pradesh. The worst rated plant was Madras Fertilizers Ltd, Chennai.

The sector has performed very well in curtailing its energy use and CO2 emissions. The sector as a whole emits far lower CO2 per tonne of urea than the urea sector in the US or China. In fact, some plants, like Indo Gulf Fertilisers and Yara Fertilisers, match the global best levels in energy efficiency and CO2 emissions.

However, the sector has slipped on its water consumption and water-pollution parameters. Its water consumption is high and can be reduced by at least one-third by using recycling/reuse technologies. The sector also has water-pollution problems. The sample of groundwater and effluents tested in the laboratory by GRP found high levels of contaminants. For instance, the ammoniacal nitrogen concentration in the groundwater in and around many plants was way above permissible limits.

Another major concern is health and safety practices in older plants. The urea sector handles dangerous chemicals, like ammonia. GRP's assessment is that most old plants need to upgrade their safety

practices as well as on-site and off-site disaster-management plans.

The overall assessment is that incentives largely determine the environmental performance of the sector. As the urea sector is strictly controlled, the government has incentivised energy efficiency. Plants who do better than the energy consumption targets set by the government make more money. This is the reason why plants have done really well in energy consumption. However, since no incentives are offered for controlling water consumption and environmental pollution, companies have shied away from investing in pollution-control measures or in technologies to reduce water use. In fact, the government's urea pricing policy effectuates a disincentive to invest in environmental protection.

The biggest issue is the very future of urea fertiliser itself. The industry has a significant role to play in addressing three major environmental issues: nitrogen pollution, ozone layer depletion, and climate change.

Urea production is completely dependent on fossil fuels and, hence, contributes to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Nitrous oxide (N2O) emitted from agricultural fields due to the use of urea is also a potent GHG and an ozone-depleting substance (ODS). Its GHG potential is 300 times that of CO2 and its ozone-depleting potential is similar to that of many hydrochloro-fluorocarbon refrigerants. N2O is now the largest ODS emitted through human activities.

In addition, the world has breached the planetary limit for nitrogen, and the

use of nitrogenous fertilisers is a significant contributor in this. In fact, nitrogen pollution of surface water and groundwater has reached alarming levels in many states of India. There is also widespread soil sickness due to imbalanced application of nitrogen fertilisers. It is estimated that the cost of nitrogen pollution on health and ecosystems in India is ₹5 lakh crore—four times the turnover of the urea industry.

To address these issues, the industry will have to reinvent itself. Firstly, Indian agriculture needs to graduate from the present practice of bulk application of urea to a more precise supply of required nutrients. The industry needs to come up with new and innovative products to improve efficiency of nitrogen use from the current 30-35% to more than 60%. This will reduce urea consumption, improve soil health, increase yields and reduce N2O emissions.

Secondly, the production of nitrogen fertilisers will also have to shift from fossil fuels to renewables. It is interesting to note that the Fertilizer Corporation of India's Nangal plant employed electrolysis of water to produce hydrogen until it switched to hydrocarbons in the 1970s due to shortage of power in the Bhakra grid. Clearly, we have the technology to produce nitrogenous fertilisers without using fossil fuels. The falling costs of renewable energy will make this an economically feasible option.

The Indian fertiliser industry needs to be geared for these future challenges. But, this industry is also one of the most tightly controlled sectors of the economy. For the urea sector to take these steps, the government needs to change its policy and bring a measure of decontrol. Decontrol will make the industry competitive and bring innovations in production and products. So, apart from fiscal reasons, there are solid environmental reasons to decontrol the urea sector. This is the key outlook emerging from GRP.

Moving from use of fossil fuels won't happen till industry is decontrolled. Only then will units get competitive & look at innovations; so even in environment terms, decontrol of urea is required

Governing insolvency professionals

IBBI's new, stringent norms would enhance governance of insolvency professionals and help achieve IBC's overall objectives

RACHIT SHARMA

DGM, Taxmann
Views are personal



WITH AN INTENT to strengthen the norms governing resolution professionals, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board India (IBBI), on July 23, 2019, has notified the amended Insolvency Professionals Regulations, and the Model Bye-Laws and Governing Board of Insolvency Professional Agencies Regulations. The regulations are effective from July 23, 2019. The key amendments are discussed in detail as under:

Authorisation of assignment by insolvency professional agency (IPA): The amended norms provide that effective January 1, 2020, an insolvency professional (IP) shall have to obtain authorisation for assignment from the IPA before accepting or undertaking any assignment as interim resolution professional, resolution professional, liquidator, bankruptcy trustee, authorised representative or in any other role under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016. The scope of the term 'assignment' is very wide, covering all work that an insolvency resolution profession could render under the IBC.

The authorisation for assignment means an authorisation to undertake an assignment issued by an IPA to a member IP. The additional requirement for authorisation for assignment by IPA is very stringent for resolution professionals. As per current norms, IPs are already registered with both IBBI and the insolvency agency. The added requirement of taking approval from IPA could be very harsh for an IP. As of now, there are no rules which prescribe criteria to be observed by IPAs for issuing or rejecting authorisation for assignment. Also, the norms don't specify the time limit for

which the authorisation shall remain valid. It is expected that IBBI would soon release guidelines to IPAs for issuing such authorisation.

Resolution professional can't take employment during assignment: Amended norms prohibit an IP from taking any employment when they hold an authorisation for assignment or when they are undertaking an assignment. This would enable an individual to seek registration as an IP even when they are in employment. They must, however, discontinue employment when they wish to have an authorisation for assignment, and may surrender the authorisation when they wish to take up employment.

No related party transactions with substantial creditor during insolvency resolution process: In order to avoid any conflict of interest on the part of the resolution professional, the amended norms prohibit IPs and their relatives from accepting any employment, other than employment secured through open competitive recruitment, with, or render professional services, other than services under the IBC, to a creditor having more than 10% voting power, the successful resolution applicant, the corporate debtor or any of their related parties, until a period of one year has elapsed from the date of their cessation from such process. Further, the norms restrict an insolvency professional from engaging or appointing any of their relatives or related parties, for or in connection with any work relating to any of their assignments.

Disclosure of conflict of interest by IP: The norms require an IP to disclose

details of any conflict of interest to the stakeholders wherever they comes across such a conflict during an assignment.

Key amendments to the IBBI (Model Bye-Laws and Governing Board of Insolvency Professional Agencies) (Amendment) Regulations, 2019 are:

Empowerment of IPA to authorise assignment: IBBI model by-laws and governing board of IPA empowers IPAs to issue/renew an authorisation for assignment to IPs in accordance with its by-laws. This amendment has been introduced in order to give effect to the amendment to the IBBI (Insolvency Professionals) regulation which makes it mandatory for resolution professionals to obtain authorisation of assignment from an IPA.

Cap on age limit for IP for obtaining assignment: The amendment norms provide that subject to meeting other requirements, an IP would be eligible to obtain an authorisation of assignment if they have not attained the age of 75 years. The amended norms however, allow an individual to be appointed as an independent director on the governing board of an IPA up to the age of 75 years.

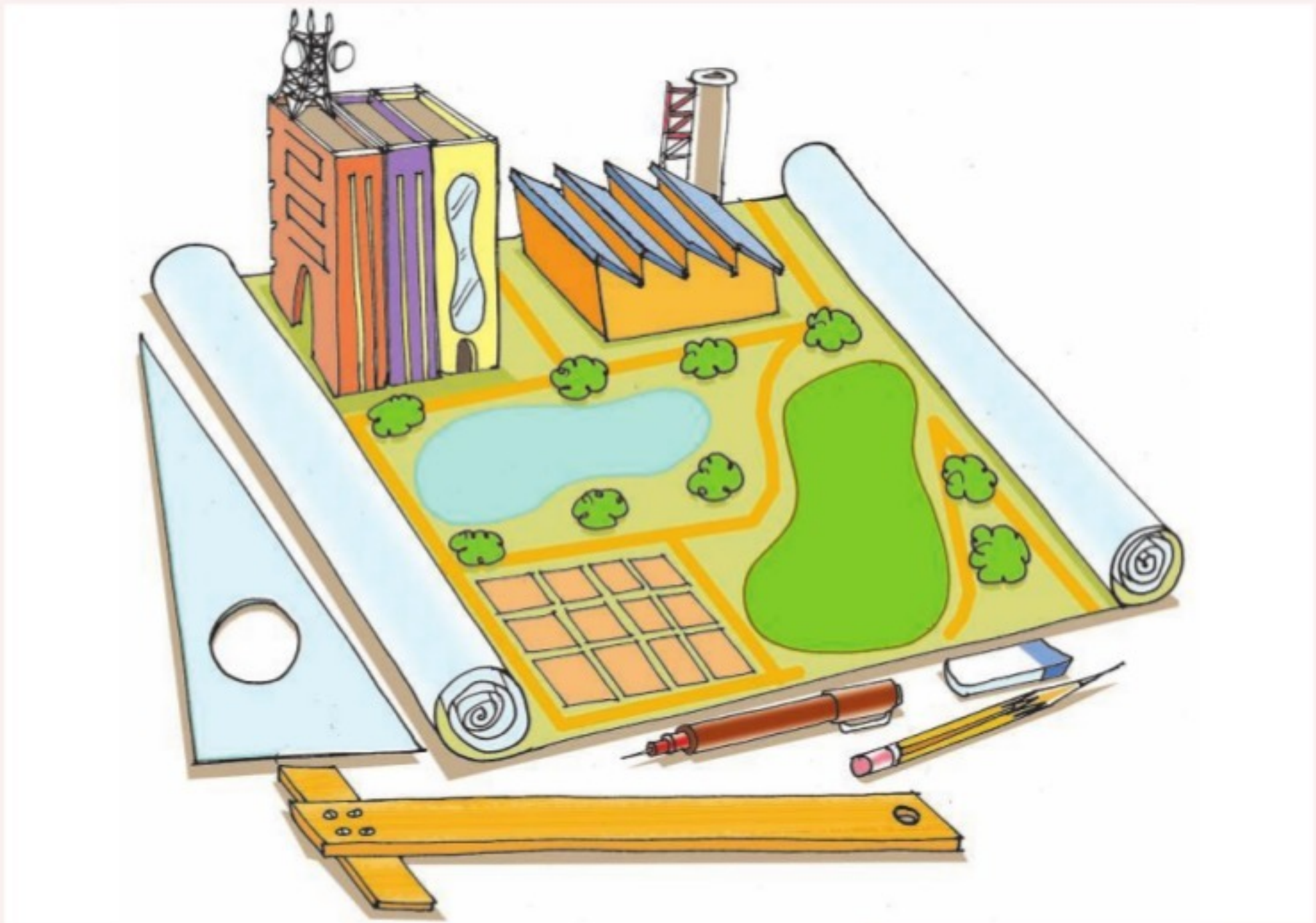
Resolution professionals play a key role in the entire resolution process as it is very important for all stakeholders that IPs perform their duty without any biases or conflicts of interest. The amendments, such as prohibiting IPs from doing anything that could be considered as a conflict of interest, mandating disclosure of such conflicts, etc, would further enhance governance of IPs, and would help in the achievement of the overall objectives of the IBC.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Exams sans invigilators

After former Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit, Congress lost its stalwart Sudini Jaipal Reddy (77), a gentleman politician, brilliant parliamentarian, who packed his speeches with wit, criticism and in-depth information. Five times Lok Sabha member Jaipal Reddy also had been elected to the Rajya Sabha twice and the Assembly of undivided Andhra Pradesh four times. He stood up firmly to oppose the Emergency, quitting the Congress and joining the Janata Party in 1977. Later, disillusioned, he turned into a strident critic of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee led NDA government in Parliament and outside. After 22 years of his joining the Congress, Reddy said it was only the INC that could fight the battle for secularism. For him, politics was about ideology and beliefs. That's why, though he was shunted from one ministry to another, he remained in the Congress until the end. During when allegations against UPA II surfaced, his image remained clean. Moreover, his stint as Petroleum Minister was marked with courage, as he took on the mighty Mukesh Ambani. As per media, while then-PM Manmohan Singh and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi had not talked with Mr. Reddy, but, according to Reddy, Rahul Gandhi called him to admit that the former had been wronged in being removed from office. Even after all these, Jaipal Reddy played a silent role in the historic decision of dividing Andhra Pradesh in 2014. Someone correctly assessed that he belonged to a rare tribe of politicians who were 'in' politics but not 'for' politics. Sending my prayers and heartfelt condolences to his family. May his soul rest in peace! — Bidyut K Chatterjee, Faridabad

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



ISHER JUDGE
AHLUWALIA
& AYUSH KHARE

Ahluwalia is chairperson, ICRIER, Delhi, and former chairperson of the High-Powered Expert Committee on Urban Infrastructure and Services. Khare is a research assistant at ICRIER



CITIES AT CROSSROADS

Indian cities need a new planning template

Bold measures for connectivity through transit-oriented development will lead not only to decongesting growth centres, but also strengthening labour markets and building rural-urban linkages

THIS COLUMN USUALLY tries to go behind the visibly deficient state of delivery of public services in our cities and discusses the possible solutions. Today, we spell out a challenge that may not be as visible as the burning landfills or flooded streets, but, in some ways, is even more important. This is the challenge of metropolitan planning, which has been sorely missing in our development strategy.

This is a matter of grave concern as metropolitan regions are the engines of growth and gateways to the national and

global economies. In 2016, the 300 largest metropolitan regions in the world (containing a quarter of the global population) contributed nearly 50% of global GDP. In India, metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi have acted as engines of growth, but lack of urban planning in general and spatial planning (integrated land use and transport) in particular has left major scars on the city fabric, with significant deterioration in the quality of public services and ease of living.

The term ‘metropolitan area’ is defined unambiguously in the Constitu-

tion as an area having a population of over 1 million, consisting of two or more Municipalities or Panchayats or other contiguous areas that may span over multiple districts. The Constitution provides considerable discretion to the state governments in determining the administrative boundaries of metropolitan areas. But metropolitan regions have been delineated by the state governments without paying attention to the need to create a unified market, especially labour market, which would forge strong economic linkages between the core city and the periphery. As a result, metropolitan regions are being created by default and not by design.

To make matters complex, the Census of India does not use the term metropolitan region or metropolitan area. Instead, a continuous urban spread constituting a town or multiple contiguous towns and their adjoining outgrowths is defined as urban agglomeration. There are 53 urban agglomerations in India with a population of 1 million and above. The number is expected to increase to 87 by 2031. Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai already have population above 10 million, and Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Surat will join the ‘big league’ by 2035.

The 74th Amendment Act mandated the setting up of Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPC) in all metropolitan areas, which were to prepare Draft Development Plans with due regard for coordinated spatial planning, sharing of resources, development of infrastructure, and environmental conservation. The Committees would comprise of elected members from the municipalities and panchayats constituting the metropolitan area as well as representation from the state and central governments to bring about coordination among the multiple authorities in a metropolitan area. However, MPCs remained a non-starter as states showed little interest in their establishment. There are no examples of any MPC carrying through a Draft Development Plan through a state government approval, financing and implementation.

Development authorities were already in place and they continue to engage in land use planning with little regard for transport planning. A range of institutions such as municipalities, and other parastatals such as State Water and Sewerage Boards continue to coexist in metropolitan regions, often with over-

lapping functional jurisdictions and little coordination among them.

The ad hoc extension of urban boundaries and regularisation of unauthorised colonies brings with it additional challenges for metropolitan governance and financing. The Delhi government has identified close to 1,800 colonies that will be regularised by the end of next month. Its implications for governance and financing will be daunting, unless explicit provisions are made through innovative measures of unlocking land value, as has been done by Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (Municipal Corporation of Bengaluru) that was formed after subsuming several towns and villages in 2007 is still struggling to regularise the new properties that were brought under its jurisdiction 12 years ago. The government of Karnataka has recently introduced certain levies on new layouts/developments and additional floor area ratio to create a dedicated resource pool to finance the Bengaluru metropolitan railway project. Hyderabad metropolitan area spans over seven districts, including the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and 1,032 villages spread over 7,257 sq-km. The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority and the GHMC have used innovative measures such as betterment charges at the time of approving layouts for construction of buildings and impact fees from builders for land use conversion to unlock land value, to finance the development of such a large area.

Any rapidly growing economy necessarily experiences structural transformation, and India’s experience has been no different. India has been among the fastest growing economies in the world for more than two decades. This has brought about structural transformation of the economy such that the share of agriculture in GDP has declined to 14% and that of services has increased to 58%.

History amply demonstrates that structural transformation necessarily

involves spatial transformation. Economic growth-generating activities collocate in metropolitan city regions to reap external economies of agglomeration and networking. Since there is no regional/metropolitan planning in India and metropolitan governance structures are fragmented, public transport and environmental conservation are the conspicuous casualties. Master planning that a physical view of the city, disregarding its economic fundamentals. As PK Mohanty puts it, “the land use planner’s vision, the transport planner’s strategy and the urban economist’s perspective are not integrated” (Mohanty 2019, Sage).

Transportation planning plays a major role in ensuring sustainable and balanced regional development through intercity and rural-urban connectivity. In India, integrated land use planning and transport planning is emerging in major highway projects in a number of cities. Opportunities for urban planning with integrated transport and land use on a much larger scale are emerging in the planned highway expansion in the country with the Golden Quadrilateral, freight corridors and other networks. While still at an infant stage, the Regional Rapid Transit System planned for Delhi-NCR under the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRRTC) will also immensely improve connectivity between Delhi and far-flung areas such as Meerut, Alwar and Panipat, and spurt economic growth in the region.

Bold measures for connectivity through transit-oriented development will lead not only to decongesting growth centres, but also strengthening labour markets and building rural-urban linkages.

Transportation planning plays a major role in ensuring sustainable and balanced regional development through intercity and rural-urban connectivity

MERGER CONTROL

Assessing the bidding markets

SOUMYA
HARIHARAN

The author is partner, Trilegal

COMPETITION LAW AUTHORITIES are assessing the impact of mergers based on bidding data, especially in sectors where companies obtain business through tenders and procurements. Recent cases have prompted antitrust authorities to undertake detailed economic analysis of past bidding data to assess competitive constraints in relation to mergers between competitors. The substantive test to assess mergers in India is whether the combination causes or is likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition (AAEC) in the relevant market. The CCI has analysed bidding data across sectors, to evaluate the frequency of bids, closeness of competition, win/loss assessment to assess, and if a merger causes or is likely to cause AAEC.

A competitive analysis of bidding markets is different from a traditional antitrust analysis of the relevant market as market shares, by themselves, are unlikely to indicate market power. In such markets, a single bidder typically emerges as the winner, but ‘runners-up’ play a major role as they exert competitive constraints on the bidding process. Consider a case where company A won 20 tenders, of which company B was runner-up (15 tenders) and company C won five tenders. In such a situation, a merger of companies A and B is more likely to impact the market as compared to a merger of A and C. This demonstrates the closeness of competition between A and B as their merger would eliminate a primary competitor, thereby distorting competition.

Empirical tools are employed to assess unilateral effects (incentives for the merged entity to increase prices post-merger) in bidding markets. Globally, antitrust regulators assess bidding markets by way of participation analysis (participation depicts closeness among bidders), win-loss analysis (how often does one bidder lose to another), probit analysis (probability of winning of one party gets impacted by participation from another), margins analysis (margins of one party may be affected by participation from another), switching analysis (one bidder wins a customer from other bidder), etc.

The CCI assesses mergers involving bidding markets using empirical analyses and economic methods. It has analysed

Companies contemplating mergers need to collate supporting data to enable a meaningful analysis of bidding data

sector-specific facts while considering the constraints exerted by new bidders, historic bidding data, overlapping bids, etc, in scrutinising bidding markets. In the Sony Pictures case, the CCI evaluated bidding data for a five-year period to determine that Ten Sports was not the closest competitor of Sony (by assessing overlapping bids and analysing bid prices). In the Siemens-Alstom merger, the

CCI analysed past bidding data to conclude that Alstom was not a frequent bidder in mainline signalling tenders, coupled with the fact that there was negligible overlap between them.

The CCI has also analysed if the parties to the merger enjoy incumbency or early-mover advantage that enables them to have detailed knowledge of the customer—advantage in responding to offers for renewals and subsequent negotiations. Such incumbents are at a financial advantage compared to new bidders, as they do not have to incur sunk costs. Accordingly, the incumbency advantage permits such ‘winners’ to likely obtain renewals of subsequent tenders. In the Linde-Praxair merger, the CCI assessed the incumbency advantage enjoyed by Linde and Praxair, which enabled them to foreclose their competitors in relation to new bids.

The bidding analysis undertaken by antitrust regulators requires extensive reliable data, which may not be readily available with companies—those contemplating mergers need to collate supporting data to enable a meaningful analysis of bidding data. The challenges they are likely to face include, *inter alia*, voluminous nature of the data sought and lack of coherently organised bidding data. Companies are unlikely to have access to the intricacies of the tender process, as information pertaining to the bid prices offered by their competitors, number and identity of other participants, rankings of players, etc, are not known to them. A key takeaway for companies that plan to undertake mergers in bidding markets involving two effective and close competitors would be the likelihood of greater antitrust scrutiny. Such companies would need to work with competition lawyers and economists to assess the impact of the merger on the relevant market.

(With inputs from Nandita Sahai and Sakshi Agarwal, senior associates at Trilegal)

WHEN MTV LAUNCHED onto television sets, the first song they aired was ‘Video Killed the Radio Star’, by The Buggles. The rise of cable TV and the internet did seem to ring alarm bells for radio, but this humble medium once again staved off threats by adapting to evolving tastes. Media pundits have been chanting death knells for radio in India, but one needs to remember that radio survived the tape, CD, iPod and will be as popular in the age of music-streaming apps. Despite being often described as a struggling media, radio is still very much alive and kicking, managing to attract and engage huge audiences in our country.

There is more to radio than meets the eye. Radio might very well be looking at its best days yet. Broadcast radio (AM) today reaches a staggering 99% of the Indian population, while FM radio reaches 65%. According to the EY-FICCI report ‘A billion screens of opportunity’, 47 new radio stations were operationalised in 2018 across 35 cities, taking the total number to 386 radio stations in the country.

Radio has been able to successfully fight off threats, which bring us to the question: What makes this traditional medium so successful even today?

Reaching all corners

Radio is an effective broadcast platform with the power to unite millions. Unlike TV and print, radio is highly interactive, hyper-local in nature, and is free of cost for audiences. The expansion to both

Nobody killed the radio star...

Radio in India continues to evolve; it grew 7.5% in 2018 to reach a size of ₹31.3 billion

ABRAHAM
THOMAS

The author is CEO, Reliance Broadcast Network Ltd



tier-2 and tier-3 cities with the Phase-III auction policy, coupled with the diversification of content for varied listener interests, offers latent growth opportunities in India’s FM radio industry. The findings of the EY-FICCI report corroborate that tier-2 and tier-3 cities are driven more by local advertising to generate higher revenues from SME and retail advertisers. With issues of national interest being broadcast on radio, and a chance to listen to the leader of the nation addressing citizens everywhere, audiences tune-in frequently and further engage with the medium, even in areas where other platforms can’t reach.

Trust and credibility

In digital medium, it is difficult to curb ‘fake news’. It is often observed that in

TRP race to grab eyeballs, even TV channels tend to exaggerate and repeat themselves. Whereas, on radio, information is crisp, straightforward and informative. People listen attentively as they know it won’t be repeated. In the content clutter these days, radio helps audiences focus and retains their attention for a longer duration as compared to TV, where pictures and headlines distract the viewer. Also, there are very few reported events of fake news on radio, making it, by far, the most credible and authentic medium out there.

What keeps radio relevant in the age of the internet is the localised flavour of conversations, chat shows, quizzes and audience interaction. Different RJs and celebs on this medium have now built their own brand and fan-following, and have given



millions of listeners something to look forward to every day.

Going online

While online streaming services like Spotify, Gaana, Saavn are fine-tuning their business models and content offerings, radio has already adapted to changing user behaviour. In fact, major players of the FM radio industry have already gone digital. By allowing listeners to tune-in to their favourite radio shows online, they are expanding their audience and, in the process, offering 360-degree solutions to advertisers. Also, instead of cutting into each other’s operations, we will witness an increased number of partnerships between radio players and streaming apps, where specific and personalised content

can be pitched to advertisers.

As the radio industry becomes more competitive and with communication becoming more content-centric, podcasts have emerged as the new battleground. Radio podcasts offer a wide variety of content with the least amount of clutter. Equipped with engaging content and subtle, seamless incorporation of advertisements, these podcasts offer the nostalgia of radio enhanced with an enriched listening experience.

Working its way up

From an advertising viewpoint, too, the transformation of radio as a medium from a traditional to an omnichannel model has opened new avenues for brands to reach out to target audiences in more relevant

ways. Beyond ads, radio is enabling growth through advertiser-funded programmes, programmatic content, concerts, digital content and delivery, events and activation, podcasts, etc.

Radio also offers an extensive advertising bouquet, covering terrestrial as well as digital. As per the EY-FICCI report, the sector grew 7.5% in 2018 and reached a size of Rs 31.3 billion, taking its share in total advertising to 4.2%. It isn’t just about the reach, but also the advertising options that radio makes available. For instance, brands can opt for RJ mentions, thereby tapping into a loyal fan base. This sort of activation isn’t possible with online streaming.

In the digital world where it’s as easy as shooting a video and making content out of it, radio has risen to the challenge and has been flawlessly delivering content not only through audio formats, but also engaging videos for digital consumption. With the consumer at the very core of their strategies, major players of the private FM industry are focusing on building communities to get a better understanding of their listeners.

The medium is here to stay

While radio has withstood time and the waves of change, it has also learned to adapt to the ever-changing media landscape. We not only see radio platforms amplify their reach and visibility via digital platforms, but the reverse effect also taking place with digital using radio stations to tap into their audiences. With a data-centric approach, radio will continue to be a profitable medium for audiences, marketers and investors alike.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

UNNAO INDICTMENT

A law enforcement system that hounds the victim, a political regime that presides over injustice — amends must be made

ACHILLING SEQUENCE of events has played out in and around a village in Unnao district, Uttar Pradesh. About two years ago, a teenager was allegedly raped by the locally powerful four-term BJP MLA on the pretext of helping her get a job. Almost a year later, she tried to draw public attention to the alleged crime and to her accusations of continued police inaction by attempting to immolate herself in front of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's residence in Lucknow. Subsequently, her father was taken into custody in connection with an Arms Act case; he died in judicial custody. The case was transferred to the CBI, MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was arrested, but, by all accounts, the repeated cries for help of the woman and her family and their allegations of police harassment and intimidation by the accused and his henchmen went unaddressed, leading to her writing a letter to the chief justice of India earlier this month. Also this month, her uncle was convicted in a case filed by the accused's brother. On Sunday, a collision of the vehicle she was travelling in with a truck bearing a blackened nameplate, which took the lives of two of her aunts, left her and her lawyer critically injured, battling for their lives. Now, after an FIR for murder and attempted murder is filed against Sengar and others, the BJP, the ruling party in UP and at the Centre, claims it suspended him long ago, but the impression is grim and inescapable: Of a law enforcement machinery that systematically hounds the victim, a powerful accused who is able to spread fear even from inside jail. And a political regime that, at the very least, turns a blind eye to horrific injustice.

Now both government and Opposition must ensure that the spotlight does not shift away from the case to the posturing around it. The outrage and furore will have served a purpose only if the law enforcement machinery, that has evidently been so effete in this case, is shamed into action. In particular, the BJP government in UP must know that it will be watched. The Yogi Adityanath regime, so far, has presided over a terribly mixed record on law and order. Even as it projects itself as strong and iron-fisted on crime and the criminal, it has invited persistent allegations that it favours the strong against the weak, the majority against the minority. Or, as it seems to be in Unnao, the rich and powerful against the poor and helpless.

Cases such as this one are a test of the basic compact between a people and the government: That crime will be punished. There can be no greater indictment of a system than the mounting impression that the victim is being punished, instead. This impression should be an especially heavy cross to bear for a party and government that do not tire of underlining their commitment to the empowerment of women.

CALL OF THE TIGER

Growing tiger numbers point to the urgency of devising conservation models that also work outside protected areas

THE REPORT OF the tiger census released on Monday showcases a significant achievement for the country's conservation efforts. India is now home to 2,967 tigers. The last tiger audit in 2014 had counted 2,226 tigers. Even more remarkable is the fact that the latest census shows that the tiger population has increased by more than 100 per cent from 2006, when the numbers of the big cat had hit an all-time low of 1,411 — the animal had been completely wiped out from some reserves such as Sariska in Rajasthan.

The tiger is at the top of the food chain in several ecosystems and its conservation is important to ensure the health of these habitats. A steep fall in the tiger population could lead to a rise in the herbivore population, which could destroy forests by feeding on trees and plants. That is why the decline in tiger numbers in 2005-2006 rang alarm bells amongst wildlife scientists and conservationists, prompting the government to form a Tiger Task Force, and tighten protection measures. The number of tiger reserves has gone up from 28 in 2006 to 50 in 2018. Healthy increases in the population of tigers in these reserves have led to migration outside these protected areas. Several studies have shown that 25 to 30 per cent of the country's tigers now live outside the core area of national parks.

There is, however, a flip side to the increase in the tiger population. As the animals spill out of protected areas, their proximity to human habitats increases. And, when humans and tigers come face to face, the big cats often pose serious threats to humans and their livestock. There have been several reports of human-tiger conflict in the past five years. Last week, about 250-km from Lucknow, villagers beat to death a mature tigress who had strayed from the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve. The animal had reportedly attacked people, who were working in fields. And, last year, the forest department in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district gunned down a tigress that had killed at least six people. These incidents point to a new conservation challenge: Devising wildlife protection models that work outside the tiger reserves. Today, several corridors that link tiger reserves are sites of infrastructure projects. In fact, on Monday, the Supreme Court quashed the Uttarakhand government's proposal for a road on a corridor between the Rajaji Tiger Reserve and the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Sustaining the country's tiger population will, therefore, require a deft balancing of the imperative of conservation with the needs of local people and the demands of infrastructure development.

SUGAR BOMBS

With the 'Odisha Rasagola' getting a GI tag, a culture war is back to square one

CHAMPAGNE IS FROM Champagne, butter chicken is from Delhi and the rosogolla, a dessert both subtle and sublime is Bengali. But the certainty of old was questioned, and a cultural war drum sounded, when in 2014 Odisha claimed that it was the true progenitor of the sweet, soft balls of chenna and sugar. In 2017, it appeared as though West Bengal had put the matter to rest when the IPR cell in the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion granted a geographical indication (GI) status to "Banglar Rosogolla". In 2019, that's changed. "Odisha Rasagola" now has a GI tag too, and the battle is back to square one.

Odisha's claim is based on a report by scholar Asit Mohanty, who submitted a report to the state government, which stated that rosogolla (or rasagola) was cited in the 15th century Oriya Ramayan by Balaram Das and has been a religious offering for six centuries. But its antecedents aside, there is in fact little difference between the rasagola and rosogolla. And, with desserts as with people, where they end up is as important as where they come from.

Historical accident, as much as precedent, is responsible for the Bengali claim over rosogolla. As the launching point of the British Empire as well as the capital of the Raj for long, Bengal has laid claim to many a cultural artifact, and the Calcutta elite has often been accused of snobbery, of not taking seriously the diverse depths of other groups in what was once the Bengal Presidency. The current battle over the rosogolla is just another front in the culture wars in east India. The shadow of Bengali dominance is receding and non-Bengali cultures are trying to assert their contribution — to language, literature, history and food. But in the larger scheme of things, what's in a GI tag? Would a rosogolla not taste just as sweet, wherever it came from.



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

THE LONG, BORING and predictable non-thriller in Karnataka is over. We can assume that similar coups will be staged in some other states on a periodic basis. Indeed, a handful of MLAs were already pocketed by the BJP in Goa recently, while an open claim has been made during the election campaign by the BJP president that Trinmool Congress MLAs will soon start deserting the party. In Maharashtra, almost every day, some prominent leaders from the Congress or NCP have been joining the BJP, and occasionally the Shiv Sena.

Therefore, rather than lamenting what happened in Karnataka, it is more useful to take into account the larger significance of such cross-party poaching. Two straightforward responses often dot media discussions on these developments. One is laced with moral indignation, a sense of resignation and exasperation. This constitutes a lament about honesty and integrity of party members combined with the frustration that the anti-defection law is so ineffective.

The other response, coming from pro-BJP observers and also from many independent observers, reminds us how this is only a repetition of what used to happen earlier during the heydays of Congress' dominance. On the one hand, this response fits well with the current bout of whataboutery — "they did it earlier, why criticise the BJP now for doing the same". This response knowingly or unknowingly attempts to exonerate any transgressions of democratic morality today in the name of similar transgressions in the past. This line of argument seldom realises that it denies any space for recovery. Instead, it situates democracy in a déjà vu of dead ends and impasses. For non-BJP observers, such a response implies the impossibility of critique. One cannot begin commenting on the present without going through an endless list of criticisms of the past.

But if we choose to move beyond cynical justifications and helpless lamentations, what can we learn from the developments in Karnataka, Goa, West Bengal or Maharashtra — and possibly everywhere? They tell us about the fragility of India's parties and party system. Today, the BJP appears invincible, ascendant and almost hegemonic. But it still needs to demolish other parties, not through elections, but through the subterfuge of defections. It simply cannot rely on its "so-

We have lamented political events in Karnataka. We must also note their significance

The current processes of in-flow and out-flow underline the weakness of the way parties are organised. Parties do talk about membership drives, but they often obfuscate intra-party democracy and intra-party competition. Tickets are bought, begged, stolen, but not distributed on any sound principles that would convince party workers to stay on with the party even when it denies them the ticket. Organisational hierarchies are marred by personality cults — but family is the basic organising principle at the local level for most parties.

many-crores-strong" members and its ideological anchor for entrenching itself; it requires a steady import of all sorts of dubious characters and practitioners of the old regime in order to put itself in a position of strength. This peculiar predicament of the BJP draws attention to four lessons about party politics and party building in the Indian context.

In the first place, the current processes of in-flow and out-flow underline the weakness of the way parties are organised. Parties do talk about membership drives, but they often obfuscate intra-party democracy and intra-party competition. Tickets are bought, begged, stolen, but not distributed on any sound principles that would convince party workers to stay on with the party even when it denies them the ticket. Organisational hierarchies are marred by personality cults — but family is the basic organising principle at the local level for most parties. The looseness that marks the organisation and functioning of parties allows its elected representatives to function almost independently from the organisation.

In fact, electoral victories for many candidates are so individualistic that they can easily override the party in their legislative performance and choices. Only when parties are tightly controlled by a leader does some of this looseness appear to be reined in. But in exchange, proximity with the supreme leader trumps principles of party organisation. So, the result is the same — an anarchic, individualistic, unregulated and meaningless manner in which party organisations function.

Two, there is no mechanism to broker ambitions of party workers at any level of the party hierarchy. Because the rise to power within the party is unreasonably individualistic or based on transparent cronyism, when different workers at the same level aspire for something, the party does not have pluralistic, consensual and/or formal democratic mechanisms to address intra-party competition. Vulgar money, closeness to the leadership, recourse to community identity, and increasingly, show of muscle power, operate in situations of intra-party competition.

Characteristically, power positions within the party remain stagnant because there is rarely any routine way for incumbents to exit. Young workers seek other avenues because they are not accommodated; but at the same

time, the old guard also migrates to other parties if they are sought to be replaced. The absence of intra-party rules and mechanisms about holding different positions results in party-hopping whenever ambition is circumscribed either by intra-party competition or by fluctuations of party fortunes.

Three, what does this tell us about the link between the party and the voters? When a representative changes party — as in Goa, Karnataka or West Bengal recently — is s/he carrying along the voters to the new party? Both in 2014 and 2019, the National Election Study (conducted by Lokniti) has shown that around 31 per cent voters vote for the candidate rather than the party. But larger numbers say that they vote for the party. Changing a party is clearly a treachery to voters. But it is also true that over and above this more general finding, many representatives get elected on their own "merit" — further weakening the party. All parties need to take notice of this worrying tendency because the party is becoming irrelevant as a vehicle of one's ambition and electoral success.

Finally, indiscriminate party-hopping, what once came to be known as the "aya ram, gaya ram" trend, obviously happens in a milieu of non-ideological parties and politics. It is therefore ironical that in times of the ascendance of a party that actually gets involved in controversies over its ideological inclination, a free movement of present and past representatives is gaining currency. While one may blame this on the non-ideological nature of non-BJP parties, this also suggests that despite its ideological vehemence, the BJP too adopts a non-ideological path to power.

This alerts us to the larger lesson: Politics is supposed to be a route that links personal aggrandisement and a faint sense of public good. In contrast, the BJP's open door policy and its new entrants' penchant for personal aggrandisement suggest that even the faint whiff of public good is losing its relevance. More than the individual entrants, the party that embraces them needs to be blamed — not for the moral scandal this involves but the deeper democratic malaise it tends to exacerbate.

The writer taught politics and is currently chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics and co-director of Lokniti



AKRITI GAUR

AN INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE of the Indian government recently made a controversial recommendation to ban all transactional, storage and mining activities related to cryptocurrencies. If the suggestions are implemented, anyone who holds or trades in cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum in India can be sent to jail.

Cryptocurrencies enable some level of anonymity in transactions, operate on decentralised networks outside central banking systems, and are subject to fluctuation. Naturally, consumer and market protection, and lack of accountability of users and exchanges are relevant triggers for regulation. While the recommendations elaborate on some of these concerns, they make a limited case for regulation and not a blanket ban.

Certain justifications provided by the committee merit scrutiny. Excessive power consumption for cryptocurrency mining has been provided as a reason for the ban. The total global power consumption of banks and the internet is approximately 100 TWh and 2,500 TWh per year, respectively. Bitcoin uses 66.7 TWh per year globally. Therefore, this claim appears to be conjecture and perhaps merits a separate evaluation for India. Similarly, the committee points out China as an example that has banned the use of cryptocurrencies. Recently, a Chinese court recognised cryptocur-

A CRYPTIC BAN

Government committee's recommendation on cryptocurrencies is unrealistic

Cryptocurrencies enable some level of anonymity in transactions, operate on decentralised networks outside central banking systems, and are subject to fluctuation. Naturally, consumer and market protection, and lack of accountability of users and exchanges are relevant triggers for regulation. While the recommendations elaborate on some of these concerns, they make a limited case for regulation and not a blanket ban.

tocurrency as digital property. While countries such as China have adopted harsher regulation in the past, their changing approach to cryptocurrencies cannot not be ignored.

The committee proposes a new form of digital currency — the Digital Rupee — which will be the only digital currency permitted under Indian law. The recommendations lack clarity on its implementation, scaling for billions of Indians, inclusion of the unbanked, and whether India possesses the necessary infrastructure for rolling out a digital currency of this magnitude.

The draft law proposed by the committee raises significant questions of implementation and enforcement. It states that all offences under the law will be investigated by the police. Any cryptocurrency-based activity is pseudonymous, decentralised and may span across borders — making it impossible to track such activity in real-time. Policymakers must first assess whether the police and traditional investigation tools are equipped to investigate crimes of this nature.

The committee notes that blockchain technology is nascent and suffers from weaknesses. It acknowledges that the technology will improve over time. At the same time, it has taken a stand to ban cryptocurrency without really understanding its architecture and associated benefits. Global experts have

pointed out that cryptocurrencies are not yet a popular medium of exchange because there is very little acceptance. Even in India, the report of the Government's Working Group on FinTech and Digital Banking (2018) suggests that the use of digital currencies does not pose an immediate threat to the economy. It acknowledges that cross-border use of such currencies makes it difficult for national regulators to enforce laws.

In order to address concerns regarding protection of users and fraud prevention, existing laws can be revisited. Cryptocurrency exchanges, users and other market players can be brought under the purview of anti-money laundering laws or KYC norms. Like the US, sectoral regulators can monitor aspects of cryptocurrency for the purpose of taxation or monitoring large transactions.

Undoubtedly, a case can be made for making reasonable regulation to ensure that blockchain-based cryptocurrencies don't upend the existing financial security of the country, but the way forward isn't a ban. As the government mulls its next move, it is important to consider a reasonable policy that suitably balances technological innovation and protection of users and economic interests.

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JULY 31, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

JANATA SPLIT

THE JANA SANGH-DOMINATED Madhya Pradesh government appeared headed for a major political crisis with the ruling Janata Party vertically splitting into two factions and the leadership taking retaliatory action against the rebels. In an eventful day, while the non-Jana Sangh groups disassociated themselves from the Janata Party and asked the chief minister, V K Sakshalecha, to quit immediately, the latter struck back by asking five of his ministerial colleagues to resign for participating in the "anti-party conference".

UP FLOODS

A POPULATION OF over 11 lakh and 3,620 vil-

lages have been affected by floods which have ravaged an area of 4.73 lakh hectares, including 2.46 lakh hectares of cropped area in Uttar Pradesh. The floods have played havoc in Bahraich district where a population of over half a million have been affected in 781 villages. According to reports received at state headquarters, 162 villages have been marooned in Bahraich district. A total of 640 boats are engaged in relief and rescue operations. Four persons and 13 heads of cattle had perished and 2,278 houses have been damaged.

NEW CABINET

WITH THE INDUCTION OF 10 more Cabinet

ministers and eight ministers of state and allocation of portfolios, Charan Singh's coalition government has taken shape. Of the 27 ministers appointed to the Council of Ministers so far, 10 cabinet members and five ministers of state represent the Janata (Secular) and eight cabinet ministers and three Ministers of State are nominees of the Congress. One berth has been given to the Socialist group. C Subramaniam has been given charge of Defence while the Petroleum and Chemicals Ministry has been allocated to T A Pai, who will also hold additional charge of Railways. Biju Patnaik will continue as Minister of Steel and Mines and Coal.



A better blueprint for the city

There needs to be in place a clear roadmap for the planning of metropolitan cities



CITIES AT CROSSROADS

BY ISHER JUDGE
AHLUWALIA AND
AYUSH KHARE

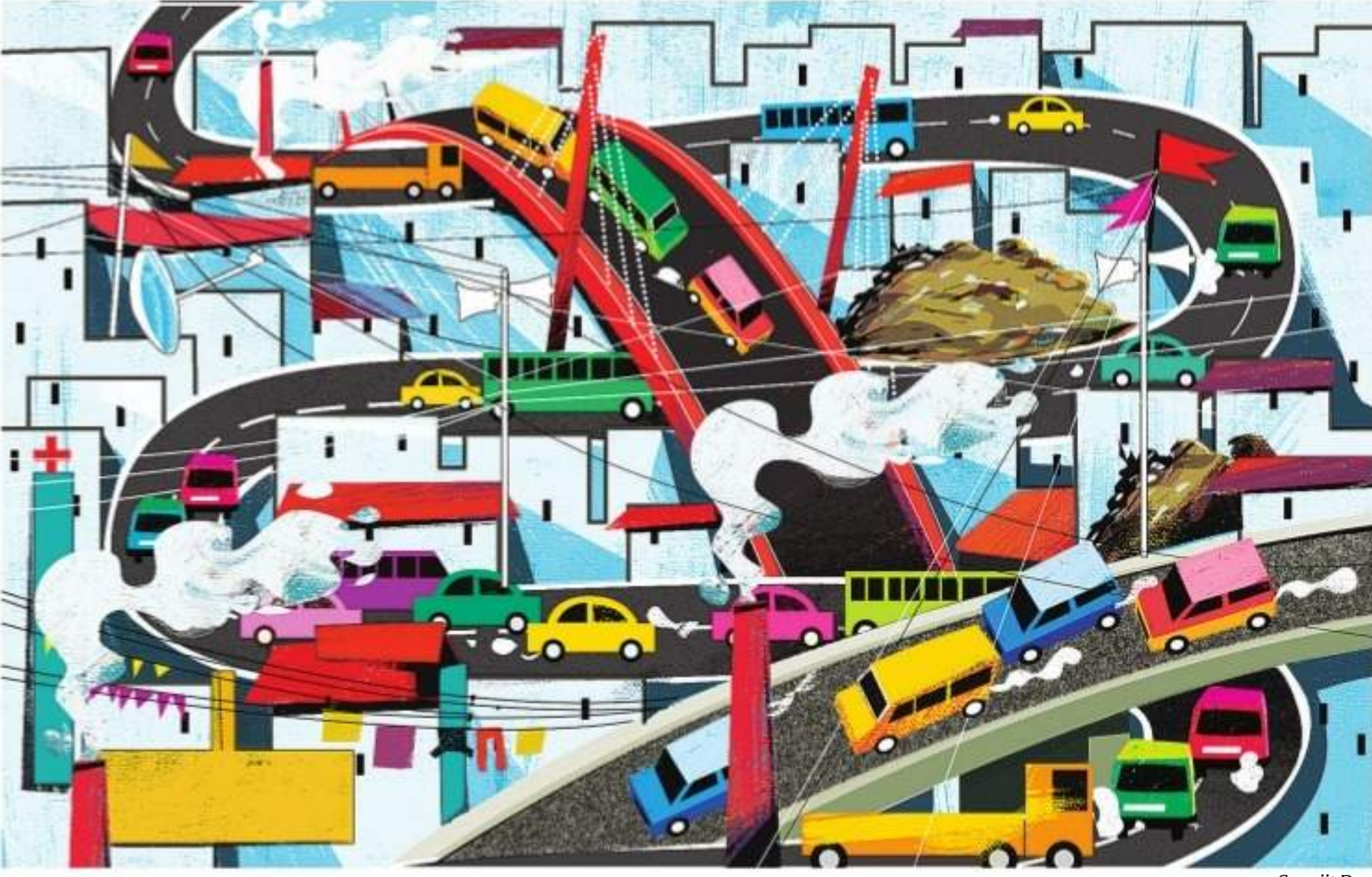
THIS COLUMN USUALLY tries to go behind the visibly deficient state of delivery of public services in our cities and discusses possible solutions. Today, we spell out a challenge which may not be as visible as the burning landfills or flooded streets but, in some ways, is even more important. This is the challenge of metropolitan planning, which has been sorely missing in our development strategy.

This is a matter of grave concern as metropolitan regions are the engines of growth and gateways to the national and global economies. In 2016, the 300 largest metropolitan regions in the world (containing a quarter of the global population) contributed nearly 50 per cent of the global GDP. In India, metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi have acted as engines of growth, but the lack of urban planning in general and spatial planning (integrated land use and transport) in particular has left major scars on the city fabric with significant deterioration in the quality of public services and ease of living.

The term “metropolitan area” is defined unambiguously in the Constitution as an area having a population of over one million, consisting of two or more municipalities or panchayats or other contiguous areas that may span over multiple districts. The Constitution provides considerable discretion to state governments in determining the administrative boundaries of metropolitan areas. But the metropolitan regions have been delineated by the state governments without paying attention to the need to create a unified market, especially labour market, which would forge strong economic linkages between the core city and the periphery. As a result, metropolitan regions are being created by default and not by design.

To make matters complex, the Census of India does not use the term metropolitan region or metropolitan area. Instead, a continuous urban spread constituting a town or multiple contiguous town and their adjoining outgrowths, is defined as an urban agglomeration. There are 53 urban agglomerations in India with a population of one million and above. The number is expected to increase to 87 by 2031. Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai already have population above 10 million, and Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Surat will join the big league by 2035.

The 74th Amendment Act, 1992, mandated the setting up of Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPC) in all metropolitan areas which were to prepare Draft Development Plans with due regard for co-ordinated spatial planning, sharing of resources, development of infrastructure and environmental conservation. The committees would comprise elected members from the municipalities and panchayats constituting the metropolitan area as well as representation from the state and central government to ensure coordination among the multiple authorities in a metropolitan area. However, MPCs remained a non-starter as



Suvajit Dey

states showed little interest in their establishment. There are no examples of any MPC carrying through a Draft Development Plan via state government approval, financing and implementation.

Development authorities were already in place and they continue to engage in land use planning with little regard for transport planning. A range of institutions such as municipalities, and other parastatals such as state water and sewerage boards, continue to coexist in metropolitan regions, often with overlapping functional jurisdictions and little coordination amongst them.

The ad hoc extension of urban boundaries and regularisation of unauthorised colonies brings with them additional challenges for metropolitan governance and financing. The Delhi government has identified close to 1,800 colonies which will be regularised by the end of next month. Its implications for governance and financing will be daunting unless explicit provisions are made through innovative measures of unlocking land value as has been done by Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (Municipal Corporation of Bengaluru) that was formed after subsuming several towns and villages in 2007 is still struggling to regularise the new properties that were brought under its jurisdiction 12 years ago. The government of Karnataka has recently introduced certain levies on new layouts/developments and additional floor area ratio to create a dedicated resource pool to finance the Bengaluru Metropolitan Rail project. The Hyderabad metropolitan area spans seven districts, including Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and 1,032 villages spread over 7,257 square km. The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority and GHMC have used innovative measures such as betterment charges at the time of approving layouts for the construction of buildings and impact fees from builders for land use conversion to unlock land value, to finance the development of such a large area.

Any rapidly growing economy necessarily experiences structural transformation, and India’s experience has been no different. India has been among the fastest growing economies in the world for more than two

The Constitution provides considerable discretion to state governments in determining the administrative boundaries of metropolitan areas. But the metropolitan regions have been delineated by the state governments without paying attention to the need to create a unified market, especially labour market, which would forge strong economic linkages between the core city and the periphery. As a result, metropolitan regions are being created by default and not by design.

decades. This has brought about structural transformation of the economy such that the share of agriculture in GDP has declined to 14 per cent and that of services has increased to 58 per cent.

History amply demonstrates that structural transformation necessarily involves spatial transformation. Economic growth-generating activities collocate in metropolitan city regions to reap external economies of agglomeration and networking. Since there is no regional/metropolitan planning in India and metropolitan governance structures are fragmented, public transport and environmental conservation are the conspicuous casualties. Master planning takes a physical view of the city disregarding its economic fundamentals. As administrator P K Mohanty puts it, “the land use planner’s vision, the transport planner’s strategy and the urban economist’s perspective are not integrated”.

Transportation planning plays a major role in ensuring sustainable and balanced regional development through inter-city and rural-urban connectivity. In India, integrated land use planning and transport planning is emerging in major highway projects in a number of cities. Opportunities for urban planning with integrated transport and land use on a much larger scale are emerging in the planned highway expansion in the country with the Golden Quadrilateral, freight corridors, and other networks. While still at an infant stage, the Regional Rapid Transit System planned for Delhi-NCR under the National Capital Regional Transport Corporation (NRCTC) will also immensely improve connectivity between Delhi and far flung areas such as Meerut, Alwar and Panipat, spurring economic growth in the region.

Bold measures for connectivity through transit-oriented development will lead not only to decongesting growth centres but also strengthening labour markets and building rural-urban linkages.

Ahluwalia is chairperson, ICRIER, Delhi, and former chairperson of the high-powered expert committee on urban infrastructure and services. Khare is a research assistant at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The riots won’t have any political future. Hong Kong’s deep-seated problems can only be solved through development.” — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

The 50-day journey

The second Narendra Modi government has displayed its commitment to accountability



KIREN RIJIJU

THE NARENDRA Modi government completed 50 days of its second term in office last week. It is time to present our report card and roll out the roadmap for the future. Some may argue that since this is a continuous government, a report card on the completion of 50 days is not required. Some others may also argue that 50 days comprises too short a period to prepare a report, especially given that the Modi government passed its biggest test only two-and-a-half months ago.

People evaluated the Modi government’s performance in the Lok Sabha election and awarded more than 100 per cent marks in the mammoth democratic test.

This is where the Modi government stands out from the rest. Prime Minister Modi is a tough task master and a firm believer in the accountability of the government to people, the citizens of India. And, for this government, the first 50 days are a period of laying the foundation to accelerate the pace of progress in the country. Therefore, people have the right to know where this government is headed.

The Modi government 2.0 began its journey by making its objectives explicit. It added “sabka vishwas” to its motto of “sabka saath, sabka vikas”. To make this happen, the government set a target of making India a \$5 trillion economy in the next five years. A bigger economy means more economic power, progress and prosperity to every Indian citizen. Budget 2019-20 has set the ball rolling and there is no doubt whatsoever, even in the minds of the Opposition, that the Modi government will achieve this goal.

The kind of tone set by the Modi government 2.0 can be gauged from the following: An investment plan laid out for Rs 100 lakh crore for infrastructure in roads, railways, airports, ports etc; action against corruption stepped up and a clean-up of the banking system, tightening of the noose around economic fugitives, reforms such as the amendment to Insolvency & Banking Code, labour laws benefiting about 50 crore workers; creation of the Jal Shakti ministry to deal with the water crisis that the country is facing and which the scientists say is going to worsen if adequate measures are not taken promptly; and, plans to ensure electricity and LPG connection to every household in the villages in the next three years.

In the first 50 days, the government has provided relief in corporate tax to over 95 per cent of domestic businesses, rolled out pension scheme for traders and increased MSP for farmers.

The launch of Chandrayaan-2 coincided with the completion of 50 days in office of the government.

The government has done its bit when it comes to its commitment to take every

political party along in key reforms. This is evident from the functioning of the Budget Session of Parliament. A record number of bills have been passed in this session. In fact, this is the highest productivity for the first session of Parliament after a Lok Sabha election in recent times.

In diplomacy, the first 50 days of the Modi government 2.0 have been exceptional. Two strategically located neighbours, Sri Lanka and Maldives, have come closer to India at a time when other powers are trying to impose themselves in the Indian Ocean region. Prime Minister Modi’s visit to these two island countries immediately after winning back the people’s mandate shows the importance this government accords to our key neighbours. Relations with China have been strengthened with engagements such as at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meet in Kyrgyzstan and G-20 summit in Japan.

On the front of combating terrorism, Pakistan has been further isolated in the international community with the prime minister’s call for a global conference on terrorism and holding countries sponsoring, aiding and funding terrorism accountable.

The ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case is another testimony to this government’s intent at doing everything possible to ensure the safety and security of Indian citizens anywhere in the world. ICJ’s ruling that Pakistan cannot execute the capital punishment awarded to the retired naval officer by a sham military court of that country, shows how strongly our government fought for the rights of Kulbhushan Jadhav.

Before I conclude, a few words on the responsibility that Prime Minister Modi has entrusted me with at the Sports and Youth Affairs ministry. Next year shall see the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, and given the hard work and commitment of our sportspersons, we expect a better performance for India at the Olympics. Consistent support has been extended by our government to sportspersons in their training programmes and participation in international competitions. We have been identifying and nurturing new talent through Khelo India and supporting elite talent through the Target Olympic Podium Scheme. The effort is to build a sporting ecosystem, right from the grass roots level to elite athletes. Under the Khelo India initiative, a National Sports Education Board (NSEB) is also being set up for the development of sports.

Our efforts are not limited to sportspersons but extend to every citizen of India, with the aim to inculcate sports and fitness into everyone’s lives. The transformational change that Modi 2.0 has brought about is in participative governance, where the citizens and government together define what it means to be a proud Indian.

Our prime minister has led from the front in showing us how an ideal citizen thinks and lives. Transforming India requires active and committed participation from each one of us. Let us join hands together to build a New India.

The writer is Minister of State (Independent Charge), Sports & Youth Affairs; Minister of State, Minority Affairs

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UAPA WORRIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Riding roughshod’ (IE, July 30). Giving more teeth to the UAPA is necessary. However, the amendments to the law should have come with safeguards against misuse. This becomes all the more imperative because the party in office at the Centre is known to be sensitive to criticism.

Vijai Pant Hempur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Riding roughshod’ (IE, July 30). The number of terrorist attacks in the country has gone done down with the exception of a few border states. Moreover, we have a plethora of laws to combat terrorism. What is the necessity of making the UAPA more draconian? This law could be vulnerable to misuse like the sedition law. It could also tax the over stressed judiciary.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

MAKE IT HUMANE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Change without reform’ (IE, July 30). An evaluation of the NHRC against the backdrop of Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes it imperative to revise the existing human rights legislation.

G Javaid Rasool, Lucknow

RELIGION & SOCIETY

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Divine patriarchy’ (IE, July 29). It’s well-known that goddesses have held an advantageous position in the Hindu pantheon

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

as compared to their male counterparts. But this backing by religion hasn’t furthered sensitivity towards women.

Raunak Rai Maini, Delhi

TASKS FOR NEW CM

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Karnataka gets Yediyurappa as CM fourth time’ (IE, July 27). BS Yediyurappa should ensure the all-round development of the state. The slowdown in the state’s economy must be reversed.

Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata



VARAD PANDE AND SUBHASHISH BHADRA

Big data, big responsibility

The government must address concerns over privacy and secrecy of data

DATA, DATA everywhere, and everyone is taking notice. Not just tech companies and start-ups, but even governments are seeking to utilise the enormous amount of data being generated by the country’s epochal transition to a “Digital India”. The Niti Aayog has laid out a vision for making available anonymised data across sectors. The Economic Survey 2018-19 dedicated an entire chapter to the topic of data — “of the people, by the people, for the people” — making a bold call to harness data as a “public good” in the service of the people.

We welcome this conversation and concur with the idea that governments should harness data and digital platforms to enable more efficient service delivery, product innovation and evidence-based policy-making. But we also believe that with big data comes big responsibility. As demonstrated by Cambridge Analytica and numerous other data breaches, poorly designed systems create risks for individuals, businesses and governments.

One “big idea” that the Survey discusses at length is the creation of a centralised welfare database of citizens that links different government-held data repositories about citizens. The sharing of information, facilitated by this database, can improve welfare delivery, empower citizens with information and “democratise” data. Many states have already taken steps in this direction through the creation of massive databases of infor-

mation on every resident.

While this is a bold idea, we believe there is much to be cautious about as we commence on the collection and use of data at scale as it can lead to loss of personal data, both intentional and unintentional. For example, recently, the Andhra Pradesh government websites publicly displayed the Aadhaar number of women, their reproductive history, whether they had an abortion and so on. Another website exposed the name and number of every person who purchased medicines from government-run stores, including those buying pills for erectile dysfunction.

Whether or not one believes that Indians care about privacy in general, it is obvious that no Indian would want such information to be publicly available. Researchers at CGAP, Dalberg and Dvara Research spoke to ordinary Indians across India and found overwhelming public concern about the security of the data they share with banks, hospitals and other institutions. An individual’s lack of control over data should therefore not be misinterpreted as indifference. The government must design the proposed databases in ways that allow anonymised personal data to serve its highest purpose, while protecting an individual’s agency over data.

The Survey rightly acknowledges the importance of protecting personal information and proposes an architecture that relies on obtaining individual “consent”. But evidence

shows that “consent”, while noble in theory, is deeply flawed in practice. A recent survey by researchers at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) shows that even English-speaking postgraduate law students struggle to understand the privacy policies before clicking “I Agree”. Therefore, any large-scale data collection must be preceded by extensive on-ground research on how consent can be made meaningful to the individual.

And we need to go beyond consent. Consent must be supplemented with a full range of individual data rights, including the right to delete one’s data. Any data should be subject to what lawyers call “collection limitation”, which means that a service provider should only collect minimal personal data that is proportionate to the stated purpose.

The databases should be designed in a manner that a department is not able to see the data that it does not need, irrespective of whether citizens give their consent or not. For example, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers does not need to have access to an individual’s medical records. Access to each additional data field should be carefully evaluated.

The Survey’s emphasis on data security and encryption is encouraging. However, encryption is not a silver bullet. The government should implement bolder technical safeguards. One such feature is decentralised storage of data — for example in the individual’s personal device — rather than in a central database. Another is anonymisation at

source, wherein the data is stripped of any personal information as soon as it is created. These will prevent the creation of data honeypots that can be attacked by hackers or breached accidentally. In addition, research shows that changing the default option — asking people if they want to “opt-in” to (as against “opt-out” of) data sharing requests can make a big difference to how much data gets shared.

And finally, citizens must have a time-bound and easily-accessible recourse to any data breaches or harms. They must be able to reach out to an adjudicatory body through multiple offline and online modes. This body must be empowered to penalise both public and private bodies that use the databases, and redress must be speedy.

India stands at the cusp of a major opportunity, one where data and digital platforms can become an enabler of a meaningful life for every Indian. This is also the opportunity for India to become a global leader and present a new approach that other countries can emulate. But to achieve this, the boldness of our vision must be tempered with a thoughtfulness of approach. Maximising public good but also safeguarding against harm must be the mantra for the new digital India.

The writers work at Omidyar Network India, an investment firm focussed on social impact through equity investments and grants, with an emphasis on technology.





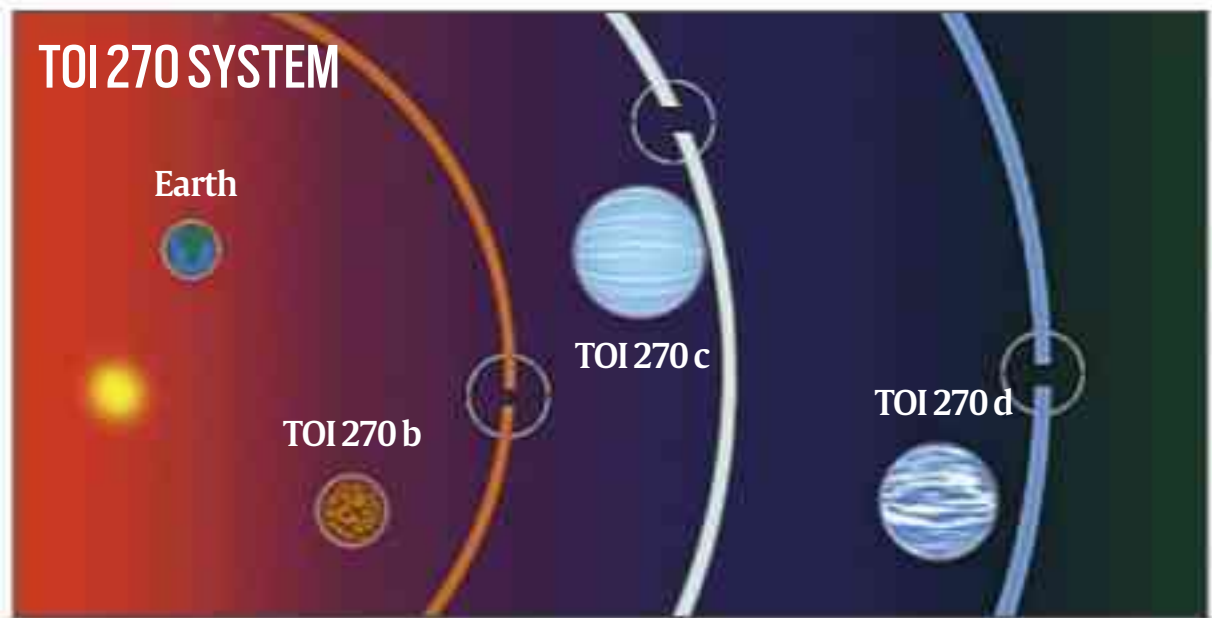
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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

THIS WORD MEANS

TOI 270

NASA finds a new planetary system about 73 light years away from Earth



IT IS the name of the dwarf star and the planetary system recently discovered by NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS). TOI 270 is about 73 light years away from Earth, and is located in the constellation Pictor.

Its members include the dwarf star, which is 40 per cent smaller than the Sun in size and mass, and the three planets or exoplanets (planets outside the solar system) that have been named TOI 270 b, TOI 270 c, and TOI 270 d. These three planets orbit the star every 3.4 days, 5.7 days, and 11.4 days respectively.

In this system, TOI 270 b is the innermost planet. Researchers expect it to be a rocky world about 25 per cent bigger than Earth. It is not habitable since it is located

too close to the star — about 13 times closer than our Solar System's Mercury is from the Sun.

On the other hand, TOI 270 c and TOI 270 d are Neptune-like planets because their compositions are dominated by gases rather than rock. Planet d, which is suspected to have a rocky core covered by a thick atmosphere, offers a surface unfavourably warm for the existence of liquid water, thereby rendering the planet potentially uninhabitable.

With further study and observations, researchers expect to find the composition of these planets, the presence of atmosphere in them and the kinds of gases they contain, etc.

MEHR GILL

TELLING NUMBERS

Maharashtra and Karnataka lead the Start-Up India scheme

MAHARASHTRA, KARNATAKA, and Delhi have seen the highest number of start-ups recognised under the government's flagship Start-Up India Scheme in the period between January 2016, when the scheme was launched, and July 16, 2019, according to a reply tabled by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry in Parliament last week. These three states also attracted the highest investments from Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) in start-ups. The information was collected by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), and formed part of the reply by the Minister for Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal to a question asked by Congress MP from Odisha Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka in Lok Sabha on July 24.

According to the reply, a total of 20,028 start-ups across the country have been recognised under the scheme. To meet the funding require-

STATES ATTRACTING THE MOST INVESTMENTS FROM AIFs

State	No of Startups Invested in	Investment made by AIFs*
Karnataka	79	538.3
Maharashtra	69	489.0
Delhi	46	252.9
Haryana	12	120.5
Tamil Nadu	10	88.3

* in Rs crore

ments of start-ups, a Fund of Funds for Start-ups (FFS) with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore had been established. The DPIIT and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) were taken as the monitoring and operating agencies respectively for the FFS. As of July 10, 2019, SIDBI had committed Rs 3123.20 crore to 47 SEBI registered AIFs, which raised a corpus fund of Rs 25,728 crore.

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF RECOGNISED START-UPS

State	Recognised Start-ups (16/01/2016 to 16/07/2019)
Maharashtra	3,783
Karnataka	2,938
Delhi	2,634
Uttar Pradesh	1,621
Telangana	1,116

Source: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)

SIMPLY PUT

Twists & turns in Unnao story

Recalling the case of an alleged rape and multiple murders linked to a jailed BJP MLA

AVANEESH MISHRA
LUCKNOW, JULY 30

TWO DAYS after a 19-year-old rape victim and her lawyer were badly injured in a mysterious road accident that killed two of the woman's aunts in Rae Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh, the BJP faced a firestorm of protests in Parliament and outside for allegedly protecting the MLA accused of the rape.

Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who is the BJP representative in the UP Assembly from Bangarmau, is in jail after being arrested on April 13, 2018. On Monday, police registered a murder FIR against Sengar after an uncle of the woman accused him of ordering the previous afternoon's hit on the highway at Gurubakshganj.

The CBI, which has already charge-sheeted the MLA for rape, will now also investigate the road accident in which the car carrying the woman and her companions was rammed by a truck that had a number-plate blacked out.

The woman's father died in judicial custody in 2018. A few days before Sunday's accident, the woman and two of her relatives had written to the Chief Justice of India to say there was a threat to their lives.

What is the story of this case of many twists and turns, which has now escalated into a major political controversy?

The first allegations

On April 8, 2018, the woman, who has since come to be called the "Unnao rape victim" after the district in UP to which both she and Sengar belong, tried to set herself ablaze near Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's residence in Lucknow to protest alleged police inaction against the MLA, whom she accused of sexually assaulting her.

Police took the woman and eight members of her family, including her mother and grandmother, to the police station. The woman told reporters that the MLA had sexually assaulted her in his home in June 2017, and her family had been threatened.

Unnao Police said the woman's family had alleged that two youths from their village had kidnapped her on June 11, 2017, and that a case had been registered on June 20 that year. Based on the woman's statement, three men, Shubham Singh, Naresh Tiwari, and Brijesh Yadav, were arrested for gangrape and offences under The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The woman was 17 years old at the time of the alleged incident.

The officer in charge of the police station concerned had said that the woman's family suspected that the MLA was helping the accused youths. They had, according to the officer, therefore, alleged that on June 4, 2017,



The smashed vehicle in which the Unnao rape victim was travelling Sunday. ANI

Shashi Singh, the mother of the accused Shubham Singh, had taken her to Sengar's residence, where he had assaulted her sexually.

Police also said that the woman's father and uncle were criminals — the father had 28 cases of murder, loot etc. against him, and the uncle faced 15 cases, some from as early as 1991.

Subsequently, the woman told *The Indian Express* in an interview that the MLA was a family friend, and that she and her siblings addressed him as "Bhaiyya".

"It was on June 4 last year (2017)," she said in the interview published on April 13, 2018. "I was asked to go inside a room, where he raped me. Later, I was told that my father and family would be killed if I opened my mouth. I did not speak about it to anyone until I was kidnapped by some of his people a few days later, on June 11. They gangraped me for a few days and sold me to someone from whom I was recovered."

Sengar denied all allegations. He claimed some history-sheets were trying to fix him because he had helped "innocent youths" who had been accused in a trumped-up case.

Death of the woman's father

On April 9, 2018, the day after the woman attempted to kill herself in Lucknow, her father died in judicial custody in Unnao jail, allegedly of injuries sustained in a brutal assault by supporters of the MLA six days previously. Four of Sengar's supporters — Vineet, Bauwa, Shailu and Sonu — were named in the FIR filed by the family on April 3.

The accused too, had filed an FIR against

the woman's father, who was booked under sections of the Arms Act and the IPC. The family alleged that the MLA and his supporters had tried to frame the woman's father.

It subsequently emerged that the woman's father had been arrested on the same day as the incident took place, while the four aides of the MLA were arrested only after he died in jail. Six policemen were suspended and, the following day (April 10, 2018), the MLA's brother, Atul Singh, was arrested. The post mortem examination of the woman's father found 14 injuries on the body. It identified septicaemia or blood poisoning as the cause of death.

A Special Investigation Team was formed on April 11, 2018 to probe the alleged rape. In the meantime, a video surfaced, showing the woman's father alleging that the MLA's brother had beaten him in the presence of the police. On the same day, Sengar's wife Sangeeta met the UP DGP to plead for justice for her husband. He was a victim of a political conspiracy, she told reporters.

The CBI's investigation

On April 12, 2018, police registered an FIR against Sengar under various sections of the IPC and The POCSO Act. The same day, on the directions of the Allahabad High Court, the investigation was handed over to the CBI.

CBI arrested Sengar the following day (April 13), following an order passed by the court hours earlier. The "law and order machinery was directly in league and under the influence of" Sengar, the court said. On April 14, CBI arrested Shashi Singh, the woman

who had allegedly lured the victim to Sengar's home on June 4, 2017.

In May 2018, CBI booked Sengar and others for conspiracy to implicate the victim's father in a false case, and arrested two policemen. Sengar and Shashi were moved to Sitapur jail from Unnao after a plea was filed in the High Court saying the victim was feeling threatened.

On July 7, 2018, CBI filed its first chargesheet against Sengar's brother Atul Singh and four others in connection with the death of the woman's father. The woman's father had come from Delhi to attend a court hearing on April 3 related to the rape case against the MLA, the chargesheet said. In the evening, he was abused and beaten by the accused in front of his house, the CBI said.

On July 11, CBI filed another chargesheet in the court of the Special Judicial Magistrate (CBI), Lucknow. It accused Sengar of the woman's rape, and Shashi Singh of aiding him in the crime. They were accused under IPC Sections 120B (conspiracy), 363 (kidnapping), 366 (kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage, etc), 376 (rape), and 506 (criminal intimidation), and under The POCSO Act.

On July 14, a third chargesheet was filed against Sengar and nine others for allegedly hatching a conspiracy and implicating the woman's father in an Arms Act case.

Cases against woman's family

Five months after the CBI chargesheets, an FIR was lodged against the victim, her mother, and uncle for allegedly forging documents submitted to police as proof that the victim was a minor. The FIR was registered on the complaint of Shashi's husband Haripal Singh, following the directions of a local court.

In July 2019, the uncle of the woman was convicted in a 19-year-old case of attempt to murder, and sentenced to 10 years in prison by a district court. Notably, this case, dating back to the panchayat elections in Unnao in June 2000, had been filed by Sengar's brother, Atul Singh.

According to Ramjeevan Yadav, the additional district government counsel of Unnao, Atul Singh had alleged in the FIR that when he was casting his vote in the elections, the woman's father and her two uncles were "threatening" local people to vote for their candidate.

"When Atul Singh objected, they allegedly started hurling abuses at him. Atul Singh did not react and started walking towards his house. When he was a few metres from his house, the three brothers came back and started threatening him and opened fire at him. However, Atul Singh managed to escape unhurt," Yadav had said.

Using iris, fingerprint scans to fight crime

SRINATH RAO
MUMBAI, JULY 30

ON MONDAY, Maharashtra became the first state to adopt a digital fingerprint and iris scanning system to aid police investigations. The Automated Multi-modal Biometric Identification System (or AMBIS) adopted by the Maharashtra Police will soon be replicated across the country, with the state government working with the National Crime Records Bureau in New Delhi to create standards to be used by other state police forces.

An AMBIS unit comprises a computer terminal, a camera, and iris, fingerprint, and palm scanners. It also includes a portable system to dust off and capture fingerprints from crime scenes. With the integration of the system with facial recognition from CCTV cameras, AMBIS enables the police to cross-reference and put faces to criminals whose fingerprints have been captured on paper over the decades, apart from solving fresh crimes.

AMBIS replaces the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), which has been used by Indian law enforcement agencies to search finger and palm prints. However, AFIS has limited utility, providing only one-to-one fingerprint matches as compared to multimodal matches possible with AMBIS. With facial recognition technology, the new system is also an upgrade on AFIS.

The start

Indian authorities first thought of digitising fingerprints in 2015 when they were trying to gain custody of gangster Chhota Rajan in Indonesia. The Mumbai Police's dossier against Rajan lacked the record of his fingerprint, which was captured in the 1980s. Even though the police could piece together Rajan's fingerprint from a torn paper in Chembur's Tilak Nagar police station, the episode underscored the need to digitise fingerprint records.

The Maharashtra Cyber Department studied models used by the Federal Bureau of

Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Homeland Security in the United States, and the Interpol, before formulating its own requirements. Eventually, the French company that had designed the Interpol's biometric and facial recognition system was awarded the tender to set up AMBIS. Bal Singh Rajput, Superintendent of Police, Cyber, said. The system matches the requirements set by the US National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The pilot project

Before Monday's formal launch, the system was introduced at select police stations in Mumbai that have upgraded tech infrastructure such as the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS).

Through 2018, the cyber police department digitised over 6.5 lakh fingerprints recorded on paper since the 1950s. The task, however, was complicated by the poor condition in which most paper prints were stored, the mislabelling of prints, and the

manner in which finger and palm prints were recorded several decades ago.

What happens now

According to Rajput, the older data is being continuously worked upon to increase accuracy and resemble the high-quality prints now recorded using AMBIS. Thus far, Mumbai Police have cracked 85 cases of theft and housebreaks dating back to 2014 after matching prints dusted from the scenes of crime with those digitised. The system is expected to be of help in more serious offences as its accuracy improves and the database expands.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis has announced the implementation of the project in all 94 police stations in Mumbai. The next step will be to roll it out in the 1,160 police stations, 7 police ranges, 10 central jails, 12 police training centres, and 4 fingerprint bureaux in Maharashtra. This will happen after the system's performance in Mumbai is reviewed and the challenges of setting it up in rural areas, addressed.

Designating an individual 'terrorist': what the amendments propose

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, JULY 30

THE UNLAWFUL Activities Prevention Amendment (UAPA) Bill is an anti-terror legislation that seeks to designate an individual as a "terrorist". On July 24, Lok Sabha cleared the changes to the existing law, but Opposition parties and civil liberties lawyers have criticised the Bill, arguing it could be used to target dissent against the government, and infringe on citizens' civil rights.

Who is a "terrorist" in the Bill?

The words "terror" or "terrorist" are not defined, but the UAPA Bill in Section 15 defines a "terrorist act" as any act committed with intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, security, economic security, or sovereignty of India or with intent

to strike terror or likely to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or in any foreign country. The original Act dealt with "unlawful" acts related to secession; anti-terror provisions were introduced in 2004.

The Bill seeks to empower the central government to designate an individual a "terrorist" if they are found committing, preparing for, promoting, or involved in an act of terror. A similar provision already exists in Part 4 and 6 of the legislation for organisations that can be designated as a "terrorist organisation". Home Minister Amit Shah, during a debate on the Bill in Lok Sabha, stressed on the need to designate individuals as terrorists to root out terrorism.

How are individuals declared terrorists?

The central government may designate an individual as a terrorist through a notifi-

cation in the official gazette, and add his name to the schedule supplemented to the UAPA Bill. The government is not required to give an individual an opportunity to be heard before such a designation.

At present, in line with the legal presumption of an individual being innocent until proven guilty, an individual who is convicted in a terror case is legally referred to as a terrorist, while those suspected of being involved in terrorist activities are referred to as terror accused. The Bill does not clarify the standard of proof required to establish that an individual is involved or is likely to be involved in terrorist activities.

What happens when an individual is declared a terrorist?

The designation of an individual as a global terrorist by the United Nations is

associated with sanctions including travel bans, freezing of assets and an embargo against procuring arms. The UAPA Bill, however, does not provide any such detail.

The Bill also does not require the filing of cases or arresting individuals while designating them as terrorists. According to Home Ministry officials, the consequences will be prescribed in the Rules supplemented to the law once the amendment Bill is passed.

The Bill also seeks to give the central government the power to remove a name from the schedule when an individual makes an application. The procedure for such an application and the process of decision-making will also be decided by the central government.

If an application filed by an individual declared a terrorist is rejected by the gov-

ernment, the Bill gives him the right to seek a review within one month after the application is rejected.

Under the amendment Bill, the central government will set up the review committee consisting of a chairperson (a retired or sitting judge of a High Court) and three other members. The review committee will be empowered to order the government to delete the name of the individual from the schedule that lists "terrorists", if it considers the order to be flawed.

Apart from these two avenues, the individual can also move the courts challenging the government's order.

What are the other major changes proposed in the UAPA Bill?

The existing UAPA law requires an investigating officer to take prior permission of the Director General of Police of a state



Burning bright

Peer review and scientific publication can make India's tiger census a global model

If India has increased its population of tigers to an estimated 2,967 individuals in 2018-19, putting behind fiascos such as the Sariska wipeout 15 years ago, it adds to its global standing as a conservation marvel: a populous country that has preserved a lot of its natural heritage even amid fast-paced economic growth. Since the majority of the world's wild tigers live in India, there is global attention on the counting exercise and the gaps the assessment exposes. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has asserted in its report, 'Status of Tigers in India 2018', that 83% of the big cats censused were individually photographed using camera traps, 87% were confirmed through a camera trap-based capture-recapture technique, and other estimation methods were used to establish the total number. Previous estimates for periods between 2006 and 2010 and then up to 2014 indicated a steady increase in tiger abundance. Such numbers, however, are the subject of debate among sections of the scientific community, mainly on methodological grounds, since independent studies of even well-protected reserves showed a lower increase. It is important to put all the latest data, which are no doubt encouraging, through rigorous peer review. Conservation achievements – and some failures – can then be the subject of scientific scrutiny and find a place in scientific literature to aid efforts to save tigers.

There are several aspects to the latest counting operation – a staggering exercise spread over 3,81,400 sq km and 26,838 camera trap locations – that are of international interest, because some tiger range countries are beginning their own census of the cats. Moreover, even developed countries are trying to revive populations of charismatic wild creatures such as wolves and bears through a more accurate outcome measurement. For India's tigers, not every landscape is welcoming, as the official report makes clear. The less accessible Western Ghats has witnessed a steady increase in numbers from 2006, notably in Karnataka, and Central India has an abundance, but there is a marked drop in Chhattisgarh and Odisha; in Buxa, Dampa and Palamau, which are tiger reserves, no trace of the animal was found. It is imperative for the NTCA to analyse why some landscapes have lost tigers, when the entire programme has been receiving high priority and funding for years now at ₹10 lakh per family that is ready to move out of critical habitat. Ultimately, saving tigers depends most on the health of source populations of the species that are estimated to occupy a mere 10% of the habitat. The conflict in opening up reserves to road-building has to end, and identified movement corridors should be cleared of commercial pressures. Hunting of prey animals, such as deer and pig, needs to stop as they form the base for growth of tiger and other carnivore populations. As some scientists caution, faulty numbers may hide the real story. They may only represent a 'political population' of a favoured animal, not quite reflective of reality.

Flee market

Investors seem disappointed with tax measures seen as burdening businesses

The wheels of India's multi-year stock market rally are slowly beginning to come off. Since the Union Budget was presented this month, there has been a palpable change in mood among investors, who in June led a mini-rally in the market as signs emerged one after another that the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be returning to power at the Centre. The Nifty and the Sensex are down roughly by about 5% since the Budget was presented. Foreign portfolio investors have pulled out over ₹2,500 crore in July, in contrast to June when FPIs made a net investment of close to ₹10,400 crore. Investors who were quite enthusiastic about the prospects of structural reforms that could boost India's economic growth under the second Modi government, have been quite disappointed by the Budget proposals. Among other things, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman imposed new taxes on the "super rich" and on companies that buy back their own shares, and raised the mandatory minimum public shareholding in listed companies (a move that is seen to be against the interests of promoters). Not surprisingly, investors have been taken aback by these measures, which are seen as increasing the burden on businesses.

Even more worrying is the signal that is sent across by the falling stock market. As stock prices discount the future, lacklustre market performance could well be a prelude to the further worsening of general economic conditions in the near term. There is already a significant downturn in sectors such as automobile with major companies reporting falling sales and earnings, and automobile dealers closing down showrooms and slashing jobs. The overall gross domestic product growth, which slipped below 6% to hit 5.8% in the fourth quarter, has also been slowly catching up with the bleak picture painted by high-frequency economic indicators for quite some time. The underlying turmoil in Indian markets becomes evident when one looks beyond the Sensex and the Nifty at the mid-cap and small-cap space that has witnessed significant value erosion since the start of 2018. The small-cap index has lost almost a third of its value since January 2018 while the mid-cap index has lost about a fifth of its value. Interestingly, many industrialists who were previously enthusiastic cheerleaders for the Narendra Modi government have turned vocal about their disappointment at the government not being bold enough in pushing through structural reforms needed to boost economic growth despite the majority it enjoys in Parliament. This suggests the deep sell-off in stocks over the last 18 months may well be a sign of disappointed investors voting with their feet.

Padding up for the next UNSC innings

India must give exceptional weightage to how all Security Council issues have an impact on the subcontinent



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

Despite the fact that India has served as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) more often than any country other than Japan from the Asia-Pacific Group, it is a matter of satisfaction and a tribute to Indian diplomacy that the Group unanimously decided this year to support India for an eighth second-year term. The elections are to take place in June next year. This means that India's election is assured and its term will run in the calendar years 2021 and 2022.

Fast-changing dynamics

To anticipate what issues will arise during India's tenure two and three years down the road, in the highest decision-making organ concerned with peace and conflict in the global organisation, is clearly problematic. The dynamics of international politics are fast moving.

The Washington consensus of the post-Soviet era, if it ever truly existed, has unravelled in the wake of three factors: tensions between major powers; proxy wars in West Asia, and widespread and scattershot use of threat and economic sanctions by the United States which pursues a militarised foreign policy with a military and intelligence presence in 150 coun-

tries, and 800 bases in 70 nations.

The rise of China and the bogey of Russian aggression are resisted through military and economic measures by Washington, which urges its usually reluctant European allies and others to follow suit. The race is on for supremacy in artificial intelligence, high technology and 5G which will have strategic significance in future decades. In this variable world of incessant jockeying for greater influence among big and medium powers, and where the centre ground for concepts such as strategic autonomy and equidistance has shrunk with rising polarisation between the major powers, there are nevertheless some constants. Whether or not the U.S. President Donald Trump is re-elected, the 'America First' doctrine will endure in some form since it has the support of a sizeable constituency in that country. This makes U.S. foreign policy more transactional, which in turn will generate less traction to the reform process within the UN and the expansion of permanent membership of the UNSC to which India aspires.

India can use its term as a non-permanent member to enhance its credentials as a constructive and responsible member of international society, but an upgrading of its status will have to wait until an indeterminate future date. It may be noted in passing that the inclusion of India, Japan, Germany and Brazil in the UNSC, to which package India is formally committed, will create an even greater imbalance in favour of the West versus the Rest in world affairs.

India is one of the world's big-



FILE PHOTO/AB

gest economies, which even the pessimists cannot deny. Accordingly, its voice resonates and is capable of making a significant contribution during its tenure by emphasising and strengthening multilateralism as a means of making the world safer.

Multipolar focus

India needs to uphold the objective of a multipolar world and counter existing trends towards unilateralism, ethno-centrism, protectionism and racial intolerance. It should seek to protect the World Trade Organisation from American attempts to undermine it, since the WTO's dispute mechanism is a resource for developing countries, as is the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN Human Rights Council and other UN bodies despite the U.S. and a few other countries withdrawing support to them. India should attempt to make progress on the non-discriminatory elimination of weapons of mass destruction, protection of the environment against global warming, safeguarding outer space from weaponisation, and enhancing respect for diversity and plurality

The makings of a digital kleptocracy

When data is monetised, as the Economic Survey advocates, it becomes toxic and harms public interest



REETIKA KHERA

Last year, I was denied information requested under the Right to Information Act (RTI) 2005. I had sought the names of agencies empanelled by the Unique Identification Authority of India for an "image makeover" and the expenditure on it. It was denied by invoking the exemption clauses of Sections 8(d) and 8(j), respectively, i.e. the 'commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property' and 'unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual'. Apart from the recent RTI Amendment Bill, 2019, there are many ways in which the RTI is being undermined.

In 2017, my co-author and I wanted to check what proportion of beneficiaries receive their pensions or rations using data provided through government portals, for example the National Food Security Act and State social security pensions. We found data without dictionaries, abbreviations that were not spelt out anywhere, figures that were inconsistent across different pages of the same website, and missing or broken links. It took us months to decipher public data. With several caveats about interpreting the results.

More recently, there has been public furore over the delay in the release of data, for example farmer suicides, suppression of data such as on employment, bungled migration data in the Census, and controversy over the methodology used to calculate GDP growth rates. These data are the backbone of policy making in India.

These three – information obtained through the RTI Act, administrative data and data collected by the statistical machinery of government – are examples of "data as a public good". But these are scarcely mentioned in a chapter so-titled in this year's Economic Survey. Instead, its focus is on the expanding digital footprint of people, falling costs of data generation and storage and the growing data mining industry. The thrust is on how to monetise these data, for example by selling data that we share with the government in trust. Another worrying suggestion is consolidation of our data across various ministries.

Under watch

The view in the Economic Survey is data utopic. In this data-fairlyland, (near) real-time data collection can be a sufficient condition for remedying gaps. If only the officers-in-charge could receive a weekly report about school toilets that do not function, "they can take the required action".

The day after I read this chapter of the Survey, a local Gujarati paper carried news of an e-memo being sent (thrice) to the owner of a scooter for a traffic offence; the scooter had been stolen 10 months ago. The police had spotted the scooter on a CCTV in various localities of the city but were unable to catch the culprits and return the scooter. This anecdote is at odds with the data-fairlyland conjured up in the Survey. In the real world, remedial action on non-functional toilets is more likely to be hampered by a lack of funds, of accountability or an officer, rather than lack of data. Having data/information can only take us that far.

Each time you click on a link, or even hover your mouse over one, your behaviour is being tracked and analysed to understand your preferences and needs and being sold to companies to enable "tar-



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geted" advertising. The fact that it is often not very well targeted is something its proponents prefer to ignore. As a single person I regularly receive SMSes which offer a solution to this problem: "Kya aapke pati aapki baat nahi maante? (does your husband not listen to you?)". Mistrargeting is not always accidental. "Predatory lending" thrives on it. For instance, ICICI functionaries sold insurance policies to unsuspecting customers such as poor Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme workers and Kisan Credit card holders whose premiums it was clear they would not be able to pay. The Survey's data utopia is misplaced.

Data can easily become toxic. The Survey does not tell us this. Ever wondered why you get SMSes offering you companionship ("aao meethi meethi baat karen"), cures for baldness ("ganjapan door karen") or strategies for losing weight ("vajjan ghatayen"). Somewhere along the line, your mobile number and/or email ID got sold in the data market. Even as most of us delete these, others get trapped. A former Chief Justice of India was duped of ₹1 lakh recently as a result of a fraudulent email. In Mumbai, identity fraud was perpetrated by accessing personal data (address, phone number and Aadhaar). In phishing attacks in Rourkela, Odisha, fraudsters called bank customers asking for Aadhaar details to update their ac-

count, but used it to siphon off money. The Survey treats personal data (such as date of birth, mobile numbers and addresses) the same way as data on rainfall, temperatures and road networks.

In the examples above, the fraudsters had to get access to people's data. The Survey is proposing that these be sold for a price. This has already started. In early July, the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, informed Parliament that the department had earned ₹65 crore from the sale of vehicle registration and licence data. Imagine the consequences of your health data being sold to private health insurance companies; or your data on your earnings being sold, or data being used in the way Cambridge Analytica did.

Pakistan and the terror angle

It bears repetition that the growth of India's economy and its democratic system are our best insurance policy; witness what China has been able to get away with in respect of the Uighurs. New Delhi's preoccupation with Pakistan finds its articulation in the subject of international and cross-border terrorism. Although the context is normally couched in general terms, no one is in doubt that the

Indian reference is to Pakistan. The question of an international convention against terrorism has been under discussion in UN committees for many years, and the UNSC will not be the forum for headway on this. India could use its presence on the UNSC's sanctions subcommittee to proscribe Pakistan-based militant groups and individuals. But experience shows that this is frankly of dubious benefit when weighed against the effort expended.

New Delhi will feel in the next few years that its time has come for a major role on the world stage, but big player status will be difficult without India being pivotal in the South Asian region. In this respect, India's regional status is insufficiently credible. Accordingly, on all issues before the UNSC, India must give exceptional weightage as to how they will have an impact on the Indian subcontinent.

Demosthenes in Fourth Century BC Athens stated that diplomats had "no battleships at their disposal... their weapons are words and opportunities". India's presence on the UNSC will present opportunities to enhance the country's reputation. American policies in India's near-neighbourhood towards West Asia, Russia and China present challenges that can be met only with great skill and delicate balance. India should aim to end its eighth term on the Council with its merit- and legality-based judgments intact and widely respected.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary

ing for jobs, getting health insurance or whether you were speeding, we cannot question them.

Some believe that a data protection and privacy law can, even will, take care of these concerns. Indeed, the Survey merrily assumes such laws to be in place. Given the government's track record on Aadhaar, these laws are unlikely to protect citizen's rights adequately. Further, privacy and data protection laws will face unique implementation challenges in India. This is on account of low levels of tech-digital and legal literacy combined with pre-existing social inequalities which directly bear upon power relations between us (as citizens/consumers) and them (government/corporations).

Jumping on the bandwagon

Even where such laws have been put in place, those societies/economies are grappling with the fallout of corporations whose practices can best be described as "digital kleptocracy". To understand this, take the example of lending and credit scores. The literature documents unscrupulous use of algorithms to identify vulnerable targets such as search histories of single African American mothers in the United States that are used to sell them home or education loans which it is clear they are unlikely to be able to repay. Thus, digital kleptocracy is a means by which rich tech companies mine poor people's data, in fact, steal; in most cases the person is unaware of their data being harvested and used for profit. What the Economic Survey advocates is not only for the government to facilitate such practices but also climb aboard this bandwagon of digital kleptocrats.

Reetika Khera is an Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

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.

Cat count

While it is a matter of pride that India's tiger population is nearly 3,000 strong in the backdrop of shrinking forests, we cannot afford to ignore reports of growing man-animal conflict (Page 1, "India has nearly 3,000 tigers, up by a third from 2014 count", July 30). The 'encounter' in Maharashtra last year with Avni the tigress and, more recently, two incidents, the first where a tigress and her cubs were poisoned at Chandrapur, Maharashtra and the second where another tigress was beaten to death by villagers in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh, a

few days ago, should set alarm bells ringing. Steps must be taken to find a solution to growing encroachments in wild habitats. The importance of wildlife protection has to be inculcated from primary school level.

M. PRADYU,
Thalikkavu, Kannur, Kerala

■ At last India's national animal has got its due. But what is disturbing is the lack of awareness of the dwindling population of Asiatic lions in Gujarat's Gir forest, which is the last bastion for this species. I hope the authorities concerned will now take

necessary action to protect this equally magnificent animal before it is too late.

C.R. GOPALARATHNAM,
Thillathanam, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

■ The tiger could be out of danger, but we must admit that we are failing to conserve other endangered animals. Not a day goes by without reports of elephants being killed in various ways. The problem seems to be more pronounced in West Bengal, Odisha and Assam. Development in Chhattisgarh and Odisha in the form of mining companies is creating disturbances resulting in human-elephant conflict. Tiger conservation must be

an umbrella move to save other species too.

MEJARI MALLIKARJUNA,
Nadigadda, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh

Unnau case

The Unnau rape case is one where the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister must ensure justice. The prime accused is an MLA from the BJP, the party in power. CM Yogi Adityanath has done nothing to restore people's faith when it comes to maintaining law and order. Civilised societies cannot allow the fathers of rape survivors to die in mysterious circumstances or have the survivors meeting with a suspicious accident.

Kuldeep Sengar is an embarrassment for the BJP.

MEGHANA A.,
Shell Cove, NSW, Australia

Open House

The joy of reading a newspaper or a book cannot be substituted by online reading. It would be worthwhile to do whatever is possible to ignite the passion for reading among the next generation as participants in

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

Figure mismatch: The front-page story on tiger census (July 30, 2019) put the number of tigers in India at 2,967. It is correct. The accompanying graphic erroneously said it was 2,976.

A related inside page report on top tiger reserves talked about sanctuaries in 80 States. It should have been 18 States.

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Focussing on the critical years of a child’s life

What the draft National Education Policy omits in its chapter on early childhood care and education



K.R. ANTONY

The draft National Education Policy starts its opening sentence with a hitherto little-known fact: “The learning process for a child commences immediately at birth.” Many believe that children start learning only in school. It is true that language and numerical proficiency, and analytical skills, are attained in school, but the foundation for such a learning capacity is laid much earlier, and it happens without our knowledge. Higher cognitive functions attain their peak of growth between the ages of one and three – before school education begins.

However, the next sentence of the draft says, “Evidence from neuroscience shows that over 85% of a child’s cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6”. This is grossly inaccurate because the global focus for optimal brain development is on the first 1,000 days of a person’s life (*The Lancet*, 2007). Stretching the window of opportunity to six years is a mistake. This wrong understanding leads to misplaced priorities for a nation to boost its human development potential.

Laying the foundation

These 1,000 days are when rapid and dramatic changes take place in the brain and fundamental cognitive and interpersonal skills are developed. The centres for vision and hearing in the cerebrum develop between the second and fifth months of one’s life. In these areas, the formation of nerve connections peaks by the fourth month, and is followed by a gradual retraction or “blooming and pruning” until the end of the preschool period. Similarly, the centres for language and speech proficiency develop maximally between the sixth and tenth month even before the child’s speech and language makes any sense to us. Even as a toddler, a child’s spoken vocabulary increases significantly.

Pregnancy and infancy are important periods for the formation of the brain. This is when the foundation is



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laid for the development of cognitive, motor and socio-emotional skills. Apart from genetic determinants, environmental determinants play an equally critical role in shaping personality. In essence, an infant is born with the capacity to learn, but how much and what all the infant can learn is influenced by the environment.

The drafting committee of the National Education Policy should have consulted a paediatrician or developmental neurologist on what needs to be done in the first 1,000 days. The policy has rightly categorised early childhood education into two parts. The first focuses on children below the age of three years; the second on children aged three to six years. While Anganwadi centres target children in the second category, the section on Early Childhood Care and Education up to three years is sketchy and inadequate. It only mentions health and nutrition services for both mothers and children. Take-home ration that is provided for children up to three years by the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme only helps physical growth; it does not provide psychosocial stimulation for development. That responsibility is left entirely to the parents or family members.

The section on expansion and strengthening of facilities for early childhood education states that “the

care and educational requirements of 0-3-year-olds in the region would continue to be handled by neighbourhood Anganwadis”. That is a tall order. Children below three are not enrolled in the daily services of the ICDS centre. They stay at home.

Filling the gap

This gross design defect in the architecture of the ICDS has existed since its inception in 1975. Policy directions and strategies for “care concept with early stimulation for child development” are lacking in the ICDS. The solution is to have an additional worker trained in care and stimulation for child development in every Anganwadi. New workers will impart psychosocial stimulation for the development of the brain through five sensory organs of the body, i.e., eye, skin, ear, nose and tongue. The intensity and frequency of flow of these signals during early childhood determines the level of intelligence and mental development attained. The baby’s explorative learning and storage of such inputs into the brain takes place every moment of her early life. Her storage capacity is expandable and enormous. The baby also derives analytical conclusions based on which she develops value systems and character.

Apart from breastfeeding, cleaning the baby, giving oil massages and applying lotion adds to her under-

standing of love and care through tactile and pressure stimulation. Carrying the baby and rocking her provides her security.

From two months of age, the baby starts to interact socially. Playing with the baby with toys or by using facial expressions improves her social interaction skills. The baby recognises where sounds originate, the voice of her mother, and her own name by six months of age.

Showing the baby the colours of the sky, flying birds, fluttering butterflies and domestic animals improves visual stimulation. Songs, soft music and sweet talk stimulate the auditory areas of the brain. Making the child feel the softness of flowers, leaves and cheeks adds to her sensory learning. These are all not a waste of time, but good investment for a child’s development.

By the time the child is two or three, she will be asking a volley of questions: who, when, what, why, how. Often the questions and answers are repeated but the child does not get bored. Stories stretch their imagination.

Parents and caregivers do not have sufficient time earmarked for the care of their children. More than money, they must invest time for the development of the child. Working parents offload this responsibility to grandparents or domestic workers or leave their children in care centres or crèches. But these places don’t have qualified or trained staff to provide scientific care.

There is no government system to take care of babies of poor families or of mothers who go to work for a daily wage. The experimental project of Fulwari, or community-managed crèches in Chhattisgarh, is one answer to this gap. Policymakers may have a look at Fulwari for replication.

The 86th Amendment of the Constitution 2002 and Section 11 of the Right to Education Act also mandate public provision of early childhood care and education. Interestingly the policy states: “Universal access to quality Early Childhood Education is perhaps the best investment that India can make for our children’s and our nation’s future”.

K.R. Antony is a former Health and Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF, India, and former Director, State Health Resource Centre, Chhattisgarh

A leaf out of Yunnan’s book

The province in China offers some ideas for the Northeast in the areas of connectivity, border trade and ecotourism



ASHISH KUNDR

The Northeast, positioned as the gateway to ASEAN, lies at the heart of India’s ‘Act East Policy’. Development of the region, so far a domestic policy concern, has now been aligned with national strategic and economic objectives. The underlying assumption is that trade across the borders will usher in economic prosperity to this hitherto neglected frontier. It would be useful to draw comparisons with China’s approach in Yunnan, a ‘bridgehead’ to South and Southeast Asia, as part of its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

Similarities and differences

Yunnan and the Northeast have much in common: populations of a similar size, mountainous regions, diverse indigenous communities, a rich natural resource base, huge hydropower potential and historically lower levels of development. Yunnan shares a 4,000 km-long international border with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. The Northeast abuts China, Myanmar and Bangladesh over a length of 5,000 km. Yet, behind these apparent similarities lie stark contrasts in economic reality.

The GDP of Yunnan is about \$265 billion, of which tourism contributes nearly a quarter. Trade across the land border of Yunnan with ASEAN is in the range of \$14 billion, half of which is with Myanmar. In contrast, the combined GSDP of the Northeast is approximately \$65 billion. A restrictive regulatory regime (Inner Line Permit for domestic tourists and Restricted Area Permit for foreigners) poses entry barriers. Indian border trade with Myanmar (through the sole functional custom station at Moreh) has hovered around \$50 million for several years. This calls for a closer look at three crucial aspects: connectivity, border trade and ecotourism.

The Northeast is catching up in air, rail and highway connectivity, though it lags behind Yunnan. Kunming, the headquarter of Yunnan, has a flourishing international airport. For the first time, all eight States of the Northeast have at least one functional civilian airport, with efficient internal connectivity via Kolkata and Guwahati. International flights to Dhaka have commenced from Guwahati recently, and flights to Bangkok and four more cities of ASEAN are in the pipeline under the UDAN scheme. Yunnan has a rail network connecting cities like Beijing,

Shanghai and Guangzhou. The rail footprint in the Northeast is weak, though the Railway Ministry has announced its intent to ensure internal rail connectivity by March 2022. Yunnan has an impressive highway network providing city to port connectivity. The Northeast has seen a spurt of public investments in national highways and bridges, with remarkable results in the last few years, though internal roads remain a challenge.

Yunnan has a well crafted trade strategy, while border trade across the Northeast has been sluggish. The Ruili Border Economic Zone is the main hub for facilitating Yunnan’s trade with Myanmar. Ruili city has transformed from being a sleepy border town to a thriving economic zone. China is now aspiring to develop an economic zone with Myanmar between Ruili and Muse. The project aims to develop core infrastructure and invite private investment for manufacturing, processing, trading and warehousing. The Zokhawthar land customs station in Mizoram has fragmented infrastructure and barely sees any formal trade. Trade across the integrated check post at Moreh in Manipur has shown promise. Absence of robust internal connectivity, infrastructure for logistics, warehousing and processing has hampered meaningful trade. Ambitious transnational projects, such as the Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project, have also been slow to take off on account of nagging land acquisition problems.

Building blocks

Yunnan has experimented with some imaginative approaches for ecotourism embracing local communities. Ecotourism in Xishuangbanna has been anchored in ‘ecological villages’, showcasing the culture, architecture, customs and cuisine of the Dai ethnic community. The villagers partner through land leasing arrangements with companies, allowing tourists to catch a glimpse into the Dai way of life. Nagaland has made a good beginning with the Hornbill festival, but there are opportunities in other States too. Following this path would help encourage private investment in tourism infrastructure. Tourism revolving around ecology, culture and ethnicity would ensure that there is no disruption in the tribal way of life and contribute to the economy.

A discernible focus on the development of the Northeast has yielded results in the last few years. Now is the time to empower the States to build blocks. Taking a leaf out of the experience of Yunnan could provide a template for the transformation of this frontier.

Ashish Kundra is an IAS officer currently working with the Government of Mizoram . Views are personal

The Odisha model

Other States could take a cue from Odisha, which has empowered women politically and financially

ANANYA BEHERA

It is widely acknowledged that women’s empowerment helps in the achievement of critical development goals. If there are a greater number of women in politics, there is a concomitant increase in the level of attention given to gender-specific policy and planning. However, the number of women taking leadership roles in India is rather small compared to the global average. The representation of women MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha has seen an improvement from 11% in 2014 to 14% in 2019, but it is still lower than the world average of 24.3%. In 2019, 715 women candidates contested the Lok Sabha election, while the number of men who contested stood at 7,334.

Odisha may be seen as one of the underdeveloped States in the country and a laggard in terms of some human development indicators. However, other States could take a cue from the Odisha government’s model for women’s empowerment. The Biju Janata Dal (BJD)-led State government was among the first to reserve 50% of seats in Panchayati Raj institutions for women. Further, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik nominated women for one-third of the seats in Lok Sabha election. Thus, seven candidates out of 21 fielded by the party for the 2019 election were women. The success rate among the women candidates was higher than for men, as five out of seven won the elections.

The power of self-help groups

Besides empowering women politically, the BJD government has been organising women into self-help groups in order to empower them economically ever since the BJD assumed power two decades ago. As of now, Odisha has six lakh self-help groups with seven million women under its flagship ‘Mission Shakti’ programme. The programme aims at empowering women by helping them start income-generating activities. The self-help groups are linked to the Odisha Livelihoods Mission and Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society. Members of the self-help groups are encouraged to sell products at fairs and exhibitions

organised by the State round the year. This gives them an opportunity to travel across different parts of the State and gain greater exposure. The State government had announced an interest-free loan of ₹3 lakh in January 2019 to each of the self-help groups. This amount was increased to ₹5 lakh just before the general election. The Women and Child Development Department has been rechristened as the Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti Department.

The nomination of Pramila Biso, a self-help group leader, by Mr. Patnaik as a candidate for a Lok Sabha constituency might have come across as a surprise to many. But it could be seen



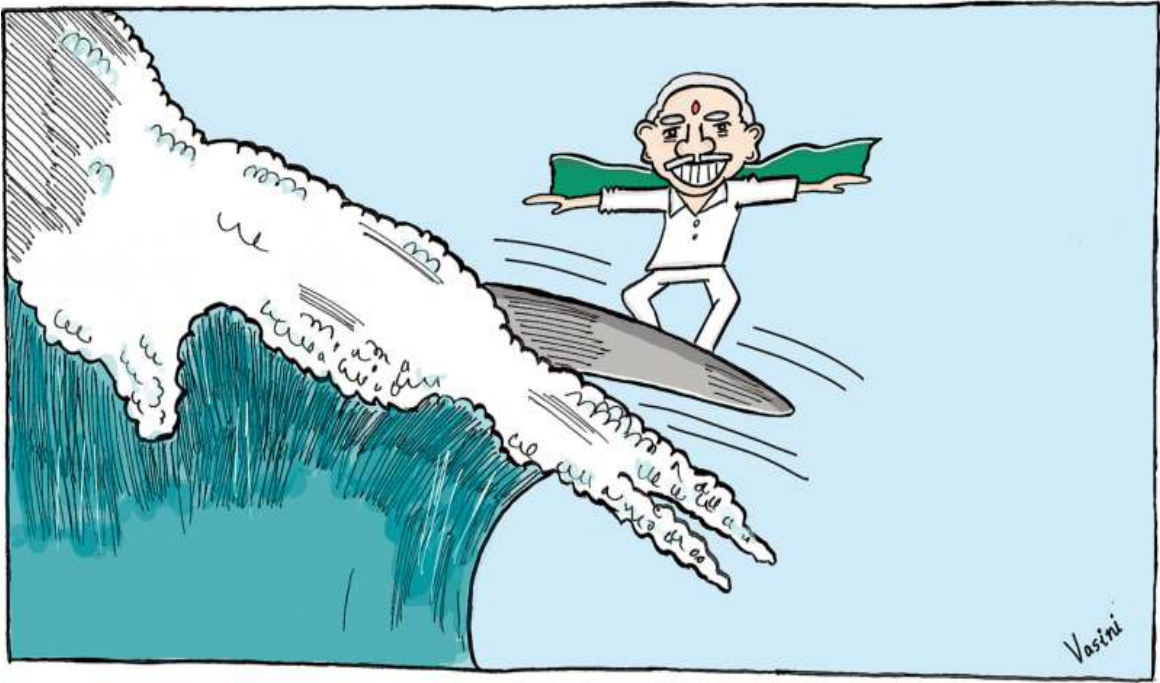
LINGARAJ PANDA

as a deliberate and strategic move to bring self-help group members to the forefront of public life. The decision also sent the signal that rural women can also aspire to reach higher echelons in politics.

Many sops

In a bid to win the trust of women and also to empower them, the Naveen Patnaik government has announced several sops like smartphones, award of work contracts, and higher entitlements in the State’s health insurance scheme, arguably superior to the national level scheme, Ayushman Bharat. The State government has announced an accident insurance scheme for all members of self-help groups. It is no wonder that all this has paid rich dividends and helped propel the BJD to its fifth straight term.

Ananya Behera is a former UGC Senior Research Fellow and a Ph.D. in Sociology



DATA POINT

Why India migrates

In India, most men migrate for work while most women migrate after marriage. However, some States, especially those in the northeast, don’t follow this trend. By **Sumant Sen and Niharika Pandya**

A Migration for work among male migrants and relocation after marriage among female migrants are relatively low in most of the northeastern States
B After the Northeast, the States in the western and southern regions witnessed relatively lower migration rates of men for work. The States in the south also recorded low migration rates of women post marriage
C The eastern States recorded some of the highest male migration rates for work
D In every State, < 1% of female migrants moved for education. On the contrary, in all the States >1% men migrants moved for education. Relocation for education was more pronounced in the northeastern States
Close to 10% male migrants in Meghalaya moved out due to marriage while Manipur saw the highest female migration rates for work
Source: Census 2011

The table shows the % of migrants in each cohort. For instance, 26.1% of J&K’s total male migrants moved out for work while 49.51% of U.P.’s female migrants moved after marriage

State	% of male migrants			% of female migrants		
	Work	Marriage	Education	Work	Marriage	Education
J&K	26.1	0.98	3.91	3.32	35.88	<1
Himachal	43.39	1.45	3.63	3.32	53.18	<1
Punjab	37.33	1.66	1.92	3.15	59.99	<1
Uttarakhand	53.17	1.15	2.46	3.07	55.75	<1
Haryana	38.21	2	2.19	2.15	68.76	<1
Delhi	33.3	1.4	2.11	3.98	45.94	<1
U.P.	55.82	1.04	1.49	4.04	49.51	<1
Sikkim	29.35	2.15	13.02	4.29	56.55	<1
Arunachal	22.36	0.91	14.56	3.16	40.39	<1
Nagaland	24.95	1.34	7.34	4.82	37.24	<1
Manipur	32.02	1.23	14.96	12.36	23.33	<1
Mizoram	12.49	0.91	6.35	4.15	12.91	<1
Tripura	31.92	1.71	4.68	2.84	54.53	<1
Meghalaya	29.17	9.55	5.34	4.87	50.25	<1
Assam	43.34	2.31	3.3	6.57	47.14	<1
W.B.	54.56	2.14	1.89	4.48	63	<1
Jharkhand	51.09	3.54	3.72	4.09	70.06	<1
Bihar	54.97	1.11	2.48	4.11	49.28	<1
Odisha	57.62	1.75	1.46	6.11	57.76	<1
Chhattisgarh	46.61	3.01	2.26	8.93	57.7	<1
M.P.	45.35	2.53	2.02	4.12	65.44	<1
Goa	30.11	1.79	3.93	5.09	53.38	<1
Rajasthan	39.9	1.67	1.63	2.86	60.14	<1
Gujarat	32.84	1.95	2.49	2.99	50.94	<1
Maharashtra	32.65	2.14	1.43	3.67	52.9	<1
A.P. (united)	42.27	2.98	3.18	5.72	51.06	<1
Karnataka	35.99	3.41	1.61	5	41.6	<1
Kerala	42.96	2.34	4.81	9.17	36.86	<1
Tamil Nadu	42.95	5.03	1.53	7.23	44.42	<1

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 31, 1969

Nixon visits Saigon

The American President Mr. Richard Nixon paid a fleeting five and three-quarter hour visit to Viet Nam to-day [July 30] which included nearly four hours of consultations with Government leaders in Saigon. He was the first American President to visit the capital city [Saigon] since the war started. Mr. Nixon, accompanied by his wife, flew in from Bangkok and was taken to the Presidential Palace in Central Saigon by a fleet of helicopters. Amid the strictest security precautions Saigon has ever seen, Mr. Nixon had one-and-a-half-hour-long talks with President Nguyen Van Thieu, a working lunch and 75 minutes in private talks with Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky. Just before leaving, Mr. Nixon delivered a speech on the steps of Independence Palace in which he said: “We have gone as far as we can or should go in opening the door to peace and it is time for the other side to respond.” Twenty minutes before the President arrived in Saigon, all international telecommunications were cut off and were not restored until well after he had left. In his speech, which was broadcast live over South Viet Namese Radio, Mr. Nixon said Mr. Thieu’s latest initiative to hold elections with the Viet Cong was an offer “as generous as any ever made in the history of warfare.”

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 31, 1919.

Punjab Riots.

In the course of a statement to the press, Swami Shradhanand, vice president of Seva Samiti, praying for funds to undertake the organisation of relief of sufferers from recent disturbances in the Punjab says [as reported from Lahore]: The Samiti has so far got about Rs. 6000, almost the whole of which has already been pledged and every fresh case of relief imposed additional liability on the Samiti. The rush of persons seeking relief is so great that unless a prompt response is made to the appeal there is a grave risk of our work being hampered if not stopped. I therefore earnestly request all generous donors to immediately remit their contributions to me. While the Punjab was passing through a crisis, other provinces could only look on with helpless sympathy. An opportunity is now offered to various provinces to come to the rescue of the distressed in the Punjab and by their generous support show their profound sympathy with our fellow countrymen in the Punjab in their hour of need.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 141

उचित माहौल जरूरी

गत सप्ताह सरकार ने इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों को बढ़ावा देने की अपनी नीति पर और अधिक जोर देना आरंभ कर दिया। उसने इन वाहनों पर वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) की दर को 12 फीसदी से घटाकर 5 फीसदी कर दिया। वहीं इन वाहनों के चार्जर पर भी जीएसटी की दर 18 फीसदी से कम करके 5 फीसदी कर दी गई। नई दर 1 अगस्त से

लागू होगी। सरकार ने 12 से अधिक लोगों को लाने ले जाने में सक्षम इलेक्ट्रिक बसों को स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा किराये पर लेने पर उसे जीएसटी से छूट प्रदान की है। इससे पहले बजट में इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन खरीदने की खातिर लिए गए ऋण के व्याज पर आयकर में 1.50 लाख रुपये की छूट देने की घोषणा की गई थी।

दोनों कदम सरकार की मार्च में की गई फेम (हाइब्रिड और इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों के निर्माण में तेजी) के दूसरे चरण की घोषणा के अनुरूप हैं। सरकार ने 2022 तक सरकारी परिवहन क्षेत्र में इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए 10,000 करोड़ रुपये व्यय करने की प्रतिबद्धता जताई है। इसमें से 1,000 करोड़ रुपये बुनियादी विकास के लिए चिह्नित किए गए हैं। इन वाहनों का निर्माण करने वाली कंपनियों ने हालिया रियायतों का स्वागत किया है क्योंकि इससे इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों के निजी इस्तेमाल को भी बढ़ावा मिलेगा। जीएसटी दर कम होने से इलेक्ट्रिक कारों और पेट्रोल तथा डीजल कारों की कीमत का अंतर घटेगा क्योंकि उन पर 28 फीसदी जीएसटी लगता है।

चार्जों पर जीएसटी में भारी कमी करके

सरकार ने उस आलोचना का जवाब दिया है जिसमें कहा जाता रहा है कि सरकार फेम नीति के तहत चार्जिंग स्टेशन का मजबूत बुनियादी ढांचा तैयार करने की योजना नहीं बना सकती है। परंतु अभी भी कई कारणों से इस पूरी कवायद पर संदेह के बादल हैं। पहली बात तो यह कि सार्वजनिक परिवहन में बदलाव लाकर उसे सीएनजी आधारित करने में ही काफी असमानता देखने को मिली है। दूसरी ओर निजी कार मालिकों को इन वाहनों के इस्तेमाल के लिए प्रोत्साहित करना आसान नहीं है। देश की राजधानी में नियमित रूप से सार्वजनिक परिवहन का इस्तेमाल करने वालों को याद होगा कि कैसे सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के आदेश के बाद जब अचानक सार्वजनिक परिवहन सीएनजी आधारित किया

गया तो कैसे फिलिंग स्टेशनों के इर्दगिर्द भीड़ लगी रहती थी। दिल्ली की सड़क से आखिरी डीजल बस हटने के 17 वर्ष बाद भी दिल्ली और आसपास पर्याप्त फिलिंग स्टेशन नहीं हैं। आज भी इन स्टेशनों पर भारी भीड़ लगी रहती है। देश में कुल मिलाकर 30 लाख सीएनजी वाहन हैं। इनमें गैस भरने के लिए देश भर में केवल 1,424 स्टेशन हैं। इनमें भी ज्यादातर दिल्ली और मुंबई में हैं। गत वर्ष पेट्रोलियम एवं प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्री धर्मेंद्र प्रधान ने कहा था कि अगले एक दशक में देश भर में 10,000 नए स्टेशन खोले जाएंगे लेकिन मोदी सरकार का दूसरा कार्यकाल शुरू होने के बाद भी इस योजना के बारे में कोई खास जानकारी सामने नहीं आई है। विनिर्माताओं ने चार्जिंग की लागत का भी जिक्र किया जो बिजली कीमतों

से जुड़ी हुई है। चार्जिंग नेटवर्क बनाने वाली कंपनियों के मुताबिक इन वाहनों का इस्तेमाल करने वालों को जल्दी ही नया प्वाइंट पर बिजली के लिए 18 फीसदी जीएसटी चुकाना होगा जिससे इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन चलाने की लागत में काफी इजाफा होगा।

नियमित रूप से सामने आ रही रियायतें इस बात की ओर इशारा करती हैं कि इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों को लेकर सरकार की नीति बुनियादी रूप से कमजोर है। एक ओर बात, इन वाहनों को लेकर सरकार काफी हद तक आयात पर निर्भर है, ऐसे में इस क्षेत्र में कितनी सफलता मिल पाएगी यह भी देखने वाली बात होगी। निरंतर संशोधन और अलग-अलग दरें जीएसटी ढांचे को सहज बनाने के विचार के प्रतिकूल हैं।



अजय मोहंती

मोदी की वापसी से स्तब्ध क्यों बाजार ?

यदि आज बाजार प्रतिभागी नाराज हैं तो शायद इसकी वजह यह है कि इतने वर्षों तक वे सपनों की दुनिया में जी रहे थे। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं देवाशिष बसु

बजट के पहले सेंसेक्स 39,908 के स्तर पर था और अब तक करीब 2,500 अंक फिसल चुका है। कुल मिलाकर निराशा का भाव है। सेंसेक्स जून के अंत में उच्चतम स्तर पर पहुंचा था। अगर आप सोशल मीडिया पर एक घंटा या इससे कुछ अधिक समय बिताते हैं तो आपको निरंतर इस सरकार की नीतियों की आलोचना सुनने को मिलेगी। यह सुनने को मिलेगा कि सेंसेक्स की इस ऊंचाई की आड़ में जो संपत्ति तिरोहित हुई, वह इन नीतियों की बदौलत हो हुई। ऐसी टिप्पणियां की जा रही हैं कि एक महीना भी नहीं हुआ और मोदी के दूसरे कार्यकांश पर कर और पुनर्खरीद पर कर लगाया गया है। इसके लिए बजट के स्तरहीन होने को वजह बताया जा रहा है। कहा जा रहा है कि यह भारतीय राजनीति का सबसे छोटा मधुभास साबित हुआ।

गत वर्ष बजट में सबसे बड़ा झटका दीर्घाबंधि के पूंजीगत लाभ (एलटीसीजी) कर के रूप में सामने आया था। इस वर्ष लाभांश पर कर और पुनर्खरीद पर कर लगाया गया है। इसके अलावा प्रवर्तक हिस्सेदारी को घटाकर 65 फीसदी करने और सालाना 2 से 5 करोड़ रुपये अर्जित करने वाले लोगों के व्यक्तिगत आय कर में 3 फीसदी और 5

करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की वार्षिक आय वालों पर लगने वाले कर में 7 फीसदी का इजाफा किया गया है। सरकारी खजाने के दम पर आराम का जीवन जी रहे राजनेता और अधिकारी अमीरों को आदेश दे रहे हैं कि वे गरीबों के लिए छोटा-मोटा बलिदान दें। हम इंदिरा गांधी के जमाने से ऐसा होते देख रहे हैं लेकिन इसके लिए जो समय चुना जाता है वह महत्वपूर्ण होता है। सरकार जहां समृद्ध कंपनियों और निवेशकों से अधिक से अधिक पैसा जुटाने में लगी हुई है, वहीं वह आर्थिक मंदी, रोजगार की कमी, निवेश में मामूली इजाफे और अपने व्यय में भारी इजाफे के लिए भी वही उत्तरदायी है।

सपनों की दुनिया से बाहर

आज यदि बाजार प्रतिभागी नाराज हैं तो इसकी वजह शायद यह है कि वे इतने वर्षों तक स्वप्न लोक में थे। नरेंद्र मोदी को जहां आबादी के हर तबके ने वोट दिया वहीं कारोबारी, वित्तीय और निवेशक समुदाय का उन्हें खास समर्थन हासिल रहा। पांच वर्ष तक फंड प्रबंधक, विश्लेषक और कारोबारी बदलाव के हर वादे में यकीन करते नजर आए। उन्होंने तमाम सही-गलत

आंकड़ों तक को हजम कर लिया और अपने प्रजेंटेशन में उन्हें शामिल किया। इस तरह निवेशकों और फाइनेंसरों के समक्ष वृद्धि की गुलाबी तस्वीर पेश की गई। उन्होंने इस सरकार के हर समाजवादी कदम का स्वागत किया और उसे नये भारत की दिशा में उठा कदम बताया। जबकि ऐसे हर अवसर पर उन्हें सरकार को पिछली सरकारों के कदमों की याद दिलानी चाहिए थी।

उन्हें यह बात जरा भी अजीब नहीं लगी कि जिस सरकार ने पिछली कांग्रेस सरकार के हर काम को बुरा बताया, वह न केवल उसी कांग्रेस सरकार के विचारों और योजनाओं को जारी रखे हुए है बल्कि उन्हें कई गुना विस्तार दे चुकी है। उनके लिए नोटबंदी एक बड़ा बदलाव लाने वाला कदम था, न कि व्यापक आर्थिक क्षति और बिना किसी पूर्व शर्त के बैंकों के पुनर्पूँजीकरण को वे एक अनिवार्य कदम मानते हैं, न कि पैसे डुबाने जैसा कदम। सबसे अहम बात यह है कि उन्होंने सरकार के हर दंडात्मक और जबरिया कदम को पारदर्शी और स्वच्छ भारत के लिए उठाया गया जरूरी कदम बताया।

बच्चों तक के लिए आधार अनिवार्य करना हो, वस्तु एवं सेवा कर या बिना कारण बताए कर छापे अथवा यह कहना कि

नागरिकों को गोपनीयता का अधिकार नहीं है, ये सारी बातें उन्हें देश की स्वच्छता को लेकर प्रतिबद्धता नजर आती रहीं। उनका भरोसा इतना गहरा था कि वे देख नहीं पाए कि व्यवस्था की सफाई का दावा करने वाली सरकार धीरे-धीरे पारदर्शिता के सबसे अहम उपाय सूचना के अधिकार तक को खत्म कर रही है।

और फिर वे मेरे लिए आये

उपरोक्त गलत धारणा अब ध्वस्त हो चुकी है। इन्फोसिस के पूर्व मुख्य वित्तीय अधिकारी और इस सरकार के समर्थक रहे मोहनदास पट्ट कहते हैं कि सरकार देश के नागरिकों और कारोबारियों को एक ऐसी कर व्यवस्था से बचाने में नाकाम रही है जो एक गलत आकलन व्यवस्था और ध्वस्त अपील व्यवस्था के साथ काम कर रही है। किसी भी बड़े देश में ये दोनों व्यवस्थाएं एक साथ गड़बड़ नहीं रहतीं। कर अधिकारी हर किसी को कर वंचक और खुद को निगरानी समिति का सदस्य समझते हैं। हमने 30 से अधिक देशों में रिटर्न फाइल किए हैं लेकिन किसी देश में करदाताओं से इतना बुरा व्यवहार नहीं किया जाता है जितना भारत में। हाल ही में प्रकाशित एक आलेख में उन्होंने आलोचना करते हुए लिखा कि भारतीय जनता पार्टी ने पिछली सरकार का कर आतंकवाद समाप्त करने का वादा किया था लेकिन 50 फीसदी से अधिक लंबित कर विवाद पिछले दो वर्ष में उत्पन्न हुए हैं।

हम क्या जानते हैं?

मुझे हमेशा आश्चर्य हुआ है कि कारोबारियों और वित्तीय जगत के लोगों की आशाओं का आधार क्या था? आखिरकार मौजूदा सरकार देश की अब तक की सरकारों में सबसे अधिक गोपनीयता बरतने वाली सरकारों में शामिल है। यह सरकार कैसे काम करती है और क्या सोचती है इस बारे में हमें बहुत कम जानकारी है। इसके लक्ष्य क्या हैं या फिर जबरदस्त चुनावी जीत के बाद यह किस खाके का अनुसरण करना चाहती है यह भी हमें नहीं पता। इसका चुनावी घोषणापत्र केवल कागज का एक टुकड़ा भर है, आधिकारिक आंकड़ों में छेड़छाड़ करके सरकार की सेहत दुरुस्त दिखाई जाती है, कोई श्वेतपत्र शायद ही देखने को मिले और तमाम राजनीतिक घोषणाएं जुमलों, अलंकारों और शब्द संक्षेपों से भरी रहती हैं। यहां तक कि सेवानिवृत्त सरकारी अधिकारियों तक को बाहर बोलने की इजाजत नहीं रहती।

चाहे जो भी हो हमें सरकार के कदमों पर बात करनी चाहिए। अगर बाजार प्रतिभागियों और कारोबारियों ने सरकार के कदमों पर ध्यान दिया होता तो उनका भरोसा बहुत पहले टूट गया होता। सकारात्मक पहलू की बात करें तो विकृत पूंजीवाद में कमी आई है और फंसे कर्ज की वसूली के प्रयास हुए हैं। नकारात्मक पहलू देखें तो कांग्रेस की शैली के समाजवाद, प्रतिबंधों, कर आतंक, दंभ और संस्थाओं के पतन में इजाफा हुआ है। कुलमिलाकर यह तेज आर्थिक वृद्धि हासिल करने का तरीका नहीं है। अगर हम ऐसा मानते हैं, तो अपना मजाक खुद बना रहे हैं।

महज सूचकांक से नहीं लगता प्रगति का सही अंदाजा

वैश्विक स्तर पर अपने प्रदर्शन को आंकने के लिए आतुर देशों की नजर में वैश्विक सूचकांक तेजी से मापदंड बनते जा रहे हैं। खास तौर पर प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (एफडीआई) के लिए जद्दोजहद कर रहे विकासशील देशों के बीच इन सूचकांकों को लेकर खास आकर्षण देखा जा रहा है। संवाल है कि क्या इन सूचकांकों को किसी देश की प्रगति का सटीक संकेत माना जा सकता है? कई सूचकांकों में भारत के अलग-अलग प्रदर्शन को देखें तो इसमें संदेह की काफी गुंजाइश नजर आती है।

मसलन, हाल ही में जारी वैश्विक नवाचार सूचकांक में भारत की रैंकिंग के पांच स्थानों के सुधार के साथ 52वें नंबर पर पहुंच जाने को लेकर अच्छा-खासा रोमांच देखा गया है। इसी तरह कुछ समय पहले आई विश्व बैंक की कारोबारी सुगमता रैंकिंग में भी भारत का स्थान 100 से उछलकर 77 पर आ गया था। मोदी सरकार की तरफ से उठाए गए कुछ सकारात्मक कदमों का इस जबरदस्त उछाल में योगदान रहा है।

वैश्विक नवाचार सूचकांक को पहली बार किसी विकासशील देश में जारी किया गया है। नई दिल्ली में आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्री पीयूष गोयल ने जोशीले अंदाज में कहा कि ‘एक नया नजरिया भारत की नई पहचान बन चुका है और हम एक अधिक समृद्ध देश बनते जा रहे हैं।’

उनके ये शब्द उत्तेजना जगाते हैं लेकिन मौजूदा हालात को बड़ा-चढ़ाकर भी पेश करते हैं। हमारे पास भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (आईआईटी) और भारतीय विज्ञान संस्थान (आईआईएससी) जैसे कुछ विश्वस्तरीय शिक्षण संस्थान हैं और हम वैश्विक स्तर पर आईटी एवं इंजीनियरिंग क्षेत्र की बड़ी ताकत भी हैं। फिर भी यह सोचने वाली बात है कि भारतीय दूरसंचार उद्योग 5जी सेवाओं की शुरुआती तैयारियों के मामले में चीन,

इन दिनों बड़ रही सूचकांकों की भीड़ में से किसी पर भी नजर डालें तो एक पैटर्न दिखेगा। इन सूचकांकों में अमेरिका, स्कैंडेनेविया, जर्मनी, चीन, ताइवान और सिंगापुर शीर्ष स्थानों पर मौजूद होते हैं। ये देश न केवल कारोबारी सुगमता एवं नवाचार जैसे मानकों पर काफी आगे हैं बल्कि मानव विकास सूचकांक और जीवन की गुणवत्ता से संबंधित मापदंडों पर भी उनकी स्थिति काफी मजबूत है। अकेले मानव विकास

सूचकांक को ही देखें तो भारत लगातार पीछे खिसकता जा रहा है। वर्ष 2018 में भारत 189 देशों में से 130वें स्थान पर रहा और एक साल पहले की तुलना में उसकी रैंकिंग में केवल एक स्थान का ही सुधार हुआ था। हालत यह है कि भारत कई पैमानों पर पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और सहारा क्षेत्र के अप्रीकी देशों से भी पीछे रहा। भ्रष्टाचार धारणा सूचकांक में भारत की स्थिति 180 देशों में से 78वें स्थान पर ही है जो एक साल पहले के 81वें स्थान से मामूली सुधार ही दिखाता है। यह भी गौर करने वाली बात है कि वैश्विक प्रेस स्वतंत्रता सूचकांक में भारत की रैंकिंग दो स्थान की गिरावट के साथ 180 देशों में से 140वीं पर खिसक गई है।

अनूठे सूचकांकों के मामले में भी भारत की स्थिति कोई बेहतर नहीं है। विश्व खुशहाली सूचकांक को ही लीजिए। इसमें फिनलैंड के लोगों को सबसे खुशहाल बताया गया है। लेकिन छह महीने तक सूरज नहीं देख पाने वाले और अजीब तरह के खानपान वाले लोगों को भला इतना खुश क्यों होना चाहिए? दूसरी तरफ अतुल्य भारत, खूबसूरत पर्यटक स्थलों एवं दुनिया की बेहतरीन खानपान वाली जगह होने हुए भी भारत की 140वीं रैंकिंग खटकती है। खुशहाली रिपोर्ट में भारत भूटान, पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश, नेपाल और श्रीलंका से भी नीचे मौजूद है।

हमारी कंपनियों का प्रदर्शन भी अच्छा नहीं है। संवेदना सूचकांक में कंपनियों का आकलन आंतरिक संस्कृति, सीईओ के प्रदर्शन, नैतिकता पालन और सोशल मीडिया मौजूदगी के आधार पर किया जाता है। आजकल कंपनी प्रबंधन के बीच संवेदना काफी पसंदीदा शब्द है। शीर्ष 20 संवेदनशील कंपनियों में एक भी भारतीय कंपनी शामिल नहीं है। वहीं सबसे कम संवेदनशील कंपनियों की 20 कंपनियों की सूची में भारत की आठ कंपनियां जरूर शामिल हैं।

इसका मतलब है कि सूचकांकों में भारत की स्थिति सुधारने के लिए कार्यबल बनाने से कहीं अधिक प्रयास करने होंगे। लेकिन यह भी तय है कि इन मानदंडों पर सुधार लाए बगैर प्रगति के रास्ते पर बढ़ पाना भी मुश्किल होगा।

कानाफूसी

रास न आई घरवापसी

मध्य प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री कमलनाथ ने भारतीय जनता पार्टी के दो विधायकों नारायण त्रिपाठी और शरद कोल की घर वापसी तो कराई लेकिन इसे पार्टी में सभी खुश नहीं हैं। दरअसल प्रदेश के पूर्व नेता प्रतिपक्ष और वरिष्ठ कांग्रेस नेता अजय सिंह राहुल और त्रिपाठी के रिश्ते बहुत पहले से खराब चल रहे हैं। वर्ष 2014 के लोकसभा चुनाव में अजय सिंह सतना लोकसभा सीट से बहुत मामूली मतों से हार गये थे। उस वक्त उन्होंने अपनी हार के लिए त्रिपाठी को जिम्मेदार ठहराया था जो सतना जिले के मेहर विधानसभा क्षेत्र से विधायक थे और अब भी हैं। उधर त्रिपाठी गत वर्ष के विधानसभा चुनाव के दो दिन पहले कांग्रेस छोड़कर भाजपा का दामन थाम बैठे थे। यही कारण है कि सतना कांग्रेस के नेता भी नारायण त्रिपाठी का विरोध कर रहे हैं। इस बीच पार्टी की प्रतिक्रिया पूरी तरह नपीतुली है। प्रदेश कांग्रेस प्रवक्ता पंकज चतुर्वेदी ने कहा है कि कमलनाथ पार्टी को मजबूत बनाने के लिए जो भी कर रहे हैं, स्थानीय इकाइयों को उसे स्वीकार करना होगा।



आपका पक्ष

दूषित भोजन व पानी से अरबों का नुकसान

प्रदूषण के कारण देश को वर्ष 2016-17 में करीब 7 लाख करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ है। फाउंडेशन फॉर मिलनेनियम सस्टेनेबल डेवलपमेंट गोल्स (एसडीजी) और रिसर्च फर्म थॉट ऑर्बिट्रिज के एक अध्ययन में कहा गया है कि भोजन व पानी के दूषित होने से 7,37,457 करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ है। यह राशि देश के कुल जीडीपी का 4.8 प्रतिशत है। अध्ययन में यह भी कहा गया है कि अगर हालात नहीं सुधारे गए तो यह नुकसान वर्ष 2022 तक 9,50,000 करोड़ रुपये तक पहुंच सकता है। अध्ययन के अनुसार वर्ष 2016-17 के दौरान दूषित भोजन व पानी के कारण होने वाली बीमारियों के इलाज का कुल अनुमानित खर्च 32,941 करोड़ रुपये था। दूषित भोजन व पानी की वजह से सबसे अधिक फैलने वाली बीमारियों में डायरिया, सांस की बीमारी तथा अन्य संक्रामक रोग शामिल हैं। यह आंकड़ा चौंकाने



वाला है क्योंकि देश गरीबी तथा भुखमरी से जूझ रहा है वहीं दूषित भोजन व पानी के कारण अरबों रुपये बरबाद हो रहे हैं। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में स्वास्थ्य के प्रति जागरूकता की कमी है। स्वास्थ्य के प्रति जागरूकता के लिए सरकार विज्ञापनों के माध्यम से लोगों को जागरूक करती है जिसमें बड़ी धनराशि खर्च होती है। इसके बाद

एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश को दूषित भोजन-पानी से 7 लाख करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हुआ

भी दूषित भोजन व पानी का सेवन कर बीमार होने वाले लोगों की संख्या काफी अधिक है। सरकार ने हर घर पानी की योजना की शुरुआत की है। इस पहल से हर

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



जिंदगीनामा

कनिका दत्ता

कोरिया एवं अमेरिकी कंपनियों पर ही आश्रित है। दवा क्षेत्र से इतर भारतीय कंपनी जगत शोध एवं विकास के मद में बहुत कम खर्च करता है और शायद ही कोई ऐसा हफ्ता गुजरा होगा जब कोई टिप्पणीकार या विश्लेषक चीन की वैश्विक तकनीकी महारत का जिक्र नहीं करता है। चीन का शोध एवं विकास पर प्रति व्यक्ति व्यय भारत की तुलना में आठ गुना है।

इसके बावजूद निस्संदेह यह सरकार नवाचार को बढ़ावा देने में सही मायने में रुचि ले रही है। विश्व बौद्धिक संपदा संगठन ने भी नीतिगत परिवेश में सुधार और बौद्धिक संपदा अधिकारों के आवंटन एवं परीक्षण में लगने वाला समय कम करने के लिए किए गए प्रयासों की सराहना की है। लेकिन बड़ी समस्या यह है कि कुछ खास सूचकांकों में प्रदर्शन सुधारने पर ध्यान देने भर से मनचाहा नतीजा नहीं सुनिश्चित किया जा सकता है। कारोबारी सुगमता रैंकिंग में प्रदर्शन सुधरने के बावजूद एफडीआई प्रवाह में कोई खास अंतर नहीं आया है (असल में यह घट ही गया है)। इसी तरह नवाचार सूचकांक में भारत की रैंकिंग सुधरने से वह अचानक वैश्विक स्तर पर तकनीकी चैंपियन नहीं बनने जा रहा है क्योंकि ऐसी उपलब्धियां एकाकीपन में नहीं होता है।

इन दिनों बड़ रही सूचकांकों की भीड़ में से किसी पर भी नजर डालें तो एक पैटर्न दिखेगा। इन सूचकांकों में अमेरिका, स्कैंडेनेविया, जर्मनी, चीन, ताइवान और सिंगापुर शीर्ष स्थानों पर मौजूद होते हैं। ये देश न केवल कारोबारी सुगमता एवं नवाचार जैसे मानकों पर काफी आगे हैं बल्कि मानव विकास सूचकांक और जीवन की गुणवत्ता से संबंधित मापदंडों पर भी उनकी स्थिति काफी मजबूत है। अकेले मानव विकास

घर में पेयजल तो पहुंच जाएगा लेकिन वह पीने लायक होगा इसकी गारंटी नहीं है। कई बार नलों से आने वाले पानी के दूषित होने की शिकायत भी मिलती रहती है। अतः सरकार को दूषित भोजन व पानी से होने वाले नुकसान को रोकने के लिए नीति बनानी चाहिए।

दीपिका शर्मा, नई दिल्ली

बारिश के दिनों में सावधानी जरूरी

बारिश का मौसम शुरू हो चुका है तथा इस मौसम में मच्छर जनित बीमारियां अधिक होती हैं। दिल्ली में अबतक मलेरिया के 80 तथा डेंगू के 34 मामले सामने आ चुके हैं। ये आंकड़े नगर निगम ने एक रिपोर्ट में जारी किए हैं। दिल्ली में पिछले साल डेंगू के 2,798 मामले दर्ज हुए थे तथा इस बीमारी से चार लोगों की मौत हो गई थी। बारिश के दिनों

में जहां तहां पानी जम जाता है जिससे मच्छर के लार्वा आसानी से पनपते हैं। वहीं बारिश के दिनों में मच्छरों के लिए तापमान अनुकूल रहता है। शहरों के अलावा ग्रामीण जगहों में मलेरिया के अधिक मामले सामने आते हैं क्योंकि खुली जगह तथा खेत खलिहान, नलियों में पानी जमने से मच्छरों की संख्या काफी बढ़ जाती है। डेंगू व मलेरिया बीमारी से बचने के एहतियाती कदम अभी से उठाने होंगे। आम लोगों की जिम्मेदारी बनती है कि वे अपने घर के आसपास पानी जमने से दूर जिससे मच्छर का लार्वा नहीं पनप सके। जहां कहीं गाड़ों में पानी जमा हो वहां कीटनाशक का इस्तेमाल किया जाए। सरकार विज्ञापनों के जरिये सावधानी बरतने की सलाह समय-समय पर देती रहती है। इसमें घरों के गमले, पुराने टायर, डिब्बे आदि में पानी जमने से रोकने को कहा जाता है। सरकार के साथ-साथ लोगों को भी मच्छर को पनपने से रोकना होगा तथा जहां मच्छर पनप रहे हों उन्हें नष्ट करना होगा।



दैनिक जागरण

कुछ फैसले इतिहास बदलकर नए भविष्य की बुनियाद रखते हैं

समाज सुधार का बड़ा काम

तत्काल तीन तलाक संबंधी विधेयक पर राज्यसभा की मुहर लगना समाज सुधार की दिशा में एक बड़ी पहल है। अच्छा होता कि विपक्ष इस विधेयक के विरोध पर नहीं अड़ता और मुस्लिम समाज को यह संदेश देने में भागीदार बनता कि इस कुप्रथा को खत्म करने का समय आ गया है। क्या इससे अजीब बात और कोई हो सकती है कि कई विपक्षी दलों ने मुस्लिम समाज के उन नेताओं के साथ खड़े होना पसंद किया जो यह तर्क दे रहे थे कि तत्काल तीन तलाक की प्रथा गलत तो है, लेकिन उसे खत्म करने की पहल नहीं होनी चाहिए? तत्काल तीन तलाक की कुप्रथा उन सामाजिक बुराइयों में से है जो महिलाओं को दोयम दर्जे का नागरिक साबित करती है। क्या ऐसी कोई प्रथा धर्मसम्मत कही जा सकती है जो पति को पत्नी को एक झटके में छोड़ने का अधिकार देती हो? तत्काल तीन तलाक की बुराई के चलन में होने के कारण मुस्लिम महिलाएं अपने वैवाहिक भविष्य को लेकर आशंका से घिरी रहती थीं। इससे भी खराब बात यह थी कि जब उन्हें एक झटके में तीन तलाक दे दिया जाता था तो वे एक तरह से सड़क पर आ जाती थीं। इस हालत में उन्हें मुश्किल से ही कोई मदद मिलती थी।

यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण रहा कि मुस्लिम नेताओं और धर्मगुरुओं ने अपने समाज की महिलाओं के साथ खड़े होने के बजाय तत्काल तीन तलाक का समर्थन करना बेहतर समझा। इस रवैये को देखते हुए यह आवश्यक हो गया था कि तत्काल तीन तलाक को दंडनीय अपराध बनाया जाए। इसकी जरूरत इसलिए और बढ़ गई थी, क्योंकि सुप्रीम कोर्ट की ओर से तत्काल तीन तलाक को अमान्य करार दिए जाने के बाद भी इस तरह के तलाक का सिलसिला कायम था। यह एक तरह से सुप्रीम कोर्ट को दी जाने वाली सीधी चुनौती ही थी। एक झटके में तीन तलाक को दंडनीय अपराध बनाने के खिलाफ तरह-तरह के तर्क देने वाले जानबूझकर इसकी अनदेखी ही कर रहे थे कि दहेज की मांग करना भी दंडनीय अपराध है। जब समाज सामाजिक बुराइयों को खत्म करने में सहयोग देने से इन्कार करे तब फिर कानूनी उपायों का सहारा लेना जरूरी हो जाता है। यह उम्मीद की जाती है कि मुस्लिम महिला विवाह अधिकार संरक्षण विधेयक के कानून बन जाने के बाद तत्काल तीन तलाक के मामले थमंगे। ऐसा हो, इसके लिए मुस्लिम युवाओं को आगे आना चाहिए, क्योंकि कोई समाज तभी आगे बढ़ता है जब उसकी महिलाओं को मान-सम्मान मिलता है। अब जब मुस्लिम महिलाएं भी अधिकार संपन्न होने जा रही हैं तब फिर यह जरूरी हो जाता है कि समान नागरिक संहिता की दिशा में आगे बढ़ा जाए।

कोशिशों का दिखता असर

जल संरक्षण की दिशा में झारखंड में हो रही छोटी-छोटी कोशिशें अब अपना असर दिखा रही हैं। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने अपने मन की बात कार्यक्रम में एक महीने के भीतर जहां दो बार झारखंड के अलग-अलग इलाकों में हो रहे इन प्रयासों की सरनाह कर यहां के गांवों को राष्ट्रीय फलक पर चर्चा में लाया, वहीं समय समय पर यहां ग्रामीण स्तर पर हो रहे प्रयास भी लोगों को जल संरक्षण की प्रेरणा देते रहे हैं। इस दिशा में दैनिक जागरण ने शहर से लेकर गांव तक पूरे राज्य में लोगों को पानी का महत्व बताते हुए जल संरक्षण के लिए प्रेरित करना का बीड़ा उठया तो इस नेक काम को झारखंड सरकार का भी साथ मिला। इसके तहत पूरे प्रदेश में स्कूल-कॉलेजों के स्तर पर जलसेनिकों की एक बड़ी फौज तैयार हो रही है। अभियान के पहले ही चरण में लगभग डेढ़ लाख जागरण जलसेनिक बूंद-बूंद पानी का संचय करने के संकल्प को ले अपने काम में जुट गए हैं। जल संरक्षण और पर्यावरण संरक्षण की दिशा में इन जल सेनिकों द्वारा रोज किए जा रहे काम अन्य लोगों को भी पानी का मोल बताते हुए प्रकृति संरक्षण के लिए प्रेरित कर रहे हैं। जल, जंगल और जमीन झारखंड की पहचान से जुड़े तत्व हैं, लेकिन इसके बावजूद प्रकृति की गोद में बसे इस राज्य के कई इलाके गंभीर जल संकट से जूझते हैं। वहीं कई इलाकों में लगातार जल संकट गहरता जा रहा है। खुशी की बात ये है कि गांवों और पंचायतों के स्तर पर जमीन से जुड़े लोगों और किसानों ने अपने-अपने स्तर से समय समय पर जल संरक्षण का प्रयास कर अपने-अपने इलाकों की सुरत बदल डाली। यहां के सिमोन उरांव, जमुना टुट्टू और चामी मुर्मु जैसी शख्सियतें पहले भी पानी और पर्यावरण बचाने को लेकर राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सराही गई हैं। रांची जिले के ओरामांडी प्रखंड के आर कैरम गांव से लेकर हजारीबाग जिले के कटकमसांडी प्रखंड के लुपुंग आदि गांव भी पिछले दिनों अपने इन्हीं संकल्पों के बूते पूरे देश में चर्चा में आए। इन इलाकों में हुए काम से प्रेरणा लेकर अन्य इलाकों को भी इस तरह के प्रयास करने चाहिए। जल संरक्षण के प्रति फैल रही यह जागरूकता भविष्य के लिए सुखद संकेत दे रही है।

जल, जंगल और जमीन झारखंड की पहचान से जुड़े तत्व हैं, लेकिन इसके बावजूद इस राज्य के कई इलाके गंभीर जल संकट से जूझ रहे हैं

प्रदूषित नदियां और बाढ़ की तबाही

सुधीर कुमार

दक्षिणी-पश्चिमी मानसून में एकाएक आई तेजी की वजह से इन दिनों बिहार, असम, मेघालय, मिजोरम, त्रिपुरा समेत देश के कई राज्य भीषण बाढ़ की चपेट में हैं। सबसे बुरा असर प्रभावित इलाकों के ग्रामीण समाज तथा अर्थव्यवस्था पर पड़ा है। इस आपदा से भौतिक एवं मानव संसाधन का बड़े पैमाने पर नुकसान हुआ है। लाखों लोग बाढ़ में फंसकर अपने जीवन को बचाने की जद्दोजहद कर रहे हैं। बाढ़ देश में हर वर्ष तबाही लाती है। बाढ़ प्रभावित क्षेत्र का दृश्य कुछ पल के लिए मरघट-सा हो जाता है। एक तरफ लोगों के समक्ष सुशुधित स्थानों पर जाकर अपने जीवन को बचाने की चुनौती होती है, वहीं इसके पश्चात प्रभावित आबादी के बीच भोजन, पेयजल एवं दवा जैसी मूलभूत सुविधाओं को प्राप्त करने की व्याकुलता बढ़ जाती है।

गौरतलब यह भी है कि देश के किसी भी हिस्से में जब भी बाढ़ आती है तो हमारे सामने नदियों की मंद पड़ी गति का प्रश्न खड़ा हो जाता है। दरअसल देश में बारम्बासी नदियों के साथ-साथ बरसाती नदियां भी प्रदूषण की मामक रेखा

भारत में नदियों का सामाजिक, आर्थिक, धार्मिक महत्व है, लेकिन प्रदूषण की वजह से कई नदियों का अस्तित्व खतरे में है

से ऊपर बह रही हैं। गद-मलबों की अधिकता होने के कारण नदियों की प्राकृतिक गति सुस्त पड़ गई है। ऐसे में हल्की बारिश होने पर भी नदियां जल संग्रहण नहीं कर पाती हैं और बाढ़ के फैलाव का सबसे बड़ा कारण बन जाती हैं। बेतहाशा औद्योगीकरण, कल-कारखाने से अनियंत्रित मात्रा में निकलते अशोधित अपशिष्ट तथा सीवरज से निकलने वाली गंदगियों की वजह से देश के हर कोने में नदियां प्रदूषण के बोझ से दबी जा रही हैं, जिसकी वजह से नदियां अब सतत रूप से न तो प्रवाहित हो पा रही हैं और ना ही उनमें जल धारण करने की क्षमता ही शेष है।

ऐसे में साल के अधिकांश महीनों में नदियों में पानी की जगह रेत और गद ही दिखाई पड़े तो ज्यादा आश्चर्य नहीं करना चाहिए। आज भी देश के कुछ क्षेत्रों में नदी ही पेयजल का मुख्य

प्रदूषित नदियां और बाढ़ की तबाही

स्रोत है, ऐसे में प्रदूषित और सुखती नदियां कब तक लोगों की प्यास बुझा पाएंगी, यह भी सोचने योग्य विषय है! दरअसल मानव सभ्यताओं को जन्म देने वाली नदियां आज हर दृष्टि से उपेक्षा की शिकार हो गई हैं। उपेक्षित और प्रदूषित नदियां ही बाढ़ को आमंत्रण देती हैं। केंद्रीय प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड की मांनें तो देश में सेकड़ों नदियां अभी भी प्रदूषित हैं। कश्मीर से कन्याकुमारी और गुजरात से अरुणाचल तक देश के हर कोने में नदियां प्रदूषण के बोझ से दबी जा रही हैं। भारत में नदियों का सामाजिक, आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक और धार्मिक महत्व है, लेकिन अतिक्रमण और प्रदूषण की वजह से कई नदियां का अस्तित्व खतरे में है। इधर नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार द्वारा राष्ट्रीय नदी संरक्षण योजना के तहत देश के 16 राज्यों की 34 नदियों में प्रदूषण कम करने के लिए 5800 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की धनराशि मंजूर किए जाने से नदियों के पुरोरोद्धार की आस जगी है, लेकिन बतौर नागरिक हमें ध्यान रखना होगा कि यह लक्ष्य सिर्फ नदियों को साफ करने से नहीं, उन्हें गंदा न होने देने के हमारे संकल्प से भी जुड़ा है!

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

ए. सूर्यप्रकाश

कर्नाटक में नई सरकार की नियति अब अदालती फैसले से तय होगी। तब तक अस्थिरता का दौर जारी रहेगा और लोग भी असहाय होकर एक और सरकार को लड़खड़ाते हुए देखने पर मजबूर होंगे



एचडी कुमारस्वामी सरकार के पतन के साथ ही कर्नाटक के राजनीतिक नाटक से पर्दा उठ गया। राजनीति का विद्रूप चह्रा दिखाने वाला यह नाटक कई दिनों तक खिंचा। अब राज्य में बीएस येदियुरप्पा के नेतृत्व में बनी सरकार ने बहुमत भी हासिल कर लिया है। हालांकि इसके साथ ही कहानी पूरी तरह खत्म नहीं हुई है, क्योंकि इसमें कर्नाटक विधानसभा के स्पीकर रहे केआर रमेश कुमार के फैसलों को लेकर भी कई संवैधानिक पेंच फंसे हुए हैं। स्पीकर रहते हुए कुमार ने उन 17 विधायकों को अयोग्य करार दिया जो पहले ही उन्हें अपने इस्तीफे भेज चुके थे। विधायक चाहते थे कि उनके इस्तीफे स्वीकार किए जाएं और उनमें से दस विधायकों ने तो स्पीकर से मुलाकात कर इस्तीफा देने के अपने अधिकार पर चर्चा भी की थी। वहीं कांग्रेस और जद-एस उन्हें अयोग्य ठहराना चाहते थे, क्योंकि वे विधानसभा में तब सदन में मौजूद नहीं रहे जब कुमारस्वामी सरकार विश्वासमत का सामना कर रही थी। स्पीकर ने यह फैसला भी सुनाया कि मौजूदा विधानसभा के कार्यकाल में वे चुनाव भी नहीं लड़ सकते। इससे इन विधायकों की सभी योजनाएं धरी की धरी रह जाएंगी। साथ ही नए मुख्यमंत्री को उस योजना को भी झटका लगा जिसमें वे उपचुनावों में इन विधायकों को भाजपा के टिकट पर मैदान में उतारने की सोच रहे होंगे। यह मामला पहले से ही सुप्रीम कोर्ट में लंबित है और पूरी संभावना है कि वे विधायक

स्पीकर द्वारा उन्हें अयोग्य ठहराने के फैसले को भी अदालत में चुनौती देंगे। भले ही इसका जो परिणाम निकले, लेकिन इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि इस घटनाक्रम से देश की लोकतांत्रिक परंपराओं को खामी ठेस पहुंची है। इस नाटक की शुरुआत तब हुई जब बागी विधायक इस्तीफे सौंपने स्पीकर के कार्यालय गए। चूंकि इस्तीफे उनकी अनुपस्थिति में दिए गए थे तो स्पीकर ने कहा कि विधायक उनसे खुद आकर मिलें, क्योंकि वह इस दायित्व से बंधे हैं कि यह पड़ताल कर पाएं कि क्या वे किसी दबाव या अंतरात्मा की आवाज पर ही इस्तीफा दे रहे हैं? विधानसभा नियमों के अनुसार यदि विधायक स्पीकर से मिलकर अपना इस्तीफा सौंपकर यह भरोसा दिलाएं कि वे अपनी मर्जी से ऐसा कर रहे हैं तब ऐसी स्थिति में स्पीकर को तत्काल प्रभाव से उनका इस्तीफा स्वीकार करना होगा। यदि इस्तीफा खुद नहीं सौंपा जाता तब नियम स्पीकर को यह गुंजाइश देते हैं कि वह इसकी तफ्तीश शुरू करें कि क्या इस्तीफा स्वैच्छिक और वास्तविक है? उनके पास ऐसे पत्र को खारिज करने का भी पूरा अधिकार है। जब सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने निर्देश दिया तो दस विधायक उनसे मिलने भी गए। इस प्रक्रिया का पालन करते हुए उन्होंने स्पीकर को सूचित किया कि वे इस्तीफा देना चाहते हैं।

जब कुमारस्वामी सरकार को विश्वासमत की बाधा पार करनी थी तब सत्तासूद गठबंधन की दोनों पार्टियों ने अपने सदस्यों को सदन में



अवधेश राजपूत

रहने और विश्वासमत के पक्ष में मतदान का व्हिप जारी किया। इस्तीफा देने वाले विधायक मुंबई में डेर डाले रहे। इस पूरे घटनाक्रम और इस्तीफे से जुड़े हुए नियमों को देखते हुए स्पीकर को विधायकों के इस्तीफे स्वीकार कर लेने चाहिए थे। चूंकि विधायकों ने विश्वासमत से पहले ही इस्तीफे दे दिए तो उनकी दलील थी कि पार्टियों के व्हिप उन पर लागू नहीं होते। राज्य में पखवाड़े भर चला ड्रामा बड़ा डरावना था जिसमें कांग्रेस और जद-एस ने बागियों को वापस अपने पाले में लाने के लिए हर तिकड़म आजमाई। यहां तक कि विधायकों को मुंबई में पुलिस शिकायत दर्ज करानी पड़ी। कर्नाटक कांग्रेस के कद्दावर नेता डीके शिवकुमार ने उस होटल में घुसने की नाकाम कोशिश भी की जहां बागी विधायक रहे हुए थे। सदस्यों के इस्तीफों को लेकर कर्नाटक विधानसभा के स्पीकर का रवैया राज्यसभा के सभापति एम वेंकैया नायडू के दृष्टिकोण से उलट रहा। नायडू को सपा के राज्यसभा सांसद नीरज शंकर का त्यागपत्र 15 जुलाई को मिला।

उसके अगले दिन ही नायडू ने राज्यसभा को सूचित किया कि उन्होंने शंकर का इस्तीफा स्वीकार कर लिया है। सभापति ने उन्हें बुलाकर पूछा कि क्या वह वास्तव में इस्तीफा देना चाहते हैं और ऐसा वह स्वच्छेड से कर रहे हैं। उन्होंने उनसे पूछा कि क्या वह अपने निर्णय पर पुनर्विचार करना चाहेंगे। फिर जब सदस्य इस्तीफे पर अड़े रहे तो सभापति ने उसे तत्काल प्रभाव से स्वीकार करते हुए अपने सचिवालय को शेष औपचारिकताएं शीघ्र संपन्न करने का निर्देश दिया। इस्तीफे की औपचारिक घोषणा भी उन्होंने सदन में 16 जुलाई को कर दी। वापस कर्नाटक विधानसभा में हुए नाटक का और लौटते हैं। यह बहुत दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण था कि राज्य की जनता ने 2018 में हुए विधानसभा चुनाव में किसी भी दल या चुनावपूर्व गठबंधन को स्पष्ट जनादेश नहीं दिया। अंतिम परिणामों में भाजपा 104 सीटों के साथ बहुमत के जादुई आंकड़े से चंद कदम दूर रह गई। राज्य में सबसे कम 37 सीटें हासिल करने वाली जद-एस को राज्य की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी पार्टी के 78

पतंगबाजी सरीखी चिट्ठीबाजी



राजीव सचान

यदि बुद्धिजीवी तबका आपस में संवाद नहीं कर सकता तो कितनी ही चिट्ठियां लिख ले, समाज को सही दिशा नहीं दिखा सकता



खिलवाड़ ने यह माहौल बनाने में मदद की है कि भारत में अल्पसंख्यकों की जान की खैर नहीं, लेकिन इसका मतलब नहीं कि बीड़ की हिंसा जनित घटनाएं यही हो रही हैं। सच्चाई यही है कि वे हो रही हैं। पशुओं, बच्चों, वाहनों आदि की चोरी के आरोप में पकड़े गए लोग अक्सर बीड़ की हिंसा का शिकार हो रहे हैं। इसी तरह गाय काटने या गोमांस बेचने के शक के घरे में आए लोग बीड़ की हिंसा के शिकार हो रहे हैं। इस सबके साथ यदा-कदा सांप्रदायिक वैमनस्य के कारण भी ऐसी घटनाएं हो रही हैं। इसे किसी और न सही, खुद को बुद्धिजीवी कहने वाले लोगों को अवश्य समझना चाहिए। उन्हें यह भी समझना चाहिए कि बीड़ की हिंसा के मामले लचर कानून एवं व्यवस्था का भी तनीजा हैं। आमतौर पर पुलिस पशुओं की चोरी, गायों की तस्करी आदि की घटनाओं को गंभीरता से नहीं लेती। इससे लोगों में आक्रोश बढ़ता है और नतीजा यह होता है कि जब कोई चोर हाथ लगता है तो फिर उसकी पिटाई होती है। कई बार यह पिटाई जानलेवा साबित होती है, लेकिन 49 बद्धिजीवियों समेत अन्य अनेक बुद्धिजीवी इस निष्कर्ष पर पहुंच गए कि दलित और अल्पसंख्यक चुन-चुनकर

बीड़ की हिंसा का शिकार हो रहे हैं।

49 बुद्धिजीवियों की मांग है कि बीड़ की हिंसा से निपटने के लिए कानून बने। सुप्रीम कोर्ट भी ऐसी जरूरत जता चुका है। मोदी सरकार इस दिशा में प्रयासरत भी है, लेकिन क्या कानून बनने मात्र से बीड़ की हिंसा रुक जाएगी? ऐसा होने में संदेह है, क्योंकि पुलिस सुधारों पर ध्यान देने से बचा जा रहा है। इस मामले में भाजपा और गैर भाजपा सरकारों में कोई भेद करना मुश्किल है। इस पर हैत नहीं कि 49 लोगों की चिट्ठी के जवाब में 62 लोगों की चिट्ठी आ गई। एक समय था जब एक ही पक्ष के लोग चिट्ठी लिखते थे और उसी को प्रचार एवं महत्व मिलता था। तब उन्हें कोई जवाबी चिट्ठी नहीं लिखता था, बल्कि यह कहें तो बेहतर कि लिखने की हिम्मत नहीं जुटा पाता था। अब वह दौरे बंद हो गया है। अब हर चिट्ठी का जवाब देने वाले हैं। फिल्मकारों, कलाकारों, लेखकों आदि यानी हर समूह के लोगों की किसी भी चिट्ठी पर उन्हीं के बीच का कोई दूसरा समूह उन्हें जवाबी चिट्ठी लिख देता है। यह एक नया परिदृश्य है और शायद यह उन बुद्धिजीवियों को बिचकूल भी नहीं पच रहा जिन्हें पहले कोई जवाबी चिट्ठी नहीं मिलती थी। उन्हें यह शिकायत रहती है कि उन्हें तत्काल देशद्रोही करार दिया जाता है या फिर पाकिस्तान जाने को कह दिया जाता है। ये बुद्धिजीवी यह भूल जाते हैं कि एक समय वह भी था जब किस तरह कुछ लोगों को बड़ी आसानी से सीआइए एजेंट कह दिया जाता था और फिर भी यह शिकायत कोई नहीं करता था कि देश में असहिष्णुता बढ़ रही है।

बात-बात पर चिट्ठी लिखने वाले यह समझें तो बेहतर कि देश न सही, वक्त बदल गया है और उनकी हर चिट्ठी पर जवाबी चिट्ठी आएगी। यह बात और है कि इससे समाज और देश को कुछ हासिल होने वाला नहीं है। हासिल तो तब होगा जब दोनों खेमों के बुद्धिजीवी एक-दूसरे के साथ संवाद करेंगे। बुद्धिजीवी का मतलब है विद्वान और विद्वान जब संवाद करते हैं तो अपना तर्क रखने के पहले दूसरे के दृष्टिकोण को समझते हैं। यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि ऐसा कुछ भी नहीं हो रहा और इसीलिए यह जो चिट्ठीबाजी हो रही है उसकी अहमियत पतंगबाजी से ज्यादा नहीं। यदि बुद्धिजीवी तबका आपस में संवाद नहीं कर सकता तो फिर कितनी ही चिट्ठियां लिख ले, समाज को सही दिशा नहीं दिखा सकता।

(लेखक दैनिक जागरण में एसोसिएट एडिटर हैं)

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जीवन एक संगीत

संगीत शब्द के उच्चारण के साथ ही मन-मयूर नाच उठता है, दिल की धड़कनें तेज हो जाती हैं और मन प्राण में उमंग और उत्साह की अखिरल धारा प्रवाहित हो उठती है। आशय यही है कि संगीत प्रतीक है जीवन का, संगीत प्रतीक है आत्मा का, संगीत प्रतीक है अनुभूति का। महान कवि खलील जिब्रान ने एक बार कहा था, ‘संगीत आत्मा की जुबान होती है। जहां पर हमारी जुबान बंद हो जाती है, वहीं संगीत का प्रारंभ होता है।’ यदि गंभीरता से मनन करें तो आत्मा-मीमांसा का एक प्रश्न उठ खड़ा होता है कि आधुनिक जीवन की आपाधापी में जबकि हम अपनी आंखें मूंदकर अपने सपनों की दुनिया को साकार करने की होड़ में लगे हुए हैं तो क्या हम संगीत के सच्चे स्वरूप का अहसास कर पाते हैं? ब्रिटेन के मशहूर कवि पर्सी बिश शेली का यह मानना था कि हमारे जीवन के सबसे मधुर गीत प्रायः वे गीत होते हैं जो हमारे सबसे पीड़ादायक विचारों से उत्पन्न होते हैं। अर्थात् संगीत दर्द में जन्म लेता है और यही कारण है कि संगीत के जादुई असर को महसूस करने के लिए दर्द की मौजूदगी बहुत जरूरी है, क्योंकि जब मन प्रसन्न रहता है तो मन के भाव के सूर एकत्रित नहीं हो पाते। यदि जीवन में दर्द हो तो दिल में संगीत की उमियां स्वतः कावटें लेने लगती हैं। कष्ट और वेदना में कवि बनने की प्रतिभा का आर्वाभाव हो जाता है।

श्रीप्रकाश शर्मा

मेलबाक्स

राजनयिक संबंध स्थापित करते समय पर्याप्त सावधानी बरतने की जरूरत है।

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कश्मीर के विकास में बाधक

रेडियो कार्यक्रम ‘मन की बात’ में प्रधानमंत्री ने साफ कह दिया है कि जो लोग कश्मीर के विकास की राह में रोड़ा बन रहे हैं और नफरत फैलाना चाहते हैं, उनके ये नापाक इरादे कामयाब होने वाले नहीं हैं। प्रधानमंत्री की ओर से ऐसे किसी बयान की आवश्यकता इसलिए थी, क्योंकि एक तरफ सरकार से यह अपेक्षा बढ़ गई है कि घाटी को पटरी पर लाने के लिए हरसंभव उपाय करें, क्योंकि गृहमंत्री बनने के बाद से शाह कश्मीर पर खास ध्यान दे रहे हैं। सभी को भरोसा है कि मोदी-शाह की जोड़ी कश्मीर की समस्याओं को निपटा कर रहेगी। बीते दिनों कश्मीर में जवानों की 100 अतिरिक्त कंपनियां तैनात की गई हैं। जिसके साथ ही कश्मीर में राजनीति गरमा गई है, घंटिया बयान सामने आने लगे हैं कि 35ए को हाथ लगाया तो सारा शरीर भस्म हो जाएगा। लेकिन केंद्र सरकार का कहना है कि ये कंपनियां सिर्फ कश्मीर की सुरक्षा के लिए तैनाती की गई हैं। एक तरफ केंद्र सरकार आतंकवाद पर नकेल कस रही है तो दूसरी तरफ घाटी के नेता उनकी जवानदा कर रहे हैं। इन सब के बीच मासूम कश्मीर की जनता पिस रही है। क्या उनको निडर होकर जीने का हक नहीं? क्योंकि ये आतंकी हमले उनको डर की जिंदगी जीने को मजबूर कर रहे हैं।

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व्यवस्था को दुरुस्त करने की जरूरत

भारतीय रेल यातायात का सबसे बड़ा साधन है। राज्य के यात्रियों को सस्ता और सुगम यात्रा कराने वाली ट्रेनों में लोग धूम्रपान करते हैं। क्या सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर धूम्रपान करना अपराध नहीं है? सरकार द्वारा ऐसे सभी स्थानों पर वैधानिक चेतावनी लिखी होती है कि धूम्रपान दंडनीय अपराध है। बावजूद इसके कुछ पढ़े-लिखे अशिक्षित लोग ऐसे अपराध जानबूझकर करते हैं। वे अपने स्वास्थ्य के साथ-साथ आस-पास के लोगों का भी स्वास्थ्य बिगाड़ रहे हैं। दुख की बात है कि ऐसे लोग समझाने पर झगड़ने पर आमादा हो जाते हैं। इस व्यवस्था को ठीक से लागू करने का दायित्व सिर्फ सरकार का ही नहीं, अपितु हम सभी को अपने दायित्वों को निभाने की जरूरत है। अपने स्वार्थ की पूर्ति के लिए हम अपने आस-पास के वातावरण को दूषित करके अपने साथ अन्य लोगों को भी मौत के मुह में धकेल रहे हैं। कानून का सम्मान करते हुए सरकार के दिशा-निर्देशों का पालन करना चाहिए।

आचार्य राम कुमार बघेल शास्त्री, पलवल

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

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

कानून का शिकंजा

निवेशकों को कम समय में मोटा मुनाफा देकर अमीर बनाने का सपना दिखाने वाली पॉजी योजनाओं पर अब लगाम कसी जा सकेगी। संसद ने ‘ अनियमित जमा योजनाएं विधेयक, 2019’ को मंजूरी दे दी है। इसलिए उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि नया कानून लागू होने के बाद लोगों को उगने वाली ऐसी योजनाएं चलाने वालों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई हो सकेगी। देश भर में हजारों छोटी-बड़ी चिटफंड कंपनियां और समूह इस तरह की योजनाएं चला रहे हैं और नए-नए घोटाले सामने आते रहे हैं। लेकिन ऐसी योजनाओं के घोटालेबाज इसलिए बच निकलते हैं कि पॉजी योजनाओं को लेकर अब तक कोई कड़ा कानून नहीं था। ऐसे में घोटालेबाजों को सजा नहीं मिल पाती थी। पिछले एक दशक में पश्चिम बंगाल, ओड़ीशा और असम में जिस तरह से बड़े पैमाने पर चल रही पॉजी योजनाओं का खुलासा हुआ और जो गिरफ्तारियां हुईं, उससे साफ है कि करोड़ों-अरबों की ऐसी ठगी बिना रसूखदारों और राजनीतिक संरक्षण के संभव नहीं होती। पश्चिम बंगाल में जो सारदा चिटफंड घोटाला, पर्ल समूह, रोजवैली घोटाला सामने आया, उसकी आंच राज्य सरकार के मंत्रियों, विधायकों तक पहुंची थी। जाहिर है, जहां-जहां भी ऐसी कंपनियां चल रही हैं उनके कर्ताधर्ताओं को बचाने वाले सत्ता में मौजूद हैं।

पॉजी योजनाओं के नाम पर फर्जीवाड़े के अब तक करीब एक हजार मामले सामने आ चुके हैं। चौंकाने वाली यह है कि इनमें लगभग एक तिहाई मामले सिर्फ पश्चिम बंगाल के हैं। यह कारोबार इसलिए फलता-फूलता रहा कि ज्यादातर योजनाओं के निवेशक जानकारी के अभाव में शिकायत ही नहीं कर पाए और कंपनियां पैसा लेकर चंपत होती रहीं। लेकिन जब पश्चिम बंगाल में सारदा, रोजवैली जैसे घोटालों का पर्दाफाश हुआ तब सरकारों की नींद खुली। पता चला कि पर्ल समूह की निवेश योजना में पांच लाख लोगों ने पैसे जमा कर रखे थे और यह रकम पचास हजार करोड़ के करीब थी। जब मामला सुप्रीम कोर्ट पहुंचा, रिजर्व बैंक और सेबी जैसे नियामक सक्रिय हुए और बड़े मामलों की जांच सीबीआइ के हवाले की गई, तब जाकर लगा कि लोगों के साथ धोखाधड़ी करने वाली कंपनियों के खिलाफ सख्त कानून की जरूरत है। पिछले पांच साल में सीबीआइ ने पॉजी योजनाओं में घोटालों से जुड़े दो सौ मामले दर्ज किए हैं। ये आंकड़े और हकीकत बताते हैं कि भारत के शासन तंत्र में भ्रष्टाचार की कितना घुसपैठ है, जिसमें गरीब लोगों का पैसा डकारने वाले लोग बिना किसी भय से कारोबार करते रहते हैं। हाल में कर्नाटक में एक पॉजी घोटाले की जांच करने वाले आइएएस अधिकारी को डेढ़ करोड़ रुपए की घूस के मामले में पकड़ा गया। इस कंपनी का मालिक चालीस हजार निवेशकों का पैसा लेकर विदेश जा गया।

ऐसी कई दुखद घटनाएं भी सामने आईं जब पॉजी योजनाओं में पैसा डूब जाने पर लोगों ने खुदकुशी जैसे कदम तक उठा लिए। ऐसी योजनाओं में पैसा लगाने वाले ज्यादातर लोग मध्यमवर्गीय होते हैं और अच्छे मुनाफे के लालच में कंपनियों में पैसा लगा देते हैं। ऐसे धंधे करने वाली कंपनियां इसलिए बची रहती हैं कि वे रिजर्व बैंक, सेबी जैसे नियामकों के तहत नहीं आती और लोगों में जागरूकता की कमी का फायदा उठाती हैं। नए कानून में कठोर उपाय किए गए हैं। लोगों को उगने वाली योजनाएं चलाना अब आसान नहीं होगा। ऐसा करने वालों को दस साल तक की जेल और जुटाई गई रकम का दो गुना तक जुर्माना भरना होगा। अगर नियमित जमा योजना में मियाद पूरी होने पर पैसा नहीं लौटाया तो उस सूरत में सात साल जेल और पच्चीस करोड़ रुपए तक का जुर्माना हो सकता है। कानून भले कितना कड़ा क्यों न हो, उससे ज्यादा जरूरी है ऐसे अपराधियों को संरक्षण मिलना बंद हो।

बाघ का जीवन

संरक्षित पशु के रूप में बाघों की घटती संख्या को लेकर लंबे समय से चिंता जताई जा रही है और इसमें सुधार के लिए तमाम अभियान चलाए गए। लेकिन इस मसले पर कोई अच्छी खबर नहीं मिल पा रही थी। बाघों की तादाद पर आए नए आंकड़े से यह साबित होता है कि इस मोर्चे पर इतने सालों के दौरान जो कवायदें की गईं, उनका सकारात्मक हासिल अब सामने आया है। विश्व बाघ दिवस के मौके पर प्रधानमंत्री ने 2018 में की गई गिनती के जो आंकड़े जारी किए हैं, उसे इस मोर्चे पर काफी उत्साहवर्धक कहा जा सकता है। वन्यजीव संस्थान की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक देश भर में बाघों की संख्या इस साल दो हजार नौ सौ सड़सठ पाई गई है। यह 2014 में बाघों की कुल संख्या के मुकाबले सात सौ इकतालीस ज्यादा है। यानी पिछले करीब पांच सालों के दौरान बाघों की तादाद में तैंतीस फीसद या करीब एक तिहाई की बढ़ोतरी दर्ज की गई है। जाहिर है, बाघों की कम संख्या को देखते हुए इनके संरक्षण को लेकर जिस तरह की चिंता जताई जा रही थी, उस लिहाज से ताजा आंकड़े काफी राहत भरे हैं।

गौरतलब है कि 2006 में जब बाघों की संख्या महज एक हजार चार सौ र्यारह तक सिमट गई थी, तब इसे एक गंभीर समस्या के रूप में देखा गया था। दुनिया भर में बाघों के संरक्षण को लेकर जिस तरह के अभियान चल रहे थे, उसमें यह भारत के लिए ज्यादा असहज स्थिति और चिंता की बात थी। लेकिन उसके बाद से ही बाघों के संरक्षण और उनकी संख्या में बढ़ोतरी के लिए अभयारण्यों के विस्तार से लेकर उन्धे अनकूल माहौल बनाने के तमाम उपाय किए गए और इसी का हासिल है कि आज बाघों की तादाद में संतोषजनक बढ़ोतरी दर्ज हुई है। हालांकि इस बार बाघों की गणना के लिए अट्‌टाईस मानकों का उपयोग किया गया। इनमें गिनती के लिए दायरे में विस्तार से लेकर सर्वे के आकार तक में वृद्धि की गई। इसके अलावा, 2014 में जहां डेढ़ साल और इससे ज्यादा उम्र के बाघों की गिनती की गई थी, वहीं इस बार इस सर्वे में एक साल के बाघों की भी शामिल किया गया। विशेषज्ञों के मुताबिक दुनिया भर में बाघों के लिए इतना बड़ा सर्वे किसी देश में नहीं होता है। पहले सर्वे का आकार अपेक्षया कम होता था और इसी मुताबिक गिनती पर भी इसका असर पड़ता था।

बहरहाल, इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि ताजा सर्वेक्षण बाघों की संख्या में अच्छी बढ़ोतरी की राहत भरी खबर देता है, लेकिन सच यह है कि अभी भी खतरा टला नहीं है। बाघों के पर्यावास वाले इलाकों में इंसानी आबादी के अलग-अलग तरीके से दखल की वजह से समस्या गहराती गई थी और यह चुनौती आज भी बनी हुई है। इसके अलावा, जिस सुंदरबन को बाघों के लिए सबसे मुफीद जगहों में से एक माना जाता रहा है, वहां भी बढ़ती समुद्री सतह की वजह से एक बड़े हिस्से के डूब जाने का संकेत मंडरा रहा है। अगर यह स्थिति सामने आती है तो फिर बाघ मनुष्य के रिहाइश की ओर रुख कर सकते हैं। इसके बाद सहज ही अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि इंसान और बाघों के बीच कैसे टकराव की स्थिति पैदा हो सकती है। जाहिर है, ताजा उपलब्धि की गति बिनाए रखने के लिए जरूरत इस बात की है कि बाघों के पर्यावास को निर्बाध बनाने के अलावा उनके संरक्षण के अन्य उपायों या विकल्पों पर भी काम किया जाए।

कल्पमेधा

लोग उतनी पूर्णता और उत्साह से बुरे काम नहीं करते, जितना धार्मिक विश्वास के वशीभूत होकर करते हैं।

—*पास्कल*

रवि शंकर

देश में गरीबी मिटाने पर जितना धन खर्च हुआ है वह कम नहीं है। केंद्र सरकार के हर बजट का बड़ा भाग आर्थिक व सामाजिक दृष्टि से पिछड़े वर्ग के उत्थान के लिए आवंटित रहता है, किंतु इसके अपेक्षित परिणाम देखने को नहीं मिलते। ऐसा लगता है कि या तो प्रयासों में कहीं कमी है या फिर प्रतिबद्धता नहीं है, या लक्ष्यों की दिशा ही गलत है।

गरीबी एक वैश्विक समस्या है। दुनिया के ज्यादातर देश खासतौर से अफ्रीकी, एशियाई और लातिन अमेरिकी देश इससे जूझ रहे हैं। गरीबी का मतलब है गरीबी रेखा से नीचे जीवन जीना। किसी भी स्वतंत्र देश के लिए गरीबी एक बहुत शर्मनाक स्थिति है। ऐसे में भारत ने अपने लोगों को गरीबी के दलदल से निकालने की दिशा में लंबी छलांग लगाई है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम (यूएनडीपी) की ओर से जारी रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में वर्ष 2006 से 2016 के बीच सत्ताईस करोड़ से ज्यादा लोगों को गरीबी से बाहर निकला गया। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार वर्ष 2005-06 में भारत के करीब चौंसठ करोड़ यानी पचपन फीसद लोग गरीबी में जी रहे थे। साल 2015-16 में यह संख्या घटकर सैंतीस करोड़ पर आ गई। इस प्रकार भारत ने बहुआयामी यानी विभिन्न

गरीबी एक वैश्विक समस्या है। दुनिया के ज्यादातर देश खासतौर से अफ्रीकी, एशियाई और लातिन अमेरिकी देश इससे जूझ रहे हैं। गरीबी का मतलब है गरीबी रेखा से नीचे जीवन जीना। किसी भी स्वतंत्र देश के लिए गरीबी एक बहुत शर्मनाक स्थिति है। ऐसे में भारत ने अपने लोगों को गरीबी के दलदल से निकालने की दिशा में लंबी छलांग लगाई है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम (यूएनडीपी) की ओर से जारी रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में वर्ष 2006 से 2016 के बीच सत्ताईस करोड़ से ज्यादा लोगों को गरीबी से बाहर निकला गया। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार वर्ष 2005-06 में भारत के करीब चौंसठ करोड़ यानी पचपन फीसद लोग गरीबी में जी रहे थे। साल 2015-16 में यह संख्या घटकर सैंतीस करोड़ पर आ गई। इस प्रकार भारत ने बहुआयामी यानी विभिन्न

जगमोहन चोपता

गेहूँ की कटाई से खाली खेतों में जगह-जगह चूल्हे जल रहे थे। हर चूल्हे पर दो महिलाएं मुरतैदी से रोटियां पका रही थीं। खेत के किनारे पुरुषों का झुंड सब्जी काट रहा था। इक्का-दुक्का युवा बड़े कड़ाहे में हलवा बना रहे थे। छोटे-छोटे लड़के-लड़कियां हर एक चूल्हे से बनी रोटियों को इकट्ठा कर रहे थे। कुछ बच्चे सभी को चाय बांट रहे थे। गांव के बड़े बुजुर्ग गप मारने के साथ-साथ इन तमाम कामों पर पैनी नजर गड़ाए हुए थे। ऐसा लगता था कि किसी फिल्म के दृश्य का फिल्मांकन किया जा रहा हो। लेकिन यह सब हो रहा था पहाड़ के एक गांव में।
बीते सप्ताह एक शादी में अपने गांव चोपता जाना हुआ, जहां शाम को बरात आनी थी। बाजार के तमाम दबावों के बावजूद गांव में आज भी सहकरिता पर आधारित कामकाज जारी है। गांव के लोग बरातियों के लिए मिल कर खाना तैयार करते हैं। युवक-युवतियों द्वारा बरात के स्वागत से लेकर खाना परोसने तक के तमाम काम मिल-जुल कर किए जा रहे थे। इस प्रक्रिया में धीरे-धीरे बड़े-बुजुर्ग छंट कर मार्गदर्शक की भूमिका में चले जाते हैं तो छोटे बच्चे उनकी जगह लेने लगते हैं।

समाजीकरण का यह बहुत ही अनोखा आयोजन

बदलाव के बरक्स

कश्मीर एक बार फिर चर्चा में है। वैसे तो सालभर वह किसी न किसी वजह से टीवी की बहसों, खबरिया चैनलों की ‘ब्रेकिंग न्यूज’ तो कभी अखबारी सुर्खियों में रहता है। कभी अलगाववादी पाकिस्तान जाने की बात कहते हैं तो कभी राष्ट्रीय जांच एजेंसी (एनआइए) के छापों से बिलबिला पड़ते हैं। कभी हमारे जवानों के आतंकियों से लोहा लेते हुए वीरगति को प्राप्त होने की दुखद खबर खबरें आती हैं तो कभी आतंकवादियों को मौत के घाट उतारने की कामयाबी हमारे वीरों के खाते में दर्ज होती है। कभी इन्हीं जवानों द्वारा कश्मीर के बच्चों को पढ़ाने से लेकर उन्हें सही दिशा में प्रेरित करने के लिए सेना और प्रशासनिक सेवाओं में जाने की निशुल्क कोचिंग मुहैया कराने की सकारात्मक खबरें भी आती हैं। इस हमारे लगता है कि कश्मीर में बदलाव की बयार बह रही है। वहां लोग अब बंदूक छोड़कर कलम पकड़ रहे हैं और बम की जगह विकास की बातें कर रहे हैं। पर उसी राज्य की पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री कह रही हैं कि अनुच्छेद 35 के साथ छेड़छाड़ बारूद को चिंगारी दिखाने जैसी होगी। आखिर क्या कारण है कि घाटी में महज दस हजार सैनिक बढ़ाए जाने की बात सुन कर महबूबा मुफ्ती इतनी आग-बबूला हो रही हैं ?

दरअसल, अनुच्छेद 35 के जरिए घाटी के कट्टरपंथी अलगाववादी और सियासतदान अपनी राजनीति की दुकानें चलाते रहे हैं। इन्हींने कश्मीरियों को पढ़ाई-लिखाई और रोजगार बंद कर दिए अपनी राजनीतिक रोटियां सेकने में। इन्हीं के बच्चे सीमा पार से आ रहे पैसे से विदेशों में पढ़ रहे हैं। ये चंद लोग बात-बात पर कश्मीरियों को उकसा कर, बहला-फुसला कर आतंकी और जिहादी भी बना रहे हैं। इन्हीं की करतूतों के कारण कश्मीर भारत का अभिन्न हिस्सा

गरीबी और सवाल

स्तरों और दस मानकों में पिछड़े लोगों को गरीबी से बाहर निकालने में उल्लेखनीय प्रगति की है।

यूएनडीपी की इस रिपोर्ट में इस बात का खुलासा किया गया है कि गरीबी कम करने की दिशा में पहल करने वाले देशों में दुनियाभर में भारत समेत दक्षिण एशियाई देश सबसे आगे हैं। यह एक आशाजनक संकेत है कि गरीबी के खिलाफ वैश्विक लड़ाई जीती जा सकती है। यूएनडीपी ने गरीबी और मानव विकास पहल (ओपीएचआई) का जो सूचकांक तैयार किया है, उसमें गौर करने वाली बात यह है कि गरीबी के दायरे से बाहर होने वालों में मुसलिम, दलित और अनुसूचित जाति वर्ग के लोगों की संख्या काफी ज्यादा रही। पिछले एक दशक में भारत में समाज के सबसे गरीब तबके की स्थिति में सुधार आया है। खास बात यह है कि भारत में भी गरीबों के उत्थान में सबसे तेज रफ्तार झारखंड की रही है। हाल में एक अमेरिकी शोध संस्था– ब्रूकिंग्स की ओर से भारत में गरीबी को लेकर जारी आंकड़े सरकार को सुकून देने वाले थे। रिपोर्ट में दावा किया गया था कि पिछले कुछ साल में भारत में गरीबों की संख्या बेहद तेजी से घटी है। सबसे अच्छी बात यह है कि भारत के ऊपर से सबसे ज्यादा गरीब देश होने का ठप्पा भी खत्म हो गया है। देश में हर मिनट चलावैला लोग गरीबी रेखा के ऊपर आ रहे हैं। यह दुनिया में गरीबी घटने की सबसे तेज दर है। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश में 2022 तक तीन फीसद से कम लोग ही गरीबी रेखा के नीचे होंगे। वहीं 2030 तक बेहद गरीबी में जीने वाले लोगों की संख्या

देश में नहीं के बराबर रहेगी। लेकिन विश्व बैंक इससे अलग सोचता है। उसका मानना है कि अभी भारत में दुनिया की एक तिहाई आबादी गरीबी रहती है। इसमें से 32.7 फीसद आबादी ऐसी है जो सवा डॉलर (सौ रुपए से भी कम) से कम में गुजारा कर रही है। जबकि 68.7 फीसद आबादी ऐसी है, जिसे दो डॉलर (डेढ़ सौ रुपए लगभग) रोजाना से कम में गुजारा करना पड़ रहा है। लेकिन वर्तमान में भारत में गरीबी के मापदंड ही सवालों के घेरे में हैं। हमारे यहां गरीबी की एक नहीं, कई परिभाषाएं हैं। तेंदुलकर समिति के मानक के अनुसार ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में सत्ताईस रुपए और शहरी क्षेत्रों में तैंतीस रुपए प्रतिदिन खर्च करने वालों को गरीबी रेखा से ऊपर रखा गया और इस मानक के

कार्यक्रम की रिपोर्ट से खुश हो सकते हैं कि भारत को गरीबी कम करने की दिशा में बड़ी कामयाबी मिली है लेकिन हम इस सच्चाई से भी इनकार नहीं कर सकते कि अब भी दुनिया के सबसे ज्यादा गरीब भारत में रहते हैं। अब भी छत्तीस करोड़ से ज्यादा लोग किसी न किसी रूप में गरीबी झेल रहे हैं। भारत में 1990 से 2017 के बीच सकल राष्ट्रीय प्रति व्यक्ति आय में 266.6 फीसद का इजाफा हुआ है। क्रय क्षमता के आधार पर भारत की प्रति व्यक्ति सकल राष्ट्रीय आय करीब 4.55 लाख रुपए पहुंच गई है जो पिछले साल से 23,470 रुपए अधिक है। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि भारत के चार राज्यों– बिहार, झारखंड, उत्तर प्रदेश और मध्यप्रदेश में गरीबों की संख्या सर्वाधिक है। गौर करने वाली

राज्य में गरीबी की दर सबसे कम है।

समाज की संगत में

समाज की संगत में बच्चे के विकास के लिए माता-पिता की भूमिका अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। बच्चे के शारीरिक, भावनात्मक, सामाजिक और शैक्षणिक विकास के लिए माता-पिता को बच्चे के विकास के चरणों को समझना और बच्चे के विकास के लिए सही माता-पिता की भूमिका को समझना आवश्यक है।

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कार्यक्रम की रिपोर्ट से खुश हो सकते हैं कि भारत को गरीबी कम करने की दिशा में बड़ी कामयाबी मिली है लेकिन हम इस सच्चाई से भी इनकार नहीं कर सकते कि अब भी दुनिया के सबसे ज्यादा गरीब भारत में रहते हैं। अब भी छत्तीस करोड़ से ज्यादा लोग किसी न किसी रूप में गरीबी झेल रहे हैं। भारत में 1990 से 2017 के बीच सकल राष्ट्रीय प्रति व्यक्ति आय में 266.6 फीसद का इजाफा हुआ है। क्रय क्षमता के आधार पर भारत की प्रति व्यक्ति सकल राष्ट्रीय आय करीब 4.55 लाख रुपए पहुंच गई है जो पिछले साल से 23,470 रुपए अधिक है। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि भारत के चार राज्यों– बिहार, झारखंड, उत्तर प्रदेश और मध्यप्रदेश में गरीबों की संख्या सर्वाधिक है। गौर करने वाली

राज्य में गरीबी की दर सबसे कम है।

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बात यह है कि इन चारों राज्यों में पूरे भारत के आधे से ज्यादा गरीब रहते हैं जो करीब बीस करोड़ की आबादी है। स्पष्ट है, गरीबी न केवल भारत, बल्कि दुनिया के अन्य विकासशील व पिछड़े देशों के लिए भी अभिशाप बनी हुई है। इसीलिए अभी भी अपेक्षाकृत गरीबों की बेहतरी के लिए काफी कुछ किए जाने की जरूरत है।

देश में गरीबी की दर घटने को लेकर लोगों की यह धारणा कुछ हद तक सही हो सकती है कि केंद्र सरकार द्वारा चलाई जा रही योजनाओं का इसमें योगदान है। लेकिन इन योजनाओं से कितनी और किस तरह गरीबी दर में कमी आ रही है, यह दावा विवादों को ही जन्म दे रहा है। ऐसी योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन और इनमें भ्रष्टाचार को सवाल उठते रहे हैं। एक तरफ तो विश्व की सबसे तेज बढ़ती अर्थव्यवस्था होने की आत्ममुग्धता तो दूसरी तरफ विश्व के एक तिहाई गरीबों को अपने दामन में समेटे रहने का कलंक।

भारत की यह विरोधाभासी छवि वाकई सोचने को बाध्य कर देती है। बुलेट ट्रेन का सपना संजोते देश ने दूसरे देशों के उपग्रह अंतरिक्ष में छोड़ने की क्षमता तो अर्जित कर ली, पर वह गरीबी के अभिशाप से मुक्त नहीं हो सका। देश में गरीबी मिटाने पर जितना धन खर्च हुआ है वह कम नहीं है। केंद्र सरकार के हर बजट का बड़ा भाग आर्थिक व सामाजिक द