

Needed: A 370 type job on the economy



MARGINAL UTILITY

TCA SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

a long line of such initiatives.

The pattern was set by Jawaharlal Nehru. He was, in every way, a fantastic man who, even though his government didn't have enough money to think big, always thought bigger than big and deeper than deep. But, alas, he completely messed up India's economy by insisting on an autarkic, capital-intensive investment model.

His daughter Indira Gandhi was exactly the same. She was a brilliant political leader and for a brief while made us all very proud. But like her daddy, she messed up the economy with her emphasis on public ownership of industrial and financial resources. If Nehru had created the problem of wrong allocation of resources, Indira Gandhi worsened it.

P V Narasimha Rao tried to fix the allocation problem but only half-heartedly. He therefore fell between two stools and was not re-elected for a second term.

Then there was Manmohan Singh who also served two terms. But he failed to fix the Nehru-Indira allocation problem in which an increasing proportion of national resources always gets misallocated.

In 2014 along came Narendra Modi. Everyone thought he would direct resources where they would be used most efficiently. But he carried on with the Nehru-Indira policies and has disappointed everyone. He has, however, avoided the Narasimha Rao trap. He was handsomely re-elected in 2019.

The real structural problem

So in economic terms, India has remained completely unchanged since 1957. It therefore continues to waste national savings, which have always been inadequate.

Economists know this and love to talk about economic structures. However, each economist has his own interpretation of the term and there is no consensus on what constitutes a structural problem.

Being economists, they also deliberately miss the point that the real structural problem is not economic but political. This is because both the Constitution and the electoral system emphasise equity over efficiency.

This has resulted in every 10-year period of good growth being followed by a decade-and-a-half of wasting the fruits of that growth on distribution. This, if you ask me, is the real structural problem, not some intellectually attractive but practically useless economic hypothesis. Our political system acts as a major drag on the economy.

We are well and truly stuck. Or, to use Gunnar Myrdal's famous 1967 description, India is a soft state. Later, Lee Kuan Yew said the same thing about India.

What Modi must do

So what can Mr Modi do within these constitutional and political constraints? Indeed, can he do anything at all?

The technical solutions provided by economics are well known. But as all prime ministers have known, they are the least of their problems because the real opposition is political, and the most difficult ones of these are posed by members of the ruling party.

Nehru faced it and had to force the pace because his party was snapping at his heels. Indira Gandhi too was under attack by her party colleagues and changed the DOS of the Indian economy.

The same thing happened to Narasimha Rao and to Manmohan Singh. Both would have liked to make a clean break from the Nehru-Indira model but it was the Congress party that prevented it. It seems likely that Mr Modi faces a similar problem — if not from the BJP, certainly from the RSS.

After all, as we all know, it is always more difficult to convince your friends when they have old-fashioned views. What I would suggest therefore is an economic *chintan shivir* where a genuine attempt is made by the government to educate its supporters. This *shivir* should pass a resolution that reverses the Congress party's Avadi resolution of 1955. It must hand the baton back to the private sector.

Or, if I may, Mr Modi must pull off the economic equivalent of his Article 370 coup. No one thought it was possible. But Mr Modi showed that it was.

This is what he must now do with the economy — move the government out of the way in the same spirit as he moved Article 370 out of Kashmir's way.

Making the most of what you have

There is much to learn from Bharat Ratna Pranab Mukherjee



PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

It was hot, that evening of May 22, 2004, a day before the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was to be sworn in. This was the first major tryst of the Congress party with coalition politics at Delhi. As television channels were going wild speculating about who was going to get what portfolio, Pranab Mukherjee was sitting quietly in his small study in his Talkatora Road residence, going through various reports on the functioning of the Union home ministry; a few party seniors had confidently told him that he would be India's Union home minister in a few

hours. Kashmir had seen a terror attack and some news channels — confident that they were interviewing the next home minister — even aired some comments from Mukherjee on the attack.

Late in the evening, as those channels flashed the portfolios of the new ministers in Manmohan Singh's council, against Mukherjee's name the legend said: Defence Minister. There was an air of disbelief at Talkatora Road. His close aides, under the mistaken impression that the Ministry of Defence was a portfolio a notch lower than the Ministry of Home, were both shocked and indignant. But what did the man himself do? He took 10 to 15 seconds to digest the new situation. Went to the toilet. Came back and ordered his assistant: "Connect me to the defence secretary."

Pranab Mukherjee, then the most experienced minister in the UPA, knew that slippery patches abound in the corridors of power — and you must take what you get, there is no time to ponder over unfulfilled possibilities.

That trait has paid off. He might have failed to become the Prime Minister of India. But he did become the President. And now he is a Bharat Ratna.

What would Pranab Mukherjee have told the Congress party to do on Article 370? It's

an easy question to answer. He has nothing to do with his visit to the Nagpur headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). He would have told the Congress to quit shilly-shallying and support the government in the larger national cause. Much in the way he dealt with a group of Trinamool Congress MPs that came to meet him in 2009.

The UPA government was conducting massive campaigns against Left Wing Extremists (LWE) in the Junglemahal areas of Bengal. Obviously this was hurting the Trinamool Congress government that was supporting the UPA at the time. Mamata Banerjee sent a delegation of MPs to meet Mukherjee to persuade him to talk to P Chidambaram who was home minister, and stop these campaigns. The delegation was led by MP Kabir Suman, Bengal's answer to Bob Dylan and a vocal supporter of democratic rights.

The group made its pitch to Mukherjee. "Dada, you have to tell the home minister to put an end to this state terror. This is just unacceptable", said Suman, ill-advisedly, as he wrapped up the delegation's collective view.

Mukherjee looked up and the light glinted off his glasses. "Chharpokka" (bedbugs), he said softly. "Peeshe peeshe marbo" (we will crush them underfoot, one at a time) he

hissed and resumed his work. The delegation left and Suman never went back to meet Mukherjee again.

Of course, there is much about Mukherjee that makes him an attractive mascot for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). But this world view — that India is indivisible, there are no nationalities or self determination issues in this country and those who question the state must be crushed — is what brings Modi close to Mukherjee. Ironically, Mukherjee himself derives this from Indira Gandhi.

The man who has been bestowed the Bharat Ratna turned down all mercy petitions during his tenure as President. In 2016 he summoned the finance minister over the insurance Ordinance, which the NDA government was chasing as its first big-ticket reform move. He discussed fine print of the Land Acquisition Bill with the government a few months later. When the government sent the contentious enemy property Ordinance (as the bill on the issue was stuck in a parliamentary committee) Mukherjee summoned his team of legal experts and asked the government for a clarification. It was all done with complete cordiality. Home Minister Rajnath Singh visited him almost every week and sat with him virtually the entire day when he lost his wife.

Mukherjee is not getting the Bharat Ratna because he sold out. He's getting it because he made the most of the opportunities he got, without compromising his convictions. There's a lesson in that, somewhere.

LUNCH WITH BS ► CHANNA DASWATTE | ARCHITECT

Averting urban apocalypse

Daswatte tells Rahul Jacob that it is time to radically rethink zoning laws and heighten protection for water bodies to save our cities

Leading a large group through the late Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa's country home in Lunuganga, Channa Daswatte, who worked closely with Bawa, makes references to Bawa's affection for Indian design. He draws our attention to a wall hanging by Riten Mazumdar that looks like a Raza painting in its dramatic black and white and red design. Nearby are cushion covers that were designed for Bawa's home by the wife of the late Charles Correa, Monika Correa. The exhibition, part of a celebration of the centennial of Bawa's birth that started last month (www.bawa100.com) threw a pointillist's spotlight on Bawa's furniture and lamps, a little known aspect of Bawa's talent for creating a tropical modernism in private and public architecture that ranges from some of the most elegant hotels in Asia to Sri Lanka's parliament to a Buddhist temple that seems like a Japanese scroll on a lake in Colombo.

Soon we are crowded around what looks as if it were a sleek leather chair imported from Italy. It is in fact, Bawa's take on the Roorkee chair, used in the British Raj. There is another Mazumdar masterpiece on Bawa's bed, which has the word 'Ram' written repeatedly in Devanagari script as if it were a geometric pattern. In Fabindia were to recreate it, it would be a runaway best-seller.

When I meet Daswatte a few days later at a client's home that he designed in Bengaluru, it is almost as if we have been transported by a machine that freezes time and space. In a modern bungalow that seems a country estate even in Hebbal, the throttled bottleneck on the way to Bengaluru airport, Daswatte picks up where he left off. The tiles on the terraces of the home are from Athangudi in Tamil Nadu, made by the master craftsmen whose work adorns many a Chettinad mansion. But the tiles' design, which marries Italy with southern India, is by the Sri Lankan artist Laki Senanayake. Daswatte suggested these to the owner of the house, Bimal Desai, one of the country's largest beedi producers now better known as a leading proponent of mini urban forests in Bengaluru and public interest petitioner to protect the city's Cubbon Park. "We have taken something traditional like the Athangudi tile and made it contemporary," says Daswatte. I sit under a large line drawing by Senanayake that is so vivid that I feel as if I should lean forward to avoid brushing against the tree's branches, but the subject that hangs

over our conversation is the savaging of sub-continental cities by real estate moguls and brutalist public works department babus who show little respect for the local climate or the need for the conservation of water bodies and trees.

Daswatte's work as a founder of the architectural firm MICD Associates brings him to India often as he completes work for the Taj group in Sikkim, a restoration project in Odisha, but the return to the Desais' home makes him recall that he travelled as a young architect to the city with Bawa 25 years ago to look at the restoration of a fort at the request of Bimal Poddar. "What a beautiful city it was," he exclaims, as he describes driving down roads lined with tamarind and mango trees. Today, the structure has literally been cut in half to make way for a highway.

Daswatte is a pragmatist who quickly points out that the city is still 'very green' and 'very civilised.' Unprompted, he moves the discussion instead to real estate development without regard to the need to preserve wetlands — the subject of an exhibition in Bengaluru earlier this month — that lead to recurrent floods as extreme weather events come bunched together in ever shorter cycles. In Colombo, he says, it took three floods before the government addressed the issue head-on. At a parliamentary inquiry a few years ago, Daswatte was grilled, not least because some committee rooms had been flooded and "chairs were floating in two-and-a-half feet of water". Daswatte replied that the plans for Sri Lanka's parliament, which Bawa designed, had recommended the dredging of land to allow for water to be diverted during monsoonal downpours. In an echo of Krupa Ge's harrowing book on the Chennai floods, *Rivers Remember*, he says that "water doesn't recognise boundaries". It is also time for a fundamental rethink on zoning: "The zoning laws lead to a huge sprawl of the city."

Daswatte recounts how, even in suburban and rural Sri Lanka, the profusion of individual tubewells has led to water stress. This is a recurrent theme in India, where a Mint feature last Saturday put Bengaluru first on the list of cities likely to run out of groundwater, perhaps as early as next year. A Sri Lankan minister has called for rural housing to be more densely clustered to make delivering and conserving water and constructing sewage facilities easier. Daswatte exclaims in horror at reports of

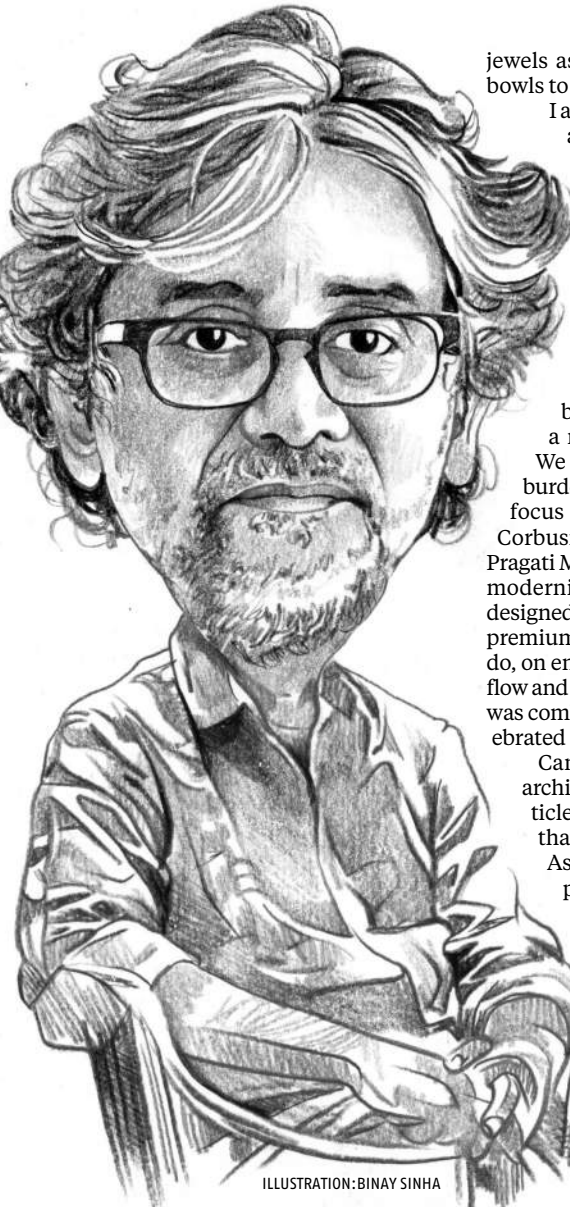


ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

"water trains" transporting water from villages to Chennai.

We are interrupted from this vision of urban collapse by lunch. Veena Desai comes out with a plate of delicate Gujarati kacchoris in her hand. Before us is a south Indian vegetable kurma, green beans and a Mangalorean fish curry in coconut milk sent over from her mother's home. The family are eating inside to leave us to the interview but we are joined by the family's adopted stray dogs, whose molten, pedigreed eyes glow like

jewels as the food moves from the serving bowls to our plates.

I ask him why so little public and private architecture in India's cities is rooted in the tropics, by contrast to many Sri Lankan hotels and homes. It is a question he was asked a fortnight earlier at an Architectural Digest talk in New Delhi. With an impish grin, Daswatte reports that he "blamed it on Nehru, which is fashionable to do these days". Then he turns serious and observes that India's modernism was a conscious break with the colonial past. "We had a more gentle path to independence. We had the privilege of not having the burden of over-population." Instead of a focus on public spaces such as Le Corbusier's Chandigarh or New Delhi's Pragati Maidan, he observes that in Sri Lanka, modernism came via homes, iconically designed by Minnette de Silva. She placed a premium, as Bawa and his successors would do, on ensuring that buildings had ample airflow and did not require air-conditioning. This was combined with a spare aesthetic that celebrated local craft.

Can Bawa be described as Asia's best architect? Daswatte reframes my crude listicle-styled question and makes the case that Bawa, who died in 2003, could be Asia's most influential. Avoiding comparisons of Bawa vs Correa (the two were close friends) or Bawa vs the Japanese, he makes the point that everyone from the often insular Japanese to architects in Southeast Asia and south India lay claim to Bawa. Daswatte recounts that when he was asked to talk about Bawa in Tokyo some years ago, he called someone he knew in the city because he was sure the event would be poorly attended. The hall was packed.

On my way out, Desai shows me his densely packed Japanese tree-planting technique that he is recreating near one of the city's railway stations. A taxi then takes me to a shopping district at the centre of the city. The brutalist metro station looks like a factory grafted onto a carpark and flipped over. Water-tankers prowl the streets like rogue elephants, with their trunkS stuck on the back. The posh optician's toilet I duck into ran out of water hours earlier. It is a reminder that urban apocalypse in India is nearer than we think.

Scaling new heights, literally!



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

The first time I met Monika, the 15-year-old from Hutup, a village in Jharkhand, she was defying societal norms by playing and coaching soccer and paying her way through school. She had told me she wanted to design clothes for small town girls like herself — fashion that would be acceptable in their conservative society and yet be stylish enough to enable them to feel confident when confronting city girls. Some time ago, when a Muslim girl in her team wasn't allowed to play by her family because it meant wearing shorts, Monika's innate fashion sense came to the rescue. She asked her to wear leggings

under her shorts. Her ideas were fresh and her confidence inspiring. I remember thinking this feisty teen from a tiny, unheard of village would someday scale great heights. I didn't realise how literally this would come true.

Last month, Monika, now in class 12 and still a soccer player and coach, was selected to be part of an all-female scientific wilderness expedition, Girls on Ice Cascades, in Washington, USA. Sponsored by BookASmile Foundation and mentored by the good folk of Yuwa, the award-winning NGO from Jharkhand, which uses football to empower girls to overcome violence and choose their own futures, Monika spent two weeks on Mount Baker, an active volcano, learning about glacial ecology and glacier travel skills.

"In my village, girls hardly ever came out and played, let alone follow their dreams," Monika told me after she returned from the expedition. "I wanted to set an example for young girls, especially the ones in Little Sunrise, the team I coach." Initially, it wasn't easy. Monika had neither walked on snow before nor was she used to wearing heavy trekking boots. "Moreover, the other girls in my team were much better dressed while all I had were my soccer jerseys," she

recounted. Once again, Monika realised that her childhood dream of using fashion as a confidence-building tool for girls like her had a lot of scope. "But since the beginning, everyone there was so nice to me that I soon felt at ease with them."

For Monika, the expedition was a transformational experience. "My self-confidence received a huge boost when I completed the expedition," she says. Her other teammates had much more experience of trekking on snowy terrain. "They were very fit too," she said, adding with satisfaction, "but I was as fit as them." After spending two weeks with her teammates, all from different states in the US, Monika found that as girls, they too faced all manner of challenges. "Breaking stereotypes, rising above gender biases and living one's dreams is difficult for girls no matter where they live — if they can do it, so can we," she told me. "Now that I'm back in Hutup, these are the stories I tell to the players I coach."

Monika still wants to be a soccer coach and fashion designer for rural girls. But now she also wants to inspire other girls in her village to spread their wings and explore the world. "I want to tell them my story," she said. "Maybe it will give them hope that any dream is achievable for a girl from Jharkhand."

A historical wrong



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

My grandparents never discussed matters political at home though they must have grappled with contrarian views seguing between the personal and the professional. When he retired in 1939 as an honorary officer from the British Indian Army — a rare distinction at the time for Indian soldiers — my paternal grandfather sailed to London to receive his Order of British India and the title of Sardar Bahadur accompanied by a pension payable over three generations. That annuity may have dwindled to a minuscule value in foreign exchange but still commands respect in the clan. Around the same time my maternal grandfather, who was serving

in the Ganga Risalla, a royal camel corps, was commandeered for action in the Second World War, and held as a PoW in Italy. Photographs from the period show him with a full beard over an already receding hairline, tall and strapping in the manner of a native warrior.

Though they retired from service three decades apart, both returned to their ancestral homes, fiercely loyal to the idea of home and country. I kick myself now for not having the wisdom then to ask how they reconciled to the idea of serving the imperial army while seeking liberation from it. How was one form of loyalty replaceable with another? With the blood of fierce combatants in their veins, how could they serve the very master from whom they demanded discharge? Both led by example, the one stoic and hardy, the other via discipline channelled through horse riding, *shikar* and sartorial preferences. Our generation was taught to use gun — I chickened out — or cutlery with equal felicity.

How did they view Independence, the collapse of the princely order and the rise of a self-serving political class? How did their view of nationhood align with its reality? One was too austere — and fierce — to ever let his views be known. The other too gentle and mentoring to bring a negative discourse to the table. Were they

happy with the way their children's lives shaped? Or disappointed by the shallow ambitions of their grandchildren?

My own father, I would like to believe, reflected their aspirations for the forthcoming generation. My father and I did match our wits over matters political, often from opposite ends of the pole. I thought him liberal but inflexible; he considered me unorthodox but historically illiberal. "Same-same," my children said. "Stop fighting." We never did.

He too served the army and was posted in J&K, but not in the valley. I toured Srinagar with him (also Ladakh and Jammu). He viewed Kashmir as a betrayal, a sign of India's weakness. The cost of lives in Kashmir agonised him. Let it be known, civilian lives mattered, but soldiers' lives mattered more to him. So, what would he have made of the abrogation of Article 370 by sleight of hand? Would he have commended the move? Or been dismayed by what felt like a political rather than a statesmanlike maneuver? My inability to arrive at a conclusion indicates that though I knew him well, perhaps, after all, I did not know him well enough. A historical wrong may have been righted by a party flexing its muscle power, but the way it was undertaken would, I believe, have saddened my father as much as his forebears.

Fixing the demand slump

In the midst of a demand slump, the like of which the economy has not seen for some time, there will be many experts offering reasons and solutions. This is a modest contribution to the debate. Indian consumers are up to their neck in debt (refer "Borrowed money" in *Ruminations*, May 25). EMIs (equated monthly instalments on loans) have been taking an ever-larger share of take-home pay because a steadily larger share of consumption has been fuelled by borrowed money. Making matters worse, many people are paying EMIs on loans taken for lakhs of houses or flats lying incomplete for years.

Second, consider the effects of lower inflation. Pay hikes get smaller, so the easing of the EMI burden that used to happen over time is now absent. Also, because interest rates too have come down, people are pushed to save more for their senior years, and spend less now. Third is the negative wealth effect. Real-estate prices have dropped by 25 per cent and more. Stock market indices too are lower than they were a year ago, and many mutual funds have given poor if not negative returns. When people feel poorer, they spend less.

Fourth, the employment structure has changed because there are fewer women in the workforce. Whatever the mix of reasons (women studying for longer, gentrification, lack of safety during the commute, and a shortage of work available), there are now fewer working adults in the typical family. This must affect family incomes. Fifth is the possible impact of people living longer. The population in the 60+ age group is growing at about twice the overall population growth rate (more than 35 per cent in a decade). This must raise health costs for families as they take care of the elderly. Consider the sharp increase (154 per cent over four years to 2017-18) in household debt for reasons other than housing, vehicles, consumer durables, and education. Some of this might be for marriages and other social occasions, but some would certainly be to cover medical bills.

Sixth is the point that Rathin Roy made on this page yesterday, that much of the demand for goods and services is confined to a thin upper crust. Not as thin as he says, because the consuming cohort is 30-35 per cent of the total population. As an indicator, the 2011 Census showed that 21 per cent of the 246 million households owned a powered two-wheeler. That percentage would be appreciably higher today, as about 6 per cent of households — 17 million in 2017-18 — have been buying two-wheelers every year. Only some of that would be replacement demand. Still, Dr Roy is right that the spending cohort is not growing fast enough. One reason would be that the growth of labour-intensive manufacturing (which has the capacity to deliver a living wage rather than just a minimum wage) has not been able to create a larger spending category at the lower-middle class level. The gig economy, typically with lower productivity and therefore incomes, is no substitute.

Finally, there is the transition in agriculture. Farmers now produce more than domestic markets can absorb. In the absence of exports as a sufficiently large spillover outlet, the changing domestic demand-supply balance has created price pressures that limit farm incomes despite higher production (which comes with higher costs and more variable prices, and therefore greater uncertainty). Again, if labour-intensive manufacturing had succeeded, and pulled people into factories from farms, there would have been fewer farm mouths to feed.

It boils down to the changes needed to facilitate wage-intensive manufacturing (including labour law reform, a competitively-priced rupee, efficient infrastructure, supply-chain development, etc). The government has an agenda on some of this, but — to take one example — it is not enough to reduce multiple labour laws into four codes. Mere compilation/number reduction without a change in the content of the codes will make no difference. Under pressure to revive the economy, the government might look for quick fixes. That's understandable, but no one should labour under any illusions. Without structural change, sustainable economic growth will continue to trend downward.

Pakistan gets a Modi yorker

Until now, it was Pakistan that always set the pace on Kashmir. Modi has turned the tables by scrapping Article 370 and Pakistan is struggling for a response

At the risk of drawing the charge of Schadenfreude, let me note some delight at the amount of time, attention and emotion I saw the Pakistani National Assembly spend over intricacies of the Indian Constitution last week.

This meltdown over the Indian decisions on Articles 370 and 35-A were striking for a bunch of reasons, and cheap partisan thrill isn't one of them. It was, first of all, the incredible irony for a nation, where a ruler is often known by the constitution he junks or writes, showing such concern for India's.

The high point for me, of course, was Imran Khan himself accusing India of violating the Simla Agreement. I track Pakistan politics like it was India's "internal affair" and have no recollection of a ruler there swearing by what they often describe in their political rhetoric as an outdated and irrelevant piece of paper.

Even better, it came within days of the fast-bowling genius — never mind the bottle cap — himself saying just days earlier, from the White House that India and Pakistan had failed to resolve Kashmir bilaterally for 70 years, so the "most powerful man", you Mr Trump, should mediate.

Now, the three solemn bilateral agreements between the two countries over 31 years — Simla (1972) to Lahore (1999) and Islamabad (2004) — add up to just a handful of pages. And, diplomatic verbiage and platitudes apart, all three rest on one central pillar: Settling all issues, including Kashmir, bilaterally. Other Pakistani leaders have also freely broken this commitment. But, since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Simla Agreement, none of the 12 Pakistani chief executives — elected, re-elected or military — has explicitly junked the Simla Agreement. That pretence is maintained.

The Lahore and Islamabad declarations essentially reaffirm the bilateral commitment of Simla. By stating publicly to the world that both countries could not resolve Kashmir bilaterally and that Mr Trump should take over, Imran became the first Pakistani leader to formally disown the three earlier agreements. Having torn up the Simla Agreement and thrown its shreds in the reflecting pool, he is now charging India with violating it. It may sound like I am turning the knife, or a cheap shot, but this is the exact definition of *nau sau choohe kha kar billi hajj ko chali* (the cat goes for a holy pilgrimage after eating 900 rats).

The substantive point here is, the fundamental strategic and political equation on Kashmir has now fully reversed. Since 1947, it is Pakistan that set

the pace. It invariably made the first move. With sending the pillaging and raping raiders in 1947 to the regulars in mufti as (Op Gibraltar), and then tanks into Kashmir (Op Grand Slam) in August-September 1965. Pakistan made all the first moves on Kashmir until the Simla Agreement 1972.

Seventeen years of peace followed, but Pakistan was preparing, and not for permanent peace. It was developing its nuclear deterrent, and then, fortuitously, helping the US-led coalition win the Cold War against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Nukes were ready by 1989, coinciding with the Soviet defeat. One jihad won, to the west, a nuclear-armed Pakistani establishment was now ready to launch another to its east.

And then Kargil, the IC-814 hijack, attack on the Indian Parliament, 26/11 in Mumbai, Pathankot, Pulwama and so on, Pakistan made every single move first and India was left searching for a response. We will debate the prudence of India's latest turn at another point. But we must acknowledge that for 70 years India had been the status quo power, despite its size and muscle, whereas Pakistan worked steadfastly to alter it. Last week, India changed that.

Now Pakistan is struggling for a response. Because its strategic establishment's head isn't wired for response, it is already over-loaded with proactive mischief. A week after Imran dished in Washington the Simla, Lahore and Islamabad Agreements, Narendra Modi has rewritten the Indian playbook by not protesting, but, in a dramatic (devious it would seem if you are Pakistani) way, agreeing with him. If those agreements made Pakistan and the global community believe that Kashmir's final status was still open to debate and negotiation, that misconception is now buried. So are the agreements, Imran was right.

Pakistan has to now find a new set of ideas beyond its standard operating procedures (SOPs): Provoke, deny, offer to help, negotiate, let things calm. Repeat... In the past India sought the big power help to press Pakistan to mend its ways. Now, Pakistan is doing so.

And realising its limitations and diminished stature. It is such a basket-case now, it is bartering its economic sovereignty for \$6 billion from the IMF. For simplicity of understanding, this is less than the amount ArcelorMittal is paying to buy the bankrupt Essar Steel. Its politics, society, institutions are all broken. Balochistan it can handle en passant. But Pashtuns' uprising is mainstream,



NATIONAL INTEREST
SHEKHAR GUPTA

mass-based, and peaceful.

The one leverage it has with the world, becoming Afghanistan's local guardian and helping Mr Trump flee without seeming to do so, comes with a big price. If Pakistan has to deliver on Afghanistan, it cannot be distracted in Kashmir. It cannot fight a two-front battle. Not with the Financial Action Task Force deadline for meeting its commitments against terror just weeks away. This isn't what he was mentally prepared for. It is also beyond his capacity. We should qualify this, however, by adding that he isn't the one taking any calls here. It is the powers that be in GHQ. Do they want action on both fronts?

Former Pakistani diplomat Husain Haqqani used a line in an article for ThePrint that I wish I had conjured up. He said that for Pakistani strategy was always to "internationalise" the Kashmir issue and India fought to keep it bilateral. But the Modi government has now reduced Kashmir to an internal affair in both India and Pakistan.

In India, it is being debated and contested between the Modi majority and the vocal political and intellectual minority which sees the action as undemocratic. In Pakistan, it is now about, how did this happen, how did the "No 1" spy agency in the world fail to get a whiff, did someone sell out, what the hell to do now? That exasperation echoed in Imran's outburst in his National Assembly, when he asked, so what do you want me to do? Attack India?

It isn't my argument that everything is perfect in India, or with the latest moves on Kashmir. Just that it isn't relevant to where Pakistan finds itself today. The more it pretends to mourn Article 370 (which it called illegitimate in the past), the more it extols the jailed mainstream Kashmiri leaders (whom it called stooges) and the more it screams about civil liberties in Indian Kashmir, the more ridiculous it sounds.

Think about it. Protesting the arrest of some separatist usual suspects and the detention of some political leaders in Kashmir when you have thrown two former prime ministers (Nawaz Sharif and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi) and one former president (Asif Zardari) in jail and banished another (Musharraf) into exile. Nawaz's daughter and the main opposition leader Maryam is now in jail, too, as is Rana Sanaullah, former deputy chief minister of Punjab, three other MPs from Nawaz's party, two Pashtun MPs, among others. None of these (apart from Nawaz) is convicted. Most haven't even been put on trial. Most have been locked up for months, and in real jails.

This isn't working for Pakistan. The status quo has shifted. Either Pakistan accepts it, or launches into something reckless. Or, pray for things really going out of control in the Valley once restrictions are lifted, leading to an almighty popular insurrection where Indian forces lose their nerve. That is now Pakistan's only hope.

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Chill wind in the Valley



AL FRESCO
SUNIL SETHI

The irony is that till the precipitate evacuation of pilgrims and tourists that prefaced the "integration" of Jammu & Kashmir by parliamentary vote, the Valley was having its best summer season since the killing of terrorist-turned-martyr Burhan Wani in July 2016.

The hotels and houseboats of Srinagar were packed, hardly a spare room available in Gulmarg and Pahalgam, and the bazaars buzzed with shoppers and holiday-makers. Friends and colleagues returning from vacation reported that (despite the paramilitary presence) a mood of relative calm prevailed. No major protests or encounters took place and travel to the

Mughal gardens and monuments in provincial districts of Anantnag and Baramulla was unhindered.

Perhaps it was this lull, a fleeting illusion of normalcy, that prompted Home Minister Amit Shah to execute his elaborate plan of "unifying" Kashmir with India — part of a long-held BJP promise to abolish its special status — with electrifying stealth and speed. Almost overnight the Valley went dead, an eerie chill wind funnelling the might of the Indian state with massive troop reinforcements.

It may well be that Article 370 serves no particular purpose in ensuring the security or progress of the Valley's Muslim majority; but revoking it by smothering their voices — and arresting their leaders — is another turn of Narendra Modi's Hindutva juggernaut moving inexorably forward. The withdrawal of special status for J&K has found both popular and political support among opposition parties — dividing the Congress in its ranks — because many regard it as an unfair privilege. (Swathes of voters who handed the BJP its spectacular victory in May tend to regard many Valley-dwellers as spoilt, self-serving and unpatriotic.)

While dumbing down the J&K legislature from statehood to union territory — and unshakably putting it under New Delhi's thumb for the foreseeable future — Mr Shah in the Rajya Sabha thundered: "[Kashmir] was heaven on earth and will remain so... Give us five years and we will make Jammu & Kashmir the most developed state in the country."

Mr Shah's reference to Kashmir as paradise (albeit a bleeding, violent one) isn't new. Further fishing in troubled waters he evoked a clichéd vision of *akhond* Kashmir: "When I talk of J&K, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Aksai Chin are included in it. Don't you consider PoK a part of J&K... I will give my life for it... We are ready to give our lives..."

Therein lies the rub: Amit Shah's nationalist rhetoric supersedes his knowledge of topographic ground reality. Anyone who has been to Muzaffarabad (as this columnist has) will testify how dull, dusty, and featureless the hilly area on the banks of the Jhelum is. Its Mirpuri inhabitants don't speak Kashmiri but a dialect of Punjabi, akin to Dogri and other hill dialects of the Jammu region. Nor do they bear any resemblance to the people of

the Valley being, as one analyst writes, "culturally and linguistically... totally different from Kashmiris. To that extent the term PoK is also a misnomer and should be appropriately called PoJ&K."

The contrast between PoK and the Valley is so glaring that it is patently obvious why no one really wants PoK (except possibly Amit Shah) and everyone down the ages has coveted the fabled vale of alpine meadows, saffron fields, lake-studded peaks, and picturesque *shikaras* and houseboats. Certainly Nehru's sentimental attachment to the land of his forebears led to expedient political compromise as did "Sher-e-Kashmir" Sheikh Abdullah's grasp in founding a regional dynasty.

The ban on outsiders buying property is an old restriction and, in fact, led to the advent of houseboats as popular holiday homes for colonial administrators and outsiders. (Similar restraints exist in many northeastern states and also in parts of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.)

Despite the prime minister's assurances of investors' summits and a host of opportunities for the disaffected Kashmiri youth, development in the Valley has been skewed since the rise of insurgency in the late 1980s. While it is true

that J&K is ahead on social indicators as compared to backward parts of the country (thanks to generous infusions of Central subsidy) there are few jobs outside the government sector, no industry to speak of other than tourism, fruit-growing and handicrafts, and zero investment in skill development or business promotion.

Corruption has grown manifold during decades of militancy and on-and-off civil administrations have been paralysed by the overwhelming dominance of armed forces. Most small businesses that flourish during the summer's tourist season wait for a surge of visitors in late August-September, when the Valley's gigantic *chinars* catch fire in a blaze of breathtaking autumn colours.

An enthusiastic young entrepreneur I know who has converted his charming family house and garden on the shores of Nigeen Lake into a successful small hotel was telling guests in June that he was forced to turn down bookings as he was full up till October.

But a sudden blast of chill wind from New Delhi has ruined his chances of profit and struggle in holding his family legacy together. There are many such who face an uncertain future with frustration and hopelessness.

was, and remains, king at CCDs. More exotic introductions followed over the years... Devil's Own Cocoa Cream, Tender Coconut Lemonade, Tropical Iceberg, Cool Blue... plus a whole range of breads, munchies, meals and desserts that ranged from Frittata Omelettes to Spicy Sriracha Chicken to Peri Peri Ciabatta to Wok Tossed Oriental to Rice Sizzle Dazzle Brownie. CCD evolved as it reached more diverse audiences in more diverse geographies, offering a new experience not just in beverages but also more exotic and inviting food choices that were both aspirational and a tad more expensive, hence premium.

Most importantly, CCD pioneered the "hang-out" generation in India over the past two decades. It introduced free wi-fi (initially for limited time) but then kind of made it as a standard offering. I personally attended at least two meetings with VG Siddhartha in 2011/12 on creating wi-fi hotspots at all CCDs. Siddhartha was fully cognizant of the value of the wi-fi freebie to young millennials. We discussed various advertiser funded models to make the wi-fi free to all CCD customers, while concurrently offering third-party brands a captive younger audience. I remember

sharing my experience of *keitai* (kill time) from Japan and how the coffee shop culture had mushroomed in that country because of youngsters just sitting around and literally killing-time on their mobile phones. Siddhartha had been fascinated. I did not however need to preach to the converted.

The coming in of Starbucks did shake-up CCD somewhat. The global brand's offering was much classier, albeit costlier. But the better heeled customer almost immediately switched loyalties. While there have been claims in media that 94% of all CCDs are cash-positive on a stand-alone basis, I would take that statistic with a pinch of salt. Of late CCD has started to lose momentum. Too many stores. Sparser foot-falls. Somewhat frayed interiors. No new innovations on the menu. A brand beginning to look somewhat stagnant, weary and tired.

I don't know where CCD is headed. I do hope it survives. And prospers. It really has been one of the best Indian brands created post liberalisation. A brand that 'youngified' India and let a lot happen over coffee.

The writer is an advertising and media veteran. Email: sandeep@goyalmail.com

A lot can happen over coffee



YES, BUT...
SANDEEP GOYAL

In a tribute to VG Siddhartha, Captain Gopinath of Air Deccan wrote, "Before (Café) Coffee Day, even in the South, the middle class went to Udipi hotels to read papers over coffee and chat and sip coffee with friends. The Udipi hotels were the favourite hangout places for Kannada writers. The journalists and writers of English press went to a few select coffee houses in the cantonment area. The modern youth never visited them. Siddhartha changed all that — the entire cultural landscape — through his ubiquitous coffee shops, both in the South and the rest of India where very few drank coffee (but

spent hours over books or laptops or simply unwinding with friends".

When little-known entrepreneur Siddhartha opened his first Café Coffee Day (CCD) outlet at Brigade Road in 1996 at Bangalore — which was fast developing into the "pub capital of India" at the time — youngsters at first sneered at the idea of spending hours hanging out over a coffee but realised pretty soon that "a lot could happen over coffee". Coffee and an hour of internet surfing cost ₹100 — not cheap by the standards of those days (no wonder CCDs were initially called "internet cafes") but then nobody gave anyone dirty looks for hanging around for hours over that cup of coffee, nobody frowned when you just sat there sipping the coffee and doing your assignments and your homework in the ambient air-conditioning, nobody chided you for talking loudly or laughing or just sitting there watch the world go by. Nobody disturbed you if you were there with a girl; no one bothered if a foreigner just sat cross-legged in one corner immersed in a philosophical tome.

CCD birthed a completely new phenomenon in the India of the 90s: "my-space, my pace".

Barista followed. Then Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Costa Coffee, Georgia Coffee, Gloria Coffee, Coffee by Di Bella, Café Mocha... McCafé. And of course, Starbucks. But CCD outpaced them all. By 2008 CCD had opened 595 outlets; by 2012, the count was 1400; today in 2019 CCD has nearly 1700 cafes, around 48,000 vending machines, 532 kiosks and 403 ground coffee selling outlets. By comparison Barista has today just 220 outlets; and Starbucks 136.

CCD's biggest achievement has been to get a predominantly tea-drinking country (especially the North & West) to take to coffee with such gusto. The introduction of a menu of choice that ranged from Café Latte to Café Americano to Café Mocha to Macchiato to a Vanilla Cappuccino in hot coffees to Café Frappe to Dark Frappe to Kaapi Nirvana in cold options was quite a leap forward from the Nescafe hot coffee that used to be available in plastic cups from vending machines at airports and offices. Teas are available too, but coffee

Bookish nostalgia

EYE CULTURE

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

On the first Sunday after I moved to the National Capital Region nearly six years ago, a friend offered to take me to Old Delhi for a special treat. I did not know where I was going — I wasn't even familiar with the roads or areas in my new city. And, I was down with a severe case of nostalgia for my hometown, Kolkata. But my friend promised that the place she was taking me to that morning would be a perfect antidote. "You'll love it!" she said. We boarded a yellow line metro from Malviya Nagar to Chandni Chowk, and then took a rickshaw to Daryaganj. Our destination that morning was the weekly book market.

My first instinct was to compare this temporary market to the more permanent one on College Street in central Kolkata. As a student, I would frequent the shops selling second-hand books in the locality around Calcutta University, often dropping into the famed Coffee House for a *chicken kaviraji* or Paramount for green coconut sherbet, having purchased a coveted volume. Perhaps quite naturally, my first reaction that Sunday was one of disappointment. "That's it?" I said, standing on the footpath opposite Delhi Darwaza and casting a glance towards Netaji Subhash Marg. But my disappointment was soon belied; like every treasure of Delhi, Daryaganj revealed itself to me slowly, over the years.

A couple of years after my first visit, I began taking people to the market when they asked me to show them around my adopted hometown. Not only outsiders visiting Delhi but also natives who were either unaware of this urban treasure or had never visited it despite knowing about it. For booklovers, of course, this was a treat, but also for those planning to pick up stationary at a discount. At least two shops on Netaji Subhash Marg sell paper by the kilo. There are also notebooks to be got, as well as pencils, pens, ink, folders — all the paraphernalia with which you need to clutter your writing desk before you can call yourself a writer.

But this privilege will be denied to old timers such as me or newcomers discovering our city. *The Hindustan Times* reported on August 3 that following a July order of the Delhi High Court, the temporary shops which occupied the footpath along Netaji Subhash Marg every Sunday would

not be there anymore. "The order came in response to the Delhi traffic police submitting a report to the court suggesting that the [road]... is a very busy road which sees high traffic volumes at all times and that book sellers occupy the footpath, leaving no space for pedestrians," the report said.

Over the years, I developed a protocol of how I would show people around this place. The trip would usually begin on a winter afternoon, near the Delhi Darwaza, about which there are several urban legends. I would begin by narrating the most famous one: "If you happen to find yourself around these parts on a rainy evening, do not seek shelter under the Delhi Gate," I would tell them. "The roof leaks, and what drips on your head or shoulder will not be water — but blood." The legend was that the sons of Bahadur Shah "Zafar", the last Mughal emperor, were hanged here in 1858, after the British recaptured Delhi in the First War of Independence. I'm told the story can send a chill down your spine even on a sunny afternoon.

Once you had bought your books and stationary, it was quite natural that you would be hungry. And then, I would take you — no, not to Moti Mahal, where butter chicken was apparently invented — but to Changezi Chicken. If you were accompanied by one or more women, you could enjoy lunch in the relatively quieter mezzanine floor. Else you would be confined to the ground floor. The usual order: A quarter plate of *changezi* chicken, *khamiri roti*, and *zafrani kheer* for dessert. The legend is that the recipe apparently travelled to India with the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan. This is, of course, sheer mythopoeia — Genghis Khan did not attack Delhi; Timur did in 1398, capturing the city and unleashing a massacre.

Of course, I have a personal legend as well. On my first Sunday at Daryaganj, as I was perusing the stock of one of the booksellers, I came across a hardbound copy of Iain M Banks's *Whit* (1995). Flipping open the book I found that the half-title page had the author's autograph. "How much for this?" I asked the disinterested bookseller, my heart almost in my mouth. "Fifty rupees," he said, nonchalantly. I quickly took out a crisp note and handed it over to him. A minute later, I was excitedly showing my loot to my friend and she was smiling. "So is Daryaganj better than College Street?" she asked. In some ways, yeah, it was.

Opinion

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2019



ON J&K'S FUTURE

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi

J&K will not remain an UT forever. You will get the opportunity to elect your representatives soon. I want to tell the people of Jammu and Kashmir that your representatives will come from among you

Turning vegetarian could help fight global warming

IPCC research shows shows dietary changes could bring emissions down by 8 billion tonnes annually by 2050

IT HAS BEEN clear for sometime that the fight to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and mitigate climate-change impact, rests on a drastic rethink of global land use. A large part of land use is tied to human diet, from pastures for grazing of meat animals to agriculture. A new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on climate and land says a plants-based diet will be kinder on the planet than a meat-based one. It recommends that governments, especially those of rich nations, where meat consumption is high, work on reducing this.

Land use and management, including agriculture and deforestation, contribute almost a quarter of the GHG emissions. Unless land is managed more sustainably, keeping global warming under 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, is impossible—countries, thus, have included land-use, land-use change and forestry in their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions announced as part of the 2015 Paris Agreement. While deforestation for pastures to graze cattle, like in Brazil and Colombia, is particularly emission-intensive, cattle, too, produce large amounts of methane, a potent GHG. Besides, the emission foot-print of manufacturing animal-feed, water- and electricity-use in raising and slaughtering of meat animals, and processing/packaging of meat is significant. The IPCC report, thus, says that balanced diets that are plant-based and feature sustainably-produced animal-sourced food “present major opportunities for adaptation and mitigation”. Indeed, by 2050, the report says, dietary changes could free up millions of square kilometres of land and reduce global carbon emissions by upto 8 billion tonnes annually (relative to business-as-usual). Though, perhaps with the politics and socio-cultural sensibilities associated with dietary habits in mind, authors of the report have refrained from telling people what to eat. Given land use across the world contributes \$75-85 trillion to the global economy annually (2011, based on the value of the dollar in 2007)—this is many times the world’s combined GDP—influencing land use in favour of more sustainable practices is also a fraught economic question, with the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people tied to it.

The risks a shifting to a largely plant-based diet also must be considered. Rice-farming, for instance, accounts for 24% of agricultural methane emissions. In a country like India, where rice is a staple and one of the largest agricultural exports, pushing a plant-based diet could result in more demand for unsustainably produced rice. Also, nitrous oxide emissions—a potent heat-trapper, with one tonne being equivalent to 265 tonnes of CO₂ over 100 years—from agriculture have almost doubled since the 1960s, given fertiliser application has increased nine-fold globally. Besides, research by the Carnegie Mellon University shows that, without reducing caloric intake significantly, simply changing the diet to include the US department of agriculture (USDA) advised food mix, or reducing caloric intake while sticking to the USDA food mix recommended for a healthy weight, will increase GHG emissions and energy/water use.

The window to act on sustainable land use is narrowing fast. Human use already affects 60-85% of forests and 70-90% of other natural ecosystems. Land—the forests on it as well as the soil—plays a key role as a carbon sink. But, with manifest climate change effects, desertification and degradation of land is becoming an ever-growing threat, and humans are responding with even more unsustainable use—fertiliser use, excessive groundwater extraction, stripping down of rainforests, etc, are key examples. The IPCC report, therefore, calls for stepping up efforts to keep the land productive while enhancing its carbon-absorbing capacity—a carefully calibrated, primarily plant-based diet could be one way to do this.

Tackling lynch mobs

Rajasthan has come up with a law, other states must too

RAJASTHAN HAS DONE well to, in response to a Supreme Court recommendation, come up with a special law to deal with lynch mobs. Though the Opposition protested against the “Rajasthan Protection from Lynching Bill, 2019” and argued that existing laws were good enough, this is not quite true; though, while the Opposition argued that some of the Bill’s provisions—even two persons can be defined as a mob—could be misused by classifying other crimes as mob violence, this is something that needs to be kept in mind by the investigating authorities. The Bill makes lynching a cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offence, punishable with up to seven years imprisonment and fines of ₹ 1 lakh if the victim is injured, and this goes up to life imprisonment when the violence results in the victim’s death. And, in a bid to deter mob violence, the Bill treats conspiracy, aiding, abetting, and attempt at mob lynching in the same way as it does perpetrators and assailants, and even recognises creation of a hostile environment, distribution of offensive materials, etc, as allied criminal offences. Moreover, the Bill is not only retributive but also rehabilitative, stipulating that victims of mob lynching be compensated by the state government under the Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme, and that the state take necessary measures to assist in the rehabilitation of any such victims who might suffer a displacement.

Other states need to take a cue from Rajasthan and come up with similar laws at the earliest. Ideally, as the Uttar Pradesh State Law Commission did last month, when it came up with a draft anti-lynching law, there should also be strict rules for the police and others in authority whose job is to prevent lynching. This includes punishment for not providing protection to the victim if violence was apprehended, failure to act on time, failure to record details of the crime, and so on; if there is no provision to penalise those whose jobs are to prevent such crimes, chances are all laws will come up short. This is a shortcoming in Rajasthan’s Bill. Amazingly, though the state’s law commission took the initiative on its own, Uttar Pradesh has yet to come up with an anti-lynching law; and this is despite the fact that Uttar Pradesh has recorded 20 distinct incidents of mob violence resulting in 11 deaths since 2015. While the number of those killed/attacked by lynch mobs is likely to be much smaller than those in conventional crimes like murder, the purpose of lynch mobs is to generate fear in certain communities/classes of people; to that extent, the punishments have to be as stringent as possible.

More MEDICS

Govt has done well to accept the findings of the WHO report on quacks, the one it had contested earlier

THE GOVERNMENT’S DESPERATION over clearing the air on the National Medical Council (NMC) Bill has forced it to accept and acknowledge a problem that it had, only last year, denied even exists. The NMC Bill talks of bridge course to enable Ayush practitioners to prescribe allopathic medicines—this will take care of the poor doctor-patient ratio that India has. As per a *Times of India* report, while the government, in January last year, had termed “erroneous” the WHO finding that nearly 57% of those practising allopathic medicine in the country didn’t have any medical qualification, now, it has included the figure in its FAQs over the NMC Bill. The NMC Bill talks of Community Health Providers—healthcare professionals who can be trained with the bridge courses.

India’s doctor-population ratio remains a sickly one doctor for a thousand people. Thus, it is crucial to accept the case for having community health providers. India needs more doctors, and ideas like converting district health hospitals into medical colleges make eminent sense. Until this can be achieved, the country needs to work with what it has. Besides, as Devi Shetty of Narayana Health and Srinath Reddy of Public Health Foundation of India highlight, India’s problem is over-medicalisation. Reddy points to the case of mid-level health workers in Chhattisgarh who have proved better than doctors at treating primary care conditions, especially malaria. He emphasises the need to train nurses to become ‘nurse practitioners’ and ‘nurse anaesthetists’. Shetty, on the other hand, says that “even in the litigation-happy US, 67% of anaesthesia is given by nurses, not doctors”. If more of community health providers can do the same, it would only help rural health care. More important, it would make more sense to impart the necessary training to a large talent pool of health professionals than to laud quacks thrive.

NO PROOF REQUIRED

NO ECONOMY HAS SUSTAINED GDP GROWTH WITH A REAL POLICY RATE ABOVE 1.75%. FOR THE LAST TWO AND A HALF-YEARS, THE REAL POLICY RATE HAS AVERAGED 100 BP HIGHER IN INDIA

Monetary policy: Facts, Opinion, Governance

THIS TIME, MP does not mean Member of Parliament, but Monetary Policy. What I want to discuss today is the FOG surrounding monetary policy in India. It used to be the case, around the world, that a deliberate fog was created around central bank speak. That changed post the 2008 financial crisis. Central banks around the world went for three Cs—Clarity and Consistency in Communication. All advanced country central banks go for the 3Cs; among EMEs, I don’t know, but what I hear foreign investors say is that the developing world is much closer to the advanced economies than to India.

Is India as different as claimed by “experts”? My own experience, and interpretation, is that India is very different because the experts (perhaps including those at the Central Bank) look at monetary policy very differently. Most importantly, Indian experts look at the monetary policy through nominal lenses; economics is about the real world. After all, nobody talks about nominal GDP growth; when we discuss growth, it is growth adjusted for inflation. Why don’t we do the same with the MP variable called the repo rate—or talk of real borrowing and lending rates?

On August 7, the MPC reduced the repo rate by 35 bps, to 5.4%. The first publication to be off to the races was *Bloomberg Quint* which headlined its story “35 Basis Point Cut Takes RBI Rate To 2010 Level”. The story was accurate. In April 2010, the RBI raised the repo rate to 5.25%. CPI inflation at that time was 13.3%, WPI inflation was 10.5%, and the SBI lending rate was 11.8%. IIP was growing at 13%.

It certainly doesn’t take a weatherman economist to figure out that the repo rate of 5.4% in August 2019 is not even on the same planet as April 2010, let alone be uttered in the same line. But, I want to quote from some of the editorials after the RBI move. *Business Standard* opined that “the central bank is doing its part by progressively reducing the cost of money” (emphasis added). Editorial in *Mint* argued that what the RBI/MPC did

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Views are personal



was “the best it could have done under the circumstances, grim as they are”. It also quoted Governor Das as stating that the committee felt that “25 bp would have been inadequate, while 50 bp would have been excessive”. And why didn’t RBI undertake a larger cut? The *Mint* view: “Because it did not want to send out a panic signal by easing monetary conditions too much, too fast”.

The MPC action (inaction) came against a backdrop of central banks around the world sending out panic signals by cutting lending rates. But to continue with the editorials. The *Financial Express* headlined its editorial “RBI is doing its bit, over to government now”. There is elaboration a few lines down. “But the central bank can only do so much. Indeed, it is doing more than its best to create a conducive lending environment for banks”. *Economic Times* editorial, “Slashing rates by 35 bp, dumping multiples of 25 bps as the quantum of rate change, signals non-routine concern over growth, as also restraint to avert any panic. It also signals RBI’s capacity to go beyond convention” (emphasis added).

There is a surprising uniformity (identity?) in the editorials—in addition to the fact that they have got the simple fact of cost of money grotesquely wrong. If I were Governor Das, I would be worried. After every Budget, industry gives a strong heads-up to whatever fiscal policy package the government comes up with. Out of 10, the ranking is always—good, bad and ugly budgets, the same—a robust 9. A lot of us (including the pink newspapers) have criticised this hypocrisy and this “Big Brother is watching” fear. This lack of objective analysis is worrisome. But, why have sheep newspapers not conducted objective analysis

of RBI/MPC actions?

What could the editorials have said? They could have pointed out that inflation is phenomenally low, and below the notional 4% target for the *third* successive year. While the nominal repo rate is the same as 2010, the real repo rate is at 2.6% compared to minus 8.1% in April 2010. Stated differently and equivalently, the cost of capital (repo rate) today is nearly 11 percentage points (ppt) higher. SBI lent money then at 11.75%—today, the nominal lending rate of SBI is higher (with much lower inflation) by 2 ppt at 13.75%.

The system is broke, including the experts who report on the system. The same experts blamed the lack of liquidity for the economic slowdown, not the high real rates. Everyone was shouting lack of liquidity as the cause for slow and declining growth in 2018. With this expertly felt lack of liquidity in 2018, industrial production growth Jan-May 2018 averaged 5.4%. With ample liquidity (and all the papers quoted above congratulated RBI for successfully introducing the much needed liquidity in 2019), IIP growth has averaged 1.9% in 2019. The first five months of 2010 IIP growth averaged 11.9%. But wait a minute—weren’t we coming out of the 2008 financial crisis and that is why IIP was so high in 2010 and not because of real interest rates? There is partial truth in that.

Compare first five months of 2011 with 2019. Industrial production growth: then 6.8%; today 1.6%. Real repo rate: then minus 2.8%; today plus

3.4%. Real SBI lending rate: then 3.6%; today 11%. Liquidity: then ample; liquidity today, ample.

Das took over as RBI Governor in December 2018. He has been in office for only eight months and it is unfair to assess performance over such a short time period. Nevertheless, few facts are relevant. Eight months prior to Das’s arrival, inflation had averaged 3.9%, repo rate averaged 6.3% and the real repo rate averaged 2.4%. Over the last eight (Das) months, (till July 2019), inflation has averaged 110 bp lower 2.8%; the repo rate has averaged 20 bp lower at 6.1%, and the real repo rate 90 bp higher. Liquidity is very stressed in 2018 (according to many experts, that was the cause for the slowdown) and very ample in 2019.

Every monetary statistic contradicts the expert assessment that monetary policy is reducing the cost of money. It is simple math really—if inflation goes up by 10%, and my cost of borrowing goes up by 5%, the cost of money has come down. And just the opposite when inflation declines more than the

repo rate. Why is this simple math seemingly not understood by experts?

There are additional factors constraining growth in 2019 and beyond. Tariff wars have intensified, world growth has slowed down, and our competitors are lowering real rates and lowering tax rates. We are raising both. The expert media fully recognises (most of them do) that higher tax rates in a slowing economy will slow GDP growth even more. But, why this arrogant dismissal of the one factor the rest of 180 countries find the most potent cyclical, and structural factor, to enhance growth? More than a decade ago, Deputy Governor Rakesh Mohan opined that lazy banking was an important and unique aspect of Indian banking. But, why do experts endorse lazy banking as a solution to our growth problems?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PM Modi’s address

PM Narendra Modi’s post-Article 370 abrogation TV address to the nation has come in for fulsome praises from many people, including the media, for reaching out to Kashmiris with a slew of promises. But, the moot question is whether his promises of early polls, restoration of statehood, benefits to government employees on par with their counterparts in UTs, filling government job vacancies and investment will make up to the people of Kashmir for what they were robbed off—special status. At best they are a balm inefficacious in healing the deep wound to the Kashmiri psyche. People do not trade their identity for favours. Winning the hearts and minds of Kashmiris alone will facilitate their integration into India. The withdrawal of special status and privileges is not the way to win their *vishwas* (trust). As for the promise of development, human development indices in Kashmir are relatively better than in most parts of India. We are also struck by the incongruity of a leader of a party that never tires of accusing the secular parties of ‘Muslim appeasement’. PM Modi did not speak a word on the deployment of more troops and the house arrest of Valley’s mainstream leaders. Why leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad and Sitaram Yechury are prevented from visiting the people of the Valley while NSA Ajit Doval is featured interacting with the local residents defies understanding. If what is going on in the name of Hindu revivalism in the rest of the country, the reading down of Article 370 may well be a move to superimpose Hindutva culture onto Kashmir’s indigenous culture or *Kashmiriyat*. The hailing of the annulment of special status as the ‘correction of a historical wrong’ by *Hindutvawadis* says it all!
— G David Milton, Maruthancode

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Household savings in India

Policy environment for savings in India is sub-optimal. This is particularly true of the household sector, which has been the largest contributor to overall national savings

NIRVIKAR SINGH

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Views are personal

INDIA HAS TWO fundamental problems in its pursuit of higher economic growth. First, it needs to increase investment. Second, it needs to increase savings. Both investment and savings have fallen as percentages of GDP, and are below the levels needed to support GDP growth of 8-10% a year. There is a counter argument that higher growth itself will rekindle animal spirits of investors, but I think the starting point has to be with creating prospects for better investment returns. The investment slowdown is related to the collapse of the preceding investment boom, which included too much corruption and, more generally, misallocation of capital. Until the overhang of bad assets is cleaned up, so that credit flows more freely again, investment will stagnate. The government has been trying, but perhaps not hard enough. The battles with RBI on this front have also not helped. Efforts to attract foreign investors will also not achieve too much until the financial sector and corporate balance sheets are cleaned up. Even then, the policy framework for investment has to improve, in terms of taxation, infrastructure, and stability.

The savings side is trickier, but also has the potential for plucking some low hanging fruit, with the right degree of policy attention. This is because the policy environment for savings in India is sub-optimal. This is particularly true of the household sector (including smaller firms in the Indian case), which has been the largest contributor to overall national savings. The other sources of savings—corporations, government and foreigners, are potentially important, but their determinants are more complicated, including whatever factors determine the investment climate, and the politics of government expenditure. Households, however, can be potentially reliable sources of savings.

There are three interrelated aspects of household saving where policies can

be changed to make a difference. First, the level of household savings has fallen in recent years, despite high real (though not nominal) interest rates. Second, Indian households tend to put a relatively smaller proportion of their savings in financial assets, versus physical assets such as gold and real estate. Third, Indian households put relatively little of their financial savings into long term savings such as pensions and insurance products, versus bank accounts. All three factors result in a paucity of funds that can be intermediated into productive investment.

Tarun Ramadorai, who headed the RBI committee on household savings that reported in 2017, has pointed out that the tax incentives for long term savings through pensions are muddled and weak. He has made detailed proposals for clarity and simplicity in the design of pension schemes and the tax incentives that accompany them. This is about more than just “nudges,” and requires significant, but straightforward, policy changes. The government may be worried about possible losses of revenue through tax breaks, but this seems to be an area where the returns will justify any short term revenue hit.

Last year, Radhika Pandey, Ila Patnaik and Renuka Sane, in the India Policy Forum, provided a detailed empirical analysis of the impact of tax breaks on household financial savings, and found that such incentives must be carefully designed to avoid distortions between different types of financial saving. They also emphasised the need for more sensible regulations, giving insurance companies and pension funds more room to invest in assets other than government bonds. In brief, household savings have to be channelled efficiently to more productive investments.

The need for better channelling of household savings is driven home by a more recent analysis by Patnaik and Pandey, in an NIPFP working paper. Gov-

ernment policy on this front does not seem to be coherent or sufficiently evidence-based. Budget proposals often seem to be piecemeal and fragmented. Nevertheless, one can characterise this area as low-hanging fruit, because there is so much room for improvement. Despite the nuances of having different types of financial saving, with different types of institutions and regulations for collecting and channelling them, the underlying economic behaviours are not difficult to model and analyse.

A comprehensive, evidence-based policy approach to household financial savings will also help draw attention to institutional weaknesses in financial services and financial intermediation. It can be politically difficult to deal with such weaknesses without an overarching goal. Improving the level, composition and channelling of India’s household saving can provide the requisite framing for political feasibility of more fundamental institutional reforms, as well as reforms in tax policy and regulation for the financial sector. Institutional reforms here could include a greater role for private sector firms, more competition, and more effective use of digital technology. Patnaik and Pandey make all these points, and they just need more detailed modelling and simulation for evaluating policy options.

None of the above makes redundant the need for continued improvements in the climate for non-financial firms to do business, or to innovate, or to export. All the real aspects of producing and selling things in India are subject to hurdles that the government has the power to reduce or remove, if it decides it wants to be growth-promoting rather than rent-seeking or populist in its policy stance. But higher growth requires higher investment, and that will need more household financial saving, channelled to productive uses. This is an area that needs better policy attention than it has received.

● JAPAN-KOREA TRADE DISPUTE

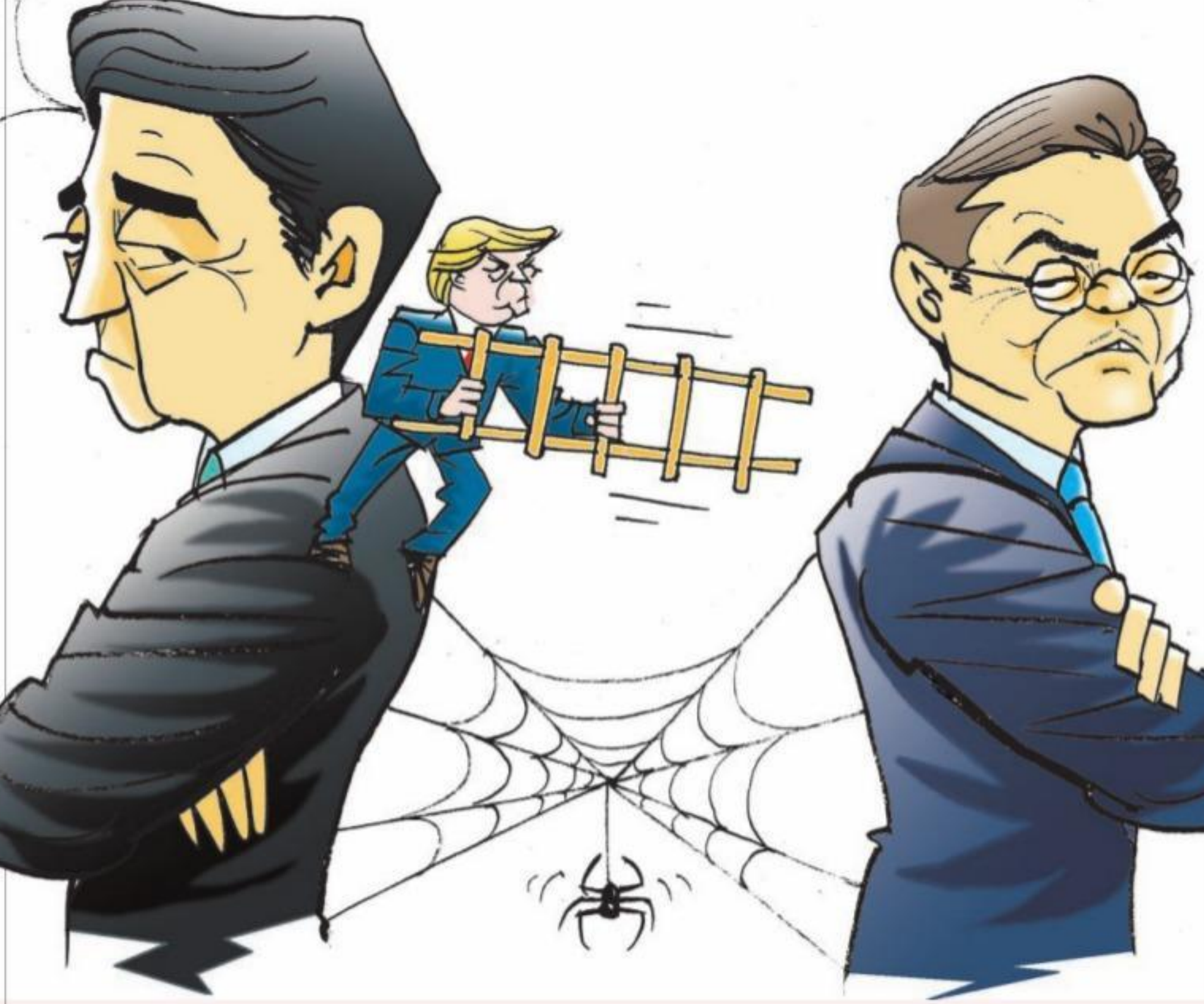
Japan seeks to emerge from the shadow of history

The biggest trade war of recent times, the US-China dispute, is tied to forced technology transfer and intellectual property rights. But the Japan-South Korea dispute appears tied to Japan's long and arduous struggle to emerge from the pages of history

JAPAN, THE QUIET sentinel of Asia, lives in the future and yet cannot quite extricate itself from the past—caught in the net of history whilst seeking to escape it. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's attempts to amend the Constitution and the current trade skirmish between Japan and South Korea can be traced back to history—a history that Japan seeks to put behind, but so far with little success.

In fact, Japan's new era, the Reiwa era (literally, beautiful harmony), began May 2019 with the abdication of the Chrysanthemum Throne by Emperor Akihito. The abdication marked the end of the three decades of the Heisei era (peace everywhere). With the Tokyo Olympics 2020 scheduled next year, there is much optimism in the air—an understanding that it will repeat for Japan what Tokyo Olympics 1964 did, which boosted its economic renaissance.

Japan's aspirations reflect in the winds of its domestic politics under the 64-year-old Abe, now in his seventh year of office. In fact, the years of political instability seem to have passed. If Abe stays in office until November 2019 (which is a certainty), he will surpass 2,886 days in office (tolled by PM Tarō Kōsuga in the early 20th century) and become Japan's longest-serving PM in history. Some achievements, as Abe articulated at Davos 2019, are



ANURAG VISWANATH
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growth in Japanese GDP by 10.9% (in his six years of office), female labour participation hitting 67% and an ageing population (above 65) accessing job opportunities. But observers such as

political scientist Lully Miura say that Abe continues to be in power because of "an exceptional combination of specific conditions," including his foreign policy and the administration managing

allies have sought a revision of the Constitution, seeking the formalisation of Japan's de facto military, Self-Defense Forces (SDF), which would entail parting with the Article 9 (no-war clause) of the Constitution. Article 9 says that "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential never be maintained."

The recent July elections to the upper house of Parliament (House of Councillors) impacted amendment. Of the 124 seats, Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Komeito won 71 seats (57+14), and the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) 53 seats in the 245-member house. The parties in favour of amending the Constitution, the LDP and allies Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party) and Komeito (total of 157 seats), fell short of the two-third 'super-majority' (164 seats) needed to initiate the amendment. A day after the elections, Abe sought to keep the issue alive by discussing it. He now seeks amendment in 2020. The issue of Japan remilitarisation continues to be alive. The public increasingly believes that Japan is vulnerable, ineffectual and impotent as a balance to a rising China, which boasts considerable military prowess.

History is also at play in Japan-South Korea relations, both staunch US allies, but who cannot see eye to eye. Japan and South Korea have several common concerns, including the security dilemma in the Northeast Peninsula (North Korea and China), but a trilateral (US-Japan-South Korea) has not been forthcoming.

Relations between the two are rocky because of 'historical animosity' that dates back to Japanese colonisation of the peninsula (1910-45). In fact, the recent move by Japan to strike South Korea off its 'white list' (of 27 preferential trade partners) effective August 28 is not because of a trade dispute per se, but because of history.

The dispute sparked when the South Korean Supreme Court ruled that Japanese companies Nippon Steel, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nachi Fujikoshi compensate wartime forced labour. Japan views this as flogging the acrimonious past. As Japan views it, this was resolved in 1965 when relations were normalised, and in terms of reparations, Japan paid \$2.4 billion by way of loans and aid to Korea.

But the issue of forced wartime Korean labour in mines and factories,

the forced prostitution of Korean women to provide sexual services to the Japanese army—'comfort women'—and the plight of the Koreans who continue to stay in Japan (regarded as second-class citizens) has haunted bilateral ties. In 2015, President Park Geun-hye inked what Japan called a deal to "finally and irreversibly" settle the issue of 'comfort women' through a \$9-million deal, which many viewed as a pittance. In 2018, the foundation that Japan funded to support and provide funds to the 'comfort women' was dissolved.

Japan was alarmed with the decision of the South Korean court to order the seizure of Japanese assets, which it viewed as damaging Japanese trade and investment in South Korea. Citing 'national security grounds' of 'declining trust' between the two, Japan slapped exports to South Korea with restrictions. Japan has targeted three chemicals (hydrogen fluoride, fluorinated polyimide and photoresists) used by South Korean companies in smartphone displays and chips. This will disrupt the supply chain of South Korea's semiconductor, display (electronics) and automobile industry, and companies such as Samsung, SK Hynix and LG will be affected. Japanese exports to South Korea now need case-by-case approval.

South Korea has responded with strong public opinion and visible nationalist outrage, and has accused Japan of 'weaponising trade'.

South Korean customers are boycotting Japanese products in the supermarkets, and South Korea wants to stop military-intelligence sharing with Japan, which has implications on the security of the peninsula. But Japan is unrelenting.

The issue shows no immediate signs of abating, with the US unable to resolve the acrimony of the past. While the US will eventually step in and resolve the posturing, for South Korea, with legislative elections in April 2020, with the corner, backing down may indicate 'loss of face'. The biggest trade dispute of recent times, the US-China dispute, is tied to forced technology transfer and intellectual property rights. But for Asia's quiet sentinel Japan—be it constitutional amendment or trade dispute with South Korea—both are tied to its long and arduous struggle to emerge from the pages of history. The US and now Japan are cases in point of the new dynamics in international relations, where economics is a powerful instrument of political arm-twisting, and so is history.

Relations between the two are rocky because of 'historical animosity' that dates back to the Japanese colonisation of the Korean peninsula (1910-45)

DATA DRIVE

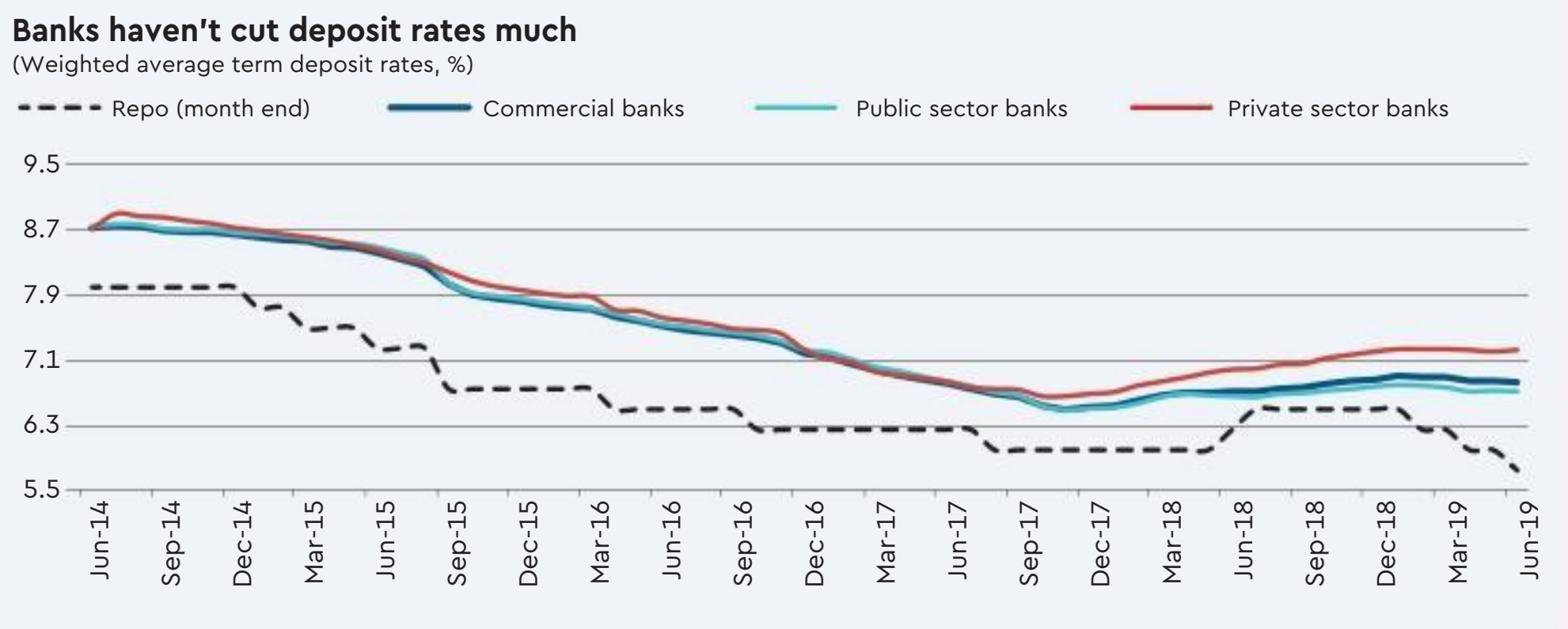
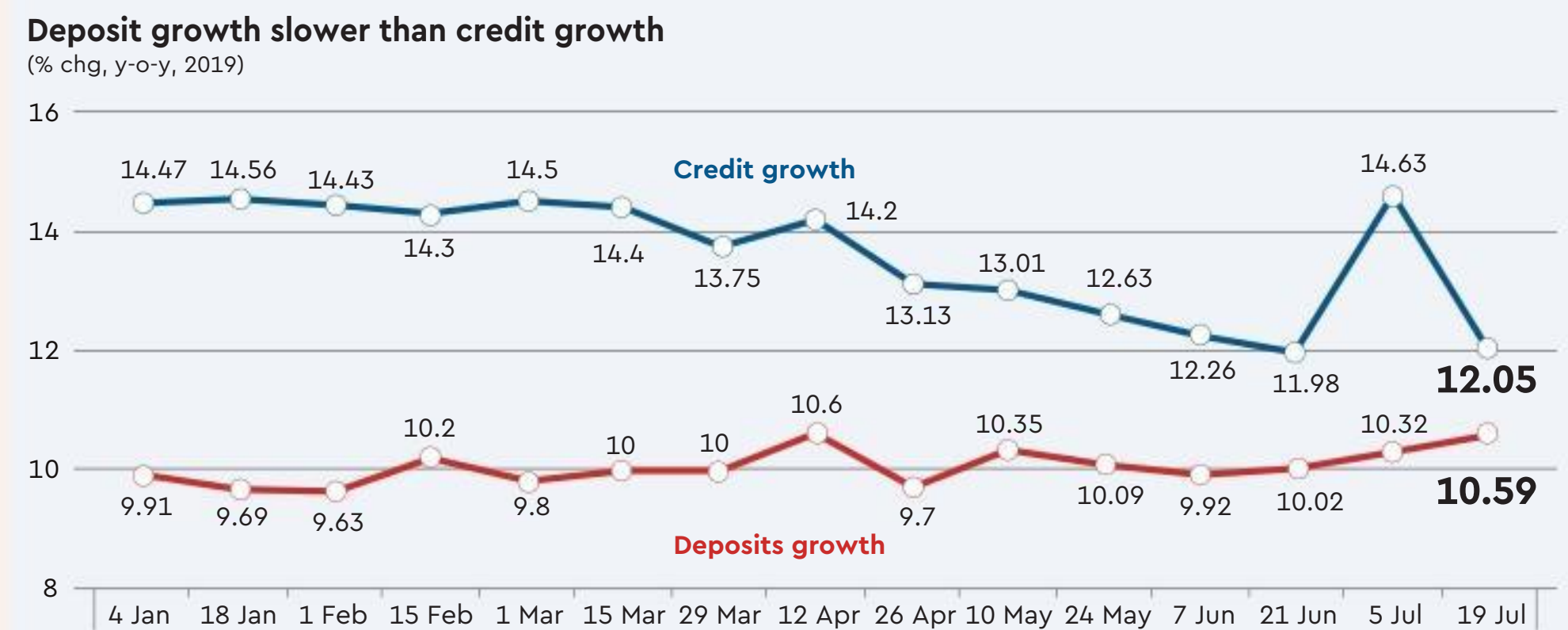
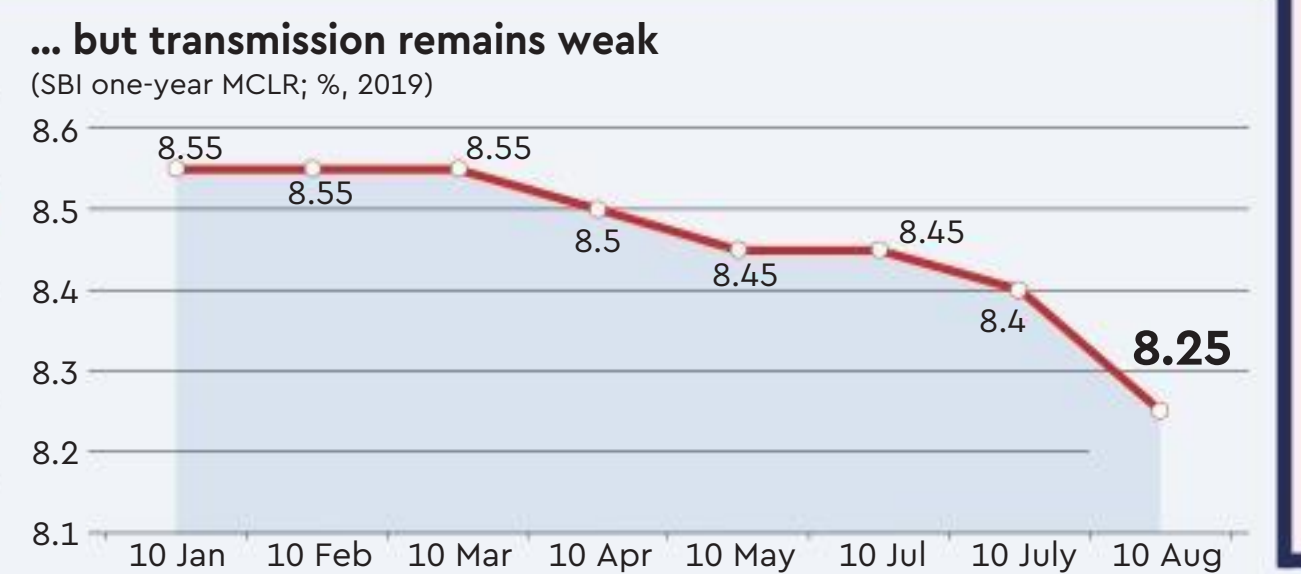
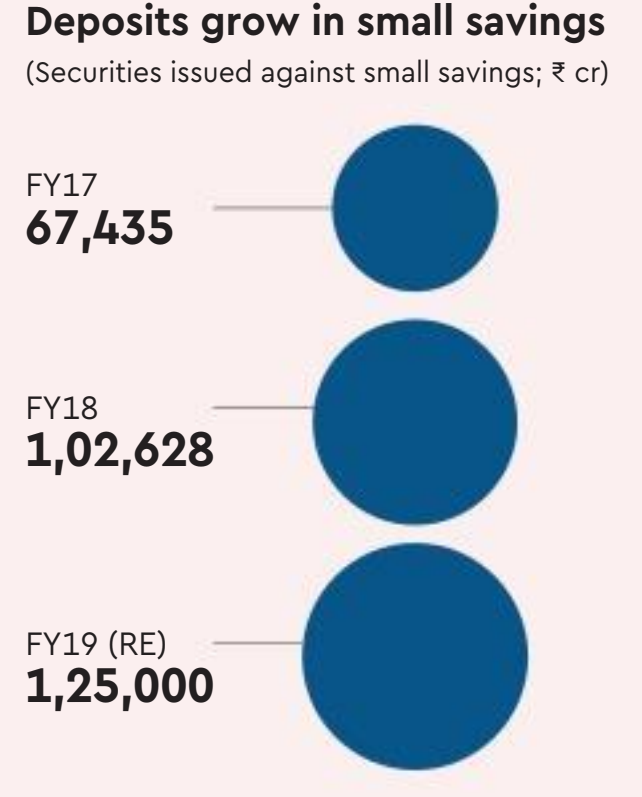
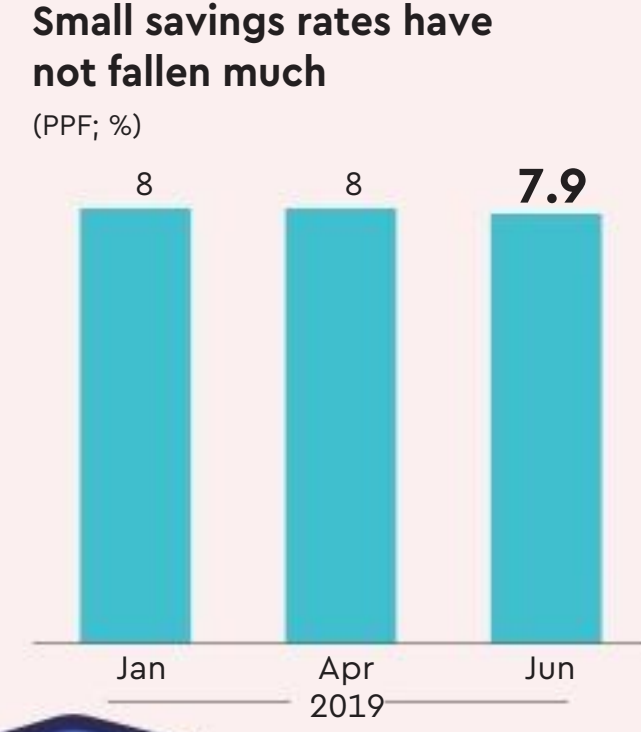
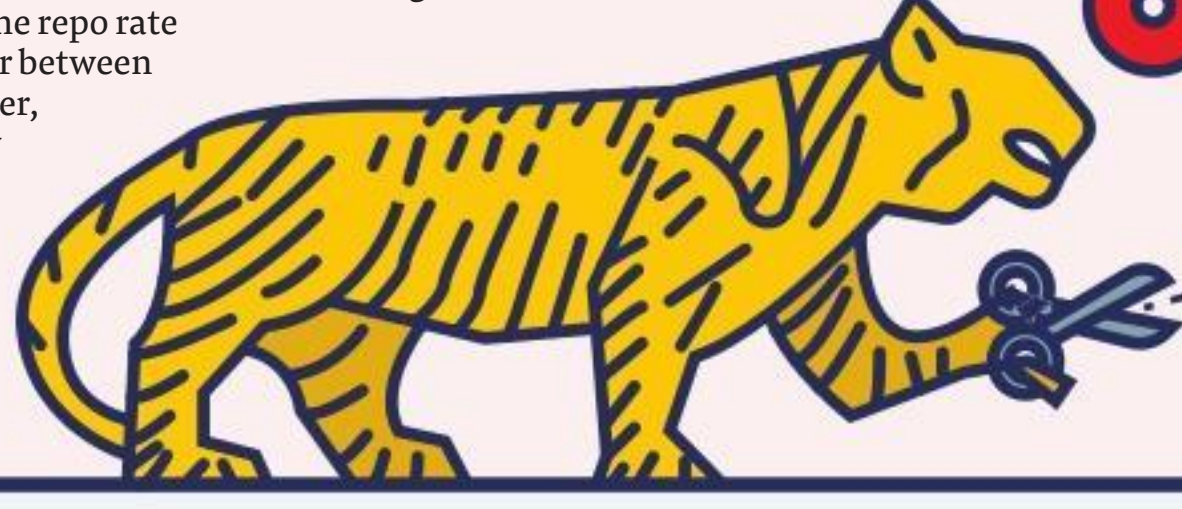
Poor transmission

WHILE THE RESERVE BANK of India has cut the repo rate by 35 basis points—the first cut of this magnitude—to 5.4% (the repo rate is now at a nine-year low), the onus is now on banks to cut their lending rates to spur economic activity. In response to the policy, the country's largest lender, the State Bank of India, has reduced the Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) across all tenors by 15 basis points.

Banks have been very slow in passing on the benefits of the central bank's rate cuts to their customers. To be sure, before Wednesday's rate cut, the central bank had cut the repo rate by 75 basis points this year between February and June. However, the transmission of policy rate cuts on fresh loans of banks was only 29bps. The earlier RBI announcement to benchmark new floating rate loans to the

external benchmarks to have been taken off the table. Banks have not been able to reduce their lending because of slowing growth in deposits. As a result, deposit rates have remained flattish as banks have found it challenging to pass through rate-cuts, and small savings—given they are still offering much higher rates than bank deposits—are cornering growing shares of the deposit pie. For example, while the five-year deposit rate of the SBI is 6.5%, the five-year post office term deposits fetch 7.7% and Public Provident Fund is fetching returns of 7.9%.

The central bank has injected liquidity, which means the supply-side is being taken care of, and has also made it easier for banks to lend to non-banks, and this should improve liquidity. Going forward, transmission should improve given surplus liquidity in the financial system.





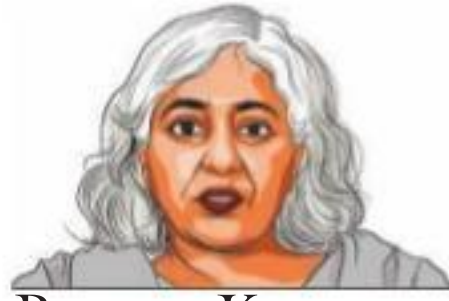
The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Sins of omission

Crucial questions about Centre's action on Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional status remain unanswered



RADHA KUMAR

ON AUGUST 8, Prime Minister Narendra Modi finally addressed the nation on recent moves that fundamentally altered the character of Jammu and Kashmir and took the country by surprise, indeed shock.

As one of those astonished and deeply angered by the speed, stealth and force with which far-reaching constitutional change has been achieved, I had hoped to hear some explanation for why his administration deemed the move imperative, and even more importantly, why it was made at this time and carried through in this way, with preventive arrests and detentions, flying in 40,000 additional troops for a security lockdown of the Valley as well as neighbouring districts in Jammu and Ladakh, tabling it in Parliament without prior notice when a significant number of Opposition MPs were missing, many of whom had requested postponement until they could reach Delhi.

The PM did not refer to these actions even in passing. Though he did say that the security lockdown would soon be lifted, he gave no assurance of when. The government earlier announced that the closure of telephone lines and the internet would be relaxed on Friday, but it has been extended. It is doubtful if the PM's Kashmiri "brothers and sisters" would even have heard his speech.

I had also hoped, groundlessly, that Modi would indicate that his other measures — demoting the state to union territory status and voiding the terms of its relation to India (Article 370) were time bound and of short duration. He did give a vague assurance that Jammu and Kashmir might one day regain statehood, but the offer was so indeterminate and hedged about with so many conditions that it offered more warning than hope.

This is the first time in the history of independent India that a state has been demoted to a union territory (UT). The PM's explanation for an act of such far-reaching consequences was astonishingly weak. It would enable faster development, he said, because now central laws and schemes would be applied. But there is no reason to believe that UT status enables better implementation of development programmes than statehood does — of our UTs, only Goa (until 1987) and Delhi can boast of high rates of development

and the factors in each case have little to do with administrative status. Indeed, development grew further after the two acquired legislatures.

The PM is willing to offer Jammu and Kashmir a legislature — how generous — but with severely truncated powers. The police and civil administration will answer only to the Centre, removing the political interface that acted as both a buffer and, if only in theory, a check on unbridled power. I trust the Union government understands that now it and it alone will be to blame for any political, security and administrative failures, however large or small.

The potential fallout on security, which should be a pressing concern, was simply skirted over. There is clear and present danger that Pakistan will exploit the current situation to flood the Valley with arms and re-double infiltration attempts; equally, that homegrown militancy will rise, if not in the immediate term then certainly in the middle term. What steps does the Modi administration plan to prevent such an outcome, apart from flooding the Valley with troops and putting a lieutenant-governor in place, neither of which are likely to prove effective?

The PM did touch on one substantive issue, the voiding of Article 370, but here too his arguments consisted of a string of assertions without explanation. The critical question — how will the terms of the Instrument of Accession be codified if Article 370 is null? — he simply ignored.

Instead, he said that Article 370 had been a major impediment to Jammu and Kashmir's development because it entrenched corruption and nepotism. No objective analyst will deny that the state was riddled with these twin evils, but so are a large number of other Indian states and they are not governed by Article 370. In fact, the people of Jammu and Kashmir complain far more loudly about these evils than do the residents of other states, perhaps because in their case corruption and nepotism are tied to a situation of ongoing conflict, which has, as in most conflict regions worldwide, produced a black economy. To think that corruption can be removed when violence persists is merely hubris.

The bulk of Modi's speech was a laundry list of beneficial programmes to follow. Some of these were initiated years ago — such as scholarship schemes and inducements to industry to invest and Bollywood to make movies — and faltered for the same reason in each case, continuing violence.

The truth of the matter is that Jammu and Kashmir is ahead of the bulk of other states on development indicators such as food, housing, health, education and even gender (in some respects). The Modi administration is doing no more than previous administrations have done — throw money at a people while taking away their political and human rights.

With one great difference: This time it is a full-scale denial of their rights, one which raises acute concern about the vulnerability of our democratic, federal and constitutional structure. As critics have pointed out, what is the guarantee that what has been done in Kashmir will not be done elsewhere, at the whim of this or successive administrations?

The PM did not address these concerns either, and his omission sent out the message that the will of the people is irrelevant when it comes to Jammu and Kashmir. The contrast between this position towards the majority population and that towards selected minorities in the state could not be sharper. In Leh, Jammu city and amongst stranded refugees, it is clear that though the will of its people was not solicited, they support this move. All the rest, the Modi administration appears to believe, can go hang.

What has been perpetrated, in one fell sweep, is a coup on the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The prime minister's speech sought only to normalise the coup. Whether he will succeed in doing so is up to us. Following the craven failure of our parliamentarians to debate the intentions, implications and method used by the Modi administration in the past week, and the widespread Indian support for what has been done, the future for both Kashmiris and Indian democrats seem bleak.

Kumar is a former interlocutor for Jammu and Kashmir and author of Paradise at War: A Political History of Kashmir

WORDS AND MEANING

PM's address defines the new order for Jammu and Kashmir. It frames new challenges, and faces the trust test on the ground

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi's address to the nation, following his government's decision to read down Article 370, demote the status of Jammu and Kashmir, and carve it up into two Union Territories, was keenly awaited. It was expected, and hoped, that the speech would provide some answers in the aftermath of a move as unilateral as it is consequential. The PM's speech made certain key assertions: That Kashmir's destiny is intertwined with that of the rest of the country; that Article 370 is now history; that there is no returning to status quo; that special status had only bred corruption and nepotism and secessionism; that under Central rule, by implementation of Central laws and programmes, Kashmir would become prosperous and peaceful. And that at an indeterminate point in the future, after Kashmiri youth have stepped up to leadership roles, Kashmir may become a state again. Prominent in the PM's speech was a list of benefits, allowances and schemes that government employees in J&K would be able to access because Kashmir is now a UT. He also told Pakistan — and the world — that he had redrawn the red lines of Kashmir diplomacy.

The message was unequivocally clear. It was also important for what it didn't say. The PM made no mention of the words and sentiments that have consecrated the place of another BJP prime minister in a troubled Valley's political imagination — there was no reference to Atal Bihari Vajpayee's invocations of "Insaniyat, Jamhooriyat, Kashmiriyat", which PM Modi has himself echoed earlier. There was none of the soft play with ambiguity, which has always helped the Centre expand its space for manoeuvre in the Valley. There was no reference even to PM Modi's own assurance, delivered from the ramparts of the Red Fort on an Independence Day two years ago: "Na goli se, na gaali se, Kashmir ki samasya suljhegi gale lagaane se... (Kashmir's problem will not be solved by abuse or the bullet, but by embracing its people)". Today in Kashmir, that embrace is needed, more than ever. For, the promise of Good Governance will shape and be shaped by a political setting that has seen violence, terrorism and a popular uprising for three decades now. As he talks of a new generation of leaders in the Valley, PM Modi cannot be unaware of the grim backdrop of his government's making — the detention and arrest of mainstream leaders, including former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, the snapping of lines of communication between the Valley and the rest of the country.

In a state as broken as Kashmir, words do heal and yet they are never enough. Much more needs to be said — and done — to assure Kashmir and the nation that the government is mindful of the trust reposed by its enormous mandate in the world's largest democracy, that it does not intend to continue to impose its will on the Valley or be seen to rule it by diktat.

CLIMATE ON THE FARM

IPCC report shows how land use affects climate change. It must not be used to target developing countries on global warming

REPORT RELEASED on Thursday by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that better management of the world's farms and forests is necessary to tackle climate change. Land use has always been part of conversations on climate change and activities like afforestation have held an important place in the fight against global warming. But the discourse on combating global warming has given more thrust to curbing vehicular and industrial emissions. The IPCC report warns that clean energy, clean transport and reduction emissions alone will not cut global emissions enough to avoid dangerous warming beyond 2 degrees Celsius. It points out that the global food system is responsible for 21 to 37 per cent of the world's GHG emissions.

About a quarter of the Earth's ice-free land area is subjected to what the report describes as "human-induced degradation". Rapid agricultural expansion has led to destruction of forests, wetlands and grasslands and other ecosystems. Soil erosion from agricultural fields, the report estimates, is 10 to 100 times higher than the soil formation rate. This has created spinoff effects. "When land is degraded, it becomes less productive, restricting what can be grown and reducing the soil's ability to absorb carbon. This exacerbates climate change, while climate change in turn exacerbates land degradation," says the report. Moreover, agriculture and allied activities like cattle rearing are major sources of methane and nitrous oxide, far more dangerous GHGs than carbon dioxide.

The report is expected to be a key scientific input into forthcoming climate negotiations, such as the Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in Delhi in September and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Santiago, Chile, in December. If recent developments are any indicator, the report could spur moves to pressure developing countries like India to ramp up their global warming mitigation targets. This week the UN special envoy on climate change, Luis Alfonso de Alba, reportedly expressed the hope that India will take up enhanced climate commitment, including in areas such as agriculture. But the country, which seems well on course to meeting its Paris Climate Pact targets, should be careful about taking up commitments that hobble its agriculture sector. However, India — and other countries — could do well to pay heed to the IPCC report's recommendations on curbing land degradation and soil erosion by improving knowledge systems.

THEY IS A PROBLEM

A new study finds that gender-neutral pronouns can increase sensitivity. But grammar can be notoriously rigid

IT'S PERHAPS BECAUSE their power is such a mirage, a well-perpetuated fraud, that kings and priests have always understood the importance of pronouns. Royalty, and even minor nobility, never call themselves "I" or are addressed as "you" — "hum khush hue", they will say, as if inherited privilege represents a collective.

In 2015, Sweden decided to adopt the term "hen", a gender-neutral pronoun to be used alongside "hon" and "han" (she and he) in the Swedish language. A study conducted over three years by Efrén Pérez of the University of California and Margit Tavits at Washington University published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that gender-neutral depictions like the one in Sweden helped combat pro-men biases and even increased sensitivity towards LGBTQI people. The study simply confirms what many gender and queer rights activists have long argued, that the bias towards heterosexual men in particular, and gender binaries in general reinforces inequality. But is fighting to change words, and grammar, the best battle to engage in the war for equality?

For some time now, there has been a search for a gender-neutral pronoun in English as well. The latest candidate, "they", is gaining some popularity among enlightened (or "woke") young people. But syntax is a hard thing to change, the plural pronoun does not roll off the tongue nor sit well on a page. Sample: "They is happy about their new shoes." Language does, of course, evolve — just look at the number of Indian words in our erstwhile coloniser's dictionaries. But it does not evolve as and when we please. In the meantime, faced with the fact that words do indeed oppress, it is important to endeavour to ensure that the limits of language are not the limits of decency.

A LIFE IN LAW

Shamnad Basheer's work in IP, academia, holds survival lessons for the liberal edifice



PRITAM BARUAH

INHABITING DUALITIES DEFINED Shamnad Basheer. Nicola Lacey, biographer of the eminent legal philosopher H.L.A. Hart, wrote that Hart was surely an insider to Oxford philosophy, but always saw himself on the margins. Memories of Basheer kindle something similar: Inspiring students, intervening socially, recognised publicly and yet, secluded and distant. His energy and innovative impulses stemmed from a fertile yet tumultuous intellectual and personal space.

We were colleagues, flatmates and friends. I admired how despite his dilemmas, Basheer inspired students. Whether in the successful Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access (IDIA) programme, the Spicy IP blog, or research initiatives; students remained central to his work: They worked incessantly on his projects, voluntarily. IDIA volunteers would undertake arduous journeys to train underprivileged children. This did take a toll on competitive law students, but with Basheer's leadership, they excelled academically and in voluntary work: He instilled an ethic for voluntary work that will inspire generations.

Basheer's energy shines through in his multi-dimensional academic career, which was marked by controversies and pathbreaking achievements. Basheer studied at NLSIU and Oxford, and taught in India and the US. He lectured globally and was the most recognised Indian in the world of intellectual property.

Fame, however, invites scrutiny. His work was plagiarised by the Mashelkar Committee

Report on patent reforms for drugs, and Basheer had generously dismissed it saying it was for a public cause. However, it was his own friends and peers from NLSIU who argued that Basheer should have revealed his research funders, some being stakeholders.

Basheer, however, was always irrepressible. He increased public interest in IP law through the Spicy IP blog, which he founded in 2005. Simultaneously, he intervened in public issues on IP. Some of his notable interventions were those in favour of the rights of disabled persons to access copyrighted material, and the right of fair use by students in the famous Delhi University photocopy case.

Basheer also walked the tightrope in the Novartis case, concerning the patenting of the life-saving drug Glivec. He was balancing intellectual justification against public emotion, proprietary rights against public welfare. The Supreme Court heard him at length as an "academic intervenor". His arguments went a long way in disallowing Glivec to be patented. However, Basheer's arguments were double-edged for both sides. He was against Novartis in concluding that Glivec did not qualify to be an invention, and against human rights groups in concluding that excessive pricing was not a ground for patent denial. For those sceptical of the neutrality of law and opinion, it is difficult to say where Basheer's heart lay. But his actions set a precedent to enrich judicial discourse through academic intervention.

Basheer and I had joined NUJS, Kolkata, at

its pinnacle. Mahendra Pal Singh had created a free but rigorous intellectual environment: Sound academics like Basheer and Sudhir Krishnswamy were appointed as full-time professors, fresh talent like Prabhash Ranjan and Chinmayi Arun were nurtured. Basheer tilled this fertile ground and, subsequently, IDIA emerged. Its initial days witnessed both opposition and support. There was talk of Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) being reformed: For it to vernacularise, be a test of potential rather than information, blunt advantages of coaching, and, to bridge the urban-rural divide, IDIA, many of us argued, would help get in some disadvantaged students into a system of privilege, and legitimise it by painting it as inclusive. Basheer took criticism on board, but perhaps the visionary in him saw that in our pathological democracy, starting somewhere was more important than starting ideally. Basheer has perhaps been proven right today. Several students from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to enter the hallowed law schools.

Basheer's emphasis on IDIA holds survival lessons for the falling liberal edifice. He acted on ideas and inspired people; got himself entangled with the daily life of law in an accessible manner. He anticipated that intellectual rigour needs popular succour in a democracy. Else the ivory towers shall fall.

The writer is associate professor of law at Jindal Global Law School

AUGUST 10, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

MNF ATTACK

ARMED COMMANDOS OF the outlawed Mizo National Front launched a three-pronged attack on the Turlial central jail near Aizawl in the embattled union territory of Mizoram, raided the Amarapur police station in neighbouring Tripura and indulged in looting and killing in the nearby market of Amarapur last night, according to official reports reaching Shillong. The security guards at Turlial central jail, put up a bold defence and foiled an attempt by a command group of the MNF to free the undertrial there. However, there were no casualties in the exchange of fire which lasted about 15 minutes. The hostiles later re-

treated into the nearby jungles.

UNIONS REJECT HIKE

DELHI UNITS OF the five main trade unions rejected the Delhi administration's offer to raise the minimum wages of workers by Rs 26 to Rs 40 a month. The unions which have five lakh members in the city, decided to go ahead with their one-day strike on Saturday to demand that the basic minimum wage be increased from Rs 185.90 to Rs 350 a month. They also want a dearness allowance of Rs 150 a month for the workers. The decision was taken by the Joint Action Committee for Minimum Wages made up of Delhi units of the All-India Trade Union Congress, Centre of

Indian Trade Unions, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, Hind Mazdoor Sabha and the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

No CONG SUPPORT

IT WILL NOT be surprising if the Congress (I) does not support the government when the vote of confidence is taken on August 20. Already there are pointers that the party may change its stand — what a Congress (I) leader calls "straws in the wind". The party's commitment of "unconditional support" ended when the new government was formed. Ten Congress (I) MPs issued a statement on Tuesday, criticising the government and asking it to read "the writing on the wall".



13 THE IDEAS PAGE

Denting cynicism in Valley

Prime Minister Modi's speech handled political differences with finesse, showed sensitivity towards Kashmiris



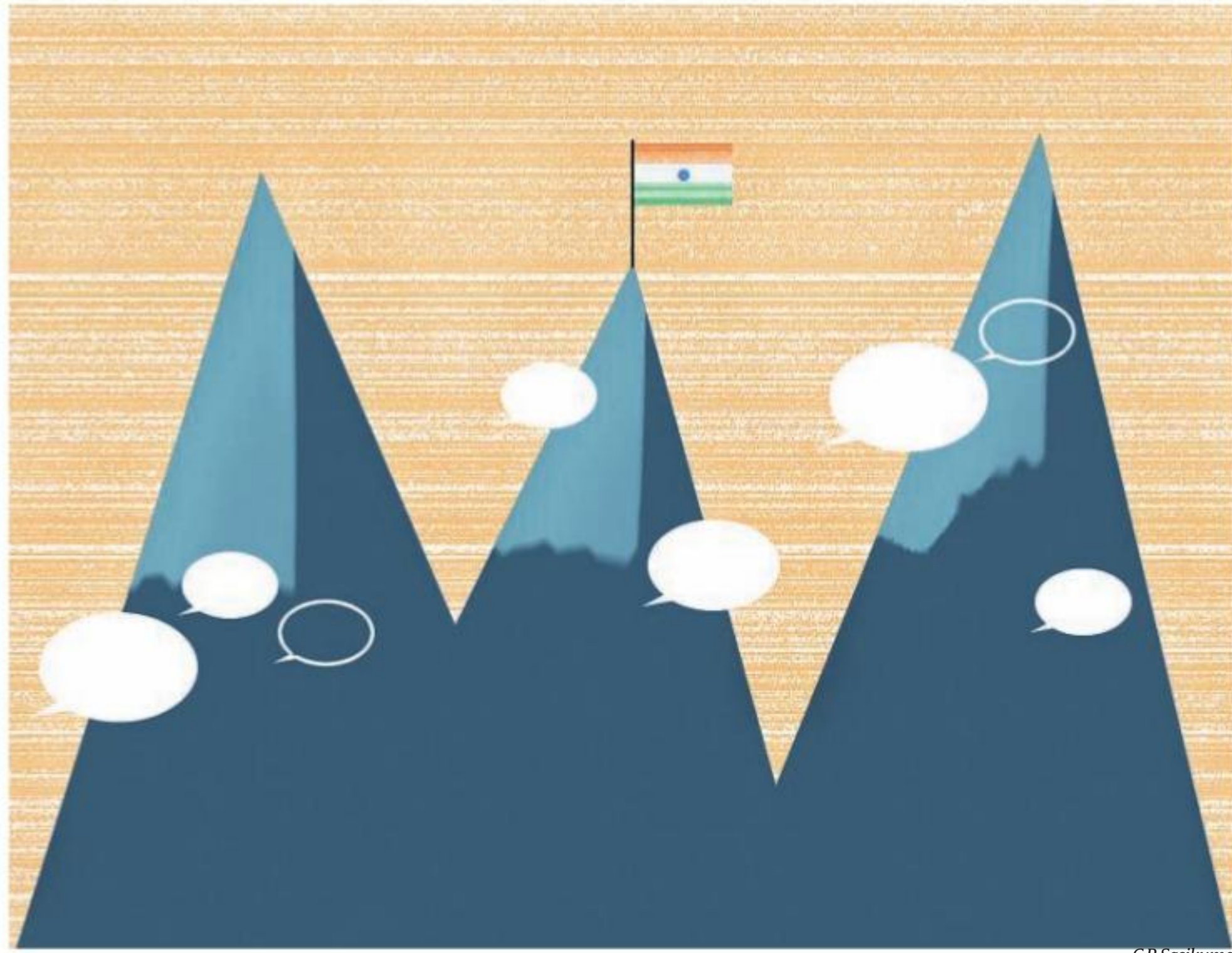
SYED ATA HASNAIN

WHAT PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi did with his address to the nation was to return the focus of his government's decision squarely to the internal domain. After Pakistan's extremely negative response, the focus was in danger of getting hijacked to the international domain, which would have sent a negative message to the local Kashmiri population. The address was perfectly timed because the question that was arising was whether India would squander the difficult decision at the altar of unnecessary triumphalism without looking at the sensitivities of its implications.

Like many citizens, I too supported the government's decision but had one qualification: I had always hoped that whenever such a decision was taken, it would be with complete political consensus. We have a tremendous precedent for this. In the Joint Parliamentary Resolution of February 22, 1994, all Indian political parties came together to communicate to the world that every inch of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir belonged to India and that the nation would aspire to get it back. However, the circumstances in terms of a fractured polity exist today to a far greater extent, although the geopolitical challenges are somewhat similar. Through his address to the nation, PM Modi kept the discourse of political differences limited and handled it with finesse.

A day after images of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval sharing a meal with locals in Shopian hit the headlines, many people were wondering when normalcy would return, given the fact that routine events which can disrupt peace in Kashmir were approaching as a part of the calendar — Eid and Independence Day give anti-national elements a chance to upset things and bring turbulence to the environment. The NSA's presence in the field was appreciated as well as met with cynicism. What the PM's address did was to dent that cynicism. After his Independence Day speech in 2017 — with its references to "na goli se na gaali se" — this address is the first one which shows complete sensitivity towards the plight of Kashmiris. The essence of the earlier thoughts, along with current sentiments, can actually mainstream the people of Kashmir with India. It will, however, need patience, the ability to execute outreach and retain sensitivity in the face of Pakistan's attempts to enhance the alienation of the people against India.

Before attempting to outline a rudimentary strategy to achieve what the PM has outlined, I need to mention two facets of the government's decision that will work favourably. The first was mentioned by the PM extensively in his address — the dilution of J&K to union territory (UT) status. The PM outlined how exactly J&K had been kept away from development without adequate central oversight. This was one of the ma-



C.R. Sasikumar

lor lacunae responsible for the lack of development, high levels of corruption and lack of distribution of wealth to the common people. The UT status brings the region under far greater political and bureaucratic scrutiny, an aspect which perhaps got missed out in the strategy of 1996 when it was decided to counter Pakistan's proxy war through the early return of democracy. Of course, then there were mindsets about the special status of J&K being cast in iron.

The second facet, not noticed as much, is the fact that the government undertook a bifurcation of the state and not a trifurcation. The latter was expected but did not happen much to the chagrin of the people of Jammu division and especially its strong political community. I think the people of Jammu will ultimately thank the government for this decision. Here is how I justify it: Jammu's linkages with Kashmir are historic and deeply ingrained. The communities may temporarily be at odds with each other due to extraordinary circumstances but the mutual interests bound together in the ties across the Pir Panjal are far in excess of the prevailing negatives. Someone who knows J&K well has obviously advised the government. If a geographical division would have taken place along the Pir Panjal, it would have been perceived as a religious division and that is something which would have been exploited by adversaries. Retaining the integrated nature and ultimately returning the UT to the status of a state in the same make up, mainstreaming Kashmir through the Jammu route, will work far better. In fact, the people of Jammu would have done a yeoman service to the nation for which we need to be grateful.

The PM also made a few promises. What stood out was the extension of central government facilities for staff and security personnel. This must be executed early, as one of the crucial organisations which must remain fully motivated is the J&K Police. Its efficiency and morale makes a difference. The promise to return full statehood should act as a good motivator for the polity and the people. Once the PM has stated this, no other reassurance is required.

The PM also made a few promises. What stood out was the extension of central government facilities for staff and security personnel. This must be executed early, as one of the crucial organisations which must remain fully motivated is the J&K Police. Its efficiency and morale makes a difference. The promise to return full statehood should act as a good motivator for the polity and the people. Once the PM has stated this, no other reassurance is required.

Enhancing the self esteem of the Kashmiri people and improving the governance to deliver quality administration appears the PM's clear intent. There are three issues for his advisors to dwell upon. First, develop a basic consensus and form a few all-party committees for direct outreach to the people. Second, make arrangements for the empowerment of the panchayats to deliver grass roots governance. And third, re-empower a part of the J&K bureaucracy, bringing highest quality administrators to the UT. This will facilitate the PM's promise of early restoration of the state's status. Finally, early elections are needed. The can help the polity of the sub-region rebuild its self esteem.

The writer, a former corps commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps, is chancellor, Central University of Kashmir

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"In the first eight weeks, police fired 160 rubber bullets and 1,000 rounds of teargas. On Monday, they came close to matching those figures in a single day. Meanwhile Beijing issues barely veiled threats, such as the mass drill of 12,000 riot police in Shenzhen."

—THE GUARDIAN

Jaipal and Sushma, my comrades

They left an indelible imprint on the national canvas. They will continue to inspire generations to come



M VENKAIAH NAIDU

THE PASSING AWAY of two distinguished and dear friends, Jaipal Reddy and Sushma Swaraj, within 10 days has left me with a sense of loss. Jaipal Reddy, 77, and Sushma Swaraj, 67, were more like my siblings — Jaipal was an elder brother and Sushma, a younger sister. They were outstanding parliamentarians, able administrators and brilliant orators. Both had several similarities and their share of differences; similarities include their abilities, disabilities and their long and successful stints in public life.

Jaipal Reddy was handicapped by polio, but he never let it dampen his spirits. By his words, deeds and accomplishments, he epitomised the real meaning of "differently-abled" and proved to be extraordinarily able. I have asked him if he took any conscious effort to demonstrate that he was not constrained by his physical disability. He would say it was the spirit that mattered — the physical disability didn't make any difference to his indomitable spirit. His life was a saga of an irrepressible creative spirit that transcended all obstacles to soar to great heights.

Jaipal was a great orator and an intellectual giant, with the ability to analyse each and every issue. With razor-sharp intellect and sparkling wit, he was a powerful spokesperson of the party he belonged to. He was an excellent speaker in English and Telugu. Both of us used to sit next to each other in Andhra Pradesh assembly and enjoyed exchanging notes. The ruling party members used to call us Tirupati Venkata Kavulu, comparing us to the two famous Telugu poets who used to compose poems in close collaboration.

Sushma defied a socially ordained disability — in our socio-political milieu, there are several impediments in the way of women getting their due. She overcame formidable social barriers by words, deeds and accomplishments, just like Jaipal. Born in the orthodox social order of Haryana, she rose from being the youngest Cabinet minister in the state government to become the first full-term external affairs minister of our country. It was no mean achievement.

In terms of their differences, Jaipal and Sushma belonged to different ideological streams. But the course of political events brought them together, for a short period though, when they were in the Janata Party after the Emergency. Both were strongly bound by their unflinching commitment to making India what it deserved to be.

Jaipal and I were fellow travellers for a considerable period in the politics of united Andhra Pradesh. We were comrades in arms in stirring the proceedings of the legislative assembly. We were vocifer-

ous in taking up issues of public importance and highlighting the omissions and commissions of the government of the day. Being senior to me in the assembly, he was a kind of friendly guide when I entered the AP assembly for the first time in 1978. We used to meet daily over sumptuous breakfast at each other's homes to discuss and set the agenda for the day. And the day used to end with media persons checking with us if their headlines for the next day based on our interventions in the assembly were okay.

Though born in a feudal family, Jaipal had acquired a modern equity and rights-based perspective that propelled his political life. He never compromised on the core moral and political values and never hesitated to raise his voice against the political establishment to which he belonged to and its leadership. We used to often discuss the transformation and evolution of the polity of our country.

Sushma was my soulmate in politics. We struck a strong bond of kinship, which strengthened over the years. When I went to pay my last respects to Sushma, her daughter Bansuri burst into tears and recalled her mother telling her, "I come back relieved every time I meet Venkaiahji as I effortlessly unwind myself of all the burdensome thoughts like a sister does with her elder brother." Cruel destiny has snatched away an affectionate sister from me.

I was associated with Sushma's political journey and its twists and turns. In 1999, when I was in charge of Karnataka, she readily agreed to my suggestion to contest from Bellary in Karnataka and while I was in charge of Delhi from the party, she accepted the chief ministership of Delhi. She was gritty and graceful, both in victory and defeat.

Sushma had endeared herself to the Indian masses. She was seen as the epitome of Indian culture and a true representative of the core values of our country. Her attire, mannerisms, choice of words, modes of expression, effusive warmth and affection, politeness, demonstrated respect for seniors and elders, articulation skills based on the strength of conviction, force of logic and speaking without hurting others, made her one of the most affable political leaders of modern times. She won the respect and admiration of political leaders from across party lines and the people at large.

Both Jaipal and Sushma belonged to that group of political leaders who had strong convictions based on their vast knowledge and rich experience. They can serve as role models for younger politicians. In fact, their eloquent, reasoned and impassioned speeches must be studied by young politicians.

Their physical forms are no longer with us and their voice will no longer be heard. However, they continue to live in their stirring speeches and insightful writings. Those memorable moments, embedded in our national consciousness for eternity, will continue to inspire many and for long.

The writer is vice-president of India

A case of lazy banking

High real interest rates have hurt economic growth

NO PROOF REQUIRED
BY SURJIT S BHALLA

THIS TIME, MP does not mean Member of Parliament, but monetary policy. What I want to discuss today is the fog surrounding monetary policy in India. It used to be the case, around the world, that a deliberate fog was created around central bank speak. That changed post the 2008 financial crisis. Central banks around the world went for the three Cs — clarity and consistency in communication. To a C, all advanced country central banks go for the 3Cs. Among emerging economies I do not know, but what I hear foreign investors say is the developing world is much closer to the advanced economies than to India.

Is India as different as claimed by "experts"? My own experience, and interpretation, is that India is very different because the experts (perhaps including those at the central bank) look at monetary policy very differently. Most importantly, Indian experts look at the monetary policy through nominal lenses; economics is about the real world. After all, nobody talks about nominal GDP growth; when we discuss growth, it is growth adjusted for inflation. Why don't we do the same with the monetary policy variable called the repo rate — or talk of real borrowing and lending rates?

On August 7, the RBI/MPC reduced the repo rate by 35 bp to 5.4 per cent. The first publication to be off to the races was *Bloomberg Quint* which headlined its story "35 Basis Point Cut Takes RBI Rate To 2010 Level". The story was accurate. In April 2010, the RBI raised the repo rate to 5.25 per cent. CPI inflation at that

time was 13.3 per cent, WPI inflation was 10.5 per cent, and the SBI lending rate was 11.8 per cent. IIP (Index of Industrial Production) was growing at 13 per cent.

It certainly doesn't take a weatherman economist to figure out that the repo rate of 5.4 per cent in August 2019 is not even on the same planet as April 2010, let alone be uttered in the same line. But there has been a surprising uniformity in the editorials in the pink press, which have supported the RBI and the MPC action (inaction) — in addition to getting the simple fact of cost of money wrong. If I were governor Shaktikanta Das, I would be worried. After every budget, the industry bodies give a strong heads up to whatever fiscal policy package the government comes up with. Out of 10, the ranking is always — good, bad and ugly budgets, the same — a robust 9. A lot of us (including the pink newspapers) have criticised this hypocrisy and this "Big Brother is watching" fear. This lack of objective analysis is worrisome. But why no objective analysis of RBI/MPC actions on the part of the sheep newspapers?

What could the editorials have said? They could have pointed out that inflation is phenomenally low, and below the notional 4 per cent target for now the third successive year. While the nominal repo rate is the same as 2010, the real repo rate is at 2.6 per cent compared to minus 8.1 per cent in April 2010. Stated differently and equivalently, the cost of capital (repo rate) today is nearly 11 per-

centage points (ppt) higher. SBI lent money then at 11.75 per cent — today, the nominal lending rate of SBI is higher (with much lower inflation) by 2 ppt at 13.75 per cent.

The system is broke, including the experts who report on the system. The same experts blamed the lack of liquidity for the economic slowdown, not the high real rates. Everyone was shouting lack of liquidity as the cause for slow and declining growth in 2018. With this expertly felt lack of liquidity in 2018, industrial production growth Jan-May 2018 averaged 5.4 per cent. With ample liquidity (and all the papers quoted above congratulated the RBI for successfully introducing the much needed liquidity in 2019), IIP growth has averaged 1.9 per cent in 2019. The first five months of 2010 IIP growth averaged 11.9 per cent. But wait a minute — weren't we coming out of the 2008 financial crisis and that is why IIP was so high in 2010 and not because of real interest rates? There is partial truth in that.

Let us compare the first five months of 2011 with 2019. Industrial production growth then was 6.8 per cent; today it is at 1.6 per cent. Real repo rate then minus 2.8 per cent, today plus 3.4 per cent. Real SBI lending rate then 3.6 per cent; today 11 per cent. Liquidity then, ample; liquidity today, ample.

Das has been in office for only eight months. Nevertheless few facts are relevant. Eight months prior to Das's arrival, inflation had averaged 3.9 per cent, repo rate averaged 6.3 and the real repo rate averaged 2.4 per

cent. Over the last eight months, (till July 2019) inflation has averaged 110 bp lower 2.8 per cent; the repo rate has averaged 20 bp lower at 6.1 per cent, and the real repo rate 90 bp higher. I forgot to add — liquidity very stressed in 2018 (according to many experts, that was the cause for the slowdown) and very ample in 2019.

Every monetary statistic contradicts the expert assessment that monetary policy is reducing the cost of money. It is simple math really — if inflation goes up by 10 per cent, and my cost of borrowing goes up by 5 per cent, the cost of money has come down. And just the opposite when inflation declines more than the repo rate. Why is this simple math seemingly not understood by experts?

There are additional factors constraining growth in 2019 and beyond. Tariff wars have intensified, world growth has slowed down, and our competitors are lowering real rates and lowering tax rates. We are raising both. The expert media fully recognises (most of them do) that higher tax rates in a slowing economy will slow GDP growth even more. But why this arrogant dismissal of the one factor the rest of 180 countries find the most potent cyclical, and structural factor, to enhance growth? Why do experts endorse lazy banking as a solution to our growth problems?

Bhalla is contributing editor, The Indian Express. See the full article at indianexpress.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONGRESS, DISSENT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Coming apart" (IE, August 9). The editorial criticised the divergent stands of Congress party members on the political developments in Jammu and Kashmir. Some party leaders took a stand different from the "party line". Dissent is an integral part of democracy and it should be encouraged. Anti defection law and presidential style elections make politicians, especially the elected politician, a puppet of the "party line".

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Coming apart" (IE, August 9). The confusion in the grand old party regarding its leadership is being reflected in the contradictory voices of Congressmen in response to the developments in Jammu and Kashmir. With the Opposition in disarray, a unified stand against the Centre's abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir appears a far cry.

Vijai Pant Hempur

NEED OF THE HOUR

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Silence of the successful" (IE, August 9). The need of the hour in the country is to focus on stabilising Kashmir rather than telling the people of the Valley that the government is vindictive and vengeful. It is also important to understand that the Babri masjid demolition, completely unethical, was carried out by a mob, not the government. Comparing that incident with a decision of the

LETTER OF THE WEEK

FOOD UNITES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Eat, pray, love" (IE, August 2). The Upanishads describe food as god. Any food item is composed of ingredients which come mostly from agricultural lands which have been worked upon by several workers. It is quite likely that all such people do not have a single religious belief. To a hungry or thirsty man, food is greater than religion. Sujata's food was precious for Gautama on his way to becoming Lord Buddha. Who was Sujata? That would be a foolish question.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Kolkata

government makes no sense.

Vatsal Chaudhary, Delhi

HUMANE LEADER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "A dear leader" (IE, August 8). Sushma Swaraj will be remembered more for being humane than as a politician, even though she was a towering figure in Indian politics. As Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, she played a key role in discrediting the UPA government, paving the way for the BJP's victory in 2014.

Mona Singh, Amritsar



State of the Union

Early elections and full statehood are essential to the total integration of J&K with India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on Thursday may not have reached its primary audience in Jammu and Kashmir which was in blackout. But he did well by speaking out on his decision to revoke its special status, and divide it into two Union Territories. Considering the secrecy and disinformation that preceded the decision that he rightly characterised as historic, and the triumphalism among his supporters that followed, the address was reassuring. The promises he made will be checked against delivery in the coming months, not only by the people of J&K but also by the rest of India and other countries. In his 37-minute address, Mr. Modi promised restoration of statehood to J&K once normalcy returned, a participatory election, and growth in employment, commerce and opportunities in general for them. The PM urged industrialists to set up shop, and film-makers to shoot in the Valley, and asked people there to integrate with the global community. He even offered a catalogue of products and services that could make the State attractive in the global market. While these are desirable objectives, the PM could start with what is exclusively within his powers to effect – to call for fresh election and restore statehood at the earliest. While an elected government itself will be a sign of improvement in the situation, it will also make normalcy more organic. Revocation of statehood was unjustified in the first place, and its restoration must be immediate.

What actually triggered separatism and terrorism in J&K – whether the special status and autonomy it was granted by the Constitution, or the gradual erosion of these concepts over decades – is a difficult question, but the BJP has always claimed to have known the answer. The PM reiterated that position, stating that Articles 370 and 35A gave only “separatism, nepotism and corruption to the people of J&K”. Additionally, he also said these were hurdles in the region's development; and now that these are removed, an era of development and progress could be ushered in. While the charges of corruption and nepotism are true to an extent, there is no reason to suggest that J&K has been any worse than other States in this respect. The implied reductionism in the address that political aspirations may be a price worth paying for material progress may not be a democratic path to progress. No other formation in India is more vociferous than the BJP on questions of culture, heritage and faith. National integration is essential for peace, stability and progress, and uniform development across regions, but this is not synonymous with an enforced cultural homogeneity. J&K needs a representative government and full statehood urgently for normalcy and integration with the Indian Union.

Taking on the mob

Rajasthan's laws on lynching, 'honour killing' are inevitable responses to rising hate crimes

It is possible to argue that there is no need to create new criminal offences for 'lynching' and 'honour killing' because they remain plain murders. These are already punishable with death or life imprisonment. Yet, mob lynching and murderous attacks on young couples in the name of preserving family or community honour have emerged as preponderant social evils. It is but inevitable that societies come up with new ways of combating such hate crimes. Rajasthan has made bold to grapple with these two crimes by passing special penal laws. Vigilante mobs have unleashed a wave of crimes in the name of cow protection and preventing the sale of beef or transport of cattle; the spread of rumour and attempts to establish sectarian dominance have also contributed to this disturbing phenomenon. The Supreme Court zeroed in on the nub of the trend when it spoke of “rising intolerance and growing polarisation” in a judgment last year. It also mooted a special law to criminalise it and “instil a sense of fear” among those too quick to form a lynch mob. The passage of the Protection from Lynching Bill, 2019, makes Rajasthan the second State, after Manipur, to implement the suggestion. A positive feature is that it closely resembles the Manipur law in the way “lynching” is defined. It covers any act of violence, whether spontaneous or planned, by a mob on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation or ethnicity. And two persons are enough to constitute a ‘mob’.

According to the State's Parliamentary Affairs Minister, 86% of mob lynching incidents reported in India after 2014 were in Rajasthan. The Bill says that when a mob attack ends in death, it is punishable with life imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹5 lakh. There are lesser terms for causing injuries. As directed by the Supreme Court, the Bill provides for appointment of a nodal officer to prevent lynching and for district police chiefs to act as coordinators. It ensures compensation to victims and rehabilitation measures for those displaced. The opposition BJP, on expected lines, contended that the Bill was brought in a hurry to please a community. However, it is a fact that Muslims have been prime targets of lynch mobs. The party's fulmination against the other Bill that prohibits interference in the “freedom of matrimonial alliances in the name of honour and tradition” was equally bereft of substance, as it cited societal norms and cultural practice to oppose the progressive law. In effect, it was batting for khap panchayats that seek to interdict inter-caste marriages. The Bill provides for both death and life imprisonment for killing in the name of honour, but it is doubtful if courts will look at all such murders as among the ‘rarest of rare cases’ that warrant the resort to the death penalty.

Incisive interventions that blunt the RTI's edge

With the kernel of the Information Act under threat, the independence of the information commission is in peril



SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY

When we describe India as a democracy what do we really mean? Are we referring merely to a system of popular sovereignty founded in universal adult franchise? Or are we suggesting something more – perhaps an assurance, grounded in the Constitution, of a set of rights, of the rights, among others, to a freedom of expression, life and personal liberty, and equal opportunity and status?

These are questions, as Astra Taylor argues in her remarkable new book, *Democracy May Not Exist, But We'll Miss It When It's Gone*, that we must perpetually ask ourselves. If nothing else to remind oneself that while there can be reasonable disagreements over how a republic ought to be structured, seeing democracy as purely an enforcement of majoritarianism, where the only end in mind is the selection of a representative government, leads to self-rule “becoming not a promise but a curse”. Evidence throughout history has shown us that just results do not necessarily follow from a simple guarantee of equal status enshrined in a right to vote. The wealthy and the dominant classes find uncanny ways to ensure concentration of power. Democracy, therefore, has to percolate beyond the bare promises of formal political equality.

It is to this end that India's Constitution provides a framework for governance by pledging to people a set of inviolable guarantees. But

realising the full value of those guarantees at times requires a parley with the state. It was one such long battle, fought over nearly two decades, driven by the unstinting efforts of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, that resulted in the enactment in 2005 of the Right to Information Act (RTI Act). By any account, the law proved transformative to India's democracy; it revolutionised the citizen's ability to engage with the state, arming people with a mechanism to ferret out some of the truth from the government's otherwise secretive operations.

Deep-reaching amendments

Today, though, the kernel of the RTI Act is under threat. New amendments have been passed without subjecting the draft law to scrutiny by a parliamentary committee. A feature common to every law enacted by Parliament in its present session, this portends the reduction of governance to a form of democracy by crude acclamation. The changes made include an alteration to the term in office of the information commissioners (ICs) and to the manner of determination of their salaries. In place of the existing five-year term accorded to the Central Information Commissioner (CIC) and the various ICs the law grants to the Union government the power to notify their terms through executive regulations. What is more, the amendment deletes the RTI Act's mandate that the salary paid to the CIC and the ICs ought to be equivalent to that paid respectively to the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners (ECs). Now, the salary, allowances, and terms and conditions of service of the CIC and the ICs will be determined by executive guidelines.



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On its face, a reading of these amendments might not strike us as being especially harmful. The changes may appear to be nothing more than matters of legislative niceties. But the RTI Act is not an ordinary statute. It is a law that enlivens and animates the basic right to freedom of information. Although such a right is not enumerated in the Constitution, the Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed its position as intrinsic to the right to freedom of expression (for example, in *PUCL v. Union of India*, 2004).

It might be difficult to see the merit in this finding if we take democracy to mean governance by the many and nothing more. But as the courts have wisely recognised, information often acts as a great leveller; it helps anchor democratic action. Therefore, for democracy to be valuable, citizens must possess a right to freely express themselves. It ought to follow then that it is only when citizens have a right to know what the state is up to, where governance is transparent, can their speech have genuine meaning; only then can they constructively participate in the veritable marketplace of ideas.

It was with a view to giving effect to these constitutional promises that the RTI Act was formulated. Extensive debate was held both in

Parliament and within parliamentary committees before it was decided that public authorities ought to be mandated by law to making a series of voluntary disclosures on their structure, their functioning, and their financial management. Besides this basic directive, citizens are also empowered under the RTI Act to seek and obtain any information from public authorities, barring a few exempted categories such as information which might affect the sovereignty of the country or private information which might have a bearing on a person's right to privacy.

Ferretting out the truth

This freedom to secure information that the law provides has, in many ways, redesigned the structure of India's democratic governance. It has helped open the government up to greater scrutiny. For example, it was through a response to a request made under the RTI Act that it was discovered that between 2006 and 2010 more than ₹700 crore had been diverted from Delhi's special component plan, intended for the development of Scheduled Caste communities, to projects related to the Commonwealth Games. More recently, an exposé by Rohini Mohan into the horrifying processes of the “Foreigners Tribunal” in Assam was made on the back of securing information through the RTI Act. Even there, as Ms. Mohan has pointed out, only five out of the 100 functioning tribunals replied to requests for copies of the orders delivered.

It is when a plea for information goes unheeded that the CIC and the ICs play an especially vital role. Should the initial request for information made to a public information officer, designated by each public authority, fail, the pe-

itioner is entitled to lodge an appeal to an authority within the department concerned. Should that entreaty fail too – and it often does since this is a virtually illusory remedy – a further appeal can be made to the office of the CIC or the State Information Commission.

Until now, the RTI Act granted an acceptable level of independence to ICs. By placing their terms of service on a par with those of the ECs the law insulated the ICs from political influence. This protection was not dissimilar to the autonomy accorded to members of the higher judiciary. The basic idea remained the same: security in office is imperative if members must intervene without fear or favour to ensure that the law's mandate is met.

It could well be argued that the RTI Act, in its original form, was far from flawless, especially in that it did not do enough to open up public authorities to complete scrutiny. But the present amendments, far from strengthening the existing regime, subvert the independence of the information commission. The delegation of the power to fix the tenure and the salaries of the CIC and the ICs to the political executive places the information commission's autonomy in a state of peril. With the withering of that independence, the right to freedom of information also begins to lose its thrust. Ultimately, therefore, the new amendments represent a classic piece of totalitarian legerdemain. Democracy, to borrow the American philosopher Cornel West's conception, demands a “leap of faith”. If the new amendments are allowed to stand, making that leap becomes all the more implausible.

Suhrit Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

Not the final word from Islamabad and Delhi

There are already signs that the Kulbhushan Jadhav case between Pakistan and India might return to the ICJ



VANSHAJ RAVI JAIN

The publication of the International Court of Justice's award in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case on July 17, 2019 was heralded by both India and Pakistan as a victory to their side; the truth probably lies somewhere in between. The award vindicated India's claims on merit, concurring that Pakistan was guilty of multiple violations of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR): by failing to inform Mr. Jadhav of his rights under Article 36 of the treaty, by neglecting to notify India of his arrest without delay, and by denying him consular access. Nonetheless, the ICJ rejected India's claims on two crucial grounds: fair trial rights and remedy.

The bedrock

Much of India's case hinged on Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees individuals the right to a fair trial. By convicting Mr. Jadhav through a military tribunal, using video evidence of a confession obtained under coercive circumstances, and by denying Indian consular officers the opportunity to arrange for his legal representation, India ar-

gued that the Pakistani state had employed an unjust procedure in his trial. Predictably, however, the ICJ chose to hinge its jurisdiction in this case on Article 1 of the Optional Protocol to the VCCR, which grants the ICJ compulsory jurisdiction only over disputes arising out of the application or interpretation of the Consular Convention. The unfortunate consequence of this choice was that disputes pertaining to violations of other international law norms, such as the human rights obligations under the ICCPR, were ruled to be outside the remit of the ICJ's jurisdiction. India's attempts to have the ICCPR piggyback on the VCCR, by claiming that the latter was also, in essence, a human rights treaty and by asserting that the inclusion of the ICCPR was necessary for an effective remedy, were rejected out of hand.

Issue of remedies

The more troubling aspect of the ICJ's award, from the Indian perspective, concerns the ICJ's decision on remedies. It denied India's prayer to set aside Mr. Jadhav's conviction by the military tribunal, and for his release. Instead, it ruled that the appropriate remedy would be for Pakistan to carry out an “effective review and reconsideration” of the tribunal's conviction and sentence. What this means, in simpler terms, is that Pakistan will have to provide Mr. Jadhav a judicial mechanism to assess the prejudice caused to him by a denial of consular access, and



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to reconsider (and possibly alter) his sentence and conviction based on his findings.

While not entirely unforeseeable, this decision is worrying for several reasons. First, this remedy carries a fraught history: it has only ever been used before by the ICJ in *LaGrand* and *Avena*, which involved an identical denial of consular access to nationals of Germany and Mexico, respectively, by the United States. Crucially, the unsatisfactory implementation of this remedy and the weak review mechanisms provided by the U.S. in response to the ICJ's decision in both cases have been widely noted in academic literature. Second, the remedy does little to account for the violation of Mr. Jadhav's fair trial rights. This means that the review procedure Pakistan opts for might well be one carried out by a military tribunal, and also one that continues to rely on the allegedly-forced video confession. But perhaps the most troubling aspect of this remedy, and the one that makes it most ripe for further litigation, is that it is intrinsically ambiguous.

Apart from asserting that the re-

view and reconsideration of Mr. Jadhav's conviction “must be effective”, the ICJ has offered little guidance on how it must be carried out. It is known, from the *Avena* judgment, that providing Mr. Jadhav access to a clemency petition (as Pakistani law does) is an insufficient form of review, since it does not entail the use of a judicial mechanism. The Pakistani Supreme Court, in *Said Zaman Khan v. Federation of Pakistan*, ruled that the state's civilian courts could only review the decision of a military tribunal on the narrow grounds of *coram non iudice* (i.e., an absence of jurisdiction) or *mala fides* (bad faith). It is unlikely that Mr. Jadhav's denial of VCCR rights falls under either category. However, the decision in *Said Zaman Khan* is under review, following the Peshawar High Court's attempts to widen it in 2018, in the Abdur Rashid case.

Heading back to The Hague?

The outcome of the latter case may well portend the use of a civilian review mechanism for Mr. Jadhav's case. Even if the Rashid case fails, Pakistan could potentially be required to alter their laws to provide a more effective review mechanism for decisions of military tribunals: a fact alluded to by the ICJ, which stated that “Pakistan shall take all measures to provide for effective review and reconsideration, including, if necessary, by enacting appropriate legislation” [emphasis added].

Ultimately, though neither state

will admit it, the Jadhav decision will be a bitter pill to swallow for both India and Pakistan. For Pakistan, making a significant alteration to its legal system would amount to an admission that the ICJ's judgement was a public admonition of Pakistan's judicial review mechanism: a prospect Pakistan is unlikely to welcome. For India, any review mechanism that fails to acquit Mr. Jadhav will be seen as procedurally unsound, and an attempt by Pakistan to further shrink its international legal responsibilities. It does not help that both countries have dug themselves into holes by thoroughly politicising the ICJ's verdict.

The likely consequence is that, irrespective of what review mechanism Pakistan implements, both nations will be soon be back, knocking on the door of the International Court: the ICJ's Statute allows parties to approach the court again, asking it to interpret its judgment. Signs of this outcome can already be witnessed, with Pakistan refusing India unimpeded access to Mr. Jadhav through a note verbale issued mere weeks after the ICJ's decision. India's counsel, Harish Salve, has publicly stated that the state will not hesitate to return to the ICJ if Pakistan's conduct proves to be unsatisfactory. It is increasingly likely that we haven't heard the last of the Jadhav litigation. For now, however, the ball remains in Pakistan's court.

Vanshaj Ravi Jain is a DPhil candidate and Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford

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.

Pakistan's stance

Strange as it might seem, the reverberations over the Central government's decision to abrogate Articles 35A and 370 and re-designate Jammu and Kashmir as a Union Territory appear to be felt more in neighbouring Pakistan than in the Kashmir Valley itself (Editorial, “Knee-jerk”, August 9). A flurry of activity has been witnessed in Pakistan – expulsion of the Indian envoy, bilateral trade coming to a halt, and even a refusal to grant consular access to Kulbhushan Jadhav. What is even more of an oddity is Pakistan which has absolutely no locus standi as far as Kashmiri affairs are concerned also threatening to take the matter to the United Nations Security

Council. India has to thwart all efforts by Pakistan to meddle in our internal affairs.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

■ Before it rushed ahead with snapping trade ties with India, debt-ridden Pakistan should have understood that trade is a basic need for employment and income generation for its people. Also reorganising its own State is India's internal matter. Even on the diplomatic front, the rest of the subcontinent has recognised this as fact. Pakistan must shun its policy of state-sponsored terrorism as it is already on the grey list of international donor agencies for terror-financing. It should continue to engage in talks with India at the bilateral level and resolve all

pending issues.

HARVINDER SINGH CHUGH,
Jalandhar City, Punjab

Bank nationalisation

None can dispute the beneficial impact of bank nationalisation on the Indian economy but let us not forget that everything is transient in its time and place (Editorial page, “Economic milestone and a poignant anniversary”, August 9). There are obvious unwanted consequences and developments that call for change now. The recommendations of the Narasimhan Committees on banking sector reforms in the 1990s deserve a closer look. The point of non-performing assets, the inherent deficiency of public sector banking in many areas and new issues require a holistic look. Other issues include mergers of banks,

the structure of non-banking financial companies and small- and medium-enterprises, holistic consolidation in banking and industrial structures. Change is of the essence.

K.U. MADA,
Mangaluru

■ The fact that much of the growth of agricultural credit since 2001 has been cornered by “big agri-business farms and corporate houses located in urban and metropolitan centres” goes against the basic credo of nationalisation. Other points in the article highlight the need to expand the rural banking network and instructional credit. That privatisation of nationalised banks is a panacea for all the ills of the banking sector would spell disaster for the

rural economy. It would be far more prudent to correct systemic faults that have crept in the sector in the course of the last 50 years than reversing a policy measure that has made financial inclusion a reality. Even merger to create a few leviathans may prove to be counter productive.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

Green ambassador

Striking a balance between environmental concerns and development is no doubt difficult, but the photograph of a nine-year-old girl in Manipur crying over felled trees as a result of a road widening project in that State is anguish and distress that anyone who is environmentally conscious can understand (“Life” page, “Girl who cried over felled

trees is Manipur's green ambassador”, August 9). However, the gesture of the Manipur government in making her a green ambassador, offering 20 saplings to her and extending her other concessions, will go a long way in not only assuaging her distraught feelings but also making it clear that there exists a government that cares for its citizens. That the Chief Minister himself intervened in the matter is gratifying. The incident needs to be highlighted in all educational institutions so that the younger generation is encouraged to do its bit in the protection of the environment.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

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In Beed, a harvest of crushed hopes

Maharashtra's drought-stricken district of Beed hit the headlines recently when reports emerged of an unusually high rate of hysterectomies among its women, especially those who migrate to nearby districts to cut sugar cane. **Jyoti Shelar** pieces together their story as the State administration carries out an investigation

At 34, Sangeeta Kale from Maharashtra's Beed district is a mother of two college-going sons, aged 19 and 17. Married off to a sugar-cane cutter at the age of 13 even before she had hit puberty, Kale had little inkling of the hard life ahead. Kale, who had her first child when she was just 16, worked through her pregnancy with husband Sadashiv in the fields of western Maharashtra, sometimes spending up to 16 hours cutting and loading the cane crop into trucks during the harvesting months – October to March. Her life remained the same after her first and second deliveries and subsequent years.

However, she found the routine back-breaking work daunting on days her menstrual cycle set in, as the fields had no toilets. She couldn't take leave for fear of being heavily penalised. Finally, fed up with these troubles and other recurrent gynaecological issues ranging from white discharge to pain, Kale underwent hysterectomy – uterus-removal surgery – last July.

Just like Kale, many women, some of whom are just in their 20s, in Beed have undergone this life-altering procedure, which is otherwise prescribed only for a handful of medical conditions and often performed as a last resort.

What is even more shocking is that Kale was the seventh woman in her extended family, living in Beed's Umrad Jahagir village, to have undergone the operation. "Frustrated with period pain, white discharges and foul smell, when I approached a doctor, I was told my uterus was damaged and hysterectomy was the way out," says Kale.

The drought-stricken Beed district in Maharashtra's Marathwada region came under the scanner this May after reports came to light about the unusually high rate of hysterectomies among its women, especially among those who migrate to neighbouring districts to work as sugar-cane cutters.

State figures say that in three years (2016-2019), as many as 4,605 women have had their uterus removed in Maharashtra. Civil rights organisations allege that the hysterectomy rate in Beed is 14 times more than that for the State or the country. In Umrad Jahagir village where the Kales reside, the number of 'womb-less women' now stands at 50.

Pushed into debt

Sitting on the floor of her tin-roofed shanty, Kale, slightly under five-feet tall, points towards her back and knees. "The uterus-removal surgery has no doubt relieved me from the menstrual cramps and vaginal discharge, but it has brought along back and joint pain. On many days, the pain is unbearable. It's like I have aged at a greater speed," she says.

"The doctor assured me that removing the uterus was the best option. Though I was taking medication, my infections were recurring. I had already undergone a sterilisation surgery, so there was anyway no scope of having more children. Hysterectomy seemed like the right thing to do. But later, the after-effects started," rues Kale, who missed out on the last sugar-cane cutting season as she was bedridden for three months after the procedure. Her decision to undergo the procedure has brought not just health issues but severe economic distress to the already impoverished household.

Her husband holds her responsible for the debt of ₹2 lakh that has piled on them. At first, he blamed her one-off leaves from work. Then, he pointed fingers at her for the ₹30,000 that they had to borrow for the hysterectomy. The taunts have gotten worse since they missed out on the last season of sugar-cane cutting.

Kale relied on the testimonies of her four sisters-in-law and two of their mothers-in-law, who had all been through the procedure, when she got admitted to the Veer Hospital located on the Beed-Jalna road for the surgery. "None of us has ever been to school. But the doctor is educated. His word was assuring for us," she says.

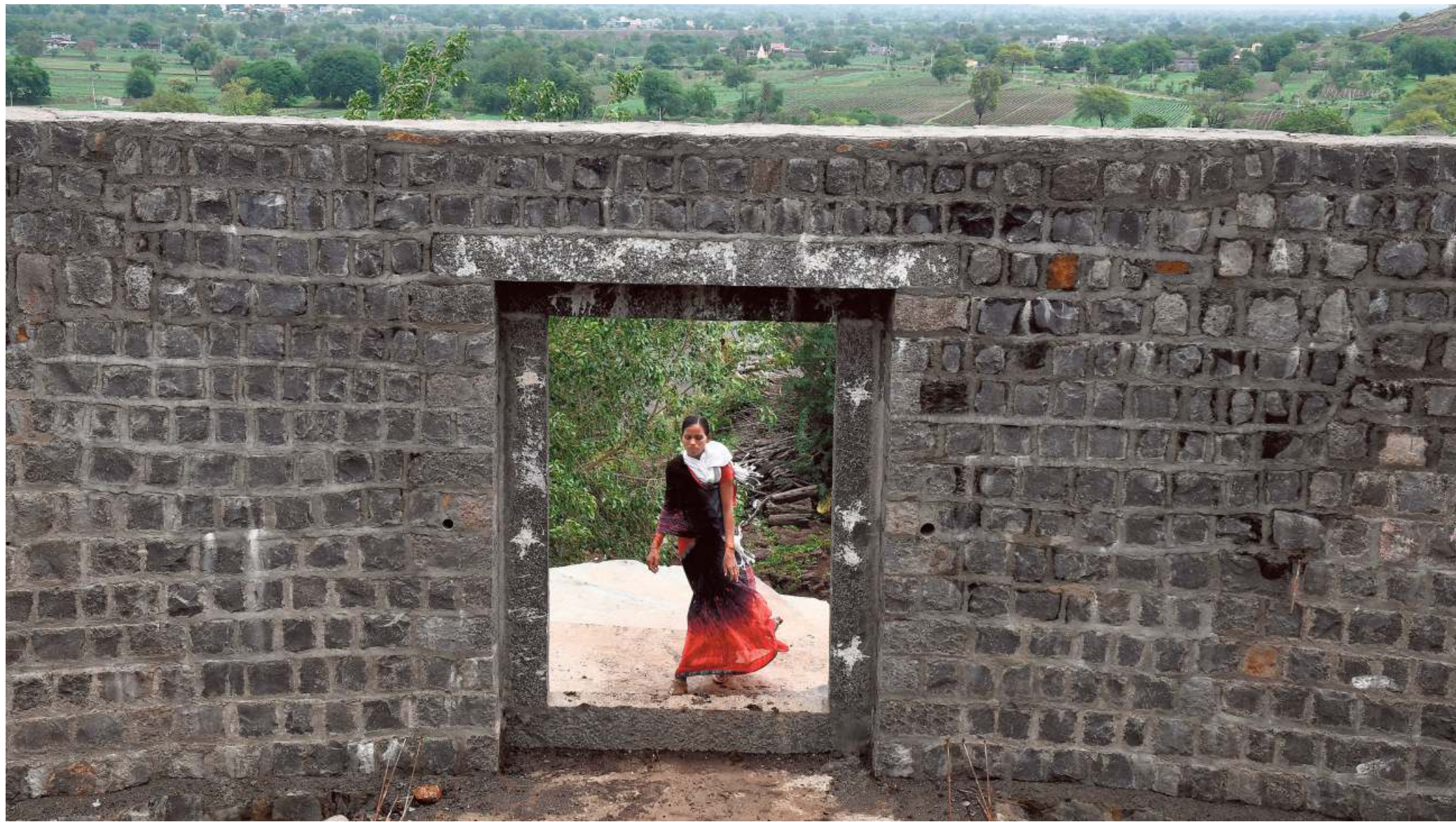
Kale's sister-in-law Vaishali, 33, was also advised a hysterectomy when she sought medical help after grappling with vaginal discharge and recurrent infections for years. "I was told my uterus was damaged and getting it removed was best. I had two sons, so we thought the most important job of the womb was done," says Vaishali.

Scores of women in Beed offer a similar narrative. Shockingly, most don't have medical reports or any papers to show the history of their treatment.

Their individual stories all follow a pattern. Women would commonly consult their doctors for health issues lasting up to a year, but then complain of recurrent infections. Sooner or later, hysterectomy would be recommended to them as a permanent solution.

However, they were never told how the surgery could lead to hormonal imbalance, calcium deficiency and constant body ache, among other things.

In Beed, open defecation remains a ground reality. Many households do have built toilet blocks built under the



Sarika Chandrasen Kurlekar, 32, among the 56 women in Vanjarwadi village who have undergone hysterectomy. • ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

government's Swachh Bharat scheme but their members still defecate in the open due to lack of water. For the women in the district, it is a vicious cycle as they have no sanitary facilities either at their workplace or at their homes. And the nature of work in a sugar-cane field has only worsened their situation.

An estimated 5-6 lakh people, including pregnant and lactating women, migrate from Beed to other parts of Maharashtra, and border areas of Karnataka, to work as sugar-cane cutters. Hailing from a region that is perennially under a spell of drought and not having many avenues of employment, Beed residents continue to live in abject poverty and have to rely on sugar-cane cutting to make a living. Traditionally, a couple is hired by a *mukadam* (contractor) as a single 'unit', known as *ek koyta* (one sickle). The contractor pays them *uchal* (a lump sum) in advance, ranging from ₹80,000 to ₹1.2 lakh, for a period of four to six months. The pairs migrate after Deepavali every year.

While a typical workday starts at around 6 a.m. for the couple, the woman gets up earlier, at 4 a.m., and cooks food for the entire family before she sets out. Children are left behind in temporary shanties near the sugar-cane farms as their parents toil under the sun.

Two-and-a-half tonnes a day

Laxmi Chauhan, 44, from Beed's Vanjarwadi village and her husband Nanabhau, 45, have been migrating for sugar-cane cutting for the past 25 years. "We manage to cut about two-and-a-half tonnes of sugar-cane in a day. A tonne of sugar-cane earns us anywhere between ₹350 to ₹400 depending on the seasonal rate," says Nanabhau, a father of two sons, both in their twenties.

Soon after the birth of their children, Chauhan began experiencing pain in the abdomen, which resulted in her frequent absences from work and low productivity. "Working during the menstrual cycle was anyway difficult," says Chauhan, adding that she had to make multiple strikes with the sickle to cut a single cane, a process which made her feel further weak and unwell. It also meant lower earnings for the couple.

"We earned less than the *uchal* and had to repay the remaining amount to the *mukadam*. Also, when one failed to report to work, the *mukadam* demanded a fine of ₹500, which had to be paid in cash and was distributed among other workers who took the extra workload," says Chauhan.

Troubled by her own dwindling productivity and the couple's mounting debt, Chauhan finally decided to see a doctor at the Veer Hospital in 2014. Following a sonography, she was told that her uterus had got swollen and this could lead to cancer. Within the next few days, the couple hurriedly collected ₹25,000 and Chauhan got her uterus removed, as advised by the doctor. She was hospitalised for seven days.

"Since then, my body has begun swelling and I am in pain every day. But

The surgery has no doubt relieved me from the menstrual cramps and vaginal discharge, but it has brought along back and joint pain

SANGEETA KALE
Beed resident



I feel better than before," she says. Weight gain, which Chauhan has experienced, is another inevitable side effect of hysterectomy. When asked if the uterus removal was at the suggestion of a *mukadam*, the couple deny it. "We trusted the doctor's word," says Nanabhau, adding that they had sought help with the intention of getting medical treatment and not surgery. "When the doctor told us about the risk of cancer, we did not want to take any chances," he says.

Coaxed by contractors?

Following reports on the high number of hysterectomies performed in Beed, the Maharashtra administration launched an investigation on June 18. Among the many aspects that the authorities are probing, one is whether the *mukadams* push women to undergo the procedure to ensure better returns. "There could be a nexus between profit-driven doctors and the *mukadams*. This definitely needs to be investigated, among other things," says Neelam Gorhe, who is heading the seven-member investigation committee that will submit its report to the Chief Minister and Health Minister this month.

A *mukadam* is a well-connected villager who reaches out to prospective labourers from the nearby areas. With frequent droughts and failing crops, many couples prefer to migrate for income generation, even if they have acres of farmland back home.

"The poverty is so ingrained that the advance taken by couples is exhausted very quickly. When they fail to cut sugar-cane worth the advance paid to them, we are left with no choice but to

pursue them to return the remaining money," says Bappa Kotwade, 42, a *mukadam* from Beed's Irla Dubba village. Having been a *mukadam* for the past 15 years, he supplies up to 200 *koyatas* (couples) to sugar-cane factories every season.

While some labourers are *gadiwale* (couples with a pair of bullocks and a rented cart), some work as *toliwale* (groups that transport harvested sugar cane in trucks or tractors).

"Some men are alcoholics and recovering money from them becomes a task. Some couples disappear midway. There are some who never pay back. We have to be taskmasters to deal with this," says Kotwade, adding that they forge long-standing relationships with the labourers and keep paying them small amounts for food and health expenses to ensure that they come back every season.

But it is not always hunky-dory for the labourers, some of whom have been beaten up and even illegally detained in factories when they failed to cough up the money. "There have been murders too," says Kotwade, citing a story of a *mukadam* who had a scuffle with a labourer while demanding the money. "The labourer died due to serious injuries and the *mukadam* landed in jail."

Kotwade, however, rubbishes the allegation that *mukadams* suggest hysterectomies to women. "It is a vicious cycle of hard manual labour, grinding poverty and bad living conditions. Uterus or no uterus, they have to work to earn. Why should we tell them anything?" he says, adding that women have been undergoing hysterectomies for years in Beed.

Let down by doctors?

A muddy pathway through a farm in Vanjarwadi leads to the house of Sarika Chandrasen Kurlekar, a frail 32-year-old. In the village, where 56 women have undergone uterus removal procedures, Kurlekar is the youngest to have been operated. She has never migrated for cane cutting but, like all other women, had been complaining of continuous white discharge that caused fatigue. Her medical record from Matoshri Hos-

Early marriages and child birth, fear of cancer and the loss of wages during menstruation have all culminated in the high rate of hysterectomies

ABHIJIT MORE
Health activist

pital cites "bulky cervix and persistent demand by patient" as the reason for the hysterectomy.

Ashok Anand, head of gynaecology at the state-run J.J. Hospital in Mumbai, is amused at the reasons cited. "Neither a bulky cervix nor persistent demands by a patient warrant a hysterectomy. Her symptoms were more likely due to cervicitis, which could be treated through conservative medication," says Anand.

Since news on the hysterectomies in Beed came to light, questions have been raised on the possible role of the medical fraternity in making women undergo the procedure. State data showed that 99 private hospitals in Beed district have carried out 4,605 hysterectomies since April 2016. Eleven of these hospitals have carried out more than 100 hysterectomies in the three-year period.

'Gross exploitation'

The top five in the list are: Pratibha Nursing Home (277); Tidke Hospital (196); Shree Bhagwan Hospital (193); Gholve Hospital (186); and Veer Hospital (179). In comparison, 2,000-odd hysterectomies have been performed in the public sector in the same period in Beed. "Instead of getting rational treatment in public health-care facilities, the women are pushed towards irrational treatments in the private sector," says Abhay Shukla, national co-convenor of the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan. "It's nothing but gross exploitation of vulnerabilities of women and a failure of the state," he says. Activists also rue that the official count could be under-reported as the state banks on these same hospitals to furnish the figures.

Local doctors, however, feel the criticism is uncalled for and insist that for most of the women who underwent the surgery, their health warranted it. Gy-

naecologist Madhav Sanap, who has run the Shree Bhagwan Hospital since 1998, is prompt to assert that there may be doctors who conduct unindicated procedures, but he is not one of them. "Of the 193 surgeries that I have carried out, only four were of women under 35. I can provide history for each and every case," he says, while arguing that the hype around hysterectomies in Beed requires an in-depth analysis. "It will prove that the district has rates comparable to other parts of the State," he says.

Poor hygiene

Sanjay Veer, a gynaecologist and owner of Veer Hospital, says no one goes under the knife unless there is real suffering. "These women live in conditions of extremely poor hygiene. They don't have access to toilets. They can't afford sanitary pads. Open defecation is rampant in their villages as near the sugar-cane farms where they work," he says.

"The core issues are poverty, illiteracy, lack of sanitation and access to water. Doctors are being made scapegoats in this issue, which is largely a socio-economic one and requires a larger solution," he adds.

The National Family Health Survey data show that the rate of hysterectomies in Maharashtra is 2.6%, while the national average is 3.2%. But when it comes to Beed, a 2018 survey of 200 women by Maharashtra State Commission for Women revealed the extent of the problem as around 36% were found to have had undergone hysterectomies.

According to Beed's civil surgeon Ashok Thorat, there is an absence of enough data to carry out comparisons with other districts in Maharashtra. "Our primary investigations have shown that the prevalence of hysterectomies is 17 per 1,000 women in Beed. In some parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and other States, the prevalence is about 50 to 60 per 1,000 women," says Thorat, adding that a detailed survey is under way to get to the root cause.

In fact, a circular dated April 16, has made it compulsory for private gynaecologists in Beed to seek permission from a civil surgeon for every hysterectomy procedure barring emergency procedures, which have to be reported within a span of 24 hours. The circular warns doctors against portraying all kinds of tumours, growths and swelling on uterus as cancers.

"The number of hysterectomies has gone down by 50% since we implemented the SOP [Standard Operating Procedure]," Beed's collector Astik Kumar Pandey tells *The Hindu*. "Right now, all the hospitals are under our scanner. All hysterectomies in the past, especially of women who are under 35, are being scrutinised," he says.

Activists say that the menace of unwarranted hysterectomies affects not just sugar-cane cutters but women in general. "Early marriages and child birth, fear of cancer and the loss of wages during menstruation have all culminated in the high rate of hysterectomies. The government has no clue about the ground reality as it has never maintained any data," says health activist Abhijit More who terms Beed's situation as a blatant violation of rights of women living in the district, who are uneducated and therefore ill-equipped to make the right health choices.



Six out of the seven women from the extended Kale family in Umrad have undergone hysterectomies. • ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 150

सुस्त मांग का असर

अर्थव्यवस्था में पिछले कुछ समय से मांग में आई अनदेखी सुस्ती के बीच कई विशेषज्ञ इसके कारण एवं समाधान बता रहे होंगे। इस चर्चा में यह भी छोटा सा योगदान है।

भारतीय उपभोक्ता कर्ज में आकट डूबे हुए हैं। कटौतियों के बाद हाथ में आने वाले वेतन का एक बड़ा हिस्सा कर्ज भुगतान की मासिक किस्त (ईएमआई) में चला जाता है क्योंकि उपभोग का एक बड़ा हिस्सा उधार की रकम से ही जोर पकड़ता है। इससे भी बुरी बात है कि कई लोग उन घरों

या फ्लैटों के लिए उठाए कर्ज को भी किस्त भर रहे हैं जिनका निर्माण अभी तक पूरा नहीं हुआ है।

दूसरा, निम्न मुद्रास्फोति के प्रभावों पर सोचें। वेतन वृद्धि कम होती जा रही है लिहाजा समय के साथ किस्त के बोझ में मिलने वाली राहत नदारद हो चुकी है। ब्याज दरों के भी नीचे आ जाने से लोग अपनी वृद्धावस्था के लिए अधिक बचत करने और फिलहाल कम खर्च करने को मजबूर हैं। तीसरा कारण नकारात्मक धन प्रभाव है।

रियल एस्टेट की कीमतें 25 फीसदी से भी अधिक गिर चुकी हैं। शेयर बाजार सूचकांक भी एक साल पहले की तुलना में निचले स्तर पर हैं और कई म्यूचुअल फंडों ने नकारात्मक नहीं तो खराब प्रतिफल दिया है। जब लोग खुद को गरीब महसूस करने लगते हैं तो वे कम खर्च करते हैं।

चौथा, श्रमशक्ति में पहले से कम महिलाएं होने से रोजगार ढांचा भी बदला है। महिलाओं के अधिक समय तक पढ़ने, कुलीनता का भाव आने, आते-जाते समय सुरक्षा की कमी और उपलब्ध कार्य न होने जैसे कारणों से एक औसत परिवार में कामकाजी व्यक्तियों की संख्या कम हो गई है। निश्चित रूप से इसका असर परिवार की आय पर होगा। पांचवां कारण लोगों के अधिक समय तक जीवित रहने से जुड़े प्रभाव हैं। साठ साल से अधिक उम्र वाली आबादी जनसंख्या की समग्र वृद्धि दर से

करीब दोगुनी दर से बढ़ रही है। बुजुर्गों की देखभाल करने से परिवारों पर स्वास्थ्य संबंधी खर्चों का बोझ बढ़ता है। आवास, वाहन, टिकाऊ उपभोक्ता उत्पादों एवं शिक्षा को छोड़कर अन्य कारणों से लिए जाने वाले घरेलू कर्ज में तीव्र वृद्धि हुई है। इनमें से कुछ हिस्सा निश्चित रूप से इलाज पर हुए खर्चों की भरपाई के लिए होगा।

छठे कारण का उल्लेख रथिन रॉय अपने लेख में कर चुके हैं। उत्पादों एवं सेवाओं की मांग का बड़ा हिस्सा एक पतली ऊपरी परत से ढका हुआ है। हालांकि यह आवरण उतना पतला भी नहीं है क्योंकि कुल आबादी का 30-35 हिस्सा उपभोग करने वाले दस्त में शामिल है। मसलन, 2011 की जनगणना बताती है कि 24.6 करोड़ में से 21 फीसदी परिवारों के पास दोपहिया वाहन थे। आज के समय में यह अनुपात

अधिक ही होगा क्योंकि करीब छह फीसदी परिवार हर साल दोपहिया वाहन खरीद रहे हैं। फिर भी रॉय इस मामले में सही हैं कि खर्च करने वाला तबका उतनी तेजी से नहीं बढ़ रहा है। एक कारण यह होगा कि श्रम-आधिक्य वाले विनिर्माण की वृद्धि निम्न-मध्य वर्ग के स्तर पर बड़ी व्यय श्रेणी बनाने में सफल नहीं हो पाई है।

उसकी वजह से आय भी कम होने से 'गिग इकॉनमी' भी विकल्प नहीं रह गई है। आखिर में, कृषि क्षेत्र में बदलाव का दौर है। किसान अब घरेलू बाजार की खपत से अधिक पैदावार करते हैं। लेकिन अधिक उपज का निर्यात नहीं हो पाने से घरेलू मांग एवं आपूर्ति के बदले संतुलन ने कीमत संबंधी दबाव पैदा किए हैं जो कृषि आय को सीमित कर देता है। अगर श्रम अधिकता

वाली विनिर्माण गतिविधियां सफल हुई रहतीं और लोग खेतों से निकलकर कारखानों में पहुंचे रहते तो खेती में लगे कम लोगों का ही पेट भरना पड़ता।

मजदूरी की सघनता वाले विनिर्माण को बढ़ावा देने के लिए श्रम सुधार, प्रतिस्पर्द्धी कीमत वाले रुपये, सक्षम ढांचागत आधार और आपूर्ति शृंखला विकास जैसे बदलावों की जरूरत है। अर्थव्यवस्था में नई जान फूंकने के दबाव में आकर सरकार तात्कालिक समाधानों का रुख कर सकती है। इसे समझा जा सकता है लेकिन किसी को भी भ्रम में नहीं रहना चाहिए। संरचनात्मक बदलावों के बगैर टिकाऊ आर्थिक वृद्धि का रूझान नीचे की तरफ ही बना रहेगा।



अजय मोहंती

जलवायु परिवर्तन पर कदम और उनकी भू-राजनीति

जलवायु के अनुकूल तकनीक पर नियंत्रण ही भविष्य में भू-राजनैतिक शक्ति का माध्यम बनेगा। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं नितिन देसाई

जून और जुलाई 2019 दर्ज इतिहास के सबसे गर्म महीनों में शामिल रहे हैं और 2015 से 2019 तक का समय सबसे गर्म पांच वर्ष का समय रहा है। भारत में दिल्ली के पालम में 10 जून, 2019 को 48 डिग्री सेल्सियस का तापमान दर्ज किया गया। राजस्थान में तापमान बढ़कर 50 डिग्री सेल्सियस का आंकड़ा पार कर गया। यूरोप और अमेरिका में भी अप्रत्याशित गर्मी देखने को मिली।

विश्व मौसम विज्ञान संस्थान के महासचिव पेटेरी टालास के मुताबिक अत्यधिक गर्मी के साथ-साथ ग्रीनलैंड, आर्कटिक और यूरोपीय ग्लेशियरों में जमकर बर्फ पिघली। आर्कटिक में लगातार दूसरे महीने जंगलों में आग लगी और घने जंगल नष्ट हो गए जो कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड का अवशोषण करते थे और ग्रीन हाउस गैसों का उत्सर्जन कम करते थे। यह कोई विज्ञान गल्प नहीं बल्कि जलवायु परिवर्तन की हकीकत है। अगर तत्काल कदम नहीं उठाए गए तो भविष्य में हालात और खराब होंगे।

ये गर्म हवाएं केवल नमूना भर हैं। यदि हम जलवायु परिवर्तन की चुनौती से निपटने के लिए कदम नहीं उठाते हैं तो हालात और खराब होंगे। बाढ़, सूखा, बारिश में कमी, तूफानों का आना, तटीय इलाकों के मीठे पानी में खारापन, कृषि

एवं जैव उत्पादकता पर असर बढ़ेगा। कुलमिलाकर जलवायु से जुड़ी आपदाएं बढ़ेंगी और हमारा स्वास्थ्य प्रभावित होगा। दुनिया का कोई देश अपने दम पर इससे निपट नहीं सकता क्योंकि ग्रीनहाउस गैसों का उत्सर्जन समूची पृथ्वी पर असर डालने वाला है।

यही कारण है कौन क्या करता है और किसे क्या करने को मजबूर किया जाता है, इसकी भू-राजनीति अब जलवायु कूटनीति की चिंता के मूल में है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा में सितंबर 2019 में जलवायु परिवर्तन पर बहस होने वाली है, उससे कुछ संकेत निकल सकते हैं।

नेचर पत्रिका के एक हालिया आलेख में जलवायु परिवर्तन की भू-राजनीति के चार संभावित परिदृश्यों पर चर्चा की गई है। पहला परिदृश्य काफी हद तक अकल्पनीय है। इसमें विभिन्न देशों के बीच बोझ की साझेदारी के मामले में गहन सहयोग की बात की गई है। जीवाश्म ईंधन कंपनियों को वित्तीय बाजार के माध्यम से हाशिये पर करने, हरित तकनीक वाली कंपनियों के उभार और सभी देशों द्वारा संयुक्त राष्ट्र के सतत विकास लक्ष्यों को हासिल करने की बात कही गई है।

दूसरा परिदृश्य एक तकनीकी बदलाव की परिकल्पना करता है, जहां स्वच्छ ऊर्जा की आर्थिकी में नाटकीय बदलाव की बात कही गई है। इसका एक समतुल्य उदाहरण

मोबाइल फोन तकनीक से लिया जा सकता है जिसने दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में क्रांति ला दी। परंतु यह परिदृश्य कुछ देशों के बीच तकनीकी दबदबे और प्रतिद्वंद्विता की तस्वीर भी पेश करता है। इस संभावना के लिए मौजूदा कार्बन स्पेस में उचित दखल कायम करें। दोनों देशों में तेल की कमी है और सौर तथा पवन ऊर्जा को वे केवल कार्बन उत्सर्जन में कमी के विकल्प के अलावा ऊर्जा सुरक्षा के उपाय के रूप में भी देखते हैं। दोनों देश कोयले पर काफी हद तक निर्भर हैं और कोयले का इस्तेमाल कम करने तथा नई तकनीक विकसित करने तथा अपनाने में दोनों के हित जुड़े हैं।

तथ्य यह है कि घरेलू विकास के लिए हमें प्रभावी जलवायु कार्य योजना की आवश्यकता है। कोयले पर निर्भरता के अलावा दोनों देश जलवायु के अनुकूल वृद्धि के लिए काम कर सकते हैं। लेकिन उन्हें इस क्षेत्र में वास्तविक नेतृत्व तभी मिलेगा जब वे दूसरों से कुछ अलग कदम उठाएं। उन्हें जो गुंजाइश बनानी है या सार्वजनिक परिवहन, भवन डिजाइन, शहरी नियोजन, ऊर्जा क्तिफायत वाले विनिर्माण आदि के क्षेत्र में जिस पैमाने पर जलवायु के अनुकूल तकनीक इस्तेमाल करनी है, उसके लिए बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा तथा अन्य संसाधनों की आवश्यकता होगी।

ये दोनों देश यह काम करने के लिए बेहतर स्थिति में हैं क्योंकि उनकी इमारतों, शहरी क्षेत्र, विनिर्माण क्षमता और बिजली संयंत्र आदि अभी बनने हैं। आवश्यकता केवल यह समझने की है कि जलवायु के अनुकूल तकनीक पर नियंत्रण किस प्रकार किया जाए। जो देश ऐसा करने में कामयाब रहेगा वही भविष्य में भूराजनैतिक शक्ति का स्रोत बनेगा। चीन पहले ही इस राह पर बढ़ चुका है और भारत अगर जलवायु परिवर्तन की भूराजनीति में पिछड़ना नहीं चाहता तो उसे भी ऐसा करना होगा।

लैटिन अमेरिका और यूरोप के कई देश वैश्वीकरण को नकार चुके हैं। इनमें से कई देशों में दक्षिणपंथी सरकारें हैं जो मानवजनित जलवायु परिवर्तन तक को स्वीकार नहीं करतीं। इसके बावजूद जलवायु परिवर्तन पर कदम उठाने को लेकर आम जन का प्रतिरोध बढ़ेगा क्योंकि ऐसी घटनाएं भी बहेंगी।

ग्रीनहाउस गैस उत्सर्जन में भारत की हिस्सेदारी 5 फीसदी जबकि चीन की 25 फीसदी है।

हालांकि 2030 तक दोनों की हिस्सेदारी 20-30 फीसदी रहेगी और उन पर कदम उठाने का जबरदस्त दबाव होगा। बहुराष्ट्रवाद के क्षरण को देखते हुए कहा जा सकता है कि यह व्यापार, तकनीक हस्तांतरण या वैश्विक पूंजी बाजार की मदद से एकतरफा दबाव में तब्दील हो जाएगा। भारत और चीन को प्रतिक्रिया देनी चाहिए और खुद को जलवायु परिवर्तन के खिलाफ कदमों का अगुआ बनाना चाहिए।

कार्बन ऐक्शन ट्रेकर्स भारत की पेरिस प्रतिबद्धता को वैश्विक सहयोग की आवश्यकता के अनुरूप आंकता है। हालांकि वह चीन की प्रतिबद्धता को काफी कम मानता है। दोनों देश पेरिस प्रतिबद्धता की लोच पर हैं बल्कि वे वादे से बेहतर प्रदर्शन कर रहे हैं। एक हालिया अध्ययन यह भी बताता है कि चीन का उत्सर्जन पेरिस समझौते में किए उल्लेख से एक दशक पहले ही उच्चतम स्तर पर पहुंच सकता है।

जहां तक बात है जलवायु से जुड़ी भू-राजनीति की तो दोनों बड़े देशों में काफी कुछ एक समान है। दोनों का हित इसी में है कि अतीत के उत्सर्जन की जवाबदेही सुनिश्चित करने के मामले में दोनों देश मिलकर काम करें तो भविष्य के विकास के लिए मौजूदा कार्बन स्पेस में उचित दखल कायम करें। दोनों देशों में तेल की कमी है और सौर तथा पवन ऊर्जा को वे केवल कार्बन उत्सर्जन में कमी के विकल्प के अलावा ऊर्जा सुरक्षा के उपाय के रूप में भी देखते हैं। दोनों देश कोयले पर काफी हद तक निर्भर हैं और कोयले का इस्तेमाल कम करने तथा नई तकनीक विकसित करने तथा अपनाने में दोनों के हित जुड़े हैं।

तथ्य यह है कि घरेलू विकास के लिए हमें प्रभावी जलवायु कार्य योजना की आवश्यकता है। कोयले पर निर्भरता के अलावा दोनों देश जलवायु के अनुकूल वृद्धि के लिए काम कर सकते हैं। लेकिन उन्हें इस क्षेत्र में वास्तविक नेतृत्व तभी मिलेगा जब वे दूसरों से कुछ अलग कदम उठाएं। उन्हें जो गुंजाइश बनानी है या सार्वजनिक परिवहन, भवन डिजाइन, शहरी नियोजन, ऊर्जा क्तिफायत वाले विनिर्माण आदि के क्षेत्र में जिस पैमाने पर जलवायु के अनुकूल तकनीक इस्तेमाल करनी है, उसके लिए बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा तथा अन्य संसाधनों की आवश्यकता होगी।

ये दोनों देश यह काम करने के लिए बेहतर स्थिति में हैं क्योंकि उनकी इमारतों, शहरी क्षेत्र, विनिर्माण क्षमता और बिजली संयंत्र आदि अभी बनने हैं। आवश्यकता केवल यह समझने की है कि जलवायु के अनुकूल तकनीक पर नियंत्रण किस प्रकार किया जाए। जो देश ऐसा करने में कामयाब रहेगा वही भविष्य में भूराजनैतिक शक्ति का स्रोत बनेगा। चीन पहले ही इस राह पर बढ़ चुका है और भारत अगर जलवायु परिवर्तन की भूराजनीति में पिछड़ना नहीं चाहता तो उसे भी ऐसा करना होगा।

काफी कुछ सीखा जा सकता है भारत रत्न प्रणव मुखर्जी से

वह 22 मई, 2004 को एक गर्म शाम थी। उस दिन संयुक्त प्रगतिशील गठबंधन (संप्रग) सरकार को शपथ लेनी थी। दिल्ली में कांग्रेस का गठबंधन राजनीति का यह पहला बड़ा प्रयास था। टेलीविजन चैनल यह अटकल लगाने में व्यस्त थे कि किसे कौन सा मंत्रालय मिलेगा? उस वक्त प्रणव मुखर्जी अपने तालकटोरा रोड स्थित घर के छोटे से अध्ययन कक्ष में बैठे थे और केंद्रीय गृह मंत्रालय के कामकाज से संबंधित विभिन्न रिपोर्ट को पढ़ रहे थे। पार्टी के कुछ वरिष्ठ नेताओं ने उन्हें गोपनीय ढंग से बता दिया था कि वह कुछ ही घंटों में देश के गृहमंत्री बनने वाले हैं। कश्मीर में आतंकी हमला हुआ था और कुछ समाचार चैनल जो उन्हें गृहमंत्री मान भी चुके थे, उन्होंने इन हमलों पर मुखर्जी की टिप्पणी भी चला दी।

दर शाम जब चैनलों ने मनमोहन सिंह के मंत्रिमंडल में शामिल नए मंत्रियों के नाम जारी किए तो मुखर्जी को रक्षा मंत्री बनाया गया था। तालकटोरा रोड स्थित उनके आवास पर किसी को इस पर यकीन ही नहीं हो रहा था। उनके करीबी सहयोगियों को यह गलतफहमी थी कि रक्षा मंत्री का पद गृह मंत्री से छोटा होता है और यही कारण है कि वे स्तब्ध और नाराज थे।

परंतु स्वयं मुखर्जी ने क्या किया? उन्होंने नए हालात को अपनाते में 10 से 15 सेकंड का वक्त लिया। वह शौचालय गए और वहां से वापस आकर उन्होंने अपने सहायक को आदेश दिया कि रक्षा सचिव से उनकी बात कराई जाए।

प्रणव मुखर्जी उस वक्त संप्रग के सबसे अनुभवी मंत्री थे और उन्हें सत्ता के गलियारों की फिसलन का बखूबी अंदाजा था। उन्हें पता था कि जो दिया जा रहा है आपको वह लेना होगा, अशुभी संभावनाओं को लालसा में वक्त बरबाद करने का कोई अर्थ नहीं। धैर्य का प्रतिफल मिला। भले ही वह देश के प्रधानमंत्री नहीं बन पाए लेकिन देश के राष्ट्रपति बने और अब भारत रत्न भी। मुखर्जी अनुच्छेद 370 को लेकर कांग्रेस को क्या सलाह देते? इस सवाल का जवाब देना आसान है और इसका नागपुर स्थित राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ के मुख्यालय की उनकी यात्रा से कोई लेनादेना नहीं है। उन्होंने कांग्रेस से कहा होता



सियासी हलचल आदिति फडणीस

प्रणव मुखर्जी को भारत रत्न इसलिए नहीं मिला क्योंकि उन्होंने किसी तरह का समझौता किया। उन्हें यह इसलिए मिल रहा है क्योंकि उन्होंने मिले हुए अवसरों का लाभ उठाया और इस दौरान अपनी प्रतिबद्धताओं से कभी समझौता भी नहीं किया। इसमें कहीं न कहीं एक सबक छिपा हुआ है।

प्रतिनिधिमंडल का नेतृत्व सांसद कबीर सुमन ने किया था। उन्हें बंगाल में बांब डिलन के समकक्ष और लोकतांत्रिक अधिकारों का हिमायती माना जाता है। इस समूह ने मुखर्जी से बात की। दादा, क्या आप गृहमंत्री से कहेंगे कि वह राज्य का यह आतंक बंद करें? सुमन ने समूह की राय से अवगत कराते हुए कहा कि यह सब स्वीकार्य नहीं है जिसने भी ऐसा करने को सलाह दी है वह गलत है। मुखर्जी ने ऊपर देखा और नरमी से कहा, 'खटमल हैं वे। हम उन्हें कुचल-कुचल कर मारेंगे।' इतना कहकर वह अपने काम पर लग गए। प्रतिनिधिमंडल लौट गया और सुमन दोबारा कभी मुखर्जी से मिलने नहीं गए।

यकीन मुखर्जी में ऐसा काफी कुछ है जो उन्हें भाजपा के लिहाज से आदर्श बनाता है लेकिन यह वैश्विक नजरिया जिसमें माना जाता है कि भारत अविभाज्य है इसलिए एक राष्ट्रीयता या आत्मनिर्धारण का कोई मुद्दा ही नहीं है, यही दृष्टिकोण भाजपा को मोदी के करीब लाया। विडंबना देखिए कि मुखर्जी को खुद यह दृष्टि इंदिरा गांधी से मिली। भारत रत्न से सम्मानित मुखर्जी ने बतौर राष्ट्रपति तमाम दया याचिकाएं खारिज कर दी थीं। उन्होंने 2016 में बीमा अध्यादेश को लेकर तत्कालीन वित्त मंत्री को तलब किया था। राजग सरकार उसे अपने सुधारात्मक कदम के रूप में प्रस्तुत कर रही थी। कुछ महीने बाद उन्होंने भूमि अधिग्रहण विधेयक की बारीकियों को लेकर भी सरकार से चर्चा की। जब सरकार ने विवादास्पद शत्रु संपदा अध्यादेश उनके पास भेजा तो उन्होंने अपनी कानून की जानकार टीम को तलब किया और सरकार से स्पष्टीकरण मांगा। यह सारा काम पूरी सहृदयता से किया गया। गृह मंत्री राजनाथ सिंह तकरीबन हर सप्ताह उसके मुलाकात करने जाते और उनकी पत्नी के निधन पर वह लाभभूरा पूरा दिन उनके साथ बैठे थे। मुखर्जी को भारत रत्न इसलिए नहीं मिला क्योंकि उन्होंने किसी तरह का समझौता किया। उन्हें यह इसलिए मिला है क्योंकि उन्होंने प्राप्त हुए अवसरों का लाभ उठाया और इस दौरान अपनी प्रतिबद्धताओं से कभी समझौता भी नहीं किया। इसमें कहीं न कहीं एक सबक छिपा हुआ है।

कानाफूसी

उलझन की वजह? भारतीय जनता पार्टी ने ओम बिरला को लोकसभा अध्यक्ष चुनने में ज्यादा वक्त नहीं लगाया, लेकिन उपाध्यक्ष को लेकर ऊहापोह की स्थिति बनी हुई है। नई लोकसभा का पहला सत्र समाप्त हो चुका है लेकिन जलवायु परिवर्तन की चुनौती से निपटने के लिए कदम नहीं उठाते हैं तो हालात और खराब होंगे। बाढ़, सूखा, बारिश में कमी, तूफानों का आना, तटीय इलाकों के मीठे पानी में खारापन, कृषि



मंदिर प्रबंधन संस्थान

मध्य प्रदेश में मुख्यमंत्री कमलनाथ के नेतृत्व वाली कांग्रेस सरकार राजधानी भोपाल में एक मंदिर प्रबंधन संस्थान की स्थापना करने पर विचार कर रही है। इस प्रस्तावित संस्थान में पुजारियों को मंदिरों और मठों के प्रबंधन के बेहतर तौर तरीके सिखाए जाएंगे। जहाँ शाखाएं होंगी जिनमें इंजीनियरिंग, वास्तु, वित्त और इतिहास आदि विषयों के साथ-साथ मंदिरों का प्रबंधन, पूजा अर्चना के तौर तरीके और मंदिरों तथा पुजारियों की सामाजिक और धार्मिक जिम्मेदारियों के बारे में भी बताया जाएगा। सरकार इस संस्थान का बुनियादी ढांचा स्थापित करने पर 50 करोड़ रुपये की राशि व्यय करने जा रही है।

आपका पक्ष

आर्थिक तेजी में सभी की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण वर्तमान भारतीय आर्थिक परिदृश्य में मंदी के संकेत मिलने लगे हैं। इसका साक्ष्य रिजर्व बैंक के गवर्नर शक्तिकांत दास द्वारा मौद्रिक नीति समीक्षा में चालू वित्त वर्ष में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर का अनुमान 7 फीसदी से घटाकर 6.9 फीसदी करने से मिलता है। इसके अलावा बैंक ने नीतिगत दरों में 35 आधार अंकों की कटौती की है। रिजर्व बैंक का यह प्रयास बाजार में मौजूद तरलता को बढ़ाने के लिए है जिससे निवेश बढ़े और तेज आर्थिक विकास सुनिश्चित हो सके। अमेरिका-चीन की संरक्षणवादी नीति के कारण भी मंदी को और अधिक प्रोत्साहन मिल रहा है जो पूरे विश्व को आर्थिक संकट की ओर धकेल रही है। केवल दरों में कटौती करके देश तेज आर्थिक विकास दर हासिल नहीं कर सकेगा। भारत को 2024



तक 5 खरब डॉलर वाली अर्थव्यवस्था बनाने में इस तरह की समस्या बाधक साबित हो सकती है। तेज आर्थिक विकास के लिए अर्थव्यवस्था के सभी साझेदारों को अपनी सार्थक भूमिका का निर्वहन करना होगा। अर्थव्यवस्था प्रबंधक के सामने मुद्रास्फोति दर को 4

आर्थिक वृद्धि का लक्ष्य हासिल किया जा सकता है। देश के सभी आर्थिक साझेदारों में रिजर्व बैंक के साथ सरकार भी महत्वपूर्ण साझेदार है। सरकार को निवेश अनुकूल माहौल के लिए राजकोषीय प्रबंधन पर पहल तथा निवेशकों के लिए बाधा रहित माहौल उपलब्ध कराना प्रमुख कदम है।

अब कब्जे वाले कश्मीर की बारी जम्मू कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 के कुछ प्रावधान को हटाए जाने और जम्मू कश्मीर तथा लद्दाख को केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बनाने पर पाकिस्तान

अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंच पर इसका विरोध कर रहा है। पाकिस्तान ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र में आपत्ति जताई तो वहां से उसे दो ट्रक जवाब मिला कि यह भारत का आंतरिक मामला है। भारत को पाकिस्तान के कब्जे वाले कश्मीर तथा लद्दाख के अकसाई चिन को वापस करने कब्जे में लेने के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंच पर जाने की जरूरत नहीं है, बल्कि भारत को अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंच पर यह घोषणा करनी चाहिए कि भारत की जमीन पर कब्जा करने वाले देश फौरन इसे खाली करें। इससे भारत को अन्य देशों की मदद मिल सकती है तथा कब्जा करने वाले देशों पर दबाव बन सकता है। केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बनने से केंद्र सरकार को पूरी शक्ति मिली है कि वह अपनी जमीन पर से कब्जा हटा सके। भारत को पहले कब्जा करने वाले देशों को चेतावनी देनी चाहिए फिर सेना की मदद से कब्जा हटाना चाहिए।

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@gmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

उम्मीदें और चुनौतियां

जम्मू-कश्मीर को अनुच्छेद 370 से लगभग मुक्त कर दिए जाने के बाद गुरुवार को प्रधानमंत्री ने राष्ट्र के नाम संदेश में भविष्य का जो खाका पेश किया और विकास के लिए जिन कार्य योजनाओं का जिक्र किया, वे इस बात की ओर इशारा करती हैं कि जम्मू-कश्मीर का भविष्य अब उज्ज्वल है। प्रधानमंत्री के संबोधन में इस बात का भरोसा साफ झलकता है कि कश्मीरियों के साथ भेदभाव के दिन अब लद चुके हैं और उन्हें अब उन सारे कष्टों और पीड़ा से मुक्ति मिलेगी जो दशकों से अनुच्छेद 370 के कारण उन्हें झेलने पड़े हैं। जाहिर है, केंद्र सरकार का सारा जोर अब कश्मीर घाटी में हालात सामान्य बनाने और उसके विकास पर होगा। इसके लिए सबसे जरूरी है स्थानीय लोगों के दिल को जीतना। और कश्मीरियों का दिल तभी जीता जा सकेगा जब सरकार की नीतियों के प्रति उनमें भरोसा पैदा होगा, वे राज्य में विकास होता देखेंगे, नौजवानों को रोजगार और बच्चों को शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का लाभ मिलने लगेगा। अगर केंद्र सरकार कश्मीरियों के लिए इन कसौटियों पर खरी उतरती है तो निश्चित रूप से लोगों का दिल जीत पाना कोई मुश्किल काम नहीं है।

इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 खत्म करना एक कठिन और जोखिमभरा फैसला था। आज कश्मीर जिस हालत में पहुंच चुका है, उसका सबसे बड़ा कारण ही अनुच्छेद 370 रही जिसकी आड़ में स्थानीय राजनीतिक दल भोली-भाली जनता को छलते रहे और अपने नीहित स्वार्थ पूरे करते रहे। अनुच्छेद 370 की वजह से घाटी में अलगाववादी नेताओं की बड़ी जमात पनपती चली गई और पिछले कुछ सालों में पत्थरबाजों की फौज खड़ी करने में अलगाववादी तत्त्वों का बड़ा हाथ रहा। सब जानते हैं कि अलगाववादी नेता पाकिस्तान के इशारे पर काम करते हैं और उससे उन्हें हर तरह की मदद मिलती है। इस समस्या से निपट पाने में जम्मू-कश्मीर का विशेष दर्जा बड़ी बाधा बना हुआ था। ऐसे में केंद्र सरकार राज्य में विकास का कोई भी काम कैसे शुरू कर सकती थी? कैसे वहां उद्योग लगाए जाते? हेरानी यह भी है कि देशभर में बच्चों के लिए शिक्षा का अधिकार कानून लागू है, लेकिन जम्मू-कश्मीर के बच्चे इससे वंचित थे। केंद्र सरकार राज्य के लोगों के लिए जितना भी पैसा देती, उसका बड़ा हिस्सा भ्रष्टाचार की भेंट चढ़ जाता और लोगों को उसका कोई फायदा नहीं मिला। अनुच्छेद 370 की वजह से ही राज्य कुछ दलों और लोगों की जागी बन गया था।

जम्मू-कश्मीर अब पुराने दौर से निकल चुका है। जो नया दौर है वह उज्ज्वल भविष्य की उम्मीदों के साथ बड़ी चुनौतियां भी लिए हुए है। चुनौतियां केंद्र सरकार के लिए ज्यादा हैं। प्रधानमंत्री ने जो एलान किए हैं उनमें विकास और रोजगार पर जोर है, ताकि नौजवानों को भटकने से बचाया जा सके। इसके लिए राज्य में निवेश हो और उद्योग लगे, ताकि युवाओं को काम-धंधा मिले। उन्होंने जम्मू-कश्मीर को सबसे बड़े पर्यटन केंद्र के रूप में विकसित करने की बात कही है। साथ ही फिल्म उद्योग से भी उन्होंने कहा है कि वह कश्मीर को भी केंद्र बनाए जिससे वहां रोजगार के मौके बनें। इसके अलावा जम्मू-कश्मीर के सरकारी कर्मचारियों को भी अब देश के अन्य राज्यों जैसी सुविधाएं मिलेंगी। जम्मू-कश्मीर को पट्टी पर लाने के लिए सरकार को हर मोर्चे पर जूझना होगा। आतंकवादियों और अलगाववादियों की कमर तोड़नी होगी, राज्य को तेजी से विकास के रास्ते पर ले जाना होगा और सबसे जरूरी यह कि बल प्रयोग की नीति को छोड़ कर आमजन के दिल को जीतना होगा। प्रधानमंत्री ने इसका विश्वास दिलाया है।

सड़क पर हिंसा

सड़क पर लापरवाही से वाहन चलाने से हुए हादसों से इतर मामूली बात पर हिंसा के रूप में एक समस्या दिनोंदिन गंभीर होती जा रही है, जिसमें आए दिन किसी के साथ मारपीट या फिर हत्या तक कर देने के मामले सामने आ रहे हैं। बुधवार रात देश की सबसे बड़ी स्टील कंपनी भारतीय इस्पात प्राधिकरण (सेल) के अध्यक्ष के साथ जिस तरह की घटना हुई, उससे साफ है कि सड़क पर वाहन चलाते हुए कोई व्यक्ति नाहक ही जानलेवा हिंसा का शिकार हो सकता है। दक्षिणी दिल्ली के हैज खास इलाके से जब वे गुजर रहे थे, तब अचानक ही एक कार उनकी कार के आगे खड़ी हो गई, उसमें से चार लोग निकले और बिना किसी बात के उन्हें डंडों और लोहे की छड़ से पीटने लगे। गनीमत बस यही रही कि इलाके में गश्त कर रहे दो पुलिसकर्मियों की नजर उन पर पड़ गई और उन्होंने उन्हें बचाया। लेकिन कल्पना की जा सकती है कि अगर किन्हीं वजहों से गश्त कर रहे पुलिसकर्मी वहां नहीं पहुंचते तो सेल अध्यक्ष के साथ क्या हो सकता था।

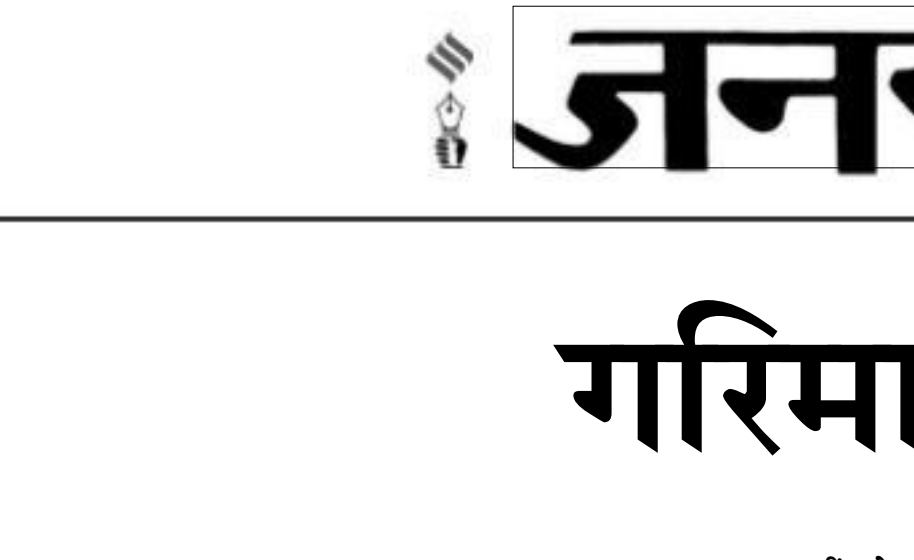
हालांकि यह कोई पहली घटना नहीं थी जिसमें बिना किसी बात के सड़क पर मारपीट की गई हो। हो सकता है कि यह कोई सुनियोजित आपराधिक घटना भी हो। यह जांच के बाद ही साफ होगा। लेकिन ऐसी खबरें अक्सर आती रहती हैं जिनमें बहुत छोटी चूक से वाहन अगर किसी अन्य गाड़ी में धूँ जाए या वाजिब कारणों से भी रास्ता बाधित हो जाए तो लोग थोड़ा खूब्र नहीं रखते और एक दूसरे के साथ बेहद तल्ख भाषा में बहस करने लगते हैं। इसी दौरान कई बार दोनों या फिर एक पक्ष हिंसक हो जाता है और किसी की जान भी चली जाती है। सवाल है कि सड़क पर जिस तरह की गलतियां अनेदखी करने लायक होती हैं या फिर थोड़ी बातचीत से उससे उपजी समस्या को दूर किया जा सकता है, उस पर आपसी बहस का स्तर इस हद तक कैसे चला जाता है जिसमें किसी की जान भी चली जाती है! ऐसा लगता है कि लोगों के भीतर धीरज और सहिष्णुता का पैमाना इतना कम हो गया है कि वे मामूली बात पर भी गाली-गलौज या हिंसा पर उतर जाते हैं। बिना बात के गुरसा होने के बाद उन्हें इसका भी होश नहीं रहता कि इसकी जद में आकर हिंसा करने पर उनके खिलाफ कानूनी कार्रवाई भी हो सकती है।

हालांकि फिलहाल सड़क पर हिंसा के मामलों में जितनी और जिस प्रकृति की सजा है, उसकी वजह से खुद पर लगाम खोने वाले लोग शायद निश्चित रहते हैं। इसके अलावा, शहरी जीवन को रफ्तार के साथ जीने वाले लोग इसमें किसी तरह का खलल नहीं चाहते और सड़क पर मामूली बाधा से उनका धीरज छूट जाता है। यह एक तरह से खुद को श्रेष्ठ मानने की कुंठा से भी जुड़ा होता है जो थोड़ा-सा मौका पाते ही बेलगाम होकर फूट जाता है। नतीजतन, कई बार किसी को बुरी तरह हिंसा का शिकार होना पड़ता है तो किसी की जान भी चली जाती है। इसी के मद्देनजर हाल के दिनों में यह मांग तेजी से उठी है कि वाहन चलाते हुए अपने बर्ताव पर लगाम खोने वालों के खिलाफ सख्त कानून बनाए जाएं, ताकि सड़क पर हिंसा की मानसिकता वाले लोगों को ठोस सबक मिल सके। सड़क पर सुविधाजनक और सहज तरीके से वाहन चलाना किसी का अधिकार हो सकता है, लेकिन अगर इसमें यातायात नियमों के साथ-साथ जरूरी सलीका नहीं है तो इससे हिंसा करने वाले के सभ्य होने पर भी सवालिया निशान लग सकते हैं!

कल्पमेधा

अगर तुम्हारा स्वभाव ही है तो चिंता करके कष्टों का आह्वान करो, लेकिन उसे पढ़ीसियों को उधार मत दो।

- रुडयार्ड किपलिंग



अब हर पार्टी के सांसदों-नेताओं को दोनों सदनों में सावधान रहना पड़ेगा। सत्तर साल देश की जनतांत्रिक राजनीति में युगांतकारी परिवर्तन हुए हैं। उसका ताजा उदाहरण 2019 का आम चुनाव रहा है। इस लोकसभा चुनाव में जनता स्वयं आगे आकर चुनाव लड़ी। जनता समझती है कि देश कहां सुरक्षित है, किसके हाथ में सुरक्षित है, किसे चुनना चाहिए।

सत्तर सालों के संसद के दोनों सदनों और राज्य विधानसभाओं के सत्रों की अवधि चर्चा का विषय बनी रही है। एक चलन-सा बन गया था कि सत्र ही कम दिनों का बुलाया जाए जिससे हो-हल्ला न हो और हो भी तो कम समय में विधायिका या संसदीय कार्य तत्काल पूरा कर लिया जाए। आम नागरिकों में भी इस बात की चर्चा चल पड़ी थी कि लोकतंत्र के इन मद्दियों में लोकतंत्र तभी जीवित रहेगा, जब यहां पक्ष-विपक्ष दोनों के बीच देश और राज्यों के प्रमुख विषयों पर खुले मन से राष्ट्र या राज्य हित में चर्चा हो।

पिछले यानी सत्रहवीं लोकसभा के गठन के बाद लोकसभा और राज्यसभा में जो कार्य हुए, वे देश के नागरिकों में विश्वास ही नहीं बल्कि लोकतंत्र की भावना को मजबूत करते हैं। वर्षों से लंबित बिलों का पारित होना यह दर्शाता है कि देश का मन-मस्तिष्क बदल रहा है। लोगों ने अब अपने अलावा देश के बारे में भी सोचना शुरू कर दिया है। यही कारण है कि

पिछले दो दशकों से संसद के दोनों सदनों और राज्य विधानसभाओं के सत्रों की अवधि चर्चा का विषय बनी रही है। एक चलन-सा बन गया था कि सत्र ही कम दिनों का बुलाया जाए जिससे हो-हल्ला न हो और हो भी तो कम समय में विधायिका या संसदीय कार्य तत्काल पूरा कर लिया जाए। आम नागरिकों में भी इस बात की चर्चा चल पड़ी थी कि लोकतंत्र के इन मद्दियों में लोकतंत्र तभी जीवित रहेगा, जब यहां पक्ष-विपक्ष दोनों के बीच देश और राज्यों के प्रमुख विषयों पर खुले मन से राष्ट्र या राज्य हित में चर्चा हो। पिछले यानी सत्रहवीं लोकसभा के गठन के बाद लोकसभा और राज्यसभा में जो कार्य हुए, वे देश के नागरिकों में विश्वास ही नहीं बल्कि लोकतंत्र की भावना को मजबूत करते हैं। वर्षों से लंबित बिलों का पारित होना यह दर्शाता है कि देश का मन-मस्तिष्क बदल रहा है। लोगों ने अब अपने अलावा देश के बारे में भी सोचना शुरू कर दिया है। यही कारण है कि

शोभा जैन

गांधीजी ने कुछ स्वप्न देखे थे, जिनमें से एक था-ऐसे स्वराज की स्थापना हो, जो भाषा, जाति और धर्म की संकीर्ण भावना से परे आदर्श समाज के निर्माण का हो। लेकिन आज की जो हालत बाजार अपने चारों ओर देखते हैं, उससे यही लगता है कि हम इस स्वप्न को बहुत पीछे छोड़ आए हैं। इन दिनों आक्रामक भाषा चलन में है। इसे चलन कहा जाए या सभ्यता का हास-सोचती हूं कि आखिर क्या कहा जाए इसे? समय और युगिन संदर्भों में बदलाव के साथ लोकतंत्र में भी भाषा के जायके बदल रहे हैं।

माना जाता है कि मनुष्य भाषा में जीता है। हम जिस समय में जी रहे हैं, वह विश्व बाजारवाद का दौर है। हम आधुनिकता के अंत और उत्तर आधुनिकता की ओर अग्रसर एक ऐसे काल में हैं, जिसमें समय मनुष्य का न होकर मशीन का है... उपकरण का है और नई-नई अवधारणाओं का है। स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद हमने अपने देश में लोकतांत्रिक शासन-व्यवस्था को स्वीकार किया, जहां जनता के चुने हुए प्रतिनिधि देश की कानून और व्यवस्था का संचालन करें।

जो सरकार जनता के द्वारा चुनी जाती है, उसमें

खतरे में अर्थव्यवस्था

देश की वित्तीय स्थिति नाजुक है। सरकार और निजी क्षेत्र दोनों पर इसका असर साफ नजर आ रहा है। अर्थव्यवस्था में मंदी की वजह से कारपोरेट जगत बेहाल हुआ जा रहा है। इस मंदी का असर संग्रहण पर भी पड़ रहा है। सरकार के राजस्व संग्रह लक्ष्य पूरे नहीं हो पा रहे हैं। वित्त वर्ष 2016-17 में अप्रत्यक्ष कर संग्रह में बढ़ोतरी की दर बीस फीसद थी जो 2017-18 में घट कर 5.8 फीसद रह गई। इसका असर देश की आर्थिक वृद्धि पर पड़ रहा है। जीएसटी आर्थिक सुधारों के लिहाज से एक अच्छा कदम था, लेकिन जीएसटी के तहत अनुमानित कर संग्रह नहीं हो पा रहा है। जीएसटी संग्रहण में स्टाफ की कमी, राज्यों से सहयोग नहीं मिलना और केंद्र व राज्यों में तालमेल की कमी जैसे कारणों से अप्रत्यक्ष कर की वसूली बहुत कम हो रही है। इसका राजकोषीय संतुलन पर असर पड़ रहा है। सरकार राजकोषीय संतुलन साधने के लिए ओर विदेशी उधारी बढ़ा रही है और दूसरी ओर देश की जनता की बचत को उपयोग में ला रही है। इसके अलावा, निर्यात बढ़ाने लिए भी ठोस कदम नहीं उठाए जा रहे।

सरकार ने इस साल के बजट में आयत शुल्क को बढ़ाया है। सिर्फ आयात को कम करके सरकार भुगतान संतुलन को सुधारना चाहती है।

● *दीपक गिरकर, इंदौर*

रफ्तार की उम्मीद

हाल में भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने सुस्त पड़ी

सत्रहवीं लोकसभा और राज्यसभा के सैंतीस दिनों की कुल बैठकों में बत्तीस विधेयक लोकसभा और सैंतीस बिल राज्यसभा में पारित हुए। 17 जून 2019 से 6 अगस्त 2019 तक चली लोकसभा में शून्यकाल के दौरान पहली बार एक हजार से अधिक मुद्दे उठाए गए। सन 1952 के बाद यह पहला मौका है जब सैंतीस बैठकों के बावजूद एक दिन भी कार्यवाही बाधित नहीं रही। और 1952 के बाद भी पहली बार ऐसा हुआ है जब सदन का व्यवधान शून्य रहा और इसमें सदन के सदस्यों की अहम भूमिका रही। राष्ट्रपति के अभिभाषण पर तेरह घंटे से अधिक चर्चा हुई और एक सौ तिरासी तार्रांकित प्रश्न पूछे गए। सबसे अच्छी बात तो यह रही कि ज्यादा से ज्यादा नए सदस्यों को बोलने का मौका दिया गया। इस सत्र में शून्यकाल में दो सौ पैंसठ नए सदस्यों में से दो सौ उनतीस सदस्यों को अपनी बात कहने का मौका मिला। छियालीस नई महिला सांसदों में बयालीस को शून्यकाल के दौरान बोलने का अवसर मिला। लोकसभा में लगभग एक सौ सैंतीस प्रतिशत काम हुआ, जबकि राज्यसभा में एक सौ तीन प्रतिशत। राज्यसभा की सत्ताईस बैठकों में बत्तीस विधेयक पारित हुए। पिछले सत्रह साल में उच्च सदन में यह सबसे सफल सत्र रहा।

देश आश्चर्यचकित था जब राज्यसभा में तीन-तलाक बिल पारित हुआ। लोगों को भरोसा नहीं हो रहा था। लोकसभा में तो भाजपा और एनडीए की संख्या दो-तिहाई से अधिक है। वहां पर विधेयकों का पास होना लगभग तय ही होता है। पर राज्यसभा जहां भाजपा या एनडीए के पास अभी बहुमत नहीं है, से भी तीन तलाक बिल के पास हो जाने से सभी हैरत में रह गए। काँग्रेसी सदस्य मान कर चल रहे थे कि लोक सभा में इनकी संख्या बल है पर राज्यसभा में तो विधेयक पास नहीं होने देंगे। लेकिन प्रधामंत्री और गुहमंत्री की कुशल रणनीति से जब राज्यसभा में भी विपक्ष चौरसी और सत्ता पक्ष सौ मर्तों से तीन तलाक विधेयक को मंजूरी मिल गई तो सभी को लगा कि अब राज्यसभा में काँग्रेस और विपक्ष में कोई एकता नहीं है। तीन तलाक पर अच्छी बहस हुई। चर्चा के दौरान कुछ दलों ने बहिष्कार किया पर अधिकतर दलों ने मतदान किया।

राज्यसभा में काँग्रेस सहित कुछ विपक्षी दलों जब सूचना के अधिकार का बिल आया। इस बिल पर काँग्रेस ने विरोध जताया। उनका साथ कुछ विपक्षी दलों ने भी दिया। पर जब मत विभाजन हुआ तो राजग को एक सौ सत्रह और काँग्रेस सहित कुछ विपक्षी दलों को पचहत्तर मत मिले। इसके बाद राज्यसभा में भाजपा के हाँसले बुन्द हो गए। भाजपा को यह विश्वास हो गया कि यदि अब कोई भी कठिन से कठिन विधेयक यदि

देश हित में लाया जाएगा तो भाजपा मत विभाजन में जीत सकती है। यही कारण था कि जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य पुनर्गठन विधेयक लाया गया। संकल्प सबसे पहले राज्यसभा में लाने का निर्णय प्रधानमंत्री और गुहमंत्री ने लिया। देश में किसी ने नही सोचा था कि धारा 370 और 35ए को समाप्त करने वाला विधेयक लाया जाएगा। राज्यसभा में पांच अगस्त को जैसे ही गुहमंत्री ने जम्मू कश्मीर में दस फीसद आरक्षण और जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य पुनर्गठन विधेयक प्रस्तुत किया, सत्ता पक्ष की बाँछे खिल गई और विपक्ष में सन्नाटा छा गया था। सदन हतप्रभ था। काँग्रेसी और टीएमसी सहित डीएमके और सपा ने विरोध के स्वर उठाए। राज्यसभा में सभी सदस्यों के द्वारा उठाए गए एक-एक सवाल का जवाब गुहमंत्री ने दिया। इसी बीच प्रधानमंत्री भी सदन में आ गए। विपक्षियों ने मत विभाजन मांगा। मत विभाजन में काँग्रेस सहित विपक्षियों को मात्र इकसठ



और भाजपा को एक सौ पच्चीस मत मिले।

स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में सुधार से संबंधित चार विधेयक-राष्ट्रीय चिकित्सा आयोग विधेयक-2019, होम्योपैथी केंद्रीय परिषद (संशोधन) विधेयक-2019, भारतीय चिकित्सा परिषद (संशोधन) विधेयक-2019 और दंत चिकित्सक (संशोधन) विधेयक-2019 दोनों सदनों द्वारा पारित कर दिए गए। विशेष रूप से राष्ट्रीय चिकित्सा आयोग विधेयक, 2019 चिकित्सा क्षेत्र में एक क्रांतिकारी सुधार है जो चिकित्सा शिक्षा, चिकित्सा व्यवसाय और चिकित्सा संस्थानों से संबंधित सभी पहलुओं के विकास और विनियमन के लिए एक राष्ट्रीय चिकित्सा आयोग के गठन तथा आयोग को सलाह देने और सिफारिश करने के लिए एक चिकित्सा सलाहकार परिषद के गठन का प्रावधान करता है।

देश में सामाजिक और लैंगिक न्याय प्रणाली को और मजबूती प्रदान करने के लिए भी कुछ विधेयकों

निज भाषा

जनता की भाषा की प्रधानता होना भी स्वाभाविक है। मगर हम इसके ठीक उलट स्थिति में जी रहे हैं। अंग्रेजी ने जिस प्रकार हमारी अपनी भाषाओं का विकास अवरूढ़ किया है, इससे स्वभाषा से लोगों की दूरियां बढ़ती ही जा रही हैं। बाजार की सुविधा के लिए गढ़े जाने वाले शब्द जन्म ले रहे हैं। हम टेलीविजन पर उपभोक्ता सामग्री के विज्ञापनों में इस विरूपीकरण को देख सकते हैं, जिसमें अंग्रेजी और हिंदी की खिचड़ी से निर्मित अशुद्ध भाषा से संपन्न परिवारों की जीवन-शैली और मूल्यों को प्रदर्शित किया जाता है।

इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि अंग्रेजी बहुत ही समृद्ध भाषा है और आजकल संसार के कई समृद्ध देशों में राजभाषा के रूप में ही स्वीकृत है। मगर है यह विदेशी भाषा ही और हमें इस सत्य को स्वीकारने में कोई शर्म नहीं कि वर्चस्व की इसकी तमाम कोशिशों के बावजूद आज भी इसमें समूची जनता का एक नगण्य अंश ही कुशलता प्राप्त कर सका है। स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद से ही देश में भाषाओं की प्रगति में काफी तेजी आई है, लेकिन स्वभाषा का प्रयोग अपनी सुविधानुसार तोड़-परोड़ कर किया जा रहा है। माल बेचने और गांव-कस्बों में नए बाजार बनाने के लिए

इस्लामिक देशों के संगठन ओआइसी ने भारत के रुख का विरोध जरूर किया है, पर ये भी ज्यादा अहमियत नहीं रखता, क्योंकि एक और ओआइसी के कुछ सदस्य संयुक्त अरब अमीरात और बांग्लादेश निजी स्तर पर भारत के पक्ष में हैं। कुल मिला कर पाकिस्तान अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर अलग-थलग पड़ गया है। इसी बौखलाहट में उसने भारत से राजनयिक और आर्थिक संबंध तोड़ने जैसे कदम उठाए हैं। उसने ये फैसले अताकिंक और आवेश में आकर उठाए हैं, इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं। इतिहास गवाह है कि जब-जब

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

आप चाहेें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है :

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बौखलाया पाक

जब से भारत ने जम्मू-कमीर से अनुच्छेद 370 को खत्म किया है, तभी से पाकिस्तान अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर इसका जोर-शोर से विरोध कर रहा है। लेकिन भारत के खिलाफ अभियान में उसे अबेकड़ा सफलता नहीं मिल रही है। पाकिस्तान का सबसे बड़ा हथपद होने का दावा करने वाले चीन ने भी इस मसले पर इतना जोर नहीं दिया जितनी पाकिस्तान को उमीद थी। अमेरिका ने सिर्फ इतना ही कहा कि हम घटनाओं पर नजर रखे हुए हैं। रूस, ब्रिटेन और फ्रांस ने तो पूरी तरह पाकिस्तान की अनेदखी की। हां,

को इस सत्र में पारित किया गया। यौन अपराधों से बच्चों का संरक्षण (संशोधन) विधेयक-2019 पॉर्नोग्राफी में बच्चे के चित्रण को अपराध घोषित करने के अलावा बच्चों के साथ होने वाले यौन अपराधों के लिए ज्यादा कठोर सजा का प्रावधान करता है जो बीस साल तक या कुछ मामलों में शेष जीवन के लिए कारावास तक बढ़ाई जा सकती है।

राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा तंत्र को मजबूत बनाने और राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा पहलुओं और मानवाधिकारों के बीच संतुलन कायम करने के लिए इस सत्र के दौरान राष्ट्रीय जांच एजेंसी (संशोधन) विधेयक-2019, गैरकानूनी गतिविधियां (रोकथाम) संशोधन विधेयक-2019 और मानवाधिकार संरक्षण (संशोधन) विधेयक-2019 पारित किए गए। इसके साथ ही वेतन अधिनियम 1936, न्यूनतम वेतन अधिनियम 1948, वोनस भुगतान अधिनियम 1965 और सामान पारिश्रमिक अधिनियम

1976 को आपस में मिला कर वेतन संहिता विधेयक, 2019 को कानून का रूप दिया गया है। उपभोक्ता संरक्षण विधेयक-2019 पहले के कानून को रद्द करके और उपभोक्ता अधिकारों के प्रोत्साहन, संरक्षण और उन्हें लागू करने के लिए केंद्रीय उपभोक्ता संरक्षण प्राधिकरण की स्थापना का प्रावधान करके उपभोक्ता संरक्षण तंत्र में आमूल-चूल परिवर्तन लाने का प्रावधान करता है। मोटर वाहन (संशोधन) विधेयक-2019 का उद्देश्य सड़क सुरक्षा से जुड़े मुद्दों को सुलझाना, नागरिकों को सहूलियत देना, सार्वजनिक परिवहन, स्वचालन एवं कंप्यूटीरकरण को सुदृढ़ करना, अधिनियम के प्रावधानों के उल्लंघन पर जुर्माना राशि बढ़ाना है।

पिछले पांच-छह वर्षों के दौरान राज्यसभा और लोकसभा चैनल को लेकर जनता की रुचि बढ़ी है। इन दोनों चैनलों के माध्यम से देश के

नेताओं, सांसदों का आकलन शुरू हुआ है। इसीलिए अब हर पार्टी के सांसदों-नेताओं को दोनों सदनों में सावधान रहना पड़ेगा। सत्तर साल देश की जनतांत्रिक राजनीति में युगांतकारी परिवर्तन हुए हैं। उसका ताजा उदाहरण 2019 का आम चुनाव रहा है। इस लोकसभा चुनाव में जनता स्वयं आगे आकर चुनाव लड़ी। जनता समझती है कि देश कहां सुरक्षित है, किसके हाथ में सुरक्षित है, किसे चुनना चाहिए। जनतंत्र की परीक्षा में जनता अच्छे नंबरों से उत्तीर्ण हुई। अब देश के जनप्रतिनिधियों को भी अच्छे नंबरों से उत्तीर्ण होते रहना चाहिए। अब देश में जहां दोनों सदनों पर पुनः देश का अदृट विश्वास जाोगा, वहीं राज्य विधानसभाओं को कामचलाऊ सत्रों के बजाय उत्कृष्ट कार्य करने वाले अधिक दिनों का सत्र चलाना ही होगा। लोकतंत्र संवाद और बहस से मजबूत होता है न कि इससे भागने से।

(लेखक भाजपा के राज्यसभा सदस्य हैं)

कुछ इस पर निर्भर करता है कि हमारी सांस्कृतिक सोच क्या है, समाज के बारे में हमारी दृष्टि और भूमिका क्या है। विदेशी भाषा में शिक्षा पाने से हमारा स्वतंत्र चिंतन कुंठित हो गया है। यह बात प्रत्यक्ष रूप से भले न स्वीकार की जाए, मगर सत्य यही है। आशा यही की जाती है कि हमारी लोकभाषाएं आधुनिक ज्ञान-विज्ञान के क्षेत्र में विकसित हो सके। हमारा उतम साहित्य इस इसी दिशा में विकसित हो, क्योंकि स्वराज की सार्थकता स्वभाषा की उन्नति से ही संभव है। इसके लिए लोकतंत्र में भाषा की मर्यादा बनी रहे, यह भी उतना ही महत्वपूर्ण विषय है, जितना चुनाव में वोट डालना।

साहित्य में जो भाषा मनुष्य को संस्कारित करती है, वह राजनीति में भी अपना असर बनाए रखे। यह भी समाज के साथ कुशल राजनीतिकों के दायित्व का हिस्सा होना चाहिए। गांधीजी का जो आत्मनिर्भर बनाने का स्वप्न है, वह केवल स्वभाषा से ही संभव है, क्योंकि जिस प्रकार जड़ कटा वृक्ष पुष्प और फल नहीं दे सकता और शीशू ही अपनी हरियाली खोकर सूख जाता है, उसी प्रकार अपनी भाषा से कटा देश भी कमजोर हो जाता है। हमारी जड़ें हमारी भाषा हैं। इसके बिना देश की समृद्धि संभव नहीं। हमारे लिए भाषा से प्रेम की भी जरूरी अहमियत होनी चाहिए।

ताकि जनता भी सचेत रहे और गलतियां न करें। मगर दुख की बात है कि नए मोटर वाहन कानून में काले शीशों वाली कारों और वाहनों को छोड़ दिया है जो जुर्म के चलते-फिरते अंडू साबित हो रहे हैं। वाहनों के साथ सड़कों पर अतिक्रमण और इनकी जानलेवा हालत पर संबंधित अधिकारियों, ठेकेदारों और अतिक्रमणकर्ताओं पर भी जुर्माना जरूरी है क्योंकि भारी रोड टैक्स के बाद भी इनकी हालत में कोई सुधार नहीं होता। इस वाहन कानून पर सरकार को जनता और यातायात पुलिस से खुल कर राय लेनी चाहिए थी। देश में कानून तो बहुत हैं मगर उनके ठीक से पालन करवाने वाले बहुत ही कम हैं। इसके लिए सरकार को और अधिक नियुक्तियां करनी होंगी जिससे आय और अनुशासन के साथ रोजगार भी बढ़ सकता है।

● *महेंद्र मान, अलीपुर*

कैसे आएगी हरियाली

विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस पर सोशल मीडिया जैसे वॉट्सएप और फेसबुक पर बहुत सारे पेड़ लगाए गए, यानी की बहुत मित्रों के पास से पर्यावरण दिवस की शुभकामनाएं वाले संदेश आए। बहुत सारे मित्रों ने पेड़ लगाते हुए फोटो फेसबुक पर पोस्ट किए और हजारों लाइक और कमेंट बटोरें। लेकिन पर्यावरण दिवस के अगले दिन न किसी ने पेड़ लगाते फोटो पोस्ट किया और न ही कहीं से शुभकामनाएं आईं। जाहिर है, अगले दिन ही सब पेड़ों को, पर्यावरण को भूल गए। इस हकीकत को नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि मीडिया और सोशल मीडिया में पेड़ लगाते हुए फोटो खींच कर डालने और छपवाने से धरती पर हरियाली नहीं आने वाली। इसके लिए वाकई जुटने की जरूरत है।

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