Breakthrough in sensitivity conjecture

Hao Huang's argument could finally help in the understanding of Boolean Functions



TECH-ENABLED

DEVANGSHU DATTA

hen you make an application for a mortgage, you have to answer many questions on a form. The lender will want details about your age, health, income, net worth, other debts, family situations, etc. Those answers can be translated into binary "ves" or "no" responses, so far as the lender is concerned. Ideally, the lender wants somebody who is under 45 ("yes" for positive), who is in good

health, without family encumbrances, a working partner etc.

The positive answers (say the applicant has a steady income that's sufficient to service the loan) can be translated into "1s" and the negatives (let's say, the applicant has diabetes) can be translated into "0". Then the score can be summed up. The lender may set a minimum cut-off score and take a decision on whether to offer a mortgage, and on what terms.

There may be some questions, which are complete "deal-breakers". For example, the applicant may have a very serious health problem. Or, the applicant may have been convicted for fraud, or some other serious crime. If one of those answers is a zero, the rest of the score will not matter. The mortgage will be refused. The entire score. in other words, collapses to zero.

This sort of string of ones and zeroes is known as a Boolean Function, named after the mathematician George Boole (1815-64) who first looked at such logical sequences in the 19th century. As anybody who has dealt with computers will know, the machines work in terms of ones and zeroes, with internal circuits (logic gates) being opened and shut on the basis of those numbers. Each zero or one in a string is one input, while the answer is the output.

Various Boolean functions may add up differently but the answer is always one ("the mortgage will be offered") or zero ("the mortgage will be refused"). The "sensitivity" of a string as it is known depends on the deal breakers, if any, as well as on the total number of ones or zeroes required for the outputted answer to be either zero or one.

This is a simple example of how understanding Boolean Functions matters in the real world. Everything a computer does, boils down to the use of Boolean logic. When you think of the number of things that are processed by computers, you get a sense of how important it is to understand how **Boolean Functions work**

Each function can have different rules obviously. For example, there can be a blanket rule where the output is a 1, if any of the inputs are 1. Or there can be a rule where the output is 1, if there are an even number of ones in the input.

Mathematicians examine Boolean Functions in many ways. For instance, deal breakers are measured by the "sensitivity" of a Boolean function. If there are three deal breakers in that mortgage application, the sensitivity is three.

There are other measures like "query complexity", which tell the computer how many inputs are needed before an output may be produced. For example, an online health insurance form (or a doctor checking for symptoms) may start with a question about gender. The next question will vary depending on the first answer. There may be further variations in the following questions until the computer can calculate an output (or the doctor has a diagnosis). This is query complexity.

These values tend to be related -a

computer scientist can usually judge what the value of one of these measures will be, for a given function, if the other measures are known. Usually one measure is the square, or the cube of another although other relationships are possible.

However, "sensitivity" is an outlier. For the last 30-odd years, mathematicians have been looking for ways to relate sensitivity to other measures of Boolean Functions. There have been dozens of papers written on the subject of the sensitivity conjecture — that it is indeed related to other measures of **Boolean Functions**

Amazingly Hao Huang, a mathematician at Emory University, has just proved the sensitivity conjecture with an ingenious argument that looks at the way in which the points of a cube behave. The coordinates of the point of a cube can be represented by 000 (centre bottom), 001 (top front point), 010 (left bottom), 011 (left top), 111 (centre back top) etc. These inputs can be manipulated to colour the cube differently etc. Sensitivity is indeed related to other measures.

What is truly astonishing is that his proof is just two pages long and it was instantly accepted by the academic community. This breakthrough could lead to other results that help in the understanding of Boolean Functions.

CHINESE WHISPERS

The Naidu way

Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu completed two years in office on Sunday, when there was an event in Chennai. There Home Minister Amit Shah unveiled Naidu's book Listening, Learning, Leading, chronicling "two years of energetic, extensive engagement". "My thoughts always on my role in transforming India," Naidu states in the book. According to his office, Naidu has had 330 major public engagements, presided over 123 sittings of the Rajya Sabha, and visited 19 countries. The 257page book has 232 photographs of Naidu's public engagements and a chapter on the 'turnaround" in the functioning of the Rajya Sabha. The book notes in detail the success of the e-notice initiative that Naidu has introduced for Rajya Sabha members. In the just-concluded Rajya Sabha session, MPs submitted over 9,000 notices online, accounting for about 60 per cent of all such notices submitted.

Spirited speech by Rahul



The Congress on Friday had a meeting in New Delhi to discuss its position on scrapping the provisions of Article 370. Most top leaders - party

general secretaries, state unit chiefs, and Chief Ministers Ashok Gehlot and V Narayanasamy – attended. Chief Ministers Kamal Nath, Amarinder Singh, and Bhupesh Baghel were absent, and Rahul Gandhi (pictured) reached the meeting more than an hour late. Sources, however, said he made amends for his late entry by giving a spirited speech. Gandhi asked those who wanted the party to support scranning Article 370 how many more votes the Congress could hope to get if it did. The answer in unison was "zero". Sources said party General Secretary Jyotiraditya Scindia, who went public opposing the Congress stand on the issue, apologised to Gandhi for his public statement.

TMC makes a point

With the Congress directionless and the legislative strength of the Left parties decimated, the Trinamool Congress believes it has represented the real voice of the Opposition in the just-concluded Parliament session. The Trinamool has collated information to state that its members performed better than those of all other parties — not just the Congress but also the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) —in raising issues during the Zero Hours in the two Houses and in contributing to debates on Bills. According to its data, Trinamool members' contribution to debates on various Bills in proportion to the number of its members was worse that of only the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, but better than that of the BJP and Congress, while its MPs' Zero Hour mentions were better than those of all these parties.

How to make the horse drink water

For ideal monetary transmission, we need two benchmarks — one for loans and another for deposits



TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

hen it comes to monetary policy, a career bureaucrat could be more innovative than an economist. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das has proved that.

After taking three baby steps since February, when the rate cutting cycle started, he changed track last week: No more baby steps (25 basis points or bps rate cut); not a giant step (50 bps) either. He followed the "golden mean" of the Buddhist philosophy — a 35 bps rate cut, bringing in the policy rate to 5.4 per cent.

Indeed, it was the decision of the rate setting body of the Indian central bank, the Monetary Policy Committee, but Das has been advocating such odd cuts for months now, as there is nothing sacrosanct about a 25 or 50 bps move that traditionally the RBI has been opting for. For him, 25 bps is too low and 50 bps is too high - a 35 bps cut is appropriate, at this juncture. If the same

trend continues, the next rate cut could be 15 bps or even 40 bps, depending on economic conditions.

The Chinese central bank typically moves rates in multiples of 9 bps; for the European Central Bank, it is 10 bps; and the central bank of Taiwan, 12.5 bps. In the Das regime, the RBI will probably tread on the path of multiples of 5 bps.

One school of thought is that the Indian central bank has now been undoing what it had done in the past — too much of tightening — and more rate cuts should be on the table. But you could also say that the RBI has done enough since February and it cannot do the heavylifting of a slowing Asia's third largest economy alone. Soon, the law of diminishing marginal utility will catch up with it. In other words, with every successive rate cut, the impact will wane. Yes, that could be true for the market rates, but the credit story is different because the banking community is shy of transmitting the rate cuts.

Within hours of the latest round of rate cut, State Bank of India, nation's largest lender, rushed to cut its MCLR or the marginal cost of fund-based lending rate, by 15 basis points, roughly passing on 40 per cent of the benefit to its borrowers. A cumulative rate reduction of 75 bps since February and a change in the policy stance have led to 102 bps drop in the 10-year government bond vield but a feeble 29 bps cut in the bank loan rates. The government is the biggest beneficiary of the rate cutting cycle as its borrowing cost has gone down substantially but the banking sys-



tem has cold shouldered corporate India and retail borrowers.

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. How does one ensure monetary policy transmission? Why doesn't the banking system pass on the benefit of low interest rates to the borrowers?

One way of looking at it is the bankers are lazy and greedy. They are always fast in cutting down the deposit rates but slow in paring the loan rates. Also, the benefit of lower loan rates is often given to the new borrowers while the old borrowers continue to pay high rates. This happens particularly in the retail loan segment. The largest contributing factor to such practices is the pile of bad assets. Banks do not earn any interest on bad loans and, on top of that, they need to provide for them. So, the good borrowers end up subsidising the bad borrowers.

But this is an oversimplification of the ground realities. Even after the banks cut their deposit rates, the new rates are applicable only to incremental deposits while almost the entire loan book gets repriced immediately, following any loan rate cut. Also, the rate cut typically does not impact the banks' current accounts (on which they do not pay any interest) and savings accounts (most large banks have been paying 3.5-4 per cent interest on such accounts). So, the lowering of rate does not impact the cost of the entire deposit portfolio of the banks.

The transmission of the policy rates needs to be looked into both for loans as well as deposits — and not for loans alone. The only way to pare the deposit cost instantly is to have a substantial floating deposit base. Either the banks need to make the floating rate deposits attractive to entice savers or the regulator can explore an idea of making a part of the deposits linked to floating rates mandatory.

Media reports suggest a few banks are planning to make the RBI policy rate as the benchmark rate in place of MCLR which has been under the scrutiny of the regulator.

The Indian banking system's search for an ideal benchmark for loan rates has been on for 25 years. First, there was PLR or prime lending rate, introduced in October 1994. It was the rate at which banks used to lend to their top-rated clients but it had no relation to their cost of funds. Sometime early this century, the PLR was replaced by BPLR or benchmark PLR, which was supposed to factor in the actual cost of funds, operating expenses and regulatory requirements, provision for bad loans as well as profit margin. Then came the base rate (in July 2010) — supposedly more transparent and fairer to small and medium enterprises that had for so long been subsidising top-rated corporate borrowers. But that did not happen. So MCLR came in but again no one was happy and the RBI was planning to introduce a new benchmark from April — a move Das has kept on hold.

Unlike in the developed countries, where banks raise money from the market to lend, in India, deposits and capital are the primary sources of lending. So, the key to bringing down the loan rates is the cost of deposits. We need to look for two benchmarks — one for loans and another for deposits. In isolation, a benchmark for loan alone will never work. If we remain obsessed with monetary transmission for loans alone, banks may end up robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The writer, a consulting editor with Business Standard, is an author and senior adviser to Jana Small Finance Bank Ltd His latest book, "HDFC Bank 2.0: From Dawn to Digital" was released recently. Twitter: @TamalBandyo

INSIGHT

FIGHTING

Dissecting the slowdown, evaluating the response

The second part of the series in which top economists and thinkers offer their views on how to revive the economy



SAJJID Z CHINOY

o appreciate India's current economic challenge, one has to only realise that if growth in April-June prints below 6 per cent again — as we expect it will — this would be the first time in almost seven years that growth has printed below 6 per cent for two successive quarters. The last time this happened was in the run-up to the 2013 taper tantrum, when India's internal and external imbalances ruptured and dragged activity down.

It's tempting to characterise India's slowdown as either "externally induced", on the one hand, or "structural", on the other. The first would imply there is very little policymakers can do, because a falling global tide is depressing all boats. The second would imply there is no role for any counter-cyclical policy response. We would argue the data conform to neither of these characterisations

While India's growth slowed to 5.8 per cent in the January-March quarter, creating a sticker-shock for markets, it wasn't because of slowing external demand. Exports grew at nearly 11 per cent that quarter, reflecting a strong first quarter globally. To be sure, global growth has since slowed precipitously as the uncertainty-magnifying effects of the trade conflict dampen business sentiment around the world. Exports are therefore expected to weigh on growth in the coming quarters. But while they may compound the slowdown, they weren't its genesis. Some argue that India is in the midst

of a "structural consumption slowdown". But this is not borne out by the data. Private consumption growth has averaged almost 8 per cent for the last four years, and has begun to slow only in recent quarters, albeit sharply, suggesting there is nothing structural about its slowing yet. Instead, consumption began to slow after the IL&FS mayhem led do a shutdown of the NBFC sector, which had financed (unsustainably so, one could argue) much of the recent spurt in consumption. With public sector banks constrained by capital and still work-

ing through their NPA woes, they were understandably risk-averse to jump in and fill the gap. The continually worsening agrarian terms of trade further hurt rural purchasing power, and with the auto sector experiencing meaningful, though idiosyncratic, stress, consumption came up against the perfect storm.

The fact that the slowdown has a cyclical component to it is also evident in the evolution of core inflation. The annualised momentum of core-core inflation was 6 per cent in the second half of 2018 but dramatically slowed to less than 3 per cent in 2019, suggesting a sharp drop-off in pricing power and confirming

output gaps have opened up. What then should the countercyclical response be? With headline and core inflation falling meaningfully, some space for monetary easing has opened up. The question is: How efficacious will monetary easing be in the current environment? Until the financial system is repaired, the transmission of monetary policy is likely to be limited. Despite multiple rate cuts and a deluge of interbank

liquidity, a large chunk of NBFCs are still being rationed out. The binding constraint hasn't been liquidity or the cost of capital. Instead, the source of lenders' risk aversion has always been asymmetric information about the underlying asset quality of NBFCs. Without some sort of asset quality review" by regulators, the logjam is likely to continue, we think.

Bank credit growth, too, has slowed sequentially, suggesting heightened risk aversion by banks as they reassess risk against the backdrop of rising household debt, and some public sector banks still face capital constraints. Therefore, even as risk-free rates have gone down, credit spreads have gone up. All told, even as monetary policy has been eased, the plumbing (financial sector) is partially choked, leading to limited transmission. In this environment, easing beyond a point may not do much to the real economy, but simply increase the

risks of an asset price bubble. Unsurprisingly, calls have renewed for more "fiscal stimulus". This would be counterproductive. Public sector borrowing (8-9 per cent of GDP) is consuming all household financial savings (7-8 per cent of GDP). These SLOWDOWN pressures have pushed up the term premium, keeping the cost

of capital higher than it needs to be. Any fiscal stimulus at this stage would simply result in bond yields and quasisovereign spreads firming (potentially sharply), which will further impede the transmission of monetary policy. Similarly, policymakers must resist calls to constantly tinker with GST rates, which adds to policy and fiscal uncertainty.

Finally, it's important to ensure monetary conditions are not inadvertently tightened by letting the exchange rate appreciate. India's bilateral merchandise trade deficit vis-à-vis China has increased over the last 15 years, and accounts for India's entire non-oil, non-gold trade deficit. Things haven't been helped by the rupee appreciating 18 per cent in real terms vis-à-vis the CNY (Chinese yuan) over the last five years. With the CNY breaching the psychologically important threshold of seven against the US dollar last week, and more depreciation expected as trade tensions deepen, it's important the rupee be allowed to depreciate in tandem with the CNY, so that bilateral competitiveness is not further eroded.

But the economic challenge isn't limited to just a demand slowdown, Business sentiment and "animal spirits" are flagging, which can't be reversed by just reducing the cost of capital. So what can the gov ernment do in the near term? How about doubling down on asset sales through a bold and decisive plan to privatise and strategically disinvest? Not only will this signal reform intent, but alleviate fiscal concerns while creating resources for a public investment injection, and attract foreign interest for some of these assets.

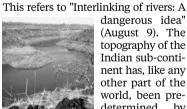
In the near term, therefore, the focus must be to fix the financial plumbing to allow monetary policy to transmit more fully, ensure India's exchange rate remains competitive, sell assets more aggressively (as a visible down-payment of reform intent), and exhibit strategic fiscal restraint.

But the medium-term challenge is perhaps more daunting. Growth has been driven in recent years by debt-fuelled consumption by households (which cannot sustain beyond a point) and the positive terms of trade shock from the collapse in oil prices. Externally, with the trade war deepening and protectionism rising, the global economy will pose more headwinds than tailwinds. All this has only one implication. For growth to sustain close to 7-8 per cent in the medium term, the economy will need another wave of productivity-enhancing reforms. The Bankruptcy Code and the GST are a good start, But reforming land, labour, power, and the financial sector is now imperative. Sustained growth cannot be driven by a fiscal stimulus or a monetary stimulus. Only through a reform stimulus.

The author is Chief India Economist at J.P. Morgan, All views are personal

LETTERS

Show some restraint



dangerous idea" (August 9). The topography of the Indian sub-continent has, like any other part of the world, been predetermined by

nature. Nature has

determined the geographical and geological pattern for all perennial and nonperennial rivers with planned distribution of suitable soil and mineral resources. Therefore, investment of funds for diversion of water is tantamount to defying nature inviting selfdestruction.

Problems arise due to increased habitation, necessitating intensive deforestation that has impeded the natural flow of river water. The excessive speed of flowing rivers in the catchment areas caused by deforestation and resultant soil erosion has reduced silt availability from the mountains, reducing soil fertility, creating floods and lowering crop yields. The channelisation of water from perennial rivers to drier areas is damaging because their geological and geographical purposes have already been determined. The availability of natural resources is thus in accordance with a planned climatic condition. Human intervention upsets these conditions. Additionally, diverting water through canals to interconnect rivers clashes with natural environmental planning, destroying the natural resources on

either side. We should stop playing with the naturally planned environment created for our benefit and adapt our lifestyle with it to avoid destruction in the long run. Respect for nature will create a healthy population and in the process, a sound economy.

C Gopinath Nair Kochi

Winning hearts is key

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's post-Article 370 abrogation TV address to the nation has come in for fulsome praise from many people as well as large sections of the media because he reached out to the people of Kashmir with a slew of promises and did not openly demonstrate triumphalism. But the moot question is whether his promises of early polls, restoration of statehood, benefits to government employees on par with their counterparts in other Union Territories, filling government job vacancies and investment will make up for what the people of Kashmir lost or were robbed of because of its earlier special status. They are a balm inefficacious in healing the deep wound to the Kashmiri psyche. 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 trust or vishwas. G David Milton Maruthancode

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard, Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002 Fax: (011) 23720201 · E-mail: letters@bsmail.in All letters must have a postal address and





Moving onshore

India needs modern tools to hedge currency risks

he task force appointed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to investigate the question of offshore rupee markets has submitted its report. The provocation for the report has been the recent sharp growth, in the committee's words, in the offshore trading volumes in the rupee non-deliverable forwards (NDF) market, "likely even beyond the volumes in the onshore markets". It is not surprising that the RBI is concerned about this issue. Maintaining the stability of the currency is one of its duties, even if it no longer targets a particular level for the rupee. If the value of the rupee is set largely by NDF markets that operate offshore and beyond the regulations and visibility of the central bank, then it becomes difficult to either anticipate or manage major changes. There is no major issue with the currency at the moment, but the "taper tantrum" episode of 2013 showed how the RBI can find it difficult to manage volatility in the currency markets.

The report correctly notes that there is little or no way to directly influence the construction of the NDF markets offshore. The only thing that is in the power of the government and the central bank to change is domestic regulations. The committee, led by former Reserve Bank deputy governor Usha Thorat, has correctly determined these should be altered to ensure that the incentives for traders to shift offshore trading in NDFs onshore are strengthened. The committee notes "there is a trade-off between the size/prominence of the offshore market and the extent of regulations/restrictions that are placed on cross-border transactions and foreign exchange markets/participants".

The clear implication is that the regulatory burden on transactions and participants is currently too high and irrationally structured, and they should be corrected. A growing economy with increasing linkages with the global economy requires modern tools to hedge currency risks.

It must be understood that fetishism for know-your-customer and a moral panic about round-tripping must give way to a clear understanding of how macro-economic stability requires the incentivisation of onshore trading. The committee suggests that at least exchange-traded NDFs should be permitted in the short term, though over-the-counter contracts are the eventual ideal. Definitely hedging volumes and convenience onshore need to be increased, so that legitimate hedging requirements are not taken to the overseas market.

While the committee's recommendations on how to ensure the rupee can be managed with greater visibility are well meant, the fundamental need is to ensure that the macro-economic environment itself is stable enough to make these concerns redundant. India needs to keep its own house in order. Often $India \'s\ internal\ imbalances\ such\ as\ the\ high\ fiscal\ deficit\ and\ inflation\ result\ in$ external sector problems. Therefore, it is important that policymakers constantly work on strengthening macroeconomic stability. Strong and stable fundamentals would reduce the scope of speculation in the currency market.

In this context, a lower fiscal deficit and public-sector borrowing requirement will ensure that there are no concerns about debt sustainability. And real sector reforms to increase exports competitiveness will address the concerns about a high current account deficit.

Rising global uncertainty

India needs active policy intervention

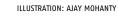
he global economic outlook significantly worsened over the last week with no clear sign of reversal. The US designated China as a currency manipulator after the Chinese yuan depreciated past seven to the US dollar. The underlying reasoning is that China is manipulating its currency to help exporters. Earlier, as the possibility of a trade truce faded, along with the emergence of reports that Chinese firms have been asked to not import agricultural products from the US, President Donald Trump announced tariffs on an additional \$300 billion worth of imports. The rise in trade tension resulted in a wider sell-off in risk assets. Stocks and emerging market currencies declined.

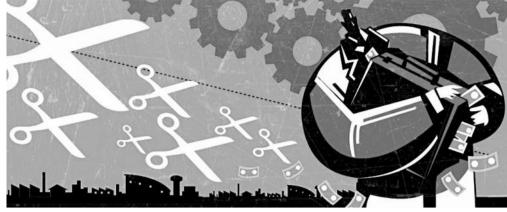
Although China has used its currency to push exports in the past, it is difficult to argue that the Chinese government intends to do the same thing even now. Other things being equal, slower growth and lower exports, partly because of higher US tariffs, are likely to weaken the yuan. Also, it is not in the interests of China to significantly devalue its currency at the moment. While a weaker yuan will indeed help exporters, it will affect plenty of businesses that have piled up foreign-currency debt over the years. In fact, China burned reserves worth about a trillion dollars defending its currency after the 2015 devaluation. A significant depreciation at this juncture could result in capital flight and complicate macroeconomic management.

The focus on currencies with increasing tariffs on imports from individual ıntries reflects the basic problem with the Trump administration's view of global trade. China is not alone. Mr Trump has accused the European Union, too, of currency manipulation. The distorted view of the world's largest economy will only increase uncertainty and impede global growth. For instance, risk aversion in the global financial system and the safe-haven demand have pushed up the Japanese yen. A stronger yen can complicate economic management in Japan. But an effort to intervene in the currency market could attract the wrath of the US.

The International Monetary Fund reduced its growth forecast for developing and emerging Asia largely because of the impact of tariffs on trade and investment. The trade tension is also affecting the US. For instance, as the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta has shown, investment in manufacturing declined by 4.2 per cent in 2018 because of trade tension. The Federal Reserve recently reduced interest rates for the first time since the financial crisis and markets expect it to cut rates further. Trade tension is being seen as a major risk to the current economic expansion in the US.

This has implications for India as well. For instance, Mr Trump has targeted India for higher tariffs. Also, India has not done well to increase tariffs on a range of items in recent years, including in the last Budget. Aside from bad optics, it is not in India's interests to increase tariffs. The trade-related problems will affect India through both the financial markets and trade channels. India will need active policy intervention to avert adverse consequences and capture possible opportunities, such as attracting firms that are moving out of China. Regrettably, India is not well prepared to deal with the changing global economic environment. The absence of policy adjustment would exacerbate the slowdown.





Prioritise GDP, not tax revenues

The present tax policy is focused on increasing tax revenues, whereas it should try to obtain the same number of rupees of taxation, while enabling a higher GDP

t is widely understood that the Indian taxation of corporations is unusual by world standards. This is also the case with the Indian taxation of foreign investors. The taxation of non-resident investors drives up the cost of capital for Indian firms, and adversely impacts physical investment in India.

It hampers the growth of financial services and allied industries, and hampers the liquidity and market efficiency of financial markets.

Let's start in a world where India has residence-based taxation: That is, non-residents are not taxed. Suppose we try to sell foreigners Indian government bonds, and suppose the supply and demand are **SNAKES & LADDERS** equalised at an interest rate of (say) 10 per cent.

Now suppose we add one more clause: We tell the foreign investor, "Of the interest that you earn in India, we want one percentage point as income tax." The interest rate required by the foreigners will immediately go to 11 per cent. The true cost of capital for the government does not change. Money is paid by public debt management and this shows up as

AJAY SHAH

Many things do change. The bond market will involve a great deal of procedural friction, where the government first pays 11 per cent on its cost of borrowing, and then gets back a tenth of this as taxation. This is one illustration of the superiority of what all advanced countries do: Residencebased taxation.

Similar problems are found with Indian private corporate equities. We have taxation on transactions in the form of a securities transaction tax (STT). This violates the principles of public finance, where all taxation on transactions is considered "a bad tax". Instead of trading the shares of Infosys in India, the foreign investor will prefer using the Infosys ADR at the New York Stock

Exchange (NYSE), where there is no STT.

The order flow that could have come to India is diverted to the NYSE. This reduces the liquidity and pricing efficiency of Indian financial markets. It also hampers the revenues of securities firms and other support services associated with the financial markets. Our attempt to tax foreigners is inducing a loss of exports and GDP in India.

The Mauritius treaty was a key part of protecting India from the consequences of mistakes in tax policy. India has long had bad tax policy, but the distortions imposed upon FPIs were limited through the Mauritius treaty. It all worked out okay, as long as fees were paid to service providers in Mauritius. Over the years, these protections have subsided. Now, there are many features of the Mauritius or Singapore treaties which are unusual by the world standards. As an example, the Mauritius treaty taxes royalty payments in ways that are not found elsewhere in the world. Similarly, the definitions and categories under 'permanent establishment' in the Singapore treaty are out of line with the way the rest of the world works.

The lost revenue adds up to rather large numbers, particularly when we look at the Nifty derivatives and the rupee derivatives. In about 2007, India

had almost a 100 per cent global market share in the trading of India-related securities. From that point onwards, we have introduced a series of measures in financial regulation, taxation, and capital controls, which have induced a steady loss of financial markets business. Activity in the two largest financial products — the Nifty and rupee — is steadily moving out of India. With the INR, it is estimated that the loss of revenue for India, in 2016, works out to ₹60,000 crore per year (http://ifrogs.org/POLICY/ndfReport.html).

Similarly, India-related fund management should take place here in India. Indeed, India should have become a base for global fund-management in South Asia or Asia. But this has not worked out. A great deal of India-related fund management has exited the country, in response to the policy environment, and the policy risk associated with future changes in taxation, capital controls, and financial regulation.

These problems are a test of our public policy capabilities. In the limit, we run the risk of becoming like some Latin American countries, where the financial markets have entirely moved to

Tax policy is hampering the real economy. The most important raw material for a firm like Tata Steel is not coal or iron ore, it is capital. The global investor equalises the post-tax return obtained through putting equity and debt capital into competing steel companies in China, Taiwan, Australia, South Korea, or India. A foreigner who looks at a bond issued by Tata Steel only counts the post-tax rate of return, and compares this against the post-tax returns that can be obtained by other large steel companies of the world. When India has higher taxation, the cost of capital for Tata Steel goes up.

The Indian taxation of capital — corporate income tax, dividend distribution tax, cess, and STT — induces a higher cost of capital for Tata Steel, when compared with that obtained by its rivals abroad. This hampers the possibility of making and exporting steel from India.

Such enhancement of the cost of capital for equity and debt capital of India's firms, is not in India's interests. It will induce a lower scale of investment, because the hurdle rate for investment projects in India goes up.

Tax policy is focused on increasing tax rev enues or increasing the tax/GDP ratio. We should instead be asking how to obtain the same number of rupees of taxation, while enabling a higher GDP. Our objective should be a high GDP, not a high tax/GDP ratio. Tax reform is one of the important elements of the path to a \$5 trillion GDP. Suppose we are at ₹20 of tax revenues on ₹100 of GDP. Suppose tax reforms make it possible to go to ₹20 of tax revenues and ₹150 of GDP. This is a highly attractive outcome. The purpose of tax reforms, and all economic policy, should be to foster GDP growth.

 $The \ writer \ is \ a \ professor \ at \ National \ Institute \ of \ Public$

Immigration in hotter times

am sharing an image that has been haunting me. We are locked in a room where we can see from our narrowly opened window that the weather outside has gone berserk — fires in forests, heat waves, extreme rain, and storms, all happening as predicted. But our screams are not being heard. As if, it is happening somewhere else. Or not real.

I know this sounds too dramatic. But it is a fact. The impact of clearly changing weather patterns because of a warmer planet is happening in our face. But we are so distracted — trade wars, Brexit, immi-

gration, economy (good and bad), nationalism, war and much more that goes with it are predominant. Climate change could not have happened at a worse time in human history it would seem. We simply don't have the bandwidth to handle it.

This is when it becomes clear that things are spiralling out of control. Every year, we are told, is the hottest year, till the next year comes around. Then a new record is broken. It is getting worse. That we know. We hear it; we can even feel it now.

We need to understand what this existential crisis means to people living on the margins of survival. It is a matter of record that every extreme weather event flood or drought — forces people to migrate, searching for work. It pushes them out of their homes sometimes this is temporary and sometimes relocation becomes permanent. But now, climate change has become that last straw breaking the camel's back.

Amitav Ghosh, in his new novel Gun Island, evocatively takes us through the generations of immigrants; when weather disturbances made people leave their homes in search of new livelihoods in the past and now. The migrant has always been that human face of change - good and bad. It is also a fact that migration is not only because of the push but also because of the pull — the grass is greener on the other side of the Mexican wall.

Today's interconnected world has simultaneous jeopardies — one, it transports climate-altering carbon oxide emissions from one country to the global atmosphere, and, two, it transports global news at the speed

of mobile telephony. The push and the pull will only increase

The question is what our response will be to this induced and hastened migration. Already immigration is defining the politics of many countries. In India, we are discussing how to count "outsiders" and we don't know what we will do once we have counted them. In Europe, the public mood (and elections) is being determined by images of hordes of boat people landing illegally; in the US,

the wall and the millions that are awaiting entry are taking over airwaves, social media, and other public spaces. The "immigration" narrative is real, and already we are doing a really bad job in handling our response — both in words and in action. It is already adding to societal fear and insecurity; bitterly polarising communities and feeding the nationalist brigade.

Just think. When a white supremacist opened fire and massacred people in El Paso, Texas, US, he said that he was doing this to protect the world from climate change. His cold logic, written on his now taken down blog, is that Americans will never give up their lifestyle, which he accepts is destroying the planet. His answer: Remove enough people so that the US lifestyle can be sustainable. Kill them. Stop them from entering the US.

In the past I would have dismissed this rant as madness. But now we are getting to a point where the two crisis points will intersect, indeed implode. As yet, we have little data on the causes of migration. We talk glibly about climate refugees because it is hard to understand the nature and gravity of this problem.

This is not to say that migration is bad. The fact is cities and countries have been created because of people who have left homes and settled to build new prosperity. In India, we know that internal migration is the name of the employment game. Every region has vast numbers of people who come from the regions of distress — hit by flood or drought or destitution — or come because they seek new opportunities. Every Indian city is an amalgamation of different regions, languages, and food habits.

But it is reaching a tipping point. In India, we have no idea of the number of people who are migrating – in the short and long terms — because the last census was conducted a decade ago. But from the sheer number of illegal and unauthorised settlements springing up in cities, it is clear that the number of new settlers is huge. What this will do to politics is now apparent from domicile reservations to migrant counting. It will only get worse.

I am writing this without an ending. I have no conclusions to offer. But I do believe it is time we discussed the true nature of our climate jeopardy. In human terms.

The writer is at the Centre for Science and Environment Twitter: @sunitanar

China's syndromes in India's ocean



NITIN PAI

ertil Lintner's book $\it The Costliest$ Pearl is perhaps the most comprehensive account of the contemporary geopolitics of the maritime Eastern Hemisphere. It covers the ground from Djibouti to Vanuatu and the water from the South China Sea to the Southern Indian Ocean, And although it covers the actions and reactions of the powers from within and without the region, it is China that lies at the heart of the plot.

In that sense, Mr Lintner's book mirrors the biggest geopolitical — and perhaps historic — narrative of our time: China's rise as a global power and its consequences for the countries of Asia, Africa and the Pacific, A number of books published in the last few years have sought to both chronicle international developments, assess and judge China's policies and actions, and offer policy prescriptions on what other countries ought to do about them. Written from the American, Australian, Indian, Singaporean or other South East Asian national perspective, these accounts are subjective and presume that the reader is concerned about the national interests of the author's country of origin.

Mr Lintner's readout, on the other hand, is detached. Even if he were batting for Sweden, where he comes from - which he isn't — that country has no dog in this fight. This makes his reading of the situation a little more objective than other books that you might read. As objective as the book is, Mr Lintner is not neutral. He does not see China as an innocent country trying to escape American attempts to keep it down. He is deeply suspicious of its political system, very sceptical about its geopolitical narrative and unambiguous in his conclusion: "the Indian Ocean is the pearl (President Xi Jinping) wishes to secure for his growing Chinese empire — irrespective of the cost."

It's 2019. It should be abundantly clear by now that Beijing has a plan for extending its hegemony with Chinese characteristics for a new era, and while that might involve throwing around a trillion dollars in infrastructure proiects, the game is still the old one of global dominance. In chapter after chapter, Mr Lintner shows how China has attempted to convert projects into influence, often successfully. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the banner under which every single Chinese project is now placed, has provided a wellmarketed brand name for Beijing's initiatives. Although it is suffering a nationalistic backlash in several countries — Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar and Malaysia — it remains a welcome calling card in the capitals of many of the smaller countries of the Indian Ocean region.

DOWN TO EARTH

SUNITA NARAIN

Interestingly, although the Modi government famously and correctly kept India out of the imperial durbar that goes by the name of the BRI summit, Mr Lintner reminds us that 'work on a US\$ 1 billion Chinese industrial park in Sanand in Gujarat began in 2016" that the Global Times — the English-language mouthpiece of the Chinese regime — described as a "One Belt One Road" pilot project. Of course, every brick that China lays anywhere in the world is now hailed as part of the BRI, but it only shows the reach of Beijing's charms and

infrastructure projects.

How have countries of the Indian Ocean region responded to the Chinese push? They have either welcomed or been unable to resist Beijing. This is because while the first preference of small and medium powers is to have great powers balancing each other, their fallback plan is to bandwagon onto the side of the stronger ones. This means that a small island country in the region would prefer the United States, China, India and others create a stable balance where no one is able to push it around. If they cannot play one against the other for some reason, they will take the side of the strongest of the lot. In chapter after chapter, the book tells the stories of how this dynamic is unfolding.

Mr Lintner argues that in comparison to the countries of the South China Sea, those in the Indian Ocean have political and economic vulnerabilities that make them susceptible to manipulation by outside powers. The Western powers, for their part, "want to defend their possessions and interests without being sure who, exactly, their regional allies should be." This, plus a "reluctance to identify China as the main adversary", has made the Indian Ocean more volatile than other regions witnessing a tussle between great powers.

What the book misses out is the digital dimension: it may well be that the Digital Silk Road, where countries are enticed into adopting Chinese technology in their communications networks, is the most powerful card in the BRI deck. While countries and analysts are wondering what to make of overbuilt ports, forlorn railways and overgenerous lines of credit, the almost subliminal deployment of network equipment, broadband modems, smartphones and software platforms might be what ultimately strings the pearls.

THE COSTLIEST PEARL China's Struggle for India's Ocean

Bernard Lintner Context; ₹699; 288 pages



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

THAS 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

AJASTHAN 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 moblynching 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.

MoreMEDICS

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

HE 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 let quacks thrive.

NO PROOF REQUIRED

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

Monetary policy: Facts, Opinion, Governance

HIS 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 reporate 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, Iwant 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



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 grotes quely 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 reporate is the same as 2010, the real reporate is at 2.6% compared to minus 8.1% in April 2010. Stated differently

Every monetary

the expert

assessment that

monetary policy is

reducing the cost

of money

and equivalently, the cost of capital (reporate) 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 slow-

down, 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 reporate: 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 reporate has averaged 20 bp lower at 6.1%, and the real reporate 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 statistic contradicts 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

> reporate. Why is this simple math seem*ingly* 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?

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

Professor of Economics, University of California, Santa Cruz 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. Government 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.

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

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

JAPAN-KOREA TRADE DISPUTE

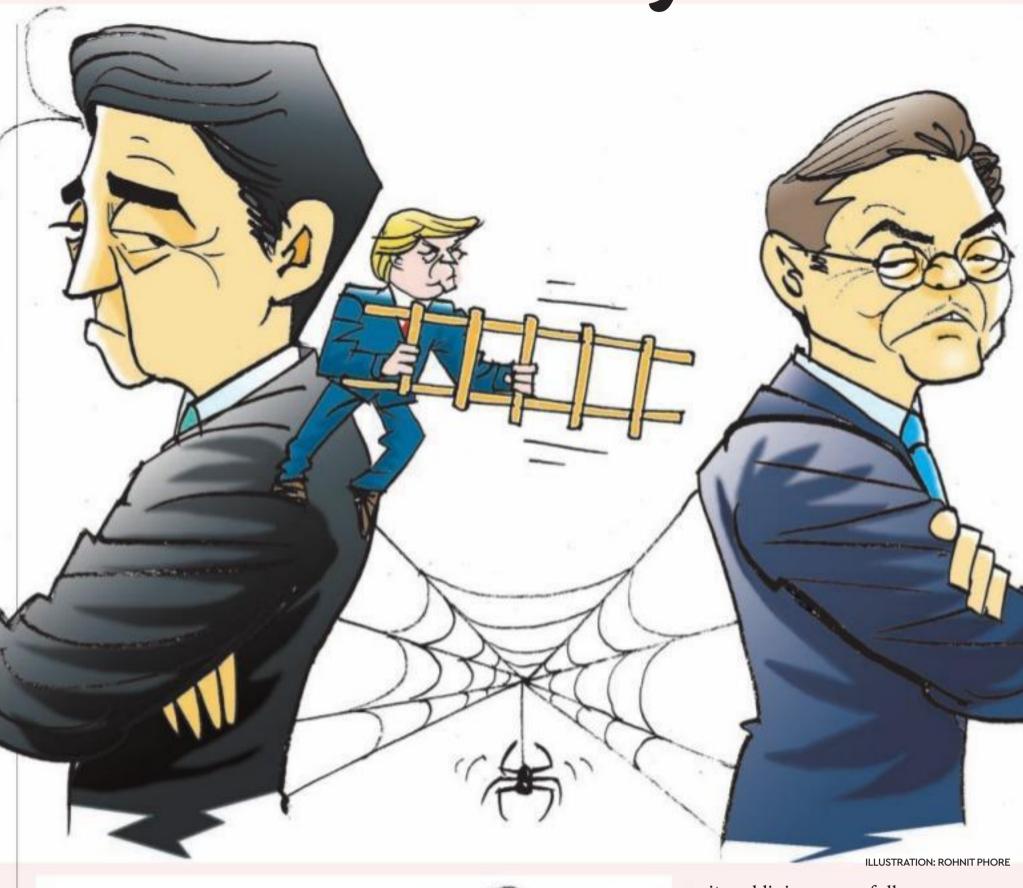
Japan seeks to emerge from the shadow of history

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

APAN, 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 Taro Katsura 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

The author is a Singapore-based Sinologist, and adjunct fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. Views are personal

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 its public image carefully.

But it is Abe who has sought to turn a page in Japan's constitutional history, seeking an amendment for the first time in its 72-year history. Japan's surrender in the Second World War led to a postwar pacifist Constitution. Despite being a formidable power in its own right, Japan is dependent on the US for defence—it is bound to the US by a defence treaty (1951, revised in 1960) where the US has military bases in Japan in exchange of protecting Japan in case of an attack. Abe and his

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 (nowar clause) of the Constitution. Article 9 says that "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential will 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 245member 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 secu-

> rity 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,

Apr

2019

7.9

Jun

67,435

FY18

1,02,628

FY19 (RE)

1,25,000

Small savings rates have

not fallen much

(PPF; %)

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 dis-

Relations between

the two are rocky

because of 'historical

animosity' that

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colonisation of the

Korean peninsula

(1910-45)

plays 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 militaryintelligence 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 round 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.

Deposits grow in small savings

(Securities issued against small savings; ₹ cr)

DATA DRIVE

Poor transmission external benchmarks appears to have The central bank has injected HILE THE RESERVE BANK of been taken off the table.

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.

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

Banks have been very slow in

passing on the benefits of the central

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 fiveyear deposits 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%.

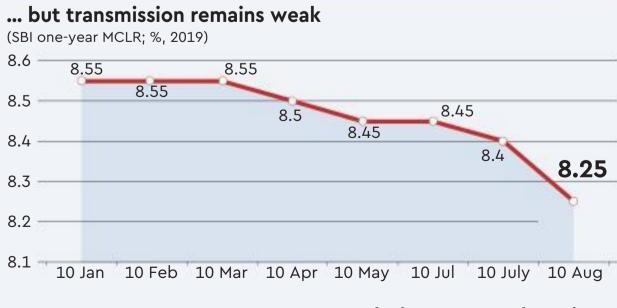
liquidity, which means the supplyhas also made it easier for and this should improve liquidity. Going forward, transmission should improve given surplus liquidity in the financial system.

side is being taken care of, and banks to lend to non-banks,

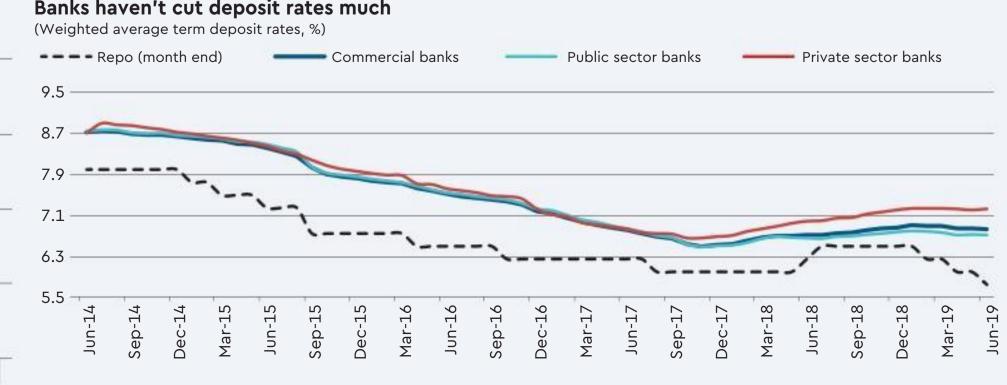


Deposit growth slower than credit growth

(% chg, y-o-y, 2019)



Banks haven't cut deposit rates much (Weighted average term deposit rates, %) --- Repo (month end)



Source: RBI, SBI, Budget documents

14.47 14.56 14.43 14.63 **Credit growth** 14.5 14.2 14.3 14.4 13.01 12.63 13.75 13.13 12 12.26 12.05 11.98 10.6 10.35 10.32 10.2 10 10 10 10.59 10.09 9.92 10.02 9.91 9.8 9.69 9.7 9.63 **Deposits growth** 4 Jan 18 Jan 1 Feb 15 Feb 1 Mar 15 Mar 29 Mar 12 Apr 26 Apr 10 May 24 May 7 Jun 21 Jun 5 Jul 19 Jul

press.com

TELLING NUMBERS

N-E crowds list of states with most dense tree & forest cover

A QUARTER of India's geographical area (24.49 per cent) is under forest and tree cover, according to data shared in Parliament by the Ministry of Environment. Forest and Climate Change. These assessments are done by the Forest Survey of India, whose findings are published in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR). The last report was published in 2017.

The lowest forest and tree cover in the country is in Haryana, at 6.79 per cent of its geographical area. Punjab follows with 6.87 per cent. Rajasthan's forest and tree cover is over 7.26 per cent of its geographical area while Madhya Pradesh's is 27.73 per cent.

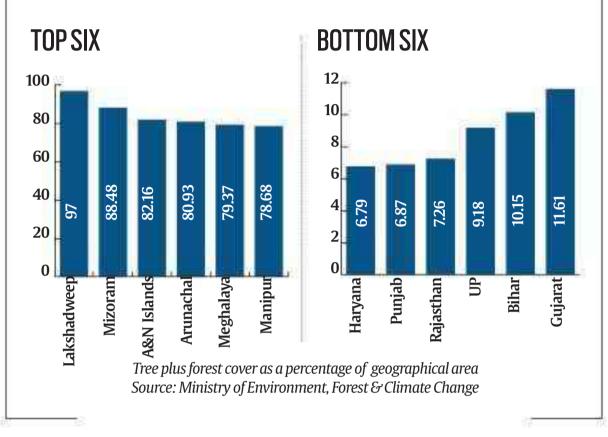
At 97 per cent, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep is on top - its geographical area is only 30 square km. Among the six states with the highest forest and tree cover, four are in the Northeast - Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Meghalaya. Goa and Kerala are two other



Tree planting drive in Chandigarh in 2016. File photo

states with more than 50 per cent of their geographical area under forest and tree cover.

In terms of geographical area, the highest tree and forest cover is in Madhya Pradesh, with 85,487 sq km.



TIP FOR READING LIST -

TRY ALL TRADES TO MASTER ONE

RANGE

DAVID PESTEIN

IF SOMEONE wants herself or her child to develop a skill and excel in it, say playing a musical instrument, how intensely do they focus? Experts would argue that they start early in life, practise for as long as possible,

and specialise. Journalist David Epstein argues that it pays more to generalise than to specialise. In Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialised World, Epstein uses data from surveys of individual cases of eminent musicians, inventors, scientists, artists, and athletes to argue that generalists, while they take longer to make their mark, tend to outshine specialists because

of their varied interests, creativity, and their ability to see across domains. The path to excellence, therefore, lies not through early specialisation but in trying out multiple domains and broadening skills.

Among young musicians, one survey found, the most successful ones were those who found their instrument of choice only after having tried other ones. Scientists who won a Nobel prize, as opposed to the scientists who didn't, were 22 times more likely to have also tried

their skills as actors, dancers, musicians, or other performers. Epstein gives the example of tennis player Roger Federer, whose parents encouraged him to try various sports, including basketball, handball, skiing, skateboarding, swimming, table tennis, and wrestling, before he finally chose tennis.

Epstein not only argues in favour of experimenting with various skills, but also that one should quit frequently He cautions, though, that it is critically important to know when to quit, and suggests premeditating possible scenarios that would warrant quitting a job before even accepting it.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How to read leaked NRC data

Data released by Assam government caused a storm in Assembly but NRC process stays on schedule. What trends was the govt trying to highlight, and what is their demographic and political significance?

KABIR FIRAQUE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 11

LAST WEEK, the Supreme Court refused to be drawn into a debate over the leak of National Register of Citizens (NRC) data in Assam, stressing that it wants the final NRC out on schedule (August 31) "irrespective of who likes it or who doesn't". This capped a week of controversy that began with the state government tabling the data in the Assembly, and demanding reverification.

What kind of data were presented in the **Assembly?**

According to the government, these are from the draft final NRC published in July last year. It showed the number of people included in and excluded from the NRC in each of Assam's 33 districts. In fact, sections of the Assamese vernacular media had published district-wise data last year itself, but the NRC authorities had never commented on their authenticity. Besides, the numbers of inclusions and exclusions will now have changed, following the processes of claims and objections.

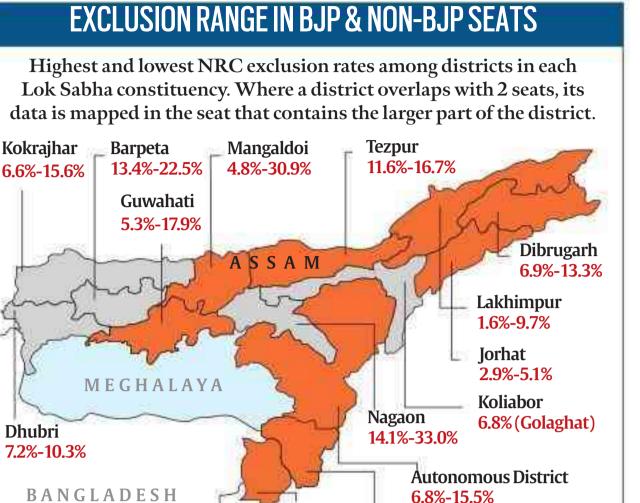
Last year, the NRC authorities did not give a district-wise breakup and only released all-Assam totals — 3,29,91,384 applicants, out of whom 2,89,83,677 were included as citizens and 40,07,707 were left out. In the data tabled in the Assembly, the totals are slightly different - 3,29,91,385 applicants, 2,89,83,668 inclusions and 40,07,717 exclusions.

What is the significance of data broken up district-wise?

It is about demographic profiles and geographic locations. BJP minister and government spokesperson Chandra Mohan Patowary, who presented the data, highlighted a trend — the inclusion rate is higher in Bangladesh-border districts, and lower in districts with a predominant indigenous population. The government cited these trends to claim the NRC is flawed. This argument presumes that the number of illegal immigrants will be higher in border districts. Migrants from East Bengal/East Pakistan/Bangladesh have, however, been settling in various parts of Assam for decades.

The three border districts—Dhubri, South Salmara and Karimganj — happen to be Muslim majority. On the other hand, the two districts with the highest exclusion rates — Hojai and Darrang — too have high Muslim populations but are far from the border.

What do demographic profiles tell us



Karimganj Silchar

7.7%-8.0%

about immigration?

While it is widely accepted that the migrant-origin population is predominantly Muslim, the counter-argument is that Bengali Muslims have been entering Assam since British rule. Migration is considered illegal only when someone has entered Assam after March 24, 1971. As such, the relationship between population profiles and immigration has been a subject of debate among demographers.

Held by BJP Held by others

SOURCE: Map created based on data released by state government

Dr Nandita Saikia, Assistant Professor of Population Studies at INU, has analysed Census figures since 1891 to conclude that Muslims comprised 85 per cent of migrants from East Bengal during 1891-1951, and about two-thirds of migrants from East Pakistan during 1951-71. For the period between 1971-2011, she concludes that the Muslim population growth in Assam (from about 25% to 34%) cannot be explained as a natural increase.

Abdul Mannan, former professor of statistics at Gauhati University, has gone into the same population trends in his book Infiltration: Genesis of Assam Movement and concluded that the Muslim population growth has been driven by natural factors rather than migration. "A segment of the

Muslim population has a higher fertility rate, unfortunately, because of illiteracy, backwardness and other factors," Mannan said. Some districts have always had a high Muslim population, such as Karimganj since Independence, and undivided Goalpara district since the first census of 1871, he said.

12.9%(Cachar)

Leave alone religious profiles, even the extent of overall migration is debated. "Over decades, scholars, activists and politicians have struggled, jousted and claimed vastly different figures for in-migration," noted Sanjoy Hazarika, journalist, author and International Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. "The issues are far more complex than a simple sum game, much more than the demographics of religion. There are community growth rates, overall and group fertility rates (the number of children that women will bear between different ages), mortality data and replacement rates," Hazarika said. "... The fact of the matter is that no one has a clear idea. Bangladesh has denied for decades that any of its nationals migrate to India."

Won't the NRC clear the uncertainty?

Hazarika said the NRC, "if it had been done clearly and correctly, had been the best bet to

develop a reasonable figure. Now it is mired in so many controversies over data and who's on or offit and why, that it will continue to be a long and tortuous process. And the poorest and most vulnerable are bound to suffer the most. Ad hoc, knee-jerk rhetorical flourishes may make for good sound bites. but they often are far from reality, logic or facts."

Among researchers, Saikia questioned the NRC, saying it was not scientific as it was done without a pilot project (an attempt in 2010 was foiled by protests), adding there are fundamental flaws in the field verification process, and calling it unfortunate that the Supreme Court has not agreed to reverification. She said the total exclusion was lower than figures declared by the Centre from time to time. "During 1971-2011, the population growth of those districts which experienced established immigration trends before 1951 is unbelievably high. However, they have the highest inclusion in NRC. Whatever exclusion is happening, they too will be included in the final list as excluded people's close relatives are included," she said.

Mannan, on the other hand, described the government narrative around the NRC data as "sheer propaganda not supported by statistics". He said the cutoff date of 1971 is not acceptable to the government, which is trying various ways to delay the NRC. "If they cannot bring the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) before the NRC, a large number of those who came after 1971 and who do not have documents... a majority of them will not find their names in the NRC."

Why should exclusion, and not inclusion, cause the government anxiety?

Higher Muslim inclusion also implies higher Bengali Hindu exclusion, a base that the BJP is trying to protect. Over the last one year, minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other BJP leaders have publicly cited their estimates about a high proportion of Hindus among the exclusions. If they are still out of the NRC, the BIP is hoping that they would be eligible for Indian citizenship if the CAB is

Ranjit Dass, state BJP president, told *The* Indian Express: "We have appealed to our central committee that unless a Foreigners Tribunal or a higher court declares a person a foreigner, one should not be declared as such only based on the NRC. Also, people who are eligible under CAB will be included as citizens once it's passed — and we are committed to passing it... There is no question of vote bank but it's all about a moral responsibility."

With inputs from Abhishek Saha in Guwahati

Hottest ever month on record: what now?

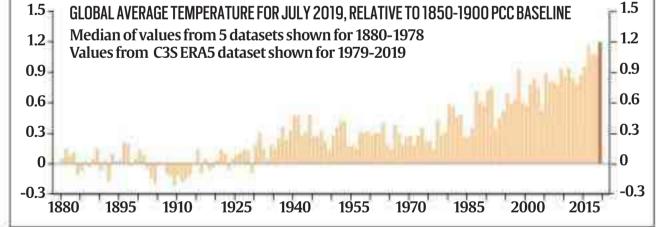
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI. AUGUST 11

THIS MONTH, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced that July 2019 matched, and possibly broke, the record for the hottest month since analysis began. **Trends:** The finding emerged from analy-

sis of new data from the WMO and the Copernicus Climate Change Programme, run by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts. The previous warmest month on record was July 2016, and July 2019 was at least on par with it.

Every month in 2019 has ranked among the four warmest for the month in question, and June was the warmest June ever recorded. the Copernicus Programme said in a state-



ment. July 2019 was close to 1.2°C above the pre-industrial level. The Paris Agreement set specific 'temperature targets' with a goal to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to aim to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

Source: Copernicus Climate Change Programme

Why it's a concern: Exceptional heat has been observed across the globe in recent weeks, with several European countries recording temperature highs. "The extraordinary heat was accompanied by dramatic ice melt in Greenland, in the Arctic and on

European glaciers. Unprecedented wildfires raged in the Arctic for the second consecutive month, devastating once pristine forests which used to absorb carbon dioxide and instead turning them into fiery sources of greenhouse gases. This is not science fiction. It is the reality of climate change. It is happening now and it will worsen in the future without urgent climate action," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement. The statement quoted UN Secretary-

General António Guterres as saying: "This year alone, we have seen temperature records shattered from New Delhi to Anchorage, from Paris to Santiago, from Adelaide and to the Arctic Circle. If we do not take action on climate change now, these extreme weather events are just the tip of the iceberg. And, indeed, the iceberg is also rapidly melting."

How PoK has featured in RSS, Jana Sangh discourse for nearly 7 decades

SHYAMLAL YADAV NEW DELHI, AUGUST 11

HOME MINISTER Amit Shah reiterated in Lok Sabha last week that the creation of the

two new Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh did not mean the dilution of India's claim over the entire original state of Jammu and Kashmir, including the portions occupied by Pakistan and China. While this has always been India's position, for the RSS and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), Kashmir and PoK have been especially important.

Jana Sangh

The BJP perceives an inalienable link between Jammu and Kashmir and its own inception, both as a party and as an ideology. Kashmir was one of the issues on which the founder president of the BJS — the predecessor and first avatar of the BIP — Syama Prasad Mookerjee, walked out of the Cabinet of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The Jana Sangh was founded in 1951, and Mookerjee told Nehru that it would be "nothing short of national disgrace and humiliation" if India failed to recover the part of Kashmir that

Pakistan had illegally occupied. On June 23, 1953, Mookerjee died in jail in Srinagar, where he had been kept by the government of Sheikh Abdullah after he entered Kashmir in violation of prohibitory orders. The slogan "Jahaan hue balidaan Mookerjee, wo Kashmir hamara hai" has been raised by the BJS and BJP ever since.

■ In its first annual conclave in Kanpur in December 1952, the BJS under Mookerjee expressed concern over the central government's policies which had resulted in the "invader Pakistan's occupation of 1/3rd land of the state (Jammu and Kashmir)".

■ In its meeting in Allahabad (now Prayagraj) on August 15, 1953, the BJS passed a resolution saying "Bharat-Pakistan friendship" was not possible until the "return of 2/5th of Pak-Occupied-Kashmir".

■ In its third annual conclave in Jodhpur in January 1955, the BJS reiterated its demand that "Government must clearly and decisively declare that it will make all efforts to take back Kashmir's one-third part occupied by Pakistan illegally."

■ In its fourth conclave in Jaipur in April 1956, the BJS again demanded that Nehru's government should "make all possible efforts to take back PoK at the earliest".

■ In its national executive meeting in Jaunpur in April 1957, the party asked the government to "make all efforts to take back Pak-Occupied-Kashmir". The BJS manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections in 1957 said India "should try to take the one-third part of Kashmir back".

■ This demand was reiterated in the sixth all-India conclave in Ambala in April 1958, and in its meeting in Surat in December 1959.

■ The BJS manifesto for the 1962 Lok Sabha elections promised to "make all efforts to take Pak-Occupied-Kashmir back."

■ The national executive meeting in Kota in May 1962 expressed concern over the Pakistan-China alliance against India, and demanded that "active steps must be taken to take back Pak-Occupied-Kashmir".

■ In January 1966, the BJS national executive meeting in Kanpur said: "It is the duty of the central government to get PoK back. It should be the only issue in the dialogue between India and Pakistan on Jammu and Kashmir."

■ The manifesto for the 1967 Lok Sabha elections did not mention PoK, but went a step further: "BJS believes in integration of Bharat and Pakistan".

The 1971 manifesto did not mention PoK. But the November 1972 meeting in Jaipur criticised the Simla Agreement, and the calling back of the Indian Army "without liberating the areas of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan since 1947".

RSS

The RSS's Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), Kendra Karyakari Mandal (KKM), and Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal (ABKM), too, have repeatedly raised the issue of PoK.

■ In 1960, the KKM said the government, "by giving its silent consent to the construction of Mangala Dam in Pak-occupied Kashmir, shown its mental preparedness to give up its claim over that strategic area".

■ In 1962, the RSS passed a resolution in its KKM opposing concessions to Pakistan on Kashmir and other issues: "Pakistan herself is an aggressor in Kashmir. If India acquiesces before one aggressor, it can't resist the other."

in India-Pak talks on Kashmir should be "the question of getting Pakistan's aggression vacated from the one-third part of Kashmir". ■ In 1990, an ABKM resolution said

■ In 1963, the ABPS said the core issue

"Tension there (in Kashmir) could get defused only if Pakistan withdraws from the 2/5th part of Kashmir forcibly occupied by it."

■ In 1994, after Parliament unanimously resolved that "Pakistan must vacate the areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which they have occupied through aggression", the ABPS said it "hopes that this timely expression of national solidarity will spur the government to abandon its hitherto ambivalent attitude towards the Kashmir issue".

■ In 1995, the ABKM said "It is very strange that all the brave talk on the floor of the Parliament and on various international fora about Jammu and Kashmir's irrevocable integration with Bharat and the declaration that the only problem that remains is one of vacation by Pakistan of its occupied parts in

Kashmir should have evaporated so soon." In 1997, in the light of discussions on greater autonomy for the state, the ABPS warned that greater autonomy "will close all options before our country to take steps in the light of the unanimous resolution of the Parliament".

■ In 2003, in a resolution on "International Scenario", the RSS's ABKM called upon the government "To draft our

WORDLY WISE

GREAT FLOODS HAVE FLOWN FROM SIMPLE SOURCES.

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE REWIND

Return of Sonia as interim president, Congress failure to look beyond its first family, signals its inadequacy in a challenging political moment

N HIS RESIGNATION letter from the post of Congress president, Rahul Gandhi had called for a transformation of the party. Later, he said that the Congress must pick a president from outside the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to move forward from the general election defeat. However, on Saturday, nearly two-and-half months after Rahul quit as party chief, the Congress Working Committee, the party's top decision-making body, named Sonia Gandhi the interim president. Sonia, who helmed the party for a record 19 years till 2017, will hold the post until organisational elections are held and a new president is ap-

Predictably, senior Congress leaders have hailed the choice. In fact, however, the party's move to fall back on a former president from the dynasty is a symptom of the crisis plaguing the Congress. Clearly, India's Grand Old Party seems to be lacking in young talent. Or, its privileged and entitled establishment that has so abysmally failed to challenge the BJP juggernaut rolling over the country's political landscape, is unwilling to step aside for a new leadership. Either way, given the absence of any structures and processes or ideological framework, it seems that the only glue that can hold the party together is still the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The Congress has also exposed itself as a timid party unwilling to face up to the new reality. India, today, has a predominantly young electorate. Under Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, the BJP appeals to its ambitions and aspirations. The BJP has also been changing the ideological compass of the Indian state. The Congress, however, appears to be in a state of confusion as the Modi-Shah regime resets the nation's policies and priorities. The party's failure to produce a coherent response to the Centre's decision to amend Article 370 and change the status of Jammu and Kashmir is only the latest illustration of its listless character today.

The absence of leadership and lack of direction in the Congress has prodded many leaders to leave the party. Sonia's return as president may stem the bleeding. But the party will need to do much more if it wants to regain credibility among voters. A first step could be to end the nomination culture in the party and hold elections for leadership positions. That itself could rejuvenate the party and help it attract young, energetic people. The Congress also needs to restate its principles so that citizens know where it stands on crucial national issues. It needs fresh faces, bold strategies and a new political language to come back into the reckoning. It could take a leaf from the BJP, which recast its leadership after losing the 2009 general election and acquired a new edge. Even though the return of Sonia at the helm draws attention to the impoverishment of Congress options, she could step up to this moment and ensure a genuine transition by taking the tough decisions.

A FLOOD OF DOUBTS

Maharashtra floods revive questions of coordination and efficiency in water resource management

FTER BEING BATTERED by unprecedented rains for over a week, nearly 4 lakh people have been rescued from flood-hit villages in the Pune, Sangli and Satara districts of Maharashtra and relocated to 300-odd camps. The state government, the armed forces and the NDRF completed commendable rescue missions, but around 30 lives were lost, including 10 who died tragically when a rescue boat capsized in Sangli. The Met department has predicted a slowing down of rains in the state over the next few days, and while lakhs of homes will need rebuilding, about 1.5 lakh hectares including some of Western India's most productive farmland, including sugar-producing regions, is now destroyed for this year's critical kharif season.

Running through the centre of this crisis is the river Krishna, which blesses agricultural land in south-western Maharashtra with bountiful harvests. The very heavy rains in the upstream areas of the Krishna began at the start of the month. By Monday, August 5, parts of Pune district experienced floods even as Kolhapur city faced a partial blackout as transformers and feeders went under. By Tuesday, very large parts of the region were flooded as the dangerously swollen Krishna breached its banks. On Tuesday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis spoke to his Karnataka counterpart BS Yediyurappa, requesting that more water be discharged from the Almatti, the first dam across the Krishna in the neighbouring district, in order to provide some relief in the upstream regions in Maharashtra. But only on Friday did the discharge from Almatti cross five lakh cusecs, likely on account of the neighbouring state's bureaucracy, concerned about its own water stocks. By Saturday, parts of Sangli and Kolhapur had been flooded for six days and dozens of villages marooned as roads and major highways were inundated. Without a doubt, the rains were unprecedented — Pune has now received 140 per cent in excess of its average rain for this time of the year, while Satara and Sangli have recorded 81 per cent and 59 per cent in excess. But the upstream dams on the Krishna were discharging water from their reservoirs early last week, and the delay in coaxing more water to be released from Almatti was perhaps critical. Fadnavis has said the need of the hour is more accurate rain forecasts, more detailed warnings in place of the current categorisation as "heavy" or "very heavy". But in reality, while weather forecasting models will continue to develop, there was fair warning of last week's deluge. So the state must now look into whether there was adequate coordination between various arms of the bureaucracy in managing dam waters in the Krishna river basin, whether a pre-planned and controlled release of waters over a few days could have prevented some of the widespread destruction caused by sudden discharges.

Similar questions over whether reservoir waters should have been released in a controlled manner over several days were raised after previous Maharashtra floods too. Flood management can no longer be seen as minimising economic and physical losses. As plans get afoot to build more big dams and river linking projects, the state will need intelligent and nimble — and transparent — water resource management.

Freeze Frame

EPUNNY



18K and the world



India's strategies for internal security, territorial defence and diplomacy will have to act in unison

WHEN YOU CREATE new facts on the ground, especially in a contested terrain, you must be prepared for push back. As Pakistan mounts a political offensive against India's decision to alter the status of Jammu and Kashmir, there will surely be international ripples. The Indian diplomatic objective is to get the rest of the world to live with the new reality in Kashmir, if not accept it.

This is not the first time that India has created new facts on the ground. India's Pokhran tests of 1998 come readily to mind. It took about 10 years for the international system to move from a very harsh initial reaction to lifting by 2008 the four-decade-old nuclear blockade against India.

That is good diplomatic precedent for Delhi in coping with whatever Pakistan throws at India. But there should be no underestimating the complexity of the challenge. India's diplomatic response must be at multiple levels. One is the legal dimension. Realists might scoff at legal niceties. But legal arguments are important and Delhi must present a solid legal brief about its actions, since there is little international understanding of the complex historical evolution of Kashmir. That applies more broadly to the international public opinion, where the Pakistani narrative on Kashmir continues to prevail, thanks to the nature of the international media coverage of Kashmir. Of special interest are the Western legislatures that tend to generate policy pressures on their executive establishments.

Traditionally, Pakistan has been good at mobilising opinion in these quarters, especially in Britain and Europe. India has done quite well in the US over the years, where it has outsmarted separatist propaganda backed by Pakistan. But Delhi should note that Pakistan is learning from the Indian playbook in the US. It has mobilised the not insignificant Pakistani diaspora and won over small but key sections of the Congress.

Then comes the question of "internationalisation". Pakistan loves the idea and India deeply resents it. Going to the UNSC has been the instinctive first reaction of Pakistan. But neither Pakistan's faith in the UN nor India's concerns stand up to close scrutiny. The UN's ability to impose solutions on disputes between nations has rarely been impressive. But for India taking the Kashmir question to it, there was no way the UN would loom so large on Kashmir. During the Cold War, divisions the Cold War, though, there was a brief moment when Russia and China seemed to acquiesce in the interventionist agenda that Western liberals had set for the UN. Great powers are quarreling again and they are unlikely to agree on the Kashmir question. India's task is to simply prevent such an agreement. This does not mean India's engagement

among major powers limited the UN Security

Council's peace-making role. After the end of

with the UN and multilateral agencies is unimportant. Some multilateral activity can be quite useful. For example, the recent Indian campaign at the UN on designating Masood Azhar as a terrorist has been good at highlighting Pakistan's role as a safe haven for violent extremism. Even more valuable has been India's engagement with the Financial Action Task Force, which has ratcheted up the pressures on Pakistan to stop support for terrorism. What matters, therefore, is not the general principle of "internationalisation", but the specifics of the context and the nature of the forum.

Pakistan's proclaimed faith in mediation is touching because there is no evidence that third-party involvement in the Kashmir dispute has benefited Pakistan. Consider, for example, Islamabad's efforts to mobilise the international community for mediation in the Kargil War two decades ago. It ended up in the US compelling Pakistan to accept the sanctity of the Line of Control. Rather than getting rattled by Pakistan's posturing on mediation, Delhi should concentrate on the attitudes of the major powers to the current dynamic in the Subcontinent. Bilateralism is the key to outcomes on the multilateral domain. Consider the five permanent members of the UNSC. China is a party to the dispute on Kashmir

twice over. The border between India and China in Ladakh is disputed; China also occupies a piece of Kashmir that Pakistan ceded to it in 1963. China is certainly part of India's Kashmir problem. China, however, has problems of its own in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Beijing surely knows that those living in glass houses should not be throwing stones. Russia, once upon a time, was India's go-

to veto-wielder at the UN on Kashmir. Delhi too has stood by Moscow when it is in some difficulty, for example when Russia changed the facts on the ground in Crimea during 2011. In recent times, Russia has drawn closer to China and is often tempted to take "even-

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The Gita and philosopher Seneca provide a roadmap to tranquility

handed" positions between India and Pakistan. But dispelling all doubts, Moscow has come out last week in support of India's Kashmir move.

Over the last two decades, France has emerged as a reliable strategic partner — a sort of "new Russia" for India. In recent years, it has played a key role in the FATF as well as the UNSC on terror-related issues. Delhi can certainly bank on political support from Paris at the current juncture.

When it comes to Kashmir and Pakistan, Britain is always suspect in Delhi's eyes. There is speculation that London played a key role in facilitating the current US reset on Pakistan As Britain defines its post-Brexit global strategy, Delhi must encourage London to take into account its long-term interests in India and end its persistent ambiguity on Kashmir.

In the end, though, it's really the US that has the most important role in shaping the international reaction to the developments in Kashmir. For nearly two years, its been the relentless pressure from Washington that has forced Pakistan to count the costs of its support for terrorism. And it is the US decision to quit Afghanistan that seems to have emboldened Pakistan to ramp up pressures on Kashmir.

India can't quibble with the US decision not to spend more of its blood and treasure in Afghanistan. Beyond that, there is much room for discussion between Delhi and Washington on a range of issues relating to the future of Afghanistan and the sources of terror in Pakistan. It should not be impossible to find a way to secure the interests of both, especially since the India-US bilateral relationship has acquired much greater depth over the last two decades, and covers a much wider region than the Subcontinent.

The real test for Indian diplomacy, including with the US, comes when Delhi lifts the massive security blanket over Kashmir and Pakistan unleashes its terror proxies. That in turn sets the stage for a muscular Indian response, an inevitable escalation of the conflict with Pakistan and the intensification of great power interest in Kashmir. That is when India's strategies for internal security, territorial defence and diplomacy will have to act in unison.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

IN GOOD FAITH

Ashwini Mokashi

THE PURSUIT OF wisdom, virtue and happiness are lifelong goals, and the process of attaining these goals itself is a worthwhile experience. Such themes from ancient texts continue into contemporary conversation,

while the quest for happiness is pursued anew

with each generation. The wise person of the Gita, Sthitaprajna,

is concerned with what is right action and how to exercise right judgement. In doing so, the sage becomes a jnana yogi, and by performing the right actions, the Sthitaprajna also becomes a karma yogi. The Sthitaprajna must possess, according to the Gita, a number of characteristics. First, she/he engages and excels in one's own duties (swadharma). Second, the Sthitaprajna is a believer in the teachings of the Gita (shraddha). Third, she displays equanimity to pleasure and pain (samatvam). And finally, there is the development of non-

attachment (anasakti) and tranquility (shanti). Wise people abandon all desires. They have no sense of possessiveness, sense of "mine". They discard their ego (ahamkara). Their concern for the self is absorbed into a concern for the divine. They are tranquil and In both systems, a wise person is one who has the capacity for making correct judgements when undertaking action, and for these she then assumes complete responsibility. Right thinking results in right action, essential for peace of mind and happiness: Right or moral actions lead to virtue. Happiness results from knowing one has done the right thing at the right time.

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happy. This state is known as the state of wisdom (sthita prajna) or the state of Brahman establishment (brahmi sthiti). This state is no doubt difficult to attain but once attained, it stays with the Sthitaprajna until the end.

The wise person of the Stoic, Seneca — Sapiens — embodies the ethical tenets of Stoicism, which bring them permanent happiness. Seneca describes how to be wise by incorporating the Stoic ethical concepts such as appropriate actions (kathekonta), what belongs to oneself (oikeiosis), virtue (arete), detachment (apatheia), telos (goal) of living in accordance with nature, knowledge of the laws of nature, which together lead to happiness (eudaimonia). For Seneca, happiness essentially means peace of mind, which results from a constant practice of virtue, and intellectual exercise, which is required to perform moral actions. Seneca's critique of emotions such as anger and grief highlights both the utility and futility of emotions.

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There are, however, also significant differences between Seneca's vision and that of the Gita. The Gita's metaphysical concept of moksha has no parallel in Stoicism. The Sthitaprajna becomes a virtuous person, achieves moksha and becomes a part of the divine Brahman. The Sapiens becomes virtuous in preparation for death. The conceptual differences illustrate that while the definition of a Sthitaprajna or one with steady wisdom would be applicable to the Sapiens, the terms Yogastha (established in Yoga) or Samadhistha (wrapped in meditation) would not.

Seneca's treatment of various emotions is one of the most unique features of his philosophical writings. Seneca treats different emotions with the skill of a psychological therapist and shows the futility of those emotions in a logical and sensitive way, without making it sound like a Stoic mandate of denying passions to any individual. Seneca's great contribution is to make this concept available to everyone by giving people directions instead of merely asking them to rise to a high standard of the ethical expectations of Stoicism.

Mokashi is the author of Sapiens and Sthitaprajna: A Comparative Study in Seneca's Stoicism and the Bhagavad-Gita

AUGUST 12, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

STRIKERS ARRESTED VIOLENCE IN SEVERAL parts of the city, resulting in the arrest of around 300 persons, marred the strike called in Delhi by all the central trade unions. Industrial units, as well as buses, shops and hotels were stoned by groups of striking industrial workers. The bandh, called to express solidarity with the striking textile workers and to demand an increase in the minimum wage laid down by the Delhi administration, was only partially successful. Essential services such as water supply, electricity and milk were unaffected. However, these workers had in any case been exempted from the "bandh" call

NARMADA FLOODS THE ARMY WAS called out in Broach to assist relief operations as the swirling waters of the Narmada entered the city and the help of the Air Force was sought to rescue over a thousand people marooned in the floods at Wankaner in Rajkot district in Gujarat. The flood waters entered the city last night, disrupting normal life. Narmada was flowing at 31.5 feet this morning after crossing the danger mark of 22 last night at Golden bridge near Ahmedabad. The low-lying areas of Broach were completely submerged.

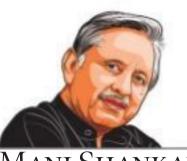
FAVOURED DESTINATION INDIA HAS BECOME the safest place in the

world for the members of the western underworld to change their identity. "Shedding skin" — as the process of changing identity is called in the underworld lingo — is as easy here as buying tickets at a railway booking window. A source in the foreigners regional registration office said that nowhere in the world can a Canadian Tony Wilson change himself into an American Jack Smith as early as in India. The modus operandi is simple. Al that is needed is a passport and one or two other identity papers. The US social security card is among the hot favourites. The racket in passport trading, which was first exposed by The Indian Express in December 1975, has become active again with wider ramifications.

THE IDEAS PAGE

A long night in the Valley

Who are we to teach Kashmiris the virtues of democracy? What is sought to be drowned out is the legacy of unflinching patriotism to India that the Kashmiri Muslim has displayed



Mani Shankar Aiyar

NARENDRA MODI AND Amit Shah have just created a Palestine on our northern border. To do so, they first floated the deceitful rumour of an imminent massive Pakistani terror attack on the Valley to induct around 35,000 additional armed personnel into a region already bristling with lakhs of jawans. They then forcibly evacuated tens of thousands of Amarnath yatris and tourists from Kashmir. They have detained over 400 local leaders. They have shut down schools and colleges, shops and hotels, petrol pumps and gas outlets, and rendered the usually bustling streets of Srinagar and other Valley towns an empty wilderness. All communications have been severed other than those they do not have the technological capacity to cut. Parents in the Valley are unable to contact their sons and daughters in the rest of the

In the name of Fundamental Rights, the fundamental rights of the people of Kashmir are being extinguished. The Directive Principles of the Constitution are being enforced by transgressing the letter and spirit of the Directive Principles. A well-known Aya Ram-Gaya Ram of Uttar Pradesh is being paraded as the "voice of the people" of Kashmir. Why such suppression of seven million Kashmiris if they are in fact being "liberated" from the stranglehold of "three families"?

Modi-Shah have learned their lessons well from their mentor, Benjamin Netanyahu and the Zionists, including Menachem Begin, who preceded Netanyahu. They have learned how to trample on the freedom, dignity and self-respect of the Kashmiris even as Israel has tried to get away with seven decades of merciless oppression of the Palestinians. The Palestinians have retaliated by running a ceaseless insurrection ever since Al-Naqba ("The Catastrophe") of May 14, 1948, when they were crushed by the Zionist war machine, funded and supplied by western imperialism. Intifada has followed intifada. All have been mowed down but miraculously spring up again. That so many Arab allies have abandoned them and their own liberation movement has split down the middle has not ended Palestinian protest, however heavy the cost to the ordinary Palestinian in terms of death, injuries and incarceration.

Modi-Shah have promised the Kashmiris "development" in exchange for forced integration at the point of the rifle and pellet shots into the eyes of their children. Even as the Palestinians, whatever their internecine differences, have unanimously spurned the Manama package of US/petrodollars goodies in exchange for quiescence, so too are the Kashmiris spurning the Modi offer of an enslaved prosperity. Modi's political ancestors, of course, played no part in our freedom movement but had they done so they would have known that whatever the colonial investments made in railways and the telegraph, in industry and trade, in tea and jute,



in "development" so-called, We the People of India (barring the Hindutva-ites) answered the British with the call of "Ouit India".

What is sought to be drowned out is the

legacy of unflinching patriotism to India that the Kashmiri Muslim has displayed, first in being the only Muslim-majority concentration in undivided India to close their ears to the siren call of Pakistan. They refused to believe that "Islam" was "in danger" because Independence was coming to secular Bharat. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was delivered a knock-out blow. In 1965, every single Pakistani intruder sent into the Valley under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's notorious Operation Gibraltar was picked up and reported to the Indian authorities. By whom? By the Kashmiri aam aadmi, who else, almost all Muslim to the last man, woman and child. How betrayed must they be feeling now that "freedom" is being thrust down their throat, like castor oil to a recalcitrant child, by the largest deployment ever of armed might inside an integral part of the country? How must the Naga and the Mizo, protected by the Article following the now deleted 370, namely, Article 371 of the Constitution, be looking at the purses of gold being flung at them by a patronising central government driving a Faustian bargain to buy adherence to a contemptuous India?

What the full-fledged Constitution of India promises to the Kashmiri is but a pale shadow of the "Naya Kashmir" manifesto adopted by the National Conference 75 years ago, on September 29-30, 1944. The principal draftsman was B P L Bedi (the father of actor Kabir Bedi). The leading lights of the National Conference included Prem Nath Bazaz, Kashyap Bandhu, Jia Lal Kilam and Modi-Shah have promised the Kashmiris 'development' in exchange for forced integration at the point of the rifle and pellet shots into the eyes of their children. Even as the Palestinians, whatever their internecine differences, have unanimously spurned the Manama package of US/petrodollars goodies in exchange for quiescence, so too are the Kashmiris

gious communities of the Riyasat. Writing in 1966, the renowned scholar of Kashmir affairs, Sisir Gupta, in his magisterial study, had this to say: "Socialistic in its approach, the plan in New Kashmir has ever since 1944 provided the guiding principles of the National Conference's approach to the problems of Kashmir". In other words, left to themselves, the Kashmiris might have given themselves an even more liberal order than they are now being offered with a pistol to their temple. To quote Gupta again, the proposed constitution "envisaged equality of citizens irrespective of 'religion, race, nationality of birth', freedom of conscience and worship, (as well as) of speech, of the press, of assembly and meetings, and of street processions" and the "right to work", "equal rights to men and women" and even children, besides "cheap, quick, impartial justice". In particular, there was a huge emphasis on women's rights with separate sections detailing women's rights in the political, economic, social, legal, and educational spheres. Modiji, Shah sahib, they were there long before us. So, who are we to teach Kashmiris the virtues of democracy?

Singh. It was a Nava Kashmir for all the reli-

Instead of achhe din, what Parliament has ensured is a long, dark night in the Valley, and perhaps even the rest of the country, with simmering communalism, rising political tensions, unending hit-and-run terrorism, asymmetric armed struggle, and guerrilla insurrection. This is what happened in East Pakistan in 1971. We are now bringing a similar disaster upon our heads. Be warned.

The writer is a former Union minister

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Why did Pakistan appear to have been taken by surprise when the Indian government scrapped Article 370? After all, one of the main planks of Mr Modi's hyper-nationalistic re-election campaign was the promise to do away with Kashmir's special status." — DAWN

Creation of order

Consider the larger picture: Abrogation of Articles 370, 35A will help integrate the Valley



SARJAN SHAH

EVEN MORE THAN the obvious economic benefits of expanded private and public investment in the territories of the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir, the government's moves on Articles 370 and 35A shall strike at the heart of the festering politics of the Valley. Far from actually protecting any rights or privileges of the local people (who, if the critics are to be believed, have been living in tortuous circumstances under the jackbooted heels of Indian "occupation forces", even while having the proverbial shields of 370 and 35A), these temporary and conditional provisions of the Indian Constitution only served to extend and exacerbate an environment in which the people of the Kashmir valley felt an "otherness" towards their fellow Indians from the rest of the country.

Why, in a country that has the world's finest historical record on minority protections when adjusted for income, education and development levels, should a Muslimmajority state feel the need to have autonomy and special privileges? These "articles" had become little more than articles of faith for separatists to exploit, mainstream leaders to use when convenient and for all forms of nefarious influences to keep the Kashmiri Muslims in a constant state of "siege mentality". If, everyday, your leaders tout two provisions of the Indian Constitution as being the only reasons for the continued existence and viability of a Kashmiri civilisation; and, if those two provisions essentially limit the applicability of the very same Constitution of which they are a part — and from which they draw their authority and legitimacy — should it surprise outsiders that Kashmiris have at times been found as

distrustful of the Indian state? Considering the horrific circumstances that Indian security forces have had to endure since the start of militancy in the early 1990s, and without obfuscating the occasional lapses in judgment that have undoubtedly occurred, I feel proud that overall, the Kashmiri people have had to face far fewer depredations than the Hindu, Sikh and Christian minorities in the westernmost territories of united India (that is, West Pakistan). I am even more proud when the record of the Indian security forces in Kashmir is compared with the record of the Pakistani army in its own eastern territories, and against its own Bengali-speaking population.

There can be no doubt that the Indian state has spent more than 70 years attempting dialogue, cultural exchange and even rehabilitation of separatists and militants. Only when attacked by local or foreign militants have the Indian armed forces been compelled to respond with a heavy hand. Overall, the Kashmiri state has functioned in fact, the very statistics being touted by

critics to show that J&K outclasses some hinterland Indian states along multiple development indices goes a long way to show that the Indian administration has provided education, nutrition and basic amenities to the local population in a relatively consistent manner, over a long period of time. And this, while constantly battling surprise hitand-run attacks from heavily armed and externally-supported gunmen.

Given the circumstances, therefore, it seems that some form of drastic action was needed not only to accelerate the physical integration of the region with the rest of India — through investment in plant and machinery, expanded tourism and real estate, road, rail and air connectivity and the like — but also to accelerate the psychological and emotional integration of the Kashmiri people with the rest of India. In the post-370/35A era, even the maintenance of the same level of administration and governance, with the same level of judicial redress and other rights as the Kashmiris have enjoyed in the past, will be enough to finally drive home the point to every Kashmiri: That trusting the Indian state, its institutions and its secular fabric, is something they can do without fear.

Finally, a lot of criticism has been focused on the "means" used to conduct this sudden strike against the offending provisions of the Constitution. On this front, it is clear to me that maintenance of law and order, and the protection of our territorial integrity, are higher priorities than the temporary abeyance of certain rights and freedoms. A few days in detention for leaders who would have undoubtedly utilised this as an opportunity to stoke Kashmiri passion against the straw man of the tyrannical Indian state, a clampdown on avowed pro-Pakistani separatists and the prevention of mass media in an era of rampant fake news — these are patently sensible precautions for a state to take when attempting radical and far-reaching change. These precautions have to survive for weeks, not months.

The fact that the number of incidents of stone-pelting and militancy has been falling consistently since governor's rule began in Kashmir, and that there seem to have been no major or minor incidents of civil disobedience in the last week — while the administration has ensured smooth provision of basic amenities to the people proves the tactical expediency of the "means" used. I am fully aware of the dangerous, slippery slope that curtailment of any kind of rights involves. However, I do believe that in dangerous times, in a dangerous neighbourhood (which South Asia undoubtedly is), and, when faced with one of the world's great intractable problems, "order" must take precedence over a superficial form of immediate justice. Only in the creation of long-term order, can we ever hope to have truly substantive justice for the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, who, I can say with the utmost conviction, are better off with us than they ever could be with our dear neighbours.

The writer is an alumnus of London School of Economics, Cambridge and Harvard, and lives and works in Mumbai

M M Ansari

Was Kashmir listening to PM?

spurning the Modi offer of

an enslaved prosperity.

His contention that Article 370 is source of all misgovernance is belied by facts

ramparts of the Red Fort in 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Kashmir's problems can be solved only by embracing the people of Kashmir, not with bullets or abuses (Na goli se, na gaali se, Kashmir ki samasya suljhegi gale lagane se)". The strategy of resolving the Kashmir imbroglio has

In his speech on August 8, PM Modi justified his government's action on the abrogation of Article 370 by saying that the provision had outlived its utility. Major stakeholders in Kashmir were, however, not consulted before the government announced its move. Many important leaders

were put under house arrest. The communication system in Kashmir has been blocked and restrictions have been placed under Section 144. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge the extent to which the government's unilateral decision has hurt the sentiments of Kashmiris. But the lockdown in the Valley is unprecedented. After having blocked all telephone lines, the PM delivered a statesman-like discourse, one which sounded as a message of hope and harbinger of development. Its impact hasn't been assessed. But was anyone in the Valley listening to the PM?

Under Article 370, the Centre's legislative power was confined to three subjects — defence, external affairs and communications. And, the assembly of the erstwhile state had the power to decide which Central laws would apply to Jammu and Kashmir. Article 35A, also revoked, gave Jammu and

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permanent residents and grant them special rights and privileges, including the right to own property. With the abrogation of special status, people of Kashmir would have rights enjoyed by the rest of the country, the PM said. In 2010-11, then chief minister of the state,

Omar Abdullah and the late Mufti Mohammed Sayeed told us that they were the most powerful CMs in the country because Article 370 gave them powers to execute development plans. In contrast, the PM dwelt at length on what he called the "discriminatory nature of these provisions" — a part of the compact with the Indian Union and Kashmir during the time of its accession. Necessary legislative changes have been made from time to time through democratic

In spite of perpetual turmoil, J&K's human development indicators compare favourably with other advanced Indian states. The trouble, however, is that confidence building measures were never implemented effectively. For instance, the Line of Control (LoC) trade, which offers opportunities to Kashmiris to promote business and employment, has been frequently disrupted by the Centre. Likewise, the PM's Special Scholarship Scheme for J&K students, of which a mention was made in the speech, has never been implemented in letter and spirit. Money was rarely disbursed on time to students and institutions. Therefore, the PM's criticism that Article 370 is a major source of misgovernance, including militancy, is un-

IN HIS INDEPENDENCE Day speech from the Kashmir's legislature the power to designate acceptable. He listed a number of welfare in governance or when Jammu and Kashmir measures that could not be implemented due to Article 370. But it was the Centre, which did not do enough to effectively implement the BJP-PDP Agenda of Alliance. For instance, there was no headway in the rehabilitation of migrant Kashmiri Pandits, an important part of the agenda.

PM Modi made repeated reference to dynastic politics and said that leadership opportunities to the youth have been denied. He assured people in Kashmir of free and fair elections. The PM, however, did not explain as to why the state assembly elections were not conducted along with the recent parliamentary elections.

In fact, the government seemed to have made up its mind to abrogate Kashmir's special status and split it into two UTs. When PDP-NC decided to form the government, the assembly was dissolved on the pretext of failed communication.

The PM said that products of the state should be taken to the world but he was silent on why Srinagar could not have an international airport to facilitate exports. At the time of peak tourism when the Amarnath Yatra was on, visitors were told that the government apprehended terror attacks. This deprived many workers of their wages and livelihoods. The government knew what was going on, but the people were misled.

The PM commended the role of panchayats in delivering services to people. Unfortunately, the three-tier system for effective functioning of panchayats was never constituted, even when the BJP was a partner was under governor's rule. Elections at the block level have not been conducted. These omissions have nothing to do with the

much-maligned Article 370. While the PM has rightly said that J&K is an integral part of India, care should have been taken of international agreements, particularly the issues discussed with Pakistan from time to time. Under the Simla Agreement, India and Pakistan have agreed, inter alia, "Pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation and both shall prevent the organisations, assistance or encroachment of any acts detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations". The unilateral abrogation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two UTs is tantamount to violation of the above provision.

The PM has made repeated commitments to follow Atal Bihari Vajpayee's principle of resolving Kashmir dispute within the realm of 'Insaniyat, Kashmiriyat and Jamhooriyat'. But the government has not bothered to follow this principle.

Abrogation of Article 370 and 35A could help the BJP in the upcoming state elections, divert attention from the sliding economy and cover up the failed attempts to contain militancy in J&K. But will these moves bring peace to Kashmir?

The writer is a former UGC member, CIC and interlocutor on Jammu and Kashmir

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WITHOUT PRINCIPLE THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Silence of the successful' (IE, August 9). The parallels drawn by the author between the demolition of the Babri Masjid and revocation of Article 370 are shockingly true. The actions of the government which have unleashed emotional and passionate responses are an assault on the Constitution. The way the Presidential Order was passed to modify Article 367 may not be understood by lay people. But legal experts will know that it undermines the Constitutional spirit.

Jasleen Kaur, Delhi

UNHEALTHY VOID

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Coming apart' (IE, August 9). The entire Opposition was stumped by the government's move to scrap the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. When the Congress whip Bhubaneshwar Kalita resigned on the day of this announcement and later, young leaders like **Jyotiraditya Scindia and Milind Deora** favoured the government's move, it was the Congress which stood exposed.

Bal Govind, Noida

HARD DECISIONS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Unlock the Valley' (IE, August 9). Much harm was done in Kashmir due to the insertion of Articles 370 and 35A. An impression had been created among Kashmiris that they were different from the other residents of the country. In order to bring them into national mainstream, hard decisions will have to be undertaken. A thorough check is to be

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com

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placed on anti-national elements.

LR Gupta, Lucknow

STUMPED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Self flagellation in Pakistan' (IE, August 8). The Narendra Modi government's decision to abrogate Articles 370 and 35A has come as a surprise to Pakistan. The Pakistan government's decision to halt trade with India looks to be reactive rather than proactive. It would be more of a bane for Pakistan than for India as India is doing better economically.

Atharva Kajwadkar, via e-mail

Dealing with doping

Cricket bodies must keep the game free of performance enhancing drugs

nort is expected to operate at a higher moral plane where the effort is honest and transparency remains an abiding principle. It is a utopian ideal leaning on pure performance, copious sweat and relentless training. But in a practical world greased with greed, besides match-fixing, there is another terrible offence: ingestion of performance-enhancing drugs. Athletes like Canada's Ben Johnson were labelled as drugcheats and rightly denied their Olympic medals. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), since its inception in 1999, has imposed stringent measures so that sport stays drug-free. In India, WADA's rules have been enforced by the Government-run National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) and almost all sports federations had fallen in line except one behemoth - the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). But that aberration was erased as the BCCI accepted NADA's supervision following a meeting between its CEO Rahul Johri, General Manager Saba Karim and Sports Ministry officials led by Sports Secretary Radhey Shyam Julaniya. Indian cricket's governing body finally agreed to subject its players to NADA's testing routines. Before its turn-around, the BCCI had resisted NADA's intervention. The main objection pertained to the 'where-abouts' clause, which made it mandatory for a player to reveal where he would be on a daily basis. The need for privacy was offered as an excuse.

Earlier, the BCCI had its in-house dope-tests but it only lent credence to the allegations about conflict of interest. The issue came to a boil when Prithvi Shaw was given a back-dated eight-month suspension after he tested positive for a banned drug, Terbutaline. The 19year-old batsman, who was checked in February, claimed that the substance was present in an over-thecounter cough syrup. Shaw's excuse and the BCCI's quick acceptance of his self-medication, bred scepticism. It is either naivety or a classic cover-up from an Indian cricketer, who had been advised about the chemicals that have to be avoided even for therapeutic purposes. The silver-lining is that the episode hastened the BCCI's move into the NADA's ambit and also cleared the decks for the Indian women's cricket team to compete in the 2022 Commonwealth Games at Birmingham. With the BCCI belatedly allowing NADA to monitor its domestic cricketers, by extension the International Cricket Council too has finally come under the WADA's unerring gaze. In these hyper-kinetic times, it is a fallacy to stress that cricket is just a reflection of skill and that drug-enhanced muscular efficiency cannot influence match results. Sport has to be a level playing-field and it is finally one with the willow-game subjecting itself to universal drug-testing rules.

Hong Kong on the brink

As protesters make new demands, the prospects of a quick settlement recede

tests broke out in Hong Kong two months ago when local authorities proposed a Bill that would have allowed them to extradite suspects to places with which the city doesn't have extradition treaties, including mainland China. The Bill was suspended amid public anger, but the protests, now entering the tenth week, continue to rock the city, affecting the economy and setting off an unprecedented political crisis. The police have tried several tactics to rein in the protesters and restore normalcy in the city, a major Asian financial hub and business centre. They have fired tear gas shells and rubber bullets. Dozens have been arrested, some on riot charges. Still, the city has been on a standstill. Public transportation is hit. People, from construction workers to teachers and lawyers, have joined the demonstrations. The protesters ransacked the local legislative council building and occupied parts of the airport, which led to the cancellation of several flights. Graffiti appeared across the city calling for "a revolution" and "liberation" of Hong Kong. Despite warnings from both the city government and Beijing, the protesters don't seem to be in a mood to leave the streets.

It is no longer about the extradition Bill as a leadership-less group keeps coming up with new and varied demands. Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, has said the Bill is dead. The protesters first wanted the city government to formally withdraw the Bill. Then they wanted Ms. Lam, the architect of the Bill, to go. Now, the protesters say they won't end the rallies even if Ms. Lam quits. They have made a host of demands - withdraw the Bill, order an independent probe into the clashes between protesters and police, drop all charges on the arrested protesters and start the process to reform the electoral system. Ms. Lam, perhaps wary of being seen to be weak in the face of mounting pressure, has ruled out any more concessions. For her, the top priority is to restore order, while Beijing, with its patience wearing thin, has hinted that it could interfere to end the crisis. Both the city government and the protesters share responsibility for the crisis Hong Kong is in today. Ms. Lam could have officially withdrawn the Bill instead of merely pronouncing it dead. Her reluctance to do so even after the Bill was suspended only fanned the flames. The protesters on the other side took an excessively provocative path when they ransacked the city Parliament and attacked the police. What could have been a peaceful protest against an extradition Bill led to the biggest political crisis Hong Kong has seen since it was handed over to China by the British colonialists. At least now, the focus of both the local leadership and protesters should shift to finding common ground and a peaceful settlement. It's in everyone's interest to arrest the slide of Hong Kong.

The imprint of a state juggernaut

High productivity apart, this Budget session lacked sufficient deliberation, pointing to the crafting of a docile Parliament



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

fficial spokespersons have hailed the recently concluded Budget session of Parliament as unprecedented both in terms of its hours of work as well as its performance. The 17th Lok Sabha, which was convened on June 17, held 37 sittings that extended over 280 hours till it was adjourned sine die on August 6. Sometimes House sittings were extended into the late hours. The Rajya Sabha, which met on June 20, held 35 sittings till it was adjourned sine die on August 7. The spokespersons of both Houses claimed that productivity was approximately 137% and 103%, respectively, denoting the hours of work put in. While the Lok Sabha spent 46% of its time in legislative business, the Rajya Sabha spent

51%, a record in recent years. There were 40 Bills that were introduced during this session (33 in the Lok Sabha and seven in the Raiya Sabha). While the Lok Sabha passed 35 bills, the number was 32 in the Rajya Sabha; 30 bills were passed by both Houses of Parliament. In the Lok Sabha, 183 starred questions were orally answered while 1.066 matters of urgent importance were taken up; 488 issues under Rule 377, that requires advance notice and approval of the Speaker, were attended to. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla, repeatedly drew attention to the equality of the members of the House cutting across party differences, and extending opportunities to new and young members. Out of 265 first time members, 229, including 42 out of 46 women

members, found an opportunity

to express themselves in the

All this sounds impressive and there is much to commend for a functioning House especially after the pandemonium witnessed during the sessions of the 15th and 16th Lok Sabha. But can we say that the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha was representative of the concerns and demands of India's complex, inegalitarian and deeply diverse polity, eliciting the responses of the government for its acts of commissions and omissions, and holding it accountable for its performance? Or, should we say, both the Houses were craftily streamrolled to sing to the tune of the government?

Legislative measures

About half the time of both the Houses in their respective sessions was spent on legislative measures. Parliament has to be credited for passing some bills that enjoyed a broad consensus such as the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, the Consumer Protection Bill, and the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, although questions have been raised on whether these bills and the way they were framed, were the most appropriate ways to further their intent. However, many of the bills passed by the Houses were matters that led to deep division and contention within the polity, such as the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, the Aadhar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment (UAPA) Bill, and the Codes on Wages.

Some of the bills passed by the Lok Sabha such as the Inter State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill 2019, the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019, the Trans-

Rights) Bill, 2019, and the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019 definitely called for a wider and closer discussion. Many of the bills, such as the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, which was passed by both the Houses, had bearing on powers of the States and tended to reinforce the powers of the Centre. And indeed, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019 introduced in the Rajya Sabha surreptitiously, on the penultimate day of its working, and passed by the Lok Sabha on its last working day, changed the constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, hitherto protected under Article 370. It split the State into two Union Territories: Jammu

and Kashmir, and Ladakh. All these legislative measures, particularly, the last one, which intend to define Indian polity in crucial ways – and will undoubtedly have enormous implications for the future of constitutional democracy in India - were passed without routing any of the bills concerned through the Standing Committees of the Parliament, or Select Committees. Given the paucity of time, there was little possibility of subjecting them to closer reflective scrutiny. The government was obviously aware of this. In fact, at times it seemed the generous time that the Speaker of the Lok Sabha gave to new members was at the expense of the rectitude of these bills. Worse still, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill that radically modified

Article 370, had to be assented to by the Constituent Assembly of the State, by its very provisions. Since the State Assembly remained dissolved and it is under presidential rule, the sleight of presidential powers was employed to move it. Little consideration was extended to reflect popular opinion, with the political leadership of the Kashmir Valley (on which the bill has the gravest consequences) under internment, and the whole population kept incommunicado.

Institutional bearing

The legislative measures that the National Democratic Alliance-II leadership embraced, and the mode of piloting them through the Houses have conveyed, loud and clear, a four-fold message. First, the task of Parliament is not to discuss and debate, shape and reshape measures for public good, and ensure oversight, but merely play second fiddle to the executive leadership. Therefore, criticism and debate over the bills was kept to the minimum, if avoided altogether. There was no attempt to form the 24 departmentally related standing committees before the session, or early in its day, to which bills could be referred to for scrutiny and review or form subject committees for the purpose. The plea of some Opposition members of the Houses in this direction was all in vain.

Second, formal legal equality of citizens would be on premium and all differential considerations on grounds of disadvantage or considerations of diversity would be suspect: Therefore, Articles 370, 35A, and Sharia provisions were sought to be modified, while commitment to human rights in general, was reinforced by recrafting the National Human Rights Commission through The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill.

Third, there was an enormous

strengthening of the surveillance and investigative instrumentalities of the State not merely through the UAPA, but also in bills pertaining to the economy and financial transactions. In these measures the 'lethal machine' of the State was on full display against the prevalent ascription of a 'soft' state.

Fourth, legislative measures and amendments such as the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, highlighted the emergence of an institutional hierarchy, demoting key positions, involving transparency and accountability, to executive discretion. The institutional hierarchy of authority, where the higher rungs were cushioned from the lower ones, was vividly there to see in the way in which the name of the Prime Minister was invoked by Ministers and member after member of the ruling dispensation as the font of wisdom, foresight and concern. Clearly, the attempt to craft a docile Parliament had gone a long

Impact on democratic ethos

In the past, there was much that was lacking in the composition and functioning of Parliament. There was also little to defend the way the Opposition had made a habit of boycotting the House and stalling its proceedings, although at times it was the most effective way of demanding responsiveness, and even to air popular grievances. At the same time, it should be said, Parliament was grappling with coming to terms with its own institutional working to be the voice of democracy. If the proceedings in the recently concluded session are a clue to its future, then Parliament has been securely chained to India's juggernaut.

Valerian Rodrigues taught Political Jawaharlal Nehru University

A point to ponder over in the POCSO Bill

More than an emphasis on the death sentence, there needs to be an overhaul of the criminal justice administration



ANUBHAV KUMAR

here has been much development recently with respect to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. With an objective of stopping the rampant sexual abuse of children, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in the Raiva Sabha in July, and later passed by both Houses of Parliament. It is all set to become the 'law of the land'. The present bill is welcome in certain respects as it specifically defines what 'child pornography' is; 'using a child for pornographic purposes' and for 'possessing or storing pornography involving a child' is punishable. It has also widened the ambit of 'Aggravated sexual

The other side

The highlight of the Bill is the introduction of the death penalty for the rape of minors. The Bill, in its object clause, justifies this by referring to the judgments of the Su-

preme Court in Machhi Singh (1983) and Devender Pal Singh (2002) in which the court has held that the death penalty can be awarded only in rarest of rare cases. Thus the intention of the Bill is to have a deterrent effect; but it can be argued that the introduction of the death penalty may backfire in cases of child sexual abuse and even have a catastrophic effect. Often, the perpetrators of abuse are family members and having such penalty in the statute book may discourage the registration of the crime itself. Also, it may threaten the life of the minor as the maximum punishment for

murder is also the death sentence. The Justice J.S. Verma Committee, which was constituted in 2013 in the aftermath of the Nirbhaya case, after due deliberations found itself against the imposition of death penalty in rape cases. The 262nd Report of the Law Commission of India, 2015, also provides for abolition of the death penalty except in terror cases.

Today, the death penalty has become a prominent tool of symbolic legislation – a political statement indeed. Many a time, the Government, by introducing the death penalty, portrays itself to be strict and serious with regard to such offences. It largely diverts attention from the core issues of in-



lapses and trial delays and conveniently evades the fact that 'it is the certainty of punishment rather than its severity which has deterrence in real sense'. It is pertinent to note here that even a vear-and-a-half after the passage of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018, which introduced the death penalty for rape of a minor girl, such incidents have not been under check. The debate here is not about retaining or abolishing the death penalty but the probable ramifications of its provision in the

The deterrent effect of capital punishment appears to be on the wane. Globally, there is research to support the view that despite stringent punishments, there is no fall in the rate of commission of crimes. Robin Conley in his book, Confronting the Death Penalty, has observed that the death penalty may seem just and appropriate in abstract but once you are privy to its practicality, it becomes less appealing. Deterrence has its own limitations and it has to be supplemented by exhaustive measures that includes an overhaul of the criminal justice administration.

Court data

The Supreme Court has recently taken cognisance of the sexual abuse of children, directing its registry to file a case as writ petition with cause title "In-re Alarming Rise in The Number of Reported Child Rape Incidents". The court has also observed that it intends having a 'zero tolerance policy' toward child rape. As data on sexual crimes against children collected by the court show, 24,212 FIRs were filed across India from January to June this year. According to National Crime Records Bureau data of 2016, the conviction rate in POCSO cases is 29.6% while pendency is as high as 89%. The prescribed time period of two months for trial in such cases is hardly

The court has also taken note of the delay in trials, in turn directing the Central Government to set up special courts within 60 days of the order in each district having more than 100 pending cases under the Act. It is to be seen how long it takes to comply with the or-

complied with.

ment) Act, 2018 introduced the death penalty for rape of girls below the age of 12. At the same time, the POCSO Act, under Section 42, provides that where the same act constitutes an offence under the said Act and any other law, then the offender will be punished under the Act or such law, whichever provides for greater punishment. This has created an issue as the effect of such an amendment was death penalty for rape of minor girls but not for assault against mi-

The proposed Bill does away with such a discrepancy. It is gender neutral and provides for the death penalty for "aggravated penetrative sexual assault of a child", thus bringing both these pieces of legislation on a par with each other in this respect. With these amendments and with the Supreme Court considering child abuse "intolerable", there seems to be reasonable hope now that vulnerable children could be safer. The Bill is a step forward in preventing child abuse but the consequences of providing for the death penalty need to be closely observed.

Anubhav Kumar is Assistant Professor (Law), National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi, Iharkhand

which highlighted the

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At the Congress's helm

The election of Sonia Gandhi is reflective of the abyss into which the Congress party has fallen (Page 1, "Congress names Sonia as its interim president", August 11). Though she can claim credit for cobbling up UPA-1 and UPA-2, it is doubtful whether her sedate style can match the rabble rousing ways of the ruling dispensation at a time when hate and fear rule Indian politics. Democratic values are under attack in the country and one wonders whether the Congress party has let down the nation by opting once again for dynastic leadership. It has thrown away a historic opportunity for a new beginning. MANOHAR ALEMBATH,

■ The fact that the Congress Working Committee has

settled for Ms. Gandhi is not a surprise. The grand old party of India cannot separate itself from the Nehru/Gandhi family as there are no acceptable second rung leaders. It is ingrained within Congress men and women that the party and the family are inseparable. If at all there is a leader who is dynamic. articulate and has the ability to lead, they are confined to his or her State or region. One is sure that the prefix 'interim' is only a term for the arrangement where Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will step in eventually. M.R.G. MURTHY,

■ It is shocking that months after the results of the general election and a marathon meeting on Saturday, the Congress has fallen back on the family rather than choosing a livewire president. Why so much drama when the matter was already settled, as a Bengali proverb goes? BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE, Faridabad, Haryana

■ Ms. Gandhi has done the right thing by assuming the position of "interim president", though reluctantly. Otherwise, there was every chance of the party having becoming irrelevant with each passing day since the resignation of Rahul Gandhi as party president. There could have been a split between the old and new guard. The idea of India is undergoing a change. Party unity is necessary. Rahul Gandhi would do well to reflect on how he can assist the new president in order to regain public confidence in the party. A.S. SRINIVASAN,

■ The Grand Old Party is like a sinking ship. As the BJP is

growing by leaps and bounds, there is a worry that India is heading towards an 'Opposition-less' polity which is not good for the country. In its present political state,

the Congress has failed to gain even the support of the ground-level cadre. With the new change, the party leadership should leave no stone unturned to come back with vigour and enthusiasm as a constructive Opposition, if not as a ruling party. A. JAINULABDEEN.

Stand on Kashmir

The futile stand of the Opposition in opposing for the sake of opposition the government's move on the Jammu and Kashmir issue is odd. The Opposition, especially the Indian National Congress, has lost an opportunity to be united and strengthen the country. There needs to be a

permanent solution to this prolonged issue but in an amicable manner. A policy of live and let live must come into being so that there is peaceful co-existence between the two nations. V.P. DHANANJAYAN,

Ecological notes

The havoc and destruction across many regions in the Western Ghats following a vigorous phase of the southwest monsoon must cause policymakers to revisit the Madhav Gadgil report

dangers of environmental degradation in the Ghats, largely the result of uncontrolled quarrying and the destruction of forests, wetlands and mangroves in the name of development. There is need to reinforce the importance of ecologically-sensitive zones especially as there is expert opinion that all this is a "man-made calamity". DEVADAS V.,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: A report headlined "Kashmiri students hold silent protest in AMU" (Aug. 9, 2019) erroneously identified the former Chief Minister of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, as 'Sher-e-Kashmir' and 'Papa Mian'. The two are different. 'Papa Mian' actually refers to another Sheikh Abdullah, a lawyer and one of the founding members of Abdullah Girls College, Aligarh Muslim University. It was an edit-

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Rethinking water governance strategies

Individual States need to assume the responsibility for managing water resources in their territories



SRINIVAS CHOKKAKULA & ASHWIN PANDYA

India's 'water crisis' took over social media recently. That India's cities are running out of water, coupled with Chennai's drinking water woes, made the 'crisis' viral, raising questions about the quality of the discourse and choice of water governance strategies in India. If there is a water crisis, what is the nature of the crisis? Where is the crisis prevalent? And how do we deal with it?

Usually, a delayed monsoon or a drought, combined with compelling images of parched lands and queues for water in urban areas raise an alarm in the minds of the public. Similarly, episodes of inter-State river water disputes catch public attention. However, this time, it was somewhat different. Videos and news reports claiming that Indian cities are running out of groundwater went viral. These news items could not have gained the traction but for the fact that they relied on a 2018 report of India's own Niti Aayog, which was titled 'Composite Water Management Index: A tool for water management.'

Zombie statistics

Later, thanks to yet another series of tweets by Joanna Slater of The Washington Post, the 'crisis bogey' lost some of its sheen. Ms. Slater investigated the "zombie statistics" in the Niti Aayog report, especially the piece of information that said: "21 major cities are expected to run out of groundwater as soon as 2020, affecting [nearly] 100 million people." Her perseverance led to an eventual conclusion that there was no credible evidence for this assessment.

To be fair to Niti Aayog, its projection was only a means to an end goal: leveraging some action from the Indian States. The report's central goal was to propose a tool, an index, to monitor the States' water resource management strategies and provide the necessary course-shift, beyond supply augmentation approaches. The report may have had a lofty goal of promoting 'cooperative and competitive federalism' but was, in reali-



Delhi residents filling water in cans from a distribution tanker. • GETTY IMAGES

ty, a desperate move to engage with the States, in the absence of any substantive leverage to influence their approaches to water resources management. This also underscored that the fulcrum of any course correction lies with States.

Yet, what baffles us is the guestion: Just how did such 'zombie statistics' gain traction? This is disturbing on two counts: one, there is an absence of critical engagement or institutional accountability; two, a deeper hypocrisy surrounds the discourse on water governance in India. If there is a crisis, where is the crisis and what is the nature of the crisis?

For instance, what does the report mean when it says that "cities [are] running out of groundwater"? Does it mean that cities will not have groundwater reserves to meet their drinking water demand? If yes, this is

Second, if the report means that the crisis lies in the depletion of groundwater levels in cities below safe rechargeable levels, then this is also not unknown. For almost two decades, the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has been reporting on the increasing number of over-exploited blocks across India, the 'dark' category blocks. The recent annual book of CGWB has reported 1,034 units, out of the 6,584 units it monitors, as over-exploited. If this is the 'crisis', then we have had it for long. What has this not received enough attention? Is it because these zones are not in cities?

Just to be sure how critical the 'crisis' is, CGWB's 2013 estimates say that the groundwater development in India is just about 62% of the utilisable groundwater reserves. Similarly, a recent report by the Central Water Commission, prepared in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), asserted that India is not yet in "water scarcity condition". But it is certainly in a "waterstressed condition", with reducing per capita water availability.

Here, we certainly don't mean to say that India can continue with the present ways of water management. We also cannot remain in a state of denial that a crisis is not in the making. However, certain steps need to be taken to ensure a more useful and productive discourse about water governance challenges.

First, India needs to reconsider the institutional processes for dissemination of knowledge about water resource management. There is a certain amount of danger inherent in the casual manner in which knowledge about water resources is legitimised and consumed, particularly in these days of 'viral' information.

Second, we need to recognise the the crisis is not as much of scarcity as of delivery. The challenge is to ensure an adequate access to quality water, more so in urban areas where inequities over space and time are acute. We need to also realise that with the country's rapid urbanisation, demand cannot be met by groundwater reserves alone. For in-

stance, according to the Delhi Jal Board estimates, groundwater meets just 10% of Delhi's drinking water needs. The rest is met by surface water sources, most of it transported from outside Delhi. The urban needs, which underpin much reporting on 'water crises', need to be met by robust long-term planning and preparation for droughts and other contingencies.

Responsibility lies with States

Finally, we need to reconsider our approaches to water governance. We must recognise that the fulcrum of change and action is with the States. For long, water resource departments in States have continued to follow the conventional approaches of supply augmentation. The challenge is that of reorienting themselves towards deploying strategies of demand management, conservation and regulation.

The Centre has to work with States towards an institutional change for the necessary course-shift. The Finance Minister, in her budget, repeatedly stated that the government will work with States to address India's national water security challenges. Let us hope that the government intends to strengthen federal governance of water resources towards long-term water security.

Srinivas Chokkakula is at the Centre for Policy Research: Ashwin Pandya is with International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage. Views are personal

Information blackout leads to silence and exaggeration

Journalism, when not fettered, facilitates informed dialogue



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

In the aftermath of the First World War, sociologist Max Weber told his students that not everyone realises the demanding nature of producing good journalism and that a journalist's actual responsibility is far greater than that of a scholar's. The conspicuous absence of reporting from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) following the vivisection of the State last week helped in realising the full import of Weber's observation.

Journalism performs many tasks. British journalist George Brock has mandated four irreducible core tasks: verification, bearing witness, sense making, and investigation. However, following the Union Government's dramatic move to alter the political structure of J&K, Indian journalism was forced to temporarily abandon its 'bearing-witness' role and had to resort only to its 'sense-making' task. In this newspaper, there was a strongly worded editorial, "Scrapping J&K's special status is the wrong way to an end;" a series of lead and Op-Ed articles; and an outstanding data story, "J&K's vital statistics," which debunked the claims of Home Minister Amit Shah that Article 370 hindered development. It is important to classify these writings within the rubric of the 'sense-making' task of journalism. While they were rigorous and insightful, there was a sense of incompleteness because there were no ground reports from Kashmir. A day before the governdecision, all forms of communications - mobile networks, Internet services, and landline phone connectivity – had been shut down, leaving Kashmir and some districts in Jammu isolated.

Knocking on the judicial doors

Anuradha Bhasin, the Executive Editor of Kashmir Times, later moved the Supreme Court, seeking directions to ensure that media-persons and journalists from the State are able to freely practise their profession. She also challenged the restrictions imposed through the complete shutdown on Internet and telecommunication services and severe curbs on the movement of photojournalists and reporters. Her petition rightly contended: "The information blackout set in motion is a direct and grave violation of the right of the people to know about the decisions that directly impact their lives and their future. The Internet and telecommunication shutdown also means that the media cannot report on the aforesaid developments, and the residents of Kashmir thus don't get access to information that is otherwise publicly available to the rest of India."

This newspaper's Srinagar correspondent, Peerzada Ashiq, documented the gruelling days of blackout in his "Diary of a Kashmir correspondent". His last despatch prior to the blackout was a report on the house arrest of former Chief Ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti and other leaders on August 4. Then, there was a complete silence for three days. What emerged clearly from Ms. Bhasin's petition and the Mr. Ashiq's diary is that we know very little about the opinion of the people directly affected by the government's decision.

There are ethical and democratic angles to the task of 'bearing witness'. Academics Richard Stupart and Katherine Furman explained how we rely on a division of labour to gain knowledge. They contended that no one person can know everything worth knowing; hence we divide the knowledgeproducing tasks. "Journalists who venture into sites of conflict and suffering form an important part of our collective knowledge production, and one which [is] important to the rest of us as moral agents," they argued.

American journalist Roger Cohen's reflections on the 'bearing-witness' task brought out its stupendous role in informing and sensitising people. He wrote: "In the 24/7 howl of partisan pontification, and the scarcely less-constant death knell din surrounding the press, a basic truth gets lost: that to be a journalist is to bear witness... To bear witness means being there - and that's not free. No search engine gives you the smell of a crime, the tremor in the air, the eyes that smolder, or the cadence of a scream."

For reasons known only to the state apparatus, it firmly believes that information blackout will lead to a political consensus. But, political processes gain their endurance only when people are active participants. Journalism, when it is not hampered, facilitates informed dialogue and provides a meaningful insight into people's aspirations. Otherwise, they are left with either a deafening silence or an enervating exaggeration. The state media will not report the observation of David Kaye, the UN's special rapporteur on freedom of expression: "There's something about this shutdown that is draconian in a way other shutdowns usually are not.'

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Pipe dreams for water transfer

It is time to consider out-of-the-box solutions to take water from a point of surplus to one of deficit

MADHURIKA SANKAR

Last month, the 'Chennai water train' made its poignant, slow arrival into the city, carrying 2.5 million litres of water for its parched residents. At the very same time, in another part of the country, unspeakable tragedy had unfolded, with Assam and Bihar getting ravaged by the monsoons. And just when it feels that the country has been through enough, rain batters Karnataka and Kerala, taking many lives and causing more misery.

It is a cruel fact that it doesn't rain evenly across the planet. With the havoc that rapidly-intensifying climate change is bringing, one man's drought could well coincide with another man's deluge.

These climatically turbulent times beg the question of whether it would be too far-fetched to use the 'water train' model widely and set up infrastructure to transport water from areas with surplus to parched lands. Historical-

ly, this notion has been toyed with and abandoned, mainly owing to how expensive it is to ferry water through thousands of kilometres of pipelines and against gradients, often involving pumping sta-

tions requiring a lot of energy. Yet, it isn't as much a technical problem as one of money, and perhaps politics.

The American, Greek examples

In the U.S., the city of Las Vegas planned to use excess water from the Mississippi river through a multibillion-dollar project, a proposal that has remained a pipe dream. French engineers have dreamed up plans to helping water-starved African nations by hauling icebergs to their shores. Some of these plans have succeeded; for example, Greece has used the mega Spragg trash bag and its 'world's strongest zipper' to haul massive amounts of water.

These schemes have yielded another novel idea, which is to use water to transport water. This has been implemented with success in the Caribbean, especially during the drought of 1983-84 in Antigua. The advantages of transporting water over water include the fact that one

Horsepower of energy can move 150 kg on road, 500 kg on rail and 4,000 kg on water. Similarly, one litre of fuel can move 24 tonnes per km on road, 85 tonnes on rail and 105 tonnes on inland water transport. The disadvantages are that the loading and unloading facilities are expensive to construct and, in India, most rivers don't have the depth and breadth to accommodate large barges all through the year. It will also require the dredging of rivers, which is exorbitant and might destroy natural ecosystems. Finally, though India recently forged ahead with its inland waterways development plans by investing in the National Waterways in the Northeast, the bigger problem is that there are too few large industries located near river belts. The impetus for investment simply doesn't exist.

Nevertheless, exciting and pathbreaking innovations in technology

and enterprise still hold out much potential to solve our world's resource problems. Desilting of lakes and rivers (concomigarbage

tive

plastic disposal); extensive, statemandated rainwater harvesting; desalination and, finally, recycling of water – all these can make a considerable difference.

According to Magsaysay awardee P. Sainath, there have been five principal migrations of water in India: from agriculture to industry; rural to urban; food to cash crops; poor to rich; and livelihood to lifestyle. These are all independent of seasonal droughts and have to do with our poor water management strategies.

But, in a country of contrasts – where animals frantically try to save themselves from floodwaters in Kaziranga National Park while, at the same time, innocent children carry back-breaking quantities of water in the blistering Chennai sun – perhaps it is time to consider out-of-the-box technological innovations.

The writer is based in Chennai



DATA POINT

Legislating in a hurry

The buck stops here

Source: PRS Legislative Research

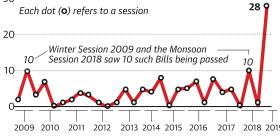
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During the 2019 Budget Session, 28 Bills were introduced and passed — the highest for any session in ten years. None of the Bills were referred to a committee for scrutiny. The J&K Reorganisation Bill was discussed for just under 7.4 hours in both Houses put together. By Varun B. Krishnan

Bills galore

A record high Graph shows the number of Bills introduced and passed in the

same session over the years. Two Bills in Rajya Sabha (RS) and one in Lok Sabha (LS) were introduced and passed on a single day



While Bills were discussed for relatively longer periods

Standing or Select Committee for scrutiny % OF BILLS DISCUSSED FOR >3 HOURS IN LS

% OF BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEES IN LS

than previous Lok Sabhas, none of them were referred to a

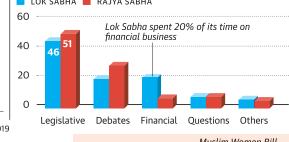
LOK SABHA

In the 15th LS, 71% were

17th*

*In Budget Session

Due to this Bill-passing blitz, half the time of both the Houses was spent in legislative business. Graph shows % of time spent by Parliament in different roles in the latest session LOK SABHA RAJYA SABHA



Fast and J&K Reservation furious Graph plots a Bill's discussion time in RS against the discussion time in the LS. Each circle refers to a Bill and its size discussed for corresponds to in LS with 31 the number of participants in that discussion

Muslim Women Bill Reorganisation Bill was

0.5 1.5 2.5 3.5 4.5 5.5 6.5

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 12, 2019. Labour in India. Delegates' Views.

gy to meet the challenge of a cross vote by

Congressmen. Both the Swatantra and Jan

Sangh are discussing the desirability of cast-

ing even their first preference votes for Mr.

Sanjiva Reddi as an act of supreme sacrifice

by them, if they were faced with the possibil-

ity of his certain defeat as a result of last-mi-

nute defections by the Congress left-wing in

the name of buttressing Mrs. Gandhi's lea-

dership by routing the Syndicate.

A meeting of the City of London "Indepen-

dent Labour Party" was held at Essex Hall (London) on June 30. The subject was "Conditions of Labour in India". Mr. Neil Maclean, M.P., who presided, said: We wish to hear at first hand about Labour conditions in India. The Independent Labour Party believed that all people in the Empire with a grievance ought to be heard. Britons always waited to hear the other side from their own and to hear it in good order, and then have the fight to put their own side. That method was to be adopted in these questions and discussion was invited. We wanted to know and we wanted to put things in India right. So long as the British Empire had a race of people used by another part of the Empire to keep down wages and conditions, it was bad not merely for India, but for Britain. Mr. Montagu said that his purpose was to make Indians realise that they were partners in the Empire. Let them then be equal partners able to work out their own destiny in accordance with Indian ideas and traditions. Let us get the idea of a subject race out of our

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 151

मौद्रिक जोखिम से बचाव

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) ने विदेशों में रुपये के बाजार के सवाल की जांच परख के लिए जो कार्य बल गठित किया था उसने अपनी रिपोर्ट दे दी है। रुपये के नॉन डिलिवरेबल फॉरवर्ड (एनडीएफ) बाजार में भारी पैमाने

भी कहीं अधिक है। आश्चर्य नहीं कि आरबीआई इस मुद्दे को लेकर चिंतित है। भले ही वह रुपये के लिए कोई खास दायरा या लक्ष्य लेकर नहीं चल रहा हो लेकिन मुद्रा की स्थिरता को बरकरार रखना उसक दायित्वों पर हो रहा कारोबार रिपोर्ट की दृष्टि से में से एक है। अगर रुपये का मूल्य काफी हद उल्लेखनीय रहा। समिति के मुताबिक उस तक विदेशों में परिचालित एनडीएफ से तय कारोबार का आकार देश में हो रहे कारोबार से होता है और वह केंद्रीय बैंक के नियमन और

उसकी निगरानी से परे है तो इसमें किसी बड़े बदलाव का अनुमान लगाना या प्रबंधन करना दोनों मुश्किल हो जाते हैं। फिलहाल मुद्रा को लेकर कोई बडा मसला नहीं है लेकिन वर्ष 2013 में अमेरिकी केंद्रीय बैंक द्वारा की गई टैपरिंग का उदाहरण बताता है कि कैसे आरबीआई के लिए मुद्रा बाजार की अस्थिरता का प्रबंधन कर पाना मुश्किल हो सकता है।

रिपोर्ट का यह कहना सही है कि एनडीएफ बाजारों को प्रत्यक्ष तौर पर प्रभावित करने का कोई तरीका नहीं है। सरकार और केंद्रीय बैंक केवल यह कर सकते हैं कि वे घरेलू नियमन में बदलाव लाएं। आरबीआई की पूर्वे डिप्टी गवर्नर उषा थोराट की अध्यक्षता वाली समिति का यह कहना सही है कि ऐसा करते हुए यह ध्यान में रखा जाना चाहिए कि कारोबारियों को एनडीएफ के बाहरी कारोबार के बजाय देश में कारोबार करने के लिए प्रोत्साहन मिले। समिति कहती है कि विदेशी बाजार के आकार और उसकी प्रमुखता तथा सीमापार लेनदेन तथा विदेशी विनिमय बाजार या प्रतिभागियों पर लगने वाले प्रतिबंधों की सीमा के बीच एक किस्म की द्विधा व्याप्त है। इसका सीधा अर्थ यह है कि फिलहाल लेनदेन और प्रतिभागियों पर नियामकीय बोझ बहुत अधिक है और यह अतार्किक तरीके से गठित है जिसे ठीक करने की आवश्यकता है। एक बढती हुई अर्थव्यवस्था जिसकी विश्व अर्थव्यवस्था के साथ संबद्धता बढ रही हो, उसे मौद्रिक जोखिम की हेजिंग के लिए आधुनिक उपायों की आवश्यकता है। यह समझने की आवश्यकता है कि ग्राहक को जानने और राउंड ट्रिपिंग (ऐसे

लेनदेन जिनसे राजस्व बढता दिखता है लेकिन हकीकत में आर्थिक स्थिति में कोई बदलाव नहीं आता) को लेकर नैतिक सवाल उठाने के बजाय इस बात की स्पष्ट समझ होनी चाहिए कि वृहद आर्थिक स्थिरता के लिए देश में कारोबार को किस प्रकार बढावा देने की आवश्यकता है। समिति का सुझाव है कि कम से कम विनिमय वाले एनडीएफ को अल्पावधि में इजाजत दी जाए, हालांकि ओवर द काउंटर अनुबंध फिर भी आदर्श होंगे। निश्चित रूप से हेजिंग का आकार और देश में कारोबार की सुगमता बढ़ाने की आवश्यकता है ताकि हेजिंग की वैध आवश्यकताओं को विदेशी बाजारों में ले जाया जा सके।

रुपये का अधिक बेहतर प्रबंधन सुनिश्चित करने को लेकर सिमिति की अनुशंसाएं बेहतर हैं लेकिन बुनियादी जरूरत यह सुनिश्चित करने की है कि वृहद आर्थिक माहौल अपने आप में इतना स्थिर हो कि इन चिंताओं को दूर किया जा सके। अक्सर देश के आंतरिक असंतुलन मसलन उच्च राजकोषीय घाटा और मुद्रास्फीति आदि बाह्य क्षेत्र की समस्या पैदा करते हैं। ऐसे में यह अहम है कि नीति निर्माता वृहद आर्थिक स्थिरता को मजबूत बनाने पर काम करें। मजबूत और स्थिर बृनियाद मुद्रा बाजार में सटोरिया गतिविधि पर रोक लगाएगी। इस संदर्भ में कम राजकोषीय घाटा और सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की उधारी की आवश्यकता यह सुनिश्चित करेगी कि ऋण के स्थायित्व को लेकर कोई चिंता न हो। निर्यात प्रतिस्पर्धा बढाने के लिए वास्तविक सुधार अपनाने से उच्च राजकोषीय घाटे की समस्या हल करने में मदद मिलेगी।



के अपहरण, भारतीय संसद पर

हमला, मुंबई पर हमला,

पठानकोट, पुलवामा जैसी

घटनाएं हुईं। पाकिस्तान ने हर

बार पहला वार किया और

भारत प्रतिक्रिया तलाशता रह

आकार में वह काफी बड़ा है।

मोदी की यॉर्कर से विचलित पाकिस्तान

कश्मीर मामले में हमेशा पाकिस्तान पहल करता था और भारत प्रतिक्रिया देता था। मोदी ने अनुच्छेद 370 में संशोधन कर हालात बदल दिए हैं।

झ पर ४० जा मैं दूसरों के कष्ट में सुख ल रहा लेकिन फिर भी मैं इस बात पर खुश कि पाकिस्तानी नैशनल झ पर यह आरोप लग सकता है कि मैं दूसरों के कष्ट में सुख ले रहा हूं असेंबली ने गत सप्ताह भारतीय संविधान पर चर्चा करने में अच्छा खासा समय खर्च किया और इसे बखुबी तवज्जो दी।

भारत द्वारा अनुच्छेद 370 और 35 ए को लेकर जो निर्णय लिए गए वे कई वजहों से पाकिस्तान में हलचल की वजह बने। एकतरफा रोमांच इसका कारण नहीं है। सबसे बड़ी वजह तो यही है कि एक ऐसा देश, जिसके शासक अपने संविधान को खारिज करने के लिए जाने जाते रहे हैं, वह भारत के संविधान के लिए इस कदर चिंतित है।

मेरे लिए अहम बात थी इमरान खान का भारत पर शिमला समझौते का उल्लंघन करने का इल्जाम लगाना। मैं पाकिस्तान की राजनीति पर इस कदर नजर रखता हुं मानो वह भारत का आंतरिक मामला हो। मुझे वहां का कोई ऐसा शासक याद नहीं आता जिसने उस दस्तावेज के प्रति निष्ठा जताते हुए शपथ ली जो जिसे वे अक्सर कागज का पुराना और अप्रासंगिक टकडा करार देते हैं। अपने जमाने के सबसे काबिल तेज गेंदबाजों में शामिल रहे इमरान खान ने कछ ही रोज पहले व्हाइट हाउस में अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डॉनल्ड ट्रंप से कहा था कि भारत और पाकिस्तान 70 वर्ष तक कश्मीर मसले को द्विपक्षीय तरीके से हल करने में नाकाम रहे और अब दनिया का सबसे ताकतवर व्यक्ति होने के नाते उन्हें मध्यस्थता करनी चाहिए।

बीते 31 वर्षों में दोनों देशों के बीच तीन द्विपक्षीय समझौते हुए। सन 1972 में शिमला समझौता, सन 1999 में लाहौर समझौता और 2004 में इस्लामाबाद समझौता। ये सारे महज खानापरी बनकर रह गए। तमाम अन्य बातों के अलावा तीनों समझौतों की एक केंद्रीय बात है, कश्मीर समेत सभी मुद्दों को द्विपक्षीय तरीके से हल करना।

अन्य पाकिस्तानी नेताओं ने भी इस प्रतिबद्धता को आराम से तोडा। परंतु जुल्फिकार अली भुट्टो द्वारा शिमला समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर के बाद पाकिस्तान में जो भी शासनाध्यक्ष हुए, वे चाहे चुनाव जीते हों, दोबारा चुने गए हों या सेना की मदद से गद्दीनशीं हुए हों, किसी ने भी खुलकर समझौते को खारिज नहीं किया। इसे मानने का ढोंग जारी रखा गया।

लाहौर और इस्लामाबाद घोषणापत्र शिमला समझौते की प्रतिबद्धता दोहराते हैं। इस

बीच अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप से कश्मीर मसले पर मध्यस्थता का आग्रह कर इमरान खान पहले ऐसे पाकिस्तानी नेता बन गए हैं जिसने पहले के तीनों समझौतों को औपचारिक रूप से नकार दिया है। अब वह भारत पर इसके उल्लंघन का इल्जाम लगा रहे हैं। यह नौ सौ चूहे खाकर बिल्ली हज को चली का सटीक उदाहरण है। यहां अहम बात यह है कि कश्मीर को लेकर मूलभूत सामरिक और राजनीतिक समीकरण उलट चके हैं। सन 1947 से अब तक पाकिस्तान पहल करता था। सन 1947 में लूट और बलात्कार करने वाले कबाइली लुटेरों को भेजने से लेकर ऑपरेशन जिब्राल्टर के तहत फौजियों को मुफ्ती बनाकर भेजने और अगस्त–सितंबर 1965 में ऑपरेशन ग्रैंड स्लैम में कश्मीर में टैंक भेजने तक वह ऐसा करता रहा। सन 1972 में शिमला समझौता होने तक कश्मीर में पहला कदम पाकिस्तान उठाता रहा।

इसके बाद 17 वर्ष शांति रही लेकिन पाकिस्तान आगे की तैयारी में लगा रहा। वह परमाणु प्रतिरोध तैयार करता रहा, उसने अफगानिस्तान में अमेरिकी नेतृत्व वाले गठबंधन की तत्कालीन सोवियत संघ के खिलाफ लडाई में सहायता की। सन 1989 तक उसने परमाणु हथियार तैयार कर लिए। पश्चिम में एक जिहाद जीता गया और पाकिस्तान ने पूर्व में दूसरे की तैयारी शुरू कर दी। उसके बाद करगिल, आईसी-814



राष्ट्र की बात शेखर गुप्ता

गया। भारत के हालिया कदम को लेकर हम एक अलग पहलू पर चर्चा करेंगे। परंतु हमें यह भी मानना होगा कि 70 वर्ष तक भारत ने यथास्थिति कायम रखी जबिक ताकत और

जबिक पाकिस्तान लगातार इसे बदलने में लगा रहा। पिछले दिनों भारत ने इसे बदल दिया। अब पाकिस्तान प्रतिक्रिया के लिए छटपटा रहा है क्योंकि उसके रणनीतिकार ऐसी प्रतिक्रिया के लिए तैयार ही नहीं किए गए। इमरान खान द्वारा वॉशिंगटन में शिमला, लाहौर और इस्लामाबाद समझौतों को नकारने के एक सप्ताह बाद नरेंद्र मोदी ने इसका विरोध न कर एक नई इबारत लिखी। उन्होंने नाटकीय रूप से इससे सहमति जता दी। अगर उन समझौतों से पाकिस्तान तथा विश्व बिरादरी को लग रहा था कि कश्मीर की अंतिम स्थिति पर अभी बहस और मोलतोल संभव है तो वह भ्रम अब समाप्त हो चुका है। इमरान सही थे, वे समझौते भी अब समाप्त हैं। अब पाकिस्तान को उकसाने, इनकार करने, मदद की पेशकश, बातचीत, आदि के अपने मानक व्यवहार से अलग तरीका तलाशना होगा। अतीत में भारत बडी शक्तियों से आग्रह करता था कि वे पाकिस्तान पर दबाव बनाएं। अब वह काम पाकिस्तान कर रहा है।

अब उसे अपनी सीमा और घटते कद का अहसास हो चुका है और वह 6 अरब डॉलर की राशि के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष के समक्ष गिड्गिड़ा रहा है। इसे ऐसे समझें कि इससे अधिक राशि तो आर्सेलरिमत्तल दिवालिया एस्सार स्टील को खरीदने के लिए चका रही है। पाकिस्तान की राजनीति.

संस्थान और समाज सभी भंगुर अवस्था में हैं। यह बलूचिस्तान को संभाल सकता है लेकिन पख्तूनों का शांतिपूर्ण आंदोलन जोर पकड़ चुका है। उसके पास एक लाभ है, वह अफगानिस्तान का स्थानीय संरक्षक बनकर ट्रंप की वहां बने रहने का दिखावा करते हुए वहां से निकलने मे मदद कर सकता है। परंतु इसकी उसे बड़ी कीमत चुकानी होगी। अगर पाकिस्तान को कश्मीर में अच्छा प्रदर्शन करना है तो वह कश्मीर में नहीं उलझ सकता। अभी तो कतई नहीं क्योंकि आतंक के खिलाफ उसकी प्रतिबद्धता को लेकर वित्तीय कार्यबल की तय मियाद कुछ सप्ताह में समाप्त हो रही है। इमरान खान मानसिक रूप से इसके लिए तैयार नहीं थे, यह उनकी क्षमता से भी परे था। हमें यह भी मानना होगा कि सारे फैसले वह नहीं लेते, इसमें सैन्य मुख्यालय की भूमिका रहती है। वे दोनों मोर्ची पर पहल चाहते हैं। पूर्व पाकिस्तानी राजनियक हुसैन हक्कानी ने दें प्रिंट के लिए लिखे एक आलेख में एक पंक्ति लिखी थी जिसे मैं भी लिखना चाहता। उन्होंने लिखा कि पाकिस्तान की नीति हमेशा कश्मीर मुद्दे का अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण करने की रही जबकि भारत उसे द्विपक्षीय रखना चाहता था। मोदी सरकार ने अब कश्मीर को भारत और पाकिस्तान का आंतरिक मसला बना दिया।भारत में इस विषय को लेकर मोदी समर्थकों और राजनीतिक एवं बौद्धिक अल्पमत वालों के बीच बहस चल रही है जो इसे अलोकतांत्रिक मानते हैं। पाकिस्तान में चर्चा है कि ऐसा कैसे हो गया और पाकिस्तानी खुफिया एजेंसी को इसकी भनक कैसे नहीं लगी। कोई बिक तो नहीं गया ? अब क्या किया जाए ? नैशनल असेंबली में इमरान के गुस्से में यह बात नजर आई। उन्होंने वहां कहा कि उनसे क्या अपेक्षा की जा रही है ? कि वह भारत पर हमला कर दें ? मेरा यह तात्पर्य नहीं है कि भारत में सब ठीक है या कश्मीर में ताजा पहल एकदम सही है। बात यह है कि आज पाकिस्तान जहां है वहां यह प्रासंगिक नहीं है। वह अनुच्छेद 370 पर दुख जताने का जितना ढोंग कर रहा है, प्रमुख कश्मीरी नेताओं को जिन्हें वह दलाल कहता है, उनको बंदी बनाए जाने की जितनी तारीफ करे और भारतीय कश्मीर में नागरिक अधिकारों को लेकर वह चाहे जितना चीखे, वह उतना ही अधिक मूर्खतापूर्ण

वह अलगाववादियों को पकड़े जाने का विरोध करता है जबकि उसने दो प्रधानमंत्रियों नवाज शरीफ और शाहिद खकान अब्बासी और एक पूर्व राष्ट्रपति आसिफ अली जरदारी को जेल में डाला और एक अन्य परवेज मशर्रफ को निर्वासित किया है। अब नवाज शरीफ की बेटी और विपक्षी नेता मरयम नवाज भी जेल में हैं। इसी तरह पंजाब के पूर्व उपमुख्यमंत्री राणा सनाउल्ला, नवाज की पार्टी के तीन सांसद, दो पख्तन सांसद आदि भी बंदी बनाए गए। नवाज को छोडकर इनमें से किसी को सजा नहीं हुई है। इनमें से ज्यादातर बिना किसी जांच के महीनों से जेल में बंद हैं। यह पाकिस्तान के लिए ठीक नहीं है। यथास्थिति बदल चुकी है। या तो पाकिस्तान इसे स्वीकार करें या कुछ मनमानी करे। या वह प्रार्थना करे कि घाटी में हालात एक बार फिर बेकाबू हो जाएं और हालात इतने बिगड जाएं कि भारतीय फौज आपा खो दे। अब यही उसकी आखिरी उम्मीद है।

जम्मू कश्मीर में निवेशक सम्मेलन कहीं जल्दबाजी में उत्साह तो नहीं!

भारतीय कंपनी जगत जम्मू कश्मीर से संबंधित मामले में नरेंद्र मोदी और अमित शाह की जबरदस्त तत्परता से तालमेल बिठाने की कोशिश में लगा हुआ है। भारतीय उद्योग परिसंघ (सीआईआई) इस साल अक्टूबर में जम्म कश्मीर के लिए केंद्रित पहला निवेशक सम्मेलन आयोजित करने जा रहा है। क्या यह असंगत उत्साह है या गलत आशावाद है ? शायद अपरिपक्व उत्साह इस सम्मेलन को कहीं बेहतर तरीके से व्याख्यायित कर

जम्मू कश्मीर में कारोबारी संभावनाओं को लेकर सीआईआई ने एक बड़ी तस्वीर पेश की है। यह देखने में काफी मोहक लग रहा है। अनुच्छेद 370 लागू रहने के दौरान राज्य में जमीन एवं कामगारों की उपलब्धता जैसे मुद्दे कारोबारी गतिविधियों के बड़े अवरोधक थे। लेकिन बदले हुए हालात में खाद्य प्रसंस्करण इकाइयां, छोटे एवं मझोले स्तर की विनिर्माण इकाइयां और पर्यटन को बढावा मिलने से यहां बेरोजगारी की अधिकता एवं निम्न विकास से मुकाबला करने में मदद मिलेगी। एक राज्य के तौर पर जम्मू कश्मीर में कारोबारी सुगमता की अंदरूनी स्थिति तमाम वजहों से ठीक नहीं है। लेकिन इसने आश्चर्यजनक तौर पर मानव विकास सुचकांक में पश्चिम बंगाल और राजस्थान जैसे नौ अन्य राज्यों को पीछे छोड़ा था। इससे पता चलता है कि यहां पर एक हद तक शिक्षित एवं स्वस्थ लोग मौजूद हैं जिनका इस्तेमाल किया जा सकता है।

फिर भी उद्योग जगत के लिए 'देखने एवं इंतजार करने' की रणनीति पर चलने के कई बाध्यकारी कारक हैं। ऐसे में अचरज की बात नहीं है कि जम्मू कश्मीर में कारोबारी योजनाओं के बारे में पुछे जाने पर अधिकतर उद्यमी इसी के पक्षधर नजर आए। जम्मू कश्मीर में निवेशक सम्मेलन का आयोजन राजनीतिक नजरिये से एक बेहतर तस्वीर पेश करने का माध्यम बन सकता है लेकिन इस तरह के सम्मेलनों की अहमियत व्यावहारिक स्तर पर संदिग्ध ही रही है। एक दशक से अधिक समय से ऐसे सम्मेलन शोहरत दिलाने का जरिया साबित होते रहे हैं। मोदी ने ही गुजरात का



जिंदगीनामा

कनिका दत्ता

मुख्यमंत्री रहते समय यह सिलसिला शुरू किया था। यह अलग बात है कि कोई भी राज्य उन निवेशक सम्मेलन में होने वाले तमाशे की बराबरी नहीं कर

गुजरात सरकार के निवेशक सम्मेलनों ने एक परिपाटी तय कर दी। बड़े पैमाने पर निवेश की मंशा रखने वाले संभावित निवेशकों को इस सम्मेलन में बुलाया जाता है और पूरे तामझाम से होने वाले सम्मेलन में आए मेहमानों को उस राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री एवं आला अफसर वहां निवेश से जुड़े लाभों (अक्सर आभासी) के बारे में बताते हैं। इसमें निवेश पर मिलने वाले कर अवकाश और जमीन अधिग्रहण एवं श्रम संबंधी मसलों के त्वरित समाधान जैसे आश्वासन शामिल होते हैं। भारत में ये समस्याएं अममन हरेक राज्य में विनिर्माण को बाधित करती हैं। उसके बाद कुछ दिग्गज

उद्योगपति उस राज्य से जुड़ी खासियत (यह भी अक्सर आभासी ही होती हैं) के बारे में भाषण देने आते हैं। गुजरात और पश्चिम बंगाल के निवेशक सम्मेलनों में मुकेश अंबानी भी जाते हैं। इस दौरान कारोबारी जमात एवं नौकरशाही के बीच अनौपचारिक बातचीत भी होती है। अंत में, उस राज्य का जनसंपर्क विभाग हरकत में आता है और निवेश की प्रतिबद्धता से जुड़े वादों (कथित तौर पर सहमति पत्र) का आंकड़ा जारी कर देता है जो अक्सर हजारों करोड़ रुपये का होता है। लेकिन उनमें से बहुत कम वादे ही जमीन पर साकार रूप ले पाते हैं।

मुमिकव है कि जम्मू कश्मीर निवेशक सम्मेलनों से जुड़ी इस प्रवृत्ति को बदल दे और वहां पर निवेश की योजना को लेकर वाकई गंभीर कारोबारियों की लंबी कतार लग जाए। अगर वे

तैयार हो जाते हैं तो देश के इस सबसे नए केंद्रशासित प्रदेश को विकास का स्वर्ग बनाया जा सकता है। अगर वाकई में ऐसा होता है तो कश्मीर घाटी में फिलहाल कर्फ्यू जैसे हालात में रहने के लिए मजबूर लोगों समेत हरेक भारतीय इस पर खुश होगा। समस्या यह है कि एक संवैधानिक प्रावधान को हटाकर हो सकता है कि एक ऐतिहासिक भूल सुधार ली गई हो, लेकिन इससे जमीनी स्तर पर भी हालात में बदलाव आना दूसरी बात है। जम्मू कश्मीर का विकास के मामले में पीछे रह जाने का वहां पर भूमि स्वामित्व एवं रोजगार जैसी बंदिशों से खास लेना-देना नहीं है। इसका अधिक संबंध इस बात से है कि केंद्र एवं राज्य के नेतृत्व ने पाकिस्तान के साथ रिश्तों को इतने खराब ढंग से संभाला कि जम्मू कश्मीर स्थायी अशांति की स्थिति में रहने के लिए अभिशप्त हो गया। निकट भविष्य में तो इन बाह्य कारकों में किसी भी तरह के बदलाव की

अपनी घोषणाओं के साथ जम्मू

कश्मीर में पैसा लगाने को भी

एवं सामाजिक स्थायित्व जरूरी होने से केंद्र को जम्मू कश्मीर में निवेश करने जा रहे लोगों को सुरक्षाबलों की भारी मौजुदगी से इतर चीजों का भी ऐलान करना होगा। कारोबारी सगमता के लिए भारी पुलिसबल इकलौती गारंटी नहीं होता है। लगातार घेराबंदी की स्थिति में रहते हुए भी आर्थिक चमत्कार करने में सफल इजरायल को अक्सर एक मिसाल के तौर पर पेश किया जाता है। लेकिन भारत अगर अपने अल्पसंख्यकों का भी एकीकरण करने को लेकर गंभीर है तो वह इजरायल मॉडल को शायद ही अपनाना चाहेगा। पाकिस्तान एवं चीन की क्षेत्रीय आकांक्षाओं का सामना करने के लिए एक तरह की सुविचारित योजना भी इस कवायद का एक अहम हिस्सा है। अभी यह नजर नहीं आ रही है।

संभावना कम ही है।

निवेश के लिए राजनीतिक

इस बात की संभावना कम ही है कि अक्टूबर के खुशनुमा वक्त में होने वाले इस निवेशक सम्मेलन में शिरकत करने जा रहे उद्योगपतियों को इस बाधा के बारे में पता ही नहीं होगा। कोई बात नहीं, कम-से-कम दो दिनों के लिए तो कश्मीर घाटी में पर्यटन गतिविधियों को बढ़ावा मिलेगा।

गतिविधि वहां अधिक है। लेकिन

इन सब के बीच लद्दाख की खबरें

कानाफूसी

कौन बनेगा तेलंगाना भाजपा प्रमुख?

जिस तरह कांग्रेस पार्टी दिल्ली इकाई के लिए अध्यक्ष तलाशने में लगी हुई है, उसी तरह भारतीय जनता पार्टी तेलंगाना इकाई के लिए अध्यक्ष की खोज में जुटी हुई है। भाजपा अगले चुनाव के पहले तेलंगाना में मजबूत राजनीतिक उपस्थिति दर्ज कराना चाहती है। कांग्रेस के पराभव और सत्ताधारी तेलंगाना राष्ट्र समिति के खिलाफ बनते माहौल के बीच पार्टी को लग रहा है कि वह लाभ उठा सकती है। गत मई में संपन्न लोकसभा चुनाव में पार्टी को चार



सीटों पर जीत हासिल हुई थी और महज पांच महीनों के अंतराल में पार्टी का मत प्रतिशत 7 फीसदी से बढ़कर 19 फीसदी हो गया। भाजपा ने सिकंदराबाद के सांसद कृष्ण रेड्डी को केंद्र में गृह राज्य मंत्री भी बनाया है। जाहिर है यह कदम पार्टी के विकास को ध्यान में रखकर उठाया गया है। भाजपा के मौजूदा प्रदेश प्रमुख डॉ. के लक्ष्मण पार्टी के वरिष्ठ ओबीसी नेता हैं और लोग उनकी इज्जत करते हैं लेकिन वह दिसंबर के विधानसभा चुनाव में मुशीराबाद सीट से चुनाव हार गए। वह अन्य दलों के नेताओं को भी पार्टी में नहीं ला सके। इन हालात में मुरलीधर राव का नाम चर्चा में है। राव पहले विद्यार्थी परिषद में रहे और बाद में स्वदेशी जागरण मंच से जुड़ गए। उन्होंने कई बार लोकसभा चुनाव लड़ने का प्रयास किया लेकिन सीएच विद्यासागर राव ने उनकी राह रोक दी। निजामाबाद के सांसद अरविंद धर्मपुरी ने सार्वजनिक रूप से उन्हें प्रदेश अध्यक्ष बनाने की मांग की है।

आपका पक्ष

कुपोषण मुक्त होगा छत्तीसगढ़

छत्तीसगढ़ सरकार ने राज्य को

कुपोषण मुक्त करने के लिए गांधी जयंती (2 अक्टूबर) से कुपोषण और एनीमिया पीड़तों को प्रतिदिन नि:शुल्क पौष्टिक भोजन देने की घोषणा की है। यह अभियान महात्मा गांधी की 150वीं जयंती के अवसर पर आरंभ किया जाएगा। सरकार ने अगले तीन साल में राज्य को कुपोषण मुक्त करने का लक्ष्य रखा है। कुपोषण से लड़ने के लिए छत्तीसगढ सरकार ने ठोस कदम उठाया है। देश के दूसरे राज्यों में भी कुपोषण हटाने के लिए कई योजनाएं चल रही हैं। लेकिन छत्तीसगढ़ पिछड़ा राज्य है तथा यहां गरीबी भुखमरी दूसरे राज्यों से अधिक है। वर्ष 2000 में छत्तीसगढ, उत्तराखंड तथा झारखंड इन तीन राज्यों का गठन हुआ था। आज तीनों राज्यों में उत्तराखंड की स्थिति कुछ ठीक है। झारखंड तथा छत्तीसगढ़ का विकास धीमी गति से हुआ है। केंद्र सरकार ने भी कुपोषण खत्म करने की दिशा में



पहल की है। लेकिन केंद्रीय ह कपोषण मुक्त करने के लिए योजनाएं राज्यों तक पहुंचने से पहले ही दम तोड देती है। केंद्रीय योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन की गति राज्यों में धीमी पड़ जाती है जिससे लोगों को इसका समुचित लाभ नहीं मिल पाता है। छत्तीसगढ तथा झारखंड खनिज संपन्न राज्य होते हुए भी उपेक्षा के शिकार हैं। यहां बेरोजगारी, भुखमरी तथा गरीबी : इसकी व्यवस्था करनी चाहिए।

छत्तीसगढ़ सरकार निःशुल्क पौष्टिक भोजन देगी

अधिक है। सरकार को कुपोषण मुक्त करने के लिए नि:शुल्क पौष्टिक भोजन देने के बजाय वह दो वक्त पौष्टिक भोजन कर सके

राज्य अपने नागरिकों को उनकी क्षमता के अनुसार रोजगार प्रदान कर सकता है। ऐसे लोगों को सरकारी नौकरी जरूरी नहीं बल्कि सरकार उसे किसी निजी कंपनियों या संस्थाओं में रोजगार प्रदान करने में मदद कर सकती है जिससे वह कमा सके तथा खुद भोजन प्राप्त कर सके।

सुचरिता साहू, रायपुर

कश्मीर-लद्दाख में अब विकास की बारी

जम्मू कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 के कुछ प्रावधान हटाने और जम्मू कश्मीर तथा लद्दाख को अलग केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बनाने से अब यहां विकास संभव हो सकेगा। रोजाना मीडिया में जम्मू कश्मीर की खबरें आ रही हैं कि वहां धारा 144 लगाया गया है। वहां बडी कडाई बरती जा रही है। ऐसा इसलिए शायद आतंकी

नहीं मिल पा रही है। कश्मीर में पर्यटन स्थल होने तथा फलों की खेती के कारण वहां का विकास जल्द संभव है। लेकिन लद्दाख के विकास में सरकार को काफी कवायद करनी पड़ेगी। लद्दाख में कई ऐसे क्षेत्र हैं जहां घास का एक तिनका भी नहीं उगता है। बर्फ से ढंके लद्दाख में पर्यटक भी काफी कम जाते हैं। हालांकि लद्दाख भारत का ऊर्जा का बडा स्रोत बन सकता है। यहां सौर ऊर्जा की अधिक संभावनाएं हैं। इसके अलावा जल विद्युत की भी अपार संभावनाएं हैं। सरकार को पहले इन जगहों में जाने के लिए अच्छी सड़कों का निर्माण करना होगा। अगर इन जगहों में जाना सुलभ होगा तो लोग वहां जाएंगे और वहां का विकास तेज गति होगा। कश्मीर को भारत का स्वर्ग कहा जाता है। लेकिन आतंकवादी गतिविधियों तथा अनुच्छेद 370 के कारण वह उपेक्षा का शिकार था। अब केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बनने से विकास संभव होगा।

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



कृतज्ञता व्यक्तित्व के आभामंडल का विस्तार करती है

राहुल के बाद सोनिया

सोनिया गांधी का एक बार फिर कांग्रेस की कमान संभालना इस पार्टी की गांधी परिवार पर निर्भरता को तो दर्शाता ही है, यह भी बताता है कि उसके लिए इस परिवार के बाहर किसी अन्य के नेतृत्व को स्वीकार करना कितना मुश्किल है। इसमें संदेह है कि अंतरिम अध्यक्ष के रूप में सोनिया गांधी के चयन से कांग्रेस का संकट वास्तव में दूर हो सकेगा। सच तो यह है कि गहुल गांधी द्वारा अध्यक्ष पद छोड़ने के बाद जिस तरह पार्टी लगभग ढाई माह तक अनिश्चितता में फंसी रही और फिर सोनिया गांधी पर ही उसकी आस टिकी उससे उसकी कमजोरी और अधिक स्पष्ट रूप में सामने आई है। कांग्रेस यह कह सकती है कि सोनिया गांधी को अंतरिम अध्यक्ष ही बनाया गया है, लेकिन इससे कहीं न कहीं यह संदेश देने की कोशिश की गई है कि गांधी परिवार के बगैर पार्टी का गुजारा नहीं है। इस फैसले के जरिये कांग्रेस का आगे बढ़ पाना मुश्किल ही है। ऐसा लगता है कि कांग्रेस घूम-फिरकर वहीं पहुंच गई है जहां से चली थी। बेहतर हो कि आगे बढ़ने के लिए कांग्रेस पहले यह तय कर ले कि उसमें गांधी परिवार के नेतृत्व के बिना आगे बढ़ने की सामर्थ्य है या नहीं?

यह ठीक है कि कांग्रेस का गांधी परिवार से अलग होना आसान नहीं और उसके अस्तित्व का आधार ही यह परिवार है, लेकिन जब खुद राहल गांधी ने कह दिया था कि गांधी परिवार से बाहर के किसी व्यक्ति को नेतृत्व सौंपा जाना चाहिए तब यह आवश्यक हो जाता था कि पार्टी उसी दिशा में आगे बढ़े। यह विचित्र है कि कांग्रेस गांधी परिवार के रूप में जिसे अपनी ताकत समझती है वही उसकी कमजोरी भी है। इसी ताकत और कमजोरी के कारण कांग्रेस गांधी परिवार को लेकर अपनी दुविधा से उबर नहीं पाती। निराशाजनक यह है कि कांग्रेस की इस दुविधा का नुकसान देश को भी उठाना पड़ रहा है। एक मजबूत-मुखर विपक्ष की अपनी भूमिका निभाने के लिए कांग्रेस को सबसे पहले नेतृत्व के सवाल को हल करना होगा ताकि पार्टी को सही दिशा मिले। राहुल गांधी ने अध्यक्ष पद छोड़ने के साथ ही पार्टी के नेताओं को यह मौका दिया था कि वे नए नेतृत्व की तलाश करें, लेकिन वे इसके लिए आवश्यक साहस नहीं जुटा सके। साहस का यह अभाव इसलिए है, क्योंकि पार्टी के बड़े नेता एकजुट नहीं हैं और वे भी शक्ति केंद्र के इर्द-गिर्द घूमने की उसी बीमारी की चपेट में आ गए हैं जिससे कभी कार्यकर्ता ग्रस्त हुआ करते थे। मौजूदा माहौल में पार्टी को अगर मजबूती के साथ आगे बढ़ना है तो उसे अपनी रीति-नीति पर साहसिक फैसलों के लिए तैयार रहना होगा।

बदहाल शिक्षा

उत्तराखंड के सरकारी प्राथमिक विद्यालयों में घटती छात्रसंख्या, दूरदराज एवं दुर्गम क्षेत्रों में शिक्षकों की कमी और वहीं सुगम क्षेत्रों में तैनाती की बढ़ती होड़ की तस्वीर चौंकाने वाली है। हैरत की बात ये है कि राज्य में 2521 यानी करीब एक चौथाई प्राथमिक विद्यालय सिर्फ एक शिक्षक के भरोसे संचालित किए जा रहे हैं। 71 विद्यालय ऐसे हैं, जहां एक भी छात्र नहीं है। इनमें सर्वाधिक 54 विद्यालय नैनीताल जिले में हैं। 264 विद्यालयों में छात्रसंख्या एक या दो तक सिमटी है। 178 विद्यालयों में एक भी शिक्षक नहीं है। पर्वतीय जिलों में एकल शिक्षक विद्यालयों की संख्या सबसे ज्यादा है तो दूसरी ओर सुगम एवं मैदानी जिलों में मानकों से ज्यादा शिक्षक कार्यरत हैं। शिक्षा को लेकर ये दुरावस्था शायद ही कहीं ओर नजर आए। साक्षरता दर में देश के अव्वल राज्यों में शुमार उत्तराखंड में सरकारी प्राथमिक शिक्षा की हालत तंत्र की पोल खोल रही है। पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में विकास की धीमी रफ्तार और पिछड़ेपन की दुहाई देकर 18 साल पहले जिस राज्य की स्थापना की गई, वह दो दशकों की ओर कदम बढ़ाने के बावजूद प्रारंभिक शिक्षा की हालात सुधारने में नाकाम साबित हो रहा है। यह चिंताजनक स्थिति है। राज्य में शिक्षा की बुनियाद कमजोर धरातल पर रखी जा रही है। इसका बुरा असर प्राथमिक विद्यालयों से छात्रों और अभिभावकों के मोहभंग के रूप में सामने है। शिक्षा की जरूरी आवश्यकता पूरा करने को दूरस्थ ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में स्थापित किए गए विद्यालय अपने लक्ष्य का संधान नहीं कर सके हैं। अब तेजी से घटती छात्रसंख्या से विद्यालयों का अस्तित्व ही खतरे में पड़ रहा है। वर्षों से शिक्षकों की कमी रहने से विद्यालयों में छात्रसंख्या का घटना स्वाभाविक है। राज्य के पर्वतीय जिलों में पलायन के लिए स्तरीय शिक्षा की कमी को बड़ा कारक माना गया है। एक ओर पलायन रोकने की बात कही जा रही है, दूसरी ओर नीतिगत स्तर पर ढुलमुलपन बरकरार है। इस सबके बीच एक बार फिर से प्राथमिक शिक्षकों का जिला कैडर खत्म कर स्कूल कैडर लागू करने पर मंथन किया जा रहा है। स्कल कैडर होने पर शिक्षकों के लिए विद्यालयों में ही टिकना अनिवार्य हो जाएगा। इससे पहले प्राथमिक शिक्षकों का जिला कैडर खत्म कर ब्लॉक कैडर लागू किया गया था, लेकिन कुछ अरसे बाद ही इसे खत्म कर दोबारा जिला कैडर किया गया है। ब्लॉक कैडर का जितना अपेक्षित लाभ मिलना चाहिए था, नहीं मिल सका। स्कूल कैडर मौजूदा समस्या का समाधान तब ही माना जाएगा, जब सरकार मजबूत इच्छाशक्ति के साथ यह फैसला ले और फिर इसे लागू भी करे।

देर से उढाया गया दुरुस्त कदम



प्रकाश सिंह और प्रतिभा नैथानी

मोदी सरकार द्वारा अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने से कश्मीर और शेष भारत के बीच दीवार तो गिरी ही, इससे आतंक से निपटने में मदद मिलेगी और विकास का मार्ग प्रशस्त होगा

श्मीर को लेकर आजादी के समय से ही देश में अनिश्चितता बनी हुई थी। स्वतंत्रता के बाद भारत में रियासतों को तीन विकल्प दिए गए थे। पहला कि वे स्वतंत्र देश के रूप में अपना अस्तित्व बनाए रख सकते हैं। दूसरा वे भारत में शामिल हो सकते हैं और तीसरा वे पाकिस्तान का हिस्सा बन सकते हैं। कश्मीर के तत्कालीन महाराजा हरि सिंह ने दुर्भाग्य से शुरू में ढुलमुल नीति अपनाई। वह शायद स्वतंत्र देश के रूप में रहने का सपना देख रहे थे, परंतु जब पाकिस्तान के सैनिकों और कबाइली लोगों ने राज्य पर हमला किया तब उन्हें लगा कि राज्य को बचाने का एक ही विकल्प है। उन्होंने भारत से मदद मांगी और भारत में विलय होना स्वीकार करते हुए इंस्ट्रुमेंट ऑफ एक्सेशन पर 26 अक्टूबर, 1947 को हस्ताक्षर कर दिए। परंतु ब्रिटिश सरकार लॉर्ड माउंटबेटन के जरिये कुछ और ही खेल खेल रही थी। माउंटबेटन ने कश्मीर के भारत का अंग बनने के बाद लिखा कि 'मेरी सरकार की इच्छा है जैसे ही जम्मू-कश्मीर की कानून-व्यवस्था दुरुस्त होती है और वहां से घुसपैठिये बाहर खदेड़े जाएंगे तो स्थानीय लोगों की भावनाओं के अनुसार राज्य का विलय सुनिश्चित किया जाएगा। उन्हें ऐसा लिखने का कोई अधिकार नहीं था और कानूनी

अनुच्छेद 370 केंद्र से जम्मू-कश्मीर के रिश्तों की रूपरेखा है। यह अनुच्छेद प्रधानमंत्री

दृष्टि से यह गलत था।

जवाहरलाल नेहरू और शेख मोहम्मद अब्दुल्ला के बीच लंबी बातचीत के बाद 17 अक्टूबर, 1949 को भारतीय संविधान सभा द्वारा स्वीकार किया गया था। इसके प्रावधानों के अनुसार रक्षा, विदेश नीति और संचार मामलों को छोड़कर किसी अन्य मामले से संबंधित कानून बनाने और लागू कराने के लिए केंद्र को राज्य सरकार से अनुमित लेनी होगी। अनुच्छेद 370 के अंतर्गत जम्मू-कश्मीर का अलग झंडा रहा।

उल्लेखनीय है कि अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाने की चर्चा समय-समय पर होती रही है। संसद के रिकॉर्ड खंगालने से कुछ रोचक प्रसंग सामने आए हैं। उत्तर प्रदेश के बिजनौर से स्वतंत्र सदस्य प्रकाशवीर शास्त्री ने 11 सितंबर, 1964 को लोकसभा में एक प्राइवेट मेंबर बिल रखा कि अनुच्छेद 370 को निरस्त कर दिया जाए। उनका कहना था कि यह अनुच्छेद अस्थायी तो है ही, इसके रहने से चार समस्याएं उत्पन्न हुई हैं। पहली तो यह कि इसके कारण पाकिस्तान बराबर यह दुष्प्रचार करता है कि कश्मीर का अलग अस्तित्व है और वह भारत का हिस्सा नहीं है। दूसरी यह कि जो देश हमारे संविधान से परिचित नहीं है, उन्हें भी यह भ्रम हो रहा है कि कश्मीर का भारत से जुड़ाव अस्थायी है। तीसरी यह कि कश्मीर के जनमानस में भी यह भावना है कि किसी दिन राजनीतिक परिस्थितियां बदल सकती हैं और चौथी यह कि इस प्रावधान का लाभ उठाते हुए अलगाववादी बराबर भारत



के विरुद्ध अनर्गल बातें करते रहते हैं। इस पर कुल 25 सांसदों ने बिल के पक्ष में भाषण दिए। कांग्रेस के हनुमंथेया ने कहा कि सभी सदस्य बिल के पक्ष में हैं और इसे पारित किया जाना चाहिए। भाकपा के एनसी चटर्जी ने कहा कि यह अनुच्छेद अस्थायी है और पूछा कि यह कब तक बना रहेगा। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि इस समय प्रधानमंत्री नहीं हैं, अन्यथा में उनसे पूछता कि उनके शब्दकोश में अस्थायी के क्या

कश्मीर के सांसदों ने भी अनुच्छेद 370 को समाप्त करने का जोरदार समर्थन किया था। कांग्रेस के श्यामलाल सर्राफ ने बिल का समर्थन करते हुए कहा कि जम्मू-कश्मीर की जनता इस अनुच्छेद को नहीं चाहती। कश्मीर के ही गोपालदत्त मेंगी ने तो यहां तक कहा कि अनुच्छेद 370 प्रदेश के लिए एक अभिशाप है और यह हमें कोई विशेष दर्जा नहीं देता, बल्कि इसने हमें अपने देश में ही एक दूसरे दर्जे का नागरिक बना दिया है और यह शेष भारत एवं कश्मीर के बीच एक दीवार है। उन्होंने यह भी बताया कि नेशनल कांफ्रेंस के महासचिव मीर कासिम से उनकी प्रातःकाल बात हुई थी और उन्होंने भी कहा था कि भारतीय संविधान

जम्मू-कश्मीर में पूरी तरह लागू किया जाना चाहिए। कश्मीर के एक अन्य सांसद और शेख अब्दुल्ला के करीबी अब्दुल गनी गोनी ने भी संसद से बिल पास करने को कहा। अपने बयान में उन्होंने कहा कि जम्मू-कश्मीर के तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री बख्शी गुलाम मोहम्मद ने भी अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के लिए पहल की थी, परंतु केंद्र सरकार सहमत नहीं हुई थी। उन्होंने कहा, 'मैं नहीं जानता कि केंद्र सरकार पश्चिम के प्रभाव में है या वह पाकिस्तान को खुश करना चाहती है।' केंद्र सरकार और कांग्रेस नेताओं पर उन्होंने कश्मीर की जनता पर अन्याय करने का आरोप लगाया और कहा कि कश्मीर भारत का अभिन्न अंग है और अनुच्छेद 370 के प्रावधान अस्थायी हैं जो हटा दिए जाने चाहिए। अपने भाषण के अंत में उन्होंने कहा कि अनुच्छेद 370 को समाप्त किया जाना आवश्यक है ताकि हम सब भारत के समान नागरिक बन सकें और हमें दोयम

दर्जे का नागरिक न समझा जाए। कश्मीर के एक और सांसद सैयद नासिर हुसैन समनानी ने कहा कि हमारी क्या गलती है कि अनुच्छेद 370 समाप्त नहीं किया जा रहा है। हम चाहते हैं कि हमारे जीवनकाल में

ही यह अभिशाप खत्म हो ताकि हम और हमारी संतानों का भविष्य सुरक्षित हो सके। गृहमंत्री को इशारा करते हुए उन्होंने पूछा कि आखिर यह प्रावधान अभी तक संविधान में क्यों है और कौन इसे बनाए रखना चाहते हैं। हम तो चाहते हैं कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में उसी तरह कानून लागू हों जैसे महाराष्ट्र, मद्रास और बंगाल में लाग होते हैं। हम जिन्ना के द्विराष्ट्र सिद्धांत में विश्वास नहीं करते और इसीलिए हमने कश्मीर में मुस्लिम लीग नहीं बनने दी। बिल पर बहस का जवाब देते हुए गृहमंत्री गुलजारी लाल नंदा ने कहा कि कुछ कानूनी दिक्कतें है जिससे अभी अनुच्छेद 370 समाप्त नहीं किया जा सकता, परंतु उन्होंने आश्वासन दिया कि प्रकाशवीर शास्त्री की भावनाओं का आदर करते हुए निकट भविष्य में कोई रास्ता निकाला जाएगा। ये सभी बहस पचास साल से भी पहले हुई थीं।

मोदी सरकार ने कश्मीर और शेष भारत के बीच की दीवार गिराकर देश की संप्रभुता को बल दिया है। निश्चय ही इससे अलगाववादियों और आतंकवादियों से निपटने में भी सहायता मिलेगी। विकास का मार्ग भी प्रशस्त होगा। परंतु आने वाले दिन चुनौतीपूर्ण होंगे। पाकिस्तान हरसंभव प्रयास करेगा कि कश्मीर में हालात बिगड़ें। उपलब्ध सूचनाओं के अनुसार आतंकवादियों को कश्मीर में भेजा जाएगा। लश्कर ए तोइबा और जैश ए मुहम्मद को हरसंभव सहायता देकर पुलवामा या उससे भी ज्यादा गंभीर घटनाओं को अंजाम देने के लिए उकसाया जाएगा। केंद्र सरकार को इसके लिए अपने सुरक्षा बलों और खुफिया तंत्र को पूरी तरह सक्रिय रखना होगा।

(प्रकाश सिंह सीमा सुरक्षा बल के पूर्व महानिदेशक हैं और प्रतिभा नैथानी सेंट जेवियर कॉलेज, मुंबई में राजनीतिशास्त्र की विभागाध्यक्ष हैं)

response@jagran.com

कांग्रेस ने फिर पकड़ी गलत राह

कांग्रेस में जिस तरह पार्टी अध्यक्ष के चयन को लेकर मंथन चलता दिख रहा था उससे कुछ समय के लिए यह भ्रम अवश्य पैदा हुआ कि शायद इस बार कोई नया नाम निकलकर सामने आए। मगर सोनिया गांधी को अंतरिम अध्यक्ष बनाए जाने का पहला निष्कर्ष यही है कि परिवार से जुड़े प्रमुख नेताओं के समूह ने मान लिया है कि बाहर का कोई अध्यक्ष नहीं हो सकता। ढाई महीने की कसरत के बाद यदि पार्टी अस्वस्थता के कारण स्वयं को औपचारिक जिम्मेदारी से मुक्त करने वाली सोनिया की शरण में ही जाने को विवश है तो इसके मायने कांग्रेस की दृष्टि से अत्यंत ही चिंताजनक हैं। इस समय कांग्रेस के सामने राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर प्रभावी पार्टी के रूप में अपने अस्तित्व को बनाए रखने का संकट है। यह एक दिन में पैदा नहीं हुआ है। 2014 के आम चुनाव में कांग्रेस 44 सीटों तक जब सिमटी तो उस समय सोनिया गांधी ही अध्यक्ष थीं। अगर कांग्रेस उस समय ईमानदारी से पराजय के कारणों का गहन विश्लेषण करती तो उसे नरेंद्र मोदी के उदय से आलोड़ित होते समाज तथा तेजी से बदलते भारत के सामूहिक मनोविज्ञान और उसके समक्ष अपनी सारी कमजोरियों का अहसास हो जाता। एके एंटनी की अध्यक्षता में गठित समिति ने समझने की कोशिश की और एक रिपोर्ट सोनिया गांधी को भी सौंपी। वह रिपोर्ट कभी सार्वजनिक नहीं हुई। अब 2019 में हम खंडहर में बदलती जिस कांग्रेस

को देख रहे हैं उसके लिए किसे दोषी माना जाएगा? अगर पीवी नरसिम्हा राव के कार्यकाल को छोड़ दें तो पिछले चार दशकों में नेहरू-गांधी परिवार ही पार्टी का सर्वोच्च नीति-निर्धारक रहा है। भले औपचारिक तौर पर उसके हाथों में नेतृत्व रहा हो या नहीं। स्वयं सोनिया गांधी मार्च 1998 से 2017 तक अध्यक्ष रहीं। 2013 से उपाध्यक्ष के तौर पर राहुल गांधी कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष की भूमिका निभा रहे थे एवं बाद में अध्यक्ष बन गए। 2019 के चुनाव परिणाम को देखें तो कांग्रेस को 52 में से 23 सीटें तमिलनाडु एवं केरल से मिली हैं। अगर तमिलनाडु में द्रमुक ने उसे सीटें न दी होतीं तथा केरल में शबरीमाला विवाद के कारण लोगों में वाममोर्चा के खिलाफ गस्सा न होता तो वह 2014 से भी पीछे चली जाती। नरेंद्र मोदी और अमित शाह की नीतियों और व्यवहार से संपूर्ण भारत एक बड़े बदलाव की ओर प्रयाण कर चुका है। इसमें जो भी पार्टी नीति, नेतृत्व और रणनीति में अनुकूल बदलाव करने का माद्दा नहीं दिखाएगी वह या तो इतिहास के अध्याय में सिमट जाएगी या फिर निष्प्रभावी अवस्था में



अवधेश कुमार

जो उसे उबार सके, लेकिन सोनिया को कमान सौंपकर उसने मौका गंवा दिया

कांग्रेस को निर्णायक

नेतृत्व की जरूरत थी



जीवित रहेगी। कांग्रेस लंबे समय से नीति, नेतृत्व और रणनीति के संकट का शिकार रही है। सोनिया गांधी को अंतरिम अध्यक्ष बनाने की घोषणा करते हुए रणदीप सिंह सुरजेवाला ने कहा कि वह तजुर्बेकार नेता हैं और देश जिन परिस्थितियों में गुजर रहा है, उसमें हमें उनके नेतृत्व की जरूरत है। यह सोनिया गांधी ही थीं जिनके नेतृत्व में 1999 में लड़े गए पहले चुनाव में कांग्रेस उस समय तक सबसे कम 114 सीटों तक सिमट गई थी। 2004 में भी उसे केवल 145 सीटें ही मिली थीं। चुंकि वाजपेयी सरकार के खिलाफ संघ परिवार में ही व्यापक असंतोष पैदा हो गया था, इसलिए नेताओं-कार्यकर्ताओं ने चुनाव में काम ही नहीं किया। 2009 के चुनाव में भाजपा एक लचर पार्टी की तरह लंड रही थी तो कांग्रेस को 206 सीटें आ गईं। सोनिया गांधी के कारण पार्टी एकजुट अवश्य रही, लेकिन समय के अनुरूप कांग्रेस को वैचारिक धार देने तथा नेतृत्व समूह में ऊर्जावान-क्षमतावान चेहरों का चयन कर आगे लाने का कदम उन्होंने बिल्कुल नहीं उठाया। 10 जनपथ कुछ विश्वासपात्र-कृपापात्र नेताओं के सुझाव के अनुसार भूमिका निभाता रहा।

देश बहुआयामी वैचारिक परिवर्तन से गुजर रहा था और सोनिया गांधी के नेतृत्व में कांग्रेस को यथास्थिति से निकालने की तैयारी तक नहीं की जा सकी। 2014 आते-आते विचार, व्यवहार और नेतृत्व के स्तर की जड़ता

परवान चढ़ चुकी थी। नरेंद्र मोदी की वाणी में लोगों को एक ऐसा प्रभावी नेतृत्व दिखा जिसके पास देश को जड़ता से निकालने का विचार एवं व्यवहार दोनों है। बदलाव की प्रक्रिया वहीं से आरंभ हुई जो 2019 में सुदृढ़ हुई है। इसमें ऐसी कांग्रेस के लिए जगह थी ही नहीं। कांग्रेस नेतृत्व इस बहुआयामी बदलावों को समझने में अभी तक नाकाम है। चुनाव परिणामों का जो कारण कांग्रेस बता रही है उसमें न तो वह देश में आ चुके बदलाव की बयार को स्वीकार करती है, न अपनी घातक कमजोरियों को। यही कारण है कि ले-देकर उसकी नजर राहुल से निकलते हुए प्रियंका और अंततः सोनिया गांधी तक टिक जाती है। कांग्रेस को इस समय ऐसे नेतृत्व की जरूरत थी जो भारतीय राजनीति में आ रहे अहम बदलाव को समझते हुए उसके अनुरूप पार्टी को वैचारिक कलेवर देने तथा नेतृत्व के स्तर पर सक्षम लोगों को सामने लाने का साहस कर सके। जिसके पास नरेंद्र मोदी एवं अमित शाह के अनरूप परिश्रम करने की क्षमता के साथ वक्तुत्व कला भी हो।

क्या सोनिया गांधी इन कसौटियों पर खरी उतरती हैं? साफ है नहीं। 2014 की पराजय के बावजूद वह पार्टी में किसी स्तर पर बदलाव का माद्य न दिखा सर्की। फिर उनसे ऐसी उम्मीद की ही नहीं जा सकती। इसके संकेत भी साफ हैं। अनुच्छेद 370 पर देश का बहुमत उत्साहजनक समर्थन दे रहा है और कांग्रेस नेतृत्व उसकी आलोचना कर रहा है। इससे खीझ के चलते पार्टी के अंदर से भी कई नेताओं ने सरकार के कदम का समर्थन कर दिया, पर सोनिया और राहुल गांधी की समझ में नहीं आया। यह वैचारिक दिशाभ्रम का केवल एक प्रमाण है। जिस राज्य में देखिए, कांग्रेस के अंदर नेताओं-कार्यकर्ताओं में अपने भविष्य को लेकर छटपटाहट है। लोग पार्टी छोड़कर भाग रहे हैं, क्योंकि उन्हें नहीं लगता कि वर्तमान कांग्रेस नेतृत्व भाजपा का सामना करने में सक्षम है। कांग्रेस के शीर्ष नेताओं में शामिल लोगों के सामने भी स्पष्ट हो चुका है कि सोनिया, राहुल और प्रियंका को लेकर आम जनता में बिल्कुल आकर्षण नहीं है। मोदी-शाह की तुलना में जनता इनको महत्व नहीं देने वाली। बावजूद यदि पार्टी परिवार से बाहर जाने का साहस नहीं कर पाई तो फिर यह मानकर चलिए कि वर्तमान कांग्रेस के राजनीतिक भविष्य पर पहले से बड़ा प्रश्नचिन्ह खड़ा हो गया है। इससे उसके समक्ष अस्तित्व का संकट और गहरा जाएगा।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक हैं) response@jagran.com



स्वतंत्रता

मनुष्य के चतुर्दिक विकास के लिए उसका स्वतंत्र रहना बेहद जरूरी है। स्वतंत्रता के बिना व्यक्ति अपनी बुद्धि, विवेक और चेतना से कार्य को निष्पादित करने की समझ खो देता है। पराधीनता की बेड़ियां मानवीय जीवन को पशुतर कर देती हैं। कहा भी गया है-पराधीन सपनेहुं सुख नाहीं। अर्थात जो व्यक्ति किसी भी स्तर पर, किसी भी रूप में पराधीन होता है, वह कभी सपने में भी सुख नहीं पा सकता। आरजी इंगरसोल ने कहा है-नेत्रों के लिए जैसे प्रकाश है, फेफड़ों के लिए जैसे वायु है, हृदय के लिए जैसे प्यार है, उसी प्रकार मनुष्य की आत्मा के लिए स्वतंत्रता है।

स्वतंत्रता स्वाधीनता शब्द का पर्याय है। जिसका अर्थ है किसी अन्य की नहीं, बिल्क स्वयं की अधीनता। अगर मनुष्य स्वयं के अधीन नहीं होगा तो वह समाज के लिए हिंसक एवं अराजक हो सकता है। स्वतंत्र यानी एक ऐसा स्व निर्मित तंत्र है जो हमारे पूर्वजों के विचारों, नियमों एवं परंपरा की बुनियाद पर टिका होता है। स्वतंत्रता के संबंध में दो प्रकार के विचार देखने को मिलते हैं-निषेधात्मक एवं भावात्मक। निषेधात्मक का अर्थ है-किसी भी तरह के बंधनों का अभाव, लेकिन इसका तात्पर्य उच्छृंखलता नहीं, बिल्क मर्यादित सीमा के भीतर व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता है। भावात्मक स्वतंत्रता का अर्थ है-मानव के स्विणम विकास एवं व्यक्तित्व के लिए सुविधाओं और अवसरों की उपलब्धता। अतः स्वतंत्रता एक समन्वयात्मक धारणा है जिसमें निषेधात्मक एवं भावात्मक, तोनों पक्ष शामिल हैं।

समाज और स्वतंत्रता का भी संबंध साहचर्य है। एक संगठित सभ्य समाज के निवासी एवं सामाजिक प्राणी होने के नाते हमें कुछ सीमाओं का पालन करना आवश्यक है। स्वतंत्रता के इन्हीं नियमों एवं सीमाओं से समाज में समानता का भाव निर्मित होता है। ये हमारी स्वच्छंदता और शक्तियों के अविवेकपूर्ण उपयोग को रोकती हैं। स्वतंत्रता की रक्षा के लिए महत्वपूर्ण शर्त है आंतरिक चाह। यदि आंतरिक चाह न हो तो स्वतंत्रता नहीं बची रह सकती।

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

हितेंद्र डेढ़ा, चिल्ला गांव

कमजोर हो रही समाज की अहम कड़ी

अनीश कुमार

आज देश में पढ़े-लिखे और संपन्न लोगों में आत्महत्या के मामले तेजी से बढ़ रहे हैं। रह रहकर इस आशय की खबरें आती रहती हैं। इन घटनाओं के पीछे कई कारण हैं, लेकिन बुनियादी वजहें भावनात्मक टूटन, तनाव, रिश्तों से रीत रहा भरोसा और सामाजिक-पारिवारिक असहयोग ही हैं। जो बहुत चुपके हमारे परिवेश का हिस्सा बन गए हैं। तभी तो नाउम्मीदी के हालातों में अपनों के साथ होने के बावजूद भी हालातों से जूझने की राह नहीं निकाली जाती, बल्कि मौत को चुन लिया जाता है। ऐसे परिवार भी ये कदम उठा रहे हैं जिनमें न आर्थिक तंगी है और ना कोई जीवन निर्वाह की बड़ी चुनौतियां। इतना ही नहीं अपनों का साथ और संबल भी उनके हिस्से हैं। ऐसे में विचारणीय है कि परिवार के जो लोग एक-दूसरे की ताकत हुआ करते हैं, वे मौत का ऐसा सुनियोजित खेल कैसे खेल जाते हैं? मानसिक तनाव, सामाजिक दबाव या धार्मिक भटकाव की ये कैसी परिस्थितियां बन रही हैं कि बर्बरता से अपनों की जान ले लेना और जिंदगी का हाथ छोड़ना ही उन्हें सही लगने लगता है।

अपनों को मारकर मर जाने की बढ़ती प्रवृत्ति कहीं ना कहीं हमारी सामाजिक–पारिवारिक व्यवस्था की भी विफलता है

अफसोस कि अपनों के साथ जीने और हालातों से जूझने की हिम्मत ना जुटाकर दुनिया से विदा हो जाने की राह चुनने वाले ऐसे परिवारों की संख्या बढ़ रही है। गांवों-कस्बों तक ऐसी भयावह घटनाएं हो रही हैं। अपनों को मारकर मर जाने की बढ़ती प्रवृत्ति कहीं ना कहीं हमारी सामाजिक-पारिवारिक व्यवस्था की भी विफलता है, क्योंकि ऐसी कोई भी घटना सिर्फ व्यक्तिगत त्रासदी नहीं हो सकती। पूरा परिवेश ऐसे अप्रत्याशित हालातों की वजह बनता है। आमतौर पर व्यक्तिगत हो या सामृहिक अधिकतर मामलों में मानसिक दबाव और सामाजिक तिरस्कार का भय ही आत्महत्या का कारण बनता है। ऐसी घटनाओं से समाज में आ रही संवेदनशीलता की कमी की भी झलक मिलती है। इन घटनाओं से जुड़े सवाल हमारी पारिवारिक-सामाजिक स्थितियों में आ रहे

बदलावों को रेखांकित करते हैं। नतीजतन ये पूरे समाज को चेताने वाले मामले हैं।

निःसंदेह हमारी पूरी सामाजिक-पारिवारिक व्यवस्था को समग्र रूप से उन कारणों से जूझना होगा जो परिवार यानी समाज की सबसे अहम कड़ी को यूं जिंदगी से हारने की ओर धकेलते हैं। यह कोशिश करनी होगी कि कोई भी परिवार ऐसी विकल्पहीन स्थिति में न आए कि मौत के बरक्स जिंदगी का चुनाव न कर सके। हमारे देश में परिवार को एक सुरक्षा कवच की तरह माना जाता रहा है जिसमें हर पीढ़ी के लोग सुरक्षा और संरक्षण पाते हैं। परिवार भले ही समाज की सबसे छोटी इकाई है, पर इसी की बुनियाद पर पूरी सामाजिक व्यवस्था की इमारत खड़ी होती है। नई पीढ़ी को संस्कार देने की बात हो या एक दूजे के सुख-दुख में साथ देने का मामला, परिवार की भूमिका बहुत अहम है। ऐसे में यह बड़ा सवाल है कि समाज की यह सबसे अहम कड़ी इतनी कमजोर कैसे हो रही है कि भरे-पूरे परिवारों की सामूहिक आत्महत्या के मामले सामने आ रहे हैं। जाहिर है आज हम सबको मिलकर इसके जवाब खोजने होंगे।

(लेखक दिल्ली विवि में असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर हैं)

अब मिली कश्मीर को वास्तविक आजादी

संजय गप्त ने अपने आलेख 'एक ऐतिहासिक फैसला' में विलय के बाद कश्मीर में शेख अब्दुल्ला के आधिपत्य को बनाए रखने की नेहरू-लालसा से उपजे अनुच्छेद-370 और 35-ए को हटाने वाले प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के फैसले को जिस तरह से ऐतिहासिक बताया है, वह सर्वथा उचित है। पिछले तीन दशकों से कश्मीर घाटी में पनपने वाले पाक पोषित अलगाववाद और आतंकवाद को संरक्षित करने वाला यही अनुच्छेद-370 था, लेकिन कांग्रेस शासन में इसे इसलिए नजरंदाज किया जाता रहा, क्योंकि यह अनुच्छेद उनके पूर्वज नेहरू द्वारा लगाया गया था। इसने कश्मीर को विशेष दर्जा देकर शेष भारत से अलग कर दिया। कश्मीर का यह विरूपित स्वरूप पाकिस्तान के लिए सुविधाजनक बन गया। आज अनुच्छेद-370 हटाने संबंधी भारत के फैसले से सबसे ज्यादा हैरान और परेशान पाकिस्तान ही है। जब दुनिया के तमाम प्रभावशाली देश इसे भारत का आंतरिक मामला मान रहे हैं, तब पाकिस्तान इस मामले को संयुक्त राष्ट्र में ले जाने की बेताबी दिखा रहा है। इससे यह समझा जा सकता है कि अनुच्छेद-370 से चाहे कश्मीर का हित भले ही न हुआ हो, लेकिन पाकिस्तान ने इसका भरपूर फायदा उठाया है। यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण रहा कि सब कुछ समझते हुए भी भारत इससे पहले कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद-370 हटाने का निर्णय नहीं ले पाया। भारत की इस नाकामी से पाकिस्तान को दुःसाहसिक कारगिल घुसपैठ करने का अवसर मिला। भारत पर होने वाले पाक प्रेरित भीषण आतंकी हमले इसी अनुच्छेद-370 की देन थे। इतने पर भी पूर्व की कांग्रेस सरकारें मौन रहीं। यद्यपि इस राष्ट्रघाती मौन की कांग्रेस को बहुत बड़ी कीमत चुकानी पड़ी, फिर भी इससे राष्ट्र का जो

नुकसान हुआ है, उसकी भरपाई अब भाजपा की मोदी

मेलबाक्स

सरकार को करनी पड़ रही है। अनुच्छेद-370 और 35-ए को निष्प्रभावी करके जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य को केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बना देना उसी नुकसान की भरपाई का एक हिस्सा है। केंद्र सरकार के इस साहिसक कदम से कश्मीर को जो वास्तविक आजादी मिली हैं, उसको अब जतन से संवारने की जरूरत है।

डॉ. वीपी पाण्डेय, अलीगढ़

भारत से सीखे पाक

जम्मू कश्मीर राज्य के पुनर्गठन को लेकर भारत सरकार द्वारा अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाने का ऐतिहासिक फैसला एक साहसिक कदम है। केंद्र सरकार के इस फैसले से अब घाटी के चहुंमुखी विकास का मार्ग प्रशस्त होगा। एक देश, एक निशान और एक विधान से संपूर्ण मुल्क एकता के सूत्र में बंधेगा। अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के विरोध में पड़ोसी मुल्क पाकिस्तान युद्ध की धमकी दे रहा है। पाकिस्तान ने समझौता एक्सप्रेस रोककर तथा भारत से तमाम तरह के व्यापारिक संबंध भी तोड़ लिए हैं। यह पाकिस्तान की बौखलाहट का नतीजा है। पाकिस्तान को यह बात भलीभांति पता होनी चाहिए कि जम्मू कश्मीर हमारा आंतरिक मामला है। पाकिस्तान को इसमें दखल नहीं देना चाहिए। भारत एवं पाकिस्तान दोनों मुल्क एक साथ आजाद हुए थे। विस्तृत क्षेत्रफल एवं विशाल भौगोलिक सीमाएं होने के बावजूद भारत ने असीम प्रगति की है और हम चांद तक जा पहुंचे हैं, परंतु हमारा पड़ोसी मुल्क आतंक की फैक्ट्री बनकर रह गया है। उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था डांवाडोल हो गई है। यह पड़ोसी मुल्क गरीबी, कुपोषण एवं आतंकवाद से त्रस्त है जो कि एशिया की शांति भंग कर रहा है। पाकिस्तान के हुक्मरानों को भारत से शिक्षा लेकर अपने मुल्क में व्याप्त गरीबी, अशिक्षा, बेरोजगारी, कुपोषण एवं आतंकवाद से लड़ाई लड़नी चाहिए। भारत भी शांति स्थापना एवं मानवीय विकास में उनका पूर्ण सहयोग करने के लिए तैयार रहेगा।

अब असली अग्नि परीक्षा

केंद्र की मोदी सरकार द्वारा जम्मू कश्मीर में अनुच्छेद 370 और 35ए हटाने पर पूरे देश ने वाहवाही, सराहना करते हुए ऐतिहासिक कदम बताया है। मोदी सरकार ने उक्त अनुच्छेद हटाकर प्रथम अग्नि परीक्षा पास कर ली है, लेकिन अब असली अग्नि परीक्षा में पास होना होगा। अब इस फैसले को सार्थक करके बताना होगा कि वाकई में ये अवरोध पैदा कर रहे थे। विकास, निर्माण के साथ-साथ उद्योग, रोजगार और शिक्षा की सौहार्दपूर्ण बयार बहानी होगी, ताकि वहां की जनता यह कह सके कि हमें उक्त अनुच्छेद के नाम पर इतने वर्षों तक अंधेरे में रखा गया।

hemahariupadhyay@gmail.com

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

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