Zee's search for a partner

It has neither got the money nor a strategic investor. Zee's disappointing deal with Invesco, however, could be a precursor to a better strategic foray



MEDIASCOPE

VANITA KOHLI-KHANDEKAR

he street was hoping for a foreign strategic investor to trigger an open offer, but eventually it came to a financial transaction," says Mihir Shah, vice president (India),

Media Partners Asia.

That sums up the feeling about the most awaited media deal in India. After more than nine months of speculation, it wasn't Comcast, Sony or Reliance Jio but US-based Invesco Oppenheimer Developing Markets Fund that took 11 per cent in Zee Entertainment Enterprises for ₹4,224 crore on July 31.

Zee is among India's largest media firms. Its 41 channels in 10 languages get a massive 19 per cent share of television viewership even as its OTT brand Zee5 is climbing up the charts. It is the only competitor that gives Disney's Star India, currently number two on network share, a good fight. On revenues of ₹7,934 crore, it had an EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) of ₹2,564 crore in the financial year ending March 2019. This has grown at 16.3 per cent over the last five years.

When Subhash Chandra, chairman of the \$4.3 billion Essel Group and the man who created Zee announced that the firm was looking for a strategic partner to scale up globally, there was a lot of excitement.

The first big trigger for divestment was the Disney-Fox deal. It has changed the nature of the game in India's ₹1,67,400 crore media and entertainment market making it bigger and more tech-oriented. After the \$137 billion Alphabet (Google and YouTube's parent) and the \$94.5 billion Comcast. the \$60 billion Disney is one of the largest media firms in the world.

Its ownership of the ₹13,825 crore Star India means the battle will be fought between the ₹38,838 crore or \$5.5 billion Reliance Jio (which owns Viacom18 among many media firms) and Sony that is just under a billion dollars in India. A Comcast-Zee combination would have had the firepower to take on Disney-Star or Reliance Jio.

However, the second reason for the Zee divestment is what ruled. At a group level, Essel has piled up a huge debt of reportedly over ₹17,000 crore and the collateral was promoter's equity in various businesses. The only way of deleveraging it was to sell stakes in various media and non-media assets. Invesco has owned 8 per cent in Zee for 17 years now, an additional 11 per cent made for a convenient deal.

But it brings in neither money (that goes to the lenders) nor a strategic partner into Zee. "This is a better deal because it was meeting my timelines,"

says Punit Goenka, managing director and CEO, Zee. The group has to settle everything with its debtors by September 30 this year. "If we had more time we could have done that (got in a strategic investor). But since black Friday (January 25 when the Zee stock crashed by over 30 per cent) we have been fighting. My conjecture is that strategic investors were looking for a bargain," says he.

That is not surprising given that this was the distress sale of a good asset. What makes Goenka happy is that "the floor price of the Zee stock has been reset." Invesco bought its stake at ₹400 a share, way higher than the ₹360 or it was trading at then. Since end July, it has fallen further to ₹330 or so. The promoters still own about 25 per cent of Zee stock and they haven't ruled out another sale to a strategic investor. It may dilute the family's control over management. But if Rupert Murdoch can sell Fox to a bigger rival to future proof it, why not Subhash Chandra?

Twitter: @vanitakohlik

Bifurcation plan leaves GAIL in two minds

The government plans to unbundle the pipeline company into two to avoid conflict-of-interest issues but the state-owned major wants to retain control of both businesses

The primary job of GAIL is to lay gas infrastructure, marketing can be done by anyone.

hen Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan stated this in early 2018, he was echoing a decade-old question that many industry experts had been asking. Is there a conflict of interest in the gas sector when the same entity that is responsible for transporting natural gas via a national pipeline grid should also be responsible for marketing it?

The Narendra Modi government is likely to inch closer to a plan to unbundle gas transmission and marketing business of GAIL by the end of this financial year. The company has already appointed EY as a consultant for the exercise.

"As far as GAIL is concerned, there is definitely some element of conflict of interest. But it is a

diversified entity now with petrochemical coming into the fold. If the business is split, the government could sell its marketing business to a state-run entity, as planned earlier, to meet the divestment target. In that case, the petrochem business should ideally be part of the marketing arm," said R S Sharma, former chairman of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

Recently, ideas of hiving off the pipeline business and selling it to a strategic investor had also been considered.

So why the split? Based on the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) Act of 2006, companies like GAIL had to provide mandatory open access to its gas pipeline infrastructure on a non-discriminatory basis at transportation rates determined by PNGRB. This is known as the common carrier principle.

The Act also stipulated that marketing and transmission functions should not be performed by the same entity, to preclude the issue of conflict of interest. This is mainly because those involved in marketing

will be able to accord priority to their own product. In the past, in fact, there have been complaints from even global energy majors of not being able to access to GAIL networks. "We have an online open access facility in place, which is transparent and hassle free. Hence, the question of allegation of monopoly or conflict of interest will not stand," a company official countered.

Based on the latest data available with the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC), of the 16,324 km natural gas pipeline network in India, GAIL accounts for 70 per cent or 11,411 km, giving the state-run entity a market monopoly. Gujarat State Petronet and Reliance account for 16.5 per cent and 11 per cent of the remaining pipeline network. According to a regulatory source, the capacity of utilisation of these pipelines is still 40-45 per cent. The drop in international liq-

English moved from Hooghly to what



Under law GAIL has to

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uefied natural gas (LNG) prices was reportedly pinching the company, because it was buying the gas at a higher contracted price and selling it at a lower price in accessing GAIL networks the domestic mar-

ket. This means a major dent in the company's earnings due to long-term contracts.

GAIL's management has been pushing for the creation of a separate subsidiary — with a separate management and arms-length independence – for the marketing business, rather than giving it to another company, a senior GAIL official said. Experts

highlight that despite the legal requirement, GAIL only split the accounts of the two divisions rather than spinning one of them off.

Sources added that an alternative plan was also submitted before the government by the management in June, the details of which is not available in the

public domain. B C Tripathi, who was chairman and managing director till July 31, told Business Standard, "Though reforms are necessary, it should not be a knee-jerk reaction. Only GAIL is investing in pipelines now in India, to the tune of around ₹50,000 crore. We need to create infrastructure and demand too. For that the company needs a strong balance sheet." He added that evaluating the LNG long-term contracts will not be wise, as it was a decision taken five years ago. "We have already renegotiated all those contracts," he added.

So what's the broad plan now? The ministry of petroleum and natural gas is likely to float a Cabinet note soon for a natural gas trading hub, while GAIL and ONGC are likely to take equity in the planned gas exchange, which is a part of this hub. Petroleum ministry sources said the gas hub is likely to come in place after the bifurcation of GAIL.

When asked about this plan, Fatih executive director International Energy Agency, said, "If there is enough volume to be imported and if they are looking at the geographical advantage of India, with lot of demand centres and production centres with enough volumes, it should be a good candidate for becoming a gas hub. But it shouldn't be if the volumes are not significant." Based on government estimates, natural gas production is expected to be at 71.92 billion cubic meter by 2021-22, from 35.07 BCM now.

According to the PPAC, of 4,781 MMSCM (million metric standard cubic meters) natural gas available for sale in India in June, around 57 per cent is met through LNG imports. "The potential for GAIL as a company will always be there as the country is planning to increase the share of natural gas in the overall energy basket from 6 per cent to 15 per cent by 2022," the company official said.

For the time being, however, the question whether GAIL will maintain its identity or be unbundled this year

CHINESE WHISPERS

Revisiting two nation theory The Deendayal Research Institute (DRI),

founded by Nanaji Deshmukh more than 40 years ago, has been hosting an annual lecture under the rubric "Akhand Bharat Parisamvad" for the past 32 years on August 15. This year, former union minister Arif Mohammed Khan will be the lead speaker. Khan, who had quit the Rajiv Gandhi government on the issue of the Muslim Women's Bill, recently backed the government for bringing in a law to proscribe "triple talaq". Khan will speak on "Dharmanirpekshta aur Dwi-Rashtravaad", or secularism and the two-nation theory. Bharatiya Janata Party Vice-President and Indian Council for Cultural Relations chief Vinay Sahasrabuddhe is the second speaker. The DRI has an ideological affinity with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Game, set, match



Nikhil Alva (pictured), who had handled Rahul Gandhi's social media outreach in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha election, on

Tuesday posted a video clip on his Twitter handle. The clip is from a badminton match in which one side smashes the shuttlecock repeatedly, while the other side manages to retrieve it every time and eventually wins the point. "Never give up." Alva said. Alva's posts came three days after the veterans outmanoeuvred Rahul Gandhi to have his mother Sonia Gandhi return as Congress chief. As people started debating if this was a message from Rahul's team, Alva posted the clip again with a different message. "The BJP grabs all the attention. Smash, smash, smash, smash... drama, drama, drama, drama... The Congress never gives up! Guess who wins in the end", Alva posted.

Moral of the story?



A Twitter follower has drawn an analogy

between the state of the auto industry in India and the fable about the hen that laid golden eggs. The story went something like this: A farmer had a hen that laid golden eggs, but only one a day. The farmer killed the hen in his greed to get all the eggs at one go, but, of course he couldn't. The Twitter user said the farmer in this case was the Central government, the hen was the auto industry, and the egg was the goods and services tax. According to an estimate, the auto industry accounts for 49 per cent of manufacturing GDP and almost 15 per cent of GST collection.

The Jagannath road

ANALYSIS BEHIND THE HEADLINES



INFRA DIG

BIBEK DEBROY

hat is common to Kisari Mohan Ganguli and Manmatha Nath Dutt? Towards end of the 19th century, both translated the Mahabharata, in unabridged form, from Sanskrit to English. Ganguli's translation appeared between 1884 and 1896, Dutt's in two spurts, between 1885-97 and 1901-05. Ganguli translated nothing else. Dutt also translated Valmiki Ramayana, five Puranas. Harivamsha, several Dharmashastra and *Rig* Veda incomplete). But there is an obscure connection between the two, one not too many know of. In those days, zamindars/rajas often commissioned authors to write brief histories of their families. Kisari Mohan Gangulithus wrote a brief history of Andul Rajbari. Some Bengalis may know Andul Rajbari was where Satyajit Ray's 1958 film "Jalsaghar" (The Music Room) was shot. Likewise. Manmatha Nath Dutt was commissioned to write a sketch of Posta Raj. Most Bengalis will now recognise Posta because of a nonsense rhyme written by Sukumar Ray, Satyajit Ray's father. "Shuntey pelum Posta giye, tomar naki meyer biye." "I went to Posta and heard that your daughter is getting married."

The Roys from Posta, a subarnabanik community, attained prominence because of Lakshmikanta Dhar. In the 17th century, when the

would become Calcutta, this family moved with them. Lakshmikanta Dhar was Clive's banker and also helped the English in wars with the Marathas. As a mark of gratitude, Lakshmikanta Dhar was given a "robe of honour" and title of "Maharaja". He accepted the former, but refused the latter. Since he didn't have sons, he requested that his daughter's son, Sukhmoy Roy, be given the title. In the process, Sukhmoy Roy came to own property in Calcutta and some of this was storage space along the river. The word "posta" means quay, embankment or jetty and this was a jetty on the River Hooghly used by these zamindars Jorasanko). Perhaps there was dissatisfaction with the very brief history of Posta Raj done by Manmatha Nath Dutt in 1900. A more comprehensive one, on Maharaja Sukhmoy Roy Bahadur and his family, was written by Benimadhub Chatterii in 1910. Sukh moy Roy was responsible for constructing the Cuttack Road (also known as Jagannath Road). Driving from Kolkata to Puri is easy now, along National Highways. Few remember the old name of Cuttack Road, constructed by Sukhmoy Roy over a "distance of two hundred and eighty miles from Uluberia to Puri Singdarwaja" for benefit of pilgrims to Jagannath temple, at a time when had railwavs not introduced. The railway line from Calcutta to Puri was constructed later.

Benimadhub Chatterji's book tells us there were dharamshalas all along the route and each dharamshala could take five hundred pilgrims. At distances varying between two and four miles, there were also wells. Hidden in archives. I found an item from a newspaper known as "Courier", published on August 27, 1841. This item was about "Raja Shookmoy Roy". "He made a gift of one and a half lakh of Rupees for the construction of the Juggernath Road from Pooree to Bissenpur via Cuttack and Midnapur. It was 261 miles long, with 816 bridges and drains. It was commenced in 1823 and completed in 1830, at an expense of 5,415 rupees per mile." The Puri Gazetteer (written in 1929) was ambivalent about credit for this road. "The state of internal communications at the time of the British conquest has been described by Toynbee in his Sketches of the History of Orissa. When we took the province in 1803, there was not a road, in the modern sense of the word, in existence... The construction of the Jagannath Road was not sanctioned until the year 1811, and in October 1812 Captain Sackville was appointed to superintend the work... The most important road in the district is the Cuttack-Puri road, also known as the Jagannath or Pilgrim road; of which 39 miles lie in this district. As mentioned above, the portion of this road in the Puri district was stated to be passable in 1817; but the whole road was not complete until 1825, and it was not metaled till nearly 50 years later."

'The bridges were built almost entirely out of stone taken from the ruined forts and temples in which the province then abounded; the cost of their construction being met by a Bengali gentleman, who took this excellent opportunity of helping pilgrims on the road to Jagannath. His name is commemorated by an inscription (dated 1826) on a bridge three miles from Puri, in Persian, Hindi, Bengali and Sanskrit... It is one of the most perfect roads to be seen in the province, and in portions is lined with an over-arching avenue of trees, which afford grateful shade to the foot-sore pilgrim." This Bengali gentleman was Sukhmoy Roy. It seems he gave the money and Governor General took the credit.

The author is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister Views are personal.

What an irony!

LETTERS



With reference to "BJP accuses Chidambaram of making 'provocative' remarks on Kashmir" (August 13), there can't be two opinions about the fact that the former home and finance minister P Chidambaram's (pictured) alleged remarks stating that the BJP wouldn't have abrogated Article 370 had Jammu and Kashmir been a Hindu-dominated state doesn't behove a senior politician of his stature. No wonder that his mindless statement has invited the ire of the senior leaders of BJP as well as its ministers who have termed his comments irresponsible and Ironically, the top leaderships of both the CPI and the CPI (M) have also jumped into the fray by questioning the rationale behind the Centre's move to abrogate Article 370, thereby taking away the special status of J&K in one

It goes without saying that despite the government's determination to persist with its astute game plan to convert the terror stricken state into two separate Union Territories, the journey ahead may not be very smooth. One can safely say some of the challenges might come from "internal" factors rather than "external" ones. What an irony!

Kumar Gupt Panchkula

Grossly inefficient

This refers to "Power ministry seeks diluting air pollution standards for thermal plants" (August 13). It is distressing to learn that the government is not just pushing back the target date but also pushing up the maximum emission permitted for thermal power plants. This shows utter disregard for environmental protection and for our next generations health in the face of the high levels of air and water pollution in India. The proposed norms are more liberal than what is in place in major economies of comparable size - the UK, Europe, the USA, China, Japan and possibly run contrary to our international commitments. Added to that is the concern that our monitoring and enforcement standards are grossly inefficient.

Indian regulations actually have to be tougher since our energy demands will grow faster than many others and we have a high population density. Also, India has to consider the location's system load not just a per megawatt (MW) emission level. A single old plant with 120MW capacity and a new one with 2,000MW capacity do not have the same environmental footprint.

P Datta Kolkata

Nature's wrath

Ever since the Cold War, there have been many predictions about World War III and the likely nuclear character it can take. However, World War III is already upon us and we are unable or are refusing to see it. The war is about nature versus man. Nature will win as it is far more powerful. Whatever control we think we can exercise over it is only temporary and soon nature will not only overcome it but do so with a brute force. Let's forget about the Arctic ice and global warming for the moment and focus on recent local events. The floods started in



and now in Uttarakhand. The reason is iust one - nature is reclaiming the space we have taken away from it.

Compared to countries like the USA, Russia and Canada, our population should be only around 100-300 million. Even taking into account the other population giant, China, we should have only about 500-600 million. The excess is occupying nature's property and it is claiming it back. True, human mismanagement in the levels of dams and ad hoc releases also added to the misery, but this is secondary. We have blocked nature's path and it is angry. Soon we will need a cabinet minister for disasters at the Centre and in the states

TRRamaswami Mumbai

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HAMBONE



Managing the rupee

The government and RBI should address overvaluation

inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been meeting industry representatives over the past few days, giving rise to expectations that the government will announce measures to revive economic activity. It has been reported that industry is looking for a stimulus package worth over ₹1 trillion. Though the details of a possible plan are not yet public, it is important to note that the government does not have the fiscal space to do so and should think through carefully before committing additional spending or tax concessions. For instance, sectors such as automobiles are demanding a reduction in the goods and services tax. But at a time when the problems are structural, a quick-fix solution may not be the ideal solution.

Instead, it should focus on some macro challenges, such as trade, to boost output. It is correct that the global trade environment has become more challenging, but, as the Economic Survey rightly noted, "India's share in global exports is so low that it should focus on market share". The external environment has become more testing with the possibility of competitive devaluation by large economies. China allowed the yuan to weaken past the psychological level of seven to the US dollar. US President Donald Trump has expressed his discontentment with a strong dollar.

Although going for a deliberate currency depreciation through market intervention like emerging market countries may be difficult for the US, lower $ing the interest \, rate \, by \, the \, Federal \, Reserve \, - \, something \, that \, Mr \, Trump \, has \, been$ demanding for long — would have a similar impact on the greenback. Though devaluation or wilful weakening of currencies is a zero-sum game and all countries cannot do it at the same time, India should look at protecting its interests in this environment. Moreover, the rupee is overvalued and is affecting India's trade balance. As economist Sajjid Chinoy highlighted in these pages on Monday, the rupee has appreciated by 18 per cent in real terms against the Chinese yuan over the past five years. This partly explains India's higher trade deficit with China. And now with rising trade tension, the yuan could weaken further. In fact, the rupee has appreciated in real terms against a number of currencies. The 36-currency export-based real effective exchange rate index was at 118.54 in June, showing significant overvaluation. The rupee overvaluation has affected exports, which have remained virtually stagnant over the past few years.

The stated policy of the Reserve Bank of India is that it does not target any particular level for the rupee and intervenes in the currency market only to quell excess volatility. However, in the given global backdrop, the central bank, in consultation with the government, may need to devise an approach to avoid persistent rupee overvaluation. It is possible that near-zero or negative interest rates in advanced economies and the search of yields will bring in more foreign inflows over time and push up the rupee. Therefore, the currency market will need careful management. To be sure, India needs to address multiple problems to push up exports. Addressing currency overvaluation could be a good starting point in the short run.

Two countries, one system

China struggles with its own regional 'special status' issue

scalating tensions between Hong Kong's pro-democracy protestors and the Chinese authorities have transcended the specific issue of extraditing criminals to the mainland, which was the proximate casus belli for the unrest that began 10 weeks ago. As Beijing sends paramilitary forces from nearby Shenzhen to augment the territory's garrison troops and cuts international airline links with the island territory, at stake is the nature of the relations between China, and its unique version of authoritarian capitalism, and the semi-democratic capitalism of the former British colony. Signals from the Chinese leadership augur a savage crackdown. This is the biggest internal threat to Xi Jinping's authority since his assumption of the mantle of President for Life in 2018. Inevitably, comparisons are drawn with the students' revolt in Tiananmen Square in 1989, where hopes of democratic concessions were met with a brutal crackdown by the People's Liberation Army on the unarmed people of China.

But there are critical differences between that pro-democracy movement, which erupted about a decade after the start of China's extraordinary economic transition, and the one in Hong Kong, now that China is attaining superpower status. The impulse for the '89 democracy movement came from students rather than the rapidly expanding cohorts of workers and peasants who were beginning to enjoy the fruits of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms and were unlikely, if not uninclined, to challenge Communist Party power in any meaningful way. Protestors converged in the vast square in the symbolic heart of Beijing — outside the iconic Forbidden City, overlooked by a giant-sized portrait of Mao Zedong — and exposed China to global cynosure. At a time when "capitalism with Chinese characteristics" was still to gain credence, a crackdown, however condemnable by world opinion, was inevitable.

On the other hand, when the British exited Hong Kong, an island linked to the continent through reclaimed land, in 1997, the city was guaranteed a basic constitution that granted it limited democracy, which was to stay till 2047. Hong Kong's citizens could vote for its administrators — albeit from a slate of candidates approved by Beijing (the current embattled CEO is one of them). "One country, two systems" is the euphemism for it. China's dictatorship tolerated this exceptionalism principally because of Hong Kong's status as a global financial hub and tax haven. This not only enables millions of non-resident Chinese to invest their dollars in mainland ventures but also facilitates all manner of offshore financial transactions for the Chinese leadership. Most global corporations also route their investments through this.

It has largely been the financial underwriter to China's economic miracle. The mandarins of the Communist Party of China, therefore, have a vested interest in maintaining Hong Kong's quasi-democracy. Diminishing Hong Kong's financial clout just as China is suffering the impact of its trade war with the US would not be in the country's broader interests. This is the unstated dilemma that the Chinese leadership faces even as it ups the threat levels on the territories' unarmed protestors. For India, the Chinese leadership's preoccupation with Hong Kong offers a welcome distraction from a more robust response to the changing constitutional and territorial status of Jammu & Kashmir. But the disruptions in the former British colony also offer the Indian leadership a cautionary story of the consequences of ignoring local sentiments when altering governance architectures.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



UK's democracy in practice

Its principles were witnessed during the Brexit debate

PARTHASARATHI SHOME

he United Kingdom has been the cause for exasperation not only among European presidents, prime ministers and Eurocrats, but also political and economic partners across the Atlantic and emerging economies alike. The object has been the apparent chaos created in charting a way out of Europe viz. Brexit and its multi-pronged fallout. Its own leaders of all parties and from within the ruling conservatives themselves aired individual — and altering — views, disagreeing openly over the best way to, or not to, exit. Penguin published a collection of amusing Brexit cartoons comprising a popular party gift. WhatsApp became a steady source of Brexit satire.

Britain's inability to find a way out reflected a short-sightedness in anticipating the complexities inherent in designing any interim or long-term arrangement that would facilitate a painless vet honourable exit from Europe. Arguably Theresa May, ex-prime minister, was viewed as having conducted insufficient consultation with Parliament if not her Cabinet before agreeing on a Brexit package with the European Union.

When May took her package back to her Cabinet and Parliament, there was oxymoronic muted uproar.

Several members of her Cabinet resigned sequentially even as new versions of the package emerged from her office. Famously, Boris Johnson, her foreign minister — who had earlier competed with her but lost the leadership contest of the Conservatives — led the resignations. Indeed, the Conservative membership — a group of merely over 100,000 members — have just elected him their leader. It has been pointed out that, effectively, a minuscule electorate has named Britain's new prime minister. It is reminiscent of Britain's June 2016 referendum on Brexit that passed on less than 40 per cent of the electorate voting in favour (since many

failed to vote).

Returning to the process of Brexit itself, however, there is an interesting vignette to learn from the sequence of events — May's various packages, Parliament's quick rejections, her refusal to give up and trudging back to the drawing board, returning to Parliament with calibrated versions, colleagues and Parliament continuing not to accept any, and at the end leaving her with few sympathisers. The cycle revealed a fundamental conviction and a fearless practice of democracy that stood out as an example across democracies of the world.

Few if any British friends or acquaintances have grasped this point. To some extent, this opacity could

be explained by a widely held view from the beginning of May's tenure as prime minister that she would have to resign before Brexit. That force gathered momentum from the second Parliament rejected her first package for Brexit. What observers missed was that the quintessential element of democracy, of the freedom to express one's individual view, was time and again proved to be possible in the UK's democracy.

This freedom transcended party Conservatives and Labour, as well

as others — lines, the Cabinet — some members agreeing, some defying, some resigning, and later even changing their views, rather than acquiescing to the prime minister. Members of Parliament formed cross-party groupings if they agreed on an identifiable route out. At least four major alternative packages were put up by them but rejected by fellow MPs. One conservative member, Sir Oliver Letwin, stood out in his attempt to constructively mesh together alternative views; even he did not succeed.

May could have walked out of Europe without a 'deal' but she did not, though she did verbalise "no

deal is better than a bad deal". May repeatedly tried to find a solution, though the wheels of democracy reigned to overwhelm her. Finally, on July 24, May departed 10 Downing Street and Boris Johnson moved in. The new prime minister quickly asserted his resolve to abandon Europe on October 30 unless Europe relented to his demands.

Where does the UK go from here? The American president encouraged Brexit strongly right from the start even mentioning, while May was still in charge, that Boris Johnson would be a good prime minister. Does that imply that sweet trade deals will be easily achieved between the two countries if Brexit occurs? Reflecting the US's prevailing trade practices, that is uncertain.

Britain has an uphill task in its international commercial affairs and domestic economic policy implementation. Domestically, Britain's post-War framework was founded on the 1949 Atlee Plan whose objective was to improve income distribution through government intervention in health, transport, education and housing. By 1980, it was the object of critique by economists such as Julian Legrand of the LSE for insufficient achievement. By 2017-18, the situation deteriorated further. These sectors are now crying for urgent attention.

They include the National Health Service where waiting months for a GP appointment is not unknown. Emergency corridors in hospitals are packed. Trains are frequently in disrepair. Education standards have languished or worsened. Public hous ing has been sold to private hands while private sector developers face stern governmental requirements to provide subsidised housing, resulting in sky-high private housing prices for the unsubsidised sub-sector, reflecting the inevitable transfer of burden from the subsidised to the unsubsidised.

In the end, will Brexit be worth it? I have written on the history, psychology and economic implications of Brexit (columns of August 23, 2016; September 6, 2016; and September 18, 2018). The history began with Elizabeth I whose small navy defeated the colossal Spanish Armada, breathing self-worth into the British. Despite continuing net immigration from Europe over the centuries, including in its royal family, Britain remained an island with a strong sense of identity. Since its joining Europe, the psychology and economics were driven by unbending Eurocrats in Britain's perception until it lost patience with Europe. It voted to leave, even though on a narrow margin, come what may.

The opportunity cost can be high. Internationally, the UK's free trade with Europe will cease. Britain will have to initiate long and arduous trade negotiations across the globe. It will have to use dexterity in selling its high technology at the best prices. It will have to raise itself from the bottom up to revive manufacturing and sell its products competitively while raising its youth out of subsidies and into productive employment. A tough journey awaits.

One lacuna remains, however. Prior to May's departure, a million-strong march against Brexit in London was ignored even as the march towards Brexit gathered speed. That is the only blip on democracy that did raise an eyebrow.

No longer in denial?

he first interview that a prime minister gives to the media is always closely watched and keenly analysed. Earlier this week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave his first interview after the formation of the new government to The Economic Times. It was significant that he chose an economic daily for his first interview even though the new government's preoccupation so far has been largely with its political agenda.

Just a few days before the interview, his government had withdrawn the special status for Jammu & Kashmir and effectively nullified the provisions

under Article 370 of the Constitution. His government had also reorganised the state into two Union Territories. An interview with ing in detail the government's perspective on the moves initiated in Jammu & Kashmir would have been more appropriate perhaps.

However, the reasons for the prime minister to speak to the readers of an economic newspaper and talk more about the economy were AK BHATTACHARYA no less urgent. The deteriorating

state of the economy and the largely negative response of India Inc and the markets to the government's first Budget on July 5 were certainly pressing reasons for addressing economic issues in an interview. After all, India's economic growth had decelerated to 5.8 per cent in the January-March guarter of 2019 and the prospects for the following quarter were worse. Exports growth continued to be a cause for concern, the global economic situation got more uncertain and the stock markets saw significant erosion in value, particularly after the Budget's proposals on a super-rich tax that also hit

large sections of foreign portfolio investors. The idea, therefore, seemed to be to dispel the growing feeling among business leaders that the Modi government was more focused on its political agenda and less concerned about the economy. A detailed interview on the government's approach to the economy, even though it did not address many specific concerns of industry, was considered an instrument for sending out a message that Mr Modi was adequately engaged with the economy and its problems. Jammu & Kashmir did figure in the interview, but it was completely overshadowed by economic issues.

Two messages from Mr Modi came out loud and clear —one for the bankers and the other for industry leaders. For bankers, the message was intended to reassure them that there would be no witch hunt for their lending decisions taken in good faith. The bankers were also urged to resume

> lending at rates that reflected the relatively low inflation level in the economy. Almost in a similar vein, Mr Modi asked industry leaders to make more investments and assured them that those who followed the law would receive the government's full support. He also talked about how his government took stringent action against dishonest tax officials.

Both the messages have come in the backdrop of reports of harassment of industrialists and bankers.

There have been reported instances of how the tax department has been harassing business leaders and traders to collect more taxes and meet their targets. Many public sector bankers have become wary of approving loans for fear of the law enforcement agencies filing cases against them. As a result, business leaders and traders are starved of resources that they could use for their ventures.

Mr Modi made two more specific assertions. He compared the individual's right to personal data as important as the right to private property. The statement does not address the larger privacy concerns over data, but is nevertheless a message to giant multinational digital companies that are upset over the Indian government's data localisation policy. The Indian government has been insisting that foreign companies dealing in data in India must locate their data within the Indian geography and, therefore, become subject to the Indian laws on data.

Foreign digital giants could not have missed the import of that statement from Mr Modi.

His second assertion pertained to the automobile industry, which has been shaken by a sharp fall in demand for passenger vehicles. At a time, when different government departments are setting different target dates for phasing out the traditional fossil fuel-based passenger vehicles and replacing them entirely with electric vehicles, Mr Modi announced that the country's market was large enough for the growth of both traditional vehicles (based on internal combustion engines) and electric vehicles. He suggested that both types of vehicles could co-exist.

There were many other reassuring statements from the prime minister like those on the importance of fiscal consolidation, further reforms in sectors such as banks, pensions, insurance and power, more relaxation in norms for foreign direct investment, and liberalisation of labour laws. His reference to the need for increased asset monetisation seemed to suggest that public sector disinvestment or eve strategic sales of government equity in public sector undertakings (PSU) would receive high priority in the coming days.

But his equal emphasis on asset recycling is indicative of the government moving ahead with the earlier idea of selling existing assets like tolled roads and bridges to the private sector and use the resources generated from such sales to finance fresh investments in various infrastructure projects. Those hoping that the government would loosen its purse strings and spend more on such infrastructure projects would be disappointed. But asset recycling as an instrument for raising fresh resources to reinvest in a wide range of infrastructure areas is an idea, which now seems to be receiving serious government consideration.

Whether all these reassuring messages for bankers, captains of industry and taxpayers will help change the mood in industry and the markets, only time will tell. And whether the economy benefits from such commitment on reforms in a host of sectors and other policy initiatives will depend on how soon and how effectively these ideas are actually implemented. But that the prime minister chose to speak on such issues through an interview in a newspaper shows that he may no longer be in denial. Mr Modi may have recognised that the Indian economy needs urgent attention.

Ambedkar's shifting legacy



BOOK REVIEW

ARCHIS MOHAN

hat is the representation of Dalits in India's newsrooms? I have seen quite a few in the half-adozen newsrooms in which I have worked in nearly two decades in journalism. They clean the toilets and are entrusted occasionally with the upkeep of in-house canteens. I cannot remember having had a Dalit journalist colleague. If there were any, they may have thought it wiser to keep their caste identity concealed and never spoke on Dalit-related issues.

Constitution-mandated quotas in government jobs and public education have ensured Dalit representation in the bureaucracy and publicly-funded academia in the last 70 years. As Dalit activist Chandrabhan Prasad has reminded us over the years, the post-1991 liberalisation helped Dalits become entrepreneurs or get jobs as skilled work force in the private sector. A Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), a Delhi-based think tank, survey in 2006 found negligible representation of Dalits in mainstream English and Hindi newspapers and news channels. The situation does not seem to have changed much in the past 13 years since.

The lack of Dalit representation in the media is at the heart of No Laughing Matter. The Ambedkar Cartoons 1932-1956. These were the crucial years in Ambedkar's public life and the book features 122 cartoons, arranged in seven chronological phases that collate how Ambedkar was depicted in cartoons in English language newspapers.

As the foreword by Suraj Yengde, a first generation Dalit scholar, points

out, Ambedkar in the cartoons of these years "is shown as a child, a crying baby, a recalcitrant hooligan, at times literally dwarfing him in the company of other nationalist leaders".

Mr Yengde, who has recently written Caste Matters, writes how Ambedkar is "shown shoeless (representative of the Mahar servanthood), as a woman prostituting her way up the social and political ladder", "a trouble-maker and at times as someone whose sole purpose is to disturb the fecundity of other Indian leaders."

Unnamati Syama Sundar spent over six years collecting these cartoons. The author has "taken to task" doyens of the Indian political cartooning fraternity of that era --Shankar, Enver Ahmed, Vasu, RK Laxman, Earan, R Banerji, Oommen, Bireshwar and Ravindra. According to the author, of all the cartoonists of that era, Shankar was the "most erudite" and seemed to have a "grudging admiration" for Ambedkar.

If Ambedkar was ridiculed or largely ignored in the media during his lifetime, it forgot him quickly enough when he died. As Mr. Sundar writes, during his own school days and growing up, he was familiar with Bapu (Mahatma Gandhi) and chacha (Jawaharlal Nehru), or even Karl Marx and Lenin, but never Ambedkar despite studying in a college meant for Dalit and tribal students, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) founder Kanshi Ram resurrected Ambedkar in the Dalit imagination in the 1980s. The V P. Singh government conferred on Ambedkar the Bharat Ratna posthumously and declared April 14, his birth anniversary, a gazetted holiday in 1990.

NEW DELHI DIARY

Ambedkarites are no fans of Gandhi, the communists and the Rashtriya Swavamsevak Sangh (RSS). There are those among Ambedkarites who believe the razing of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 was no coincidence. The date was the death anniversary of Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution. A couple of months before his death in 1956. Ambedkar rejected Hinduism and converted to Buddhism, along with half a million people, in Nagpur as a mark of protest against the caste system. This was to fulfil the vow he had taken over 20 years back, called the "Yeola declaration," that while he was born a Hindu. he would not die as one. The book has quite a few cartoons from that era

In his introduction, the author voices the Ambedkarite anger at Gandhi and communists. Few in the Ambedkarite movement forgive Gandhi for the Poona Pact of 1932, where he fasted to "blackmail" Ambedkar to agree to reject separate electorates for depressed classes. In 1933-34. possibly as a penance, Gandhi took a ninemonth tour against "untouchability" covering over 19,000 km to visit every province. In his speeches, he implored Hindus to banish "untouchability". Most in the Congress at the time felt Gandhi was wasting his time on a "religious issue" when the struggle to win independence should take priority.

The author has produced a cartoon from an edition of the Organiser, a publication inspired by RSS ideology, to underscore the irony of the Sangh lately publishing special editions on Ambedkar and its efforts to appropriate the Dalit leader's legacy, On February 12, 1951, the Organiser published a cartoon to ridicule the Hindu Code Bill. The Bill's prime backers were Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru, and among other things, it banned polygamy. The cartoon depicted Ambedkar and a woman on a donkey, riding towards a precipice with Nehru holding a banner that states "all clear". "Ambedkar rides an ass of a Bill," the caption stated.

When several Constituent Assembly members started calling Ambedkar a "modern Manu", the Hindu lawgiver —rather incongruously since Ambedkar had burnt the Manu Smriti, -an article in the Organiser termed it "an instance of depicting a Lilliput as a Brobdingnag". "It borders on ridicule [sic] to put Dr. Ambedkar on par [sic] with the learned and god-like Manu".

By the 1970s, Madhukar Dattatraya 'Balasaheb' Deoras, the third RSS chief, included Ambedkar in the Sangh pantheon of epratahsmaraniva, or those remembered at the daybreak prayer, and the *Organiser* calls him a champion of Hinduism. As the author points out Hinduism is "a religion he held in scorn, while he did not relent in trying to save savarana Hindus from themselves". "At least an ass can count on consistency as a virtue," the author adds.

NO LAUGHING MATTER: The Ambedkar Cartoons 1932–1956 Edited and selected by Unnamati

Syama Sundar Navayana Pages: 407; Price: ₹599



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

statistic contradicts

the expert

assessment that

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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 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

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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

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS

JAPAN-KOREA TRADE DISPUTE

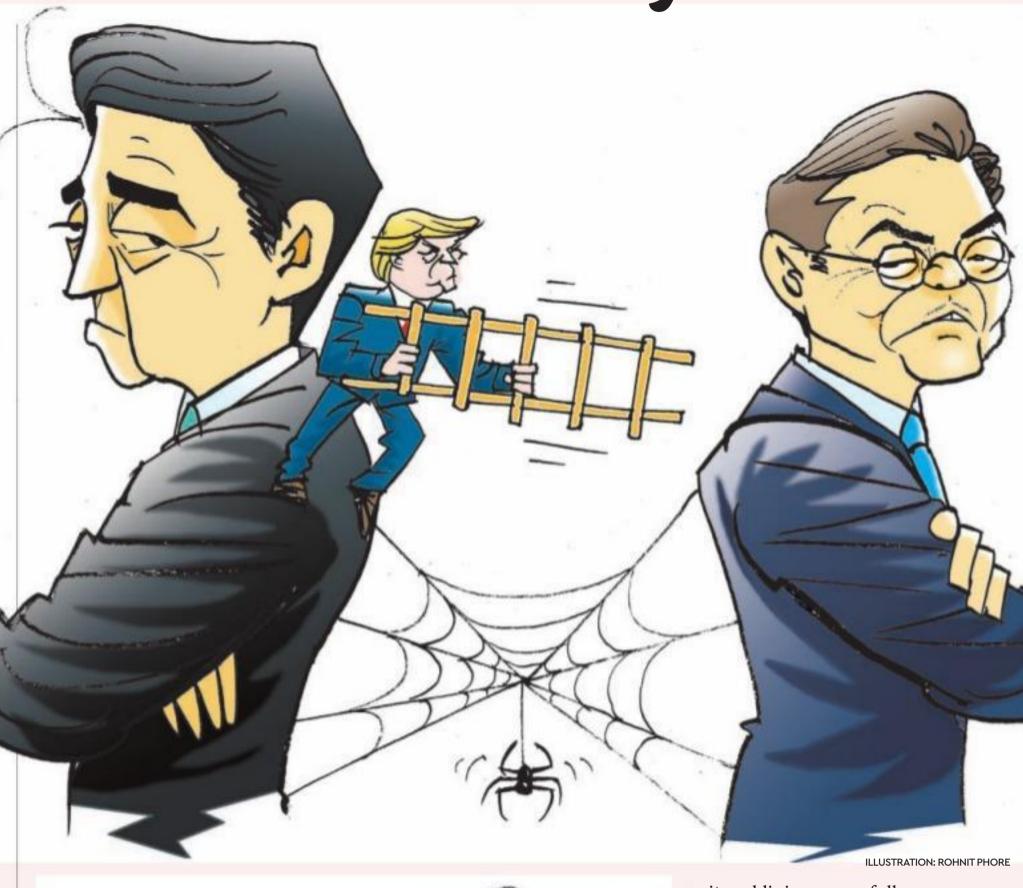
Japan seeks to emerge from the shadow of history

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

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

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

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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

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 ardu-

has implications on the security of the

ous 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-

Deposits grow in small savings

(Securities issued against small savings; ₹ cr)

twisting, and so is history.

DATA DRIVE

Poor transmission external benchmarks appears to have HILE THE RESERVE BANK of India has cut the repo rate by been taken off the table. 35 basis points—the first cut Banks have not been able to reduce their lending because of slowing

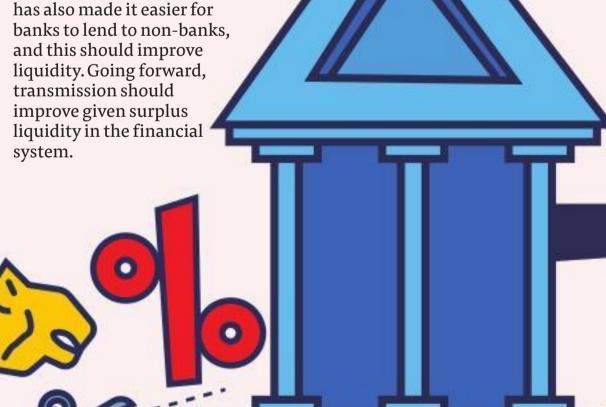
of this magnitude—to 5.4% (the repo rate is now at a nine-year low), the onus is now on banks to cut their lending rates to spur economic activity. In response to the policy, the country's largest lender, the State Bank of India, has reduced the Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) across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

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

floating rate loans to the

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%.

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





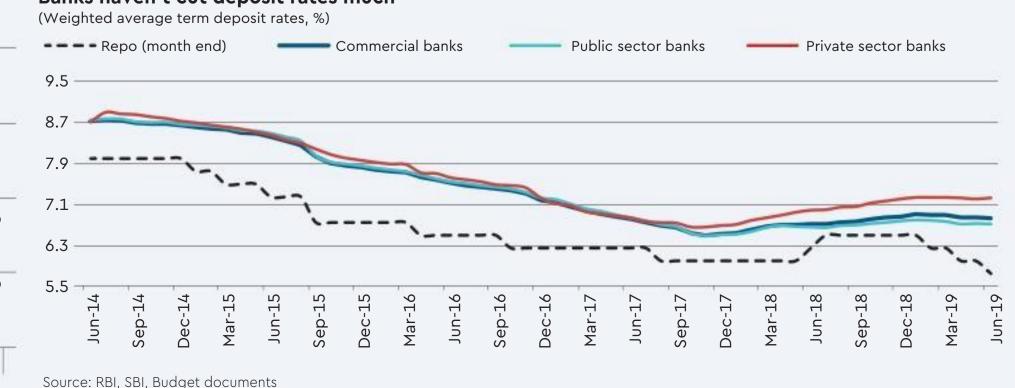
... but transmission remains weak (SBI one-year MCLR; %, 2019) 8.6 8.55 8.55 8.55 8.5 8.45 8.4 8.25 8.3 8.2 10 Feb 10 Mar 10 Apr 10 May 10 July 10 Aug

Banks haven't cut deposit rates much (Weighted average term deposit rates, %)

Deposit growth slower than credit growth (% chg, y-o-y, 2019)

press.com





Source: RBI, SBI, Budget documents

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

VODKA GOES WELL WITH A WINTERY PERSPECTIVE.

— MICHÈLE BERNSTEIN

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FACE THE DELUGE

Floods in different states raise questions about understanding of monsoon, preparedness to deal with rivers in spate

HE SOUTHWEST MONSOON has left a trail of destruction this year. Nearly 500 people have reportedly lost their lives in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Assam and Bihar. In Kerala, which experienced its worst deluge in a century last year, more than 80 people have lost their lives in five days since August 8. In neighbouring Karnataka, the toll stands at 48. Northern Karnataka, which was facing drought like conditions in May, is now under water. According to Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, the state is witnessing its worst floods in 45 years. In Maharashtra, more than 40 people have lost their lives in Sangli and Kolhapur districts, while the Marathwada and Vidharbha regions are reeling under a drought.

The floods this year have drawn attention to the changing dynamics of the southwest monsoon. Take the case of Kerala. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data, the state recorded a more than 25 per cent deficit in rainfall between June 1 and August 7. But Kerala has nearly made up the deficit in the past five days. Palakkad district has received 80 per cent excess rainfall after August 8, Wayanad and Thrissur have also experienced sharp departures from normal rainfall, with an excess of nearly 40 per cent. Similarly, on August 8, Karnataka received nearly five times the rainfall the state receives in a day. Kodagu, the state's worst flood-hit district, received 460 per cent above normal rainfall between August 5 and 11. In fact, monsoon rains in the past five years have followed a pattern: A few days of intense rainfall sandwiched between dry spells.

The focus this year, as in the past, has been on providing relief to the flood-affected. But questions must also be asked about the ways states prepare for, and deal with, floods. The vagaries of weather, for example, demand cooperation between states that share a river basin. This year, Maharashtra and Karnataka bickered over opening the gates of the Almatti dam on the river Krishna. By the time the two states agreed over the amount of water to be discharged from the dam's reservoirs, the damage was already done. The floods also drive home the urgency of focusing on nature's mechanisms of resilience against extreme weather events. Policymakers and planners have shown little inclination to place wetlands, natural sponges that soak up the rainwaters, at the centre of flood control projects. Flood governance in the country has placed inordinate emphasis on embankments. But the floods in Bihar and Assam showed — for the umpteenth time — that these structures are no security against swollen rivers. Of course, what is true for the Western Ghats states may not hold for Assam and Bihar. But the message from the floods this year is clear: There is a need to revisit the understanding of the monsoon and find ways to deal with its fury.

In China's court

How it addresses protesters' escalating demands for autonomy and democracy in Hong Kong will be a critical test

VER NEARLY THREE months, the protests in Hong Kong have evolved from a movement with a specific thrust — against a proposed law that would allow people accused of certain crimes to be extradited to the Chinese mainland — to a wider expression of public anger at the Chinese state's curbs on democracy and the city's special status within the People's Republic. For its part, the Chinese government's patience with the financial nerve centre coming to a standstill appears to be wearing thin. Over the weekend, the spokesperson for the Chinese government's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs office said that with Hong Kong protestors turning "radical" and using "dangerous tools to attack police officers", "the first signs of terrorism were beginning to appear".

The move towards labelling pro-democracy protestors as anarchists, radicals or terrorists by the Chinese government holds, for many, a disturbing augury. Since they began in June, the protests in Hong Kong have consistently been compared to the 1989 demonstrations in mainland China, which culminated in the Tiananmen Square massacre. With the unprecedented cancellation of all flights from Hong Kong airport on Monday, the movement now threatens to bring economic activity in the global financial hub to a standstill. The protests at the airport were in response to the partial blinding of a protester by a projectile used by the police, among other incidents of alleged brutality. Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive, has warned of the protests going "down the path of no return", hinting at an imminent confrontation with the Chinese authorities.

What is at stake in Hong Kong is the adaptability of the Chinese state apart from its moral, ideological and administrative ability to keep the promise it made to Hong Kong. In 1997, it was decided that China would be "one country, with two systems", and Hong Kong would continue to enjoy its autonomy. That promise has been eroded, for example, by refusing to allow direct elections for the chief executive's post. Despite China's accession to the original demand — scrapping of the extradition law — the protests show no signs of fizzling out. With China's rise as an economic and military superpower, and with the surveillance technology at the state's disposal, repression through coercive might is certainly an option. But brutality as policy triggers retaliation: After Hong Kong police used tear gas and rubber bullets to quell the protesters, they responded by the sporadic throwing of bricks and acts of vandalism. A country with superpower ambitions, which is negotiating massive international investments through the Belt and Road Initiative, can ill-afford to look incapable of delivering on the promise of federalism and autonomy.

ONE BOTTLE VODKA

A group of Ukranian and UK researchers has spun off the spirit of Chernobyl, but Russians may have mixed feelings

F YOU WANT to curl up with a copy of the Nobel Prize-winning Voices from Chernobyl in one hand, leaving the other free to curl itself around something refreshing, your time begins now. Atomik vodka is not on the market yet, but it will be. Only one bottle of this "artisanal moonshine" exists, and currently the only way to consume it is to admire photographs of it tastefully laid on a bed of hay in a wooden box. But the company that distilled it expects it to attract fearless drinkers everywhere, and will plough back the profits into the welfare of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, the circle with a radius of 30 km around the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, made off-limits after the meltdown of 1986.

Atomik vodka is distilled from grain and water sourced from the disaster zone, and strikes out beyond the brief of a British-Ukranian project to study the uptake of radioactivity by living systems from scorched earth. Actually, it pushes the principle of the experiment to the limit, because a distillate can be assumed to contain a greater concentration of radioactive material than the feedstock. But Atomik vodka is safe to drink, and has been okayed by the Ukranian authorities, in whose territory the exclusion zone falls.

The safety rating of the drink would not deter the adventurous, who are attracted by labels. Spirit-sellers cottoned on to this long ago in the age of exploration, when Caribbean rum was sold under the colourful name of "kill-devil". The world is going to love the dangerous glamour of Atomik, but what of Russia, the mother lode of vodka? Chernobyl is still in their race memory, and something atomic just went bang in the north, killing five scientists and maybe creating a mini-Chernobyl. The Russians may have mixed feelings about Atomik.

The Constitution test



India has a constitution but Centre's move on Kashmir poses questions about constitutionalism

Faizan Mustafa and Jagteshwar Singh Sohi

IN FRAMING A government which is to be administered by men over men, the greatest difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed, and next, oblige it to control itself. The main purpose of the constitution is constitutionalism, the concept of limited powers. Constitutions are a social compact between the state and people. We need to ensure that the exercise of governmental powers should be controlled in order that it is not destructive of the values it was intended to promote. If the last century saw the death of God, currently we are experiencing the death of constitutionalism. The sudden abrogation of Article 370, like the imposition of Emergency in 1975, is nothing short of the sad demise of constitutionalism.

All societies are by nature authoritarian, and governments even more so, particularly if they have massive majorities in Parliament. Today most western constitutions, including that of the US, are only ostensibly about rights and limitations; in fact, they are about power and control. Article 370 was a shell that had long been emptied. The successive Presidential Orders issued under Article 370, in fact, gave special status to the Centre. So, what has been gained by its abrogation is not clear.

The state is a necessary evil and an instrument of exploitation in the hands of those in power. It can be termed as the march of God on earth when it operates within its allotted sphere and upholds people's liberties.

Constitutionalism is the anti-thesis of authoritarianism. Having a constitution does not mean that we have constitutionalism as well. Several communist and Islamic countries had constitutions without constitutionalism. Hitler, too, had the Weimar Constitution. Constitutionalism tries to limit the power of constitutional authorities through doctrines such as rule of law which, as opposed to rule by law, ensures equality before law, equal protection of laws to all and non-arbitrary exercise of power. To ensure that too much power is not concentrated in one hand or organ, we have the doctrine of separation of powers between the three organs of state — the legislature, executive and judiciary. Distribution of powers ensures that the Centre does not become too powerful and power is shared with the states. Under asymmetric federalism, special status is given to some states due to peculiar historical and cultural factors to limit the power of the Centre in those states. All fundamental rights are negative restrictions on the power of the state.

Federalism is the basic structure of the Constitution and it means sharing of power between the Centre and states. Since the Kashmir assembly would have opposed bifurcation of the state into two UTs, we did not hold assembly elections along with Lok Sabha polls. Now currently the state is under President's rule, and Parliament has exercised the powers of the assembly. This means we have gone against the spirit of the Constitution and

made it a plaything.

As the state enjoys monopoly of power, the greatest danger to fundamental rights comes from the state. Kashmiris, rather than getting personal liberties and freedom under Article 21 and freedom of speech and movement under Article 19, are experiencing detention and censorship. Even the Supreme Court does not see any urgency to guarantee these fundamental freedoms and has asked to wait for two weeks. Are we back to ADM Jabalpur (1975)? After the 44th constitutional amendment of 1978, rights under Article 21 are non-derogable and cannot be denied even during emergencies.

The opening words of our Constitution are "we the people", not "we the government of India". As the people's representatives too may go against the Constitution, we have given the power of judicial review to constitutional courts to strike down a law if it violates the constitution and a constitutional amendment if it impinges on its "basic structure".

The Instrument of Accession signed by Raja Hari Singh on October 26, 1947 and accepted by India on October 27, 1947 with a promise of plebiscite, was an exercise of limiting powers of the central government in respect of J&K. The framers of the Constitution incorporated these restrictions on the Centre's powers in Article 370. Article 370 thus limited the power of the Centre by laying down that in extending central laws on matters provided in the Instrument of Accession, mere consultation with the government of J&K would be enough but on matters not conceded to the Centre by the Instrument of Accession, concurrence of the state government will be required. Article 370(3) further laid down that the President may, by order, modify this Article or order that it will cease to operate. But such an order could be issued only with the concurrence of the constituent assembly of J&K. After the dissolution of Kashmir's constituent assembly on January 25, 1957, this option was no more available to the president. Ideally, the matter should have first been referred to the apex court for advisory opinion.

We have now used Article 370 to insert a new clause in Article 367 and then invoked this clause to convert the constituent assembly of Kashmir into a legislative assembly of a Union Territory. This is a blot on constitutionalism. Similarly, sounding a death knell to all principles of representative democracy, we have treated the governor as the government of the state. While governments represent the popular will, it is an open secret that governors are agents of the Centre.

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The President of India, too, like Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad, has not kept in mind that he had taken an oath under Article 60 "to preserve, protect and defend the constitution". He should have at least consulted the Attorney General and other experts before signing the orders and assenting to the J&K State Reorganisation Bill. Zail Singh did not sign the Postal Bill even though Rajiv Gandhi had 400 plus MPs in Lok Sabha.

Nobody has even bothered to examine the delicate international law angle in this controversy. The right of internal self-determination cannot be claimed by a minority in a country. But the denial of internal political freedoms may lead to a claim of external selfdetermination by secessionist elements. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in its 2018 and 2019 reports did recommend to us to "fully respect the right of self-determination of the people as protected under international law". Keeping the intricate international dimensions in mind, PM Modi in his address to the nation spoke like a true statesman and assured Kashmiris about their political rights in electing their representatives.

The BJP has argued that Article 370 was temporary though the Supreme Court did not say so. Unlike Article 369 and SC/ST reservation in Parliament and assemblies, it did not mention any time limit. Having abrogated Article 370, we should forcefully defend our action. Our courts can examine the constitutionality of this abrogation but we cannot permit any other country to raise this issue. Gandhiji said the ends do not justify the means. Even conceding that the time for the abrogation of Article 370 had come, it could have been done in a more democratic and humane manner.

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



LAW AND INJUSTICE

Instead of a separate law on triple talaq, Centre should have framed a just law for all

RAZIA PATEL

THE MUSLIM WOMEN (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill 2019, now a law, has been hailed as a victory for gender justice by Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and other supporters of the Bill. The question is: Will this law really provide justice to Muslim women? To answer it, we need to inspect the Bill's content as well as the intention with which it has been brought in.

The issue of triple talaq is definitely real in India. For decades, many Muslim women activists have been engaged in a struggle to change discriminatory family laws. The agenda had been holistic, covering not only one form of talaq but traditions like halala and polygamy and demanding a more comprehensive "gender just law". The intention was to bring Muslim women into the gamut of secular family laws, which are applicable to all other women from all religions in India. However, the current Act is a far cry from such an objective.

The Bill has many flaws. Its first provision says: "Any pronouncement of talaq by a Muslim husband upon his wife, by words either spoken or written or in electronic form or in any other manner whatsoever shall be void and illegal." In fact, such a practice had alA common gender-just law could be a solution, rather than separate religionspecific laws. The BJP has batted for a common civil code since decades. Ironically, when the time came, they opted for a sharia-

based law.

ready been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in its judgment on August 21, 2017. The SC had sought legislation in support of its judgment and the law would have been sufficient with just this one section. However, the government has included unwarranted criminal provisions in the Bill.

The next provision talks about punishment of the husband with imprisonment up to three years and a fine. This is, in itself, a contradiction. If triple talaq has no legal validity (by virtue of the SC verdict), how can you punish it? Also, the personal laws of all communities are civil matters. This is the first time that criminal provisions are being laid out in matters of marriage and divorce.

The next provision talks about the husband providing a subsistence allowance. How can a jailed person provide money? Further, the woman in a case of triple talaq, will receive no support from her in-laws, since she will be seen as being responsible for putting her husband in jail.

There are existing laws which protect Hindu women and those from other communities in cases of domestic violence. Instead of this new law, in case a husband insists on triple talaq by unlawful means, he could have been booked under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. A common genderjust law could be a solution, rather than separate religion-specific laws. The BJP has batted for a common civil code since decades. Ironically, when the time came, they opted for a sharia-based law.

Currently, there is a sense of apprehension in the Muslim community, given the backdrop of mob lynching and the talk by political leaders of imposing the National Register of Citizens not only in the Northeast but across the country. The fear is that the triple talag law will be used as a tool to harass men from the community.

The way in which the Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha is also a concern. Many members who opposed it in the debate helped the BJP by remaining absent during voting. This was irresponsible and shows apathy towards issues concerning Muslims.

This law will only serve the political purpose of the BJP. Affected Muslim women will continue to suffer. In fact, the law will add to their suffering.

> Patel is chairperson, Muslim Mahila Sanvidhan Hakka Parishad

AUGUST 14, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIAN EXPRESS

MORVI FLOOD DEATHS THOUSANDS ARE BELIEVED to have perished in the industrial township of Morvi and nearby villages in Rajkot district, but the state administration is uncommunicative on the situation in the disaster-hit area. Bodies of the flood victims are submerged under debris which it might take a long time to remove. Vultures were seen swarming the streets, which were littered with corpses. According to a young man returning from Morvi, a hospital with 200 patients and doctors and the police quarters were washed away. Newspapers carried reports with estimates of deaths ranging from 1,000 to 25,000, but were unable to get details about

the situation as the teleprinter communication with Rajkot remained cut off.

BSF SHOOT ORDER THE BORDER SECURITY Force, which is policing the Indo-Bangladesh border is under orders to shoot at sight if the non-Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh carry out their threatened long march and enter Indian territory tomorrow, according to reports from border areas. The BSF has made all arrangements to meet any eventuality, the reports added. The West Bengal government home secretary, Rathin Sen Gupta, told reporters that "the entry of the marchers into Indian

territory will have to be stopped and the BSF

will take necessary action."

No RBI strikes

THE UNION CABINET decided to repeal the controversial ordinance relating to strike by Reserve Bank employees. It allowed another ordinance impounding the compulsory deposits for one year to lapse. With the prorogation of the last session of Parliament, these ordinances would have lapsed even otherwise. However, with today's decision, the new coalition government has allayed the apprehensions voiced by the leftist parties. The Cabinet has authorised Finance minister, H N Bahuguna, to discuss the CDS matter with trade union representatives.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Reading the slowdown

To arrest it, a coordinated policy response, addressing both structural and cyclical factors, is needed



THERE ARE CURRENTLY three issues that beg answers from policy makers. First, what are the reasons for the current demand slowdown? Second, whether the current slowdown is structural or cyclical and third, whether banks have stopped lending and are causing a disruption in demand. Let us address them one by one, in the reverse order.

The slowdown in demand is a fact, but the consensus that banks are not extending enough credit to help us navigate through the current slowdown is misplaced. This is a false narrative as Economics 101 suggests a bi-directional causality between economic growth and credit off-take. Thus, a growth slowdown will percolate into a credit slowdown and not vice-versa. However, let us momentarily digress from Econ 101 and just validate whether banks are extending credit, particularly retail credit, as we are in the midst of a consumer slowdown, if we go by indicators like car sales.

Here are the numbers. For the three year period ended FY19, incremental bank credit to the economy was at Rs 20.3 lakh crore, of which agriculture received Rs 2.3 lakh crore, services Rs 8.8 lakh crore, retail/personal received Rs 8.3 lakh crore (housing was at Rs 4.1 lakh crore) and industry got Rs 1.5 lakh crore. In the comparable period, GDP expanded by Rs 36.5 lakh crore. In Q1FY20, retail loans have continued to expand at Rs 46,000 crore (bank credit, though, has shown a de-growth of Rs 1.3 lakh crore, led by industry) even though some segments of retail loans like vehicles have indeed registered a negative growth revealing lack of demand and other cyclical issues afflicting the auto sector.

What does all this imply? Incremental bank credit doubled the pace in FY19 as compared to FY17. The slowdown in bank credit, if any, is primarily the result of credit to industry, that first declined in FY17, barely managed a positive number in FY18, but has somehow picked up pace in FY19 (ten times larger vis-à-vis FY18). This is the result of several structural reforms and disruptions, apart from deleveraging and asset quality issues beginning in FY16. It is thus foolhardy to blame bank credit for the current demand disruption. It is, rather, the lack of demand for bank credit which is causing the slow-

This brings us to the first and second question of the reasons behind the current demand slowdown and how to label it: Structural or cyclical or both? This labeling is important, as a structural slowdown would imply macro reforms, ignoring business cycles, while a cyclical slowdown would mean unleashing counter cyclical policies. We believe the current slowdown is a combination

of both structural and cyclical. First, what are the structural factors that might have resulted in the current demand deceleration? We believe that the most crucial factor that is reinforcing the demand slowdown is slow growth of both corporate (a proxy for urban wages) and rural wages. The corporate wage (based on financial data of 4,000 to 5,000 companies) which used to grow in high double digits (peaked at 21.4 per cent in FY09) post the crisis is now down to single digit growth, as corporates are more conscious of costs in the midst of a massive deleveraging cycle. In a similar vein, rural wages have also declined from double digit growth rates (peaked at 27.7 per cent in FY14) growth till FY15 to less than five per cent in the last three fiscals. Clearly, this high growth phase was unsustainable (a deadly cocktail of wage-inflation nexus). However, the bottom line is the subsequent decline in wage growth and structural changes have resulted in stagnating per capita income growth (in

C R Sasikumar WAGE & INCOME GROWTH (%, YOY) SECTOR WISE SHARE (%) IN INCREMENTAL BANK CREDIT DURING FY 17-19: RS. 20.3 LAKH CRORE

30.0 7.0 6.0 25.0 **5.0** 20.0 4.0 15.0 3.0 10.0 2.0 5.0 1.0 0.0 Real Per capita Income (RHS) **Rural Wage**

7.5 Industry 10.9 Agri & Allied 39.7 Retail loans of 41.9 which housing: 20% Services

real terms) and hence to keep the consumption expenditure at the same level, household savings also declined.

Of particular interest is the decline in household savings. Our research shows that this decline is attributed to current high real interest rate (RIR), stagnating per capita income (after touching a peak in FY17) and dependency ratio. In particular, the high RIR has two opposing effects on private savings. The first is the substitution effect, in which savings increase as consumption is postponed to the future, and the second is the wealth effect in which savers increase current consumption at the expense of saving. According to our results, the wealth effect in India dominates the substitution effect resulting in a savings decline. The higher real interest rate tends to increase the lifetime income of lenders and thereby encourages consumption and discourages savings. However, such an increase in consumption is being outstripped by other factors that are inhibiting its growth like per capita income.

Clearly, there are a host of structural factors that are holding back current consumption. A decline in wage growth resulting in lower savings is a result of conscious policy decisions to correct macro imbalances. But it has resulted in consumption taking a hit. It is naïve to say that there are no cyclical

factors. For example, to solve the NBFC crisis

First, what are the structural factors that might have resulted in the current demand deceleration? We believe that the most crucial factor that is reinforcing the demand slowdown is slow growth of both corporate (a proxy for urban wages) and rural wages. The corporate wage (based on financial data of 4,000 to 5,000 companies) which used to grow in high double digits (peaked at 21.4 per cent in FY09) post the crisis is now down to single digit growth, as corporates are more conscious of costs in the midst of a massive

deleveraging cycle.

confidence building counter-cyclical measures. In a similar vein, private investment is currently a significant laggard in total investment. The share of the private sector has declined from 50 per cent during the 2007-14 period to 30 per cent during 2015-19 in new projects investments (in value-terms). A possible increase in capacity utilisation (currently at 76.1 per cent) can happen only if we simultaneously address the sector-specific issues in order to boost demand of bank credit. One such sector is the MSME, where delayed payments of receivables for MSMEs need to be monitored. Similarly, to improve transmission in MCLR, both the asset and liability side of bank balance sheets need to move simultaneously, and that is already happening.

and the recent tax imbroglio, we need more

We must end on an optimistic note though. India can become a \$5 trillion economy by FY25, based on an assumed 12 per cent nominal GDP growth and a five per cent depreciation in the rupee. Remember, China doubled its GDP in four years and quadrupled it in eight years. India remains a promising growth story — taking continuously shorter spans to add each subsequent trillion dollars of GDP. For this to continue, a coordinated policy response, both cyclical and structural, is a must.

The writer is group chief economic adviser, State Bank of India. Views are personal

possible possible" and "fulfilled the expec-

tations of crores of Indians".

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Indian excesses have been continuing against the Kashmiris for decades, but many economically powerful Muslim states - particularly the petrodollar-fuelled Arab sheikhdoms - have rarely shown an inclination to highlight Kashmir's plight internationally." -DAWN

Call of the wild

PM Modi's 'Man vs Wild' appearance had a deeper plan, will benefit Uttarakhand tourism



Anil Baluni

THE LATEST EPISODE of Discovery's popular series Man vs Wild, hosted by Bear Grylls, presented an altogether unseen facet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vivid personality. The nonchalant manner in which PM Modi enjoyed his adventurous trip sans any security cover, that too deep inside the world-famous Jim Corbett National Park, left millions of viewers of this superhit series in India — and across the world — spellbound.

But people who have had a personal acquaintance with Modi know well that the adventure show was not a regular television programme – some deep thought process must have gone behind its conceptualisation. Whatever Modi does is not without a purpose: His real plans behind this mega show will be revealed in the months to come. But one thing is obvious: When Modi decided to appear with Grylls, the idea must have been much beyond sharing his personal experiences and his brush with Mother Nature.

The timing of the show is itself significant, as the entire world today is trying to find a way to stop global warming, and save the earth's species from extinction. And we have seen how our prime minister has led the world from the front in this realm during the Paris climate change summit in 2015.

Through Grylls' show, he once again tried to underline how Indians are intertwined with nature, and are deeply in love with Mother Earth. He explained to the world the Indian philosophy of "vasudhaiva kutumbakam" (the world is one family); and, how we believe in "sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niraamayaah, sarve bhadraanni pashyantu, maa kashchit dukhha bhagbhavet" (May all become happy, may all be free from illness/ May all see what is auspicious, may no one suffer). We all pray to Mother Nature.

Let's not forget that when the Lok Sabha polls were coming to an end, PM Modi's visit to Kedarnath, a place which is very close to his heart and which he has never missed a chance to visit year after year, was much talked about. When the holy shrine bore the brunt of devastating floods in 2013, he was shaken to the core. Since then he has made every effort to ensure that Kedarnath's glory is restored. Today, the entire Kedarnath valley, particularly the shrine, has virtually risen from the ashes due to the determined efforts of Modi.

The regular visits Modi has made have not only speeded up the restoration and rebuilding of Kedarnath, but have also restored the faith of the masses. Gradually, the entire shrine complex has regained its

grandeur under the guidance of the prime minister. This has also led to an influx of visitors to Kedarnath and other old shrines in Uttarakhand. This year a record 11 lakh visitors are likely to pay their obeisance at Kedarnath before the holy shrine closes for winter. This number — it used to be around seven lakh in earlier years — has seen a remarkable increase. Faith has prevailed against all odds.

One interesting aspect related to Modi's visit to Kedarnath is about his stay at a stone cave where he meditated. Today, I am flooded with queries from across India, and also abroad, from people showing keen desire to stay in the "Modi cave" - the name it has got after the prime minister's stay — for meditation. And all this is due to Modi's charisma.

A similar effect is likely to be witnessed in Jim Corbett after the airing of the Man vs Wild episode. The transformation of Uttarakhand from the land of religious tourism into a haven for adventure and nature tourism is inevitable. Uttarakhand will soon become the most sought-after destination for adventure and wildlife. We will see, in the months to come, Jim Corbett National Park taking a big leap in the tourism sector in India and abroad.

Modi has a unique way of making things work. One of the shining examples of it is the world's tallest statue, "Statue of Unity", dedicated to the "Iron Man of India", Bharat Ratna Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, which has come up at a remote location in Gujarat. Now, every month, lakhs of visitors are travelling to this place which has led to a complete transformation of the region: This has given a fillip to the local economy and created new avenues for jobs.

It is with this extraordinary vision that Modi works towards the development of society. So, when he set a target of developing all-weather roads in the difficult terrains of the Uttarakhand Himalayas in record time, and decided to invest Rs10,000 crore to construct 570 km of roads under the Bharatmala project connecting bordering and remote areas of Uttarakhand to the national mainstream, his vision to ensure speedy development of Uttarakhand was crystal clear. Today, the Uttarakhand hills are being connected through the rail network also.

Since I belong to Uttarakhand, I have been witness to the transformation that the state is undergoing under the direct supervision of Modi: You have to visit the state to experience these changes. For Uttarakhand and its people, Modi is a true "vikas purush", a "karamyogi". I firmly believe that what is true for Uttarakhand is true for the rest of the country. Since 2014, India has been undergoing social and economic transformation. Time and again Modi has broken myths, walked on the path his predecessors shunned, and taken decisions which were considered impossible. India, and the world, are fast realising the mettle Modi is made of.

> The writer is head, BJP media cell, and Rajya Sabha MP

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IN DEFENCE OF 370

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Creation of order' (IE, August 12). The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954 has been amended multiple times. The spirit of Article 370 was more honoured in the breach than in observance. The mainstream leadership in the state did cultivate a psychological barrier in the mind of the people, but similar emotive appeals have been made by other regional parties as well to foster their political space vis-avis national politics.

Sudip Kumar Dev, Kolkata

HARD TEST AHEAD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The external test' (IE, August 13). New Delhi has to plan an effective strategy to counter all the allegations of Pakistan on Kashmir. It has to firmly convince international organisations that all allegations of Pakistan on Kashmir are baseless. The external test is a tough challenge for the government. It will require the overnment to pursue a firm stand regarding the integrity of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sanjay Chawla, Amritsar

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'The External test' (August 13). With Pakistan upping the ante and threatening to move UNSC, India cannot afford to dismiss the issue without complete damage control exercise. Article 370 at best was a temporary provision and the government has every right to change it. India must understand that the task of maintaining peace in Kashmir and bringing the average Kashmiri into mainstream India will be a challenge. The success of the abrogation of the

Article will hinge over it. Bholey Bhardwaj, Mumbai

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

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CONG RESET BUTTON

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Ringing in the old' (IE, August 13). When Rahul Gandhi declared that none of the Nehru-Gandhi family members would take up his role after his resignation, we thought that at last there would be a change of guard: A non-Gandhi would be at the helm. However, once more, after being at the helm for 19 years, Sonia Gandhi was given this responsibility. Politically and otherwise, things have changed drastically in the last few years. It will be a litmus test for Sonia Gandhi, especially in the forthcoming state elections. Whether she would be able to hold her workers and leaders together would be keenly watched.

Bal Govind, Noida

VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

REMEMBERING SUSHMA

ORGANISER AND *Panchajanya* remember senior BJP leader and former foreign minister Sushma Swaraj, who died on August 6. Both the publications have multiple pieces on her. In *Organiser*, editor Prafulla Ketkar writes that Swaraj was "not just in appearance, but even in qualities she was was Bhartiya womanhood personified". He writes: "A typical saree wearing, relatively short with big Bindi and strong Sindoor, (Swaraj) proudly carried her Bhartiya identity at global stage."

In *Panchajanya*, editor Hitesh Shankar writes that she was "undefeated". In the backdrop of her death on the same day as the government read down Article 370, Shankar says that Swaraj's "life journey

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came to an end as the promise was fulfilled". He mentions that the promise of abrogating Article 370 was "in the hearts of its cadre, in the roots of the party" since the days of Jana Sangh.

SETTLING KASHMIR

THE EDITORIAL in Organiser on the reorganisaton of the the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state says that though the RSS and BJP "since Jana Sangh days", and "many nationalists were clear that Article 370 and its misuse in the form of 35A... are at the root of most of the problems in J&K, larger social awareness was not there". "Multiple frauds at electoral and Constitutional level were incurred in the name of the 'special status' given by the temporary provision" and that "barring a few familes", the abrogation is the "real swaraj" from the "72 years of misgovernance; the freedom from election rigging, discrimination, infiltration and underdevelopment". It adds that the work of "giving a greater touch" to all the people of the two new UTs is the "real task at hand".

Another article says the "onus is on the

government to 'win the hearts and minds of all Kashmir Muslims". The article addresses Kashmir's Muslims. It says: "Wake up, oh the blind men of Hindostan! Particularly those cronies belonging to the Congress Party Dynasty! Deradicalisation (sic) of Kashmiri Muslims is a Himalayan challenge. No one can deny the mood of the nation and also those in the Jammu and Ladakh regions, applauding the bold decision by Modi-led NDA government." It says Kashmiri Muslims must "understand that they should not allow Srinagar and other towns and villages (from Paradise to Hell) to undergo the same fate as infrastructure damage in 16 towns and cities across Syria". It also adds: "At the same time, Kashmiri Muslims must also realise that India is unlike the US. Kashmir is also unlike Afghanistan. Indian troops are not aliens like the US troops in the Middle East. India's patience, punishment withstanding capability and resilience is far greater than Pakistan and its cronies in India."

Panchajanya claims that "removal of Article 370 was the demand of the times" and the Modi government has made the "im-

REDEFINING SWARAJ THE ORGANISER Independence Day special issue has an essay by RSS General Secretary

Manmohan Vaidya on the organisation being "nothing but the execution of the visions for revitalising spirituality and society before political change exhibited in the writing of Swami Vivekanand, Rabindranath Tagore and B R Ambedkar". This has been the "soul of Bhartiya nationalism" and the reason why "RSS finds resonance across the regions". Vaidya writes that RSS founder KB Hedgewar believed that "for freedom to be realised it was essential that mental, spiritual and social awakening needs to take place alongside". Tagore, he says, wrote in "Swadeshi Samaj" that a "welfare state is not our Bhartiya tradition". Vaidya blames the welfare state for the spread of Christianity and Islam during the crusades to lands where

people were dependent on the state.

Compiled by Krishn Kaushik

14 EXPLAINED

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2019

EXPLAINED

#ExpressExplained

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

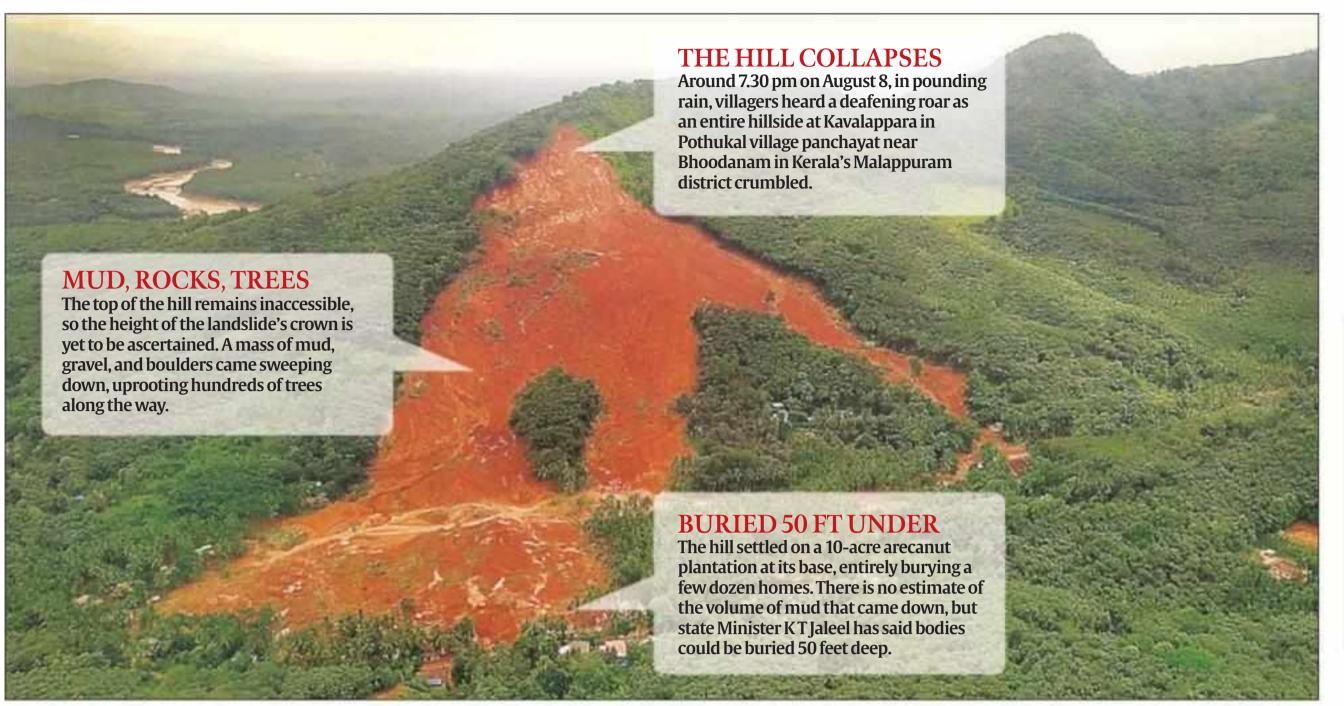
How a hill in the Western Ghats buried a part of a village in Kerala

Almost 60 people are feared dead in Kavalappara, buried alive under layers of mud and rocks. It is the worst tragedy in Kerala's devastating monsoon so far this year



THE AREA

The landslide at Kavalappara occurred a couple of hours after another in Puthumala in neighbouring Wayanad district. The two landslide sites are on either side of a section of the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats, close to Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri district. Water coming down the hills at Puthumala becomes the Chulika stream, which meanders through gorges and valleys to emerge as the bigger Chaliyar river, which flows by Kavalappara. On August 8-9, the Chaliyar inundated several towns along its banks.



RAINING DEATH

Malappuram meteorological subdivision got 189.4 mm rain from August 1 to August 7,66% more than the normal 114.3 mm. On August 8, the Nilambur rain gauge station, the one nearest to Kavalappara, recorded the highest rainfall of that day in Kerala.

At least 59 people from 43 families are feared dead.
23 bodies had been recovered until Tuesday evening

HOURS EARLIER

17 people from 7 families died after a landslide washed away 10 acres of land in a private tea estate in Puthumala in Meppadi village panchayat of Wayanad district. 53 houses, a mosque, a temple, a shop and two estate-quarters vanished under mud and rocks. The crown of the landslide was 800 ft high. Wayanad meteorological subdivision got 252.3 mm rain from August 1-7 — the most in Kerala during this period, and a 37% departure from the 184.5 mm normal.

REPORTING: SHAJU PHILIP
Photo: IAF

SIMPLY PUT

West well stocked with water, South is short

Reservoirs exceed normal levels for this stage of the year after heavy rain in Maharashtra and Gujarat, way below normal in rain-hit Kerala and Karnataka



The Koyneshwar temple on the bank of the swollen Koyna river, in Karad, Maharashtra, on Tuesday,. *PTI*

ANJALI MARAR PUNE, AUGUST 13

per cent).

AMONG THE four states that have experienced extremely heavy rainfall this month, the status of water stored in their reservoirs is vastly different. Nationwide, the 103 reservoirs monitored by the Central Water Commission (CWC) had stored 76.845 billion cubic metres (BCM) by August 8, or 47 per cent of their live storage capacity. This was below last year's storage at this stage (97 per cent) as well as the 10-year average (97

In Gujarat and Maharashtra, storage in the 35 reservoirs has surpassed the 10-year average (considered normal), following incessant rainfall over the Western region since the start of August, according to the latest live storage report issued by the CWC, with figures updated until August 8. On the other hand, although coastal Karnataka and north Kerala too have had heavy rainfall over the last fortnight, the water stock in reservoirs in both two Southern states is still below normal for this time of the year.

Southern Gujarat, and western and southern Maharashtra have had heavy rainfall, which has led to floods in Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara districts of southern Maharashtra. The Western region has 35 reservoirs, in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The current live storage in the 35 reservoirs is 17.40 billion cubic metres (BCM), which is 54 per cent of their live storage capacity of 32.31 BCM. Last year, the live storage during this period was 35 per cent, the CWC report said. The 54 per cent also surpasses the 10-year average storage of 46 per cent.

In the Southern region are 32 reservoirs under CWC monitoring, with a total live stor-

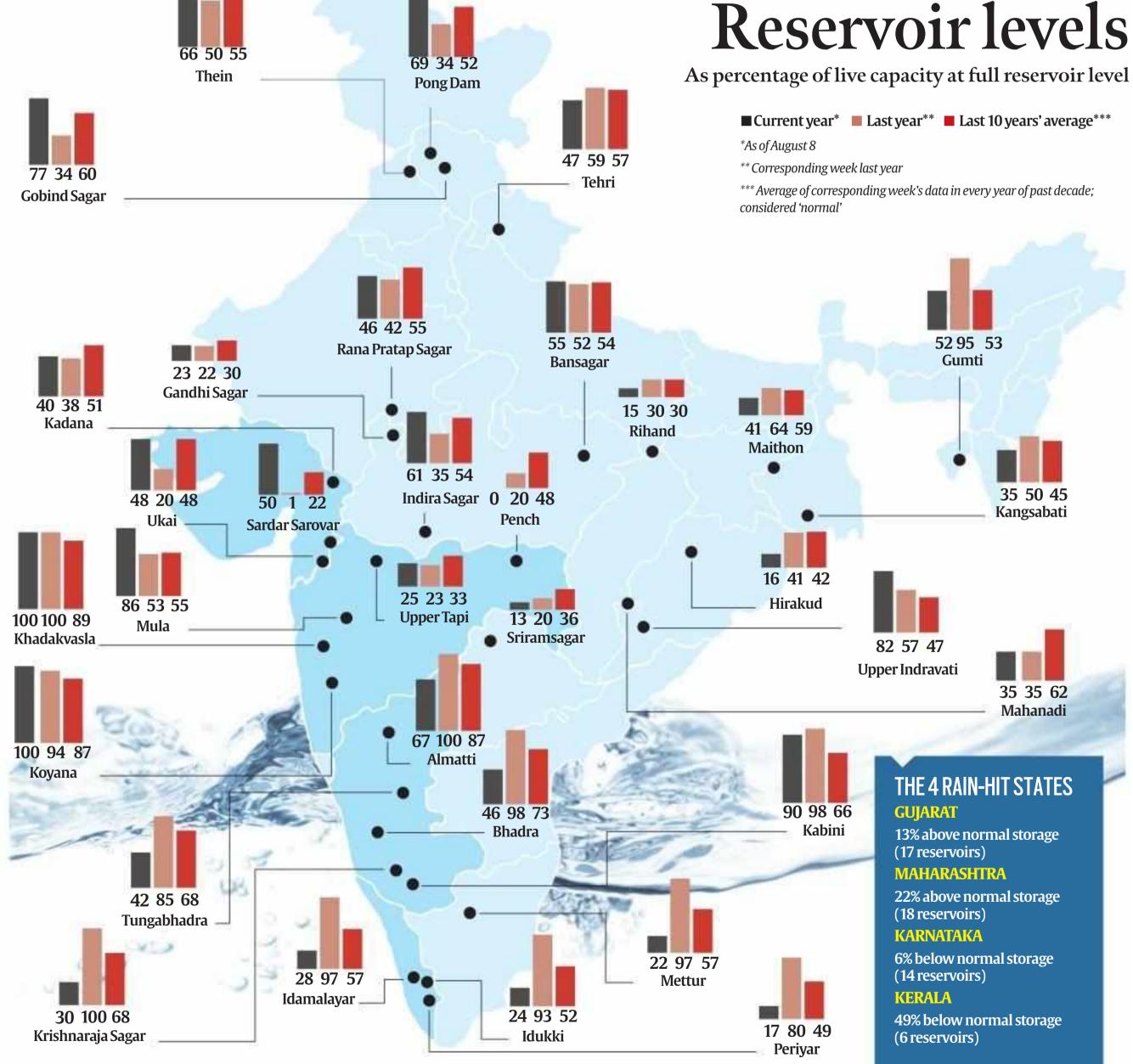
age capacity of 52.10 BCM. As of August 8, the total live storage available in these reservoirs is 21.83 BCM, which is 42% of total live storage capacity. This is below the storage during the corresponding period of last year (62 per cent) as well as the 10-year average for the corresponding period (50 per cent).

Of the two Southern states that have witnessed very heavy rainfall, the storage in the 14 reservoirs of Karnataka is 6 per cent below normal. In the six reservoirs of Kerala, storage is as much as 49 per cent below normal for this time of the year. Of the 32 reservoirs in the entire Southern region, as many as 19 have reserves that are below 40 per cent of full level. The lowest deficit is in Telangana, where the two reservoirs (not counting combined projects with Andhra Pradesh) are 62 per cent below normal. Tamil Nadu's six reservoirs are 55 per cent below normal.

As in the Western region, Northern India's six reservoirs, at 69 per cent of their total live storage capacity (12.4 BCM of 18.01 BCM), too, have exceeded the corresponding storage at this time last year (39 per cent) as well as the 10-year average for this stage of the monsoon (56 per cent).

In Central India, the 14 reservoirs are at 19.13 BCM, or 44 per cent of total live capacity (43.11 BCM), which is better than last year's corresponding status (42 per cent) but lower than the 10-year average for this period (49 per cent). With less than two months of the monsoon season remaining, Uttar Pradesh's reservoirs are at 54 per cent below normal.

In the Eastern region, the 16 reservoirs are at 6.09 BCM, or 32 per cent of total live capacity (18.83 BCM), which is lower than last year's corresponding status (47 per cent) as well as the 10-year average for this period (39 per cent).



REGION BY REGION: HOW FULL ARE RESERVOIRS

The 3 figures, in order, are current status, last year's, and 10-year average

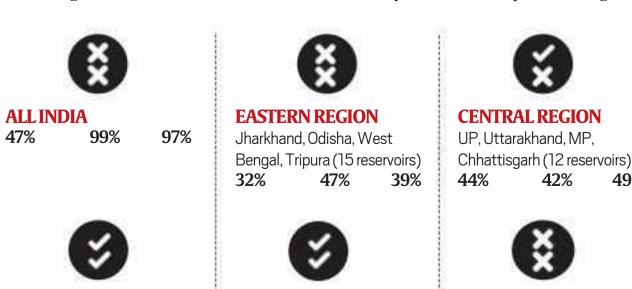
WESTERN REGION

35%

Gujarat, Maharashtra

(27 reservoirs)

54%



NORTHERN REGION

Himachal Pradesh, Punjab,

39%

Rajasthan (6 reservoirs)

REGION-WISE FILLING POSITION AS PERCENTAGE OF FRL

	100%	81-99%	51-80%	41-50%	40% & below
North	- [-	4	2	_
East	-	1	2	6	7
West	2	8	4	4	17
Central	-	-	5	1	8
South	-	3	7	3	19
Total	2	12	22	16	51

BASIN WISE STORAGE POSITION

BETTER THAN NORMAL (average storage of last 10 years): Indus, Narmada, Tapi, Godavari and West Flowing Rivers of South

CLOSE TO NORMAL: Mahi and Krishna

SOUTHERN REGION

Andhra, Telangana, Kerala,

Karnataka, TN (31 reservoirs)

62%

50%

DEFICIENT: Ganga, Mahanadi & Neighbouring East Flowing Rivers (EFRs) and Cauvery & neighbouring EFRs.

HIGHLY DEFICIENT: Sabarmati and Rivers of Kutch

Deliberate, don't disrupt

Legislators could do well by adhering to a model code of conduct

ne of the most unedifying sights in public life is lawmakers taking to organised disruption of legislative business. Such displays became common in Parliament in the past decade as political parties and legislators demonstratively advertised their points of view without recourse to debate. A number of crucial bills have taken an inordinate time to be enacted due to disruption, while others were not enacted despite a broad consensus – such as the Women's Reservation Bill – due to the behaviour of a few naysayers. Many sessions of Parliament in the recent past saw little business being done due to repeated disruption. In this context, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu's exhortation to political parties to incorporate a model code of conduct for their legislators in State Assemblies and in Parliament is welcome. He suggested that the code should include stipulations on members not entering the well of the House, and desisting from sloganeering and unruly acts. If indeed parties adopt a code, it will go a long way in making parliamentary work meaningful. Otherwise, the general public will lose interest in the procedural aspects of parliamentary democracy and limit their participation to just voting in the elections.

But the absence of disruption alone does not make for meaningful debate. The current Budget session sailed through with minimal disruption. Yet the high productivity during the session came without sufficient deliberation over crucial bills, several of which were rushed through without vetting by parliamentary standing and select committees. These committees have in the past been useful in expanding discussion over laws with civil society and experts from various streams of the larger society. They have also facilitated an enhanced cross-party coordination over issues. By not sending a single Bill among the 28 that were introduced and passed to a standing or select committee for scrutiny, the current session accentuated the trend that has minimised the importance of such committees over the last few years. Unlike the 15th Lok Sabha (2009-2014), when 71% of the bills were referred to such committees, in the 16th Lok Sabha, they constituted only a fourth of the overall number of bills. Time spent on debates in the current session in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha was barely a third of the overall business. This does not augur well for lawmaking. As Mr. Naidu has also pointed out correctly, deliberation is an important component of parliamentary democracy apart from legislation and accountability of lawmakers. All three aspects must cohere for a thoroughgoing procedural democracy.

War within war

As the Saudi-led coalition crumbles, Yemen needs a nationwide ceasefire

The Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen is proof of how things can go wrong with an ill-conceived, poorly strategised and geopolitics-driven nilitary interference that cares little about human lives After four years of war, the Saudis have not met their declared goal – pushing back the Shia Houthi rebels from the capital Sana'a and restoring the ousted government which is now temporarily headquartered in the southern city of Aden. On the contrary, the war has pushed Yemen into what the UN calls the worst humanitarian crisis. Thousands have been killed, tens of thousands displaced and about two thirds of the country's 28 million people do not have enough to eat. And now, there is a rebellion within the coalition. Last week, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a militia group that was fighting the Houthis as part of the Saudi-led coalition, turned against their masters and captured the presidential palace in Aden as well as the city's main port. In return, Saudi jets targeted STC fighters before a tenuous ceasefire set in. It now looks like a three-way conflict. The Shia Houthis, who the Saudis claim are backed by Iran, are controlling much of the country's north including Sana'a. Yemen's internationally-backed government of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, the Saudi ally, is controlling the south, though Mr. Hadi is running the purported administration from Saudi Arabia. The STC wants the south to be an independent entity, like it was till the Yemeni unification in 1990.

The STC's rebellion also signals the growing friction in the multi-national coalition Saudi Arabia has stitched together to fight the Houthis. The STC is backed by the UAE, a crucial partner of Saudi Arabia in its foreign policy adventures. They stayed together in propping up the military dictatorship of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, in countering the spread and influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world, in opposing the Iran nuclear deal and on blockading Qatar. But when it comes to Yemen, the Saudis see the Hadi government and Sunni Islamic parties, including the Islah, as allies who could stabilise and rebuild the whole country after the Houthis are defeated, while the UAE, already frustrated by the coalition's failure to defeat the rebels, counts on the STC and is staunchly opposed to the Islah party, which has ties to the Brotherhood. The UAE has already pulled out of the Yemen war leaving it to Saudi Arabia to defeat the Houthis. And with their continued backing to the STC, the Emiratis appear less concerned about defeating the Houthis than maintaining their influence in southern Yemen. This should be a moment of reckoning for Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince and the main architect of the Yemen intervention. He has lost the war and his coalition is crumbling, while Yemen is left with unimaginable human suffering. It is time for a nationwide ceasefire and talks with all stakeholders under the mediation of a willing UN to find a political settlement to the crisis.

The contours of the Kashmir move

India's actions were enabled by the unilateralism in global politics and a decline in multilateral arrangements



SUHASINI HAIDAR

The government has defended its twin decisions to revoke operative portions of Article 370 of the Constitution and dividing Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories as "internal policy" that warrant no international comment. While the Prime Minister's moves have a domestic basis, their manner, or "Modi's vivendi" as it were, must be studied in their broader global context.

The U.S.-Afghan factor

The immediate context is the future of Afghanistan and what the deal between the United States and Pakistan for Afghanistan will mean for India. According to reports, an assessment by Indian intelligence agencies that there would be an imminent settlement was what triggered the discussion within the Modi government about a response that would ensure India was not overlooked.

The U.S.'s deal for the return of the Taliban to Afghanistan's mainstream has three specific dangers for New Delhi. First, the deal would most certainly derail the Afghanistan elections planned for September 28, or make their results irrelevant. India's stakes in a democratic Afghanistan go beyond the process since every one of the 17 presidential ticket aspirants is a leader with ties to India. Second, a deal will bring the Taliban, whose leaders owe allegiance to Islamabad and Rawalpindi, into the central power structures and institutions in Kabul. Third, intelligence estimates indicate that after the deal, U.S. troops will not "zero out" completely but continue to maintain between

three and five military bases. In the past, America's dependence on Pakistan for supply routes and security guarantees led the U.S. seeking concessions from India on Kashmir. The U.S. President's comments in July, during a media interaction with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan that the U.S. counts on Pakistan to "extricate" it from Afghanistan, accompanied by an offer to mediate on Kashmir, set alarm bells ringing in Delhi and dictated the timing of the recent moves. Facing a fast-closing window of opportunity to consolidate its position in Jammu and Kashmir, the government chose to present the U.S. and Pakistan with a fait accompli before a deal was concluded.

The UN's limited impact

The government's move in Kashmir, which had not been contemplated in all the decades since India signed the 1972 Shimla agreement - India and Pakistan committed that "neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation" has also been enabled by the prevailing unilateralism in international politics and the concomitant decline in multilateral arrangements. It is clear that the UN and the UN Security Council have few real powers to stop New

Pakistan has itself carried out such a reorganisation in the parts of Kashmir it occupied in 1948: military control and demographic changes in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), or what Pakistan calls Azad Jammu and Kashmir: elections in which its national parties, the Pakistan Peoples Party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf take part, and an ongoing process to dilute Gilgit-Baltistan's autonomous status. Pakistan has done all this without any UN pushback. In addition, its sustained support of terror groups inimical to India has discredited its protests



on the Kashmir issue. Given that four permanent members of the UNSC have already accepted Kashmir's reorganisation as an "internal matter" - and China's dissent is mainly on the issue of the reorganisation of Ladakh and Aksai Chin – there is little expectation that the UNSC petition by Pakistan will make any headway. The Prime Minister can travel next month to New York quite confident that he will not face more than a few uncomfortable moments and perhaps some protests outside the UN, if at all.

The government has already tested the UN's will and faced no repercussions. In July 2014, the government declared that the U.N. Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) set up in 1949, had "outlived its utility", and asked it to vacate its premises in Delhi. In September 2016, after the Uri attacks, the government publicly announced it had crossed the LoC, a line monitored by the UNMOGIP, to carry out what it called "surgical strikes" on terror camps in PoK.

While such operations have frequently been mounted by the Indian and Pakistani Armies, this was the first such public claim and faced no pushback whatsoever from the UN. In mid-2018, the government also dismissed the first report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation on both sides of the border in Kashmir, accusing the High Commissioner of "individual bias". And in February 2019, India announced that it carried

out air strikes on a terror camp in Pakistan, after which the Pakistan Air Force dropped bombs over the LoC in Kashmir. Aside from warnings to keep the peace, the UN's reaction was mild, and the UNMO-GIP's role non-existent.

During this period, the ineffectiveness of the UN has been writ large over many other similar disputes. Russia's control of Crimea has only strengthened since 2014 despite a UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution, UNSC statements and a "package of measures". When the U.S. decided, in 2017, to declare Jerusalem as Israel's capital, it lost a vote in the UNGA, but suffered no real action as a consequence of changing the decades-old status quo. Neither has Israel, despite UN censure of the Gaza bombings, and settlements in the West Bank; nor has China changed after UNSC resolutions on Tibet and UNGA petitions on Xinjiang.

Reflecting a trend

Finally, while "Modi's vivendi" on Kashmir is aimed at his domestic base, it mirrors the prevailing trend of populism worldwide, much like the demonetisation decision in 2016 did: recapturing the national narrative, startling opponents with an unexpected move, and thrilling voters with forceful action. In his treatise "What is Populism?", Princeton professor Jan-Werner Müller recounts how populist regimes frequently frame their actions as representing the will of the "real people", a group they exclusively represent. By extension and example, those who dissent are deemed to be not "Real Poles" (prawdziwi Polacy) in Poland or "Real Hungarians" in Hungary. In the same vein was the retort by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to his opponents: "We are the people. Who are

In populist moves worldwide, such actions are "authorised by blame accrues to the government if anything goes wrong. By contrast, says Müller, democratic accountability would actually mean that the burden is on the government to justify just how it uses its political judgment to ensure desired outcomes.

The Kashmir line

In the Kashmir case, the government's actions, which have included the pouring in of troops, a clampdown on communications and the arrest of local leaders, have all been justified through the expressions of euphoria the decisions have elicited among its supporters nationwide. The populist assessment is that any negative consequences - violence in Kashmir, resistance in Jammu and Ladakh to the freeing up of property rights, for example, or the larger impact of worsening India-Pakistan ties on the Kartarpur corridor, Kulbhushan Jadhav's fate, and trade and transport arrangements - will not hurt the government as they were authorised by "the will of the people"

The prevailing narrative is that the government's Kashmir decisions have finally allowed 'Realpolitik' to prevail over the woollyheaded idealism of the past that has not benefited the nation in all these years. Furthermore, an influx of investments and non-Kashmiri residents into the Valley will "normalise" it and usher in an age of prosperity. While the term Realpolitik is used today in a positive sense, it is important to remember the context in which its earliest proponent, Athenian general Thucydides introduced it, In the 'History of the Peloponnesian War'; here he states: "Right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must."

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Writing out a clean Bill on health

Medical education needs continuous reforms; the National Medical Commission Bill could be the first step towards this



SUMANT NARAIN

ver the past few days, there have been expressions of concern in various fora ov er a few clauses of the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill, now enacted. Even medical professionals have protested. According to media reports, there are five primary concerns. These pertain to the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)/National Exit Test, empowering of community health providers for limited practice, regulating fees for only 50% seats in private colleges, reducing the number of elected representatives in the Commission, and the overriding powers of the Centre.

On examinations First, a focus on the examinations. For the past few years, a separate NEET is being conducted for undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In addition there are different examinations for institutes such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research. This Act consolidates multiple exams at the undergraduate level with a single NEET and in turn avoids multiple counselling processes. NEXT will act as the final year MBBS examination across India, an en-

trance test to the postgraduate level, and as a licentiate exam before doctors can practise. It aims to reduce disparities in the skill sets of doctors graduating from different institutions. It would also be a single licentiate exam for graduates across the world. Thus, the government has in effect implemented a 'One-Nation-One-Exam' in medical education.

Second, concerns have been expressed over the limited licence to practise for community health providers. We have to appreciate that even with about 70% of India's population residing in the rural areas, the present ratio of doctors in urban and rural areas is 3.8:1; 27,000 doctors serve about 650,000 villages of the country. A recent study by the World Health Organisation shows that nearly 80% of allopathic doctors in the rural areas are without a medical qualification. The NMC Act attempts to address this gap by effectively utilising modern medicine professionals, other than doctors in enabling primary and preventive health care. Evidence from China, Thailand and the United Kingdom shows such integration results in better health outcomes. Chhattisgarh and Assam have also experimented with community health workers. Further, the Act requires them to "...qualify such criteria as may be specified...." thereby ensuring quality.

Fee structure

The next issue relates to the capping of fees. It is an open secret today that private medical colleges

are capitation fee-driven, resort to a discretionary management quota and often have charges of corruption levelled against them. The Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 has no provision for fee regulation. Until now, 'not-for-profit' organisations were permitted to set up medical colleges, a process involving enormous investments and a negotiation of cumbersome procedures. The NMC Act removes the discretionary quota by using a transparent fee structure. It empowers the NMC to frame guidelines for determination of not only fees but all other charges in 50% of seats in private colleges to support poor and meritorious students.

It would be simplistic to assume that a rise in unethical practices in this profession is solely the result of private medical education. While a cap on fees is necessary, there is also a need for incentives to attract private investors. In any case, the transparency that NEXT provides would lead to fee regulation through market forces. The Act also provides for rating of colleges. Thus, reducing entry barriers for setting up medical colleges, along with their rating, is expected to benefit students. They would be able to make an informed decision before seeking admission.

The next issue is of representation in the NMC. A report of the then vice-chancellor, NITI Aayog, on reforms in medical education says: "The current electoral process of appointing regulators is inherently saddled with compromises and attracts professionals who may not be best suited for the task at nand. Indeed, there is ample evidence that the process has failed to bring the best in the field in regulatory roles. The process is based on what is now widely regarded as a flawed principle whereby the regulated elect the regulators." The Act, therefore, provides for a transparent search and selection process with an eclectic mix of elected and nominated representatives, both in the search committee and the commission itself. The government has further addressed the concern of preponderance of selected members in the commission by adding members from State medical councils and

universities. Finally, we need to view the issue of overriding powers of the Centre in the context that the Medical Council of India, even if directed by the government on critical matters, may not always pay heed. In public emergencies, citizens expect the government to address issues. In the current set-up, it may not be possible all the time. Also, the government should be able to give directions so that NMC regulations align with its policy. Hence, these powers. The use of such authority would follow the principle of natural justice: the NMC's opinion would be sought before giving directions.

In a nutshell

While some sections of people have sought to create a negative perception about select clauses of the Act, they have not highlighted other features. The Act establishes the Diplomate of National Board's equivalence to NMC-recognised degrees – a long-pending demand. It also promotes medical pluralism. Then, there is a paradigm shift in the regulatory philosophy from an input-based, entry barrier for education providers without corresponding benefits, to its becoming outcome-focused. Both the number of doctors and their skill sets are expected to improve. Autonomy to boards and segregation of their functions will avoid a conflict of interest and reduce rent-seeking opportunities. And 'quacks' are liable to face imprisonment or be fined or both. The Act ends inspector raj.

The efforts of successive governments have now culminated with the NMC Act replacing the IMC Act. There is no denying that medical education needs continuous reforms in order to usher in improvements in health care. There cannot be just one solution. The NMC Act is a serious attempt to meet the primary need of more medical professionals in the country; it is a beginning.

Sumant Narain is a civil servant and ex-director, NITI. The views expressed are

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

China's gesture

Every year, Indian pilgrims undertake an arduous journey to the high-altitude Kailash Manasarovar. Peace of mind is a goal. At this juncture the perceptible change in China's attitude, whereby it has spent 36.8 million RMBs in building reception centres at the various points and equipping them with a number of facilities is a gesture that will help India-China ties (Page 1, "In Manasarovar, Chinese lend a helping hand to Indian pilgrims", August 13). The words attributed to Nixon Waterman are relevant here: "I am sure that we would differ less and clasp

our hands in friendliness. Our thoughts would pleasantly agree, if I know you and you know me." R. PICHUMANI, Thippirajapuram, Tamil Nadu

Rainfall metrics In the context of the heavy spells of monsoon rain, it would be most appropriate to have two scales - one for intensity and the other for magnitude – to measure rainfall. There is no scale to classify rains above a certain intensity. The term "exceptionally heavy rainfall" is too blanket a term. For example, there was a report of 82 cm of rain on a single day in the Nilgiris district which is a

averaging 40 cm. Therefore, the present system of classification of rains should change. The 'intensity scale' could be formulated to judge and predict the intensity of rain in a given area and at a given period of time. Events such as cloudbursts and a very heavy downpour may be grouped under this category. The 'magnitude' scale could be used to record and interpret rains for a 24-hour period in a given area. There also need to be special studies to

analyse cloud patterns.

'intensity' and 'magnitude'

with predictions of

record in Tamil Nadu. In

Kerala, there has been rain

based on these. For the 'magnitude scale', in addition to the classification of low intensity rain the revisions can be on these lines: 25 cm-50 cm: 'Extremely heavy rain' (Category 1); 26 cm-75 cm: 'Extremely heavy rain' (Category 2); 76 cm-100 cm: 'Extremely heavy rain' (Category 3); Above 100 cm: 'Extremely heavy rain' (Category 4). In the 'intensity scale' over a short period (less than five hours), the scale could be: 0.1 to 5 cm: 'Moderate': 5 to 9 cm: 'Intense (warning); 10 cm: 'Cloudburst' (Take action - disaster); 10.1 to 15 cm: 'Floods, flash floods' (Heavily disastrous); 15.1 to

20 cm: 'Devastation': 20 to 30 cm: 'Devastation on a large scale'; Above 25 cm: 'Unimaginable consequences'. A. RAJAGOPAL KAMAT,

Malaparamba, Kozhikode, Kerala

Switching off The article, "Shut TV, marvel at the beautiful world" (Open Page, August 11), was a good piece of advice. Many a stereotyped serial is watched by millions even though they are smart in guessing the plot from the beginning to the end. Watching them may be a sheer wastage of time, energy and money,

but there is a curiosity to

know the already known.

Are those not following the advice adhering to the maxim "live and help to live"? C.G. KURIAKOSE,

Kothamangalam, Kerala

Cricket in Olympics The announcement by MCC World Cricket Committee Chairman Mike Gatting that cricket may well be a part of the 2028 Olympics is heartening ('Sport' page, August 13). A T20 format will be a feast for cricket fans. Likewise, the game of cricket should feature in the Asian Games K. PRADEEP,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

Sanguine amidst slowdown

Despite stagnant incomes and increased joblessness, Indians are hopeful about the economy's future



Any major country in the world would give an arm and a leg for a growth rate of 6% per annum. But, in India, we lament such an achievement as a 'slowdown'. This is because, somehow, today we perceive any growth below 7% to be unsatisfactory. And not so long ago, we perceived any growth rate below 8% to be less than satisfactory.

What has changed now? It is not as if our per-capita income levels have suddenly shot up to a point where a lower growth rate can be considered satisfying. We are still a lower-middle income country.

What has really changed is our perception of what a satisfactory growth rate will be. Such perceptions do matter as they reflect the mood of the times that influences economic decisions. For instance, usually, growth in discretionary spending is a function of growth in income. But, if income expectations change, then the relationship between income and discretionary spending could also change. Similarly, aspirations and social norms impact decisions. If the mood turns sombre, if aspirations are diluted and if social norms turn less upbeat, economic decisions would be less enthusiastic even if income growth remains unchanged.

Seeking consumers' opinion

Further, if changes in perceptions of individuals result in synchronised waves of optimism or pessimism, such shifts could well determine whether an economy moves towards accelerated expansion or a slowdown. Hence, it makes sense to ask consumers about their perceptions of expected well-being and then derive an aggregated sense of the mood to anticipate future economic trends.

According to George Katona, who pioneered work on consumer sentiments at the University of Michigan, discretionary spending depends on the ability and willingness of a consumer to spend. While ability is reflected in the consumers' income and assets, willingness to spend is re-



flected in the consumers' perception of future prospects.

How have Indians perceived their future in the recent past? There are two regular surveys which answer this question. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been conducting a Consumer Confidence Survey since 2010 and the Centre For Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) has been conducting a Consumer Sentiments Survey as a part of its Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS) since January 2016.

Expectations of income increase Both show that during 2018, a rising proportion of Indians felt that their incomes would rise over a one-year horizon. Both show that this increase in income-growth expectations of 2018 was of a distinctly sharper gradient than seen earlier.

According to the RBI survey, around the end of 2017, 46.5% of households expected their incomes to increase and 12.7% expected a decline. On a net basis, 34% expected an increase. By end-2018, the net figure had gone up to 57.3%, signifying a major improvement in income expectations during 2018.

The CMIE's CPHS shows a similar rising trend but at a different level. The net proportion of households that expected an increase in income increased from less than 5% in February 2018 to 23% in May 2019.

Both surveys show that this rising optimism about household incomes has declined in 2019. The RBI's survey shows that the decline began in the first quarter of 2019 while the CPHS shows it began in the second quarter. Interestingly, both showed pessimism on jobs during 2018. The consistent contradiction in both surveys is noteworthy. Households did not see an increase in jobs in 2018 but they did expect incomes to im-

prove. This means hopes were high

even in the face of job losses. Received wisdom on consumer sentiments tells us that people have an uncanny way of revealing their assessment of change in prospects. Bad news during sustained bad times is not really newsworthy and it does not attract much attention. On the other hand, good news or news of hope during a bad patch can change perceptions. Such a hope could have been provided by one-time cash transfers to households last year.

The RBI survey quantifies this eloquently. While 9.5% households, on a net basis, believed that employment conditions had worsened in 2018, 28.5% households believed employment conditions would improve

Their faith in the future remained intact even in the face of adverse outcomes compared to expectations. In December 2017, 9.4% of the households believed employment levels were worse (on a net basis) than a year ago but simultaneously, 33.6% believed they would improve in a year. A year later, in December 2018, 8.7% still believed the employment levels were worse than a year ago. Yet, a larger proportion – 37.6% believed these would improve in a year.

Optimism continued to prevail even in the latest July 2019 RBI survey, where 13% of households believed that employment conditions had worsened over a year but 31% of them believed that these would improve in a year. Such optimism is seen in income expectations as well. As of July 2019, on a net basis, only 3% of the households believed their incomes were higher compared to a year ago but 48.5% believed these would be better a year later.

Divergent findings on spending

How does this optimism on income and employment translate into a willingness to increase spending on discretionary or non-essential items? Here, the RBI and CMIE surveys diverge significantly. The RBI survey is prescient in anticipating a slowdown in the automobile sector. It shows that while households are optimistic on jobs and income in spite of current adverse conditions, they are not similarly gung ho about spending on non-essentials. In mid-2018, on a net basis, 53% of the households expected to spend more on non-essentials a year ahead. By July 2019, this proportion fell to 15%.

The CMIE's CPHS asks a related but somewhat different question, on whether households considered current conditions to be a good time to buy household durables. It shows that till July 2018, respondents who believed that it was a good time to buy consumer durables roughly equalled those who believed it wasn't. Both numbers were at about 22.6%. By March 2019, the proportion of pessimists declined to 17% and that of optimists increased to 30%. The CMIE survey shows an improvement in the mood to spend on discretionary goods. This reflects the fact that sales of domestic appliances began a recovery in the June 2018 quarter and grew at double-digit rates during the December 2018, March 2019 and June 2019 quarters.

Evidently, there isn't any widespread consumer goods slowdown. The slowdown is prominent in the automobile sector but not in other industries. The RBI survey reflects the former and the CMIE survey reflects the latter. It may be worth noting here that the RBI survey is based on a survey from 5,451 respondents from 13 towns while the CMIE's CPHS is based on over 40,000 respondents from over 300 towns and nearly 3,000 villages.

Different parts of the Indian economy are moving in divergent directions but, Indian households maintain hope in a future that will bring in more jobs and more income.

Mahesh Vyas is Managing Director, Centre

Balancing T.N.'s growth model

The State needs to reduce the burden on Chennai's water resources by diversifying other urban centres



Nearly three months into the southwest monsoon, the water crisis hasn't abated in large parts of Chennai. This scenario, for sure, will haunt the city again next summer with an even greater vigour, as freshwater supply hasn't overcome the rising demand.

This demand-supply asymmetry has rendered traditional solutions such as rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge totally ineffective. Overcoming the crisis will, hence, require some unconventional solutions to be tried, as suggested here.

The water crisis is a consequence of the skewed, Chennai-centric development model of Tamil Nadu, resulting in the capital city's water demand overshooting its available water resources.

To illustrate, in 2001, Chennai's water requirement stood at 1,327 million litres per day (MLD); by 2021 this will shoot up to 1,980 MLD. On the other hand, the supply was only 830 MLD in 2018.

Similarly, the area coming under city limits that was just 176 sq. km in 1978 has increased nearly threefold, to 425 sq. km, today. Even if resources in the city get augmented through supply of water from Krishna and Cauvery rivers, the demand will still outstrip the supply.

De-congesting Chennai

Hence, policies enabling indiscriminate, Chennai-centric investments in sectors like IT/ITES, automobiles and real estate need a rethink. Tamil Nadu's capital city has to be de-congested and allowed to grow only as much as its available water resources permit.

Thus, the key drivers that attract people from across Tamil Nadu - like better education prospects, employment opportunities and possibilities of a decent lifestyle - need to be brought into other cities in the State, especially those with a better availability of

For instance, the districts of Cuddalore, Nagapattinam and Tiruchirappalli together receive an average rainfall of more than 1,200 mm per annum, compared to the 900 mm-1000 mm average annual rainfall of Chennai. Some of the major investments can be shifted to these areas. The Tamil Nadu government can take the lead here, moving some of its wings to these districts.

The South Indian state, here, can take its cues from The Netherlands, which has two de facto capitals - Amsterdam, the official capital; and The Hague, the seat of government. Similarly, South Africa has three de facto capitals - Pretoria, the administrative capital; Cape Town, the legislative capital; and Bloemfontein, the judicial capital. Such distribution of administrative and commercial apparatus will reduce the pressure on Chennai's limited water resources and also make other towns and cities attractive for migrants.

More desalination plants

Further, when one considers desalination, Tamil Nadu's capacity pales in comparison with that of coastal West Asian countries. For instance, Saudi Arabia, the world leader in installed capacity of desalination plants, has built such plants all along its coastline and its largest plant, Ras-Al-Khair, has a capacity of 1,000 MLD. Similarly the UAE's Taweelah plant, when complete, will have a capacity of 900 MLD of potable water. On the other hand, in the case of Tamil Nadu, the total installed capacity of its two desalination plants is only 200 MLD – the Minjur plant and the Nemmeli plant both possess a capacity of 100 MLD each - and both are located along the capital city's sea coast, making the entire process Chennai-centric and suited to the requirements of only the city.

Such plants need to be built all along the 900 km-long Tamil Nadu coast - not just alone the coastline of its capital city. The cities and towns across the districts of Kancheepuram, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, Thanjavur and Tirunelveli should be self-sustaining in generating freshwater from these desalina-

Finally, the State's cultivation model needs a paradigm shift. Tamil Nadu cultivates paddy in an area of about 18.3 lakh hectares, requiring about 710 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) of water - the storage capacity of seven Mettur dams!

A nominal shift away from paddy to less water-intensive but high-income crops such as pulses, vegetables, and ornamental plants would save and release fresh water amounting to the capacity of at least two Mettur dams to the hydrological supply system of run-off across Tamil Nadu.

So, it is time for Chennai, and Tamil Nadu, to think out-of-the-box solutions that can complement traditional solutions such as water harvesting and groundwater recharge. These, coupled with some prudent policymaking and planning, can permanently solve the water crisis.

J. Harsha is Director, Central Water Commission Views expressed in the article are personal

Biodiversity in the time of deluge

As it weathers repeated floods, Kerala needs to take steps to protect its fragile ecology

PRAKASH NELLIYAT

In mid-August 2018, Kerala experienced severe floods and is still struggling to deal with their devastating impact. It is a matter of deep concern that, a year later, the State is facing a similar situation. This only shows that there is a considerable human-induced natural imbalance in the State, making it vulnerable to the vagaries of climate change.

Such floods impact the poorest strata of the society the most, causing a loss of lives, livelihood options and assets. They also place an enormous burden on the government in terms of reconstruction budgets. In this context, a broader assessment of floods from a 'sustainable development' perspective, by limiting economic growth options to within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem, is the need of the hour.

True, the root cause of such floods, not only in Kerala but elsewhere, is the high precipitation levels. However, one cannot discount the role of anthropogenic factors like unscientific development and over-exploitation of nature in aggravating the damages.

Impact of climate change

In recent decades, the global climate has been changing in an unpredictable manner. As per an IPCC report, the Global Green House Gases emissions grew by 70% between 1970 and 2004. Global warming has had critical effects on the hydrological cycle and water is the primary medium through which the climate change impacts trickle down to the people.

The changing precipitation alters the hydrological systems, resulting in floods and droughts in different regions. With the certainty that climate change is already impacting most countries, there is no option but to take adequate precautions through dam management and timely public

In the case of Kerala, a structural transformation and changing patterns of land use are affecting its environment. Agriculture is becoming insignificant (11.3% of State GDP) and services (63.1%) and industry (25.6%) sectors dominate the State's economy. Further, a high population densi-

ty – as per the 2011 census, it was 860 persons per sq. km, much higher than the Indian average of 382 – the shift from a joint family system to a single-family one and a greater inflow of money, particularly from Gulf countries, has resulted in an increased construction of luxurious houses and resorts.

The government, on its part, has also been developing extensive infrastructure to support the booming services and industry sectors.

Speaking of construction, it is important to take the appropriate decision on the type and size of the structure, its location, materials it proposes to use, and permissible damages it will cause to the nature. One cannot just replicate the Gulf model of construction in Kerala's fra-



gile and ecologically sensitive landscapes. Land transactions suggest that people in the State have bought land from farmers over the decades not for cultivation, but for construction. If this trend continues, vast tracts of paddy fields and other lowlying places will get converted to plots or buildings. A loss in wetland area will naturally impact the State's ability to handle floods.

People fail to account for the damage done to natural ecosystems while estimating losses suffered due to natural disasters. Floods also wash away top soil and substantial biodiversity of the area, resulting in a reduced river-water flow, death of earthworms and spread of viral and bacterial diseases among crops. There is, at present, a lack of clarity on how best these natural assets could be restored. However, the urgency to devise suitable corrective measures has never been greater.

The writer is a Chennai-based researcher working in the areas of environment and sustainable development



DATA POINT

July 2019 was the joint-hottest month on Earth (July 2016 was equally hot). Due to the Climate rise in global temperature, in 2019, the extent of sea ice in the polar regions has dropped well below the average levels seen in past three decades. This is expected to add to the well below the average levels seen in past three decades. This is expected to add to the increasing sea levels, which have been steadily rising in the recent years. By **Sumant Sen** Graph shows global-average temperature for July relative to 1850-1900 average Off-target According to the Paris July 2019 was close to 1.2°C 1.2 1.2 Agreement 2015, the above the pre-industrial average 0.9 0.9 objective was to restrict global temperature rise to 0.6 about 1°C in the first 0.3 0.3 30-year period, compared to the pre-industrial average. The target has been missed every year since then 1895 1910 1955 1985 2015 Arctic region sea ice extent Antarctic region sea ice extent **Accelerated** meltdown 20 Both the Arctic and 1979-2010 15 Antarctic sea ice extents dropped to their lowest 10 levels in 10 at various points of time January 2019 in 2019. The chart shows 1979-2010 the change in sea ice average levels in July extent in 2019 compared to 1979-2010 average May May Jul Sep Jul Sep Mar Nov Jan A sea change Change in sea level since 1993 in mm Since 1993, global sea level has risen by an average of 3.3 mm per year. This increase is usually caused 40 Compared to 1993, the global sea level, as in April 2019, has increased by 94 mm approximately by water from melting ice 20 sheets and glaciers and the expansion of sea water as

Source: National Snow and Ice Data Centre, NASA, World Meterological Organisation, Copernicus Climate Change Programme

The Man Frindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 14, 1969

Many die in Sino-Soviet clash

China and Russia to-day [August 13] accused each other of intruding into their territory in the Sinkiang area. Both said the intruding forces had killed several of the defending soldiers. China claimed that "Several hundred" Soviet mechanized troops, under cover of helicopters, tanks and armoured cars, have crossed the border into Sinkiang province. The clash occurred 500 miles from China's nuclear installations. Peking Radio, in its Chinese language broadcast monitored in Tokyo, said China's Foreign Affairs Ministry has denounced the 'intrusion' and lodged a protest note with the Soviet Embassy in Peking. The broadcast said the Soviet intrusion took place near Yumin along the western sector of Sinkiang Province bordering the Soviet Union. The note indicated that fighting was still going on since it demanded immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops or face the consequences from the action. The broadcast said that on the morning of August 13 several hundred troops under cover of two helicopters and more than 10 tanks and armoured cars intruded two kilometres deep into Sinkiang province. Chinese border troops on regular patrol duty, responded to the attack.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 14, 1919

Indians in South Africa.

Mr. M.K. Gandhi has communicated to the press [in Bombay] a cablegram which he has received from Ismail Aswat, Chairman, British Indian Association, Johannesburg, together with a statement of his own by way of explanation. The cable reads: "Bill assented 23rd June promulgated 3rd instant restricts companies acquiring further fixed properties and holding bonds as prior to company law, reaffirms old and Townships Acts operating as new licenses after 1st May and unrestricting present traders and successors particular township. Deputation waiting His Excellency urging withhold assent on groundless Legislation. Investigate Indian question throughout the Union for further restrictive legislation. - Aswat." Mr. Gandhi points out that the cable makes clear what he has said in a recent letter to Sir George Barnes. The restrictions imposed were clear and as he had already remarked, meant virtual ruin of the Indian settlers in Transval. They would have to die out in natural course. Mr. Gandhi proceeding explains that the use of word "assent" for a second time in the cable before to a clause in the Letters Patent providing for vetoing of class legislation.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 153

रूपये का प्रबंधन

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण पिछले कुछ दिनों किसी संभावित योजना की कोई जानकारी से निरंतर उद्योग जगत के प्रतिनिधयों से सार्वजनिक नहीं की गई है लेकिन यह बात मुलाकात कर रही हैं। इससे इन अटकलों को ध्यान देने लायक है कि सरकार के पास ऐसा बल मिला है कि सरकार जल्द ही आर्थिक करने की राजकोषीय गुंजाइश नहीं है और उसे गतिविधियों में सुधार के उपाय घोषित कर अतिरिक्त व्यय या कर रियायत की प्रतिबद्धता सकती है। ऐसी खबरें आई थीं कि उद्योग जगत जताने से परहेज करना चाहिए। उदाहरण के को एक लाख करोड रुपये से अधिक के लिए वाहन क्षेत्र वस्त एवं सेवा कर में कमी प्रोत्साहन पैकेज की आवश्यकता है। हालांकि की मांग कर रहा है। सरकार को ऐसा नहीं

करना चाहिए क्योंकि कुछ क्षेत्रों को रियायत देने से लाभ के बजाय नुकसान ही होगा। इससे सरकार पर राजकोषीय दबाव बढेगा।

इसके बजाय सरकार को वृहद चुनौतियों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए। उदाहरण के लिए व्यापार और उत्पादन वृद्धि। यह सही है कि वैश्विक कारोबारी माहौल अधिक चुनौतीपूर्ण हो चुका है लेकिन जैसा कि आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा भी गया है, वैश्विक निर्यात में देश की हिस्सेदारी अत्यधिक कम है और हमें बाजार हिस्सेदारी पर ध्यान देना चाहिए। बाहरी माहौल और अधिक कठिन हो गया है क्योंकि बडी अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के भी प्रतिस्पर्धी अवमूल्यन की संभावना बनी है। चीन ने युआन को कमजोर होने दिया है और वह प्रति अमेरिकी डॉलर ७ के मनोवैज्ञानिक स्तर पर है। अमेरिकी असंतोष जताया है।

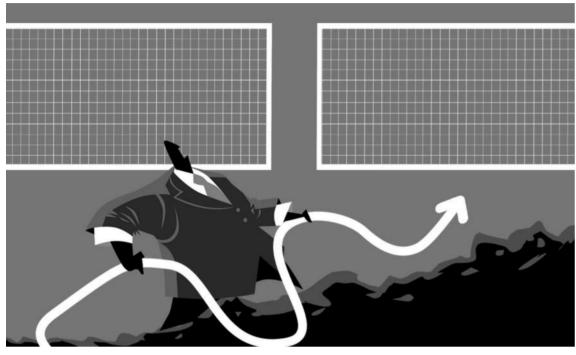
हालांकि बाजार हस्तक्षेप के माध्यम से जानबुझकर डॉलर को कमजोर करने और अमेरिकी केंद्रीय बैंक फेडरल रिजर्व द्वारा ब्याज दरों में कटौती करने (ट्रंप लंबे समय से इसकी मांग कर रहे थे) का भी अमेरिकी मुद्रा पर ऐसा ही असर होगा। हालांकि अवमूल्यन या मुद्राओं को जानबूझकर कमजोर करना एक ऐसा कदम है जो सभी देश एक साथ नहीं उठा सकते। भारत को इस माहौल में अपने हितों का संरक्षण करने की आवश्यकता है।

इतना ही नहीं, रुपया अधिमूल्यित है और यह बात देश के व्यापार संतुलन को प्रभावित कर रही है। जैसा कि अर्थशास्त्री साजिद चिनॉय ने पिछले दिनों लिखा भी था कि बीते पांच वर्ष

राष्ट्रपति डॉनल्ड ट्रंप ने मजबूत डॉलर के साथ में रुपया युआन की तुलना में वास्तविक तौर पर 18 फीसदी तक अधिमूल्यित हुआ है। चीन के साथ भारत के बढ़े व्यापार घाटे का यह भी एक कारण है। अब बढते व्यापारिक तनाव के बीच युआन में और कमजोरी आ सकती है। सच तो यह है कि रुपया कई मुद्राओं की तुलना में मजबूत हुआ है। 36 मुद्राओं के निर्यात आधारित वास्तविक प्रभावित विनिमय दर सूचकांक का स्तर जून में 118.5 था। यह काफी अधिमूल्यित है। रुपये के अधिमूल्यन ने निर्यात को प्रभावित किया है और वह गत कई वर्षीं

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक की उल्लिखित नीति के मृताबिक वह रुपये के किसी खास स्तर को लेकर नहीं चलता और मुद्रा बाजार में केवल तभी हस्तक्षेप करता है जब अस्थिरता बहुत

बढ़ जाती है। मौजूदा वैश्विक परिदृश्य में केंद्रीय बैंक को सरकार के साथ मशविरा करके ऐसी राह निकालनी होगी जहां रुपये का अधिमूल्यन रोका जा सके। संभव है कि विकसित देशों में शून्य के करीब की नकारात्मक ब्याज दर तथा प्रतिफल की तलाश आने वाले दिनों में और अधिक विदेशी निवेश आकर्षित करे और रुपये को और मजबत करे। ऐसे में मुद्रा बाजार को सक्रिय प्रबंधन की जरूरत है। ज्यादा हस्तक्षेप से मुद्रा एकत्रित होगी और उसका अपना राजकोषीय प्रभाव है। परंतु मौजूदा वैश्विक हालात में देश की प्रतिस्पर्धों को बचाए रखने के लिए ऐसा करना जरूरी है। निर्यात को बढ़ाने के लिए हमें कई समस्याओं को हल करना होगा। मद्रा अधिमल्यन को दर करना इस दिशा में अच्छी शुरुआत हो सकती है।



कितना तेज हो रहा भारत का विकास?

कारोबारी आय में इजाफा नहीं हो रहा और वाहनों की बिक्री में गिरावट देखने को मिल रही है। इस परिदृश्य में जीडीपी के आधिकारिक आंकड़ों की पड़ताल कर रहे हैं शंकर आचार्य

करीबन साढ़े चार वर्ष पहले, अप्रैल अलग रुझान दे रहे थे। 2015 में भी मैंने इस समाचार पत्र में लगभग उपरोक्त शीर्षक से एक आलेख लिखा था। वह लेख केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय (सीएसओ) द्वारा प्रकाशित राष्ट्रीय आय के अनुमानों और उत्पादन प्रस्तुति के लिए 2011-12 को नया आधार वर्ष बनाये जाने के बाद लिखा गया था। उस वक्त मैंने वर्ष 2014-15 की आर्थिक समीक्षा के साथ जो आशंकाएं और मुद्दे उठाए थे, वे थे:

■ जीडीपी वृद्धि दर में 2013-14 में दो फीसदी का इजाफा कर उसे 6.9 फीसदी किया गया। नीतिगत पंगुता, भुगतान संतुलन के संकट और नीतिगत ब्याज दर में 300 आधार अंक की बढोतरी के बीच यह इजाफा किया गया था।

■ वर्ष 2013-14 और 2014-15 के लिए औसतन 7 फीसदी की वृद्धि दर औद्योगिक उत्पादन सचकांक, कॉर्पोरेट आय सूचकांक, बैंक ऋण, कर राजस्व, निवेश एवं निर्यात आदि के मोर्चे पर कमजोर प्रदर्शन के बीच थी।

■ सन 2011-12 और 2012-13 के लिए विनिर्माण की हिस्सेदारी में बढोतरी और थोक/खुदरा व्यापार में गिरावट तथा 2013-14 और 2014-15 में इन दोनों क्षेत्रों में सुधार की बात कही गई जबकि सूचकांक

 कंपनी खातों के क्षेत्र में नए एमसीए-21 डेटा बेस में दिक्कतें सामने आ रही थीं। ■ वर्ष 2011-12 के आधार पर पुरानी शृंखला का अभाव।

समय बीतने के साथ-साथ नया डेटा सामने आता गया। इनमें तमाम विसंगतियां भी थीं, मसलन नोटबंदी वाले वर्ष यानी 2016-17 के लिए जीडीपी वृद्धि दर के 8.2 फीसदी रहने की बात, गत वर्ष दो वैकल्पिक पुरानी शृंखला का प्रकाशन। एक राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकी आयोग की ओर से तो दसरी सीएसओ की ओर से। इसके अलावा नई शृंखला को लेकर तमाम टिप्पणियां देखने को मिलीं। विवाद चलता रहा और गत माह नैशनल काउंसिल ऑफ ऐप्लाइड इकनॉमिक रिसर्च (एनसीएईआर) और अमेरिकन नैशनल ब्यूरो ऑफ इकनॉमिक रिसर्च द्वारा आयोजित दो दिवसीय इंडियन पॉलिसी फोरम कॉन्फ्रेंस में यह उभरकर चरम पर आ गया। दो पूर्ण सत्र और शाम का भाषण पूरी तरह विषय केंद्रित थे। एनसीएईआर की वेबसाइट पर अरविंद सुब्रमण्यन, सुदीप्त मंडल, एन आर भानुमूर्ति, आर नागराज, प्रणव वर्धन और सेबेस्टियन मॉरिस जैसे विद्वानों की बात पढी जा सकती है। 2011-12 की शृंखला तथा उसके स्रोत और तरीकों पर उठाए गए

अधिकांश सवाल जायज हैं। खासतौर पर

2014-2018 के बीच सरकार के मुख्य आथिक सलाहकार रहे अरविंद सुबमण्यन का पर्चा विशिष्ट है।

सुब्रमण्यन अपने पर्चे में देश के वृद्धि प्रदर्शन को (2011-12 की आधिकारिक आधार शृंखला के मुताबिक) दो अवधियों में बांटते हैं: 2011 के पूर्व यानी 2002-03 से 2010-11 तक और दूसरा 2011 के बाद यानी 2012-13 से 2016-17 तक के बीच। उन्होंने 2011-12 को कट ऑफ वर्ष बनाया है क्योंकि यही वह समय है जब नए आधार

की शुरुआत हुई थी। 2011-12 को कट ऑफ वर्ष इसलिए बनाया गया है क्योंकि नया आधार उसी वर्ष आरंभ हुआ था। इसके बाद उन्होंने उत्पादन वृद्धि के रुझानों की तुलना पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया। इसके अलावा समेकित मांग के विभिन्न चरों की वृद्धि, खासतौर पर निवेश, निर्यात और ऋण पर ध्यान दिया गया। आयात का भी जिक्र हुआ लेकिन इस पर उतना जोर नहीं दिया गया।

वर्ष 2011 के पहले और बाद में इन चरों की तुलना की गई तो पता चला कि 2011 के पहले तेजी का दौर था और उस वक्त जीडीपी करीब 8 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ रही थी। उस समय वास्तविक निवेश 13 फीसदी, वास्तविक निर्यात 15 फीसदी और वास्तविक ऋण 17 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ रहे थे। उसके

बाद नकारात्मक झटकों का दौर आया। वर्ष 2011 के बाद वैश्विक व्यापार में ठहराव आ गया। वर्ष 2012-14 के दौरान संप्रग सरकार की नीतिगत पंगुता और 2013 के भुगतान संतुलन के बीच दोहरी बैलेंस शीट का संकट उभरा। रही सही कसर 2014-15 के सुखे और 2016 में नोटबंदी ने पूरी कर दी। 2014 के बाद तेल कीमतों में गिरावट से जो लाभ मिलना था, वह इन वजहों से पूरी तरह मिल नहीं सका। अनुमान के मुताबिक ही 2011 के बाद से वृहद मांग के संकेतकों में गिरावट आने लगी। निवेश, निर्यात और ऋण आदि सभी क्षेत्र गिरकर 3 फीसदी के स्तर पर आ गए जबकि 2011 के पहले यह दो अंक में थी। शायद सोचा गया होगा कि 2011 के बाद जीडीपी वृद्धि दर में भी तेज गिरावट आई होगी लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ। अरविंद सुब्रमण्यन की मुख्य पहेली यही है कि जोडीपी वृद्धि दर में केवल 0.8 फीसदी की गिरावट आई और यह 7.7 फीसदी से गिरकर

सुब्रमण्यन का यह कहना एकदम सही है कि 2011 के बाद से जीडीपी वृद्धि के आंकड़ों में गड़बड़ी है। गौरतलब है कि इनका आकलन 2011-12 की नई शृंखला के आधार पर किया गया है। वह कहते हैं कि 2011 के बाद 7 फीसदी की वृद्धि दर हासिल करने वाले किसी भी देश ने इतनी लंबी अवधि तक निवेश, निर्यात और ऋण के क्षेत्र में इतना कमजोर प्रदर्शन नहीं किया। वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय अनुभवों का सहारा लेकर कहते हैं कि जब भी वृहद मांग के ये कारक मंद रहे हैं, किसी भी देश ने 5.5 फीसदी से अधिक की वृद्धि दर्ज नहीं की है। केवल चार देशों ने 4.5 से 5.5 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि दर्ज की, 13 देशों ने 3.5 से 4.5 प्रतिशत और 33 देशों ने 3.5 प्रतिशत से कम की वृद्धि दर हासिल की।

उनके तथा अन्य लोगों द्वारा प्रस्तुत पर्ची में ढेर सारी और बातें हैं। सभी वर्ष 2011 के बाद जीडीपी आंकड़ों को लेकर गंभीर चिंता जताते हैं और राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय द्वारा जताए गए राष्ट्रीय आय के अनुमान का नए सिरे से आकलन करने की मांग करता है। वर्ष 2011 के बाद के दौर में जीडीपी अनुमानों में सुधार के लिए कंपनियों के एमसीए-21 डेटा बेस तथा चालू जीडीपी व्यवस्था में इस्तेमाल मूल्य अपस्फीतिकारक चयन उत्तरदायी हैं।

सवाल यह है कि अर्थव्यवस्था कितनी तेज गति से प्रगति कर रही है ? स्पष्ट है कि यह दर आधिकारिक तौर पर दर्शाए गए आंकड़ों से काफी कम है। कितनी कम ? इस बारे में सुब्रमण्यन के दो हालिया पर्चों के बाद अनुमान लगाया जा सकता है। उनके मुताबिक अगर आधिकारिक आंकड़े 7 फीसदी की दर दर्शा रहे हैं तो यह आंकड़ा 2.5 फीसदी कम यानी तकरीबन 4.5 फीसदी या उससे कम होना चाहिए। मेरा अपना अनुमान है कि यह गिरावट इतनी अधिक नहीं बल्कि एक से दो फीसदी के बीच होगी। यानी ताजा आंकड़े अगर 5.8 फीसदी की दर दर्शा रहे हैं तो वास्तविक वृद्धि दर 4 से 5 फीसदी के बीच होनी चाहिए। यह आंकडा बहुत प्रीतिकर नहीं है और वाहन बिक्री में आई 30 फीसदी की गिरावट जैसे मानकों को तवज्जो दें तो गिरावट और बढ सकती है।

वस्तु एवं सेवा शुल्क का प्रदर्शन और इससे जुड़े कुछ प्रश्न

आज देश की अर्थव्यवस्था जिस भारी संकट से गुजर रही है, उसके मूल में मौजूदा सरकार की जो नाकामियां हैं, उनमें से प्रमुख है वस्तु एवं सेवा कर यानी जीएसटी को समुचित ढंग से तैयार करने और क्रियान्वित करने में नाकामी। जीएसटी को एकल कर दर होना था जिससे करदाताओं का बोझ काफी कम होता, कागजी कार्रवाई कम होती, अनुपालन की लागत में गिरावट आती, इलेक्ट्रॉनिक ट्रैकिंग आसान होती और अनुपालन बढता। इसके साथ ही कर दायरे में इजाफा होता और पहले बाहर रहे उत्पादों पर कर लगने से सरकार का राजस्व बढ़ता। इसके कारण पूरी कर व्यवस्था में जो किफायत आती वह सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में इजाफा करने के साथ-साथ आर्थिक वृद्धि और जीवन स्तर सुधारने में सहायक होती।

हम आज कहां हैं ? सबसे

पहली बात, जीएसटी राजस्व के मोर्चे पर अपेक्षा के अनुरूप नहीं रहा। गत वित्त वर्ष में कुल राजस्व सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के एक फीसदी तक कम रहा। हालांकि केंद्रीय बजट में इस तथ्य को जनता से छिपाने का प्रयास किया गया। यह कमी पूरी तरह जीएसटी के कारण रही जो गत वर्ष के बजट अनुमान से कम संग्रह कर सका। ऐसा क्यों हुआ ? एक वजह तो यह हो सकती है कि शायद कर वंचना अनुमान से अधिक रही। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि जीएसटी काफी हद तक इनवॉइस मिलान पर निर्भर रहा। परंतु ऐसे मिलान के लिए ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म सही तरीके से बनाया ही नहीं गया था। जीएसटी अपने आप में अत्यंत जटिल है और इसके चलते इनवॉइस मिलान का काम उचित तरीके से नहीं हो सका। इससे फर्जी इनवॉइस सामने आने लगे। परिणामस्वरूप भुगतान सुगम होने और चतुराईपूर्ण तकनीकी निस्तारण के जरिये अनुपालन में सुधार से इतर सरकार अब इस बात पर नजर रख रही है कि कर अधिकारियों को ज्यादा अधिकार कैसे दिए जाएं। यह जीएसटी की मूल भावना के प्रतिकूल है। एक अन्य समस्या कर दरों की

है जो बहुत ज्यादा हैं या बेहद कम हैं। हमें यह समझना होगा कि राजस्व निरपेक्ष कर दर आखिर क्या हो सकती है। अगर यह 18 फीसदी है और शराब और ईंधन इसमें शामिल हैं तो हमें यह दर



नीति नियम मिहिर शर्मा

बरकरार रखनी होगी। अगर हमें अधिकांश वस्तुओं और सेवाओं को कम कर दर के दायरे में रखना है और यदि जीएसटी परिषद अपना पूरा समय दरों में बदलाव या कमी करने में लगा देती है तो स्वाभाविक है कि हम राजस्व लक्ष्य प्राप्त नहीं कर पाएंगे। अगर हमें कम कर दर वाला देश बने रहना है तो यह ठीक है लेकिन तब हमें यह मानना होगा कि हम जीएसटी क्रियान्वयन से राजस्व निरपेक्षता नहीं हासिल कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में हमें व्यय में कटौती करनी होगी। परंतु उस स्थिति में हमें अपना रुझान बदलना होगा और

कुछ कडे फैसले लेने होंगे। उदाहरण के लिए यह मानना होगा कि बीते दशक में व्यय में सबसे अधिक इजाफों में से एक अर्द्धसैनिक बलों में हुआ। रक्षा पर आगे होने वाले व्यय में स्थायी रूप से इजाफा हो सकता है। व्यवहार में ऐसा बदलाव सरकारी व्यय को तयशुदा सीमा में रखने के लिए आवश्यक हो सकता है। हम उतना व्यय नहीं कर सकते न ही कर लगा सकते हैं। ऐसे में हमारे पास उक्त काम करने का कोई स्थायित्व भरा तरीका नहीं है।

समस्या यह है कि अगर हम अनुमान से कम जीएसटी संग्रह करते हैं और सरकार का यह कहना सही है कि दरों में कटौती आर्थिक गतिविधियों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए की गई है तो वह बढ़ोतरी कहां है ? कारोबारियों में उत्साह की भावना क्यों नहीं नजर आ रही है ? अगर लोगों के पास इतनी अधिक धनराशि है तो खपत में इजाफा क्यों नहीं आ रहा है और निवेश बढता हुआ क्यों नहीं दिख रहा?

एक दिक्कत यह हो सकती है कि जीएसटी की निवेश अनुकुलता का लक्ष्य भी हासिल नहीं हुआ है। कारोबारी समहों के जीएसटी चुकाने को लेकर कई

फसलों की बुआई पर भी असर 🗄

पड़ा होगा। बाढ़ग्रस्त क्षेत्रों में

सब्जियों का उत्पादन भी प्रभावित

तरह के सुधार किए गए हैं और अन्य सुधार प्रक्रियाधीन हैं। यह कहा जा सकता है कि देश में अभी भी निवेश की दृष्टि से बहुत अनुकूल माहौल नहीं है। दरों में बार-बार बदलाव हो रहा है। न केवल जीएसटी दर बल्कि सीमा शुल्क दरों पर भी यही बात लागू होती है। कर आतंक एक हकीकत है। कर निरीक्षकों को जीएसटी लागू होने के बाद बहुत अधिक अधिकार दे दिए गए हैं। इन सारी वजहों से निवेश सामान्य स्तर से भी नीचे चला गया। जीएसटी के कारण आर्थिक गतिविधियों में इजाफा होने का अनुमान इस बात पर निर्भर था कि कर व्यवस्था कम आक्रामक हो। हालांकि कर भुगतान व्यवस्था में सुधार की योजना है वहीं इसे लेकर कहीं अधिक इच्छाशक्ति से काम करने की जरूरत है। अधिकांश करदाताओं के लिए जीएसटी फॉर्म स्वत: तैयार होने चाहिए और उन्हें तीसरे पक्ष की इनवॉइस और बिल निस्तारण ऐप के माध्यम से जमा करने की व्यवस्था होनी चाहिए, जिन्हें मोबाइल से संचालित किया जा सके। अगर इनवॉइस मिलान का काम नहीं हो पाता तब हमें दूसरी दिशा में प्रयास करते हुए अनुपालन को आसान बनाना होगा। इसके लिए श्रम की बचत वाले तकनीकी नवाचार करने होंगे। वित्त मंत्रालय को निजी क्षेत्र के वित्तीय प्रौद्योगिकी उद्योग के लोगों को साथ लेकर इसे अंजाम देना चाहिए। कर भुगतान सुगम बनाने को लेकर सार्वजनिक

सरकार निरंतर यह दावा कर रही है कि वह बुनियादी वस्तुओं पर अधिक कर दर नहीं रख सकती लेकिन जीएसटी के पीछे की अवधारणा यही कहती है कि गरीबों की क्षतिपूर्ति का सबसे बेहतर और किफायती तरीका अप्रत्यक्ष करों के साथ छेडछाड करना नहीं बल्कि प्रत्यक्ष सब्सिडी में बदलाव है। सरकार उसका तरीका पहले ही निकाल चुकी है और सब्सिडी देने में अपनी सक्षमता पर उसे गर्व भी है।

मशविरा भी किया जाना चाहिए।

ऐसे में सरकार को विविध दरों का बचाव त्याग देना चाहिए और किफायत और उन लाभों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए जो उसे देश के गरीबों की सब्सिडी जारी रखने के संसाधन देंगे। आज सरकार के पास न तो सब्सिडी के लिए पैसा है और न ही अर्थव्यवस्था में गति है।

सभी सरकारी अस्पतालों में

कानाफूसी

धन देने में देरी

गत वर्ष दिसंबर में सत्ता में आने के बाद मध्य प्रदेश सरकार लगातार केंद्र सरकार पर यह आरोप लगाती रही है कि वह केंद्र की विभिन्न योजनाओं में उसका हिस्सा जारी करने में जानबूझकर लापरवाही बरत रही है। जिन योजनाओं का भुगतान नहीं किया जा रहा है उनमें महात्मा गांधी राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी योजना भी शामिल है। मौजुदा वित्त वर्ष के आरंभ में राज्य को केंद्र से इस योजना के लिए 700 करोड़ रुपये की राशि मिलनी बाकी थी। राज्य सरकार ने कहा कि इस फंड के न मिलने से राज्य की ग्रामीण आबादी को दिक्कत का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। प्रदेश के ग्रामीण विकास मंत्री राशि हासिल करने के लिए दूसरी बार दिल्ली का दौरा करने की योजना बना रहे हैं। अपनी पिछली यात्रा के दौरान उन्हें केवल आश्वासन मिला था। वह आशा कर रहे हैं कि इस बार शायद कुछ ठोस कदम उठाया जाएगा।



नई पीढ़ी का संकट

जेल की सजा काट रहे राष्ट्रीय जनता दल अध्यक्ष लालू प्रसाद के बेटे तेजस्वी यादव और तेज प्रताप यादव बहुत गलत समय पर अपने गृह राज्य बिहार की राजनीति से दूर हैं। गत 10 अगस्त को पार्टी ने पटना में सदस्यता अभियान शुरू किया लेकिन इस अवसर पर न तो दोनों भाई मौजूद थे और न ही उनकी बहन मीसा भारती। ऐसे में कार्यक्रम को अपेक्षित सफलता मिलनी ही नहीं थी। कार्यक्रम स्थल पर बमुश्किल 200 कुर्सियां थीं, और पार्टी कार्यकर्ता उन्हें भी भरने के लिए संघर्ष करते नजर आए। तेज प्रताप झारखंड के देवघर में सावन महीने की पूजा अर्चना में व्यस्त थे, जबिक तेजस्वी अपने और अपने पिता के किसी अदालती मामले के चक्कर में दिल्ली गए थे। यादव परिवार की दूसरी पीढ़ी के इस आचरण पर पार्टी के नेता नाराज नजर आए।

आपका पक्ष

कम बुआई से खाद्य संकट की आशंका

इस साल खरीफ सीजन की मुख्य फसल धान की बुआई काफी कम हुई है। मॉनसून के देर से आने, बारिश की कमी तथा कुछ राज्यों में बाढ़ के कारण फसलों की बुआई काफी कम हुई है। इससे देश में खाद्य संकट या अनाज महंगे हो सकते हैं। खरीफ सीजन की फसल बाजार में करीब चार माह में आ जाएगी। आम तौर पर खरीफ सीजन की फसल तीन से चार महीने में तैयार हो जाती है। इसके बाद यह बाजार में आएगी तथा कम फसल होने से महंगाई बढ़ सकती है। कृषि मंत्रालय के आंकड़ों के अनुसार देश में 265 लाख हेक्टेयर में धान की रोपाई हुई है जो औसत से 40 लाख हेक्टेयर कम है। इसके अलावा महाराष्ट्र, कर्नाटक, बिहार सहित देश के कई राज्यों में बाढ़ के कारण भी फसल खराब होने की आशंका जताई गई है। इससे आने वाले समय में फसल उत्पादन कम होगा। बाजार में कम फसल



आने से इसके दाम बढ जाएंगे जिससे महंगाई बढ सकती है। कई राज्यों में चावल मुख्य भोजन है और इसकी खपत अधिक होती है। पश्चिम बंगाल, बिहार, झारखंड, ओडिशा, छत्तीसगढ़, मध्य प्रदेश, उत्तर प्रदेश आदि राज्यों में लोग भोजन में चावल अधिक पसंद करते हैं। इन राज्यों में चावल की खपत अधिक होती : कारण खरीफ सीजन की अन्य

इस साल खरीफ सीजन में धान की बुआई औसत से 40 लाख हेक्टेयर कम हुई है

है। ऐसे में फसल की रोपाई कम होने से उत्पादन घटेगा जिससे मांग बढने के कारण महंगाई बढेगी। बारिश की कमी के

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।

हुआ होगा।ऐसे में अनाज के साथ सिब्जियों के भी दाम बढ़ सकते हैं। अत: सरकार को इस स्थिति पर अभी से नजर रखनी चाहिए तथा खाद्य संकट या महंगाई बढ़ने से रोकने के लिए अभी से पहल शुरू कर देनी चाहिए।

दीप्ति कुमारी, नई दिल्ली

स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में किए जाएं प्रभावी बदलाव

भारत में स्वास्थ्य पर जीडीपी का बहुत कम हिस्सा खर्च किया जाता है जो गरीबों और जरूरतमंद लोगों की जरूरतों को पुरा करने के लिहाज से काफी दर है। सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य बजट का बडा हिस्सा परिवार कल्याण पर खर्च होता है। देश के लगभग रोगियों की हालत दयनीय है। संक्रामक रोगों से ग्रस्त मरीज भी अस्पताल के बाहर खुले और गंदे में रहने को मजबूर हैं। भारत में स्वास्थ्य पर निजी खर्च 78 प्रतिशत के लगभग है। इसका अर्थ यह हुआ कि मात्र 22 फीसदी चिकित्सा व्यय ही सरकार के खाते में आता है। हमारे यहां स्वास्थ्य पर लोगों का निजी खर्च दुनिया भर में सबसे अधिक है। निरोधात्मक चिकित्सा तथा प्राथमिक चिकित्सा को बिल्कुल मुफ्त तथा नकदी रहित करना होगा, जबकि अनुपूरक चिकित्सा को आंशिक रूप से शुल्क आधारित बनाया जा सकता है। सरकार को यह जिम्मेदारी लेनी होगी और इसके लिए खर्च की व्यवस्था कर ढांचे से ही करनी होगी। महंगी स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं से निजात पाने में स्वास्थ्य बीमा से ज्यादा सुलभ और नि:शुल्क या सस्ती चिकित्सा सुविधाएं लोगों के लिए मददगार हो सकती हैं।

अजीत कुमार गौतम, गोरखपुर





समय का महत्व समझने से ही जीवन सार्थक बनता है

पाबंदियों पर सही रुख

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने यह बिल्कुल सही कहा कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में सुरक्षा को लेकर लगाए गए प्रतिबंधों को हटाने के लिए केंद्र सरकार को वक्त मिलना चाहिए, क्योंकि इस राज्य के हालात संवेदनशील हैं। कोर्ट की इस टिप्पणी और याचिकाकर्ता को लगाई गई फटकार से उन लोगों को जवाब मिल जाना चाहिए जो अनुच्छेद 370 की समाप्ति के बाद हालात नियंत्रण में रखने के लिए लगाई गईं तमाम पाबंदियों को गलत ठहरा रहे हैं। यदि कोर्ट को यह कहना पड़ा कि याचिकाकर्ता को जमीनी हकीकत की जानकारी नहीं है तो फिर यह अपने आप साफ है कि प्रतिबंध हटाए जाने की मांग कितनी अतार्किक है। बेहतर हो कि इन पाबंदियों से असुविधा महसूस कर रहे लोग यह समझें कि ये खुद उनकी और राज्य के अन्य लोगों की सुरक्षा के लिए हैं। मौजूदा हालात में सुरक्षा संबंधी प्रतिबंधों को एक झटके में वापस नहीं लिया जा सकता। कश्मीर के मामले में तो यह और अधिक आवश्यक है कि सुरक्षा को लेकर अतिरिक्त सतर्कता बरती जाए। लंबे समय से आतंकवाद से प्रभावित जम्मू-कश्मीर में ऐसे तत्वों को कोई मौका नहीं दिया जा सकता जो भारत को हजार घाव देने के मंसूबे पाले हुए हैं और किसी भी समय कोई बड़ी आतंकी घटना अंजाम देने की कोशिश कर सकते हैं। अनुच्छेद 370 पर सरकार के ऐतिहासिक फैसले के संदर्भ में सुरक्षा को चाक-चौबंद रखने के लिए जो कदम उठाए गए हैं उनका उद्देश्य ऐसे ही तत्वों के मंसूबों को

केंद्र सरकार का फैसला जम्मू-कश्मीर को एक नए युग में ले जाने के लिए कड़वी औषधि की तरह है। इसका असर होने में वक्त भी लगेगा और कुछ तकलीफें भी होंगी। इन तकलीफों को सहने के लिए हर किसी को तैयार रहना चाहिए। अब जब राज्य प्रशासन की ओर से यह बताया गया है कि हालात की समीक्षा करते हुए पाबंदियों में चरणबद्ध तरीके से ढील दी जा रही है तब उचित यही है कि सरकार को अपना काम करने दिया जाए। वैसे भी यह कोई पहला अवसर नहीं है जब जम्मू-कश्मीर में सुरक्षा को लेकर आम जनता के आवागमन और इंटरनेट जैसी सुविधाओं पर पाबंदियां लगाई गई हों। बेहतर हो कि जम्मू-कश्मीर की जनता सेना प्रमुख जनरल बिपिन रावत के इस संकल्प पर गौर करे जिसमें उन्होंने कहा है कि सेना स्थानीय लोगों के साथ वैसे ही मिलकर रहेगी जैसे वह 30-40 साल पहले रहती थी। रावत के इस कथन का संदेश साफ है कि आतंकवाद के कारण सुरक्षा चुनौतियों को देखते हुए सेना और आम जनता के बीच यदि कोई दूरी बन भी गई थी तो वह अब

बदलाव पर विचार

34 वर्षों तक लगातार शासन करने वाली माकपा आज बंगाल में अस्तित्व बचाने की लड़ाई लड़ रही है। वाममोर्चा अन्य घटक दलों को साथ लेकर लड़ने के बावजूद इस स्थिति में पहुंच चुकी है कि अपने दम पर चुनाव लड़ना भी मुश्किल है। इस विकट परिस्थिति में पश्चिम बंगाल में अपने सबसे खराब प्रदर्शन के दो महीने बाद माकपा राज्य के लोगों तक खास संदेश देने के लिए अपने संगठन में बड़े बदलाव की तैयारी कर रही है। पार्टी के सभी स्तरों पर अपने पुराने दिग्गज नेताओं की जगह पर नए चेहरे को मौका देने पर विचार कर रही है। 1977 से लगातार 34 वर्षों तक बंगाल पर शासन करने वाली माकपा के नेतृत्व वाले वाममोर्चा को 2019 के चुनाव में एक भी सीट हाथ नहीं लगी। राज्य की 42 लोकसभा सीटों में से 40 पर तो पार्टी उम्मीदवारों की जमानत जब्त हो गई। वाम दल को सत्तारूढ़ तृणमूल कांग्रेस और बंगाल की राजनीति में उभरी भाजपा से कड़ी चुनौतियां मिल रही है। मई में आए चुनाव परिणाम के बाद से वामदल ने राज्य समिति की दो बैठकें आयोजित की हैं। चुनाव नतीजे में साफ तौर पर दिख गया कि राज्य में पार्टी की पकड़ कितनी कमजोर हो गई है। बैठकों में पार्टी इस निष्कर्ष पर पहुंची कि संगठनात्मक परिवर्तन न केवल जमीनी स्तर और मध्य स्तरों पर, बल्कि मतदाताओं को 'एक संदेश भेजने' के लिए शीर्ष स्तर पर भी होना चाहिए। वाम दल सोशल मीडिया के जरिए भी युवाओं तक पहुंचने की कोशिश कर रहा है। माकपा पोलित ब्यूरो के सदस्य हन्नान मोल्लाह का कहना है, 'पार्टी एक असाधारण स्थिति से गुजर रही है और इस स्थिति में असाधारण उपायों की जरूरत है। इससे पहले हमारे सामने केवल तृणमूल थी। अब हम तृणमूल और भाजपा की दोहरी चुनौतियों का सामना कर रहे हैं।' परंतु, यहां सबसे बड़ा सवाल माकपा के लिए यह कि आखिर युवा नेता लाएंगे कहां से? माकपा की युवा एवं छात्र शाखा डीवाईएफआइ हो या फिर एसएफआइ आज दयनीय स्थिति में है। आज के युवाओं को माकपा की घीसीपीटी राजनीति में दिलचस्पी नहीं है। क्योंकि वामपंथी दलों ने कन्हैया जैसे कुछ युवाओं को चुनावी मैदान में उतारा, लेकिन उनकी जो सोच व विचारधारा है उसे लोगों ने एक सिरे से खारिज कर दिया है। ऐसे में माकपा के लिए युवाओं को पार्टी से जोड़ना आसान नहीं होगा। क्योंकि पिछले एक दशक से बंगाल ही नहीं पूरे देश की राजनीति काफी बदल चुकी है।

संवैधानिक कसौटी पर कितना खरा दांव

के तहत समानता का अधिकार सुनिश्चित होगा।

यह दावा भी किया गया कि बीते सात दशकों से

जम्मू-कश्मीर के लोगों को जो विशेष दर्जा और

खास अधिकार मिले थे उनसे मकसद हासिल

नहीं हुआ और ऐसे में कश्मीरियों के लिए समय

आ गया है कि वे राज्य में शांति और स्थानीय

लोकतंत्र को सशक्त बनाने के लिए एक नई

राष्ट्रीय कड़ी से जुड़ें। इस दृष्टि से फैसले को

मूल संवैधानिक मान्यताओं के अनुरूप पेश

सरकार की बुनियादी दलील है कि संविधान

को किसी कालखंड के दायरे में समेटकर

नहीं रखा जा सकता। राष्ट्र और लोकतंत्र

समकालीन स्थितियों के संदर्भों में विकसित

होते हैं। एक स्थिर समाज का विकास अपने

अंतर्निहित प्रभावों से अवरुद्ध हो जाता है। ऐसे

में आने वाली पीढ़ियों को इतिहास की बेड़ियों

से मुक्त होकर अपने अनुभवों के आधार पर

नए रास्ते तलाशने चाहिए। सरकार का दावा है

कि अनुच्छेद 370 एक अस्थायी संवैधानिक

प्रावधान है, जिसका उपयोग एवं प्रासंगिकता पर

निर्णय करने का अधिकार सरकार के पास है कि



अश्विनी कुमार

अनुच्छेद ३७० को खत्म करने के सरकार के निर्णय पर लोकप्रिय राष्ट्रीय धारणा नि :संदेह इसके पक्ष में है, लेकिन इस प्रक्रिया की संवैधानिक वैधानिकता को लेकर सवाल भी उट रहे हैं

दी-शाह की जोड़ी ने एक बड़ा दांव खेला है। मोदी सरकार ने जम्म्-कश्मीर में अनुच्छेद-370 समाप्त करते हुए राज्य को केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों में बांट दिया है। सरकार ने कश्मीरी लोगों के लिए शांतिपूर्ण एवं समृद्ध भविष्य का वादा करते हुए यह कदम उठाया। अब यह इतिहास ही तय करेगा कि सरकार ने जो हिम्मत दिखाई है, क्या वह वक्त से पहले उठाया गया कदम मानी जाएगी या फिर उसे इस तरह याद किया जाएगा कि ऐसे फैसले का समय आ गया था। चूंकि यह निर्णय देश को जोड़ने वाली कड़ी के रूप में देखा गया तो निःसंदेह लोकप्रिय राष्ट्रीय धारणा इसके पक्ष में है, लेकिन इस प्रक्रिया की संवैधानिक वैधानिकता को लेकर सवाल उठ रहे हैं। अब इसका फैसला शीर्ष अदालत को करना है जो कदम मुख्य रूप से राजनीतिक लिहाज से उठाया गया प्रतीत होता है।

संवैधानिक दृष्टि से देखें तो याचिकाकर्ता सहित इसके आलोचकों को लगता है कि सरकार का यह कदम देश के संघीय ढांचे पर प्रहार है। वे महसूस करते हैं कि यह विलय की संधि में कश्मीरियों के साथ किए गए वादे का शर्मनाक तरीके से किया उल्लंघन है। वे इस कदम को 'संवैधानिक विरूपता' की संज्ञा भी दे रहे हैं। बहस हो रही है कि अनुच्छेद 370 की धारा तीन को संवैधानिक गारंटी के मूल को खत्म करने के लिए इस्तेमाल नहीं किया जा सकता। लिहाजा ऐसी कोई भी व्याख्या

कानूनी तौर पर असंभव है। आलोचकों की दलील है कि चूंकि संविधान के अनुसार भारत राज्यों का एक संघ है तो इस स्थिति में वह किसी केंद्रशासित प्रदेश को अवश्य पूर्ण राज्य का दर्जा दे सकता है, लेकिन एक संप्रभु शक्ति के रूप में उसने कभी किसी प्रदेश के पूर्ण राज्य का दर्जा खत्म नहीं किया। केंद्र सरकार के एकतरफा निर्णय के खिलाफ मुख्य कानूनी आपत्ति यही है कि इसमें राज्य के चुने हुए जनप्रतिनिधियों की सहमति नहीं ली गई है जो कि मूल संवैधानिक व्यवस्था के दृष्टिकोण से अनिवार्य है। नवगठित केंद्रशासित प्रदेश में विधानसभा के दायरे को सीमित करना 'एक बड़े तबके को पूर्ण लोकतांत्रिक भागीदारी के अधिकार से वंचित करने' के रूप में देखा जा रहा है। यहां बहुसंख्यक भावनाएं भुनाने के लिए संवैधानिक सिद्धांतों को ताक पर रख दिया गया। यह कार्यकारी शक्ति के अतिक्रमण के विरुद्ध पूरक संवैधानिक संरक्षण की अवहेलना के क्रम में अनुच्छेद 14 का उल्लंघन करता है।

वहीं इसके पक्ष में भी उतनी ही मजबूती से तर्क दिए जा रहे हैं। इस पर संसदीय हस्तक्षेप में गृहमंत्री अमित शाह ने सामाजिक एवं आर्थिक न्याय, लैंगिक समानता का सिद्धांत और राज्य में शांति एवं तरक्की की उम्मीद का हवाला दिया। वहीं केंद्र द्वारा दिए गए अधिकारों से कश्मीरियों को भी अन्य नागरिकों की तरह विकास के पूरे लाभ मिलेंगे। इससे संविधान के अनुच्छेद 14



वह किसी विशेष संदर्भ में इसका आकलन कर सकती है। केंद्र सरकार शायद इसमें अदालत के क्षेत्राधिकार को भी चुनौती देते हुए दलील दे कि एक चुनी हुई सरकार को भारत की एकता और कश्मीरी लोगों की प्रगति को ध्यान में खकर एक नीति आधारित राजनीतिक निर्णय करने का अधिकार है। इस लिहाज से यह न्यायिक समीक्षा का विषय नहीं हो सकता और यह 'न्यायिक शासनीय मानदंडों' के दायरे में नहीं आता। अदालत को आगाह किया जाएगा कि वह किसी 'राजनीतिक झंझावात' में न पडे। इस विषय पर संवैधानिक नीतिशास्त्र की भी दुहाई दी जाएगी और स्मरण कराया जाएगा कि संवैधानिक गारंटी स्थिर नहीं होती और यह समय के अनुसार बदलती रहती है। अपने निर्णय के समर्थन में सरकार आवश्यकता के सिद्धांत का हवाला भी दे सकती है कि अतीत में भी अनुच्छेद 370 को लेकर ऐसी प्रक्रियाएं

इसमें न तो कोई बुद्धिमानी है और न ही यह संभव है कि इस मामले में अदालती रुख के आकलन का जोखिम लिया जाए।

अपनाई जा चुकी हैं।

कड़ी परीक्षा अवश्य होगी। मौजूदा राष्ट्रीय मिजाज को देखते हुए संविधान की व्याख्या में 'मूलवाद (ओरिजिनलिज्म) की ऐतिहासिक अस्वीकार्यता' बड़ी लुभावनी प्रतीत होती है हालांकि सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने जो न्यायिक सक्रियत दिखाई है, उसमें मामले को नकारने की गुंजाइश नहीं है। जैसे समाज में बदलाव जीवन का नियम है, वैसे ही समाज में आ रहे बदलावो पर प्रतिक्रिया भी कानुनी जीवन का हिस्सा है वास्तव में न्यायिक समीक्षा की विस्तृत शक्ति स्वयं ही इस सिद्धांत पर संचालित होती है कि किसी संविधान को नए प्रारूप में सार्थकता देनी होती है। वहीं सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने भी स्थिर न्यायिक व्याख्या द्वारा संविधान की भावना को धता बताने के खतरे को लेकर आगाह किया है।

फिर भी कानूनी चुनौतियों के परिणामो के लिहाज से स्पष्ट है कश्मीर को लेकर विरोधाभासी विमर्श की निर्णायक लड़ाई अदालती कक्षों या लुटियंस दिल्ली की बैठको में और कश्मीर की सड़कों पर नहीं लर्ड़ जाएगी। कश्मीर में शांति और समृद्धि की लडाई में हार-जीत का फैसला इसी से तय होगा कि भारतीय लोग अपने दिल और दिमाग में क्या रखते हैं। कश्मीर की नियति राजनीतिक विमर्श में अपने यही अर्थ प्रस्तुत करती है कि देश केवल रोटी के सहारे ही जिंदा नहीं रहते सरकार के सामने सबसे बड़ी चुनौती यही है कि वह कश्मीरी लोगों की पहचान और गरिमा का सम्मान करते हुए उनमें स्वैच्छिक देशभिक्त का जज्बा जगाने में सफल हो। उम्मीद है कि इस संदर्भ में प्रधानमंत्री के आश्वस्तकारी बयान से जुड़ी योजना जल्द ही मूर्त रूप लेगी। इससे ही भारत की 'सभ्य' देश वाली छवि मखरित होगी जो उसके मूल्यों से 'सॉफ्ट पावर' में परिलक्षित

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गांधीवाद की ओर लौटने की दरकार

एक दिन बाद हम आजादी की वर्षगांठ मनाएंगे। इस अवसर पर स्वत्रंतता दिलाने वाले सेनानियों का स्मरण भी स्वाभाविक रूप से किया जाएगा। यह भी एक संयोग है कि इस वर्ष दो अक्टूबर को आजादी के सबसे बड़े नायक माने जाने वाले महात्मा गांधी के जन्म के 150 वर्ष पूरे होंगे। इस उपलक्ष्य में अनेक संस्थाओं ने गांधी के समय के मूल्यों, स्वतंत्रता के बाद के भारत की संकल्पनाओं के साकार होने की स्थिति तथा देश में जनतंत्र के स्वरूप पर विचार-विमर्श आयोजित किए। स्वच्छता पर विशेष ध्यान दिया गया। 15 अगस्त, 2014 को लाल किले की प्राचीर से प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने गांधी जी के जन्म के 150 वर्ष पूरे होने पर देश की ओर से उन्हें स्वच्छ भारत की सौगात देने का संकल्प लिया था। पहले तो सुनकर लोगों को अचंभा हुआ, मगर धीरे-धीरे स्वच्छता के महत्व को समझा गया। बड़े उत्साह से शौचालयों के निर्माण का कार्य सारे देश में हुआ। आज 27 राज्य/केंद्र शासित प्रदेश खुले में शौच से मुक्त हैं और 98.6 प्रतिशत परिवारों को शौचालय उपलब्ध हैं। स्वच्छता महात्मा गांधी को अत्यंत प्रिय थी। वह इस सौगात से प्रसन्न अवश्य होते, लेकिन अभी इस पर बहुत कुछ करना शेष है।

नरेंद्र मोदी की कर्मठता और जीवन शैली का प्रभाव प्रशासन के अंतिम छोर तक तो पहुंचा है और उसके परिणामस्वरूप शौचालय केवल कागजों पर नहीं बने हैं, मगर उनके निर्माण में जो गुणवत्ता-स्तर अपेक्षित था, उसमें कमी रही होगी। अब लोग सरकारी धन के अपव्यय को देखकर शिकायत नहीं करते। उसे सामान्य मान चुके हैं। यह चिंता का विषय है। महात्मा गांधी के जीवनकाल में ही उनके आदर्श देश भर में पहुंच चुके थे। उस समय यदि ऐसे किसी कार्य में थोड़ा भी क्षरण होता तो लोग सशक्त विरोध करते। यदि वे जीवन मूल्य तिरोहित न हो गए होते तो संभवतः स्वच्छ भारत की संकल्पना इन वर्षों में सही स्वरूप ले चुकी होती, जिस पर समूचा विश्व आश्चर्य करता। स्वच्छता आवश्यक है, मगर और भी बहुत कुछ फिर से पाना है। आज भी देश में तमाम लोग राष्ट्र के कार्य में इस आशा के साथ जुटे हुए हैं कि यह देश महात्मा गांधी के मुल्यों से स्वयं को कभी अलग नहीं कर पाएगा। नरेंद्र मोदी की स्वच्छता-सोच उसी का एक उदाहरण है। महात्मा गांधी के विचारों को अपनाने वाले लोग भी हर क्षेत्र में कार्यरत हैं। इनकी संख्या कैसे बढ़े, उनका विश्वास कैसे बढे और इनकी ओर अधिकाधिक लोग कैसे आकर्षित हों, इस पर भी आज चर्चा होनी चाहिए।



की धारा बनकर क्षति पहुंचा रही है



भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा के नामचीन अधिकारी रहे महेश नीलकंठ बुच का प्रकाशित संकलन वर्तमान स्थिति तक पहुंचने के कारणों का एक अत्यंत सूक्ष्म विश्लेषण प्रस्तुत करता है। साथ ही साथ उन संभावनाओं को भी चिन्हित करता है जो राष्ट्र-निर्माण के लिए आवश्यक मूल्यों को पुनः जागृत कर सकती हैं, जिनके आधार पर देश स्वतंत्र हो पाया था। अपनी कर्मठता, लगनशीलता तथा सिद्धांतपरकता के लिए सदा सराहे गए 'एमएन बुच' ने आठ साल पहले ही सेवानिवृत्ति ले ली थी, क्योंकि वह राजनीतिक दबाव में अपने नैतिक मूल्यों से हटने को तैयार नहीं थे! दिल्ली विकास प्राधिकरण के प्रमुख पद पर रहते हुए 1978 में उन्होंने पाया कि 92 प्रतिशत आवंटन विवेकाधीन/तरजीही कोटे में आते हैं। इसमें सामान्य व्यक्ति के लिए केवल आठ प्रतिशत बचता है। तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री मोरारजी देसाई से मिलकर वह इसमें संशोधन कराने में सफल हुए। जैसा अपेक्षित था, व्यवस्था में लोग नाखुश हए। उन्हें इसका अंजाम भी भुगतना पड़ा! बुच के लेखों में कुछ ऐसे प्रकरणों की चर्चा है जो आज भी लोगों के अंतर्मन को झकझोर सकने की क्षमता रखते हैं। ये स्पष्ट करते हैं कि महात्मा गांधी के समय के मुल्य किस अनुपात में तिरोहित हो चुके हैं और इसके दुष्परिणाम सामान्य व्यक्ति पर कैसे पड रहे हैं।

केंद्र सरकार में मंत्री तथा असम के राज्यपाल रहे

स्वतंत्रता सेनानी श्री प्रकाश महात्मा गांधी के सानिध्य में रहे, देश के हर बड़े नेता के साथ उन्होंने कार्य किया। सेवानिवृत्ति के बाद एक दिन उनकी पोती ने उन्हें उदास देखकर कारण पूछा। उन्हें बंबई से मद्रास जाना था, मगर रेल का टिकट उपलब्ध नहीं था। उनकी पोती ने उन्हें टिकट लाकर दिया! दादा जी के पूछने पर उसने बताया कि किसी एजेंट को पचास रुपये अलग से दिए थे, काम हो गया! दादा जी ने टिकट स्वीकार नहीं किया, उन्होंने कहा कि वह गांधी के देश में पैदा हुए हैं, वे ऐसे टिकट पर यात्रा कैसे कर सकते हैं? उनकी पोती नें कहा कि मैं भी गांधी के देश में ही पैदा हुई हूं! इस पर जो उत्तर उसे मिला वह किसी के भी सामने पूरा परिदृश्य खोल कर रख देता है: 'बेटी, मेरे गांधी थे मोहनदास करमचंद गांधी और तुम्हारी गांधी हैं इंदिरा गांधी!' महेश बच ने 1967 के बाद आए परिवर्तन का बड़ा ही सटीक वर्णन अन्य कई प्रकरणों में भी किया है। मंत्री के स्तर पर मानवीय संवेदनाओं से युक्त कर्तव्यनिष्ठ आचरण की एक घटना अत्यंत मर्मस्पर्शी है। काका साहेब गाडगील पंडित नेहरू की सरकार में मंत्री थे। वह महात्मा गांधी, नेहरू, पटेल जैसे नेताओं के निकट सहयोगी रहे थे। एक बार बंबई दौरे पर उन्होंने सीपीडब्ल्युडी के कुछ कार्यों का निरीक्षण किया। उस विभाग के मुख्य अधिकारी नें उन्हें अपने घर पर भोजन के लिए आमंत्रित किया। उन्होंने अपने सचिव से कहा कि चांदी की थालियों में भोजन परोसा गया था। इस अधिकारी के आचरण और ईमानदारी की जांच की जाए! उनके सजग सहयोगी ने बताया कि वे थालियां तो एक अतिथि गृह से मंगाई गई थीं, और ऐसा उन पर मुद्रित था। काका साहेब को लगा कि उन्होंने गलत अनुमान के आधार पर उस अधिकारी के बारे में धारण बनाई। इस गलती के प्रायश्चित के लिए काका साहेब ने उसी समय उस अधिकारी के घर जाकर उनसे क्षमा मांगी।

आज राजनीति के पटल पर महत्वपूर्ण माने जाने वाले कुछ नामों की चर्चा अवश्य होती है कि कहां से चले थे, कहां तक पहुंच गए! जाहिर है महात्मा गांधी को भुलाने से ही अपरिग्रह की संस्कृति संग्रह की धारा बन गई है! साफ है कि महात्मा गांधी को भुलाकर पंक्ति के अंतिम छोर पर खड़े व्यक्ति को उसके अधिकार नहीं मिल पाएंगे। भारत में गांधी जी के द्वारा अपनाए गए शाश्वत मुल्यों की पुनर्स्थापना ही विकल्प है।

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मानव जीवन

मानव जीवन प्राप्त होना इस सृष्टि का सर्वोत्कृष्ट उपहार है। मानव जीवन प्राप्त होने का आशय है आनंद का द्वार खुलना। हमारे ऋषियों ने इस मानव जीवन को मोक्ष रूपी मंदिर का प्रवेश द्वार माना है। यही स्वर्णिम काल है जिसमें मनुष्य भौतिक उन्नति के साथ-साथ आध्यात्मिक उन्नति भी कर सकता है। मनुष्य योनि आत्म कल्याण करने का सबसे उत्तम साधन है। पुण्य कर्म संपादित करके नूतन पथ तैयार करने का अवसर इसी मानव जीवन में उपलब्ध होता है। मनुष्य जीवन साधना, उपासना के माध्यम से आत्म तत्व का साक्षात्कार करने की स्वर्णिम वेला है। सद् ग्रंथों के उपदेशों तथा उच्च कोटि के साधकों के मार्गदर्शन मे इस मानव जीवन में अनेक प्रकार की आध्यात्मिक उपलब्धियों को अर्जित किया जा सकता है। सुक्ष्म शरीर पर पड़े जन्म जन्मांतरों के संस्कारों तथा तामसिक वृत्तियों को आध्यात्मिक साधना के माध्यम से दूर करने का पावन अवसर इसी जीवन में प्राप्त होता है। इस दृश्य जगत में रहते हुए निःस्वार्थ भाव से कर्तव्य कर्म करते हुए जीवन को आनंदमय बनाना मनुष्य के हाथ में है।

यह जीवन दुखों से निवृत्ति के लिए प्राप्त हुआ है इस जीवन में यदि मनुष्य दुखी, चिंताग्रस्त होकर अज्ञानी बनकर अपना समय व्यतीत कर देता है तो यह उसका दुर्भाग्य है। परमेश्वर ने मनुष्य को विवेक शक्ति रूपी आभूषण से अलंकृत करके इस संसार में भेजा है। मनुष्ट को प्रतिपल आत्मनिरीक्षण करना चाहिए। आत्मनिरीक्षण मानव जीवन का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण अंग है। इसे स्वयं की चिकित्सा कहा गया है। मन, वाणी, शरीर से कभी भी पाप कर्म न हो इसलिए सदैव सजग रहें। इस बहुमूल्य धरोहर को प्राप्त करके मनुष्य को अपने जीवन में उल्लास, आनंद एवं समृद्धि का संचार करना चाहिए भौतिक संपत्ति के साथ-साथ आध्यात्मिक संपत्ति अर्थात पुण्य कर्मों का संचय भी अवश्य करना चाहिए। भौतिक धन से तो केवल इस संसार की यात्रा सुखद बनती है, परंतु आध्यात्मिक धन मोक्ष प्राप्ति का मार्ग प्रशस्त करता है। यही इस मानव जीवन का सर्वोच्च लक्ष्य है।

आचार्य दीप चंद भारद्वाज

कम हो रही है खेती योग्य जमीन

हाल ही में संयुक्त राष्ट्र की जलवायु परिवर्तन संबंधी अंतर सरकारी समिति यानी आइपीसीसी ने जलवायु परिवर्तन और भूमि संबंधी अपनी रिपोर्ट जारी की है। इसमें कई चिंताजनक तथ्य उभरकर सामने आए हैं। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि दुनियाभर में 23 प्रतिशत खेती करने योग्य भूमि का क्षरण हो चुका है। वहीं भारत में 30 प्रतिशत भूमि अब कृषि योग्य नहीं रह गई है। इतना ही नहीं, बल्कि यह प्रक्रिया लगातार जारी है। दरअसल जब किन्हीं प्राकृतिक कारणों या फिर इंसानी गतिविधियों की वजह से उस क्षेत्र विशेष की भूमि की उत्पादकता में कमी आ जाने को भू-क्षरण कहते हैं। ऐसी जमीन में खेती करना संभव नहीं होता। यह अपनी तरह की पहली ऐसी रिपोर्ट नहीं है जिसमें इस तरह की हकीकत बयां की गई है। इससे पहले इसरो यानी भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन भी बता चुका है कि भारत के कुल भू-क्षेत्र का करीब 30 प्रतिशत भाग उपजाऊ लायक नहीं रहा यानी इतना हिस्सा रेगिस्तान या मरुभूमि में तब्दील हो चुका है।

अब तक जिन इलाकों में भू-जल खत्म हो

दुनिया में 23 प्रतिशत खेती योग्य भूमि का क्षरण हो चुका है। वहीं भारत में 30 प्रतिशत भूमि अब कृषि योग्य नहीं रह गई है

जाता है या फिर जहां पानी की मौजूदगी नहीं होती उन्हें मरु भूमि घोषित कर दिया जाता है। क्योंकि जल के अभाव में वहां किसी तरह की खेतीबारी नहीं हो पाती है। लेकिन हाल के दिनों में भू-क्षरण की एक बड़ी वजह शहरीकरण भी बन कर उभरी है। चूंकि शहरीकरण के चलते नए नए सड़कों, पुलों, उद्योग धंधों, आवासीय कॉलोनियों और रेलवे लाइनों का निर्माण हो रहा है जिसके कारण खेती योग्य जमीने तेजी से खत्म हो रही हैं। इसके अलावा तीव्र जलवायु परिवर्तन, वन क्षेत्र का लगातार कम होने और कीटनाशकों एवं उर्वरकों के उपयोग के चलते भी जमीन की उर्वरा शक्ति कम हुई है। भू-क्षरण के इन कारणों पर अभी दुनिया का बहुत ज्यादा ध्यान नहीं गया है। लिहाजा इस समस्या के निवारण पर ज्यादा चर्चा भी नहीं हो पा रही है। यह समस्या इस वजह से भी विकराल होती

प्रतीत हो रही है, क्योंकि इसके कारण विभिन्न उपभोग की वस्तुओं की पैदावार में गिरावट देखी जा रही है। साथ ही जो खाद्य पदार्थ पैदा हो रहे हैं उनमें पोषक तत्वों भी कम होते जा रहे हैं। जाहिर है इससे हमारी खाद्य सुरक्षा बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो सकती है। पैदावार में गिरावट की वजह से खाद्य पदार्थों की कीमतें भी बढ़ रही हैं। वर्ष 2050 तक खाद्य वस्तुओं की कीमतें 23 प्रतिशत तक बढ़ सकती हैं।

हालांकि आइपीसीसी ने इस गंभीर प्राकृतिक आपदा से निपटने के लिए कुछ उपाय सुझाए हैं। मसलन उसने जीवाश्म ईंधन से होने वाले कार्बन उत्सर्जन को रोकने के साथ-साथ खेती के तौर-तरीकों में बदलाव करने, शाकाहार को बढ़ावा देने और जमीन का सोच-समझकर इस्तेमाल करने का अहम सुझाव दिया है। जाहिर है यदि हमें समय रहते इस समस्या से निजात पाना है तो हमें अपनी विकास की दिशा बदलनी होगी, क्योंकि विकास की हमारी मौजूदा प्रक्रिया हमें विनाश की ओर ले जा रही है। इसमें प्रकृति को हमें अपना साथी बनाना होगा। इससे ग्रीनहाउस गैसों का उत्सर्जन कम होगा और जमीन की गुणवत्ता बरकरार रहेगी। (लेखिका शिक्षिका हैं)

बदले हालात में कश्मीर को संवारना जरूरी

कश्मीरियों से सच्चे संवाद की जरूरत शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में शंकर शरण ने कश्मीर को विशेष दर्जा देने वाले अस्थायी अनुच्छेद-370 और 35-ए के खात्मे के बाद कश्मीरियों से जिस सार्थक संवाद की जरूरत पर बल दिया है, वह उचित है। वस्तुतः बदले हालात में अब केंद्र शासित जम्मू-कश्मीर और लद्दाख को संवारने की जिम्मेदारी भारत सरकार की है। इसके प्रति प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने देश के नाम अपने संबोधन में कश्मीर को संवारने की जैसी प्रतिबद्धता जताई है, वह गौर करने लायक है। ऐसे में कश्मीरी मुसलमानों को भी यह समझना होगा कि कश्मीर में उनके बहुसंख्यक होने के बाद भी अल्पसंख्यक कश्मीरी पंडितों और सिखों का भी कश्मीर पर बराबर का हक है। देश की उस पंथनिरपेक्ष पहचान को शेष भारत की तरह कश्मीर में भी बनाए रखने की जरूरत है, जिसे कश्मीर की झूठी आजादी की ओट में पाक पोषित आतंकवादी और अलगाववादी पिछले तीन दशकों से छिन्न-भिन्न करने की कोशिश में लगे हुए थे। आतंक पीड़ित अल्पसंख्यक कश्मीरी पंडितों और सिखों का सामृहिक नरसंहार इनकी इसी कोशिश का एक हिस्सा था, जिसे मोदी शासन में नाकाम कर दिया गया। मोदी सरकार ने ही कश्मीरियों सहित अन्य देशवासियों को इस बात की अनुभूति कराई कि कश्मीर संप्रभु भारत राष्ट्र का एक हिस्सा है जो अब संवैधानिक रूप से केंद्र शासित है। इस दृष्टि से बदलते परिवेश में 1990 से पहले की महकती कश्मीरियत को पुनर्जीवित करने की जिम्मेदारी अब वहां के उन स्थानीय नागरिकों की भी है जो अभी तक अलगाववादियों और आतंकवादियों के बहकावे में आकर अपनी रक्षक भारतीय सेना पर ही पत्थर बरसाते रहे हैं। निःसंदेह यह काम आपसी संवाद से ही संभव है. जिसकी

मेलबाक्स

पहल भारतीय सुरक्षा सलाहकार अजीत डोभाल सहित खुद प्रधानमंत्री मोदी कर चुके हैं। आतंकवाद की कोख मानी जाने वाली कश्मीर घाटी की वह युवा शक्ति जो अभी तक शेष भारत से कटी रही, उसे अपनी दक्षता से बदलते कश्मीर को संवारना होगा। इसके लिए भारत और उसकी भारतीयता से कटने की नहीं अपितु जुड़ने की जरूरत है।

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चिदबरम का बचकाना बयान

कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेता पी चिदंबरम ने अनुच्छेद 370 पर अपना बयान देते हुए इसे हिंदू मुसलमान के साथ जोड़ने की कोशिश की। यह बयान उनकी मानसिकता को दर्शाता है। इससे पहले भी उन्होंने जम्मू-कश्मीर पर लोकतंत्र की हत्या होने वाला बयान दिया था, जिसकी पाकिस्तान में खूब चर्चा हुई थी। चिदंबरम जैसे नेताओं के बयानों को ना तो सरकार को और ना ही मीडिया को महत्व देना चाहिए। ऐसे नेताओं के कारण ही दुश्मन देश को भारत के आंतरिक मामलों में बोलने का मौका मिल जाता है। पी चिदंबरम जैसे नेताओं को कुछ भी बोलने से पहले अपने भीतर झांकने की जरूरत है। ऐसे नेताओं के कारण ही शायद कांग्रेस खत्म हो रही है। विजय किशोर तिवारी, नई दिल्ली

दोहरे चरित्र वाला पाकिस्तान

पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान उनके मंत्री और नोबल पुरस्कार विजेता मलाल युसुफजई का जम्मू-कश्मीर में रह रहे मुसलमानों के प्रति प्रेम उमड़ रहा है। काश यही प्रेम पाकिस्तान में रह रहे अल्पसंख्यकों के प्रति भी उमड़ता तो लोग यही कहते कि पाकिस्तान के लोगों का नजरिया एक है। लेकिन जब देखने का नजरिया दोहरे स्तर का हो तो सवाल उठना लाजिमी है। पाक में अल्पसंख्यक समुदायों के साथ वहां की सेना और प्रशासन जिस तरह का व्यवहार करता है वह बेहद दुखद है। लेकिन सेना के खिलाफ न तो इमरान खान और न ही मलाला की जुबान खुलती है। कम से कम अपने यहां हो रही ज्यादती पर भी उन्हें चिता करनी चाहिए नीरज कुमार पाठक, नोएडा

महंगी शिक्षा का हो मूल्यांकन

सीबीएसई ने 10वीं और 12वीं की परीक्षा शुल्क प्रत्येक विषय पर 150 रुपये से बढ़ाकर 300 रुपये कर दिया हैं पहले विद्यार्थियों के कुल विषयों का व्यय 750 रुपये था लेकिन अब उन्हें 1500 रुपये कुल व्यय करने पड़ेंगे अभिभावकों को पहले ही शुल्क अदा करने में कई परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ता था, अब तो और भी ज्यादा दिक्कत होगी। सरकार को इस विषय का मूल्यांकन करना चाहिए।

विनीत, आंबेडकर कॉलेज, दिल्ली

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

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इन्स्

रणनीतिक कदम

प्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के बाद दुनिया के ज्यादातर देशों ने भारत के इस फैसले को उसका अंदरूनी मामला बताते हुए इस मुद्दे से उचित दूरी बना ली है। पाकिस्तान के दो सबसे प्रमुख सहयोगी और हमदर्द चीन और अमेरिका ने हाल में जिस तरह का रुख दिखाया है, उससे साफ है कि कश्मीर मुद्दे पर अब पाकिस्तान को कोई अहमियत नहीं मिल रही। भारत के विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर इन दिनों चीन की सरकारी यात्रा पर हैं और उन्होंने चीनी विदेश मंत्री के साथ बातचीत में यह साफ कर दिया है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 को हटा कर उसे संशोधित रूप में लागू करना और राज्य को विभाजित कर दो केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बनाने का फैसला पूरी तरह से भारत का अंदरूनी मसला है। अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाने के तुरंत बाद चीन ने लद्दाख को केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बनाने को लेकर अपनी असहमति जताई थी। लहाख का हिस्सा अक्साईचिन तक है और यह इलाका भारत और चीन दोनों के लिए ही सामरिक दृष्टि से महत्त्वपूर्ण है। इसलिए चीन ने अपनी तात्कालिक प्रतिक्रिया में कहा था कि जम्मू-कश्मीर के मामले में भारत एकतरफा कार्रवाई से बचे। लेकिन उसने अपनी प्रतिक्रिया में ऐसा कुछ नहीं कहा था जो पाकिस्तान के प्रति उसके समर्थन को जाहिर करता हो।

दरअसल, चीन नहीं चाहता कि भारत लद्दाख के क्षेत्र में विकास गतिविधियों को शुरू करे। इसलिए भारत ने अपनी स्थिति और रुख को स्पष्ट करते हुए बता दिया है कि अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाने से पाकिस्तान और चीन दोनों के साथ सीमाओं में किसी तरह का कोई बदलाव नहीं हुआ है और भारत ने यह कदम जम्मू-कश्मीर और लद्दाख के बेहतर विकास के लिए उठाया है। विदेश मंत्री बनने के बाद एस जयशंकर की यह पहली चीन यात्रा है। हाल के घटनाक्रमों के मद्देनजर उनकी इस यात्रा का महत्त्व इसलिए भी बढ़ गया है कि अनुच्छेद 370 हटाए जाने के बाद पाकिस्तान के विदेश मंत्री ने चीन यात्रा की थी और भारत के इस कदम के खिलाफ बयान जारी करने को कहा था। लेकिन चीन ने संयम बरतते हुए बयान दिया, जिसमें बुनियादी चिंता लद्दाख को लेकर ही थी। दरअसल, चीन भी हकीकत को समझता है। उसने पिछले एक साल में देखा है कि जैश सरगना मौलाना मसूद अजहर पर संयुक्त राष्ट्र की पाबंदी के मुद्दे पर उसे मुंह की खानी पड़ी है। इसलिए चीन अब पाकिस्तान को लेकर ऐसी कोई हमदर्दी दिखाने से बचना चाहेगा जिसमें भारत के खिलाफ कोई संदेश जाता हो। चीन इस बात को भी अच्छी तरह समझ रहा है कि सीमा विवाद के बावजूद भारत उसके लिए बड़ा बाजार है। ऐसे में चीन कश्मीर मुद्दे पर खुल कर पाकिस्तान के साथ नहीं आने वाला।

इसके अलावा, अब अमेरिका ने भी अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के बाद इस मुद्दे पर अपना रुख साफ करते हुए कहा है कि वह कश्मीर पर पुरानी नीति पर कायम है। अमेरिका ने अब तक कोई ऐसा बयान नहीं दिया जो मौजूदा हालात के मद्देनजर भारत के खिलाफ जाता हो। जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के बाद पाकिस्तान को लगा था कि दुनिया के ज्यादातर देश उसके साथ आ जाएंगे, लेकिन उसे निराशा ही हाथ लगी है। इस हकीकत की पृष्टि पाकिस्तान के विदेश मंत्री के उस बयान से होती है जिसमें उन्होंने अपने देश के नागरिकों से यहां तक कह डाला कि वे मुगालते में न रहें, क्योंकि जम्मू-कश्मीर का विशेष दर्जा वापस लिए जाने के भारत के फैसले के खिलाफ संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद (यूएनएससी) और मुसलिम जगत का समर्थन हासिल करना पाकिस्तान के लिए आसान नहीं है। पाकिस्तानी विदेश मंत्री का यह बयान उनकी हताशा बताने के लिए काफी है।

स्वायत्तता की खातिर

छिले करीब दो महीने से हांगकांग में विरोध प्रदर्शनों की जो लहर चल रही है, अब उसे थामना वहां के प्रशासन और चीन के लिए मुश्किल होता जा रहा है। सोमवार को हांगकांग हवाई अड्डे पर जिस तरह लोकतंत्र समर्थक प्रदर्शनकारियों की भारी तादाद उमड़ आई और इस वजह से विमानों का परिचालन रद्द करना पड़ा, उससे यही लगता है। कि ताजा विवाद का कोई हल निकलने के बजाय यह मसला और ज्यादा उलझता जा रहा है। हालत यह है कि प्रदर्शनकारियों ने हांगकांग के हवाई अड्डे पर उतरने वाले यात्रियों का स्वागत किया और इस बीच 'आजादी के लिए- लड़ाई' के नारे लगाए। जाहिर है, हाल में प्रत्यर्पण संधि के सवाल पर उठे विवाद की आंच अब इस रूप में सामने आ रही है कि हजारों लोग आजादी के नारे के साथ सड़क पर हैं। खबरों के मुताबिक, ताजा प्रदर्शन के दौरान लोगों के हाथों में मौजूद तख्तियों पर लिखा था-'हांगकांग हमारी हत्या कर रहा है, हांगकांग अब सुरक्षित नहीं रह गया है।' लेकिन इसके बरक्स चीन ने इस प्रदर्शन के दौरान वहां के पुलिस अधिकारियों पर पेट्रोल बम फेंकने जैसी हिंसा को आतंकवाद से जोड़ा है। तो हालात की जटिलता का अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है।

गौरतलब है कि हांगकांग अभी चीन का हिस्सा है, मगर वहां 'एक देश, दो व्यवस्था' के तहत शासन का संचालन होता है। इसका मतलब यह है कि हांगकांग के पास स्वायत्तता है और चीन के बाकी नागरिकों के मुकाबले इसके नागरिकों के पास कुछ विशेष अधिकार हैं। लेकिन वहां के प्रत्यर्पण बिल में किए गए नए बदलावों की घोषणा के बाद चीन को हांगकांग में किसी भी व्यक्ति को हिरासत में लेकर पूछताछ करने और उसे वापस भेजने को लेकर कई अधिकार प्राप्त हो जाएंगे। बाकी मामलों पर चीन का जो रुख रहा है, उसे देखते हुए ताजा कवायद ने स्वाभाविक ही वहां के लोगों की चिंता को बढ़ा दिया है। उनका मानना है कि इसके लागू होने के बाद न सिर्फ यहां के लोगों पर चीन का कानून लागू हो जाएगा, बल्कि यह सीधे तौर पर हांगकांग की स्वायत्तता को भी प्रभावित करेगा। हालांकि चीन का ऐसे मामलों में जो रिकार्ड रहा है, उसे देखते हुए इस आशंका से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है कि इस कानून के अस्तित्व में आने के बाद शक के घेरे में आए लोगों को मनमाने आरोपों के तहत गिरफ्तार और प्रताड़ित किया जाए।

यों वहां सरकार ने यह आश्वासन देने की कोशिश की है कि प्रत्यर्पण से संबंधित इस कानून के तहत सिर्फ गंभीर और आपराधिक मामलों के अभियुक्तों को चीन भेजा जाएगा और इसके लिए भी हांगकांग के एक जज की मंजूरी अनिवार्य होगी, लेकिन स्थानीय लोग इसे राजनीतिक विरोधियों को ठिकाने लगाने के औजार के तौर पर देख रहे हैं। इसी क्रम में बारह जून को हुए विशाल प्रदर्शन के बाद एक जुलाई को आंदोलनकारियों ने कई घंटों तक संसद की इमारत को अपने कब्जे में रखा था। जाहिर है, खासतौर पर संसद भवन को नुकसान पहुंचाने को चीन ने अपने लिए एक बड़ी चुनौती के रूप में देखा और इसे 'एक देश, दो व्यवस्था' के सिद्धांत का उल्लंघन करार दिया। हांगकांग में लोकतंत्र के पक्ष में 2014 में उनयासी दिनों तक 'अंब्रेला मूवमेंट' चला था और उसके बाद चीन की सरकार ने उसमें भाग लेने वाले कई लोगों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई की थी। उसके बाद लोकतंत्र के हक में उठी ताजा आवाज पर भी चीन का जो रुख है, उससे साफ है कि प्रत्यर्पण बिल के सवाल से शुरू हुए इस आंदोलन को भी कई चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ सकता है।

कल्पमधा

अधिकतर लोग अपनी दुर्बलताओं को नहीं जानते यह सच है, लेकिन यह भी उतना ही सच है कि ज्यादातर लोग अपनी शक्ति को भी नहीं जानते। -जोनाथन स्विफ्ट

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उच्च शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता और प्रयोग

राज कुमार

वित्तीय आत्मनिर्भरता के लिए संस्थानों की बौद्धिक क्षमता को आधार बनाना होगा, तभी शोध परिणाम, उत्पाद, संरचना, संकल्पनाओं के पेटेंट अच्छी आय का स्रोत बन सकते हैं। विशेषज्ञता हासिल कर उद्योग जगत की आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप परामर्श के माध्यम से भी अनेक संस्थानों ने अच्छी कमाई की है। इसलिए संस्थानों की प्रवृत्ति और प्रकृति के अनुसार उनकी क्षमताओं के सही आकलन और दोहन के लिए उचित रणनीति बनाने की बनाने की जरूरत है।

मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय ने पिछले साल नवंबर में 'लीडरशिप फॉर एकेडेमिशियंस' (लीप) नामक एक अभिनव योजना का शुभारंभ किया था। इस योजना का उद्देश्य देश के उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों को विश्व रैंकिंग में अव्वल बनने के लिए तैयार करना था। इस योजना के तहत विभिन्न विश्वविद्यालयों के उन शिक्षाविदों को नेतत्व का प्रशिक्षण दिया गया जो योग्यता और योगदान की दृष्टि से उच्च श्रेणी के और वरिष्ठता क्रम में द्वितीय स्तर पर थे और जो भविष्य के नेतृत्व के लिए तत्पर थे। केंद्रीय भूमिका में नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ रैंकिंग फ्रेमवर्क (एनआइआरएफ) रैंकिंग में शीर्षस्थ संस्थाओं को दायित्व दिया गया। इनमें मुंबई, कानपुर, खड़गपुर और रुड़की के भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (आइआइटी), राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (एनआइटी)- त्रिची, आइआइएसआर- कोलकाता, जेएनय (दिल्ली), दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय, टाटा इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ सोशल साइंस-मुंबई, हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय, बनारस हिंदु विश्वविद्यालय- वाराणसी और अलीगढ़

मुसलिम विश्वविद्यालय जैसे प्रमुख संस्थान शामिल थे।

चयनित शिक्षाविदों को पहले दो सप्ताह इन संस्थानों में

एक गहन प्रशिक्षण में सहभागिता करनी थी और फिर विश्व के एक शीर्षस्थ विश्वविद्यालय में एक सप्ताह के अध्ययन के लिए जाना था। इस प्रशिक्षण के लिए मिशिगन विश्वविद्यालय (अमेरिका), एनटीयू (सिंगापुर), हॉर्वर्ड विश्वविद्यालय, परडु विश्वविद्यालय, शिकागो विश्वविद्यालय, स्टैनफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालय (अमेरिका), मोनास विश्वविद्यालय (मेलबर्न) और ऑक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालय (इंग्लैंड) का चयन हुआ। शुरुआती दो सप्ताह के प्रशिक्षण हेतु प्रशिक्षक के रूप में देश के जाने-माने शिक्षाविदों, प्रशासकों , वैज्ञानिकों को इसमें निमंत्रित किया गया था। कार्यक्रम में जहां प्रशिक्षु शिक्षाविदों को शैक्षिक संस्थानों में नेतृत्व का अर्थ समझाया गया, वहीं गुणवत्ता बढ़ाने के लिए किए जाने वाले प्रयासों की सम्यक रूपरेखा भी दी गई। संस्थानों में अच्छी टीम के निर्माण से

लेकर शिक्षण और शोध की गुणवत्ता सुधारने जैसे विषयों पर गहन प्रशिक्षण हुआ। विदेश प्रवास के दौरान इन्हें एक विश्वस्तरीय विश्वविद्यालय की कार्य-पद्धति के गहन अध्ययन का अवसर मिला। इस योजना का प्रथम चरण पूर्ण हो गया है और सारे शिक्षाविद प्रशिक्षण के बाद अपने-अपने संस्थानों में वापस आ गए हैं। अपेक्षित परिणाम के लिए अब उपयुक्त रणनीति की आवश्यकता है जिससे यह स्पष्ट हो कि शिक्षाविदों के प्रशिक्षण के बाद उनके संस्थानों में क्या बदलाव आया। परिवर्तन और परिवर्द्धन के लिए नई सोच, सम्यक दृष्टिकोण, उत्कृष्टता की प्रतिबद्धता और प्रशासनिक सहयोग की जरूरत होती है। इस अत्यंत महत्त्वपूर्ण और भविष्य को ध्यान में रख कर बनाई गई योजना के सुपरिणाम उत्तराखंड के

पंतनगर में स्थित गोबिंद बल्लभ पंत कृषि एवं प्रौद्योगिक विश्वविद्यालय में देखने को मिले। क्या रही उनकी रणनीति और कैसे रहे उनके परिणाम, यह देश के दसरे संस्थानों के लिए अध्ययन का विषय होना चाहिए।

लीप परियोजना के अंतर्गत गोबिंद बल्लभ पंत कृषि एवं प्रौद्योगिक विश्वविद्यालय से तीन प्राध्यापकों (वैज्ञानिकों) का चयन हुआ। तीनों वैज्ञानिक हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय और फिर मोनास विश्वविद्यालय (आस्ट्रेलिया) गए। इन तीनों वैज्ञानिकों के अनुसार टीम में जाने का लाभ यह मिला कि तीनों सहभागियों ने प्रत्येक दिन साथ बैठ कर नए दुष्टिकोण और अपने विश्वविद्यालय के संदर्भ में संभावित परिवर्तनों को लेकर विचार-विमर्श किया। यह टीम एक सम्यक सोच और रणनीति के साथ वापस लौटी। विश्वविद्यालय प्रशासन ने इन प्राध्यापकों के विचारों और योजनाओं का सम्मान किया। पंतनगर

विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति ने तीनों वैज्ञानिकों का व्याख्यान आयोजित करवा कर उसमें विश्वविद्यालय के लिए महत्त्वपूर्ण कार्यों की रूपरेखा बनवाई। इससे यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि रैंकिंग सुधारने का आधार शोध गुणवत्ता के विकास पर बहुत निर्भर है। इसी में यह बात भी उठी कि स्वायत्तता मूल कुंजी है, पर इसी के साथ जवाबदेही भी जुड़ी है। अच्छे परिणामों के लिए उत्कृष्ट, जिम्मेवार, अनुशासित और स्व-प्रेरित शिक्षकों का समूह जरूरी है। देश के जिन संस्थानों में यह हो पाया वे संस्थान अपनी अलग पहचान बनाने में सफल हुए।

दुनिया के उत्कृष्ट विश्वविद्यालयों के उदाहरण देखने पर यह भी पता चला कि वित्तीय आत्मनिर्भरता के लिए संस्थानों की बौद्धिक क्षमता को आधार बनाना होगा, तभी शोध परिणाम, उत्पाद, संरचना, संकल्पनाओं का पेटेंट अच्छी आय का स्रोत बन सकते हैं। विशेषज्ञता हासिल कर उद्योग जगत की आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप परामर्श के



माध्यम से भी अनेक संस्थानों ने अच्छी कमाई की है। इसलिए संस्थानों की प्रवृत्ति और प्रकृति के अनुसार उनकी क्षमताओं के सही आकलन और दोहन के लिए उचित रणनीति बनाने की बनाने की जरूरत है।

गोबिंद बल्लभ पंत कृषि एवं प्रौद्योगिक विश्वविद्यालय में विश्वविद्यालय रैंकिंग संवर्धन टीम बनाई गई है। इसमें परे विश्वविद्यालय के प्रत्येक महाविद्यालय के प्राध्यापक शामिल किए गए हैं। इस टीम ने संस्थान की क्षमता आकलन का अभियान शुरू किया है जिससे संस्थान की कमियों का पता लगा कर उन्हें दूर करने का काम किया जा सके। इस दल के शिक्षकों का मानना है कि अभी तो संस्थान की वर्तमान उपलब्धियों और क्षमताओं का सही मायने में संकलन ही कर लिया जाए तो रैंकिंग कुछ सुधर सकती है। इसके बाद मध्यम और लंबी अवधि की रणनीति बनाई जाए तो गुणवत्ता को काफी हद तक सुधारा जा सकता है।

भारतीय कृषि अनुसंधान परिषद द्वारा कृषि विश्वविद्यालय एवं संस्थानों की रैंकिंग का प्रस्ताव जारी हुआ है। यह दायित्व स्वाभाविक रूप से इस टीम को दिया गया। अपने अनुभवों और उत्कृष्टता के पैमानों को समक्ष रख इस टीम ने विश्वविद्यालय के योगदान से संबंधित आंकड़े जुटाए। संकलित आंकड़ों को आधार मानते हुए रैंकिंग संवर्धन टीम ने विश्वविद्यालय के उस प्रत्येक बिंदु को स्पर्श किया जहां उपलब्धियों के कुछ आंकड़े संकलन में शामिल नहीं हुए थे। पूर्व छात्रों के सहयोग से छात्रों के सेवायोजन के आंकड़े अद्यतन किए गए। अनेक परियोजना अधिकारियों और विशेषज्ञों से व्यक्तिगत रूप से मुलाकात करने का प्रयत्न हुआ। इस तरह सभी मानकों पर विश्वविद्यालय की स्थिति सुधरी। अब तक जहां अनेक मानकों की उपलब्धियों, जिन्हें पहले शुन्य माना जा रहा था, को नए सिरे से सुधारा गया जिससे अपनी क्षमताओं को समझने का अवसर मिला।

> कई स्तरों के आकलन और समीक्षा के बाद रैंकिंग संवर्धन टीम ने वर्ष 2018 के विश्वविद्यालय के योगदान पर आधारित अपना आइसीएआर रैंकिंग आवेदन तैयार किया। लीप योजना के क्रियान्वयन के बाद केवल कुछ महीने गुजरे थे, इसलिए अभी रैंकिंग टीम को उपलब्धियों को नए दृष्टिकोण से देखने का अवसर भर मिला। आत्म-अन्वेषण और सामग्री संयोजन के इस प्रयास ने पंतनगर विश्वविद्यालय को देश के चौंसठ कृषि विश्वविद्यालयों और तीन केंद्रीय कृषि विश्वविद्यालयों में पहले स्थान पर ला खड़ा किया। वर्ष 2019 की आइसीएआर रैंकिंग में दो आइसीएआर संस्थानों को प्रथम एवं द्वितीय रैंक मिली और तीसरे स्थान पर पंतनगर कृषि विश्वविद्यालय रहा। पिछले कई सालों से पंतनगर

का यह कृषि विश्वविद्यालय सातवें-आठवें स्थान पर बना हुआ था। रैंकिंग संवर्धन टीम के मुताबिक देश के किष विश्वविद्यालयों में विशिष्ट कार्य संस्कृति है। इस कारण कृषि विश्वविद्यालयों में विश्व के सर्वश्रेष्ठ शिक्षण संस्थान के रूप में उभरने की क्षमता है। प्रतियोगी भाव से देश के कृषि विश्वविद्यालय दुनिया के अग्रणी संस्थानों में अपना स्थान बनाने में सक्षम हो सकते हैं।

लीप परियोजना से देश के अनेक विश्वविद्यालयों ने कई महत्त्वपूर्ण उपलिधयां हासिल की हैं। विश्वविद्यालयों को उत्कृष्ट बनाने के लिए सबसे जरूरी है कि प्राध्यापकों की क्षमताओं का पूरा उपयोग किया जाए। इसके लिए मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय को अपने इस अभिनव प्रयास को जारी रखना होगा ताकि इस परियोजना के लाभों को सार्थक परिणामों तक पहुंचाया जाए। तभी देश उच्च शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में विश्व में अपना खास मुकाम बना पाएगा।

रिश्तों की डोर

अनीता यादव

🚁 न दिनों डिजिटल क्रांति के दूत मोबाइल को लेकर देश-दुनिया में एक खलबली-सी मची हुई है। यह खलबली मोबाइल से जुड़े नकारात्मक प्रभावों को लेकर है। मनुष्य एक सामाजिक प्राणी है, इसके बावजूद आज वह समाज से धीरे-धीरे कट रहा है। मोबाइल के जरिए वह सोशल मीडिया के फेसबुक, ट्विटर, वाट्सऐप, इंस्टाग्राम सरीखे माध्यमों पर लगभग हर वक्त सक्रिय रहता है। आधुनिक जीवन शैली ने पहले हमें पड़ोस से काट कर अलग कर दिया तो वर्तमान में मोबाइल परिवार से भी दूर करता जा रहा है, जो समाज की सबसे छोटी इकाई है।

दुनिया को तो हम मुट्ठी में कर लेने का दावा कर रहे हैं, लेकिन परिवार समेत सामाजिक संबंध और रिश्तों की डोर निरंतर कमजोर होकर टूट रही है। मित्रता और रिश्ते केवल सोशल मीडिया पर निभाए जा रहे हैं। वास्तविक जीवन में न कोई किसी के घर जाना चाहता है, न बुलाना चाहता है। समाज से दूर होता व्यक्ति तनाव, खीझ, अकारण डर की भावना सहित हीनता की भावना का भी शिकार हो रहा है। इसके बावजूद मोबाइल की गुलामी हमें प्रिय और सर्वस्वीकार्य भी लगती है। रात में नींद से उठ-

उठ कर अपनी पोस्ट पर पसंदगी और टिप्पणियां गिनना मानसिक बीमारी नहीं तो क्या है? हर वक्त नोटिफिकेशन की ध्विन न केवल कार्य-शैली को प्रभावित करती है, बल्कि मोबाइल में झांकने को भी बाध्य करती है।

आधुनिक जीवन में फैलता यह ऐसा व्यवधान है जो रोज न केवल मानसिक, बल्कि शारीरिक बीमारियों को भी न्योता दे रहा है। आधुनिक जीवन-शैली पर चल रहे शोध के अनुसार मोबाइल हमारे मन और शरीर, बल्कि उम्र को

भी प्रभावित कर रहा है। पिछले दिनों आस्ट्रेलिया के क्वींसलैंड स्थित सनशाइन कोस्ट यूनिवर्सिटी ने एक शोध में पाया कि ज्यादा समय मोबाइल देखते रहने

से सिर की हड्डी में वृद्धि देखी गई है। देखने में यह बिल्कुल सींग के आकार की ही लगती है, जो घंटों मोबाइल पर झुके रहने के कारण बननी शुरू होती है।

इस खबर को मीडिया से लेकर सोशल मीडिया तक पर खूब जगह मिली। ईयर फोन लगाकर रेलवे क्रॉसिंग और सडक पार करना तो हमारे यहां आम बात है, इससे हो रही दुर्घटनाओं में मरने वालों का आंकड़ा हर अगले साल नए रिकॉर्ड बना रहा है। इसी तरह, गाडी चलाते हुए मोबाइल में वीडियो देखने, फोन या गाने सुनने से भी हम बाज नहीं आते। हम समझना नहीं चाहते कि हमारे मस्तिष्क की बुनावट कुछ इस तरह से है कि एक समय पर एक ही कार्य में मस्तिष्क को केंद्रित कर सकते हैं। मस्तिष्क एक साथ कई काम करने के लिए नहीं बना। कछ अपवाद जरूर हो सकते हैं।

किसी मित्र या रिश्तेदार मरीज को अस्पताल में मिलने जाने पर हम मरीज से कितनी बातें करते हैं? सेल्फी लेने और उसे सोशल मीडिया पर डालने में ही समय बिता कर लौट आते हैं। यह 'सेल्फी मेनिया' कई बार नैतिक सीमाओं का अतिक्रमण कर

जाता है जब लोग मृतक की दुनिया मेरे आगे मुखाग्नि या दाह संस्कार की तस्वीर भी साझा करने से बाज नहीं आते। हम जीवन के किन क्षणों को सार्वजनिक करें, इसकी सीमा तय करना जरूरी है।

मोबाइल के रूप में मुट्ठी में समाई 'वर्चुअल' यानी आभासी दुनिया क्या हमारी वास्तविक दुनिया को धीरे-धीरे लील नहीं रही ? आज हम तकनीक को इस्तेमाल नहीं कर रहे, बल्कि तकनीक हमें इस्तेमाल कर रही है। कुछ समय पहले तक हम बताने में असमर्थ थे कि हमारे पडोस में कौन रहता है. अब यह बताने में असमर्थ हैं कि घर में कौन हमारे साथ है। खाने की मेज से लेकर बिस्तर तक पर भी हम मोबाइल के साथ होते हैं। सोशल मीडिया के 'स्टेटस' को आधुनिक युवा का 'स्वैग' समझा जाता है। आधृनिक समाज का यह सच क्या विचारणीय नहीं है?

दिखावे की भावना कभी हमारी संस्कृति का हिस्सा नहीं रही। गौतम बुद्ध, महावीर, विवेकानंद सरीखे तमाम चरित्रों से हमने सहज और त्यागमय जीवन को जाना है। सोशल मीडिया का स्वरूप समय की मांग हो सकता है. लेकिन आज यह अति कर रहा है। हम घुमने या पर्यटन के लिए इसलिए नहीं जाते कि प्रकृति से जुड़ कर थोड़ा सुकून या घुमक्कड़ी के माध्यम से दिनचर्या से कट कर वृहद समाज से जुड़ने में आनंद की अनुभूति होगी, बल्कि इसलिए कि कोई खास जगह हमें सोशल मीडिया पर अधिक से अधिक 'लाइक' और टिप्पणियां दिला सकती है। 'डेयरिंग' करना आधुनिक युवा का 'स्वैग' या दंभ है, फिर चलती ट्रेन के आगे सेल्फी लेना हो या नदी, समुद्र की ऊंची लहरों के साथ। यह कैसा 'स्वैग' है जो जान के बदले भी सीख नहीं दे पा रहा!

अमेरिकी सरकार ने पिछले दिनों सड़क पर चलते हुए मोबाइल पर बात करने वालों के खिलाफ नियम बनाए हैं और कड़ाई से नियमों के पालन को सुनिश्चित करने की बात की है। क्या भारत में भी ऐसे कानून की दरकार नहीं हैं ? कोई भी तकनीक जान की कीमत पर किसी भी सभ्यता में स्वीकार्य नहीं हो सकती। कुछ बंदिशें जीवन को सकारात्मकता की ओर ले जाएं तो बुरा क्या है! मानव जीवन इतना सस्ता नहीं हो सकता कि उसे तकनीक की भेंट चढा दिया जाए।

साफ संदेश

🚬 फगानिस्तान में बुरी तरह फंसा अमेरिका वहां भे वापसी के लिए छटपटा रहा है और इस काम के लिए उसे पाकिस्तान की सर्वाधिक जरूरत महसूस हो रही थी। इसी कड़ी में 'शेख अपनी-अपनी देख' की नीति पर चलने वाला अमेरिका पाकिस्तान को खुश करने के लिए जम्मू-कश्मीर को लेकर कोई ऐसी नीति अपना सकता था जो भविष्य में भारत के लिए मुसीबत साबित हो सकती थी। हाल ही में इमरान खान के अमेरिका दौरे में डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने कश्मीर को लेकर मध्यस्थता का शिगुफा छोड़ा ही था जिससे भारतीय नीति निर्माताओं के कान खड़े होना स्वाभाविक था। इससे भारत समझ गया था कि अब हाथ पर हाथ धर कर बैठने का समय नहीं है लिहाजा, उसने एक झटके में धारा 370 और 35-ए हटाते हुए जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य का पुनर्गठन कर अमेरिका-पाक की जोड़ी को साफ संदेश दे दिया कि कश्मीर उसकी कमजोर रग नहीं कि जिसे दबा कर भारत की भूमिका को अफगानिस्तान में नगण्य कर दिया जाए।

भारत ने अफगानिस्तान में अब तक लगभग 25 हजार करोड़ रुपए खर्च किए हैं। उसने अफगानिस्तान में बिजलीघर, बिजली की लंबी-लंबी लाइनें, कई बांध, नहरें, स्कुल, पंचायत घर आदि क्या-क्या नहीं बनाए हैं! सबसे बड़ा निर्माण कार्य हुआ है ईरान और अफगानिस्तान को सीधे सड़क से जोडने का। जरंज-दिलाराम सड़क 218 किलोमीटर लंबी है। इस पर भारत ने अरबों रुपए खर्च किए हैं। इस सड़क ने अफगानों की 200 साल पुरानी मजबूरी को खत्म किया। उन्हें अब अपने यातायात और आवागमन के लिए पाकिस्तान पर निर्भर रहने की जरूरत नहीं है। अफगानिस्तान में हमारे हजारों

डॉक्टरों, इंजीनियरों, शिक्षकों, पत्रकारों, अफसरों विचार गुलाम नबी आजाद से अनुच्छेद 370 पर और विशेषज्ञों ने पिछले सत्तर साल में इतना जबर्दस्त योगदान किया है कि वहां के कट्टरपंथी भी बदलाव तभी संभव है जब उसमें सब कुछ बदल भारत की तारीफ किए बिना नहीं रहते।

अमेरिका की अनुपस्थिति में पाकिस्तान खतरनाक तालिबानियों का इस्तेमाल भारत के खिलाफ कर सकता है। ऐसे में भारत कभी बर्दाश्त नहीं कर सकता कि अफगानिस्तान को लेकर बनने वाली किसी भी योजना में उसकी अनदेखी हो और वह भी जम्मू-कश्मीर को आड़ बना कर।

के बाद नई परिस्थितियों में अमेरिका के लिए

सीधे शब्दों में कहें तो धारा 370 के उन्मुलन किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

भारत की अनदेखी करना आसान नहीं होगा। अब देखना है कि वह कौन-सा लालच देकर पाकिस्तान से अफगानिस्तान पर मदद मांगेगा? राकेश सैन, वीपीओ लिदड़ां, जालंधर

मुश्किल राह

अब केवल चार राज्यों में कांग्रेस की सरकारें बची हैं। ऐसे में सोनिया गांधी हताश व निराश कांग्रेस का सहारा कैसे बन पाएंगी? तब कांग्रेस एकजुट थी, अब वह बात नहीं रही। जम्मू कश्मीर से धारा 370 और 35-ए हटाए जाने के बाद जिस तरह कांग्रेस दो खेमों में बंटी नजर आई, उसका मतलब साफ है कि इस बार सोनिया गांधी की राह बहुत आसान नहीं है। जनार्दन द्विवेदी, कर्ण सिंह, ज्योतिरादित्य सिंधिया, मिलिंद देवड़ा आदि के

दिया जाए। कांग्रेस को नरेंद्र मोदी से बड़ी विकास की रेखा खींचनी होगी। विपक्ष में रह कर भी वह अपने क्षेत्र के विकास के लिए सरकार पर दबाव बना सकती है। काम करने का श्रेय अगर वह नहीं ले सकती है तो कांग्रेस काम करने के लिए अपेक्षित दबाव बनाने का श्रेय तो ले ही सकती है।

सर्वथा भिन्न नजर आए हैं। दरअसल, कांग्रेस में

• रितेश कुमार उपाध्याय, संत कबीर नगर

महंगी परीक्षा

भारत में केंद्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड (सीबीएसई) की स्थापना 1952 में हुई थी। इसके अनेक उद्देश्यों में से एक सभी बच्चों को कम शुल्क में अच्छी और तनावरहित शिक्षा प्रदान करना है। दिल्ली के सभी सरकारी स्कूल सीबीएसई के अंतर्गत आते हैं और उनकी स्थापना इसीलिए की गई थी कि गरीब अभिभावक भी अपने बच्चों को शिक्षा ग्रहण करने के लिए उनमें भेज सकें। लेकिन आज सीबीएसई की स्थापना के ये सारे लक्ष्य धृमिल लगते हैं क्योंकि उसने हाल ही में दसवीं और बारहवीं कक्षा का परीक्षा शुल्क प्रत्येक विषय 150 रुपए से बढ़ाकर 300 रुपए कर दिया है।

पहले विद्यार्थियों के कुल विषयों का परीक्षा

व्यय 750 रुपए था. लेकिन अब उन्हें इस मद में 1500 रुपए खर्च करने पड़ेंगे। गरीब और अल्प आय वाले अभिभावकों को पहले ही शुल्क अदा करने में तमाम परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ता था लेकिन उसे कम करने की बजाय अब उन पर और बोझ लाद दिया गया है। क्या सरकार को उनकी परेशानियां कम लग रही हैं या उसका उद्देश्य गरीब विद्यार्थियों को महंगी शिक्षा प्रदान करना है? सरकार को यह शुल्क वृद्धि वापस लेनी चाहिए।

विनीत, आंबेडकर कॉलेज, दिल्ली

गलतियों से सीख हर साल पंद्रह अगस्त का दिन जहां हमारे

आजाद होने की खुशी लेकर आता है वहीं इसमें भारत के खंडित होने का दर्द भी छिपा होता है। वक्त के गुजरे पन्नों में भारत से ज्यादा गौरवशाली इतिहास शायद ही किसी देश का रहा हो। लेकिन भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप से ज्यादा सांस्कृतिक, राजनीतिक, सामरिक और आर्थिक हमले भी इतिहास में किसी देश पर नहीं हए। शायद हमारा वैभव और हमारी समृद्धि की कीर्ति ही हमारे पतन का कारण भी बनी। भारत के ज्ञान और संपदा के चुंबकीय आकर्षण के चलते विदेशी आक्रांता लूट के इरादे से इस ओर आकर्षित हए। वे आते गए और हमें लुटते गए। हर आक्रमण के साथ चेहरे बदलते गए लेकिन उनके इरादे वही रहे।

जो देश अपनी गलतियों से नहीं सीख पाता वह स्वयं इतिहास बन जाता है। हमें भी शायद अपनी इसी भूल की सजा मिली। कई मायनों में इस खंडित भारत को हम आज आजाद भारत कहते हैं। जिस दिन हम भारत को उसकी खोई हुई अखंडता लौटा देंगे वह दिन हमारी ओर से हमारे वीरों को सच्ची श्रद्धांजलि का दिन होगा।

सोनू कुमार सोनी, बेतिया, बिहार

नई दिल्ली