Breaking down companies



TICKER

MIHIR SHARMA

assumption in neo-classical economics is simply that companies are responsible only to their shareholders, and have the single goal of maximising profits. That serves you very well for a few years; after a while, you discover that in fact managers are capable of surreptitiously seizing control of companies that they do not own. And so you have to learn principal-agent theory -

useful

the owners are the principal, and the manager their agent — to try and work out how to get companies working properly at profit maximisation again, perhaps through tweaking how managers are compensated.

But, in today's world, who do companies really have to respond to? Increasingly, it's the state — whether as owner,

Consider the question of "mandatory" corporate social responsibility, such as the government has now indicated it will introduce. CSR itself was nothing more than a boondoggle — an attempt to corral private resources to serve politicians' objectives. In many cases, CSR money was spent on politicians' favourite charities, or on welfare in their constituencies. In cases where no politician was directly involved, it became just another way for promoters to deny their fare share of the profits to small shareholders — the two per cent of profits mandated by CSR would go to a family-run "charity" instead. More recently, however, CSR funds are increasingly being spent essentially for undercover lobbying — on the stated priorities of the central or state government in return for favourable treatment by government officials. Who is the company working for, then?

There's also the question of the resurgence of the state sector worldwide, whether as direct or indirect investor. Here geo-politics, domestic politics, and corporate policy can interact in sometimes worrying ways. In the United Kingdom, any move to stop Brexit is complicated by one simple fact: the Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, is not very happy with the European Union. He has always been a eurosceptic, but he has particularly good reasons at the moment, from his point of view. If and when in power, he would like to move on nationalisation — for example, the re-nationalisation of British Rail. But the primary owners of many of the railway lines in Britain today are foreign state-run railway companies, mostly from Europe. Keolis, in which France's SNCF state railway company is a majority owner, controls three major lines out of London. A fourth of trains running in Britain — and many of its buses — are owned by Arriva, which is controlled by Deutsche Bahn of Germany. The Dutch railways are also a big player, and the Italians have just invested in the West Coast Mainline. A Labour government in the EU could correctly fear that its European partners will not look favourably on it bending EU rules in order to re-nationalise them if it is state companies that will be expropriated.

The power of the state sector globally also complicates the notion that the owners of companies are diffuse shareholders who have an interest only in profit maximisation. Look at the state of Cathay Pacific following the protests in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's flag carrier — the world's tenth largest airline and among its best managed — has seen its stock tank after the government in Beijing took a strong stand against its permissive stance with regard to employees who sympathised with the protestors. Part of this is the general kowtowing to the Chinese market that any foreign company does — after all, a great deal of Cathay's business comes from flying to mainland China, and almost all of its low-cost subsidiary Cathay Dragon's market is in the mainland. But even so, the company might have held firm if not for the fact that a significant stake in the carrier is held by Beijing-controlled Air China. It is hard to imagine that Cathay will not take actions that further increase its alienation from its passengers if that is what Beijing wants. Would that be what a disinterested corporate entity would do in its place? Of course not.

Some equity owners would not be displeased with the notion of state power in the marketplace — as long as it is on their side. Large pension funds and the like are overjoyed at the notion of partnering with state-controlled finance to invest in Indian infrastructure, for example. Their idea here is that the political risk in India is so immense that it is better to make sure the government is on your side, as a partner, than otherwise. That may be short-sighted, however. A government is quite happy to expropriate anyone, even a partner, if it feels the slightest pressure to do so. But the larger point is clear: at this moment, the market is not working to the assumptions of neo-classical economics. Even if internally there is a well-regulated, free and fair equity market, the power of state finance globally, of staterun companies and the continuing arbitrariness of state demands mean that companies continue to be unable to serve their actual equity owners as well as they should.

Why she can, but won't

The Queen can dismiss Boris Johnson, according to British constitutional experts. But then, 21st century monarchs reign but mustn't presume to rule



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K DATTA RAY

he isles are full of noises. I mean the British Isles where this is being written. The noises are not only the groans of victims of the Peterloo Massacre of August 16, 1819, but today's muffled talk of crises and muted whispers of coups. Since they concern parliament and constitutionality, there's a strong resemblance with the exciting times of Indira Gandhi and Gyani Zail Singh.

Boris Johnson boisterously prancing about with a House of Commons majority of only one recalls Mrs Gandhi's defiance after the Allahabad High Court judgment. The pious expected her to resign. Her adversaries hoped she would be toppled. Her fear was a stab in the back from ambitious colleagues if she didn't attend the Lok Sabha, or attended but couldn't vote. Her most loyal supporter was Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the president, whose position, Jawaharlal Nehru had claimed, was analogous to that of Britain's sovereign. Reading what some British politicians expect from Queen Elizabeth, I can hear Zail Singh saying with a smile and a shake of his turbaned head, "I can but I won't!".

He meant sacking Rajiv Gandhi, the prime minister. The Queen, too, can dismiss Mr Johnson whom she appointed prime minister, according to British constitutional experts. But Dr Ruth Fox, director of the Hansard Society, adds that "it it is incumbent on politicians to resolve this (the present crisis) politically". With his term drawing to a close, another talking point was whether Rajiv would acquiesce in Gyani standing again. In the event, Zail Singh anticipated Dr Fox's political prudence. He didn't sack Rajiv or contest the presidentship again.

Chatting informally in Rashtrapati Bhavan in those tumultuous days, Zail Singh turned out to be an easy man to talk to, considerate of my limited Hindi and surprisingly familiar with British precedents. When I asked about the basis for appointing Rajiv prime minister, he at once brought up the 1956 Suez crisis and the vacuum left by Sir Anthony Eden's resignation without recommending a successor. Zail Singh believed quite accurately too — that the Queen took advice she thought appropriate and appointed the man she felt best able to repair the damage of an ignominious war. Similarly, he felt in 1984 that Rajiv alone could restore public confidence after the tragedy of Mrs Gandhi's assassination.

He would have appreciated the present challenge to the most aristocratic of democracies and the most democratic of aristocracies. John Bercow, the Commons speaker, vows to "fight with every breath in my body" any move by Mr Johnson to bypass or close down parliament. John McDonnell, the shadow chancellor of the exchequer, threatens to send Jeremy Corbyn (leader of the opposition) "in a cab to Buckingham Palace to say we're taking over" if Mr Johnson loses a no-confidence vote and refuses to quit. Mr Corbyn's own preference is to head a "caretaker government" to continue negotiations with the European Union. Even the egregious Brexit Party leader, Nigel Farage, hints

that his hat is in the prime ministerial ring. Behind these histrionics is Mr Johnson's

obsessive determination - aided and abetted by his powerful but unpopular strategic adviser Dominic Cummings but by few others of any standing — to take Britain out of the EU on October 31 even without a divorce settlement. Since many MPs, including prominent Conservatives, oppose such an inglorious exit, theorists have begun to look for a solution to the 93-year-old Queen who has been on the throne 67 years, and seen the rise and fall of 13 prime ministers, including the first female incumbent with whom her relations were reportedly correct but cool.

But royal powers exist mainly in theory. Not since Queen Anne in 1707 has any monarch refused assent to a bill. Not since 1834 has any British monarch dismissed a prime minister. No wonder the telephone lines are said to be humming between the Queen's private secretary, Edward Young, the cabinet secretary. Sir Mark Sedwill, and the prime minister's principal private secretary, Peter Hill. This "golden triangle" of secretaries is determined to keep the Queen out of controversial entanglements on the 200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre.

Already, the former foreign secretary, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, has announced that while "King Charles lost his head by flouting the constitution, Mr Johnson will wish to keep his, while some around him are, clearly, losing theirs". The pointed reference is to the presumptuous Mr Cummings. The direct warning is to the prime minister. But there's also an oblique message to Her Majesty: 21st century monarchs reign but mustn't pre-

LUNCH WITH BS ► MRUTYUNJAY MOHAPATRA | DIRECTOR GENERAL | INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Taming the weather gods

A physicist from a nondescript Odisha village and now the chief weatherman of India spells out his journey to Abhishek Waghmare and Sanjeeb Mukherjee

write in whatever

time that is left

holiday job. He

has, in his car

unpublished

volume of the

from his no-

es sir. I'm quite sure, sir. There would be light rain... just light rain in the morning," our guest assures an official on the other end of the phone managing the show for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day address from the Red Fort. It is a muggy August 14 afternoon. The PM's Office is on its toes, praying for a no-rain I-Day, and they have just got an assurance from Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, the new chief of the country's met department, that the event won't be a washout.

With a degree of confidence one rarely sees in weathermen, Mohapatra assures the caller, and gets back to our conversation. We are already one drink into it. When we had asked him a few minutes ago what he would like to drink, Mohapatra had said "I don't take drinks" with the sincerity of a child. So he is

sipping a lemonade, as we acclimatise ourselves to the comfort- **Mohapatra loves to** ably cool air around us in Tres in New Delhi's Lodhi Colony. "Urban heat island effect," he says. For the uninitiated, that's why we feel warmer in a city than in the surrounding rural areas.

In no time — and for countless times during our conversation we find ourselves discussing the **translated into his** freak weather phenomena. mother tongue Floods have ravage l hundreds of villages and inundated several

towns in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. "These instances are increasing, and would increase further. This is the very reason we have started impact-based forecast at the district level," he tells us taking a sip from his glass.

European cuisine is new to Mohapatra. Indeed, anything apart from regular Indian food is a rarity for him, given his work hours. "I go to office even on weekends, at least for half a day. I cannot do research work on weekdays." He rarely eats outside, and is content with home-cooked food. And yes, he is happy that Odisha Rasagola received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

We are sitting at a corner table in the unusually quiet restaurant. Maybe because it is bang in the middle of a week with two holidays — a large chunk of Delhiites would be holidaying out of the city. Mohapatra does not eat chicken or red meat but eats his seafood with as much relish as he does rice. his staple. As we order some prawns to start with, we get some neighbours — thankfully, soft-spoken ones.

Mohapatra enters his favourite territory cyclones.

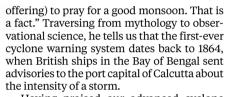
Fondly called the "cyclone man" of India, thanks to his ability to tame cyclones — that is, minimising their impact — he goes back to October 29, 1971. His father had assumed the role of a "nowcaster", he says, and had saved a hundred lives by getting fellow villagers to their "mantu ghar", or a house with a safe terrace, hours before a cyclone hit Rajgurupur. Nowcast is a special

weather advisory issued by the meteorological department three hours before an extreme weather event, such as a thunderstorm, occurs.

He wouldn't have known h says, that 18 years later, he would get his first big inspiration, and come face-to-face with his first biggest challenge. In 1999, India test-fired the Agni-II ballistic missile under the Prime Ministership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and t able and scientific guidance of for-

mer President of India APJ Abdul Kalam. Mohapatra, then a junior scientist at DRDO, was monitoring the test at the launchpad in Balasore. Before the fire, Kalam had visited each and every department on the campus, to shake hands with all scientists and engineers and wish them luck. "I shook hands with Kalam," he remembers fondly.

The same year, India received sub-normal monsoon after six years of excellent rainfall. In late October, Odisha was hit by an unprecedented cyclonic storm that took more than 10,000 lives. Once again, Mohapatra was at the spot. "The IMD was not well equipped to handle such mega-cyclones back then," he recalls poignantly. It was this experience that prepared him for the 2013 cyclone Phailin. Thanks to accurate prediction, around half a million peo-



Having praised our advanced cyclone warning system, he concedes with despair that the low density of our ground and air observational network makes it difficult to accurately predict the time and place of extreme and sudden weather events. Against a requirement of 55 radars, India has just 26 of them at present, he adds.

Mohapatra's love for rice is amply evident. "The food is good, I like it. But let us have rice, else I will feel I have skipped lunch," he says. A risotto comes to our table, and he seems to get the stimulus to speak on. Continuing an earlier discussion on the poor state of science awareness among the masses in the country. he says he wants to take weather observatories to schools. "If children learn science by operating weather stations, they will be better citizens when they become part of the active economy," he seems to ponder over an

unknown future.

So what does Mohapatra do when he is not trying to decode the vagaries of nature? He loves to write in whatever time that is left from his no-holiday job.

He has, in his car trunk, an unpublished volume of the Bhagwad Gita, translated into his mother tongue. "How can a person like me, who is uneducated and understand nothing but Odia, know the Gita," his grandmother would ask him. He took it up as and translated the Gita. He uses the "navakshari chhanda" (nine-letter format). He has also compiled the scientific aspects elucidated in the Odia Bhagabata, a cosmo-religious tale of Hindu deity, Krishna.

We decide to skip dessert. Mohapatra lets out a secret — luck has played a key role in getting him to the place he finds himself todav. His elevation as the head of the forecasting modernisation programme in 2008 was due to the sudden exit of a senior colleague from the IMD to Isro. That senior colleague is now

the secretary in the earth sciences ministry. "Kaama na kale khaiba nahin." (one should not eat unless one has completed one's job) he says, with a sigh of contentment as we prepare to disperse. Who would not feel contented after clearing the stage for none other than the country's Prime Minister!



ple could be moved to safe shelters in a week

Massive in its severity, but managed success-

fully by minimising fatality. Mohapatra

smiles, asserting that India's cyclone warning

system is now better than that of Japan and

Australia. "Catching up with the sophistica-

tion the US boasts of remains," he says, enjoy-

seabass. It arrives in no time — a wholesome

fish portion, pampered with jalapeno and ten-

der barley. "The knowledge about the rains is

not new to us Indians," he turns the page. "Our

rishis (saints) used to do yagnas (sacrificial

For the main course, Mohapatra orders

The next milestone: The 2019 cyclone Fani.

— India's biggest modern-day evacuation.

The fear of ₹50



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

KEYA SARKAR

hen we were young and came to Santiniketan, we never realised the lack of it. Maybe because most of our garbage then was biodegradable and just went into a compost pit somewhere in the large garden. But once I permanently shifted in 2003 to Santiniketan, I realised this place had no conservancy services. Jurisdictionally. Santiniketan is divided into two parts. One part comes under the Visva Bharati University and the other under the Ruppur gram panchayat. Since none of them are capable of providing conservancy services, residents just chuck their garbage wher-

ever they fancy. Add to this, the hordes of tourists who

arrive every weekend, and you can imagine the state of the streets of Santiniketan and the amount of plastic piling up.

So many years ago, my husband and I decided to start a door-to-door plastic cleaning service for our neighbourhood of over 150 households. Initially, this was funded by us and then residents started making purely voluntary contributions to see us through almost a decade of cleaning.

Emboldened by this, we decided to extend this to the rest of Santiniketan. While a hand pulled rickshaw van had sufficed to cover our area, we needed something bigger and faster if we were to do the whole of Santiniketan. We decided to buy an electronic three-wheeler (popularly known as the Toto) fitted with a hydraulic dumper. A few of us, like-minded in our fight against pollution, raised enough money from friends and family to buy the vehicle and pay for the battery recharge cost and driver's salary for a year.

We then printed leaflets explaining how the Toto would visit each area once a week and collect only the plastic that the household had accumulated. For this, we sought a voluntary monthly donation of ₹50. We were hitting 1,000 households and thought even if half these people opted to pay, our monthly expenses would be taken care of.

But for Santiniketan people, ₹50 is a big sum. Even though reality has changed and both academic and nonacademic staff earn handsome salaries. A friend who had studied at the arts department at the university and is now a renowned sculptor had donated generously towards the initial toto buying fund. When we told him about our ₹50 donation plan he said "Oh! they will say 'zero' means nothing and what will you do with ₹5" in order to avoid paying. We all laughed.

But we realised how well he knew Santiniketan because the reticence to come out with ₹50 was for real. Maybe for most of them it was a case of ensuring they were paying for a service that would be regular and consistent. So that we thought was fair. They would pay if we were able to demonstrate consistency.

But for many other households that was not the case. They simply didn't want the service because they said they don't accumulate any plastic. "We take our own bag to shop", they said by way of explanation. "But what about biscuit packets, shampoo bottles and a million other plastic packaging which has become part of our lifestyle?" The answer: A gentle shutting of doors.

Of course, they don't have any. They are quietly being burnt. All to save ₹50.

I'm staking a claim too...

ing the last of his prawns.



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

oyal families the world over have claimed legitimacy to the throne as a divine right, not least in Europe where the Roman Catholic Church chose to meddle in the affairs of state by the power vested in it. The Bourbons addressed Louis XIV with the epithet 'Sun God'. Ancient Egyptians maintained a close relationship with Ra. The Incas believed the sun to be an ancestor. But direct kinship to the sun belonged in India, where his descendants included the good king Harishchandra, followed some generations later by Dashrath, whence starts the Ramayan. Dashrath's son Ram was the progenitor of the twins Luv and Kush whose

own children went on to rule parts of India. I am no historian, or mythologian, but even so I have not come across dynastic claimants of Lakshman, Bharat or Shatrughan, though they too must exist. But of appellants to Ram's lineage, there are several, Suryavanshis all, of whom the Sisodias are primus inter pares. The Chittaur rulers of Mewar (more recently to be found in Udaipur) believe themselves sprung from Luv, who went on to establish Luvkote, the earlier name for Lahore, now in Pakistan. The sun may have been bountiful in their kingdom but was not always benevolent, causing them generations of hardship under Mughal rule, but the spirit of the Sisodias did not break. The sun that set over Empire shone brightly over their neck of the woods.

Kush, in turn, went on to establish his lineage by way of the Kachchawas, whose leading dynastic claimants ruled most recently from Amber and Jaipur, and did well by themselves. True, they were warriors, but they seemed to have dabbled in real estate as well — the land on which the Taj Mahal in Agra is built was part of their estate, as apparently was Ramkot in Ayodhya where they ordered a Ram temple. Princess Diya Kumari, an MP in the current dispensation, reports that her father was the 309th descendant of Kush, while Maharana Arvind Singh Mewar is the 232nd descendant of Luv. The Mewar Sisodias appear to have been blessed with a longevity not given to the Amber Kachchawas. Meanwhile, counter-claims to Luv's progeny from Alwar have emerged. One may concede Diya Kumari's assertion that there are millions of descendants - and admirers - of Ram, but a case is being made about "direct" lineage.

In 21st-century India, Ayodhya aside, do such incredulous claims matter? In Bikaner recently to address some security concerns, I met senior officials from republican India appointed through a civil competition system. The one assigned to our case made it clear that he was "privileged" to proceed with his official duties having established, through rigorous questioning, that we were, indeed, offspring of the sun.

History may have served our family well, but we are serving it somewhat poorly. For some recent rituals in the clan, I found it difficult to recall the names of our greatgrandfathers, leave alone their forebears of a few hundred generations. Of grannies. alas, our knowledge remains poorer still. However, as a member of the House of Kachchawas, I'm staking a claim too - not to Ayodhya or the Ram temple, as my hugely distant cousins have already declared, but to a slice of antiquity and a smidgeon of respect. As Ram's descendant, however ambiguously, I demand it in his name.

Volume VII Number 3 MUMBAI | 17 AUGUST 2019

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Coming up: A tipping point

ndia may soon cross a perhaps unique tipping point, when its export of services becomes bigger than its export of merchandise (other than oil and gems & jewellery). Over the first four months of this financial year, services exports fetched \$74.05 billion, not far short of what was fetched by merchandise exports, excluding oil and gems/jewellery: \$79.81 billion. Since the first is growing at over 8 per cent, and the second at less than 2 per cent, the tipping point may be no more than a year or two away.

This would be an extraordinary development, and not necessarily something to celebrate. Globally, services trade accounts for less than 20 per cent of the total. In India's case, if one takes all of exports (including oil and gems/jewellery), the share of services is 40 per cent. One could argue that it is in fact more: The export of gems and jewellery is classified as merchandise trade, though in reality what is being exported is the value created by the work of people who cut and polish imported diamond roughs and work on precious metals (also imported). Whatever the official classification, this is export of services.

There is supreme irony in this services-manufacturing denouement. When the US first proposed, in the 1980s, that a new round of global trade talks should be expanded in scope to include not just merchandise trade but also trade in services, India was a stout critic of the idea of opening up markets for trade in services. My fellow-columnist TCA Srinivasa-Raghavan was one of the few who saw that India might have a competitive advantage in this area (we have cheaper technologists, doctors, accountants, space scientists, etc than almost all other countries). But his voice was lost in the anti-American cacophony.

Today, the boot is well and truly on the other foot. In the prolonged negotiations for RCEP (Regional Cooperation for Economic Partnership), India has been offering a two-sector deal to the leading economies of the Asia-Pacific: If they open up on services trade, New Delhi will open up further on merchandise trade. There have been no takers so far, and RCEP is stuck.

Consider other ironies. Among the things that India is pushing for is liberalisation of something classified as "Mode 4" in the multilateral trade services agreement. This covers the movement of "natural persons"; the blunt argument is that other countries must allow more work migrants from India (think H1B). The counter-argument from across the table is precisely the one that India uses to try and stop the flow of migrants from Bangladesh: The movement of "natural persons" is a citizenship issue, not one of trade. Common sense tells us it is both.

There is nothing which says countries must be consistent; they can and do follow their perceived self-interest. So what should concern those in charge of economic affairs is not the tactical nature of negotiating positions but the structural flaw at the heart of the Indian economy, which finds reflection in the export pattern: The failure of domestic manufacturing, specifically the Make in India programme, and the consequentially outsize share of GDP and trade accounted for by services. Bear in mind that high-value services exports create fewer jobs than manufacturing (think vendors, dealers, after-sales servicing).

Yet the likely prospect is that the manufacturing-services imbalance will grow. It is easier to realise the untapped potential of some forms of services export than it is to improve the country's physical infrastructure, which today hobbles manufacturing. The relatively high cost of power, land, and transport, along with steep port charges and shipping rates, combines with inefficiencies in the labour market, all of it made worse by an unrealistic exchange rate for the rupee, to limit manufacturing exports. Indeed, as services exports continue to succeed, the rupee will become stronger and large parts of the manufacturing sector, with their smaller profit margins, will find it steadily harder to compete internationally. This will almost certainly result in a shortage of domestic job opportunities for millions of rural youngsters who have acquired a basic education and who do not wish to go back to tilling the land.

Facts, fiction and reality in J&K

Modi has broken the post-Simla status quo on Kashmir. The new reality has to be accepted to move on from its complex and complicated past

efore searching for a solution to the Kashmir problem, we should understand it better. There are deadly perils in jumping with solutions without first understanding the facts and realities. Only quacks - or maybe, faith-healers — prescribe medication for chronic ailments without arriving at a reasoned diagnosis.

There are three sets of solutions today from three categories of these "faith-healers". First, in India, the establishment view, which finds wide popular support is, that the only problem in

Kashmir is Pakistan, and the radical Islam it exports there along with rifles, rocket-launchers and RDX. Get the Pakistanis off our back, and you shoot a sequel to Kashmir Ki Kali in Dal Lake.

The Pakistani establishment fantasy, again with wide public support, is an exact opposite: Get the Indians out by pushing, pinching, bleeding them. We defeated the Soviets and Americans in Afghanistan. What is India? Then, you can integrate all of Kashmir as the sixth province of Pakistan.

The third category, in our analysis today, is the small, but articulate and doughty group of Indian liberals. They accept that Kashmir's accession to India isn't final, that the will of the Kashmiris is paramount and it hasn't yet been sought. To that extent, their basic demands for plebiscite, autonomy, even independence, are legitimate. You can't keep them with India by using state and military power.

Philosophically, it is difficult to argue with this: India is a voluntary federation of states, so how can you force people to stay with you if they don't want it. No surprise that this view also finds sympathy among a lot of fundamentally liberal and young elites. I understand the perils in picking an argument with them because this very position gives them the higher moral ground. But we live

et's break it down to five fundamental pillars L et's break it down to live fundament on which this current liberal position rests: 1. India made a commitment to plebiscite in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions of 1947-48. Why did it violate these?

The fact is, both India and Pakistan made this commitment. Both broke it. If you read the text of the resolution (47), however, you will see a threestep ladder. The first was Pakistan withdrawing all its forces from Kashmir and then making "best endeavours" to ensure all others (we will call them jihadis today), to leave, too. It never happened.

The next two steps were India thinning its troops to the minimum needed, setting up an allparty government, and then for a plebiscite to be held under a UN-appointed governor. Pakistan didn't take the first step. India wasn't jumping to

2. Most Kashmiris want neither India nor Pakistan. They want freedom, or azadi. How can you deny it to them? Think referendum, think Quebec, Scotland, or Brexit.

Once again, read the resolutions. It will take you three minutes. They do not provide independence or azadi as an option. The choice is India or Pakistan.

Pakistan's supposed support for Kashmiri "azadi" is fraudulent, but it has also had some Goebbelsian success with this great deception that Pakistanis back freedom for Kashmiris. Pakistan has built this masterfully over 70 years, calling

the part of Kashmir occupied by it "Azad Kashmir".

Since they claim all of Kashmir. shouldn't they be calling it their state of Jammu and Kashmir as well? No. Because that will expose their hypocrisy in using azadi as a cover for territorial capture. Google if there are any statements from any Pakistani leaders of consequence offering azadi as an option. I find none. If you buy into that azadi fantasy, please do. You can't sell it to the rest of India.

3. Can you hold for ever a piece of

Pakistan's supposed

support for Kashmiri

but it has also had

some Goebbelsian

deception that

Pakistanis back

"azadi" is fraudulent,

success with this great

freedom for Kashmiris.

Pakistan has built this

years, calling the part

of Kashmir occupied by

masterfully over 70

it "Azad Kashmir"

territory and people by military power?

The answer is a counter-question: Can you take away a territory and people from another country through military power? Pakistan tried this. Twice, in 1947-48 and 1965 through direct military invasion, and 1989 onwards with proxy war. There was also the little madness of Kargil 1999. These are facts. You need to understand Nehru's shift on the

UN resolutions from mid-1953 onwards. The Cold War is then ratcheting up, Kashmir's geography traps it into a unique pincer where the Great Game hasn't ended. Foreseeing trouble, he moved to integrate Kashmir in 1953 with Sheikh Abdullah's arrest. In the next two years, Pakistan had joined the US-led Baghdad Pact, SEATO, etc. It began tilting the military balance in its favour over the next decade. Ultimately it was Nehru's pre-emptive action that saved Kashmir from military (not plebiscite-led) capture.

NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

The Pakistanis waited until they felt they had built sufficient military advantage, caught India in a period of weakness — military recovering from the 1962 debacle, Nehru's death food shortages - and used its full US-armed and trained military might (read up on Op Gibraltar and Op Grand Slam) to take Kashmir, but failed.

This was the last time Pakistan could have taken Kashmir by direct military force. And they hadn't sent their troops and tanks to win Kashmiris

These three pretty much account for the twists and turns in the Kashmir story in its first, UN to Simla epoch (1947-72), though at a kind of digi-

tal pace in fast-forward. That brings us to the

4. Why is the Modi government not settling Kashmir in accordance with the Simla Agreement as even Imran Khan is now saving?

The answer again: Do read the short Simla Agreement. The literal sense is all India-Pakistan problems are now bilateral. Which means, no UN Resolutions. The spirit was, both realise that none can take any territory by force. So, rename the Cease Fire Line (CFL) as the Line of Control (LoC) and work on persuading your people to accept it as the border. Why this wasn't stated more explicitly. is a brilliant subject for some genuine scholar for a book called "The Guilty Indians (not just men) of

But, the spirit was betrayed as soon as the prisoners of war returned. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto began Islamising his country (yes, he, not Zia, did), hosted the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Lahore, even named its cricket stadium after Muammar Gaddafi as he launched a fundraiser for his "Islamic Bomb".

The cool breeze of Simla lasted only until the bomb was ready. By 1989, Pakistan was back in "action", trying to take Kashmir with force again, avoiding direct confrontation which they knew they would lose.

The Simla Agreement was indeed violated. Only by Pakistan.

5. But the Kashmiris don't want to be with you,

Again, a counter-question: Who are the Kashmiris? The Right-Nationalists are missing nuance when they say just 10 districts of the Valley

> can't speak for all of the state Because these represent the state's majority. The liberal argument is more flawed. If the majority view of Valley Muslims then subsumes the sizeable minorities of the state, what do we do for the view of the rest, about 99.5 per cent of India? Can you have the democratic logic of majority work in one place and not in the other?

Whether you like Narendra Modi or not, he has now broken the post-Simla status quo. Pakistan's space for sub-military manoeuvre is gone. No political party of consequence

is questioning the abrogation of Article 370, only the method.

There is a new status quo. Pakistan can risk breaking it. There is a problem in Kashmir, with anger, alienation, violence, human rights abuses, and it needs addressing. It must begin with accepting that the borders today are the permanent borders of India and Pakistan. We shouldn't need Bill Clinton to come here and tell us that maps of the region can no longer be redrawn with blood. Once you accept this reality, you can argue about the

By special arrangement with ThePrint

Flawed superheroes

The black elephants



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

he phrase "black elephant" has been gaining traction on social media. This is an amalgamation of two phrases. One, "The elephant in the room" is about something large and obvious that is being ignored or overlooked. The other, "black swan" is an event that seems impossible and unpredictable until it occurs. A "black elephant" therefore, is an apparently unpredictable event that should actually be very predictable.

One example of a black ele-

phant was the nuclear bombings and led to accords, such as the of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Kyoto Protocol. destructive power of the atom bomb stunned Japan into sur- ings, climate change still seems to was implemented with a high render. But the Germans and Americans had been trying to develop an atom bomb for years. Physicists had put pen to paper and theoretically calculated the explosive power it unleashed long before the actual development of the bomb.

Right now, the world is undergoing the sixth extinction event. This is a mass extinction of species, caused by climate change. Climate change is causing hotter temperatures (on average) coupled with wilder, more unpredictable cycles of extreme weather, such as hurricanes, bliz-

zards and droughts. This is another black ele-It is impossible to prepare for phant. There is overwhelming a black swan, by definition. At evidence that climate change has

best, it is possible to build robust been triggered and accelerated systems that can cope with it. It is by human activities. This situapossible to prepare for a black ele-tion has been predicted in detail, phant, but this is an event that and in its broad outlines. by people choose not to prepare for. many scientists. It has been debated at multiple conferences

> cause surprise, and policy-mak- degree of secrecy. The subseers around the world appear quent events made it obvious that

> > One example of a

black elephant

was the nuclear

bombings of

Hiroshima and

Nagasaki. The

destructive

power of the

atom bomb

stunned Japan

under-prepared for consequences. Indeed, the American president appears to be in denial to the point where US government agencies have supposedly been instructed to throttle the use of the phrase, "climate change".

Brexit is another into surrender black elephant. It has been on the cards since 2016. advocated some variation on this The deadline is very short now. The UK appears to be totally unprepared despite the consequences having been spelt out

in detail. For that matter, the

unprepared for some of the possible consequences. This could, for example, have a domino effect where other member nations opt out of the EU.

When we examine domestic policies over the past few years, one must classify demo netisation as a black swan. It had never been a mainstream policy administration was unprepared position for any political party. It

> was utterly unprepared and didn't even have a coherent policy position to justify it. On the other hand. the abrogation of

the administration

Article 370 and the retraction of statehood status for Jammu & Kashmir is a black elephant. The BJP's ideologues have always

theme, and it should not have been a surprise that it would be muscled through, given a Parliamentary majority.

The entire political establish-

European Union may well be ment — government and opposition — ought to have been prepared for it, and ready with polipositions, as well as arrangements on the ground. But there was a refusal to acknowledge the possibility, let alone prepare for the consequences. What little news we have trickling out of the region indicates that the for what has followed. If further consequences, such as an escalation of hostilities with our Western neighbour, or international condemnation, those

would also be black elephants. There are always black elephants in the offing. The rollout of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) across the country is on the cards, for example. It will cause huge disruptions since it asks for documents that many Indians have never possessed. We've already seen the mess that resulted from a "pilot NRC project" in Assam, with lakhs of residents sitting in camps. But nobody is debating the likely consequences of a national rollout of the NRC yet. I'm sure you can think of other black elephants if you try.

KUMAR ABISHEK

EYE CULTURE

he face of superheroes is slowly received The Boys; earlier this year, a totalitarian regime. movie. Brighthurn, was released, HBO is also coming up with a re-imagined version of DC Comics' iconic Watchmen series. Over the past 10 years, several comic books have come up, showing the darker side of our superheroes — the most prominent being DC's Injustice: Gods Among Us.

In all of these, superheroes are either villains or at least flawed personalities. In an earlier Eve Culture ('Superheroes are like us and more'; March 23, 2019), I had reasoned why people are attracted towards superheroes. However, this time, I would like to project the flip side.

First, why this shift? According to Barry Keith Grant, author and critic, "Stated simply, genre movies are those commercial feature films that, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situation (Film Genre: From Iconography to Ideology)." Superheroes movies and shows comprise arguably the most popular genre, currently.

Leo Braudy - in The World in a *Frame: What We See in Films* — says: 'When the genre conventions can no longer evoke and shape either the emotions or the intelligence of the audience, they must be discarded and new ones tried out... Change in genres occurs when the audience says, 'That's too infantile a form of what we believe. Show us something more complicated"."

So far in the superhero genre, little has changed: Avengers (the entire team or its members) save the day in 21 of the 23 Marvel Cinematic Universe movies released so far. Even in a parody like the *Deadpool* series or genre-critical Logan, the protagonist saves the day.

But, shows and movies like The Boys, Watchmen, and Brightburn are attempting us to show that "something more complicated" by turning the genre

upside down. While the Homelander character (the

leader of the superhuman group Seven) in The Boys — based on the comic book series of the same name — is an evil Superman (with a tinge of evil Captain America), Brandon in Brightburn is a re-imagined take on Clark Kent's (aka Superman's) teenage days when he upon realising his superhuman powers starts to terrorise his town. In the 2012 movie Chronicle, Andrew Detmer, whose mother is dying of cancer, father is verbally and physically abusive and classmates are bullies, doesn't turn out to be a friendly neighbourhood Spider-

Man or good-hearted Star-Lord.

In Injustice: Gods Among Us, Superman, in an alternate reality, descends into tyranny after he is changing. Recently, Amazon tricked into killing his pregnant wife Prime Video came up with well- Lois Lane by Joker and establishes a

The appeal of a corrupted Superman goes beyond his powers of X-ray vision, laser vision, super strength, flight, and invulnerability. He is also the moral foundation of the DC universe (like Captain America for Marvel). Superman - in most comic books (even in Superman: Red Son, in which he is a Communist poster boy) and portravals has remained unerringly true to his moral code and this makes it tempting to watch someone that upright fail.

Now let's discuss the challenges that superhero movies pose to society. "They celebrate exceptionalism and vigilantism. The old American ideal of succeeding through cleverness, virtue and grit is absent, as is the notion of ordinary folk banding together to overcome a threat — think of It's a Wonderful Life or the original The Magnificent Seven or any of a dozen World War II-era films. Gone is respect for the rule of law and the importance of tradition and community," Mark Bowden argues in his 2018 opinion piece 'Why Are We Obsessed With Superhero Movies?', which was published in The New York Times.

According to an American Academy of Pediatrics study that analysed 10 superhero movies between 2015 and 2016, "The most common act of violence associated with protagonists in the films was fighting (1,021 total acts), followed by the use of a lethal weapon (659), destruction of property (199), murder (168), and bullying/intimidation/torture (144). For antagonists, the most common violent act was the use of a lethal weapon (604 total acts), fighting (599), bullying/intimidation/torture (237), destruction of property (191), and murder (93) were also portrayed."

An abstract of this 2018 study was published in ScienceDaily, which also quoted the lead author, Robert Olympia. MD, a Professor in the Departments of Emergency Medicine & Pediatrics at Penn State College of Medicine, as saying: "Pediatric health care providers should educate families about the violence depicted in this genre of film and the potential dangers that may occur when children attempt to emulate these perceived heroes."

Maybe it's time superheroes were increasingly projected in films as flawed humans and not gods. This would not only spice up the CGI-generated universe but also help the young audience develop a distaste for unnecessary violence for the sake of "greater good".

A different fundamentalism



LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

ugust is not the month for wondering about the Indian Constitution. That annual activity is reserved for January, the month when it was adopted, in 1950.

But now that Messrs Modi and Shah have used it as a weapon against the former state of Jammu and Kashmir, one can be forgiven for the indulgence. These are, after all, momentous

So the idle thought is this: If religions and constitutions are both the product of the human brains devised in order to bring order to peoples' lives and societies, why do some people prefer one over the other? As fundamentalists get very angry should be on an indifference attempted or adopted.

Not just that: If religions can be criticised for being the product of their times and not valid for eternity, why can't constitutions? If what was written in 1949 valid for all times, contexts and circumstances, why can't the same be said for all religious texts? Why laugh at people who quote from the scriptures and not from constitutions?

One answer to this question is that while religions were not "adopted" by "the people", constitutions have been so adopted. Thus, fervour for this or that religion notwithstanding, constitutions are to be preferred.

But wait: Is not ascribing inter-temporally valid wisdom to the idea of "Founding Fathers" thrusting upon them a sort of divinity?

Another answer people give is that reform is crucial and both are open to it — even Islam in spite of its 700-year-old ban on ijtihad or questioning. However, both religious and constitutional

demand theory would say, they when a reform is actually

Sensible India

In a word, then, the problem is not the wisdom of religions and constitutions. It is the fundamentalism of the religious and the constitutional nutcases.

Sensible societies indulge this anger of the status quoists and get on with the reforms, whether it is to religious or constitutional practice. India has been a champion at this.

The British, who claim the parentage of the very idea of constitutions, have been typically slimy: They have never written anything down. In Britain no one much talks about the constitution, only about constitutional practice — which is as malleable as plasticine.

The US Constitution has been amended 33 times in 227 years. The Australian one has been amended eight times in 116 years - and it takes a referendum to get it done.

The Irish Constitution, from which ours has borrowed quite a

lot, has been amended 35 times in about 75 years. The French have made about 30 amendments in 56 years but mostly about their former colonies and elections, etc.

Our Constitution, meanwhile, has been reformed 104 times in just 70 years. I used to think this was because the original was faulty. But now I believe that we have been very sensible about it. In modern parlance, we have not shied away from system

upgrades. That's why the amendments to Article 370 are no more than a systems upgrade. Whether it is a good upgrade or not is something the judges will decide on the technicalities of the process, not substance.

Delicious irony

But they can't do much because of the constitutional fiction they themselves propounded with their "basic structure" formulation. That has not been violated because — this is delicious Article 370 was constitutionally

The wise men who framed the Constitution made it temporary because they understood that it contained the seeds of secession.

But they put it there because they had to indulge Nehru. Here Sardar Patel erred. He should have stood firm. By 1953, even Nehru had

realised that Article 370 was a

huge mistake. He therefore locked

would you believe it — Sheikh

up and exiled "Prime Minister"

Abdullah, his blue-eyed boy, from Kashmir for 15 years. But Nehru died in 1964. Sheikh Abdullah was released only in 1968 because by then Indira Gandhi, who hugely diluted Article 370 in 1975, was surround-

ed by Kashmiri (Pandit) advisers.

The wonder, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out during his Independence Day speech, is that this troublesome provision was allowed to germinate and bloom to such an extent that a mere four million Muslims of a small valley — 80 miles by 40 miles — were able to hold not just the remaining 1,300 million Indians but also the superpowers to ransom by cunningly feeding the appetite of the Pakistan military.

As Churchill might have said, never have so many been bullied so much by so few. And as Sam Pitroda ought to say "gaya to





SANS THE ILLS Congress leader, Sonia Gandhi

A democratic and resilient India at 73 has no place for bigotry, superstition, sectarianism, fanaticism, racialism, intolerance or injustice... We must rise as a nation to stand against every act of injustice

Amazon should clear Future Retail deal with govt first

Don't want e-tail situation where rules changed after Wal-Mart paid \$16bn for Flipkart; open the sector fully

MAZON MAY OR may not finally buy 10% of Indian retailer Future Retail media reports suggest the deal is close to being finalised—but what is odd is that the discussions are taking place despite the NDA government at the centre being opposed to allowing FDI in multi-brand retail. While the deal will probably, like the one which saw Amazon buy 5% of Shoppers Stop, be concluded using an investment arm of the US major, the law is not wholly clear either. Before the UPA demitted office, for instance, it had allowed up to 49% FDI in multi-brand retail with a few caveats on minimum investment, local sourcing and the requirement to get specific permission from each state government before setting up shops there. While the BJP said it was not in favour of the policy when it came to power, the policy wasn't scrapped either. In due course, under the NDA/BJP, FDI was allowed in the B2B space, but banned in B2C; foreign capital, including from Amazon, came into the country in billions using what is called the 'marketplace' model. Under this model, an Amazon could invest billions of dollars in a 'marketplace' where sellers—including some controlled by Amazon—could sell their products to retail customers.

While there was no explicit confirmation, the broad signal that everyone got was that allowing FDI in multi-brand retail would hurt the BJP's kirana support base, but the government was not averse to allowing multi-brand retail through the back door. It was in this context that Walmart spent \$16bn to buy Flipkart, but within a short while of this, once elections were approaching, the government decided to tighten the rules dramatically.While FDI was still to be allowed in B2B ecommerce, suppliers that were controlled by ecommerce majors—like Cloudtail for Amazon or RetailNet for Flipkart—could not sell anything on the marketplace. While this was done to prevent these suppliers from using free foreign money to offervery deep discounts—the thrust of the new policy was to prevent discounting as this was hitting local players—it was a complete U-turn from the prevalent policy. While the new policy also prohibited e-tailers from exclusive tie-up with suppliers, like a mobile phone manufacturer for instance, oddly enough none of the rules—such as the ban on deep discounting, whatever that meant—did not apply to ecommerce platforms set up by home-grown chains like Reliance or Future Retail.

Given how any policy can be overturned so quickly, even though Amazon may not require explicit permission from the government to buy into Future Retail using some investment arm/firm, it would do well to get this formally cleared by the government; else, it will be in trouble if, at some point, the government wants such deals to be undone. Ideally, though, the government should give up its hostility to FDI in multi-brand retail as, once this is allowed, it will attract large amounts of FDI and also create a lot of jobs. More important, from the point of view of the BJP's kirana constituency, given how much space most big-box retailers like Walmart require, they are unlikely to be able to set up shop in most neighbourhood markets and, to that extent, they are unlikely to pose a threat to kiranas. Etail operations, on the other hand, pose a real threat since they don't need to be located near the consumer.

Yesterday's problem

'Population explosion' is a bogey the govt should ignore

HE PRIME MINISTER, in his Independence Day speech, flagged "population explosion" as a problem and talked of the need to counter it. It is surprising that the government has missed the message on the declining trend in fertility in the country and is gearing up to fight yesterday's problem. The proponents of population regulation raise the bogey of the absolute population level already being too high and the resulting resources-demand gap fuelling social misery and instability. But this deliberately ignores or underplays the fact that the rates of both absolute population growth and total fertility have been declining steadily, and negate the need for population regulation measures. Rajya Sabha member representing the BJP, Rakesh Sinha, has moved a private member's Bill that talks of enforcing a two-child policy through measures such as denial of financial benefits and sharply cutting PDS benefits for people who have more than two children. But, the fact is the total fertility rate (TFR) in the country is already down to 2.2, marginally above the 2.1 replacement rate, and both states and communities that have had historically high fertility rates are registering sharp decline in this. Indeed, amongst Muslims, the decline between 2003-06 and 2015-16 was the sharpest, at 23%, and the fertility rates for Christians and Buddhists/neo-Buddhists have fallen below the replacement rate and that for Jains and Sikhs, already below the replacement rate in 2003-06, has slid further.

The country's annual population growth rate fell from 2.5% in 1971-81—a time when 'population explosion'was bandied around commonly, and when India infamously experimented with forced sterilisation—to 1.3% in 2011-16. Similarly, the TFR in the country is down from 5.52 in 1971.As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) that provides the most dynamic data on fertility rates, even the states that have a higher fertility rate—Bihar (3.2), Uttar Pradesh (3), Madhya Pradesh (2.7), Rajasthan (2.6), Jharkhand (2.5), Chhattisgarh (2.4) and Assam (2.3)—than the national TFR have shown precipitous decline in fertility rates. Just a decade ago, for instance, Bihar had a TFR of 4 and UP of 4.1 while MP, Jharkhand and Rajasthan had a TFR of 3.5 each. With such trends likely to continue, as demographers predict, the population burden on India's resources will only ease in the coming decades. Given the improving levels of education, especially amongst women, and access to contraception, late marriage, financial independence of women, etc, fertility rates are coming down sharply. Local culture also plays a strong factor. Thus, as educational attainment levels go up, and more women push marriage for later, TFR will come down further, even child-bearing shifts to the older age-brackets. The solution to achieving population stability rests on increasing access for women to education and jobs. Pushing for active control measures, like a two-child policy that penalises those having more than two children could actually do more harm than good. Indeed, the Economic Survey 2018 talks about a sharp slowdown in population growth over the next two decades, with some states transitioning to an ageing society by the 2030s. India's 0-19 population is already falling and the share of the elderly is set to double over the next two decades. Against such a backdrop, population regulation seems not just unnecessary, but also harmful.

Listening IN

Facebook transcribing audio chats over Messenger in a furtive way hurt its own interests

TIS IRONICAL that those who chronicle the tiniest detail of their lives on social media should rue the loss of privacy in the digital age, but the latest instance of Facebook's "privacy violation" has even its die-hard supporters cringing. The social media giant, as per Bloomberg, had hired hundreds of private contractors to transcribe the content of call made over its Messenger app. The company admitted that it had been transcribing the audio content and it will no longer do so, following scrutiny on other companies over related transgressions. The company explained that those using Messenger had chosen the option to have their voice-chats transcribed. Given that some of the transcribed chats featured deeply personal content, it is quite clear that users were not aware that they had signed up for such sharing of their data. With consent fatigue, it is easy to assume, most simply didn't bother to read the terms of agreement and thus were not aware of what they had signed away. What Facebook has done is hardly surprising, though. It has become a norm for Big Tech industry—both Amazon and Google have been caught doing the same.

Although all three have promised not to do this again, they are bound to work a way around it. For companies, selling smart AI speakers, the only way they can improve services is through more and more data, which has to come from consumers sharing such data over social media, searches, chats, etc. Instead of trying to hide the fact that it will mine data, a Facebook should perhaps ask consumers outright to opt for such services in exchange for incentives. That way, they may even find willing participants. Also, given the fact that the core services of Facebook or Google continues to be free, adding a paywall for opting out of such data mining could be the right way to go. Big Tech's reputation will end up in tatters if it keeps hiding the fact that it will mine all sorts of data about the user, and hiding, thanks to the hyperbole on privacy, will always get conflated with sinister designs.

PDS REFORMS

SLOW PROGRESS OF AUTOMATION OF FAIR PRICE SHOPS IN KEY STATES COULD POSE A CHALLENGE FOR THE GOVT'S AIM TO MAKE ONE RATION CARD APPLICABLE ACROSS INDIA BY JUNE, 2020

The challenges for one nation, one ration card

HE GOVERNMENT HAS made a 'soft launch' for rolling out nation-wide portability for an estimated 23 crore ration card holders by June 1,2020. The key aim in introducing of nation-wide ration card portability under the National Food Security Act, 2013 is to facilitate ration card holders lifting their foodgrains from any of the 5.4 lakh fair price shops (FPS) of their choice, without needing to obtain new ration card. According to food ministry officials, the key focus of the scheme is ensuring that beneficiaries covered under NFSA are not denied their rations because of inter-state migration.

Currently, a large chunk of the labour force mostly covered under NFSA travels from states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, etc, to more economically advanced states, such as Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, in search of livelihood. This migration pattern is seasonal, especially at the beginning of the sowing of *rabi* and *kharif* crops, and during their harvesting. Often, few members of a family migrate to other states, thus depriving them of subsidised foodgrain entitlements under NFSA. Along with inter-state migration, there is migration within states for economic reasons as well.

"This initiative shall be helpful for the large migratory population of the country, who migrate from one part of the country to another in search of job or employment, marriage, or any other reason, and find difficulty in accessing subsidised foodgrains in the present system," food minister Ram Vilas Paswan has said recently, after launching the inter-state portability in two clusters of adjoining states—Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, and Gujarat & Maharashtra. This would enable beneficiaries from either state's cluster to avail the NFSA benefits from any of the two states. Currently, in four states—Andhra

Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, and Maharashtra—both intra-state and inter-state portability of ration card is being implemented. Seven other states—Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tripura—are, at present, testing intrastate portability that would allow beneficiaries to lift their quota of ration

Senior consultant with ICRIEF Views are personal

from any FPS store within that state. Food Secretary, Ravi Kant, has said

that inter-state portability of ration card will be implemented in these 11 states by January 2020: "By January 2020, these 11 states will be formed as one grid, where ration card will be made portable. It means beneficiaries can buy ration from any one of these 11 states."

The 'one nation, one ration card' entails integration of the existing PDS systems or portals of states and UTs with those of the Centre under a central repository of all NFSA ration cards and beneficiaries. The central repository also ensures that no duplicate ration cards and beneficiaries exist in any state or UT.

However, a critical factor which would impact the country-wide roll out of this initiative is studying, recording and regularly updating labour migration patterns. Especially, when a few members of a family that owns a ration card migrates for few months, reconciling the data at both locations would be a critical challenge. "The allocation of the foodgrains to states would have to be dynamic,

based on the lifting of foodgrains captured on a monthly basis across states," an official stated. On the storage distribution front, Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns have to operate in tandem, considering the needs arising in particular states. Presently, FCI godowns store three months' stock in advance, keeping in mind demand from a state or region.

Another challenge is that currently, around 77% of FPSs-4.12 lakh of the 5.34 lakh operating across the country have installed electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) machines. Two key states—West Bengal and Bihar—that witness huge labour emigration, have been laggards in this regard. According to data presented by the food ministry in the Lok Sabha recently, Bihar has installed ePoS devices at only 62 of its 41,483 FPSs. In West Bengal, only 366 FPSs out of the total 20,806 have ePoS machines.

Food ministry officials said that ePoS devices serve to authenticate of beneficiaries and electronically record subsidised foodgrain distribution to them. "As compared to earlier practice of man-

ual record-keeping of the transactions, the ePoS-based transactions have the advantage that the FPS dealers are not required to manually make separate entries of foodgrain distribution in registers and ration cards of the beneficiaries," the official said. While officials admitted that ePoS machines do experience some connectivity issues, these devices can also work in offline mode.

According to the food ministry, more than than 4.1 lakh ePoS devices are already operational across the country; 25 states/UTs have either completed the installation in all FPSs or have made significant progress in this area. (see graphic). More than 85% of the total 23 crore ration cards (at least one member) in the country have been seeded with the Aadhaar numbers of the beneficiaries.

For rolling out the one nation, one ration card move pan-India, all PDS shops should install ePoS machines and all ration cards have to be seeded with Aadhaar numbers. Thus, much depends on the two states of Bihar and West Bengal, where 1.54 crore and 5.62 crore individual ration cards, respectively, have to be seeded with Aadhar cards, and ePoS machines installed at all the FPSs over the next few months.

Another key challenge for the government would be studying seasonality of migration so that beneficiaries are not deprived of their entitlements. Based on seamless automation of PDS across the country, the Centre can allocate foodgrains under NFSA to respective states. At present, around 61 million tonnes of mostly rice and wheat are stored at warehouses of FCI, Central Wearhousing Corporation, State Wearhousing Corporations and private godowns, and are distributed among 81 crore beneficiaries annually.

Use of technologies like installation

of ePoS machines at FPSs and computerisation of supply chain management of FCI operations would help in increasing the overall efficiency of the entire process, while maintaining transparency and curbing corruption All states have to be on-board in terms of adoption of technologies so that beneficiaries across the country are provided with subsidised foodgrains under NFSA.

Progress of installation of electronic point of sale (ePoS) machines at fair price shops (FPSs) in key states 90,000 No ePoS machines 80,000_ installed at FPSs 70,000 60,000 50,000 40,000 86 30,000 8 8 20,000 *including other states, Lok Sabha, June 25,2019

Transit can save the environment

The technology that drives Uber and Lyft might reduce traffic yet, just not in the way those companies initially thought

MARK BUCHANAN



AS MORE AND more of the world's population shifts into cities, traffic congestion is becoming an ever-larger problem. The average American now loses around 100 hours a year sitting in traffic. Globally, congestion slows driving speeds, increasing emissions of carbon dioxide-more than 20% of which now comes from traffic.

Some dream that self-driving cars may solve the problem by smoothing out people's natural and often disruptive driving habits, yet self-driving cars are arriving much more slowly than enthusiasts expected. Ride-hailing services might also help by reducing car ownership, but a new study shows that in cities where Uber and Lyft have been introduced, traffic delays have gone up, not down.

One obvious idea to decrease congestion is better public transportation. But experts have been skeptical of how much this can help. Economists Gilles Duranton and Matthew A Turner argued nearly a decade ago that luring some drivers off the roads and onto trains and buses leaves less congested roadways, which then attract other drivers to those same roads. It is similar to what happens when you try to reduce congestion by building more roads: When you make more room for cars and trucks, you get more cars and trucks.

But new research based on statistical patterns in traffic demand and the availability of public transportation flies in the face of this theory. A good measure of a city's traffic burden is the fraction of the population that chooses to drive to work rather than use public transit. Using a simple conceptual model, physicists Vincent Verbavatz and Marc Barthelemy of the Institute of Theoretical Physics in Saclay, France, posited that easier access to public transportation can tip people away from driving.

That prediction turned out to be quite accurate for 25 large metropolitan areas in Europe, the US, Asia and Australia. In these cities, the fraction of people driving to work decreased in direct proportion to how easy it is to access public transportation specifically, which fraction of the population lives within one kilometre of a transit station.

Why did no one discover this before? For one thing, the data didn't exist. The research used sources such as TomTom navigation data, academic studies on access to transportation in many nations, and average driving speeds estimated from Google Maps. But more than that, Barthelemy told me by email, patterns can only be discovered if someone thinks to look for them. Their simple model suggested an interesting pattern to look for.

Their results lend credence to the idea that making public transportation more accessible can draw people away from driving, thereby reducing traffic. It also counters a fixed idea in transportation policy research that population density is the most crucial determinant of traffic patterns, with more densely populated cities being more

efficient. That turns out to be wrong. Verbavatz and Barthelemy also used their results to estimate how carbon dioxide emissions vary between cities and found that—in another prediction backed up by the empirical data—emissions rise in direct proportion to the diameter, or linear size, of a city, as well as with the proportion of people who lack good access to public transport. Compact cities emit less carbon dioxide per person, but not because of their population density. And better access to public transport always helps.

Of course, making access easier isn't just about getting people closer to transit stations. "Easier" might mean bridging the final distance between user and transport system with convenient bus service, for example. In this sense, one of the most exciting developments in public transport might be the rise of fleets of Uber-like buses able to move people over short, flexible routes. One example is the DC MicroTransit system, currently running for free in Washington. The aim is to use mobile technology to make the mass transit system easier for everyone to access, but to do it using large vehicles so as not to tax the roadways with even more traffic.

Some experts envision the emergence of a dense microtransit mesh of public and private shuttles bringing access to sprawling public transit systems to almost everyone's doorstep. Logically, as Verbavatz and Barthelemy's modelling demonstrates, this seems like a sound way to reduce road traffic. The technology that drives Uber and Lyft might reduce traffic yet, just not in the way those companies initially thought.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners

THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO

PM's I-day address

In his second-longest 92 minute I-Day speech since 2014, PM Modi talked about everything, but, did not mention 'Pakistan'. While the Pakistan PM Imran Khan, during his I-Day address, remarked that Pakistan observed its I-Day as "Kashmir Solidarity Day" and that people of Kashmir would retaliate against "illegal aggression by India". As per Pak's trend, Imran also said "goons of RSS" were lynching people, threatening judges, intellectuals and declaring anyone who differed with them "anti-nationals". This year in his speech, Modi probably brought the three most important points on birth control, Jal Shakti and plastic use regulation. In his speech Modi said that what his government has achieved in 70 days, previous governments could not in 70 years, on Jammu & Kashmir . Modi gaga over triple talaq, but he did not find it necessary to explain the need to criminalise triple talaq. PM Modi may feel suitable to announce, a longstanding demand that has been pending two decades, from the Red Fort that India would soon have a Chief of Defence Staff. However, these promises should not turn out to be hollow words. Because optimism is necessary to have will of implementation of schemes and projects in phased manner to benefit the aam admi. Very correct when one national daily said "Deeds must follow words as noon follows dawn". — Bidyut K Chatterjee, Faridabad

Clarification

In 'Fiscal space before the new govt in Karnataka' (August 16), the the fiscal deficit-GSDP ratio for the year 2016-17 in Karnataka is 2.5%, not 2.65% as it reads in the graph.

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

R.N.l. Reg. No. 6188/61 Printed for the proprietors, The Indian Express (P) Ltd by Vaidehi Chintaman Thakar at The Indian Express Towers, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021. Editorial & Administrative Offices: Express Towers, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021. Phone: 22022627/67440000. Fax: 022-22856323. Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Managing Editor: Sunil Jain, Deputy Managing Editor: Shobhana Subramanian* (*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act.) © Copyright: The Indian Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved.

WWW.FINANCIALEXPRESS.COM

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 2019

How yoga can boost exports Bond with the best

India's yoga trade is poised for an export boost given the rising interest for the ancient technique across the globe

NEHA GUPTA & VARSHA JAIN

Gupta is fellow and Jain is research assistant, ICRIER. Views are personal

INKING TO THE wellness carnival of the International Yoga Day (IDY) on June 21, many yoga studios are opening up both in India and globally. India is the secondlargest exporter of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) products with permission of 100% FDI therein. But the government is yet to fully utilise the trade potential in yoga industry, which exists in both services and manufacturing. Trends suggest a growth in cross-border movement of yoga professionals (teachers, practitioners, trainers, instructors), which can be referred to as the 'software' part of yoga. Another growing segment is trade in yoga accessories, dealing with the 'hardware'part of yoga (technically considered to be part of sports goods sector).

As estimated by the '2016 Yoga in America Study', the US continues to lead with the rise in number of yoga practitioners from 20.4 million in 2012 to 36.7 million in 2016. Over the same period, the spending by such professionals on yoga classes, clothing, equipment and accessories has increased by \$6.1 billion (\$16.8 billion during 2016). Conversely, Asia is leading in wellness trips, where China and India are the top countries, adding over 12 million and 17 million trips, respectively, during 2015-17, as per the Global Wellness Economy Monitor 2018. Till December 2016, India had trained and certified 799 yoga professionals as reported by the ministry of AYUSH. Certification can lead to formalisation of the industry, but the gap is wide enough to call for greater intervention on the part of the government for continuing its yoga heritage.

So, where India is placed in terms of trade of yoga services and equipment, as compared to the US, Europe and East Asia? The government has been opening centres in such regions to promote cultural exchange on yoga, music, dance, etc. For example, India and Japan committed

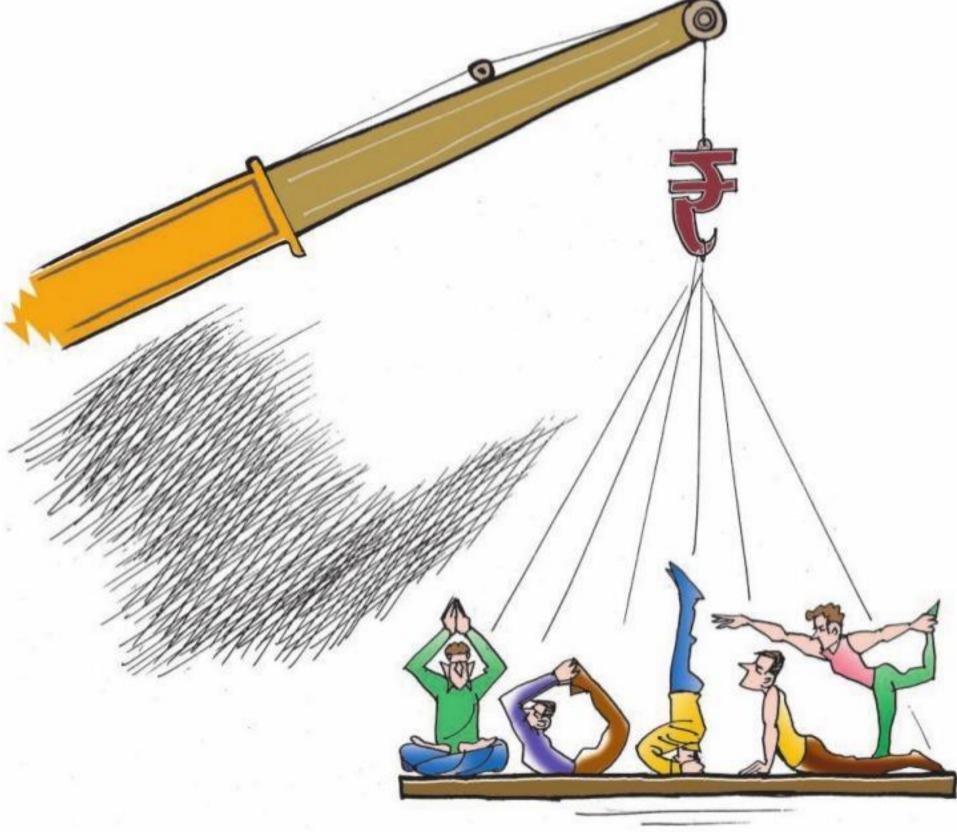


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

to liberalisation, under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2011, across all services modes to cover provisions relating to movements of teachers and contractual service providers in the field of yoga, among others. In July 2018, under India-Korea CEPA, both the countries agreed on certain terms related to export of yoga from India—Indian trainers/teachers/instructors to be sent to Korea for imparting lessons or providing guidance to Korean hospitals, etc, and instructors as well as Indian yoga institutes allowed to set up centres in South Korea (in exchange of Korea's similar initiative in the field of taekwondo). Having said that, it is crucial to verify whether India's yoga institutes are investing enough abroad to capture

maximum gains? With growing need for yoga services mainly post-IDY, the demand of and spending on accessories has risen. Broadly, yoga accessories are the tools that support yoga, such as mats, bricks, blocks, clothes and other equipment. However, more clarity on definition, scope and coverage of the same is required. Several foreign brands, too, have introduced special yoga mats, and various manufactures are shifting to recyclable, renewable or eco-friendly sources for making such equipment. The identification of exact product codes for yoga accessories is a big hindrance to a detailed study on the trade potential in this industry. For instance, the Sports Goods Export Promotion Council does not provide separate product codes for yoga mats, yoga straps, etc.

In its Foreign Trade Policy Statement 2017 Mid-Term Review, the government emphasised on using branding/marketing campaign to facilitate exports "of commodities and services in which India has traditional strengths, such as handicrafts and yoga." As the craze for yoga techniques and accessories is rising, along with export of yoga professionals' services, this is the right time to strike a chord and reap the potential economic benefits from the industry. Better and separate data reporting can be pursued in terms of demand for yoga mats, bricks, clothes, etc, and information about the number of yoga professionals going from India to other countries. The challenge, though, remains for researchers and policymakers to verify the accuracy of data and information available on private websites with official government sources. Nevertheless, investment in promoting yoga exports and value addition under Make in India can support growth of concerned manufacturers and give the country a required export boost.

Sovereign bonds: How to

meet the budgetary 'ends' with limited 'means'

SHARAD KUMAR

The author is AGM-Economist, SBI Views are persona

HIS YEAR'S BUDGET focused on Grameen Bharat, MSMEs and infrastructure—pillars towards reaching the \$5-trillion economy goal. A non-populist Budget, it remained short of major direct tax proposals, but focused on development goals. While achieving these goals could be an

end, where are the means? With tax revenue growth having its own limitation, the dependence has been on off-budget borrowings, besides government borrowings. And with government borrowings already on the high side, the government think tank might have worked out a plausible option, especially when the fiscal prudence target is supposed to be kept sacrosanct. The sovereign bond issue might be an outcome of such deep thinking.

The finance minister said: "India's sovereign external debt-to-GDP is among the lowest globally at less than 5%. The government would start raising a part of its gross borrowing programme in external markets in external currencies. This will also have beneficial impact on demand situation for the government securities in domestic market." The beneficial impact had an obvious reference to the intent of easing the yields and interest rates. Many considered it as a change of style from the times when the government issued government bond in rupees and borrowed in foreign currency through designated bodies (on concessional rates) such as the World Bank. The government's intent to have an offshore borrowing of 10-15% of total borrowing, working out to Rs 70,000 crore (\$10 billion), got a mixed reaction.

The cacophony takes the debate back to the East Asian Crisis and reminds one of the implications of foreign inflows in the form of debt. The East Asian Crisis was followed by the Global Financial Crisis. While India remained largely unscathed, growth was supported by the four stimulus packages by the government in 2008-09. Strong domestic fundamentals and relatively low external debt helped, as there were no foreign obligations.

The study "The Impact of the Financial Crisis on Emerging Asia" by Morris Goldstein and Daniel Xie presented at the Asia Economic Policy Conference (2009) notes: "By contrast (and with the exception of Peru, Argentina and Venezuela), shares of foreign currency debt are low in Latin America and are particularly low in emerging Asia." It acknowledged that the most striking feature is the low rollover risk in emerging Asia, relative to higher risk in emerging CIS and emerging European economies. Today, this low rollover risk in India is also due to its low dependence on sovereign foreign debt.

In a scenario where sovereign debt is expected to be priced 7.5% (assuming 3% coupon and 4.5% forward premium), much higher than the current yields on domestic bonds, it becomes a little ambitious to go for it, especially when there could be options to raise resources within. Though the domestic bond market is also subject to volatility and bond prices may move in tandem with factors that make sovereign bonds dearer, it does not provide a concrete case for not resorting to the traditional method of deficit financing.

Are there better options? An alternative could be revisiting the limit for FPIs to buy government bonds, revised upwards to 6% in FY20 by RBI. Currently, the limit for FPI investment in central government securities is Rs 3,384 billion for H1FY20. The utilisation so far has been Rs 2,063 bil lion, i.e. 61% with two months remaining for the first half year. This is against a util isation level of 73% in the same period of FY19. Another alternative that has been exercised by some—like Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB)—is masala bonds. These can take supply of money from international markets without incurring currency risk. The off-shore masala bond issue, denominated in rupee, would entail the investor bear the currency risk, with no requirement of currency hedge on the issuer side (unlike sovereign bonds). While this may also seem to be an option, the higher coupon would reduce the 'masala' element in such bonds A better-rated company would be able to issue *masala* bonds at a better pricing, but so is the case if it floats a bond domestically. KIIFB had to pay 9.723% for its fiveyear *masala* bond—not a low number.

As Phil McGraw said: "Sometimes you make the right decision, sometimes you make the decision right." We believe the government would take a call depending on market demand, pricing and accept ability—but with domestic financing as the primary option with further relaxation in FPI limits. In a developing economy like India where growth is being targeted, can we not afford a bit of fiscal slippage? India has slipped from the fastest growing economy to second fastest. It may, therefore, be pertinent to look at the broader picture and be flexible, than to micromanage.

DATA DRIVE

Steep drop in MF exposure to NBFCs



Jan

Sept

2018

May

2019

Jun

ON-BANKING FINANCIAL companies (NBFCs) are still facing liquidity squeeze as most banks have tightened lending since Q1FY20, and mutual funds, too, have reduced their exposure to NBFCs and housing finance companies. As a result,

most NBFCs have resorted to assignment/securitisation of loans to meet funding requirements. Some banks have hit single sector exposure limits on NBFCs and are not keen to increase

Bank of India has taken multiple steps to increase availability of funds to NBFCs, the overall impact has been marginal. The central bank has allowed banks' lending to NBFCs for agriculture, micro and small enterprises, and housing classified as priority sector lending, up to specified limits. It has also raised any bank's exposure limit to a single NBFC from the existing 15% to 20% of tier-1 capital to ease the liquidity pressure.

NBFCs face liquidity squeeze

exposure to the sector. While the Reserve

In the Budget, the government has underlined that public sector banks will be encouraged to buy high-rated pooled assets of up to ₹1 lakh crore of financially sound NBFCs on which the government will give six-month partial credit guarantee for the first loss of up to 10%. These changes will help some reduce some of the challenges faced by retail NBFCs as the risk factors of retail-lending NBFCs are different from infrastructure or consumer-lending NBFCs.

Borrowings mix of NBFCs

(%) Public deposits Bank borrowings Debentures Commercial paper Others



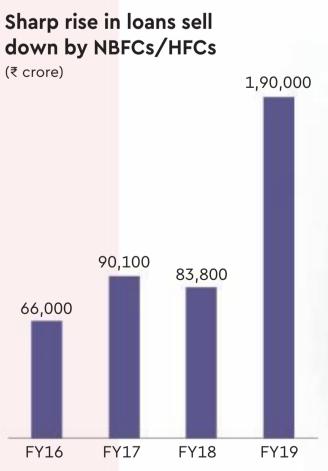
(% chg, y-o-y)

Q1

19

Q2

FY19



Disbursement slows down because of tight liquidity

(Q-o-Q growth in loan disbursement; %) Q1FY19 Q2FY19 Q3FY19 Q4FY19 Q4FY20 11

-10

-12 -18 -20

-12 -10 -13

16

-5 -3 -31

(Y-o-Y; %) Q1FY19

Muted AUM growth

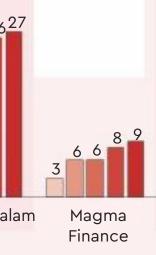
1516161616

Q2FY19

Q4FY19

414141

Q1FY20



Muthoot

Mahindra Finance Shriram Transport Bajaj Finance LICHF **PNBHF** HDFC Ltd LICHF L&T HF Cholamandalam Magma Finance Cholamandalam PNB HF Source: RBI, ACE Mutual Fund, FIDC-CIRF, Kotak Institutional Equities press.com

WORDLY WISE

THE CLERGY ARE, PRACTICALLY, THE MOST IRRESPONSIBLE OF ALL TALKERS.

— George Eliot

The Indian EXPRESS

S FOUNDED BY S RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FORCE OF REFORM

Test of PM's announcement of Chief of Defence Staff will lie in delineation of office's powers. It needs a purposeful mandate

THAS BEEN clear for two decades that big military reforms cannot take place without political will. On August 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi signalled that such political will had been summoned when he announced that the armed forces would now have a Chief of Defence Staff, a post for which there was a long felt need. Its creation was recommended two decades ago by the Group of Ministers in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA government that was tasked with studying the Kargil Review Committee and coming up with concrete proposals from it. The KRC had redflagged the urgent need for structural reforms in the military. The GoM proposed a five star CDS who would bring unity of command between the three services, rising above the often competing views and claims of the Army, Navy and Air Force, to advise the prime minister and defence minister on a host of issues such as strategy, procurement of weaponry, manpower requirements, as well as work towards tri-service operational "jointmanship".

However, through all these years, the proposal could never find enough backers either in the political class or the defence bureaucracy. The three services were not convinced either. Politicians were worried that concentrating power in the hands of a high military official would give rise to praetorian tendencies; the defence ministry feared a change in the civilian-military equation that would result in its own loss of supremacy; and the Air Force and Navy opposed it because they believed that the CDS system would be dominated by the Army. Even a watered down version of the CDS suggested by the 2011 Naresh Chandra Committee, which was essentially a slightly more empowered version of the existing Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee system, did not see the light of day.

The decision to appoint a CDS would be meaningful only if the government clears these speedbreakers, which still exist. In addition, now there is also the Defence Planning Committee headed by the powerful NSA, who is the defacto CDS. The real test of Modi's announcement will be known when the time comes to delineate the powers of this office. Without a purposeful mandate, it would end up becoming just another military office. It is clear that the CDS must be able to report to the prime minister and defence minister, and must be seen as the senior-most military official, rather than as just "first among equals" with the service chiefs. In the US, the powers of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are defined by a 1986 law. In the hierarchy, he is placed above the service chiefs, and his role defined as that of the "principal military advisor" to the president and defence secretary. The same law also lays out what the CJCSC cannot do. For sure, there will be resistance to an empowered CDS, because the military, like most organisations, is loath to change. But the Indian armed forces know, too, that this is the best way forward to a modern army that is prepared for today's challenges.

SLOW AND SLOWER

Instead of short-term palliatives, government should keep the focus on fixing structural issues plaguing the economy

HERE IS MORE bad news on the economy. On Tuesday, data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers showed that sales dropped by 18.7 per cent in July — the sharpest decline in nearly 19 years. On Wednesday, data released by the commerce ministry showed that non-oil, non-gold imports, an indicator of domestic demand, contracted in July — they have contracted every month this financial year. The corporate results season also points to depressed demand. Clearly, household demand, which has been the bulwark of growth over the past few years, has slowed down substantially over the past few quarters. Why is this so? And can it be reversed?

Part of the explanation can be traced to household borrowings. Slower income/wage growth over the past few years led to households stepping up their borrowings to finance their consumption. In just two years, household financial liabilities went up from Rs 3.85 lakh crore in 2015-16 to Rs 7.4 lakh crore in 2017-18 — a period that also coincides with the sharp growth of NBFCs. This changed with the collapse of IL&FS. With the crisis engulfing the NBFC sector, the capacity of households to borrow to finance their consumption has been restricted. Bank lending is yet to offset this decline. This raises the question: If growth over the past few years was driven largely by households gorging on debt, which is unsustainable beyond a point, will policy interventions designed to fuel household consumption without addressing the underlying reason, the slowdown in income growth, be the prudent approach?

With the primary drivers of growth struggling, an argument is being made for a fiscal stimulus. Notwithstanding that the budget, which was presented just a few weeks ago, shied away from doing so, the space for a meaningful stimulus does not exist as the government is likely to find it difficult to meet its budgeted fiscal deficit target this year — its tax revenues are growing well below nominal GDP growth. In any case, higher government spending will be counterproductive — it will push up bond yields, restricting transmission of the interest rate cuts by the MPC. Reports also suggest that the government is considering a slew of measures to reverse the slowdown. At this juncture, the temptation to rely solely on short-term palliatives should be avoided. While sector-specific measures, such as addressing the concerns of the auto sector could be explored, the focus should be on addressing the structural issues that plague the economy.

THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

A Buddhist temple in Japan has an android for a priest. But in India, even such an advanced AI may not be able to adapt

ERE'S WHERE KARL Marx got it wrong: Opium sells itself, while religion requires marketing. The Kodaiji Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan, is just 400 years old. But its latest priest, Kannon, can technically live forever, acquire unlimited knowledge and like Douglas Adams' fictional supercomputer, Deep Thought, could hold the answer to "life, the universe and everything". Kannon is an android priest, with silicon skin and a camera for a left eye. It began conducting sermons earlier this year and preaches about compassion and the dangers of desire, anger and ego.

Apart from the tricky theological questions, an android does provide the perfect vessel to preach detachment. When it talks of desire and ego, it can counsel without hypocrisy. Ironically, though, the motive behind the technological update may not be so detached as the new priest. The clergy at the Kodaiji temple reportedly hopes that Kannon will attract younger people, amongst whom the influence of religion is waning.

closer home, too, robotic intervention holds much promise for religion to get with the times — and we can do it cheaper. The repetition of mantras, whether at weddings or funerals, is set and, frankly, requires little engagement from the audience. Given that most people are not well acquainted with classical Sanskrit, the vedic android will require programming no more sophisticated than a tape recorder. The only thing preventing the complete digitisation of religion is that even the most sophisticated artificial intelligence cannot perform the moral gymnastics that human beings who deal with religion and public life are able to. For instance, what will be the caste of a robot priest? Some questions trump even the most sophisticated technologies.

ess.com

The long disarm of the law

Even by its own spotty standards, abdication of the legal profession in leading the charge for liberty is striking

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

THE CONSTITUTIONALITY AND wisdom of rendering Article 370 irrelevant to Kashmir can be debated. But no matter which side of the debate you are on, the spectre of the Indian legal system abdicating its responsibility to protect the liberties of ordinary Indians should alarm all of us.

There are three tragic ironies in the current moment. First, the very act of supposedly "integrating" Kashmir more fully into India starts off by virtually putting the whole population of the Valley under a pall of suspicion. The normal rights to movement, communication and expression have been suspended for a large section of the population. Admittedly, there are security exigencies in Kashmir, and the state has an interest in preventing violence. But to put a state under a communication lockdown of protracted and uncertain duration, to detain almost the entire political leadership of the state, to deny ordinary citizens their liberties, reeks of a conduct that befits a colonial power, not a liberal democracy.

The second alarming thing is the casualness with which all of this is justified. This casualness only underscores the lack of empathetic imagination and the weakening commitment to freedom that characterised the rest of India; it is as if we are saying, we will win over Kashmiris by imposing even more hardship on them. But the third irony is that their first experience of Indian law as a Union Territory is untrammelled executive power writ large, where anyone can be detained or prevented from travelling on any pretext whatsoever. Indian courts have had a spotty record in defending our civil liberties. But even by that spotty standard, the abdication of the legal profession in leading the charge for liberty is striking.

There are a few petitions pending in the Supreme Court. But the court has already abdicated its responsibility by kicking the can down the road. In the case of detention, where mass political arrests have taken place, time is of the essence. What is the point of habeas corpus protection if it applies only after the state has done its deeds? Even if, for argument's sake, some measures of detention or restrictions on public assembly are necessary, the justification, duration, form and location can at least be scrutinised. Even

There are a few petitions pending in the Supreme Court. But the court has already abdicated its responsibility by kicking the can down the road. In the case of detention, where mass political arrests have taken place, time is of the essence. What is the point of habeas corpus protection if it applies only after the state has done its deeds? Even if, for argument's sake, some measures of detention or restrictions on public assembly are necessary, the justification, duration, form and location can at least be scrutinised. Even if the Supreme Court wanted to take more time on Article 370 issues, taking up issues

of 'liberty' cases should have

been its top priority.

if the Supreme Court wanted to take more time on Article 370 issues, taking up issues of "liberty" cases should have been its top priority.

But, more generally, there is an extraordinary listlessness in the legal profession in the defence of liberty. One would have thought this was a time for the legal profession to blitzkrieg the court with habeas corpus petitions. One would have thought that if Shah Faesal was denied the right to travel, prominent lawyers would invoke memories of the famous Maneka Gandhi case, and draw their swords on behalf of the right to travel. In fact, the tribe of senior counsel who are never shy to claim chivalrous custodianship of the Indian Constitution, are strikingly missing in leading the charge in the public sphere for liberty and rule of law in Kashmir. There are honourable exceptions, but such high degrees of deference in the legal culture of judges and lawyers to executive power does not portend well for Indian democracy.

Perhaps this is not surprising. So much of the public rhetoric is reminiscent of the Emergency. You had, then, Justice Y V Chandrachud arguing, in *ADM Jabalpur*, in a manner reminiscent of current discourse, that liberties could be ignored since political prisoners would not be mistreated. He had a "diamond bright" and "diamond hard" hope that such things would never come to pass. You had Justice A N Ray warning counsel not to "paint pictures of diabolic distortion and mendacious malignment of the government of the country."

H M Seervai's gloss on ADM Jabalpur is still worth quoting: "The majority judgment gave charter to every government servant to do his will against the helpless people, stripped by the Supreme Court of the protection of law. A rigid censorship concealed the extent of the injury inflicted by the judgment from the public gaze. But the evidence which has come to light since then shows how little justification there was for any judge to speak of 'motherly care' shown to detenues, or to express 'diamond bright and diamond hard hopes', that the kind of misdeeds which counsel for detenues feared had not tarnished the record of free India and would not do so."

There is danger that what Seervai described as the sensibility of the majority judgment is becoming the default common sense of our legal and wider political culture. Even if we admit that there are security and public order exigencies in Kashmir, there is no reason to exempt mass detentions from quick legal scrutiny. As the legal historian, Rohit De, reminded us (see his paper, Constitutional Antecedents, in the Oxford Handbook of the Indian Constitution), even in the midst of World War II, when India was ruled by a colonial power, a newly created and young Federal Court of India (the precursor to the Supreme Court) had, under the leadership of Sir Maurice Gwyer, the courage to invalidate Rule 26 of the then Defence of India Rules and direct the Bombay High Court to issue a writ of habeas corpus. There were some technical grounds for the decision. But, as De recounts, "the court was shocked by the non-application of mind that went into these detention orders. This was evidenced by the practice of verbatim reproduction in the order of detention of all the objects in relation to which such an order may be made instead of specifying a particular ground of suspicion."

Even for the British, war was not a catchall excuse to exempt habeas corpus cases from quick judicial scrutiny. All states are organised hypocrisy: They will use arguments from necessity to suspend the rule of law or civil liberties. But it does not portend well for a state when literally any argument from "necessity" or "sensitivity" is given a free pass by the judicial system. In fact, the abrogation of Article 370 makes it even more important to signal that the Constitution, whose writ and ambit we want to extend to Kashmir, is a constitution of liberty, not simply a tool of executive tyranny. It is a Constitution designed to elicit people's natural sympathies by guaranteeing their liberty and dignity.

Our legal abdication on liberties is a sign that we are not ready to treat Kashmiris as ordinary Indians and that we are willing to debase ourselves in the face of an executive that is acting more colonially than a colonial power.

> The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

THE CALIPH OF THE COURT

Pakistan's Chief Justice Saqib Nisar neglected cases to campaign for a dam

KHALED AHMED

IN PAKISTAN, JUDGES at the top of the judiciary have a way of going berserk, taking seriously Islam's "justice on the street" legend about the caliphs of Baghdad. When this happens, the dubious practice of "suo motu" gets out of hand: The judge, instead of worrying about his backlog, creates new cases on his own and absents himself from his real job. Pakistan suffered the suo motu psychosis of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Iftikhar Chaudhry (2005-2013) and the state had to pay damages abroad because Chaudhry, heady with false charisma, rescinded foreign contracts. The lawyers who had supported him in his row with the government lived to regret their stupidity.

Chief Justice Saqib Nisar (2016-2019), watching the theatre of the absurd, of suo motu, of his predecessor, thought he could actually improve on the Caliph of Baghdad's act. He wanted to leave a blazing legacy, but left the reputation of the judiciary in tatters. His main "achievement" pertains to the Basha Dam.

Justice Nisar paraded around, collecting "dam funds" and toured the UK to lobby expat Pakistanis. The dam is estimated to cost \$14 billion. One estimate indicates that Nisar collected Rs 9 billion but cost the government Rs 13 billion in publicity ads.

Justice Nisar took cover behind Article 184 (3) of the constitution, which empow-

As the backlog of cases at Justice Nisar's court mounted — from 38,129 in 2017 to 40,254 in 2018 — and the litigants whimpered in protest, he started favouring lawyers who sought long adjournments in return for — guess what — donations to the dam fund. Cases cited in the press included upscale housing billionaire Malik Riaz who was asked to chip in with

'tens of billions of rupees'.

ered him "to act in matters of public importance involving fundamental rights". The dam is a bit of a stretch and may take a long time — and a lot of money that Pakistan doesn't have — to build. But his Basha shenanigans went on: A member of the Sindh Assembly was asked to deposit Rs 3 million in the dam fund for assaulting a citizen. Nisar asked a cement factory to deposit Rs 100 million in a case involving environmental damage to the temples of Katas Raj in district Chakwal, which did nothing to restore the Hindu temples.

As the backlog of cases at Justice Nisar's court mounted – from 38,129 in 2017 to 40,254 in 2018 — and the litigants whimpered in protest, he started favouring lawyers who sought long adjournments in return for – guess what – donations to the dam fund. Cases cited in the press included upscale housing billionaire Malik Riaz who was asked to chip in with "tens of billions of rupees"; and the Khokhar brothers accused of land-grabbing in Lahore, who had to cough up Rs 100 million. He went on his fund-raising binge and was often flanked by Prime Minister Imran Khan himself. As he circulated like the legendary Caliph of Baghdad, he thought he should give himself a name reflecting the "blessing" he was proving for the Pakistani masses. He chose the funny nickname, Baba Rehmata.

Some lawyers — not all, because most of them are deeply religious — noted that he was going overboard with his blending of ideology with nationalism. One instance often cited was what he said in a speech in Quetta: "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was probably the first thinker who conceived the two-nation theory, that there were two nations; one was Muslims and the other — well, I don't even want to utter the word." He preened over downgrading the Hindu community, protected as equal citizens by the constitution he was supposed to uphold.

Some judges in the higher judiciary didn't like what Nisar was doing. It is difficult to say whether they really objected because Nisar was legally out of bounds or simply because he looked ridiculous. One judge was Justice Qazi Faez Isa, whom he removed from a hearing midway for questioning his exercise of the suo motu. Unfortunately, Justice Isa is today facing dismissal at the Supreme Judicial Council after a reference by the Imran Khan government. You have to pay for not being the Caliph of Baghdad.

Then, on June 28 came the curtains. Three events planned in London with former chief justice Saqib Nisar and a federal minister failed to go ahead "for lack of interest".

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

AUGUST 17, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

Petrol, kerosene, LPG and diesel prices increased and dies

FUEL PRICE RISE

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ordered increases in the prices of almost all petroleum products. The decision to increase prices was taken at a meeting of the cabinet this morning in the wake of unprecedented increases in the prices of crude oil and petroleum products in the world market. Naphtha, fuel oil and low sulphur heavy stock (LSHS), used as feedstock for the fertiliser industry, and lubricants of various grades, have been left untouched. While feedstocks for the fertiliser industry have been exempted from price increase to prevent any escalations in the prices of fertilisers in the interest of agricultural pro-

duction, lubricants have been protected be-

cause they are already very highly priced in comparison with other products.

CPM VOLTE FACE

AFTER REPEATED ASSERTIONS that it will not back a political combination dependent on the RSS-Jana Sangh or the Congress (I), the CPM decided to support the Charan Singh ministry even while recognising that the government has not "yet freed itself" from the support of Indira Gandhi's party. Explaining the party's volte face, the CPM central committee said in a statement after its two-day-long deliberations in Delhi that it was necessary for it to back the government in order to prevent "the Jana Sangh-

dominated Janata Party from coming back.

Nanaji's Duty

JANATA LEADER NANAJI Deshmukh has told the prime minister that by raising certain questions and highlighting the inconsistencies in his (Charan Singh's) views about Morarji Desai, H N Bahuguna, Indira Gandhi and on other matters, he was only doing "national duty". In a letter to Singh, Deshmukh refuted the charge that he was travelling all over the country abusing him. He reminded Singh about the grave charges of corruption levelled by the latter against H N Bahuguna when both were members of Desai's government.

— THE GUARDIAN

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 2019

13 THE IDEAS PAGE

By numbers alone

The change in Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional status is democratic only in one sense — it had a parliamentary majority. But democracy is much more than that



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

DID THE ABROGATION of Jammu and Kashmir's special status express India's democratic wish, or did it violate basic democratic canons? The government's claim is the former, critics say it is the latter. How do we judge?

Democracy has at least four meanings. Democracy, first of all, is a system of electoral power. The BJP received 229 million votes in the recent elections. If all voters were to exercise franchise in Jammu and Kashmir, the erstwhile state would have at best eight million votes, of which the Kashmir Valley had approximately 4.5 million. The BJP has been committed to the abrogation of Article 370, saying it gave undue privileges to India's only Muslim-majority state. Having received a larger mandate for the directly-elected Lower House of Parliament, and confident that it could get enough votes in the indirectly elected Upper House, it went ahead with its ideological project and removed Article 370 via parliamentary majorities. This is consistent with the first meaning of democracy namely, electoral majorities as a cornerstone of democratic power.

But elections alone do not define a democracy. The second idea of democracy is that it is not simply a system of majority rule, but also a system of minority protection. All post-Nazi democracies since 1945 have had this character. The Nazi regime and its theorists, such as Carl Schmitt, had argued that democracy was only about majority wishes and if the German majority wanted Jews to be second-class citizens, the Jewish minority of German lands would have no choice but to submit. Only liberalism, argued Schmitt, protected the Jews, not democracy.

The logical culmination of this view of democracy was the concentration camp, or the incarceration and death of several million Jews because their loyalties to the German nation were considered suspect by those who won power. Unless minority rights constrain the majority-rule principle, democracies can, in principle, lead to concentration camps. That is why post-1945, democracies have tended to be liberal democracies, not simply electoral democracies. Modern democracy first enables majority rule and then also checks and balances it with minority rights.

In and of themselves, 4.5 million votes cannot carry greater democratic weight than 229 million votes. Election winners do get the right to frame policies or enact laws in a democracy, but in post-Nazi democracies, this rule is radically modified when the 229 million voters are primarily of one religion (or race), and the 4.5 million votes are overwhelmingly from a minority religion (or race), as opposed to both being racially, religiously, ethnically so mixed that voters can be identified primarily as individual citizens, not as members of the religiously defined majorities and minorities. The problem is not rule by a majority, but rule by a religiously (ethnically or racially) defined majority.

Nearly 44 per cent of Hindus voted for the BJP in the recent elections and only eight per cent of Muslims did. India is about 80 per cent Hindu, and the Kashmir Valley over 96 per cent Muslim. The minority-protec-



C R Sasikumai

tion principle of democracy means that even with 229 million overwhelmingly Hindu votes, the BJP should not impose its will on seven million Kashmiris. The agreements made to protect minority rights — Articles 370 and 35A — would have to be respected, unless the minority itself agreed to their termination.

It is suggested that Kashmiri Muslims have no right to this reasoning because in the early 1990s, with the insurgency at its peak, they actively engineered the outmigration of Kashmiri Hindus, a minority community in the Valley where Muslims are a majority. This argument is flawed. All it can logically require is (a) identifying and punishing those organisations that forced the outmigration, and (b) insisting on the return of Kashmiri Hindus. By no democratic reasoning does it entitle a government to inflict majoritarian retribution on an entire community — to avenge an earlier majoritarian excess.

The third meaning of democracy is that it is a constitutionally-governed system. All modern democracies, except the British, are constitutionally-based. Elections establish who will rule, but the rulers so elected are also constitutionally bound. Here, there are

three key questions. First, can routine legislative action scrap an article of the constitution? Or, was a special legislative procedure, mandated by a constitutional amendment, required? If the latter, the change should also have been proposed as a constitutional amendment, and super majorities in the two Houses of the central legislature pursued ex-ante, not celebrated post-fact. Second, can the governor's approval, procured in this case, be taken as the state's consent for change? Constitutionally, the governor represents Delhi, not the state in question. The governor cannot be called a substitute for the state's elected political representatives. If the elected state legislature is not in session, a constitutional change pertaining to the state must await the return of

elected representatives. Third, we know that Article 3 of India's Constitution allows the change of state boundaries without the approval of state assemblies, but the Centre, on August 6, did not simply hive off Ladakh from a state, a la Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. It also demoted Jammu and Kashmir. Can India's Parliament, without a constitutional amendment, turn a state with full federal rights into a Union Territory, which has reduced rights and whose law and order are centrally governed, not by the state? It is analogous to turning Pennsylvania, a state in the American federation, into a Washington DC, which is not a state.

The fourth meaning of democracy is that it is a system of political ethics. In a democracy, those vitally affected by a decision are given a chance to speak, even if they are likely, or destined, to lose. Losers are silenced in authoritarian polities, not in democracies. The Kashmir Valley is vitally affected by this constitutional change, but it was locked down, its leaders arrested, and a curfew imposed. This is similar to what happened on the eve of the Emergency, on June 25, 1975. Indira Gandhi arrested major Opposition leaders before a president-approved order was presented to Parliament and democracy suspended. Since August 5, we have witnessed a Kashmir-level emergency, though

clearly not a national emergency. In short, only in one democratic sense democracy as a system of electoral power – can the decision to change Kashmir's status be called potentially legitimate. In all other democratic senses, we have witnessed severely anti-democratic conduct. It was electorally-enabled brute majoritarianism.

The writer is director, Center for Contemporary South Asia, Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies and Social Sciences, Professor of Political Science, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University

A jan andolan for water

"The demonstrators (in Hong Kong) should give Beijing no excuse for violent suppression. But the behaviour of a small minority does not justify a ruthless

Proposed Jal Jeevan Mission will be a decentralised, community-managed and sustainable water management scheme



PARAMESWARAN IYER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

response to the movement as a whole."

ON AUGUST 15, during the first Independence Day speech of his second tenure, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the Jal Jeevan Mission, which plans to supply water to all households by 2024. Five years ago, on the same occasion, he had made an equally audacious pronouncement: That India would become open defecation free by October 2, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Having delivered on that promise, the PM has now set another BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) and, without a doubt, an idea whose time has come.

For many years, the central and state governments have been making efforts to increase access to safe and adequate drinking water. While the provision of a basic quantity of drinking water in rural India has been achieved through handpumps, dug wells or public stand posts, at the top of the aspirational ladder has always been household water supply (HWS). Thus, while states like Sikkim and Gujarat have managed to achieve high levels of HWS, a relatively low percentage of rural Indian households have access to this service. The strategy so far to increase access to HWS faced obstacles, including not paying enough attention to sustaining or recharging groundwater, the primary source, and treating service delivery primarily as an engineering solution, without adequate involvement of the users.

A further challenge at the policy level was that, until now, the institutional landscape for water at both the Centre and state government has been somewhat fragmented, with several ministries in Delhi and departments in states dealing with different aspects of water management, with overlapping roles and responsibilities. No single body had the ultimate oversight and authority necessary to resolve conflicting issues and take the necessary decisions. The creation of the Jal Shakti Mantralaya in the Government of India to integrate the management of India's water resources and supply of drinking water is a landmark step in diagnosing and addressing the problem. At a policy level, therefore, the stage has been set to deliver integrated water management solutions.

One of the main implementation challenges in rural drinking water service delivery has been the inadequate attention to taking concrete measures to sustain the source of the water, in most cases groundwater. The traditional approach to source sustainability by the large engineering departments in states has either been to assume that the groundwater source is infinite or that it is some other department's problem. Instead of taking simple and local measures, like creating rainwater harvesting structures and point recharge structures in the vicinity of borewells, the emphasis has been more on maximising the pumping of water and distributing it through pipes. This led to many of the systems either shutting down or func-

tioning suboptimally due to the groundwater source having dried up. The proposed Jal Jeevan Mission will make source sustainability measures mandatory prior to pumping and distributing water to households. Another major issue with the traditional

approach to service delivery was that the provision of drinking water was viewed primarily as an engineering solution, with schemes being planned and executed by the public health and engineering departments. However, water is an ideal sector for the applicability of the principle of subsidiarity – the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level Programmes like the Swajal project in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and the WASMO programme in Gujarat, demonstrated that with adequate capacity building and training, water can be most efficiently managed at the lowest appropriate level. Adopting this principle, the Jal Jeevan Mission's first preference will be to have single village ground water-based schemes, wherever sufficient quantity and good quality of groundwater exists. These schemes would be managed by the community itself through the setting up of a village water and sanitation committee, a sub-committee of the gram panchayat Wherever adequate quantity of safe groundwater is not present, or where it may be technically not feasible to have single-village schemes, surface water-based multi-village schemes will be promoted. Further, in some remote regions, where it may not be technoeconomically feasible to have household water supply schemes, local innovations, such as solar-based schemes will be encouraged.

It is not commonly known that household waste water, mainly from the kitchen and bathing, from household water supply amounts to about 75 per cent of the amount of water supplied. Under the proposed Jal Jeevan Mission, with rural households planned to get household water supply, huge quantities of household waste water will be generated across the country, therefore making its effective management critical. It is, therefore, planned to include a mandatory provision under the Jal Jeevan Mission for the effective channeling and treatment of household waste water (known as grey water), through appropriate and low cost drainage and treatment systems. Once appropriately treated, the grey water can be used for both recharge of ground water as well as for irrigation purposes.

On the lines of the Swachh Bharat Mission, extensive information, education and communication will be needed to create a jan andolan for water management. The ongoing Jal Shakti Abhiyan will help in creating awareness about the importance of integrating source sustainability and water reuse with the provision of household water supply. This integrated approach to decentralised, community managed, and sustainable water management is the backbone of the government's plan to ensure that every household gets the benefits of water supply The Jal Jeevan Mission will be a major step towards improving our people's ease of living and meeting their aspirations of a New India.

The writer is secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti. Views are personal

change of state boundaries without the approval of state assemblies, but the Centre, on August 6, did not simply hive off Ladakh from a state, a la Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. It also demoted Jammu and Kashmir. Can India's Parliament, without a constitutional amendment, turn a state with full federal rights into a union territory, which has reduced rights and whose law and order are centrally governed, not by the state? It is analogous to

Article 3 of India's

Constitution allows the

turning Pennsylvania, a state in the American federation, into a Washington DC, which is not a state.

Summer of Love 2.0

The world needs another Woodstock and all that it stood for

RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

FIFTY YEARS AGO, in August 1969, half a million people gathered for three days on a 600acre dairy farm at Bethel, New York to celebrate peace, love and music. The event became known as the Woodstock Rock Festival. The festival became world-famous after a soundtrack album and an award-winning documentary by the same name was released subsequently. Nearly 30 bands and musicians performed at the Woodstock Festival over four days, including Ravi Shankar, Joan Baez, Jimi Hendrix, Santana, The Grateful Dead, The Who, Jefferson Airplane, Joe Cocker and many others. Despite the famous absentees — like Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan and Simon & Garfunkel - Woodstock became a symbol of anti-Vietnam contestation and the global counterculture movement. Unlike today's youth, who is thinking in terms of money and jobs

and becoming increasingly conformist and

complacent, the young people of the 1960s

were feeling frustrated and rejected by the

socio-political systems of their time. In

American society in particular, young peo-

ple were disgusted by the Jim Crow laws in

the Southern US and the assassinations of

the African-American emancipation move-

ment leaders, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and

Martin Luther King Jr. They were also

strongly opposed to the Vietnam war and

the draft system — which mainly drew from

the Black population, minorities and lowerclass whites. Increasingly disillusioned with the American political debate, the rebellious youth turned towards new radical values expressed by Black Power, Maoism and the hippie movement.

The hippie movement was reinforced by the escalation of US involvement in Vietnam, followed by unrest on college campuses. It included hundreds of thousands of young Americans across the country who showed their rebelliousness by way of their long hair and beards, colourful dresses, drug use and adherence to a host of oriental spiritual philosophies — things that American society had never heard of. Among the distinctive signs and attitudes related to those of this generation was the love of psychedelic and progressive rock music. In fact, the American counterculture movement was not only influenced by the philosophies of the Beat poets and writers like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs, and some Freudo-Marxist icons like Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm; but it was also motivated by the music of rock bands like The Mamas and the Papas who popularised the Hippie image of California when they sang "If you're going to San Francisco/Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair."

In July 1967, *Time* magazine published a cover story on the Hippie movement, de-

scribing it as the "Summer of Love". According to the article, the movement was "blooming in every major US city from Boston to Seattle, from Detroit to New Orleans," embracing hundreds of thousands of souls. These were mostly young people in their twenties and thirties who dreamed of a place where they could practise free love, take acid and listen to their favorite bands: This is what the Woodstock Music Festival provided them with in August 1969. No other music festival had attracted so many counterculture people in one place. The Monterey International Pop Music Festival in 1967 and The Atlantic City Pop Music Festival had each attracted around 1,00,000 people. The specificity of the Woodstock Music Festival was that it embodied the zeitgeist of the 1960s, represented by political radicalism, women's liberation movement, anti-war partisanship and, finally, cultural transformation.

Max Yasgur, the man who rented out his farm for the Woodstock festival in 1969 died in 1973. In 1984, a plaque was placed at the site of the festival commemorating the historical event and years later, in 2008, the ashes of Richie Havens, one of the artists who participated at Woodstock, were scattered across the field. Several years ago, Michael Lang, who was one of the organisers of the original Woodstock event, decided to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the event in August 2019. However, the investors who had promised to help Lang in this enterprise walked out. Though Lang continued his dream of organising a Woodstock 50 with help from Oppenheimer & Co., the concert was finally cancelled in late July. Consequently, in an interview with the magazine Variety, Lang underlined that Woodstock remained committed to "social change. and the values of compassion, human dignity, and the beauty of our differences."

But the truth is, that times have changed and Woodstock is no more in the hearts and minds of today's youth. The Woodstock Music Festival was organised in 1969, a year after the sons and daughters of the most privileged sections of the United States and of Europe decided to change the world. The year that Grace Slick and Jefferson Airplane sang, "Now it's time for you and me to have a revolution." As such, the Woodstock Music Festival was the result of all that rebelliousness which seemed to be in the air, and it seemed to be everywhere. It was a moral revolt against a mode of living which has now taken over our universities and workplaces. Fifty years later, maybe, it is time to re-invent Woodstock.

> The writer is professor-vice dean, Jindal Global University

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SOLID DEFENCE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Unifying the command' (IE, August 16). The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as permanent chairman of the chiefs of staff committee (COSC) will ensure inter-services coordination and operational synergy between three defence services. CDS as the single point of contact between the defence services and the civilian leadership will aid policy coherence. The pivotal role of the National Security Council as an advisory body to the PMO in matters of national security should remain unaltered to maintain the upper hand

of the civilian leadership. Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

STORY IN HER EYES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Goddess of small things' (IE, August 16). Vidya Sinha was a star of the middle-of-theroad cinema that balanced itself between the blatantly commercial and the laboriously intellectual genres. With extraordinary flair, she emoted ordinary, run-of-the-mill moments. She will always be remembered as the actress whose eyes carried a story.

Sangeeta Kampani, Delhi

JINGOISM AGAIN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The PM's message'. The most notable feature of all the PM's speeches has been drawing

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Ministry's tasks THIS REFERS TO the editorial,

'Face the deluge' (IE, August 14). In June, the government created an integrated Ministry of Jal Shakti. Some states have received less rainfall while others face a deluge. Both the situations have to be addressed. The Jal Shakti ministry should intervene in situations such as the one in Maharashtra and Karnataka. A lot of damage could have been avoided if the two states had agreed to a timely discharge of waters from the Almatti dam.

Krishan Chugh, Delhi

parallels with non-BJP governments and condemning them, no matter how solemn the occasion. The country is undergoing serious economic troubles and there is political turmoil in J&K. The PM has rightfully said that all the citizens should take ownership of change. However, the country is gripped with jingoism and any dissent is viewed in bad light.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

ess.com

Justice for the mob

Acquittal in the emblematic case of Pehlu Khan's murder imperils the country's image

Tt is a sign of the times that vigilante mobs can get away with daylight murder. Even after visual evidence becomes available; and even when the victim names his assailants in a dying declaration. The acquittal of all those charged by the Rajasthan police with beating dairy farmer Pehlu Khan to death in April 2017 is a stark reminder that there is a humongous gap between capturing video footage of a man being beaten up and bringing the culprits to book. The Additional District Judge of Alwar has given the benefit of doubt to the six men charged with Khan's murder. A principal reason given is that the six persons named by Khan were not charge-sheeted by the police. It seems that the derailment of the prosecution case began early. Based on mobile phone call records and the statement of staff at a cow shelter, the police gave a clean sheet to the named suspects and booked a different set of people, including three minors. The police failed to conduct an identification parade, while there was an apparent contradiction between government doctors declaring that the victim died of injuries, and a private hospital's claim that the cause was cardiac arrest. It is not difficult to surmise that infirmities were built into the case in advance. The court also need not have held inadmissible the footage of the incident, as the Supreme Court had ruled last year that authentic and relevant electronic evidence can be accepted even in the absence of the required certification under the Evidence Act.

Last year, Jharkhand managed to obtain convictions in two cases of lynching, but the Pehlu Khan lynching case had emblematic significance. It was vital that it was properly investigated and the culprits convicted. Unfortunately, the wholesale acquittal is a setback to combating the rampant vigilantism of our times. Each such incident imperils India's image as a modern democracy. There is ample evidence to suggest that the institutional bias in favour of cow vigilantes is working against the interest of justice. The CID-Crime Branch took over the case two months after the incident, and filed a charge sheet. Those charge-sheeted were granted bail not long after. Even after the change of regime late last year, the police obtained permission to prosecute two sons of Pehlu Khan for transporting bovines in violation of a State law. This indicates the assiduity with which cattle protection laws are implemented, while lynch mobs in the garb of cow protectors are treated with kid gloves. The Rajasthan Chief Minister, who recently got a new expansive law enacted to punish lynching, has promised to take the matter on appeal. A mere appeal may not suffice; orders for a fresh investigation and trial one that would lead to the formal indictment of all those responsible for the murderous attack - may be needed to restore a sense of justice.

Making CSR work

Non-compliance by corporates should be decriminalised and made a civil offence

t was first encouraged as a voluntary contribution by business; six years ago it evolved into a co-option of the corporate sector to promote inclusiveness in society and now, corporate social responsibility or CSR has become an imposition on India Inc. Key amendments to the relevant sections of the Companies Act in the last session of Parliament have now made non-compliance with CSR norms a jailable offence for key officers of the company, apart from hefty fines up to ₹25 lakh on the company and ₹5 lakh on the officer in default. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is said to have assured representatives of India Inc. when they met her last week that this amendment will be reviewed. Yet, it is curious that the government rushed through with amendments on the CSR law even as a committee constituted by it was finalising its report on the same subject. As it happened, the committee, headed by the Corporate Affairs Secretary submitted its report on August 13, well after Parliament had passed the amendments. On the specific issue of penalties, the committee has proposed that non-compliance be decriminalised and made a civil offence. "CSR is a means to partner corporates for social development and such penal provisions are not in harmony with the spirit of CSR," the committee's report says and rightly so. CSR should not be treated as another tax on businesses.

Every company with a net worth of ₹500 crore or turnover of ₹1,000 crore or net profit of ₹5 crore should spend 2% of the average profits it made over the previous three years on social development. The experience since this provision was operationalised in 2013 has been mixed. Filings with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs show that in 2017-18, only a little over half of those liable to spend on CSR have filed reports on their activity to the government. The other half either did not comply or simply failed to file. The average CSR spend by private companies was just ₹95 lakh compared to ₹9.40 crore for public sector units. These are early days yet, and compliance will improve as corporates imbibe CSR culture fully. The committee's suggestion to offer a tax break for expenses on CSR makes sense as it may incentivise companies to spend. It has also recommended that unspent CSR funds be transferred to an escrow account within 30 days of the end of the financial year. It should be recognised that CSR is not the main business of a company and in these challenging times they would rightly be focusing their energies on the business rather than on social spending. The government should be careful to not micromanage and tie down businesses with rules and regulations that impose a heavy compliance burden. Else it might end up with the opposite of what it intends – to rope in corporates as citizens to promote social inclusion.

A considered step that opens up new vistas

The abrogation of Kashmir's special status is a major move towards ensuring an inclusive India



M. VENKAIAH NAIDU

The recent decision by the government to abrogate Article 370 has resulted in a countrywide debate on the subject. The general perception is that a vast majority of people in the country feel that the abrogation is a welcome step. They also feel that the abrogation should not be viewed through a narrow political prism as it centres around the unity and integrity of the nation. In fact, it is also seen as a major step towards ensuring an inclusive India.

Historical perspective

Before delving into the issue, one should understand the essence of Article 370; it was only a temporary, transitional arrangement and was never intended to be a permanent provision.

Under Part XXI of the Constitution of India, which deals with 'Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions', the special status was conferred upon Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) after Maharaja Hari Singh signed The Instrument of Accession on October 26-27, 1947.

However, an important nugget of history is that Article 370 was not incorporated at the time of accession. It was included in October 1949 at the instance of Sheikh Abdullah, who was a member of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution. It became operative only in 1952

Under Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir State was allowed to have a separate Constitution and a Flag. Its Constituent Assembly, initially, and the State legislature, subsequently, were empowered either to adopt or not to adopt any law passed by the Indian Parliament. Except for matters such as 'Defence', 'External Affairs', 'Commu-

nications' and matters mentioned in 'The Instrument of Accession', the Indian Parliament had no jurisdiction on extending its legislations to the border State without the concurrence of Jammu and Kashmir.

While considering the proposal to incorporate it in the Constitution, Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru advised Sheikh Abdullah to convince B.R. Ambedkar, who apparently was not in favour

In the book, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Framing of Indian Constitution, by Dr. S.N. Busi, Dr. Ambedkar was cited as saying: "Mr. Abdullah, you want that India should defend Kashmir. You wish India should protect your borders, she should build roads in your area, she should supply you food grains, and Kashmir should get equal status as India, but you don't want India and any citizen of India to have any rights in Kashmir and Government of India should have only limited powers. To give consent to this proposal would be a treacherous thing against the interests of India, and I, as the Law Minister of India, will never do. I cannot betray the interests of my country".

Even Pandit Nehru had pointed out in Parliament on November 27. 1963 that "Article 370 is part of certain transitional, provisional arrangements. It is not a permanent part of the Constitution. It is a part as long as it remains so."

Hardly unifying

History shows that instead of bringing people of Kashmir closer to the rest of India, Article 370 has only widened the chasm. This schism has been systematically widened by vested interests. While Article 370 has failed to benefit the people in a meaningful way, it was used by separatists to drive a wedge between those living in J&K and the rest of India. It was used by a neighbouring country to spread terrorism.

The demand for abrogation of Article 370 has been under consid-



eration for a long time. In fact, Parliament had discussed this way back in 1964. A discussion on a private member's bill seeking abrogation of Article 370 found near-unanimous support back

It would be pertinent to point out that the non-official resolution moved by Prakash Vir Shastri in the Lok Sabha was supported by leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia and K. Hanumanthaiya, a senior Congress leader.

Hanumanthaiya not only pointed out that the members, irrespective of party affilations, wanted the abrogation of Article 370 to be made into law but also went on to say: "To go against or to say anything against this unanimous opinion in this House is to disown constitutional responsibility in a convenient manner. Article 370... stands in the way of full integration."

Of the 12 members who favoured its abrogation, seven belonged to the Congress including Inder J. Malhotra, Sham Lal Saraf (from J&K), H.V. Kamath, Socialist, Sarjoo Pandey (CPI) and Bhagwat Jha Azad, former Chief Minister of

The country felt that this provision needed to go sooner or later. As Jawaharlal Nehru's colleague and then Home Affairs Minister Gulzarilal Nanda had told Parliament decades ago, "Article 370 is nothing more than a shell emptied of its contents. Nothing has been left in it; we can do it in one day, in 10 days, 10 months. That is entire-

Parliament and the Government have now come to the conclusion, finally, that such a dysfunctional provision has no relevance in the current context and that the time has come to integrate Jammu and Kashmir fully into the rest of India. Without having improved the lives of people in any way, Article 370 had become an impediment to the very development of the State.

A leveller

The people of the country also need to know, as pointed out by the present Home Minister, Amit Shah, in the Lok Sabha recently, that key Central laws made for the welfare of citizens of the country could not be implemented in J&K due to Article 370. With its abrogation, a total of 106 Central laws will now be extended to J&K. Some of the key pieces of legislation include the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Land Acquisition Act, the National Commission for Minorities Act, the Right to Education Act and those relating to em-

powering local bodies. With Article 35A becoming void, the decades old discrimination against the women of J&K has been eliminated. They can now purchase and transfer property to their children, even if they get married to a non-resident.

In my view, the abrogation of Article 370 is indeed a step in the right direction to safeguard the unity and integrity of India.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir has been an integral part of our country. It will always remain so. So, the action to remove Article 370 is purely an internal matter. It goes without saying that India will not allow outsiders to meddle in its internal affairs. People should guard against false and mischievous propaganda by a section of the Indian and western media, which probably still believes in the colonial mindset of 'divide and

Parliament has carefully consi-

dered and taken a decision that this transitory provision needs to go and that J&K must be fully integrated with the rest of India. The naysayers who are alleging that constitutional impropriety has been committed must know that the Bill was passed by two-thirds in the Rajya Sabha and four-fifths in the Lok Sabha after an elaborate discussion.

Game changer

I am sure that this integration fulfils a long-standing demand of many sections of the people in J&K, including Ladakh. The speech of the Ladakh MP, Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, in the Lok Sabha recently, was truly noteworthy, where he pointed out that Ladakh was not just a piece of land but a precious gem of Bharat. I am also confident that the status of a State would be accorded once things improve and total normalcy is restored in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Government's decision would facilitate greater investments by both individual entrepreneurs and major private companies in different sectors including hospitality, tourism, education and health. It would naturally generate much-needed employment for local youth. It would also enable greater scrutiny of the implementation of the schemes of the Government of In-

In conclusion, it should be noted that the abrogation of Article 370 is a national issue involving our country's safety, security, unity and equitable prosperity. It is a step in the right direction that the Indian Parliament has taken with an overwhelming majority. It is a step that opens up new vistas for the all-round development in a State that was relatively neglected. It is a stepping stone to enable an improved quality of life for the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

M. Venkaiah Naidu is the Vice President of

Giving shape to an elusive strategic concept

The post of Chief of Defence Staff will enable more efficiency in defence planning and help civil-military relations among the top arms importers.



P.S. RAGHAVAN

cement in his Independence Day address on Thursday, appointing a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), is one that could have a farreaching impact on the management of defence in India

The issue of efficient management of the higher defence organisation came into sharp focus after the Kargil war in 1999, when the K. Subrahmanyam-headed task force was asked to examine questions about the anticipation and detection of Pakistani intrusions in Kargil and the military response. The strategic expert and his team highlighted the systemic issues bedevilling our national security structures, which included poor coordination and technological inadequacies.

On its recommendations, the Government tasked a Group of Ministers (GoM) in the early 2000s to undertake a review of national security management. Their recommendations covered intelligence, internal security, border management and defence. These resulted in an overhaul, which included the appointment of a National Security Adviser, a strengthening of intelligence coordination mechanisms, upgrading the technological capacity of security agencies, and sharpening institutional responses to traditional and emerging internal security challenges. Defence management was the one area in which the implementation of the GoM's recommendations was dis-

The issues are well-known. The first is a pervasive sentiment in the armed forces that they are not formally involved in decision-making This perception is reinforced by the fact that the Service Headquarters are not within the Ministry of Defence; they are treated more like attached offices. This structure has led to cumbersome, opaque and antiquated decisionmaking processes, from administrative requirements to weapons acquisitions.

Changing face of conflict

From an operational perspective, the concept of military conflict today extends beyond land, air and sea, into the domains of space. cyber, electronic and information. Effective defence preparedness requires a 'jointness' of the Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Navy in incorporating these domains into their war-fighting strategies. It also requires a prioritisation of the weapons requirements of the forces and optimisation of their resource allocations based on a clearly defined national defence strategy.

The GoM had recommended better efficiency by integrating the armed forces headquarters into the Ministry of Defence (MoD). It had also pitched for the appointment of a CDS, who could promote an integrated approach to interservice prioritisation and resource allocation as well as a pooling of



common structures to avoid unnecessary redundancies. The CDS was to administer tri-service institutions such as the Andaman and Nicobar Command. In today's context, his charge would also presumably include the recently established tri-service space and cyber agencies. He would provide coordinated military advice to the Defence Minister, incorporating the perspectives of the individual services. He would develop the national defence strategy, which itself should flow from a national security strategy that factors in traditional and non-traditional threats as well as internal security requirements and external strategic objectives. This would be in collaboration with the civilian defence leadership of the MoD

A thread of resistance

All recommendations were accepted barring the one on the CDS. Opposition from sections of the armed forces and the bureaucracy and from a political party resulted in this last-minute decision. There was apprehension that a CDS would undermine of the authority of the three service chiefs over their forces. The establishment in many countries of theatre commands under the CDS reinforced this fear. The other concern was that an all-powerful CDS would distort the civil-military balance in our democracy.

This opposition was based on misperceptions and "turf" considequivalent, with varying degrees of operational control over their armed forces. It has not diluted civilian control over their governance. Instead, it has meant greater participation of the military in defence decision-making alongside the civilian bureaucracy, enhancing the coherence and transparency of policies. In almost every case, the appointment of a CDS has been a top-down decision, to which the system has subsequently adjusted.

Need for indigenisation

The role envisaged for a CDS in India is that of developing multi-domain military strategies, strengthening tri-service synergies and enabling perspective planning. It is only after achieving jointness in training, exercises and infrastructure that the feasibility of regional commands can be explored in the specific context of India's geography and the nature of its internal and external threats. The CDS can contribute to rational defence acquisition decisions, preventing redundancy of capacities among the services and making best use of

available financial resources. While implementing this reform, we should also focus on the important objective of indigenisation. It is a shame that India is still

This abject dependence on other countries, for weapons systems, components and even ammunitions, does not befit an aspiring great power. There must be procedures and practices to ensure that every acquisition is structured in a erations. Many democracies have way as to strengthen our indigeturn aiding defence self-reliance.

A corollary of the appointment of a CDS is integration of his establishment into the MoD without which he cannot meaningfully fulfil the role assigned to him. Eventually, the three Service headquarters would also need to be suitably integrated into the Ministry. It would require changing their current functional structure as well as amending the existing rules of business of the government. This was envisaged by the GoM, but when a decision on the CDS was deferred, action on it lost steam.

In his announcement on the CDS, the Prime Minister mentioned past reports on defence reforms, the transforming nature of military conflict, the impact of technology and the need for modernisation, coordination and jointness. This leads to hope that the GoM recommendations of 2001 will be implemented. If carried out objectively, undistorted by turf considerations, this longawaited reform would soothe frictions in civil-military relations and bring greater efficiency, transparency and accountability into decision-making on defence matters.

P.S. Raghavan is Chairman, National Security Advisory Board. The views

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.

UNSC meet on Kashmir

China, being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, seems to be pandering to the whims of its all-weather friend, Pakistan. The decision, at the goading of China, to hold a closed-door discussion on Kashmir is a matter of surprise as it is a subject that involves the internal affairs of India (Page 1, August 16). Much has changed since 1947. The move also shows the big brother attitude of China which has many problems of its own. China

should first concentrate on making peace with the Hong Kong protesters and also respecting Tibet and the Uighur Muslims. It has no right to be sermonising about Kashmir, which is being sorted out in a peaceful manner in democratic traditions. SRAVANA RAMACHANDRAN,

Population control

The most significant issue that the Prime Minister highlighted in his Independence Day speech on Thursday was of

puts population back on govt. agenda", August 16). While the two-child norm has been able to slow down the rate of population growth, there is a need to have smarter moves in the present situation. Apart from an incentivisation of smaller families, large families must lose state sponsored welfare benefits and privileges. An interventionist move or policy formulation must also balance sustainability without affecting the segment of a young and

population control ("PM

working-age population. N. SADHASIVA REDDY,

Climate planning The increasing frequency of heavy rainfall in many States is a reality, probably linked to climate change. The havoc being caused is a wake-up call. From people to wild animals being affected to disrupted agricultural operations, the list can go on. While the Assam floods threatened already endangered species, in Kerala, it was the washing up of tons of

plastic material that reflected our gross negligence of environmental issues. Thus, man could be responsible for the changed conditions. Widescale deforestation and the plundering of natural resources are cause for worry. The simple lesson is that we need to respect nature. JANGA BAHADUR SUNUWAR,

■ Kerala is pursuing development projects at the expense of nature (Editorial

page, "Lessons after the great deluge", August 16). Taking over lakebeds and floodplains to allow construction is affecting percolation. Mangrove vegetation is also being mindlessly exploited. Rampant mining, now widespread, is leading to the loss of precious topsoil and landslides. Revisiting the Gadgil report is a must for regions falling under the Western Ghats. ABHISHEK M.R., Ajjarkad, Udupi, Karnataka

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

Paddy, tube wells and depleting groundwater

Rice cultivation in Punjab, which thrived in the past due to the easy availability of water resources and free supply of electricity to farmers, is under considerable strain now. **Vikas Vasudeva** examines how overexploitation has made groundwater not only scarce but also increasingly alkaline

urmeet Singh, 60, a tall landowning farmer in Bhattiwal Khurd village, which is located in Punjab's Sangrur district, has yet again planted the water-guzzling paddy crop this summer (kharif) as he is sceptical of any other crop fetching him a remunerative price.

Standing on the edge of the Ghaggar branch canal, which flows barely a few metres away from his field, Gurmeet reveals that hardly anyone in the village irrigates his/her field with canal water. That is because motor-operated tube wells, with their powerful submersible pumps, have become an easy and preferred choice for most of the households to extract groundwater, he says.

Punjab's policy of providing free electricity to farmers, in place since 1997, along with the Central government's favourable attitude towards paddy cultivation, are the key factors that have motivated farmers like Gurmeet to persist with paddy, despite the grave groundwater crisis faced by the State.

"Most of us here in the village have tube wells installed, be it on our farm or inside our houses. We use groundwater for irrigation, drinking and other domestic purposes. In 1977, we got our first tube well drilled at a depth of 35 ft-40 ft. Water at that time was easily available at 15 ft-20 ft. Since then, we have drilled as many as four tube wells as the water levels have been consistently falling. I got the latest one installed two years ago at around 300 ft. It cost me around ₹1,00,000," he says, his head dropping in despair as he mentions the high cost of his latest tube well.

The green revolution impact

Gurmeet's father Magar Singh, 90, intervenes to point out that farmers like him shifted to cultivation of rice and wheat during the hara inquilab (green revolution); till then, he says, crops like pulses, maize, vegetables and cotton were mainly grown in the village.

"Paddy (rice) requires far more water than other crops and as farmers started cultivating paddy, the need for tube wells arose. The extraction of groundwater only increased as farmers shifted from the use of monoblock pumps in the 1980s to other types like submersible pumps," he says.

Ideally, groundwater should be available at a depth of 50 ft to 60 ft, but in Punjab, its level has significantly dropped to 150ft to 200 ft in most places. Many attribute this drastic fall to an indiscriminate extraction of groundwater in the last two decades.

Further, deepening of tube wells, and purchase of the powerful motors to carry out the deepening, is costing farmers ₹1,100 crore per year, according to government data. The State, which gives increased financial burden due to the rising use of electricity. This year, the total power subsidy to the farm sector is estimated at ₹9,674 crore.

To counter this, the Punjab State Farmers' Policy, drafted by the State's Farmers and Farm Workers' Commission in June last year, suggested rationalising of power subsidy and asked the government to restrict the subsidy to the non-income tax payee farmers. It also recommended that cultivation of paddy on common lands be disallowed. Common (shamlat) village lands, whose utilisation is regulated under Punjab Village Common Lands (Regulation) Act 1961, have been increasingly used for paddy cultivation over the years. Experts feel that a restriction on such usage can help arrest groundwater depletion. The government, however, is yet to take a final call on these policy proposals.

The Punjab government is well aware of the fast depleting groundwater reserves. Last month, Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh directed the State Planning Board to chalk out a comprehensive crop diversification model. The Board was also directed to undertake a detailed review of the various schemes of the agriculture department to bring in much-needed reforms in the sector.

The Chief Minister, who has been stressing the need to prioritise the cultivation of crops that consume less water like maize, cotton and sugar cane, asked the Board to come up with a strategy to persuade the farmers to shift to

However, while the State government has been advocating crop diversification to save groundwater, farmers don't seem to be keen on shifting to other crops unless they are given an assured market and a guaranteed price for their produce. "I am aware that paddy consumes more water than other crops but what is the alternative? Government agencies purchase rice and wheat (during rabi season) at the minimum support price (MSP), which assures me of a remunerative return. But in the case of other crops, there's hardly any such assurance. The government should purchase all major crops at MSP as is done in case of rice and wheat; until then, it's difficult to shift," says Randhir Singh, 51, who grows paddy at his three-acre farm in Bhattiwal Khurd village.



A farmer at his paddy field in Sangrur as a bore well extracts groundwater. Increased cultivation of the water-guzzling rice crop, augmented by free power supply, has caused depletion in water reserves. • АКНІLЕЯН КИМАК

This sentiment is echoed in other parts of the State as well. In Fatehpur village, located in the Chief Minister's pocket borough of Patiala, Karamjeet Singh says that after suffering financial loss owing to a price crash in the market, he stopped the cultivation of potato a few years ago. "Three years ago, I planted a potato crop in my field but prices in the market crashed badly. The potato was fetching as low as ₹2 per kilo in the market. I couldn't even recover the cost of my crop and suffered a loss of around ₹3,00,000. Since then, I have stopped its cultivation and have been sowing rice and wheat, for which I am assured of getting a remunerative price as government agencies will purchase my produce at the MSP," he says, as he takes a seat along with his fellow farmers at the public shed in the village.

'Wrong to blame farmers'

As the farmers beat the heat and humidity of an August afternoon under a fan mounted on the shed's ceiling, Ajaib Singh, 62, points out that it is wrong to blame farmers for groundwater depletion. "There are industries and factories that are extracting a huge amount of groundwater - legally and illegally. Not only this, the unsystematic disposal of waste from these industries is contaminating the water, making it increasingly alkaline," he says.

For Dilbag Singh, 43, usage of water from the Kherimala branch (canal), which flows barely three km from the village, is an affordable and doable way to reduce dependence on groundwater. "The government needs to upgrade and work on maintenance of canal irrigation system. It needs to ensure the supply of water at tail-ends [the last part of the water outlet]. If an underground pipeline system can be laid, it will help us optimise water use. Also, it will check the theft of canal water," he says.

"Farmers like me are using tube wells because it's an easy way of extracting water with powerful submersible pumps these days, but if the government develops a mechanism and lays a pipeline till my farm, why would I need to invest in a tube well? I remember we used to get water in canal outlets and also from wells for irrigation during the 1980s, but now almost every house in the village has a tube well," says Kesar Singh, 52, who has sown rice in his five-

Another rice-growing farmer, Nirmal Singh, who is a farmer leader as well, points out that the government needs to focus on establishing an assured market mechanism. "What farmers want is a market – where the purchase of their



The government should purchase all major crops at MSP as it does for rice and wheat; until then, it's difficult to shift to other crops

RANDHIR SINGH, Farmer at Bhattiwal Khurd village



PUNJAB

products is guaranteed and they get an assured remunerative price," he says.

Punjab's economy is highly dependent on agriculture. The sector. however, is experiencing slower growth as the State's cropping intensity and irrigation potential have been fully exploited and the growth in productivity has also reached a saturation point.

The intensive groundwater extraction in the last five decades through installation of shallow tube wells is reflected in tube well numbers - which have increased by almost 200% in 35 years, from six lakh in the 1980s to 14.76 lakh in 2017-18. Also, the area under rice cultivation has increased from 11.83 lakh hectares in 1980 to 28.86 lakh hectares in 2017-18. On an average, there are 34 tube wells per sq. km of net sown area in Punjab (2015-16).

According to the Draft Dynamic Ground Water Estimation Report-2017, 109 blocks out of the 138 blocks taken for its study were "over-exploited", two blocks were "critical" and five blocks were "semi-critical" while 20 blocks are in "safe" category. The water table was declining in nearly 80% of the area of

The report also said that while the annual replenishable groundwater resource in Punjab was about 17.5 million acre-ft (MAF), the annual draft (extraction) was 29 MAF, implying that the extraction rate outstripped availability by quite a few notches.

"If this trend continues, it will adversely affect the agricultural economy of the State and it is apprehended that irrigated area may decrease by up to 15% in the year 2025. Further, in the coming 20 years, supply from about 60% of top quifers may be jeopardised. There will be an increase in the cost of raising crops, placing an increased financial burden on farmers and the government. A shortage in water supply could also act as a deterrent when it comes to investment in industries requiring water. Around 30 million residents of the Punjab region may face a collapse in agricultural output," says S.K. Saluja, Superintending Engineer, Directorate of Ground Water Management.

Salinity in water

The report also raised concerns about the deteriorating quality of groundwater due to pollution caused by urbanisation, industrialisation and an increased use of fertilisers and pesticides. It said that while nearly 50%-60% of groundwater was "fresh and fit", 20%-30% was "moderately saline and of marginal quality". Further, about 15%-25% of the groundwater was "saline, alkaline and not fit for irrigation".

Water in south and southwestern districts - like Sangrur, Muktsar, Bathinda and Mansa - came under the last category, containing "varying concentration of soluble salts" and its use for irrigation will adversely affect agricultural proIrrigated area in Punjab may decrease by up to 15% in the year 2025. Around 30 million residents could face a collapse in agricultural output

ngineer, Directorate of Ground Water Management

duction, said the report.

An increased awareness about the need for safe drinking water has caused many households in Bhattiwal Khurd village to install RO (reverse osmosis) water purification systems. "I felt the need for RO system at my home after due to water-borne diseases at regular intervals. We have been consuming groundwater directly from tube wells for a long time," says Randhir Singh.

Untreated industrial effluents

P.S. Rangi, a noted agriculture economist and a former adviser to Punjab State Farmers Commission, says that water quality is being impacted by untreated or inadequately treated industrial effluents and sewage that flows into rivulets and rivers in Puniab.

"Also, traditional water bodies such as ponds and wells in the villages are under threat. In most of the places, ponds have been filled and encroached upon while in other places, they have become a dumping ground for sewage. The problem is further compounded by the mixing of storm water and sewage in various municipal towns. The pollution and contamination of water resources due to industrial waste, sewage and excessive use of chemical pesticides in agriculture is a major cause of concern that needs immediate attention," says

Given the grim situation, Punjab's Department of Water Supply and Sanitation is planning to implement 10 surface water projects at a cost of ₹1,021 crore. These projects intend to provide potable piped water supply to 1,021 "quality-affected" villages, making them less reliant on groundwater and more on canal water.

A total of 130 such villages - including 85 uranium-affected villages in Moga and 45 iron-affected ones in Roopnagar - have so far been shifted from groundwater to canal water.

Lakhwinder Singh, professor of economics at Punjabi University, Patiala, who has been mapping rural Punjab for State thrived in the past due to easy availability of both groundwater and surface water but, over the past few years, the availability has reached a saturation point.

Increase in indebtedness

"Successive State governments invested on drainage systems that saved crops from damage in the case of heavy and untimely rains. Over the years, due to an incentivising of groundwater irrigation by the government and an irrational increase in the number of electric tube wells, water tables have receded. Experts have been time and again cautioning the State on the long-term consequences of excessive exploitation of groundwater. Now, farmers are forced to borrow from informal and formal sources to install tube wells, causing indebtedness and farmer suicides," says Lakhwinder, adding that that faulty public policy and irrational cropping system should be blamed for the scenario.

"Governments never visualised a scenario where agriculture would block the natural groundwater recharging process and create conditions for falling water tables," he says.

He proposes that the drainage system be used for artificial recharge of groundwater. "There is also a dire need to change the cropping pattern, especially in major parts of Malwa, which need to take up cotton cultivation again," he says, adding that "water recharging system, if put in place, can solve weatherrelated problems and economic incentives can be used to change farmers' mindsets, making them shift to multicropping system".

He feels that a "major policy shift with long term vision can solve both the agrarian crisis and the problem of water

Realising the magnitude of agrarian crises, the draft policy framed by Punjab's Farmers and Farm Workers' Commission points out that a decade of business as usual has left farmers in an unenviable position.

The policy strikes a cautious note in telling that the State is struggling to meet the aspirations of its farmers and the time has come to take a critical look at the deteriorating resources, the changing economic environment and the emerging market scenarios.



Farmers in Fatehpur, Patiala, looking at an abandoned well, which once used to be a major water source for irrigation but has now run dry due to over-extraction of groundwater. • AKHILESH KUMAR

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 155

बदलाव के मोड़ पर

पर पहुंचने वाला है। तेल एवं रत्न-आभूषण क्षेत्र को छोड़ दिया जाए तो देश का सेवा निर्यात जल्दी ही वस्तु निर्यात से ज्यादा हो जाएगा। इस वित्त वर्ष के पहले चार महीने में सेवा निर्यात से 74.05 अरब डॉलर की राशि आई जो वस्त्र निर्यात (तेल एवं रत्नाभूषण को छोड़कर) से हासिल 79.81 अरब डॉलर की राशि से कुछ ही कम है। चूंकि सेवा निर्यात 8 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ रहा है और वस्तु निर्यात की वृद्धि दर 2 फीसदी से भी कम है, ऐसे में

भारत बहुत जल्दी बदलाव के एक खास मोड़ बदलाव एक या दो वर्ष से ज्यादा दूर नहीं है।

यह घटनाक्रम असाधारण होगा और जरूरी नहीं कि यह अच्छा ही हो। वैश्विक स्तर पर कुल कारोबार में सेवा व्यापार की हिस्सेदारी 20 फीसदी से भी कम है। भारत की बात करें तो तेल एवं वस्त्र-आभूषण समेत कुल निर्यात में सेवा क्षेत्र की हिस्सेदारी 40 फीसदी है। इसे इससे अधिक भी कहा जा सकता है क्योंकि वस्त्र एवं आभूषणों को वस्तु निर्यात में शामिल किया जाता है जबकि हकीकत में जो निर्यात किया जा रहा है वह उन लोगों के काम की बदौलत होता है जो आयातित हीरे को काटने और चमकाने का काम करते हैं। आधिकारिक वर्गीकरण चाहे जो भी हो, यह सेवा का निर्यात है।

इस सेवा-निर्माण दलील में जबरदस्त विडंबना है। सन 1980 में अमेरिका ने पहली बार यह प्रस्ताव रखा कि वैश्विक व्यापार वार्ताओं के नये दौर के दायरे का विस्तार करके न केवल वाणिज्यिक वस्तुओं बल्कि सेवा व्यापार को भी उसमें शामिल किया जाए। उस वक्त भारत ने इसकी आलोचना करते हुए कहा था कि बाजारों को सेवा क्षेत्र के व्यापार के लिए नहीं खोला जाना चाहिए। मेरे साथी स्तंभकार टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवन उन चनिंदा लोगों में शामिल हैं जिन्होंने कहा था कि भारत को इस क्षेत्र में प्रतिस्पर्धी लाभ मिल सकता है (हमारे पास अन्य तमाम देशों की तुलना में सस्ती तकनीक, चिकित्सक, अंकेक्षक, अंतरिक्ष विज्ञानी आदि हैं)। परंतु उनकी आवाज

अमेरिका विरोधी शोरगुल में खो गई।

आज परिस्थितियां एकदम उलटी हो चुकी हैं। क्षेत्रीय आर्थिक साझेदारी सहयोग (आरसीईपी) को लेकर लंबी बातचीत में भारत एशिया प्रशांत क्षेत्र की प्रमख अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के समक्ष दो क्षेत्रों में यह पेशकश कर रहा है

कि अगर वे सेवा व्यापार खोलते हैं तो वह वस्तु व्यापार में और खुलापन लाएगा। किसी का प्रत्यत्तर नहीं आया और आरसीईपी अटका हुआ है।

अन्य विडंबनाओं पर नजर डालते हैं। भारत जिन अन्य चीजों के लिए जोर दे रहा है उनमें कछ ऐसी चीजों का उदारीकरण शामिल है जो बहुपक्षीय व्यापार सेवा समझौतों के 'मोड 4' में वर्गीकृत हैं। इसमें 'प्राकृतिक मनुष्यों' का आवागमन भी शामिल है। इसके पीछे दलील यह है कि अन्य देशों को भारत के कामगार प्रवासियों को इजाजत देनी चाहिए (एच1बी

वीजा के बारे में विचार कीजिए)। इसके उलट दलील यह है कि भारत बांग्लादेश से प्रवासियों के आगमन को रोकने का प्रयास करता है। कहा जाता है कि प्राकृतिक लोगों का आवागमन व्यापार का नहीं नागरिकता का मुद्दा है। सामान्य समझ कहती है कि दोनों बातें सही हैं।

विभिन्न देश अपने साप्ताहिक मंथन हित को ध्यान में रखकर

काम कर सकते हैं और वे टी. एन. नाइनन ऐसा करते भी हैं। ऐसे में आर्थिक मामलों के प्रभारियों की चिंता वार्ता

की रणनीतिक स्थिति नहीं बल्कि देश की अर्थव्यवस्था की ढांचागत किमयां होनी चाहिए। ये वे किमयां हैं जो निर्यात के रुझान में साफ नजर आती हैं। घरेलु विनिर्माण की विफलता, खासकर मेक इन इंडिया की नाकामी और जीडीपी में सेवा व्यापार की असंगत होती हिस्सेदारी। यह बात ध्यान रहे कि उच्च मूल्यवर्धन वाला सेवा निर्यात विनिर्माण से कम रोजगार उत्पन्न करता है।

इसके बावजूद संभावना यही है कि विनिर्माण और सेवा क्षेत्र का असंतुलन आगे बढ़ेगा। दरअसल सेवा निर्यात के कुछ ऐसे क्षेत्र का लाभ उठाना आसान है जो अब तक दायरे से बाहर रहे जबकि विनिर्माण को बेहतर बनाने के लिए देश के बुनियादी ढांचे में सुधार करना कहीं अधिक मुश्किल है। बिजली, भूमि, परिवहन, बंदरगाह शुल्क, नौवहन दरों की ऊंची लागत और श्रम बाजार की अक्षमताओं आदि के साथ-साथ रुपये की विनिमय दर ने वस्त निर्यात को प्रभावित किया है। यह सही है कि सेवा निर्यात सफल हो रहा है लेकिन रुपया मजबूत होने के साथ-साथ कम मार्जिन पर काम करने वाला विनिर्माण क्षेत्र अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर और अधिक गैर प्रतिस्पर्धी होता जाएगा। इसका असर ग्रामीण क्षेत्र के लाखों युवाओं के लिए घरेलू स्तर पर रोजगार की कमी के रूप में सामने आएगा।



हकीकत में बदलता सीडीएस का पद

चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ के पद की अवधारणा में सबसे अहम बात यह है कि ऑपरेशनल थिएटर कमांड को इस पद के अधीन रखा जाए। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं प्रेमवीर दास

था कि दो दशक की चर्चा और बहस के में मंत्रियों का एक समूह नियुक्त किया बावजद पिछली सरकारें चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ (सीडीएस) की जरूरत पर कोई निर्णय नहीं ले सकीं। मैंने यह भी कहा था कि केवल मौजूदा प्रधानमंत्री के पास यह क्षमता है कि वह नोटबंदी की तरह विपक्ष की आलोचना की परवाह किए बिना यह कदम उठा सकें। मेरी यह धारणा सही साबित होती दिख रही है। गुरुवार को प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने लाल किले के प्राचीर से यह घोषणा कर दी कि देश में सीडीएस की नियुक्ति की जाएगी। उन्होंने कहा कि इससे सशस्त्र बलों को समय की आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप बनाने और एकजुट करने में मदद मिलेंगी।

अब यह बात लगभग सभी जानते हैं कि वाजपेयी सरकार ने करगिल युद्ध के बाद स्वर्गीय के सुब्रमण्यम की अध्यक्षता में एक समिति (केआरसी) का गठन किया था। इस समिति को समूची सुरक्षा व्यवस्था की समीक्षा करने का दायित्व सौंपा गया था। के आरसी ने कई अनुशंसाएं की थीं,

क्षा क्षेत्र की कमजोरियों पर इसी उनमें एक महत्त्वपूर्ण अनुशंसा सीडीएस समाचार पत्र में लिखे एक लेख में का पद सुजित करने की भी थी। इसके मैंने करीब एक महीने पहले कहा पश्चात तत्कालीन उप प्रधानमंत्री के नेतृत्व गया। इस समूह ने चार कार्य समूहों का गठन किया जो राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों से संबंधित थे। इनमें से एक था उच्च रक्षा प्रबंधन जिसकी अध्यक्षता पूर्व रक्षा राज्य मंत्री अरुण सिंह कर रहे थे। मैं इस समूह का एक मात्र सेवानिवृत्त समूह था। शेष अन्य सदस्य सेवारत सैन्य अथवा असैन्य अधिकारी थे।

> अरुण सिंह समिति में तमाम वरिष्ठ सैन्य-असैन्य अधिकारियों को शामिल किया गया था। इनमें छह रक्षा सचिव और तीनों सेनाओं के करीब 17 पूर्व प्रमुखों के साथ-साथ रक्षा अनुसंधान विकास एवं उत्पादन क्षेत्र के उच्च पदस्थ लोग भी

> यह समिति सैन्य मुख्यालय और रक्षा मंत्रालय के साथ-साथ तीन अन्य कार्यबलों के साथ निरंतर संवाद में रहती थी। शेष तीन कार्यबल क्रमशः खुफिया सेवा, सीमा प्रबंधन और आंतरिक सुरक्षा को लेकर काम कर रहे थे। इन तीनों समृहों में केवल

सेवानिवृत्त अधिकारी ही शामिल किए गए थे जो सरकार की निर्णय प्रक्रिया में उच्च पदों पर आसीन रहते थे। महज चार महीनों में इन समूहों ने एक बैठक में मंत्री समूह के समक्ष अपने प्रस्ताव पेश कर दिए। उस बैठक में मैं मौजूद था और मुझे याद आता है कि अरुण सिंह के कार्यबल ने उच्च रक्षा प्रबंधन को लेकर जो भी अनुशंसाएं की थीं, मंत्री समृह ने उन्हें स्वीकार कर लिया और वे मूल अनुशंसा में शामिल हो गईं। इनमें सबसे अहम प्रस्ताव था चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ का गठन।

यहां यह बताना उचित होगा कि चर्चा में शामिल तमाम वायुसेना प्रमुखों ने सीडीएस के विचार पर कड़ी आपत्ति जताते हुए कहा था कि इसका सेनाओं की लड़ाकू क्षमता पर बुरा असर पड़ेगा। रक्षा मंत्रालय की अफसरशाही में इसलिए नकारात्मकता थी क्योंकि माना जा रहा था कि यह निर्णय प्रक्रिया में उनकी भूमिका को नुकसान पहुंचाएगा। इन प्रतिकृल विचारों के बीच अरुण सिंह को अपनी अनुशंसाएं देनी पड़ीं। हमारे समूह ने यह प्रस्ताव रखा कि सीडीएस द्वारा नियोजन, सिद्धांत और सेना विकास कार्यक्रम के संचालन के साथ-

साथ खुफिया विभाग कभी निगरानी करनी चाहिए और सेना प्रमुखों के पास संचालन की शक्ति रहनी चाहिए।

यह महसूस किया गया कि समय बीतने के साथ-साथ उनके नियंत्रण का दायरा नए सिरे से समायोजित हो जाएगा। यह एक बडा समझौता था जो तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री की मंजुरी नहीं हासिल कर सका। नौसेना के तत्कालीन चीफ एडमिरल सुशील कुमार की हाल में आई पुस्तक के मुताबिक तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री ने कहा था, 'इसके बारे में और सोचना पड़ेगा।' मामला पिछले 18 वर्षों से वहीं अटका हुआ है। मोदी ने इस मसले पर जबरदस्त साहस दिखाया है, जिसके लिए उनकी तारीफ की

परंतु बात यहीं समाप्त नहीं हो जाती। प्रधानमंत्री ने कहा है कि तमाम बडी सशस्त्र सेनाओं में सीडीएस है। उन्होंने अमेरिका का उल्लेख खासतौर पर किया। यह सही है कि अमेरिका में तथा ब्रिटेन, फ्रांस, रूस, चीन आदि देशों में सीडीएस योजना निर्माण और सैन्य विकास की निगरानी नहीं करता। यह काम व्यक्तिगत सेना प्रमुखों के पास रहता है लेकिन संचालन का नियंत्रण सीडीएस के हाथ में रहता है।

यह बात समझी जा सकती है क्योंकि प्रधानमंत्री ने जिस संयुक्त और एकीकृत व्यवस्था पर जोर दिया है, वे दोनों बातें यहां लागू होती हैं। केवल पाकिस्तान में ही सीडीएस इन अहम लेकिन नीरस कामों को अंजाम देता है परंतु अंतिम निर्णय सेना प्रमुखों, उनमें भी थल सेना प्रमुख का होता है। आशा की जानी चाहिए कि हमारे होने वाले सीडीएस को इस श्रेणी में नहीं रखा जाएगा। ऐसे में सीडीएस के गठन का निर्णय जहां साहसिक था क्योंकि इसे काफी विरोध के बीच अंजाम दिया गया ऐसे में उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि यह पद केवल सजावटी नहीं होगा बल्कि इसके पास तमाम जरूरी अधिकार होंगे। केवल परिचालन के नियंत्रण से ही ये दोनों हासिल हो सकते हैं। एक बात और निश्चित है कि विभिन्न सेवाओं के प्रमुखों की ओर से इसका विरोध होगा। वे इसे अपने अधिकारों का अतिक्रमण मानेंगे परंतु जैसा कि मैंने कहा प्रधानमंत्री इस बात से निपट

सीडीएस की अवधारणा से जुड़ी एक बात यह भी है कि ऑपरेशनल थिएटर कमांड को उनके अधीन लाना होगा। सेना, नौसेना और वायुसेना के दरिमयान ऐसी 12 कमांड हैं। अंडमान एवं निकोबार कमांड को भी इसमें शामिल किया जाना चाहिए और जानकारी के मुताबिक दो अन्य कमांड अभी प्रक्रियाधीन हैं। चंकि हमने उच्च रक्षा प्रबंधन के क्षेत्र में अमेरिका का उदाहरण लिया है इसलिए हमें भी उस राह पर चलना चाहिए। हमारे यहां कामकाज का मौजूदा तरीका बहुत पुराना है और उसमें सुधार काफी लंबे समय से लंबित है। इस बात की पूरी उम्मीद है कि प्रधानमंत्री अपनी बातों पर अमल करते हुए इस दिशा में आगे बढ़ेंगे।

(लेखक उच्चतर रक्षा प्रबंधन संबंधी कार्यबल और राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा सलाहकार बोर्ड के सदस्य रह चुके हैं)

लगातार जारी है ज़ी समूह की नीतिगत साझेदार की तलाश

उम्मीद की जा रही थी कि कोई नीतिगत विदेशी निवेशक शुरुआती पेशकश करेगा लेकिन अंतत: यह वित्तीय लेनदेन के रूप में सामने आया। यह कहना है मीडिया पार्टनर्स एशिया के उपाध्यक्ष (भारत) मिहिर शर्मा का। इस बात में देश के सबसे प्रतीक्षित मीडिया सौदे का लब्बोलुआब छिपा हुआ है। तकरीबन नौ महीने की अटकलबाज़ी के बाद कॉमकास्ट, सोनी या रिलायंस जियो के बजाय अमेरिका की इन्वेस्को ओपनहाइमर डेवलपिंग मार्केट्स फंड ने जी एंटरटेनमेंट एंटरप्राइज में 11 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी खरीदी। कंपनी ने 31 जुलाई को हुए सौदे में इसके लिए 4,224 करोड़ रुपये की राशि चुकाई।

जी देश की सबसे बड़ी मीडिया कंपनियों में शामिल है। इसके 10 भाषाओं में 41 चैनल हैं जिनकी टेलीविजन दर्शकों में 19 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी है। जबकि उसके ओटीटी ब्रांड जी 5 को भी काफी लोकप्रियता मिल रही है। यह इकलौता समूह है जो डिज्नी के स्टार इंडिया को कड़ी टक्कर दे रहा है जो इस समय नेटवर्क हिस्सेदारी में दूसरे स्थान पर है। 7.934 करोड़ रुपये के राजस्व के साथ मार्च 2019 में समाप्त वित्त वर्ष में इसकी ब्याज, कर, अवमूल्यन के पूर्व आय 2,564 करोड़ रुपये रही। गत पांच वर्ष में इसमें 16.3 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ोतरी हुई है।

जब 4.3 अरब डॉलर मूल्य के एस्सेल समूह के चेयरमैन और जी को खड़ा करने वाले सुभाष चंद्रा ने कहा कि उनकी कंपनी वैश्विक प्रसार के लिए नीतिगत साझेदार तलाश कर रही है तो इस खबर पर काफी उत्साह देखने को मिला।

विनिवेश की पहली प्रेरणा बना डिज्नी और फॉक्स के बीच हुआ सौदा। इस सौदे ने भारत में 1,67,400 करोड़ रुपये के मीडिया और मनोरंजन बाजार में हलचल मचा दी। यह अधिक बड़ा और तकनीक केंद्रित हो गया। 137 अरब डॉलर की अल्फाबेट (गूगल और यूट्यूब की मूल कंपनी) और 94.5 अरब डॉलर की कॉमकास्ट के बाद 60 अरब डॉलर मूल्य की डिज्नी भी दुनिया की बड़ी मीडिया कंपनियों में शुमार है।

स्टार इंडिया में 13,825 करोड रुपये का उसका स्वामित्व



मीडिया मंत्र वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

ज़ी देश की सबसे बड़ी मीडिया कंपनियों में शामिल है। इसके 10 भाषाओं में 41 चैनल हैं जिनकी टेलीविजन दर्शकों में 19 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी है। जबकि उसके ओटीटी ब्रांड ज़ी 5 को भी काफी

लोकप्रियता मिल रही है। यह इकलौता समूह है जो डिज्नी के स्टार इंडिया को कड़ी टक्कर दे रहा है जो इस समय नेटवर्क हिस्सेदारी में दूसरे स्थान पर है।

डॉलर से कुछ ही कम है। कॉमकास्ट और ज़ी अगर मिल जाते तो उनके लिए डिज्नी-स्टार या रिलायंस जियो का मुकाबला करना आसान था।

बहरहाल, दूसरी बात। समूह स्तर पर एस्सेल पर 17,000 करोड़ रुपये का भारी भरकम कर्ज होने की बात कही जा रही है और इसकी प्रतिभित प्रवर्तक के विभिन्न कारोबार में उसकी हिस्सेदारी है। कंपनी को ऋणमुक्त करने का एक मात्र तरीका विभिन्न मीडिया और गैर मीडिया कारोबार में हिस्सेदारी बेचना है। इन्वेस्को के पास पिछले 17 वर्ष से ज़ी की 8 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी है और अब उसने 11 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी और खरीद ली है।

परंतु इस सौदे से कोई पैसा नहीं आएगा क्योंकि वह कर्जदारों को जाएगा। न ही इस सौदे से कंपनी को कोई नीतिगत साझेदार मिला। ज़ी के सीईओ और प्रबंध निदेशक पुनीत गोयनका ने कहा कि यह एक अच्छा सौदा है क्योंकि यह समय पर पूरा हो सका। समूह को इस वर्ष 30 सितंबर के पहले अपने कर्जदारों के साथ मामला निपटाना था। गोयनका कहते हैं कि अगर अधिक समय होता तो शायद समूह नीतिगत साझेदार तलाश करती। परंतु चूंकि कंपनी 25 जनवरी को शेयरों में 30 फीसदी गिरावट के बाद से लगातार संघर्ष कर रही थी इसलिए उनको लगता है कि नीतिगत साझेदार मोलभाव कर रहे थे। इसमें चिकत करने वाली कोई

अच्छी संपत्ति की परेशानी में की गई बिक्री है। गोयनका इस बात से प्रसन्न हैं कि ज़ी के शेयरों का आधार मूल्य नए सिरे से तय हुआ है। इन्वेस्को ने कंपनी के शेयर 400 रुपये प्रति शेयर के मूल्य पर खरीदे। यह उस वक्त के 360 रुपये प्रति शेयर के बाजार मूल्य से अधिक था। जुलाई के अंतर से यह और गिरकर 330 रुपये प्रति शेयर के करीब आ गया था। कंपनी के प्रवर्तकों के पास अभी भी ज़ी के करीब 25 फीसदी शेयर बचे हुए हैं और उन्होंने नीतिगत निवेशक को एक और बिक्री से इनकार नहीं किया है। इससे प्रबंधन पर परिवार का नियंत्रण कमजोर पड़ सकता है लेकिन अगर रुपर्ट मर्डोक फॉक्स को एक बड़ी प्रतिद्वंद्वी को बेच सकते हैं तो सुभाष चंद्रा क्यों नहीं ?

बात नहीं है क्योंकि यह एक

कानाफूसी

नाराजगी पर मतभेद

केंद्र सरकार ने जम्मू कश्मीर का विशेष दर्जा समाप्त करने को लेकर संविधान के अनुच्छेद 370 और 35 ए को लेकर जो निर्णय लिया उस पर बिहार के मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार की प्रतिक्रिया अब तक सामने नहीं आई है। परंतु इस विषय को लेकर उनकी पार्टी जनता दल यूनाइटेड के भीतर नेताओं की राय बंटी हुई है। जदयू बिहार में भाजपा की सहयोगी है। पार्टी का एक धड़ा जहां केंद्र का समर्थन कर रहा है, वहीं दूसरा धड़ा इसके खिलाफ है। पार्टी नेता आरसीपी सिंह ने कहा कि पार्टी इसके खिलाफ थी लेकिन कानून बनने के बाद विरोध का कोई तुक नहीं है। कुछ मंत्री अभी भी विरोध कर रहे हैं। पार्टी के एक वरिष्ठ नेता ने कहा कि भाजपा के कुछ नेताओं ने वादा किया था कि कश्मीर में यथास्थिति में बदलाव नहीं किया जाएगा। अगर वे अपना वादा तोड़ रहे हैं तो विरोध तो होगा।

सबूत लाओ

मध्य प्रदेश में कांग्रेस सरकार आने के कुछ ही महीनों के भीतर भारतीय जनता पार्टी की प्रदेश इकाई ने भी 2024 के चुनावों की तैयारी शुरू कर दी। पार्टी ने महत्त्वाकांक्षी सदस्यता अभियान शुरू किया है। पार्टी के सांसदों और विधायकों से कहा गया है कि वे पार्टी के प्रदेश नेतृत्व को बताएं कि वे इस दिशा में क्या कदम उठा रहे हैं और नए सदस्यों को आकर्षित करने के लिए आयोजित कार्यक्रमों की सूची तथा इस अवसर पर खींची गई तस्वीरों को बतौर सब्त पार्टी के पास जमा कराएं। पार्टी



आपका पक्ष

लोगों में बचत की भावना उत्पन्न करना

वर्तमान समय में लोगों में बचत की भावना उत्पन्न करना जरूरी हो गया है। बचत का अर्थ सिर्फ पैसे से नहीं है बल्कि सभी चीजों से है। पूरे विश्व के साथ ही देश में जल संकट गहराने लगा है। इसका समाधान पानी की बचत करना ही है। खाद्यान्न संकट से निजात पाने के लिए भी अन्न की बचत जरूरी हो गई है। भारत को आर्थिक मंदी का सामना नहीं करना पड़े तथा देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूती प्रदान करने के लिए भी बेवजह खर्च से बचने की जरूरत है। डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था में आज अधिकतर लेनदेन कार्ड से हो रहा है। इससे नोटों का चलन काफी कम हो गया है जिससे अधिक नोट छापने की जरूरत नहीं रह गई है। इसका फायदा रिजर्व बैंक को नोट छापने



में इस्तेमाल होने वाले कागज तथा रंग में बचत होगी। आधुनिक युग में लोग बचत करना भूल गए हैं। पहले जमाने में लोग काफी बचत करते थे। चाहे वह अन्न हो या पैसे या कुछ और चीजें। लोग उतना ही भोजन लेते थे

जल संकट से निजात पाने के लिए लोगों को पानी की बचत के लिए प्रेरित करना होगा

बेकार नहीं जाता था। आज होटलों तथा रेस्टोरेंट में काफी जितना वह खा सके। इससे अन्न ः अन्न बरबाद चला जाता है। इससे

प्रयास किया जाना चाहिए। इससे देश की अर्थव्यवस्था के साथ लोगों की आर्थिक स्थिति भी मजबूत होगी।

दीप्ति कुमारी, नई दिल्ली

बताता है कि उसकी लडाई

38,838 करोड़ रुपये अथवा 5.5

अरब डॉलर मुल्य की रिलायंस

जियो (जिसके पास कई अन्य

कंपनियों के साथ वॉयकाम 18

का मालिकाना है)और सोनी से

है जिसका कारोबार एक अरब

अन्न तो बरबाद होता ही है।

ग्राहक को पैसे भी अधिक लगते

हैं। अगर बचत की भावना होगी

और पूरा देश बचत में सहयोग

करेगा तो देश काफी कुछ बचा

सकता है। इसी प्रकार घर पर भी

भोजन की बरबादी रोकने का

सेना को मजबूत करने का समय

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने स्वतंत्रता दिवस पर कहा कि चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ (सीडीएस) का

भी मिल सकेगा। कश्मीर मामले के बाद यह और भी जरूरी हो गया है क्योंकि पाकिस्तान लगातार सीमा पर अपनी सेना बढा रहा है। देश की दुढ राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति ने जैसे अनुच्छेद ३७० के कई प्रावधानों को हटाया है इसे देख यह कल्पना की जा सकती है कि अब कब्जे वाले कश्मीर तथा अकसाई चिन भी भारत वापस पा सकेगा। पाकिस्तान अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंचों पर भारत की कार्रवाई का विरोध कर रहा है लेकिन उसे ही मुंह की खानी पड़ रही है और भारत को विश्व के कई देशों का समर्थन मिल रहा है।

पद सुजित किया जाएगा। इससे

तीनों सेना के बीच सामंजस्य

बनेगा जिससे किसी भी आपात

स्थिति में सरकार को सेना के

तीनों अंगों से जानकारी फौरन

मिलेगी तथा सेनाओं को निर्देश

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादूर 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।



संवेदना मनुष्य के अंत:करण की गहन और मौन अभिव्यक्ति है

पाक को सख्त संदेश

अनुच्छेद-370 की समाप्ति के बाद जम्मू-कश्मीर में हर दिन सुधरते हालात के बीच रक्षामंत्री राजनाथ सिंह ने जिस तरह यह संकेत दिया कि अगर आवश्यकता हुई तो भारत नाभिकीय हथियारों का पहले इस्तेमाल न करने के अपने सिद्धांत पर फिर से विचार कर सकता है उसका संदेश पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान को भी सुनना चाहिए और वहां की सेना को भी। कश्मीर के मामले में अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय में पूरी तरह अलग-थलग पड़ चुके इमरान खान को अब यह सच्चाई समझने में देर नहीं करनी चाहिए कि परमाणु हथियारों के सहारे ब्लैकमेलिंग की कहीं कोई गुंजाइश नहीं रह गई है और वह बार-बार युद्ध का जो डर दिखाते रहते हैं वह उनके खोखलेपन को ही उजागर करता है। इमरान खान से भी अधिक पाकिस्तानी सेना को एक सैन्य बल के रूप में अपने आचरण को सुधारना होगा। भारत ने शुरुआत से ही एक जिम्मेदार नाभिकीय शक्ति का परिचय दिया है। जिम्मेदारी का यह भाव परमाणु हथियारों का पहले इस्तेमाल न करने के उसके संकल्प से ही परिलक्षित होता है। यह संकल्प अटूट है, लेकिन पाकिस्तानी शासन और सेना के लिए यह समझ लेना आवश्यक है कि अगर परिस्थितियों ने भारत को इस संकल्प से बाहर निकलने के लिए विवश किया तो वह ऐसा करने से हिचकिचाएगा नहीं।

भारत के खिलाफ आतंकवाद को छद्म युद्ध के हथकंडे के रूप में इस्तेमाल करने वाली पाकिस्तानी सेना यह सहन नहीं कर पा रही है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में हालात तेजी से सामान्य हो रहे हैं। कश्मीर के मोर्चे पर हर स्तर पर पराजित हो जाने के बाद पाकिस्तान आतंकवाद के सिलसिले को तेज कर सकता है। इसके प्रति हर स्तर पर सतर्क रहने की आवश्यकता है। यह उल्लेखनीय है कि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने स्वतंत्रता दिवस पर राष्ट्र के नाम अपने संबोधन में पड़ोसी देशों के साथ पूरी दुनिया को आश्वस्त किया कि भारत दक्षिण एशिया से आतंकवाद के खात्मे के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है और आगे भी इसके लिए पुरी जिम्मेदारी से कदम उठाए जाते रहेंगे। पुलवामा आतंकी हमले के बाद बालाकोट में सैन्य कार्रवाई करके भारत अपने इरादे जता भी चुका है। समस्या यह है कि देश में अभी भी एक वर्ग ऐसा है जो केवल सरकार की आलोचना करने के अपने एजेंडे को आगे बढ़ाने में इस हद तक चला जाता है कि उसे आतंकवाद की पक्षधरता में भी कोई बुराई नजर नहीं आती। ऐसे ही तत्वों के आधार पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय मीडिया भी कश्मीर को लेकर गलत रिपोर्टिंग जारी रखे हुए है और पाकिस्तान का दुस्साहस भी बढ़ता है। यह आवश्यक है कि पाकिस्तान के साथ-साथ कश्मीर की अशांति के लिए जिम्मेदार ऐसे तत्वों को भी कोई कड़ा संदेश दिया जाए।

उम्मीद की किरण

उत्तराखंड सरकार ने देर से ही, पेयजल संकट से निपटने के लिए कुछ हटकर सोचने की पहल तो की है। प्रदेश के अर्द्धनगरीय इलाकों के लिए अलग पेयजल नीति की कवायद को इससे जोड़ा जा रहा है। दरअसल ये इलाके नगर निकायों से सटे हैं और वर्तमान में शहरी क्षेत्रों का स्वरूप ले चुके हैं। इनमें आधारभूत सुविधाओं के विकास में बजट की कमी आड़े आ रही है। पेयजल भी इसमें एक है। आलम यह कि यहां लोगों को जरूरतभर का पानी भी मयस्सर नहीं है। जो उपलब्ध भी है, उसकी गणवत्ता बेहद खराब है। इनके लिए अलग से पेयजल नीति की जरूरत लंबे समय से महसूस की जा रही है। इसी के मद्देनजर राज्य सरकार ने पिछले दिनों ऐसे इलाकों को पेयजल संकट से निजात दिलाने की कसरत शुरू की, जो अब आगे बढ़ी है। दो रोज पहले हुए राज्य कैबिनेट ने इस पर बड़ा फैसला किया है। अर्द्धनगरीय शहरों में पेयजल संकट से निपटने के लिए 975 करोड़ रुपये की योजना पर मुहर लगाई गई है। विश्व बैंक की मदद से यह योजना वर्ष 2023 तक पूरी की जानी है। योजना पर 780 करोड़ रुपये विश्व बैंक खर्च करेगा, जबिक राज्यांश के रूप में 195 करोड़ रुपये राज्य सरकार को जुटाने हैं। ऐसे में उम्मीद है कि आने वाले तीन-चार सालों के भीतर निकायों की सीमा से लगे इन इलाकों में पानी का संकट काफी हद तक हल हो जाएगा। हालांकि पेयजल की चुनौती सरकार के सामने फिर भी बनी रहेगा। चूंकि यह समस्या केवल इन्हीं क्षेत्रों नहीं, बल्कि समूचा प्रदेश इससे जूझ रहा है। बहुत सारे ऐसे इलाके हैं जहां पर पूरे साल पानी के लिए हाहाकार मचा रहता है। लोग एक अदद बाल्टी पानी के लिए रतजगा करते हैं। कुछेक इलाकों में खरीदकर पीने के पानी का इंतजाम करने की बातें भी सामने आती हैं। अब सरकार ने इस दिशा में कदम उठाने शुरू किए हैं। निश्चित तौर पर अच्छा प्रयास है, जो भविष्य के लिए उम्मीद जगाता दिख रहा है। सरकार को उन इलाकों पर भी ध्यान देना चाहिए जहां पेयजल योजनाएं बदहाल हैं। खासकर दुर्गम पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों में अरसे से पेयजल योजनाओं का पुनर्गठन नहीं हो पाया है लोगों को 2 से 3 किलोमीटर दूर से पानी ढोना पड़ रहा है। सही मायने में पेयजल को लेकर सरकार को सम्यक नीति पर विचार करना चाहिए। अगर शहरी क्षेत्रों की बात करें तो हालात यहां भी अच्छे नहीं हैं। बस, किसी तरह काम चल रहा है। आने वाले समय में यहां भी चुनौतियां बढ़ सकती हैं।

निर्णायक रक्षा सुधार की पहल

राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के मसले को व्यापक दृष्टिकोण

के साथ देखना होगा। इसके अस्तित्व में आने

से भारतीय सुरक्षा बलों की क्षमताएं निश्चित

स्वतंत्रता के समय ब्रिटिश भारतीय सेना

में कमांडर-इन-चीफ का पद हुआ करता था,

लेकिन जवाहरलाल नेहरू को हमेशा सैन्य

तख्तापलट की आशंका सताती थी। इसलिए

उन्होंने अपने शासन में इस पद पद को समाप्त

करके चीफ ऑफ आर्मी स्टाफ यानी सीओएसी

की परंपरा शुरू की। मगर सीडीएस की जरूरत

लंबे समय से महसूस की जा रही थी। वर्ष

1971 में बांग्लादेश मुक्ति संग्राम के बाद

तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री इंदिरा गांधी जनरल मानेक

शॉ को सीडीएस बनाना चाहती थीं. लेकिन

नौकरशाही के अलावा वायु सेना और नौ सेना

की कुछ आपत्तियों के चलते वह प्रस्ताव ठंडे

सीडीएस नियुक्ति की बात की जाए तो

सबसे पहले इसकी सिफारिश मंत्रियों के एक

समूह यानी जीओएम ने की थी। इस मंत्री समूह

का गठन कारगिल समीक्षा समिति के निष्कर्षों

बस्ते में चला गया।

रूप से और बेहतर होने जा रही हैं।



ब्रिगेडियर आरपी सिंह

सीडीएस की नियुक्ति से जहां तीनों सेनाओं के बीच समन्वय बेहतर होगा वहीं दुनिया भर में सामरिक मोर्चे पर आ रहे बदलावों से ताल मिलाने में भी सहूलियत होगी

तंत्रता दिवस पर राष्ट्र को संबोधित करते हुए प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने एक अत्यंत अहम घोषणा की। उन्होंने सैन्य बलों की क्षमताओं को और बेहतर बनाने के लिए चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ यानी सीडीएस की नियुक्ति का एलान किया। उन्होंने कहा, 'हमारे सैन्य बल भारत का गौरव हैं। उनमें और बेहतर समन्वय के लिए मैं लाल किले से एक अहम घोषणा करना चाहता हूं कि अब भारत में चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ भी होगा।' देश में फिलहाल यही व्यवस्था है जिसमें तीनों सेनाओं के प्रमुखों में से सबसे वरिष्ठ को चीफ्स ऑफ स्टाफ्स कमेटी यानी सीओएससी का दर्जा दिया जाता है। मगर यह कोई विशेष दायित्व नहीं, बल्कि अतिरिक्त जिम्मेदारी है। इसमें अमूमन कार्यकाल भी बहुत छोटा होता है। जैसे फिलहाल सीओएससी वाय सेना प्रमुख बीएस धनोआ ने 31 मई को यह पद संभाला था। वह 30 सितंबर को सेवानिवृत्त हो जाएंगे। उसके बाद सबसे वरिष्ठ होने के नाते जनरल बिपिन रावत यह जिम्मा संभालेंगे, मगर वह भी 31 दिसंबर को सेवानिवृत्त हो जाएंगे। इस प्रकार देखा जाए तो स्थायी सीडीएस की नियुक्ति तीनों सेनाओं के बीच बेहतर समन्वय की दृष्टि से एक बड़ी पहल है। यह बीते 72 वर्षों के दौरान हुआ एक निर्णायक रक्षा सुधार है। इससे दुनिया भर में सामरिक मोर्चे पर आ रहे बदलावों से ताल मिलाने में भी सहूलियत होगी। सीडीएस सैन्य आधुनिकीकरण, संचालन तैयारियों और युद्ध जैसे तमाम मसलों पर राजनीतिक नेतृत्व को सलाह देने वाला इकलौता सैन्य सलाहकार होगा। अमेरिका और ब्रिटेन जैसी तमाम आधुनिक सेनाओं में सीडीएस जैसी व्यवस्था है। हालांकि वहां उसका नाम अलग है। मोदी ने आगे कहा, 'भारत जिस तरह की सुरक्षा चुनौतियों से जूझ रहा है उन्हें देखते हुए समय आ गया है कि तीनों सेनाओं के बीच तालमेल को और बेहतर बनाया जाए। सुरक्षा चुनौतियों से निपटने की दिशा में सीडीएस वह तालमेल और सैन्य बलों को प्रभावी नेतृत्व प्रदान करेगा।' बाद में रक्षा मंत्री राजनाथ सिंह ने भी ट्वीट के जिरये कहा, 'तीनों सेनाओं के बीच बेहतर समन्वय और संचालन को सरल बनाने के लिए आवश्यक सुधार के रूप में सीडीएस भारत के सुरक्षा परिदृश्य पर बेहद सकारात्मक एवं दुरगामी प्रभाव डालेगा।'

सीडीएस के गठन के साथ ही तीनों सेनाओं की एकीकृत कमान का रास्ता भी साफ होगा। इससे तीनों सेनाओं के लिए दीर्घावधिक योजनाएं, रक्षा उपकरण खरीद, प्रशिक्षण और लॉजिस्टिक्स में सही तालमेल बैठेगा। मोदी की घोषणा के बाद अब रक्षा मंत्रालय सीडीएस नियुक्ति की प्रक्रिया शुरू करेगा। इसमें उसके कार्यकाल और अन्य संबंधित मुद्दों को तय किया जाएगा। सीडीएस की बुनियादी भूमिका सेना, वायु सेना और नौसेना के बीच संचालन समन्वय को बेहतर बनाने की होगी। उसे



अवधेश राज

की पड़ताल करने के लिए किया गया था। भारतीय सामरिक रणनीति के पितामह माने जाने वाले के. सुब्रमण्यम कारगिल समीक्षा समिति के प्रमुख थे। मौजूदा विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर उन्हीं के पुत्र हैं। मई 2001 में तत्कालीन गृह मंत्री के नेतृत्व वाले जीओएम ने पूर्व रक्षा मंत्री अरुण सिंह की अध्यक्षता वाली समिति की संस्तुति पर इस विचार को आगे बढ़ाया। अरुण सिंह समिति ने 'भारत के सामरिक बलों की कमान के प्रशासनिक नियंत्रण के साथ ही सरकार के लिए सैन्य सलाहकार की भूमिका के साथ' सीडीएस पद की संकल्पना पेश की। सीडीएस के उस स्वरूप का कुछ हल्का संस्करण 2012 में रक्षा सुधारों पर गठित नरेश चंद्रा टास्क फोर्स ने पेश किया जिसके आधार पर पर चीफ्स ऑफ स्टाफ कमेटी के स्थायी चेयरमैन की व्यवस्था सामने आई। वर्ष 2016 में लेफ्टिनेंट जनरल शेकटकर समिति ने एक

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने अपने फैसले को अमल में लाने के लिए कोई समयसीमा तो नहीं दी है। न ही यह संकेत दिए गए कि यह कब से

बार फिर यही सुझाव दिया।

लागू होगा। फिर भी मौजूदा सरकार की चाल-ढाल को देखते हुए लगता है कि इसे जल्द ही अमलीजामा पहना दिया जाएगा। इसे अंतिम रूप देने से पहले कई पहलुओं पर विचार करना होगा। मसलन सीडीएस का कार्यकाल कितना होगा या फिर उसकी जवाबदेही किसके प्रति होगी। क्या वह प्रधानमंत्री को रिपोर्ट करेगा या सुरक्षा मामलों की कैबिनेट सिमिति को? उसका मुख्यालय कहां होगा? प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय में या रक्षा मंत्रालय में? सीडीएस के क्या अधिकार होंगे? क्या उसके पास बजट और संसाधन आवंटित करने की शक्ति होगी? या फिर वह केवल प्रतीकमात्र होगा? वरीयता अनुक्रम में उसका क्या स्थान होगा? सीडीएस की नियुक्ति से पहले सरकार को इन सभी सवालों के जवाब तलाशने होंगे।

अब अगला सवाल यही है कि सीडीएस कौन बनेगा? इस पर केवल एक स्पष्टता यही है कि वह चार सितारा जनरल होगा क्या वह मौजूदा प्रमुखों में से कोई एक होगा प्रधानमंत्री की घोषणा का समय भी बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि सेना और वायु सेना प्रमुख जल्द ही सेवानिवृत्त होने वाले हैं। फिलहाल एयर चीफ मार्शल बीएस धनोआ सबसे वरिष्ठ हैं और इसी आधार पर सीओएससी के चेयरमैन हैं। वह सितंबर में सेवानिवृत्त हो रहे हैं। सेना प्रमुख जनरल रावत भी दिसंबर में सेवानिवृत्त हो रहे हैं। चुंकि सेना प्रमुख का दायरा तीनों सेनाओं में सबसे बड़ा है तो इस लिहाज से वह इसके लिए स्वाभाविक पसंद होने चाहिए। तीनों सेनाओं के प्रमुख को तीन वर्ष का नियत कार्यकाल या 62 वर्ष तक की सेवा अवधि मिलती है। ऐसे में अगर सरकार मौजूद प्रमुखों में से किसी को सीडीएस बनाती है तो इस पद के लिए सेवा अवधि की

> (लेखक सेवानिवृत्त सैन्य अधिकारी हैं) response@jagran.com

आयु सीमा भी 62 वर्ष से अधिक बढ़ानी होगी

लाल किले से मोदी के संदेश का मर्म

संवाद की कला में निपुण हुए बिना कोई नेता महान नहीं बन सकता। महान नेताओं की खूबी होती है कि वे लोगों से जब भी बात करते हैं तो उनसे भावनात्मक रूप से जुड़ जाते हैं। फिर उनकी बात से प्रेरित होकर लोग वह कर गुजरते हैं, जिसका उन्हें भी पूर्वानुमान नहीं होता। पिछले पांच साल में हम प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को ऐसा करते हुए देख चुके हैं। स्वच्छ भारत अभियान ने पांच साल में इस देश के लोगों का व्यवहार ही नहीं, आदत भी बदल दी। देशवासियों के इस सहयोग के कारण प्रधानमंत्री इस समय आत्मविश्वास से लबरेज हैं। 73वें स्वाधीनता दिवस पर लाल किले की प्राचीर से उनका संबोधन इसका प्रमाण है।

प्रधानमंत्री ने यूं तो लाल किले से बहुत-सी बातें कहीं, लेकिन आज जिक्र उन मुद्दों का जिनका तात्कालिक राजनीतिक नफा-नुकसान से कोई सीधा वास्ता नहीं है। ये मुद्दे किसी वोट बेंक को ध्यान में रखकर नहीं उठाए गए हैं। ये मुद्दे ऐसे भी नहीं जिनका प्रभाव कुछ साल के लिए या सरकार के कार्यकाल तक के लिए हो। ऐसी बातें वही कर सकता है जिसमें दलगत राजनीतिक स्वार्थ से ऊपर उठकर देशहित में कुछ कहने, करने का माद्दा हो। इस संदर्भ में जनसंख्या नियंत्रण, जलजीवन मिशन, सिंगल यूज प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल से परहेज, रासायनिक उर्वरकों के प्रयोग में कमी, जिलों के हस्तिशिल्प उत्पादों के निर्यात, कृषि उत्पादों के निर्यात और घरेलू पर्यटन को बढ़ावा देने जैसे मुद्दों का जिक्र जरूरी है।

सबसे पहले जनसंख्या नियंत्रण की बात करते हैं। यह ऐसा विषय है जिसके बारे में कोई राजनीतिक दल सपने में भी बोलने से डरता था। इस मुद्दे का जिक्र आते ही लोगों को आपातकाल के जमाने की ज्यादितयां याद आ जाती हैं, पर मोदी इससे डरकर चुप नहीं रहे। उन्होंने जनसंख्या विस्फोट की विकराल समस्या से लोगों को आगाह किया, पर वह यहीं नहीं रुके। कहा कि छोटा परिवार रखना भी देशभिक्त है, पर जो छोटा परिवार रखते हैं उन पर ज्यादा बच्चे पैदा करने वालों का बोझ नहीं डाला जा सकता। हालांकि उन्होंने अभी इस संबंध में किसी कानून की बात नहीं की है, पर इस बात को उनके इस कथन के संदर्भ में देखा जाना चाहिए कि हम समस्याओं को न पालते हैं. न टालते हैं। दरअसल दुनिया भर में यह माना जाता है कि जनसंख्या वृद्धि की दर इतनी होनी चाहिए जिससे नई पीढ़ी लगभग उसी अनुपात में पुरानी पीढ़ी का स्थान ले सके। विशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि यह रिप्लेसमेंट रेट 2.1 होनी चाहिए। जबिक देश में यह दर 2.2 है। समस्या इस बात



ऐसी बातें वही कर सकता है जिसमें राजनीतिक स्वार्थ से ऊपर उठकर देशहित में कुछ कहने, करने का माद्दा हो



से और बढ़ जाती है कि सात राज्यों उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, राजस्थान, मध्य प्रदेश, छत्तीसगढ़, झारखंड और असम में यह ढाई से 3.2 तक है। इन सात राज्यों में देश की 45 फीसद आबादी बसती है। बढ़ती आबादी कई तरह के असंतुलन और चुनौतियां लेकर आती है।

पानी के संकट को उन्होंने जलजीवन मिशन का नाम दिया। देश के 75 फीसद लोगों को पीने का शुद्ध पानी उपलब्ध नहीं है। इस मुद्दे का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने महिलाओं की परेशानियों का जिक्र किया, जिन्हें कई-कई किलोमीटर चलकर पानी लाना पड़ता है। सरकार अगले पांच साल में जलजीवन मिशन पर साढ़े तीन लाख करोड़ रुपये खर्च करने वाली है। जल संरक्षण से जल संचयन तक उन्होंने सभी चुनौतियों का जिक्र किया। इसी तरह प्रधानमंत्री ने एक बार इस्तेमाल किए जाने वाले प्लास्टिक से परहेज करने की अपील की तो साथ ही किसानों से कहा कि अपने खेतों में रासायनिक खादों का इस्तेमाल कम करें। रासायनिक खादों के इस्तेमाल से न केवल जमीन की उर्वरा शक्ति घट रही है, बल्कि भमिगत जल भी प्रदुषित हो रहा है। निर्यात को बढ़ावा देने पर जोर देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि हमारा किसान अपने उत्पाद का निर्यातक क्यों नहीं हो सकता। साथ ही उन्होंने हस्तशिल्प

को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए कहा कि जिले के हस्तशिल्प उत्पाद के निर्यात का प्रयास होना चाहिए। पर्यटन उद्योग के विकास के लिए मोदी ने लोगों से अपील कि वे 2022 तक देश के पंद्रह पर्यटन स्थलों पर जाएं। पर्यटन रोजगार का बड़ा जिरया है।

जनसंख्या और जलजीवन मिशन के अलावा बाकी लक्ष्य ऐसे हैं जिन्हें आसानी से हासिल किया जा सकता है। इन मुद्दों पर कामयाबी उनकी अपील के असर पर निर्भर है। प्रधानमंत्री पद पर रहते हुए नरेंद्र मोदी को पांच साल से ज्यादा समय हो चुका है। वह 2014 में आए थे तो स्वयं को 'सिस्टम' से बाहर वाला बताकर बदलाव का वादा किया था। पांच साल बाद भी उन्होंने लाल किले से खुद को एक बार फिर बदलाव के वाहक के रूप में पेश किया है। बड़ी बात यह है कि लोगों को उनको इस भूमिका में स्वीकार करने से कोई गुरेज नहीं है। लोगों को मोदी पर यह भरोसा उनकी सरकार के पांच साल के काम से बना है। ऐसा भरोसा तभी बनता है जब लोगों को नेता की नीति ही नहीं नीयत पर भी यकीन हो। प्रधानमंत्री का यह आत्मविश्वास नए जनादेश और उनकी अपील को आगे बढ़कर जन अभियान बना देने के लोगों के संकल्प से उपजा है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी का लाल किले से छठा संबोधन एक कुशल प्रशासक और समाज सुधारक का समन्वय था। साल 2014 में केंद्र में सत्ता संभालने के बाद से उनका सतत प्रयास रहा है कि समाज की शक्ति को जगाया जाए। भारतीय संस्कृति और परंपरा में सत्ता की शक्ति से ज्यादा अहमियत समाज की शक्ति की रही है। सत्ता पर आवश्यकता से ज्यादा निर्भरता किसी समाज और देश को बहुत आगे नहीं ले जा सकती। इस बात को प्रधानमंत्री अच्छी तरह समझते हैं।

उन्होंने पहले ही इस बात को समझ लिया था कि पिछली सरकारें अपेक्षित गित से देश का विकास नहीं कर पाईं तो इसका कारण केवल राजनीतिक इच्छाशिक्त का अभाव नहीं था। नेता की राजनीतिक इच्छाशिक्त तभी फलीभूत होती है जब उसे आम लोगों का समर्थन और सहभागिता मिले। पिछले पांच वर्षों में मोदी भारतीय समाज की इस शिक्त को जगाने में कामयाब रहे हैं। आम लोगों के साथ उनकी इस जुगलबंदी को उनके राजनीतिक विरोधी या तो भांप नहीं पाए या उस पर यकीन नहीं किया। नतीजा सबके सामने है।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं) response@jagran.com



कार्य की सफलता

हम सभी जीवन में बड़ा मुकाम हासिल करना चाहते हैं। इसके लिए कई बड़े कार्य करने होते हैं जिनमें अक्सर कई मुश्किलें भी आती हैं। ऐसे में बेहतर है कि प्रारंभ में छोटे कार्यों या बड़े कार्य के छोटे भाग का ही चुनाव करना चाहिए न कि संपूर्ण बड़े कार्य को एक साथ करने के लिए व्याकुलता उत्पन्न करनी चाहिए। प्रारंभ में छोटे कार्यों को ही हाथ में लेना इसलिए उचित है तािक ये आसानी से पूरे किए जा सकें जिससे सफलता हािसल हो सके। सफलता चाहे छोटे काम की ही क्यों न हो यह व्यक्ति में उत्साह भर देती है जो उसे बड़े काम करने के लिए शक्ति प्रदान करती है। छोटे काम में सफल होने पर व्यक्ति अपनी योग्यता और प्रतिभा का अनुभव भी कर लेता है। ऐसे में जब एक कदम आगे बढ़ाया जाता है तब रास्ता सगम हो जाता है।

प्रारंभ में छोटे इंजनों को ही बनाने में सफलता प्राप्त की गई थी। उसके बाद ही रेलगाड़ी जैसे भारी-भरकम इंजन को बनाने और चलाने में सफलता प्राप्त की गई। रेल गाड़ियों के परिचालन में अत्यंत भार के कारण इसके पिहयों को प्रारंभिक गित देने में बहुत अधिक शिक्त की आवश्यकता होती है, लेकिन जब ये एक बार घूम जाते हैं तब ये स्वयं बलवान हो जाते हैं। पिहयों और रेल के डिब्बे का वजन बहुत अधिक होने के कारण जब ये घूमने लगते हैं तब ये संवेग के कारण स्वयं शिक्तशाली हो जाते हैं। ऐसे में इसे दोबारा घुमाने में इंजन को पहले की अपेक्षा बहुत कम शिक्त लगानी पड़ती है। इसी प्रकार सफलता के पिहयों का भी एक बार घूमना इसिलए कठिन होता है, क्योंकि ये रेल के समान भारी होते हैं, किंतु जब ये एक बार घूम जाते हैं तब इन्हें गित देने में ज्यादा शिक्त की जरूरत नहीं पड़ती है।

इस सफलता को और आगे बढ़ाने में उसकी मस्तिष्क की उत्साह रूपी शक्ति काम करने लगती है। ऐसे में व्यक्ति को जब एक बार अपनी योग्यता पर विश्वास हो जाता है तब वह बड़े से बड़े कार्यों में हाथ डालने लगता है। फिर वह बड़े से बड़े कार्य को आसानी से संपादित करके सफलता प्राप्त करता रहता है।

वीके जायसवाल

सुशासन की राह में बाधाएं

जारायाः जारास्यार

सामान्यतः यह देखा जाता है कि लोगों को न तो लोक प्रशासन के बारे में ज्यादा पता होता है और न ही नवलोक प्रबंधन के। साथ ही सुशासन, लोकनीति और लोकरूचि का भी समुचित ज्ञान नहीं होता है। व्यक्ति तो मात्र यही सोचता है कि उसका जीवन सुरक्षित रहे तथा उसे सामाजिक न्याय मिले और उचित रोजगार के अवसर उपलब्ध हों। यहां बताना उचित होगा कि अभिशासन सरकार की क्रिया है। और सरकार एक संज्ञा है और सुशासन सरकार द्वारा किया जाने वाला कार्य है। सुशासन की अवधारणा का विकास कौटिल्य, अरस्तु तथा प्लेटो के दर्शन शास्त्र में देखा जा सकता है। राम राज्य के रूप में सुशासन की अवधारणा भारत में प्राचीन काल से विकसित रही है, परंतु आधुनिक लोक प्रशासन की शब्दावली में यह शब्द 1990 के दशक में शामिल हुआ था। विश्व बैंक के एक दस्तावेज में सुशासन शब्द का प्रयोग एक ऐसी प्रक्रिया के रूप में किया गया है जिससे शासन शक्ति का प्रयोग राष्ट्र के आर्थिक और सामाजिक संसाधनों का प्रबंध करने के लिए किया जाता है। सुशासन सुशासन की परिकल्पना तभी सिद्ध होती है जब वहां की सरकार और नागरिकों के बीच संबंध मधुर हों

की परिकल्पना तभी सिद्ध होती है जब केंद्र-राज्य, राज्य-राज्य, सरकार-बाजार, सरकार-नागरिकों के बीच संबंध मधुर हों। सामान्यतः प्रशासनिक अधिकारी और राजनेता के बीच संबंध मजबूत होते हैं, लेकिन नागरिकों के साथ शासन व्यवस्था के संबंध उतने अच्छे नहीं होते हैं। ऐसे में सुशासन की परिकल्पना का क्षरण हो जाता है। वैसे सरकार और नागरिक समाज तथा संगठनों के संबंधों में मधुरता लाने का प्रयास किया जाता रहा है, लेकिन अभी तक अपेक्षित सफलता नहीं मिल पाई है।

भारत में नागरिक समाज का निर्माण न हो पाने के पीछे फैबियन समाजवादी नीति रही है। जिसका कारण यह है कि यहां आयकर 28 से 30 फीसद तक वसूला जाता है। यह तो कम है, इंदिरा गांधी सरकार ने तो अपने समय में 93 फीसद तक आयकर लगाए थे। यही कारण है कि आज देश में कर की चोरी चरम पर रही है। अगर भारत अमेरिका की तरह ही सभी को चार फीसद कर की सीमा में बांध दे तो निश्चित तौर पर सभी व्यक्ति खुशी के साथ कर जमा करेंगे, क्योंकि 28-30 प्रतिशत की जगह चार प्रतिशत कर देना सभी को मुनासिब होगा। और फिर सुशासन की अवधारणा को बल भी मिलेगा।

सुशासन एक पूंजीवादी अवधारणा है। यदि सुशासन लाना है तो सरकार के बोझ को कम करना होगा। निजी क्षेत्र को भी बढ़ावा देना होगा। सुशासन का अर्थ यह भी है कि सरकारी कार्यों को जनता स्वयं अपना कार्य समझ कर करे। इससे सरकारी विभाग भी कम हो जाएंगे और भ्रष्टाचार स्वतः समाप्त हो जाएंगा, लेकिन वर्तमान परिदृश्य को देखते हुए यह कहा जा सकता है कि अभी सुशासन मात्र कल्पना ही है, क्योंकि जनता-प्रशासन के बीच संबंध इस कदर मधुर नहीं हैं कि दोनों एक-दूसरे के क्रियाकलापों का सम्मान करें। इसी कारण सरकारी नियमों को लोग तोड़ने में जरा भी संकोच नहीं करते हैं। अतः देश में ऐसी स्थित बनने के बाद ही पूर्ण सुशासन की उम्मीद की जा सकती है।

(लेखक शिक्षक हैं)

सत्ता से जुड़ने की चाह

जुड़ाव की राजनीति के आगे बेबस विपक्ष शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में बद्री नारायण ने लिखा है कि भाजपा अपने विरोधी दलों के जनाधार में सेंध लगा रही है। इसके लिए वह अपने विरोधी विचारों को आत्मसात करने से भी पीछे नहीं हट रही है। एक आम नागरिक के तौर पर मुझे नहीं लगता कि भाजपा ने वैचारिक स्तर पर किसी तरह का लचीला रुख अपनाया है या उसका आयाम विस्तृत किया है, बल्कि वह अपने उग्र राष्ट्रवाद और हिंदुत्व की नीति पर पहले की ही तरह मजबूती से खड़ी है। जहां तक उसका आधार बढ़ने की बात है तो इसकी सिर्फ एक ही वजह नजर आती है, वह आज के अधिकांश नेताओं में सत्ता सुख की चाह होना है। भाजपा के पास नरेंद्र मोदी जैसा नेतृत्व और अमित शाह जैसे कुशल रणनीतिकार हैं। ये दोनों राजनेता जनता की नब्ज पकड़ने में माहिर हैं। इनके पास चुनाव जीतने की कला भी है और संसाधन भी। इनसे पार पाना कई विपक्षी दलों के लिए मुश्किल साबित हो रहा है। ऐसे में ज्यादातर चुनावों में भाजपा की जीत हो रही है और वह सत्ता में भागीदार बन रही है। आने वाले कई वर्षों तक भारतीय राजनीति के केंद्र में भाजपा ही रहने वाली है। आज ज्यादातर लोग राजनीति में किसी विचारधारा के लिए नहीं आ रहे हैं, बल्कि अधिक से अधिक सत्ता का सुख भोगना ही उनकी मंशा है। इसी कारण दलबदल की समस्या भी इन दिनों गंभीर रूप से सामने आई है। ऐसे में भला कौन नेता सत्ता सुख से वंचित रहना चाहेगा। यही कारण है कि आजकल विपक्ष के ज्यादातर नेता भाजपा का रुख कर रहे हैं। कल अगर भाजपा कमजोर हुई और कोई दूसरी पार्टी सत्ता में आने में सफल होती है तो ये नेता उसका दामन थामने से भी नहीं पीछे नहीं हटेंगे। मुझे यह कहने में तिनक भी संकोच नहीं हो रहा है कि सत्ता की चाह

मेलबाक्स

में भाजपा का कुनबा बढ़ रहा है, न कि उसकी विचारधारा को आत्मसात करने के कारण।

् विवेक श्रीवास्तव, नई दिल्ली

विकास में बाधक

स्वतंत्रता दिवस पर लाल किले से दिये अपने भाषण में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने विकास से संबंधित सभी पहलुओं पर प्रकाश डालने का प्रयास किया। प्रधानमंत्री ने गांव, किसान, गरीब, आतंकवाद, भ्रष्टाचार, आदिवासी, जल संरक्षण, प्लास्टिक का अंत, पर्यटन को बढ़ावा, जम्मू कश्मीर का विकास, अंतरिक्ष तथा जनसंख्या विस्फोट जैसे विषयों से देश को अवगत कराया। हमारा देश निरंतर विकास की इबारत लिख रहा है। परंतु लगातार बढ़ती जनसंख्या सभी समस्याओं की जड़ है। जिस पर नियंत्रण पाए बिना प्रगति का सपना अधूरा ही रहेगा। प्रधानमंत्री ने देशवासियों से इस विषय पर गंभीरता से विचार करने का आह्वान किया। आम नागरिकों को भी इस बात पर चिंतन करना चाहिए। भारत सरकार पिछले कई वर्षों से परिवार नियोजन जैसे जागरूकता अभियान चलाती रही है, परंतु इसका बहुत कम असर देखने को मिला है। अब सरकार को एक ठोस जनसंख्या नियंत्रण कानून बनाने की आवश्यकता है। इस कानून के बनने से एक से दो दशक में जनसंख्या स्थिर हो जाएंगी और देश स्वतः ही प्रगति पथ पर अग्रसर हो जाएगा। hitender.dedha@gmail.com

महत्वपूर्ण है जनरल डिब्बा

पूरी दुनिया में भारतीय रेल का दूसरा व एशिया में पहला

स्थान है। लेकिन बढ़ती जनसंख्या के कारण रेलवे के सभी प्रयास यात्रियों के लिए कम पड जाते हैं। कह सकते हैं कि आम जनता या कमजोर वर्ग के लिए रेलवे भी सहलियत देने में असमर्थ रही है। कालांतर में रेलवे में आम यात्रियो के लिए थर्ड क्लास की श्रेणी भी होती थी, लेकिन यहां भी रेलवे ने थर्ड क्लास को खत्म करने के नाम पर कमजोर वर्ग के साथ धोखा किया और रातों रात आधुनिक डिब्बों से थर्ड क्लास शब्द मिटवा कर साधारण, जनरल शब्द लिखवा दिया। रेलवे की इस घोषणा से जनता में अपार खुशी की लहर थी। वर्तमान में भारतीय रेल में यात्रियों के लिए कई क्लास होने पर भी कमाई के लिहाज से जनरल डिब्बों की अहमियत सबसे ज्यादा है, क्योंकि जनरल डिब्बों में क्षमता से चार गुना ज्यादा पैसेंजर होना आम बात है। त्योहारों के समय यह स्थिति और विकराल रूप धारण कर लेती है। रेलवे को चाहिए कि वह अपनी आमदनी बढ़ाने के साथ-साथ आम लोगों को या गरीब लोगों को अपने गंतव्य स्थान पर पहुंचाने के लिए अधिक से अधिक जनरल डिब्बे वाली ट्रेनों का संचालन करे।

प्रेमपाल सिंह, पलवल

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 : दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी–210–211, सेक्टर–63, नोएडा ई–मेल : mailbox@jagran.com