Vodafone's India woes

We need international players, especially in a sector like telecom, for global best practices and the latest in technology, if nothing else



NOT FOR PROFIT

NIVEDITA MOOKERJI

alesh Sharma stepping down and Ravinder Takkar taking over as the CEO of Vodafone Idea are not ordinary events in the life of a company. If analysts are to be believed, the latest top-level change will determine where the telecom company is headed. For the UK-based telco, a leading player in the

world in terms of market value and subscriber numbers, India has been an expensive bet and giving Takkar the top job seems to be a final attempt on its part in gaining shareholder confidence. If this doesn't work, exit may be the only way out for the telco, caught in a never-ending tariff war. It's another matter that the top executives of the company have not gone beyond calling the Indian telecom market "unsustainable".

Next October, the Newbury (Berkshire)-headquartered telecom giant will complete 15 years in India. Vodafone's India story began in October 2005, when it acquired a 10 per cent stake in Sunil Mittal-promoted Bharti group. At \$1.5 billion, that was the single largest foreign investment in the country till then, and the deal made headlines. But it wasn't enough being a financial partner to Bharti and soon Vodafone wanted a bigger India play. In February 2007, after months of negotiation, the British telco announced its decision to pay \$11.1 billion in cash to buy a 67 per cent stake in Hutchison Essar (Hutch) from Hong Kong-based business baron Li Ka-Shing. That again was the single largest foreign investment in the country till then. During the deal talks, whether it was a celebrity-like treatment given to then Vodafone global CEO Arun Sarin, when he made a rare appearance early morning in a luxury hotel, or it was then Hutch Essar head Asim Ghosh, who had to escape media attention by taking the back gate at a conference venue. Vodafone was at the centre of the telecom narrative in India. The Voda-Hutch deal was completed in 2009.

Soon, Vodafone wanted to be on its own, of course, helped by the easing contours of foreign direct investment regulations in telecom, Essar group's Ruias. who became Vodafone's local partner after the Hutch deal, left the entire business in the hands of the UK telco a few vears later. But, this time, reality struck hard. The next local tango for Vodafone, in March 2017, was with Aditya Birla group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birlaled Idea Cellular. The two agreed to merge their Indian operations in a \$23billion deal. The idea was to create a new giant to take on Jio. The plot clearly didn't work.

Vodafone's merger with Idea was a product of compulsion and didn't yield the desired results. It has been losing subscriber numbers and the losses are widening too. Difference in culture between the two companies and an integration not executed well, only made things worse.

A Vodafone executive familiar with the workings of the multinational had recently pointed out that nowhere else in the world had the telco confronted a situation like this. He was referring to Reliance Jio taking on all others in the market through disruptive pricing.

However, that does not mean Vodafone has not been disenchanted with India before. The UPA-2 decision to retrospectively tax Vodafone has been the biggest setback for the UK-based telco, much before Jio came into the picture. The government at that time had raised a tax demand of ₹11,000 crore related to Vodafone's acquisition of Hutchison Telecom stake in 2009. The amount had increased to ₹20,000 crore, including interest and penalties. While the Supreme Court subsequently quashed the demand in January 2012, the government amended the IT Act retrospectively, to impose the liability back on Vodafone.

As for its current business, Vodafone Idea has said it won't participate in the 5G spectrum auction at the current price fixed by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India. Who knows what the next step of the UK partner would be. If at all it's an exit, it won't be a first for Vodafone. New Zealand and Japan are among the geographies that the group exited when the going got tough. There are hurdles in Australia as well as recently the regulator stopped a planned \$7.7billion merger of Vodafone's struggling Australian business with TPG Telecom. There are indications that an exit from Australia cannot be ruled out.

If Vodafone indeed decides to quit India, the telecom market in the country, which once had telcos from across the world, will be left poorer. We need international players, especially in a sector like telecom, for global best practices and the latest in technology, if nothing else.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Wordplay



Congress Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor (pictured) has again got his Twitter followers to riffle through their dictionaries. On Wednesday, he

retweeted party colleague P Chidambaram's tweet of September 24, 2018. Chidambaram had tweeted the link of his interview to a newspaper on the alleged irregularities in the Rafale fighter jet deal where he sought to punch holes in then finance minister Arun Jaitley's defence of the deal and said. "To a person running scared. every shadow will be a demon". Tharoor fished out the nearly year-old tweet and commented, "Well said P Chidambaram! It is a tribute to your strength of character that you are standing up to persecution and character assassination with courage and confidence. I believe justice will prevail in the end. Till then we will have to allow some malicious minds their schadenfreude." Some of Tharoor's followers immediately reached for their dictionaries and/or the internet to search for the meaning of the word "schadenfreude".

Supporters vs spokespersons

The drubbing faced by the opposition parties in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh not only put paid to the political prospects of their frontline leaders, but also brought had news to their spokespersons appearing on television debates. With most prominent non-BJP parties - namely, the Congress, the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party – barring their "official spokespersons" from representing their parties in televised debates, such debates now feature BJP spokespersons only, apart from the representatives of some lesser known and fringe political outfits. Some enterprising leaders of opposition parties, however, have devised a novel way of appearing in TV debates without breaching the ban edict: They are identified as "supporters" of their respective parties rather than "spokespersons"!

No takers

The Kamal Nath-led Madhya Pradesh government is desperately trying to sell its old seven-seater aircraft but with little success. In January, the state government had issued a global tender for its Super King Air B-200. It had fixed a base price of ₹11.1 crore but there were no takers. This is the third failed attempt to sell off the plane. The aircraft is 18 years old and the state government has been forced to hire charter planes or choppers to fly its VIPs. The previous Shivraj Singh Chouhan government had also tried to sell the aircraft off, albeit unsuccessfully. The Congress (then in the opposition) had criticised the move. Selling it would be a "waste of valuable resources," it had said.

Changing optics of the telecom war

Unlike its mobile services, Reliance Jio's fibre-to-the-home business is going to be less disruptive for the industry

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

he next big battle between the country's two telecom giants, Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel, is set to be fought on the home broadband front, with both players preparing to grab customers with the triple-play of video, data and voice.

After over a year of testing the waters, Reliance Industries' Chairman Mukesh Ambani announced last week that the group's telecom arm, Reliance Jio, would commercially roll out fibreto-the-home services (FTTH) from September 5 across 1,600 towns. The proposal makes great sense. But Jio will

face a tough competitor in Bharti Airtel, which has been first off the block in this arena. Airtel is currentlv furiously switching its 2.36 million subscribers to home broadband in 100 cities from copper in the last mile to fibre at no extra cost to consumers, either for the Wi-Fi router or the higher speeds. Airtel's plan, according

to sources in the company,

is to connect over five million homes in the next three years. It currently has a fibre network capacity to connect around 10 million homes. According to telcos, on an average only 25 per cent of the homes through which the fibre passes actually take a connection. Airtel, though, is not looking at numbers alone. Its gameplan is to move from average revenue per user (ARPU) to increasing average revenue per

SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH & S ADIKESAVAN

n the midst of all the noise

regarding the current growth

slowdown, we have somehow for-

gotten some of the potentially trans-

formative announcements made in

the first Budget of Modi 2.0. One such

announcement was the offer of micro

loans at an effective rate of 4 per cent

per annum for women in self-help

groups (SHG) towards income-gener-

ating activities in all 727 districts of

the country. At present, under the

Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY)

scheme, these ultra-low interest loans

tical theme of antyodaya (resurgence

of the lowliest) articulated first by

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, an

original socio-economic thinker of

the last century, these bank loans for

amounts ranging from ₹10,000 to

₹50,000 have helped in demonstrably

altering the lives of lakhs of women

across the country. A large theoretical

and empirical literature in development microeconomics suggests that

when credit is routed through wom-

en, the household as a whole experi-

ences better outcomes in the form of

increased consumption or invest-

ment on goods.

Woven around the brilliantly prac-

are available only in 250 districts.

account, or the monthly bill of a household using Airtel services for mobile, DTH, broadband, landline and content.

Going beyond the hype of the Jio launch, this means that the two rivals could be neck-and-neck in terms of acquisition of FTTH subscribers if their plans fructify. This is also because Jio has gone in for a more realistic plan than what it had earlier envisaged to reach: 20 million homes, which translates into five million connections, instead of 50 million earlier.

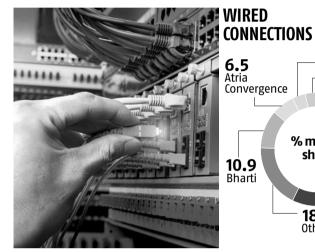
The change in plan, say analysts, could be because of the challenges involved in laying fibre underground, which is not only a slow process, but

also expensive because of the high cost to get right-ofway permissions, especially in large cities. Jio launched FTTH in select pockets at an upfront cost of ₹2,500 to ₹4.500 for the instrument and free broadband. But despite the free broadband offer it managed to connect only a modest 0.5 million homes. The freebies, however, will soon be over.

It is clear that this time around, unlike during the launch of mobile services, Jio is not looking at becoming a disruptor. Its 4G LTE services for mobiles came with zero tariffs followed by rock bottom prices. The broadband base price, though, has been set at ₹700 a month for 100 mbps speeds, only slightly lower than Airtel' minimum base price of ₹799

ANALYSIS BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Moreover, most telcos admit that



the size of the FTTH market at the prevailing price for triple play services is limited. The is so because only 30 million homes in the country currently have an annual salary of over ₹10 lakh, the household income level at which FTTH price tag becomes affordable. If rural area is taken away from this equation, then the number of homes that can afford the service falls to 20 million. Even fixed broadband is available only in 7 per cent of Indian homes and big cities like Mumbai fare no better with just 25 per cent homes connected to

So how does one woo more households to home broadband? Interestingly, the two players are pursuing different strategies. Airtel is wooing its 16 million DTH consumers (about 30 per cent live in cities) by offering them an integrated

fixed broadband.

INSIGHT

A bottoms-up approach to inclusive growth

set-top box that will, apart from broadcast channels (linear TV) through DTH, provide internet, landline telephone as well as OTT channels.

% market

18.2

-3.72 MTNL

3.48

Hathway &

57.2

"We think DTH is the most efficient way to deliver linear TV across the country as cable does not reach everywhere and laying it is expensive. For broadband, we have FTTH, through which we will power OTT channels, gaming, conference calls, smart homes, home surveillance and also voice calls," says a source in the company.

To begin with, Airtel has already piloted a triple-play integrated plan for ₹1,399 to ₹1,899 in three cities, which includes postpaid mobile connections, DTH, internet and OTT bundled together. channels Consumers have to pay only one bill broadband, OTT, landline amongst others, and will have a single customer care number. The company will soon launch an integrated set-top box that will power all these services with no requirement for separate ones.

Jio's strategy in comparison is more diverse, with FTTH being its centerpiece. Mathew Oommen, president of Jio, says "Fibre is full proof and with new technology delivery costs are coming down." Of course, it also offers the highest speeds. So the set-top box given to FTTH customers will offer broadcast TV and OTT channels, while an IP phone will offer voice calls.

But aware of the challenges in rolling out FTTH, Jio has also bought over cable distribution companies. Through the acquisition of Hathway, Den and GTPL they now have access to over 23 million homes, or 12 per cent of all TV households. But merely a little over 2 million of them have broadband, which has been possible through replacement of the cable backbone to fibre or improving the quality of the coaxial cable.

Jio plans to work with the 30,000 local cable operators (LCO) it acquired via the three companies to find new subscribers for its triple-play box for high-speed internet and OTT channels, while leaving the LCOs to offer TV channels as they did before. But that's not all. Jio is working on a new technology to use cable infrastructure to offer voice calls. It also has plans to replace coaxial cable with fibre, and upgrade some of the customers acquired from cable companies. Regardless of whether all this is going to be disruptive for telcos or not, one this is certain: New standards of broadband speeds are sure to be set in the industry.

for all services from mobile, DTH,

LETTERS

Significant proposals

As analysed in the editorial "In the right direction" (August 21), the proposals of the task force on the Direct Tax Code to resolve income tax disputes are significant. The idea of a negotiated settlement via mediation by collegiums of commissioners is a better alternative than litigation because there are pending court cases worth about Rs 6 trillion and the success rate of income tax department at courts is very poor. This, together with the suggested legal management unit that will deal with the tax litigation process under the new income tax law, should bring down the number of litigations. Besides, replacement of individual assessment officers by assessment units both for individual and corporate assesses is likely to mitigate their fear of harsh treatment and improve compliance.

Overall, the proposals as reported in the media are helpful. Their effectiveness together with recommended reduction in the tax burden will be proved by increased compliance by tax payers.

Y G Chouksey Pune Be flexible

This refers to "Prospects of floating lending rate, fixed deposits spook bankers' (August 21). All commercial financial institutions including banks are backed by five parameters, namely, capital adequacy, functional stability, market competition, costs and profits. Banks, in particular, have to function with adequate caution to prevent capital erosion, protect market image and retain customer confidence. In this

traditionally comprises retail depositors who invest for daily operational savings bank accounts or time deposits. Corporate deposits show only an artificial growth with higher cost of deposit. They have less time frame as they adopt a profit-oriented approach with temporary parking of idle funds for short-term returns. They are opened with special rates of interest governed by time and amount that determines the cost. However, interest rates in both the cases have to be linked to liquidity, the quantum of deposits, time span, costs and projected returns from such funds when lent in the market. Conversely, higher interest rates on advances will delay or lead to default in repayment by retail borrowers or stagnate corporate accounts where repayment of instalments is not forthcoming.

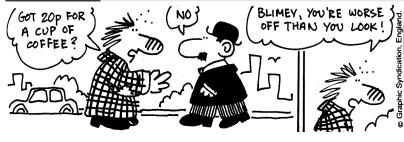
context, a large portion of bank custom

Unlike public sector banks, private banks adopt a less flexible approach for market survival, as there is no infusion of capital by the government. Banks have to link their deposit rates to the repo rate. It deters the customer who prefers fixed returns against uncertain floating rate returns. A banking scenario with erosion in deposits, non-recovery of advance instalments and restrictions on the imposition of service charges would lead to pressure on the capital base, impacting liquidity.

C Gopinath Nair Kochi

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HAMBONE



The SHGs are typically groups of 10 women in the same neighbourhood pursuing economic activities like food processing, catering, tailoring and tiny local trade like vegetable vending, dairy and backyard poultry. The SHGled approach differs from traditional micro-finance in several ways. First, it does not exclusively focus on credit or savings but also includes emphasis on social empowerment, outreach,

and capacity building. Second, the

goal is not to establish a separate

Counter the growth slowdown with a micro-loan revolution

in dealings with the formal sector and help households create a credit history that will eventually allow them to access regular sources of finance.

sums in doses under a

These loans have proved to be extremely popular among the marginalised and have put these women in meaningful economic pursuits resulting in positive changes in their own lives as well as in their neighbourhoods. Over the past 40 years, SHGs across South Asia and Southeast Asia have emerged as a social and financial force to reckon with. In South Asia, the spread of SHGs has been most notable in India. In 1992, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) piloted the concept with 500 groups. Since then, the SHG movement has witnessed tremendous growth that helped build one of the world's largest and fastest-growing

networks for micro-finance. India, the loans under DAY have grown from ₹23,319 crore to ₹84,790 crore in

SHGs that have received this credit support stood at 5.13 million as on March 31, 2019. As a result, the dependence on private money lenders has been reduced for groups that were earlier credit-excluded from the formal banking channels. That a few governments in states like Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha have latched on to this opportunity to nurture these women's SHGs is reflected in the higher disbursals under DAY in these states.

Kerala is a striking example of the power and potential of women's SHGs with the state government building up this network and using it to bring women to the forefront of other innovative socio-economic activities. For instance, the government there has recently pro-

moted and used women's SHGs for the construction of houses under the Rebuild Kerala programme, launched after last year's devastating floods.

The opportunity for state governments to tap into this fully Centrefunded low-interest credit-linkage programme is immense. Our experience as the largest lender in the country is that wherever the states have understood the opportunity that DAY affords and entrusted the leadership with efficient bureaucrats, the traction has been immense — with attendant benefits to the lending banks as well.

SHG loans is one segment where delinguencies are lower. Even where defaults are noticed, mostly it does not arise from wilful default — empirically, the credit morality and the "intent to repay" is the highest among women, especially those who borrow relatively smaller sums. It is a tribute to womenhood in general that What then is the potential we are

talking about based on the Budget announcement? Under the Jan Dhan Yojana, banks had at last count (as of August 7, 2019) opened 365.5 million accounts; of these the public-sector banks have opened 290.6 million accounts with the State Bank of India alone facilitating 110 million accounts. We believe that a bank account is the key to financial inclusion and opens the door to many economic possibilities including micro-credit support. It is estimated that nearly 60 per cent of these accounts are those of women, which works out to 180 million.

In a country that aspires to post real growth rates of 8 per cent and wants to become a \$5 trillion economy by FY2025, formal credit linkages to these previously excluded groups is imperative. We estimate the number of women already assisted is 60 million based on the number of SHGs financed. The gap that needs to be filled to ensure full credit inclusion comes to around 120 million. It is here that the Budget announcement on interest subvention under DAY offers great possibilities for income support to the marginalised.

Banks are waiting for a formal notification from the Reserve Bank of India on spreading the coverage to all districts. Once that happens and the enablers in terms of state government support for the formation and nurture of these SHGs is ensured, we believe the scheme will well and truly contribute to antyodaya as envisaged by its original proponent. This is what we call a bottoms-up approach to inclusive growth.

executive. Views are personal

micro-finance institution but to use the group to intermediate **Banks are waiting** for a formal notification from the Reserve Bank of India on spreading the DAY coverage to Banks lend them small all districts stepped-up credit-support structure.

In a form of silent revolution in the last five years and the number of bankers face less problems in the recovery of loans given to them.

Ghosh is group chief economic advisor, State Bank of India; Adikesavan is a senior bank

No sectoral relief

Tax cuts for specific industries must be avoided

ast month, India's automotive sector contracted by 19 per cent, the biggest fall since April 2001. Passenger vehicle sales have been dipping for some time, an indication of tepid overall consumer demand, but now commercial vehicles have also begun to suffer, indicating that economic activity is slowing. Passenger vehicle sales went down 31 per cent year-on-year in June; it was 26 per cent for commercial vehicles. Two- and three-wheelers also suffered, though less than four-wheelers. Naturally, company finances have also taken a hit, with profits falling 28 per cent in the June quarter for auto manufacturers and 21 per cent for the producers of auto ancillaries.

The problem, it is clear, is more from domestic sales, which are shrinking, than exports, which grew at a low but positive rate of 4 per cent in July 2019. The auto sector has been loudly calling for a sectoral stimulus package and, given that it accounts for a significant part of India's manufacturing output and employs about 35 million people, the government might be willing to oblige. In particular, the sector is hopeful of a cut in the goods and services tax (GST).

The government bears some responsibility for this slowdown in the auto sector. In particular, regulatory uncertainty has taken a toll on companies. There was confusion and rollbacks galore when it came to the implementation of new fuel standards, which rendered investment difficult and also buying decision. The government's recent stance about aggressive electrification of personal vehicles has also worried carmakers. A troubled financial sector added to the problem. Financing costs are high because the transmission of recent interest rate cuts by the central bank has been imperfect. And the crisis in non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) has played a part since those had become major sources of auto loans to consumers, funding a majority of commercial vehicles purchases, two-thirds of two-wheelers, and almost a third of passenger car purchases. Stressed NBFCs have rolled back this lending, and similarly burdened banks have cut down on exposure to companies and dealers.

Therefore, it is clear that the causes of this slowdown are not easily countered by something as simple as a tax cut. It reflects a deeper malaise: A regulatory mess, a slowdown in demand and a stressed financial sector. Thus, the government must be careful while considering the auto industry's demand for a relief package. India's history with sectoral packages rolled out as a consequence of lobbying has not been good. They tend to be withdrawn too late, and provide perverse incentives going forward. No sector should subsist on such policies. What is needed is something that addresses the overall situation. Here, perhaps, the government would like to consider following through on its corporate income tax cut for the largest companies. But any such overall stimulus, while tempting, should also take into account the fiscal situation. The market is already overloaded by government borrowing, which intensifies the investment crisis in the economy, thanks to crowding out. The slowdown in the economy will put further pressure on revenue and affect fiscal targets. Thus, a reform package that enables higher investment and demand without burdening the fiscal position is the only practical way out.

The plastic problem

States lack the will to impose restrictions

egal bar of some kind or the other on the use of disposable plastic shopping bags had already been in place in most states prior to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to make India free of single-use plastics. Some of the states have also extended this ban to other use-and-throw products made of plastic, specially multi-layered plastic, which cannot be recycled. However, these injunctions remain largely on paper for want of effective enforcement except in parts of some states such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim. If the initiative results in triggering a mass anti-plastic movement, it would be good for terrestrial and aquatic environment, marine biodiversity, and human and animal health.

Rough estimates suggest that about 26,000 tonnes of plastic waste is generated in India every day. About 90 per cent of it is neither recycled nor safely destroyed. The bulk of it ends up in landfills, where it lasts practically forever to pollute the environment and ground water through toxic gases and pernicious metals such as lead and cadmium. In cities, the discarded carry bags and wrappers clog the drains to cause flooding of roads. Plastic toxicity in food packed in recycled and inferior grade plastic poses a risk to human health.

Nearly 80 per cent of the plastic produced is used for packaging. Curbing this usage would affect several businesses, notably food processing, beverages, wholesale and retail trade and e-commerce. They would have to invest in finding suitable and ost-effective replacements and installation of new machinery. Disposable bags are relatively easy to shun because their alternatives are available in the form of bags made of cotton, jute or other non-plastic fibre. Such bags used to be a regular part of shopping in the past. Of late, some types of bio-derived and bio-degradable substitutes of plastics have also been developed. These might find gainful application

 $According to a \,United\,Nations\,Environment\,Programme\,(UNEP)\,report, 127\,of$ its 192 member countries have enacted legislations to regulate plastic bags. Over 25 of them have also imposed legal restrictions on other single-use plastic products such as water bottles, milk packets, ketchup and shampoo sachets, cups, glasses, cutlery, straws and take-out food containers. The stipulated deterrents include curbs on manufacture, distribution, use and trade; taxes and fines; and manufacturers' extended responsibility to retrieve used products for safe disposal. Though the success of these measures is quite patchy, these have freed nearly 25 per cent of the world of plastic waste menace.

India's poor record in this field is not due to a paucity of legal framework but the lack of will to impose the mandated restrictions. This is reflected in the pliability of plastic waste management policies of both the states and the Centre. Almost all state governments tend to succumb to the industry's pressure to grant wide-ranging exemptions from the plastic ban. The Centre, too, last year relaxed the plastic waste management rules of 2016 by dropping some stringent and result-oriented norms. This has defeated the very purpose of formulating these rules. Now that the Prime Minister himself has taken up the cudgels to eliminate plastic bags and single-use products, better results can be expected.

III IISTRATION: BINAY SINHA



The world has a Germany problem

PAUL KRUGMAN

The debt obsession that ate the economy

ou might think that recent events — market turmoil, weakening growth, declining manufacturing production — must be producing some soul-searching in the White House, particularly over Donald Trump's view that "trade wars are good, and easy to win." That is, you might think that if you haven't paid any attention to Trump's past behaviour.

What he's actually doing, of course, is attributing the economy's troubles to a vast conspiracy

of people out to get him. And his recent remarks suggest, if anything, that he's preparing to open a new front in the trade war, this time against the European Union, which he says "treats us horribly: barriers, tariffs, taxes."

The funny thing is that there are some aspects of European policy, especially German economic policy, that do hurt the world economy and deserve condemnation. But Trump is going after the wrong thing. Europe does not, in fact, treat us badly; its markets are about as open to US products as ours are to Europe's. (We export about three times as much to the EU as we do to China.)

The problem, instead, is that the Europeans, and the Germans in particular, treat themselves badly, with a ruinous obsession over public debt. And the costs of that obsession are spilling over to the world as a whole.

Some background: Around 2010, politicians and pundits on both sides of the Atlantic caught a bad case of austerity fever. Somehow they lost interest

in fighting unemployment, even though it remained catastrophically high, and demanded spending cuts instead. And these spending cuts, unprecedented in a weak economy, slowed the recovery and delayed the return to full employment.

While debt alarmism ruled both here and in Europe, however, it eventually became clear that there was a crucial difference in underlying motivation. Our deficit hawks were, in fact, hypocrites, who suddenly lost all interest in debt as soon as a

Republican was in the White House. The Germans, on the other hand, really meant it.

True, Germany forced debttroubled nations in southern Europe into punishing, societydestroying spending cuts; but it also imposed a lot of austerity on itself. Textbook economics says that governments should run deficits in times of high unemployment, but Germany basically eliminated its deficit in 2012, when euro area unemployment was more than 11 per cent, and then began to run ever-growing surpluses.

Why is this a problem? Europe suffers from a chronic shortfall in private demand: Consumers and corporations don't seem to want to spend enough to maintain full employment. The causes of this shortfall are the subject of a lot of debate, although the most likely culprit is demography: Low fertility has left Europe with a declining number of adults in their prime working years, which translates into low demand for new housing, office buildings, and so on.

The European Central Bank, Europe's counterpart to the Federal Reserve, has tried to fight this chronic weakness with extremely low interest rates - in fact, it has pushed rates below zero, which economists used to think was impossible. And bond investors clearly expect these extreme policies to last for a very long time. In Germany, even long-term bonds — all the way out to 30 years! — pay negative interest rates.

Some analysts think that these negative interest rates hurt the functioning of the financial sector. I'm agnostic on that point, but what's clear is that with monetary policy stretched to its limits, Europe has no way to respond when things go wrong. Indeed, much of Europe may well already be in recession, and there's little if anything the central bank can do.

There is, however, an obvious solution: European governments, and Germany in particular, should stimulate their economies by borrowing and increasing spending. The bond market is effectively begging them to do that; in fact, it's willing to pay Germany to borrow, by lending at negative interest. And there's no lack of things to spend on: Germany, like America, has crumbling infrastructure desperately in need of repair. But

Most of the costs of German fiscal obstinacy fall on Germany and its neighbours, but there are some spillovers to the rest of us. Europe's problems have contributed to a weak euro, which makes US products less competitive and is one reason American manufacturing is sliding. But characterising this as a situation in which Europe is taking advantage of America gets it all wrong, and is not helpful.

What would be helpful? Realistically, America has no ability to pressure Germany into changing its domestic policies. We might be able to provide a little moral suasion if our own leadership had any intellectual or policy credibility, but, of course, it doesn't. There's a sense in which the whole world has a Germany problem, but it's up to the Germans themselves to solve it.

One thing is for sure: Starting a trade war with Europe would truly be a lose-lose proposition, even more so than our trade war with China. It's the last thing either America or Europe needs. Which means that Trump is probably going to do it.

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India's wealth creators should not be eyed with suspicion, the prime minister stated from the ramparts of the Red Fort last week, because it is only when wealth is created that wealth will be distributed. In normal circumstances, this would have been an unexceptionable statement. In today's context, the timing is a little unpropitious.

By wealth creators we assume Narendra Modi was referring to Indian entrepreneurs — at any rate, this is how his finance minister defined the term five days later. Is it really possible *not* to view these 'wealth creators" with suspicion?

For one, corporate fraud and varia

- from Nirav Modi to IL&FS to the Avantha group — have dominated the headlines on an almost monthly basis these past two years, leaving the intelligentsia wondering what to expect next. If we take in the past 15 years, starting with Ramalinga Raju's confessions, the cause for suspicion is redoubled.

For another, if not the prime minister, his regime's enforcement agencies have become manifestly ubersuspicious of the wealth creation of the wealth creators. You know this has reached serious proportions when one of Mr Modi's staunchest

corporate cheerleader, Mohandas Pai, complains publicly of "tax terrorism". Mr Pai was speaking soon after Café Coffee Day's V G Siddhartha was found dead and a letter allegedly written by him complained of harassment by the tax authorities (which may or may not be true).

SWOT

KANIKA DATTA

The immediate context apart, the prime minister's statement reflected a remarkable point of departure. In the past, no prime minister would have dared fete the cause of the rich so openly. This discretion had historic roots. One was the very visible wealth creation by a slew of business groups — from the Walchands to the Tatas and Birlas — from the opportunities afforded by the two World Wars. Although it is true that these businesspeople mostly bankrolled the freedom struggle, too, it was clear that their wealth creation did not lead to meaningful wealth distribution in a dirt-poor country.

Like many leading intellectuals of his generation around the world, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was heavily influenced by the Soviet economic model (more so after he was given the standard curated tour of Stalin's "reforms"). Having experienced at first hand the abject poverty of United Provinces' neasantry he was con-

vinced of the need for a state-led

Thanks to P C Mahalanobis and the Planning Commission, the Indian economic template bore no resemblance to the statedriven capitalism of the Chinese model that emerged two decades later and helped China overtake India. The Mahalanobis model involved intricate levels of controls that kept businessmen tangled in red tape and, inevitably, had a limited impact on economic activity or wealth distribution. India's famous Hindu rate of

growth kept India poor. Indira Gandhi spotted the political opportunity in India's poverty, making a virtue out of protectionism, nationalism and the strengthening of the licence-permit raj. Garibi Hatao was a great electoral slogan that masked the fact that the principal wealth creation was taking place at the level of the corrupt politician and the bureaucrat. Rarely has poverty been more cynically exploited.

The suspicion against "wealth creators" has its genesis in this economic model. It encouraged some might say forced — business groups to deploy political relationships as a competitive advantage and block foreign and domestic competition (the automobile industry was particularly notorious for this). This business-politician complex created a vicious circle. With structural constraints causing business growth to crawl, taxing became an extractive enterprise. Inevitably, the higher the tax, the higher the evasion; those fortunate to have export licences could sequester large chunks of wealth created in foreign tax havens. No less inevitably, a politician emerged who viewed these wealth creators with suspicion: V P Singh as finance minister in Rajiv Gandhi's government, whose "blacklist" spooked the business community like never before.

True, economic reform forced India Inc to raise efficiency and productivity and enabled it to expand, creating some degree of redistribution. Lower tariff barriers and delicensing permitted some degree of economic expansion and people to become relatively more prosperous. For the first time, wealth creation was a legitimate, even laudable, ambition, but the political class still hesitated to own this message. Pro-poor remained the UPA's shtick, even as millions came out from under poverty.

Today, the problem is that the principal old economy wealth creators of India Inc still suffer from the licence raj hangover. Four decades of punitive taxation and limited competition worked themselves into the DNA of corporate India's governance standards. So much so that tax evasion, family-oriented corporate structures, a complete disregard of boards and an ability to suborn the state-owned banking system are as rife today as they were

The private sector is now the engine for economic growth. Mr Modi's statement on Independence Day reflects an understanding of that truth. The issue for him is to create a dynamic for the corporate sector to grow and compete legitimately and establish healthy governance standards. Right now, that doesn't seem to be in evidence.

The paradoxical politician



BOOK REVIEW

AJAY SINGH

¬rom a nondescript village called ☐ Ibrahimpatti in the Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh to the highest seat of power in Delhi. Chandra Shekhar's life was extraordinary by any standards. A legend in his lifetime, he embodied many contradictions: a loner who had many friends cutting across party and ideological lines and a socialist who had many capitalists as friends. It would not be wrong to describe him as the first rank outsider in Lutyens' power clique.

The rise of Chandra Shekhar (1927-2007)

was coterminous with the most turbulent phase of post-independent Indian politics. The biographical account of this unique leader penned by Harivansh, the deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha and one-time a colleague of Chandra Shekhar, and Ravi Dutt Bajpai, a scholar on India, offers a riveting, insider's view of that phase.

Mr Harivansh, who belongs to Sitabdiara village, close to Chandra Shekhar's Ibrahimpatti, is well qualified to write this biography for many reasons. The most important among them is his access, first as a journalist and later as a confidant, to the former prime minister. Given his socialist background and close association. he may not be as clinically critical of the politician's life as he is expected to be. But Mr Harivansh makes it clear at the start that the book aims to bring out the untouched and humane aspects of Chandra Shekhar's life.

The authors have succeeded in that effort. One anecdote — Chandra Shekhar's first conversation with Indira Gandhi,

daughter of prime minister Jawaharla Nehru — is instructive. When Indira Gandhi asked why he chose to join the Congress after working with the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), he said that as a committed socialist, he wanted to steer the Congress towards socialism. And if this objective was not achieved, he went on, "I will endeavour to break the party, for I believe that unless the Congress is fragmented, no new kind of politics can emerge in the country." Indira Gandhi looked at him in astonishment, but in today's context, those words were prophetic. But that encounter was vintage Chandra

Shekhar: he did not hesitate to speak his mind even in the most adverse circumstances. He ticked off his senior and most adored ideologue Ram Manohar Lohia when the latter came to Ballia to attend a political function. Whether Nehru, Lohia or Indira, Chandra Shekhar could not be cowed by the force of personality and circumstance. That is why former President Pranab Mukherjee in the first volume of his autobiography recalled Chandra Shekhar as one of the "most outstanding leaders" who did not get the appreciation he deserved.

Mr Harivansh has justifiably tried to correct this historical wrong. One of the many facets of Chandra Shekhar's personality includes contrarian views that went against the popular will. His stance on Indira Gandhi's decision to launch Operation Blue Star in the Golden Temple in 1984 was one such and it made him quite unpopular. He steadfastly opposed the army action, arguing that anyone conversant with the history of Sikhism would know that such an action would entail a heavy social cost. He was proved right when Indira Gandhi was assassinated a few months later by her own Sikh security guards.

Much before the Punjab problem reared its head. Chandra Shekhar did not hesitate to show his rebellious streak even against Indira Gandhi while he was in the Congress. He openly sided with redoubtable Jayaprakash Narayan and came out with the pearl of earthy wisdom —"Vinash kale vipareet buddhi (wisdom leaves you at the time of ruin)" — when she arrested JP. In turn, he, too, was arrested and jailed until the Emergency was lifted. Chandra Shekhar chose incarceration over compromise and suffered for it.

Chandra Shekhar's powerful personality exists now only in the margins of people's memory. In the late eighties, he was seen as a leader who was not inclined to cede ground to VPSingh who had emerged as the chief crusader against corruption. He felt cheated when he was upstaged by a conspiring Singh and Devi Lal in choosing the prime minister after the 1989 election that saw the Janata Dal emerge victorious. Singh, however, did not last long because the Bharatiya Janata Party withdrew support following the arrest of L K Advani in October 1990. So it was in turbulent circumstances that Chandra Shekhar took over as prime minister on November 10. 1990. At that point, the social fissures were wide open on account of the politics of Mandir (the Ram Janmabhoomi) and Mandal (the OBC reservation in education and jobs), and the new prime minister had no track record as an administrator either.

Despite the challenges, as the book explains, Chandra Shekhar made a good beginning that raised the hackles of the coterie around Rajiv Gandhi who soon

began breathing down his neck. Chandra Shekhar strove for the solution to the Ayodhya dispute and was close to resolving it, according to the book. Similarly, he was bequeathed with an economy tottering on the brink of bankruptcy. According to the book, even at the risk of unpopularity. Chandra Shekhar allowed the mortgaging of sovereign gold in order not to default on the country's international debt repayment obligations. When he signed the order, he knew his days in politics were numbered.

Messrs Harivansh and Baipai have uncovered many vignettes that throw light on the life of a man who earned immense respect among his peers though he was marginalised towards the end of his life. Paradoxes defined Chandra Shekhar. This book, an effort to unravel that political enigma of our time, is a laudable endeavour even if it borders on hagiography.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR: The Last Icon of Ideological Politics Harivansh & Ravi Dutt Bajpai Rupa Publications, 324 pages, ₹595 FINANCIAL EXPRESS WWW.FINANCIALEXPRESS.COM





ON INDIA'S DEMOCRACY Congress leader, Dr Manmohan Singh

Nothing is more important than the unity and integrity of our nation. India is indivisible. Secularism is the bedrock of our nationhood. It implies more than tolerance. It involves an active effort for harmony

Linking loan-rates to repolike rate simply won't work

Surely RBI Governor knows banks can't re-price loans at will; and banks will just raise spreads if RBI forces them

IVEN HOW SO many economists, along with those in the government, believe than an interest rate cut is the silver bullet the flagging economy needs, it is not surprising that, with RBI having cut reporates by 85 bps since February, Governor Shaktikanta Das is once again talking of the need to speed up transmission; banks have cut lending rates by around less than half this amount. At the Fibac conference on Monday, the Governor spoke of the possibility of speeding up transmission by formally linking lending rates with an external benchmark like the reporate. While the government will welcome such a move, it is a bad idea and simply won't work.

For banks to remain profitable while cutting lending rates, they need to be able to borrow at rates that fall in tandem with the reporate, or whichever external benchmark the RBI finally zeroes in on. A little over a third of bank funds are got from savings deposits, so it is vital these get re-priced immediately. Given how much pressure the political class put to get banks to raise savings deposit rates to where they are today, will the government allow banks to link savings deposit rates to the repo? Or will the government argue that small savers—and this includes millions of retired people—need to be protected from the vagaries of the market? Certainly, by not reducing interest rates on small savings, the latter would appear to be the government's view. In which case, it is unfair to ask banks to cut lending rates immediately while they continue to pay the same rate to their depositors.

Another 30-35% of bank funds come from bulk deposits, which are funds that large corporates, among others, deposit with banks or other bodies to earn interest on till they need them; since interest rates on these are unregulated and there is enough competition to get them, the rates on these bulk deposits are typically higher than even those on fixed deposits at most times. As for the reporates that RBI cuts, or raises, just 2-3% of bank borrowing—even less at most times—comes from the central bank; the repo applies to these loans. In other words, most of the money that banks have, and use to give loans, is borrowed at interest rates that are fixed. If banks are then forced to cut lending rates, their losses will soar.

Cutting into bank profits is a bad idea at most times, but it is least desirable at a time when, as now, banks are desperately trying to shore up their balance sheets; ironically, if PSU banks make losses by being forced to cut lending rates even as their borrowing rates remain broadly unchanged, the government will have to make good these losses. Banks can, of course, lower lending rates by reducing their spreads; but this is not easy since the spread is determined by, among other factors, the size of their work force, which cannot be reduced in even the medium-term for PSU banks, the costs of maintaining an expensive legacy branch network, etc. What is more likely, should the central bank force their hand by going ahead with the linking, is that banks will just increase the spread between the repo-linked MCLR rate and the one charged to lenders; once this is done, even if the MCLR falls, the lending rate will remain the same. A better course for RBI is to encourage banks to link some loan products—some banks have done this for home loans recently—to the repo, but not to insist on an across-the-board linkage.

Rural stint a must for doctors

Govt medical education hugely subsidised

HE SUPREME COURT, in an order upholding compulsory rural service bonds imposed by states for admission to PG and specialty medical courses, has stressed on the need for a uniform policy on this. The Centre and the successor regulatory system to the Medical Council of India should take heed. The apex court has fixed the compulsory rural service period upon passing the courses at government medical colleges at two years, and the bond-release amount at ₹20 lakh. Given how both compulsory service periods and bond amounts varied from state to state—from two to five years, and up to ₹50 lakh, respectively—a uniform service period and bond-release amount across the country is a good idea. Those challenging the compulsory service norm had contended that the condition is illegal and arbitrary. The SC pointed out that the government spends a large amount in training each medical graduate and post-graduate in government medical colleges—AIIMS calculates the cost of producing one MBBS at ₹1.7 crore—but just a fraction of this is paid for by students. Besides, the public-sector allopathic doctor-population ratio stands at 1:11,082 against the WHO recommended ratio of 1:1,000—this translates into a shortage of 600,000 doctors—and the brunt of this is borne by rural areas. Some of the country's least-developed states fare the worst; as per data from the directorates of state health services and the National Health Profile 2018, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh have worse government doctor penetration than the overall India figure. Primary health centres that serve the rural populace are short of at least 3,000 doctors, with 1,974 PHCs operating without a single doctor. The community health centres, the first port of call for the rural population for specialist care, are short of nearly 5,000 surgeons. So, a compulsory rural service clause that ensures specialist healthcare is extended to rural areas is welcome.

But, while compulsory rural service is a good idea, there are other potential solutions to the chronic doctor/specialist shortage that the government should consider. It could work on converting district hospitals into medical colleges. This can be a cure for the high costs of medical education—on land, equipment, utilities, teaching staff, etc—that force the government to significantly subsidise this, by supplying ready infrastructure. Indeed, the UPA-II government had proposed an undergraduate degree in Rural Medicine and Surgery, for which students were to be trained at district and sub-divisional hospitals, but this never really took off. Nations with much better doctor-population ratios have got there, in part, because they were not hindered by the cumbersome norms that medical education in India has. This is not to say that the norms are summarily undesirable, but there is space for reform. And, in case the government of a state is not able to spend the amount required to upgrade a district hospital into a medical college, there are around 330 private/trust-run hospitals with 300-800 beds already conducting postgraduate training that, as Dr Devi Shetty recommends, can be partnered for undergraduate training through problem-based learning, or learning through cases rather than lectures. It is also important that the government encourages enough quality private colleges to come up. The increased supply in trained doctors will cause some to shift to the rural market.

Whining DINING

Restaurants wanting to renegotiate terms with Zomato is ok, but surely they knew what they were signing on to?

ITH ANOTHER BODY of restaurants joining the fight with food aggregator Zomato, the battle is well and truly joined and, going by the tweets of the firm's founder, Deepinder Goyal, it would appear Zomato will renegotiate. The fight centres around Zomato Gold, a subscription service that offers massive discounts on dining; those signing up at a price of ₹1,199would get, for instance, either one-plus-one on food, or two-plus-two on drinks at partner restaurants. According to Zomato, in damage-control mode after 1,200 of its partner restaurants quit, the problem was caused by 'bargain hunters'; Goyal has assured action and has asked restaurants to stop the #logout movement.

The furore started after Zomato launched Infinity Dining—all-you-can-eat deals for ₹750 per person; it is still not clear what the restaurants were expecting. They signed up for services to increase footfall, so how didn't they anticipate the deep discounting? When the entire model of e-tail and food delivery is based on discounting—whether this is healthy or not is a different matter—how did they believe this wouldn't apply to them? Zomato can either reduce its discounts or put in a fair-usage policy, like mobile phone companies have, but this could also result in it losing customers. Both Zomato as well as the restaurants are learning their lesson the hard way. Zomato could afford the discounting because it had VC money; the restaurants, however, didn't have this luxury, so they couldn't sustain the discounting for too long. With no one refusing a free lunch, the problem is that someone has to pay for it. Eventually.

TAXING TIMES

INDIAN BUSINESSES STRUGGLE WITH MORE THAN 9,000 COMPLIANCES AND 600+ FILINGS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 600 UPDATES OVER THE PAST YEAR

Tax compliance complexity is the challenge

NDIA'S TAX CHALLENGE is not the rates per se, it lies in the complexity of compliance. This point appears to have been addressed by the Task Force report on revamping the Direct Tax Code. As reported in this newspaper on August 20, 2019, the recommendations are not yet public, but appear to be directed toward reducing tax rates, and changing the assessment and litigation management processes to simplify and share information among the various tax departments.

While details of the report and the government's responses are awaited, it is important to understand that the government is currently facing a constrained fiscal space and may not be eager to cut rates so easily. We have a tax conundrum on our hands. First, these are indeed tough times—our tax/GDP ratio has dropped and was 10.9% last year, according to the Economic Survey 2018-19; total expenditure/GDP stood at 12.2%. The last quarter of FY19 saw tax revenues grow at an abysmal 1.4% year-on-year, as per estimates from the Controller General of Accounts. In fact, tax collections were the lowest for the June quarter in ten years.

Second, India's effective corporate tax rates are quite high—with indicative estimates running between 26% and 30%. Hit by the slowdown, industry is pleading for relief and our finance minister has assured corporate leaders that the tax rates will come down, but only after revenues begin growing again.

Third, our tax base is narrow and quite skewed. Less than 10% of Indian adults file or pay income tax. The top 1% individual taxpayers contribute nearly one-third of India's income tax. There are just around 12 lakh GST reg-



istrants out of India's 6.3 crore enterprises. 373 companies with profits before taxes exceeding ₹500 crore contributed 52% of corporate tax last fiscal. Surcharges on this narrow top segment hurt more.

As a welfare state, the Indian government needs revenues for growth and development goals, but this calls for a prudent and judicious choice of tax rates and tax base. For India to become a \$5 trillion economy, investment has to rise significantly. Studies show that high tax rates impact investment and formalisation of the economy—a 10 percentage point increase in the effective corporate income tax rate has been shown to be associated with a reduction in investment/GDP ratio of up to 2 percentage points; a tax rise equal to 1% of GDP can reduce output over the next three years by nearly 3%. At the present juncture, the government may be reluctant to cut rates, but the current narrow, skewed tax base, with high effective tax rates, is definitely not the recipe for higher growth.

There is a way out of this conundrum—and the answer lies in easing compliance. There is considerable global evidence that shows that compliance costs can be large, particularly for small businesses. When it comes to finance and taxation, Indian businesses struggle with more than 9,000 compliances and 600+ filings; there have been more than 600 updates over the past year. For small businesses, managing this paperwork and keeping up with frequent changes can put a heavy strain on resources and lead to businesses staying under the radar—either not registering for relevant taxes or worse, reducing activities to a level at

In the present

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which tax is not payable. Either way, productivity and growth are hit.

India desperately needs a holistic review of the compliance burden on firms. We rank 121 out of 190 countries in the Paying Taxes category of the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, recording 275 hours per year in time paying taxes last year; China clocked

142 hours, and ranked 114. A simple exercise shows that, all else remaining constant, just by halving the number of hours firms spend in paying taxes, India's rank in this category jumps to 99 while the overall rank goes three places, up to 74.

In June, there were reports of a proposed National Ease of Doing Business Policy, where ministries and departments were to be made accountable for the paperwork they inflict on companies, and were to measure the time and

cost incurred by companies on compliance. The re-engineering of tax compliance should take place within the three-vector frame of "Rationalisation, Simplification, Digitisation". The finance ministry has been the leader in easing compliance so far, through this framework-digitisation of tax returns, straight-through-processing of GST filings, e-assessments, etc. If the finance ministry moves ahead immediately to measure the costs and time spent by firms, especially small ones, in paying taxes, it would make for a radical reform, with a significant impact on incentivising firms to emerge from under the radar and count themselves within the formal sector.

> The finance minister could also consider removing the mandate of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for this year Apart from raising compliance costs, at a time when India needs to raise investment and growth, businesses should focus their attention on what they know and do best. In the present atmosphere, making CSR voluntary would go a long way in

regaining the goodwill of industry. CSR rules can be reviewed in consultation with industry and implemented once the economy picks up steam.

These are difficult times indeed but we do not really need big-bang reforms. Easing compliance is the game-changing move India needs for the economy to grow to its \$5 trillion goal. The finance ministry can lead, as it has done before. It is hoped that the new Direct Tax Code will show the right way forward now.

Criminalisation of corporate India

The penal provisions, especially those involving imprisonment, in the Companies Act, 2013 are disproportionate retributive measures compared to the acts of omission by companies or their officers

SIDDARTH M PAI & SHANKAR JAGANATH Pai is Founding Partner, 3one4 Capital & Jaganath is

Founder, Cimplyfive . Views are personal

JOHN LOCKE, IN his seminal work *Two* Treatises on Government, highlighted that punishments should be governed by three legitimate motives: reparation, restraint and deterrence. The legitimacy of punishment is upheld when "laws of nature", the inveterate body of moral principles that forms the basis for all human conduct, is violated and not for the violation of an arbitrary rule. Of the motives stated above, reparation is the first preference since it is restorative, often taking the form of a pecuniary punishment or a restoration of property. Restraint is advocated only to secure mankind "from injury and violence, being slighted and broken by him". With this, Locke honours the liberal principle of honouring freedom as paramount necessitating its restriction only in cases most egregious.

Thus, incarceration and criminalisation, which strip the perpetrator of the bare basics of citizenship and freedom, is considered the "ultima ratio"—the last resort. However, in India, especially in our corporate laws, the last resort of imprisonment seems to be, in many cases, the first response.

The insertion of a three-year imprisonment term for violating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) norms in India is the latest in a litany of 50-odd criminal measures instituted against officers in default, which could include directors, in the Company's Act 2013 the primary statute governing corporate law in India. This Act, instituted by the previous UPA government, arbitrarily mandates, for seemingly civil offences, imprisonment sentences that are harsher than those in the Indian Penal Code. For instance, the sentence for violating CSR is longer than the sentence for causing death by negligence (Section 304A, IPC—2 years).

This criminalisation of civil offences that has seeped into corporate statutes belies a virulent distrust of businesses and businessmen. Criminal law deals with offences against the public, society, or the state, and acts of moral opprobrium or acts of violence against individuals; civil offences in

contrast, involve damage to property of an individual or group of individuals and each should follow the legitimate purposes of punishment that is restorative and act as a deterrent. Yet, the Companies Act disregards this and affords criminal sentences to civil offences by companies, some examples of which are listed below:

■Violation of share buyback norms (Sec 68)—up to 3 years ■Failure to repay deposits or inter-

ests (Sec 74)—up to 7 years ■Declaration of dividend without paying it (Sec 127)—up to 2 years

■Violating CSR norms (Sec 135) up to 3 years ■Default in constituting commit-

tees (Sec 178)—up to 1 year ■Contravention of inter-corporate loans and investments (Sec 186)—up

to 2 years ■ Failure to provide the government statistical infor-

A key question to ask here is *Cui Plagalis*—who loses, and is this loss permanent? For default in constituting committees of the board or failure to provide statistical information to the government, a criminal sen-

mation (Sec 405)—up to

6 months

disproportionate measure of retribution, compared to the act of omission by the company or its officers. In such matters, what is the purpose of imprisonment? Reparation?—it doesn't resituate any property to the shareholders or government; restraint?—these acts don't pose the threat of violence to anyone; deterrence?—unless these are wilful acts of fraud, these penal clauses demonise rather than deter directors.

A law is only as effective as its enforcement. Enforcement of penal provisions in corporate India is not only erratic but also cyclic and comes into focus only in the aftermath of prominent scandals. In other periods, noncompliance is either not systematically

pursued and punished, or consciously ignored for reasons of being impractical, like what is being advocated in the case of imprisonment for CSR lapses, without amending the law by revoking the impractical provision. Further, lenient treatment accorded to non-compliances by public sector companies, by not enforcing penalties, puts to question the deterrence value of the example being set for Indian corporates.

In UK, from where we can trace Indian corporate law, penal provisions with imprisonment as punishment are preceded by the words like "knowingly", "recklessly", "misleading", "false or deceptive". Further, they provide an exit clause where the officer in default is exempt from this harsh punishment if he/she can show that they acted honestly. In a civil society, acts that deprive a

person of their freedom should be

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reserved for the most egregious of crimes. Instead, in India it looks like criminal sentences are a signal to show how seriously lawmakers take an issue. Further, this renders these punitive measures prone to misuse. The Shri Injeti Srinivas committee to review offences under the Com-

pany's Act also echoed the same in its report submitted on August 14th, 2018, and made numerous suggestions to decriminalise our corporate laws. Full translation of their recommendation to law is still awaited.

In a July 2018 speech, the honourable Prime Minister said, "...the efforts of industrialists too have a role in nation building. Should we insult them, call them thieves and robbers? Is this the way?" If this thought is to be translated into action, it is time that India reviews the penal provisions, especially the one related to imprisonments, in the Companies Act, 2013, and make laws that honour the efforts of industrialists and entrepreneurs in nation-building.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Benchmarking banks' bulk deposit rates

Apropos of "Time for bench-marking bulk deposits rates of banks?", in 2008-2009, few banks had introduced floating interest rates on deposit. It may be noted that, in India, interest rates on fixed deposits are much sought-after and a deciding factor in choosing a bank to park deposits. Not in savings bank accounts, which are daily-need based. It is about time savings bank deposits rates call for embracing floating interest rates. It is imperative to note savings deposits serve our routine needs. A large chunk of salary credit, bulk of PF contribution on salary disbursal day, government subsidies and CSR funds also find way giving spikes to savings deposit balances. Linking savings bank accounts with floating rate of interest would further give boost to sluggish savings bank deposits growth. Majorly, customers use savings bank accounts for taking care of day to day transactions. It is a shield against interest rate flections. We need to educate customers about the floating rate savings bank accounts. It would be interesting to update them about the importance of how spikes, at times, will help good interest in their savings account balances. Customers can hold their savings to reap the benefits of high floating interest rates and put on hold heavy withdrawal for some time, if any. — NK Bakshi, Vadodara

For a fiscal overreach Apropos of "Raising deficit by cutting

tax rates...", consumption is no longer fuelled by the lower income sector that lacks purchase power, even as the middle one keeps away from white goods on uncertainties of the future. Spending does not create wealth, production does, and that needs a healthy pool of savings. The burden of investment for growth should revert to the government. A mix of policies that channel funds to lower strata for consumption, enable savings to the next and calibrated tax incentives for the job-creating capital should help revive the economy. — R Narayanan, Mumbai

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS



JAPAN-KOREA TRADE WAR

History comes back to haunt trade ties

Trade wars appear to be becoming the norm rather than exceptions, and the new conflict between Japan and South Korea is set to worsen the effects of the US-China trade war

> tury, leading up to the Second World War. The Japanese control of the Korean peninsula, the subsequent 'forced' Korean contribution to the Japanese Imperial Army and its pursuits during the Second World War have left indelible

> tion of the Korean peninsula into North

(the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and South (Republic of Korea), that Japan and South Korea connected diplomatically in 1965. Sour ties with the Soviet Union-controlled North Korea, and military alliance with the US, were political glues binding the countries. A more powerful bonding force was robust economic exchanges. Both Japan and South Korea, along with Taiwan and Hong Kong, were shining examples of the 'Flying Geese' economic paradigm of labour-intensive, export-oriented industrialisation. As Asian entrants into the elite group of advanced first-world economies, both have achieved high industrial sophistication and remarkable development of economic, financial and regulatory institutions, while having a large presence in the global lists of top business corporations.

Trade has intricately bound Japanese and South Korean economies. South Korea is one of Japan's main export destination for goods as well as commercial services. The goods trade relationship is largely inclined towards South Korea being a major importer of Japanese products, while on commercial services the relation is more balanced, with both serving as major sources of export and import for each other. It's on goods trade, though,

that both the countries have got into a spat, and that is now assuming alarming proportions.

Following the South Korean Supreme Court's ruling last year directing Japanese companies to pay compensation for forced Korean labour during the Second World War, Japan has begun taking trade actions against the country. The first of these comprised imposition of stricter screening for Japanese export of some chemicals—essential in the production of smartphones and semiconductors—to South Korea. Following these controls, announced on July 4, 2019, earlier this month, the Japanese cabinet approved removal of South Korea from the 'White List' of countries maintained by Japan. The White List includes countries to which Japanese exporters can export items that can also be used in the manufacture of weapons, without rigorous scrutiny. Removing South Korea from the White List implies that Japanese exports of such items to the country will henceforth be subject to case-by-case detailed screening for eliminating possibilities of potential military end-use. Japan has justified the tighter export controls on national security grounds. By doing so, it joins the US and Russia, who, in recent years, have similarly justified unilateral trade actions.

The ruling by the World Trade Organ-

isation (WTO), earlier this year, on the use of national security for trade actions—in the context of the Russia-Ukraine dispute—was somewhat ambiguous. While clarifying that it is empowered to review such actions, it also specified that countries are best judges of circumstances pertaining to national security. Thus, while South Korea may complain against Japan at the WTO, the possibility of obtaining an effective response is limited.

ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

There are further reports of South Korea looking to retaliate by removing Japan from its own 'White List' of trusted trade partners. It might also withdraw from a military intelligence sharing arrangement it has with Japan, in connection with both the countries' maintenance of American military bases.

The Japan-South Korea trade conflict

For both Japan and

South Korea, trade

was a way of

overcoming the

misgivings and lack

of trust produced

by history. But the

same history is now

leading to an

irreparable damage

demonstrates the increasing lack of 'trust' amongst countries in world trade. The White Lists maintained by both the countries enable extension of preferences to others primarily on the basis of 'trust' that sensitive exports won't be diverted to unsanctioned uses. Once trust dissolves, and is replaced by cynical scrutiny, trade relations no longer remain the same. For Japan and Korea, trade was a way of overcoming the misgivings and lack of trust

produced by history. Unfortunately, the same history has come back to haunt trade relations, and is looking set to create irreparable damage.

There are multiple implications of the Japan-South Korea trade war. The first of these is the inevitable adverse impact on the functioning of global supply chains embedded out of Japan and South Korea. Functioning of several of these would be adversely affected by export controls and tighter retaliation. The second impact is on regional and global trade prospects, which would have to brace for further contraction and slowdown. The third, and probably much less noticed impact, is on the prospects of the ongoing trade negotiations, most notably the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The RCEP is at a greatly advanced stage, and the Japan-South Korea trade spat at this juncture is particularly bad news. Both the countries are important actors in the RCEP process. A trust deficit between the two might have the 'herd' effect of spilling on to the rest of the group. In one respect, though, India should be enjoying a quiet laugh at the development: for once, at least, the region would find it difficult to label it the 'spoiler' at the RCEP. Having said that, it is a clear that trade wars are here to stay, and more such skirmishes might be in the offing. Future trade negotiations

need to prepare for such wars.

DATA CAFE

Investing in a greener future

Investments in coal-fired projects declined by 90% in 2018, and in renewable energy projects rose 10%

NDIA IS TAKING strong steps towards realising its commitments made at the Paris climate summit. A recent report from the Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA), Coal vs Renewables Finance Analysis, shows coal-fired projects have seen a decline of 90% in investments from 2017 to 2018. The report highlights the incredible transition of energy investment in India, towards renewable projects from coal projects, by analysing 54 energy projects—comprising both renewable and coalfired projects—that reached their financial closure in 2018. The report finds that the projects attracted a total funding of ₹30,524 crore, 80% of which went to renewable energy projects and 20% to coal power projects. The high-scale investment in renewable energy in India has been noted by the International Energy Agency

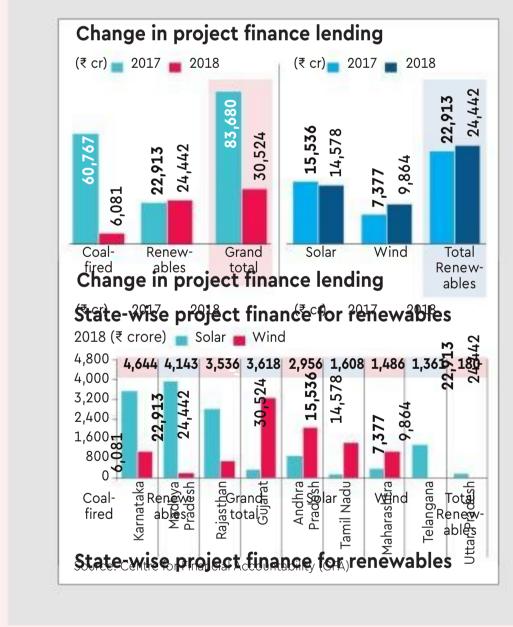
(IEA), according to which India is the largest growing market for renewables in the world and the country's investment in the renewable energy sector grew at a rate of 12% in 2018.

The report shows that, in 2018, five coal-fired projects having a combined capacity of 3.8GW had received investments worth ₹6,081 crore, as opposed to 12 such projects with a combined capacity of 17GW—getting a financing of ₹60,767 crore in 2017. As far as the renewable energy sector is concerned, it saw an increase in

In 2018, five coal projects having a combined capacity of 3.8GW received investments worth ₹6,081 crore. While renewables saw a rise in investments of ₹1,529 crore in 2018 over 2017

investments of ₹1,529 crore in 2018 over 2017. Of the 54 projects assessed, 49 were renewable energy projects, having a combined capacity of 4.7GW, and received loans of ₹24,442 crore in 2018—60% were for solar PVs and 40% for wind projects. The CFA also noted that primary financing for coal-fired power projects shrank by 93%, whereas for renewable projects it increased by 10% in 2018.

In coal projects, investment amounting to ₹3,938 crore came from majority government and majority governmentowned financial institutions in 2018, while for renewable energy projects majority investments came from privatelyowned commercial banks, who contributed three-quarters of the funding, i.e. ₹18,263 crore. However, there is a disparity when it comes to region-wise investments. States such as Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat attracted around half of the entire country's renewable projects—23 such projects, both for solar PVs and wind energy—and others like West Bengal and Chhattisgarh didn't get any (the CFA report only studies solar PV and wind energy projects, and not the entire renewable energy ecosystem). The trend reflects India's ongoing efforts towards enhancing green energy, and reducing pollution caused by fossil fuels. Even as some developed countries such as the US have backed out from the Paris agreement, India is setting the tone for a development model that is needed to tackle climate change.



impressions on both the countries.

It was several years after the Korean independence in 1945, and the separa-

Charging up for electric mobility

For EVs, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' charging solution, and different options must be weighed carefully

ARUNESH KARKUN & MRIDULA DIXIT BHARADWAJ

Authors are with the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP)

Energy Efficiency Services Ltd has led the way by commissioning 300 AC and 170 DC chargers across India. The government has installed 51 public charging points that are operational in Delhi NCR. While a promising start has been made, a few key factors must be considered to develop a large-scale EV charging network.

Currently, multiple charging standards are being adopted. The Department of Heavy Industries has introduced the Bharat AC-001 and DC-001 standards for EV chargers. The DC-001 standard relies on Chinese GB/T connector standards.

There are two other major standards—CCS and CHAdeMO. Guidelines from the ministry of power indicate that a public charging station must be able to cater to EVs that adhere to any of the above standards. However, the development of a national standard for chargers and connectors will be more beneficial; it will also provide more clarity to the manufacturers, buyers and service providers. As the current Bharat standards are limited by a maximum power rating of 15kW, EVs with larger batteries that need to be charged at higher power levels, such as electric buses, will require different standards. The Bureau of Indian Standards is currently developing comprehensive standards for EV charging. The choice of charging method and

technology is another key consideration. Different categories of EVs have different operational constraints. Generally, commercial vehicles cover longer distances than personal vehicles in a day. They also require frequent and fast recharging, for which low-powered AC- and DC-based charging systems are not suitable. While larger on-board batteries may reduce the need for frequent recharge, they will add

significantly to the upfront costs of EVs, and additional weight. Given this, the role of alternate charging solutions must be explored. These can be grouped into three categories—opportunity charging, battery swapping, and hybrid trolleybus systems.

In 'opportunity charging', EVs top-up their batteries during very short stops, through high power DC-based charging.A high amount of energy can be transferred to the battery in a very short span of time. This can be beneficial for electric buses with smaller battery packs. However, frequent fast charging can degrade batteries faster than usual.

'Battery swapping' involves the removal and replacement of the on-board battery. This allows the EV to replace a discharged battery in a few minutes, by visiting a swapping station, where batteries are charged and stored. While this has been demonstrated to work across different vehicle categories, issues pertaining to the interoperability of batteries and related connectors need to be addressed.

'Hybrid trolleybus systems' are buses that draw power from overhead lines during operations. They have small on-board batteries that enable operation even when disconnected from overhead power lines.

Each of these solutions have unique advantages, making them better suited to certain categories of EVs more than others. For instance, battery swapping-based electric two-wheelers have been successful in Taiwan, whereas a large number of electric bus projects in Europe utilise opportunity charging and hybrid trolleybus systems. It is also important to note that these solutions need significant capital investment to build the required infrastructure. However, once built, the return on investment will increase with usage. Thus, for EVs, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' charging solution, and different options must be weighed carefully.

That said, the future of EVs looks bright in India. As the technology matures, India must prepare itself to make the most of this opportunity to move towards a cleaner and greener future.

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ESPITE BEING NEIGH-

BOURS and military allies

of the US, Japan and South

Korea—Asia's economic

powerhouses with strong

LOBALLY, ELECTRIC VEHI-

CLES (EVs) continue to gain

in popularity. As of 2018,

according to the Interna-

tional Energy Agency (IEA),

export-oriented and globally-integrated economies—have had rocky bilateral ties.

The strains are inherited from the

uncomfortable history of the region dur-

ing the early decades of the previous cen-

over 50 lakh electric passenger cars were

in operation, with approximately 52 lakh

sle-free charging experience is crucial.

With EVs suffering from high upfront

costs and an inability to travel over a long

distance on a single charge, buying them

remains an unattractive proposition at

present. In India, since 2015, the Faster

Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid

and) Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme has

introduced subsidisation of EVs. However,

four years hence, only 2.8 lakh EVs have

been supported under FAME. In comparison, automobile sales in India crossed 2.67

crore in 2018. It is clear that the subsidies

on EV sales alone will not be sufficient to

meet the ambitious target set by the gov-

ernment. This is essentially so because of

the inconvenience caused to EV adopters

due to a shortage of charging stations, hin-

dering EV deployment. The installation of

a reliable, grid-friendly, and accessible net-

work of public chargers is, therefore, a nec-

essary prerequisite for the success of EVs.

ernment in both the Union Budget and the

Economic Survey. The Phase 2 of the FAME

scheme has laid emphasis on the installa-

tion of a robust public charging infra-

structure. In terms of deployment, the

This has been highlighted by the gov-

For large-scale adoption of EVs, a has-

charging points worldwide.



WORDLY WISE

THERE ARE NO PRIVATE LIVES. THIS A MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF MODERN LIFE.

— PHILIP K DICK

The Indian EXPRESS

S FOUNDED BY S RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

ONLY DUE PROCESS

Case against P Chidambaram must proceed strictly according to the law, and must be seen to do so too

EFORE THE SUPREME Court could rule on the plea of former Union minister and Congress leader P Chidambaram against Delhi High Court's denial of anticipatory bail in the INX Media case on Friday, he was arrested by the CBI. The prosecution has argued that it is a money-laundering case of "monumental magnitude". And yet, the scenes that led up to the arrest, late Wednesday evening, were unseemly and unprecedented. Multiple CBI teams converged, some personnel even scaled the walls of the Rajya Sabha MP's Delhi residence, after he addressed the media at the Congress headquarters where he claimed that there was no case against him. The spectacle, captured live on TV, raises serious questions about the CBI's conduct: Was the high drama necessary, given that the agency was not dealing with a declared absconder or a heinous crime? The Congress has termed it a show of political vendetta. Indeed, while the allegations against Chidambaram will stand, or fall, in a court of law, the sequence of events so far has raised disquieting concerns. No person, howsoever high the office he or she may hold, or may have held in the past, is above the law. Yet, due process needs to be followed, and it must be seen to be followed too, especially in a case as politically sensitive as this one.

The allegations against Chidambaram have to do with his tenure as Union finance minister in the Manmohan Singh government. The CBI registered an FIR in May 2017, alleging irregularities in the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) clearance given to the INX group for receiving overseas funds of Rs 305 crore in 2007. In 2018, the ED registered a case of money laundering, and the CBI called Chidambaram for questioning. The former minister's lawyers have pointed out that he has cooperated with the investigating agencies. On Tuesday, Justice Sunil Gaur of Delhi High Court, however, while vacating the anticipatory bail order issued in July last year, observed that "custodial interrogation" of Chidambaram "is required for an effective investigation". In a sweeping order, he wrote that "grant of bail in cases like the instant one will send a wrong message to the society" and recommended to Parliament "to suitably amend the law to restrict the provisions of pre-arrest bail and make it inapplicable to economic offenders of high-profile cases like the instant one". In its zeal, the court seemed to have forgotten that bail is a fundamental right of every citizen, and that it can be denied only in exceptional circumstances. There are other questions, too — for instance, the person who has turned approver in the case against Chidambaram is herself an accused in a murder case.

It is important that the justice process proceeds lawfully and with utmost transparency, so that this case does not invite allegations of vendetta in a polarised political moment.

PRIVACY RIGHTS, WRONGS

In hearing clutch of petitions concerning Aadhaar and social media, Supreme Court must be guided by its own ruling

HE SUPREME COURT has rightly agreed to hear together multiple public interest litigations pending in the Madras, Bombay and Madhya Pradesh high courts, calling for the linking of Aadhaar with social media accounts. There can be no room for conflicting rulings in a matter with international implications, which could inspire litigation or influence attitudes in other nations. Privacy is at stake here, and the Supreme Court is its most appropriate guardian, having clarified it and defined it as a "guaranteed fundamental right" in 2017. In its deliberations, the Court will no doubt be guided by that landmark judgement, which was celebrated, among others, by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the pioneering digital civil liberties group.

As it stands now, the court is expected to strike a balance between the imperatives of privacy and security. Obviously, this is an impossible choice, since the right to privacy is fundamental and cannot be reduced under normal circumstances. By way of a parallel, the right to life is absolute until a death sentence is pronounced, and the right to liberty can be conditional only in a state of unrest or emergency. Logically, therefore, the question of striking a balance with an absolute right cannot arise under normal circumstances. It also involves a question of scale. Why is Aadhaar indispensable? Wouldn't the phone numbers associated with social media accounts suffice? They identify owners with complete accuracy, since sim cards are issued against identity documents. While the data security of Aadhaar remains so contested that it is not mandatory even for banking purposes, insistence on Aadhaar would simply invite more lawsuits.

Death threats, criminal intimidation, smearing and stalking are commonplace in social media, and the dark satanic mills of rumour and fake news have the capacity to spark violence and conflict. But a technical solution would be as effective as legal remedy, without trespassing upon privacy. For instance, artificial intelligence can identify dubious content by textual analysis and flag it like spam or malware. And this week, Twitter proactively swept away Chinese accounts spreading disinformation about the Hong Kong protests. The Supreme Court has been admired for standing up for privacy. Now, it should mandate a technical solution, because it cannot possibly consider encroaching upon the very value that it upheld and protected.

MAN VS TIME

Jagannath Mishra was the last stalwart from a time when Bihar could conceive of an upper-caste Congressman as CM

"N 1990, WHEN Jagannath Mishra's final stint as chief minister of Bihar concluded after just 95 days in office to make way for Lalu Prasad, it was seen as the end of a political era. Mishra, who died at 82 on Monday after a long ailment, was the last . Congress chief minister of Bihar as well as the last Brahmin leader to have claimed the office. Bihar, along with Uttar Pradesh, had been, at least since the Sixties, the epicentre of the social and political churn in north India that resulted in the gradual decline of the "Congress system" and waning of upper-caste dominance. With the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations in 1990 and the rise of subaltern leaders, it was thought that the era of upper caste dominance of politics in the Hindi belt was dead and buried.

Mishra was the last stalwart of the old order. "Dr Sahib" was a leader from the time when the Congress was to its supporters an "umbrella party" and to its opponents a dominant feudal force. In Bihar, the party was seen by many as a regressive force, particularly in terms of its treatment of OBCs and Dalits. The assertion of the OBCs, led by the likes of Lalu and Nitish Kumar, was about stitching a social coalition that was both ideologically coherent and numerically powerful. Muslims, Yadavs, OBCs as a whole and Dalits, became a politically dominant force that saw the rise to power of a discourse of dignity and social justice.

While Mishra, who was charged in the fodder scam, and the Congress, have been unable to resurrect their fortunes in Bihar, and the backward caste coalition has splintered, the BJP has emerged as a force in the state. Though the junior partner in the Nitish Kumar government, its influence has steadily grown. While the BJP has sought to expand its social base by offering posts to members from a cross-section of communities, many party and RSS leaders have questioned caste-based reservations. Thirty years after Jagannath Mishra was CM, the prospect of an upper-caste CM no longer seems as faraway.

BJP's caste play

Caste politics is being reinvigorated by actors who traditionally opposed it

CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND HAIDER ABBAS RIZVI

THE RESERVATION QUESTION is back in the Sangh Parivar. A few days ago, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat called for a "conversation in a harmonious atmosphere between those in favour of quota and those against it": "Those who favour reservation should speak keeping in mind the interests of those who were against it, and similarly those who opposed it should do vice versa," he said. It seems that the conversation should take place first within the Sangh Parivar, where everybody does not seem to be on the same page on caste-based reservation.

Traditionally, the Sangh Parivar has opposed caste-based politics and criticised the use of *jativad* as an electoral tool in its two incarnations, reservation and vote banks. Hindu nationalists denounced the Mandal report and VP Singh's decision to implement it. In August 1990, Organiser protested: "The havoc politics of reservation is playing with the social fabric is unimaginable. It provides a premium for mediocrity, encourages brain-drain and sharpens caste-divide". Two decades later, the situation has changed on both fronts, not only reservation, but also elections.

In the last Lok Sabha elections, the BJP factored in caste as a major variable in its candidate-selection. Its standard strategy consisted in federating smaller castes against the larger ones, which were often more affluent. This was in tune with the party's policy regarding chief ministers' selection: The BJP appointed a non-Maratha CM in Maharashtra, a non-Patel CM in Gujarat, a non-Jat CM in Haryana. In the last general election, this strategy was applied to candidate selection in the OBCs and SCs. In UP, the BJP targeted the non-Yadav OBCs, who often belong to the poorer strata of society and usually resent Yadav domination, particularly the way they corner most of

While the Yadavs are traditionally associated with the SP, the BJP successfully wooed the non-Yadavs. Whereas 27 per cent of SP candidates were Yadavs in 2019, Yadavs represented only 1.3 per cent of the candidates of the BJP which gave tickets to 7.7 per cent Kurmis and 16.7 per cent "other OBCs", who often came from small caste groups (data drawn from the Social Profile of the Indian National and Provincial Elected Representatives, created by Ashoka University and Sciences Po). This strategy translated into votes if one goes by the National Election

In the last Lok Sabha elections, the BJP factored in caste as a major variable in its candidate-selection. Its standard strategy consisted in federating smaller castes against the larger ones, which were often more affluent. This was in tune with the party's policy regarding chief ministers' selection: The BJP appointed a non-Maratha CM in Maharashtra, a non-Patel CM in Gujarat, a non-Jat CM in Haryana. In the last general election, this strategy was applied to candidate selection in the OBCs and SCs. In UP, the BJP targeted the non-Yadav OBCs, who often belong to the poorer strata of society and usually resent Yadav domination, particularly the way they

corner most of the quotas.

Survey of CSDS-Lokniti: While 60 per cent of Yadavs voted for the SP-BSP alliance, 72 per cent of "other OBCs" supported the BJP, showing that the OBCs were polarised along jati lines. In the same way, the BJP has become the rallying point of non-Jatav voters against the BSP. Once again, the BJP cashed in on the resentment of smaller Dalit groups, accusing the Jatavs of monopolising reservation. In UP, the BSP gave more than 20 per cent of its tickets to Jatavs, whereas the BJP nominated 5 per cent of Jatavs only, 7.7 per cent of Pasis and 9 per cent of "other SCs". Certainly, the BSP-SP got 75 per cent of the Jatav vote, but it received only 42 per cent of the "other SCs" vote, against 48 per cent which went to the BJP the winner of 15 of 17 "SC seats". After the election, the BJP has continued

with the same strategy in UP by appointing a Kurmi as party chief and promoting small OBC groups at the expense of the Jatavs. The Yogi Adityanath government has included 17 small OBC castes (Kahar, Kashyap, Kewat, Nishad, Gond, Bhar, Prajapati, Rajbhar, Batham, Bind, Turha, Manjhi, Mallah, Kumhar, Dheevar, Dheemar and Machua) in the list of SCs. These castes, which represent about 15 per cent of the state's population, have been asking for this change. Now, they will have more opportunities as they will not have to compete any more with Yadavs and Kurmis. The Dalits, on the contrary, resent this move which is bound to intensify competition for quotas within the SC category. Not only did Mayawati object that only Parliament and the president had the power to do so, but the BJP minister for social justice and empowerment, Thawarchand Gehlot, said the same thing before the Rajya Sabha. Even if this decision is eventually declared unconstitutional, these jatis may be grateful to the BJP during the coming by-elec-

tions in UP. The same reasoning applies to the policy of the BJP Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis, regarding the Marathas. In 2014, during the last Maharashtra election campaign, the BJP slammed the Congress government's decision to reserve 16 per cent of government jobs and seats in educational institutions for Marathas. After forming government, the party changed its mind. In November 2014 the Bombay High Court stayed the ordinance regarding reservations for the Marathas because, according to the court, they were not backward. Immediately, Fadnavis declared: "We will appeal in SC on the HC ruling. We will take measures to ensure that the quota remains". Fadnavis first appointed a new "Backward Classes Commission", the Gaikwad Commission, which declared that "The Maratha class of citizens having been declared socially and educationally backward class of citizens are entitled to reservation benefits and advantages enshrined in Article

15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution of India" Following the Commission's recommendation, the Fadnavis government decided to grant a 16 per cent quota to Marathas in government jobs and educational institutions run by the state. This decision was approved unanimously by the legislature. The BJP innovated only on one ground: It had a law passed to create a new group called "Socially and Educationally Backward Class", made only of the Marathas, which was granted a 16 per cent quota outside existing reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs in order not to alienate the BJP voters from the non-dominant Dalits and OBCs that the party was wooing in Maharashtra like elsewhere.

This time, the Bombay HC upheld the decision of the Maharashtra government in spite of the fact that Marathas had not suddenly become more backward and the additional quota took reservation up to 68 per cent (well beyond the 50 per cent threshold the SC laid down decades ago). The judges — who simply reduced the 16 per cent quota to 12-13 per cent — had to consider "exceptional circumstances and an extraordinary situation". On July 12, the Supreme Court did not stay the HC order, simply sought the Maharashtra government's response on pleas challenging the quota. This move may help the Fadnavis government to show its goodwill to the Marathas till the state elections.

Thus, caste politics has been reinvigorated by two kinds of actors who, traditionally, opposed it. One, the BJP is implementing it at the time of candidate selection and in expanding caste-based reservations. Two, the judiciary is making it easier by relaxing aspects of past jurisprudence.

Jaffrelot is senior research fellow at CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, professor of Indian Politics and Sociology at King's India Institute, London. Rizvi is Information Commissionor,

Uttar Pradesh



Musical Chairs

Extraneous factors in transfers and postings hamper administration

TARADATT

THE RECENT TRANSFER of Subhash Chandra Garg as finance secretary heading the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) led to speculation. Transfers/postings and superannuation define the life of a public servant. However, the displacement of the architect of a core aspect of the Union Budget (the proposal to raise \$10 billion from the sale of sovereign bonds overseas), during the Budget Session of Parliament, is definitely not routine.

Extraneous considerations in effecting transfers/postings, though hardly new to the bureaucracy, affect the administration in multiple ways. It is not that those holding key positions are any less competent than others, but merit simply seems incidental in such appointments. What else explains appointments and extensions of retired and retiring bureaucrats to key positions by amending laws and statutory rules?

It is increasingly difficult to find civil servants holding key positions on the strength of their transformative contributions in engineering and improving delivery systems or writing defining policy papers. The administrative reform and policy domains are considered shelters for incompetent officers, while those with even a discredited past can be found holding top posts due to their carefullyhoned skills to be their masters' voice.

It is not that those holding key positions are any less competent than others, but merit simply seems incidental in such appointments. What else explains appointments and extensions of retired and retiring bureaucrats to key positions by amending laws and statutory rules?

In this context, though there exist numerous examples, let me cite two which illustrate how administrative sanctity is affected, from my time as joint secretary in the cabinet secretariat. In one instance, even after damaging inputs were brought to the notice of the prime minister and President, a person was appointed as chairman of the ST commission (2010). In another case, when a cadre and batchmate of the successor cabinet secretary was appointed as secretary to the PM (in 2011), a proposal was prompted by the PMO asking the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to place the newly-appointed secretary at 10th position in the Warrant of Precedence, above the cabinet secretary.

The sole justification supporting the decision to elevate the new aspirant was that his predecessor had enjoyed that position. The approval granted by the cabinet secretary was also contrary to the apex court ruling that any change in rules or placements in the Warrant that interfered with the positions of the chief justices or judges of the Supreme Court and high courts, could be done only with prior concurrence of the CJI. In this case, the secretary to the prime minister was positioned at 23 after the secretary to the President and before other secretaries to the Government of India. His re-positioning at number 10 would decidedly affect the chief justice and other judges of high courts positioned hierarchically at 14 and 17.

The approval overstepped other proposals held long in abeyance. It disregarded the fact that the previous principal secretary to the PM had been conferred the status of minister of state by the prime minister and that his placement above the cabinet secretary was ad personam to him. Then too, approval had been taken by the incumbent cabinet secretary in the last fortnight of his tenure without seeking the concurrence of the CJI. The new secretary had neither been designated a principal secretary nor conferred a rank equivalent to minister of state.

I resubmitted the file to the cabinet secretary elaborating the rules and procedures Most reluctantly, the proposal was returned to the MHA but was resubmitted by the home secretary with reiterations.

Some months later, when I was back home in Odisha, I read a news item that the cabinet secretary did not yield to pressure to change the Warrant to place secretary to Prime Minister above himself!

The writer is a retired IAS officer and the article, in part, is an extract from his forthcoming book, Highlander's Plain Speak

AUGUST 22, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO nied that it had stipulated any condition

INDIAN EXPRESS

FRESH ELECTIONS **ENOUGH EVIDENCE IS available to suggest** that the President, N Sanjiva Reddy, is toying with the idea of dissolving the Lok Sabha and ordering fresh elections to resolve the current political deadlock. Reddy would like to induct an interim government to run the affairs of the country till the elections. The controversial proposal for holding a mid-term poll under an interim government is meeting with stiff resistance from the Janata Party and Jagjivan Ram, who has staked his claim to form a government.

No Congress Support THE CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY Party de-

when it came to its support to Charan Singh at any stage. The CPP made it clear that none of its members had expressed any desire even to meet any one of the Janata (S) leaders until they were invited by the latter. P Venkatasubbaiah, secretary, in a statement expressed shock at the statements of the Prime Minister, Charan Singh, and the External Affairs minister, S N Mishra, to the effect that they did not like to be blackmailed by the conditions of the Congress-I party for the abolition of the special courts.

Majority Test THE LÉADER OF the Opposition, Jagjivan

Ram, asserted that he would have his majority tested on the floor of the Lok Sabha and nowhere else. Coming as this assertion did in response to a question of why he did not fortify his claim to form a new government by submitting a list of his supporters to the President, it gave the impression that Ram was not ready to place the proof for his strength before Sanjiva Reddy. Ram argued that Reddy had himself set a precedent for this: He pointed out that the then Opposition leader, Chavan, had been offered a chance to form the government in the wake of the resignation of the Desai ministry. Since then, Ram said, there has been a "material change" in the situation.

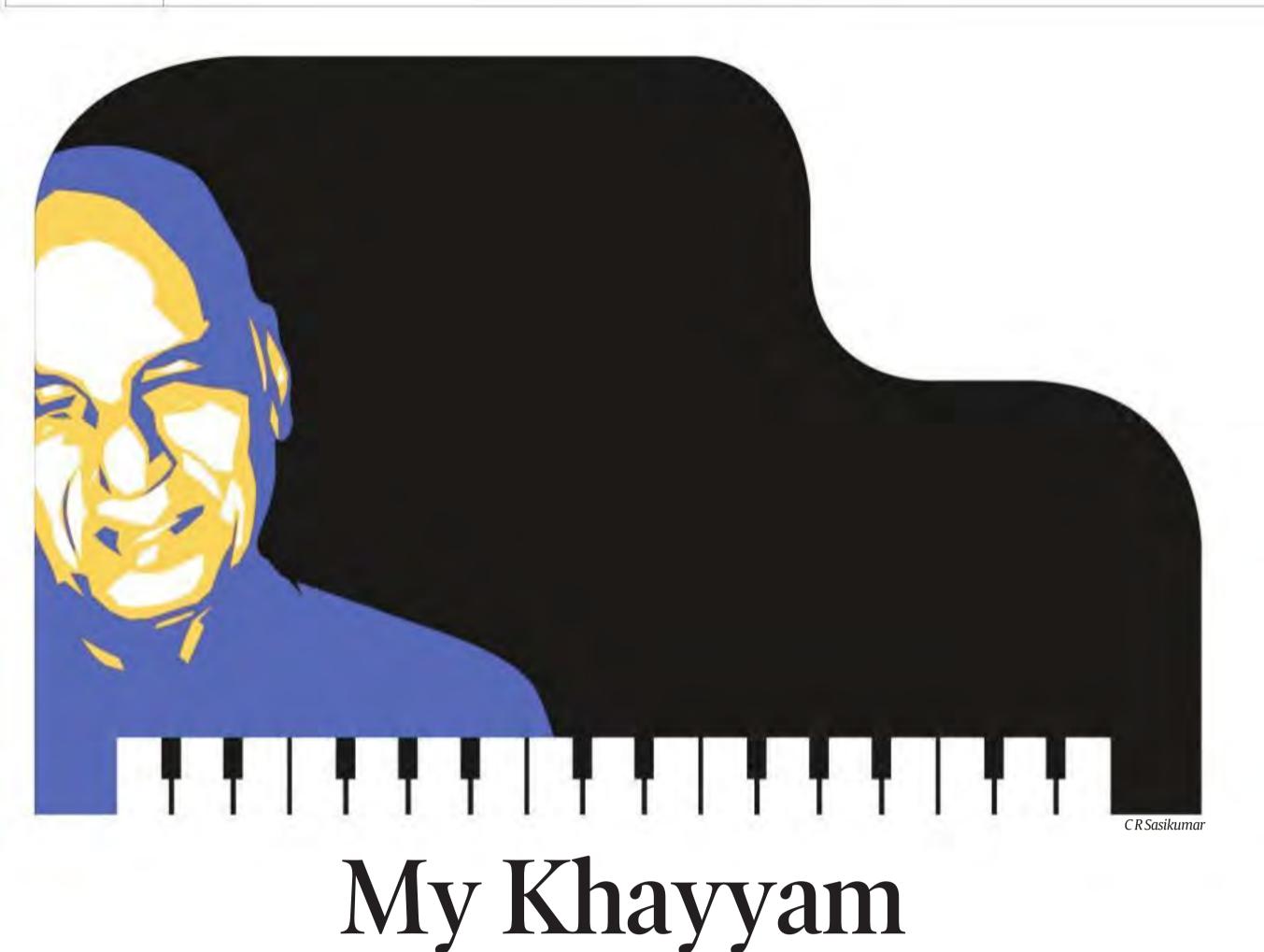
ess.com

THE IDEAS PAGE



"Historically, the Americans have only woken up and rushed to the region when the two neighbours (India and Pakistan) have been on the brink."

-DAWN



To share my memories of him is to share the poetry, cinema and music we made together



Muzaffar Ali

KHAYYAM IS NO more. He was the last of those who lived the melody, who was intoxicated, and could intoxicate others. When people like him depart, the vacuum they leave behind can only be filled by their legacy. A legacy that speaks to the human soul. I may not understand the scope of his art, what he contributed to his profession and the medium. But he certainly enriched me and my work with what we did together. There is more to him than what meets the eye, than Umrao Jaan. For me, there is Anjuman, Gaman and Zooni. My entire journey with Khayyam had Shahryar for company — my favourite poet from Aligarh, so very alien to the ways of Bollywood. He could understand me better than I understood myself, as was the case in "Seene mein jalan..." from Gaman. Sharing my Khayyam is, therefore, difficult without sharing my Shahryar and understanding my films is difficult without understanding their music and poetry. Today, both the poetry and music are lost.

Gaman had won several awards, including for the best playback singer and music. Going back to Jaidev for Umrao Jaan seemed obvious. We worked together for a few months but Shahryar and I felt that it wasn't quite working out. So, I went to the maestro Naushad Ali. But, I realised that

he would be difficult to negotiate with if I did-

n't like a melody.

We then went to Khayyam. His being the third choice weighed on my mind. He was not an easy man at all and what was needed most in this creative relationship was ease and understanding. In the final analysis, the music also had to come from my soul for it to speak through my images. I stood outside, waiting, having rung the bell, his melody "Sham e gham ki qasam..." from *Footpath* resonating in my mind.

The door opened, and there stood the gracious and talented Jagjit Kaur. We instantly took a liking to each other. I could read in her eyes the "subject to Khayyam sahab" look.

We were ushered in before the formidable man himself. Bollywood is full of people who look bigger than they are. And one had to be prepared to face the best and the worst of people at all times for your work.

The Khayyam I met was not the same Khayyam that I was afraid of confronting. He accepted Shahryar as a part of me, without my saying so. He was also open to reworking the melodies to suit my cinematic needs. He also acknowledged the nuances of Awadh and we took the help of Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan on certain classical renditions.

The music of *Umrao Jaan* took nearly two years to create. Each song was crafted as if it was coming from the soul of a poetess. Rehearsals with Asha (Bhonsle) ji brought a new resonance and Khayyam sahab made her sing a scale lower than her usual Bollywood fare. She had read the novel and felt Umrao in her veins. We gave a significant gap between each song so that it would be a little different from the other. The songs were the trajectory of Umrao's life and had to be carefully crafted. Each time, a new world was born in

Each time, a new world was born in Khayyam's music room. The white chaandni stretched seamlessly through the room, which had images of Gurunanak Dev, Harmander Sahab and the Holy Kaaba to cast their blessings on what was happening there. The aroma of freshly-made coffee by Jagjit ji made the ambience welcoming for us. If the rhythmist was not present, she would sit with a hard-

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As the melody emerged, Jagjit ji would look carefully at me to judge my reaction and then at her husband to see if he sensed the same, in a way, fearful of my disapproval. Out of Khayyam's deep confidence oozed out a melody that ripped the heart apart. "Ye kya jagah hai dosto...". You know the rest.

What you don't know is the music he created for a lesser-known — but in no way in less creative - film. In my film Anjuman, for which Shahryar wrote the lyrics, and Shabana Azmi sang, in which the last ghazal by Faiz Ahmed Faiz was sung by Khayyam and Jagjit Kaur at my insistence. I insisted because I knew in my heart that only they could do justice to the melody created for it.

Then came *Zooni*, my most ambitious project for which Shahryar created a series of poetic masterpieces for Khayyam to compose and for Asha ji to sing. The angst and joy in those songs became unforgettable for me as they echoed in the Valley, with Dimple Kapadia on screen. These unreleased melodies still haunt me as we wait for better days, when the film can become a reality. The ultimate tribute to my Khayyam.

The writer is a film director

A time for new leaders

Kashmir needs a new leadership emerging from the development narrative of the 21st century, not the separatist themes of the 20th century



FOR THE SEPARATISTS in Kashmir, the winter chill has set in early. And it is likely to be a long haul. The heat and dust of separatism and terrorism, that had been the bread and butter of many of leaders in the Kashmir Valley, seems to have lost steam. These leaders, who had consistently been fed on the staple of separatism and special status, find the new reality unfathomable. But the people of the Valley are at least thinking about it, even if they are not openly supporting the Narendra Modi government's move to nullify Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

Two weeks have passed since the passing of the presidential orders bifurcating the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories and nullifying several clauses of Article 370. The popular response to these two decisions in the Valley has largely been subdued. No major violence has taken place nor has there been any terror attack. Initially, there were severe restrictions on the free movement of people, including round-theclock curfew. But, most of the restrictions have been relaxed, either partially or fully. Vehicular movement on the streets of Srinagar and elsewhere is slowly returning. Curfew has been removed in most parts. Schools and markets are open. Life is limping back to normalcy after a few days of preventive restrictions.

For people like me, who have seen the worst form of terrorist and separatist violence in the past, including the aftermath of the neutralisation of Burhan Wani, sporadic incidents of violence in a few places in the Valley are not really that serious.

Critics attribute this absence of a public outburst in the Kashmir Valley to the deployment of security forces in large numbers or to the internet blackouts or to the round-theclock curfew restrictions. But, then, none of this is new to the people of the Valley. Increased presence of the forces and internet blackouts have been a regular feature in the life of the terror-stricken areas of the Valley. Yet, in the past, people used to come out on the streets in large numbers, pelt stones and clash with the security forces, leading on some occasions to casualties. In fact, "one dead body a day" used to be the strategy of the separatist and terrorist establishment because each casualty would be used to foment more trouble and violence.

That is no longer the scenario in the Valley. Perhaps people have been taken aback by the turn of events. It has still not sunk in fully. The staple of separatism and special status, on which they were fed for decades, must still be causing consternation in their minds. Yet, they don't seem to be blindly buying into the other narrative anymore like in the past. They have paused and are thinking.

One reason could be the experience of the last five years. Globally, democratic pol-

itics is changing. It is the era of strong and decisive leaders who know how to mould public discourse. The Modi era in India has seen a large-scale shift in public discourse – from the pessimism of the past to optimism about the future. The Valley is not insulated from that futuristic discourse. Through the development narrative, the Modi government has moved closer to the hearts and minds of the people in the Valley, like in the rest of the country. The merchants of separatism in the Valley's politics have missed this shift and are stuck in the old discourse, making themselves gradually irrelevant.

The formation of the first ever BJP government in the state, together with the PDP, has helped in building up this narrative in many ways. First, it has robbed the separatists and terrorists of their political mouthpiece. The PDP used to act like a political organ of the separatists in the Valley Having aligned with the staunchly nationalist BJP, the PDP was forced to distance itself from that narrative, less out of conviction and more out of political expediency. Today, its efforts to return to that path are no longer viewed credibly. On the other hand, being in the government for three years has helped the BJP move closer to the people of the Valley. Various sections of the Kashmiri society had an opportunity to watch the party from close quarters. I have interacted with thousands of people from all walks of life, including separatists, in the last few years. It has certainly helped in winning over significant sections of the Valley's social leadership. Today, the calmness in the Valley is partly due to those sections of the social leader ship, that include, students, youths and the non-PDP, non-NC political leadership, that have engaged with the BJP and Narendra Modi over the past few years.

It is a good sign. Once they stop and think, people realise the falseness of the narrative that they have been fed all these years by leaders from the Valley and across the border. The so-called special status has only benefitted the leaders and their cohorts; its removal will bring the fruits of development to the doorsteps of ordinary citizens of the Valley. Having given conflict a chance for several decades and ending up impoverished, directionless and insecure, the people of the Valley should give a chance now to the new narrative being offered by Modi.

"The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with an average voter," commented Winston Churchill. This is a significant reality in the Kashmir Valley. The misuse of power by a handful of leaders in the Valley has left the ordinary Kashmiri in misery. But then, the best argument for democracy is also to build confidence through humane development — the Modi way. For that, Kashmir needs a new leadership, built not on the separatist narrative of the 20th century but on the development narrative of the 21st century. It is here that the investment and focus of the central government should go. Failing in that will mean a return of not just the old leadership but the dreaded old narrative of separatism and conflict.

> The writer is a national general secretary, BIP, and director, India Foundation



Don't fear the churn

editorial positions or

news coverage of

'The Indian Express'

Congress, with same top brass, cannot be the source of any political inspiration

SUBRATA MUKHERJEE

THE EDITORIAL 'THE rewind' (IE, August 12), on the Congress party's decision to choose Sonia Gandhi as its interim president makes statements that are ultimately contradictory. First, it is critical of the choice of a "timid party", reflected in its inability to keep a pledge of the outgoing president that the new chief would not be from the Nehru-Gandhi family. Second, the editorial expresses hope that her induction as the working president "ensures a genuine transition by taking tough decisions". The editorial is silent on how this transition would take place.

Political parties rise and decline, and new formations emerge over time when important issues become political at a particular place and time. It is because of the need of this inherent elasticity that political parties need a democratic set up to bring about essential changes peacefully without the system either breaking down or collapsing. The Congress party lacks this capacity.

In a well-developed party system, political parties perform a wide variety of functions. They build channels of communication between the people and the decision-makers. They also act as channels of communication between the government and people. In not performing these basic functions of a political party, the Congress by clinging to a premodern dynastic mindset has proved to be grossly inadequate. This, it failed to do during the days of Indira Gandhi's stewardship of 17 years when no organisational elections were held and then, subsequently, all the nonNehru-Gandhi family party workers were eased out: Be it Narasimha Rao or Sitaram Kesari. Is there any other example of a political party where the top slot is reserved for a person from the first family; where the interim president replaces the outgoing president, her own son whom she anointed after holding office uninterruptedly for 19 years? The Congress points to the presence of dynasts in other parties which is un-

true — in no other party is the top slot kept reserved for a family member as it is in the Congress. One must not confuse dynasts with political families. The latter are there in all the parties, except the Left Front, but dynastic succession is unique to the Congress party and some regional satraps.

The Congress, since the days of Indira Gandhi, is a classic example of clientelism, with the loyalty to

the family superseding that of the party. As a result, it has lost the ability to remain in contact with the people at the grassroots. In the 1950s, V R Gadgil, a Congress party functionary, used to comment that in every single village in India, two things were visible, a 15 paise postcard and a Congress worker. The first one is visible even today but the second one, even with a pair of binoculars, is hard to find. In the absence of an organisation as

such, the Congress plays machine politics, where power brokers exercise decisive advantage in nominating candidates. The candidates are imposed from the top and lack any grassroots experience or support. In which other political party does a president entrust his sister — a novice — with the task of revamping the organisation in a major part of a decisive state? In spite of its initial

scepticism, the editorial DEAR EDITOR, expresses the hope that I DISAGREE Sonia Gandhi "could step up to this moment and en-A fortnightly sure a genuine transition by taking tough decisions". column in which we How can she, when Sonia invite readers to tell is part of the problem? us why, when they differ with the

A political party channelises mass support in an institutional manner. It allows ordered accommodation of new groups and demands within the political process. The Congress party, in the last two decades

when Sonia was at the helm, miserably failed to achieve this.

Sonia Gandhi had the golden opportunity to revamp the party after declining prime ministership in 2004. But, rather than allowing Pranab Mukherjee to lead the party, she chose Manmohan Singh, a non-political bureaucrat lacking any political base, to be the prime minister. Many grass roots leaders like Himanta Biswa Sarma and Jagan Reddy left

the party, floated their outfits and emerged as successful leaders of their state. Rahul himself never thought it necessary to hold an office under Manmohan Singh, thus easily lending himself to the BJP's criticism of "naamdar" versus "kaamdar".

The editorial acknowledges the lack of organisational structure in the Congress. But it holds the party's decision to fall back on Sonia as a "symptom" of the problem. But that actually is the problem itself. To contend, as the editorial does, that it reflects a "lack of talent" in the Congress is incorrect. Last year, the party won elections to state assemblies in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. But to hold that the Nehru-Gandhi family seems to be the "only glue that can hold the party together" is absurd in a democratic set-up. It seems that the editorial willy nilly endorses the Congress leadership's fear of a churn.

This seems all the more glaring given that the BJP has seen so many new faces as its party presidents and as leaders in the two houses of Parliament. The CWC comprises people who have not gone through the electoral process, and yet are there to advise the party on how to win elections. Sonia's role is similar to that of Napoleon III, who survived because of the relative weakness of all social forces. To expect that such discredited leadership would be able to revamp the party or bring in crucial changes is itself illusory.

> The writer retired as professor of political science in Delhi University

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unjust view

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Justice delayed' (IE, August 21). The learned writer, while relying heavily on an Economic Survey report, has dismissed the perennial problem of vacancies in the courts. The article is more pedagogic and less realistic. It is less objective and more subjective. It is completely divorced from ground realities. If the gist of the survey report is applied in a universal manner, it may as well mean the dismissal of vacancies of teachers in our schools and colleges, doctors in hospitals, and other services of public interest. What is lamentable is that the learned writer is himself a retired Supreme Court judge.

Ram Mathur, Ghaziabad

ON THE BACKFOOT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'China and its quasi-colony' (IE, August 21). The UNSC close-door consultation on Jammu and Kashmir has been a diplomatic setback for China. This was evident from the press briefing of the Chinese envoy to the UN after the meeting, where the assertiveness in his tone is perhaps an attempt to avoid comparative scrutiny by the international media. After all, it was at China's behest that the meeting was scheduled in the first place. China should choose its friends wisely, and its enemies too. Befriending a rogue state like Pakistan will only bring it further embarrassment on the global stage.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

address and phone number. THE WINNER RECEIVES **SELECT EXPRESS**

mention their postal

PUBLICATIONS

REAL DEMOCRACY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'World and Valley' (IE, August 19). A majority of Kashmir's population is suffering because of its partition and people in the rest of India are celebrating "conquering" Kashmir. India's diplomatic moves can be appreciated but they are of no use if an internal conflict becomes inevitable. Retain the rights of the people of Kashmir, then take further steps. That is democracy.

Archana Santhosh, Bhatinda

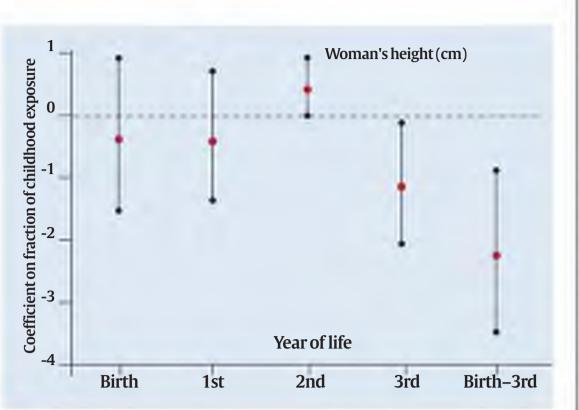
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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TELLING NUMBERS

How nitrate exposure in infancy impacts Indian women's height



Point estimates and 99% confidence intervals for coefficients derived from five regressions that estimate nitrate exposure. The CI for the last line (birth to 3 years) does not cross zero-impact line. World Bank

IN A new World Bank report that looks at the impact of water pollution worldwide, one aspect covered is the long-term impact of nitrate exposure experienced during infancy. While short-term exposure to nitrates has almost negligible effect on adult height, cumulative exposure over the first three years of life has considerable impact.

An infant girl who has been exposed to nitrate levels above the safety threshold in the first three years experiences a 1-2 cm decrease in her adult height, the report found. Given that female adult height in India has increased by approximately 4 cm over the last century, a 1-2 cm loss means that nitrate exposure in infancy can wipe out almost half of this gain in height.

Nitrate pollution is caused by the overuse of nitrogenous fertilisers which, while boosting yields, can be

harmful if they leach into water or air. In India, the Green Revolution of the 1960s kick-started the use of synthetic fertilisers, the report notes.

The data set used was taken from over 1,330 monitoring stations from 1963-2017. The birth years of the sample range was from 1966-1999, "a period when the effect of the Green Revolution was already in force yet nitrogen fertilisers were increasing in

The report also found (using data from the Central Groundwater Board of India) that nitrate levels in groundwater aquifers exceeded permissible levels in more than 50 per cent of the districts across 19 states.

The report broadly covers two types of pollutants — the well known ones such as faecal contaminants and the new pollutants that include plastic, nutrients and pharmaceuticals.

THIS WORD MEANS

FLOCCINAUCINIHILIPILIFICATION

Used by Monetary Policy Committee member Chetan Ghate now, by Shashi Tharoor earlier

IN THE minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee, which decides on India's monetary policy, released on Wednesday, one of the government-nominated members, Chetan Ghate, is quoted as stating: "Estimates of economic growth in India have unfortunately been subject to a fair degree of floccinaucinihilipilification. Notwithstanding this, growth is likely to pick up from Q2-Q3: 2019-2020". The minutes pertained to the third bimonthly monetary policy review that was announced on August 7.

The Oxford Dictionary defines 'floccinaucinihilipilification' as "the action or habit of estimating something as worthless". It is evident that Ghate used the word to characterise the efforts of several economists who have raised doubts about the validity of India's gross domestic product (GDP) estimates. Earlier this year, the debate about the correctness of India's GDP estimates received fresh impetus when Arvind Subramanian, country's chief economic adviser during the time — early 2015 — when news GDP estimates were released, openly questioned the estimates. Subramanian went on to say that existing GDP growth rates overestimate growth by as much as 2.5 percentage points.

Ghate is not the first to use 'floccinaucinihilipilification' in recent times. The 29-letter word got widespread publicity in October 2018 when Congress leader Shashi Tharoor mentioned it in a tweet promoting his book on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Tharoor had tweeted: "My new book, THE PARADOXICAL PRIME MINIS-TER, is more than just a 400-page exercise in floccinaucinihilipilification".

The word has Latin roots — *flocci*, nauci, nihili, pili — all of which mean "at little value". Despite its length, 'floccinaucinihilipilification' is not among the longest words in the English language. According to Grammarly, that odd distinction goes to the 45-letter word 'Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcan oconiosis', which is a lung disease caused by the inhalation of silica or quartz dust.

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

How an Indian citizen is defined

Citizenship can be determined by place of birth or by bloodline. There are cutoff dates for the country, which are different for Assam where the NRC is being prepared. A look at how the laws have evolved



IN THE run-up to the publication of the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, citizenship has become the most talked about topic in the country. The Assam government has been taking various steps in relation to those who will be left out of the NRC, while the Supreme Court last week rejected a plea to include those born in India between after March 24, 1971 and before July 1, 1987 unless they had ancestral links to India. In any other Indian state, they would have been citizens by birth, but the law is different for Assam.

How is citizenship determined?

Citizenship signifies the relationship between individual and state. It begins and ends with state and law, and is thus about the state, not people. Citizenship is an idea of exclusion as it excludes non-citizens.

There are two well-known principles for grant of citizenship. While jus soli confers citizenship on the basis of place of birth, jus sanguinis gives recognition to blood ties. From the time of the Motilal Nehru Committee (1928), the Indian leadership was in favour of the enlightened concept of jus soli. The racial idea of jus sanguis was rejected by the Constituent Assembly as it was against the Indian ethos.

Citizenship is in the Union List under the Constitution and thus under the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament. The Constitution does not define the term 'citizen' but gives, in Articles 5 to 11, details of various categories of persons who are entitled to citizenship. Unlike other provisions of the Constitution, which came into being on January 26, 1950, these articles were enforced on November 26, 1949 itself, when the Constitution was adopted. However, Article 11 itself confers wide powers on Parliament by laying down that "nothing in the foregoing provisions shall derogate from the power of Parliament to make any provision with respect to the acquisition and termination of citizenship and all matters relating to citizenship". Thus Parliament can go against the citizenship provisions of the Constitution.

The Citizenship Act, 1955 was passed and has been amended four times — in 1986, 2003, 2005, and 2015. The Act empowers the government to determine the citizenship of persons in whose case it is in doubt. However, over the decades, Parliament has narrowed down the wider and universal principles of citizenship based on the fact of birth. Moreover, the Foreigners Act places a heavy burden on the



At an NRC Seva Kendra in Chaygaon, Assam. Abhishek Saha

individual to prove that he is not a foreigner.

So who is, or is not, a citizen of India?

Article 5: It provided for citizenship on commencement of the Constitution. All those domiciled and born in India were given citizenship. Even those who were domiciled but not born in India, but either of whose parents was born in India, were considered citizens. Anyone who had been an ordinary resident for more than five years, too, was entitled to apply for citizenship.

Article 6: Since Independence was preceded by Partition and migration, Article 6 laid down that anyone who migrated to India before July 19, 1949, would automatically become an Indian citizen if either of his parents or grandparents was born in India. But those who entered India after this date needed to register themselves. **Article 7:** Even those who had migrated

to Pakistan after March 1, 1947 but subsequently returned on resettlement permits were included within the citizenship net. The law was more sympathetic to those who migrated from Pakistan and called them refugees than to those who, in a state of confusion, were stranded in Pakistan or went there but decided to return soon. **Article 8:** Any Person of Indian Origin re-

siding outside India who, or either of whose parents or grandparents, was born in India could register himself or herself as ab Indian citizen with Indian Diplomatic Mission.

1986 amendment: Unlike the constitutional provision and the original Citizenship Act that gave citizenship on the principle of jus soli to everyone born in India, the 1986 amendment to Section 3 was less inclusive as it added the condition that those who were born in India on or after January 26, 1950 but before July 1, 1987, shall be Indian

citizen. Those born after July 1, 1987 and before December 4, 2003, in addition to one's own birth in India, can get citizenship only if either of his parents was an Indian citizen at the time of birth.

2003 amendment: The then NDA government made the above condition more stringent, keeping in view infiltration from Bangladesh. Now the law requires that for those born on or after December 4, 2004, in addition to the fact of their own birth, both parents should be Indian citizens or one parent must be Indian citizen and other should not be an illegal migrant. With these restrictive amendments, India has almost moved towards the narrow principle of jus sanguinis or blood relationship. This lays down that an illegal migrant cannot claim citizenship by naturalisation or registration even if he has been a resident of India for seven years. **Citizenship (Amendment) Bill:** The

amendment proposes to permit members of six communities — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan — to continue to live in India if they entered India before December 14, 2014. It also reduces the requirement for citizenship from 11 years out of the preceding 14 years, to just 6 years. Two notifications also exempted these migrants from the Passport Act and Foreigner Act. A large number of organisations in Assam protested against this Bill as it may grant citizenship to Bangladeshi Hindu illegal migrants.

What is different in Assam?

The Assam Movement against illegal immigration eventually led to the historic Assam Accord of 1985, signed by Movement leaders and the Rajiv Gandhi government. Accordingly, the 1986 amendment to the Citizenship Act created a special category of

citizens in relation to Assam. The newly inserted Section 6A laid down that all persons of Indian origin who entered Assam before January 1, 1966 and have been ordinary residents will be deemed Indian citizens. Those who came after 1 January, 1966 but before March 25, 1971, and have been ordinary residents, will get citizenship at the expiry of 10 years from their detection as foreigner. During this interim period, they will not have the right to vote but can get an Indian passport.

Identification of foreigners was to be done under the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act, (IMDT Act) 1983, which was applicable only in Assam while the Foreigners Act, 1946 was applicable in the rest of the country. The provisions of the IMDT Act made it difficult to deport illegal immigrants. On the petition of Sarbananda Sonowal (now Chief Minister) the Act was held unconstitutional and struck down by the Supreme Court in 2005. This was eventually replaced with the Foreigners (Tribunals of Assam) Order, 2006, which again was struck down in 2007 in Sonowal II.

In the IMDT case, the court considered classification based on geographical considerations to be a violation of the right to equality under Article 14. In fact, another such variation was already in place. While the cutoff date for Western Pakistan is July 19, 1949, for Eastern Pakistan the Nehru-Liaquat Pact had pushed it to 1950.

Constitutionality of Section 6A

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court is yet to examine the constitutionality of Section 6A under which the current NRC has been prepared. The Bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur did hold its hearing on April 19, 2017, but it was dissolved on the retirement of Justice P C Pant in August 2017. The Supreme Court, in its order last week, refused to extend restrictive provisions of amendments to Assam in view of a different dispensation for them in Section 6A.

In Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha (2014) where the constitutionality of the 1986 amendment was challenged (the Mahasangha argues that the cutoff year for Assam should be 1951 instead if 1971), the court referred the matter to the Constitution Bench. While Section 6A was inserted in 1986 as a result of the Assam Accord, which has been discussed at length by the court, the court accepted the challenge to its constitutionality in 2014 and referred to the Constitution Bench 13 questions such as whether Section 6A is constitutional and valid though it prescribes a different cutoff date for Assam (1971) from the one prescribed in the Constitution for the rest of the country (1949). But then, this provision was about citizenship on commencement of the Constitution.

> The author is a well-known expert in constitutional law

Tiger trade: report counts 2,359, shows where

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, AUGUST 21

A NEW report has quantified the illegal global trade in tigers and tiger parts over a 19-year period between 2000 and 2018. India has the world's largest tiger population - 2,967 in the Tiger Census released last month — and the highest extent of tiger trade also happens in the country. The new report has been compiled by Traffic, a NGO working in conservation and currently in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, according to the Traffic website.

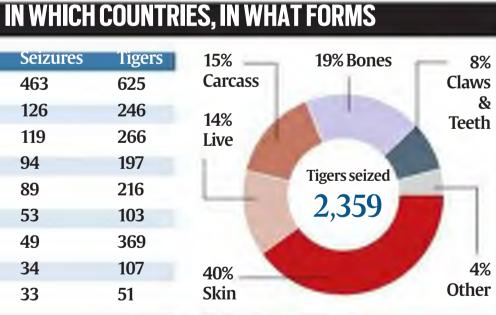
What it found, how

Overall, a conservative estimate of 2,359 tigers were seized from 2000 to 2018 across 32 countries and territories globally. These occurred from a total of 1.142 seizure inci-

Country Seizures Tigers 625 463 India China 246 126 Indonesia 119 266 94 Nepal 197 216 **Vietnam** 53 Malaysia 103 **Thailand** 49 369 107 Russia 34 51 Bangladesh 33

dents, the report said.

Apart from live tigers and whole carcasses, tiger parts were seized in various forms such as skin, bones or claws. The report explains how the number of tigers was estimated from



these diverse sets of seizures. For example, say three skulls and 74 claws have been seized. Given that one tiger has one skull and 18 claws, the skulls indicate at least three tigers and the 74 claws point to more than four tigers, so that the total haul would have come from a minimum of five tigers.

On average, 60 seizures were recorded annually, accounting for almost 124 tigers seized each year. The top three countries with the highest number of seizure incidents were India (463 or 40.5% of total seizures) and China (126 or 11.0%), closely followed by Indonesia (119 or 10.5%).

The India findings

While the latest census has put India's tiger population at 2,967, the Traffic report uses the 2016 WWF estimate of 2,226, with India home to more than 56% of the global wild tiger population. India is the country with the highest number of seizure incidents (463, or 40% of all seizures) as well as tigers seized (625). In terms of various body parts seized, India had the highest share among countries for tiger skins (38%), bones (28%) and claws and teeth (42%).

Why is age of marriage different for men and women? The law, the debate

APURVA VISHWANATH

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 21

THIS WEEK, the Delhi High Court took up a plea that sought a uniform age of marriage for men and women. A bench comprising Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar issued a notice to the Centre and the Law Commission of India, seeking their response to the public interest litigation filed by advocate and BJP spokesperson

Ashwini Kumar Upadhyaya. Currently, the law prescribes that the minimum age of marriage is 21 and 18 years for men and women, respectively. The minimum age of marriage is distinct from the age of majority, which is gender-neutral. An individual attains the age of majority at 18 as per the Indian Majority Act, 1875.

Why a minimum age

The law prescribes a minimum age of marriage to essentially outlaw child marriages and prevent abuse of minors. Personal laws of various religions that deal with marriage have their own standards, often reflecting custom.

For Hindus, Section 5(iii) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 sets 18 years as the minimum age for the bride and 21 years as the minimum age for the groom. Child marriages are not illegal but can be declared void at the request of the minor in the marriage.

In Islam, the marriage of a minor who has attained puberty is considered valid under personal law. The Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 also prescribe 18 and 21 years as the minimum age of consent for marriage for women and

men respectively.

How the law evolved

The Indian Penal Code enacted in 1860 criminalised any sexual intercourse with a girl below the age of 10. The provision of rape was amended in 1927 through the Age of Consent Bill, 1927, which made marriages with a girl under 12 invalid. The law had faced opposition from conservative leaders of the nationalist movement such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Madan Mohan Malaviya who saw the British intervention as an attack on Hindu customs.

In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act set 16 and 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for women and men respectively. The law, popularly known as Sarda Act after its sponsor Harbilas Sarda, a judge and a member of Arya Samaj, was eventually

years as the age of marriage for a woman and a man, respectively.

amended in 1978 to prescribe 18 and 21

Two genders, two ages

The different legal standards for the age of men and women to marry has been a subject of debate. The laws are a codification of custom and religious practices that are rooted in patriarchy. In a consultation paper of reform in family law in 2018, the Law Commission argued that having different legal standards "contributes to the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands".

Women's rights activists too have argued that the law perpetuates the stereotype that women are more mature than men of the same age and therefore can be allowed to marry sooner. The international

treaty Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also calls for the abolition of laws that assume women have a different physical or intellectual rate of growth than men.

The Law Commission paper recommended that the minimum age of marriage for both genders be set at 18. "The difference in age for husband and wife has no basis in law as spouses entering into a marriage are by all means equals and their partnership must also be of that between equals," the Commission noted.

The challenge in court

Upadhyaya, the petitioner in the Delhi High Court case, has challenged the law on the grounds of discrimination. He alleges that Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, which guarantee the right to equality and the right to live with dignity, are violated by having different legal age for men and women to marry.

Two Supreme Court rulings could be significant to the context of this argument. In 2014, in National Legal Services Authority of India v Union of India, the Supreme Court while recognising transgenders as the third gender said that justice is delivered with the "assumption that humans have equal value and should, therefore, be treated as equal, as well as by equal

In 2019, in Joseph Shine v Union of India, the Supreme Court decriminalised adultery and said that "a law that treats women differently based on gender stereotypes is an affront to women's dignity."

laws."

The Delhi High Court will hear the ongoing case next on October 30.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 159

क्षेत्रवार राहत नहीं

की गिरावट दर्ज की। यह अप्रैल 2001 के बाद की सबसे बडी गिरावट है। यात्री कारों उपभोक्ता मांग में गिरावट आई है। परंतु अब

गत माह देश के वाहन क्षेत्र ने 19 फीसदी है कि आर्थिक गतिविधियों में धीमापन आ रहा है। जुन में यात्री कारों की बिक्री सालाना आधार पर 31 फीसदी गिरी जबकि की बिक्री में पिछले काफी समय से कमी आ वाणिज्यिक वाहनों की बिक्री 26 फीसदी कम रही थी जिससे यह संकेत निकल रहा था कि हुई। दोपहिया और तिपहिया वाहनों पर भी असर पडा, हालांकि यह असर चौपहिया वाणिज्यिक वाहनों की बिक्री पर भी असर वाहनों से कम रहा। जाहिर सी बात है कि पड़ने लगा है। यह इस बात का सीधा संकेत कंपनियों की वित्तीय स्थितियों पर भी बरा

असर पड़ा और वाहन निर्माता कंपनियों का मुनाफा 28 फीसदी और वाहन कलपुर्जा कंपनियों का मुनाफा 21 फीसदी गिरा।

यह बात साफ है कि समस्या निर्यात के बजाय घरेलू बिक्री में है। जुलाई 2019 में निर्यात 4 फीसदी की कमतर लेकिन सकारात्मक दर से बढा जबकि घरेलू बिक्री घटी। वाहन क्षेत्र जोरशोर से क्षेत्रवार प्रोत्साहन पैकेज की मांग कर रहा है और चूंकि यह देश के विनिर्माण उत्पादन का अहम घटक है और इसने 3.5 करोड़ लोगों को रोजगार दे रखा है इसलिए सरकार शायद इस मांग पर ध्यान भी दे। खासतीर पर यह क्षेत्र वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) में कटौती की अपेक्षा कर रहा है।

वाहन क्षेत्र में इस मंदी की कुछ जिम्मेदारी

सरकार की भी है। खासतौर पर नियामकीय अनिश्चितता ने भी कंपनियों पर असर डाला है। जब भी नए ईंधन मानकों को लागू करने की बात आती है तो भ्रम की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो जाती है। इससे निवेश और खरीद का निर्णय दोनों बाधित होते हैं। सरकार ने हाल ही में निजी वाहन क्षेत्र में इलेक्टिक वाहनों पर जो जोर दिया है उसने भी कार कंपनियों को चिंतित किया है। वित्तीय क्षेत्र की दिक्कत संकट में और इजाफा कर सकती है। वित्तीय लागत इसलिए बढ़ी हुई है क्योंकि केंद्रीय बैंक द्वारा हाल में की गई ब्याज दरों में कटौती का सही ढंग से पारेषण नहीं हुआ। गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों (एनबीएफसी) की भी इसमें भिमका है क्योंकि वे उपभोक्ताओं को कार ऋण देने, वाणिज्यिक वाहनों की खरीद,

करीब दो तिहाई दोपहिया वाहनों की खरीद और एक तिहाई यात्री कारों की बिक्री में योगदान देती थीं। संकटग्रस्त एनबीएफसी ने ऋण देना बंद कर दिया और तनावग्रस्त बैंकों ने भी कंपनियों और डीलरों के समक्ष अपना जोखिम कम किया।

यह स्पष्ट है कि इस मंदी को कर कटौती जैसे उपायों से नहीं निपटाया जा सकता। समस्या की जडें कहीं अधिक गहरी हैं। नियामकीय दिक्कत, मांग में कमी और तनावग्रस्त वित्तीय क्षेत्र। सरकार को वाहन उद्योग की राहत पैकेज की मांग पर विचार करते वक्त समझदारी बरतनी होगी। लॉबीइंग के बाद मिले राहत पैकेज के मामले में देश का प्रदर्शन बहुत अच्छा नहीं रहा है। इन्हें बहुत देर से वापस लिया जाता है और ये आगे

चलकर गलत प्रोत्साहन बनते हैं। किसी क्षेत्र को ऐसी नीतियों पर निर्भर नहीं रहना चाहिए। जरूरत कछ ऐसा करने की है जिससे परे माहौल में सुधार आए। यहां शायद सरकार बड़ी कंपनियों के कॉपीरेट आय कर में कटौती के माध्यम से ऐसा करना चाहे। ऐसा प्रोत्साहन आकर्षक हो सकता है लेकिन वित्तीय स्थिति को भी ध्यान में रखना होगा। बाजार पहले ही सरकारी उधारी से त्रस्त है। निवेश का संकट इसे और भीषण बना रहा है। अर्थव्यवस्था में आ रही मंदी राजस्व पर और दबाव बनाएगी तथा राजकोषीय लक्ष्यों को हासिल करना और कठिन होगा। इस स्थिति में ऐसा सुधार पैकेज बेहतर होगा जो उच्च निवेश को बेहतर बनाए और बिना राजकोषीय स्थिति पर दबाव बनाए मांग में इजाफा करे।



निदयों को जोड़ने से मॉनसून पर खंतरा?

अगर नदियों को जोड़ने की परियोजना अमल में लाई जाती है तो भारत में मौसम चक्र के सबसे अहम किरदार मॉनसून पर भी गहरा असर पड़ सकता है। बता रहे हैं मिहिर शाह

ही विज्ञान एवं अध्यात्म दोनों के बुनियादी सिद्धातों के उल्लंघन के लिए तैयार होने की सीमा और हमारा दु:साहस भी बढ़ चुका है। अपनी गलतियों से सबक सीखने के बजाय हम गलत रास्ते पर ही आगे बढ़ने से खुद को रोक नहीं पा

भारत की नदियों को एक-दूसरे से जोड़ने का प्रस्ताव दोषपूर्ण धारणाओं की एक पूरी शृंखला पर आधारित है। कहा जाता है कि एक ही समय पर भारत के कुछ हिस्सों में बाढ़ और कुछ हिस्सों में सूखा होता है, लिहाजा पानी की अधिकता वाले क्षेत्रों से किल्लत वाले क्षेत्रों में पानी पहुंचा दिया जाए तो सबकी समस्या दूर हो जाएगी। सवाल है। कि क्या वाकई में भारत के कुछ इलाकों में बहुत अधिक पानी है ? पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों के बारे में सोचिए। क्या आपको पता था कि धरती पर सर्वाधिक बारिश वाली जगहों में शुमार सोहरा (पहले चेरापूंजी के नाम से मशहूर) अब पीने लायक पानी की कमी से गुजर रहा है ? जल प्रबंधन की पुरानी परिपाटी को इसकी वजह माना जा सकता है जिसमें अपने जलग्रहण क्षेत्रों का बेहतर प्रबंधन कर पाने में हम नाकाम रहे हैं। इसके अलावा प्राकृतिक झरनों को हमने बरबाद कर दिया और भूमिगत जल का खूब दोहन किया। जलवायु परिवर्तन ने हालात को और भी खराब कर दिया है। आज मेरा संगठन 'समाज प्रगति सहयोग' इस जटिल समस्या का समाधान तलाशने में लगा हुआ है लेकिन मैं बता सकता हं कि दिल्ली की तुलना में वहां दस गुना बारिश होने के बावजूद किसी और के लिए वहां अतिरिक्त जल नहीं रह गया है। भारतीय उप-महाद्वीप में मॉनसन पर निर्भरता के चलते नदियों में अधिक पानी होने की स्थिति लगभग एक समय पर ही पैदा होती है। एक हालिया अध्ययन से पता चलता है कि भारत के जल-अधिकता वाले नदी घाटी क्षेत्रों में मॉनसूनी बारिश में खासी कमी आई है। इस तरह नदी-जोड़ परियोजना की मूल धारणा ही सवालों के घेरे में आ जाती है।

यह बड़ी राहत की बात है कि वित्त मंत्री ने अपने बजट भाषण में नदी-जोड़ परियोजना का जिक्र तक नहीं किया है। शायद यह नए जलशक्ति मंत्री की सोच की स्पष्टता का संकेत देता है। लेकिन इस विचार के समय–समय पर सामने आने की बात को ध्यान में रखें तो इस खतरनाक विचार का ध्यानपूर्वक अवलोकन जरूरी है। नदी-जोड परियोजना के तहत हिमालयी खंड में गंगा और ब्रह्मपुत्र निदयों पर बड़े बांधों और उत्तरी एवं पूर्वी राज्यों के जल-अधिकता वाले इलाकों में पानी जमा करने की योजना है। फिर इस पानी को नहरों के जरिये पानी की कमी वाले मध्य, दक्षिणी एवं पश्चिमी इलाकों में भेजा जाएगा। वहीं परियोजना के प्रायद्वीपीय खंड के मुताबिक प्रायद्वीप में मौजूद निदयों के अतिरिक्त पानी को भी जमा कर दक्षिणी एवं पश्चिमी हिस्सों में भेजा जाएगा। इस परियोजना के तहत कुल 44 निदयों को 9,600 किलोमीटर लंबी नहरों

श भर में जल संकट गहराने के साथ सोहरा में महज 70,000 लोग होने और के जरिये जोड़ने की तैयारी है जिस पर 11 लाख करोड़ रुपये की लागत आने का अनुमान है। यह परियोजना की असली लागत का एक अनुमान भर है और असली लागत इससे काफी अधिक रह सकती है। क्रियान्वयन में विलंब की आशंकाओं और ऊर्जा मद के अलावा खेती एवं जंगल को होने वाले नुकसान और मानवीय विस्थापन पर होने वाला खर्च भी इसमें शामिल नहीं है। असली विडंबना यह है कि भारत की स्थलीय संरचना देखते हुए नदियों को जोड़ने की जो परिकल्पना की गई है, वह मध्य एवं पश्चिमी भारत के असली सखाग्रस्त इलाकों को दरिकनार कर देती है। ये इलाके समुद्र तल से 300-1,000 मीटर की ऊंचाई पर

हाल में वैज्ञानिकों ने भारतीय नदी प्रणाली में इतने बड़े स्तर पर होने वाले दखल के संभावित असर का बारीकी से परीक्षण शुरू कर दिया है। परियोजना में शामिल 44 में से 29 निदयों के बारे में 2018 में किए गए एक अध्ययन के मुताबिक इस परियोजना की वजह से 3,400 वर्ग किलोमीटर क्षेत्र डुब जाएगा और करीब सात लाख लोगों को विस्थापित होना पड़ेगा। नहरें बनते समय विस्थापित होने वाले लोगों की संख्या अलग होगी। यह 29 में से 24 निदयों के प्रवाह को भी बाधित करेगा जिससे गीली जमीन (वेटलैंड) एवं निदयों के चौड़े मुहाने (एस्चुअरी) तक पहुंचने वाला पानी भी कम हो जाएगा। जलमार्ग में नए दूषणकारी तत्त्व, प्रजातियां और बीमारियां पैदा करने वाले

एजेंट मिलेंगे। भारतीय उप-महाद्वीप के पहले से ही संकटग्रस्त डेल्टा क्षेत्र नदियों से लाई जाने वाली गाद में 87 फीसदी तक कमी हो जाने से और भी अधिक खतरे में पड जाएंगे। पानी के प्रवाह में कमी आने का असर डेल्टा क्षेत्रों में खारेपन पर असर पड़ेगा जिससे आगे चलकर समुद्र का जलस्तर बढ़ने और भूमिगत जल एवं नदी जल के खारे होने की भी स्थिति पैदा हो सकती है। नदियों एवं डेल्टा क्षेत्रों में खारापन बढने से नदियों के मुहाने पर गिरने वाली गांद में और कमी आएगी। दर्लभ पारिस्थितिकी एवं अहम किष क्षेत्र तुफानों की संख्या बढने, नदियों की बाढ और खारापन बढ़ने को लेकर अधिक संवेदनशील हो जाएंगे।

कृष्णा, गोदावरी एवं महानदी नदियों में प्राकृतिक एवं मानव-निर्मित कारणों से पानी का प्रवाह पहले से ही धीमा हो चुका है। ऐसे में नदी-जोड परियोजना केवल इस समस्या को बढाने का ही काम करेगी। यह कोलोरेडो, नील, सिंधु एवं येलो नदी प्रणालियों से मिलती-जुलती स्थिति है जहां ऐसी ही परियोजना सीमित स्तर पर लागू करने की कोशिश की गई थी। एलिमेंटा अध्ययन का दावा है कि 'भारत की नदी-जोड परियोजना अमेरिका में एक नदी प्रणाली से दूसरी प्रणाली तक पानी पहुंचाने की सबसे बड़ी परियोजना से भी 50-100 गुनी बड़ी है और इसके मानव इतिहास की सबसे बडी निर्माण परियोजना बनने की संभावना है।'

आखिर में, हमें यह मान लेना चाहिए कि नदी-जोड़ परियोजना भारत की मॉनसून प्रणाली को समग्रता को ही गहराई से प्रभावित कर सकती है। निदयों के मीठे जल के लगातार समुद्र में जाने से ही बंगाल की खाडी के ऊपरी स्तरों में पानी में लवणता का निम्न स्तर और निम्न सघनता बनी रहती है। यह समुद्र में पानी के स्तर का ऊंचा तापमान (28 डिग्री सेल्सियस से अधिक) बने रहने की वजह है जिससे समुद्री इलाके में निम्न दबाव का क्षेत्र बनता है और मॉनसूनी गतिविधियों को प्रोत्साहन मिलता है। उप-महाद्वीप के अधिकांश हिस्से में बारिश काफी हद तक कम खारे पानी के इस जलस्तर से ही निर्धारित होती है। लेकिन नदी-जोड़ परियोजना के तहत निदयों के मार्ग में बड़े अवरोध खड़े करने से समुद्र तक पहुंचने वाले मीठे पानी का प्रवाह बाधित होगा जिसका उप-महाद्वीप में जलवायु एवं बारिश पर गंभीर दीर्घकालिक दुष्परिणाम हो सकते हैं जो आबादी के बड़े हिस्से की आजीविका को भी खतरे में डाल

सच तो यह है कि सडकों एवं बिजली आपर्ति की तरह निदयों को इंसानों ने नहीं बनाया है जिनका मनमाने ढंग से बेजा इस्तेमाल किया जा सके। नदियां एक जीती-जागती पारिस्थितिकी हैं जिनका जन्म हजारों वर्षों के भीतर क्रमिक रूप से होता रहा है। लेकिन हम अपने अहंकार के वशीभूत होकर नदियों को काफी नुकसान पहुंचा चुके हैं। अब वक्त आ गया है कि हम अपनी नदी जल प्रणालियों में नई जान फूंकने, प्रकृति के नाजुक धागे को उलझाने के बजाय विनम्रता एवं समझदारी दिखाते हुए विज्ञान एवं अध्यात्म का समावेश करने

की दिशा में आगे बढें। (लेखक समाज प्रगति सहयोग के सह-संस्थापक हैं)

तीनों सेनाओं के साझा प्रमुख की क्या होगी संभावित भूमिका

सरकार ने बीते 15 दिन में सुरक्षा से जुड़े तीन अहम कदम उठाए हैं। पहला, जम्मू कश्मीर का विशेष राज्य का दर्जा समाप्त कर उसे दो केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों में बांट दिया गया है। दूसरा, रक्षा मंत्री राजनाथ सिंह ने परमाणु हथियारों के पहले इस्तेमाल न करने के भारत के पुराने सिद्धांत को नकारते हुए परोक्ष रूप से यह कहा है कि खास परिस्थितियों में भारत भी पहले हमला कर सकता है।

तीसरा, स्वतंत्रता दिवस के

अपने भाषण में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा कि वह चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ (सीडीएस) की नियुक्ति करने जा रहे हैं। वह तीनों सेनाओं का कमांडर होगा जो सशस्त्र बलों को और प्रभावी बनाएगा। यह स्पष्ट नहीं है कि वह करगिल समीक्षा समिति द्वारा 1999 में की गई अनुशंसाओं तथा 2001 में मंत्री समूह के कहे के मुताबिक पांच सितारे वाला सर्वोच्च पदस्थ होगा जिसे तीनों सेनाओं के प्रमुख रिपोर्ट करेंगे। या फिर नया सीडीएस 2012 के नरेश चंद्र कार्य बल के मुताबिक एक चार सितारा अधिकारी होगा जिसे चीफ्स ऑफ स्टाफ कमेटी के स्थायी चेयरमैन का दर्जा मिलेगा जो तीनों सेनाओं का प्रमुख नहीं होगा। वह केवल समकक्ष में सर्वोपरि होगा। एक पांच सितारा सीडीएस की नियुक्ति हालांकि पहला चरण होगी लेकिन यह इशारा होगा कि उच्च रक्षा प्रबंधन को लेकर राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति बरकरार है। वहीं चार सितारा अधिकारी की नियुक्ति प्रतीकात्मक होगी।

नए सीडीएस के समक्ष क्या काम होंगे? पहला, थलसेना, नौसेना और वायसेना के मध्य निर्णायक बनना। इसके लिए पांच अधिकारी आवश्यकता होगी क्योंकि इन सेनाओं का नेतत्व फिलहाल चार सितारा अधिकारियों के पास है। तीनों प्रमुख अपने-अपने क्षेत्र के हित में काम करते हैं इसलिए सीडीएस को बजट आदि के वितरण में गहन ईमानदारी का परिचय देना होगा। उसके निर्णय व्यापक राष्ट्रहित में होने चाहिए। इसके अलावा सीडीएस शीर्ष राजनैतिक नेतृत्व को सलाह देने का भी काम करेगा।

कई वरिष्ठ सैन्य अधिकारियों को आशंका है कि सीडीएस उनके अधिकार का अतिक्रमण और उनकी सेना को सीमित



दोधारी तलवार

अजय शुक्ला

करेगा। इस बात से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि तीनों सेनाओं की प्रतिद्वंद्विता सैन्य क्षमताओं को नुकसान पहुं चाएगी। दूसरे विश्वयुद्ध में जब अमेरिका और जापान की जंग चल रही थी तब वॉशिंगटन में अधिकारियों ने टिप्पणी की थी कि इस अभियान की सबसे भीषण लड़ाई सैन्य कमांडर जनरल डगलस मैकआर्थर और नौसेना के उनके समकक्ष अर्नेस्ट किंग के बीच लड़ी गई। बाद में अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति बनने वाले तत्कालीन जनरल आजइनहॉवर ने अपनी डायरी में लिखा, 'अगर कोई किंग को मार दे तो यह जंग जीतने में मदद मिल सकती है।' आखिरकार वियतनाम युद्ध में विभिन्न सेनाओं के बीच विसंगति के बाद राष्ट्रपति रोनाल्ड रीगन के कार्यकाल में गोल्ड वॉटर - निकोलस अधिनियम के जरिये राजनीतिक हस्तक्षेप कर सैन्य कमान के ढांचे में बदलाव लाना पड़ा।

बीच रिश्तों को भी ऐसे ही पुनर्गठन की जरूरत है। सन 1962 में चीन के साथ जंग में वायसेना परी तरह बाहर ही रह गई। सन 1965 में पाकिस्तान के साथ लडाई में नौसेना के साथ यही हुआ। सन 1999 में करगिल की लड़ाई के वक्त सेनाध्यक्ष जनरल वीपी मलिक ने बताया कि कैसे उन्हें शुरुआती चरण के दौरान वायु सेना का सहयोग पाने की खातिर एयर चीफ मार्शल अनिल टिपणिस पर दबाव बनाना पड़ा। केवल सीडीएस की नियुक्ति करने से यह असहजता दूर नहीं होगी। बिना सेना और रक्षा मंत्रालय के बीच की खाई पाटे कोई सुधार नहीं होता दिखता। नई सर्वोच्च संस्था में सैन्य, अफसरशाही और वित्त तीनों क्षेत्रों पर काम होना चाहिए। नए सीडीएस को दीर्घावधि

भारत की विभिन्न सेनाओं के

की योजना पर काम करना होगा। खासकर तीनों सेनाओं के कार्यबल के ढांचे, कमान और संचार, उनके द्वारा प्रयोग में लाए जाने वाले हथियार तथा तकनीक आदि पर। सीडीएस को तीनों सेनाओं को आधनिकतम तकनीक से लैस कर भविष्य में साइबर हथियारों और ऐंटी-सैटेलाइट हथियारों से सुरक्षित करना होगा। आंतरिक स्थिति को देखते हुए सीडीएस को ऐसा सैन्य ढांचा बनाना होगा जो प्रशिक्षित हो और आंतरिक सुरक्षा की जिम्मेदारी निभा सके। वह बेहतर प्रबंधन के माध्यम से कुछ धनराशि भी बचा सकते हैं।

सीडीएस की नियुक्ति से जुड़ा सबसे विवादास्पद सवाल यह है कि क्या उन्हें जंगी कार्रवाई की निगरानी और तीनों सेनाओं की संयुक्त सैन्य शक्ति के तालमेल वाले मुख्यालय का नेतृत्व देना चाहिए? या फिर सैन्य ऑपरेशन क्षेत्रीय कमान द्वारा चलाए जाने चाहिए। इन्हें तीनों सेनाओं का समर्थन मिलना चाहिए। फिलहाल तीनों सेनाओं के पास कुल 17 एकल सर्विस कमान हैं। इन्हें तीनों सेनाओं की चार कमान में बांटा जा सकता है। मिसाल के तौर पर पाकिस्तान और चीन की चुनौती को एकीकृत पश्चिमी और पर्वी कमान से संभाला जा सकता है जिसमें थलसेना और वायुसेना शामिल हों। इस बीच हिंद-प्रशांत क्षेत्र की समुद्री चुनौती को दक्षिण-पश्चिम और दक्षिण-पूर्व कमान से निपटाया जा सकता है जो मुख्यतौर पर नौसेना की होगी लेकिन इसे वायसेना और थलसेना की मदद मिलेगी।

तीनों सेनाओं की भौगोलिक कमान का विचार अमेरिका जैसी वैश्विक सेना को संगठनात्मक बढ़त दिलाने में कामयाब रहा है हो सकता है उसकी केंद्रीय कमान इराक में लड़ रही हो जबकि प्रशांत कमान उत्तर कोरिया में लड सकती है। भारत में सैन्य परिचालन के मोर्चे इतने दर नहीं हैं, ऐसे में अमेरिकी ढांचे की नकल करना ठीक नहीं। वायुसेना के बेड़ों को तयशुदा कमान पर रखना सही नहीं होगा क्योंकि आधुनिक युद्धक विमानों की पहुंच बहुत तगड़ी होती है। विमान आसानी से एक स्थान से दो जगह आक्रमण कर सकता है। इसी लचीलेपन के कारण वायुसेना तयशुदा तैनाती की कट्टर विरोधी है।

कानाफूसी

मनु गांधी की डायरी

भारतीय राष्ट्रीय अभिलेखागार ने ऑक्सफर्ड यूनिवर्सिटी प्रेस के सहयोग से मनु गांधी की डायरी प्रकाशित की हैं। इसका अनुवाद एवं संपादन त्रिदीप सुहृद ने किया है जो फिलहाल गुजरात स्थित सीईपीटी विश्वविद्यालय में पदस्थ हैं। मनु महात्मा गांधी की रिश्तेदार थीं। सन 1943 में मनु बीमार कस्तूरबा की देखभाल करने के लिए आई थीं। उस समय गांधी दंपती पुणे की आगा खां पैलेस जेल में थे। मनु महात्मा गांधी की हत्या तक उनके साथ रहीं। उन्होंने 10 डायरी लिखीं जो उनके निधन के बाद राष्ट्रीय अभिलेखागार को सौंप दी गईं। उनकी डायरी का पहला खंड सन 1943 और 1944 में महात्मा गांधी के साथ बिताए गए दिनों का ब्योरा है। इस डायरी में दिए गए ब्योरे एक कैदी के रूप में गांधी के जीवन पर प्रकाश डालती है। इसके साथ ही इसे एक स्त्री की आध्यात्मिक और शैक्षणिक तलाश से जोड़कर देखा जा सकता है।

एक दिन की उद्यायुक्त

दिल्ली स्थित ब्रिटिश उच्चायोग चाहता है कि 18 से 23 की उम्र की भारतीय महिलाएं एक प्रतियोगिता के लिए आवेदन दें जिसका नाम है-एक दिन की उच्चायुक्त। प्रतियोगिता के विजेता को एक दिन तक उच्चायोग चलाने का अवसर दिया जाएगा। इस दौरान विजेता देश में ब्रिटेन के नेटवर्क की निगरानी कर सकती है, रोजाना की ब्रीफिंग का काम कर सकती है और वह मीडिया तथा अन्य महत्त्वपूर्ण लोगों से बातचीत कर सकती है। यह प्रतियोगिता 11 अक्टूबर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय बालिका दिवस को ध्यान में रखकर आयोजित की जा रही है।



आपका पक्ष

मंदी की आहट और छिनते रोजगार

इस समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित एक खबर के अनसार भारत ने वर्ष 2018 में ब्रिटेन और फ्रांस को पीछे छोड़ते हुए दुनिया की पांचवीं बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था का स्थान प्राप्त किया था। भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था का आकार वर्ष 2017 में 2.65 खरब डॉलर था। ब्रिटेन का 2.64 खरब डॉलर और फ्रांस का 2.59 खरब डॉलर था। अब ब्रिटेन की अर्थव्यवस्था का आकार 2.82 खरब डॉलर और फ्रांस का 2.78 खरब डॉलर हो गया है। भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था का आकार 2.73 खरब डॉलर का हो गया है। भारत अब सातवें नंबर पर आ गया है। अर्थव्यवस्था में छा रही सुस्ती को दूर करने के लिए केंद्र सरकार सक्रिय हो गई है। इसी मुहिम में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने पिछले दिनों वित्तमंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण व शीर्ष अधिकारियों के साथ अर्थव्यवस्था की विस्तृत समीक्षा की थी। इस बैठक में वर्तमान आर्थिक सुस्ती की प्रकृति और इसके दीर्घकालिक



प्रभावों पर विचार किया गया। उम्मीद की जा सकती है कि सरकार जल्दी ही अर्थव्यवस्था के कुछ क्षेत्रों के लिए कुछ खास प्रोत्साहन उपायों की घोषणा कर सकती है। गौरतलब है कि वर्ष 2018-19 में आर्थिक वृद्धि घटकर 6.8 प्रतिशत पर आ गई थी। यह वर्ष 2014-15 के बाद की न्यूनतम दर है। वर्ष 2018-19 की आखिरी तिमाही में भी विकास ! विदेशी निवेश भी एक ऊंचाई पर ! में अफवाह फैलाने या किसी हिंसा

मंदी की आहट से वाहन उद्योग क्षेत्र के कामगारों की नौकरियां जा रही हैं

दर 5.8 फीसदी रही अर्थव्यवस्था में छा रही सुस्ती के कारण इस समय उपभोक्ताओं के विश्वास का स्तर गिर रहा है और

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

शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in

उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

लोगों को रोजगार मिला हुआ है।

आधार को सोशल मीडिया से जोड़ना

पहुंच कर ठहर गया है। इसके साथ

ही पिछले साल सितंबर से मांग की

कमी और अर्थव्यवस्था में आई

गिरावट के कारण देश का वाहन

उद्योग संकट का सामना कर रहा

है। वाहन क्षेत्र में मंदी जारी रही तो

10 लाख लोगों की नौकरियां जा

सकती हैं। वाहन क्षेत्र में 50 लाख

प्रियंबदा, गोरखपुर

अदालत में आधार को सोशल मीडिया से जोड़ने के लिए जनहित याचिका दायर की गई हैं। याचिका में आधार या अन्य सरकारी पहचान पत्र को सोशल मीडिया प्रोफाइल में जोड़ना अनिवार्य करने के लिए सरकार को निर्देश देने की मांग की गई है। इस कदम से सोशल मीडिया

बंद करने में मदद मिल सकती है। लेकिन आधार पहले से ही कई विवादों में रहा है तथा आधार से डेटा चोरी होने के कई मामले अदालत में सुनवाई के लिए पहुंचा है। ऐसे में सोशल मीडिया को आधार से जोड़ना सही नहीं होगा। सोशल मीडिया में प्रोफाइल बनाते समय मोबाइल नंबर और ईमेल आईडी का सत्यापन ओटीपी और ईमेल में भेजे गए लिंक के जरिये किया जाता है। वर्तमान में हर मोबाइल नंबर आधार से जडा हुआ है क्योंकि इसे जोडने के लिए सरकार ने नियम बनाए थे। ऐसे में सोशल मीडिया प्रोफाइल धारक की पूरी जानकारी सरकार चाहे तो तुरंत निकाल सकती है। ऐसे में सोशल मीडिया को आधार से जोड़ा जाना उचित नहीं है। आधार को सोशल मीडिया से जोड़े जाने पर आधार डेटा का सोशल मीडिया कंपनी द्वारा गलत इस्तेमाल करने की आशंका बनी रहेगी। अत: आधार डेटा को सुरक्षित बनाए रखने के लिए यह कदम सही नहीं है।

के लिए सोशल मीडिया की मदद

अनामिका कुमारी, नई दिल्ली





परिवर्तन के बिना प्रगति असंभव है

कश्मीर पर अलग राग

जम्मू-कश्मीर पर पाकिस्तान किस तरह अलग-थलग पड़ गया है, इसका प्रमाण केवल यही नहीं कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में उसकी कहीं कोई सुनवाई नहीं हुई, बल्कि यह भी है कि दक्षिण एशिया का कोई देश उसका साथ देने को तैयार नहीं। भूटान, श्रीलंका, नेपाल, मालदीव के बाद अब बांग्लादेश ने भी जम्मू-कश्मीर को भारत का आंतरिक मामला करार दिया। इसके अलावा अमेरिका और फ्रांस ने भी नए सिरे से पाकिस्तान के समक्ष यह स्पष्ट कर दिया कि वे कश्मीर मामले में हस्तक्षेप करने की जरूरत नहीं समझते। इस सबके बावजूद भारत में कुछ राजनीतिक दल और खासकर कांग्रेस एवं वामपंथी दल जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के फैसले पर मीन-मेख निकालने में लगे हुए हैं। क्या इससे अजीब और कुछ हो सकता है कि जब विश्व समुदाय जम्मू-कश्मीर पर भारत सरकार के फैसले का समर्थन कर रहा है तब कांग्रेंस विरोध का राग अलाप रही है और वह भी तब जब उसके एक के बाद एक नेता इस मसले पर पार्टी की राय से असहमति जाहिर कर रहे हैं। यह देखना दयनीय है कि कांग्रेस अभी भी यह मान रही है कि कश्मीर पर मोदी सरकार की कुटनीति विफल है। इस नतीजे पर पहुंचने के लिए उसने जिस तरह अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति के ताजा बयान का सहारा लिया उससे यही स्पष्ट होता है कि वह जम्मू-कश्मीर मामले को समग्रता के साथ देखने के बजाय छिद्रान्वेषण पर जोर दे रही है। शायद यही कारण है कि उसके नेता अनुच्छेद 370 को अस्थाई कहने से बच रहे हैं। कांग्रेसी नेता न केवल इसकी अनदेखी कर रहे हैं कि यह एक अस्थाई अनुच्छेद था, बल्कि इस बात को भी भूल जा रहे हैं कि खुद नेहरू ने कहा था कि यह संवैधानिक व्यवस्था घिसते-घिसते एक दिन खत्म हो जाएगी।

कांग्रेस को यह स्मरण होना चाहिए कि उसके कार्यकाल में अनुच्छेद 370 में कई संशोधन किए गए। अगर यह अस्थाई अनुच्छेद इतना ही महत्वपूर्ण और उपयोगी था तो फिर कांग्रेस ने सत्ता में रहते समय उसे स्थाई रूप क्यों नहीं दिया? यह हास्यास्पद है कि कांग्रेस एक ओर तो कश्मीर को भारत का अटूट अंग बताती है और दूसरी ओर उस अनुच्छेद को हटाए जाने का विरोध भी करती है जो अलगाव और भेदभाव का जरिया बन गया था। बेहतर हो कि कांग्रेस यह स्पष्ट करे कि उसे कश्मीर के भारत में एकीकरण को लेकर आपत्ति क्यों है? कायदे से तो यह एकीकरण आजादी के बाद ही होना चाहिए था-ठीक वैसे ही जैसे हैदराबाद और जूनागढ़ की रियासतों का हुआ था। कांग्रेस सरीखे दल के लिए यह ठीक नहीं कि वह दलगत राजनीतिक हित के आगे देश हित की

हड़ताल से नुकसान

किसी समस्या का समाधान क्या हड़ताल हो सकता है? आज तक क्या हड़ताल या बंद से नुकसान के अलावा किसी का भला हुआ है? यह एक बड़ा सवाल है जिसका उत्तर शायद बंगाल में हड़ताल करने वाले कर्मचारियों एवं संगठनों के पास भी नहीं है। यहां बात सेना के लिए हथियार एवं गोला-बारूद बनाने वाली देश की 41 आयुध फैक्ट्रियों के बोर्ड (ओएफबी) के करीब 82 हजार असैन्य कर्मचारियों की एक माह की हड़ताल की हो रही है। देश भर की रक्षा विनिर्माण इकाइयों में मंगलवार से एक महीने की हड़ताल शुरू हो गई है। केंद्र ने हाल ही में इन फैक्ट्रियों के निगमीकरण का प्रस्ताव पास किया है, जिसका कर्मचारी विरोध कर रहे हैं। कर्मचारियों का कहना है कि सरकार एक तरफ सेना को मजबूत करने के दावे करती है, वहीं दूसरी ओर सुरक्षा संस्थानों को निजी हाथों में सौंपने की साजिश रच रही है। यह हड़ताल तीन मजदूर संघों ने की है। वे सरकार की निगमीकरण की योजना तत्काल वापस लेने की मांग कर रहे हैं। हालांकि बोर्ड के अध्यक्ष सौरभ कुमार का कहना है कि केंद्र के प्रस्तावित कदम का उद्देश्य फैसले लेने में स्वायत्तता बढ़ानी है। यूनियनों का आरोप है कि सरकार निगमीकरण या सार्वजनिक उपक्रम (पीएसयू) के बहाने फैक्ट्रियों का निजीकरण करना चाहती है। यूनियनों की ओर से रक्षा मंत्री राजनाथ सिंह को लिखे पत्र में कहा है कि निगमीकरण या पीएसयू बनाने से कर्मचारियों का भविष्य बर्बाद हो जाएगा। इसीलिए सरकार को यह फैसला वापस लेना चाहिए। हालांकि सरकार का कहना है कि वह आयुध फैक्ट्रियों के निजीकरण नहीं, बल्कि इनको रक्षा क्षेत्र का सार्वजनिक उपक्रम बनाने पर विचार कर रही है। रक्षा मंत्रालय ने स्पष्ट किया है कि 'ओएफबी के निजीकरण को लेकर अफवाहें फैलाई जा रही हैं। ये भ्रामक हैं और इनका मकसद कर्मचारियों को गुमराह करना है।' अगर सरकार की ओर से स्पष्ट किया जा रहा है कि आयुध फैक्ट्रियों का निजीकरण नहीं किया जा रहा है तो फिर हड़ताल क्यों ? क्या सरकार को पता नहीं है कि निजी हाथों में ये फैक्ट्रियों दे दी जाएंगी तो इसका नतीजा घातक भी हो सकता है। क्योंकि आज देश की आंतरिक एवं बाहरी सुरक्षा सरकार के लिए बड़ी चुनौती है। इस समय पाकिस्तान लगातार साजिशें रच रहा है। ऐसे में सरकार को भी चाहिए कि हड़ताली कर्मचारियों को पूरी तरह से आश्वस्त करे कि निजीकरण नहीं हो रहा है और कर्मचारियों को भी बैठकर मसले को सुलझा लेना चाहिए।

हर मोर्चे पर मात खाता पाकिस्तान



संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में जम्मू – कश्मीर पर हुई चर्चा का यही निष्कर्ष निकला कि परिषद इस मुद्दे पर कोई हस्तक्षेप नहीं करना चाहती।यह भारत के लिए एक बड़ी कूटनीतिक उपलब्धि है

म्मू-कश्मीर को लेकर इमरान खान की टिप्पणियों और पाकिस्तान की ओर से उठाए जाने वाले राजनयिक कदमों से लगता है कि पाकिस्तानी नेता अपना मानसिक संतुलन खो बैठे हैं। पाकिस्तान के राजनियक भी हिंसात्मक रुख अपनाने पर आमादा हैं। जिस दिन से अनुच्छेद 370 और 35ए हटाने और जम्मू-कश्मीर को दो केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों में बदलने की घोषणा हुई उसी दिन से पाकिस्तान एक के बाद एक गलतियां करता जा रहा है। इन गलतियों से उसे आज ही नहीं, बल्कि भविष्य में भी नुकसान उठाना पडेगा। भारत-पाक के बीच यह एक अलिखित परंपरा रही है कि व्यक्तिगत आक्रमण से परहेज किया जाता है। नीतियों और गतिविधियों पर जरूर सख्त रुख अपनाया जाता है, लेकिन कभी भी तीखे निजी हमले नहीं हुए। इमरान खान, उनके साथियों और पाकिस्तानी सेना ने इस उसूल को तिलांजलि दे दी है। उनके द्वारा प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी, भाजपा एवं राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ परिवार की विचारधारा पर जो टिप्पणियां हो रही हैं उन्हें भारत की जनता आसानी से भूल नहीं पाएगी। मोदी भारत के निर्वाचित प्रधानमंत्री हैं। भारत की जनता ने उन पर भरोसा किया है। पाक चाहे या न चाहे उसे भाजपा और मोदी के नेतत्व वाली सरकार का ही सामना करना होगा। ऐसे में क्या यह उचित है कि पाकिस्तान ऐसे शब्दों का इस्तेमाल करे जिससे द्विपक्षीय संबंध कभी

सुधर न पाएं? राजनय की हमेशा यह मांग रहती हैं कि बड़े देशों के नेता नीतियों का खंडन तो करते हैं, लेकिन व्यक्तिगत आक्षेप का सहारा कभी नहीं लेते। मोदी ने धैर्य का प्रदर्शन करते हुए इस पूरे घटनाक्रम के बीच न तो इमरान खान पर और न ही पाकिस्तान सरकार के अन्य लोगों पर किसी तरह का निजी हमला किया। इससे पाकिस्तान को सबक लेना चाहिए।

पाकिस्तान ने पहले ही भारत के साथ संबंधों को और कमजोर कर दिया है। उसने व्यापारिक संबंध तोड़ दिए हैं। राजनियक रिश्तों को कमतर करते हुए भारतीय उच्चायुक्त को स्वदेश लौटने का हुक्म दे दिया और अपने उच्चायुक्त को भारत न भेजने का निर्णय किया। इसके साथ-साथ पाकिस्तान सांस्कृतिक संबंध भी समाप्त करना चाहता है। भारतीय फिल्मों और टीवी प्रोग्राम और यहां तक कि कोई भी विज्ञापन जिसमें कोई भारतीय कलाकार हों, उन्हें दिखाने की पाकिस्तान में अनुमति नहीं रहेगी। ये सब कदम पाकिस्तान की नादानी ही दर्शाते हैं, क्योंकि औपचारिक व्यापार तो खत्म हो सकता है, लेकिन अनौपचारिक व्यापार तो चलता ही रहेगा, भले ही पाकिस्तान कितनी भी कोशिश क्यों न कर ले। इससे पाकिस्तान की पहले से चरमराई अर्थव्यवस्था का और बरा हाल होना तय है। वहीं भारत को इससे कोई खास नुकसान नहीं होगा। जहां तक सांस्कृतिक संबंधों की बात है, पाकिस्तान ने कई बार पहले भी भारत के सांस्कृतिक प्रभाव



को रोकने की कोशिश की है, लेकिन उसमें वह नाकाम ही रहा है। पाकिस्तानी हुक्मरान भूल जाते हैं कि उनका देश दक्षिण एशिया का भाग है, अरब देशों या ईरान का नहीं। भारत ने दूरंदेशी दिखाते हुए पाक को यह सही सलाह दी कि वह ये सभी नकारात्मक कदम वापस ले, लेकिन शायद दशकों से भरी कटुता पाकिस्तान के नेताओं को तार्किक रूप से सोचने की

पाकिस्तान जम्मू-कश्मीर के मसले का अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण करने की भरपूर कोशिश कर रहा है। इसीलिए उसने संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद यानी यूएनएससी की औपचारिक बैठक की मांग की और उसमें बोलने की विशेष अनुमित भी मांगी। उसने यह अनुरोध इसलिए किया, क्योंकि वह परिषद का सदस्य नहीं है। इस पर परिषद के सभापति ने पाक की अपील को ठुकरा दिया। फिर पाक के सदाबहार मित्र चीन ने सभापति से निवेदन किया कि बैठक में अनौपचारिक रूप से चर्चा आयोजित की जाए। यह चर्चा 16 अगस्त को हुई। इस दौरान भारत ने जम्मू-कश्मीर में जो संवैधानिक कदम उठाए उन्हें लेकर चीन को छोड़कर

लगभग सभी सदस्यों ने माना कि यह भारत का आंतरिक मामला है। चीन के अलावा करीब सभी देशों में सहमति रही कि जम्मू-कश्मीर का मुद्दा भारत-पाकिस्तान को द्विपक्षीय स्तर पर सुलझाना चाहिए। अमेरिका का यह मत अधिक महत्वपूर्ण था कि इस मामले में सुरक्षा परिषद की कोई भूमिका नहीं। चीन चाहता था कि चर्चा के बाद एक बयान जारी हो, लेकिन फ्रांस और कई अन्य देशों ने यह जारी नहीं होने दिया। चर्चा का यही निष्कर्ष निकला कि आगे भी संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद जम्मू-कश्मीर के मामले में हस्तक्षेप नहीं करना चाहती। यह भारत के लिए एक बड़ी कूटनीतिक उपलब्धि है।

यह सच है कि दशकों बाद जम्मू-कश्मीर पर संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में चर्चा हुई, लेकिन आज के भारत को ऐसी चर्चा से घबराने की जरूरत नहीं, क्योंकि इससे भारत का अंतरराष्ट्रीय रुतबा जाहिर होने के साथ यह भी सिद्ध होता है आज के भारत से कोई पंगा नहीं लेना चाहता। यह आश्चर्यजनक था कि इस चर्चा में ब्रिटेन की भूमिका नकारात्मक रही। शायद वह अभी भी औपनिवेशिक मानसिकता से पीड़ित है और इसी कारण नए भारत को

समझ नहीं पा रहा। ऐसा करके वह अपने हितो की अनदेखी ही कर रहा है। भारत सरकार ब्रिटेन के इस रुख को नजरअंदाज न करे।

पाकिस्तानी विदेश मंत्री शाह महमूद कुरैशी ने अपने देशवासियों को आगाह किया कि कश्मीर पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय समर्थन को लेकर वे किसी मुगालते में न रहें। संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में उनकी यह आशंका सही साबित हुई लेकिन क्या पाकिस्तान इससे सही सबक ले पाएगा? भारत या अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय उससे ऐसी उम्मीद नहीं रख सकते। दरअसल जबसे पाकिस्तान बना तबसे ही भारत के साथ निरंतर शत्रुता उसकी विचारधारा का मुख्य स्तंभ बन गया है। पाकिस्तान के शासकों और प्रमुख रूप से उसकी सेना भारत विरोध की यही घुट्टी पाकिस्तान को पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी पिलाते आ रही है। भारत के हालिया कदमों से जम्मू-कश्मीर को लेकर पाकिस्तान के औपचारिक दृष्टिकोण पर कोई असर नहीं पड़ा है। यह संभव नहीं कि जम्मू-कश्मीर की जनसांख्यिकी में आने वाले वर्षों में कोई विशेष परिवर्तन होगा चूंकि पाकिस्तान कश्मीर पर सार्थक रूप से सोच ही नहीं पाता इसलिए आगे चलकर भी वह नकारात्मक कदम ही उठाएगा। जाहिर है कि भारत को और अधिक सतर्क रहने की आवश्यकता होगी। पाकिस्तानी सेना और आइएसआइ अपनी तंजीमों को आतंकवाद की ओर और ज्यादा धकेल सकती हैं। इसके साथ साथ भारत के विरुद्ध कश्मीर घाटी में माहौल खराब करने के लिए और भी नई तरकी बें निकाली जा सकती हैं। इसलिए यह अत्यंत आवश्यक है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर के लोगों को पूर्ण आश्वासन मिले कि उनकी पहचान से कोई खिलवाड नहीं होगा। इसके प्रयास किए जाने चाहिए कि वे अपनी पहचान और परंपराओं को पूर्ण रूप से कायम रख सकें।

(लेखक विदेश मंत्रालय में सचिव रहे हैं) response@jagran.com

दोधारी तलवार पर चलती कांग्रेस

सुप्रसिद्ध व्यंग्यकार हरिशंकर परसाई ने अपने लेख 'सदाचार का ताबीज' में लिखा है, 'एक राज्य में हल्ला हो गया कि भ्रष्टाचार बहुत फैल गया है। राजा ने विशेषज्ञों को बुलवाया और जांच करने को कहा। जांच पूरी हुई तो राजा ने कहा दिखाओ भ्रष्टाचार कहां है। विशेषज्ञों ने कहा कि वह स्थूल नहीं है, सूक्ष्म है, अगोचर है, पर सर्वत्र व्याप्त है। राजा ने कहा कि ये गुण तो ईश्वर के हैं। तो क्या भ्रष्टाचार ईश्वर हो गया। विशेषज्ञों ने कहा, 'हां महाराज अब भ्रष्टाचार ईश्वर हो गया है।' पिछले चार-पांच दशकों से तो हम लोग भी मानने लगे थे कि भ्रष्टाचार भगवान हो गया है। उसे महसूस किया जा सकता है, पकड़ा नहीं जा सकता। हम भ्रष्टाचारी की विराटता देखने के इतने आदी हो गए कि हमें वह दिखता ही नहीं था। निराशा ऐसी थी कि भ्रष्टाचार के साथ जीने को नियति मान बैठे। पूर्व केंद्रीय गृह और वित्त मंत्री को सीबीआइ की ओर से हिरासत में लिए जाने ने जैसे सपने से जगा दिया। सक्ष्म भी दिख सकता है यदि देखने और दिखाने वाले में इच्छाशक्ति हो। चिदंबरम पर भ्रष्टाचार का आरोप भगवान तो नहीं बन पाया, पर संस्था जरूर बन गया। दिल्ली हाईकोर्ट के जज के मुताबिक चिदंबरम आइएनएक्स मीडिया घोटाले के मुख्य साजिशकर्ता हैं। जज ने यह बात सीबीआइ और प्रवर्तन निदेशालय यानी ईडी द्वारा पेश सुबूतों और दस्तावेजों के आधार पर कही। दिल्ली हाईकोर्ट ने अपने फैसले से पिछले कई दशकों में बनी इस आम धारणा को भी तोड़ा कि देश के कानून की नजर में सब बराबर नहीं हैं। यह भी कि व्यक्ति के रसुख से तय होता है कि कानून के लंबे हाथ की पहुंच उस तक है या नहीं? हाईकोर्ट ने कहा कि सांसद या बड़ा वकील होने से आप कानून से बच नहीं सकते। चिदंबरम और उनकी कांग्रेस पार्टी कई साल से कह रही थी और आज भी कह रही है कि यह सब राजनीतिक बदले की भावना से की गई कार्रवाई है। सो अदालत में भी यही कहा गया, पर हाईकोर्ट ने कहा कि इसे राजनीतिक बदले की कार्रवाई कहना हास्यास्पद है। हाईकोर्ट से अग्रिम जमानत की अर्जी खारिज होने पर कांग्रेस के वकील नेताओं की फौज सुप्रीम कोर्ट दौड़ी।

चिदंबरम की हालत देखकर महाकवि भूषण की यह कविता याद आती है-तीन बेर खाती थीं, वे तीन बेर खाती हैं। यानी जो दिन में तीन बार खाती थीं अब तीन बेर पर गुजारा कर रही हैं। विडंबना देखिए जिन कांग्रेस नेताओं/वकीलों की गुहार पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के ताले आधी रात को खुल जाते थे उनकी पुकार पर शाम साढ़े चार बजे



गलत नहीं किया तो किस बात का डर और गलत किया है तो पार्टी क्यों उनका बचाव कर रही है



भी सुनवाई नहीं हुई। सुप्रीम कोर्ट से निराशा हाथ लगने के बाद वह चिदंबरम जो नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार से रोज पूछते थे कि माल्या, नीरव मोदी और मेहुल चोकसी कैसे भागा, वही शाम पांच बजे के बाद खुद लापता हो गए। सीबीआइ और ईडी की टीम उनके आवास पर उनका इंतजार करती रही। रात में घर के बाहर नोटिस चिपकाया गया। सुबह मामला सुप्रीम कोर्ट के तीन जजों की बेंच के सामने गया तो उन्होंने कह दिया कि मुख्य न्यायाधीश इसे सुनेंगे। इसके

बाद भी चिदंबरम कई घंटे लापता रहे। राजनीतिक भ्रष्टाचार का पर्याय बन चुकी कांग्रेस पार्टी से शायद कुछ लोगो को उम्मीद रही होगी कि अपनी इस छवि को बदलने के लिए पार्टी भ्रष्टाचार के आरोपी नेताओं से दूरी बनाकर रखेगी, मगर पार्टी के वरिष्ठ नेता ही नहीं, बल्कि नेहरू-गांधी परिवार की नई नेता प्रियंका गांधी वाड़ा भी चिदंबरम के समर्थन में खुलकर आ गई हैं। इतना ही नहीं, चिदंबरम को पार्टी दफ्तर में प्रेस कांफ्रेंस करने की सुविधा भी दी गई। इसका क्या मतलब समझा जाए कि पूरे कुएं में भांग पड़ी हुई है या पार्टी और परिवार एक संदेश दे रहा है कि भ्रष्टाचार के आरोप में फंसे नेता उसकी थाती हैं अथवा यह निकट भविष्य के आसन्न खतरे को देखते हुए अपने लिए समर्थन बनाए रखने की कोशिश है? ध्यान रहे कि नेशनल हेराल्ड मामले में अन्य लोगों के साथ सोनिया

चिदंबरम के कानूनी शिकंजे में फंसने से आम लोगों की सोच में बड़ा बदलाव आएगा। एक धारणा जो मन में घर कर गई थी कि पांच सौ रुपये की रिश्वत लेने वाले सिपाही जैसी छोटी मछलियां तो पकड़ी जाएंगी, लेकिन बड़े मगरमच्छों पर कभी कोई हाथ नहीं डालेगा। आम आदमी ही नहीं सुप्रीम कोर्ट के मुख्य न्यायाधीश ने भी हाल में कहा कि राजनीतिक रसुख वालों के खिलाफ सीबीआइ की जांच प्रभावी नहीं होती। इससे अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि यह ग्रंथि कितने गहरे पैठी हुई है। वैसे बदलाव भारतीय जनतंत्र के उन 'सुल्तानों' की सोच में भी आएगा जो मानकर चलते थे कि उनके ऊपर हाथ डालने की किसी में हिम्मत नहीं है। उन्हें यकीन था कि सत्ता में कोई हो, सिस्टम उनका दास है। उनका यह यकीन मुगालता साबित हो रहा है। चिदंबरम और कांग्रेस नेताओं की बदहवासी भ्रष्टाचार के खिलाफ लड़ाई के लिए अच्छी है। कानून का डर होना ही चाहिए। केवल आम आदमी को ही कानून से क्यों डरना चाहिए। रसूख वालों का यह डर अच्छा है। इससे गरीब आदमी को सुकून मिलेगा कि कानून की नजर में सचमुच सब बराबर हैं।

कांग्रेस ने अतीत में बहुत सी गलतियां की हैं, पर संगठन मजबूत स्थिति में हो तो गलती का नुकसान अपेक्षाकृत कम होता है। भ्रष्टाचार के मामले में चिदंबरम का बचाव करने का फैसला करने से पहले पार्टी कार्यसमिति की बैठक नहीं हुई। मां सोनिया और बेटे राहुल की बैठक में तय हुआ कि चिदंबरम का बचाव करना है और पूरी पार्टी बचाव में कूद पड़ी। ऐसा लगा जैसे चिदंबरम भ्रष्टाचार के आरोपी न होकर स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के सिपाही हों। सवाल है कि पार्टी के युवा नेता जिनका अभी लंबा राजनीतिक जीवन है, वे भ्रष्टाचार के इस दाग को क्यों ढोएंगे? जम्मू-कश्मीर का विशेष दर्जा खत्म करने और राज्य के पुनर्गठन के मुद्दे पर पार्टी के अंदर से निकली बगावत की आग अभी ठंडी भी नहीं पड़ी थी कि पार्टी ने एक और आत्मघाती फैसला ले लिया। इस फैसले से कांग्रेस आम लोगों को बता रही है कि सत्ता में रहते हुए उसके नेताओं पर भ्रष्टाचार के जो आरोप लगे उसकी वास्तविकता को नजरअंदाज कर, वह बचाव करेगी। यदि चिदंबरम ने कुछ गलत नहीं किया तो फिर डर कैसा और गलत किया है तो बचाव क्यों? कहते हैं इस जीवन का किया-अनकिया सब यहीं रहता है। कांग्रेस और चिदंबरम दोनों, जीवन की इस सच्चाई से भाग रहे हैं। ऐसे ही लोगों के लिए कबीर दास बहुत पहले लिख गए हैं-'करम गति टारै नाहीं टरी..।'

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



मनुष्य ऐसी किसी भी वस्तु या व्यक्ति से प्रेम कर सकता है, जिसके साथ वह व्यक्तिगत जुड़ाव महसूस करता हो। ऐसा प्रेम एक-दूसरे के लिए सिर्फ चाह या दिखावा मात्र नहीं, बल्कि एक प्रभावशाली भाव-संबंध है। प्रेम में मनुष्य के भीतर एक अहसास उत्पन्न होता है और इसी अहसास के अनुरूप वह व्यवहार भी करता है। कबीरदास कहते हैं कि पोथी पढ़कर कोई विद्वान नहीं होता, लेकिन जो प्रेम के ढाई अक्षर पढ़ ले, वह महापंडित हो जाता है। यह संसार मिथ्या है और यहाँ दुखों का अंबार लगा है, लेकिन इसके बावजूद मनुष्य को अपने जीवन के प्रति विशेष लगाव है। इसका कारण यही है कि संसार में अवश्य ऐसा कुछ आकर्षण है कि लोग दुखों को सहने को भी तैयार रहते हैं। संसार का यह आकर्षण प्रेम ही है और प्रेम के अभाव में मनुष्य के जीवन की कल्पना तक नहीं की जा सकती। मनुष्य के जीवन में आनंद का आधार प्रेम ही है। प्रत्येक धर्म संस्कृति में प्रेम के गुण को सर्वोच्च माना गया है। प्रेम ईश्वर का सबसे श्रेष्ठ गुण है और इसी गुण के कारण हम उसकी ओर खिंचे चले जाते हैं।

भगवान बुद्ध कहते हैं कि जिस तरह हजारों दीयों को एक ही दीये से, बिना उसके प्रकाश को कम किए जलाया जा सकता है, उसी तरह ख़ुशी बांटने से ख़ुशी कभी कम नहीं होती। वह कहते हैं कि आंख के बदले आंख की मंशा पूरी दुनिया को अंधा बना सकती है। घृणा, घृणा करने से कम नहीं होती, बल्कि प्रेम से घटती है. यही शाश्वत नियम है। असल में जब हम स्वयं से प्रेम करने का संकल्प लेते हैं, तभी हम दूसरो से भी प्रेम कर सकते हैं। ऐसा तब तक संभव नहीं जब तक मनुष्य अपने क्रोध पर विजय प्राप्त न कर ले। जब मनुष्य अपने क्रोध को नियंत्रित और दूसरों को क्षमा प्रदान करता है, तभी वह ईश्वरीय प्रेम की अनुभूति को प्राप्त कर सकता है। क्षमा ही हमारे प्रेम की क्रिया है क्षमा दूसरों के लिए नहीं, बल्कि स्वयं के लिए करनी होती है। जब हम दूसरों को क्षमा करते हैं, तब वास्तव में हम अपनी आत्मा को स्वतंत्र करते हैं।

आचार्य अनिल वत्स

धर्म का सही मतलब

डॉ. रतन कुमार घोषाल

भारत विश्व के समस्त देशों में एक अनोखा गणतंत्र है। यहां भौगोलिक, भाषागत विविधत होने के बावजूद इसकी जनतांत्रिक बुनियादी संरचना किसी चट्टान के समान मजबूत है। यह मजबूती इसे राष्ट्रवाद की भावना से मिली है जो इसके कण-कण में समाहित है। यह भी सत्य है कि अनेक उन्नत देशों की तुलना में भारत में प्रति व्यक्ति आय अभी काफी कम है। मानव विकास सूचक में भी भारत का स्थान काफी नीचे है। यहां शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य की बुनियादी संरचना भी उन्नत नहीं है। गरीबी भी भयावह है। इसके बावजूद यहां केंद्रीय और राज्यों के स्तर पर चुनाव सफलतापूर्वक संपन्न होते रहे हैं। दुख की बात यह है कि भारतीय लोकतंत्र में समय के साथ कई बुराइयां प्रवेश कर गई हैं। अधिकांश राजनीतिक दल इन्हें दूर करने के बजाय इनको ही सत्ता प्राप्ति का जरिया बना लिए हैं। इधर भाजपा जब से केंद्र में सत्ता में आई है तब से विपक्षी दल उस पर धर्म की राजनीति करने का आरोप लगाते रहे हैं। बंगाल में इन दिनों यह कुछ ज्यादा देखने-सुनने को मिल रहा है। विपक्ष के इस आरोप में कितनी

भारत में धर्म का अर्थ वह नहीं है जो विपक्षी दल लगा रहे हैं। इसका सीधा आशय राष्ट्रीयता या राष्ट्रवाद की भावना से है

सच्चाई है? क्या विरोधी दल के नेता भारतीय परिप्रेक्ष्य में धर्म का असली अर्थ समझते हैं? या फिर वे पूजा-पाठ की पद्धति को ही असली

गीता में कहा गया है कि मनुष्य की प्रकृति और उसके संभावित कर्म का सटीक संपादन ही धर्म है। बंकिमचंद्र के शब्दों में कहें तो मानव प्रवृत्ति का साधन ही धर्म है। उन्होंने देश प्रेम को ही धर्म माना और इसे राष्ट्रीयता के आंदोलन से जोड़ा। उनका 'वंदेमातरम्' मंत्र भारतवासियों में 'ब्रह्मत्व' का विकास करने में सक्षम हुआ था। वास्तव में हिंदुत्व और धर्म किसी भी राजनीतिक दल का नहीं होता है। सनातन हिंदू धर्म के मूल में स्नेह और प्यार हैं। अर्थात स्वयं को सर्वभृत देखना और सर्वत्र समान देखना यही धर्म है। भारत में कई तरह की विविधताएं ैहैं। यहां विभिन्न भाषाएं, विभिन्न विचार,

विभिन्न पहनावा आदि हैं। इसके बावजूद हम सब एक हैं। इसे सांप्रदायिक विभाजन नहीं माना जाना चाहिए। संप्रदाय का मतलब यदि दल अथवा समूह होता है तो समस्त राजनीतिक दल ही सांप्रदायिक हैं, क्योंकि सभी एक-दूसरे के विरुद्ध बोल और कार्य कर रहे हैं। श्रमिक संप्रदाय और मालिक संप्रदाय के बीच विरोध उत्पन्न करना भी तो सांप्रदायिकता है।

वास्तव में भारत धर्म आधारित देश है। इसलिए तो ऋषि अरविंद ने कहा था कि धर्म के लिए, धर्म द्वारा ही भारत का आस्तित्व है। और यहां धर्म का मतलब उन्होंने राष्ट्रीयता की भावना माना है। इससे स्पष्ट होता है कि भारत में धर्म का व्यापक अर्थ वह नहीं है जो विपक्षी दल लगा रहे हैं। इसका सीधा आशय राष्ट्रीयता या राष्ट्रवाद की भावना से है। भाजपा इसी विचारधारा को मानती है। बंगाल के लोग इससे प्रभावित होकर भाजपा से जुड़ रहे हैं। गत चुनावों में इसके वोट प्रतिशत में बढ़ोतरी इसका प्रमाण है। बंगाल के दूसरे दलों को भी इससे सीखना चाहिए और बेवजह धर्म के नाम पर इसे बदनाम नहीं करना चाहिए।

(लेखक कलकत्ता विश्वविद्यालय में अर्थशास्त्र के वरिष्ठ प्राध्यापक हैं)

स्याह तथ्यो वाला लेख

और राहल भी जमानत पर हैं।

वरिष्ठ कांग्रेस नेता मनीष तिवारी का आलेख 'स्याह नतीजों वाला फैसला' पढा। वह लिखते हैं कि दिल्ली और श्रीनगर के बीच राजनीतिक दीवार को गिराकर कश्मीर को सीधे नई दिल्ली से संचालित किया जाना उचित नहीं है। मेरा उनसे सवाल है कि क्यों कांग्रेस सरकारों में जम्मू-कश्मीर को जनवरी 1990 से अक्टूबर 1996 तक, यानी पौने सात साल तक राष्ट्रपति शासन में रखकर दिल्ली से सीधे संचालित किया गया था? यह संविधान के अनुच्छेद 356 में दो-दो बार संशोधित करके किया गया था। इसी तरह पंजाब को 1987 से 1992 के बीच पांच वर्ष राष्ट्रपति शासन के तहत रखा गया था। वह आगे लिखते हैं कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में अक्टूबर 1951 में संविधान सभा का गठन किया गया और उसके द्वारा बनाया गया सूबे का संविधान 26 नवंबर, 1957 को लागू हुआ। पहली बात तो यह है कि लागू होने की तिथि 26 जनवरी, 1957 थी। और वहां की संविधान सभा के गठन के बारे में चौंकाने वाला तथ्य यह है कि उसका 75 सदस्यीय सदन एक ही पार्टी यानी नेशनल कांफ्रेंस के नेताओं से भरा पड़ा था, अन्य किसी दल को या तो चुनाव में खड़े ही नहीं होने दिया गया या जीतने नहीं दिया गया। इसके लिए सरकारी मशीनरी का सीमा से परे जाकर दुरुपयोग किया गया। हिंदू-बौद्धों के हितों का ध्यान रखने वाला वहां कोई नहीं था। जम्मू तथा लद्दाख के साथ ऐसा सौतेला व्यवहार किया गया कि कश्मीर घाटी ही सर्वोच्च बना दी गई। दोनों की आबादी मिलाकर घाटी से अधिक थी, किंतु घाटी को विधानसभा में 47 सीटें और जम्म्-लद्दाख को 41 स्थान दिए गए। लोकसभा में भी घाटी के लिए तीन और जम्मू-लद्दाख के लिए भी तीन स्थान रखे गए। जम्मू-कश्मीर संविधान इसीलिए एक क्रूर प्रहसन है।

मेलबाक्स

लगता है कि लेखक को उस विलय पत्र के विषय में भी पूरा ज्ञान नहीं है, जिस पर महाराजा हरि सिंह ने हस्ताक्षर किए थे। यह अन्य 554 विलयपत्रों के ही बिल्कुल समान था, जिनके द्वारा शेष रियासतों ने भारत में अधिमिलन किया। इस विलयपत्र के प्रावधानों से परे जाते हुए केवल कश्मीर के संबंध में 370 की व्यवस्था करते समय तत्कालीन केंद्रीय मंत्री एन गोपालस्वामी आयंगार ने सदन को आश्वस्त किया था कि 370 एक अस्थायी व्यवस्था है जो जल्दी समाप्त हो जाएगी। आखिर वह अस्थायी व्यवस्था कब तक चलती? अजय मित्तल, मेरठ

जनसंख्या नियंत्रण

20 अगस्त के अंक में हृदय नारायण दीक्षित का लेख, राष्ट्रीय समृद्धि से जुड़ा है जनसंख्या नियंत्रण, पढ़ा। लेखक की चिंता वाजिब है। आज जनसंख्या के कारण बड़ी-बड़ी सड़कें, अस्पताल, स्कूल व शिक्षण संस्थान सब छोटे पड़ रहे हैं। एक तिहाई से भी ज्यादा आबादी के पास ना घर है, ना पीने का पानी और ना टॉयलेट। अतः अब जनसंख्या नियंत्रण निहायत जरूरी हो गया है।

सतीश त्यागी काकड़ा, इंदिरापुरम

दिल्ली में बाढ़ और कारण

इस समय दिल्ली में बिना बारिश के बाढ़ का संकट उत्पन्न हो गया है। 23 हजार से ज्यादा लोग यमुना के आसपास से हटाए गए हैं। इससे पहले दिल्ली में 1978 में भयानक बाढ़ आई थी। दिल्ली में बाढ़ के कारण प्राकृतिक कम और मानवीय ज्यादा हैं। दिल्ली के यमुना नदी के आसपास अवैध

कॉलोनियां बन चुकी हैं। यमुना नदी के पास भूमि माफिया ने जमीन काट कर बेचना शुरू कर दिया है, जिससे यमुना के किनारे सिकुड़ गए हैं। सरकार ने 1000 करोड़ से ज्यादा रुपये यमुना की सफाई पर खर्च कर दिए हैं, लेकिन यमुना आज भी नाले जैसी ही प्रतीत होती है। अगर सरकार जल प्रबंधन को सही ढंग से लागू करे तो यमुना के आसपास बेहतरीन नाले नहर बनाकर पानी को बाढ़ के समय उसमे डाला जा सकता है जिससे दिल्ली में बाढ़ का संकट भी खत्म हो जाएगा और पानी की जरूरतें भी पूरी हो जाएंगी। विजय किशोर तिवारी, नई दिल्ली

पाक का कश्मीर राग

जब से भारत एवं पाकिस्तान पृथक स्वतंत्र राष्ट्र बने हैं, तब से पाकिस्तान कश्मीर का राग अलाप रहा है। अब भारत को राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर पर दावा पेश करना चाहिए। यह भारत का अभिन्न अंग है। इसे लेकर भारत को आवाज उठाने की जरूरत है। यह व्यावहारिक एवं नैतिक कदम होगा।

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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

भारत के वायुसेना प्रमुख बीएस धनोआ ने एक बार फिर मिग-21 विमानों के इस्तेमाल को लेकर जो चिंता व्यक्त की है, उससे यह साफ है कि ये विमान अब किसी भी रूप में सुरक्षित नहीं रह गए हैं। इसीलिए उन्हें यह कहना पड़ा है कि इतनी पुरानी तो हम कार भी नहीं चलाते हैं जितने पुराने मिग विमान उड़ा रहे हैं। वायुसेना अध्यक्ष की यह फिक्र वाकई जायज है, क्योंकि शायद ही कोई महीना बीतता हो जब मिग के दुर्घटनाग्रस्त होने की कोई खबर न आ जाती हो। पिछले कुछ सालों में मिग विमानों के हादसे जिस तेजी से बढ़े हैं, उससे यह सवाल उठना लाजिमी है कि कब तक हमारे लड़ाकू पायलट अपनी जान जोखिम में डाल कर इन विमानों को उड़ाते रहेंगे। लेकिन वायुसेना में अभी भी जिस बड़ी संख्या में, भले ही मजबूरी में इन विमानों का उपयोग किया जा रहा है, वह गंभीर चिंता का विषय है। हकीकत यह है कि आज भी मिग-21 विमान ही वायुसेना की रीढ़ बने हुए हैं। सिर्फ भारत ही दुनिया में एकमात्र देश है जो पचास साल पुराने मिग विमानों के दम पर अपनी वायुसेना को धकेले जा रहा है।

वायुसेना प्रमुख पहले भी मिग विमानों के पुराने पड़ने और वायुसेना के आधुनिकीकरण का मसला उठाते रहे हैं। लेकिन वायुसेना की सबसे बड़ी मजबूरी यह है कि उसके पास पर्याप्त लड़ाकू विमान नहीं हैं। ऐसे में मिग विमानों से ही काम चलाना पड़ रहा है चाहे पायलटों का प्रशिक्षण हो या फिर सैन्य अभियान। पिछले कुछ सालों में हुए मिग हादसों में भारत ने कई जांबाज पायलटों का खोया है। पिछले चार दशकों में पांच सौ से ज्यादा मिग विमान दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हो चुके हैं और दो सौ से ज्यादा पायलट मारे जा चुके हैं। पायलटों का मारा जाना वायुसेना के लिए मिग खोने से भी ज्यादा बड़ा नुकसान होता है। हालांकि वायुसेना प्रमुख कह चुके हैं कि रफाल विमान मिलने के बाद मिग विमानों को चरणबद्ध तरीके से हटाया जाएगा। रफाल विमानों की पहली खेप भारत को अगले महीने मिलेगी और अगले तीन साल में छत्तीस रफाल विमान भारतीय वायुसेना के बेड़े में होंगे। इस तरह पहले चरण में 2022 तक मिग-21 विमान हटाए जाएंगे और 2030 तक मिग-27 और मिग-29 विमान भी हटा दिए जाएंगे। लेकिन सवाल यह है कि क्या 2030 तक वायुसेना पुराने मिग विमानों का ही उपयोग करती रहेगी और हम अपने लड़ाकू पायलटों को खोते रहेंगे?

आज दुनिया के बड़े देश अंतरिक्ष युद्ध की तैयारियों में लगे हैं। हाल में भारत ने अंतरिक्ष में निशाना साधने में कामयाबी हासिल की है। पर विडंबना यह है कि एक ओर हम अंतरिक्ष की ताकत बनने की बात कर रहे हैं और दसरी ओर हमारी वायसेना के पास जरूरत भर के भी विमान नहीं हैं। अभी वायुसेना को युद्धक विमानों के बयालीस बेड़ों (स्क्वाडून) की जरूरत है, जबिक उसके पास सिर्फ इकतीस बेड़े ही हैं और वे भी पुराने विमानों के। हालांकि पिछले एक दशक में मिग विमानों को बायसन मानकों के अनुरूप उन्नत बनाने का काम तो हुआ है और इनमें राडार, दिशासूचक प्रणाली आदि को बेहतर किया गया है। लेकिन पुराने विमानों को अद्यतन करने भर से विमान सुरक्षित हो जाएंगे, इसकी क्या गारंटी है ? रक्षा विशेषज्ञ भी मिग विमानों को उन्नत बना कर काम में लेने पर इसलिए चिंता जताते रहे हैं कि विमानों की भी एक उम्र होती है और उसके बाद वे काम लायक नहीं रह जाते हैं। ऐसे में वायुसेनाध्यक्ष का यह कहना कि इतनी पुरानी तो कोई कार भी नहीं चलाता है जितने पुराने हम विमान उड़ा रहे हैं, क्या गलत है!

अंधविश्वास की जकड़न

क्रिक्नीसवीं सदी के इस दौर में हम वैज्ञानिक उपलब्धियों के जरिए ₹ मंगल और चांद पर शोध की जो नई ऊंचाइयां हासिल कर रहे हैं, उसे दुनिया भर में एक बड़ी कामयाबी के तौर पर देखा जा रहा है। मगर इसी के समांतर जब अंधविश्वास में डूबी गतिविधियों की खबर मिलती है तो निश्चित रूप से यह बेहद अफसोस की बात है। मध्यप्रदेश के इंदौर जिले में दो मृत भाइयों के पुनर्जीवन की इच्छा से जिस तरह के अंधविश्वास का खुला प्रदर्शन देखा गया, उससे फिर यही साफ हुआ है कि अभी इस मोर्चे पर बहुत कुछ किया जाना बाकी है। गौरतलब है कि इंदौर जिला मुख्यालय से करीब तीस किलोमीटर दूर तालाब में डूब गए दो भाइयों को निकाल कर सांवेर के सामुदायिक स्वास्थ्य केंद्र में लाया गया था। वहां डॉक्टरों ने जांच करने के बाद दोनों को मृत घोषित कर दिया और पोस्टमार्टम के बाद शवों को उनके परिजनों को सौंप दिया गया था। लेकिन परिजनों ने चूंकि सोशल मीडिया पर कहीं पढ़ा था कि मृतक के शरीर को अगर नमक से ढक कर रखा जाए तो वह फिर से जी उठता है, इसलिए उन्होंने डॉक्टरों की राय और पोस्टमार्टम की रिपोर्ट को किनारे कर दिया और शवों को नमक से ढक दिया।

सवाल है कि आखिर किन वजहों से मृतक के परिजनों के साथ-साथ वहां के स्थानीय निवासियों में से किसी को इस बेमानी धारणा पर सवाल उठाना और उसे महज अंधविश्वास बताना जरूरी नहीं लगा। खबरों के मुताबिक ग्रामीणों की भीड़ के दबाव में स्वास्थ्य केंद्र में मौजूद डॉक्टर भी लाचार थे और वे भी इस घटना को रोक नहीं सके। जैसा कि स्वाभाविक था, अफवाह पर आधारित एक बेमानी कवायद नाकाम हुई और आखिरकार मृत भाइयों के परिजनों और गांव वालों को सच्चाई को स्वीकार करना पड़ा कि किसी मर चुके व्यक्ति को अंधविश्वास के सहारे जिंदा नहीं किया जा सकता। इतना तय है कि वहां कुछ लोग पढ़े-लिखे जरूर होंगे। लेकिन उस पढ़ाई-लिखाई का क्या फायदा जो सामान्य से अंधविश्वास पर आधारित धारणाओं को तोड़ने में भी मददगार साबित नहीं हो सके। ऐसे लोगों के सोचने-समझने के स्तर और उसके लिए जिम्मेदार स्थितियों का अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है. जिसमें कोई व्यक्ति किसी कल्पना या अंधविश्वास को इसलिए सही मान लेता है कि वह सोशल मीडिया पर कहीं लिखा हुआ था।

इस समुची घटना की विडंबना यह भी है कि जो सोशल मीडिया तकनीकी विकास और विज्ञान की उपलब्धियों का एक औजार माना जाता है. वहीं आज अंधविश्वास को फैलाने का जरिया भी बन रहा है। दरअसल, हमारे देश में विज्ञान विषयों की पढ़ाई तो कराई जाती है लेकिन शायद ही कहीं वैज्ञानिक चेतना के विकास और उसे मजबूत करने पर जोर दिया जाता है। यह बेवजह नहीं है कि कई बार बड़ी वैज्ञानिक उपलब्धियों के मौके पर भी आस्था के नाम पर अंधविश्वास को बढ़ाने वाली गतिविधियां देखी जाती हैं। जबिक संविधान में मौजूद अनुच्छेद 51-ए (एच) के तहत मानवीयता, वैज्ञानिक चेतना और तार्किक सोच को बढ़ावा देने के लिए सरकार और समाज की जिम्मेदारी तय की गई है। सवाल है कि संविधान में दर्ज व्यवस्था के बावजूद समाज में अंधविश्वास पर आधारित गतिविधियां और उसे फैलाने की कोशिशें कैसे बदस्तूर जारी रहती हैं! अंधविश्वास पर आधारित पिछड़ेपन और अफसोसनाक परंपराओं को बनाए रख कर क्या कोई भी समाज केवल साक्षरता दर में इजाफे के बूते और अक्सर बड़ी वैज्ञानिक उपलब्धियों पर गर्व कर सकता है? जरूरत इस बात की है कि वक्त के साथ समाज में अंधविश्वासों को दूर करने के लिए इसके खिलाफ एक सख्त कानून बनाया जाए और वैज्ञानिक चेतना के विकास के साथ-साथ उसे मजबूत करने के लिए व्यापक अभियान चलाया जाए।

कल्पमधा

उन व्यक्तियों से मैं महानतम पद भी स्वीकार नहीं करूंगा, जो न तो स्वप्न लेते हैं और न ही इच्छाएं पालते हैं।

- खलील जिब्रान

चीन का संकट बना हांगकांग

संजीव पांडेय

चीन से यह जरूर पूछा जाना चाहिए कि वह हांगकांग में 'एक देश दो व्यवस्था' को खत्म करने पर क्यों तुला है? हांगकांग के लोगों को मिली स्वायत्तता और लोकतांत्रिक अधिकारों को क्यों छीना जा रहा है? हांगकांग के लोगों को उस न्यायिक व्यवस्था में लाने की कोशिश क्यों हो रही है जो एक

पार्टी के नियंत्रण में है? चीन ने हांगकांग के लोगों से लोकतांत्रिक प्रणाली को लेकर वादे किए थे, उसे पूरी तरह से लागू क्यों नहीं किया गया?

न को इस वक्त फिर एक बड़े आंदोलन का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। पिछले दो महीनों से हांगकांग की सड़कों पर जिस तरह से जनसमृह उमड़ रहा है उससे चीन के हाथ-पैर फूलने लगे हैं। चीनी सरकार के खिलाफ इस विद्रोह का मल कारण कई अपराधों में संलिप्त अपराधियों को प्रत्यपित करने की अनुमति देने वाला विधेयक है जिसका हांगकांग में जोरदार विरोध हो रहा है। हांगकांग सरकार के इस प्रत्यर्पण विधेयक के पीछे चीन है। दरअसल, चीन और ताइवान के साथ हांगकांग की अभी तक कोई प्रत्यर्पण संधि नहीं है। प्रस्तावित प्रत्यर्पण विधेयक के पारित होने के बाद हांगकांग, ताइवान और चीन के बीच अपराधियों को प्रत्यर्पित करने की अनुमति मिल जाएगी।

हांगकांग के लोग इसे अपने देश की स्वायत्तता खत्म करने के कदम के रूप में देख रहे हैं। इसीलिए दो महीने से इसका जोरदार विरोध हो रहा है। स्थानीय लोगों का मानना है कि यह विधेयक उस चीनी न्यायिक

व्यवस्था में स्थानीय लोगों को भेजने का रास्ता है जो एक राजनीतिक पार्टी के नियंत्रण में है। हालांकि विधेयक के समर्थकों का तर्क है कि प्रत्यर्पण बिल से बड़े वित्तीय और मादक पदार्थों से जुड़े अपराधों को रोकने में मदद मिलेगी। हालांकि भारी विरोध के बाद हांगकांग की मुख्य कार्यकारी कैरी लैम ने फिलहाल इस विधेयक को निलंबित कर दिया है, लेकिन इसे वापस नहीं लिया है। दूसरी तरफ आंदोलनकारियों पर चीनी सैन्य कार्रवाई की आशंका जताई जा रही है। लेकिन अमेरिकी के साथ व्यापार युद्ध के मोर्चे पर फंसी चीन अगर हांगकांग में सैन्य कार्रवाई जैसा कदम उठाती है तो इससे उसकी मुश्किलें और बढेंगी।

हांगकांग के आंदोलन ने व्यापक रूप ले लिया है। पहले आंदोलन में छात्र ही शामिल थे। लेकिन बाद में छात्र संघ, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता, यूनियन कार्यकर्ता, अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों के कर्मचारी और शिक्षक भी आंदोलन में शामिल हो गए। आंदोलन को

पश्चिमी देशों का समर्थन हासिल है। अमेरिकी विदेश मंत्री माइक पोंपियों ने हांगकांग सरकार के प्रस्तावित प्रत्यर्पण संधि विधेयक की आलोचना की है। ब्रिटेन ने भी हांगकांग के आंदोलनकारियों के प्रति समर्थन जताया है। ब्रिटेन का समर्थन महत्त्वपूर्ण इसलिए है क्योंकि हांगकांग उसका उपनिवेश रहा है। पश्चिमी देशों का भी तर्क है कि प्रस्तावित प्रत्यर्पण कानून लागू होने के बाद चीन की न्यायिक व्यवस्था में हांगकांग के लोगों को न्याय नहीं मिलेगा। हांगकांग एशिया का एक बड़ा व्यावसायिक केंद्र है। यही कारण है कि इस आंदोलन को हवा दे पश्चिमी देश चीन को दबाव में लाना चाहते हैं ताकि अपने व्यापारिक हितों को सुरक्षित रख सकें। हांगकांग का आंदोलन ऐसे वक्त में तेज हुआ है जब

अमेरिका और चीन के बीच व्यापारिक युद्ध चरम पर तक हांगकांग के शेयर बाजार को पांच सौ अरब डालर है। चीन पर इस व्यापार युद्ध का असर दिखने भी लगा है। इस साल अप्रैल-जुन तिमाही में चीन की विकास दर पिछले सत्ताईस साल में सबसे कम रही है।

हांगकांग के आंदोलन का असर चीन द्वारा विकसित किए जा रहे ग्वांगडोंग-हांगकांग-मकाऊ बृहतर खाड़ी क्षेत्र पर भी पड़ेगा। इस प्रस्तावित बृहतर खाड़ी क्षेत्र से चीन, हांगकांग और मकाऊ की अर्थव्यवस्था को भारी लाभ मिलेगा। चीन की योजना के मुताबिक बृहतर खाड़ी क्षेत्र के विकास के तहत हांगकांग, मकाऊ और ग्वांगडोंग प्रांत को एकीकृत करने की योजना है। इससे पूरे क्षेत्र में और विकास होगा। चीन को शक है कि इस योजना को नुकसान पहुंचाने का खेल भी पश्चिमी ताकतें कर रही हैं।

इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि हांगकांग के आंदोलन में शामिल लोग परेशान हैं। हांगकांग की अर्थव्यवस्था उन्हें एक बेहतर जिंदगी नहीं दे रही है। पढ़े-लिखे युवाओं को उनकी योग्यता के हिसाब से पर्याप्त वेतन वाली नौकरी नहीं मिल रही है। रोजगार के अवसर तो उपलब्ध हैं लेकिन उम्मीद के मुताबिक वेतन नहीं है। जो वेतन इस समय हांगकांग में लोगों को मिल रहा है उससे युवा अपने लिए एक घर नहीं खरीद सकता है। चीन के मीडिया ने भी इस तथ्य को स्वीकार किया है। ग्लोबल टाइम्स के अनुसार आंदोलन में शामिल युवाओं के सामने बेहतर वेतन और रोजगार एक समस्या है। आंदोलन तेज होने के बाद हांगकांग की अर्थव्यवस्था पर भी चोट पहुंची है। व्यापार ठप पड़ा है। पर्यटन से लेकर खुदरा कारोबार को नुकसान पहुंचा है। यही नहीं, हांगकांग शेयर बाजार को भारी नुकसान हुआ है। अभी



का नुकसान हो चुका है। संपतियों की बिक्री में पैतीस फीसद तक की गिरावट आई है।

चीन एक तरह से कई मोर्चों पर फंसा हुआ है। हाल में भारत द्वारा जम्मू-कश्मीर का विशेष राज्य का दर्जा खत्म कर देने के बाद चीन भी भड़का हुआ है। चीन की नाराजगी लद्दाख को केंद्र शासित राज्य बनाने को लेकर है। अभी तक लदुदाख को भी जम्म-कश्मीर का हिस्सा होने के कारण विशेष दर्जा मिला हुआ था। चीन की नजरों में लद्दाख विवादास्पद क्षेत्र है। इसकी सीमा अक्साइ चीन से मिलती है जिस पर भारत का दावा है। दूसरी तरफ पाकिस्तान अधिकृत कश्मीर में चीन ने भारी निवेश कर रखा है। यहां पर चीन बिजली परियोजनाएं

लगा रहा है। सड़कों का नेटवर्क खड़ा कर रहा है। जाहिर है चीन कश्मीर मसले पर पाकिस्तान के साथ खड़ा होगा। लेकिन जम्मू-कश्मीर के विशेष दर्जे को खत्म किए जाने को लेकर चीन की नाराजगी और नीतियों का भारी विरोधाभास हांगकांग में नजर आता है। जम्मू-कश्मीर के विशेष दर्जे को लेकर चिंता जता रहा चीन हांगकांग के विशेष दर्जे को समाप्त करने की योजना बना रहा है। हांगकांग को लेकर चीन ने जो वादा वहां के लोगों से किया था, उसे आज तक पूरा नहीं किया। और तो और लोकतांत्रिक तरीके से हांगकांग की स्वायत्तता को बचाए रखने के लिए आंदोलन कर रहे युवाओं को चीन अब आतंकी घोषित करने की योजना बना रहा है। हांगकांग के आंदोलन का सैन्य दमन की धमकी भी दे रहा है।

चीन से यह जरूर पूछा जाना चाहिए कि वह हांगकांग में 'एक देश दो व्यवस्था' को खत्म करने पर क्यों तुला

> है? हांगकांग के लोगों को मिली स्वायत्तता और लोकतांत्रिक अधिकारों को क्यों छीना जा रहा है? हांगकांग के लोगों को उस न्यायिक व्यवस्था में लाने की कोशिश क्यों हो रही है जो एक पार्टी के नियंत्रण में है? चीन ने हांगकांग के लोगों से लोकतांत्रिक प्रणाली को लेकर वादे किए थे, उसे पूरी तरह से लागू क्यों नहीं किया गया? हांगकांग के लोग पश्चिमी देशों की तर्ज पर लोकतंत्र की मांग कर रहे हैं। लेकिन चीन ने इसे मंजूर नहीं किया। हांगकांग के मुख्य कार्यकारी को सीधे हांगकांग की जनता द्वारा चुना जाना चीन को मंजूर नहीं है। हांगकांग विशेष प्रशासनिक क्षेत्र का सबसे बड़ा मुखिया या मुख्य कायकारी का चुनाव एक चुनाव समिति करती है जिसमें सिर्फ बारह सौ सदस्य हैं।

> सच्चाई तो यही है कि भारतीय कटनीति चीन के दबाव में है। ओसाका में हाल ही में हए जी-20 की बैठक में हांगकांग के आंदोलनकारी

नेताओं ने जी-20 के नेताओं को ज्ञापन देकर हांगकांग के आंदोलन के लिए समर्थन मांगा था। आंदोलनकारियों ने ओसाका की बैठक में पहुंचे राष्ट्राध्यक्षों को ज्ञापन देकर चीनी राष्ट्रपति शी जिनपिंग के सामने आंदोलनकारियों का पक्ष रखने की अपील की थी। दिलचस्प बात यह थी कि भारत और इंडोनेशिया ने आंदोलनकारी नेताओं का ज्ञापन स्वीकार नहीं किया जबिक बाकी देशों के नेताओं ने आंदोलनकारी नेताओं का ज्ञापन भी स्वीकार किया और चीन के सामने हांगकांग के आंदोलनकारियों का मुद्दा भी उठाया अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप और जापानी प्रधानमंत्री शिंजो आबे ने चीनी राष्ट्रपति शी जिनपिंग से हांगकांग के आंदोलनकारियों की मांगों को लेकर चिंता जताई।

शब्द के संदर्भ

राजकुमारी

ड़ता, रूढ़िवादिता, स्थिरता जैसी नकारात्मक मानसिक स्थितियों के विखंडित होने का समय तभी आता है, जब आप वैचारिकता का दामन कस कर पकड़ते हैं और चिंतन की ओर अग्रसर होते हैं। किसी मसले पर होने वाली बात या फिर उठने वाले सवाल पर तपाक से पत्थर या फिर फूल से शब्द बना कर फेंकना और उसे लपकना मुश्किल हो जाता है। यों हमारी रोजमर्रा की जिंदगी में इस तरह के न जाने कितने शब्द टकराते हैं। लेकिन मैं आमतौर पर बोले जाने वाले एक शब्द 'कपल' की बात साझा करना चाहती हूं। इस पर विचार करते हुए यही लगा कि आखिर कब हम जंग लगी बृद्धि को सफाई अभियान के तहत लाकर कुड़ा बाहर फेंकेंगे। यहां बात वैसे व्यक्ति की है जो अंग्रेजियत से नाता तो जोड़ बैठा है, पर उसके संदर्भों को समझना जरूरी नहीं मानता। अगर जुबान पर 'ऑस्सम' या 'नाइस' न रहे तो कैसे दिखाएं 'इंग्लिश–विंग्लिश'!

खैर, जैसे ही कोई कहता है 'ब्यूटीफुल कपल' तो उससे गहरा रोमांच झलकता है। जो असल में 'कपल हैं, वे बाग-बाग हो जाते हैं। लेकिन जमीनी स्तर पर देखें तो इस शब्द के अर्थ की समझ बड़ी तुच्छता लिए

है। कोई पुरुष और स्त्री एक साथ दिखे नहीं कि उसे 'कपल' मान लिया, इल्म और अदब दिमाग से फुर्र हो गया। जमाने से दिमाग के बाइस्कोप में दो विपरीतलिंगी व्यक्ति की चिपकी तस्वीरों को देख कर एक ही खयाल का वेग से आना- 'प्रेमी जोडा'। इससे इतर भाई-बहन, दोस्त, गुरु-शिष्या, सहकर्मी, सहपाठी- यानी सब रिश्तों पर हावी एक स्थायी विचार रिश्तों का गुड़-गोबर कर देता है। उम्र, हाव-भाव, तस्वीरों में खड़े

होने का तरीका, सबको पीछे दुनिया मेरे आगे छोड़ और अक्ल को घास चरने भेज कर मंदबृद्धि लोग चलते-चलते कह जाते हैं और फिर सफाई देते हैं तस्वीर में मौजूद लोग। सुनने वाले दोस्त हैं तो ठहाका मार कर हंस लेते हैं। तब आानंद से मन के पांव थिरकने लगते हैं जब वाकई प्रेमी ही 'कपल' होते हैं। एक दूसरे से नजदीकी सिद्ध करने के चक्कर में सार्वजनिक स्थान के खयाल से भी ऊपर उठ कर अपने प्रेम को अभिव्यक्त करते हैं। हाथों की अंगुली मृट्ठी में और अत्यधिक कसावट, सुंदरता में बनावट की मिलावट। यानी दो शब्द क्या-क्या न कराए! लेकिन अगर वे बहन-भाई हए तो जिज्ञासा रखने वाले झल्ला जाते हैं. मानो जुबान जल जाए। इसके बाद तो पुरुष और स्त्री का साथ बाहर निकलना हुआ तो नियम और शर्तें लागू

समझिए, वरना साथ बाहर न निकलने का ऐलान

इस दौर में असमंजस की स्थिति बड़ी विचित्र है। लड़के-लड़िकयों में बढ़ती आधुनिक भेड़चाल, खड़े होने और बैठने की बेढंगी मुद्राएं, बेलगाम व्यवहार, आम बातचीत में गाली-गलौज। ये सभी कारण हैं जिसकी वजह से सामान्य लोग इस प्रचलित शब्द को वरीयता देने लगे। फिर यह बार-बार उपयोग में आने लगा। शब्दों को जुबान से बाहर धकेलने का काम आमतौर पर पार्की, भ्रमण वाले सार्वजनिक स्थानों,

भी फैलता दिखता है। ऐसे युवा जिनकी जींस पैंट से लगता है कि अब निकल कर गिर जाएगी, वे किसी प्रवाह से गुजरते आसपास के माहौल से बेखबर बेफिक्र लगते रहते हैं! फिर कुछ सोच कर बोलने की गुंजाइशें खत्म ही समझिए।

रेस्तरां, मेट्रो की सीढ़ियों आदि पर

धीरे-धीरे सोशल मीडिया के मंचों का विस्तार ही हो रहा है। लेकिन इस पर मौजूद दो ठीक-ठाक से दिखने वाले लोग कभी मिले हों किसी मौके पर और उनकी तस्वीरें उनकी वाल पर दिखे तो भी अनुमान से ही इस तरह के शब्द धड़ल्ले से चिपका दिए जाते हैं। ऐसा बोलने वाले बोल कर निकल जाते हैं, उसमें उलझे रहते हैं वे, जिन्होंने अपनी वाल पर तस्वीर डाली होती है। ऐसे में कई बार स्थिति बिगड़ जाने की पूरी

गुंजाइश होती है। किसी की नासमझी बेवजह ही भावनात्मक रिश्तों में दरार का कारण भी बन जाती है। इसलिए बिना लगाम के 'कपल' शब्द का प्रयोग करने वाले के बजाय ऐसे लोगों के बीच मजबूत रिश्ते के लिए जरूरी है ऐतबार, समझदारी और सुझ-बुझ समझदारी हो तो रिश्ता बच जाए और दूसरा न सुने तो बिखर भी जाए। विचारों में नजाकत बाकी होगी, तभी 'कपल' शब्द के मायने समझ सकेंगे। वरना यह शब्द नाइत्तिफाकी के कठघरे में खड़ा रहेगा। इसलिए इसका इस्तेमाल करने से पहले एहतियात बरतना जरूरी है। इस बात का इल्म होना चाहिए कि इस शब्द का सुनने वाले पर क्या प्रभाव पड़ सकता है या किस प्रकार उनके निजी जीवन को प्रभावित कर सकता है।

हमने खूब सुना होगा कि कमान से निकला तीर और मृंह से निकले शब्द वापस नहीं आते। तो शब्द अपनी अर्थवत्ता खो दे, उससे पहले शब्दों का प्रयोग सही रूप में समझदारी से करने की जरूरत है। अनुचित प्रयोग किसी का अनर्थ करा दे सकता है। पहले तोला जाए, फिर बोला जाए। शब्दों का अपना सौंदर्य है जो खोने न पाए। यानी इल्तजा यह है कि 'कपल' न कहें तो भी चलेगा, मगर गलत उपयोग न करें। किसी भी शब्द का प्रयोग अपनी बुद्धिमता से करें, क्योंकि व्यक्ति और शब्दों की गरिमा, दोनों को बचाना महत्त्वपूर्ण है।

यमुना में बाढ़

ट्रार साल बरसात के दिनों में हरियाणा के हथिनी कुंड बैराज से यमुना में पानी छोड़े जाने से दिल्ली में बाढ़ जैसे हालात बन जाते हैं। इसका मुख्य कारण यमुना का अतिक्रमण और दशकों से इसमें कचरा और गाद से भरा होना है। यही हाल देश की अन्य निदयों का भी है जिससे आसपास के इलाके हर साल बाढ़ के पानी में डूबते हैं। इस तरह की आपदा से हर साल जो नुकसान होता है, उसका कोई अनुमान भी नहीं है। आज भी सिर्फ कागजों और विज्ञापनों में तो बहुत कुछ करने और कदम उटाने के वादे और दावे किए जाते हैं मगर धरातल पर कुछ नहीं है और उसका नतीजा हर साल बाढ़ में डूबे इलाके दिखने के रूप में आता है। दुख की बात तो यह है कि इनके असली बजट का बड़ा हिस्सा तो महज विज्ञापनों पर ही खर्च कर दिया जाता है और असली काम छोड़ दिए जाते हैं। इसलिए आज सबसे पहले नदियों को अतिक्रमण मुक्त करवा कर इनकी खुदाई और सफाई की अधिक जरूरत है ताकि भविष्य में इनके बाढ़ जैसे फैलाव को रोका जा सके।

• वेद मामूरपुर, नरेला, दिल्ली

बाढ़ और सबक

जुलाई-अगस्त का महीना देश में अत्यधिक बाढ़ लाने वाला होता है। इसके चलते कई राज्य बाढ़ग्रस्त हो जाते हैं। हाल में हिमाचल प्रदेश, उत्तराखंड, बिहार, असम से लेकर महाराष्ट्र, गुजरात, कर्नाटक, केरल तक में बाढ़ का भयावह मंजर देखने को मिला है। बड़ी संख्या में लोग मारे गए है, लाखों बेघर हो गए हैं, फसलों को भारी नुकसान पहुंचा है और अरबों रुपए की क्षति हुई है। लेकिन हमारी राज्य सरकारों का हाल यह है कि वे इस समस्या से निपटने के लिए पिछली

बार से कोई सबक नहीं सीखतीं। पता है कि साल में दो महीने बाढ से हालात खराब होते हैं फिर भी बचाव के स्थायी उपाय नहीं किए जाते।

अमित कुमार, आंबेडकर कॉलेज, दिल्ली

पाओक भी हमारा

जब से भारत व पाकिस्तान स्वतंत्र राष्ट्र बने हैं, तब से ही पाकिस्तान भेड़िया आया, भेड़िया आया की तर्ज पर कश्मीर का राग अलापता रहा है। अब राष्ट्रीय-अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारत की बारी है कि 'पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर भारत का अभिन्न अंग है, इस

पछा गया तो उन्होंने इसे 'संस्कार' बताया न कि 'रैगिंग'। पहले साल के डेढ़ सौ छात्रों का एक साथ सिर मुंडवाना, एक जैसी पोशाक पहन कर और सिर झुका कर कक्षा में प्रवेश करना कैसे मान लें कि ये यह कहना कि कोई छात्र शिकायत करता है तो उसका नाम गुप्त रखा जाएगा और एंटी रैगिंग समिति उसकी जांच करेगी, साफ-साफ नजर आ रहा है कि यह मामला रैगिंग का है। सवाल तो यह है कि कौन जुनियर अपने सीनियर के खिलाफ

शिकायत करके जान जोखिम में

आने पर उसे दबा दिया जाता है।

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

पर भारत का हक है'. इसे लेकर भारत माहौल बनाए रखे। जब सीधी उंगली से बात नहीं बनती है तो हमें टेढ़ी उंगली से ही अपनी बात मनवानी होगी। यह व्यावहारिक और नैतिक कदम है। अब भारत को शांति से नहीं बैठना चाहिए।

हेमा हरि उपाध्याय, खाचरोद, उज्जैन

रैगिंग या संस्कार!

इटावा के सैफई में उत्तर प्रदेश आयुर्विज्ञान विश्वविद्यालय में एमबीबीएस प्रथम वर्ष के विद्यार्थियों ने अपने सिर मुंडवाए और कक्षा में सिर झुका कर प्रवेश किया। सबसे ज्यादा हास्यास्पद तो यह है कि रोंगटे खड़े कर देने वाली रैंगिंग की इस घटना को विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपित राजकुमार से

डालेगा? सुप्रीम कोर्ट के कड़े निर्देशों के बावजुद ज्यादातर संस्थानों में रैगिंग की घटनाएं आज भी जारी हैं। दुखद तो यह है कि संस्थान न तो ऐसी घटनाओं को रोकते हैं, बल्कि किसी ऐसी घटना के सामने

• शकुंतला महेश नेनावा, इंदौर

पाक की गीदड़ भभकी

भारत के रक्षा मंत्री के बयान से पाकिस्तान बुरी तरह से बौखलाया है। रक्षा मंत्री ने हाल में कहा था कि अगर पाकिस्तान अपनी हरकतों से बाज नही आता है तो अब उसे उसी की भाषा में सीमा पर ही जवाब मिलेगा। जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 को बेअसर कर उसका विशेष राज्य का दर्जा खत्म कर

दिए जाने के बाद से पाकिस्तान में खलबली मच गई है। एक तरफ पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति से बात कर रहे हैं तो दूसरी ओर वे भारत के खिलाफ संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद मेडिकल कालेज का 'संस्कार' है ? कुलपित द्वारा में चले गए। लेकिन दोनों ही जगहों पर उन्हें मुंह की खानी पड़ी है। चीन के अलावा कोई भी देश पाकिस्तान का साथ नहीं दे रहा है। फिलहाल देखने की बात यह है कि अब पाकिस्तान अंतरराष्ट्रीय न्यायालय का दरवाजा खटखटाता है तब उसे क्या हासिल होता है। पाकिस्तान को समझना होगा कि अगर भारत ने अपना अड़ियल रवैया अपनाया तो वह उसे सबक सिखा सकता है, फिर भले परमाणु हथियारों का इस्तेमाल ही क्यों न करना पड़े।

• राहुल उपाध्याय, बलिया

बदहाल स्कूली शिक्षा

बिहार में शिक्षा व्यवस्था की बदहाली से बच्चों का भविष्य अधर में है। लेकिन सरकार को इसकी को चिंता नहीं है। आज बिहार में शिक्षक पात्रता परीक्षा (टीईटी) उत्तीर्ण किए कई योग्य अभ्यर्थी बैठे हैं जबकि बिहार के प्राथमिक से लेकर उच्च माध्यमिक विद्यालयों तक के स्कूलों में शिक्षकों की भारी कमी है। बिहार में शिक्षा सुधार न हो पाना आला अधिकारियों की भी कमी है। वे स्कूलों में केवल मध्याह्न भोजन की जांच करते हैं। बिहार की शिक्षा केवल मध्याह्न भोजन तक ही सीमित रह गई है। कई स्कूलों में तो कायदे से पढ़ाई तक नहीं हो रही, कई स्कूलों में बच्चें ही नहीं आते, जबिक कई स्कूलों में शिक्षकों की मनमानी चलती है। कई विद्यालय तो ऐसे हैं जो शिक्षा का केंद्र न होकर पश्-गृह और अतिक्रमण के केंद्र में तब्दील हो गए हैं। यहां विकास के लिए आवश्यक संसाधन तक नहीं है। सवाल है ऐसे में बच्चे क्या और कैसे पढेंगे?

• मनकेश्वर भट्ट, मधेपुरा