Cleansing young minds

Raise future generations to be zero-waste individuals by inserting waste management into school curriculum countrywide

OUT OF THE BLUE

ANJULI BHARGAVA

A recent news report in *The Times of India* caught my attention the other day: "*Mountains of waste: Hill states treat just 31 per cent of the trash*". To be quite honest, I was rather taken aback at the number being as high as this. Do the mountainous regions actually treat 31 per cent of their garbage? Walk around in any Himalayan town and you would be forgiven for thinking this number (put out by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change) is much lower, if not zero.

But this column is not here to dwell on the problem. So visible has become the size of India's garbage crisis that almost everyone — even Lutyens' Delhi — is now seized of it. I will put forward a few suggestions that, in my view, can make some dent if we take the bull by its horns today.

At the cost of being repetitive, I'll say this: Building toilets is one part of it, tackling the garbage landfills and heaps is undeniably the other. Although my expectations from all governments are rather low, I do think this one has done the country one favour by driving home the need to clean up. Let's take it a step further. Open defecation must be eliminated but so must the strewn garbage and the use of plastic. Expand the scope of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). Focus on segregating trash and treating it countrywide. In fact, set one's goals high like with solar and wind power generation targets.

To do this, the country must embark on a gargantuan awareness drive. Can funds from SBM be used to finance such a campaign? Unless a clean-up drive is accompanied by behavioural change from a majority of the population, it won't go far in a country of our size. This is not Singapore where you can impose heavy penalties and arm-twist citizens to obey. Neither is it a small and homogenous Rwanda where the authorities in capital city of Kigali have managed to achieve wonders by instilling a sense of pride in poorly paid municipal workers. Leaving matters in the Indian state municipal bodies' hands — as has been the case all these years — has yielded very little. The authorities seem neither concerned nor seized of the dangers of landfills, leachate and the outbreak of disease unchecked garbage can lead to.

Above all, we need to bring solid waste management (SWM) into all school curricula in an organised and cohesive manner. Explain how, what, where, when and why it is critical for everyone to be zero-waste individuals to children across India's government and private school system. Just like the impending dangers of climate change and ways of mitigating it have slowly crept into syllabuses, India can try and spawn a future generation of waste warriors by starting from the word go. Make it part of national curriculum, across state and central boards. As they have shunned crackers, children will lead the way and induce parents to do the same.

The good news here is we don't have to start from scratch. In Bengaluru, an organisation has developed a text "Trashonomics", a simply written and illustrated booklet that makes children aware of the basics of SWM. The what, the how and the why of reducing waste footprint. The book uses a crow — an intelligent bird that wastes nothing — to explain simple concepts, guide and prod children to adopt these practices as a way of life as they step into adulthood. In five chapters, it explains what happens when one mixes waste, burns it or just dumps it, or what one can do to reduce the total quantity generated and how to segregate it. A chapter contains at-home solutions and illustrates how to handle organic waste at home including composting and dealing with recyclable waste. The book also touches upon being a responsible consumer and minimising use of plastic.

At the Corbett Tiger Reserve, the Waste Warriors (an organisation headquartered in Uttarakhand) chapter has taken things head on and is now working with a host of schools and villages to tackle this growing menace. Films, videos and print material have been developed and is being used to explain why tackling trash is critical for our future survival.

I'm heading there later this week to see its impact. If I don't drown or disappear in one of the garbage heaps along the way, I'll report back to you on this soon.

Changing the shape of plastic

To fight the menace, India would do well to encourage the use of biodegradable raw material instead of petroleum products for packaging

KUNAL BOSE

The growing use of plastics, a small percentage of which is recycled, is causing a spasm of popular disgust across the world. Not only are there emissions of enormous quantities of greenhouse gases in the course of production of around 350 million tonnes (mt) of plastics every year, the environment suffers further serious damage as most of used plastics go into landfill sites or is burnt or is just littered everywhere from city streets to sea shores.

The versatility of the light but strong synthetic material made from fossil feedstock oil has created many application opportunities at low cost. In fact, plastic has replaced aluminium, steel and natural fibres such as jute and hemp in many applications, including particularly packaging. What, however, has raised public ire is the growing application of plastics in packaging, particularly in the quintessential single-use products. Consulting firm McKinsey estimates that packaging claims a quarter of the total plastics use.

Environmentalists' concern relates primarily to the fact that the intended life of single-use plastic products is less than a year. Because of their mostly remaining beyond the pale of established waste collection system for recycling purposes, they float on the earth for centuries.

In view of the damage that is being done to our marine life, fisheries and farming, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a call on Independence Day that "the time has come for freeing India from single-use plastic." In fact, in this regard, India goes well beyond the tokenism practised in many countries. In Grand Slam and other major tournaments, tennis players will be seen removing plastic racket wrappers on court. Wimbledon banned the practice this time. Instead of banning their use, a large number of countries have obliged retailers to charge customers a token amount for disposable plastic bags. Check with big retailers in India, such as Reliance Retail, Big Bazaar and Spencer's, they all have surrendered to consumer preference and functional benefits of plastic bags rather than being environmentally correct.

A joint report by McKinsey, Ellen MacArthur and the World Economic Forum has estimated the negative externalities of plastics at $40 billion and that exceeds the manufacturers' profits. Among plastic-packaging leaks into natural systems, oceans figure most prominently with a share of nearly one-third. At regular frequency, newspapers will have reports of marine species such as whales, turtles and fishes dying because of their ingesting plastic waste mistaking that for food. Our beaches are an example of the damage that the "throw it away society" could wrought. Go to any beach in India or elsewhere, you will see plastic debris littering the shore. No wonder, then, birds unwittingly feeding on floating plastic garbage are perishing in growing numbers. Necropsies of dead birds' stomachs are found filled with plastics.

Used plastics thrown in the open take wing and travel long distances to invade every part of the planet, including the most remote reaches of the Arctic. But how do plastics discarded in urban centres find their way into the Arctic? A study published in the current issue of the American Association for the Advancement of Science journal *Science Advances* says propelled by atmospheric winds micro-plastics fall on the Arctic. Since micro-plastics remain airborne, human beings and animals breathe them in posing health risk. The study of rising plastic debris on the Arctic sea floor found the decadal growth scary, including a tenfold rise at one observation point.

At this point plastics recycle at the rate of less than 40 per cent compared with 80 per cent for steel and around 77 per cent for aluminium cans. Collection of end-of-life vehicles and plant and machinery for conversion into steel scrap and aluminium cans for smelting is getting better and better globally, including in India. Both World Steel Association and International Aluminium Association are aggressively promoting the environment friendliness of their respective metals based on their infinite recyclability. The environment and health concern about single-use plastics is seen as an opportunity by the aluminium industry to muscle into canning still water. Plastics are also facing competition from glass in still water bottling. Modi's dislike for plastics and the worldwide adverse publicity for the material bode well for jute, which over the years has seen plastic bags making inroads into sugar and foodgrain packing.

In a report, McKinsey says the plastics-related environmental problem will reach "a whole new level" by 2030 when waste volumes would grow to 460 mt from 260 mt in 2016 on the assumption of current demand growth sustaining. The petrochemical industry must be confident about the market for its products expanding. Otherwise, why should it be thinking of achieving a capacity of 600 mt by 2034? At the same time, public outcry against plastics has made the industry realise that it must move beyond the use-once-and-discard approach and by way of intensive R&D make plastic waste an "important driver of profitability for chemical companies."

Modi's dislike for plastics and the worldwide adverse publicity for the material bode well for jute, which has over the years been replaced by plastic as a packaging material for sugar and foodgrain

McKinsey suggests plastics could live down their negative image and reshape the industry economy by applying "circular economy principles to global plastic packaging flows". The suggested practice could "drastically reduce negative externalities" of plastics. Pressure is mounting on chemical companies to embrace a "new plastics economy" that will promote effective collection systems for recycling. Hopefully, industry research into splitting plastics into their components for making new materials will be a success leading to commercialisation. The circular economy advocated for plastics has already been embraced by steel, aluminium and copper giving relief to environmentalists.

Take the most commonly produced plastic in the form of polyethylene where the rate of recycling is only 10 per cent. Scientists, however, see wealth in waste polyethylene. The material consists of a long chain of carbon, which could be turned into value-added polymers. At the laboratory, much progress has been made to convert some varieties of used plastic into high value "pliable wax like biodegradable plastic." The new material could find application in mulch farming and for making bag and writing instrument. McKinsey advocates "decoupling plastics from fossil feedstock" by adopting renewably sourced feed materials. But that will be a long and politically tortuous journey.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Back in business

A noticeable change since Sonia Gandhi took over as Congress president is that General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra (*pictured*) now has a greater say in how things are run, besides the general sense of activity in the party headquarters. Since 2014, the Congress headquarters at 24, Akbar Road, had worn a deserted look, with key meetings held at the party's "war room" in a bungalow on Gurudwara Rakab Ganj Road. Now Sonia and Priyanka have asked the party leadership to hold their meetings at Akbar Road. The distribution of invites to the 75th birth anniversary celebration of Rajiv Gandhi, held last Thursday, was done there, which kept the office buzzing for a few days. The ticket distribution for the forthcoming assembly polls might also take place there. But the Congress national headquarters will soon have competition with the new Gujarat Bhavan slated to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi right opposite the bungalow.

Stationery problem

Someone joked even the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been hit by the slowdown in the economy. On Monday, during the hearing seeking an extension of the police custody of former finance minister P Chidambaram in the INX Media case, the CBI submitted a computer printout of the case diary. Chidambaram's counsel, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, objected to it, to which CBI counsel said that it had run out of printed booklets of the case diary, and hence could not submit one. The court then accepted the printout of the case diary while acceding to the probe agency's plea to extend Chidambaram's remand till August 30.

Bhogle's Twitter silence

It was rather uncharacteristic of noted cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle to not tweet about India's first World Test Championship match against the West Indies, which ended on Sunday. It did not take long for many among his 8.36 million followers on the platform to wonder why Bhogle, who was posting tweets on other non-India Test matches, was silent on the India match in Antigua. Bhogle's replies such as "Didn't feel like it. Won't feel like it today either" on Day Two didn't help clear the air. However, in a tweet posted after the match, he wrote: "I didn't tweet on this game because I was unhappy at the time and I didn't want that to influence anything I might say." One wonders what could have angered the usually mild-mannered and politically correct commentator: Team selection, changes (or continuity) after the unsuccessful World Cup campaign, or not being among the chosen commentators for the India-West Indies series?

ON THE JOB

Unemployment now in the 8-9% range

MAHESH VYAS

The unemployment rate breached the 9 per cent mark during the week ended August 25. It touched 9.07 per cent. This is the highest weekly unemployment rate recorded in about three years. To be precise, it is the highest unemployment rate since the first week of September 2016.

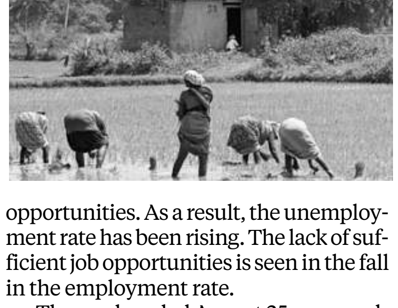
The weekly unemployment rate has hopped over values between 7.9 per cent and 9.1 per cent during the last four weeks. It seems to be finding a new level between 8 and 9 per cent. This would be a 100 basis points higher than the 7.2-7.9 per cent range it scaled during the preceding three months.

While the weekly unemployment rate was over 9 per cent during the week ended August 25, the 30-day moving average on the same day was 8.25 per cent. There is some volatility in the weekly estimates of unemployment and the 30-day moving average is a much better indicator of the true unemployment rate. This measure suggests that the unemployment rate has jumped up from around 7.5 per cent till recently to over 8 per cent in August.

Unless there is a sharp fall in the unemployment rate during the last week of August, it is likely that August 2019 would end with an unemployment rate of close to 8.5 per cent. This is not as alarming as the 9 per cent recorded in the latest week but, it would still be the highest unemployment rate recorded by India, in the past three years.

The unemployment rate has been rising steadily since July 2017. This is an outcome of the relative stabilisation of the labour participation rate since early 2018 and a fall in the employment rate. A stable labour participation rate implies that as the working-age population rises naturally steadily, a constant proportion of this keeps coming into the labour markets seeking for jobs. Thus, with a stable labour participation rate, as the working-age population rises, the labour force also keeps rising steadily.

However, this steady increase in the labour force is not met with sufficient job opportunities. As a result, the unemployment rate has been rising. The lack of sufficient job opportunities is seen in the fall in the employment rate.



The week ended August 25 saw a sudden and sharp increase in the unemployment rate in rural India. At 9.1 per cent, the rural unemployment rate was higher than the 8.9 per cent urban unemployment rate. It is not very often that the rural unemployment rate exceeds the urban rate. So, the rise in rural unemployment rate we observe in the most recent week is somewhat unusual.

This is the kharif agricultural season and labour participation in rural India has increased. The 30-day moving average labour participation rate in rural India as of August 25 was 44.4 per cent. This is just a tad higher than the rate recorded in July. At this level, rural India is witnessing the highest labour participation rate in over a year. Working-age population has been thronging into the rural labour markets in search of work in greater numbers than in the recent past.

It is this rural labour that seems to be facing greater challenges in finding jobs currently. Rains have been erratic spatially and temporally. Sowing was initially deferred because of the delayed progress of monsoon clouds over the Indian subcontinent. Sowing is still lower than it was last year but now, there is a double whammy as large tracts of sown areas are flooded because of excessive local rains. Demand dynamics for rural labour have been complicated. This is not a normal kharif season demand for labour.

Wage rates for ploughing and sowing had increased by about 7 per cent, y-o-y in June 2019. It would be interesting to see what happens to them by August. The increase in the labour participation rate could have led to a weakening of these rates by August. But, it would be instructive to juxtapose these data when the wage rates are released.

The CPHS labour statistics tell us that the increased influx of labour into the rural labour markets did not find adequate jobs. As a result, the employment rate in rural India dipped below 41 per cent in the first few weeks of August. In the past 12 months, the ratio has been below 41 per cent in 8 months. Earlier, the ratio was never below 41 per cent. Rural India, it seems, cannot absorb the labour descending upon it. If the growth in rural wage rates fall, we could be witnessing a new stress point in labour markets in India.

Urban India has not been a great absorber of labour. Its employment rate has been falling steadily. In July 2019 it reached a new low of 36.8 per cent. Therefore, any weakening of the rural labour markets could be ominous.

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

Timely assurance

This refers to the editorial "A first step to revival" (August 26). The measures by the FM are not merely welcome but are sweet music to the ears of all businesses and industry — big and small. The government has done an admirable job; the ball is now squarely in the industry's court and it is for them to kick it right and hard. We always need — and ask for — more but the announcements made on Friday offer huge opportunities to all commercial activity in the country.

That the government is becoming responsive to the needs and demands of the industry is a great change. The presentation by the Minister of Finance, Nirmala Sitharaman (*pictured*), was very lucid as it talked of some concrete measures to provide an impetus to the ease of doing business. The government's readiness to respond and react is indeed a huge assurance that they are willing to go even further to understand the genuine problems of the industry and endeavour to make all reasonable changes to solve these. You have beautifully summed that up, when you write "the government has emerged from a state of denial and recognised that the Indian economy faces serious problems".

There is no doubt that deeper structural questions still remain unaddressed. Let the industry first respond to a lot that is already on offer and I am sure the government will also attend to the issues of raising productivity and investment to a higher level. Having shown its commitment to addressing the economic slowdown — as you have rightly summed up — it is more than likely that the government will follow through on structural reform.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

Much-needed fillip

The government deserves compliments for announcing the stimulus package in time to arrest the economic slowdown. The measures announced encompass many sectors. But the most important and far reaching decision the government announced was regarding the angel tax. Start-ups registered with the government will no longer be subject to angel tax. This would provide a big boost to the funding plans of start-ups, thereby boosting growth in some ways.

Further, the government has responded quickly to withdraw the enhanced surcharge levied on income of foreign portfolio investors on short- and long-term gains on equity. The enhanced surcharge announced in the Budget 2019 was largely believed to be dampening the investors' sentiment and needed to be done away with early. Also, by deciding a timeline for GST refund as two months for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the government has shown its concern for the MSMEs that need faster access to working capital to sustain their operations.

Hopefully, the measures announced by the government will give the much-needed fillip to growth and will be able to insulate India to some extent from the worldwide slowdown.

Sanjeev Kumar Singh Jabalpur

No sunset for Arun

This refers to the editorial "The Jaitley era" (August 26). Arun Jaitley, the former finance minister, was a man of many parts — an astute politician, a legal luminary, a much-respected parliamentarian and a multi-tasker who handled diverse portfolios in the Narendra Modi cabinet. Given his genius, it is improbable that he would have favoured the introduction of demonetisation without proper planning or the implementation of GST so soon after demonetisation. But his commitment to Narendra Modi was total and he did his best to justify them. The execution of GST and navigation of the deliberations of the GST Council are a tribute to his superlative negotiation skills, strong relationships he built with Opposition leaders and his power of persuasion.

Y G Chouksey Pune

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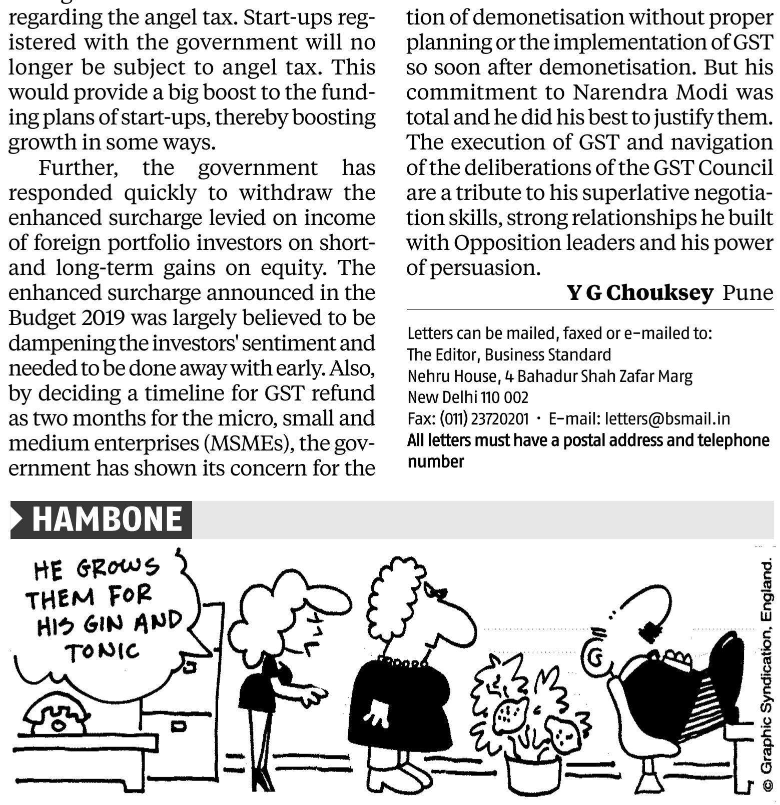
HAMBONE



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Protect TV's diversity

Trai should minimise intervention in channel pricing

A new consultation paper from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on the subject of cable television channel pricing has set alarm bells ringing in the sector. The paper views the increasing number of channel bundles on offer as a problem; such bundles usually come with discounting of channel prices, which permits cross-subsidisation. However, it also means that the choice before consumers can become confusing, even if they are saving money on their bills overall. The paper proposed additional regulations on pricing, including a cap on the amount that bouquets could discount their prices, and a possible change to the ceiling price of ₹19 per channel. This has caused concern in particular to smaller channels, with a niche viewership. These channels can manage to continue only if they are essentially cross-subsidised by more popular channels as part of a bouquet, or if they are priced higher than ₹19 in such a way that their costs are covered.

There is little doubt that Trai is attempting to solve a problem that it has itself created. Its regulations on tariffs that were implemented in end February were meant to ensure that customers paid only for what they wanted to view. However, it has in practice led to chaos, because customers have found themselves without their favourite channels or have felt their average bills would increase. There has been a consequent ratings jump for free-to-air channels — which broadcasters attempted to get around by using bundling to make their package of channels look attractive. Some broadcasters were offering discounts of as much as 70 per cent on the total a la carte prices of their channels, according to Trai. This, the regulator feels, is the cause of the confusion, and not its own intervention in pricing. Indian regulation has a habit of viewing greater choice for customers as "confusion" and discounts as exploitation — neither of which is particularly justifiable on economic principle.

The economic principle that could apply here, however, is protection of competition: If large broadcasters are using bundling — in this case, channel bouquets — to edge out smaller competitors, then there is considerable logic to intervention. This was the argument, for example, against Microsoft bundling Internet Explorer for free with its Windows operating system. However, Trai has not made an evidence-based case that this is what is happening with bouquets in the cable TV space. In fact, according to the broadcasters' association, it is smaller channels that are most at risk from Trai's new proposal. A further reduction in the diversity of channels available to consumers in India is surely not the regulators' aim. The broadcasters have noted that popular channels are charged more; and that if those channels are bundled with less popular channels, the bundle does not cost as much as the individual channels would. These are not surprising results — this is exactly how the markets could and should work. It seems odd in this context, therefore, to reduce the discounts on offer, or to reduce the price cap on individual channels. Indeed, the price cap should be increased well above ₹19, so more premium content is made available to niche subscribers.

Integrating J&K

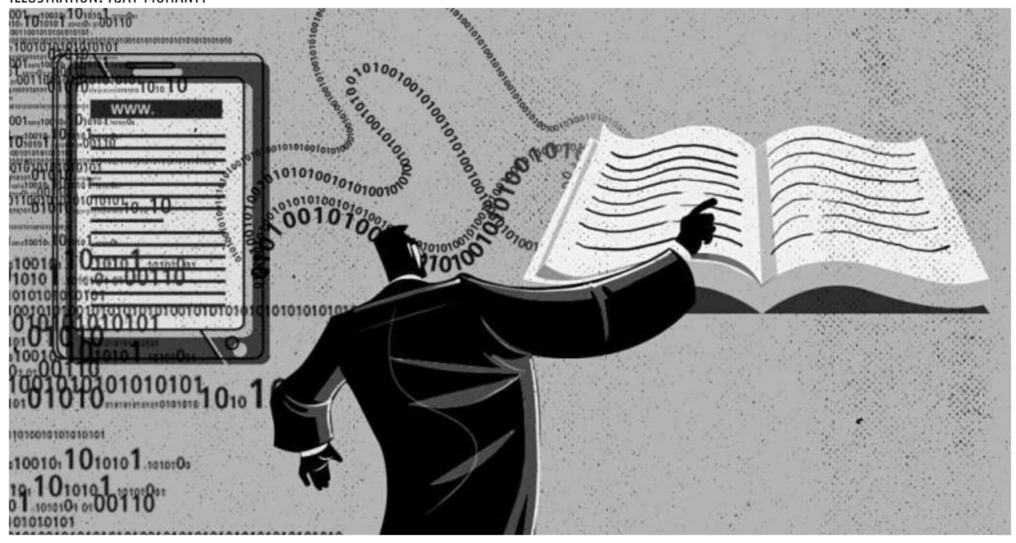
To gain credibility, the clampdown needs to be relaxed

It has been three weeks since the Narendra Modi government read down the provisions of Article 370 for Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) but the promised return to normalcy remains elusive. The fact that an opposition delegation was prevented from visiting Srinagar over the weekend, and a person died in stone-throwing on Sunday — a familiar pattern these past three decades — underlines this ground reality. To be sure, the lockdown was an open-ended exercise: Home Minister Amit Shah had told the Rajya Sabha that full status would be restored to J&K at "the appropriate time". The definition of "appropriate" is unclear. But if it is to add credibility to its claim that abrogating Article 370 and splitting the state into two Union Territories were in the best interests of the people of J&K, New Delhi's confidence-building exercise needs to start now. A prolonged lockdown on mobile connectivity, limited access to the internet, the heavy presence of security forces, and continuing curfew cannot continue beyond a reasonable period.

That Kashmiris are yet to be convinced of the virtues of the constitutional exercise conducted on their behalf by Parliament is evident. Schools are open but few children are attending and government offices are still assailed by widespread absenteeism and the bazaars are deserted. This dormant sense of angst is more difficult to confront because there is no knowing in what form, where, and when such emotions will erupt. It is equally true that Kashmiris may not be able to sustain this state of affairs indefinitely. But with Pakistan and China in the equation, externally sponsored militancy remains a threat. This implies the continuing heavy presence of security forces, complete with the legal impunity that has been the cause of deep-seated resentment among ordinary Kashmiris. Now that the state is under central rule, New Delhi's outreach programme demands sensitivity and imagination. There is no point in the governor claiming it is all peace and quiet in the Valley, while the military and the administration say the lockdown will have to continue. It's high time the Centre kick-started the process of investment, skill building, and expanding job opportunities for the Kashmiri youth.

External compulsions as much as domestic optics also dictate why J&K needs to be seen as functioning as normally as possible. Despite Pakistan's fulminations, the international community's response has been muted. Even US President Donald Trump has retracted his offer of "mediation", recognising J&K's borders as India's bilateral issue with Pakistan. If the state descends into chaos again, the Western powers may seek ways to intervene — the very contingency Mr Modi sought to avoid by abrogating Article 370. At the very least, his address to the UN General Assembly on September 28 should be able to report the start of J&K's peaceful integration into the Indian state. A draconian clampdown on its leaders and people is unlikely to convince anyone of the wisdom of an essentially unilateral constitutional change. Prosperity in the state needs to be preceded by peace, and the first step should be to take measures that would raise hopes among the people of the state that their lives would improve within a reasonable time frame.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



The impending return of the book

Why an anti-digital wave like the anti-carbon one is around the corner

I can't help but introspect when I find myself buying the books I feast on more and more in printed format rather than doing what I have been doing for the past two decades, buying them in electronic form, for example on the Kindle. Add one further reason to introspect — these books I buy have titles like *Doing Data Science*, *Neural Networks with R*, and come filled with algebraic equations and computer code.

Initially, I explained this behaviour by telling myself that I was just being practical: Dense computer codes do not read well on Kindle, a fact that is ironic. After all, if there is one business that stands for the internet, it is Jeff Bezos's Amazon, which was started in 1995 as a bookstore on the internet.

Why did the world's first online store start by selling books? Wikipedia's page on Amazon does not say this, but having lived through those times, my understanding is that one major reason must have been that the book industry in the United States in the mid-1990s had a margin of 40 per cent-plus at the bookstore level, which made it possible to offer discounts big enough to lure prospective buyers to adopt online shopping. We had to wait till 2004 for Chris Anderson, the editor of *Wired*, to explain to us another angle to this with his book, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More*. Chris explained to all of us that in industries like the book industry, a large number of book titles are read by a few people. These passionate readers constitute the "long tail" and are more likely to pay a good price for a book than readers of best sellers who need a heavy discount to lure them to buy /read a book. This "long tail" model has since then been adopted by many other industries and one could today easily say that it forms the cornerstone of online shopping. And, just imagine, it all started with the printed book industry.

AJIT BALAKRISHNAN

Come to think of it, Tim Berners-Lee, who came up with the idea of the World Wide Web in 1989, was motivated by a desire to make the sharing of knowledge easier. And the Web did live up to that goal, at least for the first 15 years of its life. We all rejoiced in the enormous amount of written material we could read for free on the Web, not to mention the enormous amount of free music and free video/films that we could watch.

What then explains why I am wandering back to reading programming and other tech books in the printed form? The first reason is the hurdle that I encounter increasingly when I search the Web for answers to a tech puzzle and hit on a website that promises to provide an answer to my question. After I read about a hundred words and start marvelling at my luck in stumbling on such a great and well-written explanation, the website halts: "Subscribe to read more!" screams a banner spread across the page that I am reading. I hesitate, because, most often when I do pay money and subscribe, and start reading a longer version of what I have read so far, another loud banner pops up: "Download our eBook!" I hesitate, again, because the many times I have done this, it results in a version which has just a wee bit more than the version on the Web, but not all the details that I eventually find in the printed version of that book.

The question that springs to my mind is this: Has the World Wide Web then degenerated in the last two decades of its existence to become a mere promotional medium? A tool that merchants use to lure you, in stages, to buy the real thing, a printed book?

Scholars and management theorists say that the World Wide Web has impacted our lives in three fundamental ways: The first way is it "dis-intermediates", i.e., the manufacturer of, say a mobile phone, in Shenzhen, China, can reach me, an Indian consumer in Mumbai directly through the Web and avoid the cost of paying commission to the chain of distributors. Thus, it is theorised, this "dis-intermediation" is how the Web makes economies more efficient just as "mass production" did in the Industrial Revolution. The second way is "dematerialisation", the classic example being music that no longer exists in material forms like gramophone records and cassette tapes, but only in its "de-materialised", streaming form. The third way that the Web is impacting our lives is "disaggregation", an example of which is when what we know of as "a bank" gets disaggregated into "payment" companies, "lending companies" and so on. Vast private equity and venture fortunes are being poured into making profits out of these three big movements and contemporary entrepreneurship means starting a business that capitalises on one of these three waves.

In the light of all this, how do I view my own switch to printed tech books? Have there been any cases where we have seen a reversal of an industrial revolution? What comes immediately to mind is the current reversal in worldwide views about the by-products of the Chemical Industrial Revolution: the Chemical Industrial Revolution started with the synthesis of indigo, and led to an era of affordable synthetic drugs, synthetic textiles, petrochemicals and so on but today is reversing itself as a revolution against plastics, petrol and synthetic chemicals of every kind gathers momentum.

Is such a pro-printed book wave around the corner?

The writer is hard at work on a textbook on Machine Learning for Standard VIII students in India in 22 languages; ajitb@rediffmail.com

Why Trump isn't energy's friend

You really can have too much of a good thing. Or a bad thing. Or just a thing. By "thing," I am referring in this case to President Donald Trump's support for the energy industry. Trump is all in on developing America's bountiful supplies of oil, natural gas and coal. This is what miners and drillers (and pipeline operators and refiners) want. At this juncture, though, it's not necessarily quite what they need.

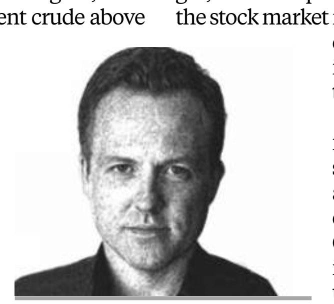
Meanwhile, Friday morning delivered what has become a rather familiar set-piece: A tariff tantrum in oil prices. China's announcement of new tariffs on another $75 billion of US goods, including oil, took what had been a tentative rally in Brent crude above the $60 level and dunked it back down below.

This is the problem with Trump's support: He is all about boosting supply. When it comes to demand, however, his broader agenda rather gets in the way.

Trump's "energy dominance" plans are informed by his trade policy in so far as higher fuel exports cut into those trade deficits that bother him so much. In addition, red states (those where Trump won the popular vote in 2016) account for more than 80 per cent of the country's oil, gas and coal production, as well as almost three-quarters of its refining capacity, according to data compiled by ClearView Energy Partners, a DC-based analysis firm.

So Trump has compelling reasons linked to his signature issue and his political survival to try to boost energy supply, and this informs many of his administration's policies and proposals. He wants to open up more federal waters as well as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling. Under Trump, the Environmental Protection Agency is pushing for changes to a provision of the Clean Water Act to make it harder for states to block the construction of new pipelines. Similarly, he has signed executive orders aimed at streamlining approval of cross-border pipelines (maybe with this one in mind) as well as seeking ways to further curb the states' say over permitting. On the other hand, Trump is all for state regulation of methane leaks at oil and gas facilities, planning to end direct federal regulation of this potent greenhouse gas.

The common theme here is one that resonates with many Republicans in general and the fossil-fuel industry in particular: Dismantling regulation. Its practical effect is to make it easier, and thereby cheaper, to produce more of these fuels. Yet you may have noticed there isn't exactly a shortage. One of the reasons oil, gas, and coal producers are so utterly friendless in the stock market is because of a pathological desire to continuously boost output and invest in new deposits to the point where they trash returns for shareholders.



LIAM DENNING

Trump proves less of a reliable friend when it comes to the other side of the equation: Demand. His attempt to overturn vehicle fuel-efficiency standards — and put California in its place — has resulted in several prominent vehicle manufacturers deserting him for a deal with Sacramento (much to his tweeted chagrin, of course). Meanwhile, Energy Secretary Rick Perry's various efforts to engineer a bailout of struggling coal-fired power plants, as well as nuclear ones, have run into the thorny issue of being deemed utterly unnecessary.

Above all, Trump's trade policy ensures that, even as he encourages more freedom molecules and other flag-toting fossil fuels, he is undermining the markets best placed to take them. China alone is forecast to account for 42 per cent of the growth in global oil consumption between 2018 and the end of 2020, according to the Energy Information Administration. The prospect of exports of liquefied natural gas is the main thing keeping gas futures above $2 per million BTU. Similarly, coal miners would be in even more pain were it not for the recent increase in exports. America's own energy consumption has risen somewhat in recent years, but this is not a growth market.

The energy industry should view Trump's increasingly shrill calls for the Federal Reserve to salve the wounds of the trade war with lower interest rates as similar to OPEC's ongoing supply cuts. They are both nominally bullish stopgaps that are actually bearish signals of weakening fundamentals.

Energy, especially oil, is an industry that grew up on globalisation. Yet every week brings further evidence of America's increasing disinterest in supporting that particular status quo. It isn't just trade. Japan and South Korea, two US allies in an especially dangerous part of the world, are now engaged in an escalating spat that would once have been snuffed out by the smothering blanket of US diplomacy. Trump has also signalled his disinterest in upholding the Carter Doctrine, even as he engages in brinkmanship with Iran. And of course, there is the confrontation with Denmark to think about.

A policy of boosting output into a weakening market only leads to one outcome when it comes to prices. And there is an added, more insidious risk for the fossil-fuel industry in this environment.

Earlier this week, my colleague Jennifer Dlouhy reported on a lobbying effort involving several large energy firms — including one linked to a certain tycoon whose death was announced Friday morning — that has resulted in nine states effectively criminalising demonstrations against pipelines. While it fits neatly with Trump's own efforts to ease the path for pipelines, it is hard to imagine anything more short-sighted. One wonders why the firms lobbying for this expect trials of protesters will either a) actually prevent protests, or b) bolster the industry's credentials. Like the president's policies, this is old-school thinking so blindly focused on the supply end of things that it forgets about the other: Winning over the customer and, ultimately, society.

The writer is an investment banker and former editor of the Wall Street Journal.©Bloomberg

Facts about India's PMs

BOOK REVIEW

TCA SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

The author is a good friend so whatever really rude things I have to say about this book I will tell him in private. Here, it is enough to say that this is a very comprehensive effort at capturing the main points of modern Indian history.

What's more, the facts have been thoroughly checked. That, in itself, is a major positive in recent books on contemporary history. It is, thus, an excellent and very valuable reference volume. Incoming diplomats will find it especially useful.

In writing it prime minister-wise Mr Bhagwati has gone back to a time-honoured tradition in history writing because that is how old history used to be written — king-wise or emperor-wise. In the 20th century this sort of periodisation largely gave way to party-wise or government-wise histories. The exception is the US where the president is, to all intents and purposes, a king on probation for four years, extendable by four more years.

In India we have tended to fall between the two stools where the Nehru- Gandhi dynasty has been treated as royalty and the rest as hired help while the royals are taking a break. This general approach can be discerned in the overall tone of Mr Bhagwati's writing which suffers from a natural human tendency to be more sympathetic to some leaders, or what are called confirmation bias in statistics and anchoring beliefs in psychology.

While this is not a serious flaw in a book that comprises facts, it does tend to wobble the narrative a little bit.

For example, Mr Bhagwati says that as home minister in 1984, P V Narasimha Rao allowed the anti-Sikh riots to get out of hand. Three thousand Sikhs were killed in those riots. But why blame him alone or him at all?

The Prime Minister was Rajiv Gandhi, a member of India's political royal family. Mr Bhagwati asks if Rajiv had been too distracted by grief after his mother — the Queen Mother if you will — had been assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards. He also suggests that perhaps he should have taken office after a couple of weeks when he was less in shock.

But the fact remains: When the riots happened, he was the prime minister. It is disingenuous to blame the home minister.

Also, as it happens, the notion that it was not Rajiv's fault became the received wisdom only after his wife Sonia Gandhi became Congress president in 1998. Before that the prime minister was held responsible if not accountable.

Similarly, where Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah are concerned, Mr Bhagwati is very charitable towards the former's kindness to the latter. Like many others, he attributes it to Nehru's sagacity and his helplessness in the face of British intransigence.

Mr Bhagwati is very careful when describing the three BJP-led governments. It is a deadpan recounting of the facts with which most well-informed Indians are familiar

But a little more questioning of Nehru's reasons would have worked better. After all, he did write to Edwina Mountbatten about his emotional ties to Kashmir.

And about the internal Emergency that Indira Gandhi imposed in 1975 suspending fundamental rights, Mr Bhagwati appears to blame the wrong judge —Jagmohan Sinha of the Allahabad Hight Court who set aside her election rather than V Krishna Iyer of the Supreme Court who went along with the specious plea that there could not be a vacuum. He ruled that Mrs Gandhi could continue as prime minister but not vote in Parliament.

That this was nonsense became clear on October 31, 1984, when she was assassinated. In fact, that is exactly what had happened once before: On January 11, 1966, when Lal Bahadur Shastri suddenly died of a heart attack.

Lastly, Justice Sinha was only applying the existing law in setting aside her election and disqualifying her for six long years. That he had based his ruling on a very minor technicality is not relevant. A paragraph on this technicality would have been helpful as an illustration of a Black Swan event.

Mr Bhagwati is very careful when describing the three Bharatiya Janata Party-led governments, two by Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004) and Narendra Modi (2014 to date). It is a deadpan recounting of the facts with which most well-informed Indians are familiar.

The way Mr Bhagwati tells it we don't get any real sense of the mind of these two prime ministers. Both represent discontinuities in Indian political approaches and attitudes. The difference is only of degree. Mr Bhagwati is content to say that Vajpayee and Mr Modi think very differently.

But that is like saying Nehru and Indira Gandhi thought differently.

THE PROMISE OF INDIA: How Prime Ministers Nehru to Modi Shaped the Nation
Jaimini Bhagwati
Penguin/Viking
Pp 385; ₹799

Opinion

TACKLING HURRICANES

President of USA, Donald Trump

"They start forming off the coast of Africa, as they're moving across the Atlantic, we drop a bomb inside the eye of the hurricane and it disrupts it. Why can't we do that?"

Anti-plastic vision shouldn't become a waste of efforts

Ban on plastic hasn't worked; the focus should perhaps be on managing plastic waste better

THE PRIME MINISTER has the right idea in calling for a ban on single-use plastics in the country. But, the sobering truth is that this has proved more difficult to implement than it sounds at the first war cry. For perspective, 25 of 29 states already have total/partial plastic bans, and yet, it continues to be a menace big enough for the prime minister to try and raise awareness about. Even though India isn't a big plastic polluter (given its low consumption level), the plastics industry is slated to grow at a steady rate of 10.5% annually over FY15-FY20. And, it is true that developed nations, including the US, have treated the developing world as dumping grounds for their waste, including plastic waste. But, the fact is that mismanaged plastic waste in the US, as per an analysis by *Science* was just 0.9% of the total waste generated in that country versus nearly 2% for India. While the 2% figure seems small, India generates 33.1 million pounds of plastic waste every day, of which only 19.8 million is collected and recycled.

The Union government, in March last year, amended the Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016, aiming to completely phase out single-use plastics by FY20. That the Indian plastic industry, which employs around 4 million, will bleed jobs once a ban is enforced aside, as long as consumers aren't given alternatives that are affordable, easily available, and sustainable in the long run, expecting this anti-plastic "revolution"—with a summary ban, if this is envisioned—to take off is just building castles in the air. Maharashtra's experience—the state is the largest generator of plastic waste in the country—shows how ground realities foil the best intentions. The state banned single-use plastics last year, with hefty fines for offenders; but, just days before the ban came into effect, there was little on-ground preparedness, as *The Indian Express* had reported at the time. Not enough had happened to make sustainable alternatives to plastic carrier bags available to the public. And, the "buyback" policy that the state government had come up with to encourage consumers to return plastic bottles also fell flat because there was absolutely no clarity on its operationalisation. Consequently, the state had to dilute its ban in phases, largely because of the backlash it faced from both industry and individual users of plastic in the state.

Substituting single-use plastics—especially plastic bags—is easier said than done. Cotton bags, long thought of as a more environment-friendly substitute, may not be all that they are worked out to be, given the environmental footprint of their manufacture, as recent research shows. Cloth/jute bags, corn-starch bags, disposable plates and cutlery of soft/re-purposed wood, etc, are all talked about, but are either more expensive compared to the plastic-product they are expected to replace or are less easily available. For instance, the installed capacity for non-export jute in the country is 2,700 tonnes per annum versus 10.3 million tonnes for plastic, a significant chunk of which caters for products that jute products can functionally substitute. With such a massive gap, phasing out plastics seems very difficult. Given how poorly recycling efforts, from collection to actual recycling/re-purposing/reuse, are monitored, India's plastic problem poses a daunting challenge. Often, a high cost of use at the consumer level—much like what Japan imposes—is proposed as an alternative to bans, but, given the lack of substitutes, it will be a *de facto* ban. So, to tackle the emerging plastic menace, India must not only work on encouraging cheaper, readily available substitutes but also get its act together on managing plastic waste better.

Killing access to credit

Madhya Pradesh's move leaves tribal folk more vulnerable

ON PAPER, THE amendment to Madhya Pradesh's Anusuchit Jan Jaati Sahukar Viniyam 1972 that the Kamal Nath government has brought seems noble. After all, governments must protect the marginalised from exploitation and usury—there have been enough reports, this year alone, of bonded labour to suggest that such exploitation hasn't been fully eradicated. The amendment not only waives off all existing loans from unofficial sources for tribal people in the state but also provides for jail-term of up to three years and a fine of ₹1 lakh for private, unlicensed moneylenders who try to recover the loan forcibly. Even licensed moneylenders are no longer free to negotiate the interest rate with the borrower. But, not only does the Nath government miss the woods for the trees in the matter, it, in fact, leaves tribal people in the state far more vulnerable than before.

Madhya Pradesh ranks 25th out of 36 states and Union Territories in the Crisil Inclusix 2018 report. While it does 'above average' on credit penetration, it is 'below average' on branch penetration; only 37% of the bank branches in the state were in rural areas, at the end of June 2018, and each bank office was serving 10,209 people against the national average of 9,280; commercial banks were serving 14,781. While 17 out of the state's 51 districts have significant tribal population, just four of the 17 had an 'above average' showing in Inclusix. It is, thus, likely that the bulk of credit penetration from formal sources is happening in the non-tribal districts in the state. But, while the state needed to crack down on usurious rates and linked exploitation, it has instead adopted a solution that will mean moneylenders simply stop lending to tribals. Without the banks that they need, tribal folk will then simply have no access to credit. The PM Jan Dhan Yojana may have connected a majority to formal finance through bank accounts, but as long as they are thought of as "unbankable" for credit—and the banks can't be faulted for this—the waiver means a 'from the frying pan to the fire' fate for Madhya Pradesh tribals. It is also unclear whether the waiver extends to all informal loans, including loans from relatives. If it does, it foments not just trouble within the community, it hurts tribal households that have lent money, too.

The government could have simply opted for harsh punishment for forced recovery and usury/exploitation while increasing the reach of formal finance, not just through bank penetration but also by shifting to direct-cash-transfers for various government benefits. Even if banks can't treat these funds as some manner of assurance of recovery, it would have allowed them to screen and target tribal households showing responsible financial behaviour for extending credit. A summary waiver, on the other hand, means not just increased vulnerability but also increased likelihood of default on loan repayment from other sources in the hope of a bailout/waiver.

GoldenOPPORTUNITY

PV Sindhu's rise should inspire India to take right route on nurturing more such sports greatness

PV SINDHU, India's ace shuttler, created history by becoming the first Indian ever to win gold at the World Championships. This was her third attempt at the title. While Sindhu had cemented her place in Indian sports history when she bagged the silver at the Rio Olympics in 2016, her latest victory has raised hopes of the first Indian gold in badminton in the 2020 Olympics. Sindhu's record of success says as much about the state of badminton in the country as her own individual mettle. Her coach, Indian badminton great Pullela Gopichand, had set up a world-class academy with a grant from the government in 2004, and has been instrumental in raising the level of Indian badminton. His pupils, Kidambi Srikanth, Parupalli Kashyap and Saina Nehwal, have all secured top positions in world championships. But, at government-run sports academies, there is little to speak of.

While corruption is a significant reason for India's poor show, another important one is the lack of infrastructure. The number of government-owned sports facilities in India are limited, and even those are not well maintained. Except for cricket, not much attention has been paid so far to sports. An IndiaSpend analysis reveals that India spent roughly a third to a fourth of the money spent by the UK, which won 67 medals, compared to India's two, in the 2016 Olympics. Moreover, while the country spent ₹750 crore on sport-specific federations, training centres, coaches and other infrastructure between 2012-13 and 2015-16, spending on athletes totalled ₹60 crore. Per athlete spending for the country was far less than what some foreign universities spent on their athletes. If India needs more Sindhus, it must give more Gopichands the requisite support to nurture future champions.

RATE CONUNDRUM

LOWER RATES HELP LOWER THE COST OF BORROWING, BUT BANKS HAVE TO CONSIDER GROWTH IN DEPOSITS. THIS PREVENTS THEM FROM RESPONDING THE WAY RBI WOULD LIKE

Difficult to sync lending rates with repo rate

MADAN SABNAVIS

Chief Economist, CARE Ratings

Views are personal

IT IS NOW almost axiomatic that whenever the MPC convenes, there will be a rate cut in case CPI inflation is reigning at less than 4% and the risk factors are minimal. At present, oil price is down, and there is little possibility of a spike as every time supply comes down from the cartel, the US tends to provide the required substitution. Besides, the world is moving towards less oil consumption. The monsoon has turned normal and, while there can be marginal shortfalls, it is unlikely that prices will shoot up. Yes, prices of vegetables can create panic at times due to the recent flooding in several parts, but that would be temporary in nature.

The important question is whether or not we have been relying too much on monetary policy for growth, and lost the plot along the line. The economy has been stagnating as several sectors show declining growth and job losses. The government has chosen to stick to fiscal prudence and sought to revive animal spirits through some 'talk'. The recent measures announced by the FM are more in the nature of addressing pain points of industry, like auto or SME, or banks and not any additional fiscal outlays. The withdrawal of the surcharge on tax to be paid by FPIs is probably the only one which has fiscal implications. But, plain talk, not backed by financial resources, has not worked in the last three years. That is the difference between 'RBI talk' and 'government talk'. 'RBI talk', also sometimes loosely called 'open mouth operations', has worked to cool the currency and, at times, interest rates that are market determined. But, when it comes to the government, industry does not seem to be convinced and is waiting for a 'delta' to flow in the form of additional expenditure announcements. This is not happening.

Captains of industry have been asking for rate cuts more out of habit, and RBI and MPC have been obliging with alacrity. When it was 25 bps, they argued that it was anaemic and something more potent was required. Last time, it was 35 bps and, hence, industry should be happy. RBI and the government have both been haranguing banks to lower rates, and the famous epigram of all discussions in the media is that the 'transmission is rigid'. Let us see how these numbers have moved in the last one year or so.

The repo rate has come down by 110 bps in the last year, ending August 9, 2019. The first point of action has to be the deposit rate as it feeds into the MCLR, which becomes the indicative rate for borrowers. The one year deposit rate has moved from 6.25-7% on August 10, 2018 to 6.35-7.3% on August 9, 2019. The mid-point rates have moved from 6.625% to 6.825%. The mid-point savings bank rate has, on the other hand, come down from 3.75% to 3.375% in this period. The weighted average rate on term deposits has gone up from 6.72% in June 2018 to 6.84% in June 2019. Quite clearly, banks are cautious here as lowering deposit rates in general will affect the supply of funds and, given that deposits are 76-78% of total liabilities, lower repo rates do not necessarily translate to lower deposit rates.

Let us look at the lending side. The MCLR has moved up from an average of 7.9-8.05% to 7.9-8.4%—a mid-point increase from 7.975% to 8.15%—at a time when the repo rate has been lowered. The WALR on new loans has moved from 9.45% to 9.68% (June to June), while that on outstanding loans has increased from 10.26% to 10.43%.

The question is why lending rates are not coming down, when policy rate has fallen sharply in the last year? First, MCLR is a function of the deposit rates and, if the latter does not come down or increases, it does not really point to lower lending rates. Second, even if the MCLR comes down, the effective rate for customers may not come down if credit risk perception is higher. And, at times when the economy is in an acknowledged state of slowdown, with corporate sales growing at an anaemic rate of 5% in the first quarter, it would be incorrect not to price in this risk when lending to most clients. That is why the WALR has gone up during this period. Therefore, the issue of transmission must be left to banks, rather than being decreed from above, as interest rate is the price for capital which should ideally be the reflection of demand and supply. Supply is restricted by deposits growth while demand is screened by banks, based on quality, where credit risk matters. On the demand side, it should be realised that it has not kept pace as there is still surplus capacity with industry. Also, private sector investment in infrastructure is still limited and, hence, comes in the way of demand for funds.

The recent measures announced by the FM are more in the nature of addressing pain points of industry

The market reaction to interest rates has, however, been amazingly proactive. The 10-years GSec has moved down by 110 bps between August 10, 2018, and August 9, 2019, 364-days Tbill by 143 bps, 91-days Tbill by 124 bps, and call rate by 90 bps. This means that the government bond market reacts well, and those borrowing here tend to gain the most. Here, the biggest beneficiary has been the government, which has a gross borrowing programme of ₹7 lakh crore this year and can lower costs by over 100 bps and save ₹700 crore. Also, the gross Tbill issuance for the year would be above ₹10 lakh crore, getting in a benefit of ₹1,000 crore in interest payments on an annualised basis relative to last year.

How about the corporate bond market? Here, interestingly, the corporate bond spreads over GSecs has moved upwards quite perceptibly. It was by 37 bps for AAA bonds, 71 bps for A rated bonds and 51 bps for BBB rated bonds during this one year period. Clearly, the risk perception on commercial lending has increased and, hence, while GSec rates have moved downwards, the market has priced corporate bonds higher. And, if the market reaction is testimony of the final interest rate, credit has actually been priced higher.

The conclusion is quite revealing. Lowering of rates by RBI definitely helps the government lower the cost of borrowing, which can be up to ₹2,000 crore a year, depending on the tenure of issuance. However, when it comes to commercial credit, banks cannot, and do not, respond the way the central bank would like as they have to also consider the growth in deposits, which is mainstay for them and, hence, transmission will be slow, depending on their requirements. Also, credit risk has to be priced appropriately; and ex poste numbers do reflect the perception. At a broader level, it raises the issue of whether we should at all expect banks to lower their deposit and lending rates when the RBI lowers the repo rate, especially when the market does not support such actions as seen in the bond spreads.

India's stimulus plan short on vision

If Sitharaman and her team can show some strategic thinking around exports, India will be on a roll when global demand eventually steadies and recovers

ANDY MUKHERJEE

Bloomberg

INDIA IS BELATEDLY acknowledging that something's gone wrong with what was once billed as the world's fastest-growing economy. That's the good news. The bad news is that New Delhi still doesn't have a cohesive strategy to reverse the slowdown.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman did offer a stimulus package on Friday. The highlight was the rollback of a tax surcharge on overseas investors that she herself had imposed in July's budget. It is a welcome concession, though there's no logic in giving global banks a break on derivatives they trade in India while denying the same tax benefit to local hedge funds.

This unfair discrimination against a nascent industry in domestic alternative assets is Exhibit A of the non-strategic thinking that's clouding policy-making in India. Exhibit B is the so-called angel tax on startups, a much-hated levy that has finally been removed. The tax was introduced by the previous Congress Party-led government and treated money raised by fledgling firms as income. Why did this instrument for harassing private businesses stay on the statute books for seven years, when getting rid of it was so simple?

The finance minister's plan to deal with a long and painful slide in the auto industry, where July sales slumped 36%, is Exhibit C. The government will buy more cars for its fleet, she said. That, and an assurance that vehicles purchased now won't become illegal when stricter pollution standards kick in next year, should help deal with some of the inventory buildup. But, carmakers are unlikely to ramp up production until they see a sustainable return to normal volumes. That will require dealing with both depressed incomes of consumers and a financing funk.

Enter Exhibit D. Sitharaman will hasten the injection of 700 billion rupees ($9.8 billion) of additional capital into state-run banks, a policy she announced in July. It is not enough. Lenders still need to absorb the full hit from 2.4 trillion rupees of bad debt accumulated in just 16 companies, which they are trying to address outside the courts. Half of that reflects loans to troubled shadow banks, according to Credit Suisse Group AG. The figures for haircuts being discussed in the media are so large that banks will have little spare capital to expand their balance sheets.

A parallel effort by the Reserve Bank of India to link loan rates to its policy benchmark is a laudable move. Here, though, lenders are bound to look for ways to avoid passing on lower borrowing costs to existing customers. The government isn't willing to face up to the strategic reality that most of its inefficient state-run banks have no strengths beyond their large branch networks, which don't count for much in a digital world.

When you're always fighting fires, it is difficult to turn off the water hose and start tending the garden. The desolate patch that promises the most potential is exports. With the US President, Donald Trump coming very close to pressing the tariff trigger on consumer goods made in China, the country with the biggest claim to insert itself into global supply chains is India, because of the size of its low-paid workforce. Hong Kong-based Li & Fung Ltd, the world's largest supplier of consumer goods, says it is helping one American retailer slash its reliance on the People's Republic to 20% from 70% in two years. Even if Trump doesn't deliver on his ultimate threat, a large opportunity for India has opened up.

The three industries that hold the biggest promise for jobs and suppressed wages are textiles, autos and electronics. The trio can, in turn, support a fourth domestic supply chain—construction and real estate

The three industries that hold the biggest promise for jobs and suppressed wages are textiles, autos and electronics. The trio can, in turn, support a fourth domestic supply chain—construction and real estate. But Bangladesh is ahead in textiles, Thailand is stealing a march in autos, and Vietnam in shining in electronics. If Sitharaman and her team can show some strategic thinking around exports, India will be on a roll when global demand eventually steadies and recovers.

Allowing larger firms to flourish, enabling smaller firms to secure cheap financing and forcing the state to retreat from business would be the great news the private sector has been waiting for. The wait is becoming interminable.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From denial to acceptance

Inspite of the steadily dipping economic trend, the FM presented Budget 2019 in tones of aggressive self-assurance, no different than before. Wiser counsel seems to have prevailed now, for the government realises that it had missed vital sign posts on the way, and is attempting a course correction, with policy rejig, in selective sectors, if only to animate market sentiment. But, Monday morning's market did not jump with joy—it was still cautious. The recent pronouncements of the FM, no doubt, will carry a much delayed feel-good factor. The banks have had sufficient liquidity for quite a while, but officials remained circumspect over lending. The FM, inter-alia, has asked PSBs to lend without fear of inquisition. With ministers, secretaries and lesser officials continuing to face relentless grind for decisions taken while in office, one can only hope that her message would find effective downward transmission.

— R Narayanan, Mumbai

PV Sindhu's gold

PV Sindhu has scripted history by becoming the first Indian badminton player to win the World Championship title in singles. This exemplary feat bears a clear testimony to her indomitable spirit and perseverance, with which she overcame all odds and cemented herself as one of the greatest badminton players of the world. Her final match against a formidable opponent, Okuhara of Japan, saw Sindhu display her best en route to her mammoth win. Sindhu's glorious journey from a promising young player to the pinnacle of glory will continue to act as a source of inspiration to all budding players.

— M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

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ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

AUGUSTINE PETER
Visiting fellow, RIS, & former member, Competition Commission of India. Views are personal

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Imagining CCI 2.0

While the Competition Law Review report is a comprehensive one, a few issues remain unaddressed. There is no reference to the concept of single-economic-entity, which came up in a few cases prominently in the recent past. Common ownership and its effect on markets remain unaddressed

THE COMPETITION LAW Review Committee (CLRC) has just submitted its report to the minister of finance and corporate affairs. This article looks largely at the anti-trust issues.

A major structural change relates to the recommendation for a Governing Board. The CCI's remit is an amalgam of advocacy, regulatory, investigative as well as adjudicatory functions. The recommendation is that CCI should have a Governing Board that oversees its advocacy and quasi-legislative functions. Investigative, regulatory and adjudicatory functions, by implication, would remain with the whole-time members of CCI. The idea of Governing Board has been adopted from ex ante regulators like SEBI and RBI. CCI is an ex post regulator, except in case of combinations (merger and acquisitions). CCI has very limited legislative functions, unlike an ex ante regulator, a main function of whose is making rules for the sector concerned. And advocacy does not require a structured system. The wall between regulatory, investigative and adjudicatory powers of the whole-time Members and powers of the part-time Members might turn porous, CCI being an ex post regulator.

Another recommendation is that the regulatory infrastructure of the CCI should be boosted by opening a couple of regional offices for carrying out non-adjudicatory functions. This is welcome. The recommendation to introduce a 'Green Channel' for combinations is a long-standing demand within and outside the Commission.

This committee worked on the emerging developments in the digital space and recommended: (i) that provisions may be introduced in the law to identify 'hub and spoke' cartels, and (ii) that agreements that do not fall in the category of horizontal (section 3.3) or vertical (3.4) be coupled in the category of section 3.4 to be evaluated under rule of reason. Besides, the committee has also recommended that transaction based threshold should be applied in the case of combination in the digital space.

Merger of the DG office with the commission with separation of investigative and adjudicatory functions has been recommended. This is not a major change in the sense that the current provisions provide for this, except that the appointment of DG, additional DG, etc, are currently done by the Government, which would simply need to be transferred to the commission.

CCI may be granted a one-time corpus fund. It also may be empowered to charge an ad valorem fee for combination filings. Obviously, this would accrue to the CCI corpus fund. This is a major step in providing autonomy to CCI. However, if a Governing Board were to come about, such autonomy is at risk of being compromised.

> **There appears to be no recommendation to give statutory powers to CCI to seek and obtain information and data for non-enforcement work**

Introduction of a bench of NCLAT dedicated to hearing appeals under the Competition Act has been recommended. This is a next-best solution to the reinstatement of the old COMPAT.

The chairperson and whole-time members may sit in panels of three in relation to adjudication, and the composition of the panel may be determined by the chairperson. With only four members now at the maximum, flexibility is limited. The recommendation that there will be no "casting vote" may not be relevant because with three members as quorum, the issue of tie would not arise.

A major recommendation relates to introduction of settlement and commitment mechanisms. This is expected to result in swifter disposal of cases. However, this is confined to section 3(4) and section 4 only. While exclusion in the case of cartels is justified, the exclusion of horizontal agreements other than cartels will take away a number of future cases from its ambit.

The recommendation to expand the scope of section 19(3) to make the list of factors for determining AAEC in respect of section 3 violations are very relevant and welcome. However, the provision that any other factor may be determined by regulations would render it less useful. Giving discretion to the commission would be a more effective option. In the current law, a similar provision authorising the commission exists in Section 19(4)(m).

The recommendations call for including section 4A that allows for reasonable exercise of IPR as a defence against allegations of abuse of dominance. There is an issue here. Section 4 effectively envisages per se rule. Abuse of dominance is found to be per se anti-competitive. Rule of reason cannot be introduced for IPR without vitiating the architecture of the section.

The recommendation on strengthening of the inter-regulatory consultation mechanism is a step forward, but falls short of the ideal scenario.

While it is a comprehensive report, a few issues remain unaddressed. There is no reference to the concept of single-economic-entity, which came up in a few cases prominently in the recent past. Common ownership and its effect on markets remain unaddressed. The neutrality between public and private sector enterprises has been diluted over the last few years through exceptions to public sector banks in combination process, etc. One expected the committee to recommend roll back of the same, given the combination regime is proposed to be streamlined and modified substantially. Criminalisation of cartels seems to have been merely looked at by the committee. No arguments in favour of or against the same has been made in the report. It is time to start a discussion on the need for criminalisation of cartels to weed out this cancer. Market studies have been recommended. However, there appears to be no recommendation to give statutory powers to CCI to seek and obtain information and data for non-enforcement work like this. Provisions exist in mature jurisdictions like the UK. This will enable the commission to initiate *suo motu* cases as also to evaluate the state of competition in major sectors of the economy and suggest policy changes to the government.

Getting out of the economic coma

V KUMARASWAMY
Author of Making growth happen in India

Misaligned monetary policies are at the root of the current rot

EVEN AFTER 28 years of reforms, India is still confused about what market reforms are. There is lack of confidence about their satisfactory working. So, we find a lot of good samaritan interventions, even from 'not answerable to people' regulators who tend to arbitrate between consumers and producers instead of working on making markets more functional. Similar confusion on trying to balance savers' and investors' interest, pensioners' and borrowers', levels of capital account convertibility have led to instability in various monetary metrics. This perhaps is one of the main villains of the current economic logjam. India has near-full capital account convertibility. Quibbles on the definition aside, despite restrictions on tenure, interest rates, security, etc, we are able to raise far more loans than we want in forex. The size of our forex reserve is such that no overseas lender believes that an Indian corporate would default because RBI would fail to provide requisite forex at the time of repayment; default if any would be due to the corporate's own failure. After 4-5 rounds, many overseas banks have developed confidence about regular borrowers. While the country's risk premium has gone down (due to better rating and perception), borrower risk premium is also going down. Although there have been some mammoth overseas transactions by Indian corporates, there is still some distance to cover.

As a result, the dollar interest rates commanded by Indian borrowers is at a much lower level than domestic 'administered' rates and in line with the rates in world markets. Between two open (capital) markets, the interest rates should converge, and where they will settle depends on the relative size and strength. But, to protect pensioners and the poor, we are stubbornly holding up domestic rates, creating problems for investment, capacity utilisation and jobs.

There are various ways to converge the $ rates and $ interest rates with differing consequences. One way is to let the domestic rates drift to $ interest rates. This will cause lesser accretion to our reserves. Both demand and supply will be more equally distant from the pure trade-account-dollar demand and supply, and, hence, will be unlikely to disturb the latter. This is what our misaligned policies do not permit. The surplus from capital account keeps the dollar cheaper, making imports more attractive and taxing exports. The second way is to make borrowers hedge their exposures fully. Or impose a tax on interest paid overseas. This will increase the dollar loan costs, converging the domestic rates with $ interest rates and reduce the surplus dollar supplies from the capital account. But, the purpose of capital account convertibility is to source cheaper capital for faster growth.

The third way may be to impose physical limits on capital dollar and restrict it to imbalance in trade dollar (plus remittances). RBI may be allowed to accrete only 2-3 months of CAD or trade deficit per annum till forex reserves fall back to six-month's import cover from the 10.9 months now. This would mean partial roll-back of convertibility or discretionary action by RBI that is not market-based. The fourth, one-time devaluation, may not help by itself since the capital dollar market does not care for absolute levels as much as its movement during the year, which it translates into interest rates and adds to the interest rates exchanged by the parties. It would help if RBI and the government openly declare that they would depreciate the currency as much as the difference between the domestic rupee interest rates and capital dollar interest rates would warrant on a year-on-year basis. In such a case, the players would price it in and the resultant would be equivalent to the ₹ interest rates. However, this would nullify the beneficial effect of capital account convertibility altogether.

Inconsistent monetary policy, where inflation, exchange rate and domestic interest rates and markets are messed around with, leads to lack of competitiveness and unemployment. Our growth and markets are being gifted to overseas players. There is little else to blame for our misfortune now—fiscal deficit, CAD, reserves, debt/GDP, public investment ratio, are all favourable and should, at better times, be an ideal launch-pad for growth acceleration.

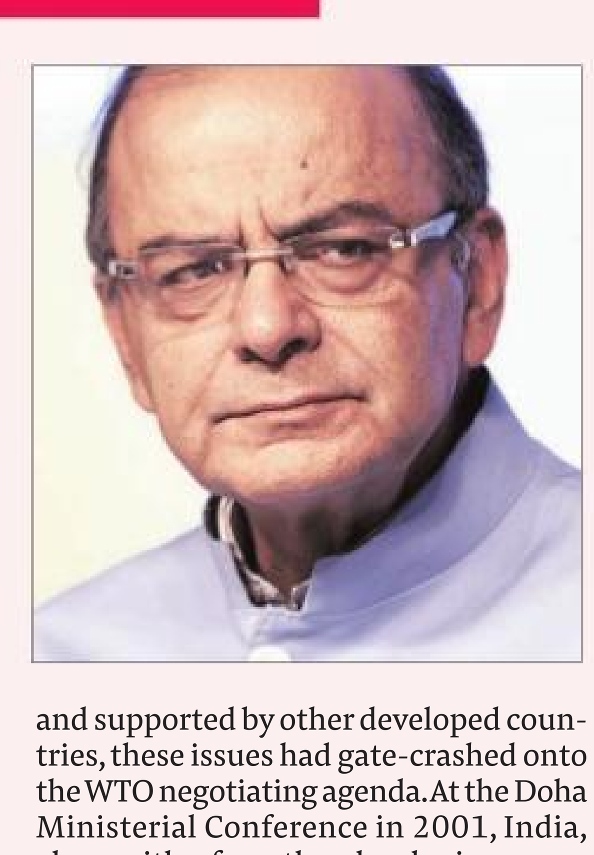
The ideal action for the monetary authorities would be a mix of various alternatives. The trade dollar (without the influence of capital dollar) truly represents the cost competitiveness of the economy. This is what would determine capacity utilisation and employment. As explained here before, capital dollar does not depend on dollar levels. Effort should be made to stabilise $/₹ rate in the combined market. Capital account should be liberalised on the outbound account as well, so that dollars sitting in reserves and invested in US treasuries earning 1% and 2%, can earn a lot more. Tax on dollar interests and limits on reserves accretion would make the exchange rate converge towards trade dollar levels. The government should also reduce the spread over inflation on domestic interest rates. But to lessen the impact on pensioners, it should target interest 'subsidies' by paying them 1-1.5 % extra upto a specified extent. This can be financed out of the tax the capital dollar coming in without imports.

ARUN JAITLEY

India's hero at WTO

As the commerce minister in the Vajpayee govt, Jaitley pulled off some nifty moves that changed the course of trade negotiations at the WTO in favour of developing nations

ABHIJIT DAS
Head, Centre for WTO Studies, IIFT, Views are personal



MOST OF THE TRIBUTES to former finance minister Arun Jaitley, who passed away last Saturday, have missed his influence in decisively changing the course of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations at the WTO during August-September 2003. His contribution, and personal qualities, in shaping WTO negotiations needs to be recalled.

Jaitley assumed charge as India's commerce minister in January 2003, at a time when the Doha Round was at a crucial juncture. In accordance with the Doha Ministerial mandate of 2001, key decisions had to be taken at the Cancun Ministerial Meeting of the WTO, which was barely a few months away in September 2003. Two topics required his constant attention—agriculture and the so-called new issues.

In agriculture, Jaitley had the onerous task of not conceding ground to developed countries, as well as some export power-houses among developing countries—Brazil and Argentina—who were seeking to prise open India's market for their agriculture exports. As the negotiations in agriculture progressed in 2002-2003, the interests of developing countries appeared to be getting ignored. But this changed decisively in August 2003, when the ambassadors of Brazil and India to WTO decided to join hands. Their aim was to thwart the attempts of the EU-US partnership to accommodate their mutual interest, while marginalising the concerns of India and other developing countries.

The fledgling coalition forged by the diplomats of Brazil and India in Geneva required a formal approval at the political level in New Delhi. Fearing that the price of aligning with Brazil would be to grant market access for its agricultural products into India, some quarters in the Indian government were strongly opposed to the coalition. Jaitley showed immense foresight and astuteness in sensing the value of this coalition. He moved with determination and succeeded in changing the mind of one his influential ministerial colleagues, who was the main person opposing the coalition.

Further, recognising the utility of having China on his side, he openly welcomed that country as a member of this coalition. Eventually, on 20 August 2003, the G20 coalition in agriculture was established. And the rest, as is often recognised at WTO, is history. Henceforth, it would be the developing countries, and not EU-US combine, that would be the most influential voice in agriculture negotiation. Jaitley was one of the principal architects of this tectonic shift at WTO.

Let us now turn to another subject in the Doha mandate, in which Jaitley made seminal contribution—the four new issues: investment, competition, government procurement and trade facilitation. At the insistence of the EU and the US, and supported by other developed countries, these issues had gate-crashed onto the WTO negotiating agenda. At the Doha Ministerial Conference in 2001, India, along with a few other developing countries, had strongly resisted commencing negotiations on these issues. They saw little merit in overloading the negotiating agenda with new issues that did not hold promise of creating reciprocal benefits for developing countries. In 2003, the mantle fell on Jaitley to prevent negotiations on these issues from moving ahead at the Cancun Meeting. How he achieved this provides many lessons in negotiating strategy and also demonstrates some of his finest personal qualities. In this context, it is worth recalling some episodes at the Cancun Meeting.

First, in one of the small group meetings, Robert Zoellick, the Trade Representative of United States, sought to give a particular twist to the Doha mandate, which would have been adverse to the interest of developing countries. Jaitley's quick thinking saved the day. Using his immense legal skills, he completely turned the tables on Zoellick, who was no mean lawyer himself.

Second, in another incident at Cancun, a marathon meeting, lasting almost 7-8 hours, had just ended at 4 am. Jaitley came out of the meeting room, looking completely exhausted. He was promptly informed that his next meeting would be held within 3 hours. As the meeting was on an issue of immense importance to India, he ignored his tiredness and took a detailed briefing on it for almost 2 hours. His personal comfort took a back seat, when it came to protecting national interest at WTO. Through his actions that day, Jaitley taught all of us young officers the meaning of commitment to the task at hand.

The third incident concerns the coalition of about 100 countries against the new issues created at Cancun. At a crucial juncture, rumours were rife that a key country was planning to abandon the coalition. Jaitley played his masterstroke. He convened a press conference where the minister of this key country was made the centre of attraction. This minister clearly enjoyed the glare of international media and any thought of leaving the coalition was quickly abandoned.

In the face of opposition from more than 100 countries, the Cancun Ministerial Meeting collapsed without taking any substantive decisions. From the discussions, it was clear that at least two out of the four new issues would not remain on the negotiating agenda. And so it proved to be in August 2004. This came about in no small measure due to Jaitley's multi-faceted skills at Cancun.

Immediately after the Cancun meeting collapsed, domestic and international media surrounded Jaitley. His statesmanship emerged in this impromptu media interaction. He resisted the temptation of playing to the gallery and, unlike some of his counterparts from key developing countries, did not take any credit for collapse of the meeting. His measured statement ensured that India would not be singled out as the main country responsible for the collapse of the WTO meeting.

For those of us who had the privilege of interacting with Arun Jaitley at Cancun, his razor-sharp thinking, commitment to duty, strategic approach to negotiations and courage in taking on the developed countries, evident in ample measure at this crucial meeting, shall remain an abiding memory.

May your soul rest in peace, Sir.

(While working as a Director in the department of commerce, the author was part of India's official delegation to the Cancun Ministerial Meeting of WTO held in 2003.)

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

UNPOPULAR IDEAS CAN BE SILENCED, AND INCONVENIENT FACTS KEPT DARK, WITHOUT THE NEED FOR ANY OFFICIAL BAN. — GEORGE ORWELL

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE WRONG COUNSEL

The Press Council is primarily the autonomous guardian of press freedom — on J&K it has gone against its own mandate

THE FIRST PRESS Commission recommended the establishment of a Press Council of India (PCI) in the 1950s. It was in response to a survey of yellow journalism, but the first element of the commission's mandate for the proposed statutory body was to secure the freedom of the press. The problematics of media bias were secondary, since only a free press could be called upon to be responsible. The PCI has been on the side of the angels in some of the most disturbing periods in contemporary history, like the insurgency in Punjab and the violent polarisation triggered by the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. It produced a good report on the media in Kashmir in 2017. But now, it has actually gone against the mandate set for it well before its inception in 1966. The PCI has sought to intervene in the matter of a petition filed by *Kashmir Times* in the Supreme Court, seeking removal of press curbs which have crippled reporting from Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370. The PCI's mandate would place it on the side of the petitioner, but it has sought to balance the priority of press freedom against the "national interest of integrity and sovereignty". Chairman Justice CK Prasad appears to have overridden the dissent of members representing the press on the ground that freedom is contingent upon responsibility.

Responsibility to whom? The PCI's move appeals to the imperative of national interest, and extraordinary circumstances may indeed demand emergency interventions. But national interest, at all the times, is served by the truth. And especially in times when it is contested, by reporting, fairly and accurately, without fear or favour. The job of the press in a democracy is to keep the public accurately informed as the situation unfolds in Jammu and Kashmir. The PCI does not need to remind the Indian press about its responsibilities in this matter — from the time when lethal insurgency broke out in Kashmir in 1990, the mainstream press has reported from the region very responsibly, serving the interests of both security and human rights.

There is room for a meaningful intervention in Kashmir, where local media has not been allowed to function at all, while national and international media have found it hard to get their stories out. And there has been a rash of sunny stories, especially on television, depicting a Kashmir that is surreally normal. By calling for curbs that effectively suppress the freedom of expression of a local publication, the PCI undermines itself as the institution charged with the responsibility of safeguarding one of the pillars of Indian democracy.

AGENDA FOR THE BANK

Measures unveiled for financial sector may be short-term balm. India's banking industry needs a design change

LAST WEEK, FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a raft of measures aimed at reviving the economy and boosting investor sentiment. As part of this package, the government announced that it would frontload the release of Rs 70,000 crore to state-owned banks for recapitalisation, and the linking of the interest rate on loans to the RBI's key policy rate, the repo rate, besides promising bankers that they would be protected in cases where bonafide decisions are taken by them while lending. The upfront release of what is growth capital for banks should help lenders to plan their asset growth better instead of scrambling for funds and ensure that the pipeline of loans is healthy. But where the government, central bank and banks may be on sticky ground is on linking the interest rate on loans to the repo rate.

The rationale for pricing loans based on what is essentially an overnight borrowing rate is not clear, especially in the context of funding costs for banks. Ideally, such a benchmarking should be to liquid bonds or securities and across different average maturities or tenures such as three-months, six-months and one-year, like the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate or Libor. It's a challenge that the RBI and the Indian banking industry have faced over the last few decades following the freeing up of interest rates after having tried out the base rate system and then a marginal cost of funds based lending rate. Similarly, it may be too optimistic to expect bankers to push loan growth in the absence of more credible assurances of protection from over zealous investigative agencies.

Essentially, some of the measures unveiled last week for the financial sector may prove only to be short-term balm. India's banking industry, dominated by PSU lenders, will be competitive, more efficient and profitable only if there is a structural design change which features operational independence, empowered bank boards, better governance standards and quality of lending besides a government shareholder which acts like a sovereign wealth fund. That will have to be accompanied by stable government and regulatory policies. During its first term, the Narendra Modi-led government may have been late in addressing the problem of bad loans which forced the government to infuse over Rs 2 lakh crore for recapitalisation. A government with a powerful political mandate and facing the rising threat of a deepening domestic slowdown and global downturn, cannot be seen to be kicking the can down the road now.

THE CHAMPION

PV Sindhu shows it is possible to come back after defeat, and win over the world

PV SINDHU TOOK just 38 minutes to win the World Badminton Championship final and become the first Indian to reach that dizzy height. This giant leap for Indian badminton was as much about her ruthless triumph on D-Day as it was about the way she has repeatedly bounced back after confidence-shattering defeats. It was a result of waking up the morning after and resetting her targets, no matter how hurtful the loss was, that had seen Sindhu collect a bunch of medals — at the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, now five at the World Championships and an Olympics silver.

Indian shuttlers have had little history of excellence at the world championships. Prakash Padukone had a bronze, Pullela Gopichand had none, Saina Nehwal had faltered in six quarterfinals before eventually medaling, and the men's singles shuttlers couldn't find the breakthrough till a minor toe-hold this year. Arguably the world's most talented player, Tai Tzu-Ying, whom Sindhu beat in the quarters, has struggled to medal at the Worlds and even the legendary Lee Chong Wei had to retire with a big bunch of silvers, but no gold. Being crowned World Champion is no fortuitous happenstance, for even a bronze is hard-earned. To be the only constant in the podium pictures for three straight years is an achievement that guarantees an entry into badminton's Hall of Fame.

It is no secret that India struggles for medals at Olympics, the frustration reaching tipping point three years back in Rio. But Sindhu was in a stratosphere of her own — revelling in ousting shuttlers with big reputations, including the mighty Chinese Wang Yihan, before losing a classic final. She never settled for it, and it was to be the start of an assault on every peak — India had never medaled in women's singles at the Asian Games before her silver. No Indian, male or female, had made the World Championship finals. No Indian had won the year-ending circuit finale. A solitary global medal — not necessarily gold — makes grand news in India. But Sindhu's is an unapologetic ambition to win over the world, and she will do everything within her prowess to keep winning.

Asian cats, Western monkeys

Across Asia, focus is turning to multiple geopolitical quarrels. Western powers are back in play, arbitrating

SANJAYA BARU

ONE STORY from the *Panchatantra* which holds a lesson for students of geopolitics and international relations is that of the clever monkey and the quarrelling cats. Seeking to arbitrate between two cats fighting over some leftovers, the monkey brings in a weighing scale to ensure equal division. Finding one part of the cake bigger than the other, the monkey takes a bite of the bigger slice to make them equal. Finding it has bitten off too much, it takes a bite of the other side to ensure balance. And so it goes on, till the entire cake is devoured.

Divide and rule has been around for ages as a tactic of control and domination. With Japan and the Koreas quarrelling, China and India quarrelling, Pakistan and India quarrelling, the Arabs and the Iranians quarrelling, there are so many Asian cats chasing each other's tail that western monkeys are back in play, arbitrating across Asia.

The story over the past quarter century was the much heralded "geo-economic" rise, or resurgence, of Asia. The focus this year seems to be turning to multiple geopolitical quarrels among Asians. That a rapidly retreating Britain would allow its capital city to become a stage for an old South Asian quarrel it facilitated over a century is as much a comment on the monkey's delusions of past grandeur as on the cats' lack of wisdom.

Equally, if not more, China's questioning of India on matters pertaining to territory on one side of its borders sounds fanciful given its quarrels with many neighbours all around. Not long back, a Chinese premier said to his Indian counterpart that when India and China shake hands the whole world looks at them. What was not stated was that some would look with hope and others with concern. Today, when China and India quarrel on the status of Jammu and Kashmir, it could be said again that the whole world looks at them, some with hope and others with concern. The hope this time is that quarrelling Asians will bring to a halt the narrative of a "Rising Asia".

Major Asian powers have a responsibility towards the continent as a whole. No power, howsoever big and powerful, can hope to dominate the continent. Asia will never become China's backyard the way the US converted western Europe into its backyard after the Second World War. If the US succeeds in the "geo-economic containment" of China it will be because of China's inability to reassure its neighbours rather then because Asians will once again wish to be dominated by the West. The real and present challenge for all of Asia is the slowing down of its growth engines. Sure, the global growth engine is itself slowing down, but for most Asian countries the slowdown threatens livelihoods, not merely lifestyles.

In 2007, the late Lee Kuan Yew, founder-mentor of Singapore, famously said that China and India were the twin engines of the Asian aircraft and that together the two engines would lift the continent as a whole onto a new trajectory of growth. Have we, within the decade, come to a point when "differences turning into disputes", not just between the two Asian giants but between so many Asian neighbours, could ground the Asian aircraft and delay the dawn of the so-called "Asian century"? Does China imagine its future is secure without Asian stability?

It is no secret that the US is now engaged in a "geo-economic containment" of China, as originally theorised by the Harvard scholar Edward Luttwak in his wonderfully crafted book, The Rise of China and the Logic of Conflict (2012). Of course, the Chinese understand this. Must they, then, pick a quarrel with so many of their neighbours, making many of them turn West, seeking balance? Would a burnt-out power like Britain have the courage to voice concern about human rights in Hong Kong but for the courage it derives from concerns around Asia? Would it allow anti-India demonstrators to disrupt traffic in the heart of London but for the fact that it sees new opportunities to regain lost influence?

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The real and present challenge for all of Asia is the slowing down of its growth engines. Sure, the global growth engine is itself slowing down, but for most Asian countries the slowdown threatens livelihoods, not merely lifestyles.

For India, the slowdown is even more challenging since it is now clear that it is not merely a cyclical downturn that can be addressed with fiscal and monetary policy intervention but has deep-rooted structural foundations that need urgent fixing. Analysts have pointed to inadequate improvement in labour productivity, reduced rates of saving and investment, inadequate demand constrained by inequalities in wealth and income as structural factors that are holding the Indian economy back.

Many other Asian economies, including China, are facing structural constraints to growth. Given global demographics and income distribution, any hope of restoring momentum to global growth depends vitally on the Asian growth process rebounding. But, for growth to return to Asia, the continent needs geopolitical stability. Asia cannot look to the West for a return to such stability for a variety of reasons. Europe is constrained by a lack of vision and capability while the US is actively engaged in disrupting global growth to ensure its own continued dominance.

Luttwak's advice for the US leadership was to seek the geo-economic containment of China. However, President Donald Trump has acted as if he is seeking the geo-economic containment of Asia as a whole. Indeed, many in Europe see him as disrupting the prospects for growth in Europe too. As for Latin America and Africa, all hopes of their growth articulated so convincingly a decade ago seem less plausible now.

Against this background, Asian leaderships across the continent have a responsibility to the future. A decade ago, it was hoped across Asia that China and India can offer that kind of leadership to the continent. Today, that hope has receded. If Asians will not shape Asia's future, who would want to? This question ought to be the agenda for the next meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping.

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THE LAST WINDOW

Like other countries, India too must act quickly and decisively on the IPCC report

JOYASHREE ROY

THE 2018 IPCC Special Report on Global warming of 1.5°C delivered a clear message: Human activities have caused an approximately 0.87°C rise in global average temperature over pre-industrial times. The latest IPCC report on 'Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse gas fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems' takes the warning further and states that the land surface air temperature has risen by nearly twice the global average temperature, at about 1.3°C.

Given the direct impact the world's land systems have on human well-being, livelihood, food security and water security, the report cannot be overlooked, and especially not by acutely vulnerable India.

Desertification of land under agricultural use will exacerbate the already worsening dangers of declining crop yields and crop failures. Combating it requires the urgent implementation of measures from the set of several remedial options proposed in the report, including reduced tillage, planting cover crops, improvements in grazing management and greater use of agroforestry.

However, another key component is maintaining and extending forest cover, as forests act as enormous natural carbon sinks. In this context recent news that suggests the dilution of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in India seems regressive. Industrial development and environmental protection can be planned prudently to be compatible. Land sparing industrialisation, appropriate zoning and environmental safeguards are possible without being in conflict with replacement of the ecological services provided by the natural growth-forest ecosystem.

Every developing nation needs industrial growth, but given the severity of the threat we face in climate change, not factoring in the importance of preserving prudently chosen and managed forest cover would be ill-advised. Global assessment reports have also shown that consulting indigenous people is an important way of integrating local knowledge with scientific knowledge.

Every developing nation needs industrial growth, but given the severity of the threat we face in climate change, not factoring in the importance of preserving prudently chosen and managed forest cover would be ill-advised. Global assessment reports have also shown that consulting indigenous people is an important way of integrating local knowledge with scientific knowledge.

Water management is also critical. Agriculture in India accounts for more an estimated 86 per cent of the country's freshwater use. The water intensity of Indian paddy is also below global best practices. The 2019 HIMAP report by ICIMOD has shown that with receding glaciers, there is need to manage water better both in the short and in the long run — especially in India — to address the challenge of food security.

The Union government has commendably taken up the goal of "irrigation water productivity". Yet, promoting compatible irrigation practices like drip irrigation, sprinkler irrigation, shifting away from water-intensive cash crops, alternate wetting and drying (AWR) practices in paddy cultivation, extension services for providing access and sensitising farmers to the efficient water use technologies and practices and the use of water efficient agricultural practices needs to be taken up on a war footing. The largely forgotten traditional rainwater harvesting practices like building tanks and artificial ponds in low-lying catchment areas need to be scaled up across the nation.

Consumption and waste management in the food sector is considered to have climate implications as well. A shift towards a more plant-based based diet is considered a healthy sustainable dietary option in the IPCC report. The UN estimates that the world's population could breach 9.7 billion by 2050, so the need to augment food supplies per unit availability of land and water is a necessary target. The shift is even more pertinent for India as its yet largely poor population will be one of the first to be affected by constrained food supplies. Diversification of the food system, balanced diets, low meat diets are all identified with health benefits, adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development benefits. Livestock sector management with crop management is necessary for multiple benefits.

Unlike many countries which have crossed the health safety limits of meat consumption with rising incomes, India need not follow the same path. Here, education can play an important role in managing meat consumption. Market incentives too need to be aligned with human health benefits.

Like for many other countries, there is a very small window left for India's policymakers to respond to the severity of the threat. However, there are some cultural advantages for India and multiple options for adopting sustainable practices to avoid a carbon-intensive development path. It is hoped that the well-being of the masses will take precedence over short-term economic gains for a few.

The writer is currently Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

AUGUST 27, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIAN EXPRESS

Five Left parties to have common plank

Pakistan to buy 50 US copters

Political uncertainty in UP

A NATION ON TRIAL

LEFT UNITY

THE CPM WILL have seats adjustments with the Janata(S)-Congress combine but no electoral alliance. This may well be the attitude of other Left parties also. At the same time, the five Left parties — CPM, CPI, RSP, PWP and Forward Bloc — will go for a common manifesto and joint electoral programme and are unwilling to be an integral part of the Janata(S)-Congress alliance. This strategy has almost been finalised during the CPM politburo meeting. CPI leader Rajeshwara Rao's appeal to Left parties to chalk out a programme to contain the "communal and authoritarian forces" has been welcomed by Marxist leaders. Rao's statement, it is pointed out, indicates that there is no love lost in the CPI for the Congress-I. Much significance is attached to the CPI national council's censure of the Kerala unit of the CPI for making adjustments with the Congress-I in the state.

NANAJI ON ALLIANCE

JANATA PARTY GENERAL Secretary Nanaji Deshmukh ruled out any electoral adjustment with the Congress-I anywhere in the country for the Lok Sabha mid-term poll. He was commenting on West Bengal Janata Leader P C Sen's statement indicating such a partnership. Deshmukh said all the sitting members of his party would be given tickets, unless they chose not to contest. He added that Janata would contest nearly all the 543 Lok Sabha seats. However, some seats could be left for parties like the RPI (Khobragade group).

HAVANA FOR NAM

CUBAN LEADERS ARE confident that the sixth non-aligned summit, which opens in Havana on August 28, will be a success despite the highly-charged atmosphere in which the conference was meeting. Cuban Vice-President Rafael Rodriguez and other top political and government functionaries said that as the host nation, Cuba will leave no stones unturned to preserve the unity of the non-aligned movement.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"India, riding a wave of triumphalism stoked by hyper nationalist rhetoric, needs to know the world is not indifferent to the consequences of two nuclear-armed countries inching closer to a tipping point."
—DAWN

In Atal ji's mould

Like Vajpayee, Arun Jaitley was a quintessential democrat. Atal ji used poetry to express himself, Jaitley used prose

RAM MADHAV

C R Sasikumar

WHAT A CRUEL destiny it is to be forced into writing obituaries every few months. In the past five years, we in the BJP have lost six young and dedicated leaders to untimely deaths. First, it was Gopinath Munde, followed by Anil Madhav Dave, Ananth Kumar, Manohar Parrikar, Sushma Swaraj, and now Arun Jaitley. We lost our beloved Atal ji too. No single political party in Indian history has faced such tragedy.

"Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuhu". Those who are born shall die, said Lord Krishna in the Bhagwad Gita. Yet, when promising leaders pass on in their prime, we long for better answers. The void that these leaders have left behind is hard to fill.

Arun Jaitley was a gentleman politician — suave, sophisticated, humane and witty. He was not just a leader; in over three decades of political life, Jaitley had become an institution. He was our one-stop reference for everything — whether it was the challenges faced by the government or the party or questions about the nation's future or political issues. From leaders in the states to ministers in the cabinet, from the BJP's alliance partners to parties on the other side, everyone would turn to him for solutions and guidance. For the media, he was the source of information and the "line-giver". He was simply indispensable.

Jaitley rose through the party ranks. A find of the Atal-Advani era, he came into prominence through hard work, dedication and talent. An activist of the ABVP, he was incarcerated during the Emergency. When a lucrative offer to contest polls was in sight during the Janata Party regime, Jaitley chose to establish himself as a successful professional before taking the political plunge. A decade in the rugged terrain of the Indian legal system had probably helped him become an expert in matters of law and justice and constitutional intricacies. By the time he became an integral part of the BJP in the late 1980s, Jaitley had made a reputation as a legal and constitutional luminary. This expertise, coupled with his raw sense of grass roots politics, made Jaitley a great asset for the BJP.

Jaitley's used to be the last word on many legal and constitutional questions that the party would face in the states or at the national level. Law and matters related to the Constitution were at his fingertips. But the solutions he would provide were not just those of a lawyer or a constitutional expert, but also of a shrewd politician, who had his nose to the ground. He had an amazing understanding of the country's grass roots political reality.

Jaitley was a versatile genius. He handled the finance and defence ministries with equal aplomb. Under two prime ministers, he held portfolios as diverse as law, information and broadcasting, disinvestment, finance, and defence. As the Leader of Opposition or Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, he led or participated in several committees and commissions, always adding great value to their functioning.

Jaitley was a quintessential democrat. If we were to name one leader as a successor of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's legacy in politics, it was him. He never believed in political untouchability. He had as many friends in the Opposition as in his party. Like Vajpayee, he too endured criticism with dignity. Like Vajpayee, Jaitley was a man of ideas, feelings, and words. Atal ji used poetry to express himself while Jaitley used prose. Both were superb orators. Jaitley inherited Atal ji's sense of humour as well. Satire used to be a cherished ingredient in politics in the past. But of late, it has become a rarity. The exception was Arun Jaitley. A player with words, he would use puns frequently in his political discourse to score points without offending the other side. An ability to lighten a heavy debate through his ready wit was Jaitley's forte. He also had the unique ability to lift a discourse intellectually. He was one of the few leaders in Indian politics with whom one could have an intelligent and profound conversation.

Jaitley's fondness for cricket is well-known. He was an office-bearer at the BCCI and led the Delhi and District Cricket Association from the front. During his tenure, he promoted many young talents who later became star players in the Indian cricket team. In politics, he was like an all-rounder in cricket. He knew how to hit sixes for the ruling side, how to bowl out the Opposition through tough arguments and how to field the interests of his party in challenging times.

> In over three decades of political life, Jaitley had moulded himself into an institution. He was our one-stop reference for everything — whether it was the challenges faced by the government or the party or questions about the nation's future or political issues. From leaders in the states to ministers in the cabinet, from the BJP's alliance partners to parties on the other side, everyone would turn to him for solutions and guidance. For the media, he was the source of information and the 'line-giver'. He was simply indispensable.

Jaitley owed his rise in politics to the Atal-Advani leadership, when young leaders were spotted and promoted by the party. During the past three decades, Jaitley too spotted, supported and promoted several young talents in Indian politics. Several leaders in today's BJP, including several in the government, owe their political rise to Jaitley.

With Jaitley, one had the freedom to disagree yet continue to have dialogue and a cordial relationship. He never saw disagreements on issues to be matters of personal prestige. He was a Kashmir specialist. He diligently guided me and Haseeb Drabu in drafting the Agenda of Alliance between the BJP and the PDP. I vividly remember how after 40 days of intense deliberations, we were stuck over a couple of points. At Prime Minister Narendra Modi's advice, we approached Jaitley who was busy giving final touches to the Union Budget. He joined us outside the North Block at 1 am, standing on the road between South and North Block, nudging us towards closing the matter to mutual satisfaction.

Jaitley is no more. As songwriter Irving Berlin wrote: "The song is ended; but the melody lingers on."

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

Beyond Kashmir

World powers are focused on other issues. India must prepare for global disruptions

RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi wraps up his participation in the G-7 Summit in France, the immediate focus might well be about what US President Donald Trump said or did not say about "mediating" between India and Pakistan on Kashmir.

But the longer term question in Delhi ought to be about India's problems and possibilities in a turbulent world that is marked not only by deepening economic conflict among the major powers but also sharpening political divisions within the West.

India's challenge today is less about keeping the world at bay in Kashmir, but responding purposefully to the breakdown of the current global order and contribute to the shaping a new one.

To be sure, India has a problem in Kashmir — of reworking the political compact with the people of the Valley and generating sustainable support for the new constitutional arrangement. That task is certainly complicated by Pakistan's furious bid to internationalise the issue.

But, Kashmir is not making world leaders lose sleep. Barring China, few major powers want to take advantage of India's problems in Kashmir. Pakistan might whip itself into a frenzy about every word on Kashmir dripping out from the world's chancelleries. But, there is little reason for Delhi to be too excited. After all, the world has other problems at hand.

Take a look at the just concluded G-7 summit. One surprising visitor to the summit venue was the Iranian foreign minister Jawad Zarif. The French President Emmanuel Macron, observers believe, was trying his hand at "mediating" between Trump and the Islamic Republic. Quite clearly, the world has more mediations to work with than Kashmir.

Besides Iran, G-7 is worrying about a lot of other issues — from the Amazon forest fires to Brexit and the escalating tariff war between the US and China, to the French threat to impose new taxes on American technology companies.

Kashmir might certainly be there if the situation in the Valley gets out of hand and the military tension between India and Pakistan escalates. Indian diplomacy has handled these situations again and again over the last three decades. While India needs to watch out, there is no reason to be overanxious.

If Delhi is smart, it will recognise that Trump values a trade deal with India a lot more than winning the Nobel Prize for solving the Kashmir problem.

In any case, India should worry less about what Trump might say about Kashmir, and pay more attention to his breath-taking disruption of the current global economic and political order. For more than seven decades, the idea of a coherent political West, championing global capitalism, security alliances, and multilateral institutions has been been an unshakeable assumption.

In the seven decades following the Second World War, "Western primacy" was seen as immutable. Communists, socialists, nativists and nationalists in the East and the South seemed to agree; they demonised the West and railed against its hegemony.

Few would have expected that the "leader of the Free World" — the US President — would be the one taking the political axe to the West and its core institutions.

Consider what Trump has done to the G-7 forum that was founded in the 1970s as some kind of "Politburo" to orchestrate political and economic coordination between the Western powers. At the first G-7 Summit that Trump attended in the summer of 2017, he announced the withdrawal from the 2015 Paris accord on the mitigation of climate change.

Last year, Trump left the meeting in Canada before it came to a close and dissociated himself from the final communique and damned his host Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as "dishonest". This year, President Macron was smart enough to dispense with the joint communique.

Trump has been ever harsher with the World Trade Organisation that was designed by the West to advance globalising capitalism. Trump believes the WTO has not worked for the American labour. He is ready to bring the global trading architecture down in favour of bilateral deals.

Trump appears to be set on undermining US military alliances in Europe and Asia — a prospect that Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping could only have dreamt of. He is also eager to end America's "endless wars" in the greater Middle East, including Afghanistan.

We do not know whether Trump will be recalled as a short-term aberration or the accidental catalyst for big structural changes in the world. What we do know is that the post-War economic and political institutions are under extraordinary stress. Few of them are likely to survive the next few years intact.

The Trump disruption demands that India take a fresh look at its economic and security policies and adapt to structural changes in the global order, far more sweeping than the ones India confronted at the turn of the 1990s — the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the new wave of economic globalisation.

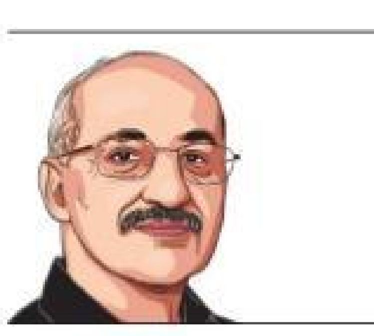
India's strategy of incremental reform is increasingly incapable of coping with the disruptions unfolding in the world. The longer India takes to rework its internal and external economic strategies, the harder it will be to cope with the emerging global political challenges.

But an India that quickly adapts to the new dynamic can easily elevate its place in the new global pecking order that is bound to emerge when the dust settles from the current world turmoil. If India gets its economic house in order and returns to a high growth path, Delhi might discover that there was no better time than now to change the rules of the game on Kashmir as well as on the two state parties to the problem — Pakistan and China.

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

Chronicle of an acquittal foretold

Pehlu Khan verdict underlines subversion of justice by police and bureaucracy



HARSH MANDER

ON THE eve of India's 73rd Independence Day, slogans — "Bharat Mata ki jai", "Jai Shri Ram" and "Modi hai toh mumkin hai" — were raised in the corridors of the additional district judge court in Alwar. Two groups of men had waited in sweltering heat the whole day for the court to announce its verdict in the case involving the lynching of dairy farmer Pehlu Khan on April 1, 2017. One was of the men accused of the killing and their associates. The other comprised supporters of the dead man, elders from the village and human rights workers who had helped them fight for justice.

Close to sundown, word emerged from the courtroom that the judge, Sarita Swami, had acquitted all the adult men accused of killing Pehlu Khan. The burst of triumphalist sloganeering of the accused men and their supporters was matched only by the despair of the family and neighbours of Pehlu Khan. Jaibuna Begum, Khan's widow, said she was "heartbroken". Irshad Khan, his older son, reportedly said: "We have lost faith in the law. For two-and-a-half years, we have been waiting. We thought that justice would be delivered and it would give peace to my father's soul. Our hopes were shattered."

Independence Day was a sombre one across Nuh. The news of the acquittal had travelled across the district. For Meo Muslim dairy farmers, terrorised by the lynching of Pehlu Khan and other dairy farmers after him, the judgment signalled not only the wanton denial of justice for the family of Pehlu Khan. It was about them, gesturing whether they could hope to live as equal citizens, and work their ancestral livelihood of dairying without fear. People everywhere in the district were shrouded in a sense of profound betrayal, of loss, of uncertainty about their futures, and of a kind of settled hopelessness.

Yet this was an acquittal foretold. From the day of the attack, the police did everything they could to subvert the possibility of any punishment of the men, who planned or executed before video cameras, the public lynching of Pehlu Khan.

Gulab Chand Kataria, the then home minister of Rajasthan, indicated very early where his government stood. Defending the cow vigilantes, he said, "The problem is from both the sides. People know cow-trafficking is illegal but they do it. Gau Bhakts [sic] try to stop those who indulge in such crimes." Alwar SP, Rahul Prakash, declared that was "100 per cent" certain that the lynched man and his associates were "cow smugglers".

Pehlu Khan had listed six men in his statement in hospital before he died. The police did not follow the legal requirement of obtaining a certificate from a doctor that he was fit to give the statement, enabling the court to discount it. Under the law, a dying declaration is sufficient to convict a person even if there is no collaborative evidence. In this case, five months later, police removed the names of all these six men from the list of the accused, claiming that they were not even present at the site of the lynching. Instead, nine more people, including two minors, were charged with the crime, based partly on two videos that had been taken of the crime. But the police did not send the video for forensic verification of its authenticity, nor did they locate the mobile phone from which it was recorded. So, once again the court rejected this crucial evidence.

Months after the lynching, NDTV reporters captured on secret camera the main accused, Vipin Yadav, bragging. "We kept beating him (Pehlu Khan) up for one and a half hours," he told the undercover reporters. "First there were 10 people, then the crowd swelled". But this video was neither authenticated, nor presented before the court. The victims were not even made to identify the accused.

It is undisputed that many men were already present at the crime scene when Khan and his companions reached the spot, suggesting prior knowledge and planning; and that the mob attack was clearly a hate-crime targeting the dairy farmers on account of their religion. Still, the police did not include sections on criminal conspiracy and promoting enmity between groups on the grounds of religion in its charges, thereby eliminating any chance of evidence that this was an organised crime by Hindutva outfits. Additionally, because the victims claimed that the mob tore up their permit, they should have been charged under Section 204 for destruction of evidence.

The case, therefore, fell apart so comprehensively because it was designed to do so. What made the sting of this acquittal even more agonising was that less than a month before this, and that too under a Congress government, Pehlu Khan's sons and nephews were charge-sheeted under the Rajasthan Bovine Animal Act 1995 for transporting milch animals across state borders without required documents. The fact is they had not crossed any state border when they were attacked. That they were transporting dairy cows and calves makes it evident that they could not possibly have been taking them for slaughter. You don't pay Rs 50,000 for a milking cow, and then sell her for slaughter, which would at best get you one-tenth of the price. Third, they claimed to have the required documents. Even if not, at most they were guilty of a technical transgression, not of any intent to harm any cow.

But none of this matters. It is evident that the rules of crime and punishment are rewritten in an India rapidly being remoulded as a Hindu nation. By these new rules, if anyone is lynched for causing harm to the cow, the persons who have been lynched are considered the original sinners. After all, they sought to injure or kill the cow sacred to Hindus. The lynch mob is the true victim in all cases of cow lynching: They are understandably provoked by the malfeasance of cow-killers; therefore, their violence is righteous and heroic. The cow-killing communities are the enemies, whereas the lynch mob are the soldiers of the Hindu nation.

In this new India, the desolation of the Meo Muslim people of Nuh on Independence Day is not hard to understand. Do we have any solace to offer to them?

Mander is a human rights worker and writer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A GENTLEMAN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Mr Jaitley' (IE, August 26). It is rightly believed that politics is for the thick skinned, but the stories about Arun Jaitley tell us how different he was from his ilk. He was sensitive and empathetic. His affable demeanour across the political spectrum made him the "go-to" man for his party.

Vijai Pant *Hempur*.

OLD FRIENDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A two-way street', (IE, August 26). India and France see each other as reliable partners in ensuring a multipolar world order. There was a quest for such a world during the heydays of the Cold War as well, when the two countries defied the idea of taking shelter in one of the two camps. The French supported India after its first nuclear test. The engagement between the two countries has moved beyond the traditional realm of strategic and economic partnership to areas such as clean energy and environment.

Sudip Kumar Dey, *Kolkata*

WELL DONE SINDHU

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'She's world champion' (IE, August 26). Sophisticated wrist work was in full display during the PV Sindhu-Nozomi Okuhara match. A gold medal at the World Championship was long due for Sindhu considering that she has started her journey in 2013 with a World Championship Bronze at 18. Since then she has won Olympic, Asiad and Commonwealth Games medals. But a gold medal at a major event has been elusive. Now, she has become first Indian to win the World Championship medal and joint first in the number of medals at World Championships along with Chinese Zhang Ning. With the Olympics less than a year away, she must chose her tournaments judiciously and reserve her best for Tokyo.

Bal Govind, *Noida*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

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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

Cardiovascular disease burden in India, and state highs & lows

STROKE IN INDIAN STATES (DALY LOST PER LAKH POPULATION)

HIGHEST BURDEN	
West Bengal	2,821
Odisha	2,259
Tripura	2,259
Assam	2,229
Chhattisgarh	2,142
LOWEST BURDEN	
Mizoram	455
Sikkim	488
Delhi	561
Himachal Pradesh	656
Arunachal Pradesh	739

ISCHAEMIC HEART DISEASE (DALY LOST PER LAKH POPULATION)

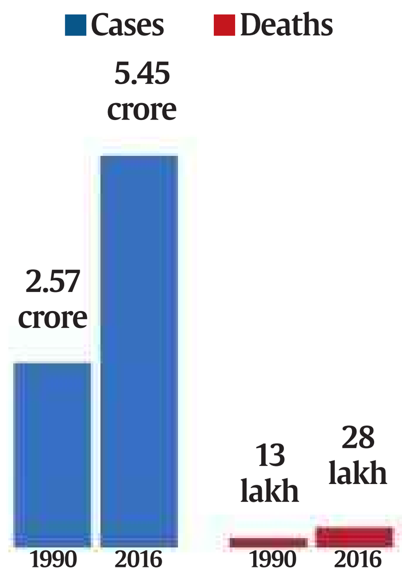
HIGHEST BURDEN	
Punjab	5,758
Tamil Nadu	4,788
Haryana	4,244
Andhra Pradesh	4,023
Karnataka	3,892
LOWEST BURDEN	
Mizoram	663
Arunachal Pradesh	957
Meghalaya	957
Nagaland	1,167
Sikkim	1,526

LAST WEEK, *The Lancet* published the results of a clinical trial with PolyPill tablets (a combination of aspirin and atorvastatin) conducted on older patients of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in Iranian adults. It concluded that a fixed dose of the tablets along with therapy may help reduce the CVD burden, particularly in low and middle income countries. Three-quarters of CVD-related deaths happen in lower-middle income countries, according to the World Health Organization, which classifies India among such countries.

Among CVDs, heart attacks and strokes are the most common cause of death and disability in Iran. In India, too, the leading CVD diseases are ischaemic heart disease and stroke, contributing 61.4 per cent and 24.9 per cent of total DALYs (Daily Adjusted Life Years) lost from CVDs, according to an earlier *Lancet* study (2018).

The 2018 study found that among Indian states, West Bengal, Odisha and Tripura have the highest burden of strokes in terms of crude DALY rates. Crude rates are calculated by factoring in incidence along with the population of a region. Mizoram, Sikkim and Delhi have the lowest burden of stroke in terms of DALYs per 1,00,000. In the case of ischaemic heart disease, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Haryana have the highest burden while Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have the lowest.

CVD BURDEN IN INDIA

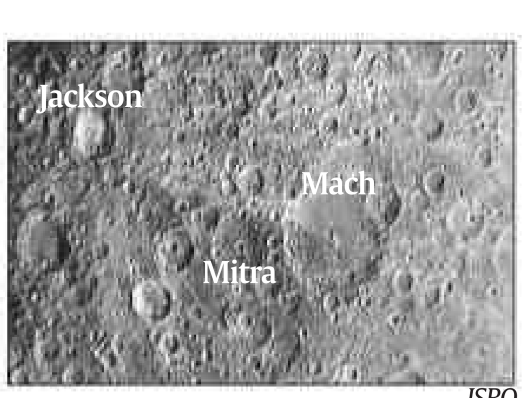


Source for all data: The Lancet

MEHR GILL

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

IMAGES FROM CHANDRAYAAN-2: HOW DID CRATERS GET NAMES LIKE 'MITRA'?



ISRO

ON MONDAY, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) released images of the lunar surface captured from the Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft orbiting the Moon. Taken on August 23 by the Terrain Mapping Camera-2 of Chandrayaan-2 from an altitude of about 4,375 km, the images show impact craters named after various scientists — (Arnold) Sommerfeld (Germany), (Daniel) Kirkwood (US), (John) Jackson (Scotland), (Ernst) Mach (Austria), (Sergei) Korolev (former USSR), (Sisir) Mitra (India), (John) Plaskett (Canada), (Dmiytry) Rozhdestvenskiy (former USSR) and (Charles) Hermite (France). Mitra (1890-1963), born in Bengal, was a physicist and Padma Bhushan winner.

The first attempts at naming lunar craters date back to the 17th century, K B Shingareva and G A Burba write in their book *The Lunar Nomenclature: The Reverse Side of the Moon, 1961-1973*. Some used the names of prominent personalities — scientists, philosophers and even members of royalty — while others named the lunar features after comparable features on Earth.

The system of nomenclature evolved over the years and is now standardised. In a resolution by the International Astronomical Union in 1973, crater and crater-like formations are given the names of astronomers or eminent scientists, posthumously. Among other lunar features, mountains are given names corresponding to the geographical names of mountains of the Earth, while extensive dark surfaces are given names that correspond to the mental states of humans.

SIMPLY PUT

Repo cut: reasons, implications

The minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee reveal how its six members read the state of the economy. But is a repo rate cut enough, and how will linking repo rate to lending and deposits rates impact people?

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 26

ON AUGUST 7, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a cut of 35 basis points in the repo rate, which is the rate at which the RBI lends to the banking system. On August 21 (that is, 14 days since the decision), as is the norm, the RBI released the minutes of the MPC's deliberations. The importance of this document is that the details they provide about how different MPC members view the state of the Indian economy, and what they believe is the key area of concern.

The MPC is made up of six members — three nominated by the Union government (Chetan Ghate, professor at the Indian Statistical Institute, Pami Dua, Director of Delhi School of Economics, and Ravindra Dholakia, former professor at IIM-Ahmedabad), and three representing the RBI (Governor Shaktikanta Das, B P Kanungo, and Michael Patra). The MPC meets every two months to review the monetary policy stance of the RBI.

Benign inflation trajectory

The MPC is mandated by law to ensure that retail inflation stays within a band of two percentage points of the target inflation rate of 4%. Since inflation has been well below the 4% mark, the MPC members have found it logical to repeatedly vote for rate cuts since February. This time was no different, and every member found enough policy space to cut the repo rate, even though two members (Dua and Ghate) voted for smaller cuts (25 bps) and one member (Dholakia) wanted a 40 bps cut.

Decelerating growth

With inflation worries out of the way for the time being, all members focussed on economic growth concerns. They quoted extensively from a whole bunch of RBI surveys that suggest that growth is under pressure. As chart 1 shows, professional forecasters project GDP growth to be less than 7% this financial year. The chances of touching 8% — either in the current fiscal or in the next — are almost non-existent. Similarly, as chart 2 shows, consumer confidence has worsened; even where it is positive, it is less so since the last survey. Chart 3 shows a similar story for business sentiment. Chart 4 shows how inventory-to-sales ratios are on their way up, thanks to the dip in sales.

Investment vs Consumption

Overall GDP can be boosted by one of four drivers: private consumption, private business investment, government expenditure, and exports. With government finances at their limit and exports lagging because of low global demand and trade tensions, the toss-up was between encouraging businesses to invest more, and incentivising individuals to consume more.

A rate cut does both but the minutes reveal MPC members differed on why they wanted a rate cut. In turn, this showed what they thought was the real problem in the economy that needed to be addressed.

For instance, Dholakia focussed on boosting the private sector's investment in the economy by reducing real interest rates. "It is well recognized... that investment is a primary driver for economic growth and employment creation. In order to boost investment activities, positive sentiments and business-conducive environment need to be enhanced. It requires carrying out several economic reform measures in the land and labour markets, tariffs of electricity and other resources, and taxation of income and goods and services, besides urgently correcting prevailing high real interest rates in India. While most of these measures are not within the purview of the monetary policy, correction of high real interest rates to a certain extent is".

In contrast, Patra and Kanungo were more concerned about the sharp fall in private consumption demand. "What is worrisome though is that other components of aggregate demand could be joining investment in the loss of speed. Private consumption, the bedrock of domestic demand (57 per cent of GDP), is losing momentum in both urban and rural areas... The overarching goal is to reinvigorate domestic demand and the time to do it is now," stated Patra.

Monetary transmission

The MPC has cut the repo rate by 110 bps since February but only about 40 bps have been transmitted to borrowers. Poor monetary transmission has consistently undermined the effectiveness of the MPC's decisions. Banks don't pass on the full cut because their cost of funds depends largely on the interest they pay on the deposits — both short and long term ones — that they accept. Unless those deposit rates also change, banks' cost of funds will continue to stay high; this is why they are unable to pass on the benefit. An SBI analysis claims that if deposit rates were to come down by 100 bps, lending rates could fall by 40-50 bps.

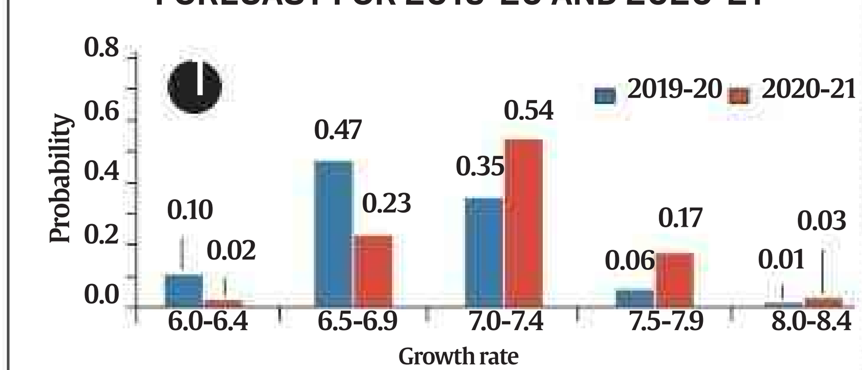
That is why, even though all MPC members voted for a cut, some also cautioned about the limits to such cuts. "It should also be highlighted that there has been inadequate monetary transmission given the quantum of past rate cuts... By a large cut (35 bps) I feel we will be burning through monetary policy space without much to show for it. While the real economy needs some support, we should wait for more transmission to happen," stated Ghate. Similarly, Patra stated: "Monetary policy has been proactive and front-loaded as the first line of defence. From here on, the space for monetary policy action has to be calibrated to the evolving situation, especially as the nature and depth of the slowdown is still unravelling and elbow room may be needed if it deepens."

Implication of linking lending and deposit rates to repo rate

As mentioned earlier, banks can't be expected to "only" link their lending rates (the interest rate they ask from borrowers) to repo without linking their deposit rates (the interest rate they pay to depositers) to repo as well. If they were to link both lending and deposit rates to repo, as SBI has done to some extent since May 1, it can improve monetary transmission. But there is a flip side — if this is done industry-wide, borrowers will rejoice every time the repo falls (since their EMIs will fall); however, savers such as the elderly will be unhappy (since their money will earn lower returns).

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

PROBABILITY DISTRIBUTION OF GDP GROWTH FORECAST FOR 2019-20 AND 2020-21



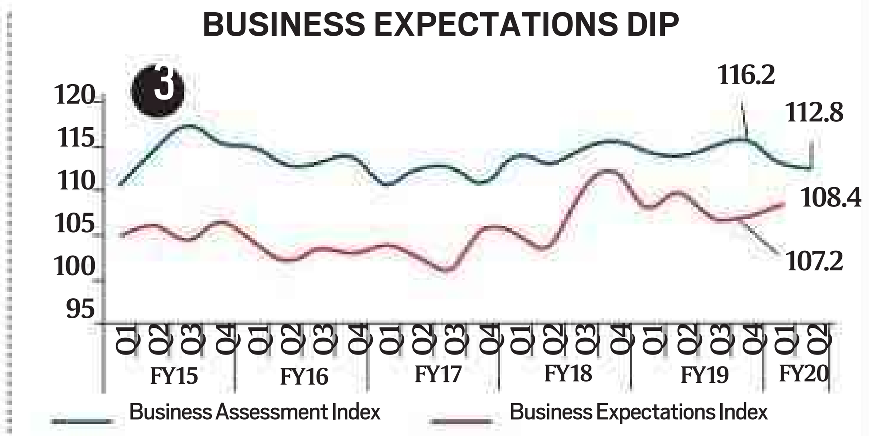
CONSUMER CONFIDENCE WORSENS

2

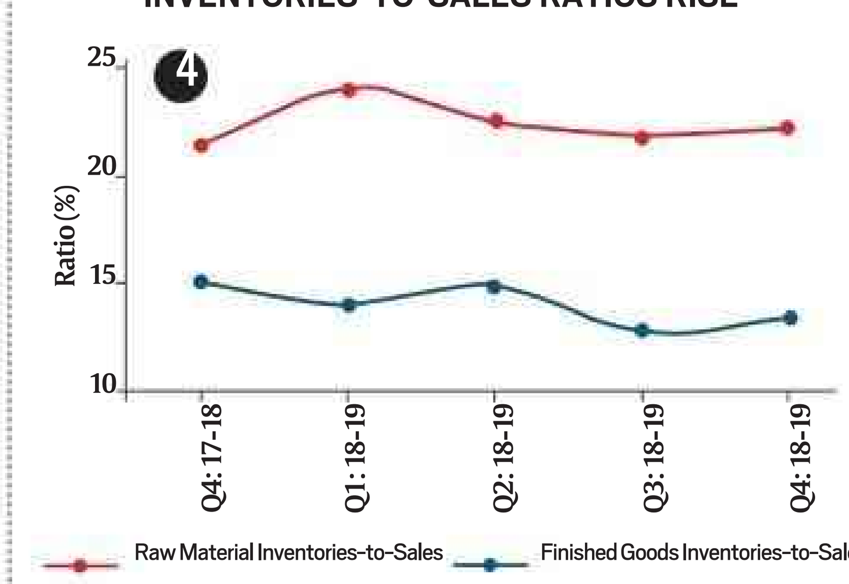
Main Variables	Current Perception compared with one year ago			One year ahead expectations compared with current situation		
	May 19	July 19	Change	May19	July19	Change
Economic Situation	1.1	–1	▼	40.5	34.8	▼
Employment	–10.5	–13.1	▼	36.2	30.9	▼
Price Level	–77.3	–78.4	▼	–59.3	–63.9	▼
Income	8.2	2.9	▼	52.9	48.5	▼
Spending	65.2	68.3	▲	71.8	73.6	▲
Consumer Confidence Index	97.3	95.7	▼	128.4	124.8	▼

Positive sentiment with sign of **improvement** compared to the last round of survey
Positive sentiment with sign of **deterioration** compared to the last round of survey
Negative sentiment with sign of **improvement** compared to the last round of survey
Negative sentiment with sign of **deterioration** compared to the last round of survey

BUSINESS EXPECTATIONS DIP



INVENTORIES-TO-SALES RATIOS RISE



Source: RBI

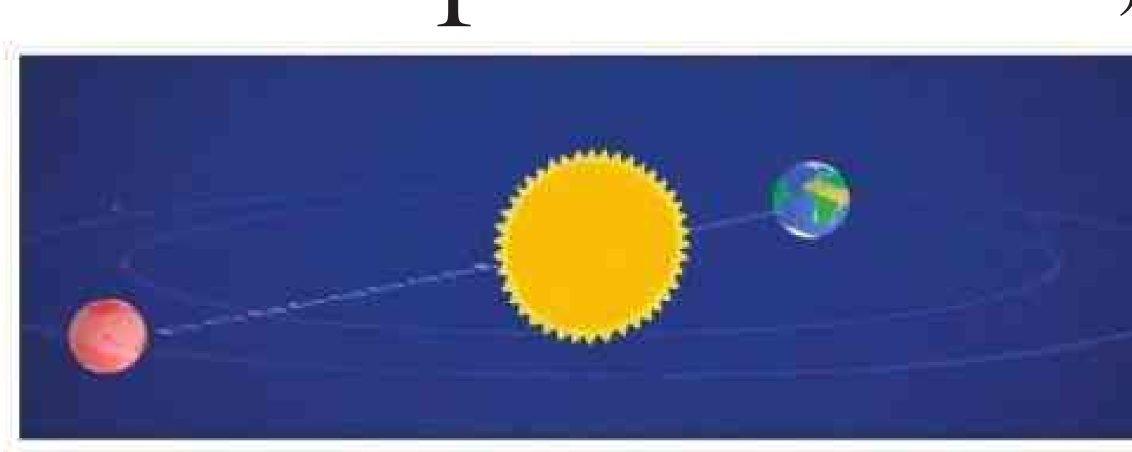
Earth and Mars will pause chatter, here is why

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 26

FOR MORE than a week, the daily chatter between Earth and Mars will go silent.

On the surface of Mars are NASA's Curiosity rover and InSight lander. Above Mars are several orbiters, including India's Mars Orbiter Spacecraft (Mangalyaan), which has completed its official mission life but remains in orbit. Antennas on Earth and those on active spacecraft on or around Mars regularly exchange data.

Now this will pause because of a phenomenon called Mars solar conjunction. For NASA's spacecraft, this will happen between August 28 and September 7.



During Mars solar conjunction (August 28-September 7), Mars will be on the opposite side of the Sun from Earth. Radio transmissions can be interrupted. *NASA*

The cause

During Mars solar conjunction, Mars and Earth will be on opposite sides of the Sun. The Sun expels hot, ionised gas from its corona, which extends far into space. During solar conjunction, this gas can interfere with radio signals when engineers try to communicate with spacecraft at Mars, corrupting commands and resulting in unexpected behaviour from those space explorers, NASA said in a statement. When Mars disappears far enough behind the Sun's corona that there is increased risk of radio interference, engineers hold off on sending commands. Solar conjunction occurs every two years.

This time, the hold on issuing commands — called a "command moratorium" — will run from August 28 to September 7, NASA said. In 2015, the conjunction period for Mangalyaan had lasted for more than a month — from May 27 to July 1.

The pause

Besides Curiosity and Insight on the Mars surface, NASA has the Odyssey orbiter, the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and the MAVEN orbiter. Some instruments aboard spacecraft will be inactive, especially cameras that generate large amounts of data. However, NASA said, all of its Mars spacecraft "will continue their science; they'll just have much simpler 'to-do' lists than they normally would carry out".

On the surface, Curiosity will stop driving and InSight will not move its robotic arm. Above, Odyssey and the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter will continue collecting data from Curiosity and InSight, but only Odyssey will attempt to relay that data to Earth before conjunction ends. MAVEN will continue to collect its own science data but won't support any relay operations during this time.

All of this means that there will be a temporary pause in the stream of raw images available. Once conjunction is over, the spacecraft will beam the data they have collected. If any of the collected science data are corrupted, they can usually have that data retransmitted, NASA said.

International protection for 'cute' otters: what is CITES, what does it do?

SANJANA BHALERAO
MUMBAI, AUGUST 26

OVER A hundred nations, acting within the framework of an inter-governmental agreement, approved a proposal by India, Nepal, and Bangladesh Sunday to prohibit commercial international trade in a species of otter native to the subcontinent and some other parts of Asia.

One hundred and two votes were cast in favour and 15 against, with 11 abstentions, at the ongoing Eighteenth Conference of the Parties (CoP18) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Geneva. The vote must be confirmed at the Plenary of the meeting, which concludes Wednesday.

The Conference also accepted a separate proposal by India, moved together with the EU, the US and the Philippines, for inclusion of a species of gecko lizard found widely in South and Southeast Asia, the US, and Madagascar for protection as a "species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival".

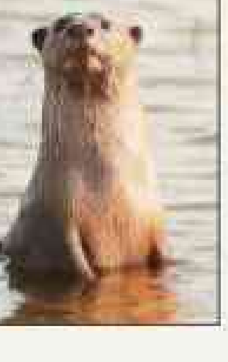
Animals and appendices

Members at the Conference have voted to move the smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) from CITES Appendix II to CITES Appendix I "because it is considered to be facing a high risk of extinction and is detrimentally affected by international trade, as well as habitat loss and degradation and persecution associated with conflict with people (and fisheries)".

The other proposal that was passed was to include the Tokay gecko (*Gekko gecko*) in CITES Appendix II.

Appendix I includes species "threatened with extinction"; according to the CITES website, "trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances". Appendix II provides a lower level of protection. There is also an Appendix III, which "contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade".

An AFP report said smooth-coated otter numbers in the wild had fallen by at least 30% over the past 30 years, and in Japan, where keeping otters as "cute" pets is a fad, otter cafes offer baby otters for up to $10,000 (almost Rs 7.2 lakh) each.



Smooth-coated otter in Kabini river; Tokay gecko. *Wikipedia*

The proposal moved at CITES CoP18 flagged threats to all subspecies of otters from "man-made changes to aquatic habitats", poaching, illegal trade for use as pets, and for the animals' fur and for use in traditional medicine. Between 1980 and 2017, 5,881 otter pelts were seized across 15 countries in Asia, with about half of the seizures being made in India, the proposal said.

The proposal on protecting the Tokay gecko mentioned threats from hunting and collection for use in traditional medicine.

Apart from the smooth-coated otter, India had proposed Appendix I status for the small-clawed otter, mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), the Indian star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) and the Tokay gecko.

The International Convention

The CITES website describes it as an international agreement aimed at ensuring "that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival".

CITES was drafted after a resolution was adopted at a meeting of the members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1963. The text of the Convention was agreed at a meeting of the representatives of 80 countries in Washington, DC, on March 3, 1973; the Convention is, therefore, sometimes referred to as the Washington Convention.

CITES entered into force on July 1, 1975, and now has 183 parties. States and regional economic integration organisations adhere voluntarily to CITES. The Convention is legally binding on the Parties in the sense that they are committed to implementing it; however, it does not take the place of national laws.

In effect, CITES provides a framework for Parties to make domestic legislation to ensure that the Convention is implemented effectively in their national jurisdictions.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड
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पहला कदम

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने शुक्रवार को कई ऐसे प्रशासनिक और कर संबंधी बदलावों की घोषणा की जिनका लक्ष्य देश की ठिठकी हुई अर्थव्यवस्था में नई जान फूंकना है। मंदी को देखते हुए सरकार की ओर से ऐसे कुछ कदमों की अत्यंत आवश्यकता थी। बहरहाल, फिलहाल ऐसी राजकोषीय गुंजाइश नहीं है जिसके तहत किसी तरह का आर्थिक प्रोत्साहन प्रदान किया जा सके। यह राहत की बात है कि सरकार अतिरिक्त व्यय को लेकर सचेत है और सीमित राजकोषीय प्रभाव वाले उपायों पर ही ध्यान केंद्रित कर रही है। यह बात भी काबिले तारीफ है कि सरकार सुनने को तैयार है और वह मान रही है कि देश की अर्थव्यवस्था में दिक्कतें हैं।

सरकार ने जिन उपायों की घोषणा की है उनमें क्षेत्र आधारित घोषणाएं भी हैं और सामान्य उपाय भी। इन घोषणाओं में शायद सबसे अहम घोषणा वह थी जिसमें कहा गया कि पंजीकृत सूक्ष्म, लघु एवं मझोले उपक्रमों (एमएसएमई) का लंबित वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) बकाया 30 दिन की तय अवधि में निपटाया जाएगा। इतना ही नहीं भविष्य में तमाम नए बकाये को 60 दिन के भीतर निपटाया जाएगा। आशा है कि ऐसा करने से रोजगार उत्पन्न करने वाले क्षेत्रों में कार्यशील पूंजी की कमी कुछ हद तक दूर होगी। सरकार को वित्तीय तंत्र को और सुगम बनाना होगा। फिलहाल यह तंत्र सरकारी बैंकों के तनाव और आईएलऐंडएफएस संकट के परेशानी में नजर आ रहा है। बैंकरों को अतिउत्साही जांच आदि से कुछ बचाव उपलब्ध कराया जा रहा है और सरकारी बैंकों में नई पूंजी डाली जा रही है। इसकी व्यवस्था बजट में ही की जा चुकी थी और सरकार का मानना है कि इससे बैंकों को वृद्धि के लिए कुछ पूंजी मिलेगी। बीते कई दशकों के सबसे बुरे वर्ष का सामना कर रहे वाहन क्षेत्र को भी कुछ राहत दी जा रही है, हालांकि यह राहत उद्योग की इच्छा के मुताबिक कर कटौती के रूप में नहीं दी जा रही है। इसकी जगह सरकार ने उच्च पंजीयन शुल्क को फिलहाल टाल दिया है और इस क्षेत्र को प्रभावित कर रही कुछ नियामकीय अनिश्चितता को दूर किया है।

कुछ हालिया निर्णयों को पूरी तरह या आंशिक तौर पर वापस लिया गया है। उदाहरण के लिए मंत्री ने दोहराया कि वित्त मंत्रालय कानून की उस धारा को अधिसूचित नहीं करने जा रहा है जिसके तहत कारोबारी सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्व के नियमों के उल्लंघन को आपराधिक करार दिया जाता। पहली बात तो यह कि इसे कभी पारित ही नहीं होना चाहिए था। आयकर अधिभार में किए गए जिस इजाफे ने विदेशी पोर्टफोलियो निवेशकों के एक धड़े को प्रभावित किया था और बाजार में एक किस्म की अफरातफरी पैदा की थी उसे भी आंशिक तौर पर बदला गया है। सरकार को इसे पूरी तरह वापस ले लेना था क्योंकि यह कर ढांचे में जटिलताएं पैदा करेगा। कुल मिलाकर इनमें से कई प्रावधान सुखद हैं। खासतौर पर वित्त मंत्री द्वारा संपत्ति निर्माण करने वालों के संरक्षण और कर मांग में पारदर्शिता बढ़ाने जैसी बातें।

ये उपाय दर्शाते हैं कि सरकार अब संकट को नकारने के दौर से बाहर आ चुकी है और यह मान रही है कि देश की अर्थव्यवस्था गंभीर समस्याओं से दो चार है। इतना ही नहीं वह बिना राजकोषीय संतुलन को छेड़े चक्रीय समस्याओं को हल भी करना चाहती है।

जहां तक बात है गहन ढांचागत दिक्कतों की तो उन्हें हल करना शेष है और निवेश भी बढ़ाना है। इसके लिए केंद्र सरकार को काफी काम करना होगा। उसे राज्यों के साथ मिलकर उत्पादन कारक बाजार के लंबित सुधारों को अंजाम देना होगा। सरकार ने आर्थिक मंदी दूर करने की प्रतिबद्धता दिखाई है अब उसे ढांचागत सुधारों की ओर बढ़ना चाहिए।

अजय मोहंती

पशु उत्पाद निर्यात बढ़ाने के और प्रयास की दरकार

पालतू पशुओं की गणना से सामने आए आरंभिक आंकड़े बताते हैं कि न केवल उनकी उत्पादकता में सुधार हो रहा है बल्कि देश के विभिन्न राज्यों में उनकी संख्या में भी इजाफा हो रहा है। बता रहे हैं **नीलकंठ मिश्रा**

सरकार हर पांच वर्ष के आसपास पालतू पशुओं की गणना करती है। ऐसी 20वीं गणना गत वर्ष की गई। इससे पिछली गणना 2012 में जबकि पहली पशुगणना 1919 में की गई थी। ताजा पशुगणना के कुछ आरंभिक आंकड़े आ चुके हैं।

ये आंकड़े देश की कृषि अर्थव्यवस्था को लेकर हमारी समझ बढ़ाने की दृष्टि से पर्याप्त हैं। देश के कुल कृषि उत्पादन में पालतू पशुओं का योगदान एक तिहाई से अधिक है। इतना ही नहीं वर्ष 2012 से 2016 के बीच हुई चरणबद्ध वृद्धि में इसका योगदान करीब आधा रहा।

इन दोनों पशुगणना के बीच केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय ने उत्पादन में वृद्धि के जो आंकड़े पेश किए, उसकी तुलना में विभिन्न श्रेणियों में पशुओं की तादाद बहुत कम बढ़ी। उदाहरण के लिए इस अवधि में दुधारू पशुओं की तादाद में बदलाव नहीं आया लेकिन दूध के उत्पादन की दर सालाना पांच फीसदी से अधिक बढ़ी। इसी प्रकार मांस के उत्पादन में सालाना चार फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी आई जबकि बकरियों और भेड़ों की तादाद केवल एक फीसदी वार्षिक की दर से बढ़ी। सुअर की आबादी जहां 2012 के स्तर से 20 फीसदी गिरी वहीं पोर्क का वार्षिक उत्पादन इससे तेज गति से बढ़ा।

जीडीपी के आंकड़ों की सच्चाई से जुड़ी हालिया बहस को देखते हुए कई लोग कह सकते हैं कि इस मामले में सीएसओ का आकलन गलत है। परंतु इस विसंगति का कहीं अधिक ठोस स्पष्टीकरण मौजूद है। मसलन दूध की बात करें तो गायों और भैंसों की तादाद सन 1997 से लगभग अपरिवर्तित है लेकिन बैल और भैंसे की संख्या कम हो रही है जबकि गाय-भैंस की संख्या बढ़ रही है। 2017 की गणना में बैल और भैंसे की तादाद 31 फीसदी गिरकर 4.7 करोड़ रह गई जबकि गाय-भैंस 18 फीसदी बढ़कर 14.5 करोड़ हो गईं। दुधारू गाय और भैंस की संख्या भी 2012 की तुलना में 5 फीसदी बढ़ी। ज्यादा दूध देने वाली संकर नस्ल के दुधारू पशुओं की तादाद 30 फीसदी बढ़ने से औसत उत्पादन में भी काफी सुधार हुआ। यानी दूध उत्पादन में 33 फीसदी बढ़ोतरी को इससे समझा जा सकता है।

पशुपालन में मानव के प्रयास पशुओं की तादाद के अनुरूप ही रहते हैं। इसका मतलब प्रति व्यक्ति आधार पर क्षमता और आय में सुधार हुआ। कीमतों में बढ़ोतरी धीमी होने के बावजूद दूध की आपूर्ति सुधरने की बात भी इससे समझी जा सकती है। बैल और भैंसे की तादाद में कमी आने का भी लाभ है। पहले जो चारा 2.1 करोड़ बैल और भैंस खाते थे वही अब उनकी जगह लेने वाले 2.2 करोड़ दुधारू जानवर खाते हैं।

उत्पादन लागत में कमी से जुड़ा एक अन्य दिलचस्प तथ्य है। 19वीं और 20वीं पशुगणना के बीच एक ओर जहां देश में पालतू पशुओं की तादाद केवल 4 फीसदी बढ़ी वहीं झारखंड राज्य में यह 31 फीसदी और ओडिशा, बिहार, तेलंगाना और पश्चिम बंगाल में 24 से 26 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ी। अन्य राज्यों में इन पशुओं की तादाद तीन फीसदी तक कम हुई। तेलंगाना में इनकी तादाद शायद इसलिए बढ़ी क्योंकि राज्य सरकार ने योजना के तहत 84 लाख भेड़ें चरवाहा परिवारों को दीं। परंतु बिहार, झारखंड, पश्चिम बंगाल और ओडिशा में हुई वृद्धि के लिए संभवतः दूरदराज इलाकों तक बुनियादी सुविधाओं में सुधार ही सबसे बड़ी वजह है। ग्रामीण सड़कों में सुधार, बिजली, फोन और ऋण सुविधाएं आदि ने इसमें सहायता की। इससे जागरूकता बढ़ी और उत्पादन को बाजार तक बेहतर पहुंच सुनिश्चित हुई। कुछ वर्ष पहले अपने गृह स्थान, बोकारो (झारखंड) में मैंने देखा कि अंडे अलग-अलग ट्रे में रखे थे और उनकी कीमत भी अलग थी। दुकानदार ने बताया कि एक अंडा झारखंड का और दूसरा तमिलनाडु का है। वर्षों से मैं यही जान रहा था कि अंडे तमिलनाडु से आते हैं लेकिन अब झारखंड में भी अंडों का व्यावसायिक उत्पादन आरंभ हो गया है। हमारा यह भी मानना है कि कम प्रति व्यक्ति आय वाले राज्यों में पालतू पशुओं की तादाद बढ़ने का संबंध उत्पादन की गिरती औसत लागत से भी है। इससे संकेत मिलता है कि इन उत्पादों में महंगाई अपेक्षाकृत कम बनी रहेगी।

कुछ आंकड़े ऐसे भी हैं जिनमें हमने सुधार की अपेक्षा की थी लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ। भैंस की तादाद में बदलाव नहीं आया जबकि हमें आशा थी कि इसमें इजाफा होगा। जैसा कि कृषि एवं प्रसंस्कृत खाद्य उत्पाद विकास प्राधिकरण (एपीडा) ने कहा, भैंसे के मांस का निर्यात 2011-12 से 2016-17 के बीच 34 फीसदी बढ़ा। यानी करीब 1.1 करोड़ भैंस का इजाफा। पशुपालन विभाग ने कहा कि इस अवधि में जिबह किए गए भैंसे की तादाद में 43 फीसदी का इजाफा हुआ। परंतु एक विसंगति यह है कि पशुगणना में भैंसे की तादाद में किसी बढ़ोतरी का जिक्र नहीं आया। वर्ष 2018 का ब्योरा हमारे पास नहीं है लेकिन 2012 में 10.9 करोड़ भैंस में से केवल 1.6 करोड़ ही भैंसे थे। इनमें भी 1.1 करोड़ की उम्र दो वर्ष से भी कम थी यानी उनके मांस का पूरा इस्तेमाल संभव नहीं था। हम यह समझ नहीं पाए कि कटने के लिए सालाना तकरीबन एक करोड़ भैंसे कहां से आए?

आय में सुधार के साथ खानपान में भी बदलाव आया है। लोग अब पहले से अधिक दूध, मांस और अंडे खरीद और खा सकते हैं। इसका सीधा असर मांग पर पड़ता है। ये प्रारंभिक आंकड़े यह सुझाते हैं कि देश में पालतू पशुओं की तादाद बढ़ने और अपेक्षाकृत कम विकसित राज्यों में इस उद्योग का विकास होने से इस मांग को पूरा करने के लिए पर्याप्त क्षमता निर्मित हो रही है।

भौगोलिक विविधता ने भी स्थानीय आपूर्ति को बीमारियों या मौसम के कारण होने वाली बाधा से बचाव प्रदान किया है। उपभोक्ता मूल्य सूचकांक में पशु उत्पादों की हिस्सेदारी 11 फीसदी है जबकि गत वर्ष के अंत में एकदम निचले स्तर पर गिरने के बाद हाल के महीनों में इन उत्पादों की महंगाई में थोड़ा इजाफा हुआ है लेकिन इसके ऊंचे स्तर पर बने रहने की आशंका नहीं है।

इस दृष्टि से देखें तो बढ़ती घरेलू मांग और वैश्विक प्रतिस्पर्धा को पूरा करने के लिए हमें उत्पादकता को और अधिक बढ़ाने की आवश्यकता है। ऐसा करके ही यह क्षेत्र निर्यात से अधिक से अधिक आय जुटा सकता है।

पारंपरिक और पोषक भोजन से समृद्ध फर्स्ट फूड का संस्करण

जमीनी हकीकत

सुनीता नारायण

जंक फूड नहीं बल्कि अच्छा भोजन ही प्राथमिक भोजन यानी फर्स्ट फूड है। यह वह भोजन है जो प्रकृति और पोषण को आजीविकाओं के साथ जोड़ता है। यह भोजन हमारे स्वास्थ्य के लिए भी अच्छा होता है, यह हमारी समृद्ध जैव विविधता से प्राप्त होता है और लोगों को रोजगार प्रदान करता है। सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि इसे पकाने और खाने से हमें न केवल खुशी, बल्कि बेहतर स्वास्थ्य भी मिलता है।

सन 2013 में सेंटर फॉर साइंस ऐंड एन्वॉयरनमेंट, यानी वह संस्थान जिसके साथ मैं काम करती हूं, ने फर्स्ट फूड (प्राथमिक खाद्य) का पहला संस्करण प्रकाशित किया था। उस वक्त मैंने लिखा था कि भोजन का संबंध संस्कृति और सबसे अधिक जैव विविधता से है। हम अक्सर इस बारे में विचार नहीं करते कि जैव विविधता और सांस्कृतिक विविधता का संबंध जैव जगत की विविधता से है। हमने दलील दी कि हमें पौधों के बारे में जानकारी और उनके गुणों को पहचानते हुए इस बेहतरी के साथ भोजन पकाना चाहिए कि खाद्य पदार्थों की खुशबू बरकरार रहे। अगर हम अपने खाने की थाली में मौजूद जैव विविधता की कीमत समझेंगे तभी तो वनों की जैव विविधता की रक्षा करेंगे।

सन 2017 में फर्स्ट फूड: कल्चर ऑफ टेस्ट का प्रकाशन किया गया। पहली पुस्तक की तरह इस पुस्तक में भी हमने उन खाद्य पदार्थों को बनाने की विधि संकलित की हैं जो हमें जैव विविधता की जानकारी देती हैं। हमने ऐसा इसलिए किया क्योंकि तब तक यह पता चल चुका था कि दुनिया मोटापे की समस्या से जूझ रही है। यह बात स्पष्ट है कि हम जो भोजन कर रहे हैं वह हमारे स्वास्थ्य के लिए खराब है। इसमें कोई पोषण या अच्छाई नहीं है।

सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण बात, अब यह स्पष्ट है कि हमारे भोजन में आया यह बदलाव यानी घर में पके पौष्टिक खाने से दूरी बनाने और सदियों पुरानी खाद्य परंपराओं से दूर जाने का यह सिलसिला संयोगवश नहीं है। हम उस पीढ़ी से आते हैं जो प्रसंस्कृत और फैक्टरी निर्मित खाना खाने वाली है, जिन्हें मार्केटिंग के बल पर बढ़ावा दिया गया। इसने हमारी आदत और खाद्य संस्कृति में बदलाव लाया।

भोजन के इस नए कारोबार में बदलाव लाने का काम रसोइये कर सकते हैं। वे हमारे लिए भोजन तैयार करते हैं और समाज को यह बताते हैं कि कौन सा भोजन बेहतर है।

सवाल यह है कि हम खराब भोजन की इस संस्कृति में बदलाव कैसे लाएं? क्या ऐसा करना संभव है? प्रसंस्कृत खाद्य उद्योग बहुत ताकतवर है। उनके पास लोगों, खासकर युवाओं को अपने साथ जोड़ने की क्षमता है। वे खानपान के रंग, गंध और खुशबू के सहारे लोगों को लुभाते हैं। उन्हें पता है कि हमें कैसे लुभाना है। यह जानते हुए भी कि यह हमारे स्वास्थ्य के लिए बुरा है। सबसे अहम बात यह है कि प्रसंस्कृत खाद्य उद्योग ने अब हमारी व्यस्त जीवनशैली का फायदा उठाना शुरू कर दिया है। यह आसान है क्योंकि यह उपलब्ध है और इसे बनाना आसान है। कोई समस्या ही नहीं।

सबसे अहम बात यह है कि खानपान की उनकी दुनिया उनका कारोबार है। यह इसलिए चलता है क्योंकि उन्हें मुनाफा कमाना है। यही वजह है कि कंपनियां भोजन को हम तक पहुंचाने की आपूर्ति श्रृंखला तैयार करती हैं। ऐसे में सवाल यह है कि अच्छे भोजन की आपूर्ति कैसे सुनिश्चित की जाए? क्या आजीविका का यह कारोबार मुख्य धारा के खाद्य उद्योग का हिस्सा बन सकता है या इसे अपने बचाव के लिए समांतर बाजार की आवश्यकता है? यह कैसे होगा?

यही कारण है कि फर्स्ट फूड के 2019 के संस्करण में हम ऐसी आजीविका की जानकारी प्रस्तुत कर रहे हैं जो फर्स्ट फूड से जुड़ी हो। इसका संबंध कारोबार से है जो अदृश्य और एक तरह से नवजात है। परंतु इसका संबंध एक ऐसे कारोबार से भी है जिसे भरपूर ढंग से विकसित होना चाहिए। हम जानते हैं कि ऐसा संभव है। इथियोपिया का एक मोटा अनाज है टेफ जिसके बहुत छोटे-छोटे बीज होते हैं। यह ग्लूटेन रहित होता है और यही इसका सबसे बड़ा गुण है। इस बीज को कॉफी के बाद दुनिया को इथियोपिया का दूसरा तोहफा माना जाता है। लंदन में टेफ के एक किलो आटे की कीमत करीब 7 पाउंड है यानी करीब 614 रुपये प्रति किलो। इथियोपिया में यह इससे आधे से भी कम कीमत पर मिलता है।

भारत में भी इसके उदाहरण हैं। रागी और ब्राउन टॉप मिलेट अब हमारे खाद्य बाजारों में प्रमुखता से नजर आ रहा है। हम अब इन्हें खा रहे हैं क्योंकि ये उपलब्ध हैं। परंतु अच्छे खाद्य पदार्थ की इस वृद्धि को बढ़ावा देना होगा ताकि यह हमारे जीवन में रच बस जाए। हमने इस खाद्यान्न के कारोबार की संभावनाओं को भी तलाशा। ठीक उसी तरह जैसे चाय उद्योग छोटे किसानों को साथ लेकर रोजेल्ले फ्लावर्स (लाल अंबारी) एकत्रित कर रहा है या फिर जैसे कटहल का कारोबार इस तरह विकसित हुआ कि अब यह साल भर उपलब्ध रहता है। ये बातें बहुत अहम हैं। हो सकता है कि ये आज हमारी बुरे खानपान की आदतों को बदलने के लिहाज से पर्याप्त न हों लेकिन ये हमें भविष्य की राह तो दिखाते हैं।

भोजन के इस नए कारोबार में बदलाव लाने का काम शेफ यानी रसोइये कर सकते हैं। वे हमारे लिए भोजन तैयार करते हैं और समाज को यह बताते हैं कि कौन सा भोजन बेहतर है। यही कारण है कि ये वे लोग हैं जो भोजन, पोषण, प्रकृति और आजीविका के बीच के इस नए संबंध को आकार दे सकते हैं। यही कारण है कि फर्स्ट फूड के इस विशेष संस्करण में हमने पाक कला में महारत रखने वाले स्त्री-पुरुषों के ज्ञान का इस्तेमाल किया है। भोजन का यह फैशन हमारे लिए अच्छा होगा।

कानाफूसी

समय की बरबादी

पिछले दिनों मध्य प्रदेश कैबिनेट मंत्री ओंकार सिंह मरकाम अनचाहे ही एक विमान में चार घंटे से भी अधिक समय तक फंसे रहे। यह वाकया भोपाल के राजा भोज हवाई अड्डे पर हुआ। वह दिल्ली से जबलपुर यात्रा पर थे लेकिन खराब मौसम के कारण विमान को भोपाल ही उतारना पड़ा। मंत्री के पास विमान में बैठे रहने के अलावा कोई विकल्प ही नहीं था। उन्होंने विमानन कंपनी और विमानतल के अधिकारियों से बार-बार अनुरोध किया कि उन्हें शहर में स्थित उनके बंगले पर जाने दिया जाए। उन्होंने अधिकारियों से कहा कि वह इस समय का उपयोग कुछ जरूरी फाइलें निपटाने में करना चाहते हैं और बुलाए जाने पर तत्काल हवाई अड्डे लौट आएंगे। परंतु उनकी एक न सुनी गई। यह सुनने में आया है कि मंत्री ने विमानन सचिव के पास मामले की शिकायत दर्ज की है।

शुभकामनाओं से आजिज

जिन लोगों को व्हाट्सऐप पर आने वाले अनचाहे बधाई संदेशों, सुप्रभात संदेशों या अन्य फॉरवर्ड किए गए संदेशों से आपत्ति है, वे खुद को इस घटना से जोड़कर देख सकते हैं। इस बार व्हाट्सऐप का शिकार कोई साधारण व्यक्ति नहीं बल्कि इलाहाबाद उच्च न्यायालय के मुख्य न्यायाधीश हुए हैं। पिछले दिनों श्रीकृष्ण जन्माष्टमी के अवसर पर उन्हें अपने कनिष्ठ न्यायिक अधिकारियों से लगातार शुभकामना संदेश प्राप्त हो रहे थे। इस पर रोक लगाने के लिए उच्च न्यायालय के महापंजीयक ने सभी जिला न्यायाधीशों को एक निर्देश जारी किया। उनसे कहा गया कि वे शुभकामना संदेश भेजने पर तुरंत रोक लगाएं। पंजीयक ने कहा कि इस संबंध में किसी भी तरह की चूक को गंभीरता से लिया जाएगा।

आपका पक्ष

वाहन उद्योग नीति में बदलाव की जरूरत

वाहन उद्योग में मंदी की मार पड़ रही है और इस उद्योग से जुड़े कर्मचारियों की नौकरियां जा रही हैं। वाहन निर्माताओं के संगठन सायम के अनुसार इस साल वाहनों की कुल बिक्री 12.35 प्रतिशत घट कर 60.85 लाख वाहन रही। पिछले साल यह आंकड़ा 69.42 लाख था। बाजार में मंदी की आहट से लोग नए वाहन नहीं खरीद रहे हैं। इससे वाहन उद्योग में मंदी छा गई है। पिछले दिनों वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने वाहन उद्योग के लिए कई घोषणाएं कीं हैं। लेकिन उनकी घोषणाएं से इस उद्योग का एकदम उबर पाना मुश्किल ही लग रहा है। वित्त मंत्री ने अपनी घोषणाओं में कहा कि मार्च 2020 तक खरीदे गए बीएस -4 वाहनों को उनके पंजीकरण की पूरी अवधि तक चलाया जा सकेगा। इसका अर्थ है कि बीएस-4 वाहन के पंजीकरण से 15 वर्षों तक चलाया जा सकेगा। देश में पर्यावरण की चिंता के मद्देनजर बीएस-6 वाहन तथा इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों पर जोर दिया जा रहा है। इसलिए बीएस-4 वाहनों के निर्माण के बजाय सरकार ने बीएस-6 वाहन निर्माण के लिए कहा है। वहीं सरकार की मंशा है कि आने वाले वर्षों में देश में सिर्फ इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन ही चलाए जाएं। इससे तेल आयात पर लगाम लग सकेगी जिससे भारी मात्रा में विदेशी मुद्रा खर्च होने से बच जाएगी। इसके अलावा पर्यावरण का भी बचाव हो सकेगा। सरकार का यह कदम पेरिस जलवायु समझौते के तहत कार्बन उत्सर्जन कम करने का प्रयास भी है। वित्त मंत्री ने कबाड़ नीति लाने की बात भी कही है। आमतौर पर एक वाहन का जीवन 15 वर्ष तय किया गया है। इसके बाद इसके चलाए जाने पर पाबंदी लगाई गई है। ऐसा माना जाता है कि 15 वर्षों के बाद उक्त वाहन अधिक प्रदूषण छोड़ता है। वित्त मंत्री की घोषणाओं से वाहन उद्योग को आस तो दिखी है लेकिन इसका कितना फायदा होगा यह कहना मुश्किल है। सरकार को वाहन नीति में बदलाव करने की जरूरत है। जो वाहन गैस या बिजली से चलते हैं उसकी जीवन अवधि बढ़ाने की जरूरत है जो वर्तमान में पेट्रोल-डीजल से चलने वाले वाहन की 15 वर्ष तय की गई है। इसी प्रकार अन्य नीतियों में बदलाव की भी जरूरत है।

बृजमोहन कुमार, नई दिल्ली

वाहन उद्योग में छा रही मंदी से निपटने के लिए सरकार को नीतियों में बदलाव करना चाहिए

तकनीक से आपदा पर लगेगी रोक

बाढ़ को रोकने के लिए प्रतिरोधात्मक उपाय न अपनाकर बाढ़ आने पर बचाव व राहत कार्यों पर अधिक जोर दिया गया है। इसके उदाहरण बिहार, असम, कर्नाटक, महाराष्ट्र में आई बाढ़ हैं। परंतु इन पर नियंत्रण नहीं किया जा सका है। ऐसे क्षेत्रों जहां नदियों की निचली धाराओं में बाढ़ आती है, उन पर बड़े-बड़े बांध बनाकर जलाशयों में वर्षा के पानी को रोकने की व्यवस्था की जानी चाहिए। मॉनसून के दौरान गांव व उसकी सहायक नदियों के पैटर्न को समझने के लिए समन्वित प्रयास की आवश्यकता है। भूमि सर्वेक्षण की अपेक्षा सरकार को उपग्रह चित्रों पर आधारित नक्शों व भौगालिक सूचना तंत्र जैसी आधुनिक तकनीकों का प्रयोग करना चाहिए। बिहार की कोशी नदी जिस प्रकार हर बार अपने बहाव में परिवर्तन करती है, ऐसी नदियों के व्यवहार को समझकर सुरक्षात्मक प्रयास करने चाहिए।

पंकज कुमार निराला, छत्तीसगढ़

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।

दैनिक जागरण

ध्यान की दौलत से कार्य करने की क्षमता अपने आप बढ़ती है

ट्रंप से खरी बात

फ्रांस के बायरिट्ज शहर में भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री ने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति के समक्ष जिस तरह दो टूक ढंग से कहा कि भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच के सारे मसले द्विपक्षीय हैं और इसीलिए हम किसी तीसरे देश को कष्ट नहीं देना चाहते उससे ट्रंप प्रशासन को यह पता चल जाना चाहिए कि आज के भारत को कश्मीर या फिर किसी अन्य मसले पर झुकाया नहीं जा सकता। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति के समक्ष खरी बात करने की जरूरत इसलिए थी, क्योंकि हाल में उनकी ओर से दो-तीन बार यह कहा जा चुका है कि वह कश्मीर पर मध्यस्थता करने को तैयार हैं। उनके ऐसे बयानों से ही पाकिस्तान अपनी पीठ ठोकने में लगा हुआ था। अब उसे भी यह अहसास हो जाए तो बेहतर कि अमेरिका या फिर चीन का सहारा लेकर वह भारत को आंखें नहीं दिखा सकता। यह उल्लेखनीय है कि इसके पहले भारत ने चीन के समक्ष भी यह साफ कर दिया था कि जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने से न तो पाकिस्तान से लगती सीमा में कोई बदलाव हुआ है और न ही चीनी सीमा में। यह अच्छा हुआ कि भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री की खरी बात के बाद अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति भी यह कहने को बाध्य हुए कि उन्हें उम्मीद है कि भारत और पाकिस्तान मिलकर समस्याओं को सुलझा लेंगे, लेकिन भारत सरकार को केवल इतने से ही संतोष नहीं करना चाहिए। चूंकि अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति किसी भी मसले पर कुछ भी कहने और यहां तक कि अपनी ही बातों से मुकर जाने में माहिर हैं इसलिए भारत को चाहिए कि वह अमेरिकी विदेश विभाग से राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के ताजा वक्तव्य को आधिकारिक रूप देने की मांग करे।

यह आवश्यक है कि भारत सभी आवश्यक मंचों पर यह भी स्पष्ट करे कि वह कश्मीर पर मध्यस्थता का राग सुनने को इसलिए नहीं तैयार, क्योंकि यह उसका अपना आंतरिक मामला है और अगर पाकिस्तान से कोई बात होती है तो वह उसके कब्जे वाले भारतीय भूभाग को लेकर ही होगी। यह सही समय है कि भारत इस बात को भी पूरी दृढ़ता के साथ रेखांकित करे कि पाकिस्तान या फिर अन्य किसी देश को इस मुगालते में नहीं रहना चाहिए कि भारत जम्मू-कश्मीर या फिर लद्दाख को लेकर किसी से वार्ता करने को राजी हो सकता है। वास्तव में ऐसा करने पर ही दुनिया को यह संदेश जाएगा कि कश्मीर का असल विवाद तो पाकिस्तान के कब्जे वाले उस भारतीय भूभाग को लेकर है जिसे पाकिस्तान ने हथिया रखा है। देश के राजनीतिक एवं बौद्धिक वर्ग को भी यह समझने की जरूरत है कि कश्मीर को लेकर रक्षात्मक रवैया अपनाने के कारण ही पाकिस्तान दुनिया में भ्रम फैलाने में कामयाब रहा।

सोनिया की हरी झंडी

बंगाल में कांग्रेस और माकपा समेत वाममोर्चा के अन्य घटक दलों की स्थिति बहुत ही खराब है। ऐसे में कांग्रेस एवं वामदल एक दूसरे के सहारे भाजपा को रोकने की कोशिश में लगे हैं। यही वजह है कि विधानसभा उपचुनाव की घोषणा से पहले ही वामदलों से साथ गठबंधन करने को बंगाल के पार्टी नेताओं को कांग्रेस की अंतरिम अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी ने हरी झंडी दे दी। यही नहीं 2021 के विधानसभा चुनाव में भी वामदलों के साथ लड़ने की सोनिया गांधी ने मंजूरी दे दी है। सोनिया ने बंगाल के कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष सोमेन मित्रा के साथ बैठक की जिसमें गठबंधन समेत कई मुद्दों पर चर्चा हुई। इसके बाद सोमेन मित्रा ने कहा कि अंतरिम अध्यक्ष ने स्पष्ट कहा कि अगर वाममोर्चा तैयार है तो दोनों पक्षों को राज्य में गठबंधन कर लेना चाहिए। भाजपा को रोकने के लिए तृणमूल प्रमुख ममता बनर्जी द्वारा सभी विपक्षी दलों के एक हो जाने के आह्वान के मद्देनजर सोनिया गांधी का यह फैसला काफी अहम है। हालांकि एक वरिष्ठ कांग्रेस नेता की मानें तो ममता के साथ सौहार्दपूर्ण रिश्तों के बावजूद कांग्रेस हाईकमान ने बंगाल में गठबंधन के लिए वामदलों का चुनाव किया है, क्योंकि यह स्पष्ट है कि 2021 का विधानसभा चुनाव राज्य की तृणमूल सरकार के खिलाफ होगा। ऐसे में सिर्फ भाजपा विरोध के नाम पर हम तृणमूल के साथ नहीं जा सकते। कांग्रेस एवं माकपा नेतृत्व के बीच तीन विधानसभा सीटों पर होने वाले उपचुनाव पर सहमति बन गई है। उत्तर दिनाजपुर की कालियागंज एवं पश्चिम मेदिनीपुर की खड़गपुर सीट पर कांग्रेस, जबकि माकपा नदिया जिले के करीमपुर सीट से लड़ेगी। कालियागंज सीट कांग्रेस विधायक प्रमथनाथ राय की मौत के बाद खाली हुई है। जबकि खड़गपुर सीट से भाजपा प्रदेश अध्यक्ष दिलीप घोष विधायक थे। उनके मेदिनीपुर से सांसद बनने के बाद वह सीट खाली हुई है। इसी तरह करीमपुर से तृणमूल की विधायक रही महुआ मोइत्रा अब कृष्णानगर से सांसद हैं। इसकी वजह से वह सीट खाली हुई है। इससे पहले कांग्रेस एवं वाममोर्चा ने 2016 का विधानसभा चुनाव साथ लड़ा था। हालांकि उनका प्रदर्शन निराशाजनक रहा था। इसके बाद लोकसभा चुनाव 2019 के लिए उनके बीच सीट बंटवारे पर मामला फंस गया था। इसके बाद दोनों ने अलग-अलग चुनाव लड़ा। दोनों का ही प्रदर्शन प्रदेश में बदतर रहा। कांग्रेस जहां मात्र दो सीट जीत सकी, जबकि 38 सीटों पर उसके प्रत्याशी अपनी जमानत तक नहीं बचा सके। वामो के हिस्से बंगाल से एक भी सीट नहीं आई।

ताशकंद और शिमला समझौते के सबक

सुरेंद्र किशोर

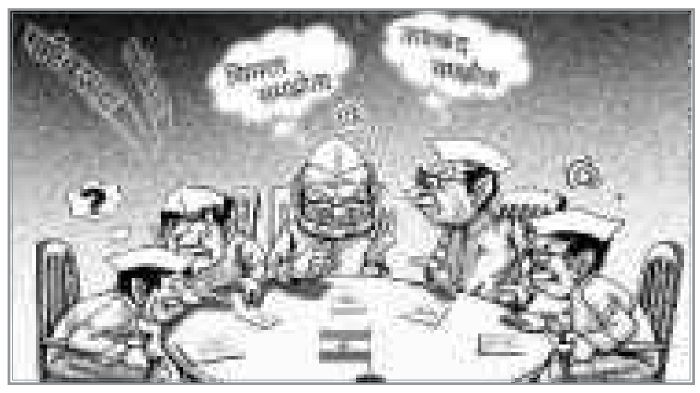
चूंकि शिमला में एक तरह से ताशकंद ही दोहराया गया इसलिए यह जरूरी है कि मौजूदा सरकार इन दोनों समझौतों से सबक सीखे

जम्मू-कश्मीर के संदर्भ में मोदी सरकार की ओर से लिए गए ऐतिहासिक फैसले के बाद से शिमला समझौता की व्यापक चर्चा हो रही है। 3 जुलाई, 1972 को हुए इस समझौते के बारे में यह बात कम लोग ही जानते हैं कि उसकी धज्जियां पाकिस्तान के तत्कालीन शासक जुल्फीकार अली भुट्टो ने उसी जुलाई महीने में ही उड़ानी शुरू कर दी थी। इसीलिए यह कहा जाता है कि भारतीय सेना ने तो युद्ध में फतह हासिल की, लेकिन हमारे हुक्मरानों ने समझौते की मेज पर सेना द्वारा हासिल लाभ गंवा दिया। ताशकंद समझौते में भी ऐसा ही हुआ था। ताशकंद समझौते के खिलाफ केंद्रीय मंत्री महावीर त्यागी ने अपना इस्तीफा तक दे दिया था। वह ताशकंद समझौते की कुछ शर्तों से असहमत थे। लाल बहादुर शास्त्री के निधन के बाद गुलजारी लाल नंदा कार्यवाहक प्रधानमंत्री बने थे। शास्त्री मंत्रिमंडल के सारे सदस्य नंदा मंत्रिमंडल में भी शामिल कर लिए गए। जब ताशकंद समझौते पर मुहर लगाने के लिए मंत्रिमंडल की बैठक हुई तो बहुत देर तक ताशकंद समझौते पर विवाद होता रहा। महावीर त्यागी ने लिखा है, 'जब इस समझौते को स्वीकार करने का प्रस्ताव आया तो मैं कैबिनेट छोड़कर बाहर आ गया और अपना त्यागपत्र नंदा जी के पास भेज दिया।' अपने इस्तीफे के बाद त्यागी जी ने कहा कि उनकी समझ से पाकिस्तान और भारत तब तक अच्छी तरह उन्नत और संपन्न नहीं बनेंगे जब तक इन दोनों देशों में एकता स्थापित नहीं हो जाती। उन्होंने लिखा कि ताशकंद समझौते के मूल ध्येय से भी मैं सहमत हूं, लेकिन इस समझौते की कुछ बातें ऐसी हैं जो हमारी सरकार और हमारी पार्टी की ओर से की गई घोषणाओं के विपरीत हैं। इस समझौते के कई तत्व बहुत ही गंभीर हैं। केवल भारत के रक्षा मंत्री की हैसियत से ही नहीं, बल्कि विश्व युद्ध के सैनिक की हैसियत से मेरे कुछ निजी अनुभव हैं। उनके आधार पर मैं कह सकता हूं कि जीती हुई हाजी पीर की चौकियों को छोड़ना भयंकर भूल होगी, विशेष कर तब जब पाकिस्तान अपने छापामारों, गुप्तचरों और बिना वर्दी के हथियारबंद सैनिकों को वापस बुलाने और भविष्य में ऐसे आक्रमण न करने को कटिबद्ध नहीं होता।

महावीर त्यागी ने यह भी लिखा है कि ताशकंद समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर के तुरंत बाद पाकिस्तानी नेताओं ने यह कहना शुरू कर दिया था कि 'समझौते में हथियारबंद पाकिस्तानियों को वापस बुलाने का जो जिक्र है उसका अर्थ यह नहीं है कि हम अपने हथियारबंद छापमारों को भी कश्मीर से वापस बुलाएंगे। इसी तरह एक-दूसरे के आंतरिक मामलों में हस्तक्षेप न करने का अर्थ यह नहीं है कि हम जम्मू-कश्मीर में कोई दखल न दें, क्योंकि इस क्षेत्र को पाकिस्तान अपना निजी क्षेत्र मानता है।'

ताशकंद समझौते जैसा हश्र शिमला समझौते का भी हुआ। शिमला समझौते पर दस्तखत करके पाकिस्तान लौटने पर पाकिस्तानी संसद में अपने 165 मिनट के भाषण में भुट्टो ने कहा था, 'हम पाकिस्तान की जनता की ओर से यह आश्वासन देना चाहते हैं कि ज्यों ही कश्मीर की जनता अपना मुक्ति आंदोलन शुरू करती है, पाकिस्तान के लोग उनकी हर प्रकार से सहायता करेंगे। वे इस सिलसिले में अपना खून बहाने से भी नहीं हिचकिचाएंगे।' पाकिस्तान के युद्धबंदियों पर भुट्टो का कहना था कि 'भारत उन्हें अधिक देर तक नहीं रख सकता। हम इस सिलसिले में विश्व जनमत बनाने का प्रयास करेंगे।' भुट्टो ने यह भी कहा, 'इस समझौते से कश्मीर के बारे में हमारे किसी प्रकार के सिद्धांतों का हनन नहीं हुआ है। पाकिस्तान कश्मीर के मामले को संयुक्त राष्ट्र ले जाने को स्वतंत्र है।'

शिमला समझौते के समय अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी शिमला में ही थे। समझौते के बाद वाजपेयी ने जो कुछ कहा, इतिहास ने उसे सच साबित किया। वाजपेयी ने तभी कह दिया था, 'यह भारत का आत्मसमर्पण है, क्योंकि दोनों देशों के विवादों पर कोई समझौता न होने पर भी भारत पाकिस्तानी इलाकों से भारतीय सेनाओं को हटा लेने पर सहमत हो गया।' याद रहे कि समझौते के अनुसार पाकिस्तान को 69 वर्ग मील भारतीय इलाका खाली करना था तो भारत को 5139 वर्ग मील पाकिस्तानी इलाका। शिमला समझौते पर तत्कालीन विदेश मंत्री सरदार स्वर्ण सिंह का कहना था कि दोनों देशों ने भारतीय उप महाद्वीप में स्थायी शांति की स्थापना के उद्देश्य से बातचीत में भाग लिया, लेकिन सब जानते हैं कि शांति स्थायी रूप नहीं ले सकी। यदि ताशकंद और शिमला में भारत ने पाकिस्तान से कड़ी सौदेबाजी की होती तो स्थायी शांति की जमीन तैयार हो सकती थी। ध्यान रहे ताशकंद समझौते के जरिये भी भारत ने जीती हुई महत्वपूर्ण भूमि पाकिस्तान को लौटा दी थी। उसी जमीन से घुसपैठिये लगातार कश्मीर में प्रवेश करके आतंक फैलाते रहे।



अवधेश राजपूत

पाकिस्तान हर बार गैर भरोसमंद पक्षकार ही साबित हुआ है। वह झूठ बोलने और अपने लोगों समेत दुनिया को भरमाने में माहिर है। यह किसी से छिपा नहीं कि बालाकोट में एयर स्ट्राइक पर उसका यही कहना था कि भारत चंद पेड़ों को नुकसान पहुंचाने के अलावा कुछ खास नहीं कर सका। अब यह कह रहा है कि भारत बालाकोट से भी बड़े हमले की तैयारी में है। शिमला समझौते के तहत दोनों देशों ने संकल्प लिया था कि वे अपने मतभेदों को द्विपक्षीय वार्ता द्वारा शांतिपूर्ण उपायों से हल करेंगे और दोनों देशों की सरकारें अपनी सामर्थ्य के अनुसार एक-दूसरे के खिलाफ घृणित प्रचार नहीं करेंगी। इसमें यह भी कहा गया था कि आपसी संबंधों में सामान्य स्थिति लाने की दृष्टि से सुविधाओं का आदान-प्रदान होगा और दोनों देशों की सेनाएं अपनी सीमा में लौट जाएंगी। समझौते का एक बिंदु यह भी था कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में 17 दिसंबर, 1971 को हुए युद्ध विराम के तहत नियंत्रण रेखा को मान्य रखेंगे। इस समझौते को लागू करने के लिए किसने क्या प्रयास किए, इसे बयान करने के लिए 1972 के बाद की घटनाएं पर्याप्त हैं। कश्मीर में आतंक फैलाए रखने में पाकिस्तान की मुख्य भूमिका रही है। वह वहां खुले आम जिहाद छेड़ने की बात करता है।

कश्मीर में पाकिस्तान की बेजा हरकतें भारत की ओर से उसके प्रति दिखाई गई उदारता का नतीजा हैं। क्या शिमला समझौते में शामिल भारतीय पक्ष ताशकंद समझौते के बाद के अनुभव से परिचित नहीं था? जरूर परिचित रहा होगा। 90 हजार सैनिकों और करीब 5 हजार वर्ग मील पाकिस्तानी भूभाग पर भारतीय सेना के कब्जे के बावजूद भारत सरकार पाकिस्तान को कोई ठोस सबक नहीं सिखा सकी। शिमला में एक तरह से ताशकंद दोहराया गया। यदि अब ऐसा कोई अवसर आए तो यही उम्मीद की जाती है कि मौजूदा सरकार ताशकंद और शिमला वाली गलती नहीं करेगी। इसी के साथ यह भी उम्मीद की जाती है कि हमारी सरकार उस पुरानी धारणा से भी इस देश को मुक्त करेगी कि भारतीय अपने इतिहास से नहीं सीखते।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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सक्षम नौकरशाही को प्रोत्साहन जरूरी

प्रेमपाल शर्मा

जब कुछ अधिकारियों को उनकी प्रतिभा और मेहनत का फल मिलता है तो पूरी नौकरशाही में नई जान पड़ जाती है

पुरस्कार और दंड देने की प्रक्रिया नौकरशाही के लिए भी उतनी ही जरूरी है जितनी जीवन के दूसरे पक्षों में। हाल में कर्मठ, ईमानदार और नवोन्मेषी 16 जिला अधिकारियों को उनके महत्वपूर्ण योगदान के लिए पुरस्कृत किया गया। इसके बाद यह खबर आई कि कई टैक्स अधिकारियों को बाहर का रास्ता दिखाया गया, क्योंकि वे कारोबारियों को अनावश्यक रूप से तंग कर रहे थे। यह सिलसिला कायम रहना चाहिए। बीते दिनों जिन अधिकारियों को पुरस्कृत किया गया वे देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में बहुत अच्छा काम कर रहे हैं। डॉक्टर अयाज फकीर भाई ने छत्तीसगढ़ के बस्तर जिले में स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं को जन-जन को सुलभ बना दिया तो संदीप नंदूरी ने पानी की कमी से जूझते तमिलनाडु के कई गांवों में बर्बाद पानी को इकट्ठा कर फिर उपयोग में लाने की विधि ईजाद कर दी। वहीं राकेश कंवर ने हिमाचल प्रदेश में कूड़े के ढेर को एक खूबसूरत पार्क में बदल दिया। इसी तरह राजकुमार यादव, माधवी खोडे, कार्तिकेय मिश्रा आदि को जब शिक्षा, कौशल विकास जैसे क्षेत्रों में उनकी प्रतिभा और मेहनत का फल मिला। जब ऐसा होता है तो पूरी नौकरशाही में नई जान पड़ जाती है और अन्य अधिकारी भी कुछ बेहतर करने को प्रेरित होते हैं। पिछले कुछ दिनों में सरकार की कोशिश बेहतर काम करने वाले अधिकारियों को पुरस्कृत करने की रही है। 2006 में शुरू किए गए सिविल सेवा अवार्ड ने भी इसमें एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है। सिविल सेवा अवॉर्ड हर वर्ष सिविल सेवा दिवस यानी 21 अप्रैल को देश के अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों में शासन-प्रशासन से जुड़े हर स्तर के अधिकारियों द्वारा किए गए उत्कृष्ट कामों के लिए दिए जाते हैं। राजस्थान के जिलाधिकारी द्वारा जेनरिक दवाओं की शुरुआत हो या फिर बदायूं के जिलाधिकारी द्वारा मल मुक्ति अभियान, कर्नाटक में भूमि रिकॉर्ड का कंप्यूटरीकरण करना हो अथवा रेलवे में ई टिकटिंग की व्यवस्था, इसी के चंद उदाहरण हैं।

निःसंदेह संघ लोक सेवा आयोग द्वारा आयोजित एक कड़ी चयन प्रक्रिया से गुजर कर देश की सर्वश्रेष्ठ प्रतिभाएं प्रशासनिक सेवाओं में आती हैं। यदि उन्हें लगातार इसी तरह प्रोत्साहन मिलता रहे तो नौकरशाही का चेहरा बदल सकता है। अभी तक के ज्यादातर अनुभव यही बताते हैं कि आजादी के बाद नौकरशाही की कार्यक्षमता में लगातार गिरावट आती गई है और भ्रष्टाचार, भाई-भतीजावाद, फिजूलखर्ची में बढ़ावा देखने को मिला है। हम सब के निजी अनुभव भी यही बताते हैं और एनएन वोहरा

से लेकर प्रशासनिक सुधार आयोग की तमाम रपटें और दूसरे तमाम सर्वे भी इसी ओर इंगित करते हैं, लेकिन कर्मठ अफसरों को प्रोत्साहन के प्रचार-प्रसार से हालात बदले जा सकते हैं। भारतीय नौकरशाही की बहुत बड़ी कमी यह महसूस की जाती रही है कि आप एक बार उसके हिस्से हो जाएं तो आप कुछ करें या न करें या कितना भी अच्छा करें आपको कोई फल नहीं मिलने वाला और न करने पर भी आपके करियर पर कोई असर नहीं होने वाला। इस धारणा को मूल रूप से समाप्त किए जाने की जरूरत है। इन पुरस्कारों की यही भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण है, लेकिन केवल पुरस्कार ही नहीं, सरकार को निकम्मे लोगों से मुक्ति भी पानी होगी।

हाल में जिन अधिकारियों की उम्र 55 वर्ष हो चुकी है या जो 25 वर्ष की सेवा कर चुके हैं उनके कार्य निष्पादन का आकलन किया जा रहा है। सरकार के ऐसे कदमों और खासकर नाकारा या भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों की छुट्टी करने पर किसी को हाय तौबा मचाने की जरूरत नहीं है। विशेषकर तब जब एक तरफ तो आप सरकार की, उसकी नौकरशाही की आलोचना करते हैं और उसकी कार्यक्षमता में गिरावट का रोना रोते हैं। इसके अलावा कानून व्यवस्था, रेल, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य आदि सुविधा के अभाव की बात करते हैं और फिर जैसे ही सरकारी दफ्तरों में बैठे निकम्मे लोगों को बाहर का रास्ता दिखाने की जरूरत होती है तो कुछ लोग उनके बचाव में लग जाते हैं। इस क्रम में लोग कई बार सरकार पर निजीकरण करने का आरोप भी लगाते हैं। शासन या सत्ता समाज के कल्याण के लिए होती है। उसे नौकरशाही करे या निजी क्षेत्र करे, अंतिम आदमी को नागरिक हक, न्याय और सुविधाएं चाहिए, ईमानदारी चाहिए, भ्रष्टाचार से मुक्ति चाहिए। जो भी सरकार इसे निष्पक्षता से करे उसका साथ देने की जरूरत है। यह उल्लेखनीय है कि 16 आइएस अफसरों को पुरस्कृत करने की चयन प्रक्रिया में देश के नामी-गिरामी लोग जुड़े हुए थे। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के पूर्व न्यायाधीश आरएम लोढ़ा उस चयन समिति के अध्यक्ष थे और पूर्व नौकरशाह हबीबुल्ला, पूर्व विदेश सचिव निरुपमा राव, पूर्व कैबिनेट सचिव चंद्रशेखर सदस्य थे। उन्होंने पांच मानदंडों पर देशभर से आई संस्तुतियों पर विचार किया और फिर एक्सीलेंस इन गवर्नेंस अवार्ड के लिए उन्हें चुना है। हाल में उठाए गए कई कदम नौकरशाही में बदलाव के संकेत दे रहे हैं। जैसे इन्हें पुरस्कृत किया गया है वैसे ही कुछ दिनों पहले कस्टम, इनकम टैक्स, पुलिस आदि विभाग के दर्जनों अधिकारियों को सेवा से बर्खास्त भी किया गया है। काफी अरसे के बाद उन अधिकारियों को भी नौकरी से निकाल दिया गया है जिन्हें सरकार ने विदेश भेजा तो था प्रशिक्षण के लिए, लेकिन वे वर्षों से बिना बताए गायब थे। ऐसे अधिकारियों को राष्ट्रीय हित में बिना किसी रियायत के तुरंत सबक सिखाने और दूसरों को भी संदेश देने की जरूरत है।

ठीक जिस वक्त कुछ कर्मठ अफसरों को पुरस्कृत किया जा रहा था उसी समय नौकरियों में भर्ती प्रक्रिया में क्या-क्या सुधार अपेक्षित हैं, उस पर दिल्ली में विचार मंथन चल रहा था। मेरा मानना है कि न केवल भर्ती प्रक्रिया, बल्कि सेवाकालीन प्रशिक्षण आदि को भी फिर से परिभाषित करने की जरूरत है जिससे नौकरशाह, मालिक के बजाय जनता के सेवक के रूप में प्रतिष्ठित हो सकें। कस्तूरीरंगन रिपोर्ट ने भी इसी तरफ इशारा करते हुए कहा है कि हमारे नौकरशाह अंग्रेजी के दंभ में भारतीय जनता से लगातार दूर रहने की कोशिश करते हैं और गुमान रखते हैं। अब समय आ गया है कि नौकरशाही को जनमुखी बनाया जाए।

(लेखक रेल मंत्रालय में संयुक्त सचिव रहे हैं)

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ऊर्जा

सोच

जीवन में आगे बढ़ने के लिए बड़ी सोच जरूरी है, ऐसा नहीं है कि जो लोग बड़ा नहीं सोचते, वे सोचते ही नहीं। इस दुनिया में एक भी व्यक्ति ऐसा नहीं है जो सोचता न हो। मेरा मानना है कि अगर आप सोच ही रहे हैं तो क्यों न बड़ा सोचें। नेपोलियन हिल के अनुसार, 'दुख और गरीबी स्वीकार करने के लिए जितना प्रयास अपेक्षित है, जीवन में ऊंचा लक्ष्य रखने के लिए उससे अधिक प्रयास की जरूरत नहीं है।' आपको बस एक संकल्प लेना है कि भव्य विचार रखने हैं। यह एक बर्गर और एक फल के बीच चयन करने जितना आसान है। आप दोनों ही चीजों को खा सकते हैं। आपको बस यह फैसला करना है कि आपको क्या चाहिए।

जहां जीवन है, वहां भली-बुरी दोनों प्रकार की घटनाओं का आना-जाना लगा ही रहता है। रात और दिन की भांति सुख-दुख के क्रम को रोका नहीं जा सकता। यदि व्यक्ति प्राप्त अनुकूलताओं की ओर ध्यान दे तो उसे अनुभव होगा कि कुछेक वस्तुओं का अभाव होने पर भी जितना कुछ उपलब्ध है वह कम नहीं है। विश्व में ऐसे असंख्य व्यक्ति हैं, जिन्हें संभवतः इतना ही प्राप्त नहीं है, जितना अभी मेरे पास है, फिर क्यों मुंह लटकाए फिर रहा हूं। व्यक्ति का ध्यान जब अपनी प्रतिकूलताओं पर ही टिका रहता है तब वह जिधर देखेगा, उधर अभाव ही दिखाई देगा। इससे कुछ लाभ वाली स्थिति का निर्माण नहीं हो सकता। ऐसे में चित खिन्नता का अनुभव करेगा और निराशा ही हस्तगत होगी। अपनी आदतों में परिवर्तन लाने की आवश्यकता है। जीवन के उजले पक्ष को देखें और उससे कुछ प्रेरणा लें तो जीवन में बहुत कुछ पाया जा सकता है और बहुत कुछ किया जा सकता है।

'योर बेस्ट लाइफ नाउ' में जोएल ओस्टीन कहते हैं-'आपको अपने दिमाग में यह बात रखनी चाहिए कि आप परम परमात्मा की संतान हैं और महान चीजों के लिए बनाए गए हैं। ऐसा करने के लिए उसने आपको काबिलियत, अंतर्दृष्टि, प्रतिभा, बुद्धि और अलौकिक शक्तियां दी हैं।'

ललित गर्ग

भारतीय भाषाओं की अनदेखी

अनीश कुमार

दुख की बात है कि आज देश का एक वर्ग रोजमर्रा के प्रयोग से अंग्रेजी को अपनी मातृभाषा बनाने पर तुला है

भारत को समझने और उसकी जरूरतों को पूरा करने के लिए भारतीय भाषाएं सबसे महत्वपूर्ण माध्यम हैं। दरअसल भाषाएं भावी पीढ़ी के लिए केवल साक्षरता के लिए ही जरूरी नहीं हैं, बल्कि भाषाओं में निहित ज्ञानराशि को समझने का सशक्त जरिया भी हैं। यह ज्ञानराशि ही असली भारत है। इसमें आम कामगारों के, किसानों के और आधुनिक पेशवरों के अभ्यासजन्य और अनुभवजन्य ज्ञान संचित हैं। विडंबना है कि यह ज्ञानराशि राशि धीरे-धीरे हमारी शिक्षा की मुख्यधारा में संकुचित हो चुकी है। इसका ही दुष्परिणाम है कि भावी पीढ़ी अपने आनंद और पीड़ा के रंगों का चुनाव गंगा-जमुना के मैदानों, अरावली या दंडाकारण्य आदि की लोकसंस्कृति से, केरल और तमिलनाडु के मृदु-कठोर भावों से कर पाने में सक्षम नहीं है।

दुर्भाग्य यह है कि अपनी इस अक्षमता का उसे भान तक नहीं है, क्योंकि वह अपनी जरूरतों को दूसरों की भाषा से पूरा करने का प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त कर रही है। इस तरह की एक पूरी पीढ़ी ने देखा है कि अंग्रेजी न आने के कारण उसे कितनी चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ा। यह पूरी पीढ़ी मां-बाप की भूमिका में अपने बच्चों को उसी अंग्रेजी का संस्कार देना चाह रही है जिसकी कमी से वे जूझते रहे। दुकान से लेकर डाइनिंग टेबल तक बच्चों को अंग्रेजी के शब्दों और 'आदतों' का पाठ पढ़ाया जा रहा है। इस अभ्यास से लगभग हर अभिभावक खुद को आश्वस्त कर रहा है कि उसके बच्चे को आने वाले जीवन में किसी आर्थिक संकट का सामना नहीं करना पड़ेगा। ऐसी दशा में बार-बार यही सवाल उपजता है कि क्या अभिभावक अपने बच्चों के लिए अंग्रेजी भाषा और माध्यम की शिक्षा के बरक्स मातृभाषा में शिक्षा को स्वीकार करेंगे? यह सवाल केवल अभिभावकों के स्तर तक ही सीमित नहीं है।

इसके समांतर अगला प्रश्न है कि क्या स्कूल नामक संस्था भारतीय भाषाओं में ज्ञान रचना के लिए तैयार है? इन दोनों ही सवालों के लिए अक्सर 'औपनिवेशिक' प्रभाव की दुहाई देते हुए हम पल्ला झाड़ लेते हैं, लेकिन हमें अपनी असफलता को भी स्वीकारना होगा कि आजाद भारत में मजबूत भाषा नीतियों के बावजूद पाठ्यचर्या के माध्यम और भाषा के रूप में भारतीय भाषाएं उपेक्षित हैं।

इसका सरलीकृत कारण नीति का कमजोर क्रियान्वयन नहीं है, बल्कि आर्थिक अवसरों, सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा और सांस्कृतिक बड़प्पन के नाम पर लोक जीवन का अंग्रेजीकरण है। इसके प्रभाव में भारतीय भाषाएं धीरे-धीरे अनौपचारिक कार्य-व्यापार तक सीमित होती जा रही हैं। वर्तमान में भाषा की एक नई समस्या है कि एक वर्ग बोलचाल, रोजमर्रा के व्यवहार और औपचारिक प्रयोग से अंग्रेजी को अपनी मातृभाषा बनाने पर तुला है। इसी वर्ग के जैसा बनने के लिए शेष समाज अपने 'संस्कृतिकरण' के लिए उनकी भाषा को अपना रहा है। उक्त के आलोक में आज इस सवाल का उत्तर खोजा जाना चाहिए कि अंग्रेजी के प्रभाव से निपटने के लिए भारतीय भाषाओं को कैसे समर्थ बनाया जाए?

(लेखक स्वतंत्र पत्रकार हैं)

मेलबाक्स

निष्पक्ष होकर कार्य करें जांच एजेंसियां

जांच एजेंसियों की जवाबदेही भी जरूरी शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में संजय गुप्त ने सीबीआइ तथा ईडी जैसी स्वतंत्र जांच एजेंसियों को निष्पक्ष एवं राजनीतिक दबाव से परे रहकर कार्य करने पर बल दिया है, जो कि वर्तमान परिदृश्य में बेहद जरूरी एवं प्रासंगिक भी है। सरकार बदलने पर पूर्व की सरकारों में रहे मंत्रियों पर स्वतंत्र जांच एजेंसियों द्वारा कार्रवाई करना शक पैदा करता है, सत्ता में रहते हुए किसी मंत्री पर प्रभावी कार्रवाई ना होना ही शक का कारण भी है। इन्हें सत्तासीन दल के मंत्रियों का भ्रष्टाचार क्यों नहीं दिखाई देता? जिस दिन सत्ता में रहते हुए भ्रष्ट मंत्रियों तथा भ्रष्ट नेताओं पर उक्त जांच एजेंसियां प्रभावी कार्रवाई करना शुरू कर देंगी, जनता का विश्वास इन जांच एजेंसियों पर बढ़ जाएगा। यह कटु सच्चाई है कि आजकल जांच एजेंसियां निष्पक्ष होकर कार्य नहीं कर पा रही हैं, बल्कि सत्तासीन दल की कठपुतली की तरह कार्य करती हैं, जो कि जनता के अविश्वास का मुख्य कारण है। सरकारों की भी यह जिम्मेदारी है कि वे जांच एजेंसियों को स्वतंत्र और निष्पक्ष रहने दें, उनका दुरुपयोग ना करें और न होने दें ताकि सरकार और जांच एजेंसियों पर आम जनमानस का विश्वास कायम हो सके।

सर्वजीत आर्या, कन्नौज

भारत और यूएई संबंध

भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री इन दिनों दो खाड़ी देशों संयुक्त अरब अमीरात और बहरीन के दौरे पर थे। यूएई भारत के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण व्यापारिक साझेदार है। यह उन चुनिंदा देशों में शामिल है जिनसे भारत का व्यापार संतुलन की स्थिति में है। यदि यूएई की तुलना में हम चीन के साथ अपने व्यापारिक आंकड़ों को देखें तो जितना कुल व्यापार हम यूएई के साथ करते हैं उतना हमारा चीन के साथ व्यापार घाटा है। भारत-यूएई के द्विपक्षीय संबंध आज के समय में सिर्फ व्यापारिक गतिविधियों तक सीमित नहीं हैं, पिछले चार वर्षों में यूएई भारत का एक महत्वपूर्ण व्यापारिक, सामरिक साझेदार बन चुका है। आने वाले समय में भारत और यूएई के संबंध और प्रगाढ़ होंगे। भारत-यूएई के संबंधों का अंदाजा जम्मू कश्मीर के मामले पर यूएई के वक्तव्य से लगाया जा सकता है, जिसमें यूएई उन चुनिंदा देशों में शामिल पहला देश था जिसने भारत की कश्मीर नीति का समर्थन किया। यूएई कई महत्वपूर्ण इस्लामिक संगठनों का महत्वपूर्ण सदस्य है, जिनमें ओआइसी शामिल है जहां पर पाकिस्तान भारत को संयुक्त राष्ट्र में घेरने के लिए असफल कूटनीतिक चाल चलता रहा है। यूएई का इस तरह जम्मू कश्मीर मुद्दे पर खुलकर सामने आना और भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री को सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान से सम्मानित करना उद्दंड पाकिस्तान को करारा तमाचा है। मोदी की यह तीसरी यूएई यात्रा है। बहरीन और यूएई ने अपने सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान से भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री को सम्मानित कर इस यात्रा को ऐतिहासिक बना दिया है।

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कांग्रेस को ऊर्जा चाहिए

लंबे समय तक सत्ता में रही कांग्रेस आज दोयम दर्जे की पार्टी बन गई है। चुनाव में बार-बार पराजय के बाद आत्मविश्वास खो चुकी इस पार्टी के एक के बाद एक नेता भ्रष्टाचार में लिप्त पाए जा रहे हैं। इससे इसकी साख और खराब हो रही है। हालात यह हैं कि इस समय विपक्ष के नाम पर कोई प्रभावशाली नेता नहीं दिख रहा है। लोकतंत्र में मजबूत विपक्ष का होना बहुत जरूरी होता है। कांग्रेस से लोगों को बड़ी उम्मीद हैं, लेकिन पार्टी इस दिशा में कुछ करती नजर नहीं आ रही है। पार्टी को कम से कम अपना एक स्थायी अध्यक्ष तो चुन ही लेना चाहिए, जो पार्टी में नई ऊर्जा भर सके।

दीपांशु अरोड़ा, दिल्ली

पीवी सिंधू की शानदार जीत

भारतीय महिला खिलाड़ी पीवी सिंधू ने एक बार फिर से देश के सामने चुनौती रख दी है कि किसी भी खेल में हुनर की कमी नहीं। बस जरूरत है उनको पहचानने और निखारने की। बैडमिंटन के ऊंचे आकाश पर चमकते सितारे पर देश को गर्व क्यों न हो। कड़ी मेहनत और लगन से ही सिंधू ने ये ऊंचाई पाई है। अपनी जीत को अपनी मां को समर्पित कर सिंधू ने नई पीढ़ी के लिए एक मिसाल कायम की है। देश को अपने इस होनहार खिलाड़ी से बार-बार ऐसी जीत की उम्मीद रहेगी।

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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।

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संस्थापक-स्व. पूर्णचन्द्र गुप्त. पूर्व प्रधान संपादक-स्व.नरेन्द्र मोहन. संपादकीय निदेशक-महेन्द्र मोहन गुप्त. प्रधान संपादक-संजय गुप्त, जागरण प्रकाशन लि. के लिए: नीतेन्द्र श्रीवास्तव द्वारा 501, आई.एन.एस. बिल्डिंग, रफी मार्ग, नई दिल्ली से प्रकाशित और उन्हीं के द्वारा डी-210, 211, सेक्टर-63 नोएडा से मुद्रित, संपादक (राष्ट्रीय संस्करण) -विष्णु प्रकाश त्रिपाठी*
दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 011-43166300, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-4615800, E-mail: delhi@nda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 * इस अंक में प्रकाशित समस्त समाचारों के चयन एवं संपादन हेतु पी.आर.बी. एक्ट के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अधीन ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

जनसत्ता

दो-टूक संदेश

अब साफ हो गया है कि कश्मीर मसले पर भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच कोई भी तीसरा पक्ष मध्यस्थता नहीं करेगा। भारत और पाकिस्तान ही आपसी बातचीत से कश्मीर सहित सभी मुद्दों को सुलझाएंगे। इससे एक बात तो यह स्पष्ट हो गई कि कश्मीर में तीसरे पक्ष की मध्यस्थता को लेकर अब कहीं कोई भ्रम की स्थिति नहीं है। फ्रांस के शहर बिआरित्ज में सोमवार को भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के बीच मुलाकात में कश्मीर को लेकर बात हुई और यह साफ हो गया कि अमेरिका कोई मध्यस्थता नहीं करेगा। दरअसल, कश्मीर मसले पर मध्यस्थता को लेकर अमेरिका जिस तरह के बयान देता रहा है, वे भारत को असहज स्थिति में डालने वाले रहे हैं। इससे अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारत की छवि को धक्का पहुंचा है। ऐसे में फ्रांस में ट्रंप और मोदी के बीच जो बात हुई और कश्मीर को लेकर भारत ने जिस तरह से अपना रुख एक बार फिर से स्पष्ट किया है उससे इतना तो तय है कि मध्यस्थता को लेकर अब कोई भी आसानी से ऐसी बयानबाजी नहीं करेगा।

अगर कोई देश या तीसरा पक्ष कश्मीर मसले पर मध्यस्थता के शिगूफे छोड़ता है या इस अति-गंभीर मसले पर हल्के-फुल्के अंदाज में बात करता है तो निश्चित तौर पर भारत के लिए यह कतई स्वीकार्य नहीं होगा। भारत हमेशा से कहता आया है कि कश्मीर उसका अभिन्न हिस्सा है और इस पर वह तीसरे पक्ष को दखल देने की अनुमति नहीं देगा। कश्मीर का मुद्दा भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच का द्विपक्षीय मुद्दा है और दोनों देश ही संवाद के जरिए इसे सुलझाएंगे। यही संदेश भारत ने सोमवार को फ्रांस में ट्रंप के साथ बातचीत के बाद दिया। दरअसल, मध्यस्थता को लेकर पिछले महीने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ने गैर-जिम्मेदाराना बयान देकर बखेड़ा कर दिया था। ट्रंप ने वाइट हाउस में पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान के स्वागत के बाद मीडिया से बातचीत में यह कह दिया था कि भारत ने उनसे कश्मीर मसले पर मध्यस्थता करने को कहा है। इसके बाद भारत ने ट्रंप के इस बयान पर कड़ी नाराजगी जताते हुए इसका खंडन किया था और दो-टूक कहा कि कश्मीर को लेकर उसकी नीति में कोई बदलाव नहीं है और भारत के प्रधानमंत्री ने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति से ऐसी कोई बात नहीं की।

दक्षिण एशिया में शांति के प्रयासों की आड़ में अमेरिका अपनी चौधराहट बनाए रखना चाहता है। उसके इस रुख की पुष्टि पिछले हफ्ते एक वरिष्ठ अमेरिकी राजनयिक के इस बयान से होती है जिसमें उन्होंने कहा था कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में धारा 370 को निष्क्रिय करने का भारत सरकार का फैसला उसका आंतरिक मामला है लेकिन इस फैसले से भारत के सीमाई इलाकों में जो असर पड़ रहा है वह चिंता की बात है, इसलिए हम दशकों से कह रहे हैं कि भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच तनाव वाले मुद्दों पर सीधी बात होनी चाहिए। भारत साफ कह चुका है कि पाकिस्तान से कोई भी बात तब तक नहीं होगी जब तक वह सीमापार आतंकवाद बंद नहीं करता। पुलवामा हमले के बाद तो भारत ने और कड़ा रुख अपनाया है। सवाल तो यह है कि अमेरिका कश्मीर की ताजा स्थिति को लेकर परेशान क्यों है? हकीकत तो यह है कि सीमाई इलाकों में या घाटी में जो तनाव बढ़ रहा है उसके पीछे पाकिस्तान है, यह किसी से छिपा भी नहीं है। अमेरिका को चाहिए कि जो नसीहतें वह भारत को दे रहा है और उससे उम्मीदें कर रहा है, उसके साथ ही पाकिस्तान पर भी तो सीमापार आतंकवाद बंद करके भारत के साथ द्विपक्षीय वार्ता के लिए दबाव बनाए।

सिंधू का तोहफा

पुसरला वेंकटा सिंधू के पास इतिहास रचने की क्षमता तो हमेशा से रही है लेकिन रविवार को स्विटजरलैंड के शहर बासेल में उन्होंने अपनी पुरानी प्रतिद्वंद्वी जापान की नोजोमी ओकुहारा को हरा कर अपने इस संकल्प को हकीकत में बदल डाला और भारत के इतिहास में विश्व बैडमिंटन चैंपियनशिप में पहली बार स्वर्ण पदक हासिल कर इतिहास रच दिया। पदक हासिल करने से ज्यादा बड़ी और महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह देखने की है कि वे पूरे टूर्नामेंट में किस तरह से खेलीं और पिछले टूर्नामेंट के मुकाबले इस बार किस तरह की रणनीति अपनाई। सिंधू ने यह साबित कर दिखाया है कि उनमें कोर्ट पर आलराउंड प्रदर्शन करने की गजब की काबिलियत है। अपने गेम में शुरू से ही हमलावर रुख अपनाते हुए उन्होंने मैच पर पकड़ बनाए रखी और ओकुहारा को एक बार भी हावी नहीं होने दिया। सिंधू ने इस टूर्नामेंट के हर मैच में शीर्ष रैंक वाले प्रतिद्वंद्वियों- बी वैन जैंग (अमेरिका), ताई जू यिंग (ताइवान) और चेन यू फी (चीन) को हरा कर अपना लोहा मनवाया।

सिंधू की कभी हार न मानने वाली सोच और कोर्ट पर कड़ी मेहनत से सामने वाले को चित करने की क्षमता ने ही उनको यह पदक दिलवाया। 2017 में ओकुहारा ने ही ग्लासगो में हुई विश्व बैडमिंटन चैंपियनशिप के फाइनल में सिंधू को हराया था। इसी जीत के साथ सिंधू ने अब चीन की जेंग निंग की बराबरी कर ली है जिन्होंने छह बार खेल में भागीदारी कर पांच मैडल जीते थे। विश्व बैडमिंटन चैंपियनशिप के इस रेकार्ड के साथ ही सिंधू के खाते में एक और बड़ी उपलब्धि यह दर्ज हो गई कि विश्व बैडमिंटन चैंपियनशिप के सारे पदक जीतने वाली वे चौथी एकल महिला खिलाड़ी बन गई हैं। हालांकि पूर्व में विश्व बैडमिंटन चैंपियनशिप में स्वर्ण पदक से चूक जाने की पीड़ा सिंधू को हमेशा रही और इसके लिए उन्हें आलोचनाओं का भी शिकार होना पड़ा था। प्रेस कॉन्फ्रेंसों और इंटरव्यू में इसे लेकर उन पर सवाल भी दागे जाते रहे। पर रविवार को हम सबने सिंधू को उनके करिश्माई खेल से एक नए रूप में स्थापित होते देखा है। किसी खिलाड़ी के लिए इससे बड़ी खुशी और क्या हो सकती है कि वह अपनी मां के जन्मदिन पर उन्हें स्वर्ण पदक जीतने का तोहफा दे! इसीलिए सिंधू के लिए रविवार का दिन बेहद खास रहा।

आखिर सिंधू ने ऐसा क्या नया किया कि हर बार की तरह वे फाइनल में डगमगाए बिना सफलतापूर्वक अपने दबाव को काबू में रख पाईं! काफी हद तक इसका श्रेय उनकी फिटनेस को जाता है। उनके भीतर की इसी ताकत ने उन्हें क्वार्टर फाइनल में कड़े मुकाबले का सामना करने और एक मुश्किल मैच को काबू में करने की हिम्मत दी। सिंधू ने अपने खेल में बदलाव करते हुए तौरतरीके बदले हैं और सुरक्षित खेलने की प्रवृत्ति से अलग हटते हुए मैच में शुरू से ही सामने वाले पर आक्रामक रुख अपनाने की शैली विकसित की है। इसके अलावा उन्होंने पिछली गलतियों से काफी कुछ सीखा भी है। इस बार सिंधू ने शुरू से ही अपनी नई रणनीति अपनाई थी और उनका जोर शटल को कोर्ट के पीछे तक पहुंचाने पर ही बना रहा। इस रणनीति ने काफी हद तक उन्हें स्वर्ण पदक तक पहुंचाने में मदद की। अर्जुन अवार्ड और पद्मश्री से सम्मानित सिंधू ने 2016 के रियो ओलिंपिक में रजत पदक जीतने के बाद से अब तक पीछे मुड़ कर नहीं देखा है। 2017 के आखिर में उन्होंने अपनी अच्छी फॉर्म बरकरार रखते हुए इंडियन ओपन सुपर सीरीज भी अपने नाम की थी। सिंधु की यह उपलब्धि भारतीय बैडमिंटन के लिए एक नए युग की शुरुआत है।

कल्पमेधा

छोटी-छोटी बातों से पूर्णता प्राप्त होती है
और पूर्णता कोई छोटी बात नहीं।
-माइकल एंजेलो

प्लास्टिक कचरे से बढ़ता संकट

संजय ठाकुर

हैरानी की बात तो यह है कि जिन राज्यों में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर रोक लगाने की घोषणा कर दी गई है उन राज्यों में इस घोषणा पर अमल नहीं किया गया है। प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर पूरी तरह रोक लगाने के लिए सबसे पहली जरूरत इसका विकल्प सामने लाने की थी। लेकिन राज्य सरकारों ने इसे पूरी तरह नजरअंदाज कर दिया। इसी का नतीजा है कि प्रतिबंध के बावजूद प्लास्टिक का धड़ल्ले से इस्तेमाल हो रहा है।

भारत में प्लास्टिक कचरे का निबटान एक बड़ी समस्या बना हुआ है। ये समस्या अब और ज्यादा विकराल इसलिए हो रही है कि कई कंपनियां और पुनर्चक्रण इकाइयां चोरी-छिपे विदेशी प्लास्टिक कचरे का आयात कर रही हैं। एक मोटे अनुमान के मुताबिक हर साल एक लाख इक्कीस हजार टन से ज्यादा प्लास्टिक कचरा पश्चिम एशिया, यूरोप और अमेरिका सहित पच्चीस से ज्यादा देशों से भारत लाया जा रहा है। पचपन हजार टन प्लास्टिक कचरा तो पाकिस्तान और बांग्लादेश से ही आ रहा है। पिछले एक वर्ष के दौरान उत्तर प्रदेश में अट्ठाईस हजार आठ सौ छियालीस टन, दिल्ली में उन्नीस हजार पांच सौ सत्रह टन और महाराष्ट्र में उन्नीस हजार तीन सौ पचहत्तर टन से ज्यादा प्लास्टिक कचरा आयात किया जा चुका है।

विश्व के सबसे बड़े प्लास्टिक कचरा आयातक देश चीन ने चौबीस श्रेणियों के ठोस कचरे के आयात पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया है। इसके बाद भारत में प्लास्टिक कचरे का आयात और बढ़ गया। चीन के बाद मलेशिया, वियतनाम और थाइलैंड सहित कई अन्य देशों में भी प्लास्टिक कचरे के आयात पर कई तरह के प्रतिबंध लगाए गए हैं जिससे भारत की मुश्किलें और भी बढ़ गई हैं। हालांकि भारत सरकार ने देश के खतरनाक अवशिष्टों के प्रबंधन और आयात से जुड़े नियमों (हैजारड्स एंड अदर वेस्ट्स (मैनेजमेंट एंड ट्रांसबॉउंडरी मूवमेंट रूल्स, 2015) को संशोधित करके एक मार्च, 2019 को ठोस प्लास्टिक कचरे के आयात पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया है लेकिन इसमें खामियों के चलते भारत में प्लास्टिक कचरे के आयात की छूट मिल रही है। ऐसी छूट के चलते इस्तेमाल की गईं पॉलीऐथिलीन टेरेफ्थैलेट प्लास्टिक बोतलों को महीन कचरे के रूप में आयात किया जा रहा है।

केंद्रीय प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड (सीपीसीबी) के एक अध्ययन के अनुसार भारत में प्रतिदिन पच्चीस हजार नौ सौ चालीस टन प्लास्टिक कचरा पैदा होता है जिसमें से चालीस प्रतिशत फिर से इकट्ठा ही नहीं हो पाता है। कुल प्लास्टिक कचरे का छठा हिस्सा भारत के साठ बड़े शहरों में पैदा होता है जिसमें से अकेले दिल्ली में रोजाना छह सौ नवासी टन प्लास्टिक कचरा निकलता है। देश में हर साल सबसे ज्यादा चार लाख उनहत्तर हजार अठानवे टन प्लास्टिक कचरा महाराष्ट्र में होता है। इसके बाद गुजरात (दो लाख उनहत्तर हजार दो सौ चौरानवे टन), दिल्ली (ढाई लाख टन), तमिलनाडु (एक लाख पचास हजार तीन सौ तेईस टन), उत्तर प्रदेश (एक लाख तीस हजार सात सौ सतहत्तर टन) और कर्नाटक (एक लाख उनत्तीस हजार छह सौ टन) का नंबर आता है। सबसे कम (तेरह टन सालाना) प्लास्टिक कचरा मेघालय में होता है। इसके बाद अरुणाचल प्रदेश (साढ़े चौदह टन), मणिपुर (तीस टन), गोवा (एक सौ छह टन) और उत्तराखंड (तीन हजार सोलह टन) का स्थान आता है। सबसे ज्यादा घातक स्थिति तो यह है कि प्लास्टिक कचरे का उचित रूप से निपटान न होने से हर साल अस्सी लाख टन से ज्यादा प्लास्टिक कचरा समुद्र में जा रहा है।

धरती में घुलनशील प्लास्टिक के दस मानकों के संबंध में भारतीय मानक ब्यूरो ने अधिसूचना जारी की है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने भी प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल को रोकने के आदेश दिए हैं। केंद्र सरकार ने भी प्लास्टिक कचरे से पर्यावरण को होने वाले नुकसान का आकलन करवाने के लिए कई समितियां और कार्यबल बनाए हैं। ऐसे कानूनों और नियमों को कड़ाई के साथ लागू न किए जाने से प्लास्टिक कचरा अभी भी एक बड़ी समस्या बना हुआ है।

देश के कई राज्यों में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर रोक लगाने के फरमान तो जारी कर दिए गए हैं लेकिन इन राज्यों की सरकारों के ढुलमुल रवैए और नीति-निर्माण के स्तर की खामियों से इसके इस्तेमाल को पूरी तरह रोकने में अभी तक सफलता नहीं मिल पाई है। ऐसे में वास्तविक स्थिति यह है कि सरकारी दस्तावेजों में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर रोक के बावजूद व्यापक स्तर पर इसका इस्तेमाल हो रहा है। प्लास्टिक पर रोक लगाने वाले राज्यों में सिक्किम, महाराष्ट्र, तमिलनाडु, अरुणाचल प्रदेश, नगालैंड, त्रिपुरा, हिमाचल प्रदेश, छत्तीसगढ़, आंध्र प्रदेश, दिल्ली, राजस्थान, कर्नाटक, उत्तर प्रदेश, झारखंड, गोवा, कोलकाता, उत्तराखंड, जम्मू एवं कश्मीर, पंजाब, हरियाणा, मध्यप्रदेश और बिहार शामिल हैं। इनके अतिरिक्त गुजरात, केरल, ओड़िशा और पश्चिम बंगाल में भी आंशिक रूप से प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर रोक लगाई गई है। जबकि तेलंगाना, असम, मेघालय, मणिपुर और मिजोरम में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर अभी भी कोई रोक नहीं है।

हैरानी की बात तो यह है कि जिन राज्यों में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर रोक लगाने की घोषणा कर दी गई है उन राज्यों में इस घोषणा पर अमल नहीं किया गया है। प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर पूरी तरह रोक लगाने के लिए सबसे पहली जरूरत इसका विकल्प सामने लाने की थी। लेकिन राज्य सरकारों ने इसे पूरी तरह नजरअंदाज कर दिया। इसी का नतीजा है कि प्रतिबंध के बावजूद प्लास्टिक का धड़ल्ले से इस्तेमाल हो रहा है। दूसरी बात यह कि लोगों को प्लास्टिक से होने वाले नुकसान के बारे में जागरूक नहीं किया गया, इसीलिए लोग बिना किसी डर के इसका इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं। प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर पूरी रोक के लिए उस प्लास्टिक पर भी गंभीरता से विचार किए जाने की जरूरत थी जो कई तरह के सामान की पैकिंग में उपयोग किया जाता है। इसमें दूध, मक्खन, तेल, घी, बिस्कुट, चिप्स, नमकीन, कुरकुरे और डिटर्जेंट पाउडर जैसे सामान हैं।

प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल को रोकने के लिए इस संबंध में बनाए गए कानूनों को भी प्रभावी ढंग से लागू नहीं किया गया। इस कारण लोग बेरोकटोक इसका इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं। प्लास्टिक पर रोक के फैसले के समय विभिन्न राज्यों की सरकारों ने मौजूदा प्लास्टिक को नष्ट करने के लिए भी कोई योजना नहीं बनाई। प्लास्टिक ऐसा पदार्थ है जो मिट्टी में न घुलने के कारण भूमि में जाकर जल को भूमि में शोषित होने से रोकता है। इससे भूमि की उर्वरा-शक्ति कम होती है। प्लास्टिक को सही तरीके से नष्ट न किए जाने से प्लास्टिक में मौजूद रसायन भूमि में चले जाते हैं और मिट्टी तथा भूमिगत जल को विषैला कर देते हैं। प्लास्टिक का सही निपटान न होने से जल निकास प्रणाली में अवरोध पैदा हो जाते हैं और पर्यावरण को भारी नुकसान पहुंचता है। जल-जनित रोगों का यह भी एक बड़ा कारण है। प्लास्टिक को मिट्टी में घुलनशील बनाने के लिए इसमें मिलाए गए रासायनिक पदार्थ स्वास्थ्य की दृष्टि से बहुत खतरनाक होते हैं। प्लास्टिक के निर्माण में अल्प अस्थिर प्रकृति के अम्ल और अल्कोहल के रूप में बने कार्बोनेट ऐस्टर नामक रसायन और कैडमियम व जस्ता जैसी विषैली धातुओं का इस्तेमाल खाद्य पदार्थों से मिल कर कैंसर के खतरे को बढ़ा देता है। कैडमियम के इस्तेमाल से उल्टियां, हृदय के आकार का बढ़ना और मस्तिष्क के ऊतकों का क्षरण जैसी समस्याएं हो सकती हैं। पॉलीऐथिलीन, पॉलीप्रोपीलीन और टेरेफ्थैलेट प्लास्टिक के विभिन्न रूप हैं जो सूक्ष्म कणों के रूप में वायु, जल और भोजन के साथ शरीर में प्रवेश करके प्रतिरोधी तंत्र को नुकसान पहुंचाते हैं।

प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर पूरी तरह रोक लगाने की दिशा में बहुत काम करने की जरूरत है। इसके लिए केंद्र सरकार को गंभीरता से विचार कर सुदृढ़ नीति व कारगर कार्ययोजना तैयार करनी होगी और कड़े कानून बना कर उन्हें प्रभावी ढंग से लागू करना होगा। सरकार को प्लास्टिक का आयात पूरी तरह बंद करके विभिन्न कंपनियों और पुनर्चक्रण-इकाइयों पर कड़ी नजर रखनी होगी।

बादल राग

मेधा

दुनिया मेरे आगे

अशोक, नीम, सप्तपर्णी, गुलमोहर- सारे ही वृक्ष नृत्यरत होते हैं। उनके पत्तों के झूमर पड़ने से एक अलग किस्म का संगीत उत्पन्न होता है। आसमान से बूंदें उतरती रहती हैं और धरती को सोंधा करती हैं। छज्जे से टापर-टुपर की आवाज जिंदगी की बेहद पहचानी-सी धुन है। यही धुन तो बचपन से लेकर आज तक बदली नहीं है। अचानक ही यह गीत होठों पर तैर जाता है- 'बृष्टि पड़े टापर-टुपर...'। पेड़ों की डालियां आगे बढ़-बढ़ कर मानो मेरी बाहें पकड़ मुझे अपने साथ झूमने का न्योता देती हैं। रह-रह कर शीतल बयार का प्यार आत्मा को तृप्त करता रहता है। अपने पीछे के लैम्प-पोस्ट की आभा में झिलमिलाता सप्तपर्णी किसी स्वप्नद्रष्टा दार्शनिक की मुस्कान लगती है। अंधेरे की ओट लिए धरती की एक झलक को व्याकुल आसमान पर रहम कर बिजली बार-बार धरती का दीदार करवाती है। रह-रह कर गरजते बादल जैसे मुनादी करते हों कि प्रकृति का यह सारा लाव-लश्कर मेरे ही दम से है। छज्जे पर बनती बूंदों की झालर रात का शृंगार करती हैं।

जीवन-रस में डूबे मेरे मन को सहसा खयाल आया कि गांव में बूंदों की गति और मोटाई के अनुसार बारिश को अलग-अलग नाम से पुकारा जाता था। जहां तक मुझे याद पड़ता है, वे सारे नाम बहुत ही मजेदार होते थे। उनकी ध्वनि में एक तरह का सुरीला खिलंदड़पन था। पतली और कमसिन-सी बूंदों वाली बारिश को दादी कहती थीं 'झिसी-फुसी' पड़ रहा है। जाने क्यों लग रहा, अभी दौड़ कर गांव जाऊं और सारे नाम पता कर वैसी ही बूंदों को खोजने निकल जाऊं। ऐसा लग रहा है जैसे बारिश, बादल, गांव, बचपन, दादी- सब इस एक क्षण में एक साथ साकार हो रहे हैं। यह जो क्षण है, यही सच है।

सावन के हरियाए मन ने हृदय से सूखे सारे रंगों को देशनिकाला दे दिया है। गांव के पीपल-बाबा की मजबूत डालियों पर लगे झूलों पर पेंग भरता बचपन यहां तक आ पहुंचा है। दरअसल, सावन का महीना मुझे बारहों महीनों में सबसे अलग लगता है। उम्मीद की हरियाली से सजी धरती, बाहर-भीतर के मैल को धोकर मन और तन को निर्मल करते बादल। दूर बसे साजन के संदेश सुनाते बादल। हां, वह पिया जो हृदय के सात पर्दों के पार बसा है... जो कभी-कभार झलक दिखा कर छिप जाता है। फिर सदियों का इंतजार दे जाता है। वह निष्ठुर, निर्मम पिया, जिस तक अतल हृदय की गहराई से उठती पुकार भी नहीं पहुंच पाती, वैसे रूखे पिया को भी सावन के नीर निर्मल कर देते हैं। इस मौसम में बाहर जितना बादल बरसता है, भीतर विरह की अग्नि उतनी भड़क उठती है।

इसीलिए विभिन्न परंपराओं के 'बारहमासा' में सावन का बहुत महातम्य है। बुल्ले शाह ने यों ही नहीं लिखा- 'सावन सोहे मेघला घट सोहे करतार/ ठौर-ठौर इनायत बसे पपीहा करे पुकार।' सभी सूफी संतों के यहां 'बारहमासा' का बहुत महत्त्व है और इसमें बारिश के माह का और खासतौर पर सावन का। जायसी के महाकाव्य 'पद्मावत' में विरह का सौंदर्य अपनी पराकाष्ठा पर कतई नहीं होता अगर उसमें रत्नसेन की पहली पत्नी नागमति के वियोग खंड में बारहमासा के अंतर्गत सावन माह में नागमति की विरह-वेदना की मार्मिक अनुभूति की अभिव्यक्ति जायसी ने न की होती। प्रकृति की उत्सवधर्मिता, उसका सौंदर्य विरह की ज्वाला को तीव्र से तीव्रतर कर देता है।

अपनी सोच में डूबती-उतराती मैं तब जाकर चेतन हुई जब हाल में बादलों की एक पुकार ने मेरा ध्यान खींचा। कालिदास ने 'मेघदूत' में जिन बादलों के चित्र रचे हैं, वे भी तो इसी आसमान से उपजे होंगे। सहसा मन रोमांचित हो उठा कि आह... मैं वही आसमान देख रही हूं, जिसे निरखते हुए कालिदास ने 'मेघदूत' लिखा था। 'मेघदूत' की स्मृति में डूबे नयन देख रहे हैं... सावन के महीने में हर तरफ प्रकृति की इनायत बरस रही है। ऐसे में 'पी' से मिलन की चाह भी बढ़ जाती है। वह 'पी', जो पति हो सकता है, प्रेमी, गुरु या वह भी जो सब प्रेमियों का प्रेमी और सब गुरुओं का गुरु है।

कालिदास नहीं हैं। जायसी भी नहीं हैं और बुल्ले शाह भी नहीं हैं। लेकिन आसमान अब भी अपनी जगह टंगा है। 'मेघदूत' भी है। जायसी का 'पद्मावत' है और बुल्लेशाह का 'बारहमासा' भी है। यानी शब्द शाश्वत है। शाश्वत शब्द में ही मनुष्य भी अपनी जगह बना लेता है। 'मेघदूत' से कालिदास जीवित हैं। 'पद्मावत' से जायसी।

कितना अद्भुत है यह सोच पाना कि धरती के जिस टुकड़े पर बैठ मैं बारिश के सौंदर्य-रस का पान कर रही हूं, हजारों साल पहले धरती के इसी टुकड़े पर किसी ने ऐसे ही आनंद लिया होगा... तब मैं नहीं थी। हजारों साल बाद भी यहीं बैठ कोई फिर से बादल-राग सुनेगा, तब भी मैं नहीं होऊंगी। क्या पता तब भी मैं थी और हजार साल बाद भी मैं होऊं! आखिर शाश्वत होने से कोई तो रिश्ता होगा नश्वर मनुष्य का। चाहे जो हो, लेकिन इतना तो तय है कि बादल जरूर उपजेंगे, तब भी इसी आसमान से!

पर उपदेश कुशल

बीती अठारह अगस्त को अमेरिका ने जमीन से जमीन पर 5000 किलोमीटर दूर तक मार करने वाली टामहॉक क्रूज मिसाइल का परीक्षण करके विश्व को एक और अनावश्यक युद्धक सामान बनाने के लिए मजबूर करने वाला काम किया है। यही अमेरिका 2 अगस्त 2019 को इंटरमीडिएट रेंज न्यूक्लियर फोर्सेज ट्रीटी यानी आइएनएफ संधि का पुनः नवीनीकरण करने से रूस और चीन पर यह आरोप लगाते हुए कि, 'ये दोनों देश इस संधि के बावजूद नई आधुनिकतम मिसाइल विकसित कर रहे हैं', पीछे हट गया था। पर रूसी उप विदेश मंत्री के अनुसार अमेरिका खुद इस संधि की आड़ में इस मिसाइल को पहले से बनाने की तैयारी में लगा था।

दरअसल, अमेरिका की कथनी और करनी में बहुत फर्क है। वह चाहता है कि दुनिया के अन्य देश मसलन, भारत, उत्तर कोरिया, ईरान आदि अपनी रक्षा के लिए भी हथियार न तो विकसित करें और न ही उन्हें न बनाएं। इसके लिए वह उन देशों पर तरह-तरह की आर्थिक दंडात्मक कार्रवाइयां करता रहता है, लेकिन खुद अत्यंत घातक हथियारों का भारी भरकम जखीरा रखने के बावजूद आएदिन नए-नए हथियार बनाता रहता है। कितना अच्छा होता कि दुनिया के सभी देश हथियारों पर होने वाले अकूत धन को मानव कल्याण के कार्यों यथा गरीबी हटाने, भूख से निजात दिलाने, अशिक्षा दूर करने, अस्पतालों की दशा सुधारने, पशु-पक्षियों सहित पर्यावरण को बचाने में लगाते और विश्व के सभी लोग शांति से अपना जीवन गुजारते! पर अफसोस की बात है कि अमेरिका जैसे देश दुनिया को चैन से नहीं जीने देते। संयुक्त राष्ट्र जैसी संस्थाएं भी अमेरिका की जेबी संस्थाएं बन कर रह गई हैं। इस भयावह स्थिति का विकल्प ढूंढ़ा ही जाना चाहिए।

● *निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद, उत्तर प्रदेश*

शाबाश सिंधू

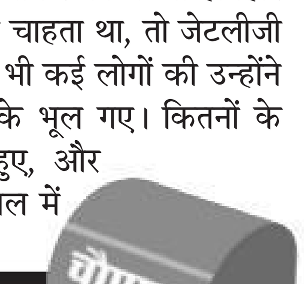
एक बार फिर दुनिया हिंदुस्तान के हुनर का लोहा मान रही है। यह कारनामा करने वाली हिंदुस्तान की बेटी और कोई नहीं सबकी चहेती खिलाड़ी पीवी सिंधू है। सिंधू को विश्व बैडमिंटन चैंपियनशिप का खिताब अपने नाम करने वाली देश की पहली भारतीय खिलाड़ी बनने का गौरव प्राप्त हुआ। उन्होंने एक बार फिर दुनिया को बता दिया कि भारत में किसी भी खेल में प्रतिभाओं की कमी नहीं है। 24 वर्षीय इस खिलाड़ी ने विरोधी को बड़ी आसानी से घुटने टेकने पर मजबूर किया तो दुनिया कह उठी शाबाश सिंधू! बैडमिंटन के ऊंचे आकाश पर चमकते इस सितारे पर देश को गर्व क्यों न हो! कड़ी मेहनत और लगन से ही सिंधू ने यह ऊंचाई पाई है। यह जीत अपनी मां को समर्पित कर सिंधू ने नई पीढ़ी के लिए एक मिसाल कायम की है। देश को अपनी इस होनहार खिलाड़ी से बार-बार ऐसी जीत की उम्मीद रहेगी। सिंधू सहित उनके प्रशिक्षक, परिजन और प्रशंसकों को अनेक बधाइयां!

● *एमके मिश्रा, रातू, रांची, झारखंड*

उनके मानवीय गुण

अरुण जेटलीजी के अनेक ऐसे मानवीय गुण हैं जो लोगों को अपनाने चाहिए। वे पैसे वाले थे, भारत के सबसे महंगे वकीलों में थे। पैसे वाले और भी बहुत लोग हैं पर उनमें कितने हैं जो अपने नौकरों, ड्राइवर, रसोइया, टाइपिस्ट आदि को मकान खरीद कर देते हैं? उनके बच्चों को उन्हीं स्कूलों में पढ़ाते हैं, जिनमें अपने खुद के बच्चे पढ़ते हैं? जेटलीजी ने हमेशा ऐसा किया। यही नहीं, यदि किसी नौकर का बच्चा होनहार होता था और विदेश में पढ़ना चाहता था, तो जेटलीजी ने उसे विदेश भी भेजा। और भी कई लोगों की उन्होंने आर्थिक मदद की और करके भूल गए। कितनों के लिए वे फरिश्ते जैसे सिद्ध हुए, और इन बातों का अपने जीवनकाल में कभी प्रचार नहीं किया। उनकी स्मृति सदा नमन।

● *अजय मित्तल, मेरठ, उत्तर प्रदेश*



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

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

पुनर्पूंजीकरण के बजाय

हाल ही में वित्तमंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने 70 हजार करोड़ रुपए से बैंकों के 'पुनर्पूंजीकरण' का फैसला किया है। यह सही है कि बैंकिंग क्षेत्र गैर निष्पादित परिसंपत्तियां (एनपीए) के संकट का सामना कर रहा है और उसे सरकार से राहत की दरकार है। लेकिन प्रश्न यह उठता है कि आखिर कब तक? सरकार के लिए अब जरूरी हो गया है कि बैंकिंग क्षेत्र से अपनी शेयरधारिता कम करे और निजी क्षेत्र की भूमिका बढ़ाए ताकि बैंकों का सफल परिचालन, क्रियान्वयन हो। उन्हें राजनीतिक दबाव से मुक्ति मिले और वे अपनी क्षमताओं में वृद्धि कर सकें। यही अर्थव्यवस्था के सुदृढ़ीकरण की नींव है। मौजूदा दौर में यह आवश्यक हो गया है कि सरकार बार-बार करदाताओं के पैसों से बैंकों के पुनर्पूंजीकरण की नीति को त्यागे। वह अपने वित्तीय संसाधनों में वृद्धि कर जनमानस की कल्याणकारी योजनाओं पर खर्च को बढ़ाए और भविष्य की जरूरतों के अनुसार विकासात्मक कार्यों पर बल दे ताकि उनका जीवन स्तर सुधर सके।

● *कपिल एम वड़ियार, पाली, राजस्थान*

मुफ्त का फंदा

अपने देश में चुनाव के पहले नेताओं द्वारा मुफ्त में कुछ देने की घोषणा करने का चलन रहा है। चूंकि जनता मुफ्त में कोई भी वस्तु पाना पसंद करती है तो नेता भी इस बात का फायदा उठाते हैं। ज्यादातर नेता वोट पाने के लिए जनता को मुफ्त की चीजों का लालच देते रहे हैं। किसी नेता ने मुफ्त लैपटॉप बांटे तो किसी ने बिजली-पानी मुफ्त कर दिए। हाल ही में एक राष्ट्रीय पार्टी के पूर्व अध्यक्ष ने तो साल में 72000 रुपए देने की घोषणा कर डाली थी। अभी-अभी एक मुख्यमंत्री ने महिलाओं को मेट्रो में मुफ्त सफर का लालच दिया है। समझने वाली बात है कि कोई भी चीज मुफ्त नहीं होती, उसकी अपनी कीमत होती है। ये नेता अपनी जेब से तो कुछ देते नहीं। इसका खमियाजा आम करदाता को भुगतना पड़ता है। तो इन नेताओं को क्या हक है कि आम आदमी से वसूले गए करों के पैसे को यों लुटा दें? दूसरी बात, मुफ्त में पाने की आदत से तो लोग नाकारा ही बनेंगे और यह आदत देश को पीछे धकेलने का काम करेगी। इसलिए कानून बनाया जाए कि कोई भी नेता जनता को मुफ्त का लालच न दे। वोट चाहिए तो नेता काम करें, देश को मजबूत करें।

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