

Yet another ruling on director liability

Unless the culture of compliance seeps into enforcement, judgments would be mere essays



WITHOUT CONTEMPT

SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN

The Supreme Court has spoken yet again — quashing criminal proceedings initiated against the managing director of a company that runs a hotel in New Delhi — about the liability of a managing director in a company charged with crime for no reason other than his being the managing director. Yet, whether this would lead to any reform in the conduct of enforcement agencies is a question that

could end up being rhetorical.

The facts seem straight out of the movie *October*. A visitor to the hotel fell from the sixth floor to the fourth floor. It was found that a terrace next to the club lounge on the sixth floor was often used as a smoking area, with the hotel not stopping smokers from using the place. The charge was that the hotel did not take adequate precautions to maintain safety.

The managing director was charged on the grounds that he was the only executive director of the company, he chaired all board meetings, and he would therefore, be responsible for all acts of omission or commission by his officials. Indeed, employees involved in hotel operations were charged too, but the managing director had been roped in as an accused only for the reason that he was the chief executive. The Delhi High Court refused to quash the proceedings at the request of the managing director. The Supreme Court disagreed.

The law declared by the Supreme

Court is that before issuing summons to an individual as an accused, the criminal court is required to be satisfied from the material on record that the person named as the accused needs to be proceeded against. If the court does not find adequate material to rope in an individual as an accused, but later during trial finds material to rope in a person not hitherto named as an accused, it can rope in the accused at that stage too (Section 319 of the Criminal Procedure Code). Yet, summons do get routinely issued against every person named by the prosecutor.

Summons can also get issued after a judge decides that the person named as an accused must be tried for criminality. In the case at hand, indeed, the Delhi High Court agreed that it was rightly issued. All that the charge sheet stated as the ground to rope in the managing director was that he is responsible for the overall operations of the company, and being the only executive director, he would be the accused. It would also imply that if there were other executive

directors, they too would have been roped into the proceedings.

The situation gets even more complex with quasi-civil proceedings, conducted by regulators who have the role of legislature, executive and judiciary, all rolled into one organisation. Recently, the Securities Appellate Tribunal was faced with an appeal where the capital market regulator routinely directed all directors to personally refund money raised without issuance of a prospectus. The tribunal has declared the law unequivocally — indeed also relying on Supreme Court judgments — to rule that liability under the law cannot arise merely by designation but from the responsibility and role played by the individual at the relevant time. Implying that “vicarious liability” cannot be automatically imputed, in the absence of a shred of evidence that the individual in question was responsible.

In fact, the Companies Act, 2013, the post-Satyam corporate law that raises the bar of criminality under company law to the level of anti-drug trafficking law when it comes to bail where fraud is alleged, took care to stipulate that for

charging a director, one must apply one’s mind to knowledge and involvement implying “board processes”. Regulations governing listed companies’ obligations made by the capital market regulator too lay down the standard of having to determine knowledge and involvement by applying board processes.

When a director sits on the board of a company, she necessarily has to rely on the processes necessary for the board of directors to be briefed by the management. If the director on the board is unaware despite doing all that a reasonable person would to make herself aware of the goings on in a company, the law would not permit the director to be charged in any proceedings. Yet, in practical application, this standard gets diluted. Enforcement agencies prefer to “err on the side of caution” and rope in everyone they can lay their hands on, leaving the burden of correcting the error to the judicial system. More judgments can follow on the subject, but unless the culture of compliance seeps into enforcement too, these would merely be essays to be relied on after the judiciary has already been burdened with the task of correcting the errors of the enforcement agencies.

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CHINESE WHISPERS

Vanishing group of ministers

National broadcaster All India Radio (AIR) on Wednesday afternoon tweeted that the government had constituted a “GoM”, or group of ministers, to look into issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir. The tweet, with the hashtag “Article 370”, came a little after 2 pm. It fuelled speculation about the ambit of such a “group of ministers”. However, nearly two and a half hours later, government sources denied that any “GoM” was constituted. “Reports about the government setting up a GoM on issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir are not correct,” a government source said. Some also wondered how AIR could do this without official confirmation.

Too little, too late



After facing a near wipe-out in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, followed by a string of senior leaders, including legislators, deserting the party, Samajwadi Party President

Akhilesh Yadav (pictured) has decided to dissolve all state- and district-level committees in Uttar Pradesh. Barring UP unit President Naresh Uttam Patel, the former chief minister sacked all other office-bearers. As expected, there is a lot of unhappiness because of this. But a section of the party feels Yadav’s move was long overdue and should have taken place much earlier or immediately after the Lok Sabha elections. With three sitting Rajya Sabha members crossing over to the BJP recently, there has been much damage, both to the organisation and member morale, they said, and that his “surgical strike” might be “too little, too late”.

Reading between the lines

Union minister and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Prakash Javadekar was left fumbling for words on Wednesday. At a BJP press meet, Javadekar launched on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his comments on Kashmir, which, he said, “insulted” the country and had given Pakistan “a handle” to target India at the United Nations. Gandhi had tweeted about “violence and people dying” in Kashmir, which Pakistan included as part of its petition in the UN to attack India over the situation in the Valley. Javadekar demanded that Gandhi apologise for what he termed the “most irresponsible politics” the country had witnessed. Gandhi’s tweets on Wednesday, attacking Pakistan and asserting that Kashmir was India’s internal issue, were made due to public anger over his earlier comments, Javadekar said. He wondered if Gandhi’s mindset had also changed due to the change in his constituency. When asked to clarify what he meant by his comments about “Rahul’s constituency”, Javadekar first struggled to explain himself and then said his remarks were not about the constituency but its representative. Gandhi represents the Wayanad constituency in the Lok Sabha. He had represented Amethi for 10 years between 2004 and 2014.

The à la carte approach to economic advice

The set-up in Modi 1.0 and 2.0 is geared to sector-specific guidance rather than macro-economic counsel

SUBHOMY BHATTACHARJEE

As the economy’s numbers point to a large-scale slowdown it is important to focus on the men and women advising the government, specifically Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Both his predecessors, Manmohan Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had trusted confidants as their chief advisors: Former Reserve Bank of India Governor C Rangarajan for Singh and Vijay Kelkar for Vajpayee. The former became chairman of the Prime Ministers’ Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC), after Suresh Tendulkar quit in 2009. Kelkar often described himself as *paramarshdata* (advisor) in the finance ministry in North Block but his views were often solicited by Vajpayee from across the road in South Block.

Among those who advise Prime Minister Narendra Modi on economic policies, there is no such clear hierarchy. So there is no concept of a confidant in economic spheres unlike, say, the role National Security Advisor Ajit Doval plays in steering the security of Jammu & Kashmir.

The economic advisors to the Modi government are, instead, more transactional in their role, their importance based on the programme or policy on hand that is sought to be steered. For instance, Parameswaran Iyer, the bureaucrat in charge of Jal Shakti Abhiyan, the water conservation mis-

sion, was also the author of the government’s massive project to tackle India’s water crisis through a set of interventions. The closest someone could come to Rangarajan or Kelkar’s position in this government is former RBI Governor, Bimal Jalan. But he, too, has been discreet, offering counsel only on specifics. Other than the report on the RBI’s capital reserves, which was put up to its board on Monday, he has authored a report on expenditure management, which the government never made public but has acted on in many cases.

It is no secret that the prime minister prefers not to surround himself with economic advisors. His signature economic policies rarely carry the overt imprint of any particular advisor or group — unlike, say, that of the National Advisory Council in the rural employment guarantee programme in Manmohan Singh’s government. This predilection has had a discernible impact on the government’s handling and defending of macroeconomic issues. Examination

of macro-economic themes has been at a premium in Modi 1.0 and 2.0. When someone has chosen to do so, the markets were caught unawares. Last week, for instance, the Deputy Chairman of Niti Aayog, Rajiv Kumar, talked of an “unprecedented situation for the government [in the] last 70 years... [we] have not faced this sort of liquidity situation where the entire financial sector is in churn and nobody is trusting anybody



else”. Kumar’s remarks caused the markets to slide because they were unsure if this was the final commentary on the current economic situation or there was more to come.

The reason for the surprise is that between Rajiv Kumar’s Niti Aayog and the PMEAC with its five members, it is unclear who has the last word on any macro-economic issues. Part-time Council member Rathin Roy recently raised a debate about whether the Indian economy has reached its limits in terms of expanding consumption, proposing it as a structural slowdown since much of the demand for goods and services is confined to a thin upper crust. Another member, Ashima Goyal, has argued that the present slowdown of the economy is largely due to cyclical factors (though she concedes some structural hurdles remain). PMEAC chairman Bibek Debroy has not waded into the debate significantly except to point out that India is yet to become a middle income economy with its attendant problems. It is not known, if this random public airing of concerns has something to do with the Prime

Minister’s Office (PMO) not tuning in to the debate on macro-themes, except on occasions such as the run-up to the Budget, when a group of economists met Modi for one whole day.

In any case, Kumar’s statement, which he claims was misinterpreted, has renewed thinking within the top levels of PM’s team about the futility of listening to macro-economic suggestions and instead entrusting the work of advice on sectoral issues to those who will be responsible for running specific projects. So the task of defending programmes such as the GST package, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, the Jan Dhan project, Mudra, Direct Benefit Transfer, housing, electricity and LPG for all, and crop insurance and the pension schemes for the informal sector have all been entrusted to bureaucrats responsible for implementing them. For example, the task of defending demonetisation in Modi’s first term was the remit of Shaktikanta Das in his capacity of secretary, economic affairs, instead of the chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian. Again, GST was implemented and defended by then revenue

secretary Hasmukh Adhia. Niti Aayog, under its CEO Amitabh Kant, has rarely commented on these programmes *ab initio*, examining them only after launch. For example, Ratan Watal, the other member of the PMEAC, chaired the committee to review the framework for digital payments, rationalisation of autonomous bodies of the central government and the transformation of India’s gold market, none of them macroeconomic themes.

As a departmental secretary pointed out, this government is keen to listen to the debates that are “finite and quantifiable”. From the debate on employment, the Modi government picked up the need to quickly reorganise employment statistics and has begun issuing those from the provident fund scheme every month.

The government is happy to listen to the bimonthly commentaries from the RBI when it resets interest rates, usually in lockstep with the government’s thinking. It would similarly adhere to the award of the 15th Finance Commission headed by N K Singh and take on board its comments. But it sits ill with the advice of Chief Economic Advisor in the finance ministry, Krishnamurthy Subramanian, who highlighted the discrepancy in tax estimates in his first Economic Survey. As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in Parliament, the Survey enjoys an arm’s length separation from the government’s examination of policies of specific ministries. It is unlikely that the PMO will listen in except when there is a specific solution on offer.

INSIGHT

The do-no-harm principle



DHIRAJ NAYYAR

The government’s decision to change its mind on what were quite apparently counter-productive economic policy measures — such as the surcharge on FPIs and the criminalisation of CSR commitment violations — shows that it is willing to listen. One cannot be sure what triggered the change, whether it was the falling stock market, acute discomfort of industry and even pro-government commentators, or the Prime Minister’s Independence Day speech in which he batted for wealth creators by calling wealth creation a national service. If India is to indeed make the “big leap” that PM Modi promised on August 15, one should hope that the government was reacting to its leader.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has the right instincts on economic policy. Often, he has spoken on the need for the government to get out of business, ease red tape and respect entrepreneurship. At the same time, he has argued in favour of a bigger and more effective role of government in ensuring that basic goods and services reach the poor. Unfortunately, the machinery of government does not always follow these principles. The fact is that the Government of India is a large beast with several layers of bureaucracy which is minded to do its own thing, ministries battling for their own interests and battling to retain

their turfs, powerful interest groups influencing (mostly legitimately, occasionally illegitimately) the making of policy. Sure, the prime minister presides, but not everyone in the system is either philosophically or practically aligned. Bad policies can slip through the cracks.

It would, therefore, be very useful and productive if all policies drafted by any department of the government are automatically subject to passing the test of the principles laid down by the prime minister. Call these the do-no-harm principles. There are three which the PM has stressed: A. Wealth creation is a national service; B. The government has no business to be in business; C. The government should ensure ease of doing business and ease of living of citizens. Every cabinet note that is drafted seeks various justifications for a policy being proposed. It should have one section on how the proposed policy fares on these three principles. If it violates any of these principles, it should be reviewed to see if it can be improved or it should be junked. Even Budget proposals should be tested on these principles. Decisions like the surcharge on the super-rich, or indeed on FPIs can be pre-empted at an early stage.

If the government is feeling bold about a “big leap”, it should review all the major economic/socio-economic policies made in the last decade and see whether they pass the do-no-harm principles. Those which do not should be revised or removed. After all, the challenge in India isn’t just making new policies but also ensuring that deadweight baggage from the past is jettisoned.

There is an additional principle, which has not been on Prime Minister Modi’s list of mantras but which would be a welcome inclusion. The government should not focus on revenue generation and gathering; it should focus only on growth. If the Ministry of

Finance is driven by the Department of Revenue and its annual tax (and non-tax) collection targets, there will be serious negative side effects. The most obvious one is tinkering with tax rates, usually upwards, using surcharges and cesses. The second is harassment of taxpayers as taxmen try to squeeze the last paise out of the minority who comply with the law. The third is perverse non tax revenue measures like forcing one public sector company to buy another, which is faux strategic disinvestment because it brings none of the efficiency gains from the transfer of management control to a private party or independent board. If anything, it adds to inefficiency by burdening better public sector companies with less efficient ones. All of this may help the government meet its current fiscal target but it comes at the cost of growth. Would it not be so much better to abandon revenue collection fundamentalism and focus on growth? The revenue that will accrue on account of higher growth will far exceed any temporary squeezing exercise.

A country which has made very effective use of an overarching, no-harm-principle in recent times is Bangladesh. The country, which was once considered a basket case, has now emerged as a mighty player in the global textiles market (apart from seriously improving its human development). The textiles sector is the major source of growth, jobs and exports for the country. Conscious of this, the government tests every economic policy against its potential impact on the textiles sector. Any policy that would negatively affect textiles is discouraged.

Of course, India can never be a one-sector economy. But if it does make some high principles non-negotiable, it would be much better placed to make a big leap than it is today.

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LETTERS

Look before you leap

This refers to the editorial “No windfall” (August 28). I agree that the transfer of this large amount should not be seen as a windfall gain and should be used wisely. It should be used for public investment to revive the economy; for example, in the improvement of the infrastructure and carrying out substantive reforms in areas like labour, land etc. The amount should not be wasted to run moribund public sector entities such as Air India. Also it should not be frittered away in pre-poll bonanzas considering some state Assembly elections are coming up in the next few months. In case a part of the money is used to re-capitalise the public sector banks (PSBs), it should be done alongside substantive governance and operational reforms of these entities. Merely recapitalising them without initiating substantive reforms will amount to encouraging reckless lending and inefficient functioning.

There should be more substantive efforts to transform PSBs into professionally run, profitable entities. The government must not forget that the money it has received from the Reserve Bank of India as the owner of the central bank is, in fact, taxpayers’ money. **Arun Pasricha** New Delhi

Where is Naresh Goyal?

This refers to “Goyal structured schemes to siphon off funds” (August 25). It is now crystal clear that Naresh Goyal is not as naïve as he is projecting himself to be. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has reportedly got evidence that Goyal had siphoned off large amounts of money in foreign jurisdictions by creating a number of tax-evading schemes. The ED has taken possession of various incriminating documents. It is also emerging that either Goyal or companies controlled by him may have routed inflated commission to its own group entity in Dubai. What does all this

indicate? Does this in any way show him as an honest businessman or a kind-hearted employer who has great sympathy for his employees?

My question to readers and followers of the Jet Airways episode is, how long will the country tolerate these types of fugitives? Yes, I repeat, he is a fugitive. He has violated the FEMA rules and there is enough evidence for him to be booked under the anti-money laundering provision. Also, he hasn’t paid his employees their dues and has defaulted on bank loans.

I am aware that one of his attempts to flee the country was foiled but there is nothing in the public domain about his current whereabouts. If he is in this country, my appeal to the legal fraternity is please get hold of him, prosecute him and allow the law to take its own course in a time-bound manner. It will reinforce the credibility of the law enforcers in the eyes of the public. We hope Goyal will not be allowed to take asylum in another country to spend the rest of his life peacefully.

Sanjoy Dutta Kolkata

Govt must reciprocate

This refers to the report “RBI approves a record ₹1.76 trillion surplus transfer to government” (August 27). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with active support from former governor Bimal Jalan and ex-deputy governor Rakesh Mohan graciously handled a tough situation. The new Economic Capital Framework, recommended by the Jalan panel and accepted by the RBI,

should convince and satisfy all stakeholders. It may be recalled that RBI’s reserves, which had peaked to 11.9 per cent of the balance sheet size in 2009, has been depleting since then and is now touching 5.5 per cent. The Jalan panel recommendation to maintain reserves at 5.5-6.5 per cent level has to be seen against this development. In



the central bank’s eagerness to support the GoI, the level has been maintained at the minimum. The government should welcome this gesture and, in the coming years, reciprocate by helping RBI to augment its reserves. Ideally, RBI’s share capital should be raised from the present level of ₹5 crore to the equivalent of \$100 billion or upwards. **MG Warrier** Mumbai

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

HAMBONE



Protecting privacy

Data must be treated as personal property of an individual

Justice BN Srikrishna made a telling point recently at a symposium marking the second anniversary of the Puttaswamy judgment which affirmed that privacy was a fundamental right. He said given the parliamentary majority the ruling party enjoys, it should have been possible to pass the data privacy legislation that a committee headed by him drafted, “with the same ease that cash is withdrawn from an ATM”. But it has been two years since the Supreme Court recommended specific legislation to protect privacy, and over a year since the Srikrishna Committee submitted its recommendations, and draft legislation, and there has been no movement in terms of turning that draft into law, even though a number of other legislation has been passed by Parliament at an impressive speed.

This is unfortunate as in the absence of a specific privacy protection law on the lines proposed by the Srikrishna Committee, it is difficult to prevent privacy being breached in practice. In this two-year period, there have been multiple disturbing developments that have impacted privacy. For example, the DNA Profiling Bill has been cleared and there are grey areas in that legislation. DNA is not only sensitive personal data — it can uniquely impact the privacy of persons related to the individual whose DNA is stored and tested. The government has also proposed the bulk sale of automobile registration lists, and driving licence data from state motor vehicles departments, to private sector entities. Aadhaar has been linked to income tax returns despite being supposedly voluntary. There are also proposals to link Aadhaar to electoral rolls, which may result in voters being profiled in unconstitutional ways.

There are multiple public interest litigations currently being heard in various courts proposing that Indians should be forced to link Aadhaar to their social media accounts and to the usage of instant messaging services. The petitioners, including the Tamil Nadu government, claim that this would be effective in curbing the spread of fake news. Whether that is true or not, the loss of anonymity on social media would inevitably result in curbs on free speech. The privacy of citizens who may express unpopular opinions, or indulge in acts of whistle-blowing, would no longer be sacrosanct. Any democracy, which recognises privacy as a fundamental right should give primacy to those freedoms and seek other ways to combat fake news.

There will soon be other privacy issues as the ecosystem of the Internet of Things (IoT) proliferates. Given that a fridge, air-conditioner, or car may now see, hear, record and transmit private conversations, privacy breaches will, in fact, become even more egregious in the near future. Legislation must be “future-proofed” to deal with fresh challenges on the IoT front. These examples should make it clear that it is necessary to balance multiple considerations when it comes to privacy. Data is indeed digital gold, and a national resource. All manner of public services can be enabled by data, and all sorts of business models can be based on data. But data must be acknowledged as the personal property of the individual generating it, and it should not be gathered, stored, or used without the informed consent of those individuals. Until there is a specific privacy legislation built upon that foundational principle, the Puttaswamy judgment of August 2017 will mean very little in practice.

The price of controls

Price caps on sanitary products and hand washes are counterproductive

The National List of Essential Medicines (NELM) committee would be ill-advised to bring sanitary products, adult diapers and hand washes under price controls. As with the caps imposed on essential medicines and consumables, the NELM committee is probably motivated by the praiseworthy objective of making these products more accessible to poorer households. On the face of it, this move makes sense: The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2015-16 shows that about only 57.6 per cent of Indian women of reproductive age use sanitary products (48.5 per cent in rural India and 77.5 in urban India). As for hand washes, other surveys have shown that about a fifth of sample sizes cite lack of soap as a reason for not washing their hands after defecation or outdoor manual work. These numbers are unquestionably high, and the societal and health consequences of non-usage of sanitary products and soap are serious. The question is whether price control alone is the optimum approach to these problems. From the supplier point of view, price controls on a range of products from safety blades, milk and life-saving medicines to cement and tyres remain a testimony to the chronic shortage economy that characterised India in the long decades of planning. Indeed, a 2013 decision to put prophylactics under price controls saw a sharp drop-off in sales. The decision was struck down by the court later, and caused the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority to extend price controls by making an absurd differentiation between ordinary condoms and those with “special features”. Either way, family planning objectives are unlikely to be met.

In both sanitary products and hand washes, the lifting of licensing controls saw an explosion of choice and, in the case of the former, innovations for women, especially in the workplace. It is nobody’s case that more Indians should be blocked from access to such products. The issue is whether affordability is the sole factor hampering wider usage. In the case of soap, NGO surveys suggest that ignorance and access to washing facilities (such as a toilet) play as big a role in usage as affordability. In sanitary products, availability could be an additional hurdle rather than affordability alone — the NFHS shows that rates of school or work absenteeism owing to menstruation is roughly the same as the rates in Singapore and Australia. Fixing these problems may demand imagination rather than the hatchet of price controls. Education on basic hygiene is the most important of them. Enhancing distribution is another. In an earlier era, the government leveraged the vast reach of FMCG companies such as ITC, Brooke Bond, Lipton and Hindustan Lever (the later now part of the Hindustan Unilever stable) to distribute its “Nirodh” brand of condoms to meet family planning objectives. There is no reason it cannot encourage similar distribution tie-ups for private sector manufacturers. Including such objectives under the CSR mandate would be one way of putting a flawed law to good use.

Simple economics suggests that greater distribution and usage will automatically lower prices. Then again, NGOs such as Goonj, started by Ramon Magsaysay award winner Anshu Gupta, pioneered a low-cost, reusable, environmentally friendly sanitary product made from waste cloth that is uniquely suited to the needs of low-income working women. Replicating models using such age-old methods would be the best advertisement of India’s indigenous capabilities for innovation.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



Is stakeholder capitalism back?

There are reasons to believe that corporate leaders renouncing shareholder primacy are being a little disingenuous

For four decades, the prevailing doctrine in the US has been that corporations should maximise shareholder value — meaning profits and share prices — here and now, come what may, regardless of the consequences to workers, customers, suppliers, and communities. So the statement endorsing stakeholder capitalism, signed earlier this month by virtually all the members of the US Business Roundtable, has caused quite a stir. After all, these are the CEOs of America’s most powerful corporations, telling Americans and the world that business is about more than the bottom line. That is quite an about-face. Or is it?

The free-market ideologue and Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman was influential not only in spreading the doctrine of shareholder primacy, but also in getting it written into US legislation. He went so far as to say, “there is one and only one social responsibility of business — to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits.”

The irony was that shortly after Friedman promulgated these ideas, and around the time they were popularised and then enshrined in corporate governance laws — as if they were based on sound economic theory — Sandy Grossman and I, in a series of papers in the late 1970s, showed that shareholder capitalism did not maximise societal welfare.

This is obviously true when there are important externalities such as climate change, or when corporations poison the air we breathe or the water we drink. And it is obviously true when they push unhealthy products like sugary drinks that contribute

to childhood obesity, or painkillers that unleash an opioid crisis, or when they exploit the unwary and vulnerable, like Trump University and so many other American for-profit higher education institutions. And it is true when they profit by exercising market power, as many banks and technology companies do.

But it is even true more generally: The market can drive firms to be shortsighted and make insufficient investments in their workers and communities. So it is a relief that corporate leaders, who are supposed to have penetrating insight into the functioning of the economy, have finally seen the light and caught up with modern economics, even if it took them some 40 years to do so.

But do these corporate leaders really mean what they say, or is their statement just a rhetorical gesture in the face of a popular backlash against widespread misbehaviour? There are reasons to believe that they are being more than a little disingenuous.

The first responsibility of corporations is to pay their taxes, yet among the signatories of the new corporate vision are the country’s leading tax avoiders, including Apple, which, according to all accounts, continues to use tax havens like Jersey. Others supported US President Donald Trump’s 2017 tax bill, which slashes taxes for corporations and billionaires, but, when fully implemented, will raise taxes on most middle-class households and lead to millions more losing their health insurance. (This is a country with the highest level of inequality, the worst health-care outcomes, and the lowest life expectancy among major developed economies.) And while these business leaders championed the claim that the tax cuts would lead to more



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

Trade wars can be lost. Guess by whom?

Guess what? Trade wars are not “easy to win”. They even might be lost. Donald Trump is beginning to have a sinking feeling about this possibility after a bad week. There has been, first, the announcement of new tariffs of \$75 billion by Beijing on American imports. This was in retaliation to Mr Trump’s announcement of 10 per cent tariffs on the remaining \$300 billion Chinese-made consumer goods not yet hit by tariffs on September 1 and December 15.

The move by the Chinese leadership is quite worrisome for the White House: It shows, first, that Xi Jinping is not ready to bend to US pressures. Second, and more importantly, he is playing Trump at his own game and turning the tables on him: The US President is shaping his re-election campaign around the theme that he is the leader making America great again and that he is the one who is — at long last — dealing successfully with the China challenge. However, the moves taken by Beijing are aimed at having a cumulative impact: On the one hand, hitting hard at core support constituencies of the President — hence the new tariffs on agricultural and farm products and the reinstatement of tariffs on cars and auto parts; on the other hand, increasing concerns about a trade-induced recession. The sharp fall of the markets after the announcement of the Chinese tariffs showed that Beijing is doing a good job in that domain.

Then the G7 was another illustration of how much the Trump administration is isolated in its trade war against China. Even Boris Johnson, the UK Prime Minister, preferred ally of Mr Trump, was compelled to state his opposition to trade wars. Of course, the American President enjoys on many occasions showing that he does not care being isolated. But in the present context this isolation can

only weaken Washington’s hand towards Beijing.

Last but not least was the succession of news showing that Trump can use all the superlatives he wants about the state of the American economy, but this does not prevent the slowdown of activity and the prospects of a recession in 2020 becoming increasingly evident. And this might be what could sink the President’s re-election hopes. Media reports and leaks from the White House have been mentioning that people close to Mr Trump are increasingly concerned that the continuation of the trade war and its increasing impact on investment and economic activity could at some stage create irreparable damage to the President. His erratic behaviour, such as the repeated offer to buy Greenland, or his Twitter “ordering” (sic) “Our great American companies to immediately start looking for an alternative to China, including bringing your companies HOME and making your products in the USA”, is setting new heights in the kind of volatility and impulsiveness that has been a hallmark of this presidency.

The increasing concern about an economic evolution that could ruin his hopes of winning a new mandate in November 2020 has made Trump mention the possibility of new tax cuts to stimulate activity — at a time when the federal deficit is skyrocketing — and unleash the most virulent attacks against Jay Powell, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, accused of being “a bigger enemy than China”. Which will remain as a unique episode in the history of the relationship between the White House (or any administration) and the Federal Reserve.

However, to the President’s chagrin, Mr Powell has been undeterred by this kind of attacks. He, like other governors of the Federal Reserve and most of the central bankers, continues to point out that the uncertainties generated by the White House trade

investment and higher wages, workers have received only a pittance. Most of the money has been used not for investment, but for share buybacks, which served merely to line the pockets of shareholders and the CEOs with stock-incentive schemes.

A genuine sense of broader responsibility would lead corporate leaders to welcome stronger regulations to protect the environment and enhance the health and safety of their employees. And a few auto companies (Honda, Ford, BMW, and Volkswagen) have done so, endorsing stronger regulations than those the Trump administration wants, as the president works to undo former President Barack Obama’s environmental legacy. There are even soft-drink company executives who appear to feel bad about their role in childhood obesity, which they know often leads to diabetes.

But while many CEOs may want to do the right thing (or have family and friends who do), they know they have competitors who don’t. There must be a level playing field, ensuring that firms with a conscience aren’t undermined by those that don’t. That’s why many corporations want regulations against bribery, as well as rules protecting the environment and workplace health and safety.

Unfortunately, many of the mega-banks, whose irresponsible behaviour brought on the 2008 global financial crisis, are not among them. No sooner was the ink dry on the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reform legislation, which tightened regulations to make a recurrence of the crisis less likely, than the banks set to work to repeal key provisions. Among them was JPMorgan Chase, whose CEO is Jamie Dimon, the current president of the Business Roundtable. Not surprisingly, given America’s money-driven politics, banks have had considerable success. And a decade after the crisis, some banks are still fighting lawsuits brought by those who were harmed by their irresponsible and fraudulent behaviour. Their deep pockets, they hope, will enable them to outlast the claimants.

The new stance of America’s most powerful CEOs is, of course, welcome. But we will have to wait and see whether it’s another publicity stunt, or whether they really mean what they say. In the meantime, we need legislative reform. Friedman’s thinking not only handed greedy CEOs a perfect excuse for doing what they wanted to do all along, but also led to corporate-governance laws that embedded shareholder capitalism in America’s legal framework and that of many other countries. That must change, so that corporations are not just allowed but actually required to consider the effects of their behaviour on other stakeholders.

The writer, a Nobel laureate in economics, is University Professor at Columbia University and Chief Economist at the Roosevelt Institute. He is the author, most recently, of *People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent*. @ProjectSyndicate



CLAUDE SMADJA

policy — not only against China but also against Mexico or EU countries — are a major reason for the weakening of the world economy. And Mr Powell made it very clear that it was not the job of central banks to run trade policy, and that monetary policy was of limited usefulness for countering the negative impact of trade wars.

Donald Trump tried to cheer up the markets by declaring at the end of the G7 that China wanted to resume the trade negotiations. But Beijing has been completely silent about such a thing. And when the White House tried to use a statement by Vice Premier Liu He that “China is willing to resolve issues through consultation and cooperation (...) while resolutely opposing the escalation of the trade war” to support its assertion, experts were quick to point out that this is the kind of standard statement emanating from Beijing from the beginning.

To make matters worse some people around Trump are seemingly operating under two wrong assumptions: They think they can use the troubles in Hong Kong to pressure Xi Jinping in the trade negotiations. In reality, it is exactly the opposite as events there convince the leadership that it has to stand firm against foreign pressures when its existential interests are at stake. The same people also consider that the approach of October 1, 2019, the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, might prompt Beijing to be more flexible to clear the trade conflict before the big event. This is again wishful thinking: It is not at the moment that Xi Jinping wants to celebrate the great rejuvenation of China under his leadership, and the restoration of its status “close to the centre of the global stage” that he can afford to look like he is bowing to the pressure of countries seen as trying to contain China’s rise.

Yes, trade wars are not so easy to win and might even be lost.

The writer is President of Smadja & Smadja, a Strategic Advisory Firm; @ClaudeSmadja

Seva as political strategy



BOOK REVIEW

NILANJAN MUKHOPADHYAY

More than a hundred years ago, a 24-year-old nationalist Mahatma, pursuing medicine at the National Medical College, Calcutta (now Kolkata), joined a band of volunteers from Ramakrishna Mission. They headed to Bardhaman, about 100 km from the burgeoning metropolis, because rural hinterlands there had been inundated once again by the “Sorrow of Bengal” — the Damodar river. A doctor in the making, he was not only equipped to rescue people from the

rampaging waters, but also treat patients afflicted by the outbreak of a cholera epidemic. The time he spent among flood victims encouraged him to make volunteerism an annual habit.

Thereafter, for as long as he was in Calcutta, the young man joined the medical corps at the Gangasagar fair held every winter at the confluence of River Ganga and the Bay of Bengal. Although he was faithful to the *bhavana* or sentiment of service or *seva*, he realised that such volunteering to help people affected by natural calamities or outbreaks of disease enabled one to build personal relationships and provided an entry point when canvassing for a cause or idea. This man, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, in 1925 established the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which partially grew out of a different sort of volunteerism — providing security to Hindus who wanted to take out a religious procession with

full *band baja* through Muslim colonies. The idea of using *seva* or service as a ploy to engage with people on socio-political ideas and beliefs emerged from such activities and explains why *seva* has always been integral to the Sangh’s activities.

In *Disaster Relief and the RSS*, which examines a relatively less emphasised aspect of the RSS’ activities, which is one of the primary reason for the immense popularity that it has acquired, Malini Bhattacharjee points out that the founder was “perhaps the first leader during the period (1920s and 1930s) to seriously shape the idea of *seva* as a means for constructing the Hindu Rashtra”. For Hedgewar, a powerful India of the future was dependent on the military regeneration of people and “*seva* played a key role in this imagination.”

Volunteerism indeed played important roles throughout the rise of the Sangh Parivar, and these experiences developed

young *swayamsevaks* for tougher tasks ahead. In his youth, before becoming fully a part of the RSS, Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined volunteers to work with flood victims in Surat. He told this writer that in the 1960s he was “quite active in social work. When I say social work, I do not mean in the manner it is understood now — this NGO business.” The premium placed on volunteerism by the RSS is evident in the current *sarkaryavah* (the second in command), Bhaiyyaji Joshi, who was former head of the organisation’s *seva* division.

The Hindu Right’s volunteerism played an important role during the Partition riots and was instrumental in the RSS’ swift spread in north and west India. In a display of exemplary dedication, the *swayamsevaks* worked day and night with Hindus uprooted from West Punjab and, to a limited extent, East Bengal, who had lost family members and all their possessions.

The author delves at length on disaster relief, examining the involvement of faith-based organisations — Swami Vivekananda played a key role in develop-

ing this facet of Hindu religious organisations — such as the Red Cross Society, which spawned similar bodies. Ms Bhattacharjee brings in perspective from the ground through interviews with *swayamsevaks* and others. Besides the theoretical portions, which explore what constitutes *seva* and how this was used by the RSS in nation-building, the book has valuable case studies of the RSS’ relief efforts in Odisha after the 1999 Super Cyclone and its involvement in the reconstruction of Kutch in the aftermath of the 2001 earthquake. RSS volunteers succeeded in establishing contact with a wide spectrum of people, and during the course of relief work “new *shakhas* mushroomed in the villages of coastal Odisha” where the RSS had little association until then.

The author notes the Odisha cyclone struck within a few months of murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his sons by a Bajrang Dal activist. The epic natural disaster provided an opportunity to shift focus from allegations over the Sangh’s role in the murders, to the dedica-

tion of *swayamsevaks* after the cyclone. The author’s scholarly approach successfully establishes how humanitarianism opens up the political space and opportunities that RSS used successfully. She also establishes that the idea of *seva* as structured in the RSS, although evolving from ancient Hindu precepts of *dana*, is a constantly evolving form of social engagements. But most importantly, the book establishes the success of RSS in utilising disaster situations, which warrant *seva* activities, as opportunities for political mobilisation.

Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay is a journalist and author. His latest book is RSS: Icons of the Indian Right. He has also written Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times (2013).

DISASTER RELIEF AND THE RSS: Resurrecting 'Religion' Through Humanitarianism
Malini Bhattacharjee

₹850, 268 pages



PORTRAIT: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

● **Food CaFe:**
TT SRINIVASARAGHAVAN

For well-run NBFCs, liquidity is no longer a problem

The managing director of Sundaram Finance Ltd shares with **Sushila Ravindranath** the reasons why the country is facing an economic downturn, the various problems facing the NBFC sector, the liquidity crunch, and offers some workable solutions

T SRINIVASARAGHAVAN IS the managing director of the 70-year-old Chennai-headquartered Sundaram Finance Ltd, which is one of the country's largest and most respected non-banking finance companies (NBFC). It was started primarily to help truck operators purchase commercial vehicles. The company has since grown into one of the most trusted financial services

groups in India. It has a nationwide presence of nearly 640 branches, over 2 lakh depositors, and 3 lakh commercial vehicle and car finance customers. In addition, Sundaram Finance is into mutual funds, housing finance, general insurance, information technology, business process outsourcing and retail distribution of an array of financial services. Srinivasaraghavan has been involved with all the diversifications and has

played a key role in the company's growth. He has had more than 40 years of experience in the banking and financial services sector, and has been associated with leading trade-related organisations, including the International Finance and Leasing Association of the UK, of which he was the president. He has served on various committees constituted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on NBFCs and related matters, and has been celebrated at various fora.

I have wanted to meet him to understand the economic downturn the country is facing; he has himself seen quite a few cyclical turns, and ups and downs in the economy. Sundaram Finance has dealt with them all. After many postponements due to his hectic travel schedule, we meet for lunch at Kapila Dasa, at the Express Avenue Mall in Chennai, which is next door to his office. The food is vegetarian.

This restaurant is a no-frills, spacious place, and in spite of the milling crowds outside, one can settle down for a peaceful conversation. We ask for the *rasam* of the day, and the restaurant's famous spicy corn toast as a starter.

I ask him about the various problems facing the NBFC sector, and the liquidity crunch. "There has been too much loose talk about NBFCs," he says with a touch of asperity. "One infrastructure company (ILFS) went bust, Dewan Housing Finance Corporation went under, and these two are not NBFCs. The Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group is going through its set of problems. There are 9,983 registered NBFCs in the country, and just three have defaulted. Does this constitute a crisis? Since September 2018, how many more companies have defaulted or gone under? The media has gone overboard, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy."

As a consequence, he says, the flow of credit has been cut off by banks. "Collections are used for debt settlement and there is no growth capital available. This entire crisis erupted because of unin-

formed discourse creating its own momentum. This has wide ramifications for the economy. There are many small finance companies serving the last-mile delivery. Those lines have been cut off. Local NBFCs, which help people like small traders, form a separate ecosystem by themselves," he says.

Srinivasaraghavan adds that the mutual funds shut shop for NBFC lending. "They were, any way, lending only to the triple-A rated NBFCs. The small guys were funded by banks and that came down to a trickle. Banks, fortunately, are in a better place now."

We decide to order the main course before we talk about the auto industry. We ask for crispy *rawa dosas* and *uthappams* with toppings. There are several varieties of *chutneys* and *sambar* to go with these standard favourites.

I ask him what he thinks has led to the slowdown in the automotive sector. "There has been overcapacity in commercial vehicles. It has been exacerbated by having to shift to Bharat Stage 6 emission norms, and the changing of axle-load norms. There are a lot of unknowns surrounding BS6, including higher initial cost, availability of fuel across the country, and so on. These things have to find their own level," he replies.

However, what is more difficult to understand is the steep fall in passenger car sales. He says that banks are major players in funding of cars, "but they do not have a problem with liquidity. Yet people are not buying cars like they did earlier. They are not coming to the showrooms. Is there buyer fatigue? Is it because of Uberisation? Whatever the reason, sales are tanking. We are not very sure what will revive sales. Then there is the introduction of electric vehicles (EVs) to contend with."

On the weak demand in the housing business, he adds: "There is a demand for housing costing below Rs 1 crore, especially below city limits. High-cost projects in the heart of the city are not moving so well."

He shares with me another factor that has come into play, and that is the change of government in many states after the elections. "There have been too many disruptions. Infrastructure projects are being re-initiated in many of the states. It is time to get our act together."

But how do we do that? While there are no clear answers, he says that we can start by focusing on infrastructure.

We must focus on infrastructure. Single-window clearance will help a great deal. We need islands of excellence working like city-states. Local govts have to get its act together

"Single-window clearance will help a great deal. Why are our special economic zones not working? We need islands of excellence, working like city-states. Local administration must get its act together. Removing all irritants will be good for everybody," he says.

As we wait for filter coffee, I ask him how his company is coping with troubled times. "We are over the worst. For well-run, well-managed NBFCs, liquidity is no longer a problem. The problem is from the demand side. Over the years, we have developed a diversified portfolio. We will be going after pockets of opportunity still available in the market. We have gone through this kind of phase in 2013 as well. We have to tighten our belts, and wait for the cycle to turn."

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● **DAWN RAIDS BY CCI**

When the CCI comes knocking

L CHARANYA & PUNEETH GANAPATHY

Charanya is partner and Ganapathy is principal associate, LakshmiKumaran & Sridharan

Dawn raids are CCI's tool to curb anticompetitive practices

OVER THE LAST few months, officers from the investigative wing of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) have been undertaking dawn raids to pursue allegations of anticompetitive practices. The CCI recently conducted its fifth raid (third in the last nine months) on the Indian arm of the French company Mersen, possibly to investigate allegations of bid rigging relating to a railway contract. This sudden increase in dawn raids by the CCI is also the result of a recent Supreme Court judgment (*CCI vs JCB*), where it was held that the documents seized by the director general (DG) during a raid can be used as evidence during the inquiry.

In these raids, companies were often found to be unaware of not only the procedural necessities and requirements that the DG investigation is supposed to follow, but also the rights a company has when such an unforeseen event takes place. Here is a quick guide to prepare for a dawn raid.

When can a dawn raid take place?

- ▶ The CCI may direct the DG to investigate anticompetitive practices prohibited by the Competition Act, 2002. Such direction can be made by the CCI without seeking any comments or representation from those being investigated.
- ▶ An unexpected raid may be conducted by the DG when there is reasonable ground to believe that books/papers are likely to be destroyed, mutilated, altered, falsified or secreted.
- ▶ The provisions require authorisation from the chief metropolitan magistrate, New Delhi, before such a raid.

What are the most common issues investigated?

- ▶ Collusive bidding/pricing of goods and services, exclusivity arrangements, price determination agreements and refusal to supply have been the common practices targeted.
- ▶ Bundling or tying-in arrangements and use of dominance in one market to enter into another will remain perennial issues for growing businesses.
- ▶ Persons, companies, firms routinely engaged in bidding for tenders by government entities and public sector undertakings must tread with caution.

What are the powers of the DG?

- ▶ The DG has the power to require the production of records and documents from officials and employees of the company being investigated and may seize them as prescribed under provisions of the erstwhile Companies Act, 1956, as reformulated in the Companies Act, 2013.
- ▶ The DG is also empowered with the powers of a civil court and may record statements on oath and require the presence of any person. The DG can consequently receive evidence, issue commissions for examination of evidence and requisition public documents from any office.

What you need to do in the event of a raid?

- ▶ Cooperate and seek time to call an in-house or external counsel. Seek identity of the officials and the search warrant from a magistrate. Ensure and check (1) that the warrant is correctly addressed to your company, (2) whether the warrant specifies any premises or officers of the company, and (3) that the officers of the raid team visiting your company are properly named and authorised in the warrant.
 - ▶ Insist on presence of independent witness/external counsel when being questioned or when a statement is taken.
 - ▶ Do not share any communications, opinions, documents relating to legal advice taken from counsel, as these are protected by privilege. You are entitled to withhold the same from the DG/CCI after politely explaining legal privilege or asking your in-house or external counsel to do so.
 - ▶ Answer details on the location and storage of information correctly. Keep copies of all answers. Record details of persons, documents, hard drives, email, electronic devices, storage, etc, to which access was given to the officials.
 - ▶ Obtain a detailed record of any seizures made. Do not provide false information or obstruct the investigation.
 - ▶ Follow a prepared dawn raid checklist creating a central point of contact to calmly handle the investigation.
- It is advisable bespoke recommendations are obtained suitable to the needs of a company/business/group structure, after a detailed analysis of likely anticompetitive issues, size of staff and logistics, data repositories and management policies and cross-regulatory and cross-jurisdictional issues.

LAST MONTH, WHEN India sent the Chandrayaan 2 to the moon's South Pole, many space experts pointed towards the beginning of a new space race, or the space race 2.0. This brings back the question about what was the space race all about and how did it start in the first place? It was a distinct and unique phenomenon within the phenomenon of the Cold War.

What made it unique and distinct was the time during which it happened. Never before in the history were there two superpowers that were almost equally capable of destroying each other and set up their hegemony globally. Secondly, the global balance of power was seen for the first time. Although great powers always used to exist, but there were no superpowers. There are many takeaways and lessons that can be derived from the space race.

Firstly and most importantly, the space race started as a race to achieve 'absolute power' and not 'relative power', but as the race turned into rivalry, both the superpowers started striving for 'relative power'. As international relations theorist Kenneth Waltz puts in the anarchy of international politics, relative gain is more important than absolute gain. Secondly, the space race was also a race between two ideologies, two political systems and two civilisations (East versus West). Thirdly, the space race shows how ideologies take a back seat if profits, gains and supremacy are ensured by overlooking the ideals. This happened when the Americans used

Decoding the Cold War space race

Nobody won the space race; the world benefited

MARTAND JHA

The author is a senior research fellow at the Centre of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi



Wernher von Braun and his team of engineers to build their space programme, despite knowing about von Braun and his team's Nazi past.

The Cold War space race was a blessing in disguise in many ways, especially in the field of science and technology. The outer space travel required the invention of many new things. It included things like artificial limbs, water purifier, adjustable smoke detectors, satellite television, freeze dried food, space blankets, etc. The standard of engineering got better during the space race because in a competitive race both the superpowers attached a lot of value to their successes as well as failures.

Therefore, the scope of this demand a very high quality of trained individuals who could cater to the extremely precise requirements of rocketry, missile technology and spacecraft. A whole new discipline of engineering bloomed and blossomed during this period.

The space race was also about the clash of towering individuals. While von Braun was the architect of the American space programme, Sergei Korolev took the Soviet space programme to newer heights. But the important lesson learnt during the space race is that the potential of the outer space is huge, which could be utilised for



civilian purposes and for the benefit of the mankind at large. To put it simply, the 'constructive potential' of the outer space outweighed its 'destructive potential'.

Another new area that originated and evolved due to the demand of the times was international space laws, which had to be written. These were signed and ratified as treaties by many countries across the world, and were legally binding in nature. The role played by the media to set the agenda for public debate about the space race was crucial. Many times, the media was used as a tool for spreading false information as well as propaganda. The lesson learnt in this case was that either the

media is used by powerful governments or the media tries to portray their own agenda as the public agenda. Both of this happened during the space race. While the former was the case in the Soviet Union, the latter was seen in the US.

The space race spanned almost two decades. This was the time when drastic, dramatic and welcome changes were happening across the world in almost every area. Many of these happened in parallel with the space race, while a few impacted it directly. The space race was designed in an extremely realist domain. The struggle for hegemonic supremacy was apparent during this period. The outer space was

seen as a potent tool that could be used militarily to inflict pain to the adversaries.

Who won the space race?

This can be debated as both the superpowers saw phases in which they were doing better than the other. If one looks at the early period, it appears the race was heavily tilted towards the Soviet Union when it became the first country to launch an artificial satellite, i.e. the Sputnik 1, in 1957. Then, in 1961, the Soviet Union sent the first man (Yuri Gagarin) to space. The space race tilted towards the US when it placed the first man (Neil Armstrong) on the moon in 1969. In the 1970s, when NASA budgets increased, the US outspent the USSR and launched far more satellites than any other country, making the NASA the premier space research agency.

The space race that turned into a space rivalry ended in collaboration between the two superpowers during the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project in 1975. So, the question of winning or losing is not an objective one. The binary of victory and loss are measured in absolute terms. There are clear winners and losers in a competition. But here that was not the case. The intention of being a clear winner was certainly there, which led to the start of the space race, but because both the superpowers ended up gaining a lot from the point they started investing in their space programme, none of them won or lost. However, the US stamped its relative superiority over the USSR by the end of the space race.

TELLING NUMBERS

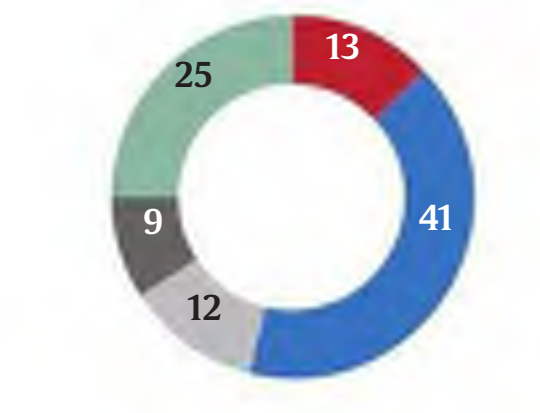
Does political pressure hinder probes? Police reflect in survey

IN A new report that looks at the working conditions of police in India, one key finding is about the political pressure perceived by police, and the extent to which this hampers their investigations. 'Status of Policing in India Report 2019: Police Adequacy and Working Conditions' has been prepared by Common Cause and the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). Among its findings:

28% police personnel believe that pressure from politicians is the biggest hindrance in a crime investigation. Taking into account various kinds of obstacles, 2 in 5 police personnel believe that these pressures are the biggest obstacle in crime investigation. The other obstacles cited were related to society, legal systems and internal working systems in police (see pie chart).

38% personnel reported always facing pressure from politicians in cases of crime involving influential persons. Roughly one third also reported "always" facing pressure from their seniors in the

WHAT POLICE SEE AS OBSTACLES

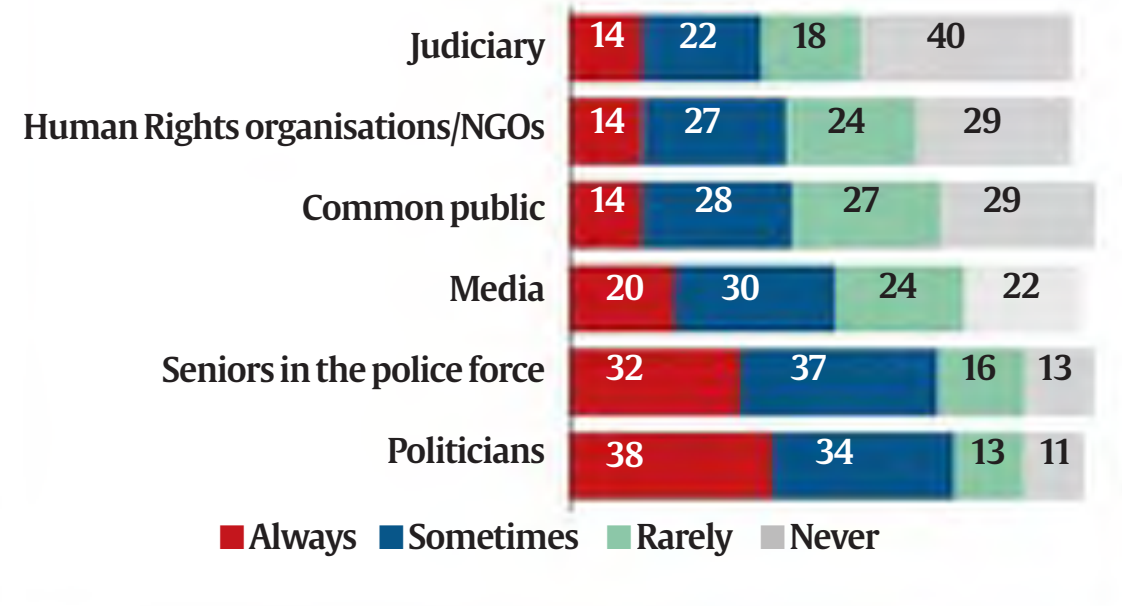


- Related to internal working of police
- Related to legal system
- No response
- Related to pressure on police
- Related to society

police force. This proportion drops to one-fifth of the police "always" facing pressure from media, while about 14% reported that they "always" faced pressure from human rights organisations/NGOs, judiciary and the common public in cases involving influential people (see bar graphs).

Source for all data: Common Cause & Lokniti-CSDS

IN CASES AGAINST THE INFLUENTIAL, POLICE SAY PRESSURE LIKELY FROM...



THIS WORD MEANS

COPROLITE

Faeces in fossil form. A sample from an ancient puma has unearthed the oldest known parasite DNA

SCIENTISTS HAVE found the oldest parasite DNA ever recorded. The discovery was made in the "coprolite" of a prehistoric puma in Argentina. Coprolites are fossilised faeces belonging to animals that lived millions of years ago. Scientists can analyse and study their shape and size and depending on the location they were found in, they can figure out the animal from which they came as well as uncover what those animals ate, London's Natural Museum of History explains. For instance, if there are bone fragments in the faeces, it tells scientists that the animal might have been a carnivore. Tooth marks can reveal how the animal ate.



A team of scientists from Argentina's National Council of Scientific and Technical Research studied a prehistoric puma's coprolite taken from a rock-shelter in Catamarca province. With the help of carbon dating, they were able to estimate the age of the coprolite at between 16,500-17,000 years. Using ancient mitochondrial DNA analysis, they were able to confirm that the coprolite came out of a puma. This led to the identification of the oldest parasite DNA found yet. Parasite DNA has been found in coprolites before, but this is the oldest since the evidence found earlier dated back to a few thousand years ago only. The study is published in the journal *Parasitology*.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How the forces protect VIPs

Former PM Manmohan Singh's security cover has been downgraded from SPG to Z plus. How are such decisions made? How are SPG, Z plus, other categories different? Who are the forces deployed in each?

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 28

THE GOVERNMENT recently downgraded the security cover of former PM Manomhan Singh, from Special Protection Group (SPG) to Z plus of the CRPF. The security cover of several other VIPs too has been downgraded.

How does the government decide the level of protection an individual needs?

The Home Ministry takes the decision based on inputs from intelligence agencies, which include the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing. They largely give a subjective measure of threat to life or injury to a person from terrorists or any other group, based on information from their sources.

Certain individuals, by dint of their position in government, are automatically entitled to security cover. These include the Prime Minister and his immediate family. The Home Minister and officials such as the National Security Adviser too generally get security cover on the basis of their position.

Since none of the intelligence agencies in India is accountable to any statutory body, barring the internal oversight of the Home and External Affairs Ministries, VIP security is sometimes seen as open to manipulation. A number of protectees, it has been alleged, are under security cover for political reasons and not necessarily due to any real threat.

What are the various protection levels?

There are largely six types of security covers: X, Y, Y plus, Z, Z plus and SPG. While SPG is meant only for the PM and his immediate family, other categories can be provided to anyone about whom the Centre or state governments have inputs about facing a threat. The X category on an average entails just one gunman protecting the individual; Y has one gunman for mobile security and one (plus four on rotation) for static security; Y plus has two policemen on rotation for security and one (plus four on rotation) for residence security; Z has six gunmen for mobile security and two (plus eight) for residence security; Z plus has 10 security personnel for mobile security and two (plus eight) for residence security.

There are various kinds of cover within these levels. These include security of residence, mobile security, office security and inter-state security. Different VIPs are given different kinds of cover depending on threat perception. For example, if the Chhattisgarh CM is assessed to be facing a threat from Maoists only in his state, the Centre may choose to give him residence and mobile security only in his state, and appropriate security by the concerned state police when he travels out. Similarly, some may have a threat only when they travel, so they are given an escort force. Then, different forces may be engaged for residence and mobile security. Many protectees get residence security from



Manmohan Singh with his security cover in 2015. His cover has been downgraded from SPG to Z plus. Renuka Puri/Express Archive

WHO PROTECTS WHOM

VIP	Category	Force
Amit Shah	Z plus	CRPF
Rajnath Singh	Z Plus	NSG
Nitin Gadkari	Z Plus	CISF
Ajit Doval (NSA)	Z Plus	CISF
Kiren Rijju	Z plus	CISF
Ram Vilas Paswan	Y	CRPF
Ravi Shankar Prasad	X	CRPF
Mohan Bhagwat	Z plus	CISF
Mayawati	Z plus	NSG
Akhlesh Yadav	Z plus	State police
N Chandrababu Naidu	Z plus	NSG
Raman Singh	Z plus	NSG
Bhupesh Baghel	Z plus	State police
Sarbananda Sonowal	Z plus	NSG
Farooq Abdullah	Z plus	NSG
Ghulam Nabi Azad	Z plus	NSG

state police and mobile security from a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).

Who are SPG? Whom do they protect?

The SPG is a force raised specifically for the protection of the PM, former PMs and their immediate family. The force is currently 3,000 strong and protects only four people — PM Narendra Modi, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, her son Rahul Gandhi and her daughter Priyanka Gandhi.

The elite force is highly trained in physical efficiency, marksmanship, combat and proximate protection tactics and is assisted by all central and state agencies to ensure foolproof security. SPG Special Agents assigned to the PM security detail wear black, Western-style formal business suits, with sunglasses, and carry a two-way encrypted communication earpiece, and concealed handguns. They wear safari suits on occasions. Then there are special operations commandos who carry ultra-modern assault rifles, and wear dark-visor sunglasses with inbuilt communication earpieces, bulletproof vests, gloves and elbow/knee pads.

The SPG was raised in 1985 in the wake of the killing of PM Indira Gandhi in 1984. Earlier, Delhi police (before 1981) and Special Task Force (raised by the Intelligence Bureau in 1981) provided residence and proximate security to the PM. Following Indira Gandhi's killing, a review committee of secretaries recommended formation of a special group under a designated officer and for STF to provide immediate security cover both in New Delhi and outside as a short-term measure.

In 1985, the Birbal Nath Committee set up by the Home Ministry recommended raising a Special Protection Unit (SPU), and 819 posts were created under the Cabinet Secretariat. The SPU was then re-christened

SPG and the post of Inspector General of Police was re-designated as director.

For three years, SPG functioned under executive orders. In 1988, Parliament passed the SPG Act. Then, the Act did not include former prime ministers. When V P Singh came to power in 1989, his government withdrew SPG protection given to his predecessor Rajiv Gandhi. After Rajiv's assassination in 1991, Singh faced much criticism and the SPG Act was amended to offer protection to all former PMs and their families for at least 10 years.

In 2003, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government again amended the SPG Act to bring the period of automatic protection down from 10 years to "a period of one year from the date on which the former prime minister ceased to hold office" and beyond one year based on the level of threat as decided by the government. During the Vajpayee regime, the SPG cover of former PMs such as H D Deve Gowda, I K Gujral and P V Narasimha Rao were withdrawn. Vajpayee himself enjoyed SPG protection until his death last year. Under the current SPG Act, family members of an incumbent or former PM can decline security cover. Manmohan Singh's daughters declined SPG cover after his tenure ended.

And who are the National Security Guard?

The NSG was founded as a special commando unit for surgical strikes against organised terrorist attacks within the country. It was envisaged in the wake of high casualties and damage during Operation Blue Star in 1984.

According to NSG's website, it is a "Federal Contingency World Class Zero Error Force" to deal with terrorism. It says it is a force "specially trained and equipped to deal with specific situations and therefore to be used only in exceptional circumstances to

thwart serious acts of terrorism".

Yet its mandate of the force has been diluted over the years with the burden of VIP security. NSG has two groups of personnel and officers: Special Action Group (SAG) and Special Ranger Group (SRG). SAG is drawn from the Army and focuses on counter-terror training and action; SRG is used for VIP security.

NSG personnel have always been in high demand among politicians. The force has often argued that Black Cat commandos, as NSG personnel are popularly known on account of their combat dress, has become a status symbol and the government must take it off VIP security duties. That has not happened.

NSG is not a protection unit; its core ability is in handling terror, hijacking etc.

How do these protection levels compare with VIP protection in other countries?

In the US, the security of the President and his family is handled by the Secret Service, which also looks after the safety of the vice president, his immediate family, former presidents, their spouses, and their minor children under age 16. It also provides security to major presidential and vice presidential candidates and their spouses, and foreign heads of state; security for the White House, the Treasury Department building, the vice president's residence, and foreign diplomatic missions in Washington, DC.

In the UK, VIP security, including of the PM, is handled by the Protection Command under London's Metropolitan Police Service. It has two branches: Royalty and Specialist Protection (RaSP), providing protection to the Royal Family, the PM and government officials, and Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection (PaDP), providing security to government buildings, officials and diplomats.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, AUGUST 28

JUNO, THE NASA probe orbiting Jupiter since 2016, has been sending back information that are giving scientists new insights into the evolution and structure of the planet. One new study suggests that 4.5 billion years ago, when the Solar System was still young, Jupiter received a massive whack from a planet still being formed, and swallowed it up. Another study looks at the reasons why the "stripes" on Jupiter do not run deep into its surface.

Collision with a proto-planet

Information sent by Juno shows that Jupiter's core is not mainly ice and rock as previously thought, but a "fuzzy core" that



Artist's impression of a collision between a young Jupiter and a massive, still-forming protoplanet. Astrobioogy Center, Japan, via Rice University

includes lighter elements like helium and hydrogen. This, scientists suggest in the journal *Nature*, could be explained by a head-on collision with a still-forming planet about 10 times the size of Earth.

Researchers from Rice University in the US and Sun Yat-sen University in China worked on the idea that a colossal event stirred up Jupiter's core, diluting it. Computer simulations suggested a growing Jupiter could have disturbed the orbits of nearby "planetary embryos", and that there was at least a 40% chance that Jupiter would swallow a planetary embryo within its first few million years, Rice University said in a statement.

Skin deep stripes

There is a reason why Jupiter's stripes are only skin deep, the Lawrence Livermore

National Laboratory (LLNL) of the US said in a statement. A team looked to the Juno mission that revealed how far zonal winds around Jupiter descend — to a depth about 4 percent of Jupiter's radius.

It is these zonal winds — alternating east-west jet streams — that are seen in photographs as colourful stripes on Jupiter. In a paper in *Physical Review Fluids*, researchers have shown that these zonal winds can only descend to 3,000 km in the atmosphere.

Magnetic fields can make fluids that conduct electricity (like Jupiter's atmosphere) behave more like honey than water. Deeper into the planet, where the pressure is higher, the atmosphere becomes more conducting and is more strongly influenced by the planetary magnetic field. It's also the same place where the stripes stop, LLNL explained.

10 years of H1N1 influenza: outbreaks in India, infection trends in the states

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, AUGUST 28

IN APRIL 2009, the first case of influenza A H1N1 was reported in Mexico. Later the infection spread and a total of 214 countries were affected by the pandemic worldwide. Ten years since, influenza H1N1 has become a seasonal virus, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta. Yet, in India, the past decade saw as many as 1.58 lakh persons being infected by the virus and over 10,000 succumbing to it.

Maharashtra toll highest

An analysis shows that Maharashtra has reported the highest number of cases (33,284) and deaths (3,637) since pandemic influenza struck in 2009. Continuous and intensified surveillance, testing of throat swab samples at both National Institute of Virology

(NIV) in Pune and private laboratories and death audits helped the state health authorities towards early identification of cases. According to Dr Pradeep Awate, Maharashtra's surveillance officer, the surveillance systems and diagnostic capacities in the state are strong, which led to the reporting of the maximum number of cases and deaths. Awareness levels were high especially regarding home-based isolation of persons with the flu. In other states, surveillance may not be as good, experts have pointed out.

Virus in circulation, evolving

Unlike the temperate countries, where peak influenza activity is recorded in winters, in the tropical and sub-tropical countries, the primary peak of influenza activity is during the monsoon. However, in some places, influenza also peaks during winters and in some tropical countries, influenza sustains throughout the year.

THE HIGHEST BURDENS

YEARS WITH THE MAXIMUM H1N1 DISEASE BURDEN	Cases reported	Deaths	STATES MOST AFFECTED BY H1N1 IN 2017	
			States	Deaths
2009	27,236	981	Gujarat	7709
2010	20,604	1,763	Maharashtra	6144
2015	42,592	2,990	Rajasthan	3619
2017	38,811	2,266	Madhya Pradesh	802

Source: National Centre for Disease Control/ National Medical Journal of India

Source: Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme

According to experts at NIV Pune, scientists have tested over 65,000 patients' samples in the past 10 years. If testing is stopped, it would seem there is no disease. But the virus is very much in circulation.

Overcrowding leads to increased transmission of airborne infection. Some areas in the country may have a sparse population but with diagnostic testing facilities being set up, more cases are being detected.

Rajasthan worst hit in 2019

Increased testing in states like Rajasthan and Gujarat has resulted in more cases being reported. According to the National Centre for Disease Control data, Rajasthan is the worst hit this year with 5,040 cases and 206 deaths. From 2010 till mid-August this year, Rajasthan has seen 21,107 cases reported and 1,638 deaths while Gujarat has reported 25,219 cases and 1,897 deaths. This year Gujarat has reported 4,819 cases and 149 deaths, followed by Maharashtra which has registered 2,135 cases and 202 cases.

N-E states also affected

In the National Medical Journal of India, NCDC researchers have, in their 2019 study 'Influenza A (H1N1) in India — changing epidemiology and its implications', reported that 2017 was an unusual year. According to researchers Dr S Kulkarni, Dr S Singh and others, the geography of the influenza A

(H1N1) virus seems to have been affected. While cases used to come mainly from western parts of India and localised to districts like Pune in Maharashtra and Jaipur in Rajasthan, northeastern states like Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, which had never reported influenza A (H1N1) cases in the past, notified 44 cases in 2017.

This year, Tripura registered 31 cases, Sikkim reported eight, while Meghalaya and Manipur reported two each. According to Dr Kulkarni, in 2017 the virus showed epidemiological characteristics different from previous years. Researchers said these observations require further probe to understand the changing ecological and transmission dynamics, as well as potential changes in awareness and testing. Monitoring of the genetic character of the virus and surveillance for drug resistance in the context of influenza A (H1N1) and other influenza viruses remain a high priority, said Dr Kulkarni.



THERE IS ONE THING THE PHOTOGRAPH MUST CONTAIN, THE HUMANITY OF THE MOMENT.
— ROBERT FRANK

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

JOIN THE DEBATE



SHAJI VIKRAMAN

The dousing of fires for now opens up space to repair ties between the government and the RBI

IN AUGUST LAST year, Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England told *Bloomberg* about fixing common errors that happen over history and the attempt by the central bank he heads to ensure a change in thinking to make the system as resilient as possible to “unknown unknowns”. The questions on the minds of central bankers like him are: “What’s the shock that could happen? Do I have enough capital? If somebody fails, can I clean up the mess in an orderly way?”

A few days ago, the chief of the world’s most powerful central bank, the US Federal Reserve, Jeremy Powell, said at the annual meeting in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, that the Fed was examining the monetary policy tools it has used both in calm times and in (a) crisis. Powell, who has come under a savage attack from the US President Donald Trump, said that the Fed is now assessing whether it should expand its toolkit. All these indicate the fraught times for the world’s central banks, in the backdrop of fears of a possible recession, the effectiveness of monetary policy and growing political assaults on these banks in the face of a global slowdown.

Like some of its peers, the Reserve Bank of India, too, should be fortifying itself considering the risks on the horizon. But it may have been partly blinded because of a controversy that erupted late last year on the level of reserves which it maintains, and the quantum of profits or surplus that it should distribute to the government — the owner of the bank. There has been a possible closure to that with the RBI board approving the recommendations of a committee headed by Bimal Jalan, based on which, the central bank will transfer Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the government, including the surplus and excess provisions. The committee has also outlined a clear and transparent policy for the distribution of RBI’s profits over the next few years, which should lead to less conflict. More importantly, it has also set new benchmarks for building capital buffers to equip a central bank which dons multiple hats — that of a monetary policy authority, a regulator of the financial sector and the payments system, debt manager for both the Centre and state governments and the is-

suer of currency. Such a wide mandate for a central bank, including fostering financial stability, will in the normal course call for bullet-proofing against multiple risks relating to credit, operations, contingent risks, financial stability and revaluation of assets.

Wiser, after the balance of payments crisis in 1991, the RBI started building adequate buffers in the form of a few reserve funds. But, over the past decade, successive governments, desperate to raise revenues, have sought hefty payouts from the central bank, arguing that it was far more capitalised than not just its emerging market peers but also in comparison to some of the leading global central banks. Such comparisons may be meaningless considering that quite a few of them have fully convertible currencies. The first major pitch for large transfers of surplus profits from the RBI came during the tenure of Raghuram Rajan as Chief Economic Advisor, a thread which was picked up by his successor, Arvind Subramanian.

The Jalan committee’s review, however, shows that the RBI’s realised risk provisions have dropped below levels equivalent to 1988-89, with progressively higher transfer of surpluses to the government over the last few years. This has been pronounced in recent years with such transfers as a proportion of the bank’s net income averaging 90 per cent between 2014-18 — a sharp spike compared to the average of a little over 50 per cent in the years up to 2004. The committee’s analysis shows that 90 per cent of the net income was transferred to the government when risk provisioning was 10 per cent over the past few years. All this coincides with the period when the government was struggling to meet its mandated deficit targets. The committee’s report also says that close to 73 per cent of the RBI’s economic capital is in the form of unrealised revaluation balances, which reflect changes in the market movements of domestic and foreign securities and gold. Those balances, which may have led many to seek higher payouts, can’t be tapped into, the committee has recommended — a sensible practice.

A bilateral agreement on the distribution

of surplus or profits and a flexible approach may have worked in India until the blow up last year. But, what makes it easier in the case of many other central banks is that the quantum to be paid out is built into the law — either as a fixed percentage of the current net profit or based on clearly defined criteria. There may not be an optimal model for this but a beginning has been made which should lead to less conflict, a more transparent process, smoothening of profit flows over the next few years and building up of adequate capital for a modern central bank. The UK has already done that with the Bank of England and the Treasury, having signed an MoU last year on their financial relationship which lays the ground rules for determining the bank’s capital, dividend payments, among others.

As Adair Turner, former head of the UK Financial Services Authority wrote in the *Financial Times* recently, central bank watching is a preoccupation for many professional economists as minor rate changes matter a lot to asset managers, macro hedge funds, investment banks and their clients, but not as much for consumers and businesses. The issue of the independence of the Indian central bank is now threatening to degenerate into a spectator sport with personalities looming larger than institutions or the sovereign. Even in such a scenario, if both sides have agreed to adopt a new approach to determine the economic capital of the central bank and on future distribution of its profits, it may have to do largely with the fact that two senior members of the committee, Bimal Jalan and Rakesh Mohan, have been on both sides of the divide — in the finance ministry and the RBI.

The dousing of fires for now opens up a window of opportunity to unveil a calibrated public spending programme or to set aside sufficient capital for a new institution to finance long term projects. And if policymakers on both sides can shut out the noise, it could be an opportune time to repair ties between the government and the RBI and to forge a respectful relationship.

The writer is consulting editor, The Indian Express

THE COST OF WATER

Delhi government’s waiver scheme should occasion revisiting debates on pricing of scarce resource, while also ensuring equity

IT IS TEMPTING to describe the Delhi government’s move to waive the pending water bills of consumers as a sop with polls in mind. But the move should occasion a broader debate on water pricing. The arrears for domestic consumers in the city amount to more than Rs 6,000 crore, which includes a late payment surcharge (LPSC) of Rs 3,500 crore. Arrears for commercial consumers amount to Rs 10,000 crore, of which Rs 9,000 crore is LPSC. The surcharge would be completely cleared for domestic consumers and a rebate of 25 to 100 per cent will be offered to them, depending on the colony they live in. For commercial consumers, the LPSC would be cleared if they pay the principal amount before the deadline of November 30. The Delhi government has clarified that the waiver is a one-time move. But the AAP government’s admission that lot of the arrears are a result “of wrong meter readings” should occasion discussion on water billing mechanisms, especially at a time when providing piped supply to all households in the country is high on the Centre’s agenda.

The Standing Committee of the Ministry of Water Resources, which submitted its report to Parliament in 2015, found that the percentage of districts with over-exploited groundwater level increased from three in 1995 to 15 in 2011. The situation has worsened, since then. Twenty one Indian cities including Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai are racing towards zero groundwater by 2020, according to a Niti Aayog study. At the same time, about 80 per cent of rural India lacks access to piped water. In such a situation, subsidies — as well as payment-waiver schemes like the one in Delhi — are likely to draw the criticism that they work to the benefit of the well-heeled. A water pricing policy should facilitate the extension of supply while also ensuring that the affluent do not milk the system. As per the UN’s Dublin Principle, water is an economic good and its pricing should, therefore, reflect its scarcity value. But at the same time, policy shouldn’t compromise on the principles of equity.

Since water is a state subject, charges for domestic, agriculture and industrial consumers vary across the country. But the determination of water charges for the different sectors is largely ad hoc and the processes are non-transparent. Most states have dragged their feet on the National Water Policy 2012 directive of setting up an independent Water Regulatory Authority. The Delhi loan waiver scheme should occasion revisiting this policy document.

FRAMED

Controversy over photograph of Melania Trump and Justin Trudeau demonstrates the power and peril of still images

THE PHOTOGRAPH, AT first glance, might seem like a medium whose time has gone. The ubiquity of images, of every mundane thought and moment being shared world wide on the web with an Instagram-filtered visual aid, has made a photograph that reveals more than the sum of its pixels a rare commodity. But the picture of US First Lady Melania Trump, leaning in to air-kiss Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the end of the G7 summit in France is indeed worth a thousand words. And then some.

Social media is abuzz (as it always is), making much ado about nothing. Melania’s kiss, the *faire la bise*, is the common greeting, the way to be polite in France and much of Europe. And it is likely that most of the people who are trying to mischievously read more into the photograph are aware of this. But the fact is that the picture does indeed lend itself to analysis. And the point of focus isn’t the First Lady’s embrace with Trudeau, its her husband. The brash Donald Trump is captured with downcast eyes, looking sombre, even defeated. It is a side of Trump we do not know. A single frame has made one of the most polarising figures in world politics appear a man filled with subtleties.

Like words, it appears, the image has lost none of its power due to its ubiquity. A good, well-timed picture can, in the words of poet Eminem, “take the moment, freeze it and own it, squeeze it and hold it”. Of course, the danger of the picture, of immortalising a moment, is reading too much into it. Melania Trump is being made to be an anti-Donald Trump figure on Twitter, and Trudeau her Disney prince, the one to rescue her from an ogre. And Trump, in one reading, is a tragic figure, the underdog who has to look on. Both the readings make sense in a still frame. Neither is probably true in life.



SEEMA CHISHTI

THE DARKEST HOUR

ADM Jabalpur was a test for the Supreme Court. Only the dissenter passed it

COSTA GAVRAS’ 1982 film *Missing* is a haunting story of what a military dictatorship does to its citizens as they go, well, missing. The real-life story set in Chile was also about the actions of the US government, which even had a lawsuit filed against it. The way a society responds to enforced disappearances or “detentions” by the state is often seen as a marker of the health of a democracy. That could well be why the habeas corpus or produce the person writ is a sacred one, that ties democracy to each of its citizens against the power of the state.

On Independence Day, Justice D Y Chandrachud, made a revealing personal statement which holds great relevance today. The Supreme Court judge spoke of how “with seven to eight hours of dictation left in the day, when I finished dictating” the order annulling the infamous *ADM Jabalpur* judgment of 1976, he “told his Secretary that they would close for the day”. He had “told a parent he was wrong.” “I know he (former Chief Justice Y V Chandrachud) believed through his life that *ADM Jabalpur* was wrong.”

The senior Chandrachud was among the four SC judges who sat on the five-judge habeas corpus bench for 37 working days from December 1975 to February 1976, and ruled that personal liberties in India were not to be necessarily upheld in the face of the executive after declaring Emergency. The hearings started on December 15, 1975. The government’s arguments were centred around how the political executive had rights in

times of war or during an Emergency to restrict personal liberty. When Justice H R Khanna, the only one who was ultimately to dissent, asked the attorney general, Niren De, if “supposing some policeman, for reasons of enmity, not of state, kills someone, would there be a remedy?” De is said to have replied: “My Lord, not so long as the Emergency lasts.”

Several senior advocates including Shanti Bhushan, Soli Sorabjee, V N Tarkunde, argued the habeas cases and maintained that with the remedy of habeas denied, the securing of a citizen’s life and liberty was “dead”. The ruling, however, was 4-1. All the judges wrote separate judgments. But the net result was upholding the executive’s prerogative to detain people and so, a citizen had no right to move a habeas in a high court. Justice Beg, amazingly, went on to speak of the “care and concern bestowed by the state authorities upon the welfare of detenus who are well-housed, well-fed and well-treated is almost maternal.”

ADM Jabalpur is seen as one of the darkest spots in the history of the Supreme Court. The motives of those gave that judgment have been a matter of great speculation ever since. Notably, Justice Y V Chandrachud maintained that he had read the law right, even if it was not right to follow it. This does not hold much water now.

Another unique reasoning accorded was of rescuing the Court by going along with the government. On January 30, 1976, a resolu-

tion was moved in the Lok Sabha, recommending changes which would have resulted in significantly changing the Constitution to clip the wings of the judiciary. Legal scholars like Upendra Baxi felt had the Court acted differently in *ADM Jabalpur*, “it would have imperiled the Courts’ existence”. That argument about saving the Court reminds of the apocryphal tale about the American military officer in Vietnam arguing that they had to destroy a village to save it.

Once the Janata Party government was in place after Indira Gandhi lost the elections, in 1978, Justice Y V Chandrachud had said: “I regret that I did not have the courage to lay down my office and tell the people, well, this is the law.” But one man had that courage at the time — Justice H R Khanna. He was superseded, his dissent, now legendary, formed the grounds of the rejection of *ADM Jabalpur* in 2017.

The then government did not stop at Justice Khanna. From nine high courts, 16 judges who had anything to do with upholding personal liberties were swiftly transferred within two months. As legal scholar Gautam Bhatia put it in *Transformative Constitution*, Justice Khanna’s dissent would constitute a “contrapuntal” or something that appears as a counterpoint, often solitary, against the tide at the time, but something that conceals the kernel of the future and the way ahead, which lives on to speak forcefully, another day.

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AUGUST 29, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

URS LOSING GROUND THE RULING KARNATAKA Congress received a further setback, with its majority in the 225-member Assembly reduced to five after six more of its MLAs joined the Congress-I. The strength of the Congress-I has gone up to 41 and the Karnataka Congress has fallen to 114 MLAs. The Congress-I, which had a strength of 14 MLAs at the time of the July split, has gained 35 more in the past fortnight, including six from the Janata. President of the ad-hoc KPCC (I) committee, S Bangarappa, at a press conference in Bangalore said his party would stake its claim to form government in the next two or three days “since the

Devaraj Urs Government had been reduced to a minority”.

JANATA’S HAND FOR URS THE JANATA PARTY will be willing to come to the rescue of the Karnataka Chief Minister Devaraj Urs if he seeks its help. This was clearly indicated by the Janata Parliamentary Party leader Jagjivan Ram. According to information available with Ram, Urs has not yet formally approached the Janata central leadership for help.

LORD’S FUNERAL BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Margaret Thatcher cut short her holiday vacation to hurry back

to London for urgent security talks at 20 Downing Street following Monday’s bloody bombing in which 23 people, including Lord Mountbatten and 18 soldiers were killed. Buckingham Palace announced that Lord Mountbatten’s funeral ceremonies will be held at the Westminster Abbey. Thereafter, the body will be taken to Komsey Abbey near his Hampshire home at Broadlands for a private burial. The former war hero is related through his great grandmother Queen Victoria, to most of Europe’s royal houses. The Earl made plans for his funeral in 1976, expressing the wish that all the nations whose soldiers served under him in World War II should be represented.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

The consensus builder

Arun Jaitley brought together states with vastly different views on the GST to ensure the country's economic integration



SUSHIL KUMAR MODI

HE WAS ARGUABLY the greatest consensus builder of modern India. What Sardar Patel did for the country's polity, Arun Jaitley did for the Indian economy. He brought about economic integration in a federation as diverse and as vast as India, something which no modern federation has achieved. But for him, GST would have remained a pious intention — something everyone agreed to but had a different version of. Even though Arun ji made immense contributions in every field that he handled, in this article I would confine myself to the implementation and evolution of GST. This process is something I was closely associated with and I had the opportunity to observe and interact with him the most.

The biggest stumbling block was the issue of CST compensation, which the previous government had announced and made an allocation in the Union Budget but never gave to the states. Arun ji ensured that the compensation was given to the states on the basis of the recommendation of the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers (EC). This fostered an environment of trust between the Centre and the states; the latter could now feel positive about being compensated for GST losses.

The Constitution Amendment Bill (CAB) had been hanging fire since 2010 — there were differences between the Centre and the states on crucial issues such as a constitutional guarantee for compensation, subsumption of entry tax and inclusion of petrol and diesel. Arun ji met a group of state finance ministers in December 2014 to resolve the differences. The rough edges were further smoothed when he joined the EC in its deliberations and the result was the 122nd CAB, which virtually everyone agreed to in principle as well as in broad details. It was a testimony to Arun ji's negotiating skills that the CAB was debated and passed unanimously by Parliament and ratified by the state legislatures.

Initially, the GST Council had to grapple with the contentious issues of dual control — which a dual GST implied — and the rate path under the new tax regime. The Council's first five or six meetings were devoted exclusively to arriving at a consensus on these thorny issues. It was only Arun ji's credibility in a body split down the middle (between the Centre and the states), his skills of persuasion, wisdom, commitment to a united vision, democratic way of functioning and his ability to take everyone along that ultimately helped in forging a consensus.

The vexed issue of compensation got resolved when he suggested protecting the revenues of the states at a compounded annual growth rate of 14 per cent over the base year revenue levels; this masterstroke got even the states, which were till then demanding compensation of several kinds to agree to the compensation mechanism. In the meetings of the Council, Arun ji sat for long hours, patiently heard everyone out and evolved a common ground.

He virtually never discussed in the Council issues that had not been previously deliber-



C R Sasikumar

ated by the committee of officers from across the country. He also put into place an arrangement whereby every meeting of the Council was preceded by a meeting of the officers of the state and the Centre. This meeting of the Officers' Committee proved to be a key strategy in consensus-building: The technical details were thrashed out in such meetings and the Council could then have the benefit of discussing issues over which a broad consensus had already evolved. The Council would then refine this through protracted discussions.

He formed a group comprising about a dozen senior ministers from across the political spectrum, and representing varied view points on the matter, for discussing and resolving the issues that eluded consensus. The issue would get discussed threadbare in the group and almost invariably get resolved in the next meeting of the Council.

Another strategy that he often adopted on particularly contentious issues was to refer the matter for detailed analysis by and consideration of one of the many specialised committee of officers that were constituted for aiding and advising the Council in the exercise of its functions. The issues concerning the real estate sector were particularly vexing and the committees sat over them more than two times and were also directed to hold joint meetings. As Chairman of the Council, Arun ji urged non-member states to join in these deliberations so that the issue could be resolved. The tax rate on lottery was another issue which seemed headed for voting. But Arun ji saved the day by calling for a dual rate structure which found favour with all the concerned states. At times, he would defer discussions on a contentious issue, allow people to mull over it and approach the discussion in the next meeting from a different angle.

The tax rates in case of government works and the tax structure of the restaurant sector had been hotly debated in the Council with feelings running high among the different sides. But the master strategist that he was,

He put into place an arrangement, whereby every meeting of the Council was preceded by a meeting of the officers of the state and the Centre. This meeting of the Officers' Committee proved to be a key strategy in consensus-building: The technical details were thrashed out in such meetings and the Council could then have the benefit of discussing issues over which a broad consensus had already evolved. The Council would then refine this through long and protracted discussions.

Arun ji managed to convince everyone in the next meeting by proposing a middle way and concentrating on the agreed points. The issue of taxing powers in territorial waters was another contentious issue, wherein not much was at stake yet feelings ran high. Arun ji explained the constitutional provisions and yet accommodated the viewpoint of the states by charting a middle path. It eventually became Section 9 of the IGST Act.

The taxation of branded food products was also hotly debated in the Council and when the issue seemed to run into legal hurdles, Arun ji actually suggested a formulation for the draft notification. He often let the states argue their position at length, heard every possible viewpoint patiently and resolved the issue by calling for some give and take, but never allowing matters to reach a flashpoint without compromising on the basic principles. Even the most trenchant advocates of a viewpoint were goaded into coming around to a common view. The issue of TDS and TCS were resolved by deferring them till such time as everyone was ready for these taxes while the universal applicability of the national e-way bill system was resolved by permitting flexibility to the states in case of intra-state movements.

Being associated with and having observed the proceedings, I can unhesitatingly state that it was Arun Jaitley who translated the prime minister's vision of GST into reality. This was particularly trying in the initial period when the alliance holding office at the Centre did not have as much representation in the Council as it now has. It is testimony to the immense respect he commanded across the political spectrum that a body comprising the Centre, 29 states and seven union territories did not ever have to resort to voting. He was a politician, an officer and a thorough gentleman. But above all, he was the ultimate consensus builder, ever prepared to walk the last mile and take that extra step to take everyone along.

The writer is deputy chief minister, Bihar

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Ben Stokes's batting to win England the third Test match of the current Ashes series was one of the most extraordinary demonstrations of sporting excellence of the last 50 years." — THE GUARDIAN

Reforming the Law Commission

The government should enshrine in law, the composition, tenure, functions and work procedure of the panel



TAHIR MAHMOOD

OVER A MONTH ago, the media reported that Cabinet will soon take a call on reconstituting the Law Commission (IE, July 15). There has been no further public information on the progress in the matter. The last commission had gone out of office a year ago, on August 31, 2018.

The Law Commission of India — the oldest amongst the national-level parastatal bodies — remains an odd one even in its 65th year. Unlike its sister organisations, established much later, it has no fixed composition, no defined eligibility criteria for its chair and members, and no set functions — everything rests on the government's will. The terms of reference are specified afresh each time it is reconstituted as if it were an ad hoc body. It is an enigma to many as to why this oldest commission is still being treated in such a casual way while three of the other national commissions of later years, those for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, are now regulated by the Constitution and there is a parliamentary charter for each of the national commissions for human rights, minorities, women, children and safai karmcharis.

The Law Commission is a legacy of the country's colonial past. In 1833, our British rulers unified, under a centralised dispensation, the three presidencies they had been ruling for long, and planned to enforce the English common law in the whole of what they called "British India". To translate their plan into action they constituted many law commissions. The work of these bodies transformed India into a common law country. After the fourth commission completed its work towards the end of 19th century, the rulers, sensing the beginning of an uprising for home rule, did not continue the exercise.

The eighth year of Independence, the Government of India decided to revive the British legacy of appointing law commissions to study, research and report on legal matters specified in their terms of reference. The first commission, set up in 1955 for a three-year term, assumed charge on September 1 that year and vacated office on August 31, three years later. From September 1, of a given year, to the same date three years later was then irrationally adopted as the fixed term for the commission for all time to come irrespective of when a new commission was constituted and entered office. Consequently, each of the later commissions worked for less — some for much less — than three years, leaving their assigned work half way.

Though the commission's job requires research-oriented juristic learning, which cannot essentially be the outcome of judicial experience, the commission has been a haven for retired judges. The chairpersons of the four pre-independence Law Commissions — C H Cameron, John Romilly, Whitley Stokes and Thomas Macaulay — were eminent jurists, not magicians, and so were many of their members. Independent India initially main-

tained the tradition by appointing the distinguished jurist M C Setalvad as the chairman of its first Law Commission. The policy was later changed, and with the sole exception of the fifth commission which was headed by a non-judge (the first law secretary K V K Sundaram), the commission has always been headed by judges.

Members of the commission are also generally drawn from the judiciary, and the member-secretary is always from the bureaucracy. Of course, there have been some immortal names among them. The eighth commission was headed by the legendary judge Hansraj Khanna who had sacrificed his chance of being CJI by dissenting from the infamous majority judgment in the habeas corpus case of the Emergency days (ADM Jabalpur, 1976). The inimitable jurist-judge V R Krishna Iyer served as a member of the commission before being elevated to the apex court bench in 1973.

Reports of the commission are generally written individually by members including the chairman and placed before the full commission for discussion and adoption. Quite a few of these reports have been on the Hindu and Christian family laws, but none on the Muslim personal law. The apex court had once suggested that the issue of reform of Muslim law be entrusted by the government to the Law Commission which should work on it in consultation with National Minorities Commission (Sarla Mudgal, 1995). Commenting on it, the civil servant-turned-politician Mani Shankar Aiyar remarked: "What faith will the minorities have in the pronouncements of an all-Hindu Law Commission?" (Confessions of a Secular Fundamentalist, 2004).

The 18th Law Commission, with former Supreme Court judge A R Lakshmanan as the chairman and I as its only full-time member, was 50 per cent Muslim but the community still did not have "faith" in it. Three of the four reports written by me for the commission were criticised by Muslim clerics for their indirect "adverse effect" on the community's supposedly sacrosanct law and my learned chairman shied away, for fear of a "backlash", from endorsing my fourth report, seen as directly touching the Muslim law. In light of this experience, I strongly feel that if the commission has to work without regard for extra-legal and political considerations it must have a governing statute defining its powers and responsibilities, and limitations.

Before constituting the 22nd Law Commission — though the exercise is long overdue — the institution should, in my opinion, be placed under a proper parliamentary charter. The government of the day, which has conferred constitutional status on the National Backward Classes Commission, overhauled the governing law of the National Human Rights Commission and set up a Rashtriya Kamdhenu Ayog for the preservation of bovines, will do well to determine by legislation, the composition, tenure, functions and work procedure of the Law Commission. It should be a predominantly jurists' commission, not a retired judges' collective with a sprinkling of legal scholarship and jurisprudential expertise.

The author is former chairman of National Minorities Commission and member, Law Commission of India



SYED ZAFAR ISLAM

Poised for a leap

Fundamentals of Indian economy are sound. Growth is on the horizon

IF YOU LOOK at the global markets for investors today, two big blocks will come to mind immediately — India and Africa. Unsurprisingly, these emerging markets have attracted maximum foreign investment over the last two decades. India, being the bigger of the two, remains a hot favourite with foreign investors. Narendra Modi's India has received \$250 billion FDI in the last six years, which is equal to the foreign investment in the 14 years prior to 2014. At present, the confidence appears to be slightly low in the Indian corporate world, which can be attributed to their concern over the global economy, where the GDP is likely to come off by over 60 to 70 bps.

Contrary to what detractors are saying, the RBI made a responsible gesture by handing over a big surplus of Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the government. It is in the national interest because it will support the government with the ammunition not only to combat the potential economic slowdown but also help spur investment and sectoral stimulus.

The government is making an all-out effort to put the economy back on the eight percentage plus growth rate. But the private sector appears to have shown little appetite to fight shoulder-to-shoulder with the government. Our private sector and indeed the economists across the ideological spectrum were aware that Modi-1 was about laying the foundation for a robust, modern economy. It was going to be a bit bumpy, but very

fruitful in the long run.

Many claim there is a feeling of fatigue in the world's sixth leading economy after a long run of high growth. Even at the forecasted rate of 6.30 per cent, the Indian economy continues to be the fastest growing among the top global economies. The not-so-impressive growth rate of 5.8 per cent in one quarter shouldn't lead to fears.

Yes, there is a slowdown. But we have not entered uncharted territory.

Modi-1 had inherited a largely informal, cash economy with a burgeoning, chaotic unorganised sector. Of course, India had changed beyond recognition following the reforms of the 1990s, but large parts of the economic activity had remained ensconced in the past. The Modi government embarked on game changing plans to formalise the economy. Demonetisation and GST were the two bold changes the government had to make in the national interest.

Another factor that has contributed to the slowdown is less-than-normal rainfall in the recent past (thankfully, this year the monsoon is good). Unfortunately, this factor is generally overlooked in the debate. The elections may also have contributed to the slowdown. Forced by the code of conduct during the elections, the government was unable to spend on schemes or announce big reforms. As a result, the growth in capex had slipped to 2 per cent from the previous quarter of 12 per cent and impacted in GDP by around 80

bps. India's slowdown is also firmly linked to the global trend and the ongoing US-China trade war is not helping matters.

It will be a great service to your country if you do not panic. Our economy is on a very sound footing. Our macro indicators are all good. Consider this: Forex reserves are an all-time high at \$491 billion; CPI inflation is tracking at 3.2 per cent and has remained below the 4 per cent mark for nearly 12 months. Core inflation has also decelerated meaningfully in the last 12 months. Gross FDI flows remains robust tracking at close to 2.4 per cent of GDP on a 12-month trailing basis.

PMI manufacturing and services for July saw an improvement compared to a slowdown in previous month. This is encouraging and it suggests that the economy has shown improvement and also accelerated the job creation.

The juggernaut of the Indian economy has generated so much energy over the years that a strong momentum has been in motion for the last few decades. It's continuing to propel the economy forward. The government was not exactly sitting idle before Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a series of welcome measures at a press conference last week and reiterated her resolve to fix the problem at another meet on Tuesday.

Some in the industry have argued that there was a crisis of confidence between lenders and borrowers and between the government and industry. They had urged the

government to look into it. The FM has done exactly that. The infusion of Rs 70,000 crore to PSU banks will shoot up lending to the tune of Rs 5 lakh crore, assuming banks leverage it seven times. The government is launching structural changes in the agriculture sector, such as modifying the Essential Commodities Act.

Government spending is going to pick up following the good monsoon. Consumption will rise as we are entering the festive season. Growth will come. It will come from improving exports, from investment and from disinvestment. The government is encouraging private investment, as announced in the budget. The foreign investors' shares have been increased. It is bound to attract more investment from abroad. We believe that government can exceed the disinvestment target for the year, which stands at Rs 1.14 lakh crore.

The forecast is not exactly gloomy for the next quarter and beyond, but yes, it's not in double digits immediately. With PM Modi's continued focus on reforms, credit flow and ease of doing business and with his infectious optimism, it's very likely that we will achieve the \$5-trillion mark by 2024/2025 assuming we hit the average GDP of 7.5 per cent and rupee-dollar remains stable around 70.

The writer is national spokesperson of the BJP and former managing director, Deutsche Bank, India. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INVISIBLE TRAGEDIES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'When his heartbeat dropped' (IE, August 28). It has been 24 days since the abolition of Article 370 and the curfew being imposed in the Kashmir Valley. A section of media shows pictures of Kashmir where it looks as though the "life is normal". How long will the people be trapped in their houses? Does the government have a plan to end the curfew?
Dhaval Trivedi, Pune

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'When his heartbeat dropped' (IE, August 28). The writer has expressed his anguish over losing the life of the baby, yet to born to his sister, likely because of the communication blackout in the Valley. This story has been brought to us as the brother of the unfortunate woman is a journalist. But, as the article says, many similar stories may have gone unnoticed.
Vandana, Chandigarh

RIGHTS REVOKED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The verdict of history' (IE, August 28). There will be from time-to-time an over-arching executive, which seeks to change the fundamental nature of a constitutional democracy for its ideological ends. In such times, the judiciary is meant to stand up for the Constitution's "basic structure". The right to free speech and expression stands revoked in Kashmir. People born on Indian soil, "natural cit-

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

izens" could well be denied citizenship in Assam, even as the flawed NRC process hangs over the entire country as a threat. The Supreme Court consists of the finest legal minds in the country. It must have the moral courage to not be swayed by arguments of national or cultural insecurity. There is reason why the judiciary is independent and does not contest elections.
Shatam Ray, via email

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 165

निजता की रक्षा

न्यायमूर्ति वीएन श्रीकृष्ण ने हाल ही में पुतास्वामी फैसले (इसी फैसले ने यह सुनिश्चित किया था कि निजता एक मूल अधिकार है) की दूसरी वर्षगांठ के अवसर पर आयोजित एक परिषदवादी में एक उल्लेखनीय बात कही। उन्होंने कहा कि सत्ताधारी दल को संसद में जिस प्रकार का बहुमत प्राप्त है, उसे देखते हुए वह डेटा ड्राइवसी (निजता) विधेयक

पारित किया जा सकता था जो उनकी अध्यक्षता वाली समिति ने तैयार किया था। उन्होंने कहा कि यह विधेयक उतनी ही आसानी से पारित हो सकता था जितनी आसानी से एटीएम से पैसे निकाले जाते हैं। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने निजता की सुरक्षा के लिए विशिष्ट कानून की अनुशंसा करीब दो वर्ष पहले की थी। श्रीकृष्ण समिति की अनुशंसा और मसौदा कानून भी

वर्षभर पहले सौंपे जा चुके हैं। इस बीच संसद में कई विधेयक पारित किए गए लेकिन इस मसौदे को कानून में बदलने को लेकर कोई हलचल नजर नहीं आ रही है। यह बहुत खेद की बात है कि श्रीकृष्ण समिति द्वारा प्रस्तावित निजता संरक्षण कानून की अनुपस्थिति में व्यावहारिक रूप से निजता का बचाव करना काफी कठिन है। दो वर्ष की इस अवधि में ऐसी कई घटनाएं हुई हैं जिन्होंने निजता को प्रभावित किया है। उदाहरण के लिए डीएनए प्रोफाइलिंग विधेयक मंजूर हो गया और इस विधान में भी कई ऐसे पहलू हैं जिन पर शंका है। डीएनए न केवल संवेदनशील व्यक्तिगत डेटा है बल्कि यह उन लोगों की निजता को पूरी तरह प्रभावित कर सकता है जिनका डीएनए परीक्षण किया गया है और

जिसे भंडारित किया गया है। सरकार ने यह प्रस्ताव भी रखा है कि राज्यों के मोटर वाहन विभागों से वाहन पंजीयन सूची और वाहन चालन लाइसेंस के डेटा को भी निजी क्षेत्र की संस्थाओं को बेचा जाए। स्वैच्छिक माने जाने के बावजूद आधार को आय कर रिटर्न से जोड़ दिया गया है। आधार को निर्वाचन सूची से जोड़ने का भी प्रस्ताव है जबकि इससे मतदाताओं की अस्वैधानिक प्रोफाइलिंग होने का खतरा है। विभिन्न अदालतों में तमाम जनहित याचिकाएं लंबित हैं जिनमें कहा जा रहा है कि देश के नागरिकों को अपना आधार सोशल मीडिया अकाउंट और इंस्टैंट मैसेजिंग सेवा से जोड़ने को कहा जाए। तमिलनाडु सरकार समेत विभिन्न याचियों का कहना है कि ऐसा करने

से फेक न्यूज पर प्रभावी तरीके से अंकुश लगाया जा सकेगा। यह सही हो अथवा नहीं लेकिन सोशल मीडिया पर गोपनीयता का समाप्त होना वाक स्वतंत्रता पर भी असर डालेगा। अलोकप्रिय विचार रखने वाले या जरूरी खुलासे करने वाले नागरिकों की निजता तब बरकरार नहीं रह सकेगी। ऐसा लोकतंत्र जो निजता को मूल अधिकार मानता हो उसे फेक न्यूज का मुकाबला अलग तरीकों से करने वालों और आजाद खयाल लोगों को वरीयता देनी चाहिए। इंटरनेट के प्रसार के इस दौर में निजता से जुड़े अन्य मसले भी जल्दी सर उठा लेंगे। चूँकि एक फ्रिज, वातानुकूलक या कार अब निजी बातचीत को सुन और देख सकते हैं, रिकॉर्ड कर सकते हैं तथा उसे आगे भेज सकते हैं तो ऐसे में निकट भविष्य में निजता का

मसला और गंभीर होता जाएगा। कानून ऐसा हो कि भविष्य में उसका फायदा न उठाया जा सके। उसे आगामी चुनौतियों के लिए पहले से तैयार रहना चाहिए। ये उदाहरण स्पष्ट करते हैं कि निजता के क्षेत्र में कई चुनौतियों पर ध्यान देना होगा। डेटा वाकई डिजिटल सोना और राष्ट्रीय संसाधन है। इसके माध्यम से तमाम जन सेवाओं को शुरू किया जा सकता है और इस पर तमाम कारोबारी मॉडल स्थापित किए जा सकते हैं। परंतु इसे लोगों की व्यक्तिगत संपदा मानना होगा और इसे एकत्रित करने, भंडारित करने या बिना सहमति के इस्तेमाल नहीं करना चाहिए। जब तक निजता के बुनियादी उद्देश्यों पर आधारित कानून नहीं बनता, अगस्त 2017 के पुतास्वामी फैसले का कोई खास मतलब नहीं होगा।



अजय मोहनदी

वैश्विक और घरेलू माहौल तथा विकास संबंधी दुविधा

देश में एक असंभव त्रयी का मेल और वैश्विक स्तर पर प्राकृतिक, आर्थिक, तकनीकी और भू-राजनैतिक उथलपुथल के कारण तमाम बड़ी चिंताएं उठ खड़ी हुई हैं। जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं अरुणाभ घोष

देश के समक्ष विकास के जो भी विकल्प मौजूद हैं, उन पर घरेलू दुविधाओं और वैश्विक स्तर पर हो रहे तमाम बड़े बदलावों का बहुत अधिक प्रभाव है। घरेलू स्तर पर रोजगार, वृद्धि और स्थायित्व की एक असंभव त्रयी हमारे सामने है जहां तीन लक्ष्यों में से ज्यादा से ज्यादा दो पूरे हो सकते हैं। उदाहरण के लिए सौर पार्क स्थायी बुनियादी ढांचे में अंतरराष्ट्रीय निवेश आकर्षित करते हैं लेकिन वे उतने रोजगार नहीं पैदा कर सकते जितने कि वितरण वाली ऊर्जा अधोसंरचना। प्राकृतिक ढंग से कृषि कार्य को बढ़ावा देना मिट्टी की सेहत के लिए अच्छा है। यह कार्बन उत्सर्जन कम करने और जल संरक्षण तथा श्रम को भी प्रोत्साहन देने वाला है लेकिन इससे कृषि उत्पादन में जो मूल्य वर्धन होगा वह उर्वरक उद्योग को होने वाले नुकसान को भरपाई नहीं कर सकता। देश के औद्योगिक उत्पादन में अहम हिस्सेदारी और वाहन तथा वाहन कलपुर्जा उद्योग को देखते हुए इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों के इस्तेमाल की ओर आक्रामक पहलकदमी नए उभरते औद्योगिक क्षेत्र पर खेला गया दांव है लेकिन यहां भी दो विपरीत परिस्थितियों के बीच संतुलन कायम करने की स्थिति बनेगी। बाहरी माहौल हमारे चयन को और बाधित करता है। जलवायु परिवर्तन ने प्राकृतिक वातावरण को बहुत गहरे तक प्रभावित किया है। हमारी जैव विविधता को नुकसान पहुंचा है और जैव रासायनिक

प्रक्रिया में गड़बड़ी पैदा हुई है। औद्योगीकरण में गिरावट उत्पादक वृद्धि का धीमा होना और असमानता में इजाफा होने के कारण पश्चिमी देशों ने वैश्विक एकजुटता से मुंह मोड़ा है। यह भरोसा कमजोर हुआ है कि बाजार आधारित वृद्धि से सामाजिक न्याय मिल सकता है। कुत्रिम मेधा, बड़े डेटा, स्वचालन, क्वांटम गणना आदि विभंगकारक तकनीक ने विभिन्न देशों के बीच प्रतिद्वंद्विता पैदा की है और इससे तकनीक हासिल करने या उसका संरक्षण करने की प्रवृत्ति में भी इजाफा हुआ है। लोकलुभावनवाद और राष्ट्रवाद ने कई देशों में अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवस्था को चुनौती देना शुरू कर दिया है। ऐसे में विभिन्न गठजोड़ों की स्थिरता, कूटनयिक नियमों और सैन्य संबद्धता को प्रभावित किया है। इसके साथ ही मध्यस्थता के लिए जरूरी रहे संगठन की तनाव महसूस कर रहे हैं। देश में इस असंभव त्रयी को हासिल करना और वैश्विक स्तर पर प्राकृतिक, आर्थिक, तकनीकी और भूराजनैतिक विभंगियों के कारण सात बड़ी चिंताएं पैदा हो गई हैं।

1. ऊर्जा और संसाधन सुरक्षा: ये दोनों संसाधन सुरक्षित करने, सुरक्षित मार्ग, सुरक्षित निरभर करते हैं। केवल हाइड्रोकार्बन का आयात कम करने से बात नहीं बनेगी। नई तरह की निरभरता पैदा होगी। मिसाल के तौर पर स्वच्छ ऊर्जा उत्पादों का कारोबार और सेवाओं या बैटरी आदि के लिए अहम खनिजों

की आपूर्ति। इसके लिए मजबूत कारोबारी रिश्ते कायम करने होंगे, आपूर्ति शृंखला बनानी होगी और प्रभावी बहुपक्षीय संस्थानों की जरूरत होगी।

2. आर्थिक और पर्यावरण संबंधी कूटनीति: भारत ने पेरिस समझौते के जरिये जलवायु परिवर्तन के मामले में नेतृत्व क्षमता दिखाई। उसने सहयोग आधारित ऊर्जा सुरक्षा के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय सौर गठजोड़ की पहल की। अगले महीने भारत मरुस्थलीकरण से निपटने के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र के सम्मेलन की मेजबानी करेगा। परंतु ये तो समय-समय पर होने वाले हस्तक्षेप हैं। सन 2022 तक जब भारत जी 20 देशों की बैठक की मेजबानी करेगा, तब तक उसे अपने व्यापारिक, वित्तीय और आर्थिक हितों को ऊर्जा, जलवायु और स्थायित्व के साथ जोड़ना होगा। विश्व स्तर पर एक आर्थिक स्थायी एजेंडे की आवश्यकता होगी।

3. रोजगार और व्यापार का माहौल: अमेरिका और चीन के बीच व्यापार युद्ध वैश्विक व्यापार वृद्धि को प्रभावित करता रहेगा। जाहिर है अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यापार कुछ समय तक रोजगार वृद्धि में सहायक नहीं होगा। भारत को घरेलू स्तर पर रोजगार पैदा करने होंगे। ऊर्जा परिवर्तन का दौर धीमी होती अर्थव्यवस्था में रोजगार का माध्यम बन सकता है।

4. जलवायु जोखिम और बुनियादी निवेश: देश की वृद्धि अब जलवायु के

जोखिम से जुड़ी हुई है। आवास, परिवहन और उद्योग खासकर तटीय इलाकों में उद्योग जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाओं में निवेश को जोखिम उत्पन्न होगा। जलवायु परिवर्तन के कारण वित्तीय संकट उत्पन्न होने के संकेत नजर आने लगे हैं। केंद्रीय बैंकों को इस पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है।

5. कार्बन सीमा समायोजन और व्यापारिक गतिरोध: कारोबारी विवाद स्वच्छ ऊर्जा की राह रोक रहे हैं। विभिन्न देश इसके बढ़ते बाजार में अपने हिस्से के लिए जुझ रहे हैं। भविष्य में जलवायु और ऊर्जा संबंधी विवाद बढ़ेंगे। सन 2019 के अंत तक यूरोपीय संघ 2050 तक कार्बन निरपेक्षता का समझौता कर सकता है। इसके तय होने के बाद देखा होगा कि जलवायु परिवर्तन को लेकर गंभीरता नहीं दिखा रहे देशों को दंडित करने के लिए कार्बन सीमा समायोजन कर कब लगाया जाता है। अमेरिका का रुख इस दिशा में काफी ढीला है। चीन कह सकता है कि उसके उत्सर्जन 2030 के पहले उच्चतम स्तर पर होंगे। वैश्विक व्यापार तंत्र में मची अफरातफरी देश के ऊर्जा चयन और विकास विकल्पों पर दबाव डालेगी।

6. घरेलू लोकलुभावनवाद और भू-राजनैतिक जोखिम: विकसित देशों में बढ़ती असमानता के कारण विरोध बढ़ रहा है। इससे निपटने के लिए लोकलुभावनवाद का अदृशपूर्ण निर्णय लिया जा रहा है। कहीं और लिए जा रहे ऐसे निर्णय पड़ोसी देशों के माध्यम से भारत के लिए भू-राजनैतिक जोखिम पैदा कर सकते हैं। ईरान-अमेरिका विवाद इसका उदाहरण है। उसने देश की ऊर्जा सुरक्षा पर असर डाला है। चीन और अमेरिका के तनाव के कारण चीन ने अहम खनिज आपूर्ति रोकने की धमकी दी है। ऐसे में भारत के लिए अन्य देशों के साथ तकनीकी सहयोग करना और निवेश जुटाना मुश्किल हो रहा है।

7. झटकों पर झटके: सन 2008 में केवल वैश्विक वित्तीय संकट नहीं आया था बल्कि उसके साथ वैश्विक खाद्य संकट भी उत्पन्न हुआ था। ऊर्जा की बढ़ी कीमतों, उर्वरक की बढ़ी लागत, खाद्य भंडार की कमी, अनाज से जैव ईंधन बनाना, मुद्रा का अवमूल्यन और विपरीत मौसम आदि के कारण खाद्य किलेबंदी तेजी से बढ़ी। भारत को भविष्य में ऐसे झटकों से बचने की तैयारी रखनी होगी। इनमें जल संकट, कृषि नुकसान, ऊर्जा आपूर्ति से जुड़ा तनाव, बढ़ते व्यापारिक विवाद, विपरीत मौसम की घटनाओं के चलते बीमा कंपनियों और वित्तीय संस्थानों का दिवालिया होना और पर्यावरण के चलते विस्थापित लोगों के आंदोलन आदि इसमें शामिल हैं। जलवायु को लेकर किए जाने वाले प्रयोग भविष्य में कृषि जैव विविधता आदि को लेकर अप्रत्याशित परिणाम ला सकते हैं। उदाहरण के लिए समताप मंडल में सल्फेट के कण डालना। इसके कारण पृथ्वी अशासित क्षेत्रों में राजनीतिक संघर्ष भी उत्पन्न हो सकते हैं।

यह कहना सही नहीं होगा कि हमारी विकास संबंधी दुविधा आसानी से दूर हो जाएगी। परंतु इसमें ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था, स्थायी शहरीकरण और हरित औद्योगीकरण के लिए अवसर भी हैं। इससे भारत को नई प्रतिस्पर्धी बढ़त मिल सकती है।

रिजर्व बैंक की राहत पाकर कहीं बेपरवाह न हो जाए सरकार



दिल्ली डायरी

ए के भट्टाचार्य

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने बजट पेश करने के डेढ़ महीने बाद गत शुक्रवार को अपनी पहली बड़ी नीतिगत घोषणा की जिसे बंबई स्टॉक एक्सचेंज (बीएसई) ने भी काफी पसंद किया। बीएसई का बेंचमार्क सेंसेक्स सोमवार को कारोबार के दौरान करीब 800 अंक बढ़ गया। अमेरिका-चीन व्यापार वार्ता बहाल होने की उम्मीदों ने भी समूचे बाजार का मनोबल बढ़ाया लेकिन सीतारमण की घोषणाओं के अनुकूल असर को भी नजरअंदाज नहीं किया जा सकता है। सोमवार शाम को इससे भी बड़ी घोषणा की गई। भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) के निदेशक मंडल की बैठक में विमल जालान समिति की अनुशंसाएं स्वीकार कर लिए जाने की जानकारी एक बयान में दी गई। जालान समिति ने आरबीआई की आकस्मिक निधि के लिए जरूरी पूंजी, मुद्रा एवं स्वर्ण भंडार संबंधी प्रावधानों की समीक्षा कर कुछ सुझाव दिए थे। इन सुझावों को स्वीकार करने का मतलब है कि आरबीआई को अपने आरक्षित भंडार से 1.76 लाख करोड़ रुपये सरकार को देने होंगे। इसमें से 52,637 करोड़ रुपये अधिशेष आकस्मिक निधि संबंधी प्रावधानों के मद में और 1.23 लाख करोड़ रुपये लाभांश के तौर पर दिए जाएंगे। लाभांश की राशि में से 28,000 करोड़ रुपये तो आरबीआई कुछ महीने पहले ही अंतरिम लाभांश के तौर पर सरकार को दे चुका है। सरकार ने उस राशि को 2018-19 के अपने राजस्व का हिस्सा भी बताया था।

इस तरह वर्ष 2019-20 में सरकार को आरबीआई से कुल 1.48 लाख करोड़ रुपये का राजस्व ही मिलेगा। इस साल के आम बजट में आरबीआई से 90,000 करोड़ रुपये का राजस्व मिलने का प्रावधान रखा गया था। इस तरह केंद्र सरकार को इस साल अब 58,000 करोड़ रुपये की अतिरिक्त राशि ही मिलेगी। यह भारत के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) का महज 0.3 फीसदी है। इसके बावजूद शेयर बाजारों ने आरबीआई से सरकार को बड़ी राशि मिलने की घोषणा का दिल खोलकर स्वागत किया और मंगलवार को बाजार 147 अंक चढ़ गया। सरकार की राजकोषीय स्थिति थोड़ी बेहतर होने और उसकी उधारी पर दबाव कम होने

की आशा में सरकार के 10 वर्षीय बॉन्ड का प्रतिफल भी सुधरना शुरू हो गया। हालांकि खतरा यह है कि बाजार में उत्साह का यह दौर सरकार के भीतर यह भ्रम पैदा कर सकता है कि अर्थव्यवस्था की सारी चिंताएं एक बयान में दी गईं और समस्या का समाधान निकाल लिया गया है। ऐसा होना बेहद खतरनाक होगा। कोई भी कदम अर्थव्यवस्था की गहरे तक धंसी समस्याओं को धीरे-धीरे का सुनिश्चित एवं टिकाऊ तरीका नहीं है। अभी तक अपनाए गए कदमों की अपनी सीमाएं हैं और सरकार बाजार की सोच बदलने में कामयाबी को लेकर अधिक खुशी न ही मनाए तो बेहतर होगा।

शुक्रवार को वाहन क्षेत्र के लिए घोषित फैसले पर गौर करते हैं। इससे वाणिज्यिक एवं यात्री वाहनों की बिक्री बढ़ने में मदद मिलेगी क्योंकि मार्च 2020 के पहले लेने वाहनों की खरीद पर मिलने वाले कर लाभ का फायदा हर करदाता उठाना चाहेगा। इसी तरह बीएस-4 इंजन वाले वाहनों को पंजीकरण के 10-15 साल बाद तक परिचालन की अनुमति मिलने से भी वितरकों के पास धूल खा रही गाड़ियों की मांग बढ़ सकती है। पंजीकरण मानकों में ढील देने और पुराने वाहनों के लिए स्क्रैप नीति लागू जाने से भी गाड़ियों की बिक्री बढ़ने की उम्मीद जगी है।

लेकिन इन उपायों का असर कम अवधि तक ही रहेगा। अगले साल में गाड़ियों की मांग को एकमुश्त समाधान करने वाली फ्रिंक्रमेंट बनी रहेगी। वाहन उद्योग का जीडीपी में करीब सात फीसदी हिस्सा है। समूचे विनिर्माण क्षेत्र का करीब आधा वाहन उद्योग में ही है और सीधे एवं परोक्ष तौर पर करीब 80 लाख लोगों को रोजगार देता है। बिजली के बगैर चलने वाली गाड़ियों की दीर्घावधि

मांग को लेकर दुनिया भर में आशंकाएं जताई जा रही हैं और भारत भी इससे अछूता नहीं रह सकता है। तकनीक का प्रभाव, सहभाजन अर्थव्यवस्था का उदय और युवाओं के बीच सवारी गाड़ियां खरीदने की बढ़ती प्रवृत्ति के चलते गाड़ियों की मांग में सुस्ती जारी रहेगी। केवल इस वर्ष के लिए वाहन क्षेत्र की सुस्ती दूर करना ही काफी नहीं है।

सरकार के लिए इतना ही अहम मुद्दा यह है कि वित्त मंत्री की कई घोषणाओं के तीव्र एवं सहज क्रियान्वयन पर ध्यान बना रहे। राहत उपायों की घोषणा मौजूदा आर्थिक सुस्ती के नुकसान को दूर करने की शुरुआत भर है। इन घोषणाओं के जमीनी स्तर पर त्वरित क्रियान्वयन से ही तय होगा कि यह राहत एक कितना असरदार होगा? मसलन, पुराने वाहनों की स्क्रैप नीति को जल्द से जल्द अंतिम रूप दिया जाना चाहिए। अगर यह विचार विभिन्न मंत्रालयों की विरोधाभासी राय का शिकार हो जाता है तो स्क्रैप नीति लाने में देरी होगी और इच्छित सुधार अधिक दूर हो जाएगा।

सार्वजनिक बैंकों के पुनर्पूजीकरण के लिए फौरन 70,000 करोड़ रुपये जारी करने के फैसले के भी क्रियान्वयन के लिए सजज तैयारी एवं योजना की जरूरत पड़ेगी। क्या अपेक्षाकृत सेहतमंद एवं बकाया कर्ज की वसूली में बढ़िया प्रदर्शन करने वाले बैंकों को पुनर्पूजीकरण योजना का इस्तेमाल योग्यता-आधारित तरीके से करना चाहिए? क्या इन बैंक के साथ सार्वजनिक बैंकों के एकत्रीकरण का नया दौर भी शुरू करना चाहिए? सूक्ष्म, लघु एवं मध्यम इकाइयों के बकाया कर्ज का एकमुश्त समाधान करने वाली योजना के संदर्भ में भी ऐसी ही सजगता की जरूरत है। बकाये का निपटान करने का असर कर्जदारों के बीच भुगतान अनुशासन पर प्रतिकूल रूप से न पड़े। आधिकार, जालान समिति की अनुशंसाओं के मुताबिक 58,000 करोड़ रुपये की अतिरिक्त राशि मिलने के बाद सरकार को जेब ढीली करने के दबाव से बचना होगा। कर राजस्व में गिरावट के लिए खरटे असली हैं, लिहाजा इस अतिरिक्त राशि का इस्तेमाल प्रोत्साहन के बजाय इस राजस्व कमी को भरपाई में करना सही होगा।

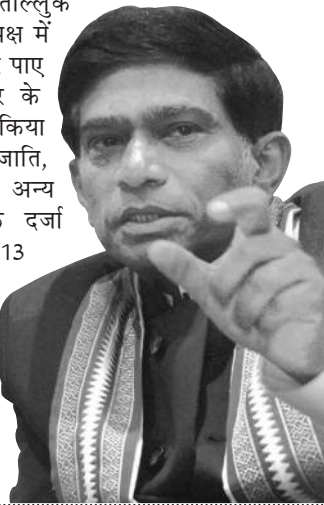
कानाफूसी

टाइम बैंक का अनूठा प्रयोग

मध्य प्रदेश की कांग्रेस सरकार राज्य में अपनी तरह का अन्टा टाइम बैंक यानी समय बैंक बनाने जा रही है। सरकार का इरादा इस पहल के जरिये बुजुर्गों और अकेले रहने वाले लोगों को सहायता प्रदान करना है। इस योजना के तहत लोग स्वेच्छा से दूसरों की सहायता कर सकते हैं। वे जितना समय दूसरों की सहायता में लगाएंगे उतने घंटे एक तरह की सामाजिक सुरक्षा योजना के तहत उनके निजी खाते में जमा कर दिए जाएंगे। जब वे बुजुर्ग हो जाएंगे और उन्हें सहायता की आवश्यकता होगी तो उन्हें उतने घंटे की सहायता सुनिश्चित की जाएगी जितने उन्होंने दूसरों की सेवा में लगाए होंगे। प्रदेश के कैबिनेट मंत्री पीसी शर्मा का कहना है कि अगर इस पर पूर्ण सहमति बन गई तो यह अपनी तरह का अन्टा प्रयोग होगा।

जाति पर बवाल

छत्तीसगढ़ सरकार द्वारा गठित एक उच्चस्तरीय समिति ने प्रदेश के पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री अजीत जोगी का अनुसूचित जनजाति से होने का दावा खारिज कर दिया है। हालांकि अभी तक समिति की रिपोर्ट सार्वजनिक नहीं है लेकिन इस पर प्रतिक्रिया देते हुए जोगी ने कहा है कि समिति का निष्कर्ष गलत है। उन्होंने आरोप लगाया कि समिति प्रदेश की कांग्रेस सरकार से प्रभावित है। समिति का गठन सन 2018 में छत्तीसगढ़ उच्च न्यायालय के आदेश पर हुआ था। समिति ने पाया कि जोगी कंवर समुदाय से ताल्लुक रखने के अपने दावे के पक्ष में ठोस सबूत प्रस्तुत नहीं कर पाए हैं। समिति ने बिलासपुर के जिलाधिकारी को अधिकृत किया है कि वह अनुसूचित जाति, अनुसूचित जनजाति एवं अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग (सामाजिक दर्जा प्रमाणन नियमन) नियम 2013 के अनुरूप आगे कदम उठाए। समिति ने अतीत में जोगी को जारी किए गए तमाम जाति प्रमाणपत्रों को भी खत्म करने की बात कही है।



आपका पक्ष

मुफ्त के बदले सुविधा विस्तार पर हो जोर

दिल्ली सरकार ने पानी का बिल माफ करने की घोषणा की है। मुख्यमंत्री अरविंद केजरीवाल ने कहा कि ई, एफ, जी, एच श्रेणी की चार कॉलोनियों में रहने वाले लोगों के मीटर अगर चालू हैं तो पानी का बकाया माफ कर दिया जाएगा। इससे पहले दिल्ली सरकार ने प्रति माह 20 हजार लीटर तक पानी का बिल माफ करने की घोषणा की थी। इसके अलावा दिल्ली सरकार ने बिजली के बिलों में भी 50 प्रतिशत सब्सिडी की घोषणा की थी। इसके तहत अगर कोई व्यक्ति 200 यूनिट कर प्रति माह बिजली खर्च करता है तो उसका बिल आधा हो जाएगा। दिल्ली सरकार ने बसों में महिलाओं को मुफ्त सफर करने की भी घोषणा की है। वहीं दिल्ली मेट्रो में महिलाओं को मुफ्त सफर करने पर विचार कर रही है लेकिन मेट्रो तथा केंद्र सरकार से इसकी मंजूरी अब तक नहीं मिल सकी



पिछले दिनों दिल्ली सरकार ने पानी का बिल माफ करने की घोषणा की -पीटीआई

है। दिल्ली मेट्रो में केंद्र और राज्य सरकार की आधी-आधी हिस्सेदारी है। दिल्ली सरकार की घोषणाओं पर गौर करें तो दिल्ली में बिल माफ करने के बजाय पानी की आपूर्ति पर अधिक ध्यान देने की जरूरत है। आज भी कई कॉलोनियों में पानी की आपूर्ति ठीक से नहीं हो पाती है। अगर दिल्ली में बस की बात करें तो

सफर मुफ्त करने की। वहीं मेट्रो की बात करें तो अभी भी दिल्ली की कई जगहों में मेट्रो नहीं पहुंच सकी है जिसके विस्तार की जरूरत है। मेट्रो में सफर मुफ्त करने के बजाय अगर दिल्ली सरकार फंड मुहैया कराये तो उन जगहों में भी मेट्रो पहुंच सकती है। दिल्ली में अगले साल विधानसभा चुनाव होने हैं। ऐसे में दिल्ली में सत्ताधारी मुफ्त वाली घोषणाओं के जरिये मतदाताओं को लुभाने की कोशिश करते दिख रही है। आम लोगों को अगर अपने-अपने क्षेत्र में विकास देखा है तो उन्हें मुफ्त मिल रही चीजों के बदले सुविधाओं के विस्तार पर अधिक जोर देने की जरूरत है। उदाहरण के लिए अगर पानी सिर्फ दो समय आता है तो उसे 24 घंटे आपूर्ति करने की जरूरत है, न कि

कि दो समय दो-दो घंटे आने वाले पानी के लिए बिल माफ करने की जरूरत है।

मोहित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

नदी जोड़ो परियोजना पर हो काम

वारिश आने के पहले कई योजनाएं तो बनती हैं, मगर उन पर अमल होना बड़ा मुश्किल काम है। अधिकारियों के साथ जनता भी इस काम में सहयोग करेगी तो बाढ़ की समस्या का समाधान होने से कोई रोक नहीं सकता है। देश की सभी नदियों को आपस में जोड़ना होगा और पानी को एक जगह जमा करके जरूरत के मुताबिक सभी जगह पहुंचाना होगा। बाढ़ के पानी के निकलने के लिए खरटे बनाए जाने चाहिए। बाढ़ पीड़ितों की राशि सही हाथों में पहुंचाना भी सुनिश्चित करना होगा। कुल मिलाकर बाढ़ की समस्या का स्थायी समाधान तभी हो सकता है जब सरकार और आम जन अपनी जिम्मेदारी समझते हुए मिलकर काम करें।

ओमप्रकाश मालवीय, भोपाल

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

हताशा के कदम

जम्मू-कश्मीर से धारा 370 हटने के बाद पाकिस्तान की झुंझलाहट लगातार बढ़ रही है। हालांकि इस मामले को उसने अंतरराष्ट्रीय बिरादरी के सामने भी रखा और मदद की गुहार लगाई, मगर कोई कामयाबी नहीं मिल पाई। जो अमेरिका पहले मध्यस्थता करने की बात कर रहा था, उसने भी कह दिया कि यह दोनों देशों के बीच का मामला है, वे आपस में बैठ कर इसका समाधान निकालें। इस तरह पाकिस्तान हताशा है। इसी हताशा में वह कुछ ऐसे कदम उठाने का प्रयास करता है जिससे भारत को सबक सिखाया जा सके, उसे परेशान किया जा सके। मगर अब तक के उसके सारे कदम बेअसर साबित हो चुके हैं। इसी सिलसिले में वह भारत के साथ अपने सारे हवाई मार्ग बंद करने पर विचार कर रहा है। पाकिस्तान के विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री फवाद चौधरी ने टवीट कर कहा कि प्रधानमंत्री यह फैसला जल्दी ही करने वाले हैं। इससे संबंधित कानूनी पहलुओं पर विचार चल रहा है। मगर यह समझ से परे है कि ऐसा करके आखिर पाकिस्तान को हासिल क्या होगा। इससे महज उसकी कुछ खुनस ही मिटेगी।

अगर पाकिस्तान भारत आने-जाने वाले विमानों को अपनी सीमा से होकर नहीं गुजरने देने का फैसला करता है तो निरसंदेह विमानन कंपनियों का खर्चा बढ़ेगा। मगर ऐसा नहीं कि इससे सिर्फ भारत को नुकसान होगा, पाकिस्तान को भी राजस्व घाटा उठाना पड़ेगा। फिर यह पहली बार नहीं होगा, जब पाकिस्तान अपने हवाई मार्ग भारत के लिए बंद कर देगा। बालाकोट पर हवाई हमले के बाद भी उसने ऐसा किया था। इसकी वजह से भारत से उड़ान भरने वाले विमानों को कुछ लंबा रास्ता तय करके दूसरे देशों में पहुंचना पड़ता था। मगर फिर उसने हवाई रास्ते खोल दिए। ऐसे फैसलों से विमानों को थोड़ा अधिक समय उड़ान भरनी पड़ती है, उनका खर्च बढ़ जाता है। जाहिर है, इसका असर मुसाफिरों पर भी पड़ता है। मगर ऐसा कभी नहीं हुआ कि बड़े पैमाने पर उड़ानें रद्द करनी पड़ी हों। इसलिए अगर इस बार भी वह ऐसा फैसला करता है, तो भारतीय या दूसरी विमानन कंपनियों के लिए बहुत घबराने की बात नहीं होगी।

जब दो देशों के बीच तनाव बढ़ता है तो इस तरह के फैसले संभावित होते है। पुलवामा के बाद भारत ने पाकिस्तान के साथ कई कारोबारी रिश्ते तोड़ लिए थे। इसी तरह बालाकोट और फिर धारा 370 हटने के बाद पाकिस्तान ने भी कई कारोबारी गतिविधियों पर विराम लगा दिया। अब वह पाकिस्तान के रास्ते अफगानिस्तान के साथ भारत के व्यापार पर भी अंकुश लगाने पर विचार कर रहा है। वह भारत से अफगानिस्तान के लिए जाने वाली सड़कों को भी बंद करने पर विचार कर रहा है। जाहिर है, इससे वाणिज्यिक वाहनों को थोड़ा लंबा रास्ता तय करना पड़ेगा, जिससे माल दुलाई का खर्च बढ़ेगा। पर पाकिस्तान को इसका भी नुकसान उठाना पड़ेगा। पहले ही भारत के साथ उसके व्यापारिक रिश्ते खत्म होने से उसे बड़े पैमाने पर घाटा उठाना पड़ रहा है। वहां की आर्थिक स्थिति ठीक नहीं है, ऐसे में खुनस में उठाए गए कदम उसके ही लिए परेशानी का सबब बनेंगे। इमरान खान जिस तरह खुद को पाकिस्तान की तरक्की के लिए समर्पित बताते रहे हैं, उससे लगता रहा है कि वे भारत के साथ रिश्ते बेहतर बनाने के पक्ष में हैं। पर हवाई रास्ते बंद करने और व्यापार रोक देने जैसे कदमों पर उनके विचार करने से यही जाहिर है कि वे बातचीत के जरिए समाधान के पक्ष में नहीं हैं।

हिंसा की जमीन

राजधानी दिल्ली सहित देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में मंगलवार को पीट-पीट कर मार डालने की जो दहला देने वाली घटनाएं सामने आईं, उनसे एक बार फिर यह सवाल उठा है कि आखिर लोग इतने असहिष्णु और हिंसक क्यों होते जा रहे हैं। किसी को बच्चा चोर समझ कर, तो किसी को डायन बता कर मार डालने की घटनाएं वाकई चिंताजनक हैं। पुरानी दिल्ली स्टेज्न के बाहर मंगलवार को एक मद्रससे के शिक्षक को पटरी पर दुकान लगाने वाले कुछ दुकानदारों ने पीट-पीट कर मार डाला। बात सिर्फ इतनी थी कि इस शिक्षक ने हेडफोन उठा कर देखा और पसंद न आने पर खरीदने से इंकार कर दिया। इसी को लेकर विवाद हो गया, जो उनके लिए जानलेवा साबित हुआ। मुंबई में एक वृद्ध टेले वाले को कुछ लोगों ने पीट-पीट कर इसलिए मार दिया कि उसने कुछ लोगों को वहां कचरा फेंकने से मना किया था। बिहार के नवादा जिले के एक गांव में एक वृद्ध महिला को डायन बता कर पीट-पीट कर मार डाला गया। इसी तरह उत्तर प्रदेश के संभल में भीड़ ने बच्चा चोर होने के शक में एक व्यक्ति की हत्या कर दी। ऐसे ही एक मामले में मेरठ में एक महिला को बांध कर पीटा गया। ये सारी घटनाएं बताती हैं कि देश में कैसा खौफनाक भीड़ तंत्र बन चुका है, जिसका कानून-व्यवस्था में न कोई भरोसा है, न ही उसका कोई खौफ।

ऐसी घटनाएं पिछले कुछ सालों में ज्यादा बढ़ी हैं। कभी ‘गोरक्षक’ कानून-व्यवस्था को हाथ में लेते हैं और ‘गोतर्करों’ को ठिकाने लगा देते हैं तो कभी बच्चा चोरी के शक में अनजान व्यक्ति भीड़ का शिकार हो जाता है। कई बार ऐसी घटनाएं धर्म-विशेष के लोगों के साथ हुई हैं, जिन्हें ‘जय श्रीराम’ का नारा लगाने को मजबूर करते हुए पीट-पीट कर मार दिया गया। कुछ घटनाओं को लेकर तो कहा जा सकता है कि इन्हें अंजाम देने वाले किसी न किसी रूप में प्रेरित होकर ऐसा करते होंगे, लेकिन राजधानी दिल्ली में जिस मद्रससे के शिक्षक को हेडफोन पर विवाद के कारण मार डाला गया, वह ज्यादा गंभीर चिंता का विषय है। इस घटना को अंजाम देने वालों ने जरा भी नहीं सोचा कि कुछ रूपए की चीज के पीछे वे एक व्यक्ति को जिस तरह मौत के घाट उतार रहे हैं उसका हश्र क्या हो सकता है। इस घटना से हर आदमी के भीतर यह खौफ पैदा होना स्वाभाविक है कि रास्ते चलते न जाने क्या विवाद हो जाए और लोग पीट-पीट कर मार डालें! ऐसी घटनाओं के पीछे सबसे बड़ा कारण ही यही है कि लोगों में कानून-व्यवस्था का भय खत्म हो गया है। शायद वे जानते हैं कि पुलिस कुछ नहीं करेगी। इस घटना में भी पुलिस ने कुछ पटरी दुकानदारों के खिलाफ गैर-इरादतन हत्या का मामला दर्ज कर लिया। हैरानी की बात है कि भीड़ भरे बाजार में किसी ने उस शिक्षक को बचाने की कोशिश भी नहीं की।

समाज में बढ़ती इस तरह की हिंसक प्रवृत्ति एक लोकतांत्रिक और सभ्य राष्ट्र के लिए शर्मनाक है। इस तरह की घटनाओं का ग्राफ जिस तेजी से बढ़ रहा है, उससे साफ है कि देश में कानून-व्यवस्था का कोई मतलब नहीं रह गया है। ऐसी घटनाएं पुलिस और समाज दोनों के लिए चुनौती बन गई हैं। ऐसे अपराधियों से निपटने के लिए कानून भी काफी हैं, लेकिन उभय टण तंत्र में सब बेअसर साबित हो रहे हैं।

कल्पमेधा

अहंकारी हमेशा केवल अपने महान कार्यों का वर्णन करता है और दूसरों के सिर्फ कुकर्मा का।
–स्पिनोजा

जनसत्ता

ब्रह्मदीप अलूने

जी-7 समूह के देश दुनिया में पूंजीवाद का प्रतीक हैं और इसमें रूस का होना या न होना भी बड़ा मुद्दा रहा है जो सदस्य देशों के बीच विरोधाभास को बढ़ाता रहा है। इस समूह के देशों की आपसी असहमतियों का आक्रामक कूटनीतिक प्रदर्शन भी चुनौतीपूर्ण रहा है। क्रीमिया पर रूस के आधिपत्य के बाद लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों के नाम पर वर्ष 2014 में रूस को जिस तरह से समूह से बाहर का रास्ता दिखाया गया था, उसे लेकर भी आपसी मतभेद सामने आते रहे हैं।

वैश्विक आर्थिक मुद्दों पर विचार और परामर्श के विकसित देशों के सबसे बड़े संगठन जी-7 का फ्रांस में शिखर सम्मेलन ऐसे समय पर आयोजित हुआ जब अमेरिका की रूस से कूटनीतिक तकरार और चीन से आर्थिक तनाव चरम पर है। दुनिया के विकसित और अग्रणी राष्ट्रों के इस समूह में जहां एक ओर आर्थिक, सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, कूटनीतिक और राष्ट्रीय नीतियों को लेकर गहरे मतभेद सामने आ रहे हैं, वहीं दूसरी ओर युद्ध, राष्ट्रवाद, दक्षिणपंथ के उभार, मुक्त बाजार के साथ अप्रवासन का विरोध और परमाणु हथियारों का जखीरा जुटाने की होड़ के बीच शांति और समग्र विकास के प्रति प्रतिबद्धता में गहरा अंतर्द्वंद दिखाई साफ नजर आ रहा है।

दरअसल, अमेरिका, फ्रांस, इटली, कनाडा, जर्मनी, जापान और इंग्लैंड जी-7 के सदस्य राष्ट्र हैं जो स्वतंत्रता, समानता, लोकतंत्र और मानवाधिकारों

प्रेमपाल शर्मा

हाल में बुलंदशहर के अपने गांव के रास्ते में दोस्त ने बताया कि यहां खुर्जा और बुलंदशहर के बीच अल्पसंख्यकों के लिए कुछ नए स्कूल खुले हैं। योजना तो पिछली सरकार की थी लेकिन बन कर अब तैयार हुए हैं। देखने की उत्सुकता हुई और गाड़ी उधर मोड़ दी। जीटी रोड के मुख्य सड़क मार्ग से गांव की पतली-पतली गलियों के बीच लगभग एक किलोमीटर का रास्ता पार करके हम स्कूल पहुंचे। ऐसी भव्य इमारत! चमामच! बीस कमरे, सुंदर-सा प्रवेश द्वार, खेल का मैदान, नए लगे पेड़। मन ऊर्जा से भर गया।

लेकिन उत्साह ठंडा होने में भी देर नहीं लगी। स्कूल छठी से लेकर बारहवीं तक का है लेकिन अभी सिर्फ दो कक्षाएं ही चलती हैं- नवीं और दसवीं की। पिछले वर्ष सिर्फ नवीं कक्षा ही चल रही थी। क्यों? यहां तो चारों तरफ बच्चों के लिए स्कूल है ही नहीं और इतनी अच्छे स्कूल में दाखिला क्यों नहीं? क्योंकि सरकार ने दो साल में अभी सिर्फ एक शिक्षक दिया है। उसे शिक्षक मानो, प्रिंसिपल मान लो या क्लर्क, वही सभी कुछ है। स्कूल की अकेली

बदलते सुर

कश्मीर से धारा 370 को निष्क्रिय किए जाने के बाद से ही पूर्व कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी सरकार को आड़े हाथों लेते रहे हैं। लेकिन अब अचानक उनका कैसे हृदय परिवर्तन कैसे हो गया है? उनके स्वर एकदम बदल गए और वे सरकार के समर्थन कह रहे हैं कि मैं कई मामलों में सरकार से असहमत हूं पर कश्मीर में पाकिस्तान हिंसा भड़का रहा है और वह दुनियाभर में आतंकवाद का प्रमुख सपर्थक बना हुआ है, कश्मीर का मसला भारत का आंतरिक मामला है इसमें किसी दूसरे देश के हस्तक्षेप की जरूरत नहीं है। अगर राहुल अब हकीकत को मान रहे हैं तो बहुत अच्छी बात है। उन्होंने भले ही सरकार से अपनी वैचारिक भिन्नता बताई हो, किंतु देश के साथ उन्होंने सरकार के साथ खड़े होकर खुद, पार्टी, जनहित और देशहित में दिल से जो कहा वह सराहनीय है। इस तरह कांग्रेस ने एक बेहतर संदेश विपक्षियों को दिया है कि आंतरिक मतभेद चाहे कितने भी हों लेकिन राष्ट्रहित में हमें हमेशा सरकार के साथ एकजुट होकर खड़े होना चाहिए।

● *शकुंतला महेश नेनावा, इंदौर*

बौखलाया पाक

जम्मू-कश्मीर से धारा 370 को हटाए जाने के बाद से पाकिस्तान चुी तरह बौखलाया हुआ है। इस बौखलाहट में वह दुनिया के दूसरे देशों के आगे इस मामले में दखल देने की फरियाद करता घूम रहा है। लेकिन सारी दुनिया पाकिस्तान की मंशा को जानती है, इसलिए किसी भी देश ने उसे कोई तबजूज नहीं दी और इस मामले में इसका साथ देने से भी इंकार कर दिया, यहां तक कि मुसलिम देशों ने भी इस मुद्दे पर उसका साथ देने से साफ मना कर दिया। इस

मतभेदों में उलझता जी-7

की रक्षा के प्रति अपनी प्रतिबद्धता का इजहार करते रहे हैं। उच्च आय और विकास के उच्च पैमाने स्थापित करने वाले जी-7 के राष्ट्रध्यक्ष हर साल अलग-अलग देशों में शिखर सम्मेलन आयोजित करते हैं और आर्थिक गतिविधियों के साथ ही जलवायु परिवर्तन, गरीबी, असमानता, सुरक्षा, पर्यावरणीय संकट जैसे सामाजिक सरोकारों और वैश्विक समस्याओं से जुड़े विषयों पर भी विमर्श करते हैं। इन सबसे बीच यह भी दिलचस्प है कि अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के उभार के बाद महाशक्ति अमेरिका की भूमिका वैश्विक हितों से ज्यादा अमेरिकीवाद पर केंद्रित हो गई है और इसके प्रभाव से जी-7 भी अछूता नहीं है। जी-7 समूह के देश दुनिया में पूंजीवाद का प्रतीक है और इसमें रूस का होना या न होना भी बड़ा मुद्दा रहा है जो सदस्य देशों के बीच विरोधाभास को बढ़ाता रहा है। इस समूह के देशों की आपसी असहमतियों का आक्रामक

कूटनीतिक प्रदर्शन भी चुनौतीपूर्ण रहा है। क्रीमिया पर रूस के आधिपत्य के बाद लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों के नाम पर वर्ष 2014 में रूस को जिस तरह से समूह से बाहर का रास्ता दिखाया गया था, उसे लेकर भी आपसी मतभेद सामने आते रहे हैं। अब ट्रंप ने जी-7 को रूस के बिना अग्रू बताया है, वही अन्य देश ट्रंप की नीतियों को लेकर सहज नहीं लग रहे। जी-7 दुनिया के औद्योगिक देशों का समूह है लेकिन इन देशों में से अधिकतर अपनी बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था के मुकाबले वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था में बहुत कम भागीदारी कर रहे हैं। भारत और चीन की चुनौती इस समूह के सामने बरकरार है। यूरोपीय संघ का सबसे बड़ा देश जर्मनी है और उसका मुसलिम शरणार्थियों के प्रति उदार रवैया ट्रंप के आक्रामक राष्ट्रवाद के विरोध में नजर आता है। जर्मनी के बड़े राजनेता जिंकमार गैबरियल ट्रंप को शांति और समृद्धि के लिए खतरा बता चुके हैं। हाल में ट्रंप ने फ्रांस के राष्ट्रपति एमैनुएल मैक्रों की आर्थिक नीतियों की कड़ी आलोचना करते हुए आरोप लगाया था कि फ्रांस गुगल जैसी बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों पर कर लगाने की तैयारी कर रहा है। ट्रंप प्रशासन ने कहा था कि फ्रांस की ओर से लगाया गया कर अन्यायपूर्ण ढंग से अमेरिकी टैक कंपनियों को नुकसान पहुंचाने वाला है। वहीं, फ्रांस का कहना था कि अन्य देशों की कंपनियां उनके यहां या तो कॉर्पोरेट कर देती ही नहीं हैं या देती भी हैं तो बहुत ही कम। करों को लेकर असहमति से उत्तेजित ट्रंप ने वाईन को लेकर फ्रांस की आलोचना करने से गुरेज नहीं किया



ब्रिटेन की आंतरिक राजनीति को प्रभावित किया है। ट्रंप ने ब्रिटेन से व्यापार को लेकर जहां बातचीत की बात कही, वहीं हाल में ब्रिटिश प्रधानमंत्री बोरिस जॉन्सन ने कहा है कि अगर अमेरिका ब्रिटेन के साथ व्यापार सौदा चाहता है तो उसे ब्रिटिश व्यापार पर से प्रतिबंध हटाना होगा। जी-7 शिखर सम्मेलन के दौरान जॉन्सन ने स्वीकार किया कि अमेरिका में ब्रिटिश व्यवसायों के लिए बहुत बाधाएं हैं। ब्रिटेन की कंपनियों के लिए अमेरिकी बाजार में बड़े पैमाने पर अवसर की संभावनाएं देखते हुए जॉन्सन अमेरिकी नीतियों में सुधार के हिमायती हैं। यहां यह भी उल्लेखनीय है कि रक्षा क्षेत्र में यूरोप में सबसे ज्यादा खर्च करने वाले ब्रिटेन ने अमेरिका समर्थित नाटो को हमेशा समर्थन

कथा नए स्कूल की

शिक्षिका अचानक हमारे पहुंचने से अचकचा गई। फर्श पर एक साथ दो कक्षाओं के बीच में उनकी कुर्सी थी। एक तरफ नवी क्लास के बच्चे तो दूसरी तरफ दसवीं के। काश हार्वर्ड, केंब्रिज के शिक्षाविद हमसे भी कुछ सीख पाते कि कैसे अकेले शिक्षक के बूते भारत में पूरा स्कूल चलाया जाता है।

जब ठीक-ठाक कक्षाएं हैं तो फर्श पर क्यों बैठे हैं? यह पूछने पर शिक्षिका ने व्यावहारिक बात बताई- ‘मैं बीच में बैठ कर दोनों क्लासों को तो भी संभाल लेती हूं।’ हमने पूछा- क्या सभी विषय पढ़ा लेती हैं? तो वे बोलीं-‘क्या करें, मैं हूं अर्थशास्त्र की लेकिन बारी-बारी से सभी विषय पढ़ाने ही पड़ते हैं।’ आप और शिक्षकों की मांग क्यों नहीं करते लिखित में? क्या डीएम और उच्च शिक्षा अधिकारियों को बताया? ऐसे प्रश्नों पर वे हकलाने लगीं कि कहीं कोई आफत न खड़ी हो जाए।

तब्बूजोआब यह कि बार-बार कहने के बावजूद न शिक्षक नियुक्त हुए ,न क्लर्क और ईसीलिए जो बच्चे दाखिला लेना भी चाहते हैं मसलत छठी, सातवीं क्लास में, वे भी नहीं आ पाते। इस बारे में गांव के प्रधान को भी सारी हकीकत पता

है लेकिन वे दिल्ली रहते हैं यानी कि उनकी पत्नी गांव की प्रधान बनी हैं और पूरे परिवार के साथ में दिल्ली में रहती हैं। प्रधानी के दायित्व गांव में उनके छोटे भाई संभालते हैं, यानी कि भारतीय लोकतंत्र में खड़ाऊ प्रधानी। साल में असली प्रधान पत्नी तो मुश्किल से ही आती है, उनके पति कभी-कभी आते हैं जैसे पिछले बार एक सरकारी कार्यक्रम में पेड़ लगाने और फिर चुनाव के दौरान आए थे।

खुशी की बात यह थी कि बच्चों के चेहरे पर अद्भुत मुस्कुराहट थी। खिले-खिले

ऊर्जा से भरे हुए। मानो घर के रोजाना के कामों से मुक्ति उन्हें स्कूल में रह कर ही मिलती हो। जुलाई के महीने में जरूर संख्या कुछ कम रहती है क्योंकि उन दिनों ये सब बच्चे खेतों में धान की रोपाईं करने जैसे कामों में लगे रहते हैं। शिक्षिका समझदार लगती थीं क्योंकि उन्होंने कहा, इनके लिए पेट भरना ज्यादा जरूरी है बजाय स्कूल के और इसीलिए हम इसे नजरअंदाज कर देते हैं। वाकई लड़कियों की कॉपी में लेख को देख कर लगता था, काश इनके पंखों को और उड़ने का मौका मिलता!

कुछ लड़कियां अपने मां-बाप के साथ घर पर सिलाई और कढ़ाई-बुनाई का काम भी संभालती

हैं लेकिन वे दिल्ली रहते हैं यानी कि उनकी पत्नी गांव की प्रधान बनी हैं और पूरे परिवार के साथ में दिल्ली में रहती हैं। प्रधानी के दायित्व गांव में उनके छोटे भाई संभालते हैं, यानी कि भारतीय लोकतंत्र में खड़ाऊ प्रधानी। साल में असली प्रधान पत्नी तो मुश्किल से ही आती है, उनके पति कभी-कभी आते हैं जैसे पिछले बार एक सरकारी कार्यक्रम में पेड़ लगाने और फिर चुनाव के दौरान आए थे।

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ऊर्जा से भरे हुए। मानो घर के रोजाना के कामों से मुक्ति उन्हें स्कूल में रह कर ही मिलती हो। जुलाई के महीने में जरूर संख्या कुछ कम रहती है क्योंकि उन दिनों ये सब बच्चे खेतों में धान की रोपाईं करने जैसे कामों में लगे रहते हैं। शिक्षिका समझदार लगती थीं क्योंकि उन्होंने कहा, इनके लिए पेट भरना ज्यादा जरूरी है बजाय स्कूल के और इसीलिए हम इसे नजरअंदाज कर देते हैं। वाकई लड़कियों की कॉपी में लेख को देख कर लगता था, काश इनके पंखों को और उड़ने का मौका मिलता!

कुछ लड़कियां अपने मां-बाप के साथ घर पर सिलाई और कढ़ाई-बुनाई का काम भी संभालती

हो। केंद्र सरकार को अब व्यापक व समग्र रूप से यह प्रयास करना चाहिए कि पाई-पाई पैसे का सदुपयोग देश व जनहित में हो, ताकि सरकार के इस फैसले की आलोचना करने वालों का मुंह बंद हो सके।

● *हेमा हरि उपाध्याय, खाचरोड (उज्जैन)*

अनूठी पहल

उत्तर प्रदेश की राज्यपाल ने एक अनुकरणीय पहल करते हुए टीबी पीड़ित एक बच्चों के इलाज का पूरा खर्चा उठाने का संकल्प लिया और सबसे अच्छी बात यह

र ही कि तत्काल बाद राजभवन के कई अधिकारियों ने इसी तरीके की पहल करते हुए टीबी पीड़ित बच्चों को इलाज के लिए गोद लिया। काश, आज भारत में सभी साधन संपन्न लोग अगर इसी तरीके से पहल करते हुए शिक्षा से वंचित या इलाज से वंचित गरीब बेसहारा बच्चों को गोद लेकर के उनकी परवरिश की जिम्मेदारी उठा लें तो हम एक सशक्त और मजबूत समाज की स्थापना कर सकेंगे।

● *रमेश माहेरवरी, सुल्तानपुर*

कामयाबी का शिखर

कुछ शख्सियतें ऐसी होती हैं जो कामयाबी के पीछे नहीं बल्कि कामयाबी उनके पीछे भाती है और ऐसे में वे आसमान में इतनी सीढ़ियां लगा