ow do you deal with a high per-

forming CEO who

is arrogant, in-your-face and

cocky? Watch very carefully

for prodromal signals and

act on the 5Cs: Consider,

Directors must act on signals



THE WISE LEADER

consult, counsel, coach and, if all fail, then confront. Before any disaster, there are prodromal signals, which portend a development. For example, in Newark, USA, recently, the R. GOPALAKRISHNAN municipal water tested pos-

itive for lead. Despite this, the insensitive and defensive mayor wrote to reassure the public, followed by a condemnation of the "false statements". The federal government heavily intervened to reverse the mayor last week. Another example: In 2011, John Looker, suffering from brain cancer, raised millions of dollars from Americans. Gradually, a small club of doubters developed on whether Looker had cancer at all. Upon confrontation, John Looker admitted to his lies. A bigger scam was averted by responding to the behavioural signals (refer article by Abby Ellin, The New York Times, August 1, 2019).

If board directors perceive unusual, unproven signals, should they act, and if so how? I suggest through a 5C Action Ladder — consider, consult, counsel, coach and, if all fail, then confront. Even if the evidence is not legally provable, they should act. Boards are not ceremonial, they have obligations; their actions must be based on facts and shared judg-

Every recent case of corporate governance failure had developed through a trail of early signals, which directors did observe. JP Morgan received an internal warning about the risks of continuing to deal with Jeffrey Epstein, who finally committed suicide in a New York jail (on August 10). But nobody listened. Consider the prodromal warnings in the cases of Ranbaxy, Jet Airways and YES Bank. After the disaster, media strings together the sequence of events and then it appears obvious that the board should have acted. At a recent governance conclave, participants seemed to agree on how to deal with a superlatively performing chief executive, who is arrogant.

Here is an ongoing drama about a real institution, presented as if it were a company.

The CEO had consistently positioned the company as the fastest growing, particularly since he took over. Growth targets were announced with panache, accompanied by spending plans on grandiose projects. These were cheered with great enthusiasm by credulous investors. The CEO oozed charisma and had a Demosthenes-like oratory skill; he repeatedly pointed out that his predecessors had been losers, and promised to move fast and compensate for lost time. The CEO expressed his vision of quadrupling the value of the company by 2030. Meanwhile, some signals started to accumulate:

■ While competitors faced business headwinds, the CEO did not even admit to a problem. His front-facing employees and business associates were bewildered.

■ The chief accountant (book keeper) of the company observed that the deficit in the company cash flows was higher than what had been projected in the annual accounts. He felt that the barrier of prudent management had been breached by the real deficit. The CFO diplomatically responded that this would be "investigated seriously".

■ The company's former chief of business strategy later announced doubts about the company's revenue recognition methodology. The growth required to be corrected, according to him, because the growth over the last few years had been overstated. Amazing!

■ The company had a risk management department. The head and the deputy head had a simmering difference of opinion and styles. This difference broke into the open, caus-

ing directors to wonder how reliable its functioning was. ■ Some independent directors expressed concern about the internal matters and the functioning of the board. The CEO soft-pedalled and agreed to investigate their complaints.

■ Another independent director, who chaired the board's treasury and risk management committee guit the board: later admitting to serious differences on prudent management of risks

■ The CEO had announced major projects, involving significant capital purchases from overseas. Unconfirmed signals suggested that company procedures had been subverted. The CEO, of course, denied the allegations strongly.

■ In two independent communications, a group of suppliers and distributors expressed concern about the company's practices. As committed partners of the company, they wished to alert management. This was refuted in strong terms by another group of suppliers and distributors, who expressed loyalty to the company, implying that the first group was disloyal.

In this case, should the directors do something, maybe along the 5C path or any other? Does the answer not seem a big "yes"?

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Bercow "shocked"; his options limited

The offender is Her Majesty herself even though everyone knows she is obliged to do the bidding of the prime minister she has appointed



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K DATTA-RAY

t may sound presumptuous. But listening to John Bercow, Speaker of the British ► House of Commons, simmering in wrath over Parliament suddenly being shut down for more than five weeks, the late Bijoy Kumar Banerjee might well have adapted Gopal Krishna Gokhale's famous line and chuckled, "What Bengal thinks today, Britain thinks tomorrow."

For ignoramuses (or ignorami if you wish to sound pedantic), Banerjee was the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Speaker responsible in 1967 for what constitutional pundits call the most confident, bold and impartial act in India's legislative history. I can do no

better than repeat a few lines from this column of March 5, 2016, which recalled that stormy November 29 morning when I took my mother to the Assembly and the security man checking her handbag joked, "I must make sure Madam that you are not carrying a hand bomb in your handbag!" I wrote, "No sooner had the governor, Dharma Vira, a retired ICS officer, taken his seat than the Speaker, Bijoy Banerjee, stood up and wagging his finger like a village schoolmaster admonishing errant children, intoned that by summoning the Assembly, the governor had dealt the greatest blow to democracy since 1642, when King Charles I entered the House of Commons. The MPs he had gone to arrest had disappeared; asked about their whereabouts, the speaker, William Lenthall, famously replied in words Banerjee would have loved to utter, 'I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as this House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here'."

Banerjee then adjourned the House sine die. The background to that drama was the governor's dismissal (presumably under Indira Gandhi's orders) of West Bengal's elected United Front government. Instead, he appointed the septuagenarian former Congress chief minister, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, who pretended to head a notional "Progressive Democratic Front". The front had no existence outside Raj Bhavan's drawing room where the governor deluded himself that Ghosh's minority regime commanded a legislative majority. Back in the safety of Raj Bhavan (and no doubt after an exhaustive telephone conversation with his mentors in New Delhi) Dharma Vira retaliated to the tat of Banerjee's adjournment with the tit of dissolution. A crippling hartal followed by rioting led to the predictable President's Rule.

Bercow professes to be as shocked and indignant as Banerjee at what he calls "a constitutional outrage" whose "purpose" of stopping Parliament debate on Brexit is "blindingly obvious". But his options are limited in gentlemanly, law-abiding, protocol-bound Britain. The offender is not a civil servant governor appointed by the prime minister but Her Majesty herself even though everyone knows she is obliged to do the bidding of the prime minister she has appointed. It was Boris Johnson who decided Parliament should be prorogued although he is protected in the looking-glass world of British constitutional politics by the fiction of "The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty in Council' taking the decision. The Queen is said to have acted on the advice not of her prime minister but of her Privy Council. In conse-

quence, "the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain" will carry out her wish and prorogue Parliament. That exalted worthy is another MP who is appointed by the prime minister but enjoys nominal precedence over his boss.

Such anomalies and inconsistences spare what has been called the most aristocratic of democracies and the most democratic of aristocracies, the hurly-burly of Indian legislatures. I well remember the pandemonium in the West Bengal Assembly after Banerjee's bombshell when the dumpy little governor had to be bundled out into his car, his glasses knocked off in the melee. Towering over others, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, suspected by some of planning the coup and destined to become West Bengal's last Congress chief minister, clasped a bulky copy of Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice. The book might have been effective as a missile had Ray chosen to hurl it at Banerjee, but served no purpose in guiding our rough and ready politicians in practising India's tumultuous version of parliamentary politics.

There can be no question of Bercow or anyone else reacting so churlishly when the Queen in all her regal finery opens Parliament on October 14. But Her Majesty might spare a moment to ponder on the advice of an anti-Brexit organisation called Best for Britain: "If the Queen is asked to help, she would do well to remember history doesn't look too kindly on royals who aid and abet the suspension of democracy."

That takes me back to Banerjee's declamation about Charles I. But, of course, no matter what the great and the good say, history dare not repeat itself.

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ RATISH NANDA | CEO | AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Touching lives, not just structures

Nanda tells Veenu Sandhu that conservation and development go hand in hand

t's just past noon. Sidewok, a pan-Asian restaurant at Khan Market in New Delhi where we've decided to meet over an early lunch, is empty. Soon diners will trickle in. Khan Market — originally a market-cum-residential area for Partition refugees, now often counted among the most expensive retail high streets of the world — is not far from Ratish Nanda's "on-site office" at Sunder Nursery.

Within six months of being opened to the public, the stunningly restored 90-acre nursery complex with water bodies, Mughal-era monuments and lush green patches was listed on Time's 2018 list of the world's 100 greatest places to visit. Near Sunder Nursery, the Humayun's Tomb and several other monuments within the complex that houses it are listed as Unesco World Heritage Sites - courtesy the restoration efforts of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in India, of which Nanda is chief executive. And, across the busy Mathura Road that runs past the grand tomb is the Nizamuddin basti, where the community is reaping the benefits of the mammoth conservation exercise. While at Humayun's Tomb the visitor numbers have increased dramatically since the restoration in September 2013, within the basti the conservation has meant employment and better quality of life for the local population.

"Conservation and development go hand in hand — you can't have conservation by turning your back on the people," says Nanda, as don't know why I am so hooked on raw papaya salad!" he says —to be followed by shredded lamb in hot garlic sauce (one of my favourites), Thai red curry and steamed rice.

At the Nizamuddin basti, the trust started by fixing a school as part of a conservation effort and providing a pathology lab that has served some 460,000 patients till now which says something about the success of the initiative, that has reached out beyond the catchment community of 20,000. It built women's toilets long before building toilets became a movement in India, created women's parks, introduced a women and child health programme and also looked to provide economic opportunities to women.

Nanda slides his yellow diary towards me. "This," he says, "is made and sold by the women of Nizamuddin at Humayun's Tomb, of course with permission from the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India), which manages the tomb complex." On the hard cover is a pattern from the Humayun's Tomb. Another such self-help group, Zaika-e-Nizamuddin (flavours of Nizamuddin), runs a food delivery service with recipes drawn from the area's 700-year-old culinary heritage. The day I meet Nanda, four members of the group are in Hyderabad preparing dishes at the Park Hyatt kitchen.

Just as we begin talking about food, the som tum arrives at our table. The papaya is fresh and crunchy, and with the peanuts and the tangy, mildly sweet dressing, it makes for a deliciously light appetiser.

His approach is understated but Nanda is clearly passionate about the work he does. "I would do this job for free," he says. While he'd rather talk about his work than how he got into it, he relents when I ask. He studied to be an architect at the School of Habitat Studies in Delhi. "Ours was the first batch and we had a subject called Urban History. I got hooked in the very first year." He used to live in South Extension, "but till I got into college I had never crossed over to Kotla Mubarakpur (which is less than 1.5 km away)". The day he did, he says he was exposed to 600 years of architecture: baolis (stepwells), tombs, mosques... "I was a bit shocked. When you look around as an architect, our historic buildings in Delhi touch a chord in your heart that modern architecture doesn't."

As an architect, the critical question for him was: "What were they doing so different to produce this timeless architecture that we are not?" Traditional architecture, he says, is environmentally sustainable, suited to Indian weather conditions, is beautiful and it represents what we were and where we were as a civilisation.

"Architecture," he says, "is the mother of all arts. It just started with curiosity about the city - and the possibility of being able to save even a bit of that is a blessing."

By now, our plates have been changed and the main course is here. The lamb is perfect tender, shredded long, and slightly on the sweeter side, with just the right amount of garand Remains) that came out in 2014. It critically recognises that our traditional craftsmen are key to any conservation effort in India." This, he says, has been the trust's vision

right from the beginning. "What we are doing at the Aga Khan Trust for Culture is model projects. We are not here to take over every building in the country. We are here to demonstrate how conservation can be done and how it can lead to a lot of government objectives being fulfilled, one of which is employment creation." At the Humayun's Tomb, for example, 650,000 man days of work has been undertaken by craftsmen using the very tools that their forefathers used centuries ago. "Almost 75 to 80 per cent of what we spend in conservation is paid as craftsmen wages."

The other change is that the government seems to have realised that even culture needs to be liberalised. "Culture is still seen as the responsibility of the government — of the ASI to be presice. But the government's 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme is now inviting corporations and even individuals to come and fix our monuments." Corporate social responsibility also allows for spends in conservation. "It didn't earlier."

Conservation of a monument cannot be limited to the monument itself. This is the crux of the restoration and conservation projects Nanda has been part of. "What we have been saying since the 1980s was ratified in 2015-16 by the Unesco, which talked about the historic urban landscape approach."

The trust's ongoing restoration of the Qutb Shahi Tombs in Hyderabad, close to the famous Golconda Fort, also follows this approach. Here, besides the ton also gone into restoring the baolis.

While the scale of the work is for all to see, its impact isn't always measurable. Sometimes one just gets a glimpse of it — like when the community of Nizamuddin approached the trust in 2015 to undertake the conservation of their mosque after seeing the work at Humavun's Tomb. The 14th century dargah, the resting place of Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya and his disciple Amir Khusro, is now being restored. "It is a live mosque and it is taking us much longer than we thought because every now and then we have to stop work for Eid. Ramzan or Urs."

What has happened at Nizamuddin is that the way the community views itself has changed — and that, says Nanda, is how con-



red curry is, well, just that — red curry. Though difficult to get wrong, some places tend to overdo the flavours. This one, thankfully, doesn't. Around us, the tables are beginning to fill

up and the chatter is getting louder. But Nanda's focus doesn't waiver for a moment. A lot, he says, has changed in the sphere of

conservation in India and in the attitude towards conservation since the time he started. "There is a new national policy on conservation (National Policy for the Conservation of

lic so as not to overpower the senses. The Thai the Ancient Monuments, Archaeological Sites servation ought to touch the lives of people.



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

couple of years ago, I visited the Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh, branch of the Shiv Nadar Foundation-run VidyaGyan School for underprivileged meritorious students. Spending as much as ₹21 lakh per student over seven years, the two branches of VidyaGyan (the other one is in Sitapur, UP) provide world-class educational inputs in the hope that their students will develop into social doers with strong rural roots. While the campus was impressive and students even more so, I wondered whether transplanting children from households with incomes of less than ₹1 lakh (a prerequisite for admission) into privileged boarding schools would impact their ability to return to their communities. A recent conversation with Shikoh Zaidi, a Class 12 student of VidyaGyan Sitapur,

made me realise that not only could this be done, but that young people like her have the potential to become potent tools of social change.

Shikoh Zaidi's Red Revolution

"Last year, for a school project, I studied girl child education in my village," Zaidi told me. Conversations with community members enabled her to identify two basic reasons why her contemporaries in the village dropped out — either their parents weren't committed to their education or the girls themselves found going to school tough while menstruating as they didn't have access to sanitary napkins or clean toilets. Commercial napkins were unaffordable. "And, the government-subsidised lowcost pads were only available 20 km away in the block clinic." she said.

Consequently, all the women she spoke to used cloth instead, drying it away from the public gaze instead of in full sunlight to kill the germs.

"As part of a reading assignment in school, I'd read Deepa Narayan's book on gender inequality called Chup," she said. "It inspired me to help the young girls in my village." Zaidi started by organising meetings to talk about health and hygiene. "Initially, nobody was interested," she recounted. "But my father supported me wholeheartedly and when he requested our neighbours to come for my meetings, they couldn't refuse him." With the help of animation videos downloaded from the internet, the teenager started by talking about menstrual hygiene and the need to break the taboos around periods.

Many in her conservative community, including her mother, were initially shocked. "It was quite daunting, especially as many of the girls giggled loudly while I was speaking," she said. "But I felt I had to go on."

Zaidi derived much strength from her father, a farmer who has studied up to Class 12. "Abbu jaan has always supported my project," she said, "as he firmly believes that lifting taboos around menstruation and educating girls on menstrual hygiene will go a long way in empowering them." With his support and regular mentoring by VidyaGyan schoolteachers, Zaidi has spent the last year having open conversations about healthy menstruation practices in her community. Consequently, more and more families are coming around to the idea of letting their daughters use sanitary napkins and allowing them greater freedom during menstruation. "Now I'm going to pressurise the health department to make low-cost sanitary napkins available with the ASHA health workers in our village," she says.

In Class 12 now, Zaidi wants to study law and hopes to join the IAS. "Having received such a good education in school, I'll do whatever it takes to help my community." she said in parting. "Promoting menstrual hygiene is just a start...'

Don't blame it on me



PEOPLE LIKE US **KISHORE SINGH**

¬irst, my tailor said I now had a "relaxed" girth. He was measuring me up for new trousers, and when I suggested he stick with the old measurements because I'd walk off the difference, he sniggered. And, at any rate, he processed the order providing a more comfortable fit around the waist, thus robbing me of the incentive of losing those inches to fit into my old clothes. I blame him for not reining in those love handles.

Earlier this week, out at a friend's for dinner, an acquaintance sized me up critically and announced to the whole room — why? — that I'd gained weight. There was the tut-tutting you'd expect following such announ-

cement, so I abstained from a third drink, or snacks, and barely had any dinner at all, sticking to salads. "You won't lose weight this way," the acquaintance — a couple of stones heavier than me — chortled. I blame him for robbing me of the motivation to stay on a diet.

Then, last night, I went to meet a friend ahead of a family dinner, and he accused me of putting on weight. I demurred, saying I was puffy from lack of sleep, to which he said, "You have a belly." I was so upset I ate more than I ought over a lavishly ordered meal. I blame him for making me feel miserable because of which I over-ate. How's a person to stay slim with

friends like this? Over the years, my wife and I had arrived at an arrangement about leaving at the crack of dawn to go on a walk along a selected periphery of a few kilometers till, one day, my wife opted out. It's been many months that she won't wake up early, leaving me to read the papers alone, and eat biscuits from nervousness. Nor will she summon the yoga instructor. Or accompany me to a gym. By some strange alchemy, she's losing weight doing nothing at all, while I've, well,

piled it on. Naturally, she's to blame. I've told the cook not to give me

toast for breakfast, or cereals for meals, to which he's acquiesced while grumbling about the dining habits and demands of the household. And cleverly changed his cooking to include pastas, or pao with bhaji, or kulchas, which I'm asked not to fuss over since they're "fermented". That the accompaniments are loaded with carbs, or fried, is not discussed. My weight gain is a result of the cook's calorific regime.

You'd think escaping to the farm for detox would feature on one's weight-loss primer, but the maali there tends to operate in the traditional mould. He'll ply you with jugloads of frothy lassi, or various sugary inducements, bringing armloads of fattening stuff from neighbouring farms, and leave it about. You can hardly lose weight when your own staff is hell-bent on force-feeding you.

So I thought I'd turn teetotaler for a bit, but wouldn't you know it, that's when the kids would ask you to join them to toast a promotion, or because they were opening a bottle of something special at home — and what's the point of joining in if you have to restrict your intake to a thimbleful or two. They're as much to blame for my obese figure as those others who're mocking me for it.

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WEEKEND RUMINATIONS T N NINAN

Changing the narrative?

t has long been said that it takes a crisis for Indian politicians to undertake systemic economic reforms. We have seen the truth of that adage over the past week. Additionally, it was probably Arun Shourie who said that, for the Modi government, managing the headlines on the economy is almost as important as managing the economy itself. That would explain the brilliant timing of the finance minister's press conference yesterday, 90 minutes before the lowest quarterly GDP growth numbers in six years were announced, with manufacturing growth at a dismal 0.6 per cent. The National Statistical Office's ominous thunder faded in impact, given Nirmala Sitharaman's lightning strikes in banking.

So we have twin narratives. On the one hand, the economy's tempo is slower than at any point since the days of the "fragile five" in 2013 (when oil prices were twice as high). Growth over the last four quarters has averaged only 6.1 per cent. With the last quarterly growth figure of just 5 per cent, and dim prospects for the current quarter, get ready for the slowest annual growth since 2012-13.

The government has partially neutralised the impact of such bad news with its counter-narrative, of being responsive to the emerging situation. Since successive crises in the financial sector are seen as having impacted the broader economy by disrupting the flow of credit, the government has focused its attention on that by frontloading the re-capitalisation of its banks and now by folding 10 banks into four. Both announcements are designed to make for entities with stronger balance sheets. The RBI has chipped in with a larger-than-usual dropping of its policy rates to the lowest level in nine years.

Other announcements have come thick and fast. There have been rollbacks of tax pronouncements in the Budget, the further opening up of mining and retailing to foreign investment, and a massive subsidy for sugar exports so that mills can use the money to pay sugarcane farmers their dues. More generous depreciation rates have been designed to boost the sagging sales of commercial vehicles. Also coming, it is said, are a boost to government investment in infrastructure, incentives to promote exports, and a package for real estate. Meanwhile, the recent softening of the rupee's external value despite weak oil prices suggests a very belated realisation that an over-valued currency does the economy no good.

It is hard to recall another week in the two Modi governments' history that has been as packed with economic policy pronouncements. Senior government personages say that the government is now in listening mode, and willing to pay heed to criticism — something endorsed by businessmen. So what does it all amount to?

As a strategy, a steady flow of announcements is probably better than a single bigbang package that, if it fails to do the trick, leaves the situation even less hopeful than before. A continuous flow of announcements makes for lower risk and a more open-ended approach, since it can be continued till the cumulative impact makes people start thinking differently about the future, and (hopefully) begin to spend or invest more. Viewed through this prism, the government needs to do some more, and to plug some important gaps, before it can hope to change the mood.

As a first-line objective, the government would want to arrest the cyclical downswing and for consumption and investment to bottom out. Change will have to come first in consumption, since companies with stressed cash flows will hold off on investment till they see signs of improved sales. Bankers say the demand for corporate credit remains weak, but retail demand could well pick up by the festival season — if, by then, today's postponed demand starts spilling out. However, other than addressing the problems of cane growers, the government has done little to boost rural demand. Bear in mind that agricultural prices have been depressed, and rural wages have been more or less static for the past five years. Apart from which, there remain all the structural issues that wait to be addressed. So, long haul yet before the narrative really changes.

Our do unto others politics

Indian politics is caught in a vicious cycle of vendettas. BJP has taken it to a new level by weaponising CBI, ED, I-T, TV channels and social media

t's been an unlikely couple of weeks when, even in the season of Kashmir, Narendra Modi and Imran Khan have yielded space to three mere initialisms: CBI, ED, I-T.

That is because we have seen a flurry of the high and mighty raided, charge sheeted, questioned (The Indian media somehow prefers the more sadistic "grilled") and marched in and out of court.

Nothing that happens even in Kashmir right now, or another rant from Imran, or a friendly slap on Donald Trump's wrist by Narendra Modi, can beat the images of middle-aged CBI officers hitching up their trousers and climbing the walls of P

Chidambaram's Jor Bagh home for immediate news and tamasha

This brings back to me a late evening conversation and a treatise on what drives "us politicians" by a formidable practitioner of the craft. Let me also clarify that it was an alcohol-free, one-on-one dinner and therefore not at any elevated levels of "spirituality"

"Why do we invest our lives in NATIONAL INTEREST politics," my host asked. "Why do we endure the dust, heat, bumpy helicopters, 'dhakka-mukki' (pushand-shove), court cases, arrests, to

get this thing called power? Is mein aisa kya current hai (what is this irresistible pull)?" he said.

SHEKHAR GUPTA

Not the money, he said. After all, even after you made all your money, you couldn't really enjoy it. "In our politics, you can't be seen to be rich," he said, explaining how even your cars, homes and kurtas have to look modest. Even your families can't be seen flaunting jewellery, or splurging.

"Then why do you do so, what is this 'current' of political power and wealth if you can't even

"Yehi aap nahin samjhogey (this is what you don't understand), Shekhar Guptaji," he said. Then he went on to explain what happens when you get power. You do to the guy you defeated exactly what he did to you. Not even so much to him, but

"We know who his people are, in every district, every village," he said. "We send our police, vigilance bureau, whatever after them. For those we really want to target, we may even keep a kilo of illegal opium or a murder charge handy." Then what happens, he asked.

I said, "Obviously, when your victim suffers you get your revenge.'

"See, you don't understand us politicians (rajneta log)," he said. When we hurt these people, they go running to their bosses and say, huzoor, bachao mujhe (sir, please save me). Then their leader says, he can't because he hasn't got the power any more. The torture he suffers (jab woh tadapta hai), that is our fix, he said. "Tab dil mein

jo thandak padti hai, uske liye 5 saal dhakke khaate hain (the incredible pleasure we get from our rivals' helplessness to help his own is why we work so hard at our politics)."

Please do not jump to the conclusion that it's another anonymous story, because I promise to tell you who he was. Please stay with me until the end. Because, there is a twist in the tale.

 $T^{
m his}$ conversation took place almost two decades back. Much has happened since to build a large enough body of evidence to teach us how right he was.

At this particular point, we have P Chidambaram in custody, he and his son Karti accused in the INX Media case, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and former treasurer of Congress Motilal Vora charge sheeted at the age of 90 in the Associated Journals Ltd land allocation case, Kamal Nath under I-T probe, his nephew accused of bribe AugustaWestland helicopter purchase and arrested for bank loan fraud, Sonia, Rahul Gandhi and kev aides under trial in the

National Herald case, Karnataka

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middle-aged CBI

Congress stalwart D K Shivakumar under the ED's scanner, and so on. In 2015, not long after the BJP came to power,

corruption case was filed against the Congress party's Himachal Pradesh chief min-

ister Virbhadra Singh and his home was raided on the day of his second daughter's wedding. He had to rush home from the wedding venue and even cancel the celebratory lunch.

Praful Patel is living through frequent trysts with the ED on a bunch of cases; several of Mamata Banerjee's party colleagues, loyal police officers all have 'dates' with the CBI they couldn't exactly be enjoying.

Then, you can go back. Within two weeks of coming to power in the summer of 2001, Jayalalithaa charged her predecessor M Karunanidhi in a ₹12 crore "flyover" scam, had his home raided at 1.45 am, and the dramatic visuals of the old man being hauled down the steps would still shake you up.

At various points of time, Lalu, Mulayam and Mayawati were charged by the CBI, ED or I-T, irrespective of who was in power, the NDA or UPA. It is just that the cases waxed or waned, depending on whether they were playing ball with the Centre or not. Check the archives of the weeks leading up to the no-confidence motion against the UPA on

The latest to join the group of these usual suspects is Raj Thackeray, now accused by the ED of allegedly having made fake deals and making ₹20 crore out of the wreck called IL&FS.

Do the forensics on each one of these cases, and you will find a pattern. In each, the party now in trouble had done something similar, when it was in power, to the current incumbents. Amit Shah and Narendra Modi faced legal and criminal challenges for a decade, the former spending three months in custody on a "fake encounter" and murder charge (cleared later). Do note that Mr Shah too was pulled out when caught up in a child's wedding.

One of the two judges who ordered a CBI probe against Mr Shah did so two days before his retirement. He was facing a CBI probe in what was called as the provident fund scam in Ghaziabad. The CBI cleared him soon enough, and then Akhilesh Yadav's "secular" government made him chairman of UP's State Human Rights Commission. A wedding interrupted, a judge in a hurry two days before retirement, and a reward afterwards. Sounds familiar now?

There is no point getting into who threw the first rock. Because we are now caught in a vicious cycle. What used to happen in states two decades ago has come to the Centre. The BJP has only taken it to another level. First, by this triple weaponisation of the agencies, a few TV channels and social media. And second, by leaving the sidedoor open. To anybody willing to defect to them.

This is precisely what my host that evening

had said. This was the pattern in our rougher, state politics. Badals versus Amarinder, Mulayam versus Mayawati, Jayalalithaa versus Karunanidhi, Devi Lal versus Bansi Lal versus Bhajan Lal. Now this has come to New Delhi.

I am not about to break the promise I made to you earlier, to tell you the name of the political stalwart who gave me that master class in modern realpolitik of vengeance and sadistic joy. It was Om Prakash Chautala, then chief minister of Haryana and the conversation took place at Haryana Bhawan. And where is he now? In Tihar Jail.

He and one of his sons are serving a 10-year sentence for corruption. Because their politics of vengeance caught up with them, as have the voters. In these Lok Sabha elections, their party, which won a majority in Haryana once, secured just over 1.8 per cent votes. I look forward to a fresh chat with him once he comes out to ask what he thinks of where politics is headed.

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Going beyond the central bank "put"



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

he moral hazard created by the "Bernanke Put" and the Troubled Asset Relief Program or TARP in 2008 is still exerting a malign influence over global markets in 2019. In 2008, the Federal Reserve and the US treasury department took desperthe full dimensions of the sub-

prime crisis became apparent. sheet, pumping money into the and hasn't ever registered the global system by buying bonds. TARP focused on cleaning up toxic assets. Other central banks fol- and both European Union and

lowed in the wake of the Fed with Japan have negative rates. But on er. The Eurozone didn't look like rate cuts, quantitative easing (QE) and other liquidity-enhancing measures. Governments deployed counter cyclical policies. India, for example, vastly increased public spending. Similar measures the financial crisis of 2011-12.

fact that traders now expect sim- large proportion of In essence, we are ilar measures every time there is a growth blip, or some problem affecting the global economy. This encourages risk taking behaviour, predicated on the assumption that there will be bailouts if something goes wrong. Donald Trump's tweetstorms exhorting the Fed to cut rates, reinforces the assumption that a "put" is in

It's hard to make a definitive ate measures to stem the rot as assessment of the policy action after the subprime crash. It wasn't completely successful. The global The Fed expanded its balance economy didn't recover totally robust growth rates of 2005 since. Indeed QE continues in Japan

the other hand, things could surely have gotten a lot worse without the bailouts.

Another troubling issue is that the slowdown of 2019 isn't due to a The US-China trade war is direct- policies worked, at least to con-

globalization-a

and, to a lesser

extent, people,

moved with

period when goods

increasing freedom

The moral hazard lies in the ly responsible for a

Brexit has not yet of three decades of happened but it has caused issues. The UK is a large economy. Brexit will impact the entire Eurozone and cause some across the world uncertainty across

the rest of the world. In addition. likely than coordination. there are simmering tensions involving Iran, Syria, Venezuela, and potential flashpoints for conflict in the subcontinent and on the Korean Peninsula. There is also Hong Kong.

Contrast this with 2008. There was a full blown financial crisis then. But trade barriers were low-

crumbing as a political entity. The US-Iran equation was less fraught. Venezuela and Syria were going concerns.

More or less coordinated cenfinancial crisis, as in 2008, or 2011. tral bank action coupled to

> tain that crisis. Right now, it's a moot point if either central banks coordinate policies. Indeed if Mr. Trump's utterances are to be seriously, adversarial relationships with the US taking on the rest of the World appears more

As of now, the free trade of goods is impeded. It will take time for manufacturers to rework supply chains to reduce China dependencies. There are no guarantees that Mr Trump would not then raise tariffs on say, Vietnam or Bangladesh, or wherever man-

There are also serious impediments to free labour movement. Brexit is one example. The rest of the Eurozone is also seeing an upsurge of nationalism, which could result in problems for movements within that bloc. The US has tightened visa requirements, significantly raising costs for IT service providers. At the lower end of the services market, tighter checks on potentially illegal immigrants has also started to hurt American service industries.

Unlike in 2008, monetary loosing will not address these con or governments can cerns. In essence, we are seeing the rollback of three decades of globalization—a period when goods and, to a lesser extent, people, moved with increasing freedom across the world. This current situation can only

be addressed by governments talking to each other and agreeing to loosen newly-erected barriers. Looser monetary policy might spark off a strange situation, where capital flies across borders but goods and people face barriers. In that event, we're likely to see asset inflation. But growth won't accelerate meaningfully, until and unless the real geopolitical issues causing this slowdown are addressed.

The teachers we knew

EYE CULTURE

ANJULI BHARGAVA

he walks into the café, and although we have never met, I recognise her immediately. My instinct is to stand up and say good morning. She's got an air of authority. When she speaks, she holds your attention. She is the quintessential teacher.

with during my years in school. Ms Puri (the withering-look one), Ms Bhatt (the charming one, the boys and male colleagues loved), Ms Shahi (could have been modeling instead), Ms Mahajan (the no-nonsense air), Ms Mehta (cute, pert and lively) ... the list goes on. All these teachers I refer to had a very distinct personality and were forces to reckon with some more than others!

Let me explain why I call them "quintessential teachers". There are certain common qualities these ladies represent.

For one, they had a presence. They were all there. When they entered the room, you noticed. When they spoke, you listened. When their eyes were on you — even from one end of what seemed like an endless corridor — you felt them. You knew vou were heading into trouble, if not already there.

Second, they had an aura of calm and gentility. They never seemed harried or troubled — no matter what was happening in the classroom. Somehow, they knew how to make it right again. I'm not sure whether everyone was as cool as they appeared, but there was definitely something consistent and cool about their attire and the general look. Where is this sari shop they all seemed to favour? Between them, they represented every state of India in their selection — Bengali cotton, bandhini, ikat, patola and South silks.

But one thing was for certain: They all managed to look consistently comfortable and unruffled in their crisp saris.

There was also what we called the "big bindi brigade". This lot also usually had a large distinct red dot on their foreheads — the kind one associates with Usha Uthup or Shubha

These teachers were languageagnostic. It didn't matter which language they communicated with their students in — it may have been English, Hindi, Urdu, or even Odia but they managed to get their meaning across with eclat. With little or no ambiguity. They essentially meant business. Again, some more than others.

Most of these teachers — not all of course — were quite sensitive and Dehradun.

gentle in their dealing. It may not have appeared back then but most of them listened, even though you were just a 13- or 14-year-old and may not be dropping any pearls of wisdom. They actually heard you.

Then there were those who could shut you up with one look. They didn't say much — the look just conveyed their message: "if you know what's better for you, shut up". These were actually the most dread The withering look that made you squirm and feel like a worm, quaking in your shoes. Back then, of course, we as students felt we had been especially picked upon but in reality, these looks usually didn't come your way without a very good reason.

Reading — something teachers no longer appear to manage — was something almost all these teachers did with a passion. They read because they loved reading. I remember sometimes passing the teachers common room and finding one or the other teacher with her nose in a book. Of course, many knitted then...in general, their hands always seemed busy and their minds uncluttered.

One distinct quality most of these teachers had was their ability to hold your attention. Not only did they hold your attention, a few made you fall in love with a subject, or even iust a character. I know my English elective teacher made me fall in love with Bathsheba, the haughty and fiery farmer woman in Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd. I still remember the knot in my stomach I felt as she brought alive Pip's absolute terror at coming across his prisoner in the marshes in Great Expectations.

One of my biggest regrets today is not having taken up history in Classes 11 and 12, under one of the few male teachers in the arts section. the inimitable Zal Davar, By the time a student reached Class 10 in the CBSE back then, history was reduced to a meaningless series of names and dates and, therefore, I dropped it, only to realise now that it is one of my favourite subjects.

I don't know whether all this is just a figment of an overly vivid imagination or a crazy wave of sentimental nostalgia — triggered by my recent meeting with a quintessential teacher, the kind that is slowly turning extinct. I do know that this less hitech, less fancy and rather prosperous variety inspires more confidence in me than today's slightly anorexic, slightly lost, nervous, and more style over substance kind. And teachers need to start reading again. Period.

PS: My meeting was with Jyotsna Brar, former principal of Welham Girls,

NDA II: Politically verbose, economically dumb



LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

his article has been triggered by a question that the editorial director of this newspaper, A K Bhattacharya, asked a few days ago during a talk he gave on the economy. Why was the government not able to get its version about the RBI's transfer of ₹1.76 trillion across, he asked. How is it that the opposite version now dominates the discourse?

Which brings me to a larger paradox. How does Prime Minister Narendra Modi get his personal messaging and the government's political messaging so right — Modi as saviour, Article 370, triple talaq, etc — while getting its economic messaging so

If you look back, it was the and his personal messaging quite bad to your own people. How is it that eminent and Its own enemy

toeing the government line? Neither is a *bhakt* of the "BJP is always right" variety.

The same thing can be said about many other things. Take the case of GDP.

Pronab Sen, who headed the ministry of statistics and supervised the new GDP series, is like a brother to me. TCA Anant is actually a very close cousin. They are not bhakts by any stretch of the imagination. Quite the opposite, actually.

Even on demonetisation, banking, NPAs, employment, exports, exchange rate management, fiscal deficit, etc the government has failed to get its message across. Such comprehensive failure is quite extraordinary. Even the UPA's woes in this regard pale in comparison.

Modi years from 2002 to 2014. As ship cannot be the only measure chief minister Mr Modi got his of patriotism. Surely one imporeconomic messaging spot on — tant measure of patriotism is also remember the Gujarat Model? — to not make your country look

neutral economists like Bimal This is not to say that the gov-Jalan and Rakesh Mohan are ernment version would be 100 being implicitly charged with per cent correct and the opposite version is 100 per cent wrong. But where the NDA's economic performance is concerned, the truth lies not some-

To me the problem

seems to be this:

Whereas as chief

minister Mr Modi version. It's just that it was anxious to draw can't get this across effectively. So the dominant impresto his economic sion is the opposite deeds, as prime one — that everyminister he has thing is totally, been doing the well, messed up, opposite

shall we say.

where near the

middle but closer

to the government

Modi Mark II needs to think about this and not Commission, one former RBI insist that messaging is also only governor and one former chief a cyclical problem and not a structural one. Truth to tell, it is *chela*. The combined effect is purely a structural one, and it quite devastating.

This may not cause the BJP starts with the prime minister opposite in Gujarat during its electoral worries. But cow wor- himself and its roots lie in the sustained personal attacks on him after the riots of 2002.

His response has been to ignore the Opposition and the media completely. You should listen to the speech he gave on May 24, 2013, at the launch of the Ahmedabad edition of the *Hindu* Business Line, where I was employed then. "I don't need any of you," was his message. It is available on YouTube.

> To make matters worse, several persons currently holding important positions, or who had held such positions. have begun to muddy the waters.

attention away from Prominent among himself and divert it them are some cur-Prime Statistical

rently serving parttime members of the Minister's Economic Advisory Council and some former members of the

economic advisor, who was his

It is no coincidence that they are all academics who believe in the freedom of speech provision of the Constitution but not in the other part which imposes reasonable restraint. If nothing else, mere good manners demand that you behave yourself.

That said, there is the bad news itself. One relates to the slowing of the rate of output growth and the other to the rate of growth of jobs. Since neither can be explained away by bad news management, what should the government do?

The real problem

To me the problem seems to be this: Whereas as chief minister Mr Modi was anxious to draw attention away from himself and divert it to his economic deeds, as prime minister he has been doing the opposite. Someone in the Prime

Minister's Office needs to tell Mr Modi that he is the problem. Previous prime ministers always had someone who would tell them this. The list is long, starting with P N Haksar and ending with Pulok Chatterjee.

didn't always fail, either.

It didn't always work but it



SATURDAY, AUGUST 31, 2019



Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi

There must be a constant and continuous dialogue between individuals and organisations irrespective of one's thought process. We need not have to agree on everything but there must be enough civility

Opening healthcare's third Al

Google's work with deep-learning for diagnostics offers a glimpse into how AI can revolutionise healthcare

OOGLE'S DEEP-LEARNING research, involving a large dataset of retinal images used in diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy (DR), a diabeteslinked pathology that causes irreversible blindness, shows the transformative power of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. In 2016, the tech giant announced its deep-learning algorithm that had been trained using a dataset of 128,000 images—each of which had been reviewed by 3-7 expert ophthalmologists from a panel of 54—to accurately interpret underlying symptoms (microaneurysms, haemorrhages, hard exudates, etc) from fundus images (a specific type of imaging of the eye) and detect referable DR. Given the pathology affects 18% of the 70 million diabetics in India—and with 415 million diabetics worldwide, is now the fastest growing cause of blindness—Google's algorithm vastly improves the prospects of DR being screened by doctors faster, and in greater numbers than is possible in an unassisted scenario. For countries strained for resources and healthcare infrastructure, this is truly a manna since diagnosis in the early stages can prevent/delay onset of blindness. The algorithm's performance was tested with ~12,000 images, with the majority opinion of panels of expert ophthalmologists drawn from Google's pool of 54 on each of these images set as the reference standard. The panel members had been selected on the basis of high consistency of accurate diagnosis. The algorithm's performance on diagnosing the disease and its severity, in terms of combined sensitivity and specificity matrix, was 0.95 (the highest score possible being 1), slightly above the median score of 0.91 for the ophthalmologists who were part of the tests. Google has since been working with retinal specialists to build even more robust reference standards, including focussing on 3D retinal images. It is running field trials for AI-assisted diabetic retinopathy screening in Sankara Nethralaya and Aravind Eye Hospital in India. Further, research by the company showed that its algorithm is capable of aiding doctors in detecting cases that they would have otherwise missed; what makes this machinehuman collaboration even more exciting is the fact that the company's researchers $found that the \ highest \ accuracy was \ recorded \ when \ the \ algorithm \ complemented \ the$ skills of the doctor rather than an algo-alone or doctor-alone scenario.

Last year, the company showed how retinal images used in DR diagnosis can be used to detect risk of cardiovascular (CV) disease. Using images from nearly 300,000 DR patients, Google was able to train another deep-learning algorithm to ascertain risk of an adverse CV event with high accuracy for two data-sets of 12,026 and 999 patients. Not only was the algorithm able to distinguish between the retinal images of a smoker and a non-smoker while doctors can make out the difference between retinal images of patients with high blood pressure and those having normal blood pressure, it was also able to predict the blood pressure in each case with a very narrow margin of error. The trained model correctly predicted a patient's risk of cardiovascular disease over five years, from the image having been developed, 70% of the time. This was close to the performance of other traditional risk-calculation protocols with invasive tests (involving blood drawing, etc). The Google deep learning system, thus, not only complements the skills of healthcare professionals, but also pushes the boundaries of what healthcare can achieve in real time. If this is the potential from just one tech company's research, imagine the gains from the gamut of AI work happening at the moment, and not just in healthcare.

Prejudiced policing

Report exposes bias in minds of cops against Muslims

EVERAL STUDIES HAVE, over the years, showed that a higher proportion of $Muslims-relative \ to \ their population-share-tend \ to \ get \ arrested \ than \ most$ other religious/caste groups. In November 2016, for instance, The Indian Express reported that, at an all-India level, 15.8% of all convicts were Muslims as compared to their population share of 14.2%; and in the case of undertrials, the proportion of Muslims was an even higher 20.9%. In certain states, this ratio was a lot more adverse. In Maharashtra, for instance, while 12% of the population was Muslim, 20% of all convicts—and 30% of all undertrials—were Muslim; in Gujarat, Muslims were 10% of the population versus 21% of all convicts, and 22% of all undertrials. In Uttar Pradesh, the figures were 19%, 19% and 27%, respectively; it was 27%, 42% and 47% in the case of West Bengal. While the population data was from the 2011 Census, the criminal data came from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

A recent study—Status of Policing in India Report—brought out by Lokniti, CSDS and Common Cause explains this by showing how deep the communal prejudice is. Around half of the 12,000 police personnel surveyed across 21 states believed that Muslims are "naturally prone", in degrees varying from "very much" to "somewhat", to committing criminal acts. The bias was strongest in northern and central India, with an average of 63% of the police personnel in eight states in this region—Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarakhand—believing that followers of Islam naturally have a criminal disposition.

While profiling on the basis of community or caste is not desirable, several law enforcement agencies the world over do some form of this, even if this is never explicitly acknowledged. But, surely this has to be based on a more serious analysis of crime and criminals? Though there has been an attempt to do this through the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems, the scientific profiling is, at best, patchy. An average of only 68% of police data from various districts and states is available at the national level; further, forensic psychology, including profiling, is conspicuous by its absence in Indian law enforcement and criminal justice system.

Analysis by Shylashri Shankar of the Centre for Policy Research found that while in the TADA and Preventive Detention cases, there was a 19% increase in the probability of a pro-government outcome when the case pertained to security concerns, this probability doubled in the case of POTA. Given the arrest of innocent Muslims may certainly be a factor in aggravating communal polarisation, this is an issue the government needs to look at quite seriously, apart from the fact that it makes a mockery of legal and constitutional equality.

ProsperityPARADOX

India Child Well-being report highlights that prosperity is not the only parameter for children's development

TFIRSTGLANCE, the report on child well-being in India, released by World Vision India and IFMR Lead, speaks well of the state of India's children, but a closer look reveals gaps in performance of even the prosperous states. Using the same methodology as HDI, the report offers a composite index for child well-being. While Kerala (0.76) and Tamil Nadu (0.67) have the best showings, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, known human development laggards, are at the bottom. The report also presents separate indices, and, here, some of the well-governed, and otherwise developed states fall short. The report finds that states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, which have high incomes (prosperity), fare poorly in terms of some indicators. Maharashtra (0.56) is at the 21st position, and Gujarat (0.55) is placed 22nd.

Besides, overall rankings do not directly correlate with performance on individual factors. West Bengal, for instance, is placed 11th on the composite index, but ends up having a higher position on the health development indicator. In terms of positive relationships—bonds at the community and other levels that contribute to a child's well-being—Kerala slips down to 8th position, Maharashtra and Telangana perform poorly. Interestingly, six of the seven north-eastern states—excluding Sikkim—are in the top seven. In the third dimension, protective contexts, which observes children's livelihood and its effect—from exploitation and education to adolescent pregnancy—Sikkim leads other states. The report, thus, highlights the need for regionally-targeted policy reorientation to better cater to children's needs. To ensure that India's future generation is physically healthy and mentally sound, it is crucial that states acknowledge and address the nuances of their strengths and shortcomings.

NO PROOF REQUIRED

WE WILL ALL MISS ARUN JAITLEY VERY MUCH—FOR HIS NON-PARTISAN FRIENDSHIP, HIS INTELLECT & HIS IMMENSE CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLICY MAKING. ABOVE ALL, HE WAS A BRILLIANT IDEAS MAN

Jaitley: Politician savant

SURJIT S

BHALLA

Twitter: @surjitbhalla

Views are personal

Contributing Editor, Financial Express

RUN JAITLEY, A keen legal, political, economic and cricket mind, passed away way before his time at the young age of 64. He was also friend and mentor to many, and was part of the BJP trinity of Modi-Jaitley-Shah. Arun Jaitley had many leadership attributes, but in my opinion, in the main, he was a policy ideas man.

India will feel his contribution for a long, long, time. Both Goods and Services Tax (GST) and bankruptcy code are mega financial sector reforms, and possibly the most impactful. I want to briefly discuss his contribution and leadership towards making reforms happen.

GST: India's adoption of GST was not Jaitley's brainchild, but he certainly was the one who made it possible. There was a lot of opposition from the states, and from politicians of all hues. Its passage needed cajoling, negotiation, and single-minded pursuit. It required a constitutional amendment, and support from the Opposition. If you look at political leaders of all parties, the one who is respected, and befriended by all was Mr Jaitley. Both ex-post and ex-ante, Jaitley was born to make this legislation possible. Via adoption of GST, the world

learnt of another remarkable attribute about Jaitley—the ability to own up to mistakes, and work towards rectification. It is difficult to conceive of a mistake-less economic reform, particularly in implementation. The GST had too many rates, and mishaps were not properly accounted for. It had to be learning by doing, and it was. Never once did the finance minister claim that things were working well; exporters not getting their credit in time—true, and we will address that problem. And, Ms Sitharaman has promised that all past dues will be paid within the next three months. Too many rates—also acknowledged, and the GST council, led by Jaitley, repeatedly cut rates. Again, no excuses were offered other than the realistic apology that the GST decisions, given the federal nature of the tax, and the economy, had to be broadly by consensus. But India has seen more adjustments in the GST law, and with zero flip-flops (to date), than any reform in recent memory.

Policy making, even by the best, is never perfect. It is not my case, nor of any

other admirer of Jaitley, that he made all of the right decisions at the right time. But, not only was he most open to criticism, he was actually very goodhumoured about it. I remember the July 2014 Budget, the maiden budget of the Modi government. Mr. Modi had run a very successful political campaign against UPA economics, and one of the "jewels" of UPA policy was the retrospective tax. Everyone expected the tax to go, but it stayed there. When confronted, Jaitley smiled it off, took blame

Here, again, is a lesson for all of us recommending, or changing economic policy. The power of the bureaucracy is quite supreme. That it should be so, and was so, in 1947 is well understood. But, why that should be the case in 2004, or 2014, or 2019 is something that historians and psychologists should jointly consider.

rather than point to any bureaucrat, and

said it will be changed in due course.

I never worked for, or with, Arun Jaitley. Over the years, we have met at seminars. From my side (at least) there was a strong interest in establishing "contact" with Arun, especially since our interests overlapped so much. A law degree was my choice when very young; I am sure (I think!) that Mr Jaitley, at some time or another, must have wished that he was an economist! We both had a strong and passionate interest in cricket—he bought me two tickets for a match at Ferozshah Kotla some 20 years ago. And, that ticket came my way after a discussion over cricket. As it now transpires, and deservedly so, Ferozshah Kotla is going to be renamed the Jaitley stadium.

My real bond with Jaitley (again from my side) was in our obsession with policy *ideas*. The subjects for passionate discussion were economics, politics (elections) and cricket. I had asked him twice, in reasonably quick succession, to launch my books on education and the middle class (*The* New Wealth of Nations, November 2017) and *Citizen Raj* (April 2019). He

readily agreed to be the guest of honour for both books, and I was particularly grateful in April for Mr Jaitley attending, launching, and staying on for the discussion, despite being ill.

He had very sound ideas about elections. Since a long time, he had been maintaining that 2019 would be a Presidential-type elec-

tion. It was. That the aspirational middle class would decide the election. It did. And that PM Modi's inclusive growth agenda would win him the hearts and minds of the Indian electorate right again. And, substantiated rumour has it that his estimate of BJP victory was very, very, close to the actual.

That policy making is never perfect, even with the best of minds and the best of intentions, is illustrated by two "mishaps" in economic policy under Jaitley's stewardship. The first mishap occurred with the guarantee of 14% annual return in GST revenue for the states for five years from the date of implementation in July 2017. Nominal growth in GDP has averaged close to 10.5% from that date. That is a loss of approximately ₹45,000 crores annually to the Centre.

How much can this loss be attributed to an over-eager centre wanting to get a mega economic reform under their belt? Was Jaitley a bad negotiator? No. The 14% guarantee seemed the most expected reality at that time. Nominal GDP had grown by an average of 14% over the previous five years. The newly formed Monetary Policy Committee (the main "arbitrator" of inflation rates in India) was predicting accelerating inflation and, hence, 14% growth in GST revenues, did not seem such a stretch. It is another story that the MPC (and associated economists) got their inflation

forecast horribly wrong for the next 2+ years, and possibly at least the next 5+ years, and beyond.

The "institution" of MPC may not have been much of a reform at all. Again, a reality check-mate on a reform that on paper seemed reasonable. The UPA regime had unleashed a decade of, historically, the highest annual inflation in India, even higher than that in the wake of the global high inflation decade of the 1970s (induced by the quadrupling of the price of oil in October 1973). This was also the period of the highest fiscal deficits. Economists put two and two together and reached five.

expenditures. On expenditure, the restraint The real loss to the nation, his party, and even non-

supporters, is that

he was rudely

taken away so

much before

his time

Fiscal policy is about taxation and

shown by Modi-Jaitley has been exceptional and from my point of view, too exceptional Unfortunately, the fiscal hawks (including those in the Bimal Jalan committee!) do not give the duo enough credit for the fiscally responsible path they have followed. have already documented the path-break-

ing nature of GST reform. The first major direct tax reform was also initiated and inspired by Jaitley. Direct taxes were reduced in the 2019 interim budget; this was the first reduction in 22 years. Second, Jaitley announced that the goal of the government was to tax all corporates at a 25% rate. Hopefully, we will reach, and exceed, his target soon. Mr Jaitley was an optimist, and

someone who always saw possibilities for India well before most others. It is also remarkable (and a tribute to Jaitley's genius) that when no one saw potential in Modi post the 2002 Godhra riots, Jaitley was prominently by Modi's side. His ability to accurately size up individuals came across when he described me as a one-handed economist. Not sure he meant it as a compliment, but I took it as one—and he was accurate!

They say, and research proves, that an optimist lives much longer than a pessimist. The real loss to the nation, his party, and even non-supporters, is that he was rudely taken away so much before his time.

What if there was a trade war truce?

Views on whether the trade impasse can be bridged vary with Trump's every second tweet. Beijing is right to be wary of his flip-flops

EVEN A TRADE truce could have its losers. The economic conflict between the US and China has been jarring, no doubt—decades-old commercial relationships have been torn up, supply chains are getting upended, global growth is slowing, and investors and businesses are rattled. On days when the standoff seems endless, you might find yourself asking: Can't we just go back to the way things were?

But that view would dismiss the relative winners of this conflict, particularly those countries in Southeast Asia that have attracted investment otherwise destined for China. Just this week, the Nikkei Asian Review reported that Google Inc is taking steps to shift production of its Pixel smartphone to Vietnam from China. Shipments to American ports from Asia, excluding China, jumped in the first six months of the year, while imports from the mainland declined. An outbreak of trade peace, or a meaningful suspension of hostilities, could jeopardise this.

In its annual review of China's economy this month, the International Monetary Fund gamed out some scenarios for a trade deal. The baseline for such an agreement would likely aim to steer the trade balance between the countries toward zero. At the very least, it would try to make a big dent in the \$419 billion US merchandise deficit with China.

The IMF's outlined scenario would

MOSS Bloomberg see China buy more American cars, machinery and electronics; yet the lender found that it is unlikely Beijing

DANIEL

The IMF, a champion

of free-market

orthodoxy, has

become an

advocate of trade

war. Rather the

lender would prefer

a pact that isn't

based on quotas or

scaling up of

specified purchases

will stimulate its economy so much that it can absorb enough US goods without cutting back elsewhere. South Korea and Singapore—which both count China as their largest trading partner—stand to lose exports equal to about 2.1% and 3.8% of gross domestic product,

respectively, under such a trade agreement, the IMF reckons.

Australian mineral exports would suffer, too, as would electronics sales from Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia. "The impact on global GDP from the distortions introduced by a trade deal would likely be negative and weigh against the benefits from reduced policy uncertainty, the withdrawal of higher tariffs, and the introduction of

new reforms," the IMF wrote. While the biggest downsides would be felt in Asia, the disruption wouldn't be limited to the region. More purchases of US aircraft could affect France, in particular, given that Airbus

SE is Boeing Co's main competitor. This isn't to say that the IMF, a champion of free-market orthodoxy, has become an advocate of tradewar. Rather the lender would prefer a pact that isn't based on quotas or scaling up of specified purchases (though its concrete

alternative isn't immediately clear). Of course, you could argue that the Asia region may have been better off if the trade war hadn't started at all. But that risks ignoring some of the larger forces shaping the global econ-

omy long before President Donald Trump's election: the sustainability of the US's record expansion, the sunset of China's double-digit growth boom, and ageing populations in Europe and North Asia.

Views on whether the trade impasse can be bridged vary with Trump's every second tweet. Beijing is right to be wary of his flip-flops. As the economic damage from the trade war becomes more apparent, however, it's worth consideringwhether peace

would necessarily be the nirvana some are expecting come January 2021. While the Treaty of Versailles was better than the trenches, it also had serious some flaws.

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

THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO

A cry for peace Pakistan's all-out attempts to

internationalise the Kashmir dispute in the wake of the abrogation of Article 370, its decision to close its airspace to India, its latest test firing of a nuclear-capable surface-tosurface ballistic missile and India's threat to review its No First Use nuclear policy, its posture that PoK is the only dispute that remains to be settled and its intelligence agencies' warning of a possible entry of Pakistan-trained commandos with underwater strike capabilities into the Gulf of Kutch area and sabrerattling by both sides conspire to fill us with alarm at the prospect of a war. We cannot simply afford to be indifferent to the storm clouds of war gathering over the subcontinent inhabited by one-fifth of the world population. It is a truism to say that a clash, a conflict or a confrontation between nuclear-armed powers will have catastrophic consequences; still, it needs to be reiterated for the umpteenth time to defuse the situation before it reaches flashpoint. When nuclear powers fight, the question of one country matching or not matching the military might or superiority of the other country does not arise. The end result of a conflict fought with nuclear arms or a nuclear conflagration is nothing short of annihilation. New Delhi and Islamabad should guard themselves against matching provocation with overreaction. No doubt nationalism and religion command a lot of devotion from millions of people, but they cannot desensitise them to the dangers of a military spiral. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS

The recent stimulus has offered temporary relief; however, to achieve lasting robustness, the economy needs a big dose of creativity

HARSHAVARDHAN NEOTIA

The author is president, AIMA, and chairman, Ambuja Neotia Group

NDIA'S ECONOMY IS growing steadily despite global headwinds and is set to recover from the current setbacks soon. But the country must not waste another crisis. India has an opportunity to innovate its way out of trouble and chart a faster course for growth. Innovation spawns strong cycles of investment and consumption, and gives new competitive advantages to an economy.

Next month's National Management Convention, the All India Management Association's annual event, aims to nudge India's business and policy leadership towards innovation-led policies. Many government and business leaders will present their ideas on a range of innovation issues concerning economic reforms, infrastructure, investment, trade, technology, job creation, entrepreneurship, etc.

If India is to nearly double its economy over the next five years, fundamental policy and business innovations are needed. The recent stimulus has offered temporary relief, but to achieve lasting robustness the economy needs a big dose of creativity.

Knowledge is replacing capital and labour as the key factor of production and competitiveness. The new economy is about value-creation and not valueextraction, and the future belongs to companies with intellectual assets. Today, the most powerful global companies are innovation warriors that have very low capital and labour intensity.

India has to accelerate its climb up the innovation ladder to ensure continuity of economic growth. The country ranks 57th



among 126 nations surveyed for Global Innovation Index. That is both good and bad. Although India has done well for a low-middle income country, its ranking is not commensurate with the nation's aspirations and growth needs. While it ranks number one on ICT services exports, sixth on engineering and science graduates, and 18th on global R&D companies, it

ranks 80th on political and business institutions, 56th on human capital and research, 64th on innovation linkages and knowledge absorption, and 43rd on knowledge creation and diffusion. Clearly, it's time for India to get its capabilities in line with its ambitions. Intellectual property creation is basic

to building an innovation economy. India is a laggard in patent applications—for every \$100 billion of GDP, India has less than 200 patent applications compared to 6,000 in China. In 2017, according to UN's WIPO report, India awarded 12,400 patents and 86% of those patent approvals were obtained by foreigners.

India could deepen its pool of foreign innovators by getting creative with its FDI practices. America's tariffs and tech-

ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE nology bans on China are forcing global companies to look for alternative bases in Asia, but India is not attracting many of

them. We could learn from Vietnam,

which is offering ready-to-move-in industrial sheds with allied utilities and logistics for quick transfer of production out of China. FDI works better when it is built around market linkages and not just on cost arbitrage. The key to becoming an innovative nation is to reward disruptors and not the establishment. The US, Europe, Japan, Israel and now China have become

innovation powerhouses because they favour value-creators over rent-seekers. The Silicon Valley has been a model innovation ecosystem because the start-ups can focus on creating new ways of producing and consuming things and get rich doing it. Government spending on basic

research is critical for developing an innovation ecosystem. Internet, GPS, digital assistant, touch screen were all developed with American government's funding. China has become a leader in 5G, electric vehicles and digital surveillance

displaying progress in water management,

technologies because of direct government involvement. The government is best-placed to invest in experimental science and technologies because of its reliable tax revenues, whereas the private sector is best placed to build commercial applications on top of basic R&D because of its efficiency.

But it's critical that a share of private profits from public investments are ploughed back into basic science and technology research. American tech giants are coming under pressure to pay more taxes and invest more in research institutions instead of using their huge surpluses for buying out other innovators and buying back shares. If the government has no incentive to fund or support invention and discovery, the private sector will be terribly short on innovation.

Regulations and incentives play a vital role in directing innovations. Each generation of automobiles are cleaner and safer because of regulatory pressure. Solar and wind energy industries owe their development to subsidies and tax breaks. India can transform its education, sanitation and healthcare sectors by loading incentives in favour of innovations and against inefficient technologies and operating models.

The size of R&D budgets matters, but innovation is usually not proportionate to the budget. Creativity does not come by kilos. Instead, it comes by flashes of brilliance triggered by right conditions. Among American tech giants, Apple spends a lot less of its revenues on R&D than Intel, Facebook or Alphabet. Of course, mass market players have to spread their bets wider than niche players. Typically, tech giants spend 15-20% of their revenues on R&D compared to typical industrial leaders' spending of 4-6% of revenues on R&D. It is no surprise that tech companies are disrupting every industry.

Among emerging economies, China is a great example of rise to prosperity and power through innovation. India can learn from China's deliberate increase in innovation-intensity of its economy. China is the only middle-income country among the 20 most innovative nations and its R&D spending and academic research are rising the fastest in the world. At the 2018 conference of the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence, 265 research papers of China were accepted compared to 16 from India.

India has a serious innovation deficit and it has to make up in a rush. Experimentation may involve risks, but there are enormous rewards for successful innovations. More than the fear of failure, the biggest obstacle to innovation is the idealisation of obedience and safety. Time has to come for India to think disruptively and take a moonshot approach to solving its big problems.

Ravaged Bank of India?

Govt dips into central-bank reserves; it matters only because people think it does

OST CENTRAL BANKS occupy impressive premises in expensive parts of town. Few begrudge them this perk. Nice digs seem only fitting for the guardians of the nation's currency, giving them a reassuring air of gravitas and permanence. But is grand architecture necessary for central banks to perform their functions? Is there any economic justification for it? The honest answer is 'no'.

What is true of central-bank architecture is also true of central-bank capital. Most such institutions have reassuring balance-sheets. Their assets, which usually comprise safe government securities, comfortably exceed their liabilities, which are chiefly the banknotes they issue and the deposits held with them by commercial banks. The assets of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), for example, exceed its liabilities by over Rs 9 trillion (\$125) billion), of which about Rs 2.7 trillion is ready to hand.

This balance-sheet is a source of pride, allowing the institution to feel financially independent. Thus, when Narendra Modi's government began to argue that it was too lavishly capitalised, the RBI was displeased. And when the finance ministry concluded last year that it should give some of its excess capital to the government, which was keen to shore up public-sector commercial banks, the RBI resisted. The tussle was one reason why Urjit Patel, then its governor, resigned.

The central bank asked Bimal Jalan, a former governor, to consider the issue further. This week, his committee recommended that the RBI reduce its risk buffer to 5.5-6.5% of its balance-sheet. Now, under more pliant leadership, it promptly reduced the buffer to the bottom of that range, enabling it to hand over Rs 526 billion in addition to a bumper dividend of over Rs 1.2 trillion. Rahul Gandhi, an opposition leader, accused the government of stealing from the RBI. A former minister said the institution had been left no room to intervene in a crisis. Another critic said Mr Modi had "converted the R in RBI from 'Reserve' to 'Ravaged."

Lost amid this political controversy was the deeper economic question of whether central banks need capital at all. They cannot go bust. Their liabilities are the money they issue. But that money is simply a promise to pay money. Their creditors already hold the thing they are owed. Central banks' assets are also peculiar. The principal one is their licence to print money that people will accept in exchange for real resources. This right to earn seigniorage, as it is called, is worth a lot, even if their money-printing is constrained by the need to keep inflation in check.

Mr Jalan's committee argues that central banks do need strong financial positions to carry out their business. But its justifications mostly boil down to perceptions: central-bank capital matters because people think it does. That can include central bankers. If a central bank fears negative equity, it may sacrifice other macroeconomic goals to protect its financial position. But if this phobia dis $torts\,their work, perhaps\,they\,should\,work\,harder\,to\,shed\,their\,fear.$

Several central banks have functioned well for years with liabilities that greatly exceed their assets. Often they have accumulated large stocks of foreign-exchange reserves, which fall in value relative to their domestic currency when it appreciates. In these cases, then, the central bank suffers capital losses because of growing, not diminishing, confidence in its money. Take the Bank of Thailand (BOT). It says emphatically in its financial statements that its "accumulated loss has no impact on the continued operation of the BOT." And indeed inflation in Thailand is less than 1%. Perhaps it helps that the BOT's handsome premises are valued at over \$200 million.

THE ECONOMIST

DATA DRIVE

The looming water scarcity

Y 2030, INDIA'S water demand will exceed supply by two times, indicating severe water scarcity in the country. In fact, 820 million Indians living in 12 river basins have a per capita water availability close to or lower than 1,000 cubic metres—the official threshold for water scarcity. The average all-India per capita water availability is expected to be 1,341 cubic metres by 2025, and touch a low of 1,140 cubic metres by 2050, close to the official water scarcity threshold.

Water demand will exceed supply by two times by 2030



Scarcity is on the horizon

Annual per capita water availability expected to reduce to 1140 m³ by 2050, close to the official water scarcity

threshold of 1000m³ 6% of GDP will be lost by 2050 due to water crisis under

business-as-usual scenario Source: Composite Water Management

epaper. firancia press. com

Nagaland

Sikkim

Tripura

3.15

1.54

Index — NITI Aayog

The second round of the Composite Water Management Index (CWMI 2019) developed by the NITI Aayog, a tool to assess and improve the performance in efficient management of water resources, focuses on policy-oriented decisions that can be taken in the water sector. The report points out that 82% of rural households in India do not have individual piped water supply and 163 million live without access to clean water close to their homes.

but the overall performance remains below what is required to tackle the challenges. Around 80% of the states assessed over the last three years have improved their water management scores, with an average improvement of 5.2 points. However, 16 out of 27 states still score less than 50 points on the index, out of 100. They account for 48% of the population, 40% of agricultural produce and 35% of economic output of India.

The Index shows that states are Haryana reported maximum progress on the Water Index Change in Composite Water Index scores (FY15-16, FY16-17 and FY17-18) Non-Himalayan states Haryana Goa 14.44 Rajasthan 8.39 AΡ 8.12 **Jharkhand** Karnataka Telangana Tamil Nadu 3.97 3.66 Gujarat 2.71 Kerala Punjab 2.22 Bihar 0.19 Uttar Pradesh -0.1 -0.73 Maharashtra Chattisgarh -1.18 Odisha -7.27 North East & Himalayan states Uttarkhand 13.05 Himachal Pradesh 11.04 Assam 10.31 Meghalaya 8.78

Sixteen out of 27 states & UTs assessed on the Index in FY17-18 scored less than 50% of total achievable score

States scores on CWMI, Range 0-100 (FY 17-18)





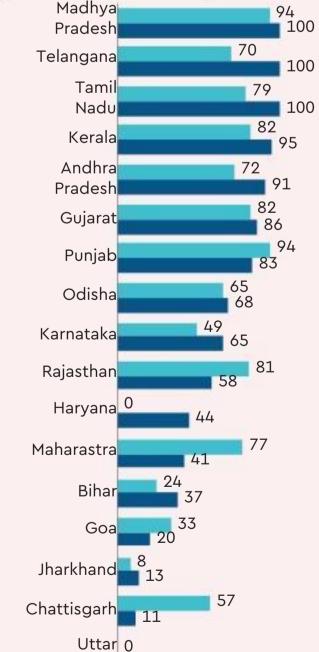
Delhi

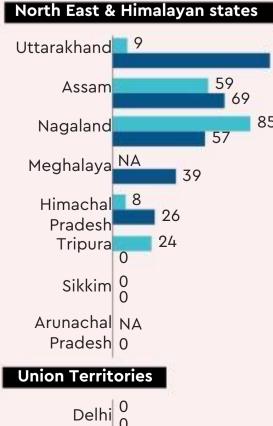
20

Eight out of 27 states have restored more than 80% of the possible irrigation potential

Area irrigated by water bodies restored as compared to the irrigation potential area of total number of water bodies identified for restoration







Pradesh 0

Puducherry 0

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, AUGUST 31, 2019 13 BODY & MIND

SHORT COURSE

[0-20 YEARS]

Tattoo needles may trigger allergic reactions

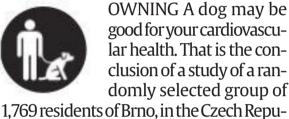


TATTOOS CAN cause allergic reactions, and tattoo needles, even clean ones, may be partly to blame, a new study found. Previous studies have shown that tattoo

inks contain high amounts of nickel, chromium, cobalt and mercury, which are transported to the lymph nodes and can cause allergic reactions. But now researchers have found that an additional source of metal is the needles themselves. Scientists analysed 12 steel tattoo needles and found that all contained chromium and nickel. They looked at the needles with an electron microscope before and after they were used. After a tattooing session, the needles were abraded, with microscopic bits of nickel and chromium worn off. The report is in Particle and Fibre Toxicology. We cannot quantify the risk that comes with these particles," said the report's lead author, Ines Schreiver of German Federal Institute for Risk Protection. "But in general, be aware that there might be risks" **NYT**

[20-50 YEARS]

Dog owners may have healthier hearts



OWNING A dog may be good for your cardiovascular health. That is the conclusion of a study of a randomly selected group of

blic. None had a history of cardiovascular illness, and 42 per cent owned pets. Researchers scored them on the American Heart Association's seven measures of heart health: blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, physical activity, diet, body mass index and smoking. Then they compared scores of the 24 per cent of the people who owned dogs and the 18 per cent who owned other pets with those of the rest who owned none. Owners of any pet scored higher than those who didn't own a pet, but dog owners scored higher than both. The authors do not conclude that owning a dog by itself assures protection against cardiovascular disease. Instead, the physical activity that dog ownership requires may be the key.

[50+YEARS]

Diabetes: Fish oil supplements show no benefits



TAKING FISH oil supplements has no benefit in preventing or treating Type 2 diabetes, a large review of randomised clinical tri-

als has found. Some observational studies have suggested a positive effect for supplements, which are high in omega-3 fatty acids, and they are widely promoted for diabetes control and prevention. But this new analysis, commissioned by the WHO, included 83 trials involving 1,21,070 subjects with and without diabetes, mostly testing omega-3s against placebo. Omega-3s had little or no effect on the likelihood of a diabetes diagnosis, on average blood glucose levels over time, or on fasting insulin. "There is no evidence from long-term studies that taking fish oil supplements will improve diabetes control or lessen the risk of developing it," said senior author Lee Hooper of Norwich Medical School. NYT



Gracia Lam/NYT

Alternatives to surgery for an enlarged prostate

Up to 90 per cent of men in their 70s have benign prostatic hyperplasia, a nonmalignant growth of the prostate gland

Experts say that

should now be

circumstances

in certain

aggressive surgical

treatment like TURP

necessary to treat an

enlarged prostate only

JANEE BRODY

ED GOLDMAN, a retired bookbinder who says he is "pushing 80," does not let his age or enlarged prostate curtail his physical activities and desire to travel. He walks the streets of his beloved New York for about two miles a day, five or more days a week, and knows every possible bathroom stop along his usual routes.

When arriving in foreign territory, he immediately checks out the location of lavatories to avoid an embarrassing accident. "The urgency, when it hits, can be pretty scary," he told me.

Goldman, like up to 90 per cent of men in their 70s, has benign prostatic hyperplasia, or BPH, a non-malignant growth of the prostate gland. As the prostate enlarges with age, it squeezes the urethra that passes through it and can disrupt normal urinary function.

The prostate is a walnut-shaped gland that produces the seminal fluid in a man's ejaculate. The gland typically starts to enlarge in men's 40s as smooth muscle and lining cells proliferate. As the gland gradually increases in size, nearly half of men develop moderate to severe symptoms of the lower urinary tract by their eighth decade of life.

These symptoms can include hesitancy starting to urinate; weak flow; incomplete emptying of the bladder resulting in urinary retention; a frequent urge to urinate, and for some, an urgency that can cause incontinence, especially when lacking immediate access to a bathroom.

The result is often a serious diminution in quality of life, for example, when one has to make a sudden dash to the restroom in the middle of a meeting, golf game, concert or lecture that perhaps lasted longer than expected. The urgent need to urinate makes

getting stuck in traffic or in a stalled subway car ever more stressful.

Goldman said he uses the bathroom every one to three hours and at least once during the night, adding that "it is very unusual for me to sleep for more than six hours at a time." He knows he is lucky so far. For some men who awaken every few hours to use the bathroom while trying not to disturb a bed partner (if they have one), a sixhour stint of sleep would be considered a blessing.

Common risk factors for developing B P H include, in addition to age, a family

history of the condition, obesity, metabolic syndrome, a sedentary lifestyle and diabetes. There is a higher incidence among African-American men. Diets high in starches and meat have been linked to progression of BPH, while a vegetable-rich diet has been associated with less severe symptoms.

The good news is there

are now quite a number of ways to alleviate the symptoms of B P H short of surgery to remove part or all of the prostate, which can cause other problems, including erectile dysfunction. According to guidelines published by the American Urological Association, recent treatments have focused on slowing the progression of the condition and preventing its

complications. Still, the first approach to relieving the symptoms of BPH, and perhaps even preventing or slowing the progression of prostatic enlargement, are focused on lifestyle changes. They include reducing overweight; minimising liquid intake late in the

day; getting regular physical activity; avoiding smoking and consumption of alcohol, caffeine and highly seasoned foods; and treating constipation.

Also helpful for men (and women) who have difficulty fully emptying their bladder and soon have to return to the bathroom is a technique called double-voiding. After urinating normally, wait about 20 to 30 seconds and try again. Men are likely to have more success emptying their bladders by sitting on the toilet and leaning forward instead of standing.

The traditional "gold standard" remedy

for B P H known as TURP, for transurethral resection of the prostate, involves inserting a scope through the penis and cutting away excess prostate tissue to relieve pressure on the urethra. Though TURP is the most effective remedy for troublesome BPH, in addition to causing sexual complications, this surgery incurs a risk of bleeding that limits its usefulness for men like

Goldman who take anticoagulants. In a less invasive version of TURP with fewer complications, a bipolar current is used to ream out the prostate. Another minimally invasive technique, called HoLEP, uses

laser irradiation to remove excess tissue.

Experts say that aggressive surgical treatment like TURP should now be necessary to treat an enlarged prostate only in $certain\,circumstances.\,These\,might\,include$ inadequate kidney function, recurrent urinary tract infections, bladder stones, blood in the urine, or the patient's unwillingness to take a daily medication or failure to get relief through drugs.

Among currently preferred treatments are several categories of drugs, including alpha-blockers like Flomax, 5ARIs like finesteride, and PDE5 inhibitors like tadalafil. There is also a combination drug of an alpha-blocker and a 5ARI that is said to work better than either one alone. While the sexual side effects of surgery are usually permanent, if such effects are caused by a medication, they can be reversed by stopping the drug and perhaps switching to another one.

There are also now minimally invasive techniques to reduce the pressure exerted on the urethra by an enlarged prostate. In one, called the UroLift System, a telescopelike instrument is inserted through the penis and one or more small bands are inserted to retract the part of prostate that is pressing on the urethra. It is usually done in a urologist's office as an outpatient procedure under local anesthesia and is supposed to result in immediate symptom relief with minimal risk of sexual side effects.

Another minimally invasive procedure, called Rezum Water Vapour Therapy, uses convective water vapour energy to destroy overgrown prostatic tissue. As with the UroLift System, it is done in an office setting under local anesthesia. The risk of side effects, including those associated with sexual performance, is reported to be low.

Keep in mind that most of the data about the success of UroLift and Rezum, including reports from patients, come from their manufacturers. If you are considering one of these, it would be a good idea to speak with one or more men who have had the procedure.

Most important, the urological association insists, is that patients with B P H be told about all the various treatment options and their benefits and risks, enabling them to make an informed decision about how to treat their problem. NYT

DIET DIARY

Why be cautious on whey



BY ISHI KHOSLA

THE USE of protein supplements, especially whey protein, is rising among gym-goers and sportsmen. Endurance and high-intensity workouts do merit an increase in protein requirements, which can usually be met with natural dietary sources. However, most people, including youngsters, are now opting for supplements as a convenient choice.

Whey constitutes about 85-90 per cent of the volume of the milk used for transformation into ripened cheese and retains about 55 per cent of milk nutrients. Whey protein isolates, extracted from liquid whey, are more than 90 per cent protein and may contain other substances, including growth factors.

Whey protein is considered the gold standard of protein as it is a high quality, complete protein that is a rich source of branched chain amino-acids (building blocks of proteins) and essential amino acids. Whey proteins are not a single protein but consist of a number of individual protein components. Whey protein contains more leucine – essential amino acid — than milk protein, egg protein and soy protein.

Commonly known benefits of whey include a boost to the immune system, muscle building, lowering of cholesterol levels and high blood pressure and cancer prevention. The benefits of whey protein are well-known and documented. However, not all people are the right candidates for whey as tolerance levels may vary. Increasingly, the issue of food sensitivities comes up as a reason for intolerance. People with known food sensitivities like milk, dairy and gluten, digestive disorders, including stomach and intestinal disorders, must be cautious and avoid whey protein supplements. More often than not, the undesirable side-effects are not recognised early enough.

From skin problems to abnormal liver and kidney function, the side-effects can be diverse. Some of them are abnormal heart rhythm, increased bad cholesterol, digestive complaints like acid reflux, bloating, constipation and cramps, nausea, headache, hairfall, acne, poor bone health and reduced appetite.

Diabetics should be careful and consume whey only if advised by a professional. Whey protein may also increase the risk of bleeding and those taking blood thinners or with bleeding disorders should avoid it. In general, longterm and excessive use of whey protein should be avoided.

Whey protein contains many of the same components found in human breast milk and for this reason, it is a key ingredient in a wide variety of infant formulas, including those for premature infants. However, in infants, colic, diarrhoea, failure to thrive, and rashes have been associated with whey protein exposure. Pregnant and lactating women are advised to choose natural sources of protein.

> Author is a clinical nutritionist and founder of www.theweightmonitor.com and Whole Foods India

Exercise may help women suffering from depression

Benefits may depend on supervision, finds study

GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

FOR WOMEN with serious depression, a single session of exercise can change the body and mind in ways that might help to combat depression over time, according to a new study of workouts and moods. Interestingly, though, the beneficial effects of exercise may depend to a surprising extent on whether someone exercises at her own pace or gets coaching from someone else.

Already, a wealth of recent research tells us that exercise buoys moods. Multiple studies show that physically active people are more apt to report being happy than sedentary people and are less likely to experience anxiety or depression. In a few experiments, regular exercise reduced the symptoms of depression as effectively as anti-depressant medications.

But science has yet to explain how exercise, a physical activity, alters people's psychological health. Many exercise scientists speculate that working out causes the release of various proteins and other biochemical substances throughout our bodies. These substances can

enter the bloodstream, travel to our brains and most likely jump-start neural processes there that affect how we feel emotionally. But it has not been clear which of the many substances released during exercise matter most for mental health and which kinds of exercise prompt the greatest gush in those biochemicals.

Those open questions prompted Jacob Meyer, an assistant professor of kinesiology at Iowa State University in Ames, to start considering endocannabinoids and the runner's high.

As the name indicates, endocannabinoids are self-produced psychoactive substances, similar to the psychoactive compounds in cannabis, or marijuana. Created in many of our body's tissues all the time, endocannabinoids bind to specialised receptors in our brains and nervous systems and help to increase calm and improve moods, among other effects.

Past studies show that exercise often increases the levels of endocannabinoids in the bloodstream, probably contributing to the socalled runner's high that leaves some people feeling tranquil and floaty after workouts.

At the same time, problems with the endocannabinoid system are linked with some



mental health concerns. People with diagnoses of depression often have relatively low levels of endocannabinoids in their blood.

So, Meyer thought, might exercise that increases endocannabinoid levels potentially play a role in combating depression? And if so, what kinds of exercise would produce such an increase, and what kinds would not?

To learn more, Meyer turned to stored

University of Wisconsin, had involved women with major depression completing a number of workouts on stationary bicycles. Each of the workouts lasted for 20 minutes,

vant earlier experiment. That research, which

he had conducted as a doctoral student at the

but their intensities varied substantially, from light to draining. During most of the sessions,

the women were told how intensely to pedal, with their efforts monitored and adjusted so they maintained that level. But during one workout, they could choose the intensity, pedalling as easily or strenuously as they liked.

Before each session, the women gave blood and completed questionnaires about their emotional states. Immediately afterward, they gave blood again and, 10 minutes and 30 minutes later, repeated the questionnaires.

In earlier studies using data from this experiment, Meyer reported that any exercise, whether its intensity was light or difficult, left the exercisers feeling more cheerful. However, the positive impacts tended to be more substantial when the women followed directions about how intensely to exercise compared to when they set their own pace.

Now, for the new study, recently published online in Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, Meyer set out to see if any changes in the women's endocannabinoid levels after the different sessions might have played into that dynamic. For the sake of a simple comparison, he focused on one session in which the women had cycled continuously at a moderate pace and another in which they had pedalled at whatever intensity they chose. For most, their you-pick effort was gentle; but for others, it was moderate, and for a few, intense.

And he found notable differences in outcomes. After both workouts, the women reported feeling less depressed and worried. But only when they had followed instructions to pedal moderately did their blood show increases in endocannabinoids. When they had exercised at their preferred pace, even if it was moderate, endocannabinoid levels remained unchanged. What these results suggest, Meyer says, is that being coached leads to different impacts on our bodies and minds than working at our own pace, whatever that might be

Why the prescribed exercise should have increased endocannabinoids, though, while the go-as-you-please workout did not is still mysterious, he says. It may be that our brains recognise when a workout's intensity is not one we would voluntarily choose and prompt the release of substances that make the effort more tolerable. That idea requires additional research, he says. This study also did not look at men with depression or the long-term impacts of the exercise.

Overall, the study underscores that our responses to exercise can be complicated, interweaving the physiological and the psychological, Meyer says, but any exercise is better for mental health than none.

WORDLY WISE

MAN IS A NOISOME BACILLUS WHOM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER CREATED BECAUSE HE WAS DISAPPOINTED IN THE MONKEY. — OTTO VON BISMARCK

The Indian EXPRESS

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BIGGER, BETTER

Consolidation of state-owned banks is an ambitious step. Its success will hinge on stronger central bank, governance reforms

LMOST THREE DECADES after the M Narasimham Committee first recommended a redrawing of India's banking landscape, the NDA government on Friday announced a big and bold step to consolidate state-owned banks. According to the mega merger plan unveiled by the finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will be merged with Punjab National Bank, making it the second largest bank in the country, while the southbased Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank will become one entity which will make it the third largest local lender, besides an amalgamation of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank with Union Bank of India and Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank. This comes on top of the merger of associate banks of the SBI with the parent bank, and that of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda during the Narendra Modi government's first term, thus pruning the number of government banks to a dozen.

A consolidation offers the promise of economies of scale, leveraging of pooled resources, manpower, brands, better utilisation of branch networks and increased efficiencies. Supplementing these will be the government's decision to infuse capital separately into many of these banks and game-changing reforms such as the insolvency law and the asset quality review of lenders. In the near term, this will certainly benefit the largest shareholder, the government, more, with fewer banks to focus on and to assign capital. But the question is whether creating bigger banks will necessarily lead to the emergence of stronger entities. The biggest potential risk in such a consolidation blueprint is the swelling of more systematically important or too-big-to-fail entities and the systemic challenges they pose as the IL&FS blow-out showed. Manpower rationalisation and cultural fit will also be issues. Overcoming political resistance, and that of bank unions, may also not be easy. The process of integration will be difficult, consuming a lot of political and managerial energies.

The success of this ambitious plan to shrink the number of banks in India will hinge on a much stronger and more independent central bank with an enhanced capability to supervise these banks and ensure financial stability. It will also mean further bolstering the RBI's capital buffers. The government's move on Friday comes at the right time, with the NPA or bad loans problem appearing to have bottomed out. But India's banking reforms will be complete only when the next set of governance reforms show in board driven and professionally run banks, which are free to operate without policy constraints or hounding by probe agencies and when the government reduces its equity. That should be the next milestone.

GLOOMY NUMBERS

With growth slumping, government must address structural issues plaguing the economy

NDIA'S ECONOMY EXPANDED at the slowest pace in 25 quarters in the first quarter of the current financial year. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by a mere 5 per cent in the first quarter of 2019-20, down from 5.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2018-19, as both consumption demand and investment weakened. In its last monetary policy meeting in August, the RBI had lowered its growth projections, forecasting GDP growth to average 5.8 to 6.6 per cent in the first half of the current financial year. But the numbers released by the statistics office, which are well below expectations, suggest that the slowdown is more entrenched than what is believed.

Higher public spending appears to have helped stem the slide. Excluding public administration and defence, which largely connotes government spending, gross value added by the remaining sectors of the economy grew by 4.5 per cent, down from 5 per cent in the previous quarter, signalling the extent of the slowdown. Manufacturing activity barely registered a rise, growing by a mere 0.6 per cent in Q1FY19. Construction also slowed down to 5.7 per cent, down from 7.1 per cent the previous quarter. The collapse in consumption demand, which has been the bulwark of growth over the past few years, is worrying. Private consumption growth, which has slowed down sharply to 3.1 per cent down from 7.2 per cent in the previous quarter, is unlikely to perk up sharply in the near term. Investment activity, which grew by 4 per cent, is unlikely to witness a quick revival. Going forward, the government is likely to front-load its expenditure, giving a push to economic activity. The cumulative impact of the rate cuts by the MPC (the sharp slowdown creates room for further cuts) will also be felt over the coming quarters. But a broad-based pick-up in economic activity is unlikely in the near term.

In light of the new numbers, the clamour for the government to loosen its purse strings will only get louder, especially after it has received Rs 58,000 crore more from the RBI than what had been budgeted for. But the space for counter-cyclical fiscal policy is all but exhausted. The government has over the past week announced a slew of measures aimed at arresting the slowdown. While sector-specific sops will provide some relief, they are unlikely to address the deeper issues plaguing the economy. To salvage growth, a business as usual approach will no longer suffice.

ALAS, POOR MRD

Three generations of our ancestors, the Australopithecines, are now identified. But MRD is shaking the family tree

HE FANTASTICALLY NAMED Yohannes Haile-Selassie of the University of Cleveland, who has unearthed an almost perfectly preserved skull of an ancestor of Lucy, has boggled the minds of his peers and uprooted the carefully manicured timeline of the human race. Because while traditional thinking suggests that each species bowed off the Darwinian stage in favour of a more evolved descendant, stratigraphic dating of the new skull discovered in Ethiopia suggests that the species shared the world with its descendant Lucy for at least 1,00,000 years. Perhaps they shared families, too.

Let's get the problem pegged out neatly. Lucy is an Australopithecus, of the genus from which our own line of Homo is descended. She is properly known as *Australopithecus* afarensis, and was named Lucy because when her fossilised bones were brought into camp in the mid-70s, they were playing *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*. In the taxonomic literature, she is unglamorously known as AL 288-1, but she had galvanised the scientific community when her age was determined -3.2 million years. But she was not the first of her genus to be discovered. That honour goes to Raymond Dart's Tuang Baby, formally Australopithecus africanus, aged 2.8 million years, who was found 95 years ago. And now we have its grandparent and Lucy's ancestor, Australopithecus anamensis, aged between 4.1 and 3.6 million years. Three generations of the pre-human family etched in stone.

Time wages a relentless war of attrition with identity, and the oldest member of a family is often nameless. He is just Grandpa. Following this unkind tradition, no one has named the new find. The literature records it only as MRD. But this old codger has rattled our cage, and our evolution is no longer a linear transition from MRD to Lucy to the Taung Baby, and finally to us.

epaper indianex

Beyond economic band-aid



Stimulative impact of RBI transfer is lower than presumed. Sustained reforms remain key

SAJJID Z CHINOY

EVEN AS THERE has been a slew of comments around the RBI's surplus-capital transfer to the government, confusion reigns on its macroeconomic implications. There's a perception that a fresh stimulus of the amount transferred (Rs 1.76 lakh crore) is now available. Consequently, market participants are queuing up to suggest where this fresh spending should be deployed. Indeed, a stimulus of this quantum (almost 1 per cent of GDP) invested in public infrastructure projects — that have large multiplier effects should be enough to arrest the current slowdown, right?

Not quite. It's important to understand how this transfer will get absorbed into the Budget. For starters, Rs 28,000 crore of this amount was already transferred and used in last year's budget. Additionally, the July budget penciled in Rs 90,000 crore as RBI dividends for 2019-20. So this amount has already been budgeted to pay for extant expenditures and is not available for fresh spending. That leaves us with a more modest sum of Rs 58,000 crore or 0.3 per cent of GDP. Won't additional spending of this quantum boost aggregate demand?

Not quite. That's because — in all likelihood — these funds won't be available for financing new expenditure, but will have to be used to reduce the quantum of expenditure cuts to meet this year's fiscal target of 3.3 per cent of GDP. Why is that? Because tax collections have been budgeted very aggressively. Gross tax collections grew at just 8.4 per cent in 2018-19 off nominal GDP growth of 11.2 per cent (a tax buoyancy of 0.8).

In 2019-20, after adjusting for the tax rate changes, gross tax collections have been budgeted to grow at 15 per cent. Even if nominal GDP were to grow at 11 per cent (the first quarter grew at 8 per cent), this would imply a tax buoyancy of almost 1.4 – the highest in three years. With growth likely to slow further this year, we think achieving a sharp jump in tax buoyancy is improbable. As a case in point, gross tax collections grew at just 1.4 per cent in the first quarter of the fiscal year.

Consequently, like last year, potentially large expenditure cuts will be necessary to meet the fiscal deficit target. In 2018-19, acEven if the deficit stays the same, the fact that asset sales will increase (on account of the RBI special dividend) implies that India's fiscal impulse will increase by 0.3 per cent of GDP in 2019-20. So there will be an aggregate stimulative impact of 0.3 per cent of GDP on the economy. But it will not come from new expenditures, but instead from replacing tax shortfalls (which are contractionary) with the RBI dividend (which is not) on the revenue side. So the stimulus will come from the

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tual expenditures were lower by 0.8 per cent of GDP (Rs 1.5 lakh crore) compared to what was budgeted. Even if tax collections grow at 14 per cent this year — which implies a higher buoyancy despite weaker growth – this would still imply a potentially hefty shortfall of 0.7 per cent of GDP (Rs 1.5 lakh crore) in net revenues, which means spending would have to be cut by a commensurate amount to meet the fiscal deficit target.

This is where the RBI's higher-than-budgeted transfer will likely be used, because it will ensure that less spending will need to be cut to meet the fiscal deficit target. Therefore, contrary to casual presumption, the RBI's extra dividend will not facilitate extra spending, but reduce expenditure cuts required to stick to the budgeted fiscal deficit. Qualitatively, the one-time dividend from the RBI constitutes an "asset sale" of the government, because it's a reduction of the government's equity in the central bank. It's important, therefore, that revenues from asset sales are deployed towards creating fresh assets, rather than being used to finance current expenditure.

All told, will the RBI transfer constitute a fiscal stimulus for the economy? At the aggregate level, that would normally depend on whether the Centre's fiscal deficit widens. If the actual deficit remains at the budgeted level of 3.3 per cent of GDP (as we believe it will) — with the RBI dividends being used to offset tax shortfalls — there should be no stimulus, right?

Not quite. This is because in India asset sales are counted above the line (as a revenue item) instead of below the line (as a financing item), which is how most other countries treat asset sales. Therefore, the true fiscal impulse is determined by deducting asset sales from the fiscal deficit, because asset sales, unlike taxes and duties, aren't contractionary.

Therefore, even if the deficit stays the same, the fact that asset sales will increase by 0.3 per cent of GDP (on account of the RBI transfer) implies that India's fiscal impulse will increase by 0.3 per cent of GDP in 2019-20. So there will be a stimulative impact of 0.3 per cent of GDP on the economy. It will, however, not come from new expenditures, but instead from replacing tax shortfalls (which are contractionary) with the RBI dividend (which is not) on the revenue side. So the stimulus will come from the changing composition of revenues rather than new spending — something that's currently lost on markets.

Of course, this also assumes the RBI dividend doesn't simply offset shortfalls of other asset sales (disinvestment). The government has correctly set an ambitious disinvestment target of 1.05 lakh crore this year. Now it must follow through. If disinvestment targets are missed, and the RBI dividend simply ends up substituting for that shortfall, total asset sales will not increase this year and there will be no stimulative impact of the RBI dividend at all.

Finally, with the Budget receiving a largerthan-expected windfall from the RBI, reducing the likelihood of any fiscal slippage, government bonds should have rallied, right? Rather, they have sold off in recent days. This is potentially because the special dividend will add to inter-bank liquidity as soon as the government spends it. Therefore, for whatever liquidity target the RBI has in mind, the central bank will have to do 0.3 per cent of GDP less of open market operation (OMO) purchases and/or FX purchases. From the perspective of bond markets, therefore, the number of potential OMOs for liquidity creation reduces, possibly explaining the recent hardening of bond yields.

Contrary to popular perception, therefore, the RBI dividend transfer is not a panacea. At most, we believe it will have a stimulative impact of 0.3 per cent of GDP — and, that too, assuming the steep disinvestment target is met. Instead, what has been very encouraging in recent days is the flurry of announcements by the government to ease frictions and attract more FDI across various sectors. But much more of this is needed. India's growth slowing to just 5 per cent in the April-June quarter is a stark reminder, as if one was needed, of the severity of the slowdown. We believe India's economy needs sustained structural reforms to boost potential growth. The RBI dividend, at best, is a cyclical band-aid.

> The writer is Chief India Economist at JP Morgan. All views are personal

Where Media Is Beseiged

Populism in South Asia threatens to reduce media to banal agitprop

KHALED AHMED

WHEN LEADERS ARE powerful and charismatic, it is difficult to report on them objectively. Their supporters are emotional and often do not accept reports that could serve as correctives in a democracy. Much-loved leaders often appeal to hidden national intolerance and so, are not impartially assessed.

The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) is "censoring" TV comment during debates. This censoring is carried out in many ways including phone calls to cable operators in the private sector. Channels can be suddenly switched off and critics can be silenced through mysterious warnings and threats that can force commentators to leave the country. People who come on TV with forceful critiques disappear mysteriously, only to be released a few days later after they have sworn to keep mum. When nationalism is on the upswing – especially when the state is expected to go to war — the media is reduced to banal agitprop.

India is no different. Raksha Kumar, in Foreign Policy (August 2), gives us a tour d'horizon: "For much of Modi's first five years in office, his government seemed to get a free pass from the country's pliant media. In November 2016, when Modi abruptly recalled 86 per cent of the country's currency — to fight corruption, he said at the time — many influential media outlets failed to ask crucial questions. By initially lauding what most economists called a damaging move and by buying the government line, journalists helped spread

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the incorrect perception that phony economics could fix big problems. In the end, India's growth rate dropped for several quarters."

"In February, Indian military pilots struck the Pakistani town of Balakot in response to a suicide attack on its soldiers. India's media was awash in jingoistic sentiments, unquestioningly publishing in print and broadcasting on TV the government line that New Delhi had killed a 'very large number' of militants from the Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist group. Days later, Reuters and some other international media challenged the government line with satellite imagery as evidence; but the damage, once again, was done, as most Indians had already been sold New Delhi's version of events," Kumar continues.

Pluralism is at risk in South Asia from populism. Prime Minister Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh has a three-fourths majority in the country's Parliament and the media is too scared to speak the truth and risk being roughed up by Awami League supporters. In the run-up to the 2018 election, the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) suffered mass arrests on trumped-up charges. Mysteriously, more than 40 candidates of the Opposition alliance left the electoral race while the vote was being cast. Daily Star's editor is said to have been asked to pay about \$8 billion to satisfy the "defamed" citizens. The "mob" is always there to do the needful if an erring journalist doesn't "let go".

Media was controlled under the military

rule of Generals Ziaur Rehman and H M Ershad. Khaleda Zia and Hasina Wajed acted in a similar manner, one leaning on the power of the military and the other on the charisma of the founder of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Reporters Without Borders ranks Bangladesh 146th out of 180 in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index. Thirty-two journalists revealed to Reuters that "the recent strengthening of defamation laws with a new Digital Security Act has spread a climate of fear

in the industry." When the police gets to you in Bangladesh, they do so under legislation that Bangladeshi journalists don't like. In Pakistan, it's different because you don't know who is threatening you, and if you get a drubbing you are not supposed to reveal your assailant. Such things have happened to journalists, bloggers — they get a rough deal in Bangladesh too — university teachers and even women reporters.

In Pakistan, the personal appeal of Imran Khan is the most powerful phenomenon faced by the media. Modi is powerful in India and Imran Khan is powerful in Pakistan. This doesn't bode well for the future of South Asia. Not being criticised is no merit as it deprives the common citizen of an objective mechanism of judging the elected leader. As both sides suffer from the same measure of inflexibility it clearly points the way to war.

> The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

AUGUST 31, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



UP DROUGHT

THE UTTAR PRADESH Vidhan Sabha has discussed inconclusively the grave drought situation in the countryside where the kharif crop had dried up, cattle are dying, tubewells and pumping sets are not operating for want of electricity and diesel and canals are cut by desperate peasants. MLAs have warned the government, which was accused of having failed to do anything to address the situation arising out of rioting by farmers for water from tubewells, pumps and canals.

RAJASTHAN FAMINE AFTER THE FLOOD ravages of mid-July in five districts, Rajasthan now faces famine in a vast

area because of a severe drought. Except for the flood-affected region, in the rest of the state crops have started withering — it is likely to force about 1,00,000 people with more than two million livestock to migrate.

RANK OVERHAUL

THE THREE SERVICES chiefs have urged the government to overhaul the rank structure in the armed forces, envisaging better career opportunities from the bottom to the top, including the creation of six more full generals, three more admirals. In a paper presented to the government, the three chiefs have said that the strength of Indian forces has increased manifold since Independence and it is time that each command is placed under a full four star general in the army or equivalent rank in the air force and navy.

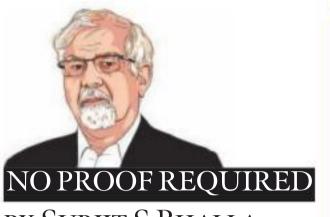
COUPLES' POSTING

MARRIED WOMEN IN the IFS and IAS want their posting at the place where their husbands are serving. In the past, when the number of couples in the two services was small, the government was able to oblige them. The foreign office would arrange that they were posted in the same mission, sometimes even by upgrading certain positions. Now, since more and more batchmates are marrying the government is thinking of what to do.

5 THE IDEAS PAGE

A politician and an optimist

Arun Jaitley will be missed for his friendships across political camps, and contribution to policymaking. Above all, he was a man of ideas



BY SURJIT S BHALLA

ARUN JAITLEY, A keen legal, political, economic and cricket mind, passed away way before his time at the age of 66. He was also a friend and mentor to many, and was part of the BJP trinity of Modi-Jaitley-Shah. Jaitley had many leadership attributes, but in my opinion, in the main, he was a policy ideas man.

India will feel his contribution for a long, long, time. Both the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and bankruptcy code are mega financial sector reforms, and possibly the most impactful. I want to briefly discuss his contribution and leadership towards making reforms happen.

The adoption of GST was not Jaitley's brainchild, but he certainly was the one who made it possible. There was a lot of opposition from the states, and from politicians of all hues. Its passage needed cajoling, negotiation, and single-minded pursuit. It required a constitutional amendment, and support from the Opposition. Both ex-post and ex-ante, Jaitley was born to make this legislation possible.

Via the adoption of GST, the world learnt of another of Jaitley's attributes — the ability to own up to mistakes, and work towards rectification. It is difficult to conceive of mistakeless economic reform, particularly in implementation. The GST had too many rates, and mishaps were not properly accounted for. It had to be learning by doing. Never once did the then finance minister claim that things were working well; exporters not getting their credit in time — true, and we will address that problem. And Nirmala Sitharaman has promised that all past dues will be paid within the next three months. Too many rates — also acknowledged and the GST council, led by Jaitley, repeatedly cut rates. Again, no excuses were offered other than the realistic apology that GST decisions, given the federal nature of the tax, and the economy, had to be broadly by consensus. But India has seen more adjustments in GST law, and with zero flip-flops (to date), than any reform in recent memory.

Policy-making, even by the best, is never perfect. It is not my case, nor of any other admirer of Jaitley, that he made all of the right decisions at the right time. But not only was he most open to criticism, he was actually very good-humoured about it. I remember the July 2014 Budget, the maiden budget of the Narendra Modi government. PM Modi had run a successful political campaign against UPA economics, and one of the "jewels" of UPA policy was the retrospective tax. Everyone expected the tax to go, but it remained. When confronted, Jaitley smiled it off, took blame rather than point to any bureaucrat, and said it will be

changed in due course. Here again is a lesson for all of us recommending, or changing, economic policy. The power of the bureaucracy is quite supreme. That it should be so, and was so, in 1947 is well understood. But why that should be the case in 2004, or 2014, or 2019 is something that historians and psychologists should



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CR Sasikumar

I never worked for, or with, Arun Jaitley. Over the years, we have met at seminars. From my side (at least) there was a strong interest in establishing "contact" with Arun, especially since our interests overlapped so much. A law degree was my choice when very young; I am sure (I think!) that Jaitley at some time or another must have wished that he was an economist! We both had a strong and passionate interest in cricket — and he bought me two tickets for a match at Ferozshah Kotla some 20 years ago. And that ticket came my way after a discussion over cricket. As it now transpires, and deservedly so, Ferozshah Kotla is going to be renamed the Jaitley stadium.

My real bond with Jaitley (again from my side) was in our obsession with policy ideas. The subjects for passionate discussion were economics, politics (elections) and cricket. He had very sound ideas about elections. For a long time, he was maintaining that 2019 would be a presidential-type election. It was. That the aspirational middle class would decide the election. It did. And that PM Modi's inclusive growth agenda would win him the hearts and minds of the Indian electorate right again. And substantiated rumour has it that his estimate of the BJP victory was very, very, close to the actual.

That policy-making is never perfect, even with the best of minds and the best of intentions, is illustrated by two "mishaps" in economic policy under Jaitley's stewardship. The first occurred with the guarantee of 14 per cent annual return in GST revenue for the states for five years from the date of implementation in July 2017. Nominal growth in GDP has averaged close to 10.5 per cent from that date. That is a loss of approximately Rs 45,000 crore annually to the Centre.

How much can this loss be attributed to an over-eager Centre wanting to get a mega economic reform under their belt? Was Jaitley a bad negotiator? No. The 14 per cent guarantee seemed the most expected reality at that time. Nominal GDP had grown by an average of 14 per cent over the previous five years. The newly formed Monetary Policy Committee (the main "arbitrator" of inflation rates in India) was predicting accelerating inflation and hence, 14 per cent growth in GST rev-

enues, did not seem such a stretch. It is another story that the MPC (and associated economists) got their inflation forecast horribly wrong for the next 2+ years, and possibly at least the next 5+ years, and beyond.

The "institution" of MPC may not have been much of a reform at all. Again, a reality check-mate on a reform that on paper seemed reasonable. The UPA regime had unleashed a decade of historically the highest annual inflation in India, even higher than that in the wake of the global high-inflation decade of the 1970s (induced by the quadrupling of the price of oil in October 1973). This was also the period of the highest fiscal deficits. Economists put two and two together and reached five.

Fiscal policy is about taxation and expenditures. On expenditure, the restraint shown by Modi-Jaitley has been exceptional — and from my point of view, too exceptional. Unfortunately, the fiscal hawks (including those in the Bimal Jalan committee) do not give the duo enough credit. I have already documented the path-breaking nature of GST reform. The first major direct tax reform was also initiated and inspired by Jaitley. Direct taxes were reduced in the 2019 interim budget; this was the first reduction in 22 years. Second, Jaitley announced that the goal of the government was to tax all corporates at a 25 per cent rate. Hopefully, we will reach, and exceed, his target soon.

Jaitley was an optimist, and someone who always saw possibilities for India well before most others. It is also remarkable (and a tribute to Jaitley's genius) that when no one saw potential in Modi post the 2002 Godhra riots, Jaitley was prominently by Modi's side. His ability to accurately size up individuals came across when he described me as a one-handed economist. Not sure he meant it as a compliment, but I took it as one — and he was accurate.

They say, and research proves, that an optimist lives much longer than a pessimist. The real loss to the nation, his party, and even nonsupporters, is that he was rudely taken away so much before his time.

> Bhalla is contributing editor, The Indian Express. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The sovereignty of parliament ought to be upheld, not least because it is the principle Brexiters said they wanted to preserve. Mr Johnson's move has united his opponents in righteous indignation." —THE GUARDIAN

Propaganda comes of age

Films like 'Uri: The Surgical Strike' and 'Chalo Jeete Hain' give longer life to the jumla



AAKASH JOSHI

ON JULY 21, 2018, the BJP's official handle tweeted: "Chalo Jeete Hain' is a short film which compels you to think who do you live for? It presents an inspiring story of young Naru, destined to serve the nation. Guess who?" Earlier this month, Chalo Jeete Hain won the National Award for Best Film on Family Values. Uri: The Surgical Strike received multiple awards too, for acting and its technical finesse. Even *Toilet*: Ek Prem Katha managed to win an award for choreography.

First, the obvious point: All three films are a blatant exercise in propaganda for the government, the ruling party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi (he is indeed Naru), and it may well be the case that they have been rewarded for this loyalty through the national awards. But, more importantly, two of the films (*Toilet* is a bore, and does not move beyond being a twohour-long PSA) display a technical finesse and narrative subtlety that makes them far more convincing than all the advertisements, apps and TV channels that have been deployed thus far in service of a government and the ruling party's ideology.

Chalo Jeete Hain, for example, retroactively assigns to young Naru many of the themes that were a hallmark of the prime minister's first term in office. He is a bright student, does indeed serve tea at the railway station, is filled with concern for a poor, Dalit classmate (Harish) whose mother is fated a life of misery in preswachh Bharat. Naru's mother coughs at a chulha because presumably, there is no Ujjwala Yojana. But it is in Naru's "rescue" of Harish and his interactions with his Guruji that the most interesting foreshadowing of today's politics takes place. Harish does not attend school despite being academically bright because he cannot afford a uniform, and Guruji insists that exceptions (a masterful attack on reservation) erode social unity and discipline. Eventually, through a play, Naru manages to raise money from the local landlord to help Harish. There must be no exceptions, divisions, no circumstances in this ideological project.

Like the archetype of the mythical hero, the narrative of New India is read back into the past, and fused with the politics of today. Naru's inspiration is Swami Vivekananda, and he wants to "live only for others". He is the adarsh balak, set to be maryada purushottam.

Yet, this message isn't forced down your throat, and for those who are politically neutral, or not given to putting every frame of the 31-minute film under the microscope, *Chalo Jeete Hain* is, in fact, a quite pleasing watch. It is in the vein of Amol

Gupte's films (Stanley ka Dabba, Hawaa Hawaai), a world of children, where their innocence allows them to bring about change in the lives of their compatriots because the desire to help has not been tamped by society and cynicism. *Uri: The Surgical Strike* is a far more pop-

ular film. Everyone from the prime minister to senior cabinet ministers and BJP leaders were peppering their public statements with "How's the josh!", leaving those who hadn't seen the film somewhat perplexed. But first-time director Aditya Dhar has managed to replicate and cash in on — arguably to an even greater extent than Border — the currency of cool that has defined Hollywood's celebration of the US military-industrial complex (think Zero Dark Thirty). And there, like here, well-made propaganda featuring soldiers, receives great accolades. The Indian army is beyond reproach, as are the national security advisor and the prime minister. The latter fulfils his promise — ghar mein ghus kar marenge — after the attack by armed militants at the Indian Army base in Uri. The soldiers are slick, the equipment state-of-theart, and the enemy is a monster. "Terrorism" and the death of soldiers allows Indian forces to torture, kill without trial.

Neither *Uri* nor *Chalo Jeete Hain* claim to be wholly factual, just as the Bal Narendra comic was not an official biography, and the numbers of "terrorists killed" being circulated by political sources (not government) after the surgical strikes or Balakot attacks have never been confirmed by the military. The films, well-made, appealing and "based on facts", have a far greater impact, each for a different reason. In *Uri*, the big-screen experience, the larger-than-life and infallible Indian government, lends credence to the stories about the surgical strike(s). It makes real, in mythical proportions, the rumours of what went on because the Indian people do not know what really went on. Chalo Jeete Hain, a short film, takes a different route. It tells a small story, something out of a folktale or even Premchand. It confirms that for the prime minister, family has always been the fellow citizen and it does it in close ups, through a gentle background score and some masterful lighting. It confirms a biography that is not yet substantiated, makes every government scheme part of the PM's personal narrative.

It is precisely because of the paucity of verified details about their subject matter that both films can appear as truth, or perhaps the lie that is repeated so often that it becomes so. Unlike the ham-handed government ads, or even the poorlyscripted attempts like Toilet: Ek Prem *Katha*, these films will keep you on the edge of your seat, make you cry for the disenfranchised and make you hate the villains and love the heroes.

These stories will make true every halftruth, make history out of every jumla. As such, they do deserve recognition for being pioneers, harbingers of a new era: Indian propaganda has come of age.

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Man for all seasons

Arun Jaitley provided a political compass to the BIP till the end

GAURAV BHATIA

jointly consider.

Hazaron saal nargis apni benuri pe roti hain/ badi mushkil se hota hai chaman mein deedawar paida - Igbal

ARUN JAITLEY WAS a multi-faceted individual. A brilliant lawyer, darling of the media, erudite parliamentarian, foodie and a witty and generous human being, he touched the lives of everyone who came into contact with him. He took inspiration from the poem written by the former prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee: "Toot sakte hain magar hum jhuk nahin sakte".

In cricket parlance, Jaitley, an ardent cricket lover, completed his innings on August 8. He will be remembered for the sixes and fours he regularly hit, especially when they were most required by his team, the BJP.

As finance minister of the country for almost five years, starting from 2014, he was instrumental in implementing GST. Consensus building was sine qua non for the implementation of GST and, there was no better consensus builder than Jaitley. It was his vision and ability that helped the NDA government to open 35 crore Jan Dhan accounts so that the formal banking system reached the marginalised; the Jan Dhan accounts ensured that they were brought into the mainstream and empowered.

Another feather in his cap was the enact-

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ment of the Insolvency Code in 2016. The Insolvency Code has resulted in the recovery of more than 1.5 lakh crore of bad debt. The Supreme Court in Swiss Ribbons (P) Ltd. v. Union of India said: "We are happy to note that in the working of the Code, the flow of financial resource to the commercial sector in India has increased exponentially as a result of financial debts being repaid. Approximately 3,300 cases have been disposed of by the adjudicating authority based on out-of-court settlements between corporate debtors and creditors, which themselves involved claims amounting to over Rs 1,20,390 crore. These figures show that the experiment conducted in enacting the Code is proving to be largely successful. The defaulter's paradise is lost. In its place, the econ-

omy's rightful position has been regained." Such was Jaitley's respect for institutions of the country that when on January 12, 2018, four justices of the Supreme Court of India held a press conference and certain opposition parties tried to derive political mileage out of it, he, out of reverence for the institution that he served so well, respected the doctrine of separation of powers and maintained that the BIP will act with rectitude, exercise complete restraint and not politicise the issue as it was the internal mat-

ter of the judiciary. My association with Jaitley began in 2002,

when I moved to Delhi to practice in the Supreme Court, My father, Virendra Bhatia, who was the then advocate general of Uttar Pradesh, had asked me to meet him and seek his professional guidance. I visited his chamber and introduced myself to him. He had a very strong positive aura and I was awestruck with his legal and political knowledge.

He had an exceptional quality of remembering and referring to you by name. His study table had the latest volumes of Supreme Court journals and latest edition of all magazines, neatly flagged and marked showing the level of reading and research he did to keep himself abreast with all the latest developments. I never thought at that point of time that he will be the one to ensure my induction in the BJP and mentor me in the years to come.

After the change of government at the Centre in 2004, Jaitley always made it a point to visit the Supreme Court canteen after his daily list of cases was over. He loved interacting with lawyers over tea. The impromptu meetings in the canteen were filled with humor and thought-provoking discussions.

He was a regular blogger. For the BJP spokespersons, his blogs were like the Bhagavad Gita; they provided the most effective referral points to understand the stand of the party and intricacies of complex political, social and legal issues. In his wide ranging blogs, he recognised the spirit of cooperative federalism during the implementation of GST. A three-part blog on Emergency is a must read for all, where he highlighted the horrors of Emergency, having been imprisoned for almost 19 months. His lucid blog on how triple talaq affects the fundamental rights of Muslim women is an example of his understanding of complex constitutional and social issues. His last blog on the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, brilliantly sums up the reasons behind the historic decision taken by the leadership of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah.

In spite of his fading health before the 2019 general election, he did not lose his cheerful disposition. He remained a political compass for the BJP and was instrumental in conducting the morning meetings with party spokespersons. He would give an opportunity to everyone in the room to voice their opinion on various subjects. He would patiently yet keenly listen to each of the proposition made. It was due to his exemplary guidance and understanding of the political scenario that the BJP returned to power.

Jaitley was a political and legal giant. He was a man of principles. He lived with dignity, fought for dignity and passed away with dignity. He leaves behind a legacy difficult to surpass. We will miss you always, Sir.

The writer is national spokesperson, BJP

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REFORMS NEEDED

the door' (IE, August 30). It is good that the government has finally woken up to the need for measures to attract FDI in certain sectors. Yes, the country may have lost to Vietnam or other countries where companies have shifted their production base from China. Nevertheless, India can still attract a fair share of business from foreign companies. That will not only give a significant boost to our economy but will provide the much needed push to employment. Bal Govind, Noida

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Opening

CONTEXT MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'An unfair comparison' (IE, August 30). It seems that the author has missed the context in which comparison between Emergency and the abrogation of Article 370 is being made. According to the article, 900 opposition leaders were arrested for dissent during the Emergency. At present, many are under house arrest in Kashmir. The Emergency was proclaimed without the consent of cabinet ministers. Similarly, Article 370 was revoked without the concurrence of the state legislature. The author talks about the rights of women in Kashmir. His concern for gender equality is well appreciated. But the women's reservation bill has been pending in Parliament for more than 10 years. It could well be that the abrogation of Article 370 will bring development to Kashmir. But there were more democratic means for that purpose.

Amit Singh, Delhi

LETTER OF THE WEEK

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The

LAST CHANCE

last window' (IE, August 27). India must, in order to keep up with the global phenomenon of climate change, shift its focus to deal with the rising global temperatures. One of the alarming effects of global warming is rising water levels which will, in the long term, result in the loss of land. This poses a major threat for all coastal cities and will trigger massive migration. India has a large coastline and it is in India's interest to take steps toward sustainable development to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Stuti Srivastava via e-mail

Unfair to seniors

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'BCCI names a largely unchanged squad for the T20 home series against South Africa' (IE, August 30). Resting Jasprit Bumrah is understandable. But why has M S Dhoni, always a match winner, failed to find a place in the team? Rishabh Pant has been retained despite his failure in the West Indies. Omitting Dhoni to accommodate Pant is not correct. Seniors must be given their due. Hope the BCCI is not forcing stalwarts to quit the game.

TSB Chander. Chennai



Big bank theory

For the mergers to work realising staff cost synergies is key

Tor its sheer magnitude, the scale and the ability to disrupt the status quo, the mega bank mergers announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday must go down as the most significant the banking industry has seen in the five decades since nationalisation. The bottomline is clear: to create banks of global level that can leverage economies of scale and balance sheet size to serve the needs of a \$5-trillion economy by 2025. The jury is, of course, out on whether this strategy will succeed. Mergers are driven by synergies - in products, costs, business, geographies or technology and the most important, cost synergies. While there may be some geographical synergies between the banks being merged, unless they realise cost synergies through branch and staff rationalisation, the mergers may not mean much to them or to the economy. This is where the government's strategy will be tested. It is no secret that public sector banks are overstaffed. There is also bound to be overlap in branch networks such as in the Canara-Syndicate Bank merger, especially in Karnataka and a couple of other southern States. Ditto with Punjab National Bank and Oriental Bank of Commerce, both of which have strong networks in the north and the west. The success of these mergers, therefore, will hinge on how well these banks handle the sensitive issue of staff rationalisation. The All India Bank Employees Association has already raised the red flag.

It was the Narasimham Committee in the late 1990s that recommended consolidation through a process of merging strong banks. The issue has been the proverbial bee in the bonnet of successive governments since then. What the committee also recommended was shutting down the weaker banks and not merging them with the strong ones as is being done now. But this is obviously not an option politically even for a government with a brute majority in Parliament. The biggest plus of the mergers is that they will create banks of scale there are too many banks in India with sizes that are minuscule by global standards with their growth constricted by their inability to expand. Yet, this advantage of scale cannot be leveraged without adequate reforms in governance and management of these banks. To be sure, Ms. Sitharaman did announce a few measures to make managements better accountable to the board. But the key reforms to be made are at the board level, including in appointments, especially of government nominees. These are often political appointees, with little exposure to banking. Surely, such practices need to be curbed as the definition of global banks is not just about size but also professionalism in governance. The government will also have to manage the fallout of unleashing four mergers simultaneously which is bound to cause upheaval in the industry. Would it have been better if these mergers had been done one by one? The future will colour the past.

With or without

Boris Johnson seems bent on delivering a no-deal Brexit

rime Minister Boris Johnson's audacious move on Wednesday to prorogue Parliament for five weeks is a cynical attempt to silence elected representatives on the key issue of Britain's future ties with the European Union (EU). The decision is all the more suspect because the fraught political climate that has prevailed since June 2016 was the consequence of the country having to renegotiate the nature of its ties with its closest neighbours. Those complex questions could only have been addressed on the floor of the house. Mr. Johnson has sought to play down the controversial decision as no more than an intent to commence a fresh legislative session with the Queen's speech charting the government's domestic priorities. But the outrage the country has witnessed suggests that despite its legal correctness, the move may have set a terrible precedent and possibly eroded the Conservatives base. The long suspension announced on Wednesday leaves MPs barely enough time – next week and the second half of October – to avert the risk of a disorderly British exit.

But then, Mr. Johnson, a hardline Eurosceptic, is committed to delivering Brexit with or without a deal. He knew all along that the chances of securing a fresh accord with the EU were next to nil. Brussels will never budge on the question of the Irish backstop, the mechanism that is meant to protect the soft border between Dublin and Belfast. All the same, reiterating that demand in his grandiloquent style put a gloss on the inability to forge a new agreement. Any serious obstacles Mr. Johnson faces to achieve a hard Brexit are entirely domestic. Foremost, the Conservative party's thin majority in the House of Commons renders Mr. Johnson's government highly vulnerable to defeat on two separate counts. One is the move to stop a no-deal exit; a vote of no confidence in the Johnson government is the other. In a bid to avert a cliff-edge exit, the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn recently invited the opposition and Europhile MPs to back a transition government that would seek another extension to Article 50 and call a general election. The proposal enabled Mr. Corbyn to reset the current narrative, even if it elicited a lukewarm response from a rejuvenated Liberal Democratic party and pro-European Tories. Legislation to prevent a no-deal exit affords an opportunity for pro-European MPs across parties to take the decisive step. Meanwhile, a legal challenge against the prorogation has been mounted by activists drawing on a 2016 ruling that forced the government to consult the legislature before triggering Article 50. Britain's biggest peace-time crisis must be resolved through the democratic process.

Spelling out the government's RBI windfall

The final impact of such infusions on the bank's independence would depend upon the future course of such transfers



The transfer of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) surplus to the government is a routine matter. Every year after the finalisation of the accounts of the RBI its surplus is transferred to the Central government sometime in end-August; this augments the non-tax revenue of the Central government. Normally, an estimate of such a transfer is decided informally between the RBI and the Central government by January and finds a place in the Budget estimate, typically announced in early February. But this year is an exception. The announcement of a huge transfer of RBI surplus, earlier this week, of ₹1.76 lakh crore to the Central government, seems to have generated quite a bit of media attention.

The two narratives

There are perhaps two caricatured folklore narratives about this increased transfer of RBI surplus.

The first one goes as follows: the government, facing a resource crunch, has arm-twisted the RBI to transfer some of its reserves, which is almost in the nature of family silver. This is not good for the economy. As when and if the economy faces a crisis, the RBI may not have adequate money to protect it. Also it denotes an erosion of the RBI's independence. This assumes credence in view of the perceived difference of opinion between the RBI and the Central government, that has been highlighted in recent media reports, as well as the resignation of the former RBI Governor, Urjit Patel in

Trends in income, expenditure and net disposable income of the RBI (₹bn)

Item	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	7
1. Income	646.17	792.56	808.70	618.18	782.81	1,930.36	Н
2. Total expenditure	119.34	133.56	149.90	311.55	282.77	170.456	
3. Net disposable income (1-2)	526.83	659.00	658.80	306.63	500.04	1,759.91	1
4. Transfer to funds	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	
5. Surplus transferred to the Government (3-4)	526.79	658.96	658.76	306.59	500.00	1,759.87	A

SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT, RBI, 2018-19

2018. The second one, on the contrary, runs on the following lines: the central bank is a unique institution; it is backed by the faith reposed on it by the the Central government, and therefore, a huge amount of reserves with the central bank is in the nature of idle cash which could have been utilised more productively in the economy. This year, the Central government has done precisely this. The RBI decided to transfer this increased surplus after following due process and after accepting the recommendations of the Jalan Committee (i.e., the expert committee to review the extant economic capital framework of the RBI, headed by the former RBI Governor, Bimal Jalan and with eminent central bankers, bureaucrats, economists and accountants as its members).

Are these competing narratives reflective of the political prior of the exponent? Or, are there more differences in substance?

Notes on the RBI

The narrative that the RBI is an overcapitalised institution has been in currency for some time. The Economic Survey of 2016-17 found that the RBI is one of the most capitalised central banks in the world and noted, "There is no particular reason why this extra capital should be kept with the RBI". Later, the former Chief Ecoment Fund (ADF) represent provi-

nomic Adviser, Arvind Subramanian in his book Of Counsel: The Challenges of the Modi-Iaitley Economy (2018) has caricatured the syndrome of treating the government's capital at the RBI by RBI officials as "prudence or paranoia". Folklore estimates of excess capital of the RBI in the range of ₹4.5 lakh crore to ₹7 lakh crore seemed to have been blowing in the wind. The issue became all the more controversial after the resignation of Mr. Patel in December 2018 citing personal reasons

Against this backdrop, the RBI, in consultation with the Government of India, constituted the Jalan Committee to assess the quantum of economic capital of the RBI (in end-November 2019). The committee submitted its report on August 14 and the RBI's Central Board in its meeting held on August 26, 2019 accepted all the recommendations of the committee; accordingly it finalised its accounts for 2018-19 using the revised framework. According to the accounts, the RBI has ended with an overall surplus of ₹1.759.87 billion in 2018-19 as against ₹500 billion in 2017-18, representing an increase of more than 250% (Table).

But what are the constituents or purposes of the RBI's excess capital? There are two distinct types of items under it. While "Contingency Fund (CF) and Asset Developsions made for unforeseen contingencies and amount set aside for investment in subsidiaries and internal capital expenditure respectively", components such as, "Currency and Gold Revaluation Account (CGRA), Investment Revaluation Account (IRA) and Foreign Exchange Forward Contracts Valuation Account (FCVA), represent unrealised marked to market gains/losses" (RBI, Annual Report, 2017-18).

In assessing the economic capital framework (ECF) of the RBI, the Jalan Committee justifiably went by the key premise, "As a central bank is a part of the Sovereign, ensuring the credibility of the RBI is as important, if not more, to the Government as it is to the RBI itself". Insofar as the methodology is concerned, the committee adopted the Expected Shortfall methodology (instead of the existing Stressed Value-at-Risk) for measuring market risk.

An outlook

But what are the risks to the RBI? In view of the RBI's function as a lender of last resort, it needs to maintain some Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) to insure the economy against any tail risk of financial stability crisis. The Jalan Committee recommended that the CRB needs to be "maintained at a range of 5.5 per cent to 6.5 per cent of the RBI's balance sheet which is

above the available level of 2.4 per cent of balance sheet as on June 30, 2018". Applying its recommendations to the RBI's 2017-18 balance sheet would result in RBI's risk equity levels in a range of 25.4% to 20.8% of balance sheet. In line with the methodology of the Jalan Committee, the amount of transfer of the RBI's surplus to the government has been placed at ₹1.76 lakh crore this year.

In the lingo of a caricatured two-handed economist, several pointers can be flagged towards deciphering the folklore narratives. First, the Jalan committee does not seem to have compromised on arriving at the economic capital framework of the RBI and has calculated the extent of excess capital of the RBI under a set of fairly standard and conservative assumptions. Second, at this juncture of the Indian economy when the spectre of a slowdown is looming large and when channels of credit disbursements are choked because of a lack of capital with the commercial banks - a transfer of such additional money to the government could enable the government to go in for bank recapitalisation in a big way and would be good for the economy. Third, the transfer of the additional surplus from the RBI could enable the government to pursue efforts towards stimulating the economy while maintaining budget discipline. Remember, in pursuing the fiscal stimulus of 2007-08, fiscal deficit went up from 2.5% to 6%. Of course, the final impact of such actions on the independence of the RBI would crucially depend upon the future course of such transfers. After all, we all know the story of the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Partha Ray is Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Management

Liberalism runs into national populism

No country has found the golden mean between free-range liberalism and statism



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

Tust before the G-20 meeting in Osaka in June this year, Rus-J sian President Vladimir Putin made headlines in the world media with an interview to the Financial Times in which he stated that liberalism had "become obsolete". He went on to say that liberal ideas about refugees, migration and LGBTQ issues were now opposed by "the overwhelming majority of the population". Even some western nations, he went on, had privately admitted that multiculturalism was "no longer tenable". There was a swift and critical response from the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk: "Whoever claims that liberal democracy is obsolete also claims that freedoms are obsolete, that the rule of law is obsolete and that human rights are obsolete." This was in fact not what Mr. Putin had alleged, but the wider question is why the Russian President is saying this now and whether he had a

Defining liberalism?

To start with, since liberalism means different things to Mr. Putin and Mr. Tusk, what is liberalism? This complex term, much used in India today in various contexts of opposition to the present Union government – and used in a derogatory sense by supporters of the government in respect of its de-

tractors - might broadly encompass three definitions. There is economic liberalism, which 'emphasises free competition and the self-regulating market, and which is commonly associated with globalisation and minimal state intervention in the economy'. There is political liberalism, which for most commentators is founded on 'belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human being, the autonomy of the individual, and Trump in the U.S., Hungarian Prestanding for political and civil liberties' as laid out in various United Nations Covenants. And then there is social liberalism, 'linked to the protection of minority groups, and such issues as LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage'.

Mr. Putin appeared critical of the 'approach of some western governments by specifically mentioning immigration, multiculturalism and LGBTQ issues, and therefore seemed to focus on social and political liberalism'. By no means is Mr. Putin the only world leader who dislikes this aspect of liberalism. The leaders of India, China, Turkey, Brazil, the Philippines and several others, even in Europe, believe highly centralised political systems work better for political stability and economic progress than western liberal democracies.

Nevertheless, liberalism has been the dominant socio-political ideology in the West since the end of the Second World War, where it has been regarded as the norm until recently. However, many even in the West now believe it could be in decline, as evidenced by support for Brexit in the United Kingdom, or support for populist leaders such as President Donald

sident Viktor Orbán or (former) Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini. David Runciman, professor of politics at Cambridge, contends that voters everywhere increasingly dislike and distrust elected representatives because western democracy has ceased to work and failed to deliver, and is headed for a long-drawn-out demise. The financial downturn in 2008 marked a major turning point, with impunity for corrupt bankers and an attempt to return to status quo globalisation that allowed markets to determine everything and led to major questions of identity and culture. Now globalisation is heading for a backlash, leading to protection, local solutions and stronger nation states, and the growing conclusion that liberalism needs urgently to justify itself by addressing issues of inequality and the loss of a sense of community.

Against migrants

Mr. Putin said Germany made a mistake by admitting more than one million refugees. He said: "This liberal idea presupposes that nothing needs to be done-...because their rights as migrants have to be protected... It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population." There is little doubt that Mr. Trump in America uses the immigration and minority issues, with their racial undertones, to bolster his core support. In European countries such as Greece, Germany and Italy that have been entry points for the recent wave of asylum seekers, attitudes towards immigrants have hardened since 2014. Poland and Hungary do not favour the admission of refugees even fleeing from violence and war, and nearly all European Union members are convinced that the EU has badly mismanaged the question of admission of refugees, which in turn has led to questioning the very basis of Europe's integration project.

Mr. Putin also deplored liberal governments dictating LGBTQ values that "millions of people making up the core population" opposed. "We have no problem with LGBT persons... but some things do appear excessive to us," he stated. Gender parity issues are strongly promoted in the British media and entertainment industry, and a storm arose in England recently over the teaching in primary schools of same sex relationships and gender identity. Boycotts of various kinds, including of major sporting events, have been threatened because of alleged anti-gay sentiments or legal restrictions. Nevertheless, same sex marriage is recognised only in some countries, others have the death penalty for homosexuality, and laws regarding LGBTQ rights vary widely across jurisdictions. As a generality, it can be stated that they are disfavoured in the vast majority of the non-western nonsecularised world.

Liberty vs. protest

Why has Mr. Putin expressed his opinions now to a newspaper considered a flag-bearer of liberalism? The Russian President's position is that 'his country has a specific and different kind of civilisation, where sovereignty trumps democracy and national unity, and stability trumps human rights'. Western-style liberalism that prioritises individual rights over those of society is regarded as a 'challenge to his style of government', which presents an alternative model. The same view is shared by China. The desire for liberty is recognised as universal, but the freedom to protest in unauthorised demonstrations and wilfully shatter the economy and tourism as in Hong Kong, or the freedom to blaspheme and outrage the sentiments of the devout, as in the French Charlie Hebdo case, or the freedom to bear arms as enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, are only random examples that show that liberty has limitations, even if they are self-imposed. Russia and China, with good reason, believe that unauthorised demonstrations open the way to foreign interference and 'colour revolutions'. No country has found the golden mean between free-range liberalism and statism. When liberal government and liberal models are under pressure even in the flagship West, it is probably 'as good a time as any for Mr. Putin to make his case'.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign

is even now celebrated for

acting. It is sad that he was

under-utilised by the Tamil

M. Balamuralikrishna's

singing and Balaiah's

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

Unwarranted mergers

The government's move to merge various Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and reduce their numbers to just 12, is wholly unwarranted and clearly aimed at deflecting public attention from the economic slowdown and the mounting criticism the government is receiving on the Non-Performing Assets front. This comes after its decision to merge associate banks with State Bank of India (SBI) proved to be a big failure. One wonders how the government claims that the present proposal would see formation of bigger PSBs when the earlier such move has failed

to yield results. Any such merger will inevitably lead to branch closures, mass transfers of employees and maximum inconvenience to customers. It is a pity that the government did not think it fit to engage the bank unions before embarking on this risk. J. Anantha Padmanabhan,

Kashmiri identity The author has argued that the loss to Jammu and Kashmir due to the abrogation of special status under Article 370 may be more symbolic than real, and he may be right in doing so (Editorial page,

and 'special status'," Aug. 30). However, for Kashmiris, Article 370 was not a mere provision in the statute book but an article of faith which sanctified the promise made to them by a secular and democratic India in October 1947, when their Muslim-majority State shunned Jinnah's twonation theory and acceded to the Indian Dominion. The actions of August 5 were antithetical to all that was promised and a strike on both the psyche and the identity of ordinary Kashmiris. It is impossible to fathom the hurt they felt to see their State flag

"On dilution, bifurcation

missing from the roof of the Civil Secretariat in Srinagar. They had toiled hard to see it fly high. BUSHAN LAL SARAF,

An underrated actor It has been my long-time grievance that actor T.S. Balaiah was never adequately feted for his acting capabilities (Friday Review, "Silverscreen's jaunty juggler," Aug. 30). His greatest asset was that he never indulged in overacting. Even when his character had to been shown stumped in a situation, he would express it subtly which only added

more comical quotient to the scene. Though he was not as resoundingly successful as Nagesh, the roles he played continue to be memorable. There was always an element of dignity in his performances. One example is his robust performance as a haughty

singer in *Thiruvilayadal*.

The song 'Oru nal poduma'

cinema industry. However, had he been alive today, he would have, as was his wont, taken this also lightly. V. LAKSHMANAN,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

A sentence in the penultimate paragraph of the article titled "On dilution, bifurcation and 'special status'" (Editorial page, Aug. 30, 2019) read: "For instance, following the 44th Amendment, unlike in the rest of the country, national emergency in J&K could still be imposed on the grounds of 'internal emergency'." It should have

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बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 167

बहस में बदलाव?

देश के राजनेता व्यवस्थित आर्थिक सुधार की तरफ तभी बढ़ते हैं जब कोई संकट आसन्न होता है। बीते सप्ताह एक बार फिर यह बात सही साबित होती दिखी। इसके अलावा संभवत: अरुण शौरी ने कहा था कि मोदी सरकार के लिए अर्थव्यवस्था से जुडी सुर्खियों का प्रबंधन भी उतना ही महत्त्वपूर्ण है जितना अर्थव्यवस्था का प्रबंधन। इस बात से अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण द्वारा शुक्रवार को आयोजित

बहुत लंबे समय से यह कहा जाता रहा है कि संवाददाता सम्मेलन का समय कितना महत्त्वपूर्ण था। बीते छह वर्षों में जीडीपी वृद्धि के लिहाज से सबसे धीमी तिमाही, विनिर्माण वृद्धि के 0.6 की निराशाजनक दर से बढ़ने जैसी अहम बातें बैंकिंग क्षेत्र को लेकर उठाए गए कदमों की आड में दब गई। यहां दो तरह की बातें हैं। एक ओर अर्थव्यवस्था की गति वर्ष 2013 (तब तेल कीमतें आज से दोगने स्तर पर थीं) के बाद से न्यूनतम स्तर पर हैं। बीती चार तिमाहियों में वृद्धि दर का औसत बमुश्किल 6.1 फीसदी रहा है। पिछली तिमाही में वृद्धि दर केवल 5 फीसदी रही है और मौजूदा तिमाही में भी इसके कमजोर रहने की आशंका है। यानी हमें वर्ष 2012-13 के बाद से सबसे धीमी वार्षिक वृद्धि के लिए तैयार रहना चाहिए।

सरकार ने हालात का अनुमान लगाया और एक दूसरी बहस को जन्म देकर इस बुरी खबर के प्रभाव को आंशिक रूप से निष्क्रिय कर दिया है। वित्तीय क्षेत्र में एक के बाद एक आ रहे संकटों ने व्यापक अर्थव्यवस्था को प्रभावित किया है। ऋण का प्रवाह प्रभावित हुआ है और सरकार ने पहले अपना ध्यान बैंकों के पुनर्पुंजीकरण पर लगाया और अब उसने 10 बैंकों को विलय कर चार बैंकों में सीमित करने की घोषणा की है। दोनों ही घोषणाएं मजबत बहीखातों वाले बैंक बनाने पर केंद्रित हैं। आरबीआई ने नीतिगत दरों को नौ वर्ष में न्यूनतम स्तर तक कर दिया है। अन्य घोषणाएं भी तेजी से आई हैं। बजट में की गई कर संबंधी घोषणाओं को वापस लिया गया है, खनन और

खुदरा क्षेत्र को और अधिक विदेशी निवेश के लिए खोला जा रहा है और चीनी निर्यात पर व्यापक सब्सिडी दी जा रही है ताकि चीनी मिलें गन्ना किसानों का बकाया चुका सकें। वाणिज्यिक वाहनों की बिक्री में आ रही गिरावट से निपटने के लिए अवमूल्यन दरों को

उदारतापूर्वक तैयार किया जा

साप्ताहिक मंथन रहा है। इसके अतिरिक्त कहा जा रहा है कि सरकार बृनियादी ढांचे में निवेश करेगी, निर्यात बढ़ाने को प्रोत्साहन देगी और अचल संपत्ति क्षेत्र को पैकेज दिया जाएगा। इस बीच कमजोर तेल कीमतों के बावजूद रुपये के बाह्य मुल्य में आई हालिया गिरावट बताती है कि अधिमुल्यित मुद्रा में अगर देरी से सुधार किया जाए तो भी अर्थव्यवस्था को कोई खास मदद नहीं मिलती। मोदी सरकार के इतिहास में ऐसा कोई दूसरा सप्ताह याद करना भी मुश्किल है

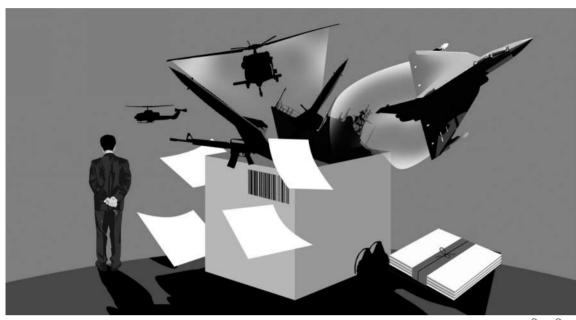
जब आर्थिक नीति से संबंधित इतनी सारी

घोषणाएं एक साथ सामने आई हों। सरकार के वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों का कहना है कि सरकार अब सुनने के मिजाज में है और वह आलोचना पर भी ध्यान देना चाहती है। कारोबारी इस बात से प्रसन्न होंगे। परंत इससे होगा क्या?

नीतिगत तौर पर देखें तो एक भारी भरकम

होता और आशाओं पर तुषारापात करता है तो

उसके बजाय ढेर सारी घोषणाओं का प्रवाह बेहतर माना जाएगा। सुचनाओं के निरंतर प्रवाह में जोखिम कम रहता है और यह अपेक्षाकृत अधिक खुला रवैया माना जाता है। चंकि यह संचयी प्रभाव वाला होता है इसलिए लोग इसे लेकर अलग सोच अपनाते हैं और निवेश और व्यय में भी इजाफा करते हैं। इस दृष्टि से देखा जाए तो सरकार को कुछ और घोषणाएं करनी चाहिए और कुछ अहम किमयों को दूर करना चाहिए। उसके बाद ही लोगों के मिजाज बदलने की आशा की जा सकती है। प्राथमिक लक्ष्य के रूप में सरकार चक्रीय मंदी को रोकना चाहेगी ताकि खपत और व्यय में सुधार आ सके। सबसे पहले खपत में बदलाव लाना होगा क्योंकि नकदी की तंगी से जझ रही कंपनियां तब तक निवेश नहीं करेंगी जब तक बिक्री में सुधार नजर नहीं आएगा। बैंकर कहते हैं कि कारोबारी ऋण की मांग कमजोर है लेकिन खुदरा मांग त्योहारी मौसम में सधर सकती है। बशर्ते कि आज की लंबित मांग तब असर दिखाए। बहरहाल, गन्ना किसानों की समस्या हल करने के अलावा सरकार ने ग्रामीण मांग में सधार के लिए कछ खास नहीं किया है। ध्यान रहे कि किष उत्पादों का मुल्य कमजोर रहा है और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों का मेहनताना पांच वर्ष से एक ही स्तर पर रुका हुआ है। इसके अतिरिक्त तमाम ढांचागत मसले तो हैं ही। जाहिर है अभी काफी कुछ करने की आवश्यकता है।



आयुध कारखाने मजबूत बनाने की कवायद

देश भर में आयुध कारखानों का संचालन करने वाले ओएफबी को कंपनी बनाने के बाद ही यह रक्षा उत्पादन में अपनी असरदार भूमिका निभा सकता है। बता रहे हैं लक्ष्मण कुमार बेहड़ा

रकार ने साहसिक कदम उठाते हुए देशभर में 41 आयुध कारखानों का संचालन करने वाले आयध कारखाना बोर्ड (ओएफबी) को कंपनी में तब्दील करने का प्रस्ताव रखा है। इन कारखानों में 82.000 से भी अधिक कर्मचारी काम करते हैं। इनके श्रम संगठनों को सरकार का यह फैसला रास नहीं आया जिसके बाद वे 20 अगस्त से एक महीने की हड़ताल पर चले गए। हालांकि रक्षा मंत्रालय के शीर्ष अधिकारियों से कई दौर की बातचीत के बाद यह हड़ताल वापस ले ली गई है लेकिन भविष्य में फिर हड़ताल होने की आशंका से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है। दरअसल समझौते के लिए रखे गए प्रस्ताव से इस संगठन के बुनियादी सरकारी ढांचे को ही खतरा पैदा हो सकता है।

ऐसे में क्या सरकार को अपने कदम पीछे खींच लेने चाहिए या अपने फैसले पर डटे रहना चाहिए? साक्ष्यों के अवलोकन से यही लगता है कि रक्षा मंत्रालय को अपने फैसले पर कायम रहना चाहिए क्योंकि ओएफबी को कंपनी बनाना न केवल इसे दीर्घजीवी बनाने के हित में है बल्कि देश की रक्षा तैयारी और आत्म-निर्भरता के लिए भी ऐसा करना जरूरी है।

ब्रिटिशकालीन ओएफबी का गठन वर्ष 1802 में हुआ था और यह भारत सरकार का सबसे पुराना एवं वाणिज्यिक गतिविधि वाला सबसे बड़ा विभागीय संगठन है। करीब 12,800 करोड़ रुपये के कारोबार वाले ओएफबी का टैंक एवं हथियारबंद वाहन से लेकर छोटे हथियारों, गोला-बारूद एवं सैन्य साजोसामान जैसे तमाम उत्पादों में ऐतिहासिक रूप से एकाधिकार रहा है। लेकिन कई वजहों से यह संगठन अपने अपेक्षित स्तर से नीचे ही रहा है।

एक सरकारी विभाग होने से ओएफबी पर सशस्त्र बलों को बेचे जाने वाले अपने उत्पादों से लाभ कमाने से प्रतिबंध है। ऐसा होने से ओएफबी अपने सांगठनिक एवं उत्पादन क्षमता में सुधार के लिए अधिक प्रोत्साहित नहीं हो पाता है। इसके अलावा उसे उत्पादन में आई समूची लागत उपभोक्ताओं से ही वसूलने की मंजूरी होती है। उत्पादन में लागत प्लस का यह नजरिया बेअसर माना जाता है और इससे रक्षा मंत्रालय पर अतिरिक्त बोझ पडता है।

हालांकि ओएफबी के लिए सबसे बडी समस्या यह रही है कि इसे निर्णय-निर्माण के स्तर पर बहुत सीमित अधिकार होते हैं। रक्षा मंत्रालय का छोटा विभाग होने के नाते वित्त, मानव संसाधन, शोध एवं विकास, कारखानों के आधुनिकीकरण और संयुक्त उद्यम एवं अनुषंगी इकाइयां बनाने जैसे मामलों में फैसले ओएफबी के स्तर पर नहीं लिए जाते हैं। बाहरी एजेंसियों के निर्णय-निर्माण का अफसरशाही वाला रवैया और नतीजों के बजाय कायदे-कानून पर अधिक जोर देने से ओएफबी के पास अपने दम पर खड़े होने और जवाबदेह होने की बहुत कम गुंजाइश ही रह जाती है। दिल्ली के सत्ता गलियारे से काफी दूर होने और शीर्ष अधिकारियों के जल्द बदले जाने से ओएफबी की चिंता और बढ जाती है। गत 10 वर्षों में ही ओएफबी के 15 चेयरमैन रह चुके हैं। शीर्ष नेतृत्व में ऐसे त्वरित बदलाव से ओएफबी को रणनीतिक दृष्टि एवं दिशा नहीं मिल पाती है।

वैसे ओएफबी ने 200 साल से प्राने इतिहास और विशाल परिसंपत्ति आधार के मद्देनजर अपना प्रदर्शन सुधारने के लिए खुद भी बहुत कम प्रयास किए हैं। हाल यह है कि आज भी यह संगठन अपने किसी उत्पाद के लाभप्रद होने का दावा नहीं कर सकता है क्योंकि इसके टर्नओवर का 75-80 फीसदी आयातित तकनीक से ही आता है।

नवाचार को अहमियत नहीं देने के अलावा ठेके समय पर पुरा करने में देरी, निम्न श्रम उत्पाद का और नाममात्र का निर्यात होने से इसके मुख्य हितधारक यानी भारतीय सेना परेशान हो गई है। सेना की कुल आपूर्ति में करीब 80 फीसदी हिस्सा ओएफबी का ही है। इसके अलावा सेना इन उत्पादों की खराब गुणवत्ता से भी परेशान है। नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) ने एक बार कहा था कि आयुध कारखानों में बने कुछ उत्पाद ऐसी खामियों के बावजूद ग्राहकों को दे दिए गए जिन्हें आसानी से देखा जा सकता था। प्रदर्शन के मोर्चे पर लगातार नाकाम रहने से परेशान रक्षा मंत्रालय ने पिछले वर्षों में खुद को इन उत्पादों से दुर करने की कोशिश की है।

सेना पहले ही करीब 275 उत्पादों को कम अहमियत वाला घोषित कर चुकी है जिससे इन उत्पादों पर ओएफबी का एकाधिकार कम हो चला है।

उम्मीद से कमतर प्रदर्शन होने से भारतीय रक्षा उत्पादन में ओएफबी की केंद्रीय भूमिका भी कमजोर होने लगी है। इसकी हैसियत इतनी गिर चुकी है कि रक्षा उत्पादन का लाइसेंस रखने वाली भारतीय निजी कंपनियां भी आज ओएफबी से अधिक उत्पादन कर रही हैं। 'मेक इन इंडिया' अभियान के तहत रक्षा उत्पादन में निजी क्षेत्र की वृद्धि बढ़ने की संभावना है। ऐसा होने पर ओएफबी और भी किनारे की ओर धकेल दिया जाएगा, अगर जल्द ही व्यापक सधार नहीं किया जाता है।

ओएफबी को कंपनी के रूप में तब्दील करने का विचार लंबे समय से चर्चा में रहा है। सबसे पहले वर्ष 2000 में गठित नायर समिति ने इसका सुझाव दिया था। उसके बाद केलकर समिति ने भी 2005 की अपनी रिपोर्ट में ओएफबी को कंपनी बनाने की जोरदार वकालत की थी। हालांकि सरकारों ने इस सुझाव को अनदेखा ही किए रखा था। लेकिन मोदी सरकार ने रक्षा उत्पादन में सुधार के एक अहम अंग के तौर पर इस सुझाव को लागू करने का साहस आखिरकार कर दिखाया है।

ओएफबी को कंपनी के रूप में तब्दील करने से यह रक्षा क्षेत्र का एक सार्वजनिक उपक्रम (डीपीएसयू) बन जाएगा और उसका प्रशासनिक नियंत्रण रक्षा मंत्रालय के पास ही रहेगा। इस तरह वस्तुस्थिति ओएफबी का निजीकरण करने की अफवाहों से काफी अलग है। एक रक्षा उपक्रम होने और उसमें केंद्र सरकार की 100 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी होने पर ओएफबी के पास निर्णय-निर्माण में काफी अधिक स्वायत्तता मिल जाएगी। इसका प्रबंधन इसके अपने निदेशक मंडल ही रहेगा। सरकार के व्यापक दिशानिर्देशों के मद्देनजर यह अपनी वित्तीय एवं निवेश योजनाओं के बारे में खुद ही फैसला कर सकता है, खुद ही संयुक्त उद्यम लगाने एवं अनुषंगी इकाइयां बनाने और शोध एवं विकास को बढ़ावा देने की दिशा में प्रयास कर सकता है और इनमें बाहरी एजेंसियों के दखल की गंजाइश भी नहीं रह जाएगी। इससे भी अहम बात यह है कि एक स्थिर नेतृत्व वाली कॉर्पोरेट इकाई होने से ओएफबी बाजार की परिस्थितियों के हिसाब से कदम उठाने में सक्षम हो जाएगा। निजी क्षेत्र से मिलने वाली चुनौतियों का सामना कर पाना भी आसान हो जाएगा।

आखिर में, अपने मौजूदा टर्नओवर के साथ ओएफबी कंपनी बन जाने के बाद आसानी से नवरत्न का दर्जा हासिल करने के लायक बन जाएगा। नवरत्न उपक्रम बनने से ओएफबी को वित्तीय फैसले करने में भी काफी लचीलापन मिल सकेगा। कुल मिलाकर ओएफबी के लिए अपना पुराना वैभव हासिल करने के लिए कंपनी बनने के सिवाय कोई रास्ता नहीं है। इस तरह ओएफबी भारत के रक्षा उत्पादन क्षेत्र में अपनी दमदार मौजूदगी दर्ज करा सकता है।

(लेखक एक रक्षा अर्थशास्त्री हैं और इंस्टीट्यूट फॉर डिफेंस स्टडीज ऐंड एनालिसिस के शोध अध्येता हैं)

ट्राई के एक और परामर्श पत्र से टेलीविजन उद्योग में खीझ

तकरीबन 74,000 करोड़ रुपये का भारतीय प्रसारण उद्योग राहत की सांस ले ही रहा था कि नियामक की ओर से एक और बाधा सामने आ गई। गत 16 अगस्त को ट्राई ने 'प्रसारण एवं केबल सेवाओं के शुल्क संबंधी मुद्दों पर मशविरा पत्र' जारी किया। अभी कछ ही महीने पहले फरवरी में एनटीओ (नया शुल्क आदेश) लाग किया गया था। उससे भी अहम बात यह है कि उपभोक्ताओं ने नई नियामकीय व्यवस्था को पुरी तरह अपना लिया है। इसी बीच ट्राई ने एक नया मशविरा पत्र प्रस्तावित किया है जिसमें चैनलों के मूल्य और उनका समूह तैयार करने को लेकर आमूलचूल बदलाव की बात कही गई है। गत 23 अगस्त को जारी इंडियन ब्रॉडकास्टिंग फाउंडेशन की प्रेस विज्ञप्ति में कहा गया है कि यह किसी भी उद्योग के आर्थिक विकास के लिए आवश्यक स्थिर नियामकीय व्यवस्था के तमाम मानकों के एकदम विपरीत है। अगर प्रसारकों के विरोध की अनदेखी भी कर दी जाए तो भी टाई की जल्दबाजी और यह मशविरा पत्र समझ से परे है। बीते 15 वर्ष के दौरान ट्राई ही प्रसारण नियामक रहा है। इस दौरान इसके अधिकांश पत्र सुस्पष्ट और अच्छी तरह विश्लेषित रहे हैं। परंतु यह पत्र बंडलिंग के खिलाफ है। अपने मूल आदेश में यह एक बड़ी बात थी। जनवरी में जब मैंने टाई के चेयरमैन आर एस शर्मा से इस बारे में पूछा था तब उन्होंने कहा था कि टाई अब यह नया मशविरा पत्र सामने है और यह बंडलिंग पर सवाल उठा रहा है, इसमें कहा गया है कि कैसे छूट दी जानी चाहिए और कीमतों की सीमा कैसे तय होनी चाहिए ? इसके लिए चुना गया

इसका पहला सकारात्मक प्रभाव, जिसके लिए ट्राई को श्रेय भी लेना चाहिए, वह यह है कि इससे पारदर्शिता आई है। इसके परिणामस्वरूप प्रसारकों का सबस्क्रिप्शन राजस्व और मल्टी सिस्टम ऑपरेटर्स यानी एमएसओ राजस्व में भी इजाफा हुआ है क्योंकि अधिक घर जुड़े हैं और

समय पूरी तरह गलत है। बाजार

में नई शुल्क व्यवस्था लागू हुए

केवल पांच महीने का समय बीता

है। इसके प्रभाव का अभी

आकलन होना है।



मीडिया मंत्र

वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

राजस्व लीकेज पर रोक लगी है। बहरहाल, चूंकि लोग अपनी पसंद के चैनल खुद चुनते हैं इसलिए कई चैनलों की पहुंच खत्म हो गई है और तमाम प्रसारकों के विज्ञापन राजस्व में कमी आई है। दूसरा, कीमतों में इसलिए

इजाफा हुआ है क्योंकि अब हर घर को हर माह 154 रुपये का नेटवर्क शुल्क अदा करना है जिसमें 100 चैनल आते हैं। इनमें से दूरदर्शन के 25 चैनल अनिवार्य इसलिए कि आप 75 चैनलों के लिए यह भुगतान करते हैं। अन्य चैनलों का मूल्य इससे अलग होता है। ध्यान रहे कि निजी टेलीविजन चैनलों के 28 वर्ष के इतिहास में औसत केबल टीवी मल्य कई अन्य जिंसों की तुलना में औसत मुद्रास्फीति दर से कम रहा है। यह भी कि केबल टीवी कोई अनिवार्य जिंस नहीं है।

तीसरा, उपभोक्ताओं की चयन क्षमता कम हुई है। औसत भारतीय परिवार एक महीने में 40 से 60 चैनल देखता था। इनमें विभिन्न भाषाओं के खेल, संगीत, मनोरंजन, फिल्म आदि तमाम तरह के चैनल शामिल हैं। नई शुल्क व्यवस्था लागू होने के बाद यह घटकर 32 से 48 चैनल प्रति परिवार रह गई है। याद रहे कि देश के 19.7 करोड़ टेलीविजन वाले परिवारों में से 98 फीसदी के पास ऐसा टेलीविजन है जिसे लोग साथ बैठकर देखते हैं। इसलिए, पिताजी, मां, बच्चे, दादा–दादी सबकी अपनी–अपनी पसंद है। बंडलिंग की व्यवस्था के खिलाफ जाने के बाद लोगों ने चैनल देखना कम कर दिया। ग्राहक अब विविध चैनलों के बजाय मजबूर भाषाई या विषय के आधार पर चैनल चुनने को मजबूर हैं।

यहां ट्राई की यह दलील सामने आती है कि बंडलिंग उपभोक्ताओं के हित में नहीं है। वैश्विक स्तर

पर अधिकांश उद्योगों में बंडलिंग की जाती है। इसमें विमानन, होटल, मीडिया, उपभोक्ता वस्तु और दरसंचार सभी शामिल हैं। ये अपेक्षाकृत सस्ते होते हैं इनके जरिये काफी विविधता भी हासिल होती है। चौथा प्रभाव उस बदलाव के रूप में सामने आया है जिसके तहत करीब 20 लाख परिवारों ने केबल के स्थान पर डीटीएच को अपना लिया। अब देश में डीटीएच उपभोक्ताओं की संख्या 7 करोड से अधिक है। अपने संसाधनों और कॉल सेंटर के कारण डीटीएच, केबल की तलना में कहीं अधिक सुविधाजनक है। परंतु देश में करीब 10 करोड़ परिवारों के पास केबल टीवी है और उनके पास वह लचीलापन नहीं है जो डीटीएच में है। यह बात इन उपभोक्ताओं को हताश करती है। राजस्व में सुधार होने पर अधिकांश एमएसओ तकनीक में निवेश करेंगे और यह समस्या भी हल हो जाएगी।

ऐसे में इस पर्चे को प्रस्तुत करने की क्या हड़बड़ी थी?

एक कदम पीछे हटकर देखें तो 2019 में बंडल, चयन और लचीलेपन को लेकर बहस निरर्थक प्रतीत होती है। हॉटस्टार, जी 5. वट आदि चैनल उन्हीं कार्यक्रमों को दिखाते हैं जो उनकी मूल कंपनियां स्टार, जी या वायकॉम 18 दिखाती हैं। परंतु इनकी कीमतों पर नियमन नहीं है, होना भी नहीं चाहिए। ऐसे में केबल या डीटीएच के लिए उन्हीं चैनलों या कार्यक्रमों की ऐसी कीमत क्यों होनी चाहिए? तीन डीटीएच और ऑनलाइन अनगिनत पैकेज और उपकरण हैं जिन पर उपभोक्ता टीवी या मनोरंजन देख सकता है। ऐसे में इस उद्योग के इतने सूक्ष्म प्रबंधन से इसका दम घोंटना कहां तक उचित है ?

मसलन ऑफकॉम आमतौर पर बिना नियमन और उसके बाद नियमन की लागत का आकलन करते हैं। किसी भी नई अनुशंसा के लिए वे प्रभाव के विश्लेषण से काम लेते हैं। उद्योग जगत और उपभोक्ता संगठनों की मांग है कि ट्राई को भी ऐसा ही करना चाहिए। ऐसा करने से शायद उसकी मनोदशा बदले और हर कुछ महीनों में मशविरा पत्रों से निजात मिल सके।

अपने ग्राहकों को ईमेल और

मोबाइल में मेसेज भेजकर किसी

अधिकांश मीडिया नियामक

कानाफूसी

आधार से भोजन

आधार ने कई लोगों के जीवन को कई तरह से सुगम बनाया है। परंतु मध्य प्रदेश के मंदसौर जिले के एक मंदिर में यह स्थानीय श्रद्धालुओं और बाहरी श्रद्धालुओं को अलग-अलग करने के काम आ रहा था। दरअसल मंदिर प्रशासन बाहरी श्रद्धालुओं के लिए लंगर की व्यवस्था करता है लेकिन पिछले कुछ समय से मंदिर प्रशासन इस बात को लेकर परेशान था कि स्थानीय श्रद्धालु भी बाहरी लोगों के साथ बैठकर भोजन कर लेते हैं। इस समस्या से निजात पाने के लिए आखिरकार मंदिर प्रशासन ने एक तरकीब अपनाई। उसने लंगर खाने वाले श्रद्धालुओं से उनका आधार कार्ड मांगना शुरू कर दिया। इससे पता चल जाता था कि कौन स्थानीय है और कौन बाहरी। हालांकि यह मामला जब सुर्खियों में आया तो गुरुवार को जिलाधिकारी मनोज पुष्प खुद मंदिर पहुंचे और उन्होंने यह व्यवस्था खत्म कर दी।

सबका जन्मदिन एक

मध्य प्रदेश के शिवपुरी जिले का एक गांव इन दिनों सुर्खियों में है। दरअसल इस गांव के अधिकांश रहवासियों के आधार कार्ड में उनका जन्मदिन एक ही है यानी एक जनवरी। शिवपुरी का काकरा गांव आदिवासी बहुल गांव है और एक समय ऐसा भी था जब इस गांव के अधिकांश लोगों के पास अपने जन्म का कोई ठोस प्रमाण नहीं रहता था। ऐसे में आधार नामांकन करने वालों ने उनके जन्मदिन की जगह एक जनवरी की तारीख़ डाल दी। दरअसल विशिष्ट पहचान प्राधिकरण के मुताबिक अगर कोई व्यक्ति जन्म तारीख का सही प्रमाण नहीं दे पाता है तो वह बिना दस्तावेजों के भी आधार बनवा सकता है। बाद में अगर उसे जन्म का प्रमाण पत्र मिल जाता है तो वह अपने आधार कार्ड में इसे सुधरवा सकता

है। अधिकारियों का कहना है कि यह सुविधा होने के बाद भी शायद ही कोई इसमें सुधार करवाने आया हो। यही कारण है कि लगभग पूरे गांव की जन्म की तारीख और महीना एक है।



आपका पक्ष

बद्यों को खेल से जोड़ना जरूरी

खेल हमारे जीवन का अहम हिस्सा है और उससे ही हमारा संपूर्ण विकास होता है। लेकिन दुर्भाग्य से आज के बच्चे खेलों के प्रति उदासीन होते जा रहे हैं। बच्चे खेलने के बजाय मोबाइल, टीवी एवं मनोरंजन जैसे साधनों को अपने जीवन का हिस्सा बना रहे हैं। यह उनके भविष्य के लिए घातक साबित हो सकता है। यह उनके स्वास्थ्य के लिए भी हानिकारक साबित हो रहा है। बच्चों द्वारा खेल से दूरी बनाए जाने से उनमें संघर्ष क्षमता, नेतृत्व क्षमता तथा उनमें सहनशीलता कम होने का प्रभाव पड़ रहा है। बच्चों के विकास के लिए खेल का होना बहुत जरूरी रही है। वर्तमान में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी खेल को प्रोत्साहन दे रहे हैं। भाजपा सरकार खेल संस्कृति को बढ़ावा दे रही है। आज भारत को



यवा शक्ति के रूप में उभरना जरूरी है। खेल को बढावा देने के लिए सभी सरकारी तथा गैर सरकारी स्कूलों में प्रतियोगिताओं का आयोजन कराने की जरूरत है। खेल से बच्चों को जोड़ने के लिए सरकार को ग्राम स्तर से लेकर ब्लॉक, जनपद, मंडल और प्रदेश स्तर तक

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने गुरुवार को फिट इंडिया अभियान की शुरुआत की

खेलों से संबंधित संसाधनों को जुटाना जरूरी है। आज के परिवेश में खेल के मैदान विकसित करने

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

4, बहादूर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं :

lettershindi@bsmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

होंगे। बढ़ती आबादी से खेल के मैदान समाप्त हो रहे हैं। सरकार के साथ ही हम सभी का दायित्व बनता है कि अपने-अपने बच्चों को मोबाइल, टीवी आदि मनोरंजन के साधन से दूर रखें जिससे खेल के लिए प्रेरित कर सकें।

बैंक धोखाधड़ी के मामले बढ़े

रिजर्व बैंक की वार्षिक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार पिछले साल 71,543 करोड़ रुपये की बैंक धोखाधड़ी के 6.801 मामले दर्ज किए हैं। इससे पिछले साल में यह आंकड़ा 5,916 और धोखाधड़ी की राशि 41,167 करोड़ रुपये थी। आमतौर पर बैंक

भी व्यक्ति को एटीएम कार्ड का पिन, ओटीपी या अन्य जानकारी देने से मना करता है। इसके बावजूद लोगों की लापरवाही के कारण उनके बैंक खाते से पैसे निकाल लिए जाते हैं। इसके बाद व्यक्ति धोखाधडी का मामला दर्ज कराता है। लेकिन बैंक यह देखता है कि किसकी लापरवाही के कारण बैंक से पैसे निकाले गए हैं। अगर कोई व्यक्ति धोखाधडी करने वाले को ओटीपी बता देता है तो ऐसे में बैंक अपनी जिम्मेदारी से पल्ला झाड़ लेता है और व्यक्ति की गलती साबित कर देता है। ऐसे में धोखाधड़ी के पैसे वापस नहीं मिलते हैं। ऐसे में ग्राहकों को किसी भी व्यक्ति को अपने बैंक खाते से संबंधित जानकारी नहीं देनी चाहिए जिससे वे किसी धोखाधड़ी के शिकार होने से बच सकें।

राजेश कुमार, नई दिल्ली





जोखिम लिए बिना कभी कोई महान चीज संभव नहीं हुई

बैंकों का विलय

दस सरकारी बैंकों के विलय का फैसला बैंकिंग सुधार की दिशा में एक बड़ा कदम है। ऐसे किसी फैसले का एक अर्से से इंतजार किया जा रहा था, क्योंकि देश में दो दर्जन से अधिक सरकारी बैंक होने का कोई औचित्य नहीं बनता। वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण की दस बैंकों का विलय चार बैंकों में करने की घोषणा का मतलब है कि अब देश में एक दर्जन सरकारी बैंक ही रह जाएंगे। चूंकि चार-पांच सरकारी बैंक ही पर्याप्त माने जा रहे हैं इसलिए देखना यह है कि भविष्य में बैंकों की संख्या में और कटौती होती है या नहीं? जो भी हो, कम से कम अब यह सुनिश्चित किया जाना चाहिए कि सरकारी बैंक उन समस्याओं से न ग्रस्त होने पाएं जिनके चलते एक तरह से उनका दीवाला निकल गया। शेष सरकारी बैंकों को न केवल एक-दूसरे से, बल्कि निजी क्षेत्र के बैंकों से भी प्रतिस्पर्द्धा करनी चाहिए। इससे भी जरूरी यह है कि उन्हें जनता के पैसे से खुद को उबारे जाने की उम्मीद नहीं रखनी चाहिए। इसी के साथ यह भी आवश्यक है कि वे बेजा राजनीतिक हस्तक्षेप से मुक्त रहें और कर्ज बांटने का काम इस तरह करें कि उसे वसूल भी कर सकें। हालांकि सरकार यह भरोसा दिला रही है कि सरकारी बैंकों के एनपीए में सुधार आया है, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि फंसे कर्ज की वसूली अभी भी चिंता का विषय बनती रहती है। इस चिंता से तभी मुक्त हुआ जा सकता है जब सरकारी बैंकों को फंसे कर्ज के मामले में जवाबदेह बनाया जाएगा। इसके लिए जरूरी हो तो नियम-कानूनों में बदलाव किया जाना चाहिए।

बैंकों में विलय की घोषणा एक ऐसे समय हुई जब अर्थव्यवस्था की वृद्धि दर में भारी गिरावट सामने आई। चालू वित्त वर्ष की पहली तिमाही में विकास दर घटकर पांच प्रतिशत रह जाना यह बताता है कि मंदी का असर गहरा रहा है। यह बीते छह साल में सबसे धीमी विकास दर है। हालांकि अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती के चलते जीडीपी में गिरावट का अंदेशा था, लेकिन पांच प्रतिशत का आंकडा कहीं अधिक चिंतित करने वाला है। सरकार उन कारणों से अनिभज्ञ नहीं हो सकती जिनके चलते अर्थव्यवस्था की रफ्तार धीमी पड़ती जा रही है। उसे इन कारणों का निवारण प्राथमिकता के आधार पर करना होगा और इस क्रम में सबसे पहले यह देखना होगा कि लोगों की क्रय शक्ति कैसे बढ़े? उपभोक्ता मांग बढ़ाने के कारगर उपायों के साथ सरकार को आर्थिक सुधारों को भी नए सिरे से गति देनी चाहिए, क्योंकि तभी उन कदमों का सही लाभ मिलेगा जो हाल के दिनों में अर्थव्यवस्था को बल देने के लिए उठाए गए हैं।

कैंपा की सौगात

देर से सही, आखिरकार उत्तराखंड को कैंपा फंड से अपना हक मिल ही गया। यह किसी सौगात से कम नहीं है। क्षतिपूरक वनीकरण प्रबंध अभिकरण (कैंपा) फंड में जमा 2675 करोड़ रुपये की धनराशि राज्य के हिस्से आई है। तकरीबन तीन दशक से राज्य सरकार इसके लिए प्रयासरत थी। इस दरिम्यान सरकार ने अपनी जरूरतों की दलील देते हुए तमाम मंचों पर यह मांग उठाई और केंद्र पर दबाव भी बनाया। उत्तराखंड ही नहीं, दूसरे राज्य भी अपने इस हक के लिए लगातार एडियां रगड रहे थे। एक रोज पहले केंद्र सरकार ने उनकी मुराद पूरी कर दी। सभी राज्यों को उनके हिस्से का कैंपा का बजट जारी कर दिया। दरअसल यह बजट केंद्र की तरफ से मदद नहीं, बल्कि राज्यों का अपना पैसा है, जो उन्होंने विभिन्न परियोजनों के लिए वन संपदा की क्षतिपूर्ति के रूप में कार्यदायी संस्थाओं से कैंपा फंड में जमा करवाया था। इस धनराशि का उपयोग वनों के कटान से होने वाले नुकसान की भरपाई, पर्यावरण संरक्षण के उपायों और खनन व विकास उपक्रमों की स्थापना की वजह से विस्थापित लोगों की मदद के लिए किया जाता है। उत्तराखंड में इसकी ज्यादा जरूरत महसूस की जाती रही है। क्योंकि राज्य में लगभग 67 फीसद वन भू-भाग है, यहां हर छोटे-बड़े काम में वन संपदा के संरक्षण की जरूरत बनी रहती है। अभी तक राज्य सरकार को कैंपा फंड से बेहद कम राशि मिल रही थी. अब 2675 करोड़ रुपये राज्य के हिस्से में एकमश्त आ गए हैं। निश्चित तौर पर सरकार के लिए यह बड़ी राहत वाली बात है। अब उसे इस राशि से ब्याज के रूप में ही सालाना लगभग दो सौ करोड़ रुपये मिलेंगे। कैंपा फंड से नियमित मिलने वाला बजट अलग से मिलता रहेगा। यानी काफी हद तक टेंशन खत्म। चूंकि वन्य जीव-मानव के बीच संघर्ष थामने के उपायों, बुग्यालों का संरक्षण और वन पंचायतों को सशक्त बनाने जैसे काम भी कैंपा के दायरे में शामिल हैं। ताजा परिस्थितियों में सरकार के लिए यह राह आसान हो गई है। अब उसे इन कामों के लिए पूरी तरह से केंद्र पर निर्भर नहीं रहना पड़ेगा। हां, इतना जरूर है कि सरकार को अपने कामकाज का तौर-तरीका बदलना होगा। कैंपा फंड में जमा रकम सरकार को भले ही मिल गई है, लेकिन इससे होने वाले कार्यों की मंजूरी केंद्र के स्तर पर ही मिलनी है। लिहाजा वनीकरण और दूसरी योजनाएं को बनाते वक्त सावधानी बरतने की जरूरत है। इनमें धरातलीय स्थिति का समावेश जरूर होना चाहिए। ऐसा न होने की स्थिति में आधी-अधूरी योजनाओं के केंद्र के वापस आने की आशंका बनी रहेगी।

भ्रष्टाचार पर चौतरफा प्रहार

फंसाने की कोशिश की, लेकिन जनता ने उस

झुठ को नकार दिया। इसके अलावा प्रधानमंत्री

मोदी ने अपने मंत्रियों पर भी नकेल कसी और

समय-समय पर उन्हें आगाह किया कि भ्रष्टाचार

का कोई भी प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष मामला बर्दाश्त

नहीं किया जाएगा। यही रणनीति उन्होंने शीर्ष-

नौकरशाही के प्रति भी अपनाई। एक ओर

अफसरों को प्रधानमंत्री से सीधे संपर्क करने

का अधिकार दिया तो दूसरी ओर उनकी

व्यक्तिगत निगरानी भी की। इसकी 'हवा' तेजी

से शीर्ष अधिकारियों में फैल गई और उनमें भय

समा गया कि उनका भ्रष्टाचार मोदी से छिपा नहीं

रह पाएगा। जो अधिकारी भ्रष्टाचार से फिर भी

बाज नहीं आए उन्हें सरकार ने जबरन सेवा

अभी सेंट्रल बोर्ड ऑफ डायरेक्ट टैक्सेज

के अधीक्षक स्तर के 22 अधिकारी और

जून 2019 में भारतीय राजस्व सेवा के 27

अधिकारी सेंट्रल सिविल सर्विस रूल्स,

1972 के अंतर्गत भ्रष्टाचार के कारण हटाए

गए। विगत पांच वर्षों में लगभग ऐसे 300

से अधिक अधिकारी हटाए जा चुके हैं।

मक्त कर दिया।



ग्रेस के नेता और देश के पूर्व

मोदी सरकार ने भ्रष्टाचार के खिलाफ जो मुहिम चलाई है उसके तहत वह राजनीतिक, आर्थिक, प्रशासनिक और सामाजिक भ्रष्टाचार पर एक साथ प्रहार कर रही है

रही है, पर आज भ्रष्टाचार का स्वरूप व्यापक

वित्त एवं गृह मंत्री पी चिदंबरम और जटिल हो गया है। ऐसी संस्थाएं जिन पर भ्रष्टाचार के निवारण के लिए जनता आश्रित है की गिरफ्तारी नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार द्वारा भ्रष्टाचार पर तेज होते प्रहार का संकेत है। वे ही भ्रष्टाचार में लिप्त हैं। अपने प्रथम कार्यकाल से ही प्रधानमंत्री मोदी आदिकाल से ही भ्रष्टाचार की समस्या ने भ्रष्टाचार के प्रति जीरो-टालरेंस की नीति रही है। कौटिल्य ने सरकारी अधिकारियों में अपनाई, लेकिन 72 वर्षों में भ्रष्टाचार ने गहरी भ्रष्टाचार के बारे में कहा था कि जिस प्रकार जड़ें जमा ली हैं जो देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को मछली के लिए पानी का सेवन न करना संभव दीमक की तरह चाट रही हैं। भ्रष्टाचार में प्रमुख नहीं, उसी प्रकार सरकारी कर्मचारी भी उस संस्थाओं के अनेक उच्च पदाधिकारी संलिप्त पैसे का सेवन किए बिना नहीं रह सकते जो उनके हाथों से गुजरता है, लेकिन इस प्रवृत्ति मिले हैं। उन्हें राजनीतिक संरक्षण भी प्राप्त पर लगाम तो लगानी ही पड़ेगी और जैसा होता रहा है इसलिए कौन किस पर हाथ डाले? प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने कहा, किसी को राजनीतिक जनता जानती है कि किसी सरकारी दफ्तर में काम कराने के लिए क्या करना पड़ता है? नफा-नुकसान की चिंता किए बिना पहल करनी प्रायः तर्क दिया जाता है कि भ्रष्टाचार के लिए पड़ेगी। साफ-सुथरा प्रशासन शुरू से ही मोदी सरकार की 'यूएसपी' रही है। उन्होंने भ्रष्टाचार जनता भी उतनी ही दोषी है जितने सरकारी अधिकारी और कर्मचारी। सिद्धांततः यह पर प्रहार के लिए टॉप-डाउन-मॉडल अपनाया है। उन्होंने सर्वप्रथम स्वयं अपने आचरण से ठीक है, पर व्यवहार में? कल्पना कीजिए कि 60-70 या ज्यादा वर्ष के पेंशनभोगी सरकारी एक भ्रष्टाचार-विहीन राजनीतिज्ञ का प्रतिमान पेश किया। मोदी सरकार की नीतियों से कोई दफ्तर या कोषागार के चक्कर लगा रहे हैं और संबंधित बाबू उन्हें रोज-रोज नई कमियां बता सहमत या असहमत हो सकता है, लेकिन कर टहला रहा है। क्या वे प्रतिदिन आ सकते इसकी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकता कि उन पर हैं? गांव के गरीब किसान, मजदर, महिलाएं या उनकी सरकार के मंत्रियों पर भ्रष्टाचार के किसी दफ्तर में इस टेबल से उस टेबल परेशान आरोप नहीं लगे। पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री मनमोहन सिंह की भी छवि बेदाग रही, लेकिन उनकी सरकार हो रहे हों और उनसे अपेक्षा की जाए कि वे बार-बार आएं? मोदी सरकार ने भ्रष्टाचार के कई मंत्री भ्रष्टाचार में लिप्त थे। के खिलाफ जो मुहिम चलाई है उसके तहत 2019 के लोकसभा चुनावों के दौरान वह राजनीतिक, आर्थिक, प्रशासनिक और

कांग्रेस के तत्कालीन अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी ने राफेल सौदे में भ्रष्टाचार पर मोदी सरकार को



मोदी सरकार का फरमान है-रिफॉर्म, परफॉर्म एंड ट्रांसफॉर्म अर्थात 'सुधरो, काम करो और बदलो' अन्यथा बाहर का रास्ता देखो, लेकिन जनता के पैसे से खिलवाड़ मत करो। किसी सरकार में ऐसी मजबूती संभवतः पहली बार दिखाई दे रही है। यह कोई अचानक उठाया गया कदम नहीं है। मोदी सरकार ने शुरू से ही इसके संकेत दिए थे। काला-धन घोषित करने की योजना, विमुद्रीकरण, टैक्स चोरी रोकने के लिए जीएसटी लाना, बिचौलियों को खत्म करने के लिए सब्सिडी को सीधे खाते में ट्रांसफर करने आदि जैसे अनेक कदम मोदी सरकार की इस मुद्दे पर गंभीरता को रेखांकित करते हैं। इसके कारण ट्रांसपेरेंसी इंटरनेशनल द्वारा तैयार 'भ्रष्टाचार-सूचकांक' 2018 में भारत की स्थिति चीन से बेहतर हो गई। 180 देशों की सूची में चीन 87वें स्थान पर चला गया वहीं भारत 78वें स्थान पर पहुंच गया, लेकिन अभी सुधार की बहुत गुंजाइश है। शायद इसीलिए चिदंबरम के विरुद्ध भी कदम उठाने से सरकार हिचकी नहीं। यह कांग्रेस के

शीर्ष नेताओं द्वारा भ्रष्टाचार में लिप्त होने का

अनोखा केस है। यह बात और है कि जब भी कोई छोटा-बड़ा नेता कानून के शिकंजे में फंसता है तो वह उसका ठीकरा राजनीतिक विद्वेष पर फोड़ देता है। सोनिया और राहुल गांधी भी भ्रष्टाचार के शिकंजे में हैं। यह है मोदी का टॉप-डाउन-मॉडल। जब टॉप अर्थात शीष राजनीतिज्ञों और अधिकारियों पर लगाम लगेगी तो 'बॉटम' अर्थात नीचे वाले अपने आप ठीक हो जाएंगे, लेकिन ऐसी रणनीति तो केंद्र सरकार के मंत्रियों और अधिकारियों के लिए है और जनता का ज्यादा काम राज्य सरकार के दफ्तरों में अधिकारियों से पड़ता है।

राज्यों में प्रधानमंत्री की नहीं वरन मुख्यमंत्रियों की चलती है। संभवतः मोदी की रणनीति में राज्यों के मुख्यमंत्रियों के लिए भी संदेश छिपा है, पर क्या राज्यों के मुख्यमंत्री भी मोदी जैसे साफ-सुथरे हो सकेंगे? क्या वे भी अपने विधायकों और अधिकारियों पर लगाम लगा सकेंगे? अब तो पंचायत स्तर पर भी भ्रष्टाचार है। पंचायतों को करोड़ों रुपये विकास के लिए केंद्र और राज्य से मिलते हैं जिसे ग्राम ब्लॉक और जिला स्तर पर सरपंच, ब्लॉक प्रमुख और जिला-पंचायत अध्यक्ष सरकारी अधिकारियों की मिलीभगत से उड़ा रहे हैं भ्रष्टाचार का फैलाव बहुत है। उसमें गहराई भी बहुत है। इसके विरुद्ध अन्ना हजारे जैसे जन आंदोलन मात्र से काम नहीं चलेगा, प्राइमरी-कक्षा से ही इसके विरुद्ध बच्चों में संस्कार और मूल्य डालने पड़ेंगे। पैसे का लालच तो अंतहीन है, पर यदि हम देश, समाज, परिवार के साथ एकसूत्र में गुंथे हुए आगे बढ़ना चाहते हैं तो हमें भ्रष्टाचार के विरुद्ध स्वयं को सिपाही बनाना पड़ेगा और इसकी अगुआई करने वाले सरकारी, गैरसरकारी संगठनों एवं जनआंदोलनों का साथ देना पड़ेगा।

(लेखक सेंटर फॉर द स्टडी ऑफ सोसायटी एंड पॉलिटिक्स के निदेशक हैं) response@jagran.com

महिलाओं के हाथ से छूटते काम

हमारी पीढ़ी की स्त्रियां जब पलटकर देखती हैं तो उन्हे अपने गांवों, कस्बों और नगरों में ऐसी बेशुमार स्त्रियां नजर आती हैं जिनके पास काम ही काम थे। जैसे, गाय-भैंस का दूध दुहने से लेकर उनके दाना, पानी, नहलाने का बंदोबस्त करना, बदलते मौसम की मार से उन्हें बचाना, गोबर से उपले थापना, उसके साथ पीली मिट्टी मिलाकर कच्चे घरों की लिपाई-पुताई करना, संयुक्त परिवारों का खाना पकाना, कपड़े धोना, घर की साफ-सफाई करना। इसी तरह मौसम के हिसाब से थोक में दाल, चावल, मसाले खरीदकर उन्हें सुखाना, साफ करना, चक्की पर पीसना, दालों, मसालों में कीड़े न लगें, इसके लिए उन पर हल्के हाथ से तेल लगाना, फिर उन्हें ठंडा करके कनस्तरों, डब्बों में भरना। इसके अलावा मौसमी अचार, पापड़, बड़ियां बनाना, स्वेटर बुनना, कपड़े सिलना और पल-पल आते तीज-त्योहारों से जुड़े खान-पान तैयार करना, घर में वक्त-बेवक्त आए मेहमानों का स्वागत-सत्कार करना, अपने बच्चों और रिश्तेदारों के बच्चों की देखभाल करना। कुल मिलाकर उनके पास काम ही काम थे। इसके चलते इन महिलाओं के जीवन में जैसे आराम नाम का शब्द ही नहीं था। बहुत से लोग कहते हैं कि इसी परिश्रम के कारण अक्सर उन महिलाओं को कोई गंभीर रोग नहीं होते थे और उनका जीवन भी लंबा होता था।

सामाजिक भ्रष्टाचार पर एक साथ प्रहार कर

हालांकि यह भी सच है कि उन दिनों औरतों के काम को काम की तरह देखने का रिवाज नहीं था। उनके सारे काम कर्तव्य की श्रेणी में आते थे, जिन्हें उन्हें न केवल बीमारी-हारी के दौरान, बल्कि कई बार जान देकर भी निबाहना पडता था। इसके अलावा चुंकि घरेलु काम से कोई आय नहीं होती थी इसलिए उनके कामों की कोई

तथ्य-कथ्य | सैन्य कर्मियों की संख्या

(आंकड़े लाख में)

3.61

थाईलैंड

2.55

श्रीलंका

3.96

इंडोनेशिया

4.06

म्यांमार

4.82



अब तेजी के साथ खत्म होती जा

शिनाख्त भी नहीं होती थी। वे फ्री के खाते में जाते थे। हाड़तोड़ काम के बावजूद हाथ में पैसा न होने के कारण महिलाएं मामुली जरूरतों के लिए भी पुरुषों पर निर्भर थीं। इसीलिए यह विचार सामने आने लगा कि महिलाओं का पैसा कमाना कितना जरूरी है? इसीलिए जबसे महिलाओं की शिक्षा और उनकी आत्मनिर्भरता की लहर चली तबसे घर के काम औरतों की जिंदगी से दूर होते चले गए। घर की जरूरतों को पूरा करने से लेकर घरेलू उपयोग की वे चीजें जिन्हें महिलाएं तैयार करती थीं, उन्हें बाजार से खरीदा जाने लगा। एक वक्त ऐसा भी आया है कि घर के कामों को करना हैसियत से भी जोड़ दिया गया। एक यह तर्क भी चल निकला है कि इतनी पढ़ाई-लिखाई क्या इसलिए की है कि रात-दिन खाना बनाएं ? शायद इसीलिए इन दिनों हम देखते हैं कि जो परिवार खाना बनाने के लिए कुक रख सकते हैं वे कुक रखते हैं। जो खरीद सकते हैं वें उसे बाजार से खरीदते हैं। इसके अलावा तकनीक ने भी दुनियाभर में घरेलू कामों को आसान बनाया है। गैस,

माइक्रोवेव, कुकर, मिक्सी, फ्रिज, कपडे धोने की मशीन

आदि ऐसी ही सुविधाएं हैं, लेकिन स्वास्थ्य विशेषज्ञ कहते हैं कि अब कम काम के कारण महिलाएं उन रोगों का शिकार हो रही हैं जो अक्सर पुरुषों को होते थे। इसका बड़ा कारण यह है कि जितनी कैलोरी वे खाती हैं, वे खर्च नहीं होतीं। मोटापा बढ़ता है, उससे निपटने के लिए जिम आदि जाने पर अतिरिक्त खर्च तो होता ही है, अलग से समय भी निकालना पड़ता है, जबिक घर के तरह-तरह के काम व्यायाम ही थे।

बदलाव के इस दौर में जो बात हैरत में डालती है वह यह है कि औरतों के जितने भी काम थे उन सब पर कंपनियों और प्रकारांतर से पुरुषों का कब्जा हो गया है। अब बड़े-बड़े होटलों, ढाबों, यहां तक कि घरों में भी पुरुष ही खाना पकाते दिखते हैं। वे ही सिलाई, कढ़ाई करते, पशुओं की देखभाल करते नजर आते हैं। दूध का लगभग सारा व्यवसाय पुरुषों के हवाले है। स्वेटर बनाने से लेकर कपड़े सिलने तक के क्षेत्र में पुरुष छाए हुए हैं। वे ही बड़े-बड़े शेफ और फैशन डिजाइनर हैं। महिलाओं ने जो विशेषज्ञता सदियों में प्राप्त की थी वह खत्म होती जा रही है और अगली पीढ़ियां तो हो सकता है कि इस बात पर आश्चर्य करें कि कभी महिलाएं खाना पकाना जानती थीं और वे खेतीबारी का काम भी कर सकती थीं। तकनीक, मशीन और पुरुषों ने औरतों के सारे काम छीन लिए हैं। भले ही इसे औरतों की मुक्ति के रूप में देखा जाता हो, लेकिन यह अपनी कलाकारी से हाथ धोना भी है। इसे आज नहीं, बहुत बाद में महसूस किया जाएगा, लेकिन तब तक सब विस्मृति के गर्भ में जा चुका होगा।

स्रोत: आइआइएसएस

14.45

भारत

(लेखिका साहित्यकार हैं) response@jagran.com

20.35



सत्य का बोध

सत्य ही धर्म है। महात्मा गांधी सत्य एवं अहिंसा के पुजारी थे। उनका कथन है कि जो सत्य के मार्ग पर चलते हैं, उन्हें पग-पग पर परमात्मा का संबल मिलता रहता है। उसके मार्ग में बाधक बनने वाले परमात्मा के कोप का भाजन बनते हैं, क्योंकि सत्य के मार्ग पर जो चलते हैं, वे किसी के बारे में न बुरा सोचते हैं और न अहित ही किसी का करते हैं। वे सदा सब की भलाई ही सोचते हैं। सबकी भलाई में ही उनकी भलाई का भाव छुपा रहता है। वे अपने कतव्यों को पालने में सदा ही मुस्तैद रहते हैं। इसी कारण उन पर परमात्मा की कृपा-दुष्टि एवं अनुदान-वरदान सदा ही बरसते रहते हैं।

सत्यवादी व्यक्ति की कथनी और करनी में भिन्नत नहीं देखी जाती है। कथनी और करनी में जहां भिन्नता पाई जाती है, वहां असत्य और अधर्म का वास होता है सत्य के दर्शन के लिए कथनी और करनी में समानत अनिवार्य है। धर्म के मार्ग पर चलने में कठिनाइयों का सामना तो करना पड़ता है, पर जो मन में संकल्प करके सत्य के मार्ग पर चलते हैं, कठिनाइयां मात्र उनकी परीक्षा लेती हैं, कुछ अहित नहीं कर सकती हैं, क्योंकि उस व्यक्ति को परमात्मा की शक्ति का संबल मिलता रहत है। उसके पग-पग पर आनेवाली कठिनाइयां उसे और निखारती हैं और तरह-तरह की अनुभूतियां प्रदान करके मंजिल का मार्ग प्रशस्त करती रहती हैं।

बादल सुर्य को ज्यादा समय तक ढंक कर नहीं रख सकते हैं, यह प्रकृति का नियम है। सत्य के मार्ग के पथिक राजा हरिश्चंद्र राज्य का परित्याग किया। पत्नी बच्चा, स्वयं को बेचा, पर सत्य मार्ग से पीछे पग नही किया। राजा हरिश्चंद्र को सत्य के ज्ञान का बोध था उन्हें ज्ञान था कि मात्र ईश्वर सत्य है और सुष्टिगत वस्तु नश्वर है। सत्य की अनुभूति का ज्ञान होते ही व्यक्ति अपने दोष-दुर्गुणों, अहं को परम सता के चरणों में समर्पित करता है और अपने मन मंदिर को पवित्र करके निष्पाप बना लेता है। इसलिए बुरे परिणामों से बचने के लिए दोष-दुर्गुणों को जीवन से निकाल देना ही जीवन के लिए हितकारी होता है।

मिलकर लड़नी होगी कुपोषण से जग

हाल ही में वर्ल्ड विजन इंडिया और आइएफएमआर लीड द्वारा संयुक्त रूप से 'चाइल्ड वेल-बीइंग इंडेक्स' (बाल कल्याण सूचकांक) रिपोर्ट जारी की गई है। देश में बच्चों के स्वास्थ्य, पोषण, शिक्षा, स्वच्छता और सुरक्षा जैसे दो दर्जन संकेतकों के अध्ययन के बाद तैयार की गई इस सूचकांक में केरल, तमिलनाडु और हिमाचल प्रदेश को शीर्ष स्थान मिला है, जबिक मेघालय, झारखंड और मध्यप्रदेश नीचले पायदान पर हैं। नीति आयोग ने रिपोर्ट को महत्वपूर्ण बताते हुए कुपोषण के खात्मे के लिए सरकार के साथ-साथ गैर-सरकारी संगठनों को भी आगे आने को कहा है।

आंकड़ों के मुताबिक भारत में प्रत्येक चार में से एक बच्चा कुंपोषण का शिकार है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र बाल कोष के अनुसार दुनिया में सबसे ज्यादा कुपोषित बच्चे भारत में हैं। हमारे देश में पांच वर्ष से कम उम्र के करीबन 44 फीसद बच्चों का वजन सामान्य से कम है, जबकि 72 फीसद बच्चे खून की कमी यानी एनीमिया से जूझ रहे हैं। कुपोषण की समस्या बच्चों के शारीरिक और मानसिक विकास के लिए

नीति आयोग की एक रिपोर्ट बताती है कि केवल कुपोषण के कारण देश की कुल आय में दस फीसद की कमी आती है!

प्रमुख रूप से उत्तरदायी रही है। नवजात व पांच साल तक के बच्चों तथा गर्भवती महिलाओं में कुपोषण के मामले देश में सर्वाधिक देखे गए हैं। बच्चों में कुपोषण का अर्थ यह हुआ कि उनकी जीवन की गुणवत्ता और राष्ट्र के प्रति मानव संसाधन के रूप में जो दायित्व है, उसे निभा पाने में वे पूरी तरह विफल हो जाएंगे। देश में स्वास्थ्य व पोषण की समुचित

व्यवस्था कर कुपोषण से होने वाली मौतों को बहुत हद तक रोका जा सकता है। कुपोषण के कारण मानवबल की कार्य-क्षमता और गुणवत्ता का क्षरण होता जाता है। नीति आयोग की एक रिपोर्ट बताती है कि केवल कुपोषण के कारण देश की कुल आय में दस फीसद की कमी आती है! बच्चे देश के भविष्य हैं, लेकिन गरीबी की वजह से कई बच्चे पर्याप्त भोजन व आवश्यक सुख-सुविधाओं से विरत

जीवन गुजारने को विवश हैं। हालांकि सरकारी स्कूलों में मध्याह्न भोजन और आंगनबाड़ी केंद्रों में पोषाहार वितरण से स्थिति सुधरती नजर आ रही है। इस गति को तेज किए जाने की जरूरत है।

गत दिनों प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने मन की बात कार्यक्रम में कुपोषण से निपटने पर चर्चा के दौरान जनभागीदारी पर विशेष जोर दिया। उन्होंने देशवासियों से मार्मिक अपील करते हुए यह भी कहा कि हमें व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर भी कुपोषण से ग्रस्त लोगों को बाहर निकालने का प्रयास करना चाहिए। अगर देश का हर सक्षम व्यक्ति एक कुपोषित व्यक्ति को उस स्थिति से बाहर निकालने का प्रयास करता है, तो बड़ी तेजी से कुपोषण के मामलों में कमी लाई जा सकती है। सरकार ने 2022 तक देश को कुपोषण-मुक्त बनाने का संकल्प लिया है। इस संकल्प को पूरा करने में हम सबों की भागीदारी अनिवार्य है। देश का एक सामान्य नागरिक भी अपने घर में शेष बचे भोजन को फेंकने के बजाय जरूरतमंदों के बीच बांटने की आदत को विकसित कर कुपोषण-मुक्त भारत बनाने में अपना अहम योगदान दे सकता है।

(लेखक बीएचयू में अध्येता हैं)

चीन की अनदेखी न करे भारत

वियतनाम दक्षिण कोरिया

पाकिस्तान

उत्तर कोरिया

मोदी सरकार द्वारा अनुच्छेद-370 एवं 35-ए हटाए जाने के बाद बौखला रहे पाकिस्तान को पड़ोसी चीन से जैसी शह मिल रही है, उसकी अनदेखी करना भारत के हित में नहीं होगा। कश्मीर मुद्दे को चीन की मदद से संयुक्त राष्ट्र में ले जाने वाले पाकिस्तान को यह भरोसा है कि भारत से जंग होने की स्थिति में उसे चीन की मदद जरूर मिलेगी। शायद तभी वह अपनी तंगहाली में भी भारत के साथ जंग के मंसुबे पाल रहा है। पाकिस्तान के रेल मंत्री शेख राशिद अहमद ने बड़ी बेतकल्लुफी से यह बयान दिया है कि आगामी अक्टूबर-नवंबर के महीने में भारत के साथ पाकिस्तान की जंग अवश्यंभावी है। उन्होंने यह भी फरमाया कि कश्मीर के लिए जंग का अब निर्णायक समय आ गया है। पाक सरकार के ये मंत्री बिना किसी भरोसे के इतनी खुली बात नहीं कर सकते। यद्यपि भारत ने इस तरह के भड़काऊ बयान का कोई संज्ञान नहीं लिया है, बावजूद इसके सावधानी अपेक्षित है। क्योंकि चीन के साथ होने वाली पाकिस्तान की साठगांठ भविष्य में भारत के लिए चुनौती बन सकती है। इस दृष्टि से अक्टूबर माह में भारत आने वाले चीनी राष्ट्रपति के साथ वार्ता करते समय भारत को यह कहने में संकोच नहीं करना चाहिए कि कश्मीर मुद्दे पर बेवजह पाकिस्तान को शह देना उचित नहीं है। भारत-पाक के बीच उलझने वाली कश्मीर समस्या को सुलझाने के लिए मध्यस्तता का मन बना रहे अमेरिका को जिस तरह से भारत ने कड़ा जवाब देकर शांत कर दिया है, वैसी ही कूटनीति चीन के साथ अपनाने की जरूरत है। हालांकि चालबाज चीन बहुत ज्यादा भरोसेमंद नहीं है, फिर भी कूटनीतिक संतुलन बनाना ही होगा। डोकलाम विवाद पर भारत की दृढ़ता ने जिस तरह से चीन को पीछे हटने को विवश कर दिया था। आज कश्मीर मुद्दे

मेलबाक्स

पर चीन के प्रति वैसी ही दृढ़ता की जरूरत है। विश्वमंच पर अपनी धाक जमा चुके भारत के लिए पाकिस्तान को कूटनीतिक मात देने हेतु चीन को रास्ते पर लाना ही होगा। कश्मीर मसले पर भारत को अपने घर के विपक्षी विरोध के साथ-साथ पाकिस्तान की पीठ पर हाथ रखने वाले चीन की नकारात्मक दृष्टि की अनदेखी नहीं करनी चाहिए।

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कैसे हो पुलिस व्यवस्था में सुधार

राज्य में कानून व्यवस्था एवं शांति को बनाए रखने में पुलिस की अहम भूमिका होती है। लेकिन मौजूदा समय में पुलिस अपने दायित्व का निर्वहन सफलता पूर्वक नहीं कर पा रही है। इसके अनेक कारण हैं, जिनमें ड्यूटी का समय निर्धारित ना होना, त्योहारों पर छुट्टियों का ना मिलना, इसके अतिरिक्त कार्यकाल के दौरान मात्र छह फीसद को अतिरिक्त ट्रेनिंग मिल पाना शामिल है। इन्हीं सब कारणों से पुलिस पर लोगों का भरोसा और अपराधियों का डर दोनों कमजोर हो रहा है। बहुत सारे मौकों पर पुलिसकर्मी अपने कर्तव्यों का निर्वहन करना चाहते हैं, लेकिन वाहनों या स्टाफ की कमी से वह ऐसा नहीं कर पाते। इन सबके बावजूद भी पुलिस हमारी सेवा में दिन-रात लगी रहती है। भारत के सात राज्यों में पुलिस कर्मियों को लगभग 18 घंटों तक ड्यूटी करनी पड़ती है। बिहार में कहीं-कहीं ऐसे थाने हैं, जहां मात्र एक ही पुलिसकर्मी तैनात है। हालांकि कुछ राज्य ऐसे भी हैं जहां पर ज्यादा काम के बदले पुलिस कर्मियों को एक माह का अतिरिक्त वेतन दिया जाता है। कुछ राज्यों ने सप्ताह में एक दिन छुट्टी देने का भी प्रावधान किया, लेकिन संख्या बल

की कमी के कारण यह मूर्त रूप नहीं ले सका। राजनीतिक नेतृत्व पुलिस व्यवस्था में बदलाव लाना नहीं चाहते हैं, क्योंकि पुलिस उन्हीं के इशारों पर चलती है। पुलिस को अब कानून व्यवस्था और जांच-पड़ताल दो अलग विंग में विभाजित करने की आवश्यकता है, जिससे पुलिस का दबाव कम किया जा सके। यह तभी संभव हो सकता है जब आपराधिक जांच प्रक्रिया फॉरेंसिक साक्ष्यों पर आधारित हो।

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नकदी लेनदेन

नोटबंदी के समय ऐसा लगा था कि अब नकदी का चलन कम होगा। सरकार ने भी प्लास्टिक मनी के अधिक से अधिक उपयोग पर जोर दिया था। यह भी बताया गया था कि इससे भ्रष्टाचार पर अंकुश लगेगा, लेकिन रिजर्व बैंक की सालाना रिपोर्ट में चौंकाने वाले तथ्य सामने आए हैं। इसमे बताया गया है कि बाजार में नकदी का लेनदेन बढ़ा है। क्या सरकार ने घोषणा के बाद प्लास्टिक मनी के इस्तेमाल पर गंभीरता नहीं दिखाई अथवा लोगों को यह पसंद नहीं आया? श्रीनिवास यादव, गाजियाबाद

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

अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें : दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com

सेहत की चिंता

सी देश की संपन्नता इस बात से भी आंकी जाती है कि वहां के लोग कितने स्वस्थ और खुशहाल हैं। भारत में स्वास्थ्य स्थितियों को लेकर समय-समय पर होने वाले सर्वेक्षणों में चिंताजनक आंकड़े आते रहते हैं। यहां मधुमेह, रक्तचाप जैसी जीवनशैली संबंधी बीमारियां तेजी से बढ़ रही हैं, जो अधिक चिंता की बात है। ऐसे में प्रधानमंत्री का 'फिटनेस इंडिया आंदोलन' स्वास्थ्य के मोर्चे पर सकारात्मक नतीजे देने वाला साबित हो सकता है। पहले कार्यकाल में भी उन्होंने 'फिटनेस चैलेंज' देकर कुछ खिलाड़ियों और अभिनेताओं को उकसाया था, ताकि देश के युवा उससे प्रेरणा लें और अपने स्वास्थ्य के प्रति सचेत हों। योग दिवस के जरिए भी यही जागरूकता पैदा करने का प्रयास किया गया। अब तो अस्पतालों में भी चिकित्सा के साथ-साथ लोगों को योग करने, व्यायाम करने आदि की प्रेरणा दी जाती है। हालांकि सेहत ठीक रहने की प्रेरणा प्राचीन समय से दी जाती रही है। कहावत ही है कि पहला सुख नीरोगी काया। पर जैसे-जैसे विकास और जीवन में सुख-सुविधाएं बढ़ती गईं, लोग इसके महत्त्व को भूलते गए या फिर कुछ व्यस्तताओं के चलते अपेक्षित ध्यान नहीं दे पाते। उस परंपरा को जीवित करना, लोगों को अपने स्वास्थ्य के प्रति सावधान करना आज बड़ी जरूरत बन गई है।

नागरिकों के स्वास्थ्य का ध्यान रखने का अर्थ सिर्फ यह नहीं होता कि स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं को बेहतर बनाया जाए, स्वास्थ्य सुविधाएं ठीक की जाएं, सर्वसुलभ कराई जाएं। सरकार का काम यह भी है कि वह लोगों को स्वस्थ जीवन जीने की स्थितियां मुहैया कराए, उनमें स्वास्थ्य के प्रति जागरूकता पैदा करे। आंकड़े बताते हैं कि सरकारें जितना पैसा स्वास्थ्य योजनाओं पर खर्च करती हैं, स्वास्थ्य सुविधाएं मुहैया कराने पर करती हैं, उसमें कमी आ जाए, तो दूसरी योजनाओं पर बेहतर तरीके से खर्च किया जा सकता है। इसलिए दुनिया के तमाम देशों में इस बात पर जोर दिया जा रहा है कि लोगों में जीवनशैली संबंधी बीमारियों के प्रति सतर्कता पैदा की जाए। आंकड़े यह भी बताते हैं कि सरकारों को जितना पैसा गंभीर बीमारियों के इलाज पर नहीं खर्च करना पड़ता उससे कहीं ज्यादा पैसा जीवनशैली संबंधी समस्याओं पर काबू पाने के लिए करना पड़ता है। जीवनशैली संबंधी बीमारियां जैसे रक्तचाप, मधुमेह, अस्थमा, हड्डियों की कमजोरी वगैरह को सामान्य रूप से स्वास्थ्य के प्रति सजग रह कर अपनी दिनचर्या में सुधार लाकर काबू किया जा सकता है। नियमित व्यायाम, योगासन आदि से शरीर में पैदा हुई अनियमितताओं को आसानी से दुरुस्त किया जा सकता है। इस तरह इन बीमारियों पर व्यय होने वाले धन की बचत होगी और उसका उपयोग दूसरी बुनियादी सुविधाओं के मद में किया जा सकता है।

विचित्र है कि जिन समस्याओं पर खुद सतर्क रह कर काबू पाया जा सकता है, उनके लिए भी लोग सरकारों का मुंह जोहते रहते हैं। स्वास्थ्य संबंधी सुविधाएं बेहतर न होने, चिकित्सा पर खर्च बढ़ते जाने, दवाओं की कीमतें नियंत्रित न होने आदि की शिकायतें आमतौर पर सुनने को मिल जाती हैं। मगर इस बात से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि शरीर में अनेक तरह की अनियमितताओं को हम खुद अपनी लापरवाही से पैदा कर लेते हैं, जो बाद में गंभीर बीमारी का कारण बनती हैं। अगर हम अपने खानपान और दिनचर्या, सामान्य व्यायाम वगैरह का ध्यान रखें, तो कई समस्याओं पर खुद काबू पा सकते हैं। ऐसे में प्रधानमंत्री का 'फिटनेस इंडिया अभियान स्वार्थ्य के मामले में बेहतर नतीजे की उम्मीद जगाता है।

सोने की चमक

चिछले तीन महीने में सोने के दाम जिस तेजी से बढ़े हैं उसे देख कर अब हर निवेशक यही सोच रहा होगा कि काश सोने में पैसा लगाया होता! सोना अब चालीस हजार रुपए प्रति दस ग्राम तक जा पहुंचा है। भारत में सोने के दाम का यह रिकार्ड स्तर है। इस बात की संभावना से भी इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि आने वाले दिनों में सोना कोई नया कीर्तिमान कायम कर दे और बयालीस-तियालीस हजार रुपए तोले तक चला जाए। सोने के रोजाना बढ़ते दाम से जहां निवेशकों की चांदी हो गई है, वहीं कारोबारियों और खरीदारों के माथे पर चिंता की लकीरें साफ दिखाई पड़ रही हैं। देश भर के सर्राफा बाजारों का रुख अभी जो हालात बयां कर रहा है उसे देखते हुए तो यही लग रहा है कि जल्दी ही सोना नीचे नहीं आने वाला। हालांकि अब त्योहारी मौसम भी आ रहा है और शादी-ब्याह का भी। ऐसे में सोने की मांग काफी बढ़ेगी। अगर सोना सस्ता नहीं होगा तो लोगों की जेब ढीली होगी। मिलावटी सोने का कारोबार बढ़ेगा और सोने की तस्करी करने वालों की भी मौज होगी।

भारत सोने के मामले में पूरी तरह आयात पर निर्भर है। इस वक्त अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में डॉलर के मुकाबले रुपए की हालत कमजोर चल रही है। जाहिर है, सोना खरीदने के लिए ज्यादा पैसा देना पड़ेगा। इसका असर घरेलू बाजार पर पड़ता है। फिर, इस बार बजट में सोने पर आयात शुल्क को दस से बढ़ा कर साढ़े बारह फीसद कर दिया गया था। इससे भी सोने के दाम बढ़ना स्वाभाविक था। इसके अलावा और भी कई कारण हैं जिनकी वजह से सोने के दाम का ग्राफ तेजी से चढ़ रहा है। रिजर्व बैंक इस साल में चार बार नीतिगत दरों में कटौती कर चुका है। इसका सबसे ज्यादा फायदा बैंकों और कर्ज लेने वालों को हुआ और इससे भी सोना महंगा होता गया। माना जा रहा है कि ब्याज दरें कम होने से कर्ज बाजार में जान आएगी और खरीदार व निवेशक सोना खरीदने की ओर रुख करेंगे। इससे सोने की मांग और कीमत दोनों बढ़ेंगी। इस वक्त बाजार में पिछले कुछ महीनों से जो मंदी का माहौल बना है उसका असर शेयर बाजारों पर भी साफ दिख रहा है। रियल एस्टेट बाजार का तो पिछले तीन साल से दम निकला पड़ा है। ऐसे में निवेशकों को सबसे ज्यादा मुनाफा सोने में ही दिख रहा है।

सोना जिस तरह से आसमान छू रहा है उससे खरीद तो मुश्किल हो ही गई है, सोने में मिलावट और तस्करी भी बढ़ रही है। यह चिंता की बात है। हाल में विदेशी बाजारों में नकली ब्रांड वाली सोने की छड़ों को खपाने की जो खबरें आ रही हैं वे चौंकाने वाली हैं। ऐसे में सवाल है कि भारत के घरेलू बाजार में बाहर से जो सोना आ रहा है वह कहीं मिलावटी तो नहीं है, शुद्ध है तो कितना, ये सवाल लोगों के मन में उठने लाजिमी हैं। सोना तैयार करने वाली रिफाइनरियों, कारोबारियों और बैंकों के सामने यह गंभीर चुनौती है। कि मिलावटी सोने के कारोबार पर कैसे अंकुश लगे। मिलावटी सोना काफी सस्ता मिल जाता है और आमतौर पर बाजार में शादियों के सीजन में खपा दिया जाता है। ऐसे में गैरकानूनी तरीके से बाहर से सोना लाने वालों पर निगरानी की जरूरत है।

कल्पमधा

देवता न बड़ा होता है, न छोटा, न शक्तिशाली होता है, न अशक्त। वह उतना ही बड़ा होता है जितना बड़ा उसे उपासक बनाना चाहता है। -हजारीप्रसाद द्विवेदी

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ब्रह्मांड में जीवन की उम्मीदें

निरंकार सिंह

हाकिंग दूसरे ग्रहों पर जीवन की उम्मीदों को मानव सभ्यता के अस्तित्व के लिए महत्त्वपूर्ण मानते थे। उनका मानना था कि आकाशीय पिंडों की टक्कर या परमाणु युद्ध के कारण हमारी सभ्यता नष्ट हो सकती है। इसलिए मानव सभ्यता को बचाने के लिए हमें ब्रह्मांड में जीवन की संभावनाओं की तलाश करनी चाहिए, ताकि मानव जाति का भविष्य सुरक्षित रहे।

वन के लिए सबसे अनुकूल ग्रह हमारी पृथ्वी है। वैज्ञानिक लगातार अध्ययन कर अन्य ग्रहों पर भी जीवन की संभावनाएं तलाश रहे हैं। अब एक नए अध्ययन में दावा किया गया है कि पृथ्वी के आकार वाले बर्फीले ग्रहों पर भी कुछ क्षेत्र रहने योग्य हो सकते हैं। अब तक वैज्ञानिक यह सोचते रहे हैं कि पृथ्वी जैसे आकार वाले जमे हुए ग्रहों पर जीवन मुमिकन ही नहीं हो सकता है क्योंकि इन ग्रहों पर मौजूद महासागर जमे हुए हैं और अत्यधिक ठंड जीवन की संभावनाओं को खत्म कर देती है। लेकिन नया अध्ययन हमारी उस सोच को चुनौती देता है जिसमें हमें यह लगता है कि अत्यधिक ठंडे और गर्म ग्रहों में जीवन संभव ही नहीं हो सकता। जियोफिजिकल रिसर्च जर्नल में प्रकाशित एक अध्ययन के अनुसार, बर्फीले ग्रहों की भूमध्य रेखाओं के पास के क्षेत्रों में रहने योग्य तापमान भी मौजूद हो सकता है। कनाडा की टोरंटो यूनिवर्सिटी

में खगोल और भौतिक विज्ञानी एडिव पैराडाइस ने बताया कि हमारी खोज में कुछ ऐसे ग्रह मिले हैं जो बर्फीले हैं। परंपरागत रूप से इनको रहने योग्य नहीं माना जा सकता, लेकिन नया अध्ययन यह सुझाव देता है कि शायद वे ग्रह रहने योग्य हो सकते हैं। शोधकर्ताओं ने बताया कि ये रहने योग्य क्षेत्र एक तारे की विशिष्ट दूरी से प्रभावित होते हैं, जिसकी वजह से वहां का तापमान सामान्य और पानी तरल अवस्था में मौजुद हो सकता है।

अब तक के अध्ययनों से पता चलता है कि हमारी पृथ्वी भी दो से तीन बार हिम युग से गुजरी है लेकिन फिर भी यहां जीवन बच गया। हिम यग में भी सूक्ष्म जीव बचे रहे। पैराडाइस का कहना है कि पृथ्वी अपने हिमयुग के दौरान भी रहने योग्य थी। यहां जीवन हिमयुग से पहले पनपा था। यह हिमयुग और उसके बाद भी बरकरार रहा। वैज्ञानिकों ने बर्फीले ग्रहों में रहने योग्य

कारणों का अध्ययन करने के लिए कंप्यूटर प्रोग्राम का सहारा लिया, जिसमें सूर्य की रोशनी की मौजूदगी और क्षेत्रों के आकार के आधार पर मॉडल बनाए गए। सबसे खास चीज जिस पर वैज्ञानिकों ने ध्यान दिया, वह कार्बन डाइआक्साइड थी। कार्बन डाइ आक्साइड की वजह से ही ग्रहों में गर्मी रहती है और जलवायु परिवर्तन भी होता है। इसके बिना ग्रहों के महासागर जम जाते हैं, बेजान हो जाते हैं। जब वायुमंडल में कार्बन डाइआक्साइड का स्तर कम हो जाता है तो ग्रह स्नोबॉल यानी बर्फीले हो जाते हैं। लेकिन जब इन ग्रहों पर सूर्य का प्रकाश पड़ता है तो इनकी भूमध्य रेखाओं के आसपास के

है कि बर्फीले ग्रहों पर जीवन संभव हो सकता है। नासा के वैज्ञानिकों ने हाल में एक ऐसा ग्रह

खोजा है जो रहने योग्य हो सकता है। यह ग्रह हमारे सौर मंडल के बाहर मिला है। हमारी धरती से यह करीब इकतीस प्रकाश वर्ष दूर है। इस सुपर अर्थ ग्रह को 'जीजे 357 डी' नाम दिया गया है। इस ग्रह की खोज नासा के अंतरिक्ष टेलीस्कोप- ट्रांजिटिंग एक्सोप्लेनेट सर्वे सैटेलाइट (टीईएसएस) के जरिए इस साल के शुरू में की गई थी। अमेरिका की कॉर्नेल यूनिवर्सिटी में इस बारे में शोध करने वाले दल की सदस्य लिजा कलटेनेगर के अनुसार यह उत्साहजनक है कि धरती के सबसे करीब पहली

सुपर अर्थ का पता चला है। यह ग्रह आकार में धरती से बड़ा है। इस पर घना वातावरण देखने को मिला है और इसकी सतह पर धरती की तरह पानी तरल रूप में हो सकता है। टेलीस्कोप की मदद से इस पर जीवन के संकेतों की पहचान का प्रयास चल रहा है। ट्रांजिटिंग एक्सोप्लेनेट सर्वे सैटेलाइट (टीईएसएस) को नासा ने ग्रहों की खोज के लिए पिछले साल 18 अप्रैल को छोड़ा था। यह दो साल तक काम करता रहेगा। स्पेन के इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ एस्ट्रोफिजिक्स ऑफ द कैनरी आइलैंड और यूनिवसिटीं ऑफ ला लागुना के खगोलविदों ने कहा है कि उन्होंने जीजे 357 सिस्टम का पता लगाया है। इसमें कुल तीन ग्रह हैं। इनमें एक ग्रह (जीजे 357डी) पर रहने के लिए अनुकूल परिस्थितियां हो सकती हैं। इसके अलावा इसमें एक बौना ग्रह (जीजे 357) भी है जो सर्य के आकार का एक तिहाई हिस्सा लगता है। इसी साल फरवरी में ही टीईएस



क्षेत्रों में बर्फ के पानी बनने की संभावना प्रबल सैटेलाइट ने पता लगाया था कि जीजे 357 हर 3.9 टीम के अनुसार इंसान ब्रह्मांड में मौजूद ऐसे कई हो जाती है। इस आधार पर भी कहा जा सकता - दिनों में थोड़ा मंद हो रहा था। वैज्ञानिकों ने कहा कि - ग्रहों पर जिंदगी जी सकता है जो पृथ्वी से ही मिलते-यह इस बात का प्रमाण है कि इसके आसपास कोई ग्रह चक्कर का लगा रहा है। नासा के गोडार्ड स्पेस फ्लाइट सेंटर के अनुसार यह ग्रह जीजे-357 बी था जो पृथ्वी से लगभग बाईस फीसद बड़ा है।

> मशहूर वैज्ञानिक स्टीफन हाकिंग लंबे समय से दुसरी दुनिया में जीवन की तलाश पर जोर देते रहे थे। अपने जीवन भर के गणित और खगोल भौतिकी के अध्ययन से उन्होंने कई ऐसे निष्कर्ष निकाले जो दूसरी दुनिया में जीवन की संभावनाओं का पुरजोर समर्थन करते थे। हाकिंग दूसरे ग्रहों पर जीवन की उम्मीदों को मानव सभ्यता के अस्तित्व के लिए महत्त्वपूर्ण मानते थे। उनका मानना था कि

आकाशीय पिंडों की टक्कर या परमाण युद्ध के कारण हमारी सभ्यता नष्ट हो सकती है। इसलिए मानव सभ्यता को बचाने के लिए हमें ब्रह्मांड में जीवन की संभावनाओं की तलाश करनी चाहिए, ताकि मानव जाति का भविष्य सुरक्षित रहे। इसके लिए उन्होंने रूसी अरबपति यूरी मिल्नर की सहायता से दस करोड़ अमेरिकी डालर की लागत वाले एक दस वर्षीय अभियान की शुरुआत की थी। इसे दूसरे ग्रहों पर जीवन की खोज करने का अभी तक का सबसे बड़ा अभियान माना जाता है। इसे 'ब्रेकथ् मिशन' नाम दिया गया। इस अभियान में पृथ्वी के करीब स्थित लाखों तारों से आने वाले संकेतों को सुना जा रहा है। इस अभियान की खूबी यह है कि पुराने अभियानों की तुलना में इस अभियान का दायरा दस गुना बढ़ाया गया है। प्रोफेसर हाकिंग के इस मिशन में पृथ्वी के इर्द-गिर्द स्थित तारों के पास जीवन की संभावना की तलाश

के लिए रेडियो तरंगों को भेजा जाएगा।

इसके लिए दुनिया के दो सबसे शक्तिशाली रेडियो टेलीस्कोप, ग्रीन बैंक टेलीस्कोप और पार्क्स टेलीस्कोप की मदद ली जाएगी। एक तीसरा टेलीस्कोप दूसरी दुनिया के संकेतों का पता लगाएगा। दुनिया भर का वैज्ञानिक समुदाय 1960 से ही सामृहिक प्रयासों के जरिए सर्च फॉर एक्ट्राटेरेस्ट्रियल इंटेलिजेंस (सेटी) कार्यक्रम के तहत अंतरिक्ष के अन्य ग्रहों पर जीवन की तलाश में लगा है। इसकी श्रूरुआत प्रोजेक्ट ओज्मा (1960) से हुई। शुरुआती दौर में इस कार्यक्रम के तहत कुछ समय के लिए रेडियो टेलिस्कोप के जरिये रेडियो तरंगों को भेजा जाता था।

खगोल वैज्ञानिकों की एक अंतरराष्ट्रीय जुलते हैं। आस्ट्रेलियन नेशनल यूनिवर्सिटी के वैज्ञानिकों का दावा है कि ऐसे ग्रह रहने लायक हैं कि नहीं यह पता लगाना खगोल विज्ञान के लिए एक उपलब्धि है। इस टीम की अगुआई करने वाले चार्ली लाइनवीबर के अनुसार हाल ही में कई ऐसे ग्रह पाए गए हैं जहां ऐसा माहौल पाया गया है कि जिंदगी जी जा सके। इसमें कई ग्रह ऐसे हैं जो एक जैसे हैं और पृथ्वी से मेल खाते हैं। इससे पृथ्वी के बाहर भी जिंदगी बसर करने की संभावनाएं बढ़ गई हैं। अब नए ग्रहों की खोज से वैज्ञानिकों के हौसले काफी बढ़ गए हैं। अब अंतरिक्ष में अन्य ग्रहों पर भी जीवन की तलाश में अभियान में तेजी आएगी।

शायद का चंगुल

विप्रम

शायद उसने... शायद मम्मी ने... शायद पापा ने..! कभी-कभी डॉक्टर से सुनने को मिलता है- 'रिपोर्ट आने दीजिए। शायद एलर्जी है। हो सकता है कोई संक्रमण हो।' रोजमर्रा की हमारी जिंदगी में न जाने कितने 'शायद' ने क्या कुछ घोल रखा है या इसने क्या कुछ से बावस्ता नहीं कराया! फिर भी यह 'शायद' हमारी जुबान से उतरता नहीं। पहले 'शायद' के कोई मायने नहीं समझे जाते थे। यों भी यह आम प्रचलित भाषा का शब्द नहीं माना जाता। इसके स्थान पर पहले 'संभव है' का प्रचलन था। 'अनुमान' का प्रयोग श्रेष्ठ माना जाता था। यह तो मौसम विभाग की अजब-गजब भविष्यवाणी ने 'संभव' शब्द की गरिमा को क्षीण कर दिया! गलत अनुमान बता कर 'शायद' के दरवाजे खोल दिए गए।

यानी यह कहा जा सकता है जब से वैज्ञानिकों की भविष्यवाणी खरी न उतरी, तुक्के-अटकलों पर टिकने लगी, तब से यह 'शायद' अपने जोर के साथ चलन में आया और 'संभव-अनुमान' के प्रयोग की संस्कृति धूमिल हो गई। इसीलिए 'शायद' ने अपने बाजार भाव बढ़ा लिए। अब तो प्रतिस्पर्धा की दौड़

में हर कोई इसी की डोर थामे आगे बढ़ा जा रहा है। स्पर्धा का बीजगणित भी यही कहता है 'शायद'!

कुछ दिन पहले की बात है। नुक्कड़ वाले डॉक्टर से हमने दवा ली। उसने एक दिन की दवा दी थी। दूसरे दिन हम फिर गए, तब दवा कुछ बदल कर दी गई। कुछ फायदा न हुआ तो हमसे रहा न गया और पूछ लिया- 'डॉक्टर साहब! दवा का कुछ फर्क नहीं पड़ा। आखिर मुझे हुआ क्या है?' डॉक्टर ने गंभीर में 'कहा जा सकता है' शब्दावली नहीं चलती।

मुद्रा में कहा- 'देखते हैं। शायद वायरल है!' हम आश्चर्य में पड़ गए, जबिक गंभीर हमें होना चाहिए था। अगले दिन हमने एक अन्य डॉक्टर के क्लीनिक जाना उचित समझा। सोचा कि यहां शायद जल्दी आराम मिल जाएगा। कभी-कभी सस्ता डॉक्टर काम नहीं आता। बल्कि वह बीमारी लंबी खींच देता है। खैर, हमने नए डॉक्टर से भी पूछा कि हमें हुआ क्या है, तब डॉक्टर साहब ने कहा- 'कोई खास तकलीफ नहीं है आपको। मैंने कुछ जांच लिख दी हैं। देखते हैं, क्या निकलता है!'

हम समझ गए। घुमा-फिरा कर यहां भी 'शायद' का ही दौर चल निकला। अब 'शायद' का क्या इलाज हो? जीवन के हर मोड़ पर शायद ही शायद हो तब सही-गलत क्या सोचना! कभी हकीम-वैद्य

नब्ज देख कर ही बता दिया करते थे कि मरीज को हुआ क्या है। आज के मेट्रो के जमाने में डॉक्टर अनुमान लगाते हैं। हजारों रुपए जांच में खर्च कराने के बाद पता चलता है कि माजरा क्या है या बीमार को रोग क्या है! जबिक हकीम-वैद्य मरीज के हाथ की नस पकड़ कर ही बता देते हैं कि उसने पिछली रात खाने में क्या खाया था। आयुर्वेद

दरअसल, 'शायद' की

महिमा अपरंपार है। हमारे रोजमर्रा के जीवन में इसके बिना कोई काम पूरा नहीं होता। एक विद्यार्थी अपनी मेहनत को शायद के पैमाने से ही आंकता है। इसी में अपने परीक्षाफल का पूरा आकलन कर घर वालों को समझा देता है। अब तो ऐसा लगता है कि 'शायद' में ही सारी दुनिया समा रही है। हम कह सकते हैं कि वे जमाने लद गए, जब संभव-असंभव में जीते थे हम। अनुमान लगाना अब पिछड़ गए लोगों का काम रह गया है। अब तो केवल 'शायद' ही काम का है।

देखा जाए तो 'शायद' एक विकास की ओर इंगित करता है। इसके सहारे आगे बढने वाले अच्छे-बुरे कयास-प्रयास लगा कर क्या कुछ नया कर जाते हैं, यह अवश्य ही विचारणीय है।

प्रयत्नशील लोग समझ लेते हैं कि अगली बार शायद कुछ नया हो जाए। यह तो समानता का जमाना आ गया। लड्का-लड्की दोनों एक समान। पहले तो 'शायद' की ही अटकल में लड़कियां होती जाती थीं, जिससे देश का स्त्री-पुरुष अनुपात अच्छा तो नहीं, लेकिन संतोषजनक दिखता था।

बहुत कम लोगों को पता होगा कि ज्योतिषी भी 'शायद' की पोटली समेटे हुए होते हैं। जजमान अपनी दीन-हीन या महीन दशा के फलीभूत ज्योतिषी के मत्थे चढ़ जाता है। पूरी कृपादृष्टि इस शायद के चारों ओर घूम जाती है। मजे की बात कि कोई इन ज्योतिषी महोदय से पूछ कर देखे कि महाराज, आज आपके पास कितने जजमान आएंगे, इस सवाल का उत्तर शायद वे सीधा-सीधा न दें, बल्कि घुमा-फिरा कर दें। हो सकता है कुछ भी न बताएं। यहां भी सब 'शायद' के घुमाव हैं। अनिश्चितता को दर्शाने वाला यह शब्द आम बोलचाल की भाषा में इतना घुलमिल गया है कि इसके चंगुल से निकलना मुश्किल है। हर कोई इसी 'शायद' के पीछे लगा हुआ है। पुरानी हिंदी फिल्म का एक गाना याद आ रहा है। बोल उसके कुछ यों हैं - 'शायद तेरी शादी का खयाल दिल में आया है, इसीलिए मम्मी ने तेरी मुझे चाय पर बुलाया है।'

तबाही को न्योता

छले कई दिनों से पाकिस्तान की फौज और उसके मंत्री परमाणु बम धमकी की रणनीति पर चल रहे हैं, लेकिन वे शायद परमाणु हमले और उसके दुष्प्रभाव को नहीं जानते। निश्चित तौर पर परमाणु बम का दुरुपयोग पाकिस्तान पहले करेगा, मगर उसके बाद पाकिस्तान बच भी सकेगा इसमें संदेह है। एक परमाणु विस्फोट का असर करीब 40 किलोमीटर तक रहता है। अनुमान है कि एक किलोमीटर के दायरे में तो कुछ भी नहीं बचेगा, दो किलोमीटर के भीतर लोग स्वास्थ्य सुविधा न मिलने के कारण नहीं बचेंगे। चार किलोमीटर तक के जीव-जंतु-मनुष्य आग की लपटों में झुलस जाएंगे। नौ किलोमीटर तक भवन और इमारतों के गिरने के कारण बड़ी तादाद में लोग मारे जाएंगे और इससे उत्पन्न हुए विकिरण का दुष्प्रभाव कई वर्षों तक रहेगा। एक बम से उठने वाले धूल व धुएं का गुबार इतना भयानक होगा कि वायुमंडल में फैलकर सूर्य की रोशनी को रोकेगा, साथ ही उस क्षेत्र में कई साल तक वर्षा न होने के कारण फसल नहीं हो पाएगी, भिम खेती के योग्य नहीं बचेगी।

क्या भुखमरी, तंगहाली झेल रहा पाकिस्तान इस तबाही को झेलने में सक्षम है? भारत तो तीन-चार परमाणु बम हमले सह भी सकता है, कुछ क्षेत्र, करोड़ों लोग खोने के बाद भी वह लड़ने में सक्षम होगा, लेकिन पाकिस्तान सिवाय एक रेत के ढेर से ज्यादा कुछ नहीं बचेगा। न जल होगा, न जीवन। अंतरराष्ट्रीय जगत को भी पाकिस्तान के इस बचपने से सतर्क रहना चाहिए और ठोस कदम उठाते हुए उस पर हर तरह के प्रतिबंध लगाने चाहिए, क्योंकि यह परमाणु युद्ध प्रकृति में भीषण तबाही लेकर आएगा, जिसका दुष्परिणाम केवल भारत-पाकिस्तान नहीं बल्कि पूरे विश्व को उठाना पड़

सकता है। तंगहाली में जीने वाला पाकिस्तान, जिसकी करते हुए लोकसभा और राज्यसभा नहीं चलने दी थीं। अपना कचरा समेटने तक की हैसियत नहीं, अमेरिका मगर अब ट्रंप की मौजूदगी में प्रधानमंत्री ने यह कह कर और चीन के कर्ज से दबने के बाद भी 300 कि कश्मीर भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच द्विपक्षीय मुद्दा किलोमीटर मारक क्षमता वाली गजनवी मिसाइल का परीक्षण करके अपना खौफ दिखाना चाहता है।

बार-बार एक ही मिसाइल का परीक्षण करना बताता है कि युद्ध का खौफ भारत में नहीं बल्कि पाक के हक्मरान और फौज में है। फिर भी हमारा पड़ोसी एक कंगाल देश बजाय अपने कर्ज समाप्त करने के युद्ध की गीदड़ भभिकयां दे रहा है, जबिक पांच दिन युद्ध कर सकने की हैसियत भी अब उसकी नहीं है और हम इसे अपने स्तर पर सुलझा लेंगे, एक करारा जवाब दिया है। विपक्षी नेताओं को 'कौआ कान ले गया' का राग अब बंद कर देना चाहिए।

• गोमती मित्र रमेश, सुल्तानपुर, उत्तर प्रदेश

समय की मांग

आज सरकार की प्राथमिकता सभी नागरिकों को गरीबी रेखा से ऊपर लाना, भोजन पानी, आवास, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

बची। आखिर भारत से नफरत के दम पर कब तक पाकिस्तानी हक्मरान अवाम पर राज करेंगे?

• मंगलेश सोनी, मनावर, धार, मध्यप्रदेश विरोध का सच

बालाकोट हवाई हमले के वक्त समूचे विपक्ष ने एक स्वर से केंद्र सरकार से इसके सबूत मांगे थे मगर वक्त का पहिया देखिए कि आज स्वयं पाकिस्तान के वजीरे आजम ने यह कहते हुए कि भारत बालाकोट हमले से भी बड़ा हमला करने की फिराक में है, स्वीकार कर लिया कि बालाकोट में हवाई हमला हुआ था। इसी तरह जब अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप की ओर से कहा गया कि मोदी ने अनौपचारिक बातचीत में मुझसे पाकिस्तान और भारत के बीच मध्यस्थता करने की अपील की है, तो एक बार फिर समुचे विपक्ष ने हंगामा जैसी आवश्यक सुविधाएं उपलब्ध कराना है। ये सब सुविधाएं परिवार सीमित होने पर ही संभव हैं इसलिए जनसंख्या नियंत्रण को धार्मिक दायरों से अलग हो कर देखना होगा नहीं तो जनसंख्या वृद्धि को रोकना संभव नहीं हो पाएगा। आज जनसंख्या नियंत्रण समय की मांग है क्योंकि प्राकृतिक संसाधनों की एक सीमा है। • रितेश उपाध्याय, उत्तर प्रदेश

हमारे देश और समाज को जितना नुकसान तथाकथित धर्मगुरुओं और पोंगापंथियों ने पहुंचाया है उतना शायद किसी युद्ध या महामारी ने भी नहीं पहुंचाया होगा। जब इनकी चर्चा कहीं नहीं होती तो ये कुछ ऐसा बोलते हैं जिससे लोगों का ध्यान उनकी ओर खिंचे। प्रज्ञा ठाकुर उनमें से एक हैं। जब मीडिया में बहुत दिन तक

उनकी खबर नहीं आती तो कुछ ऐसा बोल देती हैं जिससे चारों ओर हलचल मच जाए और जब उनके कुबोल पर मीडिया वाले कुछ पूछ देते हैं तो सफाई देती फिरती हैं। बीते सोमवार को दिवंगत अरुण जेटली और बाबुलाल गौर की श्रद्धांजलि सभा में उन्होंने बोल दिया कि पार्टी के वरिष्ठ नेताओं का एक-एक कर जाना

विपक्ष की 'मारक शक्ति' का परिणाम है। विज्ञान ने इंसान को कहां से कहां पहुंचा दिया! भारत खुद भी चांद की यात्रा पर है और ये हैं कि अभी कूपमंड्कता से बाहर निकलना ही नहीं चाहते। उस पर तुर्रा यह है कि हम फिर से विश्व गुरु बनेंगे! प्रज्ञा को इतनी छोटी-सी बात नहीं पता कि जन्म और मृत्यु प्रकृति का नियम है, उससे किसी मारक शक्ति का कोई लेना-देना नहीं। भाजपा नेताओं के देहांत के आसपास ही कांग्रेस की बड़ी नेता शीला दीक्षित भी इस संसार को छोड़ कर गईं तो उस पर प्रज्ञा क्या बोलेंगी? संत या संन्यासी का चोला पहन कर जाद टोने की बात करना घोर मानसिक पिछड़ेपन की निशानी है। इससे प्रज्ञा को बाहर निकलना पड़ेगा तभी वे देश के विकास की बात करने की हकदार हैं।

दरअसल, सभी राजनीतिक दलों में कुछ ऐसे नेता हैं जिन्हें पार्टी की ओर से परोक्ष रूप से छूट होती है। जब वे कुछ ऊलजलूल बोलते हैं तो पार्टी का नेता मीडिया में आकर बोल देगा कि पार्टी का उससे कोई लेना-देना नहीं है, ये उनका निजी विचार हैं। इसके बाद बात आई-गई हो जाती है। वैसे प्रधानमंत्री ने अपने नेताओं से कह रखा है कि बयान देते समय संयम बरतें। लेकिन क्या इतना पर्याप्त है? हेमंत करकरे के विषय में प्रज्ञा ठाकुर ने जब निचले स्तर की बात कही थी उसी समय अगर उनके खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई की जाती तो उनका मनोबल इतना न बढ़ा होता कि लगातार गैर जिम्मेदार बोल बोलती रहें। सुशील कुमार शर्मा, विश्वास पार्क, दिल्ली

नई दिल्ली