

Kashmir's political rivals in war of words

A recent Twitter battle between the two titans of Kashmir on the triple *talaq* Bill was instructive. Omar Abdullah (National Conference) tweeted: "Mehbooba Mufti ji, you might want to check how your members voted on this bill before tweeting. I understand they abstained which helped the government with the numbers needed to pass the bill. You can't help the government and then fail to understand need to pass!" Replying to him, Peoples Democratic Party's Mufti tweeted, "Omar sahab, I suggest you get off your moral high horse since it was your own party that expelled Soz sahab for voting against the BJP in 1999. FYI in Parliament, abstention is essentially a no vote." Abdullah was quick to retort to Mufti's claims, and wrote, "Madam, is recounting an incident from TWENTY years ago the best you can do to defend PDP duplicity? So you are accepting you instructed your MPs to abstain. And no an abstention is NOT a no vote, a no vote is a no vote. An abstention helped the BJP this time."

Will Sandeep step into Sheila's shoes?

After Sheila Dikshit's death, the hunt has begun for a new chief for the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee as the party is conscious that it cannot delay the appointment. Elections in Delhi are round the corner and the Congress's preparation is non-existent. Sandeep Dikshit, late Sheila Dikshit's son and former Delhi MP is one contender. So are ex-Delhi Congress chiefs Jai Prakash Agarwal and Subhash Chopra. There are chances that Sandeep Dikshit might be considered for the post. It is expected that the "sympathy factor" as well as Sandeep Dikshit's clean image in public may yield dividends.



OPINION

M VENKAIHAH NAIDU

'Let the Oppn have its say and the govt have its way'

Elections cannot be completed without peoples' participation. People's participation is not limited to contesting elections and taking part in voting every five years. When I say "peoples' participation", I am referring to the importance of continuously encouraging and enthusing people about elections. It is also equally important to recognise the efforts put in by various agencies, including the security personnel and civil society organisations.

I would also like to emphasise that the time has come to devolve as many functions as possible to the rural and urban local bodies. I also request various state governments to undertake electoral reforms, including amending the state laws concerning local self-governments, in conformity with the Constitution.

India has embarked upon a great social revolution by providing universal adult franchise in all its elections and reserving seats for SC/STs & minimum 33 per cent for women in the LSGs. This has led to bringing down the walls that were erected in the name of caste and community.

On the occasion of presenting these awards today, as a mark of celebration of our democracy, it is appropriate on my part to share some of my thoughts and concerns about our cherished democracy, functioning of our legislatures and the conduct of MPs and MLAs. I am deeply distressed by the behaviour of some sections in the Rajya Sabha during last two years.

Parliament functions based on the rules of the constituent Houses, conventions, earlier rulings of the Chair and code of conduct for members. As the chairman of Rajya Sabha, it pains me if members chose to disregard them, resulting in pandemonium which in turn erodes the stature of the House of Elders in the eyes of the public. Members of Rajya Sabha have a special responsibility cast on them of leading by example being the members of the House of Elders. During this session, some members in their wisdom have preferred to tear official papers and throw them at the Chair on some occasions. Such conduct does not speak well of the functioning of our parliamentary democracy. It is the people of our country who have imbibed the true spirit of democracy by regularly voting in rising numbers and choosing their representatives to Parliament.

After doing so, they expect their representatives to conduct themselves in the best possible manner and strive over the next five years to make a difference to their lives by enabling them fulfill their hopes and aspirations.

However, I am sad to say that the elected representatives often do not match the democratic spirit of our people through their conduct. Democracy is all about — debate, discussion and decision. This can't be replaced by — disorder, disruption and delay, which is nothing but a negation of the spirit of democracy. The basic functions of the Parliament and State Legislatures are... Legislation, that is making laws for socio-economic transformation of our country; deliberation that is raising issues of public importance and ensuring the accountability of the executive of the day. If MPs and MLAs resort to slogan shouting, rushing into the well of the Houses and disruption of the proceedings, they are only compromising on these core functions. This is a great disservice to the Parliamentary democracy.

In every election, people give a certain mandate to the governments. Thereafter, the governments go about delivering on the promises made to the people over the next few years. Respecting such a mandate and allowing the governments to deliver as per the mandate should be an essential principle of functioning of such legislatures.

Opposition parties do have the right and responsibility of seeking the governments to deliver on the promises made by them during the polls. Opposition can and should take the governments to task, if they deviate from what has been offered to the people for which various effective instruments are available.

I want to make it clear that both the ruling and the Opposition parties have shared responsibility of ensuring effective functioning of our legislatures by taking on board concerns of each other. Stalling the functioning of legislatures means subverting democracy and betraying the people. The best way is to let the Opposition have its say and the government have its way. The democracy is all about the 'numbers' of each section of a legislature. Whoever has the highest numbers, run the government and those who have lesser numbers are required to ensure that governments do not stray from the mandate of the people.

The ruling and Opposition parties should not look at each other as enemies or adversaries. Instead, they should function as joint stakeholders in the well-being of the people and socio-economic transformation of the country. Our nation needs both effective and responsible governments and equally effective and responsible Opposition. The country's interests are not well served if either of them is found wanting.

It is the Parliament and State Legislatures that give ample opportunities for both the ruling and the Opposition parties to give out their best. MPs and MLAs should always be guided by these cardinal principles, so that our legislatures can become vibrant instruments of the change that the people wish to happen. I expect the MPs and in particular, the Members of Rajya Sabha to take the lead in the transformation through their exemplary conduct and contribution to effective functioning of the House.

The country has witnessed a couple of days back, a Member of Lok Sabha making some objectionable comments about a woman presiding officer who was in the chair. Members of that House have rightly voiced outrage over the comments of that member. It is not in our civilisation to disrespect women. This kind of behaviour and comments demean our parliamentary democracy and should be avoided by accommodation.

We are the largest democracy in the world. We shall be the best in terms of its quality as well. I urge upon both the ruling and Opposition parties in all the legislatures to be guided by such a spirit of mutual respect and accommodation.

Edited excerpts from a speech by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu after presenting the first Democracy Awards instituted by the State Election Commission, Maharashtra, in Mumbai on July 27

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?



"NRC is not only for Assam; it is a must for the entire country. We cannot allow the country to be turned into a dharamsala that anyone and everyone can illegally enter and stay forever."

BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan on expanding the National Register of Citizens to cover the entire country.



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

SANTANU SEN is a doctor and a Trinamool Congress MP in the Rajya Sabha, and heads the Indian Medical Association (IMA). In an interview to Aditi Phadnis, he talks of his reservations about the National Medical Commission Bill. Edited excerpts:

'NMC Bill will be the mother of quackery'

You made your maiden speech about the National Medical Commission and you slammed the government's proposal to make medical education uniform across India. Now, doctors across the country are on strike in protest. Why?

The National Medical Commission Bill was introduced on December 29, 2017, and it was first placed in Parliament on January 2 last year. Our fight against the NMC Bill is because of the following reasons: First, this Bill is undemocratic. Why? The existing Medical Council of India used to be formed through an election in all the states of the country. It would have elected representatives from the states.

And the purpose of the MCI was...?

... To regulate medical education in the coun-

try! To give the licence (to medical colleges), to recognise, to fix curriculum ... medical education used to be regulated by this autonomous body.

But weren't there a lot of problems with the whole process of recognition, de-recognition, licences...? The CBI also conducted an enquiry, after which the government decided to change the way medical education is structured in India...

Yes, your question is the right one. But my point is: There are many issues, many complaints about this government. If there is a complaint about any institution, does it mean you dissolve the institution? Is that the solution?

For the last several months, the Union government was indirectly controlling the

CHECKLIST

ONE-WAY TRAFFIC IN MAHARASHTRA: FROM CONGRESS/NCP TO BJP

■ In July, sitting MLAs from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Shivendrasinhraje Bhosale (Satara), Vaibhav Pichad (Akole) and Sandeep Naik (Airoli) resigned from their seats months before the Assembly elections and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). With Naik leaving, the NCP would be wiped out in Navi Mumbai, where the Naiks — Sandeep, along with his heavyweight father Ganesh Naik and former MP brother Sanjeev — are said to enjoy extensive influence. The family feels they were sidelined by the NCP leadership, specifically Ajit Pawar. This region comprises 63 Assembly seats — one-fourth of the Assembly's strength.

■ The Congress MLA Kalidas Kolambkar (Naigaon) also handed over his resignation letter separately to Speaker Harihbau Bagade at Maharashtra's Vidhan Bhawan. Kolambkar is a seven-term lawmaker from Mumbai. He now has no mentors

left in the Congress after Narayan Rane quit the party two years ago. Kolambkar won the 2014 election by a narrow margin of 800 votes.

■ Defector MLAs owe a lot to Shivendrasinhraje Bhosale's cousin, Udayanraje Bhosale, an NCP MP from Satara. Vaibhav Pichad hails from Akole tehsil in Ahmednagar district and is son of the former NCP minister Madhukar Pichad.

■ NCP's Mumbai unit chief, Sachin Ahir, recently quit the party to join Shiv Sena. Ahir, a minister in the previous Congress-NCP government in the state, was associated with the Sharad Pawar-led party since its formation in 1999. He represented Shivdi Assembly seat in Mumbai from 1999 to 2009 and was later elected from Worli. In 2014, he lost the Assembly election to Shiv Sena's Sunil Shinde. Jaydutt Kshirsagar, NCP leader and former Maharashtra Minister, joined the Shiv Sena in May.

MCI through a board of governors. You could say that for the last nine months, it was being governed by the government.

Earlier, it was the MCI which the government would send all requests for medical colleges: The MCI would conduct rigorous checks and formalities of the institutions and send its recommendation to the government.

Now, in this NMC, there is no provision for election. It is by nomination. And if you see the constitution, there are 25 members and almost all are government persons — hand-picked from the central government, or central government employees...

Does that make them less competent?

Let me tell you...The minister said of the 25 members, 21 were doctors. But who are they?

All are central government employees: Director of AIIMS, Director of JIPMER...Will a central government employee ever go against the decision of the government when it comes to giving the licence or recognition?

If there is no autonomy, how can such an important institution function without vested interests driving it?

We believe the NMC is anti-federal. The MCI used to have at least three members from every state in India. But in the NMC proposed by government, there will be six members nominated from states and union territories and five members from the elected state council members. According to this formula, every state will get the opportunity to have its nominee on the council once every 12 years and every state council nominee once in 14 years. There could not have been a worse marginalisation of the states. For instance, if the state of Delhi is represented this year, 2019, the next opportunity will arise in 2031 and 2033.

The Bill is also anti-poor. As of now, even according to the guidelines of the Supreme Court, capitation fees of private medical colleges were governed by a regulatory body. If I run a medical college, my capitation fee cannot be anything I want.

In India there are almost 530 medical colleges, of which 270 are run by the government and 260 are private. The admission fee of 85 per cent seats of private medical colleges is regulated by the government. According to Clause 10(i) of this Bill, not only would 50 per cent of the seats be sold freely but also for the remaining 50 per cent, this Board will only fix the criteria but will not prescribe the capitation fee. So, indirectly, hundred per cent seats of all private medical colleges will be for sale. Do you think after

the National Medical Commission Bill is passed, a meritorious student from a remote rural district of the country can even dream of becoming a doctor? It will indirectly lead to mushrooming of private medical colleges and nothing else.

So right now, isn't it the case that you can charge any amount as capitation fee?

No, that is only for the NRI quota, which is only 15 per cent. Now there is a cap on capitation fee. In this Bill, for the remaining 50 per cent, they will prescribe the guideline for capitation fee, not the capitation fee per se.

So if a meritorious student tries and fails to get one of the 50 per cent seats, he or she will be overlooked by the system. The student who will get admission will be the child of a person who can afford to pay crores of rupees as capitation fee. What kind of doctor will that make him or her?

Moreover, this Bill says that inspecting new medical colleges should be discretionary. What do you mean by discretionary?

Today, I open a medical college. It will be absolutely discretionary whether my medical college will be inspected or not. I will collect crores and crores of rupees as capitation fee. My medical college will not be inspected for three-four years. After three years, I might have accumulated crores and crores of rupees. They might shut it down whenever they inspect it: But I would get away. What will happen to the students left in the lurch? What will be the fate of those students?

There are many other aspects of the Bill that we oppose. This Bill is going to be the mother of quackery in India because AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yunaani, Siddha, homoeopathy) doctors are going to be treated on a par with trained doctors. And not just these. The Bill allows lab technicians, ECG technicians, X-ray technicians, compounders, ambulance drivers, etc. who are directly or indirectly associated with medical system to get the licence and practise as doctors.

The Bill has now been passed. What is your next step?

Because of the efforts of the IMA, and all the pressure put by us, they have agreed to listen to four of our amendments. State representation has been corrected; On Ayush the minister has replied in his own way — let us see what he does. He has said he will set up a committee to decide who will be given the licence. But until it is made clear by the government, the IMA will continue to agitate.



SANTANU SEN
President, Indian
Medical Association

Speaking up for voiceless: One woof at a time

Shiranee Pereira is quietly but insistently arguing that dogs can and must be replaced by tech and AI in testing drugs. More to the point, drug firms are listening. She is among India's new Gandhians, writes Aditi Phadnis

Every email sent by Shiranee Pereira, who started the Chennai chapter of People For Animals, ends with this Franciscan blessing:

May God bless us with DISCOMFORT: at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with ANGER: at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people and the earth so that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with TEARS: to shed for those who suffer from pain, hunger and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough FOOLISHNESS to believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we will do what others say cannot be done.

St Francis of Assisi is considered the patron saint of the animals and his endorsement is crucial for Pereira's charges: Around 1000 animals, including, dogs, cats, horses, donkeys, monkeys and others, at the People for Animals sanctuary on the outskirts of Chennai. The lame, the blind, the mad, the rejected, the abused and the abandoned... they're all welcome here and they will all be cared for with tenderness and single-minded attention.

Pereira is a singular individual. And, without being conscious of it, she has internalised the Gandhian method of reconciliation: That there's no bad in anyone, and if we only rouse the ethical and the just in everyone and make sure no one loses face, everyone would win. Since 1932, the Corporation of Chennai had been eliminating street dogs via electrocution at a designated facility — the Basin Bridge Lethal Chamber. In 1995, Pereira took up the battle with the civic authorities and managed to end this barbaric practice. Acknowledging that street dogs were a problem, she offered a solution: Chennai's first mass animal birth

control/immunisation programme for these dogs at the same premises — the lethal chamber. Now, around 10,000 dogs are sterilised and immunised every year. "The programme has been so wonderfully successful that the incidence of human rabies in the city have dropped from 49 persons per annum in 1995 to nil in 2009 as per the records of the Health Department of the Corporation of Chennai. This is turn helped to evoke a state-wide order for the implementation of the animal birth control programme in Tamil Nadu and stop all killing of stray dogs," she said.

She then scaled up her programme several notches. In 2003, she put together the "The Science of Alternatives movement" in India to promote the universal concept of 3Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement) in the use of animals in research and education. India's first-ever Conference on Alternatives to Laboratory Research on animals was held in Delhi that year, under the aegis of Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA), Ministry of Environment and Forests. Pereira was an expert consultant with the CPCSEA then. Globally, 500 scientists and students were invited. The concept of alternatives to dogs in laboratory research, she said, was so new, shocking and morally provoking for the Indian scientific community that hundreds of the participants walked out of the conference. But the first seed was sown to better laboratory animal welfare in India.

The coup was a chance meeting with IBM and the launch of Project, DONT — Dogs are Not for Testing. DONT is a project that seeks to augment the precision and prediction of drug/chemical toxicity by replacing the dog in testing with the power and potential of machine learning and Artificial/Augmented Intelligence. She realised that she would be



Pereira reckoned that cognitive computing and read-across strategies, using Big Data, could serve as a robust and far more predictive, economical and humane replacement to the use of animals in toxicity testing

treading on the toes of the multi-billion-dollar drug discovery industry, in which testing on animals is a mandatory part. But she reckoned that cognitive computing and read-across strategies, using Big Data, could serve as a robust and far more predictive, economical and humane replacement to the use of dogs in toxicity testing. IBM's Watson would be the vehicle for this. She found enthusiastic support from the pharma industry — no one wants to be seen as heartless, after all. This was in 2018 and though the details of the project are confidential, she is certain it will take off.

Pereira is also negotiating a buy-in from the famed racing industry of Tamil Nadu, the Madras Race Club to launch a rehabilitation facility for race horses. These horses, in their prime, earn so much for their owners but are either sold to breeders or abandoned when they are judged too old to work. The racing industry in Tamil Nadu is large and solvent

enough to set up a retirement facility for race horses and does not want to be seen as cruel and exploitative. Pereira is merely trying to appeal to the better side of their nature.

Every animal at the PFA shelter in Chennai has a personal connect to Pereira's life. Laxmi, the donkey (featured in the picture), for instance, is a carrot thief, she exclaimed with affection. She records with deep sorrow, the passing of a rescued Labrador, Ms Cherry, who was dumped at the shelter by a cruel breeder. Ms Cherry was used as a breeding machine and was abandoned when she developed a liver ailment. Pereira nursed her back to health and she began following Pereira like a shadow, laughing and chattering with her, but never letting her out of her sight, maybe because she was afraid of being discarded again. Ms Cherry lived for four more years but the liver and kidneys packed up and she could not be saved. This and other stories: At PFA, Red Hills.



THE OTHER INDIA

Call of the wild

National Park tourism must evolve beyond the tiger

The 33 per cent bump in the tiger population according to the latest census reflects a triumph of India's conservation efforts and its ability to conduct a complex exercise, possibly the world's largest, in counting carnivores. These are remarkable achievements: India not only has the world's largest tiger population but has managed this with the world's second-largest population. Taken together with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled appearance on Discovery TV with Bear Grylls, this is an

opportune time to propagate awareness and appreciation of India's ecological bounty among the wider Indian populace. Mr Modi's appearance on Mr Grylls' show may further this aim, though a programme that features man overcoming beasts in the wild may not be the most appropriate way to spread the good word. Many man-animal conflicts — the kind that results in the tragic killing of leopards, tigers, and elephants — are often a result of rank ignorance rather than livelihood encroachments. Few care to acknowledge, for instance, that peo-

ple are not natural food for tigers; they kill humans only when threatened or lack prey. Leopards, to take another example, are one of the most adaptive of the big cats and tend to encroach on human habitat, especially those that are garbage-ridden when their natural habitat shrinks. This is what is happening in the Borivali National Park, for instance, where real-estate encroachments are impinging on the eco-system for leopards and other lesser mammals. As a result, they stray into newly urbanised areas, often killing unsuspecting humans who cross their path.

At least part of the trouble is the lack of awareness-building in India's zoos and institutions, official and private, involved in wild-life tourism. The appalling behaviour of the Indian public at zoos is one

reflection of this. Another is the monofocus of tourists visiting National Parks. Every National Park promises the visitor a unique view of the tiger and builds up the mystique of the animal (some even invoke *The Jungle Book*, for good measure). In National Parks such as the ones in Ranthambhore, Corbett, or Kanha, this has created something of a circus-like atmosphere where jeeps and guides keep a laser-focus on the whereabouts of the big cats to the exclusion of all else. This is a great pity. For one, this single-minded mission of spotting a tiger in the wild raises unrealistic expectations. Unlike the vast open plains of Serengeti in Africa, where big cats and other animals can be viewed in their hundreds, tigers are an extraordinarily reclusive beast, and are unlikely to will-

ingly reveal themselves even in the thinnest deciduous forests (this is one reason a tiger census is so challenging). Spotting the tiger then becomes a competitive exercise that appears to bring out the worst in the average Indian tourist — noise and litter are their hallmarks. What they miss in this single-minded quest are the multiple bounties embedded in Indian forests — trees, birds, insects, leaves, and flowers. As Pranay Lal's encyclopaedic *Indica* (2016) has revealed, South Asia is home to a record number of species of flora and fauna and unique habitats. If National Park administrations and guides worked towards offering tourists a journey through nature and the environment, Indians would come away with a better appreciation of the *raison d'être* of conservation.

The next big thing in telecom

With its enhanced speed, ultra-reliable connectivity and guaranteed service quality, 5G will be a key enabler of industry's digital transformation initiatives



REUTERS

An engineer stands under a 5G base station antenna in Huawei's multi-probe spherical near-field testing system at its manufacturing centre in Guangdong, China

SUBRAHMANYAM KANAKADANDI

It is said that when it rains, it pours. That is more or less the story of the development of Indian telecom. After years of constrained data growth, the entry of Reliance Jio and its competitive pricing has ensured rapid deployment and uptake of 4G, enabling India to leapfrog from 2G networks to 4G. But, technology development does not rest easy.

The age of 5G, the latest generation of mobile networks, is around the corner. SK Telecom in South Korea and Verizon in the US have already launched 5G services commercially, while operators in many other western countries are gearing up to launch their own 5G services soon. Our recent study on 5G in industrial operations found that 72 per cent of telcom operators across the globe are planning to launch 5G networks within the next two years.

The Indian telecom industry is also gearing up for 5G adoption. While the specific timelines are yet to be declared, there have been reports that the government is likely to auction 5G spectrum before the end of 2020. Telecom operators and network equipment manufacturers have already started setting up joint initiatives. In India, there are two aspects to 5G adoption — regulatory and financial, and actual market development.

Indian telecom providers are saddled with large quantities of debts. These operators are required to pay huge sums of money to the government for using spectrum. This licensing process, which started with 2G spectrum, has continued until 4G spectrum was auctioned a few years ago. Through this process, operators have amassed a large amount of debt. In fact, owing to operational difficulties, this space has seen mergers and acquisitions too, with the industry now consolidated into three large private players.

Additionally, Indian banks are coming out of a credit and liquidity crunch cycle, which started a few years ago. As banks grapple with high levels of non-perform-

ing assets (NPAs), they will be cautious about lending to telecom operators. This situation is likely to change in the next year, as NPAs in the system started to decline in the last quarter of financial year 2018-19. For 5G auctions to succeed, telecom operators will have to work closely with banks. Even after the auctions, banks will need to support the capex requirement for the 5G roll-out.

The government on its part has also set up a committee to explore the feasibility of reducing the cost of spectrum. This committee may recommend moving towards a revenue sharing model with the government, instead of an upfront royalty structure. If this happens, telecom operators will be able to invest in 5G with greater financial ease.

The second aspect telecom operators will need to focus on is actual market development. While 5G's features, such as enhanced speed, ultra-reliable and low-latency connectivity and guaranteed quality of service, promise to transform the digital experience in both the industrial and consumer space, they are of particular interest to a subset of organisations — industrial manufacturers.

Our research found a strong business case for 5G adoption in smart factories or industry 4.0 initiatives. Globally, 75 per cent of industrial companies feel that 5G will be a key enabler of their digital transformation initiatives in the next five years. This is surprisingly higher than the share of executives that feel the same for artificial intelligence or advanced data analytics. Not just that, nearly two out of every three industrial companies are ready to implement 5G in their operations within two years of its availability in their respective markets.

Such a strong level of interest from industrial companies can partly be explained by the fact that nearly half of industrial companies feel that connectivity issues — such as signal reliability and lack of speed — are a significant hindrance for their digital transformation initiatives. Our research also found that industrial companies are ready to pay a premium over their current

connectivity costs for 5G features.

The uses of 5G in manufacturing are many. They range from video surveillance of remote production lines to real-time service and breakdown alerts in shop-floor operations, and remote monitoring of shipment conditions (such as temperature and humidity), to virtual testing of parts and packing from suppliers in supply chain operations. In countries such as Germany, large industrial giants are actively considering acquiring regional licences for 5G, so that they are in better control of their destiny when it comes to smart factories. In fact, our research found that a third of industrial companies are considering applying for their own 5G licence, assuming the regulator allows it.

With the focus on manufacturing growing in India, the smart factory and industry 4.0 domains can provide telcom operators a stable revenue stream. In our earlier research on smart factories, we found that 70 per cent of organisations in India either already had an ongoing smart factory initiative, or were planning to have one soon, with big investments flowing in from multinationals such as GE and Bosch. Moreover, in areas such as supply chains, we found that over 50 per cent of organisations in India were already experimenting with or implementing robotics and the Internet of Things (75 per cent). 5G technologies can be a shot in the arm for all such industrial manufacturers.

In order to tap the industry 4.0 opportunity, telcom operators need to evolve from plain service providers to digital transformation partners for industrial companies. This would require understanding business requirements, translating the requirements into solutions, and taking the lead in implementing the solutions. Co-innovation projects with industrial companies and close collaboration with the entire 5G ecosystem can facilitate the journey of telcom operators into trusted digital solution partners.

The writer is Director, Capgemini Invent India

Delivering higher education effectively

RICHARD HEALD

India is on the path to becoming a global 21st century economic and political superpower. To succeed, engineers, data scientists, health care professionals, social workers and a whole range of trained professionals will be necessary on an unprecedented scale.

It is therefore encouraging that the Government of India's Draft National Education Policy represents the largest reform of Indian higher education in decades. This includes allowing for mutual recognition of qualifications, simplification of education regulation, widespread adoption of online courses, integrating vocational training into mainstream education, and greater international collaboration.

The new policy's emphasis on quality, equity, access, learning outcomes, teaching, and research is to be applauded, as is the acknowledgement of the societal-level benefits of education and the decision to set up an Inter University Centre for International Education, specifically to support the internationalisation of universities.

The UK India Business Council (UKIBC) has long supported and advocated these reforms. However, we believe the scale of India's challenge will require further measures.

Indian policy-makers are right to want the best the world has to offer, and allowing foreign universities to offer their own degrees in India is a welcome step. However, limiting participation to the top 200 globally ranked institutions will not significantly mobilise the global expertise, resources, and investment necessary to achieve India's ambitions.

Crucially, universities outside the "top 200" globally frequently offer world-leading education in topics vital for India's development. At the same time, institutions that have an overall ranking in the top 200 could bring individual courses to India that are ranked low.

It is also important to note that international rankings contain biases, systematically underplay the importance of university social responsibility, and reward research over teaching. This makes them a poor proxy for the needs of India's employers, society and the wider economy.

There are also limits on which Indian institutions can form international partnerships, meaning that Indian institutions integral to India's ability to meet its global economic and political superpower ambitions will not be able to benefit from in-depth international expertise. This could prevent many Indian higher education institutions from accessing the very teaching and research resources they need to improve and deliver for students and employers.

We therefore recommend that all institutions within India be permitted

to forge international partnerships should they demonstrate, to both parties, real added value.

The plan to merge high quality vocational training with mainstream education at the secondary, college, university and post-university level is to be commended. However, given the New Education Policy's ambitious objective to "provide access to vocational education to at least 50 per cent of all learners by 2025", we recommend that the ministry of human resource development and the ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship work much more closely together.

This could be done by considering models such as degree apprenticeships popular in the UK, where students learn and demonstrate strong practical skills in areas such as electrical, mechanical, and aerospace engineering alongside building an understanding of the theory. This would provide employers with graduates that have sophisticated employability skills and has the added advantage of fostering social acceptability for quality vocational training.

Where highly-skilled Indian graduates are emerging from studies in the UK or India, a lack of mutual recognition of degrees is a significant barrier to harnessing their skills. Currently, Indian authorities do not recognise foreign qualifications obtained through articulation and pathway programmes or the one-year Master's programme offered by UK universities, which are recognised widely elsewhere.

Part of the rationale behind this is the "time" element — a UK Masters degree programme is typically only one year while obtaining a Master's degree from an Indian university requires two years. Moving from a "time-based" model to an "outcome-based learning" approach, focusing on credits acquired rather than number of lectures, would end the current situation where Indian employers are missing out on highly educated and highly motivated graduates, and talented young people are missing out on opportunities.

Mutual recognition of qualifications and allowing universities to award dual degrees will be a game-changer for India's higher education system, as it will significantly increase international collaborations and attract more foreign students to come and study in India — one of the key objectives of the new policy.

India's economy is at a crossroads, and the National Education Policy could determine the path it takes. It takes significant steps in the right direction, and with the further measures outlined above, it will help young Indians and, indeed, India, achieve their full potential.

The writer is Chief Executive Officer, UK India Business Council

OTHER VIEWS

To stem slowdown, policies must aim to revive demand

Lower interest rates can only help when economic sentiment is robust

Annual growth in eight core sectors, which account for 40 per cent of India's industrial output, dipped to 0.2 per cent in June. This is the lowest monthly growth in this index since April 2015. Earlier last month, the International Monetary Fund brought down its growth forecast for the Indian economy in the current fiscal year by 30 basis points to 7 per cent. India's Gross Domestic Product growth has been declining continuously starting with the quarter ending June 2018, with the most recent data available for the quarter ending March 2019.

The Indian economy badly needs a policy stimulus to come out of its present deceleration. The Reserve Bank of India has already cut policy rates thrice in 2019. However, these rate cuts do not seem to have worked. Lower interest rates can only help in reviving economic activity when economic sentiment is robust. They will be ineffective if investors do not see future demand that justifies their investment. Such a situation can only be salvaged through policies that focus on reviving demand rather than lowering borrowing costs. A series of policy decisions such as increasing the income tax rate on the super-rich and imposing strict regulations on spending Corporate Social



ISTOCK

Responsibility funds etc are generating fears that the government is being too harsh towards businessmen and top executives in order to meet its revenue targets. It is important that policy interventions do not make matters worse.

Hindustan Times, August 2

Making better drivers of us

Enforcement of new law will be key

The way India drives and behaves on roads is set for a transformative course correction, on paper at least, with Parliament's green signal to a landmark legislation that aims to improve road safety with stringent laws for errant drivers, contractors in case of faulty roads and vehicle makers if they fall short of production standards. The minimum penalty for violation of traffic rules and regulations will now be ₹500, and ₹10,000 is the standard fine for a whole set of offences. The global model of road discipline — strict punishment and huge penalties for traffic-related offences — now awaits the Indian test of enforcement, which has not exactly distinguished itself in the past. If bringing a law results in even an incremental

change in the notorious defiance, nothing like it, but the compulsive *jugaad* mindset to dodge the system and make it corruptible calls for a supplementary step: projecting road safety as a national mission, much like Swachh Bharat.

The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2019, has a slew of laudatory proposals like cashless treatment for victims in the golden hour, compulsory insurance coverage for all road users, protection of Good Samaritans, infusion of ₹14,500 crore into safeguarding fatal spots, a National Road Safety Board and technology-driven driving licence. But then there's the regulatory reality check for the best of intentions.

The Tribune, August 2

Refreshing stand

Zomato affirms pluralist principles

A person professing the Hindu religion in Jabalpur and observing Shraavan in a ritually sectarian fashion has turned the spotlight on an India divided, earned widespread derision, and shown that the majority online are not bigoted. He declined to accept a Zomato order delivered by a Muslim, and when he took his peeve to Twitter, the company's handle responded: "Food doesn't have a religion. Food is a religion." The company's CEO joined in the conversation, sticking up for diversity and stating that he was not "sorry to lose any business that comes in the way of our values."

As the conversation proceeded, though, it may have become obvious that standing up to bigotry may actual-

ly be good for business. While a small minority supported the actions of the peeved customer in Jabalpur, the volume of derision he has earned drowned out their voices. At the same time, Zomato received congratulatory messages from all quarters, including politicians, businessmen and influencers, for defending the idea of a diverse India. India's corporate culture is not celebrated for being led by liberal principles. Against that backdrop, Zomato's moral determination to hold the line stands out in sharp relief. And it has answered one of the oldest questions about capitalism: Does morality matter in business? It does.

The Indian Express, August 2

Opinion

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 2019

I USED THE phrase 'cooperative federal polity' in my Budget speech on February 28, 1997. I do not claim that I was the first to use that phrase, but I am happy that 'cooperative federalism' has been used repeatedly in Budget speeches and on other occasions.

States are sovereign

What does 'cooperative federalism' mean? The phrase recognises and affirms that India is a federal state. There is a Central government and there are state governments. Each government has areas of legislation reserved to it. The Central government (through Parliament) cannot encroach upon the territory reserved for the state government, the state government (through the Legislature) cannot encroach upon the territory reserved for the Central government. There are also some areas where both governments may legislate. The division of legislative fields is the essence of federalism. Respecting the constitutional scheme is cooperative federalism.

Nevertheless, the Constitution of India contains exceptional provisions authorising Parliament to make a law on any unenumerated matter (Article 248); on any matter included in the State List if it is "necessary or expedient in the national interest" for a limited period (Article 249); and on any matter "while a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation" (Article 250).

Article 252(2) is an interesting provision. A law made by Parliament may confer powers and impose duties upon a state government or its officers, but the Centre shall pay the state such sum of money as may be agreed. This provision is a strong affirmation of states' sovereignty, rights and powers.

Pushing bills through

The BJP government is a government with a difference: it does not respect states' rights nor does it observe constitutional limitations or niceties.

The BJP government's commitment to federalism can be gauged by the manner in which Bills are passed in the Rajya Sabha. The Lok Sabha is the House of the People while the Rajya Sabha is the Council of States. The primary duty of the members of the Rajya Sabha is to protect and advance the interest of the states. As on August 2, the Lok Sabha has passed 28 Bills in this session and the Rajya Sabha has passed 26 Bills. Not one of them — repeat, not a single Bill — went through a process of consultation with the opposition parties. Not one Bill was referred to the Standing Committee or a Select Committee for detailed scrutiny. State governments were not consulted on any Bill, including Bills that were on subjects included in the Concurrent List (List III) of the Constitution and that affected the rights of states. Not one amendment proposed by the Opposition was accepted by the government.

A few examples would suffice. In *Justice Puttaswamy*, the Supreme Court explained the scope of Article 110 of the Constitution, and that judgment is binding on the government. The Rajya Sabha cannot amend a Money Bill or vote out the Bill; it can only make recommendations and return the Bill to the Lok Sabha, which may or may not accept the recommendations. The President cannot withhold assent to a Money Bill or return it to Parliament for reconsideration. Taking advantage of these limitations, but in

ACROSS THE AISLE

P Chidambaram



Coercive federalism



Muslim women in Varanasi celebrate after passing of the triple talaq Bill in the Rajya Sabha

brazen violation of Article 110, the government amended at least 10 non-financial laws through the *Finance (No. 2) Bill* and thus avoided scrutiny by the Rajya Sabha or a direction by the President to reconsider.

The Right to Information Act, 2005, has been hailed universally as a seminal legislation. Section 15 of the Act authorises the state government to constitute the State Information Commission. The state government will select and appoint the State Information Commissioners. The initial term of office was five years. Hitherto, the power to prescribe the salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions of their service was vested in the state government (Section 16). Now, the power to prescribe the initial term and the salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions has been taken

over by the Central government! We asked why? There was no answer.

The National Medical Commission Bill is the ultimate affront to the states. Every power of the state government to provide for and regulate medical education has been taken away leaving each state with only a two-year term as a member of the commission, *once in four years!* It is as good as transferring the subject of medical education from List III to List I. Yet it passed in the Council of States without a protest from the states!

Every trick in the bag

How does the government manage to win the vote on Bills in the Rajya Sabha? Take the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, otherwise known as the triple talaq Bill. The government won the vote by 99 to 84

because 46 members of the Opposition were absent at the time of voting! No member of the BSP was present, six SP members were absent, the NCP had two out of four members, one Congress member resigned on that very day (and joined the BJP the next day) and four Congress members were absent. The AIADMK, JD(U), TRS and PDP which had spoken against the Bill vanished at the time of voting!

Divide, cajole, intimidate, threaten or close deals, the BJP has used every trick in its bag to pass laws that will reduce states to municipal administrations and add one more dimension to the sinister idea of Oneness — One Government for everything.



Website: [@Pchidambaram_IN](http://pchidambaram.in)



INSIDE TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR

Indira's example

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is getting the rap for the high tax in this year's Budget on the super rich. But Sitharaman may be merely a scapegoat for what was essentially a political decision. It is believed that the BJP top leadership pushed for the richest Indians to be taxed higher, even though finance ministry officials fought against the proposal, pointing out that this would send wrong signals to the business community and stall foreign and domestic investment. The leadership seems to have been inspired by Indira Gandhi, who, half a century ago, enforced bank nationalisation and abolished privy purses to demonstrate to the poor that the government would not spare the rich.

Rajasthan quartet

The government's success in getting through amendments to the RTI Act and passing the triple talaq Bill, despite the BJP's lack of a majority in the Rajya Sabha, is at least partly due to the tireless efforts of party general secretary Bhupendra Yadav, who is Amit Shah's right-hand man for floor coordination. Yadav was in constant touch not just with BJP MPs but with parliamentarians from other parties. Which was why he displayed supreme confidence several days before the Bills were taken up in the House. Yadav, a Rajya Sabha MP from Rajasthan, is one of four MPs from the state who played an important role in the smooth functioning of Parliament this session. The others in the Rajasthan quartet are: Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla, BJP whip in the Upper House Narayan Lal Panchariya and MoS for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Kashmir elections

The BJP is veering round to the view that to abrogate Article 35(A) of the Constitution, which allows the J&K Legislature to define permanent residents of the state, getting through an amendment in Parliament is not necessary. It can be done simply by an executive order by the Law Ministry, in conjunction with the Home Ministry. Even a Cabinet approval is not required. The legal opinion given to the Narendra Modi government is that the amendment itself is illegal since it was passed merely by a Presidential Order in 1954, when Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister. (APIL has already been filed in the Supreme Court along these lines.) However, the government may delay taking any action on Article 35(A) until after the Jammu and Kashmir elections,

which could be held simultaneously with the Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly polls.

Moving on

Usually key jobs in the President's secretariat are co-terminus with the President's tenure. But in the case of the low-key Ram Nath Kovind, his press secretary Ashok Malik and his joint secretary Bharat Lal quit Rashtrapati Bhavan last month after two years in the job. Both men were reportedly handpicked by the PMO to assist Kovind at the start of his tenure. Malik is keen to return to journalism and work at the Observer Research Foundation, while Lal has already joined as additional secretary in the water ministry, a ministry in which the PM takes special interest. Lal was Modi's point person in Delhi during his years as Gujarat chief minister.

Out of closet

The absence of so many opposition MPs during the passing of the triple talaq Bill in the Rajya Sabha was because of a secret understanding between the BJP and party bosses of allies AIADMK and JD(U) that their MPs would walk out of the House. While the BJD came out in support, parties such as the BSP, TDP and TRS did a no-show. Some degree of arm-twisting was evident in the exercise with most politicians apprehensive of Central government agencies. But the absence of six of the 12 Samajwadi Party MPs and both the PDP MPs was not because of a call from their leaders but because the BJP reached out to individual MPs directly. In fact, except for the BJP, Congress and Trinamool Congress, parties do not generally issue whips since they do not want to reveal the cracks in their camp. Sanjay Singh from the Congress came out of the closet on voting day and others could follow suit. The absence of four Congress MPs was also puzzling.

Pulling no punches

Mary Kom is an unattached nominated MP and hence under no obligation to follow any whip or support the government. Just before the triple talaq Bill was to be taken up in the Rajya Sabha, a senior Central minister spied the sportswoman, nominated by the Modi government, quietly leaving the House. He quickly stopped her and reminded her of the important vote ahead. Kom tried to excuse herself, explaining that she had a sports practice scheduled, but the minister was adamant and even made BJP office-bearers speak to her. In contrast, senior lawyer KTS Tulsii, nominated by the UPA government, was not present during voting.

New season, old rivalries

United have the squad to be back among the top four, although title challenge still looks far away

RINGSIDE VIEW

Shamik Chakrabarty



ON FRIDAY, HARRY Maguire became the top Twitter trend, because Manchester United reportedly agreed to sign the 26-year-old centre-half from Leicester City. At £80m, Maguire would be the world's most expensive defender, eclipsing the £75m that Liverpool paid Southampton for Virgil van Dijk in January 2018. Van Dijk made Liverpool serious Premier League title contenders and they ran Manchester City agonisingly close last term. The Dutch centre-half was the reason why Liverpool went on to annex the Champions League. United badly needed a strong, all-round player at the heart of their defence. Maguire could be the impact-player they have been looking for.

Maguire's signing is coming at a time, when the 'Glazers Out' movement has become a fad on social media. All said and done though, the United owners are backing the manager, Ole Gunnar Solskjær. The Norwegian, who took over

from Jose Mourinho in December last year, had a topsy-turvy six months in charge. After initial promise, he saw United's campaign fall apart towards the back end of the last season. Out of the Champions League, he is starting with a clean slate. Solskjær is aiming to take England's biggest club back to the Ferguson-way. If the Romelu Lukaku-Paulo Dybala swap deal eventually happens, United will have all the bases covered. Solskjær will then have no room for excuses.

It's refreshing that United's transfer policy has changed under Solskjær. Louis van Gaal was a misfit in English football. Mourinho searched for quick fixes, pretty akin to his managerial style. The Portuguese's dated methods and approach saw him lose the dressing-room. He failed badly with regards to man-management.

Solskjær, notwithstanding his limited managerial experience at the top-level, so far has shown excellent man-management skills. Paul Pogba is a case in point. The Frenchman looked set to leave Old Trafford this season. Those Real Madrid overtures had been alarming. Also, Pogba's agent, Mino Raiola, did his best to make life difficult for the United hier-



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archy. Solskjær's 'arm around the shoulder' approach convinced Pogba to commit his immediate future to his boyhood club. A brownie point was won.

So far, United have made two signings—Daniel James for £15m from

Swansea City and Aaron Wan-Bissaka for close to £50m (including add-ons) from Crystal Palace. The team needed a right back and Wan-Bissaka is considered to be one of the most promising right backs in England at the moment. Both Wan-Bis-

saka and James are electric with and without the ball. Maguire's impending arrival will make the defence meaty. Also, Solskjær's United have a strong British core à la Ferguson's sides. And like his mentor, the current United manager's training method is also very British.

In all pre-season matches, Solskjær used a fluid 4-2-3-1 formation. They won all their tour games. This is going to be the manager's preferred system in the Premier League as well, where they will begin their campaign against Chelsea on August 11. "We need to improve and we need to be better. The more we improve and the more we get better, the bigger the chance we can challenge for trophies at the end of the season. These boys have shown their capabilities. If we just stay level-headed, I can see us improving a lot," Solskjær told talkSPORT.

After the new signings, United have the squad to be back among the top four, although title challenge still looks a little far away.

Last month, Arsenal fans penned an open letter to voice their discontent to the club chiefs. It came on the heels of their bitter rivals Tottenham Hotspur spending big, £63m, to sign midfielder Tanguy Ndombele. The Gunners under Unai Emery have since brought in Ivory Coast winger Nicolas Pepe from Lille for a club record fee of £72m. But they would yet again play catch-up, as the squad lacks depth.

All is not well at Spurs. "I'm not in

charge of this. I know nothing about the situation of my players, I'm only coaching them, trying to get the best from them.

"Things that may or may not happen — sell or buy players, extend contracts or not extend contracts — it's not in my hands, it's in the club's hands and in Daniel Levy's hands. At the moment, I'm just managing the team in the best way possible," a seemingly frustrated Mauricio Pochettino said the other day. Pochettino's genius have repeatedly helped the north London club punch well above their weight. He took Spurs to the Champions League final last season. Levy, the club chairman, must take note.

Chelsea are hit with a transfer ban and they have lost their only world-class footballer, Eden Hazard, to Real Madrid. The Blues' new manager, club legend Frank Lampard, faces a baptism of fire. With a trigger-happy owner, Roman Abramovich, watching from afar, the feel-good factor that surrounded Lampard's arrival at the Bridge, could evaporate by October-end.

Despite very little transfer activity during close season, the title race this time, too, is unlikely to go beyond Manchester City and Liverpool. They gave us one of the most extraordinary title races in the Premier League history last term. Pep Guardiola's City won it on the final day. Fresh from their Champions League triumph, Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool should be ready to respond.

ACROSS
THE AISLE

P CHIDAMBARAM

I USED the phrase 'cooperative federal polity' in my Budget speech on February 28, 1997. I do not claim that I was the first to use that phrase, but I am happy that 'cooperative federalism' has been used repeatedly in Budget speeches and on other occasions.

STATES ARE SOVEREIGN

What does 'cooperative federalism' mean? The phrase recognises and affirms that India is a federal State. There is a Central government and there are state governments. Each government has areas of legislation reserved to it. The Central government (through Parliament) cannot encroach upon the territory reserved for the state government, the state government (through the Legislature) cannot encroach upon the territory reserved for the Central government. There are also some areas where both governments may legislate. The division of legislative fields is the essence of federalism. Respecting the constitutional scheme is cooperative federalism.

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EVERY TRICK IN
THE BAG

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FIFTH COLUMN



TAVLEEN SINGH

Modi's
aura
shrinks

AFTER GIVING Narendra Modi a magnificent second chance to save India, the gods seem to have given up on him. There was a time not long ago when he was so bestowed with divine blessings that whatever he did seemed to work well for him. Even when he made reckless decisions like invalidating nearly all our currency overnight. But, since he was given his second chance just two months ago it is as if nothing he does is working well for him. Was it his Budget that began it all?

Perhaps. Everyone who wants India to become a country whose economy soars to new heights put all their hopes on this particular Budget. Personally, I have been hoping for the past five years that he would come up with at least one Budget that would be as dramatic and courageous as that one in the early Nineties that closed down the wicked licence raj. Not only has there never been such a Budget from Modi, but he seems to view with suspicion and malevolence the men who have created some of the finest companies in the world. So last week they were told that they could be fined and jailed if they defaulted on their corporate social responsibility. Forcing them to set aside funds for compulsory charity was one of Sonia Gandhi's worst ideas.

It should have been tossed in the garbage bin by Modi and he should instead have appealed to big business to help him serve India by contributing to his big plans like Swachh Bharat and the new Jal Shakti mission. There is still time. Stop threatening them with jail and they could become the most useful partners in the mission to give every Indian access to clean and reliable supplies of water by 2024.

Stop the campaign of tax terrorism that recently drove one of India's finest entrepreneurs to take his own life, and you could see a new mood among businessmen. The step most urgently needed is for the Prime Minister to stop treating businessmen as if they were pariahs. It is because of severely restricted access that ugly rumours are spreading about how the Prime Minister gives help to only a privileged handful. Talk of oligarchs has begun.

On the political front, the BJP's image of being a 'party with a difference' has been badly damaged. This is because of the way Kuldesh Singh Sengar was handled. He should have been expelled a year ago when the child who accuses him of rape tried to kill herself in front of the Chief Minister's residence in Lucknow. He should have been expelled before he managed, despite being in jail, to intimidate and probably kill the victim's family and possible witnesses. This is normal in rural and small-town India where violent thugs control law enforcement. What should not be normal is for said violent thugs to be honourable members of the BJP. The Prime Minister will find it hard to continue lecturing India about values and morality in his *Mann ki Baat* if he is seen to be sheltering rapists and other criminals in his fold.

This is just the domestic proof of the gods having retracted their grace from the man to whom they have given so much. Beyond our borders things do not look that good either. Imran Khan seems to have made a good enough impression on the leader of the free world for him to suddenly declare that Pakistan has changed. It now has a new leader, 'a great athlete', who will change it from being the 'subversive', 'deceitful' country it was before Imran.

So the United States will once more shower billions of dollars on the Islamic Republic next door. And, our hope that Pakistan will stop exporting jihadists to India because of being broke will die. We know that Donald Trump is not just impressed with Imran's athleticism and good looks. We know that it is because he needs his help to end America's unending, hopeless war in Afghanistan that Imran was so feted, but we also know that this renewed friendship hurts us directly. Imran is probably the first Pakistani Prime Minister to have got an American President to declare publicly that America is ready to mediate in Kashmir.

This brings me to another area in which the Prime Minister appears to have not had much luck or divine intervention. On account of reckless chatter in Delhi and large numbers of troops moving to the Valley, there are rumours in Srinagar that the special status of Kashmir is on the verge of being ended. They have reason for concern because this is something that the BJP believes should be done, but Modi would be wise not to do this so soon in his second term. If only because the gods no longer seem to be on his side.

Follow Tavleen Singh on Twitter
@tavleen_singh

Coercive federalism

INSIDE TRACK



COOMI KAPOOR

INDIRA'S EXAMPLE

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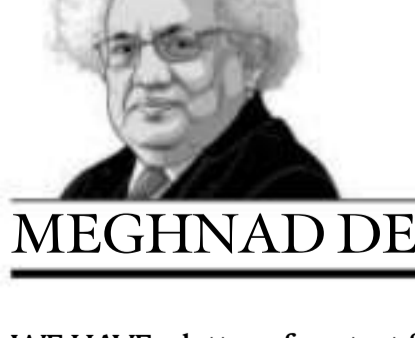
RAJASTHAN QUARTET

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OUT OF MY MIND



MEGHNAD DESAI

WE HAVE a letter of protest from a group of distinguished Indians raising the problem of Hindu youths forcing Muslim youths to say *Jai Shri Ram* and beating them up. Another group objected that the issue was raised publicly at all as they thought it would create a bad impression of India abroad.

But whether foreigners take any notice

Minister. (A PIL has already been filed in the Supreme Court along these lines.) However, the government may delay taking any action on Article 35(A) until after the Jammu and Kashmir elections, which could be held simultaneously with the Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly polls.

MOVING ON

Usually key jobs in the President's secretariat are co-terminus with the President's tenure. But in the case of the low-key Ram Nath Kovind, his press secretary Ashok Malik and his joint secretary Bharat Lal quit Rashtrapati Bhavan last month after two years in the job. Both men were reportedly handpicked by the PMO to assist Kovind at the start of his tenure. Malik is keen to return to journalism and work at the Observer Research Foundation, while Lal has already joined as Additional Secretary in the Water Ministry, a ministry in which the PM takes special interest. Lal was Modi's point person in Delhi during his years as Gujarat Chief Minister.

OUT OF CLOSET

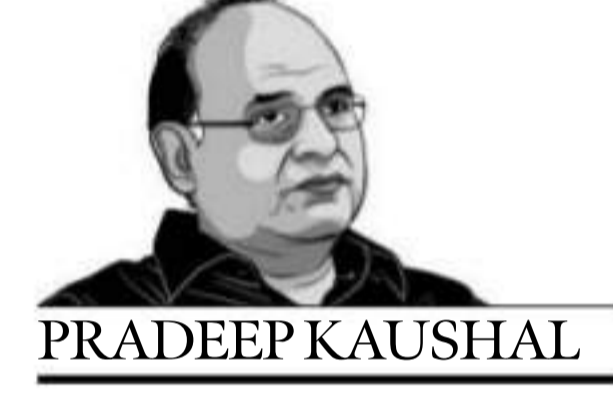
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HISTORY HEADLINE

Gaya Lal, and Haryana art of defection



PRADEEP KAUSHAL

WHILE THE large-scale crossing over by MLAs resulted in state governments falling in Karnataka and Goa recently, they were still no match for what a Haryana legislator managed in 1967, back when shadows had just started appearing over Indian democracy's golden halo. In the process, Gaya Lal also lent the term 'Aya Ram, Gaya Ram' to the country's political lexicon.

The month was February, and there was political uncertainty in the air. The Congress had returned to power at the Centre with its lowest tally till then (283 out of 520), under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. The party had suffered setbacks in Assembly polls in several states, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, West Bengal, Orissa (now Odisha), Madras (now Tamil Nadu) and Kerala. This had triggered a tussle for power between the Congress and an Opposition combine, consisting of the Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party, Samyukta Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, regional parties and defectors from the Congress. The Opposition coalition gave its state regimes an umbrella identity — the Samyukta Vidhayaik Dal (SVD) governments.

For Haryana, carved out of Punjab on November 1, 1966, it was its first Assembly election. While the Congress won, it was with a thin majority of 48 out of 81 seats. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh got 12 seats, Swatantra Party three and Republican Party two. The Independents formed the second-largest block, with 16 seats. One of them was Gaya Lal, winning from Hasanpur (SC) constituency.

Congress Chief Minister Bhagwat Dayal Sharma was sworn in on March 10, 1967. Within a week, his government fell after 12 Congress MLAs defected, forming a group that they dubbed the 'Haryana Congress'. The Independent legislators also forged a new party, 'United Front'. The process of switching sides continued, swelling the United Front ranks eventually to 48 MLAs.

Consequently, on March 24, Rao Birendra Singh (father of present Union Minister of State Rao Inderjit Singh), who had been elected from Pataudi on a Congress ticket, took over as CM under the SVD banner. His position was flimsy at best, threatened by both Bhagwat Dayal Sharma and Devi Lal,



Bhajan Lal with Indira Gandhi, after turning his Janata Party govt wholesale into a Congress govt, on Jan 22, 1980, taking along 37 MLAs. Express Archives

who was still in the Congress.

However, if there was one man who defined those days of uncertainty, it was Gaya Lal. Within nine hours, the MLA changed sides twice — in and out of the Congress — and within a fortnight, moved to the United Front.

Presenting him at a press conference in Chandigarh after having overthrown Sharma, a beaming Rao Birendra uttered those inimitable words "Gaya Ram is now Aya Ram". Then home minister Y B Chavan later used the phrase in Parliament to denote political turncoats.

But Rao lasted only a few months, demitting office on November 2. The Assembly was dissolved and the state placed under President's Rule, followed by elections in 1968.

Meanwhile, Gaya Lal marched on. After the United Front, his next stop was the Arya Sabha, led by Indervesh, Agnivesh and Adityavesh, in 1972. Two years later, he found his way into the Bharatiya Lok Dal, led by Charan Singh. Consequently, he got a Janata Party (formed by the merger of four parties, including the Bharatiya Lok Dal) ticket in 1977 and won. Gaya Lal's last election was in 1982, as an Independent. He lost.

By the time he died in 2009, Gaya Lal had paved the way for son Udai Bhan. In the 1987 Assembly elections, Bhan, a Lok Dal-BJP candidate, won, riding a wave in favour of the combine; he lost in 1991, as a Janata Party nominee; tasted defeat again in 1996, as an Independent; won a second time, in 2000, as an Independent; joined the Indian National Lok Dal; defected to the Congress in 2004 but lost;

and a year later, returned to the Assembly as a Congress candidate.

However, long before then, Haryana had moved on — to five-star defections, showing the way to the rest of the country. In 1979, facing competition from incumbent Janata Party CM Devi Lal, Bhajan Lal set off with dissident party MLAs on "Bharat Darshan". For over two weeks, the group, on a luxury bus and a fleet of cars, toured Alwar, Kota, Agra, Gwalior, Shivpuri, Bhopal, Kanpur, Kolkata and Mumbai, staying at heritage hotels and resorts, with Bhajan Lal picking up the entire tab. It paid off, and on June 29, 1979, he became the CM.

After Indira Gandhi returned to power at the Centre, Bhajan Lal converted his Janata Party government wholesale into a Congress government, on January 22, 1980, taking along 37 party MLAs.

At least Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, the first victim of Haryana's topsy-turvy politics, retained his good cheer through it. As the CM during the March 1967 phase of defections and counter-defections, while he was headed one day for the MLAs' hostel to try win over some potential turncoats, an aide came up running to tell him, "Sahib, Pandit Tuhi Ram has also left." "Pandit Tuhi Ram?" Sharma said, askance. "Phone lagao (connect me to him)." The aide indicated there was no hope; the news was on All-India Radio.

Known for his wit, Sharma quipped, "Just check, maybe Panditayin too has defected." Panditayin being his own wife Savitri Devi.

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Why the fear of debate

of internal Indian quarrels (they don't and why worry about it even if they do?), is the issue in itself not worth debating? We have been here before. After 2014: we had issues of vigilante attacks, love jihad, *ghar wapsi* etc. The Prime Minister was blamed for every incident. No one was interested in asking why such things happened but only in blaming the ruling party or rather the Prime Minister.

The issue of illegal violence and intimidation is important. But it is also important to ask about its causes. Modi cannot be the direct cause of every incident. After all, violent incidents happen under every government. The Nirbhaya case was not the fault of Dr Manmohan Singh during whose prime

ministership it happened, nor the problem of safety of women in public which became prominent at that time. Nor was the last major communal riot in Muzaffarnagar during the Samajwadi Party's rule in Uttar Pradesh the fault of Akhilesh Yadav. Nor of the UPA government which was in power at the Centre then.

If there are recurrent incidents of violence, it is necessary to examine their roots rather than just blame the party you do not like or even dismiss such complaints because you like the party in power. These are social problems which have to be tackled at the place where they occur and not in Delhi. Let me try, even at the risk of upsetting all sides.

A moment's thought would reveal that all these complaints of Hindu-Muslim confrontations are local to the Hindi belt — the BIMARU states. The peculiarity of the Hindi belt is a serious issue to investigate. It is frequently taken, not least by itself, as India itself. It was for decades the source of power of the Congress. It is the one area of India which has not had an anti-Brahmin movement or any social reform agitation as South India, Punjab, Gujarat or Maharashtra have had. It was left backward socially in terms of literacy, women's status, low status of OBCs during the Congress's 50-year rule. The Hindi belt has also the largest concentration of Muslims in India. The idea of secularism is said to be based on the *Ganga-Jamuni*

tehzeeb. Yet, the lack of social reform in the Muslim society is also to be laid at the door of the Congress. Just compare Muslims in South India with Muslims of the Hindi belt in terms of modernity.

The idea of Hindu nationalism is founded on a history of India based solely on the history of the Hindi belt — thousand years of Muslim domination etc, which did not affect South or Northeast at all.

There is plenty of political violence in West Bengal, religious quarrels in Punjab (within the Sikh community), dowry deaths and female foeticide in Punjab/Haryana but little of the communal violence which we see in the BIMARU states. It is worth asking why.



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Lower rates the growth key?

What does the government need to do to stimulate the economy? Is cutting interest rates enough?

K. BHARAT KUMAR

The story so far: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lowered the repo rate to 5.75% in the Monetary Policy Review in June. This was a level last seen nine years ago. Despite three rate cuts aggregating to 75 basis points in this cycle beginning February, economic growth has failed to pick up and, in fact, has been slowing down even more. There is clamour for another big cut from the RBI in the upcoming monetary policy announcement this week. This is because the transmission of the earlier cuts by banks to borrowers has been poor. By the RBI's own assessment, only 21 basis points have been passed on to borrowers by banks in this cycle.

What are the repo and reverse repo rates?

The RBI uses the repo rate to influence the interest rate structure in the economy and to manage inflation. Technically, the repo rate is the rate at which commercial banks would borrow from the RBI, and the reverse repo is the rate of interest they would earn when they deposit funds with the central bank.

What is the stand worldwide as far as governments are concerned on cutting rates?

The traditional argument is that the lower the interest rate, the better for businesses as it brings down the cost of capital, making investments more attractive. Any government would love this as the country would then draw higher investments leading to higher growth and more job creation. Governments abhor higher interest rates as, theoretically, these push up project costs and keep investors away.

A case in point is U.S. President George H.W. Bush's election loss in 1992 to Bill Clinton. The former President actually pointed fingers at Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan as the reason for the defeat. The argument was that had Mr. Greenspan lowered rates, it would have made the economic recovery that the U.S. was going through more visible and hence (purportedly) leading to a re-election of Mr. Bush.

One view on this tug-of-war is that the government of the day typically has a relatively short-term view when it comes to growth but that as an institution, a central bank has the long-term view where low inflation would eventually lead to high growth scenarios.

In this context, nothing comes more quickly to mind than the tussle between P. Chidambaram as Finance Minister and Duvvuri Subbarao as RBI Governor. Despite the best attempts of the government to get the RBI to cut rates, and thus stoke growth, Mr. Subbarao insisted on higher rates in order to keep money supply and inflation low. In his book, *Who Moved My Interest Rate?: Leading the Reserve Bank of India Through Five Turbulent Years*, the former RBI Governor makes this very point: that to experience sustained high growth, a low-inflation scenario is a pre-requisite.

This view is supported by a paper, 'Reconsidering Monetary Policy: An Empirical Examination of the Relationship Between Interest Rates and Nominal GDP Growth in the U.S., U.K., Germany and Japan', published in 2018 in the journal *Ecological Economics*. The authors, Kang-Soek Lee and Richard A. Werner, found that nominal interest rates are consistently positively correlated with growth.

A central bank also keeps an eye on the fiscal deficit maintained by the government. A high fiscal deficit usually makes it difficult for the central bank to rein in inflation, hence causing it to be hawkish and raising interest rates. The late economist and former RBI Deputy Governor Subir Gokarn's was a voice that was constantly egging the government of the day to keep the deficit under control.

Why aren't Indian commercial banks passing on the RBI's rate cuts to consumers quicker?

Deposits from the public form a chunk of funds that commercial banks use to lend to borrowers. Deposit rates have remained high; only last week, the State Bank of India lowered its rates citing improved liquidity. If deposit rates remain high, then the cost of funds for a bank remains high no matter where the RBI pegs its repo rate. Deposit rates have remained high for two reasons. One, competing interest rates in the government's small savings schemes have remained high – even after a cut in late June, the Public Provident Fund and the National Savings Certificate yield 7.9%. Compare this with the 6.8% or so that one would get at SBI, the nation's largest bank.

The other reason that deposit rates have remained high is the liquidity crunch triggered by the sudden inability of the non-banking finance company IL&FS to pay back loans since last September. The RBI intervened to infuse liquidity soon after but these interventions were not enough.

However, the liquidity position has improved in the last two months following consistent market operations by the RBI under its new Governor Shaktikanta Das. This is reflected in the falling yields on government securities. The environment is, thus, conducive for banks to pass on the benefit of lower interest rates to borrowers.

Will lower rates spur economic growth?

Capital is one of the three main factors of production, which are critical to the growth of a commercial entity, the other two being land and labour. But capital is only a necessary, not sufficient, condition. Land, unless allocated by the local government, is too costly for investors seeking to set up shop. On labour, even if adequate hands are available for a job, the skill quotient is still low. Training graduates to be job-ready is a form of tax that companies pay. Also to be taken into account is the market environment and demand. If end users are seeing lesser money in hand than earlier, demand will certainly be impacted.

Therefore, in an environment where the other factors of production are not favourable for an investor, low interest rates by themselves may not prove attractive enough. Any revival of economic activity will be contingent on joint efforts by the government on the fiscal front to stimulate demand, and the RBI, to keep interest rates low.

A rate cut in the upcoming monetary policy announcement this week has to be backed with some positive measures from the government. To hope that a rate cut will suffice to re-ignite economic activity would be naive.

What are the guidelines on migrant camps?

Why is the government keen that States set up detention centres for illegal immigrants? Where should they come up?

VIJAITA SINGH

The story so far: On Wednesday, the Delhi Police told the Supreme Court that nearly 500 illegal Bangladeshi migrants have been deported from the capital in the past 28 months. Last month, the Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, informed the Lok Sabha that State governments have been instructed from time to time to set up detention centres. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has also drawn up a manual for States and Union Territories. At present, there are six detention centres in Assam, the highest among the States. At least 10 more are set to come up before the final publication of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) on August 31.

What are detention centres?

Detention centres are set up to house illegal immigrants or foreigners who have completed their jail sentence but their deportation process to the country concerned has not been initiated or completed. It is also set up to accommodate foreign convicts in criminal cases who have completed their jail terms and await deportation. According to the MHA, these holding camps are also "to restrict the movement of foreigners staying back illegally and thereby ensure that they are physically available at all times for expeditious repatriation or deportation".

What does the Home Ministry manual say?

The MHA framed a 'Model Detention Centre/Holding Centre/Camp Manual', which was circulated to all States and Union Territories on January 9. Mr. Nityanand Rai informed the Lok Sabha on July 2 that State governments have been instructed from time to time (2009, 2012, 2014 and 2018), to set up detention centres. Under Section 3(2)(c) of The Foreigners Act, 1946, the Central Government has the powers to deport foreign nationals staying illegally in the country. These powers have also been entrusted to State governments under Article 258(1) of the Constitution and under Article 239(1) for administrators of Union Territories.

Some centres already exist in some States and Union Territories. The intention is to standardise the camps, and the States and Union Territories have been asked to implement the orders.

What triggered the move?

On September 20, 2018 activist Harsh Mander filed a petition in the Supreme Court to highlight the plight of families languishing in six detention centres in Assam; members of the families who were declared foreigners were put in camps separated from each other.

The top court sent a notice to the Centre and Assam government seeking their response. In the petition, Mr. Mander compared the situation of these families with the family separation policy imposed on illegal immigrants in the U.S. by the Trump administration. The petition itself was based on a report submitted by Mr. Mander when he, as Minorities Monitor for the National Human Rights



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Commission, had visited detention centres in Assam from January 22-24 in 2018.

The first major finding of the mission led by Mr. Mander was that the "State does not make any distinction, for all practical purposes, between detention centres and jails; and thus between detainees and ordinary inmates". It found there was no clear legal regime governing the rights and entitlements of detainees. The report said, "Consequently, the jail authorities appear to apply the Assam Jail Manual to them, but deny them even the benefits, like parole, waged work etc., that the inmates get under the jail rules."

The manual says States require 'no specific approval' from the Home Ministry to set up 'detention centres'. It lays down that the centres should be set up outside jail premises

Central or State government to guide the treatment and rights of the detainees." The detention centres are therefore de facto, if not *de jure*, administered under the Assam Jail Manual, and the detainees are treated in some ways as convicted prisoners, and in other ways are deprived even of the rights of convicted prisoners, it was found.

It was in the context of this petition that on November 5, 2018, the Centre informed the Supreme Court that it was framing new guidelines for keeping foreign nationals in detention centres across the country.

What are some of the guidelines?

There are 39 points in the manual. The manual says that States require "no specific approval" from the Home Ministry to set up "detention centres/holding centres/camps". It lays down that centres should be set up outside the jail premises and their numbers and size should be decided by the States keeping in view the actual number of foreigners to be housed as

well as the progress in deportation proceedings.

The manual says: "On completion of the sentence of the foreigner, the jail authorities concerned may hand over the foreign national to the authority in charge of the detention centre." There should also be a provision to facilitate the stay of such foreigners in "metro" cities during the waiting period between their interview with the embassy concerned and issuance of travel documents.

The MHA has said the detention centres should be designed for inmates to maintain standards of living in consonance with "human dignity". Well-lit, airy rooms adhering to basic hygiene standards and equipped with electricity, water and communication facilities are to be provided at the centre. Other than CCTVs and round-the-clock security personnel, the manual adds, the centre's boundary wall should be at least 10 feet high and ringed with barbed wires with strict access control measures. There should also be a periodic security audit by the appropriate authorities. The order says that detention centres should also have open spaces for detainees to move around and segregated accommodation for men and women. "It should be ensured that members of the same family are not separated and all family members are housed in same detention centre." Mr. Mander's report had highlighted how men, women and boys above six years lodged in detention centres in Assam were separated from members of their families. It says: "Many had not met their spouse for several years, several never once since their detention, since women and men were housed in different jails, and they were never given parole or permission to meet." The MHA manual has addressed these concerns saying no restrictions shall be imposed to meet family members. It also asks States to pay special attention to the needs of women, nursing mothers, transgenders and open a crèche in the camp. The manual says, "Children lodged in [a] detention centre may be provided educational facilities by admitting them in local schools."

How many detention centres are there?

Assam has six detention centres, the highest among the States. At least 10 more are to come up in the wake of the final publication of the NRC by August 31. The NRC is being updated as per directions of the Supreme Court to segregate Indian citizens living in Assam from those who had illegally entered the State after March 25, 1971. Nearly 41 lakh people were excluded from the final draft. Of these, 36 lakh have filed claims against the exclusion.

Since 1985, when Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) were first set up in Assam, till February 28 this year, as many as 63,959 persons were declared foreigners through ex-parte proceedings. The Assam government informed the State Assembly last week that 1,145 people declared foreigners by 100 FTs across the State were lodged in detention centres till July 9 this year. Of them, 335 people who have spent more than three years in these centres were to be released following a Supreme Court order. The Central government had informed the Supreme Court in February that of thousands of persons declared foreigners by the FTs in Assam, only 162 could be deported to Bangladesh. In 2016 and 2017, 39 Bangladeshi nationals were deported from detention camps in Assam, according to what the MHA informed Parliament in January 2018.

Why is India pulled to deep-sea mining?

What is the country's Deep Ocean Mission all about? What are the metals that can be extracted?

ASWATHI PACHA

The story so far: India's ambitious 'Deep Ocean Mission' is all set to be launched this year. Dr. Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, Union Ministry of Earth Sciences, announced on July 27 that the ₹8,000-crore plan to explore deep ocean minerals will start from October. He said, "We finally have the in-principle approval to go ahead with the mission. Now expenditure plans will be drawn up and circulated [to various institutions affiliated to the Ministry] for executing programmes and we hope to launch by October 31."

What will be mined from the deep ocean?

One of the main aims of the mission is to explore and extract polymetallic nodules. These are small potato-like rounded accretions composed of minerals such as manganese, nickel, cobalt, copper and iron hydroxide. They lie scattered on the Indian Ocean floor at depths of about 6,000 m and the size can vary from a few millimetres to centimetres. These metals can be extracted and used in electronic devices, smartphones, batteries and even for solar panels.

Where will the team mine?

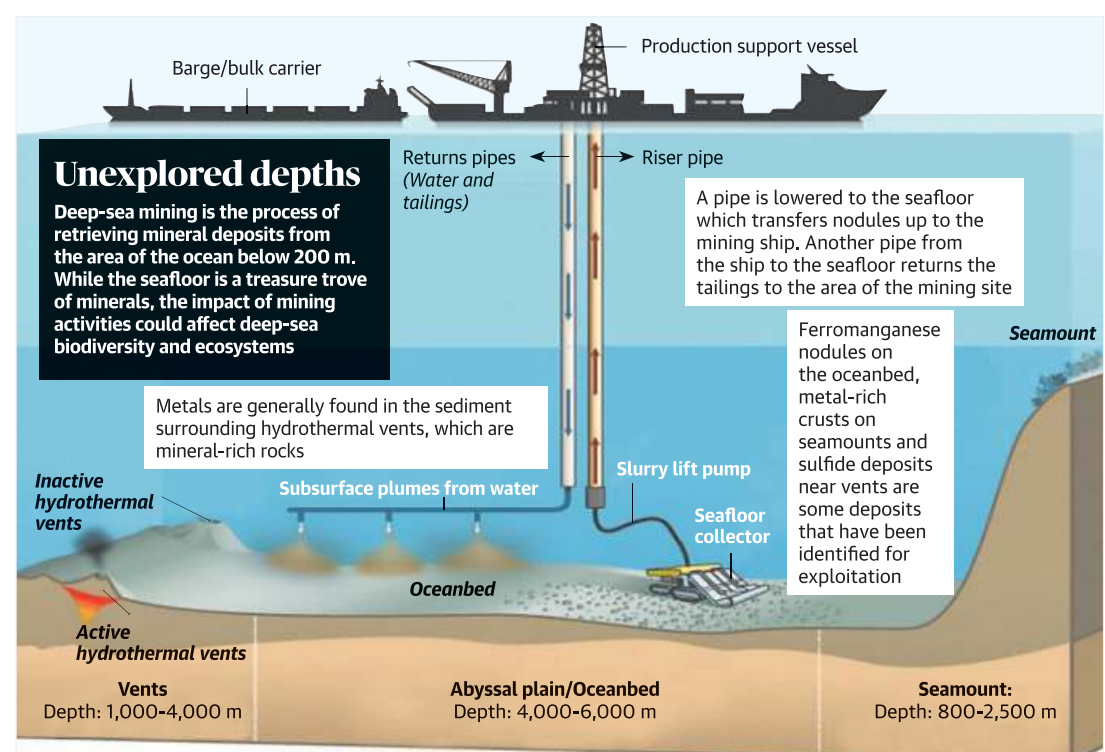
The International Seabed Authority (ISA), an autonomous international organisation established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, allots the 'area' for deep-sea mining. India was the first country to receive the status of a 'Pioneer Investor' in 1987 and was given an area of about 1.5 lakh sq km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) for nodule exploration. In 2002, India signed a contract with the ISA and after complete resource analysis of the seabed 50% was surrendered and the country retained an area of 75,000 sq km.

According to a release from the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the estimated polymetallic nodule resource potential in this area is 380 million tonnes (MT), containing 4.7 MT of nickel, 4.29 MT of copper, 0.55 MT of cobalt and 92.59 MT of manganese. Further studies have helped narrow the mining area to 18,000 sq km which will be the 'First Generation Mine-site'.

Which are the other countries that are in the race to mine the deep sea?

Apart from the CIOB, polymetallic nodules have been identified from the central Pacific Ocean. It is known as the Clarion-Clipperton Zone.

According to the ISA's website, it has entered into 15-year contracts for exploration for polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the deep seabed with 29 contractors. Later it was extended for five more years till 2022. China, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Russia and also some small islands such as the Cook Islands, Kiribati have joined the race for deep



Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature, Nature Journal

sea mining. Most of the countries have tested their technologies in shallow waters and are yet to start deep-sea extraction.

When will India start mining?

India's mining site is at about a depth of 5,500 metres, where there is a high pressure and extremely low temperature. Explains Dr. G.A. Ramadass, head of the Deep Sea Technologies Group, National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai, "We have developed and demonstrated the mining technology with artificial nodules at 500 metres depth. We have also deployed Remotely Operated Vehicle and In-situ Soil Tester in the depth of 6,000 metres and have a thorough understanding of the mining area at the Central Indian Ocean Basin." He adds, "The mining machine newly developed for 6000 metres depth was able to

move about 900 metres and will be deployed soon at 5,500 metres. We hope to test it in October this year. Weather conditions and availability of ships also play a role. More tests are being conducted to understand how to bring the nodules up to the surface. A riser system comprising an umbilical cable or

electromechanical cable and a hose is being developed."

What will be the environmental impact?

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), these deep remote locations can be home to unique species that have adapted themselves to conditions such as poor oxygen and sunlight, high pressure and extremely low temperatures. Such mining expeditions can make them go extinct even before they are known to science. The deep sea's biodiversity and ecology remain poorly understood, making it difficult to assess the environmental impact and frame adequate guidelines.

Dr. Ramadass adds that though strict guidelines have been framed, they are only exploration guidelines. A new set of exploitation guidelines are being worked out and discussions are on with the ISA. Environmentalists are also worried about the sediment plumes harming the filter feeders in the upper ocean layers. Additional concerns have been raised about the noise and light pollution and oil spills.

Is deep sea mining economically viable?

The latest estimate from the ISA says it will be commercially viable only if about three million tonnes are mined per year. More studies are being carried out to understand how the technology can be scaled up and used efficiently.

CAPSULE



Elephants and carbon
If forest elephants go extinct, it can seriously increase carbon dioxide levels, a study published in *Nature Geoscience* claims. Elephant populations in African forests encouraged the growth of slow-growing trees which had a high wood density and sequestered more carbon, it found. This is because they preferentially eat fast-growing varieties leaving slow-growing ones.



Habitable world
TESS, NASA's mission to search for exoplanets, may have found the first potentially habitable world. The super-Earth exoplanet is named GJ 357 d, which is only 31 light years away, was discovered earlier this year. The exoplanet orbits a diminutive dwarf star and is 22% larger than the Earth. There are two other exoplanets in the system. The super-Earth has a thick atmosphere and may possess water.



Extreme weather and humans

Study finds European heat wave was made more likely, intense by human-induced climate change

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL

The extreme heat waves that enveloped parts of Western Europe last month were made much more likely and intense by human-induced climate change, a study has found.

A recent report from the World Weather Attribution group has suggested that the continuous days of extreme heat that hit countries like France and Netherlands would have been a once-in-a-millennium occurrence without climate change but were made up to 100 times more probable as a result of it.

In the U.K. and Germany, the event is less rare (with estimated return periods of around 10-30 years in the current climate) and the likelihood is about ten times higher (at least 3 times) due to climate change, the study added.

Though in all these countries, the temperature would have been 1.5 to 3 degrees Celsius lower without climate change.

The said group has analysed all seven heat waves in the 21st century in Europe (2003, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2018 and June 2019), and found that each one was made more likely and more intense due to human-induced climate change.

"The July 2019 heatwave was so extreme over continental Western Europe that the observed magnitudes would have been extremely unlikely without climate change," the report concluded.

NCBS study shows how stress can affect fear memory

It may be possible to reverse fear memories that have been abnormally strengthened by severe stress

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

Fear memories formed before and after experiencing chronic stress can have very different behavioural effects. They also affect the brain morphology differently, finds a study. The researchers, based in National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) Bengaluru came to this conclusion by studying male Wistar rats.

The researchers find that it may be possible to reverse fear memories that have been abnormally strengthened by severe stress. This is because, they find, the process of fear memory reversal itself is not impaired by stress. "This is the good news emerging from our study. Of course, these ideas need to be tested in human subjects in great detail before therapeutic relevance can be fully assessed," says Sumantra Chattarji of NCBS in

Tigers in India face lurking threat from virus

There is heightened risk of disease transfer from dogs to tigers, leopards in Ranthambhore National Park

ASWATHI PACHA

The Prime Minister's announcement that tiger numbers have increased in the country may be good news. But the loss of habitat, a decline of prey and poaching continues to be a threat to tigers' survival. Along with these, a potential virus – Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) – that can be transmitted from CDV-infected dogs living in and around wildlife sanctuaries has started to raise concern among wildlife biologists.

Canine distemper is a contagious and serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems of puppies and dogs.

Risk of disease transfer

A recent study published in *Threatened Taxa* notes that 86% of the tested dogs around Ranthambhore National Park in Rajasthan carried CDV antibodies in their bloodstream. This means that the dogs are either currently infected or have been infected sometime in their life and have overcome the disease. This finding points out that there is an increased risk of disease transfer from the dogs to tigers and leopards that live in the park.

Last year, over 20 lions from the Gir forest succumbed to the viral infection and now a guideline has been prepared by the National Tiger Conservation Authority to prevent the spillover of the disease to wild animals.

"The main aim should be to vaccinate the free-ranging and domestic



Loss prevention: Last year, over 20 lions from the Gir forest succumbed to the canine distemper virus infection, and now a guideline has been prepared by the National Tiger Conservation Authority. • RAJEEV BHATT

dogs in the area around national parks. A lot of NGOs have started animal birth control programmes. They need more support from the government," says Dr. Jimmy Borah, Consultant, Species Conservation and Law Enforcement, Panthera, and the corresponding author of the paper. "The disease needs to be recognised and more targeted studies need to be initiated to collect baseline data on CDV from wherever they are reported from in wild carnivores. Understanding the role of domestic animals as contribu-

tors to a local CDV reservoir is imperative precursor in considering control measures."

Blood samples

The study was done from July to August 2015 when the team visited villages (in a 4 km radius) around the Ranthambhore National Park and collected blood samples from over 100 dogs. The results showed that 86% of the studied dogs had CDV antibodies in their blood. These dogs wander into the forest along with the humans, and there

have been cases where leopard have hunted these dogs. "Studies from Russia and Africa have shown that small, isolated wildlife populations are more susceptible and when the virus transmits from one species to another the disease manifestation is worse," adds Dr. Borah.

Easier route

"The easy way out is prevention. Managing any disease in a wildlife population is extremely difficult. Most dogs are free ranging and not owned by any particular person in the village. The government should take the initiative to vaccinate the dogs around wildlife sanctuaries in the country. This would be a good time to vaccinate against rabies as well. It is an investment that requires time and effort but increasing herd immunity will reduce chances of disease spillover to wildlife," says Nadisha Sidhu, first author of the work. She was a researcher with the World Wide Fund for Nature-India when the work was done and is now a consultant for Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Bengaluru.

Ms. Sidhu says there were only a few CDV suspected cases in India when she started her work in 2015, and so was considered not important. But with the CDV confirmed deaths of lions in Gir, more attention has been drawn to the disease. She hopes more studies are conducted to get countywide data on the disease prevalence so that necessary prevention guidelines can be laid out.



Bonding: Eye contact has an important role in dog-human relationships. • S. RAMESH KURUP

Eyes of the beholder and the beheld

It is not how the dog looks, but how he 'puppy looks' at his owner



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

A recent report described the remarkable prowess of a female dog in the Kaziranga National Park in Assam. She could sniff the presence of poachers of the rhinoceros and tigers and warned the forest officials about it. The officials named it Quamy since she was equal to a quarter of an army. Likewise two dogs named Nirman and Myna sniffed the presence of tigers and their poachers in the Madhya Pradesh forests.

Keen senses

Dogs belong to the wolf family and have inherited a keen sense of smell and vision from them. Wolves have over 300 million smell receptors compared to just 6 million in humans and can smell the presence of someone 3 kilometres away. And they have sharper vision and hearing – they can hear their prey 10 km away. Dogs have inherited these senses of smell, sight and hearing. We know of how dogs sniff malaria and even cancer in humans (see earlier article on 9-12-2018). Happily enough, dogs are tamer than wolves and can be domesticated. A recent report by a team of researchers from UK and USA describes yet another feature of dogs, namely how a dog's facial muscles have evolved over the years as they were domesticated and that their ability to raise their eyebrows resembles ours. This ability, argue the researchers, have triggered their nurturing by humans, making dogs our "best friends" (Kaminski et al., *Evolution of facial muscle anatomy in dogs*, *PNAS*, 116: 14677-81, July 16, 2019).

Dogs were domesticated about 33,000 years ago. As they were domesticated by us, we started selecting and preferring those that better matched our relationships. Such selections have involved the ability of dogs that are able to read and use our communications better than other animals are not able to. As the authors point out: "dogs are more skillful in using humans communicative cues like pointing gestures or gaze direction even than human's closest living relative chimpanzees."

Eye contact has turned out to be an important contribution to the dog-human relationship. A Japanese group points out that mutual gaze between dogs and human leads to biochemical changes both in the owner and the pet dog, and an attachment akin to that between a mother and her infant! To quote the researchers again: "The most likely evolutionary scenario is that dog's ancestor must have, to some extent, expressed characteristics that elicited care-giving response from humans. Humans then consciously or unconsciously favoured and therefore selected for those characteristic leading to the analogous adaptations in dogs today".

Mutual gaze

And of these, mutual eye contact and gazing has been an important contribution. Dog owners know only too well how moving the gaze of their pet is – sometimes so sad that they need to be hugged, and some other time so upsetting that you want punish them. The UK-USA group has done particular research on how the facial muscles and the anatomy of dogs have been selectively evolved to contribute to this mutual eye contact and the "language" expressed in such gazes. We humans favour dogs that show "paedomorphic" (infant-like) features like large forehead, large eyes and so on. The team has also shown that a particular set of facial muscles make the eyebrows raise and lower, which is appealing to us humans.

In order to determine whether domestication has shaped facial muscles to facilitate dog-human communications, the researchers compared in detail the facial anatomical features of domestic dogs on the one hand and grey wolves on the other. Compared to dogs, wolves are unable to raise the inner part of their eyebrows. Also, while dogs have a muscle that pulls the eyelid towards the ear, wolves are not able to. Dogs are also able to produce eyebrow movements that are more frequent and expressive. These are what people call the "Puppy Dog" eye movements – sad, happy, don't care, and other expressions remarkably similar to human infants. There is no such "Puppy Wolf" movement of the eyebrow. And this puppy dog movement of the facial muscle anatomy has come about thanks to selection pressure in breeding based on human preferences.

The best dog need not be the cutest or the most beautiful. It is the one that looks at you and you return. The look is mutual affection. In the California annual contest called the World's Ugliest Dog, the winner in 2019 is "Scamp the Tramp", one with beady eyes, no teeth, short stubby legs, and his owner Ms Yvonne Morones is justly proud of him. It is not how the dog looks, but how he 'Puppy Looks' at his owner and she at him. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder and the beheld.

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A step closer to oral administration of kala-azar drug

IIT Hyderabad achieved controlled, sustained drug release for 10 days

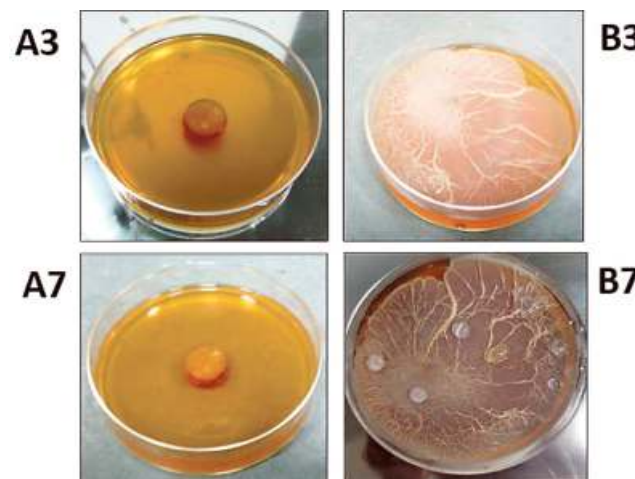
R. PRASAD

By encapsulating an antifungal drug in polymer nanofibres, researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad have been able to achieve controlled and sustained release of the drug for up to 10 days. As a result, no fungal growth was seen up to seven days when the drug (Amphotericin B) was encapsulated in the polymer. The encapsulated drug can also be used for treating kala-azar.

Oral administration

Most importantly, the antifungal activity against *Candida albicans* was observed when the encapsulated drug was compressed to form oral tablets. This would mean that oral administration of the drug might become possible if initial results achieved in the lab can be replicated in animal and human clinical trials. Currently, oral administration of the drug has major challenges – high toxicity, reduced bioavailability in the body due to poor solubility in water and high cost.

Researchers from IIT Hyderabad led by Chandra S. Sharma and Saptarshi Majumdar from the Department of Chemical Engineering produced nanofibres containing the drug by electrospinning the drug-gelatin polymer solution. The gelatin polymer is extremely



Effective: Drug-loaded tablet displayed antifungal activity on days 3 and 7 (left column) compared with control (right column)

water-loving (hydrophilic) and so is not stable. To increase the stability and allow the drug to be released in a controlled and sustained manner, the researchers used a commercially available crosslinker.

"The drug is found on the surface of the gelatin nanofibres but remains encapsulated when compressed into tablets," says Prof. Majumdar.

"The cross-linked polymer matrix allows the drug to diffuse slowly when the polymer degrades. We have controlled the diffusion rate so it is released over a period of 10 days," says Prof. Sharma. Only *in vitro* studies have been carried to test the stability of the tablet and controlled release.

The results of the study were published in the journal *Nano Structures & Nano-Objects*.

Stability of tablet

Since the main goal was to study if the drug can be administered orally, the researchers tested the stability of the tablet for eight hours at extremely acidic condition (1.5 pH). The stomach has acidic pH and the polymer should be stable for up to four hours. After eight hours at low pH, the tablets were kept for 10 days in an alkaline medium of 7.4 pH. "The tablets were stable for eight hours at low pH. The polymer matrix showed signatures of degradation after the sixth day but was stable for 10 days," says

Mrunalini K. Gaydhane from IIT Hyderabad and one of the first authors of the paper.

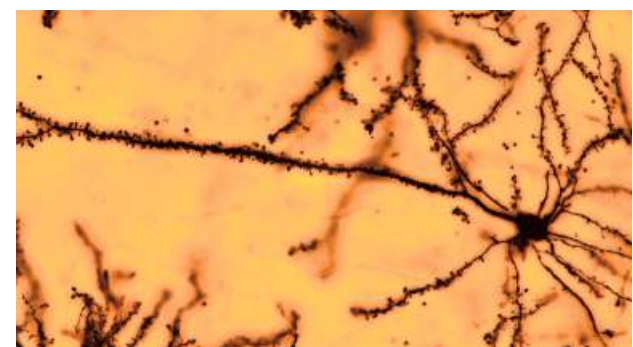
The researchers found that each day 10% of the drug was released from the polymer through diffusion. The drug was completely released from the polymer matrix at the end of the 10th day.

Negligible toxicity

"We had used mice fibroblast cells for testing toxicity of the drug. There was negligible toxicity to cells even at the end of five days. In fact, the cells continued to multiply," says Gaydhane.

Only 20 mg of the drug in 500 mg of polymer was used for making the table used for testing. "Our next target is to achieve the same drug release profile with dosages used for therapeutic purposes," Prof. Sharma says.

The chemical crosslinker used in the study is highly toxic. In order to reduce toxicity, the researchers exposed the gelatin polymer to saturated vapour of the crosslinker for just six-eight minutes. In the conventional process, crosslinking takes 24 hours to complete. "Reducing the time taken to cross-link reduces toxicity. But we are now looking at increasing the stability of the polymer matrix without using any crosslinker," Prof. Majumdar says.



Spiny neurons: Pyramidal neuron from the medial prefrontal cortex of a rat, showing the dendritic spines.

whose lab the study was conducted. The results are published in the journal *Psychopharmacology*. In a pair of experiments that studied the behavioural aspects, the rats were taught to fear a 20-second-long tone of approximately 70 decibels. Later, they were subjected to a training where they were made to realise and learn that

they need not fear the tone, which the scientists call as fear extinction exercise.

In the first experiment, the experimental rats were subjected to chronic immobilisation stress for 10 days after which fear memories were formed. Another group was subjected to same stress for 10 days but here the fear memories were formed on the

first day. The control groups in both cases were not subjected to the stress treatment and were only given the fear formation and extinction treatments.

The results showed that when fear memories were formed after stress treatment, both acquisition and overcoming the fear were impaired.

In a separate experiment, the morphological effects of stress were studied by studying eight rats. Four of these were controls and four were subjected to stress. After 10 days, the rats were sacrificed and thin slices of their brains were examined.

The researchers studied and counted the dendritic spines on specific neurons in the two sets of animals. Dendritic spines are contact points where a neuron communicates with other neu-

rons. "We found that due to stress, the number of dendritic spines increases in the amygdala [where fear memory is formed], but decreases in the infralimbic area [where memory reversal happens] of the medial prefrontal cortex," explains Prabhakar Chakraborty from NCBS and the first author of the paper.

Effect on neurons

An increase in the number of dendritic spines is seen as an increase in the capacity of the neuron to communicate with other neurons. This strengthens the functioning of that neuron. So the above morphology experiment shows that stress acts in two ways. It not only increases the capacity of neurons involved in fear memory formation but also decreases the capacity of the neurons involved in memory reversal, thereby making it

doubly difficult to erase the fear memory.

"While these results are pretty novel and add an entirely new dimension to earlier research, we feel that our findings are quite robust for several reasons," says Dr Chattarji. According to him, an important reason is that the analysis of cells in different brain regions involved in these behaviours also undergo structural changes that are consistent with the results of the behavioural experiments.

One of the main challenges was to train the animals and execute the experiments flawlessly over a long time. "Experiments in animal behaviour are often susceptible to the finest fluctuations in something as trivial as handling the animals. Extreme care was needed to avoid unnecessary experimental confounds," says Mr Chakraborty.



Unreal spectacle on the screen

Reality TV projects false values

DIVYA GRACE

Drama, jealousy, tears, overrated comedy and underrated values – reality TV has it all. Nothing seems to bring viewers greater joy than to watch fellow human beings being humiliated and reduced to tears in front of millions. Does reality TV have a negative impact on the younger generation? Should it be banned?

First, reality TV shows are usually far from reality. People take advantage of the word “real” and use it as a green flag to say and do whatever they want on TV. It may seem like a peek into real human nature, but all the drama shown on screen is simply a result of clever editing. One cannot be natural when being filmed. Modern technology has distorted the lines between what is real and what is not, and reality TV is the finest example of it.

Reality TV projects false values and standards. The people, especially teenagers, who watch such shows may be influenced into rethinking their own values and strive to change their lifestyles, aiming for an unattainable and fake benchmark. This may, in turn, cause them to starve themselves to become thinner or try to squeeze their legs into a pair of jeans that is at least three sizes too small. These efforts not only harm them physically but also mentally and emotionally, when they realise that they can't meet the standards on TV and resign themselves into thinking that they are not “good enough”.

Inappropriate ideas

A “no boundaries” reality TV show can illustrate some inappropriate and uncomfortable ideas. Most of these shows start and end with bad language, and the “behind the scenes” gossip, which is supposed to give you an insight into a character, is just an excuse for gossip. This type of behaviour can influence the younger generation who are always anxious to seek out role models. These shows manipulate them into thinking that such behaviour is acceptable, leading to many social problems among their peers.

As instant noodles, “instant stars” are all the rage now. The standards of acting and clean, fun television have dropped drastically. The people who appear on reality TV are usually unprofessional and though this may seem to make the whole thing more real, it couldn't be further from the truth. Since these people are not used to the spotlight, they don't know how to handle stressful situations and how to cope with

Reality TV has taken away the real purpose of watching television – breaking away from the harsh reality

criticism. There are many reported cases of how criticism from TV judges has caused people to give up on their dreams, develop social disabilities and become a shadow of their past selves. Reality TV may be entertaining, but it is in truth just a façade put up to hide the cruelty and horrors of human nature.

The popularity of such shows is fed by people's rising thirst for fame. Reality TV has increased the temptation of money and popularity. Many of the populace don't even care for what reason they come on TV, as long as they can have the spotlight on themselves for five minutes. Priorities, values and ethics have changed and this is the kind of culture we are exposing the future generation to.

When one considers it, TV is one of the most amazing man-made inventions and gives us access to hundreds of stories that change and inspire our lives every day. Quality television is wholesome entertainment and is capable of bringing people together, connecting them. But reality TV has taken away the real purpose of watching television – breaking away from the harsh reality.

In conclusion, reality TV shows encourage people to chase after false hopes and dreams, all in bad taste. Without such shows, society will be happier and healthier with a broader outlook towards life.

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Confessions of a TECHNOPHOBE

A Luddite he is, but he wants software to help reply to the birthday greetings flooding his phone

TAJENDER SINGH LUTHRA

I am a self-confessed Luddite. However, I like using social media in moderation for its convenience, speed and reach.

Generally, I refuse to join social media groups. But since I don't want to be called rude or reclusive, I break that rule. Missing out on interesting chats in a few chosen groups, particularly one formed by my Civil Service batch mates, is not the done thing. But rarely do we have stimulating discussions on what ails public policy and administration or remedies for poverty and backwardness. Serious discussions may ruffle egos. So primarily, we use this group to exchange birthday wishes and stay connected.

The group makes my birthday extra special. I am elated to receive over 40 messages when I check my phone in the morning, and by night, the figure touches 100. But my happiness is short-lived as I am confronted with a difficult question: how do I thank everyone? My heart wants to acknowledge all who wished me, but I am lazy.

A friend suggested that we need software to help us write everyone's name with ease, élan, speed and dexterity. Just click a button and all the names pop up. But can software really help us do this?

Birthday wishes start pouring in from early morning. I feel lazy and convince myself that I will write my thank-you note in the evening.

By then, everyone who wanted to wish me, would have done so. But a little later, I feel under pressure. If I write so late, wouldn't my early-morning friends think that I am lazy, uncivilised or ungrateful?

In such a large and diverse group, I have forgotten some names. I haven't met many of them since our training got over 29 years ago.

Several Sanjays and Viveks are there in the group. How do I address each of them individually? Use the first name for one Sanjay and the last name for another? But I feel offended when an acquaintance addresses me by my last name.

Then, there is a chatterbox in the group, but I don't know her name. I wish to call another batch mate to ask her name. But I know his frivolous suspicions. He may post openly on the group – hey, what's the plan?

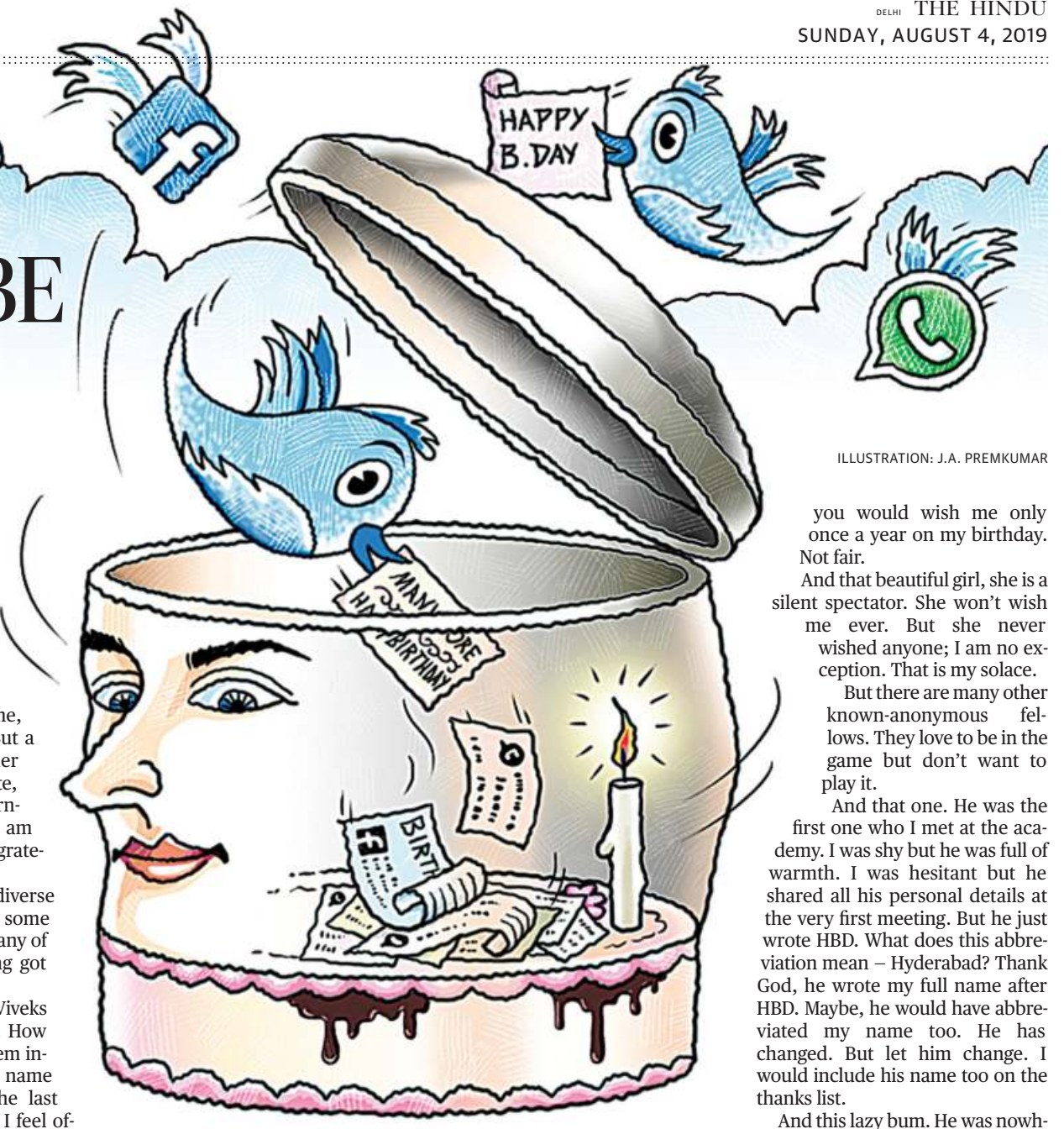


ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

you would wish me only once a year on my birthday. Not fair.

And that beautiful girl, she is a silent spectator. She won't wish me ever. But she never wished anyone; I am no exception. That is my solace.

But there are many other known-anonymous fellows. They love to be in the game but don't want to play it.

And that one. He was the first one who I met at the academy. I was shy but he was full of warmth. I was hesitant but he shared all his personal details at the very first meeting. But he just wrote HBD. What does this abbreviation mean – Hyderabad? Thank God, he wrote my full name after HBD. Maybe, he would have abbreviated my name too. He has changed. But let him change. I would include his name too on the thanks list.

And this lazy bum. He was nowhere till I laboured to make the list. But just after I posted it, he writes his best wishes on the group. He rather needs to be ignored for being lazy in wishing me. But, I am confused. Software won't really solve my birthday problems.

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Sunshine thoughts on a better world, to win over hate with love

The nascent rays touch off a stream of musings on where the world is headed to

POOVITHA MUTHURAMAN

As the morning sun's rays find their way through the thick curtains of my bedroom window, I wake up right away. I have always been a light sleeper – the slightest disturbance, and sleep deserts me. Just like my mind which at the slightest provocation leads to a cascade of thoughts that engulf my whole being.

I check the time on my phone and habitually, my messages and Facebook feed. As I scroll through the horrible stuff (rapes, honour killings, shootings and suicides) that we call news today, the spark in my mind had already begun. I close my eyes and feel myself being sucked into my messy thoughts, the primary one being – “Where and when did we begin to fail as humans?”

Was it when we were taught never to give up on our goals, ideologies, dreams and desires at all costs?

Was it when we made our children feel like a failure when they scored less in a



ILLUSTRATION: SATWIK GADE

Somewhere along the way, we forgot to love without expectations, to care without demands and to give without getting

test and seeded the thought that life was a competition?

Was it when we taught our boys that it was shameful to be human and cry their feelings out?

Was it when we gave our pride and ego more priority over a relationship with a loved one?

Was it when we portrayed that to succeed in life meant

to hoard loads of money and give up on every other aspect of life?

Was it when the real learnings and experiences in life didn't matter anymore unless you had a degree from one of the top universities?

Was it when we started believing that everyone else's lives were better by looking at the social media stories and statuses?

Was it when we were taught too much science and logic, that we forgot we are emotional beings?

As we are in the age where we are told to “live our lives

to the fullest” or “to follow our passion” or “to be happy and positive no matter what”...

Somewhere along the way, we forgot to love without expectations, to care without demands and to give without getting. We have lost touch with our basic human nature.

Blurring lines

As the lines between right and wrong and black and white blur and merge into grey, the grey matter of my mind pushes me further into the whirlwind of thoughts and I end up asking the most dreaded, unanswerable question: “What is the purpose of this life?”

Before I reach my breaking point, the ringtone of my phone brings me back to reality. As I pick up and hear his sleepy voice at the other end, all my worries on existential crisis vanish. I realise, at the end or beginning of the day, all we need to survive is a little more love than the previous day until it begins to overturn all the hate in the world.

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Space-hopping on a rocketing mind

V. SHREE SAUPARNIKA

Why do couples decide to separate after 25 years of marriage? Why do so many teenagers run away from home every year? What do modern, advanced nations compete for? What holds all matter together, gives it shape, size and feel?

One of the definitions of space is “an unoccupied expanse or area”. In another use, the word is found in “I think I need some space”, “I have no space at all” and other such declarations. But can you imagine a world without space, in any of its connotations? And what about a world without personal space? I am sure most teenagers might just lose their minds if asked just to think about it.

Personal space is important. Never breach this barrier when man is in “commune” with nature lest you regret it for the rest of your life. It could even change the course of life. For instance, in Hindu mythology, if Sita had not crossed the Lakshman Rekha (the boundary of her personal space drawn by her brother-in-law, which may lead to controversy if done today), we would have had a different story alto-

gether without the war and other legendary exploits.

That is not to say that personal space can never be breached. There is the matter of consent. You cannot invade a person's space without permission. People often fail to understand the significance behind personal space. Often, the violators do not know that they are violating. Even worse is when the person whose personal space is being breached, does not know it. This often happens to children. So they need to be taught how to identify the breaches. The same goes for cyberspace.

The invasion of a person's privacy is caused by ignorance, thoughtlessness, spite or stupidity. The earlier people know this, the better the virtual world will become.

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Toothsome kachoris with a stuffing of serendipity

When the mind plays games with you, it can sometimes be for a little side trip to fortune

SUDHIR VOMBATKERE

I make a “to-do” list whenever I go out so that I don't miss out any chores, which may, otherwise, necessitate additional trips. You know, “bank”, “vegetables” and such.

We love Gujarati snacks such as *papri*, *ganthia* and *khakra*, and stock these purchased from Mansukhlal's shop not far from home. Asha had asked me to buy *papri*, four 100-gram packets, and I dutifully wrote “Mansukhlal” on my list.

There were other tasks, each involving searching for a parking space and walking to the place of business. In the day's planned “circuit”, I parked some distance from Mansukhlal's and ambled

across. There were some customers at the counter, and it took a little time to meet the proprietor and exchange pleasantries with him. He asked what I would like to buy. I could not for the life of

Forgetfulness is 'normal' with advancing age...

me recall what it was I had come for, and noticing my confusion, he gently said, “Don't worry, take your time. This happens to all of us.”

I took the “to-do” list from my pocket, but all it said was “Mansukhlal”.

There were others waiting, so after a minute or two I told him I would do some other chores and come back

when I recall what it was I needed. And off I went to the bank where I got my passbook updated after waiting in the longish queue at the updating machine. After that I went, passbook in hand, to meet the manager to remind her I needed Form 16 to file my return.

When I eventually got back to Mansukhlal's, I discovered that I had left my passbook on the bank manager's table. Damn! I'll pick it up the next time I go there, if it doesn't get misplaced or lost, I thought. I entered Mansukhlal's and without hesitation ordered four *kachoris*. These packed and paid for, I drove home.

As I was parking, I received a jolt as *papri* suddenly came to mind. Gosh, now



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Asha is going to give me a lecture!

I went up to our flat, let myself in with my key, and quietly placed the purchases on the kitchen counter before announcing my return.

Asha's response was, “You didn't take my call! What were you doing?” I apologised, “I put my phone on ‘silent’ yesterday at the music performance, I forgot to restore the ring. Sorry I didn't

take your call.”

She said, “I was calling to tell you we already had *papri* in the cupboard. Now I don't know what we'll do with so much *papri*.” I smiled to myself. Asha loves *kachoris*!

Forgetfulness is “normal” with advancing age, but thankfully, *kachoris* are every bit as tasty as *papri*. Pushing 80, I once told my visiting son that I must remember to get some things urgently done, because I did not know how much longer I had to live.

Prompt came his reply: “No hurry, daddy, you'll live to be a hundred. Only the good die young.”

And we laughed together for a long time.

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Why the apathy towards cleanliness?

A culture of cleanliness and tidiness must be inculcated from an early age

D.B.N. MURTHY

When diet eats the mind

The big debate at homes these days is what to eat.

SEETHA JAVAKUMAR

A thought for talent

An education policy should identify, nurture and capitalise on the nation's talent

AJAY CHANDRA
ARKALGUD RAMAPRASAD

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दैनिक जागरण

लक्ष्य के लिए योजना बनाएं और फिर योजना अनुरूप कार्य करें

जरूरी है जनसंख्या रजिस्टर

एक ऐसे समय जब असम में राष्ट्रीय नागरिक रजिस्टर यानी एनआरसी पर काम हो रहा है तब राष्ट्रीय जनसंख्या रजिस्टर अर्थात एनपीआर की तैयारी स्वागतयोग्य है। यह काम इसलिए होना चाहिए ताकि उन हालात से बचा जा सके जिनसे आज असम दो-चार हो रहा है। जहाँ एनआरसी यह बताएगा कि कौन देश का नागरिक है वहीं एनपीआर देश में रहने वालों की पहचान सुनिश्चित करेगा। बेहतर होता कि देश में रहने वालों की पहचान तय करने का काम पहले ही कर लिया जाता। चूंकि यह नहीं किया गया इसीलिए आज असम में यह बताना मुश्किल है कि कौन देश का नागरिक है और कौन बांग्लादेश से आकर वहां बस गया है? चूंकि किसी भी देश के नागरिकों और निवासियों में भेद होता है और उनके अधिकार भी अलग-अलग होते हैं इसलिए एनपीआर बनना ही चाहिए। पता नहीं भविष्य में असम की तरह शेष देश में नागरिक रजिस्टर तैयार करने की जरूरत पड़ेगी या नहीं, लेकिन अगर कभी पड़ी तो उसका आधार जनसंख्या रजिस्टर ही बनेगा।

आज जैसे असम में यह जानना कठिन है कि कैसे नागरिक के तौर पर देखा जाए और कैसे निवासी के रूप में वैसे ही स्थिति देश के कुछ अन्य हिस्सों में भी बन रही है। ऐसा इसीलिए है, क्योंकि दूसरे देशों से वैध-अवैध तरीके से भारत आकर बसने वालों की पहचान का कोई तंत्र नहीं बन सका। बांग्लादेश से लाखों लोगों की घुसपैठ ने असम समेत पूर्वोत्तर के अन्य राज्यों और साथ ही पश्चिम बंगाल में जो गंभीर समस्याएं खड़ी कीं वे किसी से छिपी नहीं। ये लाखों लोग देश के संसाधनों का इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं और उसके चलते पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों के नागरिक अपने अधिकारों का हनन होते हुए देख रहे हैं। वे अपनी सांस्कृतिक पहचान बचाए रखने के लिए भी चिंतित हैं। विडंबना यह है कि इस चिंता की अनदेखी कर कुछ लोग बाहर से आने वालों के प्रति नरमी बताने का उद्देश्य देने में लगे हुए हैं। वे शोहिया के प्रति भी उदारता बताने की वकालत कर रहे हैं। यह ठीक नहीं। भारत कोई धर्मशाला नहीं कि जो चाहे, यहां आकर बस जाए और संसाधनों की तंगी को बढ़ाने का काम करे। आखिर जब पश्चिम के धनी देश अवैध प्रवासियों के प्रति सख्त हैं तो भारत क्यों उनके प्रति उदारता बरते और वह भी तब जब वे सुरक्षा के लिए खतरा बन सकते हैं। राष्ट्रीय जनसंख्या रजिस्टर की तैयारी अच्छी बात है, लेकिन इसी के साथ सीमाओं की सुरक्षा पर भी ध्यान देना जरूरी है। यह अच्छा नहीं हुआ कि हजारों शोहिया पूर्वोत्तर के सीमावर्ती इलाकों से घुसपैठ कर जम्मू जाकर बस गए और किसी को कुछ पता नहीं चला।

मिलावट का धंधा

पिछले कुछ महीनों में पूर्वोत्तर भारत के सबसे बड़े थोक बाजार कोलकाता स्थित बड़ाबाजार, उससे सटे जोड़ाबागान से लेकर उल्टाडांगा इलाके तक में मिलावटी मसाले के धंधे का भंडाफोड़ हुआ है। अब तक हजारों किलोग्राम मिलावटी मसाले जब्त किए गए हैं और कई लोगों की गिरफ्तारी भी हुई है। बावजूद इसके मिलावट के कारोबार पर लगाम नहीं लग पा रही है। मिलावट का यह कारोबार इतना खतरनाक है कि लोग रसायन मिले मसाले खाकर बीमार पड़ रहे हैं। शुक्रवार को इंप्रोसमेंट ब्रांच (ईबी) ने काशीपुर थाना इलाके में ऐसे ही एक कारखाने का भंडाफोड़ करते हुए 900 किलोग्राम मिलावटी मसाले जब्त कर प्रदीप सिंह नामक शख्स को गिरफ्तार किया। दरअसल 25 जुलाई को उल्टाडांगा इलाके में नकली मसाला कारखाने का भंडाफोड़ हुआ था। वहां से जीतेंद्र कहार नामक एक युवक को गिरफ्तार किया गया था। कहार से पूछताछ में इस कारखाने का पता चला। इसके बाद छापामारी कर प्रदीप सिंह को गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया। मौके से 700 किलोग्राम हल्दी पाउडर, 50 किलो जीरा पाउडर, 50 किलो साबुत धनिया, 15 किलो धनिया पाउडर, 80 किलो चावल आटा, 25 किलो पीला रंग और 15 किलो लाल रंग बरामद किया गया है। प्रदीप सिंह ने पूछताछ में बताया कि खराब गुणवत्ता वाले चावल को पीसकर उसमें रंग मिलाने के बाद उसे मसाले में मिक्स कर दिया जाता था। इससे यह पकड़ना मुश्किल हो जाता था कि मसाले मिलावटी हैं। इससे मसालों का वजन भी बढ़ जाता था और खर्च भी बहुत कम पड़ता था। कोलकाता में इस तरह के मिलावटी मसालों का धंधा खूब फल-फूल रहा है। यह तो पिछले कुछ माह से थोड़ी निगरानी बढ़ाई गई है तो एक के बाद एक खुलासे हो रहे हैं। अन्यथा रसायन एवं कृत्रिम रंग मिले मसाले खाकर न जाने कितने लोग बीमार हुए होंगे। पुलिस भी मान रही है कि लंबे समय से मिलावटी मसाले तैयार करने का कारोबार चल रहा है। रंग और रसायन का प्रयोग कर हल्दी, जीरा पाउडर और मिर्च पाउडर तैयार किया जाता था। मसाले में चावल पाउडर, आटा व मैदा का भी प्रयोग किया जाता था। इसके बाद उसके ऊपर रंग और सुगंध के लिए रसायन का छिड़काव कर दिया जाता था। तैयार मिलावटी मसालों को पैकेट में भरकर राज्य के विभिन्न जिलों में भेज दिया जाता था। ईबी के अनुसार मिलावटी मसाला बनाने का कारोबार महानगर के कई और स्थानों पर भी हो सकता है।

पड़ोस में दिखा पृथ्वी जैसा ग्रह

मुकुल व्यास

बाहरी ग्रह खोजने में जुटी अमेरिकी अंतरिक्ष एजेंसी 'नासा' के ट्रेस टेलीस्कोप ने तीन नए ग्रहों का पता लगाया है। इनमें हमारी पहली समीपवर्ती 'सुरार' शमिल है। यह पृथ्वी जैसा ग्रह इंसान के रहने योग्य हो सकता है। इसका नाम जीजे 357डी है जो 31 प्रकाश वर्ष दूर एक तारे का चक्कर कर रही है। यह ग्रह अपने तारे के आवास योग्य क्षेत्र में स्थित है। इसका अर्थ हुआ कि यह अपने तारे के बहुत नजदीक नहीं है और उससे बहुत दूर भी नहीं है। यदि यह तारे के नजदीक होता तो बहुत गर्म होता और बहुत दूर होने पर बहुत ठंडा होता। इस लिहाज से यह अपेक्षाकृत अनुकूल है।

ऐसी स्थिति में ग्रह को सतह पर तरल जल का मौजूद होना संभव है बशर्ते वह ग्रह चट्टानी हो। जीजे 357डी का वायुमंडल किटना घना है और वह तरल जल की मौजूदगी के लिए किटना कम है, इसका पता लगाने के लिए एनपीआर और शोध की दरकार है। इस नई खोज से पहले पृथ्वी से 73 प्रकाश वर्ष दूर तीन ग्रहों की खोज की खबर आई थी। इनमें दो ग्रह ऐसे हैं जो ग्रहों के निर्माण में बीच की कड़ी हो सकते हैं। जर्मनी

घने वायुमंडल वाला यह ग्रह पृथ्वी की तरह अपनी सतह पर पानी को रोक सकता है। उसमें ऐसी ही कई और खूबियां भी हैं

में हाइड्रलबर्ग स्थित मैक्स प्लांक इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ एस्ट्रोनामि की खगोल वैज्ञानिक डायना कोस्कोवस्की का कहना है कि जीजे 357डी अपने तारे के आवास योग्य क्षेत्र के बाहरी छोर पर स्थित है और यह अपने तारे से उतनी ही ऊर्जा प्राप्त करता है जितनी कि मंगल सूरज से प्राप्त करता है। उन्होंने कहा कि यदि इस ग्रह का वायुमंडल घना है तो वह ग्रह को गर्म रखने के लिए समुचित ऊष्मा संचय कर सकता है। वैज्ञानिक लीसा काल्टेनेगर का मानना है कि इस ग्रह पर जीवन संभव है। उन्होंने कहा कि यह सचमुच रोमांचक है कि ट्रेस टेलीस्कोप ने हमारे पड़ोस में एक ऐसी सुरार-अर्थ खोजी है जहाँ जीवन हो सकता है। घने वायुमंडल वाला यह ग्रह पृथ्वी की भांति अपनी सतह पर पानी को रोक सकता है। काल्टेनेगर ने कहा कि निर्माणाधीन नए टेलीस्कोपों की मदद से हम

वर्षों जीवन के संकेत भी ग्रहण कर सकते हैं। जीजे 357डी हर 55.7 दिन में अपने तारे की परिक्रमा करता है और अपने तारे से इसकी दूरी सूरज से पृथ्वी की दूरी की करीब 20 प्रतिशत है। ट्रेस टेलीस्कोप द्वारा खोजे गए तीनों ग्रह जीजे 357 नामक तारे की परिक्रमा कर रहे हैं। यह एम श्रेणी का बौना तारा है जो हमारे सूरज की तुलना में 40 प्रतिशत ठंडा है तथा द्रव्यमान व आकार की दृष्टि से उसका एक-तिहाई है। ट्रेस टेलीस्कोप ने गत फरवरी में यह पता लगाया कि यह तारा हर 3.9 दिन बाद मंद पड़ जाता है। यह इस बात का संकेत था कि ग्रह इस तारे की परिक्रमा कर रहे हैं। इनमें सबसे नजदीकी ग्रह, जीजे 357बी पृथ्वी से करीब 22 प्रतिशत बड़ा है। वैज्ञानिकों ने इसे 'गर्म पृथ्वी' बताया है। गर्म होने के कारण इस पर जीवन होना नामुमकिन है, लेकिन नजदीकी चट्टानी ग्रह होने के कारण खगोल वैज्ञानिक इसके वायुमंडल की संरचना का अध्ययन अवश्य करना चाहेंगे। इस सिस्टम के मंडोले ग्रह, जीजे 357सी का द्रव्यमान पृथ्वी से 3.4 गुना अधिक है और यह अपने तारे की परिक्रमा नौ दिनों में पूरी करता है।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)



संजय गुप्त

इससे इन्कार नहीं कि उद्योग-व्यापार जगत का मनोबल बढ़ाने की जरूरत है, लेकिन यह भी ध्यान रहे कि आज की सबसे बड़ी समस्या दो नंबर की अर्थव्यवस्था है

लो कसभा चुनावों में भाजपा की बड़ी जीत का कारण बेवेल कांग्रेस और अन्य विपक्षी दलों की कमजोरी ही नहीं थी, बल्कि देश की जनता और खासकर निर्धन तबके के साथ-साथ निम्न-मध्यम और मध्य वर्ग का प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी पर भरोसा था। यह भरोसा मोदी सरकार की ओर से पांच साल में किए गए कार्यों की वजह से उपजा। 2014 में जब मोदी ने सत्ता संभाली थी तो आर्थिक माहौल बेहतर नहीं था। मोदी ने आर्थिक माहौल को बेहतर बनाने के साथ गरीबों के कल्याण के लिए तमाम योजनाएं चलाईं। मोदी सरकार की जिन योजनाओं ने जमीन पर असर दिखाया उनमें आवास, शौचालय, बिजली संबंधी योजनाओं के साथ उच्चवला, जनधन, आयुष्मान भारत योजना प्रमुख हैं। इन योजनाओं के अतिरिक्त आठ करोड़ लोगों को नए नए काम मिले हैं। किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की राशि और साथ ही सॉफ्टबैंक का पैसा नकदी हस्तांतरण के तहत लोगों के खाते में सीधे पहुंचने का एक लाभ यह हुआ कि इन योजनाओं में भ्रष्टाचार की गुंजाइश खत्म हो गई। इससे भी लोगों का मोदी सरकार पर भरोसा बढ़ा और भाजपा को प्रचंड जीत मिली, लेकिन इस सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल की शुरुआत के साथ ही

अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती ने जिस तरह सिर उठाना शुरू किया उसके आम बजट से दूर होने की उम्मीद की जा रही थी, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ। उल्टे बजट के कुछ प्रावधानों और खासकर अति अमीरों से ज्यादा टैक्स लेने की नीति ने उद्योग-व्यापार जगत को हतोत्साहित करने का काम किया। इसके अलावा भी कई अन्य ऐसे संकेत सामने आ गए हैं जो अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती को प्रकट कर रहे हैं, जैसे रेटिंग एजेंसी क्रिसिल द्वारा विकास दर का अनुमान घटा कर 6.9 प्रतिशत करना और शेयर बाजार में गिरावट जारी रहना।

यदि हम अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती के कारणों की तह में जाएं तो पाएंगे कि पिछले एक दशक के आर्थिक हालात का विपरीत असर मोदी सरकार के पहले कार्यकाल के आखिरी समय पड़ा। उद्योगों के बीमार होकर बंद होने और उद्योगपतियों द्वारा भारी-भरकम कर्ज लेना उसे चुकाने से इन्कार करने अथवा खुद को विलफुल डिफाल्टर में तब्दील करने से हलात और खराब हुए। इस सबके बीच वित्तीय संस्था अग्रगण्य एडएफएस के फेल होने से स्थितियों और उलझ गईं। हालांकि मोदी सरकार दोबालिया संहिता कानून लेकर आई और उसमें निरंतर सुधार भी किए, लेकिन उसके संसकारत्मक नहने आने में समय लगा। आज स्थिति यह है कि अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए जितनी को प्रचंड जीत मिली, लेकिन इस सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल की शुरुआत के साथ ही



अवधेश राजपूत

हुए ऐसी भी स्थिति आ सकती है कि लोगों को अपने छोटे कर्ज चुकता करने में परेशानी को सामना करना पड़े। अगर ऐसा हुआ तो बड़े कर्ज के साथ-साथ छोटे कर्ज भी बढ़ते खाते में जा सकते हैं। इसकी भी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि निजी क्षेत्र में निवेश लगभग बंद सा पड़ा है और देश के दो सबसे बड़े उद्योग ऑटोमोबाइल और रियल एस्टेट मंदी के दौर से गुजर रहे हैं। ये दोनों ही सेक्टर लगभग 60 से 65 प्रतिशत रोजगार प्रदान करते हैं। तमाम अर्थशास्त्रियों का मानना है कि अगर स्थिति जल्द नहीं सुधरी तो 10 लाख नौकरियां अकेले ऑटोमोबाइल सेक्टर में ही जा सकती हैं।

यह शहकरी है कि मोदी सरकार न केवल उद्योग-व्यापार की चिंताओं का समाधान करने के लिए सक्रिय हो रही है, बल्कि ऐसे संकेत भी दे रही है कि वह विदेशी निवेशकों पर अधिकार पर नए सिरे से विचार कर रही है। यह समय की मांग भी है, क्योंकि विदेशी निवेशकों पर कर अधिकार लगाने का नकारात्मक असर दिखने लगा है। इससे इन्कार नहीं कि उद्योग-

व्यापार जगत का मनोबल बढ़ाने की जरूरत है, लेकिन इसी के साथ यह भी ध्यान रहे कि आज की सबसे बड़ी समस्या दो नंबर की अर्थव्यवस्था है। पहले नोटबंदी और फिर जीएसटी के जरिये सरकार ने दो नंबर की अर्थव्यवस्था को नियंत्रित करने की कोशिश की, लेकिन इन दोनों कदमों के कारण कारोबार जगत को तमाम परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ा। हालांकि सरकार के पास दो नंबर वाले तौर-तरीके अर्थव्यवस्था को नियंत्रित करने की कोशिश आ गई है कि वह बिग डेटा के जरिये और आयकर एवं जीएसटी अधिकारियों के सहयोग से अनियंत्रित अर्थव्यवस्था को नियंत्रण में ला सकती है, लेकिन इससे कारोबारी और परेशानी महसूस कर सकते हैं। चूंकि वे आशंकित हैं इसलिए निवेश से हाथ खींच रहे हैं। समानांतर अर्थव्यवस्था को संकुचित करने की कोशिश छोटे-मझोले कारोबारियों तक भी पहुंच सकती है। वास्तव में अभी तो यह शुरुआत है, क्योंकि जीएसटी में अभी तक लिंकेज की घोषणा नहीं हुई है। जिस दिन वह

उधार के सींगों वाली सियासत



राजनीति की कथा लिखने में यही तो आनंद रहता है, कोई झंझट नहीं रहता। राजनीति हर जगह हो सकती है। होती ही है। तो कथा यूँ बन रही है कि कहीं राजनीति होती थी। और वहीं गाय भी थी। गाय भी हर जगह होती ही है। यहाँ भी थी। गाय अक्सर सड़क पर ही मिलती। दूध देती नहीं थी सो कोई उसे पूछता नहीं था। तो कथा में राजनीति के अलावा गाय भी थी। अब ये दो सर्वव्यापी टाइप के चरित्र इस कथा में, कहीं न कहीं तो, कभी न कभी आपस में मिलने ही थे। एक दिन वे दोनों सड़क पर ही रूबरू हो गए।

मुझे तुमसे कुछ प्रश्न पूछने थे? गाय ने राजनीति को सामने खड़ा देखा तो उससे कहा। यूँ तो राजनीति की मुलाकात गाय से रोजाना होती ही रहती थी। बयानों में, पोस्टरों में, फतवों में, नारों में, बहस में, पर इस तरह एक दिन वही गाय यूँ उसके ठीक सामने पड़ जाएगी, इसका अंदेशा उसे भी नहीं था। राजनीति ने स्थिति से निपटने की ठानी। 'कैसी हो गौमाता?' राजनीति ने उसे प्रणाम किया। गाय राजनीति की विमर्शता के निहितार्थ समझ गई। उसने पहले ही स्पष्ट चेतावनी देना उचित समझा। 'देख लो, मेरे पास दूध नहीं है।' गाय ने कहा। राजनीति ने हाथ जोड़ दिए। 'दूध नहीं चाहिए। पेट भरा पड़ा है माता। पेट फूला पड़ा है। गैस बन रही है। दूध के लिए जगह ही नहीं है।' राजनीति ने कहा। गाय कुछ देर चुप रहकर उसका पेट देखती रही। सारा देश उदरस्थ कर लिया है क्या? 'तूने मेरे सींग वापस नहीं किए रे? ' गाय ने उलाहना के स्वर में कहा।

तथ्य-कथ्य

विभिन्न देशों का जीडीपी (ट्रिलियन डॉलर में)

एक ट्रिलियन = एक लाख करोड़



ज्ञान चतुर्वेदी

राजनीति चुनाव के वक्त गाय से सींग उधार ले गई और फिर वापस नहीं किए। अब गाय निहत्थी और राजनीति मरखनी है

राजनीति कभी चुनाव के टाइम पर गाय से सींग उधार ले गई थी। फिर उसने वे सींग वापस ही नहीं किए। तबसे गाय तो निहत्थी हो गई और राजनीति मरखनी। 'माता, वैसे भी तू सींगों का इस्तेमाल तो करती नहीं। अपने सिर पर फालतू ही सजाये घूमती रहती थी। लोग तुझसे उदते ही नहीं थे। हमने कम से कम जमाने में तेरे सींगों का भव तो पैदा किया। है कि नहीं? फिर? तेरे पास तो ये सींग फालतू ही पड़े रहते। है न? हमने तो तेरे सींगों की इज्जत ही बढ़ाई है।' राजनीति ने गर्व से कहा। गाय ने राजनीति के हाथों में अपने सींग देखकर पूछा, 'पर मेरे ये सींग पहले इतने पैसे तो कभी नहीं थे? तुम्हारे हाथों में आते ही ये इतने पैसे कैसे हो गए हैं?' राजनीति मुस्काने लगी। 'हमारे पास हर चीज को पैना, नुकीला और घातक बनाने की तरकीब आ गई है। इसे ही तो मीडिया वाले आजकल धारदार राजनीति कहने लगे हैं। हम आजकल बयानों, भाषा, धर्म, सेवा और विनम्रता में भी एक खास तरह का पैनापन ले आए हैं।' राजनीति ने गर्व से कहा।

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सकते में सपा

सकते से उबरने में समय लगता है, लेकिन कितना? यह कोई बता नहीं रहा है। सपा चुनावों में मिली हार से अभी पूरी तरह उबर भी नहीं पाई थी कि उसके जरिये संसद पहुंचे नेता भी उसे एक-एक करके गच्चा देने लगे हैं। दूसरी पार्टी नेतृत्व है कि मानों चांदर तानकर सो रहा है। नेतृत्व यही मानकर बैठा हुआ लगता है कि जिसको रहना है रहे, जाना है जाए। अभी तक चुनाव नतीजे की समीक्षा भी नहीं हो पाई है। पार्टी

से नाराज नेताओं को लगता है कि नेतृत्व उनकी बातों को तरजीह देना तो दूर उनकी सहाय या किसी तरह के सुझाव को सुनना भी पसंद नहीं करता। सभी फैसले बिना राय-मशवरे के थोप देना आम बात हैं। मिलने-मिलाने का सिलसिला भी टूट रहा है। भला ऐसे में कब तक साथ रहना मुनासिब हो रहा है। जिसको जहाँ विकल्प मिल रहा है, वहाँ का रास्ता भाग रहा है। कल जा रहा है कि पार्टी का शीर्ष नेतृत्व बसपा प्रमुख की राजनीतिक चोट से उबर नहीं पा रहा है। पहले खुद संभल लें, तब न किसी और की परवाह करें।

चैबरों की चुप्पी

देश के दोनों प्रमुख उद्योग संगठनों सीआइआई और फिक्की को ईडिया इंफ यानी कंपनी जागत का सबसे मुखर प्रतिनिधि

राजरंग

माना जाता है। अपने सदस्यों के हितों के लिए लांबिंग करने के साथ ही अर्थव्यवस्था के समझ मंडरा रहे संकट पर चेतावने रहना उनकी आदत में शुमार रहा है। इससे जुड़ी चिंता पर वे सरकार को वाकिफ भी कराते रहे हैं। मगर इन दिनों उन्होंने मौन धारण कर रखा है। जहाँ आर्थिक मंदी की आहट से कई क्षेत्रों में टिककत महसूस की जाने लगी है। एजेंसियों व इंडिया इंफ की बड़ी शक्तिशाली ने मंदी को लेकर अपनी चिंताएं जतानी शुरू कर दी हैं, लेकिन इन चैबरों ने रहस्यमय चुप्पी साध रखी है। हद तो तब हो गई जब देश के कॉर्पोरेट वीजी सिद्धार्थ की बहार है कि जगह गाएंगे 'बाघों में बहार है।' पीएम की इस टिप्पणी के बाद से बाबुल फूले नहीं समा रहे हैं। दरअसल बाबुल खुद एक पेशेवर गायक हैं। उनके इस हुनर को पीएम से मिलती तारीफ सबसे श्रेयर

मंत्री जी को मिली खुशी

चमक-दमक की दुनिया से ताल्लुक रखने वाले बाबुल सुप्रियो वैसे तो इन दिनों जंगल से जुड़े महकमें में मन रमाए हुए हैं, लेकिन जैसे ही कोई उन्हें उनके हुनर से आकटा है तो उनमें वह स्वाभाविक खुशी फूट ही पड़ती है। पिछले दिनों कुछ ऐसा ही हुआ। बाघों की गणना से जुड़ी रिपोर्ट जारी करते हुए पीएम ने बाबुल से कब, अब मंत्री जी बाघों में बहारे हैं कि जगह गाएंगे 'बाघों में बहार है।' पीएम की इस टिप्पणी के बाद से बाबुल फूले नहीं समा रहे हैं। दरअसल बाबुल खुद एक पेशेवर गायक हैं। उनके इस हुनर को पीएम से मिलती तारीफ सबसे श्रेयर

करते फिर रहे हैं।

कॉल ड्रॉप का वहाना

यू तो आए दिन कॉल ड्रॉप की वजह से सरकार के एक मंत्री और कुछ अधिकारियों की किरकिरी होती रहती है, लेकिन शुक्रवार को केंद्र के एक शीर्ष पदाधिकारी को कॉल ड्रॉप ने फजीहत से बचा लिया। हुआ कुछ यूँ कि वित्त मंत्रालय ने एक प्रेस ब्रीफिंग बुलाई जिसमें प्रकरारों को सवाल पूछने की अनुमति नहीं थी। प्रकरार जब वित्त मंत्रालय के अधिकारियों के साथ इसे लेकर बहस कर रहे थे, तभी मंत्रालय के आला अफसर वहां आ धमके। आनन-फानन में एक अधिकारी ने मंच पर रखी नेम प्लेट की अदला-बदली की और अपनी सीट छोड़कर उन्हें बैटने को जगह दी। सलाहकार ने बमुश्किल दो मिनट तक अफसरों के साथ कानाफूसी की और मामले की गंभीरता को भांपते हुए मोबाइल पर कॉल लगाने लगे। कुछ देर तक कॉल नहीं लगी तो उन्होंने बाहर जाकर कॉल करने के बहाने वहां से खिपकना बेहतर समझा। इसके बाद काफी देर तक वह नहीं लौटे। बहरहाल उनका कॉल मिली या नहीं यह तो पता नहीं, लेकिन कॉल ड्रॉप के बहाने वह फजीहत से जरूर बच गए।

