## Three contradictions

The Modi regime wants a bigger role for the government but it does not have the comfort of having enough financial resources



**RAISINA HILL** 

A K BHATTACHARYA

hree broad contradictory trends have marked the government's management of the Indian economy in recent months. The contradictions have made the policy challenge to overcome the current economic slowdown even more formidable. How soon the Modi government can resolve these contradictions is difficult to say, but their early recognition at least will perhaps be the first step towards a resolution.

The first contradiction stems from the Centre's stressed finances. The headline number for the government's fiscal deficit does not tell the entire story. Yes, the fiscal deficit in 2018-19 was 3.4 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and is projected to be 3.3 per cent in 2019-20. But these figures mask the real stress in the government's finances. With a substantial amount of off-Budget borrowing and slowing tax collections, the  $actual\,gap\,in\,the\,government's\,revenues$ and expenditure is much higher than what the headline number of the fiscal deficit indicates.

Yet, the government has gone into overdrive with its welfarism. Such a direction means that the government has to provide for more resources from the exchequer to finance a host of welfare schemes. If it is the piped water supply scheme for all in the latest Budget, then the interim Budget in February this vear talked about the scheme for income transfer to farmers. A year ago, there was a massive scheme for health insurance for over half of India's total population.

Add to these the many other welfare schemes like subsidised gas connection for the poor, affordable housing and the rural employment guarantee scheme that was started by the Manmohan Singh government, it becomes clear why the fiscal burden on the Centre's finances

has been rising at a disconcerting pace. Ideally, welfare schemes should not be questioned. But when the government's finances are under stress, the contradiction between the growing burden of welfarism and the government's tight fiscal situation becomes acute. In short. the Modi regime wants that the government should play a bigger role, but it does not have the comfort, let alone the luxury, of having enough financial resources with the exchequer.

The consequences are evident in the way tax collection departments of the government have become overactive. with complaints of harassment of corporate taxpayers rising. Tax collection targets have been set at levels that are

ambitious and unrealistic, not recognising the slowing growth trend in the economy and, therefore, in tax collections. At another level, the government has also begun exploring options of sequestering a part of government revenues in a way that these do not have to be shared with the states. The growing incidence of surcharge and cess on taxes, which are not shared with the states, and exploring a separate mechanism for funding defence and internal security to ensure an assured allocation of finances for them are among such disturbing trends.

The second contradiction arises out of the Modi government's political stance. The results of the general elections in 2019 showed that the Modi government has grown its political capital by a huge margin. Not only has it won more seats in the Lok Sabha, but it has vanguished the opposition political parties in almost all the states, barring a few in southern India. It faces very little opposition in getting virtually any legislative bill passed by Parliament.

But the irony is that the Modi regime is not willing to use its huge political capital for taking any economic policy measure that it fears might undermine that political strength. It appears to be reluctant to initiate any economic policy move that might show the government to be favouring the big business, as this can upset its voters base, composed of the ordinary middle class and the poor people. Thus, taxes are raised on the rich and the reports of committees that recommend a more friendly or lower taxation system for India Inc do not see the light of day

The third contradiction is seen in the manner in which it has tried to revive investment. Recognising that the government or the Indian private sector is facing a resources crunch, it is increasingly relying on foreign inflows to fuel an investment drive in the country. But there is no simultaneous attempt to promote exports to prevent any adverse impact such foreign inflows can have on the country's balance of payments. And instead of fixing the flawed exchange rate policy to eliminate the negative fallout of an overvalued currency on exports, the government appears to have embarked on a path of import substitution, a signal of which is evident from the manner in which import duties have been raised successively in the last couple of Budgets.

The short point is unless these contradictions are resolved over the next few months, there is very little chance of the government coming to grips with the challenges of an economic slowdown.

#### **CHINESE WHISPERS**

#### **Expose corruption, get notice**

A case of "shooting the messenger" has raised questions about the Uttar Pradesh administration's willingness to clean up the system. Recently, a police sub-inspector on duty at the state secretariat in Lucknow was caught on camera taking a bribe of ₹100 to allow a contractor to enter the premises without a valid pass. The clip became viral, following which the police person was suspended and an inquiry into the matter was ordered by the UP secretariat's administration. Now three government employees have been served notice for video-graphing the incident and making it public on social media. When an employees' body flayed the action against the three, the head of the department expressed ignorance about this, adding that he would "look into the matter".

#### **Kishor missing in action**



The Janata Dal (United), or JD(U), has started preparing its strategy for next year's Assembly elections in Bihar, but its professional poll strategist, Prashant Kishor, is busy elsewhere. Kishor is on a professional assignment with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Sources say the JD(U)'s centre of action has shifted to Delhi, where Rajya Sabha MP Ram Chandra Prasad Singh has started working on two crucial aspects - identifying the probable candidates and balancing the equations with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), an ally. JD(U) sources say Kishor's designated number two status in the party is largely symbolic: after President Nitish Kumar. Singh's writ runs in the party. Given Kumar's fast-changing preferences of allies and key aides within the party, one really doesn't know...

#### **Laddoos for breaking rules?**

Motorcycle riders in Palakkad, Kerala, were in for a treat last weekend. The traffic police in the city distributed over 300 laddoos among them. No, there was no festival; it wasn't even a traffic department party. In fact, the two-wheeler riders got a warning after they enjoyed their sweet treat. "It is laddoos today but if you do not pay heed to traffic rules, you will have to pay ₹1,000 as fine," the riders not wearing the helmet were told. This was part of an awareness campaign highlighting the need to follow safety rules. The state has made mandatory that pillion riders on two-wheelers wear the helmet and those sitting in the back seat of a car wear the seat belt.

# Hobson's choice before the Reserve Bank

... between a harder forward premium and a sharp decline in the domestic rates



**BANKER'S TRUST** 

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

lil Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said in his recent interviews that shifting of the stance of the monetary policy from neutral to accommodative itself meant a rate cut of 25 basis points (bps) at least and, therefore, effectively, the rate cuts have been 100 bps, every analyst and his aunt were penciling yet another rate cut on August 7.

Even now, against the backdrop of the US Federal Reserve's rather hawkish rate cut, a 25 bps drop in policy rate could be on the table in India as core inflation is modest, overall retail inflation remains below 4 per cent and there are telltale signs of growth slowing down. Had Das not made this comment, the expectation was building up for a 50 bps rate cut. One bps is a hundredth of a percentage point.

Let's shift the focus from the policy rate and monetary transmission or the lack of it to the recent liquidity conundrum in the Indian financial system.

The RBI has pumped in ₹52,500 crore through the so-called open market operation (OMO) — buying bonds from banks and releasing money into the system. Besides diversifying its liquidity management toolkit, the central bank has also infused around ₹69,500 crore through three-year US\$/INR buysell swap auctions in two tranches in March and April.

Finally in June, the central bank cut its policy rate yet again, the third in a row; changed the stance of the monetary policy and committed to ensure "adequate" liquidity for all productive purposes. A series of RBI actions has changed the liquidity scenario — from deficit to a zone of surplus.

Till now, the narrative is quite straightforward. It takes a new turn with the RBI starting to intervene in the foreign exchange market to mop up dollar flow. This is adding to the liquidity in the system as for every dollar bought, an equivalent amount of rupee flows in. At the same time, the RBI has also been conducting sell-buy swaps, postponing the rupee liquidity infusion.

Simply put, on the one hand, the RBI has been injecting rupee liquidity through OMO purchases and US\$/INR buy-sell swap auctions and, on the other, it is "sterilising" any rupee liquidity infusion following its dollar buying in the spot market. What is the result? A rise in forward premia and a spike in the implied INR rates that drives up the hedging cost for importers. This starkly contrasts the fall in yields of government bonds and other instruments.

To put things in perspective, the implied INR rates (annualised hedging cost) crossed 7 per cent briefly, up from 6.25 per cent, and is currently veering around 6.6 per cent while the one-year treasury bill yields have fallen. The



hedging cost for two years and beyond has gone up more than half a percentage point in the past two months.

An unstated objective of the threeyear \$10 billion US\$/INR buy-sell swaps was to bring down implied INR rates and hedging costs so that it makes the external financial window more accessible to borrowers. The recent RBI actions have negated the gains from the buy/sell swaps.

To be sure, the spike in the forward premia is also being caused by the new large exposure framework or LEF guidelines, effective April 1. The LEF requires banks to limit their exposure to individual entities. This constrains inter-bank trading activities and reduces market liquidity, especially at quarter ends.

While bond yields are going down, forward premiums are rising. The rise in hedging costs may inhibit the importers from taking cover. It can also make life difficult for those who want to borrow overseas.

Is the RBI sending conflicting signals? To be fair to the regulator, the RBI is facing the classic impossible trinity or trilemma: Can it have a fixed foreign

exchange rate, an open capital market and independent monetary policy, targeting inflation? First, through OMO buying and US\$/INR buy-sell swap auctions, the RBI had sent signals that they were relevant options before the central bank to infuse liquidity. When the dollar flow strengthened, it started buying the greenback. But if it does not sterilise the forward liabilities, it would end up injecting further liquidity when the system is already in surplus. Till April, the system was in a liquidity-deficit mode. In May, it turned surplus by an average of ₹25,000 crore daily, which crossed ₹1 trillion in June and went close to ₹1.5 trillion in July.

We get to know the figures of the RBI's dollar buying from the market with a lag. In January, the amount was \$293 million which rose to \$825 million in February and crossed \$9 billion in March. In April, it was close to \$5 billion and, in May, half of that.

As a result, the RBI's foreign exchange reserves rose from around \$412 billion in March-end to \$430.4 billion in mid-July. The local currency, which hit an intra-day low of 70.64 to a dollar in mid-May, is trading at 69.60 (August 2 closing) after dropping to 68.27 in the first half of July. Had the RBI not bought dollars from the market, the rupee would have appreciated more, hitting exporters hard.

If the RBI does not buy dollars, the rupee will appreciate further; if it does not sterilise the rupee liquidity (generated out of dollar buying) through sellbuy swaps, and postpones the rupee liquidity infusion, the flood of liquidity will pull down domestic rates. The 10year government bond yield, which was 7.5 per cent in the third week of April, dropped to 6.25 per cent in mid-July. (It has risen from that level for different reasons.) The RBI has a Hobson's choice: Between a harder forward premium and a collapse in the domestic rates. It has opted for the first.

The other option could have been a sale of bonds through OMO to suck out liquidity but that would send a wrong signal to the market because till recently, the RBI was buying bonds. Yet another option is stamping out liquidity through short-term cash management bills under the so-called market stabilisation scheme (MSS). The RBI has used this in the past. That could be a sore point. Since the RBI is concerned about monetary transmission, it can also raise the acceptable threshold limit for systemic liquidity.

While the RBI's actions are disrupting the foreign exchange market in sync with the market dynamics, the strategies need to change to deal with shocks. Ideally, the RBI should junk the OMO calendar and conduct such auctions nimbly, say, at a two-day horizon. Will the RBI use the latest monetary policy as a platform to deal with this?

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#### **AS I SEE IT**

# Why fix something that is not broken?

The government's decision to amend the Right to Information Act doesn't make sense; it also creates suspicion about the actual motives



KARAN THAPAR

t's never wise to mend something that ain't broke. Not only does it not make sense but it also creates understandable suspicion about your actual motives. I'm afraid this is unequivocally true of what the government has done to the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The Act has perhaps done more to deepen and strengthen Indian democracy than any other measure in the last 15 years. By giving citizens the right to inquire into decision-making and, thus, the very exercise of power it has substantially increased transparency whilst fundamentally shifting the balance between citizen rights and the executive. In the process, it's become a powerful weapon against arbitrariness, privilege and corrupt governance. This is exactly what India needs and, no doubt, explains why as many as 6 million people file RTI applications every year.

At first sight what the government has done seems innocuous but that's misleading. It has amended Sections 13 and 16 of the Act which determine the tenure and salaries of Chief Information Commissioners and Information Commissioners at both the central and state levels. They will no longer have fixed five-year terms nor will their salaries be linked to those of the

Election Commissioners at the central level and the Chief Secretaries at the state level. Hereafter, both salaries and tenures will be "for such term as may be prescribed by the central government". In other words, they're left to the arbitrary choice of the executive. This could lead to several undesir-

able outcomes. Different people could be given different lengths of service and salary whilst those the government considers "loyalists" granted lengthier tenures and heftier salaries. In fact, an amendment to the rules could arguably permit the government to alter tenures and salaries after appointment. Collectively, this will ensure the RTI system does not stand up to the executive but buckles under pressure. If that happens, the Commission's independence

Two other consequences might further undermine the Commission. First, these amendments amount to a serious downgrading of RTI Commissioners and in a hierarchical country, where emoluments and position determine influence and effectiveness, they will demote Information Commissioners and diminish their power. The other impact will be on the sort of people who seek to become Information Commissioners. Anyone with a higher income and status will be uninterested. Once again, the quality of the Commission could suffer.

So when the government claims it's only acted to strengthen the Commission that's baloney. Not a single Information Commissioner I've met, past or present, accepts this. The present ones may not be affected but they know their successors will be badly hit.

The government also has a technical explanation. It says the Information Commission is a statutory body and cannot be treated on par with the Election Commission, a constitutional body. After all, it argues, Information Commission judgments can be appealed in a High Court so how can Commissioners have the status of Supreme Court judges?

These are poor excuses and not good reasons. More importantly, they overlook the fact that the Election Commission judgments are often appealed at the High Court level, yet that doesn't constitute grounds for rethinking its status.

So why has the government done this? Why has it emasculated the Commission in complete disregard of the fact the RTI system has added enormous weight to India's democracy? One can only guess but perhaps the best informed has come from Congress Rajya Sabha MP Jairam Ramesh. He believes the government's decision to shrink the Commission is revenge for five decisions which have embarrassed Narendra Modi.

That could be true in two cases. First is the RTI revelation that Mr. Modi's claim that 40 million bogus ration cards have been eliminated by his government is untrue. The actual number is 23 million. More embarrassing is the Commission's decision to disclose the Prime Minister's educational qualifications against which he has appealed to the Delhi High Court. It seems Mr Modi has something to hide but the Commission won't let him.

Ramesh says the RTI amendments are "to make sure that these types of embarrassments don't repeat themselves". Is he right? I can't say for sure but it seems to add up. In fact, I'm not unwilling to accept this is why the government has amended an institution that wasn't broke. Now, of course, it is!

# Siddhartha refused trappings of power

G Siddhartha was one VIP with high political connections who abjured India's notorious VIP culture. Once he was visiting New York along with his wife Malavika on holiday. Their visit coincided with the presence in Manhattan of Malavika's father, S M Krishna, who was then India's External Affairs Minister.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had decided that year not to attend the United Nations General Assembly owing to preoccupations at home. So automatically Krishna became the head of the Indian delegation to the General Assembly, which gave him the notional status of head of state or government under UN protocol.

Traffic in Manhattan is a nightmare during the third and last week of September when an average of 100 heads of state or government, including the American President, land up for the "general debate" which marks the start of the General Assembly every year. But as head of delegation, Krishna could sail through New York streets with outriders and other security detail and all traffic would be stopped to let the External Affairs Minister's cavalcade pass unimpeded.

In order to make their passage easier, Krishna used to ask Siddhartha and his wife to travel with him in the custom-secured SUV provided by the government. One day the son-in-law wanted to go to the UN to watch the External Affairs Minister address the General Assembly. Not only on this occasion, but invariably, Siddhartha preferred to walk to such venues and refused all trappings of his reflected power.

When word got around in the Ministry of External Affairs that Siddhartha and Malavika were going to New York and would be with Krishna, protocol officers went to Delhi airport to see off the couple. Siddhartha

chided them for doing so and when the officials said a government vehicle would be picking them up at John F Kennedy airport on arrival, he told them that he would take a taxi to reach the New York Palace hotel where his father-in-law was staying.

At the New York Palace hotel, a suite larger than most Manhattan apartments, complete with a living room, dining area and a conference room, in addition to one bedroom and another with a connecting door,

is normally reserved for the head of the Indian delegation. Needless to say, Siddhartha and Malavika booked their stay elsewhere in the city.

Siddhartha's innate sense of humour stood those he associated with in good stead even in adversity. Krishna became a teetotaler the day he was sworn in Karnataka Chief Minister in 1999 and remained so for more than a decade. One of the worst days of Krishna's public life was when he read

another foreign minister's speech in the UN Security Council. He was lampooned in the media and the Pakistanis at the UN went to town over the Indian minister's gaffe.

That night, a very upset Krishna went to the iconic Smith and Wollensky restaurant, a walking distance from the UN, and got off the wagon, ordering a large Oban 14 single malt, which was his old favourite, After the dinner, he called his son-inlaw to tell him that he had a drink after 10 years. Siddhartha's reply was that he hoped it was Black Russian or Kahlúa: both have coffee as ingredients. At the end of a bad day, Krishna laughed about his son-in-law's passion for coffee.

That passion was evident the moment Siddhartha came to know that this writer has family connections in Slovakia. Cafe Coffee Day had already made a roaring success of two its four outlets in Austria. Building on that success it ventured into Czech Republic where it opened nine cafes.

But Slovakia, a smaller and much more competitive market, was turning out to be a bigger

challenge.

Siddhartha was deter-

mined to enter the

Bratislava café scene,

especially because

there was no restau-

rant in the city which

did justice to Indian

cuisine despite the

fascination of urban

Slovaks to everything

Indian. In the end,

Cafe Coffee Day was

frustrated in these

efforts because of

Bratislava's high real

estate costs owing to

its proximity to



When word got around in the MEA that Siddhartha and Malavika were going to New York and would be with Krishna, protocol officers went to Delhi airport to see off the couple. Siddhartha

chided them for doing so

When Cafe Coffee Day's first outlet opened near the University of Vienna, Siddhartha told

this writer that he modelled it on the success of the Indian Tea Board's tea room in Cairo which became a leading hangout for Cairo University students in the 1980s. Cafe Coffee Day's daring foray into this market with its unalloyed loyalty to Austrian coffee and Sachertorte is probably the only example of an Indian company successfully selling coal in Newcastle, proverbially speaking.

Vienna

The author was a resident correspondent at the UN in New York when the events described in this article took place.

## Beyond the rate cut

RBI alone will not be able drive economic recovery

he Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is widely expected to cut the repo rate once again this week. Although the inflation rate based on the consumer price index inched up in June, it is unlikely to cross 4 per cent in the near term. However, the bigger question at this stage is: Will another rate cut be enough to revive economic activity?

The Indian economy is in the midst of a severe slowdown and indicators such as vehicle sales, corporate results, and the latest core sector data suggest that growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal year might have slipped below 5.8 per cent, registered in the January-March quarter. Further, there is absolutely no fiscal space to support growth. In fact, the data on tax collection indicates that meeting Budget targets will not be easy and may require expenditure compression. An adjustment to accommodate higher spending would not be advisable, because the combined public-sector borrowing is already on the higher side.

The Indian economy is also unlikely to get support from the rest of the world. The global economy is losing momentum. The US Federal Reserve reduced interest rates last week for the first time since the global financial crisis. The ongoing US-China trade war, uncertainty around Brexit, and geopolitical tension in West Asia are risks for global growth.

In the given economic backdrop, it is worth asking whether the monetary policy will need to do the heavy lifting in terms of reviving growth. In the June meeting of the rate-setting committee, Governor Shaktikanta Das had noted: "Keeping in view the evolving growth-inflation dynamics, there is a need for decisive monetary policy action." The growth outlook has only worsened since then. Thus, aside from the rate cut this week, all stakeholders would look for cues for the extent to which the central bank is prepared to support growth. Since the primary objective of the RBI is to keep inflation around 4 per cent (midpoint of the target range), it would be important to see how the MPC expects inflation and growth to move in the coming quarters. If it expects growth to slow significantly, more space could open up for monetary easing. Prices are unlikely to go up sharply with a slowdown in economic activity, as is being reflected by the decline in the core inflation rate in recent months.

Further, the MPC would do well to articulate the level of real interest rate it intends to maintain, and in what circumstances it could be reduced. This will give confidence to the system that the central bank will not deviate from its inflation-targeting mandate and help anchor longer-term inflationary expectations. It is also important to not disincentivise and discourage financial savings. To ensure that the economy benefits from policy accommodation, the central bank would need to work on the transmission of rates.

But monetary accommodation can work only up to a point and won't be sufficient for a meaningful recovery. The government will have to play its part. Some of the recent steps, such as a higher rate of income tax for the super-rich, higher import duty, additional powers to the bureaucracy, etc have significantly affected business confidence. Reassessing some of the recent decisions and the way the economy is being handled would be a good starting point for the government.

### The monsoon recovery

Reservoirs are still not adequately restocked

he way the monsoon has recovered this year after a delayed and weak start to near-normal in the very first half of its four-month run (June to September) does not have many parallels. A scary rain deficit of 33 per cent at the end of the first monsoon month of June shrank dramatically to below 9 per cent in just four weeks, thanks to copious precipitation in July. This, coupled with the weather office's prediction of 100 per cent normal rain in August and September, has swung the outlook for monsoon-dependent sectors, chiefly agriculture and hydel power, and rural demand from despair to cautious optimism.

The lag in crop planting, which had mounted to over 30 per cent by Juneend, has, by and large, been made up. More sowing is expected in the next week or so, because over 66 per cent of the country has already received normal or excess rain. The anticipated continuation of the monsoon's good showing in the latter half of the season may ensure better crops and higher yields. But the fingers still need to be kept crossed. The intense bouts of rain, as has been the hallmark of this year's monsoon, are seldom without a downside. Parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, and Assam have seen devastating floods. Similar deluges may damage crops, property, and infrastructure, and take human and animal lives in other parts of the country as well.

This apart, the upswing in the rains does not reflect adequately in the restocking of reservoirs. Till July 25, nearly 75 per cent of the major dams have got filled only up to 40 per cent of their capacity. The overall water stock in all the reservoirs taken together, being 63 per cent of capacity, presented a slightly better picture, though even this is below last year's corresponding level of 71 per cent. The river basins in the southern region, including those of the Krishna, Mahanadi, Godavari, and Cauvery, are particularly short of water. Some of the dams in Kerala, which brimmed over to cause catastrophic flooding in August last year, are not even half-full as yet. The silver lining, however, is that there is still time for replenishing these dams. The current vigorous phase of the monsoon and the projected normal showers in the next two months can normalise the situation. Restoring water reserves is essential to meet the needs of irrigation, industry, hydel power production, and the domestic sector in the post-monsoon period right up to the next summer.

Significantly, the unconventional track record of this year's monsoon has been attributed by weather experts largely to the interplay of two counteracting meteorological phenomena — El Nino (monsoon-inimical warming of the Pacific Ocean) and the Indian Ocean Dipole, or IOD (monsoon-friendly temperature gradient in the Indian Ocean). While El Nino, which affected the monsoon in June, is said to have turned neutral and lost its sting, the positive IOD continues to favour the monsoon. Unlike most other weather watchers who were uncertain about the progress of El Nino this year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) was spot on to foresee that it would not endure long enough to undermine the Indian monsoon. The IMD will, hopefully, prove correct in predicting normal rain in the rest of the season as well.



# The geopolitics of climate action

The command of climate-friendly technologies will become the source of geopolitical power in the future

NITIN DESAI

June and July this year have been some of the hottest months in recorded history and 2015-2019 was also the hottest five-year period on record. In India, Delhi recorded a record temperature of 48°C on June 10 this year at Palam and temperatures in excess of 50°C were recorded in Rajasthan. Europe and the United States sweltered in unprecedented heat.

"The extraordinary heat was accompanied by dramatic ice melt in Greenland, in the Arctic and on European glaciers. Unprecedented wildfires raged in

the Arctic for the second consecutive month, devastating once pristine forests which used to absorb carbon dioxide and instead turning them into fiery sources of greenhouse gases. This is not science fiction. It is the reality of climate change. It is happening now and it will worsen in the future without urgent climate action," said the Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization, Petteri Taalas.<sup>1</sup>

These heatwaves are a small sample of what is in store for us if we fail to tackle the threat of climate change.

We will see more droughts, more floods, more rain on fewer days, storm surges and saline intrusions in coastal areas, reductions in agricultural and biotic productivity, particularly in the tropics, more climate-related disasters and increases in climate-related health stresses. No country can tackle this on its own since the consequences of greenhouse gas emissions are inherently planetary in nature. That is why the geopolitics of who does what and who is forced to do what are now becoming a central concern in climate diplomacy. The debate on climate change in the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019 will give some indication of what we can expect.

A recent article in *Nature* outlined four possible scenarios of how the geopolitics of climate action

would evolve.<sup>2</sup> The first, quite implausible, envisages deep cooperation amongst countries on burden-sharing, finance market-driven marginalisation of fossil fuel companies and emergence of green technology giants, and a vigorous pursuit of the UN's sustainable development goals by all countries. The second scenario envisages a technological breakthrough that changes the economics of clean energy dramatically. A comparable example would be the mobile phone technology, which revolutionised telecommunications. But these technology-driven scenarios also pro-

ject technological dominance and rivalry between a couple of countries (No prizes for guessing who these could be!). This cannot be ruled out but there is no sufficient evidence for it to be the basis for action today. The third scenario paints the dire consequences of rising populist nationalism which puts an end to all cooperative mitigation efforts. The fourth scenario involves what we are doing now, which is muddling through with weak agreements like the Paris accord. This would moderate some of the potential impacts of

business as usual, but, judging by current trends, it would take us to a world where the temperature rise would be about 3°C rather than the 1.5-2°C, which was the goal set at Paris in 2015.

Unfortunately, right now we seem to be moving out of the muddling through to the populist nationalism scenario with the Trump administration denouncing the Paris agreement, the rise of nativism in Europe, which is shifting its attention to immigration, the rejection of globalism in many countries in Latin America and Europe, much of it driven by obscurantist rightist parties that are quite ready to reject the scientific consensus on human-induced climate change. Yet, the public pressure to act on climate change will continue to mount as instances of extreme climate events

become more frequent and more intense.

India accounts for about 5 per cent of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at present and China for about 25 per cent. However, looking ahead at 2030 each of them will account for 20-30 per cent of incremental GHG emissions and the pressure on them for more vigorous action for mitigation will mount. Given the erosion of multilateralism, this may well take the form of unilateral or plurilateral pressures exercised through trade, technology transfer or global capital markets. India and China should respond, not just defensively by referring to historical responsibility, but by projecting themselves as leaders in climate action.

The Carbon Action Tracker<sup>3</sup> rates India's Paris commitment as being in line with its fair share of what it needs to do in the global cooperation towards the 2°C goal, though it considers China's commitment to be "highly insufficient". Both countries are on track for meeting their Paris commitments and may even end up doing better than promised. A recent study even suggests that China's emissions may peak up to a decade earlier than their Paris promise.<sup>4</sup>

When it comes to climate geopolitics, the two countries have a lot in common. Both have an interest in continuing to press the case for recognising responsibility for past emissions and the needs of development in determining fair shares in the available carbon space. Both are oil deficient and see solar and wind power not just as a carbon mitigation options but as an instrument for energy security. Both depend heavily on coal and have an interest in countering the demonisation of coal use. They have a shared interest in developing technologies like carbon capture and reuse, which can provide them a mitigation option that can make coal use acceptable in a more stringent global environment for climate control.

The fact that domestic development needs and the demands of effective climate action happen to coincide, except of course for the coal dependence, makes it possible for both countries to pursue climate-friendly growth with vigour and press for more effective action by the laggards in the developed world. But what can give them a true leadership position is something rather different. It is the space that they have to develop and implement at scale climate-friendly technologies in areas like motorised transport, building design, urban planning, energy efficiency in manufacturing, power systems that can accommodate large volumes of renewables, and much more. They are better placed to do this as the bulk of their buildings, urban spaces, manufacturing capacity and power systems have yet to be built. What it requires is the recognition that the command of climate-friendly technologies will become the source of geopolitical power in the future. China is already on this path and India must follow suit if it is not to become the fall guv of global climate geopolitics.

 ${}^{1}\!\textit{Climate sceptics may wish to see the scientific studies reported} \\ at the website worldweather attribution. or g$ 

<sup>2</sup>Model and manage the geopolitics of energy, Andreeas Goldthau et al, Nature 569, 29-31 (2019) 1 May 2019 <sup>3</sup>See country profiles for India and China at

<sup>4</sup>See https://www.carbonbrief.org/chinas-emissions-couldpeak-10-years-earlier-than-paris-climate-pledge

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https://climateactiontracker.org

# Don't hope for a structural change

It has been an eventful last week. The founder of Café Coffee Day, V G Siddhartha, killed himself, leaving a note. The note confessed to large-scale but unspecified wrongdoing and a hint of harassment by the revenue authorities. His suicide note catalysed a chain of reactions that covered politics, entrepreneurship, risk-taking, and excessive debt. Most of those were tinged with strong emotion and hence misplaced. (For a more rational understanding, one must remember that suicides are not always correlated to a physical state but to a mental one. After all, many people who have lost vir-

tually everything, including their loved ones, don't commit suicide.)

The fallout of his death has been a re-examination of the current economic slowdown. Maruti Suzuki, which produces about 50 per cent India's domestic passenger vehicles, reported a 33.5 per cent decline in sales in July this year over July last year and cut its temporary workforce by 6 per cent. Air travel to and from India during the January-March quarter of this calendar year grew at 3.8 per cent, the slowest pace in the last four years. More such depressing bits of data are splashed all over the media.

The slowdown is so severe that businessmen, 90 per cent of whom have been gung-ho about this government's intent and execution since 2014, have started voicing their frustration. T V Mohandas Pai, until recently an aggressive champion of every move of this government, has come out all guns blazing. "Tax terrorism has gone rampant. Compliance burden has gone up massively. There is a fear psychosis. There is a feeling among government officials that all businessmen are crooks and we must go after them. I have never seen mood and morale so down in Mumbai.

Businessmen have given up hope." Rahul Bajaj, chairman of Bajaj Auto, said: "There is no demand and no private investment. So where will growth come from? It doesn't fall from the heavens." A M Naik of Larsen & Toubro said we should feel lucky even if GDP growth comes at 6.5 per cent, adding that he did not believe in the government data anyway (his words were the "situation is challenging" on data credibility) and so one has to use one's judgement to get a sense of actual growth. Economic growth has slipped to a five-year low of 5.8 per cent in the March quarter.

Amusingly, just a few months ago in March, Mr Pai was one of the 131 chartered accountants who trashed

the concerns of 108 scholars who had questioned India's economic data and had alleged political interference in the country's statistical bodies. The chorus of disappointment has become so loud that a few English TV channels that set new lows every day in giving sycophantic publicity to this government's agenda while trashing the nonexistent opposition, have suddenly flipped. They are now giving airtime to disaffected businessmen.

From the fire to the frying pan...: The UPA rule of 10 years was characterised by two memorable expres-

sions: Policy paralysis and crony capitalism. Nobody mentions these expressions any more. You can accuse this government of many things but not these two ills that sapped the Indian economy for decades. Far from paralysis, this is a hyperactive government that has unleashed hundreds of legal changes and schemes. Why then do we have such poor outcomes?

...But no first principles: The reason is simple — its policies and actions are not founded on fundamental principles. The first principle of growth and justice is to reduce the intrusion and domination of the state. It is too much to expect the state to have empathy for businesses and citizens, although almost all growth

in jobs and taxes comes from them. The least the government can do is not increase despondency and anger by calling everyone a crook and unleashing mindlessly coercive actions. After all, we know who the real crooks are among *netas*, *babus*, and the *aam aadmi*. Without the first principles in place, we will have cyclical ups and downs but no fundamental and rapid change, which is defined by higher productivity of capital and labour.

#### What's your plan?

Isee a lot of discussion on what the government should do. Like the story of seven blind men, each expert sees one part of the problem and prescribes a solution that he thinks will work for the whole. Someone thinks a drastic cut in interest rates will solve all problems, someone else wants personal income tax abolished. On Friday, Amitabh Kant, chief executive officer of the NITI Aayog, blamed the "economic reforms" for the current slowdown! The problem is much deeper. While the prime minister called himself a *pradhan sevak* in 2014, almost all the current leaders appear as adamant and arrogant as those of the previous dispensation. A businessman described a minister (whom he met recently as part of a delegation) as "combative, unsympathetic (about) the slowdown, and not keen to listen".

There is little hope that issues that affect the subjects will reach the rulers. Clearly, practical people should not expect the government to do anything other than minor tinkering. It is meaningless to discuss what the government can do. The road map is unknown, the first principles are missing, and the eyes and ears of policymakers are shut. The current economic slowdown will turn on its own, in the next few years, but the structural issues that have prevented a rapid improvement in the quality of life at the bottom of the pyramid and rapid economic growth will remain.

The writer is the editor of www.moneylife.in Twitter: @Moneylifers

## Satire in the Sri Lankan soul



ADITI PHADNIS

ri Lanka has a tradition of satire as journalism that is unparalleled in the subcontinent. Barring possibly, Pakistan (*The Diary of a Social Butterfly*), there is no country in South Asia that can match the wit and wordplay of Sri Lankan journalists. There were the greats of the 1950s such as Tarzie Vittachi whose weekly column "Bouquets and Brickbats" had many shifting uncomfortably in their chair every Sunday morning. And in the 1970s and 1980s there were Denzil Peiris's biting comments on the functioning of

the government, which were never influenced by the fact that the government owned the paper for which he worked; and Mervyn de Silva's satirical pieces under the pseudonyms Daedalus and The Outsider (nobody knew why he needed pseudonyms, because everyone knew he was the author and if you had a beef with him he could be found every day at the Taprobane hotel for his lunchtime beer). His son Dayan, an important pillar of the establishment now, but an influential commentator on Sri Lanka's society and politics in his own right, keeps the irony sheathed these days but when the flashes show, they are blindingly brilliant, Indian journalism seems earnest and positively stodgy by comparison.

The Sri Lankan tradition of sardonic comment on its bureaucracy, politicians and Important People, is kept alive, we report thankfully, by Andrew Fidel Fernando in *Upon a Sleepless Isle*, a travel

diary by a Sri Lankan-born cricket journalist who grew up in New Zealand and has returned to Sri Lanka to report. If, like many of us, you were wondering how Sri Lanka manages to function, in fact thrive, despite its dysfunctional political class, its entitled bureaucracy and incestuous elite, the answer lies in a haiku written by Fernando that is at the heart of the country's political culture: what he calls "Sri Lanka's great propensity to quietly tolerate inconvenience". The haiku reads: Yes, I'm unhappy/But I'm too scared to complain/Can't somebody else?

The book chronicles travels through some of the former hot spots on the island but its gaze lingers on aspects ignored by the professional war correspondent. In Mannar, other reporters might have seen remnants of the Sinhala-Tamil conflict. Fernando describes the origins of Catholicism on the island: the Church of Our Lady of Madhu, a centre of pilgrim-

age for all communities, which has amazingly survived years of war. There's a poignant prayer engraved below her statue. It says, simply: "Grant our country

**IRRATIONAL CHOICE** 

**DEBASHIS BASU** 

permanent peace" Fernando also chronicles the arrival of the Muslims — the Marrakalavo, from the Tamil 'maran' for wood and 'kala' for vessel — on the island. Muslims and Sinhalese enjoyed rare cordiality during the medieval era, but British policies of divide and rule caused suspicion and ill will. As Muslims moved from Colombo. further north to Batticaloa they found themselves fighting a two-front war: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on the one hand and the Sinhala Buddhists on the other. Both wanted them to take sides, they stayed indifferent to both. Now, the LTTE may have been demolished but extremist Sinhala Buddhists have powerful patrons. Among the (largely) Sunni Muslim community, Sri Lanka is waging its own quiet battle against the rise of Wahhabism. Same war, different names, different actors..

What seems to be missing from

Fernando's voyage of re-discovery of the land of his birth is the elephant in the room: India. He makes no comment whatsoever about Sri Lanka's neighbour that has been such a source of tribulation for the island in the recent past. Many attribute to India the distortions in Sri Lanka, the rise and development of its large (and now, unnecessary?) militaryindustrial complex and its compulsive need to ensure a balance of power in the Indian Ocean by a China tilt (so that there is no Indian-fuelled Tamil nationalism ever in the future, only Sinhala national ism). If a visitor to Sri Lanka were to read this book as the first introduction to the island, the impression he would get is that India has played no role in Sri Lanka at all — which, we know, is not true.

But that is the only missing element in a book that is utterly engaging, wickedly funny and actually quite heroic: Fernando battles attacks by packs of stray dogs, wild chattering monkeys, elephants in rut (though his preoccupation with animal copulation is, frankly, a bit tedious), three-wheeler and bus drivers and foreign tourists in the line of duty. He is also brave, as he describes the

rise and rise and sudden fall of Hambantota: the constituency of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa ("personal motto: making Sri Lanka wildly prosperous, one immediate family member at a time"). Anyone who has been to Hambantota knows the silent but empty grandeur of enormous stadia and vast airfields (built in anticipation of a huge influx of tourists, especially from China). Nothing has moved in Hambantota after Rajapaksa was ousted from power and these facilities now represent capacity created using public money that no one is using: yet another example of the way Sri Lanka's ruling class works. Everyone who is interested in social processes in South Asia must read this book, Move over Bill Bryson: Andrew Fidel Fernando is the new kid on the block.

UPON A SLEEPLESS ISLE Andrew Fidel Fernando Pan Macmillan; ₹599; 256 pages





### STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi

Demonetisation and GST rollout are perfect examples of ineptitude and lack of depth in the Modi Govt. Their callous attitude has sent the Indian economy in tailspin and has brought it to the brink of a meltdown

# **SHOBHANA SUBRAMANIAN** shobhana.subramanian @expressindia.com

# Does Modi know there's a crisis?

There is little in its policy measures—including in the Budget since May to suggest govt is too worried about growth

**AKE UPAND** smell the coffee, that's what the government needs to do. It's not clear whether the advisors—in the ministry and think tanks aren't bringing in the right perspective or whether the government genuinely believes there's nothing much to worry about. If there is concern it's not showing. That must change; the government must acknowledge unambiguously the economy is in serious trouble. When the finance minister speaks of 7% growth, whose numbers is she working with? No top economist in India is talking of 7%; the most optimistic number is 6.9% and the average is closer to 6.6%. Very pertinently, these estimates are predicated on a favourable base effect in the second half of the year because growth in Q4FY19, remember, was an anaemic 5.8%.

If Maruti Suzuki is not able to sell even one lakh units a month—a number that had become par for the course—it means consumer confidence is well and truly damaged. The first signs of this weakness were apparent last Diwali but we chose to downplay that; rather than trying to meet industry halfway on lowering prices and making vehicles more affordable to spur demand, NITI Aayog asked two-wheeler makers to come up with an EV roadmap in two weeks! That sales of bikes and scooters should be falling the way they are means consumers either don't want to buy or they don't have the means to spend; both are bad news. It is true many HFCs and NBFCs were lending to customers who were not credit-worthy and that some of these businesses are unviable. But, if HDFC's loan growth in Q1FY20 was the slowest in its history and its asset quality the worst, we have a problem.

There is no doubt India's growth is correlated with global growth and trade, both of which are slowing, but the slide cannot all be blamed only on this. Surely the telecom sector is not bleeding—with the exception of one player—because the global economy is slowing. Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea did not report losses of ₹2,866 crore and ₹4,800 crore respectively in Q2FY20 because of the global market, but because of the unfriendly regulatory environment.

We need to look inwards and set our house in order; talking about a \$5 trn econ-

How can the private

sector be asked to

invest at such high tax

rates, or when rules

are forced on firms,

when people can go

to jail for not meeting

**CSR norms ...? Govt** 

investment alone

can't stimulate GDP

omy will not help. This is not just another downcycle; the problem is, at least partly, a structural one. For example, if the elasticity in our exports is turning negative, one big reason is that we are simply not competitive, our wage structures are simply too high and our labour laws too rigid. But the government is doing little to address this; instead it wants to impose a minimum wage.

Making the environment friendly is critical. There is no doubt the IBC has been the best reform the country has seen and the government deserves full credit for making it clear to companies they can't simply default and get away with it. The clean-up in the NBFC and HFC spaces too was long overdue. But, now that there's effective legislation in place, we need to rekindle animal spirits, else the ₹100 lakh crore investment target will

remain just that. NITI Aayog believes there is room for banks to lend—apparently we are among the most under-leveraged economies in the world. That may be so, but the fact is that to lend, banks need capital and the NPA cycle isn't quite over; sectors such as telecom, power—thermal and renewable—aviation, MSME and agriculture are all very stressed. CRISIL noted that some ₹15,000 crore of assets would be at risk if the AP discoms stop paying wind and solar power producers following the tiff over the revision of tariffs. While bankers may have provided for some of the assets, one doubts they have provided for everything. More importantly, there need to be credit-worthy borrowers. Also, there is increasingly higher aversion to risk. A few months back, State Bank of India (SBI) tightened the lending norms for dealers of Hyundai and other car makers because it simply could not afford to take a chance when so many dealerships are closing down. Indeed, credit to industry is crawling, partly because companies remain over-leveraged and partly because bankers are cautious. Some private sector banks lend little or nothing to infrastructure; given how they have burnt their fingers, this time around they will be doubly cautious. Fresh slippages at SBI soared to a staggering ₹17,000 crore in Q1FY20. Even a much small lender like Axis Bank reported slippages of close to ₹5,000 crore and write-offs of around ₹3,000 crore; this, after a clean-up. Let's get real, the NPA cycle hasn't peaked.

If the private sector is to invest, and invest it must if the economy is to come out of the trough, it needs to get a much better deal; people cannot be jailed for not meeting CSR norms. Regulation needs to be non-partisan, whether for domestic or foreign players favouring some players to the detriment of the others will cost the economy tens of thousands of jobs and this is clearly visible in the telecom sector. New rules cannot be forced on companies without their approval; it is their investments that are at stake.

The government is strapped for revenues, but if it taxes companies beyond a point and penalises them unnecessarily, it will leave companies with no resources to invest. The government's investments aren't enough to put the economy back on the high growth track or create the jobs needed, and so, it must incentivise the private sector to invest. Right now there are no signs this is happening.

# **BrandedLIES**

The Consumer Protection Bill's penalisation of endorsers is ridiculous and unwarranted

**HE CONSUMER PROTECTION** Bill, 2019, passed recently by the Lok Sabha seeks to make endorsers, including celebrities, legally liable for the products they advertise. To implement what is being understood as the moral responsibility of celebrities endorsing products, the Bill, prescribes a fine up to ₹10 lakh for first time offenders, going up to ₹50 lakh and a jail term for repeat offences. Additionally, it has a provision to ban offending celebrities from taking on advertising projects for a year, extending up to three years for repeat offenders. Moreover, the Bill proposes stringent laws against endorsers, with the only grounds for exception from legal liability being presentation of evidence by the celebrities. In comparison, manufacturers and service providers face a penalty of ₹10 lakh in fines and imprisonment up to two years. While the Bill does provide the caveat that manufacturers and/or endorsers will only be penalised in cases they fail to discontinue or modify a patently false/misleading advert, this does not take away from the absurdity of attaching legal liability to endorsers of commercials, which, by their very nature, are designed to represent products in a man-

Of course, it is immoral, unethical, and downright illegal to advertise a product or service on false grounds, but to put the complete burden of ensuring the veracity of a product's commercial on its endorser would achieve nothing more than disincetivising celebrities from signing on any advertisements. This would not only hurt the interests of multiple industries but also those of consumers too. Besides, the Bill absolves consumers of both agency and responsibility of choice. In a case like the infamous Axe lawsuit, where an Indian man sued the makers of the body spray for misleading consumers, the Bill not only legitimises what is clearly a ridiculous claim but also allows for the lawsuit to extend to the endorser. Surely the laws of natural justice do not allow consumer protection to come at the cost of unfair burdens on other parties.

ner that increases their attractiveness as commodities.

## FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

CALCULATIONS SUGGEST THAT USING 'SOLAR TREES' TO GENERATE SOLAR POWER ON FARMERS' LAND IS THE ONLY WAY TO DOUBLE FARMERS' INCOMES BY 2022

# Annadata as Urjadata Harvesting solar on farms

N JULY, TWO interesting things happened that can, to a large extent, help Indian farmers augment their incomes. First, the Union finance minister (FM), in her maiden budget speech, asked why annadata (farmer) cannot become urjadata (producer of solar power). Second, in the Parliament the Minister of State for agriculture, responding to a question on the prime minister's promise of doubling farmers'income (DFI) by 2022, admitted that the existing set of policies cannot double farmers' real incomes by 2022. I welcome and appreciate this honesty, although the PM may still be optimistic to fulfil his dream of DFI by 2022. I have been saying, for the last two years through this newspaper column, that it is almost impossible to DFI by 2022 with the set of policies that the government has adopted; they will not achieve even half the target. The remaining 4 years till 2022-23 require the real incomes of farmers to go up by 13-15% per annum. But, as they say, nothing is impossible in this world, so here is my single suggestion to move in that direction.

But before that, let us quickly recapitulate the debate on this slogan of DFI given by the PM in February 2016 in Bareilly. The PM said it is his "dream" to DFI by 2022. It was followed by setting up a committee, headed by Ashok Dalwai, in April 2016. The committee clarified that it is real income that needs to be doubled over 7 years (over the base income of 2015-16), requiring a growth rate of 10.4% per year. The committee submitted its final report in September 2018. It comprises of 14 volumes (almost 3,000 pages) and 619 recommendations! These volumes contain a wealth of information, but I doubt any government can implement 619 recommendations even in five years. My humble submission to our friend Ashok Dalwai and his team is that they will do a great national service

**ASHOK GULATI** Infosys chair professor for agriculture, ICRIER Views are personal

if they bring out a summary of 14 volumes in 20-25 pages, and prioritise just 5-10 recommendations from a laundry list of 619 recommendations.

But, let us get back to the FM's statement of why the *annadata* can't become the *urjadata*. This one policy has the potential to DFI within a year or two. How? Here are the details.

The PM has also set a target of producing 100 GW of solar power by 2022. He wants to be one of the frontrunners in International Solar Alliance for clean energy. So far, the model that has been adopted to develop solar power is inviting bids from large business players. And big players did enter, ranging from Mahindra and Mahindra to Adanis, and so on. Some of them who entered early into Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) with state governments had to burn their hands when the costs came down and the state governments forced them to revise the costs of PPA downwards, upsetting their economic calculations. But, this model of generating solar

2,500

2,000

power was not very inclusive. The land has been locked for solar panels for almost 25 years, and the benefits go only to a few investors.

The alternative model is to help farmers produce solar power on their lands, making annadata an urjadata! After all, farmers occupy the largest chunk of land in this country. This model will be much more inclusive and can help augment their incomes significantly. There are two variants of this: (a) replace all pump sets, especially diesel ones, with solar pumps and the excess power generated through government at a price that gives farmers a good margin over their cost of producplants below. Under the second variant, farmers can keep growing two irrigated solar trees generate a lot of excess power that can be purchased by the state gov-



ernment. The power generated under this variant is multiple times more than that produced under the first variant, and, therefore, the income augmentation can also be several times more.

At ICRIER, we did a global survey and found that it is being practiced in many countries, from Japan to China to Germany, and India is ripe for this. The problem is mobilising enough capital to install these solar trees. In one acre, you can have 500 solar trees in a such a manner that even tractors can move through them and farmers can keep growing their normal crops. It does not impact their productivity as there is ample sunlight coming from the sides for the crops to perform photosynthesis. The second precondition is that the state should be ready to sign the power purchase agreement.

The current LG of Delhi, Anil Baijal, got excited about this idea and wanted to implement it in Delhi's agri-belt as a demonstration plot. After several meetings with him and his team, the Delhi government actually announced a policy to that effect. As per their calculation 500 trees can be planted per acre of farming land; the investment in solar panels (trees) will be done by other business per sons. The only thing that farmers have to assure is that for 25 years, they will not convert their land to other uses. The economic calculations suggested that farmers can be given ₹one lakh/acre per annum as net income, with 6% increase every year for the next 25 years! This can easily DFI overnight. They do not have to mobilise capital for solar panels since that is done by other businesses, who also make a profit in the process.

Given that power consumption per hectare in Indian agriculture is still very low (see graph), this holds a great promise for several poorer states.

Can the Modi government unleash this revolution of solar power and double farmers'income?

# How to create a crisis to solve another

The real danger of Brexit is uncertainty. Is Boris Johnson bluffing just to make the EU give him a better deal or is he serious?

**MEGHNAD** DESA

for the maturity of

its political system,

Britain is behaving

very strangely.

Both of the main

parties are divided

within themselves

and obsessed

about Brexit

Prominent economist and labour peer Views are personal



THE BRITISH ECONOMY is a good story to follow for anyone who wants to test how strong their heart is. Since the Referendum in June 2016, which resulted in a win for Leavers, two prime ministers have left defeated and now Boris Johnson is promising to exit on the deadline of October 31, come what may. Do or die is another expression.

UK was supposed to exit on March 29, 2019, two years after invoking Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty (the Constitution of the European Union). That deadline slipped. The Deal that Theresa May had negotiated was rejected thrice by the House of Commons. Under pressure, Theresa May negotiated two new deadlines. First, in the last week of May to avoid UK having to send MPs to the European Parliament; that deadline slipped. The new deadline is October 31, 2019— Halloween day.

The Conservative Party is the single largest party in Parliament, but does not have a majority (thanks to Theresa May's mistake in calling a snap election in 2017, which lost her enough seats to lose the majority). They have an informal coalition with the DPU, a Northern Ireland Party. Despite that, she lost the vote on her Deal three times, because a core of around thirty "Hard Brexiteers" in her own Party thought her Deal was not enough to eliminate the influence of the EU on the UK economy completely. These Hard Brexiteers are like a fanatical religious sect. They want an exit at any cost, preferably with No Deal.

The EU is a customs union, which means trade within the Union is free of tariffs or quotas. A Deal would list the conditions under which trade could continue on favourable conditions after exit. A No Deal exit could bring trade to a shuddering halt or long delays. Brexit, with or without a

Deal, is predicted to have a severe negative effect on the British economy. But, the fanatics reject these predictions as 'Project Fear' and argue that once free of the EU, the British economy would be free to prosper.

The country is gripped by the prospects of Brexit. There are deep differences between the Leavers and the Remainers, and also differences within each group. When given the freedom to take indicative votes on what Parliament would prefer rather than Theresa May's Deal, there was no majority of any of the eleven alternatives!

For a country known for the maturity of its political system, Britain is behaving very strangely. Both of the main parties are divided within themselves and obsessed about Brexit. But, the whole movement to leave the EU, which was a hard Left obsession in the 70's, has more recently been argued for by the

Right. The UK Independence Party (UKIP)—a fringe party obsessively arguing about leaving EU—became a threat to the Conservatives who imitated them to minimise the former's chances of parliamentary success. But, the real winner of the Referendum was UKIP, which then collapsed because it had no other programme.

Leaving Europe is proving much more complicated than anyone had expected. It was not (to use a current topic analogy) as simple as triple talaq, but an elaborate, long drawn-out divorce battle with fights over who gets the house, the children, the pets, the furniture, etc. The Withdrawal Agreement is 586 pages long. There is

a shorter document about future relations. The Brexiteers had been boasting that as soon as the UK left the EU, it could sign free trade treaties with many countries. No one had told them that leaving the free trade arrangement that they were in would take time, and negotiating new treaties would take longer still.

No one had expected that the UK would need to contest the European Parliament elections in May 2019, as March 29 was the departure date. That slipped and in the European elections, the Brexit Party quickly formed by Nigel Farage, the former UKIP leader,

came on top. Liberal Democrats, who are staunch Remainers, For a country known came second. The two main parties trailed behind. This is what hastened the departure of Theresa May, as her colleagues feared slaughter at the next elections if Brexit had not been delivered. This has brought Boris Johnson to the top. He has promised Brexit by October 31, even if he has to leave

> without a Deal. It is a tough, high-risk strategy, which Donald Trump has made popular.

> Is he bluffing just to make the EU give him a better deal or is he serious? There are only 87 days left to the deadline. A crash departure will depress the economy by 5%, at least. The pound sterling has begun to depreciate on fears of a No Deal Brexit. Boris Johnson has stuck to his threat and promised a large budget to prepare for the No Deal outcome.

> The real danger is uncertainty. Once we know what kind of Brexit we will face, then, maybe, the economy will adjust. If not, catastrophe will be the outcome.

# THE EDITOR

**LETTERS TO** 

### The Unnao tragedy The rape and the attempt on the life

of the young woman—now battling for life in a Lucknow hospital—in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao should sear every Indian, stir their conscience and galvanise them into action to prevent such a recurrence anywhere in India. The travails that the victim and her family have gone through since the disclosure of the rape by four-time BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar do not bear thinking about. The death of a father in police custody due to torture following his implication in an arms case because of his status as a rape victim's father is too harrowing for words. Were the father not the victim's father, the false case under the Arms Act would not have been foisted on him by conniving police officers leading to his custodial death. The stagemanaged accident demonstrated the inhumanity the rich and powerful were capable of to punish anyone standing up to them and seeking justice for the wrongs and injustices done to them. The tragedy of the rape survivor mirrors the dark side of our polity. We harp on 'nationalism' and coin slogans like beti bachao, but fail to protect India's daughters from sexual predators. The tragedy represents the failure of imaginative patriotism—a failure to imagine ourselves in the place of a vulnerable compatriot. The protection and patronage the rape accused MLA received from the state government agencies was in inverse proportion to the untold plight of the survivor's family. The victim and her family members were treated like flies in the hands of wanton boys. BJP, which claims to be women-friendly, could have empathised with the victim and acted to secure her justice. One only prays and hopes that the day when Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's words, "The mighty perish in their might and the slain survive the slayer" become true comes soon for our country. — David G Milton, Maruthancode

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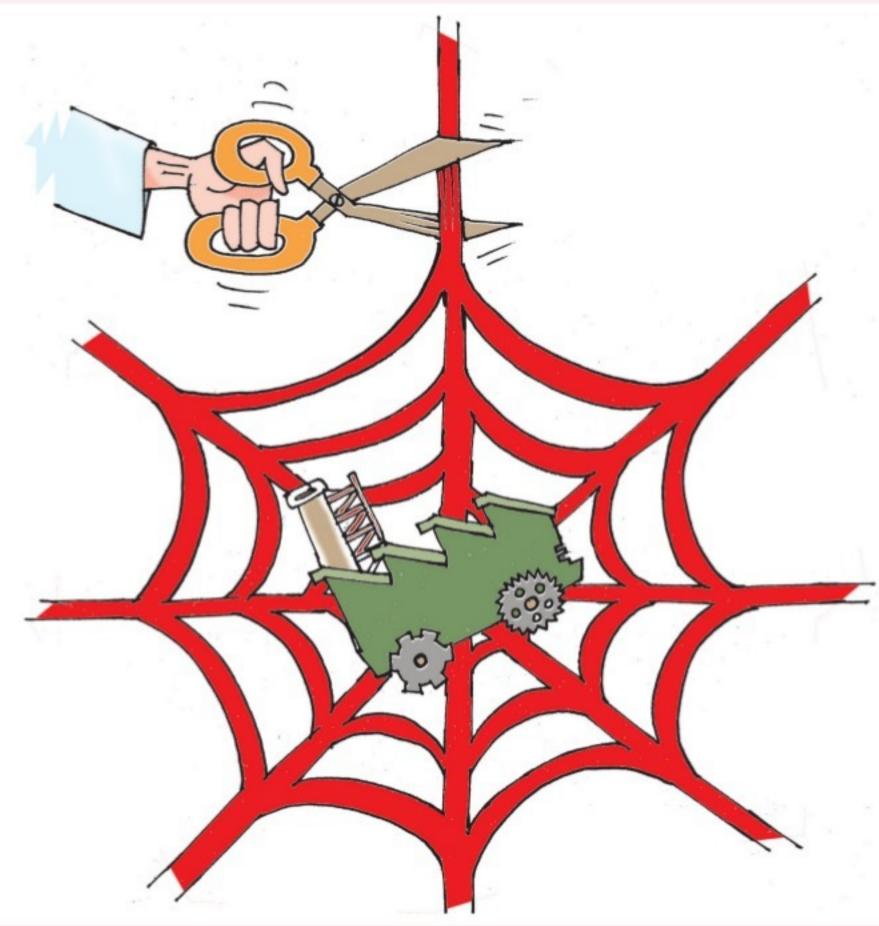


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE



## OVER THE BARREL

# Reviving investor sentiment

Modi 1.0 moved the needle somewhat towards meeting the necessary conditions for incentivising investment. GST, RERA, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act, the improvement in the 'ease of doing business' index, digitisation, etc, were welcomed by the business community. More was expected, but the initiatives were appreciated. Modi 2.0 should now push this needle further

USINESS SENTIMENT IS grim. Few corporates have the financial capability to invest; even fewer the desire. The reasons are several, but the common thread linking all the corporates is a concern about the direction and predictability of the policy and the regulatory environment. There is a lack of confidence in the ability of the leadership to convert the political promise of 'ease of doing business' into 'bureaucratic performance'. There is a 'trust

deficit'. The government will have to bridge this deficit to realise its economic

growth strategy. The government's objective is to grow the economy to reach a size of \$5 trillion by 2025. Given that the current size of the economy is \$2.7 trillion, this means it will have to grow at an annualised rate of 8% over the next five years. This is a credible, albeit, stretch objective. It has been achieved before and there is no fundamental or structural block to securing such a rate again. The twist is

investment. Growth cannot be sustained at the 8% level without reversing the current declining trend in private investment (and exports). This fact has been acknowledged by the Chief Economic Adviser in the Economic Survey, and by the finance minister in her Union Budget speech. Both have stressed the need to revive 'animal spirits' to catalyse the virtuous cycle of investment, jobs, productivity, exports, consumption and growth. Investment is the centrepiece of their growth strategy.

The question, therefore, is what must be done to resuscitate investor sentiment?

At a macro level, the answer is clear. Investors look for macroeconomic stability and a supportive regulatory

and policy environment. They are incentivised to invest when inflation is under control; the fiscal deficit is within prudential limits and the external account is broadly in balance. They want connected and efficient infrastructure, and the easing of supply-side 'factor market' constraints. This expeditious processes for land acquisiflexible and unshackled labour policy, and deepened capital markets unclogged from

the choke of non-performing assets (NPAs). They also want competitive tax rates, simplified procedures, and transparent and fair mechanisms for dispute resolution. These are well-known and frequently-

articulated necessary demands. The issue is whether these are sufficient? Is this all that is required to spur investment? I am not so sure. I believe there is a subtler condition that also needs to be met. The corporate leader must believe that promise will indeed convert to performance. His subjective preference is a nonquantifiable but important driver of

investment decisions. I was involved with a large multinational for many years. What struck me was that investment decisions were often driven by personal perceptions.

The investment proposals were, of course, subject to rigorous economic and geopolitical analysis. Empirical data was gathered on the market, competition, costs, prices and regulations. Scenarios were built to capture the consequences of the unexpected. Sensitivity analysis was carried out to define the range of possible outcomes. But when the analysis was finally presented for a decision, the discussion often focused on the intangibles of geopolitical, bureaucratic and regulatory risk. And the decision was often driven by the leadership's perceptions of these risks than by the hard numbers presented to them.

I was at the helm of the company at a time when China was the flavour of the international investor community. I found myself continually battling perception. People knew more about India than China. But what they 'knew' about India was mostly negative. Their perception was it was tangled in an undergrowth of red tape, bureaucratic encumbrance and regulatory uncertainty. On the other hand, what they knew about China was positive, albeit limited. They did not understand the investment environment. They did not speak the language; and Chinese culture was an enigma. But they 'knew' that China offered a huge market with massive potential. This perception (and, of course, reality) was an important determinant of the final decision. India also offered a large market and potential, but unfortunately perception militated against a positive decision. On at least two occasions, an investment proposal for India was turned down in favour of a project in China even through the projects were similar and the earning power of the former was higher than that of the latter. The reason was the subjective predilections of the corporate leaders.

The UPA-2 will be remembered for the ignominy of corporate scandals. The telecom and coal scandals showed up the nexus between corrupt politicians and opportunistic businessmen. It was crony capitalism at its worst. The banking crisis has its genesis in this nexus. Modi 1.0 broke this nexus decisively. It ended what Raghuram Rajan has referred to as "relationship-based capitalism," in which the 'quid' of corporate 'hospitality'was exchanged for the 'quo' of 'political favours'. It redefined the nature of engagement between the government and business. Today, few, if any, corporate houses can be confident of extracting favours from the political leadership.

Modi 2.0 should carry forward this reset in the terms of engagement. It

**Business and govt** 

occupy different

spaces. But they

have interlocking

interests. The walls

separating the two

should, therefore,

be perforated. The

finance minister

has called for such

a perforation

runs no risk in forging a collaborative relationship with business. Whereas there might have been a public backlash had it sought such a relationship in the aftermath of the scandals that shook the

UPA government. Modi 1.0 moved the needle somewhat towards meeting the necessary conditions for incentivising investment. GST, RERA, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act, the improvement in the 'ease of doing business' index,

digitisation, etc, were wel-

comed by the business community. More was expected, but the initiatives were appreciated. Modi 2.0 should now push this needle further.

Business and government occupy different spaces. But they have interlocking interests. The walls separating the two should, therefore, be perforated. The finance minister has called for such a perforation. She made explicit in her Budget speech the government's interest in bringing private industry into a partnership relationship with it. She should follow that up with the assurances that the government does not regard every businessman as a tax dodger; or every business as bent on gaming the system. That, instead, it wants to build a relationship based on mutuality of interest and trust.

# • EFFICIENT CAPITAL MARKETS Kick-starting the investment cycle



N INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE proposed in the Union Budget 2019-20 relates to the minimum public shareholding (MPS) of listed companies, which would increase from the current level of 25% to 35%, going forward. The time frame for the same is not specified. Going by past experience, India took about eight years to achieve 25% MPS in listed companies, and many PSUs are yet to reach the stipulated MPS. Hence, raising it to 35% may take at least five years from now, unless the government, in consultation with SEBI, issues a whip to achieve it as early as possible.

After the global financial crisis, both Dow Jones Industrial Average and BSE Sensex were hovering at 8,000-9,000 points (December 2008). While the former crossed 27,000 by early July 2019, BSE Sensex surpassed the 40,000 mark before the Budget. It would be unwise to believe that India's macroeconomic fundamentals are more stable than those of the US in the medium term. India's capital markets story points towards excessive speculative activities. This has been possible mainly due to too much money chasing too few floating stocks. Widening of MPS, proposed in the last Budget, is therefore considered a decision in the right direction.

This initiative would not only curb excessive speculative activities, but also channelise household savings towards capital markets in a big way. Moreover, volatility in the Indian stock market may decline due to availability of large floating stocks. When the government is committed to widen the floating stocks, there is little scope for large buybacks of equities. In this context, the government's decision to tax buybacks of shares of a listed company at 20%, similar to those of unlisted companies, is a welcome step. The pressure of the

corporate sector to waive tax on buybacks of equity shares of listed company, if entertained, may defeat the vary purpose of widening MPS.

As of now, many corporate houses are deleveraging to resolve their balance sheet problem. In fact, they are not in a position to honour their commitments on loan repayments/servicing of debt securities. How can they finance buyback of equities in such a

markets more close to medium-term fundamentals may be treated as a healthy sign

**Correction of** 

India's capital

situation? Would it create artificial scarcity of floating stocks and jack up equity prices, leading to speculative bubble? So, buybacks of equity shares of listed companies should not be encouraged, let alone waiving of tax on buybacks.

Price discovery may be efficient if equities are widely held, instead of in the hands of a few stakeholders. Moreover, concentration of shares in the hands of a few encourages governance malpractices, including insider trading, which is rampant in India despite stringent SEBI regulations.

India's equity markets reacted adversely in response to Budget proposals, despite positives like withdrawal of 24% limit on FPIs, merger of NRI investment with FPIs within sectoral limits, development of secondary market in AAArated corporate bonds, social stock exchange, etc. Besides hike in MPS, FIIs investing in India as trusts/association of persons were affected due to hike in surcharge on the super-

rich—annual income of individual/trust exceeding ₹2 crore. Currently, about 40% of FIIs are operating as trusts in India. Since FIIs have the option to convert into corporate entities to avoid payment of surcharges, income tax laws need not be revised for them. The government may have to take a call on one-time transfer of shares from trust to corporate floated by FIIs. This will clean up non-transparent and unhealthy practices followed by FIIs to access India's capital markets. Immediate reactions of India's equity markets to Budget proposals need to be seen in the context of speculative positions that might have built up after the landslide victory of the incumbent government in the elections.

Given the twin balance sheet problem, sluggish growth in private investment and poor performance of export sector due to global headwinds, correction of India's capital markets closer to medium-term fundamentals may be treated as a healthy sign—from the point of view of medium-term consolidation of capital markets. Moreover, price discovery based on fundamentals of the economy can encourage fresh equity investments and revive animal spirits amongst entrepreneurs. An efficient capital market may, therefore, kickstart the much-needed virtuous investment cycle in India.

#### NVIRONMENTAL **ISSUES HAVE** been increasingly disturbed because of global business practices, as also due to social issues and problems in handling waste. Environmental concerns are weakening developing countries and they cannot be ignored any more. Several examples show direct connection between growth and environmental degradation: China logged over 75 million hectares of forests in the last decades of the past century. Expectedly, in 1997, severe drought caused by the drying of the Yellow River affected people and industries in northern China. The following year, flash floods in the Yangtze River caused damages worth \$30 billion. The Chinese government concluded that deforestation was behind

these events, and it has banned logging. Some nations prohibit import of goods that cause ecological damage. For example, the US has banned the import of shrimp harvested without the 'turtle excluder device', because of its concern for endangered sea turtles. In 1994, the WTO intervened to address concerns regarding the import of shrimps and its impact on turtles—known as the Shrimp and Turtle case. The ruling was adopted on November 6, 1998. However, Malaysia persisted in their complaint and initiated DSU Article 21.5 proceedings against the US in 2001, but the US prevailed in those hearings.

Developing countries are affected by the relocation of polluting industries from developed areas. Also, many products that

# Making trade work for environment

We must not compromise on environmental quality in international trade



The author is a management thinker and blogger

are banned in developed nations are marketed in the underdeveloped world. Environmental integrity is crucial for a developing nation such as India and must be guarded under all circumstances. In the last couple of years, acute water shortage has forced some companies to shut down. Incidences of droughts and floods have also caused incalculable financial losses. Over 2,000 Himalayan glaciers have reportedly melted in the past few decades, causing floods and climatic changes.

The dumping of nuclear and hazardous waste in developing countries and the shifting of polluting industries to developing countries impose heavy social costs. In August 2006, cargo ship *Probo Koala* 

discharged 500 tonnes of toxic waste in Abidjan, West Africa, killing 17 people and poisoning thousands. In 1988, thousands of barrels of hazardous waste disguised as building material was discovered in the village of Koko in Nigeria. Several barrels were unsealed, causing leakage and serious health effects to residents. Exploitation of natural resources of developing countries to satisfy global demand causes ecological problems. African nations have long been at the centre of such incidents.

When MNCs exploit underdeveloped countries by using polluting technologies, they must be severely punished. When we don't care for the environment, it destroys the mankind and living beings unbeliev-



damaging effects of business processes. CSR activities focus on energy use, water use, waste management, recycling, emissions, etc. At times, developed nations raise environmental issues as a trade barrier rather than for genuine reasons.

The debate has intensified in recent years on the connection between trade and environment, and the role the WTO can play is important in promoting environmental-friendly trade. Those who have raised a roar of environment issues at the WTO have a valid reason because of circumstances where trade and the pursuit of trade liberalisation have had harmful environmental effects. Also, trade can negatively impact environment when property rights in environmental resources are ill-defined or prices do not reflect scarcity.

When the ordinance of NAFTA expansion to Peru was passed in 2007, alert citizens and environmental groups warned that the Peru FTA would incentivise a massive sell-off of the sensitive Peruvian Amazon rainforest to oil & gas companies. Such situations result in the abuse of scarce environmental resources and degradation, which worsens through trade. Some of the pollution can be purely local, such as polluting waterbodies because of chemical waste from local factories, or noise pollution due to factories, etc. Other pollution can have global repercussions; for example, excessive emission of greenhouse gases, destruction of rainforests, and so on.

Another fact to consider here is if some countries have low environmental standards, big businesses are likely to shift production of environment-intensive or highly-polluting products to the so-called pollution havens. Worse, trade-induced competitive pressure forces countries to lower their environmental and health standards. Women working in Cambodian factories supplying some of the world's best-known sportswear brands are suffering from repeated mass fainting due to excess heat and pathetic working conditions. Factory owners have not properly invested in safety of work environment and are paying very low wages to the workers. Also, short-term contracts are a root cause of job insecurity; workers cannot refuse overtime, because they are insecure about their contract renewal.

A positive point to note in international trade is that some nations have extremely high quantities of raw materials, which they are unable to use domestically. For example, Australia has the most iron ore reserves in the world, at 35 billion metric tonnes. Venezuela has the largest oil reserves, with 297.6 billion barrels. With freer trade, Australia sells easily its excess iron ore and Venezuela sells oil to other nations, and takes advantage of their material surplus to benefit their economy.

Organisations like Unilever, IKEA, IBM and Adobe have the most comprehensive CSR programmes.

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

### **TELLING NUMBERS**

# The extent of groundwater over-exploitation, state by state

GROUNDWATER resources are overexploited in 1,186 out of 6,881 "assessment units" (blocks, talukas, watersheds etc) in the country, the Jal Shakti Ministry said in reply to a question in Lok Sabha. This was as assessed in 2017, and translates to 17%, or one in every six of these units. All these over-exploited assessment units are in 17 states and Union Territories. Punjab has the highest extent of over-exploitation at 79 per cent of its blocks, followed Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana and Himachal

Pradesh, each at 50 per cent or more. Tamil Nadu, which has the highest number of blocks (1,116 firkas), also has the highest number of over-exploited units at 462 firkas, or 40 per cent. In Maharashtra, where the Marathwada region is drought-hit, 3 per cent of the talukas are over-exploited. In Uttar Pradesh with 830 units (820 blocks and 10 cities), 11 per cent are over-exploited. In the eight Northeastern states none of the assessment units (districts and blocks) is over-exploited.

#### STATES WITH HIGHEST GROUNDWATER DEPLETION, 2017

State	Total units	Semi-critical		Critical		Over-exploited	
		Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Punjab	138	5	4	2	1	109	79
Rajasthan	295	29	10	33	11	185	63
Delhi	34	7	21	2	6	22	65
Haryana	128	21	16	3	2	78	61
Himachal	8	1	13	0	0	4	50
Tamil Nadu	1,166	163	14	79	7	462	40
Telangana	584	169	29	67	11	70	12
All India	6,881	972	14	313	5	1,186	17

Note: The units assessed are blocks in Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan; Mandals in Telangana; Districts/Valley in Himachal; Firkas in Tamil Nadu; Tehsils in NCT Delhi Source: Jal Shakti Ministry

#### THIS WORD MEANS

#### **AREA 51**

What is this US facility, where aliens supposedly visit? What to make of the 'plan' by 2 mn people to storm it?

ON SEPTEMBER 20, at 3 am Pacific Daylight Time (3.30 pm IST), some two million people plan — or claim to plan — to storm a US Air Force facility called Area 51. On a Facebook event titled "Storm Area 51, They Can't Stop All of us", two million people have clicked "attending" and another 1.4 million have clicked "interested".

A 38,400-acre facility, Area 51 is in Southern Nevada. Officially known as the Nevada Test and Training Range, Area 51 is part of the Nellis Air Force Base and is used as a training centre for the US Air Force. The name originates from its location of the Nevada map.

**CONSPIRACY THEORIES:** With the facility shrouded in secrecy, several conspiracy theories have emerged over the years. Several Americans believed it was where the government hid bodies of aliens and UFOs, some believed it was where the government held "meetings" with extraterrestrials, and others speculated it was where the government developed "time travel" technology.

The CIA, according to official documents, has been using the facility since 1955 to develop and test supersonic aircraft and stealth fighter jets. It was only in 2013 that the CIA published declassified documents admitting that the Area 51 is a secret military site. This was following a Freedom of Information request filed in 2005 by Dr Jeffrey T Richelson, a senior fellow at the George Washington University National Security Archive.

THE FACEBOOK EVENT: As the announcement about the planned storming gained popularity online, the US Air



**Nevada Test and Training Range.** AP

Force issued a statement warning against any attempt to enter the high security premises. "Area 51 is an open training range for the US Air Force, and we would discourage anyone from trying to come into the area where we train American armed forces. The US Air Force always stands ready to protect America and its assets," said the statement, as quoted by The Washington Post.

It is unlikely that people will be able to enter Area 51, which is heavily guarded round the clock. The airspace above the facility is also out of bounds for civilian aircraft and special permission is required before flying through its airspace.

Those behind the Facebook event, too, have made it clear that they have no intention of entering the facility and it was a mere joke. A pinned post on the Facebook event page now has a clarification: "Hello US government, this is a joke, and I do not actually intend to go ahead with this plan. I just thought it would be funny and get me some thumbsy uppies on the internet.'

## SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Why aren't cars selling?

Not just cars, sales of trucks, tractors and motorcycles too are down. The NBFC crisis has caused a liquidity crunch, and customers are postponing the decision to buy. What does this mean for the economy?

SANDEEP SINGH & ANIL SASI NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

LEADING AUTOMOBILE manufacturers announced a sharp decline of up to 50 per cent in their domestic sales in July with the market leader Maruti Suzuki reporting a 36 per cent drop in sales during the month.

Hit by the liquidity crunch for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and a dip in consumer sentiment, July became the twelfth out of the last 13 months in which the auto sector has seen a decline in domestic sales.

Manufacturers are now going for cuts in production, and the industry that is one of the biggest job creators in the country is staring at a deep-rooted slowdown and job losses across its value chain.

#### Where is the decline?

The drop in sales is happening across all segments. If passenger vehicles ales witnessed a fall of 18.4 per cent in the quarter ended June 2019, the commercial vehicle segment witnessed a 16.6 per cent decline. The two-wheeler segment too, saw a drop in sales by 11.7 per cent during the quarter.

In fact, the 18.4 per cent drop in passenger vehicles ales in the quarter ended June 2019 was the worst quarter for the industry in the last 18 years since Q3 of 2001-02, when sales fell 27 per cent.

Even the tractor industry, which had bucked the broader downturn in the auto sector to post a third consecutive year of double digit growth up until March 2019, has seen a steady slide since then, recording the biggest monthly fall in production in June 2019.

Tractor sales have consistently fallen since March 2019, amidst weak farm sentiment; with volumes seeing a double-digit decline over the past three months, and the worst number of an over 32 per cent decline in production in June 2019.

#### Why are car sales falling? Industry insiders feel that while the pres-

sure on NBFCs and the liquidity squeeze in the market is a big factor, the decline in customer confidence is the other factor that is leading to a continuous slide in sales of passenger cars.

According to these sources, a third of the retail sales of Maruti Suzuki — the country's largest carmaker — were funded by NBFCs, and a liquidity crisis for the NBFC sector has



drop in sales in July. Amit Mehra/Express Archive

led to a drop in sales for lack of funding for

Customers are also postponing their purchase decisions due to various considerations, including an expected fall in GST rates, and the hope that the transition from BS-IV to BS-VI may lead to big discounts between January and March 2020. Customers are also expecting discounts in the coming festive season.

However, company officials say that they do not expect the trend to be reversed in the near future.

#### Why is there a decline in the sales of commercial vehicles and tractors?

The NBFC liquidity stress has been playing a part in the decline in sales of vehicles across segments, as NBFCs are significant lenders in the tier II and smaller towns.

Tractor sales have been further hurt by weak farm sentiment, the slowdown in the rural economy, and fears of a worse than average monsoon this year. This comes amid the third advance estimates of crop production indicating a slide in rabi production. Kharif sowing has remained weak so far.

Truck sales have been hurt by changes

made by the government in the axle load norms. Industry officials said that a significant decline in the sales of commercial vehicles has been visible ever since the increased axle load has become effective. The industry has been calling for a scrappage policy and other policy support measures to revive demand. According to data released by the Society

of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) overall, the commercial vehicles segment registered a decline of 9.53 per cent in April-June 2019 as compared to the same period last year. While the medium & heavy CVs declined 16.60 per cent, LCVs declined by 5.06 per cent during the quarter.

#### What does this situation indicate? The sharp decline in sales numbers of the

leading manufacturer shows the decline in consumer sentiment and indicates an overall slowdown in the economy. The drop in sales over the last one year has led major manufacturers to cut production, and has put pressure on the overall automotive sector, including the automobile ancillaries. Last month, Ashok Leyland shut its

manufacturing plant in Pantnagar, Uttarakhand, for nine days until July 24 because of weak demand for commercial vehicles. The plant, which can manufacture 1.5 lakh units annually, was earlier closed intermittently for some seven days between June 17 and June 29.

Tata Motors is learnt to have decided to close its Pantnagar facility in July for a couple of days in order to ensure improvement in productivity.

Maruti Suzuki has cut vehicle production for the last seven months, including in July 2019.

There have already been job losses across the value chain of the automobile sector, including in the dealerships and ancillaries. The continuing decline in sales is now expected to put pressure on manufacturers to cut down on their costs, and reduce headcounts.

#### And how are two-wheelers faring?

The two-wheeler segment — the more affordable form of motorised mobility and an indicator of consumption demand in the hinterland — has also seen a slowdown.

Hero MotoCorp, the world's largest twowheeler manufacturer and the market leader in India, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India, the second biggest two-wheeler player in the Indian market, and TVS Motor Co, all reported a clear drop in dispatches in the months leading up to July.

# What happens in the auto segment from

The outlook for the rest of the year will depend on multiple factors, including the progress of the monsoon and the festive season offtake, as well as improvement in the liquidity situation.

Like tractors, the drop in two-wheeler volumes is a key indicator of rural distress. In the two-wheeler segment, motorcycle sales are predominantly dependent on rural India; people in rural areas prefer motorcycles to scooters given their sturdier structure, better performance, and lower operational costs, especially in the economy segments. The continued sluggishness in two-

wheeler volumes is worrying, given that India, despite now being the world's biggest two-wheeler market, still has a very low penetration level of two wheelers. Only about 102 out of every 1,000 people have two-wheelers in India — less than half the penetration levels in Indonesia (281) and Thailand (291).

# Why Medical Commission Bill bothers doctors

#### **ABANTIKA GHOSH** NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

ON THURSDAY, Rajya Sabha passed the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill that seeks to overhaul the medical education regulation infrastructure. Since then, doctors have struck work in Delhi and other cities. What is the Bill about and why is it controversial?

## Bill status

An earlier version of he NMC Bill was introduced during the previous Lok Sabha and later referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare. It lapsed with the dissolution of that Lok Sabha. In the current session, the Bill was reintroduced with changes based on the Committee's recommendations. After Lok Sabha passed it, it was sent to Rajya Sabha with two new amendments and passed. It is now headed back to Lok Sabha, where the government enjoys a brute majority.

## Licence to practice

Section 32 of the NMC Act 2019 allows the proposed NMC, which will replace the Medical Council of India, to grant "limited li-

cence to practice medicine at mid-level as a community health provider". The Indian Medical Association (IMA) sees it as encouraging quackery. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 30 calling for the Bill to be redrafted, the IMA wrote: "We are deeply concerned about granting non medical 'persons connected with modern scientific medical profession', licence to practise modern medicine... This is nothing but legalising and promoting quackery in India... Who will guarantee that these 'legalised quacks' will work in villages only?... National Medical Commission Bill will open the floodgates for licencing 3.5 lakhs 'legalised quacks'. This amounts to 'licence to kill'."

## **Bridge course**

Doctors have expressed concerns about the licence mentioned in Section 32 being another name for a contentious "bridge course". Such a course has been proposed in the original version of the Bill. It would have allowed practitioners of homoeopathy and Indian systems of medicine to go on to practice allopathy. In the new Bill, the bridge course has been dropped as per the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare, which wrote: "The

Committee is of the view that the bridge course should not be made a mandatory provision in the present Bill. However, the Committee appreciates the need to build the capacity of the existing human resources in the healthcare sector, to address the shortage of healthcare professionals so as to achieve the objectives of the National Health Policy, 2017.. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the State Governments may implement measures to enhance the capacity of the existing healthcare professionals including AYUSH practitioners, BSc (Nursing), BDS, B Pharma etc to address their State specific primary healthcare issues in the rural areas."

## **Exit examination**

The original Bill had proposed a licentiate examination for doctors, and the IMA had expressed concerns about it then too. The new Bill proposes a single exit exam - the final MBBS exam, which will work as a licentiate examination, a screening test for foreign medical graduates, and an entrance test for admission in postgraduate programmes. It also provides for just one medical entrance test across the country In the letter IMA wrote: "The Bill con-

denses final year MBBS exam, Licentiate

This effectively removes the opportunity to reappear for PG selection. Moreover, the examination being objective in nature, increases the workload and stress level of the students manifold. Allowing foreign medical graduates to take the same examination will be an injustice... The current system allows medical graduates to practise irrespective of the status of his/her PG NEET."

exam. and PG NEET into one examination.

## **Arguments in favour**

Dr K S Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India and former professor of cardiology at AIIMS, said: "The NMC Bill opens the path to a long awaited reform of medical education... Mid-level health workers like Community Health Providers are very much needed but their training programmes, competencies and roles have to be clearly defined to differentiate them from medical graduates The Allied Healthcare Professionals Bill, which is to be examined by the Standing Committee, is the right place to position them. A common exit examination is needed for standardisation and postgraduate course selection but must be preceded by a college level testing of practical clinical skills as a qualifier for the theory based NEXT (National Exit Test)."

# The assault case against a rapper, and the US govt's curious interest

## **NEHABANKA**

KOLKATA. AUGUST 3

AN ASSAULT case against American rapper A\$AP Rocky, tried in Stockholm, has captured the public imagination with celebrities including US President Donald Trump campaigning for his release. On Friday, on conclusion of a trial conducted in the Stockholm District Court since July 30, Rocky was released from jail, with the court allowing him — and two others tried — to leave Sweden ahead of the verdict on August 14. Rocky has since reached the US.

### What is the case about?

The alleged assault happened on June 30 and charges were formally pressed after three weeks in detainment. A\$AP Rocky, 30, whose given name is Rakim Mayers, and his associates Bladimir Corniel and David Rispers pleaded not guilty to charges of assaulting a 19-year-old resident of Stockholm.

Video footage published by the tabloid Aftonbladet appeared to show Rocky and his associates fighting with two men. As the video circulated, clips were posted on A\$APRocky's Instagram account showing a security guard telling locals to stop following the artist. This was to publicly provide Rocky's version of the events, to show that Rocky and his associates had been acting in "self-defence". Rocky went on to perform at the Smash Festival in Stockholm, only to be arrested that evening.

## How did the case proceed?

On July 25, the rapper was formally charged by Swedish prosecutors who said the "events in question constitute a crime... despite claims of self-defence and provocation." They said Rocky and his associates "deliberately, together and in agreement" hit the alleged victim with a bottle.

During a trial hearing on August 2, prosecutors asked the court for a six-month sentence for Rocky. Presiding judge Per Lennerbrant ordered Rocky and his associ-



**Stockholm court last week.** TT News Agency via Reuters

ates to be released from detention pending the final verdict.

Rocky missed scheduled performances in Norway and Poland, throwing into jeopardy his plans of performing live across Europe to

promote his 2018 album, 'Testing'. Rocky's lawyer, Henrik Olsson Lilja told The New York Times in an interview that a Swedish court had determined Rocky to be a flight risk and had hence decided to extend his detention. Rocky appealed his detention in the Supreme Court of Sweden, which rejected it.

## Why is there so much interest?

The conversation surrounding the case has had less to do with the alleged assault than with the government and celebrity campaign on his behalf. While he was in detention, US politicians held a press conference on July 17 and called for the State Department and the embassies of the US & Sweden to work to free him.

On Friday, two leaked documents surfaced on Twitter. One of these was written by Robert O'Brien, US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, addressed to the Swedish Prosecution Authority on July 31, days before the trial in A\$AP Rocky's case ended. In fact, US media reported that O'Brien was in Sweden to monitor the trial.

In his letter, O'Brien wrote that the US government "wants to resolve this case as soon as possible to avoid potentially negative consequences to the US-Swedish bilateral relationship", implying that diplomatic relations between the two nations would face "negative consequences" if A\$AP Rocky's assault charge was not resolved quickly.

The second leaked letter dated August 1 showed the response by Sweden's Prosecutor-General, Petra Lundh to O'Brien's letter. "No other prosecutor, not even I, may interfere with a specific case or try to affect the prosecutor responsible. Furthermore, when a person is charged and the case is brought before a court, only the court can decide, during or after the trial, whether or not to release the person or decide on supervised detention," wrote Lundh.

#### **How has President Trump been** involved in the case?

The decision to send the government

# THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

THE DARKEST PLACES IN HELL ARE RESERVED FOR THOSE WHO MAINTAIN THEIR NEUTRALITY IN TIMES

OF MORAL CRISIS. — DANTE ALIGHIERI

# **The Indian EXPRESS**

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# NEW DELHI, OLD LINE

Once again government at Centre sends message to Valley: It alone will decide, give no explanations

HAT HAS unfolded over the last few days in Kashmir flies in the face of the claims by the NDA government, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself, of winning over Kashmir with love, dialogue and good governance. It is the government's responsibility to reassure the people in times of crisis. But on full display since August 2 is exactly the opposite. Through a series of orders, some of them half-denied, and some implemented despite denials — the evacuation of NIT students, for example -- the government has contributed to the spread of panic and uncertainty in the Valley and in the minds of other Indians, almost as if this was the intention. Most astonishing of all was the abrupt cancellation of the Amarnath Yatra, citing a terrorist threat emanating from Pakistan, and the swift evacuation of tourists and pilgrims from the Valley. Callously, the order asking them to leave immediately did not address the apprehensions of the people of Kashmir, thus conveying the crude and brute message that the government was not concerned about them, even as they rushed to petrol pumps and ATMs to stock up. Only weeks earlier, officials had been eager to project the situation in the Valley and at the LoC as much improved, with cross-border infiltration having come down drastically. The U-turn may be based on fresh information, and it is true that the Centre must have the room to take decisions for reasons not always in full public view, but calling off the pilgrimage to Amarnath is virtually an admission that the government cannot prevent terrorist attacks. This, despite the security presence in the Valley, and a new and technologically advanced security deployment specially designed for the pilgrimage.

Over the years, the yatra has become synonymous with the Centre's assertion and demonstration of control over Kashmir. But here is a government that sends in more troops to the Valley, but at the same time, sends out the message that even with close to 4,50,000 troops there, it cannot offer security to pilgrims. In the absence of credible information, all manner of rumours -- that plans are afoot to trifurcate J&K, or do away with the state's special constitutional status, among others — have spread. The silence of the government and the top echelons of the party has been conspicuous, especially given that its leaders communicate ceaselessly on social media on other matters.

Whatever lies behind the government's decisions of the last few days — whether it is preparation for contentious and polarising constitutional change, or a strategic assertion of statehood in response to the cosying up of the US with Pakistan towards a deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan — the fallout in the Valley cannot be good. That the government has chosen not to offer any explanations even to the leadership of the two main parties, who command a following among Kashmiris in their own right, is a mistake. Showing separatist politicians their place is one thing. But making a show of contempt for mainstream politicians is ill-judged. Any gains New Delhi has made in the past in the Valley have depended heavily on widening the stakes in peace and increasing the number of stakeholders. Now, an unfortunate impression is gaining ground that the Centre is again narrowing and centralising the decision-making process. Without the support of the Kashmiri people, Delhi's disconnect with the Valley can only increase.

# CURE IN PROGRESS

New medical authority to replace MCI is welcome. But it will have to connect several dots, learn from past experiences

EVERAL MEDICAL emergencies in the past five years, including the AES outbreak in Bihar in June, have shone the light on the deficiencies of India's healthcare sector. It's clear that the country lacks quality medical professionals at the panchayat and district levels. Medical research in the country has not kept up with the changing disease burden. Dogged by several controversies in the past 15 years, the internal regulator of the medical profession, the Medical Council of India (MCI), has failed its mandate of "ensuring excellence in medical education". The National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill -- passed by the Rajya Sabha last week -- that envisages an overhaul of the country's medical education system, therefore, promises to address a critical challenge. However, the 25member NMC, that will take over the regulation of medical education from the MCI, will need to connect several dots to fulfil its promise.

The government will appoint 20 members of the new regulatory body. This has not gone down well with the Indian Medical Association (IMA). Controversies over the MCI elections and the agency's tarnished record have, no doubt, exposed the frailties of self-governance. But the IMA's fears of further compromise in standards are not unfounded, given that past experience shows that the party in office often rewards its loyalists whenever the government arrogates to itself the task of constituting a body of professionals. The search committee mandated by the Bill to recommend the names of the NMC's non-elected members must, therefore, go strictly by the new agency's credo: "Enforcing high ethical standards in medical services".

Clause 32 of the Bill provides for granting "limited licenses" to 3.5 lakh community health providers (CHPs), who can then operate at the primary healthcare level and prescribe preventive medicines. Given the dearth of MBBS doctors in rural and far-flung areas, this measure could fill a major void in the country's healthcare system. The IMA, however, apprehends that the move would "result in quackery", especially because the Bill does not delineate the qualifications of the CHPs. Past initiatives to integrate CHPs in the healthcare systems of states have produced mixed results, at best. For instance, the Chhattisgarh government's scheme -- launched in 2001 -- to place such medical practitioners in the state's healthcare system lasted only four years. Courses introduced for CHPs did not get the required traction because the students were reportedly not sure of their career path. Assam has had similar experiences with CHPs. The process of framing rules of the new legislation should, therefore, be attentive to such experiences.

# Freeze Frame

E P Unny



# What investors really want



Modi 2.0 must move the needle towards meeting necessary conditions for incentivising investment

VIKRAM S MEHTA

BUSINESS SENTIMENT IS grim. Few corporates have the financial capability to invest; even fewer the desire. The reasons are several but the common thread linking all corporates is a concern about the direction and predictability of the policy and regulatory environment. There is a lack of confidence in the ability of the leadership to convert the political promise of "ease of doing business" into bureaucratic performance. There is a "trust deficit". The government will have to bridge this deficit to realise its economic growth strategy.

The government's objective is to grow the economy to USD5 trillion by 2025. Given that the current size of the economy is USD2.7 trillion, this means it will have to grow at an annualised rate of 8 per cent over the next five years. This is a credible, albeit ambitious, objective. It has been achieved before and there is no fundamental or structural block to securing such a rate again. The twist is investment. Growth cannot be sustained at the 8 per cent level without reversing the current declining trend in private investment (and exports). This fact has been acknowledged by the Chief Economic Adviser in the Economic Survey and by the FM in her budget speech. Both have stressed the need to revive "animal spirits" to catalyse the virtuous cycle of investment, jobs, productivity, exports, consumption and growth. Investment is the centrepiece of their growth

The question, therefore, is: What must be done to resuscitate investor sentiment? At a macro level, the answer is clear.

Investors look for macroeconomic stability and a supportive regulatory and policy environment. They are incentivised to invest when inflation is under control, the fiscal deficit is within prudential limits and the external account is broadly in balance. They want connected and efficient infrastructure and the easing of supply side "factor market" constraints. This means expeditious processes for land acquisition, flexible and unshackled labour policy and deepened capital markets unclogged from the choke of NPAs. They also want competitive tax rates, simplified procedures and transparent and fair mechanisms for dispute resolution.

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articulated necessary

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The issue is whether these are sufficient. Is this all that is required to spur investment? I am not so sure. I believe there is a subtler condition that needs also to be met. The corporate leader must believe that promise will indeed convert to performance. His subjective preference is a non-quantifiable but important driver of investment decisions.

I was involved with a large multinational for many years. What struck me was that investment decisions were often driven by personal perceptions. The investment proposals were, of course, subject to rigorous economic and geopolitical analysis. Empirical data was gathered on the market, competition, costs, prices and regulations. Scenarios were built to capture the consequences of the unexpected. Sensitivity analysis was carried out to define the range of possible outcomes. But when the analysis was finally presented for a decision, the discussion often focused on the intangibles of geopolitical, bureaucratic and regulatory risk. And the decision was often driven by the leadership's perceptions of these risks than by the hard numbers presented to them.

I was at the helm of the company at a time when China was the flavour of the international investor community. I found myself continually battling perceptions. People knew more about India than China. But what they "knew" about India was mostly negative. Their perception was it was tangled in an undergrowth of red tape, bureaucratic encumbrance and regulatory uncertainty. On the other hand, what they knew about China was positive, albeit limited. They did not understand the investment environment. They did not speak the language; and Chinese culture was an enigma. But they "knew" China offered a huge market with massive potential. This perception (and, of course, reality) was an important determinant of the final decision.

India also offered a large market and potential but unfortunately perception militated against a positive decision. On at least two occasions, an investment proposal for India was turned down in favour of a project in China even through the projects were similar and the earning power of the former was

higher than that of the latter. The reason was the subjective predilections of the corporate

UPA 2 will be remembered for the ignominy of corporate scandals. The telecom and coal scandals showed up the nexus between corrupt politicians and opportunistic businessmen. It was crony capitalism at its worst. The banking crisis has its genesis in this nexus. Modi 1.0 broke this nexus decisively. It ended what Raghuram Rajan has referred to as "relationship based capitalism" in which the quid of corporate "hospitality" was exchanged for the "quo" of political favours. It redefined the nature of engagement between government and business. Today few, if any, corporate houses can be confident of extracting favours from the political leader-

Modi 2.0 should carry forward this reset in the terms of engagement. It runs no risk in forging a collaborative relationship with business. There might have been a public backlash had it sought such a relationship in the aftermath of the scandals that shook the UPA government.

Modi 1.0 moved the needle somewhat towards meeting the necessary conditions for incentivising investment. The GST, RERA, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act, the improvement in the "ease of doing business" index, digitisation etc were welcomed by the business community. More was expected but the initiatives were appreciated. Modi 2.0 should now push this needle further. Business and government occupy differ-

ent spaces. But they have interlocking interests. The walls separating the two should therefore be perforated. The FM has called for such a perforation. She made explicit in her budget speech the government's interest in bringing private industry into a partnership relationship with it. She should follow that up with assurances that government does not regard every businessman as a tax dodger; or every business as bent on gaming the system. That, instead, it wants to build a relationship based on trust and mutuality of interest.

The writer is Chairman and Senior Fellow, **Brookings India** 

# SISTERHOOD OF SURVIVORS

We need more shows that place the experiences of women at their centre

SURBHI GUPTA

IT'S ALMOST TWO weeks since the second season of *Big Little Lies* came to a close. The disappointment of viewers is pretty wellknown. The second season was somewhat tame compared to the first season that opened and ended with a murder. Apart from the stellar cast that includes Oscar-winning actors Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon, what drew attention towards the mini-series was that it had women and children at the centre of the narrative, with the men mostly playing side roles. When I first heard about the show, it seemed like just another story with a murder mystery – perhaps with desperate housewives. But the seven-episode long first season was an essential watch because it threw light on issues we all know of — domestic violence and sexual abuse, school bullies and pregnancy from rape — but rarely talk about.

The disappointment over its plot aside, in its second season, Big Little Lies was still a powerful reminder that we need more shows that put the experiences of women at the centre. And they work with audiences, who having crossed over the #MeToo wave, are more aware and sensitive.

The first season, aired in 2017, turned out to be prescient. Just six months later, the Harvey Weinstein scandal brought the hitherto hushed-up reality of sexual abuse and



The show gives a face to different types of mothers the one who sacrifices her career, the one who doesn't want to, the single mother and the soccer mom. And we aren't asked to judge any of them.

harassment in Hollywood into the open. And there were ripples all over the world, including India. We were witness to the abuse Celeste (essayed by Kidman) faced at the hands of her husband Perry. In season two, he isn't there and she misses him. There is a poignant scene when the therapist asks Celeste to remember the abuse, and she does so painfully and quietly. The therapist asks her to imagine what if her best friend Madeline (played by Witherspoon) experienced the same trauma. This time, she explodes with rage and fury.

Moments like these make the show telling. It's a chilling exposition of the fact that sexual abuse often comes hand in hand with gaslighting — a phenomenon in which the abuser makes the victim question her own reality. For someone who is on her way out of an abusive relationship, the aftermath can be hard. It is normal to think of the past with a tinge of nostalgia — that comes from a belief that "it couldn't have been that bad".

The show gives a face to different types of mothers — the one who sacrifices her career, the one who doesn't want to, the single mother and the soccer mom. And we aren't asked to judge any of them. Mothers can be competitive, it is natural for them to want the best for their children. We did belittle petty fights and rolled our eyes when Madeline snapped at people. But the show is a reminder that we must stop sneering at such "flawed women", and take notice of the friendships they strike. This season was an ode to female solidarity and sisterhood.

The show takes the issue of mothering further with a courtroom drama for the custody of Celeste's twin boys. She was subjected to a witch hunt, when the photographs of her sexual relations with various men, outside the realm of her home, were used to judge her as a mother.

Big Little Lies also has Jane, essayed by Shailene Woodley. In season one, there was an air of mystery to her. She had recently moved to Monterey in California and found herself surrounded by the "rich people's club". Her world revolved around her son Ziggy, who, it was later revealed, was born out of rape.

Woodley's character gives weight to the second season. While cinema has dealt with sexual assault and rape, a conversation between the mother and her eight-year-old son about such violence is still rare. Woodley also translates the hesitation victims of assault face with intimacy in a manner that is touchingly human.

surbhi.gupta@expressindia.com

# AUGUST 5, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



CONG UNITY TALKS KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER Devraj Urs has conveyed to Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar that if he is serious to bring about unity among Congressmen in the state, he should step down from his present position. A source said that Pawar might make a statement after the state legislature was prorogued towards the end of the next week. He also said that there was a possibility that unity talks might be resumed after the Bangalore session of the pre-split AICC to be held on August 18. A source said that Vasantrao Patil and Nasikrao Tirpude, Congress and Prajatantra Congress leaders respectively, had made in abundantly clear

that there could not be any progress in the unity talks unless "Pawar climbs down from power".

## IIAS, SIMLA TO STAY

WITHOUT YET GOING into the long-term education policy, the new government is considering immediate steps to change a few decisions of its predecessor. The Indian Institute of Advanced Studies at Simla is likely to stay. The Desai government had decided to wind it up by September I, following an expert committee's report that the performance of the institute was below expectations. This recommendation was, however, challenged

by many scholars who argued that the orig-

inal objectives of the institute — to be like Princeton or the All Souls' College at Oxford — were all right but they had gone awry because of too much governmental control.

## IA PLANE CRASHES

AN INDIAN AIRLINES Avro-10 flight coming from Pune to Bombay carrying 41 passengers and four crew members, crashed on a hill at Kiroli village at about 9 pm. (According to UNI, all 45 persons are feared to have been killed) The aircraft was on the radar screen up to 11 miles from Bombay airport. After this, it suddenly vanished. Soon after 9 pm, a truck driver stated to have informed the Mumbra police in Thane district about the crash.

POWER INTENSITY IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE (KWH/HA)

# THE IDEAS PAGE

#### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The end of the INF nuclear treaty is a bad step that could be followed by a - THE GUARDIAN worse one."

# Helpless in Unnao

## State institutions have been complicit in denying justice to the victim



PRAKASH SINGH

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE system of the country is "virtually collapsing" and "as it is slow, inefficient and ineffective, people are losing confidence in the system". This was stated by the Justice Malimath Committee (2000-2003), which had been constituted to recommend reforms in the criminal justice system. Thanks to certain lobbies, the salient recommendations of the Committee were never implemented. Meanwhile, the system continues to go down a slippery slope.

There could be no greater indictment of the system than the fact that the Supreme Court had to intervene in a case of alleged rape to ensure that justice was done to the victim. Under normal circumstances, it should have been possible for the matter to be disposed in a satisfactory manner at the thana level. However, there was complete failure at all levels of administration, particularly in the police.

The facts about the Unnao case are as follows. A minor girl is gang-raped, allegedly by an MLA, Kuldeep Singh Sengar, his brother and accomplices, on June 17, 2017. The police register a case of kidnapping, but the MLA is not named in the FIR. On April 3, 2018, her father is brutally assaulted, allegedly by Sengar's men, for refusing to withdraw the complaint. The police, in a bizarre twist to the case, arrest the her father for alleged illegal possession of firearms. She attempts to immolate herself outside the chief minister's residence on April 8, 2018. The very next day, her father dies in judicial custody. There is widespread outrage. On April 12, three days after her father had succumbed to the injuries, four days after her attempted suicide and more than nine months after the gruesome incident, a case of rape is finally registered against the MLA under the IPC and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. The MLA is not arrested even at this

stage, and the case is handed over to the CBI. The CBI arrests Sengar on April 13, 2018, but the travails of the aggrieved family do not end. The family is said to have sent 35 written complaints to the police and administration over a period of one year, saying they would be targeted by the henchmen of the jailed MLA. But police do not take any effective action. On the contrary, they register an FIR against the woman, her mother and uncle on December 27, 2018 for having submitted forged documents to show that she was a minor at the time of the alleged rape. On July 12, 2019, the woman and her relatives send letters, among others, to the Chief Justice of India, alleging that the MLA had threatened them

with dire consequences if they did not settle the sexual assault case with the accused. And, on July 28, 2019, the car in which the woman was travelling is rammed by a truck under suspicious circumstances. Her two aunts are killed. The woman and her lawyer, who was also in the car, suffer grievous injuries. The security personnel provided to her inexplicably did not accompany her during the journey. The truck's number plate was found defaced. The woman is presently struggling for life.

Sengar, who was in the BSP and then in the Samajwadi Party before getting elected on a BJP ticket in 2017, is in jail, hoping to be released on bail one day and then, perhaps, acquitted for want of evidence.

The handling of the case by UP Police has been, to say the least, disgraceful. The sequence of events clearly brings out that the local police was hand in glove with the politician, trying to protect him at every stage and causing harassment to the woman and her family. Senior officers in the home department cannot escape responsibility either. The case dragged on for nearly two years. There was enough time to diagnose the problem and take corrective action. However, that was not done. Supervision was inexcusably lax and complicit. It was regrettable on the part of the police to have said, even before forensic examination, that the car crash prima facie seemed to be an "accident".

The CBI has not covered itself with glory either. It is true that the agency filed chargesheets as far back as July 2018 — one charging the MLA with abduction and rape and a second one charging four people of the murder of the woman's father. A third chargesheet was filed against the legislator for planting weapons on the woman's father. The CBI should have taken steps to ensure that important witnesses were not intimidated, much less eliminated. And why could trial in the chargesheeted cases not begin?

Fortunately, the Supreme Court issued a slew of directions on August 1, transferring the trial of rape and other related cases to Delhi and ordering that the trial be completed within 45 days. It has also directed the CBI to complete investigation into the accident case in 14 days and ordered the UP government to pay an interim compensation of Rs 25 lakh to the survivor. The CRPF has been asked to provide protection to the victim, her family and the lawyer.

The Supreme Court has been trying to depoliticise the police. It gave directions which, if sincerely implemented, would have insulated police from external pressures. Why are the states being allowed to trifle with them? The apex court needs to introspect if the monitoring and implementation of its directions has been ade-

quate. Similarly, the Witness Protection law has yet to be passed by the Centre. It has been on the anvil for several years. It should be enacted without further delay.

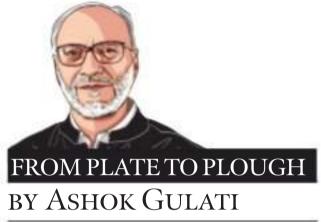
> The writer is chairman, Indian Police **Foundation**

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#### CR Sasikumar

# In the shade of solar trees

Helping farmers produce solar energy can help realise the government's target of doubling farmers' incomes



IN JULY, TWO interesting things happened that can help Indian farmers to a large extent in augmenting their incomes. First, the Union Finance Minister (FM) in her maiden budget speech asked why the annadata (farmer) cannot become the urjadata (producer of solar power). Second, in Parliament, the agriculture minister for state, responding to a question on the prime minister's promise of doubling farmers' income (DFI) by 2022, admitted that the existing set of policies cannot double farmers' real incomes by 2022.

I welcome and appreciate this honesty, although the prime minister may still be optimistic about fulfilling his dream of doubling farmers' income by 2022. I have been saying this for the last two years through this newspaper column that it is almost impossible to attain this goal by 2022 with the set of policies that the government has adopted. They will not achieve even half the target. The remaining four years till 2022-23 require real incomes of farmers to go up by 13-15 per cent per annum. But, as they say, nothing is impossible in this world, so here is my single suggestion to move in that direction.

But, before that, let us quickly recapitulate the debate on this slogan of doubling farmers' income given by the PM in Bareilly in February 2016. The PM said it is his "dream" to double farmers' income by 2022. It was followed by the setting up of a committee headed by Ashok Dalwai in April 2016. The Committee clarified real incomes will need to be doubled over seven years (over a base income of 2015-16), which requires a growth rate of 10.4 per cent per year. The Committee submitted its final report in September 2018. It comprises of 14 volumes

(almost 3,000 pages) and 619 recommendations. These volumes contain a wealth of information, but I doubt any government can implement 619 recommendations even in five years. My humble submission to our friend Ashok Dalwai and his team is that they will do a great national service if they bring out a summary of 14 volumes in 20-25 pages, and prioritise just five to 10 recommendations from a laundry list of 619.

But, let us get back to the FM's statement on the annadata becoming the urjadata. This one policy has the potential to double farmers incomes within a year or two. How? Here are the details.

The PM has also set a target of producing 100 GW of solar power by 2022. He wants the country to be one of the frontrunners in the International Solar Alliance for clean energy. So far, the model that has been adopted to develop solar power is inviting bids from large business players. And big players did enter, ranging from Mahindra and Mahindra to the Adanis and so on. Some of them, who entered early into power purchase agreements (PPA) with state governments, had to burn their hands when the costs came down and state governments forced them to revise the costs of PPA downwards, upsetting their economic calculations. But this model of generating solar power was not very inclusive. The land is locked for solar panels for almost 25 years, and the benefits go only to a few investors.

The alternative model is to help farmers produce solar power on their lands, making annadata an urjadata. After all, farmers occupy the largest chunks of land in this country. This model will be much more inclusive and can help augment their incomes significantly. There are two variants of this: One, replace all pump-sets, especially diesel ones, with solar pumps and the excess power generated through solar panels can be purchased by state governments at a price that gives the farmer a good margin over his cost of producing solar power. Second, encourage farmers to grow "solar trees" on their lands at a height of about 10-12 feet in a manner that enough sunlight keeps coming to plants below. Under this variant, the farmer

can keep growing two irrigated crops as he has been doing, but the solar tree generates a lot of excess power that can be purchased by the state government. The power generated under the second variant is multiple times more than under the first variant, and therefore the income augmentation can also be several times more than under the first variant.

At ICRIER, we did a global survey on this and found that it is being practised in many countries from Japan to China to Germany, and India is ripe for this. The problem is of mobilising enough capital to instal these solar trees. In one acre you can have 500 solar trees in such a manner that even tractors can move through those and farmers can keep growing their normal two crops. It does not impact their productivity as there is ample sunlight coming from the sides for photosynthesis. The second pre-condition is that the state should be ready to do the power purchase agreement.

The current LG of Delhi, Anil Baijal, got excited about this idea and wanted to implement it in Delhi's agri-belt as a demonstration plot. After several meetings with him and his team, the Delhi government actually announced a policy to that effect. As per their calculations, 500 trees can be put on an acre of farmer's land; the investment in solar panels (trees) will be done by other business people. The only thing that the farmer has to assure is that for 25 years he will not convert his land to other uses. The economic calculations suggest that farmers can be given Rs one lakh/acre per annum as net income, with a six per cent increase every year for the next 25 years. This can easily double their income. He does not have to mobilise capital for solar panels. That is done by other business, who

also make profit in the process. Given that power consumption per hectare in Indian agriculture is still very low (see graph), this holds great promise for several poorer states. Can the Modi government unleash this revolution of solar power and double farmers' income?

> The writer is Infosys Chair professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### MORALITY, POLITICS THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A familiar

despair' (IE August 1). The week long political drama in Karnataka came to an end with the BJP-led government coming to office. Political analysts have been criticising these developments. But this is not the first time that such a development has taken pace. The main reason of this phenomenon is the lack of morality in public life. To single out the Karnataka case as a case of political debasement is unfair.

Ravi Mathur, Ghaziabad

## DIGNITY MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Taking down patriarchy' (IE, August 1). The writer notes how abolishing triple talaq will give "real freedom to Muslim women who were subjugated to exploitation and terror "Sure we have laws that prohibit dowry and other such diabolical practices but are we really a dowry/domestic violence-free country? Real freedom doesn't merely comprise laws but the ability and freedom to step out of oppressive conditions The new law surely takes away the absolutely unacceptable right of a man to divorce his wife at his convenience by simply uttering three words but does it guarantee a woman a life of dignity and respect?

**Devanshi Bhati,** Delhi

# APT PANACEA

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Healthcare is ailing' (IE, August 2). The National Medical Commission is not a one stop solution for all the ails of the medical and hospital sector. But it is still a step in the right direction. There are differences of opinion of some of its provisions. But those

#### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian **Express offers the Letter of** the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to

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should be sorted out amicably. We all want medical education in our country to be world class, and to stop the brain drain in the medical profession. Balancing out the poor patient doctor ratio is equally critical. The provision for community doctors in the new NMC bill would go a long way in meeting this requirement.

**Bal Govind,** Noida

## LOVE OF FOOD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Eat, pray, love' (IE, August 2). Zomato has taken a principled stand that none has the right to communalise food or the business of catering. This refreshing. **S S Paul,** Nadia

### VIEW FROM THE Neighbourhood



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

In one acre you can have 500

solar trees in such a manner

that even tractors can move

through those and farmers

normal two crops. It does

as there is ample sunlight

coming from sides for

photosynthesis.

not impact their productivity

can keep growing their

# KASHMIR CENTRESTAGE

BETWEEN DONALD Trump's claim that Narendra Modi asked him to "mediate" the Kashmir dispute, and the new NDA government's seeming determination to abrogate Section 35A and Article 370, as promised in the BJP's manifesto, Kashmir is front and centre in the discussions in the Pakistani media. A cursory reading between the lines of newspaper editorials and opinion articles makes the conundrum for Rawalpindi and Islamabad clear.

On the one hand, as Moonis Ahmar puts it in an article in The Express Tribune, "Pakistan must be careful while accepting American mediation offer on Kashmir, as it will question Pakistan's stance that the Kashmir conflict needs to be resolved according to the aspirations of the Kashmiris and as per the UNSC resolutions." But, there appears to be an argument in favour of international interference (or mediation, depending on your point of view), articulated by Dawn in its editorial: "The fact is that unless the Kashmir issue is addressed, peace in the subcontinent will be a distant dream. And it is also a fact that bilateral attempts to address the Kashmir question and restart dialogue have hit a brick wall, thanks mainly to Indian arrogance and intransigence."

Two developments over the last month seem to be affecting the discourse in Pakistan around Kashmir. First, is the claim by Trump that Modi asked him to intervene in Kashmir. Trump's statement, despite the vehement denials by New Delhi's foreign policy establishment, seems to have energised the commentariat in Pakistan into encouraging the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue. Second, New Delhi's policy stance in the Valley seems to provide some fodder for this endeavour. The decision to re-imagine the constitutional, federal structure of Kashmir vis a vis the Indian state, and the demographic insecurities and concerns that engenders as well as the accusations of human rights violations by Indian security forces, seem to be one of the justifications of the first aspect of the narrative.

## ROHINGYA DILEMMA

SINCE THE influx of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh, the media in the country has been critical of Myanmar for its treatment of the Muslim minority community, as well as called for the reparation of the refugees back to Rakhine State. However, as the July 25 editorial in The Dhaka Tribune shows, the issue is far from a simple one. It welcomes the arrival of "high-level delegation

from Myanmar to convince the Rohingya to return home" but acknowledges that "sadly, the overall task remains more complicated than one of simple persuasion".

The editorial contends that "recent satellite images" show that Myanmar is illprepared for the refugees to return home and that the country is still not open to human rights organisations, journalists and international watchdogs.

The editorial argues: "Ethnic cleansing operations on a scale that took place in Rakhine state cannot and should not be swept under the rug, and it is a duty of the whole world to ensure that justice is served for the crimes that were committed. It may seem convenient to ignore the humanitarian complexities of the Rohingya crisis in favour of a speedy solution, but Bangladesh has so far not taken the easy way out, sheltering a million refugees while our own resources are stretched to breaking point. We cannot just give up on these refugees now."

## Triple talaq lessons

SINCE THE Easter terror attacks in Sri Lanka, the country's Muslim minority has been under siege, and at the receiving end of the state and security forces' unwelcome attention. Ameen Izzadeen, a Sri Lankan journalist and activist argues in The Daily Mirror on August 2 that there are lessons to be learnt for the country's Muslims from the criminalisation of triple talag in India.

The article begins with recounting how in Islam — in both the Quran and the Hadith(s) — the practice of triple divorce in one sitting is a legal and religious violation. In Sri Lanka, like in India, Muslims "are embroiled in a debate over Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA) reforms. The reforms are called for because the law and the lacuna in it bring misery to Muslim women, instead of offering them the law's

protection." Izzaden argues that religious leaders in Sri Lanka must begin the process of reforms in marriage laws, making them more gender-equal, lest they give the state an opportunity to interfere in the community's affairs. The article acknowledges that by and large, religious leaders of the community are progressive and "civic-minded", yet there are some moulvis that are resistant to reform. To them, he says: "The Muslim scholars who entertain fears about MMDA reforms must realise there is nothing un-Islamic about setting 18 as the minimum age for bride and groom. Overhauling the corrupt Qazi court system is also an Islamic duty. They need to realise their opposition to reforms is in conflict with the country's constitution and several progressive laws."

### Freeing Kulbhushan

Pakistan's delay in giving full consular access reveals a non-serious attitude to ICJ order

Two weeks after the International Court of Justice at The Hague ruled in favour of India in the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, Pakistan has yet to take the first step towards implementing the order: providing him "consular access". In its verdict on July 17, the ICJ had decided near-unanimously that by not informing India immediately of Mr. Jadhav's arrest in 2017, by not informing him of his rights, and not allowing the Indian High Commission to meet with him and arrange for his legal representation, Pakistan was in violation of the Vienna convention on consular relations. Although Pakistan's Foreign Ministry had offered a meeting between Mr. Jadhav and the Indian High Commission in Islamabad on Friday afternoon, the offer came with conditions, including CCTV cameras on proceedings, and a Pakistani official being in the room during the meeting. This was a violation of the unimpeded consular access that the ICJ had ordered, and India decided to reject the offer until Pakistan reconsiders its conditions. India's concerns are three-fold. First, Pakistan's delay in granting full consular access displays a non-serious attitude to implementing a clear-cut order from the UN's highest judicial body. This augurs badly for Pakistan's application of the rest of the ICJ order that calls for a full review of Mr. Jadhav's trial conviction and death sentence for terrorism and espionage charges. Most importantly, the nature of the conditions indicates Pakistan wants to monitor what Mr. Jadhav tells Indian officials closely, as much of their original case, as presented to the public, rested on his purported confession. If he shares adverse details of coercion, the court may well go beyond its current order in the case, and India may have a stronger chance of trying to have the trial overturned.

Islamabad must stop dragging its feet and creating unnecessary hurdles in providing what is a basic human right for Mr. Jadhav, and New Delhi needs to keep its rhetoric low, while pressing its case for access to the former naval officer, consistently and firmly. This will not be easy, as after some relative calm, shelling at the Line of Control has opened up with a new fury in the last few days. The allegations by Pakistan that the Indian Army is deploying cluster-munitions on civilian areas (firmly denied by the government), and the Army's claim that several Pakistani regulars and terrorists were killed in an infiltration attempt by a "Border Action Team" (BAT) have ratcheted up tensions further. The government's ham-handed reaction to the threats, of cancelling the Amarnath Yatra, pulling out tourists and pilgrims and raising security levels in the valley further, have only added to the narrative. It would indeed be a tragedy if the situation overshadows the fate of Mr. Jadhav, just when hopes had been raised by the international court verdict to help secure his freedom.

## Bigger and better

More judges are welcome, but SC must focus on its role as interpreter of the Constitution

ny move to increase the strength of the judiciary ought to be welcomed, given the perennial com-▲ plaint that availability of judges is not increasing in proportion to the institution of cases. In this perspective, the Union Cabinet's decision to raise the strength of the Supreme Court from 31 to 34, including the Chief Justice of India, will help in dealing with the large pendency – 59,331 cases on July 11. The law that fixes the number of judges in the highest court was last amended in 2009 to raise the figure from 26 to 31. Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi had written to the Prime Minister recently, highlighting the problem of paucity of judges, due to which he was unable to constitute enough Constitution Benches to decide important questions of law. However, a moot question is whether the highest court should go into the correctness of every decision of every high court. Are the judicial resources available being used optimally? Is valuable time being taken up by mundane matters that do not impinge on larger questions that involve interpretation of laws and constitutional provisions? For instance, routine bail matters land up in the Supreme Court within days of persons being arrested. Every major crime or disaster seems to invite a litigant, ostensibly in public interest, who mentions the matter before the Chief Justice for urgent hearing. The court is being invited to even oversee flood relief work.

A mere increase in the court's strength may not be enough to liquidate the burgeoning docket. Another set of measures that would save the court's time, including a reasonable restraint on the duration of oral arguments and a disciplined adherence to a schedule of hearings may be needed. In this case, one of the principal objectives should be to preserve the apex court's primary role as the ultimate arbiter of constitutional questions and statutory interpretation. All other questions involving a final decision on routine matters, especially civil cases that involve nothing more than the interests of the parties before it, ought to be considered by a mechanism that will not detract from the court's primary role. Some countries have brought in a clear division at the level of the apex judiciary by having separate constitutional courts, which limit themselves to deciding questions of constitutional importance. It may be worthwhile considering the 229th Report of the Law Commission, suggesting a new system under which there will be one Constitution Bench in Delhi, and four 'Cassation Benches' for different regions of the country. These will be final appellate courts for routine litigation. This arrangement may also increase access to justice to those living in far-flung areas of the country and who may otherwise have to come to Delhi and spend more time and money in pursuing appeals. It may also cut down on the time taken for disposal of cases.

# A political reinvention in a moment of crisis

India needs a national party to provide substantive opposition to the government - all is not lost for the Congress



NEERA CHANDHOKE

loday, we, the people of India, are trapped between a rock and a hard place. On one side is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which continues to bulldoze legislation, controversial at best and ill-intentioned at worst, through Parliament. On the other is the Opposition, unable to mount a concerted and effective critique of government policies. The sluggishness of the non-NDA parties is cause for some puzzlement. After all, 55% of the electorate has voted for them. Unfortunately, this vote is hardly reflected in Parliament.

Political scientists have been, for long, concerned with the often astounding gap between vote shares and the number of seats a party obtains in Parliament. This leaves a majority of the voters unrepresented. Democrats have strongly argued that the "winner takes all" principle needs to be relegated to the wayside and replaced with the system of proportional representation. This is, however, another story. The BJP is hardly likely to initiate an electoral project that might derail its relentless search for power by any

#### Bearish on the economy

What the ruling party is doing with the power it has acquired is equally puzzling. India is heading toward an economic crisis. Economic growth has slowed down, domestic and global capital is reluctant to invest in the economy, and unemployment reaches a new high every day. Seldom have prominent industrialists expressed such public concern about im-

pending economic disaster as they have now. But the BJP hardly shows interest in tackling the situation. It is more interested in demolishing democratic rights and bringing the minorities to heel.

The determined refusal to confront the crisis is symptomatic of a wider problem. The ruling party is not known for either innovative politics or imagination. Its concept of well-being is limited to a free gas connection and an indifferently built flat. Its ideology is stuck in colonial stereotypes of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim'. There is nothing new in its political discourse; merely a rehash of what V.D. Savarkar wrote in 1923. The problem is that the chauvinistic ideology of religious nationalism precludes reflection and self-critique. The great debates of contemporary politics have simply bypassed the partymulticulturalism, minority rights, redistributive justice, citizenship or cosmopolitanism.

#### Forgotten legacy

The Indian National Congress has, in the past, been more inventive because its ideology was forged in the heat of the freedom struggle. Pluralism, secularism, tolerance, citizenship, fundamental and minority rights, cosmopolitanism, non-violence and anti-imperialism were thrown up in the course of the movement. On these planks the Congress was able to mobilise vast masses of people against colonialism. Sadly, the party has forgotten its legacy. We need a national party to provide substantive opposition to the government. The Congress flounders, it is rudderless.

All is not lost. Moments of crisis can lead to reinvention. The party must reinvent itself, simply because it is synonymous with the history of our freedom struggle, and with enlightened leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru. Remember

that Nehru's vision inspired great literature, poetry, films, art, theatre, and architecture. What do we have today except mediocre hagiography? A ruling class which cannot inspire cultural creativity can only rule by coercion. In modern politics, this is counted as a fai-

#### Leading from the front

To reinvent itself the Congress must draw upon five lessons of its own past, some good, some bad, some indifferent. One, its leaders were moral exemplars. They were visionaries and they were courageous. In the middle of Partition violence Nehru was there, in the killing fields of Punjab and Delhi. He persuaded people to desist from violence and he assured Muslims of their safety. Today when Indians are lynched and left to die on the streets, politicians stay safely indoors. Our own people die avoidable deaths and leaders are silent. We need leaders who motivate us by example.

Two, the Congress could lead the mainstream freedom struggle because it had a robust organisation, both decentralised and democratic. The party formed a coalition of what has been called 'big men': heads of caste groups, peasantry, industry, religious formations, and workers organisations. When the party initiated or called off a movement, it relied upon second rung leaders. The central leadership left State politics, for example the conflict over linguistic States, to regional bosses.

Three, diversity of opinions and interests in the party encouraged members to engage in dialogue and persuasion. They negotiated and accommodated class, caste, and group interests within the organisation. The Congress found place for most demands, from interest groups, from individuals desirous of social reform, and from individuals stirred by the desire for power and prestige. The Congress was accommodative and a dialogical party. It practised democracy.

#### Long shadow of centralism

Four, the decline of the party in the late 1960s and the early 1970s was caused by organisational atrophy. At one point of time, the Congress possessed the ability to address, negotiate, and resolve competing demands. As the party became the captive of the leader, it lost this skill. Even as Ms Indira Gandhi began to forge a national constituency over the heads of State leaders, the party slid into centralism and the politics of the durbar. The power of individual members depended on their proximity to the leader. The BJP should learn from this history. Recollect that even ministers of the party are faceless and anonymous, their fates are held hostage by the

Five, the decline of the Congress took place at a time when politics demanded new forms of legitimacy. In the two decades following Independence, the Congress was legitimate because the party and its leadership were identified with the freedom struggle. Twenty years later, a new generation had no direct memory of the liberation movement. The Congress was however in thrall to its

leader; it failed to read the message of the time. By the late 1960s, simmering discontent came to pervade large parts of the country, and groups under the leadership of J.P. Narayan mobilised to target an unresponsive state and an equally unresponsive party system. The Congress had, however, mislaid the ability to contain discontent; it opted for coercion. Mrs Gandhi declared an Emergency.

Today, India faces imminent economic catastrophe. We confront serious threats to our democracy and to the Constitution. The ruling party is not particularly wedded to democracy. Right-wing authoritarianism has no love for any fundamental right that constrains the exercise of absolute power. Civil society will continue to struggle against violations of democracy. Scholars will write of the threat posed by wielders of absolute power to our constitutional democracy. But civil society has to function along with a democratic political party. Regional parties have degenerated into one-person dictatorships, or become family concerns. We have to call upon a party that had fought the first freedom struggle. The Congress has to step in after it reinvents itself. For only a democratic party can understand what the people of India want, desire and aspire for.

It is our duty to remind the Congress that it owes the people of India. What else can we say? We can only repeat Mark Anthony's words in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: 'For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth/Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech/To stir men's blood/ I only speak right on/ tell you that which you yourselves do know.' If the party does not respond, our future is an uncertain one.

Neera Chandhoke is a former Professor of

# Pulling a Vietnam in Afghanistan

Mired in Afghanistan, America's retreat strategy mirrors its Vietnam war campaign



STANLY JOHNY

By the late 1960s, it became evident to American leaders that they could not win the Vietnam war. Richard Nixon, who signed Henry Kissinger, the National Security Adviser, to hold talks with the communist North Vietnam, seeking "peace with honour". The Americans were actually prolonging a war they had already lost. The goal was not to defeat North Vietnam but to stop them from taking over the South, the American ally. Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers, called this approach the "stalemate machine"

Cut to today's Afghanistan. It's hard to miss the similarities in the U.S.'s strategy. After 18 years of fighting – longer than America's direct military involvement in Vietnam – the U.S. has realised that it cannot win the Afghan war. The American goal is no longer defeating the Taliban but to stop them, at least for now, from taking over Kabul. Veteran diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad is the new Kissinger. Just as Nixon wanted to get out of Vietnam, President Donald Trump too wants to get out of Afghanistan.

The U.S.'s involvement in Vietnam goes back to the last years of

French colonial rule. The U.S. first backed France against the Viet Minh guerrillas. After France exited Vietnam in 1954, the U.S. backed South Vietnam against the communist-led North. Initially, the U.S. involvement was limited to advisory roles. But after the U.S. destroyer, USS Maddox, was attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats off the Vietnamese coast, in August 1964, the Lyndon Johnson administration steadily escalated the HS's role peak, in 1968, American troop deployment in Vietnam reached 549,500 personnel. The U.S. went into Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, launching its war on terror. At the peak of the war here, there were over 1,00,000 troops. Despite the massive deployment of troops and superior air power, the U.S. got stuck and failed to stabilise the

#### From a position of weakness

In Vietnam, the U.S. was negotiating from a position of weakness. By the late 1960s, American public opinion had largely turned against the war. Despite massive troop deployment, both the U.S. and its South Vietnamese allies had failed to make substantial gains. America's search and destroy operations in communist-dominated villages in the south and its disastrous air campaign in the north only fuelled Vietnamese hostility. The U.S. had dropped more than three times as many bombs on Vietnam as the Allied forces had during the Second World War. Besides, the South

Vietnamese regime was unpopular, oppressive and weak. In a visit to Saigon, the South's capital, a presidency, Nixon promised peace and asked the communists to reciprocate. He badly wanted a deal, and Mr. Kissinger was his bet. Nixon first started "Vietnamis-

ing" the war – reducing U.S. troop presence in Vietnam and shifting the focus from direct participation in land war to training and advisory roles, while continuing with air strikes. At the same time, Mr. Kissinger started talks with Le Duc Tho, a North Vietnamese revolutionary and diplomat. When talks were deadlocked, the U.S. offered to pull out of the South as a compromise. In 1973, the U.S., North Vietnam and representatives of South Vietnam and Viet Cong, the communist guerillas from the South, signed the Paris Peace Accords. The North and the South agreed to a ceasefire and continue holding peace talks, while the U.S. agreed to pull troops out of Vietnam.

In the case of Afghanistan as well, the U.S. is negotiating from a position of weakness. The war entered a stalemate long ago. America's allies stand divided. The go-

vernment in Kabul, which the U.S. backs, is known for infighting and chronic corruption. The security forces are struggling to ensure basic security to the public, even in the capital city. Like Nixon's "Vietnamisation", U.S. President Barack Obama had started "Afghanising" the war – pulling out most troops and moving the remainder to training and advisory roles. The Afghan war is also unpopular in America. Mr. Trump, who camforeign interventions, wants to end it. But the U.S. cannot unilaterally pull out, especially when the Taliban is on the offensive. That would cause a lasting stain on America's already battered reputation as the world's pre-eminent military power. Hence, it needs a deal; finding one is Ambassador Khalilzad's mission.

**Advantage Taliban** Mr. Khalilzad has already held multiple rounds of talks with the Taliban's representatives in Doha, Qatar. As in Vietnam, the main demand of the Afghan insurgents is a complete U.S. troop withdrawal. The U.S. and the Taliban have agreed to a road map for peace: the U.S.'s withdrawal in return for the Taliban's assurance that Afghanistan would not be used by terrorists.

The U.S. has already made two big compromises in its rush for an exit deal. It has given in to the Taliban demand that the Afghan government should be kept away from the peace process. The Taliban does not recognise the Kabul that it would hold talks with the government only after a pullout of foreign troops. Second, the U.S. continued to hold talks even in the absence of a ceasefire. As a result, the Taliban continued its terror campaign even when the peace process was under way. U.S. officials have hoped that a

government and has made it clear

deal could be reached by September 1. It is anybody's guess what will happen to the Afghan governnce America is out the U.S. was forced to pull out of Vietnam, the Southern and Northern governments hadn't reached any settlement but for the ceasefire. The plan was for talks to continue, seeking a final agreement. The ceasefire did not last long. In the two years after the U.S. pulled out, the communists captured Saigon and the government crumbled like a house of cards.

In the case of Afghanistan, there is not even a ceasefire between the government and the Taliban even as the U.S. is preparing to make an exit. The winning side is the Taliban, which, unlike the Viet Cong, is a anti-modern, anti-woman, anti-minority fundamentalist machine, whose earlier regime was notorious for excessive sectarian violence. The Taliban is part of the problem, not a solution. The Communists unified Vietnam, and after early years of struggle, modernised the economy and rebuilt the country into an Asian powerhouse. For Afghanistan, the tunnel gets longer and darker.

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

#### Sengar's stronghold

That the residents of Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, are defending Kuldeep Singh Sengar, the expelled Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA, despite the fact that he is in jail and charged with raping a young woman, speaks volumes about the money and muscle power of politicians belonging to the ruling party (Front page, "Despite the outrage, Unnao bats for rape-accused Kuldeep Sengar," August 4). Earlier, some BJP MLAs in the erstwhile Iammu and Kashmir government had expressed their solidarity with those involved in the Kathua rape episode. Acts that show tolerance towards the alleged

perpetrators of heinous crimes have been on the rise under the previous and current Central governments. The BJP high command, by not reining in such criminals, has only emboldened them and this has had a detrimental impact on the peaceful coexistence between communities. Those in authority should do their best to bring justice to the victims of these crimes. A. JAINULABDEEN,

■ The way in which the Unnao episode is unfolding makes me wonder whether our society has lost all sense of morality and ethics. Even after two years of the incident, the case remains

unsolved and amidst so many twists and tragic turns. it has required the Supreme Court's intervention to fast forward the investigations. Indian society needs to recalibrate its moral compass if we are to progress as a civilisation. With its brute majority, the government should deal with rape cases with a firm hand without showing favour to anybody. Bringing justice to those affected by such crimes is as important as maintaining national security, the government's pet theme. A.S. SRINIVASAN,

#### **Build-up in Kashmir** The surge in troop deployment and the eviction

of tourists and pilgrims from

Kashmir have left the people flummoxed and fearful. (Front page, "Uncertainty grips Kashmir Valley," August 4). At the same time, one cannot question the government's right to adopt pre-emptive measures based on actionable intelligence about possible attacks. Though the government cannot be expected to reveal the exact details of the intelligence reports, a reassuring clarification that the security blanket is not to further any political agenda will help to assuage the people's concerns. V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,

■ The situation in Kashmir, in the wake of the Centre's decision to ask Amarnath

pilgrims to cancel their trips and its move to increase the number of troops in the Valley, is a cause for concern. The government's actions give an impression that its top echelons are planning something 'big' and its unilateral handling of all issues is bound to have serious repercussions. The BJP would do well to remember that notwithstanding its brute majority in Parliament, democratic governance is premised on consensus. J. ANANTHA PADMANABHAN,

#### **UAPA** amendments India undoubtedly needs tough laws to combat terrorism, but the proposed

amendments to the Unlawful

also give more power to the Centre, encroaching on the authority of States. The law can become one more weapon in the hands of a regime hell-bent on delegitimising dissent. The government needs to be mindful of fundamental rights of citizens while legislating against terror ("UAPA Bill gets Rajya Sabha nod," August 3). T.S.N. RAO, Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh

Activities (Prevention) Act

wrongful designation of an

individual as a terrorist will

cause irreparable damage to

settle political scores. A

his/her reputation and

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may be misused by leaders to

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

# The roots of sexual brutality

In India, it is the quintessential form of political privilege and social authority



As the young woman from Unnao, victim of multiple outrages, battles for her life, we, who are often reduced to being hapless chroniclers, have once again to wonder at the everyday workings of India's criminal justice system. Though several rounds of police and judicial reforms have sought to improve its workings, and humanise its approach, the fact remains that at the level of the police thana, other factors direct police action. Local political power; economic, social and sexual tensions between individuals; caste and community equations; habitual misogyny; and the measure of impunity that a perpetrator of crime might claim and exercise all shape not only police responses but those of the civilian government as well, including of doctors, revenue officers and

those in the local Collectorate. As those of us who have worked on issues of sexual assault since the late 1970s know, a complainant is most likely to be disbelieved, blamed for what happened to her, and denigrated and rubbished if she is a Dalit or Adivasi, or from a community perceived as marginal. If she persists in keeping with the justice system, its menacing indifference is calculated to demoralise her. If her family supports her, there might be some relief and care, but if they don't or cannot because they are themselves under pressure to keep quiet, she is left feeling abandoned and friendless and, worse, tainted. Many a time, a protest or a campaign, or the continued presence of women's groups, Dalit groups and progressive political and civil rights interventions alone have made it possible for even an FIR to be registered.

#### **Civic indifference**

With respect to the Unnao incident, notwithstanding the fact that the families of the alleged perpetrators and victim are known to each other, and from the same caste, the sequence of events has not been essentially different. For fear of the alleged



"Multiple and entangled wrongs as unfolded in Unnao do not appear as such to those who commit them." A solidarity rally for the Unnao rape victim in front of India Gate in New Delhi on July 29, 2019. • AFP

perpetrator, an MLA belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party, the police did the bare minimum that was required of them. It was only after the victim, who had been persistent in her quest for justice, threatened self-immolation in front of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's office did the wheels of justice begin to move somewhat decisively.

What stands out even in this familiar landscape of crime is civic indifference to sexual violence. It is as if such violence is expected in situations where a supplicant approaches a man in power, and is made to wait upon or transact his ostensible largesse. We were witness to a similar and equally outrageous act in Banda, in Uttar Pradesh, in 2010, when a minor girl accused sitting Bahujan Samaj Party MLA Purushottam Dwivedi of rape. Her family had approached him for assistance and protection, since there had been an attempt to kidnap and sell the girl, with the collusion of the local police. Unlike in the Unnao instance, though, Mayawati, who was Chief Minister, called for the prosecution of her MLA. It is noteworthy that the victim had the

support of the country's only rural women's news network, Khabar Lahariya, which has been long active in the region.

#### An ornamental document

The violently transactional nature of sexual assault in these circumstances bears looking at in some detail. A woman approaches an elected representative of the people for assistance, exercising her right to state redressal and assistance. She realises very soon that her claims are not transactable in a civic sense, but only in a violently sexual sense. In the event, not only is her bodily integrity violated, but also a series of constitutionally guaranteed rights, including the right to life and livelihood. And by those who have taken an oath in the name of the Constitution!

However, these crimes are not viewed in these terms. The Constitution is seldom viewed as enunciating shared civic values and morality. Rather, it exists as a formal and ornamental document that affirms not so much our sovereign democratic selves, but the privileges we have gained as elected representatives. Second, multiple and entangled wrongs as unfolded in Unnao and Banda and indeed elsewhere do not appear as such to those who commit

For one, they are validated in any number of ways, first by the family, and next by kin and caste networks. Kuldeep Singh Sengar's brother and henchmen were fully behind his various reportedly criminal acts. More important, whatever their personal feelings, Sengar and Dwivedi's spouses felt honour-bound to insist that their husbands could never have done what they ostensibly did. For to admit that their spouses are capable of such acts of crime would be tantamount to conjugal infidelity, and a denunciation of the caste family. Female complicity in these instances helps secure male authority as given and 'natural', thus placing it beyond the pale of questioning.

In any case, even if spouses do not actively endorse their husbands' crimes, the perpetrators suffer no pangs of conscience. After all, both within the family and without, a powerful man's right to a woman's body appears a natural extension of his maleness: marital rape is not an issue, for one, and male sexual entitlement is something that women are expected to reckon with. If they don't, that is entirely their problem, as has been made clear with respect to a slew of #MeToo allegations.

#### Survival of caste society

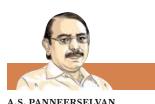
Further, such entitlement and power are affirmed by their constitutive context, which is caste society. Birthbased superiority, illegitimate as it is, cannot be sustained, unless it is renewed day in and day out through a combination of patent lies and brute force. Verbal and physical acts of sexualised humiliation and violence directed at the lower castes and Dalits are necessary for the survival of caste society and increasingly so, in the face of challenges and resistance. In the Unnao instance, and in other such instances, sexual brutality is thus not an afterthought: it is the quintessential form of political privilege and social authority in our social context. Our criminal justice system is vet to reckon with such routinised and habitual criminality, for it is never quite registered as such.

V. Geetha is a feminist historian and writer

#### FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

# Fair and participative journalism needs resources

High-quality journalism does not come free of cost



Following The Hindu's Open House in Kochi, many wrote to us seeking more details about the increased space for contributions from readers. Some raised a few questions about the idea of an interactive readers' mail, which will deal with local and civic issues.

R. Sivakumar from Chennai suggested that the 'Letters to the Editor' section on the editorial page should allow more space for letters. Jayaprakash Reddy from Nalgonda wrote: "It is most gratifying that the Editor has given his approval to start edition-centric letters to deal with local and civic issues. But whether this is confined only to the Kochi edition is not clear. I request the Editor to clarify this. There was a local letters column in the Hyderabad edition long ago, but it was stopped after a few months due to reasons better known to the Resident Editor." S. Malathi from Bengaluru asked to extend the scope of the readers' mail section to include social and political issues too.

#### Clarifications

To clarify, readers' responses to local and civic issues will not be confined to the Kochi edition alone. The Editor is keen to have a dedicated weekly section of readers' letters in all editions. Two, the 'Letters to the Editor' section is common for all the editions across the country and some additional letters that cannot be accommodated in print are published online. Given the fact that space is premium in a newspaper, there is little scope for allotting more space on the editorial page for letters. Three, the scope of the readers' mail section cannot be extended to social and political issues in a blanket manner due to a range of reasons. While the newspaper may welcome comments on social and political issues, it is also acutely aware of the need for a rigorous verification process. We need to remember what distinguishes journalism from different individual initiatives such as blogs. The authors of The Elements of Journalism, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, have come with a fine distinction: "In the end, the discipline of verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction, or art."

It is heartening to note the growing interest among readers about the economics of news production and the cost of journalism. Chidambaram Kudiarasu from Thoothukudi wrote: "At a time when the previous revenue model of advertising money is getting fragmented across platforms, readers should not grudge a few bucks more for high-quality journalism and baulk at pay walls." Rajiv Lochan felt that my claim that the revenue model for news publications was led by advertising for a century was not correct. He argued that till the market leader started the undesirable price war in 1990-91, the revenue model of the newspaper industry was reader-led, which covered operating expenses. He wrote: "Ad revenue was the surplus that would be reinvested in the business, paid out to employees and dividended out to shareholders. To claim that for a century the revenue model was led by ads is both misleading and incorrect."

#### The role of advertising

Mr. Lochan's argument is partially true. In the pre-liberalisation era, there was better balance between reader-led revenue and earnings from advertisers. It is also true that the circulation figures before 1990 were substantially low, which meant a limited operational cost. The transformation of the Indian media led to growth and proliferation. Every new platform - from privately owned TV channels to FM radio stations - expanded the market during this phase and advertising became the bedrock of financial sustainability of the news media industry. In his working paper, "A magic system? Print Publics, Consumption and Advertising in Modern Tamil Nadu", historian A.R. Venkatachalapathy observed how advertisements were critical inputs in the widening world of journalism. He cited the doyen of Tamil journalism, T.S. Chockalingam, to establish this point. Chockalingam wrote: "Without advertising revenue journalism simply cannot func-

Chockalingam's essay also explained the role of advertising in keeping the cover price considerably lower than the actual production cost. Mr. Venkatachalapathy's footnotes clearly indicate that Chockalingam made this observation as early as in 1943. Robin Jeffrey's path-breaking book, India's Newspaper Revolution, also confirms the role of advertising in the spread of the newspaper beyond the metropolitan centres.

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The Man Prindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 5, 1969

Bill on Bank nationalisation

The Lok Sabha to-night [August 4, New Del-

hil passed the Banks Nationalisation Bill sit-

ting three extra hours in the day to vote the

remaining 21 of its 27 clauses and the three

schedules and to give a final third reading to

a measure that has been described as a per-

sonal triumph for the Prime Minister, Mrs.

Indira Gandhi. The Swatantra and Jan Sangh

benches were all but empty at the historic

moment because of a walk out staged earlier

in protest against the House taking up the

third reading at the late hour. A solitary Jan

Sangh member in saffron robes did not join

the protest. Besides nationalising 14 top In-

dian banks with deposits exceeding Rs. 50 crores, the Bill seeks to introduce workers'

participation for the first time in the man-

agement of public sector agencies. Amend-

ments adopted to-day to the provisions of

the Bill give representation of bank em-

ployees in the transitory advisory boards to

bank custodians as well as in the boards of

directors to be formed after the nationalised

banks are reorganised by the Union Govern-

ment in consultation with the Reserve Bank.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 5, 1919.

Replying to Lord Wolmer in the Commons

[in London], Mr. Montagu stated that he had

India in the British Parliament.

### Rajasthan's effort to criminalise mob lynching is a good start

The Bill goes beyond just codifying SC directives

ANMOLAM & FARHEEN AHMAD

In furtherance of the recommendations made by the apex court in Tehseen S. Poonawalla v. Union of India. the Rajasthan government has introduced the Rajasthan Protection From Lynching Bill, 2019. If it gets passed, Rajasthan will be the second State after Manipur to have a dedicated law criminalising mob lynching as a special offence, in addition to other offences under the Indian Penal Code.

The Bill follows the Supreme Court's recommendations in authorising the setting up of special courts, appointment of a dedicated nodal officer, and stipulating enhanced punishments. However, its

scope is more comprehensive as it not only criminalises acts of lynching, dissemination of 'offensive material' and fostering of a 'hostile environment', but also provides for relief, legal aid, compensation and rehabilitation.

#### **Broad definition**

The Bill defines lynching as an act or series of acts of violence or aiding, abetting or attempting an act of violence, whether spontaneous or planned, by a mob (two or more persons) on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation and ethnicity. Though wide-ranging in content, the document does not cover cases of solitary offences. Noticeably, the Bill says that police officers and district magistrates have to take measures to prevent lynching and related offences. However, unlike the law on mob lynching in Manipur, it does not prescribe any punishment for dereliction of duty.

Further, some of the Bill's provisions might attract legal scrutiny. Section 8(c) of the Bill says that whoever commits an act of lynching, where the act leads to the death of the victim, shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for life and a fine not be less than ₹1,00,000 and

which may extend to ₹5,00,000. As regards sentencing, this provision completely deprives the judiciary of any amount of discretion.

#### Taking away judicial discretion

It needs to be stated that a court needs to consider all the facts and circumstances, different for each crime, while making a decision on punishment. The Supreme Court, while declaring Section 303 of the IPC unconstitutional in Mithu Singh v. State of Punjab, held that "the exercise of

judicial discretion on well-recognised principles is, in the final analysis, the safest possible safeguard for the accused. The legislature cannot make relevant circumstances irrelevant, deprive the courts of their legiti-

mate jurisdiction to exercise their discretion".

Section 9 of the Rajasthan Bill stipulates, inter alia, the same punishment for lynching and "attempting" an act of lynching. In the context of criminal law and sentencing, the principle of proportionality mandates an adequate balance of the gravity of the crime, the interests of the victim and of society, and the purposes of criminal law. The constitutional courts have time and again applied the principle of proportionality and have struck down laws that excessively harsh disproportionate.

Lynching is an egregious manifestation of prejudice, intolerance, and contempt towards the rule of law. With all its limitations, the Rajasthan Bill is evidence of political will by the State government. It is expected that deliberations help in the enactment of a more constitutionally robust Bill. However, legislation cannot act as a panacea; what is required is political commitment. It is high time that the other States and the Centre show some urgency so that creeping threats are prevented from metastasising into an out-of-control monster.

Anmolam is a lawyer, running BDLAAAW, a non-profit organisation; Farheen Ahmad is a research scholar at the South Asian University, New Delhi



#### **DATA POINT**

#### **Making a** mark

Odisha recently got a Geographical Indications (GI) tag for its variant of the rasagola. A GI tag is given to products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. There are 347 GI-tagged products across the country. By Varun B. Krishnan

**Category split** 

While Tamil Nadu has the

highest no. of handicraft

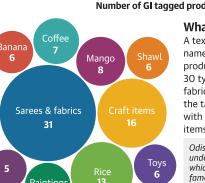
GIs, Maharashtra leads in the

no. of GI-tagged agricultural

the number of GI tags across

products. The graph shows

Geographical Kerala (Wayanad — Robusta coffee) spread Karnataka has the 0.6 (Kodaikanal Malai Poondu) highest number of GI-tagged products. 0.5 W.B. (Tulaipanji Rice) However, when Karnataka 0.4 geographical area is factored in. Kerala 0.3 has the highest. Products GI-tagged to multiple locations were omitted. The graph shows the recent GI-tagged 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 items of some States Number of GI tagged products



Source: Geographical Indications Registry

What's special? A text analysis of the names of GI-tagged products shows that over 30 types of sarees and fabrics have been given the tag (the highest). with specialised craft items figuring second

Odisha's rasagola comes under the food category which includes other

U.P. famous items such as the Tirupathi laddu, Dharwad pedha and

categories & States 201 RJ: Rajasthan, TL: Telangana, GJ: Gujarat, KL: Kerala, 150 GJ-KL-Maharashtra Others Handicrafts

Alphonso manao Darjeeling tea

A few tags

Kancheepuram silk

received to-day [July 31] only newspaper reports regarding the inadequacy of medical arrangements in the Indian Army and he had telegraphed to India for full information. He had no knowledge that any representations had been made to the General Staff at Simla in 1917 with regard to the necessity for laying a pipe line to the supply camp of Ali Masjid with pure water, but he would enquire, as he also promised to enquire to the number of men of the 6th Indian Brigade, who had been inoculated against cholera before proceeding to the frontier. Replying to Mr. Burn, Mr. Montagu said Government was most anxious to do what it could for Indian army officers taken prisoners at Kut, who had been invited to submit claims for compensation in respect to expenditure during captivity. Most of the claims had been submitted and he hoped that all would be settled shortly. Replying to Sir J. Rees, Mr. Montagu stated that he hoped to send to the Government of India shortly the advice of the Empire Cotton Growing Committee on the recommendations of the

Indian Cotton Committee.

Manufactured goods

### बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 145

#### दरों में कटौती से इतर

नीति समिति (एमपीसी) के बारे में माना जा रहा है कि वह इस सप्ताह एक बार फिर ब्याज दरों में कटौती करेगी। हालांकि खुदरा मूल्य सूचकांक पर आधारित मुद्रास्फीति जून में बढी लेकिन निकट भविष्य में उसके 4 फीसदी का स्तर पार करने की आशंका नहीं है। बहरहाल.

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) की मौद्रिक और बार दरों में कटौती आर्थिक गतिविधि बहाल करने में सहायक होगी?

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था गंभीर मंदी में है और वाहनों की बिक्री, कंपनियों के नतीजे तथा आधारभूत क्षेत्रों के ताजा आंकडों जैसे संकेतक यह बता रहे हैं कि चालु वित्त वर्ष की पहली तिमाही में वद्धि दर, जनवरी-मार्च तिमाही में फिलहाल बड़ा सवाल यह है कि क्या एक दर्ज 5.8 फीसदी से भी कम रहेगी। इतना ही

नहीं वृद्धि को सहायता पहुंचाने के लिए किसी भी तरह की राजकोषीय गुंजाइश भी नहीं है। हकीकत यह है कि कर संग्रह के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि बजट के लक्ष्य हासिल करना आसान नहीं होगा और इसके लिए व्यय में कटौती करनी पड सकती है। उच्च व्यय के समायोजन की सलाह भी नहीं दी जा सकती है क्योंकि सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र का ऋण पहले ही काफी बढ़ा हुआ है।

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को शेष विश्व से भी सहायता मिलने की उम्मीद नहीं है। वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था गति खो रही है। अमेरिकी केंद्रीय बैंक फेडरल रिजर्व ने गत सप्ताह ब्याज दरों में कटौती कर दी। वैश्विक वित्तीय संकट के बाद यह पहला अवसर है जब कटौती की गई है। अमेरिका और चीन के बीच चल रहे कारोबारी युद्ध, ब्रेक्सिट से जुड़ी अनिश्चितता और पश्चिम एशिया का भुराजनैतिक तनाव भी वैश्विक वृद्धि के लिए खतरा हैं।

दिए गए आर्थिक परिदृश्य में यह सवाल पूछना उचित है कि वृद्धि को गति देने के क्रम में मौद्रिक नीति के लिए क्या कछ उचित होगा। जून में हुई बैठक में आरबीआई के गर्वनर शक्तिकांत दास ने कहा, 'वृद्धि और मुद्रास्फीति के नए समीकरण के बीच मौद्रिक नीति के मोर्चे पर निर्णायक कदमों की आवश्यकता है।' वृद्धि के पूर्वानुमान तब से अब तक खराब ही हुए हैं। ऐसे में इस सप्ताह ब्याज दरों में कटौती से इतर तमाम अंशधारकों की नजर इस बात पर होगी कि केंद्रीय बैंक वद्धि को किस हद तक समर्थन देने को तैयार है। चूंकि आरबीआई का प्राथमिक लक्ष्य मद्रास्फीति को

4 फीसदी के आसपास रखना है इसलिए यह देखना अहम होगा मौद्रिक नीति समिति आने वाली तिमाहियों में मुद्रास्फीति और वृद्धि में कैसी प्रगति देखती है ? अगर वह वृद्धि में उल्लेखनीय धीमापन आने की उम्मीद करती है तो मौद्रिक मोर्चे पर उदारता देखने को मिल सकती है। कीमतों में ज्यादा इजाफा होने की उम्मीद नहीं है क्योंकि आर्थिक गतिविधियां पहले ही धीमी हो रही हैं। हालिया महीनों में मूल मुद्रास्फीति में गिरावट से यह परिलक्षित

इसके अलावा एमपीसी अगर यह बता दे कि वह वास्तविक ब्याज दर को किस स्तर पर रखना चाहती है और किन हालात में उसमें कमी की जाएगी तो और भी अच्छा होगा। इससे व्यवस्था में यह भरोसा पैदा होगा कि केंद्रीय बैंक मुद्रास्फीति तय करने के अपने लक्ष्य से विचलित नहीं होगा। यह भी अहम है कि वित्तीय बचत को हतोत्साहित न किया जाए। अर्थव्यवस्था को नीतिगत कदमों का लाभ मिलने के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि केंद्रीय बैंक दरों के पारेषण पर काम करे।

मौद्रिक समायोजन केवल एक सीमा तक ही कारगर हो सकता है और यह सार्थक सुधार के लिए पर्याप्त न होगा। सरकार को भूमिका निभानी होगी। कुछ हालिया कदम मसलन अमीरों के लिए आयकर की उच्च दर, उच्च आयात शुल्क, अफसरशाही को अतिरिक्त शक्ति आदि ने कारोबारी भरोसे पर असर डाला है। कुछ हालिया निर्णयों तथा अर्थव्यवस्था के संचालन का दोबारा आकलन सरकार के लिए इस दिशा में शुरुआती कदम हो सकता है।



# तीन दलबदलू, छह हत्याएं तीन बलात्कार, एक दल

कुलदीप सिंह सेंगर, संजय सिंह और साक्षी महाराज के किस्से हमें हमारी राजनीति, पुलिस और कानून व्यवस्था तथा भारतीय जनता पार्टी के बारे में काफी कुँछ बताते हैं।

गातार दलबदल करने वाले कम से कम ढाई राजनााजन बीते दिनों सुर्खियों में रहे। इनमें पहला और सबसे सुना हुआ नाम है कुलदीप सिंह सेंगर का जो उन्नाव बलात्कार-हत्याकांड में कुख्यात हुए। दूसरा नाम है अमेठी के भूतपूर्व 'राजा', पूर्व सांसद और पूर्व मंत्री संजय सिंह का जो हाल ही में कांग्रेस की डूबती नौका से कूदे हैं। तीसरा नाम है साक्षी महाराज, जो उन्नाव से भाजपा के सांसद हैं। हमने उन्हें आधा गिना है क्योंकि हाल में उनका कोई राजनीतिक या आपराधिक कृत्य सुर्खियों में नहीं आया है। उन्होंने जिक्र करने लायक काम यही किया है कि वह जेल में सेंगर से मिलने गए। यह मुलाकात लोकसभा चुनाव में सहायता के बदले धन्यवाद ज्ञापन था। ये तीनों बार-बार दल बदलते रहे हैं। इनका नाम हत्याओं के छह मामलों से जोड़ा जाता रहा है, हत्याओं के कई मामले अनसुलझे भी हैं। इसी तरह बलात्कार के कम से कम तीन अनसुलझे मामलों से इनका नाम जुडा है।

तीनों की मांग निरंतर बनी रहती है। उन्हें अपनी जाति और क्षेत्र के वोट मिलते हैं। उन्हें कानन से निपटना आता है और इनके पास ऐसी खूबी है जिसके कारण तमाम राजनीतिक दल इन्हें क्षमता, ईमानदारी और नैतिकता से परे मानते हैं, वह है चुनाव जीतने की क्षमता। संयोगवश ये तीनों भाजपा में हैं। कम से कम कुछ रोज पहले तक तो ऐसा ही था जब तक कि सेंगर को निकाल नहीं दिया गया। एक कथित अपराधी, या डॉन या कहें बाहुबली के आपराधिक जीवन पर ही इतना केंद्रित हो जाते हैं कि हम उसे रंगीन सार्वजनिक जीवन की अनदेखी कर बैठते हैं। सन 2002 में स्थानीय 'दद्दू' बसपा के टिकट पर उन्नाव से चुनाव जीतकर पहली बार माननीय विधायक बन गए।

इसके बाद वह समाजवादी पार्टी में शामिल हो गए और 2007 और 2012 के चनाव पास की बांगेरमऊ और भगवंत नगर सीटों से जीते। यही वह वक्त था जब यह माना जाने लगा था कि समाजवादी पार्टी आपराधिक माफियाओं को संरक्षण दे रही है, खासकर यादवों और राजपूतों को। सन 2017 में हवा का रुख भांपते हुए वह भाजपा में चले गए और पुनः विधायक बने। उनके भाजपा विधायक बनने के तीन महीने बाद ही वह किशोरी उनके पास नौकरी में

सहायता मांगने आई और उसने शिकायत की कि इसके बजाय विधायक ने उसके साथ 'बलात्कार' किया और 'मेरे आंसू पोंछते हुए कहा कि वह मुझे रोजगार दिलाने में मदद करेंगे।'

संजय सिंह इतनी बार दल बदल कर चुके हैं कि मैं आशंका में आपको सूची नहीं दे पा रहा कि कहीं गलती न कर बैठूं। वह हत्या के एक चर्चित मामले से जुड़े रहे, हालांकि बाद में बाइज्जत बरी हो गए।

यह मामला 1988 का है जब लखनऊ में बैडमिंटन के राष्टीय चैंपियन सैयद मोदी की सुपारी देकर हत्या करा दी गई थी। संजय सिंह इस हत्या के प्रमुख संदिग्ध थे लेकिन उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस और सीबीआई उनके खिलाफ कुछ नहीं तलाश पाईं और वह सबूतों के अभाव में छट गए। व्यक्ति जब तक दोषी न सिद्ध हो वह निर्दोष होता है, हम सभी को यह मानना चाहिए। यह भी हत्या का वैसा ही मामला सिद्ध हुआ जहां भाड़े के हत्यारों को दंड मिला लेकिन प्रमुख अभियुक्त तक कोई नहीं पहुंचा। भाड़े के दो हत्यारों में से एक भगवती सिंह को सजा हुई और दूसरे अमर बहादुर की सुनवाई के दौरान हत्या हो गई। हत्या के बाद संजय सिंह ने सैयद मोदी की विधवा अमिता मोदी (पूर्व में कुलकर्णी) से विवाह कर लिया। जिस समय सीबीआई इस मामले की जांच कर रही थी लगभग उसी समय विश्वनाथ प्रताप सिंह कांग्रेस से



उनका कार्यकाल बहुत छोटा शेखर गुप्ता रहा क्योंकि वाजपेयी की सरकार एक वोट से गिर गई। सन 1999 के चुनाव में वह अपने पुराने

मित्र और मार्गदर्शक राजीव गांधी की पत्नी सोनिया गांधी के खिलाफ भाजपा के टिकट पर अमेठी से चुनाव मैदान में उतरे। सोनिया ने सुरक्षित रहने की दुष्टि से बेल्लारी से भी चुनाव लड़ा था। उस वक्त मैंने अमेठी में समय बिताया था और सिंह के अभियान को कवर किया था। उनका एक नारा आज भी मेरे कानों में गंजता है: संजय सिंह के डर की मारी, सोनिया भाग गई बेल्लारी। सोनिया अमेठी और बेल्लारी दोनों जगह से जीतने में कामयाब रहीं।

हवा बदली और 2003 में वह दोबारा कांग्रेस में लौट आए। 2009 में उन्हें अमेठी और रायबरेली के करीब स्थित सुल्तानपुर से कांग्रेस टिकट पर जीत मिली। कार्यकाल समाप्त होने तक उन्हें अंदाजा हो चुका था कि उत्तर प्रदेश में हालात प्रतिकल हैं। उन्होंने असम से राज्य सभा सदस्यता ले ली। वह कार्यकाल अब समाप्त हो रहा है, गांधी परिवार का प्रभाव भी पहले जैसा नहीं रहा, ऐसे में उन्होंने एक बार फिर भाजपा की शरण ली।

साक्षी महाराज का जन्म सिच्चदानंद हरि साक्षी के रूप में हुआ। वह पिछड़े लोध समुदाय के चमकते सितारे थे। प्रदेश के पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री और साक्षी महाराज के संरक्षक कल्याण सिंह भी इसी समुदाय से थे। सन 1991 और 1996 में वह भाजपा के टिकट

पर लोकसभा पहुंचे। बाबरी मस्जिद विध्वंस मामले में आरोपित के नाते वह वैचारिक रूप से प्रतिबद्ध नजर आते। बहरहाल टिकट न मिलने पर उनकी यह प्रतिबद्धता भी समाप्त हो गई और वह समाजवादी पार्टी में चले गए। मुलायम सिंह यादव ने प्रसन्नतापूर्वक पार्टी में उनका स्वागत किया। साक्षी महाराज ने कहा कि अब भाजपा की नीतियां गरीब विरोधी हो चुकी हैं। परंतु क्या आप जानते हैं कि जीत की संभावना के बावजूद उनका टिकट क्यों कटा था? उन पर प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के करीबी सहयोगी ब्रह्म दत्त द्विवेदी की हत्या का आरोप था।

सन 2000 में मुलायम सिंह ने उन्हें राज्य सभा भेज दिया। इस बीच हत्या का मामला हल्का पड़ चुका था। जल्दी ही उन पर और दो भतीजों पर एक कॉलेज प्रधानाचार्य के सामूहिक बलात्कार का मामला चला। उन्हें एक महीना तिहाड जेल में बिताना पडा लेकिन द्विवेदी हत्याकांड की तरह इस मामले में भी वह सबतों के अभाव में बरी हो गए। आप देख सकते हैं कि उत्तर प्रदेश में हत्या और बलात्कार के मामलों में सबूत का न मिलना आम है। वैसे ही जैसे आपको हमेशा यह सनिश्चित करना होता है कि आप जीतने वाले दल में रहें। सन 2002 तक उन्हें पता चल चुका था कि समाजवादी पार्टी में का कोई भविष्य नहीं है। उन्होंने मुलायम पर जातिवाद, तानाशाही से लेकर पूंजीवादी होने तक के आरोप लगाए और पार्टी छोड़ दी। वह अनौपचारिक रूप से भाजपा के बागी कल्याण सिंह की राष्ट्रीय क्रांति पार्टी के साथ आ गए जो लोधियों का दल था।

सन 2009 में सरकार ने उन पर फर्जी स्वयंसेवी संगठन बनाने और अवैध रूप से 25 लाख रुपये जुटाने का आरोप लगाया। उनकी अनुयायी और उनके एक कॉलेज की पूर्व प्रधानाचार्य सुजाता वर्मा पर उनका साथ देने का आरोप लगा। वह 2012 में दोबारा भाजपा में आ गए। सुजाता वर्मा की एक दिन आश्रम से लौटते वक्त हत्या हो गई। साक्षी और उनके सहयोगियों पर हत्या का आरोप लगा। वह भूमिगत हो गए और बाद में उन्होंने आत्मसमर्पण करके जमानत ले ली। 2013 में इलाहाबाद उच्च न्यायालय से प्राथमिकी खारिज कराने की उनकी कोशिश नाकाम रही। अगले वर्ष उन्हें भाजपा ने लोकसभा का प्रत्याशी बनाया। उनकी प्रतिष्ठा बहाल हुई और ऐसे विस्तारित करियर वाले नेता के बारे में हम शिकायत कर रहे हैं कि वह सीतापुर जेल में सेंगर का धन्यवाद करने क्यों गए ? तीनों नेताओं की कहानी बताती है कि राजनीतिक दलों के लिए जीत की संभावना ही एकमात्र मानक है। अपराधी होना. बलात्कार के आरोप और हत्या मायने नहीं रखते। हिंदी प्रदेशों में एक ही फॉर्मुला है स्थानीय वोट बैंक। यह जाति, माफिया शक्ति या दोनों के मिश्रण से बन सकता है। तब या तो आप विजेता होते हैं या दूसरों को जिताने की क्षमता रखते हैं।

आप आसानी से जीतने वाले पक्ष को चुन सकते हैं और हत्या, बलात्कार, लूट, दंगे, धोखाधड़ी और घोटालों के बावजूद बने रह सकते हैं। लेकिन तब तक जब तक कि वेंटिलेटर पर संघर्ष करती कोई किशोरी, उसका पिता और हत्याओं में कई लोगों को गंवा चुका परिवार सब कुछ नहीं गंवा देता।

# जीन में उत्परिवर्तन को नाकाम करने वाली एएसओ तकनीक

सैन फ्रांसिस्को स्थित कंप्यूटर वैज्ञानिक रोहन सेठ की एक पोस्ट इन दिनों सोशल मीडिया पर काफी चर्चा में है। सेठ और उनकी साथी जेन को करीब छह महीने पहले एक बच्ची हुई थी जिसका नाम उन्होंने लीडिया रखा। जन्म के कुछ समय बाद ही उस बच्ची को दौरे आने शुरू हो गए। इस दंपती को कई संघन परीक्षणों के बाद पता चला कि 'एक अहम जीन में हुआ छोटा-सा उत्परिवर्तन बच्ची के मस्तिष्क की कार्यप्रणाली को प्रभावित कर रहा है जिससे वह गहरी अक्षमता और पीडा की चपेट में है।'

जेन और रोहन ने अपने स्तर पर गहन छानबीन की और अपनी बच्ची जैसे लाखों बच्चों को बचाने की उम्मीद में इस पडताल को 'ओपन सोर्स' करने का मन बना लिया। उन्होंने एक गैर-लाभकारी संस्था (एनजीओ) का गठन किया और इस बीमारी पर शोध के लिए 15 लाख डॉलर का फंड जुटाया। एक नई प्रक्रिया पर उम्मीद टिकी है और माता-पिता को उम्मीद है कि कुछ महीनों में ही कारगर इलाज खोज लिया जाएगा। सेठ दंपती को पता चला कि जीन में एकदम ऐसी उत्परिवर्तन स्थिति वाले महज दो लोग ही हैं। डीएनए के न्युक्लियोटाइड क्षार एडीनिन, थायमिन, साइटोसिन और गुएनिन (एटीसीजी) होते हैं। लेकिन लीडिया के डीएनए के केसीएनक्यू2 नामक जीन में एडीनिन की जगह गुएनिन मौजूद है। किसी भी इंसान के डीएनए में करीब छह अरब संरचनाएं होती हैं और लीडिया जैसा जीन उत्परिवर्तन उस शृंखला में कहीं भी घटित हो सकता है। इस वजह से परंपरागत परीक्षणों में यह खामी पकड में नहीं आती है। भले ही नकारात्मक उत्परिवर्तन दुनिया भर

सेठ दंपती ने पाया कि एंटीसेंस ओलिगोन्यू क्लियोटाइड् स (एएसओ) तकनीक के जरिये इन उत्परिवर्तनों को निष्प्रभावी किया जा सकता है। पहली स्वीकृत एएसओ दवा वर्ष 2016 में ही वाणिज्यिक रूप से उपलब्ध हो पाई थी। एक खास उत्परिवर्तन को निशाना बनाने वाली एएसओ

में करोड़ों लोगों पर असर डालते

हैं लेकिन जीन उत्परिवर्तन इतना

असामान्य है कि कोई भी दवा

कंपनी इसका इलाज तलाशने के

लिए शोध करने में शायद ही

फिक्रमंद होंगी।



तकनीकी तंत्र देवांग्शु दत्ता

दवा बनाना संभव है। सेठ दंपती एनजीओ एक्सलरेटर' का मकसद एएसओ अनुसंधान का एक मुक्त डेटाबेस

तैयार करना है। आनुवांशिक अभिव्यक्ति एक ऐसी प्रक्रिया के जरिये होती है जिसमें डीएनए मेसेंजर आरएनए (एमआरएनए) के माध्यम से राइबोसोम को सूचना भेजता है। राइबोसोम एक विशाल आणविक कारखाने जैसा होता है और यह सभी जीवित कोशिकाओं में पाया जाता है। यह प्रोटीन बनाने के लिए एमआरएनए से मिली सूचना का इस्तेमाल करता है। एंटीसेंस पद्धति इस एमआरएनए को ही निशाना बनाती है ताकि एक उत्परिवर्तित जीन से आने वाली सूचना को रोका जा सके।

ओलिगोन्यूक्लियोटाइड्स न्युक्लिक एसिड के छोटे अवयव हैं। एंटीसेंस पद्धति में गलत बरताव करने वाले जीन की पहले पहचान की जाती है और फिर एक ओलिगोन्युक्लियोटाइड को रासायनिक तौर पर संश्लेषित किया जाता है कि उस उत्परिवर्तित जीन के जरिये एमआरएनए को सूचना प्रेषित किए जाने पर रोक लगाई जा सके। यह अत्यंत विशिष्ट एवं केवल एक व्यक्ति के लिए एक डिजाइनर दवा बनाई जा सके। डीएनए के मामले में

एमआरएनए की आनुवांशिक सूचना न्यूक्लियोटाइड्स के क्रम छिपी होती है। न्यक्लियोटाइडस तीन क्षार यग्मों के कूट में समायोजित होते हैं। ओलिगोन्युक्लियोटाइड्स भौतिक रूप से एमआरएनए को जोड़ते हैं और एक खास प्रोटीन बनाने के लिए मिलने वाले निर्देशों को रोक सकते हैं। इस तरीके से थैलेसीमिया, रेटिनिटस, मस्क्यलर डिस्टॉफी, कैंसर, एचआईवी और एड्स जैसी कई बीमारियों का

इलाज किया जा चुका है।

प्रोटीन प्रसंस्करण में आरएनए को प्रभावित करने में एएसओ की भूमिका का पता दो दशक पहले चला था। एक कृत्रिम ओलिगोन्युक्लियोटाइड संरचना के एंटीसेंस प्रभाव का पहली बार प्रदर्शन जैमेनिक एवं स्टीफेंसन ने सत्तर के दशक के आखिरी वर्षों में किया था।

लेकिन इन तकनीकों के इस्तेमाल में प्रगति की दर धीमी रही है। अमेरिकी खाद्य एवं औषधि प्रशासन (एफडीए) ने पहली एएसओ दवा विट्रावीन के वाणिज्यिक इस्तेमाल की इजाजत वर्ष 2016 में दी थी। पिछले साल जाकर बोस्टन चिल्ड्रन्स हॉस्पिटल के डॉ टिमोथी यू ने एक खास मरीज की आनुवांशिक समस्या के निदान के लिए पहली डिजाइनर एंटीसेंस दवा विकसित की थी। लेकिन रीढ की मांसपेशी में कमजोरी और डकेन मस्क्यूलर डिस्ट्रॉफी जैसी गंभीर बीमारी के इलाज के लिए बनी एएसओ दवाओं को अभी मंजूरी मिलनी

यह तकनीक स्नायु एवं गैर-स्नायु संबंधी कई परिस्थितियों के इलाज में भविष्य में बदलाव लाने की क्षमता रखती है। लेकिन इसके महंगे एवं संभावित नकारात्मक प्रभावों का भी अध्ययन किया जाना चाहिए।

कंप्यूटर वैज्ञानिक कहते हैं कि

वे गंभीर बीमारियों के इलाज संबंधी शोध में खुले मंचों का हिस्सा बनने में यकीन करते हैं। उनका कहना है, 'शोध प्रक्रिया में खुलापन लाकर हम किसी भी संस्थान को एएसओ दवा के विकास में सक्षम बना सकते हैं। उसके आधार पर प्रभावोत्पादकता और सुरक्षा आंकडों का एक साझा डेटाबेस बना सकते हैं। किसी खास मरीज के लिए डिजाइनर दवा विकसित करने वाले वैज्ञानिक भी अपने डेटा को इस कोष का हिस्सा बनाकर अपना अंशदान कर सकते हैं। अधिक सूचनाएं इकट्ठा कर हम एक गणना–पद्धति तैयार कर सकते हैं जिससे प्रयोगशाला के स्तर पर होने वाली काफी मेहनत में कमी लाई जा सकती है।' वैज्ञानिकों का मानना है कि हरेक इलाज के साथ हम अगले इलाज की लागत एवं समय दोनों में ही कटौती कर सकेंगे। नवीनतम तकनीक को एक सूत्र में पिरोने का यह असामान्य तरीका होगा।

#### कानाफूसी

#### कोन बनेगा प्रदेश अध्यक्ष?

शीला दीक्षित के निधन के बाद से ही दिल्ली प्रदेश कांग्रेस कमेटी के नए अध्यक्ष की तलाश शुरू हो चुकी है। दरअसल पार्टी को अच्छी तरह मालूम है कि वह इस काम में अधिक देरी नहीं कर सकती है। कारण, दिल्ली में विधानसभा चुनाव करीब आ चुके हैं और राजधानी पर लंबे समय तक शासन कर चुकी कांग्रेस का इस समय वहां अस्तित्व ही नहीं नजर आ रहा है। इस बीच, शीला दीक्षित के बेटे और पूर्व लोकसभा सांसद संदीप दीक्षित भी इस पद के बड़े

बन सकेंगे।

के पूर्व अध्यक्षों जय प्रकाश अग्रवाल और सुभाष चोपड़ा भी इस पद के उतने ही प्रबल दावेदार हैं। इस बात की काफी संभावना है कि इस पद के लिए संदीप दीक्षित के नाम पर विचार किया जा सकता है। पहली बात तो यह कि संदीप दीक्षित की छवि बहुत साफ-सुथरी है और दूसरा हाल ही में शीला दीक्षित के निधन के बाद सहानुभूति का तर्क भी उनके पक्ष में काम कर सकता है। माना जा रहा है कि इन दोनों कारकों का लाभ उनको मिलेगा

और संदीप दीक्षित दिल्ली प्रदेश कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष

दावेदारों में से एक हैं। इसके साथ ही दिल्ली प्रदेश कांग्रेस



#### कुपोषण खत्म करने की पहल

भोजन में पोषक आहार नहीं मिलने की वजह से कई लोग कुपोषण के शिकार हो रहे हैं। इसका सीधा संबंध भोजन तथा खाद्यान्न से है। पहले जैविक खेती की जाती थी। खेतों में रासायनिक खाद का इस्तेमाल नहीं होता था। गोबर या जैविक खाद के इस्तेमाल से खेती की जाती थी। इस वजह से फसल की उपज बढ़ती थी और फसल में पोषक तत्त्व मौजूद होते थे। आज अधिक फसल उत्पादन करने के लिए रासायनिक खेती की जाती है। इससे फसल की उपज तो बढ़ जाती है लेकिन उसमें पोषक तत्त्वों की मात्रा घट जाती है। इसे समझने के लिए पोल्ट्री तथा देसी मुर्गी का उदाहरण लिया जा सकता है। पोल्ट्री मुर्गी के चूजे 15 से 20 दिन में बहुत बड़े हो जाते हैं। वहीं देसी मुर्गी के चुजों को बड़ा होने में छह माह तक का समय लग जाता है। इन दोनों में पोषक तत्त्वों का अंतर दिख जाता है। बहरहाल देश में कुपोषण खत्म



करने के लिए पोषक आहार पर : देश से कूपोषण समाप्त करने जोर देने की जरूरत है। एक गरीब व्यक्ति दो वक्त का भोजन तो करता है लेकिन उसे भोजन के हिसाब से पोषक तत्त्व नहीं मिल पाते हैं जिससे वह कुपोषण का शिकार हो जाता है। उस व्यक्ति का शरीर उचित विकास नहीं कर पाता है तथा वह कमजोर दिखाई पडता है। सरकार की सितंबर माह

के लिए लोगों की भागीदारी जरूरी है

🗄 से राष्ट्रीय पोषण अभियान शुरू करने की योजना है। इस योजना में जभागीदारी की जरूरत है। आज भी कई गरीब बच्चों को तीन वक्त ं का भोजन नहीं मिल पाता है।

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

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

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

अगर उन्हें किसी तरह दो वक्त का भोजन मिलता भी है तो उसमें पोषक तत्त्वों की कमी होती है। अतः लोगों को भी इस अभियान में शामिल होकर कुपोषण को खत्म करने की दिशा में पहल करनी चाहिए। लोग अपने आसपास के बच्चों को किसी एक दिन पौष्टिक आहार का भोजन करा सकते हैं।

प्रियदर्शिनी शर्मा, नई दिल्ली

#### घाटी को शांत करने की कोशिश

जम्मू कश्मीर में 10 हजार सुरक्षा बलों की तैनाती से घाटी के नेताओं की नींद उड़ गई है। कश्मीर के कई बड़े नेताओं और पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री ने इस मामले में प्रधानमंत्री से मुलाकात की। उन्होंने सुरक्षा बलों की तैनाती से घाटी के लोगों में डर का माहौल

सामान्य प्रक्रिया के तहत की गई है। पहले से मौजूद सुरक्षा बलों को वापस भेजने के लिए वहां सुरक्षा बल भेजे गए हैं। सरकार द्वारा घाटी में सुरक्षा बलों की तैनाती से कई कयास लगाए जा रहे हैं तथा यह खबर आजकल सुर्खियों में है। इसके अलावा सरकार ने अमरनाथ यात्रा को बीच में रद्द कर दिया तथा लोगों से वापस लौटने की निर्देश जारी किया है। वहां से पर्यटकों को भी वापस लौटने का निर्देश दिया गया है। बहरहाल घाटी में सुरक्षा बलों की तैनाती वहां की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था को और मजबूत करने के लिए किया जाने वाला कदम माना जा सकता है। पिछले कई दशकों से कश्मीर एक समस्या बनी हुई है और सरकार को इस बार इस समस्या को जड से खत्म कर देना चाहिए। इस मामले में अपने फायदे के लिए राजनीति करने वालों को भी नहीं बख्शा जाना चाहिए।

बताया। सरकार का कहना है कि

घाटी में सुरक्षा बलों की तैनाती



भाषा विचार का वस्त्र है

# बड़े फैसले का इंतजार

जम्मू-कश्मीर में सुरक्षा प्रबंध बढ़ाए जाने और घाटी गए पर्यटकों और अमरनाथ श्रद्धालुओं को तुरंत लौटने का निर्देश देने के बाद से तरह-तरह की अटकलों का दौर जारी है। कश्मीर में चौकसी बढ़ाए जाने का एक कारण यह माना जा रहा है कि पाकिस्तान वहां नए सिरे से कोई बड़ी खुराफात करने की तैयारी में है। पता नहीं सच क्या है, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि सीमा पर गतिविधियां तेज होने के साथ ही आतंकियों की घुसपैठ का खतरा बढ़ गया है। पाकिस्तान कुछ भी कह रहा हो उस पर तिनक भी भरोसा नहीं किया जाना चाहिए। इसी के साथ कश्मीर में उसकी हरकतों का मुंहतोड़ जवाब देने के लिए हर संभव कड़े कदम भी उठाए जाने चाहिए। इस मामले में मोदी सरकार के इरादों को लेकर किसी को कोई संशय भी नहीं होना चाहिए। समझना कठिन है कि राज्य में सुरक्षा मोर्चे को मजबूत किए जाने से कश्मीरी नेता परेशान क्यों हैं? उनकी ओर से ऐसा माहौल बनाया जाना ठीक नहीं कि कश्मीर पर केंद्र सरकार के संभावित कदम घाटी की जनता के लिए अहितकारी हो सकते हैं। इससे खराब बात यह है कि वे यह भी प्रतीति कराने में लगे हुए हैं कि कश्मीर का हित राष्ट्रहित से अलग है। यह ठीक मानसिकता नहीं और इसका उपचार किया ही जाना चाहिए।

कश्मीर के एक वर्ग में खुद को देश से अलग और विशिष्ट मानने की जो मानसिकता पनपी है उसकी एक बड़ी वजह अनुच्छेद 370 है। यह अलगाववाद को पोषित करने के साथ ही कश्मीर के विकास में बाधक भी है। इसी कारण अनुच्छेद 370 का शुरू से ही विरोध होता चला आ रहा है। कश्मीर संबंधी अनुच्छेद 35-ए भी निरा विभेदकारी है। इन दोनों अनुच्छेदों पर कोई ठोस फैसला लिया ही जाना चाहिए। या तो इन्हें हटाया जाए या फिर संशोधन के जरिये उनकी विसंगतियों को दूर किया जाए। इसका कोई औचित्य नहीं कि ये दोनों अनुच्छेद कश्मीर को देश की मुख्यधारा से जोड़ने और साथ ही वहां समुचित विकास करने में बाधक बने रहें। नेशनल कांफ्रेंस और पीडीपी के नेता चाहे जितना शोर मचाएं, कश्मीरी जनता को यह पता होना चाहिए कि ये दोनों अनच्छेद उनके लिए हितकारी साबित नहीं हुए हैं। यदि इन अनुच्छेदों से किसी का भला हुआ है तो चंद नेताओं का और यही कारण है कि वे इस आशंका से दुबले हुए जा रहे हैं कि कहीं मोदी सरकार जम्मू-कश्मीर के विशेष दर्जे को परिवर्तित न कर दे। पता नहीं मोदी सरकार के एजेंडे में क्या है, लेकिन उसे यह समझना ही होगा कि कश्मीर पर कोई बड़ा फैसला करने

# सबक नहीं ले रही पुलिस

बिहार के थाने शराबबंदी के लिए कैसे काम कर रहे हैं, इसका एक और उदाहरण सीतामढी में दिखा है। सीतामढी नगर थाने के मालखाने और अन्य तीन कमरों को तोड़ कर जब्त शराब, नष्ट शराब, शराबबंदी के बाद दर्ज शराब से जुड़े मामलों की जांच की गई तो पता चला कि किसी का कोई हिसाब ही नहीं है। कहां छापेमारी हुई, कितनी शराब मिली, कितनी नष्ट हुई, इसका कोई लेखाजोखा नहीं था। अनुमान लगाया जा रहा है कि जब्त शराब पीने, बेचने और बांटने जैसे काम थाने से हो रहे थे। इंस्पेक्टर रैंक के अधिकारी यहां थानेदार थे। उनसे और अन्य पुलिस वालों से पूछताछ की गई तो गड़बड़ी खुलती चली गई। इस बीच मौका पाकर थानेदार भाग निकले। राज्य के किसी थाने से थानेदार के भाग निकलने का यह पहला वाकया नहीं है। शराब पीने और शराब के

धंधेबाजों से गहरा रिश्ता रखने वाले कई थानेदार और दारोगा इस तरह का काम कर चुके हैं। पटना के कई थाने के सभी पुलिस वाले शराब माफिया से गठजोड़ में फंसकर नौकरी गंवा चुके हैं। अब सीतामढ़ी की बारी है। वहां के नगर थाने की पूरी टीम को हटाने की तैयारी की जा रही है। बिहार में सड़क दुर्घटना से लेकर बीमारी और आत्महत्या

शराब माफिया से मिलीभगत में पुलिस वालों पर कडी कार्रवाई हो रही, लेकिन लगता है पुलिस महकमा सबक नहीं ले पा रहा । पूरे बिहार में 300 से अधिक थानेदार दागदार होने की वजह से बदले गए हैं

तक के लिए मजबूर कर देने वाली शराब के खिलाफ सरकार की मुहिम एक बेहतर समाज बनाने की दिशा में सराहनीय प्रयास है। मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार ने न सिर्फ इसे सर्वोच्च प्राथमिकता में रखा है, बल्कि खुद इसकी निगरानी भी कर रहे हैं। लोगों को समझा भी रहे हैं और इसके दुष्परिणाम के बारे में भी बता रहे हैं। मुख्यमंत्री ने यह स्पष्ट संदेश दिया था कि शराब के धंधे में अफसर संलिप्त मिले तो उन पर इतनी धाराएं लगाई जाएं कि वे बाहर नहीं निकल पाएं। कार्रवाई हुई भी है, लेकिन लगता है कि पुलिस वाले सबक नहीं ले पा रहे हैं। सीतामढ़ी कांड को सामने रखकर इस संबंध में और कड़ी कार्रवाई अपेक्षित है। इससे वैसे लोगों का मनोबल टूटेगा और डर पैदा होगा, जो समाज के लिए सर्वाधिक आवश्यक अभियान को फेल करने की कोशिश में लगे हैं।

# सार्थक संवाद का अभाव

है। जर्मन दार्शनिक वाल्टेयर ने भी कहा है कि

'मैं संवाद को तैयार हूं, लेकिन पहले तुम अपने

संवाद का प्रभाव सर्वव्यापी है। संवाद के

अभाव की परिणिति अराजकता में होती है।

रामकथा में अंगद-रावण संवाद है। संवाद

असफल हुआ तो युद्ध। प्राक्भारतीय साहित्य

शब्दों की परिभाषा करो।'



हृदयनारायण दीक्षित

श्रीराम जन्मभूमि को लेकर शीर्ष अदालत ने संवाद का अंतिम अवसर दिया, लेकिन उससे कुछ हासिल नहीं हुआ। यदि इससे हल निकलता तो सभी पक्ष प्रसन्न होते

'स्तित्व सत्य है। सत्य अस्तित्व का रस है। सत्य का रस वाणी है। वाणी का रस संवाद है। संवाद वाणी का छंद है। संवाद सत्य प्राप्ति का अधिष्ठान है। संवाद ही निष्कर्ष तक ले जाने वाला माध्यम है। श्रीराम जन्मभूमि मंदिर को लेकर वास्तविक संवाद नहीं हुआ। बाबर द्वारा मंदिर गिरवाने के समय से संघर्ष है। 1992 की घटना आहत मन का परिणाम थी। एएसआइ की खोदाई से प्राप्त तमाम तथ्यों के बावजूद दुराग्रह रहा। कुछ समय पहले न्यायालय ने परस्पर संवाद का अंतिम अवसर दिया, लेकिन संवाद नहीं हुआ। संवाद से हल निकलता तो सभी पक्ष प्रसन्न होते। दुराग्रही वाद वास्तविक समाधान नहीं देते। वाद हमेशा एक पक्ष होता है और विवाद वाद का ही दूसरा पक्ष। प्रख्यात दार्शनिक डॉ. राधाकृष्णन ने भारतीय दर्शन में 'वाद' के सत्य से भटक जाने का उल्लेख किया है, 'यह प्रायः बिगड़कर जल्प (आधारहीन) के रूप में बदल जाता है। इसका लक्ष्य जीतना हो जाता है। तब यह 'वितंडा' कहलाता है।' 'वाद-विवाद' स्वपक्षीय आग्रह होते हैं और संवाद सर्वमान्य यथार्थ तक ले जाने वाली तीर्थ यात्रा है।

संवाद सभ्यता का पैमाना है। तनावग्रस्त विश्व में सभ्यताओं के मध्य भी संवाद की दरकार है। अमेरिकी विचारक सैमुअल हंटिंगटन ने 'क्लैश ऑफ सिविलाइजेशन' में सभ्यताओं के संघर्ष की आशंका जताई थी। इस्लामी स्टेट का रक्तपात प्रत्यक्ष है। 'आस्था

और विश्वास' से भी संवाद का समय आ गया है। दुनिया का बड़ा भाग पंथ विश्वासी है। भारतीय दर्शन और संस्कृति सत्य खोजी हैं। भारत में संवाद की अति प्राचीन परंपरा है। ऋग्वेद का यम यमी संवाद तत्कालीन समाज के आदर्श व मानवीय कमजोरियों का चित्रण है। विश्वामित्र का नदी संवाद सुंदर भावाभिव्यक्ति है। उपनिषद उत्तर वैदिक काल की रचना हैं। प्रश्नोपनिषद छह जिज्ञासुओं व पिप्पलाद ऋषि के मध्य हुआ संवाद है। वृहदारण्यक उपनिषद में याज्ञवल्क्य के साथ जनक, शाकल्य, मैत्रेयी, गार्गी आदि के संवाद पठनीय हैं। छांदोग्य उपनिषद में श्वेतकेतु व उसके पिता के संवाद सहित ढेर सारे संवाद हैं। कठोपनिषद के यम नचिकेता संवाद में आस्था पर भी तर्क हैं। महाभारत संवादों से भरीपूरी है जिसमें समाज विज्ञान, अर्थशास्त्र व ब्रह्मांड विज्ञान के महत्वपूर्ण विवरण हैं।

संवाद ज्ञान का उपकरण था। उसे व्यवस्थित करने वाले नियम भी थे। यहां लोकप्रिय आठों दर्शन न्याय, वैशेषिक, सांख्य, योग, पूर्व मीमांसा, वेदांत व बौद्ध, जैन में लगभग एकसमान तर्क पद्धति है। डॉ. राधाकृष्णन के अनसार गौतम का 'न्याय दर्शन' संवाद के माध्यम से ज्ञान प्राप्ति की विस्तृत व्याख्या करता है। न्याय शब्द का अर्थ निष्कर्ष तक पहुंचाने वाली गतिविधि है। निष्कर्ष के लिए संवाद विधि का पालन जरूरी था। संवाद कर्म

भारत में ज्ञान के सभी क्षेत्रों में संवाद था।



के सैकड़ों प्रसंगों में उमा और शिव परस्पर के लिए न्याय दर्शन की सूची में प्रमाण, प्रमेय अर्थात ज्ञान के विषय, संशय, प्रयोजन, दृष्टांत, संवादरत हैं। संवाद में 'प्रमाण' का शीर्ष महत्व मान्य सिद्धांत, विषय के अवयव या घटक, तर्क है। महाभारत में नारद को तर्क संवाद का अर्थात अप्रत्यक्ष प्रमाण व निर्णय सहित प्रमुख विशेषज्ञ कहा गया है। नारद प्रमाण के आधार नौ विषय हैं। इसके अलावा 'वाद, निराधार पर ही निष्कर्ष निकालते थे। भारत में नाट्यकला कथन, वितंडा, हेत्वामास अर्थात दोषपूर्ण के आविष्कारक भरत मुनि के नाट्यशास्त्र में उदाहरण, छल, निरर्थक आपत्तियां और नाटक का प्राण तत्व संवाद हैं। शेक्सपियर के नाटकों के पात्र प्रभावी संवादी हैं। राजनीति दोषारोपण सहित सात रोचक निषेध तत्व भी हैं। यहां संपूर्ण संवाद विज्ञान है। वादी प्रतिवादी के संवाद का ही लोकमत निर्माण क्षेत्र है, लेकिन प्रति आदर भाव की अनिवार्यता है। संवाद में राजनीति में संवाद की जगह कटुतापूर्ण वाद-विवाद हैं। संवाद शुन्य है। मोनोलाग या आस्था पर भी तर्क हैं। न्याय दर्शन के अनुसार सर्वप्रथम विषय की स्थापना फिर विवेचन में प्रयुक्त शब्दों की परिभाषा होनी चाहिए। न्याय यूनानी दर्शन संवादी है। अरस्तू ने कहा भाष्य में 'किसी पदार्थ को समान सादृश्यों वाले पदार्थों से भिन्न दिखाना परिभाषा' बताया गया

था कि 'कुछ व्यक्ति विषय के एक पहल को देखते हैं और अन्य दूसरे पहलू को, लेकिन सब मिलकर सभी पहलुओं को देख सकते हैं।' अरस्तू ने संवाद के तत्वों को नियमबद्ध किया था। सुकरात सत्य के अन्वेषण के लिए वाद, विवाद और संवाद का सदपयोग करते थे। अरस्तू की दो पुस्तकें 'टॉपिक्स' और 'सोफिस्टिकल रिफयूटेशंस' संवाद शास्त्र की अप्रतिम अभिव्यक्ति हैं। भारत में बहुत

पहले ही संवाद अनुशासन के तत्वों की सूची का विकास हुआ था। न्याय दर्शन व वैशेषिक दर्शन में संवाद के सभी पहलुओं का विवेचन है। आयुर्विज्ञान का विकास व्यापक संवाद से हुआ। आयुर्वेद के दो बड़े ग्रंथों चरक संहिता और सुश्रुत संहिता में संवाद नियमों का विस्तृत उल्लेख है। कौटिल्य ने अर्थशास्त्र में संवाद के 32 पारिभाषिक शब्दों की सूची दी है। संवाद के सुनिश्चित नियमों के कारण प्राचीन विद्वानों ने संवाद विज्ञान को वेद की संज्ञा दी थी।

आचार्य शंकर दुनिया के सबसे बड़े संवादी थे। उन्होंने ज्ञान के तीन स्रोत बताए। पहला प्रत्यक्ष, दुसरा अनुमान और तीसरा प्राचीन सिद्ध कथन। संवाद के यही मूलाधार हैं। वह अद्वैत वेदांती दार्शनिक थे। तमाम द्वैतवादी विद्वानों से उनका संवाद हुआ। मंडन मिश्र के साथ उनके संवाद की लोककथा है। मंडन ने संवाद में पराजय मानी। उनकी पत्नी भारती ने मोर्चा संभाला। भारती ने स्त्री विषयक प्रश्न पूछा। शंकराचार्य ने उत्तर के लिए समय मांगा। सही बात है। प्रामाणिक जानकारी के बिना संवाद का क्या अर्थ? उन्होंने सम्यक अध्ययन व जानकारी के बाद ही उत्तर दिया संसद व विधानमंडल वाद-विवाद संवाद की संवैधानिक संस्थाएं हैं। लोकसभा में बीते बीसेक साल से शोरगुल और हुल्लड़ ने प्रेमपूर्ण संवाद को बाहर कर दिया। संप्रति वाद-विवाद के साथ संवाद की भी आशाप्रद स्थित है तो भी विधानमंडलों की स्थिति निराशाजनक है टीवी चैनलों की बहसों में भी आरोप-प्रत्यारोप का शोर है। जोर से बोलने और चिल्लाने की प्रतिस्पर्धा है। संवाद का अता-पता नहीं। संवाद की महत्ता स्वयं सिद्ध है। संवाद से सभ्यता है संवाद से संस्कृति है और संवाद में ही भारत के आनंदमगन होने की नियति है।

> (लेखक उत्तर प्रदेश विधानसभा के अध्यक्ष हैं` response@jagran.com

# पैरों तले जमीन की तलाश

तकरीबन 25 साल पहले मुझे मेरे मुल्क बांग्लादेश से मेरी ही सरकार ने बाहर कर दिया था। क्या मैंने चोरी, डकैती कत्ल, दुष्कर्म या कोई अपराध किया था? नहीं। मैंने सिर्फ किताबें लिखीं। उन किताबों में लोकतंत्र, धर्मनिरपेक्षता मानवता, मानवाधिकार और नारी के समान अधिकारी होने की बातें लिखी थीं। हर तरह की विषमताओं, अन्याय और अत्याचार मुक्त, समता युक्त समाज का सपना देखा था। 25 साल में कई बार मेरे देश में सरकारें बदलीं, लेकिन किसी भी सरकार ने मुझे मेरे वतन लौटने नहीं दिया। क्यों लौटने नहीं दिया, मुझे इसका कोई अंदाजा नहीं?

इस 25 साल के निर्वासन का एक युग यूरोप और अमेरिका में बीता, लेकिन देश लौटने की उत्कंठा तीव्र थी इसलिए अपने देश के दरवाजे बंद होने के बावजूद बंगभूमि के रंग-रूप, गंध एवं स्वाद की तलाश में भारत के पश्चिम बंगाल आना-जाना शुरू किया। बांग्ला भाषा एवं बांग्ला संस्कृति के परिवेश को बांग्लादेश से बाहर फिर से जीने के लिए पश्चिम बंगाल को ही अपना घर बना लिया। टूरिस्ट वीजा पर तो रहना संभव नहीं था इसलिए कुछ दिन स्थायी रूप से रहने के लिए भारत सरकार से रेजिडेंट परमिट मिल गया। इसकी मियाद खत्म होने पर इसे बढ़ा दिया जाता है। भारत में 2004 से रहना शुरू किया। शुरुआत में मेरा परिमट पांच-पांच महीने पर बढ़ाया जाता था। 2008 से यह एक साल के लिए मिलने लगा, लेकिन हर साल की परेशानी से मुक्ति के लिए पांच या 10 साल का परमिट मिल जाता तो अच्छा था। ऐसे कई विदेशी नागरिक हैं, जो भारत में लंबी अवधि का रेजिडेंशियल परमिट लेकर रह रहे हैं।

वाममोर्चा ने जब मौलवियों को खुश करने के लिए मझे 2007 में पश्चिम बंगाल से निकाल दिया था तब केंद्र की संप्रग सरकार ने मुझे दिल्ली में गृहबंदी बनाकर लगातार दबाव बनाया और 2008 में भारत छोड़ने के लिए बाध्य किया। तब मेरा रेजिडेंशियल परिमट 2011 तक बढ़ाया गया, लेकिन मुझे भारत में रहने नहीं दिया गया। तब कई लोगों ने मुझसे कहा था कि भाजपा की सरकार बनने के बाद आपको परिमट के लिए कोई समस्या नहीं होगी। नागरिकता भी मिल सकती है। मैं कोलकाता में भी रह सकती हूं। मैंने भी वही सोचा था, लेकिन 2014 में जब भाजपा सत्ता में आई और मेरा रेजिडेंशियल परमिट एक साल से घटाकर दो महीने कर दिया गया तब मुझे लगा कि मैं आसमान से गिरी हूं। 2019 में दूसरी बार सत्ता में आने के बाद मेरे परिमट को फिर एक साल से घटाकर तीन





महीने कर दिया गया. जिसे बाद में एक साल किया गया। मुझे आज भी याद है। पश्चिम बंगाल से जब मुझे भगाया गया था तब गुजरात के तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने अपने एक भाषण में कहा था कि अगर वे तसलीमा को सुरक्षा देने में असमर्थ हैं तो तसलीमा को गुजरात भेज दें। मैं उन्हें सुरक्षा दुंगा। चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान कोलकाता में मंच से उन्होंने पूछा था कि माकपा के सत्ता से जाने के बाद और तृणमूल की सरकार बनने के बाद भी क्यों मुझे कोलकाता नहीं लौटने दिया जा रहा है? भारत में मोदी जी की तरह ऐसे बहुत कम राजनेता हैं, जिन्होंने डंके की चोट पर मेरा समर्थन किया है। राजनीतिक तौर पर संपूर्ण निरपेक्ष रहने वाली मेरे जैसी निर्वासित साहित्यकार और धर्मनिरपेक्ष लेखिका को बिना शर्त समर्थन करने के लिए मैं हमेशा मोदी जी की कृतज्ञ रही हूं। उनके सत्ता में आने के बाद

जाएगी। भारत में स्थायी रूप से रहने की अनुमति मिल जाएगी। निश्चिंत होकर अपनी बाकी निर्वासित जिंदगी सिर्फ साहित्य रचना में लगाऊंगी, लेकिन मेरी समस्या जस की तस है। मैं कोई अपराध तो नहीं कर रही। अपनी लेखनी से इस समाज में बच्चियों को शिक्षित और सचेतन होने की प्रेरणा देती हूं।

स्वीडन की नागरिक होने के बावजूद, यूरोपियन यूनियन से जुड़ाव, अमेरिका की स्थायी निवासी होने के बावजूद मैंने रहने के लिए भारत का चुनाव किया है, क्योंकि भारत में एक भाषा ऐसी है जो मेरी मातृभाषा है, जिसमें मैं खुद को अभिव्यक्त करती हूं, लिखती हूं, सोचती हूं और स्वप्न देखती हूं। भारत मुझे मेरे देश जैंसा लगता हैं। इस उपमहाद्वीप में भारत ही एक ऐसा देश है, जहां मैं निवास कर सकती हूं। इस उपमहाद्वीप में रहने वाले अधिकतर लोग यूरोप और अमेरिका में रहने के लिए लालायित हैं और मैंने इस देश के प्यार में यूरोप और अमेरिका का त्याग किया है। विदेश की धरती पर मिलने वाले यश, ख्याति और सुरक्षा को तुच्छ समझते हुए मैंने भारत में मेरे लिए मौजूद अनिश्चितता के माहौल का चयन किया है। अभी भी कई बार मुझे चौंक जाना पड़ता है, जब मेरा परिमट अचानक से घटा दिया जाता है। घटते-घटते कहीं यह मेरे लिए खत्म न हो जाए, यह चिंता बनी रहती है।

कइयों को लगता है कि मैं यहां भारत सरकार की मेहमान हूं, लेकिन वे गलत समझते हैं। मैं यहां अपने पैसे से रहती, खाती और पहनती हूं। मैं एकदम आम नागरिक की तरह साधारण जीवनयापन करती हूं। साधारण लोगों के साथ रहती हुं, साधारण लोगों में मेरा उठना-बैठना है। इस देश में कभी मुझे परदेसी होने का भाव नहीं आया। अब भारत ही मेरा देश है।

मेरा मानना है कि जन्म लेने से ही कोई देश किसी का नहीं हो जाता है। देश को प्रेम करने वाले का देश होता है। मेरा भरोसा है कि इस देश के कई लोग ऐसे हैं जिनसे कहीं ज्यादा इस देश को मैं प्यार करती हूं। मुझे पता है कि यूरोपियन यूनियन की नागरिकता मिलने या अमेरिका से ग्रीन कार्ड मिलने के बाद कई देशप्रेमी इस देश को छोड देंगे। मेरे पास सब है, लेकिन मैंने इस मुल्क के प्रति अपने प्रेम के कारण वह सब त्याग दिया है। अगर भारत के प्रति मेरे प्रेम का अगर कोई भी मूल्य है तो इस देश में रहने में मुझे कोई समस्या नहीं होगी।

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#### सहनशीलता

हम बहुधा देखते हैं कि बिजली चली जाने पर पंखा या एसी बंद होते ही ज्यादातर लोग अगले ही क्षण बेचैनी महसूस करने लगते हैं। ट्रैफिक में फंस जाने या कहीं से प्रतीक्षित खबर आने में देर हो जाने पर असहज होने लगते हैं। कभी-कभी तो पानी या खाना मिलने में विलंब हो जाने पर ही सब्र का बांध टूटने लगता है। इस तरह की अनगिनत स्थितियां हमारे दैनंदिन जीवन में घटित होती रहती हैं। ऊपरी तौर पर छोटी लगने वाली ये बाते जीवन शांति और आनंद को भंग नहीं तो कम अवश्य कर देती हैं। समय रहते इस प्रवृत्ति पर नियंत्रण के बारे में सोचना चाहिए। शुरुआत ऐसी परेशानियों को सहने की आदत विकसित करने से हो सकती है। पहले तो हमे व्यक्तिगत जीवन में संयम के महत्व को समझना होग और फिर इसे जीवन के अधिकाधिक क्षेत्रों में अपनाने की आवश्यकता को जानना होगा। इसे भी एक विधा के रूप में सीखा जा सकता है और अभ्यास द्वारा इसमें पारंगत हुआ जा सकता है।

जिन लोगों को सामान्य तरीके से इसे सीखने और अभ्यास में कठिनाई हो वे इसे भी आध्यात्मिकता एवं धार्मिकता से जोड़कर सीखने की कोशिश कर सकते हैं। प्रायः भक्तगण अपने आराध्य देव या गुरु के दर्शन या प्रवचन में विलंब हो जाने की स्थिति में व्याकुल तो होने लगते हैं, लेकिन परेशान नहीं होते, जबकि विलंब तो यहां भी होता है। भक्तिभाव के चलते इस विलंब से भक्त परेशान नहीं होते, बल्कि इंतजार की घड़ियों में भी पूरी श्रद्धा और तन्मयता बनाए रखते हैं। यह संभव होता है स्थिति विशेष के प्रति हमारे भाव के कारण इसी से परेशानी और व्याकुलता के बीच के अंतर को समझने और तदंतर उसे पाटने में सहायता मिलती है। यह अवस्था जीवन में शांति और आनंदभाव को जागृत करने और उसके संवर्धन में काफी कारगर हो सकती है

जीवन के हर पल और हर दौर का अपना महत्व है। अतः जीवन में परेशानी के क्षणों को भी आनंदित होकर जीना चाहिए। ऐसा करके ही भविष्य की सही राह तलाशी जा सकती है।

डॉ. महेश भारद्वाज

# संरक्षित जल तो सुरक्षित कल

जल सुष्टि की एक ऐसी सच्चाई है जिसे किसी भी स्थिति में नजरंदाज करना अपना सर्वनाश करना है। जल हमारे लिए इतना उपयोगी है कि इसके बिना जीवन की कल्पना भी नहीं की जा सकती। जल के किनारे ही विश्व की सभी महान सभ्यताएं विकसित हुईं। जल को प्राचीन ग्रंथों में देवता माना गया है। ऋग्वेद में कहा गया है-मुझ से सोमदेव ने कहा है कि जल में सभी औषधियां प्रवाहित हैं। जल में ही सर्व सुख प्रदायक अग्नि तत्व समाहित है। सभी औषधियां जल से ही प्राप्त होती हैं।

ऐसा नहीं है कि इस तरह के विचार सिर्फ भारतीय दर्शन में ही मौजूद हैं, बल्कि पाश्चात्य दर्शन में भी इस तरह के विचार बहुत पहले से लिखे जाते रहे हैं। प्राचीन पाश्चात्य दर्शन में थेलीज ने सुष्टि की उत्पत्ति का कारण जल को ही माना है। उन्होंने कहा था कि जल ही सबका जनक है तथा जल ही आधारभूत द्रव्य है। जल को देश के कई हिस्सों में अभी भी देवता की तरह पूजा जाता है। मध्य प्रदेश की कई जनजातियां सरोवर से पानी लेने के दौरान प्रार्थना करती हैं। राजस्थान में शीतला

नीति आयोग की एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक भारत में 60 करोड़ से अधिक लोग पेयजल की कमी का सामना कर रहे हैं

माता को प्रसन्न करने के लिए भवाई नृत्य भी

अब जब हम दैनिक, आध्यात्मिक और अपने क्रमिक विकास के लिए जल पर निर्भर हैं तो हमें मौजूदा पर्यावरण संकट को देखते हुए जल संरक्षण की तरफ विशेष ध्यान देना पड़ेगा। भारत 135 करोड़ की जनसंख्या के साथ विश्व का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा देश है। इस लिहाज से जल की सबसे ज्यादा जरूरत भी आने वाले दिनों में भारत को ही होने वाली है। नीति आयोग की एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक भारत में 60 करोड़ से अधिक लोग किसी न किसी रूप में पेयजल की कमी का सामना कर रहे हैं तथा लगभग दो लाख व्यक्ति प्रतिवर्ष प्रदूषित जल पीने से मर जाते हैं। इसके साथ ही 21 बड़े शहरों में 2020 तक पीने के लिए पानी नहीं मिलेगा। भारत में तकरीबन 70 प्रतिशत जल प्रदूषित है, जिसकी

वजह से पानी की गुणवत्ता वाले सूचकांक में भारत 122 देशों में 120वें स्थान पर है। इस रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक यह समस्या इतनी गहरी है कि भारत का जीडीपी 2050 तक 6 प्रतिशत तक गिर सकता है।

यह समस्या धीरे-धीरे बड़े शहरों से होती हुई ग्रामीण अंचल तक पहुंच चुकी है। ग्रामीण अंचल में इस समस्या का कारण है किसानों द्वारा सिंचाई के लिए बड़े पैमाने पर बोरिंग का प्रयोग करना। जिस कारण जल का स्तर काफी नीचे जा चुका है। ऐसा नहीं है कि इसके लिए सिर्फ किसान जिम्मेदार हैं। सरकार ने सिंचाई के सबसे बड़े साधन नहर की तरफ ध्यान देना कम कर दिया है इसलिए ही बोरिंग का उपयोग बढ़ रहा है। वर्तमान केंद्र सरकार ने जल संकट से निपटने के लिए जलशक्ति मंत्रालय का गठन किया है। इस मंत्रालय के तहत सरकार को एक जल नीति बनाने की ओर अग्रसर होना चाहिए। जिसमें नदियों, तालाबों, कुओं जैसे प्राकृतिक जल स्रोतों के संरक्षण की बातें होनी चाहिए। जल संरक्षण को लेकर ग्राम पंचायत स्तर से लेकर संसद तक प्रत्येक व्यक्ति की भागीदारी सुनिश्चित होनी चाहिए।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

#### कारोबार में ईमानदारी को मिले प्रोत्साहन

लगा था कि मुझे साल दर साल परिमट लेने से मुक्ति मिल

संजय गुप्त ने 'अर्थव्यवस्था की सुस्ती का निदान' शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था के सुदृढ़ीकरण के लिए जिस उपाय पर बल दिया है वह देश के कारोबार में ईमानदारी को प्रोत्साहित करने का है। वस्तुतः मोदी सरकार ने अपने प्रथम कार्यकाल में देश की दो नंबरी अर्थव्यवस्था को नियंत्रित करने के लिए जिस नोटबंदी और जीएसटी को लागू किया था उससे मिली सफलता तब तक कारगर नहीं होगी जब तक ईमानदारी से अपना कारोबार करने वाले उद्यमियों और अधिक मुनाफे के लिए नंबर दो के रास्ते पर चलने वाले छोटे-बड़े कारोबारियों में भेद करके देश के व्यापार जगत में ईमानदारी को प्रोत्साहित नहीं किया जाएगा। केवल यह मान लेना कि बड़े उद्योगपित अधिक मुनाफा कमाते हैं तो उन पर टैक्स का अधिभार भी ज्यादा रखा जाए, न्यायसंगत नहीं है। इस संदर्भ में सरकार को यह देखना भी जरूरी है कि निचले स्तर पर कितने कारोबारी नंबर दो की काली कमाई के जरिये देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को कितना चूना लगा रहे हैं? इस दृष्टि से देश की कराधान व्यवस्था को और अधिक चुस्त-दुरुस्त बनाने की जरूरत है। छोटे-बड़े व्यापारी जितना माल लाते हैं उसे वे नंबर एक में बेचकर अपने मुनाफे की आय से निर्धारित टैक्स सरकार को भुगतान कर रहे हैं या नहीं, इसकी चाक-चौबंद निगरानी होनी चाहिए। इसमें फल, मिठाई, दूध आदि का कारोबार करने वाले वे व्यापारी भी सम्मिलित होने चाहिए जो अपने इस मामुली से दिखने वाले कारोबार से भी लाखों का मुनाफा कमा रहे हैं, लेकिन सरकार को अपनी आय अथवा बिक्री के सापेक्ष टैक्स का भुगतान नहीं करते हैं। यद्यपि मोदी सरकार बहुत तेजी से नंबर एक की अर्थव्यवस्था की ओर बढ़ रही है, लेकिन इस क्षेत्र में अभी भी सुधार

#### मेलबाक्स

की बहुत गुंजाइश है। देश की सुदृढ़ अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए कारोबारियों को भी स्वेच्छा से सहयोग करने की जरूरत है, क्योंकि भारत के उद्योग-व्यापार जगत में पूर्णरूपेण एक नंबर की अर्थव्यवस्था लागू होने पर ही यह देश सोने की चिड़िया बन सकेगा।

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#### मातृ भाषा में स्वस्थ चिंतन

दैनिक जागरण के 01 अगस्त के अंक में प्रकाशित शंकर शरण का लेख, भारतीय भाषाओं के समक्ष बड़ी चुनौती, पढ़ा। इसमें मातृभाषा हिंदी के महत्व को बहुत अच्छे ढंग से बताया है। यह बात सही है कि अपनी मातृ भाषा में ही स्वस्थ चिंतन किया जा सकता है। यदि अपनी भाषा का पतन होगा तो परिणामस्वरूप समाज में सांस्कृतिक एवं नैतिक पतन भी अवश्य ही होगा, जैसा कि वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में दिख रहा है। जिन-जिन देशों ने अपनी भाषा में शिक्षा पर जोर दिया उन देशों की हर क्षेत्र में वैश्विक स्तर पर उन्नति हुई। लेख पाठकों को अपनी भाषा के साहित्य को पढ़ने-पढ़ाने के लिए प्रेरित करता है एवं ऐसे लोगों की आंख खोलने वाला है जो अपनी मातुभाषा के प्रति विमुख हो रहे हैं और अज्ञानवश विदेशी भाषा को शिक्षा एवं दैनिक जीवन में प्राथमिकता दे रहे हैं।

विकास सैनी, नजफगढ़, दिल्ली

#### दल-बदल की रणनीति

नेताओं का आजकल किसी राजनीतिक पार्टी की विचारधारा से लेना देना नहीं है। जिधर फायदा दिखाई देता

है पाला बदल लेते हैं। पार्टी, विधानसभा एवं संसद की सदस्यता तक छोड़ कर सब भाजपा की तरफ भाग रहे हैं, क्योंकि आज भाजपा सबसे ताकतवर पार्टी के रूप में सामने आई है। सभी जगह चुनाव जीत रही है। भाजपा में शामिल होने वाले नेता अगला चुनाव ध्यान में रखकर ऐसा कर रहे हैं। यहां विचारधारा नहीं, यह चुनाव जीतने की रणनीति है जो आज भाजपा में शामिल हो रहे हैं अगर उन्हें पार्टी ने टिकट नहीं दिया या कोई बड़ी जिम्मेदारी नहीं दी तो वे वहां से भागने में भी देर नहीं लगाएंगे।

अशोक नाथ झा, ग्रेटर नोएडा

#### ध्वनि प्रदूषण

स्वस्थ रहने के लिए प्रकृति ने हमें सूर्य की रोशनी ऑक्सीजन युक्त हवा, पर्याप्त जल एवं नींद अनुपम उपहार के रूप में प्रदान की है। परंतु मानव की बढ़ती संख्या एवं महती आकांक्षाओं ने वायु एवं जल को अत्यधिक प्रदूषित कर दिया है। ऊपर से रही सही कसर ध्विन प्रदूषण पूरी कर रहा है। ध्विन प्रदूषण को तुरंत रोकने की आवश्यकता है। dharmendranath.rastogi@gmail.com

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

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

# फिर जगी उम्मीद

**अ**योध्या में राम जन्मभूमि विवाद को लेकर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय में रोजाना सुनवाई शुरू होने की घोषणा से स्वाभाविक ही एक बार फिर इस मसले के हल की उम्मीद जगी है। दरअसल, तीन सदस्यीय मध्यस्थता समिति ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि विभिन्न पक्षकारों के बीच बातचीत के जरिए इस विवाद का हल निकालने की कोशिशें सफल नहीं हो पाई हैं। उसके बाद सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने आदेश दिया कि निर्णय होने तक अदालत इस मसले पर रोज सुनवाई करेगा। हालांकि जब पांच सदस्यीय संविधान पीठ ने पूर्व न्यायाधीश एफएमआइ कलीफुल्ला की अध्यक्षता में तीन सदस्यीय मध्यस्थता समिति का गठन किया था, तभी विभिन्न पक्षकारों ने कह दिया था कि आपसी बातचीत से इस मसले का हल संभव नहीं है, क्योंकि कई बार बातचीत के जरिए हल निकालने का प्रयास हो चुका है और हर बार विफलता ही हाथ लगी है। फिर भी सर्वोच्च न्यायालय चाहता था कि अयोध्या का मामला आस्था से जुड़ा हुआ है और उसका समाधान सर्वसम्मित से निकाला जा सके, तो बेहतर है। मगर वह प्रयास बेनतीजा रहा। दरअसल, रामजन्मभूमि के मालिकाना हक को लेकर कई मामले दर्ज हैं और विभिन्न अदालतों में इन पर सुनवाई हो चुकी है। इलाहाबाद उच्च न्यायालय ने नौ साल पहले फैसला सुनाया था कि विवादित भूमि का बराबर-बराबर हिस्सा निर्मोही अखाड़ा, रामलला और सुन्नी वक्फ बोर्ड के बीच बांट दिया जाए। इस फैसले को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय में चुनौती दी गई।

रामजन्म भूमि बाबरी मिस्जिद विवाद चूंकि जन आस्था से जुड़ा है, इसलिए सर्वोच्च न्यायालय की मंशा भी शुरू से यही रही कि इसका हल विभिन्न पक्षकारों के बीच आपसी बातचीत के जिए निकल सके, तो बेहतर है। मगर इस मुद्दे को इतना राजनीतिक रंग दिया जा चुका है कि बातचीत अक्सर गलत दिशा में मुड़ जाती रही है और सभी पक्ष अपने—अपने दावे पर अड़े रहते आए हैं। ऐसे में ऐतिहासिक साक्ष्यों को खंगालना, उनकी पुष्टि करना और विभिन्न दावों की हकीकत समझना खासा उलझन भरा काम रहा है। फिर इस संबंध में अलग—अलग अदालतों में ढेर सारे मुकदमे दायर थे। इसिलए सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने आदेश दिया था कि सभी मामलों को एक जगह इकट्ठा करके लगातार सुनवाई की जाए और जल्दी नतीजे पर पहुंचा जाए। इलाहाबाद उच्च न्यायालय ने उन सभी मामलों के विभिन्न पक्षों का अध्ययन और उन पर सुनवाई के बाद 2010 में विवादित भूमि को तीनों पक्षों में बराबर—बराबर बांटने का फैसला सुनाया था।

जब इस फैसले को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय में चुनौती दी गई, तो उसने भी नए सिरे से जानकारियां जुटाने का प्रयास किया। वहां इस मामले की सुनवाई पिछले साल से चल रही है और इसके विभिन्न पहलुओं का अध्ययन करने के बाद सर्वोच्च अदालत फैसले के काफी करीब है। इस मामले में सभी पक्षकारों के अलावा देश भर में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के नामचीन लोगों से भी राय ली जा चुकी है। अच्छी बात है यह कि इस मामले के सभी पक्षकार भी सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का फैसले मानने को तैयार हैं। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने कहा है कि इस मामले के अनेक पहलू हैं और वह उन सभी पहलुओं पर बेहद गंभीर है। चूंकि यह विवाद काफी लंबा खिंच चुका है, इसलिए आम लोगों की भी अपेक्षा यही है कि इसका निपटारा जल्दी हो जाना चाहिए। इसलिए उम्मीद जगी है कि सर्वोच्च न्यायालय में चलने वाली यह सुनवाई आखिरी होगी और उसके बाद जो भी निर्णय आएगा, वह अंतिम और सर्वमान्य होगा।

# कारोबार का युद्ध

न के आखिरी हफ्ते में जापान के शहर ओसाका में जी-20 देशों की शिखर बैठक के बाद अमेरिका और चीन के बीच व्यापार युद्ध खत्म होने की जो उम्मीदें बंधी थीं, वे अब धूमिल पड़ती नजर आ रही हैं। तब अमेरिका पहुंचते ही राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने कहा था कि व्यापार युद्ध समाप्त करने के लिए चीन के साथ नए सिरे से वार्ता शुरू होगी। वार्ता शुरू भी हुई। लेकिन अब ट्रंप ने फिर ऐसा कदम उठा लिया जो दोनों देशों के बीच व्यापार गतिरोध को खत्म करने के बजाय और बढ़ाएगा ही। ट्रंप ने चीन से होने वाले तीन सौ अरब डॉलर के आयात पर दस फीसद शुल्क और लगा दिया है। यह आयात शुल्क पहले से चले आ रहे पच्चीस फीसद आयात शुल्क के अतिरिक्त है। यह एक सितंबर से लागू हो जाएगा। अमेरिका के इस कदम से यह तो साफ है कि वह चीन को सबक सिखाने पर उतारू है और किसी भी कीमत पर झुकने को तैयार नहीं है। सवाल है कि क्या अमेरिका के इस अड़ियल रुख और संरक्षणवाद की नीति के सामने चीन झुकेगा? ऐसा भी नहीं कि अमेरिका और चीन दोनों ही इस हकीकत को नहीं समझ रहे हैं कि दोनों देशों के बीच चल रही कारोबारी लड़ाई दुनिया की अर्थव्यवस्था को गंभीर संकट में डाल सकती है। फिर भी संरक्षणवाद की नीतियों पर चलने से कोई बाज नहीं आ रहा। यह गंभीर संकट का संकेत है। व्यापार युद्ध खत्म करने के लिए अमेरिका और चीन के बीच

वार्ताओं का दौर जारी है। लेकिन हाल में शंघाई में वार्ता के दौरान उपजे गितरोध से अच्छे संकेत नहीं मिले हैं। अमेरिका ने ताजा गितरोध के लिए चीन पर ठीकरा फोड़ा है और कहा है कि वह अपने वादों से मुकर रहा है, इसलिए उस पर शुल्क लगा कर सबक सिखाना जरूरी है। चीन और अमेरिका के बीच व्यापार युद्ध की शुरुआत पिछले साल तब हुई थी जब अमेरिका ने चीन से आयात होने वाले इस्पात और अल्युमीनियम पर भारी आयात शुल्क लगा दिया था। इसकी प्रतिक्रिया में चीन ने भी अमेरिकी उत्पादों पर भारी आयात शुल्क लगा कर संदेश दिया कि वह भी कारोबारी जंग में पीछे नहीं हटेगा। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ने तब तर्क दिया था कि चीनी आयात के कारण अमेरिकी कारोबारियों को नुकसान हो रहा है और अमेरिका को पौने चार सौ अरब डॉलर सालाना का नुकसान उठाना पड़ रहा है, इसलिए इसकी भरपाई चीन से ही की जानी चाहिए।

पिछले दो साल में अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपित डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने जिस तरह से संरक्षणवादी नीतियों की खुल कर पैरवी की है और अमेरिकी उद्योगों को बचाने के नाम पर चीन, भारत, कनाडा और यूरोपीय संघ के सदस्य देशों के साथ जो कारोबारी रुख अपनाया है, वह चिंताजनक है। इस वक्त दुनिया में फिर से मंदी का खतरा गहरा रहा है। ज्यादातर देश अब महसूस कर रहे हैं कि वक्त रहते अमेरिकी संरक्षणवादी नीतियों का विरोध नहीं किया गया तो वैश्विक कारोबार पर अमेरिकी दादागीरी हावी हो जाएगी और दुनिया के कई देश इससे बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो सकते हैं और उनकी अर्थव्यवस्था को खतरा पैदा हो सकता है। ट्रंप की निगाहें इस समय अगले राष्ट्रपित चुनाव पर हैं और फिर से राष्ट्रपित बनने के लिए वे ऐसे कदम उठा रहे हैं जिनसे अमेरिकी जनता के भीतर उनकी एक मजबूत राष्ट्रपित की छवि बने। ईरान के साथ युद्ध, चीन और अन्य देशों के साथ व्यापार युद्ध ऐसे ही कदम हैं।

## कल्पमेधा

जो शक्ति के बल पर विजय प्राप्त करता है वह अपने शत्रु पर अपूर्ण विजय ही प्राप्त करता है। -मिल्टन

# आंकड़ों की सुरक्षा और चुनौती

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

उपभोक्ताओं के निजी डेटा लीक होने पर फेसबुक पर भारी जुर्माना लगने के बाद अब भारत को भी अपने नागरिकों के हित में डेटा सुरक्षा और डेटा स्थानीकरण पर नया कानून बनाने की जरूरत है। जिस तरह से फ्रांस ने अमेरिकी सरकार के भारी विरोध के बावजूद फेसबुक, एपल और अमेजन जैसी कंपनियों पर डिजिटल कर लगाए हैं उसी प्रकार भारत सरकार को भी भारतीय उपभोक्ताओं का डेटा इस्तेमाल करने वाली बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों पर डिजिटल कर लगाने के बारे में विचार करना होगा।

सी भी देश के लिए उसके उपभोक्ताओं से संबंधित आंकड़ों (कंज्यूमर डेटा) का महत्त्व भी लगातार बढ़ता जा रहा है। ऐसे में कोई एक सौ सैंतीस करोड आबादी वाला भारत तेजी से बढती आर्थिक अहमियत के कारण आंकड़ों की नई दुनिया में लाभप्रद स्थिति में है। इसलिए यह जरूरी है कि भारत में काम करने वाली बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के जरूरी आंकड़े और भारतीय उपभोक्ताओं से संबंधित संवेदनशील जानकारियां भारत में ही स्टोर की जाएं। हाल में तकनीकी क्षेत्र की एक प्रमुख कंपनी की ओर से जारी रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि जुलाई 2018 से अप्रैल 2019 के बीच भारतीय कंपनियों के डेटा चोरी होने से इन कंपनियों को बारह करोड़ से ज्यादा का नुकसान उठाना पड़ा है। रिपोर्ट में यह भी कहा गया है कि भारत से डेटा चोरी से कंपनियों को भारी नुकसान हो रहा है और इनका घाटा लगातार बढता जा रहा है। गौरतलब है कि पिछले महीने अमेरिका ने अपने

नागरिकों के निजी डेटा लीक करने के मामले में फेसबुक पर करीब चौंतीस हजार करोड़ रुपए का जुर्माना लगाया था। इसके बाद पूरी दुनिया में डेटा सुरक्षा एवं डेटा स्थानीकरण के मुद्दे पर बहस छिड़ गई। दुनिया के कई विकासशील देशों में इन मुद्दों पर नए कानून बनाए जाने की तैयारी भी हो रही है। पिछले दिनों टिक टॉक के स्वामित्व वाली चीन स्थित कंपनी बाइट डांस ने भारत में एक डेटा केंद्र खोलने का फैसला किया है, जो देश में किसी विदेशी कंपनी का भारत में इस तरह का पहला कदम है। अब फेसबुक, गूगल, ट्विटर जैसी अमेरिकी सोशल मीडिया कंपनियों पर भारत में डेटा केंद्र स्थापित करने का दबाव बढ गया है। भारत सरकार द्वारा डेटा स्थानीकरण पर प्रस्तावित डेटा संरक्षण विधेयक के मद्देनजर वैश्विक कंपनियों द्वारा भारत में डेटा केंद्र बनाने की संभावनाएं बढ़ गई हैं।

जन के आखिर में जापान के शहर ओसाका में जी-20 सम्मेलन के दौरान डेटा स्थानीकरण और डेटा सुरक्षा पर अपना रुख साफ करते हुए भारत ने कहा कि डेटा कच्चे तेल की तरह एक ऐसी संपत्ति है जिस पर विकासशील देशों के हितों का ध्यान रखा जाना जरूरी है। साथ ही डेटा पर विश्व व्यापार संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) के नियमों के हिसाब से बातचीत की जानी चाहिए। जी-20 सम्मलेन के इतर भी भारत के प्रधानमंत्री ने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति के साथ वार्ता में भी डेटा स्थानीकरण के मुद्दे पर पीछे न हटने की बात कही थी। वस्तुतः डेटा स्थानीकरण किसी देश के नागरिकों और उपभोक्ताओं से संबंधित डेटा को उसी देश की सीमाओं के भीतर संग्रहित करने की प्रक्रिया है। इससे उस देश की सरकार का डेटा पर बेहतर नियंत्रण रहता है और डेटा का दरुपयोग भी रुकता है।

पिछले दिनों भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआइ) ने दिशानिर्देश जारी करते हुए स्पष्ट किया था कि भारतीय उपभोक्ताओं के लेन-देन के डेटा का भारत में ही रखे जाएंगे। यदि भारत से संबंधित उपभोक्ताओं के भुगतान की प्रक्रिया विदेश में होती है तो वहां उससे संबंधित डेटा को एक कारोबारी दिन या चौबीस घंटे के भीतर भारत भेजा जाना जरूरी होगा, ताकि भारतीयों से संबंधित लेन-देन के डेटा को केवल भारत में ही रखा जा सके। वस्तुतः नई वैश्विक आर्थिक व्यवस्था के तहत भविष्य में डिजिटल कारोबार तेजी से बढ़ेगा और जिस देश के पास जितना ज्यादा डेटा संरक्षण होगा, वह देश आर्थिक रूप से उतना मजबूत होगा।

जापान के शहर फुकुओका में आयोजित जी-20 देशों के वित्त मंत्रियों और दुनिया के शीर्ष वित्तीय नीति निर्माताओं की शिखर बैठक में डिजिटल वैश्विक उद्योग-कारोबार पर डिजिटल कर लगाने को लेकर आम सहमति बनी। इस सहमति के मद्देनजर डिजिटल वैश्विक व्यापार करने वाले उद्योग-कारोबार पर एक सामान्य कराधान व्यवस्था लागू की जा सकेगी, जो सभी देशों में समान रूप से स्वीकार्य हो सकेगी। दुनिया के अधिकांश देश डिजिटल कारोबार करने वाले उद्यमों पर डिजिटल टैक्स लगाने का समर्थन कर रहे हैं लेकिन अमेरिका सहित दुनिया के कुछ विकसित देशों की प्रमुख डिजिटल कंपनियां इस नए प्रस्ताव के खिलाफ हैं। स्थिति यह है कि विकासशील देशों में बड़े पैमाने पर डिजिटल कारोबार करने वाली बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियां कर बचाने के लिए अपने वास्तविक कारोबार का एक बडा हिस्सा कम

अपने वास्तावक काराबार का एक बड़ा हिस्सा कम कारा

कर लगाने वाले देशों में हस्तांतिरत करती हैं। इससे उन देशों को राजस्व की भारी हानि होती है जहां वास्तिवक कारोबार किया जाता है। इसिलए जी-20 देशों के वित्त मंत्रियों द्वारा पारित ताजा प्रस्ताव या तो ऐसे अर्जित लाभ पर एक साझा न्यूनतम टैक्स लागू कर सकता है या फिर यह ऐसी अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहमति बनाई जा सकती है जिससे ऐसे अर्जित लाभ पर उन देशों पर कर लगेगा जहां वास्तिवक राजस्व प्राप्ति हुई है। जी-20 के तहत 2020 तक डिजिटल कर सुनिश्चित किए जाने का प्रस्ताव लागू हो जाने पर दुनिया में डिजिटल कारोबार के भविष्य की दिशा बदल जाएगी। वैश्विक डिजिटल कारोबार पर एक उपयुक्त कर लगाने से भारत और दक्षिण अफ्रीका जैसे कई विकासशील देशों को फायदा होगा।

इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि भारत में डेटा सुरक्षा और डेटा स्थानीकरण से जहां अर्थव्यवस्था को फायदा होगा, वहीं उपभोक्ताओं को भी इसका लाभ मिलेगा। रोजगार के मौके भी बढ़ेंगे। दुनिया की सबसे तेजी से बढ़ती हुई भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में बहुराष्टीय कंपनियां तेजी से डिजिटल कारोबार बढ़ा रही हैं। भारतीय मध्यम वर्ग की ताकत पर भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था दुनिया की छठी सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था बन गई है। ऐसे में बढ़ते हुए वैश्विक डिजिटल कारोबार का लाभ भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को और आगे बढ़ा सकेगा। हाल ही में 'डिजिटल इंडिया : टेक्नोलॉजी टू ट्रांसफॉर्म ए कनेक्टेड नेशन' में यह तथ्य उभर कर आया है कि भारत डिजिटलीकरण और बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के माध्यम से डिजिटल कारोबार की दिशा में तेजी से आगे बढ़ रहा है। भारत

में इंटरनेट उपभोक्ताओं की संख्या देश की करीब आधी आबादी के करीब हो गई है और इस परिप्रेक्ष्य में भारत दुनिया में अब चीन के बाद दूसरे स्थान पर आ चुका है।

भारत में वैश्विक डिजिटल कारोबार बढ़ने के और भी कई कारण हैं। ब्लूमबर्ग की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में 2014 के बाद छत्तीस करोड़ जन-धन खाते खुले हैं और पच्चीस करोड़ रुपे कार्ड जारी हुए हैं। पिछले पांच साल में मोबाइल बैंकिंग से लेन-देन पैंसठ गुना बढ़ा है। खासतौर से आधार और वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) के कारण भारत में डिजिटल क्रांति और तेज हुई है। जीएसटी लागू होने के बाद एक करोड़ औद्योगिक एवं कारोबारी इकाइयां कर-भुगतान के लिए डिजिटल माध्यम का उपयोग कर रही हैं। उपभोक्ता समझ गए हैं कि डिजिटल बाजार उनके लिए कितनी लाभप्रद है।

उपभोक्ताओं के निजी डेटा लीक होने पर फेसबुक पर भारी जुर्माना लगने के बाद अब भारत को भी अपने नागरिकों के हित में डेटा सुरक्षा और डेटा स्थानीकरण पर नया कानून बनाने की जरूरत है। जिस तरह से फ्रांस ने अमेरिकी सरकार के भारी विरोध के बावजूद फेसबुक, एपल और अमेजन जैसी कंपनियों पर डिजिटल कर लगाए हैं उसी प्रकार भारत सरकार को भी भारतीय उपभोक्ताओं का डेटा इस्तेमाल करने वाली बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों पर डिजिटल कर लगाने के बारे में विचार करना होगा। तभी डेटा स्थानीकरण भविष्य में भारत के लिए कच्चे तेल के भंडार की तरह उपयोगी होगा और भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत बनाने में प्रभावी योगदान भी दे पाएगा।

# निराला वाद्यवृंद

अरुणेंद्र नाथ वर्मा

िसी प्रतिष्ठित अस्पताल के नवीनतम उपकरणों से सुसज्जित रेडियोलॉजी विभाग में एमआरआइ मशीन के प्रकोष्ठ में प्रवेश करने से पहले कौन सोच सकता है कि अंदर वाद्यवृंद प्रस्तृति होगी। वाद्यवृंद भी कैसा! आकाशवाणी के वाद्यवृंद जैसा नहीं जिसमें सितार, जलतरंग, वायलिन, बांसुरी, तबला और मृदंग जैसे सुपरिचित वाद्य हों। यहूदी मेन्युहिन द्वारा निर्देशित फिलहार्मोनिक ऑर्केस्ट्रा जैसा भी नहीं, जिसमें साजों की संख्या से ही श्रोता-दर्शक आतंकित हो जाएं। यह वाद्यवंद निराला है। पहले सुनी हुई तरह-तरह की ध्वनियों का अद्भुत संगम। ऐसा संगम, जिसमें इंसानी संगीत के साजों के स्वर-ताल प्रकृति के बदलते स्वरूपों के नितांत मौलिक संगीत में घुलमिल जाते हैं। शायद असाध्य रोगों की आशंका से सहमे हुए श्रोता के दिल की धड़कनें भी इस अनोखे वाद्य संगीत में घुली-मिली रहती हैं। लेकिन इस नादब्रह्म को सब कहां पहचान पाते हैं!

इस निराले संगीत को पसंद करने की मनःस्थिति बने भी तो कैसे, जब गंभीर बीमारियों की पहचान और निदान मात्र घोषित लक्ष्य हों। सूर और ताल के इस अद्भुत संयोग का आनंद लेने की पहली शर्त है कल और काल की चिंता से मुक्ति। लेकिन आशंकित, कराहते रोगी को तो घड़ी, अंगूठी आदि आभूषण उतारते ही उस दिन का डर सताने लगता है 'जब लाद चलेगा बंजारा'! यह हताश मनःस्थिति और सघन हो जाती है जब सामान्य कपड़े उतार कर, एक चोगा पहना कर, अर्थी जैसे लंबे से तख्ते पर लिटा कर निर्देश दिया जाता है कि अब सांस बांध कर रखो।

मशीन के अंदर धकेल दिए जाने के पहले मिला यह आश्वासन झूठा–सा लगता है कि प्रकोष्ठ के अंदर परेशानी होने पर घंटी बजा कर ऑपरेटर को अब सैकड़ों मेंढ़ के अंदर परेशानी होने पर घंटी बजा कर ऑपरेटर को अब सैकड़ों मेंढ़ के अंदर फेले धुं बजनी शुरू होती है, उधर वह अर्थीनुमा तख्ता हरकत में आ जाता है। विद्युत शवदाह के धधकते प्रकोष्ठ में होती जाती है, भस्म होने के लिए आगे सरकती अर्थी की याद सितारवादक अं दिलाता तख्ता जैसे ही एमआरआइ प्रकोष्ठ के अंदर श्रोताओं को मुख्य दाखिल होता है, वाद्यवृंद उठान लेता है– पास आ रहे लेकिन चरमों फौजी बूटों की ठक–ठक ध्विन के रूप में। फिर वह

आखिरी कीलों की भयावह ध्वनि में बदल जाती है। कौन-सी ध्वनि कितनी देर बजी, इसका अनुमान कौन लगाए, जब समय खुद सहम कर थम गया हो।

'ठक-ठक' ताबूत को जड़ने के लिए ठोंकी जाती

तभी ताबूत पर ठुकती कीलें काली घटाओं से बेतहाशा बरसती बूंदों में बदल जाती हैं। तड़-तड़-तड़ की जोरदार आवाज प्रकोष्ठ के अंदर बादल-फोड़ वृष्टि का आभास कराए, इसके पहले ही अचानक मरघट की शांति छा जाती है। इस बार रीं-रीं-रीं की ध्वनि आती है। कोई नौसिखिया सारंगी या वायिलन बजाना सीख रहा है। पर वाद्यवृंद का कोई स्वर, कोई ताल देर तक नहीं टिकता। सारे कलाकारों को समान अवसर देने वाला सहृदय

अब सैकड़ों मेंढ़क जोर से टर्राने लगते हैं और प्रकोष्ठ के अंदर फैले धुंधलके में हजारों झींगुर एक साथ बोल पड़ते हैं। मेंढ़कों और झींगुरों की जुगलबंदी वेगवती होती जाती है, जैसे किसी संगीत सभा में प्रख्यात सितारवादक और मशहूर तबलावादक के बीच श्रोताओं को मुग्ध कर लेने की होड़ मच गई हो।

निर्देशक फिर इंसानी साज छोड़

कर प्रकृति को इशारा करता है।

लेकिन चरमोत्कर्ष के पहले ही क्षण भर की सघन चुप्पी छा जाती है। इस बार कोई पत्थर का कारीगर बिजली की धारदार मशीन से संगमरमर काटने लगता है– किर्र–किर्र–किर्र। पिघले सीसे की तरह कानों में गिरती इस ध्विन का आघात कम करने के लिए सीमेंट बालू के मिश्रण को जमीन पर अपनी करनी से फैलाता

हुआ राजिमस्त्री आ जाता है। हल्की किर्र-किर्र अब भी बनी रहती है। पर क्षण भर में फिर छा जाती है सघन शांति। अरे! क्या यह मशीन चुपचाप भी काम कर सकती है? लेकिन तभी दूर से सीटी देते हुए रेल के पुराने स्टीम इंजन के आने की छुक-छुक ध्विन लगातार तेज होती जाती है। और तेज, और तेज।

इंजन और डिब्बे समवेत स्वर में दुहरा रहे हैं- चल कलकत्ते छह-छह पैसे, चल कलकत्ते छह-छह पैसे। शोर बढ़ता जाता है। गाड़ी किसी पुल से गुजरते हुए धड़क-धड़क चीखने लगती है। श्रोता को लगता है कि उसे रेल की पटरी पर बांध दिया गया है और यह तुफान मेल उसे कुचल डालेगी। पर एक बार फिर अचानक पूर्ण विराम। चीं-चीं करके ब्रेक लगने तक की भी आवाज नहीं। और यह लो, ताबूत में कीलें फिर से ठोंकी जाने लगती हैं। पांच-छह कीलें। बस! फिर विराम । कुछ क्षणों के बाद वह अर्थीनुमा तख्ता अपने सवार के साथ वापस बाहर सरकने लगता है। प्रकोष्ठ के अंदर का धुंधलका पीछे छूट जाता है। बाहर के प्रकाश में रोगी के दिल की बढी हुई धड़कन काबु में आने लगती है। कानों में आवाज आती है- 'बस हो गया सर'। अर्थी पर लेटा शरीर तो फिर हरकत में आ जाता है, लेकिन मन में एमआरआइ वाद्यवृंद के अद्भृत स्वरों का निनाद गूंजता रह जाता है।

# विशेष दर्जा क्यों

चुचंधीय भारत के हर राज्य को पूर्ण राजनीतिक संरक्षण देकर राष्ट्र की एकता और अखंडता की रक्षा करना केंद्र सरकार का दायित्व है। पाकिस्तान सहित कश्मीर का हर अलगाववादी घटक यह समझ ले कि भारत पाकिस्तान का भौगौलिक विभाजन मुस्लिम पाकिस्तान व धर्म निरपेक्ष हिंदुस्तान के रूप में हुआ था। यहां किसी क्षेत्र विशेष या वर्ग विशेष को विशेष दर्जा या सुविधा देना शेष राष्ट्र के नागरिकों के साथ अन्याय की श्रेणी में आता है। अगर कश्मीर को मिले विशेषाधिकार के बदले राष्ट्र को अमन चैन मिलता, वहां हर भारतीय अपने आपको सुरक्षित पाता तो भारत की उदारता सहनीय होती। लेकिन उदारता के बदले पाक पोषित षड्यंत्रों से राष्ट्र की एकता-अखंडता को चुनौती देते षड्यंत्रों, आतंकी हमलों को क्यों और कब तक बर्दाश्त किया जाएगा? सवाल है कि खालिस्तान की मांग को सख्ती से दफन कर देने वाला राष्ट्र कश्मीर को और अतिरिक्त विशेषाधिकार देने की मेज पर क्यों बैठे? भारत के क्षेत्र विशेष के संप्रदाय विशेष को विशेषाधिकार या भूखंड निर्बाध क्यो दें? एक क्षेत्र विशेष के संप्रदाय विशेष की जातीयता आधारित मांग विखंडन का एक और घृणित लहुलुहान दरिया बहा देगी।

• *अरविंद पुरोहित, रतलाम।* 

# अपराधियों की राजनीति

भारतीय के लोकतंत्र में कितने शर्म और ग्लानि की बात है कि जो जनप्रतिनिधि देश की जनता की हिफाजत करने, उसके कष्टों के निवारण करने और खुशी-समृद्धि बढ़ाने के लिए के लिए चुना जाता है, वही बेटी तुल्य एक नाबालिंग लड़की से बलात्कार जैसा घिनौना कुकृत्य कर बैठता है! और तो और उस बलात्कारी जनप्रतिनिधि के पक्ष में पुलिस, कोर्ट-कचहरी, जेल के अधिकारी पूरी ताकत के साथ खड़े हो जाते हैं। पुलिस पीड़िता की रिपोर्ट तक नहीं लिखती! उलटे उसके पिता को उठा कर जेल में बंद कर देती है जहां उसके संरक्षण में बलात्कारी का सगा भाई और अन्य गुंडे उस लड़की के पिता की इतनी बर्बर तरीके से पिटाई करते हैं कि उसकी मौत हो जाती है। अंततः

## संकट में रोजगार

देश में आए दिन बड़ी-बड़ी कंपनियों से नौकरियां जाने की खबरें आ रही हैं। यह गंभीर चिंता का विषय है। कुछ दिन पहले एक खबर आई कि वाहन कलपुर्जे उद्योग में दस लाख नौकरियां जाने का अंदेशा है। कई जगहों पर तो छंटनी भी शुरू हो गई है। इसी तरह मोबाइल हैंडसेट उद्योग में साल भर में ढाई लाख नौकरियां चली गईं। रिटेल कारोबार, वितरण और निर्माण क्षेत्र में सबसे ज्यादा छंटनी हुई है। सरकारी कारखानों में

छटनी हुई है। सरकारी कारखानी में भी हालात संतोषजनक नहीं हैं।

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

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

सकती है।

उस पीड़िता को न्याय तब मिलता है जब वह मुख्यमंत्री के दरवाजे पर स्वयं पर तेल छिड़क कर आग लगा लेती है।

ये हैं भारतीय लोकतंत्र के एक चुने हुए जनप्रतिनिधि का क्रूर चेहरा। यह कितनी बार लिखा जा चुका है कि आपराधिक पृष्ठभूमि वाले नेताओं, बलात्कारियों, माफियाओं, हत्यारों, दंगा फैलाने के कुत्सित प्रयास करने वालों ने ग्राम पंचायत से लेकर भारतीय संसद तक में पैठ बना ली है। जब तक इन अपराधियों और मॉफिया तत्वों का राजनीति से सफाया नहीं होगा, इस लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था की कोई सार्थकता नहीं है। इस लोकतंत्र को ग्रहण लग चुका है।

कतत्र का ग्रहण लग चुका है। ● निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद पिछले दिनों बीएसएनएल के पास कर्मचारियों के वेतन के लिए पैसे नहीं थे। इसी तरह जेट एअरवेज की भी स्थिति किसी से छुपी नहीं है। देश में आने वाले समय में बेरोजगारी भयावह रूप धारण कर

मोहम्मद् आसिफ, जामिया नगर, दिल्ली
खेतुका खयान

**बतुका बयान** ही अध्यक्ष महबूबा मुफ्ती ने व

पीडीपी की अध्यक्ष महबूबा मुफ्ती ने कहा कि 35ए के साथ छेड़छाड़ करना बारूद को हाथ लगाने के बराबर होगा। जो हाथ 35ए के साथ छेड़छाड़ करने के लिए उठेंगे, वे हाथ ही नहीं सारा जिस्म जल के राख हो जाएगा। महबूबा मुफ्ती के इस बयान के बाद देश में उनके इस बयान की काफी आलोचना हो रही है। इस बयान के बाद लोग उन्हें पाकिस्तानी प्रेमी भी कहने लगे हैं। महबूबा मुफ्ती के इस बयान से तो एक बात साफ हो गई कि वे किसी हालात में 35ए को खत्म नहीं होने देना चाहतीं। अगर यह धारा खत्म हो गई तो सबसे ज्यादा खतरा आतंकी संगठनों को होगा जो कश्मीर में अपनी पैठ बना चुके हैं। सवाल है कि अगर धारा 35ए खत्म कर दी जाती है तो महबूबा मुफ्ती को इससे क्या डर है? क्या वे आतंकवादियों की हमदर्द हैं?

● योगेंद्र गौतम, उन्नाव - ि

## ट्रंप का शिगूफा!

भारत जब आजाद हुआ तो भारत की सत्ता छोड़ कर जा रहे अंग्रेजों और भारत के स्वार्थी नेताओं ने देश विभाजन का दंश और कश्मीर विवाद को जन्म दिया जो आज तक चला आ रहा है। इसकी वजह से ही कश्मीर में आतंकवाद खूब फला-फुला। भारत ने निरंतर इस विवाद को सुलझाने का प्रयास किया लेकिन कोई सकारात्मक परिणाम नहीं निकला। हाल में अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने एक और झूठ बोला कि भारत के प्रधानमंत्री ने कश्मीर विवाद में उनसे मध्यस्थ्ता करने को कहा है। इस बयान ने न सिर्फ भारतीय राजनीति में बल्कि अंतरराष्ट्रीय जगत में भी हलचल पैदा कर दी। भारत ने तुरंत अपना रुख स्पष्ट किया कि कश्मीर विवाद सुलझाने के लिए भारत और पाकिस्तान ही वार्ता करेंगे, इसमें किसी तीसरे पक्ष की आवश्यकता नहीं है। आज भारत एक शक्तिशाली देश और हर आंतरिक समस्या का समाधान खुद कर सकता है। ट्रंप को अगर विवाद ही सुलझाने है तो ईरान, चीन, अफगानिस्तान, उत्तर कोरीया, मैक्सिको आदि के साथ ही विवाद सुलझाए।

सुनील कुमार सिंह, मेरठ