

Einsteinian economics



TICKER

MIHIR SHARMA

A recent statement by the Union minister for commerce (and railways) Piyush Goyal gave rise to a small storm of commentary — some gently amused, and some ill-natured. Goyal — after a meeting of the Board of Trade, and in the context of a target of \$1 trillion for Indian exports — suggested that we should not be interested in discussions about the composition of such targets, as seen in the media, which he paraphrased as follows: “If you’re looking at a five trillion dollar economy, the country will have to grow at 12%. Today it’s growing at 6%.” Doing these calculations was a waste of time, he said: “Don’t get into those maths. Those maths have never helped Einstein discover gravity... If you’d only gone by structured formulae and what was past knowledge, I don’t think there would have been any innovation in this world.”

Now, of course, it was Isaac Newton who “discovered” gravity. This sort of minor slip is exactly the kind of thing guaranteed to keep Twitter amused, and the names of both scientists shot to the top India’s trending topics. (Imagine how disappointing for some Indian physicist who happened to click on these trends, excited that we were finally developing a scientific temper, only to discover that we are actually sticking to what we know best, mocking politicians.)

This was a minor error, frankly, and it’s unfair to go after it. Maybe he meant to say Newton, maybe he meant to say relativity. The BJP might have transformed such minor errors from Rahul Gandhi in the past into an election-winning image of him as a buffoon, but such slips should be shrugged off by a mature polity.

The problem, however, doesn’t end there. Worryingly, Goyal issued two clarifications through the medium of the government-friendly agency ANI. They were increasingly combative, rather than dismissive, which was odd. Further, Goyal repeated the factual error in his clarifications: “While maths helped Einstein discover gravity, it’s because he had an open mind and the ability to think big that he could use maths to discover gravity.” Once is an error, twice is puzzling, three times is a problem. Because it means that either nobody told the minister he made a mistake; or that, knowing there was a factual error, he nevertheless persisted with it in order to emphasise his larger point. Neither reflects well on how communication is being managed in New Delhi these days. If you can’t accept even a minor factual error, how will you reverse or modify bigger errors?

But the real problem is the message Goyal was trying to send out. His purpose, he clarified, was to “make the people confident, give them a spirit of positivity”; “if we live in the past”, he added, linking “structured formulae” of growth economics to this past thinking, then we won’t achieve our targets.

If this is how the government is thinking, then we are in real trouble. For if this can be called thinking, then it is the magical kind. However much the government might wish us to close our eyes and just believe, the economy is not a fairy story. We can’t set aside the hard choices of economics — expressed in those “structural formulae” — and wish our way to success. For a Union minister to mock the basic maths behind criticism of the government’s targets is a bad signal indeed; disdain for expertise seems to now be the ruling ideology in New Delhi.

The government must realise what people mean when they discuss the “structural formulae” behind the slow-down in growth and the stagnation in exports. Those producers, exporters and economists are not “living in the past”; they are seeking to change our future. They are making the point that business as usual will prevent India from achieving the targets the government has set. They are advocating for the reforms or administrative changes that, according to these “structural formulae”, will in fact ensure India achieves these targets. In the case of exports, that means a massive reduction in red tape, an increase in trade facilitation, better linkages to ports, a reduction in tariffs, and so on. If the government’s only answer to these pleas is to demand that we suspend our disbelief and “go beyond the structured way of thinking”, then we are doomed. Not only will we not make these ambitious targets, but such anti-intellectualism at the highest level means that even regular growth might be difficult to achieve.

A final word on Einstein and mathematics: whatever Whatsapp University might tell the credulous, he was never poor at maths. Naturally he wasn’t. And when he worked on the general theory of relativity, he needed to draw on the most up-to-date developments in mathematics: non-Euclidean geometries in particular. He had a wide correspondence with mathematicians, and a crucial insight was provided by his friend Marcel Grossmann. Even Einstein needed to consult experts. Unless the current government is even smarter than Einstein, so do they.

Why we need a man like John Bercow

The British House of Commons Speaker has cut down to size a monarchical Prime Minister who makes a cult of flamboyant populism



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K DATTA-RAY

Indian democracy needs a man like John Bercow, the House of Commons Speaker who has announced he would stand down on October 31, or at the next general election, whichever comes first. Bercow has restored the centrality of Parliament to British public life. No less important — some would say even more important — he has cut down to size a monarchical Prime Minister who makes a cult of flamboyant populism. Above all, he has introduced future generations into the principles and practice of parliamentary politics.

No public figure is ever blameless. In his

10 years as Speaker, Bercow has been accused of bullying Westminster staff, refurbishing his grace and favour apartment with parliamentary funds, and misusing the Speaker’s office to canvass money for his re-election campaign. Nigel Farage, the egregious Brexit Party leader, calls him the “worst Speaker in memory”. Donald Trump probably mutters far worse imprecations. For Bercow told the Commons on February 6, 2017, that he was “strongly opposed” to Trump addressing Parliament during his planned state visit to Britain, adding that “opposition to racism and sexism” were “hugely important considerations”.

In the event, the state visit didn’t take place. When Trump did visit as Queen Elizabeth’s guest, Bercow, the taxi driver’s son whose ancestors were Jewish immigrants called Berkowitz, was conspicuous by his absence from the glittering Buckingham Palace banquet that meant so much to the American President and his First Lady. Bercow, who has modernised his job sartorially too, abandoning the Speaker’s full-bottomed wig, knee-length breeches and gaiters for a sober business suit and his own short-cropped but unruly white hair, would probably have felt out of place in that gorgeous assembly sparkling with diamonds.

Last Monday’s tumultuous scenes in the Commons were a fitting epitaph to the vigour and energy he has injected into parliamentary proceedings. The previous style was slack. Contemporary issues were often ignored and few backbenchers could put questions to the Prime Minister. Bercow changed all that. With his sardonic lopsided grin and a twinkle in his eye, he made sure the Prime Minister spent hours standing at the Despatch Box answering question after question from backbench MPs. Ministers were furious at this intrusion in their time in the limelight but it must be admitted Theresa May diligently did her duty. It’s only Boris Johnson who tried to bluff his way out of parliamentary debates with invective instead of argument and more style than substance until he silenced Parliament altogether. He must envy Narendra Modi who avoids facing the Lok Sabha and much prefers public gatherings of adoring crowds hanging on his every word.

Apart from livening up the Commons, Bercow is credited with dragging it into the 21st century. The Palace of Westminster is a World Heritage site and a major tourist attraction. Thanks to Bercow, it has also become the nursery of legislative politics. Come November and members of the Youth Parliament will sit in the House of Commons

for the 11th time. It began on October 30, 2009, when the Youth Parliament became the first and only group of non-MPs ever to debate in the chamber. Since then members aged between 11 and 18 have participated in an annual debate in the Commons, chaired by Bercow himself. Among the issues — chosen by a ballot of young people from across the UK and then voted on to decide which two issues should become the Youth Parliament’s priority campaigns for the year ahead — have been racism, Islamophobia, ending knife-crime, mental health, “equal pay, for equal work”, homelessness and “votes at 16”.

Not only are these young people drawn from all over the country, they also represent the changing face of modern Britain more accurately than the Commons. While only 29 per cent of MPs are women, the Youth Parliament boasts a 52 per cent female membership. Further, 32 per cent of Youth Parliament members are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds as against 7.9 per cent of the British population and 8 per cent of MPs. The group has included differently-abled young orators in wheel chairs. Adult listeners have also been known to single out teenage speakers as future prime ministers.

The Prime Minister must be furious he can’t have Bercow opposed at the hustings and defeated: the man has announced he won’t stand again. Reportedly, Johnson hopes to inflict some kind of punishment by denying him the peerage customarily bestowed on former Speakers when they resign. Bercow couldn’t care less. His service to posterity is preparing young Britons for a parliamentary future.

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ ADITYA GHOSH | CEO, SOUTH ASIA | OYO

Flying high, feet on the ground

Ghosh tells Arindam Majumder and Nivedita Mookerji how Oyo and IndiGo are similar in more ways than one and why calling him arrogant would be completely off the mark

Aditya Ghosh, known for IndiGo’s ‘on-time arrival’, reaches a few minutes late for the lunch at Comorin, which can be best described as a millennial restaurant serving fusion dishes. Ghosh makes up for the slightly delayed start and settles down for a multi-layered meal and long conversation, keeping his handset away to focus fully on the menu and on us. This Gurugram restaurant set up by Manish Mehrotra of Indian Accent fame at the Two Horizon Centre, which houses several multinational offices, was our guest’s choice. The reason, we assumed was that it’s a close drive from the Oyo office, his current workplace. But during the course of the afternoon, we realise Ghosh has tried almost every item, including the dessert and beverages (he tells us he does not consume alcohol) available here, and rates everything five on five.

That makes our task simpler, and we happily let the man, who had led IndiGo for a decade and is now scripting an ambitious expansion plan at Oyo along with founder Ritesh Agarwal, place the order. Ghosh enjoys the exercise — he not only orders with a fair degree of familiarity and knowledge, he also serves us and himself with an air of perfection. We shift from the loud part of the restaurant to a quieter corner to talk in peace over a mocktail of coconut water and white tea. Taking off from his latest Twitter message, we ask him about his trip to Kolkata during the weekend to meet Oyo’s hotel partners in the city. “I’m sleeping less but it’s exciting to be back to those days of 2004 when we were building IndiGo.”

As the starters arrive, the conversation moves to how IndiGo and Oyo are similar in more ways than one. Till two years ago, Ghosh led one of the largest low-cost airlines in the world and now he heads the fastest growing low-cost hotel chain in the world. Under Ghosh, IndiGo was adding one aircraft per week; now as CEO of Oyo, Ghosh presides over a hotel chain that is adding more than 20,000 rooms every month. “At a fundamental level both are trying to commoditise a product that was extremely highly priced for a consistent service or it was very fragmented. Both the companies are trying to make the service more affordable but convenient also,” Ghosh says.

There’s dahi batata puri with a dollop of curd

and wasabi that melts into the mouth, along with some well-made green chilli prawns and haleem. “I stay literally across the street which has made me a resident expert here,” Ghosh points out with a smile.

We get on to his shift from IndiGo to Oyo, a subject he hasn’t spoken about much. Why does Oyo need a new leader? More importantly, why would Ghosh get excited about Oyo? “During the break I took after IndiGo, I emptied out my mind. There were just two rules — I am not going back to an airline and I wanted to work for a company that has a big presence in India as I wanted to be close to the decision making.” It was around that time that Agarwal, who counts IndiGo promoter Rahul Bhatia as his mentor, got in touch with Ghosh.

It had been more than three months since he had stepped down from IndiGo. The two met at The Quorum, an upmarket members-only club in Gurugram. The first meeting started at seven in the evening and stretched beyond 1 am. Ghosh invited Agarwal to his home for the rest of the discussion which went on till 4 am. “We just discussed various ways of scaling up the business.” He’s clearly enjoying the dahi batata he’s having for the nth time here, while recalling his post-IndiGo days when he was able to tick some of the boxes on his bucket list — hiking alone, completing reading a book in a week and watching a movie on Monday morning.

Used to having older people report to him at IndiGo, tables have turned for Ghosh at 43. Agarwal, the boss at Oyo, is still in his 20s. A joke that Agarwal often cracks is that he himself was born middle-aged while Ghosh was born a millennial and remains one. On a more serious note, he says, “I don’t think of Ritesh as a 25-year-old and I hope he doesn’t think of me as a 43-year-old. There’s a comfort level with him.” Returning to the Oyo-IndiGo similarity, he says both are made-in-India international brands. But isn’t Oyo being driven by foreign investors such as SoftBank and is it any different from the days when he had a free hand at IndiGo? “The free hand concept is overstated. The secret lies in mutual respect for what a person brings to the table. Whether it is with Rahul (Bhatia) or Rakesh (Gangwal) or with Ritesh (Agarwal), I feel I have that.”

Does he miss IndiGo? “I miss the people at IndiGo, and I still get messages everyday from



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

people there.” In his communication with IndiGo employees, Ghosh made it a point to add a line, “You people make me look so good and successful.” At Oyo too, he’s equally accessible, Ghosh claims.

It was hard not to ask him how he viewed the ongoing promoters’ war at IndiGo from the outside. “I have to be dispassionate about it... Can’t talk about it, it won’t be appropriate,” he says, withdrawing from the topic on which he surely has enough to write a book on.

It’s time for the main course and Ghosh takes charge again. Almost apologetically he orders *dal tadka*. “Dal may sound ordinary but here it’s something worth trying out,” he says. He isn’t wrong. Chef Gaurav Yadav has expertly

created a range of fusion food by mixing casual food experience with the most authentic flavours of every dish. Besides *dal*, there’s Kashmiri *palak kofta* (they call it *rista* instead of *kofta*) with steamed rice and Champaran meat with *parantha*.

Back to Oyo, Ghosh claims he has stayed in those rooms (from Townhall to Collections), often across cities, exactly like he would fly IndiGo and still does. His favourite hotel remains The Oberoi for its eye for detail even as he maintains that the growth story of Oyo is unparalleled. While there are several brands under the Oyo umbrella — “one-brand-fit-all formula doesn’t work in hospitality” — Ghosh quips, “it’s still boringly consistent like IndiGo”. For both aviation and hotels, if the product can be made available at the right price, the possibility for that to sell grows exponentially, he tells us.

We talk a bit about his life. He’s into fiction quite a bit, but likes to read other genres too. He surprises us by saying that he prefers reading newspapers to consuming news online. Quite unlike a millennial that he’s equated with! Five hours of sleep is good enough for him, he says, adding that he’s not a late night person at all. “My friends joke ‘he’s slept in everyone’s bed’, as I can’t stay awake beyond midnight.” Waking up at 4.30 am every day to be able to drop his two kids — 11 and 12 years old — are his biggest constants and he seems to like that.

One of the traits that he has sometimes been criticised for during his IndiGo stint is arrogance. He denies he’s arrogant. “I’m a stickler for what I believe in, but I don’t think I’m arrogant. I will admit that I have found it difficult to cope with unreasonable demands or brandishing political influence...”

We have been into the lunch for 90 minutes, and we agree there’s no question of foregoing the dessert. For the first time during the lunch, Ghosh looks at his phone and says he would reschedule his meetings to spend some more time with us. From Alwar milk cake ice-cream to banoffee pie and *dodha* tart, we try out the popular desserts carefully chosen by Ghosh. With about 15 more minutes to go, we quiz him on some burning issues — like Air India divestment. Will it get bidders this time? “Everything will depend on the terms of the auction.”

As we experiment with the imaginative fusion mix of Indian sweets and western pies, we want to know whether it’s tougher to manoeuvre in the sky or on land. His reply is simple: “From the low-margin business that I have come from, I’m not scared of anything... All I know is there’s no such thing as a calm day.”

With that thought, we return to work and he to his rescheduled meetings.

The stories of ‘non’-citizens



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

Last week, I attended a two-day people’s tribunal on the issue of contested citizenship in Assam. Presentations by activists and lawyers on the issue of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) were heard by a jury of eminent judges and academics. But what grabbed my attention were the testimonies of people excluded from the NRC.

Initially, when Masuma Begum of Lakhimpur found her name missing from the register, she wasn’t worried. She reasoned her parents’ names were there and her family had lived in Assam for generations. The only issue was that she was working in Guwahati, 400 km from her village, and her father had to make

several trips to furnish her legacy documents, school certificates etc. When even the second list didn’t include her name, she became worried. “I wondered what I’d do if I were declared a foreigner in my own country,” she said. A post-graduate and B.Ed, she could find herself homeless, jobless and separated from her family. Worse, she could spend years to prove an identity she’d taken for granted. Finally, her name appeared on an amended list released this month, leaving her unsettled.

She’s comparatively better off than Shahjahan Ali Ahmed (35) from Baksa district in Assam, whose name hasn’t appeared even on the latest NRC list. “My brother’s and my name was on the first list, then were mysteriously removed from the second,” he told me. “This despite that we’d submitted a legacy document that proved that our grandfather’s name was on the National Register of Citizens, 1951.”

Today, only three out of his 33 family members’ names are on the list. Ahmed now has no option but to reapply for citizenship but has lost faith in a system that he believes is inefficient, overworked and worse. “I’m so angry at the system that has turned Indians into foreigners,” he said. “It’s as if the years of discrimination against Muslims in Assam has

now found a legal sanction.”

The notes of disaffection and disappointment in Ahmed’s voice were echoed in the voices of others at the tribunal. They worried me more than the arguments, which the activists and lawyers made to the jury. For the testimonies of Begum, Ahmed and others represent the grave human cost incurred when ill-conceived government policies are poorly implemented. “I’m well educated and was able to furnish all the necessary documents to get my name back on the NRC,” said Begum. “But what about others whose names have been excluded and who are illiterate or simply don’t have the paperwork,” she adds.

As the jury later emphasised, citizenship or the right to have rights, is one of the most basic human rights in modern societies. But the embittered lines on Ahmed’s face tell another story — citizenship and nationality are as much matters of politics as they are of the heart and the soul. It is likely that some of the 1.9 million odd people identified as ‘non’ citizens by the NRC, are actually illegal immigrants or displaced people. However, the flawed implementation of the NRC has ensured that those excluded from it might now question what it means to be Indian in their hearts. And that’s one place no law can reach.

Organic ‘stench’



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

My wife’s new heroes are the ladies of various kitchen garden associations who go around collecting wet garbage from disposal centres, defying the very logic for which they were created. Thursday morning, as I drove to the airport, an overpowering whiff of pineapples emanated from the car, forcing me to throw open the windows. The chauffeur explained that the offensive smell came from a carton of pineapple peels my wife had insisted a roadside vendor give her instead of throwing away, to be turned into compost. Left to rot overnight in the boot, it was merely an

example of our new normal and cost me a shampooing trip for the car to the service station.

According to the dictionary, compost is a verb and means “a mixture of dead plants, old food etc that is added to soil to help plants grow”. It consists of “decayed organic matter”, or “vegetable waste”, and is apparently rich in nutrients. What no one tells you is that it also has an odour ripe enough to make you throw up, looks exactly like it smells, and the task of composting isn’t for the faint of heart. My wife, luckily for her, has a stout heart and a stouter will. The rest of us aren’t as fortunate, which is why composting has become the new battleground at home.

A war of words erupts because vegetable peels and shavings are collected — gutted apple cores, seeds, peels and other waste — and stored in recyclable bags. The kitchen staff protest about the extra work; the cleaning lady won’t touch rotting waste; the *maali* refuses to cart sacks full of the stuff up and down the stairs; the neighbours won’t allow it to stand in front of the gate for even a moment. Collected at home, the intended destination for the refuse is the farm. My wife’s intention of ferrying it every other day sometimes stretches to a week, or longer, during which the

stench grows stronger, particularly when it rains and sack loads of waste have been left to rot on the roof in the downpour or under the sun.

The roof reeks, the area under the kitchen sink smells, there’s a pong in the car that causes the children to complain (I’m too well trained to raise any objections any more). “Shush,” their mother admonishes them, “I’ve cleaned your backsides when you were young.” “I cleaned their backsides too,” I can’t help butt in even though I know it’s the wrong thing to say. “You think I enjoy this?” my wife puts on her martyr’s mask. “I toil for all of you, I farm in the sun, I compost so you can eat organically grown vegetables...” “Yeah, well,” says my son, “you can simply buy organic fertiliser, mom.”

This is the sequence of events that unfolds thereafter: (a) my wife bursts into tears; (b) my son looks on hopelessly; (c) my wife tells the cook to throw out the wet garbage; (d) he refuses; (e) my daughter gives her brother a dirty look; (f) my daughter-in-law gives her husband a dirty look; (g) my son volunteers the use of his car for ferrying decaying, dead and other organic material from home to farm no matter the stink. For a while, there is peace at home.

The lady has a point

Nirmala Sitharaman may have become the butt of jokes, but she has a point about app-based taxi services affecting car demand. Ola and Uber are reported to handle 2 million rides a day across the country. That could translate into anywhere up to half a million people finding a way to get by without owning cars — cumulatively, not suddenly. Add the reality of expanding metro systems (Delhi's metro has 2.5 million riders daily), and people finally have real alternatives to car ownership. City bus systems (4 million riders in Delhi) were not an alternative, being often slow and usually sweaty.

Everyone can't afford to tap into an app and summon a taxi. Most commuters in India's cities are poor, and (Mumbai being the exception) walk to work, or get there on a bicycle. As you start up the income ladder, you get to afford a bus ticket. Metro rail and auto-rickshaws are meant strictly for the middle-class, as are motorbikes. Ola and Uber, though cheaper than tired yellow tops and "private" taxis, are still expensive. In other words, the users of app-based taxis would ordinarily be potential car buyers. But with the income and career uncertainties of the gig economy, many "millennials" prefer to avoid the financial commitment of car ownership. That is what the finance minister said.

It goes without saying that the slump in car demand is not just because of app-based taxis. Other factors are at work — the general economic slowdown, the financial sector's travails, which have affected car finance, the choice of many potential buyers to wait for cars compliant with stricter emission norms that kick in next April, and so on. The industry has added to its problems by pushing dealers to stock more and more vehicles. This clogged pipeline will have to be cleared before dealers can place fresh orders. In the interim, it exaggerates the drop in sales to dealers — which is what the industry reports. Some of these factors are specific to the sector and temporary, which is why no other product category has seen a comparable demand slump. It does not help that people also expect a cut in the tax on cars; why buy a car today if it might be cheaper next week?

App-based taxis come with their own issues. They don't mean less traffic, or less air pollution; if anything the opposite, because these cars are on the road all day. That would explain why cities in the west are thinking of capping the number of such taxis. On the other hand, think of Gurugram, which, like many smaller cities in India, has virtually no public transport other than one-and-a-half metro lines. App-based taxis save the day for large numbers of people who might otherwise have had to buy their own cars, including second cars in the family.

But the issue goes beyond taxis. For far too long India has celebrated its auto industry and car ownership while neglecting public transport, not to mention pavements for walkers and lanes for cyclists — all of which any civilised city should have. The country needs to democratise its road spaces, and invest in public buses that are cheaper than metros.

One sympathises with car manufacturers struggling in a difficult market, but it is also obvious that they are milking the situation to try and wrest tax concessions from a harried government that already faces a tax revenue shortfall. To see why this is a questionable exercise, look at Maruti Suzuki's finances. The company last year had a handsome pre-tax profit margin on sales of 12.6 per cent, with a mammoth ₹36,500 crore parked as investments. The dividend pay-out has more than doubled over two years. The profit margins elsewhere in the industry are in some cases (e.g. Bajaj Auto and Eicher Motors) even better than Maruti Suzuki's, while some like Mahindra & Mahindra and Ashok Leyland come in somewhat lower — but still better than the average for the manufacturing sector. If the industry's stalwarts think car costs are too high for customers, why don't they lower prices — which a good number of companies in the business can obviously afford to do?

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



Trump hits the panic button

Why is he calling for emergency monetary stimulus? Politics

Donald Trump marked the anniversary of 9/11 by repeating several lies about his own actions on that day. But that wasn't his only concern. He also spent part of the day writing a series of tweets excoriating Federal Reserve officials as "Boneheads" and demanding that they immediately put into effect emergency measures to stimulate the economy — emergency measures that are normally only implemented in the face of a severe crisis.

Trump's diatribe was revealing in two ways. First, it's now clear that he's in full-blown panic over the failure of his economic policies to deliver the promised results. Second, he's clueless about why his policies aren't working, or about anything else involving economic policy.

Before I get to the economics, let's talk about one indicator of Trump's cluelessness: his remarks about federal debt.

In addition to demanding that the Fed cut interest rates below zero, Trump declared that "we should then start to refinance our debt," because "the USA should always be paying the lowest rate." Observers were left scratching their heads, wondering what he was talking about.

Actually, however, it's fairly obvious. Trump thinks that federal debt is like a business loan, which you can pay down early to take advantage of lower interest rates. He's clearly unaware that federal debt actually consists of bonds, which can't be

prepaid (which is one reason interest rates on federal debt are always lower than, say, rates on home mortgages). That is, he imagines that the government's finances can be managed as if the US were a casino or a golf course, and it never occurred to him to ask anyone at Treasury whether that's how it works.

But back to the economy. Why is Trump panicking?

After all, while the economy is slowing, we're not in a recession, and it's by no means clear that a recession is even on the horizon. There's nothing in the data that would justify radical monetary stimulus — stimulus, by the way, that Republicans, including Trump, denounced during the Obama years, when the economy really needed it.

Furthermore, despite Trump's claims that the Fed has somehow done something crazy, monetary policy has actually been looser than Trump's own economic team expected when making their rosy forecasts.

In the summer of 2018 the White House's economic projections envisioned that this year three-month interest rates would average 2.7 per cent, while 10-year rates would be 3.2 per cent. The actual rates as I write this are 1.9 and 1.7 per cent, respectively.

But while there's no economic emergency, Trump apparently feels that he's facing a political emergency. He expected a booming economy to be



PAUL KRUGMAN

The world of permanent interests



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

back on the board and used by the player who has captured it. This indicates the pragmatism that lay at the foundations of the highfalutin Japanese philosophy of *bushido* — the way of the Samurai.

In the realpolitik of medieval Japan, people changed sides all the time, often in the battlefield. This was, of course, also true for most other mediaeval cultures. It is hard for instance, for historians to keep track of the bewildering complexity of Rajput factions.

At any given instant over a period of centuries, several Rajput kingdoms would be at war with each other. The alliances between them kept shifting. Those Rajput clans also intermarried on a regular basis. Similar things happened in Europe where the royals married each other, even as they sent their armies off to kill each other.

This phenomenon of shifting allegiances is common even in the 21st century. Indeed, the axiom that nations have no permanent allies, only permanent interests, underlines the realism

of *shogi*. Brexit is an interesting example of ideological, and literal, floor-crossing.

We've seen British MPs switch sides so many times that it is now nearly impossible to understand (A) Who wants Brexit, or wishes to "Remain" in the European Union (B) On what terms the "leavers" want Brexit and (C) How ideologically committed any UK politician actually is, to the concept of either leaving the EU, or remaining in it.

The lack of ideological consistency, or the willingness to abandon consistency, when it impacts self-interest, seems to be hard-wired into human DNA. It's visible at many socio-political levels and at multiple scales.

Think of a tree. It has branches. The branches themselves have sub-systems of smaller branches. This is an example of

a fractal — an object, which remains complex, even when the scale of observation changes.

The human propensity to change sides is similarly fractal. Children in the same family, or in the kindergarten classroom, form shifting cliques. Large nations sign treaties and tie up alliances. Those childish cliques change. Those national alliances break up. Similar events also play out in boardrooms and political parties.

It happens so often, and at so many levels, that one must assume that this trait confers some sort of evolutionary advantage. Most people seek to find rationalisations for switching sides, rather than simply saying that they have active self-interest.

Politicians are especially hypocritical about this. Winston Churchill, the arch-conservative

British bulldog, switched political parties and abandoned his monarch (Edward, Duke of Windsor) when it suited him.

In another less famous instance I recall, a prominent politician from Bengal gave a rousing speech where he claimed the sun would rise in the West, before he switched political parties. A week later, he was on the other side of the fence and claiming with equal fervour that he would never switch again! Of course, he did. If rumour is to be believed, he was paid a large "signing fee" on each occasion.

We often see variations on this theme. It is not a phenomenon restricted to India. Italy and Israel, for example, have more complicated versions of the same floor-crossing games. Of course, the trait is not universal. Some people remain consistent to their principles and rarely switch. But they are outliers.

The entire concept of democracy is based on an understanding that large number of people do change their views and hence, vote-share shifts. Which brings us back to *shogi*. How do you capture the hearts and minds of voters? It's considerably more complicated than capturing tiles in *shogi*.

He was succeeded by Viral Acharya. His specialisation was, in my view, more suited to the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

Now the RBI has to recruit his successor and I would suggest it look inwards into its own research department, just the way it used to until S S Tarapore's retirement in 1996.

What's to be done?

I think the government should set up a cadre, which is a fast-tracked one, to which economists in the age group 40-50 are recruited. Economists from the Indian Economic Service should also be eligible to apply, as should the ones from the RBI. No one else should be eligible, least of all from the IAS, IFS, etc.

Once this cadre has been set up, the CEA and the deputy governor should be selected from it and nowhere else because if you don't know whom you are working for — the sovereign, not yourself — you are bound to be, as one former CEA recently said, of little use other than as editor of the Economic Survey.

And even that requires different skills.

Errors in medical diagnosis

EYE CULTURE

ATANU BISWAS

There was shocking news from Himachal Pradesh in late August. A woman died because of severe mental distress after a private clinic "wrongly" diagnosed her as HIV positive. However, such a wrong diagnosis is not uncommon and we know this from our personal and social experiences. In fact, in today's world, the overuse of diagnostic testing has been partially attributed to the fear of missing something important and intolerance of diagnostic uncertainty.

In his 1989 article in *New England Journal of Medicine*, J P Kassirer wrote: "Absolute certainty in diagnosis is unattainable, no matter how much information we gather, how many observations we make, or how many tests we perform." The present discussion is towards understanding the nature and quantum of clinical diagnostic errors.

Let's first examine the severity of the situation. A British National Health System survey in 2009 reported that 15 per cent of its patients were misdiagnosed. According to a study published in the journal *BMJ Quality & Safety* in 2014, each year in the US, approximately 12 million adults who went for outpatient medical care were misdiagnosed in hospital settings. This figure amounts to 5 per cent of the total adult patients and, according to researchers, misdiagnosis has the potential to result in severe harm in about half of those cases.

A diagnostic error may be defined as "any mistake or failure in the diagnostic process leading to a misdiagnosis, a missed diagnosis, or a delayed diagnosis." While delayed diagnosis is certainly an important concern, 'misdiagnosis' and 'missed diagnosis' (which is simply missing the presence of a disease) is also worrying. And it is apparent from numerous articles in different medical journals that both of these errors are prevalent. In fact, medicine in practice today is mostly statistical. In statistical language, these two types of errors are called "type I error" and "type II error". The complement (i.e. one minus the error rate) is important in medical statistics. The likelihood of a positive finding when the disease is present is referred to as "sensitivity". On the other hand, the likelihood of a negative finding when a disease is absent is referred to as "specificity". It is well-known that, nearly all signs, symptoms, or test results are neither 100 per cent sensitive or specific.

In fact, the two types of errors are

his big winning issue next year. If, as now seems likely, economic performance is mediocre at best, he's in deep trouble.

Remember, Trump's two signature economic policies were his 2017 tax cut and his rapidly escalating trade war with China. The first was supposed to lead to a decade or more of rapid economic growth, while the second was supposed to revive US manufacturing.

In reality, however, the tax cut delivered at most a couple of quarters of higher growth. More specifically, huge tax breaks for corporations haven't delivered the promised surge in wages and business investment; instead, corporations used the windfall to buy back stocks and pay higher dividends.

At the same time, the trade war has turned out to be a major drag on the economy — bigger than many people, myself included, expected. Until last fall the general expectation was that Trump would deal with China the way he dealt with Mexico: Make a few mainly cosmetic changes to existing arrangements, claim victory, and move on. Once it became clear that he was really serious about confrontation, however, business confidence began falling, dragging investment down with it.

And voters have noticed: Trump's approval rating on the economy, while still higher than his overall approval, has started to decline. Hence the panicky demands that the Fed pull out all the stops.

But while Trump realises that he's in trouble, there's no indication that he understands why. He's not the kind of person who ever admits, even to himself, that he made mistakes; his instinct is always to blame someone else while doubling down on his failed policies.

Even actions that look like a slight policy softening, like his announcement of a two-week delay in implementing some China tariffs, betray a deep incomprehension of the problem — which has as much to do with his capriciousness as with the tariffs per se. Policy zigzags, even if they involve delaying tariffs, just add to the will-he-or-won't-he uncertainty that's causing companies to put investment on hold.

So what happens next? Trump could reverse course, and do what most people expected a year ago, reaching a deal with China that more or less restores the status quo. But that would be a de facto admission of defeat — and at this point it's not clear why the Chinese would trust him to honor any such deal past Election Day. The fact is that when it comes to economic policy, Trump has trapped himself in a bad place.

The writer is a distinguished professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center. He won the 2008 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his work on international trade and economic geography. ©2019 The New York Times News Service. Shekhar Gupta's column National Interest will resume next week.

Horses for courses



LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

Of the many things the Modi government has been criticised for since 2014, one is its disinterest in economists. But if you go back a decade — more, if you want to — you will find the same problem. Neither the UPA nor the Modi government has much cared what sort of economist it appoints to what job.

There are two pivotal jobs that matter — to the extent the boys in the IAS allow them to matter. One is chief economic adviser (CEA) and the other is deputy governor in charge of economics

at the RBI.

These guys are paid to worry about certain things. But what if they worry about the wrong things?

In newspapers, for example, we don't let the editing staff worry about news and the news gatherers worry about editing. Any member of the editing staff who questions the news gathering staff will soon be told off. And vice versa.

In the advisory positions in government, however, this basic rule doesn't apply. It's almost as if the IAS — it's a bird, it's a plane, no it's the IAS! — has taken over. Specialisation doesn't seem to matter as long as the CV is a mile long.

I have no idea what Arvind Virmani's specialisation — Harvard PhD notwithstanding — was but he had at least worked in government for a very long time. His predecessor, Ashok Lahiri, was an econometrician by training.

The Economists

Kaushik Basu was basically a the-

orist. Moreover, he had been living abroad since 1993. Nor had he ever worked in government. He thus suffered from two handicaps.

Raghuram Rajan was an engineer who wandered into economics. His specialisation was finance.

Arvind Subramanian was a trade economist. His approach to the government and India's economic problems were also rather unsuited to the job.

After nearly a decade of these guys, especially the last three, we are entitled to ask: What did they contribute? Their CVs gained but what did the government get in return?

Indeed, how could they contribute anything useful when they were ships that pass through the ocean that is government policy? All three now have gone back to the US to their jobs in various universities and the latest fashions in academic economics.

Even if we grant them their intellects, is it any wonder that the IAS guys didn't take them seriously and even, on occasion, treated them as a nuisance?

Even the current CEA is a finance man. Eventually he too

will return to academia, with a nice add-on to his CV.

I have a suggestion to make therefore: In order to qualify to even apply for the job of CEA, the applicant should have worked for at least 10 years in government. That's more or less how it used to be till about 2004.

Even if it's not 10 years it should be some meaningful minimum. In any event, this parachuting must stop. The current system is a total waste of taxpayers' money.

The RBI, like the government, also employs a lot of economists. In government, the CEA is their head. In the RBI it's economist deputy governor who heads the economists.

Since 2009, only the late Subir Gokarn had proper Indian experience. But he, too, was not a money or finance man, which is what the job requires. He would have been more suited as CEA.

After him came Urjit Patel, whose specialisation was not quite monetary economics. He had worked at the RBI as a consultant, though, in the 1990s. Nor, despite his intellect, was he cut out to head the research department of the RBI.

Opinion

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

SHOBHANA SUBRAMANIAN

shobhana.subramanian@expressindia.com



PSB recap may not spur credit-growth

In the midst of an economic slump, banks are unlikely to find enough credit-worthy corporate or retail customers

A **10.15% YEAR**-on-year (y-o-y), the growth in non-food credit, in the fortnight to August 30, was the lowest in nearly two years. This, at a time when the banking system has an estimated liquidity surplus of over ₹1 lakh crore. While credit typically contracts in the period between April and August, the contraction this time around has been bigger than in the corresponding period of FY19. Most private sector banks have enough growth capital, though some state-owned banks may be a little short of it. Also, deposits, while not flooding banks, have been growing at an average of 10% y-o-y—though the latest reading has seen a fall to sub-10% y-o-y.

This, then, begs the question: Is it a problem of lack of demand, or are banks simply not lending? It is important to understand what exactly is happening because there is a lot of hope riding on the capitalisation of state-owned banks. On paper, the math looks encouraging, even exciting—₹70,000 crore of capital, leveraged at a conservative five times, can mean additional lending to the tune of ₹3.5 lakh crore; further leveraged, it could translate into loans of ₹4.2 lakh crore, or even ₹5 lakh crore.

That is a lot of money, but it must be lent prudently, to borrowers who give it back. The problem is that in the midst of an economic slump, banks are unlikely to find enough credit-worthy customers either in the corporate world or on the retail side. Demand for corporate credit is already down to a trickle. Or, more rightly put, there are probably thousands of companies that are longing for a line of credit, but simply don't have the credentials to get one. One can't blame banks for being far more careful about who they lend to; low-rated, over-leveraged businesses aren't exactly on top of their lists. It is even riskier to lend to the universe of small- and mid-sized firms; auto ancillaries and dealers will struggle more than OEMs. As for top-tier companies, they aren't in the market for loans anyway.

That, then, leaves the retail clientele. While, at an absolute level, the catchment may be large, the numbers that can form a reliable lending base for banks aren't. In a more sturdy economic environment, that universe would have grown, but in the midst of a sluggish economy, big job losses and no signs of a near-term recovery, it would stay stagnant or even shrink. Already, aggregate lending by NBFCs has decelerated sharply post the IL&FS and DHFL crises, and, therefore, the flow of credit to certain niche segments dominated by them is drying up. Banks, typically, haven't operated in segments such as consumer durables loans, which have been the domain of NBFCs. While there is a lot of talk of co-origination of loans, and banks teaming up with NBFCs to fill the gap, it is not clear whether banks really want to move into these spaces since they are clearly ill-equipped to do so.

A glance at the pattern of retail lending over the past year shows banks seem to prefer lending to individuals without collateral; this is reflected in the sharp jump in the unsecured loans portfolios of ₹1.45 lakh crore. Much of the credit has been put to work as loans against credit cards. The rationale seems to be that unsecured loans bring in much better yields, and can be worth it, if clients are screened properly. In contrast, an auto loan will fetch the bank a much lower yield, and the operational cost involved in repossessing the asset, in the event of a default, is high. Also, unsecured loans tend to be of a shorter duration than, say, an education loan, which could have a tenure of ten years; so, there is less of an asset-liability mismatch. Given this approach would necessitate a more thorough due diligence, it would throw up a smaller pool of eligible borrowers since not everyone would make the cut. Also, since the cost of an unsecured loan is much higher than that of a collateralised loan, not everyone would be able to afford one. That, too, would depress demand. The fresh capital infusion could have seen more auto and home loans being given, but the new rules that require banks to link the interest rate to an external benchmark could queer the pitch. As bankers have said, they will recover the entire interest, or much of it, in the early stages of the loan. That could make the new loan products more expensive than the older ones; this, in turn, will mean fewer eligible borrowers. To be sure, many of the state-run banks that have been starved for capital, will put their new-found resources to use since that is what the government expects of them. Hopefully, they will not fritter it away as they have in the past.

Live-inLIE

Rajasthan Human Rights Commission fans misogyny with comments on women in live-in relationships

A **BENCH** OF Rajasthan's State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) recently urged the state as well as the Centre to enact a law prohibiting live-in relationships on the grounds that cohabitation without marriage deprives women of their right to a dignified life. The bench making this recommendation comprised of retired justices Prakash Tatia and Mahesh Chandra Sharma. Their letter further stated that women in live-in arrangements are akin to "concubines", and that their situation prevents them from enjoying legal protections against domestic abuse. Not only do these assertions smack of rank misogyny, but they also lack any basis in actual fact.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 extends protection from physical, emotional, and mental abuse to both, women who are married, and those who have a "relationship in the nature of marriage." Further, a 2015 Supreme Court judgement held that an unmarried couple cohabiting consensually would be presumed to be legally married, giving the woman, and progeny, if any, the same legal rights as a wife and a child. But, perhaps the SHRC can be excused from the burden of rooting its recommendations in facts, given that one of the bench members is recorded to have a passing relationship with them—in 2017, Justice Sharma had said that peacocks didn't have sex, but impregnated peahens through their tears. Perhaps greater moral outrage should be reserved for the fact that yet again, men who subscribe to a notion of women's "dignity" that belongs in the trash cans of the 20th century, are attempting, in the name of taking up the mantle of women's "protection", to crush their individual and sexual autonomy. In fact, the assumption underlying the SHRC's statements violates the very female dignity that it proposes to protect—implying that women are gullible creatures who are "kept", and treated as "concubines" already presumes that they are owned objects, serving the singular purpose of sex and procreation.



DEALBREAKER?
Prime Minister of the UK, Boris Johnson

We are working incredibly hard to get a deal. There is the rough shape of the deal to be done. I have been to talk to various other EU leaders... I would say I'm cautiously optimistic

US ECONOMY

WHILE THE US ECONOMY IS SLOWING, NO DATA JUSTIFIES TRUMP'S DEMAND FOR RADICAL MONETARY STIMULUS. THE PRESIDENT APPARENTLY FEELS HE IS FACING A POLITICAL EMERGENCY

Trump hits the panic button

PAUL KRUGMAN

NYT



the US were a casino or a golf course, and it never occurred to him to ask anyone at Treasury whether that's how it works.

But back to the economy. Why is Trump panicking?

After all, while the economy is slowing, we're not in a recession, and it is by no means clear that a recession is even on the horizon. There's nothing in the data that would justify radical monetary stimulus—stimulus, by the way, that Republicans, including Trump, denounced during the Obama years, when the economy really needed it.

Furthermore, despite Trump's claims that the Fed has somehow done something crazy, monetary policy has actually been looser than Trump's own economic team expected when making their rosy forecasts.

In the summer of 2018, the White House's economic projections envisioned that this year, three-month interest rates would average 2.7%, while 10-year rates would be 3.2%. The actual rates, as I write this, are 1.9% and 1.7%, respectively.

But, while there's no economic emergency, Trump apparently feels that he is facing a political emergency. He expected a booming economy to be his big winning issue next year. If, as now seems likely, economic performance is mediocre at best, he is in

deep trouble.

Remember, Trump's two signature economic policies were his 2017 tax cut, and his rapidly escalating trade war with China. The first was supposed to lead to a decade or more of rapid economic growth, while the second was supposed to revive US manufacturing.

In reality, however, the tax cut delivered, at most, a couple of quarters of higher growth. More specifically, huge tax breaks for corporations haven't delivered the promised surge in wages and business investment; instead, corporations used the windfall to buy back stocks, and pay higher dividends.

At the same time, the trade war has turned out to be a major drag on the economy—bigger than many people, myself included, expected.

Until last fall, the general expectation was that Trump would deal with China the way he dealt with Mexico: make a few mainly cosmetic changes to existing arrangements, claim victory, and move on. Once it became clear that he was really serious about confrontation, however, business confidence began falling,

dragging investment down with it. And, voters have noticed: Trump's approval rating on the economy, while still higher than his overall approval, has started to decline. Hence, the panicky demands that the Fed pull out all the stops.

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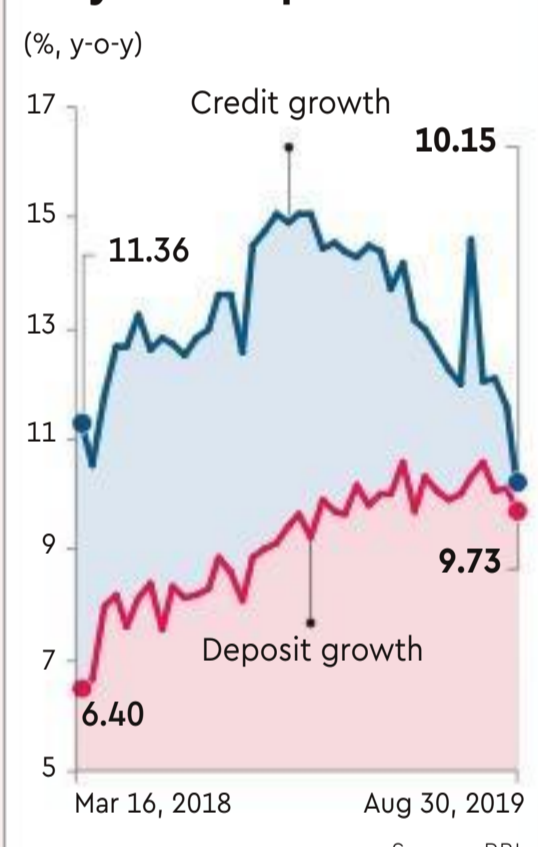
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Even deposit growth may not help



Strong case for 50bps cut in October

RBI MPC may cut by 35bps on Oct 4 & 15bps by Dec, pause, and cut 40bps to 4.5% repo rate by Sept 2020, if global growth weakens

INDRANIL SEN GUPTA & AASTHA GUDWANI

Sen Gupta is Chief India economist, and Gudwani is India economist, BofA Merrill Lynch. Views are personal

WE BELIEVE THERE is a rising case for a 50bps RBI rate cut on October 4, with August inflation coming in at a lower-than-expected 3.2% on September 13. Core inflation (except gold) is a reasonable 4%. We track September inflation at 3.6%—well within RBI's 4-6% mandate—on higher agflation. Our base has the RBI MPC following Governor Das into another 'out-of-box' 35bps cut (followed by 15bps in December, and if global growth weakens, 40bps by September.) Why 50bps now? Lower yields/lending rates hold key to growth bottoming out by early 2020. The liquidity crunch is still hurting growth, with our India Activity Indicator pointing to weakness for another quarter. Further, time for lending rate cuts (50bps BofAMLe by March, 25bps FYTD) is running out with the October-March 'busy' industrial season around the corner. Transmission should be faster with banks linking 50% of their book to an external benchmark. Finally, we plan to review our RBI rate call after the September 18 FOMC meeting (25bps cut BofAMLe). It remains to be seen how banks re-price their lending rate on SME and retail loans on October 1.

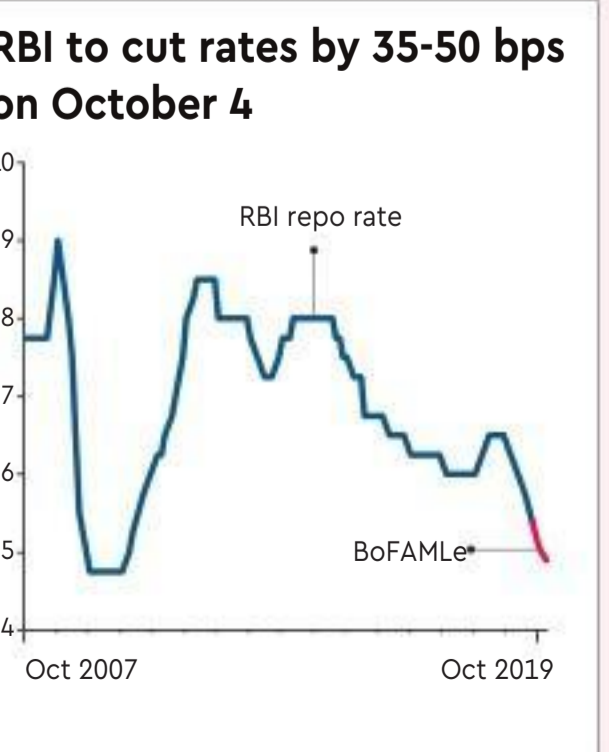
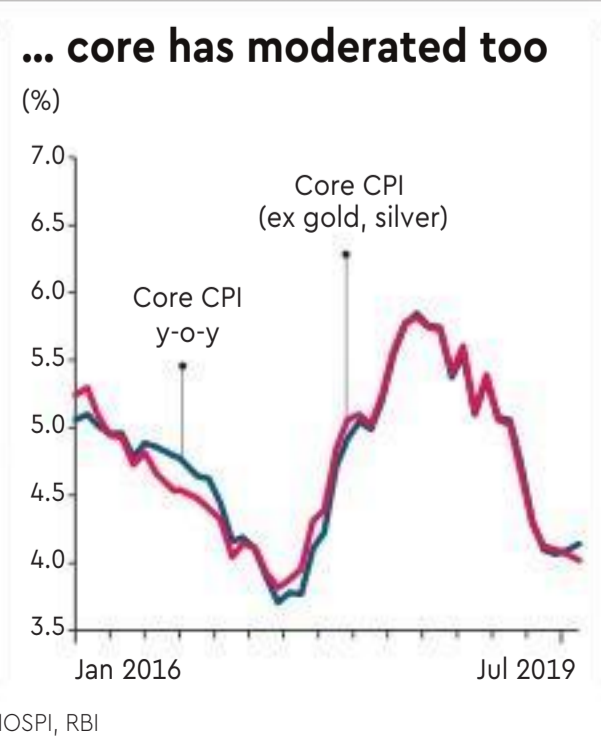
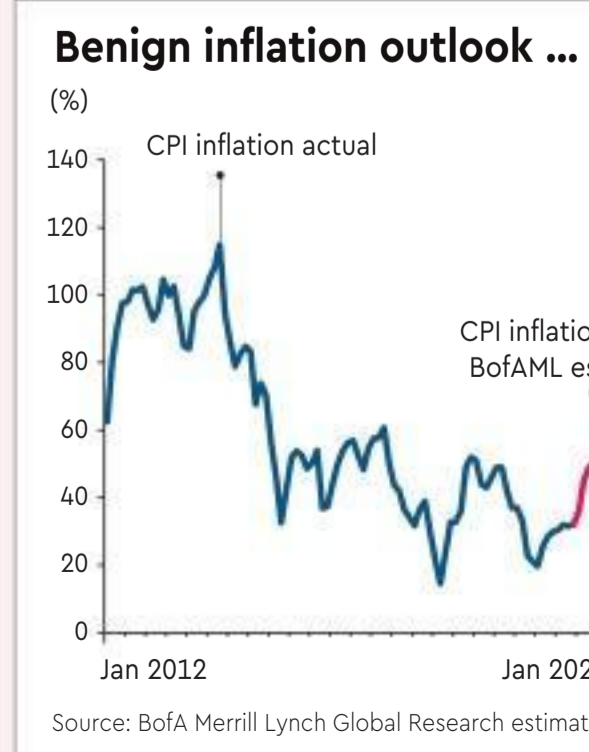
Incoming data support our standing call of a benign inflation outlook, though October-February may be higher on adverse base effects. August CPI inflation came in at a low 3.2% (3.3% consensus, 3.5% BofAMLe), up from 3.15% in July (see graphic). Adjusted for food, fuel and gold, core inflation moderated to 4.02% from 4.07% in July (see graphic). Looking forward, we track 3.6% for September on continued rise in food prices. A pick up in sowing on revival of rains should limit agflation ahead, in our view (see graphic). July industrial growth posted a higher-than-expected 4.3%, up from 1.2% in June (2.5% BofAMLe, consensus). This, in our view, is too volatile to call. Manufacturing did the heavy-lifting. While capital goods continued to contract, core IIP growth pushed headline up. FYTD IIP growth, at 3.3%, is running below FY19's 3.9%.

We see the RBI MPC cutting to a 4.5% RBI repo rate by September 2020, if global growth weakens. This will hold the real rate, 1.9% now, at 0-1% *ex post* and (-)1.5% *ex ante*. In the early 2000s recession, Governor Jalan had cut to 4.5%, 50bps below the 5%

WPI average. As real lending rates are higher, a more negative real policy rate is surely justified, in CPI terms, especially as CPI inflation averages 100bps above WPI. Second, we assess that further RBI rate cuts are necessary to bring real lending rates down to our estimated 7% potential (in old GDP series) to incentivise investment. Finally, differential between the US federal funds rate target and RBI rate will still be a comfortable 300bps, even with our 75bps Fed cut.

How will the introduction of external benchmarks, effective October 1, impact the RBI MPC's rate policy? Our base case has banks pricing fresh retail/SME loans on a spread defined as the difference between the current retail/SME lending rate and the external benchmark. As the external benchmark falls on RBI rate cuts, banks will duly reduce lending rates. What if banks settle at a lower spread/lending rate to begin with? This would obviously reduce the need for deeper RBI rate cuts.

Edited excerpts from BofAMLe's 3.2% Aug CPI: Rising case for 50bp RBI rate cut, Oct 4 (September 13, 2019)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Death by hoarding

Knocked down by a political hoarding illegally and precariously erected by an AIADMK functionary to welcome CM Edappadi Palaniswami and Deputy CM O Paneerselvam to his residence for the wedding of his son. It was a life sacrificed on the altar of Tamil Nadu's degenerate banner culture. The tragic incident has made the Madras HC to ask how much more blood need be spilled on the roads before sanity prevails and lash out at the state government and its employees—bureaucrats and police—for their indifference to the paramountcy of safety. Political parties in Tamil Nadu show scant regard for Madras HC's ban on banners, 'cut-outs', 'flex boards' and other publicity materials on roadsides to ensure the safety of road users and put them up to show their 'strength' and magnify the image of their leaders. Hoardings compound the problem of heavy congestion on city streets and cause accidents resulting in loss of limbs and lives. The party cadres are conditioned to massage the ego of their narcissistic leaders by providing them the pleasure of looking at their own 'larger-than-life' pictures while arriving at a place to attend a public rally or a private function. They put up the hoardings featuring the leaders as a sycophantic act and show no sense of shame for acting like minions. While there are innumerable sufferers from 'leader worship syndrome' in the so-called progressive state, the 'banner culture' is not separable from the motives of escaping the wrath of overweening leaders and winning favours from them. The state that seeks to pride itself on having greater political consciousness and upholding rationalism should shun the banner culture followed for 'hero-worship' and learn to pursue issue-based politics without expending time and energy on weaving 'personality cult' — G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

● US-CHINA TRADE WAR

Stakes high for America, higher for China

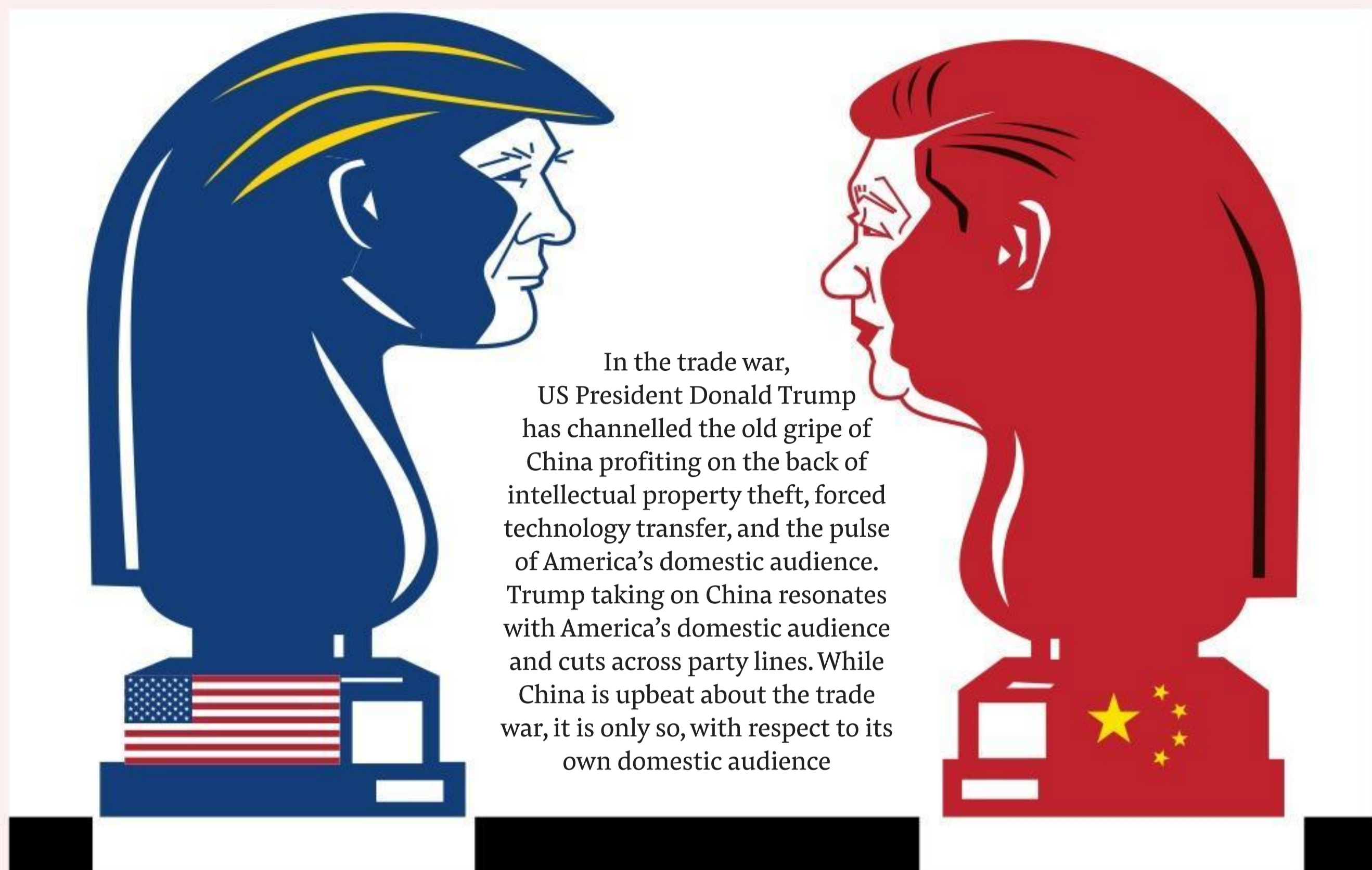
IN THE 1970S, America normalised relations with China, sending ping-pong teams. Today, China and America are playing a brasher version of ping-pong, with a tit-for-tat trade war, reneging on the agreement made in June 2019 where they agreed not to levy tariffs. In early August, US President Donald Trump announced a planned tariff hike. This was met with China slamming tariffs on 5,000 American items. In retaliation, America announced tariff hikes on Chinese goods. The trade war has sent global investors, China's manufacturers, American automobile industry and American farmers into a tailspin. The trade war, while economic in intent, has strong political undertones, and while the stakes are high for America, they are much higher for China.

The trade war cannot be seen in isolation. In recent years, the South China Sea territorial dispute and militarisation of the seas has aggravated, as have borogues of China's economic influence in Asia, Africa, Latin America and even Europe. And more recently, Hong Kong has descended into political chaos, where the Beijing-backed government is asking for a dialogue with the protesters, but clearly lacks the mechanism to facilitate it. China moving paramilitary forces to Shenzhen and sending fresh troops to Hong Kong as 'normal routine' does not help. A few protesters in Hong Kong have marched singing "The Star-Spangled Banner", asking President Trump to 'liberate Hong Kong'. The ball is clearly in the American court.

The American negotiating demands are transparency of an 'enforcement mechanism' backed by legislation in China and guarantees of farm purchases. China agreed to a 'regulatory mechanism' (not 'enforcement mechanism') and fell short of the American demand of reviewing the Chinese legislation prior to adoption. Months of trade talks failed to steer a deal. In response, President Trump indicated that tariffs on Chinese imports would be hiked.

In anticipation of the tariff hike, China announced counter-tariffs on \$75 billion worth of goods, raising tariffs by 5-10%, in two tranches on September 1 and December 15. China also said that it would resume duties of 25% and 5% on vehicles and auto parts beginning December 15, and 5% tariff on crude oil from September 1.

The Chinese stepped to America escalating the tempo of the trade war. Amer-



In the trade war, US President Donald Trump has channelled the old gripe of China profiting on the back of intellectual property theft, forced technology transfer, and the pulse of America's domestic audience. Trump taking on China resonates with America's domestic audience and cuts across party lines. While China is upbeat about the trade war, it is only so, with respect to its own domestic audience

ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

ican tariffs apply on \$550 billion worth of Chinese imports, including a 15% tariff to \$300 billion worth of Chinese imports beginning October 1 and raising the rate on \$250 billion of Chinese imports from (existing) 25% to 30% beginning September 1.

So, how will Chinese tariffs impact America? The *People's Daily* (China) reported that Beijing's tariffs were aimed at "inflicting pain on the US manufacturing sector." An analysis by Brookings Institution (2018) indicated that the 'hit list' of American industries was calculated to scare both 'red and blue' America. The items that China proposes to raise taxes include agricultural products (nuts, pork, soybean), textiles, toys, clothing and automobiles.

ANURAG VISWANATH
The author is a Singapore-based Sinologist, and adjunct fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. Views are personal

The *Wall Street Journal* has reported that major car companies, including Tesla and Ford Motor, which build their vehicles in America for export to China, will be hit hard. As for America's Midwest, G William Hoagland, senior vice-president at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a think tank, has thrown the spotlight on 240 Midwestern farms filing for bankruptcy due to the trade dispute and bad harvests. In fact, the agri-

cultural sector has been recently granted \$28 billion in subsidies.

Now, how will American tariffs impact China? These will impact Chinese companies and manufacturers who are facing slowdown. Job losses from the trade war are estimated at 2 million, or even 3 million. For China, this is bad news, with its incessant factories cutting production and jobs leading to unemployment and the circle of social prob-

lems. Goods such as clothing, footwear, toys and cellphones imported from China will cost more—a cost that the American consumer would bear. This would affect China's manufacturers, American consumers, importers, retail sales, disrupting the supply chain.

President Trump has been upbeat and optimistic that American companies would leave China and come home. But as it unfolds, American companies cannot ignore the massive Chinese market, nor the advantages of shifting base to Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia.

It is true that China's paternalistic state has ways to support Chinese businesses with cheaper credit and tax cuts. In fact, the American administration has labelled China a 'currency manipulator'

with the yuan going past 7 against a dollar, making China's exports cheaper for the developing world. But this, too, is a double-edged sword as foreign/domestic investors could pull their investments out. China's Belt and Road Initiative indirectly facilitates exporting/dumping of products in the developing world.

But China has a lot to worry about. In the trade war, President Trump has channelled the old gripe of China profiting on the back of intellectual property theft, forced technology transfer, and the pulse of America's domestic audience.

Presidential elections are round the corner. America, despite not in decline, is perceived by a large section of the American public as a power in decline. Only a narrow majority (56%) are optimistic about America's future (Pew Research Center, 2019). According to the Pew Research Center, seven in 10 Americans (January 2019) are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. A quarter of them (24%) view China and Russia as a threat to America, with 60% Americans having an unfavourable opinion of China (up from 47% in 2018), including a quarter who have a very unfavourable opinion (italics and data, Pew Research Center, 2019).

President Trump taking on China resonates with the domestic audience and cuts across party lines. This has reverberated in bipartisan support for Hong Kong, be it Kevin McCarthy's (Republican leader, US House of Representatives) opinion that America must help Hong Kong, to Nancy Pelosi's (Speaker, US House of Representatives) backing of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act.

The truth is, as economist Eswar Prasad has noted, "...the U.S. economy is about 50 percent larger than China's, and is less dependent on trade, so its prospects look better." Clearly, with the Chinese economy slowing down, China has a lot at stake. While it is upbeat about the trade war, it is only so, with respect to its own domestic audience. China is cognizant of the downside of the trade war and hence makes conciliatory noises now and then. This explains Vice-Premier Liu He's call for "calm negotiations." This also explains why China has softened its stand with a tariff waiver on 16 US goods as a goodwill gesture ahead of the trade meet. China cannot ignore that America may not lose out too much economically and that the 'China card' is a trump card in the coming elections.

DATA DRIVE

Building a mortgage market

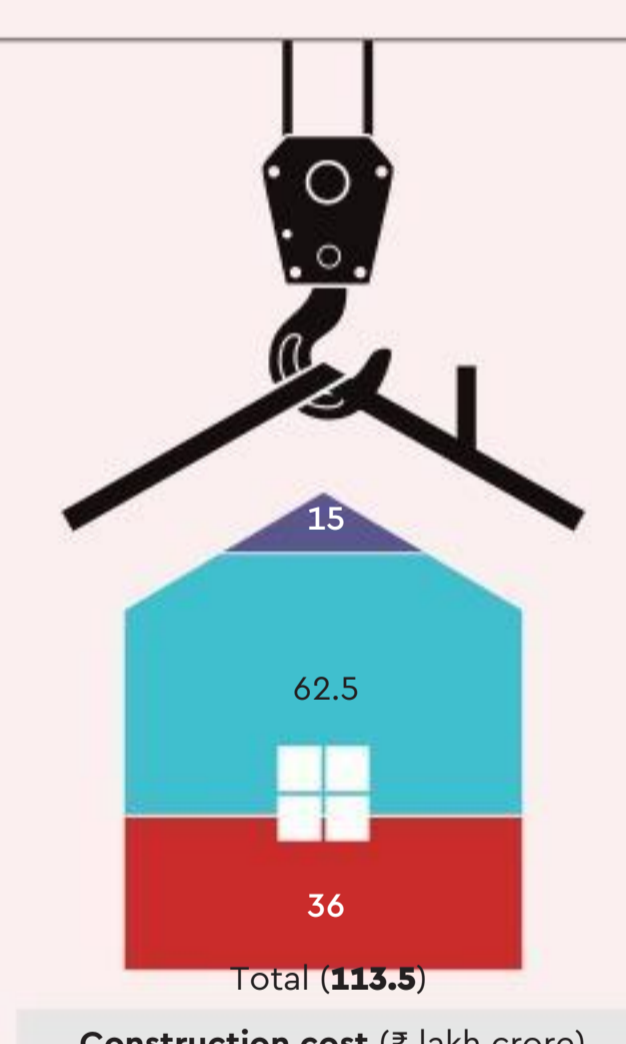
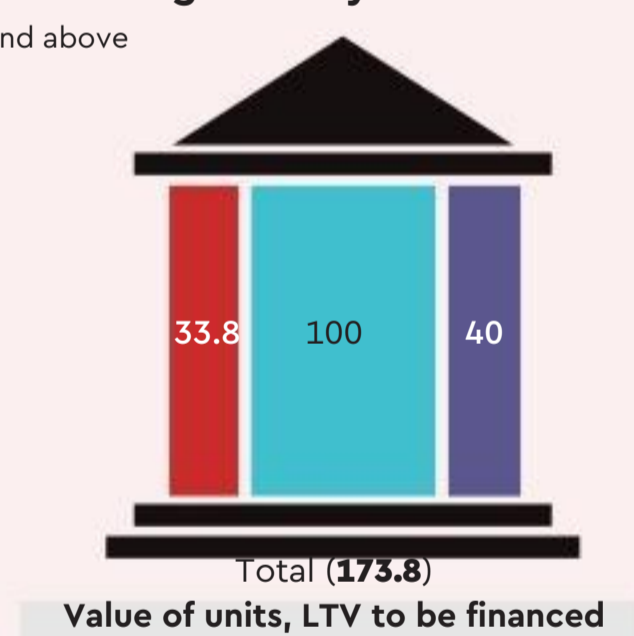
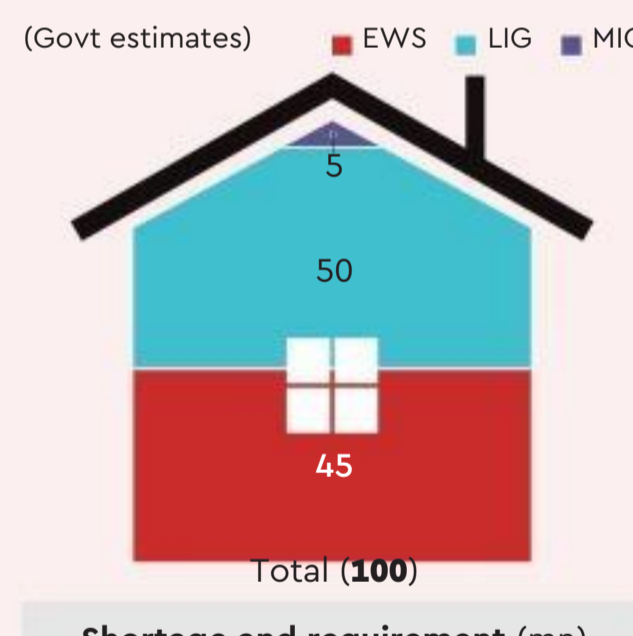
INDIA NEEDS AROUND 10 crore housing units by 2022, which calls for an investment of ₹115 lakh crore. A committee set up by the Reserve Bank of India has recommended setting up of a government-sponsored intermediary under the National Housing Bank (NHB) for the development of the home loan securitisation market.

The panel has suggested exemption of stamp duty for mortgage-backed securitisation. It has also suggested that loan documentation must be standardised for housing loan and NHB should establish the loan origination standards on a priority basis.

Securitisation involves pooling of loans and selling them to a special purpose vehicle. It is a mechanism to convert illiquid loans on the lenders balance sheet into tradeable securities. A well-developed securitisation market can emerge as source of funding for home loan lenders. The total volume of securitisation has grown from ₹23,545 crore in 2006 to ₹2,66,264 crore in 2019.

By the end of FY2022, the report estimates that outstanding home loans would reach ₹35 lakh crore, a compounded annual growth rate of 20% since FY19. Banks account for 58% of the outstanding home loans and the rest is from housing finance companies. India has a very low mortgage-to-GDP ratio compared to other countries and the ratio is expected to grow significantly over the next few years.

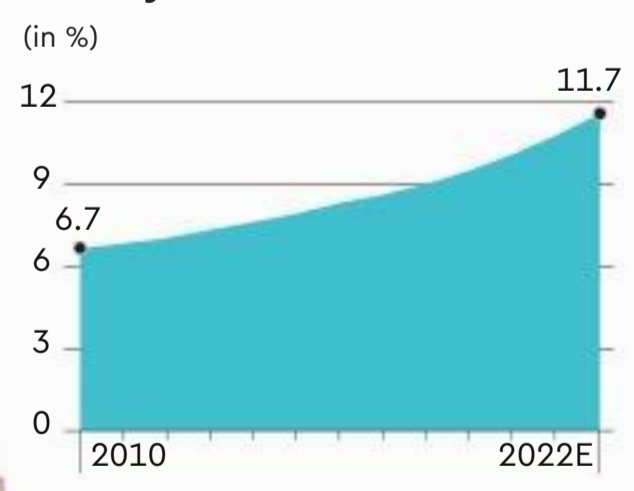
India needs additional 100 million housing units by 2022 (Govt estimates)



Aggregate home loan demand could be between ₹49 to 57 lakh cr

	Analyst estimates	Govt estimates
Units required (mn)		
EWS	36	45
LIG	38	50
MIG and above	5	5
Total	79	100
Value of units (₹ lakh crore)		
EWS	27	34
LIG	56	75
MIG and above	40	40
Total	123	149
Credit penetration (%)		
EWS	40	40
LIG	80	80
MIG and above	85	85
Aggregate loan demand (₹ lakh crore)		
EWS	4	5
LIG	23	30
MIG and above	22	22
Total	49	57

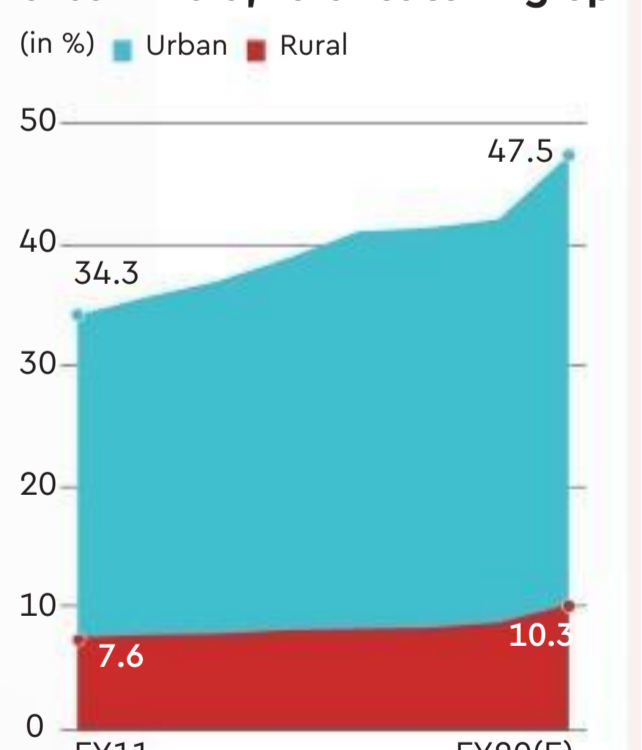
Mortgage-to-GDP ratio is expected to increase to 12% by FY22



India has low mortgage-to-GDP ratio



Higher finance penetration in urban India; rural catching up



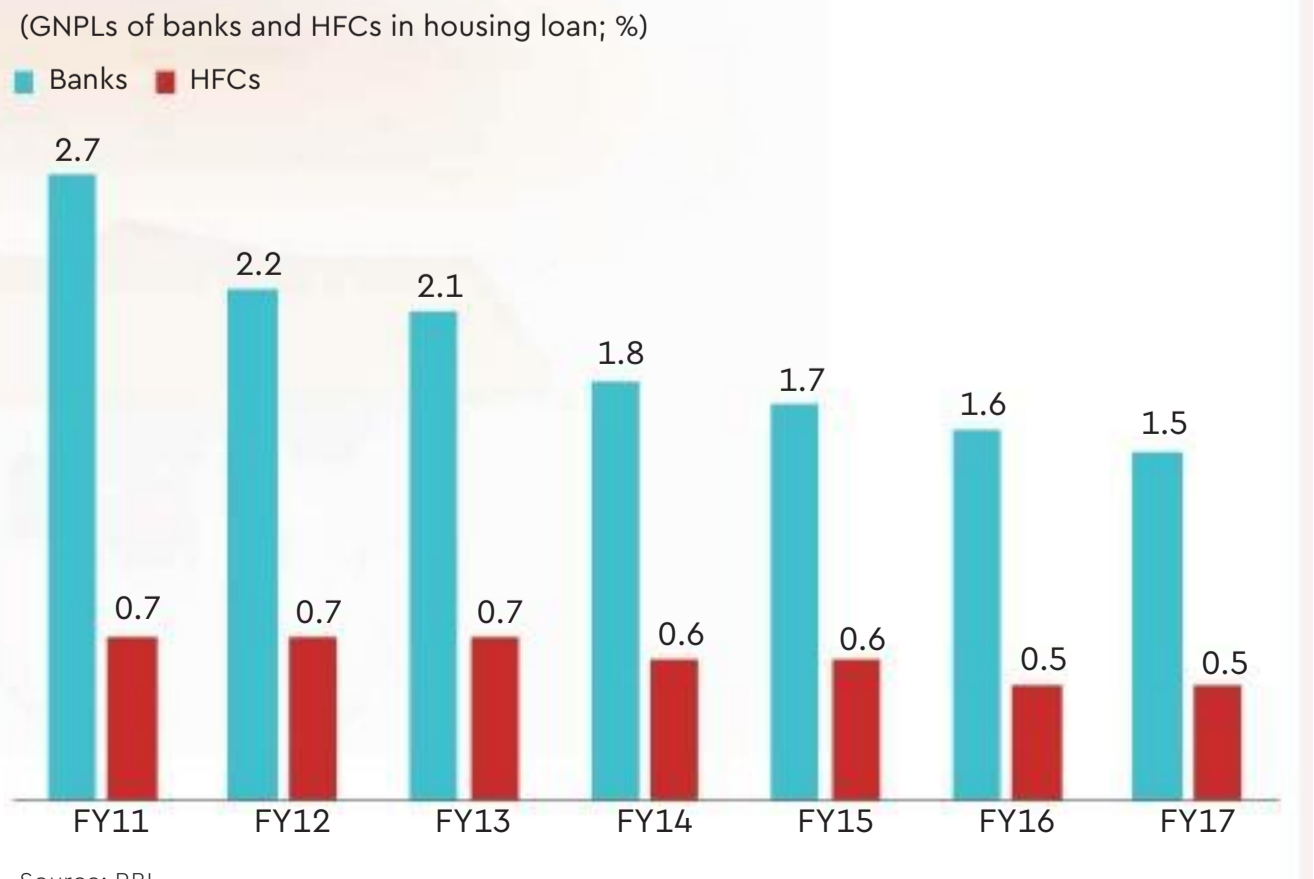
Market share of banks and HFCs in home loan



Home loan in India could grow to ₹35 lakh crore by FY22



NPA levels are still modest in home loans





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THOU SHALT NOT

Courts have expanded contours of free speech but their curious gag orders in J&K are shrinking it



HARSH MANDER

Why the outcome of the lynching case must concern us all

Tabrez Ansari & I

FREEDOM IS INDIVISIBLE. "The chains on any one of my people," Nelson Mandela reminded us, "were the chains on all of them, the chains on all of my people were the chains on me."

There are many things that trouble me about India today. One is our ever-mounting tolerance of the open and profound injustice done to "other people". A boy stabbed to death on a train does not trouble me because he is Muslim; a young girl brutally gang-raped does not stir my outrage because she is Dalit; an entire people locked down for over a month deserve it because they do not accept India to be their country; and nearly two million people excluded as citizens in Assam do not trouble me because they are "infiltrators" (even if they were born in and love this nation).

India's criminal justice system has always been biased against disadvantaged castes, women and Muslims. Few people who organised and participated in caste and communal massacres and rapes have ever been punished. But in recent years, this official bias has become more open, brazen and unapologetic. A Muslim charged with terror crimes can spend 14, even 23, years in jail, before he steps out, innocent. A Hindu charged with terror is likely to soon walk free, and might even be elected to Parliament. Criminal cases after the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots collapse wholesale with barely a whimper of protest.

This open bias of the criminal justice system is most visible in mob lynching. Lynch mobs, who in most cases record their own crimes triumphantly on mobile phone cameras, roam as heroes. The victim, even after he dies, is tainted as a criminal. The most recent example of this is the decision of the Jharkhand police to write down the crime of the lynch mob that attacked Tabrez Ansari from murder to culpable homicide.

Orphaned as a boy, raised by his uncles, as a young teenager, Ansari migrated to Pune to build his life on his own. At 22, now an accomplished welder, he returned home to find a bride. His uncles married him off to a very impoverished Shaista. Her father, an al-

coholic, accepted Ansari because he sought no dowry. The two young people were to leave for Pune the morning after his lynching to start their new life; their train tickets were booked. But that was not to be. I feel a personal sense of grief and loss at his killing, especially following our visit of the Karwan e Mohabbat to his home.

Ansari was returning that night after seeking his aunt's blessings. A mob caught him, tied him to a pole, thrashed him savagely for six hours, and forced him to recite "Jai Shri Ram".

People phoned the police several times to rescue the boy, but they did not arrive until morning. They did not register a complaint against the lynch mob until after he died four days later. But they promptly registered criminal charges of robbery against Ansari. The police took him to a local health centre. Although his skull was cracked, and bones broken, the doctors handed him back to the police after cursory first aid. Police detained him in their lock-up. His family pleaded that they be allowed to take him to a hospital, promising to return him to the police after he was better, but they refused. The family secretly took a picture of him in the lock-up. He was clearly wounded critically. The police then presented him to a judge, who should have ordered his medical treatment. Instead, he sent Ansari to jail. The jail authorities should have insisted that he be sent to a competent hospital. They did not. The family saw him once through a screen in jail, as he moaned in agony, begging them to get him to a hospital. Four days after the lynching, Ansari died.

The grounds the police stated for watering down the charge of murder to culpable homicide was that it was "not a case of pre-meditated murder"; and that the second medical report concludes that Ansari died of cardiac arrest, not just a head injury. This ignores an earlier inquiry by senior officials of the Jharkhand government, which concluded that Ansari died due to the negligence of police officials and grave lapses by doctors.

There was no robbery in the village. The police charge-sheet tried to justify the mob crime by charging Ansari with the "intention" of stealing. They ignored evidence on video of this being a religious hate crime. Ansari's uncle, who went to the lynching site in the morning, records in his statement that he heard a member of the mob shout, "Beat him so much that he dies".

There was only one post-mortem. The second report stating that he died due to cardiac failure (signed by five doctors, none of who were trained in forensics), was based only on the first post-mortem report. The immediate cause of death after violence indeed could be heart-failure, but this opinion deliberately obscures the circumstances which led to organ failure. I spoke to J Amalorpavanathan, retired head of vascular surgery, Madras Medical College. He said the human skull bone is incredibly sturdy. Cracking it requires application of great force. "It is very clear", he said, based on the post-mortem report, "that this young person, who was otherwise healthy and normal, was beaten so severely that he cracked his skull and bled inside his brain. This resulted in his death. In short, he was beaten to death."

What does this add up to? That a mob attacked an unarmed young man murderously in a religious hate crime. The police, judge, doctors and jail officials all abetted his murder with shameful, willful neglect.

Why is it possible for state authorities to act in this way, over and over again? Because the rest of us don't care. This happened to a working-class Muslim orphan. How does it concern me?

We forget Martin Luther King's indescent words from Birmingham jail, "Injustice anywhere," he declared, "is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

My destiny is tied to that of Tabrez and Shaista Ansari. Until they are assured justice, I will never be free.

Mander is a human rights worker and writer

AN ORDER released on Thursday, Jammu and Kashmir High Court has allowed two National Conference MPs to meet party leaders Farooq Abdullah, under house arrest, and Omar Abdullah, detained at Hari Niwas, in Srinagar, but barred them from speaking to the press about the meeting. This statement of fact carries within it a grave predicament, a slippery slope. The communication lockdown and detention of political leaders and an unknown number of others in and outside Kashmir since August 5, after the Centre abrogated Article 370, goes on. And the court, which is the custodian of the citizen's rights and freedoms and the centrepiece of the constitutional mosaic of checks and balances on executive power, seems not to be playing its part. Why must MPs who want to meet their leaders in Srinagar need the court's permission to do so? Why is the court playing the role of the giver of such permissions in individual cases, even as it drags its feet on pronouncing on the legality or validity of the detentions themselves? Under which law or power can the court impose a virtual gag order on these MPs — they can meet but cannot tell? If there is a danger of a breach of peace because of what the MPs might say, which has certainly not been proved, it can, surely, be addressed by existing law. A few days ago, a CJI-led bench of the Supreme Court, on a habeas corpus plea of CPM general secretary, Sitaram Yechury, had allowed him to visit his ailing party colleague and 4-time MLA, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, after hedging the permission similarly. Yechury was directed to meet Tarigami but to do only that — he was to talk to no one else and file an affidavit to the court about what transpired in Kashmir. In another case, notably, it was the Supreme Court which had come down hard on prior restraint and expanded the contours of free speech and expression.

There are serious questions about the court's conduct ever since the Centre moved to abrogate Article 370 and impose restrictions and curbs on the people in Kashmir over a month ago. The government has made its case — it has claimed that the detentions and lockdown are preventive in nature, for the people's own safety and good. But that claim is being challenged not just by its political opponents but also by other concerned citizens. In a constitutional system, the court is the appropriate forum for those questions to be asked, for executive action to be interrogated, and adjudicated. But if the court appears to be not only shirking the fundamental question, but also reinforcing that executive action with gag orders of its own, there is reason to worry.

These are critical times, when a government elected with an overwhelming majority is taking consequential steps and all unelected institutions are called upon to define their remit and role. In times like these, what the judiciary does, and what it doesn't do, is critical. The Supreme Court has posted the matter arising from Yechury's plea challenging Tarigami's detention for further hearing on September 16. It will be watched.

A PACKAGE FOR BSNL

Government needs to do a cost-benefit analysis, ask itself the tough questions about propping up loss-making enterprises

UNION MINISTER ARJUN Ram Meghwal has announced that the government is planning a financial package for cash-strapped BSNL. But it is unlikely that a cash infusion, or any other manner of assistance, can facilitate a sustainable turnaround in the fortunes of the beleaguered telco. Coming at a time when its own revenues are under pressure, the government must undertake a careful cost-benefit analysis to examine whether the money it spends to prop up these loss-making firms is better spent in areas with more pressing needs.

BSNL blames the fierce price war, as well as the lack of 4G spectrum, for its dire financial situation. But there is more to the story. Its expenditure on salaries — it has around 1.8 lakh employees — touched 75 per cent of revenues in 2018-19. For private telcos, it is a fraction of this amount. Stringent procurement guidelines have led to delays in purchasing equipment, hampering operations. Losses have surged, rising to Rs 14,202 crore in 2018-19. And though the non-availability of spectrum may have hurt its operations, revenue from data increasingly accounts for a greater share of total revenue, even if BSNL is allocated the 4G spectrum it desires, it will still need additional funds to ensure a smooth roll-out of services. The telco hopes to monetise assets such as land. It also expects to cut costs by cajoling 60,000 to 70,000 employees to opt for a voluntary retirement scheme. Even if a significant portion of its work force opts for VRS, however, it will still have over 1 lakh employees. While part of the funds from asset monetisation can be used to finance the VRS package, it is debatable whether the balance will be enough to fund its 4G operations. In a hyper competitive sector, where incumbents are bleeding, it is questionable whether BSNL has the continued ability to pump in money to challenge other telcos.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often underlined that government has no business being in business. Yet his government has still not framed a concrete strategy to shut down loss-making enterprises. The cost of keeping these firms alive is increasing, and it comes at the expense of investment in other sectors such as infrastructure, health and education.

DARK KNIGHT

In this moment, as in others, Geoffrey Boycott is at the centre of the storm

SIR GEOFFREY BOYCOTT. Even before he was conferred the knighthood this week, amid swirling controversy, it was easy to imagine 'sir' prefixed to his name. For, the legendary batsman-turned-commentator has always walked with a knightly strut — convinced in his convictions, narcissistic in his opinions, brutal in critiquing, generous in praising, inviting adulation and scorn in equal measure, an extremist who has never walked the middle path. Like his contemporary and Lancashire rival David Lloyd once remarked, "Either he loves you, or hates you. Nothing in between. No half measures." That's how his countrymen and the cricket fraternity see him too.

Ever the divisive figure — from the spring of his playing days to the autumnal retired life — he has never shirked controversies. Like the latest that pertains to his knighthood. Some reckon the recognition arrived nearly three decades late. An obdurate batsman with otherworldly limits of patience and courage, who famously came out of retirement at the age of 40 and showed his younger peers how to score runs against Dennis Lillee and Co, he undisputedly belongs to England's batting royalty. His commentary was vivid and full of life, even if his prejudices and self-absorption often surfaced. The Yorkshire twang was endearing, and some of his unique pronunciations linger on, like "Sosheen Tendulkar" or "Prince of Kolkutta". Or his "shtick of rhubarb", "wielded by his granny".

His sporting achievements make him a deserving knighthood candidate. But some of his avidly-catalogued off-field conduct less so. Boycott was fined £5,000 and given a three-month suspended sentence in 1998 after being convicted of beating his then-girlfriend in a hotel in France. Typically, Boycott shrugs off the outrage and protests at his knighthood: "I don't give a toss about it. In this moment, as in all others, Boycott is at the centre of the storm."



KHALED AHMED

A QUESTION OF QUALITY

Standard of Pakistan's manpower is linked to the country's education model

ON 3 SEPTEMBER, the Lahore School of Economics (LSE) held a symposium on behavioural economics at The Pearl Intercontinental Hotel, discussing how the quality of Pakistan's manpower has affected the country's economy and its management. Expressly discussed was the inability of the state to collect taxes and the stubborn unwillingness of the citizens to file tax returns.

Pakistan has a population of 197 million, of which only 1.7 million pay income tax; India with a population of 1.3 billion has 70 million tax-filers. Pakistan's economy has suffered frequent breakdowns and has had to submit 22 times to the dictate of the IMF. Fadi Makki of Lebanon, who heads Nudge — a collective that tries to "apply behavioural insights to the policy challenges that Lebanon faces" — referred to a Scandinavian state where people had responded to such "nudges". But the Scandinavian example may not sit well with a case-hardened Pakistan. Clearly, what was missing was the Scandinavian bureaucrat whom the citizen took on trust.

Ijaz Nabi, an ex-World Bank economist and country director of Pakistan's International Growth Centre, laid out some of the "cultural" factors which made people opt out of the system. He acknowledged that wealthy Pakistanis did record charity — all of it religion-based — instead of coming inside the tax-net. But, the conduct of the taxmen inside the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR)

tended to negate the insights offered earlier. The taxman blindly sends out audit ultimatum, then "settles" with the shopkeepers "out of court". The shopkeeper, who usually wins his court decree, actually decides to bribe the taxman to avoid the court fee and the expense of defence. Lesson: If you have to choose between the magistrate and the taxman, choose the latter. Now you have two institutions to "nudge": The taxman and the court.

One can also reduce the above behaviour study to the "quality of manpower" in Pakistan. We vaguely know that our expat community is less privileged than its Indian counterpart because of a difference in "quality": Pakistan began by being close to the United States, but today the academia in the US is dominated by brilliant Indian scholars, while Pakistani Americans struggle to insulate their identity against the values of the host country. Today, Indians in the US outnumber all immigrants, except the Hispanics. The "quality of manpower" question comes to the fore again when you see the pattern of employment of Indians and Pakistanis in the Gulf, from where the two countries receive most of their remittances.

The Muslims had a "quality" problem even under the British Raj because the Hindu community, in contrast to Muslims, was heavily engaged in commerce — therefore, it was handling worldly knowledge contained in math and the sciences.

1947, for instance, almost all the trading activity was conducted by Hindus and Sikhs; and math teachers were mostly Hindus.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, in his essays, also bemoaned the "poor quality" of the Muslim citizen and recommended that Muslims get "worldly" education instead of sending their children to madrasas. He finally set up Aligarh University and kept insisting that Muslims abandon their madrasa-only education. Today, he is no longer in the pantheon of the Pakistan Movement for this "deviation"; as also for his acceptance of bank-interest — forbidden by Islam, and a major reason behind the Muslims of India abstaining from commerce.

William Leitner, who founded the famous Government College Lahore in 1864, had written his big volume on the madrasas of Punjab but wanted Muslims to acquire worldly knowledge on the basis of "autonomous" observation — as promoted by European Enlightenment, in particular by Immanuel Kant, whose motto, *Sapere Aude* (Courage to Know), he adopted secretly to avoid Muslim wrath. He got Muhammad Husain Azad, the great writer of the new "functional" Urdu prose style, to teach "Ulum-e-Mufeeda" (useful knowledge). But today, in Pakistan, only the madrasas are functional; most state-sector schools are dysfunctional.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan



SEPTEMBER 14, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

IOC STRIKE CONTINUES WITH THE STRIKE by the Indian Oil Corporation workers entering the second day, the distribution of petroleum products was disrupted in most parts of the country. The situation aggravated with IOC employees from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Goa joining the countrywide strike. Several rounds of discussions between the petroleum minister, Bala Pajanor, and leaders of the striking workers proved abortive. A petroleum ministry spokesman told newsmen the supply position of petroleum was already bad. He said the Centre had alerted state governments to invoke the Essential Services Act to deal with the strik-

ing workers.

CONGRESS SYMBOL THE CONGRESS LEADERSHIP today bowed to the sentiments of the rank and file by making the issue of going to the mid-term poll in association with the party allies under a common symbol negotiable with the partners, so that it could be implemented wherever "feasible." Y B Chavan, who replied briefly to the debate on the political resolution at the AICC session, accepted an amendment to the resolution to this effect. The amendment sought to add the word "if feasible" to that part of the resolution which opted for a common symbol.

INDIRA'S WARNING THE CONGRESS-I PRESIDENT, Indira Gandhi, warned the government and others who were trying to downgrade her that anything they did to her would "rebound against them". Mrs Gandhi asked her party members to ignore the tirade against her. She said that she had not engaged in counter-tirade. Referring to the other Congress, Mrs Gandhi said the Congress-O committed suicide when it merged with the Janata Party. The same thing was happening to the Congress (S). She felt sorry that Jagjivan Ram was allowing himself to be used as a shield by the Janata Party. Without him, there was nothing in the Janata Party, she said.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE



CR Sasikumar

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

No matter who advises this president (Donald Trump), chaos will reign. —NEW YORK TIMES

Why sedition law has lost meaning

Various Indian courts have repeatedly ruled against the constitutionality of this British-era legislation



PRASANNA S

IN A RECENT lecture, Justice Deepak Gupta, a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, noted how the provision in the Indian Penal Code providing for punishment for seditious speech is misused often than not. Justice Gupta wondered whether the time is ripe to have a look at the law.

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, subject only to Article 19(2) which saves any law that imposes "reasonable restrictions" on the limited grounds of interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation etc.

Section 124A of the IPC defines sedition and makes every speech or expression that "brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government established by law in India" a criminal offence punishable with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. It is classified as "cognisable" — the investigation process (including the powers to arrest) can be triggered merely by filing an FIR, without a judicial authority having to take cognisance — and "non-bailable" — the accused cannot get bail as a matter of right, but is subject to the discretion of the sessions judge.

The illiberal sting in Section 124A is somewhat taken away by an explanation to the provision that clarifies that mere "disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section," and a long line of judicial decisions, including the five-judge constitutional bench decision of the Supreme Court in *Kedamath v. State of Bihar* (1962). The apex court in *Kedamath* read down Section 124A to mean that only those expressions that either intend to or have the tendency of causing violence are punishable under Section 124A. The court reiterated the *Kedamath* law in 2016 in *Common Cause v. Union of India*, directing all authorities to scrupulously follow the *Kedamath* dictum. The SC has, however, not had a chance to reopen the issue of constitutionality of Section 124A since 1962.

The court in *Kedamath* (1962) did not have the benefit of the jurisprudence of fundamental rights that was established by the 11-judge bench decision in *RC Cooper v. Union of India* (1969) and later, reaffirmed in *Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain* (1975), *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978), *IR Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu* (2007) and, more recently in *Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017). Each of these decisions now establish that fundamental rights in the Constitution are not to be read as isolated silos or as water-tight compartments, but are to be read as if the content of each fundamental right animates the other. They tell us that the entire chapter on fundamen-

tal rights has also to be read "synoptically" (see *Indira Gandhi & IR Coelho*). The court in *Kedamath* merely tested the intent of the provision whether being covered under the exceptions to the freedom of speech under Article 19(2) of the Constitution; it did not, for instance, take into consideration the effect of the right to equality (Article 14) or due process (Article 21).

The conjoint reading of Articles 14, 19 and 21 (from *Maneka Gandhi*), has now evolved the jurisprudence of testing legislation curtailing fundamental rights on the anvil of substantive and procedural reasonableness, necessity and proportionality. The requirement of "necessity" in part comes from India having ratified in the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights in 1976, which in its Article 19 requires speech-limiting state action to be backed by a law and to be necessary on the grounds of respect for rights and reputations of others, national security etc. Even otherwise, the court in 1962 was not, and could not, have been alive to the consideration of international law and international conventions in interpreting India's fundamental rights — a practice established only since *Jolly Varghese v. Bank of Cochin* (1980).

All these developments have now led to us understanding "necessity" in the context of state action limiting fundamental freedoms as the burden being on the state to establish that such a limiting measure is "necessary in a democratic society" (*Modern Dental College v. State of Madhya Pradesh*, 2016). A rough idea of "proportionality" has informed the understanding of "reasonableness" of restrictions in Article 19 since *Chintaman Rao v. State of M.P.* (1951). However, the understanding of necessity and proportionality under the Constitution to mean the burden being on the state to show that the rights-limiting measure to be the least restrictive of all available alternatives is of recent vintage (*Jin Union of India v. Ganayutham*, 1997 and more recently, *Modern Dental*, 2016).

The *Kedamath* court in 1962 also did not examine the provision for "chilling effect" on speech it causes — that is, probability of state action causing psychological barriers in the free exercise of the right to free speech. The doctrine of chilling effect gets established even in the US only in 1967, starting with Justice Brennan's dissenting opinion in *Walker v. Birmingham*. Indian judgments didn't use that expression until late 1980s.

The court in *Kedamath* also could not have examined Section 124A shedding the presumption as to its constitutionality. It is only as recently as in 2018 (*Navejohar v. Union of India*), that the court found that pre-constitutional legislations have no legal presumption of constitutionality. Incidentally, that was the case in which the court re-examined the constitutionality of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which, among other things, criminalised consensual same-sex acts, despite an earlier judgment having examined and upheld the provision.

If there is a challenge to the provision today, the court will have to keep in mind all of these developments! The court may also need to examine the classification of the offence of sedition as cognisable and non-bailable and whether that aggravates the chilling effect.

The writer is a Delhi-based lawyer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAFETY MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Let's talk safety' (IE, September 13). The amendments to the Motor Vehicle Act are a positive step. They should be followed by measures to inculcate discipline among road users. Protests against the Act indicate that enforcing it will require behavioural changes. It will also require a sustained debate on the punitive measures prescribed in the Act.

Vihaan Gupta, Ujjain

ABOUT EQUALITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Quota question' (IE, September 13). Debates must be encouraged on all topics, no matter how controversial. However, reservation policy is not against the principle of equality. It is about ensuring equality in society. Before we jump on to the conclusion that reservation must be economically based, we must look at the occupational structure in our society. Do we not find the priests in the temples belong to one group and the manual scavengers to another? There is no judge from the SC/ST communities in the Supreme Court.

Vinay Saroha, Delhi

OWN THE CRISIS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Poised for a turnaround' (IE, September 13). The authors contradict themselves in first, informing the reader that the economy is

LETTER OF THE WEEK

LESS MONEY

This refers to the article, 'The revival path' (IE, September 6). There seems to be a consensus amongst economists that the lack of demand is the main reason behind the economic slowdown. There are toll taxes on roads, bills for water, public transport fares have gone up, many trains run on flexi fare, education and health are privatised to a large extent and the Motor Vehicle Act imposes stringent penalties. So people have less money to spend.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

doing well as "global investors and multinational companies are putting their hard earned monies into India". They also add that most economic indicators show the economy is robust. However, in the concluding paragraph, we are informed "the government is cognisant of the urgency of the situation". Historically, citizens have always shown resilience and togetherness in times of crisis. If only the government could admit to the economic crisis.

Sanjay Vijayan, Greater Noida

Missing the worm's eye view

A debate on what ails the economy should acknowledge the problems of India Inc, and the 'shoot first think later' policy-speak



RAMA BIJAPURKAR

DEBATING SOLUTIONS WITHOUT acknowledging the problem isn't always helpful, nor is a bird's eye view macro analysis of the economy without a worm's eye view from the trenches of business. People say "5 per cent is 5 per cent and there's nothing to debate about it," but indeed there is.

There are two problem elephants in the room that should be acknowledged if we are to have an honest debate on what ails the economy and the ways to fix it. The elephants are the debilitating pain and weakness that large parts of India Inc are suffering from and the "shoot first think later" policy changes and policy-speak from the government.

India Inc is promoter-driven and much of it is promoter (or shareholder) managed, and there is little separation between ownership and management. For the first time, promoters are under siege. Many big boys have lost — or are about to lose — their companies these past few years. Google it, the "who's who" list will boggle one's mind, and this is happening in "jaante nahin main kaun hoon" India. Troubled companies have troubled revenue growth, so we need to read India Inc's revenue growth numbers alongside the "revenue (growth) at risk" — combined turnovers of companies in NCLT proceedings or being threatened by them. Harsh and persistent measures, being pushed by the regulator for the system to go after the large NPA base of Rs 10 lakh crores, cannot be without the collateral damage to corporate sentiment, leave alone animal spirits. Banks are also asking companies to de-leverage, given the banking regulator's toughness on defining and disclosing NPAs. Thinking about future invest-

ment in this atmosphere is tough. So let's not blame weak investment on the stubborn consumer, rather it's the other way around of stubbornly-low investment creating a weakened-income consumer.

At the same time, SEBI hasn't been playing nice either. Promoter-active (in management) listed companies dominate in India. SEBI activism about independent directors was benign compared to the new and proposed guidelines tightening the noose on disclosures of all kinds and disrupting a variety of time-honoured practices. For example, in 2020, it will not be possible for dad or uncle to be the non-executive chairman of the company while the son or nephew finds his feet as CEO or MD. The atmosphere is, dare we say, demotivating to many and seen as needless fixing of what ain't broke. Boosting consumption for Diwali isn't going to remove the fundamental pain.

The courts are being simultaneous spoilers too. Ask the real estate sector — rules, unchallenged for decades, of builder on top, are being disrupted and there are penalties for not adhering to promises. No surprises that real estate developers, used to growing via half-baked plans funded by customers money and easy loans, are not announcing new projects. And, being asked to pay back definitely dampens their animal spirits.

What choices do we have? Grit our teeth and go through the clean-up with all its collateral damage or hold the view that double digit GDP growth has many benefits and even if becoming cleaner is not one of them, why bother, who cares. This is a set of "rock and hard place" choices that is not being debated at all. Why not? A debate may throw up pragmatic prescriptions of cleaning up in a calibrated fashion, defining a glide path over five years.

This debate is not for the macro economists and stock market analysts alone. It is also about the values we want as a society (the question whose India and whose society should also be addressed). The war on black money has added to our GDP woes. The black and white economy have always been joined at the hip and no one will dis-

This debate is not for the macro economists and stock market analysts alone. It is also about the values we want as a society (question of whose India and whose society should also be addressed). The war on black money has added to our GDP woes. The black and white economy have always been joined at the hip and no one will dispute that — if the bad part is growing slower (perish the hope, it isn't declining), it is dragging down the good part also; blended profit margins in many cases do not look as attractive as they did earlier.

pute that — if the bad part is growing slower (perish the hope, it isn't declining), it is dragging down the good part also; blended profit margins in many cases do not look as attractive as they did earlier. Reviving the animal spirits in a forced declining profitability situation is hard. Again, do we accept the Deng Xiaoping-inspired "it doesn't matter if it is black money or white money as long as it is the driver of GDP" or should we think differently and cynically and say "it's never going to go away so let's use it for the larger good". Or do we say "in this era of technology we have a real chance to cut it to size" and go forward?

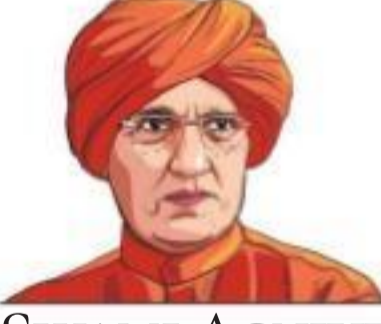
The second elephant in the room is government policy unpredictability; what a foreign board colleague of mine once called "shock and awe" regulation, and what many others call unguided missiles that have been fired first and then thought about later. So many weapons of mass distraction, all good but bad for expansion. Ask the auto industry. I saw a TV show with three CEOs of auto companies, with a combined turnover of well over Rs 100,000 crore, talking about the challenges of the sudden switch over required to meet the new emission norms and how everyone was focused on making it happen, gearing for zero pipeline stocks. Statements emanating from the Niti Aayog, later downplayed by the FM on an electric-only 2W and 3W world, the to-ing and fro-ing on the GST rates, FPI tax, angel tax, and on several other things over the last few years, has led us from policy paralysis to policy spooking. A public debate focusing on why this is happening and what the government can and must do to set policy predictability and stability as one of its key objectives will be helpful.

Discussion of these may not deliver double digit growth, but they will be a real step in that direction and they would be certainly better than telling businesses that their regulatory troubles are over because the economy needs a boost.

Bijapurkar is the author of *We Are Like That Only and A Never-before World: Tracking the evolution of Consumer India*

A brave body, a probing mind

Fit India should also mean the courage to ask tough questions



SWAMI AGNIVESH

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi is something of an enigma. He radiates energy. He is decisive. He is an expert in springing surprises. He does not dodge the non-stereotypical. Yet, there is every chance — going by what we have seen so far — that he may end up like all else before him. This prospect may not occur to the vast army of admirers and time-servers that surround him. But it is real all the same.

No other prime minister could think of Clean India campaign. And no other PM has dreamt up Fit India like Modi has done. Typical of him, he did not forget to connect, in his eloquent inaugural speech on the subject, fitness with valour (shaurya) of the martial kind. A person in high office needs to be understood not only by what he advocates, but also by what he holds back. That is precisely what is not being done in connection with Modi. There is a genuine fear that such a thing could sound heretical. Yet, there are times when heresy becomes more vital for truth than orthodoxy. The world has progressed more through heretics than through blind believers and sycophants.

Modi did speak of physical and martial bravery, which has its place in the life of a nation. He did not, however, speak about moral bravery, which is even more quintessentially human than the courage to wield the sword or exterminate enemies. Bravery of this sort has universally been held as the essence of the in-

telligence. Mere intelligence, even an astronomical amount of it, will not make a person or group of persons belong to the intelligentsia. The hallmark of the intelligentsia is moral courage. A country is better served by the intelligentsia of this kind than by the most advanced and well-trained army possible. The army may guard a country against external aggression, but it is irrelevant to the character and creative greatness of a people. This is not to argue that cowardice is a blessing. But we need to insist that bravery is a far wider concept, and that, if taken only in part, it could get distorted and prove counterproductive.

How can we create Fit India, the PM needs to ask, if we do not pay at least equal attention to developing an intellectual culture? Medical sciences aver that physical fitness is incomplete without mental and intellectual fitness. Mental unfitness is the main cause for tragic health conditions. We are familiar with the pathological conditions that come into being due to mental stress and intellectual trauma. We also know that lack of proper intellectual and imaginative development is the main reason why a society sinks into crime and corruption.

In the 1960s, Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36th president of the USA, set for himself the task of re-inventing America as a "great society". He meant well. But he was mistaken about what it involved. Greatness is an attribute of the human spirit, not of the phys-

ical, material dimensions of acquisitions and achievements. It did not take long for President Johnson's dream to degenerate into the nightmare of a crime-ridden society, the convulsions of which continue to be felt in the mass shootings that are becoming frequent in that country. In its foreign policy, America continues with its muscle-flexing — even after the Vietnam fiasco and the Middle East tragedy.

For Modi to speak with clarity and consistency on Fit India in a holistic sense, he needs to clarify for himself his stand on freedom of thought and expression. Not even a high school student can miss the blatant contradiction between the fanfare about Fit India and the growing milieu of intolerance towards intellectual freedom and liberty of conscience. You cannot criminalise intellectuals as Urban Naxals or surround outstanding academics like Romila Thapar with the miasma of hostility and move an inch towards creating Fit India, unless fitness is assumed to be relevant to only the body. The monstrous mixture of a brave body and a cowardly mind is unlikely to be an asset to the New India that Modi believes he is destined to erect.

Underlying much of Modi's advocacies is the assumption that human beings are mere bodies". This view entertains the naïve idea that human beings can be made to be brave or cowardly at will, depending on what is ex-

pedient to the state. Intellectual brilliance, for instance, is laudable if it limits itself to landing a module on the moon, or to devising ways and means for pushing the GDP higher without hurting the interests of the corporates and the socio-economic elite. But intellectual vigour as a means for enriching national character or as a catalyst in strengthening national character is un-welcome and anti-national. This is indefensible.

If courage or bravery is a value, we should be willing to welcome it in all its manifestations — physical, mental and spiritual. It is the spiritual dimension of courage that is most under-valued today. Spiritual courage involves the duty to speak truth to power and to resist agents and structures of injustice. It would raise, for example, the obvious and pressing questions: "Are the people of Kashmir too included in this vision for Fit India? If so, why are they kept in a state of seemingly interminable all-round disability?"

The willingness to ask such inconvenient questions — no less than organising public drills to boost physical fitness — should be deemed fundamental to creating Fit India. Only then would Modi's agenda stand a reasonable chance of fulfillment, which I hope earnestly it does.

The writer is a Vedic scholar and social activist

दैनिक जागरण

इंसान अपने बारे में जैसी कल्पना करता है, वैसा बन जाता है

कानून के शासन पर सवाल

आखिरकार उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस के विशेष जांच दल ने पूर्व केंद्रीय गृह राज्यमंत्री चिन्मयानंद से लंबी पृछताछ की। उन पर दुष्कर्म का आरोप उनके ही प्रबंधन वाले कॉलेज की एक छात्रा ने लगाया है। इस छात्रा का यह भी आरोप है कि चिन्मयानंद ने उसके साथ अन्य छात्राओं की भी जिंदगी बर्बाद की है। कायदे से यह सनसनीखेज आरोप सार्वजनिक होते ही स्थानीय पुलिस को चिन्मयानंद के खिलाफ जांच-पड़ताल करनी चाहिए थी, लेकिन उसने ऐसा नहीं किया। यह अच्छा नहीं हुआ कि इस मामले में कार्रवाई तब हुई जब सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने छात्रा की शिकायत का संज्ञान लिया। उसने ही उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस को मामले की छानबीन करने के लिए विशेष जांच दल गठित करने के निर्देश दिए। क्या इस तरह के मामलों में पुलिस अपनी जिम्मेदारी का निर्वाह तभी करेगी जो न्यायपालिका उनका संज्ञान लेगी? यह वह सवाल है जिसका जवाब उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस को देना चाहिए। निःसंदेह चिन्मयानंद प्रभावी व्यक्ति हैं, लेकिन क्या इसके आधार पर वह पुलिस की कार्रवाई से बचे रहेंगे या फिर उनके खिलाफ मुश्किल से कार्रवाई शुरू हो सकेगी? फिलहाल किसी के लिए कहना कठिन है कि उन पर लगे आरोपों की सच्चाई क्या है, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि उन पर पहले भी दुष्कर्म के आरोप लग चुके हैं। हालांकि ताजा मामले में चिन्मयानंद के खिलाफ आए वीडियो को उनके वकील ने फर्जी बताया है, लेकिन अगर ऐसा नहीं है तो वह उनकी छवि को तार-तार करने वाला है।

विशेष जांच दल के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि वह चिन्मयानंद के खिलाफ आए वीडियो के साथ-साथ उस मामले की भी जांच करे जिसमें उनसे कथित तौर पर फिरोती मांगी गई है। इससे भी ज्यादा जरूरी यह है कि जांच-पड़ताल तेजी के साथ इस तरह हो कि यथाशीघ्र दूध का दूध और पानी का पानी हो सके। निःसंदेह यह एकलौता ऐसा मामला नहीं जिसमें स्थानीय पुलिस समय रहते सही तरह कार्रवाई करती नहीं दिखी। इसके पहले उन्नाव दुष्कर्म मामले इसीलिए सीबीआइ के पास गया, क्योंकि पीड़ित परिवार पुलिस के रवैये से संतुष्ट नहीं था। कानून के शासन के लिए यह ठीक नहीं कि प्रभावशाली लोगों के खिलाफ जांच करते समय पुलिस किसी तरह के दबाव में दिखे। दुर्भाग्य से एक अर्से से यही देखने को मिल रहा है। नेताओं और धर्मगुरुओं के मामले में ऐसा कुछ ज्यादा ही देखने को मिलता है। जब ऐसा होता है तो आम जनता के बीच यही संदेश जाता है कि रसूल वालों से त्रस्त लोगों के लिए न्याय पाना अभी भी मुश्किल बना हुआ है। नीति-नियंत्रण यह ध्यान रखें तो बेहतर कि ऐसे संदेश कानून के शासन को नीचा दिखाते हैं।

बंगाल में छटा पे कमीशन

केंद्र समेत कई राज्यों में सरकारी कर्मचारियों को सातवें वेतन आयोग की सिफारिशों के मुताबिक तनख्वाह मिल रही है। परंतु बंगाल में अब तक छटा पे कमीशन भी लागू नहीं हुआ था। जबकि केंद्र सरकार ने 2006 में ही छठे वेतन आयोग की सिफारिशों के मुताबिक कर्मियों व अधिकारियों का वेतनमान बढ़ा दिया था। अब करीब 14 वर्ष बाद आगामी वर्ष 2020 में एक जनवरी से मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने अपने राज्य के सरकारी कर्मचारियों व अधिकारियों को छटा वेतन आयोग के मुताबिक वेतन देने का एलान किया है। नेताजी इंडोर स्ट्रेटिजियम में सरकारी कर्मचारियों के संगठन की सभा में मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने कहा कि अब सरकारी कर्मचारियों का न्यूनतम वैसिक वेतन बढ़कर 17,990 रुपये होगा। वहीं ग्रेज्युटी को 6 लाख से बढ़ाकर 10 लाख किया गया है। ममता ने कहा कि आज ही छठे वेतन आयोग की सिफारिश को लागू करने के लिए गठित कमीशन की प्रारंभिक रिपोर्ट मिली है। उन्होंने कहा कि कमीशन जो भी सिफारिश करेगा वे उसे मान लेंगी। राज्य में सातवां वेतन आयोग लागू नहीं होने से सरकारी कर्मचारी ममता से बेहद नाराज चल रहे हैं। राज्य सरकार द्वारा छठे वेतन आयोग को लागू करने के लिए गठित कमीशन के अध्यक्ष अभिरूप सरकार ने कहा कि कर्मचारियों को बढ़ा वेतन देने से संबंधित रिपोर्ट तैयार कर ली गई है। सिफारिशों एक जनवरी से प्रभावी होने की संभावना है। लोकसभा चुनाव के बाद सचिवालय में बैठक कर मुख्यमंत्री ने स्पष्ट कर दिया था कि उनकी सरकार छठे वेतन आयोग की सिफारिशें लागू नहीं कर सकती है, क्योंकि आर्थिक स्थिति से लेकर कई और तरह की दिक्कतें थीं। इसके बाद उन्होंने आयोग के चेयरमैन अभिरूप सरकार से भी बात की थी। आयोग के अध्यक्ष अभिरूप सरकार ने मूल वेतन में 2.57 फीसद वृद्धि की सिफारिश की है। इससे राज्य सरकार पर 10000 करोड़ रुपये का अतिरिक्त भार पड़ेगा। हाल के लोकसभा चुनाव में सरकारी कर्मचारियों ने भाजपा का समर्थन किया था, जिसका खमियाजा राज्य की सत्ताधारी पार्टी तृणमूल कांग्रेस को सीटों के नुकसान के रूप में झेलना पड़ा। जिसके बाद मुख्यमंत्री ने राज्य के परिवहन मंत्री शुभेंदु अधिकारी को सरकारी कर्मचारियों के संगठन की जिम्मेवारी सौंपी थी। उन्होंने जब पहली बैठक की तो पता चल गया कि वेतन वृद्धि न होने की वजह से सरकारी कर्मचारी तृणमूल सरकार से खारेज नाराज हैं।

हिंदी के विस्तार में है अन्य भाषाओं का हित



कृपाशंकर चौधे

देश में जब भी हिंदी के विरोध में कहीं से कोई आवाज उठती है तो उसका लाभ जाने-अनजाने अंग्रेजी के हिस्से में ही जाता है

हिंदी की महत्ता तभी स्थापित हो गई थी जब वह स्वाधीनता संग्राम के समय समूचे देश को आपस में जोड़ने वाली सबसे सशक्त संपर्क भाषा बन गई थी। उस दौर के सभी नेताओं का मानना था कि अगर कोई भारतीय भाषा देशवासियों को एकजुट करने में सहायक बन सकती है तो वह हिंदी ही है। हिंदी की सामर्थ्य को गांधी ने भी समझा और नेता जी सुभाषचंद्र बोस ने भी। आचार्य बिनेवा भावे ने कहा था कि यदि मैंने हिंदी का सहारा न लिया होता तो कश्मीर से कन्याकुमारी और असम से केरल तक का संदेश जनता तक न पहुंचता। हिंदी में वह शक्ति है कि वह अपने माध्यम से भारत को जोड़ सके। हिंदी को अपना स्थान अभी भी हासिल करना है। उसे इस मिथ्या धारणा को भी तोड़ना है कि विकास की भाषा तो अंग्रेजी ही है। अगर अंग्रेजी सचमुच विकास की भाषा होती तो पहले जापान और फिर जर्मनी और चीन ने अपनी भाषा में चमत्कारिक प्रगति न हासिल की होती।

हाल के समय में हिंदी ने उल्लेखनीय प्रगति और पहुंच स्थापित की है, लेकिन केरल इतने से संतुष्ट नहीं हुआ जा सकता कि वह

देश की सबसे ज्यादा बोले जाने वाली भाषा बन गई है। हिंदी ज्ञान अर्जन की, विज्ञान एवं तकनीक की और सरकारी एवं गैर सरकारी कामकाज यानी रोजगार की सक्षम भाषा भी बननी चाहिए। जब ऐसा होगा तभी उसे अपना मुकाम हासिल होगा। इस मुकाम को हासिल करने में हिंदी को गैर हिंदी भाषियों का सहयोग और समर्थन चाहिए होगा। यह तभी हासिल हो सकता है जब हिंदी के प्रति अन्य भाषा-भाषियों की आशंकाओं को दूर करने में सफलता मिलेगी। गैर हिंदी भाषियों में हिंदी को लेकर किसी तरह की आशंका उपजने न पाए, इसके लिए हिंदी प्रेमियों को सतर्क रहना होगा और इस क्रम में उन हिंदीतरभाषियों का स्मरण करना होगा जिन्होंने विभिन्न कालखंडों में हिंदी के विस्तार में योगदान किया। इसे गैर हिंदी भाषी क्षेत्रों के उन लोगों को भी स्मरण रखना चाहिए जो यह-रहकर किसी भी क्षण में हिंदी का पहला विरोध करने के लिए आगे आ जाते हैं। ऐसा करके वे हिंदी के साथ ही अन्य क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं का भी अहित करते हैं, क्योंकि देश में जब भी हिंदी के विरोध से कोई भाव उठती है तो जाने-अनजाने उसका लाभ अंग्रेजी के हिस्से में जाता है। यह ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए कि सिविल सेवा परीक्षा में अंग्रेजी के वचस्व से तभी लड़ा जा सका जब हिंदी भाषी छात्रों के साथ अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं के छात्र एकजुट हुए। इस एकजुटता को और बढ़ाने की जरूरत है, क्योंकि अंग्रेजी से उपजी अंग्रेजियत की



अवधेश राजपूत

संस्कृति यानी खुद को विशिष्ट समझने की मानसिकता हिंदी के साथ अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं के लिए एक खतरा बनी हुई है।

बहुत कम लोग इससे परिचित होंगे कि आधुनिक हिंदी गद्य का जन्म हिंदीतर क्षेत्र कलकत्ता के फोर्ट विलियम कॉलेज में तब हुआ जब वहाँ हिंदुस्तानी भाषा विभाग के प्रमुख बांग्लाभाषी तारिणी चरण मित्र थे। हिंदी का पहला साप्ताहिक समाचार पत्र 'उदंत मार्तंड' हिंदीतरभाषी क्षेत्र कलकत्ता से ही 30 मई, 1826 को निकला। हिंदी का पहला दैनिक समाचार पत्र 'समाचार सुधावर्षण' भी कलकत्ता से ही 1854 में निकला था। बांग्लाभाषी जस्टिस शारदाचरण मित्र ने देवनागरी लिपि के विस्तार के उद्देश्य से 'देवनागर' नामक पत्रिका 1907 में निकाली। हिंदी में पहला एमए होने का गौरव नलिनी मोहन सायल नामक एक बांग्लाभाषी ने पाया। ऐसा इसलिए हो सका, क्योंकि देश में पहली बार 1919 में हिंदी में एमए की पढ़ाई कलकत्ता विश्वविद्यालय में तत्कालीन

कुलपति सर आशुतोष मुखर्जी ने शुरू कराई। नेताजी सुभाषचंद्र बोस के हिंदी प्रेम को देखते हुए ही 20 दिसंबर, 1928 को कलकत्ता में आयोजित राष्ट्रभाषा सम्मेलन की स्वागत समिति का अध्यक्ष उन्हें बनाया गया। वहाँ उन्होंने हिंदी के पक्ष में ऐतिहासिक भाषण हिंदी में ही दिया। गुरुदेव रवींद्रनाथ टैगोर ने शान्तिनिकेतन में आचार्य हजारीप्रसाद द्विवेदी को 1930 में हिंदी शिक्षक नियुक्त किया और 1940 में हिंदी भवन की स्थापना की। इसी तरह पूर्वी भारत, मध्य भारत, उत्तर भारत, दक्षिण भारत और पूर्वोत्तर भारत के हिंदीतरभाषियों ने विभिन्न कालखंडों में हिंदी को सँचने का महत्वपूर्ण काम किया।

हमें यह भी नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि देवनागरी लिपि के लिए एक हिंदीतरभाषी लेखक ने अपनी शहादत तक दी। ये थे बिनेश्वर ब्रह्म। वह असम में 'देवनागरी के नवदेवता के तौर पर जाने जाते हैं। हिंदी को राष्ट्रीय स्वरूप देने में सबसे अधिक योगदान महात्मा गांधी का है। 1934 में पूर्वोत्तर भारत में हिंदी प्रचार महात्मा गांधी की प्रेरणा से ही प्रारंभ हुआ। 1936 में

वक्त की मांग है महिलाओं की वित्तीय सुरक्षा

किसी भी समुदाय, वर्ग का सशक्तीकरण एक दीर्घकालिक सांस्कृतिक परिवर्तन है जिसे प्रकट होने में कई वर्ष लग जाते हैं। महिलाएं परिवारों के सशक्तीकरण में प्रमुख भूमिका निभाती हैं। इससे उनकी पीढ़ी में तो बदलाव आता ही है, समाज में भी सकरात्मक परिवर्तन आता है। लैंगिक असमानता को दूर करने के लिए प्रयासों के साथ उन उपायों पर नजर रखना जरूरी है जिनसे कहीं जल्द सार्थक नतीजे सामने आते हों। अगर हम बदलाव की बड़ी पहल करना चाहते हैं तो महिलाओं के लिए वित्तीय स्वतंत्रता लाना महत्वपूर्ण होगा। महिलाओं के लिए कमाई के अवसर पैदा करने वाली सामुदायिक पहल संशय के माहौल को दूर करने में मददगार बनती है। आम तौर पर ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों की महिलाएं चुनौतियों के दो व्यापक स्तरों पर जूझती हैं। पहला, आत्मविश्वास की कमी को लेकर और दूसरे, धारणाओं से लड़ने का दबाव, लेकिन जीविकोपार्जन के अवसर प्रदान करने वाली योजनाओं के जरिये इन दबावों से अच्छी तरह निपटा जा सकता है।

भारत में महिलाओं के लिए रोजगार के अवसर पैदा करना बहुत ही लाभकारी साबित हो सकता है। कुछ वर्ष पहले मैकिंजी ग्लोबल ने अपने एक अध्ययन में दावा किया था कि अगर भारत अर्थव्यवस्था में महिलाओं की भागीदारी के लिए समान अवसर पैदा कर सके तो वह साल 2025 तक अपने सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में 60 प्रतिशत तक वृद्धि कर सकता है। इस अध्ययन में यह भी कहा गया था कि दुनिया भर में लिंगभेद की समस्या को समाप्त करने से वैश्विक सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में 28 ट्रिलियन डॉलर की भारी वृद्धि हो सकती है। जब एक



डॉ. प्रीति अदानी

अगर हम आर्थिक महाशक्ति बनना चाहते हैं तो महिलाओं के लिए रोजगार के पर्याप्त अवसर पैदा करने होंगे

गृहिणी आत्मनिर्भर हो जाती है तो उसका लाभ बड़ी हुई परिवारिक आय तक ही सीमित नहीं रहता है, बल्कि उसके द्वारा परिवार में लागू गए परिवर्तन पीढ़ियों की सोच में दिखने लगते हैं। इसीलिए अपने माता-पिता की तुलना में नई पीढ़ी शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और सतत विकास के प्रति ज्यादा जागरूक है। महिलाओं में वित्तीय स्वतंत्रता देश में सांस्कृतिक परिवर्तन प्रारंभ करने की क्षमता रखती है। स्कूल इंडिया अभियान यानी कौशल प्रशिक्षण के जरिये करीब 17.72 लाख महिलाओं को प्रशिक्षित किया गया है। कौशल विकास केंद्रों में प्रशिक्षित 10 में से लगभग 8 महिलाओं को या तो आजीविका के अवसर मिले हैं या उन्होंने अपना प्रशिक्षण पूरा करने के तुरंत बाद स्व-रोजगार शुरू किया है। इनमें से अधिकांश परिधान, ब्यूटी एंड वेल्नेस और स्वास्थ्य देखभाल के क्षेत्र में शामिल हुई हैं। इन आंकड़ों से दो बातें उभर कर सामने आती हैं। अपनी भौगोलिक सीमाओं और सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमि के बावजूद आज महिलाएं घूंट से परे जीवन को देखने के लिए उत्सुक हैं। इसका यह भी अर्थ है कि रोजगार

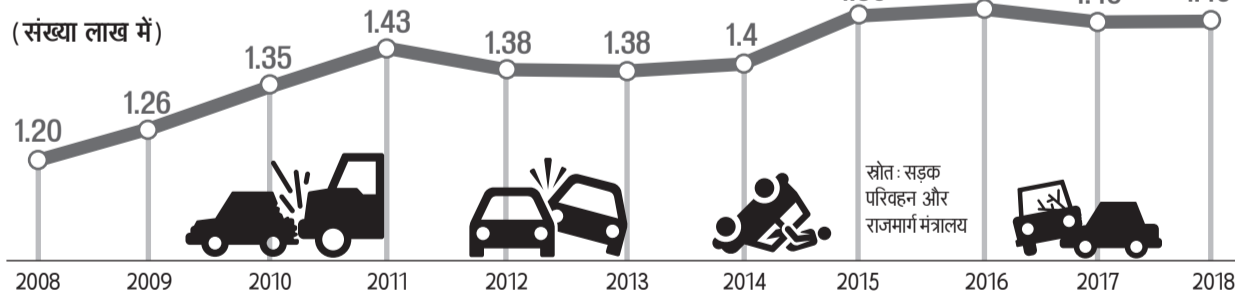
का एक बाजार मौजूद है जो इस अप्रयुक्त कार्य बल का उपयोग करना चाहता है। हालांकि किसी क्षेत्र विशेष में निपुणता आवश्यक है, लेकिन इससे भी महत्वपूर्ण है आत्मविश्वास। आज महिलाओं के भीतर अपनी पहचान को सामने लाने और अपने बच्चों के भविष्य को बेहतर बनाने के लिए गहरी उत्सुकता है। चूंकि भारत को दुनिया के सबसे बड़े उपभोक्ता बाजार के रूप में माना जा रहा है, इसलिए आने वाले समय में ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में रोजगार के तमाम अवसर उपलब्ध होंगे। हमें इस मौके का लाभ उठाने के लिए महिलाओं के लिए अधिक से अधिक अवसर पैदा करने की यह आसान करनी चाहिए।

महिलाओं के लिए स्वतंत्रता वातावरण बनाने के अलावा वित्तीय सुरक्षा हासिल करने के लिए उन्हें शिक्षित करना भी उतना ही आवश्यक है। समावेशी विकास को लेकर सरकारी सुधारों के माध्यम से बचत बैंक खाता खोलने के प्रति पहले ही व्यापक जागरूकता आ चुकी है। अब खाते में न्यूनतम धन रखने की आवश्यकता, बीमा योजनाओं और संपत्ति में निवेश करने की पेशकश सहित कई प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं, ताकि महिलाएं वित्तीय रूप से सुरक्षित हों। वर्ल्ड इकोनॉमिक फोरम के संस्थापक और कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष शवाब क्लॉज के अनुसार भविष्य की नौकरियां शीर्ष कंपनियों द्वारा नहीं, युवा उद्यमियों द्वारा उपलब्ध कराई जाएंगी। हम देख सकते हैं कि भारत में महिलाओं की एक नई पीढ़ी युवा उद्यमि के रूप में तैयार होने की कगार पर है। निश्चित रूप से यह आगे चलकर दूसरी महिलाओं के लिए नौकरियों का महत्वपूर्ण स्रोत बन जाएगा।

(लेखिका अदानी फाउंडेशन की चेयरपर्सन हैं)

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कैसे मिलेगी बालश्रम से मुक्ति

लालजी जायसवाल

पिछले दिनों ब्यूंसआयर्स में बालश्रम पर लगभग 100 देशों का सम्मेलन हुआ था जिसमें यह चिंता जाहिर की गई थी कि अधिकांश सदस्य देश 2025 तक बालश्रम को समाप्त करने के अपने लक्ष्य से पीछे रह जाएंगे। दरअसल इसके पीछे अंतरराष्ट्रीय श्रम संगठन का वह अनुमान है जिसके अनुसार विश्व भर में आज से सात वर्ष बाद भी लगभग एक अरब 21 करोड़ बच्चे अलग-अलग कार्यों में संलग्न पाए जा सकते हैं। अभी भी विश्व में पांच से 17 वर्ष के बीच के काम करने वाले बच्चों की संख्या एक अरब 52 करोड़ है। जाहिर है सभी देशों को अपने प्रयासों में तेजी लाकर दुनिया को बालश्रम से मुक्ति दिलाने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए। भारत में बालश्रम का एक प्रमुख कारण औपचारिक अर्थव्यवस्था में श्रम संबंधी निरीक्षकों की कमी का होना भी है, जिसके फलस्वरूप यह लगभग 71 फीसद बच्चे आज भी कृषि कार्य में लगे हैं जिनमें से 69 फीसद बच्चों को परिवार की इकाई में काम करने के कारण उनको पारिश्रमिक नहीं दिया जाता है। अतः यह अहसास करना लाजमी है

सभी देशों को अपने प्रयासों में तेजी लाकर दुनिया को बालश्रम से मुक्ति दिलाने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए

कि इस स्थिति में देश का भविष्य कैसा होगा?

आज भी भारत में प्रतिदिन लगभग 40.3 लाख बच्चे स्कूल के बजाय काम पर जाते हैं। बालश्रम से निरक्षरता और गरीबी बढ़ती है। बच्चों का सामाजिकरण न होने से बच्चा समाज में अपनी भूमिका नहीं निभा पाता है। जिससे समाज के मानवीय मूल्यों का क्षरण होता है, जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप मानव व्यापार, आतंकवाद एवं ड्रग माफिया जैसे अपराधों में बढ़ोतरी हो रही है। आज समाज में पनपते अपराधों के पीछे कालांतर में बालश्रम की अंतर्गत भारत सरकार बालश्रम के घृणित कार्यों को समाप्त करने की समय सीमा तक निर्धारित नहीं कर पाई है। देश के संविधान में

बच्चों को प्राथमिक तथा माध्यमिक शिक्षा का संवैधानिक अधिकार है, लेकिन इसके बावजूद भी ऐसे परिणामों का सामने आना कई सवाल खड़े करता है।

बाल श्रम का मुख्य कारण गरीबी, अशिक्षित समाज एवं देश की बढ़ती जनसंख्या है। गरीब परिवार के बच्चे शिक्षा के बजाय यदि श्रम में ही लगे रहते हैं तो उसकी गरीब पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी चलती रहती है। गरीब को कमाने वाला चाहिए, लेकिन वह दूसरे पक्ष को कभी नहीं देखता कि गरीब परिवार का बच्चा पढ़-लिख कर परिवार की गरीबी दूर कर सकता है और सश्रम समाज का निर्माण भी कर सकता है। बच्चों को पारिवारिक उद्यम में संलग्न करना भी बालश्रम का कारण बनता है। बाल मजदूरी से बच्चों का शारीरिक एवं मानसिक विकास बाधित हो जाता है। कानून को कड़ाई से लागू करने में बड़ी भूमिका निभा सकती है। सरकार को ऐसे बच्चों के लिए शिक्षा की व्यवस्था करनी चाहिए, ताकि सभी गरीब बच्चे पढ़ सकें और फिर रोजगार हासिल कर सही दिशा में बढ़ सकें।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

जमीनी हकीकत को समझने की जरूरत

शंकर शरण द्वारा लिखित आलेख 'हिंदू-मुस्लिम संवाद का सही आधार' में देश की हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता के बीच फर्सी हुई फांस को जिस साफगोई से रेखांकित किया गया है, वह आजाद भारत की जमीनी हकीकत है। माना कि भारत विभाजन में जिन्ना की मतवादी जिद जिम्मेदार रही, लेकिन उससे कहीं अधिक हमारी उदारता ने बेड़ा गर्क किया था। यदि जिन्ना की दुर्नियत को समय रहते भांप लिया जाता तो आज देश की तस्वीर दूसरी होती। मजे की बात यह रही कि भारत विभाजन के बाद भी उदारता की यह वयाव अपनी गति से बहती रही और मुस्लिम बहुल कश्मीर में अस्थायी अनुच्छेद-370 और 35-ए के द्वारा देश के एक वर्ग को विशिष्टता का जामा पहना दिया गया। बाद में अल्पसंख्यक तुट्टीकरण की कांग्रेसी राजनीति ने देश के संसंधनों पर पहला हक एक वर्ग विशेष का बताकर उदारता की सभी सशर्मा तोड़ दी। तुट्टीकरण की विकृत राजनीति ने ही कश्मीर की शैव-सूफी दर्शन से समन्वित कश्मीरियत को छिन्न-भिन्न करने का काम किया। तत्कालीन केंद्र सरकार चाहती तो आतंकवाद की इस विभाषिका को रोक सकती थी, लेकिन तुट्टीकरण के कारण ऐसा नहीं हो सका। ऐसे में यह जरूरी है कि जब एक वर्ग को पीड़ित मानकर स्वयं के संरक्षण की बात करे तो उसे दूसरे पक्ष की उस पीड़ा को नजरअंदाज नहीं करना चाहिए जो केरल, कश्मीर, असम और पश्चिम बंगाल में वह भोगता है। ऐसे में कृपाशंकर चौधे की प्रयास इस जन्तूनी हकीकत के मंजूरज ही होना चाहिए कि राष्ट्र की प्रगति और शांति के लिए इस देश के हिंदू-मुस्लिम बराबर के जिम्मेदार हैं।

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मेलबाक्स

चालान में तकनीक जरूरी

नया मोटर वाहन कानून सड़क पर चलने वालों लोगों की सुरक्षा को ध्यान में रखते हुए बनाया गया है। इसमें मोटर वाहन दुर्घटना कोष के गठन की बात कही गई है, ताकि सड़क पर चलने वाले सभी लोगों को अनिवार्य बीमा मुहैया कराया जा सके। इसके अतिरिक्त इसमें राष्ट्रीय परिवहन नीति बनाने की संभावना का भी उल्लेख किया गया है। यद्यपि जुर्माने की राशि अधिक है। बड़े हुए जुर्माने राशि से वाहन चलाने वालों में अनुशासन बढ़ेगा और देश की सड़कें सुरक्षित होंगी। इस अधिनियम से सड़क दुर्घटना में होने वाली घटनाओं में कमी आएगी। कुछ राज्य जुर्माने की राशि को लेकर सहमत नहीं हैं। ऐसे में राशि में अंतर और भ्रम से बचने के लिए केंद्र सरकार को अधिनियम का एक बुनियादी ढांचा तैयार करना था और क्रियान्वयन की जवाबदेही रा्यों पर छोड़ देनी चाहिए थी। लोगों में स्व-अनुशासन की आदत डालनी होगी। इसके साथ ही समय पर सड़क, यातायात सिग्नल आदि की उचित देखभाल होनी चाहिए। पुलिस को तकनीक का इस्तेमाल बढ़ाना होगा। इससे न केवल निगरानी लागत में कमी आएगी, बल्कि लोगों की प्रताड़ना को आशंका घटेगी और परिणाम बेहतर होंगे।

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कव समझेंगे जल का महत्व?

पृथ्वी पर मनुष्य के अस्तित्व के लिए पानी की मूलभूत आवश्यकता है, लेकिन इसकी सबसे अधिक प्राथमिकता होने के बावजूद, इसका दुरुपयोग भी बहुत अधिक हो रहा

है। हमारे जीवन का मुख्य केंद्र पानी है, लेकिन हम अपनी योजनाओं में इस केंद्र बिंदु पर ध्यान केंद्रित ही नहीं कर रहे हैं। हम विकसित तो हो रहे हैं, लेकिन पृथ्वी से जल के स्तर को कम करते जा रहे हैं। आज जिस तरह विकास हो रहा है, वो जल और जीवन के लिए नरक का दरवाजा खोल रहा है। आखिर कब हम समझेंगे कि जल ही जीवन है।

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देश में आर्थिक मंदी

इस समय देश में आर्थिक मंदी की सुगुवाहट है। भारत की जीडीपी दर 5.8 फीसद से घटकर 5 फीसद पर आ गई है। कृषि विकास दर में गिरावट, निर्माण सेक्टर में गिरावट और आय सुदन, बचत व खपत में गिरावट इन मंदी के प्रमुख कारण बताए जा रहे हैं। अमेरिका-चीन के बीच चल रहे व्यापार युद्ध का फायदा भी भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को नहीं मिल पा रहा है। भारत सरकार इस संकट की घड़ी से निकलने के पुख्ता कदम उठा रही है। सरकार के प्रयास व देशवासियों के सहयोग से इससे जल्द निवारण पाएगी।

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

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दोहरा चरित्र

पाकिस्तान ने भारतीय नागरिक कुलभूषण जाधव को दूसरी बार राजनयिक पहुंच देने से इनकार कर एक बार फिर अपना दोहरा चरित्र दिखाया है। उसका यह व्यवहार बता रहा है कि वह भारत के साथ किसी तरह की शांति नहीं चाहता, बल्कि उसकी दिलचस्पी विवादों को बनाए में है। पाकिस्तान यह भूल रहा है कि जाधव को राजनयिक पहुंच मुहैया कराना उसकी जिम्मेदारी है और उसे यह आदेश अंतरराष्ट्रीय न्यायालय ने दिया है। जाधव को राजनयिक पहुंच नहीं देकर वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय न्यायालय को ठेंगा दिखा रहा है। दो सितंबर को पाकिस्तान ने पहली बार भारतीय उच्चायोग के प्रभारी उप उच्चायुक्त गौरव आहलूवालिया की जाधव से दो घंटे की मुलाकात करवाई थी। अगर भारतीय उप उच्चायुक्त जाधव से नहीं मिल पाते तो पता ही नहीं चलता कि जाधव किस हाल में हैं। इस मुलाकात से ही यह पता चला कि जाधव मानसिक तनाव और दबाव में थे। वे चाह कर भी हिम्मत नहीं जुटा पा रहे थे कि कुछ हकीकत बयान कर सकें। उन्होंने उस मुलाकात में जो कुछ कहा उससे यह साफ था कि वे वही बोल रहे हैं जो पाकिस्तानी सेना ने उन्हें बोलने को कहा होगा। इन हालात को देखते हुए ही यह जरूरी हो गया है कि जाधव को भारतीय राजनयिक से नियमित रूप से मिलने की इजाजत दी जानी चाहिए।

भारत ने जाधव को नियमित रूप से राजनयिक पहुंच देने की मांग करके कोई अनुचित बात नहीं की है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत ने साफ कहा है कि पाकिस्तान जाधव को मौत की सजा की समीक्षा करे और वियना संधि के तहत उन तक राजनयिक पहुंच सुनिश्चित कराए। अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत ने ऐसा कहीं नहीं कहा कि एक बार ही राजनयिक पहुंच दी जाएगी। लेकिन पाकिस्तान अब अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत के फैसले को धता बताते हुए अपनी मनमानी कर रहा है। राजनयिक संबंधों को लेकर वियना संधि के अनुच्छेद 36(1)(बी) में साफ कहा गया है कि अगर किसी एक देश के नागरिक को किसी दूसरे देश में गिरफ्तार किया जाता है तो दूसरे देश को बिना देरी किए पहले देश को जानकारी देनी होगी। इसी तरह इस संधि के अनुच्छेद 36(1)(सी) में कहा गया है कि पहले देश के अधिकारियों को उस देश में यात्रा करने का अधिकार है जिस देश में उसके नागरिक को गिरफ्तार या हिरासत में लिया गया है। इसमें गिरफ्तार व्यक्ति को कानूनी सहायता देने का भी प्रावधान है। लेकिन पाकिस्तान ने अपनी दादागिरी दिखाते हुए वियना संधि को ताक पर रख दिया है।

इन दिनों पाकिस्तान की बौखलाहट इसलिए भी बढ़ी हुई है कि कश्मीर मसले पर उसे दुनिया में कहीं से कोई मदद नहीं मिल रही है। जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 को निष्क्रिय करने के भारत के फैसले को अमेरिका सहित सारे देशों ने इसे भारत का अंडरूनी मामला करार दे दिया है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र में भी पाकिस्तान को मुंह की खानी पड़ी है। पाकिस्तान के गृह मंत्री और विदेश मंत्री तक खुलेआम कह रहे हैं कि कश्मीर पर पाकिस्तान को किसी का साथ नहीं मिल रहा। इसीलिए पाकिस्तान जाधव की आड़ में अपनी खीझ निकाल रहा है। एक तरफ तो वह भारत से शांति, भाईचारे, इंसानियत की उम्मीदें रखता है मगर दूसरी ओर जाधव मामले में वह खुद कितनी अमानवीयता बरत रहा है, यह उसे नजर नहीं आ रहा। इंसानियत तो यह होती कि जाधव को बिना बाधा राजनयिक पहुंच दी जाती। जाधव कहीं भाग नहीं रहे हैं। भारत ने उनके लिए कोई विशेष सुविधाएं भी नहीं मांगी। बात सिर्फ अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत के फैसले पर इंमानदारी से अमल की है। बेहतर होता जाधव मामले में पाकिस्तान समझ-बूझ से काम लेता। इससे दोनों देशों के बीच विश्वास का पुल तो बनता।

उच्च शिक्षा की तस्वीर

किसी भी देश की उच्च शिक्षा की तस्वीर यह बताती है कि वहां की सरकार की प्राथमिकता में शिक्षा की जगह क्या है और वह इससे कितना सरोकार रखती है। पिछले कई सालों से लगातार जब भी दुनिया भर में बेहतर गुणवत्ता वाले विश्वविद्यालयों की सूची सामने आई है, उसमें शीर्ष दो या ढाई सौ तक की संख्या में हमारे देश के किसी भी उच्च शैक्षिक संस्थान को जगह नहीं मिली। इस तरह की सूची सामने आने का एक हासिल यह होना चाहिए कि सरकार और समूची व्यवस्था इस मामले में सुधार के लिए टोस पहलकदमी करे, ताकि इस स्थिति में कुछ सुधार हो। लेकिन अफसोस की बात यह है कि हर अगले साल इस मामले में भारत की तस्वीर और चिंताजनक होती गई है। कुछ साल पहले जहां विश्व भर में शीर्ष दो सौ विश्वविद्यालयों में भारत के किसी भी संस्थान को जगह नहीं मिल सकी थी, अब उसमें और ज्यादा गिरावट आ चुकी है। पिछले साल के आखिर में ढाई सौ और अब ताजा अध्ययन में तीन सौ विश्वविद्यालयों में भी हमारे देश का एक भी उच्च शिक्षा संस्थान अपनी जगह नहीं बना सका।

साफ है कि उच्च शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में समस्या और उसके कारण स्पष्ट होने के बावजूद उसके हल के लिए कुछ भी ऐसा नहीं हो रहा है, जिससे भविष्य के लिए कोई उम्मीद बंध सके। सवाल है कि सरकारों की ओर से किए जाने वाले लगातार दावों के बावजूद आखिर इस मामले में तस्वीर और क्यों बिगड़ती जा रही है! आंकड़ों में विकास का पैमाना नापते हुए क्या यह ध्यान रखना जरूरी नहीं समझा जाता कि अगर सबसे अहम उच्च शिक्षा का क्षेत्र उपेक्षित रह जाता है, तो उस विकास की बुनियाद कितनी मजबूत होगी? लंबे समय से यह सवाल बना हुआ है कि शिक्षण के मामले में दयनीय हालत की सबसे बड़ी वजह शिक्षकों की भारी कमी है। कुछ अन्य कारणों के अलावा सिर्फ इस वजह से पढ़ाई-लिखाई की गुणवत्ता बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो रही है, लेकिन इसके हल की कोशिशें केंद्र में नहीं आ पा रही हैं। थोड़ी बेहतर स्थिति इंडियन इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ टेक्नोलॉजी जैसे कुछ संस्थानों की मानी जाती है। लेकिन इससे इतर देश भर के विश्वविद्यालयों में शिक्षकों के खाली पदों की संख्या इतनी ज्यादा है कि इसके रहते बेहतर शिक्षण और शैक्षणिक गतिविधियों की उम्मीद बेमानी है।

यों शैक्षणिक और गैर-शैक्षणिक पदों पर नियुक्तियां करने से लेकर दूसरे मामलों में विश्वविद्यालयों को स्वायत्तता हासिल है। लेकिन हाल के वर्षों में जब भी शिक्षकों की नियमित भत्तों का सवाल उठा तो धन की कमी सबसे मुख्य अड़चन बन कर सामने आई। दूसरे क्षेत्रों में धन के बेलगाम प्रवाह के बरक्स उच्च शिक्षा के मामले में धन की कमी कहां और किसकी ओर से पैदा हो रही है? यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि उच्च शिक्षा और उसके सहारे रोजगार के बीच बढ़ती खाई की वजह से हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था नए ‘ट्रेजुएट’ तो पैदा कर रही है, लेकिन रोजगार उपलब्ध कराने की दिशा में पूरी तरह नाकाम साबित हुई है। उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों में शिक्षण और शोध के मामले में जिस तरह की औपचारिकताएं पूरी की जा रही हैं, उनके रहते शैक्षणिक गुणवत्ता की किन कसौटियों को पूरा किया जा सकेगा? गौरतलब है कि संख्या के लिहाज से भारत की उच्चतर शिक्षा व्यवस्था अमेरिका और चीन के बाद तीसरे नंबर पर आती है, लेकिन गुणवत्ता के मामले में इसे दुनिया के शीर्ष तीन सौ विश्वविद्यालयों में भी जगह नहीं मिल पा रही है। यह समूचे देश के लिए चिंता की बात होनी चाहिए।

कल्पमेधा

कोई वस्तु अच्छी या बुरी नहीं है। अच्छाई और बुराई का आधार हमारे विचार ही हैं।

–शेक्सपीयर

जनसत्ता

भारत डोगरा

पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में भूस्खलन की एक बड़ी वजह तो यह है कि विभिन्न निर्माण कार्यों, विशेषकर बांध निर्माण और खनन के लिए विस्फोटकों का अंधाधुंध उपयोग किया जाता है। इसको नियंत्रित और नियमित करना जरूरी है। वन-विनाश भी भूस्खलन की आशंका बढ़ने का एक अन्य बड़ा कारण रहा है। भूस्खलन अपने आप में बड़ी आपदा तो है ही, इससे बाढ़ भी उग्र रूप धारण कर लेती है।

चाहे बाढ़ हो या सूखा, समुद्री तूफान हो या भूस्खलन की बढ़ती घटनाएं, गर्मी का बढ़ता प्रकोप हो या फिर वनों में लगी आग- इन सभी तरह की आपदाओं की पिछले कुछ दशकों में बिगड़ती स्थिति देखी गई है। ये आपदाएं अब भयानक रूप लेती जा रही हैं। यह स्थिति देश और दुनिया दोनों स्तरों पर नजर आ रही है। जहां कुछ आपदाओं की इस बिगड़ती स्थिति में जलवायु बदलाव की एक बड़ी भूमिका है, वहीं दूसरी ओर स्थानीय कुप्रबंधन, अनुचित निर्णयों और नीतियों के कारण स्थिति और उग्र हो जाती है।

केरल राज्य को लगातार दो वर्ष बाढ़ व भूस्खलन का अत्यधिक प्रकोप झेलना पड़ा है। यहां कुछ हद तक जलवायु बदलाव की भूमिका नजर आती है, तो स्थानीय कुप्रबंधन ने भी स्थिति को और बिगाड़ा है। विशेषकर अंधाधुंध निर्माण और जल-निकासी के प्राकृतिक मार्ग की अवहेलना की

अनीता यादव

उस दिन महाविद्यालय में प्रवेश प्रक्रिया के बाद नए सत्र की शुरुआत थी। कक्षा ‘हिंदी विशेष’ के विद्यार्थियों की थी। कक्षा के दौरान एक दूसरे से परिचय का दौर चल रहा था। विद्यार्थी परिचय के रूप में अपना नाम, रुचियां, जन्म स्थान, जीवन में क्या बनना चाहते हैं और ‘हिंदी विशेष’ में हो प्रवेश क्यों लिया जैसी बातों के बारे में जानकारीयें कक्षा में साझा कर रहे थे। हेरानी की बात यह थी कि विद्यार्थी ‘हिंदी विशेष’ के थे, इसके बावजूद अधिकतर ने परिचय देने के लिए अंग्रेजी भाषा को चुना। मैं सबको बड़े ध्यान से सुन और उनके हाव-भाव परख रही थी। जो विद्यार्थी हिंदी में बोल रहे थे, उनमें अंग्रेजी भाषा में परिचय देने वालों के मुकाबले एक हिचक थी। अनजाना-सा भय व्याप्त था आवाज में। जबकि अंग्रेजी में परिचय देने वाले विद्यार्थी भले ही गलत अंग्रेजी इस्तेमाल कर रहे थे, लेकिन आत्मविश्वास से लबरेज थे।

कुछ विद्यार्थी हिंदी मिश्रित अंग्रेजी यानी ‘हिंग्लिश’ का इस्तेमाल कर रहे थे। जबकि मैं उनसे हिंदी में बातचीत कर उनके हिंदी ज्ञान को परखना चाहती थी। साठ बच्चों की कक्षा में एकाध विद्यार्थी ही हिंदी में

जलते जंगल

सदियों से दुनिया की प्राणवायु माने जाने वाले अमेजन के जंगल आज जल रहे हैं। दुनिया की करीब बीस प्रतिशत कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड को सोखने के कारण पर्यावरणविदों द्वारा इन्हें ‘पृथ्वी के फेफड़े’, गुद्रे और एक ‘कार्बन सिंक’ की संज्ञा दी गई है। ये विश्व के सबसे बड़े वर्षा वन हैं। वहां पेड़ जमीन से पानी खींचते हैं जो भाप बन कर ऊपर जाता है और बाद में बारिश के रूप में बरस जाता है। इसके कारण वहां मौसम हमेशा नम रहता है। दुनिया की सबसे बड़ी नदी अमेजन यहीं से निकलती है। भारत के कुल क्षेत्रफल के करीब दोगुने में ये जंगल फैले हुए हैं जो कुल 55 लाख वर्ग किलोमीटर है। ये दक्षिण अमेरिका के कई देशों पेरू, कोलंबिया, बोलीविया, इक्वाडोर और गुयाना तक फैले हुए हैं। लेकिन इनका सबसे ज्यादा करीब साठ प्रतिशत हिस्सा ब्राजील में है। अगर ये जंगल जल गए तो कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड को सोखने का चक्र बंद हो जाएगा।

वर्षा वनों के इस जंगल में पौधों और जंतुओं की करीब तीस हजार प्रजातियां और करीब 113 आदिम जनजातियां हैं। जितनी जैव विविधता अमेजन में है, उतनी दुनिया में कहीं नहीं है जो आज तबाह हो रही है। जब ये जंगल जल जाएंगे तो ऑक्सीजन की जगह हमें और अधिक कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड मिलेगी जिससे दुनियाभर में प्रदूषण की मात्रा में वृद्धि होगी। ये जंगल मानव शरीर के गुद्रे की तरह पूरे सिस्टम की सफाई करता रहता है। मौसम प्रणाली के नियमन के लिए अमेजन से बड़ा कोई पारिस्थितिकीय तंत्र नहीं है। पहले ही दुनिया जलवायु संकट से जुड़ा रही है, तोपमान बढ़ रहा है, सूखा और बाढ़ बढ़ रहे हैं। अमेजन को हो रहा नुकसान पूरी दुनिया की जलवायु पर बुरा असर डाल सकता है। अगर समय रहते पूरे विश्व ने एकजुट होकर

महंगी कीमत यहां चुकानी पड़ी है। केरल के मुख्य सचिव ने हाल ही में कहा था कि लाखों आवास खतरे की स्थिति में आ गए हैं और दस से बीस लाख लोगों का पुनर्वास करना बड़ी चुनौती है।

यही स्थिति प्रायः देश और दुनिया के अनेक ऐसे अन्य क्षेत्रों की है जिन्हें बार-बार किसी बड़ी आपदा का सामना करना पड़ा है। जलवायु संकट के दौर में ऐसे क्षेत्रों की विशेष सहायता के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय कोष की स्थापना की चर्चा तो बहुत होती रही है, पर इस क्षेत्र में व्यावहारिक उपलब्धि बहुत कम है। इस स्थिति में यह और भी जरूरी हो जाता है कि हम आपदाओं की क्षति को न्यूनतम करने के सतत और व्यापक प्रयास करें।

कुछ क्षेत्रों, विशेषकर दक्षिण एशिया के संदर्भ में अध्ययन बताते हैं कि पिछली लगभग एक शताब्दी के दौरान भूकम्प पहले से अधिक जानलेवा बन गए हैं। सवाल है कि ऐसा क्यों हुआ, जबकि इस दौरान भूकम्प से बचाव वाले भवन बनाने की तकनीक में काफी प्रगति होने के दावे किए गए। ‘साइस’ पत्रिका में छपे एक लेख के मुताबिक वर्ष 1900 के बाद आए भूकम्पों में केवल भारत और पाकिस्तान में जितनी मौतें हुई हैं, वे इससे पहले की शताब्दियों में आए भूकम्पों के कारण हुई मौतों के मुकाबले कहीं ज्यादा हैं। भूकम्पों में हुई अधिक मौतों का कारण इस दौर में इन देशों में निर्माण के ऐसे तौर-तरीकों का उपयोग है जो कम मजबूत साबित हुए हैं। हालांकि इसका अर्थ यह नहीं है कि यहां बेहतर तकनीक उपलब्ध नहीं है। वे उपलब्ध तो हैं, पर उनका उपयोग बहुत कम है। कई टेकेदारों द्वारा निर्माण के नियम-कानूनों की उपेक्षा की जा रही है, जबकि स्वयं आवास बनाने वाले अनेक लोगों के पास जानकारी का भी अभाव है।

भूकम्प-प्रतिरोधी तकनीक का उपयोग सार्वजनिक इमारतों में तो प्रायः हो जाता है, लेकिन आवासीय भवनों में इसका उपयोग प्रायः नहीं होता है। वैज्ञानिकों का कहना है कि जितनी जानकारी अभी उपलब्ध है, यदि केवल इसका उपयोग सुरक्षित निर्माण के लिए किया जाता है तो भविष्य में भूकम्प से होने वाली मानवीय जीवन की क्षति में भारी कमी लार्ई जा सकती है। दूसरी ओर, यदि निर्माण कार्य में ऐसा सुधार नहीं किया गया तो भूकम्पीय चेतवनी के अधिक महंगे व खर्चीले उपाय भी मानवीय जीवन बचाने में कारगर सिद्ध नहीं होंगे। विशेषज्ञों की इस चेतवनी को हाल के कुछ भूकम्पों के इस अनुभव

रिवायत से आगे

दुनिया मेरे आगे

परिचय देने वाला निकला। मैं सोचने पर मजबूर थी कि हिंदी भाषा के प्रति यह हीन भाव आखिर कहाँ से आया उनमें? जवाब कठिन नहीं था! हिंदी भाषी समाज में हिंदी को लेकर जो नकारात्मक भाव व्याप्त हैं, उसी भाव से ग्रस्त वे विद्यार्थी भी थे। दरअसल, हमने अंग्रेजी को भाषा न मान कर उसे बुद्धिमता का पैमाना मान लिया है! आप हिंदी समेत कितनी ही भारतीय भाषाओं के ज्ञाता हो और आपने इन भाषाओं में कितना ही गूढ़ ज्ञान अर्जित किया हो, लेकिन अगर आपको अंग्रेजी नहीं आती तो आपका यह सब ज्ञान बेमानी है। यही ज्ञान अगर अंग्रेजी में प्राप्त किया है तो ऐसा व्यक्ति ही वास्तविक ‘इंटेलिजेंट’ यानी अपार बुद्धिमान है। यही सोच भारतीय परिवेश में पुझा है।

मेरा उद्देश्य यहाँ किसी भाषा विशेष को कमतर करके आंकना कतई नहीं है। मैं केवल इस ओर इंगित करना चाहती हूँ कि हिंदी भाषा को लेकर हमारी सोच, हमारे मानस में इतना संकुचन और कुंठा क्यों है! अन्य देशों की ओर नजर डालें, फिर वह चीन हो, जापान, पाकिस्तान या फ़्रांस, इटली या फिर जर्मनी जैसे यूरोपीय देश। पाएंगे कि भाषा को लेकर इन देशों में कोई द्वंद नहीं है। इन देशों के लोग भारतीयों की तरह अपनी भाषा का प्रयोग करते हुए हीनता का भाव नहीं महसूस

अमेजन की आग को बढ़ने से नहीं रोका तो वहां धुआं गहराता जाएगा और इस काले धुएं में दुनिया के तंद्रुस्त फेफड़े कमजोर और बीमार होकर काल के गाल में समा जाएंगे। उसके बाद आने वाली तबाही के लिए संपूर्ण मानव जाति स्वयं जिम्मेदार होगी।

- कुलदीप बालियान, कोटा, राजस्थान**
- मुआवजा भी**
- नए मोटर वाहन अधिनियम के तहत यातायात नियमों का पालन न करने पर भारी जुर्माने का प्रावधान रखा गया है। यकीनन सबको इन नियमों का पालन करना चाहिए लेकिन जुर्माना बढ़ाया गया है तो

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

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

सरकार को सड़कों को भी चकाचक और सुविधाओं से लैस करना चाहिए। सड़कें खराब होने की स्थिति में गाड़ी खराब होने और दुर्घटनाओं के लिए भारी मुआवजा मिलने का भी प्रावधान होना चाहिए।

- जफर अहमद, रामपुर डेहरू, मधेपुरा**

भाषाई गुलामी

आजादी के बहत्तर साल बाद भी भाषाई तौर पर हम अंग्रेजी और अंग्रेज मानसिकता की गुलामी से नहीं उबर पाए हैं। ‘देवनागरी लिपि में हिंदी भारत की राजकीय भाषा होगी’ भारतीय संविधान की धारा 343 की इस घोषणा के बाद भी हमारे यहां प्राथमिक व उच्च शिक्षा व्यवस्था से लेकर प्रशासनिक व न्यायिक व्यवस्था तक में अंग्रेजी भाषा का ही चर्चस्व बना रहना बेहद अफसोसनाक है। आज भले ही हम

के संदर्भ में भी देखा जाना चाहिए कि परंपरागत तकनीकों से बने कुछ भवन तो मजबूती से खड़े रहे, पर जल्दबाजी में बनाए गए कुछ महंगे निर्माण भरभराकर गिर गए। विशेषकर स्कूल बनाने में हुई लापरवाही बहुत महंगी सिद्ध हो सकती है। अतः स्कूल और अस्पतालों के निर्माण में सुरक्षा को उच्च प्राथमिकता मिलनी चाहिए। कुछ क्षेत्रों विशेषकर हिमालय में भूकम्पों के अधिक जानलेवा होने का एक बड़ा कारण यह है कि जहां पहले से पर्यावरण बहुत उजड़ा हुआ है और बहुत से भूस्खलन सक्रिय हैं, वहां भूकम्प से अधिक क्षति होती है। ऐसी स्थितियां आज हिमालय के बड़े इलाके में नजर आती हैं। हाल के वर्षों में भूस्खलनों से होने वाली भीषण क्षति के समाचार वैसे भी बढ़ते ही जा रहे हैं।

भूस्खलन संबंधी राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर आंकड़े सहजता से हमारे देश में उपलब्ध नहीं हैं, पर बहुत-सी छिटपुट जानकारी विभिन्न पर्वतीय राज्यों में बिखरी हुई है। जरूरत इस बात की है कि राष्ट्रीय



स्तर पर इस आपदा के महत्त्व को समझ कर इससे बचाव के उपायों पर समुचित ध्यान दिया जाए। पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में भूस्खलन की एक बड़ी वजह तो यह है कि विभिन्न निर्माण कार्यों, विशेषकर बांध निर्माण और खनन के लिए, विस्फोटकों का अंधाधुंध उपयोग किया जाता है। इसको नियंत्रित और नियमित करना जरूरी है। वन-विनाश भी भूस्खलन की आशंका बढ़ने का एक अन्य बड़ा कारण रहा है। भूस्खलन अपने आप में बड़ी आपदा तो है ही, इससे बाढ़ भी उग्र रूप धारण कर लेती है।

बाढ़ और बाढ़ नियंत्रण का दर्जा प्राप्त हुआ। तत्कालीन से सोचने की जरूरत महसूस की जा रही है। 1953-2010 के बीच देश में बाढ़ नियंत्रण पर करीब सवा लाख करोड़ रुपए खर्च किए गए। इसके बावजूद लगभग पांच करोड़ हेक्टेयर भूमि आज बाढ़

प्रभावित है। जबकि राष्ट्रीय बाढ़ आयोग ने वर्ष 1980 में चार करोड़ हेक्टेयर भूमि बाढ़ प्रभावित होने का अनुमान लगाया गया था। अनेक बड़े बहुउद्देश्यीय बांध बाढ़ नियंत्रण के लिए बनाए गए थे। पैंतीस हजार किलोमीटर के नदी तटबंध बनाए गए। इसके बावजूद बाढ़ प्रभावित क्षेत्र बढ़ गया।

सवाल है आखिर ऐसा क्यों हुआ? इसके अनेक कारण बताए जाते हैं। जैसे जल निकासी के रास्तों को अवरुद्ध करते हुए नई बरितियां बनाना (विशेषकर शहरी क्षेत्रों में), सड़कों, नहरों और रेल मार्गों के निर्माण के समय निकासी की पर्याप्त व्यवस्था न करना, संसाधनों के अभाव या दुरुपयोग के कारण वर्षा से पहले नालों की सफाई जैसे जरूरी कार्य न करना आदि। अलग-अलग जगहों पर ये सभी कारण महत्त्वपूर्ण हो सकते हैं, कहीं कम तो कहीं ज्यादा, पर केवल इनके आधार पर यह नहीं समझा जा सकता कि बाढ़ नियंत्रण पर कई हजार करोड़ रुपए खर्च करने के बाद भी बाढ़ प्रभावित

क्षेत्र में इतनी वृद्धि क्यों हुई है। वास्तविकता तो यह है कि बाढ़ का बढ़ता क्षेत्र और इसकी बढ़ती जानलेवा क्षमता को तभी समझा जा सकता है जब बाढ़ नियंत्रण के दो मुख्य उपायों- तटबंधों और बांधों पर खुली बहस द्वारा यह जानने का प्रयास किया जाए कि अनेक स्थानों पर क्या बाढ़ नियंत्रण के इन उपायों ने ही बाढ़ की समस्या को नहीं बढ़ाया है और उसे अधिक जानलेवा बनाया है?

हमारे यहां वर्षा की यह स्वाभाविक प्रवृति है कि यदि उसके जल के संग्रहण और संरक्षण की उचित व्यवस्था नहीं की गई तो यह जल बहुत-सी मिट्टी बहा कर निकट की नदी की

ओर वेग से दौड़ेगा और नदी में बाढ़ आ जाएगी। चूंकि अधिकतर जल न एकत्र होगा न धरती में रिसेपा, अतः कुछ समय बाद जल संकट उत्पन्न होना स्वाभाविक है। इन दोनों विपदाओं को कम करने या दूर करने के लिए जीवनदायी जल का अधिकतम संरक्षण और संग्रहण आवश्यक है।

दूसरा महत्त्वपूर्ण कदम है कि वर्षा का जो शेष पानी नदी की ओर बह रहा है, उसके अधिकतम संभव हिस्से को तालाबों या पोखरों में एकत्र कर लिया जाए। इस पानी को मोड़ कर सीधे खेतों में भी लाया जा सकता है। तालाब से होने वाले सीपेज का भी उपयोग हो सके, इसकी व्यवस्था हो सकती है। एक तालाब का अतिरिक्त पानी दूसरे में पहुंच सके और इस तरह तालाबों की एक शृंखला बन जाए, यह भी कुशलतापूर्वक करना संभव है।

उपकार-सा करते हैं। इन दिनों सरकारी कार्यालयों सीख वैकों तक में ‘हिंदी भाषा का प्रयोग करें’ की सूख देती पट्टी खिड़की पर सज जाती है।

विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन का आयोजन भी वैश्विक स्तर पर हिंदी को बचाने की अगली कड़ी है। यानी हिंदी दिवस, सप्ताह या पखवाड़ा या फिर विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन मात्र औपचारिकता भर हैं। क्या हम नहीं जानते कि किसी भी भाषा का विकास या उसकी अभिवृद्धि उसके व्यावहारिक प्रयोग से ही संभव है? एक दिन या एक सप्ताह या महीना भर कार्यक्रम के रूप में भाषणबाजी से भाषा का अस्तित्व नहीं बच सकता। उदाहरण के तौर पर हमारे सामने हिंदी साहित्य के इतिहास में ब्रज और अवधी हैं जो भक्ति काल में पठन-पाठन और साहित्य लेखन के कारण भाषा थीं। लेकिन बाद में धीरे-धीरे साहित्य लिखा जाना कम हुआ और वे भाषाएं बोली के रूप में सिमट कर रह गईं। इसके विपरीत खड़ी बोली का विकसित रूप हिंदी वर्तमान में हमारे सामने है। यानी एक ‘भाषा’ सीमित व्यावहारिक प्रयोग के कारण ‘बोली’ बन उठती है और विस्तृत प्रयोग से ‘बोली’ भाषा बन जाती है। हिंदी भाषा ‘बोली’ न ब्रज जाए, इसके लिए हिंदी का अधिकाधिक व्यावहारिक प्रयोग आवश्यक है, न कि औपचारिकता के रूप में दिवस मानना या भारी-भरकम बजट के सम्मेलन करना!

हिंदी दिवस, हिंदी पखवाड़ा व हिंदी सप्ताह जैसे कई रस्म अदायगी वाले कार्यक्रम आयोजित कर लें मगर सच यही है कि हिंदी के प्रति हमारी दकियानूसी सोच ने इसे अंग्रेजी की दासी बना रखा है। हिंदी दिवस पर महज औपचारिकता पूर्ति की जगह सरकार व समाज दोनों को साथ मिलकर हिंदी को उसका समुचित हक दिलाने में मदद करनी चाहिए। हिंदी के व्यापक प्रचार-प्रसार के लिए हम सबको एक साथ मजबूत इच्छाशक्ति और प्रतिबद्धता दिखाने की जरूरत है।

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हिंदी के साथ

हर वर्ष चौदह सितंबर को हम रस्मी तौर पर हिंदी दिवस मनाते हैं पर खेद की बात है कि हिंदी को सही ढंग से बोलने, लिखने और पढ़ने के प्रति हमारा रुझान कम होता जा रहा है। शुद्ध हिंदी लेखन, व्याकरण और हिंदी साहित्य के इतिहास के बारे में नई पीढ़ी को नहीं के बराबर जानकारी है। उच्च शिक्षा भी हिंदी में दी जाती चाहिए।

विदेशों में हिंदी सीखने की ललक बढ़ रही है और वे इसके लिए तरह-तरह के जतन कर रहे हैं पर हमारे देश में ही राष्ट्रभाषा की उपेक्षा होना समझ से परे है। हमारे दायित्व बनता है कि हिंदी भाषा अपनाते के लिए अपने बच्चों को प्रेरित करें। अपने कामकाज में हिंदी को शामिल करें। विज्ञापनों का लक्ष्य हिंदी में हो। अंग्रेजी का ज्ञान प्राप्त करना अच्छा है पर उसे हमारी राष्ट्रभाषा हिंदी पर हावी नहीं होने देना चाहिए।

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