New structure at the PMO

Will appointing a principal advisor instead of an additional principal secretary make a difference?



A K BHATTACHARYA

he office of the principal secretary to the prime minister is less than 50 years old. It was created in 1971, Indira Gandhi designated Parmeshwar Narayan Haksar as her principal secretary. Haksar occupied that post from December 1971 to February 1973. After him, 11 more principal secretaries have served Indian prime ministers.

Last week, Pramod Kumar Mishra was named the principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He succeeded Nripendra Misra, who had occupied that job for more than five years

In the process, P K Mishra became the 13th person on that list of principal secretaries to the prime minister in the last half a century.

Principal secretaries to the prime minister play a key role in the government. They help the prime minister navigate the complex world of administration and ensure that the government's political and economic mandates are carried out by the bureaucracy, and even by the ministers. They play both advisory and executive roles.

The tenure of a principal secretary is no clear indication of how effective he has been in the government system. TKA Nair, the longest serving principal secretary in the last 50-odd years (7 years 4 months) may not be remembered for his effectiveness. But those with relatively short tenures as principal secretary seem to have made a bigger impact on goverthis was preceded by a four-year stint as secretary to the PM) and B G Deshmukh (eight months with Rajiv Gandhi and 12 months with V P Singh).

There are, of course, exceptions in P C Alexander (three years and eight months with Indira Gandhi), Amar Nath Verma (almost five years with P V Narasimha Rao) and Brajesh Mishra (six years and two months with Atal Bihari Vajpayee), who left a mark on the functioning of their respective governments. Of course, Brajesh Mishra was also the national security advisor and hence had a greater impact on governance.

Others who occupied this prestigious post include V Shankar for two years and three months, S K Mishra for just six months, TR Satishchandran for one year, N N Vohra for eight months and Pulok Chaterji for two years and seven months.

What is clear from the long list of principal secretaries is that prime ministers broadly like the idea of strengthening their office with senior bureau-

crats in that position. All prime ministers in the last 50 years, except Charan Singh, had got a principal secretary in

Even Morarji Desai, who was critical of the idea of a strong prime minister's office had actually appointed V Shankar as his principal secretary. The changes he brought about were purely cosmetic. Desai changed the name of his office -Indira Gandhi would describe it as Prime Minister's Secretariat (PMS), but Desai called it Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The total staff strength in Indira Gandhi's PMS was 229. Desai brought it down to 211 for his PMO. And by 2016, Modi expanded his PMO strength to 397.

Given this background, what can PK Mishra do to leave his own mark on the PMO? He has two distinct advantages. One, he has already had the experience of having worked in the PMO for about five years as additional principal secretary to the PM. He will be like Haksar. who also moved into the principal secretary's shoes after having spent four years as secretary in Indira Gandhi's secretariat. For P K Mishra, it may be a new designation, but he is not new to the PMO and already knows the system.

The second advantage for him would be that he would not have to deal with an additional principal secretary under him, unlike his immediate predecessor, Nripendra Misra. With an additional principal secretary in place, Misra had to share a part of his responsibilities with P K Mishra. In bureaucracy, this also meant dilution of power.

In the current dispensation, the new principal secretary may not be required to share any part of his responsibilities as there is no additional principal secretary. Yes, Pradeep Kumar Sinha is now in the PMO, but his designation is principal advisor to the PM. It is not yet clear what this new designation means and whether the change in designation is an outcome of a need to prevent any dilution of jurisdictional powers of the principal secretary.

By its very definition, the role of a principal advisor to the PM cannot be the same as that of an additional principal secretary. Once the new responsibilities of the principal advisor are known, there will be some clarity on what the new power equations and the arrangements for sharing of responsibilities will be in the PMO under PK Mishra

But make no mistake about it. With P K Mishra as principal secretary and Sinha as principal advisor, the PMO has got a new structure and it would not be similar to what it was in the last five vears. How different it would be and whether it would make the PMO more

CHINESE WHISPERS

UP police on sticky wicket



After they started slapping stringent penalties on offenders under the amended Motor Vehicles Act, the police in Uttar Pradesh are finding themselves in a sticky situation. There have been many instances when the aam janta has filmed police persons flouting traffic rules and posted them online. There are also videos of alleged extortion. To preempt such cases, UP DGP 0 P Singh has announced that cops found breaching traffic rules would be fined twice the amount applicable as penalty. Traffic policemen have been directed not to "harass" people in the guise of checking vehicles; they must stop vehicles only when there is proof of wrongdoing.

Deb's darbar now across Tripura

Following in the footsteps of Aam Aadmi Party chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has declared that he will henceforth hold a ianata darbar in all the districts of the state. "I couldn't meet the people of my state properly due to a shortage of time. But when they seek help on my Facebook page, I immediately respond. I will start the janata darbar soon in every district to communicate directly with people at the grassroots level and address their problems," Deb said while inaugurating the new building of the West Tripura District Court on Saturday. Since coming to power in the state in 2018, Deb has held his janata darbars in Agartala.

Owners versus tenants

A debate over "owners" and "tenants" is raging within the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) after Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao expanded his cabinet last week. Party old-timers who led the agitation for a separate state allege they have been left out in the cold. Many senior leaders have openly expressed their discontent over the fact that some newcomers who defected from parties such as the Congress and Telugu Desam Party have been given a cabinet berth. Former home minister Nayani Narasimha Reddy, who didn't make it to the cabinet, described the new entrants as "tenants". "How long these tenants will stay I do not know, he told a party gathering. Social media is abuzz with speculation about the possible defection of some TRS leaders to the Bharatiya Janata Party. The two parties have dismissed this as just

Why do lenders rush where angels fear to tread

Only a forensic audit can answer the questions that lenders to Bhartiya Micro Credit have, but don't dare to ask



BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

¬ he Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC) is an electronic filing platform for exchanging business information. This platform, created by the Reserve Bank of India, draws credit information of banks with aggregate exposure of at least ₹5 crore to borrowers.

The payment history of the Bhartiya Micro Credit (BMC), a Lucknow-based non-profit microfinance company, on CRILC, reads like a puzzle. In the past one-and-a-half years many banks that have lent to it have been reporting the BMC account moving to "default" and getting "out of default" categories. Take the case of Indian Bank: On January 1, 2018, its loan to BMC moved to the default category but on March 8, 2018, it was out of default, just to get into the default category again on March 31 and get out on April 17. The move-in moveout story continues, for almost all the banks that have lent to BMC.

What's happening? Is BMC taking fresh loans to pay off old loans? Is it arbitraging between working capital and

term loans (lifting working capital loans to service term loans)? Vijay Pandey, 40, a serial entrepreneur and founder and managing director of BMC, says he has been servicing bank loans selling his

Lenders apprehend he can't do this for long as his business has collapsed. Till July this year, only one bank's exposure to BMC was overdue for over 90 days but less than 179 days; three exposures have become special mention account or SMA 2 where principal or interest payment is overdue for 61-90 days and another, SMA 1 (overdue for 31-60 days). As on September 30, 2018. BMC's total exposure to at least 49 banks, non-banks and financial institutions was ₹238 crore.

Deciphering the credit bureau data equally challenging. There are instances of loans overdue for 200 days and yet the account is treated as standard. BMC has taken small loans from a host of banks and it is more careful about servicing the bigger loans. Do the small loans prevent larger loans from turning bad? In the third week of August, it had 251 live accounts.

The company's audited balance sheet for fiscal year 2018 shows its gross loan assets at ₹269.34 crore, up from ₹184.55 crore the previous year. Its 2019 annual report is not out.

Its website talks about being present in 10 states, covering 50 districts through 100 branches, overseen by 423 employees and serving 1,63,374 borrowers clubbed into 28,612 groups. But all these figures are shrinking drastically as the pile of bad assets is fast burying

Many such microfinance entities have



MISSING IN ACTION A photograph of e-rickshaw inauguration in Varanasi in 2015 from the BMC website. The website proudly displays pictures of the Prime Minister and a few other ministers at different BMC loan melas

gone belly up and their lenders have lost money. Then why waste premium space in a national business daily on this? BMC is unique because of its branding which attracted lenders in hordes, falling over each other to give it money.

A commerce graduate, Pandey started his career as loan officer with Cashpor Micro Credit, another nonprofit microlender, in 2005 at a monthly salary of ₹3,800 and incentives. After 17 months, he joined Sonata Finance Pvt Ltd, a non-bank micro-lender at a higher salary (sans incentive) but left it to set up BMC in 2008 to fulfill his dream of offering livelihood to people at the bottom of the pyramid.

He adopted the classic credit-plus approach — giving loans to the borrowers and teaching them how to use the money for productive purposes. He started financing rickshaw pullers for buving pedal rickshaws under a project in collaboration with the American India Foundation, a non-profit US organisation, and the Small Industries Development Bank of India. Punjab National Bank is one of the earliest lenders to this project.

So far it was an interesting story. It turned different when Pandey shifted focus from cycle rickshaw to battery rickshaw or e-rickshaw. Prime Minister Narendra Modi started appearing at different loan melas organised by Pandey in Lucknow, Varanasi, Noida and a few other places, distributing cycle rickshaws and later e-rickshaws. Such melas assembled those who the government has also been reaching out to for financial inclusion, mass insurance, health and cleanliness under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Stand Up India, and other such programmes.

The loans given to the rickshaw pullers not only covered the cost of their vehicles but also their uniform, registration and training and so on. Fiercely wooed by the banks and non-banks, Pandey later started lending for buying solar charkha, starting at Khanwa village in Bihar, adopted by Giriraj Singh, the cabinet minister of the newly formed ministry of animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries. The company's website https://bmcindia.co/ proudly displays pictures of the Prime Minister and a few other ministers at different BMC loan melas.

It was not only giving loans to the rickshaw pullers but also selling the rickshaws as Pandey found running an assembling unit for such rickshaws can bring down the cost for the borrowers. Wheel Enterprises, which holds 26.77 per cent stake in BMC, was formed for this. His lenders in private allege that BMC was making money both ways - by giving loans as well as selling rickshaws.

While the lenders suspect fund diversion, Pandey says it's a case of business failure While demonetisation hit his business hard, other factors too contributed to the crash. Too many rickshaws clogged the roads and the pullers' daily income halved, denting their ability to pay back. Besides, the battery of many rickshaws went kaput but the maker did not honour the warranty. Thousands of such rickshaws, returned by the borrowers, are now kept in junkyards.

Pandey plans to start afresh using parts of the junked rickshaws to create four different models — for ferrying passengers, carrying loads, running tea stalls and food carts. He has also picked up 1.54 per cent stake in Shikhar Microfinance Pvt Ltd, a company he wants to take over. This way, non-profit BMC will convert itself into a for-profit non-bank and eventually become a small finance bank. He also has another non-bank, Nimisha Finance India Pvt Ltd. under his belt (acquired in 2010) which will be used for giving loans to small enterprises.

The turnaround blueprint is ready and Pandey promises to clear the dues of all. But the lending community is not convinced. Only a forensic audit can answer the questions the lenders have but don't dare to ask.

The columnist, a consulting editor of Business Standard, is an author and senior adviser to Jana Small Finance Bank Ltd. Twitter: @TamalBandvo

Judicial backlogs can become history



SHAILESH GANDHI

veryone agrees that delays in justice delivery give rise to a large try and evaluate how many extra judges would be required to start reducing judicial backlogs. The 20th Law Commission in its report submitted in July 2014 concluded that the rate of disposal per judge per year is the right method for evaluating this. In simple terms it assumes that if 10 judges are disposing 10,000 cases, 12 judges will dispose 12,000 cases. This may not be precise, but it is broadly correct.

I took the data reported by the Law Commission in its report and did an analysis for 2002 to 2012 of 14 states for the subordinate courts it had taken into account. A careful analysis shows that if all sanctioned positions of judges were filled, there would have been no backlog by 2007. This would mean the queue would disappear and it would have been possible to devote adequate time to all cases without having to wait. In most cases it should be possible to dispose cases in less than three-six months. In Australia over 70 per cent of the cases in the magistrate's courts are decided within 13 weeks.

The Law Commission analysis assumed that backlog would be cleared up in three years and did not take the vacant judicial positions into account. Hence it came to the erroneous conclusion that the strength of the judiciary needs to be doubled.

I decided to also take a look at this issue by analysing the data given on the Supreme Court's website for a 12-year period from 2006 to 2017 (both years included) which has a quarterly report for all the courts. This analysis has been done by adopting the same rate of disposal method accepted by the Law Commission. The analysis shows that the number of sanctioned judges is adequate and if all the sanctioned judges were appointed, the mounting pendency and huge delays would be history. The number of judges sanctioned in

the three levels as on 31 December 2017 was 31 for the Supreme Court, 1,079 for the High Courts and 22,704 in the subordinate courts. The actual number of judges appointed was 25, 676 and 17,028 at the three levels. Thus the total number of sanctioned posts were 23,814 whereas the working judges were only 17,729. Filling about 6,000 vacant positions can make the judicial system deliver efficiently.

The increase in pendency in 12 years was about 56 lakh cases whereas the disposal missed due to not filling all sanctioned posts was nearly 661 lakh. The average increase in cases each year is less than 2.5 per cent of the average number of cases instituted each year, whereas the average vacancy is about 21

There can be no excuses for keeping judicial positions vacant while the nation suffers because of this neglect. The retirement date of judges is well known. It would be possible to factor in vacancies due to resignations, promotions and deaths by studying the past data. The increase of sanctioned positions can also be forecast early. Looking at the standard deviation in the disposal per judge each year gives us the assurance that the disposal rates in different

years are reasonably consistent. The number of registered advocates is about 1.3 million and over 60,000 graduates emerge each year from our law schools. The infrastructure would need to be augmented by only about 20 per cent. Even if we assume that there would be a capital cost of setting up courtrooms, this would not exceed ₹4 crore per courthouse which would mean about ₹24,000 crore only. This is a simple solution and can be implemented easily. This does not assume any change in the way judges and lawyers function. It only assumes that the extra judges who fill the vacancies will also dispose matters at the same rate as those who are already in the system. While the sanctioned judicial positions are about 19.1 judges per million, the actual working strength is only 13.9 judges per mil-

Surely it can be ensured that this process is started 12 months early. There should be a similar approach for subordinate judges to ensure the selection process is completed in advance.

For the sake of the nation all those responsible must ensure that all judicial appointments are made in a timely manner. An easy solution is available. This analysis suggests that if a simple process of estimating vacancies and ensuring zero vacancy is followed, the sanctioned strength is adequate to dispose the inflow of cases and some of the backlog. Even if we assume vacancies would be to the tune of 5 per cent, backlogs would go down dramatically.

If the queue of cases does not keep getting longer, most delays would be reduced considerably. If the queue is very small there is not much scope for delays. If a policy decision is taken to ensure zero vacancy in judicial positions, backlogs would become history and the fundamental right to speedy justice would actually be implemented in our courts.

The writer is former Central Information Commissioner. He acknowledges the $contribution \, of Arun \, Joshi \, in \, the \, calculations$ and analysis

LETTERS

Half-baked solution

This refers to "Odd-even set to return in Delhi to tackle pollution between November 4-15" (September 14). It was interesting to learn that the odd-even scheme is making a comeback. Aimed at combating high air pollution, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Keiriwal also proposed a "seven-point action plan" to deal with its menace in the capital.

It is significant to observe that the government's previous two experiments (in January and April 2016) had yielded mixed results, as per data analysis conducted by various government and private agencies. Incidentally, another odd-even scheme (November 13-17, 2017) had to be abandoned as the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned some of the then proposed "exemptions".

Sadly, the CM wishes to continue with his earlier wishlist. Does it really make any difference if a private car is driven either by a lady or a gentleman? Can the city's high pollution level identify the person at the wheel? Will the two-wheelers not add more fuel

to the fire? Why serve half-baked food? One genuinely wishes that the CM lends an ear to the NGT's wellmeaning observations and the exemptions are mandatorily kept to the bare minimum.

S Kumar New Delhi

Why say the obvious?

The report "Finance panel won't accept Centre's GDP forecasts: N K Singh" (September 14) is disturbing. Not on the grounds of content or context, but because of the way in which the chairman of a body like the Finance Commission (FC) has opted to tell us that the FC will "apply its mind before coming to conclusions".

From a layman's perspective, Singh was telling the obvious when he said, "the Commission is duty-



bound under the Constitution to arrive at its own independent judgement. How we intend to exercise that is entirely up to us..." If any external pressure was behind this, the chairman needs to be more specific and transparent. Otherwise, such statements will only contribute to trust deficit among stakeholders. M G Warrier Mumbai

Act now

The death of a young woman techie in Chennai — after an illegal banner erected by an AIADMK functionary on a busy road divider fell on her as she rode her two-wheeler — is truly heart-breaking. It clearly points to the entrenched banner culture perpetuated by many leaders and their

That Tamil Nadu with its impressive standing on the Human

the rule of law.

sycophants without any regard for

Development Index and being the birthplace of the self-respect movements is getting embroiled in such controversies is saddening. The breach of orders of the Madras High Court banning the erection of banners with holes, arches, placards and display boards on public streets and pavements are a cause of greater concern.

Adoption of a zero-tolerance policy against those who erect illegal hoardings and banners, and holding civic authorities accountable for turning a blind eye to such reprehensible and illegal acts, is the need of hour.

M Jeyaram Tamil Nadu

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Volume XXIV Number 23

MUMBAI | MONDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2019

India's export problem

Mere tinkering will not help

he new data from the Union Ministry of Commerce has revealed that India's exports shrank by over 6 per cent in August, a reminder of the long-term slowdown that has plagued exporting sectors. While there is no immediate impact of this structural problem on the stability of India's external balance, since imports have also been dropping, thanks to a demand crunch domestically, there is nevertheless a problem of exports that must be addressed. The decline in exports of engineering goods, which fuelled a minor recovery in the last financial year, is particularly troubling.

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal was right to argue for the centrality of exports in any growth strategy when he pointed out last week at a meeting of the Board of Trade that India needed 19-20 per cent growth in outbound trade if it is to achieve economic growth targets. He also argued that exports worth \$1 trillion in the next five years were "eminently doable", and that there was a huge opportunity for Indian exporters in the otherwise troubling context of the US-China trade war. Even the global slowdown in trade engendered by this tension nevertheless offers a chance for India, with a measly 2 per cent of world trade, to expand into new markets.

While nobody can disagree with the appropriateness of this aim for India's exports, the fact is that it appears detached from the reality of the sector. The shrinkage in August is not an exception; indeed, this is a second time this financial year that exports have shrunk year-on-year. In this context, the measures for export promotion announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a press conference over the weekend take on even greater significance. Ms Sitharaman announced a new scheme of incentives for exporters, to be called Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Products, as a replacement for the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme, which had become controversial at the World Trade Organization. The question is whether minor tinkering genuinely makes Indian exports competitive in the longer run. There are structural problems of red tape and credit availability, which need to be addressed. Ms Sitharaman did indeed take steps in that direction, however. An automated refund of input tax credit (on the goods and services tax) for exporters, which the finance minister mentioned, would help ease the working capital crunch, as would the relaxation by the Reserve Bank of India of priority-sector lending norms to exporters. Both of these have also been in the works for a while, however, so there was little new in the package that Ms Sitharaman announced.

What would really make a difference, however, is global benchmarking of port performance. The finance minister announced that export clearances — including some customs requirements, which are currently processed manually — will be digital. She set a December deadline for this change. The point must not be the use of technology for its own sake, however, but to bring down the turnaround time for both ships and trucks to global standards. Ships are turned around in global ports in half a day; trucks in 30 minutes. This must be the aim, and if it can be achieved in short order, Indian export competitiveness will see a much-needed jump.

Averting desertification

New Delhi Declaration will help land restoration

f the several noteworthy outcomes of the 14th Conference of Parties (COP 14) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the one that stands out is the move towards consolidating multiple programmes to protect the environment, land, and biodiversity. The historic Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit of 1992, aimed broadly at ensuring sustainable development, was instrumental in the signing of three major global conventions on climate change, biodiversity, and desertification, which have been running parallel despite having a strong bearing on each other. This flaw is sought to be rectified by the COP 14 by calling for greater coordination between them to harness their synergies. The underlying objective is to use a land-based route to achieve the goals of the Paris agreement on climate change.

A research-based report brought out ahead of the COP 14 by a UN agency had highlighted the intimate links between global warming, land degradation, and biodiversity loss. While climate change, marked by frequent weather extremes like droughts, intense downpours, and floods, accelerated land spoilage due to soil erosion, the latter, in turn, abetted climate change by curtailing the land's ability to absorb carbon dioxide. The refrain at the COP 14, quite understandably, was that carbon belongs to the soil and should, logically, be reinstated there instead of letting it hang in the atmosphere. This concept, hopefully, would be taken forward by the forthcoming high-profile climate action summit convened by the UN Secretary General in New York on September 23 to review the progress of the Paris agreement.

At present, about a third of the earth's land surface is marred by desertification. About 250 million people, mostly poor and tribals, depend on such land. Restoring even 150 million hectares of such lands could feed 200 million more people every year. More importantly, this could provide greater resilience to the livelihood of small stakeholders by augmenting their income. Besides, it could sequester an additional 2 Giga tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, thus, contributing handsomely to mitigating climate change.

Going by the estimates circulated at the COP 14, every dollar invested in land restoration can yield returns worth \$10 with efficient farm practices and prudent water management. Land amelioration, therefore, offers the cheapest solution to climate change and biodiversity deprivation. Most nations have consequently accepted land degradation neutrality by 2030 as their national targets. India has committed to convert about 5 million hectares of degraded land into fertile soil in the next 10 years. Significantly, India has also vowed to implement all the recommendations of the New Delhi Declaration adopted at the COP 14.

However, land improvement is an innately cost-intensive task which many developing countries can ill-afford without external assistance. Since not much support can be expected for this purpose from the funding mechanisms mooted under the climate agreement, the COP 14 has suggested the involvement of the private sector in this effort. The New Delhi Declaration specifically mentions that land restoration makes business sense if well-advised regulations and incentives are offered to the prospective investors. Thus, the COP 14 has managed to put together a prudent plan of action to arrest desertification and, more importantly, restore degraded lands to good health. Its success would, however, depend on the political will of the leadership in different countries.

ILLUSTRATION BY AJAY MOHANTY



From minding cows to minding algorithms

AJIT BALAKRISHNAN

Handling the transition to the Information Age

oing through a day glancing constantly for messages on your mobile phones, devoutly watching movies on demand on your mobile phone, gleefully buying stuff on online shopping sites... These innocent and fun activities have a larger meaning: The arrival of the Information Age. The arrival of the Information Age is no longer an idle scholarly chatter, we are sliding into it. And doing

that without fully understanding all that is in store for us as individuals or as members of human society. Except that, in India, our transition to the Information Age is going to happen while many other transitions are under way.

For example, for millions of Indians the current transition that they are going through is from running/assisting in running the family farm with meagre returns to a more predictable life with a fixed salary (an "office job"). The action to

take for this transition is to get into a train and head for Bombay (read "nearest city") and even if you have to stay in a "slum" and even if your wife has to clean toilets in some house, the regular monthly salary that you get as a shop assistant in the city, low as it may be, provides some peace. It's a great relief from minding your cows all day long in the hope that someone will pay a decent price for the milk your

cows give you or the wool that your sheep produce. Sometimes, after your third glass of arrack you wonder what your *sarpanch* grandfather would make of this (had he been alive), but that thought quickly fades as the arrack gets you into a happy mood in your Zopadpatti home.

Another large number of Indians, again in the tens of millions, are making the transition from sit-

ting at the counter of the family *kirana* shop in a village, where customer footfall is ever decreasing, to a more financially secure one: Employed in a company as a salesman going from one prospective customer to another, being summarily thrown out by many, succeeding in making a sale occasionally, but happy in the knowledge that when the month-end comes, your fixed salary amount will get credited by your employer to your bank account.

Or move from a life where you father made a living, in your village, by reciting Sanskrit *shlokas* to ever diminishing numbers of fellow villagers to one in a city employed as an accountant in some business, where the pay is just about enough to allow you to remit a few hundred rupees a month to your ageing parents in the village.

While India is right in the middle of these transi-

tions, another set of transitions is creeping up on us. For example, we are in the middle of a transition from a clerk/salesman-dominated middle, class-economy to one where the human role will be to "mind the algorithm", a job not much different from "minding sheep" or "minding cows" or "minding a *kirana* store", while the algorithm "grazes in the data fields", just like cows and sheep graze in fields of grass.

But don't worry. Just as to mind cows you don't need a degree in veterinary science, to mind algorithms you don't need a degree in computer science. And, the reasons you are employed to mind the algorithms are not much different from the reasons why you were employed for minding cows: Somebody vicious may steal your algorithm/cow, your algorithm/cow may wander into somebody else's field/domain, your algorithm/cow may eat forbidden plants/data. The algorithm will decide which prospective customer to pitch what product to, engage in polite charming talk with the prospective customer appearing in its chatbot incarnation, and even closing the sales and collecting the money. No human salesman can match this level of skill, so sales jobs will fade out, but you still need humans to "mind" the algorithms.

Another set of algorithms that will need "minding" are the ones taking over the jobs of millions of Indians, shuffling of paper from an IN-tray to an OUT-tray all day long.

But we have handled such transitions before. After all, it took nearly half a century to move from earning a living from reciting Sanskrit *shlokas* for a living to shuffling papers from an IN-tray to an OUT-tray. Similarly, it took half a century to make the transition from buying and selling *dal-chaval* to buying and selling mutual funds and fixed deposits. How can you make the transition from praising the virtues of the mutual funds/fixed deposits your boss gives you to sell, to minding the algorithms that buy and sell mutual funds?

What education do Indian school children need so that when they finish Class 12 they are adept at one or the other aspect of participating in the world of algorithms: Either of creating algorithms (read "breeding"), or repairing broken algorithms (read "veterinary help"), or to supervise the algorithm at work (read "minding")?

This is the question that worries me this Onam day on my annual one-week visit to my hometown Kannur as I sit by the seashore, which incidentally is about the same spot where Vasco da Gama showed up in 1498. Could anyone sitting in this same spot at that time have imagined that an apparently innocutous event would lead in stages to the Portuguese, then the French, the Dutch, and finally the English landing up here and colonising us for the next few hundred years?

Staring at the waves gently lapping on the rocklined coast of Kannur, this Onam day, I wonder whether we have yet fully understood from the innocent instant messaging, online shopping, and online movie frolic all the challenges that lie ahead as we slide into the Information Age?

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External benchmark: Right step, wrong tool

hat happens when policymakers do the right thing for the wrong reasons? The outcome may turn out to be good owing to sheer luck, but more likely they are setting the stage for some unpleasant, unintended consequences. This is what may happen as the fallout of the September 4 circular of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Beginning October 1 this year banks will have to link the interest rates on such loans to a known external benchmark, instead of using their own opaque internal benchmarks. This is good news for consumers, not because their loans will become cheaper. From now on, banks must allow old borrowers to shift to this system, putting old and new borrowers at par.

For 20 years, the RBI has allowed banks to inflict unfair, opaque, and discriminatory practices on borrowers. Banks know little about new borrowers but charged them less than their existing borrow-

ers, who, by the way, diligently repay loans with interest month after month, and banks knew all about their good behaviour. Allowing both new and old borrowers to have their loans linked to the external benchmark ends this discrimination. But no one is highlighting this.

The reason is that the RBI did not necessarily act to end discrimination and bring about fairness and transparency. It only acted to "improve (the) trans-

mission" of rates, an important political objective of any government. The most popular recipe for economic growth has been cutting interest rates. Every finance minister demands it. Under the floating rate system, when interest rates go up, banks are quick to increase rates, but when interest rates drop, they are reluctant to pass on the decline. It was this that the RBI tried to fix with the circular—and that too under pressure from New Delhi. In doing so, it may end up creating a different mess.

A short history of transmission

The RRI has supported this unf

The RBI has supported this unfair system for almost 20 years. We had the prime lending rate (PLR) in 1994 and the benchmark PLR in April 2003, neither of which produced "adequate monetary transmission. This defeated the very purpose for which these benchmarks were introduced", found the RBI. Even when it knew that banks were manipulating unworkable internal benchmarks, seven years later, the RBI again made a half-hearted attempt to introduce another internal benchmark, the "base rate". Expectedly, this too failed to ensure transmission.

In 2016, there was one more experiment — the marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR). The idea was that the transmission of the effects of rate changes to borrowers would be swift because marginal rates of deposits would move up and down in line with the RBI reporate. But the MCLR

too was an internal benchmark and hence there was no transmission. Moneylife Foundation last year filed a PIL (public interest litigation) petition in the Supreme Court to end the discrimination. The court directed the RBI to respond. On December 5, under Urjit Patel, the RBI finally announced an external benchmark — 20 years late. Mr Patel left soon after and the new governor quickly junked this move. It was business as usual for banks.

Unfortunately for banks, economic growth has tanked and the government is desperately looking for ways to fix things. While politicians and businessmen don't see eye to eye on anything during a slowdown, the one thing they all agree on is that cutting interest rates would spur growth. The inflation rate is now low and the RBI is cutting rates, but there is still no transmission. The reason for this is obvious, something that the RBI had refused to implement for two decades: Introducing an external benchmark.

While previous finance ministers huffed and puffed about banks' resistance and did nothing, this government is made of sterner stuff. They cut the Gordian knot and ordered banks to use an external benchmark.

Unintended consequencesWhile the move is good for consumers, will it lead

to some other mess? First, is the reporate the right benchmark? Many floating-rate loans, like home loans, are for 15 years. These loans should be linked to a long-term external benchmark rate, which the RBI should have developed first. Banks argue that the RBI shouldn't be forcing them to link long term loans to a highly volatile short-term benchmark like the repo rate. Banks have been allowed to change their rates once a quarter. Second, banks have been claiming that since the liability side is not floating, they do not have the flexibility for transmission. To protect themselves, banks have immediately started linking savings account rates to the external benchmark. This will, in turn, confuse and drive away savers from banks. The third messy aspect is that external benchmarks are applicable only to banks and not to finance companies. But they have a large market share and anyway charge more than banks.

The right course of action would have been to address all these issues systematically. The RBI had more than a decade to think through the problem. But it couldn't care less. The ministry ranted about transmission after every rate cut but didn't ask for a thoughtful solution. And banks were happy to manipulate their internal benchmarks to fleece borrowers. So when the government cracked down on poor transmission this time, the RBI quickly took the path of least resistance. Banks and the RBI will now have to deal with more serious consequences as highlighted above, but then they have brought this upon themselves.

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

Snowden, on the record



JENNIFER SZALAI

Revealing state secrets is hard, but revealing yourself in a memoir might be harder. As Edward Snowden puts it in the preface of Permanent Record: "The decision to come forward with evidence of government wrongdoing was easier for me to make than the decision, here, to give an account of my life."

Mr Snowden, of course, is the former intelligence contractor who, in 2013, leaked documents about the United States government's surveillance programmes, dispelling any notions that the National Security Agency (NSA) and its allies were

playing a quaint game of spy vs. spy, limiting their dragnet to specific persons of interest. Technological change and the calamity of 9/11 yielded new tools for mass surveillance and the incentive to use them.

For revealing these secret programs and more, Mr Snowden was deemed a traitor by the Obama administration, which charged him with violating the Espionage Act and revoked his passport, effectively stranding Mr Snowden in Moscow, where he has been living ever since.

Permanent Record is a riveting account and a curious artefact. The book is unlikely to change anyone's mind about Mr Snowden, but when it comes to privacy and speech and the Constitution, his story clarifies the stakes. For someone who worked in the intelligence community, the very idea of an autobiography feels uncomfortable. "It's hard to have spent so much of my life trying to avoid identification," he writes, "only to turn around completely and share 'personal disclosures' in a book."

Notice the scare quotes; Mr Snowden

is instinctively careful about entering anything about himself into the permanent record of *Permanent Record*. The man who emerges from such "personal disclosures" seems consequently guarded and meticulous — ideal traits for a spy or a whistle-blower.

Born in 1983 in North Carolina, Mr Snowden comes from a family whose service includes the FBI (his grandfather), the Coast Guard (his father), the NSA (his mother) and the Army (himself). He remembers the first thing he ever hacked was bedtime, changing all the clocks in the house so that he could stay up later on his sixth birthday. As a teenager, Mr Snowden learned how to hack school, examining the class syllabus to figure out how he could exploit its weaknesses; the goal was to do the least amount of work without flunking out.

School was at best a distraction, he says, and at worst "an illegitimate system" that "wouldn't recognize any legitimate dissent." He preferred to spend time on "something new called the internet," a "goddamned miracle" that was still distinctly human and profoundly weird, before monetisation and surveillance set in.

Galvanized by 9/11, Mr Snowden even-

tually turned his technical know-how into a career in intelligence, obtaining a top-secret classification at the age of 22 and bouncing around between different contractors before becoming disillusioned at some point during the Obama presidency. "I fully supported defensive and targeted surveillance," Mr Snowden writes, but as a young systems administrator he was learning that the government was pursuing "bulk collection" — indiscriminately vacuuming up data from Americans' internet communications and storing it for possible later use.

IRRATIONAL CHOICE

DEBASHIS BASU

Mr Snowden says he was affronted by the rank hypocrisy of it all. Here was President Obama, who had run for office as a critic of the Bush administration's extraordinary invocations of executive power, not just continuing his predecessor's surveillance programs but entrenching them.

The second half of *Permanent Record* reads like a literary thriller, as Mr Snowden breaks down how he ended up in a Hong Kong hotel room in the summer of 2013, turning over a trove of classified documents to Glenn Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill of *The Guardian*, Barton Gellman of *The Washington Post*

and the filmmaker Laura Poitras.

Julian Assange wanted Mr Snowden to release the information through WikiLeaks, but the site's "total transparency," Mr Snowden says, wouldn't allow for proper authentication and curation of such incendiary material. Mr Snowden emphasises that the distinction was important to him — not that the government would see it that way. "Whereas other spies have committed espionage, sedition and treason," he writes, "I would be aiding and abetting an act of iournalism."

an act of journalism."

Permanent Record weaves together personal intel and spycraft info, much of it technologically elaborate yet clearly explained. You'll also learn that even in our fragmented era, the tools of mass surveillance have revealed one thing that seems to connect almost everyone who's online: porn. "This was true for virtually everyone of every gender, ethnicity, race and age," Mr Snowden writes, "from the meanest terrorist to the nicest senior citizen, who might be the meanest terrorist's grandparent, or parent, or cousin."

This is funny, but it's ominous, too.
Without belaboring his points, Snowden pushes the reader to reflect more seri-

ously on what every American should be asking already. What does it mean to have the data of our lives collected and stored on file, ready to be accessed — not just now, by whatever administration happens to be in office at the moment, but potentially forever? When can concerns about "national security" slip into bids for unchecked power?

Mr Snowden doesn't reveal too much about his life in exile. He and Lindsay have since married, renting a two-bedroom apartment in Moscow, where he beams out his image through a screen-on-wheels, nicknamed the "Snowbot," giving talks about privacy to audiences around the world. He says he takes care to avoid being recognised in public — "but nowadays everybody's too busy staring at their phones to give me a second glance."

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PERMANENT RECORD

Edward Snowden Macmillan 339 pages; ₹699





DEAL OR NO DEALPresident of the US, Donald Trump

I see a lot of analysts are saying an interim deal, meaning we'll do pieces of it, the easy ones first. But there's no easy or hard. There's a deal or there's not a deal

RationalExpectations



Vaping is bad, but bidis/gutka worse

Govt right to worry about e-cigarettes, but even now, it is focussing on the wrong thing; gutka/bidis are the real worry

HE JURY IS still out on whether the likely ban on e-cigarettes in India is a good idea; while a committee of experts had asked for this a few years ago, a Group of Ministers (GoM) has reportedly endorsed this, and a Cabinet nod is now required. Adding colour, but little else, to the debate over the pros and cons of vaping is the fact that some of those making the case for it are former WHO officials, who, for decades, swore that Big Tobacco was evil incarnate; their argument now is that technology has changed everything, and that vaping offers tobacco's kick with a lot less risk.

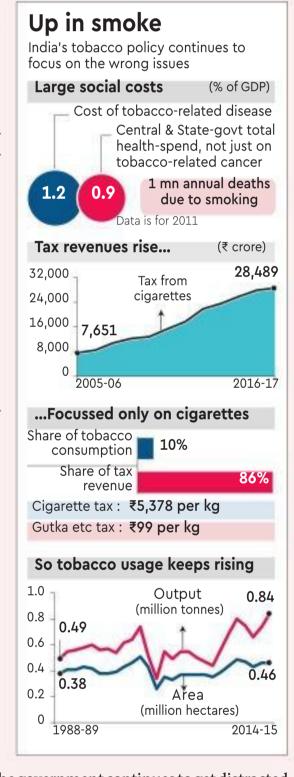
The pro-vaping lobby, interestingly, is under attack in the US for a 38% rise in the number of kids vaping (bloom.bg/2md3zIO), but argues that, since e-cigarettes extract the nicotine from tobacco, they are a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes in much the same way that tobacco patches and nicotine gums are; it is the other carcinogens, and the tar from burning the tobacco, they argue, that is the killer. Interestingly, both FDA and CDC are investigating 450 possible lung illnesses—and six deaths—resulting from vaping.

Those opposing vaping, however, argue this is a partial view since nicotine is also carcinogenic; so, while many of the other 28 carcinogens in tobacco don't find their way into

e-cigarettes, even a few are enough for them to be a health hazard. As for the argument that US studies show those who vape are twice as likely to quit smoking, some oncologists point out that the tests give just 2mg/day of nicotine to users, and with behavioural intervention; while the proportion of those quitting smoking doubled to 20%, e-cigarettes present a new kind of threat. For one, each cartridge has 10mg of nicotine, which is around a third of the minimum lethal dosage; presumably CDC-FDA will also shed more light on this aspect of vaping.

Also, with vaping marketed as a cool, and less-carcinogenic solution, as the US example shows, it can attract millions of non-smokers; and vaping hasn't been around long enough to get definitive studies on whether it is less carcinogenic. If a large number of new users get addicted to it, even if it is 'less' carcinogenic than smoking, this could be an even greater health hazard. Nor is it clear what 'less' really means; if one unit of a substance A (which is a carcinogen) is enough to cause damage, how is this safer than a formulation that has five units of A?

While it is presumed the GoM looked at both sides of the argument, since vaping is relatively new, it is unlikely there will be enough evidence—relative to that on conventional smoking—on either its pros or cons. Nor is it immediately clear that banning is going to help; more so, since the more harmful product, the conventional cigarette, can be sold freely. A better step would be to treat it—till there is clinching evidence to the contrary—like conventional cigarettes, and put restrictions on its sales near schools, ban ads, put statutory warnings on labels, ban its use in public places, etc.



The more serious problem, though, is that the government continues to get distracted by non-issues. Given what e-cigarettes cost, is this really the biggest health issue connected with tobacco usage in India? While only a very small proportion of smokers in India are likely to switch to e-cigarettes—unless there is a sharp cut in their prices—even now, India's anti-tobacco policy is solely focused on raising taxes on cigarettes to discourage their use. So, 80-85% of tobacco taxes are got from cigarettes—from ₹7,651 crore in FY06, cigarette taxes rose to ₹28,489 crore in FY17—whereas just 8-9% of all tobacco consumption is made via the cigarette route; this was around 21% in 1981-82. Indeed, according to the Tobacco Institute of India—a body of farmers, manufacturers, exporters, and ancillaries of the cigarettes' segment of the tobacco industry—cigarette duties are roughly 55 times those on other tobacco products, like *bidis* and *gutka*—₹5,478 per kg versus ₹99 per kg.

While it can be argued that *bidis* and *gutka* are used, primarily, by poor people, if the government thinks higher taxes on cigarettes will dissuade usage, surely the same strategy should be used for these products also? After all, while disease and death due to tobacco usage will hit all families equally, the economic impact will certainly be the highest for the poor. Interestingly, just around a fifth of the tobacco-related disease/death can be attributed to cigarettes, the rest is due to *bidis* and *gutka*. So, if the Cabinet does ban vaping, it will be celebrated as a big victory by the anti-tobacco groups, but it is really a distraction for a country like India, where the problem lies elsewhere. This ineffective policy is the reason why, despite continuous hiking of cigarette taxes, both the acreage as well as output of tobacco continue to rise instead of falling over time.

LowCREDIT

ADB report shows a global trade finance gap of \$1.5 trillion, with women entrepreneurs bearing the brunt

HE SIXTH EDITION of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) Trade Finance Gap, Growth, and Job Survey report shows a global trade finance gap of \$1.5 trillion. It stated that this gap is a roadblock to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those pertaining to gender equality(SDG 5), and economic growth (SDG 8). Covering 336 firms from 68 countries, 112 banks from 47 countries, and 53 export agencies from 17 countries, the study finds that the large market gap in trade finance affects women entrepreneurs more than men. Women entrepreneurs' applications for trade finance saw a higher rejection— 44% vs 38% for men. Further, 60% of women-owned firms were found to be less likely to apply for alternative financial support for trade after these rejections.

The lack of access to sufficient financing also impacted small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs)—45% of SMEs applications were rejected as compared to 17% of MNC applications. Around 76% of the banks surveyed stated that regulations, such as anti-money laundering (AML) and know-your-customer (KYC), have acted as major hurdles. The regulations do protect the global financial system from money laundering, and combat terrorism funding, but, as the report highlights, they inadvertently affect the growth of firms in lesser developed nations. To tackle this gap, the report suggests deployment of technologies like Big Data analysis, and blockchain, which most banks and enterprises do not adopt due to high costs, and the absence of a global standard for digital finance. Hence, ADB recommends adoption of common rules for e-commerce and digitised trade. Also, a digital code for legal entities looking to engage in financial and commercial transactions can be used. Access to trade finance needs to improve for women and SMEs if SDGs are to be met, and economic growth fostered.

FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

GOVT MUST MAKE SCIENTIFIC CONCLUSIONS ABOUT ZERO-BUDGET NATURAL FARMING. AS PER INFORMATION AVAILABLE, ZBNF COULD CAUSE YIELDS OF MAJOR CROPS TO DROP BY 30-50%

Fertiliser reforms key, not ZBNF

HE NARENDRA MODI government completed the first 100 days of its second term (Modi 2.0) last week. Most Cabinet ministers showcased what new and bold things they have done in their respective ministries. Media headlines, however, were filled with either the abrogation of Article 370, and its fall out, or the biggest ever slump in auto sales in the last two decades, or the slowing down of GDP growth to 5%. I was searching for any bold moves in agriculture as it affects the largest number of people. Frankly, I didn't find one. Surely, some tweaks in alreadyannounced schemes, or some new ideas were thrown in, but without much backing of science, or resources. Let me pick a few of them for deeper dive.

PM-Kisan, promising ₹6,000/year to each farm family, was announced before the Parliamentary elections. In the 100 days of Modi 2.0, it was extended to all farming families. The 2019-20 Union budget has provisioned ₹75,000 crore for this. This is the first step towards direct cash (income) transfer to farmers' accounts. As I have argued earlier in this newspaper, this will be meaningful if other subsidies, such as those on food and fertiliser, power, irrigation, agri-credit, etc, are also clubbed with this and given directly to farmers, and then allowing the prices to be set by market forces. Else, it may be at the cost of investments in agriculture, which have already fallen from a peak of 18.2% of agri-GDP in 2011-12 to 13.7% in 2017-18. With such a fall in investments, the dream of doubling farmers' incomes by 2022 cannot be fulfilled.

But, here, I want to focus on something new and interesting that the prime minister talked of in his Independence Day speech, and later repeated in his address to the UN 14th Conference of Parties (COP14), in Greater Noida. The PM's key message was to reduce consumption of chemi-



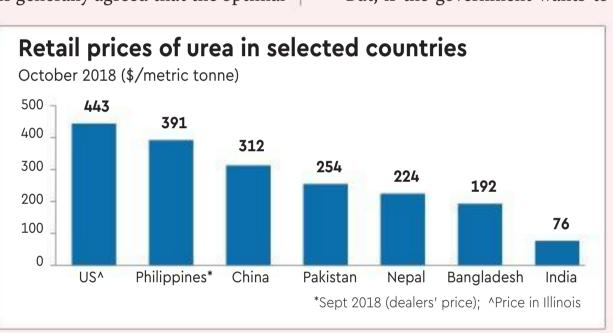
cal fertilisers, and promote what is called Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF). The ZBNF, fathered by Subhash Palekar, uses dung from desi black cows, their urine, adds jaggery and pulses flour in certain proportions, and uses that as *jeevamrit* to augment microbial activity in the soil. This is supposed to make our soils healthier, and augment productivity in a sustainable manner. Incidentally, ZBNF was also mentioned as the future of Indian agriculture by Nirmala Sitharaman in her maiden budget speech.

At the very outset, let me say that I am a supporter of adding any organic matter, be it dung, or farm yard manure (FYM), that can improve carbon in our soils. It is well-known that chemical fertilisers have not been used very rationally by our farmers. Although the optimal ratio of using nitrogen (N), phosphate (P), and potash (K), differs from plot to plot, at an all-India level, it is generally agreed that the optimal

combination of N, P, and K should be in the ratio of 4:2:1. In 2009-10, this NPK ratio was 4.3:2:1, quite close to the desired level. But, in 2010, the policy of Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) was introduced, whereby prices of P and K were almost freed, with some fixed subsidy on per tonne basis, but N (urea) was excluded from this scheme. As a result, while DAP and MOP carry a subsidy of about 25-30% of their costs of production, urea has a subsidy of more than 75% on its cost of production. Indian urea prices are perhaps the lowest in the world, and certainly lowest amongst major countries (see graphic).

No wonder, there is overuse of urea in relation to DAP and MOP. Normally, whenever chemical fertilisers are used, it is recommended to also use a good dosage of farm yard manure (FYM). So, FYM or *jeevamrit*-type stuff is conceived as a supplement to, not as a substitute of, chemical fertilisers.

But, if the government wants to



replace chemical fertilisers—the PM said in his "Mann ki Baat" of November 26,2017, that he would like to halve fertiliser consumption by 2022—then it raises serious questions. First, has the scientific body of the government, the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), studied the possible impact of ZBNF on yields of major crops, like wheat and rice, in comparison to chemical fertiliser-based farming? It needs to do large-scale testing in different regions to see the nationwide implications of ZBNF on overall production of major crops. I understand this has not been done yet, and the limited information available suggests a drop in yields from 30-50%! If so, it can puncture a big hole in India's food security basket. Do we want to go back to the 'ship-to-mouth' situation of the mid-1960s?

Second, if the PM wants to cut fertiliser consumption by half by 2022 why is the government investing in new urea plants under public sector— Gorakhpur (UP), Barauni (Bihar), Ramagundam (AP), Sindri (Jharkahnd) and Talcher (Odisha)—of 1.27 million tonnes each. Together, this amounts to 6.35 million tonnes, the production cost of which, is likely to be above \$400/tonne. One wonders whether there is any coordination between what the PM speaks, and what his government is doing? It seems a typical case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing.

My humble submission is that the fertiliser subsidy, which is budgeted at ₹80,000 crores for the 2019-20 budget, be given directly to farmers on a per hectare basis, and let them decide whether they want to opt for ZBNF, or chemical fertiliser based farming. The fertiliser prices, then, will be marketdetermined, ensuring their efficient usage, and stopping their diversion to non-agri uses as well as to neighbouring countries. It will be a win-win situation. Can the Modi government do it in the next 100 days?

Vikram and vikaas

We are marching in a fog. The distant future is known perfectly accurately; \$5 trillion economy by 2024, but that is because we set it

MEGHNAD DESA





I WAS IN Mumbai, the week of Chandrayaan-2. Mumbai is in doldrums. There is gloom, and doom and despair about Sensex and Nifty tanking. The Budget is blamed for the trouble, and the subsequent corrections are only grudgingly acknowledged. People are asking whether the India story is over. Is this a cycle or a trend?

In the Chandrayaan space mission, the path, from the Earth to the vicinity of the moon, can be, and was, known accurately. Only in the last stage did the random element become dominating. Vikram was released, but its short course, from the vehicle to the ground, was frustrated. Modi took the attitude that this was a slip, not a failure.

A puzzle remains. People have been signalling the faltering course of the economy since the new government was installed. The Budget was based on the idea that the economy was on the correct course despite some growth estimates tending downward. The most recent estimate, for the first quarter of the financial year, indicates further decline. The course of the vehicle to the moon is measured with extreme accuracy. Economic data are subject to large measurement errors. So, 5% is really somewhere between 4% and 6%. Those who fancy they are driving the economy have fuzzy, steamed-up front-view, but even their rear-view mirror is hazy. We don't know where we are going, nor where we have come from. We are marching in a fog. The distant future is known perfectly accurately; \$5 trillion economy by 2024, but that is because we set it.

There is a problem of too much, too frequent information, which distorts judgement. Thus, because stock prices are published not just daily, but minute by minute, people believe they convey some information about the economy. But, we know that stock market

prices take a random walk from day-today, i.e., there is no information content in their daily movements. It is only the weekly, or monthly, average which yields information.

There is a similar story about GDP growth rates. What we get, are quarterly growth rates annualised. Each quarter's growth rate leads to speculation about the trend of the economy. But, if you plot them, you see that there is a lot of intra-year volatility, which gets averaged out when you compute the annual growth rate. The growth rate of

2018-19, it was 6.8%; given the margins of error, this means no change. But, look at quarterly growth rates, and you see the loop of an umbrella. From 6% in the first quarter of FY18, up to 8.1% by the fourth quarter of FY18. From then on, downward to 5.8% by the fourth quarter of FY19. Now, 5% for the first quarter of FY20. Is this no vikaas, as Rahul Gandhi says?

Take a four quarter moving average to find the direction of the economy. We get, from Q4FY18 onwards, 6.9%, 7.7%, 7.7%, 7.1%, 6.35%. So, there is a cycle, from the first to the last average, of 6.9% to 6.35%. This is not no *vikaas*. The question to ask is: Where will the economy go next?

It is quite clear that consumer expenditure on durable goods has declined, as indicated by bank loans data. This, in turn, may be either due to difficulties in the bank and non-bank credit market, both of which have become non-functional compared to the past. Consumers may also be saving more. It may also be that the job market is changing, and many more are in the gig economy. They are selfemployed, rather than employed. Banks may not regard them as safe prospects to give loan to, whatever their incomes. Banks need to modernise.

The government has made several payments to farmers, and many other claimants, but, obviously, its budgetary constraint is tight. The finance ministry has announced a new working group on infrastructure projects, with a budget of ₹100 trillion (\$1.4 trillion). Is this enough?

India is waiting for the prime min-

ister to say where he thinks the economy is heading. No one else inspires the It is a great same confidence in the opportunity for people, on any issue of national importance, as he India to launch a does. On the same day as 100-year bond, the loss of Vikram, the PM maturing in 2119, of launched three new metro lines in Mumbai, remindup to \$2 trillion. ing people of how much **India remains** infrastructure has already attractive been improved. But, while internationally this is welcome, it was the end of an investment. What about the future?

The Budget did announce the intention of the government to borrow abroad. Bond yields are low, if not negative, across the developed countries' markets. It is a great opportunity for India to launch a 100-year bond, maturing in 2119, of up to \$2 trillion. India remains attractive internationally. Whatever the debt-to-GDP ratio, the ratio of the debt-servicing cost to GDP will remain manageable. India could reduce the hedging cost for the investor by guaranteeing the return in terms of gold equivalent, a sort of indexing. That will invite a flood of money from sovereign wealth funds and pension funds.

India should not hesitate.

PoK must be wrested

LETTERS TO

THE EDITOR

General Bipin Rawat has expressed the army's eagerness to rush across the Line of Control to take Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Union defence minister Rajnath Singh has endorsed Rawat's views. Rajnath Singh has made it clear to Pakistan that India is willing for dialogue, provided support to terrorism is stopped, and the backbone of terrorism is broken. He has gone a step further, saying that dialogue, with respect to Kashmir, is only about PoK. The Modi government has shown exemplary courage in the abrogation of Article 370, which enjoined special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and also Article 35A that conferred rights to Kashmiris to purchase property in any part of India while denying the same right to people from other parts of India to purchase property in J&K. Time is ripe for Pakistan to realise that it has taken away a portion of Kashmir illegally. Kashmir is not complete until the illegallyheld part of Kashmir is joined with its Indian part.

— KV Seetharamaiah, Hassan

ED action

The marathon grilling of arrested Congress MLA and former minister DK Shivakumar and his daughter, Ms Aishwarya, suggests that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is leaving nothing to chance. Shivakumar was arrested by the ED on September 3 in a money laundering case, and the IT department had also seized unaccounted money, worth around ₹8.59 crore, from him. The ED has also reportedly unravelled questionable transactions in Aishwarya's name. With the ED bent on further quizzing the fatherdaughter duo, and the other accused in the hawala transactions already identified, the odds are stacked against the accused. — NJ Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS







GST rate cut for growth is a myth

The bigger challenge today is the slump in demand, and not high GST rates. GST is a just a component of the entire consideration that is paid by the end-consumer

S IS KNOWN BY NOW, the goods and services tax (GST) is a destination-based consumption tax that is levied throughout the value chain, and the incidence of which is borne ultimately by the end-consumer—who cannot claim any input tax credit of the GST

paid on the final consumption. Hence, the lower the GST rate, the lower the incidence of the tax, and the lower the price paid by the final consumer for a particular commodity or service.

Of late, there has been an increasing clamour to reduce GST rates on various products—such as automobiles and

exempting it, as "zero" tax is payable upon supply of such a commodity or service in both the cases. However, the biggest plus point of zero rating over exempting is that the constituents in the value chain such as manufacturers and traders—can claim full input tax credits, resulting into lowering of price for the final consumer. The tax-cascading effect is completely nullified, making the product less costly.

The exemption granted to products works counterproductive for the Make in India initiative of the government, as businesses tend to import and sell rather than manufacture and sell. This, definitely, can't be the desired outcome. Time is opportune for the government to look at the zero-rating option for certain products and services for domestic consumption. We already have zero rating for export supplies, which can be extended to a select category of goods and services.

For the economy to come back to the higher growth trajectory again, consumption of goods and services in India has to increase. The solution, perhaps, lies somewhere else—away from GST rates.

● One, the quantum of export of goods has to grow substantially so as to generate revenue for Indian companies and increasing the employment rate, thereby increasing spending by Indians.

Two, the Make in India initiative has to gather speed, and new investments, both domestic and foreign, need to be increased by further easing the norms for doing business in India.

▶ Three, India needs to take quick steps to take full advantage of the ongoing trade war between China and the US, by grabbing opportunities to supply goods to both the countries as they are

Rather than totally

exempting any

goods or services

from the GST, it is

prudent to either

categorise them in

the lower bracket

or 'zero rate' them

huge markets to be serviced.

▶ Four, the tax and regulatory environment in the country has to be certain for businesses operating in an honest and diligent manner. Easy compliance mechanism and hassle-free working of the government's IT mechanism can make all the difference.

▶ Five, the liquidity crisis haunting Indian businesses has to be addressed more aggressively than ever before. Reducing

interest rates on lending is the right step in this direction, and banks need to quickly percolate that down to end-consumers.

The agility and responsiveness shown by the government to tackle the economic slowdown is commendable, and it will take a certain period of time to see the positive results. In the interim, businesses should continue to focus on what they do the best—i.e. providing quality goods and services to consumers. The effects of earth-shattering reforms such as demonetisation and the implementation of the GST, to name a few, would last for a longer period of time and, hopefully, the end-result would prove to be good for the economy in the longer run. Patience and perseverance are the two main attitudes to stay afloat in these hard times,

which shall also pass.

ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD cement, among others—to give a boost to the economy and getting back to the higher GDP growth track. While the GST rate cut certainly reduces the final price in the hands of the end-consumer and does increase the probability of higher sales, it does not guarantee the same—in

The bigger challenge today is the slump in demand, and not high GST rates. GST is a just a component of the entire consideration that is paid by the end-consumer. Let me give an example to illustrate the point. Let's assume that the price of a particular product is ₹100, and the current GST rate that the said product attracts is 28%. Reducing the GST rate to 18% will bring down the price by approximately ₹10, but what about the ability of the buyer to pay the balance ₹82? Unless the govern-

ment addresses this issue, reducing the GST rate alone won't serve the desired purpose.

In addition, with the GST collection targets difficult to be met this fiscal, any further reduction in GST rates would push the economy towards a larger fiscal deficit, which the government has been successful in containing to a large extent.

Post the implementation of the GST in July 2017, the government has proactively reduced GST rates on umpteen numbers of goods and services, which eventually have reduced the prices of these goods and services for the end-consumer. In addition, the government has announced exemptions for certain goods and services, which has also reduced the prices, but marginally, as the tax paid on inputs, input services and capital goods used in the manufacturing of such exempted goods or provision of such exempted services becomes a cost, which ultimately has to be borne by the endconsumer. Rather than totally exempting any goods or services from the GST, it is prudent to either categorise them in the lower bracket or "zero rate" them. Zero rating of a commodity or a service results in the same mathematical conclusion as APPRENTICES

The journey from 5 lakh to 50 lakh



The author is vice-president, TeamLease Skills University



Not just labour reforms, ease of doing apprenticeship is critical to improve the employment landscape

> **HE GOVERNMENT HAS** passed the Bill to merge 13 central labour laws into a single code. While the government has been working on improving 'compliance' and 'infrastructure', but on the 'employability' front it's still work in progress.

The government is making efforts to consolidate 44 labour laws into five labour codes around wages, social security, industrial safety and welfare, and industrial relations. GST was a big reform in the taxation system to simplify and facilitate business. Apprenticeship ecosystem, too, needs to be simplified; it needs to connect the dots to scale apprentices in the country. 'People', an important part of development, is still work in progress. There is a skill deficit of 12.5 crore people—only 40% employers are able to fulfil their talent needs. Yet only 4% of labour force has been developed through structured training; apprentices account for 0.1% in Indian labour force. These figures reflect lack of participation of employers, academia and youth. Apprenticeship is the best way to skill people as it entails work-based learning.

Only about 50,000 employers engage with apprenticeships, against 7.1 crore enterprises in India. In its previous tenure, the government aimed to reach 50 lakh apprentices in 5 years, for which it amended the Apprentices Act and made it conducive for employers to engage apprentices. But the mark didn't cross 5 lakh. There are three reasons for this: lack of awareness and understanding of the regulatory system, confusion amongst employers with respect to jurisdiction of multiple schemes, and the disconnect between training and higher education. While the Apprentices Act, 1961, gets executed by the MSDE and by MHRD, there are also departments like the Board of Apprenticeship Training and the Regional Directorate of Apprenticeship Training that look into apprenticeship. Further, every state has a skill mission that mostly resides with the ministry of labour. Also, there are schemes like the National Employability Enhancement Scheme (NEEM) that are recognised by the government but are not part of the Apprentices Act. All of this leaves employers with a lack of clarity. Apart from a conducive regulatory framework, improving the apprenticeship landscape needs simplification of system and an integrated approach.

▶ Consolidation of employability schemes under the Act: There are about 3 lakh trainees who are receiving training through various work-based learning programmes. While they conform to the purpose of apprenticeship, they are not recognised under the Act. If all these programmes get acknowledged under the Act, it will eliminate confusion amongst employers and can drive better adoption.

PPP for for achieving scale with governance: The NEEM, under MHRD, is an excellent example that has a third-party involved in execution and management, especially governance. That's the reason it has scaled up to 3 lakh trainees in a span of 5 years. Although third-party aggregator (TPA) rules have been laid out under the Act, they restrict the role of the private partner to a training partner instead of end-to-end execution of apprenticeship programmes. Empowering the TPA and granting authority for end-to-end execution of apprenticeship—from registration process to designing curriculum along with employer, execution of training, monitoring the progress and certification through a private training partner—will be convenient for employers. The government can ensure governance by defining clear-cut guidelines and making TPA accountable.

▶ Integrating apprenticeships with higher education: Degree apprenticeships are gaining popularity in Europe as these offer qualification and build capabilities. Apprenticeships in India need close engagement between academia and employers. The Department of Higher Education should link degree with apprenticeships. As digital learning is gaining momentum, classroom learning under apprenticeship should be allowed through online/digital platforms. This will make apprenticeships the preferred choice of the youth.

Developed economies have a 3-4% participation of apprentices in the labour market. We need a lot of ground to achieve that scale. While India has a well-regulated apprenticeship system, the new government needs to add these catalysts to scale apprenticeships.

Blue planet: Another tick in the box for habitability

K2-18b is the first planet beyond the solar system confirmed to have water

Since ITS DISCOVERY in 2015, the exoplanet K2-18b has elicited much excitement. Swirling around a red-dwarf star about 110 light-years away from Earth, the distant world sits in a so-called Goldilocks zone-not close enough to its host star to be too hot and not far enough away to be too cold—that could allow liquid water to flow across its surface. That is a crucial condition for life.

Now astronomers have cranked up the speculation. Follow-up images taken by the Hubble Space Telescope suggest K2-18b has an atmosphere containing large amounts of water vapour—the first exoplanet in a habitable zone to have this confirmed. Most exoplanets previously found with atmospheres have been gas giants, similar to Neptune or Jupiter. K2-18b instead looks like it could be a rocky planet twice as big as Earth, perhaps covered in vast ice-covered seas.

To make the discovery of atmospheric water, Angelos Tsiaras, an astronomer at University College London, and his colleagues looked at how light filtered

through the atmosphere of K2-18b as it passed in front of its star between 2015 and 2017. This spectroscopic technique is a way to analyse the atmospheric composition of exoplanets, based on which wavelengths of light make it through and which are blocked. But it is difficult—especially for the relatively small and cold rocky worlds that could hold the conditions for life

In Nature Astronomy, Dr Tsiaras describes how his team wrote software that could analyse the data collected by Hubble to try to do the same job—up to a point. They were not able to pinpoint the exact form and amounts of the water they found. Instead they used computer models to simulate the most likely scenarios, and concluded that as much as half of the atmosphere of K2-18b could be water vapour. They also found evidence of large amounts of hydrogen and helium gas.

This is just the start of such study of planets beyond our solar system. Astronomers plan to launch two new orbiting telescopes in the next decade the US's James Webb Space Telescope and the European ARIEL survey—that will be powerful enough to peer into the atmospheres of exoplanets more closely. Powerful enough, perhaps, to detect telltale molecular signatures of life.

THE ECONOMIST

HE TRIPLE HELIX model of innovation refers to constant interactions between academia, industry and governments to foster economic and social development. The model emphasises on boosting innovation for development. It describes the role of a university to join hands with industry and government. It explains social formats for production, transfer and application of knowledge. Triple helix covers creative destruction a concept coined by Joseph Schumpeter in 1942—i.e. new innovations killing older ones. Innovation arises within each of the three spheres—university, industry and government. Creative destruction cannot be avoided when we embrace innovation. In an economic sense, creativity can produce some destructive consequences.

Triple helix was developed in the 1990s by Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff. The best example of triple helix is the Silicon Valley. The government provided land, flexible financing, stretched tax holidays and fitting guidelines to the IT cluster in California. Small and big IT businesses thrived in this cluster. The world has seen success stories of Dell, HP, Oracle, Intel, Microsoft, etc. The very needs of the industry, powered by the created market, generate the need for the academia, which, in this case, comprises of ICT professionals who are given all facilities to do R&D and new product development. Government, industry and academia all profit as taxes are collected on sales of goods, revenue is generated and knowledge is developed inside a suitable research environment.

The Silicon Valley has given rise to con-

press.com

Triple helix model of innovation

The government must help develop a scientific research culture in Indian universities

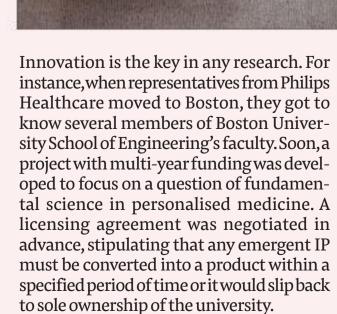


sumerism. Multiple producers of IT goods and services shield consumers from hopeless, inferior products, and ambiguous advertisements. Also, unfair pricing does not work because of intense competition. The ever-expanding consumption of IT goods and services is beneficial to the economy. The third benefit is increased consumption of computers and application software has made the world electronic savvy, and this has reduced the dependence on paper.

Many research scholars registered for PhD in universities can do wonders if only government and industry take interest in them. Government and industry can seed early-stage researches that are useful for business and societies. Progressive organisations increasingly seed it in areas of

interest to them. They work closely with the progress of the PhD by funding or cofunding. Difficult scientific problems or new areas of technology are of interest to companies. Their scientists or engineers co-mentor researchers and their guides. If something promising emerges, companies pour more funds either directly or via a collaborative proposal through a government agency. For example, the Harvard Medical School is partnered with Schlumberger, Philips Healthcare and US National Institutes of Health. At Harvard, many medical and pharma companies submit joint proposals to government agencies for the long-term aim of deciphering the results into innovative products.

The triple helix model is based on developing institutions, not just individuals.



Red Hat, founded in 1993, is an American MNC software company, now owned by IBM, providing open-source software to the enterprise community. The company has created a formal \$5 million partnership with Boston University to advance

research and education on open source and emerging technologies, including cloud computing, machine learning, automation and big data. The fund runs the scope from co-supervising PhD and post-doctoral students to fund collaborative projects with faculty under the umbrella of what is called the Open Cloud Computing Initiative. Boston University and Red Hat will jointly license co-developed technology while each party retains exclusive rights to its pre-existing IP. Also, IP developed solely by either Boston University or Red Hat is owned by whichever organisation employs the inventor.

• University-industry interactions: Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff emphasised that the initial role of a university is to provide education to individuals and basic

research. It's like the Linear Model of Innovation; universities are supposed to provide research, on which industry builds commercial goods. Other interactions take place through the involvement of industry managers and university faculty in both sectors. According to Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, the transfer of people between university and industry is a mode of transfer of knowledge. A university flourishes because of research, and industry grows on research in universities.

▶ University-government interactions: The power of interactions between government and universities depends on policies on higher education. Government has a higher influence on universities because they are the main source of funding. Government depends on universities to push innovations for the purpose of defence, economics, medical science, etc.

Do you know that the US Department of Defense extensively funded physics research during World War 2 and the Cold War? Another example is the Morrill Land-Grant Acts (1862) that allowed the creation of land-grant colleges. It was enacted during the American Civil War. During this period, universities such as Cornell University, University of Florida and Purdue University were created under land-grant

We need universities with a core mission of producing educated people who are needed to build and run a flourishing economy. Today, in India, how many universities have been able to connect their activities to society and the nation's economy? We hope the current government takes keen interest in developing scientific research culture in Indian universities.

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

TELLING NUMBERS

Why twin strikes on Saudi oil facilities matter worldwide



Satellite image shows smoke rising from Aramco's Abqaiq processing facility in Buqyaq, Saudi Arabia. Planet Labs Inc via AP

ON SATURDAY, Houthi rebels from Yemen carried out drone attacks on two major oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, including the world's biggest petroleum processing facility run by stateowned Saudi Aramco. This has impacted Saudi Arabia's oil production and exports, and in turn the global oil market.

5 mn barrels/day

Reuters quoted Aramco as saying the attack has cut output by 5.7 million barrels per day. In another report, Reuters put the figure at 5 million barrels per day. That is close to half of the kingdom's output, and 5% of global oil supply. Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, ships more than 7 million barrels of oil to global destinations every day. Reuters said the output cut was expected to send oil prices up \$3-\$5 per barrel on Monday.

260.2 bn barrels

These are the liquid reserves of Aramco, in oil equivalent, as of 2017. These reserves, Reuters said, are larger than the combined reserves of Exxon

Mobil Corp, Chevron Corp, Royal Dutch Shell Plc, BP Plc and Total SA. and have an estimated reserve life of 54 years.

10.3 mn barrels/day

The quantity of crude produced by Aramco last year. Company documents cited by Reuters said this was produced at \$2.8 a barrel, which the company touted as the lowest cost in the world to produce crude. Aramco also produced 1.1 million barrels of natural gas liquids and 8.9 billion standard cubic feet per day of natural gas.

5.2 mn barrels/day

Quantity of Aramco crude delivered delivered to customers in Asia last year, Reuters said. This was almost three-quarters of Aramco's total crude exports. The company believes demand will grow faster in Asia than elsewhere in the world - Asian buyers include China, India, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Its crude deliveries to North America reached more than 1 million barrels per day last year; to Europe, 864,000 barrels per day.

THIS WORD MEANS

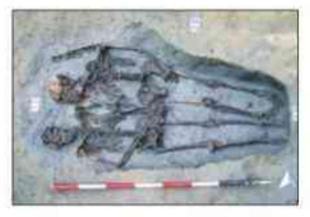
LOVERS OF MODENA

A pair of skeletons, 1,600 years old, found holding hands in grave. It turns out that both were men.

were unearthed at the ancient Ciro Menotti cemetery in Modena, Italy. Holding hands when buried, they sparked worldwide interest, and the assumption that they were a pair of lovers - the 'Lovers of Modena' as they came to be known. New analysis has now established that both were men. Researchers from the University of Bologna extracted proteins from dental enamels to complete the skeletons' biological profile, including their sex. Their findings have been published in the journal Scientific Reports.

IN 2009, two 1,600-year-old skeletons

Various skeleton pairs in the past have been found holding hands in areas such as Greece, Turkey and Siberia, but none of these so far have been established to be of the same sex. The new finding gives new insight about the funerary and burial practices in Late Antique Italy. The researchers hypothesise that the pair's burial "represents a voluntary expression of commitment between two individuals, rather



Unearthed at an ancient cemetery in Modena, Italy. University of Bologna

than a recurring cult practice of the Late Antiquity". The injuries on some of the other skeletons found in the cemetery suggest that they could have been war casualties and therefore, could have been "comrades" or "friends". Alternatively, they could have been cousins or brothers (given their similar ages) who shared the same grave because of familial bonds.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How waived loans impact states

In recent years, many state govts have waived farm loans. How did this impact their respective finances? Following a recent RBI report, a look at why state finances matter for India's macroeconomic stability

UDIT MISRA

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

ON FRIDAY, the Reserve Bank of India shared the report of an Internal Working Group (IWG), which was set up in February to look at, among other things, the impact of farm loan waivers on state finances. The report has shown how farm loan waivers dented state finances and urged governments — both central and state — to avoid resorting to farm loan waivers.

Since 2014-15, many state governments have announced farm loan waivers. This was done for a variety of reasons including relieving distressed farmers struggling with lower incomes in the wake of repeated droughts and demonetisation. Also crucial in this regard was the timing of elections and several observers of the economy including the RBI warned against the use of farm loan waivers.

The latest report of RBI has concluded: "The IWG recommends that GoI and state governments should undertake a holistic review of the agricultural policies and their implementation, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of current subsidy policies with regard to agri inputs and credit in a manner which will improve the overall viability of agriculture in a sustainable manner. In view of the above stated, loan waivers should be avoided".

What has been the impact on state finances?

Chart 1 from the RBI report details the impact on state finances in successive years. Typically, once announced, farm loans waivers are staggered over three to five years. Between 2014-15 and 2018-19, the total farm loan waiver announced by different state governments was Rs 2.36 trillion. Of this, Rs 1.5 trillion has already been waived. For perspective, the last big farm loan waiver was announced by the UPA government in 2008-09 and it was Rs 0.72 trillion. Of this, actual waivers were only Rs 0.53 trillion — staggered between 2008-09 and 2011-12.

In other words, in the past five years, just a handful of states have already waived three-times the amount waived by the central government in 2008-09. The actual waivers peaked in 2017-18 — in the wake of demonetisation and its adverse impact on farm incomes — and amounted to almost 12 per cent of the states' fiscal deficit.

What is the impact on economic growth, interest rates and job creation?

In essence, a farm loan waiver by the government implies that the government settles the private debt that a farmer owes to a bank. But doing so eats into the government's resources, which, in turn, leads to one of following two things: either the concerned government's fiscal deficit (or, in other words, total borrowing from the market) goes up or it has to cut down its expenditure.

A higher fiscal deficit, even if it is at the state level, implies that the amount of money available for lending to private businesses – both big and small — will be lower. It also

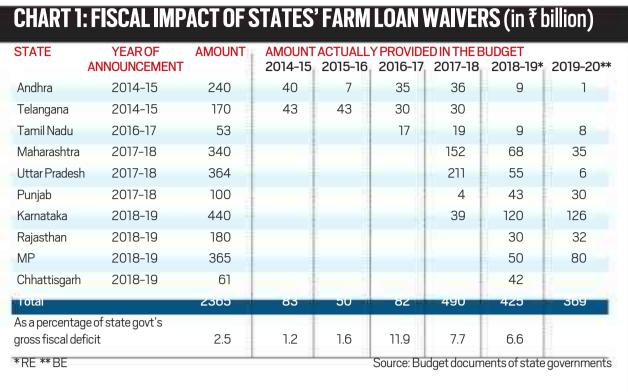


CHART 2: STATES LARGELY MEET THEIR DEFICIT TARGETS

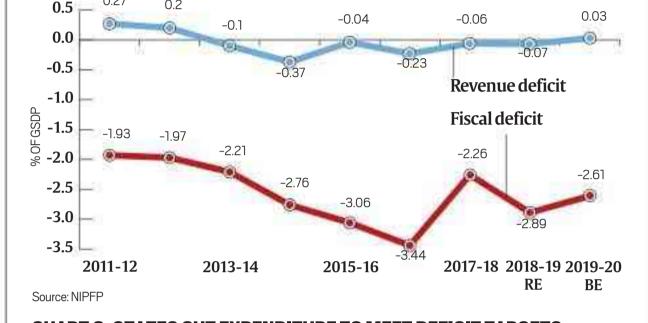


CHART 3: STATES CUT EXPENDITURE TO MEET DEFICIT TARGETS

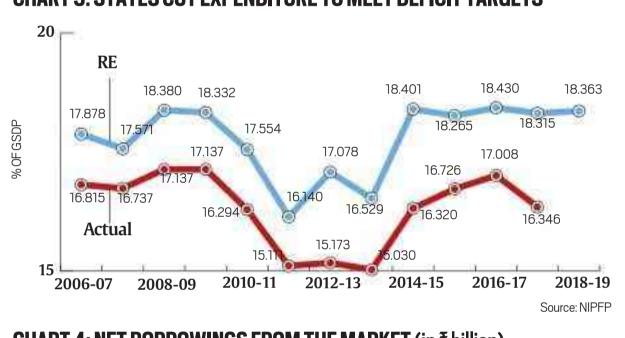
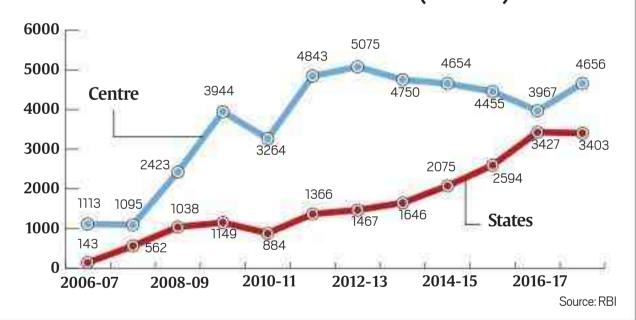


CHART 4: NET BORROWINGS FROM THE MARKET (in ₹ billion)



means the cost at which this money would be lent (or the interest rate) would be higher. If fresh credit is costly, there will be fewer new companies, and less job creation.

If the state government doesn't want to borrow the money from the market and wants to stick to its fiscal deficit target, it will be forced to accommodate by cutting expenditure. More often than not, states choose to cut capital expenditure — that is the kind of expenditure which would have led to the creation of productive assets such as more roads, buildings, schools etc — instead of the revenue expenditure, which is in the form of committed expenditure such as staff salaries and pensions. But cutting capital expenditure also undermines the ability to produce and grow in the future.

As such, farm loan waivers are not considered prudent because they hurt overall economic growth apart from ruining the credit culture in the economy since they incentivise defaulters and penalise those who pay back their loans.

So, are the states increasing their fiscal deficits or cutting capital expenditure?

There is no ready answer about specific states mentioned in *Chart 1*. However, an analysis of the latest state Budgets by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), released last month, shows that, on the whole, notwithstanding farm loan waivers etc., state governments stick to their fiscal deficit targets. In other words, state governments are not as profligate as they are made out to be. As Chart 2 shows, states barring the episode (in 2015-16) when they had to absorb the losses of state discoms (power distribution companies) under the Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (or UDAY), have stayed true to restricting their revenue deficit to zero and fiscal deficit to three per cent of their GDP.

But this relieving picture has a flip side. The way states meet their deficit targets is not by raising more revenues but by cutting expenditure. Chart 3 shows how, each year the actual expenditure is considerably lower than the Revised Estimates (RE) presented in the budget. And within expenditure, as Manish Gupta of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) points out, capital expenditure is cut relatively more than revenue expenditure.

How much do state finances matter for India's macroeconomic stability?

Far too often, analyses of the Indian economy focuses on the Union government's finances alone. But the ground realities are fast changing. The NIPFP study of state finances reveals that all the states, collectively, now spend 30 per cent more than the central government. Moreover, as Chart 4 shows, since 2014, state governments have increasingly borrowed money from the market. In 2016-17, for instance, total net borrowings by all the states were almost equal (roughly 86 per cent) of the amount that the Centre borrowed.

In other words, state-level finances are just as important as the central government finances for India's macroeconomic stability and future economic growth.

Is a new interstellar object visiting Solar System?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

IN OCTOBER 2017, the Haleakala Observatory in Hawaii spotted a strange, spaceship-shaped object passing through the Solar System. Later named 'Oumuamua, it became the subject of speculation whether it was really an alien spaceship, but was eventually declared by scientists to be an interstellar object — the first such known visitor to the Solar System. Now, it appears that a second interstellar

object is paying a visit. On August 30, the MARGO observatory in Crimea spotted a

comet which, astronomers believe, is likely to have originated from outside the Solar System, although the official confirmation has not been made yet.

The comet has been designated C/2019 Q4 (Borisov). It is still inbound toward the Sun. It will remain farther from Earth than the orbit of Mars — it will approach no closer to Earth than about 300 million km, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) said in a statement.

After the initial detections of the comet, IPL's Scout system automatically flagged the object as possibly being interstellar. Scientists at NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Studies at JPL, European Space Agency's Near-Earth Object Coordination Centre, and the NASA-sponsored Minor Planet Center in Massachusetts estimated the comet's precise trajectory and determine whether it originated within the Solar System or came from elsewhere in the galaxy.

"The comet's current velocity is high. about 150,000 kph, which is well above the typical velocities of objects orbiting the Sun at that distance. The high velocity indicates not only that the object likely originated from outside our Solar System, but also that it will leave and head back to interstellar space," David Farnocchia of NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Studies said in the JPL

As of Thursday, the comet was 420 million km from the Sun. It is heading toward the inner Solar System. On October 26, it will pass through the ecliptic plane — the plane in which Earth and the other planets orbit the Sun — from above at roughly a 40° angle. The comet will reach its closest point to Earth, or perihelion, on December 8.

C/2019 Q4 can be seen with professional telescopes for months to come. "The object will peak in brightness in mid-December and continue to be observable with moderatesize telescopes until April 2020. After that, it will only be observable with larger professional telescopes through October 2020, Farnocchia said.

Reading the HC order that allows two MPs to meet Abdullahs, with conditions

SOFIAHSAN

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15

LAST WEEK, the Srinagar Bench of the High Court of Iammu and Kashmir allowed two National Conference MPs to hold separate meetings with their party president Dr Farooq Abdullah and vice president Omar Abdullah, who have been in detention since the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5. However, the single-judge Bench barred the two Lok Sabha MPs — one of whom is a retired judge of the same High Court — from speaking to the media regarding the meeting, and imposed re-

strictions on the nature of the meeting. What is the background of the incident, and the details of the case order?

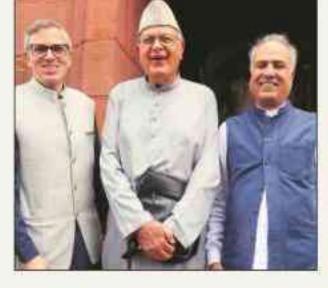
The NC MPs' petition

National Conference MPs Justice (retired) Hasnain Masoodi MP (Anantnag) and

Muhammad Akbar Lone (Baramulla) filed a writ petition on September 4, with a prayer for directions to permit their meeting with the two senior leaders under Article 226, an omnibus constitutional power allowing High Courts to exercise jurisdiction and pass directions in relation to their jurisdictional territory.

The petition, the first attempt by NC leaders for deliberations among themselves in the aftermath of the August 5 decision by the central government and its subsequent approval by Parliament, said the two Abdullahs had been under arrest since that day, and had not been allowed to meet any party workers, and even their relatives. Submitting that they too, were close friends of the leaders, the two MPs pleaded they were interested in knowing their wellbeing.

As per the High Court's order, Justice (retired) Masoodi also "claimed" that being a retired judge and a senior advocate, he was capable of rendering legal advice and assis-



Anantnag MP Justice (retired) Hasnain Masoodi (right) with Farooq and Omar Abdullah in New Delhi on August 1. The Abdullahs are now under detention; Masoodi has HC's permission to visit them. Renuka Puri

tance to the leaders, who were in detention for "undisclosed" reasons.

On September 6, during the initial hearing, Justice Sanjeev Kumar asked a government counsel, who was "incidentally" present in the court, to ascertain whether the two petitioners were "actually" prevented from meeting their party president and, if

so, for what reasons. The hearing was ad-

The HC's final order

journed until September 11.

In the order released on Thursday, Justice Kumar directed the Deputy Commissioner of Srinagar to take steps to facilitate a meeting of Masoodi and Lone with the Abdullahs at the earliest. While Omar has been detained at Hari Niwas, Faroog has been detained at his own house in Srinagar's Gupkar area.

However, the Bench in the same order also directed the two MPs to "ensure" that the meetings were "restricted to a courtesy

call" only, and to know about the wellbeing of the two NC leaders. The Court also made it clear that Masoodi and Lone "shall not go to press/media regarding their meeting and deliberations with the aforesaid persons".

The direction to restrict their meeting to a courtesy call in effect rejected the argument made by Justice Masoodi's counsel that he (Masoodi) could provide legal advice to his party leaders regarding their detention.

In its submissions, the government does not seem to have pleaded for restrictions on the nature of the meetings, or for their contents to not be disclosed publicly. Counsel for the government, in a verbal response, is recorded to have stated that there "is no formal restriction" on the meeting of the two MPs with their party leaders, and that the state was not averse to the meeting. However, the counsel asserted that the MPs must ensure that they would not do anything aimed at "vitiating the peaceful atmosphere".

The Yechury case

In their petition, the two MPs referred to a habeas corpus plea filed by CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury in the Supreme Court regarding the whereabouts of J&K party unit leader Mohd Yousuf Tarigami.

On August 28, the Supreme Court had allowed Yechury to travel to Kashmir to meet his colleague, but only to enquire about his health, and "for no other purpose". The court had warned that if Yechury was found "to be indulging in any other act, omission or commission save and except what has been indicated above i.e. to meet his friend and colleague and to enquire about his welfare and health condition, it will be construed to be a violation of this Court's order".

Counsel for Yechury was told that once his client returns to Delhi, he would have to "file a report supported by an affidavit in connection with the purpose of the visit as indicated in this order".

WORDLY WISE

FARMING MIGHT LOOK EASY WHEN YOUR PLOUGH IS A PENCIL AND YOU ARE A THOUSAND MILES FROM THE CORN FIELD.

— DWIGHT D EISENHOWER

The Indian EXPRESS

Ramnath Goenka

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

NO HALF MEASURES

Government needs to up public spending and investment in stalled projects to beat the slowdown

VER THE WEEKEND, the government unveiled measures aimed at reviving the country's troubled housing industry and exports. These include a Rs 20,000-crore refund to help the completion of affordable and middle-income housing projects that are Non Performing Assets and are not before the bankruptcy court or the National Company Law Tribunal, and which face last mile funding problems. The government will contribute Rs 10,000 crore to this stress fund and other investors will contribute the rest. A professional team will manage the fund that is estimated to potentially benefit 3.5 lakh housing units across the country. This may seem like the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) in the US in which the government provided funds to help avoid foreclosures by home buyers. In the absence of details on how many projects would qualify and the selection of such projects, considering that there are hundreds of projects promoted by developers in which thousands of crores of money pumped in by home buyers and banks are stuck, this and the package for the export sector appear to be half measures.

In the backdrop of sliding exports — the data for August shows a decline of 6.05 per cent compared to a year ago — the finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced a new export incentive scheme that will be WTO compliant, full electronic refund of GST to exporters by the end of this month, easier funding and annual mega shopping festivals in four cities by 2020, modelled perhaps on Dubai, and a faster turnaround time in airports and ports. These are not likely to help significantly reverse the trend in the near term given the escalating trade war and the global slowdown. Indeed, better infrastructure and a shift to zero rating of exports or levying of zero rate of tax on exports on the lines of countries which have implemented GST, thus easing the compliance burden, and unlocking capital that is locked up could provide a better boost competitiveness of Indian exports. Ultimately, countering the slowdown may hinge largely on the government stepping up public spending or investment in stalled projects. And at a time when revenue growth is far lower than projected so far this fiscal, it is also important that the GST Council also stand firm in rejecting the growing demand for a cut in GST to arrest the secular decline in auto sales.

Fiscal orthodoxy and the spectre of bond vigilantism may deter the government from stepping up public spending. But it is interesting that in the face of weakening growth, fiscal rules are being overturned in the West. Some days ago, both the European Central Bank President (ECB) Mario Draghi and his successor, Christine Lagarde, pitched for fiscal stimulus by European governments. Monetary policymakers in Europe want governments to ramp up public spending to boost growth with the ECB having stepped up its bond buying programme. These should provide enough cues for the government here too.

LET THE FARMER CHOOSE

State may provide the cultivator with funds, but not incentivise untested technologies like zero budget natural farming

ERO BUDGET NATURAL Farming (ZBNF) may have received endorsement from the NITI Aayog, the finance minister's budget speech and Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. But that hasn't stopped the country's premier academy of agricultural scientists from coming out against an "unproven technology" that, they say, brings no incremental gain to either farmers or consumers. Since the mid-1960s, India's annual foodgrain output has risen from 80-85 million tonnes (mt) to 280 mt-plus, just as it has from about 20 mt to 176 mt for milk and by similar magnitudes in vegetables, fruits, poultry meat, eggs, sugarcane and cotton. A significant part of these increases have come from crossbreeding or improved varieties/hybrids responsive to chemical fertiliser application, and also crop protection chemicals to ensure that the resultant genetic yield gains aren't eaten away by insects, fungi or weeds. Today's millennials may have little connect with the Bengal Famine or the ship-to-mouth times hardly five decades ago. But they should know that without IR-8 rice, urea, chlorpyrifos or artificial insemination, the nation would simply not have been able to feed itself.

The basic idea of "zero budget" itself rests on very shaky scientific foundations. Its propounder Subhash Palekar Palekar, for instance, claims that nitrogen, the most important nutrient for plant growth, is available "free" from the air. Yes, nitrogen makes up 78 per cent of the atmosphere, but being in a non-reactive diatomic (N2) state, it has to be first "fixed" into a plant-usable form — which is what ammonia or urea are. Even maintaining indigenous cows and collecting their dung and urine — the main ingredients in Palekar's microbial, seed treatment and insect pest management solutions — entails labour cost. Simply put, agriculture can never be zero budget. Also, crop yields cannot go up beyond a point with just cow dung that has only around 3 per cent nitrogen (as against 46 per cent in urea), 2 per cent phosphorous (46 per cent in di-ammonium phosphate) and 1 per cent potassium (60 per cent in muriate of potash).

That said, there is a strong case for promoting techniques such as conservation tillage, trash mulching, green manuring and vermi-composting, apart from reducing use of chemical fertilisers and insecticides through integrated nutrient and pest management. The time has also come for eliminating fertiliser subsidies to encourage their judicious use. The government should give farmers a fixed sum of money per acre, which they can use to buy chemical-based inputs or to engage the extra labour necessary for organic agricultural practices. Discrimination must end; let the farmer choose between non-organic, organic or even ZBNF.

FREEZE FRAME

E P Unny



Banish the gloom

India's growth story is far from over. But government must incentivise household savings, spur consumption



THERE HAS BEEN an enormous amount of writing on the Indian economy in the past few day. Most of it recommends the simple policy option of aggressive rate cuts to boost demand. But while rate cuts are welcome, they might not suffice in the current context.

First, the current slowdown is mostly consumption led, a by-product of the slow income growth in recent times (rural and urban wages have grown by 1-2 per cent in real terms). However, even though private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) has declined by Rs 1.5 lakh crore in Q1 FY20, it is still higher by Rs 1.65 lakh crore over the same period last year. Thus, while we should be worried, we must not be overtly despondent and write obituaries of the India's growth story just yet. Unfortunately, the markets are currently soaking in trepidation, anticipating an uncertain future that the data still does not suggest.

What could be an ideal policy option in the current context? The high inflation and high interest rates in the 1970s generated a revolution in macroeconomic thinking, policy and institutions. The theory of real business cycles, propounding the ineffectiveness of any policy response and the subsequent theory of market imperfections, opened a new vista in economics literature of how to deal with growth conundrums. In similar vein, the low inflation, interest rate and stagnation of the last decade in the developed economies deserves an equal response.

What could be that response? The contemporary issue for macroeconomists is to kickstart aggregate demand. We believe that monetary policy can only act to some extent—we have been in an era of low interest rates for a decade but that has done little to boost aggregate demand, but increase household debt (household debt in the US has increased from \$12.5 trillion in Q1FY08 to \$13.9 trillion in Q2FY19). Rather, fiscal policy needs to be the major focus thrust, especially given what low or negative interest rates mean for the sustainability of deficits.

Let us fast forward to the Indian context. The total financial liabilities of households have jumped by a massive 58 per cent in FY18 to Rs 7.4 lakh crores (there was a 22 per cent jump in FY17) and may have also jumped in FY19. In fact, while household leverage has

jumped two times in the last five years, disposable income has jumped by only 1.5 times, thereby putting pressure on savings. Even though the jump is not as much as in FY07 (when it jumped by 2.3 times over FY05), such a large jump is a matter of concern. The good thing is that gross household financial savings have jumped by a sharp 1.5 times over the same period (though it could be largely because of remonetisation).

Given such a large jump in household

leverage, monetary policy is unlikely to retain the effectiveness through large rate cuts in the current scenario. Only a counter cyclical fiscal response might address the core of the current problem. But, before we discuss that, let us for a moment digress to some of the common market fallacies for the reasons behind the decline in household savings. First, since FY12, gross savings (as a per-

First, since FY12, gross savings (as a percentage of GDP) have declined from 34.6 percent to 30.5 percent in FY18. This decline was entirely due to the decline in household savings (by 6.4 percentage points). Interestingly, most of this decline is in physical savings of households, with only a marginal decline in financial savings.

Second, the decline in household savings is because of a change in definition. Unincorporated entities, which were a part of the household sector, now get counted as corporate savings. This is visible in the data since FY12 when private corporate savings jumped by 2.1 per cent.

Third, the decline in household savings also has to do with high real interest rates. Our empirical analysis suggests that the long-run effect of real interest rates on the savings rate is negative and is statistically significant at 1 per cent level.

Coming back to the policy options, data on

household savings clearly suggests that the benefits of a fiscal push could be significant in the current context. First, the argument of huge government borrowings eating up a significant part of household financial savings only tells a part of the story. Incremental claims of government borrowings on households increased by only Rs 60,000 crore for the two-year period ended FY17.

During the same period, the move to incentivise household savings by increasing the

ceiling of section 80C resulted in an incremental Rs 1.8 lakh crore of household savings flowing into tax saving instruments. Our estimates show that the savings incentivisation multiplier is at least five times higher than the revenue foregone by the government through such tax incentives.

Capital gains tax can be abolished. The total assets under management (equity) of mutual funds jumped by only two per cent since January 2018, while they had risen by 68 per cent between November 2016 and January 2018. Such measures are stunting household savings in shares and debentures.

Apart from such a push to savings, what could be the other fiscal policy options to spur consumption? To this end, the government must address the demand weakness by front-loading expenditure through the PM-KISAN and MGNREGA. Any attempt to cut back on expenditure, to balance the fiscal deficit at this time, will be severely detrimental to consumption growth. Another option is to continue aggressively with asset sales, pursue capital expenditure and use the additional fiscal space for infrastructure spending.

that the government could be wary of is on the bond markets. In this context, the RBI could front-load a large rate cut in the October policy, while keeping liquidity in surplus mode. The government should also go ahead with the sovereign bond issuance. It could partly hedge its borrowings and decide to not bring back the dollar proceeds, instead keeping it at any of designated scheduled commercial banks (ASCBs) outside the country for import payments. This will take care of the problems of sterilisation and hedging.

A consequence of an increase in spending

The government could also introduce a performance linked compensation scheme for the banking sector employees as well as provide them operational flexibility to hire directly from the market. The wage agreement has been delayed for a long time and a quick announcement before the festive season would help improve sentiment significantly. Setting up a development finance institution could be another policy option.

The author is Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India. Views are personal

THIS LAND OF MINE

Land, culture have multiple dimensions that human brain can't easily comprehend



I ANDIC A place that recovering a consistent

LAND IS A place that never was, so say its wild incumbents.

Humans barely manage to engage in meaningful dialogues with their niche. They thrive on some autocratic understanding of their niche, instead. They think of land as cycling in and out of seasons, producing fruits and inflorescence they may reap. This utilitarian understanding of nature characterises farmers' perceptions — land running in nearidentical cycles. Yet, what would it be like to think like nature (if it had some holistic consciousness)? Would it be as orchestrated as we claim it to be? Do these questions acknowledge the concept that is "land"?

Funnily enough, the concept of land in itself is a human construct. It could be thought of as a semantic human carryover of territoriality, material limits of existence. To animals and birds that defend territories, it is something that "provides" and promotes survival. Humans experience a more mentally palpable version of territoriality, a material emotion affecting perceptions and even designing timelines.

Land, in actuality, is a synthesis of biotic and abiotic factors. Humans would define land in terms of metaphors. Land grows like a twining, sun-fetching climber littered by pheromones of marching ants. It conjures lost ponds, insects and hills in people's dreams, migraines and constipations. Land returns like asthmatic memories. Unlike other creatures, humans download meaning out of land-associations that shape their mindscapes.



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into tax saving instruments.

Land and culture are multidimensional beings. This may make it difficult for the human brain to comprehend their complexity. The human brain may approximate them into patterns. Specifically, the understanding of land may be reduced into its periodicity and culture into an exercise of placing one's individual mental niche into a collective niche of shared themes. Vishu marks the beginning of a new year in the Malayalam calendar. In the past, farmers sowed seeds and prayed for rain. The climatic cycle brought rain. Vishu marked the cycles of land — the blooming of yellow and golden cassia, migrating birds. To humans, periodicity is land's religion, defining its system of beliefs, feeding into their sense of territoriality.

Land evolves, accumulating changes. This year's Vishu will never be the same as the one before — hilltops give way to spiralling roads, ponds to chasms, peacocks shed feathers on doorsteps and nocturnal foxes barge into moonlit verandahs, cassia grows in brighter bunches, the honeycomb sees a coup led by a new queen. Nature changes sinuously. However, humans condone "trivial" changes that occur in the apparent "backdrop" of nature, due to their inability to understand concepts that traverse the dogma of "form". Human understanding stipulates approximations. Previous year's Vishu was an approximated version of the one before.

Human culture grows just as land grows and loses its incumbents. Our nostalgia of some native culture becomes an amnesiac's approximated picture. This record sets up a linearity that helps derive meaning.

Forging identities, too, is integral to human life. An infant, for instance, is an all-observing human for the first few months of her life: She sees, but sees no more in her mind. There is some unrecorded newness that sprouts but grows no more. This newness metamor-

phoses into matted thoughts as she unwittingly familiarises with her niche — family, cradle, the world around her. The placing of oneself as a participant in this milieu is a prerequisite to adapting to human culture. After this placing, her mind transforms into a highly porous space: And into this space, culture seeps in. However, every human culture is distinct, marked by some "original" form of creative expression. Every culture, then, is a different perception of a niche coloured by some amount of whim, coincidental choice of

an abstract and plastic mind.

But perception is only one way of looking at an entity. Singularity of perception, though, reduces the time one spends in processing one's world, before converting decisions into actions. Culture, then, must be some conditioned response to frequently encountered "motifs" discerned from complex situations.

Land and culture are multi-dimensional beings. This may make it difficult for the human brain to comprehend their complexity. The human brain may approximate them into patterns. Specifically, the understanding of land may be reduced into its periodicity and culture into an exercise of placing one's individual mental niche into a collective niche of shared themes. But, they are clearly larger than the sum of their components. It is the human perception that needs to be more flexible to gain a better understanding of these concepts.

The writer is a research assistant at the Indian Institute of Science

Congress (I), DMK agree on electoral adjustment in TN Discourse pull this distribution of the in prime first much of Jan. Country in the seven discourse d

SEPTEMBER 16, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

No One-day Poll

THE CONFERENCE OF chief secretaries decided to request the Election Commission to reconsider its view of holding a one-day poll in the Lok Sabha election. This decision was taken by the conference, convened by the Home Ministry to finalise poll arrangements, since the overwhelming view of the states was it would not be possible to mobilise adequate manpower to ensure a single-day poll all over the country. Deputy PM, Y B Chavan, who inaugurated the conference, which was attended by inspectors-general of states, assured the states that maximum possible assistance would be given by the Centre.

AIADMK-DMK UNITY

THE MOVE FOR unity between the ruling AIADMK and DMK, initiated by the Union Steel Minister, Biju Patnaik, has proved abortive with the AIADMK leader and chief minister, M G Ramachandran, declaring that he would not forsake the separate identity of his party. Ramachandran said the name, flag and principles of the AIADMK would not be sacrificed. On his part, the DMK chief, M Karunanidhi, said the AIADMK which broke away from the DMK in 1972, should return to the parent organisation. The unity move was initiated by George Fernandes, when he met MGR 10 days ago.

CURBING PRICE RISE

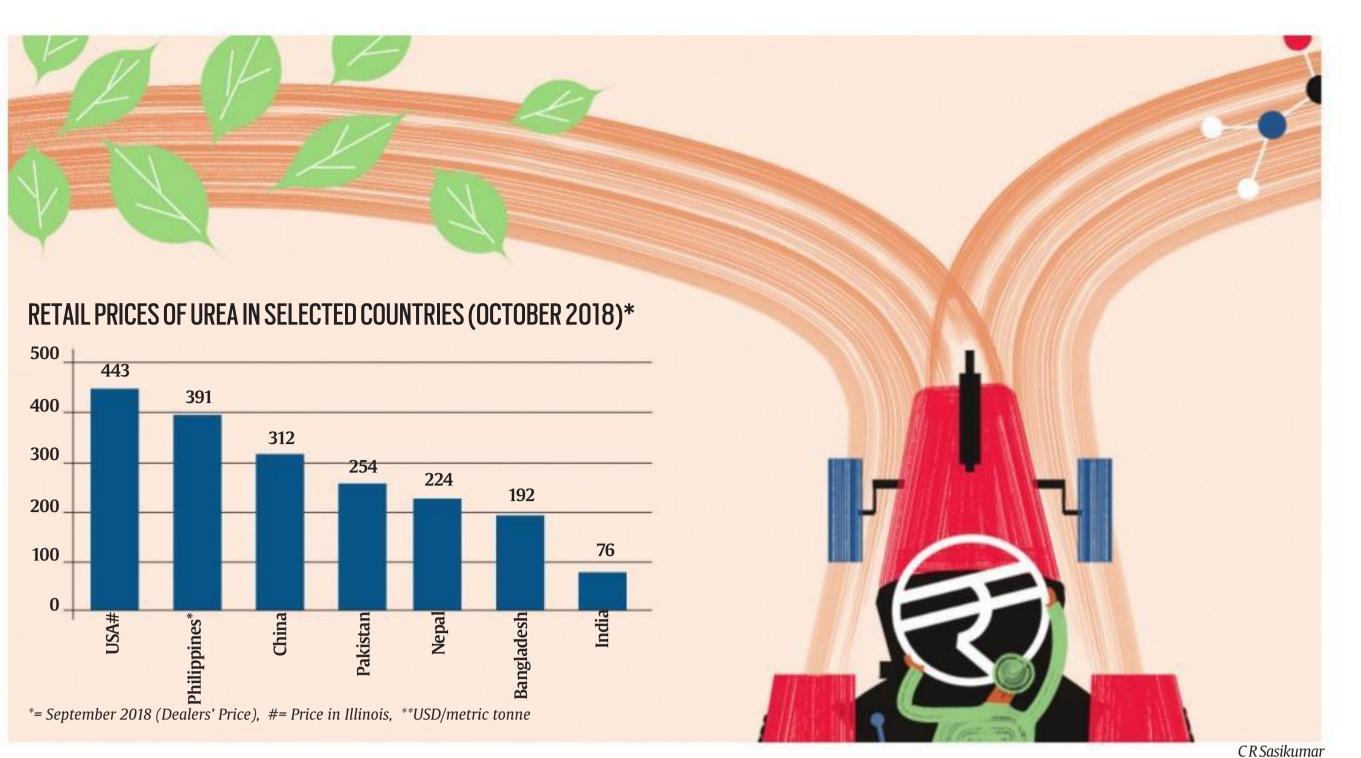
STATE GOVERNMENTS AGREED to strengthen the machinery for monitoring of prices of essential commodities and to take remedial action. This was one of the measures on which there was consensus at the meeting of the chief secretaries and IGPs of states and union territories, held in Delhi. States were told to enforce the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act, storage control order and prices and stock display order which confer wide powers. Central officials also emphasised that it was important to ensure implementation of all existing laws to curb any price rise.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

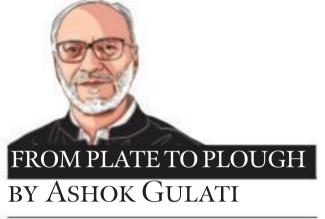
Will the fractured Muslim world ever wake up to back Palestinians' cause?

- THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE



The right to choose

Government could give fertiliser subsidy directly to farmers and let them decide if they want to practise zero budget natural farming or use chemical-fertilisers



THE NARENDRA MODI government completed 100 days of its second term (Modi 2.0) last week. On this occasion, most cabinet ministers spoke of the achievements of their ministries. The headlines in newspapers were, however, about the abrogation of Article 370, or the biggest slump in auto sales in the last two decades, or the slowing down of GDP growth. I tried to search for bold moves in agriculture as it affects the largest number of people. But I couldn't find any. Some already-announced schemes were tweaked and a few new ideas were offered but without solid scientific and financial backing.

The PM-Kisan Yojana (PMKY) — an income support of Rs 6,000 per year to small and marginal farmer households — was announced before the parliamentary elections. Modi 2.0 has extended the scheme to the families of all farmers. The 2019-20 Union budget has provisioned Rs 75,000 crore for this scheme. This is the first step towards direct cash (income) transfer to farmers' accounts. As I have argued earlier, this scheme will be meaningful if other subsidies — such as those on food, fertiliser, power and irrigation, and agri-credit — are clubbed with the PMKY and given directly to farmers. The move should be complemented by allowing market forces to set prices. Else, PMKY may come at the cost of investments in agriculture, which have fallen from a peak of 18.2 per cent of the agri-GDP in 2011-12 to 13.7 per cent of the agri-GDP 2017-18. With such a fall in investments, the dream of doubling farmers' incomes by 2022 cannot be fulfilled. In this article, I want to focus on something new and interesting that the prime minister talked about in his Independence Day speech. He repeated the same in his address to the 14th Conference of Parties of the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification** (UNCCD) in Greater Noida. The PM's key message was to reduce consumption of chemical fertilisers and promote zero budget natural farming (ZBNF). The concept, fathered by Subhash Palekar, uses dung from desi black cows, their urine, adds jaggery and pulses' flour in certain proportions and deploys that, as jeevamrit, to augment microbial activity in soil. This is supposed to make our soils healthier and augment productivity in a sustainable manner. Incidentally, ZBNF was also mentioned as the future of Indian agriculture by Nirmala Sitharaman in her maiden budget speech.

At the very outset, let me say that I am a supporter of adding organic matter — be it dung or farm yard manure (FYM) — that can improve carbon in our soils. It is well known that chemical fertilisers are not used rationally by our farmers. Although the optimal ratio of using nitrogen (N), phosphate (P) and potash (K), differs from plot to plot, at the all India level, it is generally agreed that the optimal combination of N, P and K should be in the ratio of 4:2:1. In 2009-10, this ratio was 4.3:2:1 — quite close to the desired level. But in 2010, the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme was introduced. It almost freed prices of P and K from government control and provided some fixed subsidy on these fertilisers on a per tonne basis. However, N (urea) was excluded from this scheme. As a result while DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) and MOP (muriate of potash) carry a subsidy of about 25-30 per cent of their cost of production, urea has a subsidy of more than 75 per cent on its cost of production. The Indian urea prices are perhaps lowest in the world, and certainly lowest amongst the major countries (see graph).

No wonder, there is overuse of urea in relation to DAP and MOP. Normally, whenever chemical fertilisers are used, a good dosage of FYM is recommended. So FYM, or something akin to jeevamrit, is conceived as a supple-

Has the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) studied the possible impact of ZBNF on yields of major crops like wheat and rice in comparison to chemical fertiliser-based

farming? It needs to do large scale testing in different regions to see the nationwide implications of ZBNF on the overall production of major crops. I understand that such studies have not been conducted. In fact, the limited information that is available suggests a 30 to 50 per cent drop in yields. That

could puncture a big hole in

India's food security basket.

ment, not a substitute of chemical fertilisers.

But there could be serious questions if the government's intention is to completely jettison chemical fertilisers — PM talked of halving fertiliser consumption in his "Mann ki Baat" speech of November 26, 2017. First, has the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) studied the possible impact of ZBNF on yields of major crops like wheat and rice in comparison to chemical fertiliser-based farming? It needs to do large scale testing in different regions to see the nationwide implications of ZBNF on the overall production of major crops. I understand that such studies have not been conducted. In fact, the limited information that is available suggests a 30 to 50 per cent drop in yields. That could puncture a big hole in India's food security basket. Do we want to go back to the "ship-tomouth" situation of the mid-1960s?

Second, if the PM wants to cut fertiliser consumption by half by 2022, why is the government investing in new urea plants of 1.27 million tonne, each under the public sector at Gorakhpur in UP, Barauni in Bihar, Ramagundam in AP, Sindri in Jharkhand and Talcher in Odisha. The combined capacity of these plants is likely to be about 6.35 million tonne and the production cost more than \$400 per tonne. One wonders whether there is any coordination between what the PM says and what his government is doing? It seems a typical case of left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing.

My humble submission is that the fertiliser subsidy, which is budgeted at Rs 80,000 crore for 2019-20, be given directly to farmers on a per hectare basis and allow them to decide whether they want to do ZBNF or chemical-fertiliser based farming. The fertiliser prices will then be market determined, ensuring their efficient usage, stopping their diversion to non-agri-uses as well as to neighbouring countries. It will be a win-win situation from several perspectives. Can the Modi government do that in the next 100 days?

> The writer is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

Births of a nation

Linking patriotism to women's bodies is uncalled for



Alaka M Basu

SOMETIMES ONE NEEDS to reject good advice, even when it comes from a person one admires. This seems to be the right time to reject President John F Kennedy's much repeated instruction to "ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country".

Historically, even today, if there is one large group of persons on whom a disproportionate responsibility to buckle up and do its duty for the country is placed, it is women. In today's India, the accusation of female irresponsibility is implied in the global disappointment that its women are withdrawing from the labour force. While some of this disappointment stems from the consequent loss of female empowerment that it is believed to confer, most of the commentary on this process stresses the loss of national GDP growth that it entails. The IMF, for example, estimates that India's GDP would be 27 per cent higher if women's labour force participation were to rise to male levels. It is unclear, however, whether this infliction of guilt will encourage Indian women to do their patriotic duty.

However, it is in the invocation of women's patriotic reproductive responsibilities that Kennedy's proverbial statement needs to be turned around on its head. The latest firing of this salvo occurred in the Prime Minister's Independence Day speech, in which it was declared that having small families is a form of "patriotism". At least at the policy level, we know from past and present experience that such exhortations primarily target women, women's bodies and women's reproductive autonomy. In India, the rush to sterilise as many women as possible often means sterilisations are performed under shoddy conditions with sometimes awful consequences. The 13 women who died during a sterilisation camp in Chhattisgarh in 2014 belonged to a long chain of such assaults on women's bodies. And yet, in 2016-17, most of the country's family planning budget continues to go towards female sterilisations.

There are, of course, technical problems with this hurry to address India's population "explosion" — for example, thanks to the population momentum, even if the total fertility rate declines by as much as 0.5 births more than currently projected by the UN, the population will still be around 1.5 billion in 2050, compared to the 1.6 billion if birth rates continue their current expected steady decline.

Apart from that, women's bodies and reproductive needs will be much better served by greater state investments in so many things other than advice on patriotic duty. In the last National Family Health Survey, about half of Indian women were anaemic, some 22 per cent had a below normal body mass index, only 21 per cent of

women had the full regimen of antenatal care during their last pregnancy, just 60 per cent of children aged 12-23 months had received the full recommended regime of vaccinations, and as many as 17 per cent of women had their last births delivered by Csection. Predictably, but ominously, this last figure was 40 per cent for births in private hospitals compared to 12 per cent for births in public health facilities – given WHO's indication that under usual circumstances about 10-15 per cent of births should end up needing a Caesarian delivery, we know where the money-making is happening.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that our Maternal Mortality Ratio is as high as 174 maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births (as an embarrassing point of comparison, it is 30 in Sri Lanka) and our under-five child mortality rate is 50 per 1,000 live births (nine in Sri Lanka). Within India, the child mortality rate goes from a low of seven in Kerala to a high of 78 in Uttar Pradesh. With what kind of righteous self-confidence can we ask the patriotic UP mother to cut down her births, when the chances of losing some of these births to early death are so high?

Even when she does feel her national duty more acutely than her fertility demonstrates, it is worth noting that there is what is called the "unmet need" for family planning — the percentage of women who do not want another birth ever or right now, but who are nevertheless not using any contraception. This figure is 13 per cent for India, 6 per cent for Andhra Pradesh, 18 per cent for UP and 21 per cent in Bihar. If more of this unmet need can be understood, and sympathetically (not with aggressively offered female sterilisation) met. maybe we will discover that most women in the country are already very patriotic.

To be fair, urging women to have or not have children for the sake of the nation is hardly an Indian invention. It underlay Nazi Germany's denial of contraception and abortion to non-Jewish women (unless the sexual partner was Jewish) so that the master race could increase its numbers, the glorification of motherhood in Fascist Italy and in the 1930s Soviet Union. In many of these cases (including France in the 1920s), bronze, silver and gold medals were awarded to patriotic mothers depending on how many children they gave birth to. As an amusing aside, in Nazi Germany women with more than five children were allowed to name a famous person as godfather, but that programme was suspended after it was found that Hindenburg was more popular than Hitler for this.

In contemporary times, a lawmaker in South Korea has just urged a female economics professor, nominated to head the country's trade commission, to do her national duty and get married — contribute a child to the country before selfishly worrying about her career advancement.

So, there you have it. Whether it is to tell women to have babies or not have babies, it seems that the men doing this telling are only doing it for the nation's good — not out of any masculine impositions of control on female bodies and female lives.

The writer is professor at Cornell University, Department of Development Sociology

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LISTEN TO THE PM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Let's talk safety' (IE, September 13). The road transport and highways minister's statement on the amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act betrays an authoritarian outlook. The Act is well-intentioned, but its enforcement should be on reasonable terms.

S K Balasubramanian. Pune

ABOUT TEACHERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'It begins in school', (IE, September 13). The Draft NEP 2019 acknowledged the importance of foundational learning by giving special focus to five years of early childhood care and education. But the proposed pedagogical model remains teacher-centric. The quality of teachers is bound have a profound impact on the learning outcomes. Technology can be a great equaliser; standard recorded video modules can aid the activitybased learning and trained educators can improvise lessons to make the learning experience interactive.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

PUBLIC MONEY ISSUES THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Andhra spectres' (IE, September 13). The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S lagan Mohan Reddy is on a demolition spree of the state's infrastructure. Can the state and the country afford such whimsical acts? Such infrastructure may have been commissioned by his political rival, Chandrababu Naidu. But the infrastructure was built using public money.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal

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address and phone number.

PAK'S HYPOCRISY

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Pakistan takes hard line on Jadhav' (IE, September 13). Pakistan reached the UNHRC with its agenda of violation of human rights of Kashmiris. But by denying Kulbhushan Jadhav consular access, it has gone against the International Court of Justice's verdict. The country's economy has fallen to such an extent that it has levied charges on the Sikh pilgrims to the Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara. These are desperate times for Pakistan and it is using the Kashmir issue to divert public attention.

Sumit Chaudhary, Chandigarh

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



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

Tragedy foretold

MUHAMMAD ZAMIR, A former Bangladeshi diplomat and now an analyst, makes one thing clear: "India is making its own people stateless. Bangladesh shouldn't have to pay the price." Zamir's article in The Dhaka *Tribune* on September 15 expresses a view that has become increasingly common in the Bangladesh media. It establishes first the flaws, both administrative and moral, in the NRC process in Assam and then clarifies the role Bangladesh is (un)willing to play in the scenario.

Zamir states that "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has long railed against illegal immigration into India, and has been using this also as a political weapon for the last three years in particular." He goes on to point out some of the most glaring exclusions from the final NRC list, for example, of an Indian army veteran spending 11 days in a detention camp. The article also points out Home Minister Amit Shah's past statements, of "infiltrators" being "termites" and the fears such talk engenders. In addition, there are sever problems with the appeals process, accuracy of the list.

But the nub of the article is this: One thing needs to be understood by the Assam administration presently in control of the BJP is that, "Densely populated Bangladesh is already

epaper indianexpress.com

suffering from having to look after more than a million illegal Rohingya immigrants from the Rakhine state of Myanmar. Consequently, there is no question of Bangladesh being forced to receive more alleged infiltrators. Such a measure could seriously affect bilateral relations. It might also encourage insecurity and possibly generate unfortunate clouds of communalism. This is an internal matter of India and that matrix needs to be understood. Consequently, India and the state government of Assam, instead of generating more despair, anxiety, and anger, might consider giving those designated as stateless people participatory presence within the Indian paradigm after their release from detention centres."

SILENT VALLEY

Moonis Ahmar, former dean of social sciences at Karachi University, takes the Amnesty India report on the "crackdown" and "blockade on communications" in the Kashmir Valley as the starting point of his article in *The Express Tribune* on September 13. He writer that "After more than five weeks of crackdown and communications blackout, voices of dissent are being raised by various human rights organisations and civil society groups in India". "Let Kashmir speak," according to Ahmar, is the essence of this movement.

"It is not only Arundhati Roy and other renowned Indian writers who have expressed their chagrin against India's treatment of Kashmiris, but saner voices of students, teachers, political workers, and their leaders are also condemning the serious human rights violations," the article notes.

Ahmar then asks, why despite domestic and international opprobrium, has New Delhi not lifted the blockade? He answers: "First, the narrative held by BJP stalwarts that relaxation in the occupied state cannot be given unless the alleged cross-border interference stops... Second, India also knows the fact that it will be Pakistan's last intention to allow Pakistani Kashmiris to cross the Line of Control (LoC)."

Ahmar argues that Pakistan will not provoke an escalation of the conflict at this time. He ends with a simple appeal: "Letting the Kashmiris speak and decide their own destiny is the need of the hour. If saner voices against New Delhi's brutal crackdown in the Valley are raised in India today, a time will come when one can expect a major reversal of the Indian policy of neglect, indifference, and cruelty."

STICKY WICKET

Last week, the Sri Lankan cricket team pulled

out of a scheduled limited overs' series in Pakistan, citing security concerns. "Clearly," says the September 14 editorial in *Dawn*, "the memories of the terrorist incident of 2009, when the Sri Lankan team's bus was attacked in Lahore, are still fresh in their minds."

According to the editorial, these fears are now exaggerated, if not misplaced. It argues that the security situation has improved significantly, and perhaps the Sri Lankan cricket board did not do enough to convince its players to visit Pakistan. But the editorial gives the other side of the picture too: "Meanwhile, there is a feeling among many former cricketers that the PCB did not play its cards right either, and that the board should have set its own conditions instead of agreeing to a depleted touring team." "Whether or not one agrees with that view, it is hoped that when the touring side returns to Sri Lanka, it is able to convince those who chose to stay away

that they made the wrong decision" it says. The editorial then marks the change in Pakistan cricket: "Though major foreign teams have shunned tours to this country in the past decade, Pakistan's status as a major cricketing nation has not been altered in any way. Pakistan Super League, which ranked as the second most popular T20 league after the Indian Premier League, has attracted leading foreign players to the country in the past two years."

12 THE GOVERNANCE PAGE

RAJASTHAN REBOOTS THE RTI ACT

Jan Soochna Portal to provide Rajasthan govt information at the click of a button

Citizens can access data about 23 flagship schemes and services of 13 departments on their mobiles

DEEP MUKHERJEE

JAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 15

ON SEPTEMBER 13, Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot launched a "Jan Soochna Portal" aimed at easing the access to information for the beneficiaries of welfare schemes. The portal has been created by the Department of Information Technology and Communication(DoIT&C) in collaboration with civil society. It realises the true intent behind Section 4(2) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005. In essence, this section requires public authorities to proactively — that is, suo moto — disclose information so that beneficiaries do not have to run from pillar to post trying to figure out what went wrong and how to set it right.

No wonder, 60-year-old Balulal Gurjar, a resident of Thana village in Bhilwara district, is enthused to hear of this portal. For the past few years, Gurjar has accompanied many fellow villagers to government offices, inquiring about their old-age pension entitlement that hadn't been credited in their accounts. In recent years, thousands of pension beneficiaries of Rajasthan have protested after their names were struck off from the government list on account of their "death" even though they were alive. "For many months, we were kept in dark as there was no way to know what had really happened. Had there been a Jan Soochna Portal back then, it would have been easy for us to know what had gone wrong," says Gurjar.

At present, the portal has information about 23 government schemes and services from 13 departments which the public can access with just one click on their computers, mobiles or kiosks installed in villages.

Activist Nikhil Dey from the Soochna Evam Rozgar Abhiyan and Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) says that before this initiative the provisions of Section 4(2) of the RTI Act were not implemented properly.

"We realised that the government is gathering a lot of information and hiding them behind admin laws. We wanted to build a janta information system where reports are generated useful to people. Governance has to be a joint effort," says Dey, who has consulted and collaborated with (DoIT&C) officials on the various features of the portal.

The portal aims to create a streamlined system for public information to prevent anomalies and corruption. Information about several schemes such as Ayushman



Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot, activist Aruna Roy along with other delegates during the launch of the Jan Soochna Portal on Friday. Express



How Rajasthan improved RTI

SINCE THE 1990s, Rajasthan has always played a central role in improving public access to information. The latest initiative requires the government to disclose a lot of information related to government schemes on its own, thus making it easy for the common man. By streamlining and centralising information, the portal also prevents anomalies and corruption.

Bharat Mahatma Gandhi Rajasthan Swasthya Bima Yojana, which provides free health insurance to beneficiaries has been uploaded to ensure that there is no mismatch between the amount listed as an expense by a hospital while treating a patient and the money it actually charges. Earlier, the previous government's flagship scheme Bhamashah Swasthya Bima Yojana had wit-

KEY INFORMATION PROVIDED UNDER JAN **SOOCHNA PORTAL**

- Public distribution and ration system
- Social security pension beneficiary information
- MGNREGA workers
- Sanitation beneficiaries ■ Govt-run free medicine scheme
- Govt-run health insurance schemes
- **■** Farm loan waiver
- Labour card holders ■ Procurement of food grains on
- minimum support price

Mining and district mineral

foundation trust data ■ Land ownership details

nessed many cases where higher expenses were falsely shown by hospitals.

The effort to create a centralised information database for the public in Rajasthan started last year when civil society members interacted with the government and gave their suggestions on policy issues as part of an initiative known as Digital Dialogue. "We told the government that whatever informa-

tion you have you give it to the public without any hindrance. We also asked them to organise it in a way so that it is useful for people. This initiative converts a culture of secrecy into a culture of openness," says Dey.

The launch of the portal is likely to result in centralising information about government schemes on one website and prove beneficial to the public by obviating the need to go through a tedious RTI application process to know more.

One can get land records and documents from the portal that earlier could only have been accessed through patwaris. Under the new process, one has to enter village and district details to know who owns a piece of land. Similarly, for mining, a sector where widespread corruption has been unearthed in past instances such as the Rajasthan mining scam of 2015, the flow of information in the public domain has been made more transparent.

The state currently has a network of around 68,500 e-mitra kiosks in villages that connect villagers to a number of state-run beneficiary schemes. The government has announced that it is also developing a mobile app and will install self-service portals in villages so that people can access the Jan Soochna Portal easily and get the information they require. "This portal will play a very big role in serving the people in villages. Information should be provided even before it is asked for and that is what this portal aims to do. The government will provide complete encouragement for this," said Gehlot.

shared office spaces, virtual workspaces,

common secretarial services, communica-

tion facilities, and business guidance cen-

tres". He said the centre would engage local

women entrepreneurs and connect them to

world markets using the latest technology to

build their businesses. It would be the hub

that would bring together entrepreneurs,

small business owners, industry leaders,

business mentors, industry experts, and in-

from home for women to set up their busi-

nesses. It would have creche and day-care

centres for kids and adult/senior community

centres for the elderly so that women can fo-

cus on their jobs and not have to worry about

their children and/or aged parents who will

The centre is planned as a safe space away

vestors on to a single platform.

'Forests can be saved by honouring tribal rights vested in the Forest Rights Act'

UNION TRIBAL Affairs Minister ARJUN MUNDA believes that money is not the only thing when focusing on tribal development; he says the psychology of tribals needs to be understood for effectively integrating them in the mainstream. In an interview with ABHISHEK ANGAD, he also elaborated on the government's stand on of Forest Rights Act. Edited excerpts.

You spoke of the Modi government's 100 days performance in a press conference. What is the report card of your 100 days?

We are deliberating on how to give proper education in rural India and create opportunities. Tribals are a focus area because in various parameters they are below the national average. We are also focusing on the scattered population that lives in forest areas so that it benefits from all (welfare) schemes. We are measuring the outcomes of all such schemes and it is a big responsibility. The constitutional rights of tribals have not been given to them. How do we address (this gap) in less time. This is the mandate that the Modi government has given to me. For example, we are starting 462 residential Eklavya schools so that the education among the tribals increases.

But a CAG report on social sectors ending March 2017, tabled January 2019, of one state Madhya Pradesh — pointed out glaring

lapses such as inadequate infrastructure in such Eklavya schools. Jharkhand will also get 69 new Eklavya schools, but the state also has its own share of problems. How do you aim to monitor them?

There is a structure now in place for these schools with regular monitoring, like how it happens in Navodaya Vidyalayas. Earlier money was allotted to the states, which used to run these schools, and in some areas, they did not function properly. Now there is a different system altogether.

The NFHS-4 shows significant nutritional gaps in tribal children. What is the government's plan to reduce it?

We are developing a monitoring system because various departments have been working for tribals. So we are coordinating to improve the traditional systems of dealing with these things constitutionally through Gram Sabha, the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) or PESA Act of 1996, and make people accountable.



THE **POLICY INTERVIEW ARJUN MUNDA** Union Tribal Affairs Minister

But the Tribal Affairs Ministry has a limited budget while various other ministries and state governments have large chunks of money for tribal

development. Is coordination an issue? There are a lot of things which are being done which was not there in the past few years. We are monitoring it aggressively.

In a recent survey on maternity benefits showed that around 75% women did not receive cash benefits, despite applying for it? Tribals form most of this populace.

This is a state government issue and they have to pay more attention to it. After the state formation, Jharkhand has been growing but has to strive to make it better.

Forest Rights Act (FRA) was brought because the "historical injustice needed correction". Recently a controversy has erupted. Where do you stand?

All those people who are saying various things would be have been not in contact with the forest area. The matter is sub-judice and I will not go into the merits of this case. Forests can be saved through tribal rights vested in the FRA. Our Ministry is monitoring it continuously and we want to increase the forest area and the people who stay there. We worry so much about forest biodiversity, why should not we worry about the people staying there? Communities living in the forest areas for ages cannot be evicted from the forest.

Full interview on indianexpress.com

From States

REFORMS TRACKER

New sand policy to curb black marketing

ANDHRA PRADESH

THE JAGANMOHAN Reddy-led state government has scrapped the existing sand policy and unveiled a new one that aims to curb hoarding and black marketing. The government view was that the older policy allowed unsustainable exploitation of rivers systems and only served to line the pockets of the middlemen. The state has rivers like Krishna, Godavari, Tungabhadra and Penna as well as a coastline of close to 1000 kilometres - all of which were being abused by the sand mining mafia, according to the government. The new policy regulates the amount and places where mining can happen.

UTTAR PRADESH Boosting agricultural

exports

TO BOOST farmers' income, the state government last week announced its first-ever agriculture export policy. The decision was taken in a cabinet meeting chaired by the chief minister and the policy aims at doubling the export of agricultural commodities by 2024. To this end, the government hopes to rope in farmer producer organisations as well as incentivise start-ups in this sector.

ODISHA Expanding tele-

medicine network

nounced that it will soon introduce a new tele-medicine policy aimed at expanding the Odisha Tele-medicine Network to district headquarter hospitals and wellness centres functioning under medical colleges. "Patients from remote corners of the state can avail consultation and health services from specialist doctors," said Health Secretary Dr Pramod Meherda. The government announced that it will also start eclassroom facility with the help of tele-medicine technology.

THE STATE government has an-

A centre for women entrepreneurs in Kerala that will offer fully automated private and

SHAJU PHILIP

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPTEMBER 15

THE SOCIAL Justice Department of Kerala government has proposed an international women's trade centre (iWTC) in line with the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The proposed trade centre would be the

first of its kind facility in the country. Its initial phase is expected to become operational in January 2021. The centre would be constructed in the Social Justice Department's Gender Park (see photo), which is a platform for bringing together gender policy, research, education and social initiatives. The centre would come up in the Gender Park's main campus in Kozhikode. In the initial stage, the project would give a special focus on providing opportunities for women in the flood-affected areas.

Social Justice, K K Shailaja, THE

"As more women foray into entrepreneurship and explore other self-employment options in Kerala,

there is a need for providing a platform to help them overcome various barriers imposed by society. The iWTC hopes to get potential women entrepreneurs would come



Gender Park, Kozhikode, will house international women's trade centre

forward and participate in international trade, enjoy greater economic benefits, and enhance their competitiveness to tap market opportunities".

She said the centre would give special fo-According to the Minister for Health and cus on hand-holding and bringing economically-weaker women,

marginalised groups, and women with disabilities to the forefront by helping to nurture their entrepreneur-

ial capabilities. Gender Park's Chief Executive Officer, Dr PT Mohammed Sunish, said: "Women start-

ups can be incubated in a high-tech space

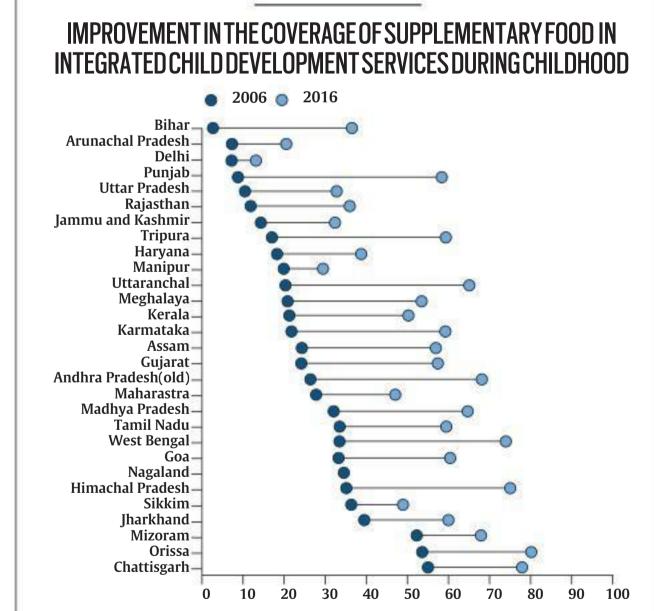
SOLUTION

It would also be a shopping destination catering to the needs of women – from retail fashion and technology outlets to health and wellness centres. This space will be the artery connecting the trade centre to the residential

be within close proximity.

and commercial community of North Kerala. Apart from having facilities for business and trade, the centre would also include space to promote and showcase performing arts and culture such as dance, music, theatre, and other cultural forms to foster creative self-expression for women.

IN NUMBERS



Source: India's Integrated Child Development Services programme; equity and extent of

coverage in 2006 and 2016. (Suman Chakrabarti et al. 2019)

MAHARASHTRA/SIMPLIFYING LAWS

A bureaucrat demystifies legal jargon for the common man

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS. PUNE, SEPTEMBER 15

SUGAR COMMISSIONER of Maharashtra Shekhar Gaikwad wears multiples hats. When he is not busy trying to get sugar mills to pay the farmers their dues, Gaikwad tries to untangle the complex land laws of the state. In fact, over the years, his books have become the Bible for the farmers in the state. It is not uncommon to see farmers taking the

cases in the revenue courts. Gaikwad's interest in land laws dates back to the late 1980s when he was a young Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) of Kagal taluka of Kolhapur district. He came across a dispute that had been going on for 80 years. The case — in which two farmers were fighting for the legal ownership of 1.46 acres of land — had

help of Gaikwad's book while arguing their

even reached the Supreme Court on two occasions. "As a young officer, I was stumped. Why would these farmers fight for so long over a piece of land," he recounts. So he asked both the parties. The answers were an eyeopener for Gaikwad and made him decide to take up the onerous task of trying to unravel and simplify the tangled world of land rights.

"It was a case of encroachment – the party that was defending its right freely admitted that it had encroached on the land and was growing sugarcane on it. From the annual yield of 80 tonnes, this farmer paid half to his lawyer and kept the case going even as the original owner of the land continued to fight the case as he had promised his father on the latter's death bed," explains Gaikwad. It was a deadlock and the only ones making money were the lawyers. The case made Gaikwad want to simplify land laws. His books, which have gone into multi-



Shekhar Gaikwad (left) with the then Chief Minister Narayan Rane at the release of his book about land mutation in Maharashtra. Express

ple editions, both in English and Marathi, have over the years become the ready reckoner for farmers, litigants and even revenue officers of the state. What differentiates Gaikwad's books from the tomes on land laws is that they are presented in a very different manner. "Interaction with farmers showed me that instead of an academic approach, they would prefer a situational approach to their problems," he says. Thus the books present situations and their legal solutions in a simple storytelling format. Other than the 25 major land laws of Maharashtra, the books draw information from various government resolutions and judgments with regards to land laws. Of his 18 books, the one titled *Shetiche*

Khaidya (Land laws) is the most popular. First published in 2005, the book till date has seen 5 editions. It simplifies various laws related to land and also answers the various questions related to land deals. Ignorance of land laws, Gaikwad says, often leads to farmer asking for advice from lawyers who charge

The most common problem that farmers face is about the mutation of their land. As the name suggests, change in ownership has to be "mutated" in the land records. Easy as it might sound, this simple act becomes the single biggest source of litigation and often leads to corrupt practices at various levels of government. Gaikwad's book Land Rights and Mutations in Maharashtra delves deep into this problem and presents numerous scenarios that farmers face. "Farmers now carry this book if the village level talathi (official) creates obstacles in their land dealings," he said.

At present Gaikwad is working on his next book, which, he says, aims to help sugarcane farmers fight for their rights.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 180

निर्यात की समस्या

केंद्रीय वाणिज्य मंत्रालय के ताजा आंकडे बताते हैं कि अगस्त 2019 में देश का निर्यात 6 फीसदी तक कम हुआ। यह निर्यात क्षेत्र में लंबे समय से चली आ रही मंदी की स्मृति को ताजा कराने वाला वाकया है। यह सच है कि इस ढांचागत समस्या का देश के बाहरी संतुलन की स्थिरता पर कोई तात्कालिक असर नहीं होगा क्योंकि घरेलू मांग में कमी यह कहना सही है कि निर्यात वृद्धि किसी

के चलते आयात में भी गिरावट आ रही है। परंतु फिर भी निर्यात की इस समस्या का हल आवश्यक है। इंजीनियरिंग वस्तुओं के निर्यात में गिरावट खासी दिक्कतदेह है क्योंकि गत वित्त वर्ष में इसमें सुधार नजर आया था।

केंद्रीय वाणिज्य मंत्री पीयुष गोयल का

भी विकास नीति के केंद्र में होती है। उन्होंने गत सप्ताह बोर्ड ऑफ ट्रेड की एक बैठक में कहा था कि अगर देश को सरकार द्वारा तय विकास लक्ष्य हासिल करने हैं तो उसे निर्यात में 19-20 फीसदी की दर से वृद्धि हासिल करनी होगी। उन्होंने यह भी कहा था कि अगले पांच वर्ष में एक लाख करोड डॉलर मुल्य का निर्यात किया जा सकता है और चीन तथा अमेरिका के व्यापारिक युद्ध के बीच भारतीय निर्यातकों के लिए काफी अवसर हैं। इस कारोबारी जंग से उत्पन्न वैश्विक मंदी की स्थिति भी भारत के लिए एक अवसर लेकर आई है। फिलहाल विश्व व्यापार में बमुश्किल 2 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी रखने वाला भारत नए बाजारों में विस्तार

लेकिन दिक्कत यह है कि यह लक्ष्य हकीकत से दर नजर आता है। अगस्त में आई गिरावट कोई पहला अवसर नहीं है बल्कि इस वित्त वर्ष में दूसरी बार निर्यात वृद्धि में सालाना आधार पर कमी आई है। इस संदर्भ में देखें तो केंद्रीय वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने सप्ताहांत पर निर्यात को बढावा देने के लिए जिन उपायों की घोषणा की है वे और अधिक मायने रखते हैं। सीतारमण ने निर्यातकों को नए प्रोत्साहन की घोषणा की जिन्हें शुल्क में छूट या उत्पाद निर्यात में कर छूट का नाम दिया गया है। यह भारत से होने वाले वाणिज्यिक निर्यात संबंधी उस योजना का स्थानापन्न है जो विवादित होकर विश्व व्यापार संगठन तक

भारत के लिए यह निर्यात वृद्धि अहम जा पहुंची। सवाल यह है कि क्या मामूली रद्दोबदल से देश का निर्यात लंबी अवधि में प्रतिस्पर्धी बन सकेगा। हमारे यहां लाल फीताशाही और ऋण की उपलब्धता जैसी ढांचागत समस्याएं भी हैं जिन्हें हल करने की आवश्यकता है। हालांकि सीतारमण ने उस दिशा में भी पहल की है। जैसा कि मंत्री ने कहा भी, निर्यातकों के लिए वस्तु एवं सेवा कर के इनपुट कर क्रेडिट का स्वचालित रिफंड कार्यशील पूंजी की कमी की समस्या को हल करने में मदद करेगा। इसी प्रकार आरबीआई द्वारा निर्यातकों को प्राथमिक क्षेत्र के ऋण मानकों में शिथिलता का भी लाभ मिलेगा। ये दोनों पिछले कुछ समय से लाग हैं और सीमारमण के पैकेज में कछ

असली अंतर निर्यात क्षेत्र में वैश्विक मानकों को अपनाने से आएगा। वित्त मंत्री ने कहा कि निर्यात मंजूरी के जो काम अभी हाथ से किए जाते हैं उनको जल्दी ही डिजिटल किया जाएगा। उन्होंने इस बदलाव के लिए दिसंबर की समय सीमा तय की है। इस प्रक्रिया में तकनीक का इस्तेमाल केवल अपने काम में नहीं बल्कि बंदरगाह पर जहाजों और ट्रकों के लौटने के समय को वैश्विक मानकों के अनुरूप बनाने में भी किया जाना चाहिए। वैश्विक बंदरगाहों पर जहाज आधे दिन में हट जाते हैं जबिक ट्रक आधे घंटे में। हमें यह लक्ष्य लेकर चलना होगा। अगर हम इसे हासिल कर सके तो देश की निर्यात प्रतिस्पर्धा में बडा सधार



वास्तविक आर्थिक सुधार का अब भी इंतजार

सरकार को यह समझना होगा कि उसके कुछ नीतिगत कदमों के बाद भी विदेशी निवेशक बिकवाली क्यों कर रहे हैं ? निवेशकों की चिंताओं के बारे में बता रहे हैं आकाश प्रकाश

देशी निवेशक अब भी अपनी इक्विटी बेचने में लगे हुए हैं। वे रोजाना करीब 10 से 20 डॉलर की निकासी कर रहे हैं। भारतीय शेयर बाजारों का प्रदर्शन साल के अधिकांश समय में सकारात्मक रहे वैश्विक बाजारों से नीचे बना

भारत की वृहद आर्थिक तस्वीर अनुकूल है। कच्चे तेल के भाव 60-70 डॉलर प्रति बैरल के दायरे में हैं। करीब 17 लाख करोड डॉलर का वैश्विक कर्ज ऋणात्मक ब्याज दर दे रहा है। मजबूत वृद्धि लायक किसी भी देश को भरपूर पूंजी आकर्षित करने में सक्षम होना चाहिए। दुनिया भर में केंद्रीय बैंक ब्याज दरों में एक और कटौती का मन बनाते दिख रहे हैं। ऐसे में तरलता की कोई कमी नहीं है। सरकार ने घरेल एवं बाहरी दोनों ही तरह के निवेशकों की बातें सुनी और पूंजीगत लाभ पर लगने वाले अधिभार को हटा दिया है। इस अधिभार को लेकर निवेशक चिंता जताते रहे हैं। इस बात को भी माना गया है कि वृद्धि दर अस्वीकार्य स्तर तक सुस्त पड़ चुकी है और इस सुस्ती को दूर करने के लिए नीतिगत कदम उठाए जा रहे हैं।

इसके अलावा वैश्विक पूंजी का देश से बाहर जाना बदस्तूर जारी है। वैश्विक या क्षेत्रीय फंड से जुड़े निवेशकों के साथ चर्चा करने पर निम्नलिखित चिंताएं उजागर

चिंता इस बात को लेकर है कि मौजूदा सुस्ती की प्रवृत्ति चक्रीय होने के बजाय कहीं संरचनात्मक तो नहीं है। वैश्विक स्तर पर दरों में लगातार कटौती होने से लगता है कि नॉमिनल वृद्धि दर दुनिया भर में नाटकीय रूप से सुस्त होने वाली है। शायद भारत अब 7-8 फीसदी के बजाय लंबे समय तक 5-6 फीसदी वृद्धि की ही राह पर रहने वाला है। मुद्रास्फीति के लगातार नीचे रहने से नॉमिनल वृद्धि दर 8-9 फीसदी तक रह सकती है। एक अंक वाली नॉमिनल वृद्धि होने से कॉर्पोरेट आय वृद्धि भी इसी स्तर पर टिक सकती है। सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) में बेहद कम लाभ हिस्सेदारी को देखते हुए अधिकतर निवेशकों ने आने वाले पांच वर्षों में भारत के लिए दो अंकों वाली आय वृद्धि का अनुमान रखा था। बाकी उभरते बाजारों की तुलना में भारत के मूल्यांकन प्रीमियम को सही ठहराने के लिए ऐसा किया गया था। दो अंक वाली उच्च आय वृद्धि के अनुमानों का पूरा हो पाना मुश्किल लग रहा है। निवेशकों का अपना मुनाफा हिस्सा छोडने के लिए तैयार होने का मतलब पुरानी स्थिति की वापसी है। हो सकता है कि यह भी एक नया सामान्य हो। जहां भारत अब भी अधिकांश देशों की तुलना में तेजी से वृद्धि करेगा, वहीं निरपेक्ष स्तर निराशाजनक हो सकते हैं। इसके लिए मूल्यांकन को दुरुस्त

करने की जरूरत पड़ सकती है। यह चिंता भी है कि चक्रीय-रोधी राजकोषीय कदम की गुंजाइश नहीं रह गई है। जीडीपी वृद्धि धीमी होने से कर राजस्व निराश करेगा और बाजार के कमजोर होने से विनिवेश से भी बहुत कुछ नहीं मिलेगा। ऐसे में नीति-निर्माताओं के पास इकलौता रास्ता मौद्रिक नीति का रह जाता है। वे इस विकल्प का इस्तेमाल भी कर रहे हैं लेकिन हताश हो चुका कंपनी जगत कम दरों के बावजूद निवेश से परहेज कर सकता है। बहुतों का मानना है कि वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था भी सुस्त पड़ने वाली है। इस तरह हमारी वृद्धि चुनौतियों से निपटने में व्यापार एवं निर्यात मददगार नहीं हो सकते हैं। संरचनात्मक सुस्ती की बात करते हुए कई निवेशक कहते हैं कि सरकार के पास इस खाई से निकलने की सीमित क्षमता ही है।

कर्ज विन्यास को लेकर भी डर देखा जा रहा है। सरकारी कर्ज का प्रतिफल करीब 8.3 फीसदी है। अगर नॉमिनल जीडीपी पहली तिमाही की ही तरह इस आंकड़े से कम बनी रहती है तो कर्ज की हालत और

एक और चिंता वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) को लेकर है। कई निवेशकों का मानना है कि जीएसटी संरचना में बदलाव करना पड़ेगा। केंद्र ने राज्यों को 14 फीसदी कर राजस्व की गारंटी दी हुई है लेकिन नॉमिनल जीडीपी के एक अंक में रहने से इतना राजस्व दे पाना असंभव होगा। केंद्र सरकार को इसकी भरपाई के लिए अपने अन्य संसाधन झोंकने पडेंगे। रसीदों का मिलान अंतिम विकल्प हो सकता है। इसके लागू हो जाने पर हम कुछ उछाल देख सकते हैं। इसके बगैर समुचे कर ढांचे पर ही नए सिरे से सोचना पडेगा। हमने सोचा था कि जीएसटी आने से राजकोषीय स्थिति सुधरेगी। लेकिन यह राजकोषीय गतिशीलता को गंभीर रूप से बाधित कर रहा है। सुस्ती के दौर में नीची नॉमिनल जीडीपी और क्रियान्वयन संबंधी चुनौतियां बरकरार रहने से इस साल

एक लाख करोड़ रुपये राजस्व की कमी हो सकती है।

तीसरी चिंता कंपनी कामकाज एवं पारदर्शिता को लेकर है। भारतीय कंपनी जगत में कामकाज के मानकों के लेकर वास्तविक बेचैनी है। सीजी पावर मामला इसकी एक मिसाल है। वास्तविक कर्ज बैलेंस शीट में दिखाए गए कर्ज से दोगुना कैसे हो सकता है ? कोई कंपनी प्रबंधन या निदेशक की जानकारी के बगैर हजारों करोड रुपये का कर्ज कैसे छिपा सकती है? आईएलऐंडएफएस मामले की असली प्रकृति, आकार और जटिलता अब साफ नजर आ रही है।

बैंकों को इन कर्जों पर 50 फीसदी नुकसान झेलना पड़ सकता है। वित्तीय प्रणाली को 45,000-50,000 करोड़ रुपये गंवाना पड़ सकता है। ऑडिटर, रेटिंग एजेंसियां, प्रबंधन और बोर्ड धोखाधडी या अक्षमता की जद में आ सकते हैं। पेशेवर रूप से संचालित और बोर्ड द्वारा प्रबंधन की जा रही कंपनियां अपवादों में ही हैं। बोर्ड भी प्रबंधन के चंगुल में फंस जाता है। अधिकतर निवेशक अब बढ़िया प्रदर्शन का रिकॉर्ड रखने वाले एक सशक्त प्रवर्तक को ही प्राथमिकता देते हैं। इससे कम–से–कम एजेंसी समस्या कम हो जाती है। सच तो यह है कि वित्तीय बाजारों में भरोसे की भारी कमी है। खराब परिचालन मानक मूल्यांकन गुणकों को कम कर देंगे।

भारचीय इक्विटी बाजारों का संकुचन दो साल पहले ही शुरू हो गया था। उस समय बाजार सही थे और बेहतर कामकाज वाले स्थापित नामों को फायदा हुआ था। गुणवत्ता प्रीमियम का भुगतान सही था।

कॉर्पोरेट इंडिया की धारणा निचले स्तर पर बनी हुई है। निवेशकों के लिए सकारात्मक बने रह पाना मुश्किल हो रहा है। कंपनियां मांग न होने, वित्तीय प्रणाली में जोखिम बढ़ने, न्यायिक सक्रियता, सहानुभूति न रखने वाले नीति-निर्माताओं एवं नियामकों और खराब लाभप्रदता की शिकायत कर रही हैं। मैंने 2012-13 के बाद इस तरह की नकारात्मक कारोबारी धारणा नहीं देखी है।

भले ही सरकार ने कदम उठाने और सुस्ती की रूपरेखा बनानी शुरू कर दी है लेकिन यह काफी नहीं है। सरकार के अलग-अलग अंगों के बीच और नीति-निर्माताओं एवं कंपनी जगत के बीच संवाद की कमी नजर आती है। हमें कंपनी जगत का भरोसा बहाल करने की जरूरत है। निवेशक इस सुस्ती को वास्तविक सुधारों के एक अवसर के तौर पर देखना चाहते हैं। भारत को कारोबार के लिए

अधिक माकूल नजर आना चाहिए। इनमें से कुछ बिंदुओं पर मैं अधिक नकारात्मक नहीं हूं लेकिन उम्मीद है कि सरकार अधिक महत्त्वाकांक्षी आर्थिक सुधारों का एजेंडा पेश करेगी। मुझे नहीं लगता है कि यह सुस्ती संरचनात्मक है। अब एनबीएफसी संकट का एक साल पूरा होने वाला है, ऐसे में आधार अनुकूल होने से वृद्धि बेहतर नजर आने लगेगी। मुनाफा हिस्सेदारी एवं जीडीपी आंकड़े मौजूदा स्तर से सुधरेंगे। वैश्विक वृहद परिदृश्य शायद ही इससे बेहतर रहा है। ऐसे में अगला छह महीना खरीद का मौका साबित हो सकता है।

(लेखक अमांसा कैपिटल से संबद्ध हैं)

बाजार दुरुपयोग की जांच में एक नया अध्याय

देश में प्रतिस्पर्धा कानून की व्याख्या में पिछले दिनों अप्रत्याशित रूप से एक बदलाव दर्ज किया गया। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने भारतीय प्रतिस्पर्धा आयोग (सीसीआई) को दिया गया एक निर्देश बरकरार रखा जिसमें उबर द्वारा कथित रूप से आक्रामक मूल्य निर्धारण किए जाने की जांच करने को कहा गया था। परंतु बात केवल आक्रामक मूल्य निर्धारण की नहीं हैं बल्कि इसकी भी है कि क्या प्रतिस्पर्धा कानून के उद्देश्य के लिए बाजार में एक से अधिक कंपनी का दबदबा हो सकता है।

पूरी दुनिया में आक्रामक मूल्य निर्धारण को प्रतिस्पर्धा कानून के क्षेत्र में एक विवादास्पद विषय माना जाता है। आक्रामक कीमतों से तात्पर्य मोटे तौर पर यही है कि वस्तुओं अथवा सेवाओं को ऐसे मूल्य पर बेचा जाए कि उनकी लागत भी नहीं निकल पा रही हो। दूसरे शब्दों में यह आर्थिक दृष्टि से एकदम अतार्किक निर्णय होता है जहां कोई रसुखदार उपक्रम या कारोबारी वस्तुओं अथवा सेवाओं की आपूर्ति लगातार घाटे में करता है। ऐसा अन्य प्रतिस्पर्धियों का कारोबार खत्म करने के लिए किया जाता है।

कई जगह केवल इतना ही पर्याप्त नहीं होता, बल्कि ऐसे प्रमाणों की भी आवश्यकता होती है जो बताएं कि प्रतिस्पर्धा को समाप्त करने के बाद कीमतों में इजाफा करके पुराने घाटे की भरपाई करने की कोशिश की गई हो। आक्रामक व्यवहार से प्रतिस्पर्धा पहले ही समाप्त हो चुकी होती है इसलिए विरोध की कोई गुंजाइश नहीं रहती। भारत में प्रतिस्पर्धा आयोग की धारा 4 का संबंध दबदबे के दुरुपयोग से है। इसके लिए पहले यह स्थापित करना होता है कि किसी एक उपक्रम का दबदबा है और उसका दुरुपयोग हो रहा है। यहां अन्य चीजों के अलावा रसखदार या दबदबे वाली स्थिति को परिभाषित किया गया है। इसका अर्थ है किसी उपक्रम की ऐसी मजबत स्थिति जो किसी प्रासंगिक बाजार में उसे यह क्षमता प्रदान करती हो कि वह अन्य प्रतिस्पर्धियों अथवा उपभोक्ताओं को अपने पक्ष में प्रभावित कर सके।

उबर के खिलाफ शिकायत यह थी कि वह दिल्ली में प्रति यात्रा जो किराया वसूल कर रही



बाअदब सोमशेखर सुंदरेशन

देश की सबसे बड़ी अदालत अपनी राय रख चुकी है। ऐसे में जाहिर है कि प्रतिस्पर्धा आयोग के

अधीन बाजार के दुरुपयोग की जांच के क्षेत्र में एक नया अध्याय लिखा जाएगा।

है वह प्रत्येक यात्रा की लागत का

आधा था। सीसीआई ने इस मामले की जांच करने से इनकार कर दिया। सीसीआई के निर्णयों पर सांविधिक अपीलों की सुनवाई करने वाले राष्ट्रीय कंपनी लॉ अपील पंचाट ने अपील करने पर कहा कि सीसीआई को इस आधार पर मामले की जांच करनी चाहिए कि किराया लागत से असंगत रूप से कम रखा गया था। उसने कहा कि रसूखदार कारोबारी होने के कारण मामले की जांच आवश्यक है।

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने उबर की अपील को खारिज कर दिया और कहा कि अगर तथ्यों से यह नजर आता है कि कीमतें ऐसी हैं कि तो प्रथम दृष्ट्या यह मामला बनता है कि शायद संबंधित उपक्रम बाजार में दबदबा रखता हो। अदालत ने कहा कि यह कीमत निश्चित रूप से बाजार में प्रतिस्पर्धियों को प्रभावित करेगी। अदालत ने यह भी कहा कि कीमतों को लागत से कम रखना प्रथम दृष्ट्या अपने दबदबे के दुरुपयोग का मामला लगता है। ऐसे में अपील पंचाट के जांच के निर्णय को बरकरार रखा गया और सीसीआई के इस निर्णय को नकार दिया कि मामले की जांच की आवश्यकता नहीं थी।

आरोप यह था कि उबर ऐसे

नुकसान की भरपाई अधिक पूंजी लगाकर करेगी। दूसरे शब्दों में कहें तो एक लचर नियामकीय व्यवस्था का लाभ लेने के लिए पूंजी की मदद ली जा रही थी और प्रतिस्पर्धा समाप्त की जा रही थी। अदालत ने कहा कि यह कहना बहुत मुश्किल है कि इस मामले में जांच की आवश्यकता नहीं है। शुरुआती वर्षों में सीसीआई तकनीकी रूप से सक्षम संस्थानों के मामले में बहुत कातर रुख रखता था। तकनीकी नवाचार को लेकर या कैसे राज्य सरकारों को नवाचार में गतिरोध नहीं पैदा करना चाहिए जैसी दलीलें देकर किसी भी तरह की जांच के खिलाफ माहौल तैयार किया जाता था। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्णय ने इस रुख पर रोक लगा दिया।

दुरुपयोग के मामलों में सीसीआई ने ऐतिहासिक रूप से जो रुख अपना रखा था, उसे भी इस निर्णय से झटका लगा। यह दलील दी जा सकती है और यह स्वीकार्य भी है कि अगर एक से अधिक लोग लागत से कम मूल्य की पेशकश कर रहे हों तो इसका यह अर्थ होगा कोई भी रसुखदार स्थिति में नहीं है। यह दिलचस्प नीतिगत स्थिति है क्योंकि दो उद्यम साथ आकर रसूखदार बन सकते हैं और साथ मिलकर बाजार का दरुपयोग कर सकते हैं। वैकल्पिक रूप से देखें तो दोनों उपक्रमों में से प्रत्येक में यह क्षमता हो सकती है कि वह बाजार पर दबदबा कायम कर सके और प्रतिस्पर्धा को प्रभावित कर सके।

इसके अलावा बाजार के

सीसीआई ने ऐतिहासिक रूप से इस रुख का समिथन किया है कि एक बाजार में एक से अधिक रसखदार उपक्रम नहीं हो सकते। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्णय के बाद अब यह स्पष्ट है कि अगर कोई उपक्रम निरंतर अपनी कीमत लागत से कम रखता है तो वह रसूखदार स्थिति में होगा। अगर एक से अधिक उपक्रम ऐसा करते हैं तो इसका अर्थ यह होगा एक से अधिक रसुखदार उपक्रम मौजूद हैं। अदालत की दलील के मुताबिक ऐसा हर उपक्रम जो रसूखदार हो सकता है, उसकी जांच की जा सकती है।

देश की सबसे बड़ी अदालत अपनी राय रख चुकी है। ऐसे में जाहिर है कि प्रतिस्पर्धा आयोग के अधीन बाजार के दुरुपयोग की जांच के क्षेत्र में एक नया अध्याय लिखा जाएगा।

कानाफूसी

शैलजा को हां, तंवर को ना

यह सवाल सबके मन में है कि आखिर कुमारी शैलजा को हरियाणा कांग्रेस का प्रमुख क्यों बनाया गया है और राहुल गांधी के वफादार माने जाने वाले अशोक तंवर को बाहर का रास्ता क्यों दिखाया गया है। जानकार बताते हैं कि ऐसा इसलिए है क्योंकि शैलजा के समर्थक जानते हैं कि उनके पास मां है। लोकसभा में जब सोनिया गांधी का स्वास्थ्य बिगडा तो उन्होंने सदन से बाहर जाने के लिए शैलजा की मदद ली और कार के आने तक वही उनके साथ अकेले खड़ी रहीं। शैलजा के पिता कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ सदस्य रहे हैं और उनके निधन के बाद ही शैलजा को पहली बार लोकसभा का टिकट मिला था। ऐसे में परिवारवाद का आरोप लगने की आशंका के बावजूद उनको पार्टी प्रमुख



आपका पक्ष

शिक्षा व्यवस्था पर ध्यान दे सरकार

देश में शिक्षा व्यवस्था बदतर होती जा रही है। टाइम्स हायर एजुकेशन द्वारा जारी विश्व यूनिवर्सिटी रैंकिंग 2020 की सूची में 300 संस्थानों में भारत के एक भी संस्थान को जगह नहीं मिली है। भारत में शीर्ष स्थान वाला भारतीय विज्ञान संस्थान बेंगलूरु 251 से 300 वें स्थान से लुढ़कर 301 से 350 वें स्थान पर आ गया है। कुल 92 देशों की 1,300 से भी अधिक विश्वविद्यालयों की इस सुची में 56 भारतीय संस्थान शामिल हुए थे। चिंता का विषय यह है कि हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था की गुणवत्ता साल दर साल घटती जा रही है। वर्ष 2017 में भारत शीर्ष 200 की सूची में था। वर्ष 2018 में 251वें स्थान पर आ गया। वर्ष 2019 में 300 से 251वें स्थान पर रहा। लेकिन वर्ष 2019 में 300वें स्थान से बाहर होकर 301वें स्थान पर आ गया है। इस सर्वे की संपादक एली बोथवेल ने हालिया रैंकिंग में भारत में संभावनाएं हैं का जिक्र तो



किया, साथ ही उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि 300वें स्थान तक किसी भी भारतीय संस्थान का नहीं पहुंच पाना निराशाजनक है। उन्होंने कहा कि सरकार को इस क्षेत्र में अधिक निवेश करने की जरूरत है। इस वर्ष वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने बजट पेश करते हुए शिक्षा के बजट को बढ़ाने की घोषणा की, मगर सारा जोर उन्होंने उच्च शिक्षा

. टाइम्स हायर एजुकेशन द्वारा जारी सर्वे में भारत के शिक्षण संस्थान ३००वें स्थान से बाहर हैं

पर दिया। वित्त मंत्री ने घोषणा की थी कि सरकार ने विश्वस्तरीय संस्थान बनाने के लिए 400 करोड रुपये आवंटित किए हैं। जबकि स्कुली शिक्षा पर मौन रहकर वित्त

दी कि प्राथमिक और माध्यमिक शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता बिना उच्च शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता में सुधार नहीं किया जा सकता। बजट में शिक्षा के लिए सिर्फ 94,854 करोड़ रुपये अर्थात बजट का मात्र 3 प्रतिशत आवंटित किया गया जो पर्याप्त नहीं है। इस विश्वस्तरीय सुची में पहला और दूसरा स्थान भले ही ब्रिटेन का हो, लेकिन शीर्ष 20 की सूची में सबसे अधिक अमेरिका के संस्थान हैं। अमेरिका के सफलता के पीछे का कारण शिक्षा में अधिक निवेश करना है। सरकार को सोचना चाहिए कि विकसित होने के बावजूद भी जो देश शिक्षा पर इतना निवेश करता है, तो फिर हमें भी इस पर ध्यान देने की जरूरत है। शिक्षा के मामले में चीन, जापान और कोरियाई देश भारत से आगे है।

दामिनी वर्षा. बक्सर

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

मंत्री ने इस बात की अनदेखी कर 🛚 एक देश एक भाषा की जरूरत

विगत 14 सितंबर को देश में हिंदी दिवस मनाया गया। लेकिन यह दुर्भाग्य है कि हिंदी देश की सरकारी कामकाज की भाषा नहीं बन सकी है। आज भी सरकारी कामकाज अंग्रेजी में ही होता है जो अंग्रेजों की देन है। देश को आजाद हुए सात दशक हो गए लेकिन पूरे देश के लिए कोई एक भाषा राष्ट्रीय भाषा नहीं बन सकी है। हिंदी दिवस पर गृह मंत्री अमित शाह ने कहा कि भारत में कई भाषाएं हैं और हर भाषा का अपना महत्त्व है। लेकिन यह बेहद जरूरी है कि पूरे देश में एक भाषा होनी चाहिए जो वैश्विक रूप से भारत की पहचान बने। गृह मंत्री का यह बयान पूरे देश को एकसूत्र में पिरोने वाला तो है लेकिन कुछ नेता अपने स्वार्थ के लिए इस मामले में राजनीति करने लगे हैं। आज भारत में लगभग 40 प्रतिशत आबादी हिंदी भाषी है। अत: हिंदी को राष्ट्रीय भाषा का दर्जा दिया जाना उचित है।

कमल कुमार, नोएडा

दैनिक जागरण



प्रेम की शक्ति से असंभव को भी संभव किया जा सकता है

हिंदी विरोध की आदत

हिंदी की महत्ता का उल्लेख करते ही किस तरह कुछ हिंदी विरोधी लोग राजनीतिक रोटियां सेंकने में जुट जाते हैं, यह एक बार फिर तब स्पष्ट हुआ जब हिंदी दिवस के अवसर पर केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री अमित शाह की ओर से व्यक्त किए गए इस विचार का विरोध शुरू हो गया कि हिंदी देश को जोड़ने का काम कर सकती है। उनके इस कथन में ऐसा कुछ भी नहीं कि उसका विरोध किया जाए या फिर यह मनमाना निष्कर्ष निकाला जाए कि गैर हिंदी भाषियों पर हिंदी थोपने की कोशिश हो रही है। क्या यह यथार्थ नहीं कि यदि कोई भाषा देश की संपर्क भाषा बन सकती है तो वह हिंदी ही है? सच तो यह है कि वह संपर्क भाषा के रूप में काम भी कर रही है और प्रभावी भी सिद्ध हो रही है। गैर हिंदी भाषी राज्यों के जो नेता अमित शाह के कथन पर कोलाहल कर रहे हैं वे यह देख पाएं तो बेहतर कि उनके यहां भी हिंदी का चलन और उसकी स्वीकार्यता बढी है। उन्हें इस सत्य से भी परिचित होना चाहिए कि हिंदी को राष्ट्रभाषा बनाने की पैरवी उनके अपने लोगों ने की थी। इसका कारण यही था कि वे हिंदी की सामर्थ्य से भली-भांति अवगत थे। बिना विचारे हिंदी विरोध की ध्वजा उठाने को तत्पर नेताओं को इसका भान होना चाहिए कि उनके आचरण से सभी भारतीय भाषाओं का अहित होता है, क्योंकि ऐसे अवसरों पर उन लोगों को सिक्रय होने का अवसर मिल जाता है जो इस मिथ्या धारणा से ग्रस्त हैं कि ज्ञान की भाषा तो अंग्रेजी ही है। ध्यान रहे कि जापान, जर्मनी, इजरायल, चीन आदि इसके ही उदाहरण हैं कि अपनी भाषा में कहीं अच्छे से उन्नति की जा सकती है।

देश की सभी भाषाओं का विकास और विस्तार होना चाहिए, क्योंकि भाषा संस्कृति का भी प्रतिनिधित्व करती है, लेकिन इसी के साथ यह भी समझना होगा कि हिंदी का किसी से बैर नहीं और वह हर भाषा को साथ लेकर चलने की हामी है। वास्तव में इसी कारण हिंदी की उपयोगिता बढी है। इस सबके बाद भी केवल इतने से संतुष्ट नहीं हुआ जा सकता कि एक लोकप्रिय संपर्क भाषा के रूप में हिंदी अपनी पहचान बनाने में समर्थ है, क्योंकि शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में उसका अपेक्षित उपयोग नहीं हो रहा है। आखिर विज्ञान, तकनीक और अन्य अनेक विषयों की पढ़ाई हिंदी में क्यों नहीं हो सकती? एक प्रश्न यह भी है कि न्यायपालिका और साथ ही सरकारी तंत्र के उच्च स्तर पर हिंदी का उपयोग क्यों नहीं हो हो पा रहा है? निश्चित रूप से इसका उत्तर हिंदी विरोध की संकीर्ण राजनीति में भी

बीएड माफिया पर सख्ती

आजादी के बाद शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में जितने घोटाले बिहार में हुए हैं, उतने शायद ही किसी अन्य क्षेत्र में हुए हों। बिहार में स्कूल से लेकर विश्वविद्यालय परिसर तक भ्रष्टाचार शिष्टाचार सा बन गया था। मैट्रिक और इंटरमीडिएट की परीक्षा की गड़बड़ियां तो अंतरराष्ट्रीय मीडिया की सुर्खियां बटोर चुकी हैं। स्कूल भवनों के निर्माण में पहले ठेकेदार और शिक्षा विभाग के अधिकारी भ्रष्टाचार करते थे, फिर प्रधानाध्यापक करने लगे। नियुक्तियों में भाई-भतीजावाद, अयोग्य लोगों की नियुक्ति, मोटी तनख्वाह लेना और नहीं पढ़ाना, जाली सर्टिफिकेट बांटना, कदाचार को बढ़ावा देना जैसी बातें हर कोई जानता है। एक समय था जब किताबें, भत्ते, मध्याह्न भोजन की गड़बड़ियां आम बात थीं। हालांकि पिछले एक दशक में शिक्षा क्षेत्र में बदलाव की गंभीर कोशिशें हुई हैं। व्यवस्था बदली भी है। निगरानी सख्त हुई है। कुलाधिपति कार्यालय से लेकर पंचायतों तक को शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में भ्रष्टाचार पर रोक के लिए सक्रिय किया गया है। इसका असर भी हुआ है। बिहार विद्यालय परीक्षा समिति का पूरा स्वरूप ही बदल गया है। राजभवन की सक्रियता से विश्वविद्यालयों की व्यवस्था पटरी पर लौट रही, लेकिन शायद सब कुछ अभी ठीक होने में देर है। अब राज्य के निजी बीएड कॉलेजों में नियमों को ताक पर रख मांकन में विश्वविद्यालयों की मिलीभगत से फर्जीवाड़ा सामने आया है। जिन शिक्षकों को प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त कर विद्यालयों में नई पीढी को अच्छा नागरिक बनाने का कार्य करना है. वहीं इस प्रशिक्षण को प्राप्त करने के लिए तमाम हथकंडे अपनाते रहे हैं। बीएड नामांकन से परीक्षा तक की गड़बड़ियों को ठीक करने के लिए नई व्यवस्था बनाई गई थी, लेकिन उसमें भी छेद हो गए हैं। अवैध नामांकन की भनक मिलने पर कुलपतियों की बैठक में नामांकित अभ्यर्थियों की जांच नालंदा खुला विश्वविद्यालय से कराने की सलाह कुलाधिपति ने दी थी। लेकिन इस पर अमल केवल पाटलिपुत्र विश्वविद्यालय ने ही किया। आरोप है कि 700 छात्रों का नामांकन गलत तरीके से लिया गया है। यह भी आरोप है कि एडिमशन फीस के अतिरिक्त रजिस्ट्रेशन, फॉर्म और हाईकोर्ट में मामले की सुनवाई के नाम पर कॉलेज प्रबंधन ने अवैध वसुली की है। यह गंभीर विषय है। शिक्षक नियोजन के दौरान हजारों फर्जी प्रमाणपत्र के मामले सामने आए थे। फर्जीवाड़ा करने वाले व्यक्ति शिक्षक नहीं कहे जा सकते। ऐसे लोग बच्चों को सदाचार का पाठ कैसे पढ़ा सकते हैं? यह सच है कि आज बेरोजगारी बड़ी समस्या है, लेकिन बेरोजगारी दूर करने के नाम पर फर्जीवाड़ा की इजाजत कतई नहीं दी जा सकती।

इसलिए जरूरी है समान नागरिक संहिता

होते हैं, लेकिन सभा के कुछ सदस्य राष्ट्रीय

विधि के निर्माण में निजी कानूनों को ऊपर बता

रहे थे। एक सदस्य मोहम्मद इस्माइल ने कहा

'यह उचित नहीं कि लोगों को उनके निजी

कानून छोड़ने के लिए मजबूर किया जाए।'

महबूब अली ने कहा कि 'साढ़े तेरह सौ साल

से मुसलमान इसी कानून पर चलते रहे हैं। हम

अन्य प्रणाली मानने से इन्कार कर देंगे।' बी

पोकर ने कहा कि 'अंग्रेजों ने निजी कानुनों को

मानने की अनुमति दी थी।' इस बात को काटते

हुए अल्लादि स्वामी अय्यर ने कहा 'अंग्रेजों

ने पूरे देश में एक ही आपराधिक कानून लागू

किया। क्या उसे लेकर मुसलमानों ने अंग्रेजों के

पंथिक विश्वास नितांत निजी आस्था है,

लेकिन संविधान सभा में पंथिक विश्वास को

निजी कानून की शक्ल में पेश किया गया। कहा

गया कि 'समान नागरिक संहिता अल्पसंख्यकों

के विरुद्ध अन्याय है। केएम मुंशी ने कहा कि

किसी भी उन्नत देश में अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय

के निजी कानून को अटल नहीं माना गया कि

व्यवहार संहिता बनाने का निषेध हो।' उन्होंने

खिलाफ विद्रोह किया?'



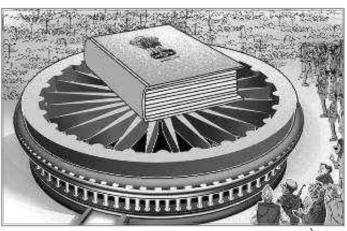
हृदयनारायण दीक्षित

देश में एक ही विषय पर दो कानूनी विकल्पों का कोई औचित्य नहीं ।एकताबद्ध राष्ट्र में 'निजी कानून' निरर्थक हैं ? सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने फिर इस ओर ध्यान आकर्षित कराया है

💳 म भारत के लोग' भारतीय राष्ट्र रि राज्य की मूल इकाई हैं। संविधान की उद्देशिका 'हम भारत के लोग' से ही प्रारंभ होती है। इसके अनुसार भारत के लोगों ने ही अपना संविधान गढ़ा है। संविधान निर्माताओं ने प्रत्येक नागरिक को समान मौलिक अधिकार दिए हैं। मूल अधिकार न्यायालय द्वारा प्रवर्तनीय हैं। राष्ट्र राज्य को भी अनेक कर्तव्य सौंपे गए हैं। वे संविधान के भाग-चार में राज्य के नीति निदेशक तत्वों में वर्णित हैं। ये न्यायालय द्वारा प्रवर्तनीय नहीं हैं। इनमें व्यापक राष्ट्रीय आकांक्षा को ही सूचीबद्ध किया गया है। ग्रेनविल ऑस्टिन ने ठीक लिखा है कि 'राज्य की सकारात्मक बाध्यताओं की रचना करके संविधान सभा ने भारत की भावी सरकारों को उत्तरदायित्व सौंपे हैं।' कुछ निदेशक तत्वों पर सकारात्मक काम हुआ है, लेकिन राष्ट्रीय एकता के लिए अपरिहार्य 'एक समान नागरिक संहिता' (अनुच्छेद 44) के प्रवर्तन में कोई प्रगति नहीं हुई है। सर्वोच्च न्यायपीठ ने तीखी टिप्पणी की है कि 'समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करने के लिए अब तक कोई प्रयास नहीं हुआ है।' न्यायालय ने इसके पहले 2003, 1995 और 1985 में भी संहिता पर जोर दिया था।

संविधान और विधि के प्रति निष्ठा प्रत्येक नागरिक का कर्तव्य है। समान नागरिक संहिता संविधान का भाग है। संविधान का आदर्श भी है। बावजूद इसके सांप्रदायिक कारण से इसका प्रवर्तन राष्ट्र की मुख्य चुनौती है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने चौथी बार ध्यानाकर्षण किया है। उसने गोवा की प्रशंसा की है। गोवा में पंथिक विश्वास के परे समान नागरिक संहिता है। बेशक निदेशक तत्वों के प्रवर्तन में न्यायालय की अधिकारिता नहीं है, लेकिन जीवन स्तर उन्नत करने संबंधी निदेशक तत्व (अनुच्छेद ४७) पर अच्छा काम हुआ है। मोदी सरकार ने इस मोर्चे पर आशातीत प्रगति की है। कुटीर उद्योगों के निदेशक तत्व (अनुच्छेद 43) पर बड़ा काम हुआ है। ग्राम पंचायतें भी इसी सूची (अनुच्छेद 40) में हैं। इसे लेकर तमाम अधिनियम बने हैं। संविधान में संशोधन भी हुआ है। गरीबों में भूमि वितरण (अनुच्छेद ३१ख) पर भी बात आगे बढ़ी है। अन्य निदेशक तत्वों पर भी प्रगति हुई है, लेकिन 'समान नागरिक संहिता' दूर की कौड़ी है। मूलभूत प्रश्न है कि आखिरकार एक राष्ट्र, एक विधि और एक समान नागरिक संहिता का स्वाभाविक सिद्धांत लागू क्यों नहीं हो सकता?

समान नागरिक संहिता राष्ट्रीय एकता का मलाधार है। संविधान निर्माता इस तथ्य से परिचित थे। संविधान सभा में इस पर जोरदार बहस हुई थी। संप्रदाय विशेष के सदस्य संहिता को अपने निजी मजहबी कानूनों में हस्तक्षेप मानते थे। वैसे संहिता का प्रवर्तन कोई हस्तक्षेप नहीं था। कानून निजी नहीं होते। दुनिया के सारे कानून राज और समाज की संवैधानिक संस्थाओं से जन्म लेते हैं और उन्हीं पर लागू



तुर्की और मिस्न के उदाहरण दिए कि 'इन देशों में अल्पसंख्यकों को ऐसे अधिकार नहीं मिले। हमारी महत्वपूर्ण समस्या राष्ट्रीय एकता है। हम वास्तव में एक राष्ट्र हैं। मुस्लिम मित्र समझ लें कि जितना जल्दी हम अलगाववादी भावना को भूलते हैं, उतना ही देश के लिए अच्छा होगा।' डॉ. आंबेडकर ने कहा, 'मैं इस कथन को चुनौती देता हूं कि मुसलमानों का निजी कानून, सारे भारत में अटल तथा एकविधि था। 1935 तक पश्चिमोत्तर सीमा प्रांत में शरीयत कानून लागू नहीं था। उत्तराधिकार तथा अन्य विषयों में वहां हिंदू कानून मान्य थे। उसके अलावा 1937 तक संयुक्त प्रांत, मध्य प्रांत और बंबई जैसे अन्य प्रांतों में उत्तराधिकार के विषय में काफी हद तक मुसलमानों पर हिंदू कानून लागू था। मैं असंख्य उदाहरण दे सकता हूं। इस देश में लगभग एक ही व्यवहार संहिता है, एकविधि है। इस अनुच्छेद को विधान का भाग बनाने की इच्छा सुधार की है। यह पूछने का समय बीत चुका है कि क्या हम ऐसा कर सकते है?' इसके बाद मतदान हुआ। संहिता का प्रस्ताव

जीत गया। संहिता संविधान का हिस्सा बनी।

समुचा भारत समान नागरिक संहिता के पक्ष में है। आंबेडकर के अलावा डॉ. राममनोहर लोहिया भी इसके समर्थक थे। पर्सनल लॉ की बातें कालवाह्य हो रही हैं। समान नागरिक संहिता का विरोध करने के लिए ही 1972 में मुस्लिम पर्सनल लॉ बोर्ड बनाया गया था। बोर्ड राष्ट्र सर्वोपरिता में विश्वास नहीं करता। वह विधि सर्वोच्चता का सिद्धांत भी नहीं मानता इसका विश्वास 'पर्सनल लॉ' में है, लेकिन बढ़ते राष्ट्रवाद के कारण इसका प्रभाव नगण्य हो चुका है। कुछेक दल वोट लोभ में संहिता के विरोधी हैं। वे चर्चित शाहबानो मामले में अदालती फैसले के खिलाफ थे। तब उस फैसले को निष्प्रभावी बनाने वाला कानून बना। ऐसे दल राष्ट्रीय महत्वाकांक्षा की तुलना में थोक वोट बैंक को ज्यादा तरजीह देते हैं। वे एक देश में दो तरह के कानूनों के पक्षधर हैं।

भारत बदल रहा है। तीन तलाक पर कानून बन गया है। अनुच्छेद 370 अब अतीत बन चुका है। राष्ट्र सर्वोपरि अस्मिता है। संविधान भारत का राजधर्म है और भारतीय संस्कृति भारत का राष्ट्रधर्म। प्रत्येक भारतवासी संविधान और विधि के प्रति निष्ठावान हैं। अपने विश्वास और उपासना में रमते हुए संविधान का पालन साझा जिम्मेदारी है। एक देश में एक ही विषय पर दो कानूनी विकल्पों का कोई औचित्य नहीं आखिरकार एकताबद्ध राष्ट्र में 'निजी कानून का मतलब क्या है। संप्रति नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में देश में आशा और उमंग का माहौल है राष्ट्रवादी संगठन पहले से ही भारत में ऐसी संहिता के पक्षधर हैं। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के ध्यानाकर्षण से संहिता पर फिर से विमर्श का अवसर आया है। दलतंत्र राष्ट्रीय अभिलाषा पर ध्यान दें। निजी कानून के आग्रही मित्र देश और काल का आह्वान सुनें। संविधान निर्माताओं की इच्छा का सम्मान करें।

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

जीरो बजट खेती के अंदेशे

पने पहले बजट में वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण 3 म पन पहल बजट म जिस नवा गुरा । जा निर्मात नरेंद्र ने और फिर बीते सोमवार को प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने भी 'संयुक्त राष्ट्र मरुस्थलीकरण-प्रतिरोधी कन्वेंशन' में शामिल देशों के 14वें सम्मेलन में भारत की 'जीरो बजट' खेती की योजना का संकल्प दोहराया, लेकिन देश के दर्जनों कृषि वैज्ञानिकों इससे उत्साहित नहीं हैं। प्रतिष्ठित वैज्ञानिक पंजाब सिंह के नेतृत्व में नीति आयोग के सदस्य रमेश चंद एवं भारतीय कृषि शोध परिषद (आइसीएआर) महानिदेशक तिरलोचन महापात्र की मौजूदगी में एक गोष्ठी में न केवल इस विचार को खारिज किया गया, बल्कि इस पर अमल से अनाज उत्पादन और उत्पादकता के भारी नुकसान की चेतावनी भी दी है। 'वापस मूल की ओर' के सिद्धांत के तहत जीरो बजट खेती की योजना इस वर्ष के आम बजट में घोषित की गई, लेकिन इन वैज्ञानिकों ने कहा है कि इस खेती में जो पद्धति अपनाने की योजना है उसके बारे में न तो कोई प्रामाणिक आंकड़ा है, न ही उसे वैज्ञानिक कसौटी पर कसा गया है। दरअसल इसके पीछे 2022 तक किसानों की आय दोगुनी करने के वादे का दबाव है। यह योजना इस सिद्धांत पर आधारित है कि पौधों को प्रकाश संश्लेषण के लिए जरूरी नाइट्रोजन, कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड, धूप और पानी प्रकृति मुफ्त में देती है। केवल उसे हासिल करने का तरीका मालूम होना चाहिए। शेष दो प्रतिशत पोषण जीवाणु को जड़ों के भीतर सिक्रय करने से मिल सकता है, जो गाय के मूत्र, गोबर, गुड़ और दाल आदि के घोल के छिड़काव से मिल सकता है। वैज्ञानिकों का कहना है कि हवा में 78 प्रतिशत नाइट्रोजन जरूर है, पर यह मुफ्त में उपलब्ध नहीं है। पौधे उसे लेकर एमिनो एसिड में बदल कर अपने लिए तब तक भोजन नहीं बना सकते हैं, जब तक उन्हें अमोनिया या यूरिया का सहारा न दिया जाए, यानी रासायनिक खाद न मिले।

भारत में जीरो बजट खेती की अवधारणा का जनक महाराष्ट्र के सुभाष पालेकर को माना जाता है। उनके अनुसार जीरो बजट खेती के सफल होने की एक और शर्त यह है कि इसमें प्रयुक्त होने वाला गोबर और मूत्र केवल काली कपिला गाय का होना चाहिए। क्या देश में खेती की नीति काली कपिला गाय के गोबर और मूत्र के आधार पर बनाना और उसे पूरी दुनिया को बताना भरतीय नेतृत्व की तर्क-क्षमता और वैज्ञानिक सोच पर प्रश्न-चिन्ह नहीं खड़ा करेगा? देश में विरले नेता हुए हैं, जिनका दिमाग इतना जरखेज (उपजाऊ) रहा है जितना



लेकर उटी आशंकाओं को दूर किए बिना इसे अपनाना सही नहीं होगा।इसपरव्यापक चर्चा होनी चाहिए

जीरो बजट खेती को



मौजूदा प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी का, लेकिन योजनाओं को वैज्ञानिक और व्यावहारिक पुष्टि के बिना घोषित करना नुकसान पहुंचा सकता है। मोदी सरकार का पहला पांच साल का कार्यकाल हो या दूसरे कार्यकाल के पिछले सौ से अधिक दिन, कुल गणना करें तो हर हफ्ते एक योजना, या विचार-संदेश देश को अपने सबसे मकबूल नेता से मिलता रहा है। एक देश, जिसमें नए-नए विचार न हों, वह धीरे-धीरे जड़वत होता जाता है। लिहाजा इस समाज को हर रोज चैतन्य रखना मोदी सरकार की अच्छी उपलब्धि है, लेकिन ऐसी चैतन्यता का भाव वास्तव में जीवन गुणवत्ता में कितना बदलाव लाता है, इसका एक

निष्पक्ष विश्लेषण करने का समय आ गया है। मोदी सरकार के इस दूसरे कार्यकाल में कृषि को लेकर एक नया भाव पैदा हुआ है जो शायद 'वर्ष 2022 तक किसानों की आय दोगुनी करने और बार-बार दोहराने' के दबाव के कारण है। शायद मोदी सरकार को यह मालूम है कि किसानों की आय कम रहने का सबसे बड़ा कारण उत्पादकता न बढ़ना है। भारत में जहां अनाज का उत्पादन बढ़ रहा है, लेकिन जमीन की उत्पादकता लगातार घटती जा रही है। इसके मूल में खेती की जमीन पर जनसंख्या का दबाव, किसानों का रासायनिक खादों तथा जल का अविवेकपूर्ण उपयोग और बाजार की सुविधा का अभाव

है। लिहाजा सरकार अब 200-400 साल पुरानी खेती यानी देसी बीज, देसी खाद और देसी बाजार आधारित परंपरागत खेती की ओर उन्मुख होने का इरादा बना रही है। इसके संकेत सरकार द्वारा जुलाई में जारी आर्थिक सर्वेक्षण को पढ़ने से और प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के हाल के तमाम भाषणों से मिलता है। सर्वेक्षण के कृषि अध्याय (पेज 172) का प्रारंभ वेस जैक्सन के इस कथन से होता है कि प्रकृति में सर्वाधिक संधारणीय (सस्टेनेबल) पारिस्थितिकी विद्यमान है। और चूंकि अंततोगत्वा कृषि प्रकृति से ही जन्म लेती है, अतः एक धारणीय पृथ्वी के लिए हमारा मानक स्वयं प्रकृति की पारिस्थितिकी ही होनी चाहिए। स्वयं इस सर्वेक्षण में भी यह पाया गया है कि रासायनिक खाद के दुरुपयोग के कारण अब खेतों को दीर्घकालिक नुकसान हो रहा है। साथ ही अगले ग्राफ में बताया गया है कि सिंचाई के पानी का भी अविवेकपूर्ण इस्तेमाल तमाम राज्य कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में बेहतर तो यह होता कि सरकार 'स्वच्छ भारत', 'बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ', 'प्लास्टिक मुक्त भारत' की तरह ही रासायनिक खाद खासकर नाइट्रोजन वाले खाद के खिलाफ 'वैज्ञानिक खेती' का नारा देती तो एक बेहतर परिणाम मिल सकता था। धान और गन्ना उत्पादन के लिए इजरायली तकनीकी का प्रयोग करना सार्थक प्रयास था, जो देश में सिंचाई के लिए उपलब्ध जल का 60 प्रतिशत खपत करते हैं। गन्ने की खेती के लिए तमिलनाडु, कर्नाटक और महाराष्ट्र पानी का भयंकर दोहन कर रहे हैं। इसमें वैज्ञानिक रूप से बदलाव लाया जाना चाहिए। ऐसी खेती के लिए बिहार और उत्तर प्रदेश जैसे राज्यों को प्रोत्साहित किया जाना चाहिए जहां सिंचाई के लिए जल उपलब्धता सबसे अच्छी है। इससे किसानों की आय बढ़ाने का कारगर उपाय हो सकता है।

जीरो बजट खेती के प्रति ऐसी शंका व्यक्त करने वाले वैज्ञानिक न तो वामपंथी विचारधारा वाले हैं और न ही 'देश-विरोधी', बल्कि इनमें से कई मोदी काल में ही कृषि विभाग में महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर रह चुके हैं। पंजाब सिंह वाजपेयी काल में सरकार की सबसे बड़ी संस्था भारतीय कृषि शोध परिषद के महानिदेशक और बनारस हिंदु विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति रह चुके हैं। सरकार को व्यापक चर्चा के बाद ही देश में 'जीरो बजट' खेती को जमीन पर लाने की दिशा में आगे बढ़ना चाहिए। इसके प्रवर्तन से पहले सभी पहलुओं पर गौर करना होगा।

> (लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं स्तंभकार हैं) response@jagran.com



विचार-औषधि

मानव मस्तिष्क एक पवित्र देवालय की तरह है तथा विचार उसमें प्रतिस्थापित देव-मूर्तियों की तरह। विचारो की श्रेष्ठता ही मानव हृदय में आनंद एवं विषाद अथवा सुख-दुख को जन्म देती है। असली आनंद की अनुभूति वहीं कर सकता है, जिसका मस्तिष्क सदैव अच्छे विचारों से भरा रहता है। हृदय के तालाब में आनंद एवं ख़ुशी की पवित्र लहरें तभी उठ सकती हैं, जब श्रेष्ठ विचारों के कैलोरीनुमा रसायन से समय-समय पर उसकी सफाई की जाए। यह कैलोरीनुमा रसायन महापुरुषों के सत्संग, प्रभु नाम-स्मरण तथा भगवत-चर्चा से ही प्राप्त हो सकता है। दूसरे शब्दों में मस्तिष्क एक नव-निर्मित आलीशान हवेली की तरह है, जिसे विचार के स्वच्छ झाडू से नित्यप्रति बुहारने की आवश्यकता है जब तक आलीशान भवन को वैचारिक गंदगी जकड़े रहेगी, तब तक खुशी, आनंद एवं प्रसन्नता के परिवेश का वहां चाहकर भी निर्माण संभव नहीं है। एक छोटे से कुविचार का कण हमारे मस्तिष्करूपी तालाब के संपूर्ण पवित्र विचाररूपी जल को प्रदूषित कर डालता है। यदि हमारे मस्तिष्क में श्रेष्ठ विचारों की दृढ़ता का कवच हो तो ऐसे क्षुद्र विचार वहां प्रवेश करने का साहस भी नही जुटा सकते। श्रेष्ठ विचार मस्तिष्क के आनंद भवन को चिर-प्रसन्न रखने की रामबाण औषधि है।

अवसाद के क्षणों में महापुरुषों का एक श्रेष्ठ विचार हमें न केवल उस पीड़ा से उबार सकता है, बल्कि हममें उत्साह एवं नव चेतना भर कर हमारे मन को खुशियों से प्रफुल्लित भी कर देता है। श्रेष्ठ विचार एवं उससे उत्पन्न रचनात्मक सोच ऐसी संजीवनीयुक्त औषधि है, जिसके आगमन मात्र से जीवन से दुख, भय, संताप एवं विषाद के घने बादल पलक झपकते ही दूर हो जाते हैं। हमें यह मानना चाहिए कि दुख एवं आनंद ईश्वर के दिए वरदान या अभिशाप नहीं, बल्कि हमारे श्रेष्ठ एवं निकृष्ट विचारो का प्रतिफल मात्र हैं। मानसिक शक्तियों का विकास तथा जीवन-दुखों से मुक्ति केवल प्रभुकृपा, सकारात्मक सोच एवं श्रेष्ठ विचारों से ही संभव है। अतः अच्छा सोचें, अच्छा पढ़ें तथा सुखद भविष्य की नींव रखें।

डॉ. दिनेश चमोला 'शैलेश'

उच्च शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता का सवाल

टाइम्स हायर एजुकेशन (टीएचई) की ओर से जारी दुनिया के 300 श्रेष्ठ विश्वविद्यालयों की सूची में एक भी भारतीय यूनिवर्सिटी को जगह नहीं मिलना भारत की उच्च शिक्षा की बदहाल तस्वीर पेश करती है। 2012 के बाद ऐसा पहली बार हुआ है। पिछले साल नेशनल इंस्टिट्यूट ऑफ साइंस, बेंगलुरु ने टॉप 300 की सूची में जगह बनाई थी, पर इस बार वह इससे बाहर है। इस सूची में इंग्लैंड स्थित ऑक्सफोर्ड यूनिवर्सिटी शीर्ष स्थान पर है तो वहीं अमेरिका के कैलिफोर्निया इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ टेक्नोलॉजी को दूसरा स्थान मिला है। इंग्लैंड का ही कैंब्रिज विश्वविद्यालय दूसरे से तीसरे नंबर पर खिसक गया है। इस सूची में चीन के दो विश्वविद्यालयों को जगह मिली है। इनमें सिंघुआ युनिवर्सिटी को 23वीं रैंकिंग मिली है। तो वहीं पीकिंग विश्वविद्यालय को 24वीं रैंकिंग मिली है।

इस सूची को तैयार करने के लिए विश्वविद्यालयों में शोध का माहौल, रिसर्च पेपर्स का वैश्विक स्तर पर उद्धृत किया जाना, पढ़ाई का माहौल और उसकी गुणवत्ता, पेटेंट

भारत को ज्ञान–विज्ञान और शोध का केंद्र बनाना है तो सरकार को उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों को स्वायत्तता देनी होगी

आदि से औद्योगिक आय जैसे पैमानों पर ध्यान दिया गया है। इससे साफ है कि हमारे विश्वविद्यालयों में मौलिकता और सृजनशीलता जैसी जरूरी चीज पर कम ध्यान दिया जा रहा है। तथा हमारा सामाजिक माहौल भी अभी मौलिक शोध करने के पक्ष में नहीं है।

इस सूची में शीर्ष स्थान पर कब्जा करने वाले अमेरिका, फ्रांस, जर्मनी, सिंगापुर, ब्रिटेन एवं ऑस्ट्रेलिया जैसे देशों की आर्थिक प्रगति को वहां की उच्च शिक्षा से जोड़कर देखा-समझा जा सकता है। इन देशों में शोध एवं अनुसंधान पर सर्वाधिक ध्यान दिया जाता है। इसके विपरीत भारत में शोध एवं अध्ययन की गुणवत्ता किसी प्रकार से डिग्री हासिल करने तक ही सीमित है। आंकड़े बताते हैं कि ब्रिक्स देशों में केवल भारत ही ऐसा देश है, जहां शोध पर कुल जीडीपी का मात्र 0.9 फीसद खर्च किया

जाता है। दूसरी ओर चीन में यह 1.9 फीसद, रूस में 1.5 फीसद, ब्राजील में 1.3 फीसद तथा दक्षिणी अफ्रीका में एक फीसद खर्च होता है। सरकार को समझना होगा कि देश में बड़ी संख्या में अच्छे संस्थान और विश्वविद्यालय होंगे तभी नई पीढ़ी को उच्च गुणवत्ता वाली शिक्षा हम दे पाएंगे और उन्हें बाजार की मांग के मुताबिक बना पाएंगे।

हालांकि पिछले कुछ समय में देश में उच्च शिक्षा के कई नए संस्थान खुले हैं। निजी शिक्षा संस्थाओं में भी वृद्धि हुई है। कई नए कार्यक्रम विदेशी संस्थानों के साथ साझेदारी के साथ शुरू हुए हैं। विश्वविद्यालयों में इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर भी बढ़ा है, लेकिन अभी भी बहुत कुछ करने की दरकार है। दुनिया के महानतम शिक्षण संस्थान अध्ययन और अनुसंधान के क्षेत्र में खास स्थान इसलिए बना पाए हैं, क्योंकि उन्हें पर्याप्त स्वायत्तता मिली है। वे अपने फैसले खुद लेते हैं और अपने खर्चे के लिए सरकार पर आश्रित नहीं रहते हैं। भारत को भी ज्ञान का केंद्र बनाना है तो उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों को ऐसी छूट देनी होगी। सरकार को उच्च शिक्षा का ढांचा शिक्षाविदों को ही गढ़ने देना चाहिए।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

कैसे टूटे सुस्ती का चक्र

आर्थिक सुस्ती दूर करने की चुनौती शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में संजय गुप्त ने आर्थिक सुस्ती पर कांग्रेस को ओछी राजनीति नहीं करने की सलाह दी है। कांग्रेस ने देश पर लंबे समय तक राज किया है, अगर इसने शुरू से ही देश में आर्थिक भ्रष्टाचार को रोकने के लिए गंभीरता दिखाई होती तो शायद आज देश में आर्थिक भ्रष्टाचार की बीमारी न फैली होती और न ही मोदी सरकार को आर्थिक भ्रष्टाचार रोकने के लिए नोटबंदी का कठोर फैसला लेना पड़ता और न ही नोटबंदी आज आर्थिक सुस्ती का कारण बनती। खैर बीता समय वापस तो नहीं आ सकता। लेखक ने यह तो ठीक कहा है कि कांग्रेस को आर्थिक सुस्ती के लिए मोदी सरकार को घेरने के लिए धरना-प्रदर्शन नहीं करना चाहिए, बल्कि ऐसी सलाह देनी चाहिए, जिससे इस पर नियंत्रण पाया जा सके, लेकिन यहां सवाल यह उठता है कि पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह ने मंदी से पार पाने के लिए जीएसटी को तर्कसंगत बनाने, गांवों में खपत बढ़ाने, कृषि में और सुधार लाने, पूंजी निर्माण में तेजी लाने, नौकरी बढ़ाने वाले क्षेत्रों को बढ़ावा देने और अमेरिका-चीन में चल रहे ट्रेड वॉर में नए निर्यात बाजारों को तलाशने की जो सलाह दी है उस पर मोदी सरकार कितना अमल कर रही है? यदि सरकार इन सलाहों पर अमल करे तो देश में आर्थिक सुस्ती के चक्र को तोड़ा जा सकता है।

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

प्लास्टिक एक गंभीर समस्या

प्लास्टिक हमारे दैनिक जीवन का हिस्सा बन गया है। सुबह जिस अलार्म घड़ी की आवाज सुनकर उठते हैं उसका निर्माण इसी से होता है। मोबाइल फोन का बड़ा हिस्सा

मेलबाक्स

प्लास्टिक का बना होता है। बाथरूम का ज्यादातर सामान भी इसी का होता है। घर में खाने पीने के सामान प्लास्टिक कंटेनर में रखे होते हैं। कंप्यूटर के ज्यादातर पार्ट इसी के बने होते हैं। कार की एसेसरी भी प्लास्टिक की मिलेगी। ये सभी चीजें जीवन को आसान बनाती हैं, लेकिन इसका जरा सा हिस्सा भी शरीर में चला जाए तो बीमार बना देगा। प्लास्टिक की बोतलों और कंटेनरो में नमक आदि रखा जाता है, जो कई बीमारियों का कारण बन सकता है। प्लास्टिक पूरी दुनिया के लिए खतरा बन गया है। समुद्र भी इसके प्रकोप से नहीं बचा है। दुनिया भर के महासागरों में इसके बड़े-बड़े ढेर बन चुके हैं। भारत में प्लास्टिक से लड़ाई शुरू हो चुकी है, लेकिन अभी इसका असर बहुत कम देखने को मिला है। भारत के 14 राज्यों और कुछ केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों में प्लास्टिक प्रतिबंधित है, लेकिन फिर भी इसका इस्तेमाल पूरी तरह से नहीं रुका है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने ग्रेटर नोएडा में आयोजित कॉप-14 सम्मेलन में कहा कि प्लास्टिक की वजह से हो रहे मरुस्थलीकरण को अगर नहीं रोका गया तो भूक्षरण का नया स्वरूप सामने आएगा। देश के एक जागरूक नागरिक होने के कारण हमको खुद इस विषय पर गंभीरतापूर्वक ध्यान देना होगा कि जल्द से जल्द प्लास्टिक से बनी हुई वस्तुओं का उपयोग त्याग दें और ज्यादा से ज्यादा कागज और मिट्टी के बर्तनों का प्रयोग करें।

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राष्ट्रीय राजधानी में बढ़ते प्रदूषण को कम करने के लिए दिल्ली सरकार एक बार फिर से ऑड - इवेन लागू करने

जा रही है। ऑड-इवेन नंबर की गाड़ियों के लिए अलग दिन होने से कारें सड़कों पर आधी रह जाती हैं। लोग सार्वजनिक परिवहन के साधनों का इस्तेमाल करते हैं तो प्रदुषण कम हो जाता है। इससे हार्ट के रोगियों को काफी फायदा होता है आमतौर पर अक्टूबर और नवंबर के महीनों में दिल्ली और आसपास के इलाकों में प्रदूषण का स्तर काफी बढ़ जाता है। यह फॉर्मुला काफी प्रभावी रहेगा।

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किसानों को पेंशन

वर्तमान सरकार ने किसानों को आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक मजबूती देने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री किसान मानधन योजना की शुरुआत की है। यह इस वर्ष प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना के बाद दूसरी योजना है जिससे किसानों को आर्थिक मदद दी जा रही है। यह पेंशन योजना भविष्य में किसानों के लिए लाभदायक तो होगी, परंतु सरकार को वर्तमान समय में कृषि विकास दर में गिरावट एवं किसानों की आर्थिक स्थिति को सुधारने के बारे में भी सोचना होगा।

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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 पाठकगण सादर आमंत्रित हैं। आप हमें पत्र भेजने के साथ ई-मेल भी कर सकते हैं।

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

बेहतरी के कदम

अप थिंक मंदी से उबरने के दबाव झेल रही सरकार ने दो बड़े क्षेत्रों में बेहतरी के लिए राहत उपायों की घोषणा की है। आवास और निर्यात क्षेत्र को बढ़ावा देने के मकसद से सत्तर हजार करोड़ रुपए से अधिक मदद देने की घोषणा की गई है। इसमें बीस हजार करोड़ रुपए की मदद अधूरी पड़ी आवासीय योजनाओं के लिए और पचास हजार करोड़ रुपए की राशि निर्यात क्षेत्र में प्रोत्साहन के लिए तय की गई है। आवासीय योजनाओं को पूरा कराने के लिए सरकार दस हजार करोड़ रुपए मुहैया कराएगी और दस हजार करोड़ रुपए अन्य स्रोतों से उपलब्ध कराने के उपाय किए जाएंगे। इसमें आवास वित्त कंपनियों को विदेशी स्रोतों से धन जुटाने संबंधी नियमों में ढील दी जाएगी। इसके अलावा भवन निर्माण के लिए कर्ज पर ब्याज दरों में छूट का भी प्रावधान किया गया है। अनुमान है किइससे साढ़े तीन लाख आवास खरीदारों को लाभ मिलेगा। इसी तरह सरकार का दावा है कि निर्यातकों को इतना लाभ दिया जाएगा, जितना अभी सारी योजनाओं को मिला कर नहीं दिया जा रहा है। चालीस से पैंतालीस हजार करोड़ रुपए के करों का रिटर्न अदा किया जाएगा। इससे सरकार पर करीब पचास हजार करोड़ रुपए का बोझ पड़ेगा। इसके अलावा छोटे और मझोले निर्यातकों के ऋण की ब्याज दरों में कटौती की जाएगी। स्वाभाविक ही इस कदम से अर्थव्यवस्था में कुछ गति आने की उम्मीद बनी है।

दरअसल, इस वक्त विकास दर पिछले छह सालों के सबसे निचले स्तर पर है। उसमें निर्यात और रियल एस्टेट का योगदान घट कर चिंताजनक स्तर पर पहुंच चुका है। निर्यात को बढ़ावा देना सरकार के लिए बड़ी चुनौती है। बाजार न मिल पाने से उत्पादन पर सीधा असर पड़ा है। इसलिए निर्यातकों को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए निर्यात संबंधी नियम-कायदों को लचीला बनाने और उन्हें वित्तीय मदद मुहैया कराने के उपायों पर विचार की जरूरत लंबे समय से महसूस की जा रही थी। इस तरह सरकार के इस कदम से निस्संदेह निर्यातकों में कुछ उत्साह का वातावरण बनेगा। इसी तरह सरकार ने बेनामी संपत्ति जमा करने वालों पर नकेल कसने के मकसद से रियल एस्टेट के क्षेत्र में कुछ नियम-कायदों को कड़ा किया था। फिर भवन निर्माण सामग्री की कीमतों में भी उछाल आया था। इसकी वजह से भी अनेक आवासीय परियोजनाएं सुस्त पड़ गई थीं। अब नए कदम से इस क्षेत्र में कुछ गति आने की उम्मीद जगी है।

मगर फिलहाल बड़ी समस्या यह है कि लोगों की क्रयशक्ति काफी घट गई है। इसलिए लोग बहुत सोच-समझ कर बाजार में निवेश कर रहे हैं। इसी का असर है कि आवासीय योजनाओं में निवेश काफी घट गया है। स्थिति यह है कि देश में तेरह लाख से ऊपर तैयार मकानों के खरीदार नहीं हैं। अब सरकार रुकी आवासीय परियोजनाओं को पूरा कराएगी तो मकानों की संख्या और बढ़ जाएगी। इसलिए ब्याज दरों में छूट और आवासीय परियोजनाएं चलाने वाली और आवास वित्त कंपनियों को राहत देने से मकानों की बिक्री में कितनी गति आएगी, यह देखने की बात है। इसके अलावा सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण बात है निर्यात क्षेत्र को शक्तिशाली बनाना। घरेलू बाजार सिकुड़ चुका है। ऐसे में अपने उत्पाद को बाहरी बाजार में खपाने की जरूरत है। पर दुनिया के कई देश आर्थिक मंदी की चपेट में हैं। ऐसे में यह कदम भी कितना प्रभावी होगा, समय बताएगा। सरकार को ऐसे छिटपुट उपायों पर ध्यान देने के बजाय समग्र आर्थिक उपायों पर विचार करना चाहिए।

योजना और सवाल

जधानी दिल्ली में वायु प्रदूषण से निपटने के लिए मुख्यमंत्री अरविंद केजरीवाल ने एक बार फिर सम-विषम योजना शुरू करने की बात कही है। पिछले कई सालों से दिल्ली जिस तरह वायु प्रदूषण की मार झेल रही है, उसे देखते हुए दिल्ली सरकार की यह कवायद एक अच्छा प्रयास है। सड़क पर अगर वाहन कम चलें तो निश्चित रूप से एक सीमा तक वायु प्रदूषण को कम करने में मदद मिल सकती है, क्योंकि दिल्ली के वायु प्रदूषण में वाहनों से होने वाले प्रदूषण की भागीदारी चालीस फीसद है। यह कम नहीं है। ऐसे में अगर दिल्ली सरकार समय रहते एहतियात के तौर पर कदम उठा रही है तो इसका स्वागत किया जाना चाहिए। लेकिन योजना की घोषणा के साथ ही इसे लेकर सवाल भी उठने लगे हैं। सवाल सिर्फ योजना पर नहीं, बल्कि इसे लागू करने के पीछे दिल्ली सरकार की गंभीरता को लेकर ज्यादा हैं। केंद्रीय सड़क परिवहन मंत्री ने ही यह कह दिया है कि प्रदूषण से निपटने के लिए सम-विषम योजना की कोई जरूरत नहीं है। केंद्र सरकार ने कई ऐसे कदम उठाए हैं जो प्रदूषण कम करने में सहायक होंगे। ऐसे में बड़ा सवाल फिर यही खड़ा होता है कि जहरीली हवा में हांफती दिल्ली को आखिर प्रदूषण से मुक्ति दिलाने का उपाय क्या है।

दिल्ली में हर साल नवंबर-दिसंबर में प्रदूषण की मात्रा बेहद खतरनाक स्थिति तक पहुंच जाती है। इसके दो बड़े कारण हैं। एक, पंजाब और हरियाणा के खेतों में पराली जलाए जाने से निकलने वाला धुआं दिल्ली की ओर आना और दूसरा कारण दिल्ली में वाहनों से निकलने वाला धुआं। दिल्ली सरकार ने प्रदूषण रोकने के लिए सात बिंदुओं के आधार पर कार्ययोजना बनाई है। इसमें दीपावली पर पटाखे न जलाने की अपील, कूड़ा और पेड़ों की पत्तियां जलाने पर रोक, धूल से बचाव, पेड़ लगाने के लिए लोगों को प्रोत्साहित करने जैसे कदम भी शामिल हैं। लेकिन हकीकत यह है कि इनमें से एक भी उपाय अब तक कारगर साबित नहीं हुआ है। राजधानी दिल्ली में अब भी लाखों ऐसे वाहन हैं जिनकी पंद्रह साल की अवधि समाप्त हो चुकी है, लेकिन सड़क पर बेधड़क दौड़ रहे हैं। पिछले चार साल में दिल्ली सरकार के परिवहन विभाग ने ऐसे वाहन मालिकों के खिलाफ शायद ही कोई कार्रवाई की होगी। जहां तक दीपावली पर पटाखे फोड़ने का सवाल है, सुप्रीम कोर्ट पहले ही पाबंदी लगा चुका है। लेकिन लोगों पर इसका कोई असर नहीं दिखा। दिल्ली के ज्यादातर इलाकों में कूड़ा जलता देखा जा सकता है। राजधानी में कूड़े के जो पहाड़ खड़े हैं, उनको हटवाने के लिए पिछले चार साल में क्या कोई बड़ा फैसला हुआ?

सम-विषम योजना 2016 में दो बार लागू की गई थी। लेकिन इसके नतीजों को लेकर ही परस्पर विरोधी रिपोर्टें और खबरें आती रहीं। दिल्ली सरकार का दावा था कि सम-विषम योजना लागू करने से प्रदूषण में दस से बारह फीसद की कमी आई थी। जबकि कुछ अध्ययनों में यह सामने आया कि इससे हवा में मौजूद घातक कण पीएम 2.5 और कार्बन की मात्रा बढ़ गई थी। सरकार को प्रदूषण से मुक्ति के लिए दीर्घकालिक नीति और उपायों पर काम करने चाहिए थे, जो नहीं हुए। सार्वजनिक परिवहन व्यवस्था को इतना दुरुस्त बनाया जाए कि लोगों को अपना वाहन निकालने की कम से कम जरूरत पड़े। सम-विषम योजना में जिस तरह छूट की लंबी सूची है उससे इस योजना पर अमल की गंभीरता कम होती है। योजना लागू करनी है तो सख्ती से की जानी चाहिए, सिर्फ वाहवाही बटोरने के लिए नहीं।

कल्पमेधा

समाज की खुशहाली सुरक्षित रखने का एक ही उपाय है, वह यह कि लोगों को अपने मन-मस्तिष्क का स्वतंत्रतापूर्वक उपयोग करने दिया जाए। -हेराल्ड लास्की

आर्थिक संकट में घिरा पाकिस्तान

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था दिवालिया जैसी हालत में है। प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान का कहना है कि उनके देश के पास कर्ज की किस्तें चुकाने तक के लिए डॉलर नहीं बचे हैं। विकास दर चार फीसद पर आ गई है, जो नौ साल के निचले स्तर पर है। इसी तरह विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार तेरह अरब डॉलर से भी कम रह गया है। पाकिस्तान एक बार फिर आर्थिक मदद के लिए आइएमएफ के दरवाजे पर खड़ा है।

ज्म्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाए जाने के बाद भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच संबंध काफी तनावपूर्ण चल रहे हैं। इस मुद्दे पर दुनिया का ध्यान खींचने के लिए पाकिस्तान ने पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर (पीओके) में नियंत्रण रेखा पर सेना की तैनाती और बढ़ा दी है। ऐसे में दुनिया के अर्थविशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि यदि पाकिस्तान भारत पर युद्ध थोपने का दुस्साहस करता है तो पहले से ही कमजोर पड़ी उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था और चौपट हो जाएगी। हालांकि भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था में भी सुस्ती का दौर है, लेकिन पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था तो एकदम खस्ताहाल है और भारी मंदी की चपेट में है। ऐसे में भारत के साथ युद्ध की कल्पना भी उसे नहीं करनी चाहिए। युद्ध से पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था को जो नुकसान होगा, उसकी भरपाई वह दशकों तक नहीं कर पाएगा। पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था के समक्ष संकट

एक नहीं, कई हैं। जहां उसके आंतरिक वित्तीय राजस्व में कमी आ रही है, वहीं बाहरी वित्तीय मदद का संकट भी गहराता जा रहा है। पिछले महीने ऑस्ट्रेलिया की राजधानी कैनबरा में आतंकी गतिविधियों के लिए धन मुहैया कराने और धन शोधन करने वाले देशों पर निगरानी रखने वाली अंतरराष्ट्रीय एजेंसी फाइनेंशियल एक्शन टास्क फोर्स (एफएटीएफ) की एशिया-प्रशांत इकाई की हुई बैठक में पाकिस्तान को काली सूची में डालने का फैसला किया गया था। अब इस पर अंतिम फैसले के लिए अगले महीने एफएटीएफ की बैठक होगी। पाकिस्तान के लिए गंभीर संकट की आहट है। यदि पाकिस्तान को काली सूची में डालने के फैसले पर मुहर लग जाती है तो उसकी आर्थिक स्थिति और गंभीर हो जाएगी।

एफएटीएफ के एशिया प्रशांत समूह ने अपनी जांच में पाया था कि पाकिस्तान ने धनशोधन और आतंकवाद के वित्त पोषण संबंधी कुल चालीस मानकों में से बत्तीस का अनुपालन नहीं किया। ऐसे में अब खस्ताहाल अर्थव्यवस्था से जूझ रहे पाकिस्तान को अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (आएएमएफ), विश्व बैंक और यूरोपीय संघ आदि से मदद मिल पाना मुश्किल हो जाएगा। इसका असर यह होगा कि मूडीज और स्टैंडर्ड एंड पूअर्स (एसएंडपी) जैसी वैश्विक रेटिंग एजेंसियां भी पाकिस्तान की रेटिंग गिराने को मजबूर होंगी। रेटिंग एजेंसियों की रेटिंग से ही देश यह तय करते हैं कि किस देश में निवेश किया जा सकता है। इससे पाकिस्तान में होने वाले निवेश पर प्रतिकूल असर पड़ेगा, निवेशक बिदकेंगे और इससे उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था की कमर टूट सकती है।

झटका दिया है। अमेरिका ने केरी लूगर बर्मन एक्ट के तहत पाकिस्तान को ऊर्जा एवं जल संकट से निपटने के लिए दी जाने वाली प्रस्तावित मदद में चवालीस करोड़ डॉलर की कमी कर दी है।

इसमें कोई दो मत नहीं है कि इस समय भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती का दौर है, लेकिन फिर भी भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था के मुकाबले तो काफी मजबूत है। भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था से नौ गुना बड़ी है। विकास दर, विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार और महंगाई नियंत्रण के मामले में भी भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था पाकिस्तान की तुलना में बहुत अच्छी स्थिति में है।

लेकिन पाकिस्तान में हालात इसके उलट हैं। पिछले महीने पाकिस्तान ब्यूरो ऑफ स्टेटिस्टिक्स (पीबीएस) ने महंगाई के जो आंकड़े जारी किए थे, वे चौंकाने वाले थे। इन आंकड़ों के अनुसार पाकिस्तान में महंगाई तेजी से बढ़ रही है। जुलाई 2019 में पाकिस्तान में महंगाई दर 10.34 फीसद रही, जो पिछले साल जुलाई 2018 में 5.86 फीसद थी। जबकि भारत में महंगाई कम बढ़ी है।

पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था दिवालिया जैसी हालत में है। प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान का कहना है कि उनके देश के पास कर्ज की किस्तें चुकाने तक के लिए डॉलर नहीं बचे हैं। विकास दर गिरती हुई चार फीसद पर आ गई है जो नौ साल के निचले स्तर पर है। इसी तरह विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार तेरह अरब डॉलर से भी कम रह गया है। पाकिस्तान एक बार फिर आर्थिक मदद के लिए आइएमएफ के दरवाजे



अमेरिका ने भी पाकिस्तान को एक बड़ा आर्थिक पर खड़ा है। उसकी मुद्रा एशिया की सबसे कमजोर आगे बढ़ा रहा है। इससे पाकिस्तान का पड़ोसी देशों मुद्रा हो गई है। डॉलर के मुकाबले पाकिस्तान का रुपया डेढ़ सौ के पार चला गया है। यदि पाकिस्तान भारत पर युद्ध थोपता है तो यह उसका आत्माघाती कदम होगा। बीस साल पहले भी करगिल की लड़ाई में दोनों देशों को भारी आर्थिक नुकसान उठाना पड़ा था। अब बीस साल बाद भारत पाकिस्तान से किसी भी युद्ध की स्थिति में आर्थिक दुष्टिकोण से बहुत मजबत स्थिति में है। इस समय भारत का वार्षिक रक्षा बजट पाकिस्तान से पांच गुना ज्यादा है। करगिल युद्ध में दोनों देशों को रोजाना करीब पंद्रह करोड रुपए का खर्च आया था। चुंकि करगिल युद्ध कश्मीर के एक छोटे क्षेत्र तक ही सीमित था, इसलिए

यह पंद्रह करोड़ रुपए तक ही सीमित रहा था। लेकिन अब ऐसा नहीं है। रक्षा विशेषज्ञों का कहना है की जिस तरह बहुत बड़े क्षेत्र में विस्तृत पैमाने पर भारत-पाक युद्ध छिड़ने की आशंका बढ़ रही है, उसमें यह खर्च पांच से दस हजार करोड़ रुपए प्रति सप्ताह से भी अधिक बढ़ सकता है। इतना भारी-भरकम खर्च पाकिस्तान की कमजोर अर्थव्यवस्था की मुश्किलें और बढ़ा देगा।

युद्ध की स्थिति में पाकिस्तान की आर्थिक मुश्किलें बढ़ाने के लिए भारत निदयों को भी हथियार के रूप में इस्तेमाल करते हुए दुश्मन देश को सबक सिखा सकता है। भारत ने इस साल 21 फरवरी को फैसला किया था कि वर्ष 1960 में हुए सिंधु जल समझौते के कारण पाकिस्तान को जो लाभ हो रहे हैं, उन्हें भी रोका जाएगा। भारत के इस फैसले से पाकिस्तान चिंतित हो गया है। एक मार्च को पाकिस्तान ने संयुक्त

राष्ट्र को पत्र लिख कर कहा था कि अगर भारत नदियों से पाकिस्तान को मिलने वाला पानी रोकता है तो इससे पाकिस्तान के सामने पीने के पानी और कृषि तथा उद्योगों के लिए संकट खड़ा हो जाएगा। यदि भारत अब आतंकी हमले और शत्रुता के मद्देनजर सिंधु जल समझौते को तोड़ दे तो पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था बुरी तरह प्रभावित होगी।

इन सबके अलावा पाकिस्तान से युद्ध की चुनौती के बीच भारत दक्षिण एशियाई क्षेत्रीय सहयोग संगठन (सार्क) के साथ-साथ पाकिस्तान रहित दक्षिण एशिया मुक्त व्यापार क्षेत्र (साफ्टा) के लिए म्यांमार, श्रीलंका, थाईलैंड, नेपाल और भूटान को मिला कर बनाए गए समूह बिम्सटेक (बे ऑफ बंगाल इनीशिएटिव फॉर मल्टी सेक्टर टेक्नीकल एंड इकोनॉमिक कोऑपरेशन) की संभावना को

के साथ कारोबार घटेगा। यह पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए बडी चनौती होगी।

स्पष्ट है कि पाकिस्तान को भारत के साथ उद्योग-कारोबार की जरूरत बनी हुई है। दुनिया के अर्थविशेषज्ञों का कहा है कि पाकिस्तानी अर्थव्यवस्था को संभालने के लिए जरूरी है कि वह पाकिस्तान में भारत के प्रति शत्रुतापूर्ण और विद्वेष का माहौल बंद करे और पाकिस्तानी अर्थव्यवस्था को बेहतर बनाने के लिए भारत के साथ कारोबार संबंध फिर से बहाल करे। यदि पाकिस्तान ऐसा नहीं करेगा तो उसकी पस्त होती अर्थव्यवस्था गर्त में चली जाएगी।

पानी पर लिखी कहानी

रजनीश जैन

पिनी का न रंग है, न स्वाद, न सुगंध और न इसे परिभाषित किया जा सकता है। यह जीवन के लिए केवल जरूरी नहीं, खुद जीवन है। यह हमें उन तृप्तियों से भर देता है जो इंद्रियों के आनंद से अधिक है।' फ्रेंच लेखक अंटोनिओ डे सेंट की पंक्तियां पानी के रहस्य से हमारा परिचय करा देती है। कहना न होगा कि यह रहस्यमय जल हमें इतनी प्रचुरता में मिला था कि हम इसकी कद्र करना भूल गए। जो भी चीज मनुष्य को इफरात में मिलती है, उसके प्रति वह उदासीन हो जाता है। पिछले तीस-चालीस वर्षों में ही पीने के पानी का संकट विकराल रूप ले चुका है। अखबारों के अंचल के पन्नों और शहरी खबरों में इस भयावह समानता को महसूस किया जा सकता है। इन्हीं समाचारों के बीच कभी-कभी मानसिक दिवालिएपन की झांकी भी नजर आ जाती है, जहां वर्षा के लिए जानवरों के विवाह कराए जाने के हास्यास्पद टोटके आजमाए जाने का जिक्र होता है।

प्रकृति के प्रति उदासीनता के परिणामों का असर नजर आने लगा है। भूजल स्तर हर गुजरते साल के साथ नीचे उतर रहा है। किसी ने कभी कहा होगा कि तीसरा

विश्व युद्ध पानी को लेकर होगा। वे पूरी तरह गलत नहीं थे। हमारे ही देश के दो राज्य जिस तरह पानी के बंटवारे को लेकर एक दूसरे के खिलाफ तलवारें ताने हुए हैं, उससे डरावने भविष्य की स्पष्ट तस्वीर उभर आती है। इन दिनों एक तस्वीर लगातार सामने आ रही है। एक नन्हे पौधे के इर्द-गिर्द खड़े करीब पचास लोग वृक्षारोपण की रस्म अदायगी करते कैमरे की तरफ झांकते हैं। इनमे से कितने पर्यावरण को लेकर गंभीर हैं,

उस फोटो को देख कर अंदाजा नहीं लगाया जा सकता।

आज जरूरत है प्रकृति के प्रति जुनूनी समर्पण की। अच्छी बारिश के बाद तस्वीर में मौजूद अधिकतर लोगों को याद नहीं रहता कि उस पौधे का क्या हाल है। त्योहार की तरह पेड़ लगाने वालों को समझना होगा कि यह सिर्फ साल में एक बार किया जाने वाला काम नहीं है। पर्यावरण के प्रति जागरूकता हमारी जीवन शैली होना चाहिए. तब जाकर हम आगामी पीढ़ी के लिए बेहतर परिस्थितियां निर्मित कर पाएंगे। जल संकट और कुछ नहीं, बल्कि आधुनिक जीवन शैली और रहन-सहन के बदलते स्वरूप का नतीजा भर है। हमारी पीढ़ी को यह कटू सत्य स्वीकार लेना चाहिए कि उनके समय में पानी एक उत्पाद की तरह बिकना शुरू हो गया है। तरक्की का यह सोपान मानव जाति को किस स्थिति से रूबरू कराएगा, सिर्फ कल्पना की जा सकती है।

पानी की समस्या पर पर्यावरणवादियों और चिंतकों के अलावा फिल्मकारों ने भी अवर्षा को केंद्र में रख कर पानी के महत्त्व को आवाज देने का प्रयास किया है। ख्यात फिल्मकार ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास ने पचास वर्ष पहले महसूस कर लिया था कि पानी का दुरुपयोग और अभाव हमारे जीवन को गहरे तक प्रभावित करने

वाला है। इसी संकट को केंद्र में रख कर उन्होंने फिल्म 'दो बूंद पानी' (1971) निर्मित और निर्देशित किया। उसका कथानक और संदेश उस दौर

से ज्यादा आज प्रासंगिक है।

आरके नारायण के उपन्यास पर आधारित 'गाइड' (1965) में अवर्षा कथानक के केंद्र में है। एक चोर परिस्थितिवश साध बन जाता है, लेकिन गांव वालों की अपने प्रति अगाध श्रद्धा के चलते वर्षा के लिए बारह दिन के उपवास की तपस्या कर बैठता है। इधर भूख से उसकी मृत्यु होती है और उधर गांव में झमाझम बारिश शुरू हो जाती है। यह फिल्म देव आनंद को बतौर अभिनेता. विजय आनंद को बतौर निर्देशक और एसडी बर्मन को बतौर संगीतकार तब तक अमर रखेगी, जब तक इस धरा पर सिनेमा मौजद रहेगा!

आरक्षण की समीक्षा

एससी-एसटी की आरक्षण सीमा को अट्ठावन से

बढ़ा कर बयासी फीसद कर दिया है। इसमें आर्थिक

रूप से कमजोर सवर्ण वर्ग को भी कुल बचे पद का

दस फीसद आरक्षण देने का प्रावधान किया गया है।

हाल में छत्तीसगढ सरकार ने ओबीसी और

अमोल पालेकर निर्देशित अपने आप में अनुठी फिल्म 'थोड़ा–सा रूमानी हो जाए' (1990) पानी को जीवन के कई प्रतीकों में बांधती है। जीवन में उत्साह और आत्मविश्वास का खत्म हो जाना एक तरह से प्रकृति का पानीविहीन हो जाना है। कविताई शैली में बोले गए संवादों की वजह से नाना पाटेकर और अनिता कंवर की केंद्रीय भूमिका वाली इस फिल्म में भी भारी सुखे के बाद बारिश का आना जीवन में आशा के संचार का प्रतीक बन कर उभरा है।

कल्पना कीजिए कि फिल्म 'लगान' (2001) से भारी सुखा झेल रहे गांव वालों की त्रासदी को निकाल दिया जाए तो फिल्म में क्या बचेगा! 'लगान' अपनी मंजिल से ही भटक जाएगी। फिल्म की शुरुआत में घुमड़ते बादलों का आकाश में जुटना एक उम्मीद जगाता है और गीत खत्म होते-होते उनका गायब हो जाना साफ कर देता है कि इस बार की अवर्षा उनकी जिंदगी के मायने बदल देने वाली है। पानी पर लिखे फिल्मी कथानकों का अंत भले ही सुखांत रहा हो, लेकिन वास्तविक जीवन में परिस्थितियां इस तरह के मौके कम ही देती है। पर्यावरण और प्रकृति के प्रति नजरअंदाजी की कीमत वर्तमान और आगामी दोनों पीढ़ियों को महंगी पड़ने वाली है। यह बात जितनी जल्दी समझ में आ जाए उतना बेहतर होगा।

हिंदी और हिंदुस्तान

ट्र साल 14 सितंबर से शुरू होने वाला हिंदी **ए**पखवाड़ा देश की हिंदी संस्कृति और मुख्य रूप से हिंदी भाषा पर नजर डालने के लिए मजबुर करता है। वह भाषा जिसने स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में संपूर्ण भारतीय समाज को एकता के सूत्र में बांधने का कार्य किया था, आज वह अपना स्थान खोजती नजर आती है। उसने (हिंदी) कभी ऐसा नहीं सोचा होगा कि मेरे साथ 'नेकी कर दरिया में डाल' जैसी कहावत चरितार्थ हो जाएगी. जिसने भारतीय धरा को आजादी का तोहफा दिया, वह भारतीय समाज में अंग्रेजी के बाद द्वितीय भाषा बन जाएगी। बेशक गूगल ने हिंदी भाषा को तवज्जो दी हो, दुनिया के छह सौ से अधिक विश्वविद्यालयों में हिंदी पढ़ाई जाती हो, मगर भारत में आज भी अंग्रेजी को प्रतिष्ठा का प्रतीक माना जाता है। अंग्रेजी को भाषा नहीं, अपित् विद्वता का प्रतीक समझा जाने लगा है और हिंदी जो कभी मां जैसी थी. अपने परिचय को मोहताज नजर आती है। सिविल सेवा परीक्षा में बैठने वाले न जाने कितने युवा सिर्फ इसी वजह से असफल होते हैं कि वह हिंदी भाषी हैं और हिंदी भाषा में पठन सामग्री की कमी है। स्थित इससे अधिक बिगड़ने की ओर है, क्योंकि सितंबर के पंद्रह दिन ही तो हम हिंदी भाषा के प्रति अपनी सहानुभूति प्रकट करते हैं। इस स्थिति के लिए संपूर्ण भारतीय समाज जिम्मेदार है जो एक ओर अपनी संस्कृति का ढिंढोरा पीट कर विश्वगुरु बनने की बात करता है तो दूसरी ओर अपनी संस्कृति को प्रस्तुत करने के माध्यम यानी हिंदी भाषा को हेय दुष्टि से देखता है। यानी 'हाथी के दांत खाने के और

दिखाने के और'। इसलिए हमारा कर्तव्य बनता है

कि हिंदी जो हिंदुस्तान की पहचान है, उसे सहेजें, अपने बच्चों को अंग्रेजी पढाएं. लेकिन उन्हें हिंदी में जीने के लिए प्रेरित करें। विज्ञापनों, पुस्तकों, पत्रिकाओं का लेखन हिंदी भाषा में करें। अपने जीवन में हिंदी शामिल करें, क्योंकि इसी से तो हमारा और भारतीय समाज का वजुद है, हिंदुस्तान का वजूद है, अगर हिंदी है तो हिंदुस्तान है।

• दीपक, आर्यभट्ट महाविद्यालय, नई दिल्ली तकनीक की भाषा बने

हमारा समाज प्रायः आम बोल-चाल में हिंदी

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

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

का प्रयोग करता है, लेकिन जब शिक्षा की बात आती है तो हम इसे अंग्रेजी भाषा को माध्यम बनाना पसंद करते हैं। इससे यह पता चलता है कि लोगों के मन में हिंदी के लिए क्या सम्मान है? जहां एक तरफ आंकड़े बताते हैं कि विदेशों में हिंदी बोलने वालों की संख्या बढ़ रही है, वहीं भारत में सिविल सेवा में हिंदी माध्यम के छात्रों का सफलता ग्राफ गिरता जा रहा है। जानकार इसका मुख्य कारण पाठ्यसामग्री हिंदी में उपलब्ध न होना बताते हैं। हिंदी में जो पुस्तकें हैं भी, वे अनुवादित हैं। यदि वास्तव में हिंदी को बढ़ावा देना चाहते हैं तो आपको इसके प्रचार-प्रसार को रोक कर इसको विज्ञान और तकनीकी की भाषा बनाना होगा।

• संदीप कुमार, ईसीसी, प्रयागराज

इस तरह छत्तीसगढ सबसे ज्यादा आरक्षण देने वाला राज्य बन गया है। विडंबना यह है कि आजादी के सात दशक बाद आरक्षण की व्यवस्था को जहां धीरे-धीरे समाप्त करने की दिशा में

बढ़ा जाना चाहिए था, वहां अब

इसका इस्तेमाल सरकारें समाज के विभिन्न वर्गों में आपसी वैमनस्यता पैदा करने में कर रही हैं। आरक्षण आज हर पार्टी के लिए बड़ा वोट बैंक बन चुका है। दशकों से चले आ रही आरक्षण व्यवस्था का लाभ कितने फीसद लोगों को मिला है, इसके लिए सरकार को स्पष्ट आंकड़े जुटाने की जरूरत है। केंद्र और राज्य स्तर पर आंकड़े जुटा कर उनका अध्ययन किया जाना चाहिए ताकि यह पता लगाया जा सके कि वाकई अब तक आरक्षण का लाभ कितने फीसद लोगों को मिला है। आमतौर पर देखने को यही मिला है कि आरक्षण का लाभ पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी लिया जा रहा है। जरूरतमंद एर हकदार लोग इससे वंचित रह जाते हैं। 1947 के भारत और अब के भारत में काफी बदलाव आ चुका है।

आरक्षण से जहां एक वर्ग वर्षों से लाभान्वित हो ता आ रहा है, तो दूसरी तरफ सामान्य वर्ग को इसका खिमयाजा भुगतना पड़ रहा है। इसमे कोई दो मत नहीं है कि इतने वर्षों में सामान्य वर्ग को आरक्षण की वजह से कोई नुकसान नहीं हुआ है। आरक्षण बढ़ने से सरकारी नौकरियों में अनारक्षित वर्गों के पदों में कमी आएगी। आरक्षण की व्यवस्था जहां एक वर्ग के लिए हितकर है, वहीं दूसरे वर्गों की यह उपेक्षा करती है। सरकार को चाहिए कि इसकी जमीनी स्तर पर जानकारी हासिल करके ही इसकी समीक्षा कर इसे बढ़ाने का निर्णय ले।

> अमित पांडेय, बिलासपुर (छत्तीसगढ़) जवाबदेही जरूरी

नए मोटर वाहन कानून में यातायात नियमों के उल्लंघन पर भारी जुर्माने और दंड का प्रावधान किया गया है। इसको लेकर विवाद जारी है और लोगों में रोष भी है। कुछ राज्य सरकारें भी खुल कर इसके विरोध में आ गई हैं। यह तो सभी जानते हैं कि बिना हेलमेट पहने, बिना सीट बेल्ट लगाए, मोबाइल पर बात करते गाडी चलाना जैसी आदतें गंभीर मुसीबत का कारण बन सकती हैं। मगर लोगों में सतर्क न रहने की आदत बन गई है, तो इसकी कुछ वजह यातायात पुलिस की लापरवाही भी है। अक्सर वह कानून का उल्लंघन करने वालों को किसी दबाव में आकर या कुछ रिश्वत लेकर छोड़ देती है। इस तरह लोगों में धारणा बन गई है कि अगर वे कोई गलती करेंगे तो आसानी से बच निकलेंगे। इसलिए केवल जुर्माने के भय से लोगों में कानून तोड़ने की प्रवृत्ति को खत्म करने का दावा नहीं किया जा सकता। इसके लिए संबंधित महकमों को भी जवाबदेह बनाना जरूरी है।

• अजीत कुमार गौतम, गोरखपुर

नई दिल्ली

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