When both yin & yang play truant

All is not well at the country's largest private airline

OUT OF THE BLUE

ANJULI BHARGAVA

In a news report that appeared in one of the dailies earlier this month, IndiGo CEO Ronojoy Dutta claimed that differences between the airline's two promoters have been successfully resolved and peace has been restored.

In response to his "phew" of relief, I have only one word: Hah! A glass once cracked is never the same again and this one is no different. Differences to my mind would be satisfactorily resolved when one promoter asks to be reintegrated into the day-to-day running of the airline and the other gracefully accepts. Even if it may be a while away for this to happen, there are other problems that have beset the airline of late.

I'll begin with the very latest. As Mumbai rains wreaked havoc once again last week, it was IndiGo that found itself drowning in a pool of public anger as 36 of its flights failed to take off on time or were cancelled in a single day. The airline found itself acutely short of ground staff to handle irate passengers and faced a massive public relations crisis. Several passengers are still reeling from the poor handling and many — including a few who wrote to me — have sworn never to fly the airline again.

If this can be dismissed as just an angry reaction to a moment, I would not call it a cause for concern. But IndiGo's sheen — and its efficiency in domestic operations — has been on the wane for a while now.

I'll cite just one example to highlight why I'm finally putting pen to paper although I have numerous such examples in stock; Since I write frequently on aviation, readers, friends, friends of friends, family and acquaintances have reduced me to an agony aunt, albeit a reluctant one!

A frequent flier of the airline — who usually takes anywhere between 12 to 15 flights a month, many of which are on IndiGo, on account of its frequencies — wrote to tell me that she had decided to boycott the airline after facing a spate of cancellations in the last few months, most of which she learnt about less than 24 to 36 hours in advance. Since her work requires her to be in cities for meetings at specific times, she is forced to rebook — at a far higher cost — each time on another carrier operating in the same time frame. Since the cancellations were sudden, she ended up paying almost double the regular fare for each sector.

But her saga is filled with more anguish. In one of the cases, her mother was travelling with her from Delhi to Bengaluru on an evening flight when it was cancelled last minute. Since she had no option but to reach Bengaluru the same night, she and her mother were first sent by the carrier to Mumbai and then Bengaluru, eventually landing there at 2.30 am. Imagine enduring all this delay and hassle with an 83-year-old in tow! In two cases, she was livid when she learnt of the cancellations only upon arrival at the Mumbai airport (this happened to me recently in February on the Delhi-Dehradun sector so I know how she feels).

I use her example only as illustrative. This has happened so many times to so many people I know that a growing number — especially those who are more time conscious than price conscious — have boycotted the airline as far as possible including some of the editors and columnists of this paper.

The airline is cancelling less than in January and February this year (when the pilot crisis was at a peak) and even compared to its total flights, the numbers cancelled may be insignificant. But the loss of goodwill in every such instance is both immeasurable and irreplaceable. If the airline could work out flight disruption arrangements with other airlines that allow it to put passengers on a rival for the same fare within a similar time band, the goodwill it would earn would be immeasurable. People value concern.

Lastly, IndiGo to my mind is making the classic mistake of adding fat cats at the top of the pyramid while trying to cut costs at the bottom. In 2017-18, when it brought in expats at fancy salaries, it failed to add ground staff at airports in keeping with its expanding fleet to cut flab. Had it not done so, it would have had staff available on the spot to handle just the kind of crisis it found itself in at Mumbai recently. In terms of loss of reputation, it's paid a hefty price for being penny wise and pound foolish.

Train 18 off the beaten track

Controversies over tenders and vigilance enquiries have brought the government's showcase Make in India project to a standstill

SHINE JACOB

Eighty per cent of Train 18's components are indigenous, and it took just 18 months from conceptualisation to manufacturing, no mean feat in a country where such projects take decades to materialise

In his Independence Day address this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Vande Bharat Express was a symbol of people's aspirations in India. "People's thinking has changed. Earlier, they were happy with merely a plan to set up a railway station. Now people ask, 'when will Vande Bharat Express come to my area'," he said. Despite being the prime minister's pet project — on a par with the Chandrayaan missions — the Vande Bharat trainset, or Train 18, project, is currently on a very bumpy track.

In the past six months, two consecutive bulk tenders for propulsion systems were cancelled on technical grounds. Then, vigilance cases were filed against the men behind the first train. In March, trade union protests erupted at the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai over the likely transfer of the project. Finally, the Train 20 project, for high speed long distance trains, has been shelved.

Train 18 — named for the year of its launch —was India's first semi-high speed train. Capable of clocking 160-200 kmph, against the average sub-100 kmph speed of India's express trains, it was built at 40 per cent of global prices. The first Vande Bharat Express from New Delhi to Varanasi, the prime minister's constituency, was launched on February 15. Covering 800-odd km in just eight hours, it has been running successfully. Its maiden journey saw massive receptions in various stations and along the track up to Varanasi, proof of Modi's observations about aspirational Indians. Train 18 is a showpiece of Modi's Make in India policy: 80 per cent of its components are indigenous, and it took just 18 months from conceptualisation to manufacturing, no mean feat in a country where such projects take decades to materialise.

Following its success, Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal had announced that 100 such trains would be launched, even with sleeper facilities, soon. Based on the production programme the Railway Board issued earlier this year, the second trainset was supposed to be on the tracks by April 2019, followed by the third in October 2019. After that, ICF had lined up one trainset each in every alternate month till March 2020 and one rake each per month from April 2020. Based on this road map, the plan was to come up with at least 45 trainsets till 2021-22.

All these dreams seem to be a distant reality now. Now the notion of procuring fully-built trainsets from the open market to get best international technology is doing the rounds, defeating the Make in India policy. A scaled-up Train 18 project is still to leave the station. So what went wrong, considering Train 18 was on a par with the Chandrayaan mission in terms of the national importance accorded to it?

The first sign of trouble started in March when all the trade unions protested against a possible transfer of designing and manufacturing to the Modern Coach Factory in Raebareli, Congress president Sonia Gandhi's long-time constituency which the Bharatiya Janata Party hopes to wrest in the next elections.

This crisis was averted after the unions were assured that ICF Chennai would get firm orders.

After this, the first bid for 43 Train-18 propulsion systems were floated. Of this, orders for only three trains were awarded, one for Spanish major CAF and two for the Medha Group, a Hyderabad-based group that supplied systems for the first Vande Bharat train. The propulsion system is considered the most important part of Train 18, accounting for ₹35 crore of the ₹100-odd crore spent on the first train.

So far so good until the government cancelled the first tender on grounds that it was tailor-made to favour the Indian company. At the same time, the government ordered a vigilance enquiry against some members of the Train 18 team for "violation of procedure" for contract awards. To this, the ICF officials counter that global majors such as Bombardier and Siemens had participated in the tender as well, and the first two rakes were awarded on an L1 (lowest bid) basis.

The second tender for 37 trains, too, saw participation from CAF, Cummins, Medha, Titagarh, Bhel and CRRC. This was cancelled, too, for not meeting the specifications set out by Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO), the Railways' research arm. Writing in *The Hindu* on September 16, K Balakesari, a former member, Staff, Railway Board, attributes these failures to the "interdepartmental rivalries and internecine turf wars within the Indian Railways". Speaking to *Business Standard*, Railway Board Chairman V K Yadav said one of the major reasons for the delay on bids was the government's effort to improve certain efficiency parameters. "The energy consumption in Vande Bharat was very high compared to the trains in same category globally. To make it more efficient, we felt it is better to delay further," he said. The RDSO has already come out with new specification and a fresh bid will be floated before October 15, he added. Sudhanshu Mani, the mastermind behind Train 18, declined to comment on the issue.

A senior Railways official said the project will go ahead despite these hiccups. "Such roadblocks are natural in all major infrastructure and manufacturing projects. We always keep on updating tenders as and when required, hence cancellation of a particular tender cannot be considered a hindrance for a particular project," he said. Train 18, he insists, will turn out be a success because the railways minister is constantly monitoring it to ensure that it becomes a reality.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Jaitley Point

Ever since he rejoined active politics in the late 1990s, the late Arun Jaitley would gather each morning with his friends from different fields at a point in Lodhi Gardens. They would take a round or two, and then sit for an extended gossip session. The group included Jaitley's friends from his school and college days, lawyers, journalists, businessmen, and politicians of various parties. One among this group would bring tea for the rest every day. On Sundays, there would be *samosas* and *kachoris* too. Now, some of his friends, including the Congress' Rajeev Shukla and former attorney general Mukul Rohatgi, are planning to write to the New Delhi Municipal Council, the civic body responsible for the upkeep of the park, to declare the corner where Jaitley sat with his friends "Jaitley Point".

A self-goal

Uttar Pradesh Energy and Additional Sources of Energy Minister Shrikant Sharma, who is also the state government spokesperson, has been waxing eloquent about the work done by his department to ensure round-the-clock electricity in urban areas and power supply in rural areas as much as possible. However, his colleague in the council of ministers, Dara Singh Chauhan, who holds the portfolio of forest, has caused much embarrassment to Sharma by stating just the opposite. Chauhan recently wrote to Sharma, complaining about erratic power supply in his Assembly constituency in Mau district. This, he said, was breeding resentment among farmers. The letter was leaked to the media and became viral before being lapped up by the Opposition to target the ruling dispensation. At a time when the Adityanath government is preparing for bypolls in 13 UP Assembly seats, the episode has left the government in disarray.

Brand Govinda

The Madhya Pradesh government, say sources, has roped in film actor and former Congress Member of Parliament Govinda (*pictured*) as brand ambassador for the state. Chief Minister Kamal Nath will make an announcement to that effect just before the state investment summit, Magnificent MP, kicks off next month. Govinda will help promote brand Madhya Pradesh as a tourist and investment destination. He met Nath at the state secretariat in March, but Nath's aide R K Miglani then said the actor was the chief minister's friend and he met him "in that capacity only".

ON THE JOB

Labour supply expands by 4.5 million

MAHESH VYAS

The 17th Wave of Consumer Pyramids Household Survey conducted during May through August 2019 indicates stabilisation of labour participation rate (LPR) at about 43 per cent. At 42.85 per cent it is the same as it was in the 16th Wave. The 14th and 15th Waves had recorded an LPR of 42.74 per cent. Evidently, the LPR is rising in small, cautious steps.

These small changes make big differences. A stable LPR implies a greater number of people have joined the labour force. This is because the underlying population keeps increasing. An increase in the LPR means that a greater proportion of the increased population is participating in the labour markets. A greater proportion of a rising population joining the labour force is the best of both worlds.

The labour force expands by about 3.4 million even when the LPR remains stable. When the LPR expanded by just 11 basis points from 42.74 to 42.85 per cent between the 15th and the 16th Waves, the labour force expanded by 4.5 million.

If all of these 4.5 million, or the 5 per cent increase in the labour force, get gainful employment, even with no change in productivity, they could cause a 5 per cent real growth in GDP. Real life is not so simplistic, but the point here is to merely demonstrate that small changes in participation and gainful employment can make a big difference to overall income and wealth in India.

One big challenge is that India's LPR is too low. Less than half the working age population is employed or seeking employment. It is impossible for any country to grow at anywhere close to full capacity if most people do not contribute to growth by staying out of the labour markets.

In this context, the small recent increase in the participation rate is most welcome in an atmosphere that has mostly projected much gloom and doom.

Labour seems to have overcome the deep scepticism regarding availability of jobs following the twin shocks of demonetisation and GST in 2016 and 2017. The near-precipitous fall in the participation rate during 2017 and 2018 has been arrested. We have not recovered lost ground but we have stopped losing any.

Labour participation has increased substantially among youngsters — those in their twenties. We describe below the data that leads to this conclusion.

To eliminate seasonality, we compare the participation rate in the latest Wave of May-August 2019 against the same in May-August 2018 and in May-August 2017. Besides being exactly two-years ago and one-year ago points of observation, they are interesting in other ways as well. May-August 2017 was the last Wave of the steep fall in the LPR that began in September-December 2016. And, May-August 2018 was the first Wave of the relative stabilisation of the LPR. We study the sources of the stabilisation.

LPR of the age group 20-24 years was 38.8 per cent in May-August 2017. It rose to 42.8 per cent in May-August 2019. Age group 25-29 saw 3.8 percentage points increase to 59.3 per cent. Other age groups have continued to record declines or very small increases.

Amongst males, the increase in LPR is across age groups except among the very young (15-19 years) and the relatively old (60 years or more). The highest increase is in the age group 25-29 years while the fall in the relatively older people is sharp enough to bring down the overall LPR among men. Arguably, this is not a very bad outcome.

There is an increase in the participation rate of young women and that is concentrated in the 20-24 age group.

The next question, of course, is to find jobs for these young men and women who are joining the labour markets.

But is the labour market full of people who cannot find jobs or does it also consist of a lot of employers who cannot find appropriately skilled labour?

Union Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar is reported to have stated last week that there is dearth of labour adequately skilled to meet the requirements of potential employers.

The political slugfest that ensued notwithstanding, the remark was not entirely flippant. Many employers do complain about not being able to find adequately skilled labour. The minister's remark merits serious attention.

It is important to measure the labour markets more comprehensively than just a household survey to understand and solve problems related to its requirements of labour. A household survey tells us a lot about the supply of labour and its characteristics but cannot tell us enough about the demand for labour and its expected attributes. That requires an enterprise survey to match the household survey. India needs to systematically understand the needs of industry. Setting up skilling institutions in collaboration with industry is good but needs to be supported with a solid flow of information from industry based on a large-scale enterprise survey.

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

Illusion of strength

This refers to "Govt's ingenious ways to milk the PSUs" (September 16). The government is facing problems of mounting fiscal deficit with much lower than expected GST and other tax revenues, losses incurred by its enterprises such as Air India, MTNL/BSNL and public sector banks (PSBs) etc and increasing expenditure on welfare schemes. It is working on various ways to create the illusion of a financially strong government. Besides adopting the cross-holding model in PSUs, milking the Reserve Bank of India and parking government expenditure under PSUs, it is increasingly using LIC to lend to and invest in loss-making banks, PSUs and corporates like Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd. The interests of minority shareholders in PSUs and LIC policy holders seem to have been completely sacrificed at the altar of political expediency and creating an illusion of well-being of government finances. One has to just read the latest Comptroller and Auditor General of India report to get an idea of what is happening.

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

Lifting exports

This refers to the editorial "India's export problem" (September 16). Compliments for beautifully analysing multiple problems of Indian exports and pointing out, perhaps, the single largest handicap — the cost of logistics — that makes our exports uncompetitive. Logistics costs as a percentage of the total price of exports even in an advanced and high-wage country like Germany are significantly lower than those in India. Our turnaround time for ships and trucks at our ports is several times higher than the global standards — half a day and 30 minutes respectively as cited by you. Obviously, the sloth and inefficiency in this crucial area add to the costs incurred by exporters.

Having said that, we must laud that Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has openly acknowledged that exports are vitally important to meet our economic growth targets and we need "19-20 per cent growth in outbound trade" to achieve those targets. This is a great start; admission of the crucial role of exports should itself spur all concerned to pull up their socks. Recent pronouncements of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman — remission of duties or taxes on exported products, automated refund of input tax credit and the relaxation by the Reserve Bank of India — are also positive steps. Let's not scoff at these.

We do need to address the structural problems of red tape and credit availability but let's acknowledge the fact that what the government has already initiated will certainly help in mitigating the problems faced by exporters. Perhaps our exporters also need to stop being "cry babies" and try to stand on their own feet and run faster. As you pointed out, the ongoing US-China trade war offers a huge opportunity for Indian exporters.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

Control dynamics

This refers to "The legacy issues of public sector banks" (September 13) by Y V Reddy, former governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The article, while putting the nationalisation of banks carried out in 1969 and 1980 in perspective, raises certain pertinent points. The public sectors banks (PSBs) face dual control of government of India as well as that of the RBI. In fact, the control of the government over PSBs has been a hindrance for the RBI in regulating these banks. Urjit Patel, former RBI governor, mourned the fact that while he was in office, the RBI did not have adequate regulatory powers to regulate the PSBs. Clearly, time has come for putting PSBs under absolute and unequivocal regulation of the RBI without the government having a say in the matter. As this would require wider political consensus, all stakeholders need to work towards this.

Sanjeev Kumar Singh Jabalpur

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HAMBONE

Business Standard
Volume XXIV Number 24
MUMBAI | TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

Strategic vulnerabilities

Attack on Aramco raises questions for Indian security

An unprecedented attack using unmanned aerial vehicles or drones on Saudi Arabian petroleum giant Aramco's oil-processing facilities, reportedly by Yemenese Houthi rebels, has shaken up the Indian and world markets. Following Aramco's confirmation that it would shut down half its output — almost 6 million barrels a day, 5 per cent of global production — oil prices showed an intra-day increase of almost 20 per cent, the largest such spike in recent years. Effectively, all the spare processing capacity in the system has been wiped out. Much now depends on how soon Saudi Arabia can bring some of it back online, and whether tensions between Iran, which backs the Houthi rebels, and the Saudi-US alliance can be controlled. Other major oil producers may have to compensate by increasing output — the US has already announced that it will open its strategic reserve in response. In India, the rupee fell against the dollar, reflecting increased concerns about instability in the external sector and inflationary pressure, thanks to higher oil prices.

For India, there are two strategic vulnerabilities that have been exposed by this attack. The first is that India, which imports over 80 per cent of its oil, continues to be dependent on a low and stable price for its macro-economic stability. The current account deficit is currently manageable, thanks to a demand crunch domestically. But every time the price of a barrel of oil goes up by $1, India spends a little over ₹10,500 crore more on imports. The country spent $112 billion on oil imports in 2018-19. Saudi Arabia accounts for around 10 per cent of the global supply and is the second-largest supplier of crude oil and cooking gas to India.

If enough other pressures are brought to bear on the economy at the same time, a spike in the price of oil would lead to severe instability. The government has not done enough, in spite of a long period of low oil prices since 2014, to deal with this strategic vulnerability. There is only one real solution: High and sustainable export earnings, which would provide confidence about the external account. But Indian exports have seen little growth in real terms for years and, in fact, shrank 6 per cent year-on-year in August, the last month for which the data is available. Reviving and renewing the export sector is not just imperative for growth but also for stability.

The other vulnerability exposed is of India's own refining infrastructure. The giant private sector refineries at Jamnagar in Gujarat, for example, at least since 26/11 have been viewed as exposed to attack from across the border. In fact, the government amended the Central Industrial Security Force Act to ensure that installations even in the private sector that are considered of vital national importance are protected. The threat goes beyond refineries, of course, to other installations — such as solar parks — that may be difficult to secure from drone attacks. Sophisticated anti-missile shields may not work against drones that hug the ground and escape radar notice. These are not precisely low-tech, but are not expensive to buy or maintain. In areas further back from the national frontier, geo-fencing and drone-detection mechanisms will need to be re-examined — the civil aviation ministry released a state-of-the-art drone policy in December last year, but it should be revisited for any loopholes following this attack. Of course, regulations must also recognise that drones have many useful and productive applications, and should not stifle technological innovation or adaptation.

Don't repeat the mistake

Politicians'calls for NRCs in their states are irresponsible

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has reportedly said that his state will implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the controversial exercise that attempts to enumerate and record all Indian citizens in a state by asking them to submit paperwork demonstrating their, or their forebears', presence within Indian territory prior to a particular cut-off date. Mr Khattar's statement appears to have bipartisan support in Haryana; his predecessor, Bhupinder Singh Hooda of the Congress, also said it was the responsibility of the government to identify non-citizens. Haryana, which includes the prosperous Delhi suburb of Gurugram, has been riven for years with unsubstantiated claims about mass Bangladeshi immigration, and there is much political fodder to be made from an NRC-like process. Indeed, even the chief minister of neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, has said that the NRC can be started in UP phase-wise, because it is "important for national security and will also put a stop to the rights of the poor being taken away by illegal immigration".

What is odd about this rush by politicians to call for the replication of the Assam NRC process elsewhere in India is that the failures and gaps in how the NRC has been prepared have become glaringly evident over the past weeks. Even the Assam BJP is far from happy with the end result, in which 1.9 million people have been left at risk of statelessness. They believe that too many Muslims have been included in the list of citizens and that too many Hindus have been excluded. The problems of gathering paperwork to demonstrate antecedents in India have also become widely known. Given these problems, it is hard to see how any objective case can be made for replicating such a flawed process elsewhere. It is also important to note that Assam is after all a special case. The NRC process in Assam arose not from a vacuum but from an official accord signed by the Government of India in the 1980s, which committed it to enumerating citizens in Assam. It is also valid to note that the Assam Accord created a citizenship cut-off of 1971, two decades after the cut-off for the rest of the country. Extending the NRC to the rest of India thus will be legally and practically even more complicated. Further, there will be a limited pay-off in terms of identifying illegal immigrants if the NRC Assam is any guide — the exaggerated numbers thrown around for years about "infiltration" were not reflected in the final NRC. Politicians should refrain from scoring political points about something so disruptive and socially problematic.

Questions also need to be asked now about what happens to the 1.9 million identified in Assam as possible non-citizens. Foreigner tribunals — another Assam-specific institution, which are not available as appellate bodies in the rest of the country — are worryingly biased. If a significant proportion of the people are eventually declared non-citizens following legal appeals, then India has the responsibility of dealing with these stateless people — since Bangladesh is certainly not going to take them back. Reports that giant detention camps are being built do not provide much comfort. Such camps cannot be a permanent solution; they will be a humanitarian and economic disaster. Legal re-integration of the stateless into the economy and society, together with a path to citizenship for their children, must be a priority.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY

Limited choices in strategic partners

The defence ministry has lost sight of what it intends to achieve via the strategic partnership route in manufacturing

BROADSWORD

AJAI SHUKLA

Serious drawbacks were highlighted last week in the defence ministry's so-called Strategic Partner (SP) model of procurement, when five Indian entities submitted Expressions of Interest (EoI) for being the SP in Project 75-I — the plan to build six conventional submarines for an estimated ₹45,000 crore. There were two responses from the private sector — Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Reliance Naval and Engineering (RNaval). Another two came from defence public sector shipyards — Mazagon Dock Ltd, Mumbai (MDL) and Hindustan Shipyard Ltd, Visakhapatnam (HSL). A fifth response came from a proposed special purpose vehicle (SPV) between HSL and Adani Defence, even though SPVs were not invited to bid. HSL thus submitted two bids, effectively competing against itself.

In many ways, this mirrored the response to the only other SP procurement that progressed earlier — for building 111 naval utility helicopters (NUH) for ₹21,738 crore. In May, EoIs were received from L&T, Tata Advanced Systems, Adani Defence, Mahindra Defence, Reliance Defence and the Kalyani Group. Although the defence ministry solicited bids only from private firms, public sector Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) also threw its hat in the ring, submitting two EoIs — one in its individual capacity and another in a joint venture with Russian Helicopters called Indo-Russian Helicopters Ltd (IRHL). The defence ministry has remained silent.

To understand how the SP model works, let us consider Project 75-I. The selected Indian SP will build the six submarines in technology partnership with a foreign original equipment supplier (OEM) that is being chosen in a separate process. Four OEMs — Rubin Design Bureau (Russia), Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (Germany), Naval Group (formerly DCNS, France) and Saab-Kockums (Sweden) formally responded to a "request for interest" the Indian Navy floated in October 2017. Since then, two more shipyards — Navantia (Spain) and Daewoo (South Korea) — have also indicated interest. Which of these six are actually in the fray will become clear on September 24, the last date for OEMs to submit EoIs. Then, after examining the SP and OEM proposals, the defence ministry will shortlist those it considers eligible. Shortlisted SPs will then pair up with approved OEMs to submit formal proposals. The defence ministry will award the contract to the SP-OEM pairing that it believes would build the submarines most cheaply, with the highest indigenous content and the most technology transfer. The aim is to equip the Indian defence industry with the skills and infrastructure to design and build the navy's next 12 submarines without foreign help. Towards this end, Project 75-I proposes to incentivise OEMs that will deliver higher indigenous content than the minimum mandated level, which is 45 per cent in the first submarine, increasing to 60 per cent in the sixth.

However, somewhere along the way, the defence ministry has lost sight of what it intended to achieve —which was to nurture private defence firms that would compete on equal terms with the nine defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) and the 41 factories of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) that monopolised defence production until 2001. In 2005-06, the Kelkar Committee recommended that technologically capable and deep-pocketed private firms be nominated Raksha Udyog Ratnas (RuRs, or defence production jewels), each operating in a specific technology sphere. The RuR identified for fighter aircraft would compete with HAL. The RuR chosen for artillery guns would compete with the OFB. The chosen RuR for submarine building would compete with MDL.

Before long, this excellent initiative encountered push-back from OFB/DPSU trade unions, which feared job losses as manufacturing orders, hitherto handed to them on a plate, flowed instead to the more nimble and productive RuRs. Defence ministry bureaucrats, many of whom directly oversaw the defence public sector, also opposed competition from RuRs. Further, there was deep bureaucratic reluctance to be involved in selecting RuRs, especially after the decision-makers in the allocation of telecom spectrum and coal mining blocks faced corruption accusations. Consequently, for the duration of AK Antony's defence ministership, the plan to pro-actively build up private defence manufacturers was put on the shelf.

In 2015, Manohar Parrikar, a defence minister who had once been an entrepreneur, resurrected a similar proposal, incorporating private sector SPs in place of RuRs. Two Parrikar-appointed committees — the Dhirendra Singh Committee and the VK Aatrey Task Force — set out stringent modalities for choosing SPs, including the financial and technical requirements companies were required to meet. But familiar resistance from bureaucrats and unions held Parrikar back until he relinquished charge as defence minister in March 2017. His successor, Arun Jaitley, took only weeks to announce an SP policy that entirely subverted its original aim. Jaitley allowed in OFB/DPSUs, forcing the private sector to compete with public sector entities that had been built up through decades of government largesse, including land, construction infrastructure, manpower skilling and technology transfer over multiple contracts awarded without tendering. Jaitley's policy also diluted the domain competence needed to be an SP. A company no longer needed submarine building skills or "system-of-systems" domain competence to bid as an SP in a submarine project. Instead, it was enough to have commissioned, or owned a power, steel, chemical or automobile plant.

Besides the requirement for private companies to compete on unequal terms, there are other concerns about how Project 75-I is being pursued. Eyebrows have been raised over the entry of Adani Defence, which neither has a shipyard nor any shipbuilding experience; its participation rests on the parent Adani Group's power plant. Since dry docks, wet basins and outfitting berths are essential for building submarines, Adani Defence relies on its SPV with HSL to meet those EoI conditions. But the rules demand that a bidding company must exist on the date the EoI is submitted — the Adani-HSL entity apparently does not. Nor is HSL eligible to bid alone, since it neither meets the EoI's financial criteria (turnover and net worth), nor has it delivered a platform worth ₹300 crore in the last five years.

Project 75-I starkly underlines the ambitions of Adani Defence, which, despite never having manufactured a single defence item, is on track to contend in all the four SP procurements planned. It is already participating in the NUH project and Project 75-I. Having tied up with Saab of Sweden, Adani will almost certainly pitch for the forthcoming SP tender for building 114 fighters in India. That leaves only the project for building tanks and, given the stakes Adani has picked up in tank electronics firm Alpha Design Technology, armoured vehicles seem to be in its crosshairs too.

The Reliance Group seems equally focused, despite the Rafale controversy, RNaval's severe financial woes and a looming corporate insolvency process under the Indian Bankruptcy Code. RNaval might shelter behind its parent group's financials, but Reliance Infrastructure's poor liquidity and a credit rating of 'D' severely dents its prospects to qualify. Intriguingly, the defence ministry has diluted the credit rating requirement in its EoI request. The Defence Procurement Procedure of 2016 requires a credit rating of "A" for projects worth ₹1,000 crore. The EoI request dilutes it to "BBB" for a project worth 45 times more. The logic behind this could be interesting.

Finally, timely delivery is everyone's bugbear, except for L&T, which is delivering vessel after vessel ahead of schedule. RNaval is years overdue in delivering patrol vessels to the navy. HSL was years late in overhauling a navy Kilo-class submarine. MDL is years late in delivering the Scorpene submarines under Project 75. It would seem the defence ministry is not spoilt for choice.

The inseparable twin of a trade war

BIJU PAUL ABRAHAM & PARTHA RAY

The trade war that US President Donald Trump initiated last year is morphing into new forms of economic conflict with far-reaching implications for the global economy. On August 1, Trump announced that the US would impose a 10 per cent tariff on all imports from China which were not yet subject to the higher tariffs that he had imposed since March 2018. On August 5, China allowed its currency, the renminbi, to slip below the psychologically important 7 renminbi to a dollar barrier. Since this marks a 11-year low for the Chinese currency, various questions tend to spring up. Are we witnessing a currency war as a fallout of the US-China trade war? Or, is the emergence of a currency war in the current context inevitable?

Purely in terms of first principles, if we consider a two-country world, consisting of a home country (say, the US) and a foreign country (say, China), then a trade war from the standpoint of the home country is perhaps intended to reduce the quantity by increasing the prices of exports from the foreign country. There may be several ways to achieve such an objective. Illustratively, weapons like tariffs, subsidies, import quotas, voluntary export restraints, local content requirements, and anti-dumping policies — all can be employed for this purpose. It may not be an oversimplification to note that the current trade war has — until now — primarily been fought in terms of a tariff war. However, if on a parallel track the exchange rate of the foreign country's currency is undervalued, then the efforts and weapons of trade war will be rendered ineffective. Specifically, if the Chinese renminbi gets depreciated with respect to the dollar, then despite the tariffs imposed by President Trump, these imports can still continue to be cheaper in dollar terms. Thus, faced with the possibility of a trade war, the foreign country can think of retaliating in terms of a currency war — a possibility that Brazilian Finance Minister Guido Mantega flagged in 2010, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.

Interestingly, the perceptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the US Treasury on the Chinese exchange rate regime differ quite a bit. Consider the following.

The US Treasury in its 2019 report on macroeconomic and foreign exchange policies of major trading partners of the United States noted that it continues to "have significant concerns about China's currency practices, particularly in light of the misalignment and undervaluation of the RMB relative to the dollar."

On the contrary, the IMF in its latest 2018 annual report on exchange arrangements and exchange restrictions has termed the Chinese currency as one of a group of currencies with "crawl–like arrangement". For a currency to be branded as falling within this group, its exchange rate "must remain within a narrow margin of 2 per cent relative to a statistically identified trend for six months or more (with the exception of a specified number of outliers) and the exchange rate arrangement cannot be considered as floating". More recently, the IMF in its *External Sector Report* of July 2019, has noted, "The large reduction in China's current account surplus — from more than 10 per cent of GDP in 2007 to 0.4 per cent in 2018 — was accompanied by a cumulative 35 per cent real appreciation of the renminbi over that period".

The depreciation of the renminbi in recent weeks has raised fears that China is aiming to counter US tariffs by weaponising its currency. The US has declared China a "currency manipulator". The initiation of a currency war could mark the opening of a new front in the US-China conflict over trade. President Trump has made increasing tariffs on China a major plank of his 2020 re-election campaign. He has justified punitive US tariffs on China as an effective measure to force China to open up its domestic market to US firms. This, he claims, would increase US exports to China, reduce the imbalance in US-China trade and create more jobs in the US. From a purely domestic standpoint his approach may seem appealing. US workers, worried about the loss of jobs to countries abroad, form the core of his domestic support base. Besides, many US analysts have argued that the US was in danger of losing its position as the world's leading economy unless it pressed China to open up its markets and stopped it from violating intellectual property rights of US firms. The trade war, from this perspective is a means to ensuring continued US dominance of the global economy.

While from a US perspective this strategy might seem logical, the implications for the rest of the world are perhaps alarming. This US-China conflict has the potential to set-off counter-actions by other countries that could impact global trade and reduce global growth. After all, other countries also have exports and domestic jobs to protect. China is a major competitor to other large emerging economies in global export markets and any depreciation in the Chinese currency makes their products much less competitive. If other emerging economies let their own currencies depreciate, we might see the emergence of a much wider currency war with unpredictable consequences. The depreciating trend in the rupee in the recent period might even be an indication of what lies ahead.

Chinese currency devaluation in 1995 and the decline in exports from Southeast Asian countries triggered the Southeast Asian crisis of 1997. The resulting economic crisis led to political unrest and regime change in many Southeast Asian countries. The only silver lining, in the current context, could be China's recent assurance that it would not use devaluation as a policy tool. But can one accept such Chinese statements at face value? Or will the currency war escalate, drawing in other countries as well? Only time will tell.

The writers are professors at IIM Calcutta

The justice puzzle

KITABKHANA

T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

There are two abiding mysteries in India that no one talks about. One is the failure of those who framed India's Constitution to make justice a fundamental right. The other is the complete failure of activists to take this up.

I would not have expected such a basic flaw to be identified by a person from the corporate sector. They normally tend to be reticent about public policy even after retirement.

So we must congratulate R Gopalakrishnan, formerly of Hindustan Lever and Tata Sons and a fellow columnist in this newspaper, for worrying about this. In a book modestly titled *Doodles on Leadership* he does precisely this. The book is published by Rupa and Co.

I have never met him or spoken to him. About a month ago, he wrote an article in this newspaper about how it was important for government officials to have empathy with the citizen. I wrote to him with a thumbs-up emoji. He responded with a single abbreviated word, thnx.

Since then we have exchanged four or five less-than-10-word emails about the justice issue. He then sent me his book to read.

The chapters that he calls doodles have made me wonder: If this is how he doodles, what would he do if were to produce something more substantial, say, a business history of post-1991 India? A practitioner's critique would surely be very useful for economist-historians who have dominated the business of writing business histories.

R Gopalakrishnan makes a devastating point: India doesn't really care about justice for the citizen. Had it done so, it would surely have made justice a fundamental right along with the rest of them

Most of the seven of the 10 essays in this book are focussed on business and management issues. They form a subset of intellect of which most economists are blissfully unaware. They should be made aware of it.

The last three are about other things like the Indian mindset and the relationship between a nation and its society of which business enterprises are a crucial part.

And then, there is the chapter on justice, a clear outlier. It stops short of saying wtf. But the sheer bewilderment of the author is writ large.

Mr Gopalakrishnan makes a devastating point: India doesn't really care about justice for the citizen. Had it done so, it would surely have made justice a fundamental right along with the rest of them.

He also tells us how the Law Commission has been in existence since 1834 — yes, for 185 years — and has been unable to persuade any government since then that justice should not only be seen to be done but actually be done. In India, he says giving the delays, it rarely is either done or seen to be done.

He cites the example of a bus conductor who, in 1973, was suspended for overcharging by five paise and pocketing the difference. The case is still pending.

He also talks about the Jessica Lal case and the Nirbhaya case where the juvenile rapist was treated leniently on a technicality — that when he committed the crime he was a few weeks short of attaining adulthood.

Then there is the S P S Rathore case in which the offender, a very senior police officer in Haryana got away after 26 years with a ₹1,000 fine. He had been convicted of molesting a young girl.

He quotes the Law Commission to show that successive governments have deliberately kept the judiciary on a tight financial leash. This, by the way, is a complaint a former colleague of his in Hindustan Lever, S L Rao, used to make in the context of regulatory agencies — the government never gave the agencies enough money. Mr Rao was an early chairman of CERC.

Like a good manager, Mr Gopalakrishnan is not content to ask the questions. He also provides the answers.

The problem, he says, is like the broken window problem in criminology where everyone assumes that someone is repairing it but no one actually is.

He also cites Amartya Sen's phrase "inflamed minds," guiding public policy to suggest that outrage can be an effective tool in the hands of the public. But after watching some of our TV anchors I am not very persuaded by this.

Mr Gopalakrishnan has five solutions. One, allocate more money for justice delivery; two, de-emphasise procedure in favour of substance; three, limit the number of adjournments; four, penalise frivolous litigation; and five, a better self-correcting judiciary.

The first four are eminently doable but the last requires Russell's Paradox to be solved: It asks who shaves the barber who only shaves those who do not shave themselves.

Opinion

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

TRUMPING TRIBUTE

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi

"The special gesture of President Donald Trump to join us in Houston highlights the strength of the relationship and recognition of the contribution of the Indian community to American society and economy"

Big exports boost requires a bigger change in strategy

Govt does well to fix export schemes and increase credit flows, but big exports-growth needs a whole new approach

THE GOVERNMENT HAS done well to come out with a series of initiatives to boost India's flagging exports; between FY14 and FY19, India's exports grew at less than 1% per annum. The measures, announced last week, include replacing a WTO-non-compliant duty refund scheme with a compliant one and, with a ₹10,000 crore higher outlay, there are measures to ensure a higher amount of export credit—around ₹36,000 crore—is available at lower interest rates. Other measures include ways to reduce the processing time at airports and ports, etc. While a weakening rupee should help India's $330-bn exports grow, it is not clear how much these moves will help boost growth to reasonable levels in even the medium term, much less be able to reach commerce minister Piyush Goyal's $1-trn-stretch target.

Though Goyal was pilloried for his recent slip about Einstein having discovered gravity, he was right when he said that looking at the past didn't necessarily help predict how the future would unfold. Between 1990 and 2018, while India's exports grew just 18 times, for instance, Vietnam's rose 102 times, as a result of which, its exports are 75% those of India today; these were a mere 6% in 1960. In other words, it is not how fast global trade is growing that is critical, what matters is seizing the opportunities that global trade throws up; Vietnam didn't just catch the textiles boom, it also rode the electronics boom, and the possibilities that got thrown up with rising US-China tensions. Seizing the opportunities, however, requires an almost complete retooling of India's manufacturing/regulations since no country can become an export powerhouse unless its local production is globally competitive; cheaper export credit, for instance, is a good thing, but it cannot make an uncompetitive product into a world-beating one. In which case, India needs to fix its infrastructure deficit, high corporate tax rates, high-cost labour and land, and reduce costs associated with bureaucratic red tape, convoluted decision-making, etc.

It is also critical that various sectoral distortions be corrected; so, for instance, India's tax policies in textiles are biased against man-made fibres whereas global demand is for such materials, and not for cotton, which is the mainstay of India's industry. Other sectoral policies also need to be fixed. While India's policies on mobile phones have so far attracted mostly small players, the bulk of the $300bn global export market for smart-phones—60% of this takes place from out of China—is serviced by four of five large companies, like Apple and Samsung; it is difficult to see how India's exports of smart-phones can take off unless India is part of the global value chains of these firms. There is, so far, little serious attempt to ensure that firms like Samsung and Apple shift their production bases to India; the boom in India's automobile exports after Suzuki's entry ensured its entire vendor-base moved to India, though, should have made clear just how important being part of global value chains is. Around 70-75% of global trade, in any case, takes place through value chains run by MNCs across the world. Agriculture is another big area of export potential, but harnessing this requires moving away from today's stop-go policies towards agriculture exports—normally based on how local prices are faring—as well as those like MSPs that distort markets. In the case of minerals, where there is big exports potential, similarly, India needs to both get its royalty-cum-tax regime right as well ensure all permissions—including licensing fresh mines and all environmental clearances—are given at the earliest. Only a policy that aims at making a country more competitive can deliver top-class exports growth; an exports-policy makes little sense on its own.

Not ambitious enough

Housing package needed to have been a lot bolder

THE LAST MILE funding for stalled housing projects will not solve the real problem in the real estate sector, but will nonetheless help. The ₹20,000 crore fund, to be set up on the lines of the National Infrastructure and Investment Fund (NIIF), will be used to complete affordable and mid-category housing projects. The government's contribution would be ₹10,000 crore, with sovereign investors, and the likes of an LIC, expected to bring in the rest.

The reason why the financial assistance may not help resuscitate much of the sector is that most housing projects, today, are stressed. The scheme, however, is only meant for those projects that have not been admitted to the NCLT for a resolution process, and those where the loan exposure hasn't gone bad. Moreover, construction should have hit 60%, which is probably not the case for the majority of projects. The point is that, if the project is net worth positive, and 60% of it is complete, the promoters should not have trouble borrowing anyway. It is the promoters with weaker balance sheets, those unable to access conventional sources of funding, who need help.

While it is hard to estimate how far ₹20,000 crore can go, Kotak Institutional Equities (KIE) points out there are currently 4.1 lakh apartment units costing less than ₹45 lakh. It is not clear how many of these have progressed to the extent of 60%, but KIE believes ₹20,000 crore should be enough to fund 40% of the construction costs for about 2.5 lakh units.

To be sure, the government doesn't want to be bailing out every errant builder. Neither does it want be trapped in litigation. Also, it is understandably more concerned about affordable homes—costing below ₹45 lakh—and mid-income housing rather than luxury apartments. Nonetheless, given how a revival in the real estate sector—especially housing—can make a big difference to the economy, the government could have looked at a much bigger level of financial support, and also enlarged the scope of the fund. For instance, it could have included some stressed projects, which have not made it to the NCLT, but where the loans may have gone bad, by working with the banks to rope in a new promoter. The NCLT process, unfortunately, is time-consuming, and the assets end up being sold to buyers, with banks taking massive haircuts. Intervening before a company is admitted to the NCLT will help projects fetch their right value, and banks, too, would recover more in quicker time. A bigger fund—at least ₹40,000 crore—with a larger contribution from the government is needed, and the conditions need to be relaxed. The returns from this investment can be very high.

Rash-driving PREMIUM

Linking vehicular insurance premiums to driving behaviour is a good idea

A DIPSTICK MEASURE of how seriously the government is taking the issue of road accidents and poor driving behaviour—apart from the heavy fines under the amended Motor Vehicles Act—is the fact that it is mulling over linking premiums for vehicular insurance to the individual's history of traffic violations. Indeed, the compounded penalty could induce motorists to exhibit safer driving behaviour. On September 6, IRDAI notified the constitution of a working group to recommend the implementation framework and methodology for a potential premium-driving behaviour regime. The national capital territory (NCT) might see a pilot launch of the new insurance policy as early as November.

At present, premiums for automobile insurance in India are dependent on the make and model, as opposed to the global practice of basing them on the driving practices of the insurance beneficiary. However, the new system is expected to follow the globally-accepted points-based model, wherein the severity of traffic violations affects the premium. Failure to wear a seatbelt, since it doesn't expose the vehicle to risk of accident, would lead to a much smaller rise in insurance premium as compared to, say, having a history of drunk driving. The data for customising insurance premiums is expected to be sourced from Automated Traffic Enforcement systems and *e-challans*. This model would, equally, give discounts on premiums to motorists with exemplary records of driving behaviour. For better collation of data, perhaps the use telematics devices, or black boxes, within vehicles could be considered. This system of pay-the-way-you-drive insurance—based on technology that records information like vehicle speed, location, driving frequency, and other performance indicators like how hard the brakes are applied, how rapid the acceleration level is, and how sharp of a corner is taken—has taken off in developed nations. India must take that route, too.

HIT RATE

THE CRITICAL PART OF LINKING THE DEPOSIT RATE TO THE EXTERNAL BENCHMARK HAS TO BE CONSIDERED, AS THIS ONE-SIDED-LINKAGE CREATES CHALLENGES ON INTEREST SPREADS

The external benchmark conundrum

MADAN SABNAVIS

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Views are personal

THE PRICE OF any commodity should ideally be determined in the market. However, often, there is a preconceived notion of how prices should behave. We want stock prices to go up, commodity prices to come down, exchange rate to be steady, and interest rates to come down. These preconceived notions can, then, have a bearing on actual price if there is regulatory power. Let us see how this works.

When it comes to, say, commodity prices, there is the eternal conundrum of whether the farmer should get a higher price, or the consumer should pay a lower price. Today, while the MPC is happy that inflation is down, the income of farmers has been affected, which has affected spending. The reverse of the two can cause political upheaval. But, there is no control over prices as there are myriad players. The same holds for currency. RBI can intervene in the market, and augment supplies to stabilise the rupee, or, conversely, withdraw dollars to ensure there is no further appreciation. But, being a market-determined rate, RBI cannot force the price in any direction by notification, which was the case in the pre-1992 days.

However, when it comes to cost of capital, there has been constant lament that interest rate transmission is not happening, and while the interest rate is no longer controlled (remember the MLR), the options tried were PLR, base rate, and the multiple MCLR system, where the latter two were formula-driven. With the market not quite being amenable, the mandatory link with a benchmark is the final regulatory push that compels banks to fall in line. Curiously, when it comes to interest rates, just like, say, a farm product, there are two sides, too—a saver and a borrower. The die has been cast in favour of the borrower, who should pay less on loans if the interest rate comes down. Ideally, the choice should have been with banks whether or not to link with benchmarks, but after quite singularly bringing in a regulatory formal-based base rate and MCLR, the benchmark is the third on the book shelf of the library that will now rule the market.

The central bank, as the monetary authority, seems to be better-placed when it has regulated banks to use the market benchmark route as it makes monetary policy more effective. RBI had been expressing its angst against transmission, especially since 110 bps cut in rates did not make banks budge much. Now, there is no choice once a benchmark has been selected. But, interestingly, after the last cut by 35 bps, the 10-year Gsec, which is market-driven, has actually remained intransigent in the 6.5% range, and not come down. Hence, if banks had linked retail loans to the 10-year Gsec, even the latest dictate would not have helped as the lending rate would have remained unchanged, as the market, which is driven by other factors, has not moved in accordance with this change. Hence, there are limits to which the benchmark would work.

How about the banks? They are probably riding the horns of a dilemma. Which benchmark to use? Which loans to include besides retail and SME? As deposits are presently not linked with the benchmark concept (except for a specific bank, which has linked savings rate), how do they manage their liabilities? Linking assets to the benchmark, and not the liabilities will strain the bank's P&L. But, if the deposit rate is also linked to a benchmark in course of time, then customers would be in a quandary as they go in for bank deposits on the assurance of a fixed known return. Now, if it is also made variable, then they would have to bear the volatility in returns, which was not part of their plan. How about the spread over the benchmark, which also has to be anchored for 3 years?

If banks want to play safe, they have to choose the benchmark that reacts either the most or least to the repo rate change—Tbill or Gsec, depending on their appetite. The rules are not yet open about whether deposits too can be linked to the same benchmark in phase 2, if, at all, there will be one. This cannot be changed and holds for all customers, and, hence, has to be done with careful thought. Next, the spread over the benchmark should be clear. Here, banks will need to work out their costs, and the possible margins that they would like to maintain, just like what was assumed when working out their MCLRs. This would be the basic lending rate, specified as xxx bps over the benchmark. Wild swings in the benchmark can, however, mean volatility in earnings, especially in a regime of declining interest rates.

> **Customers should continue to have a choice of going in for a fixed or floating rate, as it can affect them adversely when the cycle moves up**

How about customers? Intuitively, they would be better off when rates are moving downwards as there would be substantial gains in their EMIs or interest outflows. But, in a rising interest rate scenario, which cannot be ruled out as every economy goes through these phases, there would be challenges in maintaining these outflows. In FY20 so far, the 10-year GSec has moved between 6.45-7.43%, which is almost 100 bps. The 364-day Tbill moved between 5.74%-6.5%, which is almost 75 bps.

An interesting observation here is that when the financial crisis erupted, which was based on large scale defaults on home loans, it was precisely because the interest rate cycle had turned upwards, and pressurised borrowers, which caused them to default, and leave their homes and keys. While such an occurrence has been looked at today as being a black swan incident as it looks very unlikely that there can be thousands of home owners defaulting at the same time, it is a possibility that cannot be ruled out as interest rates on home loans, which is what is being driven by the government, is going to be variable.

The new interest rate setting model, based on benchmarks, will be a new experience. Hopefully, customers should continue to have a choice of going in for a fixed or floating rate, as it can affect them adversely when the cycle moves up, just as they benefit when it comes down. Also, the critical part of linking the deposits to the external benchmark has to be taken as this one-sided-linkage creates challenges on their interest spreads. As retail and SMEs also tend to move in large numbers, when it comes to response to lower interest rates, and the new dispensation comes in the downward movement regime, the response in upward movements would require close monitoring. From the point of view of monetary policy, this will go down as the final salvo being fired.

Federalism & the Finance Commission

The terms of reference of the 15th FC are too expansive, and tilt the fiscal balance further in favour of the Centre over the states

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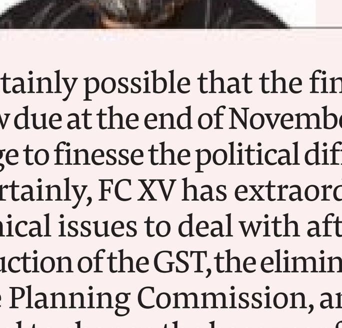

THE CURRENT RULING coalition has shown a propensity for bold moves in its attempt to reshape India's polity and society to match its vision of the nation. The economy has sometimes received similar treatment, with the GST finally being implemented; demonetisation, and public sector bank mergers are two other examples. The last Union Budget was somewhat timid, perhaps, given the growth slowdown, but recent economic policy changes have shown more willingness to respond vigorously to the problem.

Of course, boldness does not guarantee that a decision is the best possible, or even that it is a move in the right direction. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the 15th Finance Commission (FC XV) reflect that cautionary observation. Finance Commissions have been one of the success stories of India's constitutionally created institutions. Despite shortcomings, they have established precedents, mostly dealt well with challenges and changes in the country's federal finances, and retained some degree of independence and integrity. The central government has not always adopted their recommendations wholeheartedly, but overall, it has respected the institution. The current challenge, however, is whether the ToR will push FC XV into problematic territory.

The main job of the Finance Commissions has been to recommend tax sharing rules between the Centre and the states, and among states, supplemented by other kinds of fiscal transfers. A major goal has been to help poorer states fund adequate levels of public service. The challenge has been to achieve this without unduly damaging state government incentives for raising their own revenue, and for spending with profligacy. Given the large transfers required by the constitutional assignments of tax authority, and India's heterogeneity, the outcomes have not been too bad, certainly better than in some other large federal nations, which have seen sub-national governments spin out of control.

So, what is the problem with the FC XV ToR? I would argue that they are too expansive, and that this expansiveness is in the direction of tilting the fiscal balance further in favour of the Centre. In particular, the call to revisit the previous FC's decision to increase the share of the states is worrying—that decision made a great deal of sense in putting the states on a firmer fiscal footing, while also reducing the scope for discretion, and political wheeling-and-dealing that comes with it. As Govinda Rao had pointed out in 2017, the net increase in the states' share was much smaller than what still gets reported, and going back on what the last FC did will be damaging. The ToR also places emphasis on providing performance incentives to states, and controlling "populism," but that raises all kinds of difficulties in defining that term, and could lead to a complex mess, just when the last FC had succeeded in simplifying, somewhat, the criteria for fiscal transfers. Incentives of this nature had been tried earlier, and did not seem to work particularly well.

> **What is needed is a fiscal federal system in which states and local governments have greater autonomy to decide on their own revenues**

Perhaps the most striking example of pushing the envelope of the ToR is the recent, last-minute addition of asking FC XV to suggest ways of allocating non-lapsable funds for defence and internal security. Aside from issues of process, the aspect of concern here is that a technical panel that has already almost completed two years of consultations and analysis is being asked to weigh in on issues of expenditure that have a high level of political sensitivity. It fits in with an approach to the ToR that seems to push FC XV into serving as a political tool of a particular national agenda.

It is certainly possible that the final report, now due at the end of November, will manage to finesse the political difficulties. Certainly, FC XV has extraordinary technical issues to deal with after the introduction of the GST, the elimination of the Planning Commission, and the proposal to change the base year for population weights (which poses its own set of political challenges). But, I would argue that the Centre's ToR have been bold in the wrong direction, towards greater central control. What is needed is a fiscal federal system in which states and local governments (particularly cities and larger towns) have greater autonomy to decide on their own revenues, perhaps by piggy-backing on the central income tax, or by strengthening local property tax systems, or other avenues that will allow sub-national governments to be judged, by their constituents, on whether they are raising these revenues effectively, and translating them into higher quality public services. Centralisation of fiscal authority merely allows sub-national governments to go on contending that the Centre is the source of their problems.

Increasing the fiscal authority and autonomy of state and local governments will require constitutional changes, but these have been implemented before in the realm of fiscal federalism, and the government has demonstrated its willingness to be bold in other arenas. Given the timing of the FC cycle, perhaps the Centre, through the NITI Aayog, should immediately consider structural reforms in India's fiscal federalism that will promote efficient sub-national spending on health, education and infrastructure, and lay the groundwork for the kind of broad-based growth that India needs.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Aryan migration proved

The paper titled "The Formation of Human Populations in South and Central Asia", published in the highly regarded journal *Science*, has proved the Aryan migration theory conclusively, on the strength of 'genome-wide ancient DNA data from 523 individuals spanning the last 8,000 years'. Hindutva proponents and partisans can no longer defend the 'Out of India' migration theory. It has to be now conceded, without reluctance, that we are 'all migrants and all mixed'. Some came early and some late; those who are regarded as the indigenous people are the descendants of 'Out of Africa' migrants, who reached India around 65,000 years ago, and those known as the Aryans reached India around 2,000 - 1,500 BC, from the Central Asian steppe. The Aryans arrived in India not only with their Indo-European languages and pastoral techniques but also their cultural practices, and introduced a hierarchical social system based on birth. It should be clear, then, that the Vedic culture cannot be equated with India's composite and syncretic culture. The definitive findings published in *Science* should dissuade the Hindu Right from harping too much on *pithrubhoomi* (fatherland) and *punyabhoomi* (holy land). The histories of populations, and the extent of their interbreeding supported by genetic data are not amenable to alteration to suit anyone's political or ideological leanings. The article should open the eyes of those who believe in 'one nation, one religion', 'one nation, one culture', 'one nation, one ideology' and 'one nation, one language' to the beauty and validity of the concept of 'unity in diversity'. Large sections of the media, print and electronic alike have chosen to ignore the significant findings about the provenance of Indians, betraying their elitist bias and vested interest.

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

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R.N.I. Reg. No. MAHENG/2008/23487 Printed for the proprietors, The Indian Express (P) Ltd, by Vaidehi Chintaman Thakar at the Indian Express (P) Ltd Press, Plot No. EL-208, TTC Industrial Area, Mahape, Navi Mumbai-400 710 and published from Express Towers, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021. Editorial & Administrative Offices: Express Towers, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021. Phone: 22022627/67440000. Fax: 022-22856323. (Air Surcharge: R25.00 Delhi; R1.00 Goa)

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PORTRAIT: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

Union minister for information & broadcasting

Why Modi is a Level 5 leader

The PM is a communicator par excellence. He speaks directly to the people and creates a bond with them, and gives confidence to them

Level 5 Leadership connotes Honesty and Integrity, Commitment & Passion, Decision Making, Accountability. Over and above, a level 5 leader must be a good communicator, creative and innovative, who delegates and empowers and is an Inspiring leader. On all these criteria, prime minister Narendra Modi stands out.

His honesty and integrity is full & final. For him, national interest is the only interest. This image got widespread acceptability during his stint of 12 years as Gujarat CM. This stood out against the backdrop of policy paralysis, corruption and vaccum of leadership which country experienced during 2004-14. Therefore, people love him. The poorest of the poor is convinced about his honesty and integrity. It is well known that illiterate intelligence is more effective than educated incapacity many times. In five years, there is not a single charge of corruption against his government.

His humane face was visible when he consoled ISRO scientists after last minute snag in Chandrayaan-2. Before leaving Sriharikota, he delivered one of the best motivational speech to the scientist and engineers of ISRO.

After assuming power in 2014, he bowed before the Parliament footsteps, followed by bowing to the Constitution and declared that his government is dedicated to the welfare of the poor, SC/STs, downtrodden and hitherto neglected. He coined a slogan 'sabka saath, sabka vikaas'. This year he added 'sabka vishwas' which explains his intentions very clearly.

He thinks differently and acts differently. To motivate and get full cooperation of bureaucracy, he appointed 10 groups of secretaries to prepare a roadmap for the government in 10 different sectors. All the groups gave presentations, and after due diligence, he asked them to work with speed to achieve their own goals. He asked them to present their progress the year after.

Probably, he is the first prime minister who has written a book to guide and give confidence to the students about how to approach the examination and challenges in life. He titled it as Exam Warriors. Successively for two years, he addressed more than 100 million students and parents. In his interaction with students, he even referred to PUBG, making it clear that he is updated on what is happening around. He establishes immediate connect with the students and youngsters.

He is creative and innovative. He understands that India lacks in innovation, and only research & innovation will make India a part of the Big League

He was probably the first Indian politician to realise the potential of social media and used it effectively not only to reach out but, establish immediate connect with the youth.

He is a communicator par excellence. He speaks directly to the people and creates a bond, gives confidence to them. People respond to his appeals even if they have to forgo gas subsidy or travel concessions. Through his communication, he motivates.

The decision on GST, demonetisation, Surgical Strike, Balakot Air Strike, action against corruption, Abrogation of Article 370 provisions, law banning Triple Talaq are some examples of decisive leadership.

Also, 10% EBC reservation, Ujwala gas scheme, Pradhanmantri Awas, Ujala giving LED, Mudra, Skill India, Ayushman Bharat, Kisan Sanman, Pension to unorganized labor- small traders- farmers, remunerative prices to farmers, 95 million toilets are examples of empowerment of poorer section.

GST is a living example of his faith in co-operative federalism. Decisions about every word of GST law, rules and rates were decided unanimously though there is a provision of decision by voting. Increase in devolution to the states from 32% of central resources to nearly 49.5% shows his faith in federalism.

He has declared new goals for his second term—$5 trillion economy, assured water supply to every household, providing social security to all needy sections and, above all, 'sabka vishwas'.

He is creative and innovative. He understands that India lacks in innovation, and only research & innovation will make India a part of the Big League. Therefore, he started ATAL Technology Labs in nearly 3,000 schools, where robotics, 3D printing and other advanced material is made available. Students experiment with these modern gadgets and come out with exciting ideas. These are mapped in Olympiad organised for this. For engineering students, he promoted 'Smart India Hackathon', where team of students work on some problem statement and come out with digital/hardware solutions. The final round is organised at 25 centres, in which 10,000 students work non-stop for 36 hours. Every year, he interacts with these students at midnight and inspires them.

He has ensured Atal Incubation Centre's in various IITs/NITs. In this budget, he has come up with the scheme of the National Research Fund. He has sanctioned 'PMs Scholarships' to encourage real advanced research. He interacts regularly with start-ups and meets youths with innovative ideas.

BIT BY BIT

iPhone opportunities, & challenges

NANDAGOPAL RAJAN

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Apple has played some strategic pricing with its new iPhone, but its trump card might be an older phone

THE NEW IPHONES are here. Apple has, this time, chosen to refresh its lineup with upgrades of all the three phones it launched last year. So there is the iPhone 11, which betters the popular iPhone XR, the iPhone 11 Pro to replace the iPhone XS and the iPhone 11 Pro Max, an upgrade on the iPhone XS Max. All three phones are upgrades, so no radical change in design or hardware, except better, and more, cameras as well as a more powerful processor, the A13 Bionic.

Apple will be hoping that the improved cameras on its new phones—the iPhone 11 has two cameras and the iPhone 11 Pro models three lenses—will get at least its dedicated user base to upgrade. With what it has launched this time, it might be difficult to get those using newer models to opt for an upgrade, but it might impress those with models up to the iPhone 7.

Research firm Canalys says that from Q4 2018 to Q2 2019, Apple shipped 87 million of its latest iPhones, 26 million less than what the previous generation (iPhone 8, 8 Plus and X) achieved in the same period the year before. The sale of its older-generation iPhones, meanwhile, grew 12.4%, to 61 million units. This will be the first set of numbers Apple will hope to change with the new phones. It has to somehow get its customers to buy more of the newer phones.

This is why with the iPhone 11, Apple has brought down its price tag significantly. While the iPhone XR was launched at ₹76,900, its successor has a starting price of ₹64,900. It will be hoping that a lot of users in countries like India pick up the new phones instead of opting for older devices. But the fact remains that the iPhone 11 is still an expensive phone for Indians. However, it might have a chance now when users are comparing with other flagships like the Samsung Galaxy S10 or the Note 10. When it comes to specs, all these phones are very similar—with the iPhone offering a lot more in terms of sheer ecosystem advantages.

Apple's worry for markets other than India is that, for three years now, it has had the same design and incremental updates

But, after the launch of its new phones, at least in India, Apple can expect a significant jump in numbers. That is because its most popular phone has become more affordable. Canalys says the iPhone XR, which was introduced in October 2018, shipped 47 million units till June 2019. That is almost the combined numbers of the other two phones launched at the same time—the iPhone XS and iPhone XS Max. That was because the phone was selling around ₹54,900 after a price cut some months ago and raked in a lot of numbers in India. The iPhone XR can now be purchased for as low as ₹49,900. Ahead of the holiday season in India, that might be a very strategic new price for Apple, one that helps it take away numbers from OnePlus, which lords over the premium segment now. For the average Indian, the iPhone is still an aspirational phone, and given a choice, he would go for it even if it costs a few thousand rupees more.

But, that's just India. Apple's worry for the rest of the world is that, for three years now, it has had the same design and incremental updates. Most of what it has offered now, like the ultra wide lens, has been in the market for a while now. However, its processor is way more superior and so are its efforts at computational photography. But, will that be enough for its captive base of users in countries like the US and Australia to increase their monthly subscription and get a new phone? That, we will have to wait for a few months to see. Of late, these users have been holding on to their phones for longer, thus impacting the numbers for the Cupertino tech firm.

So, even as it could end up with better numbers in India, there will be a worry that its flagship phones won't do as well as it wants them to. But then Apple might be okay lying low for another year till it prepares for its big 5G plunge in 2020 with radically different iPhones.

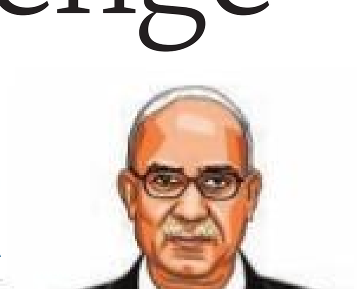
IND-AS FOR BANKS

Complexity will be the key challenge

It is a bit hard to imagine that the economy would always behave as per our models

ANIL KISHORA

DMD & Chief Risk Officer, State Bank of India. Views are personal



IT IS A MATTER OF time before the new accounting standards, Ind-AS, kick in for banks in India. These originate from an innovation called IFRS 9 or CECL, if you prefer the American version, that effectively puts accounts and risk together in a blender. How will this initiative pan out? There are assessments that point, with some degree of certainty, to elevated volatility in accounts—P&L in particular—as 'fair value' gets to broadly determine what banks report in their annual accounts.

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision came up with new norms and standards. While Basel III is still under implementation, a more evolved and, in some ways, simplified Basel IV is on the anvil. Rules and regulations continue to originate unabated globally to ensure banks maintain adequate capital, classify their assets appropriately in a timely manner, deliver proper managerial conduct and face enforcement action for breaches or deviations from expected standards. Many would agree that the system is still in shaky equilibrium, with the key stakeholders vying with each other to succeed in finding the right solution to de-risk the system and, of course, the depositors, who are actually the real lenders.

Now, the two premier global accounting standards setting bodies—International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) & Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB)—have come up with the new mechanism where accounting itself is called upon to capture the risk by adjusting the valuations on the go. Is it set to go down in history as a big game-changing invention in accounting? We don't know yet, but it is clear that accounting would no longer be a routine and mundane discipline that it has remained since Friar Luca discovered, from merchants of Venice, the good old double-entry book-keeping half a millennium ago.

IFRS 9 trifurcates assets into Stage I, Stage II and Stage III (ominous resemblance to a malignancy that afflicts humans!) and mandates provisions for 12-month Expected Credit Losses (ECL) for Stage I and Lifetime ECL for Stage II. The Current Expected Credit Loss or CECL standard proposed by FASB prefers to front-load lifetime expected losses. The expectation is that such risk-embedded accounting would prevent the next systemic financial fiasco.

Conceptually, the new accounting standard appears neat and sensible. What could create problems is the complexity it brings in. Modelling expected losses poses challenges. Data and its dissection apart, it is a bit hard to imagine that the economy would always behave as per our models and not throw up spanners in the works, potentially surfacing unexpected risks. Rapid technological advances or disruptive business models, for example, could lead entire industries to obsolescence, jacking up actual losses. Incurred loss is a reality; expected loss is an estimation.

In general, banks would have done considerable amount of technical heavy lifting to get the mechanics right as part of the preparatory to launch the new IFRS 9 standards or its national variants such as our Ind-AS. However, it is not evident as to how the industry would respond in case the new ECL-driven impairment model starts affecting profitability, making it difficult to practise the existing business models. Long tenor loans, say, for infrastructure or even housing might generate higher ECL. Economic sectors considered high-risk could also be no-go domains for some, if loss modelling shows up unacceptable outcomes. Besides credit ratings of counter-parties, collateral available might gain ascendency in credit decisioning. Banks may need to revisit their views on the kind of credit portfolio they wish to have as also their approach to pricing to minimise volatility in P&L and defend bottom lines. Overall, it may necessitate recalibration of risk appetites.

Transitioning from today's accounting to the new model would likely pose challenges for the auditing profession as well, in terms of granular data, time and resources they may require to crack through the complexities. Does one rely on model-driven expected loss numbers or dig deeper to assess the assumptions used in modelling the forward-looking scenarios? Extra work on translating accounts into different standards may also add up to costs. Businesses that deal with both the US and the rest of the world may need to deal with both IFRS and CECL—an inescapable complexity in this inter-connected world.

How do we guard against the unintended side effects of the complexity is a theme the global financial community may need to keep revisiting. Possibly, IFRS 9 would get fine-tuned to bring in greater simplicity, just the way Basel IV is emerging to handle unintended consequences and simplify risk measurement approaches. The new fair value IFRS 9 framework is academically appealing. Will it restore stability to the financial world that is looking to get its bearings back since the global financial meltdown? The short answer is 'no' but, hopefully, it should be of positive incremental value from risk management perspective.

Potential IFRS 9 outcomes might remind us of that old acronym, VUCA. In such an environment, financial institutions would be better off identifying the risk drivers underpinning their businesses and accordingly reorienting their business models, portfolio strategies and risk management practices.

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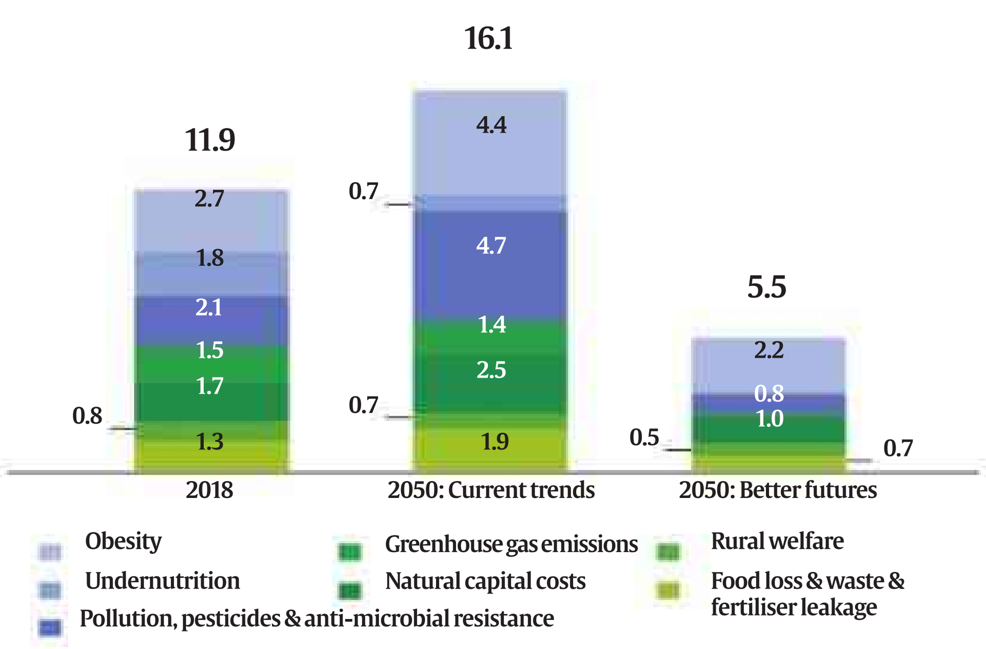
If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to **explained@indianexpress.com**

TELLING NUMBERS

What global food industry costs human health and environment

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF GLOBAL FOOD AND LAND USE SYSTEM ($ tn)



Source: SYSTEMIQ, Food and Land Use Coalition, 2019

A NEW global study has quantified the damage that the modern food industry does to human health, development and the environment costs. The "hidden cost" to the world is $12 trillion a year — equivalent to China's GDP — says the study by the Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU), a global alliance of economists and scientists.

The report calls for the world to diversify its food production and consumption. Global over-dependence on a relatively small number of staple foods leaves populations vulnerable to crop failures, with climate change adding to the strain, it said.

"A small disruption in supply really can do a lot of damage and leads to huge price increases. That creates suffering and social unrest. And it will highly likely also lead to hunger and instability," the Thomson Reuters Foundation quoted Per Pharo of FOLU as saying.

The report proposes a series of solutions, from encouraging more diverse diets to improve health and reduce dependency on specific crops, to giving more support to the types of farming that can restore forests, a key tool in fighting climate change.

What it says about India

The report points out that India has 4 per cent of global freshwater resources to support 19 per cent of the world's population. Some 80 per cent of water in India goes to agriculture, primarily from groundwater sources. This is unsustainable, it says.

Existing government policies already address critical transitions that the new report recommends, FOLU observes. Among various Indian initiatives, the report mentions the EatRight Movement of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India in 2017, the National Food Security Act of 2013, the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture, and the Zero Budget Natural Farming programme in Andhra Pradesh.

THIS WORD MEANS

YANK

Proposed new term for changes in force over time, so that scientists can study muscle behaviour better

STUDENTS OF physics define acceleration as the rate of change of velocity (or speed) with respect to time. Expressed mathematically, acceleration is the time derivative of speed or velocity. In turn, the time derivative of acceleration is "jerk". For further time derivatives after jerk, the words are, "snap", "crackle" and "pop" for each successive derivative.

Force, another familiar concept of physics, is measured in units of mass times acceleration. Unlike velocity and acceleration, however, time derivatives for force have never been defined. Now, biologists and biomedical engineers are proposing to define a new term, "yank", for changes in force over time. Their ideas are published in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*.

The objective is to quantify something that our muscles and nerves can feel and respond to. Scientists who study sports often use the term "rate of force development", a measure of explosive strength. Also, scientists who study gait and balance in animals and humans often analyse how quickly forces on the body change. "Yank" could be useful in understanding spasticity, a common muscle impairment in multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, stroke and cerebral palsy.

Source: Emory University

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

What is J&K's Public Safety Act?

The PSA, under which former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has been detained, allows for detention for two years without trial. How is the stringent Act enforced, and what are the options for appeal?

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M & BASHAARAT MASOOD
NEW DELHI, SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 16

Near Farooq Abdullah's residence on Srinagar's Gupkar Road Monday. *Shuaib Masoodi*

ON MONDAY, it emerged that former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has been detained under the state's stringent Public Safety Act (PSA), which enables authorities to detain any individual for two years without trial. A look at the provisions of the Act, and the conversation around it:

What is the PSA?

The Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978 is a preventive detention law, under which a person is taken into custody to prevent him or her from acting in any manner that is prejudicial to "the security of the state or the maintenance of the public order". It is very similar to the National Security Act that is used by other state governments for preventive detention.

By definition, preventive detention is meant to be preventive, not punitive. This broad definition is the most common ground used by a law-enforcement agency when it slaps the PSA on an individual. It comes into force by an administrative order passed either by Divisional Commissioner or the District Magistrate, and not by an detention order by police based on specific allegations or for specific violation of laws.

Why is it considered draconian?

The PSA allows for detention of a person without a formal charge and without trial. It can be slapped on a person already in police custody; on someone immediately after being granted bail by a court; or even on a person acquitted by the court. Detention can be up to two years.

Unlike in police custody, a person who is detained under the PSA need not be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours of the detention. The detained person does not have the right to move a bail application before a criminal court, and cannot engage any lawyer to represent him or her before the detaining authority.

The only way this administrative preventive detention order can be challenged is through a *habeas corpus* petition filed by relatives of the detained person. The High Court and the Supreme Court have the jurisdiction to hear such petitions and pass a final order seeking quashing of the PSA. However, if the order is quashed, there in no bar on the government passing another detention order under the PSA and detaining the person again.

The District Magistrate who has passed the detention order has protection under the Act, which states that the order is considered "done in good faith". Therefore, there can no be prosecution or any legal proceeding against the official who has passed the order. Also, after an amendment last year by the Governor, persons detained under the PSA in Jammu & Kashmir can now be detained in jails outside the state.

What happens once the PSA is slapped?

Generally, when a person is detained under the PSA, the DM communicates to the person within five days, in writing, the reason for the detention. In exceptional circumstances, the DM can take 10 days to communicate these grounds. This communication is important because it is on the basis of it that the detained person gets an opportunity of making a representation against the order. However, the DM also has the discretion not to disclose all the facts on the basis of which the detention is ordered, if he or she thinks that these facts are against "public interest".

The DM has to place the detention order within four weeks before an advisory board, consisting of three members including a chairperson who is a former judge of the High Court. The DM also has to place the representation made by the detained person. The detained person too can make a representation before this advisory board.

Within eight week from the date of detention, the board submits its report to the government, which will determine if the detention is in public interest. This report is binding on the government.

What constitutional safeguards are guaranteed to a person so detained?

Article 22(a) of the Constitution states that no person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice. Article 22(b) states that every person arrested and detained shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of 24 hours (excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court) and no such person shall be detained beyond this period without the authority of a magistrate.

However, Article 22(3)(b) allows for preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order. The Supreme Court has held that in order to prevent "misuse of this potentially dangerous power, the law of preventive detention has to be strictly construed and meticulous compliance with the procedural safeguards... is mandatory and vital". Therefore, the DM has to show that the detention order follows the procedure established by law; any violation of these procedural safeguards is to be termed violation of constitutional rights.

Over the years, the Supreme Court has held that while detaining a person under the PSA, the DM is under a legal obligation to analyse all the circumstances and material before depriving that person of his or her personal liberty. It has also held that when a person already under police custody is slapped with the PSA, the DM has to record "compelling reasons" for detaining that person. While the DM can detain a person multiple times under the PSA, he or she has to produce fresh facts while passing the subsequent detention order. And all the material on the basis of which the detention order has been passed, the Supreme Court has held, should be provided to the detained person for making an effective representation; and the grounds of detention has to explained and communicated to the person in the language understood by the detained person. If these are not followed by the DM, it can be made the grounds, before the High Court, for quashing of a detention order.

5 months on, why Israel is voting again today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 16

ISRAELI voters will return to polling booths on Tuesday for a second shot in a little over five months at deciding who will form the country's next government. The last election on April 9 failed to produce one.

ELECTION IMAGE: An ultra-Orthodox Jewish man; a Likud banner showing Netanyahu and Trump. *Reuters*

Unprecedented election

No single party has ever won a majority in the Knesset, which routinely sees representation of perhaps 10 political factions. Coalition governments are the norm, with the larger parties getting support from the smaller ones in return for concessions for their specific constituencies. Negotiations are always long and tortuous, but this is the first time that a deal could not be cut.

How the country got here

Votes are cast for parties, and seats are allocated by proportional representation — a party must win at least 3.25% of the national vote, equivalent to four seats, to get into the 120-member House. In April, Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu's Likud and the main Opposition Blue and White were tied at 35 seats each.

After results are declared, Israel's President gives the leader who he feels has the best chance of putting together a coalition, 28 days — with a possible extension of 14 days — to form a government. In April, President Reuven Rivlin asked Netanyahu to make an attempt.

The negotiations failed after Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the secular ultranationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party, walked away from the right-wing religious axis led by Likud.

The deal-breaker was ostensibly Netanyahu's refusal to remove the exemption traditionally given to ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jews from Israel's mandatory military conscription so they can continue to study the Torah full-time. Critics of Lieberman, however, alleged that his real game was to weaken Netanyahu — his one-time ally turned bitter rival — and ultimately replace the Prime Minister as the country's top politician.

On May 29, with Likud stranded one seat short of the 61 needed for a majority, Netanyahu engineered a vote in the Knesset to dissolve itself and hold fresh elections.

A referendum on Bibi

Like the last time, Tuesday's election will be a virtual referendum on Netanyahu, who in July beat Israel's iconic founder Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to become the country's longest-serving leader. Netanyahu, 69, who first became PM in 1996 and then won consecutive terms beginning 2009, 2013, and 2015, faces possible indictment for bribery, fraud, and breach of trust, which could see his long career end in ignominy.

The race is extremely close, and Tuesday's vote, like the one in April, will be a contest between Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, the 60-year-old leader of the centrist Blue and White. Gantz, a former Chief of the Israel Defence Forces, cannot compete with the Prime Minister in terms of experience and international position; yet, he is the strongest anti-Bibi candidate in years.

What can happen hereon

All citizens ages 18 and older — about 5.8 million Israelis — are eligible to vote. Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip cannot vote; nor can those in East Jerusalem who do not hold Israeli citizenship.

Most polling booths will be open from 7 am to 10 pm. Results will start to come out soon afterward, and the outcome is expected to be clear in about six hours.

However, just like in April, no one expects the elections to throw up an outright winner.

How attack on Saudi oil facility could impact Indian and world economies

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 16

ON SATURDAY, the Houthis, a rebel Shia group of Yemen that is backed by Iran, bombed the Abqaiq plant as well as the Khurais oil field in Saudi Arabia. The attack, executed by drones, meant that Saudi Aramco, the state-owned oil company, had to not only suspend the production of almost 6 million barrels per day (about 6 per cent of global oil supply) but also restrict the use of 2 mbd of spare capacity. This is the largest-ever disruption in crude oil production in Saudi Arabia, which supplies 10 per cent of global world supply and is the world's largest crude oil exporter.

Extent of supply shock

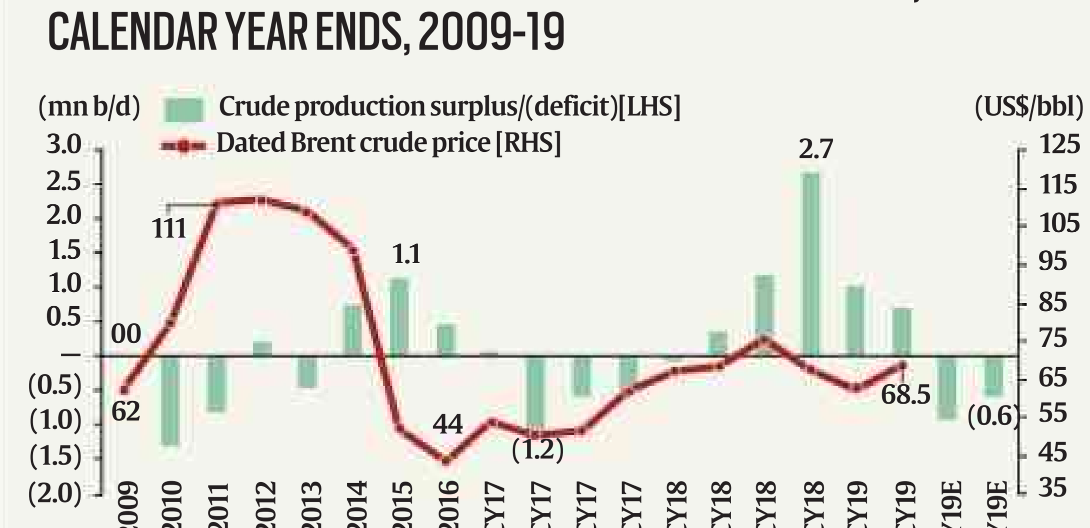
As the chart alongside shows, even without the latest disruption, according to International Energy Agency (IEA) — an autonomous Paris-based organisation with 30 member-countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as its members — the second half of the current calendar year would have seen a decline of 0.8 mbd because of already stagnating supplies. That is why oil prices too were expected to move up. The latest disruption — of an additional 6 mbd — is substantial.

However, as a report from Kotak Institutional Equities Research points out, the world has a large enough oil buffer to tide over the current disruption. For instance, OECD countries have 2.93 billion barrels of commercial petroleum inventories and another 1.55 billion barrels of strategic reserves, which are under government control. As such, it states, " if we assume that Saudi's disrupted oil supplies remain out of the market entirely for the next three months, it can be serviced by 11-12% of OECD inventories".

Extent of the price shock

To the extent that the world has enough inventories to tide over the immediate shortfall, and assuming that this attack is not the start of a long streak of international hostilities between a US-led bloc (including Saudi Arabia) and an Iran-led bloc (including the Houthis), the price shock could be relatively limited.

GLOBAL OIL INVENTORY CHANGE VERSUS CRUDE PRICE, CALENDAR YEAR ENDS, 2009-19



Source: IEA, Kotak Institutional Equities estimates

Even so, crude oil prices have already shot up by over 10 per cent, and the Brent price was $66.6 per barrel as of Monday evening. Brent futures have jumped 20 per cent. According to most estimates, oil prices are likely to trend around the $75 per barrel mark in the coming months.

However, prices will keenly reflect not just the immediate disruption but also the likely disruption should the US initiate some kind of military response. In a tweet on Sunday, US President Donald Trump said: "Saudi Arabia oil supply was attacked. There is reason to believe that we know the culprit, are locked and loaded depending on verification, but are waiting to hear from the Kingdom as to who they believe was the cause of this attack, and under what terms we would proceed!"

Impact on India

India imports 80 per cent of the oil it consumes, which means there are multiple ways in which the country will be impacted by this disruption.

The first issue is supply. India is already trying to make up for the loss of supply from Iran after US-imposed sanctions. After Iraq, Saudi Arabia is India's second-largest supplier of crude oil — it accounts for almost 17 per cent of the country's imports. Although Saudi Arabia has assured that there will be no loss of supply, if the process of restoration takes more time than anticipated, India would have to look for alternatives. This may not be easy since the global supply has been fairly volatile because of disruptions in some of the other big suppliers such as Venezuela, Libya and Nigeria.

A hit on prices may then follow. According to Madan Sabnavis of Care Ratings, India is expected to import 1.6 billion barrels of crude oil in the current financial year. So an increase in oil prices by just one dollar essentially means an increase of $1.6 billion in the import bill. That's an additional Rs 11,500 crore at the current exchange rate. But supply constraints and rising oil prices would mean that the rupee will weaken further against the dollar — that's because, as the dollar prices of crude oil rise, India would need to buy more dollars for the same amount of oil, thus depreciating the value of the rupee *vis-à-vis* the dollar.

As such, rising oil prices will worsen the Indian government's fiscal balance. Moreover, higher crude oil prices would also lead to higher domestic oil prices, which, in turn, will further depress the demand for all things, especially those that use oil as the primary input — say, cars. This dip in consumption demand, which is already under strain as the recent growth slowdown has shown, would likely mean lower economic activity and consequently lower revenues for the government.

To the extent that the current crisis is contained, the damage would be limited — but an escalation by President Trump could exacerbate worries.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

THE REAL TEST OF ONE'S BELIEF IN HABEAS CORPUS IS NOT WHEN ONE DEMANDS ITS APPLICATION FOR ONE'S FRIENDS BUT ONE'S ENEMIES. — CLEMENT ATLEE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

PUBLIC? SAFETY?

Move to book Farooq Abdullah under PSA shows arbitrariness — and a lack of plan to address the crisis in J&K

THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION to wield the Public Safety Act (PSA) against former Jammu & Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah beggars belief. How the National Conference leader, Lok Sabha member from Srinagar constituency, former Rajya Sabha member and former Union Minister for Renewable Energy turned into a case for a law used against terrorists, that too while he was in detention for five weeks, should be for the Centre to explain. Just two days prior to his August 5 house arrest under preventive sections of the CrPc, Abdullah and his son Omar, also a former chief minister, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his home along with a National Conference delegation. After all this, the application of the PSA on Abdullah, hours before the Supreme Court was due to hear a habeas corpus petition for his production filed by MDMK leader and Rajya Sabha member Vaiko, says more about the government than about a man who was the face of moderate politics in Kashmir, apart from being the standard bearer for India on the Kashmir issue.

Abdullah — and his son Omar — may have many a question to answer when it comes to their record of governance in the state but not the question of fealty to the Indian Constitution. Indeed, 25 years ago, during the height of Pakistan-sponsored militancy in Kashmir, it was Abdullah that the Centre fielded to defend India against allegations of human rights violations in the Valley. He also risked his life and political future by going along with the Centre's push for Assembly elections in 1996, winning the election that saw a good turnout despite a boycott call by the Hurriyat. His six-year term was a period in which militancy gradually decreased to virtual irrelevance by 2002. It is ironic that as India faces a fresh round of international concern and allegations for its arbitrary detentions and communications blockade in the Valley, the same leader who, despite some faux pas, acted as a reliable bridge between Kashmir and the Centre, has now been detained under a law that does not require him to be produced before a court for up to two years. It is astonishing that the Court accepted this without question.

Since August 5, when the government abrogated the state's special status, split it into two Union Territories, picked up hundreds, and imposed a lockdown, all has been justified in the name of keeping the peace. A full 43 days have passed. It is not just odd, it is a matter of increasing concern that the government appears to have made little progress on a plan of engaging with the Kashmiri people other than through saturation security presence, arbitrary arrests, a communication blockade and now using a draconian act against a key political leader.

CLEARING THE AIR

Odd-even policy is no magic bullet to tackle pollution. But it is sure to trigger a conversation about Delhi's environment

ALMOST FOUR YEARS after it was first implemented in Delhi, the odd-even scheme will make a comeback in the city. Last week, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that the road rationing scheme will be a part of a seven-point programme to combat pollution from November 4 to 15. The scheme, that will be implemented a week after Diwali, when Delhi's air is at its worst — the post-festival pollution combines with the smog from stubble burning in Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, and particulate matter from tailpipes of vehicles. In the last three years, the Delhi government and the agencies responsible for managing the city's environment resorted to knee-jerk reactions, which did very little to improve the city's air quality. The AAP government's decision to have a pollution-management plan in place nearly two months before the acrid smog hits the city is a welcome departure from the past.

The road rationing scheme allows vehicles to ply on alternate days, depending on odd and even number plates. It was introduced in January 2016, as a desperate measure of sorts after the Delhi High Court described the city as a gas chamber and asked the state government to submit a time-bound plan to mend matters. In response, the AAP government implemented the road-rationing scheme for 15 days in 2016 — from January 1 to 15 and then, from April 15 to 30. An ugly squabble between the Delhi government and the National Green Tribunal (NGT) came in the way of its implementation after Diwali in 2017. The NGT contended that any relaxation would come in the way of improving the city's air quality while the government wanted exemptions for two-wheelers. The government had argued then that Delhi's public transport wasn't equipped to handle the fallout of extending road-rationing to two-wheelers. The government has not talked about exemptions as yet. It has nearly two months to iron out glitches and sort out potential differences that could come in the way of the smooth implementation of the plan. More importantly, it needs to ensure that the city's public transport system is able to meet the needs of commuters on days when their vehicles will be off the roads.

In itself, the odd-even scheme is no magic bullet to clean up Delhi's bad air. But the good news is that the AAP government envisages road rationing as a part of a bouquet of pollution-control measures. It has also initiated a welcome conversation on Delhi's annual tryst with bad air well before it engulfs the city.

PAST ITS PRIME

Doordarshan reaches retirement age, and faces competition from the private sector in what was once its core competency

DOORDARSHAN, INDIA'S PIONEER in the TV spectrum, has turned 60. In most of the world's nations, this is a popular retirement age. It is generally agreed that workers attaining this milestone should clean out their drawers, accept a watch at a small farewell ceremony, gracefully get out of the way and recede into the sunset of redundancy. The parallel with Indian television is striking. Doordarshan began regular transmission in 1965 as a news service and in the Seventies, it was the most powerful propaganda channel of the government. But no contemporary government could possibly need such a service any more, now that private enterprise has rendered it redundant.

Today, the majority would balk at the idea of starting or ending the day with Pratima Puri or Salma Sultan calmly enumerating the signal deeds of the government of the day. A horde of private channels offer the very same thing, presented with the energy of slam poetry and the unabashedly staged quality of WWF wrestling. The national channels represent only the tip of the iceberg. State capitals also have their own government mouthpieces, exuberantly hammerlocking the opposition parties every day. There are so many eager to inform this nation, permanently afflicted by attention deficit disorder, with perpetually wants to know.

But let us not imagine that Doordarshan is completely redundant. Like Indian Airlines was tasked to service unremunerative routes, Doordarshan brings us glad tidings from the world of kho-kho, and news from farm and field that private channels would sniff at. Besides, Doordarshan's history was made memorable by hugely successful serials in multiple genres, like *Buniyaad*, *Tamas* and *Karamchand*. As the news of the day aspires to the condition of fiction, perhaps the national broadcaster can take pole position again, with programmes that lay no claim to the truth, but exuberantly depict hyperreality.

Spend to grow

Government should explore all avenues to expand capital expenditures

C RANGARAJAN AND D K SRIVASTAVA

FROM A LEVEL of 8.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2017-18, quarterly GDP growth fell to 5 per cent in the first quarter of 2019-20, a fall of 3.1 percentage points. The slowdown of the Indian economy is no longer in dispute. Thankfully, the government has come out of denial mode. The critical question is: What should be done to reverse the process? Is the downturn cyclical or structural? Any downturn that happens because of a weakening of demand is cyclical. On the other hand, if there are fundamental weaknesses in the structure of the economy, these need to be removed to sustain high growth. Successful implementation of the structural reforms in 1991 pushed India's potential growth rate to a high level. What we are witnessing in the Indian economy is a combination of the two. Several sectors such as automobiles and housing are facing a sharp weakening of demand. And there has been a significant fall in the savings and investment rate. Within household savings, the proportion of savings in financial assets has sharply declined. Apart from these, a significant growth-stifling factor is the weakness of the banking and non-bank finance sectors due to both cyclical and structural reasons.

The central government and the RBI have responded with a number of policy initiatives. The RBI has reduced the repo rate by 110 basis points since February 2019, reducing it from 6.5 per cent to 5.4 per cent. The central government has also undertaken a number of steps post the 2019-20 budget which include — withdrawal of enhanced surcharge on foreign portfolio investors, a public sector bank consolidation plan, additional depreciation rates for vehicle manufacturers, additional credit support for housing finance companies and recapitalisation of public sector banks. The slowdown appears to be continuing in spite of these measures.

The saving rate has fallen from 34.6 per cent in 2011-12 to 30.5 per cent in 2017-18. The investment rate, which is dependent on the saving rate supplemented by net capital inflows, has also fallen from 39 per cent of GDP in 2011-12 to 32.3 per cent in 2017-18. This persistent downward trend of the saving and investment rates has led to a fall in India's potential growth rate to below 7 per cent. Any additional fall below the potential growth rate may be due to cyclical factors.

> The standard response to a recession is to enhance government expenditure. In the present context of a declining investment rate along with declining demand, a good solution will be to enhance government expenditure, especially capital expenditure. On the scope for increased spending, the bonanza from the RBI will go only to meet the shortfall in revenues. Perhaps, a larger disinvestment may help.

The monetary authorities have reduced the policy rate but banks have not followed suit due to structural problems against the background of rising non-performing assets. As one commentator on the central banking system said several decades ago, "The central banking system is equipped with efficient brakes but the accelerator is uncertain." While the RBI can play a supportive role in expanding liquidity, we must understand the basic limitations. Banks must also be careful while expanding credit. Inappropriate lending can land them in trouble later. Recapitalisation of public sector banks does not "infuse" fresh funds. The mechanism adopted only enlarges their freedom for lending. The bank consolidation plan could have been introduced at a more favourable time.

In the present context of a declining investment rate and declining demand, a good solution will be to enhance government expenditure, especially capital expenditure. On the scope for increased spending, the bonanza from the RBI will go only to meet the shortfall in revenues. A larger disinvestment may help.

Other changes in the fiscal sector during recent years may also have had a structural impact. For example, GST has changed the structure of indirect taxes, affecting the balance between goods and services, formal and informal sectors, and central and state tax revenues compared to the pre-GST period. Since its implementation, the compliance cost has risen considerably for the assesses, particularly the small and medium enterprises. The buoyancy of centre's indirect taxes in the post-GST period has been at low levels — 0.5 in 2017-18, 0.2 in 2018-19 and is budgeted to be 0.6 in 2019-20.

The decline in price level in recent years partly because of the new monetary policy framework has affected the nominal GDP growth rate and growth rate of tax revenues. The implicit price deflator has fallen more than 3 percentage points compared to the average of 2012-13 to 2013-14 and 2017-18 to 2018-19. The growth in central tax revenues fell by 3.5 percentage points and that in the states' own tax revenues by 4.7 percentage points during the same periods. These changes have left limited space for augmenting capital expenditure. The Centre's capital expenditure is currently languishing at 1.6 per cent of GDP.

Countercyclical policy is primarily the responsibility of the Centre. Given the revenue trends, it may not be in a position to increase its capital expenditure relative to GDP. Other available options include bringing on board state governments for increasing their capital expenditure relative to their respective gross state domestic products (GSDPs). Second, the Centre may invest through central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) an additional one percentage point of GDP compared to the present levels. Further, through the public-private partnership (PPP) mode, the private sector may be induced to supplement the government's investment in select projects. The amended FRBM Act has a provision for increasing the fiscal deficit by 0.5 per cent of GDP under certain circumstances. The government can make use of this provision.

The present slowdown is happening at a time when industrialised countries are themselves passing through a recession. Boosting export demand in this context becomes difficult. Our share in the world's exports is still small. Despite the recessionary conditions in the industrialised countries, it may still be possible to pitch for a higher growth in exports. The recent announcements on boosting exports is a recognition of this. Allowing the rupee to depreciate steadily may help exporters. The scope of monetary policy, as already explained, is limited. The government should explore all avenues to expand its capital expenditures. Public investment in the present context may crowd in private investment. Perhaps, one redeeming feature of the current situation is that despite floods, agricultural production may pick-up leading to a possible pick-up in rural demand. The government should also address sector-specific problems and these need not be fiscal in nature. A cautious expansion in banking credit can also help. It is also the time to look at structural reforms in the banking sector, governance in general and fiscal reforms relating to direct taxes and GST.

Rangarajan is former Chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council and former Governor, Reserve Bank of India. Srivastava is chief policy advisor EY India and former Director, Madras School of Economics. Views are personal

A LEADER PAR EXCELLENCE

For Prime Minister Narendra Modi, national interest is the only interest

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

LEVEL 5 LEADERSHIP connotes honesty and integrity, commitment and passion, decision making, accountability. Crucially, such a leader must be a good communicator. Someone who delegates and empowers, and is an inspiring leader. On all these counts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stands out.

His honesty and integrity are full and final. For him, national interest is the only interest. This helped him gain widespread acceptability during his 12 years as Gujarat CM: The poorest of the poor are convinced about his honesty and integrity. In five years, there has not been a single charge of corruption against his government. His humane side also came to the fore recently when he was seen consoling ISRO scientists after a last-minute snag in Chandrayaan-2. At Sriharikota, the PM delivered one of the best motivational speeches to the scientists and engineers at ISRO.

After assuming office in 2014, Modi bowed before the steps of Parliament. He followed this up by bowing to the Constitution, before declaring that his government is dedicated to the welfare of the poor, SC/STs, downtrodden and hitherto neglected. He went on to coin the slogan "Sabka saath, sabka vikas". And this year. he added "sabka vishwas" to it, which explains his intentions.

He thinks differently and acts differently. To motivate the bureaucracy and get their full cooperation, he appointed 10 groups of secretaries to prepare a roadmap for the government in 10 different sectors. Every group gave presentations, and after due diligence, Modi asked them to work speedily towards achieving their respective goals. The following year, he asked them to present the progress made.

> Modi has probably been the first Indian politician to realise the potential of social media, and has used it effectively not only to reach out but establish an immediate connect with the youth. He is a communicator par excellence. He speaks directly to the people, creates a bond, and gives them confidence. People respond to his appeals even if they have to forego gas subsidy or travel concessions.

Probably, Modi is the first prime minister who has written a book — titled *Exam Warriors* — to guide and give confidence to students about how to approach examinations and other challenges in life. He has addressed more than 100 million students and parents in two successive years. In his interactions with students, he even referred to PUB-G — clearly the PM is up to date with the latest happenings. This also helps him establish an immediate connect with students and youngsters. Modi has probably been the first Indian politician to realise the potential of social media, and has used it effectively not only to reach out but establish an immediate connect with the youth.

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GST, demonetisation, the surgical strikes, Balakot air strike, actions against corruption, abrogation of Article 370, banning triple talaq, are examples of his decisive leadership.

Some examples of empowerment of the poorer sections include 10 per cent EBC reservation, Ujjwala gas scheme, Pradhan Mantri Awas, Ujala scheme for LED bulbs, Mudra, Skill India, Ayushman Bharat, Kisan Samman, pension to unorganised sector labour, remunerative prices to farmers, and 95 million toilets.

GST is a great example of his faith in cooperative federalism. Decisions about every word of the GST law, rules and rates were reached unanimously.

PM Modi is creative and innovative. He understands that only research and innovation will help India enter the big league. Therefore, he started Atal Tinkering Labs in nearly 3,000 schools where robotics, 3D printing and other advanced technologies are made available. Students experiment with these gadgets and come up with exciting ideas. These ideas are mapped in olympiads organised for the purpose. For engineering students, for instance, he promoted "Smart India Hackathon". He has also established Atal Incubation Centres in various IITs and NITs.

Finally, he also interacts regularly with start-ups and makes it a point to meet youth with innovative ideas.

The writer is Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, and Environment, Forest and Climate Change


INDIAN EXPRESS

SEPTEMBER 17, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

AFGHAN PREZ RESIGNS

NUR MOHAMMAD TARAKI of Afghanistan resigned as president and party leader in Afghanistan, the state-owned Radio Kabul announced. He has been replaced by Hafeezullah Amin, prime minister and first minister of Afghanistan, who is considered a more hard-line communist than Taraki — his government had been preoccupied with combating a spreading Muslim rebellion. Taraki came to power in April, 1978, following a bloody coup which toppled the government of Mohammed Daoud. Taraki, a scholarly poet-politician, was considered a less ardent communist than many members of the pro-Soviet Khalq (people's) Party.

FUTURE RSS GOVT

RSS CHIEF BALASAHEB Deoras said the RSS will gain the popularity needed for forming the government in the country in the next 10 years. "Nobody can have any grudge in case of such an eventuality in the democratic set-up," he told a closed-door question-answer meeting attended by about 100 persons in Bhopal. He said the "present tirade" against the RSS was because of its gaining popularity since the Emergency. He said "dual membership" was a non-issue, and that political parties should not bother with what their members do besides politics. Deoras described the former external affairs minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's recent observations on the RSS, as "embarrassing". He said RSS member could not be barred from becoming MPs and MLAs, as desired by Vajpayee.

AKALI DAL SPLIT

AKALI DAL PRESIDENT, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, has suspended the revenue minister, Jiwan Singh Umranangal, and three MLAs — Parkash Singh Majithia, Hari Singh Zira, Kartar Singh Vaid — and Gurbachan Singh from for anti-party activities. Talwandi said a meeting of the Dal Working Committee was being called on September 18 to endorse the decision. The action is a sequel to the call given by the pro-Badal delegates for a parallel delegate session on October 10.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

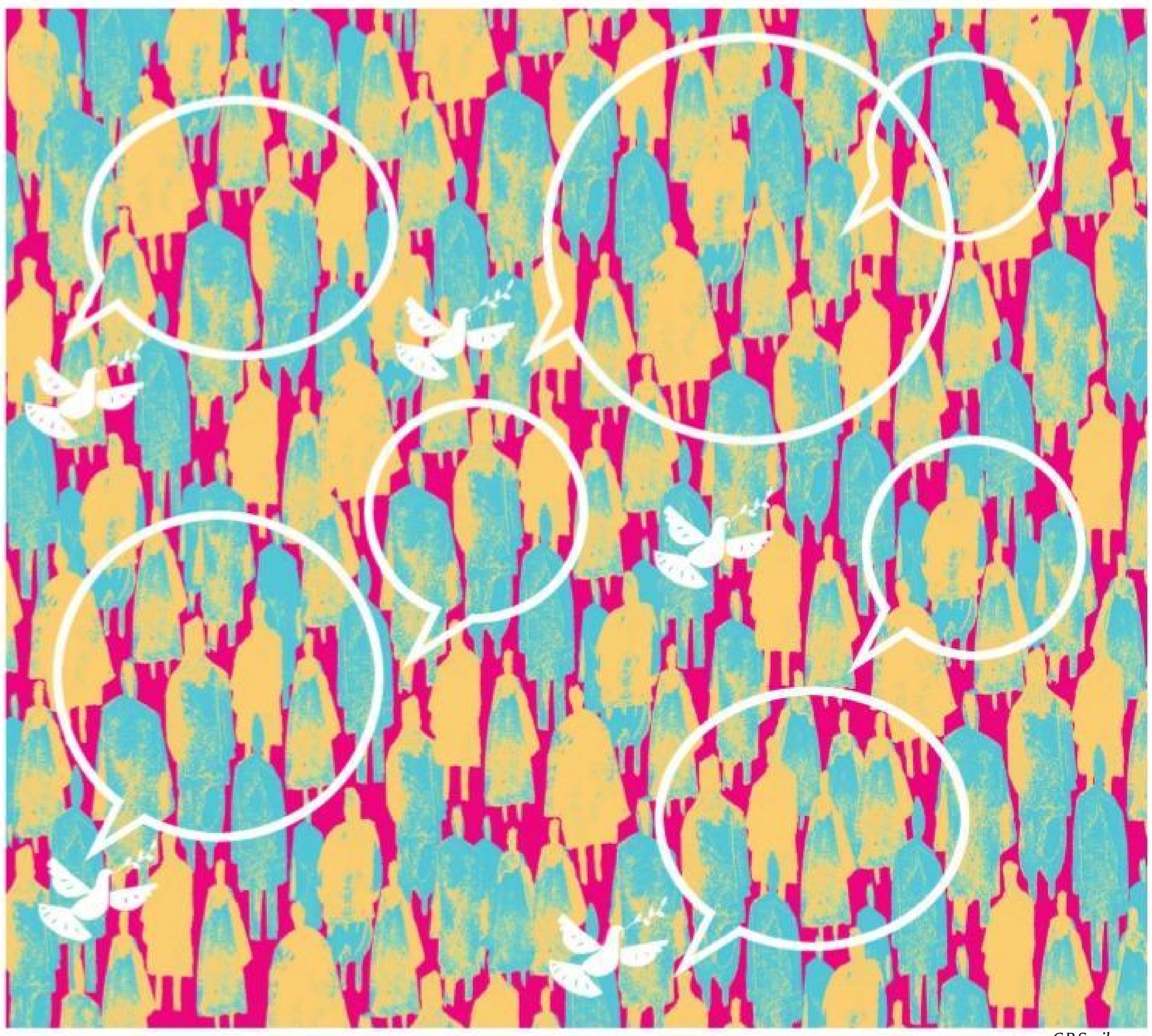
"Despite India's mantra that 'all is well' in... (Kashmir) the realisation is slowly growing that India's military enforcers have unleashed a reign of terror."

—DAWN

The reality check

The change in Jammu and Kashmir's status will make little difference vis-a-vis Pakistan, situation on the ground in the Valley. It cannot but feed into the already prevailing sense of alienation

SHARAT SABHARWAL



C R Sasikumar

A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS for the country of the recent, electorally-rich move of the government on Jammu and Kashmir must await its outcome in the Valley. However, what the move has not done is clear.

The reaction to it — a sense of satisfaction in India minus the Kashmir Valley ("rest of India"), consternation in the Valley and contrived outrage in Pakistan — is rooted in emotions or expediency.

The satisfaction in the rest of India stems from years of frustration at the failure of our efforts to establish durable peace in Kashmir and the widely-held perception that its special status was a mistake. We can discuss the history of the issue till the cows come home, but what matters is its future. Three principal arguments have figured in our national discourse: It has altered the terms of our engagement with Pakistan (no need to discuss Kashmir as it is firmly integrated with India or we will now discuss only the return of PoK), better central control over a sensitive region and ushering in an era of peace and development in J&K, whose progress was hampered by its special status.

Now the reality.

Pakistan's questioning of J&K's accession to India did not originate from its special status and will outlast its withdrawal. We took the issue of Pakistan aggression in J&K to the UN (hindsight tells us that this was a misstep), but the great power politics of the day turned it into one of the future of the territory. In the Simla Agreement, we jettisoned the UN's role, but agreed to hold bilateral negotiations for "a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir". We have not renounced this agreement. Since the late Eighties, when widespread terror and violence broke out in Kashmir, we have talked to Pakistan on this issue essentially for one or more of the following reasons: International pressure, to manage the relationship and reduce violence and the expectation that Pakistan could be moved in a positive direction through dialogue. With our increased clout, the role of international pressure has diminished considerably. J&K's special status figured nowhere in these considerations.

As for discussing only the return of PoK, this has been our national position all along, reiterated in every round of dialogue with Pakistan — the finality of J&K's accession, the only issue for discussion being the vacation of its parts under Pakistan's illegal occupation. The reported discussions for formalising the existing territorial status quo, such as at the time of signing of Simla Agreement, have been without prejudice to the above. The possibility that our government's move was aimed at forcing Pakistan's hand to settle for the existing territorial status quo has been negated by the chorus for the recovery of PoK being our next step. Never mind that Pakistan will not give it up voluntarily and its recovery militarily will pit us against China, besides Pakistan, because of its deep interest in the so-called Gilgit-Baltistan, with its entry to the CPEC.

It is true that the central government will have direct control over law and order in the Union Territory of J&K. However, the gain will be marginal as J&K's statehood and special status were never serious impediments to operations by security forces against internal turmoil or their deployment for the defence of our external boundaries. Moreover, the instrumentality of Governor's/President's rule was available, when necessary. Arguably, a key asset in a sensitive region is the loyalty of the local populace.

The scrapping of the considerably eroded special status will not make much difference to the life of people in the Valley. However, the abrupt move, together with the breakup and downgrading of the state, cannot but feed into the already prevailing sense of alienation and religious radicalisation, which Pakistan has been exploiting. The underlying assumption that deprived of the hope of any negotiations on the status of J&K, people would buy into the development agenda and emotionally integrate themselves with India is a leap of faith. Peace, a prerequisite for the settlement of citizens from the rest of India in J&K and investment by them, faces serious challenges in the Valley and any turmoil there will not leave the Jammu region untouched. Influencing public opinion requires a massive effort to engage with the people, which has been missing in the last few years. We need agents of change with mass following to carry our message. With the mainstream parties marginalised and actively discredited by the government, who is to play that role? Any opportunists coming forward may prove to be just that. The impact — positive or negative — of the recent move on the situation in the Valley will not be known until well after the lifting of the ongoing restrictions.

> Pakistan does not care for Kashmiris and for a long time has had no hope of making any territorial gains against us. However, its security establishment finds Kashmir expedient to sustain the India bogey for its institutional interest of keeping a stranglehold on the country's polity and has been using terrorism to keep the Valley on the boil. These considerations underlying Pakistan's posture had nothing to do with J&K's special status and will not disappear with its withdrawal.

Pakistan does not care for the Kashmiris and for a long time has had no hope of making any territorial gains against us. However, its security establishment finds Kashmir expedient to sustain the India bogey for its institutional interest of keeping a stranglehold on the country's polity and has been using terrorism to keep the Valley on the boil. These considerations underlying Pakistan's posture had nothing to do with J&K's special status and will not disappear with its withdrawal. Pakistan has opportunistically sought to exploit the Indian move to bring international focus on Kashmir. It is evident from the reported presence of terrorists at launchpads across the LoC and the NSA's linking of withdrawal of restrictions in the Valley to Pakistan's behaviour that the recent government move has made no difference to the Pakistan dimension of our Kashmir problem. Addressing it requires a different set of measures, discussed at length from time to time, most recently post-Balakot.

The die having been cast, the best we can do is to devote our energies to building not only immediate but durable peace in the Valley, despite heavy odds. This requires engagement with the people and not shock therapies. Otherwise, the recent initiative would risk being remembered for having caused considerable disruption on the ground and placed Kashmir in the international limelight without serving the national interest, with the possible exception of limited dividends in Ladakh.

The writer is a former diplomat. Views are personal

Myth of religious solidarity

Reactions of several Muslim countries to India's decision on Kashmir shows that political and economic interest bind nations — not ideologies

RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS PAKISTAN STRUGGLES to mobilise the international community against India's decision last month to change the status of Jammu and Kashmir, its chattering classes are deeply disappointed at the lack of support from the world's Muslim nations. There has been special criticism of the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, long seen as Pakistan's staunchest supporters in the Muslim world, for not coming out to criticise India's move.

The public debate in Pakistan did not take long to accept, if grudgingly, that the growing economic stakes in India for the UAE and KSA have trumped Pakistan's calls for religious solidarity on the Kashmir question. Pakistani analysts also compare the differing perspectives in the Gulf about Delhi and Islamabad. The UAE and KSA see Delhi as a valuable business partner and Islamabad as a supplicant seeking financial favours whenever Pakistan faces an economic crisis.

Pakistan's own national experience negates the proposition that the world's Muslims constitute a coherent political community. Religion is not nearly enough to bind the people of the same country let alone unite nations.

Although set up as the homeland for South Asian Muslims in 1947, Pakistan lost its eastern wing within 25 years. In the creation of Bangladesh at the end of 1971, the strength of linguistic identity prevailed over the presumed weight of religious affinity. The current political unrest among the Baloch, Pashtun and the Mohajir communities transcends the shared Islamic identity in Pakistan. So does Pakistan's oppression of the Muslim minorities like the Shia and the Ahmadi.

China provides an example — twice over — of the limited importance of religion in shaping partnerships between nations. It is communist China — and not the Muslim world — that has extended unstinting support for Pakistan on Kashmir in the last few weeks. The reasons for it are easy to see. China has a shared interest with Pakistan in balancing India. And Beijing is a party to the disputes in Kashmir.

Islamabad's own willingness to put national interests above Islamic solidarity is seen in its response to Beijing's ill-treatment of Uighur Muslims in China's far Western province of Xinjiang. Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan who has been roaring like a lion on India's oppression of Kashmir turns a mouse when he is asked about China's repression of Muslims.

If the appeal to religious solidarity has only limited value, why does Pakistan persist with it? For a nation that broke away from India in the name of Islam, the emphasis on religious solidarity is at once a tool of legitimacy and a political mission. After Partition, Pakistan embarked on a massive campaign to promote Islamic solidarity with the Middle East. Bemused by Pakistan's zeal for Islam, King Farouk of Egypt reportedly remarked in jest that he "did not know Islam was born on August 14, 1947".

All nations have their founding myths and can't let reality come in the way of formal adherence to them. India, of course, is not a stranger to this. If Pakistan abides with the myth of Islamic unity, India has its own — for example, the idea that solidarity with the "global South" against the "hegemonic West" is a fundamental principle of its foreign policy.

It was just a decade and a half ago, during 2005-08, that India came quite close to abandoning its own nuclear interests for the presumed obligation to defend Iran's controversial atomic programme. As the US debate on the historic civil nuclear initiative got entangled with Washington's pressures against Tehran, there was a strong demand in Delhi that India stand up for Iran in the name of non-aligned solidarity. The Manmohan Singh government managed, barely, to resist this temptation. Delhi's decision then was vindicated by Iran's move soon after to accept a nuclear compromise with America on rather harsh terms in 2015.

Pakistan is not alone in viewing the Gulf through the Islamic prism. India did much the same. For far too long, Delhi had overdetermined the Islamic factor in assessing the foreign policies of the UAE and Saudi Arabia and branded them as "pro-Pakistan". No Indian Prime Minister visited Saudi Arabia between 1982 and 2010 and the UAE between 1981 and 2015. When India initiated interest-based engagement with these countries, there was a rapid improvement in bilateral relations.

In the 20th century, many transcendental ideologies such as communist internationalism, pan-Asianism, pan-Arabism, pan-Islamism, and Third Worldism swept the world. But none of these could be sustained in a world that continues to be organised around the nation-state. The Comintern, Arab League, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement have all turned out to be dysfunctional. National interest tends to triumph, almost all the time, over proclaimed loyalty to a collective identity.

To be sure, nations will continue to invoke larger identities when it suits their particular interests. Chinese leader Xi Jinping has talked about "Asia for Asians". It is a nice way of asking America to get out of Asia. But many Asian nations are afraid of a rising China and would rather have America stay as a balancing power. Recep Tayyip Erdogan sees himself as not just the leader of Turkey but the entire Muslim world. Few in the region are eager to cede that mantle to Erdogan.

Although Pakistan's Islamic internationalism is a wasting asset, Islamabad will find it hard to stop playing the card. Someday in the future though, Pakistan might yet recognise reconciliation with India will release its energies for a larger role in the Middle East, the Muslim world and beyond.

The writer is Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

Breaker of the mould

The irrepressible life of Ram Jethmalani, who bent convention at every stage

MANECK DAVAR

ON RAM JETHMALANI'S departure to God's lounge, memories, dating four decades, crowd the mind. The early, heady days in the aftermath of the Emergency, an election fought hard resulting in victory; the failed Janata Party experiment, one more election won after the rebirth of the erstwhile Jana Sangh as the BJP; the loss to Sunil Dutt in the elections after Indira Gandhi's assassination, the only time I witnessed him alone and dejected; and, his son Mahesh's and my foray into legal journalism. And so the years passed by, with one battle after another. He was enriched by myriad experiences, political and legal, till his last few months when he lost the will to live. For a man who conquered life and triumphed over its every aspect, it was tragic to witness him in the winter of his life.

Ram Jethmalani defied and abhorred compartmentalisation. He wasn't just an eminent counsel practising at all levels of the Indian judiciary, from the magistrate's court to the Supreme Court, he was also an advocate of public causes and a politician of eminence. He wasn't just the country's best criminal lawyer, one you would trust with your life as so many of his clients undoubtedly did, but also a master of constitutional, civil and commercial law. His mastery over the Evidence Act was at par, if not better, than with the best in the world of international law practice. He was possessed of a gargantuan intellect, an elephantine memory, with the innate ability to seize the moment in court. In that, he stood out amongst his distinguished contemporaries.

I was fortunate to witness a live example of his intellectual capacity. The Bombay High Court was seized of a complex company law matter. Ram had arrived in Delhi on Tuesday morning from Detroit and was on his legs in the Supreme Court for most of the day. In the evening, he was persuaded to appear the next morning in Mumbai. At 11 am, he strode into court and produced a masterly performance over the next three hours without recourse to a single piece of paper, resulting in a positive verdict.

He was, however, no pure practitioneer of the law. To him, his proficiency in law and his reputation were stepping stones to a greater calling, that of working for the larger public good defined by his beliefs in the freedom of the individual and institutions, probity in public life and an unending battle against corruption in high places. His 10 questions to the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in this newspaper were legendary. The late prime minister compared him to a barking dog and his riposte was that he was a bulldog defending democratic processes, hence the questions day after day.

His political inclinations, of course, veered to the right. But he was steeped in the finest secular traditions, immersed in the Guru Granth Sahib and Sikhism, which he believed was his creed, as well as Urdu literature, a fine synthesis of all cultures.

What also epitomised Jethmalani was his fierce courage and scant regard for his personal safety. His finest and defining moment may be his opposition to Indira Gandhi during the Emergency, appearing for political detenues and arguing for civil liberties, in the case of *ADM Jabalpur vs SS Shukla*, wherein the court held that Article 21 could be suspended during an Emergency threatening the very concept of Right to Life. The irrepressible Jethmalani had earlier addressed the local bar at Palakkad in Kerala, tearing into Mrs Gandhi and her dictatorial politics, and an arrest warrant was issued against him. He sought refuge in the US, attacking Mrs Gandhi's oppressive policies from foreign soil. It is now a matter of history that the Emergency was lifted and Jethmalani returned to contest and win the elections against H R Gokhale, the law minister, who was one of the architects of the Emergency.

But the greater test of his indomitable courage and one which was fraught with grave personal danger was his defence of the conspirators in Indira Gandhi's assassination, Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh. So tenaciously did he persevere through a tortuous legal process, that he managed the acquittal of Balbir Singh, with Kehar Singh not being so fortunate. Passions were high, he had to resign from the BJP, but so strong was his belief that every accused required the benefit of a strong defence, that he sacrificed his fees and time for a cause he believed in. His espousal of the cause did not stop here. He firmly believed that the moderate Harcharan Singh Longowal held the key to a peaceful solution to the Punjab crisis and was instrumental in facilitating the Longowal-Rajiv Gandhi accord.

Jethmalani also defended IPS officer Simaranjit Singh Mann. Miffed at Mann's recalcitrance to follow the path laid down by him, Jethmalani called a press conference in his Harishchandra Mathur lane abode in Delhi, and denounced Mann as a lunatic, an act beyond intrepid in those times.

Jethmalani also possessed an extreme generosity of spirit, also of the intoxicating kind. He had tried to impress upon Morarji Desai the efficacy of his libations — each failed to convert the other. Jethmalani's home, hearth, bar and table were always open to his friends. Often, vehement disagreements would dissolve in the evening over a drink. He harboured no deep resentment against anybody. Towards the end, there was a rapprochement with even Arun Jaitley, due to the mediation of his son Mahesh. They buried their past differences, and ensured that in the twilight of their lives there were no regrets.

God made Jethmalani, then broke the mould.

The writer is chairman and managing director of Spenta Multimedia Pvt Ltd

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BOOST EXPORTS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'No half measures' (IE, September 16). It is essential that the government doesn't tax exports. That would improve exports, revive the economy and encourage investment. The government will also need to initate the improvement of infrastructure facilities. It should carefully study the experience of European countries with the economic crisis.

Sanjay Chawla, *Amritsar*

SPARE THE WOMAN

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Births of a nation' (IE, September 16). The author is right in pointing out that women have to largely bear the burden of the shame in the narrative of non-participation in socio-economic activities. However, it should be noted that childbearing, especially in India, is not the choice of the woman. The prime minister's call should not be seen in the context of some hypothetical nation-building project but used as an opportunity to grant women agency.

Animesh Mohan, *Balia*

MAKE ROADS SAFE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Let's talk safety' (IE, September 13). The hefty penalties under the Motor Vehicles Act can deter rash driving but the government must set up safe and adequate parking spaces in crowded places. Fines could increase the corruption in the traffic police department and people might hesitate to drive their own vehicles. To avoid such a possibility, many states have decided either not to implement the Act or implement it partially. The government must improve the quality of roads and repair flyovers to reduce traffic congestion. Road safety campaigns must be conducted regularly. The government must motivate the people to observe the traffic rules.

Sauro Dasgupta, *Kolkata*

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 address and phone number.

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बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड
वर्ष 12 अंक 181

तेल का सामरिक सवाल

सऊदी अरब की दिग्गज पेट्रोलियम कंपनी अरामको के संयंत्र पर ड्रोन के जरिये हमले की अप्रत्याशित घटना ने भारत समेत समूची दुनिया को हिलाकर रख दिया है। इस हमले में यमन के हूती विद्रोहियों के शामिल होने की बात कही जा रही है। हमले के बाद अरामको ने अपने उत्पादन में आधी यानी प्रतिदिन करीब 60 लाख बैरल की कटौती करने की बात कही है जो वैश्विक तेल उत्पादन का पांच फीसदी है। इस घोषणा के बाद तेल की कीमतों में एक ही दिन में करीब 20 फीसदी तक उछाल आ गई जो कई वर्षों में आई सबसे बड़ी तेजी है। काफी कुछ इस पर निर्भर करता है कि सऊदी अरब किस तरह से तेल प्रसंस्करण को पटरी पर ले आता है और क्या हूती विद्रोहियों का समर्थन करने वाले ईरान और सऊदी अरब-अमेरिका गठजोड़ के बीच का तनाव काबू में रखा जा सकता है? हालांकि दूसरे बड़े तेल उत्पादक अपना उत्पादन बढ़ाकर इसकी भरपाई कर सकते हैं और अमेरिका ने कहा भी है कि वह अपने सामरिक तेल भंडार के दरवाजे खोलेगा। भारत में डॉलर के मुकाबले रुपये में गिरावट रही जो बाह्य क्षेत्र में अस्थिरता और मुद्रास्फीतिकारी दबावों के चलते गहराती चिंताओं को दर्शाता है।

अरामको संयंत्र पर हुए हमले ने भारत की दो सामरिक कमजोरियां उजागर की हैं। पहली, जरूरत का 80 फीसदी से भी अधिक तेल आयात करने वाला भारत अपने वृहद-आर्थिक स्थायित्व के लिए कम एवं स्थिर भाव वाले तेल पर निर्भर बना हुआ है। फिलहाल चालू खाता घाटे की स्थिति काबू में है जो घरेलू मांग पर मांग में भारी कमी होने से है। लेकिन कच्चे तेल का भाव एक डॉलर प्रति बैरल चढ़ने पर भारत का आयात बिल 10,500 करोड़ रुपये बढ़ जाता है। भारत ने वर्ष 2018-19 में तेल आयात पर 112 अरब डॉलर खर्च किए थे। भारत को कच्चे तेल एवं रसोई गैस का दूसरा बड़ा आपूर्तिकर्ता सऊदी अरब है।

अगर इसी समय अर्थव्यवस्था को कुछ और दबावों का सामना करना पड़ जाता है तो तेल के दाम बढ़ने से गहरा अस्थायित्व पैदा होगा। सरकार ने वर्ष 2014 के बाद तेल के भाव नीचे रहने के बावजूद इस सामरिक कमजोरी से निपटने की दिशा में समुचित कदम नहीं उठाए हैं। इसका केवल एक वास्तविक समाधान ही है: उच्च एवं टिकाऊ निर्यात आय जो बाहरी खाते को लेकर भरोसा जगाएगी। लेकिन भारतीय निर्यात में कई वर्षों से सही मायने में नगण्य वृद्धि हुई है और गत अगस्त में यह एक साल पहले की तुलना में छह फीसदी लुढ़क गई। हमें समझना होगा कि निर्यात क्षेत्र में नई जान फूंकना न केवल वृद्धि बल्कि आर्थिक स्थिरता के लिहाज से भी अनिवार्य है।

दूसरी कमजोरी भारत के अपने तेलशोधन ढांचे से जुड़ी है। मसलन, गुजरात के जामनगर में स्थित निजी तेलशोधन इकाइयों पर मुंबई आतंकी हमले के बाद से ही सीमापार हमले का खतरा रहा है। इसी वजह से सरकार ने राष्ट्रीय महत्त्व के निजी प्रतिष्ठानों को भी सुरक्षा देने के लिए सीआईएसएफ अधिनियम में संशोधन किया था। ऐसा खतरा सौर पार्कों जैसे अन्य निजी प्रतिष्ठानों को भी है। उन्हें ड्रोन हमलों से बचाकर रखना मुश्किल हो सकता है। मिसाइल-रोधी प्रतिरक्षा प्रणाली भी ड्रोन के आगे कारगर नहीं होती है क्योंकि वे रडार की पकड़ में आने से बच जाते हैं। दरअसल ड्रोन विमान तकनीक के मामले में कम नहीं होते हैं और उनकी खरीद एवं रखरखाव भी बहुत महंगा नहीं होता है। राष्ट्रीय सीमा क्षेत्र से इतर इलाकों में जिओ-फेंसिंग और ड्रोन पहचान प्रणालियों की नए सिरे से समीक्षा की जरूरत होगी। नागरिक विमानन मंत्रालय ने दिसंबर 2018 में ड्रोन नीति जारी की थी लेकिन अरामको संयंत्र पर हमले के बाद इस नीति की खामियों पर गौर करना चाहिए। इस बात को भी ध्यान में रखना होगा कि ड्रोन के कई उपयोगी एवं उत्पादक इस्तेमाल हैं और नियमों में बदलाव से तकनीकी नवाचार पर असर नहीं पड़ना चाहिए।


अजय मोहंती

हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में उपद्रव का चीन पर प्रभाव

इसकी संभावना कम ही है कि हॉन्ग कॉन्ग दोबारा उसी दौर में वापस लौट सकेगा जैसा वह मौजूदा अशांति के पहले हुआ करता था। चीन के लिए इसकी अहमियत बता रहे हैं श्याम सरन

हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में राजनीतिक अशांति बदस्तूर जारी है और लगातार हिंसात्मक एवं चीन-विरोधी रुख व्याप्त है। बढ़ते विरोध को दबाने के लिए चीन की सेना के निर्मम एवं रक्तरंजित तरीकों का सहारा लेने की आशंका अधिक बलवती होती जा रही है। अमेरिकी दूतावास की तरफ कूच करते समय प्रदर्शनकारियों ने अपने हाथों में अमेरिकी झंडे थाम रखे थे। वे अमेरिका से इस मामले में हस्तक्षेप करने की गुहार लगा रहे थे जो एक ऐसा उकसावा है जो नजरअंदाज किए जाने पर चीन एवं उसके राष्ट्रपति शी चिनफिंग के लिए बड़ा आघात हो सकता है।

चीन के सामने अब समान रूप से अरुचिकर विकल्पों के बीच में से चुनने की चुनौती है। चीन की किताब में कम बुरा विकल्प हिंसात्मक दमन के बाद हॉन्ग कॉन्ग को शांघाई, ग्वांगजाेउ या शेन्जेन की तरह पूरी तरह आत्मसात कर लेने का होगा। फिर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग का शासन चीनी संविधान के तहत बने कानूनों से संचालित होगा, न कि ब्रिटिश औपनिवेशिक दासता की पृष्ठभूमि में विकसित अपने बेसिक लॉ के आधार पर। इसका नतीजा यह होगा कि दुनिया भर में तेजी से सबसे अहम अंतरराष्ट्रीय वित्तीय बाजार के तौर पर उसका वजूद नहीं रह जाएगा। इस तरह वैश्विक बाजारों के साथ चीन के एकीकरण में हॉन्ग कॉन्ग की भूमिका खत्म हो जाएगी। इससे अमेरिका के साथ जारी व्यापार युद्ध और तीव्र हो जाएगा जो राजनीतिक तनाव बढ़ाने और एक वैश्विक वित्तीय स्थिति हासिल करने की चीन की आकांक्षा पर तगड़ा आघात करेगा।

जहां यह सच है कि हॉन्ग कॉन्ग अब पहले की तरह चीन के वृद्धि पथ में बड़ी भूमिका नहीं निभा पाएगा, वहीं चीन के लिए बाकी दुनिया के साथ व्यापार, बैंकिंग एवं वित्तीय संपर्क बढ़ाने में अहम मध्यवर्ती के तौर पर उसकी भूमिका महत्त्वपूर्ण बनी रहेगी। पहले से सुस्थापित व्यापारिक चैनल होने, अपने परिष्कृत बैंकिंग ढांचे और अपने उच्च विकसित वित्तीय एवं प्रतिभूति बाजार होने से हॉन्ग कॉन्ग ने चीन को पहले से मौजूद एवं अंतर्संबंधों का सघन जाल मुहैया कराया था। इससे चीन अपनी अर्थव्यवस्था का भूमंडलीकरण नियंत्रित एवं कम जोखिम के साथ कर पाया। यहां तक कि आज भी चीन आने वाले कुल प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (एफडीआई) का 60 फीसदी से अधिक हिस्सा हॉन्ग कॉन्ग के जरिये ही पहुंचता है। इसके बैंकों ने चीन सरकार के स्वामित्व वाले एवं निजी कंपनियों के लिए जरूरी वित्त मुहैया कराने के साथ ही उनकी अंतरराष्ट्रीय गतिविधियों के विस्तार के लिए आधार के तौर पर भी काम किया। हॉन्ग कॉन्ग के शेयर बाजार का पूंजीकरण पांच लाख डॉलर है जो चीन के 6.3 लाख करोड़ डॉलर पूंजीकरण से थोड़ा ही कम है। हॉन्ग कॉन्ग के बैंकों में विदेशी मुद्रा जमा 850 अरब डॉलर है जिसमें बड़ा हिस्सा मुख्य भूमि वाली कंपनियों का है। इस तटीय शहर में 1,300 से अधिक विदेशी बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियां पंजीकृत हैं जो चीन के अलावा समूचे एशिया-प्रशांत क्षेत्र में कारोबार कर रही हैं। हॉन्ग कॉन्ग के वित्तीय बाजार का इस्तेमाल चीन ने अपने वित्तीय क्षेत्र का चरणबद्ध ढंग से उदारीकरण और अपनी मुद्रा रेनमिनबी के अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण के लिए किया। हॉन्ग कॉन्ग स्टॉक कनेक्ट के जरिये विदेशी संस्थागत निवेशक शांघाई और शेन्जेन के शेयर बाजारों में प्रवेश कर सकते हैं। अब बॉन्ड कनेक्ट कार्यक्रम भी है जिसके जरिये वे चीन के 12 लाख करोड़ डॉलर के विशाल बॉन्ड बाजार में निवेश कर सकते हैं। हॉन्ग कॉन्ग रेनमिनबी का सबसे बड़ा अपतटीय बाजार भी है।

इससे भी बढ़कर औपचारिक तौर पर चीन का हिस्सा होते हुए भी हॉन्ग कॉन्ग की स्थिति अनूठी है। उसे विश्व व्यापार संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) में एक स्वायत्त सदस्य का दर्जा हासिल है और बाजार अर्थव्यवस्था के तौर पर खुद चीन को भी नहीं मिल पाने वाले विशेषाधिकारों से लैस है। अमेरिका-हॉन्ग कॉन्ग नीति अधिनियम 1992 के तहत हॉन्ग कॉन्ग की अमेरिकी बाजार में खुली पहुंच हासिल है। इससे चीन को हॉन्ग कॉन्ग के जरिये उच्च तकनीक वाले उत्पादों एवं सेवाओं तक पहुंच मिल जाती है। चीन को होने वाले बौद्धिक संपदा लीकेज को लेकर अमेरिका एवं पश्चिमी देशों में बढ़ती चिंता के मद्देनजर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग एक पुनर्निर्यात केंद्र के तौर पर बेहद अहम हो जाता है। अगर अमेरिका इस विशेष कानून से अलग हो जाता है तो यह सीधे तौर पर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग और परोक्ष तौर पर चीन के लिए गहरा आघात होगा।

अगर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में हो रहे प्रदर्शनों से व्यापक हिंसा के बगैर निपटा जाता है तो इसकी संभावना काफी कम है कि वह अपनी पुरानी स्थिति में लौट सके। एक अंतरराष्ट्रीय वित्तीय केंद्र के तौर पर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग की कामयाबी में एक सुरक्षित एवं सुव्यवस्थित क्षेत्रीय व्यापार एवं लॉजिस्टिक केंद्र, एक स्थिर मुद्रा, एक परिष्कृत बैंकिंग प्रणाली और विकसित वित्तीय बाजार के तौर पर उसे हासिल भरोसे का बड़ा हाथ रहा है। इसकी न्यायिक प्रणाली को भी ऐंग्लो-सैक्सन वर्चस्व वाली विश्व अर्थव्यवस्था में विश्वसनीय माना जाता रहा है। यहां की सड़कों पर राजनीतिक अशांति एवं हिंसा का दौर जारी रहने से इस भरोसे में काफी कमी आई है। इसके बहाल हो पाने की संभावना नहीं है। चीन ने आर्थिक क्षति से बचने के लिए अभी तक दमन का रास्ता नहीं अपनाया है लेकिन अपनी संप्रभुता को खतरा और अपनी प्रतिष्ठा को गहरी चोट पहुंचने का डर आगे शायद उसके हाथों को न बांध सके।

यह तंग श्याओ फिंग के 'एक देश, दो व्यवस्था' सिद्धांत के खात्मे का भी ऐलान करता है। तंग श्याओ फिंग ने हॉन्ग कॉन्ग, मकाओ और ताइवान जैसे पुराने विमुक्त क्षेत्रों का चीनी मुख्यभूमि से क्रमिक ढंग से एकीकरण करने के लिए एक नवाचारी तरीका निकाला था। ताइवान में चीन के साथ समाहित होने की राह में प्रतिरोध न सिर्फ बना रहेगा बल्कि समय के साथ बढ़ेगा। उस समय चीन में सैन्य साधनों का इस्तेमाल कर ताइवान के एकीकरण का दबाव बढ़ता जाएगा। ऐसे में हमें दक्षिण चीन सागर क्षेत्र में बढ़ते तनाव का सामना करना पड़ सकता है।

भविष्य के लिए कैसा परिदृश्य है? वैश्विक वित्तीय बाजार के साथ एकीकरण और रेनमिनबी मुद्रा के अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण के लिए चीन की कोशिश को गहरा आघात लगने की आशंका है। हॉन्ग कॉन्ग संकट से अमेरिका-चीन संबंध और बिगड़ेंगे जिससे उनके व्यापार युद्ध में समझौते की गुंजाइश भी कम होती जाएगी। भले ही अमेरिका एवं चीन को एक सूत्र में बांधने वाले सघन आर्थिक एवं व्यापारिक रिश्तों को समझ पाना मुश्किल होगा लेकिन आरंभिक वियुग्मन पहले से ही जारी है और अपनी आर्थिक लागत के बावजूद यह जोर पकड़ सकता है। चीन अपना ध्यान एशिया-प्रशांत क्षेत्र में व्यापक क्षेत्रीय एकीकरण पर लगा सकता है। चीन आरसेप जैसे व्यापक मुक्त व्यापार समझौते और च्यांग मेई जैसी मुद्रा समाधान पहल के जरिये यह एकीकरण करना चाहेगा। च्यांग मेई को चीन, जापान और दक्षिण कोरिया के अलावा आसियान के 10 सदस्य देशों के बीच रेनमिनबी मुद्रा क्षेत्र के तौर पर डिजाइन किया जा रहा है। विश्लेषक अभी से यह आशंका जताने लगे हैं कि आने वाले समय में दुनिया अमेरिकी डॉलर, यूरो और रेनमिनबी के प्रभाव वाले तीन क्षेत्रों में बंट जाएगी। यह बुनियादी तौर पर बहुध्रुवीय विश्व में प्रतिस्पर्द्धा एवं गठजोड़ के भविष्य में तीन भू-राजनीतिक क्षेत्र तैयार करेगा। सवाल है कि इस बदले परिदृश्य में भारत की जगह कहां होगी?

(लेखक पूर्व विदेश सचिव और वर्तमान में सेंटर फॉर पॉलिसी रिसर्च के सीनियर फेलो हैं)

अर्थशास्त्रियों की काबिलियत के मुताबिक मिले पद


सम सामयिक
टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवन

वर्ष 2014 से मोदी सरकार की जिन तमाम कदमों की लिए आलोचना की जाती रही है उनमें से एक है अर्थशास्त्रियों में सरकार की रुचि न होना। परंतु अगर आप एक दशक पीछे जाएंगे, तब भी आपको यही दिक्कत नजर आएगी। न तो संप्रग सरकार ने और न ही मोदी सरकार ने अर्थशास्त्रियों की नियुक्ति और काम को बहुत अधिक तवज्जो दी है। इस लिहाज से देखें तो दो किस्म की नियुक्तियां बहुत मायने रखती हैं, बशर्ते कि भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा (आईएएस) के अधिकारी इन्हें मायने रखने दें। एक पद है मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार का और दूसरा भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) में आर्थिक मामलों के प्रभारी डिप्टी गवर्नर का। इन पदों पर बैठे लोगों को कुछ खास चीजों की चिंता करने के लिए वेतन मिलता है लेकिन अगर वे लोग गलत चीजों के बारे में चिंता करने लगें तो?

उदाहरण के लिए समाचार पत्रों की कार्यशैली पर बात करें तो यहां संपादन करने वालों को समाचार संकलन को लेकर चिंतित नहीं होने दिया जाता है और समाचार जुटाने वाले संपादन की चिंता नहीं करते। संपादकीय टीम का कोई भी सदस्य अगर समाचार संकलन करने वाले से सवाल जवाब करता है तो उसे तत्काल बता दिया जाता है कि यह गलत है। इसका उलटा भी उतना ही सही है।

बहरहाल, सरकार के सलाहकार पदों की बात करें तो वहां यह बुनियादी नियम लागू नहीं होता है। ऐसा लगता है कि आईएएस अधिकारी काबिज हो चुके हैं। अगर सीवी (आत्म विवरण) बहुत प्रभावशाली है तो विशेषज्ञता कतई मायने ही नहीं रखती। मुझे नहीं पता कि हॉवर्ड की पीएचडी के अलावा अरविंद विरमानी की काबिलियत क्या थी लेकिन वह लंबे समय तक सरकार में आला पद पर रहे। उनके पूर्ववर्ती अशोक लाहिड़ी प्रशिक्षित अर्थमितिज्ञ थे। यानी उन्हें अर्थशास्त्र में आंकड़ों, आर्थिक मॉडलों, सांख्यिकी आदि का इस्तेमाल करने और नतीजे हासिल करने में महारत हासिल थी।

अर्थशास्त्री : कौशिक बसु मूलतया सिद्धांतकार थे। इतना ही नहीं वह सन 1993 से ही विदेश में रह रहे थे। इससे पहले उन्होंने कभी सरकार में काम भी नहीं किया था। स्वाभाविक सी बात है कि उनमें दो कमियां थीं। रघुराम राजन एक इंजीनियर थे जो भटकते हुए अर्थशास्त्र में आ गए। उनकी विशेषज्ञता वित्त में थी। अरविंद सुब्रमण्यन एक व्यापार अर्थशास्त्री थे। सरकार और देश की आर्थिक दिक्कतों को लेकर उनका रुख भी उन्हें सौंपे गए पद के अनुरूप नहीं था। इन अर्थशास्त्रियों, खासकर अंतिम तीन के बीच एक दशक बीतने के बाद हमें यह प्रश्न करने का अधिकार बनता है कि उनका योगदान क्या रहा? उनका सीवी तो इससे मजबूत हुआ लेकिन बदले में सरकार को क्या मिला?

वे भला योगदान कर भी कैसे सकते थे जबकि उनके पास जो जहाज थे, उसे सरकारी नीति के समुद्र को पार करना होता था। उपरोक्त तीनों अर्थशास्त्री अब अमेरिका में विभिन्न विश्वविद्यालयों में अपने काम पर लौट गए हैं और अकादमिक अर्थशास्त्र में व्यस्त हो गए हैं।

हम उनकी बौद्धिकता को चाहे जितना भी मान दे दें, आईएएस अधिकारी उन्हें कतई गंभीरता से नहीं लेते, बल्कि कई बार तो वे उन्हें परेशानी बढ़ाने करने वाला ही मानते रहे। यहां तक कि मौजूदा मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार भी वित्तीय क्षेत्र के व्यक्ति हैं। अंतत: वे भी अकादमिक जगत में लौट जाएंगे। उनका सीवी भी मजबूत हो चुका होगा। ऐसे में मेरे पास एक सुझाव है: देश के मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार पद पर आवेदन करने वालों के लिए कम से कम 10 वर्ष की शासकीय सेवा अनिवार्य हो। वर्ष 2004 तक कमोबेश ऐसा ही होता भी आया था। भले ही यह अवधि 10 वर्ष नहीं हो लेकिन फिर भी यह एक उल्लेखनीय आंकड़ा होना चाहिए। चाहे जो भी हो बाहर से अर्थशास्त्री लाने का चलन समाप्त होना चाहिए। यह मौजूदा व्यवस्था करदाताओं के पैसे को नुकसान पहुंचाने के सिवा कुछ नहीं है।

सरकार की तरह आरबीआई भी ढेर सारे अर्थशास्त्रियों की नियुक्ति करती है। सरकार में मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार उनका प्रमुख होता है और आरबीआई में यह जवाबदेही अर्थशास्त्र विभाग की अध्यक्षता करने वाले डिप्टी गवर्नर की होती है। वर्ष 2009 के बाद से देखा जाए तो केवल सुबीर गोकर्ण को ही पर्याप्त भारतीय अनुभव था। परंतु वह भी मौद्रिक या वित्त क्षेत्र से ताल्लुक नहीं रखते थे जबकि उनके काम के लिए यह आवश्यक था। वह मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार के रूप में अधिक उपयुक्त होते। इसके बाद उर्जित पटेल आए। उनकी विशेषज्ञता भी मौद्रिक अर्थशास्त्र में नहीं थी। हालांकि वह सन 1990 के दशक में आरबीआई में बतौर सलाहकार काम कर चुके थे। तमाम बौद्धिक क्षमता के बावजूद उन्हें आरबीआई में शोध विभाग के नेतृत्व का अवसर नहीं मिला। उनका स्थान विरल आचार्य ने लिया। मेरी दृष्टि में उनकी विशेषज्ञता भी भारतीय प्रतिभूति एवं विनिमय बोर्ड के लिए ज्यादा थी। अब आरबीआई को उनका उत्तराधिकारी तलाशना है और मेरा सुझाव है कि उसे अपने शोध विभाग पर ही दृष्टि डालनी चाहिए। ठीक वैसे ही जैसे 1996 में एसएस तारापोर की सेवानिवृत्ति तक यह करता आया है।

क्या किया जाना है? : मुझे लगता है कि सरकार को एक काडर तैयार करना चाहिए जो तेजी से काम करने में सक्षम हो। इस पैनल में 40 से 50 की उम्र के अर्थशास्त्रियों को स्थान मिलना चाहिए। आरबीआई के साथ-साथ आर्थिक सेवा के अर्थशास्त्रियों को इसके आवेदन की अर्हता होनी चाहिए। इसके अलावा किसी को इसमें शामिल होने की इजाजत नहीं होनी चाहिए। खासतौर पर आईएएस, आईएफएस अधिकारियों को तो कतई नहीं। एक बार काडर तैयार होने के बाद मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार और डिप्टी गवर्नर का चयन इसमें से ही किया जाना चाहिए। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि अगर आपको पता ही नहीं होगा कि आप किसके लिए काम कर रहे हैं तो आपकी उपयोगिता (जैसा कि एक पूर्व मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार ने हाल ही में कहा भी) आर्थिक समीक्षा के संपादक से ज्यादा नहीं रह जाएगी। हालांकि उसके लिए भी अलग किस्म के कौशल की आवश्यकता होती है।

कानाफूसी

पुलिस की मुसीबत

संशोधित मोटर वाहन अधिनियम के तहत दोषी पाए जाने वाले लोगों पर कड़ा जुर्माना लगाने की शुरुआत करने के बाद उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस खुद को अजीब परिस्थितियों में उलझा हुआ पा रही है। वहां ऐसी कई घटनाएं देखने में आ रही हैं जिनमें आम जनता ने पुलिस अधिकारियों या पुलिस कर्मियों के यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन करने का वीडियो बनाया और उसे सोशल मीडिया पर वायरल कर दिया। कई वीडियो तो ऐसे भी हैं जहां पुलिसकर्मी वसूली करते देखे जा सकते हैं। इन घटनाओं के बाद उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस के महानिदेशक ओपी सिंह ने घोषणा की है कि जो पुलिसकर्मी यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन करते पाए जाएंगे उन पर सामान्य से दोगुना जुर्माना लगाया जाएगा। यातायात पुलिसकर्मियों से कहा गया है कि वे वाहन की जांच के नाम पर लोगों को परेशान न करें। यह भी कहा गया है कि उन्हें वाहनों को तभी रोकना चाहिए जब वाहन चालक कुछ गलती कर रहा हो।

विप्लव का दरबार

आम आदमी पार्टी के प्रमुख और दिल्ली के मुख्यमंत्री अरविंद केजरीवाल के नक्शे कदम पर चलते हुए भाजपा नेता और त्रिपुरा के मुख्यमंत्री विप्लव कुमार देव भी प्रदेश के सभी जिलों में जनता दरबार का आयोजन करने जा रहे हैं। पिछले दिनों पश्चिम त्रिपुरा जिला अदालत के नए भवन के लोकार्पण के अवसर पर उन्होंने कहा कि वह समय की कमी के चलते अपने प्रदेश के लोगों से भलीभांति मिल नहीं पाते हैं लेकिन जब भी कोई उनके फेसबुक पेज के माध्यम से सहायता मांगता है, वह तत्काल उसकी मदद करते हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि वह जल्दी ही हर जिले में लोगों से प्रत्यक्ष संवाद कायम कर उनकी समस्याएं दूर करने का काम करेंगे। गौरतलब है कि वर्ष 2018 में सत्ता में आने के बाद से ही देव अगरतला में जनता दरबार लगाते रहे हैं।

आपका पक्ष

हिंदी का उचित सम्मान जरूरी

भारत की संविधान सभा ने 14 सितंबर, 1949 को देवनागरी लिपि में लिखी गई हिंदी भाषा को भारतीय गणराज्य की आधिकारिक भाषा घोषित किया था। 26 सितंबर, 1950 को भारतीय संविधान द्वारा इसे आधिकारिक भाषा के रूप में इस्तेमाल करने की मंजूरी दी। भारतीय संविधान के भाग 17 के अध्याय की धारा 343 (1) में हिंदी को संघ की राजभाषा का दर्जा प्राप्त है। हिंदी पूरी दुनिया में सबसे अधिक बोली जाने वाली भाषा है। वर्ष 2011 जनगणना रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत की सबसे अधिक बोले जाने वाली भाषा हिंदी है। महात्मा गांधी ने हिंदी भाषा को जनमानस की भाषा भी कहा है। हर साल 14 सितंबर को हिंदी दिवस के रूप में मनाया जाता है। इतना ही नहीं इस पूरे पखवाड़े बल्कि पूरे माह में विशेषत: इसे याद करने के लिए सरकारी और स्वायत्त संस्थाओं के कार्यालयों में कविता, निबंध, लेखन, भाषण प्रतियोगिता, विभिन्न स्लोगन, हिंदी गायन, आदि के माध्यम से हिंदी पखवाड़ा के रूप में मनाया जाता है। हिंदी सहज, सरल, देश की संपर्क भाषा है जो देश के अधिकांश भूभाग पर बोली व समझी जाती है। हिंदी हमारे राष्ट्र की अभिव्यक्ति का सरलतम साधन है। समूचे विश्व में हिंदी सीखने के प्रति ललक बढ़ रही है। कंप्यूटर में हिंदी सॉफ्टवेयर, अंग्रेजी शब्दकोश में हिंदी के शब्दों का समावेश, इंटरनेट पर धाक जमा रही हिंदी मोबाइल ऐप आदि हिंदी की ताकत और सार्वभौमिकता को दर्शाता है। हिंदी डिजिटली समृद्ध, विश्वव्यापी, संस्कृति वाहक भाषा है जिसमें भरपूर अवसर समाहित है। हिंदी की सोशल मीडिया पर लोकप्रियता है। इन सबके बावजूद यह काफी दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि हिंदी राजभाषा होने पर भी हमारे उच्चस्तर के शासकीय कार्यालयों, नौकरियों, प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं में अंग्रेजी का प्रभाव कम नहीं हो पा रहा है। यह एक गंभीर और सभी के लिए चिंतन का विषय है। इसके लिए, जरूरी है कि बड़े अधिकारी, मंत्री, उच्च वर्ग, राजनेता और सरकार की दोहरी नीति और मानसिकता में परिवर्तन लाना होगा। यह तय करना पड़ेगा कि हिंदी दिवस मात्र औपचारिकता बनकर नहीं रह जाए व हिंदी को राष्ट्रभाषा का दर्जा दिलाया जाए। हिंदी का सम्मान बढ़ाने के लिए हिंदी दिवस पर लोगों को जागरूक किया जाए।

मनोहरलाल उपाध्याय, इंदौर


मुरादाबाद के एक स्कूल में 14 सितंबर को बच्चों ने हिंदी दिवस मनाया फोटो-पीटीआई

जल्दबाजी में लागू हुए संशोधन

केंद्र सरकार ने यातायात को सुगम बनाने और नियमों का पालन नहीं करने वालों पर भारी भरकम जुर्माना लगाने के लिए, मोटर वाहन कानून में संशोधन किए हैं। इन संशोधनों को 1 सितंबर से लागू किया गया है। इन नियमों को देर सबेर सभी राज्यों को लागू करना ही होगा। भले ही धारा 200 के तहत प्राप्त अधिकारों का उपयोग करके जुर्माने की रकम आधी कर दें। निश्चित रूप से केंद्र सरकार के द्वारा किए गए इन संशोधनों से देश की खराब यातायात व्यवस्था सुगम होगी और जनता नियमों का पालन करेगी। नियमों की सख्ती से पालन करने की आड़ में पुलिसकर्मियों द्वारा भ्रष्टाचार व दुर्व्यवहार करने की संभावना को देखते हुए इसके लिए भी एक स्पष्ट प्रावधान जरूरी है।

अनिल कोथुलकर, इंदौर

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिज़नेस 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।

दैनिक जागरण

अच्छे विचार भी किसी औषधि से कम नहीं होते

मध्यस्थता की मांग

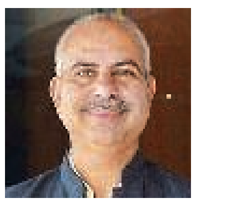
अयोध्या मामले में मध्यस्थता की मांग केवल इसलिए हैरान नहीं करती कि यह तब की जा रही है जब सुप्रीम कोर्ट इस मामले की दिन-प्रतिदिन सुनवाई कर रहा है, बल्कि इसलिए भी करती है, क्योंकि दोनों ओर से केवल एक-एक सदस्य ही आगे आए हैं। मुस्लिम पक्ष से सुन्नी वक्फ बोर्ड और हिंदू पक्ष से निर्वाणी अखाड़ा ने मध्यस्थता समूह से फिर से बातचीत शुरू करने का अनुरोध किया है। कहना कठिन है कि उनके अनुरोध पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट क्या मत व्यक्त करता है, लेकिन क्या यह अच्छा नहीं होता कि सुन्नी वक्फ बोर्ड और साथ ही निर्वाणी अखाड़ा उन सभी को अपने साथ लेते जो इस मामले में वादी-प्रतिवादी की भूमिका में हैं? चूंकि बिना ऐसा किए मध्यस्थता की मांग कर दी गई इसलिए यह अंदेशा होना स्वाभाविक है कि कहीं यह मामले को लटकाने की कोशिश तो नहीं है? इस अंदेशे का एक कारण यह भी है कि दोनों पक्षों के अन्य सदस्य ऐसी किसी मांग से अनभिज्ञता जता रहे हैं। कुछ तो नए सिरे से मध्यस्थता की जरूरत ही खारिज कर रहे हैं। स्पष्ट है कि जब तक दोनों पक्षों के सभी सदस्य मध्यस्थता की मांग नहीं करते तब तक उस पर गौर करने का कोई कारण नहीं बनता। कम से कम मध्यस्थता की इस मांग के चलते अयोध्या मामले पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट में हो रही सुनवाई तो नहीं ही रुकनी चाहिए। वैसे भी इसकी संभावना कम ही है कि नए सिरे से मध्यस्थता के जरिये किसी सर्वमान्य नतीजे पर पहुंचा जा सकता है। ऐसा तो तभी हो सकता है जब दोनों पक्षों के सभी सदस्य न केवल फिर से मध्यस्थता के लिए तैयार हों, बल्कि उनके पास विवाद के हल का कोई ठोस फार्मूला भी हो।

फिलहाल बेहतर यही होगा कि आपसी बातचीत से किसी समाधान तक पहुंचने की इच्छा रखने वाले पहले किसी फार्मूले पर सहमति बनाने का काम करें। इस बीच सुप्रीम कोर्ट को अपना काम जारी रखना चाहिए, क्योंकि वह 24 दिनों की सुनवाई पूरी कर चुका है। माना जाता है कि 50 प्रतिशत से अधिक सुनवाई पूरी हो चुकी है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट को सुनवाई रोकने के बजाय फैसले तक पहुंचने का काम इसलिए करना चाहिए, क्योंकि अगर नए सिरे से मध्यस्थता या फिर अन्य किसी कारण सुनवाई रुकती है तो मामला लटक सकता है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट इससे अवगत ही होगा कि इस मामले की सुनवाई में खलल डालने के लिए कैसे-कैसे जतन हुए हैं? चूंकि सुप्रीम कोर्ट की संविधान पीठ में से किसी न्यायाधीश के सेवानिवृत होने की स्थिति में पूरी कवायद नए सिरे से करनी होगी इसलिए ऐसा कुछ नहीं होना चाहिए जिससे समय और संसाधन की बर्बादी हो।

ममता का दिल्ली दौरा

बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री एवं तृणमूल प्रमुख ममता बनर्जी का केंद्र सरकार के साथ सियासी घमासान जगजाहिर है। केंद्र से ममता इतनी नाराज हैं कि वह पीएम नरेंद्र मोदी के शपथग्रहण समारोह में भी नहीं गईं। यहां तक कि नीति आयोग की बैठक से लेकर पीएम मोदी की और भी कई अहम बैठकों से वद दूर रहीं, परंतु अचानक सोमवार को खबर आई है कि मंगलवार की शाम को ममता दिल्ली जा रही हैं। इस दौरान वह पीएम मोदी से भी मुलाकात कर सकती हैं। यदि सब कुछ सही रहा तो करीब डेढ़ वर्ष बाद बुधवार को ममता मोदी से मिलेंगी। लोकसभा चुनाव में तो तृणमूल प्रमुख ने पीएम मोदी पर जमकर निशाना साधा था। मिट्टी के लड्डू से लेकर पीएम नहीं मानने तक से इन्कार कर दिया था। अब कहा जा रहा है कि ममता ने पीएम मोदी से मुलाकात के लिए वक्त मांगा है। उधर राज्य के प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों के मुताबिक यह एक आधिकारिक दौरा है और इसका संबंध बंगाल से है। केंद्र और ममता के कटु संबंधों के बीच अचानक इस दौरे पर सियासी विश्लेषकों की नजरें टिक गई हैं, क्योंकि बालाकोट एयर स्ट्राइक से लेकर जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने और वहां के तीन पूर्व मुख्यमंत्रियों को नजरबंद करने से लेकर पी चिदंबरम की गिरफ्तारी तक का ममता ने खुलकर विरोध किया था। अभी रविवार को ही अंतरराष्ट्रीय लोकतंत्र दिवस पर ममता बनर्जी ने देश में सुपर इमरजेंसी का आरोप लगाया था। ममता ने लोगों से अपील की कि सबको यह प्रयास करना चाहिए कि संविधान द्वारा मिले अधिकारों और स्वतंत्रता की रक्षा करें। उन्होंने इशारों में केंद्र सरकार पर निशाना साधते हुए एक ट्वीट किया-आइए, आज अंतरराष्ट्रीय लोकतंत्र दिवस पर हम उन संवैधानिक मूल्यों की रक्षा का संकल्प लें, जिन पर हमारे देश का निर्माण हुआ था। इस सुपर इमरजेंसी के दौर में हमें संविधान द्वारा मिले अधिकारों और आजादी की रक्षा के लिए सब कुछ करना चाहिए, लेकिन इसके अगले ही दिन ममता के दिल्ली जाने को लेकर चर्चा तेज हो गई है, क्योंकि सारधा कांड में सीबीआइ ममता के करीबी आइपीएस अफसर राजीव कुमार को तलाश रही है। रविवार एवं सोमवार को सीबीआइ ने राज्य सचिवालय जाकर राजीव कुमार के एजेंसी के समक्ष पेश नहीं होने के संबंध में मुख्य सचिव और गृह सचिव के लिए पत्र दिए हैं। ऐसे में अब ममता का दिल्ली जाना और पीएम से मुलाकात को लेकर चर्चा होना लाजिमी है। माकपा इस मुद्दे पर ममता को एक बार फिर घेरने की कोशिश करेगी।

अतीत के दंश झेलती कांग्रेस



रशीद किदवई

पंजाब में लंबे अर्से तक चले उग्रवाद के दौरान हजारों निर्दोष मारे गए, लेकिन उन पर सिख विरोधी दंगों की तरह कोई राजनीतिक विमर्श शुरू नहीं हुआ

अवधेश राजपूत

वर्ष 1984 के सिख विरोधी दंगों की कुछ वे फाइलें नए सिरे से खुल गई हैं, जिनमें मध्य प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री कमलनाथ का भी नाम है। यह एक तरह से कांग्रेस नेतृत्व को चुनौती है। सोनिया गांधी और कांग्रेस के लिए यह मुनासिब वक्त है कि वह 1984 की राजनीतिक परिस्थितियां स्पष्ट करें। बताएं कि तब उग्रवाद और अलगाववाद के चलते पंजाब के क्या हालात थे? कांग्रेस ऐसा करके ही प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और अमित शाह के इस दांव का सामना कर सकती है। हालांकि किसी भी सभ्य एवं लोकतांत्रिक समाज में जनमत के लिए प्रस्तुत किए गए तर्कों का गलत हो जाना कोई नई बात नहीं। इसके बावजूद कांग्रेस यह तो बता ही सकती है कि वर्ष 1992-97, 2007-2012 और 2017 से अब तक पंजाब में जब कांग्रेस का शासन रहा तब उस दौरान राज्य किन परिस्थितियों से गुजरा। दिल्ली में भी शीला दीक्षित के नेतृत्व में कांग्रेस 15 वर्षों तक सत्तारूढ़ रही और उस समय पार्टी का केंद्रीय नेतृत्व सोनिया गांधी के हाथों में था। 1984 के सिख विरोधी दंगे बहुत भावुक और संवेदनशील मामला है। लिहाजा उन पर चर्चा करते हुए राहुल गांधी पूरी तरह सचेत रहते हैं। इंग्लैंड के सांसदों और स्थानीय नेताओं के साथ वार्ता में राहुल गांधी ने कहा, 'उसे लेकर मेरे दिमाग में कोई शंका नहीं है। वह एक त्रासदी थी, एक दुखद अनुभव। आप कहते हैं कि कांग्रेस पार्टी उसमें लिप्त थी। मैं इससे सहमत नहीं हूं। वह तो बस मारकाट और एक त्रासदी थी।' इसके विपरीत अर्णब गोस्वामी को दिए एक साक्षात्कार में राहुल गांधी ने स्वीकार किया था कि 1984 के सिख विरोधी दंगों में कुछ कांग्रेसी लिप्त थे। इस साक्षात्कार के दौरान कुछ इस तरह की बातें हुई थीं:

अर्णबः क्या सिख विरोधी दंगों में कांग्रेसी लिप्त थे?
राहुलः शायद कुछ कांग्रेसी लिप्त रहें होंगे।
अर्णबः क्या पीड़ितों को इंसाफ मिला?
राहुलः एक कानूनी प्रक्रिया होती है, जिससे उन्हें गुजरना पड़ा।
अर्णबः आप स्वीकार करते हैं कि कुछ कांग्रेसी इसमें लिप्त रहे होंगे?
राहुलः कुछ कांग्रेसियों को इसके लिए सजा दी गई।

अपनी राजनीतिक और चुनावी मजबूरियों के तहत राहुल गांधी वे बातें नहीं कह सके जो 1999 में दक्षिण दिल्ली से लोकसभा चुनाव लड़ते वक्त डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह ने कही थीं। हालांकि पूरे दमखम से चुनाव लड़ने के बावजूद उन्हें भाजपा के विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा के हाथों हार का सामना करना पड़ा था। 1999 के चुनाव में मनमोहन सिंह ने उन दंगों के लिए राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ को जिम्मेदार ठहराने की कोशिश की थी। 2 सितंबर 1999 को दिल्ली के प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया में पत्रकार वार्ता को संबोधित करते हुए डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह ने 1984 के सिख विरोधी दंगों को 'एक काला धब्बा और बेहद दुखद घटना' करार दिया था। इसके साथ ही उन्होंने यह भी स्पष्ट किया कि इसमें बतौर संगठन कांग्रेस का कोई हाथ नहीं था। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि विभिन्न पुलिस थानों में दर्ज एफआइआर से साबित होता है कि इन दंगों में आरएसएस के कई कार्यकर्ता लिप्त थे। बाद में मनमोहन सिंह ने सफाई दी कि इन दंगों के लिए उन्होंने पूरे तौर पर आरएसएस को जिम्मेदार नहीं ठहराया था। 13 दिसंबर 1999 को उन्होंने कहा, 'चुनावी फायदा उठाने के लिए मेरे बयान को तोड़-मरोड़ कर पेश किया गया। मैंने कहा था कि कांग्रेस, आरएसएस या अन्य संगठनों से जुड़े जो भी लोग इन दंगों में लिप्त थे, उन्हें इसकी सजा जरूर मिलनी चाहिए।'

1984 के दंगों में हुए सिखों के नरसंहार पर 11 अगस्त, 2005 को बतौर प्रधानमंत्री मनमोहन सिंह ने राज्यसभा में बिना शर्त माफी मांगी थी। उस वक्त उन्होंने जो कुछ बोला उसमें से आरएसएस का नाम गायब था। उन्होंने कहा कि वे किसी 'झूठे सम्मान' की खातिर नहीं खड़े हैं और उनका सिर शर्म से झुका हुआ है। उन्होंने तब 1999 की एक घटना भी याद की कि कैसे उस वक्त वह हरमिंदर साहिब में सोनिया गांधी के साथ थे और 'दोनों ने यह दुआ की कि हमें हिम्मत दें और राह दिखाएं कि अपने देश में दोबारा ऐसी घटनाएं कभी न हों।' उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि 'इंसान होने के नाते हमें गर्व है और हममें इतनी प्रतिभा है कि सबके लिए भविष्य की नई इबारत लिख सकें।'

कांग्रेस का एक प्रभावशाली वर्ग निजी तौर पर मानता है कि सिख विरोधी दंगे जैसे संवेदनशील मामले में राहुल गांधी लिबरल और वामपंथी विचारकों से प्रभावित हैं, अन्यथा वह यह भी बता सकते थे कि मनीष तिवारी और अजय माकन जैसे कांग्रेस के नेताओं ने खुद पंजाब में फैले आतंकवाद के दंश झेले हैं। मनीष तिवारी के पिता डॉ. वीएन तिवारी प्रोफेसर और लगभग 40 किताबों के लेखक थे। 1984 में आतंकवादियों ने गोली मारकर उनकी हत्या कर दी थी। इसी तरह अजय माकन के भाई, सांसद और पूर्व राष्ट्रपति डॉ. शंकरदयाल शर्मा के दामाद ललित माकन की 31 जुलाई, 1985 को दक्षिण दिल्ली में एक खौफनाक हमले में हत्या कर दी गई थी।

सरकारी संरक्षण में होने वाली हिंसा और किसी आतंकी हमले में खासा अंतर होता है, लेकिन प्रो.वीएन तिवारी, ललित माकन और इसी तरह की कुछ और नृशंस हत्याओं का गहरा असर हुआ। इस तरह की बातें भी कही जाती हैं कि पंजाब में लंबे समय तक चलने वाले उग्रवाद के दौरान कई हजार निर्दोष लोग मारे गए, लेकिन उन पर किसी तरह का राजनीतिक विमर्श शुरू नहीं हुआ। 1980 के दौर में भाजपा के वरिष्ठ नेता मदनलाल खुराना पंजाब की घटनाओं का जिक्र अवश्य करते थे। उस वक्त पंजाब में होने वाले हिंसक हमलों के बाद वह 'हम लाशें गिनते-गिनते थक गए' जैसे नारों से दिल्ली की दीवारों को रंग देते थे।

मैंने अपनी किताब 'बैलेट-टेन एपीसोड्स दैट हैव शेप्ड इंडियाज डेमोक्रेसी' में बताया है कि पंजाब में 1980 के प्रारंभ में जब अलगाववादी आंदोलन पनप रहा था तो उसे दबाने के इंदिरा गांधी के प्रयासों को आरएसएस का समर्थन प्राप्त था। संघ के विचारक नानाजी देशमुख ने हिंदी पत्रिका 'प्रतिपक्ष' (25 नवंबर 1984) में एक आलेख लिखा था। उसके अंत में उन्होंने राजीव गांधी को शुभकामनाएं देते हुए उनका हौसला बढ़ाया। यह वह समय था जब 1984-85 के आम चुनाव में एक माह से भी कम समय बचा था। नानाजी देशमुख ने इंदिरा गांधी के बारे में लिखा, 'आखिर इंदिरा गांधी ने एक महान शहीद के रूप में इतिहास में स्थाई स्थान प्राप्त कर ही लिया। अपनी नैसर्गिक निर्भीकता और मेधा के बल पर उनमें यह क्षमता थी कि देश को एक दशक आगे ले जा पाएं। उनमें इतनी प्रतिभा थी कि एक भ्रष्ट और विभाजित समाज में प्रचलित पतनोन्मुखी राजनीतिक तंत्र को बखूबी चला सकें।' क्या पीएम मोदी और शाह इन वास्तविकताओं का सामना करने को तैयार हैं?

(लेखक वरिष्ठ पत्रकार एवं ओआरएफ में विजिटिंग फेलो हैं)

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जन भागीदारी वाली सरकार

भूपेंद्र यादव

यह वह दुर्लभ कालखंड है जब सरकार और जनता एकजुट होकर देश के विकास को गति देने का काम कर रही है

बीते सात सितंबर को रात एक बजकर 40 मिनट पर जब देश की नजरें मिशन चंद्रयान पर टिकी थीं तब इस मिशन के अंतिम कुछ मिनटों में ऐसी परिस्थिति पैदा हुई कि लोगों की सांसें अटक सी गईं। उस समय प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी भी इसरो मुख्यालय में मौजूद थे। रात करीब दो बजे जब चंद्रयान से लैंडर विक्रम का संपर्क टूटने की बात सामने आई तब इसरो के वैज्ञानिकों के साथ अनौपचारिक बातचीत में प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने जो कहा उसकी अपेक्षा एक कुशल नेतृत्वकर्ता से ही की जा सकती थी। उन्होंने कहा, 'जीवन में उतार-चढ़ाव आते रहते हैं। आप लोगों ने जो किया वह कोई छोटी उपलब्धि नहीं है। देश आप पर गर्व करता है। आपकी मेहनत ने बहुत कुछ सिखाया है। विज्ञान में असफलता नहीं होती, सिर्फ प्रयोग और प्रयास होते हैं।' प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के ये शब्द उन कठिन क्षणों में इसरो के वैज्ञानिकों सहित देश के करोड़ों नागरिकों को हौसला और भरोसा देने वाले थे। किसी भी देश अथवा समाज में जननायक वह होता है जो वृहद समाज की अपेक्षाओं को पूरा करने का न सिर्फ हौसला देता है, बल्कि अपनी कारगर रणनीति से विषम परिस्थितियों में लोगों में भरोसे का भाव जागृत कर उन परिस्थितियों से उबरने की क्षमता भी पैदा करता है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने पिछले कार्यकाल में इसी नीति को ईमानदारी से जनता के बीच रखते हुए निडर होकर फैसले लिए। तात्कालिक परिणाम और अस्थाई समाधान के दिखावटी एवं आधे-अधूरे प्रयासों के बजाय उन्होंने स्थाई समाधान तलाशने की प्रवृत्ति को बल दिया। इसी कारण उन्हें व्यापक समर्थन मिला। एक तरह से प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के पिछले कार्यकाल के अनवरत प्रयासों पर जनता के भरोसे का ही प्रतिफल 2019 का जनादेश।

भारतीय राजनीति के लिए वर्तमान कालखंड विश्वास और स्वाभिमान से ओतप्रोत है। यह सच है कि प्रत्येक समाज में लोगों की कुछ व्यक्तिगत आकांक्षाएं होती हैं, किंतु इसके समानांतर वही समाज एक सक्षम एवं सबल नेतृत्व की आवश्यकता भी महसूस करता है। यह भी सच है कि बेशक राजनीति सबकी रुचि का क्षेत्र नहीं होती, परंतु किसी न किसी रूप में सबका जीवन इससे प्रभावित होता है। यही कारण है कि राजनीति अथवा राजनेताओं से हर व्यक्ति कुछ न कुछ अपेक्षाएं जरूर रखता है। नरेंद्र मोदी ने जनता की अपेक्षाओं को किसी संकुचित सीमा में बांधने के बजाय उन्हें पूर्ण क्षमता तक उड़ान के अवसर में तब्दील किया है। इससे भी एक कदम आगे बढ़कर उन्होंने न सिर्फ अपेक्षाओं को विस्तार दिया है, बल्कि लोगों में आत्मविश्वास का भाव भी जगाया है। भारत जैसे विविधतापूर्ण राष्ट्र में शासन में रहते हुए, जनाकांक्षाओं को समेटे हुए और सबके विश्वास के साथ आगे बढ़ते हुए जननायक का दर्जा हासिल करना सरल नहीं है, क्योंकि यहां शासन से इतर ही जननायक अधिक रहे हैं।

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की कार्यशैली का सबसे बड़ा पक्ष उनका सकारात्मक दृष्टिकोण है। मुझे गुजरात में सद्भावना मिशन में शामिल होने का अवसर मिला था। वह नरेंद्र मोदी के खिलाफ तत्कालीन संप्रग सरकार द्वारा रचे गए षड्यंत्रों का दौर था। सद्भावना मिशन के दौरान उपवास पर रहे नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा था, 'जो पत्थर हम लोगों पर फेंके गए, उनका इस्तेमाल हम लोगों ने सीढ़ी बनाने में किया।' इसके बाद 2014 में जब वह पूर्ण बहुमत के साथ चुनकर देश के प्रधानमंत्री बने तब उनका यह कहना, 'मेरी सरकार गरीब कल्याण को समर्पित है', उन्हें सकारात्मकता के साथ जनहित में कुछ कर गुजरने वाले विराट छवि के जननेता के रूप स्थापित करता है। उनके व्यक्तित्व में युगानुकूलता भी है और परंपरा की गहरी समझ भी।

देश में हो रहे बहुमुखी बदलावों के क्रम में भारतीय लोकतंत्र में भी बदलाव हो रहे हैं। 2019 के चुनावों में देश ने वंशवाद, जातिवाद और तुष्टीकरण की राजनीति को नकारते हुए राजनीति की धारा को एक सकारात्मक दिशा में मोड़ने में सफलता हासिल की है। चूंकि एक परिपक्व संसदीय लोकतंत्र में राजनीतिक दलों को भी सर्वस्वीकृत और सक्षम नेतृत्व चाहिए होता है, चाहे परिवार हो, संस्था हो, समूह हो-सबकी मजबूती नेतृत्व की स्वीकार्यता और विश्वसनीयता पर टिकी होती है। भारतीय लोकतंत्र में एक पार्टी के प्रभुत्व को हटाने का कार्य अगर भाजपा सफलतापूर्वक कर सकी तो इसका कारण यही है कि इसके शीर्ष नेतृत्व ने अपने कार्यों से जनता में लोकप्रियता हासिल की। यह स्वीकार करने में संदेह नहीं होना चाहिए कि 'कोई नृप होऊ, हमे का हानि' कहने वाला समाज अब शासन में अपनी भागीदारी सुनिश्चित कर रहा है। वह सरकार के साथ इस विश्वास के साथ खड़ा है कि उसकी सरकार जनभागीदारी की सरकार है। आज भारत के पास जनभागीदारी से सरकार चलाने वाला एक संवादप्रिय जननेता है। पीएम मोदी के 'मन की बात' में देश अपने मन में उमड़ने वाली आशाओं को तलाशता और पाता है।

देशवासियों को यह भरोसा है कि उनका नेतृत्वकर्ता अपनी परंपरा और आस्था के प्रतीकों की गहरी समझ रखने के साथ-साथ भारतीयता के मूल्यों को जीने वाला भी है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी आम भारतीय के पुरुषार्थ और ईमानदारी को भरपूर सम्मान देते हैं और उसे आगे बढ़ने का उत्साह भी देते हैं। देश के मानस में उनके प्रति अटूट विश्वास के पीछे यह बड़ी वजह है। समन्वय का संकल्प और सबको साथ लेकर चलने की मंशा मोदी सरकार के पिछले और वर्तमान कार्यकाल में स्पष्ट रूप से देखी जा सकती है। स्वच्छता, पर्यावरण और जलशक्ति जैसे विषयों को प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने करीब से छूने और शासन की प्राथमिकताओं का हिस्सा बनाने की सराहनीय पहल की है। उन्होंने अपने प्रयासों से मानवीय संवेदनाओं को करीब से छूने का भी प्रयास किया है। अनुच्छेद-370 जैसे विषय पर इतने दलों का सहयोग लेकर इसे समाप्त करना ऐतिहासिक रूप से प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की बड़ी राजनीतिक उपलब्धि है। भारत की राजनीति में यह दुर्लभ कालखंड है, जब सरकार और जनता एकजुट होकर देश के विकास को गति देने का काम कर रही है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में भारत विकास के नए आयामों को छुएगा, ऐसा विश्वास सभी को है।

(लेखक राज्यसभा सदस्य एवं भाजपा के राष्ट्रीय महासचिव हैं)

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ऊर्जा

जीवन के मार्ग

मार्ग सीधे हों तो उन पर चलने में आनंद नहीं आता। राह पर चलने के लिए घुमाव और टेढ़े-मेढ़े मोड़ आने बेहद जरूरी हैं। यदि व्यक्ति के पास बहुत अधिक सुख सुविधाएं हों तो वह आराम से जीवन जीता है। इसके विपरीत यदि विपरीत परिस्थितियां हों तो दो वक्त की रोटी के लिए मनुष्य को जान हथेली पर लेकर घूमना पड़े तो वह यह भी करता है। व्यक्ति बहुत जल्दी आदतों और परंपराओं का शिकार हो जाता है। इस कारण वह सदियों से चली आ रही रूढ़ियों एवं धारणाओं में विश्वास करता है। यहीं वह गलती करता है और अनेक उन आविष्कारों का सृजन करने से चूक जाता है, जिनका सृजन वह सरलता से कर सकता था।

ऑर्थर कॉनन डायल की कहानी 'सिल्वर ब्लेज' में शेरलॉक होम्स अपराध की गुत्थी सुलझाने में लगा हुआ है। वह कहानी में लगभग उन सभी बातों पर ध्यान देता है जिन्हें आमतौर पर लोग अनदेखा कर आगे बढ़ते चलते हैं। वह यह देखता है कि कहानी में कुत्ता भौंका नहीं था, इसका मतलब अपराध करने वाला जानकार होगा, क्योंकि अनजान व्यक्ति पर कुत्ता अवश्य भौंकता है। यह एक छोटी सी बात है जिसे सहजता से नजरअंदाज किया जा सकता है, लेकिन इसे नजरअंदाज करने से ही अपराधी की सुई दूसरी ओर मुड़ जाती है और वास्तविक अपराधी तक पहुंचने में समय लगता है।

यह कहानी इस बात को उजागर करती है कि लोग आमतौर पर उन बातों पर ध्यान नहीं देते जिन्हें नकारात्मक संकेत कहा जाता है। सकारात्मक जानकारी पर ध्यान देना व्यक्ति की मनोवृत्ति है। अधिकतर लोग सिर्फ उसी पर गौर करते हैं जो वे सुन और देख रहे हैं। खामोशी और चुप्पी के पीछे भी अनेक राज छिपे होते हैं, इसलिए जीवन में उन पर भी गौर करनी जरूरी है। कई क्षेत्रों में असफलता के पीछे भी यही कारक प्रमुख होता है। नजरअंदाज वाली बात पर नजर रखी जाने से कई बार राहें सरल हो जाती हैं। यकीन मानिए कई बार बेवजह और सुप्त सी पड़ी चीजों पर नजर डालकर चमत्कार किए जा सकते हैं।

रेनू सैनी

सही ओहदे के लिए तरसती हिंदी

डॉ. मुरलीधर चांदनीवाला

हम अंग्रेजों से तो मुक्त हो गए, लेकिन देश को आजाद कराने वाली हिंदी अंग्रेजी की गुलामी करने के लिए छोड़ दी गई

हिंदी को हथियार बनाकर आजादी हासिल कर लेने वाले हम भारतीयों पर हिंदी के प्रति कृतघ्न कहलाने का ऐसा कलंक लगा हुआ है, जिसे धो डालने की कोशिश कभी नहीं हुई। हजारों साल के संघर्ष भरे इतिहास की ओर मुड़कर जब भी हिंदी अपना चेहरा देखती है, अपने उन घावों को देखकर सिहर जाती है, जो उसके अपनों ने ही दिए। प्राकृत हो या अपभ्रंश, डिंगल हो या पिंगल, वह थी तो हिंदी ही जो जैन संतों, सिद्धों, बौद्धों और राजपुतानों की आवाज बनी।

बीसवीं सदी में महात्मा गांधी ने जब स्वदेशी आंदोलन खड़ा किया, तब उसकी नींव में हिंदी ही थी। इस देश को आजाद कराने में क्रांतिकारियों ने भी हिंदी का ही झंडा उठाया। भारतेंदु और उनके बाद महावीर प्रसाद द्विवेदी, आचार्य रामचंद्र शुक्ल, प्रेमचंद, जयशंकर प्रसाद, निराला ने साहित्य की कम, हिंदी की ज्यादा सेवा की। अब हिंदी के लिए मर मिटने वाले कहां? जब हिंदी के लिए आखिरी लड़ाई लड़ने का वक्त था, तब हम सोये हुए थे और अब तो हम गहरी नींद में हैं। 1947 में देश तो अंग्रेजों से पिंड छुड़ाकर आजाद हो गया, लेकिन देश को आजाद कराने वाली हिंदी अब अंग्रेजी की गुलामी करने के लिए छोड़ दी गई है। देश को आजाद कराने के लिए हिंदी की वकालत करने वाले महात्मा गांधी, नेहरू सहित कोई भी हिंदी के लिए कुछ नहीं कर पाए। गांधी जी ने कहा था कि बिना राष्ट्रभाषा के राष्ट्र गूंगा है, तो समझ लीजिए, हम बहत्तर साल से गूंगे ही हैं, क्योंकि अब तक हमारी कोई राष्ट्रभाषा नहीं है। पूरे भारत की तो बात छोड़ दीजिए, हिंदी प्रांतों के सरस्वती-मंदिरों से हिंदी को बाहर खदेड़ने की मुहिम पूरी तरह सफल हो चुकी है। गांव-गांव, शहर-शहर में जितने भी विद्यालय हैं, वहां अंग्रेजी पूजी जा रही है। भारत स्वतंत्र हुआ, उसके पहले तक अंग्रेजी माध्यम के विद्यालय होते ही नहीं थे। और अब? अंग्रेजों के जमाने में भाषा और शिक्षा के पतन के लिए मैकाले को दोष देते रहे, और अब भी उसे ही दोषी ठहरा कर हम अपना बचाव कर लेते हैं।

हमारे प्रधानमंत्री विदेश जाते हैं, तो हिंदी में बोलते हैं, किंतु स्कूली बच्चों को हिंदी में बोलने की मनाही है। पूरे देश में सभी हिंदी बोल रहे हैं, समझ रहे हैं, लेकिन हिंदी को वाजिब सम्मान देने की बात पर मुंह फेर लेते हैं। यह सब कब तक चलेगा? जब जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने और तीन तलाक जैसी सदियों पुरानी परिपाटी को खत्म करने के लिए राज्यसभा और लोकसभा में मत हासिल कर हाथोंहाथ निर्णय लिया जा सकता है, तब हिंदी को राष्ट्रभाषा का दर्जा देने में कौन सा बड़ा जोखिम है? एक राष्ट्रभाषा के लिए जोखिम उठाना ही पड़े, तो हर्ज क्या है? कोई संदेह नहीं, सब बाधाओं को पार कर हिंदी ही मूर्धाभिषिक्त होगी। हिंद में रहने वाले एक अरब तीस करोड़ लोगों की सर्व-स्वीकार्य भाषा हिंदी नहीं होगी, तो फिर कौन होगी? यदि सियासत न हो तो हिंदी उत्तर और दक्षिण, सबको साथ लेकर चलने की सामर्थ्य रखती है। हिंदी है, तो हम हैं। वह हमारा स्वाभिमान है। हिंदी के बिना कैसा विकास और कैसी स्वाधीनता?

(लेखक भारतीय संस्कृति एवं भाषा के विद्वान हैं)

हिंदी को सहज बनाने की जरूरत

प्रो. कृपाशंकर चौबे के आलेख 'हिंदी के विस्तार में अन्य भाषाओं का हित' में अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं के साथ हिंदी के सामंजस्य की जो बात की गई है, वह दूर की कौड़ी है। हकीकत ये है कि हिंदी का सर्वाधिक विरोध दक्षिण भारत में ही होता रहा है। 2019 की नई शिक्षा नीति में हिंदी की अनिवार्यता पर सबसे पहला विरोध दक्षिण भारत से ही दर्ज हुआ था। जिसके कारण केंद्र सरकार को हिंदी भाषा की अनिवार्यता के संबंध में अपने कदम वापस लेने पड़े थे। वस्तुतः हिंदी भाषा के विस्तार में जहां दक्षिण भारतीय भाषाओं का विरोध बाधक है, वहीं हिंदी की बनावटी दुरूहता भी इसके विस्तार में कम बाधक बाधक नहीं है। हिंदी अनुवाद की भाषा इतनी कठिन होती है कि उसे ठीक से समझ पाना मुश्किल हो जाता है। जबकि हिंदी से अंग्रेजी में किया गया अनुवाद सहजता से समझा जा सकता है। क्योंकि अंग्रेजी में शब्दों का नहीं भावगत संदेश का अनुवाद होता है। जबकि ठीक इसके विपरीत हिंदी में शब्दगत अनुवाद से अनुवाद की गई भाषा का भावगत संदेश ही विलुप्त हो जाता है। हिंदी अनुवाद पढ़ने वाला व्यक्ति अनुवादित हिंदी के दुरूह शब्दों में ही उलझकर रह जाता है। हिंदी के संदर्भ में अपनाई जाने वाली यह बेमानी दुरूहता आज हिंदी के पठन-पाठन और विस्तार में बाधक बन रही है। सोशल मीडिया और विज्ञापन के क्षेत्र में हिंदी भाषा का जो दबदबा दिखाई देता है, वह इसलिए है, क्योंकि उसमें प्रयुक्त की जाने वाली हिंदी सर्वग्राही और सहज होती है। कोई भी भाषा अपनी सहजता से ही विस्तार पाती है। इस दृष्टि से हिंदी के उद्धार के लिए इसे अनुवादी दुरूहता से बाहर निकालकर सहज रूप प्रदान करना पड़ेगा। 'रामायण' की अपेक्षा 'रामचरित मानस' की लोकप्रियता इसलिए अधिक है, क्योंकि इसकी भाषा सहज और सर्वग्राही है। इस दृष्टि से हिंदी की भाषाई दुरूहता को सहजता में बदलने की जरूरत है, फिर चाहे भले ही अन्य भाषाओं के प्रचलित शब्दों को हिंदी के शब्दकोश में समाहित क्यों न करना पड़े।

डॉ. वीपी पाण्डेय, अलीगढ़

मेलबाक्स

हिंदी को मिले बढ़ावा

हिंदी भाषा भारतीय संस्कृति का मूल है। हिंदी के प्रति सरकार तथा हिंदी प्रेमियों को दृढ़ इच्छाशक्ति से कार्य करना चाहिए। हिंदी भाषा में रोजगार के मार्ग प्रशस्त करके सरकार लोगों को गर्व की अनुभूति कराए। राष्ट्र के प्रति स्नेह, देशभक्ति और भारत की धरती से मातृत्व सा वात्सल्य इसी भाषा से मिलता है। विदेशी भाषाओं के वार्तालापों से हम अपने देश के अपने ही लोगों में ज्ञानी नहीं बन सकते हैं। हमको यह समझना होगा कि जो लोग अपनी मातृभाषा का सम्मान नहीं कर सकते वह देश का सम्मान कैसे कर सकते हैं? आज हिंदी के ज्ञान को विद्यार्थियों ने अरुचिकर समझकर हिंदी पुस्तकों से दूरी बनानी शुरू कर दी है। यह अत्यंत ही दुःखद अहसास कराने वाले कृत्य हैं। हिंदी भाषा जन-जन की भाषा बने इसके लिए सरकार के साथ-साथ आम जन को भी इसके प्रचार और प्रसार करने की जरूरत है।

आचार्य राम कुमार बघेल, पलवल

प्लास्टिक में उलझी जिंदगी

प्लास्टिक की खोज निश्चित रूप से एक बड़ी उपलब्धि रही होगी, लेकिन इसने जिंदगी के हर क्षेत्र को प्रभावित कर रखा है। आज हालात ऐसे बन गए हैं कि इसको निगलना-उगलना दोनों ही मुश्किल हो गया है। सिंगल यूज प्लास्टिक का इस्तेमाल हर जगह हो रहा है। प्रधानमंत्री ने इसके प्रयोग को बंद करने की बात कही है, लेकिन इसका विकल्प क्या है? घर के रोजमर्रा के सामान से लेकर दवाई आदि सब कुछ तो प्लास्टिक में पैक है। वैज्ञानिकों को कोई ऐसी चीज निकालनी होगी, जिसमें चीजें सुरक्षित रखी जा सकें और वह पर्यावरण के अनुकूल भी हो।

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किसानों को पेंशन

मोदी 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।

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संस्थापक-स्व. पूर्णचन्द्र गुप्त. पूर्व प्रधान संपादक-स्व.नरेन्द्र मोहन. संपादकीय निदेशक-महेन्द्र मोहन गुप्त. प्रधान संपादक-संजय गुप्त, जागरण प्रकाशन लि. के लिए: नीतेन्द्र श्रीवास्तव द्वारा 501, आई.एन.एस. बिल्डिंग, रफी मार्ग, नई दिल्ली से प्रकाशित और उन्हीं के द्वारा डी-210, 211, सेक्टर-63 नोएडा से मुद्रित, संपादक (राष्ट्रीय संस्करण) -विष्णु प्रकाश त्रिपाठी*
दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 011-43166300, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-4615800, E-mail: delhi@nda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 * इस अंक में प्रकाशित समस्त समाचारों के चयन एवं संपादन हेतु पी.आर.बी. एक्ट के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अधीन ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

घाटी में आतंकी

जम्मू-कश्मीर से लगती भारत-पाकिस्तान सीमा पर बढ़ता तनाव चिंता का विषय है। कोई दिन ऐसा नहीं गुजर रहा जब पाकिस्तान की ओर से गोलीबारी नहीं हो रही हो। इससे सीमाई इलाकों में दहशत का माहौल है और लोग डरे हुए हैं। भारत के विदेश मंत्रालय ने बताया है कि इस साल पाकिस्तान ने दो हजार पचास बार संघर्षविराम का उल्लंघन किया है। जाहिर है, पाकिस्तानी फौज भारत को उकसाने के लिए गोलीबारी, मोर्टारों से हमले और आतंकवादियों की घुसपैठ कराने जैसी रणनीति पर काम कर रही है। भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच 2003 में संघर्षविराम समझौता हुआ था और दोनों देशों ने यह तय किया था कि उकसावे के लिए कोई भी पक्ष अपनी ओर से पहले गोलीबारी नहीं करेगा। लेकिन सीमापार से होने वाली अनवरत गोलीबारी इस बात का स्पष्ट प्रमाण है कि पाकिस्तान के लिए इस समझौते का कोई मतलब नहीं है। पाकिस्तान के लिए संघर्षविराम समझौता एक तरह से बेमानी है। कई बार तो सीमाई इलाकों में हालात इतने गंभीर हो जाते हैं कि जान बचाने के लिए लोगों को गांव छोड़ने तक को मजबूर होना पड़ जाता है और सुरक्षित ठिकाने तलाशने पड़ते हैं। इस साल अब तक भारतीय सीमा में स्थित गांवों में इक्कीस लोग पाकिस्तानी फौज की गोलियों का शिकार हो चुके हैं। संघर्षविराम के उल्लंघन की बढ़ती घटनाएं बता रही हैं कि बौखलाया हुआ पाकिस्तान कश्मीर में अस्थिरता पैदा करने के लिए किस सीमा तक जा सकता है।

यह बात किसी से छिपी नहीं है कि सीमा पर लगातार गोलीबारी के पीछे सबसे बड़ा मकसद भारत के सैन्य बलों का ध्यान बंटा कर आतंकवादियों को भारतीय सीमा में घुसाना है। इसीलिए पाकिस्तानी फौज नियंत्रण रेखा और सीमा पर बनी भारतीय चौकियों को निशाना बनाए हुए है। यों भी, पाकिस्तान भारत में हर तरफ से आतंकी घुसपैठ की साजिश रचता रहा है। पिछले दिनों ही पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर से लगी नियंत्रण रेखा से तीस किलोमीटर पहले पाकिस्तान ने दो हजार सैनिक और पांच सौ प्रशिक्षित कमांडो तैनात किए हैं। इनकी मदद से आतंकियों को कश्मीर घाटी में घुसपैठ कराने की योजना है। समुद्र के रास्ते भी आतंकियों की भारत में घुसपैठ की खबरें आ रही हैं। गुजरात के सरक्रीक क्षेत्र में भी पाकिस्तान सेना ने विशेष बलों को तैनात किया है, ताकि उस रास्ते भी भारत में आतंकियों की घुसपैठ कराई जा सके। लेकिन सबसे ज्यादा आसान और संवेदनशील इलाका जम्मू-कश्मीर से लगती सीमा है।

भारतीय सेना, सुरक्षा बलों और जम्मू-कश्मीर पुलिस के लिए इस वक्त सबसे ज्यादा चिंता की बात कश्मीर घाटी में मौजूद आतंकी हैं। घाटी में करीब ढाई सौ आतंकी मौजूद हैं। सेना और पुलिस ने भी इस बात को माना है कि अकेले श्रीनगर शहर में चौबीस से ज्यादा आतंकी हैं जो किसी बड़ी वारदात को अंजाम देने की फिराक में हैं। हालांकि श्रीनगर में चप्पे-चप्पे पर सुरक्षा बलों और सेना के जवानों की मौजूदगी का दावा किया जा रहा है। फिर भी इतनी कड़ी सुरक्षा में श्रीनगर के राज बाग, जवाहर नगर, लाल चौक सहित कई इलाकों में आतंकी स्थानीय लोगों और दुकानदारों को धमकाते फिर रहे हैं। ग्रामीण इलाकों में तो हालत और बुरी है। पुलिस और सेना के समक्ष सबसे बड़ी मुश्किल यह है कि राज्य में तमाम तरह की पाबंदियां लगी होने की वजह से आतंकवादियों के खिलाफ अभियान कमजोर पड़े हैं। इसका आतंकी जम कर फायदा उठा रहे हैं। ऐसे में यह जरूरी है कि सिर्फ सीमा पर नहीं, घाटी में मौजूद आतंकियों के सफाए के लिए भी कारगर रणनीति बने और उस अमल हो।

कैंसर के पांव

एक समय था जब कैंसर से पीड़ित मरीजों के मामले कभी-कभार ही सुनने में आते थे और यह लोगों के चौंकने का मामला होता था। लेकिन आज अक्सर लोगों को उनके संपर्क के किसी व्यक्ति के कैंसर से पीड़ित होने और कई बार उनकी मौत तक की खबरें सुननी पड़ती हैं। जाहिर है, कैंसर के इस तरह पांव फैलाने के पीछे एक बड़ी वजह हमारी रोजमर्रा की जिंदगी में खानपान से लेकर समूची जीवनशैली में आए बदलाव हैं। लेकिन इस समूचे मसले पर सबसे बड़ी चिंता की बात यह है कि अब यह जानलेवा रोग बहुत तेजी से बच्चों को भी अपनी चपेट में ले रहा है। एक खबर के मुताबिक दुनिया भर में हर साल लगभग तीन लाख बच्चे इस बीमारी के शिकार हो जाते हैं। इनमें से अठहत्तर हजार यानी करीब एक चौथाई से ज्यादा बच्चों की मौत अकेले भारत में हो जाती है। यह आंकड़ा किसी भी संवेदनशील व्यक्ति को दहला देने के लिए काफी है, क्योंकि इतनी बड़ी तादाद में बच्चों का कैंसर की चपेट में आना एक बड़ी चेतावनी है कि आने वाली पीढ़ियों पर कैंसर की भयावह मार पड़ सकती है।

यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि यह रोग खानपान और जीवनशैली की वजह से उभरता है और आमतौर पर रोग-प्रतिरोधक क्षमता के कमजोर होने की वजह से ही किसी व्यक्ति के शरीर में घर बनाता है। तो क्या हमारे समाज में लोग अपने बच्चों के जीवन को इस जोखिम में छोड़ रहे हैं जिसमें वे इस रोग से बचाव के प्रति लापरवाही बरतें? निश्चित रूप से कैंसर के लिए वंशानुगत या अनुवांशिक कारण भी जिम्मेदार होते हैं, लेकिन इसके अलावा रोजमर्रा की जिंदगी में जिस तरह की खाने-पीने चीजें बच्चों की आदत में शुमार होती गई हैं, वे उनके शरीर के पोषण की स्थिति को कमजोर करती हैं और उनके भीतर रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता कम हो जाती है। ऐसे में बहुत ज्यादा संरक्षण में रहने वाला कोई भी बच्चा आसानी से किसी बीमारी और यहां तक कि कुछ स्थितियों में कैंसर जैसे घातक रोग की चपेट में आ जाता है। अफसोस की बात यह है कि मौजूदा समय तक भी इसका कोई कारगर और सुलभ इलाज नहीं ढूंढ़ा जा सका है। फिर भी, अगर शुरुआती दौर में कैंसर का पता चल जाता है तो ज्यादातर मामलों में उससे निजात पाई जा सकती है।

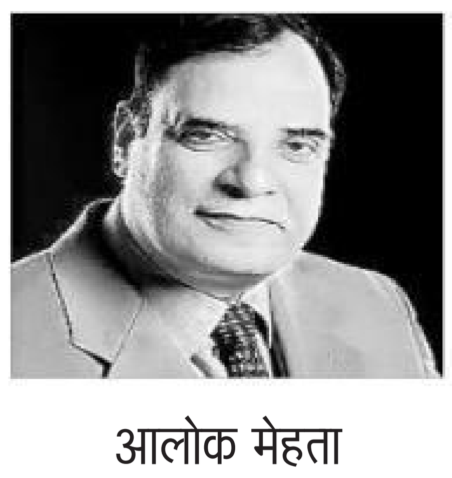
दरअसल, हमारे यहां आज भी स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं का ढांचा इस कदर कमजोर है कि कैंसर के अलावा भी बहुत सारी बीमारियां समय पर पहचान में नहीं आ पातीं और समय पर इलाज नहीं मिलने की वजह से किसी व्यक्ति की नाहक ही जान चली जाती है। अगर कोई व्यक्ति निजी अस्पतालों का रुख करता भी है तो वहां का महंगा इलाज उसे लाचार बना देता है। खासतौर पर ग्रामीण इलाकों में कैंसर पीड़ित बच्चों के अस्पताल और आधुनिक चिकित्सा सेवाओं तक पहुंचने की दर केवल पंद्रह फीसद है। दूसरी ओर, विकसित देशों में कैंसर से पीड़ित अस्सी फीसद बच्चे इस रोग के इलाज के दौरान ठीक हो जाते हैं, जबकि भारत में डॉक्टर कैंसर से पीड़ित केवल तीस फीसद बच्चे ही बचा पाते हैं। जाहिर है, परिवारों में बच्चों के खानपान, जीवनशैली में सुधार के साथ-साथ स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं में कमी के समांतर गरीबी और जागरूकता के अभाव को दूर किए बिना इस रोक की मारक क्षमता से लड़ पाना मुश्किल बना रहेगा। सवाल है कि जब कमजोर स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की वजह से इस रोग की समय पर पहचान कर पाना ही मुश्किल बना हुआ है, तब उसके इलाज को लेकर कितना आश्वस्त हुआ जा सकता है!

कल्पमेधा

हमारा कर्तव्य है कि अपने शरीर को स्वस्थ रखें अन्यथा हम अपने मन को सक्षम और शुद्ध नहीं रख पाएंगे।

–गौतम बुद्ध

खतरों से सफलता के सेनापति नरेंद्र मोदी



आलोक मेहता

सत्ता, संपन्नता, शिखर-सफलता से अधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण है- संघर्ष की क्षमता और जीवन मूल्यों की दृढ़ता। इसलिए नरेंद्र भाई मोदी के प्रधानमंत्री पद और राजनीतिक सफलताओं के विश्लेषण से अधिक महत्ता उनकी संघर्ष यात्रा और हर पड़ाव पर विजय की चर्चा करना मुझे श्रेयस्कर लगता है। राजधानी में संभवतः ऐसे बहुत कम पत्रकार होंगे, जो 1972 से 1976 के दौरान गुजरात में संवाददाता के रूप में रह कर आए हों। इसलिए मैं वहीं से बात शुरू करना चाहता हूं। हिंदुस्तान समाचार के संवाददाता के रूप में मुझे 1973-76 के दौरान कांग्रेस के एक अधिवेशन, फिर चिमन भाई पटेल के विरुद्ध हुए गुजरात छात्र आंदोलन और 1975 में इमरजंसी रहते हुए लगभग आठ महीने अमदाबाद में पूर्णकालिक रह कर काम करने का अवसर मिला था। इमरजंसी के दौरान नरेंद्र मोदी भूमिगत रूप से संघ-जनसंघ और विरोधी नेताओं के बीच संपर्क और सरकार के दमन संबंधी समाचार-विचार की सामग्री गोपनीय रूप से पहुंचाने का काम कर रहे थे। उन दिनों तो उनसे भेंट नहीं हो सकी। लेकिन संयोग से नरेंद्र भाई के अनुज पंकज मोदी भी हिंदुस्तान समाचार कार्यालय में काम कर रहे थे। पंकज भाई और ब्यूरो प्रमुख भूपत पारिख से इस परिवार और नरेंद्र भाई के संघ तथा समाज सेवा के प्रति गहरी निष्ठा और लेखन क्षमता की जानकारियां मिलीं।

प्रारंभिक दौर में वहां इमरजंसी का दबाव अधिक नहीं दिख रहा था। गुजरात समाचार और संदेश जैसे अखबार 'सेंसर' की छाया में निकल रहे थे। यहां तक कि संघ से जुड़ी 'साधना' पत्रिका भी छप रही थी। एजेंसी से वैसे भी कोई सरकार विरोधी खबरें नहीं जाती थीं। इसलिए प्रतिदिन सरकार द्वारा निर्धारित समय पर अमदाबाद से जाने-आने वाली मिनी बस से गांधीनगर की यात्रा के दौरान और फिर पत्रकार-कक्षों और दफ्तरों में गुजरात की राजनीति, इमरजंसी, सेंसर, भूमिगत नेताओं की पुष्ट-अपुष्ट सूचनाएं मिलती रहीं। उन्हीं दिनों 'साधना' के संपादक विष्णु पंड्याजी से भी उनके दफ्तर में जाकर राजनीति तथा साहित्य पर चर्चा के अवसर मिले। बाद में विष्णु पंड्या के अलावा नरेंद्र मोदी ने इमरजंसी पर गुजराती में पुस्तक भी लिखी। इसलिए यह कहने का अधिकारी हूं कि सुरक्षित जेल की अपेक्षा गुपचुप वेशभूषा बदल कर इमरजंसी और सरकार के विरुद्ध संघर्ष की गतिविधियां चलाने में नरेंद्र मोदी ने महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। गिरफ्तारी से पहले सोशलिस्ट जार्ज फर्नांडीज भी भेस बदल कर गुजरात पहुंच थे और नरेंद्र भाई से सहायता ली थी। मूलतः कांग्रेसी, लेकिन इमरजंसी विरोधी रवींद्र वर्मा जैसे अन्य दलों के नेता भी उनके संपर्क से काम कर रहे थे। संघर्ष के इस दौर ने संभवतः नरेंद्र मोदी को राष्ट्रीय राजनीति की कंटीली-पथरीली सीढ़ियों पर आगे बढ़ना सिखा दिया। लक्ष्य भले ही सत्ता न रहा हो, लेकिन कठिन से कठिन स्थितियों में समाज और राष्ट्र के लिए निरंतर कार्य करने का संकल्प उनके जीवन में देखने को मिलता है।

इस संकल्प का सबसे बड़ा प्रमाण हाल में जम्मू-कश्मीर के लिए बनी अस्थायी व्यवस्था की धारा 370 की दीवार को सरकार और संसद के फैसले से ध्वस्त कर लोकतांत्रिक इतिहास का नया अध्याय नरेंद्र मोदी और उनके निकटस्थ साथी अमित शाह ने लिख दिया। सामान्यतः लोगों को गलतफहमी है कि मोदी को यह विचार तात्कालिक राजनीतिक-आर्थिक स्थितियों के कारण आया। वे 1995-96 से भारतीय जनता पार्टी के महासचिव के रूप में हरियाणा, पंजाब, हिमाचल के साथ जम्मू-कश्मीर में संगठन को सक्रिय करने के लिए पूरे सामर्थ्य के साथ जुट गए थे। चर्चा के दौरान भी जम्मू-कश्मीर अधिक केंद्रित होता था, क्योंकि भाजपा को वहां राजनीतिक जमीन तैयार करनी थी। संघ में रहते हुए भी वे जम्मू-कश्मीर की यात्राएं करते रहे थे। लेकिन नब्बे के दशक में आतंकवाद चरम पर था। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति बिल क्लिंटन की भारत यात्रा के दौरान कश्मीर के छत्तीसिंगपुरा में आतंकवादियों ने छत्तीस सिखों की नृशंस हत्या कर दी थी। प्रदेश प्रभारी के नाते मोदी तत्काल कश्मीर रवाना हो गए। बिना किसी सुरक्षाकर्मी या पुलिस सहायता के वे सड़क मार्ग से प्रभावित क्षेत्र में पहुंच गए। तब फारूक अब्दुल्ला जम्मू-कश्मीर के मुख्यमंत्री थे। जब पता लगा तो उन्होंने फोन कर जानना चाहा कि 'आप वहां कैसे पहुंच गए। आतंकवादियों द्वारा यहां-वहां रास्तों में भी बारूद बिछाए जाने की सूचना है। आपके खतरा मोल लेने से मैं स्वयं मुश्किल में पड़ जाऊंगा।' यही नहीं, उन्होंने पार्टी प्रमुख लालकृष्ण आडवाणी से शिकायत की कि आपका यह सहयोगी बिना बताए सुरक्षा के बिना घूम रहा है। तब आडवाणीजी ने भी मोदी को फोन किया, लेकिन मोदी ने कहा कि मृतकों के अंतिम संस्कार के बाद ही वापस आऊंगा। असल में सबको उनका जवाब होता था कि अपना कर्तव्य पालन करने के लिए मुझे जीवन-मृत्यु की परवाह नहीं होती। जम्मू-कश्मीर के दुर्गम इलाकों और गांवों में यात्राओं के कारण वे जम्मू-कश्मीर की समस्याओं को समझते हुए उसे भारत के सुखी-संपन्न प्रदेशों की तरह विकसित करने का संकल्प संजोए हुए थे। लेह-लद्दाख में जहां लोग ऑक्सीजन की कमी से विचलित हो जाते हैं, नरेंद्र मोदी को कोई समस्या नहीं होती। तिब्बत, मानसरोवर और कैलाश पर्वत की यात्रा भी वे 2001 से पहले कर आए थे। तभी उन्होंने यह सपना भी देखा था कि कभी लेह के रास्ते हजारों भारतीय कैलाश मानसरोवर जा सकेंगे। उम्मीद की जाए कि लद्दाख और कश्मीर आने वाले वर्षों में स्विजरलैंड से अधिक सुगम,

आकर्षक और सुविधा संपन्न हो जाएगा।

हिमालय की तरह नर्मदा भी उनके दिल से जुड़ी है। उज्जैन, इंदौर, ओंकारेश्वर की पृष्ठभूमि के कारण मैं 1973-74 से नर्मदा के पानी बंटवारे, राजनीतिक विवाद तथा इसके पौराणिक महत्त्व के साथ ही आधुनिक प्रगति में नर्मदा की जल-शक्ति के उपयोग पर लिखता रहा हूं। इसलिए मुख्यमंत्री रहते हुए नरेंद्र मोदी से नर्मदा पर बातचीत के अवसर मिले। दो साल पहले शुभि पब्लिकेशंस के संजय आर्य ने चर्चा के दौरान माना कि राजनीतिक विवादों से हट कर नर्मदा के महत्त्व पर अंग्रेजी में कोई पुस्तक नहीं है। मैंने लिखना स्वीकार किया। इस पर भव्य चित्रों के साथ काफी टेबल बुक बनने की तैयारी हुई। मैंने नरेंद्र मोदी को पुस्तक के लिए लिखने का संदेश भेजा। फिर पांडुलिपि भिजवाई, तो उन्होंने व्यस्तताओं के बावजूद एक सुंदर लिखित टिप्पणी भेज दी। पुस्तक छपने के बाद प्रकाशक के साथ उनसे भेंट हुई तो नर्मदा-हिमालय पर बातों में वे तल्लीन हो गए। बहरहाल, असली खुशी हम दोनों के लिए यह रही कि विवादों से हट कर पचास वर्षों से लटका नर्मदा सरदार सरोवर बांध का निर्माण पूरा होने के बाद लाखों किसानों को खेती और गांवों को पीने का पानी भी पहुंच रहा है। इंदौर को नर्मदा का पानी पाने के लिए बड़ा आंदोलन करना पड़ा था। उज्जैन को भी हाल के वर्षों में नर्मदा का पानी मिलने लगा।

नरेंद्र मोदी भारत के ही नहीं, विश्व के चुनिंदा नेताओं में अग्रणी समझे जाने लगे हैं। मुझे लगता है कि उन्हें अंतरिक्ष, मंगल, चंद्रयान की सफलताओं से अधिक गांवों को पानी, बिजली, बेटियों को शिक्षा, गरीब परिवारों के लिए मकान, शौचालय और घरेलू गैस उपलब्ध कराने के अभियानों से अधिक संतोष मिलता है। इसलिए मैं इस धारणा से सहमत नहीं हूं कि गुजरात में हुए औद्योगिक विकास और संपन्नता को ध्यान में रख कर पहले उन्होंने उद्योगपतियों को महत्त्व दिया और 'सूट-बूट की सरकार' के आरोप लगने पर एजेंडा बदल कर गांवों की ओर ध्यान दिया। फिर गरीबों की चिंता क्या किसी राजनीतिक दल और विचारधारा तक सीमित रहती है? यूरोप या अमेरिका में 1990 से पहले भी अश्वेतों और हिस्पेनिक समुदाय की कई बस्तियों और लोगों की हालत बेहद खराब थी। लेकिन पूंजीवादी व्यवस्था में भी धीरे-धीरे स्थिति बदली और वर्षों बाद बराक ओबामा वहां राष्ट्रपति तक बने। अश्वेतों में नया विश्वास पैदा हुआ। इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि नरेंद्र मोदी के विचार दर्शन का आधार ज्ञान शक्ति, जल शक्ति, ऊर्जा शक्ति, जन शक्ति और रक्षा शक्ति है। मुख्यमंत्री बनने से पहले भी उन्हें अमेरिका सहित कुछ देशों की यात्रा के अवसर मिले थे। इसलिए भारत की ग्राम पंचायतों से लेकर दूर देशों में बैठे प्रवासी भारतीयों को अपने कार्यक्रमों, योजनाओं से जोड़ने में उन्हें सुविधा रहती है। योग, स्वच्छ भारत, प्लास्टिक मुक्ति, स्वस्थ भारत जैसे अभियान सही अर्थों में भारत को शक्तिशाली और संपन्न बना सकते हैं। आतंकवाद से निपटने का रचनात्मक रास्ता भी सामाजिक-आर्थिक विकास है। इसलिए राजनीति, विवाद, चुनौतियों से हट कर जननेता के रूप में नरेंद्र मोदी के दृढ़ संकल्पों और सपनों के लिए शुभ कामनाएं दी जानी चाहिए।

(लेखक वरिष्ठ पत्रकार हैं)

प्रतिभा के मंच

मोनिका शर्मा

दुनिया मेरे आगे

पिछले दिनों सोशल मीडिया में खूब प्रचारित हुए एक वीडियो ने भीख मांगने वाली एक महिला का जीवन बदल दिया। कोलकाता के रेलवे स्टेशन पर गाना गाने वाली इस महिला का किसी शख्स ने वीडियो बना कर सोशल मीडिया की दुनिया में प्रसारित कर दिया। इसके बाद लाखों लोगों द्वारा साझा किए गए इस वीडियो को देख कर मुंबई से एक संगीत कंपनी कोलकाता पहुंची और उसने उसके गानों का एल्बम बनाने के बारे में सोचा। सोशल मीडिया में ही बदली और निखरी छवि में लोगों को दिख रही यह महिला अब फिल्मी दुनिया के जाने-माने संगीतकार के साथ अपने गाने रिकॉर्ड कर रही है। इतना ही नहीं, वीडियो में अपनी मां को पहचान कर उस महिला की दस साल पहले खोई बेटी भी वापस मिल गई।

यह अकेला मामला नहीं है जब सोशल मीडिया के ऐसे सकारात्मक और सार्थक इस्तेमाल की बानगी सामने आई है। इस मायावी दुनिया के जरिए कभी किसी परिवार से बिछड़े बच्चे को मिलवाने की तो कभी किसी प्रतिभा को मंच दिलवाने की खबरें भी कभी-कभार आती रहती हैं। कुछ समय पहले महाराष्ट्र का एक किसान भी 'बालीराजा' नाम से वाट्सऐप ग्रुप बना कर चर्चा में आया था। इस समूह में उनके साथ महाराष्ट्र के अलावा, हरियाणा, पंजाब, ओडीशा, मध्यप्रदेश और छत्तीसगढ़ के किसान भी जुड़े हैं। इस ग्रुप के जरिए खेती-किसानी से जुड़ी नई तकनीकों और जानकारियों का लाभ किसानों को मिल रहा है। देखने में आ रहा है कि साहित्य से जुड़े संवाद से लेकर गृहिणियों की रोजमर्रा की समस्याओं तक के लिए फेसबुक और वाट्सऐप जैसे आभासी मंचों पर कई समूह बने हुए हैं, जहां सकारात्मक संवाद होता है। अपने अनुभव साझा कर एक-दूसरे को मार्गदर्शन दिया जाता है। अपने-आप तक सिमटे कितने ही लोगों का हुनर देश ही नहीं, दुनिया तक पहुंचता है।

हालांकि आजाद अभिव्यक्ति के नाम पर हर सीमा को पार कर कुछ भी कहने की प्रवृत्ति भी सबसे ज्यादा सोशल मीडिया में ही देखने को मिल रही है। कभी लोकतांत्रिक अभिव्यक्ति को बढ़ावा देने के रूप में अस्तित्व में आए ये साझा मंच आज अराजक चरित्र वाले माध्यम बन गए हैं। इसके चलते अभिव्यक्ति अब कोलाहल बन रही है। दुनिया से जोड़ने वाला यह माध्यम अपनों से ही दूर कर रहा है। तकनीक जीवन को सुविधाजनक और सरल बनाने के ही लिए है। यह सुविधा अब हमारी मुट्ठी में है। ऐसे में सूचनाओं को साझा करने और अपने विचार रखने की दुनिया में क्रांतिकारी बदलाव लाने वाले इन साधनों को इस्तेमाल करने का तरीका इनके सदुपयोग या दुरुपयोग को तय करता है। तकनीक के साथ भी स्याह और उजला, दोनों ही पहलू जुड़े हुए हैं। इसे सनक बना लेने के खामियाजे भी हैं और आत्मनियंत्रण के साथ सदुपयोग करने के सकारात्मक परिणाम भी।

दरअसल, सोशल मीडिया ने इस संसार के लिए 'ग्लोबल विलेज' की अवधारणा को हकीकत बना दिया है। क्लिक भर में खबरें, तस्वीरें और जानकारियां दुनिया भर में पहुंच जाती हैं। कमोबेश हर आभासी मंच के जरिए हजारों भ्रामक वीडियो आए दिन लोगों तक पहुंचते हैं। माइक्रोसॉफ्ट द्वारा दुनिया के बाईस देशों में किए गए एक अध्ययन के मुताबिक चौंसठ फीसदी भारतीयों को फर्जी खबरों का सामना करना पड़ता है। गौरतलब है कि वैश्विक स्तर पर यह आंकड़ा सत्तावन प्रतिशत है। अफसोस कि यह समस्या और बढ़ रही है। नतीजतन, हमारे यहां सोशल मीडिया की वजह से अपराध भी बढ़ रहे हैं और अकेलापन भी। ऐसे में इन मंचों का सकारात्मक इस्तेमाल एक नई उम्मीद जगाता है।

दुखद है कि हाल के वर्षों में सोशल मीडिया केवल फर्जी समाचार फैलाने, द्वेष भरी टिप्पणियां करने और किसी की छवि बिगाड़ने के लिए ही सुर्खियों में आया। यहां साझा की जाने वाली चीजों के साथ एक उन्माद भी जुड़ गया, जिसके चलते न किसी की निजता का मान करने की सोची जा रही और न ही अफवाहें फैलाने में कोई हिचक है। इसीलिए खुद की जिंदगी से जुड़ा कोई पहलू हो या औरों से संबंधित कोई सूचना, उसे फैला देना एक शगल बन गया। कभी भीड़ को कातिल बनातीं अफवाहें तो कभी फर्जी तस्वीरों से किसी चर्चित चेहरे की छवि बिगाड़ना। कभी किसी जीते-जागते सितारे की मौत की खबर फैला देना तो कभी विचार साझा करने के मंचों पर महिलाओं को ट्रोल किया जाना।

सोशल मीडिया ऐसी सामग्री का अड्डा बन रहा है, जहां फैली नकारात्मक खबरें समाज में खून-खराबे का कारण तक बन रही हैं। वाट्सऐप पर फैली बच्चा चोरी की अफवाहों के चलते कई लोगों की जान ले ली गई। अफसोस कि आभासी दुनिया में फैली ऐसी अफवाहों पर लोग विश्वास भी कर लेते हैं। ऐसे में गिनती की सही, पर ऐसी खबरें वाकई सुकूनदायी हैं कि इन आभासी मंचों के जरिए बेहतरी लाने वाले प्रयास भी किए जा सकते हैं। एक वायरल वीडियो किसी का जीवन संवार दे सकता है। दूरदराज के गांवों में बैठे किसान कृषि से जुड़ी जानकारियां हासिल कर सकते हैं। कोई गृहिणी अपने घर से काम करते हुए उसका प्रचार-प्रसार कर सकती है, किसी की प्रतिभा को पहचान मिल सकती है।

सेहत की सुध

समृद्ध भारत का सपना स्वस्थ भारत की आंखों से ही देखा जा सकता है। लोगों को स्वास्थ्य के प्रति सजग और सक्रिय करके ही देश को उन्नति के मार्ग पर ले जाया जा सकता है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) के अनुसार 2016 में दुनिया में बीमारियों से 96 लाख लोगों की जान चली गई। इनमें 63 फीसद मौतें गैर-संक्रामक रोगों से हुईं। गैर-संक्रामक बीमारियों से मरने वालों में 33 लाख पुरुष और 27 लाख महिलाएं हैं। आंकड़े बताते हैं कि भारत में जिन बीमारियों से लोग मौत का शिकार हो रहे हैं उन पर शारीरिक सक्रियता, व्यायाम, योग आदि से काबू पाया जा सकता है।

डब्ल्यूटीओ के मुताबिक पौष्टिक भोजन, तंबाकू से दूरी और शारीरिक सक्रियता से दिल की गंभीर बीमारियों और टाइप-2 मधुमेह से होने वाली असामयिक मृत्यु से बचा जा सकता है। साथ ही अन्य बीमारियों से होने वाली 40 फीसद मौतों को टाला भी जा सकता है। यदि लोग स्वास्थ्य के प्रति जागरूक हों तो सरकार द्वारा स्वास्थ्य पर किए जा रहे भारी खर्च में कमी आएगी और वह अनेक कल्याणकारी योजनाओं को संचालित कर सकेगी।

आंकड़ों के हिसाब से यदि भारत के लोग स्वस्थ हो जाएं तो भारत की जीडीपी में 1.4 फीसद का इजाफा किया जा सकता है। आज देश में ज्यादातर परिवारों की आर्थिक स्थिति कमजोर होने का मुख्य कारण बीमारियों पर किया गया भारी भरकम खर्च है। लिहाजा यह आवश्यक हो जाता है कि स्वास्थ्य संबंधी अभियान चलाएं जाएं। सरकार ने इस क्षेत्र में जागरूकता फैलाने के लिए 'फिट इंडिया मूवमेंट' की शुरुआत की है जो उसकी स्वास्थ्य के प्रति गंभीरता को बताता है। इसके तहत संपूर्ण देश में स्वास्थ्य जागरूकता व खेलकूद जैसी गतिविधियों में लोगों को शामिल करने का प्रयास किया जाएगा। इस अभियान में खेल मंत्रालय के साथ-साथ पंचायती राज व ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय और मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय की भूमिका अहम होगी। यह अभियान चार वर्षों तक चलेगा जिसमें भोजन की आदत, खेल कूद, रोग निवारण के उपाय और तंदुरुस्ती पर बल दिया जाएगा। उम्मीद है कि सरकारी तंत्र इस अभियान को रस्मअदायगी की तरह नहीं लेगा और इसे सफल बनाने के लिए हर देशवासी की इसमें भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करेगा।

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

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

बदहाल किसान

सरकार किसानों की आय 2022 तक दुगनी करने की बात करती है वहीं नीति आयोग के मुताबिक 2011-12 से लेकर 2016-17 तक किसानों की आमदनी 0.44 फीसद प्रति वर्ष की रफ्तार से बढ़ी है। 2017-18 में यह शून्य फीसद और 2018-19 में तो शून्य से नीचे चली गई है। जब तक किसानों की आमदनी तय करने के लिए नीति निर्माताओं द्वारा कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाए जाते तब तक किसानों की आत्महत्याएं रुकने वाली नहीं हैं।

● *सुरज कुमार, प्रजापति मोहल्ला, पटना*

सामूहिक जिम्मेदारी

इकोनॉमिस्ट इंटेलिजेंस यूनिट ने जो ताजा जीवन अनुकूलता सूचकांक रिपोर्ट जारी की है उसमें न केवल राष्ट्रीय राजधानी दिल्ली बल्कि देश की व्यावसायिक राजधानी कहलाने वाली मुंबई भी नीचे फिसल गई है। दिल्ली रहने के लिए दुनिया के शहरों में 112 से 118 में स्थान पर आ गई है। भारत एक विकासशील देश है। हमें ऐसे शहर चाहिए जो दुनिया को भारत आने के लिए मजबूर करें। जब हम शहरों को रहने लायक बनाएंगे तो ज्यादा निवेश और खुशी को सहजता से आमंत्रित कर सकेंगे।

हमारे शहर लगातार विस्थापन और पुनर्वास से गुजर रहे हैं। यहां स्थिरता न के बराबर है। न हमें इनकी संस्कृति की चिंता है और न परिवेश की। लोग यहां खुद को कितना सुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं यह भी बताने की जरूरत नहीं है। हमारी बड़ी आबादी ऐसी है जो मूलभूत चिकित्सा सेवाओं से भी वंचित है। सड़क, बिजली, पानी के मोर्चे पर भी समस्याएं जितनी सुलझाई जाती हैं उससे ज्यादा उलझी नजर आती हैं। बड़ी संख्या में ऐसे बच्चे हैं जो उचित शिक्षा से वंचित हैं। निस्संदेह, हमें वियना, सिडनी, ओसाका, टोरंटो, टोक्यो से सीखना चाहिए। ऑस्ट्रिया के शानदार शहर वियना ने जीवन अनुकूलता सूचकांक में अपने सर्वोच्च स्थान को कायम रखा है। इन शहरों ने रहवास के ऊंचे मुकामों को कैसे हासिल किया है, हमें इनकी कामयाबी का अध्ययन करना चाहिए।

यह एक ऐसा मोर्चा है जहां जिम्मेदारी सामूहिक है। शहरों को रहने लायक बनाने के लिए जहां शासन-प्रशासन के स्तर पर एकजुट होकर समेकित विकास के लिए काम करना होगा वहीं नागरिकों को भी देखना होगा कि शहर को रहने लायक बनाने में उनका कैसा और कितना योगदान हो सकता है। यह भी तय करना होगा कि यहां से हमें और नीचे गिरना है या फिर ऐसे ठोस कदम उठाने हैं जिनसे अगले वर्ष की रैंकिंग में हमारी स्थिति बेहतर हो जाए।

● *सौरभ शर्मा, महासमुंद, छत्तीसगढ़*

उन्माद के विरुद्ध

भीड़ द्वारा किसी को घेर कर मार दिया जाना यानी मॉब-लिचिंग किसी भी सभ्य समाज के लिए शर्मनाक है चाहे उसके लिए कितने भी कुतर्क गढ़ लिए जाएं। दरअसल, कोई भी समुदाय किसी पर प्रभुत्व तभी हासिल करना चाहता है जब वह असुरक्षा की भावना से पीड़ित हो। यह बुनियादी कारण है किसी भी हत्यारी भीड़ के मनोविज्ञान का। दूसरा कारण है बंद दरवाजों से आता बेशर्म राजनीतिक समर्थन जिसने इन खूंखार मंसूबों को 'कुछ नहीं होगा' के लबादे में ढांप दिया है। इस तरह घटनाओं की एक खास अंतराल के बाद पुनरावृत्ति का एक महत्त्वपूर्ण घटक है कानून एवं न्यायपालिका द्वारा कोई नजीर न मिलना।

अलवर के पहलू खान की हत्या के आरोपी सबूतों के अभाव में छोड़ दिए गए। यह अपराधियों को साहस देता है। मॉब-लिचिंग रोकने के लिए ऐसी घटनाओं पर त्वरित लेकिन निष्पक्ष जांच और कार्रवाई हो ताकि इनकी पुनरावृत्ति रुके और बुद्धिजीवी वर्ग को आगे आकर ऐसी चीजों पर मुखरता से बात रखनी होगी। हर पाले को अपनी विचारधारा और अपने लोगों को बचाने की कोशिश छोड़नी होगी। याद रखिए 'लगेगी आग तो आएंगे घर कई जद में...!'

● *दीपक तैनगुरिया, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय*