Walking a tightrope

Is a low-inflation, low-growth environment the new normal?

B PRASANNA

Globally, policy circles are now debating the reducing efficacy of unconventional monetary policies being used by global central banks to support growth and the need for other levers, including counter-cyclical fiscal policies. The rise in such activism is on account of the fact that these unconventional policies have not been able to generate inflation despite very low rates across the yield curve, often moving to negative territory. This limits the space of monetary policy to deal with a future slowdown.

Proponents of counter-cyclical fiscal policies advocate putting money into the hands of those who would spend it, thus improving aggregate demand and in turn leading to improved inflationary impulses, through tools like tax cuts. However, any such policy needs to be implemented within the contours of maintaining central bank independence without relying on excessive debt monetisation, through close coordination with the central bank and a well-defined exit strategy when inflation returns to medium-term trend levels. Moreover, one needs to understand that reliance on fiscal policy would possibly offset to some extent the work done by monetary policy in lowering interest rates. Rates could rise as expansionary fiscal policies could lead to reducing the global savings glut along with an increased risk perception of government bonds, which could lead to an outflow of funds from debt instruments.

Another school of thought gaining ground is the approach supported by modern monetary theorists (MMT), which radicalises policy making by transferring the burden of economic stabilisation to fiscal policy alone. This could be done by reducing the role of monetary policy to fund the government through debt monetisation with taxation taking a secondary role. While quantitative easing (QE) in part does defer to debt monetisation, it is only temporary as the QE debt is not rolled over but needs to be repaid by the government on maturity. In contrast, the MMTs propose rolling the debt in perpetuity to a point where markets move beyond the liquidity trap (an environment of low interest rates and high savings rate). Proponents of modern monetary theory would theorise this to be non-inflationary under the premise that governments would roll back this "helicopter money" as economies reach full potential by increasing taxes. In practice, however, this could be misleading as governments might not have the ability or the political willingness to retract, eventually leading to the unintended consequences of overheating of the economy.

Other tools to improve inflation and inflationary expectations include raising the inflation target, price level targeting or through raising the average inflation targeting. These policies, if considered credible, could eventually lead to an increase in inflation levels, providing more ammunition to central banks during downturns. However, these policies might lead to increased costs through higher inflation, increased transaction costs and redistribution of wealth from holders of cash (mostly the poor) which cannot be ignored.

These discussions lead us to think that the policy prescription for this low-inflation, low-growth environment might be more esoteric than one would like to believe. However, one might need to step back and assess the need or the urgency to move out of this milieu. Neutral rates have come down on account of changing demographics, technology and globalisation. These are structural changes that could be considered outside the purview of influence of monetary policy. One could argue that the low-inflation, low-growth environment is the new normal and any attempts to distort this could lead to unhealthy pressures on credit and asset price increases. Moreover, should we concentrate on growth rates, when in most of the developed world, metrics of per capita income levels and social and human development indicators are robust? The jury is still out there, in our view.

The author is group head, global markets, sales, trading and research, ICICI Bank

Underestimates & overreactions

Why the impact of the corporation tax cut may not be as substantial on the fisc or on India Inc

A K BHATTACHARYA

The big question that has arisen after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's corporation tax rate cut decision last Friday is what its actual impact would be on the government's fiscal situation. On Friday, Sitharaman said the measures (see table) would result in forgone revenues worth ₹1.45 trillion.

This was a huge amount — almost 19 per cent of the total corporation tax the government was to collect during the current year. This would have also meant a widening of the fiscal deficit by about 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). In other words, the government's fiscal deficit would have increased from the budgeted 3.3 per cent of GDP to 4 per cent.

TAKE TWO
ANALYSIS BEHIND THE HEADLINES

But on Sunday, Sitharaman told media people that she was expecting improved compliance after the tax cut and that would help her stick to the fiscal deficit target. She also said she had no plans to cut government expenditure either.

What has given Sitharaman the confidence to claim that there would be no fiscal slippage or expenditure squeeze?

If you dig a little deeper into the manner in which the finance minister has changed the corporation tax rates, you may get a sense of what lies behind her confidence. She is banking on many tax-paying companies giving up their tax exemptions and incentives and opting for the new lower tax rate of 25 per cent. Remember that the lower tax rate of 25 per cent can be enjoyed only by those who give up the existing tax exemptions and incentives. And once you give them up, there is no way you can return to the earlier regime of enjoying those exemptions!

How much did the government give up by way of revenues on account of these exemptions and incentives? In 2018-19, revenues worth ₹1.08 trillion were forgone by the government owing to as many as 28 different types of tax exemptions and incentives. These are exemptions and incentives for exports, accelerated depreciation, setting up of units in special economic zones and investments in specific states. Over 80 per cent of the revenues forgone by the government are on account of export benefits and accelerated depreciation.

Hypothetically, therefore, if all companies opt for the 25 per cent tax rate and give up their exemptions, the government stands to save an amount equivalent to ₹1.08 trillion. This is the actual amount of revenues forgone in 2018-19 on account of these exemptions; there is no estimate yet of how much revenue would be forgone on this account in the current year. It is possible that the entire tax amount forgone on such incentives will not be saved — because some companies may prefer to continue with these exemptions — but certainly, a large portion of the savings will not be required to be spent. So a part of the revenues forgone by Sitharaman's decision to reduce the corporation tax rate would be made good.

Remember that the effective tax rate for Indian companies (the actual incidence of taxes on companies after taking into account the benefits from tax exemptions) was about 29 per cent in 2018-19, compared to the actual tax rate of 35 per cent. Thus in the aggregate, the net tax benefit for India Inc would be four percentage points (down from the effective rate of 29 per cent to the new rate of 25 per cent).

Sitharaman has said she is expecting improved compliance after the tax cut and that it would help her stick to the fiscal deficit target

THE MATH BEHIND THE TAX CUTS AND REVENUE LOSS

The cause			The effect	
	Old rate	New rate	FM's estimate of forgone revenue, 2019-20	Notional savings on revenue foregone on exemptions and incentives, 2018-19
Corporation tax rate	35	25*	**₹1.45 trillion**	**₹1.08 trillion**
New manufacturing firms**	29	17	–	–
Minimum Alternate Tax	22	17	**Impact on fiscal deficit** 0.7 % of GDP	**Savings impact** 0.5 % of GDP

Net impact of tax giveaway
0.2 % of GDP#

**Set up after October 1, 2019 and manufacturing before March 2023

*On the condition that companies give up tax holidays and exemptions

Tax rates in per cent inclusive of 10% surcharge and 4% cess

GDP estimates for 2019-20: ₹211 trillion

#Based on the assumption that govt saves the entire expenditure on tax exemptions

But the impact of the tax rate change, taken together with the loss of exemption benefits, would vary from company to company. Financial services companies like banks would hugely benefit because they do not enjoy any tax exemption benefits at present. But a large number of infrastructure, public sector and information technology companies enjoy the tax exemption benefits in a big way. If they too opt for the new tax rates, then the government will be able to forgo less revenue on tax exemptions.

If the stock markets have risen sharply, it is largely because of the preponderance of the financial sector companies in the benchmark indices of the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange. This may also be why a CRISIL Research study of top 1,000 listed companies shows that their total tax gains on account of Sitharaman's tax bonanza would be only about ₹37,000 crore.

In the end, a bigger question arises. If the actual gain for India Inc is so little and the government's revenue loss will be much less than the feared ₹1.45 trillion, is the actual tax stimulus far less than earlier estimated and have the stock markets reacted prematurely?

To be sure, the government's fiscal woes are not going to be over even if the impact of the corporation tax cuts on its fiscal deficit turns out to be lower than ₹1.45 trillion. The gross tax collection shortfalls in the first four months of the current financial year (they are growing by just 6 per cent, compared to the budgeted goal of 18 per cent) will mean that the fiscal deficit target of 3.3 per cent of GDP would be difficult to achieve in any case.

CHINESE WHISPERS

No to Congress and NCP

The Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA), which had queered the pitch for some candidates of the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) in the Lok Sabha polls in Maharashtra, on Monday ruled out an alliance with these parties for the Assembly elections scheduled for next month. VBA leader Prakash Ambedkar (*pictured*) said his party, the Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh (BBM), was open to a seat-sharing dialogue with the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, the estranged ally with which it had contested the Lok Sabha polls. Talks between the AIMIM and the VBA had hit a roadblock recently over seat sharing. Ambedkar said the VBA would contest all the 288 seats in the state, and that the names of the candidates and the alliance partners would be declared before September 26. The BBM chief said he had offered 144 seats to the Congress for next month's polls but it did not respond to the offer. "They were calling the VBA the B-team of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). But they (Congress) were dealing with the BJP to get relief from government agencies probing cases," Ambedkar alleged.

Hard bargaining

Five of Bihar's 243 Assembly seats will have byelection on October 21. The grand alliance, comprising the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Congress, and others, is yet to decide seat allotment for the Assembly seats and the Samastipur Lok Sabha constituency. Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) President Jitan Ram Manjhi, a constituent of the grand alliance, on Monday said, come what may, his party would contest the Nathnagar Vidhan Sabha seat in Bhagalpur. Manjhi had recently threatened to pull out of the five-party grand alliance. The Bhagalpur seat had fallen vacant after sitting Janata Dal (United) MLA Ajay Mandal's election to the Lok Sabha. Manjhi's latest outburst comes less than two months after he had accused the grand alliance of having underestimated his party and threatened to go it alone in the Assembly polls next year.

Congress talent hunt in UP

Facing a leadership crisis in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress party held a "Talent Hunt" to identify a new team for the state minority cell. The day-long exercise, held at the UP Congress Committee headquarters in Lucknow, saw the participation of nearly 600 aspirants from 40 eastern and central districts of UP. The exercise was started at the behest of the All India Congress Committee general secretary in charge of eastern UP, Priyanka Gandhi. Congress sources said a similar "Talent Hunt" was being planned for the western districts of UP as well.

ON THE JOB

Understanding the concept of employment

MAHESH VYAS

I have always found the official definition of employment to be extraordinarily lax. A person is considered to be employed if she has been employed for at least one hour during a week. The person could be desperately looking for a real job during the rest of the week but the one hour she worked supersedes.

This is a global norm, a recommendation of the International Labour Organization. India follows this global practice.

But, how can a person who has worked merely for an hour in a week be considered as an employed person?

In India, where the unorganised sector dominates and where people are engaged in work largely informally, a large proportion of people can get classified as employed even if they do not consider themselves to be employed in any sense of the term.

Imagine the household of a typical tea vendor. He sets up shop on the street and negotiates deals with the formal and informal enforcement agencies to allow him to do business. He organises raw materials and fuel, sets up the stove to brew the sugarshot, runs the production operations, solicits customers and is the sales manager-cum-accountant. He spends a good 12 hour a day of hard work for six days of the week to earn a living and to ensure he does not lose his spot on the street to a potential competitor.

On the seventh day he replenishes stocks and cleans. On this day, his wife helps in the cleaning of the cloth used as the sieve in the operations, gives a wash to the equipment and refills stocks. If she spends an hour or more on that day on these activities and for the rest of week is fully occupied only taking care of the house, she is still considered to be employed.

If a surveyor asked the wife whether she was employed, her answer would be in the negative. And, it would be an honest answer. But, the official statistical machinery would dig deeper and discover that the wife should also be considered as employed.

We believe that this stretches the common-sense understanding of the term employment.

The tea vendor's household is not a rare phenomenon in a place like India. If the Ola cabby's brother who is still trying to find a job gives his brother's car a good wash every weekend, he could be classified as an employed person. If the village grocer's daughter who is still studying spends an hour a week tallying stocks she could be considered employed. If the milkman's wife washes the milk cans she could be classified as employed.

By classifying these occasional stints at work as employment, we could be overestimating the number of really employed people in the country. All of them did work but, it is debatable that all of them are employed.

It is easy to classify the salaried classes as employed. For the non-salaried classes, perhaps, it makes sense to classify a person as employed only if she has worked adequately to make her feel that she is indeed employed. I guess such a feeling would emerge only if a person works sufficiently to contribute meaningfully to the economic well-being of the family. It is this feeling that should be central to counting a person as employed.

We need not be judgemental about the minimum number of hours a person should work to be considered employed.

If a modern-day gig worker feels that a couple of hours of work a day is sufficient to feel employed, so be it. If another one feels its important to work six or even eight hours to feel employed, who are we to lower the bar?

There could be differences in perceptions of employment across gender, age, education and most of all, need. Culture and evolution can shape perceptions regarding employment. These differences offer a rich insight into the nature of employment. Incorporating these into the definition of employment is a challenge worth picking up. To leave the definition at a ridiculously low level is to mock the importance of real meaningful employment and abandon the diversity in its interpretation.

CMIE's Consumer Pyramids Household Survey gives importance to the perception of the respondent regarding employment/unemployment status. Beginning September 1, 2019, it has also started capturing two additional pieces of information. First, it would distinguish between work and employment. And second, it seeks to capture the utilisation of time. These two additional pieces of information along with the perceptions-based responses on employment could help us unravel the nature of the perception of employment.

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

Baseless criticism

This refers to "Impetus to Make in India, claims PM; Oppn says it's timed for US visit" (September 21). The government's decision to slash the corporate tax rate has come in for wide praise from various quarters. However, the Opposition has not been generous to the government and believes that the decision has been timed for the US visit of the Prime Minister. A few things need to be appreciated in this regard. Slashing of corporate tax has not come all too sudden. There has been gradual reduction over the years and this big slash would not have come now had there been no slowdown.

So, the current economic slowdown has prompted the government to go in for this huge cut in corporate tax rate now. Also, the rate cut is aimed at luring foreign companies that are winding up their facilities in China as a result of US-China trade war, to set up manufacturing facilities in India. Clearly, the decision to cut the corporate tax rate could not have been postponed till the next Budget as delaying it any further would not have been useful in arresting the slowdown or attracting foreign firms to set up their facilities in India. The Opposition is well within its rights to criticise the government but the criticism needs to be based on sound rationale and it should not lack conviction.

Sanjeev Kumar Singh Jabalpur

More NPAs?

This refers to the editorial "Phone banking, again" (September 23). I agree with the views expressed in the editorial. Pushing up and encouraging lending to small businesses and retail borrowers by holding loan *melas* is not a wise move. The public sector banks (PSBs) have barely started recovering from the non-performing assets (NPAs) loans mess and to again force them to lend will set the clock back. The PSBs need to lend based on risk assessment of the borrower and his/her ability to repay the loan. The hard earned money of the depositors and the capital paid for by the tax payers cannot be blown away recklessly, like the loan *melas* pushed by Janardhana Poojary in the Congress era.

Forcing banks not to declare loans to small businesses as NPAs till March 2020 will enable PSBs to cover up their growing NPAs to this segment for a much longer period of time. Economic development happens when banks lend wisely, borrowers invest in businesses, production of goods and services increases and loans are repaid on time. Lending in *melas* and then not repaying does not create a perception of economic well-being. It only shows the pitfalls of political interference and patronage. We are creating the setting for the next phase of the big NPA mess. This happens every few years. But the difference is that this time it will come too soon after the previous phase.

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

PM Modi in Houston

From all appearances, the "Howdy, Modi!" event in Houston was a big success. It was a visual treat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered his address to the rapturous applause of the audience. The bromance between Modi and US President Donald Trump was in full display in Houston. They made a mutual admiration club heaping praise on each other. With his words "Abki baar Trump sarkar", Modi has endorsed Trump's candidacy, apart from certifying that Trump "made America great again". It was a deviation from the hitherto followed policy of non-partisanship vis-a-vis the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. The PM opined that Article 370 "benefitted separatists and terrorists". He proclaimed that "discrimination against Dalits is now past history". We couldn't agree more with Modi when he said, "Diversity is the strength of our democracy".

G David Milton Maruthancode

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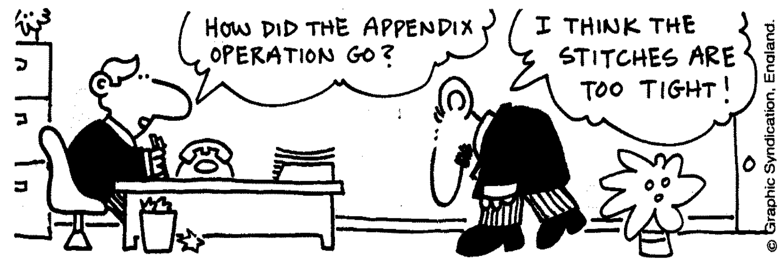
HAMBONE



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Hope for manufacturing

Govt must follow up tax cuts with administrative reform

The global supply chain for goods is in a state of flux, and this is the time for India to take advantage of it. Costs are increasing in China, for long the hub of global manufacturing, and the Sino-US trade war is disrupting existing supply arrangements. Many companies are looking to set up plants elsewhere in the emerging world — and India should be high on their list of possible destinations. So far, however, domestic risk factors and a high-cost environment have rendered Indian manufacturing relatively uncompetitive and locating in India is thus unattractive. But recent moves from the government can reverse this trend. Most notable among these is the slashing of the corporate income tax rate to 25.17 per cent for large companies, announced last week by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. What was perhaps lost in the middle of the euphoria induced by this step was the fact that new manufacturing firms will be taxed at an even lower concessional rate of 17 per cent including surcharge and cess. This is a sensible attempt to induce new investment in the manufacturing sector.

A major tax cut of this nature for new investment should significantly alter the return on equity for new investment. Importantly, it is also in the spirit of the larger corporate income tax cut, which intended to make India competitive with peer nations in Southeast Asia. Countries such as Thailand and Vietnam have concessional rates for new investment — which are, however, even lower than India's new rates. For example, companies that move their regional operating headquarters to Thailand would receive corporate tax rates below 10 per cent, and their foreign employees would be taxed at only 15 per cent.

The tax cut for new manufacturing companies should be seen in the context of other moves to make the environment more hospitable to new investment. For example, the wage code has been streamlined and some export-oriented sectors have been permitted more substantial use of contract labour. The government also recently provided clarity on foreign investment in contract manufacturing, which is permitted at the 100 per cent level through the automatic route. The finance minister also announced in the last fortnight a package for exporters that would be compliant with Indian obligations at the World Trade Organization, and also promised that refunds of input tax credits would be processed in a time-bound manner. Credit-constrained export-oriented sectors might also benefit from a relaxation of priority sector lending norms for banks. The larger attempt here is clearly to create an environment that is friendlier to those willing to expend capital on the risks that Indian manufacturing entails. Threats to risk capital include high taxes, now being addressed, and high interest rates, which too are being lowered consistently by the Reserve Bank of India, now that inflationary expectations are under control. But more needs to be done. Comprehensive central labour and land law reform is a long-pending demand of the manufacturing sector and cannot be evaded forever. It is also necessary to consider the question of administrative and regulatory risk. Access to international arbitration, clear advance tax rulings, more capacity in the judicial sector, and an independent and apolitical regulatory cadre are a must. Only then will a sustained increase in manufacturing's share in gross domestic product be visible.

Substantial ambiguity

A broader RTI Act needs sharper definitions

The Supreme Court's judgment last week bringing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) "substantially funded" by the government under the Right to Information Act raises several critical questions. The two-judge Bench of Justice Deepak Gupta and Justice Aniruddha Bose based their judgement in the case *D A V College Trust and Management Society vs Director of Public Instructions* on an interpretation of "inclusive" sub-clauses defining the categories of eligible institutions under the Act. In addition to four categories, one clause stated that the Act would be applicable to bodies that were owned, controlled, or substantially financed by the appropriate government, and not necessarily formed under the Constitution, an Act of Parliament or a state legislature, or by a notification. This definition, the judges concluded, brought NGOs funded, directly or indirectly, by the appropriate government squarely within the ambit of the Act. Potentially, thousands of private trusts and institutions that work with government funding to varying degrees could now be open to public scrutiny.

In terms of the broad purpose of the RTI Act, the judgment appears unexceptionable. If public money is being expended on a private initiative, the taxpayer has the right to know how it is being spent. This is relevant in the case of hospitals and educational institutions for which governments extend land grants and related subsidies. Most of this aid typically comes with conditions attached, such as reserving a certain percentage of beds/seats for the poor. There has long been a suspicion that the mushrooming "five-star" hospitals and educational facilities in 21st century India, built on government land and tax breaks, observe these conditions more in the breach. The Supreme Court's latest judgment would bring them under public scrutiny.

The attractions of such transparency must be weighed against the ambiguity on the key definition of "substantially funded". In 2015, the Central Information Commission had defined substantial funding thus: If a body receives ₹5 lakh from the government and if this amounts to 10 per cent of the annual income of the NGO concerned. Though this ruling has the virtue of specificity, it appears to set the threshold rather low. The Supreme Court in its September 17 ruling stated the term "substantial" meant "a large portion". It added that "[i]t does not necessarily have to mean a major portion or more than 50 per cent. No hard and fast rule can be laid down in this regard". The issue had to be determined on "the facts of each case". The judgment has offered some guiding examples — for instance, if the grant amount is small (say, ₹5,000) or whether the NGO concerned can function without it and so on. But this still leaves the door wide open for interpretation and adds to NGO costs in terms of lawyers' fees. As it is, NGOs that receive government funding are required to appoint information officers to service RTI requests, which is likely to put disproportionate pressure on smaller NGOs rather than the bigger, well-funded ones. The government would do well to include a specific definition of "substantial funding" in the RTI Act so that the overburdened courts are not loaded with more cases on this count.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY

Big bang steps

With fiscal and monetary levers being pulled simultaneously, expect economic growth and corporate profit to accelerate

AKASH PRAKASH

The finance minister surprised almost everyone on Friday with her announcements on corporate taxation. The government has taken the decisive step of reducing tax rates by 10 percentage points to 25 per cent for all domestic companies. For new manufacturing investments, companies can avail of a tax rate of 17 per cent, provided the new assets become operational by March 31, 2023. There were some other less significant changes for share buyback programme that was announced earlier, as well as for the removal of surcharge on capital gains on buying and selling of equities. The total cost of these tax breaks was estimated to be ₹1.45 trillion. The magnitude and speed of corporate tax relief is unprecedented for India. Overnight, we are now comparable to most countries in Asia. This was clearly an unexpected move, and markets rejoiced by promptly rising over 5 per cent on Friday. On further reflection, it becomes clear that this is a major policy move. Investors have to think through the long term impact — and it is not just the rise in corporate earnings. Here are some of my takeaways.

1. The government has finally moved past the "*suit, boot ki Sarkar*" jibe of the Congress. It is no longer scared of being seen to be wooing businesses. Money-making, if done ethically, is to be celebrated and not vilified. This is a big step in correcting the perception that the government had moved too far to the left and was not pro-business.

This tax break is targeted at corporate India, and improving corporate confidence. The government recognised that there was risk aversion among corporate leaders. The decision to decriminalise certain offences in the companies Act is another step in this direction. No amount of reduction in interest rates will catalyse investments if business leaders lack belief.

India will become a more attractive destination to set up and run a business as a result of these steps. Instead of giving a relief in GST rates, which would have given a boost to consumption, the finance minister has improved the earnings and cash flows of corporate India, hoping that these companies will gain confidence and, in turn, hire and invest. While more needs to be done to ease the hassles of running a business in India, this is a massive step. Tax rates can no longer be the reason to not invest in India. Corporate India must now stop complaining and instead step forward and bet on the economy and growth normalising. The time for cynicism and doubts about the government having any interest in corporate India must end. Companies will hopefully use this windfall to make investments for the future, be it in people, pricing, technology, brand building or plant and machinery. Ultimately, domestic investments must drive our economy; foreign direct investments can only be the icing on the cake.

2. This is a huge bet on growth. We will miss the fiscal targets for this year for sure, but even going forward, the only way this step makes sense for the government is if growth comes back strongly. Prime Minister Narendra Modi needs funds for his social programmes. With these new tax rates, unless growth accelerates strongly, he will not get the revenues he needs to fund these social schemes. These tax cuts should put to rest any doubt about whether the government cares about economic growth. Everyone is now aligned on one thing: Rapid economic growth is a necessity. Better still both the fiscal and monetary authorities are finally on the same page.

3. The bears worry about the fiscal deficit. It is true we may see a fiscal deficit of 3.7-3.8 per cent of GDP this year. However, as an equity investor I can live with that if growth strengthens and earnings accelerate. I would prefer a higher fiscal deficit with stronger GDP and earnings growth and a little higher inflation, than an obsession with 3.3 per cent (fiscal deficit), with no inflation and weak growth. The fiscal overshoot will also put pressure on the government to monetise assets faster and more strategically. Strategic divestments will come back on the table. They may be far more aggressive than anyone now thinks. We may see a faster roll out of direct benefit transfer, in the area of food and fertiliser subsidies, as pressure to optimise expenditure gains ground. The fiscal constraints this step imposes will encourage more reform.

4. We should see an 8-10 per cent rise in profits after tax for the listed corporate sector. The initial benefits may be lower as some companies will not move to the new regime and others will have to mark down deferred tax assets. More importantly, the new tax regime will raise the normalised return on equity and free cash flow metrics for corporate India. The benefits are for perpetuity and should therefore raise the theoretical multiple for the market.

5. These steps only further strengthen the ongoing consolidation in corporate India. The strong will get even more powerful and the weak will fade away. After all, the biggest beneficiaries of these steps are the companies which pay the highest absolute amounts and highest rates of tax. Weak companies, which are not profitable, get no benefit at all. In industry after industry the weaker players with weak governance or stretched balance sheets are being swept away, creating space for market share gains for the better run companies. The clean up of corporate India will only accelerate post these cuts.

6. In the short term, the economy will remain weak. Q2 earnings will be horrible; consumption demand will take time to recover; the NBFC crisis is not over; you will see no immediate pickup in investments; jobs growth will remain weak. People will argue that this is a blunt stimulus measure, it would have been better to cut income taxes or GST. Others will argue that companies will just sit on the gains.

However, sentiment has turned in my opinion. So have markets, as they lead the economic cycle. The government has shown that it will listen, and that the economy and corporate India matter. The lurch to the left in economic policy-making has been arrested. It has also shown that the government has the willingness to make big bets even in the economic sphere. Investors thought that monetary policy was the only lever the government had at its disposal to revive the economy. We were wrong. No one expected a stimulus of this magnitude. We now have both the fiscal and monetary levers being pulled simultaneously. Over the next 18 months, expect both GDP and corporate profits to accelerate. We may have hit bottom in both.

The writer is with Amansa Capital

Big bets for heavy (green) industries

INFLEXION POINTS

ARUNABHA GHOSH & TIRTHA BISWAS

Yesterday, the United Nations Secretary-General convened a climate action summit urging world leaders to increase ambitions to ensure net zero emissions by 2050. India co-chaired the industry transition track with Sweden. India aims to become a $5 trillion economy by 2024. Manufacturing share of GDP reached an all-time high in 1995 (18 per cent). When China was at our current size in 2006, manufacturing contributed a third of its GDP. Manufacturing is also responsible for a quarter of India's greenhouse gas emissions, rising to more than a third by 2040.

Can Indian manufacturing remain competitive, add to national income and create jobs, despite environmental constraints imposing hard choices on patterns of industrial development?

Four industries — iron and steel, cement, ammonia, and petrochemicals — contribute 27 per cent of industrial value, 23 per cent of formal sector manufacturing jobs but a whopping three-quarters of emissions. Even best-in-class energy efficiency will not keep the planet within the carbon budget consistent with limiting temperature rise to under 2°C by 2100. In order to retain or gain an edge, India must consider emerging technologies.

Iron and steel (32 per cent of emissions) will witness three-fold increase in production capacity by 2030. Most plants today use blast furnace technology. Lack of high-grade coking coal has forced firms to increasingly rely on imports. Some plants have shifted to direct reduced iron technology, which uses locally available low-grade non-coking coal, but input costs are very high. Average emissions intensity of steel production in India is twice the global level.

Alternatives are under development. TATA Steel's plant in Ijmuiden, Netherlands, has successfully piloted the HIsarna process, with half the carbon intensity of its Jamshedpur plant. But this approach would increase import dependency of low-ash non-coking coal. The Circored process uses natural gas to produce hydrogen and substitute for coal. Swapping the steam methane reformer with an electrolyser, which uses renewable electricity to produce hydrogen, eliminates emissions.

Today, green hydrogen-based steel is 20-30 per cent costlier but could become competitive in India with a carbon tax of $40 per tonne of C02. It could meet strong domestic demand and provide for 4 million direct jobs by 2050, creating another 1.6 million jobs along the hydrogen supply chain.

Cement production adds 30 per cent of manufacturing emissions. With growing demand, limestone imports have increased 18-fold since 2000. Reducing clinker slows down import dependency for high-grade limestone and reduces emissions. But clinker substitution has reduced emissions intensity by only 5 per cent since 2010. Average clinker factor of Indian cement still remains at 0.71 (global average: 0.66).

In collaboration with EPFL (Switzerland), researchers from various IITs are piloting and testing Limestone Calcined Clay Cement (LC3). Early results indicate that LC3 can be as strong as Portland cements while replacing half the clinker and using low-grade limestone abundantly available in India. A transition towards low-carbon cement could support 540,000 jobs in 2050.

Ammonia, primarily used to make urea, is critical to food security. Despite being the world's second largest urea producer, India's urea imports have grown 30-fold since 2000. Globally, energy needed to manufacture a tonne of ammonia has dropped two-thirds but Indian plants have lower energy efficiency.

One alternative is to use syngas from coal and coal-bed methane. India's first coal gasification project to produce urea is under construction in Odisha. Another CBM-based urea plant in West Bengal will start commercial production by end-2019.

Other attempts, in Oxford and Fukushima, are aiming for zero-carbon ammonia, by combining renewables-derived hydrogen with nitrogen captured from air. A seven-fold drop in electrolyser costs and cheaper renewable electricity have nudged Australia, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore and South Korea to announce plans for a hydrogen economy.

Green ammonia would reduce India's dependence on natural gas, freeing it up for other sectors. By 2050, about 200,000 jobs could be created along the hydrogen supply chain replacing 20,000 jobs in the natural gas supply chain.

India has built huge petrochemicals refining capacity. Since 2000, imports dropped from 39,300 tonnes to just 24. The thermal energy needed to crack crude is responsible for maximum emissions. Today's steam cracking furnaces are operating at peak efficiency. Reliance Industries' Refinery Off-Gas Cracker facility (the world's largest) uses refinery gases (and gasified petcoke) as feedstock, making it the most energy efficient producer in the world.

But India still remains import dependent for oil feedstock. An alternative is green methanol. Renewables-derived hydrogen and CO2 captured from air produces syngas, feeding green methanol production with zero carbon emissions. CEEW and the International Energy Agency find that by 2030 green methanol could be cheaper than using natural gas and coal-based processes in India, reducing both import dependency and emissions footprint. It could create an additional 160,000 jobs along the hydrogen supply chain.

Green steel, low-carbon cement, green ammonia and green methanol for petrochemicals promise lower emissions, lower imports and more jobs, while helping India respond to technological shifts. Dedicated efforts are needed to reduce costs and increase adoption: R&D and innovation partnerships; regulatory nudges by making clean energy more affordable and by taxing environmental externalities; and creating a domestic market for green products and processes (with financial incentives, consumer awareness and leveraging supply chains).

India could reap benefits from new approaches to heavy industrial manufacturing. Or it could get trapped in older technologies and fuel dependence. Big bets on the essential trinity of growth, jobs and sustainability are needed urgently.

Ghosh is CEO and Biswas is Programme Lead, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (http://ceew.in). Their latest paper (with Karthik Ganesan), Sustainable Manufacturing for India's Low-carbon Transition, is available *here:http://bit.ly/2m6IZZW. Follow @GhoshArunabha@CEEWIndia@tirtha_biswas*

A ready reckoner of Modi's India 1.0

BOOK REVIEW

NILANJAN MUKHOPADHYAY

This is the book that spawned numerous political theories, including conspiratorial, after its New Delhi launch last month. One of the speakers, former Union minister Jairam Ramesh, made remarks interpreted by instantaneous analysts as soft on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He remarked it was time "we recognise Modi's work and what he did between 2014 and 2019 due to which he was voted back to power by over 30 per cent of the electorate." Abhishek Manu Singhvi picked up the cue and tweeted: "Always said demonising #Modi wrong. Not only is he #PM of nation, a one-way opposition actually helps him…". The "final" evidence of senior national-level Congress leaders lining up at Mr Modi's altar was Shashi Tharoor's I-have-already-said-it statement: "I have argued for six years now that Narendra Modi should be praised whenever he says or does the right thing, which would add credibility to our criticisms whenever he errs…."

Undoubtedly, provocation for Mr Ramesh's peppery remark was the book that gave away the author's political orientation or perspective on the subject by including "malevolent" and "New India" in its title. Mr Ramesh was possibly stating that this book, written before the May 2019 Lok Sabha verdict, makes little effort to understand what makes Mr Modi tick despite his obvious divisiveness and the politics of malevolence he pursues incessantly. This limits the reach of the book, since it is likely to be picked up by the converted, or those outside the dominant fold of the times.

As the three Congress veterans' remark, not all of them in the context of the book, there must be something that Mr Modi is doing correctly for him to increase his vote share by six percentage points between 2014 and 2019. This, however, is not the subject of the author's scrutiny as he writes while explaining what made him take up this project: The London publisher invited him to lunch and asked if he would write a book on Modi's India, or India after the prime minister assumed office in 2014. Mr Komireddi labels Modi as the "worst human being ever elected prime minister."

The author is enormously angry. The concluding chapter, Coda, opens with a Nissim Ezekiel poem: "When, finally, we reached the place; We hardly knew why we were there. The trip had darkened every face; Our deeds were neither great nor rare…". When elections were held this past summer, Indians already had "more than a glimpse of the New India he [Mr Modi] has spawned. It is a reflection of its progenitor: culturally arid, intellectually vacant, emotionally bruised, vain, bitter, boastful, permanently aggrieved and implacably malevolent: A make-believe land full of fudge and fakery; where savagery against religious minorities is among therapeutic options available to a self-pitying majority frustrated by Modi's failure to upgrade its standard of living."

The diagnosis is clinical and in prose that is hard to put down — in fact, the book began with a narrative located in the 1980s, when the dream of secular and inclusive India was beginning to sour, and written in a style that makes it one of the most fascinating non-fiction books this writer has read. As the last pages stacked up on the left of the book's hinge, realisation set in that here was a writer who had matched Mr Modi rant for rant, the difference being that the spoken word was replaced by the written. Yet, there was no escaping the sadness at the book not turning out as one expected it to be. Not a very small measure of this was contributed by the author's confession that the section on Murad, escapades with whom in the 1980s set the foundation of what Old India, as a juxtaposition to the New India, may have been, was "slightly fictionalised to conceal identities".

Style apart and Mr Komireddi's refusal to probe the reasons for Mr Modi's ever-increasing stranglehold on the electorate despite escalating anger and fear of his ilk, the book is extremely valuable for people who have been spared the lives of worms in Mr Modi's New India. This book was conceived over a London lunch chiefly for people who may have flipped through headlines detailing the latest horrific incident from India, but were unaware of the entire canvas of hate-spewing ideology and kangaroo courts engulfing India since 2014. The author lays bare multiple facets of this New India where an individual has become the party, the party has become the government and the government has become the nation, and how criticising one of them means castigating all.

Kudos to the author for seeing Mr Modi's emergence as part of a political process that began in an earlier era. Almost one third of book, part one formally, can be considered a narrative on the pre-history of Mr Modi's India and can be encapsulated in one oft-repeated quote of a certain Dev Kant Barooah: "India is Indira, Indira is India." Fast forward to party leaders attempting to outpace rivals by statements eulogising Mr Modi and likening him to historical heroes of the Shivaji variety or terming him the "second Mahatma". When the regime's malevolence is incessant, it is often taxing to recollect details. This is where this book serves an important purpose. It is a ready reckoner on what is now past.

The writer is a journalist. His latest book is RSS: Icons of the Indian Right. *He has also written* Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times (2013)

MALEVOLENT REPUBLIC: A Short History of The New India
KS Komireddi
Westland Books, 228 pages, ₹599

Opinion

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

REGISTERING SHAME

Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee

NRC exercise will not be carried out in Bengal or anywhere else in the country. It was conducted in Assam due to the Assam accord ... Shame on the BJP for creating panic over NRC

Don't rush to trash traditional knowledge

Research shows *haldi* component's amazing anti-TB properties, there could be more in the vault of home remedies

SCEPTICS DISMISS HOME remedies all too readily, but scientific evidence now shows that at least one of these may have more than a germ of medical rationale. Turmeric, or *haldi*, has long been celebrated in India as an immuno-booster. A study published in the journal *Infection and Immunity*—by researchers at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, in collaboration with KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, and Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, the US—finds that curcumin, a compound abundant in turmeric, enhances the body's response to the BCG vaccine, which protects against tuberculosis. Mice studies showed that curcumin, in its nanoparticle form, prolongs the vaccine's effect by inducing the immune system to guard against adult pulmonary TB. BCG is normally effective only against disseminated and meningeal TB in children—the immune response triggered by the vaccine doesn't last into adulthood. Given TB kills 2 million annually, with most deaths happening in India, the discovery has considerable import.

The vaccine triggers the immune system to produce two types of immune cells against the TB pathogen—effector memory T-cells, and central memory T-cells. The first are part of the immediate immune response while the central memory T-cells help in longer-term protection. However, the concentration of the latter falls with time. Hence, BCG confers no protection to adults. Immunomodulators that increase the number of central memory T-cells in the body, therefore, are key to offering extended protection. This is where nanocurcumin becomes the prosaic white knight. Central memory T-cells' differentiation into into effector memory T-cells is facilitated by the potassium-ion channel. Nanocurcumin blocks this channel, and thus changes the ratio naturally maintained between the two memory T-cells. Curcumin also enhances the various functions (autophagy, and regulation of inflammatory cytokines) of the antigen-presenting cells of the immune system, such as macrophages and dendritic cells. It also causes an enhancement in the number of TB-specific acquired central memory T-cells of the Th1 and Th17 lineages. Nanocurcumin also impedes Th2 and Tregs cells that inhibit the activity of Th1 and Th17. Mice treated with nanocurcumin, the study found, had significantly lower bacterial load in their lungs and spleen than the controls.

This is not the first study to discuss the effects of curcumin (read *haldi*) in battling TB. Earlier this year, a paper by Iranian medical researchers also discussed curcumin's immunodomulatory role. There are other signs of the West, where faith in modern medicine is unshakeable, waking up to some of the wisdom of traditional medicine. There is ongoing and published research on the anti-microbial properties of *tulsi*, and of *neem*. The 2015 Nobel in Medicine for Tu Youyou is a proxy nod to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), having been given for research on the role of artemisinin in treating malaria—artemisinin is a derivative of sweet wormwood, widely described in texts on TCM. While all the "wisdom of the ancients" may not ring true the way it has for *haldi* or artemisinin, policymakers and science advocates would do well to take the loud scepticism of traditional medicine a bit sceptically, lest they miss a big reveal like *haldi's* while the West rushes to appropriate intellectual property rights. Indeed, many may have mocked, rightly or wrongly, prime minister Narendra Modi for calling Ganesha's head transplant the first example of "plastic surgery", but that Columbia University's Irving Medical Centre talks of the ancient Indian text *Sushruta Samhita* containing detailed instructions for performing complex surgical procedures—including three types of skin grafts and reconstruction of the nose—should make one think.

Need Cornell & Clarkson

Get it right on allowing foreign universities

FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES SHOULD have been allowed to set up campuses long ago; while the latest iteration of the draft legislation for this is a highlight of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill, it has been around since 2010. The government has never officially explained why it has dithered on opening India up to foreign universities, but statements from policymakers would suggest that the high cost of availing education at these campuses was an overriding factor. That should have meant top-billed private universities that charge hefty fees also didn't come up, but they have, and are thriving. While the BJP had vehemently opposed the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill in 2013, the government has now introduced a provision in the HECI Bill to permit entry and operation for foreign universities. Given that there are over 7.5 lakh Indian students abroad, and annual forex outgo, in terms of tuition, lodging, and other expenses, amounts to \$2.8 billion, the move may ensure that at least some of that dollar expenditure by India doesn't happen. More importantly, it opens up the possibility of India maturing into a regional education hub over the years, quite in the manner that a Singapore has. However, the government needs to understand that this will happen in an organic fashion, and not by insisting on allowing only "highly-reputed institutions" right from the start, as the draft HECI Bill does, according to a report in *The Indian Express*.

The government must realise that the Indian higher education ecosystem, spanning regulation, infrastructure, talent, etc, may not immediately have an appeal for a Harvard or an Oxford to set up even an extension campus. India must first go through the usual route, of proving that it means business; this would involve allowing bona fide universities that may not enjoy the stellar repute that top-billed ones do, and tweaking the ecosystem to ensure that these thrive while delivering high-quality education to those enrolling in them. Bear in mind, the IITs and IIMs classify as top institutes in India, but none of them figure even in the top-250 ranks in the world. That said, their alumni remain highly sought-after globally, and this has helped in gradually consolidating their international repute. So, even if, say, a second-rung university from the US or Australia was to set up campus in India, it would still lead to an overall improvement in the higher education ecosystem, given not every Indian university is an IIT or an IIM, and the bulk of the Indian higher education institutes are of questionable quality. The positives for the country thus could be significant, even if a non-Ivy League or non-Oxbridge university sees potential in India.

HarvestingR&D

A new World Bank book makes it clear that agri-R&D could yield better gains than rationalising land allocation

THERE IS NO doubt that for India, where the largest chunk of labour is still in agriculture, raising agricultural productivity is the surest ticket out of poverty for millions. This is especially true given how difficult it has been to sustain the creation of non-farm jobs for people to move to. While rising productivity in India has lifted many out of poverty, significant poverty still remains. What is also worrisome is that even though agricultural productivity has gone up across the world, undernourishment is on the rise. Besides, climate change promises to be the most daunting challenge going forward. The FAO estimates a 3–10% decline in average global cereal yields for every 1°C increase.

With agricultural productivity growing more slowly in poor nations, time is running out for tackling extreme poverty. A new book, *Harvesting Prosperity: Technology and Productivity Growth in Agriculture*, by World Bank researchers, argues that while many view the small (marginal)-holder pattern of land ownership as an impediment to improving productivity, the gains of reallocating land, and labour in favour of larger holdings are smaller than often thought. The real upside will come from investment in generating, and disseminating sharper agricultural knowledge. The rates of return for R&D in agriculture are nearly 30-40% higher than many alternative investments. But, R&D investment, as a share of agri-GDP, is six times higher in developed nations compared to developing nations while the number of R&D worker is 50 times higher. Unless India focuses on agri R&D, apart from correcting its many agri-policy flaws, lifting the next many millions of its poor out of poverty will be much harder than before.

GROWTH IMPETUS

MEDIUM-TERM GROWTH PROSPECTS WOULD HINGE ON SHARPER FISCAL CONSOLIDATION

Corporate tax rate cut is no *Brahmastra*

RENU KOHLI

New Delhi based macroeconomist

Views are personal

LAST FRIDAY'S CORPORATE tax rate cut elicited a euphoric response from the stock market, compelling several analysts to revise their short-to-medium term growth projections upwards. This unanticipated, major fiscal boost is expected to stir the 'animal spirits', rekindle private investments, and stroke consumer sentiment through positive wealth effect. Is the growth optimism justified? History would tell us to be cautious! Recollect Mr Chidambaram's dream budget of 1997, when he engineered a rather welcome rationalisation of personal income tax rates. What happened thereafter—the economy could not sustain the demand boost, and went into a recession couple of years down the line!

That does not mean the 1997 rationalisation of income tax rate was wrong. Rather, it was successful in meeting its objectives of expanding the tax base and raising tax revenue in the medium-to-long run. In a similar vein, Friday's corporate rate tax cut is most welcome; though its timing could be questionable. While fiscal experts would like to debate if an economy with a per capita income below \$2,000 can afford such a cut in corporate taxes, especially when rising income disparity is being projected as a long-term constraint to growth, India had very little choice in a world of "race to the bottom". Matching competing counties in terms of tax incentives was imperative. Indeed, one could argue that it came a couple of years too late! It should have been done in 2016, when the domestic private sector was in great distress, and the government had windfall oil tax revenues to bridge the financing gap.

Fiscal imperatives binding constraint

But, the immediate question everyone wants to focus on is if this fiscal boost, estimated at 0.7% of GDP by the government, will revive growth? Before this announcement, there was near-consensus that there was little fiscal space for counter-cyclical fiscal measures. RBI Governor Das, too, had communicated this, in no uncertain terms, to the market a week before. How does this measure relate to the larger fiscal concern? In the macro perspective, this would increase corporate savings by 0.7% of GDP, with immediate effect. If the general government (Centre plus states) dissaving, i.e., fiscal expansion, also goes up by equal measure, the net impact on savings, and, therefore, investment, should be zero, assuming current account projections are retained. If household savings, and its financial component remain stagnant or decelerate further, then the growth outcome could turn more intriguing!

Since the government has not clarified its stand on the financing side, bond yields moved in the other direction, confusing even the rating agencies—Moody's thought the changes are credit positive, contrary to Standard & Poor, which assessed them as credit negative! One thing, though, is clear—these tax cuts are structural, i.e., long-term commitments to firms, and, therefore, the tax shortfall will extend to multiple years. Corporate tax recovery would take time as it would depend on investment recovery, subject to evolving demand conditions. One should not forget the live lessons from faltering GST revenue collections in the face of a 14% tax revenue growth commitment given to the states, leaving very little space for counter-cyclical responses when growth falters! Which is why, now, many experts would urge more aggressive disinvestments to close as much of the financing gap as possible, subject to market conditions.

Divestment is not all panacea

How much could disinvestment help? Currently, we have many profit-making PSUs that can fetch good value in the market, which the government could tap. It needs to be flagged here that selling family silver would trigger a secular decline in non-tax revenues (dividend from PSUs). That is why, international agencies such as the IMF treat disinvestment proceeds as below-the-line (financing) item, unlike the government, which treats it as an above-the-line item. Asset monetisation of land and building that currently yield zero return are ideal, but can materialise on a grand scale only when the private sector is ready to invest in greenfield projects!

Therefore, long-term debt sustainability issues cannot be wished away. The world over, investors now worry a lot about the global debt pile-up as inflation fails to respond. If growth fails to revive, the debt market could react adversely, forcing the government to raise effective tax rates, nullifying all that it is today hoping to achieve. There is very little choice left, except to cut current expenditure, especially, food, fertiliser, and petroleum subsidies, more aggressively than ever before!

> A great deal will depend on how the MPC chooses to communicate its views on growth, and the role of monetary policy to undertake the 'heavy-lifting', post-fiscal shock

Monetary policy communication could be critical

There is one significant difference between 2009-10, when the UPA-II government played with fiscal fire, and the current situation—lack of inflationary pressure. In hindsight, one could make a case for more aggressive easing than the 110 bps policy rate cut. Governor Das has consistently been communicating to the market that there could be more room for policy rate cut, in spite of geopolitical risks to oil prices. He has stuck to his stance even after the large fiscal shock, indicating the growth slowdown is cyclical, and output gap is large. While most analysts have retained their call for a 25-40 bps rate cut on October 4, a few are still making a case for a larger cut of 100 bps, or more.

The MPC has, so far, avoided committing publicly its stance on the real rate. It is difficult to visualise if it would opt for a monetary policy shock of 100 bps reduction, or more, in the policy rate given continued financial sector fragility. Government-pushed 'loan *melas*' could be another irritant. The MPC could possibly effect another rate cut, and then turn data-dependent. It would also prefer to wait and see if the latest RBI diktat on linking lending rates to an external benchmark is helping quicker transmission. The bond market is nervous as term-premiums are rising. The MPC needs to cool it down. A great deal will depend on how the MPC chooses to communicate its views on growth, and the role of monetary policy to undertake the 'heavy-lifting', post-fiscal shock.

Support with more structural reforms

Sunil Jain, in a *Financial Express* edit, made an apt comparison with the 1991 exchange rate devaluation—that it was required to be done, whatsoever might be the consequences. If the government's objective is to restore a competitive edge for investment in India, for both domestic and foreign firms, this was a necessary structural reform, but not a sufficient one. It would need all-round support from other structural reforms in the factor and product markets. One hopes the government will not stop at this one, and carry on with narratives of other reform agendas into the following elections in Maharashtra and Haryana—two of our industrially advanced states!

Corp tax cuts will drive private capex

Corporate tax cuts in medium term: drive acceleration of capex & spur demand. In near term: more corporate savings. Only 58% of total revenue loss will be apportioned to the Centre

SANJAY MOOKIM, NAFEESA GUPTA & SHIKHA GUPTA

Authors are research analysts, DSP Merrill Lynch (India)

Views are personal

MSCI INDIA HAS underperformed EM by 7.4% YTD (in USD terms), but we think this can reverse with the decisive action taken by the government. The reduction in corporate taxes is a good structural measure because: a) cut in GST (a consumption stimulus) would need consensus from states, b) reduction of personal income taxes would benefit only the small proportion of consumers who pay taxes, and c) only 58% of the total revenue loss (₹1.45 trn/yr) will be apportioned to the Centre (a fiscal impact of 0.4% of GDP).

Lower taxes will improve returns on investment which can drive an acceleration of capex in the medium term. In the near term, however, this additional cash flow will likely lead to an increase in corporate savings (see graphic). Our calculations suggest that PSU companies (in BSE 500, ex-financials) will save around ₹193 bn in taxes, based on FY19 actual profits. Much of this (around ₹100 bn) will likely flow to back to the government, in the form of dividend, and dividend distribution tax. PSU stocks, though, could see risk due to greater disinvestment for FY20. We prefer financials, industrials/cement, and IT.

The reduction in corporate tax rates is an investment stimulus, and not a consumption one. Consumption, and higher demand will likely be a derived impact of corporates eventually spending this incremental profit. A small immediate impact, through an improvement in sentiment, is likely though. We think Indian consumer stocks are still reasonably expensive—it might be difficult to chase the sector despite the EPS lift.

Our calculations suggest FY19 PAT savings of around ₹580 bn for BSE 500 companies. The sector wise savings (for BSE 500 Index, taking FY19 PAT) is the largest for banks, energy and materials (see graphic). Given the nature of these businesses, they are unlikely to step up capex in the near quarters. The higher cash flow will therefore most likely lead to increased corporate savings in the near term.

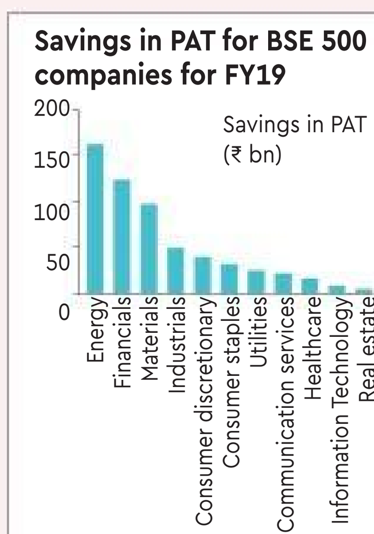
The reduction in the corporate taxes (₹1.45 trn/year) will be split between the Centre and the states in a 58:42 ratio (share of federal taxes). Therefore, the Indian states, on aggregate, will see a drop of ₹610 bn/\$8.6 bn/0.3% of GDP in transfers from the Centre. Taking FY19 state accounts, this loss for states would mean 1.73% of total revenues, and 1.71% of total expenditure. Given their hard deficit caps, states will have to cut expenditure. States largely spend on social issues (see graphic). The Centre can choose to partly cut spending, and partly raise the fiscal deficit.

The government is well behind its revenue target for FY20. According to the Department of Investment & Public Asset Management (DIPAM), only ₹123 bn of divestment revenue has come in FY20, so far (vs. target of ₹1.05 trn). We, therefore, see further pressure on PSU stocks due to rushed government stake sales. The government is also short of the targeted GST collections.

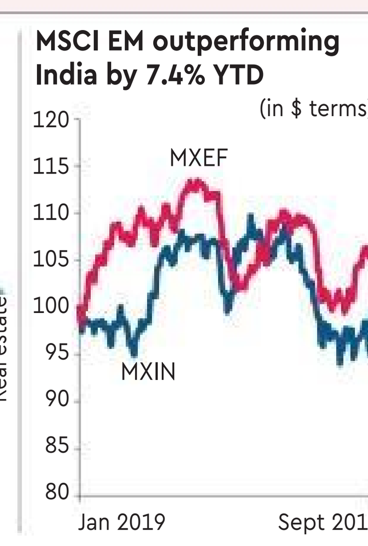
The government could look for expenditure reductions to fund this stimulus. Beyond the pop that happened on Friday, we continue with our preference for banks, industrials, and cement, which should gain from any revival of capex in the country.

Edited excerpts from BofAML's Corporate tax cuts: drive private capex, curtail govt expenditure (Sept 23, 2019)

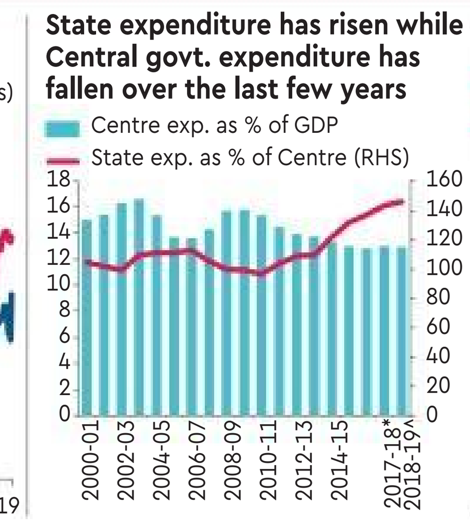
Savings in PAT for BSE 500 companies for FY19



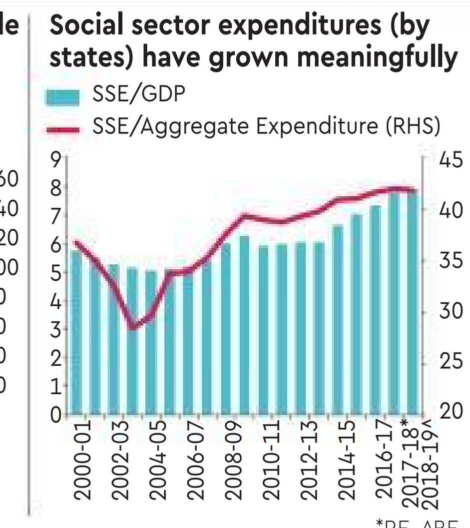
MSCI EM outperforming India by 7.4% YTD



State expenditure has risen while Central govt. expenditure has fallen over the last few years



Social sector expenditures (by states) have grown meaningfully



*RE, ^BE

Source: BofA Merrill Lynch Global Research, RBI: Study of State Finances

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prime Minister Modi in Houston

Howdy Modi event at the NRG stadium in Houston, Texas was riveting and historic. Addressing a 50,000 crowd in Houston, the champion of rhetoric, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that after 70 years, "one thing has been bid farewell". "*Aap samajh gaye, na?* It was received with thumping supportive cheer. Not only this, describing the event as "history in the making", Modi said: "You had introduced me to your family when I came to the White House. Today, I have the honour of introducing you to my family (50,000 Indo-Americans)." Whereas Trump praising Modi for "lifting 300 million people out of poverty", there was similarity between Trump and Modi, as he said that India and the US were jointly fighting against "radical Islamic terrorism", prompting the crowd, to give him a standing ovation. No doubt, Modi did vigorously defend reorganising Kashmir from an autonomous state in India to a territory of India. He assured the audience that Kashmir will be free of terrorists, and Kashmiris will enjoy the same freedoms as the rest of India. Everyone wants it; even I strongly believe that Kashmiris also approve of it. But, if the Modi government is not to completely shun 8 million people and impose the transformation without their consent, why does India not have a referendum, like the UK had it for Ireland or what other democracies did, to know the will of the people. India is denying the will of the people. Majority of Indians believe that Modi is driving the nation towards nationalism and extremism. If not, then why did Modi not say when normalcy will return, and when the apples will stop rotting?

— Bidyut K Chatterjee, Faridabad

●Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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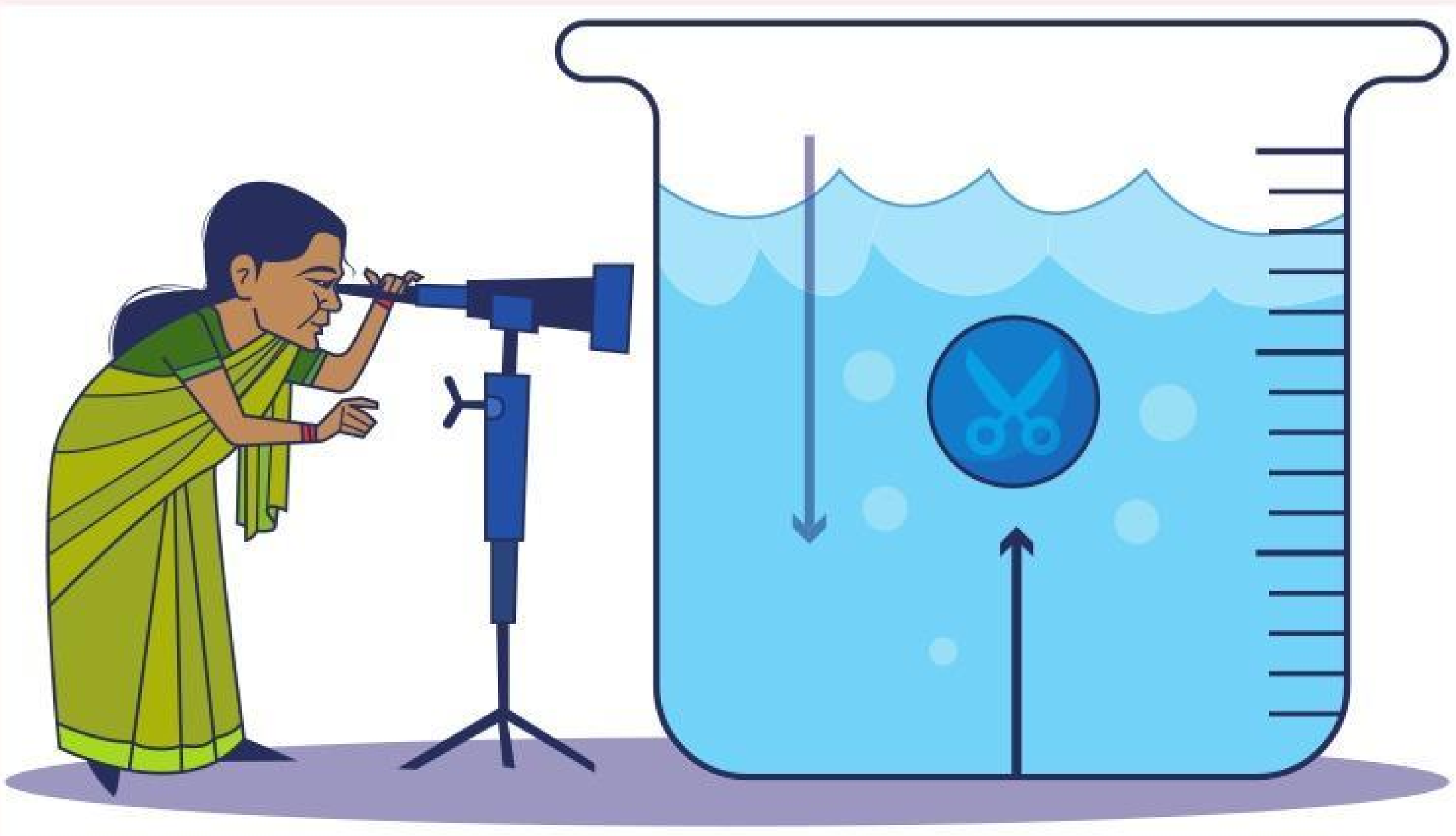


ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

EMMANUEL THOMAS & LEKHA CHAKRABORTY

Thomas is assistant professor, St. Thomas' College (Autonomous) Thrissur, Kerala. Chakraborty is professor, NIPFP, Delhi

Paying attention to tax buoyancy

The packages announced by the finance minister so far mostly target the supply side. It will take a while to yield results by way of turning around growth

OFTEN, FISCAL STIMULUS is launched through the tax side than expenditure side, assuming that the buoyancy of the former will ensure minimum fiscal slippage, while shoving the economy out of a glut. The general idea is that a reduction in rates will increase the tax base and compliance. This, along with its positive impact on growth, would lead to higher tax buoyancy. The fiscal stimulus programme announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is also premised on a similar idea. An IMF working paper titled '*How Buoyant is the Tax System? New Evidence from a Large Heterogeneous Panel*' by Paolo Dudine and Joao Tovar Jalles, published in 2017, finds that tax buoyancies are generally equal to unity or greater for developed as well as for less developed economies.

In our economy, the tax-to-GDP ratio has hovered around 14-17% for the last few decades, which is the combined figure for the Union and states. Direct and indirect taxes contribute almost equally to the total tax revenue, although the share of direct taxes is slightly higher at 52% during 2017-18. The Union collects about 10% of GDP as tax revenue and the rest is by all the states together. The finance minister's stimulus package is premised on the buoyancy of these taxes. Hence, it is imperative to look at the tax buoyancy factor both at the Union and the state level during the recent past.

Until growth revives, the high buoyancies signify a fall in revenue unless a rise in tax base and compliance compensates for it

Tax buoyancy measures the response of tax revenue to a change in national income and the tax policy. Economists generally define it as the ratio of percentage change in tax revenue to a percentage change in income. Buoyancy can be estimated for the long-term as well as for the short-term. Short-term buoyancy above unity signifies that the tax system acts as an automatic stabiliser. Here, the tax system itself would automatically leave a greater proportion of income with the taxpayers during a slowdown dampening the fall in demand. Similarly, during a boom, the system would automatically take away more income through taxes, consequently slowing down the growth of demand. Such a tax system has a built-in stabiliser. In other words, the short-run buoyancy measures the instantaneous effect of a change in GDP on the tax revenue.

Long-run buoyancy is important in gauging the impact of long-run growth of the economy on fiscal sustainability. Long-run buoyancy above unity would mean that faster growth would lead to better fiscal balance through the revenue side. This would be an important guiding principle while considering counter-cyclical fiscal measures, meaning an increased fiscal deficit would trigger growth, which can, in turn, generate more tax revenue, leading to the easing of fiscal pressure.

The Auto Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model allows us to estimate the long-run and short-run buoyancy, along with the speed of adjustment—which tells us how fast the buoyancy converges to the long-run equilibrium value.

The estimates for the period 2001-17 show that the long-run and short-run buoyancy are 1.05 and 1.74, respectively, for total tax (the Union and states combined). The high short-run buoyancy will mean that the current slowdown would have an amplified negative impact on tax revenue in the short-run. The slowdown will have a heavy impact on the Union tax revenue, which has an overall short-run buoyancy coefficient that is very high. The very high short-run buoyancy of direct taxes will escalate the fiscal pressure emanating from the recent cut in corporation taxes. This will also have a deleterious effect on the fiscal health of states as the shareable kitty will shrink substantially. Now, with the 15th Finance Commission (FC) asked to consider the impact of the award of 14th FC on Union finances, any fall in the share of states would adversely affect state finances.

Relatively low buoyancy for states' taxes (1.04 for the long-run and 1.19 for the short-run) will mean a reduced adverse impact of the slowdown on states as a whole. But the effect on individual states will depend on their buoyancies and the extent of deceleration of the gross state domestic product of respective states. Short-run buoyancy is found to be either equal to or less than unity for all states. Bihar, Goa, Haryana, Jharkhand, Odisha and Sikkim will be the ones that would be least affected in the short-run, with a buoyancy factor less than unity. For the long-term, all states have buoyancies either equal to unity or greater than unity. Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Nagaland and Sikkim have long-run buoyancy equal to one, making them less vulnerable in the long-run. Interestingly, most of the richer states fall in this category.

The packages announced by the finance minister so far mostly target the supply side. It will take a while to yield results by way of turning around growth. Till growth revives, the high buoyancies signify a fall in revenue unless a rise in tax base and compliance compensates for it. However, that is doubtful.

Having seen these premises and the estimates of tax buoyancy, what policy options do we have now to arrest the slowdown, revive the economy and moderate the fiscal slippage? With the general consensus that a fall in aggregate demand is the main culprit, steps can be initiated to shore up aggregate demand. These interventions can be on both revenue and expenditure sides. On the revenue side, a reduction in taxes that will benefit the relatively poorer sections and rationalisation of GST will definitely have a high multiplier effect. Expenditure on infrastructure and upscaling programmes like MGNREGA will also have a higher multiplier effect, leading to revival of growth.

More detailed analysis of buoyancies of individual taxes including GST (where we have only a short-time series) is essential. Although we have incorporated the optimal parameterisation in the models by choosing the apt lag lengths, the estimates can be refined further by incorporating variables like inflation, structural variables, political factors and business cycles in the tax buoyancy estimation models. At a disaggregate level analysis, it is also important to see whether the buoyancy of divisible pool taxes is greater than states' own taxes. Along with these, an understanding of how tax buoyancies behave in different phases of business cycle (output gap) will throw more light on the effectiveness of such polices.

Buoyancy of total own-tax revenue by states and the gross tax revenue of the Union

	Long-run buoyancy			Short-run buoyancy			Speed of adjustment
State	<1	1	>1	<1	1	>1	
Andhra Pradesh			1.17***		1.12***		-0.88**
Bihar			1.28***	0.29			-
Chhattisgarh			1.09***		0.94***		-0.92***
Goa		0.95***		0.08			-0.26*
Gujarat		1.09***			2.4***		-0.09
Haryana		0.85***		0.04			-0.34*
Himachal Pradesh			1.17***		1.3**		-0.98***
Jammu & Kashmir			1.28***		1.1*		-0.51*
Jharkhand			1.24***	0.54***			-0.93***
Karnataka		1.04***			1.28***		-0.5*
Kerala			1.06***		1.59***		-
Madhya Pradesh		1.15***			0.5		-0.58*
Maharashtra		0.99***			0.97***		-0.52*
Odisha		1.08***		0.29			-0.43**
Punjab		1.03***			-0.63		-0.59*
Rajasthan		0.99***			0.52***		-0.33**
Tamil Nadu		0.94***			1.19***		-0.46**
Uttar Pradesh			1.17***		1.75***		-0.88***
West Bengal		1.12***			0.66		-0.52**
Arunachal Pradesh			1.39***		0.77*		-0.51**
Assam		1.07***			1.24**		-0.42***
Manipur			1.58***		2.04**		-0.68**
Meghalaya			1.36***		0.83**		-0.41*
Mizoram			1.42***		-		-0.19**
Nagaland		1.24***			0.81		-0.25
Sikkim		0.85***		0.17			-0.35*
Tripura			1.33***		0.24		-0.41*
Union		**1.05*** **			**2.05*** **		**-0.47** **

***p<0.01, **p<0.05 and *p<0.1;
GDP and GSDP data are from RBI database; Tax revenue data are from NIPFP database of Finance Accounts

POSHAN ABHIYAAN

Leading with the front-liners

RAGHWESH RANJAN

The author is director, Social & Economic Empowerment, IPE Global

Poshan Abhiyaan leading the war against malnutrition. But are we doing enough?

THE 'POSHAN ABHIYAAN' was launched by the government with great fanfare on March 8, 2018, in Jhunjhunu, a small city in Rajasthan, where the Prime Minister made a call for waging a battle to end the evil of malnutrition in India. Poshan Abhiyaan focuses on reducing stunting, undernutrition and anaemia in women and adolescents. In two years, we have seen it being implemented in every state with much zeal. But the changes seen on the ground are minimal.

Educating families on the need for nutrition and motivating them on adopting these into their behaviour is crucial. In 2019, the campaign is focusing to address Poshan Vyavahar (Nutrition Behaviour) and communicating the five key components critical for a healthy life: 'Poshan ke Paanch Sutra'. These start from the journey of first 1,000 days of a child, diarrhoea management, locally-available nutritious food, sanitation and hygiene, and anaemia. Every house needs to be reached to bring about behavioural changes. For this, the campaign's first post, i.e. Anganwadi centres (AWC), and its soldiers, i.e. Anganwadi workers (AWW), accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers and auxiliary nurse midwives (ANM), play the most critical roles.

There are front-line workers (FLW) providing basic education, nutrition and ensuring health in rural India; they are taking forward the Jan Andolan agenda of Poshan Abhiyaan at community level and influencing people to change behaviour. But are our FLW themselves sufficiently empowered and aware to deliver what is expected of them?

Jan Andolan for behaviour change can be successful if front-line workers are energised with adequate counselling skills, knowledge, tools and also right motivation

Two independent studies supported by CIFF (Children's Investment Fund Foundation) were conducted in Rajasthan during the past two years, to identify the enablers, motivators and barriers influencing maternal nutrition and feeding behaviours amongst infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices. Each highlights a common thread—gender inequalities, social norms around food and beliefs and customs passed on through generations all dominate household decisions when it comes to nutrition. It was also found that the husband's interaction with FLW is negligible, while mothers-in-law perceive them as someone who challenge her advice to the mother. Also, the AWW, ASHA workers and ANM are neither skilled in counselling nor they are taking it on a priority basis. Areas like timely initiation of complementary feeding do not even get prioritised in AWW counselling as they are understood as low priority in the worker's own understanding. Based on the results of various nutrition-related projects, it has been observed that AWW are aware of key IYCF practices, but their perception and knowledge about the rationale applicable to recommended nutrition practices is poor.

It is not a question of capability or knowledge; it is more about what enables FLW to be change agents. Are they equipped enough with the right tools to approach the communities? Poshan Abhiyaan identifies key messages that need to be reinforced for improving status of nutrition. But what will enable mothers to adopt the best practices recommended in these messages and not fall back on the social proof from the community to seek resolution?

An ongoing pilot by IPE Global in four blocks of Udaipur in Rajasthan is using Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approach to strengthen community mobilisation for Jan Andolan. Facilitated by ASHA, it is bringing communities together and helping them identify and understand issues, find feasible solutions, and devise strategies. It is empowering women in the process, which is arguably the most important determinant of health and nutrition outcome of any intervention. Once an ownership is built amongst the community, there are better chances of sustainable adaptation of changes in behaviour. It presents an example where the cadre of ASHA, with proper training and supervision, is able to facilitate a large-scale change in the community.

Jan Andolan for behavioural change can be successful if all FLW are energised with adequate counselling skills, knowledge, tools and right motivation.

Convergence in food safety standards

India's upcoming foreign trade policy 2020-25 can consider the integration of Codex practices on mass scale

ABHISHEK JHA & SEEMA BATHLA

Jha is consultant at the Trade Promotion Council of India; Bathla is professor, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, JNU, Delhi

THE LATEST WTO'S Monitoring Report on G20 trade measures shows that the coverage of new import-restrictive measures introduced during October 2018 to May 2019 is more than 3.5 times the average since May 2012. These measures considerably affected trade coverage worth $335.9 billion during October 2018 to May 2019. It is observed that in case of trade in food and beverages, countries, mostly the developed, are becoming over-sensitive, perhaps due to stringent quality and safety standards.

The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) sets out the basic framework and standards for food safety, animal and plant health standards. While giving a platform to countries for framing own standards, it notes that regulations must be justified through science, i.e. regulations should be implemented only to the extent necessary to protect the animal, human or plant life or health, and also not unjustifiably discriminate between countries where identical or similar conditions prevail. Although member countries are encouraged to use international standards, guidelines and recommendations, they may use measures that result in higher standards if there is a requisite scientific justification. Besides, they can set higher standards based on an appropriate assessment of risks so long as the approach is consistent, not arbitrary.

The question, however, is which standards are practised globally in terms of implementing food safety? Is it the Codex standards or individual country's standards? One must recall the acrimonious saga of 1989-90 when the EU banned beef import from the US due to the quality of hormones of beef. This incident signalled that harmonisation of food safety standards is indispensable for spurring food trade globally in an eloquent atmosphere. When the WTO was set up in 1995, the SPS agreement was framed to assure harmonisation, provide risk-assessment and bring transparency under articles 3, 5 and 7, respectively. Codex Alimentarius food safety standards are referred under the SPS agreement for practising and designing trade polices as these are scientifically justified. The Codex process involves broad international input and sound scientific support from expert panels. Codex food safety standards thus guide countries in adoption of national food safety standards and regulations that protect public health within their respective territories and promote fair practices in food trade. Ironically, even today, economies digress from the Codex standards.

Till date, 188 countries are Codex members (187 countries, and the EU as a group) that participate annually to discuss food safety issues and methods to adapt them unanimously. To illustrate, the maximum residual limits (MRL) of carbendazim in orange juice is different for each country. In Canada, it is 500-600 (parts per billion, ppb), in the EU 100-700 ppb, and in the US barely 10 ppb. Apparently, the US gives justification for this to ensure a continued safety of orange juice that is fit for human consumption. This, in a way, is an articulation of divergence from Codex standards and proliferates barriers for developing and less developed countries aspiring to export. Maintaining and satisfying each country's food safety standards have become a costly affair and also ambiguous for member countries. During early 2000s, the African economies lost sizeable exports worth $670 million to the EU due to strict aflatoxin MRL acceptability. The risk on human health due to this strict food safety measure was estimated at 1.4 deaths per billion in a year.

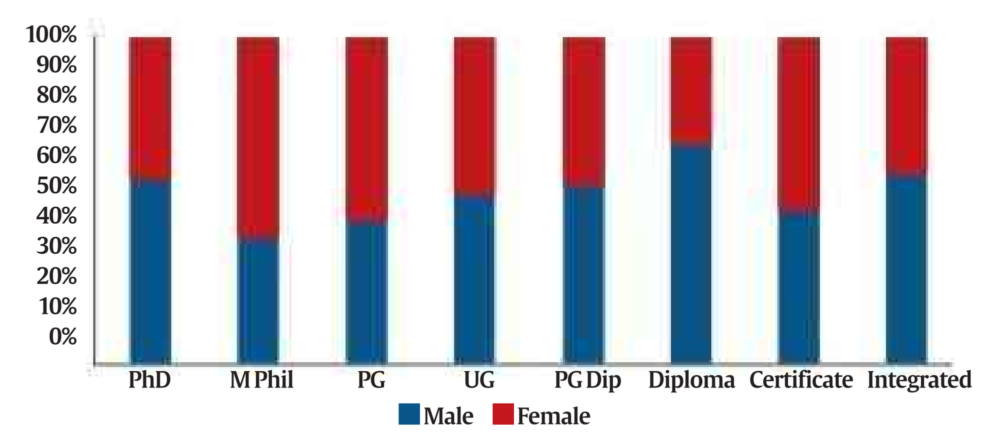
This is something each member country has to work out, otherwise agricultural trade will continue to experience a protectionist wave. Harmonisation of food standards is commonly viewed as a prerequisite to the safety of consumer health and to allow the fullest possible facilitation of international trade. Harmonisation can only be attained when all countries adopt same standards. The General Principles of the Codex Alimentarius specify the ways in which member countries may "accept" Codex standards.

The emerging interests in all Codex activities do indicate a global acceptance of the Codex philosophy, embracing harmonisation, consumer protection and facilitation of international trade. However, in practice, it is difficult for many countries to accept such standards in the statutory sense. Differing legal formats and administrative procedures, varying political systems and sometimes a growing influence of national attitudes and concepts of sovereign rights impede the progress of harmonisation and hence deter acceptance of Codex standards. Notwithstanding these, the process of harmonisation is gaining stimulus by virtue of strong international desire to facilitate international trade. Countries are increasingly aligning their national food standards, or parts of them (especially those relating to safety), with those of the Codex Alimentarius. This is particularly so in case of additives, contaminants and residues.

Policymakers need to address and solve the challenge of implementing holistic approaches and constructing bridges between different disciplines as well as different sectors, including agriculture, environment, public health, tourism and commerce/trade. This is of special importance with changing consumer behaviour and international travel in addition to trade taking place at all levels in the food chain. Often, non-transparent international supply networks make it difficult to track the origin of all commodities and ingredients used in food products. Respective governments have a crucial role to play in adopting the vision for developing and facilitating implementation of national good agricultural practice (GAP) standards that are consistent, germane with international requirements, and adapt to local policies and environment. The public sector in tandem with support from the private sector can be instrumental in delivering the skills and infrastructure required for maintaining the safety and level of quality in the agri-food chain. India's upcoming five-year foreign trade policy 2020-25 can consider the integration of Codex practices on a mass scale.

TELLING NUMBERS

In higher learning, the gender breakup in courses and states



THE ALL India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19, aspects of which were reported in *The Indian Express* on Sunday, looks at, among other aspects, the gender distribution of students enrolled in various higher education courses in the country. The total estimated student enrolment in the country is 3,73,99,388, out of whom nearly 51.36% are male and the remaining 48.64% are female.

Course levels

The gender ratio is higher on the male side in most courses, but there are exceptions — female enrolment is higher at M Phil, postgraduate and certificate levels. Enrolment at undergraduate level is 51% male and 49% female, while diploma has a highly skewed distribution at 66.8% male and 33.2% female. At PhD level, male enrolment is 56.18% and female enrolment is 43.82%. At integrated level, the distribution 57.50% male and 42.50% female. PG Diploma student enrolment is 54.09% male and 45.91% female.

The states

A higher overall share of male students in enrolment is a trend also in most of the states. The top six states in terms of total student enrolment — Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Karnataka — account for 54.23% of the total enrolment in India. The female students in these states represent 54.43% of the female students across India, and the male students in these six states account for 54.05% of the male students across India.

In Uttar Pradesh, with the highest student enrolment in India, male students account for 49.30%. Maharashtra, with the second highest student enrolment, has 54.95% male and 45.05% female students. Tamil Nadu has 50.87% male and 49.13% female, West Bengal has 50.37% male and 49.63% female students, Karnataka has 50.04% female students, and Rajasthan has more male students than female students.

Student categories

SC student enrolment is 14.89% of the total enrolment and the male-female ratio is more or less similar to that of all categories. Students belonging to the ST category constitute 5.53% of the total student enrolment; here again, the male-female ratio is similar to the overall national ratio. Among OBC students, who constitute 36.34% of the total number of students, 50.83% are male.

In the minority category, data on Muslims were collected separately. The survey found that 5.23% students belong to Muslim minority and 2.32% to other minority communities. Among Muslims, there more male students than female, whereas among other minorities, there are more female students than male.

STATES WITH HIGHEST ENROLMENT

State	Male students	Male %	Female students	Female %
Uttar Pradesh	31,89,520	49.30%	32,79,847	50.70%
Maharashtra	23,24,424	54.95%	19,05,902	45.05%
Tamil Nadu	17,36,870	50.87%	16,77,326	49.13%
West Bengal	10,56,511	50.37%	10,40,899	49.63%
Rajasthan	10,82,466	51.93%	10,01,947	48.07%
Karnataka	9,93,417	49.96%	9,95,077	50.04%

GENDER DISTRIBUTION BY CATEGORY

Category	Students	Male	Female
Scheduled Castes	55,67,078	50.94%	49.06%
Scheduled Tribes	2,067,748	50.88%	29.12%
OBCs	1,35,91,994	50.83%	49.17%
Muslims	19,59,004	50.71%	49.29%
Other minorities	8,68,100	45.75%	54.25%
Persons with disability	85,877	56.14%	43.86%

Source: AISHE 2018-19

SIMPLY PUT

The debate over status of Hindi

Many of today's assertions and apprehensions about the alleged imposition of Hindi over the rest of India were also heard in the Constituent Assembly, which discussed this question over seven decades ago

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 23

HOME MINISTER Amit Shah's Hindi Diwas (September 14) call for "one language" for all of India triggered protests. Shah said that while it was natural to have a difference of opinion on the official language of a Union as diverse as India, the founding fathers of the Constitution had evaluated all arguments in the Constituent Assembly and agreed unanimously to have Hindi as the "Raj Bhasha".

It was almost exactly 70 years ago, between September 12 and September 14, 1949, that the Constituent Assembly of India discussed the language question.

President Rajendra Prasad underlined the great importance and sensitivity of the debate: "Even if we (get) a proposition passed by majority, if it does not meet with the approval of any considerable section of people..., the implementation of the Constitution will become a most difficult problem".

These are edited excerpts of what some of the members of the Constituent Assembly said. Many of their arguments are echoed in India even today.

N GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR presented the initial draft and the first amendment. It said Hindi in Devanagari script should be the official language, but English should be used for at least 15 years.

SETH GOVIND DAS argued that Hindi should replace English at the earliest. "Democracy can only function when majority opinion is honoured... We have accepted our country to be a secular State but we never thought that that acceptance implied the acceptance of the continued existence of heterogeneous cultures... We do not want it to be said that there are two cultures here."

NAZIRUDDIN AHMAD, by contrast, cautioned: "We should not make a declaration of an All India language all at once. English should continue... till a time when an All India language is evolved, which will be capable of expressing the thoughts and ideas on various subjects, scientific, mathematical, literary, historical, philosophical, political..."

MOHD HIFZUR RAHMAN argued for replacing Hindi with Hindustani, the language that Mahatma Gandhi favoured. The clamour for Hindi was "the reaction of the Partition" — "in this state of grief and anger... they are showing their narrow-mindedness against a particular community. They want to settle the language question in the atmosphere of political bigotry..."

R V DHULEKAR presented a forceful counter-argument: "...I belong to Indian nation, the Hindi Nation, the Hindu Nation, the Hindustani Nation. I do not know why you say it is not the National Language. I shudder at the idea that our universities, schools and colleges, and our scientists should, even after the attainment of Swaraj, have to continue to work in the English language..."

Jawaharlal Nehru and some other members of the Constituent Assembly of India during one of the early sittings of the Assembly. *Archive*

FRANK ANTHONY cautioned that the Hindi that was being imposed was very different from the one that common people spoke. "In this present fanatical movement a new kind of Hindi which is unintelligible to the Hindi speaking Hindu in the street..., a highly Sanskritised Hindi will be imposed..."

QAZI SYED KARIMUDDIN pitched for Hindustani: "Why you are denying the Muslims their rights by banning Urdu script? You have got a majority so you are trying to ban it completely — to finish it... Only that language in which both Hindus and Muslims easily express themselves, i.e. Hindustani, should be made the national language."

LAKSHMINARAYAN SAHU argued for Hindi being made the national language. "I can also claim the same status for Oria, which is far more ancient than Bengali... Some people are so much enamoured of English that they think they would lose their very existence if English is not used as the official language..."

N V GADGIL on the other hand, said Sanskrit should be the national language, and English should be retained "for at least one century more". Hindi, he said, is a provincial language; "there are languages in which literature is far more rich, and yet we have accepted Hindi as the national language".

T A RAMALINGAM CHETTIAR said this "very difficult question... probably means life and death for the South". He had "great admiration for the Hindi people", but "they will have to realise that we too may have some patriotism and love for our language, for our literature...", and Hindi "is no more national to us than English or any other language".

SATISH CHANDRA SAMANTA said Bengali should be the national language because, among other things, it was the language of *Bande Mataram*, the poem that inspired the freedom struggle.

SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE said he did not share the view of those who speak of the day "when India shall have one language and one language only". "Unity in diversity is India's keynote and must be achieved by a process of understanding and consent, and for that a proper atmosphere has to be created." If "the protagonists of Hindi had not been perhaps so aggressive in their demands and enforcement of Hindi, they would have got perhaps more than what they expected, by spontaneous and willing co-operation of the entire population of India".

Mookerjee said that for Hindi to "really occupy an All-India position and not merely replace English for certain official purposes" it must be made "worthy of that position" by allowing it to "absorb by natural process words and idioms not only from Sanskrit but also from other sister languages of India..."

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU recalled Gandhi's views on this question. One, "while English is a great language (that) has done us a lot of good, no nation can become great on the basis of a foreign language". Two, the chosen language should be "more or less a language of the people, not a language of a learned coterie". And three, "this language should represent the composite culture of India".

Nehru, however, cautioned against imposing Hindi on all of India's peoples. In the speeches of "the enthusiasts for Hindi", he said, he had detected "a tone of authoritarianism, very much a tone of the Hindi-speaking area being the centre of things in India, the centre of gravity, and others being just the fringes of India". This, Nehru said, was "not only an incorrect approach, but ...a dangerous approach".

PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR SHUKLA of the Central Provinces and Berar argued that Hindi is prevalent "almost everywhere", and should "be made the common language throughout India". He advised "friends from the South" to "learn Hindi as early as possible".

G DURGABAI of Madras expressed "shock" at the way Hindi in Devanagari script was being pushed. Giving "a national character to what is purely a provincial language is responsible for embittering the feelings of the non-Hindi speaking people", she said.

SHANKARRAO DEO of Bombay warned that "one culture" has "dangerous implications". "The Chief of the RSS appeals in the name of culture. Some Congressmen also appeal in the name of culture. Nobody tells us what exactly this word 'culture' means. Today, as it is interpreted and understood, it only means the domination of the few over the many... To me it means the killing of the soul of India." India stood for "*vividhata*", Deo said.

MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD expressed disappointment that the Congress had given up its consensus on Hindustani: "It was this narrow-mindedness... which had buried the glory and advancement of ancient India in the darkness of gloom... Of all the arguments employed against Hindustani, greatest emphasis has been laid on the point that if Hindustani is accepted then Urdu also will have to be accommodated. But Urdu is one of the Indian Languages. It was born and bred and brought up in India and it is the mother tongue of millions of Hindus and Muslims of this country."

(WITH SHYAMLAL YADAV)

Longer version of the Constituent Assembly debate on www.indianexpress.com

How AWS lets users keep data within India

SHRUTI DHAPOLA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 23

AS INDIA starts conversations on whether companies should keep more of their critical data within India, companies like Amazon Web Services (AWS) have started offering the option of choosing to keep the data within the boundaries of India. A number of private companies, public sector institutions and even state governments have started opting for this.

But how does Amazon Web Sevices, the world's leading vendor of public cloud services, manage its data centres spread across the world?

To start with, it divides its services into its 22 regions around the world, one of which is Mumbai. Within each region, AWS has multiple availability zones, each basically a collection of one or more data centres. Overall, a region is a collection of three or more availability zones — Amazon does not share the number of data centres around Mumbai.

"In India, we have three availability zones. We ensure is that each availability zone is independently fault tolerant," Manav Sehgal, head of solutions architecture at Amazon Web Services, explained to *The Indian Express.* Within the availability zone, AWS ensures that risks like floods are taken into consideration. So if one data centre faces any risk of flooding, the other should have lower risk of flooding. Each availability zone is connected with a very high speed 'dark fibre' connectivity.

Getty Images

Where are these data centres?

"We don't share exact location. Even I don't know the exact location," said Sehgal, explaining how Amazon follows the "principle of least privilege", of the "first principle of security". "So if I, as a senior executive, don't need to know where my data centre is, I should not know. If we tell everyone where the data centres are, then that becomes a threat for all our customers," he said.

Can the customer choose where to keep data?

The customer gets the choice to store data within India or choose to move it outside. This can be done from the AWS console itself by selecting the region. "Customers for whom data sovereignty or data residency within India is important, like government customers, keep it in the Mumbai region," Sehgal said.

First in pollution control: how Surat industries will trade particulate matter

AVINASH NAIR
SURAT, SEPTEMBER 23

LAST WEEK, the Gujarat government launched what is being described as the world's first market for trading in particulate matter emissions. While trading mechanisms for pollution control do exist in many parts of the world, none of them is for particulate matter emissions. For example, the CDM (carbon development mechanism) under the Kyoto Protocol allows trade in 'carbon credits'; the European Union's Emission Trading System is for greenhouse gas emission; and India has a scheme run by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency that enables trading in energy units.

How will the Gujarat scheme work?

Launched in Surat, the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) is a regulatory tool that is aimed at reducing the pollution load in an area and at the same time minimising the cost of compliance for the industry. ETS is a market in which the traded commodity is particulate matter emissions. The Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) sets a cap on the total emission load from all industries. Various industries can buy and sell the ability to emit particulate matter, by trading permits (in kilograms) under this cap. For this reason, ETS is also called a cap-and-trade market.

How many industrial units are participating in ETS?

Live trading began last Tuesday, with 88 industries taking part in the first round out of 155 that have joined ETS so far. Emission permits worth Rs 2.78 lakh were traded. These industries are from sectors including textiles, chemicals and sugar, and spread over an area of 50-30 sq km. These industries use either coal or bagasse (residue after juice is extracted from sugarcane) as fuel, thus emitting a high amount of ash. The participants were selected on the basis of the size of their chimneys — those with a diameter of 24 inches or more. "So most of the participants are larger players," said N M Tabhani, member secretary of GPCB.

Why was Surat chosen for the scheme?

In the last five years, the quality of air in Surat has deteriorated. In 2013, when the project was conceptualised, the PM10 level at Air India Building in Surat was 86 micrograms per cubic metre. According to GPCB annual reports, pollution levels have increased between 120-220 per cent, with PM10 in 2018 reaching 189 µg/cu. m at Air India Building, 282 µg/cu. m at Sachin Industrial Estate and 261 µg/cu. m at Garden Silk Mills. Surat was chosen because its industrial associations agreed to run the pilot scheme, said officials associated with the project. Also, industries in Surat had already installed Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems, which makes it possible to estimate the mass of particulate matter being released.

How does the trading take place?

At the beginning of every one-month compliance period (during which one emission permit is valid), 80 per cent of the total cap of 280 tonnes for that period is distributed free to all participant units. These permits are allocated based on an industry's emission sources (boilers, heaters, generators) as this determines the amount of particulate matter emitted. GPCB will offer the remaining 20 per cent of the permits during the first auction of the compliance period, at a floor price of Rs 5 per kilogram. Participating units may buy and sell permits among each other during the period. The price is not allowed to cross a ceiling of Rs 100 per kilogram or fall below Rs 5 per kg, both of which may be adjusted after a review. On Tuesday, GPCB put out 55,993 permits, of which 55,614 were traded.

How are the auctions conducted?

These take place on the ETS-PM trading platform hosted by the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange e-Markets Limited (NeML). All participants must register a trading account with NeML. Transactions are linked to the bank accounts of the users, who can view updates through these accounts.

There are two types of auctions. In the Uniform Price Auction every Tuesday between 3 and 5 pm, the week's permit price is discovered by participating members through bidding. Second, there is a continuous market between Wednesday and Monday (2 pm to 5 pm) where members will buy and sell permits whose prices were fixed on Tuesday.

For a true-up period of 2-7 days before the completion of the compliance period, units may continue to buy and sell any remaining permits at the final auction price to meet their compliance obligations.

How will ETS help reduce emissions?

"Industries in this area are emitting way above [the cap] at 362 tonnes per month. To bring them down to 280 will be a huge reduction. In the future this cap may be reduced below 280 tonnes," said Gargi Goswami, a research associate at Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) with its global office at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, J-PAL, along with Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago in India, and NeML and South Gujarat Textile Processors Association are partners in the ETS project.

"These permits are not a way to allow industries to keep polluting. Purchasing permits is only an interim measure for many of these units who find it financially difficult to install air pollution control measures. In other words it helps you buy some time and make investments later. So the idea of this scheme is also to make sure that some units realise that it is cheaper to install APCM and reduce emissions rather than buy permits at a higher cost that will vary due to the bidding process," Goswami said.

Will there be a punitive action for non-compliance?

Based on permits held by units at the close of the compliance and true-up periods, units will be declared compliant or non-compliant. An environmental damage compensation at Rs 200/kg will be imposed for emissions in excess of a unit's permit holdings at the end of the compliance period. This amount will be deducted from an environmental damage compensation deposit that each unit has to submit before the start of the scheme — Rs 2 lakh for small units, Rs 3 lakh for medium ones and Rs 10 lakh for large units. After any deduction, a unit will have to deposit extra money to meet that shortfall.

To prevent any participant from hoarding permits, an upper limit has been set — 1.5 times the initial allocation for the compliance period, or 3 per cent of the market cap for the compliance period. Also, no unit may sell more than 90 per cent of its initial allocation.

WORDLY WISE

BOXING IS LIKE JAZZ. THE BETTER IT IS, THE LESS PEOPLE APPRECIATE IT. — GEORGE FOREMAN

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BROTHERS IN ARMS

For PM Modi, President Trump, Indian-American community is an important constituency and a diplomatic bridge

ENGAGING ACTIVELY WITH the Indian diaspora has been a hallmark of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy, and the BJP's ideology, since 2014. In almost every official foreign trip, PM Modi has interacted with the local Indian community. The event in Houston on Sunday was significantly larger than the others of its kind, including the two previous such interactions in the US. And while the diaspora has thrived across the globe, they are much better integrated in the English-speaking world. The US, as a nation of immigrants, has more readily embraced talented Indians and at the same time, the organisation and mobilisation of hyphenated Americans is quite common. But even given this context, there is a great significance to the "Howdy Modi" event. The audience at the NRG stadium — 50,000 strong — was the largest any foreign leader has drawn other than the Pope. The PM displayed his ability to connect with an audience, to speak of India to Indians abroad. And it is the first time an American president has joined a visiting leader at a diaspora event. As one of the wealthiest and fastest-growing minorities in the US, Indian-Americans are increasingly influential in US society and politics. And as a group drawn from the Indian middle classes, they are an important bridge to the US for India.

For Modi, there is a tactical calculus behind the event. The grand show is a way of mobilising the diaspora for India's national development as well as a vehicle to further New Delhi's diplomatic goals. The aim also appears to be to generate support outside the country for the PM's political moves and those of his party, such as the erosion of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, its bifurcation and downgrading to a Union Territory. For Trump, who is running for re-election, the event was about reaching out to the large Indian-American community. This convergence of interests of the two leaders is being framed as a celebration of the Indo-US relationship and as a basis for expanding common ground and overcoming thorny bilateral issues like the trade imbalance.

However, the bonhomie between the President and the Prime Minister did not hide some of the downsides that emerged from the event. Modi seemed close to crossing the red line on intervening in US domestic politics when he nearly endorsed Trump's re-election — "ab ki baar, Trump sarkar," he said. He was also unable to resist the temptation of criticising Pakistan, albeit indirectly. On the other hand, while Trump talked of combating radical Islamic terror and India's border security, New Delhi cannot ignore Trump's recent outreach to Imran Khan. President Trump continues to have a stake in the development of the US-Pakistan relationship and the outcome of his meeting with Khan in New York may not necessarily please Modi. On a positive note, the prime minister's decision to highlight India's pluralism as an intrinsic part of its identity is a welcome assertion, given that Home Minister Amit Shah's statements on immigration and language policy recently engendered widespread fears of India's monochromatisation under the present government.

EYE ON REVENUE

Rationalisation and simplification of GST may have to wait following the corporate tax cuts

THE GST COUNCIL meeting in Goa last week was overshadowed by the finance minister's announcement of a steep cut in corporate tax and a few other changes in direct taxes to counter the slowdown and to revive business sentiment. The corporate tax break naturally eliminated the chance of a cut in GST rates sought by the automobile industry, now facing its worst slump in decades, and the FMCG sector. The fitment committee with representatives from both states and the Centre was not convinced by the industry's arguments and chose to reject their demand considering the revenue implications.

Given the state of the economy and below par revenue collections, rate cuts by the GST Council were modest this time with the lowering of tariffs for hotel rooms and outdoor catering, to provide a boost to the tourism industry, rate cuts on precious and semi-precious stones besides zero tax on jewellery exports and a hike in caffeinated beverages. But over two years after the introduction of GST, there is much to worry for both the Union government and states. System-related issues still persist, reflected in the absence verification of statements of sales and purchases or invoice matching and leading to claims of huge input tax credit set offs and charges of shell companies being formed to beat the taxman. The delay in unveiling a revised return and a relatively softer enforcement mechanism in many states could be costly in terms of maximisation of revenues. The other major concern now is the grand bargain of a compensation to states spread over five years to persuade them to buy into the new regime. With the growth slowdown, what that implies is pressure on the Centre to ensure that the compensation cess and funds are adequate.

In the current scenario, it is clear that states will not accept any suggestion to lower the compensation structure, especially after last week's direct tax cuts amounting to Rs 1.45 lakh crore. The tax cuts impact states too since it will eat into their share of the tax pool. What all these signal is that the wait for rationalisation of rates or a simplified two or three tier structure may have to be longer.

PACKING A PUNCH

Amit Panghal's historic World Championship silver points to a new spring in Indian boxing

AFTER DECADES SPENT looking on through the ropes from the ringside, Indian boxing announced itself to the Olympics with a stinging 1-2 combination. Vijender Singh opened country's account with a bronze in Beijing, Mary Kom followed suit with one at London. Then came a body blow. The national body was suspended, and Indian boxing keeled over. During an Olympic cycle when the breakout performances should've bred more contenders, the sport floundered. After the nadir of a disastrous campaign in Rio, the formation of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) in 2016 has brought about a revival, the latest chapter of which is Amit Panghal's historic World Championship silver, the first for an Indian in the men's category.

The revival, however, is about more than just the medals. The health of Indian boxing can be gauged by the talent pool, especially in the men's section. Another indicator is the large net being cast. The Bhiwani Boxing Club served as a conveyor belt for long, but the sport has moved beyond Haryana. Along with the Northeastern states, it remains the cradle, but pockets are opening up in Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The Services team deserves credit as well for shaping six of the eight boxers who competed at the Worlds in Russia. State-of-the-art training facilities such as the Army Sports Institute in Pune and competent coaches are further bringing India on par with several powerhouses.

But the Worlds is not enough. Glory remains reserved for Olympic medallists, and the ultimate test will be in Tokyo next year. India's Olympic plans have again been dented, the culprit this time being the suspended world body, and the postponed qualifiers. Not all is well in the federation too, issues owing to India's sporting culture. The image-conscious stars are still protected, and occasional lack of transparency is frustrating. Next month's World Championships could also be the reality check for women. One thing though is for certain: This is not a false dawn.

Houston, we have a spectacle

Modi-Trump event is a window to the politics of our times: They have sold the thrill of power and prejudice

PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

THE MODI-TRUMP spectacle at Houston is a window to the politics of our times. Such a spectacle has its ethical dangers. But in purely political terms, it cannot be judged by our conventional categories. We can worry about whether the claims made so resoundingly by Narendra Modi and Donald Trump fit the reality on the ground. But politics is not about correspondence with truth; it is about tapping into anxieties and making people believe. We might believe that there are red lines where international politics should not get entangled with domestic partisanship. But those conventions were blurred even in the last US election, by Benjamin Netanyahu and Vladimir Putin. We might scream morality and human rights. But those have always been precarious things. Now there is such contempt for them that they are not even the currency of hypocrisy. Forget convention. Houston was about new forms of power. Modi's immediate goal was to show the world that India stands with him; and India that the US stands with it. Pakistan was cut to size. But, beyond immediate politics, Houston was also an expression of a larger politics. What are its elements?

Modi's political alchemy has always consisted of the fact that he does two things simultaneously. He projects leadership and resolve. But in his liturgy he also artfully stands in as the representative of the nation; he constantly produces that identification. For instance, in this narrative, the abrogation of Article 370 does not become an act of his government, it becomes the will of the Indian people which he carries. One can criticise a government. But who would dare indict the Indian people for their choices? These rallies in the overseas context make this identification between him and the nation easier.

The currency of power in modern politics does not come through sociological or economic determinism. Modi has always understood that social life is constituted by an ability to make the vicarious seem vivid and real. This is what he can do with nationalism. His gestures like speaking in different languages, his reminders that his schemes, however faulty, are directed at those who empower him reinforce his power. We can contest the facts, point the stark variance between a tottering economy and his high blown rhetoric; we can be suspicious of his invocation of diversity. But he understands that the power of the image and the gesture far outlives the mundaneness of reality: What are the real sufferings of the few compared to vicarious thrills of the many? The abiding image of India's power that will matter politically will not be its trade statistics. It will be the Indian prime minister leading in taking the American president's hand and making him do a round in a homage to the power of the Indian community. We may decry this as illusory politics. But we still do not have a political vocabulary to disrupt this spectacle.

The currency of power in modern politics does not come through sociological or economic determinism. Modi has always understood that social life is constituted by an ability to make the vicarious seem vivid and real. This is what he can do with nationalism. His gestures like speaking in different languages, his reminders that his schemes, however faulty, are directed at those who empower him reinforce his power. We can contest the facts, point the stark variance between a tottering economy and his high blown rhetoric; we can be suspicious of his invocation of diversity. But he understands that the power of the image and the gesture far outlives the mundaneness of reality: What are the real sufferings of the few compared to vicarious thrills of the many?

Modi is not shy of thinking of the diaspora as a possible unified force in world politics. There is a curious irony here: While so many Indians used to worry that membership in assorted transnational communities like the umma are a threat to the nation state, Hindu nationalism sees ethnicity as a fundamental transnational force, an identification that survives the partitions of nationality and citizenship. At this geopolitical juncture, there is the belief that transnational ethnic identification does not conflict with national citizenship. So, an assertive celebration of trans-ethnic identification in this form is not seen as jeopardising the claims of citizenship.

In the case of the Indian diaspora in America, this is made easier by the India-US alignment. For the last decade or so, there has been the belief that India and the US are in the following relationship: They will often have tough transactional issues to negotiate, from trade to Iran. But the fundamental dynamics of the relationship now converge to a deep alignment, especially on security and defence matters. There is the contingent alignment in the fact that both Trump and Modi have contempt for open societies and freedom. There was something chilling about the triumphalism of the moment of an alliance against Islamic extremism, shorn of any geopolitical nuance. It signalled less a resolve to tackle a real problem effectively, and more a determination to find an enemy against whom to consolidate identity, with a crowd cheering on.

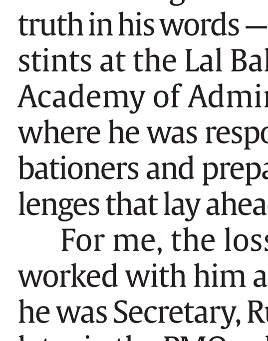
But the fundamental dynamic of the Indian relationship transcends political parties. It has grown deeper by the fact that currently there is a bipartisan consensus on the gravity of the China challenge. What the India-US bonhomie does vis-à-vis China is an open question. India's hope has always been that alignment with the US does not close more doors with China; in fact, it leverages them open. But these waters will be tested now. But Houston was the most spectacularly public and visible ideological affirmation of that alignment. There are no China doves left in Washington. At least in relation to the US, this gives India a lot of head room. It probably underlies the confidence that even if the rally seems to shade into a partisan endorsement of Trump, it will have no implications for relationships with the Democrats.

How will this play out in US domestic politics? That will depend on two things. India has sold the narrative that Kashmir has been in dire straits for the last 70 years. Even if there is a short-term crackdown, the long-term consequence will be much improved conditions for Kashmiris. But this promise is yet to be redeemed. All the signs are that it will not be. Second, we are probably underestimating the "Leftward" turn in American politics, especially in Congress. Unlike in India, where the Right has now produced total dominance, US politics is more deeply contested, and the negative effects of throwing a lot with a manifest endorsement of Trump are not entirely trivial.

But while these concerns are valid, the lead up to the Houston event demonstrated the one advantage, Modi and even Trump have. They are not constrained, literally, by anything. A few months ago, the press was full of their lack of personal chemistry. Now, they are ideological blood brothers. On the economy, Modi can change policy tack with alacrity to change the narrative. That gives them the confidence that there is always a next move, a next spectacle available to them. They play politics spectacularly, in an emotion that elevates those who participate. They have sold the thrill of power and prejudice over the sweetness of freedom and openness. And at the moment we are buying it.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

A LEGACY OF SERVICE



B N Yugandhar was anti-hierarchical, an inspiration to young bureaucrats

MALOVIKA PAWAR

"YOU KNOW, looking back, you will not remember who the cabinet secretary was when you were a young officer, but you will always remember who your director was at the Academy." As I woke up to the sad news that B N Yugandhar is no more, I saw the truth in his words — born out of his two long stints at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, where he was responsible for training probationers and preparing them for the challenges that lay ahead.

For me, the loss feels very personal. I worked with him as a young officer, when he was Secretary, Rural Development, and, later in the PMO, when he was secretary to two PMs — P V Narasimha Rao and H D Deve Gowda.

His was a life of inveterate do-gooding, and being in a position of great power in the PMO meant that he could push initiatives faster and further. To this end, he selected his foot soldiers well — young officers eager to deliver outcomes. In the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), he selected seven of us from the 1982 batch of the IAS. "My '82 Mafia," he called us.

Yugandhar could be a demanding boss. On my first day at the PMO, he said: "Here, we expect zero-error notes. After all, these are briefing notes for the PM. The staff is only there to physically hand over the related papers. You initiate the note, you do the research, you talk to the ministries. Remember: A zero-error note".

His was a life of inveterate do-gooding, and being in a position of great power in the PMO meant that he could push initiatives faster and further. To this end, he selected his foot-soldiers well — young officers eager to deliver outcomes. In the ministry of rural development (MORD), he selected seven of us from the 1982 batch of the IAS. 'My '82 Mafia', he called us.

While being the kindest of men, he did not suffer fools lightly. His default manner of talking was acerbic, laced with sarcasm and humour. He was a sharp dresser, fond of his Arrow shirts, and enjoyed chilled beer at the IIC. About his heavy smoking, he would cough, rasp and then chuckle, as he said: "My doctor says that given my life-long smoking, I am statistically dead!"

Yugandhar was a prolific reader and his taste was eclectic. In the PMO, he kept a copy of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* on his desk and read a few pages in between meetings. He waxed lyrical about Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja* and advised me to read this haunting story of the decline in fortune of a tribesman of the Paraja tribe in the hills of Orissa.

You might wonder how a director with merely 14 years in the service could have this kind of access to an officer of his seniority and stature. This was because he was fundamentally unconcerned about status, rank or seniority. He was a man of blunt opinions, and he appreciated this in others. I always found him to be determinedly anti-hierarchical.

Many may not know that the National Social Assistance Programme, launched in 1995 as India's umbrella programme for National Old Age Pensions, the Widow and Disability Pension in addition to other benefits, was very much Yugandhar's idea and initiative. While making a passionate case for protective social security for the poor, he would quote the late S Guhan, doyen of development studies in India: "For old-age pensions, I challenge anyone of you to give me an alternative. Can we do without pensions? Can we prevent old age?"

He once told me with infinite regret: "As a young officer, I was poor and couldn't do much for my parents. When I came back from my ESCAP posting (in Bangkok), I felt like a rich man. I wanted to buy things, buy curtains for my father's house. But by that time, he was too old. These things meant nothing to him. The moment had passed."

In 1994, while he was serving in the MoRD, I asked him about his son. He replied in an off-hand way: "Oh, he is one of Bill Gates' boys." Twenty years later, in 2014, as the news broke of his son's elevation to CEO of Microsoft, I wrote to congratulate him. He responded with a brief thanks. Nothing further was said.

So, it is goodbye to the man, but also to the world he moved in and the values he represented. It feels very much like a yuganta, his passing. Godspeed, sir.

The writer is a former IAS officer

SEPTEMBER 24, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO


INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIA IMPROVES RANK

INDIA, DESPITE ITS problems, emerges in the latest annual report of the World Bank as a country which made solid gains in 1979 although the popular perception is that the Morarji Desai government took the country downhill. For the Indian economy, says the report, fiscal 1979 was another prosperous year. Overall economic growth is tentatively estimated at three to four per cent after seven per cent the year before. Four consecutive years of healthy growth have now occurred accompanied by a significant rise in per capita incomes. Total savings and fixed investments have also increased in relation to income, the report states.

EYE ON PSUs

PRIME MINISTER CHARAN Singh has asked his cabinet colleagues to closely monitor the public sector units and ensure that their profitability improves during the year. In a letter to his colleagues looking after the economy, steel, commerce, industry, transport and shipping ministries, Singh has said that the government is deeply concerned at the poor performance by many state-run units. He also stressed the need of their generating financial surpluses so that the fight against inflation can be more meaningfully carried forward. He urged that every public sector unit should put in extra efforts to improve their production and profitability.

LESS ASIANS IN UK

THE TORY GOVERNMENT appears determined to cut down drastically the number of Asians entitled to come and settle down in the UK as British citizens. A committee report, leaked by a section of the UK press, says that the number of Asian immigrants with British passports should be reduced from 20,000 to 4,000 each year. This means that those affected by the recommendations would include elderly parents and children over 18 who have not yet been allowed to come here. Husbands and fiancees of British women would also not automatically be allowed in. Restrictions would also be imposed on the labour who come here on yearly permit.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It is believed Chinese people will combine confidence, cheerfulness and rationality together and make this year's National Day an unforgettable one in PRC history."

—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Leaning on the states

Defence is a national public good. It is the primary responsibility of the Centre

M GOVINDA RAO

C R Sasikumar

THE AMENDMENT TO the terms of reference (TOR) issued to the Fifteenth Finance Commission asking it to examine "..a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up and if so, how such a mechanism could be operationalised," has triggered some suggestions on the need to have a relook at the assignment system and redesign of centrally sponsored schemes (CSS). In an interesting article, Bibek Debroy (*IE*, September 22) rightly states that the Seventh Schedule is not cast in stone and that if the Union government is required to contribute to CSS in the State List, why should states not contribute to items in the Union List like defence. He also states that any restructuring/rationalisation of the CSS requires a relook at the Seventh Schedule and that this must be done with consultation with the states in an appropriate forum. These suggestions are important and need to be discussed in some detail.

Clearly, the Constitution (except fundamental rights) and, more particularly, the Seventh Schedule is not cast in stone. There have been as many as 103 amendments so far including a few in the Seventh Schedule. In fact, Article 368 provides for the amendment by introducing the bill in either house and passing it with a majority of the total membership of the house and at least two-thirds of members present and voting. In addition, changes in Seventh Schedule requires ratification of the amendment by the legislatures of at least one-half of the states. In fact, the 42nd amendment actually transferred five subjects from the State List to the Concurrent List which are: (a) Education; (b) forests ;(c) weights and measures ;(d) protection of wild animals and birds and (e) administration of justice; constitution and organisation of all courts except the Supreme Court and the High Court.

The constitutional assignments between the central and subnational governments in federations are done broadly on the basis of their respective comparative advantage. The provision of national public goods is in the federal domain and those with the state-level public service span are assigned to the states as the latter are assumed to have comparative advantage in providing these services according to the varied preferences of the people. The transaction cost of providing state level public services at the central level is higher than scale economies. In addition, there are meritorious public services with inter-state spillovers and their efficient provision requires subsidisation. Thus, while the provision of public services is mandated at subnational levels, financing is done either fully or partially by the Centre to ensure that a minimum standard of such services are provided across the country.

In the Indian context, for this reason, there are central sector and centrally-sponsored schemes. In the case of the former, funding is entirely by the Centre and states are merely implementing agencies. The CSS is a shared cost programme and is meant to ensure a minimum standard of service across the country. In fact, many of the schemes are introduced by the Centre on subjects in the State List ostensibly for their externalities but also to have a direct appeal to the electorate. Not surprisingly, several schemes were introduced and they are now restructured into 28 umbrella schemes classified into "core of the core", "core" and "optional" with states' contribution fixed at 30 per cent, 40 per cent and 50 per cent respectively for non-special category states. In principle, these schemes have expiry dates, but going by past experience, they are never folded up and always get repackaged. In fact, each of the schemes has multiple objectives and service delivery standards are not clearly defined. Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, for example, there are 42 interventions and states are required to prepare their budgets for each intervention with little flexibility and any change in the allocations between these heads would have to be approved by the Project Appraisal Board chaired by the Union HRD Secretary.

In principle, there should be consultations with states in designing the schemes, but this is hardly done. The classic example is the health insurance scheme announced by the prime minister from the ramparts of the Red Fort in his Independence Day speech in 2018 which evolved into "Ayushman Bharat", requiring non-special category states to share 40 per cent of the cost. Of course, in principle, they can opt out, but only at a huge political cost. In fact, most schemes create permanent liabilities and do not have an effective expiry date.

In fact, the Finance Commissions are aware of the need for specific purpose transfers to ensure minimum standards of meritorious services and leave some fiscal space to the Centre to undertake CSS. Thus, the Fourteenth Finance Commission, while concluding that there is a compelling case for reforming the existing system of fiscal transfers stated, "In our view, the Union government should continue to have fiscal space to provide grants for functions that are broadly in the nature of 'overlapping functions' and for area-specific interventions."

Can states pay for defraying expenditure on items in the Union List? In fact, Article 282 has this provision when it states, "The Union or a State may make any grants for any public purpose, notwithstanding that the purpose is not one with respect to which Parliament or the Legislature of the State, as the case may be, may make laws". However, the important question is that should the states be asked to pay for defence?

> Can states pay for defraying expenditure on items in the Union List? In fact, Article 282 has this provision when it states, "The Union or a State may make any grants for any public purpose, notwithstanding that the purpose is not one with respect to which Parliament or the Legislature of the State, as the case may be, may make laws". However, the important question is that should the states be asked to pay for defence?

Here, there are two specific reasons why they should not. First, defence is a national public good and keeping in view the principle that the beneficiaries of services should pay for it, it becomes the primary responsibility of the Centre to defray the cost of protecting all the people of the nation. Second, given the fact that the assigned expenditure responsibilities of the states are much larger than their revenue potential, the Constitution provides for the sharing of taxes collected by the Centre and making grants to them from the consolidated fund of the Centre based on the recommendations of the Finance Commission. The Finance Commission is supposed to take into account the capacities and needs of the Union and different states in making recommendations and the Centre's need includes the requirements for defence of the country. The TOR of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, for example, emphasises that it should have "..regard, among other considerations, to the demand on the resources of the Central government particularly on account of defence, internal security,..."

Thus, once the commission makes recommendations after assessing the requirements including those for defence, the responsibility for defraying the expense falls on the Centre. The states simply do not have the resources to spend beyond the subjects in their domain because the Finance Commission will not provide for it in its assessment.

Indeed, there is a need to reform the CSS. There should be consultations in formulating, designing and closing them down. "The one-size-fits-all" approach cannot succeed in a large and diverse country like India. As the schemes are implemented by states, they should have substantial flexibility to ensure that the schemes benefit the targeted groups. While these are important, it is not clear how a relook at the Seventh Schedule would achieve this objective.

The writer is adviser, Centre for Public Policy, IIM, Bangalore. Views are personal

Beyond Modi-Trump chemistry

India and the US need to address the vexed issues in trade. This will prepare New Delhi for profound changes in global economic order

RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

AT THE HOUSTON spectacle on Sunday that bought together an enthusiastic Indian diaspora, the personal chemistry between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump was all too evident. But the celebrations at Texas must yield tangible outcomes at New York where the two leaders are set to meet again today on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly's annual session.

According to media reports, Modi and Trump are apparently racing to wrap up the negotiations on trade that have been underway for some time. The speculation is about a "small deal" between the two countries. Yet, the two leaders also know that they need to look beyond the tactical and signal a change of direction in bilateral commercial engagement and set ambitious trade targets for the near and medium term.

In diplomacy, personal rapport and trust between the leaders is quite valuable. Although the leaders themselves might not negotiate the details of agreements, they need to communicate their respective interests to each other and signal the political will to overcome domestic obstacles.

Even more important is the recognition of your interlocutor's priorities. When you address the other leader's most important concern and give him or her room to claim victory, you will get a lot more in return. In the last two decades, the success of India's engagement with the US has been rooted in Delhi's sensible judgement about the immediate focus of the other leader.

It is easily forgotten that the then External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh offered quick unilateral support in May 2001 when US President George W Bush's announced an initiative to build missile defences and move away from the doctrine of deterrence through nuclear terror. While Bush was being pilloried at home and abroad for overturning arms control orthodoxy, Delhi's support was more than welcome in Washington. This was followed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee's strong support for Bush's war on terror immediately after 9/11 and set the stage for a political and strategic approach to the Indo-US relationship that was hobbled for decades by disputes over nuclear issues.

Delhi's new political warmth to America saw Bush extend unprecedented support for India's rise and nudge a reluctant US establishment to invest much political capital in changing the US domestic nonproliferation laws as well as international regulations to lift a long-standing nuclear blockade against India. While the UPA government wavered in taking the nuclear deal forward, Bush stayed the course thanks to his strong empathy for India.

The resolution of the nuclear issue created the basis for a productive partnership with the US that saw liberalisation of US technology transfers, the launch of counter-terror cooperation, the expansion of defence relationship and political cooperation on regional and global issues. If Jaswant Singh and Vajpayee recognised what mattered for Bush, Modi saw that addressing climate change was President Barack Obama's highest priority. Modi, who had sensible climate convictions of his own, quickly reoriented India's policy to make Delhi part of the solution in the stalled international negotiations on mitigating global warming. When he was a senator, Obama had expressed serious reservations about the nuclear deal. Once he saw Modi as a partner, Obama helped finalise the nuclear agreement and integrate India into the global nonproliferation regimes.

On the nuclear issue as well as climate change, there was strong resistance within the Indian system from two different quarters — those who picked nits and others who turned every engagement with America into a supreme test of India's commitment to non-alignment. The nit pickers were mostly from the bureaucracy that refused to see the larger gains accruing to India. The political class revelled in denouncing any change in India's long outmoded negotiating positions.

When Trump took charge of the White House in January 2017, Modi and his advisers did not take long to see the president would be very different from his predecessors and that he was going to alter many long-standing American policies. While Modi recognised the centrality Trump's trade concerns, the PM's initial responses did not seem adequate.

More consequentially, Modi did not devote enough political attention to the emerging challenges on the trade front. He seemed to let the nit pickers lead the trade negotiation. India's prickly attitude to trade liberalisation that congealed in recent years put it at odds with its major trading partners. While most of them had given up on India, Trump made it a bone of contention. In his effusive speech on India-US relations, Trump did insist that that the people of India must have "access to products stamped with the beautiful phrase Made in the USA". Put simply, market access has been the issue that has troubled the relationship in recent years. While referring to the difficulties in the bilateral trade negotiations and suggesting a deal might be at hand, Modi reassured Trump that he is learning from the President on the "art of the deal".

The PM is aware that cutting a trade deal with Trump, will make it a lot easier to deal with his administration on a range of issues including terrorism, Kashmir and the unfolding crisis in Afghanistan. But a trade agreement with the US is not just about immediate give and take between Modi and Trump. A new trade agreement must be about preparing India for profound changes in the global economic order, buffeted by Trump's politics as well as the unfolding technological disruption. Many of Trump's trade concerns in relation to India resonate with the left wing of the Democratic Party that is gaining ground. Getting India's most important trade relationship right in the near term and charting a bold course for a mutually beneficial commercial partnership with the US over the long term are urgent and worthy goals in themselves.

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RANGIN PALLAV TRIPATHY

Lessons unlearnt

Linguistic policy should not be driven by a politics of identity

A STATEMENT BY Purushottam Das Tondon in 1949 neatly captures the major problem that saddles any discussion on linguistic policy in India — looking at language only as a marker of identity. Speaking at a public meeting, he declared: "Those who oppose acceptance of Hindi as national language and Nagari as the national script are following the policy of anti-national appeasement and are catering to communal aspirations."

The debate in the Constituent Assembly on language was marred by extreme positions. As Glanville Austin notes in *The Indian Constitution: The Cornerstone of a Nation*, while the moderates wanted the issue to be resolved by consensus, the extremists were willing to push through the imposition of Hindi even if they could secure a majority of one vote. That the Constitution does not speak of a "national language" was deliberate. Instead, the term "official language" was used in Article 343 as a tactical euphemism to avoid friction amongst different linguistic communities.

There were bitter contestations on the definition of Hindi and the sources of its vocabulary. Some leaders argued for new words to be coined from a Sanskrit base to deal with modern requirements instead of assimilating words from other languages. Ravi Shankar Shukla insisted that Hindi's source of learned terms can only be from Sanskrit. There was resentment against Urdu as an influence on Hindi. The more popular term at that time, "Hindustani", stood for a confluence of linguistic and cultural influences from different traditions. However, the scars of Partition damaged the discourse on language. The compromises in this respect can be seen in the text of Article 351, which talks about the promotion of Hindi, mandating the state to promote Hindi so that it serves as a medium of expression for the "composite culture" of India. This appeased those uncomfortable with the imposition of a Sanskritised Hindi. On the other hand, Article 351 also mentions that Hindi shall draw its vocabulary primarily from Sanskrit. There were also a tussle on the official form of numerals to be used amongst "Arab Numerals", "Nagari Numerals" and "International Numerals", which finally led to a compromise in the expression "international form of Indian numerals" in Article 343.

The defining feature of the debate in the Constituent Assembly was merging the issue of language with that of national identity. At some level, this sentiment is understandable in the context of those times. India was gaining freedom after centuries of suppression and some leaders were eager to carve a national identity of a similar texture to that of the Eurocentric experiments of nation-states. English, being the language of the English colonialists, was not acceptable to many. Multilingualism was deemed incompatible with the fervour of national unity. While the sentiment of forging a national identity may be laudable, language was a poor choice of medium for such a project in a multicultural society.

As a functional tool, language inherently serves a communicative function. It enables us to transfer knowledge and ideas, and serves to transmit cultural heritage and preserve historical memories. Multilingualism should be an aspirational value. This spirit of aspiration ought to inform the design of linguistic policies in multicultural societies. On average, we interact more frequently with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds than our ancestors. Language should be looked at as an important skill to operate in a world which is more connected today than at any other point in time. This is not to contend that our linguistic heritage should be neglected or trivialised.

The problem we faced at the time of drafting the Constitution, as we face even today, is that the approach towards linguistic policy seems to be driven more by the politics of identity than values of aspiration or accommodation. The primary argument in favour of Hindi has been reduced to assertions of slim majoritarianism. Even then, there are concerns about the claim based on mere numerical strength, as only 25 per cent of Indians seem to recognise Hindi as their mother tongue (Census 2011).

Language, used as a political weapon, can be divisive and chauvinistic. It can be used to create hierarchical identities and unequal power dynamics. When we look at languages primarily as markers of identities, we build barriers to acceptability. People begin to assert linguistic supremacy, resist learning a language which they perhaps would not have objected to otherwise.

It is essential to move the discussion away from the binaries of Hindi and non-Hindi camps. The issue which merits attention is the manner in which linguistic policies ought to be designed in a multicultural society. Should linguistic policy is to be built on chauvinistic underpinnings or on practical concerns? Should the country should have a single national language or multiple? How to select a national language from amongst the many that people speak? Should there should be a national language at all? What are the parameters for evolving an effective linguistic policy?

The linguistic diversity that India has to negotiate is without precedent. We started off on a wrong foot at the time of Independence by confining language as an issue of identity. We must learn to avoid the same pitfalls which have damaged our polity so deeply.

The writer is a Fulbright post-doctoral research scholar at Harvard Law School

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TAX RELIEF

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Booster shot' (IE, September 21). The slashing of the corporate tax rate from 30 to 22 per cent is indeed a booster shot. It is an invitation to more FDI as well as greater domestic investment. Loss-making public companies like Air India and BSNL must be privatised. There's no use in sustaining loss making companies at the cost of the exchequer. Besides, just as six airports have been handed over to the Adani Group for maintenance and upgradation, similar steps ought to be taken for the Railways. The government should also give tax relief to the poor and the middle class to boost the economy.

Sauro Dasgupta, *Kolkata*

FOR FARM'S SAKE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Let prices rise' (IE, September 23). The RBI and the government must avoid any temptation to contain food inflation because any boost to farm income will do two things. First, it will help the agriculture sector grow and second it will give a huge boost to the demand side of the economy. Rather than banning exports of essential items, it will do a great service to the sector if it improves the warehousing infrastructure as huge amount of food goes waste every year.

Bal Govind, *Noida*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

TOLERANT HINDUS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'An inseparable destiny' (IE, September 23). Hinduism teaches us "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam". Different communities in the country should live in harmony. Only then will "sabka saath sabka vikas" be possible.

Neha Yadav, *Lucknow*

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड
वर्ष 12 अंक 187

विनिर्माण में सुधार की प्रत्याशा

वैश्विक स्तर पर वस्तुओं की आपूर्ति श्रृंखला निरंतर परिवर्तनशील है और भारत के पास अवसर है कि वह इसका लाभ उठाए। लंबे समय तक वैश्विक विनिर्माण का गढ़ रहे चीन में लागत बढ़ रही है और अमेरिका के साथ उसकी कारोबारी जंग मौजूदा आपूर्ति व्यवस्था को बाधित कर रही है। कई कंपनियां अपना ठिकाना बदलने की तैयारी में हैं और भारत उनका संभावित केंद्र हो सकता है। अब तक घरेलू जोखिम कारक और ऊंची लागत ने देश के विनिर्माण को अपेक्षाकृत गैर प्रतिस्पर्धी रखा है। यही कारण है कि ज्यादा कंपनियों ने भारत का रुख नहीं किया। परंतु सरकार के हालिया कदम इस रुख को बदल सकते हैं। इनमें सबसे अहम है बड़ी कंपनियों के कॉर्पोरेट आय कर को घटाकर 25.17 फीसदी करना। वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने गत सप्ताह इसकी घोषणा की। इस कदम के बाद बने माहौल में एक बात को भुला दिया गया कि नई विनिर्माण कंपनियों पर इससे भी कम यानी मात्र 17 फीसदी की दर से कर लगेगा। इसमें अधिभार और उपकर शामिल हैं। यह विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में नए निवेश की दृष्टि से अच्छा कदम है।

नए निवेश के लिए इस तरह की कर कटौती के ऐसे निवेश के प्रति शेयर प्रतिफल पर अहम असर होगा। महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि यह कदम बड़ी कंपनियों के आयकर में कटौती की भावना के भी अनुरूप है क्योंकि उस कदम का लक्ष्य भी दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया के समकक्ष राष्ट्रों के बीच भारत को प्रतिस्पर्धी बनाना है। थाईलैंड और वियतनाम जैसे देशों में भी नए निवेश के लिए रियायती कर दर है। वे दरें भारत की नई दरों से भी कम हैं। उदाहरण के लिए जो कंपनियां अपने क्षेत्रीय मुख्यालय को थाईलैंड ले जाती हैं उन्हें 10 फीसदी से भी कम कॉर्पोरेट कर देना होता है। इन कंपनियों के विदेशी कर्मचारियों पर 15 फीसदी की दर से कर लगता है।

नई विनिर्माण इकाइयों पर कर कटौती को उन अन्य कदमों के साथ जोड़कर देखा जाना चाहिए जो नए निवेश के अनुकूल माहौल तैयार करने के लिए उठाए गए हैं। उदाहरण के लिए वेतन संहिता को सुसंगत बनाया गया है और कुछ निर्यातोन्मुखी क्षेत्रों को अनुबंधित श्रम का इस्तेमाल बढ़ाने की इजाजत दी गई है। सरकार ने हाल ही में अनुबंधित विनिर्माण में विदेशी निवेश पर भी वस्तुस्थिति स्पष्ट की है। इसमें स्वचालित माध्यम से 100 फीसदी निवेश की इजाजत है। वित्त मंत्री ने गत पखवाड़े निर्यातकों के लिए एक नया पैकेज भी घोषित किया जो विश्व व्यापार संगठन में भारत के दायित्वों के अनुरूप होगा। उन्होंने यह भी कहा था कि इनपुट टैक्स क्रेडिट की वापसी तय समय में की जाएगी।

ऋण की कमी से जूझ रहे निर्यात आधारित क्षेत्रों को बैंकों द्वारा प्राथमिक क्षेत्र के ऋण मानक शिथिल करने का फायदा मिलेगा। यहां व्यापक प्रयास ऐसा माहौल तैयार करने का है जो देश के विनिर्माण क्षेत्र के जोखिमों के बीच पूंजी का विस्तार करने को तैयार हों। पूंजी को जोखिम पहुंचाने वाले कारकों में से उच्च कर की समस्या को हल कर दिया गया है। रिजर्व बैंक उच्च ब्याज दर की समस्या को भी निरंतर हल कर रहा है। परंतु अभी काफी कुछ किया जाना है। विनिर्माण क्षेत्र लंबे समय से व्यापक केंद्रीय श्रम एवं भूमि सुधार की मांग कर रहा है। इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती। आगे बढ़ने के क्रम में प्रशासनिक और नियामकीय जोखिम पर भी नजर डालनी होगी। अंतरराष्ट्रीय मध्यस्थता, अग्रिम कर को लेकर स्पष्ट नियम, न्यायिक क्षेत्र में क्षमता विस्तार और स्वतंत्र एवं राजनीति निरपेक्ष नियामकीय व्यवस्था आवश्यक है। केवल ऐसा करके ही देश के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में विनिर्माण की हिस्सेदारी बढ़ाई जा सकती है।

अजय मोहंती

राजस्व के मोर्चे पर नया विश्लेषण

राजस्व क्षेत्र के नए आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करने पर जो उछाल नजर आ रही है वह स्वागत योग्य है लेकिन इसके कारणों की समुचित पड़ताल भी उतनी ही आवश्यक है। विस्तार से बता रहे हैं **पार्थसारथि शोम**

राजस्व के मोर्चे पर ऐसे नए आंकड़े उपलब्ध हुए हैं जो राजस्व रुझानों के बारे में नई जानकारी प्रस्तुत करते हैं। ऐसे में उनका विश्लेषण किया जाना भी लाजिमी है। ये आयकर विभाग की टाइम सीरीज के 2000-01 से लेकर 2017-18 तक के आंकड़े हैं। सांख्यिकी से शुरुआत करें तो 2017-18 के आंकड़े प्रारंभिक हैं और 2016-17 के अनुमान वर्ष 2011-12 को आधार वर्ष मानकर दिए गए पहले संशोधित अनुमान हैं। वर्ष 2014-15 से जीडीपी का आधार वर्ष 2011-12 हुआ करता था। 2004-05 से 2013-14 तक 2004-05 ही जीडीपी श्रृंखला का आधार वर्ष था। इन सबको आपस में मिला दिया गया है। हालांकि उछाल का आकलन भले ही अधिक न हो लेकिन निरंतरता आवश्यक है।

उछाल या उत्प्लावकता, जीडीपी में प्रत्येक फीसदी की वृद्धि को लेकर कर राजस्व की प्रतिक्रिया है। स्पष्ट है कि 2015-16 से लेकर 2017-18 तक के आंकड़े 1.8 फीसदी की स्थिर उछाल दर्शाते हैं। इससे पहले 2004-05 और 2006-07 के बीच ऐसी स्थिर दर से उछाल दर्ज की गई थी। उस दौर में यह 1.5 से बढ़कर 2.4 हो गई थी। यह वह दौर था जब निजी क्षेत्र में जबरदस्त तेजी देखने को मिल रही थी। जाहिर है कर राजस्व में इस क्षेत्र का योगदान भी उसी तेजी से बढ़ रहा था।

मौजूदा दौर के सांख्यिकीय आंकड़े निजी क्षेत्र में उस किस्म की तेजी नहीं दर्शा रहे हैं। फिलहाल निजी क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत आने वाले तमाम उप क्षेत्र विभिन्न प्रकार की चुनौतियों से जूझ रहे हैं। ऐसे में सवाल यह उठता है कि 1.8 की उच्च कर राजस्व उत्प्लावकता कहां से आई? आदर्श स्थिति में इसका उत्तर आयकरदाताओं की बढ़ती तादाद में मिलना चाहिए जो अपने आप में एक उपलब्धि होनी चाहिए। यह कर प्रशासन के कर वंचकों और कर दायरे के आसपास के लोगों को कर चुकता करने वालों की श्रेणी में लाने के लिए किए गए प्रयासों की बदौलत हो सकता है। दूसरी ओर, एक राजस्व लक्ष्य तय करके, अतिरिक्त राजस्व हासिल किया जा सकता है। इसका दबाव अच्छे और बुरे करदाताओं पर एक साथ पड़ता है लेकिन यह अधिकारियों पर भी इस बात का दबाव बना सकता है कि अर्थव्यवस्था की स्थिति चाहे जैसी हो, वे कर संग्रह के प्रयास में लगे रहें।

नीति निर्माताओं के सामने यह चुनौती है कि वे करदाताओं के आधार का विस्तार करें और इसके साथ ही करदाताओं और कर अधिकारियों पर से अनावश्यक दबाव को भी कम करे। उन्नत कर प्रशासन ने राजस्व लक्ष्य को राजस्व निगरानी व्यवस्था से प्रतिस्थापित कर दिया है जो मौजूदा कारोबारी चक्र से जुड़ा हुआ है। भारतीय उद्योग जगत को पटरी पर वापस लाने के लिए ऐसे रुख की आवश्यकता है। दिक्कत में चल रहे क्षेत्रों को कर प्रोत्साहन देने के रूप में कर दरों में कमी करने और कर दबाव कम करने की बात करें तो कर संबंधी दबाव कम करना अर्थव्यवस्था को वापस वृद्धि दर पर लाने में कहीं अधिक मददगार साबित हो सकता है। इसे हासिल करना आसान नहीं है लेकिन जिन देशों में इसका क्रियान्वयन किया गया, वहां यह नीति सही साबित हुई है। नीति निर्माताओं को जमीनी स्तर पर कर प्रशासन की गतिविधियों पर अधिक से अधिक नजर रखने की आवश्यकता है। अगर ऐसा किया जाता है तो कर उत्प्लावन 1.8 से ऊपर के स्तर पर जा सकती है। अगर ऐसा नहीं हुआ तो यह वृद्धि अस्थायी होगी और इसका बहुत अधिक प्रभाव देखने को नहीं मिलेगा। दूसरा परिदृश्य उस रुझान का है जहां प्रत्यक्ष कर में तेजी से इजाफा हो रहा है और वर्ष 2007-08 से वह कुल राजस्व हिस्सेदारी में अप्रत्यक्ष कर से आगे निकल गया। परंतु 2009-10 में उच्चतम अंतर के स्तर पर पहुंचने के बाद इस अंतर में 2015-16 तक कमी आई। वर्ष 2016-17 में अप्रत्यक्ष कर की हिस्सेदारी एक बार फिर बढ़ी और वह प्रत्यक्ष कर से अधिक हो गई। कुल कर राजस्व में अप्रत्यक्ष कर की हिस्सेदारी 50.3 फीसदी हो गई। परंतु वर्ष 2017-18 में प्रत्यक्ष कर फिर अप्रत्यक्ष कर से आगे निकल गया और कर राजस्व में उसकी हिस्सेदारी बढ़कर 52.3 फीसदी हो गई। अप्रत्यक्ष कर के प्रत्यक्ष कर से अधिक होने की अंतरिम अवधि में सीमा शुल्क और घरेलू उत्पाद शुल्क की वापसी नजर आई। मौजूदा वैश्विक कराधान परिदृश्य में जहां अमेरिका कारोबारी साझेदारों के समक्ष गतिरोध खड़े कर रहा है वहीं, भारत को भी अपनी शुल्क व्यवस्था की जांच करने की आवश्यकता है।

सवाल यह उठता है कि वर्ष 2017-18 में प्रत्यक्ष कर, अप्रत्यक्ष कर से आगे निकल गया तो क्या यह केवल करदाताओं की संख्या में बढ़ोतरी की वजह से हुआ? इसमें दो राय नहीं कि करदाताओं की तादाद में बढ़ोतरी हुई है लेकिन कहीं यह कर जुटाने संबंधी दबाव बढ़ने के कारण तो नहीं हुआ। या फिर यह जीएसटी की उच्च इनपुट कर क्रेडिट के कारण राजस्व को हुई हानि के कारण परिलक्षित हो रहा है क्योंकि निर्यात क्षेत्र में भारी भरकम रिफंड आया है।

जीएसटी दरों में बार-बार बदलाव भी इसका कारण हो सकता है। कई क्षेत्रों की ढांचागत जरूरतों की दृष्टि से दरों में यह बदलाव आवश्यक हो सकता है। परंतु एक नीतिगत चुनौती अभी भी बरकरार है। वह यह कि जिन क्षेत्रों में इनपुट टैक्स क्रेडिट बहुत अधिक न हो वहां दरों में बदलाव न किया जाए।

चाहे जो भी हो परंतु कर दरों में कटौती के पश्चात आपूर्तिकर्ताओं पर यह साबित करने का बोझ रहता है कि संबद्ध लाभ को उपभोक्ताओं तक न पहुंचने देकर उन्होंने खुद को रिफंड मिलने से पहले अवांछित रूप से लाभ नहीं पहुंचाया है। यह बोझ समाप्त होना चाहिए।

अवांछित समृद्धि की अनुपस्थिति को साबित कर पाना कठिन काम है। इससे कानूनी मामला बने न बने, जीएसटी लाभ को नुकसान पहुंचने की शिकायतों का आधार तो बनता है। इसके अतिरिक्त अगर निर्यात रिफंड बढ़ता है तो जब तक वह वैध है, उसे तत्काल मंजूरी दी जानी चाहिए, बजाय राजस्व संरक्षण की आवश्यकता पर जोर देने के। ऐसे में सरकार का यह प्रभावी निर्देश आश्वस्त करने वाला है कि रिफंड की प्रक्रिया तेज होनी चाहिए। जमीनी स्तर के सुधारों की निगरानी प्रत्यक्ष और अप्रत्यक्ष कर दोनों में होनी चाहिए।

शौचालय निर्माण पर मनाएं खुशियां पर सावधानी बरतनी भी जरूरी

जमीनी हकीकत

सुनीता नारायण

निस्संदेह यह बड़ी बात है। गत चार वर्षों में भारत ने अपने छह लाख गांवों में करीब 10 करोड़ और शहरों में करीब 63 लाख शौचालय बनवाए हैं। कुछ साल पहले जो नामुमकिन लगता था अब वह पूरा हो चुका है और देश को खुले में शौच से मुक्त (ओडीएफ) घोषित किया जा चुका है। सरकारी अनुमानों के मुताबिक, वर्ष 2019 तक देश के 93 फीसदी से अधिक घरों में शौचालय मौजूद थे, 93 फीसदी से अधिक ग्रामीण लोग खुले में शौच नहीं जाते थे और शौचालय सुविधा से लैस करीब 96 फीसदी लोग इनका इस्तेमाल भी कर रहे थे। यह देश में शौचालयों के उपयोग को लेकर एक बड़ा व्यवहारगत परिवर्तन भी दर्शाता है। करीब 99 फीसदी शौचालयों का रखरखाव ठीक ढंग से हो रहा है, वे साफ-सुथरे हैं और शत-प्रतिशत शौचालय मल-मूत्र का 'सुरक्षित' निपटान कर रहे हैं। शौचालय बनने से किसी तरह का प्रदूषण नहीं फैला है और असल में, 95 फीसदी गांवों में पानी इकट्ठा नहीं होता है, कोई अपशिष्ट जल नहीं निकलता और नाममात्र की ही गंदगी होती है। ये आंकड़े आश्चर्यजनक हैं।

हमें इनके बारे में कैसे पता है? पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता मंत्रालय ने दो निजी सलाह फर्मों- आईपीई ग्लोबल और कैंटार को देश भर में सर्वेक्षण का जिम्मा सौंपा था ताकि भविष्य में विश्व बैंक से धन हासिल करने के लिए इन आंकड़ों का इस्तेमाल किया जा सके। राष्ट्रीय वार्षिक ग्रामीण स्वच्छता सर्वेक्षण (एनएआरएसएस) का दूसरा चरण नवंबर 2018 से लेकर फरवरी 2019 के बीच चला था। इस दौरान जमीनी हालात को परखने के लिए 6135 गांवों और 92,411 परिवारों का जायजा लिया गया।

वर्ष 2018-19 की आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा गया कि सभी शौचालयों की जियो-टैगिंग की गई है ताकि उनकी पुष्टि की जा सके। सबसे अहम बात, शौचालय निर्माण कार्यक्रम के लाभ स्वास्थ्य संकेतकों में नजर आ रहे हैं। यह सर्वे विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन और यूनिसेफ का हवाला देते हुए कहता है कि अधिक शौचालय उपलब्धता वाले जिलों में पांच साल से कम उम्र वाले बच्चों में डायरिया और मलेरिया के मामले नाटकीय रूप से कम हुए हैं। इसमें कोई किंतु-परंतु नहीं है, केवल एक और बात है। साक्ष्य कहते हैं कि देश एक नामुमकिन-सा लक्ष्य हासिल करने में सफल रहा है। असल में, भारत की यह उपलब्धि शौचालयों के विस्तार एवं मल-मूत्र के सुरक्षित निपटान संबंधी वैश्विक संवहनीय विकास लक्ष्यों को पूरा करने में एक अहम स्थान रखेगी। हालांकि इस कामयाबी को टिकाऊ बनाने की जरूरत है ताकि यह स्थायी बन सके। यहीं पर बड़ा जोखिम भी है। भले ही हम इस कामयाबी का जश्न मना रहे हैं लेकिन हमें शौचालय चुनौती को तिलांजलि नहीं देनी चाहिए। इसकी वजह यह है कि अभी काफी कुछ किए जाने की जरूरत है और अभी बहुत कुछ गलत होने की गुंजाइश भी है।

पहली बात यह है कि सभी कार्यक्रमों में एक समय के बाद गिरावट आती है। यह कार्यक्रम भी इससे जुदा नहीं होगा। लिहाजा अगर शौचालय बने हैं और लोग उनका इस्तेमाल शुरू कर चुके हैं तब भी यह रुझान बिना देरी के पलट सकता है। जब पाक्षिक पत्रिका 'डाउन टु अर्थ' के संवाददाताओं ने शौचालयों का हाल जानने के लिए देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों का दौरा किया तो उन्हें कुछ अच्छी एवं बुरी बातें पता चलीं। अतीत में शौचालयों की भारी कमी से जूझने वाले उत्तर प्रदेश में परिवर्तन साफ नजर आ रहा था। शौचालयों की मौजूदगी दिखाई दी और खासकर महिलाएं न केवल उनका इस्तेमाल कर रही थीं बल्कि संख्या बढ़ाने की मांग रखी। लेकिन वर्ष 2017 में ही ओडीएफ घोषित किए जा चुके राज्य हरियाणा में लोग एक बार फिर से खुले में शौच की पुरानी आदत अपनाते नजर आए। यह इस लिहाज से भी अहम है कि हरियाणा को लोगों के शौच व्यवहार में बदलाव के लिए खास तौर पर चिह्नित किया गया था। लेकिन शौचालय अब टूटे-फूटे हैं, लोगों के इस्तेमाल लायक नहीं रहे या फिर लोग सदियों पुरानी आदत की तरफ लौटने लगे हैं।

दूसरा, मल-मूत्र के निपटान का मुद्दा है। एनएआरएसएस 2018-19 सर्वेक्षण में सुरक्षित निपटान की अपर्याप्त एवं दोषपूर्ण परिभाषा का उपयोग किया गया है। अगर शौचालय किसी सेप्टिक टैंक, एकल या दोहरे गड्ढों या किसी नाले से जुड़ा है तो उसे सुरक्षित कहा गया है।

सच्चाई यह है कि यह केवल मल-मूत्र का फैलाव रोकने की व्यवस्था है, न कि उसका निपटान। अनुमान है कि ग्रामीण इलाकों में बने करीब 10 करोड़ शौचालयों का बड़ा हिस्सा एकल या दोहरे गड्ढों वाले संडास हैं। लोग एक गड्ढे में मल-मूत्र विसर्जन करते हैं और उसे खाली कर दोबारा इस्तेमाल में लाया जाता है। इस बारे में कोई जानकारी नहीं है कि संडास गड्ढों से यह अवशिष्ट कहां जाता है? पड़ोस के पोखर, तालाब, नाले या फिर खेतों में? यह भी कहा जा सकता है कि शौचालय अभी नए बने हैं लिहाजा शौचालय गड्ढों में इकट्ठा विष्ठा को ठिकाने लगाने की अभी कोई जरूरत ही नहीं आएगी। लेकिन आने वाले समय में तो ऐसा होगा। साफ है कि अगर इस मल-मूत्र का समुचित निपटान नहीं होता है तो यह लोगों की सेहत पर काफी भारी पड़ेगा। शौचालय न केवल गंदगी फैलने का जरिया बनेंगे बल्कि मिट्टी एवं पानी के दूषित होने से सेहत लाभ भी खत्म होते जाएंगे। तीसरा, शौचालय आकलन की विश्वसनीयता का सवाल भी है। सही रास्ते की जानकारी के लिए यह बेहद जरूरी है। फिलहाल शौचालयों की स्थिति के बारे में सारे अध्ययन परियोजना के धन प्रदाता या मंत्रालय की तरफ से ही कराए गए हैं। इन सर्वेक्षणों के परिणाम या शोध-पद्धति को लेकर संदेह करने की कोई वजह नहीं है। लेकिन यह भी सही है कि भारत में कभी भी कोई चीज इतनी सही या गलत नहीं हो सकती है। ऐसे में कई अन्य संस्थाओं की तरफ से और अलग नजरिये को लेकर इनका आकलन करने की जरूरत है। शौचालय के बारे में अच्छी खबर बताते समय भी हमें यह याद रखना चाहिए कि 'अगर हम सभी तालियां बजाने वाले बन जाएंगे तो फिर तालियां बजाने के लिए कोई टीम ही नहीं बचेगी'।

कानाफूसी

धन की कमी

कांग्रेस पार्टी को धन की कमी है। ऐसे में कंपनी को नकदी जुटाने के लिए नए-नए तरीके तलाश करने पड़ रहे हैं। हरियाणा में कांग्रेस की राज्य इकाई का खजाना खाली हो चुका है। पार्टी प्रदेश में टिकट चाहने वाले उम्मीदवारों से धन दान करने को कह रही है। हरियाणा में 21 अक्टूबर को विधानसभा चुनाव होने वाले हैं। सामान्य श्रेणी के टिकट चाहने वालों से कहा गया है कि वे कम से कम 5,000 रुपये जमा करें। अनुसूचित जाति के उम्मीदवारों से 2,000 रुपये जमा करने को कहा गया है। प्रदेश की 90 विधानसभा सीटों के लिए 900 से 1,000 के बीच उम्मीदवार हैं। ऐसे में प्रदेश इकाई का अनुमान है कि वह करीब 50 लाख रुपये एकत्रित कर लेगी। हाल ही में इकाई के कोषाध्यक्ष तरुण भंडारी ने विधायकों और पूर्व विधायकों को नोटिस जारी कर कहा था कि वे वर्ष में एक बार एक महीने का वेतन या पेंशन पार्टी में जमा करें। यह बात अलग है कि कम ही लोगों ने इसका पालन किया।

टिकट के आकांक्षी

चुनाव आयोग द्वारा उत्तर प्रदेश में विधानसभा की दर्जन भर सीटों के उपचुनाव की तारीख घोषित किए जाने के साथ ही राजधानी लखनऊ में राजनीतिक गतिविधियां तेज हो गई हैं। सत्ताधारी भारतीय जनता पार्टी की ओर से टिकट चाहने वालों ने अपनी पसंद की सीटों के लिए लॉबीइंग भी शुरू कर दी है। इनमें से ज्यादातर सीटें तब खाली हुईं जब इनके विधायक चुनाव जीतकर लोकसभा पहुंच गए। ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि कुछ विपक्षी विधायक भी भाजपा से टिकट चाहते हैं। हाल ही में समाजवादी पार्टी के तीन विधायकों ने मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ से मुलाकात की। हालांकि उन्होंने इसे सौहार्द भेंट बताया है लेकिन इस बैठक के बाद सपा के भीतर बेचैनी बढ़ गई है। वहीं सपा विधायकों वाली सीटों से टिकट चाहने वाले भाजपा नेता भी हरकत में आ गए हैं।

आपका पक्ष

ई-सिगरेट पर रोक अच्छी पहल

सरकार का ई-सिगरेट पर पाबंदी लगाने का निर्णय सराहनीय है। इस निर्णय से उन सिगरेट कंपनियों के झूठे प्रचार को झटका लगेगा जो ई-सिगरेट के नुकसान रहित होने का दुष्प्रचार कर रही थीं। इस नियम के पहली बार उल्लंघन करने पर एक साल तक की सजा और एक लाख रुपये तक का जुर्माना लग सकता है। ई-सिगरेट निकोटिन डिलिवरी सिस्टम एक बैटरी संचालित उपकरण है जो तरल निकोटिन, प्रोपलीन, ग्लाइकॉल, पानी, ग्लिसरीन के मिश्रण को गर्म करके एक एयरोसोल बनाता है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (डब्ल्यूएचओ) के मुताबिक वर्ष 2005 से ही ई-सिगरेट उद्योग एक वैश्विक व्यवसाय बन चुका है और आज इसका बाजार लगभग 3 अरब डॉलर का हो गया है। तंबाकू से करीब 25 तरह की बीमारियां और करीब 40 तरह के कैंसर हो सकते हैं। इनमें मुंह, गले, फेफड़े और प्रोस्टेट का कैंसर हो सकता है। वर्ष 2018 में केंद्र सरकार ने सभी राज्यों को ई-सिगरेट पर प्रतिबंध लगाने के लिए सलाह जारी की थी। सरकार की सलाह के बाद अब तक 16 राज्यों और एक केंद्रशासित प्रदेश में ई-सिगरेट पर प्रतिबंध लगाया गया था। डब्ल्यूएचओ की घोषणा के आधार पर इस समय विश्व में प्रत्येक साल 50 लाख से अधिक लोग धूम्रपान के कारण जान से हाथ धो रहे हैं। अगर इस समस्या को नियंत्रित करने की दिशा में कोई प्रभावी कदम नहीं उठाया गया तो वर्ष 2030 में धूम्रपान से मरने वाले लोगों की संख्या प्रतिवर्ष 80 लाख से अधिक हो जाएगी। तंबाकू सेवन से प्रत्येक साल 10 में कम से कम एक व्यक्ति की मौत हो जाती है। वर्ष 2020 तक 20 प्रतिशत से 25 प्रतिशत तंबाकू के इस्तेमाल को घटाने से लगभग 10 करोड़ लोगों की असामयिक मौत से बचा सकते हैं। डब्ल्यूएचओ के आंकड़े के अनुसार हर साल 60 लाख लोग तंबाकू के कारण मर जाते हैं। आंकड़े बताते हैं कि भारत में हर दिन करीब 2,739 लोग तंबाकू उत्पादों के कारण कैंसर व अन्य बीमारियों से दम तोड़ देते हैं। भारत में 42.4 प्रतिशत पुरुष, 14.2 प्रतिशत महिलाएं और सभी वयस्कों में 28.8 प्रतिशत लोग धूम्रपान करते है। लोगों को इससे होने वाले दुष्प्रभावों से अवगत कराना होगा। इससे सरकार को वित्तीय नुकसान होगा लेकिन देश के नागरिक के स्वास्थ्य से बड़ा कोई धन नहीं है।

अजय प्रताप तिवारी, गोंडा

सरकार ने ई-सिगरेट के उत्पादन, बिक्री तथा भंडारण पर प्रतिबंध लगाया है

प्लास्टिक मुक्त भारत की कल्पना

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने वर्ष 2022 तक देश को प्लास्टिक मुक्त करने का लक्ष्य रखा है। एकल इस्तेमाल वाले प्लास्टिक को तभी हटाया जा सकता है जब हम उसका विकल्प खोज लेंगे। प्लास्टिक हमारी दिनचर्या का अंग बन गया है। इसमें दवा, पानी और कई तरह के चीजों को सुरक्षित रखा जाता है। खाने की चीजें खराब नहीं हो इसलिए प्लास्टिक की पैकिंग की जाती है। सबसे बड़ी बात इस उद्योग में लाखों रुपये निवेश किए गए हैं। इस उद्योग से लाखों लोगों को रोजगार मिला है। इसे फौरन बंद करने का आदेश देना उचित नहीं है। हमें इसके हर पहलू पर विचार करना चाहिए क्योंकि यह वैश्विक समस्या है। दुनिया भर में लगभग 300 टन प्लास्टिक का उत्पादन होता है जिसमें 130 लाख टन प्लास्टिक समुद्र और नदियों में बहाया जाता है। सरकार इसपर प्रतिबंध लगाने से पहले सोच विचार करे।

प्रियंबदा, गोरखपुर

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

दैनिक जागरण

कोई भी रिश्ता भरोसे की नींव पर ही खड़ा होता है

बाज न आता पाकिस्तान

सेना प्रमुख बिपिन रावत का यह कथन पाकिस्तान के आतंकी चरित्र को ही बयान करता है कि बालाकोट में आतंकियों के ठिकाने को फिर से सक्रिय कर दिया गया है। यह वही आतंकी ठिकाना है जिसे पुलवामा हमले के बाद भारतीय वायुसेना ने हवाई हमले के जरिये ध्वस्त किया था। माना जाता था कि इस हवाई हमले के बाद उसके होश ठिकाने आ जाएंगे, लेकिन अब पता चल रहा है कि ऐसा नहीं हुआ। इसे देखते हुए यह सर्वथा उचित है कि सेना प्रमुख ने बिना किसी लाग लपेट कहा कि अगली बार बालाकोट से भी बड़ी कार्रवाई होगी। उन्होंने यह भी जानकारी दी कि पाकिस्तान से कम से कम पांच सौ आतंकी भारत में घुसने की फिराक में हैं। इसका मतलब है कि पाकिस्तान आसानी से मानने वाला नहीं है। कश्मीर पर उसके गर्जन-तर्जन से यह जाहिर भी हो रहा है। वह इस तरह बौराया हुआ है जैसे जम्मू-कश्मीर पर वही शासन कर रहा हो। कश्मीर पर पाकिस्तान की बौखलाहट यही बताती है कि कोई देश किस तरह दिवास्वप्न से ग्रस्त होकर अपने को बर्बादी के रास्ते पर ले जा सकता है। उसे केवल यही मुगालता नहीं था कि मुस्लिम जगत की ठेकेदारी उसके पास है, बल्कि वह इस सनक से भी ग्रस्त था कि एक दिन कश्मीर उसका होगा। वह इस सनक का शिकार तब है जब उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था रसातल में है और उसे एक तरह से भीख मांगकर गुजारा करना पड़ रहा है।

हालांकि पाकिस्तान के आम लोग यह जान-समझ रहे हैं कि विश्व व्यापी बदनामी के कारण दुनिया उस पर ध्यान नहीं दे रही है, लेकिन पाकिस्तानी सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान और खासकर उसकी सेना को शायद इसकी परवाह नहीं। हैरानी इस पर है कि क्रिकेटर से नेता बने इमरान खान सच को स्वीकार करने के बजाय अपनी आतंकपरस्त सेना की कठपुतली बनना पसंद कर रहे हैं। पाकिस्तान एक ओर खुद को आतंक पीड़ित बताता है और दूसरी ओर किस्म-किस्म के आतंकियों को पालने-पोसने का भी काम करता है। उसकी इसी दुष्प्रवृत्ति को गत दिवस ह्यूस्टन में भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप और साथ ही एक तरह से विश्व समुदाय के समक्ष इस सवाल के जरिये बयान किया कि आखिर 9-11 और 26-11 के आतंकी हमलों के साजिशकर्ता कहां पाए गए? आतंक के रास्ते पर चलते रहने पर आमादा पाकिस्तान यही जाहिर कर रहा है कि वह अभी भारत समेत दुनिया के लिए सिरदर्द बना रहेगा। हालांकि दुनिया पाकिस्तान का रोना-धोना सुनना पसंद नहीं कर रही है, लेकिन उसकी हरकतों को देखते हुए भारत को उससे नए सिरे से निपटने की तैयारी रखनी चाहिए। यह तैयारी निर्णायक ही होनी चाहिए।

एनआरसी का खौफ

असम में राष्ट्रीय नागरिक पंजीकरण (एनआरसी) लागू होने के बाद जब लाखों लोगों का नाम उसमें नहीं आया तो यह देखकर बंगाल के लोगों में खौफ देखा जा रहा है। एनआरसी से लोग इतने आतंकित दिख रहे हैं कि बंगाल में दो लोगों ने खुदकशी कर ली। सही में यह मामला बहुत ही संवेदनशील एवं गंभीर है। एनआरसी के मुद्दे पर दिल्ली में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी एवं केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री अमित शाह से मुलाकात कर लौटीं मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने एक बार फिर कहा कि बंगाल में एनआरसी लागू नहीं किया जाएगा। दिल्ली से लौटने के बाद मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने कहा-'कौन क्या कह रहा है, इसे लेकर चिंता करने की जरूरत नहीं है। मैं जब तक हूं, तब तक सभी सुरक्षित रहेंगे। मैं आपकी पहरेदार थी, हूं और रहूंगी। भारत के नागरिक भारत में ही रहेंगे। नागरिकों की सूची से किसी का नाम काटा नहीं जाएगा इसलिए किसी को डरने की जरूरत नहीं है। मैं केंद्र सरकार से इसी को लेकर बात करने गई थी।' मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने हालांकि यह जरूर कहा कि जिन लोगों के नाम मतदाता सूची में शामिल नहीं हैं, वे अपने नाम जरूर दर्ज करा लें। इस समय डिजिटल राशन कार्ड के संशोधन का काम चल रहा है, हालांकि इसका एनआरसी से कोई लेना-देना नहीं है। एनआरसी लागू होने के दुष्प्रचार से भयभीत होकर दो लोगों की मौत दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है। मृतकों के परिजनों को बंगाल सरकार की तरफ से दो-दो लाख रुपये की आर्थिक मदद दी जाएगी।' ममता बनर्जी ने भाजपा पर एनआरसी को लेकर दुष्प्रचार करने का आरोप लगाते हुए कहा-'भाजपा राजनीतिक स्वार्थ के लिए ऐसा कर रही है, लेकिन उसे किसी पर भी हाथ उठाने से पहले मुझपर हाथ उठाना होगा।' मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने आगे कहा कि एनआरसी को लेकर बयान देने वाले भाजपा के नेताओं से अपील करती हूं कि वे ऐसा न करें, क्योंकि यह मामला बहुत ही संवेदनशील है और लोगों से जुड़ा है। देखा जा रहा है कि बांग्लादेश से सटे सीमावर्ती जिलों में एनआरसी को लेकर लोगों में अधिक खौफ है। हजारों की संख्या में हर दिन लोग बीडीओ, एसडीओ से लेकर अन्य अफसरों के दफ्तर में पहुंचकर अपने-अपने दस्तावेज दुरुस्त कराने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। जब केंद्र सरकार की ओर से यह साफ कह दिया गया है कि जो भारत के नागरिक हैं, उन्हें भयभीत होने की आवश्यकता नहीं है, फिर भी लोगों में खौफ क्यों? यह सही नहीं है।

बेनकाब हुए कश्मीरी नेता

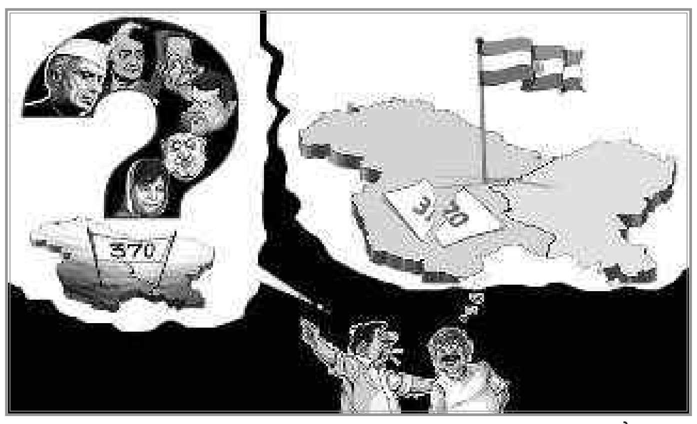
ए. सूर्यप्रकाश

घाटी के कश्मीरी नेताओं ने अपनी मुहिम को कुछ इस तरह चलाया कि उनके हिस्से में पंथनिरपेक्ष एवं लोकतांत्रिक परंपराएं न पनपने पाएं

मोदी सरकार द्वारा जम्मू-कश्मीर में अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के ऐतिहासिक कदम को छह सप्ताह बीत गए हैं। इस महत्वपूर्ण कदम पर वैश्विक एवं घरेलू प्रतिक्रियाओं की पड़ताल करें तो यही अहसास होगा कि जवाहरलाल नेहरू और बाद में नेहरूवादियों के अनिर्णय के कारण भारत को कितनी बड़ी कीमत अदा करनी पड़ी। बीते पांच वर्षों के दौरान प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने वैश्विक कूटनीति के मोर्चे पर जो भागीरथ प्रयास किए वे तब फलीभूत होते हुए दिखे जब उन्होंने अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय को आश्वस्त किया कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में उठाया गया कदम भारत का आंतरिक मामला है। यह बात उन्होंने कहीं अधिक जोरदारी से अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति के समक्ष ह्यूस्टन की उस सभा में भी कही जिस पर सारी दुनिया की निगाह थी। ऐतिहासिक तथ्य यह है कि 1947 में अविभाजित भारत में सभी रियासतों को यह विकल्प दिया गया था कि वे भारत या पाकिस्तान में अपना विलय कर सकते हैं या स्वतंत्र रह सकते हैं। कुल 564 रियासतों ने भारतीय संघ में विलय किया। इनमें जम्मू-कश्मीर रियासत भी शामिल थी जिसने 26 अक्टूबर, 1947 को विलय संधि पर हस्ताक्षर किए। जम्मू-कश्मीर के भारत का हिस्सा बनने पर पाकिस्तान खिन्न था। लिहाजा उसने उसे बलपूर्वक हथियाने की चाल चली। उसने राज्य का कुछ हिस्सा कब्जा भी लिया। चूंकि राज्य ने भारत में विलय कर लिया था तो उसका पाक के कब्जे वाला हिस्सा अवैध है जिसे पीओके कहा जाता है। भारत को इसे फिर से हासिल करना होगा। यही 'कश्मीर विवाद' है।

कश्मीर विवाद की चर्चा जरूरी है, क्योंकि दिल्ली की सत्ता पर लंबे समय तक काबिज नेहरूवादी, कांग्रेस पार्टी और मार्क्सवादियों ने पाकिस्तान को यह गुंजाइश दी कि वह दुष्प्रचार करता रहे कि भारत में जम्मू-कश्मीर का विलय विवादित है, जबकि यह राज्य वैध तरीके से भारतीय संघ में शामिल हुआ। मोदी सरकार ने इस स्थिति को सुधारने की दिशा में उल्लेखनीय काम किया। यही वजह है कि तमाम देशों ने यह एलान किया कि जम्मू-कश्मीर से जुड़ा मसला भारत का आंतरिक मामला है। इनमें अमेरिका, रूस, ऑस्ट्रेलिया, फ्रांस, जर्मनी, सऊदी अरब और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात जैसे देश शामिल हैं। वहीं पड़ोसियों में श्रीलंका, नेपाल, भूटान, बांग्लादेश और मालदीव ने एक सुर में कहा कि यह भारत का अंदरूनी मामला है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय को अब यह मालूम पड़ा कि पूरे राज्य का महज 14 प्रतिशत हिस्सा ही कश्मीर घाटी में आता है और यहां होने वाली अप्रिय घटनाओं का केंद्र भी मुख्य रूप से घाटी के चार-पांच जिलों तक सिमटा हुआ है। यह नेहरूवादियों की नाकामी ही थी कि पूरी दुनिया में यह धारणा बनी कि समस्त जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य ही अशांत था। अब इसे दुरुस्त किया गया गया है।

शेख अब्दुल्ला के दौर से ही जम्मू-कश्मीर के नेताओं ने अपने निजी हितों की खातिर अनुच्छेद 370 और अनुच्छेद 35 ए को कायम रखने पर पूरा जोर दिया गया। ये नेता मुख्य रूप से कश्मीर घाटी के थे। इन नेताओं ने राज्य के जनसांख्यिकीय तानेबाने को बिगाड़े रखने के मकसद से अपनी मुहिम को इस तरह चलाया कि उनके हिस्से में पंथनिरपेक्ष एवं लोकतांत्रिक परंपराएं न पनपने पाएं। ये नेता कश्मीरी पंडितों की दुर्दशा पर चुप्पी साधे रहे। राज्य के इन हिंदू अल्पसंख्यकों को तीस साल पहले उनके घरों से बेदखल कर दिया गया था। इन नेताओं ने कश्मीरी पंडितों की सुरक्षित वापसी सुनिश्चित करने की दिशा में भी कुछ नहीं किया। वे इसी बात से खुश थे कि कश्मीर घाटी पूरी तरह मुस्लिम बहुल बन गई है।



अवधेश राजपूत

अनुच्छेद 370 हटने के बाद देश और दुनिया को यह पता चल रहा है कि ये प्रावधान कितने असंवैधानिक और भेदभावपूर्ण थे। जैसे यह सुनकर झटका लगा कि आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े कुछ वर्गों के लिए शैक्षणिक संस्थानों में दस प्रतिशत आरक्षण का प्रावधान राज्य में लागू ही नहीं किया गया था। दूसरा साफ-सफाई के काम में लगे वाल्मीकि समुदाय को पुरानी व्यवस्था में स्थाई निवासी का दर्जा ही नहीं दिया गया। इस समुदाय के लोग लोकसभा चुनाव में तो मतदान कर सकते थे, लेकिन विधानसभा चुनाव में नहीं। इसके अलावा कोई कश्मीरी महिला यदि राज्य के बाहर के किसी व्यक्ति से विवाह करती तो उसे अपना स्थाई निवासी का दर्जा गंवाना पड़ता और उसकी संतानों से भी ये अधिकार छिन जाते। वहां और भी ऐसे तमाम प्रावधान थे जो पक्षपाती और असंवैधानिक थे।

अनुच्छेद 370 और 35ए शेष भारत के अन्य नागरिकों के लिए भी पक्षपाती साबित हुआ। जहां कश्मीरी देश के बेहतरीन शैक्षणिक संस्थानों में पढ़ सकते थे और भारत में कहीं भी रोजगार हासिल कर वहां बस सकते थे, वहीं शेष भारत के नागरिकों के लिए कश्मीर में ऐसे अवरोध थे। उन्हें न तो कश्मीरी कॉलेजों में प्रवेश मिल सकता था और न ही वे वहां रोजगार हासिल कर सकते। उन्हें वहां संपत्ति खरीदने और बसने का अधिकार भी नहीं था। आप पूरे भारत में विशेषकर पर्यटन स्थलों पर तमाम कश्मीरी कारोबारियों को देख सकते हैं, लेकिन दूसरे राज्यों के भारतीयों को कश्मीर में कारोबार करने की मनाही थी। यह वास्तव में बेहद शर्मनाक है कि कश्मीर घाटी के जो नेता लोकतंत्र को लेकर कर्कश राग अलापते रहते हैं, उन्होंने कभी हिंदू अल्पसंख्यकों, वाल्मीकि समुदाय या कश्मीरी महिलाओं के अधिकारों के लिए आवाज बुलंद नहीं की। न ही उन्होंने अन्य भारतीयों के साथ हो रहे भेदभाव को खत्म करने के लिए कोई पहल की। अपने यहां अल्पसंख्यकों को संरक्षण देने के लिहाज से शालीनता और राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति की कमी प्रदर्शित करने वाले इन नेताओं ने देश के दूसरे हिस्सों में लोकतंत्र और पंथनिरपेक्षता पर हमलों को लेकर दुख जताकर अपने आंसू अवश्य बहाए। यह और भी शर्म की बात है कि कुछ मीडिया संस्थानों, खासतौर से अंग्रेजी समाचार चैनलों पर, जहां ये नेता अक्सर दिखाई पड़ते थे, यह सवाल नहीं पूछा जाता था कि अगर भारत के इकलौते मुस्लिम बहुल प्रांत से अल्पसंख्यक हिंदुओं को बेदखल कर दिया जाएगा तो भारत की पंथनिरपेक्ष परंपराओं को कैसे सहेजकर रखा जा सकता है?

इन मीडिया संस्थानों ने इन नेताओं को लगातार मंच प्रदान किया कि वे देश के दूसरे हिस्सों को लेकर विषवमन करते रहें और वे अपने राज्य में हिंदू अल्पसंख्यकों के उत्पीड़न की जवाबदेही से मुक्त रहें। अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने की सबसे बड़ी उपलब्धि यह है कि कश्मीर घाटी के उन पाखंडी नेताओं की कलई खुली जिन्होंने शेष भारत के लोगों को कश्मीर घाटी नहीं आने दिया और अपने लिए लुटियन दिल्ली में स्थाई आशियाने बना लिए। यह शर्मनाक है कि तथाकथित सेक्युलर लोग इन नेताओं को सेक्युलरिज्म के प्रतीक के रूप में पेश करते रहे। पीएम मोदी और गृहमंत्री अमित शाह का शुक्रिया कि घाटी के इन पाखंडियों का असली चेहरा सामने आ गया। अब लुटियन दिल्ली से भी उनके पैर उखड़ने चाहिए।

(लेखक प्रसार भारती के चेयरमैन एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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पहली प्राथमिकता बने शिक्षा में सुधार

डॉ. भरत झुनझुनवाला

तमाम अध्ययन यही बताते हैं कि वाउचर व्यवस्था से स्कूलों में प्रतिस्पर्धा बढ़ती है और शिक्षा में सुधार होता है

चीन के सबसे अमीर व्यक्ति जैक मा ने कुछ समय पहले विश्व आर्थिक मंच पर कहा था कि आर्थिक तरक्की जारी रखने के लिए हमें अपने बच्चों को ऐसी शिक्षा देने होगी कि वे मशीनों से मुकाबला कर सकें। उनके मुताबिक शिक्षा में सुधार इसलिए भी जरूरी है, क्योंकि आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस का इस्तेमाल बढ़ता जा रहा है। शिक्षा में सुधार को लेकर भारत को इसलिए अधिक सक्रियता दिखाने की जरूरत है, क्योंकि उसके जरिये ही आर्थिक रूप से सशक्त हुआ जा सकता है। एक अर्से से यह दिख रहा है कि सरकारी और निजी स्कूलों के शिक्षकों के वेतन में अंतर के बावजूद सरकारी विद्यालयों के परिणाम कमतर हैं। इस वर्ष उत्तर प्रदेश बोर्ड के हाईस्कूल की 21 छात्रों की मेरिट लिस्ट में एवं 12 वीं की 14 छात्रों की मेरिट लिस्ट में एक भी छात्र सरकारी विद्यालय से नहीं था। इसी तरह दिल्ली में दसवीं के रिजल्ट में सरकारी विद्यालयों में 72 प्रतिशत छात्र पास हुए, जबकि निजी विद्यालयों में 93 प्रतिशत। 2016-17 में उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार द्वारा प्राइमरी एवं सेकेंडरी शिक्षा पर 25,000 रु. प्रति छात्र खर्च किया जा रहा था, जो 2019-20 में लगभग 30,000 रु. होगा।

एक रपट के तहत बिहार के नौ जिलों में 4.3 लाख और झारखंड में 7.6 लाख फर्जी एडमिशन सरकारी विद्यालयों में पाए गए, क्योंकि इन दाखिलों के माध्यम से मध्यान्ह भोजन जैसी सुविधाओं का बजट बढ़ जाता है। यदि फर्जी छात्रों को हटा दिया जाए तो प्रति छात्र सरकारी खर्च 40,000 रु. पड़ सकता है। नेशनल सैंपल सर्वे के अनुसार 2014 में लगभग 64 प्रतिशत छात्र सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ रहे थे। आज शायद उनकी संख्या 55 प्रतिशत हो। यदि सभी छात्रों को शामिल कर लिया जाए तो सरकार 22,000 रु. प्रति छात्र प्रति वर्ष खर्च कर रही है चाहे वह सरकारी में पढ़ रहा हो अथवा निजी स्कूल में। यदि इसमें से आधी रकम यानी 11,000 रुपये प्रति वर्ष सभी छात्रों को यूनिवर्सल वाउचर के माध्यम से वितरित कर दिए जाएं तो प्रत्येक छात्र को लगभग 1,000 रुपये प्रति माह मिल जाएगा। सरकारी शिक्षा तंत्र में लगभग 90 प्रतिशत खर्च शिक्षकों के वेतन में लगता है। इन वाउचर से छात्र अपने मनचाहे स्कूल की फीस अदा कर सकेंगे और सहज ही हमारे छात्रों की शिक्षा में सुधार हो जाएगा। नेशनल सैंपल सर्वे द्वारा कराए गए सर्वेक्षण में पाया गया कि 2014 में प्राइवेट स्कूलों की औसत फीस 417 रु. प्रति माह थी। वर्तमान में यह 1000 रु. प्रति माह होगी।

वाउचर व्यवस्था लागू होने पर सरकारी स्कूलों के लिए जरूरी होगा कि वे प्राइवेट स्कूलों से प्रतिस्पर्धा में छात्रों को आकर्षित करें जिससे उन्हें वाउचर मिल सकें। इस प्रकार सरकारी विद्यालयों को मजबूरन अपनी कार्यकुशलता में सुधार करना होगा। प्राइवेट स्कूलों को अच्छी फीस मिलेगी और सरकारी स्कूलों में प्रतिस्पर्द्धा उत्पन्न होगी। इससे दोनों में सुधार होगा।

अमेरिका के नेशनल ब्यूरो ऑफ इकोनॉमिक रिसर्च द्वारा किए गए एक अध्ययन में वाउचर से लाई गई प्रतिस्पर्द्धा के कारण सरकारी स्कूलों में सुधार पाया गया। कोलंबिया में पाया गया कि जिन छात्रों ने वाउचर के माध्यम से प्राइवेट स्कूलों में स्थानांतरण लिया उनका रिजल्ट उत्तम रहा। न्यूजीलैंड में पाया गया कि वाउचर व्यवस्था लागू होने के बाद सरकारी विद्यालयों में सुधार हुआ, क्योंकि वे अधिक संख्या में वाउचर प्राप्त करना चाहते थे। अपने देश में आंध्र प्रदेश में वाउचर व्यवस्था को प्रयोग के रूप में लागू किया गया तो पाया गया कि वाउचर के माध्यम से शिक्षा प्राप्त करने वाले छात्रों का अंग्रेजी और गणित में रिजल्ट अच्छा था। दिल्ली में पाया गया कि अंग्रेजी में प्रभाव अच्छा था, यद्यपि हिंदी और गणित में प्रभाव नहीं दिखा। लड़कियों की शिक्षा में वाउचर का विशेष लाभ दिखा। इन तमाम अध्ययनों से पता लगता है कि वाउचर की व्यवस्था से प्रतिस्पर्धा बढ़ती है और शिक्षा में सुधार आता है।

वाउचर व्यवस्था का नुकसान मुख्यतः असमानता को लेकर देखा जाता है। स्वीडन, न्यूजीलैंड, बेल्जियम, अमेरिका इत्यादि देशों में पाया गया कि वाउचर व्यवस्था से समाज के कमजोर वर्ग के छात्र पीछे रह जाते हैं और समृद्ध वर्ग के छात्र वाउचर के साथ अतिरिक्त धन देकर श्रेष्ठतम विद्यालयों में दाखिला ले लेते हैं, लेकिन इन देशों और हमारी परिस्थिति में मौलिक अंतर है। वहां हर छात्र को उसके क्षेत्र के सरकारी विद्यालय में ही दाखिला लेना होता है। जर्नल आफ इकोनॉमिक लिटरेचर में प्रकाशित एक अध्ययन के अनुसार वाउचर से आंध्र प्रदेश में शिक्षा के स्तर में कुछ सुधार हुआ, लेकिन सामाजिक समानता पर असर नहीं पड़ा। अपने देश में कमजोर वर्ग के लोग अपने बच्चों को सरकारी विद्यालयों में भेजते हैं और समृद्ध वर्ग के लोग निजी विद्यालयों में। इसलिए अपने देश में वाउचर से केवल कमजोर को ऊपर बढ़ने में सहायता मिलेगी और उससे समानता स्थापित होगी। सरकारी विद्यालयों के कमजोर रिजल्ट का एक कारण यह बताया जाता है कि उनमें कमजोर वर्ग के छात्र आते हैं। यह बात सही है। इस समस्या का सीधा उपाय यह है कि कमजोर छात्रों को वाउचर देकर उन्हें अच्छे सरकारी अथवा प्राइवेट विद्यालयों में स्थानांतरित कर दिया जाए।

निजीकरण का एक नुकसान यह है कि निजी विद्यालयों में नकल की छूट होती है। अन्य देशों में भी पाया गया कि निजी विद्यालय अपने मानकों को कम करके अधिक संख्या में छात्रों को पास कर देते हैं। यह तर्क अपने देश में लागू नहीं होता, क्योंकि हमारे यहां सीबीएसई अथवा राज्य बोर्डों द्वारा परीक्षा ली जाती है जो विद्यालयों को सामान परीक्षा व्यवस्था उपलब्ध कराते हैं। यदि हमें अपने युवाओं को अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रतिस्पर्धा में खड़े होने की क्षमता देनी है तो सरकारी शिक्षकों को दिए जाने वाले वेतन में कटौती कर प्रति माह कुछ रकम सीधे सभी छात्रों को दे देना चाहिए, जिससे वे मनचाहे स्कूलों में दाखिला ले सकें। दूरस्थ ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के लिए वाउचर की रकम को बढ़ाया जा सकता है जैसे हर छात्र को 1,000 के स्थान पर 2,000 रु. प्रति माह का वाउचर दिया जा सकता है। इससे दूरस्थ क्षेत्रों में सरकारी या निजी, दोनों प्रकार के विद्यालय चल सकेंगे और वहां के छात्रों को भी उत्तम शिक्षा मिल सकेगी।

(लेखक आइआइएम बेंगलूर के पूर्व प्रोफेसर हैं)

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साधना

प्रायः लोग ईश्वरीय कृपा पाने के लिए कठिन साधना करते देखे-सुने जाते हैं। कहीं कोई वर्षों से अन्न त्याग कर साधना कर रहा है तो कोई गुफाओं-कंदराओं में जप-तप कर रहा है तो कोई लाखों-लाख मंत्रजाप कर रहा है। ऐसी साधनाओं की चर्चा होती रहती हैं, पर तत्वदर्शी विद्वानों का कहना है कि इन सारी साधनाओं से बढ़कर दूसरों के मन को ठेस न पहुंचाना, दूसरों का विश्वास-भरोसा न तोड़ना सबसे बड़ी साधना है। यह वही व्यक्ति कर सकता है जो अपने मन को साध चुका हो और अपने मन के साथ छल-कपट नहीं करता हो। देखने में आता है कि बाह्य साधना करने वालों में अहंकार उत्पन्न होने लगता है और वे चाहते हैं कि आसपास के लोग उन्हें विशेष महत्व दें। ऐसा न होने पर उनमें क्रोध होने लगता है। राष्ट्रपिता महात्मा गांधी तो दूसरों को पीड़ा देने को भी हिंसा मानते थे। केवल भौतिक पदार्थों को तोड़ना-जलाना या नष्ट करना ही हिंसा नहीं, दूसरों का अहित करना भी हिंसा ही है।

समाज में पद और कद का बड़ा महत्व है। कोई बड़ा ओहदा मिला नहीं कि लोग उस व्यक्ति को ऐसे महिमामंडित करने लगते हैं कि जैसे वह कोई साधारण मानव नहीं, बल्कि अवतारी शक्ति है। चारों तरफ जयजयकार होने पर व्यक्ति का पद उस पर प्रभावी हो जाता है और उसका कद छोटा हो जाता है। कद का छोटा होने का मतलब मानवीय उसकी संवेदनाएं मरने लगती हैं। धीरे-धीरे इतना आत्ममुग्ध हो जाता है कि वह चाहने लगता है कि उसके माता-पिता, गुरु सब उसे देखकर उठ खड़े हों। यही दुर्गुण महाभारतकाल में दुर्योधन तथा श्रीराम के वक्त रावण में आ गया था। लिहाजा उनका पतन हुआ और फिर साम्राज्य बिखर गया। बड़ा पद मिलने पर अगर विनम्रता, सहनशीलता, सज्जनता नहीं आईं तो एक न एक दिन उच्च से उच्च पदस्थ व्यक्ति बुरी हालत में पहुंच जाता है। अतः पद या भौतिक पदार्थों की प्रचुरता से कोई शानो-शौकत और प्रभुत्व दिखाता है तो वह महामूर्ख है। अतः व्यक्ति को चाहिए कि वह बड़प्पन हासिल करने के बाद विनम्र बने।

सलिल पांडेय

सबको रोजगार देने की चुनौती

सौरभ सिंह

रोजगार के मोर्चे पर मांग और आपूर्ति के अंतर को पाटने के लिए हमें अपने विकास दर को 12 प्रतिशत से ऊपर रखना होगा

पिछले दिनों केंद्रीय मंत्री संतोष गंगवार ने कहा कि आज देश में नौकरी की कोई कमी नहीं, लेकिन उत्तर भारत के युवाओं में वह काबिलियत नहीं कि उन्हें रोजगार दिया जा सके। आंकड़े देखें तो स्थिति कुछ इसके उलट नजर आती है। नेशनल स्किल डेवलपमेंट कॉरपोरेशन (एनएसडीसी) ने 2018 की अपनी सालाना रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि उसने 40 कौशल विकास कार्यक्रमों के तहत 11,035 प्रशिक्षण केंद्रों में 39.8 लाख छात्रों को प्रशिक्षित किया, परंतु उनमें से केवल 12 प्रतिशत छात्रों को ही काम मिल सका है। इसके अलावा पीरियॉडिक लेबर फोर्स सर्वे रिपोर्ट में 2018-19 में देश में 40 फीसद प्रशिक्षित युवाओं के बेरोजगार होने की आशंका जताई जा रही है। साफ है कि देश में विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में कुशल कामगारों की जरूरतों के मुताबिक रोजगार के अवसर ही नहीं पैदा हो रहे हैं।

प्रशिक्षित युवाओं को रोजगार नहीं प्राप्त होना चिंता की बात है। पहले माना जाता था कि लोगों को रोजगार इसलिए नहीं मिल रहे, क्योंकि वे कुशल नहीं हैं, पर अभी तो प्रशिक्षित लोगों को भी रोजगार के अभाव में बेरोजगार रहना पड़ रहा है। ऐसे में सवाल यह उठता है कि क्या मेक इन इंडिया और स्किल इंडिया जैसी योजनाएं उम्मीद के अनुसार परिणाम नहीं दे पा रही हैं? इनका उद्देश्य ही भारत में औद्योगिक उत्पादन बढ़ाने और बड़ी मात्रा में लोगों को रोजगार दिलाने का है तो फिर ये अपने मकसद में कामयाब क्यों नहीं हो रहे हैं? कुछ विशेषज्ञ इसके लिए कॉरपोरेट टैक्स की ऊंची दर को दोष दे रहे थे, जिसके चलते उद्योग जगत देश में निवेश करने से कतरा रहा था और उन देशों का रुख कर रहा था जहां इसकी दरें अपेक्षाकृत कम हैं। हालांकि पिछले दिनों मोदी सरकार द्वारा इसमें की गई कटौती के बाद उम्मीद की जा रही है कि उद्योग जगत नए निवेश के लिए आगे आएगा। टैक्स छूट से कंपनियों के लिए निवेश के लिए पूंजी जुटाना पहले के मुकाबले आसान हो जाएगा। इससे मैन्युफैक्चरिंग गतिविधियों में तेजी आएगी और रोजगार के अवसर भी बढ़ेंगे।

आंकड़ों के अनुसार देश में हर साल एक करोड़ युवा रोजगार के बाजार में आ जाते हैं, लेकिन हालिया अध्ययन इस बात की पुष्टि कर रहे हैं कि देश उन्हें खपाने के लिए रोजगार के उतने अवसर पैदा नहीं कर पा रह है। हालांकि यह स्थिति को कभी नहीं बनेगी कि एक खास समय में जितने बेरोजगार हैं सबको रोजगार मिल जाए, एक खाई तो हमेशा बनी रहेगी, पर अभी स्थिति काफी खराब नजर आ रही है। इसके निदान के लिए हमें आर्थिक विकास के दर को बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। जानकारों का मानना है कि रोजगार के मोर्चे पर मांग और आपूर्ति के अंतर को पाटने के लिए हमें अपने विकास दर को 12 प्रतिशत से ऊपर रखने की कोशिश करनी होगी। इससे हमें पांच लाख करोड़ डॉलर की अर्थव्यवस्था बनने में भी आसानी होगी। हालांकि ऐसा तभी होगा जब यहां कारोबार करना आसान होगा, सरकारी अड़चनें दूर होंगी, कर संरचना तर्कसंगत होगी। साथ ही उद्योगों को आसानी से जमीन, कर्ज और औद्योगिक शांति की गारंटी मिलेगी।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

मेलबाक्स

अभी बरकरार है चुनौती

केंद्रीय स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्री डॉ. हर्षवर्धन ने 'सेहत के मोर्चे पर सुधरते हालात' शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में आयुष्मान भारत योजना का वर्णन किया है। आजादी के इतने वर्षों बाद भी देश में महंगे इलाज के कारण मौत के मुंह में जाने वाला आंकड़ा कोई कम नहीं है। हमारे देश में बहुत से लोग तो ऐसे भी होंगे जिन्हें महंगे इलाज ने कंगाल या कर्जदार भी बना दिया होगा। ऐसे में यह योजना अवश्य ही गरीबों के लिए वरदान है, लेकिन इसके साथ-साथ सरकार को देश में सरकारी अस्पतालों की गिनती बढ़ाने, सरकारी अस्पतालों को आधुनिक सुविधाओं से लैस करने और डॉक्टरों की गिनती बढ़ाने के अभी और उपाय करने चाहिए। स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय के सर्वे के अनुसार केवल 11 प्रतिशत उप स्वास्थ्य केंद्र ही स्वास्थ्य संबंधी मानकों के अनुकूल हैं। इसके अलावा 2008 में भी स्वास्थ्य संबंधी बीमा के लिए राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य बीमा योजना लाई गई थी। वर्तमान समय में भी सरकार द्वारा प्रधानमंत्री जीवन ज्योति योजना चलाई गई है, किंतु जागरूकता के अभाव में आज देश में 10 में से सिर्फ 3 लोगों के पास ही स्वास्थ्य बीमा है। सरकार को इनकी तरफ भी ध्यान देना चाहिए।

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भीड़ का फैसला

दिल्ली के महरौली इलाके में एक महिला को मौत के घाट उतार दिया गया, सिर्फ चोरी के शक के आधार पर। कितनी अजीब बात है कि केवल शक के आधार पर उस महिला को पीट-पीटकर मार डाला गया और ये जानने की जहमत नहीं की गई कि इसमें सच्चाई कितनी है? यह सिर्फ दिल्ली की ही बात नहीं है, देश के अंदर बहुत से निर्दोष लोगों को सिर्फ शक के आधार पर ही मार दिया जाता है। आज के परिदृश्य में लोगों के पास सहनशक्ति और इंसानियत की कमी होती जा रही है, जिसके कारण लोग छोटी-मोटी घटनाओं को नजरअंदाज करने के बजाय उसको तूल देते हैं और फिर उसका परिणाम भयावह हो जाता है। ऐसे लोग ये बिल्कुल नहीं जानना चाहते कि वास्तविकता क्या है? आरोप सही है या नहीं, बस लोग मारना शुरू कर देते हैं। एक इंसान ही इंसान को पीट-पीट कर मार देता है यह कितना घृणित है। अगर कोई वास्तविक अपराधी है तो भी क्या भीड़ को फैसला करने का अधिकार है? अगर भीड़ ही फैसला करेगी तो कानून व्यवस्था का क्या होगा?

नीरज कुमार पाठक, नोएडा

नियम का पालन जरूरी

मोटर वाहन अधिनियम 2019 के विरोध में बड़ी संख्या में लोग खड़े हो गए हैं। नए-नए जोक बन रहे हैं जो परोक्ष रूप से इस विरोध की पैरवी ही कर रहे हैं। कई राज्य इसे यथावत लागू करने की हिम्मत ही नहीं कर पा रहे हैं। यह तो मानना ही पड़ेगा कि यह कानून जन सामान्य की सुरक्षा के लिए ही बना है। यदि निर्धारित समय में सब कार्यवाही पूरी कर ली जाए और नियमों का पालन किया जाए तो चालान का भय नहीं हो सकता और यातायात भी सुव्यवस्थित होगा। हेलमेट बिना बाइक चलाना उस पर तीन कभी-कभी चार सवारी लादना क्या स्वीकार्य होना चाहिए? यह भी बहुधा दृष्टव्य है कि गरदन बांई ओर झुकी है और मोबाइल चालू है। झांसा देने के लिए हेलमेट में मोबाइल फंसा लेते हैं। कार की भी कमोबेश यही स्थिति है। ध्यान से वाहन नहीं चलाने से दुर्घटना हो जाती है जिसमें खुद के दोष के कारण दूसरे निर्दोष की अपूर्णीय क्षति हो जाती है। लोग वाहन चालक को ही दोषी देते हैं। मनुष्य जीवन अमूल्य है इसलिए जुर्माने की धनराशि का मजाक बनाने की जगह लोगों को नियम पालन के लिए प्रेरित करना अधिक उपयोगी होगा।

शैलेंद्र सक्सेना, नई दिल्ली

जरूरी जुर्माना

नए सख्त वाहन अधिनियम 2019 में दोषी वाहन चालकों पर भारी जुर्माना निर्धारित किया गया है, जो कि उचित है। बिना सख्ती के किसी व्यवस्था को लागू नहीं किया जा सकता है, लेकिन इसमें एक कमी यह है कि इसमें सड़कों, फुटपाथों, चौराहों एवं अंडरपासों आदि के खराब रखरखाव के लिए जिम्मेदार अधिकारियों, ठेकेदारों आदि पर कोई कार्रवाई का प्रावधान नहीं है। खराब सड़कों की वजह से भी हादसे होते हैं और लोग मौत के शिकार होते हैं। इसके लिए दोषी अधिकारियों के खिलाफ भी कार्रवाई होनी चाहिए। इससे निश्चित ही बहुत सुधार दिखाई देगा।

वेद मामूरपुर, नरेला

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।

नए रिश्तों का दौर

अमेरिका के शहर ह्यूस्टन में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के स्वागत-सम्मान में आयोजित भव्य समारोह 'हाउडी मोदी' का संदेश साफ है कि भारत और अमेरिका के रिश्ते में अब नए युग की शुरुआत हैं। इस आयोजन की अहमियत सिर्फ इसलिए नहीं मानी जानी चाहिए कि यह भारतीयों और अमेरिकियों की ओर से मोदी का सम्मान भर था, बल्कि यह समारोह इस वजह से ज्यादा महत्त्वपूर्ण रहा कि अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप खुद इसमें मौजूद रहे, मंच से हर मामले में मोदी की तारीफ की। आतंकवाद से निपटने से लेकर कारोबारी रिश्तों तक को मजबूत करने में अमेरिका भारत के साथ एकजुट दिखा। क्या कोई सोच सकता है कि आयात शुल्क जैसे मुद्दे पर कभी भारत को धमकाने वाले ट्रंप इस तरह दिल खोल कर भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री की आवभगत करेंगे! यह कोई मामूली बात नहीं है कि भारत के प्रधानमंत्री के लिए अमेरिकी कांग्रेस के सदस्य, टेक्सास के गवर्नर सहित तमाम बड़ी हस्तियां और कारोबारियों के साथ पचास हजार लोग स्टेडियम में मौजूद रहे। मोदी के इस सम्मान से वैश्विक पटल पर एक बार फिर भारत का डंका बजा है। हालांकि पहले भी ऐसे अवसर आए हैं जब प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने इस तरह के आयोजनों में प्रवासी नागरिकों का दिल जीता है। 24 सितंबर 2014 को भी न्यूयॉर्क के मेडिसन स्क्वायर पर मोदी ने बीस हजार भारतीयों को संबोधित किया था।

ह्यूस्टन का समारोह जहां अमेरिका के साथ रिश्तों के नए आयाम गढ़ने वाला रहा है, वहीं इस मंच से ट्रंप और मोदी ने आतंकवाद के खिलाफ एकजुट होकर लड़ने का जो संकल्प व्यक्त किया है, वह पड़ोसी देश पाकिस्तान के लिए स्पष्ट और कड़ा संदेश है। दोनों नेताओं ने अपने भाषण में आतंकवाद को लेकर जो कुछ कहा, उसका सार यही था कि इस्लामी आतंकवाद दुनिया की शांति के लिए बड़ा खतरा है और इससे मिल कर निपटना होगा। इसके मायने पाकिस्तान को समझने चाहिए। आतंकवाद के मुद्दे पर अमेरिका ने पिछले कुछ समय में जिस तरह से भारत का साथ दिया है, उससे भी पाकिस्तान सकते में है। राष्ट्र हितों को लेकर ट्रंप और मोदी के बीच वैचारिक साम्यता की एक और झलक हाउडी मोदी में देखने को मिली। जहां भारत में घुसपैठियों को खदेड़ने के खिलाफ सरकार ने ठान रखी है, वहीं मैक्सिको से आने वाले लोगों के लिए ट्रंप का रुख भी दुनिया के सामने है। अवैध नागरिकों का मुद्दा भी इस समारोह से दूर नहीं रह पाया। स्टेडियम में भारतीय समुदाय के लोग 'जयश्री राम' और 'राम लला हम आएंगे .. मंदिर वहीं बनाएंगे' जैसे नारे लगा रहे थे। जाहिर है, भविष्य के भारत को लेकर मोदी की नीतियों और उनके काम को लेकर अमेरिका में रह रहे भारतीयों को भी उनसे उम्मीदें काफी हैं।

प्रधानमंत्री का ह्यूस्टन दौरा भारतीयों से मुलाकात और कारोबारी रिश्तों को बढ़ाने के मकसद से ज्यादा महत्त्वपूर्ण रहा है। अमेरिकी तेल कंपनियों के प्रमुखों के साथ प्रधानमंत्री की बैठक भारत के ऊर्जा क्षेत्र की जरूरतों को पूरा करने पर केंद्रित रही और कई बड़े फैसले हुए। इससे अब भारत के ऊर्जा बाजार में निवेश बढ़ाने के लिए अमेरिकी कंपनियों को और आसानी होगी। भारत की तात्कालिक चिंता कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति को लेकर है, क्योंकि सऊदी अरब के तेल संयंत्रों पर हमले के बाद से तेल उत्पादन पर भारी असर पड़ा है। ऐसे में अब अमेरिका भारत को कच्चा तेल देगा। रक्षा क्षेत्र में भी दोनों देशों ने सहयोग बढ़ाने के लिए हाथ मिलाया है। कारोबारी लिहाज से अमेरिका अब भारत की अहमियत अच्छी तरह समझ चुका है। भारत के लिए यह कम बड़ी उपलब्धि नहीं है।

ताक पर कानून

पिछले कुछ समय से ऐसी घटनाएं लगातार सामने आ रही हैं, जिनमें लोगों ने किसी व्यक्ति पर आरोप लगा कर कानून अपने हाथ में ले लिया और पीट-पीट कर उसकी जान ले ली। यह प्रवृत्ति चिंताजनक रूप से बढ़ी है और अब इसका दायरा बढ़ता जा रहा है। रविवार को आई खबरों के मुताबिक देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में सिर्फ शक के आधार पर तीन लोगों की बुरी तरह पिटाई गई जिससे उनकी मौत हो गई। दिल्ली में लोगों के घरों में खाना बना कर गुजारा करने और अपने बच्चों को पढ़ाने वाली एक विधवा महिला को चोरी का आरोप लगा कर एक परिवार ने इस कदर पीटा कि उसकी जान चली गई। इसी तरह, राजस्थान के झालावाड़ जिले में चोर बता कर एक दलित युवक को बेरहमी से पीट कर मार डाला गया। इसके अलावा, झारखंड में गोमांस बेचने के आरोप में तीन युवकों की बुरी तरह पिटाई की गई, जिसमें एक की मौत हो गई। कानून की फिक्र को ताक पर रख एक दिन में इस तरह की तीन घटनाएं आखिर क्या बताती हैं? क्या स्थिति यहां तक आ चुकी है कि भीड़ में शामिल होने या किसी बहाने जानलेवा तरीके से पिटाई करने वाले लोगों के दिमाग में कानून का खयाल नहीं आता?

पिछले साल सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने साफ लहजे में कहा था कि कोई भी व्यक्ति अपने आप में कानून नहीं बन सकता है और लोकतंत्र में भीड़तंत्र की इजाजत नहीं दी जा सकती है। अदालत ने भीड़ के हाथों हत्या को एक अलग अपराध की श्रेणी में रखने और इसकी रोकथाम के लिए नया कानून बनाने की बात कही थी। लेकिन उसके बाद मौजूदा कानूनों को भी धता बता कर ऐसी घटनाएं जिस तरह बदस्तूर जारी हैं, उससे साफ है कि ऐसे अपराधों पर लगाम लगाना शायद सरकारों की प्राथमिकता में नहीं है। कभी गोमांस के बहाने तो कभी बच्चा चोरी या फिर कोई सामान चुराने के आरोप में पकड़े गए किसी व्यक्ति को जब कोई समूह बर्बरता से पिटाई करने लगता है तो आखिर उसका विवेक क्यों ऐसा करने की इजाजत देता है? ऐसे लोगों को यह समझना जरूरी क्यों नहीं लगता कि अगर कोई काम कानून की परिभाषा में अपराध है तो उसके लिए सजा भी कानूनी प्रक्रिया के तहत ही तय होगी? ऐसे लोग आरोपी को पकड़ने के बाद उसे पुलिस के हाथों में क्यों नहीं सौंपते और उनकी जानलेवा पिटाई की हिम्मत उनके भीतर कहां से आती है?

हालांकि किसी अफवाह या आरोप की वजह से लोग जिस तरह एक भीड़ की शक्ल में तब्दील हो रहे हैं, उसकी स्वाभाविक परिणति यही है कि ऐसी स्थिति में किसी तथ्य पर विचार करना जरूरी नहीं समझा जाता है और दिमाग पर सिर्फ उत्तेजना और उन्माद हावी रहता है। इसके अलावा, जो लोग भीड़ बन कर हिंसा करते हैं, अक्सर उन पर सख्त कानूनी कार्रवाई नहीं होती, खदेड़ने या भ्रम के आधार पर ज्यादातर लोग हत्या के अपराध से बच जाते हैं या फिर कई बार उन्हें राजनीतिक संरक्षण प्राप्त होता है। ऐसे ही मामले सामने आए जब भीड़ के हाथों हत्या के अभियुक्तों को जमानत मिली तो किसी बड़े नेता ने उनका स्वागत भी किया। सवाल है कि क्या इससे बाकी जगहों पर अराजक तत्त्वों को शह नहीं मिलेगी? उन्माद की मानसिकता में जीने वाली भीड़ किसी के नियंत्रण में नहीं रहती है और उसका खमियाजा अमूमन निर्दोष लोगों को भुगतना पड़ता है। यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि अगर यह चलन इसी रफ्तार से आगे बढ़ा तो देश के लोकतांत्रिक ढांचे और विधि के शासन के सामने एक बड़ी चुनौती खड़ी हो जाएगी।

कल्पमेधा

जिस समय हम समझते हैं कि नेतृत्व कर रहे हैं, उस समय अक्सर हम दूसरे के नेतृत्व में होते हैं।

- बायरन

जाली मुद्रा का बाजार

अभिजीत मोहन

नोटबंदी से पहले देश के विभिन्न बैंकों के एटीएम से नकली नोट निकल रहे थे। उत्तर प्रदेश के कई बैंकों के चेस्ट में भारी मात्रा में नकली नोट पाए गए थे। यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि देश में ऐसे कई गिरोह हैं जो नकली नोटों का कारोबार कर रहे हैं, लेकिन वे जांच एजेंसियों की पकड़ से बाहर हैं।

यह चिंताजनक है कि सरकर की कड़ी निगरानी के बावजूद देश में नकली नोटों का प्रवाह थम नहीं पा रहा। भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के मुताबिक बीते दो वर्षों में नकली नोटों की संख्या में दस गुना से ज्यादा बढ़ोत्तरी हुई है। रिजर्व बैंक के आंकड़ों के मुताबिक 2017-18 और 2018-19 में नकली नोटों की संख्या में भारी इजाफा हुआ है। चिंता की बात यह है कि बड़े नकली नोटों के अलावा अब दस, बीस और पचास रुपए के छोटे नकली नोट भी बाजार में हैं। रिजर्व बैंक के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि एक वर्ष के दौरान दस, बीस और पचास रुपए के नकली नोटों में क्रमशः 20.2, 87.2 और 57.3 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोत्तरी हुई है। यानी दो साल के दरम्यान छोटी मुद्राओं में नकली नोटों की संख्या चार गुना तक बढ़ी है। आंकड़ों पर गौर करें तो पचास रुपए के नकली नोटों की संख्या नौ हजार से बढ़ कर छत्तीस हजार तक पहुंच गई है। रिजर्व बैंक के मुताबिक बाजार में सबसे अधिक सौ रुपए के नकली नोट मौजूद हैं। हालांकि सौ रुपए के नकली नोटों में साढ़े फीसद की कमी आई है। रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक पिछले दो वर्षों में दो हजार रुपए के नकली नोटों की संख्या में भी बाईस प्रतिशत का इजाफा हुआ है। इसी तरह दो सौ रुपए के नकली नोटों में एक सौ साठ गुना वृद्धि हुई है।

पिछले साल 2018 में दो सौ रुपए के उनयासी जाली नोट पकड़े गए थे, जबकि इस साल इनकी संख्या बारह हजार सात सौ अट्ठासी हो गयी। इसी तरह पांच सौ रुपए के नकली नोटों में एक सौ इक्कीस प्रतिशत की बढ़ोत्तरी हुई है। 2016-17 में पांच सौ रुपए के नकली नोटों की संख्या सिर्फ एक सौ निन्यानवे थी, जो 2018-19 में बढ़ कर बाईस हजार पहुंच गई। गत वर्ष एक रिपोर्ट में इस बात का खुलासा हुआ था कि पिछले दस सालों में देश के बैंकिंग तंत्र में लेनदेन के दौरान नकली मुद्रा पकड़े जाने के मामले तेजी से बढ़े हैं। साल 2007-08 में सरकार ने पहली बार यह अनिवार्य किया था कि निजी बैंकों और देश में संचालित सभी विदेशी बैंकों के लिए नकली मुद्रा पकड़े जाने संबंधी किसी भी घटना की जानकारी धनशोधन रोधी कानून के प्रावधान के तहत वित्तीय खुफिया इकाई (एफआईयू) को देनी होगी। उसके बाद से एकत्र किए गए आंकड़ों के अनुसार वर्ष 2009-10 में सवा लाख से से ज्यादा ऐसे मामले दर्ज हुए थे। एक ही साल यानी 2010-11 में ऐसे दर्ज मामलों की संख्या ढाई लाख से ज्यादा हो गई और वर्ष 2011-12 में ये सवाल तीन लाख से ऊपर निकल गए। इन आंकड़ों से साफ है कि देश में बड़े पैमाने पर नकली नोटों का प्रवाह जारी है।

राष्ट्रीय अपराध रिकार्ड ब्यूरो भी खुलासा कर चुका है कि देश में सबसे अधिक पांच सौ रुपए के नकली नोट चल रहे हैं। आंकड़ों के मुताबिक वर्ष 2015 में पांच सौ रुपए के 2,99,524 नोट, सौ रुपए के 2,17,189 नोट और एक हजार रुपए के 1,78,022 नकली नोट बरामद किए गए। नोटबंदी से पहले के एक आंकड़े के मुताबिक रिजर्व बैंक और जांच एजेंसियों की सख्ती के बावजूद भारतीय बाजार में मौजूद साढ़े ग्यारह लाख करोड़ रुपए की मुद्रा में बड़ी संख्या में नकली नोट मौजूद होने का खुलासा हुआ था। यह भी आशंका जाहिर की गई थी कि यह आंकड़ा चार सौ करोड़ रुपए से भी अधिक हो सकता है। नोटबंदी से पहले देश के विभिन्न बैंकों के एटीएम से नकली नोट निकल रहे थे। उत्तर प्रदेश के कई बैंकों के चेस्ट में भारी मात्रा में नकली नोट पाए गए थे। यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि देश में ऐसे कई गिरोह हैं जो नकली नोटों का कारोबार कर रहे हैं, लेकिन वे जांच एजेंसियों की पकड़ से बाहर हैं। अब भी पाकिस्तान नकली नोटों की खेप बांग्लादेश के जरिए भारत में भेज रहा है। सुरक्षा एजेंसियां पहले भी खुलासा कर चुकी हैं कि पाकिस्तान की खुफिया एजेंसी आइएसआइ सालाना दस हजार करोड़ रुपए मूल्य के भारतीय नोटों की नकली मुद्रा छाप कर भारत में भेजने की योजना पर काम कर रही है। खास बात यह कि नोटबंदी के बाद भी पाकिस्तान इस खेल में जुटा हुआ है।

दरअसल, उसकी मंशा नकली नोटों के जरिए आतंकवाद को बढ़ावा देना और भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को नुकसान पहुंचाने की है। आंकड़ों पर गौर करें तो वर्ष 2010 में तकरीबन सोलह अरब रुपए मूल्य की नकली मुद्रा नेपाल और बांग्लादेश के जरिए भारत भेजी गई थी। इसी तरह वर्ष 2011 में बीस अरब रुपए की नकली मुद्रा भेजी गई। इस जाली मुद्रा में तकरीबन साठ फीसद हिस्सा पाकिस्तान में छापा गया था। वर्ष 2015 में भी इन रास्तों से तकरीबन तीन करोड़ से ज्यादा की मुद्रा पकड़ी गई थी।

अच्छी बात है कि समय-समय पर भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक देश के नागरिकों को प्रचार-प्रसार के जरिए असली-नकली नोटों के फर्क को समझाता रहता है। बैंकों को भी हिदायत दी जाती है कि वे नोटों को लेने से पहले उसकी जांच जरूर कर लें। इसमें दो राय नहीं कि नोटबंदी के बाद भी नकली मुद्रा के धंधे से जुड़े लोगों पर अभी तक पूरी तरह से शिकंजा नहीं कसा जा सका है। हालांकि भारत सरकार ने नकली नोटों पर अंकुश रखने के उपाय सुझाने के लिए शैलभद्र बनर्जी की अध्यक्षता में एक समिति गठित की थी, जिसने अपनी रिपोर्ट सरकार को सौंप दी है। इस रिपोर्ट पर अमल करते हुए मुद्रा निदेशालय में अतिरिक्त सचिव स्तर का महानिदेशक का पद सृजित किया गया है। इसके अलावा कई अन्य और कदम उठाए गए हैं। मसलन, सरकार ने बेहद सुरक्षित किस्म के कागजों पर नोट छापने का निर्णय लिया है। इसके लिए मैसूर में अत्याधुनिक तकनीक पर आधारित नोटों के कागज बनाने का कारखाना लगाया जा रहा है। इस कारखाने में निर्मित करेंसी कागज की नकल करना किसी के लिए भी आसान नहीं है। गौरतलब है कि अभी भारत में इस्तेमाल होने वाले अधिकांश करेंसी कागज आयातित होते हैं। हर वर्ष भारत तेरह अरब रुपए मूल्य के कागज आयात करता है।

नकली नोटों के अवैध धंधे को रोकने के लिए वित्त मंत्रालय, गृह मंत्रालय, भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक और केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों की सुरक्षा व खुफिया एजेंसियां मिल कर काम कर रही हैं। गौरतलब है कि एजेंसियों के बीच तालमेल बनाए रखने के लिए गृह मंत्रालय में एक संयोजन समिति बनाई गई है। इसके अलावा, रिजर्व बैंक ने नकली नोटों पर लगाम लगाने के लिए पिछले साल एक तरफ बिना छपाई वर्ष वाले 2005 से पुराने नोटों को परिचालन से बाहर कर दिया है। वहीं नए नोटों पर सुरक्षा मानक ज्यादा उन्नत बना दिए गए हैं। इसके अलावा रिजर्व बैंक ने पिछले साल से ही नंबर पैनल पर आकार में नोटों के नंबर की छपाई बढ़ते हुए क्रम में शुरू कर दी है। बेहतर होगा कि भारत सरकार नकली नोटों की समस्या से निपटने के लिए और कड़ा कदम उठाए। इसमें अमेरिका मददगार साबित हो सकता है। इसलिए कि उसके पास नकली नोटों से निपटने की उच्च प्रौद्योगिकी विद्यमान है और साथ ही उसके पास हर नकली अमेरिकी डॉलर का फोटो सहित डाटाबेस भी उपलब्ध है। उसे जानकारी हो जाती है कि नकली डॉलर कहां और किस रास्ते से आता है और इसे लाने वाले लोग कौन लोग हैं। अगर भारत भी अमेरिकी प्रौद्योगिकी की सहायता लेता है तो निःसंदेह नकली नोटों से निपटने में मदद मिलेगी।

नसीहत के फूल

राजेंद्र प्रसाद

दुनिया मेरे आगे

हरेक की जिंदगी के समंदर में अनेक उतार-चढ़ाव आते हैं। ऐसे में जब कभी एकांत में जिंदगी के बारे में सोचने-विचारने का अवसर मिलता है तब समझ आता है कि केवल सांस लेने या छोड़ने का नाम जिंदगी नहीं है। ऐसी स्वतः स्फूर्त क्रिया तो निहायत कुदरती प्रवृत्ति है, जिसे हमें याद नहीं करना पड़ता कि सांस कब लेना या कब छोड़ना है। अगर हम ठीक से जीवन पर विचार करें तो बहुत सारे पहलू और आयाम हमसे जुड़े होते हैं। उदाहरण के लिए एक बच्चा पैदा होने के बाद ज्यों-ज्यों बड़ा होता जाता है त्यों-त्यों खुद को संसार में मोह-माया की केंचुली में निरंतर ऐसा लिपटा हुआ पाता है, जिसमें अपने इर्द-गिर्द के परिवार वाले या संसारवासी समझा-पढ़ा देते हैं कि पढ़ो, पैसा कमाओ और विकास की भूख को शांत करो। इससे ऐसा जरूर लगता है जैसे बचपन में हम खूब पढ़ें, बड़े होकर अच्छा भविष्य बनाएं। अच्छा भविष्य पैसा कमाने से जुड़ा हुआ देखते हैं या गृहस्थी चलाने के लिए अर्थ को प्रधान मान कर विकास की सब क्रियाओं से गुजरते हैं। लेकिन ऐसा लगता है कि अर्थ के चक्कर में बहुत सारा अनर्थ भी जीवन में कर जाते हैं, जिसकी आपाधापी में इंसान का जीवन कीचड़ में ऐसा सन जाता है कि जीवन का उद्देश्य बहुत सीमित-सा जान पड़ता है।

यों देखें तो जीवन में दुनिया की अच्छी-बुरी बातें कही-सुनी और की जाती हैं, सिर्फ अमल करना बाकी रह जाता है। सांसारिक चक्र से थोड़ा-सा सोचें तो लगेगा कि जिंदगी के असली और प्राकृतिक आनंद से हम अपने को काफी जुदा पाते हैं। मोटे तौर पर चार तरह के लोग होते हैं- पहले, जो जल्दी से कोई गलती नहीं करते या ठोकर खाने से पहले ही संभले होते हैं; दूसरे, किसी को ठोकर खाकर देखते हुए देख संभल जाते हैं; तीसरे, खुद ठोकर खाकर भविष्य के लिए संभल जाते हैं और चौथे, वे जो ठोकर खाकर भी कभी नहीं संभलते।

बेशक जिंदगी हमें बहुत कुछ सिखाती है। आज दुनिया में कितने लोग हैं जो सही को सही और गलत को गलत जानते हैं। कटु सत्य है कि गलत को गलत और सही को सही पहचानना और कहना आज के युग में असंभव नहीं तो मुश्किल जरूर है। लगता है कि हम बदलते दौर के ऐसे कालखंड में जी रहे हैं जहां लोग साधारण नहीं, असाधारण से हो गए हैं। सामाजिक नहीं, कुछ असामाजिक हो रहे हैं और इंसानियत को भूल रहे हैं। इसका मतलब ये नहीं कि हम सब गलत हैं। कहीं न कहीं हमारी शिक्षा पद्धति, समाज और परिवारों के सोचने और काम करने का ढंग भी दोषी है। इसलिए संवाद का स्थान विवाद और समाधान का स्थान समस्या ले रहा है।

जीवन में जीने के मकसद पर विचार करने की आदत होनी चाहिए। कुछ लोग तो यह भी कह गए हैं- 'न चादर बड़ी कीजिए, न ख्वाहिशें दफन कीजिए, चार दिन की जिंदगी है, बस चैन से बसर कीजिए।' जीवन को सही और सार्थक बनाने के लिए अगर हम सीखना चाहें तो संसार में सीखने-करने की बहुत सारी चीजें हैं। उनमें महत्त्वपूर्ण है- नसीहतें, जो चिंतकों-विचारकों और महान लोगों के अनुभवों के खजाने से निकली हैं। नसीहतें हमारे जीवन के अंधकार को हटा कर रोशनी करती हैं, सबक लेने का मौका देती हैं और जीवन के रूप-स्वरूप को संवारने-सुधारने में विशेष मदद करती हैं और हमारे व्यक्तित्व को निखारने में बड़ी भूमिका अदा करती हैं। बानगी के रूप में कुछ नसीहतें गहरे अर्थ वाली भी हैं। मसलन, 'जीभ सुधर जाए तो जीवन सुधरने में वक्त नहीं लगता'। 'दीपक इसलिए वंदनीय है कि वह दूसरों के लिए जलता है, दूसरों से नहीं जलता।' 'जो दूसरों से मिलजुल कर चलता है, वास्तव में केवल वही जीने की कला जानता है।' 'सब्र और सच्चाई एक ऐसी सवारी है जो अपने सवार को कभी गिरने नहीं देती; ना किसी के कदमों में और न किसी की नजरों में।'

इन नसीहतों में जीवन के मूल्य हैं, नैतिकता के सबक और व्यक्तित्व विकास के लिए प्रेरणा है। अपनों को अपना बनाए रखने का चुंबक है और परायों को अपना बनाने के नुस्खे भी। नसीहत के फूल किसी को दें तो उसकी खुशबू खुद भी लेना न भूलें। सब मानते हैं कि दूसरों को नसीहत देना और आलोचना करना सबसे आसान काम है। सबसे मुश्किल काम है चुप रहना और आलोचना सुनना। विरासत में हर बार जागीर और सोना-चांदी नहीं मिलता, कई बार जिम्मेदारियां भी मिलती हैं। अपना अहं त्याग कर शक्तिशाली होने पर भी सरल रहने की जरूरत है। धनी न होने पर भी परिपूर्ण महसूस करना चाहिए। हालांकि जिंदगी में सरल होना आसान है, पर देखा यह गया है कि कठिन होने को लोग सरल मानते हैं और सरल होना फिर खुद-ब-खुद कठिन हो जाता है। जिंदगी की हर सुबह कुछ शर्तें लेकर आती है और जिंदगी की हर शाम कुछ तजुर्बे देकर जाती है।

अमेरिका के साथ

अमेरिका के ह्यूस्टन शहर में दो शासनाध्यक्षों की मित्रता के रूप में पचास हजार दर्शकों के बीच आयोजित हाउडी मोदी कार्यक्रम वास्तव में भारत-अमेरिका के सांस्कृतिक संबंधों की सकारात्मकता का उदाहरण है। यह अलग बात है कि अगले साल अमेरिका में चुनाव होने जा रहे हैं और अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप को भी वहां बसे भारतीय मूल के लोगों में वोट बैंक नजर नजर आ रहा है। अगर ऐसा है भी तो भारतीय नजरिए से गलत क्या है। ये लोग पहले से वहां बसे हैं और भारत-अमेरिका संबंध अब तक उतार-चढ़ाव के रूप में ही दिखता रहा है। यदि इन नागरिकों की बदौलत भारत अमेरिका संबंधों के विभिन्न आयामों में प्रगाढ़ता आती है तो वहां बसे लाखों भारतीय को भी अपनापन का एहसास होगा। भारतवंशी अपने देश के नेता को सुनने आए थे। ऐसे में अमेरिकी यदि भारत के प्रधानमंत्री के प्रशंसक हो जाते हैं तो भारत को इससे लाभ ही हैं। प्रधानमंत्री ने वहां आतंकवाद का मुद्दा उठाया और अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ने भी इस मुद्दे पर भारत के साथ मिल कर काम करने का जो भरोसा दिया वह भारत के लिए बेहतर ही है। ऊर्जा के मसलों पर दोनों राष्ट्रों के मध्य हो रही साझेदारी ऊर्जा के क्षेत्र में भारत के लिए विकल्पों का बेहतर मार्ग प्रशस्त करेगा।

● *मिथिलेश कुमार, भागलपुर, बिहार*

जिम्मेदार कौन

कोलकाता का जाधवपुर विश्वविद्यालय एक बार फिर विवादों में घिरा है। अखिल भारतीय विद्यार्थी परिषद के एक कार्यक्रम में जब स्थानीय सांसद और केंद्रीय मंत्री बाबुल सुप्रियो के साथ दुर्व्यवहार हुआ और उन्हें बंधक बना लिया गया। हालांकि उन्होंने इसकी कोई रिपोर्ट दर्ज नहीं कराई। किंतु ऐसा करने वाले विश्वविद्यालय के विद्यार्थी थे या बाहरी लोग, यह जांच का विषय है। यह समझने वाली बात है कि जेएनयू जैसा दिल्ली का विश्वविद्यालय जिसमें हजारों विद्यार्थी पढ़ते है, भारत का नाम ऊंचा करते है, किंतु कुछ अतिवादी तत्वों के कारण विश्वविद्यालय बदनाम हो जाते हैं। ऐसे असामाजिक तत्वों को कौन संरक्षण देता है? इनके रक्षा कवच को तोड़ कर ऐसे लोगों को दंडित करना आवश्यक है, क्योंकि इस तरह के तत्व समाज में समरसता और स्नेह के वातावरण को दूषित करते हैं और शिक्षण संस्थानों को गलत दिशा में ले जा रहे है। यही कारण है कि विश्व के श्रेष्ठ संस्थानों की सूची में भारत के विश्वविद्यालयों का स्तर बहुत नीचे आ गया।

● *मंगलेश सोनी, मनावर, धार*

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

गद्दारों की चिंता

आतंकी मुल्क पाकिस्तान दुनियाभर में कश्मीर मुद्दे को लेकर ढिंढोरा पीट रहा है कि भारत सरकार कश्मीरियों पर जुल्म कर रही है और उनके नेताओं का हुक्का-पानी बंद कर रखा है। दरअसल बात यह है कि पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री को कश्मीरियों की चिंता नहीं है, उन्हें भारत के उन गद्दारों की चिंता है जो खाते तो भारत की हैं, रहते भारत में हैं, लेकिन साथ पाकिस्तान का देते हैं और उनके कहने पर घाटी में आतंकियों को घुसने देते हैं। यही नहीं, इन आतंकियों को अपने घर में भी पनाह भी देते हैं। पाकिस्तान अलगाववादी और उन कश्मीरी नेताओं की चिंता कर रहा है, जिनके दिल में भारत नहीं पाकिस्तान और आतंकवाद बसता है। लेकिन भारत की सरकार ने उनको जेलों में ठूस दिया है, इसलिए पाकिस्तान बौखला रहा है। आतंक के सरपरस्त पाकिस्तान को पूरे विश्व में मुंह की खानी पड़ रही है। रविवार को ह्यूस्टन में भी प्रधानमंत्री और अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ने मंच साझा कर इशारों-इशारों में पाकिस्तान को बता दिया कि अगर आतंक को संरक्षम देने का काम बंद नहीं किया तो इसका खमियाजा भुगतना पड़ सकता है।

● *ब्रजेश सैनी, बिंदकी फतेहपुर, उप्र*

साझा सरोकार

हाल ही में ह्यूस्टन में हुए भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री के कार्यक्रम में बड़ी संख्या में विदेशी भारतीयों ने हिस्सा लिया। जहां एक और ट्रम्प के लिए यह अमेरिका में अगले वर्ष होने वाले राष्ट्रपति चुनाव की योजना का हिस्सा था दूसरी और भारत ने भी कई सन्देश इस कार्यक्रम के द्वारा पूरी दुनिया को दिए। जैसे की भारत और अमेरिका आतंकवाद के विरुद्ध एक साथ मजबूती से खड़े है व कश्मीर से 370 हटाने के मामले में भी अमेरिका का समर्थन है। भारत व अमेरिका के बीच पिछले कुछ दिनों से बढ़ रहे व्यापारिक तनाव को कम करना भी इस कार्यक्रम का उद्देश्य था। भले ही ट्रम्प के लिए यह चुनाव प्रचार का हिस्सा हो लेकिन आज अमेरीकी-भारतीय और भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति चुनाव का एक महत्वपूर्ण केंद्र है इससे एक बात तो साफ हो जाता है कि भारत और भारतीयों का प्रभाव व ताकत पूरी दुनिया में आश्चर्य जनक रूप से बढ़ी है और भारतीयों और भारतीय राजनेताओ में अपनी बात किसी भी स्थान पर मुखरता के साथ रखने की प्रवृति जाग्रत हुई है जो की दर्शाता है की भारत विश्वगुरु बनने के अपने लक्ष्य की तरफ अग्रसर है।

● *सुनील कुमार सिंह, मेरठ, उप्र*

जरूरी जुर्माना

नए मोटर वाहन अधिनियम 2019 में दोषी वाहन चालकों पर भारी जुर्माना निर्धारित किया गया है, जो पूरी तरह से उचित है, क्योंकि बिना सख्ती के शासन चलता भी नहीं है। मगर इसमें एक बड़ी कमी यह है कि इसमें दूसरे इतने ही जिम्मेवार पक्ष को छोड़ दिया गया है जो तर्कसंगत नहीं है। इसके लिए खराब और जानलेवा सडकों, फुटपाथों,चौराहों, पुलों, अंडरपास आदि के सभी जिम्मेवार अधिकारियों, ठेकेदारों और नियोजकों आदि पर भी ऐसे ही जुर्माने बहुत जरूरी हैं ताकि किसी को कोई शिकायत न रहे और यह पूरे देश में समान रूप से लागू हो सके। केंद्र के कानून तो पूरे देश के लिए बनते हैं। यदि कुछ राज्य इसे लागू करें, कुछ न करें और कुछ इसे तोड़-मरोड़ कर लागू करें, तो यह किसी के लिए भी शोभायमान नहीं है। इसलिए केंद्र सरकार को इसे इस जरूरी संशोधन के साथ ही लागू करना जरूरी है।

● *वेद मामूरपुर, नरेला*