

Protecting lawyer's privilege

There can be problematic ethics among practitioners of law but that is quite the case with any profession and its practitioners



WITHOUT CONTEMPT

SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN

If news reports of this week are to be believed, yet again, investigative agencies have sought to make inroads into the domain of lawyers to conduct investigations on their clients. This is a breach of one of the foundational precepts on which a democratic society is built.

There is no other profession that is mandated by law to be a keeper of con-

fidence. Under law governing evidence, confidential communication between a lawyer and her client is protected from extraction as evidence. Once a lawyer has been engaged, the communication between the client and the lawyer is protected from being compelled into evidence in proceedings. Therefore, the "privilege" enjoyed by this relationship is that legal advice given, the communication of facts on which advice is sought, and all related correspondence, occupy a sacred protected space that cannot be intruded into.

Indeed, a client may explicitly waive the privilege and ask the lawyer to make a disclosure of such privileged content. Likewise, if the lawyer is not actually providing legal services, but is herself involved in a violation of law that is being probed, arguably, the protection of privilege would not be available. This is the problematic area where, if an investigative agency were to lightly level allegations of colluding and participating in violation, the privilege can be

lightly weakened.

Every society has its own norms and levels of acceptance of how much these spaces should be lightly intruded into. If news reports of this week are to be believed — that investigative agencies are seeking to express judgement about quality of legal advice given by lawyers in a certain case — a serious investigative intervention is afoot. If a probe into whether the lawyer was right or wrong in her advice to a client were to be par for the course, not only would the privilege be breached, but even in non-litigation situations, lawyers would become "bureaucrats".

With apologies to the "steel frame of India", the term in the pejorative sense is used to connote playing safe to push files without taking a specific position or stand on any issue. The inclination, and thereby the capacity of the bureaucracy, to be decisive, has already been chilled over the past several years. Even routine decisions backed by precedent have been called

into question in anti-corruption probes. This has led to bureaucrats currently in office leading a fearful life.

Picture this state in the arena of private investment, where lawyers are involved in advising clients on investing capital. A central problem with the economy today is the bad sentiment in private capital formation. That negative sentiment just received a stronger disincentive, if legal advice that is sought by investors too is to be called into question.

There is a good reason for protection of the sacred space of communication between clients and lawyers. As a society that believes in the right not to be condemned without a fair trial, it is our society's belief that no person should be deprived of his freedoms without due process of law and proper procedure established by law. This finds its way into the law governing evidence and even the Constitution.

A person accused of wrongdoing requires the privacy of a protected space to have a conversation on her narration of facts and events. If such a space does not exist, the only narrative would be that of the accusers. With that, the only requirement to establish

a wrongdoing would then be to accuse a person of wrongdoing. Indeed, courts are repeatedly being told that custodial interrogation is necessary because a suspect is "not co-operating" — a term that is now synonymous with "not confessing to the accusation".

Indeed, there can be problematic ethics among practitioners of law but that is quite the case with any profession and its practitioners. The ethical facets are subject matter of disciplinary proceedings before the institution that is charged with the jurisdiction to regulate the profession — not the domain of investigative agencies that are probing the clients of lawyers.

Lawyers are the butt of many a ridiculous joke — it is in the nature of things to laugh at oneself and not take oneself too seriously. Every single case involves an adversarial airing and canvassing of ideas, each of which may be attacked vociferously by the lawyers of the other parties in that case. That brings with it the ability to laugh at oneself and to have fun at one's own expense.

But push that into shooting at the lawyer in a probe against the client, and it would be a recipe for a dystopian society. Utopia (a perfect society) is a mirage since it is tough to attain. But that does not mean one moves towards dystopia (the exact opposite of utopia), which is quite easy to attain.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Restructuring pangs



The proposed restructuring of government departments in Uttar Pradesh on NITI Aayog's recommendation is hanging over the heads of ministers like the proverbial sword of Damocles. Since the Adityanath (pictured) government is mulling to pare the total number of departments from nearly 100 to 55-57, the decision is bound to affect a large number of ministries and alter the pecking order in the state council of ministers. The issue has been discussed at length during recent cabinet meetings, although the government seems to be in no great hurry to get it over and done with. It is just a matter of time though.

Facing the music



Choosing between the call of duty and a movie featuring your favourite star can be a tough call. A bunch of young sub-inspectors (SIs) in Kurnool district learnt that the hard way when they decided to watch south star Chiranjeevi's 151st and the most ambitious movie till date, *Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy*. The policemen reportedly bunked duty to catch an early morning show at a theatre in Koilakuntla. All would have been well had they not left proof of their day out by posting a photograph on social media. The photograph was noticed by none other than Kurnool SP who was irked that the cops had neither sought his permission nor had they applied for leave. The day also coincided with the inauguration of village secretariat offices in various parts of the state and needed every possible boot on the ground. Last heard, an inquiry had been ordered and probably the SIs are hoping they would be let off lightly.

Agree to disagree

The leadership vacuum in the Congress party continues to roil the waters. After senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid raised an alarm over the future of the party, former MP and Congress General Secretary Jyotiraditya Scindia on Wednesday voiced similar concerns. The party needs urgent introspection to resurrect itself, he said. The two leaders, however, differed on their views about the party's likely performance in the coming Maharashtra Assembly elections. "I strongly believe that Congress will taste victory in the state," said the young leader, while his senior colleagues had said earlier in the day that the Congress is unlikely to taste victory in the Assembly elections in Haryana and Maharashtra.

Laws for gig workers prove a laborious process

A draft social security law has employers who rely on flexible hiring worried about rising costs

SOMESH JHA

In attempting to rewrite the country's complex labour law framework, the Indian government is keen to accommodate the interests of the growing gig economy in which millions of workers are involved. So on September 17, the labour and employment ministry put out a third draft of the Code on Social Security Bill, 2019, in which the terms "gig workers", "platform workers" and "gig economy" appeared. This essentially means, the government wants some sort of social security protection for gig workers.

Gig workers are usually spoken of in the context of on-demand work, such as drivers for Uber and Ola, delivery people for Zomato and Swiggy and so on. Essentially, they are engaged in jobs created by a tech-enabled platform where the worker is not bound to the organisation and can choose to work for as long they want.

Then there are graphic designers, coders, web designers, writers working as freelancers on short-term projects, who also can be referred to as gig workers. They work from stint to stint according to their convenience or availability of a task.

With the explosion of app-based services by domestic firms and multinationals, the size of India's gig economy has expanded rapidly too. According to a recent report by HR

consultancy firm Noble House, 70 per cent of companies in India have hired gig workers at least once for major organisational work in 2018.

The dynamics of labour laws come into place in the traditional employer-employee model. A worker is hired directly or through a contractor on a permanent basis or on a fixed-term contract. Depending upon which category under which they fall or the size of the firm, workers in India are eligible for certain benefits — provident fund, insurance, gratuity and, in some cases, protection from termination.

But gig workers do not fit into the definition of "employee" or "worker" and, therefore, remain out of India's labour law coverage. The real challenge in regulating them is the nature of work that they perform. For instance, 32-year-old Mohit, who delivers food for Swiggy in Delhi, works only three days — Friday, Saturday and Sunday and earns ₹65-₹70 per food delivery on these days. "There is no written contract. I get paid on the basis of the task. I can decide to pull the plug by logging out of the mobile application," he said. Balister Singh, who owns a Chevrolet Sail, drives for both Uber and Ola in the National Capital Region.

The government has sought to maintain status quo when it comes to defining gig workers. The draft law says a gig worker is "a person who performs

work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside of traditional employer-employee relationship."

To ensure the definition is as broad-based as possible, the government has used the term "platform workers" separately in the draft law. "Platform work is an employment form in which organisations or individuals use an online platform to access other organisations or individuals to solve specific problems or to provide specific services in exchange for payment," the draft code reads.

The provisions for gig and platform workers fall under the chapter on unorganised workers, hinting that the government is not ready to classify them as part of the formal workforce where social security benefits are partly funded by employers.

"The government has attempted to balance the needs of gig workers and distinguished them from the traditional employee-employer relationship. This is reflected in the proposal to form schemes for such workers instead of blindly extending the provisions of provident fund and employees' state insurance and so on," said Ajay Singh Solanki, leader, labour and employment law practice at Nishith Desai Associates.

Gig workers, therefore, will remain outside the coverage of Employees' Provident Fund and Employees' State Insurance schemes, gratuity and maternity benefit laws, if the draft code becomes law. These are some of the schemes in which companies take a financial hit through monetary contributions. By not bringing gig workers under the Code on Wages Act, which became law in August 2019, the government has sought to keep them out

THE GIG WORLD

What other countries have tried

- California recently passed a law to reclassify gig workers as employees, instead of contractors
- New York passed a minimum wage law for gig workers last year but didn't classify them as employees
- In the UK, a local court has said that Uber drivers should be classified as employees, getting the minimum wage law benefits; the Supreme Court is set to hear the firm's appeal next year
- The European Parliament recently approved rules requiring employers to inform all workers about their employment terms such as description of duties, no exclusivity clause for work, compensation for late cancellation of work

of the minimum wage legislation too. But the industry is anxious about the government's move to bring gig workers under labour laws.

"There should be inclusive policy-making in which all key stakeholders are invited for consultation, instead of knee-jerk reactions. The government shouldn't end up creating something that destroys a vital industry. Gig workers do need social security benefits, but what needs to be covered and who will bear the cost needs to be clear," Dinesh Goel, chief executive officer of OLY People, pointed out. OLY People helps companies like Zomato and Swiggy hire workers and around 20 per cent of its recruitments in the last six months has been in the gig economy.

The industry's concern is that it

REMEMBERING B N YUGANDHAR (1937-2019)

A role model for a generation of civil servants

SOURCE: TWITTER @VICEPRESIDENTOFINDIA



DUWURI SUBBARAO

It's not easy to forget the first time you met him. Yugandhar, who was a role model for a generation of civil servants, was that kind of an intense person who made a strong impression.

My first meeting with him happened at the Mussoorie academy in 1972 where I reported for training as a young IAS recruit and he, 10 years my senior, was a deputy director. Barely a decade in service, he was already a legend by then for his deft and sympathetic handling of the Naxalite uprising in the tribal tracts of Srikakulam district in north coastal Andhra Pradesh as collector there in the late 1960s.

Yugandhar became our course director some three months after the training had started. Until he came into our lives, the Mussoorie training was an unremarkable combination of an elite public school and a mediocre college — PT and horse riding in the morning, eating in a well-appointed dining hall and banal lectures all through the day.

Soon after taking over as course director, Yugandhar spoke to us — a motley group of trainees with inflated egos and exaggerated notions of self-importance. I have a distinct recall of what he told us: "My job is to prepare you for the rough and tumble of field postings in the first 10 years of your career. No complaints or grumbling about overwork, odd hours, having no time for relaxation etc. That's how it's

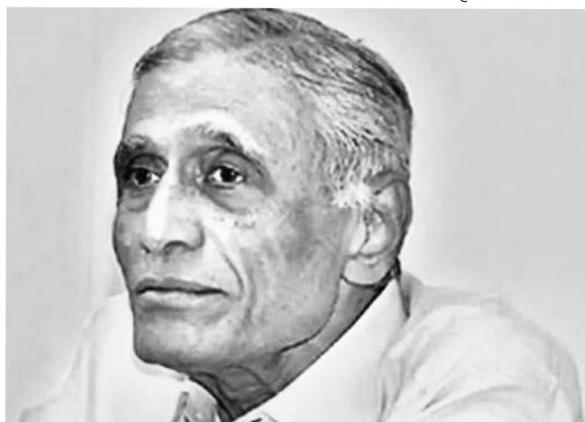
going to be in the field, and that's how this training is going to be."

In a sense, Yugandhar defined the quintessence of the IAS — the challenge and opportunity of working at the frontier. He believed passionately in plunging headlong into the field — to see, listen, talk and experience. Whether it is freeing bonded labour or providing drinking water facilities in villages, he believed that the only way a civil servant can be effective was by going out and dirtying her hands.

He visited me when I was sub-collector, Parvathipuram, in the mid-1970s. We went on an intensive three-day tour of agency villages by jeep and occasionally by foot. I had already visited dozens of these villages earlier but going with him and seeing the empathy and enthusiasm with which he interacted with tribal people was a rewarding learning experience. At the end of the tour, he asked me if I had camped overnight in a tribal village and was disappointed that I had opted for the relative comfort and convenience of travelers' bungalows.

Years later, at a difficult phase in my career, he took me under his wings in the small-scale industries department where he was secretary. Working with him felt like a continuation of my training on how to be effective. Other secretaries would summon their subordinates to their office. Not Yugandhar; he'd just walk into your office if he had something to discuss with you. That he did one afternoon and found me reading a report on sick small industries. He obviously didn't think that was good value of my time. Two days later, he told me gently: "Subba, the foundry industry around Rajahmundry has flourished for years; but of late it is showing signs of sickness. Why don't you go and find out what's happening?" Needless to say, that intensive tour in Rajahmundry taught me more about sick industries than a hundred reports.

The value of the emphasis Yugandhar placed on field exposure



came to me powerfully later in my career while serving in Delhi where officers from all civil services compete for senior management jobs in the government of India. The IAS enjoys, or at any rate enjoyed, a unique advantage in this competition because of the field experience IAS officers bring to bear on policy making. It's disappointing though that this USP of the IAS is rapidly ebbing away largely because of young IAS officers' apathy for field jobs.

In what was an initiative surely inspired by Yugandhar's training, as governor of the Reserve Bank of India, I instituted an outreach programme which required all senior management personnel of the RBI to spend a full day in a village at least twice a year. I believed that this village immersion would help them relate better to decisions that they make on issues such as financial inclusion, priority sector lending or microfinance. I could sense resistance from my colleagues who this was a nuisance in their busy workload. What was most heartening though was that having gone on an outreach visit, virtually all of them appreciated its value;

some of them even got hooked on to it.

The last time I met Yugandhar was at a dinner in a common friend's house some six months after I stepped down as governor. We talked about a lot of things including the RBI's outreach programme and about Jalanga — a village near Bhadrak in Odisha that I nurtured as governor, going there every year for five years. With characteristic enthusiasm, he said to me: "Subba, now that both of us are retired, we must go there and see what's happening."

That was not to be. Soon thereafter, he became a virtual recluse. I called him a few times hoping to plan our Jalanga visit, but each time he demurred, possibly because of failing health.

When the news of his passing came, I wasn't shocked, but there was deep sense of loss. Yugandhar is gone but his formidable legacy will survive through a generation of civil servants whom he trained, nurtured, mentored and inspired with a rare combination of energy, enthusiasm and passion.

The writer is a former governor of the Reserve Bank of India

LETTERS

A welcome step

This refers to "Largest exercise kicks off to integrate renewables" (October 9). Shreya Jai has beautifully explained the crucial — and so far not understood — function and importance of renewable energy management centres (REMCs). These centres are poised to play an important role in the overall energy business in the country. At 100gw generation capacity, renewables (essentially solar and wind) constitute nearly 25 per cent of our total installed capacity and it is of utmost importance that these "limited to some hours and seasonal" sources of clean and non-polluting energy are managed efficiently and integrated seamlessly with the national power grid. With our ambitious goal of reducing fossil energy to 50 per cent of the total by 2030, these REMCs will have to play a big role.

Germany, where renewable energy constitutes 85 per cent of the total generation, should be an excellent role model for us. It is fortuitous that GTZ of Germany is funding these REMCs. The Green Energy Corridor (GEC) aimed at transmitting, scheduling, forecasting and integrating renewable energy with the national grid is a key part of our fast changing energy landscape. The Central Electricity Authority's initiative to set up a new division to look after the developments in renewables capacity addition and grid integration is also a welcome step. The 10 per cent year-on-year growth in production of renewables deserves to be applauded.

Krishan Kaira Gurugram

Learn from past mistakes

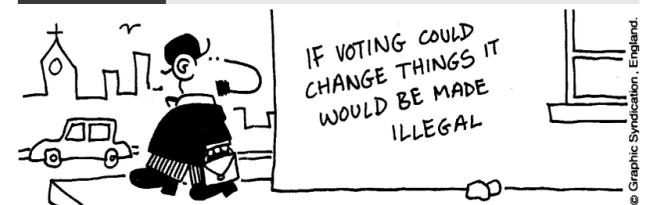
This refers to "The onion enigma" (October 8). It is not every other day that the government gets the opportunity to benefit farmers directly. A sudden surge in onion prices had given this golden opportunity to it but it has wasted the opportunity completely. At a time when farmers, in general, are under distress as they don't find agriculture a viable profession for them, the government should have resisted the temptation and allowed farmers to earn some extra money. Not only has the government stopped export but it has ordered import of 2,000 tonne of onion while as much as 15,000 tonne is wasted in storage.

It is not a one-off case. Every year, tonnes of food grain goes into the drain due to shoddy facilities at the godowns across the country. As the writer has also mentioned it is between September and November that the government had to manage onion supply well but it did not. The government needs to learn its lessons fast and should address structural issues. It should also improve warehousing and cold storage facilities besides providing technological support to farmers, irrespective of size, so that they can not only earn good returns on their farm produce but also help facilitate exports.

Bal Govind Noida

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HAMBONE



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ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



Clouding renewable power

State agencies should honour their commitments

The renewable energy sector that has been maintaining robust growth to generate hopes of meeting the ambitious goal of 175 Gigawatts (GW) capacity ahead of the 2022 schedule seems to have run into a bad patch. The capacity addition programme has slowed down since last year, prompting Crisil, a rating agency, to predict that the target is set to be missed by a huge 42 per cent. With business as usual, India may, at best, be able to add 40 GW to its present green power capacity to lift the total to only 104 GW by 2022. If this prognosis holds true, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement at the recent United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York to expand the non-fossil energy potential to 450 GW might also come under a cloud.

However, there is still no cause for despair. The constraints besetting this sector may be too many, but most of them are not insurmountable. These range from unstable policies and regulatory challenges to a free fall in tariffs and renegotiating by state governments and power distribution companies on power purchase agreements (PPAs). Besides, the cost-push effect of the safeguard duty levied on the imported solar equipment and depreciation of the Indian rupee against the US dollar have also added to the woes of this sector, as a result of which investors' interest in this sector has seen a sharp dip. Little wonder, therefore, that nearly a fourth of the 64 GW solar power capacity put up for auctions by the Centre and state governments in recent months has gone virtually abegging. Many of the sanctioned solar projects are also facing glitches in the implementation process, resulting in inordinate delays in their execution. The situation in the wind energy sector is even worse with the bidding process having almost come to a halt. The shift from fixed tariffs to competitive bidding and the increase in the capital cost seem to have shoved the wind power sector into the doldrums.

The trigger for the current slump in capacity addition can be traced to the refusal of some state governments and power distribution companies to honour the commitments made under the PPAs regardless of the court orders and the Centre's counsel against doing so. Following Andhra Pradesh's move to ask project developers to reduce the tariffs mentioned in the PPAs, the Uttar Pradesh government is seeking to achieve the same goal through relatively more coercive means. It has practically stopped procuring wind power on the specious plea that the tariffs have not been approved by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, though these rates are about 7 per cent lower than the overall average power procurement cost of the state. Going a step further, the Rajasthan government has mooted in its draft solar and hybrid policy a plan to levy a deterrent charge on plants which sell power to other states. If implemented, this can adversely affect investment prospects in the state, which has the highest clean energy generation potential. As a consequence of all this, the renewable power sector is no longer the preferred destination for foreign direct investment. The banks, too, are turning wary of lending to these projects because of the steady erosion of their viability. These issues, therefore, need to be addressed expeditiously to put this sector back on a high growth trajectory.

The pollution challenge

India needs to build state capacity at multiple levels

The Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) has ordered tanneries in Kanpur to shut down. In August, UPPCB had permitted 126 tanneries to run at 50 per cent capacity, provided they fulfilled the pollution norms. But, as reported by this newspaper, a report of the Ganga monitoring wing of the National Green Tribunal has said that effluents from tanneries, located in Kanpur's Jajmau industrial area, were being released into the river. As a result, tanneries have now been ordered to remain closed until the end of this month. The estimated size of Kanpur's leather industry is ₹12,000 crore, 50 per cent of which is exported. It provides direct and indirect employment to about a million people. What is intriguing is that it is the state agency Jal Nigam, which is mandated to run the effluent treatment plant, not the tanneries. The Jal Nigam has not fulfilled its commitment and has asked for more time to set things right, but it is the tanneries that have to suffer.

At a broader level, this episode highlights several economic and governance challenges that India is facing in its attempt to grow rapidly with increasing urbanisation. However, the issue of externality is not new and, in the Kanpur tanneries case, pollution of the Ganga has wider consequences. Economists have been debating such problems for at least about a century. The issue was first raised by Alfred Marshall and taken forward by Arthur Pigou. In his book, *The Economics of Welfare*, first published in 1920, Pigou noted: "...self-interest will not...tend to make the national dividend a maximum; and, consequently, certain specific acts of interference with normal economic processes may be expected, not to diminish, but to increase the dividend." Pigou discussed various ways of intervention, popularly known as the Pigouvian tax. A carbon tax, for instance, is a good example of such an intervention. However, there has been criticism of Pigouvian tax over the years because, for example, it is not easy to measure social costs.

India needs to tackle negative externalities of industrial development and rapid urbanisation at various levels. Imposing taxes may not always work in containing pollution and damage to the environment. Despite all the efforts made by the government, a large amount of sewage water is still being released into the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh. This along with the case of tanneries in Kanpur shows that India needs to build state capacity to deal with such issues. Tanneries have been closed because a state agency could not handle the project properly. Dealing with pollution will not only require empowering the institutions of local governance but will also need better coordination among different agencies. Engagement of local institutions is necessary as one-size-fits-all solutions may not work in a country like India. Essentially, the state should be in a position to make the necessary investment and monitor the adherence to environment regulations at the local level. The government would do well to attract private investment in waste management in a big way, which will help bring innovation and minimise costs over time.

The challenge of containing pollution will only rise and the government will need to work at multiple levels to ensure that growth and development are sustainable, and closure of industrial units doesn't become a default option.

Corporate tax cuts and growth

Reduced rates will have little impact in the short run, but could have a significant positive impact on growth in the medium term

On September 20, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced major changes in the structure of taxation for large Indian companies: The basic rate of company income tax was reduced from 30 per cent (35 per cent including cesses and surcharges) to 22 per cent (25 per cent including cesses and surcharges), a new rate of 15 per cent (17 per cent including cesses and surcharges) for new manufacturing companies (set up after October 1, 2019, and producing before March 31, 2023) was announced and the minimum alternative tax (MAT) rate was cut to 17 per cent (inclusive of cesses and surcharges). The proviso for enjoying these reduced tax rates was that companies had to give up their extant incentives and exemptions. Stock market indices soared and India Inc showered encomia. The reaction from analysts and commentators has been more mixed, ranging from euphoric ("real structural reform") to guardedly welcoming and even extending to some who worried about fiscal "bonanzas" to the corporate sector at a time of serious fiscal stress. To help form a balanced view it might be worthwhile to outline some of the likely economic consequences of these undoubtedly major changes in company tax policies.

First, the tax cut obviously provides a fiscal stimulus in the short run. The government estimates a direct revenue foregone loss of ₹1.45 trillion or 0.7 per cent of GDP. However, as various analysts have noted (such as A K Bhattacharya in *Business Standard*, September 24, 2019, and C Rangarajan and D K Srivastava in the *Hindu Business Line*, October 3, 2019), this may involve a significant overestimate, essentially because it may not have factored in the substantial revenue gains to the exche-

quer arising from companies giving up extant recourse to exemptions in order to benefit from the reduced tax rates. (Remember, that giving up exemptions is an essential precondition for benefitting from the reduced tax rates.) Budget documents show a total of revenue foregone in 2018-19 from corporate taxes on account of exemptions and incentives of ₹1.08 trillion, mainly because of accelerated depreciation and export benefits. A good part of these may be given up in 2019-20 to avail of the reduced tax rates, bringing the net revenue loss from the tax reductions down to about 0.4-0.5 per cent of GDP. Other things equal, that amounts to a net fiscal stimulus of the same order.

Second, this stimulus will entail additional government borrowing to finance a higher fiscal deficit, leading to higher medium- and long-term interest rates, which will damp investment. This explains the post announcement increase in the yield on benchmark 10-year government bonds by about 20 basis points. So, some of the positive stimulus effects on investment and other expenditure will be negated by bond market developments.

Third, these major cuts in company taxes could have potent incentive effects on corporate investments. After all, a reduction in the tax rate from 35 to 25 per cent should significantly boost post-tax rates of return on extant and future capital. But there are qualifications. Because of the prevalence of incentives and exemptions, the impact of the tax cuts will vary enormously across companies, with many companies choosing to remain in their exemption-using status. Many of the firms which benefit most from the tax cuts already have large liquid balances and are unlikely to augment their capital expenditure plans in the short run.



A PIECE OF MY MIND

SHANKAR ACHARYA

Adani's dream, GVK's nightmare

The strategy may be completely different, but the Adani group could end up doing in the airport infrastructure business what Reliance Jio has done in telecom. Mukesh Ambani was a late entrant in telecom (Reliance Communications had gone to his younger brother), with Jio starting full-fledged commercial launch only in 2016. But just three years later, the telecom sector is down to three players, and the third entity is under so much financial stress that very few would be surprised if it is forced to retire hurt.

While Reliance Jio took the low-cost tariff route (in fact, the "free" route for quite a while) to decimate most of its telecom competitors, its investment (at an estimated ₹3 trillion so far) in setting up infrastructure has been huge, pushing up the group's debt significantly to ₹2.87 trillion.

The Adani group's debut in the airports business has been equally audacious. Despite its ₹1.26 trillion debt pile, the group emerged the highest bidder for as many as six airports in the government's first such auction in 13 years since the GMR and GVK groups won the right to manage Delhi and Mumbai airports in 2006. Greenfield airports like those in Hyderabad and Bengaluru were also awarded at the same time.

The Adani group's bids far outstripped those of the competitors. For instance, for the Ahmedabad airport, Adani outbid GMR by offering ₹177 per passenger against the latter's offer of ₹85. The stage is set for the Adanis to become the third-largest private airport operator in terms of passengers han-

dled, after the GMR and GVK groups. The only other significant player is Fairfax India Holdings, which got its hands on the Bangalore International Airport when GVK sold its stake.

With the government planning to privatise 20-25 more airports in the next phase, a sensible move considering that as many as 109 out of 123 airports in India are loss-making, the Adani group is certain to put in aggressive bids for many of these as well to consolidate its position in the airport infrastructure space. But the process will take time. In any case, these airports have an annual passenger traffic of 1 to 1.5 million only. And, the total volume of passengers at all the six airports that the Adanis have won is less than the 48.5 million that the Mumbai airport alone handles. So, the writing on the wall is clear: If you have to be the largest airport player in the country, Mumbai airport is an important pit stop.

But Mumbai airport is out of bounds as the GVK group holds the controlling stake of 50.5 per cent in Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL). So the Adanis have done what they are best at: They want to pick up the 23.5 per cent stake that two South African companies, ACSA and Bidvest, together hold in MIAL. The group has already offered to buy out Bidvest (13.5 per cent) and ACSA (10 per cent), valuing the world's busiest single-runway airport that handles around 1,000 flight movements a day, at ₹9,500 crore.

If the deal to acquire a significant minority stake fructifies, it will give the Adanis two critical advantages: An insight into the operations of a leading



POWER POINT

SHYAMAL MAJUMDAR

Other tax-saving beneficiaries will use the monies to deleverage and repair stressed balance sheets. An impact analysis by Credit Suisse issued on September 30 estimates that 90 per cent of the short-run tax cut benefits will be either retained as additional profits or used for deleveraging. Of course, further down the road and subject to other economic/financial developments, one should expect positive effects on corporate investments.

Furthermore, the greatly reduced tax rate (from 35 per cent to 17 per cent) for new manufacturing companies should certainly spur investment in this sector (from both domestic and foreign sources) in the years ahead. But the amount of such tax-cut-induced investment will obviously depend on other key elements of the policy framework, such as labour and land policies, the state of the financial and infrastructure sectors, the general ease of doing business, other tax policies, fiscal prudence and the competitiveness of our exchange rate. If those move in a favourable direction, then the force-multiplier effect on investment could be powerful. The reverse also holds true.

Fourth, the tax cuts impart a clear signal in favour of private sector investment and activity. This should have an "animal-spirits-boosting" effect on company investment plans, in particular, and wider economic activity in general. However, this positive effect also will be conditioned by the broader policy environment factors alluded to above.

Fifth, some have argued that the big boost to stock prices from the September 20 actions will have enduring positive effects on stock market valuations and hence, wealth, which, in turn, will induce higher expenditure on consumption and investment. I am somewhat sceptical for at least two reasons. First, reliable quantitative estimates of "wealth effects" in India are notable by their scarcity. Second, share prices are more than usually volatile these days, as the last fortnight has amply demonstrated.

Finally, I wonder how much foreign investment the tax-cut measures will induce and in what sectors. Perhaps oddly, my concern is that if there is considerable foreign investment in non-tradeable sectors, this may shore up, or even further appreciate our already over-valued exchange rate. Recalling that an X per cent appreciation of the exchange rate is equivalent to a X per cent subsidy for imports and an X per cent tax on exports, I worry about the possible negative effects on investment and growth in our import-competing and export industries, unless we manage our exchange rate better than we have in recent years.

So what might be the overall net effect of the tax cuts on investment and growth in the short and medium term? It is obviously hard to say. My own sense is that they will have only marginal effects in the short run and significant positive effects in the medium term. "Significant" could change to "very substantial" if we also undertake meaningful reform measures in the other policy dimensions outlined four paragraphs earlier.

The writer is honorary professor at ICRIER and former chief economic adviser to the Government of India. Views are personal.

A flawed minority report



BOOK REVIEW

C P BHAMBHRI

Three academics have examined in detail the problem of accommodating minority rights within the framework of the country's laws and institutions. This is a complex issue, because it is interlinked with minorities' cultural distinctiveness along with their socioeconomic disadvantages and backwardness. So the laws and institutions of governance are expected to respond to not only the demands of cultural, religious, linguistic minorities but also harmonise the interests of and demands of groups that suffer from

socio-economic disadvantages and backwardness. This study appropriately focuses its attention on the complex story of institutions of governance that attempt to reconcile the cultural distinctiveness of groups and problems associated with their historically inherited backwardness.

The central issue that concerns every plural democracy is the "accommodation" of specific minority groups so that they do not feel left out. The author observes that in India, "Minorities are constitutionally recognised and given clearly defined rights and liberties that are in some cases greater than those of the majority". Indian pluralism, thus, is explicitly recognised by the Constitution, which mandates that the cultural diversities of minorities, whether religious or linguistic, will not only be protected but also demands of cultural, religious, linguistic minorities but also harmonise the interests of and demands of groups that suffer from

informed the framing of the Constitution. The authors clearly show that dealing with minority demands is difficult because of the claims of multiple minority groups. "Dealing with minority demands requires thinking and bargaining," they write. The challenge plural democracies face, they add, is "...to develop a public will through a deliberative process which when it prevails is accommodative of the reasonableness of the minority claims". This is wishful thinking on the part of the authors. In reality, minority claims are contested not only by counter-claimants in majority communities but also by "minorities within minorities". The Shah Bano case and the controversy over triple talaq within the Muslim community are cases in point.

Indeed, the very definition of "minority" in a country of millions of minorities has created difficulties. The colonial rulers defined minorities on the basis of religion, depressed groups and tribal groups.

Independent India has defined religious minorities as (a) Muslims, (b) Christians, (c) Sikhs, (d) Buddhists and (e) Zoroastrians. It must be mentioned that even these five categories have "internal diversity" and "minorities within minorities".

Chapters 3 and 4 — "Politics of minority accommodation" and "Public institutions for minorities" — provide detailed information about the role of Parliament, state Assemblies, the Supreme Court, high courts and other institutions in resolving claims of minority groups. For instance, the Minority Commission of India was created as a non-statutory body in 1978 and gained statutory powers in 1992-1993. The authors observe that "the policy framework as well as the catalogue of state interventions for minorities have evolved and been shaped over time through many claims and the changing public mood in the country". The list is very long and covers issues such as madrasas, the Urdu language versus the National Educational Policy framework and, of course, "policies of Reservation/appropriation action" for

backward classes.

Thus far, the book is reasonably informative. Then in Chapter 5 — titled "Learning from India" — the authors take readers on a short tour of European history and go on to suggest that these nations could learn from India in terms of dealing with complex problems of minorities and the accommodation of culturally diverse groups in a plural society. In the context of the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, this observation can only be described as a tall claim.

More optimistic observations along these lines — "as a polity democratises a new politics of groups and interests will emerge" and "the politics of accommodation is based on recognition of cultural differences" — suggest that the authors wrote this chapter in a state of absent-mindedness. It is hard to see how they have overlooked the dominant political discourse after 2014, which has comprehensively bid goodbye to the idea of celebrating cultural differences and replaced it with the "one country, one culture" slogan.

The subject of this study is vital for the

future of plural accommodative democracy in India. So it is inexcusable of the authors not to reflect on the changing political context that has created new anxieties among the minorities. The authors have failed to draw the obvious conclusion from their own study: That a certain kind of politics nurtures and nourishes plural democracy and a completely different kind demands cultural homogeneity. Did the authors fail to spot the glaring fact that the ruling party at the Centre did not have any elected Muslim MPs out of the 282 seats it won in 2014 and that the pattern did not change in the 2019 elections? If a significant minority is electorally disempowered by design, the belief that India will always accommodate cultural minorities is a pipe dream.

DEMOCRATIC ACCOMMODATION: Minorities in Contemporary India

Peter Ronald de Souza, Hiral Ahmed, Mohd Sanjeev Alam
Bloomsbury India, 2019 pages, ₹1,299

Opinion

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019

UPS AND DOWNS

Managing Director, IMF, Kristalina Georgieva

Two years ago, the global economy was in a synchronised upswing. Measured by GDP, nearly 75 per cent of the world was accelerating. The global economy is now in a synchronised slowdown



ON THE BOIL

WITH PERCEPTIONS ABOUT INSPECTIONS BY PRIVATE COMPANIES HAVING CHANGED, THE INDIAN BOILERS ACT, 1923, AND THE ENTIRE SEVENTH SCHEDULE, NEEDS A RELOOK

Junk Boilers Act and relook Seventh Schedule

BOILERS, THAT IS, steam boilers, have been important enough to engage the attention of both Union and state governments. Boilers figure as entry no. 37 in the Concurrent List. I don't think anyone paid much attention to boilers in Constituent Assembly debates. Boilers figured in the "Concurrent Legislative List" (entry no. 21) of Government of India Act, 1935, and got included in the Seventh Schedule by default. In Government of India Act, 1919, boilers figured in the list of provincial subjects, but warranted no separate entry. They were simply mentioned as a sub-head under industrial matters (entry 26), along with "factories, settlement of labour disputes, electricity, gas, and smoke nuisances". Between 1919 and 1935, boilers increased in importance. It is easy to see why. The Indian Boilers Act of 1923 was passed "to consolidate and amend the law relating to steam-boilers". This was amended in 2007, and the then Minister of State in Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) moved the Bill, stating, "The Indian Boilers Act of 1923, which this Bill seeks to amend, served its purpose well in the initial years of its operation, but with revolutionary technological changes, with the expansion of the economy, with new technologies becoming available for boiler manufacturers and for boiler component-manufactures as also for users, it was considered necessary to introduce certain necessary amendments to the Bill to make it more effective, to lend it efficacy, practicality and a user-friendly ambience."

He also added, "You will also know that the State Government inspection gave rise to long delays, corruptions;

BIBEK DEBROY
Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the PM
Views are personal



and there were complaints of inappropriate certifications, etc. All of that is sought to be addressed by introducing new organisations and making other inspecting agencies in the private sector to come forward and render this extremely critical function." Irrespective of whether boilers needed oil and grease or not, inspectors did. Since 2014, there have been more relaxations, with self-certification pushed, though this is primarily the domain of states. Nevertheless, one should read "State Business Reform Action Plan", the implementation guide DIPP prepared for states. I am indebted to Arghya Sengupta of Vidhi for asking an interesting question. Why must boilers continue to be on the Concurrent List? This doesn't mean boilers should move from the Concurrent List to the State List. Why must boilers have a separate entry? Why can't they be covered under industrial safety clauses, as used to be the case under the 1919 Government of India Act? To state it more strongly, this isn't a question of amending and tweaking Indian Boilers Act. Why can't Indian Boilers Act be repealed?

Between 1919 and 1935, what ostensibly changed was enactment of Indian Boilers Act. In my view, what really changed was the report of the Boilers Law Committee. This was a committee set up in 1920 (FD Ascoli was the president), and it submitted a

report in 1921. It was this Committee's report that led to Boilers Act of 1923. People often refer to this Committee, and to the explosion that occurred in Calcutta in 1863. I don't know how many have read the Ascoli Committee's report. It begins with the sentence, "The necessity for boiler legislation is due to the fact that the steam boiler is an extremely dangerous instrument, that is liable to explode with disastrous consequences, on account of faults in design and construction, the effects of wear, tear and usage and as the result of careless handling and management at the time of working." The world (and boilers) has moved on since then. The Calcutta explosion in 1863 led to a loss of 13 lives, and resulted in Act VI of 1864, which applied to Calcutta and its suburbs. Thereafter, two accidents in Bombay led to Act VI in Bombay in 1869, later extended after explosions in "Broach and Ahmedabad in 1871". Following the Committee's report, uniform all-India legislation, with government inspection, was introduced through the 1923 Boilers Act.

Reading the Ascoli report, I find the discussion comparing the United

Kingdom and India extremely interesting. "It is important to remember that in the United Kingdom it is the custom to insure boilers against the risk of accident of explosion, and that on this account steam boilers are subject to inspection and control by influential Boiler Insurance Companies and Associations." Therefore, beyond provisions that applied to factories and workshops, Britain didn't have any system for government inspection of boilers, and no such legislation. "It has been suggested that it might be possible to adopt in India a system similar to that prevalent in the United Kingdom. We have carefully considered the suggestion, but have arrived at the conclusion that it is impracticable. The evidence that we have heard shows unanimously the popularity of official inspection and the confidence resulting from the fact that it is done by a Government agency. The inspection is generally efficient, effective and economical—far cheaper than would be possible in the hands of a private commercial concern, the ultimate aim of which must be the payment of a dividend to

its shareholders. It is obvious that in India the same confidence would not be placed in inspection at the hands of a private commercial company." It is this perception that has changed. That's the reason we no longer need amendments to Boilers Act. We no longer need that specific legislation, and the specific entry in the Seventh Schedule. Boilers are only an example. The entire Seventh Schedule needs a relook.

Irrespective of whether boilers needed oil and grease or not, inspectors did. Since 2014, there have been more relaxations, with self-certification pushed

RSS head should have been unambiguous on lynching

Bhagwat should have condemned lynching in a more forthright manner; did well to support privatisation/FDI

RSS SANSANGHACHALAK MOHAN Bhagwat's annual Dussehra address has come in for flak given it is somewhat ambiguous in parts. While talking about lynching, Bhagwat says the "incidents have not been one-sided", going by the transcript on the RSS's official media Samvada, and that there are "allegations and counter-allegations". Bhagwat is right in saying some reports of lynching are distorted/fabricated, but there are enough videos and other testimonies that make it clear that lynchings took place; so, why even bring in the possibility of some fake news since it makes it look as if he is defending the lynchings? Nor is it clear what the *sansanghachalak* meant when he denounced such incidents being 'branded' as 'lynching'; that is precisely what they were. Yet, Bhagwat's address is also very clear in saying that such instances have "crossed the limits of the law and order," and that "neither this tendency is the tradition of our country nor does it fit in the spirit of the Constitution". No matter how "deep the difference of opinion" is or "howsoever provocative actions might have taken place", Bhagwat rightly advises citizens to go to the police; he said the Sangh condemned such actions and that *swayamsevak*s were working to ensure that such incidents never took place. And, like prime minister Modi did earlier, Bhagwat talks of how "so-called leaders" create clashes between Hindus and Muslims, and "have made an industry out of their pursuits for self-aggrandisement".

Given these statements, Bhagwat should ideally have just condemned the incidents and talked of how they were against both Indian traditions and Constitution, and not brought in the possibility of some of them being fake or distorted; after all, you do have fake allegations of rape and murder, but you don't discuss the issues of rape/murder by saying there is a lot to be said on both sides of the case. When, according to Bhagwat, there is an attempt to "defame our country and the entire Hindu society" that "has to be countered at all levels" and "alertness is a constant necessity", the RSS needs to unequivocally condemn such incidents. On a similar note, while it is true that the FIR against prominent citizens who wrote to Modi about lynching and mob violence was an action taken by a district court, had the government said that it didn't agree with the way the court was equating criticism with sedition, this would have made its stand on dissent very clear.

And, while Bhagwat has done well to support the government on its policies like disinvestment and further liberalising of rules for FDI, the speech makes it clear the support is a reluctant one. To "strengthen the economy", he said, "the government is compelled to take steps such as allowing Foreign Direct Investment and disinvestment of industries". The government is bringing in FDI to make Indian industry more competitive and, in several cases, to improve the country's export prospects or, as in the case of the oil sector, to reduce import dependence. Given how PSUs are bleeding the taxpayer and how their poor performance in areas where they dominate—like minerals—has meant large imports, the RSS chief needed to be more welcoming of privatisation and shutting down these PSUs. Over the last five years, Air India's losses were ₹28,952 crore despite getting ₹17,320 crore of fresh equity from the government, BSNL's ₹39,879 crore, and MTNL's ₹14,145 crore. Saying the Sangh's philosophy of *swadeshi* didn't mean cutting off from the rest of the world is, of course, a good thing.

Green Wall of hope

India needs a forest wall against the march of desertification

WITH A PLAN to create a 1,400-km-long and 5-km-wide green belt, from Gujarat to the Delhi-Haryana border, India is committing to concrete steps to combat desertification and land degradation. The plan, as per a *Times of India* report, was to be unveiled at the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) conference that India hosted last month, but with final clearance pending, it wasn't announced. The Green Wall of India—modelled after the Great Green Wall proposed for Africa—could not only help nurse degraded land and vegetation in the Aravallis that run through Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi but also help combat the eastward march of the Thar desert.

Nearly 97 million hectares (ha), or over 29% of the country's land is degraded. Of this, 82.64 million ha is undergoing desertification. While desertification across the globe has occurred throughout history, its pace has accelerated 30-35 times the historical rate in recent decades. India, too, is seeing more rapid degradation and desertification—the increase was 1.87 million ha and 1.16 million, respectively, between just 2003-05 and 2011-13. Such desertification/degradation exacts heavy economic costs—a TERI estimate pegs this at \$48.8 billion, or almost 13% of the gross value added from agriculture and forestry in 2014-15. Against such a backdrop, the government eying the restoration of nearly 26 million ha of degraded land by 2030 is a worthy, but Herculean quest. Isro's India desertification and degradation atlas shows that Gujarat, Delhi, and Rajasthan are among the states that face the biggest risks of desertification, with more than 50% of their land already degraded. Efforts to contain desertification in Rajasthan, led by the Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI) in Jodhpur, show how restoring vegetation and forests could hold the key. Using brushwood and tree to create shelterbelts against wind erosion, CAZRI has helped slow the march of degradation/desertification significantly. In Jaisalmer, as per a 2016 CAZRI report, shelterbelts have helped check wind velocity in their leeward side, and have helped curb soil loss by 76%. This has helped soil moisture rise by 14%, and has meant a sharp increase in crop yields. In the Indira Gandhi Nahar project area, such plantations have brought down the number of dust storms from 17 to five a year. So, it is not hard to imagine the scale of gain from the Green Wall of India.

Though the particulars of the project are to be finalised—and there will be many challenges in implementing an inter-state greening project of such a scale, quite like how it has been for the Great Green Wall of Africa, a trans-national project—there can be no doubt that land restoration has to be an urgent focus, more so given the impact climate change is likely to have on precipitation and soil quality. The government should make the Aravallis the focal point of the project, given how state governments have not just neglected the Aravalli vegetation but also, using loopholes in policy and laws, actively contributed to its degradation.

Ideal IMMERSION

Delhi shows the way on celebrating festivals, idol immersion and all, and fighting pollution at the same time

INDIAN CITIES HAVE not done too well on battling environmental pollution. The relevant laws are mostly observed in their flouting. Delhi, however, has turned a new leaf. The city made sure that the Durga Puja celebrations—idol immersions are a key ritual—would not contribute to the pollution of the Yamuna. The city police patrolled the Yamuna area keeping a check on all activity across the river bank, and diverting people to immersion pits created across the city. India has had a lax attitude towards environmental pollution. Religion has often taken precedence. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) only listed guidelines for idol immersion after the Bombay High Court asked it to do so. While these were released in 2010, and the issue of immersion pits is raised each year by NGT, guidelines have rarely been followed.

Despite CPCB reports highlighting the impact of idol immersion, people have repeatedly ignored warnings. CPCB's *Impacts of Dussehra Festival on the River Hooghly: A case study*, showed that, every year, at least 15,000 idols of the goddess are immersed in the Hooghly River. This releases 16.8 tonnes of varnish and *garjan* oil and 32 tonnes of colours, leading to an increase of 0.99 milligram per litre (mg/l) of oil and grease, and of 0.104 mg/l concentration of heavy metals, like manganese, lead, mercury and chromium. A similar report for Bengaluru found a 100% increase in TDS due to immersion. Delhi's success shows that, with effective implementation and coordinated action, the state can curb the menace of environmental pollution. This can certainly serve as a template for other Indian cities; that said, Delhi needs to sustain this success year after year to make a meaningful impact and follow it up with a less polluting Diwali.

Thunberg going radical won't help

National leaders see it as their job to do as much for the environment as is politically feasible and economically reasonable; they don't take kindly to anyone who won't acknowledge that

POLITICAL LEADERS AROUND the globe have celebrated the 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg—but, can they handle her as she and her supporters turn more radical? The protests launched in big cities worldwide by the environmental campaign group Extinction Rebellion are a first test.

Extinction Rebellion, like Thunberg, wants governments to treat climate change as an emergency and to take urgent action to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The group blocks traffic at cities' busiest intersections. In Berlin on Tuesday, police broke up their day-long occupation of a central square, Potsdamer Platz, but hundreds of protesters continued to hold another area, around the city's Victory Column. Throughout Europe, and in Sydney, Australia, hundreds of protesters have been arrested for disrupting traffic.

Thunberg supports the radical action; on Tuesday, she retweeted Extinction Rebellion's call on "rebels" to "stay strong."

In London, where more than 300 arrests took place, prime minister Boris Johnson was highly unsympathetic toward the protesters—and dismissive of Thunberg. Speaking at the launch of a Margaret Thatcher biography, he said:

I hope that when we go out from this place tonight and we are waylaid by importunate nose-ringed climate change protesters we remind them that [Thatcher] was also right about greenhouse gases. And she took it seriously long before Greta Thunberg. And the best thing possible for the education of the denizens of the heaving hemp-smelling bivouacs that now litter Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park, the best thing would be for them to stop blocking the traffic and buy a copy of Charles's magnificent book so that they can learn about a true feminist, green and revolutionary who changed the world for the better. Thatcher, who had a chemistry

degree, was indeed an early supporter of climate science. But it is more important that Johnson has added his voice to a virtual chorus of leaders who appear to have had enough of Thunberg since her angry speech at the United Nations last month, with "how dare you" as a refrain.

At the milder end of the reaction spectrum, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has disagreed with Thunberg about the urgency of radical climate action, saying technological advances would give humanity some extra time. French president Emmanuel Macron criticised Thunberg for "radical positions" that, he said, would only "antagonise" our societies, and said the environmentally aware governments of France and Germany aren't the ones she should be attacking.

At the harsher end, the US president Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, have been mocking and condescending. In contemptuous acknowledgment, Thunberg changed her Twitter profile. "A very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future," it read, repeating the language of Trump's sarcastic tweet. And after Putin described her as a clueless victim of adult manipulation, the bio temporarily changed to "a kind but poorly informed teenager."

Thunberg clearly is capable of giving as good as she gets. The question is, however, whether her combativeness helps or hurts her cause. At some point in recent weeks, she appears to have crossed the line between eliciting sympathy and emanating menace. Many national leaders see it as their job to do as much for the environment as is politically feasible and economically reasonable; they don't take kindly to anyone who won't give them high marks for effort.

There is a clear line, too, between the Fridays for Future school strikes Thun-

berg started and Extinction Rebellion. Cutting school for the climate may have struck some parents as wrong, but it was easy to sympathise with children speaking up for their future. Street blockages by adult activists are a public nuisance that leave most people cold. That is why police, who didn't disrupt the Fridays for Future demonstrations, are breaking up these protests.

Thunberg may be personally fine with her growing status as a polarising figure. But, polarisation tends to turn nasty very fast. In Rome, someone hanged Thunberg's effigy off a bridge, horrifying the mayor and other Italian officials. That goes far beyond disagreeing with the concept of climate change as an emergency.

Youthful idealism is often inflexible, and it is not really about getting results. Thunberg has, at times, seemed different from the typical youthful rebel. She has carefully kept to the scientific consensus in her public utterances, and she has emphasised working toward goals set out in a political document, the Paris agreement on climate. That discipline has helped her get her message out as effectively as few activists have ever done.

A little more acknowledgment that sympathetic politicians are at least trying to do something right, and a little less support for radicals, would perhaps disappoint some of Thunberg's more hotheaded supporters. That, however, is likely the way to keep her message politically relevant—and to get moderate votes for Green parties, which are most likely to advance the climate agenda. Otherwise, activism in support of Thunberg's message could degenerate into the incoherence of antiglobalist protests, which have been loud and disruptive, but haven't led to any meaningful change.

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LEONID BERSHIDSKY

Bloomberg



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

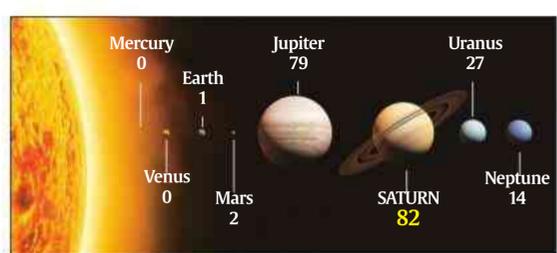
Modi-Xi meet

The two day informal summit between prime minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Mamallapuram (also known as Mahabalipuram), near Chennai, is all set to take place amid a blaze of publicity. A place of historical importance that flourished during the Pallava dynasty, Mamallapuram, famed for its architectural marvels, is an international tourist attraction. It has been declared a world heritage site by UNESCO. The buzzing town has spruced up for the high-profile summit—eviction of hawkers, removal of petty shops, and a ban on fishing were needed to give it a facelift. The Madras High Court allowed 'killer' banners to create the ambience for the summit despite a techie becoming a victim of the 'banner culture'. While we cannot predict the possible outcome of the summit, its optics are sure to lift the spirits of millions in thrall of the PM. Modi can play the statesman by pitching the diplomatic settlement of disputes, and peaceful co-existence of India, China, and Pakistan. The US-China hostility and close India-US partnership should not be brought to bear on the summit talks. Geopolitical issues should not come in the way of joint efforts to improve the economic conditions of both countries' populace. We wish to think that India, China, and Pakistan will cut down their defence expenditure to be spend more on enabling their populations (making up over 1/3 of the world population) to unlock their economic potential and lead a life free from want. In its haste to showcase itself as a superpower and as an emerging economic power house, India should not make the mistake of focussing more on competition than collaboration. A spirit of accommodation, as against assertion which is vital for a mutually supportive and beneficial relationship will make the Mamallapuram summit a success. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

TELLING NUMBERS

Which planet has how many moons? Saturn has 82 now



ON MONDAY, the International Astronomical Union's Minor Planet Center confirmed 20 new moons orbiting Saturn, making it the planet with the most moons in our Solar System, at 82. The 20 had been discovered by Scott S Sheppard of the Carnegie Institution for Science. Until their confirmation, the planet with the most moons was Jupiter, at 79.

A count of the moons listed on the NASA website shows that our Solar System's planets together have 205 confirmed moons now. Saturn and Jupiter, with 161 between them, account for nearly 80% of these. Another 20% are orbiting Uranus (27) and Neptune (14). Of the remaining three moons, one is Earth's own while the

other two are with Mars. Mercury is so close to the Sun and its gravity that it wouldn't be able to hold on to its own moon, NASA explains. Any moon would most likely crash into Mercury or maybe go into orbit around the Sun and eventually get pulled into it. It is not yet clear, however, why Venus does not have a moon.

The newly discovered moons of Saturn are about 5 km each in diameter. Seventeen orbit Saturn opposite to the planet's rotation, and three in the same direction as Saturn's rotation.

The Carnegie Institution for Science has invited, until December 6, suggestions for names of the 20 new moons of Saturn. The rules are at: <https://carnegie-science.edu/NameSaturnsMoons>

THIS WORD MEANS

HKMAP.LIVE

App that tracks Hong Kong protest hotspots has riled China

PEOPLE'S DAILY, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, has lashed out at Apple for hosting on its App Store an app that tracks and displays the movement of police in Hong Kong. The app, *HKmap.live*, "facilitates illegal behaviour", *People's Daily* said in a commentary.

HKmap.live (screenshot right) publishes crowdsourced information on the location of armed police forces, vehicles, use of tear gas, and clashes and injuries on a map of Hong Kong that is regularly updated. A website version is available too, as also a version for Android, but the *People's Daily* article did not mention this, and instead concentrated on its attack on Apple.

"Is Apple guiding Hong Kong thugs?" the article asked. "Apple's approval for the app obviously helps rioters," it said, and asked: "Does this mean Apple intended to be an accomplice to the rioters?" according to reports by the AP, AFP, *The South China Morning Post*, and *The Guardian*. "People have reason to assume that Apple is mixing business with politics, and even illegal acts," the opinion piece said. It warned "this recklessness will cause much trouble for Apple".



China, which is sensitive to international criticism of its policies, pulled NBA games off state TV after a team official tweeted in support of Hong Kongers protesting for democracy and freedom. It had earlier criticised the US jewellery brand Tiffany, and the airline Cathay Pacific.

The SCMP, which contacted the developer of the app on Twitter, quoted the developer as saying Apple previously rejected the app, but reversed its decision on Friday and made the app available for download from the iOS App Store on Saturday. Apple did not respond to media requests for a comment.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Can govt intercept WhatsApp?

As TRAI examines the possibility of lawful interception of messages on WhatsApp and similar platforms, a look at the debate around such interception, the technical difficulties, and practices around the world

PRANAV MUKUL
 NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 8

ON TUESDAY, *The Indian Express* reported that the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is studying the possibility of bringing platforms such as WhatsApp under the ambit of "lawful interception".

Lawful interception of online communications platforms such as WhatsApp, Skype, Signal or Telegram has been a long-running debate that has ranged governments and regulators across the world against technology companies and privacy activists. The authorities want such platforms to provide access to messages, calls, and their logs to law-enforcement agencies to aid them with investigations. India, too, has made demands for traceability of communications from instant messaging platforms.

Why is TRAI looking at lawful interception of online messaging apps?

The telecom sector watchdog has been carrying out consultations to build a regulatory framework for over-the-top service providers (OTTs) — or platforms that use the infrastructure of traditional telecom companies like the Internet to offer their services. TRAI has been looking at the regulation of OTTs since 2015, when mobile companies first raised concerns over services such as WhatsApp and Skype causing loss of revenues by offering free messaging and call services.

Under which laws are telecom firms currently subject to lawful interception?

The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 states that on the occurrence of any public emergency, or in the interest of public safety, the central gov-

ernment or a state government can take temporary possession — for as long as the public emergency exists or the interest of the public safety requires the taking of such action — of any telegraph established, maintained or worked by any person licensed under the Act. This mandates telecom companies to provide access to messages, calls, and logs of these in case a court order or a warrant is issued. However, the government, while clear on demanding access to message logs for law-enforcement purposes, is not relying on The Telegraph Act to meet this objective. Instead, it wants the platforms to come up with a solution to enable traceability.

So, are messages sent and received on these platforms not traceable?

Apps such as WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, etc. claim to provide end-to-end encryption of their messages. This has caused some uncertainty among the authorities on how they can seek access to messages.

On the FAQ page on its website, WhatsApp states: "We will search for and disclose information that is specified with particularity in an appropriate form of legal process and which we are reasonably able to locate and retrieve. We do not retain data for law-enforcement purposes unless we receive a valid preservation request before a user has deleted that content from our service."

What is the situation elsewhere?

Currently, there is no jurisdiction anywhere in which messaging apps have been known to provide access to their messages. However, pressure on such services to provide access for law-enforcement purposes has been rising everywhere. The United States Department of Justice has made fresh arguments for access to encrypted communications. *The New York Times* reported on October 3 that Attorney General William P Barr, jointly with his British and Australian counterparts, has written to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, pointing out that companies should not "deliberately design their systems to preclude any form of access to content even for preventing or investigating the most serious crimes".

In India, Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has repeatedly stressed the need to be able to trace messages to prevent serious crimes. While the Indian government has conceded that encrypted messages may not be accessible, it has asked the platforms to provide origin of messages that could possibly incite violence or other mischievous acts.

Behind Nobel, Chemistry of mobile batteries

AMITABH SINHA
 PUNE, OCTOBER 9

THIS YEAR'S Nobel Prize in Chemistry recognises the work that led to the development of something that we all are familiar with, and depend very heavily upon — the rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that power most of the portable devices that we use, such as mobile phones.

The prize has been given jointly to Stanley Whittingham, now with Binghamton University, State University of New York; John B Goodenough, now with the University of Texas at Austin; and Akira Yoshino of Asahi Kasei Corporation. Whittingham developed the first functional lithium-ion battery in 1976. Goodenough brought in a major improvement in 1980, while Yoshino made the first practical-use lithium-ion battery in 1985. Commercially manufactured lithium-ion batteries, based on what Yoshino had developed, made their first appearance in 1991.

How batteries work

Batteries convert chemical energy into electricity. A battery comprises two electrodes, a positive cathode and a negative anode, which are separated by a liquid chemical, called electrolyte, which is capable of carrying charged particles. The two electrodes are connected through an electrical circuit. When the circuit is on, electrons travel from the negative anode towards the posi-



From left: Stanley Whittingham developed first functional lithium-ion battery; John B Goodenough improved on it; then Akira Yoshino made it even better.

tive cathode, thus generating electric current, while positively charged ions move through the electrolyte.

Single-use batteries stop working once a balance is established between the electrical charges. In rechargeable batteries, an external power supply reverses the flow of electric charges, so that the battery can be used again.

The winners' recipe

STANLEY WHITTINGHAM: When

Whittingham began working on batteries in the 1970s, rechargeable batteries were already available, but were bulky and inefficient. Whittingham worked with newer materials to make his battery lighter and more efficient. The older rechargeable batteries used to have solid materials in the electrodes which used to react with the electrolyte and damage the battery. Whittingham's innovation came from the fact that he used the atom-sized spaces within the cathode material, titanium disul-

phide, to store the positive lithium ions. The choice of lithium was dictated by the fact that it let go of its electron quite easily and was also very light.

Lithium-ion still best

Researchers have continued to look for other materials to make more efficient batteries, but so far none of these has succeeded in outperforming lithium-ion battery's high capacity and voltage. The lithium-ion battery itself has, however, gone several modifications and improvements so that it is much more environment friendly than when it was first developed.

Going back 1,300 yrs, story of Mahabalipuram's China connection

NIRUPAMASUBRAMANIAN
 MUMBAI, OCTOBER 9

MAHABALIPURAM, OR Mamallapuram, 56 km south of Chennai on the Tamil Nadu coast, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet China's President Xi Jinping on October 11 & 12 in an informal Wuhan-style summit, had ancient links with Buddhism and China through the maritime outreach of the Pallava dynasty.

The setting speaks to several contemporary themes in India-China relations — and of contacts, both continuous and changing, across space and time. While the powerful symbolism of Mahabalipuram will likely not succeed in influencing China's hard-nosed assertion over J&K and other issues with India, the remarkable historical significance of the venue bears underlining.

When the Pallavas ruled

The name Mamallapuram derives from Mamallan, or "great warrior", a title by which the Pallava King Narasimhavarman I (630-668 AD) was known. It was during his reign that Hiuen T'sang, the Chinese Buddhist monk-traveller, visited the Pallava capital at Kanchipuram.

Narasimhavarman II (c.700-728 AD), also known as Rajasimhan, built on the work of earlier Pallava kings to consolidate maritime mercantile links with southeast Asia. Most interestingly, as historian Tansen Sen



The Descent of the Ganga/Arjuna's Penance in Mahabalipuram. Bernard Gagnon via Wikipedia

recorded in his 2003 work *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400*, Narasimhavarman II sent a mission to the Tang court in 720 with a request that would seem unusual in the context of India-China relations today.

The emissaries of the Pallava king sought the permission of Emperor Xuangzong to fight back Arab and Tibetan intrusions in South Asia. And, "Pleased with the Indian king's offer to form a coalition against the

Arabs and Tibetans, the Chinese emperor bestowed the title of 'huai de jun' (the Army that Cherishes Virtue) to Narayansimha II's troops", Sen wrote. The offer of help by the Pallava ruler, Sen noted, may have had more to do with furthering trade and for the prestige of association with the Chinese emperor, rather than any real prospect of helping him to fight off enemies in the faraway north.

The Descent of the Ganga/Arjuna's Penance, a rock carving commissioned by

Narasimhavarman I, with its depiction of the Bhagirathi flowing from the Himalayas, may serve as a reminder of the geography of India-China relations, and their shared resources.

Hindus, Muslims and China

Tamil-Chinese links continued after the Pallavas, flourishing under the Cholas as the Coromandel coast became the *entrepot* between China and the Middle East. The links extended to a wider area beyond

Mahabalipuram, through a layered history that has left a rich tapestry of society, culture, art and architecture, which is diverse and complex, and reaches up to modern times.

If he looks south from the platform of the 7th century Shore Temple, President Xi might be able to spot a key symbol of 20th century — the white domes of the Madras Atomic Power Station at Kalpakkam, 15 km down the coastline. MAPS, built in the 1980s, is India's first indigenously constructed power station.

India's secularism and diversity would not be on the agenda of the two leaders — however, their meeting ground is in a part of the country where this ethos is a lived reality. Hindu- and Muslim-majority villages alternate along that coast, each community having lived next to the other for centuries.

By the time Islam arrived on south India's east coast in the 9th century, Muslims had already started trading with China by maritime routes, Sen wrote. The trading missions that the Cholas sent to the Song court included Muslims. A trader named Abu Qasim was second-in-command of a mission sent in 1015; the next mission, in 1033, included one Abu Adil. "It is possible that both Abu Qasim and Abu Adil were members of the Tamil-speaking Muslim community on the Coromandel coast known as Ilappai," Sen wrote. Today, the ancient port of Marakanam is a fishing village, known for its Muslim boatmakers.

Continuing connections

In later centuries, the Coromandel coast retained its importance for trade between China and the west. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it was a staging post for the Dutch, French and British for control of the seas between South Asia and Southeast Asia, as the Europeans fought to protect their trade routes with China and other countries in the region.

The ancient port city of Pondicherry, 80 km south of Mahabalipuram, was a French colony famous for its Chinese exports known as "Coromandel goods", including *crepe de chine*. Today the Union Territory, with its French legacy, Tamil residents, Bengali and international devotees of Sri Aurobindo, is among the most diverse and cosmopolitan of cities in South India.

After establishing their writ on the Coromandel Coast, the British expanded eastward and established control over the Straits of Malacca, essentially to protect their trade routes to China and the rest of the region.

Among the colonial outposts on this coast is Sathurangapattinam, or Sadras, right next to Kalpakkam, where the Dutch East India Company built a fort, their second one on the east coast after establishing a capital at Pulicat, north of Chennai.

Sadras became a huge centre for the Dutch-controlled manufacture of cotton and muslin. The Dutch presence in the region grew rapidly after they established themselves in Java in 1603. They traded within Asia, buying textiles, metal, and porcelain, importing and exporting between India, China and Japan, to keep the spice trade going.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

DENYING DENMARK



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

Serial authoritarianism picks out targets one by one, and tires out challenges

The test in protest

Government says it's sure-footed on global stage. So, its refusal to let Delhi CM attend climate summit overseas is petty, cussed

ARE THERE SOME in this government, that rules the Centre with such a handsome mandate, who feel insecure by the prospect of an Opposition leader going overseas — especially if the latter also has a perceived success story to showcase? This is the dispiriting question prompted by the curious denial of permission by the Ministry of External Affairs to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to attend the C40 Cities Climate Summit this week in Copenhagen. Look at the sequence of events. Delhi's CM is scheduled to join leaders of the world's major cities in deliberating on urban strategies and solutions for climate change at a global forum that brings together mayors, climate experts, business leaders, innovators. Kejriwal is all set to highlight the work his own government has done — of course, together with the Centre, neighbouring states, pollution watchdogs — in reducing air pollution in Delhi over the last five years. It is enough, at the very least, for the metropolis to be seen to be working to combat its notoriety as one of the world's most polluted. He would speak of experiments and innovations, like the odd-even campaign, slated to return to Delhi soon, perhaps face questions on what has worked, what hasn't. But after days of being kept hanging by the MEA — according to protocol, the giver of political clearance — permission is refused. It reeks of politics, not bureaucracy. Is it any wonder, then, that it should invite accusations of Central petty-mindedness?

As an elected chief minister, Kejriwal would have been among unequals at a mayors' conference, it has been suggested. But by the same token, surely an elected chief minister has the right to decide to attend, or not to. And since when has the BJP government become such a zealous minder of the AAP leader's status, anyway? While the BJP has seldom been seen to be respectful to rivals and opponents, or a keeper of the federal spirit, the jousting and hostilities between the BJP-led Centre and AAP's Delhi government, relatively muted for some time, have always been special. The upcoming Delhi election early next year is likely to renew and sharpen this rivalry. If fought on local issues, the record of the AAP government on school education, mohalla clinics and air pollution could matter. It is this possibility, presumably, that is now preying on the mind of the BJP leadership, and holding its hand. Or, it could be sheer, no-reason, cussedness.

Either way, the scuppering of Kejriwal's travel plans sends out messages unflattering to the BJP — and to India. The government prides itself on being more self-possessed and sure-footed on the global stage. That image is dented when it is seen to show mean-spiritedness to another leader, especially of the Opposition, in full view of the world.

LESSONS FROM AAREY

Governance cannot be a cat and mouse game with the people. They must be treated as stakeholders

THE TUMULT in Mumbai over the cutting of trees for building a depot for one of the many metro lines coming up in the city carries many governance lessons. One of them is transparency, to which governments pay much lip service, while acting in exactly the opposite way. In the case of the Aarey controversy, this has been quite literally so. The Bombay High Court had ruled in favour of felling over 2,000 trees in a small patch of Mumbai's largest green area to make way for the project. Those opposed to the cutting believed they had recourse to further legal options, but felt cheated when Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited, acting with secrecy and stealth and under cover of darkness, began cutting trees in Aarey within hours of the judgment. There was no need for this unseemly haste, even if the government feared appeals against the High Court order and further delays. After all, governance cannot be a cat and mouse game with the people. It is not as if those opposing the specific location of the car shed are against the metro.

Delhi Metro showed the way in how people can be won over by the simple method of talking to them. The first managing director of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, E Sreedharan, placed much emphasis on interactions with residents along the metro route to explain to them the benefits the transport system would bring. As a result, Delhi Metro was able to cut more than 31,000 trees and transplant 6,000 more without much opposition, while also finding a way to accommodate the concerns of tree activists at the location of one car shed.

Another issue that the controversy has highlighted is the high value people accord to trees, green areas, and open spaces in India's overcrowded, poorly planned cities. Aarey is spread over 1,278 hectares, and the car shed will take up just 33 hectares of this space. Environmentalists have made the case that this patch is a vital part of the entire "urban forest", precious in concrete-filled Mumbai. As more and more small towns become cities, and generate demands for better infrastructure, clearer definitions of forests and green areas are needed. Regardless of whether one opposes big infrastructure projects, or supports them, debate of the kind that has been sparked over the environment costs of the Aarey Metro Line 3 car shed since the time the project was first mooted, is healthy and necessary. India cannot aspire to leadership in the fight against climate change in the international arena, and at the same time dismiss or discourage conversations on the environment at home

THE noose is tightening around all independent institutions in India. The episode featuring seditious charges against eminent writers and directors — now belatedly withdrawn — is a reminder of the peculiar nature of the crisis of liberal institutionalism in India. The true register of the crisis is not that liberal ideas might be losing, or that elites identified with liberalism might be discredited. Both those phenomena have occurred in the past. What is new is the choking up of the channels of protest in the time of civic oppression. Where does a politics of resistance to civic oppression go?

We cannot rely on the law. A liberal polity relies on unglamorous institutions and processes to keep open the windows of light against the darkness of untrammelled power. We have often relied on some putative motivating power of the law to deliver a modicum of protection, if not justice. The law has often disappointed deeply; and it often protects elites more than others. But the cowardly, almost impeachable, abdication of the judiciary in the face of threats to civil liberties has now made an appeal to the law akin to an appeal to the majestic benevolence of an odd judge at best, and a laughing joke at worst.

We cannot rely on discussion. The liberal faith in discussion is not so much that liberal ideas might win, as it is a faith that there is something addictive about the commitment to discussion itself; it is the habit itself that is the triumph of a liberal sensibility. This is why authoritarian politics disdains discussion. Again, this space will privilege some more than others, but its availability is a form of insurance against worse evils. So long as there is a commitment to "politics through speech," some basic norms of reciprocity will be preserved. But the idea of public discussion is itself under severe threat. There is direct intimidation using law and violence. The main channels of public debate — the media — are now, for the most part, supply-side driven propaganda. Social media can accelerate tribalisation even faster than it accelerates democratisation.

We cannot rely on artfully using fragmentation of power. Let power check power. But the fragmentation of power that we took for granted as a check against undue concentration no longer holds. Regional parties are as

likely to navigate with this authoritarianism, as against it. India's fragmented social identities are now available for new forms of re-configuration in the nationalist project; they are fuelling nationalism as much as they are resisting it. In any case, a fatalistic belief in sociological determinism to save us was the Left's version of anti politics, as if there were ready-made coalitions of minorities and other oppressed groups who will automatically appear to resist.

But if social power is not fragmented, in the same way neither is the power of money — Indian capital was seldom a defender of liberty. But now its taciturn silences are being replaced by a demonstrable alignment with not just state power, but the ideology of the state. It is having to devote all its capital, political funding, philanthropic commitment, media ownership, and even its symbolic capital, to the BJP and RSS. The BJP's insurgency against the Congress was always sustained by deep material support, from Nusli Wadia in the Eighties to regional capitalists more recently. No opposition, political or in civil society, can now count on that kind of material support.

It is undeniable that advocates of liberal institutionalism in India have always been uncomfortable with the grammar of civic protest. The preference for process over protest, discussion over organisation, law over civil disobedience, order over a fear of anarchy, petition over movement, individual authenticity over social solidarity, leaves it open both to the charge of passivity and elitism. But it could survive these preferences when the institutional windows through which this sensibility could do some moderate work, were open. But that time seems to be long gone.

It is a fair criticism of liberals that they have seldom aligned with social movements: Farmers, labour, Adivasis, Dalit etc. Often, they have worked against them, in weakening the legitimacy of their claims. In the lead up to protests against the Emergency, many of these movements were the disruptors that fuelled a general sense of discontent. But now there are two challenges that make it difficult to enlist these demands in a broad-based protest against civic oppression. There is no mechanism by which these movements translate into electoral politics and prove a threat to the

ruling party. And, it is actually easy for the government to satiate the demands that fuel these movements. For instance, each time there is the hope that Dalit discontent will translate into a movement, whether over SC Atrocities Act or something else, the government can satiate demands; each time there is a farmers' movement, the government can announce a policy change. A movement centred on policy change does not necessarily translate into a movement for defending civic freedom. That is how the government has outmanoeuvred those who thought social discontent will erupt.

The protest against civic oppression does not have a focal point. Nationalism has a single focal point, one thing that keeps BJP supporters and organisations united. Gandhi's organisational acumen, feel for organisation and exemplarity is invoked a lot these days. But it is sobering that even those techniques worked largely in the context of nationalism. Civic freedom does not seem to give that focal point for this reason. The government engages in what you might call serial authoritarianism, picking out targets one by one. The advantage of this strategy is not just that others are complacent that they will not be the victims of civic oppression. It is also that it tires out protest, by making each transgression require a separate and discrete form of protest. So we don't yet have a contest between democracy and authoritarianism. What we have are protests against individual transgressions — sedition, lynching, NRC, Kashmir. These are still seen as individual transgressions in a system that is still, overall, legitimate.

But even as we prepare our legal challenges, write in public, organise protests, mobilise and look for slivers of social resistance that can be harnessed in the service of civic freedom, we should be prepared that things will have to get worse before they get better. After all, if we still have the luxury of acting as if the system is legitimate, the system will hoist us with our own petard of legitimacy. This is not a counsel of despair, only an analytical judgement, that the crisis will have to be projected as deep, systemic and wide-ranging, before resistance finds a focal point.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

Nationalism has a single focal point, one thing that keeps BJP supporters and organisations united. Gandhi's organisational acumen, feel for organisation and exemplarity is invoked a lot these days. But it is sobering that even those techniques worked largely in the context of nationalism. Civic freedom does not seem to give that focal point for this reason.



RAJIV TULI

A VISION FOR BHARAT

RSS chief's Vijaydashami speech highlighted a culture that has no place for violence

THE YEAR 2019 will hold a special place in the history of Bharat. It not only marks the 550th "prakash varsh" of Guru Nanak and the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi; the celebration of Dattopant Thengadi's birth centenary is also starting from November 10. All three figures shared the same cultural values and civilisation. They are the guiding spirits of this nation. This was one of the key messages sent by the RSS across the globe as the sarsanghchalak shared his thoughts at the Vijaydashami celebration in Nagpur.

The annual address by the RSS chief holds great importance as the organisation is seen as an ideological mentor to not only to the ruling government but many other organisations that are run throughout the country by swayamsevakas, with a vision of building character to rebuild the nation.

He appreciated the decision made by the present government to revoke Article 370. The people of Bharat showed faith in the strong leadership of the country in the elections. And the government responded by delivering its promise of "one nation, one constitution".

Mohan Bhagwat focused on the Indian economy and areas that Bharat needs to work on. The speech highlighted the misguiding of the Indian masses by spreading the fear about the alleged slowdown of the economy. He emphasised the importance of self-reliance by focusing on the need for the growth of the

MSME sector. He revisited Thengadi's vision for a "third way" by not looking at the capitalist or communist models of development but developing an indigenous Bharatiya model.

The great emphasis given in our culture to unity in diversity is also important. The RSS's idea of diversity is that one might follow any path of worship but we all consider ourselves Hindu. Some may prefer to use "Bharatiya" instead of "Hindu". The RSS doesn't have a problem with that. Bhagwat made it clear that "terminologies" are not that important, what is really important is the "essence" and "intention".

Bhagwat also took up the key issue of Swadeshi. The Sangh believes that Bharat does not need FDI in low-tech products. He categorically reiterated that we need to be careful about who the real beneficiary is and not be misguided by mere optics when it comes to FDI. A classic example to understand what Bhagwat meant comes from the mobile manufacturing market in India. Indian mobile manufacturing companies once had a market share of 58 per cent. This has been reduced to 8 per cent as their manufacturing facilities are being taken over by Chinese companies.

This core idea of the oriental model of economic development is discussed in length by Thengadi in his book, *Third Way*. Thengadi is one of the most prominent ideologues of the Sangh. He was instrumental

in the formation of Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, Bhartiya Kisan Sangh and Swadeshi Jagran Manch. He also predicted the fall of communism and rise of Bharat in 21st century in 1989, which happens to be the birth centenary year of K B Hedgewar.

Bhagwat's speech also discussed the fear that has been spread among minorities by introducing words which are alien to Bharat, like "lynching". Efforts are underway to defame our country and the entire Hindu society. Many of these cases have been found to be false or exaggerated. He highlighted that the legal system in India is competent to curb such incidents. Indian culture has no space for violence but only for peace and acceptance to all. It goes beyond tolerance to coexistence.

For the first time, the need to look at the borders beyond land is highlighted. The world is moving towards new dynamics in maritime security. With huge maritime boundaries, Bharat needs to take care of its islands as well.

Bhagwat concluded his speech by discussing the need to realise the symbolic meaning of Vijaydashami celebration. The victory of the good over evil is only possible if we strengthen ourselves as individuals, as a community and a nation and to lead the world with an example.

The writer is member of the state executive of Delhi RSS. Views are personal

Bhagwat also took up the key issue of Swadeshi. The way it has been articulated in the speech is significant. The Sangh believes that Bharat does not need FDI in low-tech products. He categorically reiterated that we need to be careful about who the real beneficiary is and not be misguided by mere optics when it comes to FDI.

HOW THINGS WORK

Nobels in medicine and physics have gone to researchers who have discovered basic secrets of the universe

THE FIRST NOBEL prizes announced this year honour fundamental discoveries of the processes which run the universe and living things in it. Both also look ahead to a better and more interesting future. William G Kaelin Jr, Sir Peter J Ratcliffe and Gregg L Semenza have won the prize for physiology or medicine for discovering the pathways by which cells adapt to oxygen availability. Of considerable medical use, it is perhaps the most significant step towards understanding cellular respiration since 1937, when Hans Adolf Krebs and William Arthur Johnson discovered the cycle mediated by adenosine triphosphate, which powers life.

Half of the prize in physics went to James Peebles, whose theoretical framework describing the universe from the Big Bang to the present underpins all of physical cosmology. Most evocative, both for the layperson and the scientist, is the conclusion that we can sense only 5 per cent of the universe. The rest is dark matter and dark energy, whose presence can only be inferred by their influence on phenomena. These remain areas of mystery, and will prove to be fertile breeding grounds for future physics laureates. The other half of the physics Nobel prize is shared by Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz, for the discovery in 1995 of the first exoplanet, orbiting the star 51 Pegasi. Their technique, using Doppler spectroscopy, supplemented the traditional transit method, and has led to the discovery of 4,000 planets circling distant suns.

Is there life on exoplanets? Peebles appears to be convinced that even if there is, we may not recognise it, because it may not use Hans Krebs' cycle at all. And anyway, we are unlikely to encounter it in the gulf of space. Unless, of course, we adapt to long space journeys on low or no oxygen. The possibility does seem remote.



OCTOBER 10, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

SC STAYS EXECUTIONS

THE SUPREME COURT stayed all executions in the country on an application by a convict under sentence of death who has challenged the constitutionality of capital punishment. The SC order was ex-parte, but the acting chief justice, PN Bhagwati, and Justice V D Tulzapurkar, ordered that copies of the apex court's order be communicated to all states and Union Territories. The court listed the matter to come up for further directions on October 10. It also allowed the petitioner, Mal Singh, to amend his application to implead all state governments and Union Territories as parties so that appropriate orders can be passed.

CHINA FOR BOURGEOISE

IN ITS ZEALOUS efforts to catch up with the modern world in economic development, China is turning to its former capitalists inside the country and to the masters of commerce outside — the overseas Chinese. The most famous of the businessmen who stayed in China when the communists took over 30 years ago was Rong Yiren, head of a giant textile works. Today, Rong is back in the Peking limelight as chairman of a huge new state-sponsored corporation designed to entice foreign investors into joint ventures in China.

FACING FAMINE

"BOLL LUKHRI PHULA kaans, barsa ka ghar

hoi gaya naas", is a saying in the local dialect in Banda, Uttar Pradesh. It means that the howling of jackals and the blooming of kaans — a variety of grass — are indications that the rains have come to an end. The kaans is in full bloom here even as the farmers are trying desperately to sow their rabi crops. Surrounded by the waters of the Jamuna and Ken rivers on three sides, this Bundelkhand district is in the grip of a drought raging in the region. The kharif crop has been declared destroyed. Ten per cent of it that still stands will not bear fruit. For the rabi crop, farmers are keeping their fingers crossed while their women have undergone all penances to please the rain god, but without luck.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

Just blame it on millennials

After all, they are investing in experiences, not consumption and commodities



BHASKAR CHAKRAVORTI

"The automobile and components industry has been affected by BS6 and the mindsets of millennials, who now prefer to have Ola and Uber rather than committing to buying an automobile" — Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman explaining why the Indian economy is in so much trouble.

"Today, I have the honour to introduce you to my family" — Prime Minister Narendra Modi to US President Trump in Houston, referring to the US Indian diaspora, disproportionately comprised of millennials.

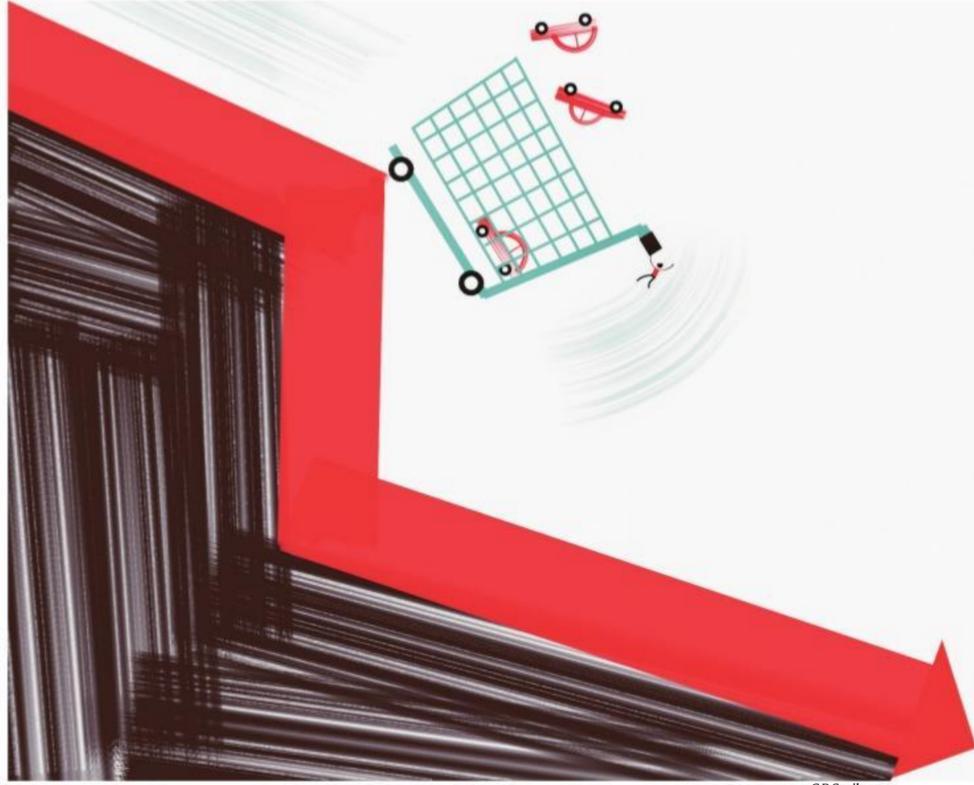
OH, THOSE MILLENNIALS. They were supposed to be Midnight's Grandchildren, who had shoved all vestiges of their parents' Gandhian guilt and Nehruvian socialism into history's cluttered closet. They were meant to represent the consumerist, urbanising, digitally exploding India. They were the embodiment of what McKinsey had — in an early fit of enthusiasm about the emerging Indian middle-class — called the "bird of gold."

Indian millennials had been handed a political bonanza: Two terms of Modi, a leader they adore at home and in Houston; a muscular post-Article 370 India, which seems to have left a mark on relatively few millennial consciences; and demonetisation, a bad idea then, worse idea now, but popular nevertheless with the demographic. This privileged class has been handed an India with streaming video, teeming cities and gleaming malls. All that was asked of them was to fulfill that promise of gluttonous gratification. Is it really that difficult to just go out and buy a car and join those teeming millions on clogged roads across India? Is it not their patriotic responsibility? It turns out millennials are too busy tracking how many minutes it will take for their Uber to wend its way so they can settle comfortably into the so-called "sharing" economy — in other words, an economy that consumes less stuff. It all seems like a frightening return to Gandhianism.

Finance Minister Sitharaman, of course, called a spade a spade; and since they are the Prime Minister's "family", I suppose it is okay to be honest about family members. There are three dreadful ways in which millennials are killing the economy: they are marrying late; they spend on experiences rather than on manufactured products; they are jobless or can't seem to get jobs paying decent salaries.

Consider each in turn. Marriage and milestones beyond it, such as having children — besides myriad other benefits — translate into greater engagement with the economy. The very act of marriage is accompanied by shopping for exorbitantly-priced products. If gold buying is one barometer, we are in trouble, thanks to these millennials. According to the World Gold Council, Indian millennials are buying less gold than their predecessors. Even millennial-friendly innovations, such as "digital gold", being pushed by the likes of Google, aren't helping.

A key culprit is, clearly, the marriage-averse millennial. According to the dating site, OKCupid, Indian millennials don't think marriage is necessary for a serious relation-



C R Sasikumar

ship to be classified as successful or happy. Of course, Indian millennials are mirroring trends elsewhere. The move away from "getting settled" (as they used to say back in the good old days) is a global phenomenon. In the US, millennials are paying fewer visits to supermarkets because of these misguided unsettling habits.

Indian millennials, of course, share another thing in common with their peers elsewhere. More than any generation preceding them, they have grown up with an awareness of the mobile phone and the internet. Their digital lives are lived by learning about, sorting and sampling a string of "experiences", such as entertainment, food or travel. Moreover, Indian millennials are the largest demographic block of social media users in the country. Social media is, of course, a beast that must be fed with shares, posts, links and likes. What this means is that millennials are steering disposable income towards "shareable" experiences.

You can imagine the impact on the GDP. For one, experiences are bought in bite-size pieces and may contribute less than a big product purchase. Also, these experiences are more service oriented and do little to help with growing the manufacturing sector. Finally, feeding the social media beast is time-consuming. It is mighty inconvenient to update your posts sitting behind a steering wheel; another reason to get the Uberwallah to do the driving.

Speaking of disposable income, millennials don't seem to have much of it. While those social media companies give you stuff for free as long as you leave them your data, companies that make real things insist on being paid. This can prove to be a serious hindrance to economic participation since India's millennials don't have the jobs they were promised by the head of their family, Prime Minister Modi. Even the ones that do have jobs, don't earn enough.

Joblessness is at a 45-year high and millennials are bearing the brunt of it. The auto

sector, which employs 3.5 crore, has laid off 3 lakh, with another 10 lakh jobs at risk. And it is not just the auto sector, of course. The real estate sector anticipates one lakh jobs to disappear over the next few months. Medium- and small-scale industries, the biggest job creators in the past four years, were supposed to deliver another crore jobs in the coming five years, but they are stalling because of a demand slowdown and a liquidity crunch. Jobs are being cut across textiles, diamond-cutting, consumer goods in what is deemed the "worst slowdown" in a decade, with no relief in sight. Even if the economy climbs back up, less than 5 per cent of the workforce has the necessary formal training, which means that even if the need exists, the jobs may not be filled.

Moreover, the Periodic Labour Force Survey suggests a wages crisis. Seventy five per cent of regular workers earn less than Rs 20,000 a month, with millennials comprising almost 50 per cent of the workforce. It is worth noting that India at 21.7 per cent lags far behind other emerging economies, such as China (53.1 per cent), Brazil (67.7 per cent), Russia (93.4 per cent) and South Africa (84.8 per cent) in the share of salaried jobs. This sorry state should explain why so few of them are rushing to buy an automobile.

Sitharaman would be well served by sparing the millennials and inquiring why the economy isn't delivering jobs, skills and better pay that Modi promised. But that would require deeper introspection and the tedious job of formulating and implementing policies for job-creation. Somebody has to own — and fix — the economy. Maybe the finance ministry could try that for a change.

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The writer is Dean of Global Business at the Fletcher School at Tufts University, founding executive director of Fletcher's Institute for Business in the Global Context and a non-resident senior fellow of Brookings India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The prime minister (Boris Johnson) continues to play fast and loose with parliament, the courts and Britain's interests. His plans must be blocked." — THE GUARDIAN

A case for deletion

The Boilers Act needs to be done away with. In fact, the entire Seventh Schedule of the Constitution needs a relook



BIBEK DEBROY

BOILERS, THAT IS, steam boilers, have been important enough to engage the attention of both the Union and state governments. Boilers figure as entry number 37 in the Concurrent List. I don't think anyone paid much attention to boilers in the Constituent Assembly debates. Boilers figured in the "Concurrent Legislative List" (entry no 21) of the Government of India Act of 1935 and got included in the Seventh Schedule by default. In the Government of India Act of 1919, boilers figured in the list of provincial subjects, but warranted no separate entry. They were simply mentioned as a sub-head under industrial matters (entry 26), along with "factories, settlement of labour disputes, electricity, gas and smoke nuisances".

Between 1919 and 1935, boilers increased in importance. It is easy to see why. The Indian Boilers Act of 1923 was passed "to consolidate and amend the law relating to steam-boilers". This was amended in 2007 and the then minister of state in DIPP (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion) moved the bill, stating, "The Indian Boilers Act of 1923, which this Bill seeks to amend, served its purpose well in the initial years of its operation, but with revolutionary technological changes, with the expansion of the economy, with new technologies becoming available for boiler manufacturers and for boiler component-manufactures as also for users, it was considered necessary to introduce certain necessary amendments to the bill to make it more effective, to lend it efficacy, practicality and a user-friendly ambience."

He also added, "You will also know that the state government inspection gave rise to long delays, corruption; and there were complaints of inappropriate certifications, etc. All of that is sought to be addressed by introducing new organisations and making other inspecting agencies in the private sector to come forward and render this extremely critical function."

Irrespective of whether boilers needed oil and grease or not, inspectors did. Since 2014, there have been more relaxations, with self-certification pushed, though this is primarily the domain of states. Nevertheless, one should read the "State Business Reform Action Plan" — the implementation guide DIPP prepared for states.

I am indebted to Arghya Sengupta of the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy for asking an interesting question. Why must boilers continue to be on the Concurrent List? This doesn't mean boilers should be moved from the Concurrent List to State List. Why must boilers have a separate entry? Why can't they be covered under the industrial safety clauses, as used to be the case under 1919 Government of India Act? To state it more strongly, this isn't a ques-

tion of amending and tweaking the Indian Boilers Act. Why can't the Indian Boilers Act be repealed?

Between 1919 and 1935, what ostensibly changed was the enactment of the Indian Boilers Act. In my view, what really changed was the report of the Boilers Law Committee. This was a committee set up in 1920 (F D Ascoli was the president) and it submitted a report in 1921. It was this committee's report that led to the Boilers Act of 1923. People often refer to this committee and to the explosion that occurred in Calcutta in 1863. I don't know how many have read the Ascoli committee's report. It begins with the sentence, "The necessity for boiler legislation is due to the fact that the steam boiler is an extremely dangerous instrument, that is liable to explode with disastrous consequences, on account of faults in design and construction, the effects of wear, tear and usage and as the result of careless handling and management at the time of working."

The world (and boilers) has moved on since then. The Calcutta explosion in 1863 led to a loss of 13 lives and resulted in Act VI of 1864, which applied to Calcutta and its suburbs. Thereafter, two accidents in Bombay led to Act VI in Bombay in 1869, later extended after explosions in "Broach and Ahmedabad in 1871". Following the committee's report, uniform all-India legislation, with government inspection, was introduced through the 1923 Boilers Act.

Reading the Ascoli report, I find the discussion comparing the United Kingdom and India extremely interesting. "It is important to remember that in the United Kingdom it is the custom to insure boilers against the risk of accident of explosion, and that on this account steam boilers are subject to inspection and control by influential Boiler Insurance Companies and Associations."

Therefore, beyond provisions that applied to factories and workshops, Britain didn't have any system for government inspection of boilers and no such legislation. "It has been suggested that it might be possible to adopt in India a system similar to that prevalent, in the United Kingdom. We have carefully considered the suggestion, but have arrived at the conclusion that it is impracticable. The evidence that we have heard shows unanimously the popularity of official inspection and the confidence resulting from the fact that it is done by a Government agency. The inspection is generally efficient, effective and economical — far cheaper than would be possible in the hands of a private commercial concern, the ultimate aim of which must be the payment of a dividend to its shareholders. It is obvious that in India the same confidence would not be placed in inspection at the hands of a private commercial company."

It is this perception that has changed. That's the reason we no longer need amendments to the Boilers Act. We no longer need that specific legislation and the specific entry in Seventh Schedule. Boilers are only an example. The entire Seventh Schedule needs a relook.

The writer is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the PM. Views are personal.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SUPPLY SIDE MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Trouble with credit' (IE, October 9). The main factors behind the decline in credit flows are subdued demand and low capacity-utilisation. It is surprising that instead of addressing the demand-side problem, the government implements supply-side measures like the corporate tax rate-cut. Although well intentioned, it is a step in the wrong direction. It has only added to the economic woes in the form of a ballooning fiscal deficit and attendant problems like a depreciating rupee, rising import bills and cuts in public expenditure.

S Bhalerao, Mumbai

FARM HOLDS THE KEY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The wrong way out' (IE, October 8). The conventional approach of fiscal and monetary stimulus methods is a temporary solution to the economic slowdown. The key to addressing the slowdown lies in reforms in the agriculture sector. There are limits to what a central bank can do — the government needs to increase investment. The problem is that the central bank can only facilitate lower rates and push banks to lend but it can't force people to borrow money from banks.

Sagar Ghorad via e-mail

CHANGE MINDSETS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Learning from Bhavkhedi' (IE, October 9). The writer has shone a light on the state of the country's marginalised classes. Centuries-old practices of segregation and untouchability persist in rural ar-

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

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eas. Laws are not enough. The removal of casteism requires appeals to peoples' conscience.

Chinmany Jain, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Learning from Bhavkhedi' (IE, October 9). In India, caste discrimination is deeply entrenched. Bhavkhedi is not an exceptional case. But it does show the extreme poverty of New India. Children from poor families go to fields to defecate. This has happened when the prime minister was awarded the prestigious Goalkeeper Prize.

Tapamoy Ghosh, Purba Bardhaman



PANKAJ CHATURVEDI AND HITESH SINGHAVI

Nipping it in the bud

E-cigarette ban prevents a disease from becoming life-threatening

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Vapourised' (IE, September 20). It states that the "ban on e-cigarettes is symptom of a larger malaise — governing by the brute force of a hammer when the subtlety of a scalpel is required". We disagree. The ban is targeted at removing a cancer that was threatening the life of unsuspecting users.

Smoking-related diseases rank among the greatest public health problems of the last century. Smoking, it is feared, will kill around a sixth of the world's population in the 21st century. However, it is not enough to see smoking as just another bad habit. Commerce, social factors and the absence of state regulations play important roles in people getting hooked to tobacco. However, there are positive signs. As per the second Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2016, India has seen the steepest decline in tobacco consumption (17 per cent) in any part of the world. There could be several reasons for this, but certainly not because e-cigarettes, "offer a path to quitting" to older smokers.

E-cigarette is a nicotine containing device that is owned or promoted by the cigarette industry. The basis of e-cigarette promotion was its safety vis-a-vis conventional cigarettes. E-cigarettes are claimed to contain nicotine minus the carcinogens in tra-

ditional cigarettes. However, nicotine is even more addictive than cocaine. Currently, there is no treatment for nicotine addiction. Moreover, nicotine even in its pure form is potentially carcinogenic. A dose of 30-50 mg of nicotine can kill an adult human.

Needless to say, tobacco is the cheapest source of nicotine. Therefore, pure nicotine is a myth and not a reality. The government of India is working towards the reduction of tobacco cultivation. The use of e-cigarettes stood in the way of this endeavour.

The wolf in the sheep clothing now stands exposed. The US has been rocked by vaping related cases of severe lung sickness. There have been 21 deaths in the past three months. The use of tobacco should be seen as a historical mistake. We now have opportunity to correct this mistake and protect next generation from the killer tobacco industry.

The editorial notes that like conventional

cigarettes, "the use of e-cigarettes should be regulated". However, we feel its better to nip the problem in the bud. The editorial also talks of the rise in the share prices of ITC following the e-cigarette ban. This is inconsequential because cigarette use is declining steadily in India. Globally, the cigarette business is no more lucrative. And, in fact, e-cigarette seems to be the tobacco industry's biggest hope.

Till date, there is no conclusive evidence that e-cigarettes prove beneficial in quitting cigarettes. On the contrary, it is known that among those who use e-cigarettes to stop smoking, 25 per cent use along it with cigarette and 75 per cent continue to use it even after quitting smoking.

As a thumb rule, nearly 10 per cent of smokers quit through the dint of will power. Approved drugs (nicotine tablets), under medical supervision, double this quitting rate. An e-cigarette, even if it's proved to help people quit smoking, is a far more expensive proposition compared to medically-approved methods. Fears that

DEAR EDITOR, I DISAGREE

A fortnightly column in which we invite readers to tell us why, when they differ with the editorial positions or news coverage of 'The Indian Express'

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 201

प्रदूषण की चुनौती

उत्तर प्रदेश प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड (यूपीपीसीबी) ने कानपुर में चमड़ा कारखानों को बंद करने का आदेश दिया है। अगस्त में यूपीपीसीबी ने 126 चमड़ा कारखानों को 50 फीसदी क्षमता के साथ काम करने की मंजूरी दी थी बशर्ते कि वे प्रदूषण मानकों का पालन करें। परंतु राष्ट्रीय हरित पंचाट की गंगा निगरानी शाखा ने कहा है कि कानपुर के

जाजमऊ औद्योगिक क्षेत्र में स्थित चमड़ा कारखानों से निकले प्रदूषक तत्व गंगा में मिल रहे हैं। इसके परिणामस्वरूप इन कारखानों को इस माह के अंत तक बंद रखने का आदेश दिया गया है। कानपुर का चमड़ा उद्योग करीब 12,000 करोड़ रुपये का है। इसमें से करीब 50 फीसदी मूल्य का माल निर्यात किया जाता है। यह उद्योग करीब 10

लाख लोगों को प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष रोजगार उपलब्ध कराता है। दिलचस्प बात यह है कि प्रदूषित जल के उपचार संयंत्रों का संचालन सरकारी संस्था जल निगम करता है, न कि चमड़ा कारखाने। जल निगम ने अपनी प्रतिबद्धता नहीं निभाई और उसने सुधार के लिए और अधिक वक्त मांगा है लेकिन इसका खमियाजा कारखानों को भुगतना पड़ रहा है।

व्यापक स्तर पर देखें तो यह घटना देश के समक्ष मौजूद तमाम आर्थिक और संचालन संबंधी चुनौतियों को उजागर करती है। ये चुनौतियां बढ़ते शहरीकरण और तेज विकास के प्रयास से उपजी हैं। बहरहाल, बाह्य कारकों का मुद्दा नया नहीं है और कानपुर के चमड़ा कारखानों के मामले में गंगा के प्रदूषण के व्यापक निहितार्थ हैं। अर्थशास्त्री

ऐसी समस्याओं पर पिछले एक दशक से विमर्श कर रहे हैं। सबसे पहले ऐसा मुद्दा अल्फ्रेड मार्शल ने उठाया था और आर्थर पिगू ने उसे आगे बढ़ाया। पिगू ने अपनी पुस्तक द इकॉनॉमिक्स ऑफ वेल्फेयर में (जो सन 1920 में प्रकाशित हुई थी) कहा, 'स्वहित राष्ट्रीय लाभांश में इजाफा करने वाला नहीं है, इसके परिणामस्वरूप सामान्य आर्थिक प्रक्रिया के साथ हस्तक्षेप के कुछ खास कदमों की अपेक्षा होनी चाहिए जो लाभांश को नुकसान नहीं पहुंचाएं बल्कि उसमें इजाफा करें।' पिगू ने हस्तक्षेप के तमाम तरीकों पर चर्चा की जिन्हें पिगूवियन कर के नाम से जाना जाता है। उदाहरण के लिए कार्बन कर ऐसे हस्तक्षेप का अच्छा उदाहरण है। बहरहाल, बाद के वर्षों में पिगूवियन कर की

आलोचना होने लगी। मिसाल के तौर पर कहा गया कि यह सामाजिक लागत का आकलन करने में सक्षम नहीं है।

देश को औद्योगिक विकास और तेजी से हो रहे शहरीकरण के नकारात्मक प्रभाव से निपटना होगा। प्रदूषण से निपटने तथा पर्यावरण को हो रही हानि से निपटने के क्रम में हमेशा कर लगाना कारगर नहीं होता। उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार के तमाम प्रयासों के बावजूद सीवेज के पानी का बड़ा हिस्सा अभी भी गंगा में मिल रहा है। कानपुर के चमड़ा कारखानों के साथ यह मुद्दा भी दर्शाता है कि भारत को ऐसे मसलों से निपटने के लिए क्षमता विस्तार करना जरूरी है। चमड़ा कारखाने इसलिए बंद हुए क्योंकि सरकारी एजेंसी अपना काम ठीक से नहीं कर सकी। प्रदूषण

से निपटने के लिए न केवल स्थानीय शासन की संस्थाओं को मजबूत करना होगा बल्कि विभिन्न एजेंसियों में तालमेल कायम करना होगा। भारत जैसे देश में हर जगह एक हल कारगर नहीं होगा इसलिए स्थानीय संस्थाओं को जोड़ना जरूरी है। सरकार को जरूरी निवेश करना चाहिए और स्थानीय स्तर पर पर्यावरण मानकों के पालन की निगरानी करनी चाहिए। कचरा प्रबंधन में निजी निवेश कारगर कदम हो सकता है। इससे लागत कम करने और नवाचार करने में मदद मिलेगी।

प्रदूषण नियंत्रण की चुनौती आगे बढ़ेगी और सरकार को स्थायी वृद्धि और विकास सुनिश्चित करने के लिए कई स्तरों पर काम करना होगा। ऐसे में औद्योगिक इकाइयों को बंद करना कोई विकल्प नहीं बनना चाहिए।



अजय मोहंती

तनावग्रस्त वित्तीय परिसंपत्ति की समस्या का हल

विफल होने वाले बैंकों, बीमा कंपनियों और महत्त्वपूर्ण वित्तीय फर्म के लिए निस्तारण की आवश्यकता पर बल दे रहे हैं **अजय शाह**

तनावग्रस्त वित्तीय परिसंपत्तियों का निस्तारण मौजूदा आर्थिक नीति के समक्ष एक प्रमुख गतिरोध है। यदि किसी वित्तीय कंपनी ने आम परिवारों से कोई गहरा वादा नहीं किया हो तो ऐसी कंपनियों का निस्तारण किसी भी तरह गैर वित्तीय कंपनियों के निस्तारण से अलग नहीं है। एनबीएफसी जैसी वित्तीय कंपनियों के निस्तारण के लिए तो ऋणशोधन अक्षमता एवं दिवालिया संहिता (आईबीसी) ही सही तरीका है। एक विशिष्ट सांविधिक वित्तीय निस्तारण निगम सीमित समस्याओं को हल कर सकता है जबकि सिर्फ आईबीसी का प्रदर्शन कमजोर रहेगा।

वर्ष 2011 के बाद से देश की एक प्रमुख समस्या रही है तनावग्रस्त परिसंपत्तियां। जब कोई कंपनी अपने आप को सीमित कर लेती है तो सामान्य कारोबारी गतिविधियां रुक जाती हैं। इसका अर्थव्यवस्था पर नकारात्मक असर होता है। जब ऐसी आशंका बलवती होती है कि कर्जदार पैसे गंवा बैठेंगे तो ऋण बाजार में भी ठहराव आ जाता है। बाजार आधारित हर अर्थव्यवस्था में किरायाती निस्तारण आवश्यक है। भारत ने यह शुरुआत सन 2016 में आईबीसी के गठन के साथ की थी। उस वक्त आईबीसी में गैर वित्तीय कंपनियां शामिल थीं।

आईएलएंडएफएस या दीवान हाउसिंग जैसी तनावग्रस्त एनबीएफसी पर विचार करते

हैं। इन कंपनियों ने पेशेवर संस्थानों से ऋण लिया था। उन पर आम परिवारों की कोई उधारी नहीं थी। इनमें से कोई संस्थान व्यवस्थागत दृष्टि से अहम नहीं है। एक मोटे नियम के तौर पर व्यवस्थागत दृष्टि से महत्त्वपूर्ण किसी भी संस्थान की बैलेंस शीट जीडीपी के कम से कम 2 फीसदी के बराबर होनी चाहिए। आज के भारत में इसके लिए बैलेंस शीट का आकार करीब 4 लाख रुपये होना चाहिए। एचडीएफसी व्यवस्थागत रूप से अहम है लेकिन आईएलएंडएफएस अथवा दीवान हाउसिंग के साथ ऐसा नहीं है।

इन परिस्थितियों में विशुद्ध आईबीसी को अपनाना कारगर होगा। जब कोई एनबीएफसी पहली बार डिफॉल्ट करेगी तो उसका कोई एक ऋणदाता एनसीएलटी के पास जा सकता है और कंपनी का नियंत्रण ऋणदाताओं की समिति के पास आ जाएगा। ऋणदाताओं की समिति का गठन एनबीएफसी को कर्ज देने वाले बैंकों, म्युचुअल फंड और अन्य पेशेवर ऋणदाताओं में से किया जाएगा।

ऋणदाताओं की समिति ही यह विचार करेगी कि उसके हित में क्या है: पूरी फर्म को बेचना, पहले कुछ हिस्से बेचकर नकदी जुटाना, कर्ज का पुनर्गठन करना या नकदीकरण करना। ऋणदाताओं की समिति के पास यह अधिकार है कि वह समस्या को हल करे। दिवालिया प्रक्रिया से होने वाला नुकसान इन पेशेवरों पर आयद होगा।

डिफॉल्ट के एक वर्ष के भीतर हम समस्या को पीछे छोड़ सकते हैं।

फिलहाल निस्तारण ढांचे की अनुपस्थिति में ऋणदाता अनिश्चितता के शिकार रहते हैं। प्रवर्तक वह प्रार्थमिकता तय करता है जिसके आधार पर ऋणदाताओं को भुगतान किया जाता है। इसके विपरीत आईबीसी ऐसे अनुमानित नियम प्रस्तुत करती है जिनके माध्यम से निस्तारण को अंजाम दिया जाएगा। बिना आईबीसी के प्रत्येक ऋणदाता अपना पैसा निकालना चाहेगा और एनबीएफसी के निस्तारण के बारे में नहीं सोचेगा। अगर किसी ऋणदाता का अपना पैसा निकल रहा है तो वह एनबीएफसी के गलत कदमों को भी सही ठहराएगा।

आईबीसी के अधीन तमाम ऋणदाता अपनी साक्षा समस्या को लेकर एक निस्तारण के लिए बातचीत करेंगे। ऐसे में तमाम ऋणदाताओं की ऊर्जा बेहतर से बेहतर निस्तारण योजना की तलाश में लगेगी।

यह खुशनुमा तस्वीर उस समय भंग हो जाती है जब आम परिवार भी परिदृश्य में होते हैं। खासकर बैंकों के मामले में। बैंक जमाकर्ता एनबीएफसी ऋणदाताओं की तुलना में विशिष्ट स्थिति में होते हैं जहां वे अपना पैसा कभी भी वापस निकाल सकते हैं। बैंकों के लिए आईबीसी का इस्तेमाल दो स्तरों पर गड़बड़ होता है। पहला, इससे जमाकर्ता की दिक्कत बढ़ती है और वह संकट का पहला

संकेत मिलते ही अपना पैसा बाहर निकालने के बारे में सोचता है। दूसरा, ऋणदाता समिति में बड़ी तादाद में लोगों को देखते हुए बातचीत का आयोजन मुश्किल होता है।

इसके लिए एक विशिष्ट निस्तारण निगम की आवश्यकता होगी जो तनावग्रस्त वित्तीय फर्म पर पूरा नियंत्रण करे। ऐसे निस्तारण निगम की तीन विशिष्ट विशेषताएं हैं। पहली बात, यह सक्रियता से काम करेगी और शुद्ध परिसंपत्ति मूल्य के नकारात्मक होने के पहले ही कदम उठाएगी। दूसरा, यह आईबीसी प्रक्रिया की तुलना में कहीं अधिक तेजी से कदम उठाएगी क्योंकि ऋणदाताओं के बीच लंबी बातचीत की आवश्यकता नहीं होगी। तीसरा, यह आम परिवारों को जमा बीमा मुहैया कराएगा या उन्हें किसी नए बीमा प्रदाता की सेवा देगा।

ऐसा सांविधिक वित्तीय निस्तारण निगम एफएसएलआरसी के डिजाइन का हिस्सा थी जो आईबीसी के पहले आई थी। अब जबकि आईबीसी आ चुकी है तो हमें निस्तारण निगम की सीमित भूमिका पर गौर करना होगा। बैंकों, बीमा कंपनियों और व्यवस्थागत दृष्टि से अहम कंपनियों मसलन एचडीएफसी आदि की नाकामी के लिए निस्तारण निगम पर ध्यान देना होगा। यह आईएलएंडएफएस जैसी सामान्य एनबीएफसी पर लागू नहीं होता जहां केवल आईबीसी पर्याप्त हो।

निस्तारण निगमों की स्थापना का प्रयास एफआरडीआई बिल के माध्यम से किया गया जिसे समाप्त कर दिया गया। यह एक अहम नीतिगत प्रार्थमिकता बना हुआ है और इसे बढ़ावा दिया जाना चाहिए। लेकिन हमें इस राह की सीमाओं को भी समझना होगा। निस्तारण निगम एक नई सरकारी अफसरशाही की तरह होगा। देश की अधिकांश सरकारी एजेंसियां खराब तरीके से काम करती हैं। इसके अलावा सरकारी प्रशासन की व्यापक विफलता भी इसे प्रभावित करेगी।

निस्तारण निगम के पास एक उल्लेखनीय अधिकार है: वह बैंक के डिफॉल्ट होने के पहले निस्तारण प्रक्रिया शुरू कर सकता है। इसका दुरुपयोग रोकने के लिए हमें व्यापक पैमाने पर जांचपरख और संतुलन कायम करना होगा। निस्तारण निगम के अधिकारियों के लिए वित्तीय फर्म में उस वक्त हस्तक्षेप करना आसान नहीं होगा क्योंकि इस वक्त उपयुक्त हल तलाशना मुश्किल होगा। बेहतर परियोजना प्रबंधन के अधीन इसे अपनी जमीन तैयार करने में कम से कम तीन वर्ष लगेगे।

लब्बोलुआब यह कि एचडीएफसी जैसी महत्त्वपूर्ण वित्तीय फर्म अथवा बैंकों या बीमा कंपनियों के निस्तारण के रूप में दो तरह के विकल्पों के निवारण के क्रम में निस्तारण निगम से दूरी नहीं बनाई जा सकती। यह प्रक्रिया एक वर्ष की नहीं है। इसमें समय लगेगा और इसे यथाशीघ्र आरंभ किया जाना चाहिए। परंतु तमाम अन्य वित्तीय फर्म के लिए उन कर्जदारों का हित निस्तारण निगम की अफसरशाही की तुलना में बेहतर काम करेगा जो ऋणदाताओं की समिति से बातचीत करेंगे। हमें आईबीसी का बेहतर कामकाज सुनिश्चित करने के लिए और प्रयास करने होंगे। इस क्रम में कई श्रेणियों के वित्तीय निस्तारण को इसके जरिये अंजाम देना होगा।

कर्मियों की नकारात्मकता दूर करती हैं अच्छी कंपनियां

आपने अपने वरिष्ठ अधिकारी के साथ अपने कार्य प्रदर्शन की समीक्षा संबंधी बातचीत खत्म की। आपका मूल्यांकन काफी अच्छा रहा और उसमें आपकी मजबूती और उपलब्धियों का जिक्र था। परंतु कुछ टिप्पणियां ऐसी हैं जहां आपके प्रदर्शन में सुधार की गुंजाइश बताई जाती है। आपका पूरा ध्यान इन्हीं टिप्पणियों में लग जाता है। अपने प्रदर्शन की समीक्षा में कही गई सकारात्मक बातों को लेकर प्रसन्न होने के बजाय आप चंद आलोचनात्मक टिप्पणियों को लेकर खिन्न और नाराज हो जाते हैं।

या फिर अगर आप तमाम सहकर्मियों द्वारा मिली तारीफों के बारे में सोचें तो शायद उस पल जैसी सामान्य एनबीएफसी पर लागू नहीं होता जहां केवल आईबीसी पर्याप्त हो। या फिर अगर आप तमाम सहकर्मियों द्वारा मिली तारीफों के बारे में सोचें तो शायद उस पल के लिए आप एकदम मूग्ध हो जाएं लेकिन बाद में आप उसे भूल जाते हैं। अब जरा इसकी तुलना एक नकारात्मक टिप्पणी से कीजिए, वह शायद आपको अधिक गहराई से प्रभावित करेगी और नकारात्मक भावना कई दिनों तक आपके भीतर बनी रहेगी।

नकारे जाने पर महसूस होने वाला अपमान, सराहना से होने वाली खुशी पर भारी क्यों पड़ जाता है, इस बारे में 2002 के नोबेल पुरस्कार विजेता अर्थशास्त्री डेनियल कानमैन का एक अध्ययन है। इस अध्ययन में प्रतिभागियों की 50 डॉलर की रकम गंवाने या इतनी ही रकम पाने की कल्पना करने को तुलना में हालांकि राशि समान है लेकिन पैसा गंवाने की कल्पना करने वालों में भावनात्मक प्रतिक्रिया कहीं तगड़ी रही। दूसरे शब्दों में कहे तो कुछ गंवा देने की नकारात्मकता कुछ हासिल करने की अच्छाई से कहीं ज्यादा होती है। शोध पत्रों ने दिखाया है कि नकारात्मकता हमारे लिए ज्यादा मायने रखती है और सकारात्मकता की तुलना में हमारा ध्यान ज्यादा आकर्षित करती है।

यह सब हमारे मस्तिष्क के एक हिस्से की वजह से होता है जिसका नाम प्रमस्तिष्क खंड है। तंत्रिका मनोविज्ञानी रिच हेंसम ने यह बताया है कि प्रमस्तिष्कखंड नकारात्मकता का पता लगाने में अपने दो-तिहाई न्यूरॉन का इस्तेमाल करता है और उसे दीर्घावधि की स्मृति में दर्ज कर देता है। यानी हमारी भावनाओं का दो तिहाई हिस्सा इस तैयार हुआ है जो प्रमुख तौर पर



इंसानी पहलू

श्यामल मजूमदार

जो कंपनियां अपने कर्मचारियों का ध्यान रखती हैं वे उन्हें

सिखाती हैं कि वे खुद को कमतर न महसूस करें। दिमाग में

कोई नकारात्मकता इसे पराजित नहीं कर सकती

नकारात्मकता पर ध्यान देता है। ऐसे में आश्चर्य नहीं कि हार्वर्ड विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा लोगों की डायरियों पर किया गया अध्ययन बताता है कि किसी झटके का नकारात्मक असर, किसी सकारात्मक घटना के असर की तुलना में दोगुना प्रभावी होता है।

बड़ी कंपनियां यह बात जानती हैं। यही कारण है कि वे अपने कार्यस्थल को खुशनुमा बनाने में बहुत अधिक समय और पैसे का निवेश करती हैं। कर्मचारी अपने कार्यस्थल से जुड़ाव महसूस करते हैं और उनका प्रदर्शन भी अच्छा रहता है। कई लोग कहते हैं कि सकारात्मक सोच हमारे मस्तिष्क के नकारात्मक पूर्वग्रह से लड़ने में मदद करता है। यानी अगर आपके पास पहले से जो कुछ है उसे लेकर आपके मन में सराहना का भाव है तो आप जीवन में आगे खुश रह सकते हैं। यह बात कहने में तो आसान है लेकिन प्रबंधक कहते हैं कि इसका क्रियाव्यवन करना कतई आसान नहीं है। उदाहरण के लिए विशेषज्ञ कहते हैं कि हमें पांच मिनट तक अपनी श्वास पर ध्यान देना चाहिए लेकिन ऐसा करना बहुत मुश्किल है क्योंकि हमारा मस्तिष्क तमाम चीजों की ओर भटकेगा।

यानी सकारात्मक विचार को

लेकर भाषण देने के बजाय बड़ी कंपनियां सकारात्मकता को व्यवहार में लाती हैं। यह एक तरह की मनोवैज्ञानिक कवायद है जो हमें बताती है कि कुछ करके प्रसन्नता कैसे अर्जित की जाए। उदाहरण के लिए वे 50 दंड-बैठक या आठ घंटे की जाँगींग का मनोवैज्ञानिक समतुल्य। इन कंपनियों के मानव संसाधन प्रबंधक भी जानते हैं कि यदाकदा के सकारात्मक अनुभव मस्तिष्क पर इतना प्रभाव नहीं डालते कि हम नकारात्मकता से जुझ सकें। खुश रहने के लिए छिटपुट सकारात्मक अनुभव लगातार मिलते रहने चाहिए।

यही कारण है कि बड़ी कंपनियां छोटी-छोटी जीत का भी जश्न मनाती हैं। उन्हें पता होता है कि छोटी से छोटी उपलब्धि को मान्यता देने से कर्मचारियों के दिलोदिमाग में खुशी बढ़ती जाती है। भविष्य में जब कभी वे निराश होते हैं तो यह छोटी-छोटी खुशियां उनके काम आती हैं। नेतृत्वकर्ताओं को जानना चाहिए कि केवल कर्मचारियों की कर्मियों या कमजोरियों की ओर संकेत करना नुकसानदेह हो सकता है। हर बार जब वे अपने आसपास मौजूद लोगों की मजबूती की सराहना करते हैं तो न केवल उनका उत्साह बढ़ाते हैं बल्कि इससे उनका भी उत्साहवर्धन होता है।

वे अपनी टीम के साथ बातचीत में अक्सर ऐसे सवाल करते हैं जो उन्हें सशक्त बनाते हैं। मिसाल के तौर पर यह पूछा जाना कि हम इस विचार पर कैसे आगे बढ़ सकते हैं, हमेशा यह पूछने से बेहतर होता है कि अमुक विचार को लागू करने में क्या दिक्कत आ सकती है? नकारात्मक विचार से निपटने का सबसे बेहतर तरीका है निरंतर संवाद करते रहना। किसी तरह की सराहना करने वाला संदेश या ईमेल भेजते रहना बेहतर है लेकिन फोन करने या कर्मचारियों के पास जाकर उनसे सीधे बात करने का कोई विकल्प नहीं है। एलनॉर रूजवेल्ट की मनाहूर उक्ति है कि आपकी सहमति के बिना कोई आपको कमतर महसूस नहीं करा सकता। जो कंपनियां अपने कर्मचारियों को प्रेरित करती हैं वे उन्हें सिखाती हैं कि वे खुद को कमतर न महसूस करें। दिमाग में कोई नकारात्मकता इसे पराजित नहीं कर सकती।

कानाफूसी

उत्कृष्टता पर सवाल

मध्य प्रदेश की कांग्रेस शासित सरकार पिछली सरकार द्वारा लिए गए तमाम निर्णयों को पलटती जा रही है। ताजा मामला राज्य सरकार के उत्कृष्टता पुरस्कारों का है जिनकी शुरुआत पिछली भाजपा सरकार ने सन 2008 में की थी। ये पुरस्कार प्रदेश शासन के बेहतरीन प्रदर्शन करने वाले अफसरशाहों और संस्थानों को दिए जाते हैं। इन पुरस्कारों को फिलहाल स्थगित कर दिया गया है क्योंकि सरकार को लगता है कि कुछ अफसरशाह अभी भी पिछली शिवराज सरकार के प्रति झुकाव रखते हैं और उनकी बनाई सूची का पूर्वग्रह से प्रसन्न होना लाजिमी है। सूत्रों के मुताबिक जब संभावित विजेताओं की सूची मुख्यमंत्री कमल नाथ के सामने पेश की गई तो उन्होंने इसे तत्काल खारिज कर दिया। अब सरकार नए सिरे से चयन प्रक्रिया अपना रही है। माना जा रहा है कि नए विजेता सामने आएंगे।

अतिक्रमण का भय

केवल हम और आप ही ऐसे लोग नहीं हैं जिन्हें निजी परिसंपत्ति पर अतिक्रमण की आशंका सताती रहती है। जानकारी के मुताबिक केंद्रीय आवास एवं शहरी मामलों के मंत्रालय में इस बात पर विचार किया जा रहा है कि खाली पड़ी सरकारी जमीन, बंगलों और फ्लैट आदि को अतिक्रमण से बचाने के लिए निजी सुरक्षा एजेंसी को मदद ली जाए। केंद्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग को निजी सुरक्षा कर्मा तैनात करने की जिम्मेदारी दी गई है। इनमें भी पूर्व सैनिकों को तरजीह देने की बात कही गई है। एक वर्ष के लिए एक सुरक्षा एजेंसी की सेवाएं ली जाएंगी और वह खाली पड़ी परिसंपत्तियों की निगरानी के लिए गार्ड तैनात करेगी। उनके आचरण की जिम्मेदारी भी एजेंसी की होगी।



आपका पक्ष

मंदी की आहट और सरकार के कदम

कई अर्थशात्रियों का मानना है कि विश्व की अर्थव्यवस्था आर्थिक मंदी की ओर बढ़ रही है तो कई उसे सुस्ती की संज्ञा दे रहे हैं। लेकिन भारत सरकार यह मानने को तैयार नहीं है कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में आर्थिक मंदी जैसी कोई बात है। सरकार इसे आर्थिक सुस्ती ही मान रही है। सुस्ती से निजात पाने के लिए हर देश अपने उपलब्ध संसाधनों के हिसाब से उचित कदम उठता है। सुस्ती ने निपटना आसान नहीं है लेकिन यह अनंभव भी नहीं है। उपलब्ध संसाधनों के संतुलित इस्तेमाल से आर्थिक सुस्ती पर काबू पाया जा सकता है। जैसे कि केंद्रीय बैंक द्वारा ब्याज दर में कमी, सस्ती दरों पर ऋण, प्रभावित उद्योग-धंधों को राहत पैकेज देना आदि शामिल हैं। आर्थिक सुस्ती से हर संस्था और व्यक्ति किसी न किसी रूप में प्रभावित होता है। शेरय बाजार में लगातार गिरावट को आर्थिक मंदी के संकेत के तौर पर देखा जा सकता है। लगातार आर्थिक विकास दर में



गिरावट होना अर्थव्यवस्था को सेहत के लिए अच्छा नहीं होता है। लगातार दो तिमाहियों तक सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में कमी को मंदी की आहट से जोड़कर देखा जाने लगता है। आर्थिक मंदी की वजह से लोगों की खर्च करने की क्षमता में गिरावट आ जाती है। इसके अलावा खपत में कमी आने से वस्तुओं और सेवाओं का उत्पादन कम होने लगता

आर्थिक मंदी से निपटने के लिए वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने कई घोषणाएं की थीं

है जिसका असर कंपनियों के कामकाज, बिक्री और मुनाफे पर पड़ता है। सरकार को मंदी से निपटने के लिए उचित कदम उठाने चाहिए।

राजीव सिंह, हैदराबाद

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।

संपादकीय 5

संकट में संस्था

मंदी का असर सिर्फ देशों की अर्थव्यवस्था पर ही नहीं दिख रहा, बल्कि दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा और ताकतवर माने जाने वाला वैश्विक निकाय संयुक्त राष्ट्र भी घोर आर्थिक संकट से जूझ रहा है। हालांकि यह कोई पहला मौका नहीं है जब इस वैश्विक संस्था ने पैसे की कमी की बात कही हो। कई साल से ऐसा हो रहा है जब साल के आखिर में इसके बजट पास होने की बात आती है तो हमेशा कटौती पर जोर दिया जाता है। पिछले साल संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने अपने सालाना बजट में साढ़े अट्‌टाईस करोड़ डालर से ज्यादा की कटौती थी। संयुक्त राष्ट्र कोई कमाऊ संस्था नहीं है। उसका खर्चा सदस्य देशों के योगदान से ही चलता है। लेकिन लंबे समय से समस्या यह बनी हुई है कि सदस्य देश अपने हिस्से का योगदान नहीं दे रहे हैं। जो देश दे रहे हैं वे भी कटौती कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में संस्था के पास पैसे की आवक घट रही है और संकट बढ़ता जा रहा है। सवाल यह उठता है कि यह विश्व संस्था अपने को कैसे बचा पाएगी। अगर पैसा नहीं होगा तो धीरे-धीरे कामकाज ठप होते जाएंगे और यह निष्प्राभावी होती चली आएगी।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासचिव एंतोनियो गुतेर्रेस ने हाल में संस्था की माली हालत पर जिस तरह से चिंता व्यक्त की है और सदस्य देशों को चेताया है, वह गंभीर स्थिति का संकेत है। अब हालात यहां तक पहुंच गए हैं कि कर्मचारियों को वेतन देने तक के लिए पैसे के लाले पड़ रहे हैं। गुतेर्रेस ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र सचिवालय में काम करने वाले सैंतीस हजार कर्मचारियों को इस बारे में बता दिया है कि अब वेतन और भत्तों में कटौती होगी। अबकी बार यह नौबत इसलिए आई है कि इस साल के जरूरी बजट का जो पैसा सदस्य देशों से आना था, उसका अभी तक सत्तर फीसद ही आया है। पिछले महीने संगठन को तेईस करोड़ डॉलर की नगदी का संकट झेलना पड़ा। ऐसी ही हालत इसी महीने भी बनी रहेगी। सवाल है ऐसे में किया क्या जाए? सिर्फ वेतन और भत्तों में कटौती से काम नहीं चलने वाला है। इसीलिए महासचिव ने खर्च में कमी के लिए दूसरे उपायों की भी बात कही है। जैसे सम्मेलनों और बैठकों को टाला जाएगा, इनमें कमी की जाएगी। संयुक्त राष्ट्र के अधिकारियों की विदेश यात्राओं पर भी अंकुश लगाया जाएगा। कुल मिला कर संस्था के कामकाज पर असर पड़ना तय है।

आज बदलते विश्व में संयुक्त राष्ट्र की भूमिका पहले के मुकाबले कहीं ज्यादा महत्त्वपूर्ण हो गई है। शांति मिशनों से लेकर क्षेत्रीय विवादों के समाधान तक में संयुक्त राष्ट्र की भूमिका से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता। छोटे से छोटा देश तक अपने विवादों के समाधान की उम्मीद लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र का दरवाजा इसलिए खटखटाता है कि उसे पता है कि इस संस्था का बुनियादी मकसद ही विश्व शांति के लिए काम करना है। दुनिया के देशों में कानूनी विवाद सुलझाने के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय न्यायालय है, तो युनिफेस जैसी संस्था की अपनी बड़ी भूमिका है। ऐसे में अगर इन संस्थाओं के बजट में कटौती होती है तो इसका नुकसान बड़े देशों के बजाय छोटे मुल्कों को ज्यादा होगा। संयुक्त राष्ट्र के ज्यादातर शांति मिशन तीसरी दुनिया के देशों में या फिर पश्चिम एशिया के युद्धग्रस्त क्षेत्रों में चल रहे हैं। ऐसे में खर्च में कटौती का खमियाजा उन देशों के नागरिकों को ही उठाना पड़ेगा। अगर संयुक्त राष्ट्र को बचाए रखना है तो सदस्य देशों को अपने निहित स्वार्थों से ऊपर उठना होगा और योगदान के मसले पर राजनीति बंद करनी होगी।

आतंक के खिलाफ

अफगानिस्तान में अमेरिकी सुरक्षा बलों के साथ लंबे समय से जारी अभियान में आतंकवादियों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई में कोई कसर नहीं छोड़ी गई, लेकिन सच यह है कि आज भी वहां तालिबान को इतना कमजोर नहीं किया जा सका है कि आश्चस्त हुआ जा सके। हालांकि बड़े कद के आतंकवादियों के मारे जाने की खबरें आने के बाद आतंकी समूहों के प्रभाव में थोड़ी कमी जरूर देखी जाती है। इस लिहाज से देखें तो वहां एक संयुक्त अभियान में अल कायदा के एक बड़े सरगना आसिम उमर को मार गिराए जाने को बड़ी कामयाबी के तौर पर देखा जाएगा। दरअसल, पिछले महीने की तेईस तारीख को हेलमंड प्रांत के मूसा कला में अमेरिकी सुरक्षा बलों ने तालिबान के परिसर पर छापा मारा था। उसी अभियान के दौरान उमर मारा गया। वह अफगानिस्तान में भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप का प्रमुख था। यों अफगानिस्तान के राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा निदेशालय का कहना है कि वह पाकिस्तानी नागरिक था, लेकिन ऐसे दावे भी सामने आए हैं कि वह भारत में पैदा हुआ है। पर इतना तय है कि उसकी उपयोगिता को देखते हुए ही उसे इस समूचे इलाके का प्रमुख का दायित्व सौंपा गया होगा और निश्चित रूप से भारत में हुई आतंकी हमलों में भी उसकी बड़ी भूमिका रही होगी।

करीब महीने भर पहले अमेरिकी खुफिया स्रोतों यह जानकारी सामने आई थी कि अफगानिस्तान-पाकिस्तान क्षेत्र में अमेरिका के एक आतंकरोधी कार्रवाई के दौरान अल कायदा के सरगना रह चुके उसामा बिन लादेन के बेटे हमजा बिन लादेन की मौत हो गई। इसके साथ ही यह भी माना गया कि अब तालिबान का वह दौर खत्म हुआ, जिसमें वह खुद को सांकेतिक रूप से उसामा बिन लादेन के साथ जुड़ा हुआ मानता था। हमजा बिन लादेन के बाद अब आसिम उमर के मारे जाने की खबर के बाद न केवल तालिबान का बचा हुआ नेतृत्व कमजोर होगा, बल्कि उसकी गतिविधियों पर भी इसका असर पड़ेगा। लेकिन यह मान कर निश्चित हो जाना शायद तालिबान को फिर से तैयार होने का मौका मुहैया कराने की तरह होगा। इसलिए आतंक विरोधी कार्रवाई में एक निरंतरता की जरूरत होगी। सही है कि उसामा बिन लादेन को मार कर अमेरिका ने एक बड़ी कामयाबी हासिल की थी। तब माना गया था कि अब इस समूचे उपमहाद्वीप पर तालिबान का चर्चस्व और असर खत्म हो जाएगा और इसका समूची दुनिया पर असर पड़ेगा। लेकिन हकीकत यह है कि अब भी वहां तालिबान के कई ऐसे बड़े कद के आतंकी मौजूद हैं, जो उसकी कमान संभाल रहे हैं और अफगानिस्तान और वहां से इतर आतंकी हमलों को अंजाम दे रहे हैं।

यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि चुनावों के पहले तालिबान ने अफगानिस्तान में किस पैमाने का आतंक मचाया। अमूमन हर रोज दर्जनों लोगों के मारे जाने की खबरें आती रहीं। इससे यहीं जाहिर होता है कि तालिबान या दूसरे आतंकवादी समूहों से लड़ाई के नाम पर अफगानिस्तान में अमेरिकी सुरक्षा बलों के लंबे अभियान के बावजूद वहां आतंकवाद की जड़ों को बहुत कमजोर नहीं किया जा सका है। हाल में अफगानिस्तान में राष्ट्रपति चुनावों के दौरान जितनी कम संख्या में लोग बाहर निकले, उससे साफ था कि आज भी वहां तालिबान का खोफ किस कदर हावी है। दरअसल, तालिबान ने इस बार फिर चुनावों का बहिष्कार करके की घोषणा की थी और लोगों को वोट न देने की हिदायत दनी थी। सवाल है कि अफगानिस्तान में ‘सब कुछ छेड़ कर देने’ के दावे के साथ अमेरिका को और दूसरे देशों की ओर से सालों से चल रहा बहुस्तरीय अभियान आज भी वहां के आम लोगों के बीच सुरक्षा का भाव नहीं भर सका है तो इसमें किसकी जिम्मेदारी बनती है?

कल्पमेधा

भलाई जितनी अधिक की जाती है, उतनी ही अधिक फैलती है।
- मिल्टन

प्रमोद भार्गव

बढ़ते तापमान को रोकना आसान काम नहीं है, बावजूद इसके हम अपने हिमखंडों को टूटने और पिघलने से बचाने के उपाय औद्योगिक गतिविधियों को विराम देकर कर सकते हैं। पर्यटन के रूप में मानव समुदाय की जो आवाजाही बढ़ रही है, उस पर भी अंकुश लगाने की जरूरत है। इसके अलावा वाकई हम अपनी बर्फीली शिलाओं को सुरक्षित रखना चाहते हैं तो हमारी ज्ञान परंपरा में हिमखंडों की सुरक्षा के जो उपाय उपलब्ध हैं, उन्हें भी महत्व देना होगा।

दक्षिणी ध्रुव के बर्फीले अंटार्कटिका में हजारों साल से बर्फ के विशाल हिमखंड के रूप में मौजूद हिमखंड का एक भाग पिछले दिनों टूट गया। हिमखंड का टूटा हिस्सा इतना विशालकाय था कि इस पर दिल्ली, मेरठ और गाजियाबाद को बसाया जा सकता है। वैज्ञानिक इसके टूटने की भविष्यवाणी पहले ही कर चुके थे। हालांकि हिमखंडों का टूटना कोई नई बात नहीं है। इनके टूटने और बनने का क्रम चलता रहा है। लेकिन पचास साल बाद किसी हिमखंड का इतना बड़ा हिस्सा पहली बार टूटा है। इसलिए इसे जलवायु परिवर्तन की चेतावनी के रूप में देखा जा रहा है। यह भी इत्तेफाक है कि यह हिमखंड उस समय टूटा, जब संयुक्त राष्ट्र का पर्यावरण सम्मेलन कुछ दिन पहले ही संपन्न हुआ है। इसी सम्मेलन में स्वीडिश किशोरी ग्रेटा थुनबर्ग ने अपने पंद्रह साथियों के साथ पृथ्वी के बढ़ते तापमान को लेकर तीखा गुस्सा जताया था। ऐसा माना जाता रहा है कि किसी भारी हिमखंड के

टूटने की घटना के बाद ही धर्मग्रंथों में दर्ज महाप्रलय की घटना घटी थी। इस घटना को ज्यादातर लोग काल्पनिक मानते हैं, क्योंकि हमारे पास इसके चित्र या अन्य प्रमाण नहीं हैं। परंतु अब जो हिमखंड टूटा है, उसकी उपग्रह से ली गई तस्वीरें और वीडियो भी बना लिए गए हैं। टाइटेनिक जहाज भी ऐसे ही हिमखंड के टुकड़े से टकरा कर नष्ट हो गया था। ये घटनाएं चिंता का सबब बन रही हैं, जिन्हें प्रलय की चेतावनी के रूप में देखा जा रहा है। भारत पहले से ही हिमालय के हिमखंडों के टूटने की घटनाओं से दो-चार हो रहा है। कुछ समय पहले ही गोमुख के विशाल हिमखंड का एक हिस्सा टूट कर भागीरथी यानी गंगा नदी के उद्गम स्थल पर गिरा था। इन टुकड़ों को गोमुख से अठारह किलोमीटर दूर भागीरथी के तेज प्रवाह में बहते देखा गया। गंगोत्री राष्ट्रीय उद्यान के वनाधिकारी ने इस हिमखंड के टुकड़ों के चित्रों से इसके टूटने की पुष्टि की थी। ग्लेशियर वैज्ञानिक इन घटना की पृष्ठभूमि में कम बर्फबारी होना बता रहे हैं। इस कम बर्फबारी की वजह धरती का बढ़ता तापमान बताया जा रहा है। इससे हिमखंडों में दरारें पड़ गई थी और इनमें बरसाती पानी भर जाने से हिमखंड टूटने लग गए। अभी गोमुख हिमखंड का बायीं तरफ का एक हिस्सा टूटा है। उत्तराखंड के जंगलों में हर साल लगने वाली आग ने भी हिमखंडों को कमजोर करने का काम किया है। आग और धुएं से बर्फीली शिलाओं के ऊपर जमी कच्ची बर्फ तेजी से पिघलती चली गई। इस कारण दरारें भर नहीं पाईं। अब वैज्ञानिक यह आशंका भी जता रहे हैं कि धुएं से बना कार्बन यदि शिलाओं पर जमा रहा तो भविष्य में नई बर्फ जमना मुश्किल होगी। यदि कालांतर में धरती पर गर्मी इसी तरह बढ़ती रही और ग्लेशियर टूटते रहे तो इनका अक्षर समुद्र का जलस्तर बढ़ने और नदियों के अस्तित्व पर पड़ना तय है। गर्माती पृथ्वी की वजह से हिमखंडों के टूटने का सिलसिला जारी रहा तो समुद्र का जलस्तर बढ़ेगा, जिससे कई छोटे द्वीप और तटीय शहर डूब जाएंगे। हालांकि वैज्ञानिक अभी तक यह निश्चित नहीं कर पाए हैं कि इन घटनाओं को प्राकृतिक माना जाए या जलवायु संकट का परिणाम माना जाए।

कुछ समय पहले आस्ट्रेलियाई वैज्ञानिकों ने एक अध्ययन में बताया था कि बढ़ते तापमान से बढ़े समुद्र के जलस्तर ने प्रशांत महासागर के पांच द्वीपों को जलमग्न कर दिया है। इन द्वीपों पर मानव बस्तियां नहीं थीं। दुनिया के नक्शे से गायब हुए ये द्वीप थे- केल,

बचाना होगा हिमखंडों को

रेपिता, कालातिना, झोलिम और रेहना। पापुआ न्यू गिनी के पूर्व में यह सालोमन द्वीप समूह का हिस्सा थे। पिछले दो दशकों में इस क्षेत्र में समुद्र के जलस्तर में सालाना दस मिली की दर से बढ़ोत्तरी हो रही है। ग्रीनलैंड के पिघलते ग्लेशियर समुद्री जलस्तर को कुछ सालों के भीतर ही आधा मीटर तक बढ़ा सकते हैं। शताब्दियों से प्राकृतिक रूप में हिमखंड पिघल कर नदियों की अवरल जलधारा बनते रहे हैं। लेकिन भूमंडलीकरण के बाद प्राकृतिक संपदा के दोहन पर आधारित जो औद्योगिक विकास हुआ है, उससे उत्सर्जित कार्बन ने इनके पिघलने की तीव्रता को बढ़ा दिया है। एक शताब्दी पूर्व भी हिमखंड पिघलते थे, लेकिन बर्फ गिरने के बाद इनका दायरा निरंतर बढ़ता रहता था। इसीलिए गंगा और यमुना जैसी नदियों का

प्रवाह बना रहा। किंतु 1950 के दशक से ही इनका दायरा तीन से चार मीटर प्रति वर्ष घटना शुरू हो गया था। गंगोत्री के हिमखंड अब हर साल तेजी से पिघल रहे हैं। कमोबेश यही स्थिति उत्तराखंड के पांच अन्य हिमखंडों- सतोपंथ, मिलाम, नीति, नंदादेवी और चोराबाड़ी की है। भारतीय हिमालय में कुल 9975 हिमखंड हैं। इनमें नौ सी उत्तराखंड के क्षेत्र में आते हैं। इन हिमखंडों से ही ज्यादातर नदियां निकली हैं, जो देश की चालीस प्रतिशत आबादी को पेय, सिंचाई और आजीविका के अनेक संसाधन उपलब्ध कराती हैं। लेकिन हिमखंडों के पिघलने और टूटने का यही सिलसिला बना रहा तो देश के पास ऐसा कोई उपाय नहीं है कि वह इन नदियों से जीवन-यापन कर रही



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कसौटी पर इंसानियत

के सब लोगों को जानते थे और वे सब हमें। आज इतने सालों बाद जब हम अपने आसपास देखते हैं तो पाते हैं कि हर पल बीतता जीवन हर रोज लगभग एक जैसा ही हो गया है। नौकरी में आने से पहले नौकरी को लेकर एक अलग तरह की अवधारणा मन में होती है। नौकरी एक तमगा लगती है जो हमारे ज्ञान और हमारी क्षमता को जैसे ‘प्रमाण-पत्र’ देती है। वह हमें एक नया आयाम

लगती है, जिससे हम अपनी क्षमताओं को एक नया रूप, नया आकार और नई ऊंचाई दे सकते हैं। मगर आज नौकरी के कोई आठ साल बीत जाने पर मैं यह कह सकती हूं कि वह कोई तमगा नहीं है, कोई उपलब्धि भी नहीं है। ये जीविकोपार्जन और हमारे द्वारा किए जाने वाले कुछ निश्चित क्रियाकलापों का लेखा-जोखा भर है। इस नौकरी को और नीरस करता है वहां का वातावरण। इस वातावरण में ही जैसे कुछ अलग और अप्राकृतिक है जो वहां काम करने वालों को थोड़ा कम मानवीय बनाता है। वहां एक अलग तरह का दबाव-सा है- अदृश्य-सा, एक डर है- हमेशा पुकारे जाने का। शायद पुकारे जाने का भी नहीं, बल्कि उसके बाद कहे या सुने जाने वाले शब्दों का। शायद

लेकिन अब हकीकत सामने आ गई है। केंद्र सरकार को चाहिए कि यदि कानूनी तौर पर संभव हो तो स्विस् बैंक में पैसा रखने वाले भारतीय लोगों के नाम और उनके खाते में जमा राशि को सार्वजनिक करे और इस पैसे को देश में वापस लाकर गरीब लोगों की भलाई व विकास पर खर्च करे।
● *राजीव शर्मा, कोटकपूरा, पंजाब*

संतुलन जरूरी

पर्यावरण और विकास के बीच संतुलन कायम करने की जरूरत है। इस जरूरत की पूर्ति तभी होगी,

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश
आप चाहेें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com

जब बीच का रास्ता तलाशा जाएगा। पहले तो यह देखा जाए कि कम से कम पेड़ काटने पड़ें, फिर यह सुनिश्चित किया जाए कि जितने पड़े काटे जाएं, उससे कहीं अधिक न केवल लगाएं जाएं, बल्कि उनकी देखभाल भी की जाए। अगर यह जिद पकड़ी जाएगी कि चार पेड़ भी न कटने पाएं, भले ही विकास के काम न हों तो इससे बात नहीं बनेगी। यह ठीक नहीं कि विकास की कई योजनाएं पर्यावरण संबंधी सवालों से दो-चार होने के कारण अटक पड़ी हुई हैं। इनमें से कुछ की तो लागत भी बड़ा र्च है। निश्चित रूप से विकास की चिंता करते समय पर्यावरण की भी चिंता करनी होगी, लेकिन केवल तभी नहीं जब किसी योजना-परियोजना की राह में कुछ वृक्ष आ रहे हों।
● *हेमन्त कुमार, गोरगडौह, बिहार*

पचास करोड़ आबादी को रोजगार और आजीविका के वैकल्पिक संसाधन दे सके। बढ़ते तापमान के कारण अंटार्कटिका का हिमखंड टूटा तो अब है, लेकिन इसके पिघलने और बर्फ के कम होने की खबरें निरंतर आ रही थीं। यूएस नेशनल एंड आइस डाटा सेंटर ने उपग्रह के जरिए जो चित्र हासिल किए हैं, उनसे ज्ञात हुआ है कि एक जून 2016 तक यहां एक करोड़ दस लाख वर्ग किलोमीटर क्षेत्र में बर्फ थी, जबकि 2015 में यहां औसतन एक करोड़ सत्ताईस लाख वर्ग किमी क्षेत्र में बर्फ थी। सोलह लाख वर्ग किलोमीटर क्षेत्र में जो समुद्री बर्फ कम हुई है, यह क्षेत्रफल ब्रिटेन को छह बार जोड़ने के बाद धुने वाले क्षेत्रफल के बराबर है। पृथ्वी के उत्तरी ध्रुव के आसपास के इलाकों को आर्कटिक कहा जाता है। इस

क्षेत्र में आर्कटिक महासागर, कनाडा का कुछ हिस्सा, डेनमार्क का ग्रीनलैंड, रूस का एक हिस्सा, संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका का अलास्का, आइसलैंड, नावे, स्वीडन और फिनलैंड शामिल हैं। भारत से यह इलाका 9863 किलोमीटर दूर है। रूस के उत्तरी तटीय इलाकों में समुद्री बर्फ लुप्त हो रही है। इस क्षेत्र में समुद्री गर्मी निरंतर बढ़ने से अनुमान लगाया जा रहा है कि कुछ सालों में यह बर्फ भी पूरी तरह खत्म हो जाएगी। बढ़ते तापमान को रोकना आसान काम नहीं है, बावजूद इसके हम अपने हिमखंडों को टूटने और पिघलने से बचाने के उपाय औद्योगिक गतिविधियों को विराम देकर कर सकते हैं। पर्यटन के रूप में मानव समुदाय की जो आवाजाही बढ़ रही है, उस पर भी अंकुश लगाने और पिघलने से बचाने के उपाय औद्योगिक गतिविधियों को विराम देकर कर सकते हैं। पर्यटन के रूप में मानव समुदाय की जो आवाजाही बढ़ रही है, उस पर भी अंकुश लगाने और पिघलने से बचाने के उपाय औद्योगिक गतिविधियों को सुरक्षित रखना चाहते हैं तो हमारी ज्ञान परंपरा में हिमखंडों की सुरक्षा के जो उपाय उपलब्ध हैं, उन्हें भी महत्व देना होगा।

हिमालय के शिखरों पर रहने वाले लोग आजादी के दो दशक बाद तक बरसात के समय छोटी-छोटी क्यारियां बना कर पानी रोक देते थे। तापमान शून्य से नीचे जाने पर यह पानी जम कर बाल बन जाता था। इसके बाद इस पानी के ऊपर नमक डाल कर जैविक कचरे से इसे ढक देते थे। इस प्रयोग से लंबे समय तक यह बर्फ जमी रहती थी और गर्मियों में इसी बर्फ से पेयजल की आपूर्ती की होती थी। इस तकनीक को हम ‘चाटर हार्वेस्टिंग’ की तरह ‘स्नो हार्वेस्टिंग’ भी कह सकते हैं। हालांकि पृथ्वी के ध्रुवों में समुद्र के खारे पानी को बर्फ में बदलने की क्षमता प्राकृतिक रूप से होती है। बहरहाल, हिमखंडों के टूटने की घटनाओं को गंभीरता से लेने की जरूरत है।

अध्याय नहीं लिखा गया। काम करने की जगह सिर्फ कुछ जरूरी कहे जाने वाले कामों को पूरा करने के लिए नहीं होनी चाहिए और न ही ये केवल जीविकोपार्जन के लिए होनी चाहिए। यह एक ऐसी जगह होनी चाहिए, जहां हर व्यक्ति कल के मुकाबले आज ज्यादा भरा हुआ हो। भरा हुआ होना एक भारी और महत्त्वपूर्ण शब्द है। काम करने की जगह ऐसी हो, जहां उसकी क्षमताओं में वृद्धि हो; जो उसे एक खुले मैदान जैसी लगे, न कि चारदिवाली की कैद जैसी। वहां आत्मसम्मान मिले जहां जाकर वह खुश हो। जहां जाकर उसे लगे कि वह अपने सीखे हुए का सार्थक इस्तेमाल कर सकता है और उसके किए कामों को सिर्फ उसकी जिम्मेदारी मान कर अनदेखा नहीं कर दिया जाएगा, बल्कि उसे उसका श्रेय भी मिलेगा।

दरअसल, हम इस पूरी व्यवस्था में कहीं उत्पीड़ित हैं तो कहीं उत्पीड़क भी। तो अगली बार अपने सहयोगियों और सहकर्मियों से मिलते हुए सबसे पहले मुस्कुराना और उनका हालचाल पूछना मत भूलिएगा। हम सबकी यह कोशिश शायद इस दुनिया को रहने लायक एक बेहतर जगह बना सके। हम मनुष्य एक लंबी यात्रा पर हैं जिसमें मशाल एक से दूसरे को देने पर ही हम आगे बढ़ सकते हैं।

दरअसल, हम इस पूरी व्यवस्था में कहीं उत्पीड़ित हैं तो कहीं उत्पीड़क भी। तो अगली बार अपने सहयोगियों और सहकर्मियों से मिलते हुए सबसे पहले मुस्कुराना और उनका हालचाल पूछना मत भूलिएगा। हम सबकी यह कोशिश शायद इस दुनिया को रहने लायक एक बेहतर जगह बना सके। हम मनुष्य एक लंबी यात्रा पर हैं जिसमें मशाल एक से दूसरे को देने पर ही हम आगे बढ़ सकते हैं।

आपदा की मार

इस बार पटना में भारी बारिश से कई घर पांच-छह फीट तक पानी में डूब गए। लगभग पूरे शहर का यही हाल था। इस बार बिहार में बारिश और बाढ़ से लाखों लोग प्रभावित हुए हैं। केंद्रीय गृह मंत्रालय के मुताबिक इस वर्ष मानसून के दौरान हुई बारिश और बाढ़ से करीब दो हजार लोगों की मौत हुई और हिलासिल लोग लापता है। बिहार में अब भी बाढ़ के हालात हैं। अभी बिहार में चुनाव नहीं है, इसलिए सरकार को भय भी नहीं अपनी सत्ता के खोने का। यदि चुनाव होते तो

सकती थी। जो व्यापारी इस प्रकार के समय में कम दाम में चीजें खरीद कर महंगे में बेचते हैं, सरकार को ऐसे समय में इस पर रोक लगानी चाहिए क्योंकि इसी के कारण असल महंगाई शुरू होती है। दूसरा, किसी भी आपदा से बचने के लिए सरकार के पास ठोस व कारगर समाधान होने चाहिए ताकि इस प्रकार के समय में न ही किसानों को तंगी हो और न ही आमजन को और न ही हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था पर कोई असर पड़े क्योंकि इस आपदा और प्याज की कमी के कारण भारत ने इस का निर्यात रोक दिया और भारत में ही सबसे अधिक प्याज की फसल उगाई जाती है जिससे निःसंदेह हमारे देश को घाटा हुआ है।

- जानवी विदुल, जलंधर*

बेटों की तस्करी!

दिल्ली की एक आइवीएफ क्लीनिक पर छापा क्या पड़ा, देश का क्रूर चेहरा सामने आ गया। दिन के उजाले में सरकार की नाक के नीचे बेटों की तस्करी का धंधा फलता-फूलता रहा। भारत में भ्रूण परीक्षण कानूनी तौर पर प्रतिबंधित है। लिहाजा क्लिनिक के काल सेंटर ने गुप्तचुप भ्रूण परीक्षण की सुपारी ली और बदले में दिए दुबई के टिकट। ऑनलाइन साइट से खुल्लम-खुल्ला लुका-छिपी का खेल खेला गया और किसी को भनक तक नहीं लगी। निश्चित रूप से बेटों की चाहत में गैरकानूनी और महंगे धंधे में देश के घनाढ्य लोगों का हाथ होना तय है। इस देश में अपराधियों का एनकाउंटर ने ही जाता है, मगर सफेदपोशों की पहचान तक मुमकिन नहीं होती। ऐसे गोरखधंधे में शामिल अस्पतालों और लाभार्थियों की तुरंत धर-पकड़ की जानी चाहिए, ताकि बेटियों के साथ होते अन्याय पर अंकुश लग सके।

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