

The long and the short of judgments

The Supreme Court is set to deliver crucial decisions but it should avoid past pitfalls



OUT OF COURT

M J ANTONY

The question whether the mills of justice must grind slowly and exceedingly well, as the saying goes, or aim at swift decisions, is a matter of interminable debate. When the British Supreme Court gave a 20-page decision against their Prime Minister last month after a three-day hearing, some held it out as a model for our courts which grate petitioners for decades. The issue before that court

was comparatively simple though of high political consequence. Our Supreme Court has before it a batch of appeals and writ petitions which involve history, archaeology, religion, politics, and 20,000 pages of documents in eight languages apart from the high court judgment that ran into 8,000 pages. But for the deadline set by the Chief Justice, the Ayodhya case would not close this week. In the normal course, judges do not set a deadline to finish arguments. Hearing normally grinds along for weeks in ordinary cases. Speeding up hearing is rare and carries a judicial hazard when one of the judges is about to retire. In the Ayodhya case, this was one of the factors which weighed with the CJ who heads a five-judge bench. He is retiring on November 17 and this is seen as the main factor for hastening the hearings. There is a section of lawyers that thinks judges who are about to retire should not take up heavy cases. Such matters should be heard by a bench

whose judges have sufficient time to hear all parties, hold conferences, exchange notes and give a final view. Past instances have amply shown that the impending retirement of one judge on the bench disrupts the comity of the brethren. It happened manifestly in the celebrated Kesavananda Bharati case. The then CJ, who was about to retire, and 12 brethren delivered 11 separate judgments running into 800 printed pages a day before his retirement. One member on the bench complained of lack of time to discuss the points among themselves because of the impending retirement of the CJ. Late Justice Y V Chandrachud wrote in his separate judgment that there was no full discussion by the judges because of that factor. This unpleasant scenario repeated in several other cases. In the historical judgment, again involving the basic structure of the Constitution, called the Minerva Mills case, late Justice P N Bhagwati wrote a long passage about the paucity of time to consider all issues

before the Constitution bench as one of the judges was retiring shortly. He emphasised the need for “judicial collectivity”. In another famous case involving personal liberty, named after a former chief minister Nandini Satpathy, part of the judgment was hurriedly delivered on a Saturday, a court holiday. The full judgement was available only next Tuesday. One judge wrote that he received a draft from his fellow judge only the afternoon before the date of delivery of the judgment. The then Chief Justice had only hours to retire. “I have no time to write a detailed judgment,” the judge wrote. The same judge wrote a similar observation in another important case involving another chief minister, Jagannath Misra. If judges have enough time to confer with each other and write shorter judgments these pitfalls could be avoided. Late jurist N A Palkhivala once famously said that judges should keep in mind the shortness of human life. The CJ recently stressed the need for people to

read and understand judgments while launching a project to translate them in national languages. Since communication of correct idea is all the more important in these days of disinformation and politicisation, long-winded judgments should be accompanied by an authoritative summary by the judges themselves. It had been done in the Kesavananda and the Minerva Mills cases. The three Allahabad high court judges also gave summaries of their judgments in the Ayodhya case. In the coming months, the importance of understanding the true meaning of the judgments cannot be overemphasised. The Ayodhya judgment must be understood by the public. So also the decision on the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. Long hearings followed by unwieldy judgments will prolong uncertainties as in the cases of reservations, land acquisition and Sabarimala, which are yet to be settled despite hundreds of pages of judicial wisdom. There would be clarification applications, review petitions, curative petitions and then perhaps turmoil in the streets. Finally, the judges will have to confess like a US Supreme Court counterpart that “we are not final because we are infallible, but we are infallible only because we are final”.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Picture of honour



India (and Bengal) is celebrating the fact that a second Indian economist has won a Nobel Prize but in another corner of a foreign field another well-known economist, who played a significant role in the economic reform programme, is being honoured in a unique way. Shankar Acharya, who served as Chief Economic Advisor to the government of India from 1993 to 2001, is part of a select group of 30 “inspirational” members of faculty, students and general staff at Keble College, Oxford, whose photos are on display in the Main Hall of the college as part of its 150th anniversary celebrations. The photo exhibition will be on display for 15 months – that is, till the end of 2020. The photograph, which portrays Dr Acharya, a *Business Standard* columnist, in one of his favourite maroon sweaters, was taken by the wife of another economist, Tim Harford, author of the popular book and website *The Undercover Economist*. Dr Acharya, whose penchant for jotting in pocket diaries and on the margins of *Business Standard*, exemplifies Keble College’s Victorian motto, “Plain Living and High Thinking,” graduated from Oxford in 1967.

Problem of plenty

The proverbial problem of plenty applies to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) these days. While the Opposition in Uttar Pradesh looks to be struggling, the unending influx of members from other parties to the BJP has raised the party’s political quotient no doubt. But it has also created much uncertainty among local leaders. While the state leadership prominently plays up high-profile inducements in press conferences and public meetings, committed party workers fear losing out on lucrative assignments and during ticket distribution for the forthcoming by-elections. Although no one would speak publicly on the contentious issue, second- and third-rung leaders can be found venting their “genuine concerns” to the media whenever they get a chance.

BJP’s Kerala woes

Electoral success continues to elude the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Kerala. The party’s electoral prospects are slim in the five assembly constituencies going to the polls later this month owing to factors such as infighting and weak candidate selection. The BJP had come second in two of these five constituencies in the last Assembly polls. However, this time, the party has decided to experiment with new candidates. Moreover, the party has failed to turn the Sabarimala temple agitation to good account. Some voters are upset with it for not bringing in an Ordinance to overturn the Supreme Court judgment, which allowed women of all age groups to enter the temple premises.

M&M gears up for another partnership

The deal with Ford is designed to boost exports but the additional capacity it will add appears counter-intuitive in a slowing market

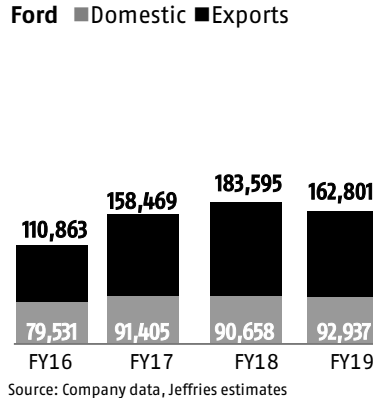
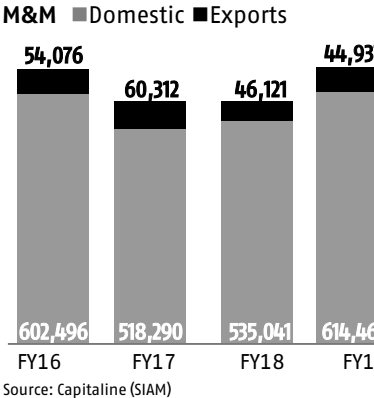
SHALLY SETH MOHILE

Being a global player in passenger vehicles is a dream Mahindra & Mahindra has harboured for long. Earlier this month the home-grown maker of sports utility vehicles and tractors decided to give its ambitions wings by stitching up a deal with a foreign partner once again. After two years of intense deliberations, which started in September 2017, M&M and Michigan-based Ford Motor have announced a joint venture in which Mahindra will control the majority 51 per cent stake, whereas Ford will transfer its entire India business, excluding the engine vertical, to the new entity. This will be M&M’s third deal with a foreign partner. The nuts and bolts of the deal are quite straightforward. Both companies expect to achieve cost synergies, pare product development time and cost and leverage each other’s distribution reach to boost exports. “The big benefit that comes to Ford and Mahindra is on the exports front. It opens up a lot of possibilities,” M&M Managing Director Pawan Goenka told Business Standard. Given that Ford has a huge network in many emerging markets and M&M in South Asia, the combined distribution can cast a much wider net than each can alone. Ford’s India business is also more geared towards exports, with six out of

every 10 vehicles currently being made in the country exported. For M&M, exports account for only 6.3 per cent of total volumes, and it expects the JV to give this number a boost. Ford’s struggles are more on the domestic front, where the venture with M&M could come in handy. High cost structure, stiff competition from Japanese and Korean brands, frequent policy changes and cyclical swings have kept its domestic share at 2.8 per cent in 2018-19. A lot is riding for both entities on the new models, including a C-segment SUV based on M&M’s platform, a B-segment SUV based on Ford’s platform, and a new MPV, being planned by the JV. The companies are also working on the new generation Aspire electric vehicle. M&M has made an equity investment of ₹657 crore into the JV, which is half the amount required to develop these products. The real test for the co-developed vehicles, though, will be when they begin exporting their new models in about three years. For the Indian market, the JV will stay clear from badge engineering — where an existing model is changed by adding a new badge and subsequently marketed as a new variant. The platforms co-developed by the new entity will have distinctive top hats and even body types bearing the DNA, feature, and styling of each brand. For the overseas markets, though, the

companies may resort to badge engineering. This will give the JV a larger bucket of products to export. Some of Mahindra models may be sold through Ford’s international distribution network, said Goenka. Earlier this year, Ford Motor carved out China as an independent market from the Asia-Pacific region and formed an International Marketing Group (IMG) consisting of a hundred emerging markets as a separate cluster. The cluster includes Africa, ASEAN, Australia, India, Mexico, the Middle East, New Zealand and South Korea among other countries and is expected to be operational by January 2020. Ford expects this region to account for one in three vehicle sales in the future. But exports of passenger vehicles out of India haven’t had much success, and the challenges faced by others remain for the JV as well. “Exports are a complex exercise,” says Mahantesh Sabarad, head of equity research at SBICAP Securities. Automobiles go through frequent changes and every time there is a minor or major modification to a model, it has to go through homologation, or the process of certifying a product to indicate it meets the regulatory requirement in its destination country all over again. This is a huge logistical challenge. Having a large basket of products alone doesn’t guarantee success, exports have to be supported by after sales network, he added. To be sure, Ford has been restructuring operations in weak markets globally, and the JV with M&M is a risk mitigation

CROSS-BORDER SALES



strategy. As much as it would like to stay invested in India, given its demographic dividend, it could no longer afford to remain a marginal player amid high operating costs and intensifying competition. Therefore, unlike General Motor, which exited India lock stock and barrel last year, Ford has decided on a middle path. The deal helps the company hedge its bets in a market where it has failed to make deeper inroads despite a presence of over two decades. “The only logic we see to this deal is that M&M needed to help Ford in its global strategy to reduce investments in non-core markets to ensure its commitment to a long-term strategic alliance which can benefit M&M through technology access and product development in the future,” wrote Arya Sen and Ankur Pant analysts at Jefferies Equity Research in a recent research report. One of the immediate concerns relate to the cumulative capacity the deal creates. “We failed to understand why M&M

is adding more capacity when its own plants’ capacity utilisation is at less than 70 per cent, while Ford is at 60 per cent. We believe investors will be concerned about M&M’s capital allocation strategy,” wrote Hitesh Goel and Rishi Vora, analysts at Kotak Institutional Equities. The two companies will have a combined capacity of 1.2 million units. Given Ford’s limited success in India so far, analysts fear the entity would be saddled with excess capacity. The other big question is that M&M’s track record with alliances has also been patchy and analysts are sceptical of the longevity of the deal. Its earlier partnership with Renault ended prematurely after five years following differences over the design of Logan, and its JV with with Navistar for commercial vehicles too didn’t last long. “I don’t see this lasting beyond five years,” said an analyst at a consulting firm.

INSIGHT

Why India lags behind China



ANITA INDER SINGH

President Xi Jinping’s weekend visit to India and his call for “new glory for Asian civilisations” remind us that China and India shed the yoke of Western imperialism in the 1940s. Since then, China’s progress has made it the world’s second economic and military power and earned it widespread recognition as the main challenger to America’s global primacy. From Chennai Xi flew to Kathmandu. Laden with investment offers to Nepal, his move symbolised China’s economic advance on India’s Himalayan doorstep. China’s per capita GDP is \$10,841 and its rank on the Human Development Index (HDI) is 86. India ranks 130. Its nominal per capita income is \$2,309. The latest Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) ranks China 28th among world economies. India has fallen to rank 68 largely because some other countries have improved their investment conditions. Why is India lagging so far behind China? Many Indians are quick to say that dictatorships make progress faster than democracies because they can avoid time-consuming democratic procedures. They are wrong. Most of the world’s top 20 states on the HDI are democracies. Economically, India is the democracy that disappoints. Dictatorship is no guarantee of eco-

nom success. Economic failures accounted in large measure for the collapse of the authoritarian multicultural states of the USSR and Yugoslavia in 1991. In contrast, India’s ability to hold itself together showed that its multicultural, multireligious diversity could be accommodated through democratic consensus. Economic liberalisation, started by Congress Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1991, advanced progress. The world saw “India rising” in the 1990s. But with China so far ahead, it can be asked whether India is still rising. After 40 years of progress at breakneck speed, China’s growth is slowing down. But India was already straggling behind. The last five years have seen economic decline, foreign investors pulling their money out of India, falling manufacturing output and exports. India’s record as a business-unfriendly country is a sticking point in its ties with many countries. Education ranks as one of India’s biggest failures. India is the only country which aims to become a global economic power without creating a reasonable level of universal education. More than a quarter of its population remains illiterate. Good education has helped Japan, the US, China and Southeast Asian countries improve the skills of their huge labour forces, to craft their vibrant, export-led economies and increase their economic influence. Indian labour is an unfortunate contrast to the proficient workers of a once war-ravaged but rising Vietnam, and also of a prospering Indonesia, which sees itself as the global maritime fulcrum of Southeast Asia. The high levels of scientific and technological education also explain the global ascendancy of the US since the 20th century, and why the US and China can use their technological advancement to build up their world



A file photo of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Hubei Provincial Museum in Wuhan, Hubei Province

power in the 21st century. (In contrast, India’s multifaceted economic decline over the last five years has made it hard to upgrade its armed forces.) China is well-placed in many contemporary areas like artificial intelligence and robotics. It can challenge the West economically and in scientific research. Neither can be done by India. India’s deficiencies weaken its position in international financial negotiations and thwart its hopes of becoming a global player. China’s prowess enables it to stake a claim to world influence. China’s \$15 trillion economy supports its economically and geopolitically motivated Belt and Road Initiative which touches 62 per cent of the world’s population. India hasn’t advanced enough to have comparable economic reach. China’s economic clout has enabled it to retaliate against President Trump’s trade war, defy the decade-long international sanctions on Iran (2005-16) and Trump’s recent sanctions on that country. China has therefore emerged

as the leading investor and foreign influence in Iran. It is strengthening its position in West Asia. By bowing to Trump’s oil-import ban, India could lose the position it had gained in Iran since 2015. China has even enhanced its influence as the largest trading partner of India’s friendly neighbours like Myanmar. It is the largest arms seller to Myanmar, Bangladesh and unfriendly Pakistan. China claims to be reshaping and complementing the existing norms of global governance. Its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has attracted developing countries in Asia and Africa and also some of the European Union’s prosperous West European members — which are simultaneously America’s allies in the NATO. India is a founding member of the Beijing-led AIIB — but it is China which is the first among supposed equals. India’s rich resources — combined with sound economic policies — should have helped it to achieve much higher HDI and GCI rankings by now. Both indices show that India’s health conditions and workers’ skills rank below those of China. On skills, the GCI ranks China at 54, India at 107. On health, China’s rank is 40; India’s 110. Economically sluggish India should boldly reform its economic policies and poor governance in order to incentivise the honest hard work of its citizens that is necessary for progress. Indian agriculture, manufacturing and industry must be made more competitive internationally. To create markets that function better than those of authoritarian China, New Delhi must strengthen the rule of law and improve the quality of democratic governance. Only then will the people of India increase their life chances; only then will democratic India narrow its gap with authoritarian China and play a larger world role.

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LETTERS

Stem the rot

Co-operative banks were formed and encouraged to facilitate financial inclusion. While they fulfil this role partially, they are governed by elected members of borrowers who may have limited vision of furthering their own business interest. The Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) role as a regulator comes in with the intention of safeguarding public deposits as co-operative banks are allowed to mobilise public deposit. Its supervision lends credibility to co-operative banks and its absence brings a dent in the safety image. Co-operative banks thrive in the ecosystem of small business, traders, petty service providers. They have also carved themselves a niche of local stronghold and knowledge, personalised customer-friendly services, face-to-face banking in an increasingly fin-tech world. So how can one mitigate the pain of loss of public deposits in the face of practical realities? One, restrict the size. The larger a co-operative bank, the larger the risk of public loss. The RBI may decide a threshold business after crossing which the co-operative bank has to mandatorily convert itself to a commercial bank or small finance bank. Alternatively, it may be given the option of receding back to non-scheduled status that will attract limited RBI supervision and also restrict it from accepting public deposits. Two, restrict senior citizens’ deposits. Senior citizens are a vulnerable section who have no means of recouping lost capital and therefore, they should be prevented from placing deposits over ₹1 lakh with co-operative banks. Three, have representation of depositors in the board of directors. Co-operative banks, by their founding principles, are largely borrower’s banks. The borrowers hold membership and are hence represented in the board by elected

members. To ensure depositors representation on the board, depositors holding fixed term deposit over ₹1 lakh should be made regular members thereby giving them an opportunity for representation on the board. Four, co-operative banks approaching the threshold limit of business mix must compulsorily adopt core banking solutions that cannot be manipulated. It will also prepare them for stepping into a larger role of a commercial bank.

Madhuri Argade via email

Leave media alone



The statement by Ajit Doval (pictured) on media policy raises eyebrows. The question is whether media should have a policy at all. Media is a watchdog of political democracy that protects public interest against malpractice and creates public awareness. Suggestions from a person within the government asking media to frame media policy is like creating barriers and asking media to see and report what is happening from the glasses provided by the government and not to report on ground realities. Rather than working on media policy, media should report what they see and leave it to their audience to apply their mind and judge.

Siddharth Duge Mumbai

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg New Delhi 110 002 Fax: (011) 23720201 E-mail: letters@bsmail.in All letters must have a postal address and telephone number

Perils of loan waivers

Waiving farm loans has led to higher NPA in agriculture

Political parties are once again busy wooing farmers ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections. The Congress, for instance, has promised farm loan waivers in both Haryana and Maharashtra. The incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has not gone that far in Haryana but has promised interest-free loans. It has already implemented a loan waiver in Maharashtra.

Loan waivers do have a clear political motive, and it could even be argued that they also reduce the debt burden and enable farmers to invest, which may increase productivity over time. However, things don't work that way. Loan waivers create moral hazard and encourage borrowers to default. As reported by this newspaper on Monday, gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) in the agriculture sector have crossed the ₹1-trillion mark. As a proportion of credit to the sector, GNPAs now stand at over 11 per cent and have gone up by about 30 per cent in the last two years.

At a time when the banking system is dealing with higher NPAs in the industrial sector, the rise in bad farm loans would only add to the overall problem in the financial sector. It is possible that some borrowers in the agriculture sector may have defaulted because of a variety of factors, such as low output prices, but there is evidence that loan waivers play a role in adversely influencing credit culture. A recent report by the Internal Working Group to Review Agricultural Credit of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), for instance, showed that the level of NPAs increased in all states that announced loan waivers in 2017-18 and 2018-19. Most other states either showed no significant change or even registered a decline in the level of NPAs. In this context, the report noted: "...this could be indicative of the presence of moral hazard, with borrowers defaulting strategically in anticipation of loan waiver."

Loan waivers not only create problems for banks but also for borrowers and the government. They affect the flow of credit because banks are reluctant to lend to farmers in states that have announced a loan waiver in the past. The reduction in the flow of credit can affect farmers and force them to borrow from informal sources at much higher rates of interest. Further, even though a loan waiver is implemented over a period of time, it dents government finances. According to the RBI's estimate, about a third of the overall slippage in the states' revenue expenditure during 2017-18 can be attributed to loan waivers. They were partly responsible for the states' fiscal slippage in 2018-19 too. Since governments have limited fiscal space, a loan waiver restricts the state capacity to make investment, including in agriculture, which can affect productivity in the medium term.

At the aggregate level, since the system does not benefit from loan waivers, the idea itself should be avoided. Also, it doesn't address the core problems of the farm sector, which needs wider reforms. However, this is not to suggest that the government should not support the sector. A better way to support farmers is direct cash transfer, which the Union and some state governments have adopted. An added advantage of this idea is that such schemes bring more farmers within the banking net and will, over time, help them get credit on more favourable terms.

Weak policy fabric

India's textile sector needs wider reforms

The Union government's proposal to make the use of a range of Indian-made "technical textiles" — textiles used in industrial applications — mandatory for ministries and public agencies offers another example of the paucity of fresh ideas for reviving the economy. In seeking to artificially create a market for a category of textiles, the plan is reminiscent of successive Jute Control Orders, which made it compulsory for industry to use jute packaging for sugar, cement, fertiliser, and some other commodities. Under the current proposal, seven ministries involved in major infrastructure projects, such as the railways and road transport, will lead the initiative in the use of these textiles.

The intention behind this proposal is praiseworthy — to encourage a fast-growing segment of the textile industry under the Make in India rubric and create jobs. The questions are whether such market creation by fiat is an efficient policy choice and it is necessary at all. The experience with the Jute Control Order offers some pointers. It was introduced with the laudable objective of reviving the perennially ailing jute industry. But other structural problems — not least absurd procurement prices, inadequate investment, outdated technology, and inflexible labour laws — ensured that jute mills remained in the sick bay, jute workers in dire straits and jute farmers in abject poverty. It is worth noting that the same problems prevent the industry from reviving despite a marked resurgence in the popularity of jute in the environmentally conscious West.

The Indian textile and garments industry does not suffer from the lack of a market but a weak ability to compete in terms of price and quality with producers from, say, Bangladesh and Vietnam, for roughly similar reasons. It would have been more constructive for the ministry to have focused on enforcing as well as expanding the coverage of an imaginative package for labour created in the first Modi government. That would have enabled flexible hire and fire without impinging on benefits, encouraging the kind of economies of scale that the textile industry sorely needs. Equally, an urgent programme to streamline the processes of the goods and service tax, one critical reason for weak exports, would have been more helpful than mandating demand. Working with the ports and shipping authorities to improve turnaround time in India's ports would have been no less useful. At a more granular level, technical textile exports have been among the faster-growing segments of the business. The ministry has, in fact, gone some way towards facilitating this sub-sector by notifying HSN codes for a chunk of technical textiles, enabling manufacturers to claim central and state government incentives. Useful enabling interventions of this nature would go far longer towards helping manufacturers compete meaningfully on a global scale.

Experience from the bad old days of the licence raj has shown that a protected and guaranteed domestic market is likely to accentuate inefficiencies and encourage the kind of corruption that inevitably attaches itself to the tendering process. The fact is that Indian textile exports have long been misaligned with demand — being predominantly in cotton when the market preference is shifting towards synthetics. This inability to anticipate global market trends is symptomatic of a key weakness of Indian business in general. Protecting markets is unlikely to encourage them to improve.

FIG. 1: WORKLOAD INDICATORS OF ASSESSING OFFICERS

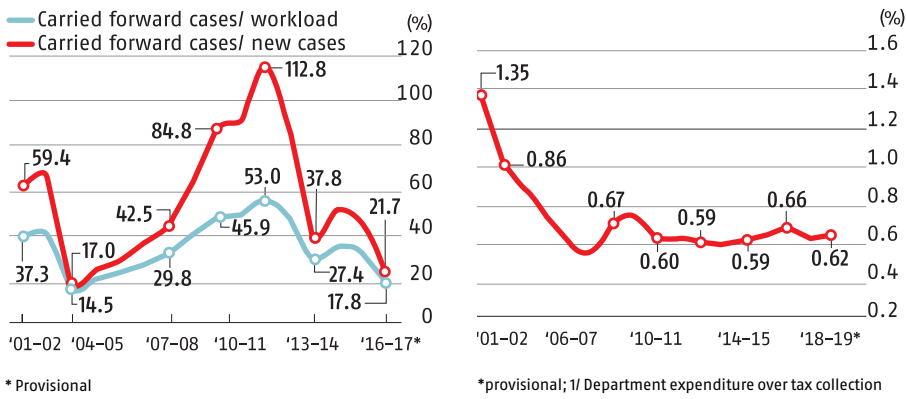


FIG. 2: COST OF COLLECTION OF DIRECT TAXES^{1/}

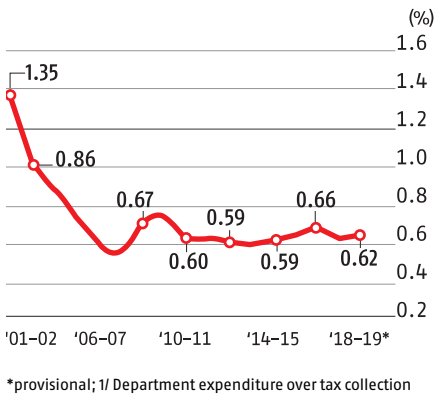


TABLE 1: NUMBER OF TAXPAYERS (in million)

Assessment Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Major Category^{2/}						
Total	52.64	57.04	61.39	69.23	74.25	84.52
Of which,						
Company	0.70	0.75	0.77	0.81	0.84	0.89
Firm	1.04	1.08	1.16	1.25	1.31	1.43
Hindu Undivided Family (HUF)	0.96	1.00	1.06	1.12	1.14	1.19
Individual	49.58	53.81	57.97	65.56	70.45	80.45
Growth in Taxpayers	11.37	8.34	7.63	12.77	7.26	13.84

^{2/} Smaller categories such as Association of Persons, Body of Individuals, Government, Artificial Juridical Person and Local Authority have been excluded for brevity. Source: Time Series Data 2000-01 to 2018-19 (Table 1.9), ITD, Gol.

Analysing revenue information-II

Tax administration advances, though continuing improvement remains paramount

This month we focus on income tax administration. We begin with how the officers' workload has changed. First the derivation. Officers' workload in year t is the sum of undisposed assessment cases in year t-1 plus new cases of current year t. ITD's Table 1.8 (not reproduced here, last published in 2017 and this table was discontinued in 2018) reports data on: (1) year-beginning workload or "total" cases; and (2) year-end disposed cases. We converted this to: (3) undisposed cases; and (4) year-beginning "new" cases, as follows. For 2013-14, (1) is 30,456,681 and (2) is 19,924,496. Thus, the difference, (3) 10,532,185, is undisposed cases which are carried forward to 2014-15. Therefore, new cases for 2014-15 must be (4) 21,254,217, which is the difference between carried forward cases (3) for 2013-14 and total cases (1) for 2014-15 (reported in ITD Table 1.8 as 31,786,402). We repeated the exercise for all years.



PARTHASARATHI SHOME

These calculations enabled the configuration of Figure 1 which plots: (i) carried forward cases over total workload, and (ii) carried forward cases over new cases. From 2011-12, both trends have declined i.e. indicators have improved, revealing relatively less cases remain incomplete. Further, from ITD's Table 1.8, it is obvious

that workload had increased in 2008-09 to 2010-11 but disposal had also shown improvement. This was possible through the new Computerised Processing Centre (CPC) in Bengaluru. The positive trend has continued in recent years as carried forward cases dropped sharply in terms of both overall workload as well as new cases. In fact, the difference between the two indicators has consistently narrowed; in 2016-17 the difference was almost as small as that achieved in 2003-04. If the data are correct, all this implies that pendency or carry-over of assessment cases from one year to the next has been impressively compressed.

We next move on to the cost of income tax collection. Is it fair to expect too much improvement given the cutback in resources given to ITD, declining from 1.35 per cent in proportion of tax collection in 2001-02 to 0.62 per cent in 2018-19, among the — or probably—the lowest in the world? A ramification of this rapidly declining indicator could be surmised to be a lowering of staff morale or remaining totally above board in the face of pressure to collect revenue. Nevertheless it also must be conceded that the installation of massive information technology infrastruc-

business confidence, profits, and investment.

Although Germany continues to flirt with recession while its government eschews fiscal stimulus, other European economies have picked up some of the slack. France, the Netherlands, and Spain are experiencing modest growth and robust employment, despite weakening trade. Italy's economy, however, seems to have flattened, and the country remains wracked by political uncertainty.

Japan is facing multiple headwinds, including weak global demand, the contractionary effects of a sales-tax hike, and stubbornly low inflation. Financial conditions remain weak, as does the real economy. Business and consumer sentiment have plunged, which, together with the country's structural, demographic, and fiscal challenges, augur further prolonged economic weakness.

Brexit-related uncertainties continue to dominate in the United Kingdom. Fears of a disorderly exit from the EU, and ongoing domestic political turmoil, leave little room for optimism about the country's short-term economic prospects. Most indicators of UK economic activity are either flat or showing minimal growth.

To be sure, low interest rates in advanced economies, coupled with the recent fall in oil prices, have helped some large emerging-market economies. Even so, weak global demand and trade-related uncertainties, in addition to domestic policy constraints, continue to weigh on their growth.

For example, China's economy is clearly slowing, although not as much as some had feared given the ongoing trade war with the US. But there is no clear prospect of a durable resolution to the conflict, which continues to dampen Chinese business sentiment and private investment growth. The renminbi's gradual depreciation against the dollar has been orderly so far, but it has had only a modest impact on growth. And while China's government has room for more fiscal and monetary stimulus, policymakers seem willing to let growth decelerate gradually to a more sustainable level, rather than boosting spending and easing access to credit, which could raise longer-term financial and other risks.



ESWAR PRASAD & ETHAN WU

The global economic slowdown is turning into a synchronised stagnation, with some major economies growing only weakly and others barely at all — or even contracting slightly. For now at least, fears of an imminent global recession seem premature. But policymakers have little appetite for fundamental reforms and limited room for effective macroeconomic stimulus, and thus seem at a loss for ways to revive growth.

The roots of the slowdown are not difficult to discern. Persistent trade tensions, political instability, geopolitical risks, and concerns about the limited efficacy of monetary stimulus continue to erode business and consumer sentiment, thus holding back investment and productivity growth. International trade flows have been directly affected as well. The World Trade Organization recently slashed its forecast for global trade growth in 2019 from 2.6 per cent to just 1.2 per cent. Furthermore, the Baltic Dry Index, a widely watched trade metric based on shipping rates for dry bulk commodities, nearly doubled in the first eight months of this year, but has since fallen by about 30 per cent, erasing hopes of a trade rebound.

Meanwhile, global uncertainty has kept the US dollar strong relative to most other major currencies. Although dollar appreciation has taken some pressure off non-US economies that depend on exports or foreign capital, it has increased the risk of an open currency war.

At the same time, not all indicators are grim. Labour markets remain largely healthy, even in otherwise anemic economies such as Germany, and household consumption remains strong in most major economies. In addition, the September surge in oil prices, which had raised concerns of another negative shock to growth, has since receded.

The US economy reflects this dichotomy. Labour-market performance and household consumption are still relatively robust, but both the manufacturing and services sectors are slowing. Tensions with major trading partners, including China and the European Union, and uncertainty regarding the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, have hit

the chapters remain. There is no clear story line except in the broadly defined title. Mr Bhagavan refers to Odd Arne Westad's work, which attempted to put the binary nature of the Cold War in a broader global context, with impacts on other regions and relationships not directly implicated. The latter, in turn, did influence the manner in which Cold War equations played out. This is the backdrop to examining India's role during the Cold War and contesting the perception that it was a marginal, though sometimes an irritating player.

The contributions themselves are of variable quality. Srinath Raghavan's piece titled "A Missed Opportunity? The Nehru-Zhou Enlai Summit of 1960", provides fresh archival confirmation of what has been fairly well established in various studies on the India-China boundary issue, that there was a possibility of reaching agreement on a boundary roughly aligned to the McMahon Line in the East in exchange for accepting Chinese claims in the West in Ladakh. This might have prevented the slide into the India-China war in 1962. Though not cited by Raghavan, this so-called "package pro-

posal" continued to be on offer at least till 1985 when the Chinese side began insisting that India had to make "meaningful concessions" in the east in exchange for which the Chinese side may make appropriate concessions in the West. This was accompanied by a new demand that Tawang had to be conceded by India in any boundary settlement, a claim that continues to be politically unacceptable. It would be interesting to explore through further research whether Cold War dynamics as it prevailed in the 1980s had anything to do with this change or whether it was mostly a reflection of the altered balance of economic and military capabilities between the two countries.

Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu's chapter titled "The Accidental Global Peacekeeper" traces India's role as the chief provider of peacekeeping forces for UN missions in various conflict zones. He has highlighted the role of General Indarjit Rikhye, who as military advisor to the UN Secretary General was instrumental in working out the basic norms and institutional processes in mounting peacekeeping operations. This is another example of India taking active part in

international rule-making despite its relative lack of substantive power.

Rohan Mukherjee analyses India's nuclear posture during the period 1962-69 and correctly describes it as maintaining nuclear ambiguity, pressing for nuclear disarmament while developing the nuclear capabilities which would enable a nuclear deterrent should that become necessary for safeguarding India's security. In my view he over-emphasises the prestige factor as driving India's nuclear policies, downplaying the security aspect. Every nuclear weapon state has, to an extent, been driven by notions of prestige and belonging to a select club and India is no exception. However, once China became a nuclear weapon state and Pakistan's relentless drive to develop nuclear weapons became well known, the security driver in India's case became compelling.

Two other contributions are worthy of mention. Rahul Sagar's chapter on Hindu nationalists and the Cold War provides a useful narrative on the mutually contradictory foreign policy prescriptions of the RSS and the BJP. There is a greater affinity with

the West but at the same time a preoccupation with its corrupting influences on India's cultural ethos. There is an emphasis on economic and military muscle but unwillingness to accept economic strategies that go beyond self-reliance.

Lastly, Syed Akbar Hyder's chapter on the Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, may seem an incongruous inclusion in the book but was interesting as a counterpoint to the Cold War binaries that were dividing countries and people into opposing categories. Faiz's poetry refused to acquiesce in these binaries and sought to evoke sensibilities that transcended boundaries and ideologies: A reminder that there is a common humanity and innate empathy that the politics of division are sometimes unable to suppress.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and a senior fellow, CPR

INDIA AND THE COLD WAR

Manu Bhagavan (ed)

Penguin, 280 pages, ₹599

India in the Cold War



BOOK REVIEW

SHYAM SARAN

Manu Bhagavan proved his credentials as an accomplished political historian with his earlier work, *The Peacemakers*, on India's active and influential diplomatic role in the early years after its independence. His considerable and pioneering research pointed to a hitherto unacknowledged role that India played in the negotiation of international norms on a broad but consistent theme is difficult. number of key issues despite being outside Bhagavan makes a valiant effort to pull the the league of major powers. India's non-various threads together in his fine alignment gave it the credentials to play the

go-between in the emerging polarisation of the Cold War. Its much-derided moralist "pretensions" enabled it to carve out a favourable niche for itself in the post-Second World War international order. The current volume, *India and the Cold War*, takes that story further, providing greater detail and more nuanced perspectives, putting together contributions from several well-known analysts, who have drawn on more recently available archival material. It is commendable that the authors of various chapters represent a younger but nevertheless promising generation of scholars, whose rigorous scholarship and attention to historical detail stand out.

It is inevitable that when you have a number of contributing scholars covering a wide spectrum of issues, adhering to a boundary roughly aligned to the McMahon Line in the East in exchange for accepting Chinese claims in the West in Ladakh. This might have prevented the slide into the India-China war in 1962. Though not cited by Raghavan, this so-called "package pro-

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2019, India launched fixed broadband fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) services by wireless operators. Let us examine the future of fixed broadband services in India over the next six years.

In the last four years, mobile operators upgraded India's wireless internet access services with an investment of over ₹6 lakh crore, attracting nearly 600 million mobile broadband consumers. As a result, the country's overall internet traffic volume has crossed 200 petabytes per day, second only to China.

This fast-paced adoption of the digital lifestyle boosted the digital entertainment and media market, with over 30 OTT players having mushroomed in this period. Today, at 10 gigabytes per subscriber per month, India boasts of the highest data usage on the small screen globally.

Yet investments in wireline business have hardly even approached full potential. India has only 18 million of the >1 billion global wired broadband subscribers. Of these, 10 million access internet on lower speed co-axial copper cables. As for FTTH penetration, India's presence is even weaker, with only 1.3 million FTTH households against over 350 million in China.

While telecom consultants, broadband experts, and many financial analysts estimate India's fixed broadband market to expand to 50 million by 2022, and 100 million by 2025, we see a clear gap between the visible consumer demand and fragile supply of fixed broadband FTTH services.

Indian digital consumers want access to whole gamut of video content anytime, anywhere, and seamlessly across devices at 50-100 Mbps or even higher speeds.

OTT players have forced traditional media and broadcasting companies to revisit some of their core business assumptions; cable and DTH Pay TV service providers are also trying to convert normal TV sets to smart TVs. This cord-cutting phenomenon, a rage in the western world, is expected to trend in high-income urban Indian households.

KPMG's India Digital Future Report 2018, Mass of Niches expects the native digital segment to shift from passive consumption to deeper engagement. Of the projection of 820 million digital users by 2025, they estimate 425 million to be wireless broadband customers, and over 100 million households to be highly engaged digital users. These 'Digital Enthusiasts', primarily millennials and Gen Z individuals, with >₹5 lakh pa incomes are more likely to pay for wired and wireless broadband services and OTT content.

The wired broadband revenue market size is projected to grow at a CAGR of 23%, expanding from ₹11,000 crore in FY18 to ₹50,000 crore in FY25. These projections appear plausible as the large screen device experience becomes even more exhilarating with UHD 4K content combined with enhanced multiplayer gaming experience. Households will transition from paying ₹500 per TV set to their Cable/DTH operator, to a home broadband service at ₹700-₹1,000 monthly ARPU for the entire household, with an additional ₹200-300 for OTT services. This will increase the average Indian consumer's monthly data consumption from 10-12 Gigabytes on a 4-6-inch wireless smartphone to 150-200 Gigabytes of usage at home. Globally, as per Cisco's 13th Annual Visual Networking Index (VNI) report, 69% of data traffic of 123 Exabyte per month is generated from fixed broadband services — India's trend in the long run can be no different.

Two or three integrated telecom operators are indicating early interest to tap the Indians' unmet demand for FTTH. In the past, Indian home broadband market remained underdeveloped due to absence of organised cable industry, which still remains fragmented and undercapitalised. With FTTH, globally fixed broadband services have evolved to become fast and reliable, with speeds ranging from 100 Mbps-1 Gbps, leading China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, and Japan, among others, to adopt it. For example, in China, 81%

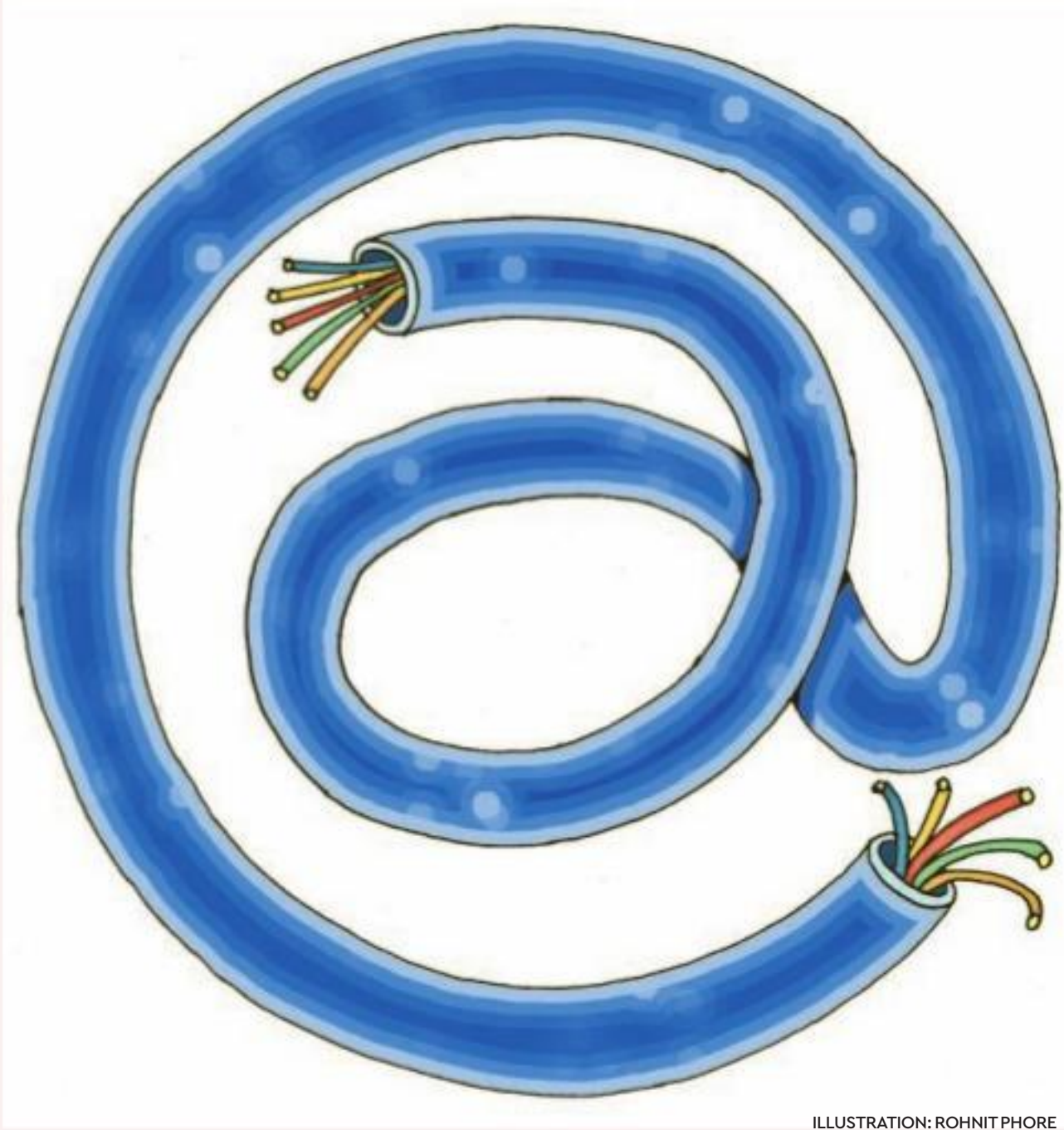


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

HIMANSHU KAPANIA

Former MD, Idea Cellular
Views are personal



● FIBRE-TO-THE-HOME

Shared fibre infrastructure is key

The govt should ease the creation of independent, fibre infrastructure company (-ies) to be used by service providers. This will make the business a low-cost proposition and encourage telecom players to participate

home broadband users are on FTTH, and even developing nations, like Indonesia, Brazil, Thailand, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, Vietnam, etc, are adding over 1 million fixed broadband FTTH subscribers per quarter consistently since last year.

What, then, is holding back Indian FTTH market growth? While demand for enhanced home broadband network and OTT services is not in doubt, the business case for next-generation Indian FTTH services remain unconvincing. As per an E&Y study, India's construction cost to reach a FTTH household is among the highest in the world at \$1,580, i.e., ₹1,10,000, against \$200 in China, \$307 in Thailand, \$334 in Indonesia, and \$432 in Malaysia. The reasons for high FTTH rollout cost in India include exorbitant cost of RoW, high lead time for approval, uncooperative building societies, unorganised/expensive fibre construction services, high fibre maintenance cost, etc.

While private FTTH operators need

support from the municipality, state government, the Centre, and the telecom regulator, fixed broadband operators can take advantage of the significant overlap between the coverage and footprint requirement of 4G today and 5G wireless broadband providers in future.

Studies across many markets show that wireless broadband access and fixed broadband access, both at home and the enterprise, are complementary services, not substitutes. Consumers will continue to use mobiles to access internet for short-burst data requirement, but will prefer home broadband services with OTT content for two-three hours per day of television viewing. However, India's wired broadband revenue opportunity will remain a pipedream unless service providers converge multiple fibre-based networks onto a unified footprint.

There are only one or two serious players trying to address the fibre supply challenge. However, the need for FTTH

broadband services is being felt throughout the country. It is not possible for one or two players to allocate scarce financial capital to address this large demand while meeting capex requirements for India's future 5G technology rollout. The existing high-cost business model for fixed broadband services supply will not yield the desired 100 million FTTH households anytime soon.

Key to home broadband market success is availability of fibre infrastructure that can encourage multiple players to serve this large FTTH market. There are two possible models:

1. The FTTH provider itself does it, making end-to-end fibre available across 1,000+ towns in each residential and commercial complex. This model is expensive, with payback period of over eight years even at an annual ARPU of ₹12,000, and involves duplication of resources in large markets.

2. Replicating the mobility infrastructure model of pooled common resources instead of a fragmented one—private sector managing pooled fibre resources on long-term MSA contracts for dark fibre or leased fibre circuits.

Until the birth of telecom infrastructure providers in the form of independent tower companies like Indus and ATC, India's mobility voice presence was limited. This reduced the entry barrier for telecom players like Jio, Airtel, Idea, etc, enabling quick expansion of coverage through shared infrastructure without individual operators having to bear the capex burden of setting up their own towers. As a result, the telecom market expanded at an exponential pace between 2008 and 2015.

By converging multiple fibre-based networks onto a single- or two-network footprint, independently financed by private investors, this 'National Fibre Infrastructure' can ensure fibre availability across the country. Indian telecom operators have already built over 22 lakh km of fibre. As the country enters into the next phase of mobility growth, early interests in monetisation of non-core assets by telecom operators is being reported.

Passive Optical Network architecture already provides fibre sharing between many service providers through either Time Division Multiplexing or Wavelength Division Multiplexing. The current 22 lakh km of fibre, once transferred to a common pool managed by independent fibre infrastructure providers, will help support 1,500 petabytes of India's daily data needs, i.e., 7.5 times the current traffic.

Unless the DoT and Trai formulate regulatory policies to support growth of an independent fibre infrastructure company, this vision will not be realised. The challenge is to get multiple tenancies so that the infrastructure cost can be spread over a large number of operators. Fibre-MSA cost to FTTH providers has to be a reasonable 60-70% of end consumer pricing. The DoT and Trai need to push central, state and municipal legislation to equate fibre deployment with infrastructure utility status. Policy could accord telecom optic fibre cable the status of public utility, offer a 10-year tax holiday to independent fibre companies, and encourage banks to leverage such companies to enable fibre-isation of at least 60% towers to reach 100 million households with FTTH. The National Building Code of India could be amended to make telecom installations and associated cabling mandatory for all commercial and residential buildings. A National Fibre Regulatory Authority overseeing setting up of common service ducts and utility corridors in all cities, apart from collaboration between states, the Centre and ULBs, will also need to be created.

Indian consumers are anxious to become part of the global FTTH revolution. With India's current fixed broadband business operating model, the gap between FTTH demand and supply will only widen unless a new collaborative, partnership-driven, low-cost business model and market structure become a reality. The government and regulator following the 'National Digital Communication Policy' vision will encourage FTTH services.

Pricing problem

AMIT BANSAL & SHRUTI GUPTA

Bansal is Partner and Gupta an Associate Director with Deloitte India.

The idea is to sift efficiency-enhancing pricing strategies from predatory pricing strategies

AS INDIA STEPS into the festive season and consumers plan big purchases, consumer goods companies are in a quandary over pricing. Consumers have exhibited strong preference towards online marketplaces for reasons attributable to discounted pricing, wider choice set, and convenience among others. Discounts nowadays are ubiquitous and no longer characteristic of just promotional or introductory pricing.

Industry bodies have exhibited dissonance alleging that discounted pricing is 'destroying' and not merely 'disrupting' the market(s). The last few years have seen an erosion of margins in the consumer goods industry that traditionally priced its products relative to manufacturing costs. It is becoming increasingly difficult for traditional players to match the discounted offerings offered by their online counterparts. The source, the sustainability, and the distortionary impact of the discounting practices is questionable. Consequently, traditional market players have implored the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to rationalise discounts.

CCI has found it challenging to respond to these allegations because in most cases the accused are not dominant market players, and the Indian competition law in its current form is only applicable to dominant players (as also for anti-trust laws in more mature jurisdictions) that indulge in anti-competitive behaviour. Therefore, practices such as below cost pricing when practiced by non-dominant players, fall outside the radar of the current competition law.

Existing literature shows that predation may not be a rational strategy for dominant firms. A firm, when identified as dominant, is supposed to have pricing power and as such may never really be required to resort to predatory pricing.

Industry developments over the past few years demonstrates prevalence of deep discounting across sectors. In more mature sectors such as telecom, we are seeing the change in competitive landscape in the form of exit of few players, strain

on financials of incumbent players and increase in consolidation. This phenomenon will make the market more prone to abuse by players that remain.

Likewise, in the new age e-commerce space, we are observing that while the new businesses are struggling to make profits due to continued deep discounting, the traditional players are losing in the run-up to match competition and unable to keep pace to survive. This acquired market power will enable charging of high prices and in turn recoupment of lost profits in the future.

We have seen several instances of the CCI dismissing predatory pricing allegations at the prima facie stage due to lack of dominance by the alleged infringer. There is a need for ex-ante regulatory intervention in such cases.

Altering the competition law framework to encompass non-dominant firms may not be the ideal solution as it will unduly strain the time and resources available with the competition regulator. Allegations of new entrants or non-dominant firms indulging in predatory pricing may alternatively be evaluated in a manner similar to merger control.

The assessment criteria can be designed based on factors such as the financial position of the company (turnover thresholds), its antecedents, and its business model among other things. Like in the case of merger control, ex-ante effects based analysis can be performed. This will allow for the assessment of likelihood of exclusion of competitors and of possible recoupment of losses by the alleged predator. It will allow the alleged predator to put forth an efficiency defense.

We recognise that discounting prices often have competition and welfare enhancing effects. Price competition can force market players to innovate and bring about operational efficiencies, and therefore may not always reduce competition. Due caution will need to be exercised as excessive regulation may curb investment (and innovation), and hinder newer markets from coming into existence. The timing of regulatory intervention is critical as it should not stifle market growth while at the same time not propagate creation of dominant player. The idea is to sift efficiency-enhancing pricing strategies from predatory pricing strategies that have the intent of elimination of competitors per se and resultantly overcome the obstacle of 'under-enforcement' posed by the current competition law architecture.

NOBEL PRIZE

THE NOBEL PRIZE for economics this year goes for work on poverty which is probably the most serious challenge for the world. Therefore, there is a move

away from behavioural economics, which has been popular with the jury and extensions of markets which has dominated the core work of other winners. In fact, there was some talk outside that the award would go to someone like Prof AK Sen. In an age when people are less enchanted with free markets and capitalism and economists like Thomas Piketty have occupied centre stage it is quite appropriate that Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer have been accorded this award.

On the face of it, their work is quite simple. There are four parts to their story. First, there is need to identify the causes of poverty, second have the necessary interventions in place which can address the issue and third, carry out field experiments which work so that those which don't can be abandoned. The last is the cost-benefit analysis to evaluate efficacy. Accordingly, those which work can be persevered.

Poverty is a major issue for a large part of the human geography with over 700 mn people being afflicted in countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Over time several measures have been used to counter this problem with different mod-

The right experiments

India should take pride in the evidence-based policy approach

MADAN SABNAVIS

Chief economist, CARE Ratings. Views are personal



icum of success. The recipients work is based on carrying out experiments with solutions once the problem has been identified so that the policies become effective.

India can take pride in such an approach because over the years successive governments have been fighting poverty through different measures. In fact, while the awardees talk of identifying the problem first, in India we have the entire menu on the table: health, family planning, education, credit, agriculture, social security and so on. These have been on the agenda from the time of independence and in all our Planning documents.

Banerjee, Duflo and Kramertalk of interventions being identified and here too India has been fairly successful in formulating in different kinds of policies. Therefore, there are specific programmes for enhancing agriculture and various schemes are brought in to address health, education etc. New innovations have come through the NREGA programme or the PM-health scheme (Ayushman Bharat). One can even go back to the employment guarantee programme, minimum needs programme, Green revolution, etc. which were used in the seventies and eighties as the problems were well understood and were common to all states.



The third part of their thesis is that we need to carry out experiments to see how they work and integrate to make them effective. This is significant in India because we have the tendency to set monetary or financial targets which are achieved without being too effective. Hence, it is not uncommon to come across schools being constructed without having teachers and books and furniture. Teacher absenteeism is common. Policies, thus, fail to deliver. On the other hand several states like TN, AP, MP etc. have implemented the mid-day meal scheme which work well ensuring children attend schools.

India can be a good example, to show how poverty has been tackled. It tells policy makers what should be done and the safeguards that have to be built. While there is still reason for us to be dissatisfied on the state of poverty—300 mn are still deprived—credit has to be given for lowering the proportion given the level of leakages in the system which lead to wastages. In fact, the measures taken by the present government since 2014-15 to improve the distribution of fiscal benefits through better delivery mechanisms is commendable and can be a useful template to be followed across the country for all programmes.

Clearly, the road ahead is long for us and the Niti Aayog can take the thesis of these awardees as a template for evaluating all the programmes of the government and create a report card on the achievements and misses so as to improve the effectiveness of policy. Such an evaluation will help to sieve out those programmes that have not worked because efficiency parameters have not been met. The same funds can be routed to others which have worked or alternatively new programmes can be constructed. It is important to make every rupee of expenditure work with a definite cost-benefit analysis being in place.

The awardees have not added the willpower to get things done which is what is missing in most of the countries which have high poverty. In fact, in most of the countries in Africa and Latin America where the rulers are dictatorial, there is less incentive to bring about change which makes this goal a distant dream. In democracies like India a major challenge has been corruption which is what should also be addressed by countries to make their policies effective. Curiously most of the poorer nations have low scores in the World Bank Governance Index of the Corruption Index of Transparency International. Hence, there is a fifth dimension which is a practical issue that has to be appended to make such policies work in poorer countries.



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

ON THE OFFSIDE, FIRST THERE IS GOD, THEN

SOURAV GANGULY.

— RAHUL DRAVID

The Indian **EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

ERASING THE SLATE

J&K needs full democracy, noisy and chaotic as it may be. Not a bonsai pruned and stunted in North Block and/or Raj Bhavan

THE COMEBACK OF mobile phones in the Valley, with the restoration of post-paid connections, more than two months after a communication blockade was imposed, is welcome. But listen closely to the murmurs of officialdom in J&K and there is reason to worry. As this paper has reported, plans are being drawn up of a political engagement even as the top brass of all major and minor parties remains in detention — Home Minister Amit Shah has now said that the Public Safety Act has been invoked against even Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, not just Farooq Abdullah, setting any possibilities of their early release to rest. So, the question is: Who will be part of this political initiative, choreographed by Delhi? Will it skip the top rung of parties altogether and go straight to mid-level leaders, some of whom have been released over the past few weeks? Who will be in, who out? Much more troubling, however, than even the glib talk of bridging the trust deficit amid continuing lockdown and detentions, is the suggestion of the emergence of a new political class in the Valley, which will presumably fill the political void that has been created by Delhi, and be part of its new solution for Kashmir.

The Centre's belief that to script a "naya Kashmir", it needs to erase the slate and start with a blank page goes against the story of India's politics so far — of a country that has subsumed so many of its rebellions, by turning rebels into stakeholders, and where areas of insurgency have seen the politics of anger and grievance give way to one of aspiration and hope. Of course, this is not a rosy or neat trajectory, there have been spectacular missteps and incomplete transitions. In some trouble spots, the insurgencies have simply been tired out, or have been bent to excessive force applied by the Centre. Yet, it has mostly been a narrative, tortuous and turbulent, of negotiation and bargaining, between the Centre and the protagonists on ground zero, such as they are. In the current moment, however, the Centre's will to clear the political board in Kashmir, to wipe it clean, all the better, presumably, to repopulate it in its own image, stands out for its staggering ambition — and hubris.

The only way out is for politics, democratic politics, and not just mobile services, to resume in the Valley. This can only happen if the leaders of Kashmir, with all their strengths but also their flaws and inadequacies, are given the space and freedom that is their right. To mobilise for and against, to make criticisms and offer alternatives, on the teeming issues — abrogation of Article 370, the sense of humiliation of a people who have not been involved in a critical decision that affects them, demilitarisation, development. Kashmir, even with its troubled past and present, and especially because of it, deserves full democracy, noisy and chaotic as it may be. Not a bonsai democracy, choreographed in North Block and/or Raj Bhavan — constrained, stunted and pruned.

RUNNING THE GAME

Sourav Ganguly takes charge of BCCI when its functioning needs to be streamlined. He will have his hands full

SOURAV GANGULY BECOMING the BCCI president presents an arresting image for Indian cricket. It's in sync with the Lodha committee reforms that called for cricketers in cricket administration. With Ganguly set to assume top office, Indian cricket will have one of its finest captains to helm the affairs of the game. He became captain in a time of upheaval, when match-fixing rattled Indian cricket at the turn of the century. Ganguly's first priority was to end regionalism, which he did successfully. He also introduced professionalism by bringing in a foreign coach, John Wright, and initiated a fitness culture. Ganguly is taking charge of the BCCI at a time when the cricket board's functioning needs to be similarly streamlined.

Over the past few years, India has significantly lost clout at the ICC. A cricket board that contributes over 70 per cent of the global body's revenue, its money has been taken away on the pretext of creating a more equitable revenue distribution system. The ICC also browbeat India to change the scheduled 2021 Champions Trophy to a World T20. Indian cricket, at this moment, needs someone of stature as its representative to the ICC. As a captain, Ganguly always put emphasis on winning overseas. His team came close to winning a Test series against Steve Waugh's all-conquering Australia in their lair. Fans would expect that the Indian team will shed the "poor travellers" tag under his presidentship.

According to the BCCI constitution, Ganguly has just 10 months to implement his vision before he goes to a three-year cooling-off period. There will be challenges. There is speculation that the BCCI under its new dispensation will carry more of a political undertone. But as a player, Ganguly knew how to get his way. As a captain, he dealt with formidable personalities like Sachin Tendulkar, Anil Kumble and Rahul Dravid. He persuaded Dravid to keep wickets in the ODIs despite the latter's reluctance. Man-management has always been Ganguly's forte. He managed to get his way even with a heavyweight administrator like Jagmohan Dalmiya. Also, he is a survivor, who played 113 Tests. As the BCCI president, however, he will have to learn to be more guarded. As a Cricket Association of Bengal office-bearer, he faced conflict-of-interest issues. But the BCCI office won't allow him to wear many hats.

BENGAL'S PRIDE

The state has scored two smash hits in one day. But there's a lot more going on in that corner of our meaningless universe

ONCE MORE, A son of Bengal has won a Nobel prize in economics, while another has cleared the field of competition for the post of chairman of the Board of Control for Cricket in India. This is broad-spectrum world dominance — brain, brawn, prefrontal cortex, motor cortex, limbic system, gluteus maximus, everything that makes us human. Bengal is celebrating, and the City of Joy is having a ball. After a span of years, there is a good reason for Bengali exceptionalism to come out and take the air of the "dying city" that just goes on living, regardless of Sharada, Narada and Dilip Ghosh-da. It is an uplifting moment.

The Didis and Dadas of West Bengal are frequently accused of being cultural supremacists. This is excessive, because they are only exceptionalists. And who can deny that the state that gave India Marx, Mao and machher jhol is exceptional? Whether it is the prevalence of hyperreality or hypochondria, no other state comes even close to the one that invented mutton rolls and permanent revolution. West Bengal leaves the competition far behind in indices as diverse as the population density of amiable lunatics and the number of streets named after poets and scientists who lived or worked in the neighbourhood. Plotting the consumption of kosha mangsho against anticid sales could reveal something of the soul of the state. Who knows, a Kuznets curve might emerge, signifying a reckless lust for life, even after Gelusil filters under the gastric onslaught.

While we admire West Bengal for mass-producing Nobel laureates (the Bengalis lay claim to Sir Roland Ross, CV Raman and Mother Teresa, too), we are only looking at a sliver of life. There's a lot more going on over there. Look beyond the cultural supremacists, and exceptional things shall be in your midst.



MADAN B LOKUR

FOUR YEARS AGO, on October 16, 2015, the Supreme Court (SC) struck down as unconstitutional an amendment to the Constitution establishing the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). The amendment and the corresponding law were challenged by the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) believing, rightly, that the amendment would violate the basic structure of the Constitution by depriving the judiciary of its independence. SCAORA engaged Fali S Nariman, a doyen of the Bar, to argue the case on its behalf. The SC agreed with his submissions and struck down the amendment. At law, the independence of the judiciary was preserved. But is it, in fact? Judge for yourself.

Try and remember, for instance, that barely a few months after the NJAC decision, a sobbing Chief Justice of India (CJI) sought outside help to resolve the institutional problem of getting the government to move on increasing the judge strength. Nothing happened. A few months later, the same CJI complained, in open court, that the government was not implementing the recommendations of the collegium for the transfer of some judges. Nothing happened, except a response given in November the same year by the Attorney General reminding the SC of its Lakshman Rekha and by the law minister of its historic failure during the Emergency. The seeds of the NJAC striking back were sown around that time and the judiciary is today reaping the harvest.

What was the proposed composition of the NJAC? The CJI was the chair, ex officio, and along with him were the next two senior judges. The Union Minister of Law and Justice was an ex officio member along with two eminent persons. They were to recommend persons for appointment as judges of the SC and high courts and the transfer of judges of the high courts (including chief justices). Notwithstanding the declaration of unconstitutionality of the NJAC, I believe its core functions are now being performed by a body minus the two eminent persons. So, the recommendation and appointment of judges has been taken over by a "new NJAC" and without any apparent protest. Why do I say this?

The collegium cut off its hands when it reversed a signed and sealed (but not delivered) resolution on January 11. To an outsider, it appeared that a resolution of the collegium lacked sanctity — and this seems to have been exploited by the "new NJAC". Let me cite a few glaring instances. As recently as in late August,

Govt calling the SC shots?

Collegium's actions show that the NJAC which was struck down four years ago is back, with a vengeance

Justice Akil Kureshi, the senior-most judge of the Gujarat High Court, was recommended on May 10 to be the Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court after considering all relevant factors and being found suitable in all respects. Guess what? The government sent two communications to the CJI on August 23 and 27 along with some material. On reconsideration of the communications and the material, the collegium modified its recommendation on September 5 and recommended his appointment as the Chief Justice of the Tripura High Court. Again, the contents of the communications and the accompanying material are not known. Is there something so terribly secret about them that it would not be in the interest of the institution to make a disclosure?

the *Economic Times* reported that the CJI had written to the law minister that 43 recommendations made by the collegium were pending with the government and the vacancies in the high courts were to the extent of about 37 per cent. Also, the collegium could not consider the appointment of 10 persons since some information was awaited from the government for varying periods. Who is calling the shots — the government?

Some more questions. On April 8, the collegium recommended the appointment of Justice Vikram Nath, the senior-most judge of the Allahabad High Court as the chief justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Sometime later, the government referred back the recommendation for reconsideration. On August 22, the collegium reconsidered the recommendation "for the reasons indicated in the file" and recommended his appointment as the chief justice of the Gujarat High Court. The reasons indicated in the file are not known and it would certainly be in the interest of the institution if they are disclosed. If the judge was unfit or unsuitable for appointment as the chief justice of Andhra Pradesh, how did he become suitable for Gujarat?

On September 5, the collegium recommended that Justice Irshad Ali be made a permanent judge of the Allahabad High Court. The recommendation was made after considering (i) the opinion of judges of the SC conversant with the affairs of the Allahabad High Court, (ii) report of the committee of judges to evaluate his judgments, (iii) possible complaints against one of the judges under consideration (could also be Justice Ali), (iv) additional information received from the chief justice of the Allahabad High Court and (v) observations of the Department of Justice and (vi) an overall assessment. What did the government do? It rejected the recommendation (without furnishing any reason or justification) and on September 20 extended his term as an additional judge by six months. Did anybody protest?

Justice Akil Kureshi, the senior-most judge of the Gujarat High Court, was recommended on May 10 to be the Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court after considering all relevant factors and being found suitable in all respects. Guess what? The government sent two communications to the CJI on August 23 and 27 along with some material. On reconsideration of the communications and the material, the collegium modified its recommendation on September 5 and rec-

ommended his appointment as the Chief Justice of the Tripura High Court. Again, the contents of the communications and the accompanying material are not known. Is there something so terribly secret about them that it would not be in the interest of the institution to make a disclosure? As in the case of Justice Vikram Nath, it would be worth asking how Justice Kureshi is fit or suitable for appointment as the Chief Justice of the Tripura High Court and not of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Have we not often heard the SC say that sunlight is the best disinfectant? And then, electric light the most efficient policeman? More than a month has gone by and even this recommendation has not been acted upon by the government. Any protest?

Finally, the transfer of the Chief Justice from Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court — whether it should have taken place or not is not the question. It could have been achieved more gracefully, like the manner in which a former CJI dealt with a delinquent judge of the Delhi High Court. After a brief discussion with the CJI, the judge quietly resigned. But some other more important questions arise in the context of the independence of the judiciary. Was she spied upon by the Intelligence Bureau (IB)? *The Times of India* reported on September 30 that the CJI had asked the Central Bureau of Investigation to "take further action in accordance with law" on a five-page report of the IB on financial and other irregularities alleged against her. Should the IB be blindly believed — there is a well-known incident of a teetotaler being called a "boozer" by the IB? Was the CJI kept in the dark about her being kept under surveillance? How many other judges are being spied on? Isn't it somewhat unusual and frightening that judges, expected to render judgment without fear or favour, are subject to surveillance by the IB? Can their independence be guaranteed under these circumstances?

It seems to me that the unconstitutional NJAC is rearing its head and is now Frankenstein's monster. The advice of the two eminent persons postulated by the NJAC is no longer required. Actually, there is now no need to amend the Constitution to bring back the NJAC — it is already in existence with a vengeance. At the present moment, silence on crunch issues is not golden.

The writer is a retired justice of the Supreme Court of India



SHOBHINI MUKERJI

AS A YOUNG research associate, I stopped at a dhaba with my boss, me armed with hand-sanitiser and a spoon, while my boss dug in to a plate of fish with her hands. My boss was Esther Duflo, director and co-founder of J-PAL, and we were on a field visit in a village in Odisha in 2008. J-PAL was in its early years then, set up globally at MIT in 2003 and in India by 2007. Despite the expansion and recognition of its work worldwide, Esther remains the same person, down to earth, no frills or fuss, who says exactly what she means in a precise five words or less. And much can be written about Abhijit's Banerjee's fantastic cooking skills.

Working with Esther and Abhijit for more than a decade has given me immense appreciation for these brilliant yet unpretentious people. They have always been open to hearing the ideas of research associates and field staff. They devise elegant solutions to complex development challenges, turn unwieldy ideas into actionable plans, engage with colleagues and bureaucrats, and return home to review a 250-page journal submission — all as part of a day's work.

For them to join the ranks of Jan

THE PEOPLE'S ECONOMISTS

This year's Nobel laureates shone the light on ways to address poverty

Tinbergen, Milton Friedman and Amartya Sen is one thing, but to attract global attention to the powerful methodology in which they, along with their co-laureate Michael Kremer, have been pioneers is another thing entirely. They have led the charge to mainstream the application of a rigorous and scientific lab methodology — the randomised evaluation — outside the laboratory, amidst the complexities of the real world, in order to derive precise measures of the impact of poverty alleviation programmes. In their own words, back in the late '90s and early 2000s, Abhijit and Esther, together with their early partners, took a leap of faith and used randomised evaluations in the field — at the time not a widely-used practice in development economics. Their intention was to do research which was hands-on, solve real problems, and also learn, with greater precision, how the world works.

Under their leadership, and with the efforts of J-PAL's network of 181 affiliated researchers, we have moved the frontiers in the fight against poverty and inequality in cost-effective and measurable ways. Whether we are thinking about innovative

ways to bring women out of extreme poverty, improve educational attainment or increase immunisation rates for children under the age of five, our work fills critical evidence gaps. This research is then brought to policymakers in a manner that is globally informed, by pooling the best insights from randomised evaluations in 83 countries, as well as grounded by local conditions and implementation feasibility, to enable context-specific policy decisions. J-PAL's scientific evaluations have debunked commonly held beliefs, and have resulted in evidence-based policy decisions.

As the news broke, my 79-year-old grandmother called to congratulate me, and to ask me specifically what it is that we at J-PAL do. Therein lies the significance of this moment. Not only have these Nobel laureates spent their careers bringing rigorous research to play in important policy decisions, but their work, and this recognition, have brought a powerful approach for fighting global poverty into our everyday conversations.

Mukerji is the executive director of J-PAL South Asia



OCTOBER 16, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

FUEL FOR TARAPUR

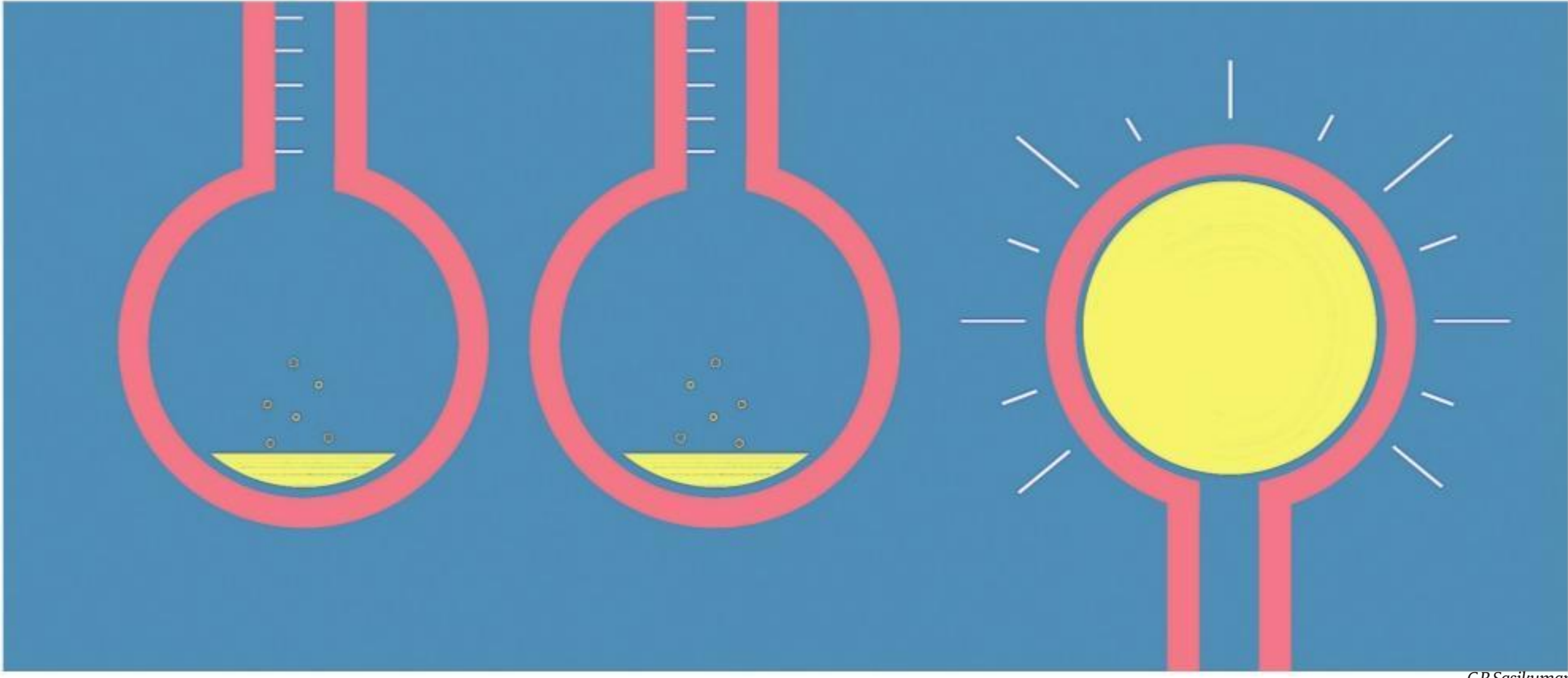
THE JIMMY CARTER administration does not seem to have taken any firm stand yet on the pending Indian applications for fuel for Tarapur. The scenario sketched by observers is as follows: Very soon the state department will reply to the nuclear regulatory commission. In the context of the general friendliness of the US administration to India and the desire of the Carter administration to utilise the two-year grace period for diplomacy, it is almost certain that the state department will recommend further supply. What the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will do is anybody's guess. The chances are probably slightly against continued supplies.

CONG-CPM TALKS

THE CONGRESS AGREED to join hands with the Marxists during the Lok Sabha poll as the latter only too readily resiled from the firm postures they had adopted earlier. This was the net outcome of the 90-minute long meeting of the leaders of the Congress, the CPM and the CPI held in New Delhi. The Congress general secretary, Yunus Saleem, emphasised that his party will continue to support the Koya Ministry in Kerala and vote for the controversial land gift bill even when they reach an understanding with the CPM for the Lok Sabha election. The question of dissolution of the Assembly was not discussed, he added.

PAK NOBEL WIN

THE 1979 NOBEL prize in physics was awarded to two Americans and a Pakistani and the chemistry prize to an American and a West German. A total of four of seven laureates selected for the three 1979 science prize are Americans, the same number as last year. The physics prize was awarded to professors Sheldon L. Glashow and Steven Weinberg, both 46, of Harvard, and Abdus Salam, 53, a Pakistani physicist working in London and Trieste, Italy — for studies aimed at unlocking the mystery of forces that hold matter together. They believe their work may eventually find a single force underlying the universe.



CR Sasikumar

A need to democratisise science

Research in elite institutions must focus on the problems of their surrounding environment



MILIND SOHONI

IT IS GOOD to hear that the Department of Science and Technology (DST) of the Government of India has engaged in a review of its State Science and Technology Councils (SSTC) Programme. The SSTCs were formed to spearhead the use of science and technology (S&T) for regional problems and to foster “scientific temper” within states, and the DST programme was mandated “to provide core support”. Sadly, this was neglected and most SSTCs are now intellectually adrift. The second review meeting is being held this week in New Delhi, and is led by notable bureaucrats, scientists and educationists. This provides an opportunity to reform our scientific institutions and align them with the interests of the people.

As a developing country, India faces many challenges. Managing floods and droughts, designing better timetables for city buses or developing biodegradable paints for Ganapati idol makers, are all extremely challenging tasks. The systematic study of such problems and their solutions will lead not only to better development outcomes, but also new science, enterprises and jobs. The primary responsibility of solving them lies with our scientists and bureaucrats, not politicians. Unfortunately, this is not fully appreciated by our society or accepted by our elite institutions as their mandate.

The result is that our industry imports much of its sophisticated machinery. Our state agencies call on expensive international consultants even in traditional areas such as irrigation. International companies fill our pot-holes with cement, and foreign universities prepare our smart city plans and assess our drinking water systems. These universities know that solving hard real-life problems is the road to “world-class” research and international rankings.

Many of the development problems, for instance, water or public health, are on the State List. Most state departments do not make any provision for research in their budget simply because it may be too disruptive, or that they do not find viable partner institutions. The SSTCs are well-placed to enable problem discovery, identify higher education institutions to work on these prob-

lems and engage with state agencies.

However, there are three hurdles. The first is funding. From the DST kitty of Rs 3,000-4,000 crore, barely Rs 100 crore makes it to the SSTCs put together. State funding is scarce. For example, the Maharashtra SSTC has an annual budget of about Rs 60 crore. Compare this with the Rs 200 crore research grants that IIT Bombay alone receives from central agencies, with little to show. Second, much of the SSTC budget is disbursed in the same patronising “project proposal and approval” method of the DST, rather than in sectoral engagement and people-driven problem identification. Chronic issues in rural electricity or public health or disasters such as the recent Sangli floods are never analysed since they are not seen as scientific problems but social, political or implementation problems to be undertaken by NGOs or the concerned state agency.

Finally, there is the imagination, peculiar to us, of a “world-class” science, of gifted scientists working on new discoveries at the frontiers of science. However, the more informed paradigm is that science is about empowering people, and not merely about few fashionable research areas. It is about the practice of observation, analysis, reporting and argumentation, which may happen within a laboratory or outside it, and which speaks not only to scientists, but to administrators, people, their representatives and the civil society at large. Thus, “why is my bus late” is as much a question for science to address as “why does a solar eclipse happen”. Only such an approach will enable us to fix our public transport, analyse the droughts of Marathwada or manage the sea of solid waste which drowns us all.

The above hurdles primarily arise from the largely unaccountable “babu science” of the DST, and other central agencies, the venerable sarkari science of nuclear, space and defence scientists — a science of “national priorities” rather than social comprehension, and the fiction of global “cutting edge” science of our elite MHRD institutions.

So what is to be done? The DST should disburse about Rs 2,000-2,500 crore directly to SSTCs with precise guidelines on problem area selection, publicly available reports as research outcomes, identification of regional institutions, strengthening of universities, and working with regional agencies. The DST should be a clearing house for data from central agencies such as the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA).

The SSTC should become the nodal center for research in and for state agencies and administrative units such as forests lands, watersheds, districts or cities. This will enable

As a developing country, India faces many challenges. Managing floods and droughts, designing better timetables for city buses or developing biodegradable paints for ganapati idol makers, are all extremely challenging tasks. The systematic study of such problems and their solutions will lead not only to better development outcomes, but also new science, enterprises and jobs. The primary responsibility of solving them lies with our scientists and bureaucrats and not politicians

sectoral research, funds, logistical support and access to state-level data. There should be innovative funding mechanisms, for example, providing Rs 10 per capita or Rs 1 crore per district per year as research funding for work on regional problems. This will enable rolling out a citizen’s right to science, for a community to seek scientific analysis of the problems it faces. For example, Nasik city may choose to develop a public transport plan, or a village may want a study of its disappearing groundwater and advice on installing an RO plant.

The SSTC should work with the state higher education department to evolve curricula and research frameworks for the state’s development requirements and provide academic space for SSTC projects, and evolve a network of regional institutions to work with district-level agencies.

There should be better alignment of research and development with existing programmes at the national and state level. For example, the SSTC may offer a programme for institutions or enterprises to prepare air quality action plans for cities as required by the National Clean Air Programme or district irrigation plans as a part of the national PMKSY programme. The elite MHRD institutions can play an important role since they are largely above the hurly-burly of state-level politics. They must anchor research on regional problems, develop suitable curricula and mentor and collaborate with regional institutions. A beginning would be for each Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER) to identify a thrust area of regional interest. The SSTC should help in ensuring this. Finally, there should be a Model State Science and Technology Council Act to ensure the above agenda to prevent capture by venerable scientists or elite institutions, and to allow people and their representatives to initiate studies on problems which bother them.

This is, of course a decentralisation of the agenda of science and democratisation of access to science and its methods, which is long overdue. This will bring real science closer to schools and colleges and allow the community to participate in its own development. This approach is certainly in line with the spirit of science, and certainly what was intended by Bharat Ratna C Subramaniam, who initiated the SSTC programme and was a key figure in both the Green Revolution and the White revolution.

The writer is with Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas, IIT Bombay. He is currently on deputation to IIT Goa

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The decision by the Trump administration to quit Syria stands apart because the status quo was entirely sustainable. American forces were not taking high numbers of casualties. The region under control of the Kurds was largely quiet.” — THE NEW YORK TIMES

The return of al Qaeda

The outfit’s recent activities point to dangers closer home. India must exercise caution



ANJU GUPTA

On October 8, the Afghan Intelligence, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), declared that the chief of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Asim Umar, had been killed in a US-Afghan raid on a Taliban compound in Helmand on September 23. Till date, the AQIS official media or their known social media accounts have neither confirmed nor accepted this claim. Taliban termed the report as “fabricated propaganda” making no comment on AQIS or Umar. It is highly likely that Umar, India born, has been killed. However, his death is not going to halt concerted efforts by AQ/AQIS network to recalibrate its activities in South Asia, especially in India.

After the killing of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011 and with the rise of AQ in Iraq (which morphed into ISIL) around early 2013, most experts believed that the AQ network had lost its capability to mount a global jihad. ISIL became the principal challenge to international security worldwide. The AQ top leadership, which included chief Ayman al Zawahiri, continued to operate from the Af-Pak region. However, AQ media also started churning out audios, videos and online magazines on South Asia. The key faces of such propaganda were Umar, then an unknown cleric, and Ustad Ahmed Farooq, a Pakistani of solid standing amongst jihadis of the region.

Their sermons targeted India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, US and, to some extent, Pakistan. This group had already started identifying themselves as AQ in “Barre Sagri” (South Asia), suggesting a South Asia-focused AQ branch, which was exhorting Muslims of these countries to wage jihad in their own countries against pro-West governments.

The AQIS was formally declared on September 3, 2014, through a video in which Zawahiri declared Umar as the chief, offering him bayat (allegiance) — which had never been offered in the past by any AQ leader to any of its regional branches. Further, a senior al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, Usama Mehmood, was also declared the spokesperson of the group.

Soon, the group started claiming the killing of prominent intellectuals in Bangladesh and participating in Afghan jihad along with the Taliban. In a US-Afghan raid in Shorabak in Helmand province in October 2015, many AQIS operatives were reported killed or arrested, including many Punjabi Pakistanis.

The arrests of a Sambal resident, Mohd Asif, and Cuttack-based Maulana Abdul Rehman, by the Delhi Police special cell in late 2015, established that Umar was originally from Sambhal and his name was Sanaul Haq. He studied at Deoband for sometime with Rehman and later fled to Pakistan where he joined Harkat ul Mujahideen. The arrests pointed out that

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BEIJING’S CHALLENGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘No zero sum’ (IE, October 15). China is trying to ring fence India by reaching out to our neighbours. Its avowed support to Pakistan despite India’s displeasure and now its new-found love for Nepal is aimed to hit India on economic front. China has not taken India’s spurning of the Belt and Road Initiative well.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

PRIVACY FIRST

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Privacy rights and wrongs’ (IE, October 11). The government’s move to intercept people’s activities and conversations on social media violates the Right to Privacy that was guaranteed by the Supreme Court in 2017. It could make India a surveillance state. The government should not pressure companies to hand over consumer data to them. This measure will impact the freedom of expression of the people who use social media to air their views. Free speech cannot be sacrificed.

Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata

VIEWS ON QUOTA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘In his company’ (IE, October 14). I recall a scene from the British television series, *Yes Minister*, in which a quota for women was put forward to bring gender parity in bureaucracy. The secretary advised the minister to make quotas at

AQIS was trying to recruit cadres in India for training in Pakistan and Rehman was aiding the process.

The Delhi police chargesheet stated that Rehman disclosed how, after his training in an LeT camp in Muzaffarabad (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir), he was taken by LeT operative Farhatullah Ghori to Rawalpindi Jail. There he met LeT operational chief Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi. The LeT link of Rehman made it very clear that AQ- LeT-Pak ISI link was intact. AQIS was a new name for the same set of jihadis focussed on targeting Indian interests apart from that of West, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

The AQ media network has been churning out substantial propaganda for the past many months, including bringing out ISIL-style updates of its daily actions against its enemies. Their channels are now reporting activities of all branches together, including the old and new propaganda by AQIS, under the brand name, As Sahab media. And the recent additions on these channels is Kashmir: AQ chief Zawahiri posted a video on Kashmir in July this year calling for jihad in Kashmir, and asserting that Pakistan had prevented Arab Mujahideen from coming to Kashmir after the withdrawal of Russia from Afghanistan. And just two days prior, in an AQIS video, Usama Mehmood did some Pakistan bashing for them betraying Kashmiris, but called for attacks on Indian interests. Portraying killed-Kashmiri commanders, such as Zakir Musa and Safdar Ahmed Bhatt, as heroes, the video clearly aimed at radicalising and recruiting cadres not just within Kashmir but also in mainland India and South Asia. Through a clip of Pakistan PM Imran Khan preventing Pakistanis from joining jihad in Kashmir, it tried to show him as a traitor of the Muslim cause.

The principal challenger to security in South Asia has always been the AQ network which includes the Afghan Taliban, factions of the TTP, LeT, JeM, HUIJ. On the one hand, the Taliban was posturing to give counter-terror assurance to the US with regards to severing its ties with the AQ. On the other hand, the AQ network has become more aggressive with its propaganda, and is calling for attacks across South Asia, including in Afghanistan. The group has reposted a lot of old propaganda, including those showing the Pakistani army in poor light. This seems to be a design to mask the connections of the group with the deep state in Pakistan.

All recent activities of the AQ and AQIS, especially those focussed on Kashmir, suggest that the group is making all-out efforts to recruit cadres from not just within Kashmir but, using the issue of Kashmir, from across South Asia. The call for a tehrenk from Kashmir unifying the jihadis of South Asia may be an over-reaching construct, but it does have the potential to exploit an emotive issue. It has called for attacks on Indian interests, not just in India, but also beyond India. The intensity of its propaganda and the current strength of the group across many parts of the world, makes it a potent network — with a long history of patient planning of spectacular attacks.

The writer is an IPS Officer. Views expressed are personal.

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.

lower levels of the hierarchy so that it doesn’t affect the gender ratio at the upper level. The woman secretary, in contrast, advised quotas in the higher bureaucracy.

H Upadhyay via e-mail

STALEMATE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘After Mamallapuram’ (IE, October 14). China is known to protect its interests. That is why there has not been much progress in Sino-Indian ties for decades in the problem areas of defence, security and terrorism. China’s share in trade between the two countries is almost 75 per cent. This enormous difference should be narrowed.

Subhash Vaid, Noida



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

EXPLAINING BHAGWAT

BOTH PANCHJANYA AND *Organiser* have reported on RSS supremo Mohan Bhagwat’s Vijay Dashami speech in their cover stories. The *Organiser* editorial also discusses Bhagwat’s address to the RSS cadre. It notes that “most of the narratives build against Bharat. Especially in English language, create intellectual confusions with the divisive approach, are the direct outcome of not settling our terms right with the cultural context” and adds that Bhagwat’s speech “did exactly” that.

The speech, it says, “generally outlines the challenges before the nation and contextualises the role of the organisation to mitigate the same” and “underscores the need for organising the Hindu society for national rejuvenation”. It mentions “a set of people” who are “hell-bent on proving Bharat as a ‘lynchistan’”. It says that many researchers find the “roots” of the lynching “phenomenon” in Christian Evangelism and Racial War in the US”. The US-based media, it says, “applied their experience to the Bharatiya context and some intellectual picked up the narrative for their political agenda”.

The editorial also explains Bhagwat’s ideas of Swadeshi and the Hindu Rashtra, mentioned in his speech. About the latter, *Organiser* says Bhagwat “provided the most inclusive and clear understanding” of it. It adds that “Hindu is the national identity of Bharat with the essential characteristic of acceptance and respect for all the religious ways, that goes beyond tolerance and everyone should protect and promote the same”.

Organiser has also listed out 20 takeaways from Bhagwat’s speech. Some of these are: Nullification of Article 370 will come to fruition only when justice denied under the influence of Article 370 is restored; success of Chandrayaan 2 in its first attempt; surveillance along maritime border and islands has to be increased for national security; “the effort to create disaffection towards civil discipline and law of the land has to be countered”; “lynching is alien to Bharat” and RSS stands against social violence; “Bharat is Hindustan, Hindu Rashtra” and “media shall come out of sensationalism, focus on creating a constructive atmosphere”.

GANDHI AND RSS

IN THE BACKDROP of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi’s birth, an article in *Organiser* speaks about “Gandhi’s tryst with RSS” trying to counter the idea that the two were against each other. The article states that “despite concerted malicious attempts to mislead him against the RSS, Mahatma Gandhi firmly reiterated his strong

belief in the organisation’s vision and ideals, notwithstanding his differences”.

It says that the “available archival sources reveal that the crusader of anti-colonial struggle Mahatma Gandhi was never a stranger” to the RSS and that the organisation “had been well-aligned with some of the constructive programmes of the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji”. The article mentions that KB Hedgewar, who founded the RSS “commended that Gandhiji was a man who was always willing to sacrifice everything for his ideals”.

There were some misgivings between some members of the Congress and RSS though, the article states, but adds that Gandhi “expressed that he was well impressed by their discipline, complete absence of untouchability and rigorous simplicity”.

The piece later adds that “shockingly, Gandhiji revealed that all the misgivings in the recent past had come to him from Congressmen like Dhebar Bhai” and he “understood that the Hindus were not happy as Dhebar Bhai was (trying to) protect the Muslims and their properties”. Also, it says that the “repeated allegations by the Congress, and the Muslim League about the RSS shunted Mahatma Gandhi into a state of utter confusion and bewilderment”.

LAWLESS BENGAL

THE “BARBARIC KILLING” of RSS volunteer Bandhuprakash Pal along with his eight-year-old son and his pregnant wife in the

Kashiganj area of the Jiaganj thana of Murshidabad district reveals that the “law and administration in West Bengal are out of control,” *Panchajanya* writes in its latest editorial. It says that it is not yet clear why the family was murdered, but the attitude of the police shows that even such “heinous incidents” cannot break the laziness of the administration.

A series of such incidents, the editorial says, are witness to the violent intolerance thriving under Mamata Banerjee’s government, which starts sharpening its knives at the mention of “Bharat-Bharat Mata, Ram-Durga, Sangh-BJP”. It asks if it is a mere coincidence that the state whose chief minister challenges kids who are taking Ram’s name, is the same state a 24-year old was killed for shouting “Jai Shree Ram”. The editorial then mentions several other incidents in which it alleges that people have been killed for openly wearing Hindu symbols. It says that the local media reports on such incidents with some apprehension, but those “who call themselves the mainstream media” are hesitant to question the deteriorating situation in the state.

The editorial asks that while there are nation-wide protests on mob-lynchings, but when such an incident happens in West Bengal then “why are the lips of the secular community sealed? Why is only that community questioning mob lynching that is continuously victimised by it?”

Compiled by Krishn Kaushik



TELLING NUMBERS

Blindness and visual impairment in India, district by district

THE NATIONAL Blindness & Visual Impairment Survey India 2015-2019, released last week, looks at district-wise prevalence of blindness and visual impairment. The survey randomly identified 31 districts with a sample size of about 93,000, among whom 18,000 were less than 50 years of age. Among those aged 50 and above, the focus of the study, prevalence of blindness is lowest in Thrissur district of Kerala (1.08%) while that of visual impairment is lowest in Thoubal in Manipur (7.3%). Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh has the highest prevalence in both categories, at 3.67% and 21.82%, respectively. In low prevalence of blindness, Thrissur is followed by North Goa, Khera (Punjab) and Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu).

The report found that the prevalence of blindness is highest among those who are at least 80 years old (11.6%). Untreated cataract is the main cause of blindness, at 66.2% and also the foremost cause of severe visual impairment, at 80.7% of all cases. Corneal opacity, cataract surgical complications and some posterior segment disorders are some of the other causes of blindness. As per the survey, prevalence of blindness has reduced by 47.1% compared to the baseline levels of 2010.

The survey, planned by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, was released by Health Minister Harsh Vardhan. The Dr Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi, planned and executed the field work, analysis and report writing.

PREVALENCE OF BLINDNESS, AGE 50 OR MORE

LOWEST 5	
Thrissur (Kerala)	1.08
North Goa	1.13
Khera (Punjab)	1.15
Virudhunagar (TN)	1.18
Thoubal (Manipur)	1.23
HIGHEST 5	
Bijnor (UP)	3.67
Warangal (Telangana)	3.47
Nalbari (Assam)	3.03
Guna (MP)	2.98
Sikar (Rajasthan)	2.81

PREVALENCE OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT, AGE 50 OR MORE

LOWEST 5	
Thoubal (Manipur)	7.30
North Goa	8.91
Thrissur (Kerala)	9.88
Chikmagalur (Karnataka)	10.19
Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh)	10.36
HIGHEST 5	
Bijnor (UP)	21.82
Warangal (Kerala)	20.31
Nayagarh (Odisha)	17.88
Birbhum (W Bengal)	17.39
Janjgir-Champa (Chhattisgarh)	17.05

All figures in per cent.

Source: National Blindness & Visual Impairment Survey India 2015-2019

THIS WORD MEANS

MICROBIAL FUEL CELLS

The technology that enabled a fern at London Zoo to take its own selfies. How does it work?



Pete the fern with equipment installed.

Source: Zoological Society of London

other hand, plants can survive in the shade, naturally moving into position to maximise the potential of absorbing sunlight.

The ground-breaking solution was enabled by ultra low-powered technology created by US AI company Xnor.ai. It works around the clock on any device while consuming such low energy that it can be powered by a small plant.

Pete's delicate leaves and shiny stalks are clearly visible in the images. "Pete has surpassed our expectations and is currently taking a photo every 20 seconds - he's been working so well we've even accidentally photobombed him a few times!" Davies said.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 15

ON SUNDAY, Kurdish forces who had until recently been America's allies against both the Islamic State and President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, announced an agreement with the Damascus regime, which is backed by Moscow and Tehran, the United States' two great rivals in the region. This happened after President Donald Trump abruptly pulled US forces out of Syria, leaving Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to simply cross the border into Syria, pummel Kurdish positions, and take over Kurdish-held territory.

The developments mark a remarkable turn in the long-running conflict in Syria. Trump's action, seemingly an effort to end America's overseas wars ahead of his 2020 re-election bid, greatly helps Turkey, Assad, Russia and Iran — and possibly, the battered but still-potent Islamic State. With the US out of the picture, the Kremlin is now seen to be the major player in negotiations between the Kurds, Assad, and Erdogan.

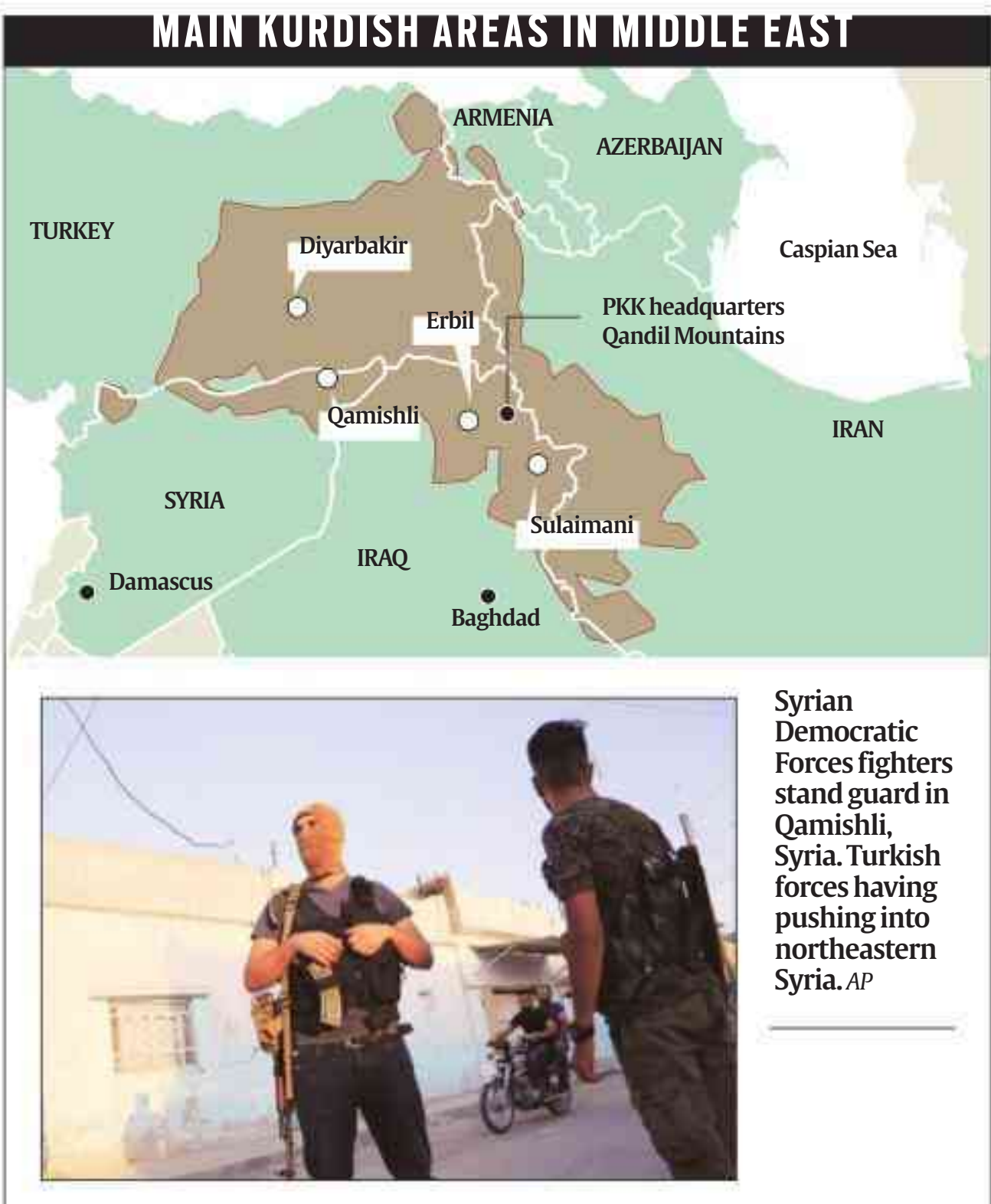
Why is Turkey attacking the Syrian Kurds? Who are the Kurds to begin with, and why are the crucial to this complex war?

An old culture, stateless people

The Kurds are the world's largest stateless ethnic group. There are an estimated 25 million to 35 million of them — numbers that are broadly comparable to those of Assam, Jharkhand, Kerala, and Telangana, as well as of Canada and Australia. They live in the highlands of southern and eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, the northeastern Syria, northwestern Iran, and parts of south Armenia, and are a minority in each of these countries. Small communities live in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, and eastern Iran as well.

Kurdish nationalists claim a history going back 2,500 years, but they became identifiable as a distinct community only in the 7th century, when most tribes in the area adopted Islam. The majority among the Kurdish people today are Sunni Muslim, but there are adherents of other faiths too, including Sufism and other mystical practices.

They speak a language that is related to Persian and Pashto, although local dialects differ. Kurmanji, which most Kurds in Turkey speak, uses the Latin script; the other widely spoken Kurdish dialect, Sorani, is written in the Arabic script. Kurds have long had a reputation for being fearless fighters, and they



Syrian Democratic Forces fighters stand guard in Qamishli, Syria. Turkish forces having pushing into northeastern Syria. AP

have served as mercenaries in many armies over the centuries. The mediaeval warrior Saladin, founder of the Ayyubid dynasty that replaced the Fatimids in Egypt and ruled over large parts of the Middle East in the 12th and 13th centuries, was of Kurdish ethnicity.

Quest for a elusive homeland

Their numbers, and distinct cultural and ethnic identity notwithstanding, the Kurdish people have never had their independent national homeland. At the Versailles peace conference after World War I, the Kurdish Ottoman diplomat Mehmet Sherif Pasha proposed borders of a new Kurdistan that covered parts of modern Turkey, Iraq, and Iran; however, the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which partitioned the old Ottoman domin-

ions, marked out a much smaller territory, entirely in what is now Turkey. Turkey negotiated with the Allied powers and, in 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne overtook Sèvres and ended the idea of a self-governing Kurdistan.

Over the decades that followed, the Kurds made repeated attempts at establishing a *de facto* Kurdistan with defined national borders — and in the process attracted massive Turkish repression, including bans on the Kurdish language, names, songs, and dress. In Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Chemical Ali attacked them with chemical weapons, and in Iran, their uprisings of the 1980s and 1990s were crushed.

In 1978, the Marxist revolutionary Abdullah Öcalan formed the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê or PKK in Kurdish) with the aim of setting up an

The link ED alleges between Praful Patel, Mirchi

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN MUMBAI, OCTOBER 15

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has alleged financial links between the family of Dawood Ibrahim aide Iqbal Mohammed Memon (popularly known as Iqbal Mirchi) and NCP leader Praful Patel.

What is the link alleged by the ED?

Patel's firm Millennium Developers Pvt Ltd developed Ceejay House in Worli, Mumbai, in 2006-07. The ED has alleged that the third and fourth floors, about 14,000 sq ft, were transferred to Iqbal Mirchi's wife Hazra Iqbal Memon in 2007 "towards beneficial interest of Mirchi in the land". It has alleged that the sale of the land to Millennium was "through dubious means" and the proceeds were "laundered" by Mirchi through "fake" bank accounts. Praful Patel and his wife Varsha Patel are shareholders in Millennium. On Tuesday, Praful Patel denied any deal with Mirchi.

How did Hazra Iqbal Memon come to own the property?

In the early 1970s, a person named M K



Ceejay House in Mumbai. Nirmal Harindran

Mohammed had illegally occupied about 1,799.36 sq yards (1,504 sq m) out of the 1,823.53 sq m land — Ceejay House was earlier known as Shriniketan — and built a restaurant called Gurukripa, records show. In 1980,

the co-owners of the land filed a case against Mohammed in the Bombay High Court, which appointed D B Khade as the court receiver to institute a suit against Mohammed, seeking the title and possession of the land. In 1988, Mohammed and the receiver reached a settlement. Mohammed was ordered to pay Rs 7 lakh to the co-owners as full and final payment for the property. In return he was to be declared sole owner of the disputed portion of 1,504 sq m. Interestingly, even as the case was on, Mohammed in 1986 sold the rights to the land to Hazra Iqbal for Rs 9 lakh.

While the ED suspects that Mohammed had links to Mirchi, it has not been established yet. The ED is investigating this and officers said they are in the process of obtaining documents and witness statements.

What happened after the settlement?

In 1999, one of the co-owners of the land, Lalben M Patel, filed a case against Hazra Iqbal Memon, challenging the High Court order that had made Mohammed the owner of the disputed portion. Subsequently, a settlement was reached between Lalben M Patel and Hazra Iqbal Memon, who paid Rs 7 lakh to the court receiver as per the High Court or-

der of 1988 and gave an undertaking to vacate the property. In return, the co-owners agreed to create a tenancy in favour of Hazra Iqbal Memon for 14,000 sq ft carpet area on the third and fourth floors, at a monthly rent of Rs 10,000. The co-owners also agreed before the court that if the building was ever converted to ownership after the formation of a co-operative society, Hazra Iqbal Memon's tenancy would be converted into ownership too, as applicable with other existing tenants.

In 2006, the co-owners of Shriniketan Building entered into a development agreement with Millennium Developers. Millennium accepted the liability of the co-owners to give 14,000 sq ft carpet area including parking spaces in Ceejay House to Hazra Iqbal Memon. In February 2007, Millennium executed a registered deed of confirmation with Hazra Iqbal Memon and her sons. For payment of stamp duty and registration charges, the valuation of the 14,000 sq ft, which was transferred to Hazra Iqbal Memon, was shown as Rs 1.13 crore.

Currently, while Hazra Iqbal Memon owns 60 per cent rights in this area, she has given 20 per cent each to her sons Asif Iqbal Memon and Junaid Iqbal Memon. All of them live abroad.

independent Kurdistan. PKK guerrillas fought the Turkish army from 1984 until Öcalan's capture in 1999, during which some 40,000 Kurdish civilians were killed. Sporadic terrorist attacks continued until 2013, when the PKK declared a ceasefire. This collapsed when Turkey joined the war against the Islamic State in 2015 and started to bomb PKK targets in Iraq.

Islamic State, Assad, the US
As the Islamic State swept across Syria and Iraq, the only fighters who were able to resist the onslaught were the Syrian Kurdish militias, the most powerful of which was the People's Protection Units, known by its Kurdish initials, YPG. The Kurds, who lived mostly along Syria's border with Turkey, had begun an armed defence of their areas after the civil war started in 2011-12. In 2014, as the US joined the war against Da'esh, it found in the YPG a helpful regional ally. From the US perspective, the Kurds also served as a military counterpoint against the Iranians and Russians, and provided some leverage in a future deal to end the war.

Once the Kurds, backed by the Americans, had forced Daesh out of northern Syria, they took over the re-captured land along the Syria-Turkey border, home mainly to ethnic Kurds, Arabs, and some other groups. The YPG has close links with the PKK, and for Erdogan's regime, this seemed like a serious security threat. For the US, the problem was of balancing decades-old hostilities and suspicion between its two allies — Turkey was part of NATO and an ally against Assad; the Kurds had just helped defeat the Islamic State at the cost of losing over 11,000 fighters.

On the nudging of the Obama administration, the Syrian Kurdish militia sought to cover its links with the Turkish guerrillas, changed its name to Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and started to enlist larger numbers of non-Kurdish fighters. By 2016, the Americans were guessing that some 40% of SDF fighters belonged to non-Kurd ethnicities. The US also worked to keep the peace on the Turkish border, carrying out patrols both on its own, and jointly with the Turkish army.

But earlier this month, Trump decided to withdraw forces from Syria — an idea he had had in 2018 as well, but had been thwarted. He informed Erdogan on October 6, and within three days, on October 9, Turkey and its Syrian Arab allies launched an assault on Kurdish-held territory in Syria. Americans troops are now on the way out, and even though Trump has issued dramatic warnings to Erdogan, the Turkish attacks on the Kurds continue.

Why is there no mathematics Nobel? The theories, the facts, the myths

KABIR FIRAQUE NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 15

EVERY NOBEL season, which has just ended with the award of the Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, one question keeps popping up. Why is there no Nobel Prize for mathematics?

Researchers have looked for answers, and the generally accepted theory is that the idea of such a prize never occurred to Alfred Nobel. One popular myth they discount is that Nobel disliked mathematicians because one of them had an affair with his wife — for, Nobel never married. Others claim that Nobel kept mathematics away from his list for fear that it would be awarded to the Swedish mathematician Gösta Mittag-Leffler, who allegedly had an affair with Sophie Hess, a Viennese with whom Nobel himself had a relationship. Scholars dismiss

this too; the evidence does not add up.

How he chose the five fields

In 1888, a French obituary described Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, him as the "Merchant of Death". The newspaper had made a mistake: the man who had died was Ludvig Nobel, brother of Alfred (1833-1896). It upset Alfred Nobel, who hoped his real obituary would not include the words "Merchant of Death" — and thus the idea of setting up the Prizes, University of Michigan mathematician Lizhen Ji wrote in the journal *Notices of the International Congress of Chinese Mathematicians* in 2013.

Nobel chose Physics and Chemistry because he was a scientist himself. Physiology or Medicine, because he was a healthy man and valued progress in medicine, Ji wrote. Literature, because he himself had written plays and poems in his youth. And Peace, because, according to Ji, he hoped the Prize

would one day be awarded to the Baroness Bertha von Suttner, another woman with whom Nobel once had a relationship. Eventually, she did win the Peace Nobel for her novel *Lay Down Your Arms* — in 1905, some years after Nobel's death.

Awards for maths

"For natural reasons, the thought of a prize in mathematics never entered Nobel's mind," wrote the mathematicians Lars Gårding and Lars Hörmander in one of the definitive research works on the subject, published in *Mathematical Intelligencer* in 1985. Ji referred to their findings that Nobel did not use much mathematics in his work or business, and did not enjoy mathematics either.



Alfred Nobel

mathematics alongside other fields.

The Nobel Prize in various fields has recognised mathematicians and mathematics-related work on some occasions. Bertrand Russell won it for Literature in 1950, Max Born and Walter Bothe won the Physics

Prize in 1954 for statistical work in quantum mechanics, and the legendary mathematician John Nash shared the 1994 Economics Prize for his work on game theory.

Busting the myth

Ian Stewart, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at the University of Warwick, writing of theories about the absence of a mathematics Nobel in *Professor Stewart's Cabinet of Mathematical Curiosities*, noted that there is no evidence to connect the mathematician Mittag-Leffler with Sophie Hess.

"Other suggested reasons for enmity between the two men (Nobel and Mittag-Leffler) also fall apart when confronted with reality," Stewart told *The Indian Express*, by email. In his book, he referred to the work of Gårding and Hörmander, who had noted that in 1965, when Nobel left Sweden to live in Paris, Mittag-Leffler was a young student, which would mean that there was little op-

portunity for the two men to interact.

"The truth is that although Mittag-Leffler was a competent mathematician, he wasn't good enough to have a chance of winning such a prize. He would have been competing against a star-studded field. Nobel might not have known that, but his advisors would surely have told him," Stewart told *The Indian Express*.

"In any case, it's a silly question. Nobel didn't set up a prize for geology, archaeology, engineering, painting, sculpture, music — or football, for that matter. Not to mention hundreds of other areas of human activity. It would have bankrupted even him to cover everything," he said.

Stockholm has an institute for mathematical research named after Mittag-Leffler. One of its first employees was the Russian Sonya Kowalevski who, according to Ji's paper, had many admirers, including Alfred Nobel. She happened to be a mathematician.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 206

ऋण माफी का संकट

राजनीतिक दल कुछ राज्यों के विधानसभा चुनाव से पहले एक बार फिर किसानों को लुभाने में जुट गए हैं। उदाहरण के लिए कांग्रेस ने हरियाणा और महाराष्ट्र में किसानों का कर्ज माफ करने का वादा किया है। वहीं सत्ताधारी भारतीय जनता पार्टी ने हरियाणा में ब्याज रहित ऋण देने की घोषणा की है। महाराष्ट्र में पार्टी पहले ही ऋण माफी कर

चुकी है।

कर्ज माफी के पीछे सीधे तौर पर राजनीतिक कारण होते हैं और कहा जा सकता है कि इनसे कर्ज का बोझ कम होता है और किसान निवेश करने में सक्षम होते हैं जो भविष्य में उत्पादकता बढ़ाने वाला साबित होता है। लेकिन कर्ज माफी एक किस्म का नैतिक संकट पैदा करती है और

कर्ज लेने वालों में डिफॉल्ट की प्रवृत्ति को बढ़ावा देती है। समाचार पत्र की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक कृषि क्षेत्र की सकल गैर निष्पादित परिसंपत्ति (जीएनपीए) एक लाख करोड़ रुपये का आंकड़ा पार कर चुकी है। इस क्षेत्र को दिए गए कुल ऋण के अनुपात के रूप में जीएनपीए की हिस्सेदारी अब 11 फीसदी है और बीते दो वर्ष में यह 30 फीसदी बढ़ा है।

ऐसे समय में जब औद्योगिक क्षेत्र में बैंकिंग व्यवस्था बड़े हुए एनपीए से जूझ रही है तब किसानों के फंसे कर्ज में इजाफा वित्तीय क्षेत्र की दिक्कतों को बढ़ाने का काम ही करेगी। संभव है कि कृषि क्षेत्र के कुछ कर्जदारों ने विभिन्न वजहों से डिफॉल्ट किया हो, मसलन कम उत्पादन मूल्य आदि लेकिन

इस बात के भी प्रमाण हैं कि कर्ज माफी ने ऋण संस्कृति को प्रभावित किया है। भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के कृषि ऋण की समीक्षा करने वाले आंतरिक कार्य समूह ने दर्शाया है कि 2017-18 और 2018-19 में ऋण माफी की घोषणा करने वाले सभी राज्यों में एनपीए का स्तर बढ़ा है। अन्य राज्यों में या तो कोई खास अंतर नहीं आया या फिर एनपीए गिरा है। इस संदर्भ में रिपोर्ट कहती है इससे नैतिक संकट की मौजूदगी का संकेत मिलता है क्योंकि लोग कर्ज माफी की उम्मीद में जानबूझकर डिफॉल्ट कर रहे हैं।

कर्ज माफी न केवल बैंकों के लिए संकट खड़ा कर रही है बल्कि यह कर्जदारों और सरकार के लिए भी दिक्कतदेह है। यह ऋण प्रवाह को बाधित करती है क्योंकि बैंक उन

राज्यों में किसानों को कर्ज देने के अनिच्छुक हैं जहां अतीत में कर्ज माफी की घोषणा की जा चुकी है। ऋण प्रवाह में कमी किसानों को प्रभावित कर सकती है और उन्हें कहीं अधिक ऊंची दर पर अन्य स्रोतों से ऋण लेना पड़ सकता है। इसके अलावा हालांकि ऋण माफी का क्रियान्वयन एक अंतराल में होता है लेकिन यह सरकार की वित्तीय स्थिति को प्रभावित करती है। आरबीआई के अनुमान के अनुसार 2017-18 में राज्यों के राजस्व व्यय में आए विचलन में करीब एक तिहाई के लिए भी ऋण माफी को उत्तरदायी माना जा सकता है। चूंकि सरकार के पास सीमित राजकोपीय गुंजाइश है, ऋण माफी से राज्य की निवेश क्षमता प्रभावित होती है। इसमें कृषि क्षेत्र का निवेश भी

शामिल है। इसका असर उत्पादकता पर पड़ सकता है।

समेकित स्तर पर देखें तो चूंकि ऋण माफी से व्यवस्थागत रूप से कोई लाभ नहीं मिलता है इसलिए इससे बचा जाना चाहिए। इतना ही नहीं यह कृषि क्षेत्र की बुनियादी समस्या को भी नहीं हल करती। उसके लिए व्यापक सुधारों की आवश्यकता है। बहरहाल, कहने की आवश्यकता नहीं कि किसानों की सहायता का अधिक बेहतर तरीका प्रत्यक्ष नकदी हस्तांतरण है जिसे केंद्र सरकार तथा कुछ राज्यों ने अपनाया भी है। इसका एक लाभ यह भी है कि ऐसी योजनाएं अधिक से अधिक किसानों को बैंकिंग के दायरे में लाती हैं और उन्हें अधिक अनुकूल शर्तों पर ऋण पाने का पात्र बनाती हैं।



अजय मोहंती

चीन का उत्थान और उसकी चुनौतियां

राजनीतिक वैधता के लिए उच्च आर्थिक वृद्धि दर पर निर्भर शासन व्यवस्था के लिए मौजूदा आर्थिक सुस्ती बड़ी समस्या बनकर उभरी है। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं **हर्ष वी पंत**

चीन में कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के शासन के 70 वर्ष पूरे होने का जश्न पूरे शानो-शौकत से मनाया गया। इस मौके पर सैन्य टुकड़ियों एवं हथियारों की परेड के साथ चीन ने अपनी बढ़ती ताकत का प्रदर्शन किया। हाइपरसोनिक ड्रोन एवं अंतर-महाद्वीपीय बैलिस्टिक मिसाइलें भी प्रदर्शित की गईं। चीन के रक्षा मंत्रालय के मुताबिक, इस परेड में 15,000 सैन्य जवानों के साथ 580 सैन्य उपकरणों एवं 160 विमानों ने हिस्सा लिया। चीन में साम्यवादी शासन के संस्थापक माओत्से तुंग की तरह ताकतवर एवं प्रभावी स्थान हासिल कर चुके चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी चिनफिंग ने इस मौके पर ऐसा भाषण दिया जो आंतरिक के साथ-साथ विश्व समुदाय को भी संबोधित था। माओ ने 1 अक्टूबर, 1949 को जहां से चीनी जनवादी गणराज्य की स्थापना की घोषणा की थी, वहीं पर खड़े होकर शी ने कहा, ‘इस महान राष्ट्र का स्तब्ध डिगाने की ताकत किसी के भी पास नहीं है। कोई भी ताकत चीनी अवािम एवं राष्ट्र को आगे बढ़ने से नहीं रोक सकती है।’

वैसे माओ की विरासत अब भी विवाद का विषय है क्योंकि सत्ता पर कब्जा करने के उनके ‘ग्रेट लीप फॉरवर्ड’ अभियान के दौरान लाखों लोग मारे गए थे। इसके अलावा

समुचा चीन कई वर्षों तक चली सांस्कृतिक क्रांति के दौरान हिंसा की चपेट में रहा था। माओ के 1976 में निधन के बाद शासन की बागडोर संभालने वाले तंग श्याओ फिंग ने आर्थिक सुधारों का सिलसिला शुरू किया था जिसे आज के समय में वैश्विक आर्थिक महाशक्ति के रूप में चीन के नाटकीय उदय के लिए श्रेय दिया जाता है। गत चार दशकों में चीन ने व्यापक बाजार सुधार किए हैं जिसके फलस्वरूप उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था को लेकर बाकी दुनिया के लिए खुल गए और करोड़ों लोग गरीबी के दलदल से बाहर आ सके। बड़ी चुनौतियों के बीच एक राष्ट्र के उदय की यह उल्लेखनीय कहानी बताती है कि दुनिया के निर्धनतम देशों में शुमार देश आज वैश्विक आर्थिक एजेंडा तय करने की हैसियत में आ खड़ा हुआ है।

चीन ने आज अपने वैश्विक आर्थिक विकास के अगले चरण पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया हुआ है। इसके लिए उसने ‘बेल्ट एवं सड़क पहल’ के रूप में वैश्विक ढांचा एवं संपर्क का महत्वाकांक्षी नजरिया दुनिया के समक्ष रखा है। इस पहल को लेकर गहरा विवाद बना हुआ है और इसे कई चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है लेकिन इस बात से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है कि इसने संपर्क के मुद्दे पर वैश्विक विमर्श को ही

बदलकर रख दिया है। इसके चलते बड़ी शक्तियों को भी अपना वैकल्पिक प्रस्ताव रखने का वादा करते हुए कहा कि इस व्यापारिक शहर को आंशिक स्वायत्तता देने वाला ‘एक देश, दो व्यवस्था’ का राजनीतिक ढांचा बना रहेगा। चीनी सत्ता को अब तक यह साफ भी चुका होगा कि शी की यह प्रतिबद्धता अब हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में कारगर नहीं रह गई है। विवादास्पद प्रत्यर्पण विधेयक को लेकर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में शुरू हुए सत्ता-विरोधी प्रदर्शन कहीं बड़ा दायरा बना चुके हैं। और चीन के साथ भावी प्रावधान तय करने में अब इस गुस्से की केंद्रीय भूमिका होगी। जब चीन अपनी साम्यवादी सत्ता की वर्गागत मना रहा था तो हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में पुलिस गोलीबारी में एक किशोर की मौत के बाद हालात बदतर हो गए।

चीन जहां अपने राजनीतिक विकास में हासिल बड़े मुकाम का जश्न मना रहा है वहीं उसके नेतृत्व को घरेलू एवं वैश्विक स्तर पर पिछले कुछ वर्षों में तेजी से बदले हालात का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। चीन के उदय की भावी राह इस बात से तय होगी कि इन चुनौतियों का सामना कितनी बखूबी से किया जाएगा?

(*लेखक किंग्स कॉलेज लंदन के रक्षा अध्ययन विभाग में प्रोफेसर हैं*)

हैं। ट्रंप प्रशासन ने वैश्विक व्यवस्था में चीन को समाहित करने को लेकर वॉशिंगटन में बनी दशकों पुरानी राजनीतिक सहमति त्याग दी है। अब यह विभिन्न स्तरों पर चीन के साथ तनातनी की मुद्रा में है। सबसे बड़ी समस्या कारोबार के क्षेत्र में है जहां दुनिया के दो सर्वाधिक ताकतवर देशों के बीच व्यापार युद्ध जोर पकड़ता जा रहा है। इससे चीन की अर्थव्यवस्था को भी चोट पहुंची है और उसकी वृद्धि दर में गिरावट आई है। अपनी राजनीतिक वैधता के लिए जनता को उच्च आर्थिक वृद्धि देने पर लंबे समय से निर्भर राजनीतिक व्यवस्था के लिए यह एक बड़ी समस्या है।

रणनीतिक स्तर पर चीन को विस्तारित हिंद-प्रशांत क्षेत्र में अब तगड़े प्रतिरोध का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। इस क्षेत्र में क्षेत्रीय शक्तियां चीन के आक्रामक तेवरों का मुकाबला करने के लिए नए गठबंधन बना रही हैं। एक जैसी सोच रखने वाले देश हिंद-प्रशांत में चीन के उभार को काबू में रखने के लिए एक नया सुरक्षा ढांचा खड़ा करना जरूरी मान रहे हैं। भले ही एक औपचारिक व्यवस्था के आकार लेने में वक्त लगेगा लेकिन अनौपचारिक गठबंधन तेजी से बढ़ रहे हैं और आज मुद्दा-आधारित गठबंधन सामान्य हो चुके हैं। यह साफ है कि चीन के हठधर्मी रवैये को चुनौती का सामना करना होगा।

शायद चीन के लिए सबसे अहम अपने केंद्रीय हितों से जुड़ी वे समस्याएं हैं जिन्हें संभाल पाना भारी पड़ रहा है। शिनच्यांग क्षेत्र में उइगर अल्पसंख्यकों के साथ चीनी सत्ता का बरताव दुनिया भर में आलोचना का मुद्दा बन रहा है। पड़ोसी ताइवान में भी चीन की मंशा को लेकर अविश्वास बढ़ रहा है और वहां पर चीन-विरोधी राजनीतिक नेतृत्व को समर्थन बढ़ता जा रहा है। उधर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में चीन को थ्येन आन मन संहार के बाद पहली बार ऐसे संकट का सामना करना पड़ रहा है।

शी ने अपने संबोधन में हॉन्ग कॉन्ग की दीर्घकालिक समृद्धि एवं स्थायित्व बनाए रखने का वादा करते हुए कहा कि इस व्यापारिक शहर को आंशिक स्वायत्तता देने वाला ‘एक देश, दो व्यवस्था’ का राजनीतिक ढांचा बना रहेगा। चीनी सत्ता को अब तक यह साफ भी चुका होगा कि शी की यह प्रतिबद्धता अब हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में कारगर नहीं रह गई है। विवादास्पद प्रत्यर्पण विधेयक को लेकर हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में शुरू हुए सत्ता-विरोधी प्रदर्शन कहीं बड़ा दायरा बना चुके हैं। और चीन के साथ भावी प्रावधान तय करने में अब इस गुस्से की केंद्रीय भूमिका होगी। जब चीन अपनी साम्यवादी सत्ता की वर्गागत मना रहा था तो हॉन्ग कॉन्ग में पुलिस गोलीबारी में एक किशोर की मौत के बाद हालात बदतर हो गए।

चीन जहां अपने राजनीतिक विकास में हासिल बड़े मुकाम का जश्न मना रहा है वहीं उसके नेतृत्व को घरेलू एवं वैश्विक स्तर पर पिछले कुछ वर्षों में तेजी से बदले हालात का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। चीन के उदय की भावी राह इस बात से तय होगी कि इन चुनौतियों का सामना कितनी बखूबी से किया जाएगा?

(*लेखक किंग्स कॉलेज लंदन के रक्षा अध्ययन विभाग में प्रोफेसर हैं*)

सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के मामले में मोदी सरकार का तरीका समस्यापरक

नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार के अपने प्रशासकीय नियंत्रण वाली सार्वजनिक इकाइयों के साथ कार्य-व्यवहार के कई स्तर हैं। मसलन, भारतीय रेल संघगत करीब 250 केंद्रीय सार्वजनिक संगठनों में इक्विटी डालने का इसका फैसला। मोदी सरकार ने अपने कार्यकाल के पहले पांच वर्षों में इन उपक्रमों में इक्विटी के तौर पर करीब 6.26 लाख करोड़ रुपये डाले। यह राशि मनमोहन सिंह सरकार के समय 2009-10 से लेकर 2013-14 के दौरान सार्वजनिक इकाइयों में डाली गई इक्विटी का करीब तिगुनी थी।

लेकिन सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में डाली गई इक्विटी की संरचना पर करीबी नजर डालें तो थोड़ी अलग तस्वीर उभरकर सामने आती है। मोदी के पहले कार्यकाल में सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों की पूंजी कुल इक्विटी निवेश का करीब 40 फीसदी है। इसमें भारतीय रेल की हिस्सेदारी 33 फीसदी, भारतीय राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग प्राधिकरण (एनएचएआई) की हिस्सेदारी 18 फीसदी और एयर इंडिया की हिस्सेदारी तीन फीसदी है। इस तरह सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की चार इकाइयों का कुल हिस्सा पांच वर्षों में किए गए कुल इक्विटी निवेश का 94 फीसदी रहा है।

दूसरे शब्दों में, करीब 250 सार्वजनिक संगठनों में से केवल चार में ही इतनी इक्विटी डाल दी गई कि बाकी सार्वजनिक इकाइयों में पांच साल के भीतर केवल छह फीसदी राशि यानी 34,931 करोड़ रुपये ही डाले जा सके। लिहाजा अगर आप यह सोच रहे थे कि मोदी सरकार ने सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के सभी संगठनों को इक्विटी आवंटन में सदाशयता दिखाई तो इस पर दोबारा गौर करें। उसने सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की समूची इक्विटी का 94 फीसदी हिस्सा केवल चार इकाइयों में ही बांट दिया। मनमोहन सरकार इक्विटी आवंटन के मामले थोड़ी अधिक लोकतांत्रिक थी। उसने 2009-14 के दौरान सार्वजनिक संगठनों के लिए जो 2.34 लाख करोड़ रुपये का इक्विटी आवंटन किया था उसमें से 45 फीसदी भारतीय रेलवे, 20 फीसदी एनएचएआई, 19 फीसदी सार्वजनिक बैंकों और छह फीसदी एयर इंडिया को दिया गया था। इस तरह इन चार संगठनों के खाते में कुल इक्विटी आवंटन का 90 फीसदी हिस्सा आया था और बाकी 10 फीसदी इक्विटी



दिल्ली डायरी

ए के भट्टाचार्य

बीएसएनएल, एमटीएनएल और एफसीआई जैसे संगठनों की वित्तीय परेशानियां सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के संगठनों के प्रति मोदी सरकार के रवैये को दर्शाती हैं

अन्य सार्वजनिक संगठनों के लिए था। इस संदर्भ में पिछले हफ्ते घटित दो घटनाओं पर खास ध्यान देने की जरूरत है। पहला, सरकार

को इक्विटी निवेश के लिए एनएचएल एवं एमटीएनएल को मुश्किल से उबारने के लिए दूरसंचार मंत्रालय की तरफ से पेश प्रस्ताव पर फिर से सोचने की मुद्रा में दिख रही है। राहत पैकेज पर पुनर्विचार का जाहिर कारण तो इसकी ऊंची लागत ही लग रही

गौर किया जा सकता है। और इन दोनों को बंद करने पर आने वाली लागत अपेक्षाकृत सस्ती पड़ेगी क्योंकि बहुतेरे कर्मचारी सीधी भर्तियों के जरिये इकट्ठा हिस्सा नहीं हैं। एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, कुल कर्मचारियों के महज 10 फीसदी ही सीधी भर्ती के जरिये रखे गए हैं जिनमें बड़ी संख्या तकनीकी पदों की है। इन लोगों को वीआरएस देने पर बहुत लागत नहीं आएगी। बाकी कर्मचारी या तो भारतीय दूरसंचार सेवा

को सौंप दिया जाए। इस नई इकाई को सार्वजनिक- निजी भागीदारी में गठित करना चाहिए और एक समयबद्ध योजना के तहत सरकार को इस कारोबार से पूरी तरह निकल जाना चाहिए।

पिछले हफ्ते की दूसरी घटना सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की कंपनी भारतीय खाद्य निगम (एफसीआई) से संबंधित है। सरकार की तरफ से खाद्यान्न की खरीद करने का जिम्मा एफसीआई के पास ही होता है। अपनी अक्षमता एवं जरूरत से ज्यादा कर्मचारी होने के साथ ही सरकार की तरफ से किए जाने वाले बिल भुगतान में देरी भी इसकी समस्या की वजह है। एफसीआई पर भारी कर्ज का बोझ है, उसने बाजार के अलावा राष्ट्रीय लघु बचत कोष जैसी संस्थाओं से भी उधार लिया हुआ है। इसकी वित्तीय मुश्किलें कम होने का नाम नहीं ले रही हैं क्योंकि सरकार उसके बकाये का भी भुगतान कर रही है।

बीएसएनएल, एमटीएनएल और एफसीआई जैसे संगठनों की वित्तीय परेशानियां सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के संगठनों के प्रति मोदी सरकार के रवैये को दर्शाती हैं। यह प्रवृत्ति इन संगठनों की वित्तीय सेहत के लिए समस्यापरक होने के साथ नुकसानदायक भी है।

कानाफूसी

तत्काल ट्रेन

ऑनलाइन रेलवे टिकटिंग कंपनी आईआरसीटीसी के शेयर सोमवार को शेयर बाजार में दौगुने बिके। जो निवेशक कंपनी के प्रारंभिक निर्गम के दौरान हिस्सेदारी हासिल करने में नाकाम रहे थे, उन्होंने सोमवार को जमकर शेयर खरीदे। कंपनी के आईपीओ को 111 गुना अभिदान मिला। एक शेयर ब्रोकर ने कंपनी के शेयरो के लिए हुई मारा-मारी की तुलना तत्काल टिकट की बुकिंग से की। उन्होंने कहा कि चूंकि कंपनी को इस कारोबार में एकाधिकार और वर्चस्व हासिल है और इंटरनेट आधारित कंपनियों में बहुत अधिक संभावना है इसलिए निवेशकों को लगा कि आईआरसीटीसी की ट्रेन में सवार होना ही बेहतर है। भले ही उन्हें इस ट्रेन का टिकट तत्काल की प्रीमियम दर पर खरीदना पड़ा। गौरतलब है कि कुछ ट्रेनों के टिकट पर प्रीमियम भी लिया जाता है।

राहत की बात

उत्तर प्रदेश में विपक्षी दलों की आपसी तकरार ने उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ को जरूरी राहत मुहैया कराई है। आदित्यनाथ उत्तर प्रदेश में भारतीय जनता पार्टी के सितारा प्रचारकों में शामिल हैं। उनकी सरकार को 11 विधानसभा सीटों पर होने जा रहे विधानसभा उपचुनाव में अपनी पार्टी की जीत का पूरा भरोसा है। यही कारण है कि वह अभी तक इन सीटों के दौरे तक पर नहीं गए हैं। जबकि इसके उलट वह महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में पार्टी के प्रत्याशियों के लिए जमकर प्रचार कर रहे हैं। उत्तर प्रदेश में वह मंगलवार से गुरुवार तक 11 रैलियों को संबोधित करेंगे। राज्य भाजपा ने नेतृत्व का दावा है कि पार्टी सभी 11 सीटों पर आसान जीत हासिल करेगी।



आपका पक्ष

भारत-चीन रिश्ते में भगवान बुद्ध का मार्ग

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी चिनफिंग की दो दिन की अनौपचारिक बातचीत के परिप्रेक्ष्य में हम एक बात पर प्रमुखता से विचार कर सकते हैं कि भगवान बुद्ध दोनों तरफ है। शांति, अहिंसा, प्रेम इस संदेश को तार्किकता से जोड़ते हुए हम एक ऐसे व्यवहार की कल्पना कर सकते हैं जहां दोनों देश मानवता की कसौटी पर खरा उतरें। भारत की सीमाओं से जो तिब्बत की सीमा लगती है आज वह प्रत्यक्ष तौर पर चीन की कम्युनिस्ट सरकार का शासन है। सैन्य अभ्यासों के बढ़ते दौर में दोनों देशों के आपसी संबंधों में संदेह तथा अविश्वास भी है। हम एक विश्व नागरिकता के दौर से गुजर रहे हैं जहां पंछी अपने बसेरों को जजीरों में बंधे हुए नहीं देख सकता। विश्व के सभी समर्थ देश धन शक्ति, ताकत और अपने प्रभाव में निरंतर वृद्धि चाहते हैं। विस्तारवादी नीतियों पर रहकर



हम कैसे हिंदू चीनी भाई-भाई के नारे को बुलंद कर सकते हैं। यहां पर दलाईलामा का एक कथन है कि हम ताकत क्यों चाहते हैं ताकि हम किसी को डरा सकें और यह बुद्ध का दर्शन नहीं है। दलाईलामा इस संदर्भ पर एक सहयोगी विचारधारा की कल्पना करते हुए कहते हैं कि अगर हम किसी की सहायता न कर पाएं तो कोई बात

पिछले दिनों चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी चिनफिंग भारत की दिवसीय यात्रा पर आए थे

नहीं लेकिन कम से कम किसी के कार्य में बाधा तो बिल्कुल नहीं बनना चाहिए। भारत, तिब्बत और चीन तीनों में बुद्ध की एकता एक है, विचारों की शुभता एक है, हमें

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।

संजय दूबे, नई दिल्ली

