Crossed wires

The noise over call tariffs and interconnection usage charges drowned out issues related to customer choice at the India Mobile Congress

NOT FOR PROFIT

NIVEDITA MOOKERJI

A Google search for India Mobile Congress will give out results that are likely to impress you. It's mostly described as the biggest technology and telecom summit in South Asia. Something like the Barcelona meet of this region. But far from it, going by the 2019 edition that ended on Wednesday.

First, many of the captains from the industry were missing. The telecom honchos were indifferent to the New Delhi summit, in sharp contrast to the full-house Barcelona one. If lacklustre participation marked the event in tune with the financial stress in telecom, its 5G theme got diluted by other distractions. From the voices captured from the venue, participants opted to focus on grievances rather than on the strides in technology.

Bringing out the bitter differences within the industry, what took centre stage was how tariffs must go up to improve the health of the sector and why interconnection usage charge (IUC) was an outdated concept. The 5G showcase trials, which were meant to be the dominant subject were sidelined, unless the context was reducing the reserve price of the 5G band for the upcoming auction. In the IUC and tariff war noise, the other contemporary issue that got diluted was the customer choice.

The narrative was around why the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) must not delay phasing out IUC, how the government is working out ways to make the auction attractive, why the industry needs to compete effectively and should Chinese equipment makers like Huawei be part of the 5G play in India. The missing piece of action was customers: Do they need 5G services and why at this point? What are the different needs of urban Indians vis-a-vis the rural ones when it comes to communication technology? Why should they have to pay more for a voice call if Trai doesn't phase out IUC? Is India a country of smartphones or feature phones? And what's the level of quality in the current telecom services?

Before getting into smartphones versus feature phones and India versus Bharat, here's a summary of the IUC, an issue now central to the industry rivals — Bharti and Vodafone Idea (operating on 2G, partly phasing out 3G and 4G platforms) on one side and Reliance Jio (an out and out 4G player) on the other. The issue came alive when last month when Trai floated a consultation paper on whether there's a need to revise the applicable date for the Bill and Keep regime. That is, Trai asked stakeholders whether zero mobile termination charge should come into effect from January 1, 2020, and if yes, what parameters should be adopted to decide the new date.

Interconnection between two public telecommunication networks allows consumers of one service provider to communicate with consumers of the other service provider. Beyond the technicalities lies a commercial arrangement between the operators.

IUC is a cost paid by one mobile telecom operator to another when its customers make outgoing mobile calls to the other operator's customers. These calls between two different networks are known as mobile off-net calls. In 2017, Trai reduced the wireless-to-wireless domestic call termination charge to 6 paise from 14 paise. At that point, it had prescribed the zero termination charge from January 1, 2020, for domestic calls. Jio was seen as a beneficiary of the 2017 regulation, and its rivals moved court. Now that Trai is reviewing the IUC phase-out date, Jio has passed on this charge to the voice calls of its customers. The phase-out of the IUC hinged on the adoption of new technologies and their impact on termination costs as well as on inter-operator off-net traffic symmetry. But a large number of customers are still served by circuit switched networks for voice calls, according to Trai. Although the imbalance in the inter-operator off-net traffic is reducing over a period, it still exists. Therefore, the need for review.

While India is increasingly turning into a smartphone market, the country's feature phone market is still large and growing. According to IDC data, of the total 69.3 million mobile phones shipped to India in the June 2019 quarter, smartphone and feature phone share were 36.9 and 32.4 million units respectively. Also, in the same quarter, the number of 4G data subscribers increased to 517.5 million. But that was just about half the total wireless subscriber base in the country at 1.16 billion in the corresponding period.

Look deeper into urban-rural numbers and the divide is clear. The country's wireless teledensity, the number of phone connections for every 100 individuals living in an area, is 88.5. Of this, urban teledensity is 156.42 and rural is 56.68.

Whether it's assessing the IUC regime or ushering in 5G, the other India is a test case.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Open door policy

In a surprise move, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi on Wednesday ordered that the doors to his courtroom be kept open for the day to let in fresh air. This was after the courtroom was found filled to capacity because it was the last day of hearing in the contentious Ayodhya land title dispute case. The security personnel seated outside the CJI's court had a tough time controlling the crowd as the doors were opened. The doors to the CJI's court are usually kept shut and also have heavy curtains to shut out the noise from the corridors.

A homecoming

It seems that Narayan Tripathi, the rebel Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA in Madhya Pradesh, has lost faith in the Congress. In a *ghar wapsi* of sorts, he landed up at the BJP headquarters on Tuesday and said, "I never left the party. Yes, during the voting on a Bill in the Assembly, I voted against the party. But that was due to some confusion. I thought both the BJP and the Congress were united in their vote but unfortunately that was not the case." He was accompanied by state BJP chief Rakesh Singh when he reached the BJP office to clear the air. Tripathi, along with colleague Sharad Kol, had stunned the party by voting in favour of the Congress government during voting on the Criminal Law (Madhya Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2019, in the Assembly in July. Both have returned to the fold.

Give plastic, get rice

A district collector in Telangana's Muludu district has found a novel way of tackling the problem of plastic waste in the town. On Wednesday, district collector C Narayana Reddy announced that the administration will give one kilogram of rice for every kilogram of plastic returned. "Over the next 10 days, we want to collect all the plastic, clear the place and send the plastic bags to cement factories while the bottles to recycling units," Reddy told a local news channel. Donors including NRIs, local politicians, traders and NGOs have come forward to donate rice. So far 335 quintals (a quintal is 100 kg) of rice have been collected by the district administration in addition to a grant of ₹5 lakh from an NRI. Reddy expects that by October 26, close to 500 quintals of plastic would be handed over at the 174 *gram panchayats* that have been declared as collection points.

Metros on the rocky route of pvt investment

Two failed private metro operations have been taken over by the public sector, yet the private sector remains the sole engine of expansion for this mode of urban transport

JYOTI MUKUL

Some weeks from now, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), a joint venture of the Union and Delhi governments, will be running the operations of 11.7 km metro network in Gurugram, the country's first privately-funded metro system. The two lines of the Rapid Metro Gurgaon are currently owned by the state government-owned Haryana Mass Rapid Transport Corporation (HMRTC), which took them over after the IL&FS group, imploding under a financial scandal, exited on September 9.

This is the second private metro that DMRC has taken over. In 2013, it took over the Delhi Airport Metro Expressline, previously operated by Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra). For the Rapid Metro, a five-year operatorship and management contract will replace the 98-year concession agreements that Rapid Metro Rail Gurgaon Ltd and Rapid Metro Rail Gurgaon South, the special purpose vehicles for the two lines, signed with the Haryana Urban Development Corporation, now called Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP).

These two companies are owned by IL&FS Transportation Network Ltd and IL&FS Rail Limited (IRL). The IL&FS group's exit has resulted in arbitration with the state government under an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

One of the key points that the arbitration will settle is how much debt was raised for the Rs 3,700-crore project. This is crucial since 80 per cent of the debt will have to be paid by the Haryana government to the beleaguered IL&FS companies, under the court order. But before this, the Comptroller and Auditor General along with a private auditor appointed by the Rapid Metro Rail will conduct an audit to ensure that the debt is not inflated. "It is a group where there is an ongoing serious fraud investigation and the erstwhile top management is under probe. Therefore, an audit is important," said a senior Haryana government officer.

TAKE TWO

ANALYSIS BEHIND THE HEADLINES

The collapse of two private metro lines in the National Capital Region point not just to the failure of private companies in infrastructure but also their unwillingness to live through the long gestation projects that could be slow to take off. E Sreedharan, one of the key men in India's metro history, was famously against private metro systems. In an interview with Business Standard in 2011, he said constructing metro systems was highly capital intensive and in themselves they do not generate profit, which is why private sector is not suited for the job.

Both Delhi Airport Metro and Rapid Metro cited poor ridership numbers and advertising revenue to back out from the projects. In the case of the airport line, the situation was made worse by RInfra's allegations of defects in the civil structure that had been put up by DMRC. The line was built under a unique model under which DMRC constructed the civil structure in return for which RInfra had to pay a concession fee.

When private operators exit infrastructure projects, governments try to put assets to use instead of allowing them to decay. So public sector undertakings are asked to pick up the baton. Though operations go on, the collateral damage is that government entities get caught in legal disputes that have financial implications. For instance, DMRC is fighting an arbitration award in the court that entails an outgo of Rs 5,800 crore for it. RInfra had demanded the amount as termination claim. Besides, DMRC is required to service the debt of about Rs 2,940 crore taken by the RInfra-promoted Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited (DAMEPL).

According to DMRC, a number of measures have been adopted since then to improve the efficiency of airport line which include increasing the frequency of trains from 15 to 10 minutes. It also reduced fares after the takeover which led to an immediate increase in ridership, from 10,069 in July 2013 to 58,515 in August 2019.

For the Rapid Metro, the daily ridership estimate was 100,000 but even after the operation of two sections spanning 11.6 km, it is roughly 65,000. When it comes to the financial burden, it is HMRTC that will take on 80 per cent of the project's debt liability.

Under the MoU signed between DMRC and HMRTC, DMRC is only an operator and not the licensee. The Haryana government-owned corporation will give it ₹2.75 crore annually. Another ₹25 crore will be given as handholding support for maintenance besides the actual cost of DMRC employees posted to the project would be reimbursed.

The two failed private sector metro projects raise questions on traffic and cost estimates, but some argue that low cost alternatives to these expensive structures are the only way out. These could either be light rail transit system or high capacity buses especially in smaller cities. The failure of private metros, however, occurred in Gurugram and Delhi, which are both hubs of economic activity with high traffic volumes.

The other alternative is public-private partnerships, such as the 72-km Hyderabad Metro Rail which is operated by Larsen & Toubro. The infrastructure major invested ₹14,000 crore in the project along with viability gap funding from the state. Under an agreement with the state government, the company is allowed to recover 50 per cent of its investment through ticket sales, five per cent through advertisement revenue and 45 per cent through leasing of retail space. The average passenger traffic each day on Hyderabad Metro is around 300,000.

Another example of PPP is the 12-km Mumbai Metro One line in which RInfra holds 69 per cent and Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority holds 26 per cent with the remaining 5 per cent being held by French company Veolia Transport RATP. Nonetheless, these projects built on PPP are yet to cross the point where they could be called successful metros.

Metros developed on PPP mode appear attractive given that the benefits accruing from Delhi's metro rail had led to a clamour for such projects in other cities. But state funding may not be possible, given the restricted fiscal space. This suggests that the future of urban metro projects are in a Catch 22 situation: Despite the spectacular failures of two private metro projects, private investment remains the sole route for expansion.

TRACK PARTNERS

DELHI METRO RAIL CORPORATION
Network: **377 KM**
Operator: JV of Union and Delhi govts

HYDERABAD
Network: **72 KM**
Operator: Larsen & Toubro

CHENNAI
Network: **45 KM**
Operator: JV of Union and Tamil Nadu govt

BENGALURU
Network: **42.3 KM**
Operator: JV of Union and Karnataka govt

MUMBAI METRO ONE
Network: **12 KM**
Operator: JV with RInfra holding 69% equity, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority holds 26%, Veolia Transport 5%

GURUGRAM
Network: **11.7 KM**
Operator: IL&FS group has exited; Now, with Haryana govt

INSIGHT

Creating a unified pension platform

ASHVIN PAREKH

A substantial part of the reforms in the area of old age security have, perhaps, gone unnoticed. The transition of government employees to defined contribution from defined benefits about 15 years ago has been a major reform. During this period, the fund has grown to a sizeable AUM of about ₹3.75 trillion and has more than three crore subscribers. The funds are managed by seven fund managers and its performance, when benchmarked against other comparable mutual funds schemes, has been noticeably good.

Recent reforms, aimed to enroll subscribers from the unorganised sector through government programmes like Atal Pension Yojana, are commendable. The regulators have also formed conducive regulations with tighter controls. One of the unique features of these reforms has been to mobilise, record and manage funds at very low costs per unit of funds under AUM. It might be the lowest globally. Various intermediaries have also contributed to keeping costs under control. They have approached their responsibility with a certain sense of social commitment.

Recent plans announced by the government and the regulator are important steps towards empowering subscribers. A thought weighing on the minds of policy makers now is unifying all pension programmes under one regulator and also create independent trust companies that undertake oversight of the intermediaries. This is a very significant reform aimed at benefitting subscribers. It is a major step in the right direction. The larger funds under their management will provide more room to incentivise intermediation and create more awareness, thus serving the subscribers better. The government and the regulator should perhaps consider possible measures in this direction. This will go a long way in covering the unorganised sector of the economy. The size of the funds offers the system some elbow room to push the pension products as a major alternative instrument for old age security. With adequate fiscal incentives, this can be achieved. In fact, reforms to encourage the lower sections of the economy in the unorganised sector to participate in old age financial security is key to the nation's economic growth.

On evaluation of the various components of the NPS and EPFO architecture, besides other pension programmes such as coal miners' pension, one notices that the cost of record-keeping is huge. It could well be more than half of the total cost. Some reforms around unifying the platforms that render such services would help in taking the financial performance of all the pension programmes to the next higher level of participation and coverage.

An excellent example of this is the unified payment platform offered by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). It is a non-profit entity owned by the banks and offers a platform for a huge amount of transaction switch on a dynamic, real-time basis. It would be one of the most cost effective services when compared with any such platform worldwide. There are some unique features of the system. It is run on a no-profit basis to serve banks and the payment system. The system does not have multiple platforms for switching transactions between banks and customers. The RuPay card has emerged as one of the most successful stories worldwide. The service provided by Indian banks through this has empowered customers considerably. The pillar of this reform is a unified, cost-efficient and system-owned platform run on a no-profit basis.

In conclusion, policy makers and pension regulators could examine five major steps to unify the pension programmes. The first big task would be to create a single regulator and a uniform set of regulation. The fiscal incentives to subscribers, more than what we have presently, would bring the unorganised sector participants to pension programmes. This is the second reform recommended. The third one would be to reduce the cost by creating a unified platform for record-keeping and promotion of pension products, run on a non-profit basis. The fourth major step should be to have the trust companies conduct the awareness programme to equip subscribers to make informed choices. The last major step would be to strengthen the system with adequate risk management skills and introduce more financial asset classes and instruments for risk management.

The author is managing partner, Ashvin Parekh Advisory Services LLP. Views are personal

LETTERS

Safeguard depositors

The middle class toils day and night to save money for future needs and deposits it in banks considering them to be 100 per cent safe. But rich scamsters loot the banks leaving the depositors in the lurch. So there is a dire need to safeguard the bank depositors and increase the deposit insurance to at least ₹50 lakh from the current ₹1 lakh. Banks may pass on the cost of insurance to depositors indirectly. Otherwise, people will stop depositing their life's savings in banks and the banking system will collapse.

A K Gupta Ludhiana

Too much negativity

Apropos Anita Inder Singh's article "Why India lags behind China" (October 16), there are some other pressing reasons that have hindered India's industrial progress vis-à-vis China. True that the style of governance between authoritarian and democratic ones does not matter, but the type of democracy does. India is a flawed democracy in which the ruling party and the Opposition see each other as adversaries rather than as collaborators in achieving national goals. This has led to the "versus complex"— what the government does must be opposed and obstructed. A partisan outlook has replaced judging issues on their merit. These ongoing internal frictions have slowed down the benefits of the new economic policy of 1991 and demographic dividend.

Second, labour productivity continues to be very low. It has less to do with skill gap and more with the role of trade unions. New technology, performance-based career advancement, abolishing unproductive work practices — everything is opposed. The worst example is the banking industry where the rise in non-performing assets is accompanied by rise in wages.

Third, India remains a corrupt country, the claims of the Narendra Modi government notwithstanding. We rank among the lowest in that respect globally. This has led to higher costs of projects, poor quality of output and underutilisation of capital.

Y G Chouksey Pune

Preposterous demands

This refers to "Telangana bus strike: HC tells TSRTC employees, govt to hold talks" (October 16). That two employees of the Telangana Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) have committed suicide following the tough stand taken by the state government to dismiss over 48,000 striking employees is most unfortunate. However, the demands of the employees are not reasonable either. The fact that they chose to go on strike from October 5 that coincides with the festival season made their intentions abundantly clear — to cause maximum inconvenience to the public and armt-wist the government into acceding to their demands.

The state road transport corporations were formed as government companies to operate on commercial principles and to make profit. When TSRTC has incurred a huge loss of Rs 928 crore for the year ending 2019, the demands of the employees for a pay hike, filling up of vacant posts and converting the corporation into a government department so that the recurrent losses of the corporation would be borne by the exchequer, are all preposterous. The contention that "their demands should be favourably considered as they had wholeheartedly participated in the agitation to form a separate Telangana state" is devoid of merit, as no government can take far-reaching economic decisions on the basis of quid pro quo.

One hopes the advice of the high court has a sobering effect and both parties hold talks to arrive at an early settlement. This will end the agony of the employees, as well as that of the public why use TSRTC buses every day.

V Jayaraman Chennai

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HAMBONE

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Timely policy response

Indian policy establishment needs to build capacity

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday reduced India's growth forecast for the current financial year by 90 basis points (bps) to 6.1 per cent. While the downgrade is substantial, it is not surprising for analysts. The World Bank recently reduced its growth forecast for the Indian economy to 6 per cent. Besides such multilateral institutions, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also has cut its growth forecast for the current financial year from 6.9 per cent to 6.1 per cent. The outlook for the Indian economy changed significantly after the official data showed that growth slipped to a six-year low of 5 per cent in the April-June quarter. The downward revision of growth forecast by international institutions is understandable as they normally go by the figures and assessments Indian government agencies offer them. But what is worrying is that the Indian policy establishment has failed to foresee the sharp slowdown. The Economic Survey, presented in July, forecast 7 per cent growth for the current year. The Union Budget went a step ahead with the assumption of 12 per cent nominal growth. Assuming 4 per cent inflation — which itself is an overestimate — it would have required real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 8 per cent.

Ideally, the slowdown should have been taken into account in the Budget as the economy has been losing momentum for several quarters. The decline in the April-June quarter was not because of an exogenous shock. True, the global economy has also slowed, but this too was not entirely unanticipated. The biggest disadvantage of not being able to read lead indicators is that it makes the policy totally reactive. Proactive policymaking can help minimise the damage. For instance, in the August review of the monetary policy, the RBI reduced its growth projection for the year by 10 bps, along with a cut in the policy repo rate by 35 bps. It was then reasoned that a 50 bps rate cut would have been excessive. However, it had to scale back the growth projection significantly in the October policy. Since monetary policy works with a lag of about two to three quarters, it needs to be more forward looking. The latest World Economic Outlook of the IMF shows that in the absence of monetary stimulus, growth forecast in the global economy would have been lower by 0.5 percentage point, both in 2019 and 2020. The monetary stimulus has thus offset the negative impact of the US-China trade war to an extent. Put differently, large global central banks evaluated the risks associated with the trade war and took pre-emptive action. Even though the efficacy of monetary policy in advanced economies is being debated, this is a good example of how policymaking should be approached.

Lower growth will also put pressure on the government's finances. Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey rightly noted in an interview with this newspaper that if the growth projections are lowered, it will affect the collection of goods and services tax. However, if the government had acknowledged the slowdown, it would have been able to account for revenue and expenditure more judiciously. Therefore, it is important for the Indian policy establishment to build capacity to be able to gauge economic activity, which will help shape a better policy response. As this newspaper has argued in the past, the central bank can work on an aggregate indicator based on incoming information to reduce the dependence on official data, which comes with a lag. This will not only help the RBI in conducting monetary policy but also enable the government to make policy adjustments in time.

FCI's rising debt stock

India's food management system needs a revamp

The growing indebtedness of the Food Corporation of India (FCI), which bodes ill for its financial health, is essentially the consequence of recurrent under-budgeting of food subsidy by the Union government, excessive stockholding and flawed grain procurement and distribution policies. Inadequate provisions for food subsidy in successive Union Budgets in the past few years have been compelling the FCI to borrow from the National Small Savings Fund and other sources. Open-ended grain procurement at the minimum support prices (MSPs) has, on the other hand, caused excessive accumulation of food stocks, requiring needless expenses on their upkeep. Furthermore, the annual increase in the procurement prices without a simultaneous increase in the sale prices has pushed up subsidy on the food grains supplied under the national food security law. The per-kg subsidy at present is estimated at ₹33.10 for rice and ₹24.45 for wheat. Even this year's Budget leaves a gap in the subsidy reimbursement of ₹1.74 trillion, which the FCI has to cover through borrowings. This, together with the previous years' outstanding loans of ₹1.45 trillion, is anticipated to raise the FCI's total debt burden to nearly ₹3.2 trillion at the end of 2019-20. Well-advised reforms in the FCI and the food management system are, therefore, urgently needed.

Several cogent proposals to this effect were mooted by the high-level committee headed by former food minister Shanta Kumar in its report in 2015. It had suggested that the FCI should hand over all procurement operations for wheat and rice to the states, which have developed adequate infrastructure for this purpose. This would allow it to concentrate more on the areas not covered under any price support mechanism, resulting in widespread distress sales. But this sane counsel has gone unheeded. The FCI still picks up grains largely from the same set of states where it has been doing so in the past. This has distorted the cropping pattern, tilting it in favour of cereals at the cost of other food crops that are in short supply and often face price volatility.

The Shanta Kumar committee had also called for carrying out labour reforms in the FCI to bring down the grain handling costs. This recommendation has been implemented only partially and needs to be taken forward without delay. Another critical recommendation that has been totally disregarded pertains to amending the food security law. The committee had favoured a reduction in the population coverage but an increase in the monthly food grain quota of the beneficiaries to make this law truly helpful for the poor. For this, it suggested the population coverage to be curtailed from the present 67 per cent to 40 per cent, which would cover all below-poverty line households, and raising the quota to 7 kg per head, instead of 5 kg, which is inadequate to meet their food needs in full.

Going by the recent indications from Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, the need for revamping at least some aspects of the food management system has finally dawned upon the government. But how far it is willing to go is yet to be seen. Nothing short of radical systemic changes in the FCI and the management of food economy would suffice.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

The price of onions

The right immediate action is inaction. The right preventive action is to get traders to constantly hoard too much

INDIA'S WORLD?

NAUSHAD FORBES

The economist Ashok Desai has a marvellous little book that provides insight into the workings of the Indian economy and the crafting of effective economic policy. He calls it *The Price of Onions*.

Mr Desai shows that a relatively small fall in the onion crop leads to a huge surge in the price of onions. Every student of economics learns in her very first class that supply curves slope up, and demand curves slope down. So when supply falls, the price rises until demand matches supply. Mr Desai explains that for an item like onion, which is widely consumed but makes up a tiny part of the family budget, we need a very large rise (10 times) in the price before we reduce consumption enough (10 per cent). Economists like their language to be as opaque as their theories, so they call this "inelastic demand". A typical year will see onion prices range from ₹3 to ₹30 per kg — as crop patterns change supply against reasonably constant demand.

Mr Desai continues: "Suppose now that you are the minister of civil supplies in the BJP government. The newspapers carry news every day of rocketing onion prices. The Congress is organising demonstrations which draw housewives by the thousand. Coalition partners are threatening to withdraw support unless onion prices are brought down. The Prime Minister is on the phone asking you to do something fast. What would you do?

"Whatever you might do, you cannot increase the output of onions till the next crop comes in. You call in the Secretary. He tells you about your secret weapon — the Essential Commodities Act. This Act gives the government power to compel traders to declare their stocks, to lay down maximum stocks that can be held, and to sequester stocks.... Force is essential; traders would not do these things willingly. Its effectiveness must be doubtful... the consequences must make one pause. For if these measures make traders disgorge stocks, the fall in price that this brings must be temporary. As long as stocks cannot be increased, scarcity can only be relieved now by making it worse later. Supplies can only be shuffled across time, and price rise can only be reduced now by raising it later"

I am quoting at length from Mr Desai's *Price of Onions* because he wrote not this month, as we might think from reading our current headlines, but in 1999, inspired by the rise in onion prices of September-October 1998. India has progressed in these last 20 years. Economic policy-making, and our agricultural policy, must also move on. How?

What caused the current shortage?

Let's come to 2019. Many insightful recent articles, by Ashok Gulati, Harish Damodaran, Shreekant Sambrani and others, tell us what caused the problem: First, very low onion prices (₹3 in January) led some farmers to switch away from onions for their rabi crop. Second, the absence of a seasonal price rise last September-October (prices remained at ₹6-7 per kg) reduced the stocking of onions by farmers and traders. Finally, large-scale flooding this monsoon lessened the onion crop in the three states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh which produce over half of India's onions. Prices soared as a result.

What can the government do?

I ask this question with great hesitation. As a concerned Indian citizen, I worry that we constantly look to the government for solutions to all our problems. The monsoon fails. What is the government doing? Consumers are buying fewer biscuits, *banians* and cars. What's the government doing? And if my worry is that we look too much to the government for solutions, my great fear is that they might actually respond and Do Something. Unless one has solid theoretical and empirical evidence that an action by government will actually help, the right action is inaction. Governments should and can enforce the rule of law, ensure it is fairly applied to every citizen, protect us from our enemies, and invest in widespread health and education for a better future. A government cannot make markets, and when it tries to control how they move, it almost always makes things worse.

So in the short-run, the right action by the government is to do nothing. Let the high price of onions clear the market, matching supply with demand. Let onion growers keep exporting — we are the world's largest onion exporter, export 10 per cent of our production, and must retain the markets we have developed. (By banning the export of onions, we also risk damaging relations with our neighbours in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Our prime ministers surely have more important things to discuss than onions). Equally, encourage traders to import onions from overseas if they can get them cheaper.

In the long-run, the government — and institutions like the Confederation of Indian Industry's Centre of Excellence for Food and Agriculture (FACE) — can help the market for onions work better. Efficient markets rest on an assumption of full and equal information being available to all. FACE could help by sharing information on crop yields and expected shortages. When prices for onions fall to ₹3-4 per kg (as they did in January this year), below the cost of producing them, that is the time to prompt creating a buffer stock — at a price slightly above production cost. Mr Desai, again: "The way to stabilise prices is not by punishing hoarders, but by making them hoard more". If we do nothing, this years bonanza profits will make farmers grow more and traders stock much more next year — thus keeping prices low.

If onion supply-chains seem inefficient (Ashok Gulati and Harsha Wardhan tell us that farmers get only 29 per cent of the consumer's rupee), the solution is not to intervene in pricing but foster greater competition and reduce uncertainty to make supply more efficient. The Lasalgaon *mandi* near Nashik dominates the onion trade in the country. If this concentrates too much power in too few traders, encourage other *mandis* across the country to trade in onions, connecting all *mandis* with networks to transparently share price information. Improved and large-scale cold-storage facilities can make it cheaper to store onions and so reduce price volatility. In other words, make markets work better instead of trying to control how they move. And if such interventions seem too difficult, then do only one thing: Read Ashok Desai's *The Price of Onions* — and Do Nothing.

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The global tarnishing

SWOT

KANIKA DATTA

Tarnishing the image of the country' has become the new buzz-phrase applied to citizens who may express their concerns about India's current social and political trajectory. A subsidiary offence associated with this exercise is to "undermine the impressive performance of the prime minister". Or so a recently withdrawn sedition petition would have us believe. The problem gallant defenders of the prime ministerial faith may face is that, right now, it is the international institutions that are doing the so-called undermining and tarnishing.

Immediately before and after the Xi-Modi Mamallapuram spectacular, three institutions have come up with economic growth projections for India that are far from impressive. Last week, Moody's Investor Service cut its 2019-20 GDP growth forecast from an already modest 6.2 per cent to 5.8 per cent. Its report suggests that India's government has scored own goals. "The drivers of the deceleration are multiple, mainly domestic and in part long-lasting," Moody's report stated.

A day later, the International Monetary Fund's new managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, mentioned India and Brazil, both BRICs champions once upon a time, as the two countries in which the "synchronised slowdown" in the global economy is most pronounced. On Tuesday, the IMF duly trimmed its 2019-20 forecast from 7 per cent to 6.1 per cent. That was preceded by an even more drastic slashing of projections by the World Bank to 6 per cent from an unwarrantedly optimistic 7.5 per cent. ADB and Fitch had also announced downward revisions in FY20 forecasts (7.2 to 6.5 per cent and 6.8 to 6.6 per cent respectively).

That little of this has been greeted with hand-wringing on editorial pages or fulminations on TV shout shows is principally because these institutions are, in a sense, behind the curve. Those who follow these things already know this bad news, since the central bank had cut its forecast from 6.9 per cent to 6.1 per cent and high-frequency indicators had flashed the warnings long before. Belying the untenably optimistic Budget projections, first quarter growth hit a multi-quarter low of 5 per cent and the second quarter is expected to be worse. And Indians who face the impact of slowing growth in their daily lives have already started feeling the impact.

These institutions, which are concerned with arcane numbers, aren't the only ones "tarnishing the image of the country". Over the year, global country rankings that various institutions publish also suggest that Narendra Modi's "impressive performance" may be hard to spot.

Let's consider the recently released Global Hunger Index. India didn't have an impressive ranking on this index to begin with despite an elaborate and expensive Right to Food legislation. But in 2019, India's rank stood at 102, down from 95 in 2010.

This marks a steady deterioration from the 83rd position in 2000. In the spirit of whataboutery that typifies the public discourse these days, it is fair to say that the avowedly pro-poor United Progressive Alliance's performance wasn't impressive either. But it may be recalled that the successor forged to power on the promise of delivering development like never before. When the share of wasting — or low-weight-for-height — rises from 16.5 per cent in 2008-12 to 20.8 per cent in 2014-18 and outstrips Yemen and Djibouti, it is possible to question the veracity of that electoral promise.

Higher education, another sub-set of human development, has been a particular focus of Mr Modi's HRD ministry in a variety of ways. This year, however, saw Indian universities drop out of the top 300 in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings for the first time since 2012.

In overall human development, in fact, the needle has scarcely moved. The country weighed in at 135 out of 188 countries in the UNDP's 2014 Human Development Report. In 2018, it stood at 130 out of 189 countries.

With Make in India, Digital India, and scores of other branded government programmes apparently designed to turn India into an industrial racehorse, the country should have zoomed up the rankings in terms of global perception. But the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index — which relies heavily on the perceptions of global business executives — showed that India had slipped 10 ranks to 68 among 141 countries. This drop was not because it had scored all that poorly but because other peer countries did better.

India did record improvements on three indices that reflect issues high on Mr Modi's radar. The Ease of Doing Business Index (up 53 notches between 2016 and 2018 to 77 among 190 economies), the Global Corruption Index (up three ranks to 78 out of 180 countries in 2018) and the Global Innovation Index (up 29 spots between 2014 and 2019 from 81 to 52 in 129 economies). In the EODB index, some of the sub-indices have made genuinely notable improvements, with three of them figuring in the top 25. But to describe these improvements, which place India in the Mediocre Middle, as an impressive performance would amount to overstatement. And it's the world that's telling us this, not "anti-national" Indians.

Hindutva in foreign policy

BOOK REVIEW

ANITA INDER SINGH

Has Narendra Modi's ideologically inspired foreign policy between 2014 and 2019 been more of a domestic vote winner than a carefully crafted diplomatic strategy that has enhanced India's world role as a force for peace, stability and regional and global prosperity? This important question is raised by Ian Hall, Professor of International Relations at Griffith University, Australia, in his timely book on Mr Modi's foreign policy. For instance, the Pulwama terrorist attack before the 2019 elections worsened relations with Pakistan and probably won Mr Modi more votes in the 2019 general election. But did India's heated response improve its regional or global image?

First and foremost, Mr Hall should correct a serious copy-editing mistake in the Preface so that it does not reappear in subsequent editions of his book. He refers to "India's Congress-led government of Rahul Gandhi, Nehru's grandson...." (p. xii). Presumably, he means Rajiv Gandhi.

Mr Modi's BJP-RSS combine strongly dislikes Jawaharlal Nehru's ideal of secular democratic nationalism. The two intertwined institutions have since long condemned it as a foreign idea and wanted their version of Hindu nationalism to define independent India. They opposed Nehru's "foreign" ideas of official non-interference in religious affairs and of the equality of all religions.

Hindutva appeals to many Hindus, since it offers the prospect of India becoming a world power defined by the Hindu nationalist version of Hindu philosophy. Hindu nationalism has inspired Mr Modi's domestic and foreign policies and shaped his approaches to foreign countries. But the Hindu nationalist concepts through which he outlines India's global role are unfamiliar to foreign countries. So is the Hindi-Sanskritic nationalist vocabulary used by Mr Modi, including *Sanskriti evam sabhyata* (cultural and civilisational dialogue), *shanti* (peace), and *samman* (dignity).

Sections of the Hindu diaspora — especially in the US — may support Mr Modi's version of Hindu nationalism. But how many foreign governments do? Mr Hall could have questioned the extent to which diasporas improve bilateral ties. The Chinese diaspora in the US is larger than the Indian one. Has this translated into good Sino-US ties? Not in the context of President's Trump's trade war against China. Will the Indian diaspora in the US really improve Indo-US ties, especially on trade and strategic issues? Surely national interests decide the nature of bilateral relations?

Mr Modi's many foreign trips have enhanced his domestic image more than his international one. He has done little to change the course of foreign policy. The border disputes with Pakistan and China remain festering sores. Unequal trading ties are, in their different ways, bones of contention with both authoritarian, territorially expansionist China and the friendly, democratic US. And since the book went to press, so is the revocation of Article 370 on Kashmir.

Mr Modi has steered India closer to the US, but strong differences over trade and New Delhi's wish to buy Russia's S-400 missile remain. Interoperability is the ultimate necessary condition of America's arms sales to countries. Indian arms purchases from Russia collide with this condition. As for Russia, Mr Hall could have said that the Russia-China tie challenges Mr Modi's belief that Moscow is New Delhi's trustworthy partner. That same Russian friend first sold the S-400 to China in 2015 and will export missile-building knowhow to help China strengthen its defence capability. The book makes clear that bilateral ties should be seen against the wider background of multilateral interests of countries — though Mr Hall does not highlight this point himself.

All Indian prime ministers have played a decisive role in shaping foreign policy. But Mr Modi has shown scant concern for process and consultation in the making of foreign policy. More ideological than pragmatic, he has never presented a strategic document. His closest friends and advisers represent Hindu nationalist thinking. The Modi establishment has never explained how its Hindu nationalism relates ends to means in foreign policy. In foreign, as in domestic policy, Mr Modi has been helped by the willingness of bureaucrats to accept and carry out his agenda.

Photo opportunities with several world leaders have helped Modi to overcome *domestically* the image of India as a country in economic decline over the last five years. But abroad? Initially he had limited success in drawing some foreign investment into India but he is no economic liberal. Since the painful demonetisation in 2016, many foreign investors have taken their cash out of the country. Mr Modi's statist, protectionist, disincentivising approach is at odds with his rhetoric about India's openness and embrace of globalisation. The spread of China's Belt and Road Initiative across Asia, Europe and Africa has highlighted India's economic weakness and limited influence even in its own South Asian neighbourhood. India's claim to be a peacemaking Hindu world guru lacks credibility amid widespread reports of increased communal violence under Modi's premiership. New Delhi is suppressing dissent and simultaneously trying to shape "national" thought through school and university education.

Mr Hall's well-researched and highly readable book will stimulate debate on Modi's foreign policy.

The reviewer is a founding professor of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in New Delhi. Website: www.anitaindersingh.com

MODI AND THE REINVENTION OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY
Ian Hall, Bristol University Press,
221 pages; ₹ 799

Opinion

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019

TROUBLED WATERS
Prime minister Narendra Modi

"For 70 years, the water which belongs to India and the farmers of Haryana flowed to Pakistan. Modi will stop this water (from flowing into Pakistan) and bring to your houses"

RationalExpectations

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Poor Economics vs Good Governance

Banerjee-Duflo's models don't always work, but the Nobel is an affirmation of the need for evidence-based policies

UNLIKE MANY NOBEL prizes where the practical applications of the winning theory is not immediately clear, it is easy to understand why Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, and Michael Kremer won the economics award this year. Tackling poverty is a global goal, and governments such as those in India spend upwards of ₹300,000 crore—that is 2% of GDP by the Centre alone, the states spend a similar amount—every year on some form of welfare activity. So, it is important to make sure the country gets the biggest bang for its buck.

Over time, the trio's research—through the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) in the case of Banerjee-Duflo—has pointed to what solutions work and what don't; on how to tweak delivery systems to make them better. Over time, the trio set up two groups of people in what is called a Randomised Control Trial (RCT)—one that get the benefits, and one that don't—to see just how well the action/intervention works. In the case of schools in Vadodara and Mumbai, in association with the NGO Pratham, Banerjee-Duflo's RCT established that providing tuitions for individual students improved overall test scores for the entire school dramatically. The reason, it turns out, is that most government schools have classrooms with children of different abilities—some have Class 2-level Maths skills, some class 3, and some class 6—so the class teacher doesn't know quite where to pitch the lesson; the remedial intervention solves for this by bringing all the kids to the same level. The Nobel citation talks of how "more than five million Indian children have benefited from effective programmes of remedial tutoring in schools".

In the case of Punjab, *The Indian Express* reports the *Pani Bachao Paisa Kamao* scheme is based on a J-PAL recommendation where farmers are paid a fixed amount for buying electricity, which is used to pump out water; if farmers use less electricity—which means they use less water—they get to keep the money they save. One farmer, Karamjit Singh Rai, earned ₹12,904 through this scheme. If such solutions were to be used across the board, the Nobel committee must have felt, the impact could be quite dramatic.

While it is heartening to see governments listening to the advice of economists like Banerjee-Duflo-Kremer, it is not as if RCTs don't have their fair share of critics. While RCTs try and eliminate regional and other biases by selecting two groups within the same area, solutions that work in one geography do not necessarily work in others; nor is it clear why a particular solution works. In Udaipur, when it was found that not enough women were getting their children in for immunisation even though it was free, Banerjee-Duflo's team gave those who came in some free *daal*; this seemed to work, and immunisation levels in the area rose fairly quickly. So, the obvious question is, would giving cash have worked just as well, and didn't the mothers think that free immunisation in itself was worth it? Indeed, if it is not, why is Swachh Bharat working as well as it is?

> **Interventions to improve education or raise levels of immunisation good, but policymakers need to see if a GDP- or jobs-focus is better. And, is it better to substitute most govt schemes with cash payouts like NYAY?**

Some of this is also intuitive. Agriculture economist Ashok Gulati, without the benefit of RCTs, has been recommending that the government give farmers a fixed amount of money each year to spend on fertilisers; once farmers know they will get the subsidy regardless of how much fertiliser they buy, Gulati argues, they will consume less fertiliser, and use the rest of the money for something else. As a result, the damage to the soil will also reduce. That is also why, more than five years ago, Gulati recommended the government scrap most of its agriculture schemes, like MSP-based procurement, and opt, instead, for a flat annual payment to farmers.

Nor do RCT-type of experiments always give a clear answer on the preferable policy option. Banerjee, for instance, helped the Congress design its NYAY election promise, where the poor were to get ₹2,500 per month as dole—the party raised this to ₹6,000 when announcing the scheme. So, is NYAY a better option than individual government schemes in various fields like education or health, or are the poor not smart enough to use the money well? For whatever reason, Banerjee never explicitly recommended using NYAY in place of other welfare-spend, or at least not publicly.

Yet, SEWA's pilot studies in Madhya Pradesh in 2012-13 found that villages that got untied cash transfers tended to open more bank accounts, build toilets (this was before Swacch Bharat began), use more modern fuel for cooking/lighting, send more children to school, etc. And, Gulati's study with Shenggen Fan and Sukhadeo Thorat found that, while every million rupees spent on fertiliser subsidies reduced the number of poor by 24, the reduction was 335 if the same money was invested in building roads, and 323 if it was spent on agricultural R&D.

While the policy lesson from the Nobel prize is that all government actions must be based on evidence—and must be junked if there is no proof of their impact after a reasonable period of time—it is important that policymakers also keep in mind the limitations of micro-actions of the Banerjee-Duflo-Kremer kind. Certainly, they will help alleviate poverty or suffering in the short-run, and they will make health and education spending more efficient—this is a very big positive—but they have to be used in conjunction with other policies to enhance growth. That is why, for instance, Banerjee opposed demonetisation since it reduced economic growth, and the biggest sufferers from it were the poor; no amount of welfare intervention can make up for the loss of livelihood. Also, larger government spending on building roads or creating Aadhaar-like solutions create their own virtuous cycles that help the poor. Eventually, good governance creates good economics for the poor; given how little economic thought has gone into most pro-poor schemes in India, Banerjee-Duflo's defining work on fighting poverty is called *Poor Economics*.

BandAID

Giving away FCI grains as aid is a temporary solution; price support and PDS reforms are key in the long-term

WITH FCI'S GRAINS stock hitting unmanageable levels, the food ministry has asked the external affairs ministry to explore the possibility of giving away some of the stock to "deserving countries" as aid. India has done this before, but at a much smaller scale than what is probably envisaged now. Giving away the grains—for a country ranked very low on the Global Hunger Index, this may not be great optics—is still a better option than allowing it to rot. Rather, the government should be thinking of reforming its procurement/price support policy. Against stocking norms requiring just 307.7 lakh metric tonnes (mt) to be held in the central pool on October 1, the total was 669.15 lakh mt on September 1. Worse, thanks to bad policy, FCI's outstanding debt in FY19 stood at ₹2.2 lakh crore.

Procurement policy has meant that existing storage remains perpetually inadequate. One solution is to liquidate the huge surplus, but FCI's open market sales scheme failed to take off as prices of wheat and rice in the open market don't cover the economic costs of FCI procurement and storage. Worse, exports also can't be an option—even when the grain-quality issue is overlooked—because the price support policy means exports won't meet WTO norms. Unless the Centre considers reforming its MPS and PDS policies, replacing them with, say, DBT for food and cost-support to farmers, respectively, India will keep facing this problem.

AILING GROWTH

WITH CREDIT MULTIPLIER STAYING WEAK, IT IS TIME TO WORRY IF CONTAGION FROM THE FINANCIAL SECTOR TO THE REAL SECTOR IS SPREADING

Economic growth in a critical phase

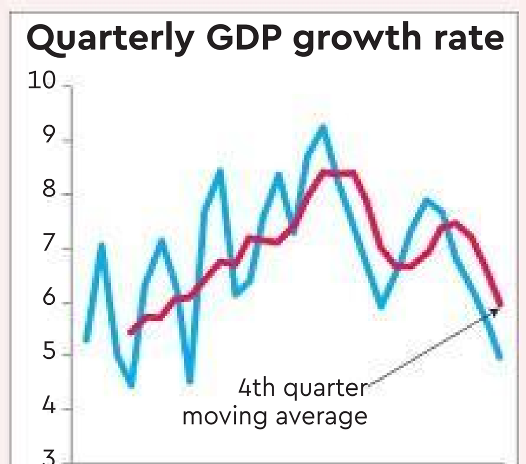
RENU KOHLI
New Delhi based macroeconomist
Views are personal

NEWS ON WEAK domestic economic activities continues. Judging by leading real and financial indicators, it seems certain that Q2FY20 growth would be worse than last quarter's 5%. Currently, most forecasts hope for a quick turnaround in H2FY20 from a supposedly cyclical slowdown, a popular first line of explanation that economists dish out. RBI's sharp cut in FY20 growth projection to 6.1% will not hold for long; another downgrade will most likely follow in December, after the release of second-quarter GDP estimates. Even as the forecast error relative to over-optimistic initial growth projection (above 7%) magnifies, the underlying narratives haven't changed much—the slowdown is still cyclical, but with a much larger output gap!

What if the slowdown is more structural? If so, potential growth should be declining, i.e., weakening trend. The accompanying graphic clearly supports such a view—the Q1FY19 peak, at 7.4%, was 100 bps lower from the preceding peak, Q1FY17 (8.4%). One can quibble about the statistical finesse of this simplistic assessment, but the trend slowdown is unmistakable. The real question is if it has fallen further after the recent growth shock. There was always a question mark on the claim of higher potential growth rate amidst weak private investment, and consistently lower capacity utilisation; its sudden collapse supports the contention that it was pushed by higher government spending, and credit by NBFCs.

For quite some time, RBI has been careful not to make its potential output estimates public, speaking in terms of the output gap. But, its projection of a sharp recovery to 7% in FY21 indicates RBI believes the economy's potential remains intact! This recalls a recent phase in which most analysts, including us, went horribly wrong on inflation forecasts! RBI, too, kept projecting higher inflation, anticipating a rebound in food inflation that was long dead. Consequently, monetary policy remained overtly tight for too long, lasting several quarters. In hindsight, one could argue that those policy errors possibly contributed significantly to the subsequent slowdown!

Quarterly GDP growth rate



Source: CSO

This makes one speculate if RBI, and others, are making similar errors in H2FY20, and FY21 growth forecasts. With inflation projections, the gap in actual and forecast errors kept increasing, but MPC was unwilling to amend, sticking to its structural model built around the ghost of food inflation bounce-back. Now, error between actual and forecast GDP growth keeps amplifying each quarter, but policy makers stick to 'predominantly cyclical' description of the slowdown. A widening output gap creates ample space for countercyclical responses; it prompts MPC to ease more, and government to seek fiscal stimulus opportunities, largely off-budget.

Ordinarily, any countercyclical response to structural slowing would invite higher inflation, and related uncertainties. But, many believe there is an extraordinary phase of weak inflation; this could absorb any potential fallout of countercyclical policy error. The risk is worth taking, they reason; bigger policy rate cut, and some on-budget fiscal expansion could quickly close the output gap. Such thinking would appeal to a government looking for a quick turnaround, but underlying risks could multiply manifold and blow-up in the medium term. Inflation may have been tamed, but inflationary expectations are still very high! One shouldn't forget the post-2008 experience, when UPA-II fired many countercyclical measures, raising demand through unflinching credit expansion and fiscal boost, which created a mirage of higher trend growth while real potential remained well below. What followed was an inflation spiral, growth crash, and external account pressures. Adherence to cyclical accounts could be laying the ground for repeating historical mistakes.

Some argue that even if this is a structural slowdown, the real rate remains too high; there is enough space for further easing. We, alongside this newspaper, consistently advocated such a view for several years. But, that time has now passed: Monetary policy has lost its mojo. Even with MPC further lowering the repo rate and RBI forcing banks to immediately transmit through external benchmarking, little is going to change on the ground. Just see the recent policy rate cycle: the MPC eased 160 bps from June 2018 to August 2019, when the credit channel remained completely blocked. The "Flow of Financial Resources to the Commercial Sector" graphic in *Monetary Policy Report*, October 2019 that has invited much attention shows how RBI's obsession with inflation targeting (IT), another structural reform in Modi 1.0, has gone haywire.

IT advocates constantly assured that once macroeconomic stability is durable, growth dividend would follow via lower cost of capital, and stable bond market. What happened? One can understand bank lending rates not falling much because of high NPAs and their slow redressal, but why did treasury yield not crash in line with falling inflation?

Focus has now shifted to the Centre's off-budget spending, and quasi-sovereign borrowings by public sector undertakings, viz. public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR). Eagerness to play by letter, not spirit of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act is at the centre of the blame game. If governments, Centre and states (about whose off-budget borrowings, little is known), were to capture most financial savings, crowding-out is no more "psychological". It is real, and embedded in high bond yields. Rising debt, and falling tax revenues have virtually shifted the economy's lever to the bond market! More OMOs, liquidity management tweaks through additional tools (e.g. forex swap) are only temporary reprieves.

Opinion that the current fiscal logjam can be navigated by scaling up divestment is not a great strategy either. With financial savings dwindling, where is the scope for further raising PSBR? More asset sales will only squeeze private corporate savings directly for public capex; this is currently happening through PSBR, but indirectly, through bank borrowings and bonds. This may please fiscal hawks, but macroeconomic gains would be marginal. The government may have the satisfaction of building more roads and railways, flaunt more statistics, but the economy's potential will not raise much unless private investment is back in the game!

This should make it abundantly clear to votaries of the cyclical prognosis that fiscal space is more or less closed. Policymakers must accept that the FY16-FY18 growth acceleration increasing PSBRs and fuelling credit through NBFCs was never sustainable. That the NBFC credit cycle busted even before public banks' balance sheets were adequately repaired shouldn't have surprised anyone. With credit multiplier staying weak, they should worry if financial contagion is spreading to the real sector.

Forcing credit through "Loan *Melas*" is not the way forward. This will further erode credibility of PSBs. The focus must shift to structural reforms. To the government's credit, it implemented several key reforms, small and big. Unfortunately, textbook reforms like inflation targeting, IBC, RERA, and GST have not yielded expected growth dividend. More structural reforms are welcome, but we must know why current ones underperformed? Likewise, more roads and railways have been built, yet these haven't added to the potential; at least, not so far. It is a mystery why consumer and business sentiments nosedived after re-electing a popular government; one bad budget couldn't have pulled down confidence so much. It is time to introspect if we are misdiagnosing the problem over and over again!

In need of a new development index

If we want leaders to consider how badly their policies are damaging the environment, we need a new development index

AJAY CHHIBBER
Bloomberg

AT INTERNATIONAL MONETARY Fund and World Bank meetings in Washington this week, there will be much debate about slowing global growth, the impact of the US-China trade war, the role of central banks in preventing a global recession, the risk of disruption to oil markets, and much more. What you won't hear, beyond a few platitudes, is a detailed plan for combating climate change and slowing the depletion of the earth's resources.

This pattern of neglect won't change unless we do a much better job of linking the climate to economic progress. That in turn will require changing the way we measure development.

The world still looks at human progress in almost exclusively economic terms. Countries view growth in their stock markets and their GDP per capita with chest-thumping pride. Almost three decades ago, the United Nations Development Programme tried to produce a more nuanced measure of progress by including life expectancy and education along with income in its Human Development Index (HDI). While a welcome innovation, the original HDI is still relatively crude, failing to account for such things as sustainability and inequality.

How much those omissions can matter became clear recently, after the UN added an inequality-adjusted index (IHDI) to its *2018 Human Development Report*. Including inequality as a factor dramatically altered countries' rankings. The US, for instance, fell from 13th on the original index to 25th on the adjusted one. By contrast, Finland rose from 15th to fifth place.

Accounting for climate damage would likely have an even bigger impact. Countries that rank high on the human development index also use more carbon and deplete more natural resources than those below them. In other words, our metrics favour unsustainable, environmentally damaging growth. (Using more energy also produces a higher ranking, but only up to roughly 100 gigajoules per person; beyond that, countries are wasting energy in inefficient systems, not improving human development.)

The same applies to the relationship between the HDI rankings and a measure known as an "ecological footprint." Up to the middle of the list, where around 140 mostly low- and middle-income countries sit, the footprint is relatively small, less than 2 global hectares per capita (a measure of the world's global ecological capacity per person). That number rises sharply among countries with higher development levels, however, increasing to as much as 8-10 global hectares.

If we want leaders to consider how badly their policies are damaging the environment, we need a new development index, one that takes account of various environmental variables such as CO_2 emissions per capita, SO_2 emissions (a measure of air quality), groundwater extraction and share of renewable energy. Doing so would drop the rankings of countries from the US to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Australia by over 15 spots apiece. If the ecological footprints of countries were considered, the rankings of Canada, Estonia and, surprisingly, Finland in addition to those countries would drop by over 20 places.

Other attempts to produce a more sophisticated measure of development haven't gotten traction. While the UN agreed to pursue its Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the system—which includes 17 goals and 169 indicators—is too complicated to measure succinctly. The Happy Planet Index hasn't gained wide acceptability because it mixes observed data on things like life expectancy and inequality with survey results measuring well-being. (Its rankings show Costa Rica and Vietnam in the top two positions, with New Zealand the only fully industrialised country among the top 20; the US ranks 105th.)

A Social Progress Index, inspired by the writings of Nobel-winning economists such as Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz and Douglas North, produces rankings that don't differ all that much from the HDI. The World Bank has introduced the concept of adjusted net savings to measure changes to wealth (a stock) rather than GDP (a flow), while accounting for additions or depletion of natural capital. But, the measure doesn't adequately address the huge stock of accumulating CO_2, SO_2 or methane in the atmosphere, the country-sized swarms of plastic now floating in the oceans or the melting of glaciers—all things that show we may be at an environmental tipping point.

Over the last 30 years, the shift from looking just at GDP to judging countries on health and education outcomes has produced real progress, as the world has improved its human development index by over 20% since 1990 and, more meaningfully, in the least developed countries by over 50%. If we want real action on climate, we now need to include damage to the environment and depletion of natural resources as factors in measuring development. Otherwise all these fine-sounding speeches are just more hot air.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Economics Nobel

Awarding this year's Nobel Prize for Economics to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer for their 'experimental approach to alleviating global poverty' came as an uplifting piece of news. Their researches and experiments guide governments and NGOs on how large-scale poverty can best be combated. The very subject of their work—improving human development indices—lends their seminal contributions a humanitarian touch. Their work goes beyond 'analysis' of poverty (theoretical economics) to 'mitigation' of poverty (applied economics), if one may put it so, and raises the hope of a poverty-free life. The recipients of the award have specialised in 'development economics' as well as 'behavioural economics', of which 'randomised control trials' (RCT) are a key component, to find out the 'incentives' that did and didn't work. RCT is not the panacea for poverty eradication; it is a tool to carry out test studies and assess the possible outcomes in a given situation to aid framing of policies, and facilitate the process of poverty eradication. Banerjee was highly critical of demonetisation, following which the economy went into a tailspin. He also took objection to the revision and suppression of 'inconvenient' data. In his view, the Indian economy is on a shaky ground with all-time low investment, job creation, and consumption, and is unlikely to revive despite the piecemeal measures to pull the country out of the crisis.

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

●Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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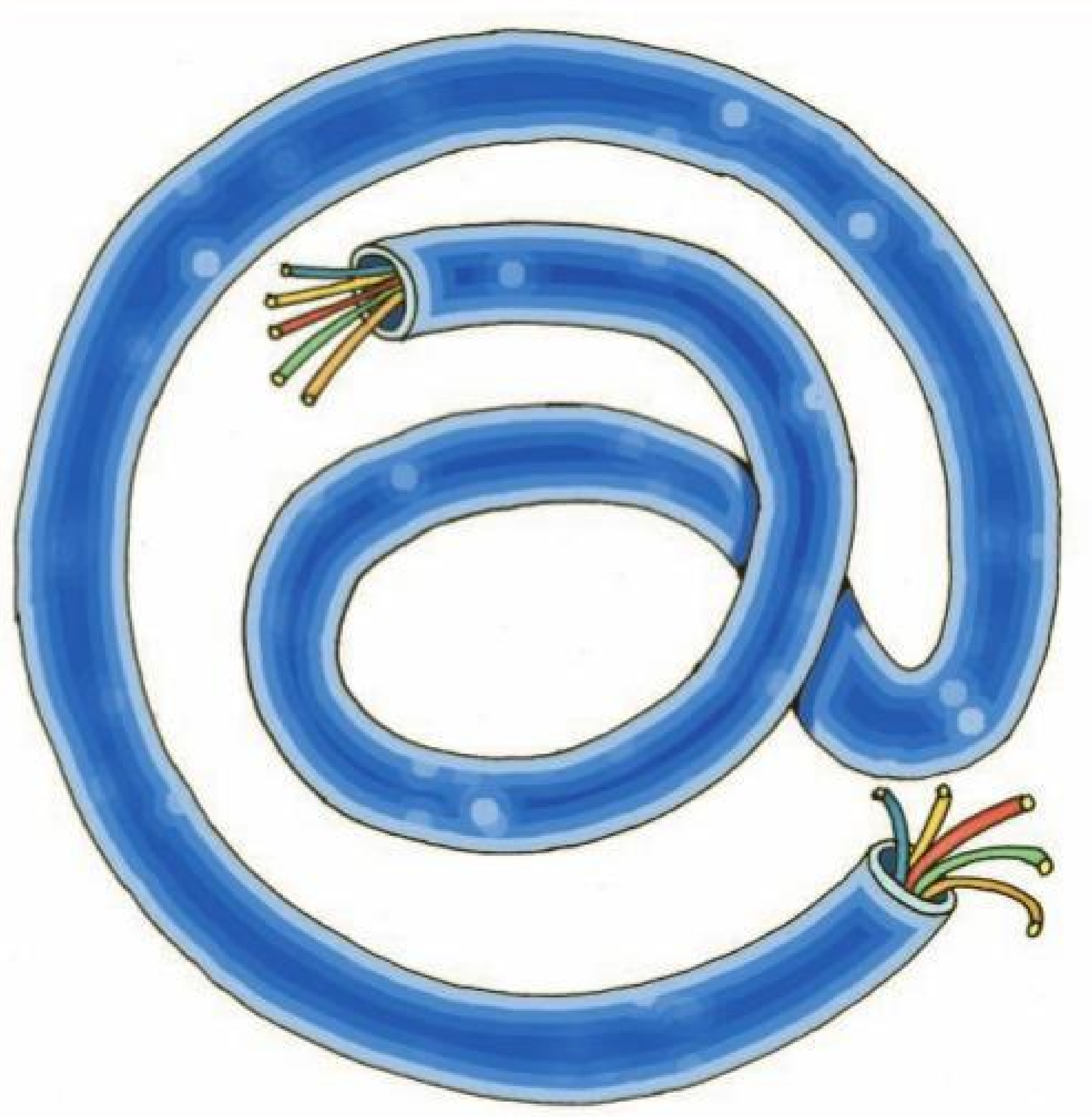

ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

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

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% 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.

> The timing of regulatory intervention is critical as it should not stifle market growth while at the same time not propagate creation of dominant players

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 right experiments

India should take pride in the evidence-based policy approach

MADAN SABNAVIS

Chief economist, CARE Ratings. Views are personal

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 modicums 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 Kramer talk 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.

WORDLY WISE

WAR IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LANGUAGE FAILS.

— MARGARET ATWOOD

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

UNCHECKED DECLINE

Trade data suggests weak domestic and global demand. Tinkering won't do, government needs to push reforms

INDIA'S MERCHANDISE EXPORTS continued their subdued performance, contracting by 6.57 per cent in September this year. Over the first half of this financial year, exports have contracted by 2.39 per cent, indicating that GDP growth is unlikely to have received a fillip from the external sector in the second quarter as well. Equally worrying, non-oil non-gold imports, an indicator of domestic demand, contracted for the 11th straight month, indicating continued weakness in domestic demand. Coupled with sluggish investment activity, as leading economic indicators suggest, these numbers point towards a subdued economic outlook in the near term. Unsurprisingly, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has lowered its forecast for economic growth to 6.1 per cent this year, down from its earlier estimate of 7 per cent — bringing it in line with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) assessment of the Indian economy.

Part of the decline in exports can be traced to a fall in petroleum exports. But, it is cause for concern that exports of major labour intensive segments such as gems and jewellery, garment and leather products, continue to decline. In fact, non-oil exports have contracted by 1.7 per cent in the first half of this financial year, with 22 of the 30 major export segments contracting in September. In part, the sluggish export performance can be attributed to a synchronised global slowdown. Exports of other nations have also been weak during this period. In fact, the IMF has also lowered its forecast for global GDP growth to 3 per cent. Then there are issues of competitiveness that afflict exports. An overvalued exchange rate and a complicated GST process exacerbates matters. But, the collapse in imports is equally worrying. Imports have contracted by 13.85 per cent in September, and by 7 per cent over the first half of this year. Excluding oil and gold, imports of other items have contracted by 5.6 per cent in the April-September period, signalling weak consumer and industrial demand. The situation is likely to have been exacerbated by inventory destocking — which along with risk aversion by banks could explain the collapse in credit flow to the commercial sector during this period.

The government has announced several steps to boost exports. But these are not enough. At this juncture, mere tinkering will not suffice. The government must draw on its political capital to push through contentious reforms that address the deeper structural issues plaguing the economy. Even in the midst of a slowdown in global trade, India, which accounts for around 2 per cent of global trade, should look aggressively to expand its share. After all, in the current economic environment of subdued domestic demand and investment, exports could provide the much needed boost to growth.

PULLBACK AND CHAOS

US withdrawal from Kurdish Syria, the manner in which it has been done, augurs more instability in the region

ON OCTOBER 15, US President Donald Trump tweeted that "after defeating 100% of the ISIS caliphate... I said to my generals, why should we be fighting for Syria and Assad to protect the land of our enemy? Anyone who wants to assist Syria in protecting the Kurds, whether it is Russia, China or Napoleon Bonaparte. I hope they do great, we are 7,000 miles away". The most charitable view of Trump's withdrawal of US forces from north-east Syria, an area under Kurdish control with its capital in Rojava, is that he is attempting to fulfill his promise of extricating the US from the conflicts it has been embroiled in across the globe ahead of the 2020 US presidential elections. The manner of the troop withdrawal, though, has strengthened the Bashar al Assad regime, sharpened the conflict in the region, as well as increased the influence of Russia in West Asia. From a US foreign policy perspective, these outcomes are an unmitigated failure. For regional and global security, they augur a time of instability.

In the immediate aftermath of Trump's decision, Turkey's President Recep Erdogan ordered his troops into the region, and there are reports of civilian casualties. US troops had suffered minimal casualties and were a buffer protecting the Kurdish forces. Erdogan, who is facing a violent Kurdish-led in insurgency in his own country, seems to be seeking a deeper strategic buffer through military control of Syria's autonomous Kurdish region. In a corner, and abandoned by their US allies, Rojava has sought assistance from Assad, and Russia and Iran too are expected to back the Assad regime, filling the power vacuum left by the US. Erdogan, for his part, seems undeterred by the sporadic threats of sanctions and other diplomatic consequences by the US and NATO.

Trump's sudden withdrawal, without getting security guarantees from Ankara, is likely to be counterproductive. First, the claim that the "ISIS caliphate" has been defeated may be technically true, but many IS fighters retreated into remote parts of Iraq and Syria. Since the conflict in Syria began in 2015, the Kurds, helped by their US allies, were instrumental in the fight against the Islamic State. The remnants of the IS, now, may be emboldened. Second, the Assad regime, which the US accused of war crimes, has consolidated and its influence is certainly waxing, along with that of Russia. Finally, an aggressive and expansionist Turkey could pose a long-term challenge to the regional balance of power. It has long been a NATO ally and even houses a US military base with nuclear capabilities. In the near term, what is required is well-thought out, firm diplomacy by the US and other world powers, that goes far beyond what President Trump's tweets have hinted at.

A WIN-WIN

In embracing both Atwood and Evaristo, the Booker prize makes a heartening statement

THE 2019 BOOKER Prize for Fiction has been awarded jointly to Margaret Atwood, for *The Testaments*, and Bernardine Evaristo, for *Girl, Woman, Other*, opening up a backlash against the selection of two winners, when the rules, tweaked in 1993, stipulate that the prize cannot be shared. But this has been an unusual Booker season in more ways than one, and, mostly for happy reasons.

Of the 13 books on the longlist this year, eight were by women. The shortlist of six had four women authors. The 1959-born Evaristo is the first black woman to win the Booker since its 1969 inception. Atwood, at 79, is the oldest-ever winner. Once we get past the statistics — and ruffled emotions — we could take a moment to let it sink in that this could well be the year when the Booker Prize came of age. In rebelling against convention and going beyond discussions of colour, age or other restrictive notions, it has embraced both the overarching genius of Atwood and the sparkling originality of Evaristo's achievement. A vocal advocate of inclusive literature and gay rights, the eight-book-old Evaristo has worked for the stage and radio, besides writing short fiction, poetry and essays. Atwood, who won the Booker first in 2000 for *The Blind Assassin*, needs little introduction.

This is not to say that the inequity will end with this year's award. Dana Beth Weinberg and Adam Kapelner of Queens College-CUNY, in a 2018 paper published in the journal *PLOS One*, presented sobering findings — books by women were revealed to be priced, on an average, 45 per cent lower than books by men. For writers of colour, especially women, the numbers are starker. But the conversation around women's writing must be more widely joined. As one of the Booker judges, Afua Hirsch, wrote, "You cannot compare them. But you can recognise them both. And I'm glad this is what we did."

Five years of Make in India

There is a contradiction in trying to attract foreign investors before reforming labour, land acquisition laws

CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND VIHANG JUMLE

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi launched the Make in India campaign on September 25, 2014 with these words: "I tell the world, 'Make in India'. Sell anywhere but manufacture here." Modi aspired to emulate China — a country he had visited many times as Gujarat chief minister — in attracting foreign investment to industrialise India. The objective was, officially, to increase the manufacturing sector's growth rate to 12-14 per cent per annum in order to increase this sector's share in the economy from 16 to 25 per cent of the GDP by 2022 — and to create 100 million additional jobs by then.

Five years later, this policy has produced contrasting results. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased from $16 billion in 2013-14 to $36 billion in 2015-16. But this remarkable achievement needs to be qualified from two standpoints. First, FDIs have plateaued since 2016 and second, they are not contributing to India's industrialisation. FDIs in the manufacturing sector, in fact, are on the wane. In 2017-18, they were just above $7 billion, as against $9.6 billion in 2014-15. Services cornered most of the FDIs — $23.5 billion, more than three times that of the manufacturing sector. This is a clear reflection of the the Indian economy's traditional strong points, where computer services, for instance, are remarkably developed. But can a country rely on services without developing an industrial base? The response is clearly no and this is why "Make in India" was initiated.

The idea, then, was to promote export-led growth: Foreign investors were invited to make in India, not necessarily for India. But few investors have been attracted by this prospect, and India's share in the global exports of manufactured products remains around 2 per cent — China's is around 18 per cent.

Why has Make in India failed to deliver? First, a large fraction of the Indian FDI is neither foreign nor direct but comes from Mauritius-based shell companies. Indian tax authorities suspected that most of these investments were "black money" from India, which was routed via Mauritius. Second, the productivity of Indian factories is low. According to a McKinsey report, "workers in India's manufacturing sector are almost four and five times less productive, on average, than their counterparts in Thailand and China". This is not just because of insufficient skills, but also because the size of the industrial units is too small for attaining economies of scale, investing in modern equipment and developing supply chains. Why are companies small? Partly by choice, because labour regulations are more complicated for plants with more than 100 employees. Government approval is required under the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 before laying off any employee and the Contract Labour Act of 1970 requires government and employee approval for simple changes in an employee's job description or duties.

> Bureaucratic procedures and corruption continue to make India less attractive for investors. It has made progress in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index, but even then, is ranked 77 among 190 countries. India ranks 78 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. To acquire land to build a plant, for instance, remains difficult. India has slipped 10 places in the latest annual Global Competitiveness Index compiled by Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF).

Infrastructure is also a problem area. Although electricity costs are about the same in India and China, power outages are much higher in India. Moreover, transportation takes much more time in India. According to Google Maps, it takes about 12.5 hours to travel the 1,213 km distance between Beijing to Shanghai. A Delhi to Mumbai trip of 1,414 km, via National Highway 48, in contrast, takes about 22 hours. Average speeds in the China are about 100 km per hour, while in India, they are about 60 km per hour. Railways in India have saturated while Indian ports have constantly been outperformed by many Asian countries. The 2016 World Bank's Global Performance Index ranked India 35th among 160 countries. Singapore was ranked fifth, China 25th and Malaysia 32nd. The average ship turnaround time in Singapore was less than a day; in India, it was 2.04 days.

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There was clearly a contradiction in the attempt to attract foreign investors to Make in India before completing the reforms of labour and land acquisition laws. Liberalisation is not the panacea for all that ails the economy, but it is a prerequisite if India intends to follow an export-oriented growth pattern.

A significant move in this direction was made last month with the reduction of the company tax from about 35 to about 25 per cent (at least on paper), a rate comparable with most of India's neighbours. This reform is also consistent with the government's effort to compete with South East Asian countries, in particular, to attract FDIs. This competition has acquired a new dimension in the context of the US-China trade dispute. After the Trump administration increases tariffs on Chinese exports to the US, several companies will shift their plants from China to other Asian countries. Some of them have already done so. According to the Japanese financial firm Nomura, only three of the 56 companies that decided to relocate from China moved to India. Of them, Foxconn is a major player which will be now assembling its top-end iPhones in India. Whether other big multinationals will begin to show interest at manufacturing in India remains to be seen.

But India will have to face another external challenge too as it sees capital fleeing the country. The net outflow of capital has jumped as the rupee has dropped from 54 a dollar in 2013 to more than 70 to a dollar in 2019, at a time when oil is becoming more expensive.

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SAFFRON IN THE SLUMS

Among the urban poor, two strands of Hindutva mobilisation are emerging

BADRI NARAYAN

B R AMBEDKAR often expressed how the Indian village was the setting for the discrimination of Dalits, and that they should migrate to cities. Dalits do suffer from the myriad oppressions heaped on them by dominant castes and along with other marginal sections of society, have migrated to cities, towns and kasbahs and settled mostly in slums. They constitute about 17 per cent of the country's urban-dwelling population. In Uttar Pradesh, slum dwellers constitute about 14 per cent of the urban population, according to the 2011 census. Most of them are poor and from marginalised sections.

Slums have emerged as sites for the practice of Hindutva politics. We are habituated to viewing this section of people as subjects who desire and demand houses, jobs, ration cards, medical treatment, etc. But they also aspire towards creating small temples in their bastis, where they can assemble, worship and share their joys and sorrows (sukh-dukh) with their neighbours. With economic betterment, slum dwellers are also aspiring for religious empowerment. Dalits and other marginalised people residing in slums are becoming increasingly aware of their religious identity as Hindus.

The RSS and its various affiliates enter slums through running schools, organising medical camps, etc. RSS shakhas are also expanding their footprint among the urban poor by giving them a "Hindu" identity. Small Hindutva organisations with various names such as Hindu Yuva Vahini and Hindu Rakshak Sangh have been working in the juggi-jhopari colonies in various UP cities.

> These two types of organisations have differing strategies. On the one hand, the RSS and some of its affiliates are working among the urban poor through 'sewa' and 'sahyog'. On the other hand, various small Hindutva outfits are trying mobilise these slum-dwelling populations through an aggressive Hindutva discourse.

These two types of organisations have differing strategies. On the one hand, the RSS and some of its affiliates are working among the urban poor through "sewa" and "sahyog". On the other hand, various small Hindutva outfits are trying mobilise these slum-dwelling populations through an aggressive Hindutva discourse. The RSS-generated discourse is aimed at reshaping their identity as "Hindu Nagrik", by inspiring them to imbibe and perform various Hindu sanskaras. In contrast, the other organisations are trying to produce a proud identity as Hindus among Dalit slum dwellers.

The tone and tenor of these two Hindutva-based campaigns is producing two different political cultures. These may overlap, but they also diverge into two streams of Hindutva identity. The first positions itself as a "soft Hindu" identity, while the second is a proponent of an aggressive Hinduism. At times, the RSS looks uncomfortable with the presence and growing influence of these smaller, aggressive Hindutva outfits. The Sangh appears to have some difficulty in handling these groups. One may find conflict and contestation between these two streams of Hindutva politics.

Both kinds of outfits help to create a political ambience that likely helps a party like the BJP. But they are producing two different kinds of Hindutva subjectivities: The first wants to appropriate the communities in these slums within its own Hindutva frame; the second does not tolerate any difference in identity and culture.

It is certainly the case that only a thin line separates the two political cultures emerging in the slums of UP. But both these strands are working separately. Some people, who form the backbone of the smaller groups, may have been part of an RSS shakha at some point in their lives, but they have now evolved their own ways of functioning.

At one point, slums were considered a space for radical Ambedkarite and Left politics. That appears to be changing in UP. From the initial years, when Kanshi Ram used these sites to evolve Bahujan politics, they are now turning into Hindutva spaces.

The transformation of these social locations from the BSP's "blue" to saffron is taking place at a rapid pace. Since Hindutva groups use religious identity as an important axis of social, political and cultural mobilisation, they have managed to link the economic aspiration in UP's slums with religious empowerment.

Today, in the slums, one can view well-organised programmes featuring chants of the Sunder Kand Path and Hanuman Chalisa. The RSS is also working towards building small temples dedicated to Hindu deities.

Both types of Hindutva organisations see religious conversion as a threat in these societies and view their work as antidote to the same. They claim that their efforts are strengthening Hindu society.

The writer is professor, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad

OCTOBER 17, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIAN EXPRESS

Pakistan elections put off

PAK ELECTION DELAYED

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT General Zia-ul-Haq postponed national elections indefinitely, banned all political activity in the country and imposed press censorship. The elections had been set for November 17 by Zia. In a nationwide broadcast, he said he took the stringent measures because the November 17 poll would not have led to a stable government. The broadcast followed speculation that the army general would not carry out the promised elections because of a fear that the daughter of the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whom Zia overthrew two years ago and who was hanged last April, would have ridden to victory on a sympathy vote.

ECONOMICS NOBEL

THE NOBEL PRIZE in economics was awarded jointly to American Theodore Schultz of Chicago and West Indian-born Sir Arthur Lewis of Princeton University, for pioneering work into economic development research. The prize was given to Schultz and Lewis "for their pioneering research into economic development with particular consideration of the problems of developing countries", according to the citation by the Royal Academy of Sciences.

POOR BUTLER

AN ITEM IN the London *Financial Times* notes: "A class of Eton boys was asked the other day to write a story about poverty. 'There was once a very poor family,' wrote one 13-year-old. 'The father was poor, the mother was poor, the children were poor. Even the butler was poor'."

NEW SIKKIM GOVT

A JANATA PARISHAD ministry, headed by Nar Bahadur Bhandari, will be installed in office in Sikkim. Bhandari told newsmen, after the governor had invited him to form the ministry, that his government would work vigorously for the all-round development of Sikkim. The single-tier ministry will be compact, not exceeding eight members, he added.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

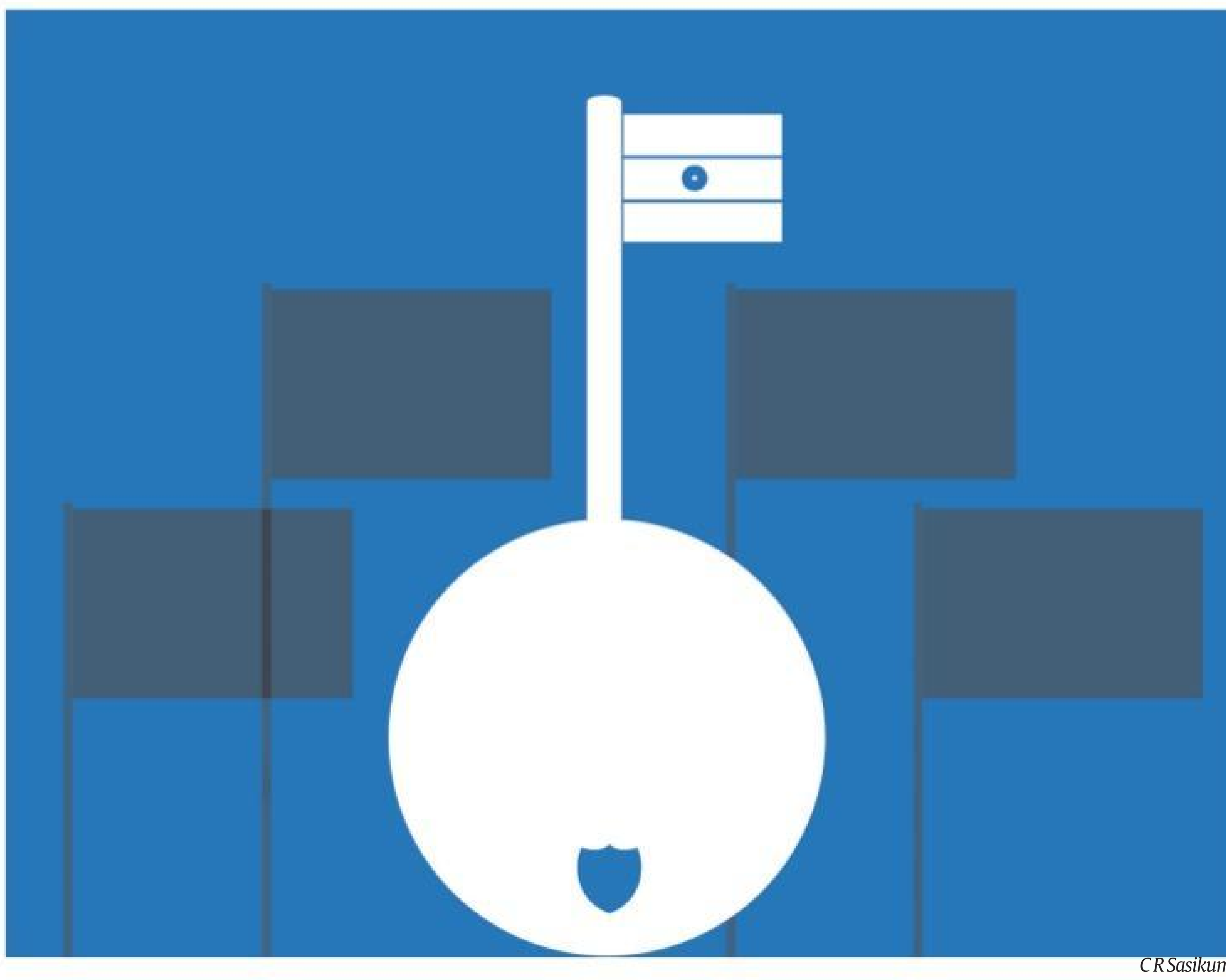
"Instead of solving the problem, the US is increasingly creating a problem for the world. It is hoped the US can reflect upon itself. As a superpower with far-reaching interests, the US will benefit the most from a benign world order."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Light on national security

Signs of long-pending reforms are finally visible. But the lack of clarity about the role of Chief of Defence Staff and bellicose talk by politicians and soldiers are not reassuring

ARUN PRAKASH



C R Sasikumar

STRATEGIC CULTURE IS said to have a significant impact on national security and state behaviour. In 1992, RAND Corporation analyst, George Tanham had pronounced that a combination of "lofty Hindu philosophy and a fatalistic outlook" had prevented the development of a strategic culture in India, and that "... Indian elites showed little evidence of having systematically thought about national strategy". Tanham's contentions were contested by those who asserted that being heirs to the rich philosophy of Vedic literature, epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and the wisdom of Chanakya's Arthashastra, Indians had never lacked a strategic culture. They also, stressed that, right from independence, India had followed a pragmatic grand strategy, scripted by Jawaharlal Nehru. Its elements included, domestically, secular federalism, a socialist command-economy, pursuit of self-reliance and externally, and a policy of non-alignment to avoid military conflicts.

This Nehruvian legacy was accompanied by a utopian proclivity for pacifism and disdain for the armed forces, rooted in phobia about military coups. According to Yale University professor, Steven Wilkinson, the Congress party evolved "specific 'coup-proofing' strategies to balance the power of the military during India's first decade". Most of these measures have remained in place ever since: The military continues to be excluded from the government's policy/decision-making process and the armed forces HQs are still subordinated to a civilian Department of Defence. Wilkinson suggests that the growth of the Central Armed Police Forces from 29,000 in 1961 to 1.1 million in 2017 is another "coup proofing" measure to "balance" the 1.3-million army.

The past five years have seen the last vestiges of the Nehruvian legacy being progressively swept away. Conclusive proof of this came when the present government ordered retaliatory raids, in peace time, on Pakistani soil. These not only marked a major shift of political focus that brought national security to centrestage, but also shattered two shibboleths: First, that India's timidity, disguised as "strategic restraint", was a chronic affliction; and second, that any armed incursion into Pakistan, ran the risk of a nuclear response. The latter, in any case, was an excessively alarmist view, given that the nuclear "red lines" informally signalled by Pakistan are far more stringent.

With the 2019 election-campaign behind us and politics having resumed normal tempo, there has been speculation whether the NDA government's newfound focus on national security signifies a strategic transformation or merely a vote-garnering election gambit. Such scepticism was not unjustified, given that the BJP's 2014 election manifesto, had promised to "address the issue of organisational reforms" in defence, and to "ensure greater participation of armed forces in the decision-making process of the MoD". While the ensuing five years saw no change in South Block, some recent "straws in the wind" may indicate growing political interest in national security issues. The most significant of these and one that demands our close attention is the long awaited initiation of national security reforms. One hopes that the April 2018 appointment of the National Security Adviser (NSA) to head the newly constituted Defence Planning Committee and his post-election elevation to cabinet rank were harbingers of this reform-process.

A lack of transparency, however, raises larger questions about the roles of the Raksha Mantri (RM), the Chiefs of Staff and the Defence Secretary vis-a-vis the NSA in the new ambit of national security decision-making. While Prime Minister Modi's announcement, on August 15, about creation of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), received widespread welcome, it adds a new and complex dimension to India's national security paradigm.

A CDS must not be created in isolation because, normatively, it carries with it a whole eco-system that could transform India's national security, if correctly implemented. In theory, as the senior-most armed forces officer and Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, the CDS would be the military adviser to the PM and RM. Apart from his key role in the nuclear command chain, he would evolve a prioritised tri-service perspective plan for force modernisation and enable fiscal support. This task would be immeasurably facilitated by the issuance of a national security doctrine/strategy which highlights national aims, objectives and interests, and clearly defines the military wherewithal required to achieve them.

The CDS would oversee the integration of the armed forces HQs with the civilian MoD and implement "jointness" amongst the three armed forces, progressively ushering in the theatre command concept. In reality, however, if not empowered adequately or if found in conflict with the NSA, the CDS could easily be reduced to an inconsequential "paper-tiger".

> A CDS must not be created in isolation because, normatively, it carries with it a whole eco-system that could transform India's national security, if correctly implemented. In theory, as the senior-most armed forces officer and Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, the CDS would be the military adviser to the PM and RM. Apart from his key role in the nuclear command chain, he would evolve a prioritised tri-service perspective plan for force modernisation and to enable fiscal support.

Another topic that two RMs, in succession, have dwelt upon — albeit in passing — is the principle of "no first use" (NFU) of nuclear weapons embedded in India's 2003 Nuclear Doctrine. NFU was adopted, not merely as a token of nuclear restraint and responsible conduct, on India's part, but also because it is, by far, the least burdensome and inexpensive form of nuclear-deterrence.

While ambiguity and doctrinal unpredictability may be useful to keep one's adversary off-balance, nuclear deterrence is far too serious a matter to be the subject of off-the-cuff public utterances by senior politicians. On the other hand, a formal review of the nuclear doctrine (including the NFU undertaking) is long overdue and must be undertaken.

In similar vein is casual, bellicose talk about "re-taking" of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, presumably by military means. Let us remember that a major part of J&K's territory has been in our physical possession since the state legally acceded to India in 1947. Whether the hearts and minds of the people of the Valley are with us, remains a question unanswered. Once peace and prosperity prevail in our J&K, it is more than likely that the people of PoK would clamour to join their Indian brethren.

Finally, a word of advice for our military leadership. It is most heartening for the citizen to hear, from them, that our troops are in fine fettle and combat-ready. However, one's confidence evaporates when they are heard parroting political rhetoric or indulging in bombast. We are not Pakistan, and dignified reticence on the part of our soldiery would be far more reassuring.

The writer is a retired chief of naval staff

Intelligence of the future

AI could transform the world. India and UAE could be partners in the transformation

SULTAN AHMED AL JABER

I REMEMBER watching the 1997 battle of the chess "grandmasters", one a person and the other a machine. The machine, IBM's Deep Blue supercomputer, eventually defeated the human, world chess champion Gary Kasparov. And I wonder what the result would be today if an AI-run machine were to be pitted against the current world chess champion Magnus Carlsen.

The result probably would be the same but with one difference — the play would be far more exciting than it was more than two decades ago. Deep Blue didn't use techniques that would be considered true AI by today's standards. Instead it relied on "brute force" methods of calculating every possible option at high speed, rather than analysing gameplay and learning about the game.

Since 1997, AI has advanced a great deal, but so has our understanding of this extraordinary technology. Therefore, the more important question today is not whether AI could outsmart some of the most brilliant minds on earth, but how we can leverage AI as a powerful and tremendously efficient tool.

Governments and businesses around the world are determined to make the next decade a truly transformative time, with experts predicting that by 2030 AI could contribute $16 trillion to the global economy. However, the humankind, not AI, will be the real driver of such transformation.

The UAE's founding father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, understood the real driver behind any substantial progress: "No matter how many buildings, foundations, schools and hospitals we build, or how many bridges we raise, all these are material entities. The real spirit behind the progress is the human spirit, the able man with his intellect and capabilities."

I strongly believe that to fully unleash the potential of AI, we must first advance research of this technology and bring it to the forefront of academia. Indeed, the UAE created the post of Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence at the same time as it assigned Advanced Skills to the Minster of State for Higher Education. This was done because the UAE firmly believes that AI and these advanced skills go hand in hand.

Advanced technologies, such as AI, are becoming all the more indispensable. It is, therefore, paramount for individuals to master these skills in this rapidly transforming world.

It is in this spirit that education leaders need to shape the future for our schools and universities. That's why the UAE and Abu Dhabi recently announced the establishment of the world's first graduate-level, research-based AI university — the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI). Our goal is for the new university to equip and empower graduate students from around the world to lead us into the AI-driven era.

And I firmly believe MBZUAI provides another great opportunity for India and the UAE to work together and benefit both countries along the way.

India is already the UAE's second-largest trade partner and the UAE has become India's third-largest trading partner, with the total non-oil trade between the two countries recorded at $35.9 billion in 2018. The long and close relationship between the two countries, built on historical, deep-rooted and age-old cultural, religious and economic ties, can now extend to advanced AI-focused education, which can help contribute to India's march towards the ambitious goal of becoming a $5-trillion economy.

MBZUAI will help build the necessary AI ecosystem that the world needs to leverage the full potential of this technology. To realise this, the university will offer post-graduate (MSc and PhD) programmes in the key areas of AI: Machine Learning, Computer Vision, and Natural Language Processing. All of these are critical to catalyse social progress around the world, and especially on our continent that is home to some of the fastest developing nations in the world.

India has historically produced a large number of engineers, mathematicians and software developers every year. By 2020, India will be the youngest country in the world, with a median age of 29 years.

Implementing a national AI strategy at the scale of a country like India will require an upskilling of this young talented workforce and student body. I hope that India and the UAE, with the world's first Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence and the first dedicated graduate level research-based AI university, will work together as the two countries, and the world, enter a truly AI-empowered era.

The writer is UAE minister of state and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence

Between image and reality

Under Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh is making a break from its past

MRITYUNJAY KUMAR

WHEN A respected english news magazine adjudged UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath as the best performing CM across big Indian states on Independence Day eve, it was an endorsement of his government's work in the past two-and-a-half years. The Adityanath government has already reached milestones that a majority of previous governments couldn't accomplish in their full tenure.

The figures speak for themselves. By creating over 2.5 lakh jobs in the government sector and over 20 lakh jobs in the private sector, the government has surpassed the job-creation record of the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party regimes. Another achievement of the Adityanath government is getting the status of best-performing state on 20 different counts, including the implementation of Central schemes. Be it the construction of over 25 lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and 2.61 crore toilets under Swachh Bharat, 1.35 crore LPG connections under Ujjawala Yojana and 1.1 crore power connections under the Saubhagya scheme, the state is number one in the country. Adityanath's first decision as CM was to waive Rs 36,000 crore worth of loans of over 86 lakh farmers. Since then, UP has become the first state to make DBT payment to its farmers.

The central government has honoured the state for making maximum purchases through e-markets. It is also number one in establishing micro, medium and small enterprises. The Adityanath government has paid a record Rs 73,000 crore to cane farmers, who were reeling under crop losses. The government's earnings have increased by almost 24 per cent under key heads as compared to the SP regime. The revenue under six major heads — excise, commercial tax, transport, mining, GST and VAT, and registration — has gone up to Rs 1.2 lakh crore in 2018-19, compared to Rs 86,000 crore in 2016-17 under the SP regime.

Law and order has been UP's bane and lawlessness reached its zenith during the SP regime. Adityanath took the menace by its horns. The elimination of over 100 and the arrest of over 10,000 dreaded criminals has not only broken the swag of anti-social elements, but has also restored people's confidence in the government and the police. Those who accuse the government of pursuing an "encounter policy" should realise that there is no policy as such. It's just a matter of giving operational freedom to the police to tackle crime.

Those who still cite cases like the Unnao rape case — more of a social issue than a law and order problem — should actually see the difference on ground. The government also cleared the long-pending recruitment of 75,000 police personnel and is all set to recruit many more.

On the education front, the biggest feat of the UP government has been the decimation of the copying mafia in board examinations. The examination centres which were hotspots of organised copying have been debarred.

During the previous regimes, MoUs would be announced but nothing much followed. We have already seen two ground-breaking ceremonies in which investment worth Rs 1.50 lakh crore — out of Rs 4.28 lakh crore pledged at the February 2018 investors meet — has actualised.

The Lucknow Metro has been operationalised. Work on the Agra and Kanpur metros is on the fast track. The government is also targeting a 24-month deadline for completing three expressways — Poorvanchal, Bundelkhand and Ganga. These super highways will provide direct road access to the national capital: One can drive down to any corner of the state from Delhi in 8-10 hours.

The success of the government in controlling Japanese encephalitis in eastern UP is the stuff of folklore. When over 60 children died at Gorakhpur's BRD Hospital in August 2017, Adityanath was unfairly criticised. Everyone forgot that he was the only leader from eastern UP who fought for the eradication of encephalitis — from Parliament to the street. He, however, took the criticism in his stride and marshalled a final assault on the menace. Result: The number of deaths from AES has dropped from 655 in 2017 to just 42 in 2019 (till September 15). The number of JE cases has dropped from 93 to just 4.

When have you seen a CM who visits three different locations in the state to have a first-hand account of development work, comes back to the state capital to hold a cabinet meeting in the evening and then again sits through hours-long power-point presentations of the departments or video-conferencing with districts? It's this work culture that has led to the success of mega events like the Kumbh — the biggest so far visited by nearly 22 crore people — and Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas.

The biggest endorsement of the UP CM's work was the affection shown by the people of UP in the Lok Sabha elections. While the critics and Opposition were expecting a saffron doom after the forging of an opportunistic alliance between the SP and BSP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma and Adityanath's work stunned the naysayers. The honour didn't come as a surprise to those who have been watching Adityanath ever since he became an MP at the age of 26 in 1998. He had been one of the best performing MPs for nearly two decades. But one would hardly find his mention whenever MPs' report cards were discussed.

Since Adityanath wears saffron and takes pride in being a torch-bearer of Hindutva, there has been a sustained design to ignore all his work as a people's representative. Can there be a starker example of intolerance?

The writer is media adviser to the UP chief minister

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A FINE BALANCE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Govt calling the SC shots?' (IE, October 16). Article 124 gives primacy to the President on appointments to the higher judiciary, with the President being bound by the advice of the council of ministers. So in effect, the executive has an upper hand. The Supreme Court should have given the NJAC a fair trial before adjudicating on its fate. The judiciary lost an exceptional opportunity to work with the other branches of the government in an institutional arrangement. The NJAC would have institutionalised the process of appointments in the higher judiciary, by keeping executive adhocism in check.

Sudip Kumar Dey, *Kolkata*

WIN THE HEARTS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Erasing the slate' (IE, October 16).The government's attempt to write off the past political legacy in J&K and experiment with new or middle rung of leaders is not prudent. It will not assuage the sentiments in the Valley. The government's action can be likened with the country's colonial rulers. J&K is an integral part of India and these developments further alienate its people.

Deepak Singhal, *Chennai*

CAPTAIN AGAIN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Running the game'. The appointment of former Indian Cricket Team Captain Sourav Ganguly as BCCI President is heart-warming news. It's good to learn that Ganguly's priority is first-class players and clearing the mess at the richest cricket body in the world. Issues like why there is no Indian umpire in the ICC Elite panel and reducing the gulf between women and men's cricket should also be Ganguly's priorities. Total transparency when it comes to financial management is something the BCCI cannot put on the backburner. With Anshuman Gaikwad and Shantha Rangaswamy having been elected as Indian Cricketer Association's representatives, issues pertaining to former players like pension will be taken care.

Bal Govind, *Noida*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

STUBBLE PROBLEM

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Court tells NGT, more subsidies will not reduce stubble burning,' (IE, October 16). The burning of crop stubble is a problem that comes to haunt Punjab and Haryana every year and its effects are seen on the rising pollution levels in the neighbouring Delhi. In 2015, the National Green Tribunal had banned the burning of crop stubble but the farmers in Punjab and Haryana continued the practice. One solutions could be to use machines to weed out the crop residue.

Devendra Khurana, *Bhopal*

MANTO REDUX

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Where do I belong?' (IE, October 14). Obtaining a legal identity is so convoluted, so complex that if Sadat Hasan Manto was alive today, he would have found us all as flustered as his iconic character, Toba Tek Singh.

Sangeeta Kampani, *Mumbai*

TELLING NUMBERS

Half of India's children suffer from malnutrition: UNICEF

STUNTED, WASTED OR UNDERWEIGHT, U-5s (%)

India 2015	54
REGION	50
Afghanistan	49
Bangladesh 2014	46
Nepal 2016	43
Pakistan 2018	43
Bhutan 2010	40
Maldives 2009	32
Sri Lanka	28

State of the World's Children 2119, UNICEF

HIGHEST BURDEN OF DEATH AMONG CHILDREN (IN 1000s) UNDER AGE 5, 2018

India	882
Nigeria	866
Pakistan	409
DR Congo	296
Ethiopia	191
China	146
Indonesia	121
Tanzania	107
Angola	94
Bangladesh	89

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 16

ON TUESDAY, UNICEF released its State of the World's Children report for 2019. The first UNICEF report in 20 years on child nutrition, it comes on the heels of the Global Hunger Index report released by the organisation Welthungerhilfe. The UNICEF report found that one in three children under the age of five years — around 200 million children worldwide — are either undernourished or overweight. And in India, every second child is affected by some form of malnutrition.

The report said 35% of Indian children suffer from stunting due to lack of nutrition, 17% suffer from wasting, 33% are underweight and 2% are overweight. According to government figures, stunting and wasting among children in the country has reduced by 3.7 per cent and the number of underweight children have reduced by 2.3 per cent from 2016 to 2018.

Among countries in South Asia, India fares the worst (54%) on prevalence of children under five who are either stunted, wasted or overweight. Afghanistan and Bangladesh follow at 49% and 46%, respectively. Sri Lanka and the Maldives are the better performing countries in the region, at 28% and 32%, respectively.

India also has the highest burden of deaths among children under five per year, with over 8 lakh deaths in 2018. It is followed by Nigeria, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, at 8.6 lakh, 4.09 lakh and 2.96 lakh deaths per year, respectively.

The report said "an alarmingly high number of children" are suffering the consequences of poor diets and a "food system that is failing them". "Almost two in three children between six months and two years are not fed food that supports their rapidly growing bodies and brains. This puts them at risk of poor brain development, weal learning, low immunity, increased infections and in many cases, death," it said.

UN officials said in India. poverty, urbanisation as well as climate change are some of the factors that are driving poor diet. Only 61% Indian children, adoloscents and mothers consume dairy products at least once a week, and only 40% of them consume fruit once a week. One in five children under age 5 has vitamin A deficiency, which is a severe health problem in 20 states. Every second woman in the country is anaemic, as are 40.5% children. One in ten children are pre-diabetic. Indian children are being diagnosed with adult diseases such as hypertension, chronic kidney disease and diabetes.

"In recent decades, our diet has dramatically changed because of both globalisation and urbanisation. India moved away from seasonal food as well as traditional food one hand and consumption of processed food has increased on the other. Obesity is spiralling out of control, not just in the developed nations but also in developing countries," said Shariqua Yunus, Chief of Nutrition, World Food Programme.

Chief, Nutrition, UNICEF India, Arjan de Wagt said although poverty has not been eradicated entirely, India has progressed from extreme poverty, but access to nutrition is still a major challenge in the country. "Last week I visited Gujarat. At one of the schools I was visiting in a village, right next to this small school was a kiosk selling chips and sodas. I asked where fruit was sold, and they told me that at least 5-6 km away. So this is obviously a problem where unhealthy cheap processed food is so easily available. Many governments are now considering taxing products like sodas. On the other hand, I have never seen the mobilisation of such large numbers for any programme such as that being done for Poshan Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission) launched by the government, or such financial commitment being made to such a programme. What the government needs to do is to ensure it is sustained," de Wagt said.

INPUTS BY MEHR GILL

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Hunger index: Why India trails

In Global Hunger Index report, India has the highest percentage of children who suffer from acute undernutrition. On other parameters, where India has improved, the pace has been relatively slow

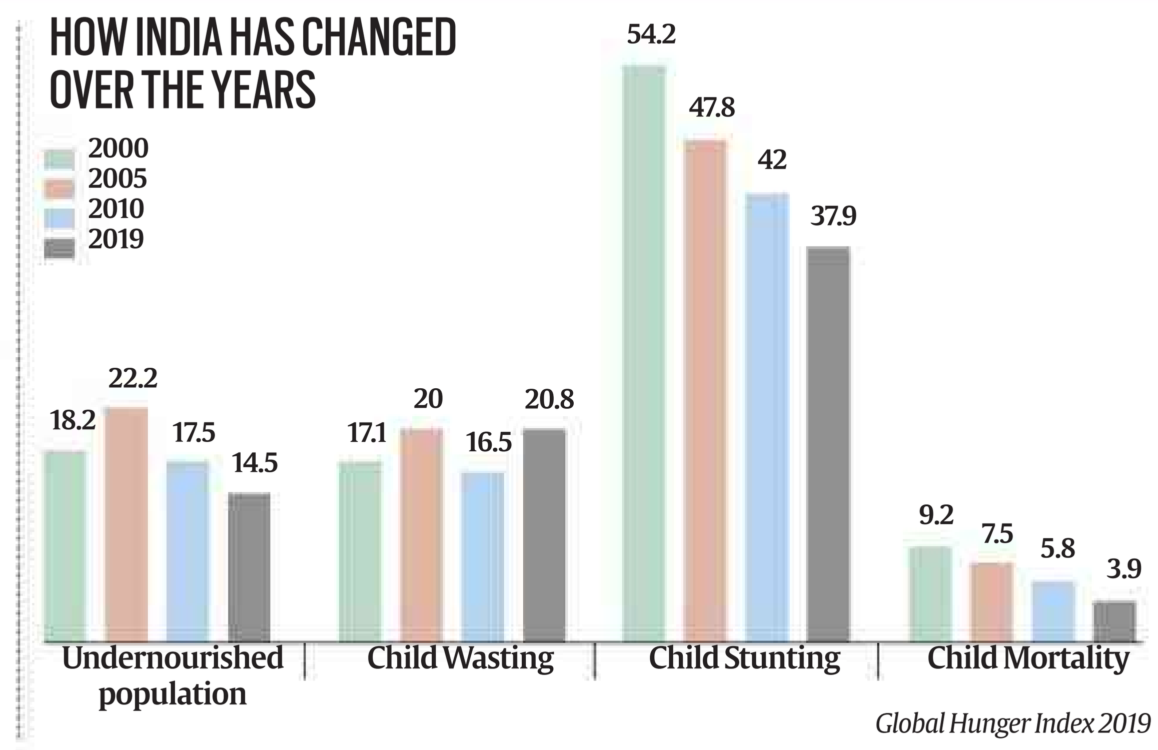
UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 16

LOW RANK, CHILD WASTING KEY CONCERN

WHERE INDIA STANDS, 2019

Rank	Score	Country
1 to 17	<5	Chile, Kuwait, Turkey etc.
18	5.3	Brazil
22	5.8	Russian Federation
25	6.5	China
34	8.5	Saudi Arabia
59	14	South Africa
70	20.1	Indonesia
80	23.6	Botswana
88	25.8	Bangladesh
94	28.5	Pakistan
102	30.3	India
108	33.8	Afghanistan
111	34.7	Haiti
116	45.9	Yemen

HOW INDIA HAS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS



Global Hunger Index 2019

THE LATEST Global Hunger Index (GHI) has ranked India a lowly 102 among the 117 countries it has mapped. In 2018, India was pegged at 103 but last year 119 countries were mapped. So while the rank is one better this year, in reality, India is not better off in comparison to the other countries. The GHI slots countries on a scale ranging from "low" hunger to "moderate", "serious", "alarming", and "extremely alarming". India is one of the 47 countries that have "serious" levels of hunger.

On the whole, the 2019 GHI report has found that the number of hungry people has risen from 785 million in 2015 to 822 million. It further states that "multiple countries have higher hunger levels now than in 2010, and approximately 45 countries are set to fail to achieve 'low' levels of hunger by 2030".

What is the Global Hunger Index?

The GHI has been brought out almost every year by Welthungerhilfe (lately in partnerships with Concern Worldwide) since 2000; this year's report is the 14th one. A low score gets a country a higher ranking and implies a better performance.

The reason for mapping hunger is to ensure that the world achieves "Zero Hunger by 2030" — one of the Sustainable Development Goals laid out by the United Nations. It is for this reason that GHI scores are not calculated for certain high-income countries.

While in common parlance hunger is understood in terms of food deprivation, in a formal sense it is calculated by mapping the level of calorie intake.

But the GHI does not limit itself to this narrow definition of hunger. Instead, it tracks the performance of different countries on four key parameters because, taken together, these parameters capture multiple dimensions — such a deficiency of micronutrients — of hunger, thus providing a far more comprehensive measure of hunger.

How does GHI measure hunger?

For each country in the list, the GHI looks at four indicators:

Undernourishment (which reflects inadequate food availability): calculated by the share of the population that is undernourished (that is, whose caloric intake is insufficient);

Child Wasting (which reflects acute undernutrition): calculated by the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (that is, those who have low weight for their height);

Child Stunting (which reflects chronic undernutrition): calculated by the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (that is, those who have low height for their age);

Child Mortality (which reflects both inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environment): calculated by the mortality rate of children under the age of five (in part, a reflection of the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition.

Each country's data are standardised on a 100-point scale and a final score is calculated after giving 33.33% weight each to components 1 and 4, and giving 16.66% weight each to components 2 and 3.

Countries scoring less than or equal to 9.9 are slotted in the "low" category of hunger, while those scoring between 20 and 34.9 are in the "serious" category and those scoring above 50 are in the "extremely alarming" category.

What is India's score relative to those of the others?

Among the BRICS grouping, India is ranked the worst, with China at 25 and a score of just 6.5. Within South Asia, too, India is behind every other country. Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan (in that order) are all ahead of India.

Some of the other countries ahead of India are Saudi Arabia (rank 34), Venezuela (rank 65, even as its score has doubled from just over 8 to over 16, because of the socio-economic and political crisis), Lesotho (rank 79), Burkina Faso (rank 88), and North Korea (rank 92).

In stark contrast to India, which has the world's largest democracy and one of the biggest economies, most of the countries below India on the GHI — Afghanistan, Haiti or Yemen etc — are either poorly governed or war-torn or ravaged by natural calamities.

Why is India ranked so low on GHI?

With an overall score of 30.3, India finds itself sandwiched between Niger (score 30.2, rank 101) and Sierra Leone (score 30.4, rank 103). In 2000, India's score was 38.8 and its hunger level was in the "alarming" category. Since then, India has steadily improved on most counts to reduce its score and is now slotted in th" "serious" category.

But the pace of India's improvement has been relatively slow. Nothing illustrates this better than the trajectory of Niger and Sierra Leone, which in 2000 had scores of 52.1 and 53.6, respectively, and found themselves in the "extremely alarming" category of hunger — and were much worse off than India.

So, even though India has improved its score, many others have done more and that explains why despite achieving relatively fast economic growth since 2000, India has not been able to make commensurate strides in reducing hunger.

What are the reasons for which India's improvements have been slow?

For one, notwithstanding the broader improvements, there is one category — Child Wasting, that is, children with low weight for their age — where India has worsened. In other words, the percentage of children under the age of 5 years suffering from wasting has gone up from 16.5 in 2010 to 20.8 now. Wasting is indicative of acute undernutrition and India is the worst among all countries on this parameter.

"India's child wasting rate is extremely high at 20.8 percent — the highest wasting rate of any country in this report for which data or estimates were available. Its child stunting rate, 37.9 percent, is also categorized as very high in terms of its public health significance... In India, just 9.6 percent of all children between 6 and 23 months of age are fed a minimum acceptable diet," states the report.

"In 2014 the prime minister instituted the 'Clean India' campaign to end open defecation and ensure that all households had latrines. Even with new latrine construction, however, population's health and consequently children's growth and development as their ability to absorb nutrients is compromised," it said.

What is keeping the Pixel 4 out of India?

SHRUTI DHAPOLA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 16

IMAGINE BEING able to control your smartphone without touching it. Or dismissing a notification or snoozing an alarm with just a wave of your hand. The idea, then called 'Air Gestures', was first propagated by Samsung with the Galaxy S4 and more recently with the Galaxy Note 10 series.

Now, Google Pixel 4 will use a radar-based Soli chip to introduce Motion Sense, a feature that provides similar touchless, gesture-based controls. Soli also enables a Face Unlock feature on the Pixel 4. But the Soli chipset is also the reason why the Pixel 4 phones are not making their way to India. A look at the reasons:

A Google Pixel 4 is displayed at a launch event in New York on Tuesday. *AP*

What Project Soli is about

Project Soli, driven by Google's Advanced Technology and Projects (ATAP) team, was first showcased in 2015. The idea is that a radar chip can be used to detect hand movements and gestures to interpret what they could mean. It's only recently that Google figured out how to reduce the size of this radar chip and fit it on the front of the smartphone, still ensuring accuracy. That's why it is coming to Pixel 4.

Soli is a dedicated radar chip on the front of the Pixel to collect and interpret raw data from hand gestures. Google says the miniature radar understands human motions at various scales, from the tap of finger to the movements of the body. It is always sensing for movement while maintaining a low footprint — keep in mind Soli is not a camera and doesn't capture images.

Soli relies on a custom-built machine learning (ML) model. Google says these models run on the device and data is never sent to their servers. The radar chip emits electromagnetic waves in a broad beam and when a human hand interacts with this, some of these waves are reflected back to the antenna. The ML model quickly interprets properties of the reflected signal to carry out the required command.

This Motion Sense technology allows Pixel 4 users to wave their hands to snooze an alarm or skip songs or go back to the last song without touching the screen. Users will have the option of turning Motion Sense on or off.

Why not India

Motion Sense will only work in countries where this radar tech has been approved for consumer use. The list includes "US, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Taiwan, and most European countries". India has not yet given the go-ahead for this technology.

A Google spokesperson said the company has a wide range of products they make available in regions around the world. "We determine availability based on a variety of factors, including local trends, and product features. We decided not to make Pixel 4 available in India. We remain committed to our current Pixel phones and look forward to bringing future Pixel devices to India."

The Soli radar chip works on the 60 GHz spectrum frequency as has the least interference for the kind of minute movements Google wants to track. However, the 60 Ghz spectrum is not commercially usable in India.

In a consultation paper titled 'Proliferation of Broadband through Public Wi-Fi Networks', the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India wrote that "most countries have already delicensed the 60 GHz band and this band has a good device ecosystem. The 60 GHz band is also known as V-band or WiGig band (Wi-Fi at 60 GHz) using IEEE 802.11ad protocol." The TRAI also recommend that the "...V-band (57-64 GHz) may be explored for allocation to the telecom service providers." But that is yet to happen.

Without this available, it would not have made sense for Google to bring the pricey Pixel 4 to India.

How a waqf is created, and the laws that govern such properties

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 16

AS THE arguments in the Ayodhya-Ram Janmabhoomi case concluded on Wednesday, the Supreme Court-appointed mediation panel submitted a fresh report offering a "consensual settlement" between parties. In any settlement, the role of the Sunni Waqf Board, a key party to the case, would be significant as the administration of a waqf property is legally determined.

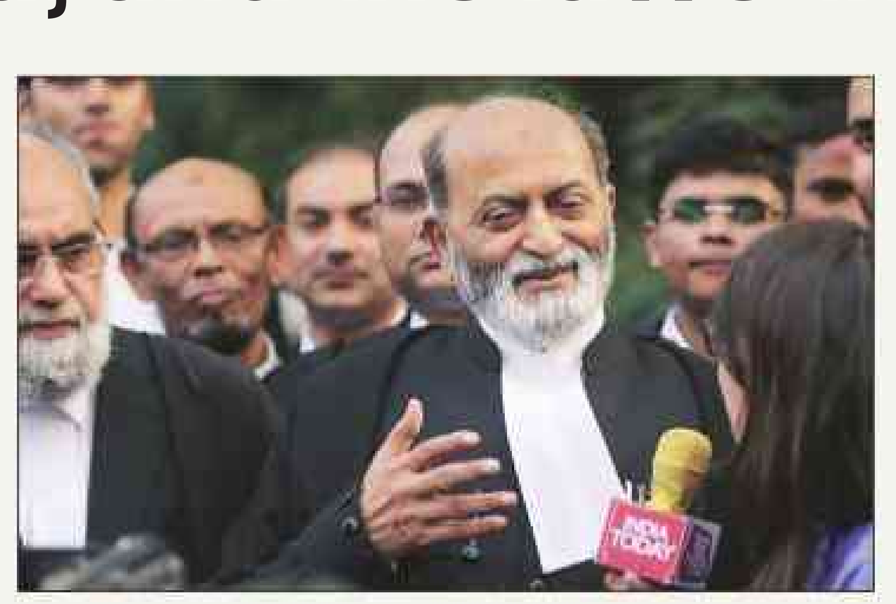
What is a waqf?

Waqf is the property given in the name of God for religious and charitable purposes. In legal terms, permanent dedication by a person professing Islam, of any movable or immovable property for any purpose recognised by the Muslim law as pious, religious or charitable. A waqf can be formed through a deed or instrument, or a property can be deemed waqf if it has been used for religious or charitable purposes for a long period of time. The proceeds are typically used to finance educational institutions, graveyards, mosques and shelter homes.

A person creating the waqf cannot take back the property and the waqf would be a continuing entity. A non-Muslim can also create a waqf but the individual must profess Islam and the objective of creating the waqf has to be Islamic.

How is a waqf governed?

Waqfs in India are governed by the Waqf Act, 1995. A survey commissioner under the Act lists all properties declared as waqf by making local investigation, summoning witnesses and requisitioning public documents. The waqf is managed by a mutawali, who acts as a supervisor. It is similar to a trust established under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, but trusts can be set up for a broader purpose than religious and charitable uses. A trust established can also be dissolved by the board unlike a waqf.



Zafaryab Jilani, advocate for the UP Sunni Waqf Board, at the Supreme Court on Wednesday. *Tashi Tobgyal*

What is a Waqf Board?

A Waqf Board is a juristic person with power to acquire and hold property and to transfer any such property. The board can sue and be sued in a court as it is recognised as a legal entity or juristic person.

Each state has a Waqf Board headed by a chairperson, one or two nominees from the state government, Muslim legislators and parliamentarians, Muslim members of the state Bar Council, recognised scholars of Islamic theology and mutawalis of the waqfs with an annual income of Rs 1 lakh and above.

The Waqf Board has powers under the law to administer the property and take measures for the recovery of lost properties of any waqf, to sanction any transfer of immovable property of a waqf by way of sale, gift, mortgage, exchange or lease. However, the sanction shall not be given unless at least two thirds of the members of the Waqf Board vote in favour of such transaction.

What is the connection between the disputed Ayodhya site and the UP Sunni Waqf Board?

According to the Waqf Act, the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Waqf Board has the power to administer the disputed site. In 1945, in a suit before a Faizabad judge between the Sunni and Shia Waqf Boards, it was held that the Babri Masjid is a Sunni Waqf. The Sunni Central Waqf Board of Uttar Pradesh became a defendant in 1989.

Can a Waqf Board give up its claim to any disputed site?

Since waqf cannot be alienated unilaterally, any unilateral claims by the chairperson of the waqf will have no legal value or bind the Muslim community. Alienating waqf property without prior approval of state waqf boards is an offence and special tribunals established under the Waqf Act have jurisdiction to deal with such disputes.

In the Ayodhya case, seven claimants, including six individual litigants and the Sunni Waqf Board, have filed suits as representatives of the Muslim community. With the arguments concluded and the judgment reserved, it would be too late for the Sunni Waqf Board to withdraw the suits. Even if the Sunni Waqf Board were to withdraw the suit, it would need the vote of two-thirds of the Board which would include members of the Muslim community. The other plaintiffs are still entitled to fight the suit on behalf of their community.

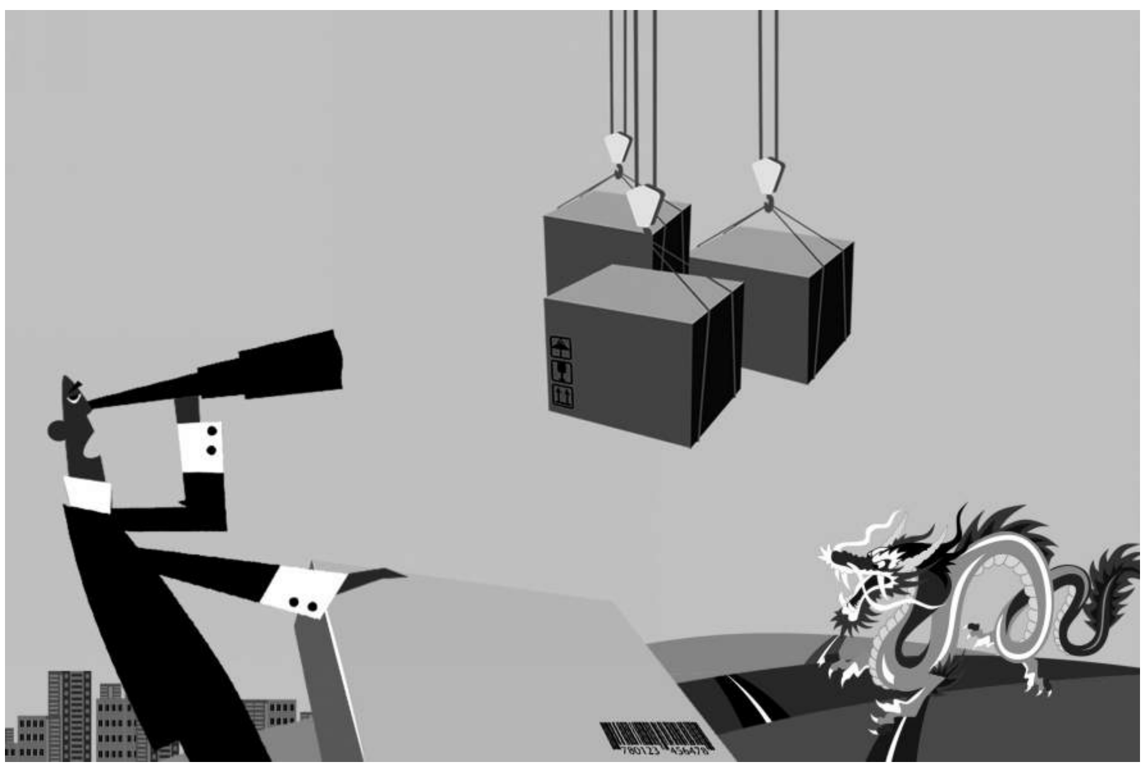
बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड
वर्ष 12 अंक 207

समय पर नीतिगत प्रतिक्रिया

अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (आईएमएफ) ने मंगलवार को चालू वित्त वर्ष के लिए भारत का वृद्धि अनुमान 90 आधार अंक कम करके 6.1 फीसदी कर दिया। यह कटौती महत्त्वपूर्ण जरूर है लेकिन यह विश्लेषकों के लिए कतई चौंकाने वाली नहीं है। विश्व बैंक ने भी हाल ही में भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का वृद्धि पूर्वानुमान घटाकर 6 फीसदी कर दिया था। ऐसे बहुपक्षीय संस्थानों के अलावा भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने भी चालू वित्त वर्ष के लिए वृद्धि पूर्वानुमान 6.9 प्रतिशत से कम करके 6.1 प्रतिशत कर दिया था। अप्रैल-जून तिमाही में वृद्धि के आधिकारिक आंकड़े घटाकर छह वर्ष के न्यूनतम स्तर पर आने यानी 5 फीसदी होने के बाद देश की अर्थव्यवस्था के परिदृश्य में नाटकीय बदलाव आया है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्थानों द्वारा वृद्धि के पूर्वानुमान में लगातार कमी किया जाना समझ में आता है क्योंकि वे अक्सर सरकारी एजेंसियों द्वारा दिए जाने वाले आंकड़ों और आकलन पर निर्भर होते हैं। परंतु चिंतित करने वाली बात यह है कि देश का नीतिगत प्रतिष्ठान तीव्र मंदी का पूर्वानुमान लगाने में नाकाम रहा। जुलाई में प्रस्तुत आर्थिक समीक्षा में चालू वर्ष के लिए 7 फीसदी वृद्धि दर का अनुमान जताया था। आम बजट में तो और आगे बढ़कर 12 फीसदी की नॉमिनल वृद्धि दर की बात कही गई थी। चार फीसदी मुद्रास्फीति के अनुमान (जो स्वयं अतिरंजित है) से इसके लिए वास्तविक जीडीपी वृद्धि दर कम से कम 8 फीसदी होनी आवश्यक है।

आदर्श स्थिति में बजट में मंदी का ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए था क्योंकि अर्थव्यवस्था पिछली कई तिमाहियों से अपनी गति खो रही थी। अप्रैल-जून तिमाही में आई गिरावट किसी बाहरी झटके की वजह से नहीं आई थी। यह सही है कि वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था में भी मंदी आई है लेकिन इसका भी पहले से पूरा अनुमान नहीं था। तमाम प्रमुख संकेतकों का सही पाठ न कर पाने का सबसे बड़ा नुकसान यह है कि इससे नीतियां पूरी तरह प्रतिक्रिया आधारित हो जाती हैं। जबकि सक्रिय नीति निर्माण से नुकसान कम होता है। उदाहरण के लिए अगस्त की मौद्रिक नीति समीक्षा में आरबीआई ने वर्ष के वृद्धि अनुमान को 10 आधार अंक कम कर दिया। साथ ही नीतिगत रीपो दर में 35 आधार अंक की कमी की गई। उस वक्त कहा गया था कि 50 आधार अंक की कटौती ज्यादा हो जाती। बहरहाल, अक्टूबर में उसने वृद्धि अनुमान दोबारा बढ़ाया। मौद्रिक नीति पारेषण में दो से तीन तिमाही लगती है। इसे और बेहतर करना होगा। आईएमएफ का ताजा आर्थिक पूर्वानुमान दर्शाता है कि 2019-20 में मौद्रिक प्रोत्साहन के बिना विश्व अर्थव्यवस्था की वृद्धि 0.5 से कम रहती। मौद्रिक प्रोत्साहन ने चीन-अमेरिका कारोबारी युद्ध के प्रभाव को एक हद तक सीमित किया है। दूसरी तरह देखें तो बड़े वैश्विक केंद्रीय बैंकों ने व्यापारिक युद्ध से जुड़े जोखिम का आकलन किया और पहले ही जरूरी कदम उठाए। विकसित अर्थव्यवस्थाओं में मौद्रिक नीति के प्रभाव को लेकर बहस चल रही है। यह उदाहरण है कि नीतियां कैसे बनें।

कमजोर वृद्धि भी सरकार के वित्त पर असर डालेगी। राजस्व सचिव अजय भूषण पांडेय ने इस समाचार पत्र के अंग्रेजी संस्करण से भेंटवार्ता में सही कहा कि वृद्धि अनुमानों को कम करने से वस्तु एवं सेवा कर संग्रह पर असर पड़ेगा। बहरहाल यदि सरकार ने मंदी को स्वीकार कर लिया होता तो शायद वह राजस्व और व्यय का सही आकलन रख पाती। ऐसे में देश के नीतिगत प्रतिष्ठान के लिए यह जरूरी है कि वह आर्थिक गतिविधियों के आकलन की क्षमता का आकलन करे। इससे नीतिगत प्रतिक्रिया बेहतर होगी। जैसा कि इस अखबार ने पहले भी कहा है, केंद्रीय बैंक, समेकित सूचकांक आधारित सूचनाओं के जरिये आधिकारिक आंकड़ों पर निर्भरता कम की जा सकती है। इससे न केवल आरबीआई को मौद्रिक नीति में मदद मिलेगी बल्कि सरकार को भी समायोजन का समय मिलेगा।



विनय सिन्हा

चीन से बाहर जाते कारोबार में भारत के लिए अवसर

पड़ोसी देश चीन से बड़े पैमाने पर कारोबार दूसरे देशों में स्थानांतरित हो रहा है। भारत के पास इस कारोबार के काफी हिस्से को अपने यहां स्थापित कराने का अवसर है। बता रहे हैं नीलकंठ मिश्रा

इन दिनों ऐसा कोई दिन शायद ही बीतता हो जब कारोबारी जंग की खबर सुर्खियों न बनती हो। इसके बावजूद कि चीन द्वारा अमेरिका से आयात होने वाली वस्तुओं पर शुल्क लगाने के एक साल बाद और वैश्विक मंदी के लिए कारोबारी जंग को दोष दिया जा रहा है, व्यापारिक आंकड़ों में कुछ खास बदलाव नहीं आया है। इसकी जांच परख करने के लिए क्रेडिट सुइस ने 100 ऐसी वैश्विक कंपनियों का सर्वेक्षण किया जिनका समेकित सालाना कारोबार एक लाख करोड़ डॉलर से अधिक है। उसने व्यापार संबंधी आंकड़े और दीर्घावधि के आर्थिक रुझान सामने रखे।

नैसर्गिक नीतिगत अनिश्चितता से परे ऐसी दो वजह मिलीं जिनके चलते विनिर्माण गतिविधियां चीन से दूर नहीं हुई हैं। पहला, चीन की क्षमता केवल अमेरिका को निर्यात करने की नहीं है बल्कि वह घरेलू मांग की भी पूर्ति करता है और अन्य गैर टैरिफ प्रभावित निर्यात बाजारों की भी। बीते एक वर्ष या अधिक वक्त में चीन से अमेरिका को होने वाले निर्यात में हुई कमी की भरपाई यूरोपीय संघ, वियतनाम तथा अन्य देशों को निर्यात बढ़ाकर हुई है। इनमें से कुछ वस्तुएं ऐसी हो सकती हैं जिनको शुल्क बचाने के लिए रास्ता बदलकर भेजा जा रहा हो। हमारी दृष्टि में इस प्रकार चीन के निर्माता अपना ढेर सारा सामान अन्य बाजारों में भेज रहे हैं। यहां दूसरी वजह सामने आती है, चीन से अमेरिका को होने वाले निर्यात में से तीन चौथाई जो तैयार माल के रूप में होता है वह सीधे उपभोक्ताओं को बेचा जाता है। मिसाल के तौर पर वस्त्र, खिलौने और मोबाइल हैंडसेट आदि पर केवल अंतिम सूची में कर लगता है।

पहली तीन सूचियों में बिचौलियां वस्तुएं अथवा वे वस्तुएं आती हैं जो निकायों को बेची जाती हैं। वहां कीमतों पर शुल्क का कोई बड़ा प्रभाव अंतिम उपभोक्ता पर नजर नहीं आता। खुदरा बाजार में बिकने वाला अंतिम उत्पाद जो इन पूर्व सूचियों का हिस्सा थे, उदाहरण के लिए वॉशिंग मशीन आदि, उनकी कीमत में टैरिफ के बाद भारी इजाफा हुआ और मांग में कमी आई। चूंकि विनिर्माता वैश्विक मांग के लिए चीन की क्षमताओं का इस्तेमाल करते हैं, इसलिए टैरिफ पर उनकी पहली प्रतिक्रिया यह है कि एक भौगोलिक क्षेत्र में एक ही देश मूल्य वृद्धि कर सकता है। जब मांग पर असर पड़ता है तब क्षमता में बदलाव का दबाव बढ़ता है।

इससे मध्यम अवधि का वह रुझान बढ़ता दिखता है जो पहले से सक्रिय है। हमने जिन फर्म का सर्वे किया उनमें से करीब दो तिहाई अपने उत्पादन का हिस्सा चीन से बाहर ले जा रही थीं या इसकी योजना बना रही थीं। अगर अमेरिका टैरिफ वापस ले ले तो भी इनमें से 90 फीसदी कंपनियां ऐसा करेंगी। इसकी प्रमुख वजह है चीन की श्रम शक्ति में आ रही कमी। माना जा रहा है कि सन 2030 तक चीन की श्रम शक्ति में 5 करोड़ की और गिरावट आएगी। माना जा सकता है कि यह गिरावट उन 20 करोड़ श्रमिकों में आएगी जो अभी कृषि क्षेत्र में हैं लेकिन विनिर्माण श्रमिकों की तादाद बीते चार साल में दो करोड़ कम हो चुकी है। इससे विनिर्माता परेशान हैं। हमारा अनुमान है कि श्रम आधारित क्षेत्रों मसलन इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स और उपकरण निर्माण, कपड़ा एवं वस्त्र, जूते-चप्पल, खिलौनों और फर्नीचर आदि में अगले पांच साल में 90 लाख से 1.5 करोड़ तक श्रमिक कम हो सकते हैं।

चीन के निर्यात पर पड़ रहे असर को वहां की घरेलू मांग में इजाफा और खराब करेगा। चीन का बढ़ता निर्भरता अनुपात चार दशक पहले लागू की गई एक संतान नीति का प्रभाव है। उपभोक्ताओं की तादाद और उपभोग की उनकी क्षमता बढ़ेगी लेकिन उत्पादकों की तादाद नहीं बढ़ेगी तो निर्यात के लिए उपलब्ध अधिशेष में तेजी से कमी आएगी। मशीनीकरण से उत्पादन में कुछ इजाफा हो सकता है लेकिन आज के रोबोट वह क्षमता नहीं रखते जो मनुष्यों के पास है। कम से कम लागत के आधार पर।

हमारा अनुमान है कि अगले पांच वर्ष में इन उद्योगों में 350 से 550 करोड़ डॉलर का निर्यात चीन से बाहर जाएगा। अगर अन्य देश सक्षम रहे तो यह आंकड़ा बढ़ भी सकता है। सर्वेक्षण कहता है कि सबसे अधिक कंपनियां वियतनाम का रुख कर रही हैं। भारत दूसरे स्थान पर है। लेकिन वियतनाम का आकार इस अवसर का लाभ उठाने की दृष्टि से बेहद छोटा है। उसका विनिर्माण जीडीपी सालाना महज 5 अरब डॉलर की गति से बढ़ रहा है। बांग्लादेश के निर्यात का 90 फीसदी हिस्सा तैयार वस्त्र क्षेत्र में है और वह कारोबारी सुगमता के तमाम मानकों पर पिछड़ा हुआ है। अन्य पूर्वी एशियाई देश या तो छोटे हैं या वहां श्रम से जुड़ा लाभ नहीं है। उन्हें शायद इस बदलाव का लाभ न मिले।

वैश्विक श्रम शक्ति में 2030 तक होने वाले इजाफे का बड़ा हिस्सा सब-सहारा अफ्रीकी देशों, भारत, पाकिस्तान, इंडोनेशिया, उत्तरी अफ्रीका और पश्चिम एशिया में होगा। भारत और इंडोनेशिया को छोड़कर इनमें से अधिकांश देश चीन का स्वाभाविक विकल्प नहीं हैं।

भारत में कुछ बड़ी तकनीकी कंपनियां निर्यात केंद्र में निवेश कर रही हैं और बीते चार वर्ष में इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स वस्तुओं के निर्यात में 25 फीसदी की वार्षिक वृद्धि देखने को मिली है जिससे इन वस्तुओं के आयात में वृद्धि नहीं हुई है। मोबाइल हैंडसेट के अलावा उपभोक्ता वस्तुओं में भी हमारी आत्मनिर्भरता बढ़ी है। अब तक केवल असेंबली का काम हो रहा है लेकिन अब कलपुर्जों की आपूर्ति भी हो रही है।

भारत में अब तक उच्च तकनीक आधारित विनिर्माण नहीं आ रहा है। सबसे अधिक निराशा वस्त्र क्षेत्र में हाथ लगी है जहां श्रम की लागत में काफी अंतर है। जबकि हमारे यहां इसका पूरा पर्यावास है और बड़े खरीदारों के कार्यालय देश में मौजूद हैं। चीन से बाहर जा रहा कॉटन वस्त्र निर्यात बांग्लादेश का रुख कर रहा है जबकि सिंथेटिक कपड़ों का कारोबार वियतनाम। बांग्लादेश में सस्ते श्रम के कारण कॉटन के कपड़ों का कारोबार वहां जाने की बात समझ में आती है लेकिन सिंथेटिक कपड़ों के मामले में चीन में श्रमिक भारत से तीन गुना महंगे होने और वियतनाम में भी 30 फीसदी महंगे होने के बावजूद कारोबार भारत नहीं आ रहा। कारोबारियों का कहना है कि सिंथेटिक धागा बनाने में लगने वाले रसायन पर उच्च आयात शुल्क ने देश में पूरी वैल्यू-चेन को प्रभावित किया है।

प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश में तो कॉर्पोरेट कर में हालिया कटौती के पहले भी इजाफा हो रहा था। यह बीते छह महीनों में भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का एक सकारात्मक पहलू रहा है। इसका मजबूत बने रहना जरूरी है। परंतु अवसर कहीं अधिक व्यापक हैं जिन्हें गंवाना भारत के लिए श्रेयस्कर नहीं होगा।

मामल्लपुरम में मोदी-शी बैठक में नहीं निकला कोई ठोस नतीजा

दोधारी तलवार

अजय शुक्ला

रात्रिभोज तक का ब्योरा देने वाले जबरदस्त मीडिया कवरेज के बावजूद प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी चिनफिंग के बीच चेन्नई के निकट मामल्लपुरम में हुए अनौपचारिक शिखर सम्मेलन में शायद ही कोई नई बात सामने आई। अगर कोई कूटनीतिक कामयाबी थी तो वह भारत की सहनशीलता में थी जिसके चलते यह सम्मेलन संपन्न हो पाया। अगर चीन के प्रति कम मेहरबान देश होता तो उसी दिन सम्मेलन को निरस्त घोषित कर देता जब पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान के साथ शी की बैठक के बाद चीन ने कहा था कि वह पाकिस्तान की सभी मुख्य चिंताओं का समर्थन करता है। यह बयान समूचे जम्मू कश्मीर पर पाकिस्तान के दावे का समर्थन करने की तरह है जो कश्मीर विवाद में तटस्थ रहने के चीन के दावे को नकारता है। लेकिन इस बयान पर बहुत कड़ी प्रतिक्रिया नहीं जताए जाने से शी को यही संकेत मिला होगा कि चीन से ज्यादा भारत मोदी-शी मुलाकात को लेकर उत्सुक है। सम्मेलन में मोदी को शी से इमरान के साथ बैठक का ब्योरा भी चुपचाप सुनना पड़ा।

दोनों देशों ने मामल्लपुरम बैठक की अहम उपलब्धि यही बताई कि मोदी और शी के बीच पांच घंटों से भी अधिक समय तक वैश्विक मामलों, निवेश, व्यापार, आतंकवाद, पर्यटन और संपर्क बढ़ाने के मुद्दों पर चर्चा हुई। मोदी ने 'चेन्नई संपर्क' का जिक्र करते हुए कहा कि इससे भारत-चीन संबंध में 'नया दौर' आने की उम्मीद है। वहीं शी ने बैठक को 'दिल-से-दिल की बात' बताते हुए कहा कि वह और मोदी 'सच्चे दोस्त जैसे' हैं।

लेकिन अनुभव बताता है कि दो नेताओं के बीच राष्ट्रीय नजरिये के आदान-प्रदान से शांति का ही मार्ग नहीं प्रशस्त होता है, खासकर जब दोनों के बीच गहरी सामरिक प्रतिद्वंद्विता हो। ऐतिहासिक समझ रखने वाले प्रेक्षक माओत्से तुंग और जवाहर लाल नेहरू के बीच अक्टूबर 1954 में हुई साढ़े चार घंटे की मुलाकात को याद करेंगे जिसमें दोनों नेताओं ने दक्षिण एशिया में अमेरिका की भूमिका, वैश्विक परिवेश और भारत एवं चीन की स्थिति पर चर्चा की थी। लेकिन उस मुलाकात के आठ साल बाद दोनों देशों ने जंग लड़ी।

सच है कि लगातार सशक्त, संपन्न एवं हठधर्मी होते जा रहे चीन के साथ कूटनीतिक संपर्क रखने के सिवाय भारत के पास शायद ही कोई रास्ता है। लेकिन वह दोस्ती एवं भाईचारे के शब्दाडंबर से इतना भटक नहीं सकता कि इस बात को नजरअंदाज कर दे कि वुहान में हुए पहले अनौपचारिक सम्मेलन के बाद से चीन ने भारत की प्रमुख आर्थिक एवं सुरक्षा चिंताएं दूर करने के लिए कुछ भी नहीं किया है। भारतीय सेना चीन से लगी सीमा पर एक भी सैनिक की कटौती नहीं कर पाई है और हमारी सेना की तैनाती का आधार अब भी दोतरफा जंग की आशंका ही है। हम भारत-चीन सीमा विवाद के हल के आसपास भी नहीं हैं और चीन इस दिशा में उठाए जाने वाले शुरुआती कदमों को भी रोक देता है। अस्थायी सीमा के तौर पर मान्य वास्तविक नियंत्रण रेखा (एलएसी) पर सैन्य तैनाती के बारे में जानकारी साझा करने के मामले में भी यही हुआ है। चीन के प्रभावी थिंकटैंक के एक प्रतिनिधिमंडल ने यही कहा है कि सीमा विवाद को भावी पीढ़ियों पर छोड़ देना चाहिए। बैठक के बाद जारी आधिकारिक बयान भी चीन के इसी रुख की तस्दीक करता है। ऐसे में भारत-चीन संबंधों को मजबूत करने के लिए शी की 'सौ-वर्षीय योजना' का तो वजूद भी नहीं दिखता है।

भारत की आर्थिक चिंताएं भी बदस्तूर कायम हैं। चीन के साथ व्यापार घाटा कम करने और क्षेत्र के 16 देशों के बीच प्रस्तावित मुक्त व्यापार समझौते क्षेत्रीय समग्र आर्थिक भागीदारी (आरसेप) को लेकर अविश्वास कायम है। इस बारे में उच्च स्तरीय आर्थिक एवं व्यापार वार्तालाप व्यवस्था बनाई गई है। यह जल्दबाजी में किया गया प्राथमिक उपचार भर है। खुद विदेश सचिव विजय गोखले ने कहा कि इस पर संक्षिप्त चर्चा ही हुई।

पिछला अनुभव बताता है कि हमें अधिक अपेक्षा नहीं करनी चाहिए। सीमा प्रबंधन के मुद्दे पर जनवरी 2012 और अक्टूबर 2013 में हुए दो सहयोग समझौते भी एलएसी पर शांति बनाने में नाकाम रहे हैं। शांति के बजाय अप्रैल 2013 में लद्दाख के देपसांग में तीन हफ्तों तक तनाव रहा, सितंबर 2014 में लद्दाख के ही चूमर में 16 दिनों तक सेनाएं आमने-सामने रहीं और जून-सितंबर 2017 में तो 73 दिनों तक सिक्किम से सटे डोकलाम में भारी तनाव बना रहा। वुहान सम्मेलन के बाद कुछ दिनों तक रही शांति बहुत जल्द खत्म हो गई।

विदेश सचिव ने बताया कि मोदी और शी के बीच कश्मीर पर कोई चर्चा नहीं हुई क्योंकि यह भारत का आंतरिक मामला है। कश्मीर पर चर्चा से परहेज के वाजिब कारण हैं लेकिन असल में यह आंतरिक मामला होने से दूर है। भारत के मुताबिक, जम्मू कश्मीर के 45,000 वर्ग किलोमीटर क्षेत्र पर चीन का भौतिक कब्जा है जिसमें से 3,000 वर्ग किमी क्षेत्र चीन ने 1962 की जंग में हड़पा था और कभी नहीं लौटाया। बाकी 5,180 वर्ग किमी जमीन चीन को पाकिस्तान ने 1963 में दे दी थी। अगर अब पाकिस्तान के साथ उसके कब्जे वाले कश्मीर (पीओके) पर ही बात होनी है तो फिर चीन के कब्जे वाले लद्दाख पर चुप्पी साधने को कैसे सही ठहराया जा सकता है?

ऐसा लगता है कि अनौपचारिक सम्मेलन की अवधारणा अभी बनी रहेगी। मोदी ने अगले साल चीन आने का शी का न्योता स्वीकार भी कर लिया है। हालांकि महज दिखावा बनकर रह गए सम्मेलन से पाने को बहुत कम है और प्रतिस्पर्द्धी बयानबाजी हकीकत से कोसों दूर है। अगर मोदी ने कविता लिखी तो भारत में चीन के राजदूत सुन वेतोंग ने भी ट्वीट किया, 'वुहान से चेन्नई, यांग्सी नदी से गंगा तक चीन और भारत हाथों में हाथ डाले साथ खड़े हैं'। ड्रैगन एवं हाथी एक साथ टैंगो नृत्य कर रहे हैं।' कई मुद्दों पर मतभेदों के बीच ऐसे मीठे बोल भारतीयों को कृपा बरसाने वाले लगते हैं। एक ड्रैगन के साथ हाथी का टैंगो करना अभी तो दूर की कौड़ी ही लगता है।

कानाफूसी

नयों से नाराजगी

भारतीय जनता पार्टी की उत्तर प्रदेश इकाई इन दिनों अलग तरह की समस्या से जूझ रही है। एक ओर प्रदेश में तमाम विपक्षी दल संघर्ष करते नजर आ रहे हैं, दूसरी ओर अन्य दलों के सदस्यों के लगातार भारतीय जनता पार्टी का रुख करने से उसके लिए अलग तरह की समस्या खड़ी हो रही है। नए नेताओं के निरंतर प्रवेश से भाजपा के पुराने नेताओं के मन में अनिश्चितता और संशय की स्थिति बन रही है। राज्य नेतृत्व जहां इन नए नेताओं को सार्वजनिक सभाओं और संवाददाता सम्मेलनों के माध्यम से पार्टी में शामिल करता है, वहीं पार्टी कार्यकर्ताओं को लगता है कि उनके हाथ से बड़े अवसर निकलते जा रहे हैं। इन अवसरों में आगामी विधानसभा उपचुनाव के दौरान होने वाला टिकट वितरण भी शामिल है। हालांकि इस विवादित विषय पर कोई भी सार्वजनिक रूप से कुछ कहने से इनकार कर रहा है। पार्टी में दूसरे और तीसरे दर्जे के नेता जरूर अवसर मिलने पर मीडिया को अपनी चिंताओं से अवगत कराते नजर आ रहे हैं।

आपका पक्ष

विकसित देश के लिए श्रम शक्ति जरूरी

किसी भी देश के लिए श्रम शक्ति आर्थिक विकास के लिए वरदान साबित होती है। पड़ोसी देश चीन ने श्रम शक्ति से अर्थव्यवस्था को विकसित कर विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में अपना दबदबा कायम किया है। भारत में वर्ष 2017-2018 में श्रम शक्ति दर 49.8 प्रतिशत रही जो वर्ष 2011-12 में 55.9 प्रतिशत थी। ये आंकड़े दर्शाते हैं कि देश की लगभग 50 प्रतिशत श्रम शक्ति का आर्थिक गतिविधियों में किसी भी प्रकार का योगदान नहीं है। जबकि कृषि क्षेत्र में आज भी जरूरत से ज्यादा कार्य शक्ति लगी हुई है। अगर कृषि क्षेत्र से अधिशेष कार्यशक्ति हटाया जाए तो कृषि उत्पादन में कोई खास असर नहीं पड़ेगा। देश को जनसांख्यिकीय लाभ लेना है तो श्रम बाजार में मौजूद इस असंतुलन को दूर करने की जरूरत है जिससे देश प्राथमिक, द्वितीयक एवं तृतीयक क्षेत्रों में संतुलित विकास कर पाए। सरकार मेक इन इंडिया योजना इस इरादे से लाई थी कि विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में श्रम शक्ति के उचित इस्तेमाल से आर्थिक वृद्धि तेज होगी और बेरोजगारी दूर की जा सकेगी। लेकिन मेक इन इंडिया योजना अपेक्षा के अनुरूप कारगर साबित नहीं हो पाई है। सूक्ष्म, लघु एवं मध्यम उद्योग में कुशल एवं अकुशल श्रमिकों की बड़े पैमाने पर जरूरत होती है। इसलिए इन उद्योगों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए सरकार मुद्रा योजना लाई थी। इन उद्योगों से उत्पादित वस्तुएं बाजार में प्रतिस्पर्धा नहीं कर पा रही हैं जिससे मुद्रा योजना के तहत दिए गए कर्ज डूब रहे हैं। सरकार को इन उद्योगों के उत्पाद को संरक्षण प्रदान करना चाहिए ताकि यह उद्योग अपने प्राथमिक अवस्था में विकास कर पाए। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में श्रम शक्ति की सहभागिता दर 50.7 प्रतिशत है जो कृषि क्षेत्र से जुड़ी हुई है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में उद्योगों की कमी है क्योंकि उद्योग लगाने के लिए बुनियादी संरचना नहीं है। अत: ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में बुनियादी संरचना को तेजी से विकसित करना जरूरी है जिससे यहां औद्योगीकरण को बढ़ावा मिल सके और ग्रामीण श्रम शक्ति का बेहतर इस्तेमाल हो सके।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

देश में वर्ष 2017-2018 में श्रम शक्ति दर 49.8 फीसदी रही जो 2011-12 में 55.9 फीसदी थी

जनसंख्या वृद्धि रोकने के हों प्रयास

विश्व में सर्वाधिक जनसंख्या वाला देश चीन है और फिर भारत। हम अपने अस्तित्व पर आने वाले संकट के प्रति कब सावधान होंगे? भारत के लिए जनसंख्या वृद्धि एक अभिशाप बन गई है। यहां की जनसंख्या सवा अरब पार कर चुकी है। आधी से अधिक आबादी गरीबी रेखा से नीचे जिंदगी गुजार रही है। भारत में जनसंख्या वृद्धि के कारण गरीबी बढ़ती जा रही है। जनसंख्या वृद्धि के कारण बेरोजगारी भी बढ़ रही है। जनसंख्या वृद्धि के कुप्रभाव के कारण इसे नियंत्रित करने के लिए परिवार कल्याण कार्यक्रम चलाए गए। इसके अलावा भी सरकार ने कई कदम उठाए जिसमें मुख्य रूप से छोटे आकार वाले परिवार को प्रसन्न करना, विवाह के नियम को कठोरता से लागू करना आदि है। जनसंख्या वृद्धि को रोकने के लिए युवाओं को भी आगे आना होगा और हम दो हमारा एक का नारा भी पालन करना होगा। सभी प्रयासों से जनसंख्या के बढ़ते रक्तबीजों की वृद्धि पर रोक लगानी होगी।

अनु मिश्रा, सीवान

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

दैनिक जागरण

हर बुरे अनुभव से भी एक अच्छी सीख मिलती है

फैसले की प्रतीक्षा

अयोध्या मामले की सुनवाई तय समय में पूरी होने के साथ ही सदियों पुराने इस विवाद के समाधान की उम्मीद बढ़ गई है। चूंकि इस मामले की सुनवाई कर रही संविधान पीठ में शामिल प्रधान न्यायाधीश 17 नवंबर को सेवानिवृत हो रहे हैं इसलिए इसके पहले फैसला आना है। इस मामले में फैसला कुछ भी हो, इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि एक समय यह धारणा बन रही थी कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट राजनीतिक एवं सामाजिक रूप से संवेदनशील इस प्रकरण की सुनवाई करने से बचना चाह रहा है। लंबे इंतजार के बाद सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इस धारणा को दूर करते हुए इस मामले की सुनवाई करने का फैसला किया और उसने दिन-प्रतिदिन सुनवाई की। राष्ट्रीय महत्व के मामलों की सुनवाई में ऐसी ही तत्परता का परिचय दिया जाना चाहिए, क्योंकि एक बड़ी संख्या में लोग फैसले की प्रतीक्षा कर रहे होते हैं। इस मामले में तो फैसले का इंतजार पूरा देश ही कर रहा है।

बेहतर तो यह होता कि अयोध्या मामला अदालत की चौखट तक आता ही नहीं, लेकिन जब आपसी बातचीत से मामले को सुलझाने की कोशिश नाकाम रही तब फिर इसके अलावा और कोई उपाय नहीं रह गया था कि अदालत अपना फैसला सुनाए। भले ही दुनिया की नजर में यह मामला जमीन के एक टुकड़े के मालिकाना हक की लड़ाई हो, लेकिन सच्चाई यह है कि यह आस्था से जुड़ा सवाल भी है। वैसे तो अदालतें आस्था से जुड़े मामलों का फैसला आसानी से नहीं कर सकतीं, लेकिन सौभाग्य से इस मामले में ऐसे साक्ष्य उपलब्ध हैं जो फैसले को दिशा देने का काम करेंगे। इनमें सबसे उल्लेखनीय है पुरातत्व सर्वेक्षण विभाग की वह रिपोर्ट जो अयोध्या में विवादित स्थल पर किए गए उत्खनन पर आधारित है। इसके अलावा अन्य अनेक महत्वपूर्ण साक्ष्य भी हैं। अब जब यह स्पष्ट है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट का फैसला इन्हीं साक्ष्यों पर आधारित होगा तब फिर सभी पक्षों को उसका सम्मान करने के लिए तैयार रहना चाहिए। उचित यह होगा कि दोनों पक्ष इसके लिए माहौल बनाएं कि जो भी फैसला आए उसे सभी स्वीकार करें। पूरे देश का ध्यान खींचने वाले अयोध्या मामले की सुनवाई के दौरान दोनों पक्षों की ओर जो तमाम दलीलें दी गईं उनसे यह तो संकेत मिला कि कौन कितने मजबूत धरातल पर है, लेकिन उनके आधार पर निष्कर्ष निकालकर अपने-अपने पक्ष में दावे करने का कोई मतलब नहीं। यह समय किसी भी तरह की दावेदारी जताने का नहीं, बल्कि यह सुनिश्चित करने का है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले का सम्मान हो। निःसंदेह यह सुनिश्चित करने की जिम्मेदारी उनकी अधिक है जो अयोध्या मामले की सुनवाई से जुड़े रहे हैं।

मजदूरों की सुध जरूरी

देश की अग्रणी कंपनियों में शुमार है कोल इंडिया। इसी की यूनिट है भारत कोकिंग कोल लिमिटेड यानी बीसीसीएल। धनबाद कोयलांचल में कोयला खनन कर देश को ऊर्जा देने का काम इस कंपनी के जिम्मे है। बीसीसीएल में काम करने के लिए पूरे देश के विभिन्न प्रांतों से आए कर्मी और अधिकारी अपना खून पसीना जलाकर कोयला उत्पादन करते हैं। बावजूद इस कंपनी के मजदूरों को जो सुविधाएं मिलनी चाहिए वे उन्हें मयस्सर नहीं हो रही हैं। यह बात इस नामचीन कंपनी की व्यवस्था पर सवाल उठाती है। और सवाल उठे भी क्यों नहीं, हाल ही में बीसीसीएल के लोदना क्षेत्र के भागा दो नंबर में एक दो मंजिला भवन गिर गया। इसमें चार परिवारों के आवास थे। इस हादसे में एक सेवानिवृत्त महिला कोयलाकर्मी की जान चली गई। हैरत इस बात की है कि इस जर्जर भवन की मरम्मत के लिए यहां रहने वाले परिवार कई बार गुहार लगा चुके थे। उनको हमेशा इस बात का भय रहता था कि कहीं भवन ढह न जाए। और, अंततः वही हो गया। दुख की बात यह भी है कि जिनपर सुरक्षा का जिम्मा है, उनकी ही लापरवाही के कारण एक इंसानी जीवन मलबे में दबकर खत्म हो गया। करीब 46 वर्ष पहले कोयला उद्योग का राष्ट्रीयकरण हुआ था। घुट-घुट कर जी रहे मजदूरों को आस बंधी थी कि उनके जीवन स्तर में सुधार आएगा। बावजूद हालात बेहद भयावह हैं। झरिया इलाके में आज भी हजारों कोलकर्मी आग के बीच बने मकानों में रह रहे हैं। कुछ वर्ष पहले घनुडीह में भूमिगत आग के कारण जमीन धंसने से कई मकान क्षतिग्रस्त हुए थे। उस समय भी एक कोलकर्मी की मां की मौत हो गई थी। बावजूद जर्जर भवन और भूमिगत आग के बीच रह रहे कर्मियों का पुनर्वास बीसीसीएल प्रबंधन नहीं कर सका। इन इलाकों में पेयजल का भी गंभीर संकट है। कई इलाकों में लोग आज भी कुएं एवं जोड़िया के पानी पर निर्भर हैं जो पीने लायक नहीं। मगर उसका उपयोग करने की मजबूरी है। इन अव्यवस्थाओं की तरफ ध्यान जाना चाहिए और कोल कंपनी को अपनी प्रतिष्ठा के अनुरूप अपने मजदूरों को सुविधाएं देनी चाहिए। ऐसा हुआ तो मजदूर भी उत्साह से काम करेंगे और कंपनी का उत्पादन बढ़ेगा।

कोयलाकर्मियों को कंपनी को बेहतर सुविधा देनी चाहिए। उनकी जान खतरे में बनी रहती है, यह अच्छी बात नहीं है

प्रभावी विपक्ष में बाधा बनी कांग्रेस

प्रदीप सिंह

नेहरू–गांधी परिवार कांग्रेस के लिए बोझ बन गया है। इसकी वजह से कांग्रेस पार्टी विपक्ष की राजनीति के लिए बोझ बन गई है

खेत की रक्षा के लिए बाड़ लगाई जाती है, पर वही बाड़ यदि खेत खाने लगे तो क्या किया जाए? किसी भी किसान से पूछिए वह कहेगा कि उसे फौरन काट देना चाहिए। नेहरू-गांधी परिवार कांग्रेस के खेत की वही बाड़ है जो अब खेत खा रही है। समस्या यह है कि इस किसान (कांग्रेस) को बाड़ से प्रेम हो गया है। वह बाड़ को बचाने के लिए फसल की बलि देने को तैयार है। इसका परिणाम दिखना शुरू हो गया है। परिवार की साख खत्म हो चुकी है और पार्टी अंतः विस्फोट का शिकार हो गई है। लोग पार्टी छोड़ रहे हैं। जो अभी तक बने हुए हैं, वे पार्टी के प्रेम के कारण नहीं, बल्कि इसलिए टिके हैं कि उन्हें आगे का रास्ता नहीं सूझ रहा। आजादी के 72 साल में संसद के भीतर और बाहर विपक्ष इतना दयनीय कभी नहीं रहा। ऐसा लग रहा है कि विपक्ष का कुतुबनामा यानी दिशासूचक यंत्र खो गया है। इसलिए सब एक ही जगह पर गोल-गोल घूम रहे हैं। कांग्रेस के नेता और कार्यकर्ता पिछले छह-सात दशकों से जिस सूरज की रोशनी में दमक रहे थे, उस सूरज को ही ग्रहण लग गया है। महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में विधानसभा चुनाव हो रहे हैं। चुनाव प्रचार और पार्टी संगठन की हालत देखकर यह पता लगाना कठिन है कि पार्टी अपनी मुख्य प्रतिद्वंद्वी भाजपा से लड़ रही है या आपस में? लोकसभा चुनाव के समय से शुरू हुआ कांग्रेस छोड़ने वालों का सिलसिला रुकने का नाम ही नहीं ले रहा। नेतृत्व को इसकी कोई चिंता है, ऐसा दिखता नहीं।

कांग्रेस इस समय तीन स्वतंत्र द्वीपों में बंट गई है। इनके नाम हैं सोनिया, राहुल और प्रियंका। आप चाहें तो इन्हें द्वीप के बजाय गणराज्य भी कह सकते हैं। काफी समय से यह लड़ाई परिवार के अंदर चल रही थी। अब खुले में आ गई है। तीनों एक दूसरे के खिलाफ कुछ नहीं बोलते, पर शायद एक-दूसरे की सुनते भी नहीं। उनके गण जरूर बोल रहे हैं और क्या खुलकर बोल रहे हैं। अशोक तंवर और संजय निरुपम खुलेआम बोल रहे हैं कि राहुल गांधी के लोगों को निशाना बनाया जा रहा है। सोनिया गांधी और प्रियंका खामोश हैं।

राहुल गांधी को कांग्रेस कार्यकर्ताओं में अपने प्रति अरुचि पैदा करने में करीब 15 साल लग गए। प्रियंका गांधी ने यह कारनामा आठ महीने में ही कर दिखाया। आप उत्तर प्रदेश के कांग्रेसियों से पूछ लीजिए। ताजा उदाहरण कालाकांकर के दिनेश सिंह की बेटी रत्ना सिंह का है। तीन बार की सांसद रत्ना प्रियंका के रवैये से परेशान होकर मंगलवार को भाजपा में शामिल हो गईं। प्रियंका इस साल फरवरी में राजनीतिक रूप से सक्रिय हुईं तो संकेत दिया कि कांग्रेस अब कम से कम उत्तर प्रदेश में जमीन पर दिखेगी। पिछले आठ महीने में एक दो अवसरों को छोड़कर वह ट्विटर पर ही अधिक नजर आती हैं। उनके ट्वीट पढ़कर उनकी राजनीतिक अपरिपक्वता का ही नहीं, बल्कि उनकी अज्ञानता के स्तर का भी पता चलता है। सोनिया गांधी ट्विटर या किसी सोशल मीडिया मंच पर हैं ही नहीं। वह दिन दूर नहीं लगता जब कांग्रेस पार्टी सिर्फ सोशल मीडिया के जरिये चलने वाली पार्टी बनकर रह जाएगी। कांग्रेस के लिए समय 2004 में ठहर गया है। गांधी परिवार सहित तमाम कांग्रेसियों को लगता है कि कुछ करने की जरूरत ही नहीं, यहां भाजपा गलती करेगी और वहां मतदाता हमारे गले में वरमाला डाल देगा।

अवधेश राजपूत

लोकसभा चुनाव में कांग्रेस की लगातार दूसरी बार दुर्गति हो चुकी है। लोकसभा चुनाव के बाद हो रहे दो राज्यों के विधानसभा चुनाव में पार्टी के पास अवसर था कि वह मैदान में कम से कम लड़ती हुई दिखती। चुनाव की अधिसूचना जारी होने के बाद पूर्व अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी अज्ञात स्थान के लिए रवाना हो गए। कहा गया कि वह नाराज होकर गए हैं। किससे, यह पता नहीं, क्योंकि पार्टी अध्यक्ष तो उनकी मां ही हैं। चुनाव के ऐन मौके पर नेता का गायब होना वैसे ही है जैसे युद्ध के समय सेनापति का मैदान छोड़ना। प्रियंका अब पार्टी की राष्ट्रीय महासचिव हैं। उनके पास उत्तर प्रदेश का प्रभार है। हरियाणा और महाराष्ट्र में चुनाव प्रचार के लिए वह कहीं नहीं गईं। अब गईं नहीं या जाने नहीं दिया गया, यह बात परिवार के अलावा कोई जानता नहीं। उत्तर प्रदेश में 12 विधानसभा सीटों के लिए उपचुनाव हो रहा है। प्रियंका वहां भी चुनाव प्रचार के लिए नहीं गईं। चुनाव प्रचार के तीन दिन बचे हैं, लेकिन सोनिया गांधी भी कहीं चुनाव प्रचार के लिए नहीं गईं। राहुल हो-हल्ले के बाद देश लौटे और प्रचार के लिए मुंबई पहुंचे। उनके प्रिय और हाल तक मुंबई कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष रहे संजय निरुपम सभा में नहीं गए।

जैसे हिंदी टीवी सीरियलों में अक्सर किसी न किसी पात्र की याद्दाश्त अटक जाती है, वैसा ही राहुल गांधी के साथ भी हो गया लगता है। चुनाव महाराष्ट्र विधानसभा का है। उन्होंने अपना भाषण वहीं से शुरू किया जहां लोकसभा चुनाव में खत्म किया था। वह अभी राफेल के मोहपाश से निकल नहीं पाए हैं। उन्हें पता ही नहीं है कि वह इस मुद्दे पर प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को घेर रहे हैं या खुद घिर रहे हैं? इस पर भी गौर करें कि सोनिया गांधी को अंतरिम अध्यक्ष बने दो महीने से ज्यादा हो गया है, लेकिन किसी को पता नहीं कि वह इस पद पर कब तक रहेंगी? भाजपा भी लोकसभा चुनाव लड़ी और कांग्रेस से कहीं ज्यादा ताकत से लड़ी। उसके राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष अमित शाह कह रहे हैं कि दिसंबर तक पार्टी के नए अध्यक्ष का चुनाव हो जाएगा। लोकसभा चुनाव में हार की जवाबदेही से राहुल को बचाने के लिए इस्तीफा दिलाया गया। कहलवाया गया कि नेहरू-गांधी परिवार का कोई व्यक्ति पार्टी अध्यक्ष नहीं बनेगा। जब लगा कि पार्टी तो इसके लिए तैयार है तो सोनिया गांधी के पुराने वफादार मैदान में उतरे और सोनिया गांधी को नए अध्यक्ष के चुनाव तक अंतरिम अध्यक्ष बनवा दिया गया। ऐसे में घी गिरा तो सही, लेकिन अपनी ही दाल में। यानी अध्यक्ष पद घर में ही रह गया।

साल 2014 के लोकसभा चुनाव के बाद से कांग्रेस कार्यकर्ताओं और समर्थकों को इंतजार था कि अब बदलाव होगा, तब बदलाव होगा। पर बदलाव की जितनी बात हो रही है उतनी ही यथास्थिति बनी हुई है। सोनिया गांधी और राहुल गांधी के अध्यक्ष रहते सारे बड़े फैसले परिवार की डाइनिंग टेबल पर होते थे। अब पूरी डाइनिंग टेबल ही उठकर कांग्रेस कार्यसमिति में आ गई है। अब परिवार की डाइनिंग टेबल और कार्यसमिति का अंतर खत्म हो गया है। नेहरू-गांधी परिवार कांग्रेस के लिए बोझ बन गया है। इसकी वजह से कांग्रेस पार्टी विपक्ष की राजनीति के लिए बोझ बन गई है। स्वस्थ जनतंत्र के लिए जरूरी है कि विपक्ष संख्या में भले ही कम हो, लेकिन प्रभावी हो। कांग्रेस के रहते यह संभव नहीं लगता।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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ऐतिहासिक भूल के सौ साल

शंकर शरण

जिस समय गांधी जी भारत में खिलाफत आंदोलन चला रहे थे तब खुद तुर्क उसे खत्म करना चाह रहे थे

भारत में महात्मा गांधी का पहला बड़ा राजनीतिक अभियान खिलाफत आंदोलन में भाग लेना था। यह मुहिम कुछ भारतीय मुसलमानों द्वारा शुरू की गई थी। उद्देश्य था तुर्की में इस्लाम के खलीफा सुल्तान की गद्दी और उसका साम्राज्य बचाना। मई 1919 से खिलाफत सभाओं में गांधी जी के भाषण शुरू हुए। खिलाफतवादियों ने 17 अक्टूबर, 1919 को 'खिलाफत दिवस' मनाया। उसका गांधी जी ने खूब प्रचार किया था। दिल्ली में 23 नवंबर, 1919 को 'अखिल भारतीय खिलाफत कांफ्रेंस' हुई जिसकी अध्यक्षता गांधी जी ने की थी। इन सम्मेलनों में आंदोलन विस्तार की योजना बनी जिसमें सरकार द्वारा दी गई उपाधियां लौटाने, सरकारी नौकरियों का बहिष्कार करने और टैक्स न देने का आह्वान किया गया। ये आह्वान अपने यहां इतिहास के पाठों में पढ़े-पढ़ाए जाते हैं, मगर वह सब खिलाफत के लिए हुआ था। डॉ. आंबेडकर ने अपनी पुस्तक 'थॉट्स ऑन पाकिस्तान' (1940) में लिखा, 'सच्चाई यह है कि असहयोग आंदोलन का उद्गम खिलाफत आंदोलन से हुआ, न कि स्वराज्य के लिए कांग्रेसी आंदोलन से। खिलाफतवादियों ने तुर्की की सहायता के लिए इसे शुरू किया और कांग्रेस ने उसे खिलाफतवादियों की सहायता के लिए अपनाया। उसका मूल उद्देश्य स्वराज्य नहीं, बल्कि खिलाफत था और स्वराज्य का गौण उद्देश्य बनाकर उससे (बाद में) जोड़ दिया गया था, ताकि हिंदू भी उसमें भाग लें।' इसी प्रकार एनी बेसेंट के शब्दों में, 'खिलाफत-गांधी एक्सप्रेस' का तूफान चला। यह आंधी ऐसी चली कि कांग्रेस की पिछली परंपरा झटके में उड़ गई।

गांधी जी ने खिलाफत को 'मुसलमानों की गाय' कहकर हिंदुओं को प्रेरित किया। यानी जैसे हिंदू गाय पूजते हैं, उसी तरह मुसलमान अपने खलीफा को, जबकि मुस्लिम जगत में कहीं खिलाफत की परवाह न थी। अरब के मुसलमान तुर्की के खलीफा से मुक्ति चाहते थे। खुद तुर्क लोग 'खिलाफत' के भार से आजिज थे। यह स्वयं महान तुर्क नेता कमाल पाशा ने कहा था। उन्होंने ही पहले ऑटोमन-तुर्क सल्तनत और फिर खिलाफत को 1924 में खत्म कर दिया। जब गांधी जी खिलाफत आंदोलन चला रहे थे, उसी समय तुर्क उसे खत्म कर रहे थे। खिलाफत के उद्देश्य समर्थन योग्य नहीं थे। तुर्की साम्राज्य बनाए रखने का मतलब था कई देशों को तुर्की का उपनिवेश बनाए रखना, पर गांधी जी ने यंग इंडिया (2 जून, 1920) में लिखा, 'मेरे विचार से तुर्की का दावा न केवल नैतिक एवं न्यायपूर्ण है, बल्कि पूर्णतः न्यायोचित है, क्योंकि तुर्की वही चाहता है जो उसका अपना है। गैर-मुस्लिम और गैर-तुर्की जातियां अपने संरक्षण के लिए जो गारंटी आवश्यक समझें, ले सकती हैं, ताकि तुर्की के आधिपत्य के अंतर्गत ईसाई अपना और अरब अपना स्वायत्त शासन चला सकें।' गांधी जी ने आगे लिखा, 'मैं यह विश्वास नहीं करता कि तुर्क निर्बल, अक्षम या क्रूर हैं।' यह भी गलत था, क्योंकि तुर्कों ने आर्मेनियाई जनसंहार (1915) किया था। उसमें दस-पंद्रह लाख आर्मेनियाई लोगों का तुर्कों ने सफाया किया। उन्हीं को गांधी जी दयालु कह रहे थे।

जिन्ना ने भी कहा कि खिलाफत 'पुराने जमाने' की चीज है और उसका साम्राज्य अब नहीं रह सकता। वैसी साम्राज्यवादी सत्ता बचाने में कुछ कठमुल्लों के साथ जुड़ जाना बहुत बड़ी भूल थी। चौरी-चौरा कांड के बहाने गांधी जी ने जब आंदोलन वापस लिया तो इसीलिए कि उन्हें वास्तविकता समझ आ गई थी। बहरहाल इस्लाम के लिए मुसलमानों में आवेश पैदा कर, उसमें हिंदुओं को झोंककर, 'एक साल में स्वराज' लेने का प्रलोभन देकर गांधी जी ने जो आंधी पैदा की, उससे समाज में गहरी दरार पड़ी। 'इस्लाम खतरे में' के नारे से मुसलमानों में 'काफिरों' के विरुद्ध जिहादी जोश भरा। फलतः मालाबार में अगस्त 1920 में हिंदुओं पर ऐसे हृदयविदारक अत्याचार किए गए कि डॉ. आंबेडकर के शब्दों में, 'समग्र दक्षिण भारत के हिंदुओं में भय की एक भयानक लहर दौड़ गई।' किंतु गांधी जी ने उन अत्याचारों की निंदा तो दूर, बल्कि प्रच्छन्न प्रशंसा की। उन्होंने कांग्रेस को भी मोपला अत्याचारों पर कोई ऐसा प्रस्ताव लेने से रोका, ताकि 'मुसलमानों की भावनाओं को आघात न पहुंचे।' कांग्रेस नेता और विद्वान केएम मुंशी के अनुसार अधिकांश नेता मानते थे कि गांधी जी एक गलत उद्देश्य के लिए अनैतिक काम कर रहे हैं जिससे बड़े पैमाने पर हिंसा होगी और सुशिक्षित हिंदू-मुस्लिमों की राजनीतिक भागीदारी घटेगी। जिन्ना ने भी गांधी जी को चेतावनी दी थी कि मुल्ले-मौलवियों को राजनीतिक मंच देकर वह बड़ी भूल कर रहे हैं। इस मसले पर लाला लाजपत राय, एनी बेसेंट, रवींद्रनाथ टैगोर, श्रीअरविंद आदि मनीषियों ने भी सार्वजनिक चिंता प्रकट की थी। मौलाना आजाद सुभानी जैसे मुस्लिम नेता अंग्रेजों से भी बड़ा दुश्मन '22 करोड़ हिंदुओं' को मानते थे।

स्वामी श्रद्धानंद ने एक खिलाफत सभा का विवरण दिया है जिसमें वह गांधी जी के साथ सम्मिलित हुए थे। उसमें मौलाना लोग बार-बार हिंसा का आह्वान कर रहे थे। स्वामी श्रद्धानंद के शब्दों में, 'जब मैंने खिलाफत आंदोलन के इस पहलू की ओर ध्यान दिलाया तो महात्मा जी मुस्कुराए और कहने लगे कि वह ब्रिटिश नौकरशाही की ओर इंगित कर रहे हैं। उत्तर में मैंने कहा कि यह सब तो अहिंसा के विचार का विनाश करने जैसा है और जब मुस्लिम मौलानाओं के मन में उलटी भावनाएं आ गई हैं तो उन्हें इस हिंसा का इस्तेमाल हिंदुओं के विरुद्ध करने से कोई रोक नहीं सकेगा।' आखिर वही हुआ। खिलाफत आंदोलन के दौरान और खिलाफत के खात्मे के बाद हिंदुओं को इस्लामी रोष का शिकार बनाया गया। स्टैनले वोलपार्ट ने 'जिन्ना ऑफ पाकिस्तान' (1984) में लिखा है कि खिलाफत के खात्मे पर पूरे भारत में जहां-तहां मुसलमानों ने हिंदुओं पर गुस्सा उतारा। हत्या, दुष्कर्म, जबरन धर्मांतरण, अंग-भंग और क्रूर अत्याचार किए। पूरे खिलाफत आंदोलन के दौर की परख करने पर आश्चर्य होता है कि गांधी जी के अहिंसा संबंधी दोहरेपन तथा खिलाफत आंदोलन की किस बड़े पैमाने पर लीपा-पोती हुई है। उस आंदोलन के दुष्परिणामों से देश आज तक पूरी तरह नहीं उबर सका है। इसीलिए अपने-अपने कारणों से यहां सभी राजनीतिक धाराएं उसकी चर्चा से बचती हैं। जबकि यह उस ऐतिहासिक आंदोलन का शताब्दी वर्ष है।

(लेखक राजनीतिक शास्त्र के प्रोफेसर हैं)

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ऊर्जा

चिंताओं का शमन

इस नश्वर संसार में हर व्यक्ति किसी न किसी बात से परेशान रहता है, उसे कोई न कोई चिंता खाए रहती है। जीवन की छोटी-बड़ी घटनाओं से किसी न किसी रूप में वह हमेशा ही हलकान रहता है। आशय यह है कि मानव जीवन का परेशानियों और चिंताओं से ताल्लुकात शाश्वत है जो जन्म की पहली सांस से लेकर मृत्यु की अंतिम सांस तक अनवरत रूप से चलता रहता है।

महाभारत के एक प्रसंग में यक्ष ने युधिष्ठिर से एक प्रश्न पूछा था, 'वायु से भी अधिक तीव्र गति किसकी होती है?' युधिष्ठिर ने उत्तर दिया था कि मानव का मन हवा की गति से भी अधिक तेज दौड़ता है। मानव-मन से अधिक तीव्र गति इस संसार में किसी की भी नहीं हो सकती है, लेकिन युधिष्ठिर के इस उत्तर में एक अहम प्रश्न छुपा हुआ है। वह यह है कि मानव के मन की वायु से भी अधिक तेज गति के मूलभूत कारण क्या हैं? आखिर इसको पोषण और उत्प्रेरण कहां से प्राप्त होता है? इस प्रश्न के उत्तर के लिए हमें गंभीर आत्मविश्लेषण करने की जरूरत है। खुद की जीवनशैली और संस्कारों की बड़ी सूक्ष्मता से आत्म-मीमांसा की दरकार है। सच पूछिए तो मानव का मन इच्छाओं से इस कदर बंधा होता है कि मन में कोई इच्छा उठी नहीं कि यह लम्हा भर देरी किए बिना साध्य तक पहुंच जाता है।

इतना ही नहीं, इच्छाओं की लीला भी बड़ी गजब है। एक इच्छा पूरी हुई नहीं कि दूसरी उठ खड़ी होती है, तीसरी उठ खड़ी होती है और अनंत तक चलती रहती है। अर्थात चिंताओं से बचने के लिए मन पर नियंत्रण अनिवार्य है और यह कार्य आसान नहीं है। इसके लिए इच्छाओं को वशीभूत करना सबसे महत्वपूर्ण शर्त है। गौतम बुद्ध ने भी मानव इच्छाओं को ही सांसारिक दुखों और परेशानियों का सबब बताया था। लिहाजा यदि सात्विक और अपरिग्रह जीवनमूल्यों को अपनाकर इच्छाओं का दमन कर लिया जाए तो जीवन की परेशानियों और चिंताओं को सहज रूप से शमित किया जा सकता है। मन और इच्छाओं पर काबू पाकर ही जीवन को सही दिशा दी जा सकती है।

श्रीप्रकाश शर्मा

कब रुकेगी भ्रूणहत्या की कुरीति

मोनिका शर्मा

हाल ही में राजधानी दिल्ली में पुलिस और स्वास्थ्य विभाग की टीम द्वारा एक कॉल सेंटर पर छापा मारने पर एक दुखद और हैरान करने वाला सच सामने आया है। इस कॉल सेंटर में आइवीएफ के जरिये महिलाओं को शत-प्रतिशत बेटा पैदा करने की गारंटी दी जाती थी। मोटी रकम वसूलकर बच्चे के लिंग की जांच का इंतजाम किया जाता था। हमारे देश में लिंग परीक्षण के लिए कड़े कानून बने हुए हैं। ऐसे में इस अमानवीय धंधे से जुड़े लोगों ने महिलाओं को विदेश भेजकर लिंग परीक्षण करवाने की राह निकाल ली। महिलाओं को उन देशों में भेजा जाता था जहां गर्भ में पल रहे बच्चे का लिंग परीक्षण कराना गैर-कानूनी नहीं है। जांच में सामने आया है कि इस आइवीएफ सेंटर के माध्यम से महिलाओं को मनचाही संतान पाने के लिए दुबई, सिंगापुर और थाईलैंड जैसे देशों में भेजा जाता था। राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर जाल फैलाए इस रैकेट का देश भर में करीब 100 आइवीएफ केंद्रों के साथ जुड़ाव था। कहने को प्रगतिशील और बदलाव की राह पर आगे बढ़ रहे हमारे समाज में परंपराओं और रूढ़ियों की जकड़न देखिए कि इस कॉल सेंटर के माध्यम से परीक्षण के लिए अभी तक करीब 6 लाख लोगों को विदेशों में भेजा जा चुका है। अफसोस कि देश में बेटियों को बचाने और पढ़ाने की मुहीम तो चलाई जा रही है, पर उनकी स्वीकार्यता आज भी पुरातनपंथी सोच के बोझ तले ही दबी है। ऐसे हालात तब हैं जब लिंगानुपात राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर चिंता का विषय बना हुआ है। राष्ट्रीय औसत के अनुसार देश में प्रति 1000 लड़कों के पीछे 943 लड़कियां हैं।

जिस समाज में बेटियों को दुनिया में आने का हक न मिले वहां उनके दूसरे मानवीय अधिकारों की बात ही बेमानी है

दरअसल बेटियों की सहज स्वीकार्यता न होने की यह स्थिति पुख्ता करती है कि हमारे समाज में विचार और व्यवहार के स्तर पर दोहरे मानक बने हुए हैं। कुछ समय पहले आई यूनिसेफ की एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक सुनियोजित लिंगभेद के कारण भारत की आबादी से करीब 5 करोड़ लड़कियां और महिलाएं गायब हैं। अफसोस कि बेटी बचाओ-बेटी पढ़ाओ के नारे तो लगते हैं, पर कन्या भ्रूणहत्या जैसी कुरीतियां भी मौजूद हैं। चिंतनीय है बेटियों को गर्भ में मार डालने का कृत्य केवल आपराधिक मामला भर नहीं है। यह पूरे सामज का ताना-बाना बिगाड़ने वाली सोच है। कई प्रदेशों में बेटों को दुल्हन नहीं मिल रही है। महिलाओं के खिलाफ अपराध बढ़ने की एक वजह यह भी है।

इस समस्या का हल सरकारी अभियान और कानूनी सख्ती से ज्यादा सामाजिक सोच में बदलाव से निकल पाएगा। बेटे की चाहत ही नहीं दहेज, बढ़ते महिला अपराध, लैंगिक असमानता और सामाजिक भेदभाव भी ऐसे बड़े कारण हैं जो बेटियों की स्वीकार्यता में बाधक बनते हैं। बेटियों के साथ जन्म से पहले ही दोयम दर्जे का व्यवहार न हो इसके लिए लोगों को संवेदनशील बदलना आवश्यक है। यह लड़कियों के प्रति समाज का नजरिया बदलने में सहायक साबित होगी। यकीनन यह कुरीति सामूहिक सहभागिता और इससे जुड़े समस्त पहलुओं पर जागरूकता आने से ही दूर हो पाएगी।

(लेखिका सामाजिक मामलों की जानकार हैं)

मेलबाक्स

राजनीति में नेतृत्व ही निर्णायक है

संघ के प्रयोगों से लाभ उठाती भाजपा शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में बद्री नारायण ने राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ को आधार बनाकर जिस भारतीय समाज का विश्लेषण किया है, वह विभिन्न धर्मों, पंथों और भाषा-भाषियों से समन्वित है। माना कि राजनीति में बहुल सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमि वाले समाज की आवश्यक भूमिका है, लेकिन इस समाज ने उसी का नेतृत्व स्वीकार किया जिसका आभामंडल उसके हितों को आच्छादित करने वाला रहा। भारतीय समाज की इसी विशिष्टता ने लालू, मुलायम, मायावती जैसे अनेक क्षेत्रीय नेताओं को राजनीतिक मंच दिया जिन्होंने अपने राजनीतिक आभामंडल से न केवल राष्ट्रीय राजनीति को प्रभावित किया, अपितु क्षेत्र विशेष पर दबदबा कायम कर अपने प्रदेश में बहुमत की सरकार बनाने में भी कामयाब हुए। इसी तरह राष्ट्रीय राजनीति में जब तक कांग्रेस पार्टी को गांधी-नेहरू परिवार का सशक्त नेतृत्व मिलता रहा तब तक केंद्र में कांग्रेस की सरकार बनती रही। 1984 में इंदिरा गांधी और बाद में उनके पुत्र राजीव गांधी की दुखद हत्या के बाद भाजपा और कांग्रेस में रस्साकसी का खेल शुरू हो गया। अपनी ईमानदार छवि से डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह ने कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी के निर्देशन में दो बार केंद्र की सरकार जरूर बनाई, लेकिन सक्षम नेतृत्व के अभाव में कांग्रेस का आभामंडल दिन-प्रतिदिन क्षीण होता गया। इसका फायदा नरेंद्र मोदी और अमित शाह के नेतृत्व वाली भाजपा को मिला और 2014 में मोदी के सक्षम नेतृत्व में पूर्ण बहुमत की केंद्र सरकार का गठन हुआ। मोदी के करिश्माई व्यक्तित्व और उनकी लोकहितैषी नीतियों के कारण उनके नेतृत्व कौशल की छाप भारतीय जनमानस पर इस कदर अंकित हुई कि 2019 में भी भाजपा ने प्रचंड बहुमत के साथ अपने दम पर केंद्र में पुनः वापसी की। लोकसभा की तीन सौ से अधिक सीटें जीतने में भाजपा के सक्षम नेतृत्व की मुख्य भूमिका है। भाजपा के बढ़ते राजनीतिक वर्चस्व का श्रेय आज भले ही उसकी मातृ-संस्था संघ के खाते में दर्ज कर दिया जाए, लेकिन हकीकत में यह प्रधानमंत्री मोदी और उनके जोड़ीदार शाह के करिश्माई नेतृत्व का ही कमाल है।

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करवा चौथ का व्रत

हिंदू धर्म में 16 संस्कारों में से विवाह संस्कार मानव के जीवन का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है। इसमें विवाह के उपरांत अलग-अलग परिवार की महिला व पुरुष संपूर्ण रूप से एक हो जाते हैं। भारतीय महिलाएं विवाह उपरांत अपने परिवार के कल्याण के लिए तरह-तरह के व्रत व पूजा आदि करती हैं। इन्हीं में एक है करवाचौथ का व्रत। इसे भारत के पंजाब, उत्तर प्रदेश, हरियाणा, मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान में विशेष रूप से मनाया जाता है। यह कार्तिक मास की कृष्ण पक्ष की चतुर्थी को मनाया जाता है। इस दिन विवाहित स्त्रियां उपवास करती हैं। यह उपवास सुबह सूर्योदय से पहले करीब 4 बजे के बाद शुरू होकर रात में चंद्रमा दर्शन के बाद संपूर्ण होता है। ग्रामीण स्त्रियों से लेकर आधुनिक महिलाएं तक सभी इसका उपवास बड़ी श्रद्धा एवं उत्साह के साथ रखती हैं। पति की दीर्घायु एवं अखण्ड सौभाग्य की प्राप्ति के लिए इस दिन भालचंद्र गणेश जी की अर्चना की जाती है। इस व्रत के पीछे भले ही कई धार्मिक मान्यताएं हैं, लेकिन इससे पति-पत्नी के संबंधों में प्रगाढ़ता आती है। ऐसे व्रत-त्योहार पश्चिमी देशों में नहीं मनाए जाते हैं। यही कारण है कि उन देशों में पति-पत्नी के रिश्ते टिकाऊ नहीं होते। उनका पारिवारिक जीवन तनावपूर्ण होता है, जबकि भारतीय परिवार स्नेहपूर्ण माहौल में जीवन व्यतीत करते हैं।

ममता, मोहन नगर, पलवल

प्रतिभाओं का पलायन

भारतीय मूल के अमेरिकी अर्थशास्त्री अभिजीत बनर्जी को इस वर्ष का अर्थशास्त्र का नोबेल मिलना यद्यपि प्रसन्नकारी है, तथापि कई प्रश्न चिन्ह भी खड़ा करता है। वे अब भारतवंशी अमेरिकी हैं। क्या यह हमारे ब्रेन ड्रेन की वास्तु स्थिति का परिचायक नहीं है? 130 करोड़ की जनसंख्या वाले इस देश में अधिकांश उच्च शिक्षित युवा विदेश की राह पकड़ लेते हैं। ऐसा नहीं कि वे राष्ट्रप्रेमी नहीं हैं, उनमें भी देश प्रेम हमारी ही तरह कूट-कूट कर भरा है। लेकिन यहां के संस्थान तथा सरकारें व वातावरण उन्हें वे सुविधाएं व संसाधन मुहैया नहीं करा पाते, जो पश्चिमी देश करा देते हैं। इन संसाधनों के बिना वे तरक्की नहीं कर पाते हैं, नोबेल तो बहुत दूर की कौड़ी है। यह विचारणीय है।

डॉ. मनोज कुमार शर्मा, स्याना, बुलंदशहर

इस स्तंभ में किसी भी विषय पर राय व्यक्त करने अथवा दैनिक जागरण के राष्ट्रीय संस्करण पर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त करने के लिए पाठकगण सादर आमंत्रित हैं। आप हमें पत्र भेजने के साथ ई-मेल भी कर सकते हैं।

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

जनसत्ता

17 अक्तूबर, 2019

कुपोषित विकास

इससे बड़ी विडंबना और क्या होगी कि एक ओर दुनिया भर में अर्थव्यवस्था को पैमाना बना कर अलग-अलग देशों में विकास की चमकती तस्वीरें पेश की जा रही हैं और दूसरी ओर बड़ी तादाद में बच्चे कुपोषण के शिकार हैं। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की ओर से मंगलवार को जारी बाल पोषण संबंधी रिपोर्ट में यह आंकड़ा सामने आया है कि विश्वभर में पांच साल से कम उम्र के लगभग सत्तर करोड़ बच्चों में से एक तिहाई बच्चे या तो कुपोषित हैं या फिर मोटापे से पीड़ित हैं। नतीजतन, इन बच्चों पर पूरे जीन कई तरह की स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं से ग्रस्त रहने का खतरा बना रहेगा। 'स्टेट ऑफ द वर्ल्ड्स चिल्ड्रन' रिपोर्ट की ताजा तस्वीर विकास के दावों की हकीकत बताने के लिए काफी है। सवाल है कि अर्थव्यवस्था के चमकते आंकड़ों के बरक्स अगर दुनिया के एक तिहाई बच्चे किसी न किसी बीमारी की चपेट में अपनी जिंदगी काटेंगे तो उस चमक को किस तरह देखा जाएगा! विकास के प्रचारित पैमानों में अगर बच्चों के पोषण पर केंद्रित कार्यक्रम दुनिया के देशों की प्राथमिकता में शुमार नहीं हुए तो सेहत की कसौटी पर आने वाली पीढ़ियों के व्यक्तित्व का अंदाजा भर लगाया जा सकता है।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र की इस रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि हम स्वस्थ खानपान की लड़ाई हार रहे हैं। असल में एक नई समस्या यह खड़ी हो रही है कि कहीं जरूरत से ज्यादा और असंतुलित खानपान की वजह से बच्चों का वजन अत्यधिक है तो किसी परिवार में बच्चों को पेट भर खाना भी नहीं मिल पा रहा है। दोनों ही स्थितियों को कुपोषण के ही रूप में देखा गया है। एक में बच्चे मोटापे से पीड़ित हो रहे हैं तो दूसरे में बच्चों का कद अपनी आयु के मुताबिक काफी छोटा है और वे अत्यंत दुबलेपन की समस्या से जूझ रहे हैं। कुपोषण, भोजन में पोषण तत्त्वों की कमी और मोटापा एक ही साथ आसपास और यहां तक कि कई बार एक परिवार में भी देखा जा सकता है। जहां विश्वभर में पांच वर्ष से कम आयु के बच्चों में से करीब आधे बच्चों को भोजन में आवश्यक विटामिन और खनिज नहीं मिल पा रहे हैं, वहीं लगभग दो अरब लोग हानिकारक खाद्य पदार्थों का जरूरत से ज्यादा सेवन कर रहे हैं, जिसके चलते मोटापे, हृदय संबंधी और मधुमेह की बीमारियां तेजी से बढ़ रही हैं।

जहां तक भारत का सवाल है, यूनिसेफ की ताजा रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक यहां हर दूसरा बच्चा कुपोषण का शिकार है। जबकि देश में हर साल एक लाख करोड़ रुपए का अनाज बर्बाद हो जाता है, यानी चालीस फीसद भोजन वार्षिक उत्पादन में बेकार हो जाता है। जाहिर है, पोषण का यह असंतुलन खानपान की स्थितियों से जुड़ा है, लेकिन दरअसल यह असंतुलित विकास नीतियों का नतीजा है। यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि पूरी दुनिया को अगले दशक के आखिर तक भुखमरी से मुक्ति दिलाने का संकल्प लिया गया है और संयुक्त राष्ट्र के इस लक्ष्य से भारत भी जुड़ा हुआ है। विकास के बरक्स व्यापक कुपोषण के विरोधाभास की यह हकीकत इक्कीसवीं सदी के उस दौर में भी कायम है, जब कई देश अपने सीमा-क्षेत्र में आम लोगों की जरूरतों और यहां तक कि बुनियादी समस्याओं से दो-चार होने के समांतर दुनिया में खुद को विकसित और ताकतवर देशों के साथ होड़ में होने का दावा कर रहे हैं। आखिर क्या वजह है कि विकास के पैमानों में वे सवाल हाशिये पर छोड़ दिए जा रहे हैं, जिनके नतीजों में एक बड़ी आबादी अपने बच्चों का पेट तक ठीक से नहीं भर पा रही है।

बेलगाम लुटेरे

दिल्ली में लूटपाट, झपटमारी की वारदात जिस तेजी से बढ़ रही हैं, उससे लोगों का जीना मुहाल हो गया है। राजधानी का शायद ही कोई इलाका ऐसा होगा जहां लुटेरों का आतंक न हो। सुबह, दोपहर, शाम हो या रात, झपटमार बेखौफ होकर अपने काम में लगे हैं। पिछले तीन-चार महीनों में तो ऐसे अपराधों का ग्राफ तेजी से बढ़ा है। घर के आसपास निकलने में भी लोग घबराने लगे हैं। इस तरह के अपराधों में वृद्धि इस बात का प्रमाण है कि लुटेरों पर दिल्ली पुलिस का कोई बस नहीं रह गया। बढ़ते अपराध कानून-व्यवस्था की रखवाली दिल्ली पुलिस को कठघरे में खड़ा करने के लिए काफी हैं। तीन हफ्ते के दौरान ही तीन बड़ी वारदातों ने दिल्ली पुलिस के सुरक्षा संबंधी दावों की कलई खोल कर रख दी है। सोमवार रात बाइक सवार लुटेरों ने दिल्ली के कमला नगर इलाके में एक जज का मोबाइल छीन लिया। इसी दिन द्वारका इलाके में एक विमान परिचारिका की चेन छीन ली गई। इससे पहले पिछले महीने की पच्चीस तारीख को साकेत कोर्ट की एक जज का लुटेरों ने तीन किलोमीटर तक पीछा करने के बाद पर्स छीन लिया था और भाग निकले थे। यह घटना सरिता विहार इलाके के पास की थी। लेकिन पुलिस हरकत में तब आई जब हाल में राजनिवास जैसे कड़ी सुरक्षा वाले इलाके में प्रधानमंत्री की भतीजी के साथ लूटपाट की घटना हो गई।

इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि लूटपाट, झपटमारी जैसी घटनाएं बढ़ने के पीछे बड़ी वजह युवाओं की बेरोजगारी और पुलिस की निष्क्रियता है। काम-धंधा नहीं मिलने से नौजवान आपराधिक गतिविधियों में जल्द शामिल हो जाते हैं और उन्हें कमाई का यही सबसे आसान जरिया लगता है। फिर, पुलिस की नजर में इस तरह के अपराध शायद कोई बड़े अपराध नहीं, आम बात हैं। पुलिस के इसी रवैये से चोरों-झपटमारों के हौसले बुलंद होते हैं। ज्यादातर मामलों में तो पुलिस लूट, झपटमारी के मामले भी दर्ज नहीं करती। आम आदमी तो इस तरह की घटनाओं की शिकायत लेकर पुलिस के पास जाने की हिम्मत भी नहीं जुटा पाता। उसे पता होता है कि इस तरह की शिकायत दर्ज कराने के बाद पुलिस उसे किस कदर परेशान करेगी। जब पुलिस एक जज की लूटपाट की घटना को चोरी में दर्ज करने पर आमादा हो तो सहज ही कल्पना की जा सकती है कि आमजन के साथ क्या होता होगा। पिछले महीने सरिता विहार में जज के साथ लूटपाट की घटना के बाद यही हुआ था। पुलिस ने पहले चोरी की धारा में मामला दर्ज किया, लेकिन जज की आपत्ति के बाद उसे लूटपाट का मामला बनाया गया। इस मामले में पुलिस अभी तक किसी को नहीं पकड़ पाई है।

सवाल है लुटेरों के आगे पुलिस इतनी लाचार क्यों है? कड़ी सुरक्षा वाले इलाकों में जगह-जगह अवरोधक लगे होने और पुलिस गश्त के बावजूद लुटेरे बिना हेलमेट के कैसे सड़कों पर घूमते और वारदात को अंजाम देते रहते हैं? अगर कैमरे न लगे होते तो प्रधानमंत्री की भतीजी को लूटने वाले पकड़ में ही नहीं आ पाते। पुलिस पर लापरवाही के आरोप इसलिए भी लगते हैं कि वीआइपी मामलों को सुलझाने की दर जहां पचानबे फीसद है, वहीं आम लोगों से जुड़ी वारदात के मामले में यह दर मात्र पचपन फीसद है। ऐसे अपराधों को अंजाम देने वाले पेशेवर गिरोहों से जुड़े होते हैं, लेकिन जहां तक सजा का सवाल है, पुलिस और न्याय प्रणाली की जटिलता और सबूतों के अभाव में बहुत ही कम अपराधियों को सजा हो पाती है। लेकिन हकीकत यह है कि पुलिस मुस्तैद हो और जिम्मेदारी से काम करे तो इस तरह की वारदात पर अंकुश लग सकता है।

कल्पमेधा

मनुष्य को अंधविश्वासजन्य नैतिकता से मुक्त होना चाहिए।

- बर्ट्रेंड रसेल

बिखरते परिवार और बुजुर्ग

ज्योति सिडाना

आज ज्यादातर बुजुर्ग घुट-घुट कर जीवन जीने को बाध्य हैं। यह आज के उपभोक्तावादी दौर का सबसे गंभीर परिणाम है। इसलिए परिवार में भय और हिंसा के पक्ष भी उभरे हैं। मनुष्य के मध्य संबंधों में अविश्वास उत्पन्न हुआ है, वह अलगाव का शिकार है, क्योंकि अमानवीय परिवेश इतना सघन रूप धारण कर चुका है कि वह किसी से भी अपनी इच्छाओं को साझा नहीं कर सकता।

सामान्य रूप में वरिष्ठ नागरिक की अवधारणा को तीन आयामों में समझा जा सकता है। पहला जैवकीय, अर्थात उसकी आयु के आधार पर, दूसरा मनोवैज्ञानिक अर्थात व्यक्तित्व में शामिल स्थिरता के आधार पर और तीसरा सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक आयाम यानी उनके अनुभवों के आधार पर। ये तीनों पक्ष किसी भी बुजुर्ग के व्यक्तित्व का अभिन्न हिस्सा होते हैं। इसलिए ये समूह समाज के लिए एक उत्पादक इकाई बने रहते हैं। ये अपने अनुभवों को समाजीकरण की प्रक्रिया के माध्यम से नई पीढ़ी को इस आशा के साथ हस्तांतरित करते हैं कि अगर नई पीढ़ी उनके अनुभवों को अपने जीवन में प्रयुक्त करती चली जाएगी, तो उनके जीवन के जोखिम या खतरे कम होते जाएंगे। इसी वजह से इन्हें परिवार का मुखिया माना जाता है और परिवार में इनकी प्रतिष्ठा उच्च होती है।

लेकिन अब प्रौद्योगिकी, संस्कृति और गतिशीलता में परिवर्तन के कारण परिवार नाम की संस्था की संरचना तेजी से बदल रही है। इस कारण बुजुर्ग अलगाव, अकेलेपन और पृथक्करण का शिकार हो रहे हैं। परिवार के कई सदस्य स्थानिक गतिशीलता के कारण घर से अलग दूसरी जगह जाकर रहने लगते हैं। परिणामस्वरूप संयुक्त परिवार में जो भूमिका यह पीढ़ी निभा रही थी, वही भूमिका अब पालना घर जैसी बाजार की संस्थाएं निभा रही हैं। परिवार में अब बच्चों के समाजीकरण का काम अब बाजार या तकनीक करने लगी है। संभवतः यही कारण है कि बच्चों में परिवार के प्रति भावनात्मक लगाव और सदस्यों के प्रति दायित्व की भावना नहीं पनपती। इसलिए ये पीढ़ी सामाजिक-आर्थिक असुरक्षा, भावनात्मक और मनोवैज्ञानिक असुरक्षा का शिकार हो रही है। यह कहा जा सकता है कि व्यक्ति की मनोवैज्ञानिक और निजी आवश्यकताओं को संतुष्ट करने में परिवार की भूमिका अब कम महत्त्वपूर्ण हो गई है। इसके लिए दोष किसे दिया जाए, यह एक चिंतन का विषय हो सकता है?

परिवार समाज की नींव होता है, क्योंकि यह सामाजिक संगठन की आधारभूत इकाई है। पूर्व के समाजों में परिवार विस्तृत नातेदारी का एक हिस्सा हुआ करता था, जबकि आधुनिक समाजों में परिवार नातेदारों और संबद्ध समुदायों से कट गए हैं। इसके परिणामस्वरूप भावनात्मक तनाव परिवार का एक आवश्यक, लेकिन नकारात्मक अवयव बन कर उभरा है। यह भी सच है कि सामाजिक परिवर्तन की प्रक्रियाओं ने परंपरागत परिवारों के सामने अनेक संकट उत्पन्न किए हैं, जैसे तलाक की दर में वृद्धि, सहजीवन (लिव-इन-रिलेशनशिप), एकल अभिभावक परिवार, एक व्यक्ति परिवार इत्यादि। संभवतः ये परिवर्तन व्यक्तिवाद के बढ़ते प्रभाव को व्यक्त करते हैं जो परंपरागत परिवारों को चुनौती देते नजर आते हैं। इन परिवर्तनों ने समाज में असुरक्षा, अस्थिरता, तनाव को बढ़ावा दिया है और अब ये परिवारों में भी प्रवेश कर चुके हैं।

आज ज्यादातर बुजुर्ग घुट-घुट कर जीवन जीने को बाध्य हैं। यह आज के उपभोक्तावादी दौर का सबसे गंभीर परिणाम है। इसलिए परिवार में भय और हिंसा के पक्ष भी उभरे हैं। मनुष्य के मध्य संबंधों में अविश्वास उत्पन्न हुआ है, वह अलगाव का शिकार है, क्योंकि अमानवीय परिवेश इतना सघन रूप धारण कर चुका है कि वह किसी से भी अपनी इच्छाओं को साझा नहीं कर सकता। देखा जाए तो एक तरफ तो समाज में स्वतंत्रता बढ़ी है, परंतु पहले की तुलना में व्यक्ति आज अधिक जकड़न में है क्योंकि उसके पास स्वाभाविक और स्वतंत्र जीवन जीने का समय ही नहीं बचा है। अविश्वास, धोखा, स्वार्थपरकता, भावनाओं का व्यवसायीकरण, प्रसिद्धि के द्वारा स्वयं को स्थापित करने की कोशिशें जैसे घातक पक्ष अब जीवन में शामिल हो चुके हैं। इसलिए वह इतना एकाकी है कि किसी पर भी भरोसा नहीं करता, उसकी आंतरिक शक्ति समाप्त हो चुकी है।

राष्ट्रीय अपराध रिकॉर्ड ब्यूरो (एनसीआरबी) की हालिया रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश में बुजुर्गों के खिलाफ अपराध में 4.3 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है। साल 2016 में देशभर में वरिष्ठ नागरिकों के खिलाफ इक्कीस हजार से ज्यादा मामले दर्ज किए गए थे। वरिष्ठ नागरिकों के खिलाफ अपराधों के मामले में महाराष्ट्र सबसे आगे है, जहां ऐसे कुल चार हजार छह सौ चौरानवे मामले सामने आए। उसके बाद मध्यप्रदेश (3,877), तमिलनाडु (2,895) और आंध्र प्रदेश (2,243) का स्थान आता है। भारत में 2011 की जनगणना के अनुसार साठ वर्ष से अधिक उम्र के लोगों की संख्या एक सौ चार करोड़ थी, जिनमें इक्यावन करोड़ पुरुष और तिरपन करोड़

महिलाएं थीं। इनकी देखभाल के लिए सरकार और स्वंयसेवी संगठनों की तरफ से तमाम योजनाएं चलाई जाती हैं, जिसकी उन्हें जानकारी भी नहीं होती। हाल के एक अध्ययन में सामने आया कि देश में पैंसठ वर्ष की आयु से ज्यादा के उनतीस प्रतिशत लोग अकेले रहते हैं, क्योंकि इनके बच्चे या तो विदेश में रहते हैं या नौकरी की वजह से दूसरे शहरों में रह रहे हैं। इनमें से बहुत से बुजुर्ग ऐसे भी हैं जिनके आगे-पीछे कोई नहीं है। ऐसे में ये बुजुर्ग घर में अकेले रहने के दौरान या अकेले बाहर निकलते वक्त अपराधियों के लिए आसान निशाना होते हैं। बुजुर्गों के साथ तेजी से बढ़ रही अपराध की घटनाएं इसी ओर संकेत करती नजर आती हैं।

परंपरागत परिवारों में वरिष्ठ सदस्यों के द्वारा सदस्य को भावनात्मक समर्थन मिलता था। जब घर का कोई छोटा सदस्य या बच्चा अपने पेशे या नौकरी में निराशा और तनाव का सामना करता था तो बुजुर्ग उसके लिए सुरक्षा का कवच बन कर खड़े हो जाते थे। परिवार के वरिष्ठ सदस्य नई या युवा पीढ़ी के लिए एक परामर्शदाता की भूमिका निभाते थे। लेकिन तेजी से बदलते परिवेश ने उनकी इस भूमिका को हाशिए पर ला दिया है। समाज वैज्ञानिक मिशेल बैरेट तर्क देती हैं कि परिवार की अवधारणा में ऐसे तत्व भी होते हैं जो उसे समाज विरोधी बनाते हैं, क्योंकि यह महिलाओं के शोषण की वैधता को स्थापित करता है और परिवार के परिवेश के बाहर महिला के जीवन की किसी भी संभावना को समाप्त करता है। अतः परिवार के इस चरित्र को बदलने की आवश्यकता है।

देखा जाए तो अर्थव्यवस्था का परिवार से घनिष्ठ संबंध होता है। जैसे-जैसे अर्थव्यवस्था व्यक्तिवादी होती जा रही है, वैसे-वैसे परिवार में भी व्यक्तिवादिता का मूल्य बढ़ता जा रहा है। कृषि युग में संयुक्त परिवार थे, औद्योगिक युग में एकाकी परिवार, सेवा क्षेत्र के युग में एकल अभिभावक परिवार और डिंक परिवार (डबल इनकम नो किड्स) और उत्तर-औद्योगिक अर्थव्यवस्था में एकल व्यक्ति परिवार अस्तित्व में आए हैं। परिणामस्वरूप समाज में सामूहिकता की समाप्ति या परिवार की समाप्ति की घोषणा की जा सकती है। जब परिवार संस्था ही समाप्ति के कगार पर खड़ी हो तो समाज या सामाजिक संघठन के विघटन को कैसे रोका जा सकता है? परिवार प्रणाली में होने वाले इस विघटन को रोकने के लिए आवश्यक है कि लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों को परिवार में शामिल किया जाए, लैंगिक समानता को स्थापित किया जाए, लड़के-लड़की को समान शिक्षा और मूल्य दिए जाएं, परिवार में संबंधों में ऊंच-नीच जैसे भेदभाव को समाप्त किया जाए, प्रत्येक सदस्य एक-दूसरे का सम्मान करे, तकनीक या सोशल मीडिया पर निर्भरता को कम करके परिवार के सदस्यों को महत्त्व देने, भौतिक वस्तुओं की तुलना में मानवीय संबंधों को अधिक महत्त्व देने जैसे प्रयास जरूरी हैं।

अगर परिवार मजबूत होता है तो समाज मजबूत होता है और समाज मजबूत होता है तो राज्य भी मजबूत होता है। राज्य मजबूत होता है तो अर्थव्यवस्था, राजनीति, संस्कृति सभी व्यवस्थाएं मजबूत होती चली जाती हैं। किसी भी राष्ट्र का मजबूत और कामयाब होना उसकी परिवार प्रणाली की मजबूती पर निर्भर करता है और परिवार की मजबूती वरिष्ठ नागरिकों की भूमिका पर आश्रित होती है। इसलिए इस विषय पर गंभीर चिंतन की आवश्यकता है।

सिकुड़ती दुनिया

पूजा यादव

दुनिया मेरे आगे

आसपास एक नजर डालें तो ऐसा महसूस होता है कि हम एक बीमार समय में जी रहे हैं। काफी दिनों बाद एक संबंधी के जाना हुआ तो शुरुआती कुछ मिनट आपस में बातचीत के बाद वहां मौजूद करीब दस लोगों में से ज्यादातर की नजर अपने स्मार्टफोन में डूब गई। बीच-बीच में भले ही वे औपचारिकता के लिए हां-हूं कर देते थे, लेकिन उनका ध्यान मोबाइल की स्क्रीन में था। यहां तक कि बच्चे भी खेलने या बात करने के बजाय मोबाइल के स्क्रीन में कुछ देख कर हंस-खेल रहे थे। दरअसल, आजकल लोग अपने कामों में इतने अधिक व्यस्त हैं कि उनके पास ठीक से खाने-पीने तक का समय भी नहीं है। बच्चों पर गौर करें तो एक तरह से झटका लगता है, क्योंकि स्कूली और घर की पढ़ाई का बोझ उठा लेने के बाद बाकी वक्त वे स्मार्टफोन पर व्यस्त रहते हैं। यों आजकल लोगों का लगभग हर काम घर बैठे फोन या लैपटॉप पर ही हो जाता है। मां-पिता बिना कुछ सोचे-समझे अपने बच्चों के हाथों में फोन थमा देते हैं, यह जानते हुए भी कि इससे बच्चों का भविष्य खराब होगा। न केवल पढ़ाई-लिखाई बाधित होने, बल्कि सेहत और बनते हुए मन-मस्तिष्क में एक परोक्ष बाधा खड़ी करने के लिहाज से भी। बच्चों का छोटी उम्र में फोन का बेलगाम इस्तेमाल करना सही नहीं है। इससे उनकी आंखें तो कमजोर हो ही सकती हैं, कई बार इंटरनेट पर मौजूद कुछ अवांछित सामग्री भी हैं जो अगर बच्चों की नजर में आ जाती है तो उन्हें अपनी जद में ले लेती है।

सोशल मीडिया के फायदे और नुकसान दोनों हैं। लेकिन इधर यह देखने में आ रहा है कि बच्चे अपनी पढ़ाई के बजाय अपना बहुत सारा समय सोशल मीडिया पर बर्बाद करने लगे हैं। थोड़ा बारीक नजर डालें, तब पता चलता है कि जब से सोशल मीडिया का प्रयोग बेतहाशा बढ़ा है, तब से हमारे चारों तरफ मानसिक बीमारियां भी बढ़ गई हैं। हर वक्त स्मार्ट फोन के स्क्रीन में डूबे रहना कब एक लत बन जाता है, हमें इसका पता भी नहीं चलता। स्क्रीन पर बहुत ज्यादा समय बिताने के कारण आंखों पर भी बहुत बुरा असर पड़ता है। पिछले कुछ समय से ऐसी खबरें आई हैं, जिनसे पता चलता है कि इंटरनेट और सोशल मीडिया साइबर अपराध के लिए एक आसान जगह हो गई है। बच्चों की निजी जानकारियां, फोटो, वीडियो आदि चुरा लेना और उन्हें ब्लैकमेल करना या डराना-धमकाना एक आम बात होती जा रही है। ज्यादा उम्र के बच्चे और यहां तक कि उनके हमउम्र भी डराने-धमकाने के इस खेल में शामिल पाए जाने लगे हैं। इसके अलावा, युवा, अधेड़ और कई बार बुजुर्ग भी इसका शिकार होने से नहीं बच पाए हैं।

सच यह है कि इस तरह की व्यस्तता की वजह से सामाजिक जीवन में भी असहजता आई है। लोग एक दूसरे पर विश्वास करने के बजाय शक करने लगे हैं। ऐसे तमाम मामले सामने आए, जिनमें सोशल मीडिया के मंचों पर फैली किसी गलतफहमी की वजह से दो लोग या समुदाय आमने-सामने खड़े हो गए। सच यह है कि गलत और भ्रामक सूचनाओं का प्रवाह सबको नुकसान पहुंचा रहा है। इनकी वजह से बच्चों का ध्यान पढ़ाई से निकल कर दूसरी बेमानी गतिविधियों की ओर जाने लगता है। इस ओर शायद लोगों का ध्यान नहीं जाता कि आजकल के बच्चे घर से बाहर निकल कर एक भी खेल नहीं खेलते और न ही अपने बंधे-बंधाए दायरे से निकल कर नए दोस्त बनाते हैं। दोस्त के नाम पर सोशल मीडिया के संपर्क के दोस्त ज्यादा होते हैं और असल जिंदगी में कम। यह समझना मुश्किल नहीं है कि सोशल मीडिया पर विकसित हुए दोस्ती के संबंध कितने उपयोगी साबित होते हैं।

इन दिनों हम जब भी हम बाहर जाते हैं तो अक्सर बच्चों को आइसक्रीम, कुल्फी, पिज्जा, बर्गर आदि की ओर ही भागते देखते हैं। बच्चों ने अब स्वाद के लिए खाना शुरू कर दिया है और पौष्टिक खाना कम कर दिया है। बल्कि वे यह सोच कर तो खाते ही नहीं कि उनके लिए क्या पौष्टिक खाना है और किससे उनकी सेहत बेहतर होगी। बच्चों के माता-पिता भी उन्हें चिप्स, कुरकुरे, बर्गर, पिज्जा वगैरह खिलाते हैं और उनके साथ खुद भी खाते हैं। यह समझने की जरूरत नहीं लगती कि ऐसा करना बच्चों के स्वास्थ्य के लिए सही नहीं है। वैसे भी खाने-पीने की चीजों में बहुत मिलावट की जाती है और स्वस्थ भोजन मिलना मुश्किल होता जा रहा है।

इन सब चुनौतियों से निपटने के लिए सरकार या दूसरों की राह देखने के साथ-साथ अगर हम खुद ही पहल करें तो किसी साधन को अपने और इस दुनिया के लिए उपयोगी बना सकते हैं। इसकी उपयोगिता को ही देखते हुए अब चुनाव जैसी लोकतांत्रिक गतिविधियों के लिए भी सोशल मीडिया और इंटरनेट का सहारा लिया जाने लगा है, क्योंकि आज यह संचार का सबसे अहम जरिया बन चुका है। दरअसल, सोशल मीडिया का सही तरीके से प्रयोग किया जाए तो इसके फायदे भी हैं। जरूरत बस इसे ठीक से समझने की है।

पराली का धुआं

इन दिनों दिल्ली और उसके आसपास के इलाकों के लिए फिर से चेतावनी आई है कि पंजाब और हरियाणा से हर साल की तरह पराली का धुआं आना शुरू हो गया है। इन राज्यों में किसानों ने धान की फसल के अवशेष यानी पराली जलानी शुरू कर दी है। इससे राजधानी के दो सौ किलोमीटर तक दायरे में लोगों के लिए सांस तक लेना दूभर हो जाएगा। दिल्ली सरकार ने तो हवा को शुद्ध रखने के लिए अगले महीने सड़कों पर वाहनों की संख्या कम करने के लिए ऑड-ईवन व्यवस्था फिर से लागू करने का एलान कर दिया है। हालांकि खेतों में पराली जलाना गैरकानूनी है, फिर भी किसान इस पराली जलाने से बाज नहीं आ रहे हैं। हालांकि किसानों के सामने भी मजबूरी है, उनके सामने पराली को नष्ट करने का कोई विकल्प या सुविधा नहीं है। अगर नहीं जलाएंगे तो अगली फसल कैसे लगाएंगे, यह बड़ी समस्या है। इसके लिए समाधान तो सरकारों को ही निकालना होगा। पराली जलाने से खेतों की उर्वरा शक्ति प्रभावित होती है।

● *घनश्याम गुप्ता, बलिया*

सरकारी लापरवाही

आखिर जिस चीज का डर था वही हुआ। हरियाणा, पंजाब और उत्तर प्रदेश के खेतों में पराली जलाई जा रही है और उसका धुआं दिल्ली की ओर आ रहा है। वायु गुणवत्ता सूचकांक में मंडी गोबिंदगढ़, जलंधर, लुधियाना जैसे शहरों की हवा सबसे प्रदूषित आई है। पर अब सरकार के हाथ-पैर मारने और इस प्रदूषण को काबू करने का कोई मतलब नहीं, क्योंकि जब सरकार को सख्त होना चाहिए था, तब उसने सख्ती नहीं दिखाई। इसका नतीजा हम सब के सामने है। परंतु अब सरकार की प्रदूषित वायु को शुद्ध करने की गाड़ी आकर दीवाली के पटाखों पर रुकेगी। लेकिन क्या सिर्फ पटाखों को रोकने या उस पर समय का प्रतिबंध लगाने से वायु को साफ किया जा सकता है? अब सरकार यही कदम उठाएगी और ये भी भूल जाएगी कि तीन सौ पैंसठ दिन की समस्या को सिर्फ एक दिन के प्रतिबंध से काबू नहीं किया जा सकता।

● *जानवी बिट्ठल, जलंधर*

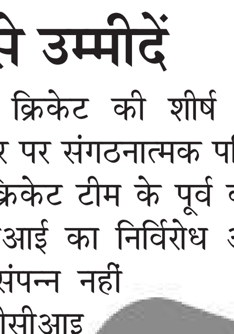
बेकाबू जुबान

हमारे नेताओं की जुबान कितनी बेकाबू होती जा रही है, इसकी ताजी मिसाल हरियाणा के मुख्यमंत्री मनोहर लाल खट्टर से देखने को मिली जब उन्होंने कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी को 'मरी हुई चुहिया' कह डाला। इसके लिए खट्टर की जितनी निंदा की जाए, कम है। एक मुख्यमंत्री के मुंह से इस तरह की भाषा शोभा नहीं देती, क्योंकि वे एक राज्य के प्रमुख और प्रतिष्ठित पद पर अपनी जिम्मेदारी निभा रहे हैं। राजनीति में पक्ष-विपक्ष, विरोध-समर्थन सब होते हैं। मर्यादा में रह कर ही भाषा का इस्तेमाल किया जाता है। यह को पहला मौका नहीं है जब खट्टर ने इस तरह के अपशब्दों का प्रयोग किया हो। वे पहले भी धारा 370 हटाने के बाद कश्मीर की महिलाओं को लेकर बेसिर-पैर के बयान दे चुके थे। लेकिन उनकी पार्टी की तरफ से किसी ने भी इस पर प्रतिक्रिया देने की हिम्मत नहीं दिखाई। एक तरफ महिलाओं के सम्मान की बातें की जाती हैं, दूसरी तरफ एक महिला के ऊपर इस प्रकार की बयानबाजी करना निंदनीय है।

● *हेमा हरि उपाध्याय, खाचरोद, उज्जैन*

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

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



गांगुली से उम्मीदें

हाल ही में भारतीय क्रिकेट की शीर्ष संस्था बीसीसीआई में व्यापक स्तर पर संगठनात्मक परिवर्तन हुआ है, जिसमें भारतीय क्रिकेट टीम के पूर्व कप्तान सौरव गांगुली को बीसीसीआई का निर्विरोध अध्यक्ष चुना गया। अभी चुनाव संपन्न नहीं हुए हैं। आमतौर पर बीसीसीआइ जैसी बड़ी स्वायतशासी संस्थाओं में चुनावों को बड़ी महत्ता दी जाती है, क्योंकि इस संस्था से बड़े पदों पर विराजमान मान्यवरों के हित जुड़े होते हैं। गांगुली का बीसीसीआइ अध्यक्ष के तौर पर चुने जाना उस पारदर्शिता में एक बड़ा कदम है जिसकी तलाश में स्वयं बीसीसीआइ, सुप्रीम कोर्ट और सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा नियुक्त प्रशासकों की समिति (सीओए) पिछले डेढ़-दो साल से लगी थी। गांगुली के कार्यकाल की अवधि मात्र दस महीनों की है और इस अवधि में उन्हें बहुत सारा फैला हुआ काम निपटाना है। इस श्रेणी में क्रिकेट तंत्र का नवीनीकरण और सभी राज्य क्रिकेट संगठनों को एक साथ एक ही राह ले चलना प्रमुख सुधार हैं। सौरव गांगुली भारत के सफलतम कप्तानों में गिने जाते हैं। अब देखना होगा कि वे भारतीय क्रिकेट में एक प्रशासक के रूप में दूसरी पारी कैसे खेलते हैं!

● *केशव शर्मा, राजस्थान विवि, जयपुर*

कड़ी कार्रवाई हो

भारत को लंबे इंतजार के बाद आखिरकार स्विट्जरलैंड से स्विस बैंक खातेदारों का ब्योरा मिला है। यह एक अच्छी खबर है। यह ब्योरा देश के लिए तभी सार्थक हो पाएगा जब स्विस बैंक में काले धन जमा करवाने वाले भारतीय सफेदपोश लोगों पर कड़ी कार्रवाई होगी। दशकों से आम सुनने में आता रहा है कि भारत के बड़े बड़े चेहरों ने अपना पैसा स्विस बैंक में जमा करवाया हुआ है, लेकिन अब हकीकत सामने आ गई है। केंद्र सरकार को चाहिए कि यदि कानूनी तौर पर संभव हो तो स्विस बैंक में पैसा रखने वाले भारतीय लोगों के नाम व उनके खाते में जमा राशि को जल्द से जल्द सार्वजनिक कर दिया जाएं और इस पैसे को देश में वापस लाकर गरीब लोगों की भलाई व विकास पर खर्च किया जाए।

● *राजीव शर्मा, कोटकपुरा, पंजाब*

जानलेवा गड्ढे

मध्यप्रदेश के जनसंपर्क मंत्री और लोक निर्माण मंत्री ने राजधानी भोपाल की सड़कों का निरीक्षण किया और पाया कि बरसात के कारण सड़कों की हालत खस्ता हो गई है। उन्होंने पंद्रह-बीस दिन में सड़कों की मरम्मत की बात भी कही। बारिश के कारण केवल भोपाल की नहीं, पूरे प्रदेश की सड़कें गड्ढों से युक्त गई हैं। हाल में होशंगाबाद में सड़क के गड्ढों ने पांच होनहार हॉकी खिलाड़ियों की जान ले ली। इंदौर के मुख्य मार्गों पर बड़े-बड़े गड्ढे हादसों का कारण बन रहे हैं। लेकिन कोई देखने-सुनने वाला नहीं है। प्रशासन को चाहिए तत्काल सड़कों की मरम्मत करवाई जाए, ताकि जनता हादसों का शिकार न हो।

● *महेश नेनावा, इंदौर*