Scoot, Skip, Jump, Lime and Spin

Time to revisit transportation planning in cities and countries to choose the most environment-friendly, comfortable and safe options



VANDANA GOMBAR

our companies — Scoot, Jump. ◀ Lime and Spin — received permits to offer shared electricscooters in San Francisco earlier this month, in a fairly neat evaluation process with clearly assigned weightings for sustainability, among other things. The process can serve as a useful benchmark for other cities looking at rolling out new mobility services.

There are four aspects of the San

Francisco exercise which stood out: Scoring smartly: The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency issued permits to four operators from the 11 applications it received, based on their total score on eight criteria.

The highest score was for responses "that include robust, unique or innovative approaches demonstrating the highest level of commitment and ability to solving known challenges and concerns and substantially exceeding the minimum requirements.

Scoot scored the highest, followed by Spin (a Ford company), Jump (an Uber subsidiary) and Lime.

Staggered growth: Scoot is permitted to operate 1,000 e-scooters while the other three start with permission for 500 each, increasing to 750 in December and 1.000 by February if each company meets the terms and conditions laid out.

Each operator is to pay a fixed charge (\$75) per scooter to finance the installation of new bike racks

Smooth transition from pilot pro**gramme:** The scooters started life as dockless micro-mobility vehicles, faced some resistance from the public, and have emerged in a more refined format, all in a matter of a couple of years. San Francisco's transport authority reviewed 12 applications and more than 800 pages of proposals before deciding to permit Scoot and Skip (Toyota is an investor in the latter company) to offer services beginning October 15, 2018 for one year under a pilot programme. A mid-pilot evaluation showed that "powered scooter share systems can serve the public interest when properly regulated." The pilot was thus converted to a formal Powered Scooter Share Permit Program, under which the four licensees got the right to operate from October 15, 2019.

Tracking complaints: Operators of the e-scooter shared service are required to track all complaints, and



their resolution. They would also need to share the details of complaints and their resolution with the transportation authority on a regular basis.

In India, sales of electric twowheelers have slowed down recently, though the vehicle of choice for lastmile connectivity in many cities seems to be the electric rickshaw. In and around the capital city of Delhi, their number has reportedly crossed 1 million. Much of this growth is unplanned and unregulated, leading to further chaos in areas where they ply their trade, since there are no designated parking spots, or passenger pick-up or

The transition to shared and electric mobility, and the availability of different options under the micromobility banner, provides an opportunity to revisit transportation plan-

ning in cities and countries, so that the most environment friendly, comfortable and safe options are picked. According to BloombergNEF estimates, investors poured over \$84 billion into mobility-service providers in ride hailing, car sharing, bike sharing, scooter sharing and ride sharing between Q1 2014 and the end of O2 2019.

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FMCG majors dig deep in the hinterlands

Manufacturers are expanding direct reach in the slowing rural market to spur demand

ANALYSIS BEHIND

ecently, when Suresh Narayanan, chairman and managing director of Nestle India, was discussing macro-trends affecting the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, he did not hold back from expressing his concerns about rural distress. Faltering sales of fast moving consumer goods manufacturers in the rural market could be the bigger concern for most, he said.

Some days later, Sanjiv Mehta, chief executive of the country's largest non-

cigarette FMCG firm Hindustan Unilever (HUL), voiced similar concerns. Mehta's HUL, which managed to maintain its July-September volume growth at five per cent, asserted that the sharp deceleration was led by a slowdown in rural areas. Retail offtake numbers

from market research firm Nielsen endorse these views (see: The Big Dippers). It also

throws light on a peculiar trend: The slowdown in the northern part of the country is significantly higher than other regions. In the last quarter, volume growth in the largest of the four regional markets, plunged to meagre one per cent — the lowest in the country — from 17 per cent last year.

The FMCG market in the rural North shrank two per cent by volume. Although large companies like Nestle, Dabur or HUL have been impacted by this slowdown in demand, it was the small, local

players that have been hit harder. Small players, who account for a third of sales for the region, grew only three per cent by value, compared to 35 per cent in the corresponding period last year. Medium players, accounting for 24 per cent of sales, saw their business shrink by four per cent in the September quarter.

This has resulted in a churn that is now leading to a large number of players exiting the market. During the quarter, Nielsen data shows, 2,000 new players entered the market but close to 2,300 existing players left it - a net loss of 300-

> odd players. In July-September, 2018, nearly 1,100 FMCG firms had entered these markets.

The markets in the west, and east saw a significant fall in volume uptake as well.

Overall, while rural volume growth slumped to two per cent across the country, in urban areas, it fell to five per cent. Consequently, the rural market, which accounts for 36 per cent of India's FMCG mar-

ket by sales, contributed 60 per cent to the slowdown. The growth in rural market has been slowing for the past few quarters, but it slipped below urban market growth in the April-June quarter.

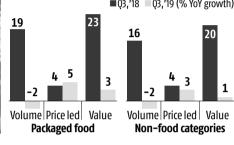
Now, the larger companies with the resources to fight back have started working to arrest this slide. Nestle, HUL, ITC, Dabur and Britannia have not only shifted their focus to rural markets but have start-

ed long-term projects to boost demand. Principal among them is to expand the reach into rural hinterlands. Nestle



THE BIG DIPPERS

Rural market in North shrunk 2% in Jul-Sep ■03,'18 = 03,'19 (% YoY growth)



Volume growth faltered in all regions except South ■Q3,′18 ■Q3,′19 (% YoY growth)

10 9 Value Volume Value Volume Value Volume Value Volume North West East South Source: Nielsen

India, for instance, has begun expanding its direct distribution reach aggressively by adding more regions under its distributors' territories. According to Narayanan, this project may enable Nestle to triple its direct reach in the next few years. The exercise has already helped it reach over 50,000 villages directly and the aim is to double that number by 2022. Nestle now aims to generate up to 35 per cent of its sales from the hinterlands in the next three years — a significant deviation from its longstanding "urban focus" strategy.

Market analyst firm Elara Capital noted in a recent report that the continued rural push by the country's largest food company may help it post over 10 per cent volume growth in the September quarter. Nestle India is also preparing a new range of products and/or SKUs (stock keeping units) targeting rural consumers. "The route to (the rural) market will have to be different (than the urban). We are actively pursuing different options" said Narayanan. Based on localised feedbacks from its 15-odd clus-

ters, the company is planning to come up with customised products for each region. The clusters, each with its own marketing and product strategy team, is now helping Nestle focus on individual geographies separately.

Analysts at Elara added that FMCG firms like HUL and Heritage Foods, apart from Nestle, have better chances of post-

ing strong growth in its core product categories as they are expanding their respective distribution reach. Moreover, Britannia saw a recovery, especially in north and east India due to better rural market sales, led by an increase in lending by banks to its trade partners during the quarter.

Edelweiss Securities further said, HUL's deepening direct reach and product innovation initiatives may help it outgrow the overall market. The company, for example, has increased the pace of product innovation in one of its top-selling brands — Lakme. According to Sandeep Kohli, executive director, personal care, HUL, if earlier HUL was doing 5-10 innovations a year, now it has increased the number to 30-50 on Lakme.

Dabur India, which gets over 40 per cent of its sales from the rural areas, has been actively developing and expanding its distribution and storage infrastructure in the rural market. The firm hired over 700 people to monitor and further develop its business and has brought 4,000-odd villages under its direct fold in early-2019.

The new wave of expansion in rural market is not without a rationale. A larger direct distribution reach helps companies monitor the market better with lower response times. It helps them address any potential slide in sales through customised promotional schemes and market activities.

According to market experts, between 2007 and 2013, the phenomenal rise in rural sales growth was a direct result of the distribution drive by multinationals. Its effects have now tapered off. "Now the companies need to go further, if they want to repeat the high double-digit growth performance in the rural India", said a senior analyst.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Maya's blame game



Still smarting from the rout in the Uttar Pradesh byelections, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) President Mayawati (pictured) is taking recourse to lame excuses to shift the

blame for the defeat. While the Samajwadi Party (SP) won three of the 11 seats that went to the polls last week, the BSP drew a blank and lost the lone constituency it held to the former. Coming on the heels of the snapping of the SP-BSP alliance after the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Mayawati has accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of helping the SP. Alleging the BJP had conspired to demoralise BSP workers ahead of the big fight in 2022 by letting the SP win a few seats, the Dalit czarina asserted her party would disrupt the saffron party's designs.

Naidu's 15-point charter



Expressing concern over the functioning of legislatures in the country and erosion of public trust in them, Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkajah Najdu

(pictured) on Tuesday unveiled a 15point reform charter for their effectiveness. Delivering the first "Arun Jaitley memorial lecture on strengthening of parliamentary institutions in the country" at Delhi University on Tuesday, Naidu urged political parties to ensure, through a roster system, that legislators attend at least 50 per cent of the proceedings of the legislature. He also called for a review of the "whip" to enable a reasonable degree of dissent without affecting the stability of the government. Other suggestions included reviewing the anti-defection law and reform of the parliamentary committee system. He also expressed reservations on proportional representation, arguing that it would deepen "social and political cleavages".

Eye on the oil sector In the backdrop of the government

planning to disinvest in some oil companies, the department-related parliamentary standing committee on petroleum and natural gas has decided to study "disinvestment, mergers and acquisitions in the petroleum sector" as part of the 15 subjects it will scrutinise for 2019–20. Some of the other subjects it has taken up and will be filing its reports on are allotting retail outlets and LPG distributorship; pricing, marketing and supply of petroleum products; litigation involving oil publicsector undertakings (PSUs); contract management; and transparency in procurement procedures in oil PSUs.

INNOCOLUMN

Building startups and companies that last



R GOPALAKRISHNAN

n a previous column (BS, September 25), I had described a progressive and happy society as one where enterprise, education and eudaemonia (well-being) co-exist. Companies, which are designed to last, promote enterprise on the foundation of trust between the ecosystem and the business community.

Business ecosystem: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross was a psychiatrist journalist, who identified a pattern in the reactions of very sick patients when they became aware of their illness: Denial-Anger-Negotiation-Depression-

Action. I call it the DANDA cycle. Many human systems tend to follow this cycle, losing a year or so between the D and the last A.

To understand DANDA, consider the factual narrative about Indian economic growth and jobs. First, the system denied any economic slowdown: it deployed addlepated economists to question the bases and comparability of GDP. Second, the system disapproved the Liberals and Khan Market types for being anti-national. Third, to be responsive, the ministry retracted some illogical impositions in the Budget for FY 2019-20. Then officials reduced corporate taxes, which had effectively been increased over five years, even if inadvertently. After that mendacious acts followed like merging unhealthy public sector banks in the hope of creating a healthy bank and merging unhealthy government telecom healthy telecom company. Then some influential people attacked India-born Nobel Prize winners for their perceived leanings and marital status.

Now we are approaching the fourth stage when reality has started to bite: There is an increasing realisation that jobs and growth do matter to voters. Article 370 and Pak-bashing don't fill stomachs. Finally, we can expect some systemic action as demanded by the last A in DANDA.

The tendency to announce near-victory is a pervasive disease. This is exemplified by the reports on ease of doing business. Spokesmen become laudatory if India moves up in the World Bank index of ease of doing business. The improvement is great, thank you, but let us not ignore the fact that the index is based on just Mumbai and Delhi. Further, the World Bank places India at positions below number 150, at the bottom of the pile, when it comes to enforcing contracts and registering property. Ease of business cannot be viewed quixotically as enthusiastic officials seem to do by relying on narrow "mathiness". They must test the broader "truthiness". I have battled a criminal charge with a NBW of arrest on a charge (flawed) of serving more than 10 boards after an amendment to the Companies Act. Come out into the real world and

hear real voices, dear administrators. What can business do? A lot.

Business community: Business folks should reflect and act on how to build honest startups and companies that will last. The euphoria around unicorns and startup valuations has reached rather ridiculous flights of fantasy. The legendary Masa (Masayoshi Son) seems to be rethinking his strategy of funding losses, based on recent sobering experiences with Uber and WeWork. Since "God" is revising his gospel, the local Indian VC industry will also shortly rethink because a new gospel will soon

companies in the hope of creating a emerge from the valley. Watch for changes in the approaches of Walmart-Flipkart and Amazon.

In July 2019, Harvard Business Review carried a persuasive piece entitled, "Building startups that will last" by Hemant Taneia and Ken Chenault. It is a subject that I am obsessed with because I am researching an allied subject. I summarise the lessons of the authors as I remember them.

■ Articulate and practice principles for society-first, not just financial achievement.

■Be adaptive and perpetually a learner ■Demonstrate the ability to execute and execute, time and again.

■ Move beyond founder-leadership to scalable leadership.

Hang on, these are the same lessons learnt by centurion companies like Unilever, Tata, Nestle. Dabur and Godrej; these same lessons are mentioned in books on long-life Japanese, American and European companies. Do they apply to startups? Are not startups

Startups are not a different genetic species, one which you must rapidly fatten and cull in a short time. The avaricious capital of high net worth individuals has converted the startup economy into a sort of Las Vegas for over three decades. We should never forget that yesterday's startups have become today's grownups. Today's startups need to grow up, not bask in permanent infancy.

It is noteworthy that the Prime Minister has emphasised the value of wealth-creators to our economy, time and time again. I feel that the last A of the DANDA cycle should prompt the ecosystem and business folks to think and act differently for the future.

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LETTERS

Like a phoenix

This refers to "Amitabh's changing role" (October 29). Angry young man, sadi ka mahanayak, youth icon and what not, superlatives fall short for Amitabh Bachchan. From being rejected by All India Radio for his baritone to becoming a superstar, a politician, an owner of a bankrupt company and now a popular TV show host. He has rewritten the definition

of reinvention. Today roles are being written for him and he keeps giving the younger breed of actors a run for their money. Some might call it overexposure of a brand icon but when you are there in almost every third or fourth advertisement then a company is bound to use your mass appeal. If any budding artist wants to know how to connect with his or her fans and use social media in the best possible manner then he or she must not look beyond Bachchan. From being on death bed and bankrupt in a failed venture, he has risen like a phoenix time and again and that is why people trust what he says

Bal Govind Faridabad

More than promise

Eyebrows are raised at the visit of a "select" team of European Union law makers to the Kashmir Valley. The group photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the EU MPs as part of the red carpet extended to them said it all. While supporters of the Modi government's Kashmir policy hail it as a "truth tour" and an "excellent diplomatic strike", critics denounce it as a "guided tour" and a "face-saving exercise". Touted or decried, it is obvious that it has been arranged to validate the government's claim of normalcy in Kashmir.

The clear signal is that the government is badly in need of a certificate of normalcy from the EU MPs to corroborate its version of the situation in the Valley even at the cost of further internationalising the Kashmir issue The government has not agreed to an all-party delegation of Indian parliamentarians to Kashmir, but it has given foreign parliamentarians access, exemplifying its skewed and self-serving nationalism in the process.

EU MPs hired, hosted and detailed to demolish the lockdown claim of Lutyen's lobby represent ultra-right wing with Islamophobia and neo-fascist sympathies and they cannot be expected to make an objective assessment of the situation on the ground by interacting with a representative cross-section of society ranging from apple growers and traders, houseboat men, hoteliers, weavers, shopkeepers and schoolchildren. The high-profile panel stands to lose credibility when it meets army officers and does not meet the leaders under detention.

A lot more than the promise of development is needed to address the sense of being occupied and subjugated. Something more than enumerating the "advantages" accruing from the revocation of special status is needed to wean the people away from their voluntary and peaceful civil disobedience. The humanitarian crisis in Kashmir is of the government's own making. The government can and must win the hearts and minds of the people of Kashmir by rescinding its decision to abrogate Article 370 and taking steps to fulfil their legitimate political aspirations.

G David Milton Maruthancode

Time to act soon

This refers to "Infy assures clients in whistle-blower case" (October 29). Infosys is by now too familiar with whistle-blowers and has had a disproportionate share of adverse corporate publicity compared to its peers and suffered sharp attrition of stock value. In this unsettled IT scenario, a Sikka déjà vu could end up in a major set-back for Infosys. In that episode, internal and external inquiries unanimously cleared Vishal Sikka of misconduct. Previously, the law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher had concluded that there was no incriminating evidence to suggest that Sikka or any other employee of Infosys had profited from the said acquisition of Panava. The role of the founders was unfortunate as they lost faith in the systems of their own creation and worse they chose to intervene beyond their remit. Salil Parekh then took over after Sikka and just two years later, a whistle beeps. This too may well turn out as unfounded but then the damage is already wrought in the market. The founders must quickly provide the reassurance unlike earlier. Surely, Infosys deserves it.

R Narayanan Navi Mumbai

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Save the bankruptcy code

Govt must step in to make necessary changes

ne of the few high-profile successes of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has been the sale of Bhushan Power & Steel Ltd (BPSL) to JSW Steel. Yet even this has had a spanner thrown in the works by the recent attachment of BPSL assets by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the investigative agency that reports to the Union Ministry of Finance. It is concerned that BPSL might have violated the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). It cannot be anyone's contention that due investigation should be stopped. Certainly, if criminal acts have been committed, then those responsible should be brought to justice. But the attachment of property in the course of an investigation cannot be indiscriminate. In this case, given that BPSL was in the final stages of its sale to JSW, the attachment has effectively derailed the IBC process, which also carries the force of law. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal has asked the finance and corporate $affairs\ ministries\ -\ the\ latter\ being\ the\ ministry\ responsible\ for\ the\ bankruptcy$ process — to sort out their differences.

Such differences should never have been allowed to arise. It is inexplicable that an agency under the finance ministry is unaware of the importance to the broader economy of the successful functioning of the IBC process. For both restoring banks to health and reviving broader investment in the economy as well as unlocking stalled capital, the IBC process is the only game in town. But it is unfortunate that the ED may once again have attached processes without applying its mind. Such behaviour has had systemic effects before, notably after the attachment of bank properties following the revelation of fraud at Punjab National Bank. Last month the PMLA Tribunal accused the ED of "inadequate investigation" of that case and that it attached the property of a consortium of banks involved in a "mechanical" manner. The tribunal also pointed out that such attachment stalled the recovery process for banks. Even so the ED seems to have learned no lessons.

The government has responded swiftly and with efficiency in the past to preserve the integrity of the IBC process. Whenever necessary, swift amendments or even ordinances have been used to keep the system moving. Such action may be required again. The finance ministry, which is surely aware of the importance of IBC, may take the lead. Essentially, no bidders will be found for companies through the IBC process if even after the NCLT approves of the takeover a further legal liability can stall the process. It will also put banks in a tight spot because they will not be able recover loans if the promoters or the management is investigated for a fraud. Once the company changes hand after going through the bankruptcy process, it should be able make a fresh start. In the case of a fraud, promoters and management can be prosecuted separately.

If the two ministries and their agencies cannot get their act together in terms of implementation — in spite of sharing the same Cabinet minister then the laws will have to be amended in such a way that the IBC is given priority once the NCLT has ruled or the process has gone beyond a certain stage. If necessary, the Prime Minister's Office should enforce co-ordination and speedy action.

Job crisis signal

Young people opting for MGNREGA work is worrying

he Indian economy is in the midst of a severe slowdown and the data suggests that a sharp recovery in the near term is unlikely. Apart from the lead indicators such as vehicle sales, which tend to grab headlines, developments on the ground are also not encouraging. An increase in the number of young workers lining up for work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a case in point. As a recent report in *The Indian Express* showed, the number of workers employed in the age group of 18-30 under the MGNREGA reached 7.07 million in 2018-19 compared to 5.8 million in 2017-18. The number had declined significantly after 2013-14. More people are seeking work under the Act in the current year as well.

While reasons for this shift are worth investigating, a higher enrolment of people in the 18-30 age bracket in the subsistence-level job guarantee programme prima facie means severe lack of employment opportunities. The gross domestic product data for the April-June quarter, for instance, showed that growth in the construction sector declined to 5.7 per cent, while expansion in the manufacturing sector collapsed to 0.6 per cent. Subdued activity in these sectors and their inability to absorb labour could have pushed workers to seek employment under the MGNREGA. It is also likely that distress in agriculture could have affected the demand for labour in rural areas.

However, there is another important aspect that needs policy attention. A 2017 discussion paper by the NITI Aayog showed that about two-thirds of income in rural India is now generated through non-agricultural activities. About half the construction and manufacturing sector output comes from rural areas. It also contributes significantly to the services sector output. It would be interesting to see if manufacturing units in rural areas are losing out because of size and greater formalisation of the economy after the implementation of the goods and services tax. Although manufacturing units in rural areas are more capitalintensive, pressure on output could have had an impact on employment.

At a broader level, the inability of the Indian economy to create enough jobs can have longer-term consequences. As the latest Economic Survey noted, India is witnessing a demographic transition with a significant increase in the proportion of the working-age population. The working-age population in absolute terms is likely to grow by about 9.7 million per year between 2021 and 2031. Growth will slow in the subsequent years. India cannot afford to lose this opportunity. It will not be able to take advantage of a rising workforce without creating enough employment opportunities. Clearly, as the evidence suggests, this is not happening at the moment. A trend reversal will require more investment, which will help generate jobs. In this context, the government has done well to reduce the corporate tax rate and, over the last few years, India has moved up significantly in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking. However, as World Bank President David Malpass has rightly noted, India needs to do a lot more, particularly in areas such as land registration and contract enforcement, to attract investment. Therefore, the pace of reforms must be accelerated. Only higher investment and rapid growth can create sufficient employment opportunities. The situation forcing young workers to enrol for the MGNREGA work needs to be reversed.

A Brexit nervous breakdown

DEEPAK LAL

The fabric of Britain's unwritten constitution has been dangerously damaged by partisan passions over Brexit

iring the last five months I have been in London watching with growing astonishment as the world's oldest democracy (based on an unwritten but well-honed constitution) goes through a nervous breakdown. With Theresa May's withdrawal bill agreed with the EU being defeated thrice by massive Parliamentary majorities for making the UK, in effect, a colony of the EU for the indefinite future, Ms

May reneged on her oft-repeated slogan "No deal is better than a bad deal", by not letting the UK leave the EU on WTO terms at the end of March. Instead she asked for an extension of the withdrawal date from the EU to the end of October.

ILLUSTRATION: DINAV CINHA

In the following interregnum, she was ousted from the premiership of the Tory party, which elected Boris Johnson as the leader and thence prime minister (PM) at the end of June with the pledge that the UK would leave the EU on October 31 (Halloween) with or without a deal

(on WTO terms). He was faced by a hostile Parliamentary majority of those who had supported Remain in the 2016 referendum, even though in the snap election of 2017 nearly all stood on manifestos to implement the referendum verdict of leaving the EU by the end of March 2019.

Surprisingly, Mr Johnson succeeded in negotiating a new deal with the EU, which removed the more objectionable clauses of Ms May's withdrawal agreement, including the notorious Irish backstop, which would have tied the UK as a permanent vassal of the EU, subject to its laws as enforced by the European Court of Justice. But, instead of supporting and lauding this deal, the Remainers have sought to thwart it by using various Parliamentary procedures (unlawful under the conventions of the unwritten constitution) to legislate delays in the withdrawal date. They have also refused to allow a fresh election despite the Tories losing their Parliamentary majority. So, the polity now is in limbo. How has this extraordinary constitutional impasse been allowed to develop?

The proximate cause was the Shakespearean denouement after David Cameron —who had called the 2016 referendum—resigned as PM after his Remain side lost. In the following election for the Tory leadership and thence PM, Mr Johnson, the leader of the Leave campaign, was fatally stabbed

on the morning he was to announce his candidacy by his campaign manager Michael Gove, who chose to stand himself. The other Leave candidate Mrs Leadson committed electoral suicide by making foolish remarks about the childlessness of the other candidate (the Remainer) Ms May who won the leadership election and PMdefault. Uncharismatic but stubborn, with little political nous nor intellectual depth, she foolishly called a snap election which destroyed the Tory

majority David Cameron had won and was forced into an electoral pact with the Northern Irish DUP for a Parliamentary majority.

She then conducted the most disastrous negotiations with the EU as a supplicant rather than as the proud leader of a major economy and military power wishing to reassert UK sovereignty and the primacy of its distinctive non-European Common Law. By agreeing to the EU's sequencing of negotiations, leaving the all-important post withdrawal economic relationship with the EU to the last, she gave an inherent advantage to the EU which Michel Barnier and his team exploited brilliantly to tie the UK indefinitely in the EU without any say.

Having escaped this trap, Mr Johnson is now faced by another problem created by Mr Cameron. When negotiating a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, Mr Cameron — seeking to ensure a five-year term to carry out his legislative agenda

 agreed to a LIBDEM proposal for a fixed-term parliament. This went against one of the important rules of Britain's unwritten constitution, which allowed the prime minister to call an election whenever he deemed it desirable for national or party political reasons. Under this new constitutional law a super parliamentary majority is required for an election to be called before the five-year parliamentary term ends. Mr Johnson has failed thrice to get this majority for an election to clear a parliament dominated by Remainers from thwarting the executive's will.

In the past, as part of the unwritten constitution, the judges could be expected to find a way through this constitutional impasse. Here again past unwise constitutional change have led to another trap. In the past the Law lords in the House of Lords along with the Lord Chancellor (from the ruling party) dealt with this legal process. But Tony Blair in his desire to ape the European Court of Justice decided to set up a Supreme Court in which the Law Lords became virtually independent agents.

The dangers of this became apparent when this new court, against precedent and previous laws, deemed Mr Johnson's prorogation of parliament illegal. It turns out that Lady Hale (known as Spiderwoman for the brooch of a spider she wore during the legal proceedings) was a Remainer. No impartiality could be expected from this court if the Fixed Term Act was legally challenged.

Then there is the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, an avowed Remainer who used what is meant to be an impartial position to allow an unprecedented and, according to the unwritten constitution (as pointed out clearly by Jacob Rees Mogg the leader of the House), an illegal ruling allowing parliament to take over the business of the House instead of the executive. This allowed various delaying tactics to be enacted into law. Fortunately, he is retiring at the end of October and this trap may be removed

But, there may be some light appearing at the end of the tunnel. Forced by a Parliamentary Act passed through the unconventional takeover of legislative business by the Remainer parliament permitted by Mr Bercow, Mr Johnson was forced to ask the EU for an extension to the UK's current departure date from the EU of October 31 to January 31, 2020. This has just been granted as a "flextension", to end early if Mr Johnson's withdrawal deal is ratified by the UK and European parliaments by end November, or after a UK general election in December. Otherwise there would be a "no deal" exit on January 31.

With parliament due to vote (as I write) on a December election based on a proposal by the LIB Dems and the SNP — both want an early election for their own special reasons — for a parliamentary vote, which only requires a simple majority, the current Brexit impasse could end. If Mr Johnson wins the election as expected, he hopefully will have the fixed term Act repealed, the Supreme Court abolished and replaced by the old final Appeal Court of the Law Lords supervised by a political Lord Chancellor, and convert the conventions about the Speaker's discretionary powers into laws. This would restore the fabric of Britain's unwritten constitution. which has been so dangerously damaged by the par-

PM's Diwali gift to the economy

economic news all around. India is slipping pathetically from its high growth trajectory. Exports continue to decline. Major financial institutions and donors have downgraded the country's growth prospects in the coming year. But the recent World Bank's Doing Business rankings provided the spark the economy badly needed. India made impressive improvements in the 2019 rankings of Ease of Doing Business — a jump from 100 in 2017 to 63, and similar one for Trading

across Borders from 146 in 2017 to 68. These results are a big achievement on the part of the government to improve the overall business climate and reduce the massive trade transaction costs that had been plaguing the Indian economy. For this, the credit squarely belongs to Prime Minister Narendra Modi who vigorously pushed for it since he took office as a part of his Make in India vision.

JAYANTA ROY These improvements, if they continue, will soon create a conducive environment for the right kind of export-pro-

moting or outward-looking foreign direct investment (FDI) to flow in. Most FDI in India so far has been inward-looking to tap the large domestic market with

high tariffs and transaction costs. Another measure of trade transaction costs is the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) of the World Bank that captures behind the border transaction costs. These are largely dependent on a country's logistics capacity. Logistics reforms that impact transaction costs behind the border include: Transport infrastructure such as road, rail, ports, and airports; reliable communications and technology infrastructure, and quality logistics services such as transport operators. India's ranking in LPI has also improved over the years, and stands at 44

However, we cannot afford to be complacent since we still do not compare favourably with Southeast economies as the table shows.

Future reforms in trade and logistics facilitation are recommended in the October 2018 Logistics Development Report of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, A slightly modified version of my recommendations are here:

Behind the border logistics

■ Rail tariff rationalisation and expediting commissioning of dedicated freight corridors (DFCs)

■ Fast track elimination of container freight stations and inland container denots by push

ing direct port delivery (DPD) and direct port export (DPE)

> ■ Nudge shipping lines to institute a transparent tariff structure

■ Seamless and efficient road transport experience - introduce One Nation, One Permit, One Tax System

■ Uniform business processes. Standardise gate-in /gate-out approvals and documentation processes

■ 24 x 7 shipping line services to trade

Border trade facilitation

■ Fully facilitated trust-based clearance processes

through modern risk management system

■ Fully-automated paperless trade environment with minimum face to face interactions

■ Single-window digital portal integrating all stake ■ Monitoring of key outputs across major gateways

■ Physical inspection of goods to be an exception

■ Training of officers to operate/manage the new system, implement audit-based controls with the

■ Popularise advance bills of entry, authorised economic operators, DPD and DPE in the private

■ Target cargo dwell time to reach levels comparable to the successful Southeast Asian countries

Institutional framework

■ Establish a National Council of Logistics and Trade

PECKING ORDER

	Doing business rank 2019	LPI rank 2018
Korea	5	25
Malaysia	12	41
Taiwan	15	27
Thailand	21	32
China	31	26
ndia	63	44
/ietnam	70	39

ministries reporting to the prime minister ■ It must consist of Cabinet ministers of

Facilitation

outside the line

the ministries and ments related to logistics and trade facilitation, and chief

ministers of concerned states

■ Private sector and trade stakeholders should be represented ■ The logistics wing under the commerce ministry

be made a dedicated secretariat ■ Development of robust performance outcomes for

logistics and trade facilitation ■ Monitor performance through an online dash-

board and fix responsibilities for time-bound corrective action

■ Facilitate policy development and multi-stakeholder coordination

■ Regular publication and dissemination of data

India should quickly implement these reforms to revive the lost export momentum and spur high, inclusive growth to create jobs. The prime minister should now with the same zeal bring down our average tariff levels to make our industry internationally competitive. These reforms, along with his recent overruling of all opposition from some of his ministers, industry, and an important part of his party, to be in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, will be his biggest personal contribu-

 $The \, writer \, is \, a \, former \, economic \, advisor \, in \, the \, Union \,$ commerce ministry

tion to the long overdue trade reforms.

The charmed life of a royal relation



T C A SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

ord Louis Mountbatten was a member of the British royal fami-Iv. That got him many jobs which he didn't perhaps deserve fully. In the end it also got him blown up when a bomb went off on his boat in 1979. He didn't deserve that either.

But he lived a good life. The royal connection also got him many good jobs, including that of Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the East during World War II. He was just 43.

Churchill wasn't keen but eventually went along. He may have wanted to send him very far away. In any case, the Americans were calling the shots by then. Dickie couldn't do much harm.

Another job that he wasn't quite suited for was that of the last Viceroy of India. He made a monumental mess. According to one historian, he hurried up the independence of India because he wanted to get back to London quickly so that he would be in the running for heading all British forces. That haste is what led to the partition mess.

Mr Lownie is very sympathetic to his subject. There is negligible detail. So the reader comes away thinking of old Dickie as what they call good man the *lalten* in Puniab.

This book, whose major strength is

its enormous bibliography, tells many stories. Many of them are well known but a few are not. Thus not many people know that Mountbatten was in charge of the disastrous Anglo-Canadian raid on the port of Dieppe in German occupied France.

It wasn't a great idea to start with, and Mountbatten knew that it wouldn't work. It was more of a political statement rather than a military one.

Given the various hurdles that Mr Lownie lists, it shouldn't have happened But "Mountbatten, naturally impatient and over-confident took the decision to proceed with the operation...

But Mountbatten, says Mr Lownie, had a crack PR team, with no less than Daryl F Zanuck on it, and managed not to get associated with it in the public mind. This despite the fact that people

always tend to associate failure with specific people.

So the confusion over who screwed up still continues. But the fact remains: He was in charge and should have stopped it after realising that it wasn't going to succeed. This was Dickie all over.

It's also, as we know, very similar to the way Indians think of him as not being responsible for partition. In the hierarchy of those who get blamed, he comes last.

His own report on it is a masterpiece of the technique of how to distance yourself. Indeed had it not been for the official record available in the Transfer of Power volumes, it might well have become the only record.

What Mountbatten's contribution in Asia was is still unclear. Mr Lownie attributes many things to him like energy, coordination, teamwork etc, but specifically? Nothing or not much.

Mercifully this book is not entirely about all that, at least not much. It's also about his — and his wife's — personal life. Both were very colourful. In his preface the author quotes Mountbatten as saying, "Edwina and I spent all our married lives getting into other people's beds." Right.

Very early on in their marriage they agreed not to insist on marital fidelity. After that it was all smooth sailing. But even there the details are absent. Who had greater success, for example? The men usually draw the short straw so it would have been interesting to know who manages to get into more beds.

Edwina's affair, if it was fully that, seemed to hurt. Mr Lownie says at one point she may even have considered divorce but she didn't really want it. Life was very nice with Mountbatten and anyway by the mid-1950s the ardour has cooled considerably. They weren't writing as often and after 1955 or so the annual visits also tapered off. But while it lasted it was very intense, even if Nehru wasn't verv loval.

Mr Lownie says on page 268 that "Nehru was deeply attractive to women and had many lovers". He lists four of But he is careful not to sound judge-

mental. But by every token it was inexcusable behaviour for a prime minister. No gloss is possible. One last nugget. Mr Lownie says

when Jinnah was given some letters from Edwina to Nehru, he returned them saying he "had no wish to capitalise on them".

THE MOUNTBATTENS: Their **Lives And Loves Andrew Lownie** Harper Collins, 490 pages, ₹699



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

TICKETTO EDUCATION Chief minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal

Girls and women who had to drop out of schools and colleges because of high transportation cost don't need to sacrifice their education. They can now take buses to good schools and colleges

RationalExpectations



Let's get realistic about BSNL revival

After cost-of-revival package is added, BSNL's debt rises four times; also, costs are understated and revenues overstated

VER SINCE THE press critiqued the government's ₹70,000 crore bailout package for BSNL-MTNL, BSNL supporters have called it ill-informed, and one-sided; it does not, for instance, take into account the tens of thousands of crores of private telecom debt that PSU banks will have to write off. Indeed, if the debt owed by telcos to the government is added, the figure could runs into lakhs of crores; while companies like RCom and Aircel are already in the insolvency courts, many believe Vodafone-Idea is running out of funds to sustain operations. And, after the Supreme Court judgment on AGR, you can add another ₹1.33 lakh crore to private sector telecom debt. Put that way, the argument is a sound one: why is writing off private sector debt okay, but a bailout for the public sector problematic?

But, before BSNL's top brass, and the politicians, start trotting this out, a reality check may not be a bad idea. While no one supports private sector telcos reneging on lakhs of $crores\, of\, debt-the\, spectrum-payment\, obligations\, to\, the\, government, of\, course, will\, be$ recovered as the spectrum will revert to it in the event of default—that does not justify losing money in a no-hope bailout. One bad deal in the past cannot possibly justify another one. It is a big risk if, after BSNL's turnover falling by over a third over the last four

BSNL's debt looks small ...

... but needs to be adjusted

1,20,000

1,16,000

900 MHz

spectrum

of govt

bailout

As per

37,006

38,838

49,608

balance

67,018

19,000 Cost of

60,000 Add size

(data for only BSNL, ₹ crore)

20,000

Low revenues make it worse

MTNL 2,783

BSNL 20,000

MTNL 20,000

(₹ crore)

Voda-Idea

debt rises

₹40,000

crore for

BSNL-MTNL to

₹135,000-

₹140,000

Voda-Idea

years, the turnaround plan projects revenues rising by two-thirds over the next four years. This, in an environment where, thanks to RJio's pricing, it is not clear if the bloodletting is over.

Nor is it quite correct to look at BSNL's low debt as a sign of it being healthy relative to the private sector; if BSNL's debt is low, it is because it has comparatively little capex and spectrum. In fact, once the ₹60,000 crore bailout package—₹70,000 crore if you add MTNL—comes through, its cost needs to be added to the debt since, had BSNL not been a government company, this would have been financed by taking on fresh debt.

There's more. The revival package allocates ₹15,000 crore—this money is to be raised by the PSUs based on a government guarantee for capex. But, while this is to be spent on other things as well, it is unlikely that even a modest 4G network can be set up at less than double this amount. So, for a full pan-India 4G rollout, the government is likely to have to pump in

Interestingly, when MTNL's 900MHz spectrum expired in April this year, the government extended the licence till January 2021; something similar has been done for BSNL. Fresh renewals would cost MTNL ₹8,000-9,000 crore, and BSNL ₹18,000-19,000 crore. While the government justified the extension by arguing that neither PSU got to use its spec-

trum at the time of allocation due to policy issues, it is unlikely a similar extension would have been afforded to a private player. This renewal will also be paid for by government, and so should be added to BSNL-MTNL's debt. If it is not renewed, and then used for 4G services, BSNL-MTNL's 4G spectrum will be much less than that with rivals like RJio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone-Idea.

The costs don't stop here. BSNL-MTNL subscribers will have to increase their monthly-spend considerably if they move to 4G; while it is not clear they can afford to do that, they will also need to buy new handsets since they cannot use their current feature phones on 4G networks. RJio subsidised the 4G handsets (JioPhone) to facilitate the move to 4G; if BSNL is to do the same, it may need to incur similar costs.

The assumptions on revenue growth—a 66% hike over the next four years—we've said, is optimistic. But, even if that happens, is that enough to make BSNL profitable? According to the presentation made to the Group of Ministers, BSNL's wage costs are 60% of its turnover—this is 87% for MTNL; the actual number, though, is 77% for BSNL if you go by the more detailed annexures in the presentation. Even if you accept the lower figure, the wage-to-income ratio is 63% for the combined entity; it is 78% based on the real figure for BSNL. Going by the projected revenue given in the presentation, and assuming (incorrectly) that there is no hike in salary costs, this means staff costs will be 35% of revenue in FY26. Take the most aggressive estimate for staffers taking VRS, and assume the wage bill gets halved as a result—the VRS planned is for 50% of the employees over 50-years of age, so a more aggressive VRS requires greater funding. Even if that happens, BSNL-MTNL's wage costs will still be over 17% of turnover compared to 3-5% in the case of most of its private sector competitors.

Given how the expenditure in the revival plan seems horribly understated, and the revenues quite overstated, the very least the government needs to do is to make public the exact assumptions made; if the arguments made in this column are incorrect, the government needs to show how that is the case. Indeed, since this is valuable public money that is being spent, both Parliament—through some standing committee—as well as the CAG should be examining the assumptions to see if they hold water. Otherwise, in the grand tradition of all bailout packages, this too will be followed by another, most likely much bigger, one.

KashmirCONUNDRUM

Letting European lawmakers visit J&K internationalises the issue; besides, it is odd since Indian MPs couldn't go

HILE THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to allow a group of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to visit Jammu & Kashmir "to talk to locals and assess the on-ground situation" is aimed at changing the international narrative on the region, it is a big gamble. An official statement issued by the PMO after the MEPs' meeting with the prime minister reads, "Their (the MEPs") visit to Jammu and Kashmir should give the delegation a better understanding of the cultural and religious diversity of the region of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh; apart from giving them a clear view of the development and governance priorities of the region." While there is always the possibility the group may not endorse India's view, if it does, many will point to the group's constitution: many of the parties the MEPs represent are seen as xenophobic, and anti-Islamic. There is also the issue of how foreigners were allowed while Indian MPs weren't.

Also, while it is clear the situation hasn't normalised—doing so can take months given the level of the militancy—inviting the MEPs looked half-baked anyway. Against such a backdrop, it is hard to fault former Union minister Jairam Ramesh when he terms allowing MEPs to visit J&K while preventing Indian lawmakers from doing the same as "an outright insult to India's own Parliament and our democracy". It doesn't help that the visiting MEPs are not an official European Parliament delegation, but are on a 'private'visit. Ironically, with the prime minister and other senior officials meeting the MEPs, it is possible to argue the issue has been internationalised; while the visit closely follows the US Congressional hearing on the Kashmir lockdown, the government's action could lead to requests for fact-finding missions from UN bodies (UNHRC, for instance), international NGOs, etc. What that could lead to is anybody's guess.

NPA AILMENT

REVERSAL IN NPA CYCLE COULD SPELL DISASTER. DOUBTS COULD RESURFACE ABOUT DISCLOSED ASSET QUALITIES, AND RETURN TO PAST BEHAVIOUR BY LENDERS LIKE EVERGREENING ASSETS

Financial sector fragility persists

STHE NON-PERFORMING asset cycle beginning to reverse after a brief spell of improvement? Nascent signs have appeared, even though an enduring setback is not yet visible. The Reserve Bank of India reported, recently, that credit quality deteriorated in June 2019, with rise in stressed and NPA ratios in all sectors except industry (Monetary Policy Report, October). Although the central bank did not provide numbers, charted trend shows the gross NPA ratio closer to 10% from 9.3% in March, which represented a four-quarter successive decline. It was only a quarter ago that RBI stated NPAs seemed to have turned around (Financial Stability Report, June 2019). A Jefferies report in early October predicts a second wave of NPAs seeing significant divergence in ratings and financial health of some stressed corporates, adding that asset quality deterioration risk has risen, following a shift in lending to bottom-end customers from nonbanks to the banks. Then, September quarter results indicate fresh stress, special mention accounts, NPAs, and provisions for several banks. These are early signs, possibly mir-

roring weak demand conditions. It remains to be seen if the deterioration persists, leading to an enduring increase in gross NPAs. The aggregate NPA ratio may not necessarily reflect the increased underlying stress ahead: post-June 2019, the revised RBI framework for resolution of stressed assets expects lenders to initiate resolution even before a default, giving complete discretion for any decision including reorganisation, sale, and restructuring. One is not sure if financial intermediaries (non-banking financial companies or NBFCs, and small finance banks are now included) will engage in more restructuring to alleviate stress than recognise such assets as NPAs. Evolving developments indicate a tilt towards restructuring or disposal of stressed assets; lenders increasingly prefer to avoid the IBC path as unanticipated complications at the forum prolong resolution, and increase uncertainty. Moreover, the underlying stress in MSME loans will remain unrecognised from the one-time restructuring allowed for specific defaults classified as standard assets on January 1, 2019 up to end-March 2020.

New Delhi based macroeconomist Views are personal

These counters could keep the lid on NPAs, preventing a full-blown reversal of the cycle. Nonetheless, the emergent setback cannot be taken lightly in the context of intense strains in the financial system, which is visibly vulnerable to frequent defaults in fresh trouble spots, e.g., real-estate exposures of banks through NBFCs. Besides, increasing the extent of restructured or reorganised loans—with or without approved additional financing—is a sure sign of persisting financial fragility. It is significant that this transpires after substantial resolution efforts, and recapitalisation of public sector banks. If economic conditions continue to deteriorate, i.e., the expected recovery from October-December quarter does not materialise, a reversal in the NPA cycle could be a serious blow. This would add to the lingering presence of past NPAs, portending a perpetuation of a pattern that eventually ends in reduced lending.

Take the case of banks first. Charted trends show brisk credit growth (in real terms) in first round; this is followed by rising NPAs; real credit then slows down, or even comes to a standstill in some cases, as balance sheets are too weak for further lending. In 2006-11, real credit growth averaged 12% annually; NPAs followed with a lag, after which the pace of real credit slowed to an average 4.5% for four successive years (FY12-FY16)—banks retreated,

Banks: Real credit growth, NPAs

Gross NPAs, % total advances (all banks), Rhs

Average credit

growth, 2006-11

Source: RTPBI, FSRs & handbook of statistics, RBI

25.6 10

2019-20 (Apr-Sept)

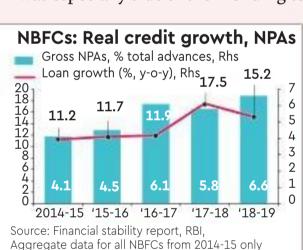
Real credit, %, y-o-y, Lhs

recapitalisation and resolution delays were addressed, the pace of real lending picked up to about 9% last year. But, in April-September 2019, real credit growth slowed again to 5.5%, down 1.6 times over a corresponding 9.1% one year ago; NPAs have started increasing. A sustained setback could result in a further lending slowdown, unless capital is quickly augmented.

graphic). Consolidated data for all NBFCs exists only from 2014-15, but it can be seen that an average 11.6% real growth in loans in FY14-FY16 shot up to 17.5% in 2017-18, followed by 15.2% last year, as NBFCs rapidly expanded lending, replacing banks. An almost five-point jump in real credit growth in this period is accompanied by a 1.5-2 percentage point jump in their gross NPA ratio, reversing the moderation in 2014-15. In 2017, RBI observed that their doubledigit credit growth "has improved resilience and stability of the economy by filling up the financing gap opened up by the muted bank credit growth from 2014-15" (Report on Trends and Progress in Banking in India, December 2017), reaffirming last year that "the slowdown in SCBs' credit growth...provided a fillip to loan companies as substitution effects provided tailwinds. This



was especially true of their lending to



commercial real estate, consumer durables, and vehicle loans" (RTPBI, December 2018).

NBFC lending began to slow late last year, triggered by the IL&FS default that led to close scrutiny of funding sources, asset-liability mismatches, and exposures. For the current year, aggregate NBFC loan data is unavailable yet, but NBFC credit growth is reportedly declining 3-4 percentage points; new financing contracted ₹1.26 trillion in April-mid September against ₹412 billion correspondingly a year ago.

From the viewpoint of financial stability, matters are equally concerning. The June 2019 re-examination by RBI (Financial Stability Report) highlights extensive interconnectedness risks: inter alia, banks' exposure to NBFCs increased 9 percentage points in June 2017-March 2019; NBFC credit to four consumer credit sub-segments grew 20% CAGR in two years to December 2018, with retail assets as key drivers of portfolio size, growth, and delinquencies in asset finance and loan companies; NBFCs lead delinquency levels in almost all consumer credit sub-segments, applying the 90-day norm. Recently, RBI said "the events of 2018-19 showed there was irrational exuberance and considerable overleveraging, with asset-liability mismatches" (Annual Report, August 2019).

In a context of visible vulnerabilities

within the financial system, a sustained

increase of gross NPAs or the alternate build-up of restructured/reorganised stressed loans could have adverse consequences that could be more severe than they have been in recent past. Doubts could resurface about disclosed asset qualities, and return to past behaviour by lenders, like evergreening assets; equally, a loss of faith in IBC is not a good augur. If past patterns are a pointer, rising NPA stress could morph into a further lend ing slowdown by both banks, and nonbanks. Growth repercussions could be felt beyond credit supply. For instance the credit channel that is still not fully operational may remain so, blocking full transmission and negating the positive impulse expected from monetary policy. The chain effect loops back to the fiscal side if further recapitalisation is needed to unclog credit pipelines. The persistence of financial fragility could indeed be a long and severe drag.

Golden age is ending in India

35 30

25.

India's outsize role in the world gold market isn't going to disappear overnight. Still, this change in gold demand should be a warning to investors

THE WORLD'S MOST important gold market isn't what it used to be. Just a decade ago, India's hunger for gold jewellry and bullion meant it accounted for about a quarter of global demand. Consumption has since fallen by about 24%. Ahead of Sunday's Diwali festival, when purchases traditionally peak, imports in September fell to their lowest level in three years. Part of this is a reaction to short-

term pricing factors. Buyers tend to stay away when the bullion price in Mumbai rises above about 30,000 rupees (\$422.97) for 10 grams. Thanks to the rupee's slump and the metal breaking through its long-standing \$1,350-a-troy-ounce ceiling, it has been in that territory now for the best part of two years, and is currently trading at 38,200 rupees.

There are longer-term issues to worry about, though. About twothirds of the country's gold is bought in rural areas, where its traditional roles as investment and adornment are oddly intertwined. Rural Indians are far more inclined to buy gold jewellry than their urban counterparts, and tend to favour plain pieces that can easily be valued and traded in if money gets tight.

That makes demographic changes a risk to the entire market. Rural population growth is grinding to a halt as people migrate to cities and birth rates fall, shifting the focus of consumption spending. "Millennials in urban India are increasingly tempted by goods other than gold, particularly luxury fashion and smartphones," according to a report by the World Gold Council, an industry group.

There are also a growing number of

alternatives to gold jewellry for those who want to save up for a rainy day. (In the case of rural India, the better term might be "a dry day," as weak monsoons tend to tighten farmers' cash flows, and force them to pawn or sell.) Gold was originally popular as a store of value because banks weren't available, but the share of rural adults with an account has soared to 79% in 2017 from 33% in 2011, according to the World Bank. A larger proportion of the adult population now has a bank account than in Hungary or Turkey.

Considering the State Bank of India's current 6.4% benchmark oneyear deposit rate and inflation at 3.99%, a savings account is a far better way to protect your wealth against rising prices than a bangle. Even in deprived urban areas, alter-

native stores and sources of capital are opening up. About four million people in Delhi's shantytowns will be granted ownership rights, the government said this week, a move that would help them take out loans to build houses. To be sure, the allure of gold can't

be wiped out by banking. Another reason that buying tends to be so vigorous in late October is that it is peak wedding season. About half of India's goldjewellry demand is for the heavy pieces worn as part of a bridal outfit, according to the World Gold Council. Consumer spending, the other main leg of gold demand alongside investment (industrial uses are a distant third) will tend to rise with income, benefiting from the same urbanisation that is depressing purchases in rural areas.

This year, however, consumers are a tough market to bet on. Motor-vehicle purchases, usually a good proxy for the public's appetite for big-ticket

DAVID FICKLING

items, are collapsing. Sales of cars, trucks and buses fell by more than a third in September from a year earlier, and two-wheelers were down 22.1%.

The same pattern is borne out in broader data. The share of consumers who think their current economic situation has worsened and is set to deteriorate over the coming year was its highest since 2013 in September, according to the Reserve Bank of India. Perceptions of the job market are the worst in seven years of records. For the first time in four years of data, consumers think they're spending less on discretionary purchases.

India's outsize role in the world gold market isn't going to disappear overnight. Its consumers still account for more than one in six ounces bought globally.

Still, this change in gold demand should be a warning to investors. For many years, its role as a rural investment made India a downside buffer for the yellow metal, with farmers rushing in to make physical purchases whenever the price fell to levels that tempted investors to liquidate their positions. As the country changes, that

dynamic is disappearing. While high gold prices still appear to put off purchases, consumption-focused urban jewellry buyers aren't necessarily going to be around to prop up the market when it is weak. Gold's attraction for investors has

long been its counter-cyclical tendencies. As this crucial part of the market grows more pro-cyclical, they'd do well to pay attention.

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

THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO

Visit to the Valley

Eyebrows are raised at the visit of a 'select' team of European Union lawmakers to the Kashmir Valley. While supporters of the Modi government's Kashmir policy hail it as a "truth tour" and an "excellent diplomatic strike", critics denounce it as a "guided tour" and a "facesaving exercise". Touted or decried, the clear signal is that the government is badly in need of a certificate of normalcy to corroborate its version of the situation in the Valley, even at the cost of further internationalising the Kashmir issue. The government has not agreed to an all-party delegation of Indian parliamentarians to Kashmir, but it has given foreign parliamentarians access, exemplifying its skewed and self-serving nationalism in the process. EU MPs cannot be expected to make an objective assessment of the situation on the ground. The high-profile panel stands to lose credibility when it meets army officers and does not meet the leaders under detention. A lot more than the promise of development is needed to address the sense of being occupied and subjugated. Something more than enumerating the 'advantages' accruing from the revocation of special status is needed to wean the people away from their voluntary and peaceful civil disobedience. The humanitarian crisis in Kashmir is of the government's own making. The government can and must win the hearts and minds of the people of Kashmir by rescinding its decision to abrogate article; 370 and taking steps to fulfil their legitimate political aspirations. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

•Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Managing Editor: Sunil Jain, Deputy Managing Editor: Shobhana Subramanian* (*Responsible for selection of News under the PRB Act) (*Copyright: The Indian Express (*P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (*P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (*P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (*P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (*P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (*P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (*P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (*P) Limited (*P) Lim New Delhi

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

RIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi made a dramatic announcement on August 15 that India would eliminate single-use plastic by 2022. This generated a lot of speculation on whether a ban on single-use plastics was in the offing. Then came another statement on October 2, Gandhi Jayanti, by the Prime Minister that single use plastics will be phased out by 2022, and the officials indicated that states will play a major role in ensuring this happens.

Single-use plastics are plastics which are used just once as in disposable packaging, and also in items such as plates, cutlery, straws, cups, etc. A study by FICCI estimates that 43% of India's plastics are used in packaging and much of it is single-use. We are also experiencing completely unnecessary single-use plastic entering homes in the form of covers for invitation cards, magazines, bread wrappers, and advertisements.

Single-use plastic is only a part of what is truly a massive challenge, and that is the management of all kinds of plastic waste. But it is good to begin with single-use plastic, its large and growing volume adds enormously to the total plastic waste. The growing volume, to a large extent, is because of rising e-commerce in India. People buy from companies like Amazon.com and Flipkart.com, that use singleuse plastic (cling film, bubble wrap, etc.) for disposable packaging. Both the companies have made a commitment to phase out their use of single-use plastic, but this is not likely to happen anytime soon.

Ever since plastic was invented by John W Hyatt in 1869, many more inventions of synthetic polymers followed, plastics have been an integral part of our lives, contributing much to the convenience and ease of modern living because of the pliability, flexibility, durability, and lightness of the material. Plastics are used not only in airplanes, computers, cars, trucks, and other vehicles but also in everyday use items such as refrigerators, air-conditioners, furniture, and even casings for electric wires, to name only a few.

The problem is that plastic does not decompose naturally and sticks around in the environment for thousands of years. Safe disposal of plastic waste is, therefore, a huge challenge worldwide. For an excellent short introduction to plastics, see bit.ly/2or5ieh.

Close to 20 states of India have imposed a partial or a total ban on singleuse plastics at one time or another. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh opted for complete bans, while others including Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha have tried partial bans. Plastic bags have been banned in even a larger number of cases. The bans have by and large not been successful owing to poor state enforcement capacity.

Plastic carry bags pose a special problem. Although they are strong, lightweight and useful, and can be saved, cleaned and reused many times, this is mostly not done because they are available very cheap and are, therefore, not valued (often shops give plastic carry bags for free). They become effectively single-use plastics.

A compulsory charge by retail stores on carry-bags has proven most effective in reducing their use sans a ban. In Ireland, a minor charge added to every bill saw a 95% reduction in demand for such carry-bags, as most shoppers began bringing in their own reusable grocery-bags.

In India, the Plastics Waste Management Rules 2016 included a clause in Rule 15 calling for explicit pricing of carry bags, which required vendors to register and pay an annual fee to the urban local bodies. But lobbying by producers of plastics meant that this clause was removed by an amendment in 2018, that was never put up for public debate, as is mandatory.

In India, plastic producers have been advocating thicker and thicker micron sizes for carry bags. Also, when there is a ban on carry-bags, it instead leads to use of nonwoven polypropylene (PP) bags, which feel like cloth and are now even being printed to look like cloth. These are actually more dangerous for the environment as their





ISHER JUDGE AHLUWALIA **& ALMITRA PATEL**

Ahluwalia is chairperson, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), and Patel is member, Supreme Court committee on solid waste management

CITIES AT CROSSROADS

Single-use plastic only part of the challenge

But it is good to begin with single-use plastic, its large and growing volume adds enormously to the total plastic waste

fine fibres rub off and enter global waters as teeny micro-plastics.

Discarded plastic bags create the greatest problems in waste management. Windblown into drains, they cause flooding of urban areas. Used as waste-bin liners to dispose of daily food scraps, they find their way into the stomachs of roaming livestock. Animals ingest them to get at the food inside and this ultimately causes death. All plastic waste is eventually carried by rain, streams and rivers into the oceans.

A Texas-sized Great Garbage Patch of floating plastics swirling in the Pacific first attracted attention in the 1960s. A similar or even greater quantity of sunken plastic, especially discarded fishing gear, called ghost nets, blankets our ocean floors. Both floating and sunken plastics kill riverine and marine life.

We need to build awareness of the damage caused by single-use plastics and develop consumer consciousness to minimise their use. For example, at airports, we could replace meters of cling-film, used to wrap luggage, with a pretty cloth bag temporarily sealed by machine stitching that can later find alternative uses. In our parties, we could use paper plates and bamboo straws. In our pantries, we could use butterpaper as in olden times replacing the millions of bread wrappers needlessly used for a product with shelf life of one to three days. We should also write to those sending us magazines or invitations or advertising in plastic sleeves to switch to tear-proof paper instead. Finally, plastic throw-aways at parties should be replaced with washable reusable tableware.

Single-use plastic can potentially be converted by thermo-mechanical recycling into plastic granules for blending into other plastic products, usually irrigation piping for agriculture. But collection of post-consumer waste and recycling poses a major challenge. This is particularly so when packaging consists of layers of different types of polymer. The multilayer flexible packaging which is used for Kurkure and other snack foods cannot be made into granules because it contains layers of plastic with different melting points. The Plastic Waste Management Rules of 2016 require creators of such packaging waste to take it back at their cost or pay cities for its management under Extended Manufacturer Responsibility. But there is little compliance.

While it is true that India recycles much more than the industrialised countries through an informal network of waste collectors and segregators (a lot of this is downcycling), a study by FICCI points out that the fast growing consumption has brought us to a point where consumption has clearly outstripped India's current capacity to recycle plastics.

In our October 2017 column (bit.ly/2JuL4aN) we had pointed out how recycled plastic can be used in strengthening roads. Use of plastics more than doubles or triples road life, and has been approved by the Indian Road Congress (IRC 98 of 2013) and mandated by the National Highway Authority in November 2015 for up to 50 km around every city with population over 500,000. To date over 14,000 km of so-called plastic roads have been built which are long-lasting and free of potholes. Only corruption in road contracts inhibits their wider use, as longer lasting roads means fewer contracts for building and rebuilding poor quality roads.

Another ingenious idea is to replace Thermocole with totally biodegradable pith from the shola/sola plant (Aeschynomene aspera); this was used in huge quantities till the 1950s for making sola-topees or pith helmets for colonials and their armies. Today, it is used in Bengali weddings and for Durga Puja decorations. Imagine the rural income generation from steady commercial use of this wild marsh-land reed.

We need many more such innovative ideas and a fundamental change in mindsets to minimise the use of singleuse plastic. It is high time we also turn to the larger challenge of plastic waste management if we want to avail of the many advantages offered by plastics in our modern lifestyle.

Oil or water?

SIDHARTH NARAYAN

& V SRIDHAR

Narayan is research associate, CUTS International Sridhar is Professor, IIIT-Bangalore. Views expressed are personal

Need to ensure that data nationalism, in the garb of additional security, does not hurt consumer interests

HE NEW PARLIAMENTARY Standing Committee on Communications & IT has a daunting task ahead, as it aims to study the contentious issue of restricting cross-border data flow, or data localisation (DL) among other policy issues, in the first year of its constitution. More so, as the government may table the 'Personal Data Protection' bill in the winter session.

Data as oil orwater is a raging debate across the world. Many have have advocated for the free flow of data across borders, as it provides various benefits, increasing consumer surplus through dynamic pricing mechanisms; maintaining availability and quality of service; promoting innovation in the provisioning of digital goods and services; ensuring ease of doing business; and preventing and detecting fraud. However, many countries, including India, are leaning towards DL. Primary reasons being privacy; protection of national interest; utilisation as an economic resource; and so on. Other reasons include ensuring access to law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and creating a level playing field for smaller Indian tech companies.

Though there are many proponents and opponents of DL, conclusive research on consumer impact is missing. Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) is involved in a consumer impact assessment of data localisation.

The preliminary results indicates that claims of the opponents hold water. The survey shows that various consumer facing parameters such as freedom of speech, availability of services provided by smaller foreign service providers, privacy and data protection of consumers, are to be adversely impacted.

DL may result in reduction in international competitiveness of service providers. Moreover, DL may create a 'honeypot of data' concentrated in one geographical location, thereby enhancing the risk of data breaches and cyber-attacks. Also, experts are sceptical of the State having adequate cyber-security experts and vulnerability proof digital infrastructure.

Capacity of LEAs in combating and monitoring of data.

the government to explore less intrusive means to achieve the objectives of data localisation

It is imperative for

cybercrimes was also questioned.Furthermore,therewere concerns of excessive tracking Preliminary findings also

show that the government may make it easier for LEAs to access data, create conditions for growth and narrow competition between foreign and domestics service providers.

On the issue of realising the full economic benefits of DL,

experts opined that this may largely be dependent on government's support in providing power, land and cooling for Data Centres (DCs). The capital intensive and not labour-intensive nature of DCs also question the amount of employment, DL is expected to create. Furthermore, experts also believed that large foreign companies are better placed to comply with DL, and set up their DCs within India, as opposed to smaller domestic companies, which may result in unintended negative impact on competition, and thereby consumers.

It seems that DL may not be the most appropriate way of achieving the regulatory objectives, since the envisaged benefits of the regulation are unlikely to outweigh the consequential costs. As the way forward, it seems necessary to analyse consumers' perceptions towards the benefits currently derived from data driven services, satisfaction levels with services and privacy risks faced, and estimate how the usage may change should these indicators be impacted on account of DL.

It is only then, that one would be able to answer the question if 'data could be oil or water, and whether it should flow freely across borders?', at least from a consumer perspective. Such evidence-based consumer facing findings, would certainly provide useful insights on the issue, and also act as fodder for further debate, which would ensure that data nationalism in the garb of additional security does not hurt consumer interests. Lastly, it is imperative for the government to explore less intrusive means to achieve the objectives of DL. Exploring alternatives to Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLAT), such as becoming a member of "Chart of signatures and ratifications of Treaty 185: Convention on Cybercrime", which has specific focus on cross border cybercrimes and associated mutual assistance amongst members, will certainly be useful in this regard.

ANKS, FINANCIAL INSTITU-TIONS and NBFCs are now playing a pivotal role in meeting the financial needs of individuals and business, which have traditionally been un-served or underserved. Regulations and compliances have, however, become stricter in recent times. In light of recent macroeconomic developments and a decelerating growth environment, there is credit crunch, as well as growing scrutiny on the broader financial sector. This has led to increases in the cost of borrowing and players are grappling with higher unit economics implications.

To contest the current state of concerns and become fit for future, Financial Institutions and FinTechs are now turning their focus on niche customer segments, leveraging technology and partnerships to service 'Aspirers' and the emerging middle class or the 'Next Billion'. FS players are fulfilling these segments' financial needs with an impetus on digital, automation and hyper-personalised products and services. Traditional banking institutions, NBFCs and new age FinTechs are realising the potential of being agents of transformation and financial inclusion by focusing on developing innovative products and services, catering to low-income and intermittent earners in unorganised sectors and MSMEs, usually starved for credit or entangled in web of shadow banking.

In such a scenario, both traditional banking institutions and FinTechs are adopting business and operational models powered by cutting edge technologies. Investing in new technologies and strategic partnerships among incumbent banks,

Battle for the "next billion" users

Fintechs need to collaborate with traditional financial institutions





NBFCs and fintechs has favoured such institutions to organically increase their customer base, lower customer acquisition, transactional and operational costs, reduce time to markets and manage portfolio risk while trying to increase formal credit and banking products penetration

in a growing and enterprising economy. Apart from fintechs, new-age banks and NBFCs are using technology more than ever and are harnessing partnership ecosystems across the value chain of lead generation, engagement, customer onboarding, underwriting, disbursement, servicing, monitoring and collection. AI/ML and big data have equipped traditional lenders to measure individual customer insights and build alternative credit scoring models. Low cost data, smartphone penetration and advent of social media are enabling both tradi-

tional banks and fintechs to identify,

engage and on-board inaccessible and isolated customers. Robotic process automation (RPA) has enabled streamlining of operational workflows, increasing productivity, accuracy, cost savings and customer engagement, servicing and grievance handling in various vernacular languages too, with supporting technologies like Natural Language Processing. Financial institutions are also experimenting with distributed ledger technologies for various use cases such as e-KYC, data exchange, loan disbursement and collection and cyber security. And, application programming interfaces (APIs) are being built and tested for robust connected ecosystems of various institutions and stakeholders.

Market size, key trends and developments

Today, India is at the core of innovation

nected world, given its favourable demographics dividend. India's banking sector, NBFCs, other financial service providers and fintechs are presented with an abundant opportunity and are making remarkable progress riding on the country's pro-financial inclusion policies and the growing use of mobile phones more than ever before. Out of all retail segments, the Aspirer

to create a financially inclusive and con-

and Next Billion segments present a golden opportunity for prolific demand of financial services built on convenience, transparency and low-cost. These segments are expected to grow significantly in the next five years. This provides FS players with an untapped potential to provide financial services.

In the past, it has been very challenging to reach rural communities and provide them with savings, payments, credit and other financial products. However, with increased digital technology penetration, there has been a boost in the design and development of business models to reach last mile; this includes innovative service delivery models and smart partnerships (tie-ups and correspondence with *kirana* stores and e-commerce).

Future state: maximizing

likelihood of adoption India, in the near future, is poised to be a leader in innovations and disruptions in banking and financial services. In a diverse country like India, financial sector incumbents and nuevo fintechs have to focus on the trinity nuances of price, product and customer service to succeed, and these nuances change with cultures and con-



PRESENTING PARTNER





sumer segments.

Adopting technological innovations across value chains will aid optimisation of resources and processes, reduce turnaround time, facilitate intuitive and automated decision making and ensure accessibility of credit for customers at rates and terms tailored to their socio-economic profile. The success of India's financial sector companies to on-board and deliver for the Aspirer and Next Billion segments will largely be dependent on their ability to rationalise and maximise use of technology, human capital and cohesive financial and non-financial ecosystems.

New Delhi

One key strategy would be to provide financial services at the point of consumption, and thus an in depth understanding of the consumption needs of different segments is imperative. Lower income segment needs are more focussed on food and clothing, while as we move up the income pyramid, the needs shift towards housing and transport.

This presents incumbents with an opportunity to understand specific segments' aspirations and challenges and provide for core user need offerings. Players should focus on providing a simple, clean and efficient user experience lever aging technology, analytics and partner ships at the point of consumption. This would facilitate the growth of a user base with lower acquisition costs. Once an adequate user base has been built, there is then the opportunity to pivot and upsell/cross-sell other financial products and services, such as micro insurance with a consumer good product or a micro-loan for small ticket size consumption. A number of players have cracked this model by first providing basic payments services, and then pivoting into higher margin financial products.

The winning strategy still seems to be through collaborations and partnerships: traditional institutions like banks and non-banking financial institutions have a large base of customers and fin techs have the right technological support; together, they can form a mutually beneficial relationship to amplify the processes of helping the un-served and the under-served customers with financial services.



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Sector

PREFERS NON-CONTRACTUAL LABOUR

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THIS WORD MEANS

DAVOS IN THE DESERT

The event the Prime Minister is attending in Riyadh. What is on the table, and why is it compared to Davos?



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with King Salman bin Abdulaziz. Twitter/PTI

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi is on a visit to Riyadh to attend an international event from October 29 to 31. Formally the Future Investment Initiative (FII), it is widely being described as "Davos in the desert". The informal name derives from the World Economic Forum's annual meeting that is held in Davos, Switzerland, where world leaders discuss and shape agendas for pressing international issues. FII, too, brings together policymakers, investors and global experts, who discuss the role of investment in driving global prosperity and development. FII is an initiative that was first undertaken by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in 2017 to diver-

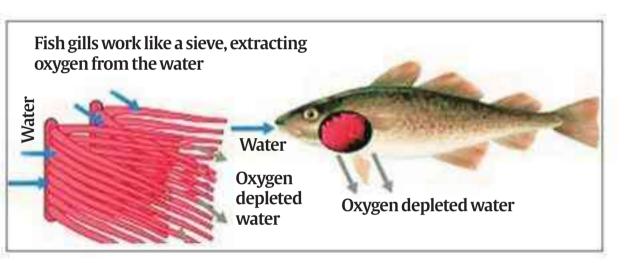
sify the kingdom's economy and reduce its dependence on petroleum products.

This year, Modi delivered the keynote address "What's next for India?" and engaged in bilateral talks with the Mohammad bin Salman and King Salman bin Abdulaziz. Saudi Arabia has already announced agreements worth \$15 billion. Other world leaders attending the event include Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari.

In 2018, the FII was boycotted by over 40 participants due to allegations about Saudi Arabia's involvement in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

TIP FOR READING LIST =

WHAT FISH DO AMID CLIMATE CHANGE



AMONG VARIOUS ways in which climate change is impacting life on Earth, one has been to change the distribution of fish species in the oceans. Scientists have predicted that the shift will be towards the poles. In a new research paper, they have explained the biological reasons why fish species will follow that direction.

It stems from the way fish breathe. Scientists describe this with the Gill-Oxygen Limitation Theory, or GOLT. Daniel Pauly, the author of the theory, is the principal investigator of the 'Sea Around Us' initiative at the University of British Columbia's Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries. His new paper is published in Mediterranean Marine Science (ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/hc mr-med-mar-sc/article/view/19285/18618). A statement on the 'Sea Around Us' website explains the theory. Warming waters have less oxygen. Therefore, fish have difficulties breathing in such environments.

Additionally, such warming, low-oxygen waters also increase fish's oxygen demands because their metabolism speeds up. This is because, as fish grow, their demand for oxygen increases. However, the surface area of the gills (two-dimensional) does not grow at the same pace as the rest of the body (three-dimensional). The larger the fish, the smaller its surface area relative to the volume of its body. So, the fish move to waters whose temperatures resemble those of their original habitats and that satisfy their oxygen needs. As the global sea surface temperature has increased by approximately 0.13°C per decade over the past 100 years, "suitable" waters are more and more found towards the poles and at greater depths.

Previous studies by Pauly and his colleagues have already predicted that climate change will cause some fish species to shift their distribution by more than 50 km per decade, the statement said.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Tracking employment in India

A new study uses NSSO data to show that between 2004 and 2017, employment grew at less than half the rate of population growth; number of women and young people in jobs fell; rural employment stagnated

UDIT MISRA

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 29

EVER SINCE the results of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18 became public — they showed that unemployment in India was at a 45-year high — there has been vigorous public debate about the true state of unemployment in the country.

What has fueled this debate — and allowed different people to arrive at differing conclusions about the state of unemployment — has been the long delays in the availability of past employment data, even though PLFS tracks employment annually.

Now, a new study, commissioned by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), and undertaken by Laveesh Bhandari of Indicus Foundation and Amaresh Dubey of Jawaharlal Nehru University, has highlighted the broad trends for employment in India between 2004 and 2018. (*The Indian Express*, October 26)

A key feature of this study is that instead of focusing on unemployment, it focuses only on the "employment" data. It does so by looking at three comparable surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) — the Employment-Unemployment Surveys (EUS) of 2004-05 and 2011-12, and the PLFS of 2017-18.

So how is mapping employment different from mapping unemployment?

The NSSO surveys divide the entire population into three categories. Broadly speaking, Category 1 consists of people who were involved in economic activity (or work) during the reference period of the survey. These individuals are labelled as "Employed" – and Category 1 can be subdivided into categories such as self-employed, salaried employees, and casual labourers.

Category 2 consists of people who were not engaged in any economic activity during the reference period of the survey, but were looking for work if work was available. These individuals are labelled as "Unemployed".

Taken together, categories 1 and 2 form the country's "labour force".

Category 3 constitutes people who are neither engaged in work nor available for it. This category — labelled as "Not in the labour force" would have a large number of people, including those who have retired, those studying, those unable to work due to disability, and those attending "only" to domestic duties. The new study focused on the level and

trends of the 'Employed' — that is, Category 1.

What are the main findings of the study? On the whole, the study found that the



total employment in the country grew by 4.5 crore in the 13 years between EUS 2004-05 and PLFS 2017-18. What puts this absolute number in perspective is that this represents a growth of just 0.8 per cent — less than half the rate at which the overall population grew, which was 1.7 per cent.

What was the urban-rural spread of employment?

Of the 4.5 crore increase in employment, 4.2 crore happened in the urban areas while rural employment either contracted (by 0.01 per cent between 2004 and 2011) or was stagnant (grew by 0.18 per cent between 2011 and 2017).

And what was the male-female spread of employment?

Over the 13 years, male employment grew

by 6 crore but female employment fell by 1.5 crore. In other words, while there were 11.15 crore women with jobs in 2004, only 9.67 crore were employed 13 years later. Women's share in employment has fallen from an already low level of 27.08% in 2004 to 21.17 per cent in 2017.

What about youth employment? India is one of the world's youngest na-

tions, but employment data according to age groups shows that youth employment (those between the ages of 15 and 24) has fallen from 8.14 crore in 2004 to 5.34 crore in 2017.

However, employment in the 25-59 age group and the 60 years and above group has gone up. The sustained schooling reforms seem to have shown their impact in the employment of children below 14 years of age reducing from 61 lakh in 2004 to 27 lakh in 2011, and just 11 lakh in 2017.

And employment by education level?

The emerging economy appears to be leaving behind the illiterates and those with incomplete primary education. Employment in this category has gone down from 20.08 crore in 2004 to 14.2 crore in 2017, and their share in those employed has gone down from 48.77 per cent in 2004 to 31.09 per cent in 2017.

Employment has risen for all other categories of education from primary, secondary, to postgraduate and above.

Has the organised sector grown?

Yes, the rate of employment growth in the organised sector — that is, in firms that are registered with regulatory authorities and are bound by a variety of labour laws has been the fastest, and its share in the total employed has risen from 8.9 per cent in 2004 to 14 per cent in 2017.

The unorganised sector, too, has grown. In fact, while its rate of growth has been slower, its overall share in the economy has gone up from 37.1 per cent in 2004 to 47.7 per cent in 2017. However, the pace of growth of the unorganised sector has moderated since 2011. Both these sectors have grown at the ex-

pense of the agri-cropping sector, where employment has fallen from 21.9 per cent in 2004 to 17.4 per cent in 2017. In essence, the results show that those who are poor, illiterate, and unskilled are increasingly losing out on jobs.

Has the rise of the organised sector led to an increase in contractual employment?

Typically, it is expected that those who work in the organised sector would be employed on some formal contract. The presence of a contract makes all the difference when it comes to job security, minimum wages, equal pay for equal work, safe working conditions, etc. Without a contract, even a worker employed in the organised sector would not have any means of seeking recourse for any injustice. Non-contractual labour also earns less in general than contractual labour. That is why the unorganised sector almost entirely employs workers on a non-contractual basis.

However, the NSSO data show a sustained trend of even the organised sector in India preferring to employ workers without a contract. Indeed, between 2011 and 2017, this resulted in the organised sector coming to employ more people without a contract.

That firms — whether organised or unorganised — prefer non-contractual employment is bad news for India's bid to make the economy more formal. In all likelihood, firms are doing so to cut the extra costs that come with complying with inflexible and stringent labour laws. This is more likely to be the case when firms are stressed for money and struggling to grow.

From the cloud, computing moves to the edge

ANUJ BHATIA

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 29

CLOUD COMPUTING — by which remote servers hosted on the Internet store and process data, rather than local servers or personal computers — is ready to move to the next level. Amazon, Microsoft, and Alphabet, the parent company of Google — the technology giants that provide cloud computing infrastructure to major corporates and governments -want to leverage 5G wireless technology and artificial intelligence to enable faster response times, lower latency (ability to process very high volumes of data with minimal delay), and simplified maintenance in computing.

This is where Edge Computing comes in

 which many see as an extension to the cloud, but which is, in fact, different in several basic ways. By 2025, says the global research and advisory firm Gartner, companies will generate and process more than 75% of their data outside of traditional centralised data centres — that is, at the "edge" of the cloud.

So, what is edge computing?

Simply put, edge computing enables data to be analysed, processed, and transferred at the edge of a network. The idea is to analyse data locally, closer to where it is stored, in real-time without latency, rather than send it far away to a centralised data centre. So whether you are streaming a video on Netflix or accessing a library of video games in the cloud, edge computing allows for quicker

data processing and content delivery.

How is edge computing different from cloud computing?

The basic difference between edge computing and cloud computing lies in where the data processing takes place.

At the moment, the existing Internet of Things (IoT) systems perform all of their computations in the cloud using data centres. Edge computing, on the other hand, essentially manages the massive amounts of data generated by IoT devices by storing and processing data locally. That data doesn't need to be sent over a network as soon as it processed; only important data is sent — therefore, an edge computing network reduces the amount of data that travels over the network.

And how soon can edge computing become part of our lives?

computing will become apparent when 5G networks go mainstream in a year from now. Users will be able to enjoy consistent connectivity without even realising it.

Experts believe the true potential of edge

Nvidia, one of the biggest players in the design and manufacture of graphics and AI acceleration hardware, has just announced its EGX edge computing platform to help telecom operators adopt 5G networks capable of supporting edge workloads. The new Nvidia Aerial software developer kit will help telecom companies build virtualised radio access networks that will let them support smart factories, AR/VR and cloud gaming.

Why did monsoon end with so much rain? Hunt for clues in Indian Ocean

AMITABHSINHA

PUNE, OCTOBER 29

THE RECORD-breaking rainfall this monsoon season, particularly during August and September, has left weather scientists confounded. After a more than 30% shortfall in June, the season ended with 10% excess rainfall, the first time such a thing has happened since 1931. The September rainfall (152% of long period average, or LPA) was the highest since 1917, the August rainfall (115% of LPA) was the highest since 1996, and the overall seasonal rainfall (110% of LPA) was the highest since 1994.

Search for answers

As late as the first week of September, the India Meteorological Department maintained that the seasonal rainfall was going to be normal (in the 96-104% range). With an influencer like El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in the Pacific remaining largely neutral this year, scientists are trying to pin down

the exact reason for the unusual rainfall. In the search for answers, one phenome-

non attracting some attention is the Indian Ocean Dipole or IOD, an ocean-atmosphere interaction similar to El Niño, but in the Indian Ocean. IOD is a measure of the difference in the sea-surface temperatures of the western Indian Ocean (Arabian Sea) and the eastern Indian Ocean, south of the Indonesian coast. When the western waters are warmer than the eastern, IOD is said to be positive; in the opposite state, IOD is negative. Like ENSO in the equatorial Pacific Ocean,

IOD too influences weather and climate events, though its impact is weaker because the Indian Ocean is considerably smaller, and shallower, than the Pacific. The IOD has an impact on the Indian monsoon: a positive IOD is understood to aid monsoon rainfall while negative IOD is known to suppress it.

Strongest ever

This year's IOD, which began developing around June and grew strong after August, has been one of the strongest on record. IOD records are not very old. Accurate measurements are available only since 1960, according to the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (ACB). "The current positive Indian Ocean



Rainfall 30% short in June, 10% excess for overall monsoon. Pradeep Kumar

Dipole event has strengthened significantly over the past month. The latest weekly value of +2.15°C is the strongest positive weekly value since at least 2001 (when the Bureau's weekly dataset commenced), and possibly since 1997, when strong monthly values were recorded," the ACB said in its latest bulletin on October 15.

This has led to scientists looking at IOD for possible clues to this year's bumper rainfall, especially since such strong IOD events in previous years, too, were associated with high monsoon rainfall.

"In previous years, we have had very strong IOD events in 1997 and 2006. In both those years, the southwest monsoon rainfall over India was around 100% of normal, 1997 also happened to be a strong El Niño year (El Niño suppresses monsoon rainfall), but thanks to the positive IOD, the monsoon rainfall was normal that year," said Sridhar Balasubramanian, associate professor of mechanical engineering and an adjunct faculty member at IDP Climate Studies at IIT Bombay. "This year the positive IOD started strengthening from July, and by September it evolved into the strongest positive IOD ever recorded in the history of Indian summer monsoon."

Tenuous link

Beyond the correlation, scientists are careful not to directly blame the IOD for this year's rains. That is because IOD's link with the Indian summer monsoon is tenuous at best. monsoon, and not the most dominant.

In fact, the IOD's influence on the monsoon is not fully understood. It is known to have a much weaker influence than ENSO, though. IOD's relationship with the Indian summer monsoon is also much less studied compared to that of ENSO, said | Srinivasan, distinguished scientist with the Divecha Centre for Climate Change at IISc, Bengaluru.

Besides, it is not clear if the IOD influences the monsoon or if it is the other way round. The IOD generally takes shape towards the latter half of the summer monsoon, in August and September, and scientists do not rule out the possibility that the monsoon could play

some role in its emergence. "It is critical to remember that IOD usually peaks in September-October-November, and its impacts on monsoon are not very robust. It is unclear if monsoon itself plays a critical role in forcing the IOD," said Raghu Murtugudde of the University of Maryland, US. "The problem with using IOD as an explanation is that its definition is not really solid. It is defined as a gradient of east-west SST (sea surface temperature) changes, but

New Delhi

It is only one of several factors that impact the the action is all in the east," Murtugudde said.

This year, earlier years

This absence of 'action' in the western Indian Ocean was evident this year too, Srinivasan pointed out. "This year there was strong cooling south of Sumatra (in the east Indian Ocean) but the western Indian Ocean did not show a large warming," Srinivasan said.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology show that since 1960, there have been only 10 strongly positive IOD events before this year. Summer monsoon rainfall was deficient on four of those occasions, more 100% on four others, and normal on the remaining two.

The fact that IOD could have played a role in bringing excess rains in August and September can not be ruled out, but the extent of its influence is something that still needs to be studied.

"The high rainfall in August and September this year was a record, and as of now, it would not be wrong to say that we do not understand the reasons for it." Srinivasan said.

WORDLY WISE

THE SINGLE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN COMMUNICATION IS THE ILLUSION THAT IT HAS TAKEN PLACE.

— GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A VISIT, A DIVERSION

Trip to Valley by members of EU Parliament renews questions about continuing restrictions on India's MPs and leaders

HE VISIT OF 27 members of the European Parliament to J&K, sponsored by a think tank in Delhi and blessed by the government, raises several questions. For a start, the government does not allow the same privilege to Indian parliamentarians and veteran political leaders, many of whom have been prevented from visiting the Valley ever since the August 5 decision to abrogate Kashmir's special status. Rahul Gandhi, MP, was turned back from Srinagar airport. Ghulam Nabi Azad, leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, who also belongs to J&K, was sent back from the Srinagar airport three times, and was finally permitted by the Supreme Court. CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury also went with the permission of the court, while Yashwant Sinha, a former finance minister of the country, was sent back from Srinagar airport. Another member of Parliament, and former chief minister, Farooq Abdullah, has been under house arrest in Kashmir since August 5.

What is also problematic is that these MEPs are not an official delegation. On this visit, they are not representing Europe or their own countries, or even their constituencies. They are in this delegation in their "personal capacity". What exactly, then, is their business in Kashmir? It can also be said with certainty that an official European parliamentary delegation would not have been comprised of a majority from the right wing political parties that now dot Europe, whose politics ranges from admiration for Nazism to anti-immigration to Islamophobia. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed them with the hope that their visit to I&K "should give the delegation a better understanding of the cultural and religious diversity of the region of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh", the only thing missing was a sense of irony.

If the idea was to impress upon the world that the government is not blocking foreign dignitaries from visiting Kashmir, as was pointed out at the US Congressional hearing, this delegation is not going to serve the purpose. As if to underline that, on the same day as the MEPs' visit, the United Nations expressed concern for the people of J&K, and asked India to restore their rights. Certificates from an apparently handpicked European delegation will do nothing to paper over the fact that the government first pushed through its decisions by imposing a communications blockade, and has then been slow to lift the curbs and restrictions on the people's right to free speech and freedom of association, or that it continues to detain a large number of political representatives in the Valley. The true test for the government's August 5 decision lies in how the people of Kashmir view it.

No stress relief

On telecom, rather than being driven by short-term considerations, government must act to restore sector's health

VENTS OF THE past week do not augur well for the long-term viability of the beleaguered telecom sector. On Thursday, the Supreme Court upheld the government's view that all revenue accruing to telcos, including from non-core activities, constitutes adjusted gross revenue (AGR). This is a blow to an industry struggling under a mountain of debt. By some estimates, telcos will now have to fork out around Rs 1.3 lakh crore, once spectrum usage charges linked to AGR are factored in, worsening their already precarious financial position. A day before this verdict, the Centre approved a revival package for public sector telcos BSNL and MTNL. By continuing to prop up these loss-making entities, at terms which can be construed as unfair to private operators, it may have ended up further distorting the market.

On the issue of what constitutes revenues, it is unfortunate the government chooses to continue with its line of argument, especially in light of the stress in the sector. The notion that income from non-core activities such as return on investments needs to be shared with the Centre is akin to killing the proverbial goose that lays the golden eggs. While a cash-strapped government may welcome this outcome — it could help offset some of the shortfall in its tax revenues — this additional levy will come at the expense of the health of an already strained sector. Highly indebted telcos will find it difficult to fulfill these obligations, especially with their profitability still under threat from the ongoing price wars. It will also have a bearing on their ability to take part in the 5G auctions. On the issue of reviving BSNL and MTNL, it is questionable whether these entities can compete effectively with the private sector. The assumptions that have been factored in the turnaround plans are optimistic to say the least. And while the logic of continuing with a sovereign-backed loss-making entity in a hyper competitive sector is itself questionable, an unequivocal backing by the sovereign, as this revival package suggests, could distort the market.

Rather than being guided by short-term revenue considerations, the government should consider the wider implications of these developments and take corrective measures for the sake of the sector. As there was ambiguity over what constitutes revenues, it should waive the interest and penalties it has levied on telcos. It should also drop its demand for license fees, reconsider the contribution to the universal service obligation fund, and rethink its stance on spectrum pricing.

CHANGE THE CHANNEL

Pakistan's media regulator wants TV anchors to be unbiased. It might as well ask them to shut shop

HE HOPE THAT abides vis a vis the India-Pakistan relationship is based on a simple assumption, a cliché almost: There's more that unites us than divide us. Historically, of course, the northern parts of India and eastern parts of Pakistan were a cultural unit. But even in contemporary times, the parallels between the pillars of the state in the two countries — the government and the media are remarkable. Earlier this week, reports confirmed that the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) has barred television anchors from giving their "opinions" during talk shows and limited their role to "moderator". For those Indians not familiar with how TV anchors in Pakistan go about their business, suffice it to say that apart from the odd Urdu phrase, they are mostly a mirror image of their Indian counterparts. Pemra's directive bars anchors from appearing as "experts", and says they should not provide "personal opinion", "bias" or "judgements" on any issue. Pemra might as well outlaw prime time TV debates, as they are conducted in this part of the world.

There was a time when television actually provided news, and attempted to inform its viewers. But prime time is now, on both sides of the border, a space where anchors attempt to echo government views and stand up for an imagined idea of nationalism. The "debate" is set in a gladiatorial arena, or to be more accurate, it is like American professional wrestling — the outcome is decided, and the referee is in on it. In fact, on one memorable day on Indian TV, a popular party spokesperson donned the mantle of an anchor,

pretending to reserve his "judgements", albeit quite poorly. None of this, however, is by way of providing justification for Pemra's diktat. In Pakistan, as in India, the government seems to believe that it is best suited to interfere in matters that are none of its business. The fact is, most news channels do what they do because that's what they believe the audience wants. The best way to "regulate" a free press is for people to just change the channel.

Journey to a beginning



Opening of Kartarpur corridor will show us that it is possible to leave behind the past, walk to the future

Amarinder Singh

MY CONNECT WITH Kartarpur Sahib goes back to my childhood. I still remember how the gurdwara, just about 235 km from my hometown of Patiala (that's less than the Chandigarh-Delhi distance), was always spoken of with great reverence in our family. Of course, that was majorly because of the historic importance of the site, where Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji died on September 22, 1539. But part of it was also because of the personal connection my family had with the gurdwara, whose present building was built in 1925 at a cost of Rs 1,35,600, donated by Maharaja Bhupindar Singh, the then ruler of Patiala and my grandfather, after the existing structure was ravaged by floods.

The desire to visit the revered gurdwara has always been strong within me. Today, just days before I see the cherished aspiration transform into enviable reality, I bow before the Great Guru for granting me this experience, and that too during his 550th Prakash Purb celebration.

I recall my personal meetings, in my previous term as chief minister, with former Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf, during which I had spoken extensively about the deep-rooted urge in every Sikh to visit the historic Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara. Though he had responded positively to my request, which our former Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, had also subsequently pursued actively, things did not really move forward till November 2018, when the Government of India conveyed its decision to build the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district to the International Border (with Pakistan), in coordination with the Government of Punjab.

It was a momentous day for all of us here in Punjab, and we wasted no time in initiating the process of getting things in place for the construction of the corridor and the infrastructure around it. It took us less than two months to make the land required for the project available to the central government. The work on the corridor (4.190 km) was started on December 13, 2018. In addition, a Passenger Terminal Building

pilgrims. Working closely with the Centre, my government, I am pleased to state, has ensured that the corridor is ready to be inaugurated by the prime minister on November 9, and to receive the first jatha of pilgrims to Sri Kartarpur Sahib on the same day. That, with the blessings of Wahe Guru, I will have the honour of being a member of this jatha gives me a deep sense of joy and satisfaction. What makes this

achievement truly

remarkable is that both

India and Pakistan stuck to

their deadlines against all

odds, in the face of many

disturbing and disruptive

year, to fulfill their ends of

the bargain. This gives me,

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Kartarpur Corridor. From

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tomorrow for Indo-Pak

relations.

the fructification of this

developments in the last one

What makes this achievement truly remarkable is that both India and Pakistan stuck to their deadlines against all odds, in the face of many disturbing and disruptive developments in the last one year, to fulfill their ends of the bargain. This gives me, and I am sure it gives the people of both countries, a powerful sense of optimism about the future.

Integrated Check Post (ICP) is also being

constructed at the International Border in

an area of about 50 acres by the Land Port

Authority of India (LPAI), which will become

operational before the corridor opens for

However, the fructification of this optimism would depend, to a great extent, on how soon, and how effectively, Pakistan leverages the opportunity it has got in the shape of the Kartarpur Corridor. From where I see it, the corridor has the potential to stand out as a historic symbol of peace and hope of a better tomorrow for Indo-Pak relations.

The recent decision of the Union Ministry of Road Transport & Highways to name the stretch from the Indo/Pak Border-Dera Baba Nanak-Amritsar-Tarn Taran-Goindwal Sahib-Kapurthala Sultanpur Lodhi National Highway as "Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji Marg" in the state of Punjab has further added to the aura of the corridor, which in many ways is a bridge of faith between India and Pakistan.

But the opening of the corridor next month will be just a small step forward on a long and difficult road, which our two nations can only traverse together if Islamabad gives up its negative posturing vis-a-vis India. As long as the Pakistan Army continues to support and sponsor cross-border terrorism, as long as our soldiers are killed by the men from across the border, and as long as the climate of mistrust and fear remains, there can be no real progress in easing the perpetual tension between our countries.

However, with my unwavering faith in the ideology of universal love and tolerance propagated by our revered first Guru, I am strongly of the view that the corridor will eventually pave the way for harmony between our two nations, whose people share common roots and a common aspiration for the future. It is my dream to see India and Pakistan connect with each other at an even deeper level, to walk beyond the 4.5 km of the Kartarpur Corridor and find new

ways of burying the past, in my lifetime. One small way of building on the trust that the corridor promises to nurture between the two countries is for Islamabad to waive the \$20 fee it has imposed on pilgrims visiting the revered gurdwara. A gesture like that would really prove that Pakistan respects the sentiments of India's people, and wants to strengthen people-topeople relations between the two nations.

The corridor, I believe, has shown us that it is more than possible to bridge the differences that have assumed unnaturally grave proportions in these seven decades. All that is needed is the will to do so. Let this corridor, then, become an icon of our collective future, and a beacon to show us the way to do it. Let it be the burial ground for hatred and mistrust, and for all those inimical forces that have obstructed peace between the two nations all these years. Terror and violence have no place in this Corridor of Peace — a truth that I am sure Islamabad realises, and hope it is ready to acknowledge.

What is needed now is the intent to bury the hatchet, which, in the given circumstances, is more the responsibility of Pakistan than of India. And now is the best time for the Imran Khan government to make the next move.

The writer is chief minister of Punjab

THE RUNNING AIR MARSHAL

PV Iyer, an unlikely soldier, continues to inspire

PARAMESWARAN IYER

OCTOBER IS THE month Air Force Day is celebrated in India and this is also a good occasion to celebrate the birthday of an Air Force veteran – Air Marshal PV Iyer – who turned ninety today. Known as the Running Air Marshal in the Indian Air Force, having logged in about 1,20,000 kms in his over 50year running career, he has turned running and fitness into a passion and inspired countless others, including his family, to make this a lifestyle. One person he could not inspire to undertake extreme running, however, was his son, the author of this piece.

In 1985, when I was general manager of the Uttar Pradesh Road Transport Corporation, based in Lucknow, my dad was planning to lead a contingent of about 200 Air Force and civilian runners on an Agra-Delhi 210 km ultra-marathon in just three days. I could, or at least was trying to, run buses in UP, and did my daily four-five km run, but definitely did not plan to embark on an ultramarathon with my father and his merry band of athletes. So, we amicably agreed that I would take one of my buses from Agra to Delhi while the Air Marshal and his team ran the distance. With night halts at Mathura, Palwal and Faridabad, they completed the run in style, being received by then Air Chief Marshal LaFontaine at Air Force Station Palam on Air Force Day, October 8, 1985. The gruelling run had a dropout rate of about 50 per cent, but the then 56-year-old

He soon took to running, like a duck to water, and regularly ran 10-15 milers early morning from the Curzon Road Apartments near India Gate to Palam airport and back. Once, in the dark of an early Delhi winter morning, he collided with a buffalo on Janpath road. Luckily, the buffalo was more startled than my father and galloped away.

Air Marshal and his co-runners, finished in fine fettle, and celebrated with a "burra khana" lunch at Palam.

Young P V Iyer was always an unlikely candidate to join the military. Born in Kozhikode to a family of traditional temple priests, who had never done more exercise beyond throwing petals in the sacred fire while performing marriage rituals, he was destined to be an academic or a lawyer, like his father. He completed a Master's in mathematics from Presidency College, Madras, and was heading towards a teaching career, but fate willed otherwise — he got selected as a commissioned officer in the Indian Air Force. In 1952, he met Kalyani, a tennis star and veterinary doctor from Queen Mary's College, and after a short courtship, they got

The Air Marshal only accidentally got into fitness in 1976 when the Indian Air Force introduced a mandatory annual fitness test for its officers. He soon took to running, like a duck to water, and regularly ran 10-15 milers early morning from the Curzon Road Apartments near India Gate to Palam airport and back. Once, in the dark of an early Delhi winter morning, he collided with a buffalo on Janpath road. Luckily, the buffalo was more startled than my father and galloped away. In between his running career, the then

Air commodore Iver took a little time off to

help his son prepare for the 1980 civil services exam. As the Commanding Officer of the Air Force station at Chakeri, Kanpur, he realised that his son, having never studied the subject before, was struggling a bit in preparing for the philosophy paper in the main exam. The Commanding Officer took a week's leave and prepared some notes on philosophy to assist the aspiring civil servant. One of the notes was on phenomenology, the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness — something which did not make any sense to me. But my father had it figured out and his notes came in handy in my responses to the questions in the exam. I managed to get selected for

the IAS. Last year, again on Air Force Day, the Air Marshal was thrilled to meet the prime minister during the evening reception at the residence of the Air Chief in Delhi. In a face to face interaction, they discussed his Air Force career. Today is another important occasion: His 90th birthday. While all of us will sorely miss Kalyani, we will enjoy and celebrate the remarkable life and career of the Running Air Marshal, with the clear intention of having many more such celebrations in the years to come.

The writer is Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti. Views are personal

OCTOBER 30, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



CFD MINISTERS RESIGN ALL THE EIGHT CFD ministers, seven of cabinet rank and one minister of state, have handed over their resignations to their party leader, H N Bahuguna. One of the CFD ministers said this had been done to assure Bahuguna that "all of us are with him and follow his direction whatever it may be." The CFD ministers are in the Banarasi Das ministry so long as Bahuguna desires and they will quit en bloc the moment he takes a decision on new power equations. According to CFD sources, Bahuguna is expected to announce his decision within the next 24 hours and possibly the CFD would be joining hands with the Congress (I). into its fold.

No CPM-CPI TIES THE LEFT FRONT'S talks with the CPI for an electoral understanding for the ensuing Lok Sabha election have failed over seats distribution. At talks between leaders of the CPI and the front, the latter stuck to its offer of only two seats to the CPI whereas the CPI desired atleast four seats, though it had earlier presented a list of seven seats. Soon thereafter, the front chairman, Promode Das Gupta, announced the list of candidates for all the 42 seats in West Bengal for the Lok Sabha. However, he said if the CPI accepted two seats before the front's election rally on November 4, the party would be welcomed

New Delhi

THE DEFENCE MINISTER, C Subramaniam. virtually underscored Charan Singh's stand that India would have to reconsider its policy if Pakistan were to go nuclear. Singh had utilised his Independence Day speech to make his position known on the issue. Subramaniam was speaking on "India's defence strategy for the Eighties" at the National Defence College. The defence minister told senior officers who constituted his audience that India had already had a situation of asymmetry vis-a-vis China and if Pakistan were to develop a nuclear arsenal then a second situation of asymmetry to India's disadvantage would develop.

India's N-Policy

- GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

THE IDEAS PAGE

In a plastic world

Use of single-use plastic needs to be minimised, but the larger problem also needs to be attended to



BY ISHER JUDGE AHLUWALIA AND ALMITRA PATEL

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi made a dramatic announcement on August 15, 2019, that India would eliminate single-use plastics by 2022. This generated a lot of speculation on whether a ban on single-use plastics was in the offing. Then came another statement on October 2, Gandhi Jayanti, by the PM that single-use plastics (SUPs) will be phased out by 2022, and officials indicated that states will play a major role in ensuring this happens.

SUPs refers to plastics which are used just once, as in disposable packaging and also in items such as plates, cutlery, straws etc. A FICCI study estimates that 43 per cent of India's plastics are used in packaging and much of it is single-use plastic. We also have completely unnecessary single-use plastic entering our homes in the form of covers for invitation cards, magazines, bread wrappers and advertisements.

truly a massive challenge, and that is the management of all kinds of plastic waste. But it is good to begin with SUPs because its large and growing volume adds enormously to the total plastic waste. The growing volume is, to a great extent, because of rising e-commerce in India with people buying from companies like Amazon and Flipkart that use single-use plastic for disposable packaging. Both companies have made commitments to phase out their use of single-use plastic, but this is unlikely to happen anytime soon.

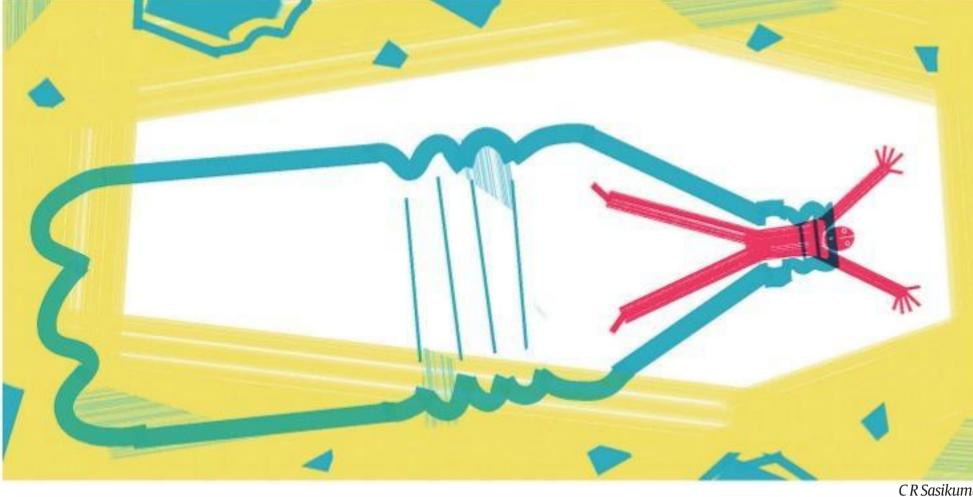
Ever since plastic was invented by John W Hyatt in 1869, it has been an integral part of our lives, contributing much to the convenience of modern living because of the flexibility, durability and lightness of this material. Plastics are used not only in airplanes, computers, cars, trucks and other vehicles, but also in our everyday-use items such as refrigerators, air-conditioners, furniture, and casings for electric wires, to name a few.

The problem is that plastic does not decompose naturally and sticks around in the environment for thousands of years. Safe disposal of plastic waste is, therefore, a huge challenge worldwide. For an excellent short introduction to plastics, one can see sciencehistory.org/thehistory-and-future-of-plastics.

Close to 20 states in India have imposed a partial or total ban on single-use plastics at one time or another. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh opted for complete bans, while others including Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha have tried partial bans. The bans have, by and large, not been successful because of poor state capacity to enforce.

Plastic carry-bags pose a special problem. Although they are strong, lightweight and useful — and can be saved, cleaned and reused many times — this is mostly not done because they are available very cheap and are, therefore, not valued (often shops give plastic carry bags for free). They become, effectively, single-use plastics.

A compulsory charge by retail stores on carry-bags has proven most effective in reducing their use without a ban. In Ireland, a minor charge added to every bill saw a 95 per



CR Sasikumar

cent reduction in demand for such carrybags, as most shoppers began bringing in their own reusable grocery-bags.

In India, the Plastics Waste Management Rules 2016 included a clause in Rule 15 which called for explicit pricing of carry-bags. This required vendors to register and pay an annual fee to the urban local bodies. But lobbying by the producers of plastics ensured that Single-use plastic is only part of what is this clause was removed by an amendment in 2018 — and that was never put up for public debate, as is mandatory.

In India, plastic producers have been advocating thicker and thicker micron sizes for carry-bags. Also, when there is a ban on carry-bags, it leads to the use of non-woven polypropylene (PP) bags which feel like cloth and are now even being printed to look like cloth: These are actually more dangerous for the environment as their fine fibres rub off and enter global waters as micro-plastics.

Discarded plastic bags create the greatest problems in waste management. Blown by wind into drains, they cause flooding of urban areas. Used as waste-bin liners to dispose of daily food scraps, they find their way into the stomachs of roaming livestock because the animals ingest them to get at the food inside, which ultimately causes their death. All plastic waste is eventually carried by rain, streams and rivers into the oceans.

ATexas-sized great garbage patch of floating plastics swirling in the Pacific first attracted attention in the 1960s. A similar or even greater quantity of sunken plastic, especially discarded fishing gear, called ghost nets, blankets our ocean floors. Both floating and sunken plastics kill riverine and marine life.

We need to build awareness of the damage caused by SUPs and develop consumer consciousness to minimise their use. For example, at airports, we could replace meters of cling-film, used to wrap luggage, with a pretty cloth bag temporarily sealed by machine stitching that can later find alternative uses. In our parties, we could use paper plates and bamboo straws. In our pantries, we could use butter-paper, as in olden times, replacing the millions of bread wrappers needlessly used for a product with a shelf life of one to three days. We should also write to those sending us magazines or invitations or advertising in plastic sleeves to switch to tear-proof paper instead. Finally, plastic throw-aways at parties should be replaced with washable, reusable tableware.

SUPs can potentially be converted by thermo-mechanical recycling into plastic granules for blending into other plastic products, usually irrigation piping for agriculture.

But collection of post-consumer waste and recycling poses a major challenge. Especially when packaging comprises layers of different types of polymer. The multi-layer flexible packaging, which is used for chips and other snacks, cannot be made into granules because it contains layers of plastic with different melting points. The Plastic Waste Management Rules of 2016 require creators of such packaging waste to take it back at their cost or pay cities for its management under Extended Manufacturer Responsibility. But there is little compliance.

While it is true that India recycles much more than the industrialised countries through an informal network of waste collectors and segregators (a lot of this is downcycling), a study by FICCI points out that fast-growing consumption has brought us to a point where consumption has clearly outstripped India's current capacity to recycle plastics.

In a 2017 column (IE, October 25, 'Don't waste the possibilities'), we had pointed out how recycled plastic can be used to strengthen roads. Use of plastics more than doubles or triples road life — it has been approved by the Indian Road Congress and mandated by the National Highway Authority in November 2015 for upto 50 km around every city with a population of over 5,00,000. To date, over 14,000 km of socalled plastic roads have been built which are long-lasting and free of pot-holes. It is only corruption in road contracts that restricts their wider use, as longer-lasting roads means fewer contracts for building and rebuilding poor quality roads.

Another ingenious idea is to replace the use of thermocol with totally biodegradable pith from the shola/sola plant (Aeschynomene aspera) — this was used in huge quantities till the 1950s for making sola-topees or pith helmets for colonials and their armies. Today, it is used in Bengali weddings and for Durga Puja decorations. Imagine the rural income generation from steady commercial use of this wild marsh-land reed.

We need many more such innovative ideas and a fundamental change in mindsets to minimise the use of single-use plastic. It is high time we also turn to the larger challenge of plastic waste management if we want to continue to avail of the many advantages offered by plastics in our modern lifestyle.

Ahluwalia is chairperson, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), and Patel is member, *Supreme Court committee on* solid waste management

His corner of the foreign field

"At a time when the US is celebrating the removal of Baghdadi, we have to tell Washington: Let the world share this achievement and don't sacrifice the

As scholar, mentor and institution-builder, Stephen P Cohen laid the foundation for South Asian studies



STEPHEN PHILIP Cohen, Emeritus Professor of History and Political Science at the University of Illinois, and Senior Fellow Emeritus of the Brookings Institution, died on Sunday. In his passing, South Asian security studies has lost a foundational scholar, teacher-mentor, and institution-builder. For nearly 50 years, from the publication of his classic on the Indian Army, he was an

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

common interests of mankind as you have done to Kurds."

South Asian studies covers a wide range of subjects: Anyone who has attended the eponymously-named annual conference in the American Midwest, which Steve supported from its inception in 1971, can testify to its breadth. In this "corner of a foreign field", to borrow Ramchandra Guha's cricket reference, Steve cultivated and curated South Asian security studies.

inescapable reference point.

Amongst the first generation of South Asianists in the US, W Norman Brown and Richard LPark had written on Indian foreign policy. A bit later, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph would publish on India's civil-military affairs and external relations. However, it was Steve who recognised the need for a long-term and systematic engagement with civil-military issues and national security, first with respect to India and later Pakistan. And from here, beginning in the 1970s, he built South Asian security studies.

How did he almost single-handedly do

First, Steve's scholarly writings framed and populated the incipient field. From 1971 to 2016, he wrote voluminously, deftly, and illuminatingly on South Asian armies, nuclear proliferation and arms control, India-Pakistan crises and the causes and possible resolution of the India-Pakistan conflict, India as an emerging power, the idea of Pakistan, India's military modernisation and the US and South Asian security.

At the core of Steve's concerns was the problem of violence, particularly organised violence – its causes, uses, limitations and management. One of his favourite studies was a little-known book he wrote on the Andhra cyclone of 1978, with his former student, CV Raghavulu. The subtitle of the book was "Individual and Institutional Responses to Mass Death". This was violence on a large scale but traceable to human neglect and ineptitude.

Second, when no one else saw fit to do so, Steve encouraged his doctoral students to specialise in South Asian security. When I arrived in Illinois in 1982, Sumit Ganguly was finishing his PhD on the causes of war in South Asia. I soon decided to study the emergence of regional cooperation in South Asia, nudged in this direction by Steve's urging me to think of the then-nascent SAARC in security terms.

Before Sumit and me, Shivaji Ganguly

had written a thesis on US policy towards South Asia. Following us, Kavita Khory, Amit Gupta, Chetan Kumar, Dinshaw Mistry, and Sunil Dasgupta, among others, would write on security-related subjects.

Steve also generously mentored students other than his own, who would blaze a trail in regional security studies including S Rashid Naim, Itty Abraham, Dhruva Jaishankar, Gaurav Kampani, Tanvi Madan, Constantino Xavier, and Moeed Yusuf. Scores of his "grand students" — his term for his students' students – can attest to his generosity as well.

Third, Steve built South Asian security studies institutionally. He was brilliant at attracting funding from US foundations -Ford, Macarthur, Rockefeller, Alton Jones The funds were deployed for specific projects but also to make the Office of Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security (ACDIS) at the University of Illinois into a centre for doctoral students, visiting fellows, and workshops and conferences.

Virtually anyone of note in South Asian security studies, scholar or scholar-practitioner, eventually found his or her way to ACDIS and later to the South Asia/India programme that Steve built at Brookings. Beyond ACDIS and the Brookings programme, in collaboration with South Asian colleagues, Steve helped establish the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) in Colombo, which has gone on to encourage the study of traditional and non-traditional security.

Steve inspired not just by being a driven scholar, mentor, and institution builder. He inspired by his many sterling human qualities that became apparent as you got to know him. For one, he was unfailingly respectful and had a deep affection for all South Asians. He rarely criticised colleagues and certainly not before students. I cannot remember his holding a grudge or being ill-tempered. All his students were his favourite and best students! And they all got household bits and pieces upon arriving so that they could quickly set up home. Steve was also boyishly in love with technology, especially Apple devices. Into his sixties, if memory serves, he was an avid tennis and basketball player.

Above all, Steve was a consummate American family man. It always seemed to me that he was happiest when he was with his lovely wife Bobby and around his children. In fact, he was relaxed and affable around other people's families as well: My children still recall a wonderful day out in Baltimore with Steve and Bobby.

I am sure Steve was stoical to the end. The last time I saw him was in 2013. I knew he had been seriously ill and had dealt with a number of painful injuries. We met for lunch. He was animated and solicitous, but as always, he would not be drawn on his health. He unsentimentally but warmly said goodbye. I hoped I would see him again, but I pulled my coat around me and didn't look back. I imagined him doing the same, and this brought a smile.

RIP Steve.

The writer is Wilmar Professor of Asian Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore

A certificate for the owner

anytime soon.

We need a timebound mechanism to transition to a clearer land titling system

Bornali Bhandari and Pawan Kadyan

THE INDIAN macroeconomic slowdown is perceived as being structural in nature. One of the key suggestions being made is that India needs to carry out factor market reforms, including those of land markets. In this article, we make a specific policy recommendation about land titling reforms. This lies at the heart of the quagmire that has stalled the progress of land reforms in India.

The Indian land titling system is currently based on presumptive titles. It is well-recognised now that we need to move towards conclusive titles. Conclusive titling works on three underlying principles of Torrens land title registration system — mirror, curtain and insurance. In short, the map/survey should mirror the true picture of the land including its ownership, extent and value; the land record should automatically mutate after registration to curtain the past and depict the correct title holder's name thereby obviating any requirement of producing complicated documents to prove ownership; and lastly, the title holder would be insured against any loss on account of any defect in the records.

To move towards conclusive titling, reforms are required at two levels — the legal framework and government process reengineering. The efforts towards conclusive titling began in 2008 with the National Land

Records Modernisation Programme (DIL-RMP). Over the last decade, DILRMP has been fairly successful in its objective of computerisation of land and registration records.

The central government had proposed a Model Land Titling Bill, 2011. However, that has not yet been taken up by most states. Only two states, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, have made some progress. Along with states, the Centre also needs to enact law/amend the Registration Act 1908, one of the central laws governing land.

Despite all efforts, progress towards a legal framework for conclusive titling has been limited. Therefore, we are proposing an alternate model. Instead of moving from one titling system to another directly, India may take an intermediate step of enacting a law for Certificate of Possessory Title (CoPT). It would essentially mean issuance of a CoPT to the owner upon registration of a possessory estate and after a few years thereafter, the land would become eligible to enter the conclusive land titling system. We recommend a period of five years in this regard. To add further flexibility in operationalising CoPT, along with the law around CoPT, state governments may also consider passing state specific "stamp acts", like has already been done by in some states. Also, registration of

land needs to be made time bound.

Single-use plastic is only part

of what is truly a massive

challenge, and that is the

management of all kinds of

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use single-use plastic for

companies have made

from companies like

This proposal has clear advantages. One, it would continue to indicate the vision to move towards conclusive titling and such clarity would guash any misapprehensions. As people register their land records under CoPT, they would get five years and at the end, if there have not been any competing claims on the land, this could be converted into a conclusive land title. Two, it would help formalise the on-ground reality where sometimes possession is used as a criterion to decide presumptive titles in India. Three, this would also automatically clear the pendency of civil suits in many cases.

Also, the DILRMP needs to be revamped and as part of DILRMP 2.0, we recommend that the Centre undertakes a drone and satellite imagery-based GIS tagged fresh survey of the entire territory of India. The existing cadastral survey maps could be geo-referenced in this exercise to harmonise data between the current and the proposed system. Together, these would create new survey maps of the land records system that would govern land administration.

The operations of land administration also may adopt the state-wide enterprise architecture approach and all institutional operators such as the departments of regis-

tration, land and surveys, urban and municipal affairs may use the same architecture and an integrated land database for smooth operations. Andhra Pradesh has already taken a lead in this regard. This may be adopted by others. Further, unique land parcel IDs having inbuilt identifiers of type of land and location may be issued for all parcels of land. This has already been done in Uttar Pradesh.

The computerised land and registration records of the past decades, which have been created as part of DILRMP may be used to establish a clear chain of presumptive title holders for all parcels of land. The unique IDs may also be mapped with the current title holders. This would assist in the issuance of CoPT later.

To move towards automatic mutation of land, the registration and land departments could develop integrated business process flows with systems-based smart contractlike checks for automatic mutatio. In sum, if states enact CoPT and the Centre introduces DILRMP 2.0 and makes necessary amendments to the Registration Act, it will unlock land's true potential, paving the way for a new paradigm.

Bhandari is senior fellow at NCAER, Kadyan is an IAS officer. Views are personal

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

GANDHI'S ABSENCE THIS REFERS TO the article 'Abandoning

Gandhi' (IE, October 29). Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence won us our freedom. Of all the Mahatma's ideas, non-violence holds good in the present-day political field. The concept of ahimsa has a long history in Indian religious thought. In his autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, he was quoted as saying: "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall — think of it, always".

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

PDS CHALLENGE

THIS REFERS TO the article 'National dishonour', (IE, October 29). India's Public Distribution System (PDS) is at the heart of all our efforts to address challenges like hunger and malnutrition. It is the inability of the most vulnerable sections of society to access the PDS that contributes to food insecurity among a sizable section of the population. As per the Economic Survey of India, 2017, the country's annual average internal migration was close to nine million people. The exercise to ensure inter-state mobility of PDS benefits that could tackle the food security issues of the migrant workers needs to be expedited. Accountability at the local level is also imperative.

New Delhi

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian **Express offers the Letter of** the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com

or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

No more waves

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Dented at the top' (IE, October 25). While the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance has swept the elections in both Haryana and Maharashtra, it has a reduced majority and also requires the support of some Independents. The BJP can no longer rely on just the Narendra Modi factor to ensure that it has a commanding victory in each poll. The promises of a five-trillion dollar economy, and of making India a very strong nation in the future, must be kept by the government. Development must be undertaken in the different sectors as promised. If it does not deliver on these, it may well lose. Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 217

रोजगार संकट का संकेत

में तेज सधार की कोई संभावना नहीं है। वाहन बिक्री जैसा शीर्ष संकेतक सुर्खियां बटोर रहा है लेकिन जमीन पर हालात उत्साहजनक नहीं

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था गहरी मंदी की चपेट इसकी बानगी है। द इंडियन एक्सप्रेस में में है और आंकडे बताते हैं कि निकट भविष्य प्रकाशित एक रिपोर्ट बताती है कि 2018-19 में मनरेगा में काम करने वाले 18 से 30 आयु वर्ग के श्रमिकों की संख्या 70.7 लाख पहुंच गई जबिक 2017-18 में यह केवल है। महात्मा गांधी राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी 58 लाख थी। 2013-14 के बाद इन आंकडों अधिनियम (मनरेगा) के अधीन रोजगार पाने में लगातार गिरावट आई थी लेकिन चालू वर्ष के लिए युवाओं की लगातार बढ़ती कतार में लगातार बड़ी तादाद में लोग इसके तहत

रोजगार चाह रहे हैं।

इस बदलाव की वजह की जांच जरूरी है लेकिन इस रोजगार गारंटी योजना में 18 से 30 वर्ष की उम्र के लोगों का बढ़ता नामांकन प्रथम दृष्ट्या यही बताता है कि रोजगार के अवसरों की भारी कमी है। अप्रैल-जून तिमाही का सकल घरेलू उत्पाद आंकडा बताता है कि विनिर्माण क्षेत्र की वृद्धि घटकर 5.7 फीसदी रह गई। जबकि विनिर्माण क्षेत्र का विस्तार गिरकर 0.6 फीसदी रह गया। इन क्षेत्रों में कमजोर गतिविधि और श्रम की खपत कर पाने में इनकी अक्षमता के कारण युवाओं ने मनरेगा के तहत रोजगार के लिए प्रयास शुरू किया। आशंका यह भी है कि कृषि क्षेत्र की समस्याओं ने ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में श्रम की मांग को

बहरहाल, एक और अहम पहलू है जिस पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। नीति आयोग का 2017 का एक प्रपत्र दर्शाता है कि ग्रामीण भारत की करीब दोतिहाई आय अब गैर कृषि गतिविधियों से उत्पन्न होती है। विनिर्माण और निर्माण क्षेत्र का करीब आधा उत्पादन ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में होता है। सेवा क्षेत्र के उत्पादन में भी इस क्षेत्र की काफी अहम हिस्सेदारी है। यह देखना भी दिलचस्प होगा कि क्या ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में विनिर्माण इकाइयां अपने आकार के कारण और वस्तु एवं सेवा कर के लागू होने के बाद अर्थव्यवस्था के औपचारिक होने के चलते नुकसान उठा रही हैं। यद्यपि ग्रामीण इलाकों में विनिर्माण इकाइयां पूंजी आधारित हैं लेकिन उत्पादन का दबाव रोजगार पर असर डाल सकता है।

व्यापक स्तर पर देखें तो अर्थव्यवस्था की रोजगार तैयार कर पाने संबंधी अक्षमता के दीर्घकालिक असर होने वाले हैं। जैसा कि ताजा आर्थिक समीक्षा में दर्ज किया गया, देश जननांकीय बदलाव से गुजर रहा है और श्रम योग्य आबादी का अनुपात बढ़ रहा है। अनुमान है कि 2021 से 2031 के बीच श्रमिक उम्र की आबादी में सालाना 97 लाख की दर से इजाफा होगा। बाद के वर्षों में वृद्धि में कमी आएगी। भारत इस अवसर को यूं ही गंवा नहीं सकता। बिना पर्याप्त रोजगार तैयार किए इस बढ़ती श्रमयोग्य आबादी का पुरा लाभ नहीं लिया जा सकता। जैसा कि प्रमाण से भी संकेत मिलता है कि फिलहाल ऐसा नहीं हो रहा है। इस रुख में बदलाव लाने के लिए और अधिक निवेश की

आवश्यकता होगी जिससे ज्यादा रोजगार तैयार होंगे। इस संदर्भ में सरकार ने कॉर्पोरेट कर दर में कमी करके अच्छा किया है। बीते कुछ वर्षों के दौरान भारत विश्व बैंक की कारोबारी सुगमता रैंकिंग में तेजी से ऊपर उठा है। बहरहाल, विश्व बैंक के अध्यक्ष डेविड मालपास ने सही कहा है कि भारत को अभी काफी कुछ करने की आवश्यकता है। खासतौर पर भूमि प्रबंधन और अनुबंध प्रवर्तन के क्षेत्र में। ऐसा करके ही निवेश आकर्षित किया जा सकता है। ऐसे में सुधारों की गति तेज करनी होगी। केवल उच्च निवेश और तेज वृद्धि से ही रोजगार के पर्याप्त अवसर तैयार हो सकते हैं। जो परिस्थितियां यवा श्रमिकों को मनरेगा में जाने के लिए मजबर कर रही हैं उन्हें बदलना होगा।



रक्षा क्षेत्र में आत्म-निर्भरता का मुकाम अभी दूर

देश के रक्षा क्षेत्र में मेक इन इंडिया अभियान दो श्रेणियों में चल रहा है। फिलहाल हमें यरेलू विनिर्माण के साथ विदेशी गठजोड़ का भी रास्ता अपनाना होगा। बता रहे हैं प्रेमवीर दास

क्षा मंत्री राजनाथ सिंह ने गत 28 सितंबर को स्कॉर्पीन श्रेणी की दसरी पनडब्बी 🔪 (खंडेरी) को नौसेना में शामिल करने के साथ ही पहले प्रोजेक्ट 17ए युद्धपोत (नीलगिरि) की भी मझगांव डॉक्स लिमिटेड (एमडीएल) में शुरुआत की। इसके चंद दिनों पहले उन्होंने बेंगलूरु स्थित हिंदुस्तान एरोनॉटिक्स लिमिटेड (एचएएल) में निर्मित हल्के लड़ाकू विमान 'तेजस' में उड़ान भी भरी थी। उससे भी पहले स्वीडिश बोफोर्स के डिजाइन पर आधारित 155 मिमी की स्वदेशी तोप का भी सफल परीक्षण किया गया था। रक्षा उत्पादन में आत्म-निर्भरता हासिल करने की दिशा में ये कदम महत्त्वपूर्ण नजर आ रहे हैं। हालांकि इन्हें संदर्भ के साथ देखना जरूरी है।

पनडुब्बी खंडेरी असल में भारत में निर्मित नहीं है। यह कहना अधिक सही होगा कि उसे भारत में 'एसेंबल' किया गया। इसका डिजाइन फ्रांसीसी होने के अलावा लगभग सारे उपकरण भी फ्रांस में बने हुए हैं। पनडुब्बी को आकार देने में एमडीएल के इंजीनियरों की मदद के लिए फ्रांस से दर्जनों टेक्निशियन भी आए थे। इसी तरह सेना के लिए निर्मित 155 मिमी तोप भी बोफोर्स की विदेशी डिजाइन पर निर्मित है और उसके कई पुर्जे बाहर से मंगवाए गए हैं। यह तोप आयात के जरिये पहली बार सेना में शामिल किए जाने के 33 साल बाद विकसित हुई है। नीलगिरि और तेजस स्वदेशी रक्षा उत्पाद हैं। मुख्यत: घरेलू उपकरणों से विकसित नीलगिरि युद्धपोत नौसेना की सोच एवं कड़ी मेहनत का नतीजा है जबकि तेजस विमान तीन दशकों तक चले विकास एवं परीक्षण के बाद सामने आ सका है। वायुसेना ने तेजस को अपने बेड़े में शामिल कर लिया है लेकिन अभी तक यह वांछित स्तर नहीं हासिल कर

ये चारों हथियार प्रणालियां रक्षा क्षेत्र के सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों या सीमित निजी भागीदारी वाले संगठनों के प्रयासों की उपज हैं। ये पिछले कई दशकों से सैन्यबलों के लिए अलग-अलग सैन्य उपकरण बनाने के 'लाइसेंसशुदा उत्पादन' से अलग हैं। पिछले दशकों में जगुआर, मिग, सुखोई विमानों और बीएमपी, टी-72 एवं टी-90 टैंकों के अलावा 130 मिमी तोप का निर्माण भी सार्वजनिक रक्षा उपक्रमों में ही होता रहा है। इन मारक हथियारों के लिए कुछ सामग्री निजी कंपनियों से भी आती रही है लेकिन अंतिम रूप से तैयार हथियार रक्षा उपक्रमों या डीआरडीओ का ही होता है। किसी बडे रक्षा निर्माण में निजी क्षेत्र की उल्लेखनीय भागीदारी लार्सन ऐंड टुब्रो की ही रही है जिसने अरिहंत श्रेणी की परमाणु पनडुब्बी का ढांचा तैयार किया था।

दरअसल रक्षा क्षेत्र में जारी 'मेक इन इंडिया' की दो श्रेणियां हैं। पहली श्रेणी में किसी विदेशी एजेंसी के साथ मिलकर भारत में प्लेटफॉर्म तैयार किया जाता है और इसके लिए डिजाइन, तकनीकी पक्ष और उपकरण भी वही मुहैया कराता है। दूसरी श्रेणी के तहत हथियार का डिजाइन भी स्वदेशी स्तर पर विकसित होता है और काफी हद तक मशीनरी एवं उपकरण भी घरेल होते हैं। अभी तक कुछ अपवादों को छोड़कर दोनों तरह का उत्पादन सार्वजनिक रक्षा उपक्रमों एवं डीआरडीओ के जरिये होता रहा है। अब नीति यह है कि निजी क्षेत्र को एक नए भागीदार के तौर पर जगह दी जाती है लेकिन अभी तक इसका परिणाम मिश्रित ही रहा है। पीपावाव शिपयार्ड में एक सामान्य निगरानी जहाज के निर्माण की रिलायंस एडीएजी की कोशिश निराशाजनक रही है। लेकिन एलऐंडटी ने अधिक जहाजों के ऑर्डर हासिल कर निवेश जुटाने की संभावना दिखाई है।

कई साल पहले, डीआरडीओ के तत्कालीन प्रमुख एपीजे अब्दुल कलाम ने विशाखापत्तनमं की एक प्रयोगशाला में हुई मुलाकात में इस मसले को सार-रूप में इस तरह पेश किया था, 'जानकारी आधारित उत्पादन नहीं, जरूरत-आधारित उत्पादन अधिक अहम है। जानकारी हमें विदेशी कंपनियों से हस्तांतरित की जाएगी, वहीं

दूसरा काम अधिक अहम है और इसमें कोई भी विशेषज्ञ जानकारी हमसे साझा नहीं करेगा। लिहाजा इसे अपने स्तर पर विकसित करने के अलावा कोई चारा नहीं है। इसमें वक्त लगेगा लिहाजा हम जितना जल्दी इस रास्ते पर बढते हैं, उतना ही बेहतर है।' रक्षा उपकरण का डिजाइन तैयार कर पाने की क्षमता महत्त्वपूर्ण है जो रक्षा उत्पादन में आत्म-निर्भरता के लिए बुनियादी शर्त है।

नौसेना ने पांच दशक पहले अपना एक अलग डिजाइन संगठन बनाया था और समय के साथ इसका विस्तार किया जाता रहा है। गोदावरी, ब्रह्मपुत्र, दिल्ली, शिवालिक, कोलकाता और अब नीलगिरि श्रेणी के जहाजों के अलावा एक विमानवाहक पोत के निर्माण का कार्य जारी है। इन सभी जलपोतों की शुरुआती रूपरेखा नौसेना के युवा डिजाइनरों ने ही अपने स्टाफ की जरूरतों को ध्यान में रखते हुए बनाई और फिर उन्हें विस्तृत डिजाइन का रूप दिया गया। इनके पोतों के मॉडल बनाकर उनका कृत्रिम जलाशयों में परीक्षण किया जाता है। शिपयार्ड में इन मॉडलों के आधार पर असली पोतों को भौतिक रूप दिया जाता है। इस तरह के प्लेटफॉर्म को विदेश में भी बेचा जा सकता है लेकिन ऑर्डर के हिसाब से जरूरी संख्या में ऐसे पोत बनाने की क्षमता विकसित करनी होगी। यह बात डीआरडीओ की उपज एलसीए और अत्याधुनिक हल्के हेलीकॉप्टर (एएलएच) के मामले में भी सही है।

आगे की राह सार्वजनिक रक्षा उपक्रमों और डीआरडीओ की विशेषज्ञता को मजबूती देने की है। इससे भारत में निर्मित रक्षा उपकरणों के निर्यात की संभावना पैदा हो सकती है। उसी के साथ हमें निजी क्षेत्र के चुनिंदा संगठनों को प्रोत्साहित करना चाहिए ताकि वे हमारे सशस्त्रबलों की जरूरतों पर खरा उतर सकें। इसके अलावा सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में पर्याप्त क्षमता की भी भरपाई करनी होगी। रणनीतिक साझेदार के तौर पर चयनित ये कंपनियां केवल विदेशी गठजोड के जरिये ही ऐसा कर सकती हैं क्योंकि उनकी अपनी क्षमता अभी बहुत कम है। यह हवाई एवं नौसैनिक प्लेटफॉर्मों के मामले में यह खास तौर पर सच है। हालांकि इस मार्ग पर चलते हुए निर्यात की क्षमता हासिल करने की उम्मीद करना ठीक नहीं होगा क्योंकि भारत जैसे तमाम देश ऐसे सैन्य साजोसामान को सीधे मौलिक विनिर्माताओं से ही खरीदना पसंद करते हैं।

अगर भारत को रक्षा उत्पादन में आत्म-निर्भर होना है तो उसे अपने सैन्य प्लेटफॉर्म बनाने और हथियारों एवं उपकरणों के निर्माण में सक्षम होना होगा। यह संभावना केवल कुछ इलाकों में ही है और क्षमताओं एवं कौशल को अमलीजामा पहनाने के लिए जोरदार कोशिश की जरूरत होगी। इस दौरान एमएमआरसीए और अगली पीढी की पनडुब्बी जैसी परियोजनाओं के लिए विदेशी गठजोड़ के अलावा कोई चारा नहीं है। लेकिन हमें डॉ कलाम की वह बात याद रखनी होगी कि आत्म-निर्भरता मूलत: इस पर निर्भर होती है कि कैसे से ज्यादा क्यों का जवाब मालम हो ? हमें वहां तक पहुंचने के लिए अभी कुछ इंतजार करना होगा।

(लेखक नौसेना की पूर्वी कमान के पूर्व प्रमुख एवं राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा सलाहकार बोर्ड के सदस्य भी रहे हैं)

लिथियम आयन बैटरी ऊर्जा भंडारण का सहज उपकरण

लिथियम-आयन बैटरी हमारी आधुनिक जिंदगी में इतना अपरिहार्य बन चुकी है कि हम इसके इतिहास के बारे में सोचते भी नहीं हैं। हरेक मोबाइल फोन और लैपटॉप में इसी बैटरी का इस्तेमाल होता है। इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों को चलाने एवं नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा के भंडारण में भी इसका उपयोग होता है।

वर्ष 2019 के लिए रसायन का नोबेल पुरस्कार लिथियम-आयन बैटरी के विकास से जुड़े रहे तीन वैज्ञानिकों को देने की घोषणा की गई है। न्यूयॉर्क स्टेट यूनिवर्सिटी के स्टैनली व्हिटिंघम, टैक्सस यनिवर्सिटी के जॉन गडएनफ और असाही कासेई कॉर्पोरेशन के अकिरा योशिनो को यह सम्मान दिया जाएगा।

कुछ की नजर में यह पुरस्कार ऐसे उपकरण के लिए दिया गया जो उनके 'बेबी' से चालित होता है। ये बैटरियां हल्की होने के साथ पुरानी बैटरियों से अधिक कॉम्पैक्ट भी हैं। छोटी-बडी ऊर्जा मांग पुरा करने के लिए बैटरी पैक को छोटा और बडा भी किया जा सकता है।

वैसे बैटरी का इस्तेमाल 19वीं सदी के अंत तक ही आम हो चुका था। उस समय इलेक्ट्रिक टॉर्च का इस्तेमाल बेहद आम था। वाहन उद्योग एवं जहाजों में भी बैटरियों का इस्तेमाल होता है। 19वीं सदी के मध्य तक विद्युत परिपथ-तंत्र का सिद्धांत आ चुका था।

किसी भी परिपथ में दो इलेक्ट्रोड होते हैं- कैथोड और एनोड। इलेक्ट्रॉन और आयन . विभिन्न दिशाओं में प्रवाहित होते हैं। इलेक्ट्रॉन एनोड से कैथोड की तरफ जाते हैं तो पॉजिटिव आयन इसकी उलटी दिशा में जाते हैं। इससे विद्यत धारा पैदा होती है। रिचार्ज के दौरान विद्युत धारा की दिशा पलट दी जाती है और इलेक्ट्रॉन का भंडारण होता है। परिपथ को पुरा करने के लिए इलेक्ट्रोड को इलेक्ट्रोलाइट माध्यम के जरिये जोड दिया जाता है। शुरुआती बैटरियों में सीसा-तेजाब के संयोजन का इस्तेमाल होता था और वे भारी होने के साथ अधिक प्रभावी भी नहीं थीं। शीत युद्ध और अंतरिक्ष की होड़ के दौरान विकसित हथियारों ने आधृनिक बैटरी संबंधी शोध को गति दी। सत्तर के दशक तक पेट्रोलियम ईंधन की आपूर्ति बाधित होने की आशंका जोर



देवांग्शु दत्ता

पकड़ने लगी थी। पर्यावरण को लेकर चिंताओं ने भी नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा के प्रति रुचि जगाने का काम किया। पहले की रिचार्जेबल बैटरियों को हर बार रिचार्ज करने पर इलेक्ट्रोड्स कम होते जाते थे जिससे उनके चार्ज होने की क्षमता कम होती जाती थी। लिथियम धातु सबसे हल्की होने से आयन आसानी से पैदा होते हैं जिससे कम ह्रास होता है। लेकिन लिथियम रासायनिक रूप से काफी सिक्रय होता है। यह सामान्य तापमान पर हवा में मौजुद ऑक्सीजन के साथ विस्फोटक क्रिया करता है। इसी वजह से लिथियम-आयन बैटरियों में विस्फोट की समस्या भी देखी

जाती है।

वर्ष 1941 में जन्मे व्हिटिंघम ने सुपर-कंडक्टर पर शोध किया था। सत्तर के दशक में उन्होंने द्रव्य विज्ञान की आधारशिला रखी थी जिसकी वजह से लिथियम-आयन कैथोड में इस्तेमाल पदार्थों की खोज की जा सकी। पहला पदार्थ टाइटैनियम डाइसल्फाइड था। यह एक क्रिस्टल की संरचना वाला रसायन है जिसमें आणविक स्तर पर लिथियम आयन मौजूद होते हैं। एनोड में लिथियम का मिश्रण था जो आसानी से इलेक्टॉन मुक्त कर सकता है। बैटरी उच्च वोल्टेज वाली बिजली पैदा करने में सक्षम होने के बावजुद वाणिज्यिक रूप से व्यवहार्य नहीं थी। व्हिटिंघम की एक्सॉन स्थित प्रयोगशाला में बैटरी से जुड़े प्रयोगों के दौरान कई बार आग भी लगी थी।

98 साल की उम्र में दुनिया के सबसे बुजुर्ग नोबेल पुरस्कार विजेता बनने वाले गुडएनफ कई मायनों में अलहदा हैं। वह उस दौर में डिस्लेक्सिक बच्चे के तौर पर जन्मे थे जब पढ़ने में दिक्कतों का सामना करने वाले ऐसे बच्चों के लिए शिक्षण के तरीके सामने

जीडीपी दर वर्ष 2005, 2006,

2007 में क्रमश: 8.4, 9.2, 9

प्रतिशत रही। अत: सरकार को नई

आर्थिक नीति 1991 से प्रेरणा लेकर

देश के विकास के लिए नए कदम

सोशल मीडिया के

लिए कानून जरूरी

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

उठाने चाहिए।

ही नहीं आए थे। उन्होंने कंप्यूटरों में इस्तेमाल रैंडम एक्सेस मेमरी (रैम) के विकास में भी योगदान दिया था। वह इस उम्र में भी रोजाना प्रयोगशाला जाते हैं। गुडएनफ ने शोध में पाया था कि धातु सल्फाइड के बजाय धातु ऑक्साइड से बने कैथोड में अधिक क्षमता होती है। उन्होंने 1980 में दिखाया था कि लिथियम आयन से युक्त कोबाल्ट ऑक्साइड का कैथोड अधिक वोल्टेज वाली बिजली पैदा करता है।

गुडएनफ के विकसित कैथोड का इस्तेमाल करते हुए जापानी वैज्ञानिक योशिनो ने 1985 में वाणिज्यिक रूप से सक्षम पहली बैटरी बनाई। उन्होंने पेटोलियम कोक का इस्तेमाल कर एनोड में लिथियम की प्रतिक्रिया को काबू में रखा। पेट्रोलियम कोक में लिथियम के अंश होने का एक बड़ा लाभ यह है कि इलेक्ट्रोड्स पर उसकी परत चढ़ जाती है और आयन प्रतिक्रिया किए बगैर इलेक्ट्रोलाइट के जरिये आगे बढता है। योशिनो ने बैटरी में धात्विक लिथियम का इस्तेमाल नहीं कर उसे अधिक सुरक्षित बना दिया।

इसका असर यह हुआ कि 1991 तक लिथियम आयन बैटरी बडे पैमाने पर उपलब्ध हो चुकी थी। इस तरह की आधुनिक बैटरी प्रति किलोग्राम 150 वाट-घंटा बिजली का भंडारण करती है। वहीं निकल-मेटल हाइब्रिड बैटरियों में प्रति किलो अधिकतम 100 वाट-घंटे का भंडारण होता है जबिक पुरानी सीसा-तेजाब बैटरियां केवल 25 वाट-घंटा प्रति किलो ही जमा कर पाती थीं। एलआई बैटरी कहीं अधिक समय तक इसे संरक्षित रखती है और उसे रिचार्ज करने के लिए परी तरह डिस्चार्ज होने की जरूरत नहीं होती है। हालांकि एलआई बैटरी इस्तेमाल नहीं होने पर तेजी से खराब भी होती हैं और वे ऊष्मा को लेकर संवेदनशील भी होती है। कभी-कभार उनमें धमाका भी हो जाता है।

एलआई बैटरियां अधिक महंगी भी हैं। इसकी एक वजह तो यह है कि विद्युत प्रवाह नियंत्रित करने के लिए स्मार्ट चिप नहीं लगाए बगैर बैटरी को पैक नहीं किया जा सकता है।

कुछ नोबेल पुरस्कार ही ऐसे होते हैं जिनका आम जिंदगी से इतना ताल्लुक होता है।

जरूरत की बात को उच्चतम

न्यायालय द्वारा सरकार से जवाब

मांगने से समझा जा सकता है।

कानाफूसी

बहस का मुद्दा

ऑक्सफर्ड स्थित और सन 1823 में स्थापित द ऑक्सफर्ड यूनियन दुनिया की सर्वाधिक प्रतिष्ठित निजी छात्र सोसाइटी में गिनी जाती है। बुधवार को यहां कश्मीर मसले पर एक सीधी बहस का आयोजन होगा। विषय है कश्मीर संकट: क्या विशेष दर्जा हटाया जाना चाहिए था? इस बहस के पक्ष में भाजपा के राष्ट्रीय उपाध्यक्ष वैजयंत पांडा और विपक्ष में माकपा के महासचिव सीताराम येचुरी अपनी राय रखेंगे। द ऑक्सफर्ड यूनियन के मुताबिक कुछ लोगों ने अनुच्छेद 370 को समाप्त किए जाने को असंवैधानिक, अलोकतांत्रिक और गैर जिम्मेदार बताया है वहीं भारत में कई लोगों ने इसका बचाव करते हुए कहा कि इससे देश की अर्थव्यवस्था और राज्य की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करने में सहायता मिलना तय हुआ है। सवाल यह है कि क्या यह राष्ट्रीय एकता और समृद्धि को बढ़ावा देने वाला कदम था जिसे गलत समझा गया या फिर यह अधिनायकवादी और मनमाना कदम था?

जन्मजात कांग्रेसी

कांग्रेस नेता डी के शिवकुमार से पार्टी के कुछ नेता नाराज हैं क्योंकि शनिवार को धनशोधन के मामले में जमानत मिलने के बाद दिल्ली से बेंगलूरु आने के बाद वह जनता दल सेक्युलर का झंडा थामे नजर आए। दरअसल कांग्रेस नेताओं के अलावा जनता दल सेक्युलर के कुछ नेता भी उनके आगमन का इंतजार कर रहे थे। शिवकुमार जेडीएस प्रमुख एचडी देवेगौड़ा की तरह ही वोक्कालिंगा समुदाय से ताल्लुक रखते हैं। वह जब फूलों से लदे एक वाहन से लौट रहे थे तो जेडीएस के किसी कार्यकर्ता ने उनके हाथ में अपनी पार्टी का झंडा थमा दिया। शिवकुमार ने

उस झंडे को थोड़ी देर लहराया और फिर वापस कर दिया लेकिन तब तक इस घटना का वीडियो बन चुका था जो वायरल हो गया। एक अन्य वीडियो में प्रदेश के पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री और कांग्रेस नेता सिद्धरमैया एक निजी वीडियो में शिवकुमार के इस कदम की आलोचना करते नजर आ रहे हैं। वह भी सोशल मीडिया पर वायरल हो गया है। हालांकि शिवकुमार ने जोर देकर कहा कि उनका झंडा पकड़ना कोई बड़ी बात नहीं है क्योंकि वह तो जन्मजात कांग्रेसी हैं।

जीडीपी वृद्धि दर घटने का अनुमान

आपका पक्ष

हाल ही में कई अंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्थाओं ने भारत में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर घटने का अनुमान लगाया है। मूडीज इन्वेस्टर सर्विस ने जीडीपी 6.2 फीसदी से घटाकर 5.8 फीसदी कर दिया जबकि अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष ने इसे 7 फीसदी से घटाकर 6.1 फीसदी कर दिया है। विश्व बैंक ने अनुमान 7.5 फीसदी से 6 फीसदी और रिजर्व बैंक ने 6.9 फीसदी से 6.1 कर दिया है। एशिया विश्व बैंक एवं फिच ने भी जीडीपी वृद्धि दर के आंकड़े नकारात्मक पेश किए हैं। घटती जीडीपी दर के अलावा बेरोजगारी, सरकारी बैंक का एनपीए, सार्वजनिक सरकारी कंपनियों का खराब प्रदर्शन, राजकोषीय घाटा, चालू खाता घाटा, बढता विदेशी कर्ज आदि अर्थव्यवथा की चुनौती है। वैश्विक सुस्ती के चलते भी देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को आघात पहुंचा है। सरकार ने भी इन चुनौतियों से निपटने के लिए कदम उठाया है

लेकिन अर्थशास्त्रियों के मुताबिक



सरकार को विशेषज्ञों की सलाह से संरचनात्मक सुधार के लिए कदम उठाने चाहिए। वर्ष 1990 के दशक में भी देश में महंगाई दर 10 फीसदी से ऊपर चली गई थी। उस समय सरकार नई आर्थिक नीति लाकर अल्पकालीन उपाय एवं दीर्घकालीन

ठोस कदम उठाने चाहिए

सोशल मीडिया वर्तमान में एक स्तंभ बन चुका है जिसके कारण इसमें प्रसारित खबरों का असर व्यापक स्तर पर होता है। सोशल मीडिया जहां एक ओर सरकार और जनता के बीच संवाद का सरल माध्यम बन गया है, वहीं दूसरी ओर फेक न्यूज, चाइल्ड पोर्नोग्राफी, महिलाओं के अत्याचार संबंधित सामग्रियों का अड्डा बनता जा रहा है। इसके प्रति

उच्चतम न्यायालय भी सोशल मीडिया को आधार से जोड़ने वाली याचिकाओं को उच्च न्यायालय से अपने यहां स्थानांतरित करने एवं कानून निर्माण करने भी कह चुका है। मामले की जटिलता का अंदेशा सोशल मीडिया के आंकड़ों को देख कर लगाया से जा सकता है। लोकसभा चुनाव 2019 में 50 हजार से भी अधिक फेक न्यूज प्रसारित की गईं और इसे 20 लाख से अधिक बार उन्हें शेयर किया गया। राष्ट्रीय अपराध रिकॉर्ड ब्यूरो के अनुसार वर्ष 2018 में 250 से अधिक मामले आईपीसी के तहत सोशल मीडिया के दुरुपयोग के दर्ज किए गए। फेसबुक यूजर की संख्या में अमेरिका को पीछे छोड़ते हुए भारत 27 करोड़ को पार करने लगा है। अतः सरकार द्वारा निर्मित सोशल मीडिया कानून सभी के लिए मुफीद होगा।

यह कदम अल्पकालीन है। देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को पटरी दीर्घकालीन हल खोजने के लिए पर लाने के लिए सरकार को

बदलाव के सहारे देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को पटरी पर लाई थी।

वित्तीय संस्थाओं के सुधार के लिए विशेषज्ञों की समिति का गठन किया उपायों को खोजकर संरचनात्मक 🗄 गया था। इसके परिणामस्वरूप

सर्जग होने और कानून बनाने की 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।

कृष्ण चंद्र त्रिपाठी, उज्जैन



विनम्रता सभी गुणों की जननी है

सरकार का इंतजार

महाराष्ट्र में सरकार गठन में हो रही देरी भाजपा और शिवसेना के बीच बढ़ती खींचतान को ही बयान कर रही है। ऐसा लगता है कि यह खींचतान लंबी खिंचेगी, क्योंकि जहां शिवसेना इस पर अड़ी है कि ढाई-ढाई साल के फार्मूले के तहत दोनों दल के नेता बारी-बारी से मुख्यमंत्री बनें वहीं भाजपा ऐसी किसी व्यवस्था को स्वीकार करने से इन्कार कर रही है। गठबंधन सरकार के गठन के दौरान सहयोगी दलों के बीच कुछ न कुछ खींचतान होती ही है, लेकिन महाराष्ट्र में वह कुछ ज्यादा ही विद्रूप होती जा रही है। समस्या केवल यह नहीं कि सरकार गठन को लेकर कोई सहमति नहीं बन रही है, बल्कि यह भी है कि दोनों दलों के बीच मतभेद कटुता का रूप ले रहे हैं। यह कटुता दोनों दलों के संबंधों में खटास ही पैदा करेगी। इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि अतीत में दोनों दल एक-दूसरे से छिटक चुके हैं। पिछला विधानसभा चुनाव दोनों दल अलग-अलग लड़े थे। राजनीतिक मजबूरी के चलते दोनों फिर से करीब आए। अब उनमें फिर से दुराव पैदा हो रहा है। इसका एक बड़ा कारण शिवसेना की ओर से यह प्रदर्शित किया जाना है कि वह भाजपा पर जितने ज्यादा तीखे हमले करेगी, उसका दावा उतना ही मजबूत होगा।

यह गठबंधन धर्म के खिलाफ है कि शिवसेना भाजपा पर दबाव बनाने के लिए उसे धमकाने का काम करे। शिवसेना की ओर से यह संकेत दिया जाना एक तरह की धमकी ही है कि अगर उसकी शर्तें न मानी गईं तो वह कांग्रेस और राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस पार्टी के पाले में जा सकती है। फिलहाल यह नहीं लगता कि वह अपनी इस धमकी को लेकर गंभीर है, लेकिन राजनीति में कुछ भी हो सकता है। सत्ता की ललक में राजनीतिक दल किसी भी हद तक जाने को तैयार रहते हैं। पता नहीं शिवसेना क्या करेगी, लेकिन इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि बारी-बारी से मुख्यमंत्री पद संभालने की व्यवस्था एक नाकाम फार्मूला है। यह कभी सफल नहीं हो सकता, क्योंकि यह एक-दूसरे के प्रति अविश्वास पर टिका होता है। ऐसा कोई फार्मूला शासन व्यवस्था के लिए एक बोझ ही साबित होगा। इसका कोई मतलब नहीं कि कोई सरकार ढाई साल तक एक तरह से चले और शेष ढाई साल दूसरी तरह से। अगर ऐसा नहीं होना है तो फिर इसका औचित्य ही क्या है कि बारी-बारी से दो मुख्यमंत्री ढाई-ढाई साल सरकार चलाएं? यह समय उन तौर-तरीकों पर विचार करने का है जिनसे महाराष्ट्र की जनता की अपेक्षाओं को सही तरह से पूरा किया जा सके। यह देखना दयनीय है कि इसके बजाय सत्ता की ज्यादा मलाई हासिल करने को लेकर खींचतान हो रही है।

निर्मल गंगा

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के ड्रीम प्रोजेक्ट में शुमार निर्मल गंगा अभियान उत्तराखंड में परवान चढ़ने लगा है। हालांकि गोमुख और बदरीनाथ से ऋषिकेश के बीच गंगा का पानी काफी हद तक स्वच्छ है, लेकिन ऋषिकेश और हरिद्वार में हालात इतने सुकूनदायक नहीं हैं। नमामि गंगे के तहत हरिद्वार और ऋषिकेश में निर्माणाधीन सीवरेज ट्रीटमेंट प्लान जनवरी बनकर तैयार हो जाएंगे। इसके अलावा दोनों शहरों में गंगा में गिर रहे ज्यादातर नाले टैप कर दिए गए हैं और शेष भी जल्दी टैप हो जाएंगे। निःसंदेह इसके सकारात्मक परिणाम भी सामने आएंगे। उत्तराखंड पर्यावरण संरक्षण एवं प्रदेषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड की रिपोर्ट पर नजर दौडाएं तो गोमख से लेकर ऋषिकेश तक गंगा के पानी की गुणवत्ता उत्तम श्रेणी की है। बावजूद इसके हरिद्वार में गंगा के पानी के कतिपय नमूनों में कुछेक स्थानों पर फीकल कॉलीफार्म (मल-मूत्र) भी पाया गया। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार पिछले कुछ समय से स्थिति में सुधार आया है। दरअसल देखा जाए तो यह समस्या का सिर्फ एक पहलू है। गंगा को यदि निर्मल रखना है तो इस नदी के साथ ही सहायक नदियों की स्थिति पर भी ध्यान देना होगा। आम तौर पर देखने में आया है कि उत्तरकाशी हो या देवप्रयाग अथवा रुद्रप्रयाग और बदरीनाथ। गंगा तट पर बसे ज्यादातर कस्बों और शहरों में अक्सर किनारे कूड़े के ढेर लगे हैं। हालांकि नदियों के किनारे कूड़े डालन पर प्रातबंध हं, लाकन इस पर अभा पूरा तरह स अमल नहां हा पा रहा है। पॉलीथिन के ढेर इस समस्या को और बढ़ा रहे हैं। यह समस्या बरसात में और भी गंभीर हो जाती है। तब यह कूड़ा नदियों में पहुंच जाता है। इसके लिए जिलों में प्रशासन ने जागरूकता कार्यक्रम भी चलाया, लेकिन एक दो दिन के कार्यक्रम से कुछ नहीं होने वाला। इसके लिए लगातार सक्रिय रहने की जरूरत है। इसके अलावा नगर निकायों को भी गंगा स्वच्छता में अपनी भूमिका का निर्वहन करना होगा। अक्सर देखने में आया है कि निकायों ने नियम-कानून तो बना दिए हैं, लेकिन उनके पास इन नियमों को लाग करने के लिए पर्याप्त संसाधनों का अभाव है। उत्तराखंड गठन के बाद से निकाय क्षेत्रों को विस्तार तो हुआ, बावजूद इसके स्टॉफ में कोई वृद्धि नहीं की गई। इसके साथ ही राजस्व को लेकर भी निकायों की स्थिति दयनीय है। जाहिर है निकायों को मजबूत किए बिना गंगा स्वच्छता किसी चुनौती से कम नहीं है। एक और महत्वपूर्ण पहलू यह है कि यहां आने वाले तीर्थयात्रियों को भी जागरूक करने की जरूरत है। ट्रैकिंग पर जाने वाले पर्यटक भी हिमालय में बड़ी मात्रा में कूड़ा छोड़ आते हैं। इसको लेकर भी गंभीर होने

कूटनीति को नई धार देता भारत



ब्रिगेडियर आरपी सिंह

भारत ने स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि दोस्ताना रिश्ते निभाने में वह एक कदम आगे चलने को तैयार है, पर अपने आंतरिक मामलों में किसी का दखल उसे बर्दाश्त नहीं होगा

धानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी दो दिवसीय सऊदी अरब दौरे पर हैं। पूर्व निर्धारित कार्यक्रम के अनुसार इस दौरे के साथ ही उन्हें अंकारा भी जाना था, मगर अब ऐसा नहीं होगा। पिछले महीने संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा में तुर्की के राष्ट्रपति रेसेप तैयप एर्दोगन के कश्मीर पर बिगड़े बोल से कुपित पीएम मोदी ने अपना तुर्की दौरा रद कर दिया। एर्दोगन ने न केवल कश्मीर में अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाने का विरोध किया, बल्कि चीन और मलेशिया के साथ मिलकर फाइनेंशियल एक्शन टास्क फोर्स यानी एफएटीएफ की बैठक में पाकिस्तान को काली सूची में जाने से भी बचाया। मानों इतना ही काफी नहीं था, एर्दोगन ने यह भी कहा कि वह आगे भी वैश्विक मंचों पर कश्मीर का मुद्दा उठाते रहेंगे। मोदी के तुर्की दौरे का मकसद था दोनों देशों के रिश्तों को एक नया आयाम देना, लेकिन एर्दोगन की बदज्बानी ने इस मृहिम को परवान चढने से पहले ही फुस्स कर दिया। इससे पहले तक भारत-तुर्की संबंधों में सब कुछ सही दिख रहा था। बीते पांच वर्षों में मोदी और एर्दोगन तीन बार मुलाकात कर चुके हैं।

भारत सरकार मलेशियाई प्रधानमंत्री महातिर मोहम्मद से भी खफा है। उन्होंने भी कश्मीर में भारत के कदम की आलोचना करते हुए उसे पाक के साथ मिलकर मसला सुलझाने की वकालत की। इससे नाराज सरकार मलेशिया से पाम ऑयल आयात बंद करके इंडोनेशिया, अर्जेंटीना या यूक्रेन जैसे किसी अन्य देश से मंगाने पर विचार कर रही है। प्रधानमंत्री के रूप में मोदी ने कूटनीतिक, राजनीतिक, सामरिक, आर्थिक, वाणिज्यिक, व्यापारिक, सांस्कृतिक ताकत का इतना बखूबी इस्तेमाल किया है जिसकी स्वतंत्र भारत के इतिहास में मिसाल मिलनी मुश्किल है। शासन कला में व्यापार एवं वाणिज्य बेहद अहम पहलू होते हैं। तुर्की और मलेशिया के मसले को मोदी ने सही तरीके से संभाला। इन दोनों देशों की अर्थव्यवस्था हिचकोले खा रही है। दोनों जगह भ्रष्टाचार का बोलबाला है और पड़ोसियों के साथ तनातनी के चलते सुरक्षा के मोर्चे पर भी हालात सही नहीं हैं। ऐसे परिदृश्य में भारत के साथ रिश्तों को तल्ख बनाना इन देशों के लिए कूटनीतिक रूप से समझदारी नहीं कही जा सकती।

तुर्की का क्षेत्रफल, 7,83,562 वर्ग किलोमीटर है। इस लिहाज से वह भारत के तकरीबन पांचवें हिस्से के बराबर है, मगर वह चार प्रमुख चुनौतीपूर्ण क्षेत्रों- बाल्कन, कॉकेशस, पश्चिम एशिया और फारस की खाड़ी के बीच स्थित है। एनाटोलियन प्रायद्वीप पर तर्की काला सागर, भमध्य सागर और एजियन सागर से घिरा है। एनाटोलिया ऐसा केंद्रीय बिंदु है जिसकी धुरी पर एशिया, यूरोप और अफ्रीका महाद्वीप मिलते हैं। वैश्वीकरण के अलावा इन क्षेत्रों में अमेरिकी सैन्य गतिविधियों और संघर्षरत देशों के साथ तुर्की की नजदीकी उसकी अहमियत और बढ़ा देती हैं। वहीं 3,28,550 वर्ग किलोमीटर में फैला मलेशिया



रही है। तुर्की राष्ट्रीय पुलिस नवंबर 2017 से

धार्मिक टिप्पणियों की ऑनलाइन निगरानी

कर रही है और उसे जहां भी इस्लाम पर कोई

टिप्पणी खटकती है तो वह तुरंत कार्रवाई करती

भारत के लगभग दसवें हिस्से के बराबर है। यह रखकर मुस्लिम बहुल देशों में अपने लिए दक्षिणपूर्व एशिया में मुख्यभूमि से लेकर द्वीप एक अलग पहचान गढ़ी, लेकिन एर्दोगन अब समूहों तक एक प्रमुख भू-रणनीतिक पट्टी के उसी पहचान को मिटाने पर तुले हैं। हालांकि रूप में स्थित है। दक्षिणपूर्व एशिया के मलय वहां अभी तक धर्मनिरपेक्ष संवैधानिक ढांचा प्रायद्वीप के दक्षिणी बिंदु पर मलेशिया प्रायद्वीप कायम है, लेकिन उनके राज में तुर्की के है जबकि पूर्वी मलेशिया बोर्नियो द्वीप पर है जहां हालिया घटनाक्रम खतरनाक बदलावों की से दक्षिण चीन सागर 600 किलोमीटर दूर है। ओर संकेत करते हैं। तुर्की ने बीते 9 अक्टूबर को सीरिया में अपनी सैन्य तैनाती को 'जिहाद' इसके साथ लगे मलक्का स्ट्रेट के माध्यम से पूर्व और पश्चिम के बीच अधिकांश व्यापार करार दिया जिससे इस देश के धर्मनिरपेक्ष होता है जिसके किनारे मलेशिया, इंडोनेशिया चरित्र पर सवालिया निशान लगते हैं। सरकारी और सिंगापुर के बीच विभाजित हैं। इन सभी धार्मिक मामलों के निदेशालय ने तुर्की की के एक दूसरे से तल्ख रिश्ते हैं। एक उभरती हुई सभी 90,000 मस्जिदों को लाउडस्पीकरों से शक्ति के रूप में भारत इन दोनों क्षेत्रों में एक उस संदेश के प्रसारित करने का आदेश दिया जो इस्लाम की निंदा पर हिंसक होने के लिए अहम अंशभागी है। ऐसे में वह अपने आंतरिक मामलों पर तीखी टिप्पणियां नहीं पचा सकता। उकसाने वाली कवायद है। तुर्की के समाज पर तुर्की के राष्ट्र निर्माता मुस्तफा कमाल शरीया को थोपने के लिहाज से यह अहम पड़ाव अतातुर्क ने अपने देश को आधुनिक बनाने है। एर्दोगन सरकार ने व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता को के मकसद से 29 अक्टूबर 1923 को सीमित किया है। इस्लाम की निंदा या उसके खलीफा शासन की समाप्ति का एलान कर उचित अनुपालन न होने पर कड़ाई की जा

तुर्की को गणतंत्र घोषित किया। इसके साथ

ही वहां धर्मनिरपेक्षता, लैंगिक समानता और

आधुनिकता का मार्ग प्रशस्त हुआ। तुर्की ने

शरीया कानूनों को आधिकारिक दायरे से बाहर

है। सार्वजनिक रूप से इस्लाम की आलोचना अपराध बन गई है। सोशल मीडिया में इस्लाम पर नकारात्मक टिप्पणियों या हास-परिहास को लेकर लोगों पर मुकदमें चलाए जा रहे हैं। तुर्की ने इसी महीने की शुरुआत में सीरिया

से लगी सीमा पर कुर्दों के खिलाफ हमला बोल दिया। तुर्किश वायु सेना ने सीमावर्ती इलाको पर बम बरसाए। इसके चलते 1,30,000 लोग विस्थापन के लिए मजबूर हुए। वहीं सीरिया मे करीब 70 नागरिकों की जान चली गई तो तुर्की में भी 20 लोग मारे गए। एर्दोगन की विदेश नीति को नियो-ऑटोमन नीति कहा जा रहा है वहां सीरियाई गृहयुद्ध के दौरान तुर्की-सीरिया सीमा पर सीरियन-कुर्दिश पीपल्स प्रोटेक्शन यूनिट्स को ताकत हासिल करने से रोकने पर जोर दिया जा रहा है। इसमें बड़े पैमाने पर मानवाधिकारों का उल्लंघन हो रहा है। भारत को भी मानवाधिकारों के ऐसे उल्लंघन के मुद्दे को मुखरता से उठाने से नहीं हिचकना चाहिए।

मोदी सरकार मलेशिया को भी अपनी नाखुशी को लेकर सख्त संदेश देना चाहती है। इसी सिलसिले में राष्ट्रीय भावनाओं को समझते हुए भारतीय व्यापारियों ने मलेशियाई पाम ऑयल के अघोषित बहिष्कार का फैसला किया। बीते शुक्रवार को विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर ने मलेशियाई विदेश मंत्री सैफुद्दीन अब्दुल्ला को अपने सख्त रुख से अवगत कराया। भारत विश्व में खाद्य तेलों का सबसे बडा आयातक है। ऐसे में अगर वह दूसरे देशों से आयात की संभावनाएं टटोलेगा तो मलेशिया को इसका भारी खामियाजा भगतना पडेगा।

भारतीय कूटनीतिक तंत्र ने पूरी दुनिया को एक स्पष्ट संदेश दिया है कि दोस्ताना रिश्तों के निभाने में वह एक कदम आगे चलने को तैयार है, लेकिन अपने आंतरिक मामलों में किसी का दखल उसे बर्दाश्त नहीं होगा।

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उदारवादियों का विचार-विमर्श

निया के सबसे वहशी आतंकी अबू बकर अल बगदादी के मारे जाने पर दुनिया ने इसके बावजूद राहत की सांस् ली कि न तो इस्लामिक स्टेट का खात्मा होने जा रहा है और न ही अन्य अनेक जिहादी संगठनों का। इसमें दो राय नहीं हो सकती कि इस्लामिक स्टेट का सरगना अल बगदादी आधुनिक काल का सबसे घिनौना और बर्बर आतंकी था। उसने मध्ययुगीन बर्बरता को भी मात दे रखी थी। उसने लोगों के बेरहमी से सिर तो कलम किए ही, उन्हें जलाकर, लोहे के पिंजरे में कैद करने के बाद पानी में डुबोकर, ऊंची इमारतों से फेंककर और बूचड़खानों में काट-काट कर भी मारा। इसी तरह उसने महिलाओं को यौन दासियों में तो तब्दील किया ही, उनकी नीलामी भी की और उनसे खुलेआम दुष्कर्म भी। उसकी बर्बरता के किस्से रेंगटे खड़े करने वाले थे, फिर भी दुनिया भर के तमाम देशों के युवक उसके संगठन में शामिल होने के लिए इराक-सीरिया चले आए। इनमें अच्छी-खासी संख्या उनकी थी जो पढ़े-लिखे और यूरोप-अमेरिका में सुविधा संपन्न जीवन जीने वाले थे। माना जाता है कि इसकी एक वजह उन्हें यौन दासियां उपलब्ध कराना और साथ ही खिलाफत को फिर से कायम करने का सपना दिखाना था। आश्चर्यजनक रूप से इस्लामिक स्टेट में शामिल होने वालों में युवतियां भी थीं। बगदादी की बर्बर विचारधारा से आकर्षित जो युवा इराक-सीरिया नहीं जा सके वे अपने-अपने देश में आतंकी गतिविधियों को अंजाम देने लगे। इसके चलते युरोप, अमेरिका के साथ-साथ अन्य अनेक देशों में आतंकी हमले कर खौफ पैदा किया गया। बगदादी के उन्मादी आतंकियों की नशंसता का शिकार इराक गए 39 भारतीय भी बने।

बगदादी सरीखे महापातकी आतंकी के मारे जाने की खबर दुनिया भर में प्रमुखता पानी ही थी। उसने पाई भी, लेकिन एक खबर कुछ इस तरह से थी-कट्टर मजहबी विद्वान अल बगदादी की 48 साल की उम्र में मौत। यह खबर अमेरिका के बड़े अखबार 'वाशिंगटन पोस्ट' की वेबसाइट पर आई तो सोशल मीडिया पर हंगामा खडा हो गया। अमेरिकी प्रशासन से जुड़े लोगों और पत्रकारों के अलावा अन्य अनेक लोगों ने इस खबर की जमकर खिंचाई की। इसी के साथ वाशिंगटन पोस्ट का मजाक उडाने वाले टवीट किए जाने लगे. लेकिन क्या यह महज हास-परिहास का विषय था? यह मानने के अच्छे-भले कारण हैं कि बगदादी को मजहबी विद्वान के तौर पर पेश करने का काम किसी गफलत के चलते नहीं हुआ। यह



बगदादी को मजहबी विद्वान बताने वाले यह न जानते हों कि वह कितना खूंखार था?

क्या यह संभव है कि



सोच-समझ कर ही किया गया होगा, क्योंकि पहले इस समाचार का शीर्षक कछ इस तरह था-इस्लामिक स्टेट के सरगना अल बगदादी की मौत। फिर कुछ सोचकर, पता नहीं क्या सोचकर, उसे मजहबी विद्वान बता दिया गया। जब इसे लेकर वाशिंगटन पोस्ट की फजीहत होने लगी तब फिर से शीर्षक बदल कर अल बगदादी को इस्लामिक स्टेट का सरगना कहा गया। इसके साथ ही यह सफाई भी पेश की गई कि उसे मजहबी विद्वान बताने वाली खबर का वह मतलब नहीं था जो समझा गया। पता नहीं इस स्पष्टीकरण के जरिये क्या स्पष्ट करने की कोशिश की गई, लेकिन बगदादी के मारे जाने पर उसे खुंखार आतंकी बताने में वाशिंगटन पोस्ट के अलावा अन्य अनेक पश्चिमी मीडिया संस्थानों ने भी परहेज किया। यह परहेज उन मीडिया संस्थानों की ओर से किया गया जो लिबरल या लेफ्ट लिबरल के तौर पर जाने जाते हैं। लिबरल यानी उदारवादी, लेकिन आम जनता के लिए यह समझना कठिन है कि आखिर किसी बर्बर आतंकी को मजहबी विद्वान बताने वाले खुद को लिबरल या उदारवादी कैसे कह सकते हैं? वास्तव में इन्हें कुदारवादी या ऐसे ही किसी अन्य शब्द से परिभाषित किया जाना बेहतर होगा।

निःसंदेह ऐसा नहीं हो सकता कि बगदादी को मजहबी विद्वान बताने वाले यह न जानते हों कि वह कितना

घृणास्पद था। यह जानते हुए भी उन्होंने उसके प्रति नरमी दिखाई तो शायद अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप को नापसंद करने के कारण ही। संभवतः वे यह नहीं चाहते होंगे कि ट्रंप को बगदादी के मारे जाने का किसी तरह का राजनीतिक लाभ मिले। यह तब और स्पष्ट हुआ जब वाशिंगटन पोस्ट में ही इस आशय का एक लेख आया कि ट्रंप का यह दावा सही सही नहीं कि बगदादी की मौत एक कायर की तरह हुई, क्योंकि उसने तो अमेरिकी सैनिकों की गिरफ्त में जाने के बजाय खुद को विस्फोट के जरिये उड़ाने का फैसला किया। इसके जरिये यही कहने की कोशिश की गई कि बगदादी ने बहादुरी दिखाई। एक अमेरिकी थिंक टैंक से जुड़े नीति विश्लेषक और स्तंभकार मैक्स बूट के इस लेख की भी तीखी आलोचना हुई। जब आलोचना ज्यादा तीखी हुई तब इस लेख की उस पंक्ति में हेरफेर किया गया और यह हास्यास्पद सफाई दी गई कि उससे यह प्रतीति हो रही थी कि बगदादी साहसी था। इन दिनों अमेरिकी मीडिया में ऐसे विचारों की भरमार है जिनके जिस्ये यह साबित करने की कोशिश की जा रही है कि ट्रंप को बगदादी के मरने से कोई लाभ नहीं मिलने वाला। यह आकलन एक बड़ी हद तक सही जान पड़ता है। बगदादी मरा है, लेकिन उसकी विचारधारा नहीं। बावजूद इसके इसकी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकते कि ट्रंप के प्रति अपनी नापसंदगी प्रकट करने के लिए एक खूंखार आतंकी के प्रति नरमी बरती गई। उदारवादियों और वस्तुतः कुदारवादियों का यह व्यवहार अमेरिका तक ही सीमित नहीं हैं। क्या कोई 'एंड दे हैंग्ड याकूब' शीर्षक को भूल सकता है जो मुंबई बम धमाकों के लिए जिम्मेदार आतंकी याकूब मेमन को फांसी दिए जाने के बाद एक अंग्रेजी दैनिक की पहली खबर बना था। यह महज अपवाद नहीं, क्योंकि पुलवामा हमले के बाद एक अन्य अंग्रेजी दैनिक की खबर इस शीर्षक से थी-'कार बांबर किल्स 37 ट्रूपर्स।' यह तो याद ही होगा कि आतंकी बुरहान वानी को किस तरह स्कूल हेडमास्टर का बेटा बताया गया था।

निःसंदेह उदारवादियों उर्फ कुदारवादियों को निवार्चित शासकों को नापसंद करने और उनकी निंदा-भर्त्सना करने का अधिकार है, लेकिन इससे बड़ी विडंबना और कोई नहीं हो सकती कि वे अपने इस अधिकार का इस्तेमाल आतंकियों के प्रति हमदर्दी प्रकट करने या फिर उनकी कित्सित हरकतों की अनदेखी करने में करें।

(लेखक दैनिक जागरण में एसोसिएट एडीटर हैं)

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समय का मूल्य

जीवन की परिभाषा समय है, क्योंकि जीवन समय से बनता है। समय का सदुपयोग जीवन का उपयोग है समय का दुरुपयोग जीवन को नष्ट करना है। समय किसी की प्रतीक्षा नहीं करता, वह निरंतर अज्ञात दिशा में जाकर विलीन होता रहता है। हमारा कर्तव्य है समय का पूरा-पूरा सदुपयोग करें। समय परमात्मा से भी महान है। भक्ति-साधना द्वारा परमात्मा का साक्षात्कार कई बार किया जा सकता है, लेकिन गुजरा हुआ समय पुनः नही मिलता। संत कबीर ने चेतावनी देते कहा है-'कल पर अपने काम को न टालें। आज करना है, उन्हें आज

प्रत्येक काम का अवसर होता है। अवसर वही है जब वह काम सामने पड़ा है। अवसर निकल जाने पर काम का महत्व समाप्त हो जाता है तथा बोझ बढता जाता है। जवानी के समय को विश्राम के नाम पर नष्ट करना घोर मूर्खता है, क्योंकि यही वह समय है, जिसमे मनुष्य जीवन का, भाग्य का निर्माण कर सकता है। जिस तरह लोहा ठंडा पड़ जाने पर घन पटकने से कोई लाभ नहीं, उसी तरह अवसर निकल जाने पर मनुष्य का प्रयत्न व्यर्थ चला जाता है। विश्राम अवश्य करें। अधिक कार्यक्षमता प्राप्त करने के लिए विश्राम आवश्यक है लेकिन उसका समय निश्चित करें। समय बड़ा मूल्यवान है। उसे किफायत से व्यय करें। जितना समय-धन को बचाकर उसे आवश्यक उपयोगी कार्यों में लगाएंगे, उतनी व्यक्तित्व की महत्ता एवं हैसियत बढ़ेगी। नियमित समय पर काम करने का अभ्यास डालें।

आदत पड़ जाने पर स्वयं ही बड़ा आनंद आएगा अपने काम और समय का इस तरह मेल रखें कि उसमे एक मिनट का अंतर न आए। तभी अपने समय का पूरा-पूरा सदुपयोग कर सकेंगे। आलस्य समय का सबसे बड़ा शत्रु है। यह कई रूपों में मनुष्य पर अधिकार जमाता है। कई बार कुछ काम किया कि विश्राम के बहाने हम अपने समय को बर्बाद करने लगते हैं। वैसे बीमारी, तकलीफ आदि में विश्राम करना बुरा नहीं है, लेकिन आंखें खुलीं तो तुरंत अपने काम में लगें।

भुखमरी दूर करने का मौलिक तरीका

विश्व बैंक ने कहा है कि 1990 के बाद अब तक भारत अपनी गरीबी दर को आधे स्तर पर ले जाने में सफल रहा। वहीं दूसरी ओर ग्लोबल हंगर इंडेक्स रिपोर्ट में भुखमरी और कुपोषण के मामले में भारत अपने पड़ोसी देश बांग्लादेश, पाकिस्तान एवं नेपाल से भी पीछे है। ग्लोबल हंगर इंडेक्स 2019 में भारत 117 देशों में 102वें स्थान पर है। अगर देश में गरीबी रेखा से लोग ऊपर उठ रहे हैं तो भुखमरी के कारण देश फिसड्डी क्यों हो रहा है। अर्थशास्त्र का यह दोहरा अर्थ समझ पाना बहुत मुश्किल है। मानव विकास के मोर्चे पर भारत की विफलता का यह मामला तब सबके सामने है जब दुनिया भर में भूख और गरीबी मिटाने का मौलिक तरीका क्या हो उसे बताने वाले भारतीय अर्थशास्त्री अभिजीत बनर्जी को अर्थशास्त्र का नोबल

रिपोर्ट में यह भी साफ है कि भारत में 6 से 23 महीने के सिर्फ 9.6 फीसद बच्चों को ही न्युनतम स्वीकृत भोजन हो पाता है। केंद्रीय स्वास्थ मंत्रालय की ओर से जारी रिपोर्ट में यह आंकड़ा और भी कमजोर मात्र 6.4 बताया

जब तक शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और रोजगार पर पूरा बल नहीं दिया जाएगा तब तक देश से भुखमरी की समस्या को दूर करना कठिन बना रहेगा

गया है। यूनिसेफ भी कह रहा है कि दुनिया में हर तीसरा बच्चा कुपोषित है। आंकड़ों से यह भी पता चला है कि कद के अनुरूप वजन के मामले में भारतीय बच्चे सबसे फिसड्डी, सबसे पीछे और यमन जैसे युद्ध झेलकर जर्जर हुए देश के बच्चों से भी भारत पीछे हैं। हालांकि भारत में मृत्यु दर, कम वजन और

अल्प पोषण जैसे संकेतकों में सुधार दिखता है। ऐसे में सवाल है कि जब विश्व बैंक भारत को गरीबी के मामले में तुलनात्मक उठा हुआ मानता है तो फिर भुखमरी क्यों है? गौरतलब है कि 1989 की लकड़ावाला समिति की रिपोर्ट में गरीबी 36.1 फीसद बताई गई थी तब विश्व बैंक भारत में यही आंकड़ा 48 फीसद मानता था और इसमें यह भी देखा गया कि 2400 कैलोरी ऊर्जा ग्रामीण और 2100 कैलोरी

ऊर्जा प्राप्त करने वाले शहरी लोग गरीबी रेख के ऊपर हैं। मौजूदा समय में आर्थिक दृष्टि से देखें तो 1.90 डॉलर प्रतिदिन कमाने वाले गरीबी रेखा के नीचे नहीं हैं। अब समझने वाली बात यह है कि रोटी, कपड़ा, मकान, शिक्षा, चिकित्सा जैसी जरूरी आवश्यकताएं क्या इतने में पूरी हो सकती हैं? जाहिर है गरीबी से ऊपर उठने का जो स्तर तय किया गया है वह निहायत न्यून प्रतीत होता है।

जीवन को बाजार के भाव पर आंका जाय तो यह दर बहुत कम है। शायद यही कारण है कि भारत गरीबी रेखा से ऊपर के मामले में बेहतर आंकड़े की ओर है। जबकि हंगर इंडेक्स के आंकड़े उसे फिसड्डी साबित कर रहे हैं। जब तक वैकल्पिक रास्ता नहीं अपनाया जाएगा मसलन शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और रोजगार पर पूरा बल नहीं दिखाया जाएगा तब तक भुखमरी के आंकड़े समेत गरीबी को दूर करने की संतोषजनक स्थिति प्राप्त करना कठिन बना रहेगा। सरकार को बेरोजगारी की कतार को कम करना चाहिए। अवसर की प्रतीक्षा में भी जो हैं उनके साथ सामाजिक न्याय हो ताकि जब गरीबी घटे तो भुखमरी भी घटे।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

न दुष्टि, न इतिहास

भारतीय दृष्टि वाला इतिहास शीर्षक आलेख में हृदयनारायण दीक्षित ने ठीक ही लिखा है कि अब अंग्रेजी सत्ता, संस्कृति, सभ्यता व वामपंथ को समर्थन देने वाले इतिहास कर्म का पोस्टमार्टम जरूरी हो गया है। पश्चिमी या इस्लामी दृष्टि से लिखे गए भारत के इतिहास को पीएन ओक ने 'धृष्टतापूर्ण मनोरंजन' बताया है। नेपोलियन का कहना था कि चुंकि इतिहास विजेताओं द्वारा ही लिखवाया जाता है, इसलिए वह एक सत्यता-रहित दंतकथा जैसा प्रतीत होता है। भारतीय इतिहास के संदर्भ में गुरुदेव टैगोर ने लिखा है-सौभाग्यशाली हैं वे देश जो चिरंतन स्वदेश को अपने इतिहास में ही ढूंढ लेते हैं। बचपन में इतिहास ही उनका परिचय अपने देश से करा देता है। अंग्रेजों के बच्चे जानते हैं कि उनके बाप-दादों ने व्यापार किया, देश जीते और दुनिया पर शासन किया। वे स्वयं भी उनकी तरह धन-गौरव, रण-गौरव और विजय-गौरव के अधिकारी बनना चाहते हैं, पर भारत के बच्चों को पढ़ाया जाता है कि उनके पुरखों ने न तो व्यापार किया, न देश जीते, न कोई साम्राज्य खड़ा किया। यही जानने के लिए है भारत का इतिहास। किंतु उनके पुरखों ने क्या किया, ये वो नहीं जानते। इस विकृत इतिहास को पढ़ने से कोई प्रेरणा हमें-हमारे बच्चों को प्राप्त नहीं होती। जब इस विकृति को दूर कर सही तथ्यों से युक्त नया इतिहास अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी सरकार ने विद्यार्थियों को दिया तो वामपंथियों ने भगवाकरण का हौवा खड़ा कर दिया। इसकी पोल न्यायपालिका में खुल गई, वैसे ही जैसे भगवा आतंकवाद की हवा निकली। विकृत इतिहास में आर्यों को प्रथम आक्रमणकारी बताया जा रहा था, गुरु तेगबहादुर, शिवाजी, महाराणा प्रताप को हत्यारे और डकैत बताया गया था। जहां तक आर्य-आक्रमण की बात है तो उसके संबंध में तो बाबा साहब आंबेडकर ने ही लिखा

मेलबाक्स

कि यह सिद्धांत इतना वाहियात है कि काफी पहले इसे खत्म कर दिया जाना चाहिए था। तो अब देशवासियों को प्रेरणा देने वाले भारतीय दृष्टि से लिखे गए इतिहास का वक्त आ पहुंचा है। हमारी इतिहास पुस्तकें इतिहास बताने वाली हों, इति न हास अर्थात ऐसा नहीं हुआ समझाने वाली नहीं।

आदर्श स्थापित करे दिल्ली देश के विभिन्न राज्यों से लोग दिल्ली इसलिए पलायन करते हैं ताकि वे बेहतर जीवन जी सकें। काम के साथ-साथ तमाम सुख-सुविधाएं उन्हें मिल सके। लेकिन साल दर साल दिल्ली में प्रदूषण के स्तर में हो रहे इजाफे को देखकर अब लोग सोचने पर विवश हो गए हैं। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इस बार पटाखों पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया था, लेकिन लोगों ने कोर्ट के आदेश को धता बताते हुए दिवाली पर खूब पटाखे जलाए। परिणाम स्वरूप दिल्ली की आबोहवा प्रदूषण के सर्वोच्च शिखर पर पहुंच गई। यह स्थिति तब है जब सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने पटाखे फोड़ने के लिए समय निर्धारित कर दिया था कि रात आठ से दस के बीच ही पटाखे जलाए जाएंगे, वह भी ग्रीन पटाखे। सोचने वाली बात यह है कि हमारा वास्तविक समाज किस अंधविश्वास का पालन कर रहा है। जो एक स्वस्थ जीवन को चुनौती दे रहा है। जिस दिल्ली को देश के अन्य राज्यों के लिए एक आदर्श स्थापित करनी चाहिए थी, वह दिल्ली प्रदूषण का संदेश दे रही है। अब तो ऐसा लगता है जैसे जहरीली हवा में घुट-घुट कर

जीवन जीना ही दिल्लीवासियों की नियति बन गई है। मिथिलेश कुमार

सादगी भरी हो त्योहार की खुशी

प्रत्येक वर्ष दिवाली के बाद दिल्ली-एनसीआर में प्रदूषण के स्तर में बहुत ही ज्यादा इजाफा हो जाता है, जो एक स्वस्थ्य मनुष्य के जीवनकाल को प्रभावित करता है। इस खतरनाक प्रदूषण के कारण लोगों में सांस लेने और आंखों में जलन की शिकायत रहती है। लेकिन इससे कुछ सीखने के बजाय हम हर बार एक ही गलती को दोहराते जाते हैं। प्रशासन के लाख सतर्कता और पटाखा जलाने के लिए समय निर्धारित करने के बाद भी कुछ लोगों पर कोई असर देखने को नही मिला। उन्होंने पटाखे जलाकर दिवाली का जश्न मनाया इस वर्ष बेशक प्रदुषण का स्तर विगत 5 वर्षों में सबसे कम रहा हो, लेकिन इस समय भी प्रदूषण का जो स्तर है वह काफी खतरनाक है। यह मानवीय स्वास्थ्य को प्रभावित करने वाला है। इससे जाहिर है कि लोगों द्वारा ही ऐसे हालात पैदा किए जा रहे हैं, जिससे वर्तमान और भविष्य दोनों ही जिंदगी इस प्रदूषण की बलि चढ़ जाए। आखिर लोग इस बात को क्यों नहीं मानते कि पटाखों से होने वाला प्रदूषण मानव जीवन के लिए खतरनाक है?

नीरज कुमार पाठक, नोएडा

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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इन्स्

आतंक की चुनौती

रमीर में बढ़ती आतंकी हिंसा की जो खबरें आ रही हैं, वे चिंताजनक हैं। पूरी कश्मीर घाटी में सेना, सुरक्षा बलों और पुलिस की भारी तैनाती, अनवरत निगरानी के बावजूद आतंकी जिस तरह से वारदात को अंजाम दे रहे हैं, उससे यह स्पष्ट है कि आतंकियों का नेटवर्क अभी भी कमजोर नहीं पड़ा है और वे अपने मंसूबों में कामयाब हो रहे हैं। सोमवार को सोपोर में आतंकियों ने बस अड्डे पर हथगोला फेंक कर हमला किया। इस घटना में बीस लोग घायल हो गए। इससे ठीक तीन दिन पहले श्रीनगर में केंद्रीय रिजर्व पुलिस बल के दल पर आतंकी हमले में छह जवान जख्मी हो गए थे। तीन दिनों में लगातार दो हमले बता रहे हैं कि आतंकियों का दुस्साहस कम नहीं हो पाया है और वे जगह-जगह बमों से हमले कर लोगों में दहशत फैलाने में कामयाब हो रहे हैं। हैरानी की बात यह है कि हमलावर आतंकी भाग निकलने में भी सफल रहते हैं। ऐसे में आतंकियों से निपटने की रणनीति पर सवाल उठने लाजिमी हैं। ऐसा लगता है कि घाटी में आतंकियों से निपटने और उन्हें खोज निकालने की सेना, सुरक्षा बलों की रणनीति में कहीं न कहीं खामियां हैं। बढ़ते आतंकी हमले क्या आतंकवाद से निपटने के सरकारी दावों की पोल नहीं खोलते?

दूसरी चिंताजनक बात घाटी में ट्रक ड्राइवरों पर होने वाले हमले हैं। सोमवार को दक्षिण कश्मीर के बिजबेहड़ा में फिर एक ट्रक ड्राइवर को आतंकवादियों ने मार डाला। इससे पहले चौदह अक्तूबर को भी शोपियां में एक ट्रक ड्राइवर की हत्या कर दी गई थी। इस घटना के दो दिन बाद पंजाब के दो सेब व्यापारियों को आतंकियों ने अपना निशाना बनाया और उनके ट्रक को आग के हवाले कर दिया था। जाहिर है, आतंकियों की रणनीति अब व्यापारियों को निशाना बनाने की है, ताकि व्यापारी कारोबार न कर पाएं। इस वक्त घाटी में ज्यादातर धंधे ठप पड़े हैं। कश्मीर में पिछले तीन महीने के दौरान दस हजार करोड़ रुपए से ज्यादा का कारोबारी नुकसान हो चुका है। ले-देकर कुछ उम्मीदें सेब व्यापारियों को बनी थीं और सरकार ने कारोबारियों को पूरी सुरक्षा मुहैया कराने का भरोसा भी दिया था। लेकिन अब हालात कुछ और ही बयां कर रहे हैं। बागों में सेब सड़ रहे हैं, लेकिन उन्हें उठाने और मंडियों तक पहुंचाने का पुख्ता इंतजाम नहीं है। अब तो दहशतगदीं ने जिस तरह ट्रक ड्राइवरों को निशाना बनाना शुरू कर दिया है, उससे व्यापारियों के लिए और ज्यादा मुश्किलें खड़ी हो गई हैं। हालात इतने गंभीर हैं कि श्रीनगर के लाल चौक जैसे व्यस्ततम बाजार तक में कुछ ही दुकानें सुबह या शाम खुल रही हैं। अगर आतंकियों के खौफ से कारोबारी माहौल इसी तरह ठप पड़ता गया तो प्रदेश की अर्थव्यवस्था को कैसे मजबूती मिलेगी, यह गंभीर प्रश्न है।

पड़ोसी देश से आतंकियों की घुसपैठ को लेकर समय-समय पर चेतावनियां आ रही हैं। सेना और खुफिया विभाग ने खुद माना है कि पाकिस्तान बड़ी संख्या में आतंकियों को भारतीय सीमा में घुसपैठ कराने की कोशिश में है। इसके लिए पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर और नियंत्रण रेखा के पास पाकिस्तानी सेना का जमावड़ा बढ़ने की खबरें भी आई हैं। घाटी में आतंकियों की पहचान कर पाना आसान इसलिए भी नहीं है कि ग्रामीण इलाकों में उनकी गहरी पैठ है और वहां उनका व्यापक नेटवर्क है। इस नेटवर्क को तोड़ने के लिए सेना और पुलिस ने कई बार बड़े अभियान भी चलाए, लेकिन आतंकियों का सफाया नहीं हो पाया। अगर यही हाल रहा और आतंकी हमले नहीं थमे तो घाटी में बाहर से निवेश आने का सपना धरा रह जाएगा।

त्रासद अंधविश्वास

हार के भागलपुर जिले से जिस तरह की घटना सामने आई है, वह हमारे देश में विकास की मौजूदा परिभाषा और विज्ञान की उपलब्धियों को कठघरे में खड़ा करने के लिए काफी है। सवाल है कि विकास और विज्ञान का रास्ता अगर सही दिशा की ओर बढ़ रहा है तो इसके बीच यह त्रासदी क्यों बनी हुई है कि एक व्यक्ति अपनी इच्छा पूरी होने के लिए किसी बच्चे की बलि दे दे! गौरतलब है कि भागलपुर के दिलौरी गांव में एक व्यक्ति ने दिवाली की रात अपने ही भतीजे की हत्या कर दी, क्योंकि तांत्रिक ने उसे सलाह दी थी कि अगर वह अपने किसी प्रिय बच्चे की बलि देगा तो उसे संतान की प्राप्ति होगी। निश्चित रूप से यह घटना कानूनी कसौटी पर एक गंभीर अपराध है और इसके लिए आरोपियों को सख्त सजा मिलनी चाहिए। लेकिन यह घटना उदाहरण है कि आस्था के सिरे से आगे बढ़ी अपेक्षाएं कैसे विकृत अंधविश्वास में तब्दील हो जाती हैं और व्यक्ति को संवेदनहीन बनाने के साथ-साथ उसके सोचने-समझने की ताकत या विवेक को छीन लेती हैं। वरना यह कैसे संभव है कि अपनी इच्छा पूरी होने के लिए कोई व्यक्ति तांत्रिक की सलाह पर किसी बच्चे की निर्ममता से हत्या कर दे?

इस साल देश भर से अब तक कम से कम तीन ऐसी वाकये सामने आ चुके हैं, जिनमें तांत्रिकों के बहकावे में आकर किसी बच्चे की हत्या कर दी गई। आस्था की दुनिया में बलि को जिस तरह एक महिमामंडित कर्मकांड के रूप में देखा जाता है, उसमें व्यक्ति इसके औचित्य या सही-गलत होने के बारे में सोचने का विवेक तक खो देता है। अपनी इच्छापूर्ति के भ्रम में चूंकि वह खुद पर विश्वास और अपना विवेक खो चुका होता है, इसलिए उसकी समस्या का झूठा हल परोसने वाले तांत्रिक की बातों में उसका आ जाना एक स्वाभाविक परिणति है। इसके बाद वह तांत्रिक की सलाह से संचालित होता है और इस क्रम में किसी भी हद तक बर्बर हो जाने में उसे हिचक नहीं होती। हालत यह होती है कि उसके पास बलि के नाम पर किसी बच्चे की हत्या के अंजाम के बारे में सोचने तक का विवेक नहीं बचा होता है।

दरअसल, इस तरह त्रासदी सामाजिक विकास के मोर्चे पर सत्ता की व्यापक नाकामी का नतीजा है। आस्था और धार्मिक परंपराओं के नाम पर समाज में ऐसे चलन को भी छूट दी जाती है, जो खुले तौर पर अंधविश्वास का कारोबार होता है और जिसका हासिल कई बार बेहद त्रासद होता है। बच्चे की बलि ऐसे अंधविश्वासों का चरम है, लेकिन इसकी जमीन छोटे स्तर पर प्रचलित कर्मकांडों के जरिए ही बनती है जिसे आमतौर पर आस्था की शक्ल में पेश किया जाता है। अमूमन हर शहर और गांव में बाबाओं, ओझा और तांत्रिकों को अपनी वैसी गतिविधियां सरेआम चलाने पर शायद ही कहीं रोक है, जो लोगों को अंधविश्वास के जाल में फंसा कर कई बार तबाह कर डालती हैं। इसमें धन की ठगी और कथित मनोकामना पूरी करने के लिए तंत्र-मंत्र का कर्मकांड कराने से लेकर किसी की बिल देने तक की हालत पैदा करना शामिल है। कानून के तहत अंधविश्वास फैलाना अपराध है, लेकिन आस्था के पर्दे में सब कुछ चलने दिया जाता है। जबकि संविधान के अनुच्छेद 51-ए (एच) के तहत यह बुनियादी कर्तव्य तय किया गया है कि सभी नागरिक वैज्ञानिक सोच या चेतना का प्रचार-प्रसार करेगा। सवाल है कि अगर दूरदराज के किसी इलाके में तांत्रिक की सलाह पर बच्चे की बलि देने की घटना होती है तो इसके लिए क्या

कल्पमधा

सम्चे सरकारी तंत्र की जिम्मेदारी नहीं बनती है?

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सक्रिय अज्ञान से भयानक कुछ नहीं होता।

- गेटे

करतारपुर से रिश्तों की उम्मीद

संजीव पांडेय

अगर करतारपुर गलियारा दोनों मुल्कों के बीच संबंध ठीक करने में माध्यम बनता है, तो इसका सीधा लाभ पाकिस्तान के कई औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों को मिलेगा। पाकिस्तान का वाहन उद्योग गुड़गांव और मानेसर से जरूरी सामान का आयात कर सकता है। इसी तरह पाकिस्तान के दवा उद्योग को भारी लाभ मिलेगा, क्योंकि पाकिस्तान में अभी भी कई दवाइयां काफी महंगी है। दोनों मुल्कों में कृषि क्षेत्र में सहयोग बढ़ेगा।

भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच करतारपुर गलियारे की शुरुआत अगले महीने हो जाएगी। इस धार्मिक गलियारे को लेकर भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच समझौता हो चुका है। उम्मीद की जा रही है कि यह धार्मिक गलियारा दोनों मुल्कों के बीच सत्तर सालों से चल रहे खराब संबंधों को ठीक करने में मदद करेगा, क्योंकि करतारपुर गलियारे का संबंध दुनिया को शांति का संदेश देने वाले गुरुनानक देव जी से है। यह धार्मिक गलियारा भविष्य में दोनों मल्कों के बीच सीमा पर कई और गलियारे खोले जाने की भी राह दिखाएगा। इस धार्मिक गलियारे के बहाने भारत-पाकिस्तान सीमा पर कई और आर्थिक गलियारों को खोलने की कवायद शुरू होगी। यही उम्मीद दोनों तरफ शांति के लिए काम करने वाले तमाम लोग लगाए बैठे हैं। कुछ घटनाक्रम बताते हैं कि तमाम तनावों के बीच शांति की उम्मीदें खत्म नहीं हुई हैं। जब दोनों मुल्कों के बीच जम्मू-कश्मीर को लेकर तनाव चरम पर था, उस समय भी

पाकिस्तान ने करतारपुर गलियारे के विकास को लेकर कोई कोताही नहीं बरती। गलियारा खोले जाने को लेकर दोनों मुल्कों के बीच नियमित बैठकें होती रहीं।

अगर बात आज करतारपुर से शुरू हुई तो आगे तक जरूर जाएगी, यह विश्वास रखना चाहिए। पाकिस्तान करतारपुर गलियारे के माध्यम से अपने यहां धार्मिक पर्यटन के विकास के लिए अच्छा माहौल बनाना चाहता है। यह पाकिस्तान के विकास के लिए जरूरी है। इसमें कोई शक नहीं है कि लंबे समय से आंतकवाद से जुझ रहे पाकिस्तान की आर्थिक हालत काफी खराब है। आतंकवाद के कारण उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था चरमरा गई है। आतंकवाद का असर पाकिस्तान के कृषि और औद्योगिक क्षेत्र पर देखने को मिल रहा है। पिछले बीस सालों में पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था को एक सौ पच्चीस अरब डालर का नुकसान सिर्फ आतंकवाद के कारण हुआ है। इससे पाकिस्तान की लोकतांत्रिक सरकार और सेना दोनों की परेशानी बढी है। पाकिस्तानी सता तंत्र को

उम्मीद है कि दोनों देशों के बीच धार्मिक पर्यटन बढ़ने से आर्थिक भाईचारा भी बढ़ेगा, क्योंकि अभी तक तमाम द्विपक्षीय बार्ताओं से कुछ खास 🎚 परिणाम नहीं निकला है।

सिखों के बड़े धार्मिक स्थल पाकिस्तान में हैं। ये धार्मिक स्थल लाहौर, ननकाना साहिब, हसन अब्दाल और करतारपुर में हैं। इन धार्मिक स्थलों का संबंध गुरुनानक देव और गुरु अर्जुनदेव से संबंधित है। लेकिन दिलचस्प बात यह है कि भारत-पाकिस्तान विभाजन के बाद पाकिस्तान में सिखों की आबादी हजारों में सिमट गई। ज्यादातर सिख भारत में आ गए। वहीं धार्मिक स्थलों को लेकर पाकिस्तान की स्थिति दिलचस्प है। पाकिस्तान एक इस्लामिक देश है, लेकिन इस्लाम से संबंधित पवित्र स्थल सऊदी अरब, इराक और ईरान में हैं। इन परिस्थितियों

को विकसित करना चाहता है तो उसकी पहली प्राथमिकता पाकिस्तान में स्थित सिखों के धार्मिक स्थलों का विकास करना होगी। गौरतलब है कि भारत ने भी विदेशी सैलानियों के बीच धार्मिक पर्यटन लोकप्रिय करने के लिए उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार में स्थित बौद्ध तीर्थ स्थलों को विकसित कर इसे बौद्ध सर्किट से जोड़ा है। भारत के बौद्ध सर्किट की तर्ज पर पाकिस्तान के पास सिखों से संबंधित धार्मिक स्थलों को आपस में जोड़ कर सिख सर्किट विकसित करने का बढिया विकल्प है।

अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारत और नेपाल मिल कर बौद्ध सर्किट विकसित कर रहे हैं। भगवान बुद्ध की जन्मस्थली लुंबिनी (नेपाल) है। जबिक उनके ज्ञान

प्राप्त करने का स्थान बोधगया (बिहार) में है। पहला उपदेश देने का स्थान उत्तर प्रदेश के सारनाथ में है। लगभग यही स्थिति गुरुनानक देव और सिखों के अन्य गुरुओं से संबंधित स्थलों को लेकर है। गुरुनानक देव की जन्मस्थली ननकाना साहिब इस समय पाकिस्तान में है। जिस करतारपुर में गुरुनानक देव ने अपने अंतिम दिन बिताए, वह भी पाकिस्तान में है। जबकि गुरुनानक देव से संबंधित कुछ धार्मिक स्थल भारत में भी स्थित हैं। यही नहीं, सिखों के दूसरे गुरुओं से संबंधित कुछ धार्मिक स्थल पंजाब, बिहार, महाराष्ट्र में हैं, तो कुछ पाकिस्तान में हैं। अगर भारत और नेपाल के बौद्ध सर्किट के तर्ज पर भारत और पाकिस्तान मिलकर सिख सर्किट विकसित करते हैं तो भविष्य में भारत और पाकिस्तान के संबंधों में खासा सुधार आएगा।

हालांकि करतारपुर गलियारे को लेकर दोनों मुल्कों के बीच समझौता तो हो गया है, लेकिन फिर भी गलियारे को



में पाकिस्तान अगर अपने मुल्क में अगर धार्मिक पर्यटन 🧪 लेकर कुछ तल्खी है। इस गलियारे से करतारपुर जाने वाले श्रद्धालुओं से पाकिस्तान बीस डॉलर प्रति श्रद्धालु (करीब डेढ़ हजार रुपए) शुल्क लेगा। भारत इस शुल्क के विरोध में है। भारत ने अंतिम समय तक पाकिस्तान से अनुरोध किया कि यह शुल्क न लिया जाए, क्योंकि इसका बोझ श्रद्धालुओं पर पड़ेगा। लेकिन इस मुद्दे पर पाकिस्तान टस से मस नहीं हुआ। उसका तर्क है कि पाकिस्तान करतारपूर के विकास पर एक हजार करोड़ रुपए खर्च कर चुका है। वहां श्रद्धालुओं को अच्छी सुविधा दी जाएगी। इसके लिए प्रतिश्रद्धालु बीस डालर लिए जा रहे हैं। जबकि भारत का तर्क है कि करतारपुर के नाम पर वसुला जा रहा यह शुल्क पाकिस्तान के आर्थिक लाभ का एक हिस्सा है। भारत से अगर रोजाना पांच हजार श्रद्धालु भी इस गलियारे से

करतारपुर जाएंगे तो पाकिस्तान को प्रतिदिन एक लाख डालर की आय होगी जो भारतीय मुद्रा में लगभग सतर लाख होगा। वहीं पाकिस्तान मुद्रा में यह रकम डेढ़ करोड़ रुपए के करीब बैठेगी। यानी पाकिस्तान हर महीने करीब सैंतालीस करोड़ रुपए कमाएगा। इसके अतिरिक्त भारत और दुनिया के दूसरे मुल्कों से आने वाले श्रद्धालु गुरुद्वारे में चढ़ावा भी देंगे। कहने को पाकिस्तान के गुरुद्वारों का प्रबंधन पाकिस्तान सिख गुरुद्वारा प्रबंधक कमेटी देखती है, लेकिन यह भारत की शिरोमणि गुरुद्वारा प्रबंधक कमेटी (एसजीपीसी) की तरह चुनी हुई संस्था नहीं है। इसका गठन पाकिस्तान सरकार ने किया है और यह इवैक्यू ट्रस्ट प्रापर्टी बोर्ड के अधीन है। इस कारण अल्पसंख्यकों के धार्मिक स्थलों की संपत्तियों और आय पर एक तरह से इस बोर्ड का ही नियंत्रण है।

भारत पाकिस्तान के बीच आर्थिक संबंध बीते दो सालों से काफी खराब हैं, जबिक दोनों मुल्कों के व्यापारी

लगातार अच्छे संबंधों की वकालत करते रहे हैं। दिल्ली, अमृतसर और लाहौर के व्यापारियों को इस गलियारे से काफी उम्मीदें हैं। दूसरी तरफ लाहौर चैंबर ऑफ कॉमर्स एंड इंडस्ट्री पंजाब सीमा के रास्ते भारत से व्यापार को तेज करने की मांग कर रहा है। भारतीय पंजाब के नेता भी लगातार पंजाब के रास्ते आर्थिक संबंधों को बढ़ाने की मांग कर रहे हैं। अभी दोनों मुल्कों के बीच सिर्फ अटारी के रास्ते व्यापारिक आवागमन है। 2014 में पंजाब के तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री प्रकाश सिंह बादल ने केंद्र सरकार को पत्र लिख कर फिरोजपुर जिला स्थित हसैनीवाला और फाजिल्का जिला स्थित सुलेमानकी बार्डर से व्यापार शुरू करने की मांग की थी। लेकिन ये रास्ते अभी नहीं खुले हैं।

अगर करतारपुर गलियारा दोनों मुल्कों के बीच संबंध ठीक करने में माध्यम बनता है, तो इसका सीधा लाभ पाकिस्तान के कई औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों को

मिलेगा। पाकिस्तान का वाहन उद्योग गुड़गांव और मानेसर से जरूरी सामान का आयात कर सकता है। इसी तरह पाकिस्तान के दवा उद्योग को भारी लाभ मिलेगा, क्योंकि पाकिस्तान में अभी भी कई दवाइयां काफी महंगी है। दोनों मुल्कों में कृषि क्षेत्र में सहयोग बढ़ेगा। भारतीय पंजाब के आलू और कपास उत्पादकों को लाभ मिलेगा। भारतीय कपास का बड़ा खरीदार पाकिस्तानी पंजाब का कपड़ा उद्योग है। भारत से पाकिस्तान को होने वाले कुल निर्यात में कपास की बड़ी हिस्सेदारी है। अगर आज दोनों मुल्कों के बीच संबंध ठीक होते हैं तो इसका लाभ मध्य एशिया, अफगानिस्तान, पूर्वी एशिया और बांग्लादेश तक को होगा। भारत को मध्य एशिया के बाजारों तक पहुंचने में आसानी होगी।

सात बजे की खबर

वर्तिका नंदा

🍞 क समय था जब खबरों की दुनिया शाम सात 🦴 बजे के आसपास घूमती थी। यह वह समय था, जब दूरदर्शन अपने 'बचपन' यानी शुरुआती दिनों से गुजर रहा था और दूर-दूर तक किसी निजी चैनल का नामोनिशान तक नहीं था। तब देश के दूरदराज के इलाकों में बैठे लोग अपने-अपने राज्य के शाम सात बजे के क्षेत्रीय समाचार बहुत ही चाव से देखा-सूना करते थे। मुझे याद है कि उन दिनों पंजाब में आंतकवाद अपने चरम पर था और पंजाब में रहने वालों के लिए शाम सात बजे के वे क्षेत्रीय समाचार पंजाब की तस्वीर दिखाया करते थे।

ये वे दिन थे जब अंधेरा होते-होते पंजाब की सड़कों पर कर्फ्यू की तरह सन्नाटा पसर जाता था और उस सन्नाटे में भी लोग इंतजार करते थे- शाम सात बजे की खबरों का। तब जालंधर दुरदर्शन में दो-तीन समाचार वाचक ही होते थे। उन समाचार वाचकों को अब 'एंकर' कहा जाता है। उस दौर के लगभग सभी एंकर सादगी लिए, संजीदगी के साथ खबर पढ़ते। समाचार वाचकों के बीच खबरों की प्रस्तुति को लेकर कोई आक्रामकता के बजाय एक

खास तरह की गंभीरता दिखती थी। पुरुष और महिला समाचार वाचकों के परिधान भी तब समूची प्रस्तुति की गरिमा को बनाए रखने में सहायक-तत्त्व की तरह थे। आज के निजी चैनलों पर एंकरों की तरह उछल-कूद के साथ खबर पढ़ने की परंपरा तब सोची तक नहीं गई थी। तब टेलीविजन को तकरीबन अंतिम सच माना जाता था। आमतौर पर लोगों को खबर पर शक नहीं होता था। खबर की परख को लेकर मानस

में सवाल नहीं उठते थे। इसके पीछे धारणा यही रही होगी कि तब खबर बिकती नहीं थी। वह सिर्फ एक खबर होती थी। और इस तरह की खबरें सम्मान और भरोसा पाती थीं।

इतने सालों के बाद यह भी अहसास होता है कि पंजाब के उस माहौल में भी शाम सात बजे की खबरें आशावाद बनाए रखने की कोशिश करती थीं। एक खास बात यह थी कि तब इन खबरों में कभी-कभार अगर कभी कुछ गलतियां हो जाती थीं, तब ऐसा होने पर दूरदर्शन की ओर से बाकायदा माफी भी मांग ली जाती थी। लेकिन इस कसौटी पर आज के टीवी चैनलों पर खबरों के प्रसारण, उसमें प्रस्तृतियों की आक्रामकता और तथ्यों के गलत तरीके से रखे जाने पर इस तरह खेद जताए जाने या माफी मांगने के

कितने उदाहरण मिलते हैं ? कई बार खबर की प्रस्तृति से ठीक पहले अगर कोई तकनीकी या प्रसारण संबंधी गड़बड़ी हो जाती थी, तब भी दुरदर्शन एक चूहे की तस्वीर के जरिए- 'रुकावट के लिए खेद हैं' की सुचना चिपका देता। उस तस्वीर में खुश दिखता चृहा तार को खाते हुए तकनीकी परेशानी को दिखाता था। दुरदर्शन का जनता से यह सादा संवाद काफी भला लगता। आज खबरों में 'रुकावट' तो शायद नहीं पैदा होती, लेकिन उस दौर की वह

दुनिया मेरे आगे तस्वीर और 'खेद' जाहिर करने की याद प्रस्तुति की दुनिया के खुबसुरत पल की तरह आती है। बल्कि दर्शकों का खयाल रखने के लिहाज से एक सौम्य छवि की स्मृति आज ज्यादा याद आती है।

तब खबरों के प्रसारण में 'मसाला' नहीं होता था और न ही आतंकवाद को भूना-पका कर पेश करने की फितरत दिखती थी। इसलिए अक्सर लगता है कि अगर तब शाम सात बजे की समाचारों की जगह आज जितने निजी समाचार चैनल होते और आज की तरह की तरह ही खबरों की प्रस्तुतियां होतीं तो शायद पंजाब अब तक सुलग ही रहा होता और न जाने 'ब्रेकिंग न्यूज' और 'एक्सक्लुसिव' के फेर में कितनी खबरें तोड-मरोड कर पेश की जातीं।

दिल्ली का संकट

इसीलिए भागते हैं कि वहां बेहतर जनजीवन और अन्य

सुविधाएं मिलने की उम्मीदें काफी होती हैं। लेकिन जिस

तरह दीपावली पर दिल्ली की आबोहवा जिस खराब

स्तर पर पहुंच गई, वह देशवासियों के स्वास्थ्य के लिए

खतरे की घंटी के रूप में नजर आ रही है। यह स्थित

तब है जब सर्वोच्च न्यायालय पटाखे फोड़ने के लिए

समय निर्धारित कर दिया था। सोचने वाली बात है कि

हमारा वास्तविक समाज किस

अंधविश्वास का पालन कर रहा है

देश की राजधानी दिल्ली की ओर लोग लोग

यह वह समय था जब सात बजे की खबर जिंदगी का एक अहम हिस्सा होती थीं। उस दौर में बात भी होती थी तो इस अंदाज में कि यह बात 'न्यूज' से पहले की है या बाद की। तब खबर की एक विश्वसनीयता थी, इसलिए प्रतिष्ठा थी। समाचार चैनलों की इतनी बड़ी भीड़ आज भी 'सात बजे की खबर' की उस साख से होड़ नहीं कर पाई है। तब दूरदर्शन के पास कई ऐसे अच्छी साख वाले कर्मी थे, जिन्होंने दूरदर्शन की गरिमा को बनाए और बचाए रखने के लिए अपनी पूरी शक्ति लगाई थी। उसके बाद के कई सालों तक अनेक कलाकार जालंधर दूरदर्शन की बदौलत ही सामने आए और बड़े सितारे बन कर उभरे। आज खबरें जिस तरह खबर न होकर होड़ बन गई हैं, उसमें दूरदर्शन के उस चेहरे की बस याद ही बाकी रही। वैसे खबरनवीस भी अब कहां दिखते हैं! चौबीसों घंटों की खबरों की भीड़ ने खबरों को सुनने के इंतजार को अतीत बना दिया है। एक नियत समय पर सीमित मात्रा में मिलने वाली खबरें कई बार बेहतर लगती थीं। इस दौर में शायद वैसा कभी हो न सके, लेकिन एक आदत के तौर पर किसी दिन सिर्फ एक बार खबर की खुराक को पाने का इंतजार शायद अच्छा भी लगे।

आबादी पर लगाम

चि छले कुछ दशकों में भारत की जनसंख्या तेजी से बढ़ी है और इस मामले में भारत अब चीन को पीछे छोड़ पहले पायदान पर पहुंचने वाला है। यह भारत के लिए चिंता का विषय है। हाल ही में असम सरकार ने इससे जुड़ा एक बड़ा फैसला लिया है जो संविधान विशेषज्ञों के बीच चर्चा का विषय बना हुआ है। असम सरकार ने एक जनवरी 2021 के बाद उन लोगों को सरकारी नौकरी नहीं देने का फैसला लिया है जिनके दो से अधिक बच्चे होंगे। असम विधानसभा ने दो साल पहले ही जनसंख्या नीति पारित की थी, जिसमें महिला सशक्तिकरण से लेकर बच्चियों की शिक्षा सिहत कई अन्य प्रावधान शामिल थे। जनसंख्या नियंत्रण का प्रावधान भी इन्हीं में एक था। शुरुआत में इस कानून को असम के पंचायत और नगरपालिका चुनाव के लिए लागू किया गया था। इस प्रकार की व्यवस्था सर्वप्रथम राजस्थान में और फिर हरियाणा, उत्तराखंड, गुजरात और मध्य प्रदेश में भी लागू की गई थी, जिसमें पंचायत या नगरपालिका का चुनाव सिर्फ वहीं लड़ सकते थे जिनके दो बच्चे से ज्यादा नहीं थे। लेकिन अब असम राज्य सरकार ने एक कदम आगे बढ़ते हुए राज्य सरकार के अंतर्गत सरकारी नौकरियों में भी इस कानून को लागू कर दिया है। साथ ही यह भी तय किया गया कि मौजूदा सरकारी कर्मचारियों को भी दो बच्चों के मानक का पालन करना होगा, वरना नौकरी से फनकी छुट्टी हो सकती है। असम राज्य सरकार का तर्क है कि कानून लागू कराने वाले और सरकारी नीतियों को जनता तक पहुंचाने वाले पहले स्वयं में एक रोल मॉडल बने, जिससे वे अन्य के लिए एक उदाहरण पेश कर सकें।

हालांकि दुनिया के कई देशों ने दो बच्चों की नीति को लागू किया, लेकिन किसी को भी जनसंख्या नियंत्रण

करने में सफलता नहीं मिली। भारत एक पुरुष प्रधान देश है जहां लड़के की चाह में बेटियों को जन्म से पहले ही कोख में मार दिया जाता है। ऐसे में यदि इस तरह के कानूनों को जबरन लागू कराया गया, तो सभी पहले बच्चे के रूप में लड़के की ही इच्छा रखेंगे। ऐसे में आशंका है कि असुरक्षित गर्भपात को बढ़ावा मिलेगा और 'बेटी बचाओ-बेटी पढ़ाओ' जैसी योजनाओं को चोट पहुंचेगी। भारत में जहां ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में पहले से ही स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं की पहुंच अच्छी नहीं है। ऐसे में बार-बार गर्भपात की स्थिति में मातृत्व मृत्यु दर भी बढ़ेगी। इसलिए भारत में इस तरह के कानूनों की

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

आवश्यकता फिर हाल वर्तमान में महसूस नहीं होती है। आबादी नियंत्रित करने के लिए पिछड़े राज्यों में शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं को बढ़ाना जरूरी है। इसके लिए खासतौर से ग्रामीण इलाकों में परिवार नियोजन और जन-जागरूकता कार्यक्रमों को बढ़ावा देना होगा। समग्रता से इस मुद्दे को देखे तो जबरन लोगों पर इस तरह के कानूनों का थोपा जाना लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था में उचित प्रतीत नहीं होता। लेकिन जनसंख्या नियंत्रण पर असम राज्य सरकार द्वारा सरकारी कर्मचारियों को रोल मॉडल बनाने के प्रयासों की आलोचना भी नहीं की जानी चाहिए, क्योंकि यह नियम मात्र राज्य सरकार के अंतर्गत सरकारी कमर्चारियों के लिए है, आम जनता को इससे मुक्त रखा गया है।

• कुलिंदर सिंह यादव, दिल्ली

जिससे स्वास्थ जीवन चर्या को खुद चुनौती दे रहा है। ऐसे में यहां की सामाजिक भावना अन्य शहर वासियों और ग्राम वासियों के लिए कदापि आदर्श नहीं बन सकती। होना तो यह चाहिए कि दिल्ली का मतलब हर चीज का आदर्श होता, लेकिन घुट-घुट कर जीवन जीना ही आज दिल्लीवासियों की नियति होती जा रही है, तो

यह पूरे देशवासियों के लिए बदिकरमती समान है।

• मिथिलेश कुमार, भागलपुर

भविष्य की ऊर्जा

इस बात में कोई दो राय नहीं है कि आने वाले समय में वायु प्रदूषण हमारे लिए सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा बन जाएगा। इस दीपावली पर पर्यावरण को ध्यान में रखते हुए सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने महज आठ से दस बजे तक पटाखे

छोड़ने की समय सीमा तय की थी। फिर भी दीवाली के दिन प्रदूषण सभी खतरनाक पैमानों को पार कर गया। सरकार और अदालत की तरफ से इतनी जदोजहत सिर्फ इसलिए की जा रही है ताकि हवा को प्रदूषित होने से बचाया जा सके। इसके लिए हवा को प्रदृषित करने वाली चीजों पर निगरानी की जा रही है। आने वाले समय में पर्यावरण को बचाने के लिए सुरज हमारे लिए बेहद मददगार सिद्ध हो सकता है। आज वैश्विक स्तर पर बिजली उत्पादन का स्रोत हमारे लिए कोयले से चलने वाले ताप बिजली घर हैं। इसके बाद पहाड़ों को खोखला करके बनाए जाने वाले बांध है। बांध के आसपास कई किलोमीटर तक जमीन खेती के लायक नहीं रह जाती। इसका एक समाधान हमारा सूरज भी हो सकता है। यदि हम सुरज से मिलने वाली रोशनी को बिजली बनाने के काम में लें, तो सूरज न सिर्फ आने वाले समय में हमारे लिए सबसे उपयुक्त सौर उर्जा का स्रोत साबित हो सकता है, बल्कि इससे हमारे पर्यावरण को किसी तरह का नुकसान भी नहीं पहुंचने वाला।

सोलर पैनलों की सबसे बड़ी खासियत यही है कि एक बार इन्हें लगाने के बाद कई सालों तक सुरक्षित चलाया जा सकता है, वह भी बिना किसी तरह की मरम्मत के। पर्यावरण वैज्ञानिकों की मानें तो अपने देश में लद्दाख के इलाके में सबसे ज्यादा सूरज की रोशनी आती है। इसलिए वहां अन्य भागों की बजाय दस फीसदी ज्यादा बिजली बनाई जा सकती है। देश में कई इलाकें हैं जहां वर्ष भर हवाओं की गति तेज रहती है। उन इलाकों में विंड टर्बाइन लगा कर हवा से बिजली बनाई जा सकती है। तमाम राज्य सरकारें यदि अपने स्तर पर आगे आएं तो न सिर्फ ताप बिजली घरों पर निर्भरता कम होगी, बल्कि लोगों को बड़े पैमाने पर रोजगार भी उपलब्ध होगा। साथ ही प्रदुषण से भी मुक्ति मिल सकेगी।

रोहित यादव, महर्षि दयानंद विवि, रोहतक

नई दिल्ली