

Why not a states income tax?



MARGINAL UTILITY
TCA SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

Ideally, income tax should be as close to zero as possible because it's a political tax of no economic significance. But that's not going to happen. However, there's something else that can be done.

Last month I had said in this space that I would suggest a game-changing reform. So think about this: Why is income tax levied only by the Centre in India while in many other federations the constituent units also levy it?

Is there a reason which is unique to the Indian federation? Do the political conditions of 1950 still persist? Why is it not in the Concurrent List of the Constitution when so many other lesser things are in it? How can the Constitution empower states in every possible way but this?

Excellencies, I think the time has come to debate this. And the only person who can initiate the debate is the Prime Minister. After all, who has suffered more as a Chief Minister at the hands of a vindictive central government? It even led him to abolish the Planning Commission.

Not just that: Who is better at breaking set ways of thinking? Mr Modi has a strong track record on this, especially when there are immediate political gains to be made.

Moreover, he now has the strength in Parliament to push through a Constitutional Amendment that no state can possibly object to. They could stop complaining about the Centre and fashion their own economic destinies. It would be the ultimate empowering of the states.

The one caveat I have is that the states income tax should not exceed 10 per cent and the central income tax should not exceed 30 per cent. All cess and surcharges should go.

India's 'normal' tax rate — the part of income legally taken by the sovereign — has been between 40 and 55 per cent for almost 800 years. Yes. But for the most part it has been between 45 and 50 per cent.

This rate of 'extraction' is why India has remained economically weak. It simply must be lowered. It's not just governments that need money to spend. Citizens do, too.

Outmoded system

To begin with, a state income tax could be optional. Those who opt for it would lose a proportionate amount from all central devolutions. For those who don't want it, the current system could continue for as long as they don't opt in.

If there are strong political reasons, the economic reasons are even more powerful. Consider the situation now. The last Finance Commission raised the devolution to the states by 10 per cent to 42 per cent. This meant 42 per cent of all tax revenue would go to the states.

But that high number could not be reached. If it had, the Centre would have been hard put to pay even its salaries. Now it seems it wants to go back to around 33 per cent. (As a result it's become a supplicant before the Commission which is not nice.)

In any case, no one can say what the correct percentage is — 30, 35, 38, 42? Like the 'desirable' level of fiscal deficit of 3 per cent, it's an arbitrary number. And like all arbitrary things, it makes no logical sense. It's a "I think that's fair" kind of judgement.

Indeed, that semi-subjective approach is the most important reason we have been tinkering with the financial devolution levels for the last quarter of a century.

Look back at the contortions the last four Finance Commissions have performed and you will be left speechless at the sheer pointlessness of it.

Hence my much simpler suggestion: Let the states decide how much they need and how much they can raise. They will, I would bet, very quickly impose a tax on agricultural incomes.

Objections

There are two major objections to a states income tax. One relates to the weaker states and the other to administrative capacity.

The weaker states issue is one of central responsibility towards states that can't pay for themselves yet. The administrative capacity argument is about the ability of states — weak and strong — to collect tax.

Both are strong arguments but that's why we need to start a debate because if this logic were accepted, we would never have a space programme and a nuclear programme. You have to decide on the objective and then build capacity.

We are thus left with just one major economic objection: How will the economically weaker states fare? This should be the sole problem to solve.

The rest is just being argumentative.

A Thackeray contests an election

Aaditya could get his party to bargain with the BJP for the position of Deputy CM. Father Uddhav will continue as party chief. This way, the Sena will be both in the government and out of it



PLAIN POLITICS
ADITI PHADNIS

The Shiv Sena was launched in 1966. Since then, no member of the family that founded it — Bal Thackeray, his son Uddhav and his grandson, Aaditya — has ever contested an election.

That is about to change now with Aaditya being fielded as a candidate for the middle class-dominated Worli constituency in Mumbai. Both — the choice of candidate and the constituency — are important, for they tell us about the future political trajectory of the Shiv Sena.

But first, a word about the youngest Thackeray. He is a poet and photographer. His

first book of poems, *My Thoughts in White & Black*, was published in 2007. The following year, at 17, he turned lyricist and released a private album "Ummeed", a music video, with all the eight songs written by him. Not only did singers like Suresh Wadkar, Shankar Mahadevan, Kailash Kher and Sunidhi Chauhan lend their voice to the songs, but grandfather Bal Thackeray ensured its inauguration by Amitabh Bachchan (in his speech at the event, the 82-year old Bal Thackeray had a word of somewhat inexplicable advice for his grandson: "Don't drive rashly — but it isn't good to be too slow either!"). Lata Mangeshkar made it a point to visit Matoshree to congratulate the young poet for his achievement.

Soon after, Aaditya became the chief of the party's youth wing, the Yuva Sena (his gmail address includes the word "tiger"). His first political "success" was when the Yuva Sena under his leadership forced Mumbai University to withdraw Canada-based Rohinton Mistry's book *Such a Long Journey* from its syllabus. What precisely was his objection to the book? "The book is utterly racist and conveys unwarranted opinions," he told *BS* then, in an interview. "Think of yourself as a parent. How would you allow your child to study such a text? Think of yourself as a teacher or a student. How will you read that

book in the classroom? You can criticise a policy. But abusive language and things put out of context are things that cannot remain on a curriculum. Are we going to teach students racist literature or something that can get them jobs?"

That's the nub of his politics — ensuring people have jobs. This is not such a marked change from 1966 when recognising that Mumbai was offering everyone jobs but Maharashtrians, Bal Thackeray launched *Marmik*, a weekly magazine that was fashioned on the British publication *Punch* and poked fun at Gujarati Seths, south Indian clerks, Udipi hotel owners and Congress politicians among others, creating enduring stereotypes. Shiv Sena flowed from the thoughts in *Marmik* but soon it was forced to review its ideological position. To expand its base from Mumbai to embrace rapidly emerging business hubs like Kolhapur and Nagpur, it needed to show it had bigger concerns. Hindutva with a more aggressive, interventionist twist became its new creed, with opposition to cricket matches in which Pakistanis were allowed to play, marking its coming of political age.

Others — like Chhagan Bhujbal and Manohar Joshi — contested elections but not the Thackeray family.

Uddhav Thackeray was made working president and then president after his father died,

but still stayed out of electoral contests. The Sena broke into two with the smaller section siding with cousin Raj. Uddhav concentrated on defining strategy — which basically consisted of playing the role of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s loyal opposition. But he had earned his spurs by showing that the Sena was needed in rural Maharashtra and was not just an urban phenomenon backed by its dominance of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. In the 2009 Assembly elections, of a total of 44 seats, the party was able to win 26 from rural, 15 from urban and three from semi-urban constituencies. In 2014, the party's seat count rose to 63 with 34 seats in rural, 23 in urban and six in semi-urban areas.

So why is Aaditya Thackeray contesting the elections instead of managing them?

He himself has never hidden his ambition of becoming an MLA. And like many before, the party seems to think that it is better to join the government and influence it from within instead of wasting time criticising it. From available information it appears eventually Aaditya Thackeray could get his party to bargain with the BJP for the position of deputy chief minister. Uddhav will continue to be party chief. This way, the Sena will be both in the government and out of it. Can there be a sweeter spot?

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ GAUTAM KUMRA | MANAGING DIRECTOR | MCKINSEY INDIA

The man who never had a boss

Kumra tells Shyamal Majumdar why consultancy is a dream job and how luck has played a big role in his personal life and career

McKinsey has been a top draw at the placement campuses of premier business schools all over the world for the quality jobs it offers, but Gautam Kumra's motivation to join the consultancy giant had more to do with "quantity" rather than quality. He didn't have much idea about what a consultancy job was, but what he did know was that McKinsey was offering three times more than the next highest salary on offer for the batch of 1993 at IIM Ahmedabad.

"For a bureaucrat's son from a middle class background, that was a big deal," he says with a smile, as we settle down at a corner table of the near-empty Baoshuan restaurant at the rooftop of The Oberoi, New Delhi. The Chinese restaurant has been renamed (it was Taipan earlier) with a new décor and refreshed menu. Kumra is clearly not a foodie and had no preference for either the venue or any specific restaurant.

McKinsey, he says, was new to India at that time, having set up office in 1992, and very few students knew what consultancy was all about. But he almost didn't get the job — the shortlist after the interview didn't have his name and a disappointed Kumra decided he would opt for the summer job he had already been offered at Citibank. The IIM placement cell, however, advised him to wait till the evening before taking a final decision. It was an unusual advice, but it paid off as McKinsey sent a fresh list in the evening with the names of two more candidates. Kumra was one of them. He considers himself extremely lucky to have listened to the placement cell's advice as accepting the Citi offer would have meant opting out of the placement process and not being able to accept the McKinsey job.

Apart from the terrific exposure the job has given him over the past 26 years, there is one vital reason why he has remained a one-company man. "I have never had a boss. Isn't that a good enough reason to stay on in any company?" Kumra says, taking a sip of the fresh lime soda. That, he says, is the same for everybody at McKinsey. "Apart from a loose hierarchy, we are pretty much on our own. People at McKinsey can pick their own sectors, their own clients, pick their location. That's what a caring meritocracy is all about. For example, I can work from anywhere in the world. Which

company CEO has this kind of freedom? In any case, no boss has ever breathed down my neck," he adds.

No boss perhaps needed to do that, as Kumra must have delivered results hugely — a reason why he became a partner within six years (a rarity those days) and steadily rose up the ladder to become one of the youngest managing partners at the India office. What has helped keep him going is his belief in the Vedanta philosophy that talks about doing things out of "mindfulness and awareness".

Kumra wants to get the ordering of food out of the way and accepts the steward's suggestion for a "dimsum lunch" which has a fixed menu — an assortment of dimsums, soup, noodles, fried rice and two chicken dishes. We share the spread; it proves quite a mouthful.

He may be a firm believer in luck playing a critical role in his life and gives several examples of that from his career, but the McKinsey boss, who makes time for a class on *Bhagavad Gita* every Sunday, surely follows at least one advice of Lord Krishna — "never cease to do thy work". So while the boss-less existence is a dream, it has also meant incredibly hard work and back-breaking travelling. He has already been to more than 50 countries ("after a point of time, every city started looking the same") and has hardly stayed at home for a full week.

Such hard work meant not being able to meet too many women (courtesy the skewed male-female ratio at McKinsey at that time — something, he says, has been corrected to a great extent now), but Kumra says luck made sure he didn't have to wait for too long. He is still excited enough to recount the story: He was busy at work on a New Year's eve when a friend dragged him out of office to a small get-together where he happened to meet Sujata Makkar, who worked at Citibank. That "lucky" meeting led to a few more and they got married at the age of 25. The couple has two children — son is studying in the US and daughter in the UK.

Kumra keeps bringing back the "luck factor" in his life. This played an important role in getting into IIM-A as well. Though he got scholarships from many US universities after completing his engineering from Indian



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Institute of Technology, Delhi, he didn't want to do research and opted for management education. He got interview calls from all the three top IIMs, but wasn't shortlisted by Bangalore and Calcutta. Ahmedabad, however, selected him. "This was unusual. I don't know how this happened, but luck surely had

a role in this as well," he says.

People like him seem to have more than 24 hours a day. In the midst of his super-busy schedule, he still has enough time for the McKinsey Leadership Institute (MLI) of which he is a founder, and for convening the CEO Bower Forum in Asia. Both these forums provide a platform for peer-learning amongst CEOs. Indian companies have a huge shortage of leaders but don't review the leadership pipeline often enough, he says. At the Bower forum, the idea is to bring a few CEOs together so that they can engage with their peers in a confidential setting. The purpose is to have deep-dive discussions on challenges specific to their roles, and even personal issues. One of the insights from this leadership development work is that while a CEO learns from his own experience, they need to learn from the experience of others who have the experience of having been there and done that.

The steward comes with dessert but Kumra skips it, as he is in a hurry. One of the main reasons he has stuck on to a consultant's job is because it involves helping companies in varied fields make the transition from being good to great. "A lot of consultants do shift to a CEO's job after some time because he can control the execution of a plan. We don't enjoy that power. But the range of experience that we have and the value addition we bring in is simply unmatched," Kumra says. He proceeds to give examples of the wide variety of companies he has worked with and the difference he has made in each of them.

At the end of the day, Kumra says, the only person who matters in any company is the chief executive officer. If he is convinced about the benefits a consultant will bring in, the rest is easy. The CEO has to be able to articulate a transformation "story" — a big-picture ambition that captures the imagination internally.

He would love to write a book on leadership (what else?) once he hangs up his boots, but that obviously would have to wait as he wants to continue in this "fantastic" job for at least five years. The reason is simple: The daily job of a consultant may not be glamorous to the outside world, but it's quite fulfilling when you step back and realise what you have accomplished, the relationships you have formed, what you have learned, and the assistance you have hopefully provided.

His book is already in the works, it seems — at least in his mind.

It's almost two hours since we started our conversation, and Kumra signals he has to rush off to his next meeting in some other corner of the same hotel.

Lessons from a slum clean-up



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
GEETANJALI KRISHNA

Six months ago, Govardhanpurwa, a slum in Kanpur city, was a festering dump. Flies and other vectors abounded. Waterborne diseases were rampant. The story of how all this changed affirms something I've suspected for a while: Developing community ties has far-reaching and often unexpected social gains. This is especially true in urban slums, which aren't as well-knit as villages that are still bound in a web of traditional relationships. Slum dwellers will often tell you that they're too busy fighting for everyday survival to develop neighbourly ties. Govardhanpurwa was no different until WaterAid India and their field partner

Shramik Bharti set up a group of six locals to operate a water pump twice a day and manage their own water supply.

"During these meetings, I met Raju Valmiki," said Raja Ram. "We realised we'd played together as children, lived a stone's throw away and still didn't know each other at all," he added. Perhaps working together to successfully resolve their water supply issue made the men aware of the power of collective action. During one of their water meetings, they digressed from the issue at hand to talk about the filth in their slum that was exacerbated by the lack of a door-to-door garbage collection service. "It seemed ironic that a neighbourhood inhabited by Dalits who cleaned other people's homes and streets didn't have anyone to pick their own waste," said Valmiki, a burly 45-year-old in a bright red shirt. "When the group asked me to start a paid waste collection service here, I jumped at the idea," he added.

Since November 2018, Valmiki has been taking his collection cart issued by the municipality to the 50 households in Govardhanpurwa. "I segregate the waste, sell whatever can be recycled to the local kabadiwala and throw the rest in the municipality dump," said he. Every day, he is able to sell recyclables for ₹10-20. "This has become my pocket money," he

grins. Valmiki charges every household he services ₹30 per month. He's happy to have the extra income. "I earn about ₹6,500 sweeping people's homes," he says adding, "but the ₹1,500 I earn from cleaning up my own neighbourhood seems much more precious."

Valmiki, Ram and their water committee friends now want to compost the wet waste. Ram says the compost could be used to develop small vegetable patches within the slum. His wife had planted sponge gourd in an unused bucket last year and it gave them a good supply of green vegetables he might not have been able to afford. "Though we were supposed to simply manage the water pump, we now want to take up other projects to make our slum a better place," he says.

Today, thanks to the group's initiative, Govardhanpurwa has clean drains, spotless alleys and dustbins outside every home. "Everyone is appreciative of how nice our neighbourhood looks now," says Valmiki. "And this gives me hope that things might get better as time goes." It would be simplistic to attribute this transformation entirely to the formation of the water management committee in Govardhanpurwa, but one cannot deny that much of this transformation occurred only after a couple of neighbours became friends.

You are what you flaunt



PEOPLE LIKE US
KISHORE SINGH

I used to think my son had better sense than most but in recent months he is showing signs of turning into a vulgarian. Ever since international luxury brands found a toehold in India, they have been knocking at the doors of those like us who have proved immune to their blandishments — or so I thought. But, now, I see my son sporting a flashy Gucci buckle on his belt that he wears to work at the High Court. The Apple wristwatch, a gift from his bride, he never takes off, though there is little that is appealing about its face or form; as for its function, I am no expert on such matters,

but it seems odd to see my son address his wrist instead of making conversation like all of us. His shirts bear logos at the pocket and cuff that I do not recognise, but they seem no better, or worse, than the rest of my humbler wardrobe.

When the downpour this week caught everyone by surprise, it also ruined my daughter's Coach shoes that she had worn to work. The damp has caused mold and fungus. Nor have her various Bottega Veneta, Longchamp or Michael Kors bags improved from their frequent commuting on the metro. But I have been banned from making remarks about her propensity to acquire more bags, such observations being deemed too old-worldly for a daughter who claims to earn her own keep.

My son's bride is a poster girl for brands but what she loves most of all is dressing up for parties. She'd quit working, if she could, to spend the day modelling her own outfits, many of which require large boxes in which to store them. Now that the festive season is here, she's taken to airing them more frequently. In the car, should we be travelling together, she commands most space to avoid crushing her outfit, while the rest of us are squashed into a corner.

The children have tried to "improve" me too. I'm routinely gifted T-shirts that I hardly wear, not least because their buttons come off, the stitching unravels, or the washing lady discolors them with bleach just as irreverently as any other homegrown brand. My daughter gave me a Tod's belt that I was forced to wear when the previous one gave way. Only, if I wear the belt with black trousers, my son says it is brown; if I wear it with brown pants, my daughter says it is black. I think it is Tod's way of making its customers buy more belts in shades varying between black and brown, but I'm sticking to the one I have even though my colleagues in office wonder why I fail to match the colour of my belt with the colour of my shoes.

From clothes to house furnishings is but a small step. If you are what you eat, then eating off Versace dinner plates is tres-mode. A lady we know customises linen but her bedsheet costs more than my chauffeur's salary. My daughter-in-law would like nothing more than to emulate her aunt who has Louis Vuitton clothes bins in her bathroom. We got her a willow one instead but I don't think she likes it very much. Why else would she leave it outside her bedroom door every night?

No virtue in stipulating 3%

The time may have come to bid goodbye to the law on fiscal responsibility, because it is doing more harm than good. No deficit target set under the law has been met in any year, except perhaps once in 2007-08. Target years for reaching the desired fiscal deficit (3 per cent of gross domestic product) have been pushed back constantly, or "paused". The compounding problem is that, when finance ministers have been unable to get even close to the targets, they have fudged the books and pushed the fiscal burden on to hapless public-sector entities, whose treasuries have been raided in more ways than one in the effort to close the reported gap in the government's numbers. One result is that oil companies that were once cash-rich are left with little cash of their own to invest.

Other tactics to show adherence to targets under the fiscal responsibility law have included not paying bills (note the minister's recent instruction that overdue payments to small and medium enterprises should be made immediately — which implicitly leaves out the rest though their money too is overdue). Alternatively, tax officials under pressure to deliver revenue numbers have coerced companies into paying up excess tax in the closing month of the year, on the promise of a refund early in the next year. And yet, despite such tactics, the deficit numbers have remained stubbornly out of line. Anyone in doubt about the real picture should read what the Comptroller and Auditor General told the Finance Commission: That the Central deficit was not 3.46 per cent in 2017-18 as Parliament has been told, but a much higher 5.85 per cent.

Why do we make finance ministers go into such contortions, to tell us that near-6 per cent is 3.5 per cent? Why not encourage more open and full accounting so that the country knows the real picture? Under-reporting the real deficit encourages key people in governments to believe that they can afford to spend more, when in reality they don't have that cushion. Correctly reported numbers, with their warning lights flashing, would (hopefully) encourage a greater sense of fiscal responsibility. If nothing else, private-sector economists, rating agencies, and the like who today parrot the government's version of the deficit would tune into a very different reality — and build market pressure for fiscal correction.

Dispensing with the fiscal responsibility law by itself is not enough, for fudging went on even before such a law existed. Scrapping the law has to be combined with other changes to make fudging difficult. One is to move away from the current, archaic system of cash accounting that most countries have given up. Cash accounting leaves out of the books the expenditure that the government has undertaken but not yet paid for (e.g. payments to infrastructure companies for work done on roads, bridges, and the like). Most companies account in their books for the money owed to creditors; the government does not, and gets away with it by following the cash-accounting method. The other, complementary step would be to provide a fuller account of public-sector borrowings. This would bring into the open the expenditure that the government currently pushes on to entities it owns — like the Food Corporation, which has borrowed from small-savings funds to pay for the food subsidy that should have been funded through the Budget.

Even if these changes don't deliver credible budgeting, there is no great virtue in stipulating that 3 per cent is the desired level of fiscal deficit at the Centre. As TCA Srinivasa-Raghavan has argued more than once in these pages, that number was simply copied from the European figure, although the economic context for India is radically different from that in Europe. It is entirely plausible, for instance, that the Indian system with its faster economic growth rate can cope quite well on all the usual macro-economic indicators with a higher deficit — even if not one that is quite as high as what exists now. Such questions cannot begin to get addressed in a world of real numbers till everyone knows the truth about the deficit.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



Money has lost its morale

The economic crisis can be fixed only with genuine, brave reform. If this Modi govt can't do it, it will confirm fears that it has lost its mojo

Isn't an expression our political class likes to use often, but there is talk every now and then to unleash the animal spirits of Indian entrepreneurship. Manmohan Singh and later Jaswant Singh (as Atal Bihari Vajpayee's finance minister) are the only leaders we'd recall having appealed to these instincts from corporate India. This Modi government too has tried lately to do so, in its own words.

In his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi did some reaching out to India's "wealth creators". He said his government respected them and acknowledged that they also made an essential contribution to nation-building.

It was among the strongest endorsements of private enterprise by any Indian prime minister from the Red Fort. This has been followed by much other corrective action: Big corporate tax cuts, capital gains tax changes, and the reversal of that hare-brained idea to criminalise what some inspector might see as non-compliance by a company of its obligation to spend 2 per cent of its profits "correctly" on Corporate Social Responsibility.

Similarly, the egregious tax hit on capital gains of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) was also withdrawn. For a risk-loving government that never reversed a decision once taken, never blinked once it had decided to jump out of the back of the plane, without even bothering to check the parachute, these retreats were a new experience.

No one in the government would admit to it, but it's made to realise for the first time that there was something even the incredible personal popularity of the prime minister and the clout of his government riding its second majority cannot control: The markets. The judiciary, media, Election Commission, even Pakistan can all be dealt with by a government of such power en passant. But the market isn't an animal political power can tame.

For the past many weeks now, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been reaching out to the business community. She has unravelled some of the most problematic parts of her Budget on a press

conference-by-press conference basis. The finance secretary, who was probably key to the drafting of this "bad news" Budget, was moved out and has since sought premature retirement. Since the Budget, the RBI has carried out two quick rate cuts and generally spoken what the financial press describes as "dovish" language.

Yet, there is little improvement in the mood, no uptick. No upbeat, smiling faces even at the World Economic Forum's India Economic Summit. Animal spirits we are talking about? They are visible for sure. Just that the animal isn't what you wish it to be: A crouching tiger with its tail up. It is more like an abandoned puppy cowering with its tail between its legs.

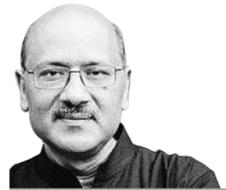
If you don't like this metaphor, or abhor dogs, I can fall back on something more conventional, like a demoralised army. You can give one the best weapons, but if the generals are already defeated in their mind, they can't rally their troops into battle, forget winning a war.

This, the complete loss of morale — even much self-esteem — is the reason this flood of good news that the government has been unleashing, almost every Friday, is going down the drain. The corporate tax break was a straight ₹1.45 trillion impetus to Indian business. It led to a couple of days' rally on the markets. Since then, however, the larger reality has returned.

From the post-tax cut peak on September 24, companies just on the BSE's Sensex have lost a fresh ₹2.53 trillion. Other reversals and reforms,

including interest rate cuts, have vanished in the same spate of pessimism. The markets are not particularly in good odour globally in the post-Piketty world. But you have to acknowledge that however wayward, imperfect, or unequal they may be, they aren't afraid of speaking truth to power. India's markets are fearlessly doing what many in the greater and more allowed institutions like the media and even the judiciary are no longer willing to do: Give Modi government the bad news.

Last quarter's growth rate of 5 per cent looked a



NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

Gandhi rewound and revised



AL FRESCO

SUNIL SETHI

In the waves of Gandhi worship that have engulfed us on his 150th birth anniversary, few have paused to consider what the Father of the Nation and Apostle of Non-Violence might have made of the celebrations and commemorations as birthday presents — or how and where he might have chosen to spend October 2?

Apart from the usual minting of coins and stamps, crocodile queues of schoolchildren hustled to *samadhis*, walkathons, and garbage clearing by politicians and release of prisoners, some of the memorialising is far-fetched. For instance, the BJP announced a four-month Gandhi marathon till his death

anniversary on January 30 next year, with each MP expected to cover 150 km in 15 days, and collectively, 500,000 km. Luckily, no log book will be kept.

As political agitprop or art exhibit, Gandhi-mania also hit the high spots globally. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar presented a Gandhi bust to US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi while a Spanish manufacturer of luxury porcelain was retailing Gandhi figures online. At one of the world's most prestigious art shows, the Venice Biennale, Gandhi-inspired artworks are the theme at the 6,000 square foot India Pavilion. Interspersed with Nandalal Bose's panels commissioned by Gandhi for the Haripura Congress session in 1938 are contemporary installations including a mural of wooden cloths by G R Iranna, glass cabinets filled with broken limbs by Atul Dodiya (whose forbears come from Porbandar), and Jitish Kallat's video projection of a letter written by Gandhi to Hitler.

Repackaging and shape-shifting Gandhi as a totem of realpolitik, diplomatic nicety, and *avant garde* tradeoff is one thing — revising him

ideologically is another. As fellow Gujarati and chief flag-waver of the Gandhi legacy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exertions on October 2 were unparalleled. Between visits to Sabarmati Ashram and Raj Ghat, a flurry of tweets flowed, declaring rural India defecation-free (and in the process employing 7.5 million people) and also eradicating the single use of plastic by 2022.

Unquestionably, Mr Modi's Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and toilet-building venture have brought hygiene and sanitation into sharp national focus. But Gandhi's intent and practice on bodily hygiene and latrine-cleaning were quite different. At Sevagram in Wardha, he not only insisted that ashramites clean the toilets themselves but he would "trudge along the tracks sweeping up the excrement that the villagers had left around like dogs, even by the well". It was his way of teaching villagers the lesson he most wanted them to learn — "that human and animal filth was the main cause of disease throughout the land". But he toiled at turning the waste into farm compost, not an employment opportunity.

Critics of SBM have noted that

millions of toilets alone cannot eradicate waste, one reason the plague of human scavenging persists. Last month the Supreme Court hit out at governments on the subject: "In no country are people sent to jail for scavenging to die. Every month four to five persons are losing their lives in manual scavenging."

Reduced 150 years later to a composite of pamphlets and porcelain dolls, Gandhi is often a challenging and contradictory figure. Although personally frugal in the extreme — an upturned Lifebuoy soap-crate served as his desk, no stub of pencil was ever thrown away — he needed, and courted, the support of moneyed men to promote his causes. The Sarabha and Birlas were at his feet. Later G D Birla said, "He was certainly a *bania*... He sent me detailed accounts of everything he spent or was spent for him... but he had no business sense... I never agreed with his notions on economics. Gandhiji believed in a medieval economic system... but he was hallucinating."

Despite his many oddities such as bodily tests of serial, dietary privations or pushing his homegrown remedies on all and sundry (he sent pots of curd to Sir Stafford Cripps daily when he developed stomach trouble in Delhi), he remained pas-

sionately engaged in championing two ideas till his last breath: Hindu-Muslim unity and upholding the rights of the marginalised. This is the polar opposite of the divisive politics that has gripped the country today.

In October 1946, despite dire warnings that he should not venture there, he insisted on going to Noakhali, a Muslim-majority rural district (now in Bangladesh) where the communal bloodletting of Partition was severe. "I am prepared for any eventuality," he wrote — prophetically it turned out — to a cousin. "Do or Die" was to be put to the test here. 'Do' here means Hindus and Mussalmans should live to together in peace and amity. Otherwise, I should die in the attempt."

Were he around today, the unconstructed Gandhi would probably have been repulsed, and perhaps a little amused (for he had a sense of humour), at the plethora of feel-good promotions floated in his name. But of where he would have preferred to spend his birthday there is little doubt. He could have only been in one of two places: in Assam and Bengal to assure Muslims under threat of losing their citizenship — or in Kashmir to bring succour to the prevailing bitterness in the Valley.

championed, but in a framework that is more relevant today. For a gangster who only understood October 2 to be a Dry Day, Gandhigiri went on to take on a new meaning as he addressed and combated his life situations in conversations with a Gandhi only he could see and converse with. The gangster and Gandhi together helped rebrand The Mahatma by simplifying his teachings and showing every-one how the Father of the Nation is still relevant and can make a real difference in our daily lives.

Brand Gandhi is today almost ubiquitous and universally well known. But Gandhism, his philosophy and his credo are largely forgotten. Today, it is Gandhigiri, the popicon avatar of the legend that is the most potent manifestation of both the man and his teachings. Send roses, not spread hate, a la *Munnaabhai*. Wear *khadi*. It has swag. Even The Complete Man is tom-tomming it. Brand Gandhi is transforming. Reforming and reorienting itself for the next 150 years. Slowly, but surely. Slowly, but significantly. Slowly, but sagaciously.

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Is it Gandhi, Gandhism or Gandhigiri?



YES, BUT...

SANDEEP GOYAL

Gandhi. *Bapu*. The Mahatma. The Father of the Nation. When one thinks of him, the image that comes most readily to mind is that of a benign, fragile old man clad in a loincloth, spinning *khadi* on a *charkha*. The mention of Gandhi also evokes the imagery of his three monkeys sitting together... one covering his eyes, one covering his ears and the last covering his mouth, representing the proverb "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil."

But the Mahatma is actually the amalgam of many more parts, concepts and principles, that range

from non-violence or *ahimsa* to *satya* the truth; from *swadeshi* self-sufficiency to non-cooperation and civil disobedience expressed as *satyagraha*; from self-rule *swaraj* to *sarvodaya*, the economic model meant for the greatest good of the greatest numbers; to the abolition of untouchability and the nomenclaturising of *dalits* as *harijans*; from fasts for self purification to hunger strikes for political protest; from the 250 miles Dandi Salt March in 1930 to the Quit India movement in 1942; from *ram-rajya* to *brahmacharya*, Gandhi was and remains a human brand far more evolved and far more layered than any other during his time, and ever since.

As the nation celebrates his 150th birthday, Gandhi despite having been assassinated more than 70 years ago, is still everywhere... He is on our currency notes, reminding us day in and day out that he is part of us and our daily lives; he has a major road or a colony named after him in almost every major town and city; every political party and every leader swears by him and his ideals.

Mont Blanc launched a ₹14 lakh fountain pen commemorating him. Apple created an ad around him 20 years back. And the 1982 Richard Attenborough epic, *Gandhi*, is one of the most watched biopics ever produced. Gandhi is an evergreen brand. A brand that continues to grow despite the man himself having left our midst so long ago.

Legends invariably give birth to one or another "ism". But as M M Sankhdher wrote in his political tome, "Gandhism is not a systematic position in metaphysics or in political philosophy. Rather, it is a political creed, an economic doctrine, a religious outlook, a moral precept, and especially, a humanitarian worldview. It is an effort not to systematise wisdom but to transform society and is based on an undying faith in the goodness of human nature." But Gandhi himself repudiated the very thought and notion of "Gandhism" saying, "There is no such thing as 'Gandhism', and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have sim-

shocker, but only to the innocent. Anybody keeping track of the economy would have expected this. It is difficult to see it improving anytime soon unless something drastic is done. What that can be, no one knows right now. Because if they did, at least among the circles where our fate is decided, the RBI would not have cut this year's growth forecast to 6.1 per cent from 6.9.

Entrepreneurship is driven not so much by profits or tax cuts today, but by optimism for tomorrow. That has been declining, especially since the first Modi government broke its own economic momentum with demonetisation.

Businesses are no different from ordinary people and families. When they see a bleak future, they fold all fresh incomes, savings, and bonanzas like the recent tax cuts into the family's savings for when times get worse. It is only if they are upbeat that they invest in enterprise, and take risks.

Again, companies' capital expenditure data from CMIE will tell you the story. It was ₹3.03 trillion in the quarter ended December 2018, came down to ₹2.66 trillion by March this year, and then to a mere ₹84,000 crore and ₹99,000 crore in subsequent quarters. Again, the CMIE data shows the latest quarter's sales growth for all companies has gone marginally in the negative to -1 per cent. The last time this happened was in the worst quarter of the Lehman crisis in 2008. This is not a slowdown. This is a rout.

You can cut and dice this data any which way, and the story is the same. All economic indicators, with no exception, are down and have been so for some time. You can blame some of it on the global environment. But that is only a small part. The roots of the problem are here.

When almost all, including those like Mukesh Ambani, are sitting on cash, or de-leveraging and de-risking, repaying their loans and waiting, it is unfair to expect the rest to begin investing. If you ask India's finest business leaders why, they now tell you, in whispers of course, that the mood has never been so grim after 1991, and their self-esteem this low.

This comes not just with the weaponisation of tax authorities, with exaggerated and unfettered new powers of raids or arrest, but also the treatment of bad loans. If everyone, from an ordinary individual borrower to a sincere entrepreneur genuinely struggling in a bad business cycle and a loan-thief are treated with equal suspicion and disdain, it leaves no incentive for entrepreneurs to borrow and for bankers to lend.

All business involves risk, a prominent and respected corporate leader tells me, but if I think even a 30-day delay in the repayment of my borrowing will have the bank publishing my name on the list of defaulters and referring me to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for bankruptcy, why would I risk it? "If a person falls sick, do you send him to the hospital or the *shamshan ghat*? This bankruptcy process under the latest RBI rules is the last rites of Indian entrepreneurship and a populist and revenge-seeking state has built us this *shamshan ghat* called NCLT."

The crisis in the economy is now beyond the pale of tax cuts, incentives, pep-talk, and promises. Some of these might work, but only fleetingly, like a shot of steroid or insulin. India's economy now needs some genuine, brave reform. Maybe beginning with a big and genuine privatisation of PSUs. If a Modi government won't do so even in its sixth year, it will only vindicate those who believe it has lost its reform mojo and is just an election-winning machine where growth is a desirable objective, but not essential.

By Special Arrangement with ThePrint

Cricket vs climate change

EYE CULTURE

SUHIT K SEN

A time when the potentially disastrous impacts of climate change, especially its subset global warming, are becoming all the clearer with every passing day, it is alarming to note that climate change-denying fundamentalists are not only hunkering down, they are also coming to power in many countries. US President Donald Trump leads the pack.

Given this situation, it is extremely heartening to see a sports person of great eminence batting for actions against the kind of ongoing changes to the climate that could literally destroy human civilisation as we know it. Ian Chappell, the all-time Australian great, both as batsman and captain, has signposted the dangers climate change poses to humanity and, especially, the longest format of the game of cricket in a cogently argued opinion piece in ESPNcricinfo, the cricket website.

Chappell says that global warming will create weather conditions that will jeopardise players' (and spectators' and umpires', though Chappell didn't mention them) health in the short term by making them more vulnerable to heat stroke and, in the long term, to skin cancer, a condition he has battled for a long time.

It's not just a question of health, Chappell pointed out. It's also a question of the use of water. A lot of it is needed to prepare and maintain cricket pitches. In water-stressed cities, and Chappell points to the example of Cape Town, where water had to be rationed a few years ago, such non-essential use of water could become difficult in future.

Chappell quotes from a report, "Game Changer", prepared by the Climate Coalition in 2018, which says that "of all the major pitch sports, cricket will be the hardest hit by climate change". One supposes both because of its water-intensity and the long hours many people directly or indirectly involved have to spend out in the open.

Part of this challenge posed to the game has already been met by altering traditional schedules. T20 cricket is played almost entirely after sundown, while significant parts of one-day internationals are played under lights. But Test cricket continues to be played predominantly in natural light, though the beginnings have been made for playing them partially after sunset. "It's no wonder day-night matches are considered crucial to Test cricket's future," Chappell writes. Commercial considerations, in the shape of attracting people to the ground after working hours, doubtless play a major role in this ongoing recalibration.

While Chappell's concerns are spot

on, the shift to day-night schedules is not a panacea. Health concerns will be met somewhat, but not other concerns. The game will remain water-intensive and water-stressed cities may well find it difficult to sustain cricket. Also, day-night matches require the consumption of a huge amount of electricity. In India around 65 per cent of electricity is produced thermally. The massive volumes of greenhouse gases emitted as a result of this — worldwide as well, of course — are a significant contributor to global warming and climate change.

Chappell does not, however, confine himself to the impact of climate change on cricket. His comments take in a much wider swathe of concerns when he writes, "... any disastrous effects on a sport will pale into insignificance when compared with the potential of climate change to inflict devastation on the planet". Chappell specifically flags the rise in sea levels and increasing incidence of "ferocious weather events like devastating tornadoes and cyclones".

It is unfortunate that over a quarter of a century since climate change was first flagged multilaterally as one of the key threats to human survival, at the environment conference in Rio de Janeiro, progress on reducing carbon emissions has been agonisingly slow. North America, especially the US, has historically been averse to admitting that such a thing as climate change exists, in the first place. After the Rio conference, then US President George Bush had infamously said that the American way of life was not up for negotiation.

Almost a quarter of a century later, the US first signed up to a global pact on combating climate change when then US President Barack Obama signed the Paris Agreement. In 2017, the US president decided to withdraw from it. It is abundantly clear that without the participation of the US, efforts to combat climate change and mitigate its baneful effects will not be effective.

Australia's commitment to fighting climate change has hardly been stellar, either. It was one of the few countries to hold out against ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, the first multilateral agreement on fighting climate change drawn up in the wake of the Rio conference and the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, effectively superseded by the Paris Agreement, though it finally signed up to the international effort to reduce emissions.

Perhaps that kind of thing was at the back of Chappell's mind when he wrote, "The effects on climate change... and the solutions rely on decisive action being taken by some annoyingly reticent politicians". Obstructive, he may as well have added.

Opinion

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi

Everybody knows what is going on in the country. It's not a secret. In fact the whole world knows it. We are moving into an authoritarian state. It's pretty clear

RBI cuts rates but makes it clear a revival will take time

Lending rates stay high despite the repo-cuts but, in any case, the slowing economy is keeping borrowers away

FRIDAY'S CUT in the repo rate of 25 basis points, taking it to 5.15%, which is the lowest in nine years, is unlikely to move the needle on the demand for loans by either companies or individuals. To be sure, banks will drop their loan rates since many have pegged these to the repo. However, it is not high interest rates that are keeping borrowers away; it is the sharply slowing economy—acknowledged by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its drastic cut in the GDP forecast for 2019-20 to 6.1%—and the fear of job losses and stagnant incomes. There are those who believe that a 40-basis-point cut in the repo would have prompted banks to lower loan rates meaningfully and stimulate demand. That, again, seems unlikely. The fact is banks are understandably cautious about lending to companies whose balance sheets are weak; not a day passes without the ratings agencies downgrading one company or another. There is little demand from A-grade companies given how working capital cycles have tightened, and how there is no rush, whatsoever, to add fresh capacity. This is borne out by the fact that although liquidity in the banking system has been in abundant surplus for more than three months now—around ₹2 lakh crore—and loan rates have come off by about 30-35 basis points, non-food credit growth has fallen to sub-10% and is running at two-year lows. So, while Governor Shaktikanta Das has promised to stay accommodative till growth revives, and he is likely to keep his promise since inflation is expected to stay benign and well within the MPC's target of 4%, it can help only at the margin.

Indeed, the accommodative stance appears to be aimed at addressing the elevated term-premium. As bond experts have been pointing out, the term-premium remains high primarily because of concerns that the fiscal deficit will slip, owing to a shortfall in tax collections; the recent shortfall in GST collections has exacerbated these concerns. On Friday, the yield on the benchmark jumped 8 basis points to close at 6.689%. With the government failing to reduce the interest rates on small savings schemes, the term-premium could remain elevated for some more time. Also, even though there isn't much borrowing taking place, borrowing rates appear to be stuck at high levels. Additionally, credit spreads have actually been widening. Economists point out that not only is the term-premium too high, the real repo rate is also very high despite Friday's cut. While the Governor has made it clear that OMOs will be used to add liquidity, the sharply lower GDP forecast is a sign RBI will bat for growth. By highlighting the widening output gap, the MPC is signalling to the bond markets that the rate cut cycle hasn't ended, but the promise of another cut—or even two in the next few months—doesn't seem to have eased its concerns. The other factor that is keeping credit spreads high is, of course, the stress in the NBFC sector, and also in some banks. While access to affordable credit is necessary for an economic recovery, a sustained uptick would require the government to usher in serious structural reforms including easier land and labour laws, friendly and reliable regulations, and so on.

Allow IITs to build corpuses

Seeking alumni contributions alone won't meet funding needs

THE IIT COUNCIL, the apex policy-making body for the Indian Institutes of Technology, has come up with a raft of reforms that, if implemented in the right earnest, can significantly boost the institutes' international reckoning. Though the IITs enjoy a solid reputation in India and abroad—many C-suite figures in top MNCs are alumni—the fact is that neither the IITs nor any other Indian university/higher education institution made it to the top-300 of the Times Higher Education (THE) World University rankings.

The IIT Council has battled for linking teachers' continued employment to their performance—against the earlier system of largely inducting permanent faculty members—and has called for five-year contracts for teachers going forward, which means that hiring and firing will get much easier. Given one of the reasons for Indian universities not figuring in the many lists of top universities worldwide is poor teacher quality, the IITs moving towards teacher-assessment is a welcome move. Setting clear accountability standards, including in R&D contribution, should help achieve and maintain high teacher quality. According to Clarivate Analytics, only 10 Indians figure among the world's top 1% highly-cited researchers in two fields. So, a model where teacher performance is made paramount could also mean more quality research, if teacher assessment is designed to encourage this. But, unless the IITs get true autonomy—they remain shackled to fulfilling the government's inclusion goals through policies like student and faculty reservation—teacher assessment won't make a meaningful difference. Appealing to alumni to contribute 1% of their earnings is another proposal that the Council has adopted. This would no doubt mean some additional funds. But, while Indian universities have produced many globally acclaimed industry leaders, alumni giving back remains a sore spot—for instance, IIT Madras raised just ₹55 crore from alumni contributions in FY17 while MIT, which draws much lower contribution and endowments than, say, a Harvard, saw ₹800 crore come in from its alumni that year. The IITs need to set up corpuses, like top universities abroad do. Indeed, in 2016, the total endowment (corpus fund) wealth of American universities was estimated to be over \$535 billion, with the top 25 universities holding nearly 52% of it. Large corpuses, built from alumni and industry donations, are invested to ensure some degree of financial security for universities. The government should facilitate corpus building, instead of being critical of it like it was when IIMs—after getting partial autonomy—did this. Also, the IITs would be much better served if they had the independence to fix fees to have well-off students cross-subsidise those from weak economic backgrounds. A cut from the monetisation of innovations and businesses nurtured using IIT facilities would also help.

TwitterBLEEPS

Censorship by Twitter, often resulting from govt requests, makes it seem like a publisher while it calls itself a platform

SOcial media in India has largely been left free of censorship so far. However, things could be changing fast. *The Hindu* reports that government demands for content removal from Twitter were the fourth highest in the world between June and December 2018. The government made 657 legal demands for content removal in this time, flagging 2,228 Twitter accounts—of these, 95 accounts were suspended and 114 tweets were withheld. While the absolute numbers may seem small, they represent a 100-fold growth from the same period five years ago. Although a recurrent phenomenon, social media censorship is now being carried out with unprecedented opacity. For instance, while the standard procedure on receiving a demand for blocking an account or deleting a tweet is to send an email notice to the affected user, Twitter said that it does not send any such notification if it is so asked by the party requesting the withdrawal—the company did not specify if the Indian government had ever prohibited it from doing so. Moreover, notifications, when provided, often don't specify the violation the user is accused of, or even who the plaintiff is. Shadow-banning, or restricting the visibility of a specific user or their post, is also part of Twitter's opaque censorship practices.

While Twitter and other social media have claimed to be platforms—earlier this year, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey had said, “people see Twitter as a public square,” and therefore they have expectations that they would have of a public square—such censorship is exercised by publishers. In which case, Twitter becomes liable for all that is published on it. Given how the lack of clarity allows both governments and Twitter to get away with arbitrary restrictions on fundamental freedoms, there is a need to get regulation right.

● CHLOROPHILE
FROM DEVELOPING VARIETIES THAT DON'T NEED FLOODING OF FIELDS TO ENRICHING THE GRAIN'S NUTRIENT CONTENT, IRRI IS MAKING RICE A WONDER CROP

Reaping riches from rice research

REMEMBER MY grandmother, a widowed smallholder farmer, sowing 'Ayarate', a newly-introduced rice variety that was the talk of her village. It was the late 1960s, or early 1970s. IR8 was a semi-dwarf, and high-yielding variety, which the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) released in November 1966. The following year, Nekkanti Subba Rao, a progressive Andhra farmer tested it in his farm, and supervised a large-scale field demonstration at the behest of the government. From those seeds came the Green Revolution in rice in India.

For a rice-eater like me, visiting IRRI, near Manila, in the Philippines, was like a pilgrimage. The scientists were engaged in producing more rice to feed a rising global population, and new converts to rice from Africa. They are also producing better rice that addressed micronutrient deficiencies—Vitamin A, zinc, and iron—with conventional breeding, if possible, and genetic engineering, if necessary. More and better quality rice had to be obtained from plants that are resilient to climate stresses, and use fewer resources like water.

“There is a wrong perception that rice needs a lot of water,” IRRI says, defending a crop that is indicted for groundwater depletion in north-western states like Punjab, where it is grown mainly for consumption in other states. Punjab contributes in excess of 80% of its rice production to the central public distribution pool. It grows rice on three million hectares. That very much coincides with the area irrigated by its tube wells—2.94 million hectares. The pumping out of water in excess of the recharge rate has resulted in groundwater depletion in 70% of central Punjab, the state's Economic Survey says.

“The conventional practice of rice production is bundled with the perception that rice needs to be flooded for most of the time.” Rice can survive in anaerobic conditions because a specific type of cells pass on oxygen to roots, IRRI said, in response to emailed questions sent after recorded presentations of its scientists, and interviews were accidentally lost. The visit to IRRI was part of a week-long programme on the status of genetic engineering of crops in East and South Asia, to which CropLife Asia, an industry

VIVIAN FERNANDES
Blogs at smartindianagriculture.com
Views are personal



body, had invited me at its expense.

Should groundwater use for cultivation of rice be discouraged? If the aquifers are well-connected, and rechargeable, pumping of groundwater is one of the good approaches to capturing water from rain and rivers, which otherwise ends up in the sea. But, how much water can be pumped out? According to IRRI, that depends on the type of aquifer, and the recharge capacity, which, in turn, depends on the source of recharge, and the properties of the sink.

IRRI says the use of groundwater allows rice farmers to make decisions about sustainable water management; they lack such autonomy with, say, canal water systems. So, instead of discouraging rice farmers from using groundwater, they should be educated about the benefits of precise water management. Efficient irrigation scheduling (like alternate wetting and drying) not only shrinks the use of water but also the carbon footprint by reducing emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas, from banded fields or paddies. Incentivising farmers with carbon credits can encourage them to use groundwater efficiently, IRRI says. (In Punjab, where electricity is free, there is little incentive to conserve groundwater.)

When rice is grown under aerobic conditions, like Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), a saving of about 12-35% of irrigation water is reported, IRRI says. Direct sowing can be done in dry or wet conditions by broadcasting the seeds on ploughed, but dry, fields, planting them in rows, with seed drills, or using these methods to plant germinated seed in wet fields (known as wet DSR).

According to IRRI, DSR is widely practised in many south-east Asian countries, like Malaysia (about 95% of total rice area), Cambodia (85-90%), Vietnam, Thailand (about 70%) and the Philippines (42%). In South Asia, Sri Lanka

leads with 95% of rice area under DSR.

The Punjab, and Haryana governments are promoting DSR to relieve groundwater stress. Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has developed a package of practices for DSR, and has recommended the ideal rice varieties for it. PC Sharma, Director of the Central Soil and Salinity Research Institute (CSSRI), Karnal, says, in DSR, there is reduction in rice yield of 5-7%. But, this is compensated by a savings in energy cost, and higheryields in the subsequent wheat crop, if zero-till agriculture is practiced, and paddy stubble is left to degrade in the fields. But, farmers, he says, are fixated on yield, and do not look at total cost savings. Also, current rice varieties are designed for flood irrigation; rice varieties suitable for direct sowing need to be developed.

IRRI is working on more nutritious rice: High iron and zinc rice (HIZR), and Golden Rice, with beta carotene to cure Vitamin A deficiency. While zinc and iron are present in rice, the levels need to be increased to have an impact on health. Conventional breeding helps, but genetic engineering ensures a significant increase. It also allows stacking of multiple traits in a single variety.

Together with Chinese scientists, IRRI has identified the genetic make-up of over 3,000 rice varieties. The 3,000 Rice Genome Project is being used to map the genetic regions influencing the glycaemic index, and texture of rice. The results of the study, it says, will be critical to develop low-glycaemic-index rice varieties, which offers a healthier option to rice-eaters wary of diabetes.

Golden Rice is currently undergoing regulatory review in Bangladesh, and

the Philippines. It has received positive food safety assessments from Food Standards Australia (FSANZ), Health Canada, and the Food and Drug Administration of the United States. IRRI has engaged in the regulatory approval process. It says it reaches out to farmers, community groups, and NGOs, but avoids those who cannot be convinced with facts and evidence.

The discovery of a submergence tolerance gene by an IRRI breeder, and its incorporation in popular rice varieties has come as a relief to farmers in flood-prone areas, where productivity is low, and unstable. The Sub1 gene was discovered in a traditional Odisha rice variety grown in Balasore, where flash floods are common. It was incorporated in the Swarna mega variety, grown on five million hectares in eastern India, and released in 2009. With the gene, the plant can remain completely submerged in muddy water for 7-10 days, and in clear water for up to 14 days, says S R Das, rice breeder and Honorary Professor at Orissa University of Agriculture

and Technology.

While underwater, the plant remains dormant. When the floods recede, it uses conserved carbohydrates to regenerate. Swarna and Swarna Sub1 are alike in all respects, except that the latter can survive flash floods. IRRI says the average yield of scuba, or Sub1, rice varieties is 4.5-6.5 tonnes per hectare, and they yield advantage is 1-3 tonnes per hectare over those that don't have the Sub1 gene. Seven varieties with the gene have been released in Asia.

Another interesting gene isolated from the Pokhali rice variety, grown in coastal Kerala, is the Saltol gene, which makes rice salt-tolerant. Rice productivity in salt-affected areas is about 1.5 tonnes per hectare. IRRI says it has developed about 100 salinity tolerant elite lines, which have traits like high-yield, good grain quality, and resistance to pests and diseases. They are ready for testing in farmers' fields. It has released 34 salt-tolerant varieties across Asia.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Clarification

Apropos of “*Ringling Indictment*” October 3, 2019, let me clarify that there are no technical standards relating to ringer timer either issued by DoT or by Telecom Engineering Centre or by any international body. Further, there was no legacy value or de-facto standards as operators were following different timers which were often inconsistent between two License Service Area of the same operator also. The real optimal period of ringing to have balance between effective resource utilisation and convenience of consumers to reply is complex and may vary based on consumer habit. Therefore, mandating any particular value without examining the details cannot be anyone's demand. The Interconnection Usage Charges (IUCs) are reimbursement for the work done and therefore it has to be paid as per the actual handling of the incoming calls. In such a situation, accusing a regulator for inaction based on unfounded assumptions and conclusions is not only unwarranted but aimed to create wrong picture of the regulator. — SK Gupta, Secretary, TRAI

KSCA elections

Team of Roger Binny has romped to victory in the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) elections. The Binny juggernaut swept all before them with their adversaries, Harish and group, failing to bag even a single seat. The new team has promised to turn the three grounds in Alur, Belagavi and Hubballi into world-class, besides, assist clubs to improve infrastructure and facilities for players. One hopes that their stint proves to be a game-changer. — NJ Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

Luxury goods' own flight shame

There is a reason why luxury goods companies are trying to mend their ways: younger shoppers, including Chinese ones, are now demanding it

ANDREA FELSTED

Bloomberg

“**FLYGSKAM**” (OR FLIGHT shame) has made some people too embarrassed to fly because of the damage to the planet. Might fashion be the next business to suffer as consumers put on their environmental hair shirts?

Bernard Arnault, chairman of luxury behemoth LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE, has criticised the 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg as being “demoralising for young people.” She's probably a bit of a downer for him too.

Arnault's business depends on shoppers, especially young ones, buying lots of unnecessary stuff, from Christian Dior saddlebags to expensive lipsticks from the pop star Rihanna's Fenty range. Fretting about an impending environmental catastrophe, and worrying that your purchases are contributing to it, is hardly conducive to a spot of retail therapy.

The clothing and footwear industries (of which luxury is only a part) contribute about 8% of global CO2 emissions, according to Quantis, an environmental consultancy. The Ellen MacArthur foundation, a non-profit organisation, estimates that the textiles business generated more greenhouse gas emissions in 2015 than all international flights and shipping combined. There is plenty here to infuriate Thunberg.

Reliable data on the luxury industry's environmental performance isn't easy to come by, but one group (made up of Global Fashion Agenda, an industry forum, the Sustainable Apparel Coalition and the Boston Consulting Group) has had a go at creating at a scorecard. This “Pulse Score” is based on elements such as the ecological smartness of product

design, raw material use and manufacturing processes. Getting 100 would be perfection on sustainability; nobody comes close to that.

Overall, fashion had a pretty underwhelming score of 42 out of 100, although the big luxury companies scored a slightly more respectable 54. While this isn't exactly cause to celebrate, it does show that the financial clout of LVMH—and its big peers such as Gucci-owning Kering SA and Switzerland's Compagnie Financière Richemont SA (home to Cartier)—might be an advantage when it comes to trying to mitigate their impact on the planet and its resources.

Yet one can't ignore the scale of that industry impact. The luxury goods makers have enjoyed more than three years of blockbuster growth, driven largely by Chinese shoppers, meaning they are gobbling up more natural resources than ever. The natural materials favoured by the fashionable elite have the worst effect on the environment (silk is a particular disaster).

None of this is helped by the wasteful practices of many shoppers, who move on quickly to the next hot design, or indeed some of the companies. Britain's Burberry Group Plc came under justified fire last year for its now abandoned practice of destroying unsold stock to prevent it being sold off cheaply.

Kering, founded by Arnault's great rival Francois Pinault, does at least try to be transparent about the damage it does. It publishes an environmental profit and loss account, which put the cost of its impact on the planet in 2018 at about 500 million euros (\$549 million). It esti-

mates that about three-quarters of this came from raw materials processing and production. Still, while it is honest of them to publish these data, the harm is still being done.

LVMH has kept a lower profile, though it does perform well on one measure. Morgan Stanley analysts say that the more a luxury company does its own manufacturing, the better it performs on environmental, social and governance targets. That is because some of the worst industry practices happen in the supply chain away from the direct control—and responsibility—of the parent.

The LVMH brands rank well on this measure, according to the Morgan Stanley research. Three of its brands (Loro Piana, Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior) do most of their own manufacturing.

As Arnault's attack on Thunberg highlighted, there is a reason why these companies are trying to mend their ways: younger shoppers, including Chinese ones, are demanding it. In 2018 all of the industry's growth came from the under-40s, according to consultants at Bain & Company. Those consumers are more likely to be loyal to brands with a conscience.

Yet no matter how much attention the industry pays to the planet, this business is still about getting people to spend money on stuff they could live without. If the rich can be shamed into giving up their far-flung holidays, what does the future hold for Gucci's diamond belt?

With assistance from Elaine He and Lara Williams
This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners

SEVENTY YEARS OF REVOLUTION

Unprecedented backlash marks China's rise...

...With USS Ronald Reagan in the South China Sea, and Japan's Defense White Paper 2019 calling out China as the main security threat to Japan

THIS IS THE seventieth year of China's revolution. In these 70 years, China's spectacular rise as an economic powerhouse with formidable manufacturing and technological prowess is laudable. But China's rise, purported to be a 'peaceful rise', has been anything but peaceful. Its rise has evoked a backlash—a backlash so fierce that it has united even an intensely polarised America.

Japan, too, has viewed China's rise in the region with caution. Japan's recent Defense White Paper 2019 indicated that "qualitatively and quantitatively superior military powers concentrate in Japan's surroundings," referencing China's expansion and intensification of Chinese military activities—ahead of North Korea's enhancement of ballistic missiles.

For decades, China 'bided' its time on the global stage. Indeed, moderniser Deng Xiaoping admonished "the nail that sticks out, gets knocked down." Deng preferred a low-profile China that 'bided its time' (*taoguang yanghui*) and focused on 'bringing in' (foreign investment, technology) in support of economic reforms. When it came to contentious issues, Deng chose to leave it to the "wisdom of future generations." Indeed, Deng's collegial and accommodative diplomacy took the sting out of Tiananmen (in 1989) and, critically, paved the way for Hong Kong's return (in 1997).

In the last decade, China has chosen to deviate from Deng's low-profile mantra—be it in the high seas with territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and the modernisation of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). In the mountains, China breached the status quo in the Doklam standoff. On land, China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, BRI, seeks a global footprint.

Japan's recent Defense White Paper has drawn attention to China's concept of 'Three Warfares' (2003), namely 'Media Warfare' (influencing domestic and public opinion), 'Psychological Warfare' (deterrence) and 'Legal Warfare' (recourse to laws) as part of the work of the military.

In the past decade, this has certainly played out. Make in China 2025, military modernisation by 2020 and innovation power by 2050 have shaped public opinion, both domestic and international. Military modernisation, the key to building deterrence, has been met with aircraft carrier Liaoning, a Russian-built Kuznetsov-class carrier in service in the PLAN in 2012. A new Type 0001A indigenously-built aircraft carrier will be oper-



ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

ational later this year. China's Type 075 class of amphibious assault ship also marks a breakthrough in China's maritime capabilities. Its territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea have taken recourse to domestic and international law.

Among other actions, the fallout of China's Three Warfares is the posturing evident in arm-twisting companies and corporations to fall in line with the One-China policy. For example, American Airlines and Delta had to stop references to Taiwan. Several countries have switched diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to China. In recent weeks, Solomon Islands and Kiribati switched recognition to China from Taiwan.

ANURAG VISWANATH
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Why did China shift from keeping a low-profile to a 'go-out'? The only mandate that the Communist Party has to stay in power is economic growth, which was inevitably slowing down. China rode the wave of globalisation and the international trading system in the 1980s and 1990s. Reforms lifted millions out of poverty. But reforms also led to sharp inequalities, urban poverty, the phenomenon of 'hol-

lowed-out' villages (because of outmigration), 'left-behind' children (left behind by their parents in the rural areas who went in search of work), land-grabs, environmental pollution, the new realities of China's breakneck reforms. The Communist Party sought to re-energise its mandate by re-framing economic growth in terms of the 'new normal', i.e. slower but qualitative, innovative growth.

The backlash of economic reforms was sought to be contained and channelled by shifting attention from the domestic to the international. Nationalism was deployed to boost up China's image in its own eyes.

Nationalism is nothing new and has been invoked time and again, aided by state manipulation of public opinion. In the past, anti-Japanese and anti-Korean demonstrations have been quickly mobilised. Nationalism has been evident in frequent allusions to China's past glory in East Asia (tributary relationships), 'China Can Say No' (1996 bestseller), the Olympics (2008), the Shanghai Expo (2010) or surpassing Japan as the second largest economy (2010). In fact, it was in 2010 that the then foreign minister Yang Jiechi said in

Hanoi at the ASEAN Meet that "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that's just a fact." In 2010, China began to articulate that the South China Sea was part of its 'core interests'.

China's domestic audience was energised with a China that has "stood up, become stronger and richer" seeking its "great power status" of yore, and meeting its inevitable destiny of Two Centenaries—the Two Centenaries implies China's two goals of achieving a 'well-off society' (by 2021, 100 years of the Communist Party) and high-income 'modern socialist country' (by 2049, 100 years of the revolution).

The grand sum of the above was China's premature assertion of its 'great power status' before its time. This assertion explains the backlash against China.

In reality, China's rise has riled. Deeply polarised politics has not prevented unanimity in the trade war against China. There is also bipartisan support on Hong Kong. Ahead of the momentous celebrations in China, the Congressional committees in the US House and Senate approved the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, 2019, which will be voted upon in the coming weeks. In another uncharacteristic move, American aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan is "conducting routine operations" in the South China Sea.

For China celebrating its 70 years of revolution—70 years of the Communist Party and 70 years of revolution is but a fraction of a fraction in China's grand 5,000-year civilisation. It has been said as much that China has 'learned to learn'.

Certainly, the Communist Party seems to have taken cognisance of a 'peaceful rise' that has gone awry. Speaking at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York recently, China's state councillor and foreign minister Wang Yi was keen to emphasise that "seeking hegemony is not in our DNA" and that the "United States is and will still be the strongest country in the world."

China's recent spate of White Papers are attempts to convey a similar message—that China seeks no hegemony but 'peaceful development'. Indeed, the newest White Paper out of China's stables "China and the World in the New Era" hopes that "China contributes to a better world."

Seventy years after the revolution, China may be enmeshed in a 'new era' of 'Xi Jinping Thought', but may be wiser playing Deng's old dictum of aiming high, playing low.

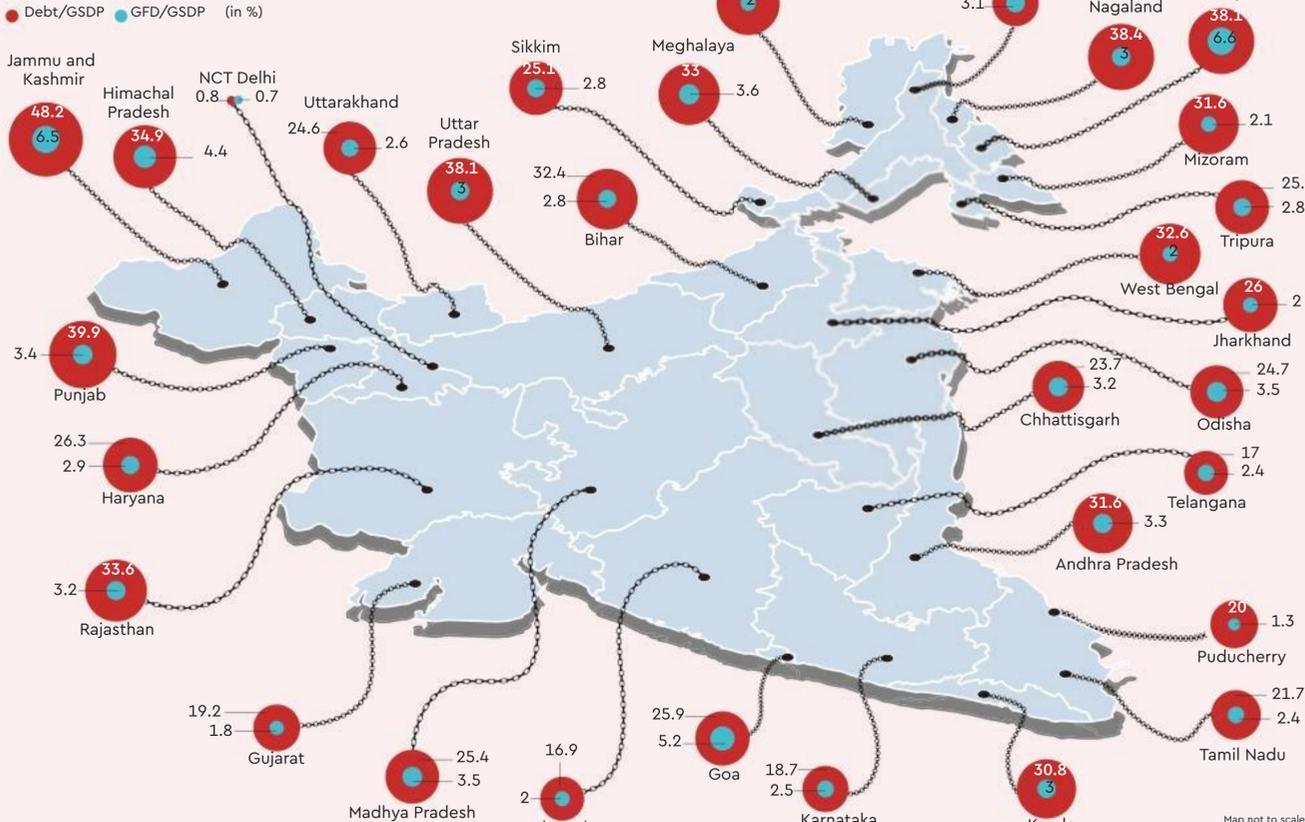
DATA DRIVE

Debt doubts crop up again

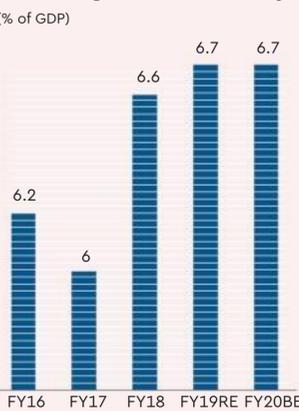
ALTHOUGH FISCAL DEFICIT has been a worry for the states in the past, RBI's latest report on state finances, shows that they are well in the clear as far as fiscal condition is concerned. The combined fiscal deficit budgeted for FY20, although a bit higher at 2.9%, puts them in a comfortable position. More important, if one discounts for UDAY expenditure, it falls to 2.5%, or well within the recommendations of the NK Singh committee. But, all is not rosy—the report shows that there has been no reduction in the debt-to-GDP ratios, budgeted at 24.9. In fact, a closer look at the data reveals that there has been little change in states' own tax and non-tax revenues. While the own-tax revenues are expected to be 6.7% of the GDP, non-tax revenues are stuck at a paltry 1.2% for the last many years. More worrisome, non-development revenue expenditures have been increasing over the last few years. If India is to become a \$5 trillion economy, it cannot do so without the states increasing their revenues—both tax and non-tax—and curbing their non-development expenditures.

Besides, most states require a policy to contain debt, as fiscal prudence shall achieve little if it comes on the back of debt increase and fall in capital expenditures. A better idea, RBI itself suggests, would be to "balance aspirational policy choices against two major operating constraints: generating adequate revenue within the Legislative Framework and adhering to Fiscal Responsibility Legislations (FRLs)."

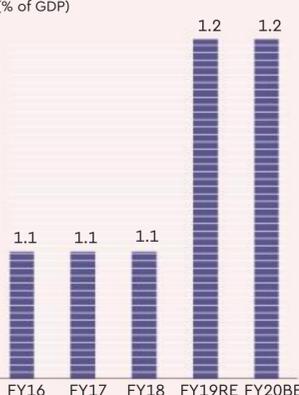
Debt profile



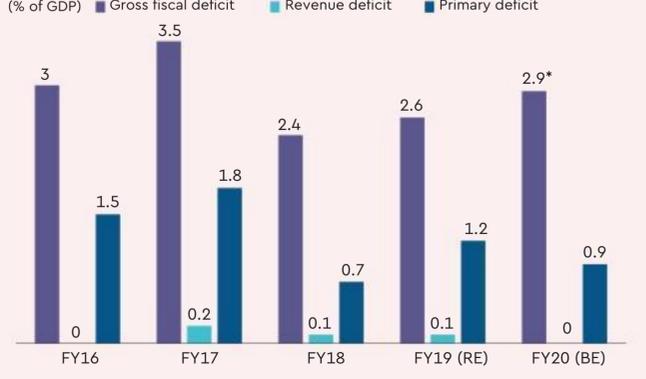
Meanwhile, own tax revenues have not grown substantially



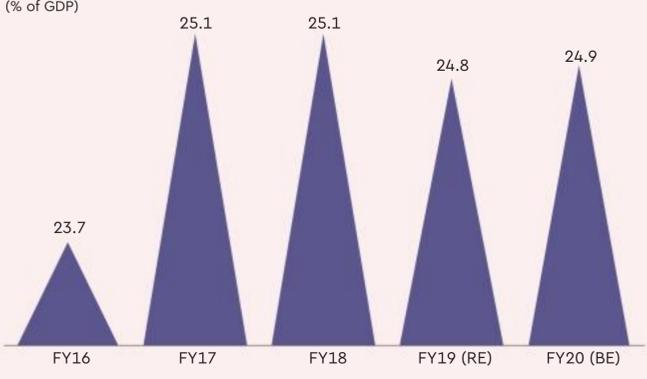
Non-tax revenues have remained flat



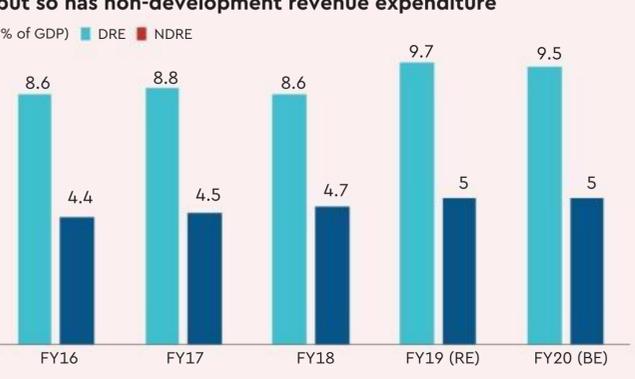
While fiscal deficit of states is contained...



...debt is still high



Development revenue expenditure has been rising, but so has non-development revenue expenditure





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Whatever it takes

Together with stimulus package, repo rate cuts signal a resolve to revive investor, consumer sentiment



SAUGATA BHATTACHARYA

A CUT IN TIME

RBI signals further support to revive growth. On its part, government should stick to fiscal deficit target

ON FRIDAY, THE Monetary Policy Committee cut the benchmark repo rate by 25 basis points, as high frequency indicators point to continued weakness in economic activity. Since February this year, the MPC has cut interest rates by 135 bps. The central bank also lowered its growth forecast to 6.1 per cent, down from its previous estimate of 6.9 per cent, suggesting that the slowdown is more severe than was previously believed. It has also decided to stick to its accommodative stance till "as long as necessary to revive growth", which signals further rate cuts if growth disappoints, especially as inflation is likely to remain well within its comfort zone.

That the MPC was going to cut rates was a foregone conclusion. The disagreement was over the quantum of the cut — one MPC member voted for a larger cut. A cut of this magnitude is at odds with the sharp downward revision in its growth forecast. That demand remains subdued, capacity utilisation has dropped, credit offtake remains sluggish, and capital goods imports continue to contract, raises the question: If the growth forecast was revised downwards to this extent, surely there is a case for a much larger rate cut? Uncertainty around the effects of the recent stimulus measures may have played a role. It is also possible that the MPC is waiting to see how banks adapt to the new external benchmarking system, and how effectively they transmit these rate cuts to the larger economy, before easing further. The RBI acknowledges that transmission has been a problem so far. While the repo rate was cut by 110 bps between February and August, the lending rate on fresh loans declined by only 29 bps. Part of the problem can be traced to the continuing high interest rate differential between bank deposits and small saving instruments. This exists because the rates announced by the government on small savings are higher than those arrived at by the formula which reflects market realities. This differential restricts banks' ability to cut term deposit rates and, as a consequence, lending rates. As the efficacy of monetary policy depends on transmission, the government should align interest rates on small savings with market rates.

The combination of low growth and low inflation shifts the balance towards further easing. But what is the terminal rate? Going by the RBI's commentary in the past, a neutral stance implies a real interest rate of around 1.25 to 1.5 per cent. But an accommodative stance could imply even lower interest rates, opening up space for more aggressive cuts than what are currently being priced in. On its part, the government should stick to the fiscal deficit target. A shortfall in revenue, unless compensated by deep expenditure cuts, translates to higher borrowings, which impedes transmission of these cuts. The government should pursue a more aggressive disinvestment programme to offset the expected shortfall in tax collections.

JOURNEY TO KARTARPUR

Former PM Manmohan Singh's participation in the pilgrimage is a reminder of the vision behind the corridor

IT IS FITTING that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will be part of the first jatha or group of pilgrims led by Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib at Kartarpur through the new India-Pakistan visa-free corridor. As head of government, from 2004 to 2014, Singh had built on the previous Vajpayee government's efforts to arrive at a modus vivendi with Pakistan. His famous "breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore, dinner in Kabul" formulation provided a vision that was at once progressive as well as deeply-rooted in the history and shared cultures of the region. Circumstances, including the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack that originated in Pakistan and was carried out by the Lashkar-e-Toiba, intervened to ensure that it would remain a vision too far. But the Kartarpur corridor is a step in that direction, even if neither India nor Pakistan acknowledge it as such anymore. It recognises that with political will, two nations can find common cause around a line on a map, though each may have its own reasons for doing so. That neither side called off work on the corridor through nine months of an outrightly hostile atmosphere, starting with Pulwama, right up to the face-off at the UN last month, speaks of the interests involved — Pakistan is wooing Sikhs; India does not want to alienate them. But it is not unlike the pragmatism that shaped Manmohan Singh's belief that it was in the interests of both peoples for India and Pakistan to find ways to live together.

Amarinder Singh has sought to clarify that he and Manmohan Singh would only go to the Darbar Sahib shrine, "not to Pakistan", and underlined that the former PM will be going on the pilgrimage at his invitation, not on the invitation of Pakistan. Yet it is undeniable that the Kartarpur corridor would not have taken shape without Pakistan's active co-operation. Indeed, it was Pakistan that initiated the plan last year. Now, having gone this far, India must show the large-heartedness to participate in the official opening of the corridor organised by the government of Pakistan.

It is as yet unclear who other than the former PM and the Punjab CM is part of the first jatha. Ideally, considering the political will that the Modi government extended to the corridor plan through the year, it should include representatives of the Akali Dal and BJP. That will also ensure that a visit to Darbar Sahib by members of one party does not get projected as a crime against the nation.

NBA@INDIA

Jersey sales might multiply briefly. It'll take longer for the ethos to take root

TWO TOP NBA teams, Sacramento Kings and Indiana Pacers, will give India its first glimpse of what basketball in the world's greatest league looks like. For NBA's niche followers who wake up at 6 am and look forward to the All Stars, wear loose branded vests of No 23 and baggy long shorts, swearing by LeBron James, this is as close as they'll get to the American jamboree. The truly commercial NBA's detour to India's financial capital, Mumbai, was expected. But this move might not be a game-changer for the sport in a country where basketball has thrived in several pockets for years.

The quality of play in the league that attracts the best global talent has always seemed to belong to another galaxy. Indian hoopsters, trained from Russian manuals, are at least 40 years behind the NBA's latest acrobatics. The delayed pre-dawn "live" coverage didn't help matters. But the NBA has finally taken the big jump — though a real connect might still take years, beyond the razzmatazz of the two-day Kings-Pacers show.

Several NBA players, not the biggest names, though, have made the "India trip" in the last few off-season autumns. A few outdoor courts have been slapped with a fresh coat of bright paint, and NBA's Academy in Gurgaon is scouting, using the most obvious Plan Of Action — find tall, groom tall. They even pushed for the exceptionally tall boy from a Punjab village, Satnam Singh, to make headlines with his brush with the Dallas Mavericks. But, one suspects that India will need wooing that goes beyond a desi token representative in the league. A strong national team doing well in Asia (like Iran, if not China) might evoke interest beyond the casual media blitz associated with the NBA jamboree spending a weekend here. Jersey sales might multiply briefly. But it'll take a long time for NBA's ethos to take root.

THE MONETARY POLICY Committee (MPC) cut the repo rate again, the fifth time since February 2019 by 0.25 percentage points, based on the views of the MPC members on current and projected economic conditions. The MPC action was in line with the series of cuts by almost all major central banks across the globe, as counter-cyclical policy responses to the global slowdown. The MPC voted unanimously on the cut, with one member recommending a deeper cut. The accommodative policy stance was retained, signalling a strong resolve to support the revival of growth, evocative of the ECB President Mario Draghi's memorable 2012 commitment to do "whatever it takes to preserve the euro".

The reason for this strong signal showed up in the steep reduction in RBI's FY20 GDP growth projection, from 6.9 per cent in August down to 6.1 per cent. High frequency indicators of economic activity remain weak, with a flat core infrastructure index growth, continuing weak automobile sales and a sharply lower services sector purchasing managers index (PMI) showing a deep contraction in September. Rural demand, propped by sales of two-wheelers and tractors, contracted. Of greater concern is the fact that RBI's forward looking surveys show an expected drop in capacity utilisation of manufacturing firms in Q2 FY20. The Business Assessment Index also fell in Q2.

The strong signal on accommodation, however, is qualified with "inflation remain[ing] within the [2-6 per cent] target". Despite some risks, this is a probable outcome; RBI largely retained its earlier growth forecast of October-March FY20 inflation at 3.5-3.7 per cent, taking the full FY20 average to approximately 3.5 per cent. This is significantly lower than the 4 per cent mid-point and provides adequate buffers for even unexpected food, oil and other price shocks.

With this kind of growth-inflation trade-off, why might the MPC have limited the repo rate cut to 0.25 percentage points rather than easing it further? The first, of course, would have been a degree of uncertainty on both the effects of the fiscal stimulus measures already announced — particularly the bold and decisive corporate tax rate cuts, and in various stages of implementation — as well as the additional measures which might be needed. While the budget targets are likely to be met

in the base case, there are likely to be compositional changes in expenditures and borrowings, the effects of which need to be better understood. Global financial market volatility, trade-related uncertainty, geo-political disruptions to global supply chains would only add to domestic policy responses. And India's policy rate cuts, now at a cumulative 1.35 percentage points, are one of the deepest of the major central banks.

Second, current household inflation expectations over a three-month and one-year ahead horizons have risen 0.40 and 0.20 percentage points, likely reflecting an adaptive response to the recent hardening of prices of some vegetables. For central banks, inflation expectations are a key input into monetary policy formulation, since hardening expectations usually translate into wage negotiations, which change inflation dynamics. However, such a risk in India's current economic conditions is quite low.

The third potential reason might be the path of lending rates over the next couple of months, with the switch of interest rates on new retail and MSME loans from the erstwhile MCLR system to one that is repo-rate linked. This brings us to the immediate concern, a drop in bank credit growth, and more broadly, a sharp contraction in the flow of funds from all financial intermediaries — one of the key reasons for the expected continuing weak growth in FY20. Bank credit growth slowed from an average of 14.2 per cent yoy during Q4 FY19 to 10.3 per cent by mid-September 2019, reflecting "weak demand and risk aversion". Total funding from domestic and foreign sources has shrunk precipitously to Rs 91,000 crore during April-mid-September 2019 from Rs 7.36 lakh crore in the same period last year. Commercial paper issuance (short-term working capital type borrowings) shrank to Rs 19,000 crore (from Rs 2.53 lakh crore in the same quarter the year before). Credit from NBFCs dropped during April-June, contracting by Rs 1.25 lakh crore, down from a net disbursement of Rs 41,000 crore in the same quarter of 2018. The only channel of stronger funds flows was via foreign currency borrowings, but this was small relative to the overall shrinkage of credit.

What should be next in the policy response? The government, RBI and other agencies have already announced a coordi-

nated set of counter-cyclical stimulus measures to revive consumption, investment and growth. The government is expediting the implementation of the multiple measures it has announced. Moral suasion will probably induce some project capex, particularly by public sector enterprises. Upfront recapitalisation payments to public sector banks might gradually fill loan pipelines, hopefully to MSMEs, which will be critical for the recovery.

The efficacy of these measures over the near to medium term will be determined by the nature of the slowdown. RBI analytics suggest that the slowdown is largely cyclical, and in macroeconomic terms, this is probably correct. However, many sectors have large structural components contributing to slowing growth, including changing consumer preferences, wage growth and income uncertainty. In the near term, lending institutions have become relatively risk averse, and a degree of appropriate risk re-allocation will need to be initiated by the government and regulators. Various credit enhancement and guarantee funds, which are being institutionalised, will help in mitigating some of this.

In the meantime, a combination of relatively easy systemic liquidity and a shift of some loan products to market benchmarks will begin to lower borrowing costs. To support credit flows to sectors which are particularly constrained for funds, the RBI has relaxed some micro-prudential restrictions to cautiously incentivise credit and fund flows to solvent but liquidity constrained financial intermediaries and sectors.

The economic revival process is likely to be gradual and weak at first. In fact, although volume indicators still show weak activity, GDP growth is likely to be 5.5-5.7 per cent in Q2 FY20 (July-September) range — better than the Q1 growth. This is likely to be driven largely by an improved manufacturing GDP, (0.6 per cent in Q1), reinforced by higher government spending. Strong policy communication will be an important instrument in reinforcing investor and consumer confidence.

Going back to the ECB President's 2012 commitment, "And believe me, it will be enough".

The writer is vice president, business and economic research, Axis Bank. Views are personal

WHAT PAKISTAN WON, AND LOST

Could Pakistan have stayed out of US-led global campaign after 9/11?



KHALED AHMED

IMRAN KHAN, DURING his September visit to America, said: "Pakistan, by joining the US after 9/11, committed one of the biggest blunders. 70,000 Pakistanis died in this. Some economists say we lost \$150 billion, some say \$200 billion. On top of it, we were blamed by the US for not winning in Afghanistan." He was replying to former US Secretary of Defence James Mattis's statement that Pakistan was the most dangerous country in the world. Khan said, "They (the insurgent groups) were indoctrinated into fighting foreign occupation [by the Soviet Union] as jihad. But now when the US arrived in Afghanistan, it was supposed to be terrorism".

After the Soviet invasion, America thought it could end the rule of the Communist Party in the USSR by cornering the Soviet army in Afghanistan. Muslim "warriors" arrived from all over the Islamic world, funded by the US and Saudi Arabia jointly. And Pakistan was dishing out hospitality and raking in "assistance" for its wobbly economy then.

Prime Minister Khan said he was opposed to Pakistan joining the international war in Afghanistan "from day one". Yet for General Musharraf, who ruled Pakistan, the Soviets were from "the other side" — against America and its allies, including Pakistan. For him, the Soviet invasion meant entry of India nextdoor as part of its "encirclement" strategy. Pakistan had tasted its last defeat at the hands of India in 1971.

Pakistan was bothered by the Moscow-supported Kabul government that leaned on

India to complete the "strategic nuclear" that would make Pakistan forget Kashmir. The Durand Line was challenged and propaganda unleashed to indoctrinate "unhappy" Pakistani elements in Balochistan and the Tribal Areas. The warriors arriving in Pakistan carried an Islamic consensus of jihad against the "godless" Soviet Union. There was no way an "Islamic" Pakistan could avoid joining the American war against the Soviet Union.

On September 11 2001, the "Islamic warriors", headed by Osama bin Laden, thought they could also liberate the world from American hegemony that raised Israel above the entire Islamic world through wars the Arabs kept losing. The plot to attack New York was conceived in Karachi by al Qaeda's Khalid Sheikh Muhammad; and the 19 warriors chosen were made to meet bin Laden for which they had to travel through Pakistan. But al Qaeda was not only foreign warriors in the long run; a majority of them were finally Afghans and Pakhtuns, many trained by the ISI's Colonel Imam inside Afghanistan. He was killed by Pakistani Taliban in 2010.

Pakistan could not have wanted it but it was the "host" country where the "warriors" serving America had made their headquarters. Pakistan should have stayed out of what happened after 9/11. But could it really?

UN Security Council resolution 1373, that made it possible to attack the Taliban government in Kabul, was adopted on September 28, 2001 by the Security Council under Chapter 7

of the UN charter. General Musharraf knew what a Chapter 7 resolution meant; it was not like the Security Council resolution on Kashmir that was merely "advisory" because it was under Chapter 6. Had Imran Khan been in power, he couldn't have defied it. However, there was another "unavoidable" reason.

For an Islamic, worry-beads-in-hand, Imran Khan, the Islamisation of Pakistan would have been irresistible. Pakistan's jihad was inspired by the founder of al Qaeda, Abdullah Azzam (d. 1989), who also established the Islamic University of Islamabad and brought the concept of "terrorist" jihad into the heart of the Pakistani state.

Sectarianism also came with jihad. Shia leader Allama Ariful Hussaini was murdered in August 1988. Within a fortnight of Hussaini's murder, President Zia died in an air crash in Bahawalpur amid rumours of Shia involvement in his assassination. The NWFP governor, General Fazle Haq, whom the Shia accused of complicity in the murder of Allama Hussaini, was ambushed and killed in 1991.

Sectarianism affected relations with Iran. In 1998, Pakistan's anti-Shia Sipah-e-Sahaba, riding together with Taliban, killed eight Iranian "diplomats" inside the Iranian consulate. That brought Iran and India closer; and once again India was threatening Pakistan on the western border.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan



OCTOBER 5, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

ECONOMIC OFFENDERS

AN ORDINANCE FOR the preventive detention of economic offenders was sent to the President for his consent and promulgation, Prime Minister Charan Singh said in Lucknow. Singh told newsmen that every care had been taken in the ordinance to prevent its misuse and the Department of Food and Civil Supplies would administer it in the states. He said that the Essential Commodities Act was not effective for the present situation. The period of detention, according to the provisions of the ordinance, would be one year and a three-member board of review would be constituted, with a serving high court judge as chairman. The

board, to be constituted by the chief justices of high courts, will have as other members district judges or those competent or qualified to become a judge, or retired judges.

CODE OF CONDUCT

THE ELECTION COMMISSION has asked political parties in power at the Centre and in the states not to issue advertisements at the cost of the public exchequer to further its interests in the ensuing elections. The ruling parties have also been advised by the EC not to use government vehicles and other facilities or, for that matter, to take any official measures to further the ruling party's prospects in the forthcoming mid-term poll.

BHUTTO NOMINATION

SEVEN NOMINATION PETITIONS for national elections in November have been rejected by the Election Commission, a Pakistani news agency report said today. Among those rejected was one from Benazir Bhutto, daughter of the late prime minister, Z A Bhutto, the Associated Press of Pakistan said. The commission also rejected nomination petitions filed by leaders of the Pakistan People's party including the deputy secretary general, Mohammad Tikka Khan, the news agency said. It said that Bhutto's petition and others were rejected because the PPP did not register with the EC as required by a recently enacted law.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Standing by China, our lives will be based on a solid platform. Our wish for a better life is sacred, our efforts will be more respected in globalization, and we will benefit from our country's strong development." —GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Revisiting Howdy, Modi

For Modi, Houston guaranteed a huge turnout of Indian Americans. Trump may need the community to win Texas in 2020



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

THAT PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's rally in Houston, Texas, was a grand spectacle is beyond doubt. But grandeur aside, there are some questions that require fuller answers.

The first question is: Why Houston? Beyond New York, the larger San Francisco area (including Silicon Valley) and Chicago, Houston, along with Dallas, has among the largest communities of Indian Americans. Modi has already held rallies in New York and San Francisco. Houston or Chicago were the logical next sites.

A significantly more important question is: Why did President Donald Trump participate? It is, of course, not entirely unusual for foreign leaders to stage diaspora rallies. Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric notwithstanding, the US is a country of immigrants. Diasporas in the US, especially Irish, Mexican and Jewish, have been mobilised by visiting dignitaries. But the presence of a US president in, and his address to, a diasporic rally is certainly rare, if not a first-time occurrence.

What could Trump's motivation be? A penchant for spectacle, any spectacle, is his barely disguised trait. It is not uncommon for him, even as President, to be seen in the company of sports, music, film and television stars, nor is the idea of repeatedly locking horns with them, especially on Twitter, ever too far from the presidential attention. He is irresistibly drawn to that which is spectacular, magnificent or gorgeous.

But this explanation won't do. As Devesh Kapur, professor at Johns Hopkins University and an authority on the subject, tells us, Indian Americans are only one per cent of the US population. And they are roughly the same proportion of the electorate, too. It is also estimated that roughly 75 per cent of Indian Americans vote for the Democratic party. Even if a substantial proportion of them rushed towards the Republican camp in 2020, it would still not be a large enough clientele for a US president, seeking re-election, to qualify as a great spectacle. The overall numbers are meagre.

But electoral demography is never simply about aggregate statistics. It is also about how those numbers are geographically distributed, and what that distribution politically means. The US presidential election is not decided by popular vote. In 2016, Trump was over three million votes behind Hillary Clinton, and in 2000, George W Bush over half a million votes behind Al Gore. US presidents are chosen on the basis of an electoral college, which does not have a one-to-one relationship with the population. The college has 538 electors/votes, of which 270 must be won. In 2020, six of the largest states in the electoral college will be: California (55), Texas (38), New York (29), Florida (29), Illinois (20), Pennsylvania (20). Of these six, three — California, New York and Illinois — have been consistently democratic in recent years. Trump carried Texas, Florida and Pennsylvania in 2016, and needs

to carry them again.

This leads to questions about the state-level significance of the Houston rally. Winning Texas, the second-largest state in the electoral college, is critical to Trump's 2020 chances, especially as it is unclear which way Florida and Pennsylvania might go. In contrast, California and New York are expected to remain firmly Democratic. If Republicans lose Texas, smaller states may not be able to make up the loss.

Texas, which has been solidly Republican for long and never elected a Democratic presidential candidate since Jimmy Carter in 1976, has of late been displaying signs of turning "purple", somewhere between "red" (Republican) and "blue" (Democratic). Obama lost Texas by 16 percentage points in 2012, but Clinton in 2016 narrowed the Republican victory to nine per cent. The results of the 2018 mid-term elections further hinted that a new trend might be emerging. The Senate race was won by Ted Cruz, an incumbent Republican who also spoke at the Modi rally, by a narrow margin. Besides, Democrats flipped two Texas seats in the US House of Representatives, 18 seats in the state House and two seats in the state Senate.

Why is this happening and how might Indian Americans fit into the emerging political calculus? In 2000, Whites constituted 53 per cent of the state, and people of colour 47 per cent. By now, these proportions have dramatically changed, as Whites have become a minority. In 2018, the population of Texas was 28.7 million. Whites were 41.5 per cent of the total, Hispanics were only slightly behind at 39.7 per cent, blacks 11.8 per cent and Asians 4.8 per cent. People of colour thus formed 58.5 per cent of the state.

It is also known that people of colour have predominantly leaned towards the Democratic party and Whites largely towards the Republicans. Statistical analysis by Juan Carlos Huerta, a Texas politics expert, shows that in 2017, among people of colour, 68 per cent identified with Democrats, a share that has been roughly stable since 2009, whereas not more than a third of Whites had Democratic leanings in 2009 and 2013. This started changing by 2017, as younger White support for Democrats increased. Generally speaking, and certainly in recent years, compared to older Whites, younger White vote for Democratic party has tended to be higher.

Thus, because the non-White population has grown rapidly and the new White migration into Texas has principally been of the younger cohorts, Republicans are beginning to look vulnerable in a state that they took for granted. Indian Americans are perhaps not more than 4,00,000 in number, but if Texas becomes a "swing" or "battleground" state, ready for a political flip, even such small numbers might ultimately matter.

In sum, Modi chose Houston because a huge Indian American participation was guaranteed. And Trump participated because Indian Americans might heavily matter in the state of Texas in 2020.

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CR Sasikumar

Nationalism without Other

For Gandhi, nationalism was based on a practical understanding of what was required for the people to be free



PRABHAT PATNAIK

I FIND GANDHI'S thought in at least three areas of abiding relevance for me: His views on nationalism, on capitalism and on solidarity.

The nationalism that Gandhi stood for, which informed India's anti-colonial struggle, differed fundamentally from the nationalism that came into vogue in Europe in the 17th century, following the Westphalian peace treaties. At least three differences stood out. First, Gandhi's nationalism was inclusive; there were no "enemies within" as with European nationalism. Second, it did not see the nation as standing above the people, an entity for which the people only made sacrifices; rather, the *raison d'être* of the nation was to improve the living conditions of the people, or to "wipe away the tears from the eyes of every Indian". Third, unlike European nationalism, it was not imperialist itself; the people whom the nation was to serve treated other people with "fairness", which is why Gandhi wanted India to give Pakistan the Rs 55 crore that were its due after Partition, despite the bitterness caused by Partition.

This nationalism was not a mere idealist construct, it was based instead on a very practical understanding of what was required for the people's freedom. If the people were to be free then that required the formation of such a nation.

Gandhi was also clear that capitalism as we know it, for which he used the term "the English system", could not serve such a nation. It was incompatible with the people's freedom. He wanted a different economic system altogether, where the capitalists could at best be the "trustees" of people's property.

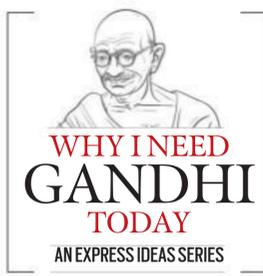
He was not a socialist but, in common with the socialists, he believed that capitalism could never solve the problem of unemployment, and the mental dullness it pro-

duced. Since he saw poverty as inextricably linked to unemployment, capitalism could also never overcome poverty. What we call "development", whose essence must be the overcoming of unemployment and poverty, was incompatible, therefore, with the institution of capitalism.

Gandhi's views on the relationship between capitalism and unemployment, and hence poverty, were deeply insightful.

It is commonly believed that even though capitalism initially destroys petty production, the displaced petty producers ultimately get absorbed within the growing capitalist sector, and that too at a higher wage than they earned earlier. This is neither theoretically valid nor historically borne out. The fact that European capitalism was not saddled with massive unemployment arising from the displacement of petty producers, was not because capitalist growth absorbed all those who had been displaced, but because of massive emigration to the temperate regions of White settlement, such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand where they drove out local inhabitants from their land and set themselves up as farmers. It is neither possible nor desirable to repeat this historical experience today, so that Gandhi's rejection of capitalism acquires pertinence.

Gandhi's rejection of the capitalist mode of production as exemplified by Europe, his rejection of European-style nationalism, and his linking of the two, was also a product of deep insight. It is not surprising that our embrace of unbridled capitalism in the neoliberal era, which predictably has brought in its train growing unemployment and absolute poverty, manifest in massive under-nutrition, has led to a denouement where the prevailing concept of nationalism has undergone a fundamental change. The inclusive, people-centred and non-aggrandising nationalism that characterised our anti-colonial struggle has given way to the old European-style "nationalism" that sees "enemies within" (indeed everyone opposed to the government is considered nowadays an "enemy within"), that sees the nation as standing above the people, and that rides roughshod over the people, trampling upon their rights as in



He was not a socialist but, in common with the socialists, he believed that capitalism could never solve the problem of unemployment, and the mental dullness it produced. Since he saw poverty as inextricably linked to unemployment, capitalism could also never overcome poverty. What we call 'development', whose essence must be the overcoming of unemployment and poverty, was incompatible, therefore, with the institution of capitalism. Gandhi's views on the relationship between capitalism and unemployment, and hence poverty, were deeply insightful.

Jammu and Kashmir today. The fact that the same government which unblushingly equates capitalists with "wealth creators" and which considers massive corporate tax concessions as a "win-win" situation for 125 crore people, also imposes an indefinite curfew on the people of Jammu and Kashmir, is not an accident. This route, however, leads to a perpetuation of unemployment, poverty, strife, and a break-up of the nation. And Gandhi saw this more clearly than almost anyone else.

Gandhi's solution to the problem of unemployment was a restraint on the rate of technological change, which of course was impossible under capitalism in its spontaneity. But Gandhi did not advocate state-imposed restrictions towards this end. He wanted instead a voluntary eschewing of consumerism that always privileges technologically-sophisticated goods. He wanted the development of a "community" among the people where one foregoes the "fineries of Bond Street" so that one's "brother" the weaver can get employment, a "community" where every person sees his or her well-being as dependent upon that of others.

The need for restraining the pace of technological change for achieving full employment is undeniable — the only countries which have achieved full employment, indeed labour shortage, in recent times, are the erstwhile socialist countries which restrained technological change and kept labour productivity growth in check.

Gandhi wanted such restraint to be voluntary, embedded in a sense of solidarity with one's "brethren". Gandhi's emphasis on solidarity, on overcoming self-centred isolation, an emphasis reminiscent of Karl Marx's stress on overcoming alienation through the formation of working class solidarity that would ultimately lead to a transcendence of capitalism, was crucial for his concept of human freedom. While their visions and analyses differed, Gandhi and Marx had this concept of freedom in common, as the development of a sense of community, which capitalism destroys.

The writer taught economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University



SAIFUDDIN SOZ

A formidable friend

Ram Jethmalani felt political one-upmanship stalled resolution of Kashmir issue

RAM JETHMALANI'S DEMISE has been mourned very widely as his circle of friends was vast and varied. Jethmalani lived a full life with all the best the system was able to offer him. His death has caused a void that can never be filled. An eminent lawyer and an authority on India's criminal justice system, Jethmalani will be remembered by a wide group of people in India and Pakistan.

Jethmalani had settled in India for good after his migration from Sindh (Pakistan) and he was a thorough Hindustani. But then, he had assiduously nourished relationships all over the subcontinent including Pakistan. He was always welcome there, not only in Sindh but everywhere in Pakistan. There were occasions when he invited friends to join the celebrations often around his birthday parties. He was always cheerful and at his best. On occasions, he recited verses, particularly by Faiz. He knew quite a lot on Iqbal'syat. He could, if he had chosen to write, done a comprehensive critique on the subject. He re-

membered many verses of Iqbal's Shikwa and Jawabi Shikwa, too. Once he had surprised many Indian and Pakistani guests who had assembled in good numbers to celebrate his birthday at his Krishna Menon Marg residence: He interspersed his conversations with verses not only of Iqbal and Faiz, but of many others such as Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi, Ahmad Faraz, Parveen Shakir, Bashir Badar and others. Jethmalani was an exceptional human being and a great friend — he could go to any lengths to maintain friendships.

Once I went to him with a personal problem: The Union minister for urban development, Buta Singh, wanted me to quit my Humayun Road residence and settle for a residence at South Avenue. It was a question of entitlement for a residence. My plea was that the same residence was being used by a businessman earlier, and after my election to the Lok Sabha, I was genuinely entitled to the residence. Jethmalani directly took up the matter with the then President of India.

When he was 94, and he thought any more of his appearances in the Supreme Court would not be to his liking as he thought the court's decorum could be impaired, he flabbergasted the judges by saying "adieu!" Until then the lordships had been earnestly requesting him to argue cases while sitting in the chair. He had emphasised that he would stand on his feet and argue the cases that day until his last breath. And that is what he did.

Sometime in 2016, when I visited his home, he broke the sad news to me that he would not be able to play his favourite game, tennis. He was 93 then.

Ram had many pursuits in life. One of them was his interest in Kashmir. He was sad that his pursuit of the resolution of the Kashmir problem remained unfulfilled because of political one-upmanship, which spoils the atmosphere in India. Ram had a considerable knowledge of Kashmir's history, and more importantly, of the development of the constitutional relationship be-

tween the state and India.

When Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, Mani Shankar Aiyar, OP Shah and myself attended a meeting with Ram on April 17, 2017, he had explained to us in detail that Pervez Musharraf's four-point formula was best suited to forge a friendship between India and Pakistan.

He had surprised us by narrating a story. He had gone to visit Atal Bihari Vajpayee soon after the Agra Summit and told him that he (Ram) would not even have changed a comma of what Musharraf had proposed for an abiding friendship between India and Pakistan. Why, then, had Vajpayee not moved to take the final step? Ram told us that Vajpayee chose to remain silent. But, then, Ram explained that Vajpayee's real difficulty was the party not getting along with him on what Musharraf had proposed!

The writer is a senior Congress leader and former Union minister

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MISREADING GANDHI

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Reading Gandhi in Catalonia' (IE, October 2). Indian citizens have ample reasons to be proud of Gandhi. His life and unwavering commitment to mutual respect is an example that inspires mankind. Unsurprisingly, Indians honour the immense legacy that Gandhi bequeathed to them. Not so Ramin Jahanbegloo, the writer of the article. In his eagerness to make Gandhi's influence even greater than it is, he belittles Gandhi and India. He overlooks both the democratic credentials of Spain and the bigoted overtones of the secessionist movement in Catalonia. He then deceives himself in drawing parallels between Gandhi and fictional powerless Catalans who wage a noble political battle against an immoral power. Ironically Jahanbegloo's make-believe Catalans do actually exist. They are the majority of Catalans who, as they endure the relentless harassment of independent leaders and their henchmen, give us all praiseworthy proof of their moral strength and their unflinching commitment to non-violence.

José Ramón Barañano, Ambassador of Spain in India

NO WATER VISION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Writ in water' (IE, October 3). The recent rav-

LETTER OF THE WEEK

RIGHTS OF ACCUSED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Exorcising third-degree' (IE, September 27). We need an anti-torture law to prevent atrocities committed by police during the course of investigation. But it is equally important to train the local police station personnel on scientific ways to extract information from the accused. SHOs should be made accountable for the health of the accused. This would discourage them to take recourse to violence. Remember, the right to not be tortured is a part of the constitutional right to life.

Shishir Singh, Prayagraj

ages of floods has been ascribed to the extended monsoon. There is, however, more to the matter. Year after year, people suffer because of the lack of vision of administrators and planners. The lethargy in cleaning clogged drainage systems and the state of water bodies like local ponds is a cause of concern.

Ranbir Singh Jakher, Gurgaon

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 197

बेमानी कवायद

अब शायद वक्त आ गया है कि राजकोषीय जवाबदेही से संबंधित कानून को विदा कर दिया जाए क्योंकि इससे फायदा कम, नुकसान ज्यादा हो रहा है। शायद एकबार वर्ष 2007-08 को छोड़ दिया जाए तो इस कानून के तहत तय राजकोषीय घाटे का लक्ष्य कभी हासिल नहीं हो सका है। राजकोषीय घाटे को सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के 3 फीसदी के बराबर रखने का लक्ष्य लगातार टाला जाता रहा या उसे स्थगित किया गया। समस्या में इसलिए भी इजाफा हुआ क्योंकि जब वित्त मंत्री इस लक्ष्य के

आसपास जाने में भी नाकाम रहे तो उन्होंने हिसाब में छेड़छाड़ की और पूरा राजकोषीय बोज़ सरकारी क्षेत्र की लाचार कंपनियों पर डाल दिया। सरकारी आंकड़ों में आ रही कमी को पूरा करने के लिए इन कंपनियों से एक से अधिक तरीके से धन वसूली की गई। एक समय अत्यंत अमीर रही तेल विपणन कंपनियों के पास अब बहुत कम नकदी बची होने की यह भी एक वजह है।

राजकोषीय जवाबदेही कानून के तहत लक्ष्य की प्रति दशाने के अन्य तरीकों में बिल

भुगतान न करना भी शामिल है। ध्यान रहे कि वित्त मंत्री ने हाल ही में कहा कि छोटे और मझोले उपक्रमों का बकाया भुगतान तत्काल किया जाना चाहिए। उन्होंने अन्य उपक्रमों का जिम्मा नहीं किया जबकि उनकी राशि भी बकाया है। इसके अलावा राजस्व के आंकड़े हासिल करने के दबाव में काम कर रहे कर अधिकारी भी साल के आखिरी महीने में कंपनियों पर दबाव बनाते हैं कि वे अतिरिक्त कर चुकाएं। उनसे वादा किया जाता है कि अगले वर्ष को शुरुआत में ही उनकी राशि रिफंड कर दी जाएगी। ये तमाम तरीके अपनाने के बावजूद घाटे के आंकड़े लक्ष्य से कमजोर बने रहते हैं। अगर किसी को वास्तविक तस्वीर पर संदेह हो तो उसे जानना चाहिए कि नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक ने वित्त आयोग से क्या कहा था। उसने कहा था कि वर्ष 2017-18 में केंद्र का घाटा 3.46 फीसदी नहीं था जैसा कि संसद को बताया गया बल्कि यह इससे

कहीं अधिक 5.85 फीसदी था। वित्त मंत्रियों को ऐसे तोड़-मरोड़ के लिए दबाव में क्यों डाला जाता है कि वे करीब 6 फीसदी के घाटे को 3.5 फीसदी के आसपास दर्शाने को मजबूर हो जाते हैं? उन्हें खलकर सच्चाई क्यों नहीं बताने दी जाती ताकि देश के सामने वास्तविक तस्वीर आ सके? राजकोषीय घाटे को घटाकर बचाने से सरकार में शामिल प्रमुख लोगों को यह प्रोत्साहन मिलता है कि वे और अधिक खर्च कर सकें जबकि हकीकत में इसकी गुंजाइश नहीं होती। अगर सही आंकड़े पेश किए जाएंगे और चेतवनी साफ नजर आ रही होगी तो राजकोषीय जवाबदेही को लेकर समझदारी बढ़ेगी। कुछ और नहीं तो निजी क्षेत्र के अर्थशास्त्रियों, रेटिंग एजेंसियों और ऐसे लोग जो आज घाटे को लेकर सरकारी राय दोहराते हैं, उन सभी का सामना एक अलग सच से

होगा। ऐसे में राजकोषीय सुधार का दबाव उत्पन्न होगा। केवल राजकोषीय जवाबदेही कानून से संबंधित नुस्खा काम नहीं आएगा क्योंकि आंकड़ों से छेड़छाड़ तो इस कानून के बनने के पहले से होता आया है। कानून को समाप्त करने के साथ-साथ अन्य बदलाव भी करने होंगे। नकदी लेखा की मौजूदा पुरानी व्यवस्था समाप्त करनी होगी। अधिकांश देश इसे त्याग चुके हैं। नकदी लेखा में सरकार के व्यय खाते का इस्तेमाल किया जाता है। उदाहरण के लिए बुनियादी कंपनियों द्वारा सड़क, पुल आदि के निर्माण का भुगतान करना। अधिकांश कंपनियां अपने बही खातों में कर्जदारों के बकाये का इस्तेमाल करती हैं। सरकार ऐसा नहीं करती और वह नकद लेखा के जरिये बच निकलती है। दूसरा, सरकारी क्षेत्र के लेखा का व्यापक

अंकेक्षण होना चाहिए। इससे वह सारा व्यय सामने आ जाएगा जो अभी सरकार अपने संस्थानों मसलन खाद्य निगम आदि पर धोपती है। जिस खाद्य सम्बिन्धी बिल की भरपाई बजट से होनी थी उसे निगम ने अल्प बचत फंडों से उधारी लेकर निपटाया। यदि इन बदलावों के माध्यम से विश्वसनीय बजटिंग नहीं होती है तो राजकोषीय घाटे को तीन फीसदी के स्तर पर रखने का कोई फायदा नहीं। टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवन ने इस समाचार पत्र में बार-बार कहा है कि यह आंकड़ा यूरोप का अनुकरण है जबकि भारत का आर्थिक संदर्भ यूरोप से एकदम अलग है। यह बात भरोसेमंद लगती है। तेज आर्थिक वृद्धि दर वाली भारतीय व्यवस्था उच्च घाटे वाले वृहद आर्थिक संकेतकों से निपट सकती है। जब तक घाटे से एकदम अलग है। यह बात भरोसेमंद लगती है। तेज आर्थिक वृद्धि दर वाली भारतीय व्यवस्था उच्च घाटे वाले वृहद आर्थिक संकेतकों से निपट सकती है। जब तक घाटे से एकदम अलग है। यह बात भरोसेमंद लगती है। तेज आर्थिक वृद्धि दर वाली भारतीय व्यवस्था उच्च घाटे वाले वृहद आर्थिक संकेतकों से निपट सकती है। जब तक घाटे से एकदम अलग है। यह बात भरोसेमंद लगती है। तेज आर्थिक वृद्धि दर वाली भारतीय व्यवस्था उच्च घाटे वाले वृहद आर्थिक संकेतकों से निपट सकती है।



विनय सिन्हा

बुनियादी क्षेत्र में भी आए कर कटौती जैसी व्यवस्था

अगर कच्चे माल की लागत में समुचित कटौती की गई तो इससे उत्पादकता बढ़ाने में काफी सहायता मिल सकती है। विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं श्याम पोनप्पा

कर कटौती को लेकर संभवतः सरकार का सोचना यह है कि इससे राजस्व का जो भी नुकसान हो रहा है, दीर्घवधि में उससे ज्यादा हासिल होगा। हम भी इस बात को सहर्ष मान रहे हैं। इसके बावजूद इस दलील को व्यक्तिगत और उपभोक्ता कर्तों तक नहीं बढ़ाया जा रहा है। यही नहीं इसे बुनियादी ढांचा क्षेत्र के कच्चे माल पर भी लागू नहीं किया गया जबकि इससे लागत कम करने में मदद मिलती। खासतौर पर संचार के लिए इस्तेमाल होने वाली रेटिंगो प्रोक्वेंसी स्पेक्ट्रम, कोयला और बिजली के क्षेत्र में।

कॉर्पोरेट कर में कटौती का निर्णय बहुत अच्छा है। इसे बहुत पहले अपना लिया जाना चाहिए था। इस विषय में कुछ बातें हैं जिनके बारे में प्रभावशाली तबके और नीति निर्माता संतर्क और शीघ्र कदम उठाए। मूल चिन्ता अंतःसंबंधित प्रक्रियाओं को लेकर है। मसलन डिजाइन तैयार करने से लेकर क्रियान्वयन तक। इसके अतिरिक्त मांग के मोर्चे पर भी सुसंगतता कायम करनी होगी क्योंकि उसके बिना हमें अपेक्षित नतीजे नहीं मिल सकते। कई लोगों ने मांग बढ़ाने के लिए उपभोक्ताओं को प्रोत्साहन देने के बजाय कर कटौती अपनाते को लेकर आशंका प्रकट की है। कुछ विशेषज्ञों ने कहा कि ऐसे सुधार बुनियादी क्षेत्र में वृद्धि पैदा करने से लेकर कृषि-व्यय तक। इसके अतिरिक्त मांग के मोर्चे पर भी सुसंगतता कायम करनी होगी क्योंकि उसके बिना हमें अपेक्षित नतीजे नहीं मिल सकते। कई लोगों ने मांग बढ़ाने के लिए उपभोक्ताओं को प्रोत्साहन देने के बजाय कर कटौती अपनाते को लेकर आशंका प्रकट की है। कुछ विशेषज्ञों ने कहा कि ऐसे सुधार बुनियादी क्षेत्र में वृद्धि पैदा करने से लेकर कृषि-व्यय तक। इसके अतिरिक्त मांग के मोर्चे पर भी सुसंगतता कायम करनी होगी क्योंकि उसके बिना हमें अपेक्षित नतीजे नहीं मिल सकते। कई लोगों ने मांग बढ़ाने के लिए उपभोक्ताओं को प्रोत्साहन देने के बजाय कर कटौती अपनाते को लेकर आशंका प्रकट की है।

ये चिन्ताएं सही हो सकती हैं लेकिन ऐसी तुलना में अहम मानक यह है कि परिस्थितियां समतुल्य हैं या अलग। उदाहरण के लिए क्या बाजार बड़े हैं और उनमें विस्तार की संभावना

है या नहीं? विविधता है या नहीं? कहीं बाजार संतृप्त तो नहीं हैं वगैरह, वगैरह। हालांकि शेर बाजार ने इस पर बहुत उत्साहजनक प्रतिक्रिया दी लेकिन विशेषज्ञों का मत बंटो हुआ था क्योंकि मांग कमजोर थी और ये प्रोत्साहन आपूर्ति क्षेत्र को दिया गया था। एक और वजह यह है कि ज्यादा कर चुकाने वाली कंपनियों को सबसे अधिक लाभ होता है जबकि ज्यादातर कंपनियां प्रत्यक्ष तौर से लाभ नहीं कमा रही हैं। सर्वाधिक करदाताओं के लिए मुनाफा 11 फीसदी तक बढ़ेगा जबकि एफएमसीजी कंपनियों मसलन एचयूएल, आईटीसी तथा नेस्ले का मुनाफा 9 फीसदी तक बढ़ सकता है। सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी और औषधि कंपनियों के मुनाफे में 5 से 6 फीसदी बढ़ोतरी होने का अनुमान है। मौजूदा वाहन निर्माताओं को इस मंदा में प्रत्यक्ष लाभ मिलता नहीं दिख रहा है। हालांकि नई कंपनियों को 17 फीसदी कर चुकाना होगा जो सिंगापूर के बराबर है। बहरहाल कई वाहन कलपुर्जा निर्माता कंपनियों जो अब तक 29 से 35 फीसदी तक कर दे रही थीं, उनके मुनाफे में 4 से 10 फीसदी का इजाफा होगा। क्रिसिल ने 80 क्षेत्रों में करीब 1,000 कंपनियों का अध्ययन किया और पाया कि मुनाफे में कुल मिलाकर 37,000 करोड़ रुपये का इजाफा होगा। जबकि स्टेट बैंक ने करीब 3,500 कंपनियों के आधार पर (इस समाचार पत्र ने 490 कंपनियों के आधार) अनुमान लगाया है कि मुनाफे में 45,000 करोड़ रुपये का सुधार होगा। इंडिया रेटिंग्स ने इसके 60,000 करोड़

रुपये रहने की बात कही। इस मुनाफे के चलते कीमतों में कमी आ सकती है जिससे मांग बढ़ेगी।

बहरहाल देश की कर दरें अभी भी प्रतिस्पर्धी नहीं हैं। इसी समाचार पत्र में हाल ही में प्रकाशित एक आलेख में कहा गया कि प्रभावी कर दर की बात करें तो अभी भी लाभांश पर कर और शेर व पुनर्खरीद को जोड़ने पर यह मौजूदा विनिर्माताओं के लिए 46.2 फीसदी तथा नए विनिर्माताओं के लिए 41.1 फीसदी है। वियतनाम और थाईलैंड में यह दरें 20 फीसदी और इंडोनेशिया तथा चीन में 25 फीसदी हैं। बुनियादी ढांचे में सुधार (मसलन पानी, बिजली, सीबरेज और कचरा प्रबंधन, संचार, परिवहन और लॉजिस्टिक आदि) और विधि व्यवस्था आदि के क्षेत्र में कुछ कदम उठाकर आपूर्ति क्षेत्र को प्रतिस्पर्धी बनाया जा सकता है। एक मांग स्थिर और सक्रिय जीएसटी व्यवस्था की है जहां दरों में कमी हो और जो आय कर कटौती से मेल खाए।

यदि समय, ऊर्जा और धन को सही तरीके से इन क्षेत्रों में निवेश किया जाए तो संभावनाओं का काफी विस्तार हो सकता है। इसके पश्चात कौशल और शिक्षा की मदद से व्यवस्थित विकास को आगे ले जाया जा सकता है।

कर छूट और बुनियादी ढांचा

व्यवस्थित विचार प्रक्रिया, विस्तृत प्रक्रिया प्रवाह और परियोजना प्रबंधन के क्षेत्र में

व्यास कमियों के अलावा मुक्त बाजार के विचार तथा किसी भी प्रकार की औद्योगिक नीति के प्रयोग को लेकर भी भ्रम की स्थिति बनी हुई है। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि सामाजिक नियोजन वाली अतीत की गलतियों के उदाहरण हमारे सामने आ चुके हैं। यहां हमें पेशकदमी करनी होगी। या तो कॉर्पोरेट कर छूट की तरह की सुविधा प्राप्त होगी या फिर नाकामी हाथ लगेंगी।

विकास संबंधी प्राथमिकता के लिए डिजिटलीकरण

ब्रॉडबैंड और डिजिटलीकरण के क्षेत्र में हमारे प्रयास निराश करने की हद तक निष्प्रभावी हैं। यह एक ऐसा उदाहरण है जहां हमें ब्रॉडबैंड के विकास में चीन के रुख को प्राथमिकता से अपनाना चाहिए। इसे एक मजबूत औद्योगिक नीति के माध्यम से गति देनी चाहिए। चीन में इसने महत्वपूर्ण आर्थिक भूमिका निभाई और चीन के लोगों को इसका आर्थिक लाभ भी मिला। भारत के लक्ष्य भी इससे अलग नहीं हैं लेकिन ब्रॉडबैंड को अपनाने की विस्तृत योजना और विनिर्माण को बढ़ावा नजर नहीं आता। बिना विस्तृत और कदम दर कदम प्रस्तावों के ई-सेवाओं से उम्मीद बांध ली गई है। चीन में ब्रॉडबैंड नेटवर्क को आखिरकार सार्वजनिक बुनियादी ढांचे के रूप में चिह्नित कर लिया गया और उसे सरकारी योजनाओं में शामिल किया गया। वहां स्पेक्ट्रम की नीलामी नहीं की गई। राज्य का स्वामित्व इसकी बुनियाद थी और ब्रॉडबैंड में निजी निवेश विभिन्न इमारतों और सार्वजनिक सुविधाओं (हवाई अड्डे, सबवे, राजमार्ग) आदि में सेवा की पहुंच बनाने में किया गया। इस दौरान नीतिगत रूप से यह सुनिश्चित किया गया कि सभी सेवा प्रदाताओं को समान पहुंच मिल सके।

दो अन्य घटनाएं इससे जुड़ी हुई हैं। एक है स्पेक्ट्रम और बुनियादी ढांचे की साझेदारी। जुलाई में ब्रिटेन ने कारोबारी जगत, संगठनों और मोबाइल कंपनियों को आवंटित तीन बैंड तक सार्वजनिक पहुंच सुनिश्चित कर दी। कोई भी न्यूनतम शुल्क देकर इनका इस्तेमाल कर सकता था। दूसरा है करीब 185,000 कर्मचारियों वाली बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल की खस्ता हालत। कर रियायत की तरह सरकार निजी क्षेत्र के साथ सलाह मशविरों और भागीदारी से कुछ ऐसे कदम उठा सकती है।

■ केंद्रीकृत/क्लाउड रेडियो पहुंच नेटवर्क के साथ लाभकारी साझा बुनियादी नीति को अपनाना

■ भुगतान आधारित इस्तेमाल तय करके तमाम उपलब्ध स्पेक्ट्रम तक पहुंच उपलब्ध कराना।

■ सार्वजनिक सुरक्षा और जनहित के लिए बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल को अंशधारक बनाना और निजी सेवा प्रदाताओं के साथ एक समूह का गठन।

यदि हम इस रुख को विस्तार दें और सामूहिक लाभ के लिए इसे तमाम संसाधनों से जोड़ें तो हमारे हित कम लागत में पूरे हो सकते हैं।

शिव सेना की बदलती राजनीति और चुनावी राजनीति में ठाकरे परिवार

शिव सेना की शुरुआत सन 1966 में हुई थी। परंतु तब से अब तक इसकी स्थापना करने वाले ठाकरे परिवार के किसी सदस्य ने चुनाव नहीं लड़ा है। बाल ठाकरे, उनके बेटे उद्धव ठाकरे और पोते आदित्य ठाकरे ने भी नहीं। परंतु अब बदलाव होता दिख रहा है। पार्टी आदित्य ठाकरे को मुंबई के वर्ली इलाके से चुनाव में उतारने जा रही है। यह इलाका मध्य वर्ग के दबदबे वाला है। यहां प्रत्याशी और निर्वाचन क्षेत्र दोनों महत्वपूर्ण हैं क्योंकि ये हमें बताते हैं कि शिव सेना का राजनीतिक भविष्य किस दिशा में जाने वाला है।



सियासी हलचल आदिति फडणीस

सबसे पहले बात करते हैं युवा आदित्य ठाकरे की। वह कवि और छायाकार हैं। उनकी पहली कविता पुस्तक 2007 में प्रकाशित हुई थी जिसका शीर्षक था, 'माई थॉट्स इन व्हाट रेड ब्लैक'। अगले वर्ष केवल 17 वर्ष की उम्र में बतौर गीतकार उनका प्राइवेट एलबम बाजार में आया। 'उम्मीद' नामक इस म्यूजिक वीडियो में उनके लिखे आठ गाने शामिल थे। इस एलबम में न केवल सुरेश वाडेकर, शंकर महादेवन, कैलाश खेर-छात्राओं को नस्ली साहित्य गायक-गायिकाओं ने अपनी आवाज दी, बल्कि उनके दादा बाल ठाकरे ने यह भी सुनिश्चित किया कि इस एलबम का लोकार्पण अमिताभ बच्चन करें। इस कार्यक्रम में 82 वर्षीय ठाकरे ने अपने पोते को सलाह दी थी कि बहुत तेज न चलें लेकिन ज्यादा धीमे चलना भी अच्छा नहीं होता। लता मंगेशकर ने ठाकरे के आवास मातोश्री जाकर युवा कवि को उसकी उपलब्धि के लिए बधाई दी थी।

जल्दी ही आदित्य पार्टी की युवा इकाई युवा सेना के अध्यक्ष बन गए। उनके जीमेल एड्रेस में भी टाइगर शब्द शामिल है। उन्हें पहली राजनीतिक सफलता तब मिली जब उनके नेतृत्व में युवा सेना ने मुंबई विश्वविद्यालय को मजबूर किया कि वह कनाडा वासी लेखक रोहंटन मिस्त्री की किताब सच अ लॉनिंग जर्नी को अपने पाठ्यक्रम से हटाए। बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड को दिए एक साक्षात्कार में उन्होंने इस किताब को लेकर अपनी आपत्ति के बारे में बताया था। उन्होंने कहा कि यह किताब नस्लवादी और अनावश्यक विचारों से भरी है। उन्होंने कहा, 'मां-बाप के रूप में सोचिए, आप अपने बच्चों को ऐसी

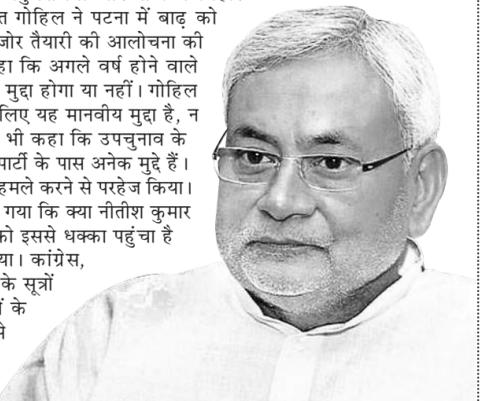
वैचारिक स्थिति की समीक्षा करनी पड़ी। मुंबई के बाहर विस्तार करने और कोल्हापूर तथा नागपुर जैसे तेजी से उभरते कारोबारी केंद्रों में अपनी पहुंच बनाने के लिए उसे कहीं ज्यादा व्यापक चिन्ताओं का प्रदर्शन करना था। अब वह अधिक आक्रामक, हस्तक्षेपकारी हिंदुत्व के साथ आगे बढ़ रही थी, जिसमें पाकिस्तानी खिलाड़ियों को खेलने की इजाजत वाले क्रिकेट मैच का विरोध भी शामिल था। अन्य नेताओं मसलन छगन भुजबल और मनोहर जोशी आदि ने चुनाव लड़े लेकिन ठाकरे परिवार ने नहीं। उद्धव ठाकरे को पहले पार्टी का कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष बनाया गया और पिता के निधन के बाद वह अध्यक्ष बन गए लेकिन उन्होंने चुनावी राजनीति से दूरी बरकरार रखी। इस बीच शिव सेना दो फाड़ हो गई। एक धड़ा उनके चचेरे भाई राज ठाकरे के साथ चला गया। उद्धव ने पार्टी की नीति तय करने पर ध्यान दिया। यह नीति थी भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) के वफादार विपक्ष की भूमिका। उन्होंने शिव सेना को केवल शहरी क्षेत्र (वृहन्मुंबई महानगर पालिका यानी बीएमसी में उसके रसूख के चलते) से निकाल कर ग्रामीण महाराष्ट्र में उसकी जरूरत को बढ़ावा दिया। सन 2009 के विधानसभा चुनाव में ग्रामीण महाराष्ट्र की 44 सीटों में से सेना 26 सीटें जीतने में कामयाब रही। उसे 15 शहरी और तीन अर्द्ध शहरी सीटों पर भी जीत मिली। सन 2014 में पार्टी की सीटों की तादाद बढ़कर 63 हो गई। इस बार उसे ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 34, शहरी क्षेत्र में 23 और अर्द्ध शहरी क्षेत्रों में छह सीटों पर जीत मिली थी।

सवाल यह है कि आदित्य ठाकरे इनका प्रबंधन करने के बजाय चुनाव क्यों लड़ रहे हैं? उन्होंने विधायक बनने की अपनी इच्छा कभी नहीं छिपाई। वहीं पार्टी की अब लड़ा रहा है कि सरकार की आलोचना करने में समय गंवाने के बजाय उसका हिस्सा बनकर जरूरी असर डालना कहीं ज्यादा बेहतर है। प्राप्त जानकारी के मुताबिक आदित्य ठाकरे भाजपा से अपनी पार्टी के लिए उपमुख्यमंत्री का पद मांग सकते हैं। उद्धव ठाकरे पार्टी प्रमुख बने रहेंगे। इस तरह शिव सेना सरकार में भी रहेगी और उससे बाहर भी। इससे बेहतर भला क्या हो सकता है?

कानाफूसी

सभी विकल्प खुले

बीते एक सप्ताह के दौरान कांग्रेस के प्रवक्ताओं ने लगातार संवाददाता सम्मेलन आयोजित कर बिहार में बाढ़ की स्थिति को प्रमुखता से उठाया है। लेकिन इन सम्मेलनों में भी वे मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार पर किसी प्रकार का प्रहार करने से बचते रहे। यहां तक कि जब कांग्रेस के राज्य सभा सदस्य अभिषेक मनु सिंघवी और पार्टी में बिहार मामलों के प्रभारी शक्तिकांत गोहिल ने पटना में बाढ़ को लेकर राज्य सरकार की कमजोर तैयारी की आलोचना की तब भी उन्होंने यह नहीं कहा कि अगले वर्ष होने वाले विधानसभा उपचुनाव में यह मुद्दा होगा या नहीं। गोहिल ने कहा कि उनकी पार्टी के पास अनेक मुद्दे हैं, न कि राजनीतिक। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि उपचुनाव के दौरान उठाने के लिए उनकी पार्टी के पास अनेक मुद्दे हैं। वहीं सिंघवी ने भी व्यक्तिगत हमले करने से परहेज किया। यहां तक कि जब उनसे पूछा गया कि क्या नीतीश कुमार की सुशासन बाबू की छवि को इससे धक्का पहुंचा है तो उन्होंने इसे भी टाल दिया। कांग्रेस, जदयू और राष्ट्रीय जनता दल के सूत्रों पर यकीन करतें तो तीनों दलों के दोबारा मेल की गुंजाइश से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है।



आपका पक्ष

देश में पर्यावरण का मुद्दा शीर्ष हो

जलवायु परिवर्तन पर पेरिस समझौता वर्ष 2020 में कार्यान्वित होने के लिए तैयार है। स्वीडन की 16 वर्षीय किशोरी ग्रेटा का गुस्सा और चिन्ता जायज थीं। उन्होंने संयुक्त राष्ट्र के एक सम्मेलन में जलवायु परिवर्तन मुद्दे पर बयान देकर अपना गुस्सा जाहिर किया था। उन्होंने कहा कि आपने हमारे सपने, हमारा बचपन अपने खोखले शब्दों से छीन लिया है। मैं अभी भी भाग्यशाली हूँ। हालांकि लोग झेल रहे हैं, वह मर रहे हैं, पूरा इको सिस्टम बरबाद हो रहा है। ग्रेटा के बयान की कई देशों के लोगों ने सराहना भी की। भारत में केंद्र सरकार और राज्य सरकार को भी यह स्पष्ट कर देना चाहिए कि कार्बन को शुद्ध रूप से उपभोग के संदर्भ में नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए। बल्कि इसके



उत्पादन में भी हम सभी देशवासियों को विचार करना होगा। जहां ऊर्जा उत्सर्जन की दर अधिक नहीं है तो इसका अर्थ यह नहीं है कि उसे विशेष लाभ मिलना चाहिए। 'व्यक्तिगत उपयोग के लिए उपभोग' के बजाय 'उत्पादन के लिए उपभोग' समस्या बड़ा

पर्यावरण बचाने के लिए पूरे विश्व के लोगों को एकजुट होने की जरूरत है

योगदान कर्ता है। इस संबंध में विचार विमर्श करने की जरूरत है। हमें अपनी विदेश नीति एजेंडे

में जलवायु परिवर्तन और ग्लोबल वार्मिंग के मुद्दे को शीर्ष स्तर पर रखने की जरूरत है। शक्ति और क्षमता में स्वचालन एवं कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता का उपयोग बढ़ता जा रहा है। इसलिए भारत को जलवायु परिवर्तन अनुकूल को एकल प्रौद्योगिकी रूपांतरण के रूप में नहीं देखा चाहिए।

स्वीकृत गुप्ता, फतेहपुर

मंदा में सकारात्मक रहने का प्रयास

इन दिनों समाचार माध्यमों और सोशल मीडिया पर कारोबारी जगत को लेकर लगातार नकारात्मक खबरें प्रकाशित और प्रसारित हो रही हैं। इससे एक प्रकार के भय का माहौल बन रहा है। लोगों को अपनी नौकरी या रोजगार की चिन्ता सताने लगी है। इसका असर उनकी उत्पादकता पर भी पड़ रहा है। व्यापारिक मंदी सार्वजनिक बहस का मुद्दा बन गई है। ऐसे में लोगों में निवेश को लेकर भी असमंजस पैदा हो रहा है कि क्या यह निवेश कभी सही समय है? निवेशक और व्यापारी दोनों इस मंदा में अपने व्यापार और निवेश को उबारने के तरीके तलाश कर रहे हैं। आवश्यकता इस बात की है कि सरकार को लोगों को आश्वस्त करना चाहिए। उन्हें प्रेरित करना चाहिए ताकि वे तमाम आशंकाओं से मुक्त होकर काम कर सकें। आम जनता को भी चाहिए कि वह नकारात्मक खबरों के प्रति जागरूक रहे और आसपास के लोग में भी जागरूकता फैलाये। बेहतर भविष्य के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि हम भयभीत होने के बजाय परिश्रम और अपना कर्म करें।

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@bmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

एक और कवायद

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने शुक्रवार को एक बार फिर नीतिगत दरों में कटौती करते हुए अर्थव्यवस्था की सुरती तोड़ने की कोशिश की है। केंद्रीय बैंक का यह कदम इस बात की ओर इशारा कर रहा है कि बाजार की हालत अच्छी नहीं है, इसलिए नीतिगत दरों में एक चौथाई फीसद की और कटौती करने जैसा कदम उठाने को मजबूर होना पड़ा है। हालांकि केंद्रीय बैंक पहले से कहता रहा है कि जरूरत पड़ने पर नीतिगत दरों में कटौती से वह हिचकेगा नहीं। इसलिए यह कोई चौंकाने वाला कदम भी नहीं है। इस साल सबसे पहले फरवरी, उसके बाद अप्रैल, जून और अगस्त में नीतिगत दरों में लगातार कटौती की गई थी। लेकिन आज भी उसका कोई सकारात्मक नतीजा नहीं नजर आ रहा है। अब रेपो दर एक दशक के सबसे निचले स्तर पर है। ऐसा भी पहली बार हुआ है जब साल में पांच बार नीतिगत दरों में कटौती का कदम उठाया गया हो।

बाजार में लंबे समय से चड़ी समस्या मांग नहीं होने से बनी है। इससे उत्पादन पर बुरा असर पड़ा है। माना जा रहा है कि ब्याज दरें और कम होने से लोग कर्ज लेंगे और कहीं न कहीं उद्योगों में जान आएगी। रीयल एस्टेट क्षेत्र भी रोशन हो सकता है। कुल मिलाकर सरकार के अर्थ-चक्र का गणित त्योहारी मांग पर केंद्रित हो गया है और वह भी खासतौर से घर और गाड़ियों की खरीद पर। अगर मांग निकलती भी है तो थोड़ी बहुत तेजी रीयल एस्टेट बाजार और ऑटोमोबाइल उद्योग में ही बनने के आसार हैं। लेकिन यह सोचने वाली बात है कि अर्थव्यवस्था के दूसरे क्षेत्रों का क्या होगा। त्वरित उपभोग वाला सामान बनाने वाली कंपनियां यानी एफएमसीजी क्षेत्र का क्या होगा जो कई महीनों से मंदी की चपेट में है। इसका वास्ता तो किसी त्योहारी मांग से नहीं होता। जबकि हाल में सरकार ने कारपोरेट करों में कटौती है और माना जा रहा है कि इससे भी कंपनियों के कारोबार में तेजी आएगी और बाजार गुलजार होंगे।

रिजर्व बैंक भी इस हकीकत को भलीभांति समझ रहा है कि मंदी का माहौल जल्दी पीछा नहीं छोड़ने वाला। नीतिगत दरों में बार-बार कटौती इस उम्मीद में ही की गई कि वाणिज्यिक बैंक ब्याज दरें घटाएंो और इसका फायदा लोगों तक पहुंचेगा। कर्ज लेने वालों की तादाद बढ़ेगी। पर देखने में यही आया कि ज्यादातर बैंकों ने अपनी तिजोरी नहीं खोली और नीतिगत दरों के अनुरूप ब्याज दरों में कटौती नहीं की। इससे कर्ज सरता नहीं हुआ। अब रिजर्व बैंक ने इस बात पर सख्ती दिखाई है और यह अनिवार्य किया है कि ब्याज दरें नीतिगत दरों के अनुरूप ही रखी जाएगी। अगर नीतिगत दरों में कटौती का लाभ उपभोक्ता बाजार को नहीं मिलता है तो यह कदम निरर्थक साबित होता है। बैंक कर्ज सरते भले कर लें, लेकिन अब चौकन्ने हैं। खुल कर कर्ज बांटने से इसलिए बच रहे हैं, ताकि कहीं कर्ज डूब न जाए। छोटे उद्यमियों के लिए भी रिजर्व बैंक ने कर्ज की सीमा इसीलिए बढ़ाई है, ताकि उन्हें आसानी से कर्ज मिल सके और छोटे उद्योग रफ्तार पकड़ें। बाजार में नगदी संकट भी है। नोटबंदी के बाद से बैंकों में धन रखने को लेकर लोगों के मन में डर-सा बैठ गया है। इसलिए लोग जमा नगदी को निकालने से परहेज कर रहे हैं। पिछले दस-बारह महीने की मंदी ने लाखों लोगों का रोजगार छीन लिया है। इससे भी क्रय-शक्ति पर बुरा असर पड़ा है। ऐसे में सवाल उठता है कि इस बार भी नीतिगत दरों में कटौती क्या बाजार में जान फूंक पाएगी!

आतंक का साया

इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि राजधानी दिल्ली सहित देश के दूसरे तमाम इलाकों में आतंकवादियों का सामना करने के लिए सुरक्षा बलों की तैयारी ऐसी है कि वे किसी भी आतंकी गतिविधि का सामना और उसे नाकाम कर सकते हैं। फिर भी यह चिंता की बात है कि सीमाई इलाकों में घुसपैठ के बाद अब आतंकियों के दिल्ली तक में आ धमकने की खबरें आई हैं। खुफिया सूचना के मुताबिक पिछले हफ्ते शहर में घुसे तीन से चार आत्मघाती आतंकी दरअसल जैश-ए-मोहम्मद से जुड़े हैं, जो जम्मू-कश्मीर का विशेष दर्जा खत्म किए जाने से बौखलाए हुए हैं और दिल्ली में बड़े हमले को अंजाम देने की फिराक में हैं। जाहिर है, यह अतिरिक्त सावधानी बरतने का समय है और इसी वजह से दिल्ली पुलिस के विशेष दरते ने बिना देरी किए एहतियाती कार्रवाई करते हुए कई जगहों पर छापा मारा और कुछ संदिग्धों को हिरासत में लिया। लेकिन यह अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में हुए घटनाक्रमों के बाद अलगाववादी संगठनों के भीतर किस तरह की हताशा छाई होगी और वे घात लगा कर नुकसान पहुंचाने की फिराक में होंगे।

लगभग दो महीने पहले जब जम्मू-कश्मीर में अनुच्छेद 370 के संदर्भ में जो फैसला लिया गया था, तभी से यह आशंका उत्प्राई जा रही थी कि इसके बाद वहां के आतंकी संगठनों की ओर से प्रतिक्रिया आ सकती है। इसीलिए केंद्र सरकार ने कश्मीर में अधिकतम और उच्च स्तर पर सुरक्षा व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित की और हालात के बेलगाम होने की आशंका के मद्देनजर अतिरिक्त सुरक्षा बलों की तैनाती की। इन तमाम एहतियात की वजह से कश्मीर में कोई बड़ा विरोध सामने नहीं आया और उम्मीद की जा रही है कि कुछ दिनों में स्थितियां सामान्य हो जाएंगी। लेकिन आतंकवादी संगठनों को शायद इसी बात से दिक्कत है कि इतने महत्वाकांक्षी फैसले के बावजूद कश्मीर में शांति क्यों बनी रही! शायद यही वजह है कि वे अब पहले की तरह आत्मघाती हमलों का रास्ता अख्तियार करके एक बार फिर घाटी को आतंक की आग में झोंकना चाहते हैं। लेकिन यह राहत की बात है कि देश के सुरक्षा बलों ने अब तक ऐसी हर अवांछित गतिविधि का वक्त पर सही जवाब दिया है और आतंकवादियों पर काफी हद तक लगाम लगी है।

यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि सीमापार से भारतीय इलाकों में घुसने की लगातार कोशिशों को सुरक्षा बलों ने किस तरह से नाकाम किया है। खासतौर पर पिछले कुछ समय से कश्मीर में घुसपैठ के मौके नहीं मिल पाने की वजह से आतंकवादियों के बीच हताशा का माहौल है। हाल के दिनों में यह साफ होकर उभरा है कि जैश-ए-मोहम्मद और लश्कर-ए-तैयबा जैसे संगठनों के सरगना अपने पाकिस्तान स्थित टिकानों से भारत में आतंकी गतिविधियां संचालित करते हैं। लेकिन भारत की तरफ से बार-बार इस ओर ध्यान दिलाने और शिकायत के बावजूद पाकिस्तान ने ऐसी कोई पहलकदमी नहीं की, जिससे उसकी सीमा से काम करने वाले आतंकी संगठनों को रोका जा सके। उल्टे पाकिस्तान ने अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंचों पर मनमाने तरीके से कश्मीर का मुद्दा उठाया और भारत को कठघरे में खड़ा करने की कोशिश की। लेकिन अब तक उसे दुनिया के किसी भी देश की ओर से ठोस समर्थन मिलना मुमकिन नहीं हुआ। जाहिर है, पाकिस्तान स्थित आतंकवादी संगठनों के लिए इसे पचा पाना असहज है और वे भारत को दूसरे स्तर पर नुकसान पहुंचाने की मंशा रखते हैं। राजधानी दिल्ली में आतंकियों की घुसपैठ की कोशिश इसी पृष्ठभूमि क नतीजा हो सकती है। इन आशंकाओं के मद्देनजर जरूरत इस बात की है कि सुरक्षा-व्यवस्था चाक-चौबंद हो और कोई भी ऐसी गुंजाइश नहीं छोड़ी जाए, जो बाद में किसी असुविधा का कारण बने।

कल्पमेधा

उन व्यक्तियों में मैं महानतम पद भी स्वीकार नहीं करुंगा जो न तो सपने देखते हैं और न ही इच्छाएं पालते हैं।

–**खलील जिब्रान**

जन्सत्ता

योगेश कुमार गोयल

पहले जहां युद्धपोतों के निर्माण क्षेत्र में सरकारी शिपायार्डों का ही एकाधिकार था और उन पर इनके निर्माण के लिए भारी दबाव भी रहता था, वहीं पिछले कुछ वर्षों से मेक इन इंडिया नीति के तहत निजी क्षेत्र द्वारा भी इस क्षमता को हासिल कर लेने के बाद इन जहाज कारखानों पर युद्धपोतों को बनाने का दबाव कम हुआ है और देश को अत्याधुनिक युद्धपोत भी समय से मिलने लगे हैं।

एक ओर जहां वायुसेना में शामिल हो रहे अत्याधुनिक लड़ाकू विमान, हेलिकॉप्टर और मिसाइल प्रणालियां भारतीय वायुसेना को दिनों-दिन ताकतवर बना रही हैं, वहीं पिछले कुछ समय में भारतीय नौसेना में शामिल हुए अत्याधुनिक जंगी जहाज और पनडुब्बियां भी भारत की समुद्री सीमाओं की सुरक्षा में सक्षम हैं। वर्ष 2008 के मुंबई हमले के बाद भारत के पश्चिमी समुद्री तट की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था को मजबूत करने के लिए सरकार ने कई सुरक्षात्मक कदम उठाए हैं, जिनमें से समुद्री सीमा में अपतटीय गश्ती पोतों की तैनाती भी प्रमुख है। पिछले कुछ समय में अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप से लेकर म्यांमा की सीमाओं तक चीन ने अपनी सैन्य गतिविधियां बढ़ाई हैं। इस वजह से भी हिंद महासागर में सुरक्षा बढ़ाना भारत के लिए अनिवार्य हो गया है। यही कारण है कि देश की समुद्री सुरक्षा को चाक-चौबंद करने के लिए रक्षा मंत्रालय नौसेना

पूनम पांडे

मीठी-मीठी गुलाबी सर्दी के संकेत आने लगे हैं। इसके साथ ही छत पर टहलना, ठहरना बहुत अच्छा लगाने लगा है। कुछ दिनों के बाद से जनवरी तक हर जगह छतों पर खिलखिलाहट बिखरने लगेगी। ऐसा लगेगा कि छतें आबाद हो रही हैं। छतें सचमुच जीवन की कहानियां सुना कर जीवन जीने के लिए तैयार करती हैं। जीवन का इतना रस देकर भी, खुशी के मोती लुटा कर भी छतें सदियों से वैसी ही निश्चल हैं। एक यात्रा के दौरान कई शहरों में थोड़ी-थोड़ी देर ठहरते हुए वहां की अलहड़ रवानगी को खूब महसूस किया। वहां की छतों पर जीवन का ताना-बाना पूरी मस्ती में तरंगित होता दिखा। ऐसा लगा कि पतंग उड़ाने बच्चों के साथ छत अपना घूघट उठा कर लहालोट हो रही हो। संस्कृति की आबोहवा का पूरा रंग रास्ते भर छतों से हमारी तरफ छलकता हुआ दिखाई दिया और यात्रा पूरी करने तक धड़कनों में रहा भी। गांव और कस्बों में छतों पर उल्लास देख कर समझ में आता है कि जीवन की उमंग और तरंग किसी खास सुविधा की मोहताज नहीं है।

ऐसे नजारे देखने को मिल जाते हैं कि बड़ी मंगैरी

आपदा को न्योता

बाढ़ को हमेशा से प्राकृतिक आपदा के रूप में गिना जाता रहा है लेकिन हमें सोचना चाहिए कि जंगलों का विनाश तो प्राकृतिक नहीं है, कंक्रीट के जंगल प्राकृतिक नहीं हैं, नदियों पर बांध प्राकृतिक नहीं हैं और न ही वैश्विक तापमान का बढ़ना प्राकृतिक है। विकास की अंधी दौड़ में जंगलों का नाश हुआ, आधुनिक नगर बसे, उद्योगों का विकास हुआ, वैश्विक तापमान बढ़ा और जलवायु में परिवर्तन हुआ। और इन्हीं सब कारणों से बाढ़ जैसी आपदाओं की बारंबारता बढ़ी। बाढ़ पहले भी आती थीं लेकिन अब इनकी आवृत्ति से लगता है कि मानव ही इन्हें बुलाता है। बाढ़ का मुख्य कारण प्राकृतिक कम और मानव जनित ज्यादा प्रतीत होता है।

वैश्विक जलवायु में परिवर्तन और तापमान में वृद्धि के कारण ही वर्षा के समय में भी परिवर्तन हुआ है। पहले तीन ही मुख्य मौसम होते थे पर अब कई मौसम हैं। जैसे प्रचंड गर्मी है, वैसे ही ठंड है। बेमौसम बारिश का नतीजा भी बाढ़ के रूप में सामने आता है। आधुनिक शहरों का कुप्रबंधन भी बाढ़ का मुख्य कारण है, वरना तीन घंटे की बारिश में मुंबई में बाढ़ कैसे आ सकती है?

जल प्रबंधन तथा आपदा प्रबंधन के साथ-साथ कुछ महत्त्वपूर्ण उपायों के जरिए बाढ़ से बचा जा सकता है। बहुचर्चित नदी जोड़ परियोजना से बाढ़ की बारंबारता और स्थितने वाली नदियों को आपस में जोड़ कर अतिरिक्त जल का प्रबंधन किया जा सकता है। छोटे व बड़े स्तर पर ‘वाटर हार्वेस्टिंग’ तकनीक के व्यापक और अनिवार्य क्रियान्वयन से अतिरिक्त जल को सीधे भूमि में स्थानांतरित किया जा सकता है, जिससे बाढ़ से राहत तो मिलेगी ही,

को अत्याधुनिक समुद्री जहाजों, पनडुब्बियों और नावों से लेस करने में जुटा है।

चीन ‘वन बेल्ट वन रोड’ योजना के तहत हिंद महासागर में गतिविधियां बढ़ा रहा है। चीन के इस बढ़ते दबदबे को लेकर भारत सहित दुनिया के कई देशों में चिंता होना स्वाभाविक है। इस योजना के तहत चीन एशिया और अफ्रीका के कई देशों में अपनी नौसेना की मौजूदगी बढ़ा रहा है। इसी के चलते पिछले साल भारत और फ्रांस के बीच ‘मैरीटाइम अवेयरनेस’ समझौता भी हुआ था, जिसके तहत दोनों देश नौसैनिक अड्डों पर युद्धपोत रख सकेंगे। फ्रांस के साथ यह समझौता इसलिए महत्त्वपूर्ण है कि उसके पास ताकतवर समुद्री सेना के अलावा परमाणु हथियारों से लैस पनडुब्बियां भी हैं।

पिछले दिनों गश्ती पोत ‘वराह’ को तटरक्षक बल में शामिल किया गया था। अनटाइनेबे मीटर लंबाई वाले गश्ती पोत वराह का डिजाइन और निर्माण देश में ही किया गया है, जो तलाश, बचाव कार्य और समुद्री गश्ती संचालन के लिए दो इंजन वाले हेलिकॉप्टर और तीव्र गति की चार नौकाओं को ले जाने में सक्षम है। इसके अलावा इसमें समुद्र में तेल फैलने जैसी घटनाओं से बचाव के लिए प्रदूषण नियंत्रक उपकरण भी लगे हैं और यह च्विकित्सा सुविधाओं, अत्याधुनिक नौवहन, मशीनरी, सेंसर और आधुनिक निगरानी प्रणालियों से लैस है। आइसीजीएस ‘वराह’ पर 30 एमएम और 12.7 एमएम की बंदूकों से लैस है। इस पोत में एकीकृत निगरानी प्रणाली, स्वचालित ऊर्जा प्रबंधन प्रणाली, उच्च क्षमता की अग्निशमन प्रणाली, स्वदेश निर्मित एकीकृत पोत प्रबंधन प्रणाली लगी है। ‘वराह’ तटरक्षक बल के सात समुद्री गश्ती पोत की शृंखला में चौथा है।

पहले जहां युद्धपोतों के निर्माण क्षेत्र में सरकारी शिपायार्डों का ही एकाधिकार था और उन पर इनके निर्माण के लिए भारी दबाव भी रहता था, वहीं पिछले कुछ वर्षों से मेक इन इंडिया नीति के तहत निजी क्षेत्र द्वारा भी इस क्षमता को हासिल कर लेने के बाद इन जहाज कारखानों पर युद्धपोतों को बनाने का दबाव कम हुआ है और देश को अत्याधुनिक युद्धपोत भी समय से मिलने लगे हैं। वर्ष 2014 में रक्षा मंत्रालय ने एलएंडटी शिपायार्ड लिमिटेड को सात तटीय पोतों के डिजाइन बनाने से लेकर निर्माण तक की जिम्मेदारी दी थी, जिनमें से चार को निर्धारित समय से पहले ही तैयार कर लिया गया और पांचवें तटीय गश्ती पोत ‘वरद’ को भी अगले कुछ हफ्तों में समुद्री परीक्षण के लिए तैयार

कर लिए जाने की संभावना है। तटरक्षक बल में शामिल हो चुके अन्य तीन युद्धपोतों में आइसीजीएस विक्रम को सिर्फ पच्चीस महीने के भीतर तैयार कर पिछले वर्ष तटरक्षक बल को सौंप दिया गया था। यह पांच हजार समुद्री मील का सफर तय कर सकता है और इस पर हेलिकॉप्टर भी तैनात किए जा सकते हैं। इसके जरिए भारत के द्वीपीय भूभागों की चौकसी के अलावा समुद्री डाकुओं पर भी नजर रखी जा सकती है। इसी तरह आइसीजीएस विजय नामक पोत को भी पिछले साल अप्रैल में नौसेना को सौंप दिया गया था।

पिछले साल ही गश्ती पोत ‘आइसीजीएस वीरा’ को भी तटरक्षक बेड़े में शामिल किया गया था। इस जहाज को एक जुड़वां इंजन वाले हेलिकॉप्टर और चार उच्च गति वाली नौकाओं को ले जाने के लिए डिजाइन किया गया है, जिसमें बोर्डिंग ऑपरेशन, खोज, बचाव, काबून प्रवर्तन और समुद्री गस्त के



लिए दो नावें भी शामिल हैं। ऐसे ही पोतों में आइसीजीएस शौर्य और आइसीजीएस समर्थ भी शामिल हैं। इस समय जितने भी गश्ती पोत बनाए जा रहे हैं, वे सभी स्वदेशी डिजाइन वाले अत्याधुनिक संचार तंत्र, अरपा रडार, चूंबकीय कंपास, स्वचालन की सुविधा, इलेक्ट्रिक चार्ट डिस्ट्रेंस, इको साउंडर इत्यादि सुविधाओं से लैस होंगे।

जहां तक हाल में मुंबई के समुद्र तटों की रक्षा के लिए नौसेना में शामिल हुई पनडुब्बी आइएनएस खंडेरी की बात है तो यह नौसेना की दूसरी सबसे अत्याधुनिक पनडुब्बी है। प्रोजेक्ट-75 के तहत देश के भीतर बनी स्कॉर्पियन श्रेणी की पहली पनडुब्बी आइएनएस कलवरी थी और आइएनएस खंडेरी इसी श्रेणी का दूसरी पनडुब्बी है। मुंबई के महझांगव डॉक

हम छत पर हैं

तोड़ती, चिप्स-पापड़ सुखाती, बच्चों के साथ अठखेलियां करती, छत पर लगाए पौधों की हरियाली से सीमेंट की छत को बागबां कर रही महिलाएं ऊर्जा से भरी लगती हैं। भरपूर हवा और रोशनी में प्रकृति का संग कितना अनुत्ा लगता है! मनुष्य के दिमाग की बनावट ऐसी जटिल है कि आधुनिक जात की निजता और मशीनीपन ने लुटेरों की तरह उसके बिंदास मन की तरंगों को छीन लिया है। महानगरों के ऊंचे अपार्टमेंट के अकेले बंद घरों में बोन्साई जैसे बच्चे ऐसी छत की दोस्ती का मजा कहां लूट पाते हैं! सुबह-शाम छतों पर दौड़ना कितनी ताजगी से भर देता है, यह वे जानें जो कमरे में बैठ कर मोबाइल और टैब के शिकंजे में फंसे हुए हैं। प्रेम, आत्मीयता, आपसी जुड़ाव कितना महत्त्वपूर्ण होता है, इसे छत पर अधिक समय गुजारने वाले लोग बखूबी समझते हैं। लेकिन आज हमारे पास छत पर जाकर बैठने का समय ही कहां है! वे आत्मीय रिश्ते जो एक छत से दूसरी छत तक हवा के झोकों की तरह महसूस किए जाते थे, अब सोशल मीडिया के ‘स्माइली’ बन कर दम तोड़ रहे हैं। बरामदे और बालकनी के बाद भावों के संगम की तीसरी नदी है तो वह है छत! अकेलापन हर लेती छतें बहुत ही

दुनिया मेरे आगे

से ज्यादा दिक्कतों की वजह एक ही है कि मन को खोलते तो सब हैं, लेकिन मन की किताब को कम ही लोग पढ़ पाते हैं। बादल को अगर पानी कह दिया जाए तो मन भी नहीं जाता। हमारे बचपन की छत पर बैठने वाली बुआ-चाची छतों पर ही एक-दूसरे को साफ-साफ बताती थीं अपनी दबी हुई सिसकी का असली कारण। ओढ़ी हुई हंसी की असली वजह और इस तरह एक-दूसरे से जुड़ी रहती थीं छतों में। उनकी एक अपनी ही दुनिया होती थी।

काफका का दर्शन है जा मार्खेंज का जादुई यथार्थवाद या फिर ओशो का अनूठा चिंतन, हम सबके भीतर एक किताब होती है वह बात जो चैन से सोने गए हैं, लेकिन इनका मकसद लोगों की व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता का हनन करना नहीं, बल्कि शांति एवं व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित करना है। इसे सुनिश्चित करने में इसलिए बाधाएं आ रही हैं कि कुछ लोग अराजकता फैलाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। ऐसे तत्त्वों पर लगाम लगाना सरकार का दायित्व है। इसी तरह उन तत्त्वों पर भी लगाम लगाना आवश्यक है जो न केवल अलगाववादियों और आतंकवादियों की भाषा बोलने में लगे हुए हैं, बल्कि उनके हितैषी भी बने हुए हैं।

- हेमंत कुमार, गोरार्डीह, भागलपुर, बिहार**

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

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

नई दिल्ली

में बनी खंडेरी का वर्ष 2017 में जलावतरण हुआ था, सागर की गहराइयों में दो साल तक परीक्षण करने के बाद देश की समुद्री सीमाओं की सुरक्षा के लिए खंडेरी को तैनात किया गया है। यह किसी भी युद्धपोत को ध्वस्त करने की अद्भुत क्षमता रखती है। अत्याधुनिक तकनीक से निर्मित स्वदेशी पनडुब्बी खंडेरी को भारतीय समुद्री सीमा की सुरक्षा करने में पूरी तरह से सक्षम इसीलिए माना जा रहा है कि यह मुंबई के तट पर रहकर ही तीन सौ किलोमीटर दूर स्थित दुश्मन के जहाज को नष्ट करने की क्षमता रखती है और इसीलिए इस पनडुब्बी के नौसेना के शामिल होने से नौसेना की ताकत पहले के मुकाबले काफी बढ़ गई है। जंग के दौरान पानी में दुश्मन पर सबसे पहले प्रहार करने वाली कलवरी श्रेणी की यह दूसरी डीजल-इलेक्ट्रिक पनडुब्बी है।

यह एक बार में पैतालीस दिनों तक बारह हजार किलोमीटर का सफर तय करने और समुद्र में क्रीब साढ़े तीन सौ मीटर की गहराई में जाकर गोता लगाने में सक्षम है। यह समुद्र के अंदर करीब 20 समुद्री मील और पानी के ऊपर ग्यारह समुद्री मील की रफ्तार से चलने में सक्षम है। विशेष प्रकार के स्टील से बनी इस पनडुब्बी में उच्च तन्यता शक्ति है, जो अधिक गहराई में जाकर काम करने की क्षमता रखती है। खंडेरी विभिन्न प्रकार के अभियानों जैसे सतह-रोधी युद्धक क्षमता, पनडुब्बी-रोधी युद्धक क्षमता, खुफिया जानकारी जुटाना, क्षेत्र की निगरानी करने जैसे कामों में पूरी तरह सक्षम है। खंडेरी को ‘साइलंट किलर’ कहा जाता है, क्योंकि यह विश्व की सबसे शांत पनडुब्बी है जिसमें रडार, सोनार, इंजन सहित छोटै-बड़े एक हजार से भी अधिक उपकरण

लगे होने पर भी यह बिना आवाज किए पानी में चल सकती है। रडार से बच निकलने के यह विशेष क्षमता इसे अन्य कई पनडुब्बियों की तुलना में अभेद्य बनाने में बेहद महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएगी। खंडेरी के बाद जल्द ही आइएनएस करंज भी नौसेना के बेड़े में शामिल हो जाएगी।

रक्षा विशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि चीन पिछले कुछ वर्षों से जिस प्रकार अपना नौसेना खर्च बढ़ा रहा है, उसे देखते हुए भारतीय नौसेना को भी तेजी से आधुनिकीकरण की जरूरत है। अमेरिकी सुरक्षा विभाग पेंटागन की एक रिपोर्ट में बताया गया था कि कुछ महीने पहले ही चीन ने बड़ी संख्या में परमाणु मिसाइल पनडुब्बियों को नौसेना में शामिल किया है। इससे भारत के लिए खतरा और चुनौती ज्यादा बढ़ गई है।

नहीं देती। पेड़ों के झुरमुट से झांकती है, समंदर की लहर बन कर पेगें से टकराती है, ताक-झांक करती है, मन के दरवाजे पर खटखटाती है, मगर उस आवाज पर गौर न करने से वह किताब अपने पन्नों सहित हो जाती है बिल्कुल खामोश! अगर आप पैंतीस से चालीस की उम्र के आसपास हैं तो कहीं न कहीं, आपने भी अपनी किशोरावस्था के दौरान किसी छत पर मन की ऐसी ही चुप्पियों को मुखर होते हुए देखा होगा। एक बुजुर्ग दादी ने मुस्करा कर बताया- ‘काश! फिर से महफिल जमने लगे छत पर... फिर कुछ अपनापन लौट आए कि वे पल जिंदादिल लंगें। यह एक अधूरी उम्मीद ही तो है, जिसके सहारे हम बूढ़े होकर भी बूढ़े नहीं होते।’

आजकल दुनिया में बहस के बीच होना इतनी बड़ी बात नहीं है, मगर उसमें न कूद पड़ना कहीं ज्यादा बड़ी बात है। इसीलिए उम्मीद और बुजुर्ग दादी की बातों में छत को खोजने का सिलसिला जारी रहेगा। महसूस करना होगा कि छत अपने को गंभीरता से नहीं लिए जाने का हिसाब मांगती है। कई बार थोड़ी देर के लिए चले जाना बहुत देर के लिए लौट आने की तैयारी के लिए बहुत जरूरी होता है। चले जाने से पैदा हुई एक खाली जगह में नई दुनिया बन कर लौट आने की गुंजाइश होती है। छतों का यह दर्शन बड़ा मनभावन है।

इससे तीन माह की अल्प अवधि में ही लगभग दस टन एकल इस्तेमाल प्लास्टिक का उपयोग रुका जो एक मिसाल है। यदि इंदौर का अनुसरण कर देश के अन्य शहरों में भी इस तरह के बर्तन बैंक शुरू किए जायें तो टनों प्लास्टिक और पॉलीथिन का उपयोग रोका जा सकता है।

- संजय डागा, हातोद, इंदौर**

गलत क्या

पिछले दिनों एक खबर के नकारात्मक पक्ष पर तो ध्यान दिया गया लेकिन उसकी सकारात्मकता सुर्खियां नहीं बन पाई। मध्यप्रदेश के खंडवा जिले के प्राथमिक स्कूल सिहाड़ा में बच्चों से टॉयलेट साफ करने का जो वीडियो वायरल हुआ था उस पर विवाद खड़ा हो गया। लेकिन इस विवाद का सबसे सकारात्मक पक्ष यह रहा कि कलेक्टर तन्वी सुंद्रियाल ने कहां कि सारे बच्चे टॉयलेट तो क्या, स्कूल भी साफ करेंं तो इसमें गलत क्या है! उन्होंने जापान की मिसाल देते हुए कहा कि वहां बच्चे स्कूल के हर काम में लगे रहते हैं तो उन्हें लगता है कि यह स्कूल मेरा है, इसे मैं गांदा नहीं कर सकता। आज स्कूलों में बच्चों से साफ-सफाई कराने पर फोटो व समाचार छप जाते हैं और अनावश्यक विवाद पैदा कर दिया जाता है।

हमारे देश की गुरुकुल परंपरा में तो राजा-रंक सभी अपनी शिक्षा-दीक्षा के समय आश्रम की साफ-सफाई करना, पानी लाना, जलाने से लकड़ी लाना या अन्य काम करते थे क्योंकि यह शिक्षा भी जीवनोपयोगी है। जब स्वच्छ भारत अभियान चलाया गया तो प्रधानमंत्री ने सभी देशवासियों को सफाई के प्रति जागरूकता का संदेश दिया था तो स्कूलों में साफ-सफाई कराने में क्या बुराई है! इसे सकारात्मक चश्मे से देखना जरूरी है।

- हेमा हरि उपाध्याय अक्षत, खाचरोद, उज्जैन**