

The real picture

The government's numbers on expenditure and receipts in the first half of the current year do not fully reveal the stress in its finances



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The Union government's revenue and expenditure numbers for the first half of 2019-20 have now been released. If you look at the broad trend and compare it with what was happening during the same time last year, you may be lulled into believing that things are under control and may have actually got better.

The government's total expenditure has been contained at ₹13.44 trillion, which is 53.4 per cent of the Budgeted estimate of ₹27.86 trillion for the full year. You may argue that clocking this rate of expenditure in the first half of the year shows a tight control on government spending. Last year also, during the same period, the government had spent an amount that was again 53.4 per cent of the Budgeted number for 2018-19.

The government's total receipts during April-September 2019 were estimated at ₹8.37 trillion, about 40 per cent of the Budgeted number of ₹20.82 trillion. Last year, this figure was slightly lower at 39 per cent.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the fiscal deficit at ₹6.51 trillion represented 92.6 per cent of the full year's number. Last year, it was much higher at 95.3 per cent. But such signs of an apparent improvement in the government's fiscal health are quite misleading. Remember that last year, the govern-

ment's expenditure was suppressed and reduced by about ₹1.5 trillion by transferring a part of those liabilities to other public sector entities. It would, therefore, appear that this year also the same exercise may have to be undertaken, since the government's total expenditure in 2019-20 is set to grow by over 20 per cent to ₹27.86 trillion, compared to the actual expenditure of ₹23.11 trillion in 2018-19.

What is that expenditure amount, to be transferred to the public sector entities and which will be classified as off-Budget borrowing, is not yet clear. But the expenditure trend so far suggests that there would be a repeat of what happened last year.

The second area of concern is on account of the six-monthly trend in the government's expenditure on major subsidies. The government had budgeted an expenditure of ₹3 trillion for the entire year of 2019-20 on major subsidies on food, fertilisers including urea

and petroleum. But during the first half of the current financial year, it has already spent 70 per cent or ₹2.11 trillion. Last year, during the same period, the government had spent a lower amount of ₹1.88 trillion, but its share in the Budget estimate was 71 per cent.

The bulk of the expenditure compression, leading to transfer of the government's liabilities to a clutch of public sector undertakings, took place under the head of major subsidies. Since 70 per cent of the Budgeted subsidies amount has already been spent, it is only a matter of a few more weeks before the government starts loading the excess burden on the public sector undertakings like Food Corporation of India and the petroleum companies. This is likely because so far there is no indication that the government is planning to clean up its accounts and show all the extra-Budget borrowings as part of the government's borrowing on its own account to reflect the correct level of fiscal deficit.

The third area of concern arises from the government's receipts. The healthy rise in the government's receipts is largely on account of a one-time transfer of the Reserve Bank of India's surplus of about ₹58,000 crore. On the investment front, the trend in the first

six months has not been encouraging. Just about ₹12,400 crore has been received in April-September 2019, against a Budgeted target of ₹1.05 trillion of receipts from disinvestment of the government's equity in public sector undertakings. Meeting that target will require a lot more effort in successfully selling Air India and BPCL.

On the taxation front, the gross tax revenues growth in the first six months of 2019-20 has declined to just 1.43 per cent to ₹9.19 trillion. In the first five months of the year, the growth rate was still higher at 4.25 per cent. Corporation tax growth in April-September too has slowed to 2 per cent, compared to almost 5 per cent in the April-August period. Similar deceleration has been noticed in the collection of personal income-tax and customs duty.

It, therefore, seems that the government's numbers on expenditure and receipts in the first half of the current year do not fully reveal the stress in its finances. Less than three months later, the government will be presenting the Budget for 2020-21. It has a few more weeks before it can make up its mind on whether to transparently recognise the stress in its finances or continue to present a headline deficit number that does not fully reveal the true picture.

CHINESE WHISPERS

War and peace

On Sunday, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was full of praise for Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her efforts to mitigate the impact of cyclone Bulbul. "Adverse impact has been contained, thanks to Hon'ble CM leading from the front..." he tweeted. A welcome break from the ongoing war of words between the two. Last week, Dhankhar had alleged the people of the state were deprived of the benefits of the Centre's flagship health scheme, Ayushman Bharat, because of the stand taken by the state government. The very next day, the state government released a comparison of the two schemes. "Swasthya Sathi is a comprehensive health protection scheme entirely funded by the state government whereas in Ayushman Bharat Vojana, the centre provides 60 per cent of the fund only," Minister of State for Health Chandrima Bhattacharya said in a statement. The state government pulled out of the central scheme in January this year, accusing the central government of making "tall claims". Dhankhar said not everything should be politicised.

Yamraj on duty



To educate train commuters on the perils of crossing railway tracks in an unauthorised manner, the Western Railway has pressed the Hindu god of death, Yamraj, into service. Last week, the Western Railway launched an awareness campaign warning people of the danger to their lives if they do not follow rules. Pictures shared by the Ministry of Railways depict a person dressed as Yamraj carrying passengers on his shoulders — those who attempted to cross the train tracks and perished. "Do not cross the train tracks in an unauthorised manner. It can be fatal..." the Ministry of Railways said in its caption in Hindi.

Master of the game

Speculation on whether Tamil cinema's biggest star Rajinikanth would join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) never died down, not even after he announced plans to launch a political party and contest the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. Rumours started swirling again after his recent meeting with BJP leader Pon Radhakrishnan, but the south star rubbished them, alleging "some people, some media" were trying to falsely paint him with saffron. Critics immediately said he was playing safe after a recent episode when the BJP found itself facing brickbats for tweeting an image of the sixth-century poet sage Thiruvalluvar dressed in a saffron robe and wearing rudraksha rosaries. Images of Thiruvalluvar mostly show him in a white robe without any religious or caste indicator.

A cobbler's suggestions to mend the economy

One-time restructuring of real estate loans and a large fund to buy toxic assets and equity in banks and NBFCs can bring back the animal spirits in the economy



BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

This is an apocryphal story narrated by Rabindranath Tagore in one of his poems. One day King Hobuchandra told his minister Gobuchandra that his feet should not get dirty when he stepped on the ground. Millions of brooms were purchased to ensure a dust-free kingdom but the whole state, the king's palace, and even the sun, got covered by the dust raked up by the brooms. A sick king started coughing.

The water from the lakes and ponds was used liberally to settle the dust. The kingdom was flooded and, much to the king's annoyance, the dust turned into mud. When this experiment failed, it was decided to cover the earth by leather. Millions of sheep and goats were slaughtered but their hide was not enough to do the trick.

Finally, an old cobbler walked into the royal court seeking an audience with the king. Sitting at the king's feet, the cobbler stitched a pair of simple leather

sandals. Now the king could roam around on the dusty roads; his feet would not get dirty again.

The government last week announced a plan to set up a ₹25,000 crore alternative investment fund (AIF) to revive stalled housing projects. The State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation of India will chip in with ₹15,000 crore and the rest will come from the government. The AIF will help in the completion of the housing projects in the affordable and middle income categories, financing them. Even those projects that have defaulted in debt repayment and even dragged into the insolvency court will get funds if they are not facing liquidation.

Finally, the government has identified the cause of distress and distrust in the banking and finance space and the slowing economy. While there is no end to the debate on whether the economic downturn is structural or cyclical or even both, the villain of the piece is the tattered real estate sector.

According to real estate services company Anarock Property Consultants, ₹6.64 trillion worth of projects are stalled across India. Its latest report says the top seven Indian cities have at least 1.9 million under-construction homes. Of this, about 5.76 lakh units, launched in 2013 or before, are stuck at various stages of non-completion and the rest have been launched between 2014 and now. A senior banker who closely tracks the sector pegs the value of stalled real estate projects at ₹7 trillion and says at least 1.5 million ready homes have no takers.



The ₹25,000-crore alternative investment fund will help in the completion of housing projects in the affordable and middle income categories

When the cracks started surfacing in the edifice of India's fast growing NBFC (non-banking finance companies) sector, the first impression was they were suffering from asset-liability mismatches for financing a substantial part of their long-term assets by rolling over short-term liabilities in the form of commercial papers. I had called it a Northern Rock moment for Indian banking. But I was mistaken. The NBFCs, particularly those that were heavily into wholesale funding, also have problems with the quality of assets (because of the comatose real estate market). They smartly passed the parcel to the banking sector.

What we have been witnessing now is a Lehman moment, in slow motion. There is plenty of liquidity in the system but the banks don't trust most NBFCs and are not willing to fund them for fear of losing money. This, in turn, is hurting the economy badly as in the past few years, it was the NBFCs that were driving growth, financing millions in different segments, fuelling demand, while bad assets-laden banks were either restrained from lending by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) or didn't have the

risk appetite to lend. Let me attempt to play the cobbler, an unwanted entry into the king's royal court, and suggest a solution to the problem that has been plaguing Indian banking and, in turn, the economy. An AIF is a good idea but it's too small an amount to make a difference. Going by the reports of various sector analysts, at best it can fund 16 per cent of the stalled projects, assuming they are already half done. Then there are the legal complexities of insolvency proceedings and uncertainties on the return this fund can generate.

The best way to tackle the problem is a one-time restructuring of the banks and the NBFCs' exposure to the real estate sector. It's easier said than done. While the NBFCs have direct exposure to the sector, the banks have both direct and indirect (through the NBFCs) exposures. Besides, there cannot be a blanket forbearance to all such loans but crafted with skill this can offer a big relief to the financial sector.

Taking forward the cobbler analogy, this will cover one foot of the king. For the other foot, we need to create a much larger AIF to rescue troubled banks and

NBFCs on the lines of the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), India's first sovereign wealth fund. The government can own 26 per cent in it and the rest can come from global investors. It must be run by a professional manager with vast experience in investment and commercial banking — someone who can attract investors and spot troubled banks and NBFCs that need capital infusion desperately.

The NIIF, along with two other investors, has recently committed ₹7,614 crore investment to the GVK group which has developed the Mumbai Airport and is developing a few others. It is making this investment on stiff terms that are not easy for GVK to stomach but does it have any choice? Similarly, some of the NBFCs and banks have no choice but to raise capital at any cost. A banking licence in India is a precious commodity. The fund can invest on its own terms, rescue the troubled financial intermediaries, and make tonnes of money.

The Troubled Asset Relief Program of the US is a good model to emulate. Buy toxic assets and equity from NBFCs and banks at a throwaway price, strengthen the financial sector, make money and bring back the animal spirit in the economy.

Historically, the government has infused trillions of rupees into public sector banks with very little or no return on capital. Once the capital comes from others, there is no pressure on the government's fiscal health even as the RBI can draw comfort from the fact that the fund's ownership will improve governance in banks. The regulator can also have its representative on the board of the fund.

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INSIGHT

Moody's rating action and the ₹28 trn revenue push

Penalising banks for past actions is not the best way to make the financial markets work better



Soumya Kanti Ghosh

The present growth slowdown is the combined impact of many factors, some unavoidable. First, the informal shift to inflation targeting happened at a time when the Indian economy was recovering from the high inflation episode. The emphasis on controlling inflation meant a benign neglect of growth. Second, the asset quality review (though necessary) and the prompt corrective action mechanism initiated during the downswing of the business cycle made banks rightfully conservative in lending. Three, the introduction of several structural measures (like GST, that were delayed for long) and implemented within a short period did have an impact on economy in the short term despite their intentions being noble. Fourth, the ultra-conservative fiscal hawkishness and calibrated monetary tightening during 2018, particularly when the economy was beleaguered with capital outflows, choked systemic liquidity and dampened the animal spirits. Fifth, the recent NBFC crisis choked market liquidity from non banks. Finally, the subdued global economy ensured external demand remained weak and failed to stimulate demand. Together, these factors depressed sentiments and stymied demand.

The objective of this piece is not to do a post-mortem of the reasons for the slowdown. Rather, our aim is to first understand some of the common fallacies resulting in policy mistakes that could have been avoided. Next offer some out of the box

IN THE BOOKS

CPSE/state gov't entities fixed assets	Present estimated value as per cost inflation index assuming 1990 as the year of acquisition
Fixed assets (in ₹ cr)	
Gross block	1,826,673
W/w land	140,749
	976,390

Sources: Cline; SBI Research; CPSE/State gov't entities, excluding BSEI sector, where financial starting from FY2017 onwards

thoughts on tackling the slowdown. In this context, the measures announced by the government to set up an alternative real estate fund is a step in the right direction.

Now the mistakes. First, given the supposed lack of fiscal space, should rate cuts by the RBI continue? The cumulative reduction of the policy rate by 135 bps since February should be given adequate time to permeate down and stimulate demand. It is almost certain that more rate cuts will happen in the current fiscal and the external benchmarking might ensure upto 50 bps lending rate reduction over the next four to six months. However, we are now worried that too low rates of EMIs on housing and automobiles, while spurring demand momentarily, may fuel debt-financed consumption and lead to greater credit offtake. The latter might turn illusory if weak sentiments continue. More importantly, bank depositors must be compensated at least to the extent of his/her interest income adequate to meet inflation.

Second, did the AQR and, specifically, the subsequent PCA norms, choke bank lending? Empirical evidence shows that penalising banks for past actions is not the best way to make the financial markets work better. Markets remain fundamentally procyclical, and punishing them for past mistakes may increase such procyclicality, especially during a weakening growth cycle.

Interestingly, in the US during the savings and loan crisis, the larger institutions were deliberately kept out of the PCA norms.

Third, the overemphasis on 3 per cent fiscal deficit defined in the Maastricht Treaty and adopted wholeheartedly in India in times of growth weakness results in costs far outstripping the benefits of macro stability. As an example, the fiscal conservatism prevented growth from returning and now we are stuck in a trap as with low growth, the fiscal deficit will jump and there might be more rating action like that of Moody's (thankfully, markets have discounted that). But in such circumstances, often the use of non-tax revenues to meet fiscal deficit by the government could be fallacious — non-tax revenue growth is inelastic to GDP growth.

Higher non-tax revenue growth can cause sectoral imbalance. A case in point is the telecom sector which witnessed an increase in leverage in 2010 when a major spectrum auction happened. Leverage which stabilised in FY17, increased in the past years. For FY19, the leverage ratio has increased largely due to an erosion in the net worth. The alternative to targeting fiscal deficit is that like most advanced economies and several emerging market economies India should target a structural deficit, which serves as an automatic counter-cyclical stabiliser.

The stimulus must come from fiscal policy which would immediately stimulate consumption demand and investment demand later. Lower income tax rates may be necessary to stimulate consumption demand while a corporate tax rate cut would spur investments with a lag.

There are a couple of things the RBI and the government can do in the current context. First, given the crisis of confidence in the financial markets it is imperative that central banks don't forget their primary function of being the lender of the last resort. Alternatively, it is imperative that the RBI backstops against good quality collat-

eral. They must be identified to ensure the stability of NBFCs so that they can meaningfully withstand any worsening of the situation, both in terms of access to liquidity and in terms of absorbing potential losses. The provision of liquidity is the ultimate responsibility of any central bank and it has been successfully done by the US Fed during the 2008 crisis and later. Why can't we?

Next, aggressive monetisation of government assets. Let us put some numbers to it. According to OECD statistics, in 2010 government financial assets had amounted to 33-43 per cent of GDP in eurozone countries like Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, France, Germany and so on. In 2018, these countries have aggressively used such enormous wealth to their own advantage. There are various ways of doing this. An obvious one is the privatisation of some of the state's assets, and using the proceeds to reduce the stock of government debt. Disposing government assets has no effect on the fiscal position and can also address liquidity problems.

We did a dipstick analysis in the Indian context and found that for 212 CPSE/state government entities, the total stock of such wealth could be at least ₹28 trillion or 15 per cent of GDP. Interestingly, the government can even securitise such assets and use them to offer protection to bondholders or to guarantee the backdrop for the financial sector in case it wants to avoid market volatility and does not want to dispose of public assets that are strategic in nature — such as telecom, energy and so on.

Finally, the government is doing the correct thing in addressing sector-specific problems. NBFC, telecom, roads, power and real estate are sectors that require attention and there must not be any negative sector specific policy surprises in the current uncertain environment.

The author is group chief economic advisor, State Bank of India. Views are personal

LETTERS

A game-changing move

Apropos your editorial, "Reviving housing" (November 8), the finance minister's announcement of the ₹25,000 crore package for the revival of the real estate industry is one of the best measures taken so far to arrest the downward slippage of the economy. The package, if implemented judiciously, has the potential to give a big boost to our doddering growth. The construction industry — with its multiple linkages across sectors like steel, cement, tiles, cables and electric goods including fans, pipes and sanitary ware, doors, windows and hardware, sheet glass etc — can have a far reaching effect on the economy. It will also mean a boost to the transport sector and, more than anything else, provide jobs to many. Great proposal indeed.

The manner in which it is being structured it has excellent chances of success. The Sebi has an unblemished record of being a very sharp watchdog and SBICAP should be a good project manager. With stated emphasis on smaller housing units, it should help a very large number of middle class people who — after investing their hard earned savings as well as loans from various sources — are facing acute stress due to stalled projects. Providing succour to them would be a great confidence building measure. Overall, one doesn't see much of a chance of failure of the project or any downside.

Permit me to mention that your



apprehensions — "it all looks good on paper but things are unlikely to be that straightforward" — are perhaps not correct. Admittedly it would need very meticulous and constant monitoring but even if it "funds only 16 per cent of the stalled projects" it is a giant step forward. SBICAP Ventures having already identified 12 projects is an excellent start and portends well for the scheme.

Indeed, there is a close connection — as you conclude — between the recovery of the real estate sector and the broader recovery of the economy and that is exactly why this move of the government might prove to be a game changer.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

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HAMBONE



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Awaiting real closure

Balance of probabilities argument isn't convincing

The long-awaited Ayodhya judgment has raised hopes of bringing to an end the land dispute in the eastern Uttar Pradesh city — something that has, over the decades, played a crucial role in the transformation of Indian politics and society. The Supreme Court's judgment is particularly careful to locate the reasoning for its decision purely in the legal sphere, insisting that while the dispute may have political and religious implications, as far as the court is concerned it is merely a title dispute, if one of great complexity. In other words, the court's decision can be seen as a clear attempt to apply secular and constitutional principles to the Ayodhya dispute, rather than using the judiciary to pronounce on history and religion. The Allahabad High Court decision, which ordered a trifurcation of the land between the three sets of applicants — so, in effect, one third came to Muslim and two-thirds to the Hindus — was marked by an excavation of historical records and of theology. The apex court judgment puts much less strain on the secular nature of jurisprudence.

That said, questions can and should still be asked about how the Supreme Court made its final decision. Several problematic points stand out in the series of arguments that led the court to award the entire disputed site to the Hindus, with some compensatory land to be given to the Muslims. First, the conclusion, to deny the Muslim claim completely on the "balance of probabilities", is odd, given that the Hindu applicants never furnished proof of their continued worship in the inner courtyard. The fear is that this application of the "balance of probabilities" might conceivably be seen in some quarters as allowing political considerations about the final status of Ayodhya to enter the calculation. Second, the court takes the opinion that the entire site is "composite", which rules out any division in the first place, even if such a division was indeed the historical practice prior to attachment in the last century. Third, the court considers two sections of the disputed site — the "inner courtyard" and "outer courtyard" of the erstwhile mosque — and notes that while there are records of Hindu worship in the outer courtyard, the Muslim applicants have failed to demonstrate continued worship in the inner courtyard.

However, the broader point is that the court judgment, while imperfect, does have the potential to bring closure to this long-running issue. In this context, all political parties and stakeholders in the dispute, right from the prime minister, deserve commendation in that they have taken much of the political heat out of the question in their statements. The prime minister himself cautioned the nation, in advance of the ruling, to not see the judgment in terms of "winning" or "losing". It is to be hoped that the establishment and management of the trust will be similarly inclusive and lack triumphalism, which could open the wounds the court has sought to close. The court, which has been scathing in its judgment about the 1992 demolition, must also ensure that cases related to that breach of law be concluded expeditiously, and that the guilty is punished. That will provide real closure, and allow India to move forward. The law must be seen to be enforced, and then national politics can emerge from the long shadow of Ayodhya.

Another warning

Structural changes needed in every aspect the economy

Moody's decision to change India's credit ratings outlook to negative from stable is another reminder of the deteriorating economic situation. Most economists believe that economic growth in the July-September quarter is likely to have slipped below the six-year low of 5 per cent recorded in the April-June quarter. Growth in the second half of the fiscal year is expected to improve, but largely because of the base effect. Although the change in the ratings outlook is unlikely to have a significant impact, it will dampen sentiment further, as was evident in the stock market on Friday. Rating agencies generally tend to be behind the curve, but Moody's rationale for the change in its view should not be ignored. It reflects an increasing risk that growth would remain significantly low compared to the past because of inadequate reforms to resolve long-standing economic weaknesses. This could lead to a gradual rise in India's debt burden. Further, in its view, the possibilities of reforms that would support growth and significantly broaden the tax base have diminished. These are sharp observations and would not help India in attracting investment.

Although the government has taken steps in recent months to revive growth, they are unlikely to address India's structural weaknesses. In this context, the government has sharply reduced the rate of corporation tax, but it will not be sufficient to revive investment in the short to medium term. India needs more flexible land and labour markets. For instance, India decided not to be part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, at least for now, because of the fear of higher imports. The fact that India could not see this as an opportunity to integrate with the global value chain and become an integral part of the fastest-growing region in the world shows that it has not done enough, over the years, to overcome structural weaknesses and improve competitiveness. This is also reflected in India's exports, which are virtually stagnant for years. It is hard to attain higher sustainable growth without higher exports. However, what is worrying is that there is practically no policy road map that will help India become more competitive.

India needs to address multiple issues. For instance, one of the biggest reasons for the sharp economic slowdown is the stress in the financial sector. While the government and Reserve Bank of India have taken several steps, which would relieve some pressure in the short run, the financial system will continue to be dominated by public sector banks, which are prone to misallocating credit and would remain a drag on the exchequer. Government finance itself is under stress and revenue collection is likely to fall short by a significant margin. Part of the problem is again fundamental. Even after over two years of implementation, the government has not been able to fix the gaps in the goods and services tax. This is affecting its ability to spend in productive areas, which would have helped push growth. Essentially, India needs structural changes in practically every aspect of the economy. For example, its record in contract enforcement is among the poorest in the world. While policymakers may choose to ignore Moody's warning, the world will not.

ILLUSTRATION BY AJAY MOHANTY



The end of neoliberalism

The simultaneous waning of confidence in neoliberalism and in democracy is no coincidence or mere correlation

At the end of the Cold War, political scientist Francis Fukuyama wrote a celebrated essay called "The End of History?" Communism's collapse, he argued, would clear the last obstacle separating the entire world from its destiny of liberal democracy and market economies. Many people agreed.

Today, as we face a retreat from the rules-based, liberal global order, with autocratic rulers and demagogues leading countries that contain well over half the world's population, Fukuyama's idea seems quaint and naive. But it reinforced the neoliberal economic doctrine that has prevailed for the last 40 years.

The credibility of neoliberalism's faith in unfettered markets as the surest road to shared prosperity is on life-support these days. And well it should be. The simultaneous waning of confidence in neoliberalism and in democracy is no coincidence or mere correlation. Neoliberalism has undermined democracy for 40 years.

The form of globalisation prescribed by neoliberalism left individuals and entire societies unable to control an important part of their own destiny, as Dani Rodrik of Harvard University has

explained so clearly, and as I argue in my recent books *Globalization and Its Discontents Revisited* and *People, Power, and Profits*. The effects of capital-market liberalisation were particularly odious: If a leading presidential candidate in an emerging market lost favour with Wall Street, the banks would pull their money out of the country. Voters then faced a stark choice: Give in to Wall Street or face a severe financial crisis. It was as if Wall Street had more political power than the country's citizens.

Even in rich countries, ordinary citizens were told, "You can't pursue the policies you want" — whether adequate social protection, decent wages, progressive taxation, or a well-regulated financial system — "because the country will lose competitiveness, jobs will disappear, and you will suffer."

In rich and poor countries alike, elites promised that neoliberal policies would lead to faster economic growth, and that the benefits would trickle down so that everyone, including the poorest, would be better off. To get there, though, workers would have to accept lower wages, and all citizens would have to accept cutbacks in important government programs.

The elites claimed that their promises were



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

Three hurdles for the realty fund

Following up on its announcement in September, the government has come up with an alternative investment fund (AIF) of ₹25,000 crore for stalled realty projects. This has immediately boosted sentiment and will unlock liquidity for projects where 60-70 per cent work has been completed. The scope is wide: It goes beyond the affordable segment to include units with a ticket size up to ₹1-2 crore and will inject money where it is needed the most — bad real estate loans or those under resolution. If it works, this scheme will help homebuyers, real estate developers, and financiers. According to market sources, this funding will help 1,500 projects, making around half the stalled projects marketable over the next three years.

This scheme is a mini-version of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), which was created by the US government in early October 2008, to prevent a collapse of the financial system brought about by the financial crisis in the same year. Under TARP, the US Treasury stepped in to buy mortgage-backed securities and stocks of commercial and investment banks. TARP ran from 2008 to 2010 and was a financial success, earning a surplus for the Treasury.

In the process, TARP offered a lifeline to the same reckless and buccaneering financiers responsible for causing the crisis in the first place and therefore missed a chance to reform the system from its core. Similarly, in India, while the real estate fund is desirable, the question is: Will this let reckless finance companies and obdurate real estate developers off the hook? In any case, the effectiveness of the fund will depend on several factors.

1. Does the AIF, the saviour, get paid first? An extensive, 37-point FAQ put out by the government

does not answer this crucial question. Put yourself in the AIF's shoes. The first thing you would want to know is whether you will get preferential access to cash inflows. After all, the AIF is coming in to save projects the promoters and lenders have made a mess of. Indeed, there are cases where a project is completed 80-90 per cent and is ripe for short-term private deals, like the AIF would do. But in each of those cases, the potential investor asks: "Since I am helping complete the project, which is otherwise stuck, it is only fair that I am allowed to take my money out first." The lenders cannot agree to this.

The AIF will be in the same situation. If there is no clarity on this, no private institution will invest in the AIF and the government will have to arm-twist various government agencies to do so, eventually leading to a drain of public funds.

There are other issues. The AIF will be a debt fund. What kind of interest rate will it charge? What will be the rights of the fund, alongside bankers and finance companies, which are finding it hard to recover their money? Remember the investment is in stalled projects, on which interest is mounting; many are already bad loans or nearly so, and will soon land up in the National Company Law Tribunal. The FAQ is not clear on any of this, especially the AIF's rights vis-a-vis other lenders.

2. What about the promoter? It is being assumed that money alone is a solution to all stuck projects. In a few cases it is. But in most cases, it is promoter quality that is responsible. Poor planning, overambitious projects, diversion of funds, and no desire to slash prices. The FAQ says the AIF "shall ensure that the end use of funds is only for the purpose of com-

based on scientific economic models and "evidence-based research." Well, after 40 years, the numbers are in: Growth has slowed, and the fruits of that growth went overwhelmingly to a very few at the top. As wages stagnated and the stock market soared, income and wealth flowed up, rather than trickling down.

How can wage restraint — to attain or maintain competitiveness — and reduced government programs possibly add up to higher standards of living? Ordinary citizens felt like they had been sold a bill of goods. They were right to feel conned.

We are now experiencing the political consequences of this grand deception: distrust of the elites, of the economic "science" on which neoliberalism was based, and of the money-corrupted political system that made it all possible.

The reality is that, despite its name, the era of neoliberalism was far from liberal. It imposed an intellectual orthodoxy whose guardians were utterly intolerant of dissent. Economists with heretodox views were treated as heretics to be shunned, or at best shunted off to a few isolated institutions. Neoliberalism bore little resemblance to the "open society" that Karl Popper had advocated. As George Soros has emphasised, Popper recognised that our society is a complex, ever-evolving system in which the more we learn, the more our knowledge changes the behavior of the system.

Nowhere was this intolerance greater than in macroeconomics, where the prevailing models ruled out the possibility of a crisis like the one we experienced in 2008. When the impossible happened, it was treated as if it were a 500-year flood — a freak occurrence that no model could have predicted. Even today, advocates of these theories refuse to accept that their belief in self-regulating markets and their dismissal of externalities as either nonexistent or unimportant led to the deregulation that was pivotal in fueling the crisis. The theory continues to survive, with Ptolemaic attempts to make it fit the facts, which attests to the reality that bad ideas, once established, often have a slow death.

If the 2008 financial crisis failed to make us realise that unfettered markets don't work, the climate crisis certainly should: neoliberalism will literally bring an end to our civilisation. But it is also clear that demagogues who would have us turn our back on science and tolerance will only make matters worse.

The only way forward, the only way to save our planet and our civilisation, is a rebirth of history. We must revitalise the Enlightenment and recommit to honoring its values of freedom, respect for knowledge, and democracy.

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IRRATIONAL CHOICE

DEBASHIS BASU

already bad loans or nearly so, and will soon land up in the National Company Law Tribunal. The FAQ is not clear on any of this, especially the AIF's rights vis-a-vis other lenders.

2. What about the promoter? It is being assumed that money alone is a solution to all stuck projects. In a few cases it is. But in most cases, it is promoter quality that is responsible. Poor planning, overambitious projects, diversion of funds, and no desire to slash prices. The FAQ says the AIF "shall ensure that the end use of funds is only for the purpose of com-

pleting the project", but what is the role of promoters in this? Project completion is only half the job; the completed units have to find buyers. Surely the fund cannot do that. Will the promoter continue to set prices and handle the selling process? But promoters' reluctance to make price cuts led to the problem in the first place. The FAQ says "as part of the investment review, the Investment Manager will take a call if there is any need to change the developer for the project". This is key, but will they do it?

3. Demand issue: Assume that the stalled projects are completed and moved to the market, what happens next? There is already an oversupply, as against weak demand growth. Here is the depressing math. According to real estate agents, India sells around 250,000 units a year in eight key cities: Mumbai, the National Capital Region, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Pune, and Kolkata. Sales are rising marginally (maybe around 5 per cent) in these areas. This demand is already over supplied by on-going projects; in fact, new launches (20 per cent growth) far outstrip actual sales. Even if 1.5 million units of the stalled projects come to this market, who will buy them? It will take years for this supply to get absorbed.

Perhaps the government should have tried other measures along with this fund. One, incentivise buyers with interest subvention on completed projects. Two, encourage mergers and acquisitions by supporting the many strong developers that can act in tandem with bankers to take over stalled projects. This is unavoidable to make the sector healthier. Three, use a carrot and stick policy with promoters to cut prices and boost demand. As with the overall economy, it is the demand side that needs to be worked on more than the supply side.

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An anonymous appeal



BOOK REVIEW

JENNIFER SZALAI

"Trust me": It's a tired cliché, a throwaway line, but when you first encounter it in *A Warning*, the new book by "Anonymous," who is identified here only as "a senior Trump administration official," it lands with a startling thud. Any revealing details have been explicitly and deliberately withheld to protect this person's identity. Who is this "me" that we're supposed to trust? It's a question that the anonymous author — who wrote an Op-Ed for *The Times* last year about resisting the president's "more misguided impulses" — might have anticipated, given how much of the book is devoted to the necessity of "character" and to quoting dead presidents by name.

Not to mention this individual's own conspicuous failures of judgment thus far. You don't even have to take it

from me; you can take it from Anonymous. "Many reasonable people voted for Mr Trump because they love their country, wanted to shake up the establishment, and felt that the alternative was worse," Anonymous writes. "I know you because I've felt the same way." A mildly chastened Anonymous now seems to recognise, somewhat belatedly, that President Trump's peddling of birtherism conspiracy theories and his boasts about grabbing women's genitals might have constituted their own kind of warning — plausible evidence that Mr Trump might not magically transform into the dignified statesman Anonymous so desperately wanted him to be.

Anonymous even admits that the thesis of the Op-Ed in *The Times* — the essay that led directly to the existence of this book, and was published just over a year ago — was "dead wrong" too.

Attempts by the "adults in the room" to impose some discipline on a frenzied (or nonexistent) decision-making process in the White House were "just a wet Band-Aid that wouldn't hold together a gaping wound," Anonymous writes. The members of

the "Steady State have done everything they can, to no avail. Anonymous is passing the baton to "voters and their elected representatives" — only now the baton is a flaming stick of dynamite.

A Warning, then, is just that: a warning, for those who need it, that electing Mr Trump to a second term would be courting disaster. "The president has failed to rise to the occasion in fulfilling his duties," Anonymous intones. The book's publisher and agents apparently referred to the manuscript as the "December Project," though the publication date was moved up to this month when the House announced an impeachment inquiry.

"I realise that writing this while the president is still in office is an extraordinary step," Anonymous says. In light of three years' worth of resignations, tell-all books, reports about emoluments and sworn testimony about quid pro quos, this is a decidedly minimalist definition of "extraordinary." How can a book that has been denounced of anything too specific do anything more than pale against a formal whistle-blower complaint?

It's hard to look like a heroic truth teller by comparison, but Anonymous tries very hard, presenting anonymity as not just convenient but an ultimately selfless act, designed to force everyone to pay more attention to what this book says by deflecting attention away from the person who's saying it.

A Warning, Anonymous says, is intended for a "broad audience," though to judge by the parade of bland, methodical arguments (Anonymous loves to qualify criticisms with a lawyerly "in fairness"), the ideal reader would seem to be an undecided voter who has lived in a cave for the past three years, and is irresistibly moved by quotations from Teddy Roosevelt and solemn invocations of Cicero.

Everything in the text of *A Warning* suggests a dyed-in-the-wool establishment Republican. There's the typical talk about American exceptionalism and national security. There's the eternal complaint that President Barack Obama was "out of touch with mainstream America." There's a wistful elegy for "our budget-balancing daydreams." Yes, Anonymous is happy about the conservative judicial

appointments, the deregulation, the tax cuts; what rankles is the "unbecoming" behavior, the "unseemly antics."

A big tell comes early on, when Anonymous reveals what "the last straw" was. It wasn't Mr Trump's response to the right-wing rally in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017, when a white supremacist killed a woman and the president talked about "the violence on many sides." It wasn't even the administration's separation of migrant families at the border. These examples might have left Anonymous appalled, but the truly unforgivable act was when Senator John McCain died last year and Trump tried to hoist the flag on the White House above half-staff: "President Trump, in unprecedented fashion, was determined to use his office to limit the nation's recognition of John McCain's legacy."

Anonymous declares that this "American spirit" was best exemplified by the bravery shown by the passengers on United Flight 93, who rushed the cockpit on 9/11. We've seen Flight 93 used as a conservative analogy before — by another anonymous author no less, writing under the pen name Publius Decius Mus, who argued before the 2016 presidential election that "a Hillary Clinton presi-

dency is Russian Roulette with a semi-auto" and consequently that voting for Mr Trump offered the only chance for the republic's survival.

That the same violent tragedy has been deployed to argue one point and then, three years later, to argue its utter opposite is, to put it charitably, bizarre. But then Anonymous, a self-described "student of history," doesn't seem to register the discrepancy. Nor does Anonymous square the analogy with an episode mentioned in the opening pages of "A Warning" — of senior officials contemplating a replay of the Nixon administration's so-called Saturday Night Massacre by resigning en masse. The idea of doing anything so bold was floated within the first two years of the Trump administration, and then abandoned.

Toward the end of the book, an earlier quote from Mr Trump kept coming back to me, unbidden: "These are just words. A bunch of words. It doesn't mean anything."

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A WARNING
Anonymous
Yale University Press
272 pages; \$30

Opinion

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2019

POWER TO EMPOWER

Prime minister of India, Narendra Modi

To empower so many Indians, especially women has been one of the most satisfying efforts of our tenure. The credit for the same goes to the people of India who made these movements their own



Rational Expectations

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If you can't do RCEP, can't do US/EU either

The narrative that RCEP-Asean-type of deals are hurting is incorrect & the talk of a US/EU FTA is just wishful thinking

THERE ARE ESSENTIALLY two strands to the arguments made after India walked out of RCEP. First, that the lack of safeguards in RCEP that India wanted against a surge in Chinese imports will hurt India, so the country is better off without being a part of RCEP; the Asean FTA is held up as an example of how FTAs are hurting. Second, rather than getting bogged down in an FTA driven by Chinese interests, India's interests are better served by concluding an FTA with the US or the EU; and since both are higher-cost economies than India, India's exports will also grow faster than, say, in an RCEP FTA.

Apart from the fact that it makes little sense to give up on trade with the world's fastest-growing region, the assertion that the Asean FTA has hurt India is incorrect; nor is it a given that India's exports will rise in a US/EU FTA. After all, if countries in the RCEP—and China is just one of them—are more competitive than India, they will continue to export more to the US/EU, even when India has an FTA; you just have to look at the growth in India's exports and those of various RCEP countries to know this. More on the proposed US/EU FTAs in a bit.

Indeed, even when you look at India's exports growth to Asean, this lack of competitiveness is a factor that can't be ignored; just because India and Vietnam, say, have the same access to the Chinese market and the same duties levied on them, it doesn't mean India's exports will do better even if they are less competitive. Vietnam's better performance relative to India can't possibly be laid at Asean's doors. The fact that, between 1990 and 2018, Vietnam's overall exports grew 102 times versus just 18 for India—as a result, Vietnam's exports are now 75% those of India's—makes it clear that the Asean FTA is hardly the issue.

If India is not part of RCEP, and doesn't get the benefits RCEP members do, its exports to these countries are unlikely to grow as fast as those of others. And, as India fails to join other such FTAs, whom will it trade with? As India gets more inward-focused—it has been raising import duties—it will get less competitive. This will push up its trade deficit; as its import duties go up, so will smuggling levels.

India's imports from Asean growing faster than its exports—exports grew 2.07 times in FY10-FY19 while imports grew 2.3 times—also has to do with India's poor domestic policies, which resulted in imports of items like coal or mobile phones/components shooting up. After all, this, between FY10 and FY19, India's global exports rose 1.9 times while those to Asean rose 2.1 times; India's imports from the world rose 1.8 times while those from Asean rose 2.3 times. Yet, in relative terms, India's trade deficit hasn't risen discernibly.

India's Asean trade deficit was around 8.3% of its total deficit with the world in the 2000s, and fell to 7.7% in the 2010s (see graphic); the deficit was as low as 4.2% in FY11, and as high as 12.5% in FY16. Those denouncing the Asean and other such FTAs would do well to look at the data.

Pravin Krishna of Johns Hopkins University points out in a recent paper that between 2007 and 2017, India's trade deficit with Asean (as a percentage of India's total trade deficit with all countries) fell from 9.9% to 6.6%. For all bilateral agreements that India has, such as with Japan, Korea, etc, this fell from 12.6% to 7.5%. The numbers will vary depending on the year—the number for 2018 could be different than that for 2017—but, there is no evidence of a catastrophic impact of FTAs, either bilateral or plurilateral. Indeed, the sharpest deterioration in India's deficit is with China, a country it has no FTA with; once again, FTAs are not the problem.

The reason for that is simple. For one, according to Krishna, there is a long gestation before any FTA gets actualised; this applies to RCEP as well. The India-Japan trade agreement began in the year 2011, but implementation is complete for only about 23% of the tariff lines so far; India will liberalise imports for 63% of goods only in 2021, and another 14% of goods are not even part of the FTA. Similarly, under the India-Korea agreement, signed in 2010, only about 8% of tariff lines had been fully eliminated prior to 2017; 20% are totally out of the FTA's purview. Nor is it true, Krishna points out, that all trade in an FTA takes advantage of the preferential duties since there are complex rules of origin etc; despite the recent explosion in FTAs, Krishna says, only about 16% of world trade takes place on a preferential basis (the figure rises to 30% when intra-EU trade is included in the calculations).

It is not clear how soon India can sign an FTA with US/EU, but suffice it to say that India has not even been able to resolve its dispute with the US on simple issues like duties on Harley Davidson motorbikes. An FTA with India, along the lines of the TPP that the US was working on, will presumably be as stringent—TPP had rules on labour laws, intellectual property protection (India will have to grant patents to a lot more US drugs as US rules are more liberal than India's), reducing sops to PSUs, and the need for unfettered market access to US firms. If lobby groups like Amul could stop an RCEP, surely they will try and do the same when the US/EU want even more market access and have even larger subsidy levels? Since most Indian markets will have to be opened, other lobbies will also get active. India's trade negotiators need to get real.

InJUSTICE

Even the best-performing states in India in terms of justice delivery score quite low

THE RECENTLY RELEASED *India Justice Report (IJR) 2019* found that Maharashtra, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu are the leading Indian states when it comes to justice delivery while Jharkhand, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh are the worst-performing, among large-to-medium sized states. The report uses publicly available data to analyse the performance of individual states on four "pillars" of justice delivery—police, judiciary, prisons, and legal aid. The report highlights that even the best-performing states score less than 60% in their performance on capacity across all four categories.

In the *Rule of Law Index (RLI) 2019*, India ranked 68th of 126 nations. It ranked 111th for order and security, which can be a proxy for policing efficiency. While Tamil Nadu was the top-ranking state in the *IJR* for the pillar 'police', it had an unimpressive score of 6.5 out of 10. This means the state of policing in other states doesn't pass muster. Indeed, with just 6.4% of the police force having received in-service training, and only 7% of all police personnel in the country being women, policing lacks skills and the required sensitisation, especially on gender concerns. In *RLI 2019*, India ranks quite poorly in civil justice, while performing marginally better in criminal justice delivery. So, even the top-ranking states in the *India Justice Report* need serious policing and judicial reforms urgently—even the Supreme Court has weighed in on this. But, as the *IJR* shows, things have barely moved.

FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

TO CURB NCR AIR POLLUTION FROM STUBBLE BURNING, THE GOVT SHOULD INCENTIVISE PUNJAB & HARYANA FARMERS TO SWITCH FROM PADDY TO CORN

Sowing paddy, reaping smog

ASHOK GULATI

nfosys Chair Professor for Agriculture, ICRIER
Views are personal



especially during the peak season.

The question one needs to ask is why Punjab and Haryana have gone, in a big way, for paddy cultivation when their water resource endowment doesn't align with the crop's requirement. Remember, one kilogramme of rice requires about 5,000 litres of irrigation water in this belt. And, the natural rainfall is too little for it. Farmers go for paddy as it gives them higher profits compared to crops like corn. The key reasons for that are two fold: (a) massive subsidies on power by the state, and fertiliser subsidy by the Centre; (b) assured procurement of paddy by the state agencies on behalf of the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

What is needed is to move about two million hectares of rice area from this belt to eastern parts of the country, where water is available much more abundantly. The basmati area in this belt is about 1.2 million hectares, and produces 4.6 million tonnes of basmati. But, the value of basmati is almost three times higher than that of common rice, and much of that is exported (see

graphic). So, Punjab and Haryana should focus primarily on basmati, giving three times higher value for every drop of water consumed, and try to get away from common paddy, which is basically for feeding the Public Distribution System, where rice is sold to consumers at ₹3/kg under the National Food Security Act. How can one encourage farmers to shift from paddy to, say, corn? It all boils down to policy, both by the Centre, and the states concerned.

Can the Centre and the states abolish fertiliser subsidy, and power subsidy? Given our political economy of securing votes through free power and cheap fertilisers, the chances are extremely low. A move towards giving these subsidies in cash on a per hectare basis can be some improvement over the existing situation. But, if the Centre, and the states of Punjab and Haryana announce a cash incentive—to be shared equally between the Centre and the states—of ₹12,000/ha for growing corn in place of paddy, it may encourage farmers to switch from

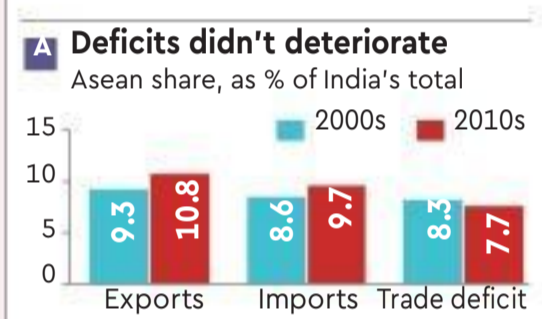
common paddy to corn. Our calculations suggest that the combined subsidy on power for irrigation and fertiliser consumption in paddy cultivation is about ₹15,000/ha. So, giving ₹12,000/ha for corn cultivation is actually transferring the subsidy from rice to corn cultivation. It will not cost the state or central exchequer anything extra; it is just reshuffling the cards. But, rather than being absorbed by government procurement, corn cultivation will have to be absorbed by feed mills for poultry, starch mills, ethanol, etc. So, tax incentives for corn-based industries in this belt would create a demand that is market-aligned.

This is just the right time to make this switch as the government's rice stocks are way above the buffer stock norms (see graphic). This reflects massive inefficiency in grain management. In fact, the Centre should announce that it will not procure more than, say, 50% of the production of common paddy from the blocks that are over-exploited. Further, it will not give to the state procurement agencies more than 4% as commission, *mandi* fee, or any cess, etc, for procuring on behalf of FCI.

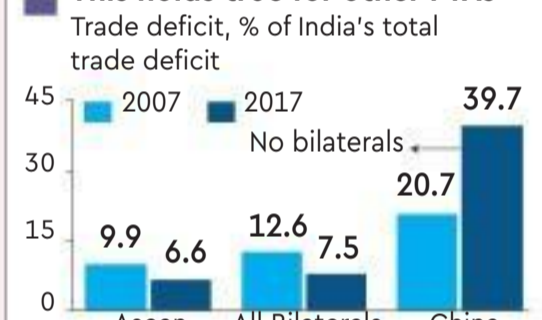
So, a carrot of ₹12,000/ha for the farmer to switch from paddy to corn, shared equally between the Centre and the states, and cutting down procurement from over-exploited blocks may do what the Supreme Court's hauling up of Chief Secretaries may not!

The Asean myth

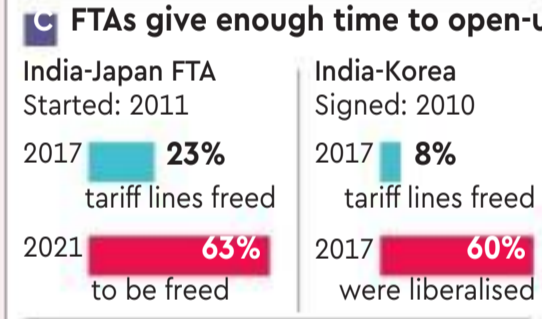
Little evidence to show India badly hit by FTAs like Asean



This holds true for other FTAs



FTAs give enough time to open-up



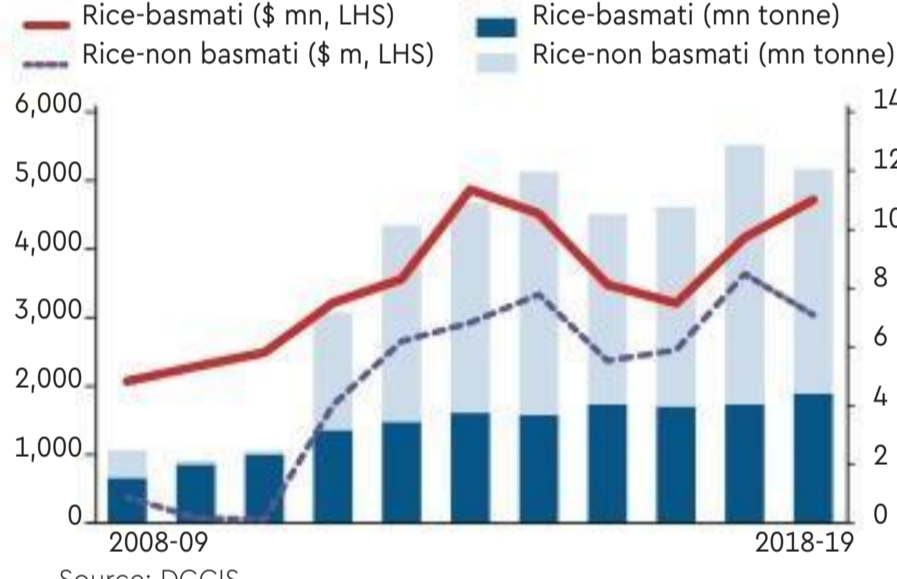
Very little trade is "preferential"



Source: Pravin Krishna, 2019 for graphs B, C, D

Exports of rice

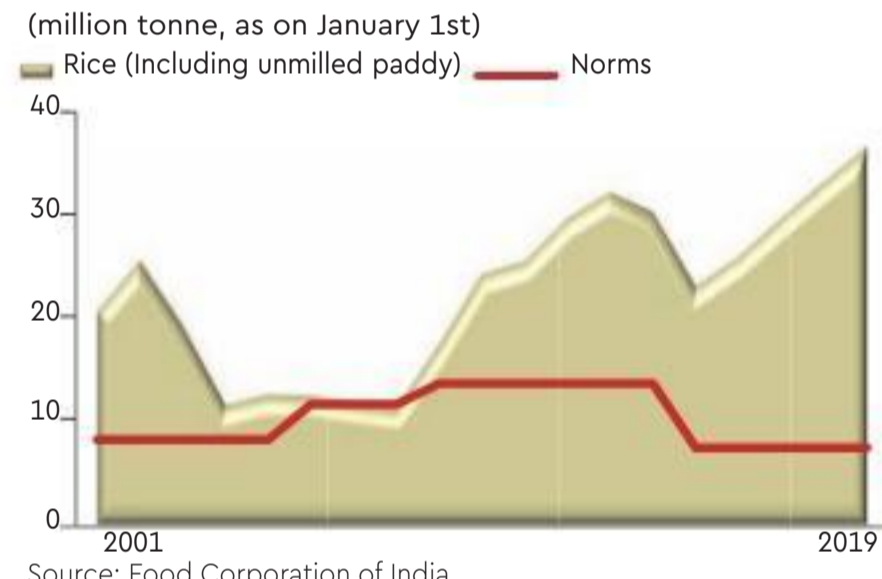
(basmati and non-basmati)



Source: DGCIS

The buffer stock norms and actual stocks of rice with Central Pool

(million tonne, as on January 1st)



Source: Food Corporation of India

The last chapter of Brexit

All complications of mature political democracies come together in Brexit, crippling the political system's ability to make a decision with long-term economic impacts

MEGHNAD DESAI

Prominent economist and Labour peer. Views are personal



THE BREXIT SAGA is too fascinating to ignore. Almost every complication in a mature political democracy has come together in Brexit. This is why the political system finds itself crippled when it comes to making a decision that will affect the economy for a long time. At last, there is an election on December 12 that may end the uncertainty. Or, at least I expect so.

The first complication is that, in theory, it is Parliament which is sovereign. Or are the people Sovereign? The people decided to leave the European Union with a 52:48 margin between the two sides. Parliament ratified the Referendum result. David Cameron, who ordered the Referendum, resigned. His successor, Theresa May, invoked the Lisbon Treaty Article 50, giving notice to the EU that the UK wanted to withdraw. The treaty allowed two years for this. So, March 29, 2019, was the exit date.

The second big question is whether the government is more powerful than Parliament? One more question is, when the government implements the people's wishes, should the people be allowed to revise their view by holding another referendum?

Theresa May negotiated a deal. She needed the UK Parliament to pass it. She failed three times to get a majority for her deal. Ordinarily, she would have to resign, and call an election. But, in 2011, a Fixed Term Parliament Act had been passed, which took away the power of the prime minister to dissolve Parliament and hold an election. So, despite lacking a majority in the House of Commons, and having lost a major Bill three times, she stayed in office. It was not Parliament, but her party that made her resign. After a contest, Boris Johnson

became the leader of the Conservative Party, and UK's prime minister.

Johnson promised to exit by October 31, deal or no deal. But, to prevent the no deal outcome, which could have been very damaging, Parliament again passed a Bill asking the PM to request an extension until January 31, 2020, if he did not get a deal by October 19. Miraculously, he got a deal. Even so, Parliament bound him not to exit till after he had secured the passage of the legislation to implement it. This extraordinary power of Parliament to instruct the executive was discovered by Speaker of the House John Bercow (who retired last week) by reviving a Standing Order of Parliament that had not been used for three centuries.

Johnson got his deal approved in principle by the House of Commons. But, he needed to pass the legislation to implement it. To do so by October 31, he proposed a tight timetable to debate the Bill. Parliament rejected the timetable. Johnson dithered, but got the extension to January 31, as instructed by Parliament. That removed the threat that the UK could exit without a deal. He got the parliamentary support to hold an election on December 12.

Johnson called the election because, lacking a majority, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to pass the deal without amendments from the Opposition which would have nullified his deal. Parliament could have added that he would need to hold another Referendum to get the legislation

endorsed by the people. If he has a majority after the election, he can get his deal passed unamended.

Two big questions remain. Will Johnson get a majority in the December election? If so, what effect would it have on the UK economy?

The electorate has been very volatile, and polls have failed to predict outcomes. A recent study found that 45% of the voters had changed their mind between the two elections (2015 and 2017) and one referendum we have had in the UK. But, as of now, Johnson enjoys a 15% lead over the Labour party. There has been a lot of muddle in the latter's approach to the Brexit issue. They now promise that if they win, they will reject Johnson's deal, renegotiate, and put the new deal to a referendum to get a decision by July 2020. The Liberal Democrats, who had slumped in 2017, are reviving since it is clear that if elected, they will revoke the Brexit application, and stay in the EU. The Scottish Nationalist Party also wants to remain, so it will join the Liberal Democrats to form

a government if necessary. For better or worse, let me put down my prediction. Conservatives: 330-340; Labour: 150-180; Liberal Democrats: 120-150; and Scottish Nationalists: 50. There are some small parties that do not matter. For a majority, you need more than 320. My guess is that Johnson will win a majority, legislate the deal, and the UK will be out of the EU by the end of January 2020. The economy will suffer a short-term shock of up to 5%, and then recover by the end of 2020.

A recent study found that 45% of the voters had changed their mind between the two elections (2015 and 2017) and one referendum we have had in the UK

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kartarpur corridor

The inauguration of the cross-border corridor to facilitate pilgrimage from India to Darbar Sahib Gurdwara in Pakistan, coincident with the 550th birthday of Guru Nanak is a moment of great rejoice for all our Sikh brethren and all Indians. Instead of two separate ceremonies, a joint ceremony by India and Pakistan would have been far more welcome and befitting. Still it must be heartily hailed as a 'rare success story' and as a testament to the fact that the obstacles of 'history and geography' are not insurmountable. A visa-free visit to the holy site where Guru Nanak spent his last years and was laid to rest would be an experience of a lifetime for the pilgrims. The accumulated hostility should not hold India back from thanking Pakistan for the gesture of goodwill. Former PM Manmohan Singh's call to 'replicate the Kartarpur model' for bilateral conflict management and resolution is worth being acted on. It is hoped that the place of pilgrimage will help build bridges between the two countries. It should shine as a beacon of hope for the masses of humanity in the sub-continent that share a common destiny that they can co-exist and realise their full potential despite different religious persuasions. It is understandable that the opening of the corridor has more than its fair share of controversies. Contentious issues like the promotional video clip featuring the slain Khalistani proponents like Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Major General Shabeg Singh and Amrik Singh Khalsa, Navjot Sidhu's spat with the central government over permission to go to Kartarpur and Islamabad's insistence on passport and the levy of service fee of \$20 for every pilgrim pale into insignificance when we think of the positive side of the momentous occasion.

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

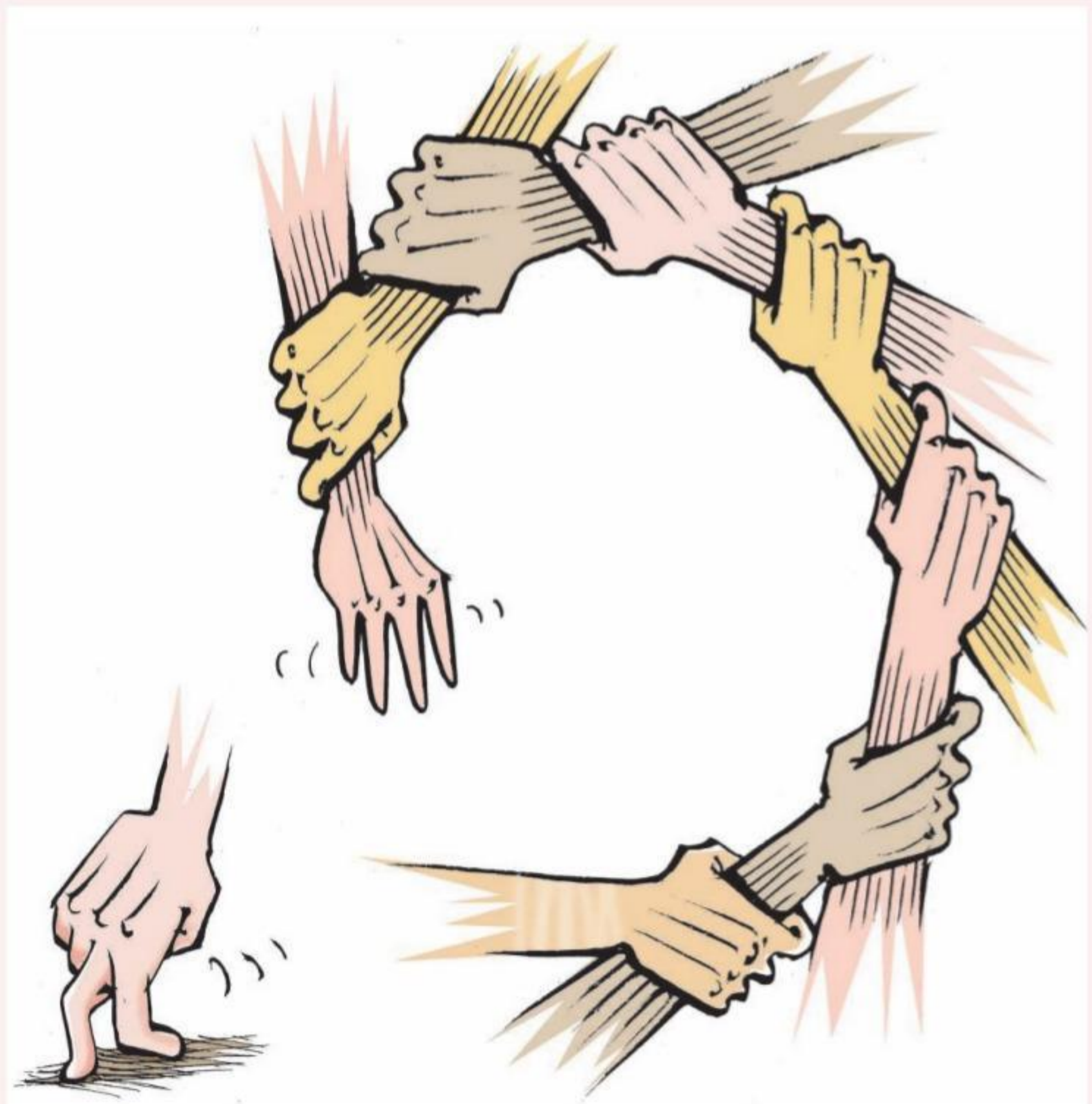


ILLUSTRATION: ROHINIT PHORE

MADAN SABNAVIS

Chief economist, CARE Ratings. Views are personal



● RCEP

India won't get a sweet deal

Under the prevailing conditions, it would be hard to have our way in most trade agreements as every country would be pushing to leverage the deal which increases their exports and limits imports

INDIA HAS ONCE again displayed its discomfort with the RCEP, keeping domestic interests in mind. Earlier, a similar position was taken at the WTO, and, more recently, with the US. This is a change of image from the past, and shows that the country has the strength to take a firm position on trade issues. More importantly, as India is a strong economic power, a powerful message has been conveyed to the rest of the world. The Ricardian theory of compara-

tive advantage states that countries should specialise in production of commodities where they have a comparative advantage in terms of cost, and import those where they don't. This leads to an optimal solution. But the world is not that simple; generally, countries produce everything depending on their social structure, economic distribution and political motivations. In case of commodities like oil or gold, there are few producers and many consumers, thus, there are only a few

options. Rarely does a large oil producer also import oil. Besides the prices have been more or less fixed via economic structures, which are formal. But for several other commodities there are both exports and imports. Besides, the overarching motivation for governments is to protect domestic industry.

There is a lot of talk of pushing forth India's exports; the problem, however, is that they tend to be concentrated in less price-elastic goods, which are driven more by global growth prospects. While some suggest weakening the rupee to boost exports, anecdotal evidence shows that this hasn't worked. If we are serious about pushing our exports, India needs to adopt an open door policy. It should also try removing bottlenecks. More important, countries should also let our exports come in. Curiously, we face tough competition from countries like China, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Vietnam in areas where we have a comparative advantage. Against this background, FTAs make sense.

The WTO is supposed to be the biggest FTA involving over 160 countries; all members agree on certain norms on movement of goods, services and investment. The idea is that elimination of quotas and reduction in tariff barriers would lead to materialisation of an optimal solution. This has seldom worked smoothly. WTO has been one-sided when it comes to services as the Western world is against immigration. Ironically, the developed world does not mind flooding emerging countries with their investment and goods. Therefore, the WTO solution has always been a mirage.

Now, let us look at RCEP. When 16 countries covering a large geography in terms of population and size have to negotiate, there would always be vary-

ing interests. It can never be a zero-sum game for everyone, even though on an average all countries would be better off. India is right to play tough while negotiating on imports in the farm area or textiles, as agreements like this are prone to encourage dumping. But, to get the benefits of freer entry into other countries, India has to be open to more imports in goods which may lead to a direct competition with probably the most underprivileged class, i.e., farmers. Also, the choice of year for benchmarking will always be a bone of contention. Each country would like to bat for the year that is most convenient.

The fact is that all countries subsidise various sections of the economy based on social and political requirements, this trend is more prevalent in agriculture. Therefore, costs and prices tend to be skewed. Also, every country wants to protect their farmers as they constitute a big constituency. Dairy products or other agro products entering through the FTA would can create problems of survival of local communities. Thus, it is natural to have resistance to these bilateral and multilateral agreements. India puts export restrictions on farm product, which is not the case for other countries like New Zealand. Hence, there will always be such instances of competitive pressures.

So, is India right in walking out of the RCEP? Sovereign countries have a right to move on if they do not acquiesce to the terms, though ideally one would not go to sign the agreement and then withdraw. The spade work should have been done well in advance. Besides, walking out may not be the best way; negotiating agreements, which are serious in nature, requires a lot of diplomatic manoeuvres. In political parleys discussions go on and diplomatic ties are maintained till the end, the same holds true for economic agreements. Walking out of the deal signals a message of intransigence, while keeping talks alive adds a strong diplomatic touch to a firm position being taken.

An argument that is often given is that the 16 nation group includes Asean, which is trade not very significant in our trade basket. If this was indeed the case, there was little need to prolong the conversation. India needs to strike such agreements with various countries in different geographies to leverage mutual advantage to grow exports. While there are talks for looking more towards the US and Europe to sign such agreements, getting these countries and blocs on board won't be easy either. Europe has been going through tough times and the US has been targeting India on certain trade issues.

More importantly, the world economy has been through a rather long phase of slowdown with few signs of an imminent turnaround. The pace of global trade has gotten truncated. Trade growth has been around 3.2% per annum, post the financial crisis. Several nations which are dependent on exports have gone into a tailspin. Any idea of trade talks with groups would invariably be directed at enhancing their own marketing while keeping others out—typical of such phases.

RCEP composition shows that the ASEAN nations are export-oriented economies and countries like Japan and China, owing to limited domestic demand, have become more dependent on foreign trade. India has had an advantage of being fairly insulated as growth has been driven primarily by the domestic forces. Therefore, under the prevailing conditions, it would be hard to have our way in most trade agreements as every country would be pushing to leverage the deal which increases their exports and limits imports. The path along will surely be uneven.

While there are talks for looking more towards the US and Europe to sign such agreements, getting these countries and blocs on board won't be easy either

AI-driven future

SUDIPTA GHOSH

Partner and leader, Data and Analytics, PwC India. Views are personal



Artificial Intelligence will add \$15.7tn to the global economy by 2030

MOST ORGANISATIONS TODAY acknowledge that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to solve complex problems at scale, enhance efficiency and optimise costs. According to a recent survey done by PwC 'With AI's Great Power Comes Great Responsibility', 65% of global and 62% of Indian CXOs have implemented AI in some form. This growing popularity is only going to see an uptake, with companies looking to become fit for future.

However, study also reveals a fundamental challenge organisations face with AI applications. Businesses may have been able to address issues around data supply chain, they are still grappling with the 'black box' problem, i.e., lack of understanding and explainability of AI decisions. In fact, 58% of survey respondents admit they lack understanding of how AI applications made decisions and only 10% CEOs are confident about the reliability. This lack of understanding has resulted in many instances where AI systems did not behave the way they were expected to.

Certain sectors like financial services are more impacted by this ambiguity than others. Financial institutions have been the earlier adopters of AI. Using AI and a multitude of customer data points, banks now determine willingness-to-pay scores, to approve loans. While this brings huge benefits and increases business efficiency, such initiatives are also fraught with risks. Each decision taken should correctly identify the risk profile of customers so that they do not adversely harm the business interests. Such applications should also be compliant with various jurisdictional data privacy laws, industry regulations and legal frameworks of the geographies they operate in.

Another industry that AI promises to transform is healthcare. Consider radiology, AI will augment the skills of radiologists, helping them find new causal patterns via image processing, interpretation, reporting and planning to enable faster and more precise reading of medical images and better diagnosis. However, it has inherent risks which need to be properly governed and managed to provide responsible patient care. For starters, the outcome of AI-aided medical imaging need to be interpretable and explainable for it to be trustworthy. Data is highly sensitive and private, and AI applications should ensure privacy and ethical use.

Challenges around AI applications, irrespective of industries and functions, are spread across ethical, economic, societal, security, performance and control related aspects. AI initiatives need to address such risks.

The first step to address these challenges is forming a responsible AI (RAI) Framework that provides a firm foundation to an organisation's AI efforts—right from strategy formulation to planning, ecosystem management, development, deployment, operations and monitoring. Strategy formulation helps organisations adhere to internal policies and practices and align with industry standards and regulations. A delivery approach is decided to manage outcomes and to ensure consistent program oversight in the planning phase. Ecosystem management helps create the technology roadmap, source different applications and establish a change management process. Finally, development and deployment of systems occur in an iterative manner to create a comprehensive and accurate model. However, some AI models have a tendency to deteriorate over time, hence these need to be constantly monitored. This can be achieved through compliance testing and operational support.

The second step is to back the framework by a technology-enabled toolkit that provides a set of assets and practice aids curated to accelerate the evaluation of data, AI models and their trade-offs, while considering the associated risks and relevance. Such assets can help organisations reduce AI related risks to a sub-threshold level and provide explainability to the decisions taken by their AI applications, thereby reducing the black box problem. The promise of AI is immense, according to our estimates it will add \$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. For this to be realised and for organisations to become fit for future, AI must be supported by strong performance pillars.

PwC's Data and Analytics team members contributed to the article.



MOST PEOPLE ARE quite uncomfortable with change; and the reasons why people detest any change are explicable. People resist a change or oppose it outrightly. That's the reason why it is important to understand importance of feelings as change proceeds, and why they need to be guided through it. William Bridges' Transition Model is a helpful framework in change management.

While most people expect changes are meant to be positive. A lot depends on individuals, how they make things better, easier, and fast-track the route to success. In organisations sometimes the hard-working employees end up being the number one obstacle to a new initiative. Bridges' transition model helps dealing with the people-aspect of change management. It helps in turning them from obstacles to supporters. As an organisational consultant, William Bridges found that the most important responsibility was guiding people through transition for successful change. He identified three stages of transition and his model strives to help business leaders to understand the feelings people go through a change process.

Bridges highlights the difference between transition and change. Change is speedy, and people often have no say when it happens. But transition is a slower process that happens internally. Transition is what goes on inside people's minds as they go through a change process.

William Bridges' Transition Model

The model helps dealing with the people-aspect of change management

VIDYA HATTANGADI

The author is a management thinker and blogger



Employees get affected by change when it transits from one stage to the next. Therefore, business leaders must change their approach to people management in an empathetic development. The three stages of Bridges' Transition Model are as follows:

Ending, losing, and letting go: When people first learn that they will have to face a change and their 'comfort zone' will be disturbed, they experience an emotional upsurge. If organisations fail to understand and acknowledge this fact, their employees might resist change all the way through a change initiative. When people see a change coming their way they feel afraid, they tend to rebuff, they feel angry, they feel disorientated, frustrated. And in short, they experience insecurity.

Dealing with these feelings requires patience. People must be encouraged to be open about their emotional reaction to change and be understood by their superiors and peers about the way they feel. Throughout the change process discussions must be going on so that employees take initiatives on their own.

Employees must be told what their role will be, what their prospects would be the emoluments, the reporting relationship, their future growth in organisation everything should be discussed with them. Bridges believed that the emotional reaction to change is most important to be handled. Emotional health and well-being is something that shouldn't be discarded.

The Neutral Zone: In this stage people



are confused and puzzled; they are not sure if the change is good, bad or ugly. They feel uncertain and irritated. It all depends on how nicely managers administer the change process. Employees struggle with their new workloads and new tasks. Each person experiences the change differently depending upon his capacity. This phase is like a fiver between the old and the new. People take time to get detached from the old style, in this stage they try to adapt to the new. People experience resentment towards the change initiative. They are lost in their own world trying to cope with change. Their morale is low and, therefore, the productivity is also low. Employees carry anxiety about their role, status and identity.

Factually this stage can be one to initiate creativity, innovation, and renewal. This is a great time to encourage people to try new ways of thinking, practicing and working.

Employees must be guided by managers with patience. Their guidance is incredible, it is very important as people go through this neutral period. This can be an uncomfortable time, because it can seem unproductive, and in this little progress is made. Frequent meetings and sharing feedback is a good solution. When people enter the neutral zone, they are not yet entirely comfortable with the change and will still need a lot of encouragement.

The New Beginning: After a while, after few days pass things seem to start falling into place. People start seeing the

real results of the change process. They might or might not see the positive result. Employees see how their efforts are starting to pay off. Suddenly, it all makes sense to them. The emotions are positive. They feel energised, they want to learn more, and they feel committed to their role. Naturally, this working atmosphere is positive. This is a time for celebration and rewards coming in pocket.

But, sometimes people can still slip back into stage 2—the neutral zone. The results cannot be taken for granted, therefore it still necessary for managers to be vigilant.

Strength of the model: This framework focuses on transition, not change. The difference between these is subtle, but important. Change is something that happens to people, even if they don't agree with it. Transition, on the other hand, is an internal process, it happens in our minds. Change can happen very quickly, whereas transition usually is a slow process.

Changes occur in our lives at regular intervals, whether we are aware of them or not. As part of our nature, as humans, we normally do not like major changes and the fear of the unknown that accompanies change. Some changes paralyse us emotionally. To handle changes in our life, we need to accept that we need to internally strengthen ourselves. And, we all need guidance and mentoring at each stage.



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

“IT IS NOT WHAT A LAWYER TELLS ME I MAY DO; BUT WHAT HUMANITY, REASON, AND JUSTICE TELL ME I OUGHT TO DO.” — EDMUND BURKE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A breather, not closure

SC ruling on Ayodhya opens the door for claims based on community identity, construction of faith



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Kartarpur corridor brings a moment of transcendence in a fraught India-Pak relationship. It must be built upon

NOVEMBER 9, 2019 will go down as a rare day in the history of the Indian sub-continent, on which two nations managed to put aside the distrust and hostilities to jointly facilitate a pilgrimage for a small religious minority in India. Access to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan's Kartarpur has been a part of the hopes and prayers of three generations of Sikhs, separated by Partition from many of their most important places of worship. The shrine, built at the site where Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith, is said to have spent the last 18 years of his life, is 4 km from Dera Baba Nanak on the Indian side, and on a clear day, can be spotted through the bulrushes on the banks of the Ravi. Until September 2018, when Pakistan and India agreed that a visa-free "Kartarpur corridor" from Dera Baba Nanak be fast tracked in time for Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary, a visit to Kartarpur Sahib for believers on the Indian side meant viewing the gurdwara through binoculars from a security forces' watchtower near the border. Since then, both sides have defied history and an extraordinary year of hostility in their relations, to give shape to the corridor and the prayers of millions of people.

About 5,000 pilgrims are expected to access the visa-free corridor every day of the anniversary year. It will be the largest sustained daily cross-border visa-free movement of people between the two countries. In any other place, this would have been evidence of friendly ties, not deep suspicion between two countries. Not surprisingly, as this is about India and Pakistan, there has been talk on the Indian side, for instance, about Pakistan's intent to destabilise Punjab — Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has made such allegations with regularity. Yet, in the end, the nay-sayers were not loud or persistent enough to put a spoke in the wheel, and Amarinder Singh himself was in the first batch of visitors to the shrine along with former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. This conveys the importance of the corridor for India, and for Punjab.

India and Pakistan are living an unprecedented moment in their history. Even so, comparisons with the fall of the Berlin Wall, exactly 30 years ago, are overblown. That was the day the world changed as two countries created from one put the past resolutely behind them and reunited with a shared vision and goals. India and Pakistan are not in a quest for unification. Just being normal and neighbourly will do. It will require statesmanship of a high order for the Kartarpur Corridor to lead to something more than a pilgrimage between the two countries.

THERE COULD NOT be a better birthday gift to L K Advani, though a day late. Under him, the VHP's Ram Janmabhoomi agitation became a national issue leading to a pan-Hindu mobilisation. Now the Supreme Court's judgement has paved the way for the construction of the temple at the disputed site at Ayodhya.

While the Court has recorded the illegality of the events of 1949 and 1992, it has chosen to restrict itself to the question of title. Following the established practice of determining the title, it has rejected the Sunni Waqf Board's claim over the title of the disputed land. The Court then turned to the 1993 law passed by the Narasimha Rao government following the destruction of Babri Masjid and asked the Centre to hand over the land to an appropriate body.

Even if one agrees to the evidence-related conclusions drawn by the Court, two nagging issues will haunt us for a long time. If the case were to be resolved by the Court when the disputed mosque existed, would the site still be handed over to the party fighting on behalf of the deity? Does this then give a message that legal disputes can be won by creating a situation of fait accompli through political intrigue? The ruling will surely come under greater scholarly scrutiny, but the political implications of the judgement deserve attention.

A controversy such as this was never ideal for adjudication but we forced the Court to settle it.

This signifies a failure to arrive at political solution. Since 1949, we failed to reach a compromise on this sensitive matter involving two communities. Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid was a controversy that India's democratic politics simply could not afford. But our politicians and political parties allowed it to linger, become complicated and finally, turn into a central theme of politics for over a decade — even more. Therefore, the Court's ruling is also a moment to remind ourselves of the petty politics of cynicism that overtook robust democratic competitive politics during and since the late 1980s.

Ironically as it may seem, post-1992, despite the need for a political solution, there was a stalemate which defied a solution — except one that came via the judicial route. A political solution required three things. One, it required frankness on the part of those who greatly contributed to the demolition to sincerely admit to their mistake and ask for forgiveness. That did not happen. Two, it required political statesmanship from the Muslim community. In the absence of a truly all-India and

secular leadership, this could not happen. Above all, a post-1992 settlement required a steely determination by the government to ensure negotiation. That too was not in sight.

This reminder is not merely for purposes of brooding over our failure. It should stand as a warning. The politics over Ayodhya had a strong element of recklessness. Adventurism is not just an attractive political style, it has a lure of trumping competitive politics. Indira Gandhi thought it fit to stoke Sikh communal militancy probably expecting to benefit from it, both the country and she herself paid the price. One would have thought that that was a lesson for desisting from cynical politics. But immediately after that, the BJP adopted the path of adventurism. After Advani's Rath Yatra in 1990, the BJP emerged as a major political force. Even after 1992, it retained its newly acquired support; it did not suffer a setback after Gujarat 2002. This inability of our politics to impose political penalties for such transgressions must be seen as a stark warning that India's politics is often on the brink of community-based emotive mobilisations.

Apart from these larger political failures, this ruling has another deeper implication. Courts, when they broker peace, do not necessarily bring closure to disputes; they only give momentary space for disputes to reconfigure. One can go on listing court rulings that were initially upheld as major attempts to reconcile contesting claims, but were followed by even more acrimony and political controversy — besides lot of litigation. The present ruling is of that kind. The majesty of the Court in momentarily sealing the Ayodhya dispute might be somewhat impressive, but a series of political possibilities will be staring us in the face.

Being a unanimous ruling by five judges, the verdict will carry weight. But the rather casual manner in which the Court has sought to dispose of the illegality of 1949 and 1992 will not only have implications for jurisprudence, it will also have implications for the way collective and competitive claims are executed. The ruling also opens the door for any number of claims based on community identity and construction of faith. This is not only about Hindu-Muslim disputes, but also about inter-community disputes, more generally. To put it bluntly, post Ayodhya-ruling, claims based on community's faith are bound to resonate with authenticity. In this sense, beyond the momentary breather this ruling may have offered, it will be unable to address the deeper issue which is fundamentally political, and

not juridical.

For the BJP and the larger political family it belongs to, the present moment will constitute a moment of poetic justice that having been in the forefront of the Ayodhya agitation, the party now finds itself in power and also in a position to savour SC's ruling — albeit with subdued celebrations. These celebrations, for the lay supporters, would signify a victory over one place, one mosque, one site. However, the real celebration would be over the larger success of transforming a community's religious sensibilities into a political lever.

In the course of the Ayodhya movement, faith and religiosity got conflated with pride and identity. This allowed the homogenisation of the Hindu community. And, then the Hindu community constituted a political force that has only become stronger. Through the Rath Yatra, and symbolised by the events of December 6, 1992, Ayodhya ceased to be a question of Hindu faith; it became a signifier of Hindutva. The SC's ruling has given a shot in the arm for the politics of Hindutva. Notwithstanding what the Court may or may not have said, in public imagination, the Hindus have scored over Muslims — the belief that a deity was born at a certain place has been upheld. This will bring a new respect for the idea of Hindutva, it will also bring new power to that idea. The respect it will have earned will mean that Hindutva will now march as the ideology of India and the power it has acquired will mean less space for dissent.

Hence the most crucial question: Will this ruling bring a closure? Such a closure does not merely mean stoppage of further litigation over Ayodhya. That too might not happen, though it should. But more than merely the land dispute at Ayodhya, will there be a closure on listing of sites across India and seeking their liberation? Will there be a closure on making a community stand constantly as an accused and as a suspect? Will there be a closure on competitive communalism that Advani so ably unleashed?

Even as it is possible to criticise the Court's ruling, what social and political spaces exist to critique, dispute and contest the political narrative in which the Ayodhya agitation originated? Or is it that along with the Ayodhya issue, this moment portends closure in the realm of alternative political visions?

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STUBBLE RESISTANCE

Persuading farmers to give up stubble burning requires reaching out to them on multiple fronts, not just with cash incentives

LAST WEEK, AS the national capital recorded its worst reading in three years on the Air Quality Index, the Supreme Court pulled up the governments of Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi for their lack of concerted action against stubble burning. The Court's two-judge bench warned Delhi's Chief Secretary, Vijay Kumar Dev, that "we will not spare your top boss if you don't take remedial action" against pollution. It also upbraided the chief secretaries of Punjab and Haryana for not being sensitive enough to the issue. Given that the Delhi and Punjab governments had resorted to blaming each other for the national capital's pollution crisis, the court's censure is timely. But the significance of the two-judge bench's order of November 7 goes beyond its stern tone. It has asked the governments of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to pay, within seven days, Rs 100 per quintal of paddy as an incentive to farmers who have not burnt stubble on their fields. The directive meets a longstanding demand of farmers' organisations, but two questions remain: Do the states have the financial resources to bear the burden of the cash incentive? More importantly, are such incentives enough to wean farmers away from stubble burning?

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has said that "his government will implement the order". This year, his government may not have to do much. More than 90 per cent of the non-Basmati paddy crop has been harvested. But the Punjab CM has given enough indications of the state's limitations in providing cash incentives in the future. "The Centre will have to help the states, which are facing serious fiscal constraints. While the GST regime has stifled financial resources of all states, Punjab, in particular, is in dire straits," he has said. The apex court has said that it will take a final call on the "aspect of finance" after "considering the detailed report to be submitted by the state governments and after hearing the other stakeholders, including the Centre". It will have to chart a plan that takes into account the interests of the farmers as well as recognises the constraints of the states.

The Punjab and Haryana governments subsidise the Happy Seeder sowing machines, which obviate straw burning. Even so, the technology has not got the necessary traction because farmers do not want to invest in a machine that lies idle for most of the year. As in the case of most farm technologies in the country, the adoption of Happy Seeders will require changing mindsets. To persuade farmers to not set their fields on fires, state governments will need to reach out to them with educational programmes — not just financial incentives.

HAPPILY NEVER AFTER

The trend of anti-fairy tales (almost) continues with 'Maleficent: Mistress of Evil'



RADHA KULKARNI

IN RECENT TIMES, popular movies on fairy tales have been increasingly showcasing, in keeping with contemporary cultural trends, "women-friendly" narratives, resulting in what are known as "anti-fairy tales". While this originally referred to stories having tragic endings, it has come to include stories that reject fairy tale clichés. *Frozen* (2013) is a good example of this: It had elements of a romantic story, but the focus was on the sisterly bond of the two protagonists. *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, which released in October, tries to fit into this genre of female-centric (anti) fairy tales, and it succeeds. Almost.

The movie goes against the grain of traditional family-centric stories and portrays "found families", a trope often used in fiction, referring to abandoned individuals coming together and forging a bond, essentially creating a family of their own. The lead character, Maleficent, undergoes a journey of self-discovery when she is jilted by the family she found at the end of the previous movie, *Maleficent* (2014). She finds the Faes, a clan of powerful fairies, and embraces their community as her own, while keeping her slightly ragtag group — consisting of a crow, a human and an all-powerful Fae, together. Maleficent is a



ONE OF 800 MILLION
A VOICE, UNDER 35

The movie goes against the grain of traditional family-centric stories and portrays 'found families', a trope often used in fiction, referring to abandoned individuals coming together and forging a bond, creating a family of their own.

more liberated character, a luxury not offered to the deuteragonist, the princess Aurora.

While Aurora does contribute to the plot, her motivation to do so stems almost entirely from her wedding plans — her own "happily ever after", a plot infatuation that started back in the 1550s. Disney's fairy tales are particularly susceptible to this cliché. Ariel is celebrated in *The Little Mermaid* (1989) for giving up her entire identity just so that she can fall in love and get married. *Cinderella* (2015) is a story that suffers from a similar problem: Once Cinderella marries her Prince Charming, years of abuse are simply washed away for the remainder of the movie. According to Ruth Bottigheimer, a professor at Stony Brook University, the original Cinderella is a rather raw, realistic version. "And then," she says in a *Huffington Post* article, "Disney comes and takes away some of the ugliness of the stories and introduces a lot of signature elements... But then the story ends at the wedding... That's supposed to be the moment that defines the rest of her life." This description almost fits the ending of *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*.

When the wedding of Aurora and the prince is discovered to be a trap, all festivities abruptly grind to a halt, and a fight en-

sues. Hundreds of Faes are slaughtered. But, nothing impacts the ending. All is forgiven, and the focus returns to the wedding, which resumes the moment the war ends. The characters seem to forget the horrific battle they survived. Instead, the only thing deemed worthy of showing is the happy ending, which, in typical Disney fairy tale fashion, has to be a wedding for the princess.

Maleficent: Mistress of Evil tackles themes like xenophobia and genocide. It portrays Maleficent's freedom — and her ability to assert her identity — in a progressive manner. The movie also looks to revolutionise the idea of the female dream, which has traditionally been limited to finding a Prince Charming. It enables Maleficent, a darker, wilder character that doesn't want a Prince Charming to design her own destiny. However, all such positives are negated by the movie's decision to revert to "traditional" fairy tale tactics when it comes to the character of Aurora. This contradiction reflects the confusion the movie seems to offer — is it the tale of a fierce character for whom the world is her oyster, or is it just another fairy tale?

The writer is a student in SP college, Pune

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



NOVEMBER 11, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

FOOD RESERVES
INDIA MAY EXHAUST in a year's time the entire food reserve of nearly 20 million tonne because of drought. The kharif loss is nearly 12 million tonne. Since the absence of rain has left most of the land a dry solid crust, a large area has not been ploughed. This loss may amount to roughly seven million tonne. The dry spell was bad enough, but the shortage of power, diesel and kerosene has aggravated the situation. In the past, the failure of rains was made up by tubewells and pumps. This time the excessive cut in power and the meagre diesel supply have left no scope to save what may lie lost.

LOK DAL WARNING
THE LOK DAL gave notice to the Congress that the continuance of the alliance would be "seriously reexamined" if the Congress does not stop its overtures to parties that have links with the Jana Sangh. Lok Dal general secretary, Rajinder Puri, told newsmen that he had written to Y B Chavan two days ago seeking clarification on the home minister's reported bid to have an understanding with the parallel Congress in Maharashtra which is sharing power with the Jana Sangh. Puri said he had written the letter on the basis of newspaper reports and, if the reports were correct, "I am afraid we will have to do some serious rethinking on our relationship

(with the Congress)."
IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS
ONE GROUP OF Teheran diplomats visited hostages at the US embassy on Saturday and another called on Iran's acting foreign minister to demand an end to the embassy standoff, it was reported. But Ayatollah Khomeini went into seclusion, apparently dashing hopes for face-to-face talks and a resolution of the crisis, AP reports. The government-run Teheran Radio said that Khomeini would not receive anyone on Saturday or Sunday — observers felt it meant discussion of the fate of the hostages was postponed until Monday.

A crop for clean air

Cash incentives must be given to paddy growers to shift to corn. Change to a less water guzzling crop will help address stubble burning



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

LAST WEEK, AS the Air Quality Index (AQI) touched emergency levels in the National Capital Region, the Supreme Court came down heavily on the chief secretaries of four states — Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. They were berated for their failure to “give clean air to Delhi residents”. Paddy stubble burning in states neighbouring Delhi, especially Punjab, is being seen as one of the reasons for the smog in the national capital. The honourable judges of the apex court have asked the Punjab government to pay Rs 100 per quintal to farmers as an incentive for desisting from burning stubble. Solutions such as subsidising Happy Seeders are also being talked about. But these solutions seem to be scratching the surface of the paddy problem.

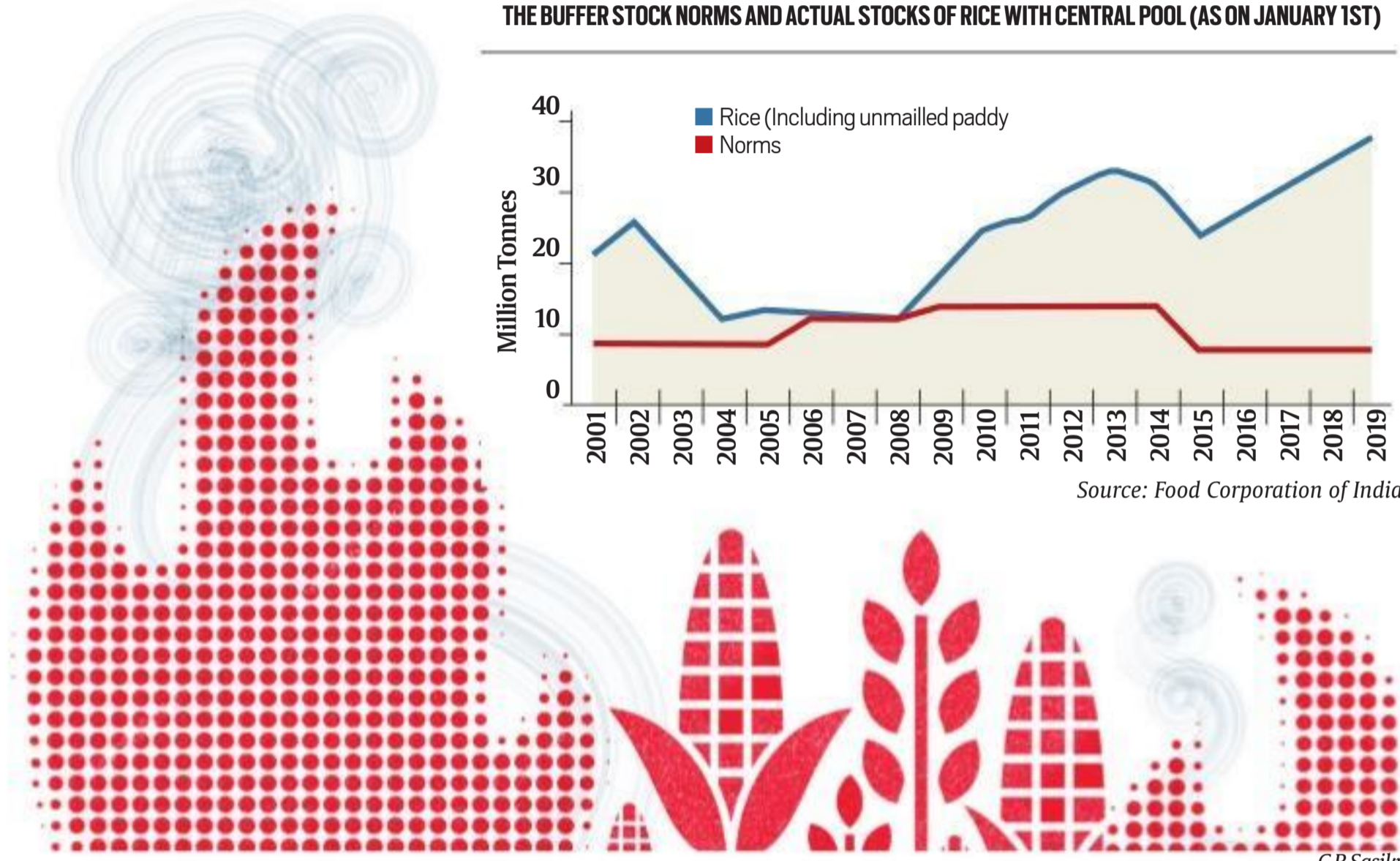
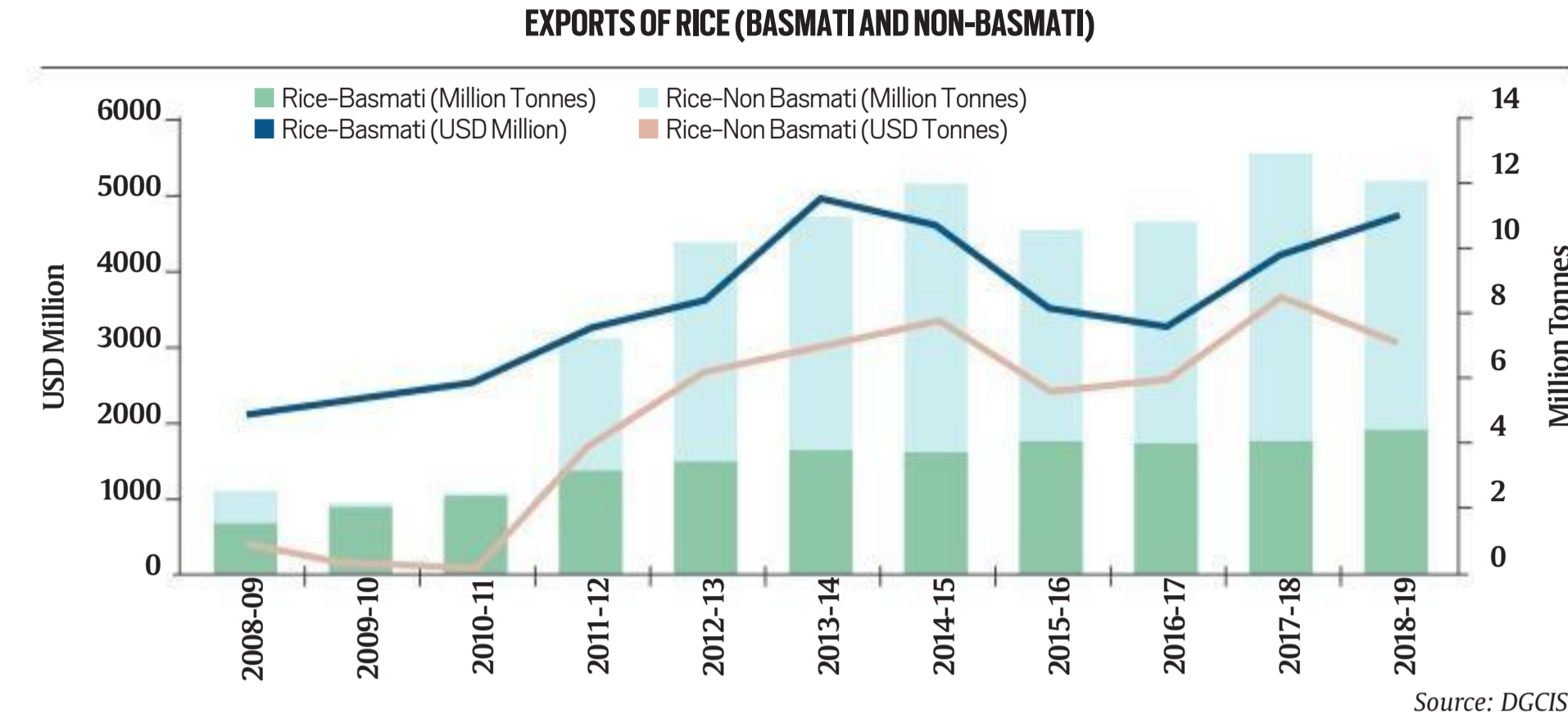
The problem is much deeper than stubble burning and nothing will be served by pulling up chief secretaries of Delhi's neighbouring states. The solution to the problem rests with the political class — both in the Centre as well as in these states. It is the elected representatives, and not bureaucracy, who make policies for grain management.

The Punjab-Haryana region was not India's rice belt, before the Green Revolution. Punjab was known for “makki ki roti and sarson ka saag”, but now it is rare to see makki (corn) in the state. Much of the kharif area in the region is under rice — about 3.1 million hectares in Punjab and 1.4 million hectares in Haryana. This has caused havoc with the groundwater table that has been depleting at about 33 cms each year. Groundwater in more than three-fourths of blocks in Punjab is over-exploited. Paddy cultivation in this belt is against the region's natural water endowment.

In order to save water during the peak summer season, the Punjab government passed a law in 2009 outlawing paddy sowing before June 15. This pushes the rice harvesting to the late October-mid-November period, leaving very little time for sowing the rabi crop, mainly wheat. Farmers rely on paddy harvesters that leave stubbles, which are then burnt to make the field ready for sowing wheat. Farm labour has become expensive, especially during the peak season.

The question one needs to ask is why have Punjab and Haryana gone in a big way for paddy cultivation when their water resource endowment does not align with the crop's requirement. One kilogram of rice requires about 5,000 litres of irrigation water in this belt. And, the natural rainfall is too less for the purpose. Farmers cultivate paddy as it gives them higher profits, compared to competing crops like corn. The key reasons for that are the massive subsidies on power provided by the state government and fertiliser subsidy given to them by the Centre. Moreover, they are assured procurement of paddy by state government agencies on behalf of the Food Corporation of India.

In the eastern parts of the country, water is available much more abundantly. About two million hectares of rice growing area in the northern belt needs to shift to this part of the country. The basmati-growing area in



Source: DGCIIS / Source: Food Corporation of India

the Northern belt is about 1.2 million hectares; it produces 4.6 million tonnes of basmati. But the value of basmati is almost three times higher than that of common rice and much of that is exported (see figure-1). So Punjab and Haryana should focus on cultivating basmati, that is known to give three times higher value for every drop of water. The states should try to get away from common paddy, which is largely meant for the Public Distribution System — PDS rice is being sold at Rs 3/kg under the National Food Security Act.

How can one encourage farmers to shift from paddy to, say, corn? That boils down to policy, both at the Centre and state-level. Can the Centre and the states abolish the fertiliser and power subsidies? The chances of that happening are remote, given the place of free power and cheap fertilisers in the country's political discourse. A move towards giving these subsidies in cash on per hectare basis to farmers can lead to some improvement. Farmers could be encouraged to change their crop preference if the Centre and the Punjab and Haryana governments announce a cash incentive of Rs 12,000 per hectare — shared equally between the Centre and the states — for growing corn in place of paddy. Our calculations suggest that the combined subsidy on power for irrigation and fertiliser in paddy

cultivation is about Rs 15,000/ha. So, giving Rs 12,000/ha for corn cultivation actually is transferring the subsidy from rice cultivation to corn cultivation. It will not cost the state or central exchequer anything extra. Moreover, corn cultivation will have to be absorbed, not by government procurement but by feed mills for poultry, starch mills and ethanol. So, tax incentives for the corn-based industry in this belt could create a more market-aligned demand for corn.

This is just the right time to make this switch from paddy to corn as rice stocks with government are way above the buffer stock norms (see figure-2). This speaks of massive inefficiency in grain management. In fact, the Centre should announce that it will not procure more than say 50 per cent of production of common paddy from the blocks that are over-exploited. Further, it will not give to the state procurement agencies more than 4 per cent as commission, mandi fee, or any cess for procuring on behalf of FCI.

An incentive of Rs 12,000/ha to the farmer to switch from paddy to corn and cutting down procurement from overexploited blocks may accomplish what the Supreme Court's hauling up of the chief secretaries may not.

The writer is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Electoral pacts are a consequence of the first-past-the-post voting system. If Britain's electoral system was fairer, and less prone to confer majoritarian powers on parties with only minority support among voters, they would not be necessary” — THE GUARDIAN

Lessons from Ayodhya

Court verdict nudges us to look back at how much we have lost over years of conflict



SALMAN KHURSHID

SEVERAL DECADES OF simmering disquiet and subdued anxiety have finally ended with the Ayodhya verdict of the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court. In a sense it is fortunate that the Court has delivered a unanimous judgment of five judges. All sides and political parties that had either exploited public sentiment or indeed suffered politically had categorically committed to accepting the outcome. Initial reactions suggest that the decision has been received widely with a sense of relief that the fire of passion, real or contrived, has finally been doused, even if some people feel a bit disappointed and legally-trained professionals will continue to dissect the findings for their impact as precedents for future decisions.

Despite the predictable 1,045 pages (a modest size compared to recent trends), the judgment makes easy reading and should not be difficult to read and understand for legal experts as well as ordinary people. What, of course, stands out conspicuously is that the disputed plot of 2.77 acres along with the surrounding land acquired by the state post demolition will be handed over to a trust to be established by the government. This is not by an act of obeisance towards Ram Lalla (the deity) or in other words, by submission to the faith of Hindus but by an interesting balancing of principles of establishing title.

The Court held that the right to the inner courtyard of the mosque, claimed by Muslims, was never free of opposing claims and periodic attempts by Hindus to assert their rights. On the other hand, Muslims had themselves admitted that Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya and the *chabutra* in the outer courtyard was undisputedly in the possession of Hindus for decades and puja was conducted uninterrupted. Although a close analysis of the interface of competing claims might throw up questions, the fact remains that the present decision, undoubtedly made very thoughtfully by the Court, was made possible by the conduct of the Muslim side over the decades. Be that as it may, ultimately the Court made a delicate balancing effort of subscribing to legal principles and putting a closure on a festering civilisational wound. Muslims, who had all along committed themselves to acceptance of the Court verdict, now have a chance to show

grace, generosity and reaching out to claim a place in contribution to true national integration and unity.

The Supreme Court might have found the Hindu case marginally more persuasive than the Muslim case, but it has done a great deal more to facilitate and inspire the Muslims to see this as a moment of reconciliation rather than defeat. There could not have been clearer condemnation by the highest Court of the land of the acts of intrusion in 1949, when the idol of Ram Lalla was placed under the middle dome of the mosque, as indeed of the act of vandalism when the mosque was demolished in 1992.

The Court was also clear that the ASI report showing evidence of previous civilisations did not prove that a temple, least of all a Ram temple, was demolished to construct the Babri Masjid. Reaffirmation of India's secular character in the judgment should not be obscured by the baseline outcome. This is the truth that preceded reconciliation. Furthermore, the direction that five acres of other land be given to the Sunni Waqf Board is a gesture that proclaims that the Court and the nation treat all citizens as equals. It has recognised that all citizens have their respective faiths and manner of worship but that while faith has a place in our national life, it does not trump legal rights in an unqualified sweep.

The greatest opportunity that the judgment offers is a reaffirmation of India as a secular society. It is a decision that refutes the idea of Hindu Rashtra and amplifies the practical handling of sensitive religious concerns in a secular system. Upholding the purpose and effect of the Places of Worship Act, amongst other matters, is a clear indication that the secular edifice of India and the commitment of its highest Court to the constitutional principles we cherish has not only remained undisturbed but indeed been fortified. If we have all placed our trust in the Court, it is imperative that we recognise our trust has been redeemed. There is silence on one issue: Periodic attempts to find a solution outside the court room that failed does not seem to have found a place under the sun.

Perhaps there is a lesson in it for us: If this is what was to happen, could we all not have done it ourselves? Has the Court gently nudged us to rethink our approach to our national life? As we look back, we will be able to see how much we have lost over Ayodhya through the years of conflict. If the loss of a mosque is preservation of faith, if the establishment of a temple is emancipation of faith, we can all join together in celebrating faith in the Constitution. Sometimes, a step back to accommodate is several steps forward towards our common destiny.

The writer is a former Union minister and senior Congress leader

Moving on from here

Nation is tired of mandir-masjid debate. Let's use this moment for a fresh start



TAHIR MAHMOOD

THE AYODHYA VERDICT deviates from some established juridical traditions. A 930-page judgment signed by five learned judges without disclosing its individual authorship, it has a 116-page addendum penned by one of them incognito, containing his “separate reasons” on one of the case issues.

Noting that the “disputed site has been a flash point of continued conflagration over decades”, the Supreme Court has chronicled related developments on a year by year basis since 1856 and acknowledged the illegality of the monumental transgression occurring in the holy city in December 1992.

The operative part of the judgment rules in favour of building the temple on the disputed land as desired by the majority community, enjoining the central government to facilitate it by taking prompt action in terms of the Ayodhya Act of 1993. For those aggrieved by the demolition of the mosque in 1992, it directs earmarking of a “suitable” five-acre plot of land to be allotted to UP's Sunni Waqf Board, either by the central government out of the land acquired under the Ayodhya Act 1993 or by the UP government at a “suitable prominent place” in the city, the choice between these alternatives to be determined by the two governments in mutual consultation.

I have been part of the reconciliation process in the matter and was consulted both by the court-appointed mediation committee

and individually by its members. On October 4, when Sunni Waqf Board chairman Zulfar Ferooqi wrote to me seeking my opinion on the advisability of accepting the committee's proposals, I had replied, “my convinced opinion is that the Board should convey to the court its acceptance of mediation committee proposals”. After securing concurrence of some other prominent persons, the Board conceded and the committee conveyed its consent to the court. Finding the proposed agreement conditional and not signed by all disputants, the court did not treat it as a “binding or concluded agreement”. Though the Court's judgment is more or less along the same lines, an extrajudicial settlement, in my opinion, would have been graceful, and, potentially, more fruitful.

The Court has devoted one full part of the judgment to Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991, which under the proposed settlement had to be fortified and strictly enforced. Enacted by the government of the day at a time when the mandir-masjid tussle in Ayodhya had assumed alarming proportions, this Act had rendered unalterable the character of all religious places in the country, as on the day of the country's independence. The Ayodhya dispute was, however, inexplicably excluded from its purview — but for that unwarranted exception, the course of events to come could have been different.

Given more teeth, this Act may ensure that

the Ayodhya melodrama is not repeated elsewhere. Bearing this in mind, the Court said: “The State has by enacting this law enforced a constitutional commitment and operationalised its constitutional obligations to uphold the equality of all religions and secularism which is a part of the basic features of the Constitution.” Clarifying as to who all are bound by this Act, the Court said: “The law addresses itself to the State as much as to every citizen of the nation. Its norms bind those who govern the affairs of the nation at every level.” And, the Act must, henceforth, be meticulously enforced throughout the country.

The Ayodhya case decided by the apex court was technically between the contesting parties before it, but the unsavoury dispute has, from the very beginning, been seen as a tussle between the two largest communities of the country, both deeply religious in their outlook. Jesus Christ had enjoined people to “render unto Caesar things that are Caesar's and unto God things that are God's”. But in our country, God has a lot to do in Caesar's domain. The founding fathers of the Constitution had, therefore, opted for a quasi-secular state, legally swearing by secularism, but at the same time well accommodating religious sensitivities. Acknowledging this, the apex court had once observed that, “It is only in a qualified sense that India can be said to be a secular state.” (St Xavier's, 1974). In such a country, the apex court

— confronted with an awfully sensitive matter — has to opt for a course of action that does not plunge the nation into a tsunami of communal tensions.

The court has said that the Waqf Board will be “at liberty” to build on the allotted plot a new mosque “with other associated facilities”. But I am not sure if the self-respecting community the Board represents should let it avail this “liberty”, generously granted by the court. Finding the judgment lopsided, some community leaders are contemplating further legal action. They would better act on the great poet-philosopher, Allama Iqbal's counsel: “Na rah minnatkash-e-shabnam nigan jam-o-subu kar le” (Don't take petty obligation and have no pious hopes). As the Court has arrived at the present decision after “navigating through the layers of complexity of the case”, a decision to continue with the legal battle will, in all probability, be an exercise in futility.

The nation is indeed tired of the sickening mandir-masjid dispute which has been perpetuating communal tensions and shattering social harmony. We must now avail whatever chance the Court has provided to bury the hatchet and hope for sustaining bonhomie in future.

The writer is former chairman of National Minorities Commission and member, Law Commission of India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

QUAD'S SPINOFFS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Quad in the spotlight', (IE, November 7). The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the Quad is now a multifaceted strategic and economic dialogue between a group of like-minded countries with shared commitments that go beyond ensuring freedom of navigation and respect for the laws of the sea. The Quad should not limit itself to countering any particular country, instead the liberal democratic values of the Quad partners can strengthen the institutional approach in the governance of the global commons.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

UNFAIR GAME

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Not cricket' (IE, November 9). It is not the first time and sadly nor the last time when an arrest has been made of an Indian cricketer involved in match fixing. Some well known cricketers have fallen into this trap in the past but Indian cricket emerged from that crisis. Ever since IPL came into the scene, a plethora of other smaller state specific leagues have blossomed across the country. And with it came the greed of money to which these unknown cricketers are prone to, and when a known cricketer like CM Gautam, who was once considered a back up wicket-keeper option for Indian team, can fall into this trap we can easily understand how vulnerable other players would be. Nothing and no one is bigger than the game and a strong message must go to each and every player that the game should be played with utmost fairness and integrity.

Bal Govind, Noida

LIMITS OF ECONOMISTS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Experts, dissent and the economy' (IE, Nov 08). There are two basic problems in implementing author's suggestions. In today's world there are no economists who have the requisite expertise but are politically and ideologically neutral. The second problem is, economists are expert in devising various solutions after the horse has bolted away. No economist worth his salt had predicted the 2008 meltdown. Lastly, economists are never known to give practical and precise advice. Their craft lies in beating around the bush while sounding profound.

H N Bhagwat, Chiplun

AN ICON

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'With a twinkle and a smile' (IE, November 9). Nabaneeta Dev Sen was not only an eminent writer but also an icon in literary criticism. She was loved and followed by her readers, editors and young writers. Her contribution to contemporary literature is seminal. We, the readers of her works, are poorer by her death.

Tapamoy Ghosh, Bardhaman

TELLING NUMBERS

Anaemia among men: how it varies among age groups, states

A RECENT study published in *The Lancet Global Health*, which looked at anaemia among men in India, found that nearly a quarter of them (23.2% in a sample of 1 lakh men) in the age group 15-54 had some form of anaemia (*The Indian Express*, November 9). The study also covered 6 lakh women.

Cases among men ranged from moderate or severe (5.1%) to severe anaemia (0.5%). Among age groups, men in the group 20-34 years had the lowest probability of having anaemia, while actual prevalence was lowest in the age group 50-54, at 7.8%. The prevalence was higher for younger age groups. Among men with anaemia, 21.7% had moderate or severe anaemia; among women with anaemia, 53.2% had moderate or severe anaemia.

Among the states, the highest prevalence of any anaemia was in Bihar, with 32.9% of the men reporting it. This is followed by West Bengal (30.46%), Jharkhand (30.3%), Meghalaya (29.13%) and Odisha (28.45%). The lowest prevalence among men was in Manipur (9.19%), followed by Mizoram (9.78%), Nagaland (10.23%), Goa (10.68%) and Kerala (11.77%).

The World Health Organization defines anaemia as a condition in which the number of red blood cells or their oxygen-carrying capacity is insufficient to meet physiological needs. Anaemia in men can cause fatigue, lethargy, creates difficulty in concentrating, thereby reducing the quality of life and decreasing economic productivity. An estimated 1.9 billion people had anaemia in 2013, which is 27% of the world's popula-

ANAEMIA PREVALENCE (%) BY AGE GROUP

Age	Men	Women	Total
15-19	16.9	18.0	17.9
20-24	14.6	15.9	15.7
25-29	14.3	15.5	15.4
30-34	13.0	14.1	13.9
35-39	12.5	13.6	13.4
40-44	10.8	11.7	11.6
45-49	10.1	11.1	11.0
50-54	7.8	-	1.1

ANAEMIA AMONG MEN IN THE STATES

HIGHEST 5	LOWEST 5
Bihar 32.86	Manipur 9.19
West Bengal 30.46	Mizoram 9.78
Jharkhand 30.3	Nagaland 10.23
Meghalaya 29.13	Goa 10.68
Odisha 28.45	Kerala 11.77

tion, and 93% of these cases occur in low- and middle-income countries. Factors such as consuming smokeless tobacco, being underweight, level of urbanisation and household wealth are associated with a higher probability of developing the disease.

Data source: *Lancet Global Health*

THIS WORD MEANS

PLIOSAUR

Predatory reptiles ruled the seas millions of years ago. Now, pliosaur bones have been found in Poland

OVER 150 million years ago, enormous reptiles swam the Jurassic oceans. The largest aquatic carnivorous reptiles that have ever lived, they are often dubbed "sea monsters". Scientifically, they are placed in the suborder *Pliosauroidae*, whose members are called pliosaurs. Interest in these giants has been revived with the recent discovery of their bones in a cornfield in the Polish village of Krzyzanowice. Remains of pliosaurs are rare in Europe.



Artist's impression of pliosaurs by Piotr Szczepaniak. Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland

"They measured over 10 metres in length and could weigh up to several dozen tons. They had powerful, large skulls and massive jaws with large, sharp teeth. Their limbs were in the form of fins. We found bones of these pliosaurs in the north of the Swietokrzyskie Mountains," palaeontologist Dr Daniel Tyborowski said in a statement released by Poland's Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

In the Jurassic era, the Swietokrzyskie Mountains area is believed to have been an archipelago of islands, where there were warm lagoons and shallow sea reservoirs, home to the marine reptiles discovered by the palaeontologists. The locality where the remains were discovered is considered to be rich in the fossils of coastal reptiles. Researchers now hope to find more remains in the coming months.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How global credit ratings work

Ratings agency Moody's has lowered India's outlook from stable to negative. How do such agencies assign these ratings? How seriously are these taken, and what changes for a government if it is downgraded?

SHAJI VIKRAMAN
CHENNAI, NOVEMBER 10

MORE THAN a decade and a half ago, a senior government official wrote an article in a newspaper headlined 'Moody's or Moody' — or words to that effect — on what was in his view the unjustified action of global credit ratings agency Moody's in pushing down the sovereign credit rating of India. Whether it is Moody's or its peer Standard and Poor's (S&P), Indian policymakers have often criticised the credit ratings assigned by these agencies.

This time, Moody's has lowered India's credit rating outlook from stable to negative because of what it has assessed as risks to economic growth, prospects of a more entrenched slowdown, weak job creation, and a credit squeeze being faced by Non-Banking Finance Companies. With growth slowing to 5% in the quarter to June this fiscal, and hardly any green shoots visible, most analysts may find it difficult to fault this assessment.

What do these ratings mean?

Credit ratings agencies rate on a scale the financials and business models of companies, as well as economic management by sovereign governments, after analysing official and other data and interacting with government officials, business leaders, and economists. These agencies then rate instruments such as bonds, debentures, commercial papers, deposits, and other debt offerings of companies or governments to help investors make informed decisions.

From a company's or a government's perspective, a better rating helps raise funds at a cheaper rate. The agencies do this on a continuous basis, either upgrading or downgrading the instrument based on performance, prospects, or events likely to have an impact on the balance sheet of a company or on the fiscal position of a government or a sub-sovereign entity. Political uncertainty can trigger a sovereign rating downgrade. In August 2011, S&P cut the highest rating (AAA) of the US citing rising debt levels and political risks. This provoked a government official to comment that "this was a 'facts be damned' decision".

Within the two categories of investment grade, which is for good-quality firms and speculative, there are several notches for companies whose financials pose a risk of defaulting on payments. India's sovereign credit rating from Moody's is now Baa2, with the outlook cut from 'stable' to 'negative'.

HOW INDIA REACTED TO PAST RATINGS

2016
ARUN JAITLEY



After economic growth had rebounded, thanks also to low global oil prices, the government was miffed that the rating agencies chose not to

acknowledge that — and the then Secretary, Economic Affairs, wrote to Moody's questioning its methodology. But when the agency revised India's sovereign rating the next year, then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that Moody's has rightly recognised the structural reforms undertaken such as GST, a sound monetary policy framework, recapitalisation of state-owned banks, etc.

2013
JASWANT SINGH



Towards the end of UPA-II, former NDA Finance Minister Jaswant Singh told Parliament that the credit rating agencies had got it all wrong, pointing out the case

of Iceland, which had the highest rating of AAA given by S&P, and whose economy had collapsed. India as an investment destination had fared better than many East Asian countries, whose economies had been hit severely over a decade earlier. "These agencies pretend to know everything. But certainly, they don't know better than the government," Singh had said.

This could potentially have an impact on companies planning to borrow overseas through bonds or foreign loans, for investors or banks abroad may well seek higher interest rates because of weak prospects. This usually weighs on institutional investors such as pension funds, endowment funds of overseas universities, or sovereign wealth funds that manage the wealth of rich countries. They have to rejig their investments when there is a lowering of ratings. Firms and many governments that borrow from the international markets too are mindful of rating downgrades.

In India, the concern could be that after Moody's upgraded its rating two years ago, when the economy grew two percentage points faster than now, the lowering could signal that a change upwards could be a long way off. As the agency put it, compared with two years ago (when it upgraded India's rating to Baa2 from Baa3), the probability of sustained real GDP growth at or above 8% has significantly diminished. It explained that the decision to lower the rating was based on increasing risks that growth will remain materially lower than in the past, leading to a gradual rise in the debt burden from already high levels.

Does a downgrade really matter?

That depends on how and where governments borrow. Many countries tap the global

debt or credit markets to raise money. Global banks or their investment banks often claim that it is important to diversify their investor base, be it companies or governments, to lower the risk of a narrow set buying into such borrowing programmes and posing a risk of selling or pulling out.

India has been an outlier on this count. It has not issued a bond or raised money directly in the international market so far, which means that to a good extent, a downgrade has limited impact. Rather, the impact is felt almost fully by private firms or state-owned companies which raise foreign currency funds. In this year's Budget, the government announced its intention to go in for a sovereign bond, but hasn't moved on it yet in the backdrop of criticism and caution by the RBI. In the past, Indian policymakers with long memories had stymied attempts to issue a sovereign bond or borrow from the international market directly. And one of the reasons for that has been what they perceive as the alleged bias of credit ratings agencies.

Consider this. In the run-up to India's balance-of-payments crisis in 1991, the agencies swiftly downgraded the sovereign rating, thus reducing the country's ability to raise money abroad through public sector oil companies or banks for short periods to buy oil or to pay for imports. In 1998, when India an-

nounced that it had carried out nuclear tests in Pokhran, the ratings agencies were quick to react again, impacting borrowings. The government and the RBI then decided to ignore these agencies and raised billions in foreign exchange through bonds issued by the SBI in two tranches. It helped that the government did not have foreign borrowings. And for long, the Indian government did not engage much with credit ratings agencies in trying to change perceptions. This was until after 2004-05 or so onwards, with the growth uptick that lasted for well over six years.

How credible are the agencies?

Credit ratings agencies have taken a knock after the global financial crisis of 2008, when they were exposed after the collapse of highly rated banks and other institutions. Since then, they have come under attack in India too, and also faced regulatory action, besides a probe by central investigating agencies after they had assigned top ratings to borrowings by firms that were part of the IL&FS group last year.

Just a year before the last sovereign rating upgrade by Moody's in 2017, Shaktikanta Das, who was the Secretary, Economic Affairs then and is now the RBI Governor, had written to the agency raising questions on its methodology and making out a case for revisiting it. The Finance Ministry's point then was that India's debt levels had declined, and that it ought to reflect in the ratings metric. Often, the government has also complained that countries with higher levels of debt and a weak fiscal have managed better ratings.

This time, the government has responded to the change in outlook by saying that India's fundamentals are robust and that other macroeconomic indicators such as inflation are still low, which is reflected in low bond yields, with growth prospects strong both in the near and long terms. Essentially, it has indicated that it does not agree with the assessment of the agency. Whether the financial markets share a similar assessment, is what needs to be seen over the next few weeks.

India's policymakers have often grumbled about the "moody" nature of credit rating agencies and their seemingly differential standards. But it is useful to keep in mind the fact that despite the sovereign ratings being what they have been for a long time, India has attracted plenty of portfolio and flows into both government and corporate debt, besides Foreign Direct Investment. A rational approach should help.

Why a small area in India map bothers Nepal

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, NOVEMBER 10

THE NEW political map of India, recently released by the government to account for the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, has triggered fresh protests over an old issue in Kathmandu. Mapped within Uttarakhand is a 372-sq km area called Kalapani, bordering far-west Nepal and Tibet. While the Nepal government and political parties have protested, India has said the new map does not revise the existing boundary with Nepal.

Following reports about the publication of the map, youths and students of the ruling Nepal Communist Party and the opposition Nepali Congress came on the streets. The Nepal government described India's decision as "unilateral" and claimed that it will "defend its international border". In India, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar told journalists that the map "accurately depicts the



sovereign territory of India".

At an all-party meeting on Saturday, leaders of various parties urged Nepal Prime Minister K P Singh Oli to take up the matter urgently with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Defining the boundaries

Nepal's western boundary with India was marked out in the Treaty of Sugauli between the East India Company and Nepal in 1816. Nepali authorities claim that people living in the low-density area were included in the Census of Nepal until 58 years ago.

Five years ago, Foreign Minister Mahendra Bahadur Pande claimed that the late King Mahendra had "handed over the territory to India". By some accounts in Nepal, this allegedly took place in the wake of India-China War of 1962.

A committee formed by the Nepal government to study this claim submitted a report to Prime Minister Oli during his first tenure. It claimed that India had "occupied" an additional 62 sq km land.

Bilateral talks

The Prime Ministers of the two countries discussed the issue in 2000, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee assuring Nepal that India would not occupy even an inch of Nepal. Five years ago, the matter was referred to a new mechanism

comprising foreign secretaries of both sides.

"There had been some sincere efforts made soon after Vajpayee's assurance," a former diplomat in Nepal said. Then National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra and Indian Ambassador to Nepal K V Rajan had gone for an aerial survey, but the matter did not move further, the diplomat added.

In New Delhi, Raveesh Kumar said: "The boundary delineation exercise with Nepal is ongoing under the existing mechanism. We reiterate our commitment to find a solution through dialogue in the spirit of our close and friendly bilateral relations."

At least two former Foreign Ministers of Nepal — Upendra Yadav (now Deputy Prime Minister) and Sujata Koirala — had said that 98 per cent of border-related matters had been settled with India. Apart from Kalapani, another unresolved issue involves a vast area along the Nepal-Uttar Pradesh border. During his visit to Nepal in 2014, Prime Minister Modi had said that the Susta and Kalapani issues would be sorted out.

How India subsidised certain exports, why WTO panel ruled against it

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 10

A WORLD Trade Organisation (WTO) panel recently ruled against India in a trade dispute over its subsidies to exporters under various schemes. If the panel's ruling is adopted, the decision is expected to put at risk export subsidies claimed to be worth over \$7 billion.

Why was India taken to the dispute settlement panel?

The US in March 2018 challenged export subsidies provided by India under five sets of schemes — Export-Oriented Units, Electronics Hardware Technology Park and Bio-Technology Park (EOU/EHTP/BTP) Schemes; Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme; Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Scheme; Duty-Free Imports for Exporters Scheme (DFIS); and Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS).

The US had alleged these schemes violated certain provisions of WTO's Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM)

Agreement that prohibit subsidies that are contingent upon export performance. According to the agreement, India was only exempt from this provision until its Gross National Product per capita per annum reached \$1,000.

The export subsidies under most of the challenged schemes, except for MEIS, consist of exemptions and deductions from customs duties and other taxes. The subsidies under MEIS consist of government-issued notes ("scrips") that can be used to pay for certain liabilities vis-à-vis the government and are freely transferable, according to the WTO dispute settlement panel.

The US argued these subsidies were a detriment to American workers and manufacturers. When consultations with India did not work out, the US in May 2018 requested that a dispute settlement panel be set up.

What was India's defence?

India argued that certain provisions under the SCM Agreement, allowing for special and differential treatment of certain developing countries, excluded it from the provi-

sions prohibiting export subsidies. It also argued that all the challenged schemes, except the SEZ scheme, adhered to a provision of the SCM Agreement that carves out exemptions from or remission of duties or taxes on an exported product under certain conditions.

On what grounds did the panel rule against India?

The panel found the US had "demonstrated the existence of prohibited export subsidies" that were inconsistent with provisions of the SCM Agreement. It recommended that India withdraw certain "prohibited subsidies" under the DFIS scheme within 90 days; under the EOU/EHTP/BTP, EPCG and MEIS schemes within 120 days and under the SEZ scheme within 180 days from the adoption of its report.

According to the panel, the US was able to show that India had foregone revenue through exemptions and deductions from duties and other taxes to the benefit of exporters in most schemes. In the case of MEIS, it was able to establish that exporters benefited from a direct transfer of funds through

the provision of scrips. MEIS, because of its design, structure and operation, did not meet the conditions for the exemptions from these prohibitions as well, according to the panel.

The panel found that the US had established that most of the measures under the other four schemes (EOU/EHTP/BTP, EPCG, SEZ and DFIS) were "contingent in law upon export performance". It also found that, as there was no dispute that India had graduated from the special and differential treatment provision that it originally fell under in the SCM Agreement, it was no longer excluded from the application of the prohibition on its export subsidies. It concluded that "no further transition period" was available to the country to stop these subsidies.

Not all the US' arguments were accepted. The panel rejected some of its claims regarding certain customs duty exemptions provided under the DFIS scheme and excise duty exemptions under the EOU/EHTP/BTP schemes.

Who will be impacted if these "prohibited subsidies" are withdrawn?

These subsidies were worth over \$7 billion annually and benefited producers of steel products, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, information technology products, textiles and apparel, according to the office of the US Trade Representative. While there will be no retrospective impact, India would have to stop providing the subsidies in this form. However, some experts say India can tweak the schemes to support exports while making them more WTO-compliant.

Some ways that India can continue to support exports, according to these experts, is by providing tax concessions (like concessions on GST) on parts and components used in the production of the exported product. The government has already begun work on making some of the debated schemes more WTO-compliant. In September, it announced the Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product to replace the MEIS as a more WTO-compliant scheme. The overall duty foregone under this scheme is expected to be "more or less the same" as MEIS (around Rs 40,000 crore-45,000 crore annually).

What happens next?

India plans to appeal the report on some aspects of law and legal interpretation before the panel's report is adopted within 60 days of it being circulated with all members. While the US is expected to push for early adoption, if India's notice to appeal the report is submitted before this, it stands a chance of challenging this ruling.

In this particular situation, with the dispute panel's appellate mechanism expected to become dysfunctional after December 11 (when two of the three remaining members of the body will retire), India may not be obligated to implement the panel's current ruling.

This is because, if its appeal is submitted on time, it will join a pipeline of 10 other appeals in other WTO dispute cases that have been filed since July 2018. Until those appeals are cleared and India's own appeal is resolved, the country will be under no legal compulsion to make the changes recommended in the dispute settlement panel's current report, according to experts.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 227

तब विवाद होगा खत्म..

अयोध्या मामले के बहु-प्रतीक्षित निर्णय ने पूर्वी उत्तर प्रदेश के इस छोटे शहर में दशकों से चले आ रहे जमीन विवाद के आखिरकार खत्म हो जाने की उम्मीदें बढ़ा दी हैं। इस विवाद ने भारतीय राजनीति एवं समाज का स्वरूप बदल देने में अहम भूमिका निभाई है। उच्चतम न्यायालय अपने फैसले के पीछे की वजह कानूनी दायरे में ही रखने को लेकर

खासा सजग रहा है। उसने इस बात पर जोर दिया है कि भले ही इस विवाद के राजनीतिक एवं धार्मिक निहितार्थ हो सकते हैं लेकिन वह इस मुद्दे को बेहद जटिल जमीन विवाद ही मानकर चला है।

दूसरे शब्दों में, यह निर्णय अयोध्या विवाद को इतिहास एवं धर्म के बारे में व्याख्यान देने का जरिया बनाने के बजाय धर्मनिरपेक्ष एवं

संवैधानिक सिद्धांतों के आलोक में देखने का एक स्पष्ट प्रयास माना जा सकता है। इलाहाबाद उच्च न्यायालय ने इस मामले में दिए अपने फैसले में विवादित जमीन को तीनों याचियों के बीच बांट दिया था। लेकिन व्यावहारिक तौर पर दो-तिहाई जमीन हिंदू समुदाय को मिली थी जबकि एक तिहाई जमीन मुस्लिम पक्ष को दी गई थी। हालांकि उस फैसले में ऐतिहासिक तथ्यों की कमी और धर्मशास्त्रीय विवरणों की अधिकता थी। लेकिन शीर्ष अदालत ने अपने फैसले में न्यायक्षेत्र के धर्मनिरपेक्ष चरित्र पर कम दबाव डाला है।

इसके बावजूद अब भी ऐसे सवाल पूछे जा सकते हैं और पूछे जाने भी चाहिए कि सर्वोच्च न्यायालय अंतिम निष्कर्ष तक किस तरह

पहुंचा? समूची विवादित जमीन हिंदूओं को देने के फैसले तक पहुंचाने वाले तर्कों में कई समस्याजनक बिंदु हैं। पहला, मुस्लिम समुदाय के दावे को 'संभाव्यता के संतुलन' के आधार पर पूरी तरह नकार देने वाला निष्कर्ष थोड़ा अटपटा है क्योंकि हिंदू पक्षकारों ने भीतरी परिसर में अनवरत पूजा होते रहने का सबूत कभी नहीं पेश किया। आशंका इस बात की है कि 'संभाव्यता का संतुलन' लागू करने को कुछ तबके इस रूप में भी देख सकते हैं कि न्यायालय ने अयोध्या की अंतिम स्थिति के बारे में राजनीतिक विमर्शों को ध्यान में रखा। दूसरा, न्यायालय का यह मत है कि समूची जगह एक 'योगिक' इकाई है, लिहाजा उसमें किसी भी तरह का विभाजन नहीं हो सकता है। वैसे पिछली सदी में जबी होने के पहले तक इस

तरह का जमीन बंटवारा एक ऐतिहासिक परंपरा रही है। तीसरा, न्यायालय ने विवादित स्थल को दो हिस्सों- भीतरी परिसर एवं बाहरी परिसर के रूप में देखते हुए कहा है कि बाहरी परिसर में हिंदूओं को पूजा के रिकॉर्ड मौजूद हैं वहीं मुस्लिम पक्ष भीतरी परिसर में लगातार इबादत होने की बात साबित नहीं कर पाया है।

हालांकि कहीं व्यापक बिंदु यह है कि दोषपूर्ण होते हुए भी इस फैसले में यह क्षमता है कि लंबे समय से खिंचे चले आ रहे मामले को बंद किया जा सके। इस संदर्भ में, विवाद से जुड़े सभी हितधारक एवं राजनीतिक दल इस बात के लिए तारीफ के हकदार हैं कि सबने अपने बयानों में इसकी सियासी तपिश काफी हद तक कम कर दी। खुद प्रधानमंत्री ने भी फैसला आने के पहले देशवासियों को

सजग करते हुए कहा था कि वे फैसले को 'हार' या 'जीत' के रूप में न देखें। यह उम्मीद की जाती है कि मंदिर के टूट का गठन एवं प्रबंधन भी इसी तरह समावेशी हो और उसमें उन जख्मों को दोबारा हरा करने वाला विजयोत्सास न हो।

विवादित ढांचे के विध्वंस की 1992 में घटी घटना को लेकर काफी तीखे नजर आए न्यायालय को यह भी सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि विध्वंस से संबंधित मामलों का निपटारा जल्द हो और दोषियों को सजा मिले। ऐसा होने पर ही अयोध्या विवाद सही मायनों में बंद हो सकेगा और भारत भी आगे बढ़ पाएगा। कानून को लागू किया जाना चाहिए और तभी राष्ट्रीय राजनीति अयोध्या की गहरी छाया से निकल सकती है।



विनय सिन्हा

इमरान नहीं नानक के बारे में सोचिए

भारतीय सिखों और तमाम गैर सिखों के सबसे पवित्र धर्मस्थलों में शुमार करतारपुर साहिब खुल गया है। यह हम सबके उल्लासित होने का दिन है।

बतौर क्रिकेट खिलाड़ी उनकी भूमिका को छोड़ दिया जाए तो इमरान खान शायद आपको सबसे शानदार लोगों में नहीं लगे। इसके बावजूद उनके मानकों के हिसाब से भारत के सिखों के लिए करतारपुर साहिब की यात्रा को वीजा मुक्त बनाने की उनकी पेशकश दिलचस्प थी।

पहली बात तो यह कि वे यह कैसे तय करेंगे कि कोई सिख है या नहीं? सिख होने का कोई सिद्धांत नहीं है, न ही यह किसी को आप प्रार्थना कर सकते हैं, पूजा अर्चना करने वाले ग्रंथी किसी भी अन्य श्रद्धालु की तरह आपको पवित्र पुस्तक से आशिष दिलाएंगे और संगत आपको लंगर में भोजन कराएंगी।

स्वर्ण मंदिर और अकाल तख्त साहिब सहित समूचे सिख समाज में किसी भी आस्था के व्यक्ति के लिए कोई रोकटोक नहीं है। कहने का तात्पर्य यह कि सिख धर्म किसी के लिए कोई रोकटोक नहीं करता। लंगर जैसे सामुदायिक भोजन की व्यवस्था इसका उदाहरण है जहां सब साथ में भोजन करें। साथ में भोजन करने वाले सभी समान समझे जाते हैं। किसी भी धर्म का व्यक्ति 'कार सेवा' कर सकता है। अनेक लोग ऐसा करते हैं। यही कारण है कि सिखों के पवित्र स्थल दुनिया में सर्वाधिक स्वच्छ जगहों में शामिल हैं। भारत में करतारपुर साहिब को कार इमरान खान, पाकिस्तानी सेना तथा आईएसआई के रुख को लेकर काफी चिंता है। ये सभी हमारी आशंकाओं के मुताबिक ही खुरे हैं। परंतु यदि यह मान भी लिया जाए कि करतारपुर साहिब के माध्यम से पाकिस्तान के पास भारत में अलगाववाद का दोबारा हवा देने का मौका था, तो भी इमरान खान ने केवल सिखों के लिए रियायत की घोषणा

कर इसे खत्म कर लिया। पहली बात तो यह कि सिख धर्म सबको समान मानने वाला समावेशी धर्म है और वह इस प्राथमिकता देने वाली अवधारणा को खारिज कर देता। इमरान यह भी नहीं जानते होंगे कि किसी सिख को या गुरुनानक तथा उनके नौ अन्य उत्तराधिकारियों के अन्य धर्म से ताल्लुक रखने वाले श्रद्धालु को कैसे अलग किया जाएगा। सिख व्यवहार और परंपरा में ऐसा कुछ नहीं है जो सिखों को गैर सिखों से अलग कर सके।

इमरान खान पुराने सैन्य प्रतिष्ठान की इस अवधारणा पर यकीन कर बैठे हैं कि सिखों और हिंदुओं में विभाजन अनिवार्य है। इससे पहले सन 1960 के दशक में इस विषय में उसका पहला और 1981-94 के बीच उसका दूसरा प्रयास नाकाम रहा था। अब तीसरी कोशिश का अवसर आ गया है। यही कारण है कि विदेशी गांधी का फोटो लगा है सिखों पर कनाडा के संगठनों को पाकिस्तान के प्रवासी समूहों के साथ जोड़ा जा रहा है। खासतौर पर कश्मीरी (मीरपुरी) समूहों को साथ लाया जा रहा है और रिपोर्ट्स 2020 को आगे बढ़ाया जा रहा है। इस तरह पुरानी किताब के एक और अध्याय को खोला जा रहा है। पहले किए गए प्रयासों की तरह इसका भी नाकाम होना तय है। इस बार भी यह भारत की तुलना में पाकिस्तान को अधिक नुकसान पहुंचाएगा। हम भारतीयों को बहुत समस्या महसूस करने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। सिखों को भारत से अलग करने की पाकिस्तानी फंतासी सन 1950 के दशक तक जाती है। उस दौर में विभाजन के घाव एकदम ताजा थे।

पाकिस्तान ने इस दिशा में पहला प्रयास



राष्ट्र की बात

शेखर गुप्ता

1960 के दशक के मध्य में चरम पर पहुंचाया। पंजाब का विभाजन हुआ था और उसके एक हिस्से में कट्टर और अलगाववादी भावना थी। परंतु पंजाब के तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री प्रताप सिंह कैरों और उनकी हत्या के बाद लाल बहादुर शास्त्री और इंदिरा गांधी ने इस चुनौती को गंभीरता से लिया। पंजाब एक बार फिर बंटा और हिंदी बहुल इलाकों को हरियाणा और हिमाचल के रूप में नए राज्य के रूप में गठित किया गया। पंजाबी बोलने वाले सिख बहुल राज्य के रूप में पंजाब सामने आया। पाकिस्तानियों ने भी भारतीय युद्ध बंदियों में से सिखों को अलग कर उन्हें बरगलाने की कोशिश की। दूसरा प्रयास सन 1981 में किया गया। यह प्रयास पाकिस्तान के नए सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान ने किया जिसे अफगान जिहाद के माध्यम से नई मजबूती हासिल की थी। हालांकि संयोगवश इसे भारत के कई आंतरिक कारकों का सहयोग भी मिला। सिखों में बगावती तेवर, कमजोर सरकारें और शिरोर्मणि अकाली दल को हाशिये पर रखना इसमें शामिल हैं। उसके बाद संत जर्नेल सिंह भिंडरानाले जैसे करिश्माई और पवित्रतावादी नेता का उभार हुआ। उसके बाद जो हुआ वह इतिहास में दर्ज है। बाद के 13 वर्षों में हजारों लोग मारे गए। ठीक उस समय जब लगने लगा था कि पंजाब में अब हालत नहीं सुधरेंगे, यह सब अचानक समाप्त हो गया। यह सब इतनी तेजी से हुआ कि हम जैसे मामले पर करीबी नजर रखने वाले भी ठीक से समझ नहीं सके।

ऐसा कैसे हुआ? यकीनन सुरक्षा बलों और खुफिया एजेंसियों ने अपना काम बखूबी किया। परंतु आतंक का वह दौर उस दिन समाप्त हो गया जिस दिन सिखों ने यह तय

किया कि अब बहुत हो गया। इस लड़ाई की असली हीरो थी सिख पंजाब पुलिस। सिखों की आम धारणा में यह बदलाव नाटकीय था। एक बिंदु पर जहां मेरे कुछ साथी पत्रकार भी पंजाब के आजाद क्षेत्रों की यात्रा करने की बातें कर रहे थे, वहीं यह सब अचानक समाप्त हो गया। हालात ऐसी थी कि अब कोई इस विषय पर बात भी नहीं करना चाहता था। इस अभियान का नेतृत्व तत्कालीन पंजाब पुलिस प्रमुख केपीएस गिल कर रहे थे। उन्होंने इंडिया टुडे की एक खबर के लिए इस विषय पर मेरे साथ विस्तार से बात की। जब मैंने उनसे पूछा कि इसका ऐसा अचानक और पाकिस्तान के लोग इकबाल को नहीं पढ़ते, उन्होंने कहा था- कुछ बात है कि हस्ती मिटती नहीं हमारी।

ऐसे में पाकिस्तानियों का यह सोचना मूर्खता लगता है कि वे उन दिनों को वापस ला सकते हैं। इसी प्रकार हम भारतीयों के लिए यह सोचना भी शर्मनाक है कि पाकिस्तानी हमारे सिखों को हमसे दूर कर सकते हैं। करतारपुर साहिब में कहीं किसी होर्डिंग पर भिंडरानाले की तस्वीर देखकर हमारा हताशा हो जाना सही नहीं है। ऐसी तस्वीरों तो आपको स्वर्ण मंदिर में और उसके आसपास भी मिल जाएंगी। बाहर दुकानों पर बिकती की चैन में और दिल्ली में कारों के पीछे तो कई जगह कंयूटर और टैबलेट के स्क्रीन सेवर में भिंडरानाले की तस्वीरें दिख जाएंगी। अगर हम इन्हें देखकर चौंकने होने लगे तो मतलब हमें एक राष्ठी के रूप में खुद पर और सिख समुदाय पर भरोसा नहीं है।

अगर हम यह मान लेते हैं कि वे 2019 में भी उसी ज्ञांसे में आ जाएंगे तो यह उनकी बुद्धिमत्ता का अपमान होगा। अगर हममें से कोई यह सोचता है कि हमने सिखों को पाकिस्तान से बचाया तो यह एकदम मूर्खतापूर्ण रूप से अताकिंक है।

हमने पिछले सप्ताह इस आलेख में कहा था कि भारत की सामाजिक और राष्ट्रीय समरसता बीते वर्षों में हमारी सहजता के साथ-साथ मजबूत हुई है। हम इसलिए मजबूत नहीं हैं क्योंकि हम अपनी विविधता के साथ एकजुट हैं। बल्कि ऐसा इसलिए हुआ है क्योंकि हम अब अधिक सहज हैं। आज यह दलील दी जा सकती है कि भारतीय सरकार के संस्थापक ने विविधता में एकता का नारा देते हुए थोड़ी कंजूसी बरती। उनको कहना चाहिए था कि विविधता का जश्न मनाओ। एक बार अगर आप इसे स्वीकार देने वाली साइबर सुरक्षा फर्म गुप-आईबी का मुख्यालय सिंगापुर में है जबकि इसका स्वामित्व रूसी शोधकर्ताओं के एक समूह के पास है जिसके मुखिया इलिया साखकोव हैं। गुप-आईबी का अनुमान है कि अधिकांश कार्डों के विवरण 'स्किमिंग' के जरिये जुटाए गए हैं। दुकानों में कार्ड स्वीपिंग के लिए लगनी पीओएस मशीनों में छेड़छाड़ कर स्किमिंग की जाती है। वहीं कुछ कार्डों का ब्योरा एटीएम मशीनों में छेड़छाड़ से जुटाया गया है।

भौतिक स्किमिंग की गुंजाइश सबसे ज्यादा होती है। बिस्की के लिए रखे गए आंकड़े ट्रेक 1 एवं

साइबर धोखाधड़ी की बढ़ती घटनाएं ग्राहक को सतर्क रहने की जरूरत

साइबर संधमारी और डेटा लीक के मामले भारत में पिछले दिनों सुर्खियों में रहे हैं। एक स्तर पर, केके नाभिकीय ऊर्जा संयंत्र पर सफल साइबर हमले की घटना अधिक डरावनी है। यह भारत के ऊर्जा क्षेत्र के आधारभूत ढांचे की असुरक्षित हालत को दर्शाता है। दूसरे स्तर पर, पेगासस की तरफ से कुछ भारतीय एक्टिविस्ट की निगरानी का मामला सबसे ज्यादा परेशान करने वाला है। यह एक व्यवस्थागत, गैरकानूनी निगरानी का पैटर्न दर्शाता है जिसकी जद में दर्जनों भारतीय एक तय समय तक जरूर रहे। अभी तक सामने आए तमाम साक्ष्यों से यही लगता है कि इस निगरानी को सरकारी एजेंसियों ने अंजाम दिया था।

पिछले दिनों सामने आया साइबर हमले का तीसरा मामला एक विश्व रिकॉर्ड ही बना गया। गू 28 अक्टूबर को 'इंडिया-मिक्स-न्यू-01' नाम के डेटा लीक में करीब 13 लाख क्रेडिट एवं डेबिट कार्ड से संबंधित विवरणों की बिस्की की पेशकश डार्क वेब पर की गई थी। खुद को जोकर्स स्टेज बताने वाली वेबसाइट पर यह मामला सामने आया। इन कार्डों में से 98 फीसदी से भी अधिक को भारतीय बैंकों ने जारी किया हुआ है। बिस्की के लिए उपलब्ध कार्ड के मामले में यह सबसे बड़ा वाक्या है। हरेक कार्ड का विवरण करीब 100 डॉलर की रकम में देने की बात कही गई है। यह बताता है कि साइबर-अपराधियों की नजर में इस ब्योरे की कीमत कितनी अधिक है। अमूमन क्रेडिट एवं डेबिट कार्ड के ब्योरा एक डॉलर प्रति कार्ड की दर पर मिल जाता है। इस घटना के बारे में जानकारी देने वाली साइबर सुरक्षा फर्म गुप-आईबी का मुख्यालय सिंगापुर में है जबकि इसका स्वामित्व रूसी शोधकर्ताओं के एक समूह के पास है जिसके मुखिया इलिया साखकोव हैं। गुप-आईबी का अनुमान है कि अधिकांश कार्डों के विवरण 'स्किमिंग' के जरिये जुटाए गए हैं। दुकानों में कार्ड स्वीपिंग के लिए लगनी पीओएस मशीनों में छेड़छाड़ कर स्किमिंग की जाती है। वहीं कुछ कार्डों का ब्योरा एटीएम मशीनों में छेड़छाड़ से जुटाया गया है।

भौतिक स्किमिंग की गुंजाइश सबसे ज्यादा होती है। बिस्की के लिए रखे गए आंकड़े ट्रेक 1 एवं



तकनीकी तंत्र

देवांगशु दत्ता

ग्राहकों को बैंक की तरफ से आने वाले मोबाइल संदेशों और ईमेल पर नजर रखनी चाहिए और अगर कोई भी संदिग्ध लेनदेन दिखे तो बैंक को फौरन उसकी जानकारी देनी चाहिए।

ट्रेक2 से संबंधित हैं। किसी कार्ड के पिछले हिस्से पर लगी चुंबकीय पट्टी में तीन ट्रेक तक हो सकते हैं। इनमें से हरेक ट्रेक में लेनदेन के लिए जरूरी जानकारीयें दर्ज होती हैं। कार्डधारक का नाम-पता, कार्ड नंबर, उसकी वैधता अवधि और कार्ड पुष्टिकरण मूल्य (सीवीवी) के अलावा थोखाधड़ी से बचाव के लिए दर्ज सूचना भी ट्रेक पर कूटबद्ध रूप में दर्ज होती हैं। कई क्रेडिट-डेबिट कार्ड में केवल दो ट्रेक ही होते हैं। जब भी कार्ड को किसी एटीएम या पीओएस मशीन में लगाया जाता है तो कार्ड पर बने ट्रेक में उपलब्ध जानकारीयें पढ़ी जाती हैं। वहीं ऑनलाइन लेनदेन में ट्रेक को पढ़े जाने की जरूरत नहीं होती है। पुष्टिकरण का काम सीवीवी संख्या दर्ज कर किया जाता है। कार्ड के पिछले हिस्से पर बनी स्पेन्ड पट्टी के पास अंकित तीन-चार अंकों की संख्या ही सीवीवी होती है।

कार्ड के ट्रेक्स पर दर्ज सूचनाओं को बेचने की इस पेशकश से पता चलता है कि ये जानकारीयें कार्ड स्वाइप के जरिये जुटाई गई हैं। तमाम क्रेडिट कार्ड इस्तेमाल न करें जहां कार्ड-रीडर लगे होने का अंदेश हो। इसके अलावा डेबिट कार्ड की तुलना में क्रेडिट कार्ड के इस्तेमाल को प्राथमिकता दें।

बताता है कि छेड़छाड़ की शिकार कई पीओएस या एटीएम मशीनों से आंकड़े जुटाए गए हैं, न कि किसी एक जगह से। इसकी वजह यह है कि किसी एटीएम मशीन में इस्तेमाल होने वाले कार्ड में उसी बैंक की तरफ से जारी कार्ड की संख्या सबसे अधिक होती है। ट्रेक 1 एवं ट्रेक 2 डेटा की उपयोगिता इस बात में है कि इसका इस्तेमाल कर एक नए कार्ड को जन्म दिया जा सकता है। एक कार्डधारक के तमाम जानकारीयें को इस नए कार्ड की चुंबकीय पट्टी पर अंकित किया जा सकता है और फिर इस क्लोन कार्ड से लेनदेन किया जा सकता है। भारत के बाहर अधिकांश ऑनलाइन लेनदेन के लिए 2-फैक्टर सत्यापन (2एफए) जरूरी नहीं है लिहाजा कोई भी चालाक साइबर अपराधी खाते से जुड़े फोन नंबर को बदलकर 2एफए को आसानी से चकमा दे सकता है। ट्रेक 1 एवं ट्रेक 2 डेटा में उपभोक्ता से संबंधित तमाम जानकारीयें मौजूद होती हैं जिनका इस्तेमाल सत्यापन में किया जा सकता है।

सवाल है कि क्या आपको घबराना चाहिए? भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के दिशानिर्देशों के मुताबिक, अगर तीसरे पक्ष की संधमारी के चलते अनधिकृत लेनदेन होता है तो उसमें ग्राहक की कोई जवाबदेही नहीं होती है। यहां पर तीसरे पक्ष की गलती का मतलब यह है कि न तो बैंक और न ही ग्राहक की तरफ से कोई ज़िम्मेदारी है। इसकी शर्त बस यह है कि ऐसा लेनदेन होने के तीन कारोबारी दिनों के भीतर ही ग्राहक बैंक को इसकी जानकारी दे दें। इसका मतलब है कि ग्राहकों को बैंक की तरफ से आने वाले मोबाइल संदेशों और ईमेल पर नजर रखनी चाहिए और अगर कोई भी संदिग्ध लेनदेन दिखे तो बैंक को फौरन उसकी जानकारी दें। अगर आप कार्ड का काम इस्तेमाल करते हैं तो एक छोटा ऑनलाइन लेनदेन कर आप यह पता कर सकते हैं कि आपको अलर्ट संदेश मिल रहे हैं या नहीं। एक नागरिक के तौर पर आप इससे ज्यादा कुछ नहीं कर सकते हैं। हालांकि कुछ सावधानियां रखी जा सकती हैं। पहला, किसी भी ऐसे एटीएम का इस्तेमाल न करें जहां कार्ड-रीडर लगे होने का अंदेश हो। इसके अलावा डेबिट कार्ड की तुलना में क्रेडिट कार्ड के इस्तेमाल को प्राथमिकता दें।

कानाफूसी

‘विदेशी गायें आंटी होती हैं’

भारतीय जनता पार्टी की पश्चिम बंगाल इकाई के प्रमुख दिलीप घोष ने यह दावा करते हुए एक और विवाद को जन्म दे दिया कि भारतीय गायों के कूबड़ पर सूरज की रोशनी पड़ने से उनके शरीर में सोने का निर्माण होता है और इसीलिए भारतीय गायों का दूध पीले रंग का होता है। विदेशी नस्लों की गायों को 'आंटी' कहते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि केवल भारतीय गाय को ही माता का दर्जा दिया जाना चाहिए। कुछ ही समय में उनका यह बयान वायरल हो गया और सोशल मीडिया पर इसे लेकर बहुत टिप्पणियां की गईं। कुछ लोगों ने लिखा, 'घोष को अगला वित्त मंत्री बना देना चाहिए जिससे भारत गाय के दूध से सोना बनाना शुरू कर सके। इससे देश की आर्थिक चुनौतियों से निपटने में मदद मिलेगी।' कुछ लोग उनके बयान के कारण उन्हें ट्विटर पर ट्रोल भी करने लगे।

बढ़ते कदम...

पिछले कुछ दिनों से माइक्रोब्लॉगिंग वेबसाइट ट्विटर पर उपयोगकर्ताओं के खातों का सत्यापन करने के लिए मनमाने नियम बनाने और इन मानकों का पालन नहीं करने पर कुछ ट्विटर हैंडल को ब्लॉक करने की घटनाओं के बीच ट्विटर चर्चा का विषय बना हुआ है और बहुत से उपयोगकर्ता मैस्टाडॉन प्लेटफॉर्म पर जा रहे हैं। गुरुवार को कांग्रेस पार्टी ने भी 'आईएसआईइंडिया मैस्टाडॉन डॉट सोशल' के साथ मैस्टाडॉन पर अपना खाता खोल लिया। इस हैंडल में पार्टी अलगाव-अलग हैं। उपयोगकर्ता अपनी पसंदीदा नीति वाले प्लेटफॉर्म का चलन कर सकता है या किसी ऐसे प्लेटफॉर्म से दूसरे प्लेटफॉर्म पर जा सकता है, जिसकी नीतियां उसे पसंद नहीं आ रही हैं। लेकिन इस बदलाव के लिए व्यक्ति को मैस्टाडॉन के सोशल नेटवर्क से बाहर नहीं जाना पड़ेगा।



आपका पक्ष

जनसंख्या नियंत्रण पर करनी होगी पहल

असम सरकार ने जनसंख्या नियंत्रण की दिशा में एक फैसला किया है कि 1 जनवरी, 2021 से उन व्यक्तियों को सरकारी नौकरी नहीं मिलेगी, जिनके दो से अधिक बच्चे हैं। इसके पहले उत्तराखंड सरकार ने भी एक फैसला लिया था कि अगर किसी व्यक्ति के दो से अधिक बच्चे हैं तो वह पंचायत का चुनाव नहीं लड़ सकता है। स्वतंत्रता दिवस के अवसर पर प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने अधिक जनसंख्या पर अपनी चिंता जाहिर की थी। बढ़ती जनसंख्या सरकार के लिए चिंता का विषय रहा है। इसे नियंत्रित करने के लिए पिछली सरकारों द्वारा भी कदम उठाए गए थे। वर्ष 2000 में राष्ट्रीय जनसंख्या नीति लाई गई, जनसंख्या आयोग का गठन किया गया। लोकसंख्या स्थिरीकरण निधि की भी स्थापना की गई। इससे लोकसंख्या के बढ़ने की गति में कमी आई लेकिन वर्तमान में देश के लिए 135 करोड़ आबादी देयता बन गई है तथा जिस कामकाजी



जनसंख्या से जनसांख्यिकीय लाभांश मिलने की उम्मीद थी उस हिसाब से उसका परिणाम सामने नहीं आया है। जनसंख्या के आंकड़े पर अगर गौर करें तो जिन राज्यों में साक्षरता दर कम है उस राज्य में प्रजनन दर अधिक है। जिस राज्यों में साक्षरता दर अधिक है वहां प्रजनन दर कम है। अगर प्रति व्यक्ति आय के आधार पर

देश की बढ़ती जनसंख्या को नियंत्रित करने के लिए सरकार को ठोस नीति लानी चाहिए

विश्लेषण करें जिन राज्यों की आय अधिक है उन राज्यों में जनसंख्या कम है जबकि गरीब राज्यों में जनसंख्या अधिक है। अर्थशास्त्रियों के मुताबिक देश में जनसंख्या

स्थिरीकरण के लिए जनसंख्या नियंत्रण कानून के साथ सरकार को शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य में निवेश करना चाहिए। वर्ष 2026 तक देश में कामकाजी जनसंख्या 68.4 प्रतिशत हो जाएगी इसके लिए सरकार को रोजगार सृजन के लिए अभी से रणनीति बनानी होगी।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

श्रमिकों का मेहनताना बढ़ाने की जरूरत

दिल्ली सरकार ने न्यूनतम मजदूरी में बढ़ोतरी की है। अब न्यूनतम मजदूरी दर 8,632 रुपये से बढ़ाकर 14,882 रुपये कर दिया गया है। दिल्ली की तरह अन्य राज्यों को भी न्यूनतम मजदूरी दर में बढ़ोतरी करने की जरूरत है। निजी क्षेत्रों में सुधार कर वेतन बढ़ोतरी करने से युवाओं का ध्यान निजी क्षेत्रों की ओर आकर्षित होगा। सरकार को चाहिए कि वह उद्योगों को कर में रियायत देकर श्रमिकों की मजदूरी में बढ़ोतरी का प्रस्ताव रखे। चिकित्सा, दुर्घटना बीमा या अन्य किसी भी आकस्मिक घटना पर उन्हें सुविधा पहुंचा कराना चाहिए। जब तक निजी क्षेत्र में सुधार नहीं होगा, वेतन बढ़ोतरी नहीं होगी तब तक निम्न वर्ग ऊपर नहीं उठ सकेगा।

अमित पांडेय, बिलासपुर

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिज़नेस 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।

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हृदयनारायण दीक्षित

श्रीराम का आख्यान भारत के गांव गली

तक व्याप्त है। देश का वातायन राममय है। इसीलिए अदालती कार्यवाही पर भारत ही नहीं, बल्कि पूरे विश्व की नजर लगी हुई थी

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8 विचार



दैनिक जागरण

समस्या कितनी भी विकराल क्यों न हो उसका समाधान अवश्य होता है

अयोध्या और राजनीति

यह देखना सुखद है कि अयोध्या विवाद पर उच्चतम न्यायालय के बहुप्रतीक्षित फैसले को देश ने धैर्य के साथ स्वीकार किया और कहीं पर भी कोई ऐसी अग्रिय घटना नहीं हुई जो चिंता का कारण बने। पूरे देश को प्रभावित करने वाले एक बड़े फैसले पर आम जनता का ऐसा संयमित आचरण उसकी परिपक्वता को ही रेखांकित करता है। इस परिपक्व आचरण की सराहना की जानी चाहिए-इसलिए और भी, क्योंकि उच्चतम न्यायालय के फैसले को उन्होंने भी स्वीकार किया जो अयोध्या में मस्जिद निर्माण के पक्ष में पैरवी कर रहे थे। निःसंदेह यह देखना भी सुखद है कि अयोध्या मसले पर उच्चतम न्यायालय के फैसले को करीब-करीब सभी प्रमुख राजनीतिक दलों ने भी स्वीकार किया। इनमें वे दल भी हैं जो अयोध्या में राम मंदिर निर्माण की मांग का न केवल विरोध किया करते थे, बल्कि ऐसी मांग के समर्थकों के तिरस्कार का कोई मौका भी नहीं छोड़ते थे। अब अगर ऐसे दलों के स्वर बदले हुए हैं तो इसका अर्थ यही है कि उन्हें यह आभास हो गया कि अयोध्या में राम जन्म स्थान पर मंदिर का निर्माण होे, यह आकांक्षा केवल कुछ धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक संगठनों की ही नहीं, बल्कि व्यापक हिंदू समाज की थी। दुर्भाग्य से इस आकांक्षा की न केवल अनदेखी की गई, बल्कि उसका उपहास भी उँड़ाया गया। इतना ही नहीं, राम मंदिर निर्माण की मांग को खारिज करने को एक तरह का सेन्चुरल दायित्व बना दिया गया। इसी के साथ मस्जिद के स्थान पर प्राचीन राम मंदिर होने का उल्लेख करने वालों को भी निंदित किया जाने लगा। सबसे दुर्भाग्य की बात यह रही कि इस काम में खुद को इतिहासकार कहने वाले लोग भी शामिल हो गए। इन इतिहासकारों की ओर से अयोध्या में राम मंदिर होने के अलावा अन्य सब कुछ होने के विचित्र और हास्यास्पद दावे किए जाने लगे। ऐसे ही दौर में जब भाजपा ने खुद को अयोध्या आंदोलन से जोड़ा तो स्वयं को सेन्चुरल-लिबरल कहने वाले नेताओं और विचारकों ने उसे लांछित करना शुरू कर दिया। उनकी ओर से ऐसा प्रचारित किया जाने लगा मानो समाज के एक बड़े वर्ग की भावनाओं से जुड़े किसी मसले को उठाना कोई संगीन राजनीतिक अपराध हो। अयोध्या में राम मंदिर निर्माण की खुलकर पैरवी करने के कारण भाजपा को राजनीतिक रूप से अछूत तो बनाया ही गया, उस पर यह आरोप भी मढ़ा गया कि वह अयोध्या पर राजनीति कर रही है। यह आरोप उछालने वालों ने इसकी अनदेखी करने में ही अपनी भलाई समझी कि अयोध्या के विवादित स्थल पर मस्जिद निर्माण की उनकी पैरवी बोट बेक की राजनीति के अलावा और कुछ नहीं

थी। यही कथित सेन्चुरल राजनीति अयोध्या मसले को आपसी बातचीत से हल करने में बाधक बनी। इसी राजनीति ने एक ऐसा माहौल बनाया कि न्यायपालिका को अयोध्या विवाद को हल करने को प्राथमिकता देने से बचना चाहिए। ऐसा तब था जब भाजपा की ओर से यही कहल जा रह था कि न्यायपालिका सदियों पुराने इस विवाद को जल्द सुलझाए। भाजपा इसके लिए भी सक्रिय रही कि आपसी बातचीत से इस विवाद का समाधान हो जाए। इसमें किन दलों की ओर से कैसे अड़गे लगाए गए, यह किसी से छिपा नहीं।

आज यदि लगभग सभी

विपक्षी दल अयोध्या फैसले

का समर्थन कर रहे हैं तो

इससे उनकी पुरानी भूल ही

रेखांकित हो रही है

इससे इन्कार नहीं कि 1992 में विवादित ढांचे का ध्वंस एक दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण घटना थी। हैरत नहीं कि उच्चतम न्यायालय ने इस घटना को आपराधिक कृत्य कहा। उसने विवादित परिसर में मूर्तियां रखने को भी गलत उद्घोषा, लेकिन इन कृत्यों से यह तथ्य ओझल नहीं होता था कि मंदिर के स्थान पर मस्जिद का निर्माण किया गया। आखिरकार यही साबित हुआ कि ये तथ्य सही थे। इसमें दोगय नहीं कि विवादित ढांचे के ध्वंस ने देश पर गहरा असर डाला, लेकिन उन राजनीतिक दलों के रवैये में कोई खास फर्क नहीं आया जो भाजपा को सांप्रदायिक घोषित कर सेन्चुरल राजनीति करने का दम भरते थे। विवादित ढांचे के ध्वंस के बाद भाजपा अपने चुनाव घोषणा पत्रों में अयोध्या में राम मंदिर निर्माण की मांग का समर्थन करने तक सीमित रह गई। इसके अतिरिक्त उसके नेताओं की ओर से जब-तब यह यह कह दिया जाता था कि अयोध्या उनके एजेंडे में है। जब ऐसे बयान आते तो विपक्षी दल उस पर सांप्रदायिकता फैलाने की तोहमत मढ़ते और जब भाजपा किन्हीं खास मौकों पर राम मंदिर निर्माण की मांग का जोर-शोर से समर्थन करती नहीं दिखती तो उस पर ऐसे कटाक्ष किए जाते कि यह मंदिर निर्माण के प्रति उसकी प्रतिबद्धता दिखावटी है। ऐसे कटाक्ष यही प्रतीति कराते थे कि अयोध्या में राम मंदिर निर्माण की बात कोई दल कर सकता है तो केवल भाजपा ही। साफ है कि यदि अयोध्या पर राजनीति की गई तो भाजपा से अधिक उसके विरोधी राजनीतिक दलों की ओर से की गई। आज यदि लगभग सभी विपक्षी दल अयोध्या पर उच्चतम न्यायालय के फैसले का समर्थन कर रहे हैं तो इससे उनकी पुरानी भूल ही रेखांकित हो रही है। बेहतर हो कि इस भूल को स्वीकार कर यह समझा जाए कि राजनीतिक परिपक्वता के प्रदर्शन में ही सबका हित है।

मेल –मिलाप बढ़ाने वाला फैसला

सुशील कुमार सिंह

जब न्याय समाजशास्त्र और धर्मशास्त्र के समुचित समिश्रण के साथ एकजुटता के मार्ग से गुजरता है तो इतिहास बनना स्वाभाविक है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट का अयोध्या मामले में आया सुप्रीम फैसला हिंदू-मुस्लिम रिश्तों की तुरपाई करते हुए लोगों के बीच जिस सदभावना के साथ उतारा गया उसे देखते हुए कह सकते हैं कि देश को अपेक्षा भी कुछ ऐसी ही थी। न्यायालय का यह फैसला देश को एकजुट करने का काम करेगा। गौरतलब है कि 9 नवंबर, 2019 की तारीख, इतिहास में दर्ज एक ऐसा साक्ष्य है जो सदियों तक नहीं बुलया जा सकेगा। सैकड़ों वर्ष पुराने मामले और दशकों से चल रहे विवाद को शीघ्र अदालत ने जड़ से समाप्त कर दिया। जाहिर है अब मंदिर निर्माण का न केवल रास्ता साफ हो है, बल्कि मस्जिद निर्माण के लिए अलग से जमीन आवंटित करने का निर्णय धार्मिक मेलमिलाप का बड़ा उदाहरण भी है। राम जन्मभूमि बाबरी अतिरिक्त केस के इतिहास पर एक नजर डालें तो पड़ताल बताती है कि जिस स्थान पर 1528 में मस्जिद का निर्माण हुआ था। हिंदू मान्यता के अनुसार

अयोध्या मामले पर सुप्रीम

कोर्ट का निर्णय देश में धार्मिक

मेल –मिलाप बढ़ाने में अहम

भूमिका निभाएगा

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सुविचारित फैसला

अयोध्या विवादित भूमि पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के फैसले का स्वाभाविक ही चौतरफा स्वागत हो रहा है। लंबे समय से इस मामले को लेकर उलझन बनी हुई थी। इसे लेकर विभिन्न पक्षों की सियासत भी शामिल हो गई थी। दरअसल, अयोध्या के रामजन्मभूमि स्थल पर तीन पक्षों ने अपने स्वामित्व का दावा किया था। रामलला विराजमान पक्ष इस पर मंदिर बनाने की मांग कर रहा था तो निर्माही अखाड़े का दावा था कि संबंधित जमीन पर उसका स्वामित्व है। इसके अलावा सुन्नी वक्फ बोर्ड का कहना था कि विवादित स्थल पर चूँकि मस्जिद थी, जिसे बाबरी मस्जिद कहा जाता था, उस पर उसका मालिकाना हक है। इस तरह इस मामले पर फैजाबाद की अदालत से होते हुए इलाहाबाद उच्च न्यायालय और फिर विशेष अदालत में कई दशक सुनवाई चलती रही। कई बार इस पर आपसी बातचीत के जरिए निपटारे की पहल भी हो चुकी थी, पर कोई नतीजा नहीं निकला था। इलाहाबाद हाई कोर्ट ने विवादित भूमि को तीनों पक्षों में बराबर-बराबर बांटने का आदेश दे दिया था। पर उसे चुनौती दे दी गई थी। फिर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के समक्ष इस मामले की गुहार लगाई गई तो उसने चालीस दिन तक लगातार विभिन्न पक्षों की दलीलें सुनने और संबंधित साक्ष्यों का अध्ययन करने के बाद यह फैसला दिया।

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के ताजा फैसले से एक तरह से इस विवाद का सर्वमान्य निपटारा हो गया है। हालांकि इस फैसले पर किसी को एतराज है, तो उसके लिए पुनर्विचार याचिका दायर करने का विकल्प खुला है, पर इसके लिए उसे ठोस सबूत जुटाने पड़ेंगे। मगर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के इस फैसले के बाद अब शायद ही किसी के पास कोई ऐसा सबूत बचा हो, जो इस सुनवाई के दौरान पांच न्यायाधीशों की पीठ से अनदेखा रह गया हो। गौरतलब है कि पांच जजों की पीठ में कोई भी सदस्य ऐसा नहीं था, जिसने किसी पक्ष पर एतराज जताया हो। सभी ने सर्वसम्मति से इस पर अपनी रजामंदी जाहिर की। सबसे बड़ी बात कि इस मामले में बहुत सुविचारित ढंग से फैसला सुनाया गया। किसी पक्ष के किसी दावे को नजरअंदाज नहीं किया गया। निर्माही अखाड़े के दावे को न्यायालय ने यह कहते हुए खारिज कर दिया कि उसने अपना दावा कार्फी देर से पेश किया। हालांकि सुन्नी वक्फ बोर्ड ने भी दावा देर से पेश किया था, पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने उस पर गंभीरता से विचार किया। भारतीय पुरातत्व सर्वेक्षण विभाग और अन्य तमाम साक्ष्यों का अध्ययन करने के बाद वह इस निर्णय पर पहुंचा कि रामजन्मभूमि पर पूजा का अधिकार दिया जाना चाहिए। सुन्नी वक्फ बोर्ड को मस्जिद बनाने के लिए पांच एकड़ जमीन अलग देने का निर्णय दिया।

अयोध्या में राम मंदिर का निर्माण दरअसल, जनआस्था से जुड़ा मामला है। शुरू से बहुमत मंदिर के पक्ष में रहा है। मगर लगभग सभी राजनीतिक दलों ने इसे सियासी मुद्दा बना दिया था, जिसके चलते यह और उलझता चला गया था। जबकि हकीकत यह भी है कि मुस्लिम समुदाय के बहुत सारे लोग इस बात से सहमत थे कि विवादित भूमि पर राम मंदिर बनना चाहिए। इसलिए सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के ताजा फैसले का मुस्लिम समुदाय ने भी स्वागत किया है। इस फैसले पर सद्भाव और सौहार्द का जैसा परिचय मिला है, वह निस्संदेह सराहनीय है।

संकट और चुनौती

अंतरराष्ट्रीय क्रेडिट रेटिंग एजेंसी मूडीज ने भारत को जो आईना दिखाया है, वह देश की अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए बड़ी चैतावनी है। मूडीज ने भारत के आर्थिक परिदृश्य की रेटिंग को ‘स्थिर’ से घटा कर ‘ऋणायत्मक’ कर दिया है। इसका मतलब साफ है कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था की साख संतोषजनक नहीं है। अर्थव्यवस्था को लेकर लंबे समय से जो शंकाएं उठ रही हैं और समय-समय पर देश-विदेश के अर्थशास्त्री और वैश्विक वित्तीय संस्थान जिस तरह आगाह करते रहे हैं, मूडीज की रेटिंग उन पर एक तरह से मुहर है। रेटिंग घटाने के पीछे मूडीज ने जो बड़े कारण गिनाए हैं उनमें आर्थिक मंदी, बढ़ती बेरोजगारी, ग्रामीण परिवारों पर आर्थिक दबाव, गैर-बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों में बढ़ता नगदी संकट जैसे कई कारण हैं। मूडीज ने सबसे ज्यादा चिंता इस बात पर जताई है कि आर्थिक मंदी से निपटने के लिए सरकार ने पिछले कुछ महीनों में जो कदम उठाए हैं, वे कारगर साबित होते नहीं दिख रहे हैं। इससे आने वाले दिनों में भारत के आर्थिक परिदृश्य को लेकर जो तस्वीर उभरती है, वह बड़े खतरे का इशारा है और इससे आर्थिक विकास के निचले स्तर पर बने रहने का जोखिम बढ़ता जा रहा है।

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में मंदी के लक्षण तो साल भर पहले नजर आने लगे थे, लेकिन तब इसे गंभीरता से नहीं लिया गया। पर जब इस वित्त वर्ष की पहली तिमाही (अप्रैल-जून) के लिए जीडीपी के आंकड़े आए, तो पता चला जीडीपी वृद्धि दर छह साल के न्यूनतम स्तर पर पहुंच गई। इसके बाद देश के ऑटोमोबाइल क्षेत्र से मंदी की खबरों ने ध्यान खींचा। फिर त्वरित उपभोग वाली वस्तुओं के क्षेत्र यानी एफएमसीजी, सीमेंट, इस्पात, खनन जैसे क्षेत्रों से मंदी की आवाजें उठीं। और मंदी की वजह से जब लोगों की नौकरियां जानी शुरू हुईं तो सरकार के कान खड़े हुए। सेंटर फॉर मॉनीटरिंग इंडियन इंडस्ट्री ने जब बेरोजगारी के आंकड़े जारी किए तो पता चला कि दशकों बाद देश में इतनी ज्यादा बेरोजगारी के हालात बने हैं। बैंकिंग क्षेत्र खुद गंभीर संकटों का सामना कर रहा है। हालांकि सरकार अर्थव्यवस्था की बुनियाद मजबूत होने के दावे करती आ रही है।

किसी भी देश की अर्थव्यवस्था की साख तय करते समय सबसे पहले रेटिंग एजेंसियां आर्थिक सुधारों के लिए उठाए गए कदमों और देश के मौजूदा आर्थिक हालात पर सबसे ज्यादा गौर करती हैं। मूडीज ने 2012 में भी नीतिगत अक्षमता के आधार पर भारत की रेटिंग घटा दी थी, जिसे 2015 और फिर 2017 में सुधारा गया था। लेकिन अब मूडीज ही नहीं कह रही कि हालात खराब हैं, बल्कि सरकार ने खुद माना है कि देश में आर्थिक मंदी का दौर है। हालांकि सरकार अभी भी इसे अस्थायी मान कर चल रही है, पर हालात बता रहे हैं कि यह दौर जल्द खत्म होने वाला नहीं है। देश में निवेश, खपत और बचत का जो संतुलन गड़बड़ा गया है, उससे निपटने के उपाय सरकार को सूझ नहीं रहे। जब देश-विदेश में आर्थिक परिदृश्य की साख ही खराब होगी तो निवेश करने आएगा कौन? निवेश नहीं होगा तो काम-धंधे कैसे चलेंगे और लोगों को रोजगार मिलेगा?

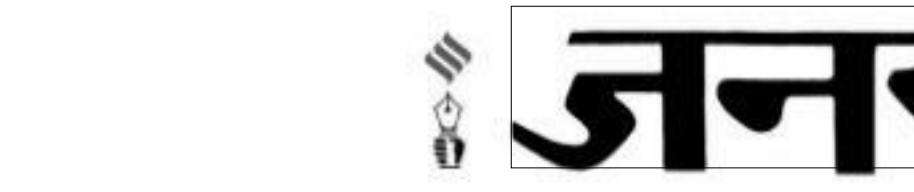
कल्पमेधा

सचमुच अब तक धर्म की स्थापना ही नहीं

हुई है। आज जिसे धर्म कहा जाता है, वह

तो मजहबों की बाड़ेबंदियां मात्र हैं।

- विनोबा भावे



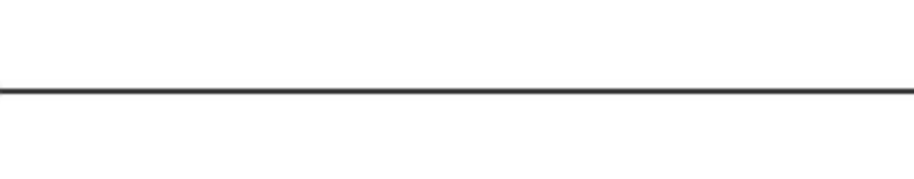
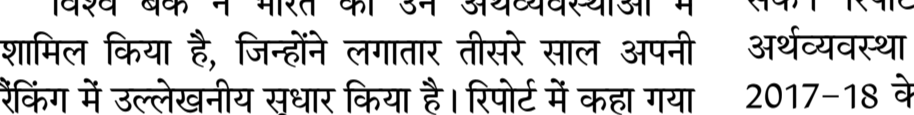
जयंतीलाल भंडारी



भारत में कारोबार करने के हालात बेहतर होने के साथ रोजगार के मौके बढ़ाने की भी बड़ी चुनौती है। हालांकि स्टार्टअप (नए छोटे कारोबार) और स्वरोजगार तेजी से बढ़े हैं, लेकिन नौकरियों की संख्या में कमी आई है। एक नवंबर को जारी सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकोनॉमी की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि भारत में बेरोजगारी बढ़ कर साढ़े आठ फीसद हो गई है, जो साल 2016 के अगस्त माह से अब तक सबसे ज्यादा है।



यकौनन सरकार के प्रयासों से देश में कारोबार करना तो आसान हुआ है, लेकिन रोजगार वृद्धि के प्रयासों के बावजूद उद्योग-कारोबार में रोजगार नहीं बढ़ पा रहे हैं। ऐसे में कारोबारी सुगमता के साथ रोजगार मौके बढ़ाने के लिए समन्वित प्रयास जरूरी हैं। पिछले महीने विश्व बैंक द्वारा प्रकाशित ‘ईज ऑफ डूइंग बिजनेस, 2020’ के सूचकांक में भारत एक सौ नब्बे देशों की सूची में तिरसठवें स्थान पर पहुंच गया। पिछले वर्ष पड़ुंचा था। इस तरह भारत कारोबार सुगमता में तो तेजी से आगे बढ़ा है। विश्व बैंक ने भारत को उन अर्थव्यवस्थाओं में शामिल किया है, जिन्होंने लगातार तीसरे साल अपनी रैंकिंग में उल्लेखनीय सुधार किया है। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया



सूर्यप्रकाश चतुर्वेदी

एक अच्छे शहर की पहचान तीन गुणों के आधार पर होती है। पहला है साफ-सफाई की स्थिति, दूसरा, यातायात और आवागमन की सुविधा और तीसरा गुण है पर्यावरण और प्रदूषण की हालत। जो शहर इन तीनों कसौटियों पर खरा उतरता है, उसे आदर्श माना जाता है। इंदौर सफाई में तो श्रेष्ठ है, पर आवागमन और प्रदूषण के मामले में अभी बहुत कुछ किया जाना है। हालांकि इंदौर पिछले चार वर्षों से देश के सर्वाधिक साफ-सुथरे शहर के रूप में स्थापित है। मुझे याद है कि होलकर कालीन युग में भी कार्फी समय तक शहर साफ-सुथरा था। लेकिन फिर स्थिति बदलती गई। लोग लापरवाह, गैरजवाबदेह और तेजी से बदलती जीवन-शैली की आपाधापी में अपनी जिम्मेदारी भूलते गए। आबादी बढ़ी और उसी के साथ गंदगी भी। लेकिन जो इंदौर में पिछले पांच वर्षों में हुआ, वह अकरस्मात नहीं हुआ। उसके पीछे निरंतर प्रयास और परिवर्तन की तलब की पृष्ठभूमि है। धीरे-धीरे यह तय किया गया कि हिम्मत करके सफाई अभियान की शुरुआत की जाए। सफाई का वातावरण, चेतना और सामूहिक जवाबदेही के साथ-साथ निजी संकल्प का

हार न जीत

अयोध्या के आंगन में दशकों से असमंजस और अंतहीन विवाद को सर्वोच्च अदालत के फैसले ने शांति सद्भाव के सेतु पर दोनों पक्षों को खड़ा कर दिया है। इस फैसले ने हमारे पूर्वजों द्वारा स्थापित मानवीय मूल्यों को ध्वस्त होने से बचा कर एक ऐतिहासिक कार्य किया है। सवाल न मंदिर का है, न मस्जिद का, बल्कि राष्ट्रीय परिप्रेक्ष्य में एकता, समन्वय और सद्भाव की त्रिवेणी में आमजन की आस्था का है। अतीत के अध्याय में अंगड़ाई न लेकर ‘आगे की सुधि लेय’ के मंत्र से वह सब कुछ किया जा सकता है जिसकी पृष्ठभूमि सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्णय में अंकित है। माननीय न्यायाधीशों के साहस और चिंतन ने देश को एक ऐसे मुकदमे से उबारने की चेष्टा की है जहां हम तारीख पर तारीख की मनोवृत्ति के शिकार हो गए थे और यह मान बैठे थे कि चोट की राजनीति के गरम तवे पर यह मामला सुलगता-सिसकता रहेगा। हमारी लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था के एक सबल स्तंभ ने यह सिद्ध कर दिया है कि न्याय के मंदिर में देर है, अंधेर नहीं। उम्मीद है कि इस फैसले के गर्भ में भविष्य की जो रूपरेखा तय की गई है, वह संवैधानिक और सद्भाव के दायरे में अपने लक्ष्य को समय पर हासिल करेगी। नूतन भारत के नवनिर्माण में देशवासियों के कल्याणार्थ एक बार फिर अयोध्या के सांस्कृतिक विरासतीय सूत्रों से भाईचारे और शांति का शंखनाद होगा, यही समय की मांग है और भारतीयता की प्रबल पहचान है। हफ्दर के मंत्र, गुरुद्वारे की गुरुवाणी, चर्च की प्रार्थना और मस्जिद की अजान में ही सवा सौ करोड़ देशवासियों और उनकी पीढ़ी के विकास, विश्वास और अमन-चैन की पटकथा चित्रित है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के इस

आसान होता कारोबार

है कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था के आकार को देखते हुए सुधार के ये प्रयास सराहनीय है। भारत को देश में कारोबारी माहौल सुधारने के मामले में नौ वां सर्वश्रेष्ठ देश चुना गया है। विश्व बैंक इस रैंकिंग के लिए दस उप श्रेणियों का इस्तेमाल करता है और इनमें से सात में भारत की स्थिति में सुधार आया है। भारत ने जिन चार क्षेत्रों में बड़े सुधार किए हैं, वे हैं- कारोबार शुरू करना, दिवालिया मामलों का समाधान, सीमा पार व्यापार को बढ़ाना और निर्माण संबंधी गतिविधियों के लिए अनुमति। विश्व बैंक ने भारत के मेक इन इंडिया अभियान की भी सराहना की है। इस अभियान का उद्देश्य विदेशी निवेश को लुभाना, निजी क्षेत्र की उत्पादकता बढ़ाना और देश की प्रतिस्पर्धा क्षमता में वृद्धि करना है।

निश्चित रूप से कारोबारी सुगमता के मामले में भारत ने विश्व बैंक के प्रमुख मापदंडों पर अपने यहां सुधार किए हैं। पिछले दिनों प्रकाशित बौद्धिक संपदा, नवाचार और कारोबार सुगमता से संबंधित विभिन्न वैश्विक रिपोर्टों में भी भारत के सुथरते हुए प्रस्तुतिकरण की बात कही जा रही है। प्रमुख कारोबार सूचकांकों के तहत कारोबार एवं निवेश में सुधार का परिदृश्य भी दिखाई दे रहा है। वास्तविक सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) में तेज वृद्धि, कंपनी कानून में सुधार और शिक्षा पर खर्च बढ़ने के कारण भारत एशिया-प्रशांत क्षेत्र में तेजी से आगे बढ़ा है। इस रैंकिंग में भारत तिवालियावें स्थान पर आ गया है।

भारत में कारोबार करने के हालात बेहतर होने के साथ रोजगार के मौके बढ़ाने की भी बड़ी चुनौती है। हालांकि स्टार्टअप (नए छोटे कारोबार) और स्वरोजगार तेजी से बढ़े हैं, लेकिन नौकरियों की संख्या में कमी आई है। एक नवंबर को जारी सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकोनॉमी की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि भारत में बेरोजगारी बढ़ कर साढ़े आठ फीसद हो गई है, जो साल 2016 के अगस्त माह से अब तक सबसे ज्यादा है। यह आंकड़ा सितंबर तक 7.2 फीसद था। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार ये आंकड़े भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में सुरती के लक्षणों को दर्शाते हैं। इसी तरह अजीम प्रेमजी युनिवर्सिटी में सेंटर ऑफ सरस्टेनेबल इंप्लॉयमेंट की ओर से भारत में रोजगार परिदृश्य पर कराए गए अध्ययन में यह सामने आया है कि कृषि और विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में नौकरियों में कमी आई है, जबकि निर्माण और सेवा क्षेत्र इस गिरावट को कम नहीं कर सके। रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 2011-12 के दौरान अर्थव्यवस्था में कुल रोजगार 47.42 करोड़ था, जो 2017-18 के दौरान घट कर 46.51 करोड़ रह गया।



में आगे बढ़ते कदमों से संतुष्ट नहीं हो जाना चाहिए। अभी इन विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में व्यापक सुधार की जरूरत है। खासतौर से भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को वैश्विक प्रतिस्पर्धा में आगे बढ़ाना जरूरी है। पिछले महीने विश्व आर्थिक मंच (डब्ल्यूईएफ) द्वारा एक सौ इकतालीस देशों के लिए जारी वैश्विक प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक सूचकांक 2019 में भारत पिछले चर्ष 2018 की तुलना में दस पायदान फिसल कर अड़सठवें पायदान पर आ गया है। खासतौर से बुनियादी ढांचा, संस्थानों, स्वास्थ्य, कुशलता, वित्तीय बाजार, नवोन्मेष, श्रम बाजार, लैंगिक असफलता आदि के अपनाने जैसे अधिकांश मानकों पर पिछले साल की तुलना में भारत का प्रदर्शन कमजोर रहा है। ऐसे में जरूरी है कि निश्चित रूप से अब ऐसे सुधार लागू किए

शहर का चेहरा

माहौल तैयार किया गया। विशेष कचरा गाड़ियों तैयार की गई जो वायलिन के वादन की पृष्ठभूमि में संगीत सुना कर अलसुबह लोगों को सफाई के प्रति सचेत करती नगर में घूमती हैं और उनमें गीले और सूखे कचरे के लिए अलग-अलग स्थान है, वे गाड़ियां हर घर से कचरा इकट्ठा करती हैं और सुबह-शाम घूम कर शहर को साफ-सुथरा रखती हैं। नागरिकों ने भी मुत्तैदी से अपनी जिम्मेदारी निभाई और वे रोज अपना कचरा अलग-अलग थैलियों में भर कर कचरा गाड़ी में डालते हैं।

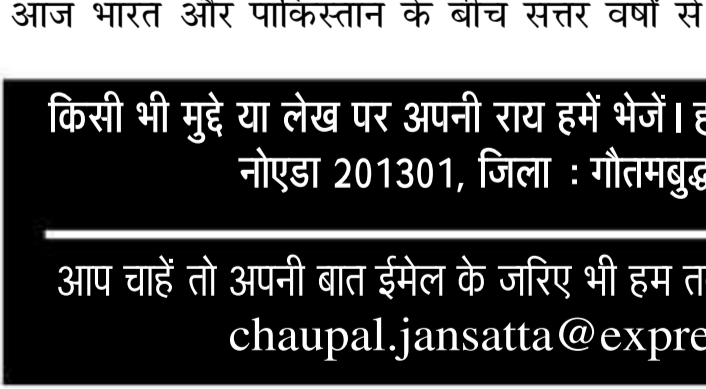
जो हुआ है वह अधिकारियों, जन प्रतिनिधियों, नागरिकों और सफाईकर्मियों की मिलीजुली मेहनत और कर्तव्य निष्ठा का परिणाम है। आज लोग सड़क पर कचरा फेंकने के पहले इधर-उधर देखते हैं। बल्कि अधिकतर लोग तो कागज या अन्य कचरा जेब में और पास ही रखने लगे हैं, ताकि वे उसे कचरा पेटी में डाल दें। जाहिर है, आप जो करना चाहते हैं, उसकी शुरुआत करने का साहस और उसके लिए आवश्यक निष्ठा और उसे पूरा करने का जुनून हो तो सब कुछ संभव है। हालांकि यह सच है कि अभी भी कुछ लोग सड़क पर गुटका और पान खाकर थूकते और बीड़ी सिगरेट में बचे हुए अंश को सड़क पर ही फेंकते नजर

आ जाते हैं। कानून बनाना आसान है, पर उसका पालन मुश्किल और चुनौतीपूर्ण है। इंदौर की सफलता में इस बात का ध्यान रखा गया कि लोग कानून के प्रति आदरभाव भी रखें और उनमें उसे तोड़े जाने का भय भी हो। एक बार मैंने खुद देखा कि कैसे अमेरिका में एक कार ड्राइवर को जुर्माने की रसीद दी गई और उसने कुछ दूर जाकर उसे फेंकी तो उसका पीछा करते हुए अधिकारी ने उस पर फिर से जुर्माना तो किया ही, कागज बाहर फेंकने का शुल्क भी वसूला!

सफाई की तरह ही उतना ही महत्त्वपूर्ण मुद्दा यातायात और प्रदूषण की भी है। दरअसल, ये तीनों ही एक दूसरे से जुड़े हुए हैं। क्या यह हास्यास्पद नहीं होगा कि शहर तो साफ-सुथरा हो, लेकिन उसकी यातायात व्यवस्था बेतरतीब हो और वह शोरगुल और धुंध-धुएं से ग्रस्त हो? लोग सभी काम सड़कों पर करते हैं। गणेश स्थापना भी सड़कों पर, गरबे भी सड़कों पर, रोजा इफ्तार भी सड़कों पर और बैंड-बाजा-बारात और शोरगुल के साथ नाच गाना भी सड़कों, धार्मिक और राजनीतिक जुलूस भी सड़कों पर। मानो सड़क चलने और आवागमन के लिए नहीं, इन आयोजनों के लिए हो। यातायात के नियमों की खुलेआम धज्जियां उड़ाई

फैसले के तहत दोनों पक्षों की मांगें पूरी हुई हैं। लेकिन फैसलें से भी अधिक खुशी यह देख कर हुई कि लोगों ने शांति से इस फैसले का स्वागत किया और स्वीकार किया और कानूनी प्रक्रिया को महाता दी। अब आस यही है कि पक्ष-विपक्ष इस मुद्दे पर सियासत करना छोड़ मंहगाई, गरीबी, प्रदूषण, भुखमरी, बेरोजगारी जैसी समस्याओं पर चर्चा कर उनका समाधान करें ताकि देश के विकास में भी हम विकसित देश का झंडा लहरा सके।

- जानवी बिदुल, जलंधर***



बनी खाई पट गई है और इससे सिख समुदाय को गुरुनानक देव जी के करतारपुर (पाकिस्तान) स्थित गुरुद्वारे के दर्शन करने का रास्ता खुल गया है। आज के दिन 1860 के दशक से चले आ रहे बाबरी मस्जिद-राम जन्मभूमि विवाद का समाधान हुआ है। माननीय सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने अपने निर्णय के साथ इस अध्याय को बंद कर दिया है।

● ***मोहम्मद शायान, कैराना***

आगे की सुध लें

दशकों से अटक पड़े अयोध्या विवाद का अंतत समाधान हो ही गया। सुप्रीम कोर्ट का फैसला बिल्कुल सही और संतुलित है। इससे किसी भी व्यक्ति की आस्था को ठेस नहीं पहुंची है, क्योंकि

जाएं, ताकि देश कारोबार, नवाचार, प्रतिस्पर्धा, बौद्धिक संपदा जैसे मापदंडों पर तेजी से आगे बढ़ सके।

देश में रोजगार बढ़ाने के लिए चीन की तरह अपने यहां भी कौशल प्रशिक्षण की बहुत जरूरत है। उच्च शिक्षा और कौशल विकास पर उपयुक्त ध्यान देकर इस चुनौती से निपटा जा सकता है। विश्व बैंक की ‘रोजगार रहित विकास’ नामक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि भारत में तेजी से रोजगार के दरवाजे पर दस्तक देने वाले युवाओं की संख्या को देखते हुए हर साल इक्यासी लाख नई नौकरियां और नए रोजगार अवसर पैदा करने की जरूरत है। इतने रोजगार के अवसर और नौकरियां जुटाने के लिए शिक्षण-प्रशिक्षण की गुणवत्ता में सुधार तथा सार्वजनिक और निजी निवेश में भारी वृद्धि करनी होगी। विनिर्माण क्षेत्र को गतिशील बनाना होगा। निर्यात बढ़ाना होगा। श्रम कौशल बढ़ाना होगा। विश्व बैंक का कहना है कि दुनिया के अधिकांश विकसित और विकासशील देशों में जनसंख्या वृद्धि दर तेजी से घटने के कारण कामकाजी आबादी कम हो गई है। चूंकि भारत की पैसठ प्रतिशत आबादी पैंतीस साल से कम आयु की है, इसलिए भारत की युवा आबादी उच्च गुणवत्ता और कौशल प्रशिक्षित होकर दुनिया के लिए उपयोगी और भारत के लिए आर्थिक कमाई का प्रभावी साधन सिद्ध हो सकती है।

निस्संदेह हमें श्रम आधारित क्षेत्रों की वृद्धि पर ध्यान देना होगा, ताकि अधिक से अधिक नौकरियां पैदा की जा सकें। इसके लिए कपड़ा, जूता-चप्पल, फर्नीचर और रसोई से संबद्ध सामान और ऐसे ही अन्य औद्योगिक व कारोबार क्षेत्रों के विकास पर अधिक ध्यान देने की जरूरत है जिसमें अधिक श्रमबल जुड़सकी होता है। चूंकि इन श्रम आधारित रोजगार के क्षेत्रों में चीन की कंपनियां अधिक श्रम लागत के कारण बाहर होती जा रही हैं, अतएव भारत को वैश्विक

स्तर की ऐसी प्रतिस्पर्धी कंपनियां भी सृजित करना

होगी, जो निर्यात बाजार में दबदबा बना सकें। इस बात पर भी ध्यान दिया जाना होगा कि विश्व बैंक फिलहाल कारोबारी रैंकिंग में केवल दिल्ली और मुंबई को शामिल करता है, लेकिन छोटे शहरों को छोटे उद्योगों के लिए कारोबार सुगमता के बड़े प्रयास जरूरी हैं। जब छोटे शहरों और छोटे उद्योगों में कारोबार सुगमता बढ़ेगी तभी कारोबार के तहत रोजगार के अवसरों में तेज वृद्धि दिखाई दे सकेगी। साथ ही उद्योग-कारोबार में रोजगार बढ़ने पर मनरेगा की ओर बढ़ रही युवाओं की कतार में कमी आ पाएगी। ऐसा होने पर देश के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) में भी तेजी से वृद्धि होगी।

स्तर की ऐसी प्रतिस्पर्धी कंपनियां भी सृजित करना होगी, जो निर्यात बाजार में दबदबा बना सकें। इस बात पर भी ध्यान दिया जाना होगा कि विश्व बैंक फिलहाल कारोबारी रैंकिंग में केवल दिल्ली और मुंबई को शामिल करता है, लेकिन छोटे शहरों को छोटे उद्योगों के लिए कारोबार सुगमता के बड़े प्रयास जरूरी हैं। जब छोटे शहरों और छोटे उद्योगों में कारोबार सुगमता बढ़ेगी तभी कारोबार के तहत रोजगार के अवसरों में तेज वृद्धि दिखाई दे सकेगी। साथ ही उद्योग-कारोबार में रोजगार बढ़ने पर मनरेगा की ओर बढ़ रही युवाओं की कतार में कमी आ पाएगी। ऐसा होने पर देश के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) में भी तेजी से वृद्धि होगी।

जाली हैं। बिना हेलमेट के तीन और चार सवारी

दुपहिया वाहनों पर बैटाना, स्कूटर और कार चलाते

हुए भी मोबाइल पर बात करना, ट्रैफिक सिग्नल की

परवाह न करना, आम बात है। शायद्यों में बाजों के

साथ ट्रक के आकार की ट्रॉली और उसमें कई-कई

बड़े सारंड बॉक्स या डीजे लगा होना आम हो चुका

है। तेज गति से बजते गाने ध्वनि प्रदूषण तो बढ़ाते ही

हैं, लोगों को परेशान भी करते हैं। यातायात भी

बाधित होता ही है। जबकि ये सभी बातें कानूनी तौर

पर अपराध हैं। पुलिस देख कर भी शिकायत करने

वाले का इंतजार करती है और खुद संज्ञान नहीं लेती।

चूंकि कोई किसी को कुछ भी सरेके से रोकता नहीं,

इसलिए ये घटनाएं लगातार बढ़ रही हैं।

आश्चर्य की बात है कि सफाई में सख्ती और

स्मार्ट सिटी के नाम पर सड़क चौड़ी करने के बहाने

सैकड़ों मकान तोड़ने का साहस करने वाला प्रशासन

यातायात बाधित करने वाली ट्रालियों को जन्म करने

का साहस क्यों नहीं कर पाता! जब सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने

ध्वनि प्रदूषण पर रोक लगाने का निर्देश दिया हुआ है

तो उसे रोकना स्थानीय प्रशासन का ही काम है। सही

काम करने के लिए संकोच और डर कैसा? मजबूत

इरादे से जनहित में किसी नेक काम की शुरुआत

करने की हिम्मत जरूरी है।

बचाने के लिए परस्पर विरोधी विचारधारा के दो दलों

ने गठबंधन कर सता लोचुपता का परिचय दिया है।

शिवसेना और भाजपा दोनों ही समान विचारधारा

वाली पार्टี हैं, लेकिन शिवसेना ने हमेशा ही अस्थिर

सहयोगी होने का परिचय दिया है, इससे उसकी साख

को बढ़ा भी लगा है। आज महाराष्ट्र में जो हालात हैं,

उसमें पार्टियां तो चुनाव जीत गई हैं, लेकिन महाराष्ट्र

की जनता हार रही है। ऐसे में सवाल है कि महाराष्ट्र

में जो समस्याएं मुंह बाए खड़ी हैं, उनका समाधान

कौन करेगा? कुछ महीनों पहले जिस प्रकार का

नाटक कर्नाटक में देखने को मिला था, उसी प्रकार

का नाटक महाराष्ट्र में होने की संभावना है।

- घनश्याम तिवारी, भोपाल***

पाक का छिपा एजेंडा

करतारपुर सहिब गलियारा भारत और पाकिस्तान के लिए विश्वास और दोस्ती का गलियारा बन सकता है। लेकिन लाता है पाकिस्तान को यह मंजूर नहीं। पाकिस्तान ने इसका प्रयोग अपने नापाक मंसूवों को पूरा करने के लिए करना शुरू कर दिया है। इस बारे में पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री कैप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह पहले ही शंका जाहिर कर चुके हैं। पाकिस्तान द्वारा दरबार सहिब को लेकर जो वीडियो जारी किया गया है, उसमें खालिस्तानी आतंकी भिंडरावाले और अन्य आतंकीयों को नायक के रूप में दिखाया जाना चिंता का विषय है। पाकिस्तान ही नहीं, भारत में भी कट्टरपंथी रिस्कों का एक ऐसा धड़ा है जो इस प्रकार के कृत्यों के प्रति सहानुभूति रख सकता है। इस स्थिति में भारत सरकार को बहुत चौकस रहना होगा। ऐसी स्थितियों को लेकर पाकिस्तान को जहां कड़ी चेतावनी देनी होगी, वहीं ठोस कार्रवाई भी करनी होगी। थोड़ी सी भी लापरवाही पाकिस्तान को भारत के खिलाफ मौका दे सकती है।

- रवींद्र कुमार, कैथल***