

Greed, not fear, will remove Delhi smog

The reliance on perception of fear of the law will not solve this problem



WITHOUT CONTEMPT

SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN

Yet another winter is upon us and yet again, Delhi is reeling under pollution and fog. Schools have had to be closed as an emergency measure. The state government has resumed its emergency road rationing measure. A politician in the party ruling at the centre has exhorted the cadre to defy the road rationing law, leading by example. Meanwhile, a judiciary-initiated fiscal charge into the capital region has taken firm root, while crop stubble in the neighbouring agrarian states continue

to be burnt at will. Of course, through Diwali, firecrackers were used at will in Delhi. Acquisition of new vehicles too has continued at will — checked only by the economic slowdown (which too is a highly-contested and surcharged topic). The challenge for policy-makers is essentially one of creating by law, a set of legitimate incentives for farmers not to burn their crop stubble after the harvest. Or for that matter a set of legitimate disincentives against such burning. However, most policy-making in India is based on rendering an undesirable action illegal, and in fact, criminalising undesirable conduct. The Indian faith in legislating the attainment of virtue is immense. Even greater is the propensity to criminalise undesirable conduct. In a nutshell, Indian policy-making has an excessive dependency on leveraging fear (or perceived fear) with the stipulation of punishment as a primary tool, as opposed to leveraging greed, with an incentive and disincentive structure nudging desirable behavioural outcomes.

It is time to think up a policy of

incentivising farmers in the states around Delhi. Let's say a farmer is given an incentive for not burning his crop stubble and instead handing over the task of incinerating the crop stubble to a state-run-or-funded community initiative. The incentive can take the form of, say, fertilisers, or even direct cash transfers. Wider community-run costs could be inflicted to nudge the choice towards the desirable option of not burning the crop stubble.

That there is only one-upmanship and petty finger-pointing is a pointer to there being no disincentive in the form of a political cost to the politicians voted into power by those societies. So long as no political cost has to be paid, politicians will merely exhort violation of vehicular restrictions, and indulge in denial of crop burning being the cause, and have internet troll armies dish out memes that point to a particular chief minister alone being the cause of the failure.

All in all, the abject failure in designing an incentive system will keep the problem alive. Meanwhile, all it would take is a publicity-seeking "public inter-

est litigant" to convince an excited bench to issue directions and judge-made law without either diagnosing the problem or testing the efficacy of the solution. Until the next harvest, the next Diwali and the next fresh short-lived outrage over the appalling smog over the Republic's capital.

Delhi and the states around it would do well to study the incentives-based approach to conserving and protecting the endangered snow leopard in the Indian Himalayas. Snow leopards were considered the enemies of the villagers in these states — they would kill cattle, which would cause immense financial losses to the villagers, who would in turn, either hunt or poison the snow leopards, which were fast en route to extinction. A well-thought through programme has been successful. Here's how.

Villagers who felt under attack from the snow leopards had been inclined to kill the snow leopards by poisoning or by hunting them. The villagers were assisted with setting up home-stay facilities for tourists. Solar-powered light sticks were tried in villages to protect domestic cattle

from the snow leopards. Experiments showed that the light sticks worked, keeping attacks at bay. In some villages, a simple wire mesh fencing did the trick. Villagers who actually lost cattle to snow leopards got compensated through insurance, which replaced a compensation policy of the government that required villagers to travel long distances carrying evidence of the loss. Earnings from home-stay tourists were reinvested in solar water heaters to enable hot showers, which in turn, brought in more tourism income. Introducing awareness in school education has led to attitudinal changes at home with the kids influencing the households.

Snow leopard killings have gone down. Their sightings have increased. Now, villagers call the conservators to rescue even accidentally trapped snow leopards instead of effecting revenge killings.

The smog in Delhi is not insurmountable. What it requires is some imaginative thinking, applying local intelligence to creating solutions based on perception of benefits. The reliance on perception of fear of the law will not solve this problem.

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CHINESE WHISPERS

One post, many names

The Congress party in Madhya Pradesh has secured its position in the state Assembly but the state unit is still struggling to tackle factionalism. As it became apparent that an announcement on the new Pradesh Congress Committee chief is imminent, minister for animal



husbandry Lakhman Singh Yadav started battling for Jyotiraditya Scindia to be declared the state Congress president. "The

Congress enjoys power but organisational structure remains weak. Jyotiraditya is young; if he became the state unit chief, the organisation would gain in strength," he said. Pitted against Scindia is former chief minister Digvijaya Singh (pictured), general secretary of the All India Congress Committee. Earlier, the tribal face of Madhya Pradesh Congress and forest minister Umang Singh had targeted Singh saying, "Even at 72, he wants to become the state party president!"

Togadia is back

Ever since he had to quit the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the outfit's former chief Praveen Togadia has struggled to be in the news. However, with the Supreme Court about to announce its verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute by mid-November, Togadia has become active once again. On Wednesday, he issued a press statement on behalf of the Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Bajrang Dal. In an appeal similar to the one that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh affiliates had issued, Togadia asked their members to maintain peace and harmony after the verdict is announced. He said if the verdict is in favour of a Ram temple, people should not indulge in sloganeering but light lamps, distribute prasad and visit a nearby temple. "Do not make any arrogant, hurtful, inflammatory posts, comments on social media or give interviews that are derogatory," he said.

TMC shifts gears

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress has altered its political discourse in many ways after election strategist Prashant Kishor was roped in to advise the party. The party took a nuanced position on the scrapping of the provisions of Article 370; now it is mulling whether it should start reaching out to Dalits in Bengal. The state does not have a history of caste-based political parties, but the TMC is concerned at rival Bharatiya Janata Party's efforts at consolidating the Dalits. The party is hoping to counter this by showcasing its Dalit leaders as the state prepares for Assembly polls in April 2021. The TMC is also speaking more often on issues of language. On Wednesday, Banerjee tweeted her concern that the joint entrance exams were now being conducted not just in English and Hindi, but also in Gujarati. She said while she loved the Gujarati language, she had no idea why other regional languages were being ignored.

The Indian banking journey: Logic & cure

In part 1 of a series, the author traces the compulsions behind bank nationalisation and the effects of liberalisation on the banking sector



JANMEJAYA SINHA

I believe there are three discernible phases in Indian banking post nationalisation till 2018. The 1969-91 post-nationalisation phase; 1992-2012 post-liberalisation phase; and 2013-18 failed clean-up phase.

1969-91: The political brilliance of bank nationalisation for consolidating Indira Gandhi's socialist credentials is well understood. What is not commented on as well was its strong economic requirement. By 1969 the lustre of the freedom movement had worn off. Indian political leaders were faced with the demands of full adult franchise with a poor, third world, resource-starved economy. India was considered a global basket case with endemic hunger and poverty. External borrowings were scarce; poor tax policy with extremely high tax rates on a small base led to widespread evasion and poor collections. India had no money to deal with the democratic demands of its people.

At this time the Indian depositor saved both Indian democracy and the Indian economy. Bank nationalisation allowed the government to access the Indian depositor. A rapid thrust to increase reach led to the spurt in opening rural and semi-urban branches (R&SU) and government ownership took out any

risk in depositing money with nationalised banks. Between 1969 and 1975, bank branches more than doubled from 8,000 branches (of which 4,780 were in R&SU areas) to 18,730 (of which 12,405 were in R&SU areas). By 1990, India had almost 60,000 branches (of which 46,115 were in R&SU areas), raising ₹314,823 crore of bank deposits. The deposits so collected were available to the government through approved securities banks had to buy to meet the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) requirements. At its peak, SLR and cash reserve ratio (CRR) together touched 50 per cent of bank deposits. Credit was disbursed to lobby groups by mandating that 40 per cent of all advances went to important priority sectors and the remaining credit to industry was allocated on the basis of Tandon & Chore Committee norms by a credit authorisation scheme.

Foreign banks were marginal but operated in profitable niches — foreign exchange, overseas syndication, structured products, transaction banking, and simple mass affluent banking. They did not really use their balance sheet but the American banks — Citibank and Bank America — made very high returns and offered bright Indians a great career. The Imperial Bank had previously been nationalised into the State Bank of India and subsequently so were its associate banks. By 1980 there were 28 banks in the public sector with over a million employees of relatively high calibre to do the government's bidding. Capital projects were funded by development finance institutions (DFI) — IDBI, IFCI, and ICICI — which had access to concessional funds and on lent them for permitted capital projects.

What was not explicitly mentioned was that bank deposits, routed as loans to industry, also funded political parties. Due to shallow capital markets Indian industry also lacked capital and was dependent on bank credit. Indian entrepreneurs were of two kinds — capital starved "actual industrialists" who managed by intelligent accounting to avoid putting own equity but built excellent plants and grew businesses; but also the "robbers" who essentially diverted depositor money to create private wealth and rotten industries (they had the highest market share in bank NPAs). The latter have gotten the greatest attention in movies, media and were the regular whipping boys at election time tarnishing all Indian capitalists.

The government used the public sector banking system as a milch cow and would pillage it for as long as it could before it collapsed in a regular boom and bust cycle of failing every 8 to 12 years — 1977, 1985, 1992 (and to be discussed later 1999 and 2012). When it failed, the government would nurse it back to adequate fitness so that it could continue thereafter to support unfunded government mandates. By 1991 the largely controlled socialist Indian economic model together with its intellectual justification had collapsed. India approached the IMF in 1992 for a bailout and smart domestic reformers managed the accompanying structural adjustment programme sensibly, liberating the economy of draconian controls and changing India's growth trajectory thereafter.

1992-2012 post-liberalisation phase: The banking reforms initiated with liberalisation had five major legs: 1. New



ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

private sector banks were given licences with the hope they would increase competition and inject efficiency into the sector; 2. Public Sector banks were encouraged to list to raise capital and face market pressure on performance; 3. India agreed to comply with Basel Committee risk norms putting a focus on NPAs; 4. Public sector banks were encouraged to use core banking technology solutions that brought transparency to their portfolios and were also encouraged to seek external help to restructure their operations; 5. Sadly, by 2000 DFIs were killed by starving them of concessional financing and forcing them to convert into universal banks.

Yet liberalisation post 1992 brought with it reduced tariffs and increased competition created a major strain in the health of the protected Indian industry. By 2000 the consequential NPAs led the financial system again to crisis. Intelligent coordinated action by the Reserve Bank of India and the government allowed the banks to get back to

health in three years. RBI cut interest rate by 1 per cent a year for three years, forced banks to use the accompanying treasury profits for provisioning, announced a non-discretionary hair-cut regime for bankers and industrialists (taking out individual risk for bank managers) and spurred robust credit growth (including retail credit) bringing net NPAs down below 2 per cent of the bigger bank balance sheets and restored bank profitability.

By 2007, a healthy banking system again tempted the government to use PSB balance sheets in the eleventh five year plan (2007-12) to fund infrastructure. I shall trace the origins of the current crisis in Indian banking and the commencement of the third banking phase — the 2013-18 failed clean-up phase — together with a reform agenda for Indian banking in my next piece.

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Views are personal

INSIGHT

India's challenge is competitiveness

Until India becomes a real market economy, it is unlikely to have the confidence to integrate with, and compete in, the global market economy



DHIRAJ NAYYAR

India's decision to stay out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) will not isolate India from the global or regional economy. The fact is that India is already quite isolated — its share of global merchandise exports is minuscule, at around 1.8 per cent (China's is around 13 per cent) and for all the talk about competitiveness in services its global share is just 3.5 per cent, lower than China's 4 per cent. It is the Indian economy's lack of competitiveness which is the isolating factor.

RCEP was not going to solve that problem. If trade liberalisation alone was sufficient to improve or enforce competitiveness, India should have emerged as an export powerhouse in the aftermath of the WTO agreement in the 1990s or at least after the FTAs signed with ASEAN, Japan, and Korea (which consist of 12 of the 15 non-India RCEP countries) in the 2000s. Evidence suggests that the outcome of those FTAs over a decade has been a faster rise in merchandise imports than merchandise exports. India's trade deficit with China, sans any free trade agreement, has risen from around \$1 billion at the turn of the millennium to over \$60 billion in less than two decades.

It is well known, but often under-acknowledged, that India's half-hearted attempts at liberalisation since 1991 led to a considerable deregulation of product markets (with the exception of agriculture) without any (or enough) accompanying reform in the three crucial factor mar-

kets: land, labour and capital. Today, all three are bottlenecks in even domestic consumption-driven growth, never mind exports. Unreformed factor markets are also responsible for the perception of "jobless growth". In truth, jobs are being created but largely in the informal sector because of the complexity in rules and regulations.

A low-growth scenario coupled with a lack of good quality jobs is hardly conducive for signing on to a free trade agreement, not least with the most competitive economy in the world — China. That agriculture was not even subject to limited market reform means that it is totally unprepared to compete internationally. No government could



possibly risk exposing 40 per cent of the total workforce (under-) employed in agriculture to global market forces. In sum, the sins of the past, in terms of reform left incomplete, continue to haunt the economy.

But it is not just the old problems. The consequences of the political economy of the last seven years — a backlash against the perception and, indeed, the reality of cronyism, corruption and an "unfair" system — have added new dimensions to the competitiveness challenge. Acquiring land for industry is not only lengthy but also expensive with buyers legally bound to pay a big multiple of the market price. In other competitor countries, particularly China, land is given free. Similarly, critical natural resources required for sectors as diverse as power and telecom can now

only be acquired through an auction mechanism designed to maximise revenue for the government. In other countries, these are allocated on a first come, first served basis. The cost structures of industries dependent on natural resources have gone up, irrevocably.

Commercial lending decisions are now taken under the over-eager eyes of the four Cs — CAG, CVC, CBI, Courts — with the result that many businesses are finding it difficult to finance themselves. Small businesses may be forced to pay more to access finance form non-banking sources. This is not an argument against transparency and rooting out corruption and cronyism but, at some point, policy-makers need to assess whether some policy measures are raising the Cost of Doing Business to an unreasonably high level even as the government strives to improve the Ease of Doing Business. China and other East Asian countries in RCEP offer cheap land, cheap power, cheap labour, low taxes and cheap finance to businesses. India has bitten the bullet on taxes, but businesses pay a premium on the rest.

The pity about RCEP is not that India did not sign it. Instead, it is about the missed opportunity on carrying out some difficult reforms domestically. The negotiations on RCEP lasted more than seven years. Perhaps, if the government had invested as much time in negotiating within its line ministries on implementing the necessary reforms to make India's economy fundamentally competitive, the outcome in 2019 would have been different. Prime Minister Modi is a believer in excellence and no half-measures. He must insist that all ministries adopt a proactive approach to reform. The decision to opt out of RCEP has bought India time to get its house in order but, in the long term, prosperity will not come behind closed doors.

Until India becomes a real market economy, it is unlikely to have the confidence to integrate with, and compete in, the global market economy.

The author is chief economist, Vedanta

LETTERS

Scams unlimited

Another major scam of over ₹7,200 crore involving many nationalised banks has been unearthed. As many as 169 raids at various places are in progress, which amounts to shutting the door after the horse has fled the stable. How can the ordinary account holder have any sort of confidence in our banks? Most of the scammers are absconding. In the Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative Bank loot mela seven people have died. Who is responsible and accountable? Is the government happy by infusing funds into these banks? No wonder our economy is in the doldrums. Scammers make hay as the government snoozes! The ordinary man has to keep his fingers crossed hoping his savings are safe.

Shanmugam Pune

Blame game

Your excellent editorial ("Action plan for Delhi", November 6) very logically puts the currently contentious issue in the right perspective. Indeed, the huge nuisance created by Diwali crackers happens only for a couple of days every year and the stubble burning, a major irritant, also gets highlighted for a month or so around the same time but all of us — governments and the society — make these two virtually the only culprits, the two big demons playing havoc with the lives of people in NCR! This is clearly — as your editorial argues — a wrong and an unbalanced approach. We tend

to somehow ignore the bigger causes of our misery that haunt us throughout the year. Totally irrational, to say the least.

We must stop politicising the issue and playing the blame game and consequently taking ad hoc measures and instead concentrate on the real issues with a "comprehensive action plan" with the central pollution control board coming out with "an official report on ambient air quality, specific sources of pollution and their share of contribution as well as allocation of tasks for corrective action". Such a central government backed report should then form the basis of action plan by various authorities and at different levels.

Stubble burning is indeed a cause but not the sole one. Notwithstanding the bigger blunder of paddy farming in Punjab and Haryana — with its consequential disastrous effects on water stress — and the ugly politics at the root of this ill-advised cropping pattern — let's admit that several other sources of pollution, within the NCR are probably much bigger contributors to the havoc being played with

the lives of people, especially children and elderly — a sound action plan, with strong implementation, should be able to set right the horrid situation.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

Consider this

I am surprised that no one has put forward the idea of converting rice stubbles into heat-compacted wooden boards that can be used as walls by the poor in constructing their own houses. It is a widely used technology in the West. You can improve the urban physical environment and also improve shelter for the poor. I am sure many would like to finance such a project of conversion for the sake of common good. I wonder if anyone has considered the idea. I also saw a similar proposal from the US to study the possibility in Bhatinda.

Salem Sethuraman Maryland

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The lure of dollar bonds

Surge in foreign borrowing poses risks

Stress in the financial system and elevated levels of non-performing assets in the banking sector appear to be pushing Indian companies to borrow from overseas. The data compiled by the *Business Standard Research Bureau* shows that Indian companies raised \$13.74 billion through dollar bonds in the first 10 months of 2019, compared with \$1.65 billion in the same period last year. This is in line with the data published by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The latest Monetary Policy Report, for instance, showed that the flow of funds to the commercial sector practically collapsed between April and mid-September to ₹90,995 crore against ₹7.36 trillion in the same period last year. Since the flow from the banking system reversed, Indian businesses turned to foreign sources for funding. Borrowing from external sources during this period was worth ₹54,073 crore, compared with (-) ₹653 crore in the same period last year. The commercial sector was also helped by a pickup in foreign direct investment in this period.

Apart from the banking system's reluctance to lend due to weak balance sheets, companies tend to borrow abroad to take advantage of lower rates. It's not difficult for better-rated companies to raise funds in international markets at a time when investors in advanced economies are desperately looking for yields. However, higher dependence on foreign currency borrowing can increase risks to financial stability. India's stock of external commercial debt is in excess of \$200 billion. Further, short-term debt (residual maturity) is worth 56 per cent of foreign exchange reserves. A higher level of short-term debt can lead to significant volatility in domestic markets if financial conditions tighten in global markets. A sudden spike in oil prices, along with repayment obligations, can significantly increase volatility in the currency market as happened in 2018. A sharp depreciation in the rupee increases the debt burden of companies that borrow in foreign currency without having revenue in foreign exchange. Higher borrowing abroad also puts upward pressure on the rupee. Indian exports have been virtually stagnant over the last few years and the overvaluation of the rupee is cited as one of the big reasons. Since India runs a current account deficit and will need to import capital to fill the savings-investment gap, it would do well to not encourage the flow of short-term debt in foreign currency. Also, the central banks should actively intervene to keep the rupee competitive.

Moreover, it is important to strengthen the Indian financial system, so that savings can be efficiently channelised into productive sectors of the economy. Although the government is consolidating and recapitalising public-sector banks, it needs to do more to bring them back on track. The government and the RBI also need to allay fears emanating from non-banking financial companies. Friction in the financial system is impeding the transmission of monetary policy and is not allowing Indian businesses to benefit from lower rates. As economist Neelkanth Mishra highlighted in this newspaper, the gap between the average lending rate of banks and the policy repo rate is the highest on record. India needs a more robust financial system to fund the productive sectors of the economy. This will also help reduce dependence on foreign borrowing and strengthen financial stability.

The Tamil Nadu way

Other states should also enable contract farming

By enacting the contract farming law on the lines suggested by the Centre in the model Bill on this subject, circulated last year, Tamil Nadu has become the first state to show urgency in undertaking this critical reform. The Agricultural Produce and Livestock Contract Farming Bill, 2019, passed by the Tamil Nadu legislature earlier this year, became a law last week after getting the President's approval. It is expected to facilitate linking farmers with the agro-processing industry and other stakeholders, such as traders and exporters, for mutual benefit. While the farmers would gain from guaranteed marketing at the pre-agreed prices, the buyers would be assured of adequate availability of the needed products of desired quality.

Unlike in many other countries where corporate houses can access large chunks of land for in-house production of agricultural raw material — also called corporate farming — the circumstances in land-stressed India do not permit this. The best option for industry and trade is to enter into contracts with farmers — or contract farming — to get them to produce the stuff needed. In fact, various kinds of contract farming arrangements, based mostly on oral or informal agreements, are already operating in the production of crops such as sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, coffee, and rubber, and dairy products. But in the absence of any legal sanctity, these contracts mostly undermine the interests of the growers. The buyers often renege on their commitments at the harvest time if the prevailing prices do not suit them. The new law seeks to address this issue by laying special emphasis on protecting the farmers' interests, considering them as the weaker of the two parties.

Among the pending farm-sector reforms needed to enhance farmers' income, legalisation of contract farming is the least controversial and, therefore, easiest to carry out. In fact, most of the states that have amended their Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) Acts, even if not strictly according to the Centre's model APMC Act, 2003, have incorporated provisions for contract farming. But this move has not served the desired purpose because of the involvement of the APMCs in its implementation. The model contract farming statute, therefore, proposes to take contract farming out of the ambit of the APMCs.

Several other well-advised features of the model contract farming Act also merit attention from the state governments. For one, this legislation is designed to act more as a facilitator and promoter of contract farming rather than its regulator. For this, it envisages setting up contract farming facilitation groups and service providers at the panchayat level. Besides, it seeks to encourage the formation of farmers' producer organisations, which have already won the confidence of cultivators and are growing in number. Moreover, to allay fears among farmers about losing the ownership of land to the sponsoring industry, this legislation explicitly bars constructing any permanent structure on the land or premises under such contracts. And most importantly, this law seeks to bring all services in the agricultural and its allied fields' value chain, including pre-production, production, and post-production services, under the umbrella of contract farming. Considering these merits of the model contract farming Bill, there seems little reason why more states should not emulate Tamil Nadu's example of passing such a law to boost agricultural incomes.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



The telecom crisis is an NPA problem

After interim relief for telecom, structural reforms must follow

The Committee of Secretaries to mitigate financial stress in telecom must act quickly on interim measures for the sector to survive. But is its mere survival sufficient for India's development and growth? Is it possible to fix telecom in isolation?

Our communications needs are very poorly served, although at rock-bottom prices. Is it even possible for our hapless citizens and enterprises to get past shoddy services and productivity foregone, to trade with other countries on a more even footing? Yes, if we succeed at major structural changes, starting with telecom. But to transform telecom, the government and all of us have to come to the stark realisation that just as finance drives the economy, digitisation and communications have to be at the heart of production and delivery. Telecom and digitisation are strategic enablers for all infrastructure and in all sectors. Leading countries are so far ahead and functioning so effectively that it is difficult for us to imagine. We must want that path, plan for it, and put in the requisite effort. Simply tweaking overdue payments, tinkering to reduce charges, and plugging along as before isn't going to get us there. In this sense, the Committee's charter is too limited. All it can do is assuage the pain, whereas our need is for a revitalised industry to serve our purposes.

If the Committee's scope were broader, could we actually adopt digitisation as our core strategy for development and growth? A study on China, "Telecommunications reforms in China", about the transformation in policies to make digitisation its development priority, is instructive.¹ Their approach to reforms was to balance the government's aims of universal coverage, governance and control, and efficiency; industry's profit-seeking; and the people and enterprises' needs for freer, more rapid communications. This is what we need to do, in a way that works for us.

Also, the government, the judiciary, the press and users need to understand and accept that the telecom crisis is part of the larger non-performing

assets (NPAs) problem. It has systemic links to NPAs and banking, which links to real estate and construction, electricity and roads, and stable and predictable taxes. Government payment delays and tax terrorism must stop. Business as usual will not resolve NPAs soon to enable growth. These two articles explain why and deserve attention.² Essentially, entities that take deposits need Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regulation. In a crisis, people with domain expertise and capacity must be appointed to take immediate steps to protect assets and operations, as with Satyam or IL&FS, because seizing/freezing assets often hurts depositors and creditors. A bureaucratic process as with the Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative bank is likely to result in yet another zombie bank, burning depositors' money just to stay alive.

The Committee's focus should be on cash flows, modelling cash flows and their timing, not just the present value of discounted flows, or other extraneous emotional, political, or judicial/administrative reasons. Employment is a legitimate consideration, but has to be sustainable, with timely cash generation. Else, other sources of timely cash support must be arranged, because without sustained cash flows, no gambit or subsidy can succeed (and maintaining unproductive employment will not be possible). Some fixes need major legislative changes to policies.

BSNL & MTNL

On BSNL and MTNL, a recent article sets the context and explains why the revival plan is unrealistic.³ In short, these poorly supported and much-abused enterprises have so much debt that earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortisation would have to be at least 35 per cent. Governments have used them as market spoilers as with Air India, precipitating unsustainable price wars that gutted the industry.

An alternative is to downsize, re-skill as needed, and retain the public sector entities (as one or both) in the role of security-and-public-interest-anchors



SHYAM PONAPPA

RCEP exit: A bargaining position or a disaster?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision on Monday not to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) took me by complete surprise. I had loudly supported his earlier position, urging his government to join the RCEP, and make it a win-win situation for India and Asia. He took this position against stiff opposition from big industries, his ministers, the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, and his bureaucrats. What changed his mind suddenly? There must be a reason to this change in stance?

In my view, the prime minister's switch is a bargaining move. The thinking in the government appears to be that India is needed to make the RCEP a real Asian trade agreement. The prime minister, therefore, is counting on China and other member countries giving India some time to make its industries competitive, or exclude some of its long list of sensitive industrial and agriculture products. His negotiators are playing the same bargaining game as we did in the Uruguay Round for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

If this is so, we are again going to lose out, and finally yield in. Then, the prime minister can tell the industry and the groups against the RCEP that he tried his best and failed. The door to joining the RCEP as a founding member is still open till the proposed signing date in February 2020. So there is time.

But the present situation is different from the Uruguay Round negotiations. Unlike agreements with the World Trade Organization, mega-regional deals, such as the RCEP, are not bound by the rule of consensus. So there will be less pressure on the part of China and other member countries to continue negotiating with India. It is likely they will move on without India, except some countries politely expressing their concern, as Japan just did. Southeast Asian countries are already badly affected by the US-China trade war initiated by President Donald Trump, who changes his position on a daily basis. These countries want an Asian deal to be concluded as quickly as possible. India is a small player for them. They will not wait for India. Hence, like in the Uruguay Round in TRIPS, and Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization, we will ultimately cave in with our heads hanging down.

The other alternative is to really opt out of the RCEP. That will be a big disaster for India. It will put to rest our Act East Policy, and delink us with the most successful countries in the Southeast, Far East, and the Pacific. We will also be delinked with the Asian regional global value chains. Our exports will slump, unemployment will rise, and gross domestic product growth will decline further. Inclusive growth will become more elusive.

We are, then, out to protect our over 70-year-

in infrastructure consortiums. These must be run by the private sector (and in strategic areas, by defence). This will facilitate policies such as assigning spectrum for payment on usage without auctions, and extending Wi-Fi to 60 GHz and 6 GHz (details at: <https://organizing-india.blogspot.com/2019/10/extend-tax-cut-logic-to-infrastructure.html>, and <https://organizing-india.blogspot.com/2018/11/a-great-start-on-wi-fi-reform.html>).

Weak financial systems

The Committee needs to apprehend and convey the need to strengthen financial institutions. Financial systems provide second-order infrastructure for productive activity and wellbeing. They need an adequate underlay of first-order, basic infrastructure, comprising communications, energy, water, waste, sewerage, and transport, leaving aside housing and the basics of security, and law and order. While most of us take these for granted, there should be no doubt about how critical these attributes are, and that they are being eroded and increasingly at risk because of social disorder and economic inadequacies. In addition, basic health care and education are essential adjuncts for the supply of trainable people to operate these sectors.

Until some years ago, despite weak infrastructure, financial systems were among India's real strengths, although eroded periodically by disruptions resulting in NPAs. However, there was strength in the professional capacity of this sector that held up in spite of the pressures. Over time, these institutions have been severely degraded, through laxity, complicity, pressures for evergreening, the abrupt imposition of credit quality and NPAs, the extent of frauds because of lax or complicit supervision and the reputational damage, the buffeting from demonetisation and pressures to cross-sell products such as insurance. Governments need to understand this and support building professionalism, avoiding *melas* and waivers.

The scope of the Committee could be expanded to set the objectives of telecom and digitisation in the interests of governance, industry, and users, and to outline next steps. They could consider the experience of China and others such as Sweden for this vast effort, while addressing linkages and NPA issues. Perhaps, they could be exemplars by setting the tone for a national approach that is not departmental and becomes bipartisan, and helps to move away from our abrasive, confrontational politics that leads to deadlocks.

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Manmade crisis in God's Own Country



BOOK REVIEW

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

Shekhar L. Kuriakose, member secretary of the Kerala Disaster Management Authority, is an expert on landslides in the Western Ghats. He has studied the works of several ancient and modern travellers who have explored the region, and claims that there is not a single mention of landslides. "The landslides... began in the 1960s," he tells the author of the book under review. "It has more to do with human interference." Viju B informs us that 13 of the 14 districts of

Kerala are prone to landslides, which along with recent and regular flooding, has made God's Own Country a site of manmade natural disasters.

In August last year and this year, the southern state of Kerala had been devastated by floods caused by excessive rainfall, overflowing rivers, and landslides. In 2018, 483 people died in the natural calamity, and about 150 more went missing; the total loss to property was ₹4,00,000 crore. This year, fewer people (121) died in another flood; the loss to property is yet to be estimated. Mr Viju, the metro editor with *The Times of India*, Kochi, who has covered the 2005 Mumbai floods, began writing this book as response to the 2018 floods — but as subsequent events have shown, the issues it deals with will continue to be relevant for years to come.

In the Introduction, Mr Viju writes: "Our forefathers used to call these moun-

tain ranges Sahyadri, which means benevolent mountains." He goes on to ask, "Why have these mountains turned hostile?" He provides some startling figures to answer his own question: "The illegal revenue from mines... in Goa alone... between 2006 and 2011 is estimated to be around ₹35,000 crore." In the past six decades, the forest cover in the Western Ghats has been compromised severely because of human activity, writes Mr Viju — "35 per cent of the original forest cover in Western Ghats have been destroyed."

Added to this is the apathy of the authorities, who prefer to turn a blind eye to clear signs of climate change instead of addressing the issues that can avoid a calamity. "The Kerala government's stand that the floods were once-in-a-hundred-years phenomenon, and that everything is going to be normal again, is asking for disaster to recur," writes Mr Viju. This

echoes the attitude of the authorities in neighbouring state Tamil Nadu, whose capital Chennai was devastated by unprecedented floods in 2015. In her account of the calamity in *Rivers Remember*, journalist Krupa Ge records how happy the authorities were to blame it on a "once-in-a-hundred-years" rainfall rather than address structural issues that can prevent floods in the future. The play-book of inefficiency is identical everywhere.

Mr Viju's book is divided neatly into 11 chapters, with 10 of these named after some area or district in the Western Ghats, such as Idukki, Wayanad, Coorg, or Bicholim. He has travelled extensively in the region meeting a large number of people, including government officials, local workers, migrants, and people of indigenous communities who have lived in these areas for ages. He has also consulted

a large number of news reports and historical texts to reconstruct the changing ecological face of the Western Ghats. One wishes that the mountain of narratives and material Mr Viju has collected was put together a little better, to make reading it less of an effort.

One of the chapters in the book is dedicated to Pathanamthitta, which was in the eye of the storm recently because of a controversial Supreme Court order allowing the entry of women in the historic Sabarimala temple. Mr Viju writes, quoting a devotee, "There is nothing wrong if devotees wish to continue these traditions (disallowing menstruating women from entering the temple)... Perhaps, in matters of faith, there is no question of rationality." Even though I am happy to defer to Mr Viju's knowledge of the area, it is difficult to agree with this view. He is also quick to note the devastating effect the popularity of Sabarimala has had on the neighbouring areas: "50 lakh (5 million) people visiting every season has put huge ecological pressure on the core wildlife corridors of

the Periyar Tiger Reserve."

The writer not only enumerates the endless problems in the region but also makes a case for what can be done to improve the situation. "The first step towards conservation of the Western Ghats would be empathising with the concerns and aspirations of communities inhabiting them, and understanding their centuries-old subcultures that are rooted in the mountains." As Mr Viju argues, the exploitation of ecological resources should be protected from the unending greed for unbridled commercial interests. If the frequency of calamitous natural events is anything to go by, this is sound advice.

FLOOD AND FURY: Ecological Devastation In The Western Ghats

Viju B

Penguin Random House

Pages: 285

Price: ₹399

The writer is a former economic advisor in the Union

Opinion

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2019

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Banking needs urgent consolidation

In a stronger economic environment, lenders might have bounced back, but NPA risks are increasing in power, real estate, telecom

HOW MUCH ROT still remains in the banking system, and how little we know about it was evident last week, after the capital markets regulator directed all listed banks to disclose any divergence in provisioning for bad loans within 24 hours of receiving the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) risk assessment report. Three banks made disclosures. For Union Bank, the divergence was close to ₹1,000 crore, which meant its losses for 2018-19 were closer to ₹4,000 crore than the ₹3,000 crore reported. For Indian Bank too, the divergence was a chunky ₹820 crore. This is a reality check, and tells us that while the intensity of the non-performing assets (NPA) cycle may have ebbed, the cycle itself hasn't ended. The larger insolvencies have found their way to the NCLT. But, the continuous downgrades across the corporate and financial sectors seen over the last six months, as also the near-collapse of a co-operative bank, are all proof there could be a few more nasty surprises. A *Jef-feries* analysis showed that there are pockets of problems; the aggregate interest coverage ratio has fallen from 6.4 times in March to 5.6 times in June, and the debt/EBITDA for 'A' rated companies looks precipitous at 6.3x.

That calls for a real-time asset quality review (AQR) in which RBI continuously monitors the loan books and balance sheets—of banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), and also, if possible, co-operative banks. The rigour has to be greater than ever before. And, if it doesn't look good, which is likely, we need to fast track consolidation.

In this context, reports of a foreign bank wanting to buy a stake in Yes Bank are heartening, and RBI should try and speed up the acquisition. The fact is that asset quality at the beleaguered private sector lender continues to deteriorate, as seen in the Q2FY20 results, and while it may manage to raise more capital, that is not good enough. RBI should have been monitoring the bank, and the transactions of the original promoters a lot more closely than it did, but there is no point crying over spilled milk. Right now, Yes Bank needs much more than just a financial investor; it should be handed over to a sound franchise. The new entity would be in a position to raise capital at a much lower cost. It may sound brutal, but the writing is on the wall. In a stronger economic environment, the lender may have bounced back, but the rapid pace at which credit profiles of companies and NBFCs are deteriorating, is worrying. In the past, the regulator has sometimes waited too long before asking a stronger lender to take over one that has collapsed, or is on the verge of a collapse. Those were better times, and the buyers could endure more pain; today, it will be harder.

It is not just Yes Bank, there are several other weak lenders—whether banks, HFCs or NBFCs—in the system, and this is a good time to facilitate mergers. Many of the smaller private sector banks are in serious trouble. To reiterate, had the environment been more supportive, one could have given them more time to recover, but the risks seem to be increasing, with more NPAs expected in sectors such as MSME, power, real estate, and telecom. With growth slowing and liquidity tight, MSMEs have been among the worst hit, and the stress could be exacerbated because they are not getting access to loans at affordable rates from banks and NBFCs.

NBFCs and HFCs are not able to access loans because of their worsening credit profiles; in fact, today access to liquidity is becoming a big problem. The rate of growth of deposits, too, has been slowing, and only those banks that inspire confidence will be able to attract retail savings.

It is possible RBI is working quietly behind the scenes to minimise the fall-out of the defaults in the NBFC sector, but some quick action would restore depositors' confidence. The DHFL issue, in particular, needs to be resolved quickly since banks have a big exposure of close to ₹40,000 crore. One more PMC will dent consumer confidence badly. The government did the right thing in initiating consolidation in the public sector banking space. A crisis is a good time to make big changes, and the consolidation of 27 PSU banks into 12 will help achieve scale, lower costs over a period of time, prevent any overlap in products and services, and, above all, strengthen the balance sheets. A big bang consolidation of this type for private sector banks, NBFCs, HFCs will help. The system has too many small lenders, making it inefficient and costly for borrowers. Most pertinently, not all of them may be safe.

Early SKILLING

Union minister Smriti Irani is right about the need for introduction of skill education early in schools

AKPMG REPORT last year highlighted that the number of Indian start-ups increased tenfold, to 50,000, between 2008 and 2018. India added 1,200 new start-ups in 2018 alone. That means 1,200 companies required web-developers and web-designers to create their websites and handle cloud and development services. The trend indicates that demand for people with computer-related skills has been growing, but the education system has not adapted to this reality. Union minister for women and child development Smriti Irani's statement that skilling needs to start from an early age (10 or 12), thus, seems to be a good idea. At the launch of skilling initiative YuWaah in conjunction with the government, Irani also said that women need to go from being consumers to makers of technology. A Deloitte report shows that female participation in the labour force has fallen to 26% in 2018 against 36.7% in 2005. This, despite the fact that women's enrollment in higher education has increased drastically—from 1.2 million in 2010-11, female enrollment increased 15-fold to 18.2 million in 2018-19. The situation is worse in the engineering and technical fields. As per AISHE 2018-19 data, while female enrollment in undergraduate courses was 49%, women's enrollment in BTech courses was just 28%.

The skill development programme has faced various issues in the country—CAG had come out with a report highlighting irregularities in operation and performance of the National Skill Development Council; but, one of the primary problems has been the late introduction of skilling. While most countries start focusing on vocational education from an early age, India's skill development starts after school completion. This needs to change. Although India introduced computer education in 1984-85, it is not counted as an integral part of the curriculum, not until higher secondary years. With software-making skills being taught at the middle school level in some countries, India needs to do the same. Last year, the World Economic Forum (WEF) released a report on the future of jobs. Besides the usual warning of increasing automation and falling employment, the report also highlighted that artificial intelligence specialist, blockchain specialist, and big-data analyst are some of the likely professions of the future. All of the nine new trades listed by WEF were associated with technology. As automation increases, WEF estimates 42% tasks will be automated in 2022, a sharp rise from 29% in 2018; India cannot ignore the importance of technology for gainful employment.



ROAD TO PARIS

French president Emmanuel Macron

If we want to be in compliance with the Paris agreement, we will need next year to enhance our commitments to reduce emissions, and we must confirm new commitments for 2030 and 2050.

THE REAL MAINSTREAM

CONTRARY TO THE CLAIMS MADE BY THE DELHI GOVERNMENT, AIR POLLUTION IN THE CITY HAS DETERIORATED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE 2012

The truth about air pollution in Delhi

CHANDRA BHUSHAN

CEO, International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (IFOREST)
Twitter: @Bh_Chandra. Views are personal



monitors in 112 cities/towns. Manual monitors, therefore, are sentinel monitors as they have comparable data for the longest time-frame.

As one can see in the accompanying graphic, continuous monitoring is a recent phenomenon in Delhi. Twenty continuous monitors were installed in 2018, and seven were introduced in 2017. We have data from only four monitors for 2012 onwards. But, there are significant data gaps from these four monitors. For instance, the Dilshad Garden monitoring station had correct data

for only 32 days for 2013; the ITO station has data for less than 50% of the time for 2012, 2014, and 2016; and RK Puram has no data for 2013, and 2014. Most researchers have concluded that using data from the continuous monitors to estimate annual pollution levels for the years 2012 to 2016 is statistically wrong. Therefore, one has to rely on manual monitors to establish whether the pollution status has improved or deteriorated since 2012.

The data from manual monitors, published by CPCB, shows that the

amount of PM 2.5 has almost doubled between 2012 and 2018—from 63 µg/m³ in 2012 to 121 µg/m³ in 2018. The average PM 2.5 level during 2012-2014 was 72 µg/m³, and during 2016-18, it was 115 µg/m³—an increase of 59%. So, air pollution levels in Delhi have increased significantly, and not reduced. From where, then, has the Delhi government put together data to show a reduction of 25%? Interestingly, there is another set of data put out by DPCC, which is less publicised. This DPCC data shows that the average level of PM 2.5 was 154 µg/m³ during 2012-14, which reduced to 131 µg/m³ during 2016-2018—a reduction of 15%. DPCC data, however, comes with a disclaimer. It clearly states that for the period 2012-2017, the data is based on four continuous monitors, and the 2018 information is based on 26 monitors. As explained above, the data from the four continuous monitors are incomplete. They cannot be the basis for estimating pollution levels during the 2012-2017 period. Even if we had complete data from the four continuous monitors, comparing data of four monitors with that from 26 monitors is highly spurious. It will not stand even the basic statistical scrutiny.

Nevertheless, let's take the DPCC data with a pinch of salt, and put it together with the CPCB data. We can see, in the accompanying graphic, where the mistake has happened. The Delhi government has taken continuous monitoring data of DPCC for the period 2012-2014 and manual monitoring data of CPCB for the period 2016-2018 to claim that air pollution reduced by 25%. This is cherry-picking, and completely wrong. These types of analyses cannot be the basis for decision-making.

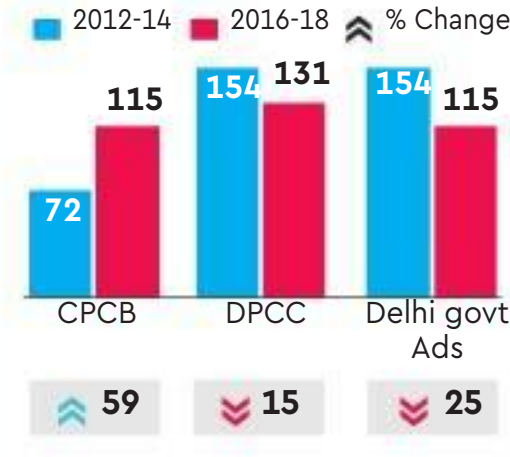
Let me end by saying that I support CM Arvind Kejriwal on stubble burning. He is absolutely right that the spike in pollution post-Diwali is because of stubble burning. One can smell biomass burning in the air, and we need to do something about this urgently. But, he is wrong to claim that his actions have led to a 25% reduction in pollution levels. Instead of putting out wrong information, it is important that his government goes back to the drawing board and develops a new blueprint for saving this historical city from Airpocalypse.

State of pollution monitoring in Delhi

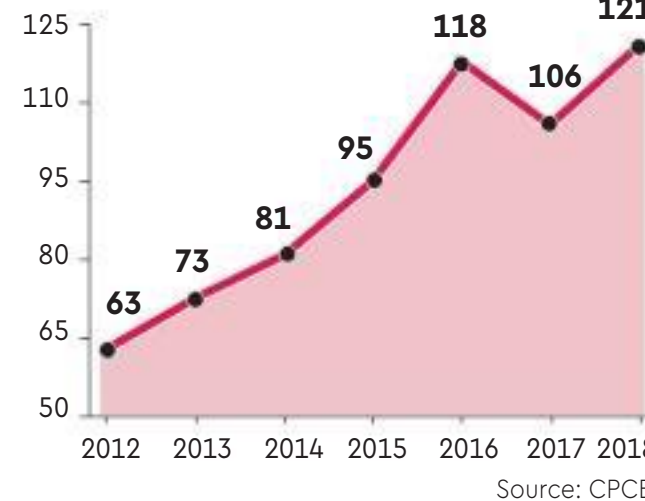
	Manual monitors	Continuous monitors	Comments
Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)	7	6	Manual monitors: Data for PM2.5 available from 2012 Continuous monitors: For 3 stations data available from 2016; for the remaining 3 stations data available from 2012, 2014 & 2017, respectively
National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI)	3		No data for PM2.5
India Meteorological Department (IMD)		7	For six stations, data available for 2017 onwards; for one station, data for only 2018
Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC)		24	For 19 stations, data available from 2018 onwards; 2 stations data available for 2012 onwards and for 3 stations from 2015 onwards

Source: Analysed by the author from <https://app.cpcbcr.com/>

PM2.5 data by different agencies (µg/m³)



PM2.5 levels in Delhi



Source: CPCB

RCEP didn't make much sense for India

Experience of FTAs with 12 East Asian countries shows that participation in regional value chains without ensuring that the domestic entities are efficient is a non-starter

BISWAJIT DHAR

Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, JNU. Views are personal



AFTER MONTHS OF ambivalence over its position *vis-à-vis* the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), India finally made the decisive move to step away from the 16-Member economic grouping in East Asia. PM Modi had made it clear that India would not sign a deal that does not address its concerns. It became clear from the Leaders' statement issued in Bangkok, at the end of the 3rd RCEP Summit, that 15 countries were going ahead with an Agreement which had several elements that militated against India's interests.

For quite some time now, Indian farmers and a number of leading manufacturing companies have been consistently flagging the imminent dangers of joining RCEP. This grouping had agreed to undertake sweeping tariff liberalisation, and India was expected to eliminate tariffs on 90% of its imports from ASEAN, and on 80% of its imports from China. Such demands went completely against Indian core interests of protecting and promoting its vulnerable segments of agriculture and the manufacturing. In fact, in all the major free trade agreements (FTAs) India has negotiated thus far, especially with the 10-member ASEAN, Korea and Japan, the country was able to prevent the vulnerable segments from getting exposed to market competition. However, with RCEP demanding such deep tariff cuts, the possibilities of protecting the vulnerabilities became next to nothing.

There were at least two reasons why Indian entities were worried about their

future if the government had signed on to RCEP. The first is that the three FTAs, with ASEAN, Japan and Korea, implemented from the beginning of the current decade, have not served India well. In every case, the trade deficit with the FTA partners has ballooned, owing to a double whammy, namely, increasing imports, but more importantly, the lack of momentum in exports. In fact, the trade deficit with ASEAN had seen a spike recently, rising from about \$13 billion in 2017-18 to nearly \$22 billion in 2018-19. No wonder then that the prime minister has called for a review of the India-ASEAN FTA.

The second factor is the large footprint of Chinese products in the Indian economy. But more significant than the sheer size of the trade deficit, once again caused by India's inability to penetrate China's market, is the fact that India exports raw materials and intermediates to its northern neighbour and imports finished products, not to speak of critical electronic items. This almost resembles the colonial pattern of trade, which we thought was behind us seven decades ago.

Over the past two years, the lack of competitiveness of Indian entities and their constant agitations, made the government take an unprecedented step towards reversing the tariff liberalisation policy. Between 2017 and 2018, tariff increases effected by the government hiked the average tariffs on manufacturing products from below 11% to nearly 14%, while average tariffs on agricultural products increased from below

33% to nearly 39%. This trend in tariff increases was also followed in 2019, with the finance minister hiking tariffs on several product categories.

There is no doubt that the decision to exit from RCEP was also taken because the manufacturing sector is going through its worst phase in decades. Exposing the manufacturing sector to competition from some of the most efficient producers would have accentuated the existing vulnerabilities and worsened the unemployment situation.

Finally, there is also a need to address an oft-heard position that not joining RCEP would deprive India of important markets and participation in value chains in the East Asian region. It seems that this position is taken without making the necessary fact-check. The reality is that India has existing FTAs with 12 of the 15 RCEP participating countries. These markets are available to us, but, as mentioned earlier, domestic vulnerabilities are preventing India from exploiting them. Moreover, imports from these countries have registered steep increase in the past few years; RCEP would have reinforced this trend. The second reality is that RCEP would have provided preferential market access to Chinese products, which, even without these lower tariffs, have had a dominating influence on the India market. Third, participation in regional value chains without ensuring that the domestic entities are efficient is a non-starter; the decade long experience of implementing FTAs with 12 East Asian countries has proved this beyond any doubt.

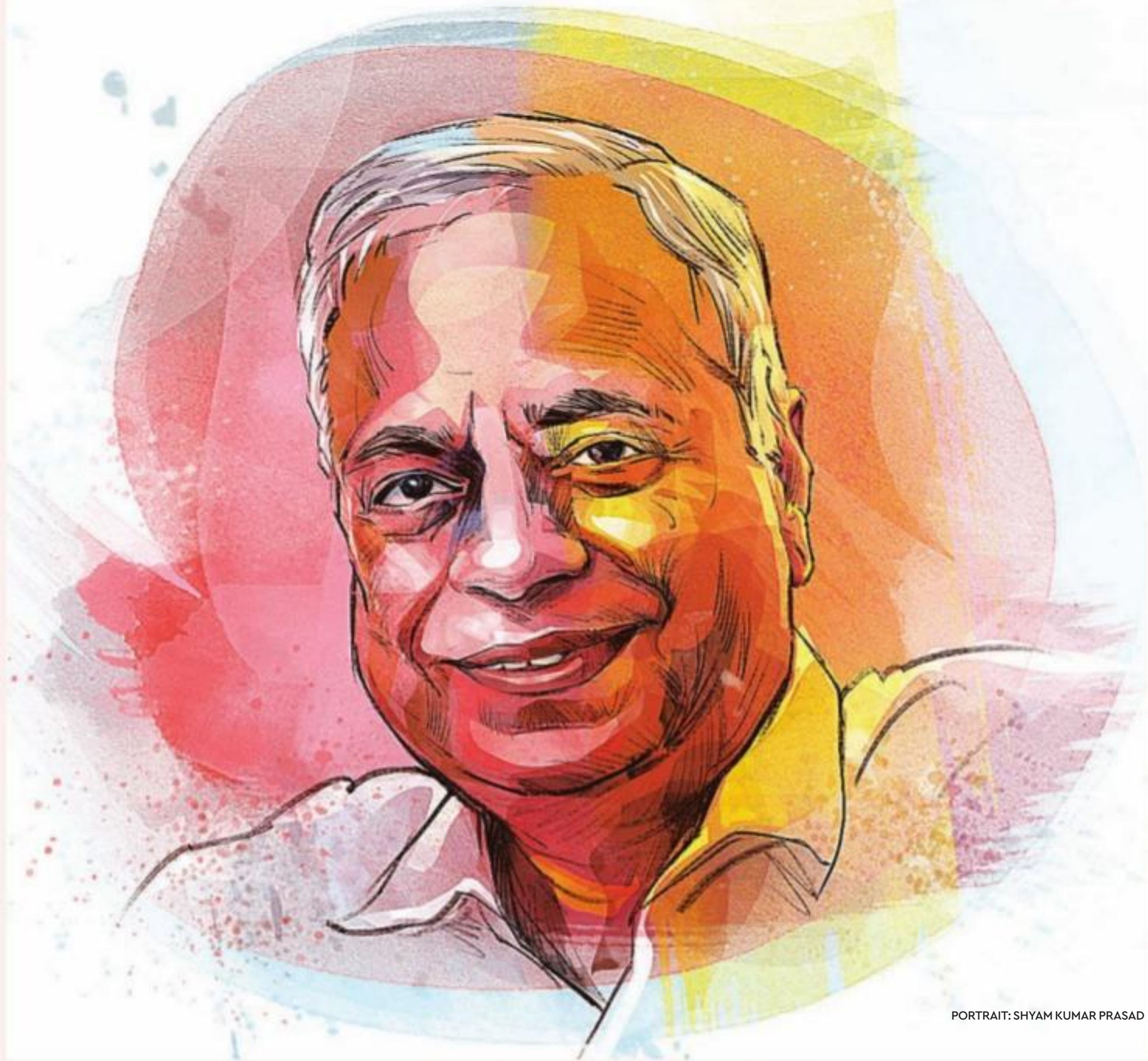
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Delhi police and lawyers violent clash

This refers to the one-sided action of suspending two police-persons and transferring two senior police officers, following the violent clash between lawyers and the Delhi Police on November 2 at Tis Hazari court premises in Delhi without any action against any lawyer, including the one who initiated the ugly clash by wrongly parking his car in front of the police lock-up in the court premises. Impartiality demanded that licence of the lawyers involved in the clash also be suspended till completion of enquiry. It is usual for no action to be taken against any lawyer in incidents of clash between lawyers and the police, while some police-persons are targeted with immediate suspension and transfer, as was done in an incident in the year 1988, when Kiran Bedi was Deputy Commissioner of Delhi Police (North). One-sided action against police-persons following the clash of November 2 resulted in them being totally helpless in defending citizens, media-persons, and themselves in violent scenes created in and outside the court premises of Saket and Karkardooma in Delhi on November 4. Such beating of police-persons will only encourage hard-core criminals, including those in prison, to be violent against police personnel. It should be ensured that licences of lawyers found guilty are permanently cancelled after enquiry is over to prevent lawyers from taking the law in their own hands in the future.

— SC Agarwal, Delhi

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



PORTRAIT: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

● **FOOD caFE:**
ASHOK JHUNJHUNWALA

Working on solutions for 'very' Indian problems

Jhunjhunwala, a professor at IIT Madras Research Park, tells **Sushila Ravindranath** that the Park brings together faculty with their wealth of knowledge, industry with its capacity to monetise innovation, and students with their entrepreneurial zeal to make the Park a nest for start-ups

THE IIT MADRAS Research Park, established about 10 years ago, is the first university-based research park in the country. And it's a huge success. The then UK minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Sam Gyimah, came to spend half an hour at the Park last year, but ended up staying almost the entire day there. He is supposed to have wondered why this treasure had been kept in hiding. When prime minister Narendra Modi came to the IIT Madras convocation a few weeks ago, he took a brief tour of the Research

Park infrastructure and interacted with the start-ups incubated by the Incubation Cell and the scientists at the R&D Centres of Excellence, and even visited the stalls set up by them. The stalls showcased innovative products and solutions developed by the start-ups working across diverse sectors such as AI, robotics, agritech, biotech, edtech, electric mobility, healthcare, skill development and water treatment. These start-ups have been focusing on deep-tech areas, developing innovative and indigenous solutions that can help meet the challenges of national importance.

The prime minister expressed his admiration for the Research Park in his convocation address, and wished for more such industry-academy collaborations across the country.

I drop in at the Research Park that now houses over 100 R&D companies, and 200 start-ups, in its 1.2-million square feet built-up area, to meet the legendary Dr Ashok Jhunjhunwala. He is a professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering at IIT Madras, teaching there since 1981, and now faculty professor at the Research Park, which is his brainchild. He has been at the forefront of promoting industry-academia interaction in the country for R&D, innovation and product development for years. The IIT Madras Research Park has been conceived and built by him. In fact, this is one among his many other achievements, including his pioneering work on wireless technology. Earlier, he was an adviser to the central government on its electric vehicle programme—a project he is passionate about.

He invites me to go around the Research Park and take a look at some of the incubation projects, before I meet him for a snack at the Cafe Puriology, at the food court, which serves street food with a twist. We order panipuri with Chinese and Italian fillings, sprouts, bread pizza sandwiches and some regular *chaat*, to keep us going. We also get some hot *masala chai*, as it is an unusually cool and rainy day in Chennai.

Jhunjhunwala has believed in encouraging entrepreneurship amongst his students even in those days when young people wanted to either migrate to the US or find a safe and steady job in India. He has incubated and nurtured over 100 companies at IIT Madras. He also set up the ITM Incubation Cell and Rural Technology and Business Incubator (RTBI).

Jhunjhunwala laid the foundation for industry-academia interaction when he established the Telecommunications and Computer Networks group (TeNeT), with the current IIT Madras director, Dr Bhaskar Ramamurthi, 20 years ago. The faculty raised money from companies that could potentially be users of products developed by the start-ups emerging from TeNeT.

Jhunjhunwala has always believed in industry and academy working together to make research commercially viable. "Faculty has the breadth of knowledge. Industry can convert innovation into

money. Youngsters are fearless and do not know that something cannot happen. We have tried to bring them all together," he says.

By 2010, the IIT Madras Research Park had become a reality. "I had to work with IIT directors, to convince them about this partnership. We also had to get the land adjacent to the IIT. You can't have a research park that is miles away from the campus. The Tamil Nadu government managed to offer the project the required land close to the campus," he says.

The Research Park is modelled on the lines of research parks at Stanford University, MIT and Harvard University. It now houses the IIT Madras Incubation Cell, which was established in 2013.

"The Research Park is a board-run independent company. Nobody can influence us. We have invested ₹500 crore, of which early-stage funding came from government grants and industry-alumni donations. Corporate social responsibility has become a big contributor in the recent years. We borrowed ₹380 crore from the banks. The board was initially worried about this. We have, however, managed to pay back ₹360 crore. We make an income of ₹30 crore per year from rent," says Jhunjhunwala.

When companies come to the Research Park, there is a grading system. Companies have to maintain 1,500 credit points. When a company offers internships to students or hires them, they earn points. Every R&D interaction with an IIT gets a credit. "We make it a part of the rental contract, which ensures the purpose of the facility is met. In some cases, the firms have linked a part of the variable pay for their key executives to their engagement with the Research Park. These are the things you need to do to get the initiative going," he adds. Jhunjhunwala further says that 10 years ago only 8% of the IIT faculty worked with industry. "Today, the number has increased to more than 50%. More than 50 faculty members have incubated companies here. The entering process for incubation is not easy. The start-ups pay very low rents for world-class facilities. We hand-hold them; they can't waste resources."

Ather Energy, which is preparing to roll-out its first smart scooter, the S340, is a product from the incubation cell. The company is backed by Hero MotoCorp. Jhunjhunwala says that many of the ideas are not pies in the sky, but are translating into IP-backed products and services.

The incubatees can't compromise. They have to focus on the customers. Most start-ups are deep-tech companies. "We take a small share in the companies we have incubated. Today, the current share value is ₹700 crore. The valuation is much higher," he says, adding, "there is Detect that has developed robotics to check oil pipelines; FIB-SOL that is working on nano-fibres for agri-inputs; Stellapps for end-to-end dairy management gathering data on the cloud. They are all working on solutions for very Indian problems."

About the Centre of Battery Engineering and Electric Vehicles (C-BEEV)—headed by Dr Prabhjot Kaur—which is working with Tata Motors, M&M, Ashok Leyland, Ampere, Kinetic and battery manufacturers Exide and Amara Raja Batteries, he adds that work is happening on new solutions to make battery costs cheaper and to make EVs a viable option in the country, again with very Indian solutions.

As he shares all this information with me over food, I notice that many people want the professor's attention. Soon, I take leave, and as we are leaving the food court, he tells me that almost 70 global companies have set up their R&D centres at the Research Park. Interestingly, Saint-Gobain Glass, the French multinational, has got 5% of its global patents from its centre at the Research Park.

"We have to make equipment in India for Indians. We must make India independent. I want India to succeed," says Jhunjhunwala.

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● **COLD WAR**

Split spreads from tech to global trade

DAVID FICKLING

Bloomberg

The government of prime minister Modi no longer needs to make difficult concessions on agricultural trade

FROM A POLITICAL perspective, India's decision overnight to walk away from immediate involvement in a trade zone encompassing half the world's population and a third of its economy is good for almost everyone.

The government of prime minister Narendra Modi no longer needs to make difficult concessions on agricultural trade. Other members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership group, or RCEP, won't need to open their home markets to India's thriving, and low-cost, services sector. China, the linchpin of a zone that also includes the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, will be able to move forward faster with an agreement that was at risk of being jeopardised by India's foot-dragging.

The US, meanwhile, can take satisfaction from the fact that its key regional ally in New Delhi is remaining outside of Beijing's orbit. A stronger RCEP that included India would almost certainly have revived politically fraught question of whether Washington should rejoin the rival Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement or TPP, which died in Congress under the Obama administration and was formally killed off by President Donald Trump.

That's precisely the problem, though. Trade agreements are hard precisely because deals that are worthwhile economically tend to be politically hazardous, and vice versa. India's pause on the RCEP isn't the cause of the parlous state

of international commerce in 2017, but it's another telling symptom of a global trading system where volumes are now falling at the fastest pace since the 2009 financial crisis.

Trade is moving in a similar direction to tech, with the world bifurcating into separate zones as tensions between China and the US force nations to take sides

Both the RCEP and the pared-down, US-free version of the TPP are better understood as attempts to harmonise trading standards than reduce tariff barriers.

In part this is a result of the success of previous trade agreements, which have lowered border levies to the point where the more potent restraint on commerce is often non-tariff barriers

governing areas such as food safety, licensing, and rules of origin. Even within the more protectionist RCEP zone, the median trade-weighted tariff had fallen in 2017 to about 5.15%, a lower average rate than Australia or Canada imposed in the mid-1990s.

Still, the effect of harmonising standards at the regional-agreement rather than global level is the opposite of an opening of trade. The objection to the original TPP—that it resulted in the US imposing its standards on other economies within the bloc—comes with the territory in such deals. The standards that are established across the zone inevitably resemble those of its largest member. That would be fine in a global agreement, but in a regional deal the effect is to raise barriers to nations outside the bloc with different rules.

In the case of RCEP, that means smaller and lower-income countries in Southeast Asia are likely to become more closely entwined with China, while their links with potential partners outside the zone will fall behind. The reformed TPP, likewise, will bind those nations closer to each other than to the rest of the world. Only the handful of countries in both blocs—Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore—stand a chance of benefiting as much as China.

The result suggests that trade is moving in a similar direction to tech, with the world bifurcating into separate zones as tensions between China and the US force nations to take sides. It's a path that's grimly reminiscent of the aftermath of World War II, when the US-led Marshall Plan and Soviet-centered Comcon developed into rival trading blocs. That division split the global economy for the duration of the Cold War. We shouldn't welcome its revival.

THE AVERAGE PLANT load factor of thermal power stations have come down from over 75% to 60%. Quite a few new thermal power plants are not being able to sell enough electricity and are, therefore, having difficulty in repaying their loans. The common inference, therefore, has been that India has surplus power generating capacity. The reality, however, is a bit more complex. Electricity is unlike other industrial goods. It is supplied through the grid, and at every moment supply needs to match demand to maintain grid stability. If demand falls, generation has to be reduced. If demand rises, generation has to rise. If it cannot be raised to meet the full demand, load shedding has to take place; this was, fairly common across the country earlier. Demand varies throughout the day as also across seasons. In Delhi, the peak demand is 70% higher than the minimum demand on an average day. At the height of the summer the peak is 10% higher. The decline in the plant load factor of the thermal plants in the country is a consequence of peak demand being met. 80% plant load factor was possible only due to substantial load shedding. The latest report of the Central Electricity Authority says that India still has a peaking power shortage of 2%.

The question that arises is what is the most cost effective way of meeting daily as well as seasonal peaks in demand; running

Redesigning power purchase

Peak-load pricing is the way forward. India also needs to push renewables

AJAY SHANKAR

Distinguished fellow, TERI and former secretary, DIPP



thermal power stations at lower plant load factors as is the case at present, or, are there better options. The best way of discovering this is for the Power Distribution Companies to invite bids separately for their base load, that is, minimum demand through the day, and for their peaking power needs separately. This is not how power is presently procured. As power shortages had persisted till a few years back, the issue of meeting peaking demand at least cost did need attention. Now, time has come to start price discovery for peaking power by inviting bids. For price discovery, these bids should be for supply from a prospective date, giving enough time for new investments. Bidding for supply from a future

date would also suit most distribution companies as they have a portfolio of long-term contracts with thermal plants with the capacity to meet peaking demand. If repeated bids are invited by the distribution companies, over the next few years, then a competitive market structure for supply of peaking power would emerge.

Potential bidders would have to consider a range of possibilities. Whether peaking power generation from gas-based plants using imported LNG at market prices can be the winning option or if coal will still work out to be cheaper for peaking power? Consequently, can existing hydro projects, which are with the state governments and central undertakings, and have



the potential for pump storage, or, some re-engineering, to get greater flexibility for peaking power supply be a cheaper option? Can diesel be an option or will solar with battery storage have a chance? Solar thermal with storage may also emerge as an option. A few years of invitation of a large number of bids in an open globalised economy should lead to movement down the cost curve for competing technologies given the size of the Indian market and its potential growth in the coming years.

Bidding for peaking power separately for the day and for the evening/night peaks would become necessary as the share of renewables rises. This should increase from around 10% at present to

over 40%, something that Germany has already achieved. The Electricity Regulators have been discharging their responsibility for promoting renewables by gradually increasing the mandatory share of renewable energy that distribution companies are required to buy. When the sun shines, solar power is the cheapest source of electricity. The critical challenge is to begin getting electricity from renewable sources at night so as to be able to get all electricity from renewables. Some bids for small capacities for solar thermal with storage and battery storage for supply at night should be invited knowing that these would be quite expensive. There would then be discovery of the price dif-

ference in peaking power at night, between supply from fossil fuel and renewables. This would also start the learning process for movement down the cost curve for storage. Based on the experience of solar power over the last ten years, prices have come down from over ₹16 to less than ₹3 per unit, expectation is that the price of storage should also come down substantially with large scale deployment. As prices are expected to decline, contracts should be for a shorter duration, most likely equal to the period for which term loans are given, and not for 25 years as is the case with thermal plants. The security of power purchase agreement for the duration of the loan would make financing possible.

This could place India as a global leader in moving towards fully fossil fuel-free electricity. And, could well happen within a decade if we start now.

The distribution companies need to individually assess demand growth in terms of time of the day as well as seasons. Bid documents for procurement of peaking power need to be designed. The regulators need to mandate this. Then the central government would need to change policy to ask the regulators to begin mandating some supply of electricity at night from renewables, and gradually increase the quantum. Leadership from the center would be critical in getting the states on board.



ALSO IN SUPREME COURT SOON

RAFALE VERDICT REVIEW

On court-monitored probe and pricing details

A THREE-JUDGE Supreme Court Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Justice S K Kaul and Justice K M Joseph is expected to deliver its verdict on a clutch of petitions seeking review of its December 14 judgment last year, which had dismissed the pleas challenging India's agreement with France to procure 36 Rafale fighter jets.

The petitioners include advocate Prashant Bhusan and former ministers Arun Shourie and Yashwant Sinha. Besides adjudicating if the deal requires a court-monitored probe, the Bench is also expected to rule on whether the pricing details regarding the Rafale deal

should be made public. While dismissing the petitions last December, the Bench had said it found "no occasion to really doubt the process" of decision-making, pricing and selection of offset partners. It had said there was no material to show that the government had favoured anyone commercially. During the review, the Centre has maintained that that the pricing details could not be made public due to security concerns. However, Bhusan has questioned how revealing the price of the Rafale would affect national security when the RFP (request for proposal) for the 126 jets had all the technical details of the aircraft.



SABARIMALA RULING REVIEW

On a ban, its lifting and the right to equality

A FIVE-JUDGE Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi is expected to deliver its verdict on a batch of petitions seeking a review of the court's September 2018 ruling that had lifted a ban on menstruating women from entering the Sabarimala temple.

In February, the court reserved its verdict after a day-long hearing of over 65 review petitions and fresh writ petitions. Lawyer K Parasaran, appearing on behalf of the Nair Service Society, argued against the ruling while senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing on behalf of two women, Bindu and Kanakadurga, who entered the temple despite protests, argued against reviewing the ruling. The temple's chief *tranthi* Rajeevaru Kandararu filed the

first review petition. The Kerala government and the Travancore Devaswom Board too opposed the review and argued that courts can set aside religious practices that violate fundamental rights of citizens.

In 2018, a five-judge Constitution Bench headed by then CJI Dipak Misra had ruled that banning entry of menstruating women is discriminatory and violates the right to equality. It said discrimination based on menstruation is akin to practising untouchability as both concepts are rooted in the idea of purity. Justice Indu Malhotra, however, wrote in dissent and said the petitioners, NGO Indian Young Lawyers' Association, had no standing before the court to seek such relief.



JUDICIARY UNDER RTI AMBIT

'The question is where do we draw the line'

A CONSTITUTION Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi and including Justice N V Ramana, Justice D Y Chandrachud, Justice Deepak Gupta and Justice Sanjiv Khanna is expected to deliver its verdict on an appeal by the Supreme Court's Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) against a January 2010 ruling of the Delhi High Court which held that the Supreme Court and CJI are "public authorities" under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

The HC had upheld a Central Information Commission order directing the SC CPIO to provide information sought by an applicant on assets of SC judges. This is significant as the Bench

will decide if disclosure of confidential information, like discussions in the collegium for appointment or promotion of judges, under RTI would be "deleterious to functioning" of the judiciary.

The Bench had earlier said "somewhere a line has to be drawn" on how much information about the process can be made public lest it affect the institution itself. "Nobody is for a system of opacity. Nobody wants to remain in darkness. Nobody wants to keep anyone in darkness. The question is where do we draw a line. Somewhere a line has to be drawn. In the name of transparency, you cannot destroy the institution," CJI Gogoi had said, reserving the verdict.

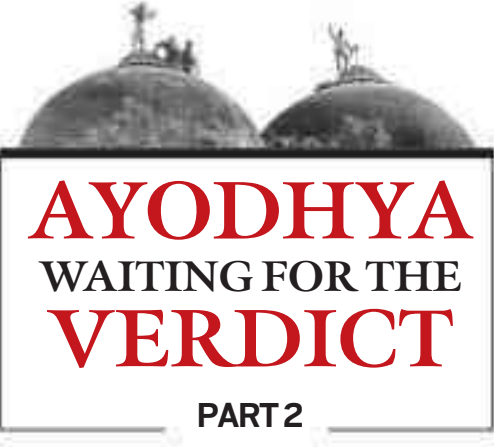


APURVA VISHWANATH & KAUNAIN SHERIFF M

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How HC verdict was argued in SC

Leading to its 2010 verdict, Allahabad HC had examined eight key questions in the Ayodhya title suit. What arguments did the two sides make over the same issues in SC, whose judgment is expected soon?



APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 6

AHEAD OF the Supreme Court's verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, which is expected soon, Part-1 of this series looked at the Allahabad High Court verdict of 2010 that had directed a three-way partition of the disputed land among Bhagwan Ramlalla Virajman, Nirmohi Akhara and Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board. In doing so, the Allahabad Bench had broadly dealt with eight key issues that involve over 30 questions.

In Part-2, a look at how the two sides subsequently argued before the five-judge Supreme Court Bench — Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Justice S A Bobde, Justice D Y Chandrachud, Justice Ashok Bhusan, Justice S Abdul Nazeer — over the same eight issues:

Is the claim made by the Hindu side in 1989, particularly by the deity Ram Virajman, time-barred?

HINDU PARTIES: While defending the High Court's finding that the claim filed by Bhagwan Ramlalla Virajman was not time-barred, they argued that the High Court was correct in holding that the Nirmohi Akhara and UP Sunni Central Waqf Board had delayed filing their claims and would not be entitled to seeking possession after the period of limitation.

MUSLIM PARTIES: The Muslim side argued that the period of limitation of 12 years began in 1949 when the idols appeared under the central dome, and the claim was filed in December 1961, and not six years as the High Court had held. The High Court had decided the period of limitation began to be applicable in 1950 when the first two suits were filed.

Does a suit filed in 1885 settle the question of land possession?

HINDU PARTIES: They have argued that the civil suit, in which a district court in Faizabad had remarked (in 1886) that the mosque was built on land considered holy by the Hindus in Ayodhya although he did not grant permission to build a temple, settles the question of land possession and it was for the Muslim side to show that this finding was wrong.

MUSLIM PARTIES: They have argued that the 1885 suit cannot be agreed as settled law on the issue since it only dealt with a portion of land — the Chabutra on the outer courtyard — and that the subsequent claims involved the entire disputed site.

When was the structure built, by whom, and who was in possession of the land?

HINDU PARTIES: The Hindu side stuck to its claim that the structure in question was built by Babur in 1528. However, since the Janmasthan is divine and is a deity in itself even without an idol, they argued that the land always belonged to Hindus and even a mosque on the premises subsequently would not alter its divinity. The court has to adjudicate whether Janmasthan can be considered a legal entity. The Akhara claimed possession of the land saying it had *shebait* rights and is entrusted with maintenance and preserving



After the conclusion of hearings in the Ayodhya title suit appeals on October 16: (Top) Primary litigant Mahant Dharam Das and Maulana Suhaib Qasmi of the Ayodhya Varta Committee. Tashi Tobgyal (Above) Senior counsel (from right) Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta (UP government), Senior Advocate C S Vaidyanathan (Ramlalla Virajman), Additional Solicitor General of India Vikramjit Banerjee (not representing any party in this case), Senior Advocate P S Narasimha (Mahant Paramhans Ramchandradas), and Senior Advocate Ranjit Kumar (Gopal Singh Visharad). Ananthakrishnan G

the idol and its property.

MUSLIM PARTIES: The Muslims had possession of the area since 1528 when the mosque was built and the land was never claimed by Hindus till 1989. "If they had possession, why was one dome of the Babri Masjid knocked down in the 1934 riots and trespass to install the idols in 1949 if they already had the title," senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan had asked.

Was the mosque built on the site of an ancient Hindu temple?

HINDU PARTIES: They have relied on reports of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) submitted as evidence that Babri Masjid was on land on which stood a "massive structure" dating back to at least the second century BC, and not on vacant or agricultural land. Another contention percolating throughout the arguments was that the mosque was built on a Hindu temple site based on "unshakeable faith" of Hindus that Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya. During the course of the arguments, the judges had put questions to senior advocate C S Vaidyanathan to prove that the mosque was built over a temple.

MUSLIM PARTIES: They have argued that ASI reports are at best expert "opinions" and "cannot be accepted as evidence" to decide

the case. They also highlighted inconsistencies in successive reports and statements made by ASI officials in depositions and argued that the court should not accept it as evidence. Additionally, they argued that gazetteers and books relied on by the Hindu side cannot be considered verified accounts of history.

Were idols and objects of worship placed on the night of December 22-23, 1949, or were they already there?

HINDU PARTIES: The Allahabad High Court had held that the idols were placed under the central dome in 1949, while the Hindu side argued that they had existed previously. During the arguments, Justice Bhusan referred to oral evidence of individuals who had testified and made references to idols and a *garb grih* before 1935.

MUSLIM PARTIES: They continued the argument that placing the idols under the central dome was a planned, surreptitious attack and an trespass.

Did the outer courtyard include Ram Chabutra, Bhandar and Sita Rasoi?

HINDU PARTIES: Since all three judges in the Allahabad High Court ruling had agreed that Ram Chabutra, Bhandar and Sita Rasoi existed before 1855, this was not a point of

contention before the Supreme Court. **MUSLIM PARTIES:** The Muslim side agree that there were idols of Hindu deities in the Ram Chabutra before 1949 too, but they argued that the Hindus did not hold the title over the place and only had the right to pray.

Who had possession and title of the property?

HINDU PARTIES: The Hindu side sought declaration of title of not only the 2.77 acres of disputed land but also the adjoining land acquired by the government. Lawyers appearing on behalf of the deity argued that the Nirmohi Akhara had "disentitled itself" from filing claims adverse to the deity.

MUSLIM PARTIES: The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board also argued that the Nirmohi Akhara and the Board were original litigants over the property until a claim was made in 1989 on behalf of the deity Ramlalla Virajman as the sole and exclusive owner of the site. However, the Board argued against the Nirmohi Akhara's claim for title on the ground that *shebait* rights cannot transfer to ownership. The Akhara has no duties and no rights, the Board argued. The Muslim side said they have only sought title over the area of dispute and not the land acquired, and that it would allow Hindus to worship in the outer courtyard in Ram Chabutra. They have argued that they are entitled to restoration of the mosque as it stood before its demolition on December 6, 1992.

Is the Babri Masjid a valid mosque?

HINDU PARTIES: Quoting the ASI reports that noted that inscriptions in the Devanagari script were found on the pillars of the mosque, the Hindu side argued that the structure was not a valid mosque according to the tenets of Islam. They also argued that every place where prayers are offered cannot be treated as a mosque, countering the claims of the Muslim side that prayers were offered in the mosque.

MUSLIM PARTIES: The disputed structure has been a mosque since the day it was constructed, the Muslim side claimed. They argued that even after the riots of 1934, namaz was offered and the Babri Masjid had an imam who led the prayers and a muezzin who recited the azaan. However, the parties agreed that construction of the mosque cannot be questioned on the basis of theology but on historical facts.

INTERVIEW MADHAV GODBOLE

'National Integration Council meeting must be called to build consensus'

Madhav Godbole was Union Home Secretary when the Babri Masjid was demolished. Pune-based Godbole, who also served as Justice Secretary and held several high positions in the bureaucracy in the 1980s and early 1990s, has recently written a book, *The Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir Dilemma: An Acid Test for India's Constitution*. He spoke with **Seema Chishri**

What is your key takeaway from the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi crisis, and the demolition of the Babri Masjid?

As I have brought out in the book, the demolition of Babri Masjid signified a total breakdown of not just the rule of law, but of the Constitution itself. The demolition could have been avoided if three successive Prime Ministers — Rajiv Gandhi, V P Singh and P V Narasimha Rao — had intervened effectively to find a solution to the dispute.

All constitutional bodies — the central government, the state government, the Governor, the judiciary, and the all India services (IAS and IPS) — failed in discharging their responsibilities. Even after the demolition of

Babri, the stand of the two communities — Hindus and Muslims — has not changed, as if time has stood still over the years. If another catastrophe like in Ayodhya takes place, India will be as vulnerable as it was in 1992, when the mosque was demolished.

Several individuals with close links to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement are associated with the government in various capacities today. Is that relevant as the verdict is about to be delivered?

Ideally, it should make no difference to upholding the principles, precepts and values of the Constitution whichever political party is in power, as every holder of office, while taking over, undertakes to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India and to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India.

But this is easier said than done. Secularism, which is part of the basic structure of the Constitution, is being questioned and flouted in flagrant disregard of constitutional precepts. Communalisation and politi-

cisation of civil services, which are the main instruments for upholding the rule of law, has become a cause for serious concern. After all, the strength of democracy lies in its institutions. Equally important is the role of civil society and the media, among others.

Why didn't then PM Narasimha Rao invoke Article 355 or 356 (in Uttar Pradesh) before the demolition? Could that have prevented the events of December 6, 1992?

Prime Minister Rao was of the view that Article 356 (of the Constitution) could not be used preemptively. My view, based on Supreme Court decisions, is quite the opposite. Invoking Article 356 (along with Article 355) and imposition of President's Rule in UP, as advised by the Ministry of Home Affairs, with the concurrence of the Ministry of Law, was the only way Babri could have been saved from destruction.

Not imposing President's Rule meant giving a free hand to (then UP) Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, and he made full use of it by

literally presiding over the destruction of the mosque. As I have argued in the book, after the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, Article 356 was invoked more than a hundred times. This was one occasion which fully warranted its use, but unfortunately, on this very occasion it was not used.

With the Supreme Court verdict in the title suit appeals only days away, what should be the focus now?

Strong pressure of public opinion must be built that, whatever may be the decision of the highest court, it will be fully respected and accepted by all. A meeting of the National Integration Council may be called to build a national consensus and resolve for the purpose. At the same time, it must be made unambiguously clear by the central and state governments that any breach of law and order would be put down firmly.

What is your prognosis for India after the decision? Will there be closure, or could the judgment open a Pandora's box?

The Supreme Court, in its majority judgment in the Special Reference No. 1 of 1993 dated 24 October 1994, had underlined that it is in the national interest that there is no loser at the end of the process, so that the final outcome does not leave behind any rancour in anyone. The court had also said that unless a solution is found which leaves everyone happy, that cannot be the beginning for continued harmony between "we the people of India". This was of course with reference to the expected negotiations between the contending parties. I have suggested in my book a similar approach to resolving the dispute. I sincerely hope this will come about as a result of the judgment of the apex court.

India cannot shirk the existential question of separation of religion from politics, as it has done so far. I believe that India's religious, racial, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and even sartorial diversity is its strength, and under no circumstances should it be permitted to be compromised and diluted.



Illustration: Shyam Kumar Prasad



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

The jobs challenge

A comprehensive employment policy combined with an industrial policy is necessary to address the crisis



SANTOSH MEHROTRA AND J PARIDA

A REPORT IN this paper (IE, November 1) on various employment estimates for 2017-18, based on the PLFS (periodic labour force survey) data, has received considerable attention. We have received several queries from policy makers regarding the differences in our employment estimates with studies by Laveesh Bhandari and Amaresh Dubey (BD), and Himanshu that are quoted in the report. In this article, we clarify the reasons for the differences and highlight the major findings of our study.

First, our estimates are different from that of BD because theirs are based only on the usual principal status (UPS) of employment. Our study is based on both usual principal and subsidiary status (UPSS) of employment. Since Himanshu's estimates are also based on UPSS, our figures are not much different except for the 2017-18 PLFS figures. Himanshu's and our estimates for employment in both 2004-05 and 2011-12 are almost the same (the negligible difference is because of the use of population multipliers that differ at second and third decimal points). The discrepancy with Himanshu's 2017-18 employment figure is only because he probably used a lower population multiplier based on a projected total population of 1.33 billion.

But, while comparing Himanshu's estimates with that of BD for 2017-18, we find that both their figures are the same (this is surprising since BD have ignored the subsidiary status of employment unlike Himanshu). We have explored why this has happened. BD have used a projected population of close to 1.36 billion based on their argument that the annual population growth of India was about 1.7 per cent between 2011-12 and 2017-18. This is a very high over-estimation of India's population growth rate during this period. The World Bank's population projection (available at World Development Indicators) shows that annual population growth in India was only 1.2 per cent per annum in 2012 and 1.04 per cent in 2018, and the total population was about 1.34 billion in 2017-18. Our population projections (based on a monthly exponential growth rate) show that the total population in India was about 1.345 billion in 2017-18 (the same as the World Bank's estimate).

The number of disheartened youth (having secondary and above level of general education, and with technical and vocational qualifications) is rising at an alarming rate. With total jobs falling at a time when new entrants into the labour force are increasing at an accelerating pace, it is not surprising that real wages have not increased in both rural and urban areas.

The National Family Health Survey 2015-16 shows that there has been a phenomenal decline in the total fertility rate (the number of children born to women in the reproductive age group of 15-49), reaching a near replacement rate of 2.2 per woman, from 2.7 in 2005-06. Hence, the 1.06 per cent population growth rate we use is logical; and 1.7 per cent cannot be India's current population growth rate. The use of the latter artificially raises the workforce number that BD came up with, 457 million in 2017-18. This is surprising since they had missed out on subsidiary workers altogether. Hence, they fail to find that the total jobs in India fell by nine million in six years, a first in India's history.

Moreover, since the employment and unemployment figures are always estimated considering both the principal and subsidiary status of employment, BD's employment estimate, based only on the principal status, is incomplete and misleading. The principal employment status is recorded for a relatively longer duration of time in the survey year (normally for a period of six months and more). It leaves out those who work for less than six months, and who must also be counted among those working. The subsidiary status of employment data (covering those working 30 days but less than 182 days), covers those not employed in the principal status, and must be added to workers in principal status. So, by ignoring the subsidiary employment, BD provide an incomplete and incorrect employment trend for India.

Hence, BD's claim that manufacturing employment during 2011-12 and 2017-18 was "stagnant" is also misleading. In fact, based on the UPSS, we found that manufacturing employment actually declined by three million between 2011-2012 and 2017-2018. While labour intensive sub-sectors were mainly responsible for this decline, a few capital intensive manufacturing sub-sectors did register consistent growth of jobs during 2004-05 and 2017-2018. Although the quality of jobs is very poor in the services sector, it has played a major role in driving job growth, but only partly offsetting the fall in employment in agriculture, manufacturing, and slowing employment creation in the construction sector. In fact, because of their problematic methodology, BD fail to notice the actual fall in total em-

ployment (including self-employment of the Ola/Uber or Mudra variety, which is captured in a comprehensive sample of the unorganised and organised sector workers).

The share of regular and formal employment increased marginally due to growth of formal jobs in the private sector, but the share of informal jobs (without social security) within the government/public sector has increased. A dominant and rising share of jobs is still generated by micro and small units in the unorganised sectors without any formal or written job contract. In both government and private sectors, the number of contract jobs (with no written contract, or less than a year's contract, or one to three-years contract) is on the rise post 2011-12. Although BD's paper also reveals the same story, we differ from them on the absolute number of jobs. The rate of growth of jobs in the unorganised component is much higher than in the organised sector (those with more than 10 workers).

Moreover, BD's research also provides a partial picture of the unemployment trends in India as they could not capture the upsurge in open unemployment among educated youth (which has more than doubled in a matter of six years), nor the recent rise in the disheartened youth labour force (those in the age group of 15-29 and not in educational institutions or the labour force). We found that the number of disheartened youth (having secondary and above level of general education, and with technical and vocational qualifications) is rising at an alarming rate.

With total jobs falling at a time when new entrants into the labour force are increasing at an accelerating pace, it is not surprising that real wages have not increased in both rural and urban areas. From now on, entrants into the labour force will increase at an accelerating pace, at least until 2030. Hence, a comprehensive employment policy combined with an industrial policy (to boost growth of medium and large firms) is necessary to address the transformation of agrarian workforce, boost real wages, and to ensure industrial development.

Mehrotra is professor of economics and chairperson, Centre for Labour, JNU. Parida is assistant professor of economics, Central University of Punjab

DRAWING DARK LINES

Targeting of migrant workers underlines the mounting challenge in the Valley

IT HAS BECOME clear that militants in the Valley are now targeting migrant workers. Several non-Kashmiri workers have been killed since the August 5 revocation of Jammu & Kashmir's special status, five in just one episode in Kulgam last week. These men from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, working to feed families in their homes states, were evidently soft targets for Kashmiri militants to make the point that "outsiders" need not think that Article 370's abatement would make it easier for them to move in. For years, non-Kashmiris have worked in Kashmiri fields and orchards as farm labour, in Kashmiri homes as carpenters and masons, and on the streets of Srinagar as petty vendors, earning money in the summer months and going home in the winter, to return unflinchingly the next year, with more in tow. They do not displace Kashmiris from their jobs or land, only eke out a living in the belief that their work is their best life insurance. It was these men who carried out much of the reconstruction work after the 2014 floods. So far, they had believed no harm would come to them because they were no one's political sword arm, they were unarmed and no threat to anyone. It was because of the trust reposed in them by the people of Kashmir that even during the unrest and turmoil of 2016, hardly any migrant worker left the Valley before the customary winter departures.

That these killings began after the government's August 5 decisions could be a pointer to how the Centre's move may have unleashed Kashmir's deep-rooted fears about identity and demography. It would seem that the government's narrative — that the changes were made to bring the state up to speed with the rest of the country on development indices — has not found many takers in the Valley, especially as J&K is better developed than many other states. By all accounts, many Kashmiris are, instead, looking at the ideological underpinnings of the decisions, to find confirmation of their worst fears and apprehensions about an agenda of demographic change in the Muslim-majority state, even though such change is not going to be easy. Some of those gunned down over the last few weeks were Muslim, which might indicate that this battle for Kashmiri identity is not about religion, and that anyone deemed to be an outsider could become a target.

While the government has projected its move in J&K as having integrated the state with the rest of the country, it seems to have set in motion new divisions and fears on the ground. It is now three months since the Centre decided to revoke J&K's special status and bifurcate it into two Union Territories; the two UTs came into being on October 31. The government has still to prove its claim that life in J&K will be better than it was before August 5. The stakes are high, and there is little time to lose.

CHASING THE CURE

New Alzheimer's drug offers hope for treating a difficult disease. It must be backed by more substantive trials

FOR NEARLY TWO decades, doctors treating Alzheimer's patients have been frustrated by the lack of advance in medical research. The most advanced drug that is used to treat the disease was developed in 2003. Now news from China has provided a ray of hope for curing a disease that has been one of the biggest headaches for healthcare systems globally since it was first identified in 1906 by the German physician, Alois Alzheimer. On Monday, the Chinese drug regulator approved a medicine that improves cognitive functions in patients with mild to moderate levels of the disease. This is a significant breakthrough because drugs currently in use treat the neuro-degenerative disorder symptomatically at best, leaving doctors almost helpless about elderly patients who may forget familiar facts and, at times, even the faces of family members.

The new drug, Oligomannate, a sugar derived from a Chinese seaweed, works by modifying gut bacteria to reduce inflammation in the brain. Green Valley, the Chinese biotech company that has developed the drug, claims that a clinical trial on 818 people "demonstrated solid and consistent cognition improvement among those treated versus a control group". The method adopted by the Chinese researchers is a departure from Alzheimer's drug development that has focussed on attacking the plaque that forms in the brains of patients; this protein build-up interferes with neural signaling. Last year, pharma major El Lilly threw in the towel during the final stages of trials of a drug that targets the plaque accumulation in brain cells, leading researchers to think of alternate disease pathways — the microbiome, for instance.

There is, however, good reason for tempering the optimism around the new drug. In China, the regulatory agency has asked Green Valley to conduct more research on Oligomannate's safety — it has, however, allowed the company to market the drug by the last week of December. The complete data on how exactly the cognitive function improved for patients on the drug versus those on placebo — and how meaningful that was in the patients' lives — is still not known outside select circles in China. Moreover, Oligomannate must be tested on diverse groups of people to be affirmed as a panacea for Alzheimer's globally. And, these trials need to include many more than 818 individuals. Once knowledge on the mode of action of the Chinese seaweed spreads among medical researchers worldwide, more potent compounds could be developed to target Alzheimer's — and mitigate a difficult challenge to the health and dignity of at least 50 million elderly people.

ALL TOO HUMAN

Priests in a Varanasi temple place pollution masks on idols, create a telling image

EVEN THE GODS, it seems, cannot bear the smog. At the Shiv-Parvati temple in the Sigra area of Varanasi, temple authorities have sought to protect the idols of the eponymous divinities from the ravages of PM 2.5 with white pollution masks, the kind that have become ubiquitous in Delhi. The head priest's logic for the move is sound: If gods can be presented blankets during winter, why shouldn't they be protected from the man-made pollution crisis that has engulfed north India now?

It is also a fact that the many deities who populate the Subcontinent are all too human. The stories around them describe anger, love, passion as well as moral and social virtues. They are loved in all their variety, and their needs are taken care of. Clothes, food and even weddings are provided for them by devotees in temples across the country, establishing a vivacious two-way relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped.

The gods may give us a fair wind, but they did not fill it with toxins. And since they are so much a part of our lives, the sight of the divine being restricted by unthinking human indulgence is also meant to shake people out of their complacency about bursting crackers in the Diwali season, for instance. The sight of their gods wearing masks, according to the head priest, has created awareness among children and adults visiting the temple, who have also started wearing pollution masks. But one goddess, Kali, remains unadorned. Covering her face hides her anger, which is considered inauspicious. While the protective gear for other gods is meant to evoke compassion and concern, she's there to remind believers of divine wrath.



BHUPESH BHAGEL

AT TIMES, SITUATIONS press us into a corner where we need to face the challenges head on and reach a long-term solution. Pollution caused by burning of *parali* (crop residue) is one such unprecedented crisis. We must act not only because it is choking Delhi or there is a 50 per cent rise in respiratory illnesses, be it COPD or asthma cases, in the National Capital Region (NCR) area, but also because we are losing soil fertility and there is a rise in incidents of cancer in Punjab and Haryana.

Farmers in Haryana and Punjab burn up to 35 million tonnes of *parali*, which is responsible for significant percentage of Delhi-NCR's air pollution levels. One study estimates that crop residue burning released 149 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, nine million tonnes of carbon monoxide, 0.25 million tonnes of sulphur oxides and 1.28 million tonnes of particulate matter.

Let us look at the background of this issue. Farmers in Haryana and Punjab have to move to the next winter crop in a very short interval, following the Rabi crop sowing. If they are late, due to short winters these days, they might face considerable losses. If *parali* is left in the field, pests like termites may attack upcoming crop. Already in an economically-precarious situation, farmers go for the cheapest option for stubble disposal — burning. A farmer knows about the pollution crisis. But we also need to know his problems —

WEALTH FROM THE STUBBLE

Chhattisgarh model for disposal of agri-waste offers a solution to pollution crisis

What we need is to utilise every product in the process and return it to the soil in one form or another. From 35 million tonnes of *parali*, we can obtain 21 million tonnes of high-grade organic fertiliser. The total amount of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and sulphur in the 23 million tonnes of *parali* annually burnt in Northwest India is about seven lakh tonnes, valued at Rs 1,000 crore. This apart, organic carbon is also destroyed during stubble burning. Thus, *parali* offers an important source for meeting the nutrient requirements of crops and improving soil health. These nutrients also reduce the risk of cancers in Punjab by reducing the levels of carcinogens in soil.

Farmers cannot do this alone. The state needs to step in and engage already-existing mechanisms like the MGNREGA for this purpose. To do this, the Centre needs to allow states to include activities like harvesting and composting in MGNREGA. This has been a longstanding demand of many states. *Parali* can be mixed with cow dung and few natural enzymes under MGNREGA to generate high-grade compost, and also reduce air pollution in North India.

In Chhattisgarh, we have already undertaken this innovative experiment by setting up *gauthans*. A *gauthan* is a dedicated five-

pests, markets and soil fertility.

Agriculture is a regenerative process, one which recycles. What we need is to utilise every product in the process and return it to the soil in one form or another. From 35 million tonnes of *parali*, we can obtain 21 million tonnes of high-grade organic fertiliser. The total amount of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and sulphur in the 23 million tonnes of *parali* annually burnt in Northwest India is about seven lakh tonnes, valued at Rs 1,000 crore. This apart, organic carbon is also destroyed during stubble burning. Thus, *parali* offers an important source for meeting the nutrient requirements of crops and improving soil health. These nutrients also reduce the risk of cancers in Punjab by reducing the levels of carcinogens in soil.

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acre plot, held in common by each village, where all the unused *parali* (*pairain* Chhattisgarhi) is collected through *parali daan* (people's donations) and is converted into organic fertiliser by rural youth. This provides them a living. Our government supports only the transportation of *parali* from the farm to the nearest *gauthan*. The state has successfully developed 2,000 *gauthans*.

Now, since the Supreme Court has taken a cognisance of the pollution crisis, it is high time to offer the best possible solutions. I presented this concept to the Niti Aayog recently. It involves an integrated regenerative rural development model of *narwa* (rivulet regeneration), *garuwa* (cattle conservation), *ghuruwa* (composting) and *baari* (kitchen garden) through a participatory process using MGNREGA. I request the Supreme Court to constitute a committee consisting of economists, agricultural experts, farmer delegates and bureaucrats to evaluate the *parali* burning crisis and explore the possibilities of expanding schemes like the MGNREGA to harvesting and composting.

A collective intervention using traditional wisdom and local resources and facilitated by sound administrative support can upturn this national problem.

The writer is Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh



NOVEMBER 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

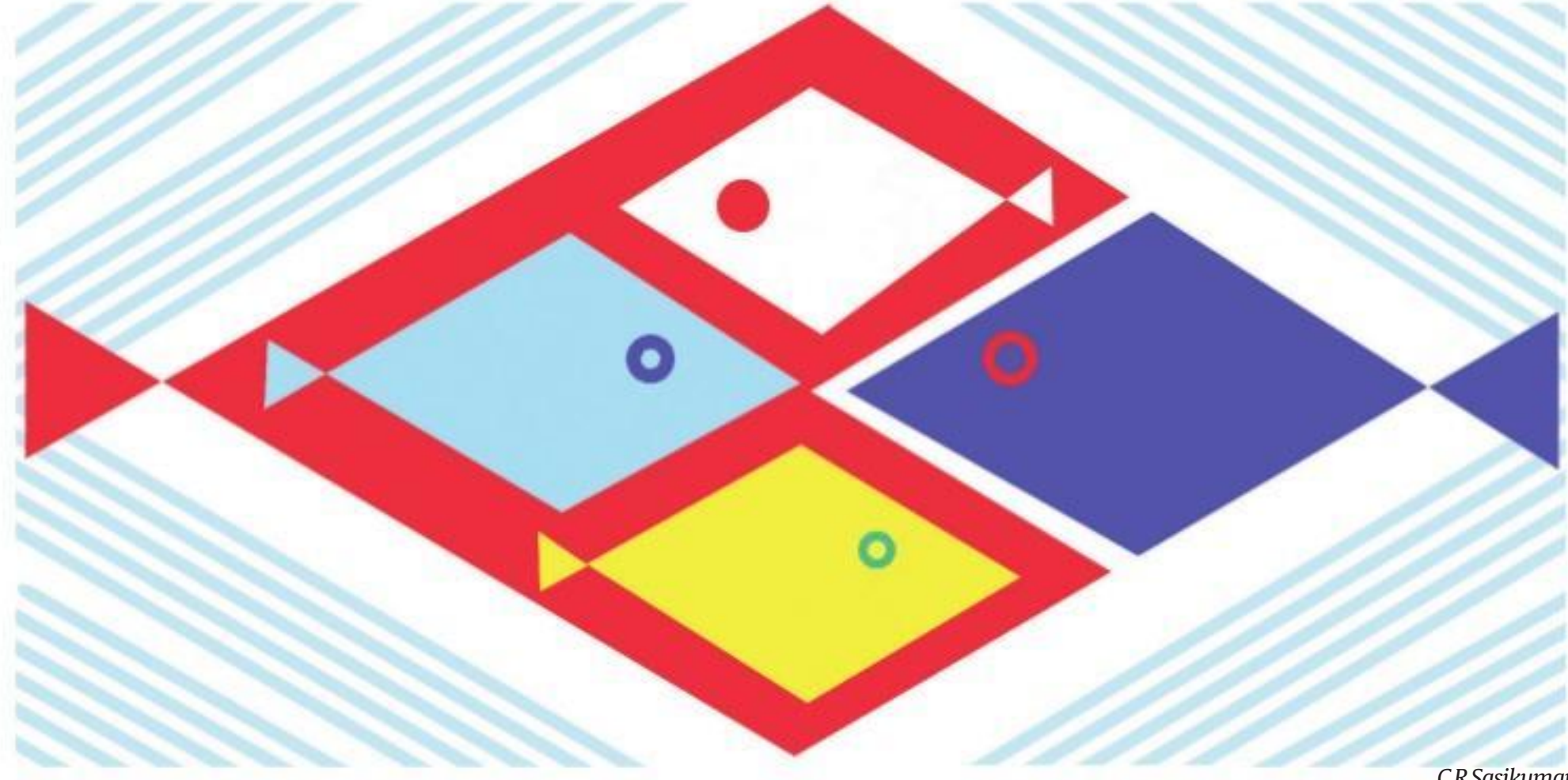
US HOSTAGE CRISIS
IRANIAN DEMONSTRATORS THREATENED Tuesday to execute some 60 Americans held hostage at the US embassy in Teheran if the US Government tried to rescue them, reports AP. "Any military or non-military attempt by the US or its agents in Iran to free the American spies held as hostages in their embassy will cause their immediate execution," the demonstrators said. A West German radio broadcast from Teheran also said other Americans, employed by private US firms in Iran, were being rounded up by armed Iranians and taken to the US embassy grounds. The US government had ruled out any military intervention.

CASTE AND CONGRESS
THE CONGRESS-I ELECTION exercise seems to be going full steam. Almost immediately after the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, Shankar Dayal Sharma, Congress-I leader, made a detailed personal assessment, state by state. According to a Congress-I source, Uma Shankar Dixit and Yashpal Kapoor have worked out "the caste factors" in different constituencies, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. These caste calculations are likely to be taken into consideration when the candidates' names are finalised. The Congress-I parliamentary board, which will finalise the names, is meeting for three days, starting today and again on November 13, 14 and 15.

IRAN PM RESIGNS
IRANIAN PRIME MINISTER, Mehdi Bazargan, resigned today, an official of the prime minister's office said. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini accepted the resignation and ordered the Revolutionary Council to take the reins of government. "Bazargan cited both developments over the past few days as well as his physical tiredness as the reason for his resignation," he added. Khomeini also ordered the council to prepare preliminaries for a referendum on the Constitution for elections to a national consultative assembly and for appointing a president. Khomeini said, "I assign the Revolutionary Council to run the country's affairs during the transition."

Quad in the spotlight

Beijing remains worried about the advantages the quadrilateral dialogue process might offer to India in the Indo-Pacific



C R Sasikumar



SUJAN R CHINYOY

IN A SPEECH at the Heritage Foundation on October 22, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the "Quad" between Japan, Australia, India and the United States would ensure that "China retains only its proper place in the world". The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying retorted on October 25 to condemn the American plainspeaking as habitual lies and malicious slandering. Such a war of words between the US and China is now routine. Yet, the spotlight is on the future of the Quad, which convened again on November 4 at the level of senior officials on the margins of the EAS in Bangkok a little over a month after the high-profile meeting on September 26 in New York. The September meeting was the first at the level of the foreign ministers.

A proposal by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in early 2007 to hold a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was endorsed by US Vice President Dick Cheney and the governments of India and Australia, leading to the first meeting at the official level. There was a general understanding, even when the four countries engaged, along with Singapore, in a maritime exercise in 2007, that it would not take on a military dimension against any country. The strategic community in China, nevertheless, had branded it an emerging "Asian NATO". Beginning with maritime-centric concerns, it was gradually seen by China as a means to an end, involving the use of the wider Indo-Pacific theatre to target China. That year, Abe's "Confluence of Two Seas" address to the Indian Parliament gave a fresh impetus to the nascent concept. Abe had spoken of a new definition of a "broader Asia" taking shape at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It recognised the economic rise of India and brought Japan and India together as part of an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, the US and Australia. It was seen as an open and transparent network that would allow people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely.

The Quad dissipated when Australia, under PM Kevin Rudd, walked away on account of Chinese sensibilities. Yet, China's suspicion resurfaced with Abe's reference in December 2012 to Asia's "Democratic Security Diamond" involving Australia, India, Japan and the US to safeguard the maritime commons from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific. President Obama's rebalance or pivot to Asia policy, never implemented, only had the effect of spurring China, under President Xi Jinping after 2013, to immediately act on its irredentist claims in the South China Sea and also vigorously promote the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Nuanced differences among the Quad countries seem to have narrowed down in the last two years. There are common references to the creation of a free, open and inclusive regional architecture, rules of the road, freedom of navigation and over-flight, and, ASEAN centrality. There is pragmatic appreciation that not all nations grappling with the rise of China are democracies.

Even as the US has upped the ante by describing China, along with Russia, as a revisionist power and a strategic rival in its National Security Strategy, National Defence Strategy and the Pentagon's report on Indo-Pacific Strategy, Japan has quietly dropped the word "strategy" from its own Free and Open Indo-Pacific in deference to better ties with China. Taking into account its overwhelming eco-

nomie dependence on China for prosperity, Australia's White Paper has been careful to highlight continued commitment to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China and to describe China as a major geopolitical player with the capacity to influence virtually all of Australia's international interests.

China believes that the concept of the Indo-Pacific, and more particularly the Quad, is a sinister plot hatched by the US aimed at containing its rise, opposing the BRI, questioning its developmental finance and connectivity projects, disparaging what it regards as its highly successful political, economic and cultural narratives, and, laying the foundation for a military alliance to undermine its future. It believes that trilateral compacts involving the US, Japan and India and the US, Japan and Australia are the thin end of the wedge, aimed at strengthening the Quad.

China remains wedded to "Asia-Pacific" for building an inclusive regional cooperative structure. For China, a switch to "Indo-Pacific" implies erosion of its pre-eminence. Recently, Chinese scholars and officials appear to have changed tack and are beginning to discern between the Indo-Pacific and the Quad. Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanwu attended a high-level dialogue on Indo-Pacific Cooperation in Jakarta on March 19, where he too underscored ASEAN centrality, and, of course, China-ASEAN cooperation. It is increasingly clear that China is now adopting a wait-and-see approach towards the Indo-Pacific instead of opposing it, since ASEAN centrality affords it an opportunity to dilute narratives in the Indo-Pacific that could prove inimical to Chinese interests.

That China sees ASEAN centrality as an opportunity to steer the Indo-Pacific away from a security agenda focused on China is supported by Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi's remarks to foreign and Chinese journalists on July 31, following the China-ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting in Bangkok. His five-point formula entailed making greater efforts to work together on the BRI, forging China-ASEAN digital cooperation, including in 5G, fully implementing the China-ASEAN FTA, finalising regional rules-of-the-road based on the negotiating text of the Code of Conduct (proposed by China), and engaging in joint maritime exercises (already undertaken between China and ASEAN in October last year).

China's spokesperson said that during the China-ASEAN Summit on November 3 in Bangkok, Premier Li Keqiang and ASEAN leaders agreed to join hands in upholding peace and stability in the South China Sea and advance the Code of Conduct consultations following an agreed schedule. Premier Keqiang also pitched for synergies between the BRI and ASEAN's development. Three outcomes documents were released, including the Joint

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Statement on the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative. China has signed bilateral agreements with ASEAN countries to advance transportation routes, including the existing economic corridors, China-Thailand Railway, China-Laos Railway and Jakarta-Bandung high-speed Railway.

India's commitment to "strategic autonomy" has generally proved reassuring to China. It suggests that India would never agree to fully align itself with the US against China. This impression has been reinforced by India holding up Australia's participation, so far, in the annual Malabar naval exercise, currently limited to just three of the four Quad nations. India did not join the Indo-Pacific Business Council. This, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at the Shangri-La event were viewed positively in Beijing. Equally, China would not have failed to note that it is India's decision that permitted the Quad to meet at the ministerial level. Notably, the decision came quick on the heels of China's egregious, though unsuccessful, attempts to support Pakistan on Jammu and Kashmir and Article 370 at the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The recent Mamallapuram summit between President Xi Jinping and PM Modi is a positive development, valued by both sides as key to giving strategic guidance to stakeholders on both sides. With Japan, the opportunity for China lies in working together on agreed-upon projects in third countries and using the proposed visit of Xi Jinping to Japan in 2020 as a high watermark. Australia, also an alliance partner of the US, is involved in freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. China would want to leverage its deep economic engagement and extensive cultivation of opinion makers to balance the hard line now being taken by Australia's security and intelligence establishment.

China remains wary of the Quad and its future contours. It remains worried about the advantages that the Quad process might offer to India in the Indo-Pacific. Naturally, it will seek to use its considerable bilateral engagement with Japan, Australia as well as India to ensure that the Quad does not flip over from a regional coordinating mechanism focused on connectivity and Infrastructure, capacity-building, HADR and maritime security and cyber security and counter-terrorism to become an "Asian NATO". Much, though, will depend on China's actions and how others perceive her capabilities and intentions.

The writer, a former Indian Ambassador to Japan, has served in China, USA and Australia. He is currently Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"India has decided not to join the RCEP for now, but it has nothing to do with the Indo-Pacific Strategy, but is based on India's own economic interests."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Above the law

Due process, the imperative to follow it, was missing in the Tis Hazari incident



MEERAN CHADHA BORWANKAR

I WAS PROMPT. I got in my police jeep and asked my driver to take me immediately to AIIMS, New Delhi, where I was told Inspector Chougule had been admitted. He was on duty at the Tis Hazari court when there was an altercation with local lawyers over the parking of vehicles. I am not clear about the details but a video clipping I was watching showed a constable being beaten up. Some lawyers were also shown hurling chairs and kicking the person in uniform who had fallen down on the floor. I was aghast and that's when I received the phone call, and realised that Inspector Chougule too was on duty at the court and was injured.

I rushed out of the jeep to the Emergency where Chougule lay helpless under the influence of anesthesia. The doctor on duty informed that he was brought to the hospital with multiple fractures and in great pain. His family had been informed and they were on their way. I was told, I decided to wait for them and took a seat in the waiting room. The TV blared about a judicial enquiry having been ordered against the police. That senior police officers would record the statements personally and the enquiry against the police must be completed within a specific timeframe.

I am shocked. My police officer is seriously injured here, and there are many more, I have been informed. Why has an enquiry been ordered against them? Why is the enquiry not about the incident? I am also wondering how the court has pre-judged the issue? I am seething with anger at an unjust system that has decided against the uniform without giving it a chance to defend itself.

I remember an incident where an officer from my cadre, faced with an angry crowd, ordered firing but the police staff on duty did not. He thought it was a case of grave indiscipline and reported it to the seniors. During the enquiry that ensued, the inspector in charge gave his statement that he felt if he or his staff fired, they would not be protected. That the administration would side with the agitators who had political support. That he would be suspended too, so he took a conscious decision to not use any force. In his statement, he cited cases of many recent agitations where it had been decided not to use force despite heavy damage to life and property. He specifically mentioned that

this was despite the fact that women had been molested during one such agitation. I remember having discussed these cases with Inspector Chougule and his staff during an evening roll call at his police station.

And I was very embarrassed when a constable got up and sought permission to share his views frankly. His contention was that the officer not using force in the above incident was right. Most policemen feel that the uniform and police discipline does not permit them to air their views, but it is also a fact that the use of even minimal force leads to disciplinary action against them. That it is safe not to act. That even their families advise them against it as police action brings public wrath — however justified the police action may be. That nobody supports the police in their hour of need. I found almost all the policemen agreeing with him and nodding their heads in affirmation. I was shocked at this near-unanimous opinion, but after detailed discussions we decided that we shall not allow ourselves to be "mere spectators". We resolved to be the true custodians of law in the capital and support each other in our hour of need. We also resolved never to use more force than required as the agitators are, after all, our own countrymen and women. They are not enemies. Their demands and agitation are justified in their perception. So, we shall use force strictly as per the demand of the situation, we had decided.

At AIIMS, our past discussions and resolutions were replaying in my mind. I was reminded of the lesson on "use of force proportionate to the violence" that had been drilled into us during "mob drill" rehearsals in the Police Academy. I was taught that, as a police officer it is my duty to safeguard public property. During the law classes in the same academy, I was also taught not to come to any conclusion without hearing both sides. The instructor used to repeatedly talk about "natural justice". He would hammer in the notion in class that it meant that both sides deserve to be heard, and must be given an opportunity to present their case. He would talk, teach and preach about "due process of law" and explain that it meant following the established procedure of hearing the opposing sides before arriving at a decision.

As I waited for Inspector Chougule to gain consciousness, and for his family to reach the hospital, I wondered if some law instructor in the judicial academy skipped this chapter on the "due process of law"? I also wondered if in the law college that I attended to secure a Bachelors of Law, we were taught that lawyers are above the law. Maybe I missed that lecture, while others attended it and took it to heart.

The writer is an IPS officer who retired as DG and holds a degree in law from the University of Pune

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WRONG PRIORITIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Lost opportunity' (IE, November 6). The decision to opt out of RCEP is not surprising. Export-led growth does not figure in our list of priorities. In contrast, Bangladesh has achieved an 8 per cent GDP growth on the back of rising exports. Asian tigers led by Indonesia and Vietnam have left us far behind in grabbing the opportunities provide by the US-China trade dispute. Now, with RCEP countries accounting for one third of foreign trade, an export revival is highly unlikely.

S Bhalerao, Mumbai

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.

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'Lost opportunity' (IE, November 6). India's concerns about RCEP are valid. But they are compelling only in the short-term. The country's policy makers need to realise how economic power is shifting from the West to the East and the RCEP might be the future of the world. We should become part of this trading bloc, while simultaneously sorting out our domestic issues.

Divya Singla, Patiala

LAW BREAKERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Shaming the law' (IE, November 6). The incident involving police and advocates is not unusual. A similar incident happened at an Howrah court April 24. The lawyers believe they are the sentinels of the law. And, the police think along similar lines. In the process both flout their mandate while the concerns of the common people get ignored.

Abhijit Chakraborty, Howrah

CLEAR THE BACKLOG

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Raise the bar' (IE, November 6). The writer mentions the huge backlog of cases in courts all over the country. Isn't reducing the

backlog a part of the judiciary's mandate? Most political and economic problems are law and order problems, and on several times, they signal the failure of the justice system. Entrepreneurship is limited because legal resources are few for victims of fraudulent deals. Lynchings and communal violence happen because the perpetrators know it will be a lifetime before they face punishment. On domestic issues people don't even go to court.

Jagruiti Desai, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Raise the bar' (IE, November 6). Since the executive and the legislature have been failing the country, the top judiciary is the only hope — the head of any organisation does make all the difference. B R Ambedkar had cautioned that a chief justice is also susceptible to human failings, much like common people. Going by the unbiased, non-political and justice-oriented approach of the next CJ, as brought out in the article, we can certainly hope that there will be no such occasion to remind us about the apprehension expressed by Ambedkar.

S N Shukla, Nirala Nagar, Lucknow



RAJNI BAKSHI

On Ayodhya, listen carefully

Beyond either-or views, many want temple but don't want to hurt mosque

DHARAMVEER BHARATI, THE legendary writer-editor, once had a conversation in the shadow of the Babri Masjid which needs to be retold. At the time of Bharti's visit to Ayodhya, the Ram temple movement was already in full swing. One attempt to demolish the structure had already been made.

Among the people Bharati interviewed was an old woman, from a nearby village, on a pilgrimage to Ayodhya. Pointing to the Babri Masjid, Bharati asked the woman if she wanted a Ram temple to be built there. With a simplicity devoid of any rancour the woman said: "It would feel good to have a Ram temple at the birth place of Sri Ram."

Then, Bharati pointed to the minarets of the other mosques in Ayodhya and asked her: "What about those mosques? What about the mosque in your village?"

Since the woman seemed puzzled by this question, Bharati explicitly asked whether she felt those mosques should also be demolished. "Certainly not", came the emphatic reply. That woman saw no connection between the wish to see a Ram temple at what she believed to be the birthplace of Ram and the existence of mosques where

her Muslim neighbours offered worship.

As a member of campaigns for communal harmony, in the early 1990s, I failed to grasp this distinction. I did see everyone who wanted a Ram temple "on that spot" as a threat to India's plural ethos and particularly as anti-Muslim.

There were strong reasons to feel this way. Voices like that of the woman were drowned out by the hate-filled propaganda of those who mobilised the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign. When Gandhian Sarvodaya workers went to Ayodhya to sit in a quiet satyagraha appealing for brotherhood of all religions, they were physically attacked by some advocates of the Ram temple campaign.

A quarter century later, it is futile to hope that the Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya, whatever it might be, will somehow mark a closure. Healing the social fabric is far more important. That work is in the hands of people who, like Bharati's interviewee, are neither "secular" nor "communal", but may have been swept along in the flood of emotions unleashed by political ambitions.

There will be those who argue that the Indian *samaj* is now so polarised that such

people have become an irrelevant minority. Such a claim is not just defeatist and cynical, it is also an offence to the spirit of democracy.

True commitment to democracy would mean a willingness to respect that woman's desire for a Ram temple and her desire to honour and preserve the mosques where her neighbours worship. Reducing her multi-layered wishes to an "either or" binary is not merely a travesty of democracy, it is anti-life.

We do live in a time when more and more people feel pressured to make "either or" choices. They harbour doubts about the possibility of brotherhood with people from "other" communities due to a sense of darkness generated over social media, and in face-to-face encounters with naked hatred. But, what if the seemingly immovable hatred is more of a cloak — worn by people whose actual affliction is fear, and a sense of insecurity?

Listening to the underlying anxieties and fears of those who seem susceptible to being swayed by hatred may be the most important aspect going forward. Such empathic listening can be painful, but there is some catharsis at the end of the tunnel. If such lis-

tening does nothing more than prevent us from hating the hater, that is a significant gain.

This cannot happen as long as we quarrel over historical details — be it about Ayodhya or any other disputed site. Those details are significant at another level but the need of the hour is to understand, and to process, the raw feelings being aroused and inflamed. For instance, once that woman had expressed her desire for the Ram temple, Bharati could easily have ignored her and walked on. It was his eagerness to understand her worldview in more detail that revealed the distinction between her aspiration and how it was being shanghaied for a toxic political design. There is indeed moral and poetic beauty in the old slogan, "Prem se kaho hum insaan hain". That emphasis on our shared humanity is precious.

Our collective future now depends on an open-hearted engagement with those who shout "Garv se kaho hum Hindu hain". We need to try and ask them to explore how their own life, and the society around them, might benefit instead with "Prem se kaho hum Hindu hain".

Bakshi is a Mumbai-based writer

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 224

विदेशी ऋण के जोखिम

वित्तीय क्षेत्र में व्याप्त तनाव और बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में फंसे हुए कर्ज का बढ़ता स्तर, भारतीय कंपनियों को विदेशों से ऋण लेने के लिए मजबूर कर रहे हैं। बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड के रिसर्च ब्यूरो द्वारा जुटाए गए आंकड़े बताते हैं कि वर्ष 2019 के पहले 10 महीनों में डॉलर बॉन्ड के जरिये 13.74 अरब डॉलर की राशि जुटाई गई जबकि पिछले वर्ष समान अवधि

में यह राशि 1.65 अरब डॉलर थी। यह भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा प्रकाशित आंकड़ों के अनुरूप ही है। ताजा मौद्रिक नीति रिपोर्ट के अनुसार वाणिज्यिक क्षेत्र को मिलने वाला फंड अप्रैल से सितंबर के मध्य तक घटकर 90,995 करोड़ रुपये रह गया जबकि गत वर्ष समान अवधि में यह 7.36 लाख करोड़ रुपये था। चूंकि बैंकिंग व्यवस्था से फंड की

आवक नहीं हो रही है इसलिए कंपनियों ने विदेशी स्रोतों का रुख किया। इस अवधि में बाहरी स्रोतों से 54,073 करोड़ रुपये की उधारी ली गई जबकि पिछले वर्ष समान अवधि में यह राशि (-) 653 करोड़ रुपये थी। वाणिज्यिक क्षेत्र को इस अवधि में प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश में सुधार का लाभ भी मिला। बैंकिंग क्षेत्र कमजोर बैलेंस शीट के चलते ऋण देने का इच्छुक नहीं है। कंपनियों भी कम दरों का लाभ लेने के लिए विदेशों से ऋण लेना पसंद कर रही हैं। ऐसे में बेहतर रेटिंग वाली कंपनियों के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार से धन जुटाना कोई मुश्किल नहीं है। वह भी ऐसे समय में जबकि विकसित अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के निवेशक बेसब्री से प्रतिफल की बाट जोह

रहे हैं। बहरहाल, विदेशी मुद्रा में की गई उधारी पर अधिक निर्भरता वित्तीय स्थिरता के लिए जोखिम पैदा कर सकती है। देश का बाहरी वाणिज्यिक ऋण 200 अरब डॉलर से अधिक है। इसके अलावा अल्पावधि का ऋण विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार के 56 फीसदी के बराबर है। वैश्विक बाजार में तनाव बढ़ने पर अल्पावधि के ऋण का बढ़ा हुआ स्तर घरेलू बाजारों में अस्थिरता ला सकता है। तेल कीमतों में अचानक उछाल आने से मौजूदा बाजार में अस्थिरता आ सकती है क्योंकि तेल भुगतान बकाया है। 2018 में ऐसा हो चुका है। रुपये के अर्थमूल्यन से उन कंपनियों पर कर का बोझ बढ़े जिन्होंने बिना विदेशी मुद्रा राजस्व के विदेशी मुद्रा में ऋण लिया। विदेशों से ज्यादा ऋण लेने

से रुपये पर दबाव बढ़ सकता है। बीते कई वर्षों से देश का निर्यात ठहरा हुआ है और रुपये के अधिमूल्यन को इसका एक बड़ी वजह माना जाता है। चूंकि देश चालू खतों के घाटे का शिकार है इसलिए उसे बचत-निवेश के अंतराल की भरपाई के लिए पूंजी की आवश्यकता होगी। ऐसे में अगर विदेशी मुद्रा में अल्पावधि का ऋण नहीं लिया जाए तो बेहतर होगा। यदि केंद्रीय बैंक रुपये को प्रतिस्पर्धी बनाने के लिए सक्रिय हस्तक्षेप करें तो बेहतर होगा।

इतना ही नहीं देश की वित्तीय व्यवस्था को मजबूत बनाना भी आवश्यक है ताकि बचत को प्रभावी तरीके से अर्थव्यवस्था के उत्पादक क्षेत्रों तक पहुंचाया जा सके। हालांकि सरकार सरकारी बैंकों को सुदृढ़

कर रही है और उनमें नई पूंजी डाल रही है लेकिन उन्हें पटरी पर लाने के लिए काफी कुछ करने की आवश्यकता है। सरकार और आरबीआई को गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय क्षेत्रों से जुड़ी चिंताओं को समतल करना होगा। वित्तीय क्षेत्र पर दबाव, मौद्रिक नीति के परिणाम पर असर डाल रहा है और देश के कारोबारी जगत को कम दरों का उचित लाभ नहीं मिल पा रहा है। बैंकों की औसत ऋण दर और नीतिगत रीपी दर के बीच का अंतर अभी उच्चतम स्तर पर बताया जा रहा है। अर्थव्यवस्था के उत्पादक क्षेत्रों को फंड मुहैया कराने के लिए हमें मजबूत वित्तीय क्षेत्र की आवश्यकता है। इससे विदेशी ऋण पर निर्भरता कम करने और वित्तीय स्थिरता मजबूत करने में मदद मिलेगी।



विनय सिन्हा

मोदी और चिनफिंग के पास है अवसर

पांच शिखर बैठकों का पहला नतीजा, दोनों देशों के कद्दावर नेताओं के बीच आपसी मान-सम्मान में चरणबद्ध इजाफे के रूप में सामने आ सकता है। विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं तरुण दास

भारत और चीन के रिश्तों के भविष्य पर दृष्टि डालने पर क्या नजर आता है? प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी चिनफिंग के बीच पांच शिखर वार्ताओं को नजर में रखते हुए सन 2022 पर नजर डालना बेहतर होगा। इनमें से दो शिखर बैठक हो चुकी हैं जबकि तीन बैठकें क्रमशः 2020, 2021 और 2022 में होंगी हैं। पांच वर्षों की अवधि किसी भी तरह की प्रगति या इसके उलट हालात को आंके की दृष्टि से उचित हैं।

इन पांच शिखर बैठकों का पहला नतीजा दोनों मजबूत नेताओं के बीच बढ़ते आपसी सम्मान के रूप में सामने आता है। ये दोनों नेता न केवल अपने व्यक्तिगत में मजबूत हैं बल्कि उनके कदम भी मजबूती भरे हैं। उनके बीच मतभेद होने पर भी आपसी सम्मान द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों के लिए बेहतर ही रहता है। दिक्कतों की कमी नहीं है और चुनौतियां तो उससे भी कई गुना ज्यादा हैं। पांच अनौपचारिक बैठकों में काफी समय साथ बिताने के बाद और अन्य बैठकों में कई मुलाकातों के बाद

आपसी सम्मान की अपेक्षा होना स्वाभाविक है। यदि ऐसा होता है तो 2022 तक काफी बेहतर आ सकता है।

इस आपसी मान-सम्मान से आगे बढ़ें तो दूसरा नतीजा हो आपसी विश्वास में कदम दर कदम इजाफा। यह दोनों देशों के लिए एक बड़ी प्रगति होगी क्योंकि दोनों देश आधी सदी से आपसी विश्वास की कमी से जूझ रहे हैं। भरोसे की यह कमी दोनों ओर से है। भरोसा कायम करने में कई छोटे-छोटे कदम लगते हैं लेकिन एक गलत कदम से यह भरोसा टूट जाता है। तमाम तरह की चुनौतियों के बावजूद पांच अनौपचारिक शिखर बैठकों के कारण आपसी भरोसे में सुधार तो होना चाहिए। सन 2022 तक इतनी अपेक्षा तो की ही जा सकती है।

तीसरा नतीजा हो सकता है व्यापार को लेकर आपसी समझ में सुधार। भारत का व्यापार घाटा करीब 60 अरब डॉलर से अधिक है। व्यापार घाटे को धीरे-धीरे कम करके 25 अरब डॉलर तक लाया जा सकता है। यह स्तर अपेक्षाकृत बेहतर माना जा सकता है। लेकिन इसके उलट

यह बढ़कर 70 अरब डॉलर भी हो सकता है। यह न केवल दोनों सरकारों पर बल्कि दोनों देशों के कारोबार और उद्योग जगत पर भी निर्भर करता है। दोनों देशों की सरकारों खासकर चीन द्वारा तय माहौल में ही निर्यातक और आयातक काम करते हैं। द्विपक्षीय व्यापार पर वास्तविक प्रगति हकीकत में तब्दील हो सकती है। इसे दोनों देशों के नेता उद्योग गति प्रदान कर सकते हैं लेकिन यह काफी हद तक चीन पर निर्भर करेगा।

यदि चीन अपने अपेक्षाकृत छोटे पड़ोसियों के साथ तार्किकता से पेश आता है तो सन 2022 तक क्षेत्रीय व्यापक आर्थिक साझेदारी समझौते (आरसेप) में भी उल्लेखनीय प्रगति देखने को मिलेगी। इन सारे देशों की अर्थव्यवस्था का आकार चीन की तुलना में काफी छोटा है। भारत भी इनमें शामिल है। जाहिर है चीन की भूमिका बड़ी होगी और आवश्यक यह होगा कि वह इन देशों को दबाने के बजाय इनका सहयोग करे। अच्छा होगा कि वह भय उत्पन्न करने के बजाय मित्र बनाए। वर्ष 2022 तक चौथी बात यह हो सकती

है कि आतंकवाद को लेकर दोनों देश व्यावहारिक सहयोग करें। चीन की अन्य प्रतिबद्धताओं के बावजूद इस दिशा में खाका खींचने में मदद मिलेगी क्योंकि भारत तथा शेष विश्व की तरह उसके लिए भी आतंकवाद गंभीर चिंता का विषय है। चीन यह समझता है कि आतंकवाद कितना नुकसान पहुंचा सकता है। आतंकवाद संक्रामक है। सन 2022 तक भारत और चीन शायद कुछ साझा चिंताओं पर साथ मिलकर काम करें।

पांचवां नतीजा एक अलग क्षेत्र से सहयोग के रूप में सामने आ सकता है। यह दो तरफा निवेश के रूप में सामने आ सकता है लेकिन भारत के विनिर्माण उद्योग को इसका विशेष लाभ मिल सकता है। जब तक भरोसे में कमी है, नीति और प्रक्रियाएं निवेश को बाधित करेंगे। यह परिदृश्य बदलने पर द्विपक्षीय निवेश का माहौल भी बदलेगा। दोनों देशों में उनके उद्योग विनिर्माण इकाइयां स्थापित कर सकते हैं, रोजगार तैयार कर सकते हैं और तकनीकी विकास कर सकते हैं। यदि विश्वास निर्माण की प्रक्रिया और एक दूसरे के प्रति खुलापन लाने की प्रक्रिया में इजाफा होता है तो सन 2022 की तस्वीर बदली हुई नजर आ सकती है।

छठा नतीजा अहम होगा: रक्षा, सैन्य और सुरक्षा सहयोग की शुरुआत। विश्वास के बिना इस क्षेत्र में दिक्कत हो सकती है। सामरिक सहयोग और साझा सामरिक हितों में इनकी अहम भूमिका है। उपरोक्त शिखर बैठकें इस दिशा में अहम शुरुआत करेंगी। सातवां नतीजा जनता से जनता का संपर्क बढ़ाने से संबंधित है। खासतौर पर शिक्षा, प्रशिक्षण और पर्यटन के क्षेत्र में। वीजा जारी होने या न होने का संबंध द्विपक्षीय तनाव और मतभेदों से है। इस बात की पूरी संभावना है कि वर्ष 2022 तक दोनों देशों के लोगों के आपसी संपर्क में सुधार होगा, लोग एक दूसरे की भाषा सीखेंगे। दोनों देशों के छात्र ज्यादा तादाद में एक दूसरे के यहां जाएंगे। अन्य नतीजे भी होंगे लेकिन हर मोर्चे पर कड़ी वार्ता के बाद ही आगे की राह निकलेगी। यह इससे पहले के सिद्धांतों से अलग है जहां कहा जाता था कि भारत को चीन के प्रति अपनी समझ बढ़ानी चाहिए। मौजूदा रुख अलग है। यह आत्मसम्मान, आत्मगौरव, आत्मविश्वास आदि से संबंधित है। हर कदम कठिन होगा लेकिन दोनों देशों की साथ प्रगति के परिदृश्य में ऐसे कदम उठाने होंगे। इस दिशा में कोई भी प्रगति चरणबद्ध तरीके से ही होगी। इसमें कोई रूमानियत या भावुकता नहीं होगी लेकिन लक्ष्य यही होगा कि चीन और भारत के बीच गहरे और व्यापक रिश्ते कायम किए जाएं।

ऐसे भी क्षेत्र होंगे जहां कोई प्रगति नहीं होगी। परंतु दोनों नेताओं का परस्पर सहयोग न केवल द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों को मिलेगा तमाम एशिया और संपूर्ण विश्व में अंतर पैदा करेगा। मोदी और शी चिनफिंग के पास यह अवसर है कि वे सही दिशा में आगे बढ़कर भरोसा न करने वालों को गलत साबित कर सकें।

(लेखक सीआईआई के मुख्य कार्याधिकारी, महा निदेशक और मुख्य सलाहकार रहे हैं)

भारत ने आरसेप से अंतिम समय में क्यों बनाई दूरी

यह बहुत चौंकाने वाली बात थी कि नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व वाली केंद्र सरकार ने सोमवार को क्षेत्रीय व्यापक आर्थिक साझेदारी (आरसेप) व्यापार समझौते में शामिल नहीं होने का निर्णय लिया। प्रधानमंत्री आरसेप की तीसरी बैठक में हिस्सा लेने के लिए बैंकॉक में मौजूद थे और ऐसा लग रहा था कि भारत इसमें शामिल होगा। परंतु अंतिम समय में भारत ने यह कहते हुए इससे दूरी बना ली कि इस नए कारोबारी समझौते की शर्तें भारत के राष्ट्रीय हितों के खिलाफ हैं। आखिर अंतिम क्षणों में ऐसा क्या हुआ?

16 देशों की सदस्यता वाले आरसेप को दुनिया के सबसे बड़े कारोबारी समूह के रूप में परिकल्पित किया गया था। इनमें आसियान के 10 देश तथा उनके साथ मुक्त व्यापार समझौते वाले छह देश शामिल होने थे, यानी 300 करोड़ लोग। यह पूरी दुनिया की आबादी का 45 प्रतिशत था। इन देशों का सकल घरेलू उत्पाद करीब 21.3 लाख करोड़ डॉलर और विश्व व्यापार में इनकी हिस्सेदारी 40 फीसदी है। भारत के बाहर होने के बाद इस समूह की क्षमता में कमी आएगी लेकिन इसके बावजूद यह दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा कारोबारी समूह बना रहेगा।

भारत के इस निर्णय पर अचंभा स्वाभाविक है। इस सप्ताह के आरंभ में आरसेप शिखर बैठक से पहले सरकार तथा विभिन्न संस्थागत जिनमें औद्योगिक संगठन तथा सत्ताधारी भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) के धड़े शामिल थे, उनकी यही राय निकल रही थी कि भारत के लिए इस विशाल कारोबारी समूह से बाहर रहने के बजाय भीतर रहना बेहतर होगा। कहा गया कि भीतर रहने से सरकार के पास यह अवसर होगा कि वह नियमों के बनते वक्त अपने हितों की मुताबिक उनमें संशोधन कराए। इतना ही नहीं आरसेप में शामिल कई देशों ने भी भारत को यह संकेत दिया कि उन्हें भारत का भीतर रहना पसंद आएगा क्योंकि वह चीन जैसे रसूखदार देश को नियंत्रित रखने में मदद करेगा।

देश का व्यापार बढ़ाने को लेकर सरकार द्वारा नियुक्त उच्चस्तरीय सलाहकार समूह ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि देश के आरसेप में शामिल होने के कई



दिल्ली डायरी

ए के भट्टाचार्य

लाभ हैं। यह रिपोर्ट बमुश्किल 10 दिन पहले दी गई है। रिपोर्ट जारी करने के कार्यक्रम में वाणिज्य मंत्री पीयूष गोयल ने कहा कि दस्तावेज गीता, बाइबिल या कुरान जैसा है। अचानक ऐसा क्या हुआ कि आरसेप पर देश का रुख एकदम बदल गया।

मोदी के बैठक में शामिल होने का इस अचानक लिए गए निर्णय से सीधा संबंध है। ऐसा कम ही होता है कि कोई शासनाध्यक्ष किसी शिखर बैठक में शामिल हो या अंतिम समय में उससे नाम वापस ले। मोदी ने सोमवार को जो किया उसकी तुलना अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डॉनल्ड ट्रंप द्वारा 12 देशों के प्रशांत-पार समझौते से नाम वापस लेने से की जाएगी। परंतु इन दोनों में अंतर है। ट्रंप ने ऐसी संधि से नाता तोड़ा जिस पर उनके पूर्ववर्ती ने 2016 में हस्ताक्षर किए थे। मोदी ऐसे समझौते पर आगे बढ़ रहे थे जिसे पार्लियमैंट सरकार ने शुरू किया था और इसे खारिज करने से पहले वह इस पर हस्ताक्षर करने के करीब पहुंचे थे।

परंतु अंतरराष्ट्रीय कूटनीति की दृष्टि से देखें तो मोदी का इस समझौते से बाहर निकलना उनके लिए झटका माना जाएगा। एक मजबूत नेता समझौता वार्ता में तभी शामिल होता है जब उसे लगें कि राष्ट्रीय हितों की रक्षा की जा सकती है। सवाल यह है कि मोदी जब भारत के हितों की सुरक्षा को लेकर आश्वस्त नहीं थे तो वह इस वार्ता में क्यों शामिल हुए। मोदी को इस विषय में एक भरोसेमंद वक्ता देनी होगी।

अभी कहा जा रहा है कि भारत आरसेप में शामिल नहीं हुआ क्योंकि सदस्य देश भारत की उस शर्त पर जल नहीं हुए जिसमें चीन से आयात की सीमा निर्धारित करने, सेवा व्यापार बढ़ाने और भारतीय वस्तुओं और सेवाओं को चीनी बाजार में बेहतर पहुंच

सुनिश्चित करने और 2019 को कृषि तथा डेरी क्षेत्र में शुल्क कटौती का आधार वर्ष बनाने की बात शामिल थी। इनमें से कोई मुद्दा नया नहीं था। भारत सरकार को उम्मीद थी कि इस दिशा में आगे बातचीत से राह निकलेगी। ऐसे में बैंकॉक में क्या हुआ जो सरकार ने समझौते में शामिल न होने का निर्णय लिया। क्या आरसेप के सदस्य देश भारत की चिंताओं को ध्यान में नहीं दे रहे थे? क्या ऐसा इसलिए था क्योंकि चीन का प्रभाव बढ़ा? क्या भारत की मोलतोल की क्षमता प्रभावित हुई क्योंकि कश्मीर के घटनाक्रम के बाद अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय का रुख बदला?

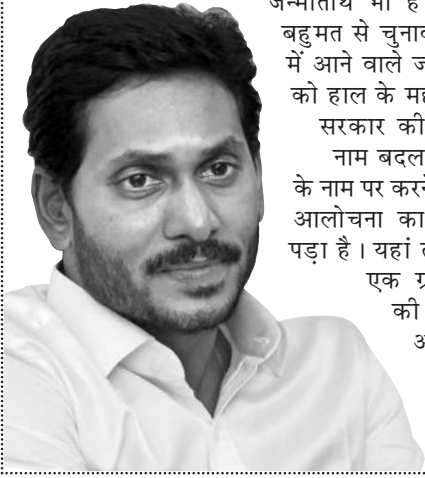
इस बात में कोई दम नहीं है कि सरकार ने अपना रुख स्वदेशी जागरण मंच के भारी विरोध के बाद बदला। मंच मुक्त व्यापार का विरोधी और संरक्षणवाद का हिमायती है। यह भी सही नहीं कि किसानों और औद्योगिक नेताओं के विरोध के कारण सरकार का रुख बदला। तथ्य तो यही है कि स्वदेशी जागरण मंच ने हमेशा आरसेप का विरोध किया है। मंच की पहले अनदेखी क्यों हुई और वह अचानक महत्वपूर्ण क्यों हो गया? इसी तरह मोदी के बैंकॉक जाने के कुछ दिन पहले सीआईआई ने एक वक्तव्य जारी कर भारत के आरसेप में शामिल होने का समर्थन किया था। परंतु गत सोमवार को सीआईआई ने भी अपना रुख बदला और सरकार के आरसेप से हटने का समर्थन किया। संभव है कि भारत सरकार ने आरसेप में लगा हो कि उसकी मांगें नहीं सुनी जा रही हैं और उसने अमेरिका के साथ व्यापार समझौते की दिशा में बढ़ने का निर्णय किया हो। आरसेप में शामिल होने को अमेरिका भारत के चीन के करीबी साझेदार और चीनी वस्तुओं के नए बाजार के रूप में देख सकता था। आरसेप चीन पर लगाए उसके प्रतिबंध कम असरदार हों। भारत के आरसेप से बाहर होने ने भारत और अमेरिका के बीच नए व्यापारिक समझौतों की राह आसान की है। यदि अमेरिका भारत के साथ जल्द व्यापार समझौता करता है और भारत चीन द्वारा भारतीय वस्तुओं की पहुंच को नकारने का प्रतिरोध करता है तो भारत के आरसेप से बाहर होने की दलील को एक नया आयाम मिलेगा।

कानाफूसी

हस्तक्षेप करेंगे

राहुल गांधी

कांग्रेस के पूर्व राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी को अक्सर इस बात के लिए आलोचना की जाती है कि संसद में सवाल पूछने के मामले में उनका प्रदर्शन खासा निराशाजनक रहा है। शून्य काल में हस्तक्षेप को लेकर भी उन पर यही बात लागू होती है। बहरहाल राहुल इन दिनों संसद के आगामी शीतकालीन सत्र की जोरदार तैयारी में लगे हुए हैं। राहुल के करीबी सूत्रों का कहना है कि इस बार वह शून्य काल के दौरान सार्वजनिक महत्व के प्रश्न पूछेंगे। एक बार सत्र समाप्त हो जाने के बाद राहुल देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों की यात्राओं पर निकलेंगे। ऐसी कम से कम पांच यात्राओं का खाका तैयार किया जा रहा है। इन यात्राओं के दौरान राहुल आम लोगों से मुलाकात करेंगे। राहुल सन 2004 से ही लोकसभा सदस्य हैं। वह केरल के वायनाड संसदीय क्षेत्र का प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं।



बदलाव की विडंबना

आंध्र प्रदेश सरकार ने पहले तो एपीजे अब्दुल कलाम प्रतिभा पुरस्कार का नाम बदलकर वाईएसआर विद्या पुरस्कार किया लेकिन उसे एक दिन के भीतर ही अपना यह फैसला पलटना पड़ा। दरअसल सरकार के इस फैसले की ऑनलाइन जगत में जमकर आलोचना हुई। आलोचना करने वालों में प्रदेश के पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री एन चंद्रबाबू नायडू भी शामिल थे। पूर्व राष्ट्रपति एपीजे अब्दुल कलाम के नाम पर रखा गया यह पुरस्कार 11 नवंबर को राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा दिवस पर दिया जाता है। 11 नवंबर देश के पहले शिक्षा मंत्री मौलाना अबुल कलाम आजाद की जन्मतिथि भी है। मई में भारी बहुमत से चुनाव जीतकर सत्ता में आने वाले जगन मोहन रेड्डी को हाल के महीनों में पिछली सरकार की योजनाओं का नाम बदलकर अपने पिता के नाम पर करने के लिए काफी आलोचना का सामना करना पड़ा है। यहां तक कि उन्होंने एक ग्राम सचिवालय की इमारत को ही अपनी पार्टी के रंग में रंगवा दिया था।

आपका पक्ष

भारत का आरसेप से पीछे हटना

एशिया के 16 प्रमुख देशों के साथ सबसे बड़े व्यापारिक समझौते क्षेत्रीय व्यापक आर्थिक साझेदारी (आरसेप) से भारत पीछे हट गया है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा कि जब वह आरसेप समझौते को सभी भारतीयों के हितों से जोड़कर देखते हैं तो मुझे सकारात्मक जवाब नहीं मिलता है। भारत ने इस समझौते से पहले कई मुद्दे और चिंताएं सामने रखी थीं पर उनका ठोस समाधान नहीं निकल सका। भारत की पहली और सबसे बड़ी चिंता यह है कि चीन समेत इन देशों के साथ पहले से ही बढ़ा व्यापार घाटा है। इस समझौते के बाद आयात और ज्यादा बढ़ने की स्थिति में भारतीय उद्योगों और किसानों के हित प्रभावित हो सकते थे। अगर भारत यह समझौता कर लेता तो समझौते के अनुसार सदस्य देशों को आयात और निर्यात पर लगने वाला कर या तो नहीं भरना पड़ता या बहुत ही कम भरना पड़ता। देश ने आजादी के बाद से ही अपनी



अर्थव्यवस्था को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने की कोशिश की है और धीरे-धीरे सुधार कर देश की अर्थव्यवस्था काफी मजबूत की है। लेकिन क्षेत्रीय असमानता के चलते देश अब भी समावेशी विकास से काफी दूर है। जब तक देश की कृषि व्यवस्था के लिए सुधार नहीं लाए जाएंगे तब तक देश में क्षेत्रीय असंतुलन मौजूद रहेगा। देश में कृषि क्षेत्र के बाद

आरसेप समझौते के बाद आयात बढ़ने से देसी उद्योग को नुकसान पहुंच सकता था

सबसे ज्यादा रोजगार मध्यम एवं लघु उद्योग देता है तथा कुल निर्यात का 40 प्रतिशत योगदान इसी क्षेत्र का है। लेकिन वर्ष 2006 में इस क्षेत्र को जो संरक्षण मिल रहा था

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।

वह हटा दिया गया। आज देश को कृषि क्षेत्र तथा माध्यम एवं लघु उद्योग को आधुनिकीकरण की आवश्यकता है। देश में शीत भंडारण की नीति अब भी टंडे बस्ते में है जिससे किसानों के उत्पाद खराब हो जाते हैं। आरसेप से भारत का पीछे हटना किसानों एवं घरेलू उद्योगों के लिए हितकारक कदम है लेकिन इसके उत्थान के लिए नए सुधारवादी एवं परिवर्तनात्मक कदम उठाना जरूरी है।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

पेड़ बचाने से होगा

प्रदूषण कम

शहर केंद्रित के जंगल में तब्दील होते जा रहे हैं। गांव में खेत अत्यधिक उर्वरकों के इस्तेमाल से बंजर होने के कगार पर हैं। जंगलों में पेड़ों की कटाई जारी है। आज हम सभी लाल, जमीन और वायु

प्रदूषण से परेशान हैं। देश की राजधानी दिल्ली तथा एनसीआर का वायु प्रदूषण हो या छत्तीसगढ़-ओडिशा का जल प्रदूषण, बात उर्वरकों के अनियंत्रित इस्तेमाल से बंजर हो रहे पंजाब खेत की हो। प्रदूषण एक ऐसा अभिशाप बन गया है जो कल-कारखानों, वैज्ञानिक साधनों का अधिक उपयोग, फ्रिज, एसी, वाहन और ऊर्जा संयंत्र आदि से निकलता है। विकास के लिए पेड़ों की अंधाधुंध कटाई, प्राकृतिक जल स्रोतों का दोहन और आबादी के निकट कारखानों का चलना आदि प्रदूषण की मुख्य वजह है। प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का दोहन रोकने के लिए हरित पंचात, सीपीसीबी और अन्य संस्थाओं को मुखर होना पड़ेगा। जल, जमीन और हवा को प्रदूषण से बचाने के लिए बच्चों और लोगों को जागरूक करने, दो पाँधे लगाने और देखभाल की जिम्मेदारी लेने, कारखाने आबादी से दूर लगाने, ऑनलाइन या ई-सेवा का इस्तेमाल और निर्माण कार्य में पर्यावरणीय मानकों को ध्यान में रखा जाना जरूरी है।

पवन कुमार मौर्य, नई दिल्ली

विचार

दैनिक जागरण

स्वार्थ हित साधने के बजाय अहित अधिक करता है

सुप्रीम कोर्ट की सरख्ती

दिल्ली और उसके आसपास वायु प्रदूषण के खतरनाक स्तर को देखते हुए सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने पंजाब, हरियाणा और उत्तर प्रदेश के साथ-साथ दिल्ली सरकार के मुख्य सचिवों को फटकार लगाते हुए यह सही कलाक क्रग्रेडों लोगों को यूं ही मरने के लिए नहीं छोड़ा जा सकता। उसने इन राज्यों को यह आदेश भी दिया कि वे उन किसानों को सौ रूपये प्रति कि्वंटल के हिसाब से प्रोत्साहन राशि दें जिन्होंने पराली नहीं जलाई। हालांकि सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने यह कलाक कि वह इस संदर्भ में धन की कमी की बात स्वीकार नहीं करेगा, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि राज्य सरकारों पैसे की तंगी का रोगा रो सकता है। वैसे यदि वे सुप्रीम कोर्ट के सख्त रवैये के बाद पराली के बचे-खुचे अवशेष को जलाए जाने से रोकने में सफल रहती हैं तो भी कहना कठिन है कि वायु प्रदूषण पर लगाम लग जाएगी। चूंकि किसान पराली इसलिए जलाते हैं कि उन्हें अपने खेत खाली कर नई फसल की तैयारी करनी होती है इसलिए उसके निस्तारण की कोई ठोस व्यवस्था तो करनी ही होगी। इसमें संदेह है कि राज्यों ने पराली निस्तारण के कोई ठोस उपाय कर रखे हैं। चूंकि उनके पास कोई उपाय नहीं इसलिए तमाम चिंता के बाद भी पंजाब, हरियाणा और पश्चिमी उत्तर प्रदेश में पराली जली।

केंद्र सरकार के साथ-साथ सुप्रीम कोर्ट को इससे परिचित होना चाहिए था कि राज्य सरकारों ने पराली दहन रोकने के कोई उपाय नहीं कर रखे हैं। उन्हें इससे भी अवगत होना चाहिए कि असल समस्या दिल्ली के पड़ोसी राज्यों और खासकर हरियाणा और पंजाब में जरूरत से ज्यादा धान की खेती होना है। धान की जरूरत से ज्यादा खेती तब हो रही है जब उसमें पानी का कहीं अधिक इस्तेमाल होता है। क्या यह उचित नहीं होगा कि किसानों को पराली न जलाने के एवज में प्रोत्साहन राशि देने के बजाय उन फसलों को उमाने के लिए प्रोत्साहित किया जाए जिनके अवशेष जलाने की जरूरत नहीं रहती ? नि:संदेह यह भी समझा जाना चाहिए कि पराली दहन प्रदूषण का एकमात्र कारण नहीं। पराली दहन रोकने के साथ-साथ दिल्ली और उत्तर भारत के अन्य शहरों में बेहिसाब बढ़ते वाहनों की संख्या को भी थामने की जरूरत है। इसके अतिरिक्त इस पर भी गौर करना चाहिए कि जरूरत है कि यालायात जाम वाहनों के उत्सर्जन को और जहरीला बनाता है। वायु प्रदूषण की एक अन्य बड़ी वजह सड़कों एवं निर्माण स्थलों से उड़ने वाली धूल भी है। आखिर प्रदूषण के इन कारणों का निवारण कब होगा ? यदि सुप्रीम कोर्ट वायुमंडल को दूषित करने वाले सभी कारणों के निवारण पर ध्यान नहीं देता तो उसका सख्त रवैया कारण नहीं होने वाला।

हाथियों की सुध

देश की उत्तर पश्चिमी सीमा में हाथियों के अंतिम पड़ाव उत्तराखंड में मनुष्य और हाथियों के बीच बढ़ता टकराव गंभीर चिंता का सबब बन गया है। राज्य में पशुियाई हाथियों की प्रमुख सैरगाह राजाजी टाइगर रिजर्व से लगे हरिद्वार के पथरी क्षेत्र में आबादी वाले इलाके में घुसे हाथी के हमले में दो लोगों की मौत की घटना इसकी तस्वीर करती है। इससे पहले भी हरिद्वार के आबादी वाले क्षेत्र में हाथी के हमलों की कई घटनाएं सामने आ चुकी हैं। न सिर्फ हरिद्वार बल्कि देहरादून, कोटद्वार के अलावा काबेट रिजर्व से लगे क्षेत्रों में हाथियों के हमले बढ़ रहे हैं। यूं कहीं कि जंगल से लगे मैदानी क्षेत्रों में हाथी खतरे का सबब बन गए हैं तो अतिशयोक्ति नहीं होगी। ऐसे में जरूरी है कि समय रहते इस समस्या के कारणों की पड़ताल कर इसके समाधान की दिशा में प्रभावी कदम उठाए जाएं। समस्या के कारणों की तह में जाएं तो यह बात सामने आती है कि स्वच्छंद आवाजाही के रस्तों में अवरोध की वजह से हाथियों के लिए जंगल में दायरा सिमटा है। उत्तराखंड में यमुना से लेकर शारदा नदी तक का क्षेत्र हाथी बाहुल्य है। शिवालिक एलीफेंट रिजर्व के रूप में घोषित इस क्षेत्र से एक दौर में हाथियों का विचरण यहां से बिहार तक होता था। वन विभाग के अभिलेख इसकी पुष्टि करते हैं। वनत के साथ ये गलियारों भी सिमटने लगे। बिहार तक विचरण की बात छोड़िए, अब तो इन्हें उत्तराखंड में राजाजी टाइगर रिजर्व से काबेट रिजर्व तक आवाजाही में मानवजनित बाधाओं से गुजरना पड़ रहा है। परंपरागत रस्तों में कहीं मानव बस्तियां उग आई हैं तो कहीं सड़क व रेल मार्गों ने दुरवारियां खड़ी की हैं। राजाजी रिजर्व के चीला-मोतीचूर गलियारे को देखें तो इसकी रह में खांड गांव के साथ ही वहां से गुजर रही सड़क व रेल लाइन ने हाथियों की आवाजाही बाधित की है। इसी प्रकार गौला गलियारा भी संकुचित हुआ है। करीब-करीब ऐसी ही स्थिति राज्य में चिन्हित नौ अन्य हाथी गलियारों की है। ऐसे में हाथियों की लंबी प्रवास यात्राएं सिमटी हैं। साथ ही जंगल की देहरी लांघते ही इनका मनुष्य से टकराव हो रहा है। हालांकि, पूर्व में हाथी गलियारों को निर्बाध करने के साथ ही इनकी आवाजाही के नए रस्ते को खुला रखने को कदम उठाने की बात हुई थी, मगर ये मुहिम परवान नहीं चढ़ पाई। हालांकि, यह किसी बड़ी चुनौती से कम नहीं है, मगर अब जबकि पानी फिर से ऊपर बहने लगा है तो इसके लिए गंभीरता से कदम उठाने ही होंगे।

मनुष्य और हाथियों के बीच टकराव को टालने के लिए जरूरी है कि हाथी गलियारें निर्बाध करने के लिए उचित कदम उठाए जाएं

पूर्वाग्रह से पानी होगी मुक्ति

डॉ. नीलम महेंद्र

एक कहलवत है कि समय के साथ बदल जाए, वरना समय बदलाव के लिए अवसर नहीं देता। यह बात एक व्यक्ति से लेकर समाज तक सभी पर लागू होती है। परिवर्तनशील व्यक्ति और समाज ही सही मायनों में प्रगतिशील और विकसित हो सकते हैं। इसके बावजूद कई मोर्चों पर जड़ता कायम है। जैसे महिलाओं को लेकर सोच का स्तर अभी भी नहीं सुधर पाया है। आज महिलाएं विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में अपना योगदान दे रही हैं। फिर भी विडंबना देखिए कि वर्ष 2019 में भी जब नोबेल जैसे पुरस्कार पाने वालों के नाम सामने आते हैं तो महिलाओं को लेकर खराब सोच ही सामने आती है।

वर्ष 1901 से 2018 के बीच भौतिकी के लिए 112 बार नोबेल पुरस्कार दिया गया और तीन बार ही महिलाओं को यह पुरस्कार मिला। ऐसे ही रसायन शास्त्र, चिकित्सा विज्ञान, अर्थशास्त्र के क्षेत्र में भी लगभग यही असंतुलन दिखता है। इनमें 6८8 बार नोबेल दिया गया जिसमें से केवल 21 बार महिलाओं को मिला। अगर विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में कुल नोबेल विजेताओं की बात की जाए तो अब तक

महिलाओं की उपलब्धियों को मान्यता देने के बजाय अवसर उसका श्रेय पुरुष सहकर्मियों को दिया जाना सही नहीं है

892 लोग इससे सम्मानित हुए हैं जिनमें 844 पुरुष और 48 महिलाएं हैं। विभिन्न वैश्विक मोर्चों पर जब नोबेल समानता की बातें होती हैं तो अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर के किसी पुरस्कार के ये आंकड़े निश्चित ही वर्तमान कथित आधुनिक समाज की कड़वी सच्चाई सामने ले आते हैं। अमेरिका की विज्ञान इतिहासकार मारिेट डब्लू रोसिटर ने 1993 में ऐसी सोच को माटिल्डा स्फेक्ट नाम दिया था जब महिला वैज्ञानिकों के प्रति एक पूर्वाग्रह होता है जिसमें उनकी उपलब्धियों को मान्यता देने के बजाय उनके काम का श्रेय उनके पुरुष सहकर्मियों को दे दिया जाता है। सोसाइटी ऑफ स्टैम वीमेन की सह संस्थापक क्लोडिया रैनकिंस का कहना है कि ऐसी कई महिला वैज्ञानिक हुई हैं जिनके काम का श्रेय उनके बजाय उनके पुरुष सहकर्मियों को दिया गया। अगर आप इस कथन



विक्रम सिंह

आखिर जब पुलिस कर्मियों और वकीलों को मिलकर ही काम करना है तब फिर उनके बीच कटुता और टकराव कोई समाधान कैसे हो सकता है?

दिल्ली के तीस हजारी न्यायालय परिसर में पुलिस और वकीलों के बीच हुई झड़प ने सारे देश का ध्यान अपनी ओर खींचा है। आम जनता के लिए यह समझना कठिन है कि इस झगड़े में कौन सही है और कौन गलत, क्योंकि उभय पक्षों द्वारा एक-दूसरे पर आरोप लगाए जा रहे हैं और आरोपों का जवाब प्रत्यारोपों के जरिये दिया जा रहा है। यदि तीस हजारी अदालत परिसर में हुई घटना की समीक्षा करें तो पता चलता है कि एक अधिवक्ता ने न्यायालय परिसर में बंदीघर के समक्ष अनधिकृत क्षेत्र में अपना वाहन खड़ा कर दिया। इसे लेकर पहले तो पुलिस कर्मियों और वकीलों में नोकझोंक हुई, फिर वह उग्र विवाद में बदल गई। कहा जा रहा है कि विवाद बढ़ने पर वकीलों ने अदालत परिसर में मौजूद पुलिस कर्मियों पर हमला कर दिया। वकीलों की मानें तो पुलिस कर्मियों ने उनके एक साथी को लॉकअप में बंद कर दिया था, लेकिन उन पर आरोप है कि उन्होंने लॉकअप तोड़ने का प्रयास तो किया ही, पुलिस कर्मियों को दौड़ा-दौड़ा कर पीटा, सर्विस रिवाल्वर छीनने की कोशिश की, वाहनों में आगजनी की, महिला पुलिस कर्मियों एवं अधिकारियों के साथ अभद्र व्यवहार किया। पुलिस कर्मियों पर भी आरोप है कि उनके द्वारा वकीलों के साथ अभद्र व्यवहार के साथ-साथ मारपीट और छीनाछपटी तो की ही गई, अवांछित बल प्रयोग भी किया गया। एक पुलिस कर्मी को ओर से गोली चलाने की

बात भी सामने आई है। पुलिस का कहना है कि गोली आत्मरक्षा में चलाई गई। वकील-पुलिस के बीच हुए हिंसक टकराव के कुछ वीडियो फुटेज सोशल मीडिया और टीवी चैनलों पर उपलब्ध हैं। इन वीडियो से यह इंगित होता है कि हिंसा पूरी तरह से बेलगाम थी और दोनों ही पक्षों की ओर से हिंसक व्यवहार किया गया। ये वीडियो यह भी संकेत करते हैं कि पीड़ित कौन है और हमलावर कौन?

बौते शनिवार को घटी इस घटना का दिल्ली उच्च न्यायालय ने संज्ञान लिया और रिविार को त्वरित कारवाई करते हुए व्यवस्था दी कि घटना की जांच एक अवकाश प्राप्त न्यायाधीश की अध्यक्षता में गठित समिति करेगी। इस समिति को छह सप्ताह में अपनी आख्या प्रस्तुत करने को कहा गया। उच्च न्यायालय ने घायल अधिवक्ताओं को राहत राशि देने और उनके बयान दर्ज कर प्रथम सूचना सपट दर्ज करने के भी आदेश दिए। इन आदेशों से मामला शांत नहीं हुआ। सोमवार को दिल्ली और साथ ही देश के अन्य शहरों में वकील हड़ताल पर रहे। इस दौरान दिल्ली की कड़कड़भुआ और सांकेत अदालत परिसरों में वकीलों की ओर से उग्रता दिखाई गई। इस उग्रता का शिकार पुलिसकर्मी भी बने। इसके अगले दिन बड़ी संख्या में दिल्ली पुलिस के कर्मी और उनके परिजन पुलिस मुख्यालय के समक्ष आ जुटे। उनका धरना देश शमक चला। जब वह लग रहा था कि पुलिस कर्मी आसानी से धरना खत्म

नई शिक्षा नीति के प्रारूप की खामियां

मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति यानी एनईपी के संशोधित प्रारूप को अंतिम रूप देकर कैबिनेट के सामने रखने की तैयारी में है। उच्च शिक्षा के संदर्भ में देखें तो इस प्रारूप में आगामी चौथी औद्योगिक क्रांति के मद्देनजर एक नॉलेज सोसाइटी के साथ-साथ आर्थिक शक्ति के रूप में भारत की भावी रूपरेखा का खाका है, लेकिन शिक्षा जगत में इसे लेकर विवाद छिड़ा हुआ है। उच्च शिक्षा के संदर्भ में यह प्रारूप महत्वपूर्ण तो है, लेकिन उसमें कुछ खामियां हैं जिन्हें दूर करने की जरूरत है। इनमें एक है एकल कार्यक्रम आधारित संस्थानों की जगह बहु विषयक पाठ्यक्रम चलाने वाले संस्थानों पर जोर। हमारे 51,000 से अधिक उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों में बड़ी तादाद एकल कार्यक्रमों पर केंद्रित है। इस विरुपित शिक्षा तंत्र के रूप में बीउड कॉलेज, इंजीनियरिंग, लॉ या मैनेजमेंट कॉलेज एकल अनुशासन वाले संस्थानों की भरमार है। प्राचीन भारतीय विश्वविद्यालय हों या आधुनिक विश्वविद्यालय उनके अनुभव दर्शाते हैं कि बहु-विषयक शिक्षण-अनुसंधान संस्थान कितने उपयोगी साबित होते हैं।

नई शिक्षा नीति में एक अन्य अभिनव अनुशांसा है शुरुआत से ही शिक्षा-अध्ययन को विभेन्नता की ओर उन्मुख करने के बजाय बहुविषयक स्नातक शिक्षा पर बल देना। अर्थात कला और मानविकी के छात्रों को विज्ञान या व्यावसायिक विषयों के पाठ्यक्रम पढ़ने के अवसर दिए जाएं तो दूसरी तरफ विज्ञान एवं तकनीक, प्रोफेशनल और वोकेशनल स्नातक कार्यक्रमों यहाँ तक कि आइआइटी जैसे इंजीनियरिंग स्कूल में भी मानविकी-कला को एकीकृत किया जाएगा। प्राचीन भारतीय परंपरा में 64 कलाओं के ज्ञान की जो चर्चा होती है वह इसी समन्वित और समग्र ज्ञान को रूपायित करती है। इन 64 कलाओं में संगीत, साहित्य और कला आदि से लेकर इंजीनियरिंग, चिकित्सा एवं गणित जैसे वैज्ञानिक विषयों के साथ-साथ कारीगरी-शिल्पकारी भी शामिल थे। आज अमेरिका-यूरोप में स्नातक स्तर की शिक्षा इस प्राचीन भारतीय पद्धति से बहुत मिलती-जुलती है जिसे वे गर्व से 'लिबरल आर्ट्स' कहते हैं। नवीनतम शोध भी दिखाते हैं कि मानविकी और विज्ञान आदि को एकीकृत करने वाली ऐसी स्नातक शिक्षा के परिणाम अत्यंत सकारात्मक होते हैं जो रचनात्मकता, उच्च स्तरीय चिंतन, समस्या-समाधान की क्षमता, टीम वर्क, संचार कौशल आदि की दृष्टि से अत्यंत सहायक हैं। एनईपी के मसौदे में एक सर्वेक्षण का हवाला है कि औसत



निरंजन कुमार



नई शिक्षा नीति प्रारूप की कुछ कमियों को दूर कर लिया जाए तो यह नए भारत के निर्माण की बुनियाद सिद्ध हो सकता है

वैज्ञानिकों की तुलना में नोबेल पुरस्कार विजेता वैज्ञानिकों में कलात्मक शौक तीन गुना अधिक था। उच्च शिक्षा प्रणाली में सामुदायिक जुड़ाव, समाज सेवा और विकास आदि को शामिल करने का भी एक प्रस्ताव मसौदे में है। शिक्षा के अभिन्न अंग के रूप में छात्रों को स्थानीय उद्योग और विशेषज्ञों के साथ इंटरैक्शिव के अवसर प्रदान किए जाएंगे ताकि छात्र सैद्धांतिक के साथ ही व्यावहारिक ज्ञान से भी लेने हों सके ताकि उनकी उत्पादकता और क्षमता में सुधार हो। पश्चिमी देशों में यह व्यवस्था कायम है।

प्रारूप की एक सिफारिश है कि विभिन्न उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों के स्नातक कार्यक्रमों में दाखिले के लिए अलग-अलग प्रवेश परीक्षाओं को खत्म करके नेशनल टैरेंटिंग एजेंसी (एनटीए) के माध्यम से एक परीक्षा हो। इससे विद्यार्थियों को अलग-अलग प्रवेश परीक्षाओं के बोझ से मुक्ति मिलेगी जिससे समय, धन और ऊर्जा तीनों की ही बचत होगी, लेकिन यहाँ यह भी जरूरी है कि प्रवेश में 12वीं परीक्षा के अंकों की भी अनदेखी न हो। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि एनटीए यह-विश्लेषी प्रारूप में परीक्षा लेगा जबकि 12वीं की परीक्षा में बोध पर आधारित सब्जेक्टिव प्रश्न भी होते हैं। ऐसे में संतुलित दृष्टि यही होगी कि प्रवेश में दोनों के अंकों को शामिल किया जाए। प्रारूप का एक बिंदु थोड़ा भ्रामक है कि स्नातक की डिग्री



अवधेश राजपूत

नहीं करने वाले तब उन्होंने पुलिस आयुक्त के व्यक्तिगत आग्रह पर धरना खत्म कर दिया। यदि दोनों पक्ष के अनुभवी लोगों ने समय रहते कारवाई की होती तो उक्त अभिय प्रसंगों से बचा जा सकता था। तीस हजारी न्यायालय अत्यंत संवेदनशील स्थल है। यदि पुलिस कर्मियों ने वहां किसी अधिवक्ता को अनुचित तरीके से वाहन खड़ा करने से रोका तो इसमें कुछ भी गलत नहीं। अदालत परिसर में पुलिस अधिवक्ताओं की सुरक्षा के लिए ही तैनात की जाती है। अगर उन पुलिस कर्मियों की जगह भी होता तो वही करता जो उन्होंने किया। यदि पुलिस पर हमला होता है तो उसे समुचित बल प्रयोग करने का अधिकार है।

अगर प्रतिष्ठित अधिवक्ता जैसे आर्यमन सुंदरम, प्रशांत भूषण, महेश जेटठानी, सोली सोराबजी आदि वह कह रहे हैं कि तीस हजारी की घटना में वकीलों की गलती लगती है तो इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती। इसी के साथ इसकी भी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि दिल्ली पुलिस कर्मी सड़कों पर उतर आए। वे शायद इसलिए सड़क पर उतरे, क्योंकि उनके मन में यह भाव घर कर गया कि पिटे

भी वही और निलंबन का शिकार भी वही बने। वे संभवतः इससे भी आहत थे कि पुलिस नहीं पूछी गई। जो भी हो, परिस्थितियां कुछ भी हों, धरना-प्रदर्शन एवं आंदोलनात्मक कार्रवाई किसी भी अनुशासित बल को शोभा नहीं देता। ऐसा आचरण एक तरह की अनुशासनहीनता है। वकीलों को भी यह समझना होगा कि हर समस्या का समाधान हड़ताल नहीं है।

यह उचित नहीं कि जब देश के कई वरिष्ठ अधिवक्ता नीर-क्षीर विवेक से अपनी बात कह रहे हैं तो वही पुलिस को डराने वाली है। समझना कठिन है कि उनकी ओर से दिल्ली पुलिस को आंदोलन के लिए उकसाने का काम क्यों किया गया? नि:संदेह दिल्ली पुलिस से वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों का रवैया जुटिहीन नहीं कहा जा सकता। उन्हें अपने पुलिस कर्मियों को भरोसे में लेकर यह विश्वास दिलाना चाहिए था कि उनके साथ नाइंसाफी नहीं होने दी जाएगी और

हर हाल में उनके मान-मर्यादा की रक्षा की जाएगी। शायद ऐसा नहीं हुआ और इसीलिए पुलिस कर्मी आंदोलित हो उठे। उचित तो यह होता कि वकीलों और पुलिस के बीच मारपीट के बाद पुलिस अधिकारियों की ओर से सारी स्थिति स्पष्ट की जाती और पुलिस कर्मियों के लिए आवश्यक दिशा-निर्देश जारी किए जाते। अगर पुलिस अधिकारियों और पुलिस कर्मियों के बीच संवाद होता रहता तो कदाचित पुलिस के सड़क पर उतरने की नैबत नहीं आती।

वकील-पुलिस के बीच तनातनी का निदान खुद को सही और दूसरे को गलत ठहराने से नहीं होने वाला। दोनों का और साथ ही देश का काम एक-दूसरे के सहयोग के बगैर नहीं चल सकता। जब दोनों को मिलकर ही काम करना है तब बैर भाव बढ़ाने वाला टकराव कोई समाधान नहीं हो सकता। बेहतर हो कि दोनों पक्ष जांच सपट की प्रतीक्षा करें और समाज को यह संदेश दें कि दोनों मिलकर काम करने को तैयार हैं। पुलिस अधिकारियों को चाहिए कि वे अधिवक्ताओं से समन्वय स्थापित करें। ऐसी किसी पहल में अधिवक्ताओं का सहयोग आवश्यक है। एक-दूसरे को झुकरने और अपनी बात मनवाने वाला रवैया न्यायसंगत नहीं। एक समय पुलिस विभाग के वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों और अधिवक्ता संगठनों के बीच नियमित बैठकें होती थीं। इन बैठकों में पारस्परिक समस्याओं का निस्तारण होता था। इस परंपरा को नए सिरे से स्थापित और पुष्ट किया जाना चाहिए। इससे भी जरूरी यह है कि दोनों पक्ष अपने अहं को तिलांजलि दें और इस पर गौर करें कि उनके बीच टकराव से दोनों की ही प्रतिष्ठा पर आंच आ रही है। कानून के शासन की रक्षा तभी हो सकती है जब कानून के रक्षक और कानून के सहायक एक-दूसरे के सहयोगी बनें।

(लेखक उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस के महानिदेशक रहे हैं) response@jagran.com



यह मनुष्य की स्वाभाविक प्रवृत्ति रही है कि वह दूसरे पर वर्चस्व स्थापित करना चाहता है। अक्सर देखा गया है कि यह व्यवहार मनुष्य के भीतर स्वाभाविक रूप से अपने आसपास की गतिविधियों को देखते ही स्वतः-विकसित होने लगता है। यह व्यवहार मनुष्य के दिमाग में इस कदर समाहित हो जाता है कि उसमें आजीवन इसकी उपस्थिति रहती है। सकारात्मक नजरिये से यह प्रवृत्ति के लिए आवश्यक है, क्योंकि स्थायित्व और संतुलन का भाव कहीं न कहीं अकमंथ्यता और शून्यता को आमंत्रित करता है तो वहीं दूसरे नजरिये से देखें तो यह ही वर्चस्ववादी व्यवहार समाज में वैमनस्य को जन्म देता है, इसी कारण आधुनिक प्रगतिशील युग में आपसी वैमनस्यता का स्तर बढ़ता जा रहा है। इसका दूसरा कारण मनुष्य के अंदर लोभ की प्रवृत्ति का होना है। मानव उत्पत्ति की शुरुआत से देखें तो वर्चस्व का भाव वहीं से शुरु हो चुका था।

वैमनस्य का दूसरा कारण लोभ है। बेहतर पाने का सपना हर मनुष्य में विद्यमान रहता है और वह बेहतर की चाह में अपने आसपास की बंधी सीमा को तोड़ता है। यह इसलिए होता है, क्योंकि लोभ की प्रवृत्ति मनुष्य को घेर लेती है। बेहतर पाने के सपने और लोभ दोनों समानांतर चलते हैं। लोभी मनुष्य के अंदर 'सब्र' नामक बंधन टूट जाता है और वह मानव सब्र के टुकटुक पर सारे सामाजिक व मानवीय बंधनों को भी टाट कर रखकर अपने हितों की पूर्ति करता है। एक बार इस महत्वाकांक्षा रूपी जाल में व्यक्ति के फंसने के बाद उसके अंदर स्वाभाविक रूप से अधिक से अधिक हासिल करने की प्रवृत्ति उत्पन्न हो जाती है जो तुष्णा में परिणत होकर बुद्धि को कुंठित कर देती है। ऐसे में सामाजिक संबंधों और हितों का बिखराव समाज में कटुता लाता है और यही स्थिति खतरनाक होती है, क्योंकि समाज में लोभ की अधिकता वर्चस्व को जनक होती है और इसी वर्चस्व से 'वैमनस्य' पैदा होता है। आपसी वैमनस्य की बढ़ती प्रवृत्ति से निदान के लिए संतुलित रूप से निश्चित और सीमित दायरे में हितों की पूर्ति ही एकमात्र उपाय है।

शिवाशु राय

मेलबाक्स

कुछ दिन हाय-तौबा तथा प्रदूषण की दुहई देने के बाद लोग फिर इस भयंकर जहर को भूल जाते हैं।दिन-प्रतिदिन बढ़ते वाहनों, कारखाने आदि से निकलने वाले जहरीले धुएँ से शहर ही नहीं, गांव-देहात भी अस्तुंते नहीं रहे हैं।निरंतर पेड़ों की कटाई के कारण जल स्तर भी घट रहा है और बरसात बहुत कम होती है। जिस स्थान पर जंगल हुआ करते थे आज वहां भव्य इमारतें नजर आती हैं। मनुष्य के साथ-साथ पशु-पक्षियों पर भी इस बढ़ते प्रदूषण का प्रभाव पड़ रहा है। लोगों को त्वचा के साथ कैंसर आदि ऐसी अनेकों लाइलाज भयंकर बीमारी अपना शिकार बना रही है, परंतु इसकी जिम्मेदारी हम स्वयं नहीं लेकर इसका दोष दूसरों पर डलते रहते हैं। अभी भी समय रहते हम सभी को इस भयंकर समस्या से निपटने का प्रयास कर लेना चाहिए तभी जीवन बचाया जा सकता है।इसका एकमात्र उपाय अधिक से अधिक पौधारोपण ही इस समस्या का पूर्णतः हल है। हम सभी को वाहनों का कम उपयोग, स्वच्छता, जल संरक्षण आदि के साथ- साथ उन सभी बातों का ध्यान देना होगा जो प्रकृति के हितोपकार हैं। पर्यावरण को नुकसान पहुंचाने वाले लोगों पर सख्त कार्रवाई की जानी चाहिए।

आचार्य राम कुमार बघेल, पर्यावरण सचेतक, पलवल

नुकसान की भरपाई

दिल्ली की तीस हजारी कोर्ट में पुलिस-वकीलों के बीच जो झड़प हुई, उसके बाद जिस तरह से वाहनों को जलाया व तोड़फोड़ की गई, उसके लिए जांच के बाद जिम्मेदारी तय की जानी चाहिए, जो संपत्ति का नुकसान हुआ है, उनका आकलन कर, उसकी भरपाई दोगुणों की चत-अचल

संपत्ति से की जानी चाहिए। देश में हर किसी ने छोटे-मोटे विवादों के बाद सरकारी संपत्ति को नुकसान पहुंचाना खेल समझ लिया है। सरकार को अब ऐसे मामलों में सख्त कदम उठाना चाहिए।
वोट की राजनीति आड़े नहीं आनी चाहिए।
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प्रदूषण पर आरोप-प्रत्यारोप

दिल्ली-एनसीआर में गांजिाबवाद सबसे प्रदूषित शहर है। इसका कारण लोनी के पास बसे मंडोला गांव के आसपास चोरी छिपे कुछ लोग हैं। इनका डाल रहे हैं और उसे जला भी दे रहे हैं। गाजीपुर, दिल्ली के कूड़ाघर पर आज 30 साल बाद भी कचरा डाला जा रहा है, जबकि कई साल पहले उसकी कूड़ा डालने को मियाद खत्म हो गई है। दिल्ली की उत्तर पश्चिमी सीमा पर भलख्वा में जीटी कनराल रोड मोड़ पर भी एक बहुत बड़ा कचरे का ढेर है। इन सबसे निकलने वाली खतरनाक जहरीली गैसें दिल्ली और एनसीआर का दम घोट रही हैं, पर हम कुछ करने के बजाय पराली जलाने वाले किसानों के सिर डीकरा फोड़ रहे हैं।

सतीश त्यागी काकड़ा, इंदिरापुरम, गांजिाबवाद

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

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नाकामी का धुआं

दिल्ली और आसपास के इलाकों में हवा की हालत जानलेवा होने की ओर बढ़ने के बावजूद इसके फिलहाल पहचाने गए कारणों से निपटने को लेकर संबंधित सरकारें जिस स्तर की अनदेखी बरत रही हैं, उससे यही लगता है कि उन्हें इस बेहद गंभीर संकट की कोई फिक्र नहीं है! खबरों के मुताबिक पंजाब में मंगलवार को खेतों में पराली जलाने की इस मौसम की सबसे ज्यादा घटनाएं दर्ज की गईं। वहां के किसानों ने पराली जलाने पर प्रतिबंध के बावजूद साढ़े छह हजार से ज्यादा जगहों पर अपने खेतों में पड़े फसल के अवशेषों के निपटान के लिए उनमें आग लगाई। नतीजतन, पिछले एक-दो दिनों में वायु की गुणवत्ता में थोड़ा सुधार हुआ आ ही था कि इतने बड़े पैमाने पर पराली जलाने के बाद फिर उसके बिगड़ने की आशंका जताई जा रही है। यह स्थिति तब है जब एक दिन पहले ही सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कहा था कि पराली जलाने और उसकी वजह से प्रदूषण पैदा करने वालों से किसी भी तरह की सहानुभूति नहीं हो सकती। बुधवार को एक बार फिर शीर्ष अदालत ने केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों को फटकार लगाते हुए कहा कि आप पूरी तरह नाकाम रहे हैं; अब समय आ गया है जब उन अधिकारियों को दंडित किया जाए, जिन्हें किसानों को पराली जलाने से रोकने की जिम्मेदारी दी गई थी।

दरअसल, पिछले कुछ सालों में धान की फसल तैयार होने और उसके अवशेष के रूप में पराली से निजात पाने की अवधि जिस तरह बदली है, उससे उपजी समस्या पर गौर करने के बजाय सरकारों ने इसकी व्यापक अनदेखी की। अगर फसल तैयार होने और कटने का समय सिमटा है और हवा के बहाव की वजह से पराली जलाना अब एक बड़ी समस्या बन गया है तो इसकी पहचान और विश्लेषण कर इसके हल का रास्ता निकालना किसकी जवाबदेही है? किसानों के सामने विकल्पों का अभाव पराली जलाने को उनकी मजबूरी बनाता है तो क्या सरकार को किसी ठोस योजना पर काम नहीं करना चाहिए, ताकि इस मुश्किल का सामना आसानी से किया जा सके? सवाल है कि अगर कई सालों से समस्या की शकल कमोबेश एक ही तरह की बनी हुई है तो संबंधित राज्यों की सरकारों ने इसके हल के लिए उचित कदम क्यों नहीं उठाए? आज अगर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के सामने इन सरकारों को फटकार लगाने की नौबत आ गई है तो इसमें क्या अस्वाभाविक है?

सही है कि आमतौर पर हल साल इस मौसम में हवा में प्रदूषण की समस्या गहराती है और इसके कई कारक होते हैं। लेकिन पिछले कुछ सालों से लगातार पंजाब और हरियाणा में बड़े दायरे में खेतों में पड़े फसलों के अवशेषों के निपटान का कोई आसान विकल्प नहीं होने की वजह से वहां के किसान आग लगा कर उसे नष्ट करते हैं, ताकि नई फसल के लिए खेत खाली हो सके। लेकिन इस क्रम में पराली में लगी आग से व्यापक पैमाने पर जो धुआं उठता है, वह आसपास के राज्यों की हवा को बुरी तरह प्रभावित करता है। खासतौर पर हवा का रुख दिल्ली की ओर होने की वजह से राजधानी में प्रदूषण की समस्या बेहद खतरनाक हो जाती है और लोगों के लिए सामान्य रूप से सांस लेना तक दूषार हो जाता है। हालांकि ऐसा नहीं है कि दिल्ली या समूचे एनसीटीआर में व्यापक प्रदूषण के संकट के लिए अकेले पराली जिम्मेदार है। वाहनों, एयरकंडीशनर आदि से निकलने वाले कार्बन की वजह से हवा बिगड़ने के तथ्य पराली के प्रदूषण के शोर में दब जाते हैं। जरूरत इस बात की है कि इस गंभीर संकट की अनदेखी के बजाय एक व्यापक कार्ययोजना तैयार हो और उस पर शिदत से अमल हो।

प्याज का संकट

प्याज के दाम एक बार फिर सौ रुपए किलो से ऊपर निकल गए हैं। सिर्फ राजधानी दिल्ली ही नहीं, कई शहरों में इन दिनों प्याज लोगों के आंसू निकाल रहा है। सवा-डेढ़ महीने पहले भी प्याज अस्सी-नब्बे रुपए किलो तक बिका था। तब दाम काबू करने के लिए राज्यों और केंद्र सरकार तक ने कई कदम उठाने के वादे-दावे किए गए थे। कुछ दिन तो राहत मिली, लेकिन फिर से प्याज के दाम सौ रुपए से भी ऊपर चले गए। इसका मतलब है कि इस कारोबार पर सरकार की कोई लगाम नहीं है और व्यापारी अपने हिसाब से चल रहे हैं। यह कोई एकाध साल की बात भी नहीं है, बल्कि साल में एक-दो बार ऐसा झटका गरीब की जेब पर लग ही जाता है। दिल्ली की मंडियों में पिछले एक हफ्ते के दौरान प्याज के दामों में पैंतालीस फीसद से ज्यादा की बढ़ोतरी हुई है और थोक भाव अस्सी रुपए तक जा पहुंचा। इसका असर यह हुआ कि मंडियों से बाजार तक पहुंचने में खुदरा भाव सौ रुपए किलो तक पहुंच गया। यह चिंता और परेशानी की बात ज्यादा इसलिए है कि प्याज रोजमर्रा के इस्तेमाल की चीज है। लेकिन सरकारें बेफिक्र हैं, उन्हें प्याज के दाम बढ़ने से कोई मतलब नहीं है। हालत यह है कि इस साल प्याज के दाम पिछले चार साल में सबसे ज्यादा चढ़े हैं।

आखिर क्या कारण है कि महीने-दो महीने भी नहीं गुजरते और प्याज के दाम आसमान चू जते हैं? मोटे तौर पर तो इसे प्याज की फसल से जोड़ कर देखा जाता है। अभी तात्कालिक कारण यह बताया जा रहा है कि बेमौसम की बारिश से प्याज की फसल पर बुरा असर पड़ा है, इसलिए जिन राज्यों से समय पर मंडियों में प्याज पहुंचना था, वह पहुंच नहीं पाया और अचानक से कमी हो गई और दाम चढ़ गए। राजस्थान, मध्यप्रदेश, महाराष्ट्र, कर्नाटक से दिल्ली सहित कई शहरों में प्याज की भारी मात्रा में आपूर्ति होती है। लेकिन इन दिनों दिल्ली सहित कई शहरों की मंडियों में प्याज की आवक चालीस-पचास फीसद तक घट गई है। दीपावली के महीने भर पहले भी प्याज ने इसी तरह रुलाया था। एशिया की सबसे बड़ी प्याज मंडी लासलगांव (महाराष्ट्र) में तब भी प्याज के दाम साठ रुपए किलो बिक रहा था और आज भी यही है। लेकिन अब तो खुदरा भावों ने डेढ़ महीने पहले का रिकार्ड तोड़ डाला है।

प्याज के बढ़ते दामों का संकट आम लोगों के लिए है, सरकार के लिए नहीं। व्यापारी इसे कुछ ही समय का संकट बना रहे हैं। जबकि हकीकत यह है कि जब प्याज की फसल खराब होती है तो इसका सबसे ज्यादा फायदा जमाखोर उठाते हैं, वे अपना स्टॉक मनमानी कीमत पर निकालते हैं और सीधे खुदरा बाजार में बेचते हैं। लेकिन सरकार जमाखोरों पर अंकुश कभी नहीं लगा पाती। एकाध-दो व्यापारियों पर छापे मार कर कार्रवाई की औपचारिकता कर दी जाती है। यह सिलसिला हर साल का है। दिल्ली में हालांकि सरकार ने सरकारी बिक्री केंद्रों पर सस्ता प्याज मिलने के दावे किए हैं, लेकिन सच्चाई यह है कि इन केंद्रों पर प्याज है नहीं। लोग खाली हाथ लौट रहे हैं। सवाल यह है कि जब मालूम है कि प्याज का संकट कभी भी खड़ा हो सकता है तो इस समस्या र-निपटने के उपाय पहले से क्यों नहीं किए जाते? क्यों राज्य सरकारों और उपभोक्ता मामलों के मंत्रालय के बीच तालमेल नहीं है? तब प्याज का जमा स्टॉक कहां चला जाता है? अगर ऐसे संकट से निपटने के लिए पहले से तैयारी हो तो लोगों के आंसू तो नहीं निकलें!

कल्पमेधा

डॉक्टर मृत्यु तक विद्यार्थी रहता है और जब वह विद्या प्राप्त करने की इच्छा छोड़ देता है तो उसकी मृत्यु समझो।

– **लार्ड डानस**

ब्रह्मदीप अलूने

ब्रह्मदीप अलूने

चीन अफगानिस्तान में तालिबान के प्रभाव को लेकर ज्यादा आशंकित है और ऐसे में वह तालिबान के सहारे आइएस को इस इलाके से खदेड़ कर अपने सीमावर्ती प्रांत की शांति को सुनिश्चित करना चाहता है। चीन को डर है कि आतंकी गतिविधियां बढ़ने से इस क्षेत्र में खतरा पैदा हो सकता है। इसीलिए, चीन पिछले कुछ सालों में अफगानिस्तान को सुरक्षा के नाम पर सात करोड़ डालर से ज्यादा की रकम दे चुका है।

अफगानिस्तान

अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति में कूटनीति को शांति का साधन माना जाता है। कूटनीति ही तर्क, समझौते, वार्ता और लेनदेन की भावना के आधार पर संघर्षों को रोकती है। चीन की कूटनीति बेहद महत्वाकांक्षी होकर भी यथार्थवादी है। अफगानिस्तान में खूनी जंग को रोकने के लिए तालिबान से बातचीत के चीन के प्रयास उसकी यथार्थवादी विदेश नीति को प्रतिबिंबित करते है। अफगानिस्तान से अमेरिकी सेना की वापसी की कवायद के बीच चीन ने बेहद रणनीतिक तरीके से इस मध्य एशियाई देश में शांति के सबसे बड़े अवरोधक तालिबान को बातचीत की मेज पर लाने में गहरी दिलचस्पी दिखाई है। एक ओर भारत तालिबान के अस्तित्व को नकारता रहा है, तो दूसरी ओर अफगानिस्तान की सरकार तालिबान को देश की वैधानिक व्यवस्था के लिए खतरा बताती है और अमेरिका तालिबान को उखाड़ फेंकने के लिए प्रतिबद्धता दिखाता रहा है। ऐसे में तालिबान को संरक्षण की पाकिस्तान की नीति को चीन द्वारा अपनी कूटनीति का हिस्सा बना लेना इस पूरे महाद्वीप के लिए

तालिबान पर चीन का दांव

रणनीतिक रूप से बेहद महत्वपूर्ण हो सकता है।

दरअसल, अफगानिस्तान की कबायली संस्कृति मध्य एशिया में बसने वाले कई नृजातीय समूहों के लिए मुफ्रीद है। पशतून, उज्बेक, ताजिक और हजारा जैसे कबीलों का सांस्कृतिक समन्वय पामीर के पठार से चीन के शिनजियांग प्रांत तक नजर आता है और साम्यवादी चीन के लिए यही स्थिति मुश्किल पैदा करती रही है। चीनी नेताओं का मानना है कि एशिया की समस्त समस्याओं के हल की कुंजी उनके पास है, इसलिए एशिया की किसी भी समस्या का समाधान उसके बिना संभव नहीं है। चीन अपनी विदेश नीति का संचालन बेहद सावधानी से करता है, जिसमें छद्म रूप धारण करके छल का उपयोग किया जाता है। तालिबान को बातचीत की मेज पर लाकर चीन विश्व शांति की दिशा में अपना प्रयास दिखाना चाहता है, लेकिन उसकी नजरों में उसका उत्तर-पश्चिम का अशांत शिनजियांग प्रांत है। यहां रहने वाले उद्गार मुसलमान चीन के खिलाफ पृथकतावादी आंदोलन चला रहे है। ‘इस्ट तुर्किस्तान इस्लामिक मूवमेंट’ का मकसद चीन से अलग होना है। यह पृथकतावादी आंदोलन 1949 की स्थिति बहाल करना चाहता है और स्वतंत्र पूर्वी तुर्किस्तान को ही स्वीकार करता है। पूर्वी तुर्किस्तान ही चीन प्रशासित शिनजियांग है। शिनजियांग को एक अलग राष्ट्र के तौर पर कुछ समय के लिए पहचान मिली थी, लेकिन उसी साल इसे चीन का हिस्सा बना दिया गया। इस प्रांत में आंतरिक अशांति इतनी ज्यादा है कि इस साल चीन ने जुलाई में एक श्वेत पत्र जारी किया था। इसमें कहा गया कि यह अस्थिर प्रांत देश का ‘अविभाज्य’ हिस्सा है और यह कभी पूर्वी तुर्किस्तान नहीं रहा, जैसा कि अलगाववादी दावा करते हैं।

शिनजियांग की सहरेद दक्षिण में तिब्बत और भारत, पूर्व में मंगोलिया, उत्तर में रूस और पश्चिम में कजाकिस्तान, किर्गिजस्तान, ताजिकिस्तान, अफगानिस्तान और पाकिस्तान से मिलती है। चीन का सबसे बड़ा संकट शिनजियांग की पश्चिम की वह सीमा है जो मुसलिम देशों से मिलती है और यही कारण है कि चीन अफगानिस्तान में सैन्य अड्डा भी बनाना चाहता है। इसके लिए दोनों देशों के बीच पिछले साल से ही बातचीत शुरू हो चुकी है। चीन वे सैन्य शिविर दूरदराज के पहाड़ी इलाके वाखान कॉरिडोर के पास बनाना चाहता है। यहां पर चीन की सीमा अफगानिस्तान से मिलती है। चीन इस इलाके को प्रभाव में लेकर तुर्किस्तान आंदोलन के प्रभाव को खत्म करना चाहता है। चीन का विश्वास है कि उद्गार आतंकी इसी गलियारे से उसके शिनजियांग प्रांत में घुसते है। उज्बेक, तुर्कमान और पारसी भाषा बोलने वाले अफगान

चीन के वीगर मुसलमानों से आसानी से जुड़ जाते है। पिछले कुछ समय से अफगानिस्तान में आइएस के उभार से चीन के अशांत शिनजियांग में आंतरिक अशांति और ज्यादा बिगड़ने का खतरा उत्पन्न हो गया है।

जनवरी 2015 में इस्लामिक स्टेट (आइएस) ने अपनी खुरासान शाखा स्थापित की थी। खुरासान एक पुराना नाम है जिसके दायरे में अफगानिस्तान और आसपास का इलाका आता है। आइएस ने अरब जगत से बाहर अपने पैर पसारने की कोशिशों के तहत बहुत कम समय में अफगानिस्तान के कम से कम पांच प्रांतों- हेलमंद, जाबुल, फराह, लोगार और नंगरहार में अपनी मौजूदगी का अहसास कराया है। आइएस अफगान तालिबान लड़ाकों को खदेड़ना चाहता है और यह भी चाहता है कि तालिबान-अलकायदा गठबंधन में शामिल लड़ाके उसका हाथ थाम लें। लेकिन स्थानीय समर्थन और राजनीतिक बल हासिल करने की इस कवायद में आइएस को



तालिबान से जबदस्त संघर्ष करना पड़ रहा है।

दूसरी ओर, दक्षिण और मध्य एशियाई देशों में सक्रिय आइएस से इस क्षेत्र में सहानुभूति रखने वाले कट्टरपंथी मौजूद है। इस क्षेत्र के विभिन्न देशों अफगानिस्तान, बांग्लादेश, भारत, कजाखस्तान, किर्गिजस्तान, पाकिस्तान, ताजिकिस्तान, तुकमैनिस्तान,उज्बेकिस्तान और शिनजियांग से हजारों लड़ाके आइएस के समर्थन में लड़ने के लिए सीरिया और इराक जा चुके हैं। ऐसे में आइएस ने उत्तरी अफगानिस्तान में अपने पैर जमाने की कोशिशें जारी रखी हैं, ताकि वह मध्य एशिया, चेचन और चीनी वीगर उग्रवादियों से गठजोड़ कर सके। रूस भी अपनी रणनीति में बदलाव करके पूर्वी अफगानिस्तान में आइएस के उदय को रोकने के लिए तालिबान की तरफ हाथ बढ़ा रहा है, क्योंकि रूस को डर है कि मध्य एशिया से होते हुए इस्लामिक चरमपंथी हिंसा कहीं उस तक न पहुंच जाए।

पेड़ का जीवन

हैं, हम उन्हें इतनी बेदर्दी से काट देते हैं !

मैंने हाल ही में झारखंड के रांची के पास उरगा–हाटी मार्ग और उत्तर प्रदेश में कटघोरा–अंबिकापुर में विशाल वृक्षों को सड़क निर्माण में खेत होते देखा है। चार लेन सड़क निर्माण के नाम पर छत्तीसगढ़ में सैकड़ों वृक्षों को बेहमी से काट दिया गया। छत्तीसगढ़ बौद्धिक सामाजिक और संवेदनशील लोगों का राज्य माना जाता है। मगर यह देख–सुन कर कोपत होती है कि पेड़ों को काटे जाने का कहीं कोई विरोध नहीं हुआ। मैं जब

इस मार्ग पर निकलता और पेड़ों को चर्मोलेज देखता तो हृदय हाहाकार करने लगता... आंखों में आंसू भर आते। सत्ता कितनी असंवेदनशील है, यह सोच मन में जुगुप्सा भर आती है। लगता है जब कहीं कोई रोशनी नहीं है, अधियारा फैला है। मन में सवाल उठता है कि तब तुम क्यों आगे नहीं आते ? मैं या मुझ जैसे लोग हों जो इसका प्रतिकार पुरजोर शब्दों में करें, लिखें या फिर आंदोलन करें। पेड़ काटा जाए तो ‘चिपको आंदोलन’ के प्रणेता से प्रेरणा लेकर विरोध करें, उसे बचाने के लिए लिपट जाएं। मगर ऐसा कोई नहीं है। मैं भी नहीं कर सका... बस देखाता रहा... खुद को अपराधी महसूस करते हुए। हां, तब सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान के लिए मुंह से बरबस

दुनिया मेरे आगे

महाराष्ट्र के मुंबई के पास आरे में लोगों ने पेड़ों को काटे जाने का जिस तरह विरोध किया, वह मेरे लिए आश्चरित की खबर रही। ये पेड़ जो हमारे जीवन के लिए अपरिहार्य हैं, समाचार माध्यमों में कभी–कभार मुख्य मुद्दा बनते रहते हैं। मगर सच यह है कि एक–दो अपवादों को छोड़ कर हमारे आसपास वृक्ष काटे जा रहे हैं। जंगल में कीमती लकड़ियों के लिए तस्कर वन माफिया बदस्तूर अपना काम कर रहा है। कई बार खुद वन कर्मी इन्हें संरक्षण देते हैं। हम घर के आसपास लगे वृक्षों को अपनी क्षुद्र आवश्यकता और स्वार्थ के कारण काट देते हैं। ऐसे में विवेकशील संवेदना से भरपूर चंद लोग ही हैं जो इस मसले पर

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जिस दिन धर्मवीर भारती का निधन हुआ था, उसी रात उनके घर के निकट एक बड़े वृक्ष का बड़ा हिस्सा बिना तुफान, पानी, हवाओं के टूट कर गिर पड़ा था। भारती जी ने घर पर जाने कितने पौधे, वृक्ष लगा रखे थे और उनसे बतियाते रहते थे।

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आह जरूर निकली थी! हिंदी के बड़े संपादक रहे धर्मवीर भारती की पत्नी पुष्पा भारती ने एक करुण लेख लिखा था। उसमें उन्होंने बताया था कि कैसे जिस दिन धर्मवीर भारती का निधन हुआ था, उसी रात उनके घर के निकट एक बड़े वृक्ष का बड़ा हिस्सा बिना तुफान, पानी, हवाओं के टूट कर गिर पड़ा था। भारती जी ने घर पर जाने कितने पौधे, वृक्ष लगा रखे थे और उनसे बतियाते रहते थे।

वृक्षों के हमारे लिए जरूरी होने के जाने कितने तर्क हैं। यह हम अक्सर बताते रहते हैं। हमारा संकट है कि हमारे जीवन में पेड़ों को काटे जाने का जिस तरह विरोध किया, वह मेरे लिए आश्चरित की खबर रही। ये पेड़ जो हमारे जीवन के लिए अपरिहार्य हैं, समाचार माध्यमों में कभी–कभार मुख्य मुद्दा बनते रहते हैं। मगर सच यह है कि एक–दो अपवादों को छोड़ कर हमारे आसपास वृक्ष काटे जा रहे हैं। जंगल में कीमती लकड़ियों के लिए तस्कर वन माफिया बदस्तूर अपना काम कर रहा है। कई बार खुद वन कर्मी इन्हें संरक्षण देते हैं। हम घर के आसपास लगे वृक्षों को अपनी क्षुद्र आवश्यकता और स्वार्थ के कारण काट देते हैं। ऐसे में विवेकशील संवेदना से भरपूर चंद लोग ही हैं जो इस मसले पर

यही डर चीन को भी है। चीन वीगरो को आतंकवादी गतिविधियों में संलिप्त बताता है। उसका कहना है कि वीगर अफगानिस्तान जाकर आतंकी प्रशिक्षण लेते हैं और शिनजियांग में अशांति फैलाते हैं। गौरतलब है कि अफगानिस्तान पर हमले के दौरान अमेरिका सेना ने कुछ वीगरो को पकड़ा था। बाद में उन्हें गुआंतानामो खाड़ी जेल में बंदी बना कर रखा गया। चीन अमेरिका में 9/11 के हमले का सहारा लेकर वीगर अलगाववादियों को अधिकाधिक रूप से अलकायदा और आइएस का सहयोगी सिद्ध करने की कोशिश करता रहा है।

चीन अफगानिस्तान में तालिबान के प्रभाव को लेकर ज्यादा आशंकित है और ऐसे में वह तालिबान के सहारे आइएस को इस इलाके से खदेड़ कर अपने सीमावर्ती प्रांत की शांति को सुनिश्चित करना चाहता है। चीन को डर है कि आतंकी गतिविधियां बढ़ने से इस क्षेत्र में खतरा पैदा हो सकता है। इसीलिए, चीन पिछले कुछ सालों में

अफगानिस्तान को सुरक्षा के नाम पर सात करोड़ डालर से ज्यादा की रकम दे चुका है। इतना ही नहीं, चीन अफगानिस्तान को चीवन अरब डालर के चीन–पाकिस्तान आर्थिक गलियारे में शामिल करने के संकेत भी दे चुका है। चीन तालिबान को सहयोग करके इस समूचे इलाके में रहस्यमय वातावरण तैयार कर समस्या को और जटिल बना सकता है। चीन की विदेश नीति का सैद्धांतिक पक्ष राष्ट्रीय हित और राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा है। चीन चाहता है कि एशिया से सभी पश्चिमी शक्तियों को निकाल दिया जाए। दूसरी महत्वपूर्ण बात यह भी है कि वह भारत को इस क्षेत्र में शक्तिशाली होने से रोकना है। चीन अपने लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करने के लिए जिन साधनों और तरीकों का प्रयोग करता है, वे अत्यंत खतरनाक है।

भारत–ईरान और अफगानिस्तान सहयोग भी पाकिस्तान और चीन के लिए रणनीतिक चिंता का कारण है। चाबहार और उरदर दक्षिण पारगमन गलियारें का उद्देश्य अफगानिस्तान और मध्य एशिया क्षेत्र के देशों के साथ संपर्क बढ़ाना है। बदलते दौर में सामरिक और सुरक्षा प्राथमिकताएं बदली हैं। तालिबान के परंपरागत शत्रु रूस ने तालिबान से वार्ता की है, यहां तक कि रूस पर तालिबान को आइएस से लड़ने के लिए हथियार देने के भी आरोप लगे है। ईरान, रूस, अमेरिका, चीन और उज्बेकिस्तान जैसे देश भी तालिबान से बात कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में भारत के लिए परंपरागत अफगान नीति से आगे बढ़ कर अग्रगामी कदम उठाते हुए तालिबान से बातचीत के द्वार खोलना राष्ट्रीय हित में होगा। कश्मीर में शांति स्थापित करने के लिए भी तालिबान की तटस्थ भूमिका भारत के लिए जरूरी है।

भारत–ईरान और अफगानिस्तान सहयोग भी पाकिस्तान और चीन के लिए रणनीतिक चिंता का कारण है। चाबहार और उरदर दक्षिण पारगमन गलियारें का उद्देश्य अफगानिस्तान और मध्य एशिया क्षेत्र के देशों के साथ संपर्क बढ़ाना है। बदलते दौर में सामरिक और सुरक्षा प्राथमिकताएं बदली हैं। तालिबान के परंपरागत शत्रु रूस ने तालिबान से वार्ता की है, यहां तक कि रूस पर तालिबान को आइएस से लड़ने के लिए हथियार देने के भी आरोप लगे है। ईरान, रूस, अमेरिका, चीन और उज्बेकिस्तान जैसे देश भी तालिबान से बात कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में भारत के लिए परंपरागत अफगान नीति से आगे बढ़ कर अग्रगामी कदम उठाते हुए तालिबान से बातचीत के द्वार खोलना राष्ट्रीय हित में होगा। कश्मीर में शांति स्थापित करने के लिए भी तालिबान की तटस्थ भूमिका भारत के लिए जरूरी है।

सकारात्मक रुख रखते हैं और कभी–कभी सुकून भरी खबरें सुर्खियां बन कर लोगों को, हमको प्रेरणा देते हैं। रही बात जंगल जलेबी की, तो यह रहस्यमयी मीठे–मीठे फलों का उत्स आजकल साहित्य की दुनिया में आकर्षण का केंद्र है, क्योंकि अब शहरों में यह लुप्तप्राय है। जिन्होंने बचपन में एक दफे इसका स्वाद चखा है, देखा है, वे इन्हें प्राप्त करना चाहते हैं। मगर अब संभव नहीं हो पाता। ‘जंगल जलेबी’ शीर्षक से मशहूर लेखिका नासिरा शर्मा की एक रोचक कहानी है जो बच्चों को जंगल जलेबी के संदर्भ में ढेर सारा ज्ञान देती है।

हमारे मोहल्ले में जंगल जलेबी के आठ–दस वृक्ष हुआ करते थे। बचपन में हम फल तोड़ते और खूब आनंद विभोर होते। अब सिर्फ एक वृक्ष बचा है। हाइवे की चपेट में आने वाले लगभग दो दर्जन वृक्षों के प्रति मैं अतिशय चिन्तित हूँ। हमारे वृक्ष बेदर्दी से काट डाले जाएंगे? क्या ऐसा नहीं हो सकता कि चाहें हम जैसा भी करें, वृक्ष न कटे कम से कम! एक साथ खड़े ये वृक्ष जो जाने कैसे, किसने रोपे होंगे, क्या सोचा होगा? कितने वर्ष व्यतीत हो गए, आज फल दे रहे हैं, मगर हम कृतघ्न हैं। अच्छा हो, सरकार वृक्षों को जड़ समेत निकाल कर कहीं दूर रोप दे..! यह तकनीक विदेशों में है। फिर हम क्यों पीछे हैं?

● *संजय डागा, हातेद*

हिंसा और सवाल

दिल्ली की तीस हजारी कोर्ट में एक वकील की गाड़ी पार्किंग को लेकर शुरू हुआ विवाद, पहले गिरफ्तारी, फिर हिंसक झड़प और बाद में सड़क पर खुली लड़ाई तक पहुंच गया। क्या केवल गाड़ी पार्किंग को लेकर वकीलों का इस तरह हिंसा पर उतर आने को किसी भी रूप से उचित कहा जा सकता है? भिड़ंत के बीच दिल्ली पुलिस की ओर से फायरिंग भी की गई, जिसमें दो वकील घायल हो गए। क्या पुलिस फायरिंग न करके और कोई दूसरा कदम नहीं उठा सकती थी? दिल्ली में पुलिस और वकीलों के बीच भड़की हिंसा का असर यह हुआ कि कानपुर में भी एक वकील ने पुलिस जवान की पिटाई कर दी। समझने वाली बात है कि समाज को कानून का पाठ पढ़ाने वाली पुलिस और वकील यदि इस तरह की गुंडागर्दी और मासपीट पर उतर आएं तो आखिर न्याय के लिए खड़ा कौन होगा? सबसे बुरी बात तो यह रही कि पड़े-लिखे वकील समुदाय ने जो संविधान और कानून की शपथ लेते हैं और जनता की रक्षा और उसे न्याय दिलाने का संकल्प लेते हैं, उन्हीं वकीलों ने आम लोगों को भी नहीं बक्शा, रब चलते लोगों को जमकर पीटा, आँटो वाले को पीट कर घायल कर दिया। न्याय मित्रों से समाज को बहुत अपेक्षाएं रहती हैं। परिस्थिति कितनी ही विकट हो, धैर्य व संयम से काम लेना चाहिए।

● *मंगलेश सोनी, मनावर, धार*

जनसत्ता