Status revoked



TICKER

MIHIR S SHARMA

ventually, illiberal gov-ernments come even for those who welcomed their ascent. That is one of the great lessons of history, and if India is unlucky a similar story will play out here over the next few You cannot demonstrate enough loyalty to an illiberal government unless vou already part

whichever in-group it prefers. In India, if you have a "Muslim-sounding" name, have served a past government, are linked to the West through education or commerce or funding, have spoken on social media of "human rights" — all these are, in one way or another, indicators of potential disloyalty.

The latest incarnation of this effect is what has happened to the writer Aatish Taseer. It appears that his status as an Overseas Citizen of India has been revoked — "revocation of status" is something the government is pretty good at, apparently. The Ministry of Home Affairs said on Twitter that "Mr Aatish Ali Taseer" - a nice touch that, like Barack Hussein Obama — "while submitting his PIO application concealed the fact that his late father was of Pakistani origin". Now, on the face of it, this appears truly representative of the Indian state's famed brilliance. Taseer has written columns, essays, and entire books about his complicated relationship with Salman Taseer, the murdered British-Pakistani politician who was his biological father. Only the Indian state could say he was "concealing" it. It also reveals the Indian state's general inability to deal with modern life, and its realities such as single-parent families. Salman Taseer did not bring up Aatish Taseer, who was in effect the child of a single mother. Surely the PIO application should reflect the fact that single mothers exist? That in such case, the applicant's biological grandparents and great-grandparents on the "other side" are irrelevant? Or is any link, however distant, to Muslim countries so insidious, like a worm coiled deep in your soul, that even if you spend your life in India re-awakening your Hindu, "Indic" heritage it is still too dangerous to allow

Taseer says, and many believe, though the Union home ministry has officially denied it, that the revocation of Taseer's status is linked to an article he wrote on the subject of the Prime Minister for Time magazine. I myself have not read it, so cannot let you know whether the article was of earth-shattering novelty, though the chances are it was not. Nevertheless it apparently came to the attention of the Prime Minister, who was quoted by NDTV as saying that the magazine was foreign and the writer from "a Pakistani political family". The home ministry perhaps felt itself constrained to follow up.

I do not, as it happens, believe that the Prime Minister himself sought that Taseer's status be revoked. That would be ridiculous and uncharacteristic of the PM. It is also not how things happen in illiberal states. In such places, lower-level functionaries of every rank and hue seek to ingratiate themselves with the highest authority by going pellmell after dissenters and outsiders. All you have to do is indicate who the outsiders are — and, fortunately, there are usually relatively easy indicators. Somebody with the middle name "Ali" is never going to be an insider in today's India. after all.

The advantage for these aspiring apparatchiks in India is that our rules, laws and procedures are so spiky with arbitrariness and contradictory principles that they can be weaponised almost at will. If citizenship rules don't get vou, tax will: if tax doesn't. FEMA can: if all those fail, then surely you've said something on Twitter that violates colonial-era provisions of the penal code. You might want to give in to schadenfreude at the sight of those who minimised such concerns in the past now being caught up in them. How else should one feel when a former home minister, under whose watch the government went after foreign-funded NGOs, independent-minded researchers and much else is himself incarcerated because of the oppressiv rules that he failed to change and in fact used against dissenters? How should one react when the ruling party comes after a man who was a prominent supporter in the years leading up to 2014, and who said in 2012, when debating whether India should welcome foreign writers, that "a little xenophobia is not such a bad thing" in a country overrun with invisible foreign power? (Taseer meant Sonia Gandhi, of course, who was apparently still a foreigner in 2012.)

But such schadenfreude would be both unkind and unwise. The fact is that similar things could happen to anyone and probably will. It is impossible to ever be loyal enough. There will always be ever more stringent loyalty tests, and at some point everyone with a soul will fail to clear at least one. And then, well, those very people whose approval you once sought, whose rise you once praised, whose triumph you welcomed — those people will see you as an outsider, and "revoke your status".

Smogiscrippling the next generation

India's future is imperilled. Any government that tolerates that commits a crime against humanity



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K. DATTA-RAY

It was a relief to escape from suffocating Delhi where law and order seemed also to have collapsed and return to Kolkata last week. But toxic though the capital's air was, I won't pretend it was altogether new. Three other cities I have lived in -- Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne and even Singapore -- have been shrouded in a haze on occasion but with a vital difference. Their leaders were not gallivanting abroad or merely watching the disgraceful fisticuffs between lawyers and policemen while people choked and coughed. Nor did they insult public agony with claptrap about digitalisation

and "faceless tax assessment".

As a newspaper reporter in Newcastle, I was in the town hall council chamber when the Lord Mayor, a working class housewife in everyday life, summoned the directors of some of Britain's biggest industrial companies after a smogshrouded day and gave them a sharp dressingdown. My Lord Mayor brusquely silenced a director who tried to talk smoothly of how their gratifying profits reflected credit on the city. Profits might be gratifying for businessmen, she retorted bluntly, but public health was her concern. She would shut down their factories if pollution continued.

I first heard the word smog as a teenager in Manchester in the 1950s when visibility could dwindle to a foot, and your handkerchief was black with grit when you blew your nose. John Ruskin, the social thinker, called smog "Manchester Devil's darkness" and said the city was the spiritual home of pollution. Old-timers recalled a thick cloud smothering Manchester in 1931, killing 450 people. Not even the smokeless zone that the National Smoke Abatement Society's campaign created could avoid deaths from lung diseases such as bronchitis. Manchester had the "foulest air in Britain" in 1995. No wonder Victorians branded it the "Chimney of the World".

What Singapore called the haze was not very

different from Delhi's pollution: satellite imagery confirmed it was mainly smoke from fires all over Indonesia, especially in Sumatra and Borneo. Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia and southern Thailand were worst affected, the soaring air pollution index sometimes forcing shops, offices and places of entertainment to close down, especially during June and July.

Pressured by its ASEAN neighbours, Indonesia's government eventually began to use weather-changing technology to create artificial rain and extinguish raging fires. Thousands of soldiers, marines and airmen were deployed to fight the flames while military aircraft and helicopters carried out water bombing and cloud-seeding. These expensive and elaborate methods were necessary only because Indonesia's rulers were as callous and corrupt as India's. The fires were not natural phenomena in California or Australia but the result of slash-and-burn operations to clear forest land for commercial plantations.

Some of Indonesia's most influential tycoons were suspected of involvement. Everyone knew who they were, but – as in India – the rich and the powerful were above the law. Among them in my time were prominent golfing partners of Suharto who was president for 31 years, from Sukarno's ouster in 1967 until the 1998 uprising forced his resig-

nation. Later, various agriculture and forestry ministers daringly promised to publish the names of the guilty firms and expedite their prosecution but I don't know if the threats were ever carried out.

Delhi's infinitely worse plight is similar in the sense that despite the furore over odd and even numbers, the problem is really agricultural. Anyone who ventures into the surrounding countryside, whether Haryana, Punjab or Uttar Pradesh, at once sees smoke billowing from fields whose paddy stubble must be burned hastily to sow the wheat crop. Special incentives for encouraging water exploitation for extra production are now counter-productive. Instead of squandering money on boosting crops, the government should eliminate excess production (which is criminally wasted anyway) and invest in modern equipment that is beyond the financial resources of cultivators to clear fields and convert stubble to manure or fodder or some other useful product, thus sparing the neighbourhood poisonous pollution. Gimmicks like Swachh Bharat are unworthy of a responsible

Toxic air is India's fifth largest killer, taking toll of about 1.5 million lives annually. The World Health Organisation reckons India has the world's highest death rate from chronic respiratory diseases and asthma. Delhi's intense pollution irreversibly damages the lungs and stunts the brain development of 2.2 million (50 per cent) children. Smog is crippling the next generation. India's future is imperilled. Any government that tolerates that commits a crime against humanity. The Supreme Court has reminded us that such a government is unfit to govern.

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ RONNIE SCREWVALA | ENTREPRENEUR & PHILANTHROPIST

A finger in many pies

Over a fish and salad lunch, **Screwvala** talks to **Pavan Lall** about why he's betting big on online education, how a crocodile disrupted his charitable work and what India needs to do to fix the economy

even years after he sold motion picture company UTV to Disney for \$454 million, 63-year-old Ronnie Screwvala shows no sign of slowing down as he says he's only half-way to achieving what he set out to do. I'm invited over for a Saturday lunch to Screwvala's home in Breach Candy in Mumbai, the city where he was born and raised.

I press the doorbell and it's opened a few seconds later by Screwvala himself who is dressed, as almost always, is in a premiumtwill T-shirt and everyday slacks and leather slip-ons minus socks. Inside his apartment that would seem massive even in Los Angeles, Screwvala, who's produced over 50 films including hits such as Jodha Akbar, A Wednesday, Chennai Express, Rang De Basanti and Barfi!, leads me into an alcove that doubles up as a dining area where a table for two has been laid out.

I'm guided to sit opposite the window and am arrested by the scenic horizon that features tranquil greenery and water as far as the eye can see. By any standards, it's a knockout view. Screwvala is easily the most successful entrepreneur the tightly-knit and insular film business in India has seen in the last decade or so and his success is all the more crucial given that he is a rank outsider. "Happy in life, almost there?" I ask? "Those are two separate questions and well, yes happier with the mix in life in many ways," he concedes.

Has time mellowed Screwvala and his risk-taking ability? On the contrary, it's actually increased, I am told. "After I sold UTV I did the whole PE investor thing for a while and ended up spending the weekends with wealth managers and realised very fast that this is not what I am going to do," he shares. "One becomes an entrepreneur to break the glass ceiling and that's when you grow the market. Of course in that process you have to be prepared to get hurt. You will get hurt. But I'm a doer and I like taking risks."

It I'm a doer and I like taking risks."

It's Parsi lunch for the day, I'm told. I soon

realise what that means — multiple courses — and plan for an extended jog the next day.

Our first course, a beetroot, orange and candied-walnut salad with mixed greens is served and we both dig in. Born in a middle-class family, Screwvala's ascent is remarkable and leads him to explain how his father who recently passed away would chide him for not owning enough shares in listed companies. "I chose to invest everything in my own private companies," he says. He doesn't get into specifics but shares how he held the loan record for a home and "borrowed all the way for his daughter's education". His daughter Trishya attended Sevenoaks School (England), followed by the University of California, Los Angeles, and then the University of Southern California. Screwvala now divides his time between

four different ventures: UpGrad, which is an online educational start-up and the one he's most involved in; Unilazer Ventures, which serves as a holding and investment company for his other start-ups that include Lenskart, a bot company and more; U Mumba which funds and supports teams playing football, kahaddi table tennis and other sports, and Swades a non-profit he runs along with wife Zarina Mehta. Screwvala narrates an incident that happened when he was helping some lower income group people in metros move back to rural areas so that they could enjoy a better quality of life. That was largely successful but sprung unexpected challenges. One individual who had moved to Mumbai and put in charge of a fishing pond in the countryside. Weeks later, Screwvala got a call saying that a crocodile had entered the pond and that person was scared for his life. "We had to drain the pond to get the crocodile out but the man made his way back to Mumbai never wanting to go back,'

Course two is a Parsi breakfast classic — tamata per eedu (fried eggs smothered in

₹400 crore in his avatar as a private equity partner in ventures that range from pomegranate farms to online optometry. He's invested another ₹400 crore in his own ground-up businesses. Once his non-compete clause with Disney expired, Screwvala wasted no time in resurrecting his film business through a firm called RSVP. "It's just a coincidence that the initials expand into Ronnie Screwvala Productions — we actually called it that because no one in the business does RSVP."

Much has changed while Screwvala waited it out. For one, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar are chasing market share even as big telcos watch from the sidelines. Equally, growth in the entertainment and media sector has been challenged. "The subscription model for OTT has yet to take off in India and media grows at just about 7 per cent a year," he says. That's at least partly why he will limit RSVP to around three or four films a year that he personally believes in and wants to do, and include the likes of the recently made *Uri* and the *Sky is Pink*. We come face to face with our main

course saas ni machhi, which is pomfret cooked Parsi style and doused in a mild sour sauce. It comes accompanied with a dry khichdi-styled pilaf. I grab what appears to be half of a perfectly cooked flaky fresh fish. Screwvala helps himself and then insists I try it with the sauce. He also insists I try the Parsi lagaan nu achaar (pickle served at Parsi weddings) with the khichdi. I don't

regret it.

its — the reason he's putting his heft behind UpGrad. Screwvala owns 75 per cent of the venture. Since inception, it has signed on 15,000 students who spend an average of ₹2.8 lakh on various courses, and is clocking ₹240 crore in annual revenue. It is what Screwvala says will be his biggest play yet. "If telecom changed the game for how business was done in India then we need 20 more of those systemic

Education is growing at double dig-

his biggest play yet. "If telecom changed the game for how business was done in India then we need 20 more of those systemic game-changers to take us to the next level." He counts education and tourism as examples.

Dessert comes in the form of a chocolate

as examples.

Dessert comes in the form of a chocolate pie. I cant resist asking what is the next big blockbuster to stay tuned for? It's a futuristic version of *Ashwatthama*, one of the most complex characters in Mahabharata.



stewed spices and tomatoes) — which can pass off easily as a Spanish starter.

Screwvala says he has invested around

The dark side of the veil



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

his week, while in Dewas, Indore, and the Dhar district of rural Madhya Pradesh, all the young women I met were chafing under the tyranny of the ghunghat (veil). Tradition dictates that within and outside their homes, all married women in this region must cover not only their heads, but in some cases, faces too. There is an elaborate, often bewildering set of rules dictating the length of the ghunghat. For example, new brides and women under 30 are expected to cover their faces up to the neck; women in their thirties cover up to the forehead and older women get away with the *ghunghat* simply covering their heads. Another set of complicated kinship rules define the people in front of whom a woman must remain veiled. As part of a team conducting a documentation exercise for an international NGO, we had to quickly figure out optimal conditions in which women would shed their veils for us — and that was quite a task.

"I can show my face only to men younger than me," said 24-year-old Pooja Itodiya, the ASHA worker in Aalri village, Dewas district. So we shooed off all the guys who looked like they were over 24 before she would settle down for a chat. She's chosen to work with children and women as she doesn't need to cover her face and head in front of them. Hours later, we were introduced to the heavily veiled Sapna Diwana, age 26.

Thinking we now understood how this worked, we asked all the young men hovering around to scram, but she still didn't remove her *ghunghat*. It turned out that there was an older woman present in the room who was, in kinship terms, the same category as her mother-in-law. Later on, as we sipped tea, she told us that in their family, young daughters-in-law couldn't even face the family's matriarchs while eating. "I end up eating facing the wall," she said ruefully. The amazing thing is that young women are expected to not only do housework but also work outside their homes while veiled. In Ghatgara village,

Dhar district, my heart went out to 27-year-old Sarika Mandloi, who has to ferry 15-litre buckets of water in full *ghunghat* even when the wind played truant with her sari.

It was restrictive, they all agreed. "In my twenties, when I had to cover my entire face, it was as if my world was restricted to inside the ghunghat," said Kanchan Jadav, who's 35 and now has more leeway with it. Savita Parihar, a bright young community mobiliser working with a local NGO, simply decided to break with tradition and hasn't looked back. "If only other families would support their daughters-in-law the way mine has," she told me. Maya Mausariya, the sarpanch of Ghatgara village, didn't sport a ghunghat either, "My family supported my choice, but the neighbours had a field day gossiping about me," she said.

I wondered why more young women didn't rebel against this regressive practice. Both these spunky ladies said that ditching the *ghunghat* was possible only with family support. As long as the community insisted young women follow hackneyed traditions, Mausariya said, it won't be easy. "But I can tell you this," she said. "Things will definitely be different when my 12-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son come

Where did my space go?



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

lill some years ago, among the most awaited times of the year used to be the seasonal sales for which the household would wait with bated breath, carting home armloads of year-old fashions to stuff into already overflowing wardrobes. The children did it because brands were still new and aspirational in India, and my wife did it so she didn't feel left out among her kitty party peers. Having acquired several such outfits, or shoes, she would refuse to actually use them "because my taste is better than theirs", she would mock her friends, rendering the pile of clothes useless.

When they were young, my wife

would think nothing of purloining cupboard space in the children's rooms, but as they grew older, I found my jackets and shirts being squeezed out by strange looking clothes on hangers that I never saw my wife wear – unless she led a secret life to which I was not privy. Since that seemed unlikely, I could only imagine that she was hoarding these clothes in preparation for some future garment apocalypse. At any rate, the number of outfits grew by mass and volume till it seemed they would overwhelm us

seemed they would overwhelm us.

My own contribution to the increasing number of objects came by way of books that lined cupboards, occupied tables, took up floor space, served as tabletops – and generally threatened to drown us in fonts and folios. Being somewhat better organised than members of my family, I took things into my hands. Additional space was leased, bookshelves designed and a library set up in the basement. I finally had a room for myself, a place to think, write, work. But the idyll lasted barely a week.

First, my wife dispatched extra linen to the basement, then unused crockery and other kitchen paraphernalia. Empty cartons, packing cases and bags-that-might-be-of-use-some-day followed. Winter clothes, pairs of shoes, electronic gadgets, useless gifts piled up over the years, worn-out towels and duvets,

excess grocery, photographs and paintings, stuff my wife had got in her trousseau, stuff she planned to give our daughter in her trousseau, a television that still worked and a toaster that didn't, fabric for upholstery, old magazines and older journals, reusable glasses and recyclable cutlery, bubblewrap for wrapping stuff and stuff wrapped in bubblewrap, lamps, shades and bulbs that could never be found when needed, a wheelchair, collectibles, odd bits of furniture soon converted the study into a dump.

Having reconciled to the inevitable my wife and I waited for what should have been logical - our grown children to move out and make their own lives. 'You work so far from home," my wife advised our daughter, "you should live closer to where you work." No go. "You'll love your independence," I said to my son — only he didn't and, in fact, got married and brought his bride home. "I worked hard all these years so we could have separate bedrooms," I cribbed to my wife, "but GenNxt just won't move out." "All my life I wanted separate bathrooms," my wife said philosophically, "but you don't always get what you want." Not only is that luxury denied to us, it appears the kids are now laying claim to more storage space than they currently command. I worry for our future — my wife's and mine.

Volume VII Number 15 MUMBAI | 9 NOVEMBER 2019

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS T N NINAN

Darkening clouds

here is simply no way to get away from the fact that the clouds over the economy continue to darken - not just because of events already unfolding but equally because of the quality of the government response. Moody's decision to put out a warning on its India rating may be nothing more than recognising the changes in economic prospects that have already occurred, since rating agencies typically react slowly and tend to be behind the curve. What should worry forecasters (and everyone else) is the risk that the minor upswing in economic growth that most of them expect in the quarters following July-September, even if only helped by progressive changes in the base period comparator, may in fact not come about because of a downswing that feeds on itself for a variety of reasons.

There is a fiscal crisis building up, which might become apparent when the Finance Commission presents its report — especially if it seeks to claw back the tax share of the states by putting out the data on the central government's vast unpaid bills, hidden expenditures, revenue shortfalls, and much else. The government is spending on citizen-friendly programmes to win votes, and who is to complain, but where are the steps to bring in the money to pay for the goodies?

At the same time, capital is being used badly or destroyed. The financial sector is one sink. The public sector swallows up ever more cash — the latest pile going to two bankrupt phone companies which are unable to pay salaries. The railways has taken in huge cash, but has little to show so far by way of growth in traffic and revenue. The bankruptcy process is taking its own toll. Irresponsible chief ministers cancelling energy contracts destroy capital, too. Regulators who mismanage sectors, as in telecom, have destroyed capital wholesale — and the Supreme Court has not helped. What underpins the economy's growth potential are the still high savings and investment rates, but these have little meaning if the money that is invested disappears without trace down various sinkholes - among which one is real estate.

The big worry is continuing denial by those in charge, perhaps even a lack of comprehension. The decision to opt out of the big regional trade agreement may eventually have been out of lack of choice, but it is silly to pretend that it is a sign of bold leadership. When every country east of Dhaka is willing to sign up and India is not, it says something is wrong with India. This reflects a failure of leadership over the past five years, and a failure to reform and get ready for opening up to and integrating with the largest, fastest-growing region in the world.

The argument that past free-trade agreements have not worked in India's favour is false; they made little difference. The fear of Chinese products swamping the market may or may not be real, but the trade deficit with China is only half the regional story: India has a big trade deficit with virtually every country in the region. The bilateral deals talked about as an alternative are non-starters. Opening up to Australia means opening up to agriculture; with New Zealand, dairying; and with Asean countries, on other agricultural items. As for switching from "Acting East" to looking West, trade deals with the US will be no easier, even as the country loses trade disputes at the World Trade Organization.

It is claimed that we can join later, but when the domestic lobbies that have won are the protectionists, why should they give up their hold on government policymakers? Where are the action plans and timelines to get ready for slashing tariffs, doubling agricultural productivity, and ending cross-subsidies in power pricing so that industry is not penalised? Or to get into regional supply chains when organised retailers are discouraged? The government has raised tariffs and become an anti-dumping champion, so the country is becoming more inward-looking. How then can the system open up, or become more competitive? Those that are competitive are being locked out of markets by those that are not. The losers are winning. This is no way to get to \$5 trillion.



Think Nanak, not Imran

India isn't made of porcelain. Kartarpur Sahib is open. It's our moment of joy. Switch off that TV neurosis on the 'return of Khalistan'. It isn't happening

NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

· mran Khan isn't the brightest being you've met, division is inevitable. That two efforts in the past – except when playing cricket. Yet, even by his standards, his offer to make the visit to Kartarpur Sahib visa-free for only the Sikhs from India was curious. How would he, to begin with, define a Sikh?

Sikhism is neither doctrinaire, nor exclusive. Anyone from any faith is welcome in a gurudwara. You just need to follow a couple of simple rules: A covered head, bare feet. Then, you can pray, the priest will treat you and get you the blessings from the holy book like any other devotee, and the "sangat" (community)

will feed you at the "langar". There is no place in Sikhism, including the Golden Temple or Akal Takht Sahib, where anyone's faith bars them.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

The essence of Sikhism is bar none. That is where the philosophy of the langar, a community meal where everyone eats together, comes from. You share a meal, you are equals. Then anyone, irrespective of faith, can do "kar sewa" (voluntary work). And so many do. This is the reason Sikh holy places are among the cleanest anywhere.

There is much anxiety in India about the moves and intentions of Imran/the Pakistan Army/the Inter-Services Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi handled the Intelligence (ISI) over Kartarpur Sahib. They all might be — and probably are — as diabolical as we suspect. But they aren't particularly bright. Even if they had such a genius idea of subverting India's Sikhs and reviving separatism through Kartarpur Sahib, Imran has ruined their "operation" by offering freebies to only the Sikhs. Besides the fact that the Sikh faith, intrinsically equal and inclusive, will dismiss this preferential treatment with contempt, Imran will also not know how to define a Sikh, or tell one from any other devotee of Guru Nanak and the great faith he and his nine successors founded. There is nothing in Sikh practice and tradition that discriminates Sikh from non-Sikh.

Imran has bought into the old military establishment folklore in Pakistan that a final Sikh-Hindu Singh Bhindranwale.

one in the mid-1960s and the second in the 1981-94 period — failed, but the time for a third push has now come. That's why some overseas Sikh organisations, especially in Canada, are being brought together with Pakistani immigrant groups, especially Kashmiri (Mirpuri), and this so-called "Referendum 2020" is being sponsored. Another chapter is being opened in an old playbook.

It is bound to fail like the earlier ones, again causing Pakistan enormously more damage than to India. We, in India, need have no anxieties.

> Preaking the Sikhs away from India is a fantasy of the Pakistani elites going back to the early 1950s, when that generation's wounds of the Partition were still raw.

The Pakistanis took this operation to its first peak in the mid-1960s, hoping to prise the Sikhs away. One faction of the Punjabi Suba (separate Punjabi state) movement had a radical/separatist impulse. But Partap Singh Kairon as chief minister in Puniab, and after his assassination

challenge adroitly. Punjab was divided again, with Hindi-predominant Haryana and Himachal Pradesh becoming new states and a Punjabi-speaking (and Sikh) majority now with a Punjab of its own. A curious little sidelight: The Pakistanis also separated and tried to indoctrinate Sikh Indian prisoners of war, especially officers, in 1965.

That chapter ended, and the second one was launched in 1981 by a Pakistani establishment emboldened by the new clout it had acquired with the Afghan jihad. It coincided, however, with many other factors internal to India: A revivalist mood among the Sikhs, weak governments, and the marginalisation of the Shiromani Akali Dal. Then, the arrival of a leader as charismatic and puritanical as Sant Jarnail

What followed is well-recorded history. It is just that in the following 13 years, tens of thousands died. And then, just when it had begun to look like Punjab was a lost cause, it all ended. So rapidly that even those of us following this closely didn't have the time to catch our breath.

OPINION 11

And why did this happen? For sure, the security forces and intelligence agencies did their job well. But that phase of terror ended the day the Sikhs themselves decided that they had had enough. The real hero of that fight was the predominantly Sikh Punjab Police. It was quite dramatic how Sikh popular opinion turned.

From a point where some of my fellow journalists were even talking of visiting "liberated zones" in Punjab, it ended almost overnight. In fact, no one even wanted to talk about this anymore. KPS Gill, who led the campaign as Punjab Police chief then, spoke to me in detail for an India Today story, and when I asked him why and how this ended so dramatically, he said, you see, the Pakistanis do not read Iqbal: kuchch baat hai ke hasti, mit-ti nahin hamaari...

For the Pakistanis to think that they can bring back those days, therefore, is fantastic nonsense. Similarly, for us in India to now worry that the Pakistanis will take "our" Sikhs away from "us" is embarrassing neurosis.

e have to be nuts to get unnerved over the pictures of Bhindranwale on the odd hoarding in Kartarpur Sahib. You can even find them in and around the Golden Temple, on key-chains sold in shops outside it, on the backs of cars in Delhi, and sometimes even as computer and tablet screen-savers. If we choose to get alarmed by any of this, we must have very little confidence in ourselves as a nation, and trust in the Sikh community.

To think that they are so gullible as to fall for the same trope in 2019 is an insult to their intelligence. And to think any of us as "we" who have to protect "them' — the Sikhs from evil Pakistanis — is worse than being irrational. It's stupid.

We had said in National Interest last week that Indian social and national coherence had strengthened over the years as it had become more relaxed. We are stronger not because we are merely united in our diversity, but because we are at ease with it now. It is possible to argue today that the founders of our Republic were a bit anxious and erred in giving us the slogan of "Unity in Diversity". They should have simply said, celebrate diversity. Once you accept that, you need not worry about the national commitment to any fellow Indian.

That's why it is time to forget subversive fears. India isn't made of porcelain. One of the holiest shrines for the Indian Sikhs and so many non-Sikh Indians is open now. It's a moment of collective joy for us to cherish. Switch off those TV discussions on the "return of Khalistan". It isn't happening. Don't paint the devil on the wall.

And if it still bothers you, just remember that concluding line of the Sikh prayer, invoking Guru Nanak: Nanak naam chardi kala/tere bhane sarbat da bhala. Translated loosely: Nanak, your name would keep us all upbeat/on the ascendant/gung-ho (you can choose either or all, or find another name for that brilliant Sikh attitude)/may the entire mankind be joyful and prosperous with your benevolence.

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Making Wikipedia more useful



DEVANGSHU DATTA

inger and composer, Dido Florian Cloud Bounevialle O'Malley Armstrong decided, understandably enough, that she needed to shorten her name when she went professional. By a fair degree of success as

A few years later, she ended up cursing herself for picking politicians, media persons and that particular diminutive. By the time the online crowd-Wikipedia launched in 2001, she was certainly "notable" the Armenian Genocide, or the enough to merit an entry there. Aryan Invasion Theory.

Some vandals with a warped sense of humour kept inserting the letter "L" into the middle of her professional name, and this happened persistently, over a

been finally fixed but the "Wiki" continues to provide fake, or Academics use it themselves, incomplete information, in though secretively, and doctors impecunious students are seekmany of its 40 million-plus and pharmacologists have been ing information. Wiki's model. The encyclonedia's USP is crowd-sourcing; it allows anybody to make an entry about pretty much anything and it's designed for easy cross-referencing and linking.

ally, through a process of editing, argument and debate, most of the entries will get fixed. the late 1990s, she had attained However, when it comes dalised or "injected" with fake encyclopedia news. There are unending flame wars on topics like

period of several years. That particular problem has

entries. This is inherent to the known to look it up as well The assumption is, eventu-

to any hot-button subject, this assumption is probably dubious. The biographical entries of celebrities are regularly van-

about Wikipedia. Students are wholesale from the crowdsourced online encyclopedia. The more honest among them even cite it as a reference!

It is a good bump up the Wiki place to look up accuracy quotient by a physics equa- several notches. One of tion, or a mathe- the problems with Wiki matical theo- citations is that the rem, so long as reference is often not you can ignore available online for the background primary viewing noise. There are often fierce

debates about the actual origin clopedias where the entries are theorem, a scientific theory — ethnic experts and fact-checked by nationalists like to "prove" it other experts. But 80 per cent is was Newton. Leibnitz or a reasonable baseline for Madhava who discovered cal-somebody who's starting to culus, for example.

if fallible, source of knowledge. even though it is a long way It has many multiples more in from perfection.

Academics and school- the way of entries across its 290teachers frequently complain odd languages than any other encyclopedic source. Even known to copy-paste entries encyclopedic aggregators, such as Xrefplus and GaleNet have less than 4 million entries between them. Moreover, the Wiki is free and that's not an viewing. A book may not be inconsiderable factor when available online at all, or it may

> guesstimates suggest around 80-85 per cent of Wiki information is accurate. That is less than 95 per cent that is con-

standard

for

"normal" encyor written by commissioned research a topic and it does sug-So, the Wiki is an invaluable, gest that crowd-sourcing works,

A new initiative could bump up the Wiki accuracy quotient by several notches. One of the problems with Wiki citations is that the reference is often not available online for primary viewing. This is especially true in the case of books and scientific papers. Scientific papers are often behind paywalls, with only the abstract available for be a paid resource that has to be bought, and in many Wiki cita-As of now, tions, there may not even be an ISBN to facilitate search. Not that every researcher can afford to pay significant sums to simply check if a reference is accurately cited.

The Internet Archive, (sometimes called the Wayback Machine, though that is only sidered the gold one of the Archive's functions) is trying to sort this issue out. It will try to scan the relevant pages of every book that is cited in a Wiki reference. This would enable researchers to click on the citation and go to the relevant page and check for accuracy. As of now, the archive has done this for 130,000 entries in the English, Arabic and Greek editions. This itself involved scanning 50,000 books.

who live in the NCR. That

means about ₹10,000 per per-

not to grow paddy, why not pay

all polluters. Thus, car owners

could be paid not to drive, coal-

based power plants paid to shut

So we come back to the tem-

porary cure rather than perma-

nent prevention, namely, target

nological solutions, the equiva-

But questions can be asked:

son per year.

Made in India AI **EYE CULTURE** speech reflecting the regional language;

GANESH MANI

t a recent workshop I co-organised in Bangalore, with the

IDC, global AI spending is about \$36 bilyear. Just in the US, which pioneered some of the early AI research and applications, there are now over 2,000 AI companies and about 3,800 AI-related patent applications were filed in 2018. DARPA, which has a multi-decade history of making investments in technology aimed at national security, has announced a \$2 billion AI initiative there. In China, there are many significant AI start-ups, including SenseTime, which touts a valuation of \$7.5 billion. Domestically, NITI Aayog has proposed a ₹7.500 crore-plan to boost AI.

Secondly, AI is not a fad; it has the potential to deliver real value, especially to people at the bottom and middle of the pyramid. For instance, in health care, there is a great urban-rural divide both in terms of accessibility and affordability. The Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai found that a significant number of new patients were travelling from states as far away as UP and Bihar to avail of treatment, often after their cancer had progressed to an advanced stage. AI-enabled telemedicine has the potential to ameliorate this. In general, the new AI is about augmented intelligence - scaling expert services and also making remote delivery possible, in tandem with other technologies. To make this a reality, India is starting to develop significant expertise in machine learning as well as language technologies.

Thirdly, increasing globalisation has spread the origins of a product and sourcing its components far and wide: An Apple iPhone is designed in the US, its parts are sourced from over a dozen countries and, until recently, was assembled primarily in China. Contrast that with the Sony Walkman of the 1980s. which was entirely designed and produced in Japan. The recent trade wars have made the origin of goods a focal point. My guess is the question and ensuing discussion at the recent workshop stemmed from trepidation about the origin label being relevant to AI systems as well and, thus, with the potential to get caught up in future cross-border trade restrictions and shenanigans.

An AI system today is not generalpurpose enough to work facilely across multiple contexts and geographies. It is best thought of as a triumvirate: Data, domain knowledge and techniques (or

as well as dialect and scenes with every day, endemic objects are what will be readily available as inputs to a retrieval or reasoning system. If any training is theme of Artificial Intelligence involved to teach the system, it is best to (AI) and innovation, the discussion use data similar to what the system will turned to the origin of an AI system or encounter when deployed. Likewise, specifically: What is "Made in India AI"? domain or subject matter expertise has Answering that question seems to many rich nuances — for example, be important for three reasons. First, AI which side of the street vehicles will be adoption is rapidly increasing. typically driven, denomination and According to technology research firm appearance of a banknote or the uniform of a state's policeman. Algorithms lion this year, up 45 per cent from last can then aid in partially or completely automating driving, paying and checking out at a retail store or in an emergency, directing people — via their smart phones — to a law enforcement officer for any clarifications and guidance. While advances in search and machine learning techniques have come from many countries via global teams of researchers and are widely published, often the systems have to be re-created domestically in the country of use with local data and domain knowledge. Such local data and domain knowledge embedding aid system performance and robustness.

Thus, "Made in India AI" needs to be interpreted as a system trained using traffic scenes in Kanpur or a conversation in Malayalam guided by local linguistic nuances. Given the rich diversity in languages and local customs, an AI system in many instances may have to be hyper-regionalised.

More importantly, the AI system will need to be trusted by the end-user farmer in Guwahati and its recommendations explainable in pithy Marathi by a physician in Mumbai — over WhatsApp perhaps — to a patient in Wardha.

In the start-up world, over the last decade or so, investors have encouraged copycat entrepreneurship: Take a successful business model that worked in the developed market(s) and execute the copy-paste routine in an emerging market. While this has been successful in some cases, it has stifled sustainable innovation. Copycat AI systems need to be wary of this expediency trap. Hastily assembled AI systems built with scant attention to local data and know-how can exhibit unanticipated behaviour and have unintended consequences. It may even end up creating a new class system.

Perhaps a better question to ask would be: Is this "Made for India"? We need to ensure that the system is fair, transparent and explainable to the common man in India.

Note to innovators and entrepreneurs: To guarantee an incredible India AI experience, make sure you stick with local data and expertise, even if you download the algorithms from an alien cloud!

Ganesh Mani is an AI expert, adjunct faculty member at Carnegie Mellon University, and past-President of the algorithms). Faces of local people, Pittsburgh chapter of TiE.org

Pay up or put up



LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

very year for the past 10 years, the National years, the Capital Region, comprising about 55,000 square km, chokes at this time of the year because of severe pollution. One of the many contributory factors is the burning of paddy stubble. Paddy is harvested in early October each year.

The governments of Delhi, Punjab, and Haryana are trying to persuade farmers not to burn the stubble. The farmers are not listening because they don't have an alternative. As a result, an impasse has developed.

The impasse can be broken if the problem is diagnosed. The diagnosis is that it's not the burning of stubble but the cultivation the Nobel Prize for it in 1991. of paddy that is the problem.

Punjab and Haryana are not Pay the polluter traditional paddy states because the crop needs a lot of water and they have less of it naturally

than, say, south or east India. But the two state governments, by making water and electricity free two decades ago, have inadvertently caused the farmers to grow paddy - around 15 million tonnes.

This is a case of what economics calls negative externalities. Mr A maximises his welfare at the cost of Mr B. Mr A's actions constitute a negative externality for Mr B. This is what the paddy stubble problem is.

One way to prevent the cultivation of paddy is to charge for the water and electricity the farmers use. But that would reduce their incomes even further. In a highly competitive democracy, this is not a practical solution.

So what's to be done? The Coase Theorem in economics offers a partial solution to the problem of negative externalities. It is named after the late Ronald Coase, who was awarded

The theorem rests on many ifs and buts but its core message is that if you think it's worth your while, pay your tormentor to stop tormenting. This, by the often happens. Nor can he down, construction companies way, was what India and China depend on the government to stop construction, etc. demanded on a global scale for because it will want their two climate issues.

The world decid- One way to prevent the ed it wasn't cultivation of paddy is worth its while. to charge for the water So everyone is and electricity the worse off now. Anyway, to would reduce their

get a sense of it, incomes even further. In consider, for a highly competitive example, three democracy, this is not a adjacent houses. practical solution middle

house is richer than the two on whole house stinking and his either side. Being much poorer, water supply contaminated? they have built their toilets along their respective compound walls, instead of indoors. This causes a stink for the house in the middle.

farmers use. But that

The rich owner of the middle house has five options buy the two adjacent houses: sell his own house and move: pay the other two to build indoor toilets; persuade the gov- only via a cess or a municipal ernment to ban toilets that are tax on about 50 million people outside the house; or seek help from the courts ... What should

The answer depends on the cost of each option. On the face If you are going to pay farmers of it, the "build them the damn toilets" option appears cheaper but it need not be so if the two owners turn extortionate. This

votes against his one. And the courts will hand the stubble. This involves techdown rulings that cannot be enforced.

That's the core question: How much is it worth to the rich house-owner not to have his

No easy solutions

This is the question that the Delhi, UP, Punjab, and Haryana governments have to answer. One way is to pay farmers not to grow paddy. It's a lot of money for 15 mil-

lion tonnes of paddy at ₹36,000 per tonne. This cost can be met 30-day problem.

lent of better fuel and better car engines, etc. Some also suggest that we create a market for the stubble. But how do you get it out in the first place? Indeed, that's why it

of disposal.

is burnt as the cheapest form

As you can see, there are no cheap solutions. Someone will have to bear the cost, which has to be shared by everyone except the polluters. But the stubbleburning problem is so temporary — just about a month that no one will agree to pay.

Net net: You can't consume clean air if you won't pay for it just because it's a



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2019



FAMILY MATTERS

Chief minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot

Decision to withdraw SPG protection to Gandhi family is condemnable. Govt is compromising the lives of a family, which has lost two members to acts of terror. It's vendetta politics of a very low level





Put money to work, no more Moody blues

Credit flows must normalise to get growth back; requires plans that work for fixing NBFCs and real estate quickly

NDIA'S ECONOMY IS plagued by several problems—cyclical and structural but, key among them is a crisis of credit. Growth can't pick up meaningfully and in a sustained fashion without a raft of reforms, and, in fact, could decelerate further before that happens. But, if consumers and companies could borrow at affordable rates, it would be a start. Right now, credit flows are weak. Bank funding to the commercial sector has de-grown 1.3% in the six months to September, compared with an increase of 1.9% in H1FY19. The year-on-year offtake in total bank credit today remains at sub-9% levels, down substantially from the 12.5% levels seen a year back. Non-bank funding to the commercial sector has grown at just 0.9% in H1FY20, compared with 7.4% in H1FY19 and 3.4% in H1FY18.

Ratings agency Moody's—which lowered the India outlook to negative from stable on Friday—is right in saying the economic slowdown could be a prolonged one. That is because the credit crisis is likely to drag on, with banks not even lending to their traditional client bases, leave alone moving into spaces that NBFCs had vacated. Some sectors—MSMEs, for instance—are getting less credit support today than they were a year back.

The quantum of NBFC funding seen in FY18 isn't coming back soon—especially to sectors such as housing, commercial real estate, and consumer durables—because, apart from a handful of top-class players, the rest aren't able to access loans; a few are bankrupt or close to it. Credit to shadow banks (from both banks and mutual funds) is up just 9.4% in FY20 so far, compared with the recent peak of 28% in FY18, and 20% in FY19.

Govt needs to

reassure lenders

they won't be

penalised if genuine

business decisions

go wrong and push

them to take

calculated risks. So,

while they need not

lend for project

finance, they must

step up loans for

working capital and

retail purchases

But, there is no shortage of money with the banking system—surplus liquidity has averaged ₹2 lakh crore in the past few months and deposits are growing at about 9-9.5%. The problem is, it is not going anywhere. Also, loans are not becoming meaningfully cheaper, which they should have because banks today are paying savers much less for deposits; interest rates have been lowered by about 50-100 basis points. In fact, transmission has been painfully slow, with the cumulative 135 bps of reporate cuts in this cycle yielding a fall in the MCLR of just about 50 bps. That is not enough to stimulate demand.

The problem is that only mid-tier firms or those that are not well-rated need the money; top tier companies are able to access the bond and ECB markets. Understandably, banks don't want to lend to sub-par businesses in a difficult economic environment because they fear they might not get their money back. Their apprehensions are justified; the finances of much of corporate India remain stressed and, in a weak demand environment, cash-flows are unlikely

Even otherwise, having burnt their fingers, private sector lenders such as Axis Capital and ICICI Bank are likely to stay away from long-term project financing, and focus on retail loans and working capital. No lender today can afford to fritter away capital; save State Bank of India, no state-owned lender has too much of it anyway. And, there are potential additions to the NPA basket, from more loans going bad in sectors such as NBFC, renewables, infrastructure, metals, textiles, telecom, and MSME. In other words, with the recovery delayed, corporate financials will stay weaker for longer, and could hurt asset quality with lenders.

If lenders were somewhat reckless between 2009 and 2014, today they are running scared. The government needs to reassure lenders they won't be penalised if genuine business decisions go wrong and push them to take calculated risks. So, while they need not lend for project finance, they must step up loans for working capital and retail purchases.

Also, while it may not seem like there is a systemic risk to the financial system from over-leveraged NBFCs and HFCs, there is no harm in being sure. The government shouldn't be bailing out weak private-sector NBFCs and HFCs; it should immediately do an asset quality review for them so that it can initiate shutdowns where necessary, and M&As where possible. If other stronger lenders want to buy out the weaker ones, the process should be facilitated with existing promoters being asked to go. Unless lenders are bigger and stronger, costs can't come down, and neither can interest rates; this can be made possible only with faster consolidation, retrenchment, and automation.

In the meantime, government must roll out structural reforms—in the areas of land, labour, regulation, enforcement of contracts—as has been pointed out ad *nauseam*. While an immediate fiscal stimulus—in the form of cuts in personal income tax rates—will spur demand, it needs to be accompanied by sector-specific solutions. The government has set up a ₹25,000-crore corpus to provide last-mile funding to incomplete real estate projects. But, that is not enough to take care of all projects. Banks should be given forbearance if they are new lenders to stalled real estate projects, but only if the existing promoters are asked to go and the projects are handed over to new builders. That way, more projects can be revived. The point is that the surplus with banks must be put to work even if that requires some rules to be rewritten.

EyeWASH

Facebook's latest breach of privacy revelations show why it needs regulation

UCKED WAS A term coined by a former Facebook investor to point to anyone who had been wronged by Facebook and its co-founder Mark Zuckerberg. The company has been fighting a near-continuous PR bat-■ tle ever since to restore its and Zuckerberg's image, but the latest instance would make it seem the company has learnt nothing from its past. Facebook should have wised up after the Cambridge Analytica scandal, but a recent Reuters report shows the company may not mean what it says on protecting users' privacy. While Facebook, in the aftermath of the Analytica scandal, had claimed that the company was against the use of personal data, sealed court records access by Reuters show that the company was using personal data to snuff out competition. Under the Switcharoo plan, executives were plotting to convince the public of Facebook's focus on user privacy while the company has been selling user data only to those companies that pay for its marketing services, and keeping such data from its competitors.

While Facebook, indeed, has accumulated such information by providing free offerings to billions of its users, and the company's terms and conditions do give it the right to access information and use it, the bigger problem is the underhanded approach Facebook has with regard to the privacy debate. Instead of clearly stating its privacy and data policies, Facebook has masked a lot of its practices by drowning users in legal jargon. More importantly, the recent instance of Facebook sharing private group chats with app developers shows that it can say one thing and do another. Facebook does provide a raft of free services, and the only way for it to make money is to monetise user information, but it needs to be careful how it uses such data, and consider whether it has a fiduciary responsibility to protect user interests. With politicians now talking about breaking up Big Tech, the company better learn from AT&T's experience.

TRADE DEAL

THERE ARE CLEAR GAINS FOR INDIA IN JOINING RCEP, IT WILL MEAN BECOMING PART OF GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS, IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS, ETC. BUT ITS RESERVATIONS ARE LEGITIMATE, TOO

India's RCEP dilemma: To be in, or not to be in

NDIA HAS DECIDED not to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) till its key concerns are addressed. These include establishing a special safeguard mechanism to quickly address surge in imports from China (and dairy products from Australia and New Zealand), agreeing on rules of origin (minimal operations within a country) that prevent easy circumvention of the conditions agreed in RCEP, reducing tariffs from 2019 and not 2014 levels (since 2014, India has raised tariffs on several items), increasing India's access to certain services sectors in other markets, and establishing credible mechanism to address non-tariff measures. India is, in effect, saying, that it

would be part of the RCEP if its concerns are addressed. A decision to opt out of RCEP would mean that India does not wish to be an active part of the Asian regional value chains (the most dynamic global value chain system), is willing to reduce the value of India's existing FTAs—much less deeper than the RCEP—thus, reducing its export opportunities, not to focus on an important policy option for improving competitiveness (i.e., trade policy reform which must complement improving cost and timeliness of transactions and policy response), and not benefit from a framework of disciplines and collaborative solutions that would apply to China, among others. The strategic implications of these aspects add to the overall consideration of issues.

RCEP members give importance to India's membership, and they have created a number of India-specific provisions. However, they will assess the value of India being part of the agreement, and the conditions underwhich that participation takes place. Thus, if RCEP members substantively engage with addressing these concerns, it will happen within a negotiating context. This implies that the process will involve a give-and-take for reaching an agreed conclusion. In this regard, India's major concerns need to be understood and evaluated carefully.

A special safeguard for imports

RAJEEV KHER & HARSHA VARDHANA SINGH

Kher is former Commerce Secretary, India & Singh is former Deputy Director General, WTO

from China is particularly important. In 2018-19, India's trade deficit with China was \$53.56 billion, or about 3.2 times India's merchandise exports to China. The ratio of India's merchandise imports from China to its exports to China was about 4.2, close to the corresponding ratio for the US-China trade (about 4.5). India's political and economic concern is, thus, obvious. Special safeguard mechanisms have

been part of negotiations at both the

multilateral and FTA level. Regarding rules of origin, experience suggests that as trading conditions change with FTAs, investments and locations shift providing options for benefiting from opportunities through regular trade-related business decisions, or by circumventing the FTA disciplines by gaming the system. Global trade policy disciplines and negotiations have long expressed concern regarding circumvention of agreed rules and disciplines. This is incorporated in practical policy steps taken by some countries, like the US and EU.

The above two areas would appear to be strong "asks" of India, with little leeway for adjustment. Creative approaches to meet this demand would be required. All issues could involve a possibility of adjustments linked to India also agreeing to some demand from other RCEP members. Significantly, addressing nontariff measures (NTMs) through agreed equivalence, protocols, and other similar mechanisms to improve meaningful market access should be a common concern. There should be a basis to develop collaborative mechanisms, for instance, along the lines of CPTPP, which includes seven members of the RCEP.

RCEP creates extensive goods liberalisation, with long transition for implementing tariff falls. It aims to enhance global value chain (GVC) complementarities. A focus on larger services trade liberalisation (an Indian concern) would create greater possibilities for more extensive GVC participation among RCEP countries. Likewise, addressing India's concerns on non-tariff measures would enable countries to

Views are personal

raised by India

would help make

RCEP an even more

effective and

meaninaful

opportunity for

creating additional

RCEP-specific

value chain

develop more cost-effective GVCs. Some of the issues

India, too, needs to keep an overall perspective of its membership of RCEP in the negotiations on its specific concerns. Achieving a high growth rate requires creating additional growth opportunities through higher competitiveness and international trade, linking up with GVCs, reducing the time and costs of business transactions, improving technological

capabilities, and creating a vibrant investment environment for domestic and foreign investment that consider overall opportunities combining domestic, and international markets. RCEP is an important framework for progressing on these objectives.

India is a large economy (7th largest in 2018) with a relatively low global rank as merchandise exporter (19th largest in 2018). In contrast, most leading trade economies have the opposite situation or a smaller gap between these two rankings. RCEP economies among the top-30 global merchandise exporters are China (top merchandise exporter in the world), Japan (4th largest), South Korea (6th), Singapore (15th), Australia (23rd), Thailand

(24th), Malaysia (25th), Vietnam (26th), and Indonesia (30th). These countries will further improve their trade and investment opportunities through a deep trade agreement like RCEP.

These economies as well as India have several free trade agreements (FTAs), many of them with common partner countries. An important difference is that a number of their FTAs are deeper in terms of liberalisation of tariffs, trade facilitation, and co-operation than those of India. Further, they have FTAs with larger trade coverage, such as CPTPP, and agreements with the EU or the US. Thus, they create greater trade diversion towards the RCEP partner countries in comparison to India's FTAs.

> Membership of RCEP would significantly change this situation.

India's share in global merchandise exports has been about 1.7% since 2011-12, having increased from 0.7% in 2000-01 India's overall GVC participation ranking (out of 58 economies) improved from 56 in 2000 to 45 in 2009. The global rank is still very low, and major improvement depends on larger market opportunities abroad. Thus, while imports from China might

be a specific concern, external opportunities will have to come through higher market opportunities, through FTAs such as RCEP. For India, participation in RCEP,

together with its own policy improvements to reduce costs and time taken for international trade transactions, would help improve linking up with GVCs; effective trade infrastructure and systems; technology upgradation; and enhanced FDI. Some of the issues raised by India would help make RCEP an even more effective and meaningful opportunity for creating additional RCEP-specific value chains than provided at present by this agreement with strong economic, regional and geo-political linkages.

Climate crisis in terms Trump can get

The Paris Agreement is not a trade agreement. There is no trade-off. The president is abandoning America's future by quitting the Paris climate accord

BAN KI-MOON & PATRICK VERKOOIJEN

PRESIDENTTRUMP MADE good on his promise this week to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement. This wasn't a surprise. But it still baffles us. Try as we might, we cannot see how America's interests are served by this decision.

Our climate emergency does not respect borders. California's forest fires will not burn less fiercely, and rising sea levels will not spare Miami or Mar-a-Lago, just because Mr Trump has chosen to opt out of a treaty of nearly 200 nations that represents our best and only chance of saving humanity from the catastrophic effects of rising temperatures.

Let us put it in a language MrTrump might understand. If average global temperatures rise by the end of the century by another one degree Celsius, or 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit, there will be no winners on this planet. Only losers.

And those immigrants the president rails against? Expect the trickle to become a flood. Climate change could force 1.4 million people to abandon their homes in Mexico and Central America, according to the World Bank. That is because one-third of all jobs in the region remain linked to agriculture and climate change is making those livelihoods more precarious. The best way to keep climate refugees from the United States' doorstep is to support a vigorous and effective climate agreement that helps protect America's neighbours from the ravages of drought and erratic weather patterns. But, Mr Trump is turning his back on this opportunity.

The Paris Agreement is not a trade agreement. There is no trade-off between Detroit, Youngstown and Pittsburgh, on the one side, and Paris on the other. Tariffs and sanctions will

not make this problem go away.

Instead, the Paris Agreement is more like a collective insurance policy, into which we all invest to protect our futures. And like most insurance policies, it makes sound business sense. The best investments we can make right now are those that will protect our food, water and energy sources, our transportation, homes and cities, and our businesses and finances from the worst impacts of climate change.

We must invest to adapt to higher

Paris Agreement is

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protect our futures.

And like most

makes sound

business sense

temperatures, rising seas, fiercer storms, water scarcity, wildfires—conditions that are now inevitable. The Global Commission on Adaptation estimates that investing just \$1.8 trillion to build climate resilience over the next decade would yield more than \$7 trillion in net benefits. That is a great

return on investment. In other words, we can either plan now and prosper—or do nothing and

pay for the consequences later. It seems to us that Mr Trump is choosing to do nothing and let the country pay later. How is this smart?

The Paris Agreement is a collaborative project, perhaps the greatest collective undertaking ever attempted by mankind. Is it perfect? No. Is it worth keeping? Definitely. Put bluntly, it is the only weapon we have to fight our climate emergency.

Bear in mind that the Paris Agreement is a work in progress. There are standards and targets to be set, compliance measures to be agreed on, budgets

to be allocated. One of the best things about the agreement is that nations have pledged to share the fruits of innovation in low-carbon technologies—for clean energy, zero-emissions transportation, greater food security and sustainable businesses and homes. The United States is a great innovator and the Paris Agreement will undoubtedly be the poorer without its participation. But equally, the country had much to gain by joining in this collective endeavour. Why miss out on the greatest technological and eco-

nomic transformation of our era?

Above all, the world will miss America's talent, leadership and ideas as we map out a low-carbon future. We know American voices will still be heard—notably, the thousands of local and state governments and businesses in the United insurance policies, it States that have made pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under a movement called

> We Are Still In. They are proof that millions of Americans still support the Paris Agreement, even if the current administration does not.

> It is not too late for Mr Trump to reconsider his decision. Staying in the Paris Agreement is the right thing to do, for America's sake and for the rest of the world. Winston Churchill is said to have once remarked that you could always count on Americans to do the right thing, after they'd tried everything else. We hope Mr Trump proves him wrong and stays in the Paris Climate Agreement—that he does the right thing from the beginning.

THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO

On NCR's air pollution problem As authorities indulge in passing-

the-buck and citing self-proclaimed achievements based on exaggerated numbers, it is important to follow-up on the tough questions posed by the apex court, challenging the hitherto procrastinated approach to combat pollution-levels. It is fair to be critical of the reactive steps being implemented by the state authorities, most of which, have time and again proven to be largely ineffective. As the AQI fluctuates between 'poor' and 'severe', the idea must be to refrain from mudslinging measures and mandate the civic-agencies to identify a longterm solution at the earliest. The yearly toxic-smog impacts roadsafety and public-life, and the issue is compounded by lack of viable efforts and co-ordination, at different levels. While the lifehazard aggravates, indoors as well as outdoors, the focus continues to be on theatrics and gimmicks. As students and taxpayers expect the authorities to remain cognisant of the challenges, one's yet to witness a large-scale, collaborative and result-oriented attempt, to suppress the problem of stubble burning at its source. Though keypersonnel have been summoned and directed to shoulder greateraccountability, especially when satellite-images provide enoughevidence of non-compliance. Undermining the right to a good quality-of-life, is apparently the new norm as public-health at large, continues to deteriorate. That said, state PCBs should collaborate to establish a robust framework, driven by a carrot-and-stick approach towards producers in order to truly prioritise the key socio-economic objectives. — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Hong Kong protests run deep and go beyond just democratisation—a manifestation of the latent social and economic undercurrents

One country, two estranged systems





HINA AND HONG Kong tied under "One Country, Two Systems" has China focussing on the first half "One Country" with recent plans of introducing "patriotic education" in Hong Kong. Hong Kongers eye the latter half "Two Systems" instead, which explains the five-month boil. China may not have moved the People's Armed Police (PAP) to quell the protests as it did in Tiananmen in 1989 fearing a global backlash, but China's Hong Kong strategy is no less a hardline one. From (accusations of) employing "Triads" to beat up protesters to banning face masks to new "enforcement mechanisms" for law and order to letting businesses and schools stall—all of which impact the economy in the hope of bringing Hong Kongers to the negotiating table.

Protests began in Hong Kong on June 9, against an extradition bill whereby suspects in Hong Kong could be sent to mainland China for trial. The extradition bill proved to be the proverbial last straw on Hong Kongers back. Furious Hong Kongers, one in seven, (Hong Kong population 7.4 million) took to the streets. The China-backed Hong Kong government under Chief Executive, Carrie Lam failed to read the depth of anti-China sentiment. Lam dilly-dallied pulling out the extradition bill, but in the process, matters went from bad to worse. In the course of the protests, several demands arose, such as the release of arrested protesters and an independent enquiry into police actions.

Hong Kong is of prime importance to China. This was more than evident from the proceedings of the recently concluded Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CP). CP officials indicated that "enforcement mechanisms" will be rolled out soon, and plans to re-look the manner in which the Chief Executive and key officials are selected are on the anvil.

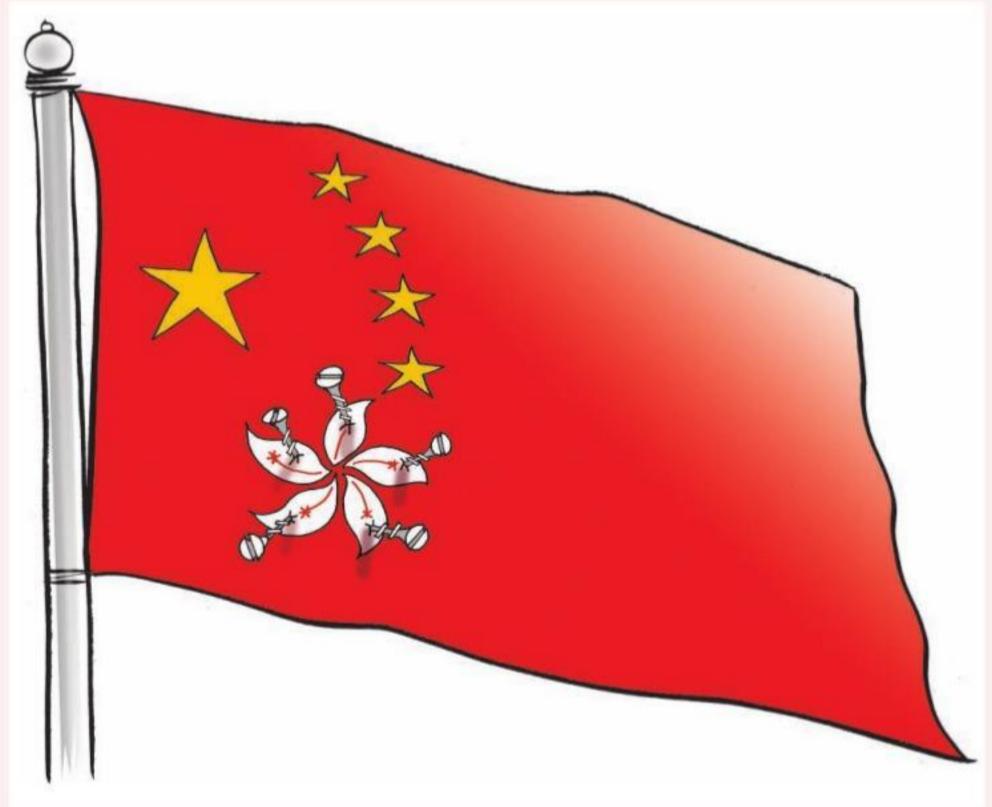
How are the protests impacting

everyday life in Hong Kong? Despite negative reports, Hong Kong is almost as famously"business as usual". Recent conversations by this author included a Hong Konger (who naturally prefers to remain anonymous) who said that Hong Kong is "always functional, perhaps with shorter queues at all operational tourist sites", while British tourist Alice Reilly visiting Hong Kong said, "at no time, did I feel threatened in Hong Kong and loved it, though the Airport Express did not run on time and the stations felt edgy."

There is no doubt that Hong Kong's steely economic image has taken a hit. Though Heritage Foundation (a thinktank based in Washington, DC) ranked Hong Kong as the world's freest economy with an economic freedom score of 90.2 in 2019 (China ranks 100 on the same index of 180 countries), Hong Kong has slipped into economic recession for the first time in a decade. Predictions are that it will worsen in 2020. Tourists have dropped, visitors from mainland have sharply decreased, retail has suffered and restaurants are in the red. Hong Kong economy shrunk 3.2% in the three months to September, higher than the 0.6% contraction forecast by economists in a Bloomberg poll.

Until recently, Hong Kong was known for its keen Chinese-style business enterprise and sleek Western-style infrastructural efficiency—not for protests or Molotov cocktail-wielding masked protesters. Nor was Hong Kong known for police brutality or a government more attuned to Beijing than its own people. In fact, Hong Kong was considered a blip for modernisation theory, which co-related economic democratisation with political democratisation.

Despite Hong Kong being a "highincome economy" (since 1987), and not withstanding its vibrant civil society that has nurtured community organisations and NGOs, it did not ride the wave of democratisation that swept the world since the 1970s. In this, Hong



ILLUSTRATIONS: ROHNIT PHORE

Kong kept company with Singapore and Brunei, highly developed but with weak democratic credentials. In fact, what is happening in Hong Kong has already made Singapore wary, with Yale-National University of Singapore canceling a course on political protests called Dissent and Resistance in Singapore, that was to be organised by local playwright Alfian Sa'at.

Unlike Singapore which decolonised and had the Peoples Action Party (PAP) emerge as the dominant party, Hong Kong decolonised, but did not democratise. Hong Kong's political destiny as a former British colony for 150 years led it to China's political embrace with the Sino-British declaration in 1984, paving

the way for reversal back to China in 1997. A mini-constitution (Basic Law), separation of powers between executive, legislature and judiciary, free press and independent judiciary came as guarantors of Hong Kong's autonomy. Hong Kong became China's Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Both sides are discovering the nitty-gritties of the unprecedented political experiment in history where a yawning gap separates theory and practice, rhetoric and reality.

To be fair, the Hong Kong impasse looks different to both sides. As one indignant Singapore-based Chinese Cao told this author "Hong Kongers consider themselves superior to the Chinese, but tell me, in what way are

they better than me? Just because they speak English and wave the US and UK flag (as a few protesters have done recently)?". The Chinese have not stopped short of calling Hong Kongers out as "running dogs of colonialism" (as one Professor of Peking University did publicly several years ago, in 2012). In fact, the dominant Chinese narrative of "One Country" coated in the saccharine of patriotism has stoked resentment in China's domestic audience, who consider Hong Kong as nothing but a disgruntled renegade to the fold.

On its part, China cannot comprehend what, where and how it got wrong. China's way of political and economic integration has been sinicisation and

homogenisation of vast tracts of polity and people, including in recent history. Inner Mongolia, where Mongol (nomadic) ethos is in decline, Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), where a social-grid system of management is in place, and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), where the demographic map has been dramatically altered, are examples. Hong Kong was to be formatted along a similar graph. Only that "mainlandisation" or "provincialisation" as Hong Kongers allege, back-fired.

Hong Kong protests run deep and go beyond the coin of just democratisation —they are a manifestation of the latent social and economic undercurrents. Protests against Article 23 (in 2003) and the Umbrella Movement (in 2014) were a prelude. Issues such as Hong Kong capitalists in collusion with the government (business-state collusion), "property hegemony", "matchbox housing" inequality (gini coefficient, a measure of inequality was 0.539 in 2018, with zero indicating equality) and denial of universal suffrage (or popular mandate) collated as the collective erosion of Hong Kong identity and core values. This explains why a disorganised pluralistic civil society shapeless and formless "that flows like water" has taken up the cudgels against Beijing-at random places such as shopping malls, at train stations, at the Central Business District, re-grouping and dispersing aided by messaging apps such as Telegram, WhatsApp and Signal

China has so far met only one demand of the protesters, the formal withdrawal of the bill, but this too after foot-dragging and delay.

What happens next? Many articulate that Hong Kong as a developed financial centre with rule of law is indispensable to China. Many Chinese shun that opinion saying "With or without Hong Kong, a fraction of China, China is sure to progress". But the reverse, whether Hong Kong can progress without China is becoming an exceedingly difficult question to answer. With China's authoritarian resilience at its best—Hong Kongers with no bread or cake may come to the table, or so China hopes.

An unintended fallout for China is that the entire HK saga is not a wonderful advertisement for a "China rising" nor will this coax Taiwan to consider reunification under a "One Country, Two Systems".

GST collection growth rate has slowed down

Oct 2019

% chg, y-o-y

14.14

13,042

FY19

% of BE target

92.6

14,886

FY20

FYTD (April to Sept)

6,516

FYTD (April to Sept)

25 % chg, y-o-y

DATA DRIVE

Taxing times

Tax (GST) collection in October declined 5.3% year-on-year, to ₹95,380 crore, because of the slowdown in consumption. Overall GST collections in April-October 2019 increased 3.4% year-on-year. The government has a target of at least ₹1 lakh crore in GST collection every month to meet its revenue estimates. This pushes up the required run rate for the rest of FY20 to ₹1.34 lakh crore per month.

OODS AND SERVICES

A report by Kotak Institutional Equities Research says that at the current run rate, the government could see a shortfall of around ₹90,000 crore in CGST and IGST and ₹1.3 lakh crore in SGST collections for this financial year. The pressure on the government's revenues is mounting since, apart from the shortfall in GST collections, both income tax and corporation tax collections remain weak. Moreover, in

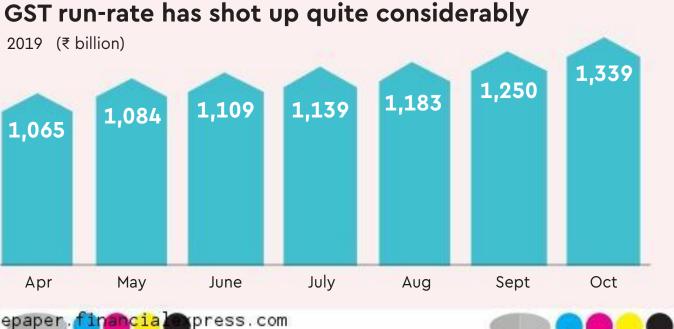
September, the government had cut corporate tax rates for all domestic companies by almost 10 percentage points to boost investments and economic growth. The tax cut will cost the exchequer ₹1.45 lakh crore annually. Also, falling nominal GDP growth in the economy will have implications for tax buoyancy.

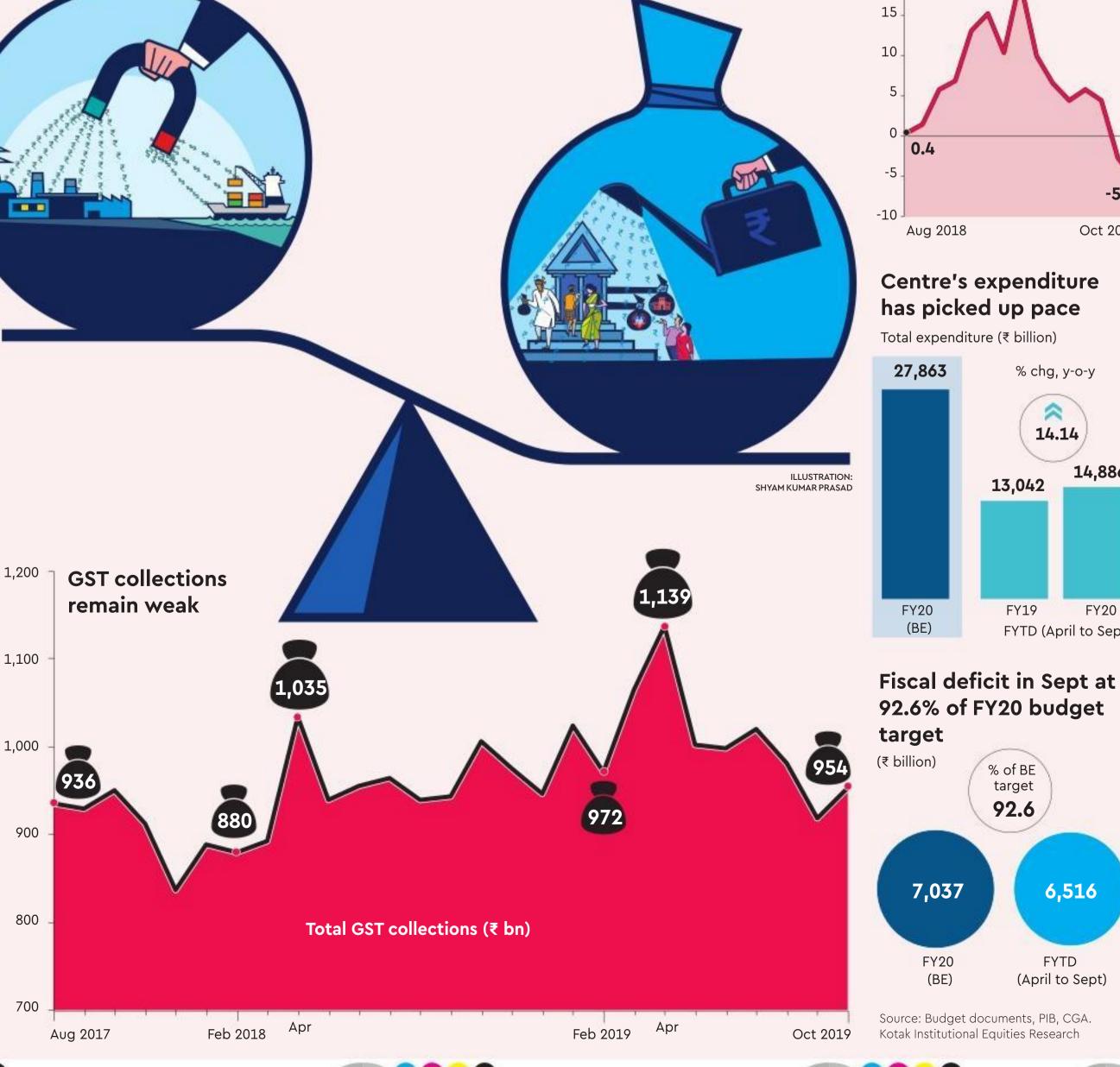
While GST collections in November are likely to improve because of festive demand aided by lending push by banks, buoyancy in GST collection is unlikely to sustain unless there is a quick pickup in economic growth. The economy grew 5% in the three months to June, the slowest in 25 quarters, and the high frequency indicators are showing no signs of improvement in the subsequent months. Gross tax revenues in H1HY20 have grown at a dismal 1.5%, with 5.2% growth in direct taxes and a decline of 2.2% in indirect taxes.

High required run rate for tax revenues in H2FY20

				FY20	
(₹ billion)	FY20 (BE)	FYTD (Apri FY19	l to Sept) FY20	Current run rate	Required run rate
■ Gross tax revenues	24,612	9,195	9,058	1,532	2,570
Direct taxesCorporation taxIncome tax	13,419 7,660 5,690	4,692 2,493 2,130	4,462 2,437 1,956	782 416 355	1,445 861 593
Indirect taxesCustoms dutyExcise dutyGST	11,192 1,559 3,000 6,633	4,489 718 959 2,805	4,588 645 1,006 2,891	748 120 160 468	1,117 140 340 638

GST run-rate has shot up quite considerably





THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2019

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

NOTHING IS STATIC. EVEN THE MONA LISA IS FALLING APART.

— CHUCK PALAHNIUK

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE MIGHTY STATE

It needs to hound and victimise a writer to feel strong and decisive

T SHOULD BE deeply embarrassing to the Ministry of Home Affairs in India to be shown up as a petty-minded witch-hunter like this. (It should be deeply troubling to the rest of the country if the MHA isn't embarrassed). The ministry has put out, officially, that the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card of British-born journalist and writer Aatish Taseer is being cancelled because he concealed the fact that his late father was of Pakistani origin, and because Taseer had failed to dispute the notice sent to him which asked him to explain this "lapse" in information. To counter the second claim, Taseer has tweeted out a picture of an email exchange between himself and the Consul General where he objected to the ministry's claim — the full 21 days to reply were not given to him, he pointed out, only 24 hours. And on the first charge, surely the mandarins of MHA need to read more, or at least, be better informed about what is being written and read. Aatish Taseer has written about his father, Salmaan Taseer, governor of Pakistan's Punjab who was assassinated in January 2011, extensively, including in his 2007 book, Stranger to History: A Son's Journey through Islamic Lands. As he wrote in a later essay: "The line that had gone through Punjab affected me directly. No nostalgia, no bittersweet ironies for me: I had a parent on one side and a parent on the other".

But then, the powers-that-be in the MHA do read. By all accounts, they have read Taseer's profile of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in *Time* magazine earlier this year, in May, during his re-election bid, titled "India's Divider in Chief". They have read it enough to be provoked by it to show Taseer the border. They are provoked by it enough to lose sight of how small and insecure they are making themselves look by drawing a line to keep out a writer who writes about his hybrid identity and about the idea of India in affectionate and generous ways. In doing so, they make India, the country he spent formative years in, look more like the Pakistan he travelled to, and discovered, only later in life — the home of the idea of a utopia "animated far more by the wish to purge than to build". Of course, Taseer also found it in himself, and in Pakistan, to revise that view. To widen his lens in order to see the country through its more complicated realities and its people, beyond the "endless contradictions" that are also "self-wounding" as they seek to kill off a shared past with India.

As it tries to cut Taseer off from a country he calls his own, a country that is therefore his, the Indian government only attracts unflattering attention to itself. The controversy about Taseer's citizenship is not about the obscure and antiquated law, the Citizenship Act of 1955. It is about the mighty Indian state that apparently needs to hound and victimise a writer to feel strong and decisive.

Sending my son to exile

What has happened to Aatish, what the state is

doing, is not just wrong but evil

I have to say that I am truly

horrified that this was done

without my even being given

a hearing. Of course, as the

BJP's Twitter trolls tell me

gleefully, I could go to court.

But, I am not sure that I can

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how can they.



TAVLEEN SINGH

AS I SIT down to write this, I still find it hard to believe that a prime minister whom I have openly supported for more than five years has allowed his government to exile my son. When the notice arrived from the home ministry, three months ago, asking Aatish to explain why his status as an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) should not be revoked on the grounds that he had not revealed that his father was Pakistani, my first reaction was to call the home minister.

I thought there was some misunderstanding and wanted to clear it up. I wanted to show him a document in my possession that shows that when I brought Aatish to live in India in 1982 as his sole legal guardian, he was given permission till the age of 18. His father's name is on the affidavit I signed. When he turned 18, I tried to apply for another indefinite visa and was advised by the officials to get a PIO card instead. This I did and nobody asked me if his father was Pakistani. In any case, this was irrelevant since neither Aatish nor I were in touch with his father. I thought if I explained all this to the home minister, he would be supportive.

My calls to the home minister were ignored. So I then tried to call Hiren Joshi who, as the prime minister's man in charge of the media, has an obligation to at least return the calls of a journalist. He refused to come on the phone. I wrote him several e-mails. They were also ignored. It was then that I realised that somebody very high up wanted revenge on Aatish. This had been a niggling fear at the back of my mind ever since he wrote that article in *Time* magazine that appeared on the cover with a distorted sketch of Narendra Modi and the words, "Divider in Chief".

I remember telling Aatish, then, that the

article was inaccurate and ill-timed because this was in the last week of the Lok Sabha campaign and there were clear indications to me that Modi would be winning a second term. The title of the piece was offensive but the content should have offended Rahul Gandhi more than Modi because in it the then Congress President was described as "an unteachable mediocrity". In any case, it was only after this article appeared that the plot to exile my son began to unfold. Modi's troll army on Twitter went ballistic and it was not long before Aatish was being described not just as a Pakistani but as an ISI agent and a jihadist.

The inevitable happened yesterday when Twitter was used to inform Aatish that he was no longer entitled to an OCI card because he had "lied" about his father's nationality. The truth is that neither he nor I have ever lied about it. Salmaan Taseer's mother was English and as far as I know, Salmaan had a British passport since as a Pakistani he is allowed dual nationality. Aatish was born in London in 1980 and British law at the time allowed him to become a full British citizen. We got him a British passport because of the hope that it would make it easier for him to go between India and Pakistan. My relationship with Salmaan ended badly soon after and I brought Aatish back to India. He did not meet his father till he was an adult.

Bringing him home to India as a baby made my family less disapproving of my "mistake". Financially, the only support I had was the job that MJ Akbar gave me in *The* Telegraph as soon as I returned home and told him I needed work. What I earned was not enough to live on. My mother helped by paying the rent of my barsati in Golf Links. And, my sister and my friend, Vasundhara Raje, helped financially whenever I was too broke to get through the month. Luckily, my sister's twins are only two years older than Aatish, so there was a regular supply of clothes. And, as I wrote in my book, Durbar, the only really nice clothes Aatish had as a child came from Sonia Gandhi. We were friends then and she helped, as did my other friends, in whatever way they could. But grateful as I am to all those who helped me through those difficult years, I have to say that I would not advise any woman to become a single mother.

To return, though, to the exile that Aatish now faces, I have to say that I am truly horrified that this was done without my even being given a hearing. Of course, as the BJP's Twitter trolls tell me gleefully, I could go to court. But, I am not sure that I can afford to spend the next 10 years fighting a legal battle against the mighty Indian state. Even as I write these words, my heart goes out to those people whom the home minister calls "termites" who may actually be Indian "termites" but will probably spend the rest of their lives in detention centres because if I

cannot afford a legal battle, how can they. Let me say as clearly as possible that I believe what has happened to Aatish is not just wrong but evil, just as what is happening to the desperately poor people who are running around trying to prove their Indian citizenship is evil and wrong. The damage done to India's image as the world's largest democracy is incalculable.

> The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

NOT CRICKET

Players involved in fixing are only most visible part of a malaise that spreads far beyond, must be urgently addressed

HE SKELETONS KEEP tumbling out of the Karnataka Premier League with players and coaches being regularly picked up by the police on charges of matchfixing. CM Gautam is the latest player caught in the police net and indications are that it may be just the tip of the iceberg. No one should be surprised, except, of course, the Indian cricket board which has been silent witness to corruption in officially sanctioned state leagues over the years. This is the board that puts several hurdles in the way of Indian cricketers taking part in county cricket for genuine skill-building experience and stops them from playing in overseas leagues, but has continued to be a silent watcher as its own state association sanctioned leagues are infested with corruption. The players and support staff that form the core of these leagues are the ones who end up in the IPL, from where paths lead to the Indian team — and yet, the Indian board continues to push things under the carpet.

Take the KPL, for instance. It was even stopped for three years when Anil Kumble was the president of Karnataka State Cricket Association. When he stopped it in 2009 because he wasn't happy with the private ownership of the franchise model, Kumble had said: "What is the KPL about? What is the point of it? In its current form, it would allow backdoor entry into KSCA for people not passionate about cricket." And here we are, the backdoor smashed by the gate crashers.

It's easy to criticise the players who have been involved in fixing, but the malaise spreads far beyond them. Karnataka cricket is full of stories about how the system is rigged from the top, a fact borne out by the police who have unearthed dubious owners and those who influence them. The situation has been dire for some time now. There have been cases of captains announcing final playing elevens after the team takes to the field, because they have been suspicious of their own team mates. Some have been spooked by the presence of travelling "fans" from across the country to remote places in the state where the games were held. Even as the police continue to investigate the KPL, the Tamil Nadu state association whose TNPL, too, was hit by the fixing controversy, has given a clean chit after an internal investigation. The pattern seems to be clear: Unless and until the police get into the act, the board or the associations won't do any serious spring cleaning on their own.

LET MONA LISA BE

She continues to trigger conversation, and disagreement, five centuries later

HIS TIME IT isn't the enigmatic smile that has got people talking about Mona Lisa, but a claim that the Musee du Louvre in Paris is worse off for being the home of Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpiece. Millions of visitors troop in to the Louvre, in itself an architectural marvel and heritage structure, just to view the oil-on-wood painting Da Vinci is believed to have completed in 1507. Since the French Revolution, this Renaissance masterpiece has been housed here except for a brief period when it was stolen.

It is being held against Mona Lisa that she overshadows all the other masterpieces in the Louvre, and the magnificent museum itself. True, the glory of Mona Lisa is such that visitors tend to ignore the many great specimens of Renaissance art, Egyptian antiquities and Greek sculptures. The Rembrandts and Raphaels, Rubens and Vermeer, Michelangelo and even the other Da Vinci works fade into the background as the gaze is focussed on Mona Lisa. Yet, many visitors, drawn in by the aura around the painting, leave unimpressed by this relatively small-sized oil-on-wood work. For the informed museum-goer, however, it signifies a moment in art history that can't be ignored. If the great Flemish art in the hall that houses Mona Lisa is largely ignored as a consequence, so be it.

If it is just hype that draws people to her, the crowd will disperse, later if not sooner. There is, however, no reason to force the crowd to exit. Or to take down Mona Lisa from that Louvre wall. Cut out the noise, and the smile will continue to reach out to you. Stay or leave, but let her be on the wall surrounded by many masters.

mess.com



LONG MARCH THAT WASN'T

Fazlur Rehman's movement seems impressive, but only on the surface

KHALED AHMED

THE PLAN TO hold a "long march" to topple Prime Minister Imran Khan from power was called the "azadi march", a name Khan had chosen for his own agitation against then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2014. But, in 2019, a long march has not been easy to organise.

The main opposition parties, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP), were doing badly after the 2018 election, won by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). PMLN leader Sharif had been convicted of corruption and money-laundering, or not being "sadiq" (truthful) and "ameen" (trustworthy), under the constitution, and sentenced to seven years in jail. The leader of the PPP, Asif Ali Zardari, was picked up for corruption by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) once again and was facing trial. Both mainstream party leaders were severely, if not terminally, ill: Zardari has already spent 11 years in a NAB jail in the past. But it was neither the PMLN nor the PPP who thought of the "long march" against Khan, knowing that the army — called the "idara" or "institution" stood squarely behind him.

PMLN was divided between the incarcerated Nawaz, who wanted anti-government agitation, and his younger brother head of the party, Shehbaz Sharif — who preferred to wait for the right winds to blow from the GHQ. A letter from prison from Nawaz to the party, however, forced his hand. On the other hand, Zardari, pragmatic to a fault, thought he could marginally support the "long march" and see where it went in the long run.

But the long march was owned by neither party. It was organised and run by Maulana Fazlur Rehman of Jamiat Ulemathought could ever undertake a protest march with little following among the masses (Fazlur Rehman actually had lost his seat in parliament in the 2018 election). Additionally, the maulana was supposed to be a man of realism, ever staying on the right side of the army which he knew stood behind PM Khan. The kind of mobilisation he finally managed, though, on the outskirts of Islamabad on the first of November, surprised all observers. The disciplined crowd from the party's

e-Islam-Fazl (JUIF), a religious party no one

religious seminaries or madrasas was estimated at a couple of hundred thousand. Still, even more astounding was the amount of money he could spend — estimated at a billion rupees — on the transport of his votaries. No one, not even expert observers, could have predicted the kind of show in Islamabad where the PMLN's Shehbaz Sharif and PPP's Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari looked like "marginal" politicians seeking the limelight.

Bilawal was upfront with his "selected" accusation — that the 2018 polls were rigged by the army to bring Khan to power, kicking polling agents out of the process while soldiers oversaw the vote-count. Fazlur Rehman was not less emphatic in sarcastically pointing to the support of the army behind Khan who, he said, was totally incompetent as prime minister. He was, no doubt responding to Khan's own uncivilised language about him in the recent past. And, when he threw at Khan the deadline of "two days" - in which Khan was to bow out of power or face "arrest" at the hands of his madrasa followers – everyone knew that the maulana was taking on the "idara" in extremis, which neither of the two parties would be able to do.

However, Shehbaz Sharif let off some accumulated steam accusing Khan of relying on magic rather than Islam: Tangentially referring to Khan's ascetically inclined wife, who is rumoured to be in possession of djinns, making Khan win through supernatural means. Predictably, the army spoke through its Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) warning all and sundry that the army would not tolerate the sort of disturbance the "long march" was threatening.

What Pakistan has achieved in its 72 years of existence is the culture of insult. It is a nuclear power where the leaders, and their followers, speak a language unheard of in past civilisations. Some fulmination comes from religion, but not all. And it come equally from the mouths of men and women. For instance, the prime minister's adviser on information, Firdaus Ahiq Awan (the name means paradise) — a heavily powdered volcano emitting fire and brimstone on television. She easily eclipses the PTI rank-andfile vulgarising democracy in Pakistan daily through their harangues.

The Maulana says he can take on the government and the army across the country, and jam all business. However, the protest or "dharna" has gone on while the PPP and PMLN hesitated at the starting line saying they were a part of the protest against an "illegitimate" state; but that they won't go beyond sitting on the outer edge of Islamabad. Everyone knows the maulana can't take on the army, but no one minds enjoying the destabilising abuse-fest unleashed against the ruling party.

> The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

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NOVEMBER 9, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIAN EXPRESS

IOC STRIKE OFF INDIAN OIL WORKERS suspended their 14day-old agitation which had seriously disrupted national economy and hampered drought relief and rabi sowing. The decision was taken by representatives of nine unions and leaders of the Petroleum Workers' Federation in response to the Petroleum and Chemical Minister's appeal. General secretary of the Petroleum Workers' Federation, Y D Sharma, announced that the nine concerned unions all over the country had been advised to suspend the protest action. Though workers are expected to resume work by tomorrow, it will take another week or 10 days before normalcy in the IOC operations is restored.

JANATA LOCAL TIES JAGJIVAN RAM CONFIRMED that the Janata Party would have local adjustments in the four southern states and Maharashtra and West Bengal, and that it would put up "roughly 400" candidates in the coming elections. Talking to newsmen, he said, "I do not think we will contest all the 542 Lok Sabha seats." He did not think there would be any difficulty in selection of candidates even for the seats not held by the Janata

Party in the distorted Lok Sabha. "We have

learnt the art of selecting candidates. We

have done this for years," he added.

Replying to questions, Ram confirmed

that the party president, Chandra Shekhar,

had left the final selection of candidates for

ences to him.

the seats on which there were sharp differ-

US Hostage Crisis

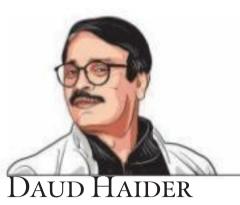
THE MUSLIM PROTESTERS holding some 60 American hostages in the US embassy in Teheran rejected a mediation offer from the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Teheran radio reported. The announcement appeared to dash one of the best hopes for a quick end to the embassy siege, AP reports. As if to underline their determination, an Iranian student set himself afire outside the embassy today, Iran's Pars news agency said. He was hospitalised with serious burns and was given little chance of survival.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2019

THE IDEAS PAGE

Revisiting the Wall

Political and economic divisions continue to haunt Germany three decades after people pulled down the barrier that divided Berlin



THE BLOODLESS REVOLUTION came from East Germany, but it was West Berlin which demolished the wall. From November 9 to 11, West Berliners clambered on to the Wall, leapt down onto East German soil. East Berliners, men and women, meanwhile, formed orderly queues at the Bernholmer Strasse checkpoint at Prenzlauer Berg, clutching their passports issued by the East German government. The checkpoint was opened before midnight on November 9, 1989 by the East German police, following which passports were displayed, and entry gained into West Berlin. No hammers or crowbars in sight, at least in my sight. Forget about breaking down the Wall. Postmidnight, four more checkpoints opened their gates. East Berliners walked into West Berlin. West Berliners walked into East Berlin too. Without passports.

The Berlin Wall measured 161 km. Not that all of it was wall; rivers and forests were lined with barbed wire. The police presence was all pervasive, though. A watchtower every half a kilometre, no telling who was in it. Not a single East German or East Berlin artist contributed to the graffiti on the Berlin Wall. On the eastern face, that is. On the western side, there was graffiti by artists from West Berlin. West Germany, Western Europe, and elsewhere in the world. A sort of "draw as you like": Politics, landscapes, faces, even male and female nudes; in every possible colour and size; all kinds of comments, writings, all anonymous. On one section of the Wall at Potsdamer Platz, a major tourist attraction today, I saw, in huge black Bengali letters, the word "sala".

I found refuge in West Berlin a few years before the fall of the Wall. No one from West Berlin had any problems travelling to East Berlin. Anyone from East Germany aged 65 or more, and holding a passport, was entitled to a day's visit to any city in the west. In some cases, a week's visit was permitted.

For those of us who saw the fall of the Wall, the history of the fall is not yet in the past, the 30 years in between seem like yesterday because the Wall still exists. The fall isn't complete. This wall is made of politics, economics, discrimination. For tourists to Berlin, there's still a few metres of the "real" Wall standing at one designated spot. The area previously covered by the Wall is marked by signposts that read "Mauer (wall) 1961-89". Bits of the Wall are still sold to visitors from abroad, complete with government authentication. But after 30 years, the "pieces of the Wall" business is floundering.

Those who are 35 have no memories of the Wall, those who are 30 don't even know what it means. School textbooks devote plenty of space to it (particularly to the misrule of the East German government and East European Communists, not even Hitler and the Nazis, or World War II command as much attention). The current generation do not agonise over the Wall, or East-West Berlin. They are simply not interested. Their problems are rooted in today's Germany. Unemployment is on the rise, living spaces increasingly scarce, the youth are headed abroad. The political establishment is seemingly indifferent, and the

right-wing is exploiting the situation. We are watching as the right-wing sup-

port-base increases at a dizzying rate. Who



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would have imagined that the fall of the Wall and the reunification of Germany (October 3, 1991) would have caused even greater turmoil? Germany is now the smoke in the European Union's eye. The two Germanys have united to become the EU bully. A large, unified nation, economically dominant, politically monopolistic, crooking its finger at random EU nations, monitoring their every move, with no room for manoeuvre, paying lip service to the "oneness of shared democratic values".

In the past three decades, Germany has become a critical factor not just within the EU, but in the world. The richest nation in the EU, fourth in the world, is nonetheless plagued by its own internal politics, if one were to study the political map of the last decade.

The two major political parties, CDU (Christian Democratic Party) and SDP (Social Democratic Party) are increasingly disconnected from the people, who are not giving them an electoral majority. The smaller parties, such as the ultra-right AfD (Alternative fur Deutschland), are gaining strength. They are the second largest party in the Thuringen provincial elections and have sent several representatives to the Central Parliament, where they are the principal opposition party. As Tagore wrote, "The shadows descend on the forest/thunder growls through the clouds..."

To mark the 30th year of the fall of the Wall, the government has been making loud noises about "Freiheit" (freedom). Everywhere, the information and publicity ministry has been putting up a giant, colourful poster of a nude woman, inscribed with the word "Freiheit". The thing is, as the Bengali proverb has it, "Once you start dancing, it is a matter of time before the mask falls off."

We had thought the collapse of the Wall would ring the death knell for Communism (including the Soviet Union and other East European Communist countries). But what do we see today? Communists forming the government in Thuringen.

In the past 30 years, no major new industry has come to East Germany. The government and large industrial companies are not interested. East Germans now openly question what they have gained from the fall of the Berlin Wall. "The Communists at least put food on our tables, gave us houses, now we're crying for food and homes. Were we so very badly off? What has Freiheit given us?"

Close on the heels of the German reunification, the government announced, "The East must look as good as the West. And the money will come from West Germans." And so West Germans began contributing to the "Solidarity Fund", their contributions to be deducted from the income from jobs or businesses, from two to 25 per cent. The contri-

bution would be returned in five years, with interest. Of course, the unemployed, or those on government dole, and East Germans, were exempt, but pensioners were not. We were all swept away in a tide of brotherly love. Since 1991, the government has been promising to return the Solidarity Fund (geld) contribution — principal plus interest — "after the next budget". The contributors have given up.

Another serious issue has emerged since 2015 — 1.5 million refugees from Syria and the Middle East, Taxes have risen, accommodation has become scarce, essential commodities cost five times of what they used to. Water, electricity, gas, public transport, all cost three times as much now.

Say a West German citizen earns 100 euros for work done. An East German will earn 80 euros for the same job. There's a further twist to this discrimination. Prices in East Germany are 20 per cent lower than those in the west, but on their daily visits to the west, East Germans are not entitled to any discounts on public transport fares or any kind of shopping. No discounts on plane fares while travelling abroad either.

Particularly significant is the fact that since the reunification, only two central ministers have come from East Germany, under pressure of strong criticism, only to be discarded later. As of now, all ministers are from West Germany. East Germany doesn't count. Chancellor Angela Merkel is also from the west (Hamburg). Her father, a priest from East Germany, was stuck there following his retirement.

The Berlin Wall came down on November 9, 1991, but the collapse had begun earlier. In a move that was almost certainly preplanned, more than 100 East Germans (mostly youth) on a trip to Hungary breached the barbed wire fence to enter Austria on August 20, 1989. Then West German external affairs minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, rushed to the aid of a bewildered Austrian government. Having exerted immense pressure on Austria to grant shelter to the East German deserters, he brought them back to West Germany. The incident received huge coverage in the West German media, and snippets reached the east too. An inspired East German populace was ready for revolution. The government was forced to open multiple Berlin checkpoints and Gunter Schabowski of the Communist Party's politburo read out an incomplete announcement from a scrap of paper and the evening of

Haider, a Bangladeshi poet, lived in political exile in Kolkata before moving to Berlin. Translated from Bengali by Yagnaseni Chakraborty

November 9 arrived.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"IN a society where everyone is not equal before the law, or equally significant in terms of political considerations, certain people get to exercise their right to protest... others are deprived of it."

With a twinkle and a smile

Nabaneeta Dev Sen's versatility was mixed always with a penetrating but forgiving sense of humour



DIPESH CHAKRABARTY

NABANEETA DEV SEN, the popular, awardwinning, and feminist Bengali author, poet, teacher, raconteur, and literary critic, passed away in Kolkata on November 7. She had been fighting cancer for a while. She was 81 at the time of her passing. Born to acclaimed writer-parents, Narendra Dev and Radharani Dev, she married, in 1959, Amartya Sen, the economist who would later go on to win the Nobel prize. Their marriage ended in 1976. Antara, a well-known editor in Delhi, and Nandana, a noted screen actress, are their two daughters.

It is difficult in the space of this brief notice to convey a sense of the versatility mixed always with a distant, penetrating but, ultimately, forgiving sense of humour — that marked the writings of Dev Sen. She moved effortlessly between many different genres of writing, from poetry, short story, novels, novellas, travel writing, children's literature, one-act plays, essays, belles-lettres to academic literary criticism. Her writings in English belong only to the last category, all of her other writings adding up to some eighty volumes — being in Bengali. In one of her famous auto-

biographical essays, with signature humour, Dev Sen described her two eyes as being rather different in what they saw of the world. Her right eye, she said, was always full of mirth and laughter, and was naturally drawn to all that was pleasurable and fun in life. Her left eye, however, was forever turned inwards and nothing that was deeply ironical or sad about the human condition could escape its attention. This was her way of explaining why all her critical observations of the world were always tinged with a gentle sense of humour. But humour was also a genre she excelled at. Even a few weeks before she died, she wrote a funny newspaper piece on her illness that made the rounds on numerous WhatsApp groups in West Bengal and Bangladesh. She borrowed an immortal and funny line from a children's poem written by Sukumar Ray, the father of the nonsense rhyme in Bengali, and of Satyajit Ray - "Alrite, kamen fite" (Alright, come'n fight!). This was the title she gave to her short essay, where she wondered if cancer,

at 81, was such a big deal after all. And, if her friends who seemed to her to be rather sad at her suffering, were not confusing her imminent passing with the mahaprayan of a child! It was, in any case, time to go. So why so much grieving, she asked of them. Dev Sen's accomplishments were

many. A winner of many honours and prizes, including the Mahadevi Verma Prize in 1992, Sahitya Akademi award in 1999, and Padma Shri in 2000, she was a professor of comparative literature at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, until her retirement in 2002. She held many distinguished positions, either as a visiting professor or as a visiting creative writer, at many reputed academic institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Germany, France, Japan, and Israel. She also served in leadership positions in many state-level, national and international literary institutions and acted as a member of the jury for many important literary prizes in the country. She was the founder of West Bengal Women's Writing Forum. Her English translation of the 16th-century female Bengali poet Chandrabati's version of the Ramayana together with her comparative discussion of this text, the 16th-century Telugu poetess Molla's Ramayana, some texts in Marathi and Maithili, as well as the more contemporary Telugu Ranganayakamma's Ramayana Vishavruksham (1974-76), will remain an enduring contribution to feminist scholarship on the study of the epic.

It was through her creative writing that Dev Sen gave herself a sovereign presence in the Bengali literary sphere. I say "sovereign" because Dev Sen did not bow to any expectations that the Kolkata society might have had of a woman whose life had been the subject of gossip and speculation among the literati of the city. She was not afraid of baring her pain in the early poetry she wrote, nor did she ever compromise on questions of freedom. Finding herself a divorcee and a single mother when she was not even 40, she went to Indiana University in the United States for her doctoral degree and secured a teaching position in Jadavpur on return. She thus made a new life for herself, a life of which she was the sole author and became exemplary for many. Her writings won her a permanent place in the

Professor Dev Sen's death will be deeply mourned in the literary and scholarly

hearts of her readers.

The writer is Lawrence A. Kimpton distinguished service professor of history South Asian languages and civilizations, University of Chicago

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SECURING VARSITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Threat perception' (IE, November 8). The posting of CISF in Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati will be a great disservice to the author of the national anthem and his ideals. Threat perception has become a new reason to undermine rational and democratic arguments against the powers that be.

LR Murmu, Delhi

ISSUES AFTER RCEP

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Closing a door' (IE, November 8). The gains made by the country if it had joined the RCEP would have been negated by the losses in several sectors of the economy. But if India does not carry out reforms it will continue to lag behind its competitors in Asia. India has a huge market of cheap labour and a spirited private sector which can be used to its advantage. The government should look into reducing energy costs and encourage other efficiency measures to increase the viability of the country's industries. **Anmol Singh Gandhi,** Ujjain

CREATE CHANCES

THIS IS WITH reference to the article, 'Experts, dissent and the economy' (IE, November 8). One of the main reasons for the poor state of the economy is the focus, by successive governments, on giving subsidies, freebies and doles. People should be empowered to buy goods and services and not handed them free of cost. This can be done by creating employment opportunities and developing infrastructure. By setting up educational Institutes on the lines of IIMs ,AIIMs and IITs and by giving impetus to research, the country's policymakers can check brain drain. **Veena Shenoy,** Thane

ABOUT HARMONY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'On Ayodhya, listen carefully' November 7). The author deserves to

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Wrong **PRIORITIES**

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Lost opportunity' (IE, November 6). The decision to opt out of RCEP is not surprising. Exportled 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

be congratulated for reformulating the slogan, "Garv se kaho hum Hindu hain" to "Prem se kaho hum Hindu hain". She has expressed the sentiments of many who want to see a Ram temple and yet, respect the existence of mosques where our Muslim brethren can worship.

Vinod Dhall, Gurgaon

CORRIDOR OF HOPE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Kartarpur opening tomorrow, Pak Army overrules Imran Khan: Passports needed' (IE, November 8). Kartarpur corridor's opening comes at a juncture when operations of the Samjhauta Express and Thar Express have been suspended and trade-ties cut. At a time when people to people relations is almost negligible, the opening of the Kartarpur comes as a breather.

Abhishek Saroha, Haryana

A rare courage

Celebrating the three Victoria Cross winners in World War II

ASHOK K МЕНТА

WINNING A VICTORIA Cross — the highest gallantry award an Indian soldier could get before Independence, like the Param Vir Chakra today — is a rarest of rare events. It is born out of a conjugation of stars when audacity, temerity and daredevilry combine with luck to make ordinary mortals perform feats of battle-madness in the face of extreme risk, and the enemy. Gorkhas have a flair for risk taking as many are not familiar with danger. Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw once famously said: "Anyone who says he does not know fear is either lying or a Gorkha".

However, the following stories about valour and courage are bewilderingly true. One battalion of the Indian Army — the Second Battalion, Fifth Gorkha Rifles, Frontier Force achieved the unthinkable. It got three Victoria Crosses in the second Burma campaign during World War II, all within 14 months and two within the same action. The Second Battalion Fifth Gorkha Rifles (Second-Five) had got a drubbing from the Japanese on both sides of the Sittang River crossing in February 1942. It was reduced to half its strength of 880, mostly due to non-swimming Gorkhas being caught on the wrong side of the river when the bridge on it was

blown up. Many were taken as prisoners, or went missing. Another battalion — First Battalion, Third Gorkha Rifles — faced worst depletion. It was amalgamated with Second-Five to constitute the Fifth Battalion, Third Gorkha Rifles (Five-Three GR) with a commanding officer from Second-Five.

The three actions that got the Second-Five the VC took place along one axis — Tiddim to Imphal — to prevent the Japanese from taking Imphal. All three were classic infantry battles entailing the use of silencing machine guns, lobbing grenades into bunkers and assaulting gun emplacements, culminating in hand to hand combat using bayonets, khukuris and stones and the ultimate weapon of faith, the cry, "Aayo Gorkhali". In defence or in attack, battles were fought to the last man, last round, the wounded refusing evacuation and the leaders at the front. Compare this with today's stand-off combat with missiles and drones where the assault is mounted from another continent by remote control.

Second Fifth VC winning actions were of a different kind. The first action on May 26, 1943, was on Basha Hill to stem Japanese advance. Havaldar Gaje Ghale leading his platoon was asked to evict the Japanese. Ghale and the raw recruits he led had not been baptised under fear. Even then, he shepherded them, while being under fire from a dozen machine guns, across the killing zone into the lion's den. Ghale would take one lot and return to guide the second along the narrow ledge criss-crossed by all manner of small arms and indirect fire. On his third sortie, Ghale received multiple wounds but refused to be evacuated, fighting doggedly till the Japanese yielded.

The second VC battle on June 26 1944 was in Bishenpur when Subedar Netra Bahadur Thapa was ordered to take Mortar Bluff under Japanese assault. With a reinforced platoon, Thapa sneaked into Mortar Bluff and held it. The perimeter defence withstood several deadly Japanese assaults. Luck deserted the platoon as two machine guns became unusable and stock of ammunition sunk. With several wounded, Thapa rallied his men to hold fast. The ammunition resupply team was wounded as Japanese entered the post. He called for artillery fire on his own post and fell, fighting a memorable action with khukuri in one hand and the head of a Japanese in the other.

The third VC action on June 26, followed immediately to recapture Mortar Bluff and

Water Picquet. Leading his section, Naik Agan Singh Rai's heroic action not only regained Mortar Bluff but also led to the capture of Water Picquet. At both places, Rai single-handedly covered by his section and artillery, charged gun emplacement killing their crew. Rai's battle heroics became stuff of legends. In his village in Nepal after his retirement, Rai re-enacted for me, both the battles in a spellbinding one-man sound and light show.

On November 9 in Dehradun, the next of kin of the three Victoria Cross winners will be honoured on the 133rd Raising Day of Second Five. Hundreds of veterans from Nepal and India will meet to remember not just the VC winners but other brave soldiers of the battalion who were recognised in battle, and many who went unsung. The whiff of Five-Three GR will return after 77 years as the present commanding officer is from One-Three GR which is co-located with Second Five in Dehradun. The toast to the President will be drunk with Old Monk rum, though some diehards will prefer Nepal's traditional jhol, kodo.

The writer is a former Commanding Officer of the Second Battalion, Fifth Gorkha Rifles

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#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TELLING NUMBERS

Maternal mortality rate in the states: Assam 229, Kerala 42

MATERNAL MORTALITY ratio, measured as the number of maternal deaths per lakh live births, varies among the Indian states from a high of 229 per lakh in Assam to a low of 42 in Kerala. This emerges out of the data in a Special Bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2015-2017 of the Sample Registration System, released on Wednesday.

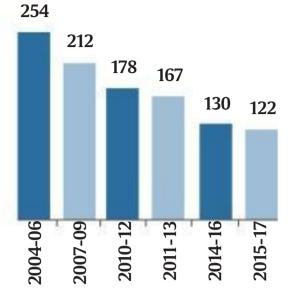
Across the country, the maternal mortality ratio has declined from 130 during 2014-2016 to 122 during 2015-17. While the bulletin has flagged a 26.9% decrease since 2013 (from 167 in 2011-13 to 122 in the latest bulletin), the decline has been by more than half since 2004-06, when the ratio was 254.

Since maternal maternity ratio, or MMR, is calculated by dividing the number of maternal deaths in a given population during a period of time by the number of live births occurring in that period, it reflects the risk of maternal death relative to the number of live births. There is another measure, maternal mortality rate, which is calculated by dividing the average annual number of maternal deaths in a population by the average number of women of reproductive age alive in the same period. This rate reflects the risk of maternal death per pregnancy or per birth and the level of fertility in a population. The bulletin provides details of both measures.

For Assam, which recorded the highest MMR, the 229 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births is still an improvement from the 2014-16 MMR of 237. Uttar Pradesh (216), Madhya Pradesh (188), Rajasthan (186), Odisha (168), Bihar (165) and Chhattisgarh (141) follow. Among these states, the maternal mortality rate is the highest in Uttar Pradesh, at 20.1. Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Assam follow with maternal mortality rates at 17.5, 16.9, 16.8 and 15.2 respectively.

Kerala has the lowest MMR, at 42. It is followed by Maharashtra (55), Tamil Nadu (63), Andhra Pradesh (74), Jharkhand (76) and Telangana (76). Kerala also has the lowest maternal mortality rate, at 1.9, followed by Maharashtra at 3.3.

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO (MMR) IN INDIA (PER LAKH LIVE BIRTHS)



STATES WITH HIGH MMR, 2015-2017

State		Maternal Mortality Rate
Assam	229	15.2
Uttar Pradesh	216	20.1
Madhya Pradesh	188	17.5
Rajasthan	186	16.8
Odisha	168	11.1
Bihar	165	16.9
Chhattisgarh	141	11.0

STATES WITH LOW MMR. 2015-2017

State		Maternal Mortality Rate
Kerala	42	1.9
Maharashtra	55	3.3
Tamil Nadu	63	4.8
Andhra Pradesh	74	3.6
Jharkhand/ Telangana	76	6.1 / 3.8

Maternal maternity ratio = maternal deaths/lakh live births

Maternal mortality rate = Average annual maternal deaths/average number (in lakh) of women of reproductive age alive Source: SRS, Niti Aayog

According to the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global target is to bring down the MMR to fewer than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.

THIS WORD MEANS

OVERSEAS CITIZEN OF INDIA

The status author Aatish Taseer enjoyed until Indian government revoked it. Who are eligible for it?

THE INDIAN government has revoked author Aatish Taseer's Overseas Citizen of India card (*The Indian Express*, November 7). An Overseas Citizen of India, or OCI, is a category introduced by the government in 2005. Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) of certain categories as specified in the Citizenship Act, 1955 are eligible for being OCI cardholders. Some of the benefits for PIO and OCI cardholders were different until 2015, when the government merged these two categories.

The Ministry of Home Affairs defines an OCI as a person who was a citizen of India on or after January 26, 1950; or was eligible to become a citizen of India on that date; or who is a child or grandchild of such a person, among other eligibility criteria. According to Section 7A of the OCI card rules, an applicant is not eligible for the OCI card if he, his parents or grandparents have ever been a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh. This is the ground cited by the government in revoking the OCI card granted to Taseer, whose areas without government permission.

father was a Pakistani national. Taseer grew up in India, and holds a British passport and a Green Card in the US.

OCI cardholders can enter India multiple times, get a multipurpose lifelong visa to visit India, and are exempt from registering with Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) no matter how long their stay.

If an individual is registered as an OCI for a period of five years, he/she are eligible to apply for Indian citizenship. At all Indian international airports, OCI cardholders are provided with special immigration counters. OCI cardholders can open special bank accounts in India, they can buy non-farm property and exercise ownership rights and can also apply for a driver's license and PAN card. However, OCI cardholders do not get voting rights, cannot hold a government job and purchase agricultural or farm land. They cannot run for public office either, nor can they travel to restricted

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

What to read in ozone hole size

The annual ozone hole over the Antarctic has been found to be at its smallest since the 1980s. What causes the hole, and what does the small area this year mean in the context of climate protection efforts?

AMITABH SINHA PUNE. NOVEMBER 8

WHILE ONGOING and predicted impacts of climate change have been bringing an almost daily reminder of an impending catastrophe, there is some good news on another environmental danger. An "ozone hole", which builds up over the Antarctic region this time of the year, has been found to be the smallest since it was first discovered in the 1980s (briefly reported in *The Indian Express*,

October 24). This comes just a month after

the UN Environment Programme said that

the ozone layer was on track to be completely

restored within "our lifetime" itself. Depletion of the ozone layer, which protects the planet from the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun, was considered as grave a threat to the planet in the 1980s and 1990s as climate change is now. Over the years, however, that threat has largely dissipated, as the world has banned the production and consumption of most of the "ozone-depleting substances". However, it will take another 15-

45 years for the ozone layer to be fully restored.

Why is ozone important?

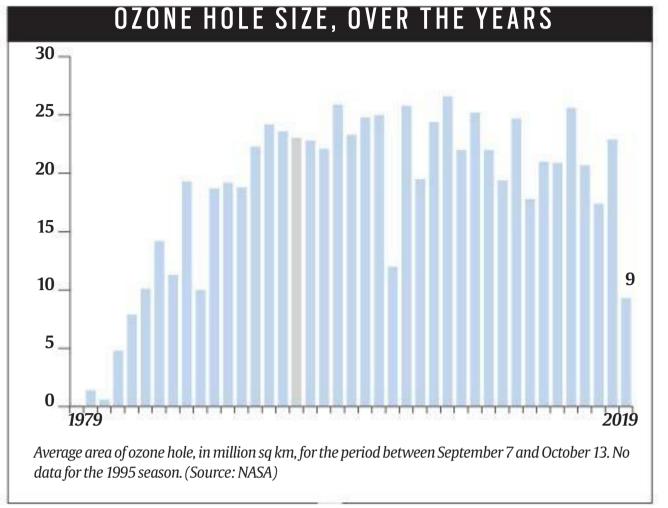
Ozone (chemically, a molecule of three oxygen atoms) is found mainly in the upper atmosphere, an area called stratosphere, between 10 and 50 km from the earth's surface. Though it is talked of as a layer, ozone is present in the atmosphere in rather low concentrations. Even at places where this layer is thickest, there are not more than a few molecules of ozone for every million air molecules.

But they perform a very important function. By absorbing the harmful ultraviolet radiations from the sun, the ozone molecules eliminate a big threat to life forms on earth. UV rays can cause skin cancer and other diseases and deformities, in plants and animals.

During experiments in Antarctica in the early 1980s, scientists noticed that during September-November, the concentration of ozone fell considerably lower to what was recorded in the 1950s. Studies and satellite measurements confirmed the depletion, and by mid-1980s scientists narrowed down on a class of industrial chemicals like chloroflurocarbons, or CFCs, as the likely culprits.

What causes the ozone hole?

The 'ozone hole' is not really a hole. It is a



World Ozone Day in 2013. Express Archive

region in the stratosphere, directly above Antarctica, where the concentration of ozone has been measured to become extremely low in certain months. Depletion is not limited to that area and has happened in other regions of the stratosphere as well, but a set of special meteorological and chemical conditions that arise over the Antarctica in the months of

September, October and November make the problem much more acute there.

NASA recently reported that this ozone hole, which usually grows to about 20 million sq km in September, was less than half that size this year, the smallest it has ever been during this time after being discovered.

Is this a major gain?

NASA said that this could have happened because of an extraordinarily high temperatures in the stratosphere this year, rather than the ongoing human efforts to contain the ozone depletion. Scientists have reported that temperatures in some areas of the stratosphere - usually over 100 degrees below zero - were 30° to 40°C higher than normal in September this year. At least two such extraordinary warming of the stratosphere has been observed in the past, and on both those occasions the ozone hole was also measured to be smaller than usual. But scientists are not sure why this warming happens. This warming has no observed connection with the warming in lower atmosphere that leads to climate change.

But while this gain might be temporary, the depletion in the ozone layer is consistently being contained, thanks to global efforts to ban the use of harmful chemicals that destroy ozone. CFCs and similar chemicals

were being widely used industrial applications like refrigeration, air-conditioning, foams, fire-extinguishers and solvents.

A 1989 global agreement, called Montreal Protocol, organised international consensus on phased elimination of these chemicals. In subsequent years, the agreement has ensured the phase-out of over 90 per cent of these chemicals. Two years ago, an amendment to the Montreal Protocol cleared the way for a faster elimination of another set of similar compounds, called hydroflurocarbons, or HFCs, which were being used as temporary replacements for CFCs.

The impact on the ozone layer has been encouraging. In September this year, the UN Environment Programme said that the ozone layer over some areas in the northern hemisphere could be completely restored to their pre-1980 levels by as early as the 2030s. The Antarctica ozone hole could be completely healed by the 2060s, it said. Parts of the ozone layer had recovered at the rate of 1 to 3 per cent every ten years since 2000.

What does it mean for climate protection efforts overall?

Because of its success in eliminating ozone depleting substances, the Montreal Protocol is often cited as a model for the problem of climate change. The example, however, is not very suitable. The chemicals that were dealt with by the Montreal Protocol were used in only some specific sectors and their replacements were readily available, even if at a higher cost differential at that time. The economic impact of banning these chemicals, and the disruption it caused, was limited to these sectors. Over the years, these industrial sectors have managed a relatively smooth transition.

Climate change, caused by greenhouse gas emissions, is a much more complex, and all-pervasive, problem. The emission of carbon dioxide happens from the most basic of all activity — production and consumption of energy. All other activities require energy to drive them, and therefore there is no escaping carbon dioxide emissions. Even the so called renewable energies have a carbon footprint. Reduction in carbon dioxide emissions affects economic activity and, in turn, the living standards of people. That is why climate change agreements like the Kyoto Protocol could achieve very little till now. while Paris Agreement faces an uphill task.

Fake 'horns' in the lab: will they save rhinos?

Study describes method to create fakes using horse hairs, rhino experts not convinced it can stop poaching

KABIR FIRAQUE

NEW DELHI. NOVEMBER 8

THE MAIN reason why rhinos of all species are poached, including the one-horned Indian rhinoceros found mostly in Assam, is that there is a market for its horn. In Chinese traditional medicine, the rhino horn is believed to have medicinal and other health benefits, including working as an aphrodisiac — an idea that remains a threat to rhino populations.

Now, researchers have proposed a solution — fake horns. They have described a method for creating fake "rhino horns" using horse hair, and suggested that if the market could be flooded with these, then the demand for real rhino horns would go down. The proposal has been met with incredulity by rhino conservation experts in India.

What the research claims

Scientists from the University of Oxford and Fudan University, Shanghai, have described their method in a paper published on Friday in the journal *Scientific Reports*. They

have suggested that the method will provide a blueprint to create "credible fakes" that could eventually flood the rhino horn market.

Unlike the horn of a cow, at the core of which is live bone, the rhino's horn is actually a tuft of hair that grows, tightly packed, and glued together on the nose by a mass of cells and fluid. The scientists relied on the horse, which is the rhino's near relative, bundled together its tail hairs and glued them together with a matrix of regenerated silk. These sample structures, they have reported, were similar to real rhino horn in look, feel and properties, as shown by analytical studies.

In order to confuse the market, the authors stressed, plausible copies should be simple to produce while being similar. The composite they created is easily moulded into a "rhino horn copy" with a microstructure that, when cut and polished, is remarkably similar to that of the real horn, they said.

The composition and the method of preparation should be the same for Indian and African rhinos, co-lead author Fritz Vollrath, professor of zoology at Oxford, told *The Indian* Express in reply to a question. In a statement on



the Oxford website, Vollrath said, "We leave it to others to develop this technology further with the aim to confuse the trade, depress prices and thus support rhino conservation."

Questions over effectiveness

If fakes do infiltrate the market, the question is whether buyers will eventually become conscious enough to avoid them. "It's a black market already and dodgy entrepreneurs will find ways... Exposing the rhino horn for what it is *i.e.* a tuft of hair, albeit a hugely expensive one that is easily replicated, should rattle the end customer and make him consider spending good money on it," Vollrath said, by email.

In India, rhino conservation experts were

their notice. "The fake rhino horn concept will not work," said Dr Bibhab K Talukdar, chair, Asian Rhino Specialist Group of International Union for Conservation of Nature/Species Survival Commission; Asia coordinator, International Rhino Foundation; and CEO and secretary general of the NGO Aaranyak. "... Whether fake or real horn trade, the intention is to make money. So this is not going to help rhinos in the wild, either way!" Talukdar said.

unconvinced when the study was brought to

Amit Sharma, head of Rhino Conservation. World Wildlife Fund, noted he has not seen the study, "but my view is that people are always looking for genuine products as they value it. This is true for any commodity. There will always be check and balance especially for products of high value and demand."

At Kaziranga National Park, home to over 2,000 rhinos, the number of rhinos poached has decreased from 27 in 2014 to six in 2017. For these horns, too, the market is China. Talukdar said in the last few years horns from Assam, and North Bengal, are being transported to China via Myanmar.

Inputs from Tora Agarwala in Guwahati

Why Thiruvalluvar matters in Tamil Nadu, and the debate over his history

ARUN JANARDHANAN

CHENNAI, NOVEMBER 8

FOR A WEEK now, a controversy has been playing out in Tamil Nadu over the legacy of the ancient saint Thiruvalluvar. It began with the BIP state unit tweeting a picture of Thiruvalluvar, whose white robes had been replaced with saffron, which drew protests from Dravidian and Left parties. On Monday, a statue of the saint was vandalised in Thanjavur; on Wednesday, after the state BJP IT cell asked party members to pay floral tributes to Thiruvalluvar statues across the state, Arjun Sampath, leader of a fringe group called Hindu Munnani, tried to drape a saffron shawl on one statue, and was arrested. A look at the importance of Thiruvalluvar in Tamil Nadu:

Who was Thiruvalluvar?

He is regarded as a cultural and moral icon for Tamils across caste and religious lines. The period when he lived is debated,

as is his religious identity. Some place him in the third or fourth century; others put him in the eighth or ninth. Some call him a Hindu; some trace his past to Jainism; Dravidian groups count him as a saint with no religious identifiers except his Dravidian roots.

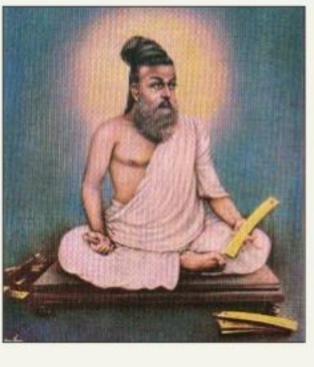
In his 1873 book *Tamil Wisdom*; *Traditions* Concerning Hindu Sages and Selections from their Writings, British scholar Edward Jewitt Robinson wrote about the saint, including the suggestion that "Valluvan, or priest of the Pariah tribe, found the deserted child [in a grove in Chennai], and reared him as his own." The book quotes several testimonies on Valluvar (Thiruvalluvar), including: "Of the six sects, one will condemn the system of the other but none of them will condemn the system propounded by Valluvar in his Cural: It has the merit of harmonising the opinions of them all, so that each sect would admit it to be its own." Another testimony says, "It is difficult to say whether the Sanskrit or the Tamil is the best: They are perhaps on a par, since the Sanskrit possesses the Veda, and the Tamil

the Cural, composed by the divine Valluvar."

What are the contemporary views?

BJP national secretary H Raja told The *Indian Express* that Dravidian parties who don't believe in gods had removed Hindu symbols from depictions of Thiruvalluvar. Raja said Tirukkural, the saint's collection of 1,330 couplets (or Kurals/Curals) is similar to Hindu Sastram. "The original Thiruvalluvar had *vibhuti* and all Hindu symbols. It was Dravida Kazhagam and DMK who changed his appearance to suit their political gains," he said, arguing that the saint's verses and life were similar to Sanatan Dharma.

S Swaminathan, a retired IIT professor who specialised in ancient Tamil history, said: "From whatever little evidence left on Thiruvalluvur's life, several scholars had concluded that most likely he was a Jain. neither a Hindu nor a Dravidian. All that we can ascertain is Tirukkural, his extraordinary piece of literature, has no comparison in Indian history or ancient literature."



A painting of Thiruvalluvar

Where does all this fit in alongside recent findings on Dravidian history? While the ongoing controversy was trig-

gered by the BJP's efforts to attribute a Hindu religious link to Thiruvalluvar, Dravidian history has already been the subject of recent discourse. Findings from the Keeladi excavation site, published by the state archaeological department, had pushed back Tamil Dravidian history in South India by at least 300 years, from 300 BCE to 600 BCE. The exhaustive excavations did not find symbols associated with Hinduism, which strengthened the theory of ancient Dravidian history detached from Hinduism. The excavations are expected to throw light on a nearly 1,000-year gap between the Indus Valley civilisation (1500 BCE) and the Sangam Era (600 BCE).

Is this the first time that efforts are being made to claim the legacy of important Tamil perosnalities?

Swaminathan said that this has been happening all along, by Dravidian groups five decades ago, and by Hindutva groups now. "The so-called picture of Thiruvalluvar

in white robes itself was a recent imagination. No figure or picture of Thiruvalluvar existed [earlier]. We do not even know whether the ancient saint who penned *Tirukkural* was one person or a blend of many over the years. Like Jesus, we created the figure of Thiruvalluvar several hundred years after his death," Swaminathan said.

Two years ago, a similar controversy had been created when the BJP called the 19thcentury social reformer Sree Narayana Guru a Hindu saint. Guru, who is credited with laying the foundations for Kerala's social and secular fabric, is known for opposing casteism and promoting spiritual freedom.

In 2017, the RSS national council in Coimbatore called for popularising Tamil saints and icons in the organisation's literature to help Hindutva ideology gain more visibility in the state. The RSS-BJP has sought to claim the legacy of freedom fighters and national leaders like Kappalottiya Tamizhan, with whom households in Tamil Nadu identify closely.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 226

गहराते बादल

अर्थव्यवस्था पर छाए संकट के बादल घने होते जा रहे हैं। मड़ी ने भारत को लेकर अपनी रेटिंग में जो चेतावनी दी है वह पहले से कमजोर आर्थिक संभावनाओं में आ रहे और अधिक बदलाव को चिह्नित करना ही है। आमतौर पर रेटिंग एजेंसियां धीमी गति से प्रतिक्रिया देती हैं। पर्वानमान लगाने वालों में से अधिकांश ने यह आशा जताई थी कि जुलाई-सितंबर तिमाही के बाद अर्थव्यवस्था में मामूली सुधार दिखाई दे सकता है (भले ही आधार अवधि में बदलाव के कारण) लेकिन शायद ऐसा नहीं हो क्योंकि

इस मंदी के अपने तमाम कारण हैं।

एक राजकोषीय संकट उत्पन्न हो रहा है जो वित्त आयोग की रिपोर्ट सामने आने के बाद उजागर हो सकता है। खासतौर पर उस स्थिति में जब वह केंद्र सरकार के भारी-भरकम बकाया बिल, छिपे हए व्यय, राजस्व में कमी तथा तमाम ऐसे कारणों से राज्यों की कर हिस्सेदारी वापस चाहता हो। सरकार वोट जुटाने के लिए नागरिकों के अनुकूल कार्यक्रमों पर व्यय कर रही है। इसकी शिकायत भला किससे की जाए। लेकिन वे कदम कहां हैं जिनकी बदौलत इनके

लिए धन जुटाया जाएगा।

पूंजी का या तो गलत तरीके से इस्तेमाल हो रहा है या उसे नष्ट किया जा रहा है। वित्तीय क्षेत्र डूब रहा है। सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र ढेरों नकदी गडप रहा है। ताजा मामला दिवालिया दुरसंचार कंपनियों का है जो वेतन तक देने की स्थिति में नहीं हैं। रेलवे में ढेर सारी नकदी लगी है लेकिन आवाजाही या राजस्व के मोर्चे पर कोई खास बढ़ोतरी नजर नहीं आती। दिवालिया प्रक्रिया का किस्सा अलग ही है। गैर जवाबदेह किस्म के मुख्यमंत्री ऊर्जा अनुबंध रद्द करके पुंजी को नष्ट कर रहे हैं। विभिन्न क्षेत्रों का कुप्रबंधन करने वाले नियामक मसलन दुरसंचार क्षेत्र के नियामक आदि ने भी पंजी को क्षति पहंचाई है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय भी ऐसे मामलों में कोई मदद नहीं कर पाया है। मूल बात यह है कि अर्थव्यवस्था की वृद्धि संभावनाएं अभी भी उच्च बचत और निवेश दर में निहित हैं लेकिन यदि निवेश की गई राशि बिना किसी

सुराग के डूब जाए तो ऐसे में क्या कहा जा संकता है। अचल संपत्ति क्षेत्र की कहानी भी इससे अलग नहीं है।

सबसे बडी चिंता है आश्वस्त न होते हुए भी ऐसे आरोपों को नकारे जाने की। बडे क्षेत्रीय कारोबारी समझौते से बाहर रहने का निर्णय भी शायद कोई विकल्प न होने की स्थिति में लिया गया। परंतु

यह दर्शाना मुर्खतापुर्ण है कि

यह साहसी नेतृत्व का उदाहरण है। जब बंगलादेश के पूर्व में स्थित हर देश इसमें शामिल हो और भारत नहीं तो यह बताता है कि गडबडी भारत में ही है। यह बीते पांच साल में नेतत्व की नाकामी दर्शाता है। यह सुधार की कमी है और बताता है कि हम सबसे बड़े और तेज विकसित होते क्षेत्र के साथ एकीकृत नहीं हो पाए।

पिछले मुक्त व्यापार समझौतों के भारत के पक्ष में कारगर नहीं होने को लेकर दी जा रही

दलील गलत है, उनसे थोडा फर्क तो पडा। भारतीय बाजार में चीनी उत्पादों की भरमार हो जाने की आशंका वास्तविक हो सकती है और नहीं भी। लेकिन चीन के साथ व्यापार घाटा केवल आधी कहानी ही है, भारत का इस क्षेत्र

के अमूमन हरेक देश के साथ बडा व्यापार घाटा है। ऑस्ट्रेलिया के साप्ताहिक मंथन लिए दरवाजे खोलने का

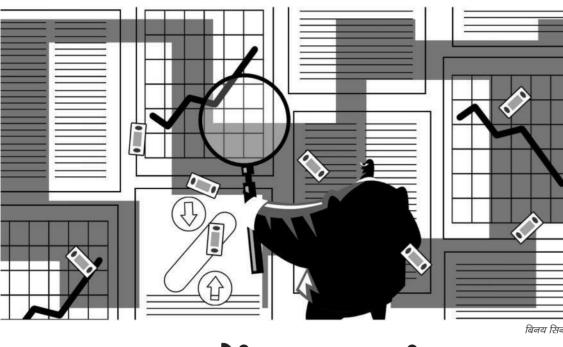
मतलब कृषि क्षेत्र को टी. एन. नाइनन खोलना है, न्यूजीलैंड के

मामले में यह डेरी उद्योग है और आसियान देशों के मामले में दूसरे कृषि उत्पादों के लिए अपने दरवाजे खोलना है। 'ऐक्टिंग ईस्ट' के बजाय अपना तवज्जो 'लुकिंग वेस्ट' पर लाने के लिए अमेरिका के साथ व्यापार समझौते करने आसान नहीं होंगे, खासकर उस समय जब विश्व व्यापार संगठन में व्यापारिक विवादों पर शिकस्त मिल रही हो।

ऐसा कहा जा रहा है कि हम बाद में आरसेप

का हिस्सा बन सकते हैं लेकिन घरेलू स्तर पर जीत दर्ज करने वाले लॉबी समूह संरक्षणवादी हैं तो वे सरकारी नीति-निर्माताओं पर अपना नियंत्रण क्यों कम कर देंगे ? आयात शुल्कों में कटौती, कृषि उत्पादकता को दोगुना करने और बिजली दरों में क्रॉस सब्सिडी खत्म करने के लिए हमारी तैयारी की कार्ययोजना और समयसीमा कहां हैं ? या संगठित रिटेलरों को हतोत्साहित होने पर क्षेत्रीय आपूर्ति शृंखलाओं में घुसने की क्या तैयारी है ? सरकार ने आयात शुल्क बढ़ा दिए हैं और एक डंपिंग-रोधी चैंपियन बन चुकी है। ऐसे में भारत पहले से अधिक अंतराभिमुख होता जा रहा है।

सवाल यह है कि व्यवस्था कैसे खुल सकती है या अधिक प्रतिस्पर्द्धी हो सकती है? प्रतिस्पर्द्धी इकाइयों को वे लोग बाजार से निकाल बाहर कर दे रहे हैं जो प्रतिस्पर्द्धी नहीं हैं। पराजित ही जीत रहे हैं। पांच लाख करोड़ डॉलर की मंजिल की राह यह तो नहीं है।



ब्याज दरों का अंतरण ही सुधारेगा सेहत

उधारी की दरों एवं आरबीआई की रीपो दर के बीच का फासला ऐसे स्तर पर आ चुका है जो केवल संकट के दौर में ही नजर आता है। इस पहलू पर रोशनी डाल रहे हैं **नीलकंठ मिश्रा**

ज दरों का अंतरण न होना अब संकट जैसे हालात में पहुंच चुका है। बैंकों की तरफ से बांटे गए कर्ज पर लिए जाने वाले ब्याज की औसत दर (उधारी दर) और भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) की तरफ से तय बैंकों को दिए जाने वाले कर्ज की दर (रीपो दर) के बीच का फासला काफी बढ गया है। यह फासला पिछले 15 महीनों में खास तौर पर बढता गया है। जनवरी 2015 से लेकर अगस्त 2018 के दौरान औसत बैंक उधारी दर रीपो दर के अनुपात में ही कम होती रही थी। लेकिन अगस्त 2018 के बाद के समय में बैंक उधारी दरों शायद ही कम हुई हैं जबिक इस दौरान रीपो दर में 135 आधार अंकों की भारी कटौती हो चुकी है।

ब्याज दर कटौती में से कुछ का समय अंतराल सामान्य है। पहले नए कर्जी को प्रभावित करने वाली दर कटौती कुल लोन बुक में कमी करती है। नए कर्जी एवं पुराने कर्जी पर ब्याज दरों का फर्क थोडा बढ गया है लेकिन हमारी नजर में ऐसा मूलत: पिछले साल कुछ समय तक चले दर वृद्धि चक्र के चलते हुआ है। जून-अगस्त 2018 के दौरान रीपो दर छह फीसदी से बढ़कर 6.5 फीसदी हो गई थी। ऐसा होने पर नए कर्जों पर वसले जाने वाले ब्याज की दर पहले तो बढ़ी और अब गिरने लगी है। यह कुछ वैसा ही है जैसे एक बहुत बड़े जहाज को अपनी दिशा बदलने में थोडा वक्त लगता है और दर को अगली कुछ तिमाहियों में नीचे आना चाहिए क्योंकि रीपो दर में हालिया कटौती का असर नीचे तक जाएगा। हालांकि रीपो दरों और नए कर्जों पर लिए जाने वाले ब्याज दर के बीच फासला अब काफी बड़ा हो गया है और यह सार्थक ढंग से समायोजित नहीं हो सकता है। आरबीआई के अक्टूबर से लागू बाहरी बेंचमार्क की तरफ मुड़ने से भावी दर कटौती में तेजी लाने में मदद मिल सकती है लेकिन उससे पहले ही की जा चुकी कटौती अंतरित नहीं होगी।

कई लोग इसे बैंकों के लाभ कमाने की कवायद समझ लेते हैं लेकिन ऐसा होने के साक्ष्य कम ही हैं। नए कर्ज पर उधारी दर और उधारी दर की नगण्य लागत (एमसीएलआर) के बीच का फासला ऐतिहासिक दायरे के भीतर ही है। बैंकों के शुद्ध ब्याज मार्जिन के आंकडे भी खास

बढे नहीं हैं। दर हस्तांतरण की ऐसी ही समस्या बॉन्ड बाजार में भी है। बॉन्ड बाजार में जोखिम-न्युनता की वजह से ऋण विस्तार होने की स्थिति दर्ज की गई है। मसलन, गैर बैंकिंग वित्त कंपनियों (एनबीएफसी) के बीच उधारी की 'सुरक्षित' माने जाने वाली दर और जोखिम से भरी दर के बीच का फासला

लेकिन ऐसी ही समस्या टर्म प्रीमियम बढने की है। दीर्घावधि वाली जोखिम-मुक्त दर (जैसे 10 वर्षीय सरकारी बॉन्ड प्रतिफल) और कम अवधि की जोखिम-मुक्त दर (रीपो दर) का फासला इस प्रीमियम को दर्शाता है। यह फासला न केवल पहले से बहुत व्यापक है बल्कि अब यह वैश्विक स्तर पर भी सबसे ज्यादा है। यह कुछ गं समस्याओं की तरफ इशारा करता है।

इस आधार पर ऐसा लग सकता है कि विदेशी पोर्टफोलियो निवेशकों (एफपीआई) की बॉन्ड मांग कम होने के कारण ऐसा है लेकिन इस समस्या के दूसरे पहलू भी हैं। पिछले दशक में आरबीआई लगातार सांविधिक तरलता अनुपात (एसएलआर) की सीमा नीचे लाता रहा है जबकि इसी अनुपात में एफपीआई की सीमा बढ़ाता रहा है। करीब एक साल पहले तक यह तरीका काम कर रहा था क्योंकि सरकारी बॉन्ड में बैंकों की हिस्सेदारी गिर गई थी और एफपीआई, घरेलू बीमा कंपनियों और आरबीआई की हिस्सेदारी बढ़ गई। लेकिन पिछले एक साल में एफपीआई काफी हद तक सरकारी बॉन्ड से दूर ही रहे हैं और बैंकों के हिस्से में गिरावट आने से आरबीआई का हिस्सा भी कम हो गया है। तुलनात्मक रूप में, आरबीआई ने खरीदा है और बैंकों ने बेचा है। एक महीना पहले तक बैंक उधारी

के लिए तरलता पैदा करने के मकसद से सरकारी बॉन्ड बेच रहे थे। बढ़े हुए फासले ने हाल में समय जमा दरों और रीपो दर के बीच हाल के दिनों में फासला बढ़ा है और हमारी राय में यह समस्या का एक और लक्षण है। छोटी बचत की दरें कम करने में सरकार की हिचक से उपजा तनाव इस व्याख्या का महज एक हिस्सा है और यह वार्षिक वृद्धिपरक जमा के केवल 10 फीसदी को ही प्रभावित करता है।

हमारे विचार में बैंकों एवं बॉन्ड बाजार दोनों में कमजोर दर हस्तांतरण की असली वजह पैसे की कमजोर आपूर्ति है। चलन में मौजूद मुद्रा, बैंकों में जमा और आरबीआई के पास बैंकों के जमा को कुल योग पिछले तीन साल से करीब 10 फीसदी की दर से बढता रहा है। नॉमिनल संदर्भों में 10-11 फीसदी की वार्षिक दर से बढने की अपेक्षा रखने वाली अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए यह वृद्धि काफी कम है। अर्थव्यवस्था के 40 फीसदी से अधिक हिस्से के अनौपचारिक ढांचे को औपचारिक बनाने की नीति को देखते हुए पैसे की आपूर्ति अधिक तेजी से बढने की जरूरत है। हालांकि वित्तीय व्यवस्था में जोखिम कम होने से सितंबर 2018 के बाद मुद्रा गुणक भले ही नीचे आ गया है लेकिन आधार मुद्रा में वृद्धि अब सुस्त पड़ते हुए 12 फीसदी ही रह गई है।

बॉन्ड एवं बैंक बाजारों में प्रभावी ब्याज दरों के नीचे नहीं आने और अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती जारी रहने के बीच व्यवस्थागत ऋण वृद्धि का 10 फीसदी के नीचे गिर जाना अधिक चौंकाता नहीं है। एक साल पहले तक यह वृद्धि करीब 15 फीसदी थी। ऋण वृद्धि में गिरावट मांग और आपूर्ति दोनों कारणों से आई है। उच्च ब्याज दर होने से कर्ज की मांग हतोत्साहित होती है और वित्तीय संस्थानों की तरफ से ऋण मानदंड सख्त करने एवं ऋण वृद्धि लक्ष्यों को नीचे लाने से मांग भी आपूर्ति भी प्रभावित हो रही है। मसलन, वाहन ऋण के आवेदन खारिज करने की दर बढ गई है और म्युचुअल फंडों के जोखिम प्रबंधक थोड़े-बहुत जोखिम वाले बॉन्ड की भी खरीद से हतोत्साहित कर रहे हैं।

अगर व्यवस्थागत ऋण में वृद्धि के साथ व्यापक मुद्रा आपूर्ति भी एक अंक में बनी रहती है तो आर्थिक गतिविधियों में अनवरत सुधार की कल्पना कर पाना मुश्किल है। नीति-निर्माताओं के लिए चुनौती यह तय करने की है कि उधारी की दरें नॉमिनल वृद्धि दरों में गिरावट के अनुपात में नीचे आ जाए। यह उस समय तक नहीं हो सकता है जब तक बैंकों एवं बॉन्ड बाजारों तक दर हस्तांतरण में जारी अव्यवस्था दूर करने के लिए बल का इस्तेमाल न किया जाए। व्यापक रूप से विवेकपूर्ण नीति लाने के लिए चक्रीय-रोधी बदलाव एक विकल्प हो सकते हैं लेकिन बैंकों एवं बॉन्ड बाजारों में ऋण प्रसार को इस नीति से प्रभावित कर पाना मुश्किल होगा। हालांकि नीति-निर्माता आधार मुद्रा आपूर्ति की दर बढा सकते हैं और उन्हें ऐसा करना भी चाहिए। इसके लिए अच्छी खासी संख्या में सरकारी बॉन्ड की खरीद की जा सकती है।

(लेखक क्रेडिट सुइस के भारतीय रणनीतिकार एवं एशिया-प्रशांत रणनीति के सह-प्रमुख हैं)

संगीत क्षेत्र का दरवाजा खोलने से बहेगी कामयाबी की नई बयार दे दी जाए।' अनिवार्य लाइसेंसिंग

क्या आपने कभी इस बात पर गौर किया है कि संगीत कंपनियों ने नए फॉर्मेट, बाजार या विधा के विकास में निवेश करना लगभग बंद कर दिया है? संगीत की इंडिपॉप या कर्नाटक या कव्वाली जैसी सैकडों विधाएं हैं जो करीब 200 भाषाओं एवं बोलियों से संबंधित हैं। हम आज के समय 'व्हाई दिस कोलावेरी डी ' या कोई मधुर भजन तभी सुनते हैं जब वह इंटरनेट पर वायरल हो जाता है। ऐसा नहीं होने पर सैकड़ों-हजारों गायक. गीत. वाद्य-यंत्र और संगीत संयोजन शायद ही लोगों की नजरों में आ पाते हैं। विदेश की बात छोडिए, देश के भीतर भी इन लोगों को लोग नहीं जान पाते हैं।

वहीं लैटिन संगीत का सबसे बड़ा बाजार लैटिन अमेरिका के बाहर है। इसी तरह कोरियाई पॉप संगीत के-पॉप की वैश्विक लोकप्रियता ने कोरियाई संगीत कंपनियों के लिए अरबों डॉलर का बाजार खड़ा कर दिया है। वहीं भारत से निकलकर वैश्विक पटल पर लोकप्रिय होने वाला पिछला बड़ा गाना 'जय हो' था जिसका संगीत वर्ष 2008 में ए आर रहमान ने दिया था।

भारत के 1.67 लाख करोड़ रुपये से बड़े मनोरंजन बाजार में संगीत की भूमिका काफी अहम है, चाहे वह रेडियो, टीवी, ओटीटी, मोबाइल फोन या रेस्टोरेंट क्यों न हों ? ऐसे में सवाल उठता है कि संगीत के बाजार को आगे बढने से कौन रोक रहा है? जवाब है कि दो बातों के चलते ऐसा हो रहा है।

पहली, संगीत की दुनिया बेहद छोटी, बिखरी हुई और पाइरेसी की समस्या से बुरी तरह हलाकान है। ईवाई के आंकड़ों को देखें तो संगीत उद्योग ने वर्ष 2018 में महज 1,400 करोड रुपये की कमाई की थी। इनमें से भी 80 फीसदी हिस्सा अकेले फिल्म संगीत का था। यही वजह है कि संगीत की दुनिया में होने वाले निवेश का सबसे बड़ा हिस्सा भी फिल्म संगीत में ही जाता है। ऐतिहासिक तौर पर फिल्मों ने संगीत उद्योग के राजस्व में 90 फीसदी से भी अधिक योगदान दिया है। हालांकि पिछले वर्षों में संगीत आधारित टीवी चैनलों (चैनल वी और एमटीवी जैसे), कई तरह के फॉर्मेट (कैसेट, सीडी, स्टीमिंग सेवाओं). टेलीविजन और कंसर्ट कारोबार



मीडिया मंत्र

वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

के रफ्तार पकड़ने के साथ गैर-फिल्म संगीत को भी नया बाजार मिलने लगा है। इंडिपॉप, गजल और अन्य संगीत विधाओं का विस्तार भी ऐसे ही हुआ। लेकिन अब भी तमाम विधाओं को अपने आप में समेटने वाले फिल्म संगीत का दबदबा कायम है और यह सबसे लोकप्रिय बना हुआ है। अब डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म भी संगीतकारों, विधा, देश, भाषा और मिजाज के लिहाज से संगीत का वर्गीकरण कर परोसने लगे हैं। लेकिन इन सबके बावजूद

संगीत उद्योग अपना अधिक

विस्तार नहीं कर पाया है और इसकी वजह यह है कि उसकी कमाई दया के लायक ही है। नियामकों ने भी संगीत उद्योग में नए निवेश को दूर रखने का काम किया है। संगीत कारोबार के पिछडने की यह दूसरी वजह है। जरा इसके बारे में सोचिए। संगीत कारोबार के तिगुना स्तर (3,100 करोड़ रुपये) के साथ रेडियो उद्योग काफी आगे है। रेडियो उद्योग अपने राजस्व का बडा हिस्सा संगीत से ही कमाता है लेकिन वह उसे रॉयल्टी के तौर पर महज 60 करोड़ रुपये ही चुकाता है। कॉपीराइट बोर्ड के वर्ष 2010 में दिए गए आदेश ने रेडियो स्टेशनों को अपने शुद्ध विज्ञापन राजस्व का दो फीसदी हिस्सा संगीत लाइसेंसधारकों को देना अनिवार्य किया हुआ है। यह फैसला उस समय आया था जब रेडियो उद्योग ऊंची लाइसेंस फीस और नुकसान के बोझ से जूझ रहा था। लेकिन अब यह उद्योग प्रतिस्पर्द्धी स्थिति में पहुंच चुका है और उसे राजनीतिक विज्ञापनों एवं सजीव कार्यक्रमों जैसे स्रोतों से राजस्व मिल रहा है। भारतीय सांख्यिकी संस्थान में असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर मेघा पटनायक कहती हैं कि अब समय आ गया है कि 'बाजार दर तय करने के लिए

स्वैच्छिक लाइसेंसिंग की अनुमति

व्यवस्था की सितंबर 2020 में समीक्षा होने वाली है। दिल्ली स्थित थिंक-टैंक एस्या सेंटर ने भारतीय संगीत उद्योग संघ (आईएमआई) पिछले महीने इस मसले पर एक चर्चा भी की।

टीवी, ओटीटी, डीटीएच जैसे तमाम संवर्गों में सामग्री तैयार करने की लागत करीब 15-40 फीसदी होती है। ऐसा अनुचित लगता है कि रेडियो में कंटेंट पर आने वाली लागत महज दो फीसदी होती है। हालांकि अनिवार्य लाइसेंसिंग एवं दो फीसदी की लागत रेडियो उद्योग की वैश्विक समस्याएं हैं। यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ एक्रॉन स्कूल ऑफ लॉ में बौद्धिक संपदा एवं तकनीकी कानून कार्यक्रम के निदेशक मार्क शुल्ज कहते हैं कि स्वैच्छिक लाइसेंसिंग से संगीत कंपनियों को 25-50 फीसदी राजस्व हिस्सेदारी हासिल करने में मदद मिल सकती है। स्ट्रीमिंग प्लेटफॉर्म पर दो फीसदी लागत का यह नियम नहीं लागू होता है और वे संगीत अधिकार रखने वालों के साथ 50-70 फीसदी राजस्व साझा करते हैं।

स्वैच्छिक लाइसेंसिंग आदर्श लगती है लेकिन क्या यह भारत जैसे विभाजित बाजार में काम कर सकती है जहां एयरटेल या जियो जैसी बड़ी कंपनियां पहुंच पर नियंत्रण रखती हैं? शायद अनिवार्य लाइसेंसिंग की रॉयल्टी दर को बढ़ाकर 10-15 फीसदी कर दिया जाए।

हम चीन के दृष्टांत से इसे समझ सकते हैं। पांच साल पहले चीन ने एक मुक्त बाजार रॉयल्टी व्यवस्था अपना ली और पाइरेसी पर काफी सख्ती बरती। इसका नतीजा यह हुआ कि चीन के संगीत उद्योग ने मनोरंजन परिदश्य में चार करोड रोजगार पैदा किए हैं और चीन दनिया के 10 अग्रणी संगीत बाजारों में शामिल हो चुका है जबकि वर्ष 2010 में यह 39वें स्थान पर था। एक मुक्त बाजार एवं कुछ नियामकीय समर्थन के मिले-जुले असर से भारत के संगीत उद्योग की तस्वीर बदली जा सकती है।

आईएमआई के अध्यक्ष ब्लेज फर्नांडिस कहते हैं, 'रिकॉर्डेड संगीत उद्योग के दरवाजे खोलिए और हम आने वाले वर्षों में भारत से अगला डेस्पेसिटो निकलते देखेंगे। यह मेक इन इंडिया की सच्ची कहानी होगी।'

कानाफूसी

विधायकों पर नजर

भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) मध्य प्रदेश में अपने विधायकों पर बहुत करीबी निगाह बनाए हुए है। दरअसल राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री कमल नाथ ने अपने पार्टी के कार्यकर्ताओं से हाल ही में कहा था कि कांग्रेस मध्य प्रदेश विधानसभा में अपने विधायकों की संख्या में जल्दी ही कम से कम दो विधायकों का इजाफा कर सकती है। इसके बाद भाजपा में हडबडी का माहौल है। पार्टी ने अपने संगठन पदाधिकारियों से कहा है कि वे विधायकों से संपर्क में रहें। खासकर उन विधायकों से जिनके खिलाफ आपराधिक प्रकरण दर्ज हैं। पार्टी ने विधायकों से भी कहा है कि वे अपने

खिलाफ मामलों की ताजा जानकारी मुहैया कराएं। पार्टी को आशंका है कि कांग्रेस इन मामलों का इस्तेमाल संबंधित विधायकों के खिलाफ दबाव बनाने में कर सकती है। हाल ही में हुए झाबुआ विधानसभा उपचुनाव में भाजपा को हार का सामना करना पड़ा था। इससे पहले पार्टी के दो विधायक विधानसभा में एक विधेयक पर मत विभाजन के दौरान कांग्रेस के पक्ष में मत दे चुके हैं।



नोटबंदी के तीन साल बाद उठते सवाल

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने 8 नवंबर, 2016 की रात को 500 और 1,000 के पुराने नोट को चलन से बाहर कर दिया था। नोटबंदी का मुख्य उद्देश्य भ्रष्टाचार रोकना, नकली नोटों को निष्प्रभावी करना, आतंकवाद को रोकना, काले धन को बाहर निकलना था। नोटबंदी के पीछे का मकसद देश हित में लिया गया था लेकिन अर्थव्यवस्था पर इसका बुरा असर पड़ा। नोटबंदी के बाद 31 मई, 2017 को सीएसओ द्वारा जारी आंकड़े के अनुसार जीडीपी दर 8 प्रतिशत थी, वह 7.1 प्रतिशत पर पहुंच गई। हालांकि सरकार ने दावा किया है कि नोटबंदी का सकारात्मक असर आने वाले वर्षों में देखने मिलेगा, जबिक अर्थशास्त्रियों के मुताबिक वर्तमान आर्थिक सुस्ती के कई कारणों में नोटबंदी भी एक कारण है। वैसे नोटबंदी की वजह से डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था में तेज बढोतरी देखी गई जिससे आर्थिक लेनदेन में पारदर्शिता आई। नोटबंदी के बाद रिजर्व बैंक के पास चलन से बाहर हुए 99.30



प्रतिशत नोट वापस आए। अंथीत लोगों ने 10,720 करोड़ रुपये के पुराने नोट वापस नहीं किए। नोटबंदी के तीन वर्ष बाद देश की अर्थव्यवस्था में नकली नोंट की समस्या अब भी मौजूद है। इसे दूर क़रने के लिए रिजर्व बैंक को कदम उठाने की जरूरत है। देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को नकद रहित बनाने के लिए सरकार ने कई कदम:उठाए लेकिन

नोटबंदी के तीन साल होने पर यथ कांग्रेस के कार्यकर्ताओं ने रिजर्व बैंक के सामने विरोध प्रदर्शन किया *-पीटीआई*

इससे जुड़ी धोखाधड़ी की समस्या का हल

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी. नागपर

जागरूकता ही उपाय है मानव द्वारा विकास के अप्राकृतिक तरीके

अपनाने के कारण ही प्रदुषण की समस्या पैदा हुई है। आज प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का अंधाधुंध दोहन किया जा रहा है। इसने पर्यावरण को बेहद नुकसान पहुंचाया है। हमें जल के संयमित उपयोग पर ध्यान देना होगा क्योंकि भूजल तेजी से घट रहा है। सबमर्सिबल पंपों के इस्तेमाल ने स्थिति को ज्यादा बिगाड दिया है। उधर, वन धरा के आभूषण हैं किंतु विकास के नाम पर तेजी से वन काटे जा रहे हैं। पर्यावरण विशेषज्ञों का भी मत है कि मानव के अस्तित्व के लिए भूतल का एक तिहाई भाग वन क्षेत्र होना चाहिए। लोगों को जागरूक करने, विकास के अप्राकृतिक तरीके त्यागने व प्रकृति से सहचर्य करने में ही प्रदूषण रोकने का स्थायी समाधान निहित है।

डॉ. एम एस सिद्दीकी, फर्रुखाबाद

ज्यादा प्रदूषित हैं। देश की राजधानी दिल्ली हो या फिर उत्तर प्रदेश की राजधानी लखनऊ सभी जगहों पर लोग प्रदुषण से समान रूप से त्रस्त हैं। भारत के 20 प्रमुख प्रदुषित शहरों में हरियाणा के 12 शहरों का होना बेहद चिंताजनक है। एक शोध किए जाने की जरूरत है कि कैसे जापान अमेरिका, जर्मनी जैसे देशों ने तरक्की भी की है और प्रदूषण के जहर से बचे भी हुए हैं। बहुत से त्योहार ऐसे हैं जिसमें लोग उत्सव मनाते हुए प्रदूषण फैलाते हैं। मनुष्य अगर प्रदूषण कर सकता है तो जागरूक होकर प्रदूषण के कारकों को पहचानकर उसे कम भी कर सकता है। प्रदुषण पूरी तरह से खत्म कर पाना तर्कसंगत नहीं लगता पर इसकी गति को कम करके कुछ राहत मिल सकती है। डॉ रसिकेश, जौनपुर

तरक्की सही लेकिन

अंकुश लगे प्रदूषण पर

प्रदूषण एक ऐसा मुद्दा है जो हमें प्रत्यक्ष

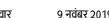
और परोक्ष रूप से प्रभावित करता है। यह

एक तथ्य है कि भारत के जिन नगरों और

महानगरों में लोग ज्यादा रहते हैं, वे सबसे

नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टेंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादूर शाह जफर मार्ग,





हर विपत्ति में उसके समान लाभ का बीज छिपा होता है

अधर में महाराष्ट्र

महाराष्ट्र के मुख्यमंत्री देवेंद्र फड़नवीस ने अपने पद से इस्तीफा देने के बाद शिवसेना के बारे में जो कुछ कहा और उसका जैसा जवाब भाजपा को सुनने को मिला उससे यही स्पष्ट हो रहा है कि दोनों दलों में दोस्ती जैसा ज्यादा कुछ शेष नहीं रह गया है। हालांकि जब तक शिवसेना केंद्रीय मंत्रिपरिषद का हिस्सा है तब तक यह उम्मीद बनी हुई है कि दोनों दल फिर से करीब आकर महाराष्ट्र में मिलकर सरकार बना सकते हैं। भारतीय राजनीति में कभी भी कुछ भी हो सकता है, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि शिवसेना अपनी जिद पकड़कर इतना आगे जा चुकी है कि पीछे लौटने की गुंजाइश कम हो गई है। उसने यह गुंजाइश भाजपा के खिलाफ अपनी बेजा बयानबाजी से खुद ही खत्म की है। अब यदि वह अपने कदम पीछे खींचती है तो अपनी जगहंसाई ही कराएगी। शिवसेना भले ही एनसीपी और कांग्रेस से मिलकर सरकार बनाने के विकल्प को अपने हाथ में बता रही हो, लेकिन यह विकल्प आजमाने के बाद उसकी साख को चोट पहुंचने का खतरा है। यह संभव है कि वह सत्ता के लोभ में अपनी साख की चिंता न करे, लेकिन उसे इससे परिचित होना चाहिए कि ऐसे राजनीतिक प्रयोग करने के क्या नतीजे होते हैं? क्या वह कर्नाटक में हुए प्रयोग की अनदेखी कर सकती है? उसे सपा-बसपा के क्षणिक मेल की भी अनदेखी नहीं करनी चाहिए। शिवसेना कुछ भी करे, फिलहाल भाजपा और उसके बीच की दूरी घटने की संभावना स्याह हो रही है।

चूंकि महाराष्ट्र में पिछली विधानसभा की अवधि समाप्त होने जा रही है इसलिए राज्य में राष्ट्रपति शासन लगने के आसार बढ़ गए हैं। अगर ऐसा होता है तो यह जनादेश का निरादर ही होगा। इससे बड़ी विडंबना और कोई नहीं कि चुनाव के पहले बना गठबंधन बहुमत हासिल करने के बाद भी सरकार गठन में नाकाम रहे। यह नाकामी गठबंधन राजनीति पर नए सिरे से सवाल खड़े करती है। अभी तक यही माना जाता था कि चुनाव पूर्व गठबंधन सबसे बेहतर और टिकाऊ होते हैं, लेकिन महाराष्ट्र का घटनाक्रम इस मान्यता को झुठला रहा है। इसकी वजह यही है कि शिवसेना ने भाजपा के कथित आश्वासन का हवाला देकर बारी-बारी से मुख्यमंत्री पद संभालने की जिद पकड़ ली है। ऐसे राजनीतिक हठ का कोई उपचार नहीं और हो भी नहीं सकता। यह हठ दोनों दलों के बीच उपजे अविश्वास को ही बयान करता है। अगर अविश्वास की यह खाई पट भी जाए तो भी दोनों के बीच की खींचतान शायद ही खत्म हो। जो भी हो, भाजपा की भलाई इसी में है कि वह महाराष्ट्र में अपने दम पर राजनीति करने की राह तलाशे।

सोच-समझकर चुने

सभी चुनें, सही चुनें। झारखंड में होने जा रहे विधानसभा चुनाव में कोई भी मतदाता छूटे नहीं। यह मात्र स्लोगन नहीं है, बल्कि मजबूत और पारदर्शी सरकार चुनने के लिए जनता की जवाबदेही भी है और अपनी इस जवाबदेही का जनता को ईमानदारीपूर्वक निर्वाह करना चाहिए। चुनाव प्रक्रिया में मतदाताओं की कम भागीदारी से कई बार ऐसे जन प्रतिनिधि चुनकर आ जाते हैं जिनका रिपोर्ट कार्ड बहुत अच्छा नहीं होता। एसोसिएशन फॉर डेमोक्रेटिक रिफॉर्म (एडीआर) की समय-समय पर राज्यों को लेकर जारी की जाने वाली रिपोर्ट में ऐसा स्पष्ट देखा जा सकता है। झारखंड में भी विधानसभा चुनावों से पूर्व एक बार फिर एडीआर ने पिछले चुनावों में चुनकर आए जनप्रतिनिधियों का ब्योरा साझा किया है। इस रिपोर्ट के अनुसार राज्य के वर्तमान 79 विधायकों में से 49 विधायकों के ऊपर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं। इनमें 38 ऐसे हैं जिन पर गंभीर मामले

दर्ज हैं। तीन पर तो हत्या का और 10 पर हत्या के प्रयास के मामले में पूर्व में प्राथमिकी दर्ज की गई है। खास बात यह है कि कोई भी दल इससे अछ्ता नहीं है। भाजपा के 21 विधायकों पर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं। जिनमें 15 पर गंभीर आपराधिक मामले हैं। झामुमो में यह आंकड़ा 11 का है, इनमें 10 के विरुद्ध गंभीर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज

चुनाव में विकास के लिए समर्पित और स्वच्छ छवि वाले उम्मीदवारों को चुनना जनता की जिम्मेदारी है। जनता अगर जाग जाए तो राजनीतिक दल भी स्वच्छ छवि के लोगों को ही चुनाव में आगे करेंगे । जनप्रतिनिधि की कुंडली खंगालनी जरूरी है

हैं। कांग्रेस के पांच विधायकों पर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं। झाविमो का भी आंकड़ा इतना ही है, भले ही उसके विधायक अब भाजपा का दामन थाम चुके हैं। राज्य के लगभग 50 फीसद विधायकों पर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज होना गंभीर चिंता का विषय है। जनता यदि चुनाव के समय ही ऐसे लोगों को नकार दे तो इन आंकड़ों में कमी आ सकती है। वोट से पूर्व जनप्रतिनिधि की कुंडली खंगालनी जरूरी है। यहां राजनीतिक दलों को भी मंथन करने की जरूरत है। राजनीतिक शुचिता की दुहाई देने वाले राजनीतिक दल प्रत्याशी चुनने के दौरान इस बात का तनिक भी ध्यान नहीं रखते। नतीजा सामने है। झारखंड में ही चार विधानसभा सीटों पर सिर्फ इसलिए चुनाव हुए, क्योंकि वहां के तत्कालीन जनप्रतिनिधियों को दो साल से अधिक की सजा हुई। जनता अगर जाग जाए तो राजनीतिक दल भी स्वच्छ छवि के लोगों को ही चुनाव में आगे करेंगे।

हर कोई कर्जदार है इस दुनिया में

सूरज ढल चुका था। मैं दफ्तर से घर जाते हुए

गाड़ी में सवार था। घर पहुंचने ही

वाला था कि अंधेरे में एक लड़का दिखा।

आठ-नौ साल का। जिस्म में कमीज नहीं।

सख्त ठंड में ठिठुर रहा था। मैंने ड्राइवर को

रुकने को कहा। खिंड़की उठाकर पूछा- बच्चा,

इस सर्दी में, रात को... यूं? वह कुछ बोला

नहीं, दांतों को पीसता हुआ ठिठुरता रहा। उसको

पैसे देने का मतलब नहीं था। मेरे पहने हुए गरम

कपड़े उसको कहां फिट होने को थे? उसके

लिए बहुत बड़े थे। खुश इत्तेफाकी से एक शॉल

थी मेरे पास। मैंने उसको वह दे दी। उसने फौरन

ओढ़ी। पर कुछ न बोला, खड़ा रहा। कांपता

रहा। मेरा घर बिल्कुल करीब था तो मैंने सोचा

घर जाकर इसके लिए अपने बच्चों के गरम

कपडों में से दो-चार लाकर उसको दिए देता

हूं। पत्नी और बच्चों की इजाजत से जब मैं

वैसे कपड़ों को लेते हुए लौटा तो देखता हूं कि

वहीं लड़का फिर वस्त्रहीन वैसे का वैसा वहीं

खड़ा है। मेरी दी हुई शॉल गायब। मुझे देखते ही

भागा...गायब। मेरे ड्राइवर ने कहा, सर, इसके

उस्ताद ने शॉल उडा ली है। बेईमान होते हैं...।



गोपाल कृष्ण गांधी जिंदगी की चौड़ी सड़क पर, तकदीर की लाल बत्ती पर रुके हुए, हम सब हाथ फैलाए हुए हैं

'ख। भिक्षा। दो शब्द, एक अर्थ। फिर भी कितना फर्क! भिखारी। भिक्षु। फिर वही बात! दो नाम, दो संज्ञाएं। मतलब एक ही, लेकिन एक तिरस्कार पाता है, दूसरा आदर। भारत में बौद्ध भिक्षुओं की संख्या नगण्य है। गया, सांची में, पूर्वोत्तर में सिक्किम, दार्जीलिंग, कलिमपोंग में दिख जाएंगे और पुनीतात्मा दलाई लामा की धर्मशाला में भी, लेकिन साधारणतः वैसे नहीं। पर जब और जहां भी दिखेंगे, भिक्षु आदर पाएंगे, सत्कार भी। और... औपचारिक भिक्षा तो अवश्य ही। किसी दुकान के सामने भिक्षु खड़ा हो तो उसे कुछ न कुछ दिए बिना दुकानदार नहीं रहेगा। भिखारी की बात कुछ और होती है। भिखारी जब हाथ में ट्टे टीन का डिब्बा लिए दो-चार सिक्के ठनठनाता सामने आता है तो वह घृणा से देखा जाता है। भिखारी से हम दूर रहना चाहेंगे। अगर हम साइकिल, मोटरसाइकिल या फिर मोटर गाड़ी में सवार हैं और सड़क की लाल बत्ती पर रुके हुए हैं तो दो खयाल आए बिना नहीं रहते हैं। कब बत्ती लाल से हरी होगी? और सामने भिखारी जो है, वह आगे वाली गाड़ियों से ही चिपका रहे। मुझ तक न पहुंचे..। और जब वह आ जाता है, बिल्कुल करीब, बिल्कुल सामने और कहता है-रहम करें साहिब, बच्चे भखे हैं...तेरे बच्चे फलें-फलें... तो...उपफ ! कुछ न कुछ देना ही पड़ता है और फिर इस बात का खयाल रखते हुए कि सिक्का टिन में डालते-डालते अंगुली उसकी अंगुलियों

को न लगे। इतना जरूर है कि हममें कई ऐसे भी हैं जो खुले दिल से बटुआ खोलकर सिक्के क्या, नोट तक डाल देते हैं, भिखारी के हाथ में। ऐसी बात नहीं कि ऐसे लोग धनवान होते हैं। नहीं, वे दानी होते हैं। धनवान लोग जो एसी गाड़ियों में बैठे होते हैं, वे बाज दफे खिड़की खोलते तक नहीं हैं, भिखारी को आते देखकर। वे अपने मोबाइल फोन पर और भी गंभीरता से बात करने लग जाते हैं। एक वजह तो यह होती है कि ऐसे साहिबों की जेबों में डेबिट. क्रेडिट कार्ड होते हैं, रुपये, सिक्के नहीं। पर असली वजह तो यही होती है कि कौन जेब से बटुआ निकालकर नोट देने की जहमत उठाए। और यह वर्ग ये तर्क भी रखे हुए है कि भिखारी लोग तकदीर के मारे नहीं, आदत के मारे हैं। काम नहीं करना चाहते और फिर वे आजाद नहीं... कोई दबंग, गुंडा या माफिया उनको इस काम पर लगाए हुए है। इनकी कमाई को वह

इस खयाल में सत्य भी है, लेकिन इस सत्य से ज्यादा आलस है। मैंने यह भी देखा है कि साहिब भिखारी से आंख नहीं मिला रहे हैं और उनका ड्राइवर रहम करते हुए भिखारी को कुछ कम-ज्यादा दे देता है। गरीबी की अपनी रस्में होती हैं, अपना रसायन। अमीरी की अपनी रस्में, अपना रसायन। मैं अपनी खुद की बात पर आता हूं। मेरी गिनती गाड़ीनुमा, ड्राइवरनुमा लोगों में है। कुछ साल पहले की, दिल्ली की बात है। जनवरी का महीना था।



टंगे हुए लंबे चेहरे और हाथ में टंगे हुए उन्हीं कपड़ों को लिए लौट आया। घरवाली बोली, अफसोस न कीजिए... इरादा नेक था। कहीं न कहीं उस भिखारी बच्चे को आपका इरादा मदद करेगा...। मन बहलाव था वह। पर मन शांत जरूर हुआ।

वर्षों बीत गए। फिर दूसरा अनुभव हुआ, भीख का। हम अन्य शहर में थे। जाड़ा नहीं वहां। गर्मी, उमस, लेकिन वही अंधेरा। मैं कुछ खरीदारी किए घर लौट रहा था पैदल, पसीने से तर। अचानक एक जवान आदमी मेरे सामने आ रुका। मैं भी रुका। अंग्रेजी में बहुत शालीनता से बोला- सर, आय एम हंग्री.. टू इडली। मैं जल्दी में था। इस तरह रोका जाना भाया नहीं। सिर हिलाते हुए चलता गया। पीछे से फिर आवाज आई- सर...। मैंने अनसुना कर दिया। एक क्षण उसे फिर देखा। उसका चेहरा, उसका अंदाज... मुझे तीर जैसी आंखों से देख रहा था। घर पहुंचने पर अपने पर जो गुस्सा आया, उसे क्या बयान करूं? थे मेरी जेब में दस रुपये के दो-चार नोट। क्यों न दिया मैंने उसे? कोई वजह नहीं। बस नहीं दिया। खाना

खाया न गया ठीक से। क्या हुआ? पत्नी ने पूछा। मैंने बताया, उसने खामोशी से सुना। स्त्री की खामोशी में वेद भरे होते हैं। उपनिषद। और हां, जातक की कथाएं भी।

याद आई मुझे वह तस्वीर, वही भित्ति अजंता की, जिसमें बुद्ध स्वयं भिक्षा मांग रहे हैं... अपनी पत्नी यशोधरा से, और अपने पुत्र राहुल से। वे कपिलवस्तु पधारे हैं और अपने त्याजे राजमहल के सामने खड़े हैं। भिक्षा-पात्र उठाए। कैसी भीख? क्या गुजर रहा है उनके मन में ? यशोधरा और राहुल के मन में ? कौन जाने ? क्योंकि मैथिलीशरण गुप्त की यशोधरा पढ़ चुका हूं, मैं मानता हूं कि कहीं न कहीं गौतम यशोधरा से कह रहे हैं-तुमको कहे बिना, रात को, नीरव रात को, छोड़कर मैं जब गया... तब सुबह उठने पर तुमको कितना सदमा कितना दुख हुआ, मैं जानता हूं।

भीख सिर्फ सिक्कों के लिए नहीं मांगी जाती। वह संवेदना के लिए, क्षमा के लिए भी मांगी जाती है। हम सब, दरअसल, कही न कहीं भिखारी हैं। क्योंकि हम जाने-अनजाने में गुनहगार हैं। दुख पहुंचा चुके हैं, किसी न किसी को। फायदा ले चुके हैं, किसी न किसी से, उसके लिए शुक्रिया कहे बगैर..। हम सब कर्जदार हैं। बड़ी कंपनियां उधार मांगती हैं बैंकों से। एयरलाइंस कर्ज मांगती हैं। भीख नही कहलाती हैं ये मांगें, पर क्या बहुत फर्क है भीख में और कर्ज में? भिखारी वे नहीं, हम सब हैं जिंदगी की चौडी सडक पर, तकदीर की लाल बत्ती पर रुके हुए, हम सब हाथ फैलाए हुए हैं। और भिक्षा कभी मिलती है, कभी नहीं भिखारी-भिखारन को जब भी देखें, जहां भी देखें, तब उनको कुछ दें या न दें, लेकिन उनमें उन भिखारियों में हम खुद को जरूर देखें और खद में उनको।

(लेखक पर्व राजनयिक-राज्यपाल हैं और वर्तमान में अध्यापक हैं) response@jagran.com

करतारपुर की आड़ लेता पाकिस्तान

रु नानक देव जी के 550वें प्रकाश पर्व के अवसर पर करतारपुर गलियारे को आधिकारिक तौर ᅺ पर खोले जॉने के पहले पाकिस्तान के लगातार रुख बदलने से उसकी कुटिल मंशा जाहिर होने लगी है। पाकिस्तान करतारपुर गुरुद्वारे के दर्शन के लिए आने वाले पहले जत्थे से भी 20 डॉलर की फीस वसूलने की बात तो कर ही रहा है, पासपोर्ट जरूरी न होने की बात से भी पलटी खा चुका है। इस पावन अवसर के लिए पाकिस्तान ने एक वीडियो जारी किया जिसमें जरनैल सिंह भिंडरावाले समेत तीन अलगाववादी नेता नजर आ रहे हैं। ये सब खालिस्तानी आतंकवाद के प्रमुख चेहरे थे जो जून 1984 के ऑपरेशन ब्लूस्टार में मारे गए थे। आखिर ऐसा वीडियो जारी करने का उद्देश्य क्या हो सकता है? यह समझना आसान है। इस वीडियो में प्रतिबंधित खालिस्तानी समर्थक समूह सिख फॉर जस्टिस का पोस्टर भी है। यह संगठन पंजाब को भारत से अलग कराने के नाम पर जनमत संग्रह-2020 के लिए अभियान चला रहा है।

पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री कैप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह ने बिल्कुल साफ कहा कि पाकिस्तानी वीडियो करतारपुर गलियारे को खोलने के पीछे के गुप्त एजेंडे को दिखाता है, जिससे हमें सतर्क रहना है। इस महान अवसर का ऐतिहासिक उपयोग हो सकता था, लेकिन जब सोच ही कुटिल हो तो इसकी अपेक्षा करना बेमानी है। करतारपुर गलियारा भारतीय पंजाब के गुरुदासपुर जिले में स्थित डेरा बाबा नानक साहिब को पाकिस्तानी पंजाब के नारोवाल जिले के करतारपुर स्थित गुरुद्वारा दरबार साहिब को जोड़ेगा। यहां गुरु नानक देव जी ने जीवन के अंतिम 18 वर्ष रहकर अपना शरीर त्यागा था। अभी तक यहां पहुंचने के लिए



अवधेश कुमार

को बढ़ावा देना है लाहौर और उसके बाद 140-45 किमी की यात्रा करनी पड़ती थी। गुरदासपुर सीमा पर स्थित डेरा बाबा नानक गुरुद्वारा से सीधा रास्ता बन जाने के बाद श्रद्धालु पैदल

पाकिस्तान ऊपर से

तो धार्मिक भावनाओं

का सम्मान दिखा रहा

पंजाब में अलगाववाद

है, पर उसकी मंशा

भी जा सकते हैं। सीमा से यह करीब चार किमी पर है। सबसे पहले अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने अपने कार्यकाल में तत्कालीन राष्ट्रपति परवेज मुशर्रफ से इस गलियारे के निर्माण पर बातचीत की थी। फिर मनमोहन सिंह ने भी नवाज शरीफ से बात की। बाद में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने नवाज शरीफ से आग्रह किया, परंतु कोई फैसला नहीं हो सका, लेकिन इमरान खान ने जिस तरह सत्ता ग्रहण करने के बाद स्वयं एवं पाकिस्तानी सेना ने इसे खोलने में रुचि दिखाई वह आश्चर्यजनक थी। अचानक इस फैसले के पीछे निश्चय ही पाकिस्तान की शातिर रणनीति है। इमरान खान ने बीते साल 28 नवंबर को अपने यहां शिलान्यास कार्यक्रम को बड़ा स्वरूप दिया। इस दौरान खालिस्तानी आतंकी गोपाल सिंह चावला सेना प्रमुख जनरल कमर जावेद बाजवा के साथ दिखा था। उसी समय स्पष्ट हो गया था कि पाकिस्तान ऊपर से तो धार्मिक भावनाओं का

सम्मान दिखा रहा है, लेकिन अंदर से उसकी मंशा पंजाब में अलगाववाद को बढ़ावा देना है। पाकिस्तान ने ब्रिटेन, कनाडा, अमेरिका आदि से आने वाले सिख फॉर जस्टिस के लोगों को भारी संख्या में वीजा दिया है।

जब पाकिस्तान का इरादा साफ हो गया है तो हमारी ओर से उसे कोई अवसर नहीं दिया जा सकता। करतारपुर गलियारा खुलने के पूर्व ही खुफिया एजेंसियों को नारोवाल जिले में आतंकी गतिविधियों के बारे में पुष्ट सूचनाएं मिली हैं। पाकिस्तान की ओर से पंजाब में आतंकवाद भड़काने के प्रमाण पिछले दो वर्षों से मिल रहे हैं। हाल में सीमा पार से ड्रोन के जरिये हथियारों की खेप भेजी गई है। अमृतसर के निकट निरंकारी आश्रम पर जो हमला हुआ था उसके तार भी पाकिस्तान से जुड़े थे। करतारपुर गलियारे द्वारा पाकिस्तान आतंकवाद के अलावा कुटनीतिक लक्ष्य भी साधना चाहता था। पाकिस्तान के विदेश मंत्री शाह महमूद कुरैशी ने इसे इमरान खान की ऐसी गुगली बताया था जिसमें भारत फंसने को मजबूर हो गया। पाकिस्तान के राष्ट्रपति ने इसे शतरंज की चाल बताया था। साफ है कि पाकिस्तान का इरादा छिपा नहीं है। भारत के लिए यह हर्ष का विषय है कि भारतीय श्रद्धालु आसानी से करतारपुर जा सकेंगे, किंतु वहां भारत विरोधी भाषण हो सकते हैं। खालिस्तान संबंधी पर्चे बांटे जा सकते हैं। गलियारे के रास्ते खालिस्तानी आतंकवादियों को प्रवेश कराने की कोशिश भी हो सकती है। इससे सतर्क रहना होगा और श्रद्धालुओं को परेशानी में न डालते हुए सुरक्षा व्यवस्था को मजबूत बनाए रखना होगा।

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दिवा-स्वप्न

जागना और सोना नैसर्गिक क्रिया है। रात में सोने पर स्वप्न आते हैं, लेकिन सुबह उठते ही स्वप्न पानी के बुलबुले की तरह खत्म भी हो जाते हैं। इसलिए रात के स्वप्न के मायने नहीं हैं। एक स्वप्न दिन में भी जागने पर आए तो वह तब सफलीभूत होता है जब उस स्वप्न के लिए बुद्धि-विवेक जागृत रहे। दिवा-स्वप्न हास्यास्पद अर्थों में तब ले लिया जाता है जब व्यक्ति सिर्फ कल्पन ही करता रहता है और उस पर कोई योजना बनाकर लगता नहीं। चूंकि मनुष्य देवता का अंश है, इसलिए वह चाह ले तो असंभव को संभव कर सकता है। ऐसी स्थिति में व्यक्ति को अपनी ऊर्जा पहचान कर अपने स्वप्न को साकार करने के लिए जुट जाना चाहिए।

धर्मनिष्ठ लोग भगवान की पूजा करते हैं। पूजा सिर्फ चित्रों तथा मूर्तियों में ही नहीं की जानी चाहिए, बल्कि जिस भगवान की पूजा की जा रही है उन्होंने कौन-कौन सा ऐसा कार्य किया है कि वे पूजनीय हुए। केवल चित्र या मूर्ति पूजने से काम नहीं चलेगा। हां, पूजा-पाठ करना अच्छा कार्य है। इससे जीवन में नियमितता आती है लेकिन अभीष्ट की प्राप्ति के लिए उद्यम करना बहत जरूरी है। उद्यम से ही कार्यों की सिद्धि होती है, सिर्फ सोचते रहने से नहीं। प्रायः लोग किसी मनोकामना की पूर्ति के लिए भगवान से प्रार्थना करते हैं। यज्ञ-अनुष्ठान भी करते-कराते हैं, व्रत-उपवास भी करते हैं और जब उनकी मनोकामना की पूर्ति नहीं होती तो भगवान को दोष देते हैं। जबिक मनुष्य के पास भगवान जैसी शक्ति और सामर्थ्य है यदि वह चाह ले तो बहुत कुछ कर सकता है। जो लोग सफल हुए हैं, वे केवल पूजा-पाठ के ही सहारे नहीं हुए। उन्होंने निश्चित रूप से उद्यम किया होगा तब उन्हें सफलता मिली होगी। बिना उद्यम के मिली सफलता स्थाई भी नहीं होती। कमजोर आत्मबल के लोग ही अपने काम को भगवान के सहारे छोड़ देते हैं।

कोई विद्यार्थी केवल पूजा-पाठ से ही उत्तीर्ण नहीं होगा। अनुचित तरीकों से यदि उत्तीर्ण हो भी गया तो उसे ज्ञान की प्राप्ति नहीं होगी। हमें अपने स्वप्नों को साकार करने के लिए अपने ऊपर विश्वास करना चाहिए।

तथ्य-कथ्य । भारत से विभिन्न देशों को होने वाला प्याज का निर्यात (2017-18) संयुक्त अरब अमीरात मलेशिया बांग्लादेश

विस्तार और सम्मान पाती हिंदी

डॉ. मोनिका शर्मा

अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी सर्वे के आंकड़ों के अनुसार अमेरिका में जुलाई 2018 तक 8.74 लाख लोगों के साथ हिंदी सबसे अधिक बोली जाने वाली भारतीय भाषा रही। 2017 के आंकड़ों को देखें तो बीते एक साल में इस संख्या में 1.3 फीसद की बढ़ोतरी हुई है। इस अध्ययन में अमेरिका के 20 लाख से अधिक परिवारों को शामिल किया गया था। एसीएस के वर्ष 2018 के आंकड़ों के मुताबिक अमेरिका में पांच साल से ज्यादा उम्र वाले 6.73 करोड़ निवासी, जिनमें अमेरिका में जन्मे और कानूनी एवं अवैध प्रवासी शामिल हैं, अपने घर पर अंग्रेजी के अलावा दूसरी भाषा बोलते हैं। इनमें हिंदी भाषी लोग बड़ी संख्या में हैं।

दरअसल विदेशों में प्रवासी भारतीयों की बढ़ती संख्या ने हिंदी भाषा को विश्व के कोने-कोने में पहुंचा दिया है। हालिया बरसों में अमेरिका ही नहीं दुनियाभर में हिंदी बोलने और समझने वालों की संख्या में इजाफा हुआ है। इंटरनेट के जरिये भी हिंदी भाषा ने वैश्विक पटल पर अपनी मौजूदगी दर्ज करवाई है। ऐसे देश जहां भारतीय मूल के नागरिक अधिक हैं,

हिंदी भाषा की वैश्वक स्तर पर बढती धमक हर भारतीय के मन को सुखद भाव से भर देती है

वहां बीते कुछ बरसों में हिंदी भाषा को खूब सम्मान और विस्तार मिला है। नतीजतन विदेशों में न सिर्फ हमारी हिंदी बोली-समझी जा रही है, बल्कि इसे पढ़ने-सीखने वालों की तादाद भी बढ़ी है। आज विश्व के 176 विश्वविद्यालयों में हिंदी एक विषय के तौर पर पढ़ाई जाती है। अकेले अमेरिका के ही 32 संस्थाओं में हिंदी पढ़ाई जाती है। फिजी में तो हिंदी को राजभाषा का दर्जा प्राप्त है। कुछ समय पहले संयुक्त अरब अमीरात की राजधानी अबुधाबी के न्यायिक विभाग ने भी कामगारों से जुड़े मामलों में अरबी और अंग्रेजी के अलावा हिंदी में भी बयान, दावे और अपील दायर करने की शुरुआत की है। गौरतलब है कि वहां बड़ी संख्या में भारतीय बसे हुए हैं। आंकड़े बताते हैं कि यूएई की कुल जनसंख्या करीब 94 लाख में 26 लाख भारतीय हैं, जो इस देश का सबसे बड़ा प्रवासी समुदाय है। यही वजह है कि न्यायिक प्रक्रिया में हिंदी को भी आधिकारिक

रूप से शामिल किया गया है। बीते साल संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने भी फेसबुक और ट्विटर जैसे सोशल मीडिया मंचों पर हिंदी में अपना खाता बनाकर सूचनाएं साझा करने की शुरुआत की थी। इतना ही नहीं दुनियाभर में कई पत्र-पत्रिकाएं हिंदी में प्रकाशित हो रही हैं। इंटरनेट की बढ़ती उपलब्धता के चलते ई-पत्रिकाओं ने भी देश-विदेश में बसे भारतीयों को हिंदी के माध्यम से जोड़ा है। हिंदी भाषा की डिजिटल पहुंच ने भारतीय संस्कृति, संगीत, योग और कला के बारे में पूरी दुनिया तक जानकारियां पहुंचा दी है। कुछ समय पहले सामने आए आंकड़ों के मुताबिक इंटरनेट पर हिंदी कंटेंट में 94 फीसद का इजाफा हुआ है।

बहरहाल विदेशों से आने वाली ऐसी खबरें यह सोचने को भी विवश करती हैं कि हमारे देश में अपनी भाषा को सीखने-जानने और मान देने की आकांक्षा क्यों गुम है? यहां न केवल स्कूलों के परीक्षा परिणामों में बच्चे हिंदी विषय में पिछड़ रहे हैं, बल्कि हमारे घर-परिवारों में भी हिंदी की उपेक्षा ही देखने को मिलती है, जबिक प्रवासी भारतीयों के परिवारों में हिंदी अपनी जड़ें जमा रही है।

(लेखिका स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

कहां है सुस्ती?

विवेक कॉल ने अपने आलेख 'एक सच्चाई है आर्थिक सुस्ती' में जिस सुस्ती का बखान किया है, उसकी व्यापकता को सिद्ध करने के लिए जुटाए गए उनके आंकड़े बेहद अपर्याप्त हैं। 11 अक्टूबर को भारत का विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार 439.712 अरब डॉलर था। एक वर्ष में यह नौ प्रतिशत बढ़ा। यानी निवेश आ रहा है, ज्यादा तेजी से आ रहा है। भारतीय स्टेट बैंक का दूसरी तिमाही का लाभ 218 प्रतिशत बढ़कर 3012 करोड़ पहुंच गया। एनपीए 4.84 प्रतिशत से घटकर 2.79 प्रतिशत पर रह गया। एचडीएफसी बैंक का लाभ 26 प्रतिशत बढ़ा और कोटक महिंद्रा का 51 प्रतिशत। कारोबारी सुगमता के लिहाज से भारत यूपीए के समय के 140वें स्थान से उछलकर 63वें पायदान पर पहुंच गया है। क्या यह उल्लेखनीय नहीं है? सीएमआइई की सबसे ताजा रपट के अनुसार रोजगार में बढ़ोतरी हो रही है। मई से अगस्त 2019 में देश में 40.49 करोड़ लोग रोजगार में थे। बीते साल समान अवधि में 40.24 करोड़ लोगों के पास रोजगार था। अर्थात 25,00,000 लोगों की बेरोजगारी दूर हुई। इस साल जनवरी से सितंबर तक बड़े सात महानगरों में 1.54 लाख करोड़ रुपये के मकान (2.02 करोड़ यनिट) बिके, जो गत वर्ष से 16 प्रतिशत ज्यादा है। सबसे अधिक बिक्री मध्यम दर्जे के मकानों में हुई है। ऑनलाइन खरीदारी से डरे खुदरा दुकानदारों को इस साल 13 प्रतिशत बढ़ोतरी की अनपेक्षित राहत मिली है, जबकि अमेजन और फ्लिपकार्ट गत वर्ष के अपने तीन अरब डॉलर के आंकड़े को इस बार त्योहारों के छह दिन में ही लांघ गए। दिवाली के मुहूर्त कारोबार में 30 टन सोने का उठान मायने रखता है। वहीं कारों की बिक्री सात प्रतिशत बढ़ी। हम उस मर्सिडीज की बात नहीं कर रहे, जिसका लेखक ने जिक्र किया है।

मेलबाक्स

यह मारुति जैसे सामान्य कारों का आंकडा है। पीएचडी चेंबर ऑफ कॉमर्स के अध्यक्ष डीके अग्रवाल का कहना है कि इस बार दीपावली पर बाजार में अच्छी बिक्री हुई है और आगे भी बाजार में तेजी बरकरार रहने की उम्मीद है। आइएमएफ अगले साल हमारी वृद्धि दर सात प्रतिशत आंक रहा है। ऐसे में मुझे नहीं लगता कि भारत आर्थिक सुस्ती की गिरफ्त में है। अजय मित्तल, मेरठ

हरियाणा में सुगम शिक्षा

हरियाणा सरकार सेवानिवृत्त शिक्षकों को पुनः सेवा देने के लिए सुगम शिक्षा के तहत आमंत्रित कर रही है। इसमें सेवानिवृत्त शिक्षकों को पुनः शिक्षण का अवसर दिया जा रहा है। क्या यह उन युवाओं के साथ अन्याय नहीं है जो पात्र अध्यापक, अध्यापिकाएं होते हुए भी बेरोजगार हैं? जिन्होंने शिक्षक बनने के सभी मापदंड तथा योग्यताएं पूर्ण कर रखी हैं। सरकार यदि सेवानिवत्त कर्मचारियों से ही काम लेना चाहती है तो उनकी सेवानिवृत्त आयु सीमा बढ़ा देनी चाहिए। आज प्रदेश ही नहीं, संपूर्ण देश में शिक्षित बेरोजगार युवाओं की लाइन लगी हुई है। प्रशिक्षित पात्र शिक्षकों का बेरोजगारी के कारण बुरा हाल है। ऐसे में इन शिक्षकों को ही सरकार के प्रस्ताव को खारिज कर देना चाहिए। आखिर इनके पढ़ाए बच्चे आज बेरोजगार हैं। उनको भी तो मौका मिलना चाहिए।

आचार्य राम कुमार बघेल, पलवल

फिल्म पर एतराज

हाल ही में फिल्म, पानीपत, का ट्रेलर आया है, जिसके बाद

से भारत के करीबी साथी दशों में से एक अफगानिस्तान ने इस फिल्म की कहानी, चरित्रों को लेकर खासा एतराज जताया है। अफगानिस्तान दरअसल फिल्म में अहमद शाह अब्दाली और अफगानिस्तान की इतिहास संबंधी एक नकारात्मक छवि फिल्म में दिखाने को लेकर भारत से कुछ नाराज है। मात्र एक फिल्म को लेकर दूसरे देश द्वारा अपनी छवि की इतनी चिंता करना कुछ अटपटा सा लगता है। कोई भी फिल्म इतिहास के तथ्यों की बारीकी या ब्योरा देने के लिए नहीं बनाई जाती है।

वैशाली, पूर्वी दिल्ली

संयम की अग्नि परीक्षा

अयोध्या में राम मंदिर- मस्जिद विवाद पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट का फैसला आने वाला है। यह पूरे देश की जनता की शांति व संयम की अग्नि परीक्षा है। पंच परमेश्वर का जो भी फैसला हो वह सहर्ष सभी को शिरोधार्य करना चाहिए। चाहे नेता हो या कार्यकर्ता या जनता जनार्दन सबको दृढ़ संकल्प के साथ इस परीक्षा में खरा उतरना है।

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

दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com

सत्ता और सवाल

महाराष्ट्र में नई सरकार के गठन को लेकर दो हफ्ते से जिस तरह का गतिरोध चल रहा है, वह लोकतंत्र व्यवस्था के लिए किसी आघात से कम नहीं है। चुनाव नतीजे आने के बाद भी सरकार का गठन नहीं हो पाना हैरान करने वाला घटनाक्रम है। ढाई-ढाई साल मुख्यमंत्री रहने को लेकर भारतीय जनता पार्टी और शिवसेना जिस तरह से अपने-अपने रुख पर अड़ गए हैं, उससे यह तो साफ है कि जो दल अभी से ही इतने गंभीर विवाद में उलझ गए हैं, अगर वे सरकार बना भी लेते हैं तब भी क्या तो वे सरकार चलाएंगे और किस तरह का प्रशासन लोगों को देंगे। निर्वाचित सरकार का दायित्व जनता की सेवा करना है, उसके लिए कल्याण योजनाएं चलाना है, लेकिन जो दल सरकार बनाने के मुद्दे पर किसी सहमित पर नहीं पहुंच पा रहे हैं, उनसे ये उम्मीदें करना व्यर्थ ही है। महाराष्ट्र में विधानसभा के लिए 21 अक्तूबर को वोट पड़े थे और 24 अक्तूबर को नतीजे आए थे। उसके बाद से ही राज्य की जनता नई सरकार की उम्मीदें लगाए बैठी है, लेकिन मौजूदा हालात बता रहे हैं कि नई सरकार बनने के फिलहाल कोई आसार नहीं है और राज्य एक बार फिर से राष्ट्रपति शासन देखने को मजबूर हो सकता है। सवाल है कि जिन दलों को जनता ने सरकार बनाने के लिए जनादेश दिया है, वे आखिर क्यों अपनी जिद पर अड़े हुए हैं? क्या इसे मतदाताओं के साथ विश्वासघात नहीं माना जाना चाहिए?

विवाद का केंद्र बिंदु इसी बात को लेकर है कि ढाई साल भाजपा राज करे और बाकी के अगले ढाई साल शिवसेना। लेकिन भाजपा ने इससे साफ इनकार कर दिया है, जबकि शिवसेना इससे कम पर मानने को तैयार नहीं है। दोनों ने साथ मिल कर चुनाव लड़ा, इसलिए सरकार भी इस महायुति की ही बननी है। पर बने कैसे, यह दोनों दलों के लिए नाक का सवाल बन गया है। न तो भाजपा झुकने को तैयार है, न ही शिवसेना टस से मस हो रही है। शिवसेना का कहना है कि सहमित यही बनी थी कि दोनों दलों से ढाई-ढाई साल का मुख्यमंत्री बनेगा। पर भाजपा इसे झूठ करार दे रही है कि ऐसी कोई सहमित बनी थी। ऐसे में कौन सच बोल रहा है, कौन झूठ, तय कर पाना आसान नहीं है। शिवसेना का तर्क है कि वह जितनी सीटों पर लड़ी है और जितने उम्मीदवार उसके जीते हैं उसके हिसाब से उसकी शक्ति भाजपा से कहीं कम नहीं है और ऐसे में सत्ता में बराबर की भागीदारी का उसका हक बनता है। सत्ता के लिए राजनीतिक दल किस सीमा तक जा सकते हैं और किस स्तर तक गिर सकते हैं, इसे लेकर लोगों में जो धारणा बन रही है, वह गंभीर विषय है।

इस वक्त जो हालात हैं, उसमें राष्ट्रपति शासन ही एकमात्र विकल्प बचता है। अगर ऐसा होता है तो महाराष्ट्र के इतिहास में यह तीसरा मौका होगा जब वहां राष्ट्रपति राज होगा। राज्यपाल तमाम कानूनी पहलुओं और विकल्पों पर विचार कर रहे हैं, लेकिन कोई भी प्रयास कामयाब नहीं हो नहीं रहा। इस बीच शिवसेना ने अपने विधायकों को एक होटल में रख दिया है ताकि कोई भी विधायक किसी दूसरे दल का हाथ न थाम ले। इससे विधायकों की खरीद-फरोख्त की आशंकाओं को भी बल मिलता है। ये सब घटनाएं बता रही हैं कि राज्य राजनीतिक अनिश्चितता के भंवर में फंस चुका है। ऐसे में जनता अपने को ठगा-सा महसूस कर रही है।

हा लांकि भारत से संबंधित लगभग सभी मामलों में पाकिस्तान का रुख शायद ही कभी ऐसा रहा, जिस पर भरोसा किया जा सके, लेकिन करतारपुर गलियारे का समूचा संदर्भ जिस भावना से जुड़ा है, उसमें उम्मीद की गई थी कि उसकी ओर से ऐसा कुछ न हो जो सुधरने वाले माहौल को बाधित कर दे। खासतौर पर आज करतारपुर गलियारे की शुरुआत होने के ठीक पहले जो बातें सामने आ रही हैं, वे कर्तई इस बात की पुष्टि नहीं करतीं कि पाकिस्तान इस मौके को संबंध सुधार का कोई जरिया बनाना चाहता। वरना यह कैसे मुमिकन है कि एक ओर पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री का बयान आता है कि करतारपुर में दरबार साहिब की यात्रा करने वाले तीर्थयात्रियों को पासपोर्ट की जरूरत नहीं होगी, केवल वैध पहचान-पत्र ही काफी होगा, तो अगले ही दिन उसकी सेना की ओर से कहा जाता है कि श्रद्धालुओं के लिए पासपोर्ट जरूरी होगा। क्या इसे पाकिस्तान के अपने वादे से मुकरने के तौर पर देखा जाए या फिर यह एक गंभीर स्थिति का संकेत है कि वहां सरकार के नुमाइंदों और सेना के बीच अंतरराष्ट्रीय मसलों पर भी कोई तालमेल नहीं है!

एक देश के नागरिकों का दूसरे देश की सीमा में प्रवेश का एक कायदा है और वह सख्त नियमों में बंधा होता है। भारत-पाकिस्तान के बीच फिलहाल यह व्यवस्था है कि दोनों देशों के नागरिकों के सीमापार जाने के लिए लिए पासपोर्ट और वीजा अनिवार्य है। करतारपुर में दरबार साहिब की यात्रा के लिए इस बात पर सहमित बनी थी कि वहां जाने वाले श्रद्धालुओं के लिए फिलहाल वीजा की जरूरत नहीं होगी। लेकिन पासपोर्ट को लेकर स्थिति स्पष्ट थी और उस पर एकतरफा तरीके से फैसला नहीं लिया जा सकता था। हैरानी की बात यह है कि इसके बावजूद पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री ने ट्विटर पर यह घोषणा कर दी कि करतारपुर आने वाले श्रद्धालुओं के लिए पासपोर्ट की बाध्यता नहीं होगी। हो सकता है कि यह दिखावा ही सही, सद्भावना के लिहाज से की गई घोषणा हो, लेकिन इसके पहले यह सुनिश्चित कर लिया जाना चाहिए था कि इस मसले पर सेना और सरकार के बीच पूरी सहमति हो और किसी घोषणा से पहले पर्याप्त तालमेल कायम हो जाए। ऐसा नहीं होने की वजह से ही अब पाकिस्तान की सरकार के सामने एक अस्विधाजनक और असहज स्थिति आ खड़ी हुई कि पासपोर्ट को लेकर वह अपनी पूर्व घोषणा का क्या करे! जाहिर है, ऐसी स्थिति में अंतिम तौर पर समझौते की शर्तें ही लागू होंगी और एक तरह से यह पाकिस्तान सरकार के अपनी घोषणा से मुकरने के तौर पर देखा जाएगा।

विडंबना यह है कि करतारपुर गलियारे से सिख श्रद्धालुओं को दरबार साहिब जाने की सुविधा मुहैया कराने का श्रेय लेकर पाकिस्तान जहां खुद को एक उदार देश के रूप में दुनिया के सामने पेश करना चाहता है, वहीं उसकी कोशिश शायद यह भी है कि इसी को मौका बना कर अपनी राजनीति भी साध ली जाए। मगर दो दिन पहले करतारपुर आने के लिए तैयार किए गए एक प्रचार-गीत में कुछ खालिस्तानी अलगाववादी रहे लोगों की तस्वीरें दिखाई गई या फिर अब झूठ पर आधारित कई बातें प्रचारित की जा रही हैं, उससे साफ है कि वह करतापुर गलियारे के बहाने अपनी मनमानी चलाने की फिराक में है। पिछले कुछ दिनों के दौरान पाकिस्तान की ओर से जिस तरह के बयान सामने आए हैं, ऐसा लगता है कि उसके पीछे कोई सुविचारित योजना नहीं है। जबिक उसे इस बात का खयाल रखना चाहिए कि उसकी ऐसी गैरजिम्मेदाराना और लापरवाह हरकतों की वजह से एक गैरभरोसेमंद देश के रूप में उसकी कैसी छवि बनेगी!

कल्पमेधा

जिन्होंने मनुष्य पर शासन की कला का अध्ययन किया, उन्हें यह विश्वास है कि युवकों की शिक्षा पर ही राज्य का भाग्य आधारित है।

- अरस्तू

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कैसे मिलेगा सबको पानी

निरंकार सिंह

जल संकट वाले इलाकों में ऐसी फसलें लगाई जानी चाहिए जिसमें कम पानी की जरूरत पड़ती हो। यदि ऐसा नहीं किया गया तो इन क्षेत्रों में खेती के लिए पानी का संकट पैदा हो जाएगा। इसलिए हमें अपनी पीढ़ियों के भविष्य की चिंता खुद करनी होगी और हर कीमत पर पानी को बचाने के उपाय अभी से करना होगा।

🔁 वा के बाद पानी जीवन की पहली जरूरत है। 😎 इसके बिना जीवन संभव नहीं है। लेकिन दुनिया में पीने वाले पानी की मात्रा लगातार घटती जा रही है। यह सिलसिला इसी तरह जारी रहा तो अगले बीस से तीस वर्षों के भीतर कई देशों के लिए अपनी आबादी के लिए अनाज पैदा करना बहुत मुश्किल हो जाएगा। पानी को लेकर विवाद कानून व्यवस्था के लिए चुनौती बन जाएगा। 1957 में प्रति व्यक्ति पानी की उपलब्धता पांच हजार एक सौ सतहत्तर क्यूबिक मीटर थी, जो अब घट कर एक हजार चार सौ से भी कम रह गई है। अस्सी फीसद पानी का उपयोग खेती में होता है और पंद्रह फीसद उद्योग-धंधों में लग जाता है। घरेलू उपयोग और पेयजल के लिए मुश्किल से पांच फीसद पानी बचता है। भारत जैसे देश में वर्षा की मात्रा प्रतिवर्ष अनियमित रहती है। साल में तीन-चार महीनों में ही सारी वर्षा हो

जाती है। इस वजह से आबादी की खुराक के लिए जमीन पर बुरी तरह दबाव पड़ रहा है। इसलिए सरकार को जमीन की सतह के पानी का और सतह के नीचे के पानी का कृषि और उद्योग के बीच बड़ी सावधानी से बंटवारा करना पड़ेगा। अधिक पानी की अनिश्चित मात्रा के लिए ट्यूबवेल पर निर्भर करने से भी काम नहीं चलेगा। भारतीय मैदानों में जमीन के नीचे का पानी पहाड़ों से आने वाली भूगर्भ स्थित धाराओं से मिलता हो या स्थानीय वर्षा से आसपास की जमीन में जज्ब हुए पानी से मिलता हो, उस जमीन के नीचे के पानी की मात्रा सीमित है।

सरकार ने 2022 तक सबको नल से पेयजल मुहैया कराने का वादा किया है। यह लक्ष्य अत्यंत महत्त्वाकांक्षी है। पर सवाल है कि सबको पानी मिलेगा कैसे? क्योंकि 2030 तक चालीस फीसद आबादी के लिए पीने लायक पानी ही नहीं बचेगा।

यह चेतावनी नीति आयोग ने अपनी हाल की रिपोर्ट में दी है। इसके अनुसार 2020 से ही पानी की परेशानी शुरू हो जाएगी। तब करीब दस करोड़ लोग पानी की उपलब्धता से वंचित हो जाएंगे। आयोग ने तीन साल पहले भी चेताया था कि देश में जल संरक्षण को लेकर अधिकांश राज्यों का काम अपेक्षानुरूप नहीं है। ऐसे में जल संकट बढ़ना लाजिमी है। दिल्ली का नब्बे फीसद भूमिगत जल का स्तर गंभीर स्थिति में पहुंच गया है। यहां के अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों में जलस्तर हर साल दो मीटर घट रहा है। दिल्ली का पंद्रह प्रतिशत क्षेत्र नाजुक स्थिति में है। यही हाल देश के प्रमुख महानगरों का भी होता जा रहा है।

नीति आयोग ने पिछले साल जारी रिपोर्ट में कहा था कि देश में करीब साठ करोड़ करीब दो लाख लोगों की मौत का कारण स्वच्छ जल न मिल पाना बताया गया है। भारत जल गुणवत्ता सचकांक में एक सौ बाईस देशों में एक सौ बीसवें स्थान पर है। साल 2030 तक देश में पानी की मांग उपलब्ध जल वितरण की दोगुनी हो जाएगी। इसका मतलब है कि करोड़ों लोगों के लिए पानी का गंभीर संकट पैदा हो जाएगा। ऐसे में अब सरकार को इस पानी के संकट का दूरगामी हल खोजना होगा।

पानी के बारे में आर्थर एचक हर्रा ने अपनी पुस्तक 'वाटर आर योर लाइफ' में कई महत्वपूर्ण जानकारियां दी हैं। आर्थर के अनुसार एक गैलन पेट्रोल बनाने में सात से दस गैलन तक पानी लगता है। एक टन नकली रेशम (रेयॉन) बनाने की प्रक्रिया में दो से तीन लाख गैलन पानी की जरूरत होती है। एक टन कृत्रिम रबर बनाने में इससे तिगुना पानी चाहिए। आधुनिक कागज के कारखानों में एक टन कागज बनाने के लिए पचास से साठ हजार गैलन पानी जरूरी होता है। दूसरे महायुद्ध के शुरू में संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका में लगभग कागज के दो सौ कारखाने थे। एक टन साबुन तैयार करने में पांच सौ गैलन पानी लगता है। जब किसी हवाई जहाज के इंजन का परीक्षण किया जाता है तो उसे ठंडा करने के लिए पचास हजार से सवा लाख गैलन पानी लगता है।

संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका के कैलीफोर्निया राज्य के लॉस एंजीलिस शहर ने अपने काम के लिए नलों हारा जमीन के भीतर का इतना पानी खींचा है कि



लोग पानी की गंभीर किल्लत का सामना कर रहे हैं। उसके आसपास की जमीन की सतह कई स्थानों पर आठ-आठ फुट तक नीचे बैठ गई है। इस राज्य के लोग बीच नामक क्षेत्र में जमीन के भीतर के पानी को खींचने से उसके जमीन के नीचे के पानी की सतह समुद्र की सतह से पचहत्तर फुट नीचे चली गई है और समुद्र तट के उस सारे भाग में कुओं का पानी खारा होने लगा है। 1939 में इन कुओं से पंप द्वारा रोज लगभग एक करोड़ गैलन पानी खींचा जा रहा था। दूसरे महायुद्ध ने उद्योग की मांग इतनी ज्यादा बढ़ा दी कि 1945 में ये कुएं दो करोड़ पच्चीस लाख गैलन पानी प्रति दिन मुहैया कर रहे थे। नतीजा यह हुआ कि वहां एक ट्यूबवेलं में पानी का स्तर समुद्र

की सतह से एक सौ दो फुट नीचे चला गया। एक और ट्यूबवेल ने जमीन से इतना अधिक पानी खींचा कि उसकी सतह समुद्र की सतह से एक सौ पैंसठ फुट नीची हो गई। परिणामस्वरूप भूमि के अंदर के पानी में समुद्र का पानी घुस जाने से वह खारा हो गया। उसी प्रदेश में स्वयं भूमि का स्तर हर साल औसतन 2.4 इंच तक नीचे धंसा, कुछ स्थलों पर धंसने की यह क्रिया डेढ़ फुट तक बढ़ गई। अन्य स्थानों में जैसे लुओविली, केंटकी आदि में जो समुद्र से बहुत दूर हैं और जहां युद्ध के कारण उद्योगों पर भारी दबाव पड़ा और ट्यूबवेल सूखने लगे।

यह अनुमान लगाया गया है कि दुनिया में 2000 से 2030 तक पानी की मांग इस हिसाब से चार से पांच गुनी बढ़ जाएगी। पानी का संकट कई देशों के अस्तित्व के लिए खतरा बन कर उभर रहा है। इससे उपजाऊ भूमि लगातार बंजर

भूमि में बदलती जा रही है। अगले दस साल में कई देशों को अपनी आबादी के हिसाब से खाद्य पदार्थों का उत्पादन करना लगभग असंभव हो जाएगा। भारत में भी अगले कुछ वर्षों में पेयजल के साथ सिंचाई के पानी का भी संकट गहराने वाला है। नीति आयोग ने भी पानी के संकट को सबसे बड़ी चुनौती बताया है। उसने यह भी कहा है कि पंजाब और महाराष्ट्र जैसे राज्यों में धान एवं गन्ने की खेती में पानी की बर्बादी भी बहुत अधिक हो रही है। जल संकट वाले इलाकों में ऐसी फसलें लगाई जानी चाहिए जिसमें कम पानी की जरूरत पड़ती हो। यदि ऐसा नहीं किया गया तो इन क्षेत्रों में खेती के लिए पानी का संकट पैदा हो जाएगा। इसलिए हमें अपनी पीढ़ियों के भविष्य की चिंता खुद

करनी होगी और हर कीमत पर पानी को बचाने के उपाय अभी से करना होगा। इसलिए अब हमारे पास वर्षा जल के संचय के अलावा कोई रास्ता नहीं बचा है। इसके लिए सारी मानव जाति को अभी से प्रयास करना होगा।

बहरहाल पानी के संकट से निपटने के लिए नीति आयोग ने देश की आधी करीब साढ़े चार सौ नदियों को आपस में जोड़ने का एक विस्तृत प्रस्ताव तैयार किया है। बरसात से या उसके बाद बहुत-सी निदयों का पानी समुद्र में जा गिरता है। अगर समय रहते इस पानी को उन निदयों में ले जाया जाए, जहां साल के अधिकतर महीनों में सुखा रहता है तो आसपास के क्षेत्रों में खेती हो सकती है।

मन की पगडंडी

पुनम पांडे

🎞 न आमतौर पर मर्जी का मालिक होता है। लेकिन आजकल यह मन बाजार की अंगुलियों पर नाचने वाला जमूरा बन गया है। मन जो चाहता है, वह कर नहीं पाता, क्योंकि मन की चाह को कुछ लोग घूरने लगते हैं। मिसाल के तौर पर अगर मन यह चाहे कि चौराहे पर गोलगप्पे का आनंद लिया जाए तो उसे कुछ मानसिक विचार या परंपरा से मिले संस्कार रोक देते हैं। मसलन, कम से कम दस परिचित चेहरे उसी वक्त सामने से गुजर जा सकते हैं और इस तरह सरेआम पानी-पूरी चटकाते हुए देख कर मजाक बना सकते हैं, अपनी कोई राय या टिप्पणी देकर आपके गोलगप्पे के स्वाद को कड़वा बना दे सकते हैं। इसी तरह आपके पास कार हो, लेकिन आपका मन अगर चाहे कि आज स्थानीय तौर पर चलने वाली बस से बाजार जाया जाए और लोगों के बीच उतर कर सामूहिक होने का सुख लिया जाए, दुकानों पर जाकर जरूरी सामान लाया जाए, तो यहां पर फिर से इस फकीरी ठाठ पर कोई न कोई गांठ लग जाती है और मन मार कर खुद को अपनी कीमती गाड़ी पर सवार होकर अकेले ही

बाजार से रूबरू होना पड़ता है।

कभी लगता है कि कथाओं में जो कृष्ण हमारे आसपास हैं, उनके बारे में जो कहानियां हैं, अगर वे कृष्ण भी यही करते और अपना मन मार कर घर के आंगन में सीमित रहते तो गाय, दूध, मक्खन आदि पर इतना कुछ कहां लिखा जाता! बाल लीला पर कुछ भी पढ़ने, सुनने, कहने लायक होता ही नहीं! फिर अगर उन लीलाओं को लिखने वालों ने जमाने का खयाल किया होता और

लोक में मौजूद बातों से इतर अपनी कल्पनाशीलता कलम से दर्ज नहीं किया होता तो ये कहानियां भी हमारे सामने कहां आ पातीं! यह जो आधुनिकता बनाम बाजारवाद का जानलेवा फंदा है, वह हमारी दिनचर्या के सरल सहज शब्दों में इतनी जटिलता पैदा कर रहा है कि हमारी अपनी मानसिक कल्पना को कमजोर ही करता जा रहा है।

पिछले दिनों एक पडोसी बालक ने अपने घर पर खिल रहे सुंदर ताजे-ताजे फूलों और पत्तियों से बेहद कलात्मक बंदनवार बना कर सजाए जो सचमच मनमोहक लग रहे थे। थोडी देर बाद वह अपने मित्र के घर गया जहां पर विदेशी फूलों की सजावट की गई थी। यह देख कर वह एकदम सदमे में आ गया।

उसके बाद उसे अपने घर के बंदनवार बिल्कुल अच्छे नहीं लगे। उसका मन आहत हो गया था। यही है वह दिखावा जो बाजार पैदा कर रहा है पैसा कमाने के लिए, मगर बीमार हमारा मन हो रहा है।

यह जो मन है, वह बड़ी-बड़ी बातों पर नहीं ट्टता, छोटी-छोटी बातों से चटक जाता है, मगर मन की खलबली और उधेड़बून में मस्त होकर बहने वाले दुनिया में कई लोग ऐसे उदाहरण बन गए जो आज सबके लिए प्रेरणास्रोत हैं।

उनको अपने अल्हड़ मन की अपनी भाषा से ऐसी चमक मिली कि उन संकेतों को अपने भीतर मथ-मथ कर

वे बुद्धिमान कहलाए। मन की उस भाषा को प्रेमचंद ने सुना और कहानी सम्राट बन गए, मीरा ने सुना और अपने जीवन की तमाम सुविधाएं त्याग कर वृंदावन चली गईं। वह मीरा अपने पदों मे आज तक अमर हैं। कलाम ने बस अपने मन की सुनी और 'मिसाइल मैन' बने, फिर देश या दुनिया में एक जगह बना ली।

एक बार सोचिए कि दुनिया को बल्ब की रोशनी कैसे मिलती. अगर थामस अल्वा एडीसन अपने मन की मर्जी पर जीवन की अर्जी न लिख देते! जो जैसा चला आ रहा था, वे भी उसी में रमे रहते तो न वे कुछ नया कर पाते, न दुनिया को यह आविष्कार

मिला होता। अपने मन की पगडंडी पर चलकर विवेकानंद ने अपनी संस्कृति और सभ्यता की अमिट छाप सारी दुनिया में छोड़ दी। समाज की विकृत यथास्थिति पर उन्होंने जो सवाल उठाए, वे विचार आज मानवता के लिए अनमोल हैं। कबीर के समकालीन ने उनके मन की आजादी को कहां आसानी से स्वीकार किया होगा, लेकिन कबीर अपने मन की सरगम में रमे रहे और आज वे सबके लिए प्रकाश स्तंभ हैं।

वह मन ही है जो निरा सपाट नहीं है, फिर भी उसको समझना काफी आसान है। मन इस उबड़-खाबड़ समाज में इतना कुछ होते हुए भी कहीं किसी सार्थक अर्थ से जोड़े रखता है। मगर कहीं न कहीं आडंबरी जीवन-शैली वाली करवट ने इसको आच्छादित कर लिया है। इसी फेर में हम अपने मन को मारने और दिखावे में जीने के आदी हो गए हैं। यदा-कदा इसको बाजार की पहेलीनुमा अधकचरे घोल से सजी सच्चाई दुविधा में डाल ही देती है। वरना नई पीढ़ी इतनी भटकी हुई नहीं होती। बाजार के षड्यंत्र से भरी बंधी-बंधाई चमकदार चौखट में कसने से बचना जरूरी है। जितनी जल्दी अपने मन के ध्वनि-संसार को समझ लिया जाए, उतना ही उत्तम।

नोटबंदी का हासिल

न साल पहले भारत सरकार ने पांच सौ और एक हजार रुपए के नोटों विमौद्रीकरण किया था। हालांकि नोटबंदी की इस कवायद का मुख्य उद्देश्य भ्रष्टाचार रोकना, नकली नोटों को निष्प्रभावी करना, दहशतगदी पर लगाम लगाना, कालाधन बाहर निकलना बताया गया था। इसलिए माना जा रहा था कि तमाम दिक्कतों के बावजूद नोटबंदी का फैसला देश हित में लिया गया। लेकिन दुख की बात है कि इनमें से एक भी मकसद पूरा नहीं हुआ और उल्टे सरकार के इस कदम से अर्थव्यवस्था चौपट होती चली गई। 31 मई, 2017 को केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय ने जो आंकड़े जारी किए थे, उनके अनुसार जीडीपी दर आठ प्रतिशत से गिर कर 7.1 फीसद पर पहुंच गई।

अर्थशास्त्रियों के मुताबिक मौजूदा आर्थिक सुस्ती के कई कारणों से में नोटबंदी भी एक बड़ी वजह रही है। हालांकि नोटबंदी के वजह से डिजिटल लेनदेन में शुरु में काफी तेजी देखी गई थी, लेकिन बाद में इसमें भी कमी आती गई। इतना ही नहीं, वर्ष 2018-19 में नकली नोटों में बढ़ोतरी दर्ज की गई। वर्ष 2016 में पांच सौ रुपए के जो नए नोट आए थे, उनके नकली नोटों में भी एक सौ इक्कीस फीसद की बढ़ोतरी दर्ज की गई। इसी तरह दो हजार रुपए मूल्य के नोटों में भी इक्कीस फीसद नकली नोटों का इजाफा हुआ। नोटबंदी के तीन वर्ष बीत जाने के बाद देश की अर्थव्यवस्था में नकली नोट की समस्या अब भी मौजद हैं। नोटबंदी के बाद भी देश में आतंकवादी हमलों से जूझता रहा है। कालेधन की समस्या अभी भी पहले जैसी ही बनी हुई है। ऐसे में तो सवाल यही उठता है कि नोटबंदी से आखि फायदा क्या हुआ? बल्कि नोटबंदी से देश की आर्थिक विकास की रफ्तार धीमी पड़ गई है और उद्योग धंधे खासतौर से छोटे उद्योग बंद हो गए।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, कोंढाली, नागपुर

जिद की उलझन

महाराष्ट्र ही नहीं पूरा राष्ट्र भाजपा-शिवसेना की खटपट देख रहा है। मुख्यमंत्री पद को लेकर दोनों दल जिस तरह की बचकानी हठ पाले हुए हैं उससे सरकार बनना मुश्किल होता जा रहा है और राज्य में राष्ट्रपति शासन तक की नौबत आ गई है। गले-गले तक हुई बेरुखी से अगर बेमन से सरकार बन भी गई तो भी कामकाज में जोरदार टकराव आए दिन देखने को मिलेगा। साथ ही, मतदाताओं की नजर में भी इनकी छिब ठीक नहीं रहेगी। इसका फायदा राकांपा और कांग्रेस को आने वाले वक्त में जरूर मिलेगा। आपस जारी है। हाल में न्यूजीलैंड की संसद में पारित कार्बन उत्सर्जन में कटौती करने वाला जलवाय संबंधी विधेयक काफी महत्त्वपूर्ण है। यह न्यूजीलैंड सरकार की राजनीतिक प्रतिबद्धता के साथ साथ दुनिया के उन तमाम देशों को सीख लेनी चाहिए जो कार्बन उत्सर्जन के लिए सिर्फ उत्सर्जन संबंधी कटौती सम्मेलन करके अपनी औपचारिकता पूरी कर लेते हैं। परंतु कार्बन उत्सर्जन पर कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाते हैं। अभी समय है इस गंभीर मुद्दे

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

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

में मामुली जिद से उभरी खटपट के कारण इन्हीं की कुल्हाड़ी इन्हीं के पांवों को घायल कर रही है। अब दोनों मिल कर सरकार बनाएं या राष्ट्रपति शासन लगे, या फिर एनसीपी-कांग्रेस और शिवसेना मिल कर भी सरकार का कर दें। हालांकि यह मुमकिन नहीं है फिर भी राजनीति में कभी भी कुछ भी संभव हो सकता है। अंत में एक कहावत भी चिरतार्थ हो सकती है भाजपा-शिवसेना गठबंधन से कि 'हम तो डूबेंगे ही, तुमको भी भी ले डूबेंगे सनम'।

• महेश नेनावा, इंदौर

कब चेतेंगे हम

वायु प्रदूषण दिनोंदिन विकराल रूप धारण करता जा रहा है। हाल में दिल्ली सहित इसके आसपास के क्षेत्र बुरी तरह से प्रभावित हुए हैं और यह बदस्तूर

संवेदनशीलता के साथ साहसिक नीति बना कर उसे बेहतर रूप से क्रियान्वयन किया जाए, अन्यथा काफी देर हो जाएगी।

अरविंद पांडेय, सिद्धार्थनगर

यह कैसा अन्याय

मध्यप्रदेश लोक सेवा आयोग ने हाल में जारी किसान कल्याण एवं कृषि विभाग भर्ती विज्ञापन में अनारक्षित एवं आरक्षित वर्ग के लिए परीक्षा फीस क्रमशः पांच सौ और ढाई सौ रुपए से पांच गुना बढ़ा कर क्रमशः ढाई हजार रुपए और साढे बारह सौ रुपए कर दी। परीक्षा फीस के नाम पर यह शिक्षित बेरोजगारों से खुली लूट है। आयोग परीक्षा फीस को कमाई का जरिया बना रहा है, जो सरासर गलत है। गौरतलब है कि शासन के ही सरकारी उपक्रमों या अन्य संस्थाओं

द्वारा आयोजित किसी भी परीक्षा में इतनी अधिक फीस नहीं रहती है और प्रतिवर्ष आयोजित विभिन्न प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं में लाखों अभ्यर्थी रोजगार की आस में आवेदन करते हैं। दुसरी बात यह कि अनारक्षित और संवेदनशीलता को भी दर्शाता है। इससे भारत सिहत आरिक्षत अभ्यर्थियों की फीस में इतना भारी अंतर भेदभाव को बढाने वाला और वर्ग विशेष को फायदा पहुंचाने वाला है। इसे समाप्त करते हुए सबके लिए एकसमान फीस रखी जानी चाहिए। क्या अनारक्षित व्यक्ति गरीब नहीं हो सकता या क्या सभी आरक्षित व्यक्ति गरीब हैं ? आरक्षण का लाभ केवल सुविधाओं और साधनों तक ही सीमित रखा जाना चाहिए। आखिर कब तक धर्म, जाति, वर्ग आधारित भेदभाव से देश की प्रतिभा का गला घोंटा जाता रहेगा?

• मोहित सोनी, कुक्षी, धार शाकिब पर पाबंदी

बांग्लादेश क्रिकेट आज जिस मुकाम पर है, उसका श्रेय हरफनमौला खिलाड़ी शाकिब अल हसन को जाता है। पता नहीं अपने इस दायित्व को उन्होंने नहीं समझा या अतिउत्साह के कारण, 2018 में किसी भारतीय सट्टेबाज़ द्वारा उनसे किए गए संपर्क के बारे में आइसीसी को नहीं बताया। इसलिए उन पर एक साल का प्रतिबंध लगा दिया गया। उन पर मैच फिक्सिंग में शामिल होने का आरोप नहीं लगाया गया। वरना दूसरे बांग्लादेशी खिलाड़ी मोहम्मद अशरफुल की तरह पांच साल का प्रतिबंध लग सकता था। अगले एक साल शाकिब को कठिन दौर से गुजरना पड़ेगा। साथ में बांग्लादेशी टीम को भी उनकी कमी खलेगी। हम भारतीय दर्शक उन्हें अगले आइपीएल में खेलते हए नहीं देख पाएंगे। सनराइजर्स हैदराबाद की टीम शाकिब के बिना अच्छा प्रदर्शन नहीं कर पाएगी। इतना होनहार खिलाड़ी ये गलती कैसे कर बैठा? यह विश्वास ही नहीं हो रहा है कि शाकिब ऐसी गलती भी कर सकते हैं।

जंग फबहादुर सिंह, जमशेदपुर

नई दिल्ली