

# Going solo

Through ups and dramatic downs, SpiceJet's Ajay Singh is steering his rocky boat all on his own



OUT OF THE BLUE

ANJALI BHARGAVA

One man's loss is another man's gain. Never has the proverb seemed more apt than in India's aviation sector of late. A few weeks ago, SpiceJet chief Ajay Singh argued that the sector could go the "tel-

cos way" if fares didn't recover while IndiGo's CEO Rono Datta claimed that we were in a "gold-en age for Indian aviation". The truth, as usual, is somewhere in the middle. Oil prices have been low and the rupee stable but there are two other factors impacting yields. One, fares are running lower than those at the same time last year. I asked a couple of aviation industry seniors to do the math and their calculations show that the average Delhi-Mumbai fare needs to rise by around ₹500-600 on a net basis for any of the low fare airlines to break-even on a flight (assuming 90 per cent load factor). Fares are in fact running a bit lower than even break-even levels. Two, overall traffic has taken a beating with growth in single digits after several years

of double-digit growth. Both these factors are reflected in the latest results reported with high quarterly losses. But analysts and industry observers argue that while the industry may be suffering on account of pricing pressure as a whole, many of SpiceJet's problems are internal and of its own creation. One of the biggest blows — entirely out of its control — to the airline's plans was the unexpected grounding of 13 of its B737 Max since March 2019. The carrier will be compensated for this by Boeing, a much needed relief for SpiceJet with cash on its books at a paltry ₹93 crore by end September. In the mad frenzy to grab Jet's slots, SpiceJet — like rivals — jumped in too. The airline took

on 31 of Jet's aircraft, all of which had a two-class configuration. However, the gambit proved costly for the carrier in more ways than one. The aircraft are ageing and appear to have been more trouble than they were worth. This led to a spike in maintenance costs in the July-September quarter. Yields played spoilsport and stayed stubbornly low, reflecting the failure to charge a premium on the business class seats on offer. The aircraft will now be reconfigured to an all-economy class, an admission of the gambit having failed. Rising costs and stubborn yields reflected in the cost per available seat kilometre for the airline that rose by 8 per cent year on year, taking it to a record high and much above many rivals. This is despite the salaries bill for the airline being amongst the lowest in the industry. In the midst of the core business taking a beating, Singh has in October and November been busy with all kinds of new initiatives. He's announced plans

to launch an international hub operation out of Ras-Al-Khaima, 40 minutes from Dubai, where he sees "great potential". By December, as per the original plans, four to five aircraft are to be based here to operate on six to seven-hour, medium-haul routes. The Gulf seems to be where he's honing in since November: The airline signed a codeshare agreement with Emirates Airlines and entered into a memorandum of understanding with Gulf Air to widen their partnership as well. Industry observers argue that Singh, with his plate already full, has been dipping his fingers in several new pies. A business-to-business cargo delivery service was launched in 2016 and is running for select corporate clients. In 2017, he surprised everyone by opening SpiceStyle stores — including one in Gurugram's Galleria market, one of the more expensive rental spots — to sell designer and other lifestyle products. The Galleria store has since shut shop but two stores in

Hyderabad and Delhi are still around. In 2018, the airline announced that it was setting up Spice Star, a training academy for youngsters interested in charting out a career in aviation. Launched in partnership with Amity University in Noida, it acts as a home grown hiring ground for the airline. What is perhaps the most incredible aspect of the SpiceJet story is how Singh is attempting to pull off everything virtually on his own. When he took charge of the struggling airline in December 2014, the airline was down to around 32 aircraft with 5,400 total employees. Five years later, it has a fleet of 118 aircraft with over 230 on order and over 15,000 employees. He appears to have what many in the sector are terming an invisible "magic wand", one that is giving jitters to analysts and investors who don't see any second line of command in the airline whatsoever. Singh remains a single man army — a desi Superman — one everyone is unsure will sink or swim.

# India rethinks its coal future

Overdependence on Australia for coking coal for its steel plants makes it vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and diminishes its capacity to negotiate on prices

KUNAL BOSE

A common preoccupation of producers of ferrous and non-ferrous metals in India, China and elsewhere is to ensure security of supply of raw materials over a long term. At least in two major minerals, namely iron ore and bauxite required by makers of steel and aluminium, respectively, India being adequately endowed has a distinct advantage over China, which is dependent on import for both. In the case of metallurgical coal, however, this is not the case for India. Its imports are set to rise year-on-year as more and more steel is to be made using the blast furnace and basic oxygen furnace (BF-BOF) route.

The country's growing import dependence is because not only is the domestic supply of coking coal way short of steel mill requirements, the poor quality of local fuel because of a high degree of ash demands its blending with high quality imported stuff to make it BF friendly.

New Delhi by way of the 2017 steel policy has set a task to reduce coking coal import dependence from the present 85 per cent to 65 per cent by 2030-31. This is sought to be achieved by stepping up production of the fuel and getting it washed to rid it of much of its ash. The steel policy says BF-BOF route will have a 60 to 65 per cent share of the 2030-31 steel capacity of 300 million tonnes (mt) and production of 255 mt. On the basis of BF-BOF route's requirement of 700 kg of coking coal for making one tonne of crude steel, the 2030-31 fuel requirements will be 161 mt.

There is nothing wrong with imports if a particular raw material, in India's case it is coking coal, is not available locally in terms of volume and quality. For example, Japan runs its steel industry at the highest levels of efficiency and optimum value addition to primary steel notwithstanding its total dependence on raw materials imports. New Delhi has evolved a three-pronged strategy to progressively cut our coking coal import dependence by overseas asset acquisition, creating a sufficient number of modern washeries and exclusive allocation of indigenous met coal reserves for the steel sector. Coal India is expected to be ready with nine new washeries for metallurgical coal by the end of the next financial year.

While renewed attempts to step up domestic supplies both in terms of volume and quality will be of relief to steelmakers without captive mines, the country is reconciled to doing mostly with coal of foreign origin at all times. The concern is not about unavailability of imports but, as additional steel secretary Rasika Chaube points out, about India's continuing overdependence on a single source for coking coal. In the past three years, India stepped up imports of such coal from Canada and the US, albeit at a slow pace. As this is happening, the share of Australia in this country's coking coal market fell to 71 per cent or 36.91 mt during 2018-19 from around 88 per cent three years ago. Irrespective of the rate at which India starts buying coal from countries



other than Australia, imports will continue to rise in step with our growing steel production. What is not to be wished away is the continuing overwhelming dependence on Australia for coal goes against commercial wisdom. First, production in the coal mining region of Australia is periodically disrupted by natural calamities as was witnessed earlier this year when deadly cyclone Trevor followed quickly by Veronica pummeled Queensland, which has as much as half the share of global seaborne supplies. Veronica, a category four storm, whipped up gusts of up to 263 km an hour uprooting rail lines connecting mines to ports in many places. This and earlier natural disasters such as cyclones Debbie and Yasie disrupting coal shipments upset production programmes of steelmakers here. The only recourse for our steel producers to

avoid production disruption is to maintain coal stocks to last at least a month, says an industry official. But that kind of inventory leads to cost accretion. Second, the overdependence on a single supplying nation compromises the buyer's capacity to negotiate favourable terms and conditions of purchases. India is finally awakened to that reality. This is leading New Delhi to promote among steelmakers the idea of "risk diversification in metallurgical coal imports" by exploring countries other than Australia wherefrom coal can be procured at competitive costs on a sustainable basis. At a recent brainstorming session with the industry, Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the time was now "opportunity for us to engage with Russia and Mongolia for the import of coking coal... An Indian technological team is to make survey of the quality of metal-

lurgical coal in Russia and logistics supportive of transfer of the mineral to India using road, rail and sea. Then there is Mongolia, very rich in coal resources, where we are to build a railway line that will facilitate movement of the fuel. There is a lot of goodwill for us in Mongolia, which incidentally is the first country to recommend India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council." To create excitement among Indian steelmakers, Pradhan told them that "almost all of Mongolia's met coal is now exported to China. But that country is keen to reduce its dependence on a single buyer that is China and explore other markets. India figures prominently in that search." Of China's import of 64.2 mt of coking coal in 2018, Mongolia alone had a share of 43 per cent. Industry officials here familiar with Mongolian coal say the country will be able to realise better prices in the world market provided it gets its coal washed and blended before selling.

According to Bhaskar Chatterjee, director general of Indian Steel Association, in India's search for long-term suppliers of coking coal in significant quantities, Russia cannot but figure prominently. If leading Russian coking coal producers such as Mechel and Kolmar want a share of the Indian market, some leading steelmakers here are giving indications that once they have satisfied themselves with "coal quality and supply logistics", they will start using fuel from Russia in significant quantities. The point is not to be missed that with the market in the West shrinking where more and more steel is made by scrap recycling, Russia sees in India a potential major outlet for its coal.

## CHINESE WHISPERS

**'Boris ko humein jitana hai'**  
The poll mood in the United Kingdom took a desi turn on Monday as a video emerged, featuring a Hindi song "*Boris ko humein jitana hai, is desh ko aaj bachana hai...*" (we have to ensure Boris' victory to save this country)", projecting Prime Minister Boris Johnson as a panacea for all the problems. The song, in chaste Hindi, is believed to be the handiwork of some groups among the 1.5-million-strong Indian diaspora. The visuals, as one would expect, consist mostly of montages of Johnson, interspersed briefly by the picture of opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, whom it calls a "liar". Whether the video will help woo the Indian diaspora is an open question, but the desi audience on Twitter is hailing it purely for its entertainment value.

## Another 'reunion'? Not yet!



Rumours of a patch-up between Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav (pictured) and his estranged uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav never seem to die. They surfaced again after the reconciliation between the Nationalist Congress Party's Sharad Pawar and his nephew Ajit Pawar. Talks of a possible coming together of the two factions of the Yadav family grew louder during the recent birthday celebrations of party founder and clan patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav, with Shivpal, who went out and formed his own outfit, the Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party, giving signals of a rapprochement to some of his erstwhile colleagues. The rumours caused great nervousness among a section of SP leaders, given the kind of grip Shivpal had on the party once. But it seems Akhilesh has not warmed up to the "reunion" idea as yet and has supposedly told SP members that the party would fight all polls on its own.

**Birthday gift**  
The escalating prices of onion have been making headlines everyday. On Monday, as the Congress celebrated the birthday of its longest-serving president, Sonia Gandhi, a party leader and Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy chose the occasion to protest the Central government's failure to control the price of the staple. He criticised the Centre's alleged inaction before a gathering of his colleagues while gifting packs of onion to women workers of the party. He got a helping hand from his party colleague A Namassivayam. Besides other colleagues, many people who passed that way also received half-kg packs of onions.

## ON THE JOB

# Graduates face 17% unemployment rate



MAHESH VYAS

Education is positively associated with labour market participation. If a person gets education there is a greater chance that such a person will seek employment. And, the probability of a person seeking a job increases as the level of her education increases. This is logical and is generally expected. Education has an apparent end goal — to get a job. An undergraduate degree makes a big difference. We see this in the data. Over 62 per cent of the population that has an undergraduate degree or more, is in the labour force seeking a job. This proportion is way above the rest.

The gap between graduates-plus and the rest in terms of labour force participation is very large. Those who completed their 10th grade or more but not their undergraduate degree pencilled a labour participation rate of only 43 per cent. The participation rate then drops to less than 40 per cent for those who had some education but had not completed their 10th grade. Those with no education had an LPR of only 31 per cent.

The LPR at the lower end of the education spectrum is also very volatile. This phenomenon of low and volatile labour force participation of the uneducated is worth a detailed study. The

expectation was that people with no education would be the more vulnerable and would be loath to remain out of the labour force. But apparently, they keep getting in and out of labour markets month after month.

The volatility of monthly labour participation rates declines as education increases. Graduates-plus have the least volatility in this respect. They are also not only way ahead of the rest in terms of labour participation they are also recording a steady increase in their participation rate.

While the overall LPR for India was at an all-time low at 42.4 per cent in November 2019, the labour participation rate for graduates-plus was at an all-time high of 62.9 per cent in October 2019. At 62.2 per cent in November, it was close to this peak.

India's labour force participation rate has fallen from nearly 47 per cent in 2016 to 43 per cent in 2019. This translates into a fall of over 7 million in the labour force over three years — from 443 million to 436 million. However, during the same period, 2.5 million graduates-plus joined the labour force. Evidently, it is people with less education who have quit the labour markets. In fact, it is those with no education that have exited the labour markets over the past three years.

As basic education is becoming increasingly universal, the labour market in India has seen a sharp fall in those who have no education. Correspondingly, the share of those that have some education has increased. The quality of human resources in the labour markets is improving. Yet, the share of graduates-plus in Indian labour markets is very low.

Graduates-plus accounted for only 13.5 per cent of the total employed in 2019. This is an improvement over the 12.7 per cent share it had in 2016. But, it is still very low.

Graduates-plus account for only about 13 per cent of the population above the age of 25 years in India. In comparison, this ratio is over 40 per cent for developed countries. It is 45 per cent in South Korea and 17 per cent in China.

Evidently, India still has a lot of catching up to do on providing tertiary education to a vast majority of its population. Add to this, the woes of industry that has often complained about the low quality of labour in India.

While 62 per cent of graduates seek employment, only 51 per cent are employed. The remaining 11 per cent are unable to find a job although they are looking for one.

Are they unemployable or are the opportunities inadequate in number and poor in quality? Possibly, both are true. If this is indeed true then we have a vortex of problems in education and employment in India.

First, the proportion of graduate+ in the population is low at only 13 per cent. Second, these graduates face the highest unemployment rate. The unemployment rate among graduates is 17 per cent. Third, industry complains that the quality of graduates is not good enough for employment. Fourth, the rate in investments and therefore jobs creation is insufficient to absorb additions to the labour market.

This seems to be a vicious cycle in which vast numbers of educated are not considered employable and lack of investments leads to low job opportunities. This could discourage the young population from seeking higher education and also discourage educational institutions from producing employable labour. There can be a hope that in the long run, markets will sort out this problem. But, as has been well said, in the long run we are all dead.

The author is MD & CEO, CMIE

## LETTERS

## Beneficial move

The recent move by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to ease NEFT transaction transfer schedule to be made available for 24 hours is welcome. It is also overwhelming to know that RBI has already waived off charges levied for the transactions carried through NEFT/RTGS payments in order to promote a cashless ecosystem.

The facility to transfer money through NEFT transaction on a round-the-clock basis will benefit many customers who are otherwise depended on physical ATMs for the purpose of immediate cash requirement. The robust penetration of digital transactions through app-based banking facility and UPI-based payment systems have further eased the common man's burden of fetching cash from a physical location such as a bank branch or an ATM. The change in the NEFT schedule will further benefit the customers especially during travel exigencies and medical emergencies — as both the situations require immediate cash payment to the beneficiaries. The latest move will make RBI and other banking institutions inch closer to achieving their goal of complete financial inclusion.

**Varun Dambal** Bengaluru

## Blatant violation

This refers to "Building owner, manager arrested" (December 9). The fire in New Delhi in which killed 43 persons in a building is a stunning example of flouting of laws with gay abandon — a five-floor structure housing factories and a host of other violations.

That such a cavalier set up kept functioning uninterrupted by the owner's conscience or law enforcing authorities tells how lethargic or corrupt or both are the officials in civic administration, labour department, state government and the central government.

This is also the reason for frequent deaths in the national capital in public buildings, hotels and cinema theatres such as Uphar. Going by the Uphar



case, it is anybody's guess how much time it will take to decide the present one in a court and whether the punishment will be exemplary.

It also raises the question whether the government's move to end "inspector raj" in factories is a case of misplaced trust in the self-inspection honesty of factory owners.

**Y G Chouksey** Pune

## CJI spot on

This refers to "CJI: Justice loses its character when it becomes revenge" (December 8) which quotes the Chief Justice of India S A Bobde as saying that there cannot be instant justice. Justice Bobde made that comment in the backdrop of the rape case in Telangana and subsequent killing of the alleged rapists. He is absolutely right. The CJI also appropriately mentioned long delays in

dispensing justice. What he did not mention is how bails are granted in even cases of violent rape and gang rape. The example of the case in Unnao in UP is a case in view right now. I am of the view that the Supreme Court can give direction, may be administratively but surely judicially that where there is violence mixed with rape and in cases of gang rape, bail should not be given. And the general impression of people is that once the criminal case goes to courts, the case will drag on and rich people with a lot of cash can appoint top lawyers to delay justice and can even derail justice. Quick disposal of such cases must be achieved.

Generalising the issue of inordinate delay in courts, it is high time the higher judiciary admits that the main cause is not simply the vacancies of judges. I feel that increasing the number of judges is only half the solution. What is needed is a thorough procedural overhaul and attitudinal change in the judicial system. The conclusion is that the massive backlog in courts can be reduced not by a quantitative approach but a qualitative change in the approach on the part of all stakeholders.

**Sukumar Mukhopadhyay** via email

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## Is India's economy crashing?

Or do we need to retool our country?

Open any newspaper or news website and the bad news is unrelenting. It looks like a whole slew of industries is crashing: The passenger car manufacturers, telecom service providers, airlines, banks that lend money to small businesses, real estate developers, civil construction companies, TV broadcasters and — hold your breath — even information technology (IT) services export behemoths.

And the headline news makes it look as if every indicator that economists follow — gross domestic product (GDP), employment rate, the rupee to dollar rate — is also heading downwards.

And depending on his political posture, the writer/columnist picks who or what to blame for the downslide: Corrupt businessmen, the Narendra Modi government's reckless modernisation moves such as demonetisation, the goods and services tax (GST) and the focus on electric cars, a desperate finance ministry slapping unimaginably unfair taxes on Indian businesses, China and its world-dominating ambition or Donald Trump and America's new-found protectionist stance.

And the antidotes being proposed for this desperate situation — decrease bank interest rates, reduce inflation and sell-off loss-making state-owned companies — all have the familiar re-assuring sound and tone of a 1960's Lata Mangeshkar/ Mohammed Rafi song, calming us into a sleepy stupor.

Let's pause here and let's check whether there are any "inter-connectedness" to these mystifying downward trends. Is it that a lack of car parking space and excessively crowded roads in cities are leading to

people in the active working group not buy cars? Is that what's leading to the fall in car sales, which in turn is leading to car manufacturers and their ancillary supplier's cutting production and jobs, and as a result income contraction for car dealers, petrol pumps, repair shops and car-financing companies (NBFCs)? And are each of these players, in turn, sending ripples through their own eco-systems —

NBFCs, for instance, which are the main source of finance in Bharat are on their knees— and is that what has brought Bharat's own businesses down?

If this is even partially true, should we be using the tools of Network Economics (Daran Acemoglu's piece, *The Network Origins of Economic Fluctuations*, in *Econometrica* (<https://economics.mit.edu/files/8135>) to find out the degree centrality and other network values to clearly figure out

the root causes quantitatively?

Or is it possible that the next boom in demand and jobs will be in services? Could new technology bring down prices for things like medical diagnosis, legal fees, insurance and so on to perhaps a tenth of the current cost, which will make, for example, a visit to a general practitioner for a basic medical check-up cost a mere ₹10 (not ₹600 as it does today) and a comprehensive medical insurance cost ₹100 a year (with no subsidy from the government) for a rickshaw puller's whole family.

Technology has the potential to drive demand for these services many fold. As James Bessen's National Bureau of Economic Research working papers No. 24,235 from January 2018 points out: "In



AJIT BALAKRISHNAN

## IRMA: Relevance @ 40

Verghese Kurien, India's milkman nonpareil, made me an offer in May 1979 that I could not refuse. He was the chairman of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) at Anand then. He wanted me to help him set up the new Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA), the first of its kind anywhere in the world. When I went to Anand a month later, I discovered that there were no documents or reports regarding the yet-to-be registered institute, save the routine draft Memorandum and Articles of Association. It existed in the thoughts, often disjointed, of Dr Kurien and Kamla Chowdhry, my old senior colleague at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) and then a Ford Foundation advisor to Dr Kurien on the new project.

Dr Kurien told me right off that he would handle funding and aesthetics of the new campus; everything else — recruitment and induction of faculty and staff, curriculum design, student intake — was entirely my responsibility with a promise of non-interference, which he scrupulously kept. He assured me that money would never be a problem and NDDB would provide all the back-stopping. He asked me how soon would the institute start functioning. Heady with excitement, I said in one year (which was patently foolhardy in retrospect). Somehow, 363 days thereafter, we managed to get Tribhuvandas Patel, the grand old founder chairman of Anand Milk Producers' Union (AMUL) to welcome the first group of 52 students to a makeshift IRMA campus. The IRMA Society was registered with the state charities' commissioner on December 14, 1979. That was IRMA's formal foundation-day.

But this column is not a nostalgia trip down the memory lane. It is about a question that became vexing for all of us then: What is this beast "rural

management" and why does it need a new institution? Partly because of the physical proximity, but mainly because many of us early pioneers of IRMA had IIMA umbilical cords either as teachers or students there, an impression existed that IRMA was a sort of a poor 'country' cousin to the already formidable IIMA. That riled us no end. This institutional existential question as to who or what we were led to long, passionate but inconclusive debates. Even as late as five years ago, the renowned water management expert Tushaar Shah, who was part of the doctoral programme at IIMA and an early member of IRMA faculty (later to be its director), and I engaged in this discussion.

Since then, much of our collective attention has been focussed on rural distress. Producers of grains, pulses, oilseeds and even vegetables have had legitimate complaints about unremunerative prices. Inadequate market support coupled with ineffective minimum support prices have aggravated their grievances. For the most part, however, dairy farmers (barring cowherds in parts of Maharashtra) have not shown signs of economic strain. The milk economy in value terms is now as large as the other two commodity systems, grains and horticulture. So, dairy production being a minor or secondary occupation cannot explain the relatively sanguine situation of its practitioners.

Unlike crop cultivation, most farmers now see dairying as an *enterprise*, and not a subsistence or default occupation. Milk, no matter how small a quantity, is produced for markets. The market power asymmetry is effectively countered by producers' organisations, which are large enough to enjoy economies of scale through the use of technology. And like all mature enterprises, their concern has moved from remunerative prices to their stability,



ET CETERA

SHREEKANT SAMBRANI

But this one is completely atypical, just as another one — The Naïve and Sentimental Lover — was. It's not quite as rant as Rudrangshu Mukherjee suggested in these columns a few weeks ago but it's, well, not quite what one expects of Mr le Carre.

The languid upper class British style is there as also the intricate writing. But Brexit isn't worth the great man, even given its sordid provenance and progress.

By the time I had landed back, I was thinking about other major story tellers who have or had lost the skills and after how many books they begin losing them. It also occurred to me that this happens only to those who write in one genre, whatever it might be.

For example, Anthony Burgess, one of the great but unsung English writers was best known for his worst novel, *The*

*Clockwork Orange* because Stanley Kubrick made a film out of it with a lot of full frontal female nudity.

He almost never wrote in the same genre twice. The exceptions were the two trilogies or six novels out of 40-odd. But then he was also a critic, music composer and playwright.

I suppose one can say the same thing about Graham Greene as well. He too wrote about very different things. Of more recent vintage are John Grisham and Daniel Silva. Grisham started to dip around 2002 and Mr Silva, who writes about an Israeli James Bond in the le Carre style, around 2013. On balance, Mr Grisham became worse as he went along.

There are many others who have suffered this fate. Dick Francis who wrote those wonderful racing crime thrillers and Sidney Sheldon are good examples.

Francis towards the end of his life was writing along with his son Felix who now writes his own. Sheldon has been "covered" by Tilly Bagshawe who has

an earlier era, cotton textile consumption soared following the introduction of the power loom at US textile units in 1814; steel consumption grew following the US adoption of the Bessemer steelmaking process in 1856, and Henry Ford's assembly line in 1913 initiated rapid growth in motor vehicles."

And to make this happen, we may need to relocate at India's current approach to innovation. The path that innovation takes even in "capitalist" countries like the US is of state-drive initiatives. This is a "well-kept secret" and the US media portrays the individual entrepreneur as the pioneer and hero. Mariana Mazzucato's book, *The Entrepreneurial State*, debunks the myth of a lumbering, bureaucratic state versus a dynamic, innovative private sector. In a series of case studies, in IT to biotechnology, she shows that the private sector finds the courage to invest only after the state, often the defence sector part of it, has made the high-risk investments. She devotes a whole chapter to demonstrating that every technology that makes the iPhone so "smart" was US defence department funded and private company executed: The Internet, global positioning system, its touch-screen display and the voice-activated Siri. This is one area where India spectacularly fails. Defence funding is channelled to state-owned research organisations where scientists are merely bureaucrats holding meetings and sending out minutes of meetings and press releases, but have long ago stopped any innovative work. Unless this tragedy is fixed, India's chances to create world-conquering and job-creating new industries are slim.

The real issue is, is it time for India to create a new industrial policy that takes an intelligent middle path between being completely state-driven on the one hand and being worshippers of unbridled liberalisation on the other? Fred Block's 2008 paper, *Swimming Against the Current: The Rise of the Hidden Development State in the United States*, spells this out and points out that we need to fashion an agenda for economic policies that take an intelligent intermediate stand. Such a renewed call for an industrial policy should not be mistaken for a call to return to a bygone era where state actions dominated the economy. What it says is that in this era where rapid technological change is a reality, government has an increasingly important role in encouraging the advance of new technologies in the business economy. As Block explains, this means an industrial policy in which government officials consult with technologists in both business and academia to identify technological challenges, the solution to which will open up entirely new industries, recognising all the while that the real constraints to innovation tend to be on the demand side.

No amount of fiddling with interest-rates and inflation-targets or subsidies is going to help.

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## Managing urban co-op banks

Changing the regulatory structure alone won't be enough

Big changes are afoot in how urban co-operative banks (UCBs) are regulated. According to a report in this newspaper, large UCBs are expected to come solely under the provisions of the Banking Regulation (BR) Act. The move will affect over 1,500 Indian UCBs, with deposits in excess of ₹4.5 trillion. This is a fairly important sector of the financial system — about 11 per cent of the deposits in scheduled commercial banks, or SCBs, in 2017 — but it has for decades suffered under a problem of divided regulation. The Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RoCS) is currently the nodal regulator, and has control of management elections and external audits. But some provisions of the BR Act also apply — under which they are inspected by the banking regulator, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and conform to its capital adequacy requirements. As with all such arrangements, there is scope for regulatory confusion and arbitrage. In particular, the RBI had fewer instruments with which to enforce its regulatory diktat, since it could not supersede UCB boards the way it could with other private-sector SCBs.

The context of this action is, of course, the massive fraud unearthed at PMC Bank, with major consequences for depositors. While it could be argued that there is no direct linkage between the PMC Bank issue and the problem of dual regulation — and PMC Bank, with a size of ₹12,000 crore, was in fact under the ₹20,000-crore threshold being considered for transfer to RBI sole supervision — it was certainly an opportune moment to consider the future of UCBs in general. One important change must be, given the PMC Bank depositors' distress, that UCBs should have the same protection as regular banks. Many PMC Bank depositors did not know that they were putting money into a differently regulated and protected entity in comparison with a regular commercial bank. If the difference cannot be clearly and transparently communicated to depositors, then the difference itself is unsustainable.

There is no clear reason for the continued presence of UCBs in their current form in a banking landscape that has changed so drastically. It has become extremely difficult for UCBs to compete because of a lack of trained manpower and their inability to raise sufficient capital. A recent high-level committee led by a former deputy governor of the RBI, R Gandhi, suggested that mergers and re-orientation of existing UCBs be continued in such a manner that many important ones eventually become small finance banks. Such small finance banks will find it easier to grow their capital, although their capital adequacy requirements might also be more stringent. The crucial aspect must be to mainstream the board's control of management and bring it in line with a proper incentive structure. The regulatory reframing will be successful only if it can transform the nature of governance for the large UCBs that will be directly affected by the change. The RBI must also recognise that, as its responsibilities grow, so must its capacity. In particular, its auditing capacity and supervision of boards must have greater depth and reach. The build-up of non-performing assets in the banking system and the trouble in non-banking financial companies suggest that the regulator has a long way to go. Simply changing the regulatory structure will not automatically result in stability in the UCB segment.

## Fighting fit

Delhi needs more adaptive fire-fighting facilities

The fire at Anaj Mandi, which left 43 people dead — all of them labourers in an illegal factory — revealed yet again the venal face of the officialdom and small business owners. Multiple rules were broken — from running factories in residential areas to the lack of a no-objection certificate from the fire department, workers living on the factory premises — pointing strongly to a nexus. The factory owner has been duly arrested but it remains to be seen whether any punitive action will be taken against complicit local municipal officials. The tragedy is the latest in a long list of fatality-causing fires in the capital. All of them — without exception — were the result of lax vigilance and rule-breaking by local authorities. The wearying, repetitive cause of these tragedies follows a predictable trajectory: State and central governments, which divide the city's administration between them, blame each other; to assuage a temporary outbreak of popular indignation some arrests are made and new rules are issued before the situation relapses into its default state of corruption and collusion.

Clearly, as media comment points out ad nauseam, these are issues that demand a systemic overhaul by courageous political leadership. Since this might be a while coming, it would help in the meanwhile if a more practical approach were taken to the state's firefighting capabilities. Right now, most urban firefighting equipment is tailored for the broad avenues of Lutyens' Delhi and the affluent colonies of south Delhi. But the truth is, slums and crowded residential areas take up the bulk of the city's space, and these spaces are all fire hazards waiting to happen. In and of themselves the narrow streets, close proximity of buildings, and overhead tangle of electricity wires make these areas vulnerable to fire; rampant illegal activity only heightens the risk. An exploding cooking cylinder could do as much damage as the spark in a poorly maintained (or stolen) electricity cable. These are areas in which large cars struggle to manoeuvre, let alone mammoth trucks. All of these present serious challenges to the city's fire-fighting services and urgently demand that they adjust their mode of operations accordingly. The tragedy of Anaj Mandi is best exemplified by the fact that some 30 fire trucks were dispatched, but only one could get through the clogged alleyways. As a result, it took the fire services five hours to contain the fire. Many victims were put into autorickshaws and taxis for the trip to hospital and several died on the way for lack of adequate medical facilities. Had it not been for the bravery of two firefighters, who saved 27 people, the death toll would have been much higher.

Given the frequency of these fires in such areas, it may be time for the firefighting services to focus on acquiring equipment and expertise to tackle fires in congested conditions. Longer bowisers from the water-carrying trucks would be one obvious answer, as would be smaller vehicles that can manoeuvre severely restricted gullies to enable firefighters with basic equipment and ambulances to reach ground zero quickly. These are easy changes to introduce and, if implemented side by side with honest and vigilant imposition of rules, could save many more lives in Dehi's fire-prone zones.

## Long-playing novelists



KITABKHANA

T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

Recently I was on two very long flights, around 15 hours in the air all told with four-hour breaks in-between. So I took along the two latest books by my favourite authors — Jeffery Archer and John le Carre.

Both write the good versus evil sort of fiction. But while Mr Archer writes simple stories — upper-end Mills and Boon, if you like — Mr Le Carre's stories are very complex. It's only because they both write so well that they stand out from the crowd.

So I was hugely looking forward to reading their new books. I started with Mr le Carre because it was a morning flight and you need all your wits about to read him. Reading him is like listening to good blues.

Mr Archer, on the other hand, is like what they call easy listenin'. So I kept his book for the return leg most of which was through the night. You can read him with several whiskeys inside you, with headphones on.

Well, folks, both disappointed, Mr Archer more than Mr le Carre. Mr Archer

has a weird story about the same person in two different bodies. One is located in London and the other in New York.

The story hops along in the usual Archer way and by the time you are halfway through you are wondering how he is going to end it. I am sure he was also wondering about the same thing because when the book finally becomes untenable, he kills one of them off. Very Hindi movie-like.

The le Carre denouement has been building up ever since the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics crashed out. It's not that the spies business has died out; it's just that Mr le Carre, always deeply suspicious of the system, has turned even more deeply so.

**There has been only exception to this urge to write and write and write: J D Salinger. He wrote just one highly successful novel, *The Catcher in the Rye***

resurrected the Sheldon genre of rich and ruthless women.

Then there was Earle Stanley Gardner of the Perry Mason fame who wrote 103 novels. It was rumoured that he employed writers to churn these out.

But there's no need to go that far. There was Edgar Wallace, the man who created King Kong. Legend has it that he would lock himself in a room over the weekend and emerge with a novel. Good stuff to start with but going downhill after the first 40 or so. He wrote around 175 novels plus over 900 short stories and 20 or so plays.

Closer home — dare I say it — there was R K Narayan. Same story. Excellent stuff to start with but that contrived simplicity began to grate later on.

There has been only exception to this urge to write and write and write: J D Salinger. He wrote just one highly successful novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

A close second was Joseph Heller who wrote two. One of them was *Catch 22*.



## Citizenship Bill, along with an NRC, is worrying

The security concerns are real, but the idea that India will welcome only non-Muslims will deepen communal divide

IT IS CERTAINLY true, as those defending the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) argue, that while Muslims have both Bangladesh and Pakistan as Muslim-majority nations, the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians have no other country to call their own in the neighbourhood; so, the argument goes, it is perfectly justifiable that the Citizenship Act be amended to grant citizenship to these illegal non-Muslim immigrants who fled to India, possibly due to being persecuted in these countries. It is equally true that, were this automatic citizenship to be opened up to Muslims, there is the possibility that the ISI can send decoys into India on the pretext they are being persecuted in Pakistan. But, any Citizenship Bill which implicitly states that religion is the basis of citizenship is problematic. Apart from the fact that it goes against India's secular fabric and the prohibition on discrimination on the basis of religion, it is also telling the country's Muslim population that they are welcome only due to the fact that they—or their parents—lived in India, or migrated to it, at the time of partition. With one stroke, Muslims have been reduced to second-class citizens; that's a self-inflicted blow on a country that, unlike Pakistan, was not founded as the homeland for a particular religious group.

What makes the CAB even more worrying is the National Register of Citizens (NRC) that the government has said is now going to be implemented all over the country. The NRC was a colossal failure in Assam since, contrary to expectations, more than 60% of those who couldn't prove their citizenship were Hindus; and that is why the process is to be repeated though it is not clear how, the second time around, the result will be materially different. But, what is worrying is the potential damage the NRC will cause and whether this will deteriorate into a communal problem particularly if there is a fear—the CAB does a lot to trigger that fear—that Muslim immigrants can be deported or put in detention camps. Indeed, the government itself has been vague about what it plans to do about those who cannot prove their citizenship, apart from general assurances that no one needs to worry. If, as is likely, Bangladesh or Pakistan don't take back the illegal immigrants, are they to be housed in detention camps or what? If there was clarity on this, it is likely the reaction to the NRC could be quite different.

How are the poor and unlettered, and migrants from within the country, to prove their citizenship since, often enough, they don't have the documents required to prove citizenship such as birth certificates or bank/post-office accounts, and then records to prove their link with their parents/grandparents; the latter includes birth certificates, land documents, school-leaving certificates, ration cards etc. Since India has never had citizenship papers, millions will now have to go back to their villages to get these documents; and there is no certainty they will succeed. If all of this helps make India terror-free, it may still be worth it, but surely a move with such large ramifications needs a broader discussion? Nor is it immediately clear that it is only Muslim immigrants who are responsible for—or are an integral part of—terror activities in India. Along with the NRC, the CAB is likely to exacerbate communal tensions in the country; that can hardly be desirable.

## Delhi, the fire trap

Rampant flouting of norms worsened by resource shortage

THE BUILDING IN Delhi's Anaj Mandi where 43 people were killed in a fire on Sunday didn't have fire safety clearance nor did it have any fire-fighting equipment installed despite being full of combustible materials, the Delhi Fire Services department stated in the aftermath of the tragedy. In the case of the city-hotel blaze in which 17 people were killed in February, the site where the fire broke out didn't have functional fire-fighting equipment, and the inspector who had recommended fire clearance for the property was from a different jurisdiction. Both cases serve to highlight the poor state of compliance and enforcement of fire safety rules in the city. While the Delhi government, in the aftermath of the February incident, cancelled the fire safety clearances of 30 hotels in the area, nearly 120 eateries continue to operate in Hauz Khas Village, despite objection from the Archaeological Survey of India (most are within 100 metres of a protected monument) and the Delhi High Court labelling these a 'ticking time bomb' in terms of fire hazard in 2017. Indeed, last year, the Court had asked the South Delhi Municipal Corporation why it had cleared these eateries while most lacked even basic fire safety exits. Only eight of 57 restrobars in Hauz Khas Village and Khan Market had fire safety NOCs. But, it is not just Delhi's posh market places that are fire traps; the Delhi government had flagged the lack of compliance at 241 schools in July this year. There are nearly 100 buildings in Lutyens' Delhi that don't meet fire safety standards, including the Parliament Annexe building, Vayu Bhawan, Sena Bhawan and the offices of various ministries, as reported by Delhi Fire Service following inspections.

The problem of fire-traps likely populating the entire city is made worse by the fact that the Delhi Fire Services is woefully under-staffed and under-equipped. As per a 2016 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the latest such report available), the Delhi Fire Service had a manpower shortage of 42% while it needed at least 12 more fire stations. Calls received by the Delhi Fire Service shot up from 45 per day in 2005-06 to 86 in 2018-19, indicating the growing number of fire-traps in the city. With inadequate fire-fighting infrastructure, this translates into poor response-time, a concern the CAG had flagged in its report. The state government and the municipal corporations need to get their act together if an Anaj Mandi like tragedy is to be avoided.

Against such a backdrop, the Centre announcing the regularisation of unauthorised colonies seems downright reckless—these colonies are some of the worst fire-traps, given how congested they are and how poorly safety standards are followed, not just in design and fire safety equipment but also in construction material used. Ruling parties shouldn't simply be giving safety the short shrift with competitive populist politics in mind. At the same time, sacking a few top officials—perhaps the zonal fire officer and her deputies—will perhaps help drive home the message for authorities, that ensuring fire safety can't be taken lightly, political and other pressures notwithstanding.

## TrashTALK

The “pedo guy” verdict has ramifications for social media conduct, but online insults needn't all be taken too seriously

WORDS FOR THE age of social media are asking, “What's in name-calling?” and a US court has answered, “Not much”—at least in spirit, if not words. Techpreneur, innovator and occasional pot-smoker Elon Musk, on Twitter, had called one of the British cave-divers who, in July 2018, helped rescue Thai school children trapped in an underwater cave a “pedo guy”—after the said cave-diver and hero had made uncharitable comments about Musk's unsuccessful attempts to rescue the children—and a \$190 million defamation lawsuit against Musk ensued. Following the judgment, Musk says his “faith in humanity is restored”. The other party's is perhaps shattered, since he had claimed that the billionaire's tweet had left him “humiliated, ashamed, dirtied” and, post the verdict, his lawyer said “It's a pity that a bullying billionaire may be able to cast such a long shadow as this. We came here because Mr Musk said sue or true”.

Social media was initially meant to connect people, now it could be driving people apart, partly because it is used to call someone “pedo guy” or to suggest inappropriate parking for innovations, as the British cave-diver did when Musk talked about his machine to rescue the trapped schoolchildren. The losing side in the Musk defamation suit has claimed that the verdict has important ramifications for what one can get away with on social media, and it may well be true. But, even when words hurt, they aren't bullets. If cases like this one were upheld, the courts would get clogged. What is *kosher* in social media and what isn't—a death threat never will be—is still getting defined. Watching one's words is advisable, but how dreary life would be if insults didn't sting!

### ● HYDERABAD METRO PROJECT

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CAG ON THE PPP PROJECT WHERE, AMONG OTHER THINGS THE VGF HAS BEEN UNLAWFULLY APPROPRIATED, GIVEN CONTRACT TERMS ON USER-CHARGES WERE VIOLATED

# Contract sanctity derailed, a green-signal to graft

DEAR SHRI MEHRISHI, This is to draw your kind attention to an ongoing scam that involves very large sums of money and very valuable commercial real estate, besides unlawful exploitation of millions of commuters using the Hyderabad metro rail. This scam could be further divided into four sub-scams, as briefly described below:

A. *Unlawful appropriation of Central VGF Grant of ₹1,458 crore*

■ The project was honestly structured and transparently awarded through open competitive bidding based on the bidding documents that were duly approved by the Union Ministry of Finance (MoF). According to the terms of MoF approval, the project was eligible for viability gap funding (VGF) of ₹1,458 crore from the central government, and the same was payable to the Concessionaire of the Project.

■ Under the VGF scheme, the state government had to certify that the user charge/fare shall be as specified in the bidding documents, and that it was not possible to increase the same in order to reduce the VGF. The Concession Agreement (forming part of the bidding documents) accordingly stipulated the user charges that the Concessionaire could recover from year to year. The sole rationale for providing VGF was to bridge the viability gap that could not be covered by increasing the pre-determined user charges.

■ The Concessionaire, in collusion with the state government, has unlawfully increased the fare by more than double, and yet, received and misappropriated a large proportion of the aforesaid VGF. Since the principal terms of the central VGF grant have been grossly violated, the Union MoF is duty-bound to recover the entire grant released so far, along with interest thereon.

B. *Illegal misappropriation of*

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Views are personal

*user charges*

■ The aforesaid increase in user charges is said to have been done under the garb of change in law. However, Article 41 of the Concession Agreement provides that if the Concessionaire suffers any financial loss due to change in law, the same shall be compensated by the state government to the Concessionaire. Conversely, if the Concessionaire makes any financial gain due to change in law, he must reimburse the same to the state government, as categorically provided in the said Article 41. However, the state government has not enforced the provisions of this Article, and has allowed the Concessionaire to unlawfully misappropriate large unearned gains, which legitimately belong to the state government or the users.

C. *Real estate scam*

■ In exchange for a low-value land specified in the Concession Agreement, the state government has allotted a large parcel of commercially very valuable land to the Concessionaire, without any authority whatsoever, and in violation of the provisions of the Concession Agreement. Moreover, no process or procedures have been followed in making these unlawful changes that have caused a huge loss to the exchequer, and provided

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Former principal advisor (Infrastructure) in the erstwhile Planning Commission  
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enormous unlawful gains to the Concessionaire. This amounts to large-scale plunder of public wealth by the Concessionaire, in collusion with the state government.

D. *Undue largesse of real estate*

■ This project is substantially supported by a large component of real estate since metro projects across the world are otherwise unviable. This entire real estate, as stipulated in the Concession Agreement, was meant to support a 71-km-long project. However, so far, only about 40 km has been commissioned while the entire real estate meant for supporting 71 km is being commercially exploited by the Concessionaire. There seems no intent to make a reduction in real estate corresponding to the reduction in project size. This has provided undue and unearned gains of large proportions to the Concessionaire at the expense of the public exchequer.

■ When some of the above violations came to my notice, I wrote to the then secretary, DEA on January 3, 2018, requesting him to withhold any further release of VGF and also recover the grant already released. My letter was followed by letters dated July 6, 2018, August 30, 2018, and July 18, 2019.

■ The foundation of a public private partnership (PPP) project is a fair and balanced contract

No process or procedures have been followed in making these unlawful changes that have caused a huge loss to the exchequer

## Becoming net carbon neutral

With solar and wind now being the cheapest sources of electricity, India must take leadership to join industrialised nations in becoming net carbon neutral

AJAY SHANKAR  
Distinguished fellow, TERI, & former secretary, DIPP. Views are personal

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CLIMATE CHANGE IS now a reality. People across the world are experiencing extreme weather occurrences that seemed unimaginable a few decades ago. Time is running out for mankind. Getting to zero carbon emissions at the earliest is imperative. The UK and France have, by legislation, decided to become net carbon neutral by 2050. The EU, too, is moving in that direction. Prime minister Modi has shown leadership in facilitating the Paris agreement, and making what then appeared a highly ambitious voluntary national commitment. This was followed by setting up the International Solar Alliance. The National Solar Mission was launched in 2010 with the target of generating 20,000 MW of solar power by 2020-22. This has already been achieved, and the goal is not to set up 100,000 MW of solar power by 2022 is now there. The prime minister has recently announced that India would take renewable energy capacity to 450,000 MW.

It is time for India to move on to achieving net carbon neutrality. From the outset, India's position on climate change has emphasised the per capita principle; on grounds of equity, every human being should have the same right to emit carbon dioxide. Further, India would pursue a low carbon growth trajectory in relation to industrialised countries and ensure that its per capita emissions does not exceed theirs. Now that developed countries are aiming to achieve zero per capita carbon emission by 2050, by extrapolation, India's position should be that it would also achieve this around the same time. Can India do it? Can it afford to do so? Would it moderate the achievement of its development goals? These are issues that need analysis and discussion.

Electricity generation is the largest source of carbon emissions in India, with 72% of electricity being generated by burning coal. India's per capita elec-

tricity consumption needs to go up. The issue is whether this should take place by using more coal, as has been the case, or is a different trajectory feasible. Electricity from solar and wind is now cheaper than all other sources. It, therefore, makes commercial sense to exploit the full wind power potential, and not to burn any coal for electricity. Germany is already getting 46% of its electricity from renewable sources. India should be able to raise its share of renewables from sub-10% at present to Germany's level of over 45% easily.

The real challenge is to get electricity when the sun is not shining. Storage is the answer. Technologies for storage exist and are being deployed. Their costs are falling rapidly. The oldest one in use is pump storage in a hydropower plant, where electricity generated in the day is used to pump water up into the reservoir of the dam, and this flows down at night to generate electricity. A 1,000 MW pump storage plant is under construction at the Tehri dam. The development of all pump storage sites would be a good starting point. Sardar Sarovar and Indira Sagar dams on the Narmada could be potential sites. Then, other hydro power plants could be examined to see whether, with modest investments, they could be run only at night.

Solar thermal power with storage offers great promise. Heat from the rays of the sun are reflected through giant mirrors, and concentrated to heat molten salt. The heat trapped in the molten salt is then used to generate electricity at night through a conventional turbine. The cost, which may at present be, say, twice that of a normal coal-based plant, would gradually come down with larger volumes. The Chinese, having commissioned one large plant, are building 5,000 MW of these. India could start building a few such plants, with competitive tariff bids, which have helped lower costs for conventional solar power. The

same could be done with battery storage. A good beginning is being made in Andaman. With experience in running such storage plants, and their declining costs, India would become well-poised to scale up and produce all its electricity with zero carbon emissions.

Transport is the next largest contributor to carbon emissions in India. Electric vehicles have zero carbon emission of their own. As the carbon emission per unit of electricity declines, and finally becomes zero, carbon emissions from electric vehicles, too, would become zero. Electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and cars are already cost competitive. They would gain market share rapidly as the charging network, including in residential apartments and office complexes, is laid out. For trucks and buses moving on highways, Germany is doing a pilot project with overhead electric cables on the highways so that hybrid trucks can run on electricity on the highway and as a normal hybrid otherwise. India would be well advised to go this route rather than putting up a CNG network on the highways as some have been advocating. The Railways are, fortunately, moving towards full electrification as it makes good commercial sense. Thus, surface transport in the country could, as of now, become nearly carbon neutral with no significant additional cost.

The major industrial sectors, such as steel, cement, and petrochemicals, pose technological challenges along with cost and competitiveness issues in moving towards zero carbon emissions. Indian industry is becoming more energy efficient, and would be well poised to move towards lower carbon emissions along with global industry.

For India to be among the first countries to become net carbon neutral may not be all that difficult. It should take leadership and consider becoming one.

that clearly allocates the risks and rewards among the respective parties. Sanctity of the contract is critical for the credibility of a PPP project. A few cases of malfeasance can destroy public confidence in PPPs, thus losing a valuable resource for national development. Exemplary action is, therefore, essential whenever malfeasance is detected.

■ As this case is nothing short of organised plunder of public money on a large scale, I would request you to kindly consider a special audit, both at the central and the state level. Since I had structured the project and written the Concession Agreement, RFP etc, I will be happy to provide such assistance as your audit team may need for comprehension and interpretation of these complex documents. More than my assistance, it is ultimately the legal experts who will have to be consulted for assessing the criminality involved in this case.

With regards,  
Yours sincerely,  
Gajendra Haldea

PS: A PPP project is meant to be driven entirely by a contract between a public authority and a private entity. Sanctity of the contract is, therefore, of paramount importance. When violated, away with unintended gains! This also opens the floodgates to crony capitalism and corruption, which increases the project costs beyond what may have been spent if the project were undertaken by the public sector. As such, PPP projects should be abandoned, in public interest, if the government does not have the will and wherewithal to recognise and enforce the sanctity of contracts. Furthermore, offenders involved in malfeasance must be brought to book and made to face the legal consequences so that short-changing of public interest is suitably addressed.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### A country without economists?

Mr P Chidambaram in his article "Economy sans economists" (*Financial Express*) has indicated that Mrs Nirmala Sitharaman the current finance minister of India holds an MA degree in economics from JNU, thinks she is a competent economist capable of managing the Indian economy. The former finance minister Mr Chidambaram has quoted the Economist calling the government an "incompetent manager" of the country. In my honest opinion, Mr P Chidambaram is unfair to be critical of Nirmala Sitharaman as finance minister and to call her as "incompetent Manager of the country. In the past more than 50% of finance ministers did not have even a MA degree in economics. Secondly, Mr Chidambaram says India's economy is being run without the aid and advice of competent economists. These comments are also unfair. One can put a question. Who are the "competent economists" in the country? It appears to me that India is without economists. For example, today the Input tax credit figure for FY19 was (₹48 lakh crore) four times more than the GST collected (₹12 lakh crore). In other words, gross collection of GST from consumers was ₹60 lakh crore. But only ₹12 lakh crore reached the government and the rest amount of ₹48 lakh crore was utilised to reduce the GST liability of GST payers. On the other hand a sum of ₹12 lakh crore can be collected by reducing the GST rate to 2% with no input tax credit. Whole of the country is engaged in paying GST and then claiming Input tax credit, but all the so called "competent economists" are silent. This is the standard of "competent economists". It appears to me that India is without economists. — SC Aggarwal, Delhi

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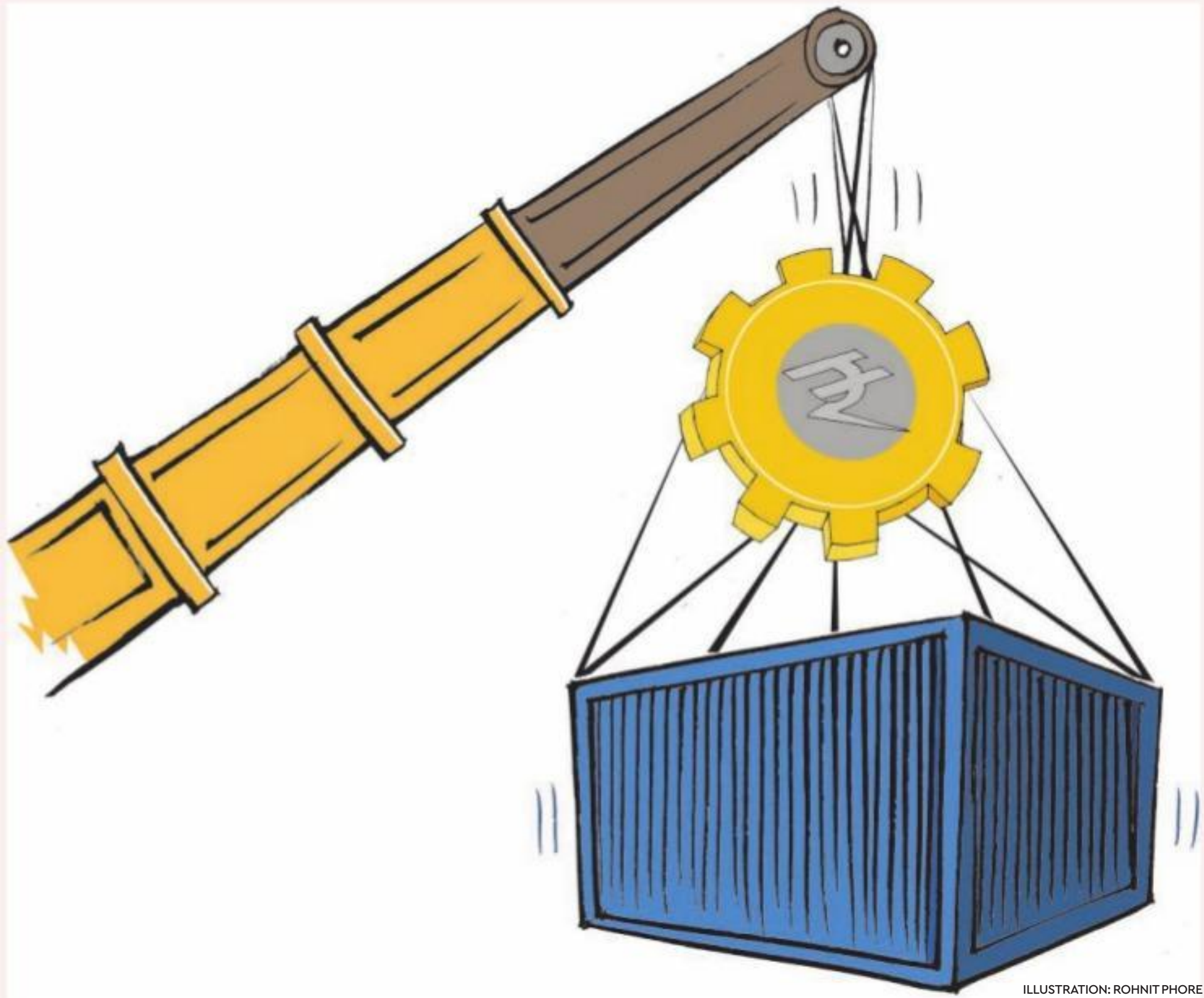


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNI PHORE

HIMANSHU TEWARI  
& RV ANURADHA

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WTO PANEL REPORT

# Need a fresh debate on trade policy framework

Greater collaboration between the government and the private sector, for developing trade-smart schemes and incentives that have long-term sustainability and contribution to the growth of Indian industry, is the only sensible way forward

RECENT GLOBAL EVENTS have significant implications for reshaping India's trade policy framework. The first important trigger for change occurred in 2013-14 when India's per capita GNI (Gross National Income, earlier referred to as GNP or Gross National Product), assessed by the World Bank, breached the threshold of \$1,000. This development had a ripple effect in India's status as a 'developing country' under the WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM), which regulates, among other aspects, export

subsidies. In 2017, after three consecutive years of India's per capita GNI exceeding \$1,000, India graduated out of the list of 'developing countries' under Annex VII of the ASCM, which basically meant losing the space for foreign trade policy manoeuvrability that India had enjoyed till then as a developing country. This was the genesis of the second trigger—a dispute challenging India's export subsidy schemes that was initiated by the US at the WTO in March 2018. The initial consultative phase did not lead to any resolution, and therefore the US sought the establishment of a panel for dispute set-

tlement at the WTO in May 2018. At the core of the dispute was the contention that 'export incentives' granted by India under the DFIS, EOU, EPCG, MEIS and SEZ schemes are 'export subsidies' that are prohibited under the ASCM. The WTO panel report, published on October 31, 2019, held these schemes to be prohibited 'export subsidies'. The panel recommended that India should withdraw these schemes in a time-bound manner. The WTO dispute mechanism allows for countries the right to appeal panel reports with the WTO's Appellate Body and India has exercised this right. But while an appeal can provide some tactical advantage in the short run, domestic reform is inevitable.

In anticipation of the inevitable, the government has been undertaking suitable steps, such as emphasising that Indian industry should reduce its reliance on export incentives and has to reinvent itself by increasing its competitiveness in the global market based on increased productivity of resources, improved quality, better efficiency and increasing reliance on data-driven business strategies.

The government has also announced December 31, 2019, as the sunset date for the MEIS (Merchandise Exports from India Scheme). There is also anticipation of the launch of a new scheme, the RoDTEP (Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Products). Another significant initiative by the Indian government was the setting up of a group consisting of SEZ stakeholders under the chairmanship of Baba Kalyani, which has made significant recommendations for SEZ reforms that the government is considering.

These developments need to be seen in the context of India's positioning in the global trade scenario. This includes recent events such as: (a) India taking a strong stand regarding its crucial and sensitive demands at the RCEP negotiations, while keeping its options open regarding its continued engagement with the RCEP as well as other free trade agreements (FTAs) with strategic trading partners; (b) India's embracing of the tenets of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, which, apart from ensuring compliance with our WTO obligations, has contributed to improving India's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report; and (c) India's adoption of disruptive technologies for

trade automation and reduction of transaction costs, which has a role to play for making it an attractive destination for trade and investment.

Seen against this overall backdrop, the tactical and strategic response in appealing the WTO panel report on export subsidies is only a short-term solution. In the long-term, as a member of the WTO, and as party to various FTAs, course correction with regard to formulating WTO- and FTA-compliant incentives and subsidies is inevitable.

Firstly, India's trade policy of the future ought to consider distinct approaches for trade in goods and trade in services. This aspect has also been highlighted among the recommendations of the Baba Kalyani report on SEZ reform. The distinction between goods and services will also enable designing separate incentives and subsidies for services exports, which neither the WTO nor India's FTAs currently regulate. With services commanding increasing relevance for India's growth story, and with the increasing 'servicification' of manufacturing, carefully-designed and WTO-compatible services subsidies are an important way forward. Equally, carefully-designed incentive schemes and subsidies for goods, which are compatible with our international obligations, are also essential. There exists sufficient space under both the WTO agreements and FTAs for this.

Secondly, a meaningful trade policy framework needs to be rooted in an evidence-based approach, and rely on microeconomic data from the industry to enable targeted decision-making based on trade data analytics. Early indicators that the government has also recognised and is acting on this imperative is evidenced in the request from the government for microeconomic data from export promotion councils, for quantifying the rate of RoDTEP. In order to be able to respond to such a request and benefit from the scheme that is eventually put in place, Indian industry will also need to be proactive and establish appropriate mechanisms to capture data at the granular level, through innovative changes in accounting systems, IT systems and MIS, as well as ensure auditable record-keeping of the information required to benefit from the scheme. With increasing growth of the digital economy and blurring of lines between the physical and digital economies, the centrality of data-driven insights in informing policymaking is that much more crucial. This necessarily has to be an evolving approach, with the industry informing the design and outcome of the government policy by sharing qualitative data over a period of time.

And finally, the trade policy of the future will have to forego its three-decade old preoccupation with export obligations and foreign exchange earnings. The shift from export growth to broad-based employment and economic growth was highlighted in the Baba Kalyani report as well. This will also enable the new policy to shed the legacy of India's 1991 balance of payment crisis and look at the world with a new and aspirational approach and a perspective of global leadership.

The ability of the government's policy to have real benefits will also depend on the extent to which Indian businesses can provide crucial strategic inputs to the government, a theme which was discussed at a recently held CII conference in Mumbai, on the Global Trade Scenario, aptly titled 'Navigating the New Normal'. Large industry houses, especially, will need to be better equipped with research and appropriate skill-sets, and apportion resources to be able to compliment and supplement government efforts. The government reaching out to industry for collating microeconomic data for informing and refining the RoDTEP scheme is an important starting point. Greater collaboration between the government and the private sector, for developing trade-smart schemes and incentives that have long-term sustainability and contribution to the growth of Indian industry, is the only sensible way forward.

## Curbing crimes against women

PRADEEP BHANDARI  
& AYUSH ANAND

Bhandari is founder, Jan Ki Baat, and Anand is an advocate, Supreme Court

### How to make society safe for women

THE ACT OF rape followed by murder of a woman in Hyderabad has shaken the conscience of the nation. In fact, there has been a stark increase in the number of rape cases since 2011—from 24,206 to 38,947 a year, and outraging of modesty of women has reached a level of 84,746 incidents in a year. There are no signs of abatement even after the 2012 Nirbhaya case, which spurred amendments in law and initiatives for women's safety. There have been persistent gaps in enforcing the relevant laws, policies and guidelines.

Certain groups are more prone to becoming a predator. A group of men may have no hesitation in valuing a woman as a commodity. The primary reasons for rape range from anger, power assertion, extremist patriarchal culture, extra publicity of sexually implicit content in our society, deviant sexual practices, poor parenting, cognitive and attitudinal bias, and sadism. Further, the level of literacy or geographical location cannot be the sole factors influencing the rapist's behaviour—it is the environmental influence on the accused that plays a major role. There should be a presumption of guilt of the accused with regard to such heinous crimes. While a step has been taken in furtherance of this by introducing Section 114(a) of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, and Section 376 of the IPC in light of the Tukaram judgment, further steps need to be taken.

There was supposed to be a one-stop facility for rape survivors, to be created from the Nirbhaya Fund—but funds for only 151 out of 660 such centres have been allocated, and a shocking amount of ₹3,409 crore remains unused. Another problem that discourages victims from pressing charges is the long duration of proceedings, which only result in further trauma and mental agony for the victim. The provision of anticipatory bail should be removed, and regular bail provisions should be made applicable after filing charge sheet in these offences. The necessity for speedy justice is long felt.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance 2018 mandated some changes in the investigation, trial and appeal cases in matters of rape and sexual assault. The recent step of the central government to open up new fast-track courts in offences related to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act is a welcome step; it may also extend to the IPC offences against women.

There are a few other aspects that are left out in this matter—there is no capital punishment in matters of rape of women above 12 years, and the accused is just given a time period of 10 years in prison and not even imprisonment for life. It is urged that capital punishment be served to the guilty in matters of rape if it has been committed with extreme brutality. It needs to be noted that the last rapist was hanged in 2004, and the accused in the Nirbhaya gang rape are still asking for mercy. The next stage is the pardoning power of the President under Article 72 of the Constitution. Currently, there is no specific time limit with regard to pardon of the accused. Although the firm contention is that there must be no pardon at all, there should still be a time limit that is to be set to decide pardons.

These laws have to serve not only as a deterrent, but also act as a retributive form of punishment. The Justice Verma Committee discussed retributive form of punishment widely in its report. The accused must feel the pain that was felt by the victim and her family, and only then the rates of such offences will reduce and the law will start acting as a deterrent. The idea that we are a utopian society, we should have a compassion towards all kinds of criminals, and we all will abide by any law once made should be reconsidered.

Giving advantage of human rights conventions to such criminals is in antithesis to the doctrine of human rights itself. The protection of human rights should be given to the persecuted and vulnerable mass. Keeping their cases pending only strengthens the will of such individuals. Excessive focus on the reformation argument is harming our society. At the same time, our society has to keep a check on all those factors that aggravate the criminality in an individual and that results in such offences. We all have to introspect how can we collectively make our society safe for women.

Laws have to serve not only as a deterrent, but also act as a retributive form of punishment

EVERY CRISIS IN the financial sector brings to the fore the segment that has stirred the pot. When the NPA issue went out of hand, public sector banks (PSBs) held centre stage and levels of above 20% caused shock and umbrage. Later, private sector banks cleaned up their books and their NPAs came to the fore. Subsequently, the non-banking financial company (NBFC) crisis came to light, and after being lauded for their amazing contribution to financing India Inc, especially post-demonetisation, the flaws of asset and liability management (ALM) mismatches made them the fall guy. More recently, the PMC Bank exposé has brought to light the inherent conflict of interest in the model of urban cooperative banks (UCBs) and raised a different kind of storm. Against this background of sequential contagion across financial groups, how should one look at the financial system?

While banks have been closely monitored by RBI, the so-called shadow banking segment, i.e. NBFCs, were only partly regulated, and for all practical purposes were independent in operations. Hence, when they did put in their applications for a banking licence, the first thought that came to mind was that they would be subject to RBI regulations and norms like priority sector lending, CRR and SLR. Now with the PMC problem, attention has turned to the cooperative banking sector.

The financial system is, hence, quite large and goes beyond banks. To get an idea of the overall size of the institutionalised lending market, one can look at some numbers. As of March 2018, commercial banks had an asset size of ₹152 lakh crore.

## Shadows beyond the banking system

The integration of cooperative banks and NBFCs should happen, and the expertise created with the regulator

MADAN SABNAVIS

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NBFCs had a size of ₹21.76 lakh crore—i.e. 14% of banks' balance sheet. Housing finance companies (HFCs) came in next, at ₹11.6 lakh crore—around 8% of banks' size. The overall cooperative banking system as of March 2017 was ₹16 lakh crore (11% size) and can be called the 'covered shadow banking system' that has been in existence for long and yet has never quite been studied in detail. Hence, the non-banking segment is around one-third the size of the banking system or has a share of around 25% in the financial system (excluding All India Financial Institutions, or AIFIs, which comprise regulatory bodies like NABARD, NHB, SIDBI and EXIM Bank, and have a size of ₹7 lakh crore).

The accompanying table provides

some interesting information on this ecosystem. Data for all institutions except cooperative banks (excluding UCBs) is for March 2018, while it is March 2017 for the latter. This helps one grasp the magnitude of the financial system, which should ideally be integrated through regulation.

The interesting thing here is that the cooperative banking system comprises over 98,000 banks/societies; the number is really large. Intuitively one can see that regulating such units is a major challenge given the limited bandwidth of the regulator. The combined NPA ratio for them is 12.8%, which is very high, with the primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) in particular being horrendous at 26.6%. While the recovery rate is fairly high (75%)

### Overview of the organised financial system

	Number	₹ crore			
		Assets	Loans	NPAs	Ratio (%)
Urban cooperative banks	1,551	5,63,200	2,80,500	19,915	7.1
State cooperative banks	33	2,32,900	1,27,000	5,200	4.1
District central co-op banks	370	5,05,500	2,52,700	26,500	10.5
PACS	95,595	2,40,000	2,00,900	53,300	26.6
SCARDB	13	30,400	21,200	5,200	23.6
PCARDB	601	29,100	15,100	4,900	33
NBFC-SI	230	19,30,000	14,53,300	84,291	5.8
NBFC-D	168	2,46,000	3,11,000	17,416	5.6
HFCs	91	11,59,800	9,35,400	12,160	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>98,652</b>	<b>49,36,900</b>	<b>35,97,100</b>	<b>2,28,883</b>	<b>6.36</b>
Commercial banks	93	1,52,53,300	87,46,000	9,79,552	11.2
All institutions	98,745	2,01,90,200	1,23,43,100	12,08,435	9.79

Source: RBI Report on Trend and Progress in Banking

for them, the fact that these loans do not get paid on time does raise a question of evergreening that may be taking place. In fact, recovery rates for state cooperative banks (SCBs) and district central cooperative banks (DCCBs) are higher, though NPA ratios lower. The universe of UCBs is also wide, with there being around 1,500 such banks where the NPA ratio is 7.1%. Thus, there is a need to take a closer look at the models being used by PACS. Also following from the fiasco at PMC, there is a broader issue of supervision and inspection that is required, as this space is quite opaque with little known on how business is conducted.

For state cooperative agriculture and rural development banks (SCARDB) and primary cooperative agriculture and rural

development banks (PCARDB) that offer long-term loans to farmers, recovery rates are 44-50%, while NPA ratios are high, too, at 23-33%. This is not a good picture even though the size of loans is not very high to cause any kind of systemic risk to the system. But for sure it is necessary to review the entire cooperative banking system that has an important role to play as it deals with the overall objective of financial inclusion since it covers largely the rural population and SMEs (when it comes to UCBs). By their sheer number, they are difficult to regulate as even maintenance of accounts does not tend to be formal as one steps down to the PACS level.

A pointer can be that RBI should consider integrating these societies into the

banking system. The move towards getting in payments and small banks was to foster financial inclusion. Given that the 'covered shadow banking system' is large at ₹16 lakh crore—a level that new banks will take years to achieve—integrating them with the formal system makes sense. Surprisingly, all the various committees on banking that have focused on reforms in commercial banking have not quite touched on this parallel formal institutionalised system, which occupies a very important place in the flow of credit especially to the rural and SME segments.

NBFCs and HFCs have a crucial role to play in the structure of finance as they have niche customers. HFCs have added a new dimension to housing finance and enabled the achievement of the objective of successive governments to provide access to households for buying homes.

At a broader level, RBI should ideally be regulating all these entities as a single regulator makes sense for better coordination. This also ensures that the scope for regulatory arbitrage reduces. From the point of meeting the objective of financial inclusion, quite clearly the 'covered shadow banking system' has a very important role to play. While nudging commercial banks to do their bit is okay in the short run, ideally the rural responsibility has to be shifted to the cooperative system, which, admittedly, has to be strengthened substantially. At present, the focus has been on creating a new category of banks, like small and payments banks, and merging PSBs. As part of this transformation, the integration of cooperative banks and NBFCs should proceed in parallel and the expertise created with the regulator.



## TELLING NUMBERS

## Enrolment and claims in flagship life, accident insurance schemes

AS OF March 31 this year, the number of individuals enrolled in the government's flagship accident insurance scheme, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), was 15.47 crore, Lok Sabha was informed on Monday. The number of individuals enrolled in the life insurance scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), was 5.91 crore, the government said, quoting information furnished by banks.

A total 1,35,212 claims amounting

to Rs 2,704.24 crore had been settled under PMJJBY, and 32,176 claims amounting to Rs 643.52 crore had been settled under PMSBY at the end of the last financial year, the government said.

The PMSBY offers insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh for accidental death or total permanent disability to people in the age group 18 to 70 years. The PMJJBY offers life insurance of Rs 2 lakh in case of death due to any reason to people in the age group of 18-50.

### GROSSENROLMENTS

State	PMSBY	PMJJBY	Total
Andhra Pradesh*	2,76,32,231	1,83,84,214	4,60,16,445
Bihar	58,29,559	16,48,757	74,78,316
Chhattisgarh	52,99,788	12,91,366	65,91,154
Gujarat	60,99,823	25,62,854	86,62,677
Jharkhand	22,44,237	5,99,262	28,43,499
Karnataka	79,09,701	34,55,273	1,13,64,974
Madhya Pradesh	87,86,945	22,37,052	1,10,23,997
Maharashtra	97,01,319	40,21,981	1,37,23,300
Odisha	45,15,671	12,59,527	57,75,198
Punjab	40,09,575	7,27,495	47,37,070
Rajasthan	60,56,922	18,20,827	78,77,749
Tamil Nadu	83,40,290	27,79,983	1,11,20,273
Telangana	63,33,999	21,77,346	85,11,345
Uttar Pradesh	1,59,84,910	39,90,315	1,99,75,225
West Bengal	74,60,614	16,39,458	91,00,072
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,47,17,823</b>	<b>5,91,09,302</b>	<b>21,38,27,125</b>

\*Andhra Pradesh figures include 1.65 crore and 1.99 crore beneficiaries converged from Aam Admi Bima Yojana (AABY) to PMJJBY and PMSBY respectively.

\*\*Total includes all states and Union Territories, as well as beneficiaries of erstwhile insurance schemes in some government departments, and urban cooperative bank subscribers who were not migrated to the CBS system (non-CBS enrolments).

### CLAIM AMOUNTS PAID (IN Rs CRORE)

State	PMJJBY	PMSBY	Total
Andhra Pradesh	213.30	45.76	259.06
Bihar	56.76	9.42	66.18
Chhattisgarh	110.12	35.40	145.52
Gujarat	222.08	45.30	267.38
Jharkhand	31.28	6.38	37.66
Karnataka	241.44	39.74	281.18
Madhya Pradesh	191.04	69.80	260.84
Maharashtra	227.72	53.34	281.06
Odisha	82.90	17.96	100.86
Punjab	43.62	21.66	65.28
Rajasthan	164.12	46.40	210.52
Tamil Nadu	136.86	43.24	180.10
Telangana	238.92	41.54	280.46
Uttar Pradesh	346.64	65.56	412.20
West Bengal	85.98	16.74	102.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,704.24</b>	<b>643.52</b>	<b>3,347.76</b>

\*Total includes all states and Union Territories

Source: Answer to Lok Sabha question, quoting data uploaded by banks and insurance companies on Jansuraksha portal. Data as on March 31, 2019

## TIP FOR READING LIST

### A SUPERSTAR MEMOIR

THE BRITISH tabloid *Daily Mail* called it “the rock memoir of the decade”, and those who have followed the life of Elton John will expect nothing less from *Me*. It is also a hugely informative memoir — the review in *The New York Times* described *Me* as a “very crowded book by a man who’s kept a lot to himself until now”.

The film *Rocketman*, the review said, while succeeding in telling a competent



basic story, “barely scratched the surface of what’s in this memoir”, and while “the lurid parts will get all the headlines”, it is Elton John’s “hard-won self-knowledge” that the book is really about. The superstar describes himself as a sexual voyeur, and talks frankly about his cocaine addiction, and his bout of prostate cancer and the use of adult diapers. “The latter”, *The NYT* review said, “may be a first in the genre”.

#### HARISH DAMODARAN

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 9

**THE EXISTING 1966 law already provides for regulation of the quality of seeds. What does the new Bill seek to change?**

The current Act only covers “notified kinds or varieties of seeds”. Thus, regulation of quality, too, is limited to the seeds of varieties that have been officially notified.

Such varieties would be mostly those that are bred by public sector institutions — the likes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the state agricultural universities (SAUs) — and officially “released” for cultivation after multi-location trials, over three years or more, to evaluate their yield performance, disease and pest resistance, quality, and other desired traits.

Release is a precondition for notification. And the provisions of The Seeds Act, 1966, apply only to certified seeds produced of notified varieties.

The new Seeds Bill, 2019 provides for compulsory registration of “any kind or variety of seeds” that are sought to be sold. According to Section 14 of the draft Bill, “no seed of any kind or variety... shall, for the purpose of sowing or planting by any person, be sold unless such kind or variety is registered”.

In other words, even hybrids/varieties of private companies will need to be registered, and their seeds would have to meet the minimum prescribed standards relating to germination, physical and genetic purity, etc. Breeders would be required to disclose the “expected performance” of their registered varieties “under given conditions”.

If the seed of such registered kind or variety “fails to provide the expected performance under such given conditions”, the farmer “may claim compensation from the producer, dealer, distributor or vendor under The Consumer Protection Act, 1986”.

**What is the context for bringing the Bill?**

The 1966 legislation was enacted at the time of the Green Revolution, when the country hardly had any private seed industry. The high-yielding wheat and paddy varieties, which made India self-reliant in cereals by the 1980s, were developed by the various ICAR institutes and SAUs.

These public sector institutions have retained their dominance in breeding of wheat, paddy (including basmati), sugarcane, pulses,

#### EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 9

FOR THREE days starting Tuesday, judges at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, Netherlands, will hear a case seeking to establish that the atrocities by the Myanmar army and security forces against the minority Rohingya amount to genocide.

Myanmar’s defence will be personally led by Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who arrived in The Hague on Sunday, as lawyers pressing the case seek to have immediate international action initiated in order to protect the Rohingya.

This is Suu Kyi’s first visit to western Europe since 2016, where she, once revered as an icon of peace and democracy, is now frequently seen as defending and condoning the actions of a regime brutal military authoritarianism.

**Who has taken Myanmar to the ICJ?**

The Republic of The Gambia, a tiny country the size of Tripura on Africa’s west coast, which stretches on either side of the river Gambia as it empties itself into the North Atlantic Ocean. The predominantly Muslim country went to the ICJ last month, accusing



A hybrid seeds store in Nabarangpur, Odisha. Harish Damodaran

soyabean, groundnut, mustard, potato, onion and other crops, where farmers largely grow open-pollinated varieties (OPV) whose grain can be saved as seed for re-planting.

Over the last three decades or more, however, private companies and multinationals have made significant inroads, particularly into crops that are amenable to hybridisation (their seeds are first-generation hybrids produced by crossing two genetically diverse plants, and whose yields tend to be higher than that of either of the parents; the grains from these, even if saved as re-used as seed, will not give the same “F1” vigour).

Today, the size of the private hybrid seeds industry is estimated at about Rs 15,000 crore. That includes cotton (Rs 4,000 crore), vegetables (Rs 3,500 crore), corn/maize (Rs 1,500 crore), paddy (Rs 1,000 crore), pearl millet/*bajra* (Rs 300 crore) and sorghum/*jowar* (Rs 200 crore). Hybrid seed adoption rates are reported to be 7-8% in paddy, 60-70% in corn, 90% in *jowar* and *bajra*, 95% in cotton, and 80%-plus in major vegetables such as okra, tomato, chilli, capsicum, cauliflower, gourds, cucumber, cabbage, melons, brinjal, carrot and radish. Even in banana, the real production increase after the

1990s has come from tissue-culture micro-propagation planting technology commercialised by private players like Jain Irrigation.

**So, are privately-bred hybrids not covered under any regulation?**

The current Seeds Act, as already noted, applies only to notified varieties. Also, unless a variety or hybrid is notified, its seeds cannot be certified. Most of the private hybrids marketed in India, by virtue of not being officially “released”, are neither “notified” nor “certified”.

Instead, they are “truthful labeled”. The companies selling them simply state that the seeds inside the packets have a minimum germination (if 100 are sown, at least 75-80, say, will produce plants), genetic purity (percentage of “true-to-type” plants and non-contamination by genetic material of other varieties/species), and physical purity (proportion of non-contamination by other crop/weed seeds or inert matter).

**How does the proposed Seeds Bill, 2019 address the above lacuna?**

It does away with the concept of “notified” variety. By providing for compulsory

# What case will Suu Kyi plead in The Hague?

Myanmar of genocide, which is the most serious of all international crimes. The Gambia is backed by the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

At the time of filing the case, Abubacarr Marie Tambadou, the Justice Minister and Attorney General of The Gambia, had told The Associated Press that his country wanted to “send a clear message to Myanmar and to the rest of the international community that the world must not stand by and do nothing in the face of terrible atrocities that are occurring around us. It is a shame for our generation that we do nothing while genocide is unfolding right before our own eyes”.

The case, ‘Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar)’, seeking the “indication of provisional measures”, will be heard by United Nations judges at the Peace Palace in The Hague. Both The Gambia and Myanmar will have the opportunity to present two rounds of oral arguments before the court. The hearings will be streamed live on the ICJ website.

**What position has Myanmar taken?**

Myanmar has long denied the allegations of mass rape, killings, and arson made by the Rohingya against its army. Myanmar says its



Aung San Suu Kyi is greeted by a Myanmar official in Rotterdam on Sunday. Office of the Myanmar State Counsellor via AP

soldiers only carried out legitimate counter-terrorism operations against Rohingya militants. It vowed last week “to defend Myanmar’s national interest”, even as it rejected a decision by the International Criminal Court to allow an investigation into crimes committed against the Rohingya.

According to Myanmar, the International Criminal Court, which too, is based in The Hague, has no jurisdiction over it, since Myanmar was not a party to the agreement that established the court. While the ICJ, which

registration of “any kind or variety of seeds”, private hybrids — whether officially “released” or “truthful labeled” — will automatically be brought under regulatory purview.

It must be mentioned here that the Seeds (Control) Amendment Order of 2006 under the Essential Commodities Act mandates dealers to ensure minimum standards of germination, purity, and other quality parameters even in respect of “other than notified kind or variety of seeds”. Enforcing mandatory registration under a new Seed Act, encompassing all varieties and hybrids, is expected to bring greater accountability from the industry, even while rendering the Seeds Control Order redundant.

**How has been the private seed industry responded to the proposed Bill?**

Seed companies have welcomed the provision of compulsory registration of all varieties/hybrids, based on the results of multi-location trials for a prescribed period to establish their performance *vis-à-vis* the claims of the breeders concerned. This should help minimise the risk of farmers being sold seeds of low-quality genetics, especially by fly-by-night operators taking undue advantage of the “truthful labeling” and “self-certification” processes.

The industry, however, wants the process of registration to be time-bound. Given the lack of manpower and infrastructure within the government system, the registration may be granted or refused on the basis of multi-location trials carried out by the breeder/applciant itself.

But the industry’s main reservation is the provision for regulation of sale price “in emergent situations like scarcity of seeds, abnormal rise in prices, monopolistic pricing or profiteering”. The fact that this power of fixing sale price of seed has been given both to the Centre and state governments has added to their nervousness. Their contention is that seed accounts for not even a tenth of the total operational costs in most crops, despite the genetic information contained in it being the main determinant of grain yield and quality.

**When is the Bill likely to become law?**

Despite the buzz, the chances of it being introduced in the current session of Parliament are remote — it is not listed in the legislative business expected to be taken up. Incidentally, an earlier version of the Bill had lapsed after being introduced in 2004.

was established in 1945, mostly deals with disputes between nations, the International Criminal Court, which began functioning in 2002, prosecutes individuals for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Some 7.4 lakh Rohingya have fled Myanmar’s Rakhine state to Bangladesh, where they have been living in refugee camps.

**What will happen after the hearings?**

The court is likely to decide the plea on provisional measures fairly soon — possibly within weeks. Hearings on the main allegations of genocide could begin next year. However, cases at the ICJ often drag on for years, and no quick closure is expected.

Also, the legal bar for handing out a conviction for genocide is high. Since World War II, only three cases of genocide have been recognised internationally: Cambodia (late 1970s), Rwanda (1994), and Srebrenica (1995). “Proving genocide has been difficult because of the high bar set by its ‘intent requirement’ — that is showing the genocidal acts, say killings, were carried out with the specific intent to eliminate a people on the basis of their ethnicity,” a Reuters report quoted Richard Dicker, head of the international justice programme at New York-based Human Rights Watch, as saying.

would harm the sector. How depositors react to being brought into an ecosystem of greater accountability, including income-tax scrutiny and compliance, remains to be seen.

#### Challenges ahead

The state government will have the task of taking the new entity out of the shadow of politics that frequently falls on the cooperative sector, and of infusing professionalism in operations. Besides the commitment to submit a compliance report by the end of March, Kerala Bank will have to keep a sharp eye on non-performing assets at a time when the state cooperative bank is running at a loss.

The 2016 demonetisation exercise, and the economic slump in the wake of two bouts of heavy floods in the state, have adversely affected the district and primary co-operative societies. Defaults in farm loans have been growing, leading to the accumulation of non-performing assets (NPAs).

# How Kerala’s ‘own bank’ changes the cooperative sector — and road ahead

#### SHAJU PHILIP

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DECEMBER 9

KERALA BANK, an entity created by the merger of 13 district co-operative banks (DCBs) in Kerala, was officially launched on Friday — the first state-owned bank in the cooperative sector.

Kerala Bank brings the state’s co-operative banking sector together under a single roof, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said; it is envisaged as a people-owned and people-managed modern bank with a significant share of the banking sector.

All DCBs except the one in Malappuram district, which is controlled by the opposition Congress-led UDF, have been amalgamated into Kerala Bank. At the launch ceremony, the Chief Minister invited the outlier bank to come on board, and invited it for talks with the government.

#### Idea and evolution

Kerala’s “own bank” had been a promise of the CPM-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) for the 2016 Assembly elections. After coming to power, Vijayan’s government appointed a committee to study the idea of creating a Kerala Bank by amalgamating the entire co-operative banking sector into a single entity.

The demand for the Kerala Bank gained momentum after the State Bank of Travancore (SBT) was merged with the State Bank of India (SBI) on March 31, 2017. The SBT, which was headquartered in Thiruvananthapuram, had been handling a major part of the government’s transactions, and was seen as Kerala’s own bank.

In October, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) accorded final approval for the creation of the unified bank, subject to certain conditions — the Chief Minister said these would be met, and a compliance report

would be submitted to the central bank before March 31, 2020.

The new bank combines 13 DCBs with the Kerala State Cooperative Bank. The formation of Kerala Bank has reduced the earlier three-tier structure of co-operative banking in the state to a two-tier one.

#### Size and position

Kerala Bank has the second largest banking footprint in the state. Its network of 995 branches is second only to the SBI’s, which has 1,215 branches across the state. While the SBI has a deposit base of Rs 1.53 lakh crore in the state, Kerala Bank would have a base of Rs 65,000 crore. Unlike the state co-operative bank and district co-operative banks, Kerala Bank can, in the future, accept NRI deposits, which will lead to an expansion of its deposit base. As part of Kerala Bank, the DCBs will get the status of a scheduled bank, which they have been lacking

until now. The co-operative banking system in Kerala has about 30 per cent market share in deposits and loans, but this may significantly increase after Kerala Bank begins to accept NRI deposits.

#### Governance structure

At present, senior bureaucrats in the Co-operative Department are naming Kerala Bank, which will get a CEO next month. Ultimately, however, Kerala Bank will have a democratically elected body, in tune with the tradition in the cooperative sector. It will have a board of directors with representatives from the primary cooperative societies, the secretary of the state Cooperative Department, four *ex-officio* members, a nominee from NABARD, and two independent professional directors. The nominees of the primary societies would have adequate representation for SCs/STs and women.





The IndianEXPRESS

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

PUT OUT THE FIRE

Anaj Mandi tragedy is reminder of urgency of creating safer working conditions in unregulated industry hubs

A CHARRED FIVE-STOREY building in Anaj Mandi in the periphery of Delhi's walled city area bears testimony to one of the city's worst fire accidents since the Uphaar tragedy of 1997. In the early hours of Sunday, a fire swept through the residential building that housed several manufacturing units, asphyxiating 43 workers, at least five of them minors. The 600-square-yard building is a typical example of a manufacturing units cluster, operating without permits, from cramped residential quarters. It had just one exit that could be used — the second exit was blocked by piles of goods, many of them combustible. This, and the fact that the five floors of the building had barely any ventilation, meant that the workers, most of them immigrants, had very little chance to escape. The owners of the building had reportedly not applied for a no-objection certificate from the fire safety department before converting their premises into manufacturing units. In fact, less than 24 hours before Sunday's blaze, the area had seen two other factory fires, which were doused before there they could cause any harm.

Union Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has laid the blame on the doors of the Delhi Fire Safety (DFS) department. The DFS has thrown up its hands, claiming that it has little enforcement powers, which, it says "is the prerogative of the city's municipal authorities". Delhi is not new to such blame games — the last round happened in February, when a fire swept through a hotel in northwest Delhi, killing at least 17 people. But questions raised in the aftermath of such episodes have never moved municipal and fire safety authorities to take concerted action to plug the loopholes in the city's accident preparedness. This has meant that Part Four of the National Building Code, which has detailed instructions on fire safety, and Delhi's own fire safety rules have remained, for the most part, dead letters.

In the post-liberalisation era, unregulated manufacturing units have mushroomed in several lower-middle class residential areas, unauthorised colonies and slum clusters of the capital. Anaj Mandi is a good example of the liberalised economy's underbelly. Once a flourishing wholesale grain market, its traders have now moved to bigger markets. In the mandi's serpentine lanes, units producing school bags, garments and toy factories and printing units exist cheek-by-jowl with residential quarters. These, as Sunday's accident shows, are tinderboxes. The Delhi municipality's standard response after such accidents has been to crack the whip on individual offenders. The government has, at times, tried to move some of these unregulated units to new industrial hubs such as Bawana and Narela. But by all accounts, these plans have not succeeded because the owners and workers of these factories found relocation uneconomical. Shouldn't the government, which swears by small-scale industry, attempt a more creative solution that enables safer working conditions without stifling entrepreneurship?

MOMENT OF RECKONING

Suu Kyi's refusal to speak for Rohingya is controversial. Her decision to defend army at ICJ sets off ripples beyond Myanmar

AUNG SAN SUU Kyi's decision to appear before the International Court of Justice to defend Myanmar from charges of genocide against Rohingya Muslims is a gambit. It is based on her international stature built over two decades of being a prisoner of conscience, detained by the Myanmar junta, and the knowledge that defending her country can only bolster her nationalistic credentials at home and even strengthen her standing vis a vis the all-powerful military. No serving head of state has appeared before the ICJ. Suu Kyi, who holds the formal designation of State Counsellor to the government, but is de facto civilian leader of Myanmar, possibly believes that her defending her country's actions against the Rohingya would carry credibility in the court. Her decision to travel to The Hague has triggered an outpouring of support for her among Myanmar's majority Buddhist communities. Myanmar's anti-Rohingya actions, for which it is being pulled up before the international court, enjoy much domestic support as the Rohingya are not considered "indigenous" to Myanmar, and do not have citizenship. It is ironic that Suu Kyi, who had only some years ago, rallied international opinion against the army, will now appear in its support. She may have sensed that it might provide her a more equal footing with the country's most powerful institution, which is also the biggest obstacle to constitutional reform.

It is ironic, too, that while the most powerful countries seemed powerless in the face of Myanmar's actions against the Rohingya community, it was a small country like Gambia, backed by the Organisation for Islamic Co-operation, that has taken it to the ICJ on charges of violating the UN convention of prevention of genocide. Gambia's lawsuit is based on a 2018 UN report that accused Myanmar of "genocidal intent", and its Army of murder, rape and a host of other charges. Suu Kyi's staunch refusal to take the side of the Rohingya has disappointed all those who saw her as an icon of freedom and democracy. Her defence in court is likely to be what it has been elsewhere: That military operations against the Rohingya in the Rakhine were actions against terrorism.

The outflow of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar has impacted several of its neighbours, particularly Bangladesh, which now hosts the largest Rohingya refugee camp in the world, as well as Thailand and other countries in south east Asia, where thousands from the community have fled to escape persecution. In India, too, the presence of the Rohingya has added to the polarising debate on the religion of refugees. This case at the ICJ is sure to have ramifications beyond the borders of Myanmar.

JUST EAT IT

A banana that took the art world by storm has been consumed. The episode is filled with symbolic meaning

HERE'S THE MOST charitable explanation of Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's "Comedian". The work of art is not one that requires great skill to produce — it is a banana duck-taped to a wall. But it can be seen, perhaps, as a joke on the entire self-important and rarefied world of high art. At \$1,20,00 or Rs 85,34,280, that's a pricey punchline. And, on Saturday, someone ate the punchline. Performance artist David Datuna consumed the profound, if slightly putrefied fruit, at the Art Basel festival in Miami, US. He did so, he says, for the most fundamental of reasons — hunger.

The now-digested banana, of course, will be replaced and the publicity will only drive up the value of the "Comedian". What the consumption of the work has done, though, is settle the debate about the usefulness of art. As much as talent, creating something from nothing is about intelligence and context. In the sparse, sanitised, "do not touch" environment of the gallery and the museum, a simple perishable object certainly makes a statement — both about the ephemeral nature of the work and the pomposity of those who run such spaces. The price is part of the joke on that world, and if Cattelan can get rich off it, kudos to him.

In fact, "Comedian" scores over most other contemporary works on one important score. It isn't useless, in the most basic sense. A banana is a nutritious fruit. In addition, it has great value in its symbolism: Slipping on its peel is the most basic joke, and it is rife with social and political meaning (think banana republic). But, most important of all, Cattelan's joke should finally silence both the elite gatekeepers of high culture, and those on the other end of the spectrum, who believe that literal meaning is the only kind that matters. The former can pay Rs 85 lakh for a banana (and a strip of tape), the latter can eat it.



ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN AND JOSH FELMAN

AS THE GOVERNMENT responds to the challenges posed by the economic slowdown, there's an ignored area of reform, where simple measures could have potentially big pay-offs. This area relates to data, specifically the process of generating and disseminating reliable data.

Reliable data is important for several reasons. For some time, we have known that confidence — in the economy and government — is critical in shaping private actions. Keynes himself stressed the importance of "animal spirits" in getting entrepreneurs to invest. Others have stressed the importance of consumer confidence in getting households to spend on durable goods such as cars. There is something of a bootstrap effect at work: Confidence can change behaviour, which changes reality, and hence confidence.

Accurate data is arguably even more important for guiding government actions. Consider the following policy questions facing India today: Does the economy require little support, a reasonable amount, or urgent and massive measures? Is there really an employment problem? Has poverty come down or gone up? Do poor government revenues simply reflect a deep economic downturn — or serious collection problems, requiring urgent measures to improve tax administration? Is there no room, a little room or considerable room for expansionary fiscal policy? Has the financial system turned the corner — or are stressed assets actually rising?

All these are serious questions confronting policymakers right now. Yet the data are simply not reliable or incontrovertible enough to allow them to be answered with any degree of certainty. And that makes it difficult to formulate policy responses. In some cases, we don't even know whether a response is needed.

Accordingly, the government's immediate task is to re-boot the data systems in three sectors: Real, fiscal and financial.

On the real sector, measurement of GDP, employment, and consumption have all

Serious questions confront policymakers. Yet data are not reliable enough for them to be answered

proved problematic. To remedy this, the government should set up a committee, perhaps under the leadership of Nobel Prize winner Professor Abhijit Banerjee, who knows and cares deeply about these issues. This committee could be asked to address two sets of problems. Its forward-looking task would be to propose improvements to data collection and statistical methodology, which could be implemented in conjunction with the planned updating of the base year. To do this, its backward-looking task would be to identify the problems in the GDP estimates and the PLFS/NSSO surveys. This difficult task will require the assistance of the professional economic community, which in turn means that the unreleased surveys should be published.

On the fiscal accounts, the government should use the next budget as an opportunity to present a revised and cleaned-up set of fiscal accounts, allowing it to put behind the problems of the last budget. The aim should be to clean up not just the flow (deficit) numbers but also the stock (debt) numbers. Particular attention should be paid to identifying — and paying — arrears to suppliers. In this effort, the government could build on some work already done. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its recent report set out a rigorous accounting methodology, especially for taking off-balance sheet transactions into account. The previous secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs, Subhash Garg, has also made some very useful suggestions in this regard. Once a sound budgetary accounting system is created, it needs to be institutionalised. Perhaps the best way to do this is by creating a Fiscal Council, as proposed unanimously by the NK Singh FRBM Review Committee. Such a council could help ensure that the accounting framework is being followed and the budget projections are realistic, based on reasonable forecasts for GDP and tax buoyancy. Of course, the Council needs to be designed so that it does not undermine the sovereignty of the executive and legislature. This could be done in several ways.

legislature. This could be done in several ways, for example, by ensuring that its members include the chairman of the Finance Commission, a representative of the CAG, and a representative of the GST Council, such as a finance minister from one of the Opposition states, as well as respected experts outside government.

On the financial sector, given the recent credit bubble and the series of problems, involving so many financial institutions, the time is ripe for a second Asset Quality Review (AQR). A regulatory system that failed to spot, let alone head off, the spate of problems from Nirav Modi to Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank to Dewan Housing and NBFC financing of real estate, and, above all, the behemoth that we have now discovered IL&FS to be, has to work extra hard to regain trust, and transparency about stressed assets will be an essential pre-requisite for that effort.

A new AQR — perhaps even led by a former RBI Governor — will allow the government and the RBI to assess the precise magnitude and sectoral nature of the problem, thereby facilitating better-tailored and better-designed policies to solve the problem. It should cover not just the NBFCs but also the banks, which are experiencing renewed stress from the real estate, steel, power and telecom sectors.

Driving a car requires considerable information: A good speedometer, data on whether the fuel tank is empty or full, gauges of tire pressure etc. Running an economy, especially one that is in a predicament such as India's today, is infinitely more complicated and the data demands are hence commensurately greater. A Data Big Bang effort along the lines proposed here would make that difficult task less challenging.

Subramanian is former Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India and Felman is former IMF Resident Representative to India



RUKMINI BANERJI

LITTLE DID we know when we embarked together on a journey 20 years ago, that the path from Mumbai's municipal schools would eventually lead to Stockholm and a Nobel prize. A tall, thin economics professor from MIT and his youthful looking colleague showed up one day in our cramped office near Grant Road in Mumbai. This is the first time we met Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo. They were interested in the education programme that we were doing at the time in with municipal schools in Mumbai, especially in how we were helping children learn to read and do simple arithmetic.

Even as early as 1999, the problem was quite visible. School enrollment levels were high and large cohorts moved each year from one grade to the next. However, despite being in school for several years, many children were well below what was expected of them at their grade. Many could not read a simple text fluently or do basic math operations. Without these foundational skills, it was difficult for a child to engage with her class-level curriculum or make meaningful progress in the school system.

The "balsakhi" programme conducted by Pratham in Mumbai municipal schools from 1998 onwards was perhaps India's first in-school large-scale remedial program. A volunteer from the neighbourhood worked with children from Class 3 and 4 for a few hours a day in "pull out" classes. Abhijit and Esther studied this programme by randomly allocating the intervention to Class 3 classes in some schools and to Class 4 in others. "Treatment" groups were compared with "control" groups.

CLASSROOM TO STOCKHOLM

Glimpses of Pratham's 20-year partnership with Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo

It was our first first-hand experience of a randomised control trial (RCT) as well as our first external impact evaluation. At the end of two years of research, it was clear that the "catch up" effort carried out by the volunteers was working: There was a significant improvement in children's ability to read and to do arithmetic in the treatment schools as compared to those where the intervention had not taken place. The balsakhi study paved the way for larger scale programmes to address the issue of "catch up" and it led to an ongoing, vibrant collaboration between Pratham and the researchers.

In 2006, the all-India ASER exercise provided data on the status of schooling and learning for every rural district in the country. It became evident that the learning crisis was widespread. The ASER data clearly showed that in every grade, there was a wide range of learning levels. For instance, in reading, about half of all children enrolled in Class 5 could read fluently at a Class 2 level and may be could read at higher levels too. But in the other half, some children were still struggling to recognise letters, others could just about read simple words and the remainder were reading simple sentences but unable to handle long texts even at the Class 2 level. As Abhijit often puts it, this situation is at least partly because the school system in India is geared to teach to the "top of the class". In developing an approach to enable children to "catch up", for some time in the school day and for some time in the school year, Pratham groups children, especially those in Class 3, 4 and 5, by their current learning level

rather than by their grade. Using methods and materials appropriate for each group, instructors or teachers work with the full big group, then with small groups and with individual children to help them acquire literacy and numeracy skills. In a short period of time — as little as 50 or 60 days — most children begin to read fluently and are able to do basic arithmetic comfortably.

Pratham's decade-long efforts in improving the effectiveness of this approach and in improving delivery on scale has been accompanied by a series of RCTs in different parts of the country. Under Abhijit and Esther's leadership, their group of researchers at the Abdul Jamil Poverty Action Lab (JPAL) have carried out studies in Jaunpur (UP) in 2006, West Champaran (Bihar) and Dehradun (Uttarakhand) 2008-2010, Kurukshetra and Mahendragarh (Haryana) 2012 and Unnao and Sitapur (UP) in 2013. It is unusual even in the world of research to have a series of studies that look at the evolution of an instructional approach over time and study it in different implementation contexts.

As the news about Abhijit and Esther's Nobel Prize spread, there was tremendous excitement across all the locations — urban communities and rural areas where they have worked with us. Over two decades, we have together learned how hard work on the ground and rigorous research can help to evolve solid solutions to one of the big problems facing primary education in India today.

Banerji is with Pratham Education Foundation



DECEMBER 10, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM RESIGNATIONS  
ELEVEN MINISTERS AND two parliamentary secretaries in Assam submitted their resignations to Chief Minister Jogendra Nath Hazarika. The resignations came after the Hazarika ministry was reduced to a minority following withdrawal of support by the Congress and the CPI. The governor of the Northeastern states, L P Singh, has asked Hazarika to prove his majority in the Assembly.

NO ALLIANCE  
PRIME MINISTER CHARAN Singh is likely to drop the two AIADMK ministers at the Centre, according to the state Lok Dal chief

M Santhosham. Talking to newsmen in Madras, he said he had told the Lok Dal president during his visit to the state on November 24 that the chances of an alliance between the Lok Dal and AIADMK were remote. The PM had replied that, "I am going to drop them." Santhosham said he would not be surprised if the PM decides to do so. He wondered how the two AIADMK ministers could continue in the cabinet after the AIADMK pledged to make Jagjivan Ram the next prime minister in its election manifesto.

PAKISTAN REPRESSION  
GENERAL ZIA-UL-Haq's government had imprisoned at least 7,000 political opponents

in Pakistan by May this year, according to Amnesty International. Most of the prisoners are supporters of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was executed in April, says Amnesty's report. The report says that about 800 people are executed in Pakistan every year.

CARTER ON IRAN CRISIS  
PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER believes Iran's grievances against the deposed Shah and the United States can be dealt with — but only after the release of US hostages held in Teheran. The US is considering a range of fresh options aimed at winning freedom for the 50 hostages held at the US embassy.



# THE IDEAS PAGE

## Inequality and its discontents

The 2019 Human Development Report points to the limits of economic growth in lifting all boats. It also offers a way forward



SHOKO NODA

GRAPPLING WITH DELHI'S poor air quality for these last couple of months, I have become aware of a stark difference in the way I cope with air pollution, and the way many others do not — because they cannot. Despite the growing evidence detailing the catastrophic impact of air pollution on human health, only those privileged enough to have the knowledge and the means to protect themselves can take measures to do so. Many other people, most of whom provide essential services to the privileged, either lack the information on the level of threat they face, or the freedom to act on it. Unable to afford a day off, or an effective mask, let alone air purifiers, they are forced to subject themselves and their children to Delhi's toxic air. Consequently, they face a greater risk of respiratory disease and heart problems, and the children are deprived of a healthy childhood.

This is inequality at play in daily life. For me, it is a harsh reminder of pervasive and pernicious inequities that hit the poorest and most marginalised hardest. In that sense, air pollution is an apotheosis of 21st century challenges: The climate crisis, technological change and inequality. And India, home to nearly a fifth of the world's population, is at the frontline of these battles.

India has made so much progress over the past 30 years — and the improvements have been substantial. Yet, there are significant concerns today, borne out by data, that the dramatic strides made in reducing extreme poverty did not reduce inequality. In fact, inequality has widened. A flurry of recent estimates, ranging from income inequality data from the India Human Development Survey and wealth inequality numbers by Credit Suisse to distributional income accounts by economists Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty, indicate that economic disparities have grown along with the GDP. To put it simply, while the poor have indeed benefited from India's economic success, the rich have garnered a greater share of the spoils. Indeed, Oxfam's inequality estimates from earlier this year suggest the top 10 per cent of the Indian population holds 77 per cent of the total national wealth.

Inequality is not just about disparities in wealth distribution. A large number of Indians not only have very low income, but their opportunities for healthcare, education and social security are dreadfully inadequate. UNDP's 2019 Human Development Report (HDR) explores precisely these inequalities in human development, by going beyond income and identifying the deep-rooted systemic drivers of inequality. In so doing, the report reminds decision-makers of the importance of providing basic services to their people, and of equipping them to live with dignity. Further, the report underlines that poor people should be protected from the fallout of climate change and benefit from modern breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and robotics.

Today, the odds are clearly stacked, in a wide range of ways, along gender, linguistic, class and sexual orientation lines. The HDR finds, for instance, that in India the share of both men and women biased against gender



CR Sasikumar

equality has risen, indicating a backlash against women's empowerment. While traditionally vulnerable communities, such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are catching up with the rest of society in primary education, they are falling further behind when it comes to advanced (12 years or more) education. Most now have access to mobiles but few have computers. And too many people are still just one illness away from poverty.

As the HDR argues, climate change will only exacerbate this inequality. The climate crisis is already hitting the poorest communities hardest and earliest. Millions of Indians in low-lying coastal areas are exposed to a rise in sea levels. Around two-fifths of the population subsist on agriculture that relies on increasingly erratic rainfall and fluctuating temperatures. A soon-to-be-released UNDP study on the impact of climate change on human development in India finds that across the country, from the hills of Uttarakhand to the coasts of Odisha, communities with greater power have, consciously or not, shifted some of the environmental consequences of their consumption onto poor and vulnerable people, onto marginalised groups, and onto future generations. We see this with air pollution, a problem to which the rich, with their carbon-intensive lifestyles, contribute more. However, they can secede from the consequences of that lifestyle — a choice not available to precisely the people who've done the least to create the problem.

With the scale and scope of the challenges mapped out, how should we respond? We don't have to look far for inspiration. India has already embraced policies that aim to transform social norms and eliminate discrimination through education, awareness and changing incentives. The 2019 Multidimensional Poverty Index — produced by UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative — finds that over 270

Today, the odds are clearly stacked, in a wide range of ways, along gender, linguistic, class and sexual orientation lines. The HDR finds, for instance, that in India the share of both men and women biased against gender equality has risen, indicating a backlash against women's empowerment. While traditionally vulnerable communities, such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are catching up with the rest of society in primary education, they are falling further behind when it comes to advanced (12 years or more) education. Most now have access to mobiles but few have computers. And too many people are still just one illness away from poverty.

million Indians were taken out of multidimensional poverty in the decade between 2005-06 and 2015-16. Encouragingly, the territories that were lagging behind, notably Bihar and Jharkhand, were able to catch up quite significantly.

Similarly, since the turn of the century, per capita income has nearly tripled; life expectancy at birth has increased by nearly seven years; and children are staying in school for at least two years longer. India has invested in important building blocks to equip its people to thrive rather than just survive. A focus on rights-based entitlements (for instance, work through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee) and technological innovations (such as to open bank accounts and facilitate digital payments to beneficiaries) has gone some way towards improving living standards. New insurance schemes for universal health coverage, crop-failure and accidents reflect a momentum for action to tackle inequality. These measures are absolutely crucial in reaching those left furthest behind.

Today, India is no longer a country languishing largely in extreme poverty. It is a country with pervasive inequality, pockets of deep deprivations and vulnerable populations. India is, of course, pivotal to the world's achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. To achieve the SDGs, we must recognise existing inequality and continuously eliminate the structural factors that create inequality. UNDP stands ready to support India to devise its own solutions to provide all its people — now and in the future — with a fair and dignified lot in life, powered by technology, shielded from prejudice and protected from an increasingly unforgiving climate.

The writer is the UNDP India Resident Representative

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Pyongyang's truce with Washington could end with terrible results. To avoid that, international efforts — notably from the US — are needed.” — THE GUARDIAN

## China at sea

With Beijing expanding strategic purpose of its marine research to Andamans, Delhi and its partners should coordinate maritime diplomacy



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

RECENT REPORTS THAT the Indian Navy “chased out” a Chinese vessel — Shiyan 1 — from the Andaman Sea should draw Delhi's attention to Beijing's growing maritime scientific capabilities and its ambitious research agenda for distant waters. Shiyan 1 is operated by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and is part of Beijing's growing marine research fleet that now stands at about 50 vessels.

Beijing's expansive investment in marine scientific research is very much part of its rise as a great maritime power and dovetails into its regional strategies. After leveraging marine science diplomacy to good effect in the South China Sea over the last many years, China has begun to extend it to the Indian Ocean. Last year, Shiyan-3 invited Pakistan scientists to join a research expedition in the Arabian Sea. Delhi must expect to see more of this in the Indian Ocean littoral.

At his press conference last week, the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Karambir Singh confirmed that Shiyan 1 was operating near Port Blair and had neither taken prior permission from India nor did it inform the relevant Indian authorities of its plans. Admiral Singh said “our stand is that if you have to do anything in our region, you notify us or take our permission”. Reacting to the Indian statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing said that China's research vessel Shiyan 1 was indeed “conducting acoustic propagation experiments and hydrologic environment measurements on the high seas of the Indian Ocean”.

But, Beijing insisted that Shiyan 1, “did not conduct any operations in the Indian EEZ (exclusive economic zone) during the whole process, and only sailed through the Indian EEZ on the way to and from the experimental area”. The foreign office in Beijing added that throughout the ship's voyage, the Indian navy aircraft followed it with warnings and its crew also replied in accordance with international practice.

The issue is not a technical one about the provisions of the law of the sea. It is about China's growing maritime scientific ambition. To be sure, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) favours freedom of marine scientific research. It also lets coastal states decide on granting permission for marine scientific research by other entities in their exclusive economic zones.

Beijing is not contesting that provision. It says it is merely asserting its rights. As the foreign ministry in Beijing put it, “China has always exercised the freedom of scientific research on the high seas in accordance with the law and fully respects the jurisdiction of relevant coastal states over their scientific research activities in the waters under their jurisdiction”. Beijing also expressed hope that Delhi will “take a correct view of China's marine scientific research activities and avoid disturbing normal and lawful maritime activities.”

There are many grey areas in the law of the sea, including on the conduct of mar-

itime scientific research in the waters that other states have sovereign control over. Great powers, rising or incumbent, tend to interpret international law to suit their interests and convenience. Weaker ones have no way of enforcing their rights under UNCLOS. More broadly, it is difficult to separate marine scientific research for peaceful and military purposes.

Shiyan 1 now operates as part of the so-called “national fleet” for marine scientific research. Earlier this decade, China brought together the marine research activities of multiple governmental agencies, ministries and commercial entities like oil companies under one administrative framework. The objective is to minimise duplication, enhance coordination and closely align research with larger maritime goals, civilian and military, set by the party-state.

In the past, China's marine science research was confined to near seas in the Western Pacific. It now extends to seas all around the world. About half of the marine scientific fleet is reportedly devoted to distant seas. Experts on the Chinese navy identify at least four broad objectives for the national science fleet.

First, to map the sea-bed resources of the world's oceans. China has internationally sanctioned licences to explore sea-bed mining in a few areas including in the South-western Indian Ocean. Second, to develop large ocean databases that facilitate Chinese naval operations by providing accurate maritime domain awareness. Third, to use its national fleet for science diplomacy that adds to the Chinese toolkit of building productive maritime and naval cooperation with coastal states across the world. It also lets China set the rules for global marine scientific research.

All major naval powers through history have sought to leverage marine scientific research to broader national objectives, both civilian and military. The Indian Navy too has modest marine scientific research capabilities and has deployed them for diplomatic purposes in the Indian Ocean.

Although, it was a late starter in the maritime domain, China now scores over the US, let alone India, in the scale, intensity, and strategic purpose of its marine scientific research programmes. For Delhi, the Shiyan incident is a useful reminder on the need to invest more in maritime scientific research.

While strengthening its own national capabilities, Delhi needs to deepen its scientific cooperation with its partners in the maritime domain. The annual summit with Japan later this week and the dialogue between the foreign and defence ministers of India and the US in Washington next week offer a good opportunity to put maritime scientific research high on the agenda.

While their national structures may not allow the kind of centralised strategic framework that China has put in place, India and its partners, including the US, Japan, Australia and France, should develop mechanisms for collaborative research in maritime scientific domain. India and its partners must also consider better coordination between their respective maritime science diplomacy initiatives in the region. Such partnerships would provide a sound basis for eventual engagement with China on marine scientific research.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express



CHRISTINA DHANARAJ

LIKE MANY OTHERS in India, my family chose to identify as “Indian Christian” to hide their Dalit identity. When a biology teacher at my school in Chennai asked me several times, if I really came under “open competition”, my father asked me to tell her, albeit proudly, that we were “Indian Christians”. It made no difference. The teacher, who also happened to attend the same church as mine, knew quite well, who we were and what our specific Dalit sub-caste was. I was a Christian on the outside, but on the inside, I was still a Parachi.

My paternal and maternal great-grand families converted into Christianity for both socio-economic and spiritual reasons. Becoming Christian meant that we could access mainstream places of worship, English education in missionary schools/colleges, and job opportunities in these establishments. My grandfather became a pastor for the Church of South India after being a teacher at a missionary school. My grandmother worked all her life as a teacher at Christian schools. I studied in a missionary school and a Christian college myself. In a way, Christianity was the ladder we climbed to escape caste.

Or so we thought. Over three generations and many years of socio-religious ostracisation, inside and outside the church, we have come to realise that the Christian identity in India is essentially a proxy for “low-caste”. No matter how well we hide it, caste markers

## Ambedkar and I

How Babasaheb helped me understand my identity as a Dalit-Christian

such as skin colour, dialect, the locality we live in, our economic status and our networks (or the lack of it) give it away. The biology teacher of my past, and modern-day twitter trolls, think the same thing — “rice-bag convert”.

For Dalit Christians in India (particularly those that are young), this can be extremely traumatic. The lack of politicisation keeps us confused, reducing our complex social experience to prosperity theology. We are conditioned to treat the church congregation as our primary community, which is apolitical at best and casteist at worst. We are made to pretend that we're just Christians, while having the lived experience of a Dalit. We grow up with no political tools or resources, and no intellectual ammunition to fight caste.

In retrospect, I believe I should have been more than just a Christian. I knew what my caste was, and felt deeply ashamed about it, but I didn't know I could identify as Dalit. I was almost 20 when I found a platform — the Student Christian Movement of India — that helped me unpack my caste location. I was much older when I finally found Ambedkar. My family didn't speak about him, and neither did my school nor my church. The friends I had then grimaced at the mere mention of his name. By the time he happened to me, I was in the thick of theorising Dalit politics, with fellow Dalits around me sporting the Ambedkarite identity. Between sly savarnas

who kept alluding to us as doing “hero-worship”, and social media posts that kept assessing who was more Ambedkarite than the other, I was left wondering, “What does it even mean to be an Ambedkarite?”

A year ago, in the midst of a brutal, polluted winter in Beijing, I found a small part of the answer. In an effort to understand Ambedkar better, I began listening to the audio book, “Ambedkar and Buddhism”, written by Urgyen Sangharakshita and read by Ratnadhya. For 11 hours and 29 minutes, I listened to Sangharakshita's description of Ambedkar's life, his thinking and his vision for my community. Many things appealed to me — Ambedkar's resilience, his dogged commitment towards his people, his confidence in his intellect, his love for discipline and his beautiful mind. No wonder my people emulate him, no wonder he is our role-model, I thought. But what took me by surprise was the way I reacted to Sangharakshita's recollection of Ambedkar's passing away.

B R Ambedkar died in his sleep on December 6, 1957, and close to 5,00,000 people had joined the two-mile long funeral procession. More than 1,00,000 had escorted Ambedkar's ashes back to “Rajagriha”. Although my connection to Ambedkarism was very new, my heart sunk and tears rolled down, as I imagined how it would have felt to lose a beloved leader, and how things would

have seemed so hopeless all of a sudden. What I felt then, closely resonated to what I went through when my father had passed away. In a way, it was similar: A community had lost their hero, like how I had lost mine.

It obviously takes more than just emotion to be an Ambedkarite. I'll probably be told to read more of him, to practice his philosophy, to spread his thoughts. I'll probably be asked how I can be a Christian and an Ambedkarite. I'll probably be trolled for being a novice, or worse, a fake. In any case, I wish I had known Ambedkar earlier than I did. Although politisation would not have made any of the discrimination less hurtful, I'm confident it would have given me the much-needed access to Ambedkar's political wisdom. Not being armed with Ambedkarite narratives meant that I had to internalise casteist violence and interpret it as something I deserved. Not having a rationalist understanding meant that I truly believed God was “punishing” me for my sins. Not knowing Ambedkar earlier meant that I had to wait for far too long before I could say I'm Dalit, not just Christian.

Ambedkar is for everybody, Ambedkarite or not.

The writer is advisor for Smashboard. She was formerly consultant for #dalitwomenfight and co-founder of Dalit History Month project. She works and lives in the Netherlands

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### FAILING A VARSITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, “What JNU represents” (IE, December 09). It is apparent that right-wing forces represented by the RSS are trying to convert JNU into a bastion of their own conservative ideas and values to counter its message for an equal and free society. The BJP has an overwhelming presence in the entire country, while the fortunes of the Left parties are on the ebb. But the sectarian forces must remember that the JNU has withstood several challenges and narrow-minded thinking will not obliterate it easily.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

#### UNDER FIRE

THIS REFERS TO the report, “Dawn fire kills 43 in Delhi factory” (IE, December 9). Most of the 43 victims of the massive fire in a factory in a congested Delhi market died of asphyxiation. The fire is the worse Delhi has seen since the Uphaar Cinema tragedy in 1997. In January last year, a similar fire broke out in an illegal fireworks factory in Northwest Delhi, killing 17 people and injuring two others. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team found that some windows at the rear of the building were sealed shut, thereby trapping poisonous gases inside the already cramped and dimly-lit interiors. Many buildings in India do not adhere to the National Building Code and do

#### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

not have fire clearance certificates.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

#### NOT JUST SUBSIDIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, “Don't cry for onions” (IE, December 9). Despite knowing that monsoons are always unpredictable, government agencies give short shrift to storing buffer stocks of onions. The country has witnessed two extremes in the price band of onions. As a result, the farmers are in a Catch 22 situation. The government's only recourse seems to be to dole out subsidies and freebies.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai



## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 245

## सही मिश्रण जरूरी

**पेट्रोल** के साथ मिलाने के लिए एथनॉल की उपलब्धता और आवश्यकता के बीच भारी अंतर को देखते हुए इसमें दो राय नहीं कि इसका उत्पादन बढ़ाने की आवश्यकता है। परंतु सरकार इस लक्ष्य को हासिल करने के लिए जो प्रयास कर रही है वे पर्याप्त नहीं प्रतीत होते। इनमें सबसे बहसतलब है एथनॉल निर्माताओं (अधिकांशतया चीनी

मिल मालिक जो इसे राब से बनाते हैं) द्वारा गन्ने के रस को सीधे अल्कोहल में बदलना।

इसके अलावा वे अधिशेष चीनी और खाद्यान्न मसलन गेहूँ, चावल और मक्के को भी इसके लिए प्रयोग में लाते हैं। इतना ही नहीं सरकार ने इन कच्चे मालों के प्रयोग को बढ़ावा देने वाले कदम के रूप में इनसे बनने वाले एथनॉल की अपेक्षाकृत ऊंची

कीमत तय की है।

ऐसे में किसान गन्ने की खेती और चीनी मिलें गन्ने की खरीद, चीनी बनाने के बजाय इस जैव ईंधन के लिए करेंगी। चूंकि गन्ना, गेहूँ और चावल के उत्पादन में खूब पानी लगता है इसलिए कहा जा सकता है कि जैव ईंधन उत्पादन में इनका इस्तेमाल पर्यावरण के लिए किसी त्रासदी को आमंत्रण देने के समान है। इनके उत्पादन में लगने वाले पानी की लागत को केवल आर्थिक संदर्भ में नहीं आंका जा सकता। इसकी सामाजिक कीमत, पेट्रोल में एथनॉल मिलाने से होने वाले आर्थिक बचत से कहीं अधिक हो सकती है।

इतना ही नहीं भारत जैसे देश में जहां बुनियादी ढांचे, उद्योग धंधों और अन्य उद्देश्यों

के लिए भी जमीन मुश्किल से मिलती है वहां जैव ईंधन फसल के उत्पादन में इसका इस्तेमाल समझदारी भरा नहीं होगा।

जहां तक खाद्यान्न की बात है, फिलहाल ऐसा लग सकता है कि अधिशेष अन्न को आसानी से जैव ईंधन बनाने के लिए इस्तेमाल किया जा सकता है लेकिन देश में व्याप्त कुपोषण और भूख को देखते हुए इसे उचित ठहराना मुश्किल होगा। हकीकत में कई भूसंपदा समृद्ध और औद्योगिक देश, जो गैसोलीन में फसल से बनने वाला जैव ईंधन मिलाते हैं, वे भी अपनी नीतियों की समीक्षा कर रहे हैं। अध्ययन बताते हैं कि इससे फसल बुआई के तरीके बदल गए हैं और खाद्यान्न कीमतें बढ़ी हैं। जैव ईंधन वाली फसल उगाने के लिए वनों की कटाई

लिए तौर तरीकों में बदलाव जरूरी है। प्रधानमंत्री अक्सर जिस सहकारी संघवाद की बात करते हैं वह केवल मंत्र नहीं बल्कि आवश्यकता है।

■ महाराष्ट्र पर नजर डालें। राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस पार्टी (राकांपा) और कांग्रेस ने शिवसेना का साथ इसलिए दिया क्योंकि दोनों दल अस्तित्व और सत्ता की लड़ाई लड़ रहे थे। परंतु शिवसेना क्यों अलग हुई? इसलिए क्योंकि उसे लग रहा था कि प्रांत में भाजपा के विस्तार के साथ उसकी वैचारिक जमीन खतरे में है। शिवसेना की बगावत सीधे-सीधे एक दलके दबदबे से बचाव का उसका तरीका है।

■ केंद्र-राज्य संबंध सन 1989 से 2014 के बीच के 25 वर्ष वाले दौर में लौट सकते हैं। महाराष्ट्र से आ रही आवाजों को सुनिए: बुलेट ट्रेन का विरोध, मेट्रो के खिलाफ धर्मकियां। आंध्र प्रदेश ने अमरावती योजना रद्द कर और सिंगापु्र से लेकर खाड़ी के लूलू समूह तक विदेशी साझेदारों को बाहर करके देश की एफडीआई के अनुकूल होने की छवि पर सवालिया निशान छोड़ दिए हैं। प्रधानमंत्री को इन राज्यों के मुख्यमंत्रियों को भी गले लगाना होगा जैसे वह विदेशी राष्ट्राध्यक्षों को लगाते हैं।

■ इन सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा है राष्ट्रीय नागरिक पंजी यानी एनआरसी। ममता बनर्जी भले ही इसे खारिज करने वाली पहली नेता हों लेकिन संभावना यही है कि अधिकांश गैर भाजपा शासित राज्य इस विभाजनकारी, खतरनाक और अपने प्रतिकूल विचार को अस्वीकार करेंगे। पूर्वोत्तर के छोटे राज्यों को अपने जन्मत से निपटना होगा जो कि नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक के खिलाफ है। ऐसे में देखें तो एनआरसी का क्रियाव्यवन करना मुश्किल ही है। यह चुनावी कारणों से सांप्रदायिक ध्रुवीकरण करने वाला विचार बना रहेगा। वैसे ही जैसे तीन दशक तक राम मंदिर रहा। एनआरसी-सीएबी के मेल के रूप में इसे आगे बढ़ाना मुश्किल है।

■ आखिर में अगर आपको लग रहा है कि मैं केवल भाजपा की कमियां गिन रहा हूं तो ग्राफ को एक बार पुनः देखिए। भगवा विस्तार सिमटता दिख रहा है। यह सीमित चुनावी हकीकत है। वैचारिक तस्वीर को देखिए तो पूरे भारत में आपको ऐसा मुख्यमंत्री नहीं मिलेगा जिसने अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने और अयोध्या मामले पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्णय की आलोचना करना तो दूर, उसका स्वागत न किया हो।

बीते दशकों में भाजपा और आरएसएस के इन पसंदीदा मुद्दों ने भारतीय राजनीति का ध्रुवीकरण किया है। अब कश्मीर और राम मंदिर बल्कि समान नागरिक संहिता पर भी आम सहमति बनती दिख रही है। यहां तक कि केरल की वाम मोर्चा सरकार भी सबरीमला में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के आदेश का पालन कराने का साहस न कर सकी। राहुल गांधी भी सार्वजनिक रूप से अपने जनेऊ का प्रदर्शन करते हैं, मंदिर जाते हैं और उच्च ब्राह्मण गोत्र दर्शाते हैं।

भारतीय मानचित्र के राजनीतिक रंग अब भाजपा और आरएसएस के भगवा रंग में रंग चुके हैं। भाजपा न सही, आरएसएस अब अपनी जीत की घोषणा कर सकता है। हेडगेवार, गोलवलकर और सावरकर अवश्य इस पर सहमत होते।

की सलाह को भी पर्यावरणाविद चुनौती दे रहे हैं। गौरतलब है कि ब्राजील तथा कुछ अन्य देश ऐसा कर रहे हैं।

एक अन्य बात जिस पर ध्यान देना जरूरी है वह यह कि भारत में गन्ने तथा खाद्यान्न से इतर तरीकों से भी एथनॉल तैयार करने की काफी संभावना मौजूद है जिसका पूरा दोहन होना अभी बाकी है। वर्ष 2009 की राष्ट्रीय जैव ईंधन नीति जिसे 2018 में संशोधित किया गया, वहां ग्रामीण और शहरी कचरे, सेलूलोसी और लिंगो सेलुलोसी बायोमास (कृषि के शुष्क पदार्थ) तथा गेहूँ और धान के अवशेषों से एथनॉल का कच्चा माल तैयार किया जा सकता है। हालांकि ऐसा एथनॉल राब से बनने वाले एल्कोहल की तुलना में थोड़ा महंगा हो

सकता है लेकिन फसल अवशेष जलाने के कारण होने वाले पर्यावरण नुकसान को रोककर यह भरपाई भी कर देता है। अच्छी बात यह है कि तेल विपणन कंपनियों ने इस विचार का समर्थन किया है और 11 राज्यों में ऐसी एथनॉल रिफाइनरी लगाने का काम चल रहा है। इस पर आगे और जोर देने की आवश्यकता है।

गैर खाद्य और तेजी से विकसित होने वाले शैवालों की मदद से एथनॉल बनाने की दिशा में शोध ने सकारात्मक परिणाम दिए हैं। ऐसी नवाचारी तकनीक की मदद से पर्यावरण के अनुकूल जैव ईंधन की आपूर्ति सुनिश्चित की जा सकती है। ऐसा करने से पर्यावास अथवा खाद्य सुरक्षा पर कोई बुरा असर भी नहीं होगा।



अजय मोहंती

# भाजपा का घटता आधार मगर हिंदुत्व का प्रसार

भले ही भाजपा देश के कुछ ही महत्त्वपूर्ण राज्यों में सत्तारूढ़ है लेकिन

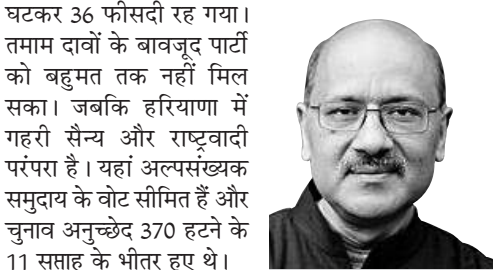
हिंदुत्व की उसकी विचारधारा पूरे देश में अपना वर्चस्व कायम कर चुकी है

आप सब ने गिलास के आधा भरा या आधा खाली होने का किस्सा तो सुना ही होगा। इंडिया टुडे समूह के उस बहुचर्चित ग्राफिक को भी इस तरह देखा जा सकता है जिसमें 2017 से अब तक देश के राजनीतिक मानचित्र पर भारतीय जनता पार्टी ( भाजपा ) के तुलनात्मक विस्तार को दर्शाया गया है। पहली नजर में ग्राफिक बताता है कि इन दो वर्षों में देश के राज्यों पर भाजपा का शासन 71 फीसदी से घटकर 40 फीसदी रह गया। ऐसा तब है जब आपको लग रहा होगा कि पार्टी की लोकप्रियता चरम पर है और मोदी के अधीन उसका वर्चस्व बेहद मजबूत है।

यह गिलास के आधा खाली होने वाला तर्क है। आधे भरे गिलास वाली दलील कहती है कि गत मई के लोकसभा चुनाव के नतीजों पर नजर डालिए। राजनीतिक हकीकत साफ नजर आती है। समूचे उत्तर भारत, अधिकांश तटीय इलाकों तथा पूर्वी और पूर्वोत्तर भारत में भाजपा के सामने कोई चुनौती नहीं है। अगर दोबारा आम चुनाव हों तो भी नतीजे मई 2019 से अलग नहीं होंगे। तो मोदी के आलोचक किस बात का जश्न मना रहे हैं ?

राजनीतिक हकीकत जटिल और बहुस्तरीय है और भगवा रंग की कई छवियां दिखाती है। आइए इन पतलों को उधाड़ते हैं: ■ मोदी का व्यक्तित्व अपने आप में बहुत बड़ा है लेकिन इंदिरा गांधी जैसा नहीं है। दूसरी तरफ देखें तो देश का मतदाता इंदिरा युग से अधिक परिपक्व है। वह लोकसभा और विधानसभा के लिए अलग-अलग चयन करता है।

ऐसे में इंदिरा की तरह मोदी भी चाहें तो अपनी पार्टी के टिकट पर एक खंबे तक को चुनाव जिता सकते हैं लेकिन केवल लोकसभा में। इंदिरा की तरह वह इस जादू को विधानसभा में नहीं दोहरा सकते। महाराष्ट्र का मामला थोड़ा जटिल है। हरियाणा के बारे में सोचिए। लोकसभा चुनाव के पांच महीने के भीतर हरियाणा में पार्टी का मत प्रतिशत करीब 22 फीसदी गिरा और 58 फीसदी से



**राष्ट्र की बात**

शेखर गुप्ता

घटकर 36 फीसदी रह गया। तमाम दावों के बावजूद पार्टी को बहुमत तक नहीं मिल सका। जबकि हरियाणा में गहरी सैन्य और राष्ट्रवादी परंपरा है। यहां अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय के वोट सीमित हैं और चुनाव अनुच्छेद 370 हटने के 11 सप्ताह के भीतर हुए थे। इससे पीछे जाएं तो 2014 में पूरा सफाया करने के बाद भी मोदी 2017 के अलावा उत्तर प्रदेश, हरियाणा, उत्तराखंड, हिमाचल प्रदेश और असम में वैसी जीत नहीं पा सके। 2015 में दिल्ली और उसके बाद पंजाब में उन्हें हार का सामना करना पड़ा। गुजरात में मामला एकदम करीबी रहा। कर्नाटक में कांग्रेस के खिलाफ सत्ताविरोधी माहौल तथा बेल्लारी बंधुओं के साथ शर्मनाक समझौते के बावजूद भाजपा को बहुमत नहीं मिला। मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान और छत्तीसगढ़ में भी पार्टी को हार का सामना करना पड़ा। पंजाब के अलावा जिन राज्यों में भाजपा हारी या निर्णायक जीत पाने में नाकाम रही, उन सभी में उसे लोकसभा चुनाव में जबरदस्त जीत मिली। यहां तक कि दिल्ली, राजस्थान, मध्य प्रदेश और छत्तीसगढ़ में भी उसे शानदार जीत मिली।

■ सबसे अहम, इंदिरा युग में जहां एक दल के दबदबे को स्वीकार कर लिया गया था, उसके उलट देश अब अधिक संघीय व्यवस्था वाला हो गया है। यदि मतदाता लोकसभा और विधानसभा के लिए अपने चयन में अंत करता है तो भले ही मतदाता भाजपा के विरोधी न हों लेकिन इससे नवीन पटनायक, के चंद्रशेखर राव, वाई एस जगनमोहन रेड्डी जैसे नेताओं का साहस बढ़ता है जो भाजपा के बड़े शत्रु नहीं हैं।

यह केजरीवाल और ममता बनर्जी जैसे भाजपा के शत्रुओं को भी सुकून देता है। लोकसभा चुनाव में संघर्ष के छह महीने बाद तीन उप्चुनावों में ममता बनर्जी को जीत

मिली है। दो सीटों पर तो बहुत भारी अंतर से। तीसरी श्रेणी के जो क्षेत्रीय नेता इससे प्रसन्न होंगे वे भाजपा के साझेदार हैं। इनमें नीतीश कुमार शीर्ष पर हैं। बिहार में अगले साल चुनाव होने हैं। इस श्रेणी में प्रफुल्ल कुमार महंत असम में और दुष्यंत चौटाला हरियाणा में आकांक्षा पाल सकते हैं।

■ सर्वेक्षण भाजपा के अधीन 17 राज्य बता रहा है जो आधा सच है। इनमें से कुछ मसलन बिहार और हरियाणा में उसकी साझेदारी ऐसे दलों से है जिनसे उसकी वैचारिकी बिल्कुल नहीं मिलती। मेघालय, नगालैंड और मणिपुर को अभी भी भाजपा की पहुँच वाले राज्य नहीं माना जा सकता। सिक्किम और मिजोरम राजग के हिस्से हैं लेकिन भाजपा के नहीं। एक अनकहा सच यह है कि भाजपा के पास केवल तीन बड़े राज्य हैं: उत्तर प्रदेश, गुजरात और कर्नाटक। कर्नाटक की स्थिति से सभी वाकिफ हैं।

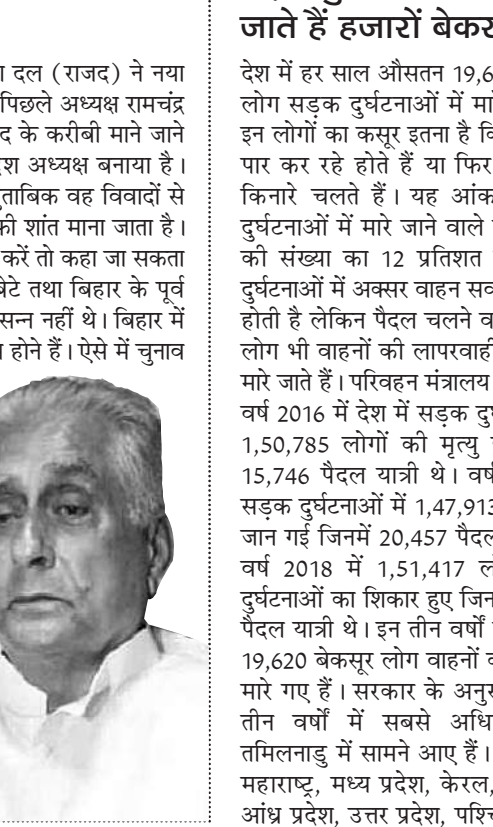
■ मोदी-शाह के उदय के बाद भाजपा ने एक ही फॉर्मूला अपनाया है। हिंदी प्रदेशों और दो बड़े पश्चिमी प्रदेशों में जीत के साथ देश पर राज। क्योंकि यहां वहां कुछ छोटी मोटी सफलताओं के साथ ऐसा आसानी से हो सकता था।

अगर इसे राज्यों में नहीं दोहराया जा सकता तो आपका मुकाबला संघवाद से है। यानी आपको मुख्यमंत्रियों से बातचीत करनी होगी, कुछ लेनदेन पर सहमति देनी होगी और इस हकीकत के साथ जीना होगा कि विरोधी दलों के शासन वाले रज्यों में पुलिस जगनमोहन रेड्डी जैसे नेताओं का साहस बढ़ता है जो भाजपा के बड़े शत्रु नहीं हैं। और कानून व्यवस्था पर उनका राज होगा। हो सकता है कुछ राज्य आयुष्मान भारत जैसी आपकी अच्छी और बड़ी योजना तक को लागू करने से मना कर दे। उनको आदेशित नहीं किया जा सकता है। कई बार उनसे समानता का व्यवहार करना होता है। इसके

### कानाफूसी

#### चुनाव की तैयारी

बिहार के प्रमुख विपक्षी दल राष्ट्रीय जनता दल (राजद) ने नया प्रदेश अध्यक्ष चुन लिया है। पार्टी प्रदेश में पिछले अध्यक्ष रामचंद्र पूर्वे को हटाकर पूर्व सांसद और लालू प्रसाद के करीबी माने जाने वाले राजनेता जगदानंद सिंह को नया प्रदेश अध्यक्ष बनाया है। सिंह के बारे में सामने आई जानकारी के मुताबिक वह विवादों से दूर ही रहते हैं तथा उनका स्वभाव भी काफी शांत माना जाता है। स्थानीय स्तर पर चल रही खबरों पर भरोसा करें तो कहा जा सकता है कि लालू प्रसाद के वारिस और उनके बेटे तथा बिहार के पूर्व उपमुख्यमंत्री तेजस्वी यादव पूर्वे से कतई प्रसन्न नहीं थे। बिहार में अगले वर्ष यानी 2020 में विधानसभा चुनाव होने हैं। ऐसे में चुनाव करीब आने के साथ ही पूर्वे के स्थान पर सिंह को प्रदेश अध्यक्ष बनाने का एक मकसद पार्टी पाटी द्वारा राजपूतों तथा उच्च वर्ग के अन्य लोगों को अपने साथ जोड़ने का भी हो सकता है। अभी यह तबका पार्टी के साथ नहीं रहा है। यह बात महत्त्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि राजद को आमतौर पर यादवों और मुस्लिमों के दल के रूप में ही पहचाना जाता है।



### आपका पक्ष

### सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में मारे जाते हैं हजारों बेकसूर

देश में हर साल औसतन 19,620 बेकसूर लोग सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में मारे जाते हैं। इन लोगों का कसूर इतना है कि वे सड़क पार कर रहे होते हैं या फिर सड़क के किनारे चलते हैं। यह आफ़ीदा सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में मारे जाने वाले कुल लोगों की संख्या का 12 प्रतिशत है। सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में अक्सर वाहन सवार की मौत होती है लेकिन पैदल चलने वाले बेकसूर लोग भी वाहनों की लापरवाही के कारण मारे जाते हैं। परिवहन मंत्रालय के अनुसार वर्ष 2016 में देश में सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में 1,50,785 लोगों का मृत्यु हुई जिसमें 15,746 पैदल यात्री थे। वर्ष 2017 में सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में 1,47,913 लोगों की जान गई जिनमें 20,457 पैदल यात्री थे। वर्ष 2018 में 1,51,417 लोग सड़क दुर्घटनाओं का शिकार हुए जिनमें 22,656 पैदल यात्री थे। इन तीन वर्षों में औसतन 19,620 बेकसूर लोग वाहनों की चपेट में मारे गए हैं। सरकार के अनुसार पिछले तीन वर्षों में सबसे अधिक मामले तमिलनाडु में सामने आए हैं। इसके बाद महाराष्ट्र, मध्य प्रदेश, केरल, कर्नाटक, आंध्र प्रदेश, उत्तर प्रदेश, पश्चिम बंगाल,



तेलंगाना हैं। तमिलनाडु में वर्ष 2016 में 2,966, वर्ष 2017 में 3,507 और वर्ष 2018 में 768 पैदल यात्रियों की जान गई थी। महाराष्ट्र में वर्ष 2016 में 2,103, वर्ष 2017 में 1,831 और वर्ष 2018 में 2,515 पैदल यात्रियों की मृत्यु हुई थी। मध्य प्रदेश में वर्ष 2016 में 1,627, वर्ष 2017 में 1,280 और वर्ष 2018 में 1,504 पैदल यात्री मारे गए थे। सरकार ने पैदल यात्रियों की सुविधाओं के दिशानिर्देश प्रकाशित



किए हैं। सरकार पैदल यात्रियों के लिए फुटपाथ, फुट ओवरब्रिज तथा अन्य सुविधाओं पर गौर कर रही है। सड़क पार करते समय लोगों को भी सावधानी बरतनी चाहिए। आज की भागदौड़ की जिंदगी में

**पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग,**

**नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in**

**पत्र/ईमेल में अपना डाक पता और टेलीफोन नंबर अवश्य लिखें ।**

# एलजीबीटीक्यू समुदाय को लेकर पूर्वग्रह से ग्रस्त है कारोबारी जगत

**भारत सरकार पहले क्षेत्रीय व्यापक आर्थिक साझेदारी (आरसेप) में शामिल होने की प्रक्रिया में थी लेकिन बाद में ऐन वक्त पर उसने अपने कदम वापस ले लिए। ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि देश का कारोबारी जगत यही मानता है कि वह अगले 25 वर्ष की अवधि में रखते हुए चीनी उद्यमों से मुकाबला नहीं कर सकता। आरसेप की वार्ताओं में 25 वर्ष की समयोजन अवधि की धमकियां। आंध्र प्रदेश ने अमरावती योजना रद्द कर और सिंगापु्र से लेकर खाड़ी के लूलू समूह तक विदेशी साझेदारों को बाहर करके देश की एफडीआई के अनुकूल होने की छवि पर सवालिया निशान छोड़ दिए हैं। प्रधानमंत्री को इन राज्यों के मुख्यमंत्रियों को भी गले लगाना होगा जैसे वह विदेशी राष्ट्राध्यक्षों को लगाते हैं।**



**जिंदगीनामा**

कनिका दत्ता

**सर्वेक्षण में निष्कर्ष यह रहा कि भारतीय कारोबारी जगत में समलैंगिक समुदाय को लेकर पूर्वग्रह का भाव है। विभिन्न कंपनियों के जिन 1,137 पेशेवरों से बात की गई उनमें से 77 फीसदी ने कहा कि उनका ऐसा कोई सहयोगी नहीं है जो एलजीबीटीक्यू समुदाय से ताल्लुक रखता हो**

संहिता की धारा 377 हटाए जाने के बावजूद कॉर्पोरेट जगत में इस विषय को लेकर इतनी अधिक खामोशी है। यह अपने आप में बताती है कि समलैंगिकता को लेकर किस कदर भेदभाव वाला माहौल है। एलजीबीटीक्यू समुदाय के अधिकारों का मुद्दा जनसंपर्क विभागों के लिए भी मायने नहीं रखता जबकि कारोबारी सामाजिक दायित्व कार्यक्रमों के तहत बनने वाले शौचालयों और गरीब बच्चों को मध्याह्न भोजन देने की तमाम खबरें छай रहती हैं। चौंकाने वाली बात यह भी है कि करीब 65 फीसदी कर्मचारियों ने कहा कि उन्हें धारा 377 के समाप्त होने के बाद भी नीतियों में कोई परिवर्तन देखने को नहीं मिला। हालांकि सर्वेक्षण ने यह नहीं बताया कि जिन 35 फीसदी लोगों ने कहा कि उन्होंने कुछ बदलाव दर्ज किया है, उन्होंने किस प्रकार के बदलाव कंपनियों में देखे।

आखिर किस तरह के नीतिगत बदलाव की अपेक्षा की जानी चाहिए? सबसे बुनियादी है

समलिंगी साथियों (अभी समलिंगी विवाह को वैधानिक मंजूरी नहीं है) और उनके बच्चों को तमाम सुविधाएं प्रदान करना। कुछ कंपनियों ने अपनी मानव संसाधन नीतियों में बदलाव किया है। उदाहरण के लिए गोदरेज समूह और इन्फोसिस ने बिना लिंग का उल्लेख किए 'साथी' को ये सुविधाएं देने की व्यवस्था की है। ओयो समूह की बीमा नीति में भी 'अन्य' को शामिल किया गया है। समस्या का एक बड़ा हिस्सा यह है कि देश के बैंकिंग और बीमा उद्योग की नीतियों में अभी ऐसे बदलाव बाकी हैं जिनकी मदद से खताधारक ऐसे लोगों को लाभार्थी बन सके जो उनके रिश्तेदार न हों। बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियां इस समस्या से निजात पाने के लिए विदेशी सेवा प्रदाताओं से बीमा कराती हैं। उनके पास ऐसी पेशकश रहती है। परंतु उनके यहां भारतीय कामगार तबके का बहुत छोट्टा हिस्सा काम करता है। ऐसी पहल देश के कारोबारी जगत के समलैंगिकता विरोधी माहौल में बहुत मामूली है। आश्चर्य नहीं कि 54 फीसदी लोगों ने कहा कि उनकी कंपनी कभी एलजीबीटीक्यू समुदाय के किसी सदस्य को काम पर नहीं रखेगी।

सर्वेक्षण में कॉर्पोरेट जगत में दिव्यांग पेशेवरों और महिलाओं को काम पर रखने की स्थिति को लेकर और निराश करने वाली सूचनाएं हैं। इनमें से तमाम बातें इतनी स्पष्ट हैं कि अब लोग इन पर टिप्पणियां भी नहीं करते। निजी क्षेत्र के प्रवर्तक निहायत सांप्रदायिक भी हैं। सचर समिति की रिपोर्ट अरसा पहले इस बात को रेखांकित कर चुकी है। परंतु देश के कारोबारी जगत के अधिकांश हिस्से में व्याप्त संस्कृति के बारे में एक निष्कर्ष दिलचस्प दृष्टि डालता है। करीब 40 फीसदी लोगों ने कहा कि कार्यस्थल पर किसी के बारे में राय बनाने में शारीरिक प्रस्तुतिकरण, जातीयता और व्यक्तिगत पसंद और प्रार्थमिकता की अहम भूमिका है। यह मानव स्वभाव है लेकिन प्रतिस्पर्धी माहौल में काम कर रहे प्रबंधन को क्षमता और प्रतिभा को भी कुछ तत्वजो देनी चाहिए। जो लोग इस बात पर आश्चर्य करते हैं कि आखिर क्यों 21वीं सदी में देश के कारोबारी समूहों की कार्य संस्कृति पर 20वीं सदी की छाप है, उन्हें ऐसे निष्कर्षों से मदद मिल सकती है।

का निर्माण करना है तो हमें महिलाओं को भी उसी दिशा में कार्य कराना होगा। अर्थात लिंग विभिन्नता को छोड़कर समान अवसर उपलब्ध कराने होंगे। स्वामी विवेकानंद के अनुसार एक पक्षी एक पंख से नहीं उड़ सकता है। उसी प्रकार हमारा समाज भी सिर्फ पुरुषों के बलबूते ही सबकुछ हासिल नहीं कर सकता है। हमें चाहिए कि हर क्षेत्र में महिलाओं की भागीदारी को बढ़ावा जाए। बहुत सी महिलाएं राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर परचम दिख रही हैं। लेकिन हम नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि आज भी कितनी लड़कियों को गर्भ में ही मार दिया जाता है। अगर उन्हें दुर्भाग्यवश मारा नहीं जाता है तो उन्हें अस्पतालों की दृष्टि से देखा जाता है। केंद्र सरकार और राज्य सरकार द्वारा महिलाओं के लिए कई पहल शामिल की जाती हैं जो कुछ हद तक प्रभावित भी करती हैं। फिलहाल मध्य प्रदेश सरकार द्वारा अच्छी पहल शुरू की गई है। इसमें एक से छह वर्ष के बच्चे तथा गर्भवती महिलाओं को सप्ताह में तीन दिन अंडे दिए जाएंगे। जो अंडा सेवन नहीं करते हैं उन्हें फल दिए जाएंगे। यह पहल महिलाओं को सशक्त बनाने में महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका अदा कर सकती है।

*सुप्रिया कुमारी, पटना*



## दैनिक जागरण

खुश रहने का सबसे अच्छा तरीका किसी दूसरे को खुश करना है

## नागरिकता विधेयक

नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक को लेकर जैसा माहौल खड़ा किया गया उसे देखते हुए लोकसभा में उसे लेकर हंगामा होना ही था। केवल कांग्रेस और कुछ अन्य विपक्षी दल ही यह साबित करने पर जोर नहीं दे रहे हैं कि यह विधेयक संविधान विरोधी है। यही काम कई बुद्धिजीवी भी करने में लगे हुए हैं। उनकी मानें तो यह समानता के अधिकारों का हनन करता है, लेकिन वे यह स्पष्ट करने की जरूरत नहीं समझ रहे हैं कि समानता का अधिकार भारतीय नागरिकों पर ही लागू हो सकता है, न कि अन्य देशों के नागरिकों पर। इस विधेयक के जरिये भारत यह तय करने जा रहा है कि वह पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान के किन लोगों को नागरिकता प्रदान कर सकता है? यह समझने की जरूरत है कि यह विधेयक दुनिया भर के लोगों को नागरिकता प्रदान करने के लिए नहीं है। इस विधेयक के विरोध में दूसरी बड़ी दलील यह दी जा रही है कि यह धार्मिक आधार पर भेदभाव करता है। निःसंदेह इस विधेयक में पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान के अल्पसंख्यक यानी हिंदू, सिख, जैन, बौद्ध, पारसी, ईसाई मत के लोगों को ही नागरिकता देने की व्यवस्था है, लेकिन यदि इन तीनों देशों के मुसलमानों को रियायत नहीं दी गई है तो इसके पीछे ऐतिहासिक कारण और यह तथ्य है कि ये सभी मुस्लिम बहुल देश हैं।

आखिर यह क्यों विस्मृत किया जा रहा है कि देश का विभाजन मजहब के आधार पर हुआ था? इस ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि की अनदेखी क्यों की जानी चाहिए? विंडबना यह है कि इसी के साथ इस तथ्य की भी अनदेखी की जा रही है कि बांग्लादेश से आए लाखों लोगों ने पूर्वोत्तर के कई इलाकों में सामाजिक परिदृश्य इस हद तक बदल दिया है कि स्थानीय संस्कृति के लिए खतरा पैदा हो गया है। वास्तव में इसी कारण पूर्वोत्तर के अधिकांश इलाकों को नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक के दायरे से बाहर किया गया है। समझना कठिन है कि पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान के मुसलमानों को नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक से बाहर रखने का विरोध करने वाले इसकी अनदेखी क्यों कर रहे हैं कि इस विधेयक में श्रीलंका के तमिल हिंदुओं को कोई रियायत नहीं दी जा रही है। क्या विपक्ष इसकी चर्चा करने से इसीलिए बच रहा है ताकि वोले बैंक की राजनीति करने में आसानी हो? यह ठीक नहीं कि संकीर्ण राजनीतिक कारणों से यह हवा बनाई जाए कि यह विधेयक मुस्लिम विरोधी है। बेहतर हो कि यह हवा बनाने वाले यह स्पष्ट करें कि पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान के अल्पसंख्यकों और बहुसंख्यकों के बीच भेद क्यों नहीं किया जाना चाहिए? भारत कोई धर्मशाला नहीं कि जो चाहे वहीं बसने का अधिकारी बन जाए।

## सबक लें नौजवान

दिल्ली कमाने गए बिहार के दर्जनों नौजवान अब गांव नहीं लौट पाएंगे। एक अवैध फैक्ट्री की आग ने उन्हें लील लिया। गांव में उनके घरों में मातम पसरा है। पता किया जा रहा कि और कौन-कौन नहीं रहा। एक कमाने वाले से दर्जनों स्वजनों की जिंदगी जुड़ी थी। सब सोच रहे कि उनका क्या होगा? यह कैसी मनहूस खबर आई? क्या से क्या हो गया? यह तो गांव-घर वालों के सवाल हैं। समाज के सवाल भी हैं। कितनी खतरनाक फैक्ट्री थी, निकलने का रास्ता नहीं मिला...। सैकड़ों लोग नौकरी कर रहे थे। वर्षों से कर रहे थे। क्या किसी ने कभी अनहोनी की आशंका नहीं जताई होगी, क्या किसी ने कभी नहीं सोचा होगा कि आग लग गई तो क्या होगा? सुरक्षा नियम का पालन क्यों नहीं हो रहा? सोचा तो जरूर होगा, लेकिन वह मजदूर थे। कुछ नहीं कर सकते थे। उन्हें तो बस रहने का रोजगार मिला था। रोजगार की मजबूरी उन्हें खतरनाक हाल में रहने और काम करने को विवश कर रही थी। जांच-मुआवजा-सजा जैसी प्रक्रियाएं शुरू हो गई हैं। यह सब शोर कुछ दिन रहेगा। हो सकता है कि दिल्ली की तंग गलियों वाले मोहल्ले की कुछ अवैध फैक्ट्रियां बंद हो जाएं, लेकिन देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों में ऐसे ही लाखों फैक्ट्रियां चलती रहेंगी। नगर निगम, श्रम विभाग, नियोजन विभाग, पर्यावरण विभाग, प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड समेत दर्जनों विभाग इनकी निगरानी के लिए काम करते हैं। सवाल है कि वे आखिरकार क्या करते हैं? दिल्ली की घटना ने बिहार के नौजवानों को बड़ा सबक दिया है। नौकरी करने दिल्ली, मुंबई या गुजरात कहीं भी जाएं, जीवन खतरे में पड़ सकता है, ऐसे अवैध संस्थानों से बचें। खतरनाक माहौल वाली संस्थाओं में काम न करें। हकीकत में ऐसा करना मुश्किल जरूर है, लेकिन करना तो होगा। बिहार सरकार को भी कोई ऐसी व्यवस्था करनी चाहिए कि राज्य के लोग जहां बड़ी संख्या में नौकरी के लिए जा रहे हों, वहां उनके जानमाल की सुरक्षा के इंतजाम हैं या नहीं, इसकी समय-समय पर जांच कराए और लोगों को जागरूक करें।

## भारत में गहरी हैं मानवाधिकार की जड़ें

चंदन कर्ण

मानवाधिकार एक व्यापक अवधारणा है, जो मनुष्य मात्र को बिना किसी भेदभाव के सम्मान के साथ जीने का अधिकार सुनिश्चित करता है। पश्चिमी विचारकों ने मानवाधिकार का प्रथम लिखित दस्तावेज 1215 में ब्रिटेन के शासक जॉन द्वारा कतिपय मानव अधिकारों को मान्यता देने वाले उस घोषणापत्र को माना है, जो विश्व भर में मैगनाकार्टा के नाम से प्रसिद्ध है। उत्तर आधुनिक युग में द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध की विभीषिका, जिसमें मानवीय मूल्यों की अपरिमित क्षति हुई थी, के उपरांत संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा द्वारा 10 दिसंबर, 1948 को एक प्रस्ताव पारित करके मानवाधिकारों की वैश्विक घोषणा को अंगीकार किया गया। भारत उन शुरुआती देशों में शामिल था, जिसने इस घोषणापत्र पर हस्ताक्षर किए थे।

यहां यह स्पष्ट करना जरूरी है कि भारत में मानवाधिकार की अवधारणा उतनी ही पुरानी है जितनी कि इसकी सभ्यता और संस्कृति। हमारे ऋषि-मुनियों ने अपनी ऋचाओं में मानव अधिकार से भी एक कदम आगे बढ़ते हुए सभी जीव-जंतुओं के सुखी और स्वस्थ होने

**भारत में मानवाधिकार की अवधारणा उतनी ही पुरानी है जितनी कि इसकी सभ्यता और संस्कृति**

की कामना की है। सर्वे भवंतु सुखिनः सर्वे संतु निरामया। उन श्रेष्ठ जनों ने विश्व के सभी कोनों से आने वाले कल्याणकारी विचारों का स्वागत किया था। तुलसी के रामराज्य में तो बैर और विषमता का कोई स्थान ही नहीं था। कालानुक्रम में हमारी सनातन संस्कृति पर हमले हुए, उसे असंख्य घाव दिए गए। तब भी हमने पूरी मानव जाति की भलाई के लिए अपनी प्रार्थनाओं को विराम नहीं दिया। तब भी नहीं जब पश्चिमी और पूर्वी पाकिस्तान के रूप में दोनों बाहें हमसे अलग हो गईं। इसके विपरीत आजादी के बाद ही पश्चिमी पाकिस्तान और पूर्वी पाकिस्तान (आधुनिक बांग्लादेश) में रह गए हिंदुओं, सिखों सहित सभी अल्पसंख्यकों के मानवाधिकारों को सुनियोजित रूप से कुचला गया। न सिर्फ उनकी संपत्तियों को लूटा गया, बल्कि बड़ी संख्या में उनकी हत्याएं भी की गईं।



प्रकाश सिंह

**महिलाओं के खिलाफ होने वाले अपराधों के मामले में हम जब तक समस्या के कारणों का निवारण नहीं करेंगे तब तक हालात बदलने वाले नहीं हैं**

महिलाओं के खिलाफ बढ़ते अपराधों ने देश की अंतरात्मा को झकझोर दिया है। शायद ही कोई दिन ऐसा होता है, जब अखबार में दुष्कर्म की घटनाएं न छपती हों। हाल की कुछ जघन्य घटनाओं ने विशेष तौर पर देश का ध्यान खींचा है। हैदराबाद में एक महिला के साथ चार लोगों ने सामूहिक दुष्कर्म किया और बाद में उसे जिंदा जला दिया। उन्नाव में एक दुष्कर्म पीड़िता को जिंदा जला दिया गया। त्रिपुरा में एक लड़की को उसके प्रेमी और उसकी मां ने मिलकर जला दिया। वह अस्पताल पहुंचते ही मर गई। राजस्थान के टोंक जिले में एक छह साल की लड़की की दुष्कर्म के बाद हत्या कर दी गई। उसका शव स्कूल से ही आधा किलोमीटर दूर पाया गया। इन अपराधों और विशेष तौर से हैदराबाद और उन्नाव की घटना को लेकर जनमानस बुरी तरह उद्बेलित है। कानून-व्यवस्था के प्रति इतना असंतोष है कि लोगों ने पुलिस द्वारा हैदराबाद में दुष्कर्म के आरोपियों की मुठभेड़ में मौत पर खुशी जाहिर की। जानेमाने लोगों ने तेलंगाना पुलिस की प्रशंसा की। ऐसा होना खतरे की घंटी है। इससे स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि लोगों का वर्तमान क्रिमिनल जस्टिस सिस्टम से विश्वास उठ गया है। अन्य देशों में भी कुछ ऐसा ही वातावरण बन रहा है। स्पेन में एक महिला के साथ हूरा दुष्कर्म की वीडियो उसे दिखाकर उसकी प्रतिक्रिया टीवी चैनल पर दिखाई गई। इससे लोगों में भयंकर रोष हुआ। फलस्वरूप जेपेलिन टीवी कंपनी, जिसने शो दिखाया

था, को क्षमा मांगनी पड़ी। दक्षिण अमेरिका के चिली देश में महिलाओं के एक संगठन ला तेसिस की ओर से बनाया गया वीडियो-‘द रेपिस्ट इज यू’ चर्चा में है। चिली की राजधानी सैंटियागो में करीब 10 हजार महिलाओं ने काले कपड़े और लाल स्कार्फ पहन कर इस गाने को गाया। इसे सामूहिक रूप से मेक्सिको, पेरिस और बार्सिलोना में भी गाया गया।

वर्ल्ड हेल्थ ऑर्गनाइजेशन ने हाल में महिला अपराध पर एक अध्ययन प्रकाशित किया है जो ईस्टर्न मेडिटेरनियन हेल्थ जर्नल में छपा है। इसमें कहा गया है कि विश्व भर में महिलाएं भले ही वह किसी भी वर्ग या समाज की हों, किसी-न-किसी प्रकार की हिंसा का शिकार होती हैं। इस अध्ययन के अनुसार भविष्य में भी स्त्रियों की सुरक्षा एक चिंता का विषय रहेगा। भारत में दुष्कर्म के मामले बढ़ना एक गंभीर चिंता का विषय है। नारी को इस देश में हमेशा सम्मान की दृष्टि से देखा गया है। दुर्भाग्य से हमारे मूल्यों में इधर इतना हास हो गया है कि नारी को बहुत से लोग अब केवल उपभोग की सामग्री समझने लगे हैं। निर्भया कांड के बाद भारत सरकार ने जस्टिस जेफ्स वॉर्मा की अध्यक्षता में एक कमेटी गठित की थी। कमेटी ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में स्पष्ट रूप से लिखा था कि इन घटनाओं का सबसे बड़ा कारण है देश में सुशासन की कमी। क्यों कमेटी ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में 28 पृष्ठ का एक पूरा अध्याय पुलिस सुधार पर लिखा था। कमेटी ने राज्य सरकारों से आग्रह किया था कि वह पुलिस सुधार संबंधी



अवधेश राजाउत

सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देशों का तत्काल पालन करे। वर्मा कमेटी की यह सोच थी कि जब तक पुलिस में मूलभूत सुधार नहीं होंगे, तब तक वह महिला सुरक्षा या अन्य समस्याओं से निपटने के लिए सक्षम नहीं होगी। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने पुलिस सुधार को लेकर 2006 में आदेश निगत किए थे। 13 वर्ष बीत चुके हैं, परंतु राज्य सरकारों का रवैया आज भी नकारात्मक है। कागज पर दिखाने के लिए एंटी सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देशों का अनुपालन कर लिया है, परंतु अगर बारीकी से देखा जाए तो सारा अनुपालन फर्जी है। जर्मनी पर अभी भी कुछ नहीं बदला है। पुलिस की पुरानी लचर व्यवस्था चली आ रही है। ऐसा नहीं है कि सरकार ने कुछ नहीं किया है। गृह मंत्रालय ने समय-समय पर राज्य सरकारों को महिला सुरक्षा के बारे में निर्देश भेजे हैं। हाल में गृह सचिव ने सभी मुख्य सचिवों को एक पत्र रिपोर्ट में 28 पृष्ठ का एक पूरा अध्याय पुलिस सुधार पर लिखा था। कमेटी ने राज्य सरकारों से आग्रह किया था कि वह पुलिस सुधार संबंधी

ऑफेंसिव पोर्टल का प्रयोग करें, जिससे यह सुनिश्चित हो सके कि महिला संबंधी अपराधों की विवेचना दो महीनों में समाप्त हो। कानून मंत्री रविशंकर प्रसाद ने भी सभी राज्यों के मुख्यमंत्री और हाईकोर्ट के मुख्य न्यायाधीशों के लिए एंटी सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देशों का अनुपालन कर लिया है, परंतु अगर बारीकी से देखा जाए तो सारा अनुपालन फर्जी है। जर्मनी पर अभी भी कुछ नहीं बदला है। पुलिस की पुरानी लचर व्यवस्था चली आ रही है। ऐसा नहीं है कि सरकार ने कुछ नहीं किया है। गृह मंत्रालय ने समय-समय पर राज्य सरकारों को महिला सुरक्षा के बारे में निर्देश भेजे हैं। हाल में गृह सचिव ने सभी मुख्य सचिवों को एक पत्र रिपोर्ट में 28 पृष्ठ का एक पूरा अध्याय पुलिस सुधार पर लिखा था। कमेटी ने राज्य सरकारों से आग्रह किया था कि वह पुलिस सुधार संबंधी

महिलाओं के विरुद्ध अपराध के दो पहलू होते हैं। एक तो अपराध का होना और दूसरा अपराध होने के बाद प्रशासनिक/पुलिस कार्रवाई। आजकल अपराध के बाद के घटनाक्रम पर विशेष तौर से चर्चा होती है। जैसे कि पुलिस ने रिपोर्ट लिखने में कोताही की, पीड़िता को एक थाने से दूसरे थाने दौड़ना पड़ा, पुलिस ने पीड़िता को संरक्षण नहीं दिया, आरोपियों की स्थानीय नेताओं से साठगांठ थी।

## समान नागरिक संहिता में बेवजह की देरी

एक असें से विभिन्न स्तरों पर समान नागरिकता संहिता को लेकर चर्चा हो रही है। हाल में संविधान दिवस के अवसर पर यह मांग तेज हुई कि अब समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करने का समय आ गया है। इस मांग का कारण यह रहा कि 23 नवंबर, 1948 को लंबे बहस-मुवाहिसे के बाद संविधान में अनुच्छेद 44 को शामिल किया गया था। अनुच्छेद 44 यही कहता है कि भारत के सभी नागरिकों के लिए उनके धर्म , क्षेत्र, लिंग, भाषा आदि से ऊपर एक समान नागरिक कानून लागू किया जाए। संविधान सभा ने इसका निर्देश भी सरकार को दिया था। वैसे तो भारतीय नागरिकों के लिए एक समान कानून है, लेकिन उत्तराधिकार, विवाह, ललाक और बच्चों के संरक्षण के मामले में विभिन्न समुदायों के लिए अलग-अलग कानून हैं और वे नाईसामी पर टिके हैं। सरकारें आई और चली गईं, लेकिन किसी सरकार ने समान नागरिक संहिता का मसौदा तक तैयार करने की जहमत नहीं उठाई है। उन सरकारें ने भी ऐसा नहीं किया जिसके नेता समान नागरिक संहिता की पैरवी करते रहे। जब भी समान नागरिक संहिता का सवाल उठा उसे अल्पसंख्यक बनाम बहुसंख्यक की बहस और अन्य बेजा दलीलों से उलझा दिया गया। जो तबहस हुई भी उसका अंत हमेशा दोषारोपण के साथ हुआ।

यह समझने की जरूरत है कि यदि पारिवारिक कानून इंसाफ पसंद हों तो इसका सबसे अधिक लाभ महिलाओं को मिलेगा। आए दिन महिलाओं के खिलाफ होने वाली घटनाएं यही बताती हैं कि सभी समुदायों की महिलाओं के साथ किसी न किसी स्तर पर नाईसामी हो रही है। परिवार के भीतर महिला अधिकारों के सवाल को धार्मिक चिंताओं के दायरे से बाहर खींचकर एक मानवाधिकार के सवाल के रूप में स्थापित करना बेहद जरूरी है। मानवाधिकारों की सही रखा तभी संभव है जब समान नागरिकता संहिता लागू हो। अनुच्छेद 44 पर बहस के दौरान बाबा साहब आंबेडकर ने कहा था कि धर्म को इतना निस्तुत और व्यापक क्षेत्र क्यों दिया जाना चाहिए कि वह संपूर्ण जीवन पर कब्जा कर ले और विधायिका को इन क्षेत्रों में हस्तक्षेप करने से रोकें?

चूंकि धर्म पितृसत्तात्मक विचारधारा में गहरी जड़ें रखता है इसलिए स्त्री और पुरुष के बीच आधारभूत शक्ति असंतुलन पर चोट नहीं की जा सकती। राज्य बनाम समुदाय और समुदाय बनाम महिला का धुवीकरण तोड़ने की जरूरत है। तीन तलाक पर उठी बहस में हमने देखा



था कि महिलाओं को कमअक्ल और जच्चाती बताकर तीन तलाक को बनाए रखने के लिए धर्मगुरु किस तरह दलीलें पेश कर रहे थे। वे मुस्लिम महिलाओं को हमारी औलतें बता रहे थे। कुछ ऐसा ही रवैया 1955 में हिंदू कोड बिल के समय दिखाया गया था। इस कानून के विरोध में अजीब-अजीब तर्क दिए जा रहे थे। किसी ने कहा कि यह पूरे हिंदू समाज के ढांचे को ध्वस्त करने की साजिश है तो किसी ने कहा कि परिवार में स्त्री और पुरुष की भूमिकाएं और जावबदेही अलग-अलग हैं, इसलिए दोनों को समान अधिकार देने का कोई औचित्य ही नहीं।

कोई भी समुदाय हो, उसकी महिलाएं उस समुदाय के पुरुषों के लिए भेड़-बकरीयां नहीं होतीं। मुश्किल यह है कि पुरुष चरवाहे की तरह धर्म के डंडे के सहारे उन्हें हंकना चाहते हैं। समान नागरिक संहिता पर अब तक महिला आंदोलन के बाहर जो भी बहस हुई है वह धार्मिक पहचान के संकेत, वोट की राजनीति, तुट्टीकरण के इर्द-गिर्द ही घूमती रही है। अफसोस की बात यह रही कि जिसके न्याय के लिए यह बहस प्रारंभ हुई वह यानी महिला ही उसके केंद्र से गायब रही। समान संहिता की जरूरत को न्याय से नहीं जोड़ा गया। कभी यह बहस अल्पसंख्यक वोटों की गोलबंदी करती नजर आती रही तो कभी वोटों को लिए बहुसंख्यक समुदाय की भावनाओं को धुनाती हुई। समझना

कठिन है कि समान नागरिक संहिता की बहस में धर्मगुरु क्यों कूद पड़ते हैं? पता नहीं वे किस आधार पर समान नागरिक संहिता को धर्म में छेड़छाड़ बताने लगते हैं? इसका नतीजा यह होता है कि हम समाधान की ओर नहीं बढ़ पाते। देश की दो बड़ी सियासी पार्टियों कांग्रेस और बाजपा, दोनों ने इस मुद्दे को सांप्रदायिक रंग ही अधिक दिया है। लैंगिक समानता पर आधारित एक समान संहिता बने, यह महिला आंदोलन की एक पुरानी मांग है। ऐसी किसी संहिता के अभाव में उन महिलाओं के सामने कोई रास्ता नहीं बचता जो भेदभावपूर्ण पारिवारिक कानूनों की जकड़न से ग्रस्त हैं।

समान नागरिक संहिता तैयार करना न तो किसी धार्मिक पहचान पर आक्रमण है न ही इससे किसी तरह का कोई नुकसान है। इसे टच भी नॉट बना कर देखाना गलत है। गौर कीजिए, सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने एक नहीं अनेक मौकों पर समान नागरिक संहिता की वकालत की है। 1985 में शाहबानों के केस में भी सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कहा था कि यह दुख का विषय है कि हमारे संविधान का अनुच्छेद 44 मृत होकर रह गया है। इसके बाद 1995 में सरला मुद्गल केस में भी सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने पूछा था कि संविधान के अनुच्छेद 44 के लिए संविधान निर्माताओं की इच्छा को पूरा करने में सरकार को अभी कितना और समय लगेगा? 2003 में जॉन बलवन्तम केस में सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने फिर कहा कि यह दुख की बात है कि संविधान के अनुच्छेद 44 को अभी तक लागू नहीं किया गया। 2017 में भी शीर्ष अदालत में यह मुद्दा उठा। इसके अलावा भी सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कई बार यह सवाल उठाया कि अभी तक सरकार की ओर से समान नागरिक संहिता को लेकर कोई प्रयास क्यों नहीं किया गया? इसके विरोध में तर्क देने वाले लोग हमेशा अनुच्छेद 25 अर्थात धार्मिक आजादी का सवाल उठाते हैं, लेकिन उसी में दर्ज है कि कुप्रथा और भेदभाव को धार्मिक आजादी नहीं माना जा सकता। ऐसा कानून बनाने की मांग एक जायज मांग है जो न्याय को धार्मिक मान्यताओं के आधार पर नहीं, बल्कि भारत के नागरिकों के हितों को ध्यान में रखकर परिभाषित करे। न्याय वही है जो धार्मिक संदर्भ देखे बिना मानवीय आधार पर हो सके। लैंगिक समानता पर आधारित समान नागरिक संहिता के सवाल पर देश में बहस इस इशदे की जानी चाहिए ताकि महिलाओं को भेदभाव से मुक्ति मिल सके।

(लेखिका महिला अधिकार कार्यकर्ता हैं)

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### मेलबाक्स

घोषित करना चाहती है। ऐसे में इन गैर भारतीयों को अन्य नागरिक सुविधाओं से वंचित होकर अपने वोट डालने के अवैध अधिकार से भी वंचित होना पड़ेगा।

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### मौत का जिम्मेदार कौन

दिल्ली के फ़िल्मिस्तान के पास अनाज मंडी में हुए अग्निकांड में बड़ी संख्या में लोगों की मौत के लिए आखिर जिम्मेदार कौन है? वे लोग जो वहां कारोबार कर रहे थे अथवा सरकार जिसने तंग इलाकों में चल रहे कारोबार पर कोई रोक नहीं लगाई? शायद दोनों ही जिम्मेदार हैं। लेकिन इसका खामियाजा तो निर्दोष काम करने वाले लोगों को भुगतना पड़ा। उनका कसूर यही था कि वे अपनी रेजी गेटों के लिए जान जोखिम में डालकर ऐसे इलाकों में काम कर रहे थे। दिल्ली के विभिन्न इलाकों की तंग गलियों में ऐसे ही हाल हैं। कोई घटना होने के बाद प्रशासन जगता है, फिर वहीं स्थिति बन जाती है। इसका स्थायी समाधान होना चाहिए।

बालकृष्ण अमरसिया, दिल्ली

### पुख्ता इंतजाम हों

दिल्ली के रानी झांसी रोड स्थित अनाज मंडी इलाके की एक बिल्डिंग में अनेक लोगों का अग्नि तांडव में काल कवलित हो जाना मानवता के लिए बहुत बड़ी क्षति है। इसमें लापरवाही बरतने वाले कठोर दंड के भागीदार हैं। साथ ही शासन प्रशासन की उन नीतियों पर भी प्रश्नचिन्ह है जिनके चलते ऐसी फैक्ट्रियों में अवैध धंधे चल रहे हैं,

ऐसी चर्चा के बीच न्याय प्रक्रिया वर्षों तक चलती रहती है और इसका ठिकाना नहीं रहता कि दंड कब मिलेगा? अपराध होते क्यों हैं, इस पर गंभीरता से कोई नहीं सोचता। जब तक हम समस्या की जड़ में नहीं जाएंगे तब तक वह सिलसिला इसी तरह चलता रहेगा। हमें मूल्य और संस्कार मुख्य रूप से दो स्तर पर मिलते हैं। पहले तो परिवार में और बाद में शिक्षण संस्थानों में। आज परिवार में न तो माता-पिता अपनी जिम्मेदारी निभा रहे हैं और न ही स्कूल कॉलेज में अध्यापक गण। मूल्यों का सर्वेय अभाव है। माता-पिता चाहते हैं कि लड़का अच्छे स्कूल में जाए, अच्छे नंबर से पास हो और उसकी अच्छी नौकरी लग जाए। वह लायक बने, अच्छा नागरिक हो, देशभक्त हो, ऐसी कोई शिक्षा नहीं दी जाती। शिक्षण संस्थानों की आजकल जो दुर्गति है, सभी को मालूम है। व्यावसायिक दृष्टिकोण से सारा वातावरण व्याप्त है। और आगे बढ़ें तो हम देखेंगे कि राजनीति में आपाधिक पृष्ठभूमि के लोगों का प्रतिनिधित्व बढ़ता जा रहा है।

यह सब हमारी भावी पीढ़ियों के लिए प्रेरणादायक नहीं है। सबसे ज्यादा गदर मंचा रहती है इंटरनेट पर अपलख अश्लीलता ने। सरकार को इसे रोकने या कम-से-कम इस पर अंकुश लगाने के बारे में सोचना चाहिए। हाल में एक खबर आई कि पटना स्टेशन पर फाई-फाई मुरत हो गया है। नतीजतन अधिकांश लोग पोर्नोग्राफी देख रहे थे। इनसे आप क्या उम्मीद करते हैं। क्या ये माला जपेंगे? एक तरफ हम ज्वलनशील पदार्थ इकट्ठा करते हैं और दूसरी तरफ चिल्लाते हैं, ‘आग लगी है, आग लगी है।’ इसे संकुचित सोच नहीं तो और क्या कहेंगे। महाभारत में तो केवल एक द्रौपदी रो रही थी, आज हजारों द्रौपदियां भयभीत होकर रो रही हैं।

(लेखक उत्तर प्रदेश एवं असम के पुलिस महानिदेशक रह चुके हैं)

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नारी-सम्मान

एक बार किसी ने आदिगुरु शंकराचार्य से एक व्यक्ति का नाम लेकर कहा था कि वे आपके लिए अमर्यादित शब्दों का प्रयोग कर रहे थे। इस पर आदिगुरु ने कहा- ‘नहीं नहीं, ये मेरे लिए अपशब्दों को प्रयोग नहीं कर रहे थे, क्योंकि यदि मेरे पंचभूत शरीर के लिए कुछ कह रहे थे तो यह तो निर्दनीय है ही। इसके अंदर गंदगी ही भरी है और यदि इसमें विद्यमान आत्मा की निंदा कर रहे थे तो जो ईश्वरीय अंश मुझमें है वही सब मैं हूँ।’ यदि इस प्रकार का विवेक किसी में जागृत हो जाए तो फिर उसे दुनिया की कोई ताकत प्रभावित नहीं कर सकती, क्योंकि दैहिक आकर्षण में कितने बर्बाद हो जाते हैं।

धर्मशोध में कामदेव द्वारा बाण चलाते का प्रसंग आता है। जब कामदेव ने महादेव की तपस्या रूपी विवेक को ध्वस्त करने के लिए बाण चलाया तो महादेव ने कामदेव के बाण को ध्वस्त कर दिया, लेकिन गोस्वामी तुलसीदास लिखते हैं कि कामदेव के बाण चलते ही पूरी सृष्टि काममय हो गई। कामदेव के बाण से जो तरंग निकलीं, उसकी चोट में सब आ गए। तब धार्मिक कथा को वर्तमान संदर्भ में देखा जाए तो तमाम इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों से काम-धारा ही नहीं, अश्लीलता की तरंगें वायुमंडल में प्रवाहित हो रही हैं और उसकी चोट में विभिन्न आयु वर्ग के लोग आ रहे हैं। लिहाजा जिस देश ने नारी की पूजा को सर्वश्रेष्ठ बताया और जहां नारी सम्मान होता है वहां देवताओं का वास बताया गया, उस देश में आए दिन नारी मर्यादा के चीरहरण की घटनाएं हो रही हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में परिवार का दायित्व बढ़ जाता है कि मर्यादा के लिए परिवारी श सज्जन हों। वर्तमान भौतिकवादी युग में घर के जिम्मेदार लोग सुबह उठने से लेकर रात सोने तक पैसे के पीछे भाग रहे हैं। घर के सदस्यों में तादात्म्य नहीं बन पा रहा है। चतुर्दिक आर सम्मान पर आघात पहुंच रहा है।

अतः इस पर रोकथाम के लिए घर के वरिष्ठ लोग कनिष्ठ सदस्यों को नैतिक शिक्षा दें, तभी देश, समाज और परिवार की मर्यादा बनी रहेगी। भारत को विश्व में श्रेष्ठ रहना है तो नारी सम्मान को वरीयता देनी ही होगी।

कामदेव पांडेय

जहां पर सुरक्षा के इंतजाम नाकाफी होते हैं। ऐसी दुर्घटना की पुनरावृत्ति ना हो इसके लिए प्रशासन को पुख्ता इंतजाम करने चाहिए।

युगल किशोर शर्मा, खांबी, फरीदाबाद

### गलत वेवसाइट पर रोक लगे

आजकल सोशल मीडिया का बहुत जोर है। हर कोई इस पर सक्रिय है। यह हमारे लिए कुछ मामलों में फायदेमंद है, लेकिन कुछ से नुकसानदायक भी। इसके जरिये हम अपनी यादें एक दूसरे से बात करके हैं। लेकिन देखने में आ रहा है कि इसका दुरुपयोग ज्यादा हो रहा है। इसमें बहुत सी गलत जानकारी भी डाली जा रही है। बच्चे-बड़े सभी इसमें व्यस्त रहते हैं। परिवार में साथ बैठे सदस्य भी एक दूसरे से बात करने के बजाय मोबाइल में उलझे रहते हैं। इससे जहां लोगों में दूरी बन रही है, वहीं मोबाइल के अधिक इस्तेमाल से तमाम मानसिक बीमारियों का खतरा बढ़ रहा है। बच्चे ज्यादातर गलत वेवसाइट का इस्तेमाल करते हैं। सरकार को चाहिए कि ऐसे गलत वेवसाइट पर रोक लगाए।

मो. जमील, नई दिल्ली

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

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