Thee-cartipping point

While China is eyeing an ambitious target for EVs by 2025, India is opting a more gradual transition



VANDANA GOMBAR

hina is looking at significantly more ambitious targets for electric vehicles. It wants 25 per cent of cars sold in the country to be electric by 2025, according to a draft policy published by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology last week. The current share is just about 5 per cent, though China is the largest electric vehicle market in the world.

The three barriers to wider adoption of electric vehicles — price, range (on single charge) and charging infrastructure — are being gradually whittled down, as battery prices keep sliding lower. Battery prices are down to \$156 per kilowatt hour, according to BloombergNEF's latest Battery Price Survey, from above \$1,100 in 2010. The price is seen falling to around \$100 per kilowatt hour by 2023 — the point at which electric vehicles will start to reach parity with internal combustion engine vehicles.

Meanwhile, exciting new electric models continue to be unveiled: Tesla showcased its electric pickup dubbed "cybertruck" last month. The \$39,900 truck can be booked with a deposit of \$100, though production is slated for

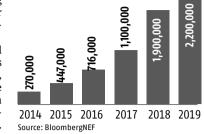
Some car makers such as Toyota and Hyundai are embedding solar panels in the roof and body of the vehicle, adding a few kilometers to the range of the solar car in what is being referred to as vehicle-integrated PV, or ViPV.

In India, MG Motor, the British brand also known as Morris Garages that is now owned by China's SAIC Motor, unveiled an electric sport-utility vehicle last week. The price has not yet been announced, though it was earlier indicated that it could be about ₹2.5 million. One of the features of the car is a builtin air purifier. It will be competing with Hyundai's Kona electric car model, launched earlier this year.

The tipping point price in India for an electric vehicle is likely to be below



GLOBAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE SALES



₹10 lakh or ₹1 million, Rajeev Chaba, president of MG Motor India said in an interview to Business Standard. Tipping points are driven by technology and policy. Indian policymakers are, however, yet to finalise how aggressive, if at all, they want to be in this space.

There are now seven million electric vehicles on the road globally. Sales this year are seen at 2.2 million, with China accounting for over half of the market. Digital ride hailing companies like Uber and Ola are increasing the share of electric vehicles in their fleets, and there are hundreds of models of electric vehicles set to be in the market soon. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure is expanding. Seeing the shift to electric, companies are signing long-term contracts to secure battery supply — BMW has placed \$11 billion worth of orders with Contemporary Amperex Technologies Co and with Samsung SDI, to secure battery supply for its electric vehicles out to 2031.

As many as 43 governments have announced plans to phase out combustion vehicle sales. India did too, only to backtrack and opt for a more gradual transition to electric mobility, with support tilting towards public transport vehicles, and charging infrastructure.

The author is editor, global policy, BloombergNEF: vgombar@bloomberg.net

Could consumption really have fallen?

The leaked NSS consumption numbers have provoked a debate. While arguments by various sides are not really convincing there are some broad lessons

JOSH FELMAN, JUSTIN SANDEFUR, ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN & JULIAN DUGGAN

¬ he National Sample Survey (NSS) consumption numbers that were recently leaked have provoked a storm of debate. Some argue that they reveal the truth about the economy, while others claim the numbers are seriously misleading. Where do we stand? In our view, both arguments are extreme.

Commentators on one side have claimed that the new numbers - showing that real per capita consumption declined between 2011-12 and 2017-18 prove that the economy did not grow at 7 per cent, as the GDP numbers for the period proclaim. And the fact that the survey was taken in 2017-18, the year after demonetisation and the year of GST implementation, is invoked as evidence that these policies severely affected consumption.

On the other side are those who believe the official GDP numbers are correct, and the consumption numbers are implausible. Some argue that the NSS numbers suffer from survey-related problems, such as false reporting to the enumerators (Swaminathan Aiyar). Others point out that the NSS numbers account for only a fraction of consumption — and a rapidly declining one — in the national income accounts (Surjit

All of these arguments have merit. But none are fully convincing. Consider first the defenders of the official national accounts. Without doubt, survey respondents are not entirely truthful, but unless it can be shown that this problem has worsened over time, then comparisons between periods — that is, the consumption growth rate — should still be reasonably accurate. And to use the latest national income accounts as a bench-

mark to make assessments about the NSS numbers is problematic given that the CSO has difficulty estimating consumption, and there are known problems with the post-2011-12 national income accounts (NIA).

What, then, of the arguments on the other side, that the NSS numbers reveal the truth about growth? We have argued elsewhere that the official figures have indeed been overstating GDP growth. But that does not automatically imply that the NSS numbers are reasonable. We need to consider the evidence carefully.

Start by considering the broad direction suggested by the NSS estimates, namely that consumption growth has slowed. This indeed seems likely. The figure below compares various consumption growth estimates for the latest rounds (2011/12 to 2017/18) with those of the previous rounds (2004/5 to 2001/12). Most of the estimates slow sharply, in line with the deceleration in the macro-indicators, such as the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), exports, and imports. Note, however, that the NIA estimate moves in the "wrong direction" - another piece of evidence that NIA methodologies are problematic. But does this mean the NSS figures are reasonable?

Consider the figure again, focusing on the indicators for the latest period. At the high end is the consumption from the NIA, showing real consumption growth of over 7 per cent per year. At the other extreme is the NSS number of just 1 per cent real growth per annum, once corrections are made for deflators, per capita numbers are converted into total numbers, and rural and urban data are aggregated into an economy-wide number.

In between the NIA and the NSS estimates is the growth in the IIP for consumer goods, which averaged 4.8 per cent. The IIP doesn't quite measure con-

CONSUMPTION GROWTH Consumer goods NSS consumption** 2004/05-'11-12 2011/12-'17-18

estimates of GDP growth, assuming 75% of discrepancy with official GDP figures is due to consumption growth ** The positive rate of 1% growth in total consumption here differs from the -3.7% growth in per capita consumption reported in the press due to allowance for population growth. Note that 2004/05–11/12 growth rates are based on the URP method, while 2011/12–17/18 rates are based on the MMRP

sumption, because it captures production, excludes consumer services, and is a volume number. But it is typically a good proxy, since consumer goods production and consumption tend to increase at similar rates.

We can derive another consumption growth estimate, which attempts to take into account the CSO's methodological problems. To do this, we first replace the official GDP growth rate every year by 4.5 per cent, the average growth estimated by Subramanian (2019a and 2019b). We then allocate the implied reduction in GDP to private consumption and investment, assuming that other components of GDP such as exports, imports, and government consumption are well measured.

It turns out that even if we attribute

75 per cent of the reduced GDP growth to (reduced) consumption, annual consumption growth in the national accounts would still be 3.7 per cent, well above the NSS estimate. (Even if we shaved this figure further, in line with the World Bank's assumption that only about 2/3rds of the consumption growth from the national income is passed on to NSS consumption growth, the implied numbers would still be well above the latest NSS estimate.)

Furthermore, consider the timing of the NSS Survey. Far from being a bad year. 2017-18 was one of the few years when the economy did well, reflected in almost every indicator of economic activity. Growth in non-oil exports and non-oil imports surged; the IIP of consumer and capital goods rebounded sharply, as did capacity utilization in manufacturing. This was not just confined to the urban, formal sector: agricultural output and a rough measure of agricultural income show that 2017-18 was a year of recovery for rural India, as well. So it stands to reason that consumption growth would be reasonable, not feeble, as the NSS figures imply.

In sum, the NSS figure for consumption growth appears implausible when judged against other indicators. But so does the NIA figure. The reality probably lies somewhere in between: consumption was better than implied by the NSS figures, but not quite as good as that implied by the NIA.

There are some broad lessons here. To begin with, one should be careful about making strong statements about consumption based on the NSS or the NIA figures. Neither the dire conclusions on poverty developments drawn by the critics nor optimism about the earlier state of the economy promoted by the cheerleaders seems warranted.

All that said, the new data should be released. Of that there should be no doubt. There is surely much to be learned from the details revealed by the Survey. and all of us should be open to revising our priors depending on what they reveal. At a minimum, analysis of the underlying data could help us to identify the deficiencies in the surveys so that measurement can be improved going forward. And improving the measurement of the economy — to provide a more reliable basis for policy formulation — is the one thing that should be beyond debate.

Felman is former IMF resident representative to India: Sandefur and Duggan are with the Center for Global Development; $Subramanian \, was former \, chiefe conomic$ adviser to the government of India (A more detailed version with data and code underlying the piece is available at: https://www.cgdev.org/blog/indiasconsumption-really-falling)

CHINESE WHISPERS

Another weight loss plan



Parliament on Tuesday organised a

lecture on "effortless weight loss and diabetes prevention" for members. An advisory to MPs said that it was in "consonance with the Fit India programme". The MPs were addressed by Dr J V Dixit, who highlighted "treatment/techniques for effortless weight loss, obesity, diabetes, anaemia and migraine," the advisory said. Some members who attended the lecture including Bharativa Janata Party's CR Patil said they have benefitted from Dixit's "two-meals-a-day diet plan". Dixit's diet plan is quite popular in Maharashtra, and quite the rage on social media but it has also faced criticism from experts that it is not supported by scientific evidence. At an event last year, Nationalist Congress Party's Supriya Sule had said all Maharashtrian weddings had a time slot during dinner for those who followed the Dixit diet plan.

Battle for state leadership

Has former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's sudden activism got anything to do with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s search for a new state unit president? He recently courted arrest along with some farmer leaders protesting the urea crisis. Then he sat on dharna seeking justice for a rape victim. Some read that as an effort to convey to the party leadership at the centre that Madhya Pradesh needs a firebrand president. On his part, current state BJP president Rakesh Singh has been keeping a low profile. As things stand, the state unit seems divided into two groups. While one is rooting for Chouhan, the other is batting for Singh.

Impatient aspirants

With the Delhi Assembly election just months away, there's a mad scramble among local leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and municipal councillors in Delhi to solicit party tickets. Things came to such a pass that a senior party functionary had to step in and tick off councillors for lobbying for tickets they were told "deserving candidates" would make the cut without much trouble. The party's sanyojaks (convenor) and vistaraks (membership drive in charges) from each constituency were also told to first resign from their organisational posts before throwing their hats into the ring. That was not enough to hold back hopefuls from flocking outside the offices of the various "power centres".

INSIGHT

From shareholders to stakeholders

In part I of a series, the authors discuss evolution of the environmental consciousness of companies



UK SINHA & SAPARYA SOOD

ll over the world, business corporations are being made to move beyond immediate financial performance and exhibit their commitment towards addressing environmental, social and governance issues (ESG). The environmental consciousness of companies has evolved over three stages. It has its roots in the momentum created by various international agreements and alliances. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (2006) highlighted the role of business corporations in protecting the environment. The UN Principles of Responsible Investment (UNPRI) and the adoption of the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), have made environmental issues a pivotal concern for corporations. This was followed by the report of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) formed by the Financial Stability Board.

This wave has hit the Indian regulatory framework as well. The new thinking which has emerged is the consensus

that the interest of shareholders has to be taken care of for a longer and sustainable period not just from quarter to quarter. The emphasis has also broadened from shareholders to stakeholders including employees, customers and the community at large. The changes have been brought about often through voluntary guidelines and making them mandatory after a while. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) in 2011 formulated the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Business which had a Business Responsibility (BR) Reporting format. In 2012, SEBI mandated the inclusion of the BR reports in the annual reports for top 100 listed companies and then extended this requirement for 500 listed companies in 2017. Non-compliance or providing misleading or factually wrong report can invite penal action. The second wave that has emerged is

the pressure from institutional investors such as pension funds, insurance companies and mutual funds. The concept of stewardship first brought out in UK has also taken roots. Being under pressure from their own investors there has been a quantum improvement in the focus of these large investors, these funds have sharpened their focus towards environmental Companies are being forced to improve their environment practices, report these and be prepared for peer comparisons. Shareholder are abandoning companies where, in spite of decent financial performance, the track record on environmental issues is poor. As per a report by Arabella Advisors in 2018, investors

with \$6.2 trillion in assets under man-

agement have been committed to divest from fossil fuels, up from \$5.2 trillion in the previous report in 2016.

According to the Global Sustainable Investment Alliance, at the start of 2016, more than a quarter of money, \$22.89 trillion, managed around the world is now invested with ESG factors in mind. There is strong research evidence that ESG investing can deliver better returns since companies with strong sustainability scores demonstrate consistent operational performance and are less susceptible to economic exigencies. For instance, the 35-member MSCI India ESG Leaders Index, providing exposure to companies with high ESG performance relative to their sector peers, has outperformed the 78-member MSCI Index over a long-term period from September 2007 to January 2019. The Morningstar India Sustainability Index has returned 14.8 per cent from 2012 to 2016, compared to 13.7 per cent for the Morningstar India Index.

Further, Investors are having intensive dialogue with companies to push them down the path of aligning their business practices with ESG criteria. According to ISS Corporate Solutions, a unit of Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS), a proxy advisory firm, nearly half of all environmental-related proposals were withdrawn in advance of 2019 meetings, compared with 33 per cent two years ago. Another driver of this wave are the socially conscious millennial investors. As per a Morgan Stanley study, millennial investors are nearly twice as likely to invest in companies or funds that target specific social or environmental outcomes.

The third and the most recent wave

is the realization on the parts of business corporation themselves that it make sense for them to be conscious and take advance action rather than being penalised by authorities or pushed by investors. In August 2019, the Business Roundtable in United States -- comprising 181 CEOs of the world's largest companies -- adopted a new approach to defining the purpose of a corporation to create value for all stakeholders and not just shareholders. This is the first time corporates have stepped up to steer the discourse on business responsibility towards the environment and society. 2.138 companies from 145 countries, representing \$36.6 trillion in revenue are taking climate actions recorded on Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA) maintained and operated by UNFCCC.

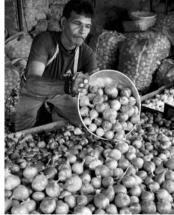
The path ahead of Indian corporates is clear -- adopt a sustainability oriented mindset to steer the company towards being conscious of the interests of all stakeholders. With rising levels of natural calamities and the sale of air purifiers shooting up as the residents of Delhi struggle to breathe in the city's highly polluted environment, the alarm bells are ringing loud and clear. Addressing environmental concerns is going to be a determinative factor in the sustenance of a company. The truth in Greta Thunberg's words at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in September cannot be ignored any more: "... The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.'

Tomorrow: The 'social' aspect of ESG

Sinha is senior advisor & Sood is associate, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas

LETTERS

Lame excuse



This refers to "Birthday gift' (December 10). It was quite interesting to learn that a party leader and Puducherry Chief Minister V Naravanasamy chose the occasion of the birthday celebrations of Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi to protest against the centre's failure to control the price of the staple. He not only gifted packs of onion to women workers of the party but many passers-by also. It would have been more effective if he had sent a pack or two to Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan to bring home his point. Needless to say, the government's fail- Fax: (011) 23720201 ure to properly visualise the emerging E-mail: letters@bsmail.in situation post onion crop failure and All letters must have a postal address and its inability to rise to the occasion well

in time has led to the messy situation both on the supply and on the price side. Sadly, there has been no honest admission of the failure till date. All that we find at ground zero are some lame excuses.

SK Gupta New Delhi

Practise what you preach

This refers to "No room for nations biased against Indian firms: Goyal" (December 10). While it is only fair for commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal to demand reciprocity in doing business, our nationalist sentiments should not blind us to the reality. Indian companies wishing to do business abroad must meet internationally accepted standards and have the ability/capacity to adhere to the laws as well as the regulatory requirements in those countries. We must accept that just as our government and regulators do due diligence and demand adherence to our laws and regulations, there are similar requirements in other countries. We can't go around picking holes in the laws/regulations of other countries

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg New Delhi 110 002

telephone number



MUMBAI | WEDNESDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2019

Simplify I-T structure

That's the way to go for improving tax base, compliance

inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman hinted last week that the government was considering lowering and rationalising personal income tax rates, among other measures, to boost economic growth, which slowed to 4.5 per cent in the second quarter of the current fiscal year. There are a variety of reasons why the government should revisit and rationalise income tax in the forthcoming Union Budget. For one, it would be a logical step after the reduction in corporate tax rates earlier this year, and would help take the process of direct tax reforms forward. The simplification of the tax structure has a better chance of improving collections in the medium- to long-run. Second, this will provide an opportunity to rationalise taxes for different category of taxpayers and remove distortions.

For instance, the late Arun Jaitley highlighted in his 2018 Budget speech that in the assessment year 2016-17, salaried individuals on an average paid ₹76,306 as income tax, while the average for individual business taxpayers, including professionals, was ₹25,753. Even at the aggregate level, collection from salaried individuals was roughly about thrice the amount of income tax paid by individual business taxpayers and professionals. Third, lowering tax rates for individual taxpayers is expected to increase their disposable income and help boost consumption, though the impact on the overall economic activity could be limited because of the small

The government, though, would have done well to release the report of the task force that reviewed the direct tax laws. This would have enabled a more informed public debate on the issue and, consequently, placed the government in a much better position to take the reforms process forward. At a broader level, while the idea of rationalising individual income tax rates needs to be welcomed, it is important to note that the government is in a difficult position in terms of revenue collection and will need to strike a fine balance. A sharp reduction in rates can adversely affect revenues and further weaken the government's fiscal position. Most analysts believe that it will be almost impossible for the government to contain the fiscal deficit under the target of 3.3 per cent of gross domestic product in the current year. Since the economy is unlikely to witness a sharp recovery in the near term, revenue collection in the next financial year could also remain under pressure.

The focus should, therefore, be on removing distortions and rationalising exemptions, along with tax rates, to minimise the impact on revenue mobilisation. In the July Budget, for instance, the government raised the surcharge for "superrich" taxpayers, which further complicated the income tax structure. Such measures should be avoided. A significant increase in tax rates, even for a small group of individual taxpayers, raises the possibility of evasion. While there is no certainty of an income tax cut translating into more spending as during tough times the tendency is to save more, a simpler regime with reasonable tax rates can be expected to help improve compliance and increase the base. Meanwhile, the government should also work on building institutional capacity in the tax department with better use of technology to check evasion. This will help improve revenue mobilisation and reduce the burden on honest taxpayers in a more sustainable manner.

Dope and hope

There are many loopholes in WADA's Russia ban

t first glance, the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA's) dramatic fouryear ban on Russia from participating in major sporting events such as the 2020 Olympics appears to be an appropriately draconian act following revelations of a state-sponsored doping programme for its athletes. A closer inspection, however, suggests that the country could well escape the punitive intent of the ban with plenty of help from world sporting bodies. The discoveries that led up to the ban following long months of investigations — chiefly thanks to information from a whistleblower, a former senior official in the programme have been shocking. For instance, for the 2014 Winter Olympics held in Sochi in southern Russia, the Federal Security Service developed a way to reopen sample bottles to replace tainted urine samples. Some years before that, athletes were administered a cocktail of banned performance enhancing drugs in alcohol (apparently to mask their presence).

Going forward, though, the proof of the efficacy of this ban lies in how well it is enforced. But the escape clauses appear to be ready at hand. Many commentators have pointed out that the ban isn't "total". Russian athletes who can prove that they are "clean" will be allowed to compete in global events in their "individual" capacity. Thus, for instance, Russia was officially banned from the Pyeongchang winter games in 2018 but 168 of them competed on this basis. The team called "Olympic Athletes from Russia" even won Gold in the men's ice hockey event. WADA is yet to provide a credible explanation as to how an individual athlete can be considered distinct from the sports administration of the country she represents. The Russian football team will be permitted to compete in the Euro 2020, Russia being one of the 12 host countries for a group stage match and a quarter-final. The loophole FIFA, world football's governing body, has exploited is that the European Championship is a regional, not a global, tournament and, therefore, outside the purview of the WADA ban. To understand the real reason for FIFA's unwarranted benevolence, follow the money: Russian oligarchs are big spenders in European football clubs.

WADA's partial punishment in the face of incontrovertible evidence offers a $compelling \, explanation \, as \, to \, why \, doping \, remains \, rampant \, in \, world \, sports \, -- \, espe$ cially those of the "higher, faster, stronger" variety. The regular breaching of Olympic records by athletes with unnaturally bulked up muscles generate lingering suspicions (though some muscle enhancing drugs are legally permitted). Too many leading sportspeople — from Ben Johnson to Petr Korda and Lance Armstrong to Maria Sharapova — have been caught in the doping net to allay qualms about the rampant use of banned performance enhancers in international sports. The fact that many Indian athletes follow similar regimens is an open secret to anyone who has visited the training facilities in Patiala; if they escape the noose, it's largely because they rarely achieve great success. Though doping was banned only from the late 1960s (and steroids were banned only in 1991), poor detection methods made it possible for athletes to evade detection. Steady improvements in technology — such as those that enable testing older samples — have enabled WADA to tighten the noose. But such is the power of global corporate money in world sports that the organisation continues to regulate with as light a hand as feasibly possible. In the long run, such realism will detract from a vibrant, growing sports business.



The legitimisation of vengeance

SHYAM SARAN

Instead of promoting the rule of law, the killing of rape suspects in Hyderabad sets a reprehensible precedent

midst the vulgar outpouring of accolades for the Hyderabad Police killing four rape suspects in an "encounter", it was reassuring to hear the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India sounding a note of caution. While acknowledging the need for swift and efficient justice, he said: "But I don't think justice can ever be or ought to be instant and justice must never ever take the form of revenge.

I believe justice loses its character of iustice if it becomes revenge."

Put this alongside the statement reportedly made by the Telangana Chief Minister, K Chandrasekhar Rao, who claimed that the encounter is a "message for the entire country." He justified the encounter killing by pointing to "pressure for immediate action". It was doubtful, he said, if justice would have been served through courts since the "Indian judicial process will go on forever.' The Telangana government, far from

distancing itself from this illegal act, publicly took credit for it even suggesting that the encounter killing had the sanction of the state political leadership. Even the pretence of this being a case of security forces firing in self-defence has been abandoned. The criminal justice system has to be made more responsive and policing of our streets must be made more effective, but to avoid the hard work and urgent reforms this requires in favour of arbitrary dispensation of punishment is reprehensible and dangerous. Those who belittle the criminal justice system are themselves responsible for its infirmities. In 2006, the Supreme Court had directed the central and state governments to "set up authorities to lay down guidelines for police functioning, evaluate police performance, decide postings and transfers and receive complaints of police misconduct." These directives remain a dead letter. Politicians regard the police as instruments of patronage and for targeting rivals. There has been a steady erosion

of professionalism and a sense of public service not only among the police but in the governance system in general.

India has one of the lowest density of police personnel in relation to its population. The sanctioned strength is 181 per 100,000 but the actual number in place is 137. The UN norm is 222. The quality of personnel is poor and declining. In Telangana, where the hor rifying rape and killing occurred, the vacancy rate is 26 per cent against the national rate of 24 per

cent. And political leaders who are screaming the loudest about protecting our women go around with a security complement which often run into hundreds. This includes several Members of Parliament who have cases of rape and murder pending against them. Should they be subjected to summary justice on grounds that the "Indian judicial process will go on forever"?

Instead of improving public security and enforce ing laws, public anger is sought to be assuaged by resorting to deliberate and arbitrary killing of suspects, throwing all legal norms by the wayside. Once such conduct becomes legitimate through political and popular sanction, then the ordinary citizen will have no defences left. It is argued that in this case the guilt of the suspects was not in question. Be that as it may, they should not have been deprived of their right to life without due process. A dangerous precedent is being set, which exposes all the citizens of this country to the arbitrary violation of their constitutional rights. This is a fit enough case for the Supreme Court to take suo motu cognisance and bring to justice those involved in the encounter killings and the political leaders who self-professedly instigated it.

Popular sentiment and public outrage are cited to somehow justify recourse to instant and drastic "justice." This is opening the door to mob rule. Responsibility of political leadership lies not in pandering to such popular sentiment but in ensuring that the law of the land is always upheld. Electoral victory gives political leadership the privilege of serving the people of the country in accordance with both the letter and spirit of the Constitution. Popular mandate cannot transcend law. There are wellmeaning people who have applauded the encounter killings because of a genuine sense of outrage and even frustration. But they need to step back and reflect that it is precisely those who have failed us in every aspect of governance who are being given the authority to deprive citizens of even their right to life without any legal safeguards whatsoever.

There is a tendency to think that what is being visited upon a fellow citizen today will never hap pen to us, law abiding as we think we are. Until it happens to us. The shortsightedness of the applause that greeted the denial of freedoms to our fellow citizens in Kashmir is depressing. Each such case sets up precedent for the same being enacted elsewhere in the country. National security may require reasonable restrictions on the enjoyment of fundamental rights by citizens, but who determines what is in the interest of national security and what are reasonable by way of restrictions? If this is done arbitrarily by the State, then the door is wide open to the unscrupulous exercise of power. In recent cases courts appear to accept that the state may impose any restrictions it wants on grounds of national security without spelling them out. Reference may be made to vague terrorist threats or apprehensions of breach of law and order. Often the aim is not to achieve conviction of suspects on the basis of tangible evidence. The harassment through the investigation and incarceration process itself is punishment.

In the lawns of the Supreme Court there is a bronze sculpture of Mother India sheltering a child. The latter represents the young Republic of India. On his lap lies an open book of the laws of the land. Etched on it is a balance representing equality of justice. The message is clear: For the young republic to grow into a proud and enduring democracy, the child must never stray from the laws of the land. The protective embrace of the mother will remain only so long as the laws are respected and observed.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and is currently

Back to square one on trade strategy

economic management is under fire. Unfazed, Lthe mandarins harp on about strong fundamentals. Even if we were to shed our disbelief, the outstanding question remains: What's the strategy to revive the economy? Mere fundamentals will not do the trick. And, since 2014, nowhere has the absence of a strategy been more obvious than in external trade.

During 2004-14, there was an overarching strategy

and tariffs, and promote competitive ness of industry and exports. Free trade agreements (FTAs) and comprehensive economic partnership agreements (CEPAs) intertwined trade and foreign policy objectives. By 2014, though, somnolence set in. There has been no semblance of a strategy, much less any meaningful policy. Yes, there have been mealymouthed statements and renaming of export promotion schemes; those do not a strategy or a policy make.

The numbers tell the story. Merchandise exports and imports grew at 17.3 per cent including gold. The objective: To promote domestic and 19.1 per cent per annum, respectively, during the decade from 2003-04. The annual growth rates for the five years since 2013-14 are 0. 9 per cent (exports) and 2.7 per cent (imports). Trade was expanding till the setback of the Great Recession; and quantitative easing helped a bit thereafter. So, good luck or right strategy at the right time, take your pick.

In contrast, over the past five years, the government seems to have just surrendered — hand-wringing about the "adverse" external environment. How true is that? Exports from Asia grew by 20 per cent in these five years and some countries did even better. Bangladesh's garment exports grew by 40 per cent in these five years. In 2018 alone, Malaysia and Vietnam posted export growth rates of 14 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively. Truth be told, there

'ndia's economy is in trouble and the government's was no foreign trade policy, only manna from heaven: production barely meets 60 per cent of our require-The oil price crash. The sharp contraction in the trade balance nurtured complacency: External trade was not a problem. Regrettably. Dutch-disease consequences were not even anticipated. The real exchange rate appreciated and exports plateaued without eliciting any policy response.

The Make in India (MII) initiative was fashioned to increase manufacturing and employment - a and a policy that underpinned it: Increase economic New Deal on manufacturing. Unfortunately, MII integration with the rest of the world, reduce protection remained a slogan; it neither boosted manufacturing

nor employment When it was launched, there were apprehensions that it was a blast from the past modern-day import substitution. Sadly, those fears are coming true. The past few years have witnessed a steady increase in protection. First came the minimum import prices for iron and steel products (2016). Then followed import duty hikes in July and September 2018 across a swathe of products, some clearly to benefit favoured sons. The July 2019 Budget increased tariffs on 75 items

manufacturing!

In short, the strategy to steadily reduce tariffs has been emphatically reversed. So, even as there has been no articulation of a foreign trade policy, the underlying mindset stands revealed. The commerce minister's recent statement that the goal was "to curb imports and hence CAD" is confirmation, if any was needed.

The trade balance and the current account deficit (CAD) are not merely a function of exchange rates and fiscal deficits. Domestic distortions and policy inaction lie behind large CADs (Business Standard, 6 October 2015). Over the last five years, there has been little action to tackle these policy distortions. Coal imports in 2018-19 were \$26.2 billion, a 60 per cent increase over 2013-14 levels. Coal accounts for over 5 per cent of our total imports; domestic coal

ments. Look at the tragedy in higher education. India now pays \$21 billion per annum for overseas education — the amount has doubled in less than five years. The import of electronic items increased by 70 per cent in five years to a whopping \$56 billion in 2018-19. Imports of pharma and chemicals have a

The unconscionable neglect of exports and the external sector has impacted competitiveness, productivity and gross domestic product growth. Worse vet new vulnerabilities are now apparent. First, the peak trade deficit was \$190 billion in 2011-12; in 2018-19. it was \$184 billion, much higher than \$136 billion in 2013-14. Worryingly, the trade balance has deteriorated by 70 per cent in just two years. Second, net oil imports were \$101 billion in 2013-14; in 2018-19, they crossed \$94 billion — almost double the level in 2015-16. India is almost back to square one, notwithstanding the low oil prices. The reprieve in oil prices has been one more missed opportunity. Third, the invisibles are also under pressure. Remittances have grown by 1.5 per cent per annum in the five years since 2013-14; the corresponding number for net miscellaneous services (think information technology) is 3.5 per cent. And, the net investment income deficit has grown by 5.8 per cent per annum in the same five vears: it was a drain of \$31 billion in 2018-19. The outcome: We are now even more dependent on remittances and miscellaneous services to keep the CAD within manageable limits.

The exit from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership has received extensive coverage. However, the government seems to be making a virtue of what was a necessity. No foreign trade strategy or policy to speak of; little by way of corrective action to address domestic policy distortions; a backto-the-past revealed preference. Any surprise that we could not sign up? Houston, we have a problem.

The writer is a former commerce secretary, Government of India

Rebalancing nature



GEETANJALI KRISHNA

At a time when global leaders are denying climate change even as the world reels under the impact of extreme weather phenomena and gloomy predictions that 30-50 per cent of all species today might be extinct by mid-century, the blurb of Bahar Dutt's Rewilding: India's Experiments with Saving Nature, promises that rare commodity - hope for the planet. The award-winning environment journalist has travelled across the country to see dugongs, olive ridley turtles, pygmy hogs and other endangered creatures to assess the efficacy of the efforts to conserve,

Rewilding is, simply put, the restoration of environments to their natural state. It has four cornerstones protecting the core, restoring wildlife corridors, reintroducing carnivores at the top of the food chain and nurturing keystone species. These are species that interact with their habitat in so many ways that their absence would significantly alter it. The first question that Ms Dutt poses is whether rewilding is even possible in India, with its diversity of people, animals and habitats existing together, as she puts it, like a tossed salad. To answer it, she documents cases across India, where rewilding has worked, at least in part. What emerges throughout the book isn't iust that these conservation efforts have worked — but how fragile they are. Their continued success rests in the hands of the

government, often clashing with its development imperative to build more dams, mines, roads and waterways.

Of these, the most striking is the story of the turtle hatchery in Varanasi, which was developed in the 1980s under the Ganga Action Plan. Today, this hatchery,

sanctuary was issued in 2018 to make way

for developing a waterway on the Ganges.

Ironically, merely two days after the state

government issued the order. Prime

Environment Champions of the Earth

Minister Modi received the UN

haven for species Indian softshell turtle and Indian flap shelled turtle as well as the critically endangered Gangetic dolphin, faces an uncertain future. Acentral government proposal to denotify it as a

award for his "exemplary action on climate change and sustainable development". The story of the conservation and rewilding of the mahaseer is also interesting as it is a rare instance of a corporate working towards the conservation of a lesser-known species.

RAHUL KHULLAR

REWILDING: India's **Experiments In** Saving Nature Author: Bahar Dutt Publisher: 0xfor d University Press Pages: 244 **Price**: ₹750

She also examines the effortstowardsthe conservation of pvgmv hogs and onehorned rhinos in Manas National Park. Assam, which remains a hotbed of insurgency.

Consequently, these tales don't evoke the hope that Rewilding's blurb promises. Instead.

being the good journalist that she is, Ms Dutt discloses that while the Tatas were remarkably successful in hatching mahaseer eggs and transporting them in moist cotton wool across the country with a mortality rate of barely 1.5 per cent, they have done little to protect the mahaseer in the wild. Further, by stocking several hundred thousand fingerlings of the bluefinned mahaseer into the Cauvery without establishing a baseline count of the endemic hump-backed mahaseer, their rewilding effort may be one of the reasons $for the \, cat a strophic \, decline \, in \, the \,$ $hump back \, population. \, The \, question \,$ arises, if rewilding can upset the delicate balance in which nature hangs, should it be done at all? Ms Dutt does not provide anvanswers.

She is, however, spot on in criticising wildlife conservation projects in India which often tend to exclude local communities. For example, the government set up residential schools for girls from the Pardhi tribe, traditionally the poachers of Panna National Parkin MP. However, they weren't given any vocational training, and most returned home after years of living away, proverbial fishes out of water. Similarly, some villages bordering Manas National Park were given smokeless stoves to reduce people's dependence on firewood. The stoves stopped working after a while, the people returned to foraging for wood illegally

from the park. Ms Dutt muses that perhaps if they had been encouraged to plant trees along the boundary, locals could have had a continuous source of fuel as well as a relationship with the wild.

Perhaps the most disheartening aspect $of India \'s\, rewilding journey is that \, the$ newly rewilded spaces are always going to be vulnerable to destruction. The proposed plan to link the rivers Ken and Betwa is an example. First, the government and NGOs worked for over a decade to rewild this jungle, even successfully reintroducing tigers into it. Today, if the plan to link the two rivers is carried out, it would entail submerging this entire tract of forest. Similarly, a successful citizens' movement to rewild a portion of Delhi/Gurgaon exists under constant threat. The citizens group has already foiled the government's plan to build a highway through the Aravalli Biodiversity Park once. But even today, the $fate \, of \, the \, park \, depends \, upon \, the \, whims$ of the government and the resolve of its citizen protectors. These stories, instead of evoking optimism, may prompt the reader to wonder if rewilding is even worth it.





WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019



QUESTIONABLE STANCE Chief minister of Maharashtra, Uddhav Thackeray

We have asked many questions... ranging from national security to the rights of locals in various states of India. If these queries are not answered, we

won't be supporting the CAB in the Rajya Sabha



The Great Letdown

It could get far worse before it gets better. And, even then, whether India will be able to create the number of jobs needed is in doubt

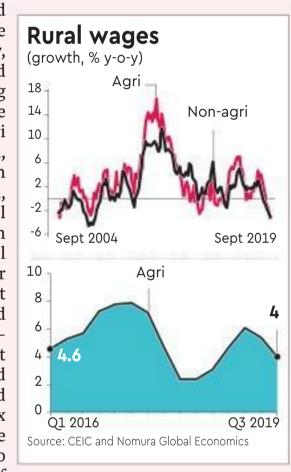
HE SENSE OF anticipation so palpable in India Inc ahead of the 2014 elections has altogether dissipated; businessmen today are stressed and distressed. They may not betray their feelings, but they are feeling betrayed. When an industrialist of the stature of Kumar Mangalam Birla says Vodafone-Idea will shut shop because there is no point throwing good money after bad, we are in trouble. Narendra Modi's NDA government had promised them and their fellow countrymen achhe din; instead, after six quarters of a decelerating economy, partly due to a debilitating blow from demonetisation, there is no sign of relief. The data and trends are chilling: consumer spending is stagnating, little freight is being ferried, factories are running at sub-optimal capacities, road construction is stalling, credit growth is crawling. And, consumer sentiment is the weakest in a decade. Retail sales of commercial vehicles—a proxy for the economy—fell 8.6% year-on-year (y-oy) in November on the back of a 23% y-o-y plunge in October. And, that is in addition to a year of flagging sales.

Given nearly 64% of the slowdown has been driven by industry—mainly manufacturing—India's aspirational electorate should brace for more job losses. If top class companies like Vodafone-Idea are forced to think of shutting down, corporate India must be in dire straits. Profits before tax plummeted 74% y-o-y in Q2FY20 for a sample of close to 2,600 companies as revenues fell 3% y-o-y.

The government's finances are not doing any better, though, with tax collections for 2019-20 slowing drastically. Rather than taking it on the chin, however, the Centre is delaying states their rightful dues. Meanwhile, the government continues to tweet one new target a day. From doubling farm incomes to raising the share of manufacturing in GDP to getting to a \$5-trillion economy, there is no shortage of targets. To be sure, the NDA inherited an economy that was in a shambles, a near-empty

exchequer, a twin-balance-sheet problem, and a high CAD. Also, no economy recovers quickly from a twin balance sheet crisis, especially with a third crisis—NBFC joining in. But, it could have been handled a lot better. Demonetisation was a bad move; the smarter way to get to tax-evaders is through better surveillance and digitisation. Reform has been neglected in a key area like agriculture, as seen in the com-

plete collapse of food prices and a ruined rural economy. That the government was compelled to roll out a dole-like scheme for farmers before the elections is evidence of this. Worryingly, wage growth for agricultural labourers slipped to a four-quarter low in Q2FY20, falling sharply from 5% in July to apparently negative territory in September. The growth in rural agri wages, a good proxy for consumption demand, slipped from 6.1% in Q4FY19 to 5.4% in Q1FY20, and further to 4% in Q2FY20. Third, the government failed to reform personal income taxes. Had the slabs and rates been altered to make it more equitable, with all exemptions withdrawn, it would have made for a cleaner structure. Also, the government needed to track professionals—doctors and lawyers—who accept fees in cash and conveniently fail to disclose their real earnings. Net direct tax collections between April and November are up an anaemic 1.6% y-o-y, and the impact of the cut in the corporation tax rates is yet to be seen. That was probably the worst measure of all because all it did was to further enrich the richest companies, most of



whom will not invest in new plants, for a revenue loss of close to ₹1.5 lakh crore. Foreign investment will take its time because it is not enough to have a low tax rate. In the absence of better labour laws and ease of doing business, global corporations will be wary of stepping into India. So far, the Make in India scheme has yielded little.

The economy is slipping fast. The 16-year low in nominal growth seen in Q2FY20 could see bankers reassess credit and turn even more cautious. Today, the government is asking banks to lend. The point is, if there was demand for credit from sound borrowers, why wouldn't banks lend? The SBI chairman rightly pointed out there is no demand for corporate credit. With revenues weak, the government will be forced to cut back on expenditure, and if GST rates are hiked, consumers will spend less. Reflating meaningfully, in the near term, is difficult without fiscal slippage; also reforms will require political will—for instance, tighter labour laws, and some U-turns on FDI in multi-brand retail. Above all, the government must convince business it will ensure a level-playing field in all industries, and that there will be no biased regulation. None of this is difficult because this government has a strong mandate; as we saw, the abysmal state of the economy made no difference to voters in the elections. But, by 2026, 88% of the population will be below the age of 60, 78% will be below the age of 50, and a good 65% will be below 40 years. Rather than debate about whether the slowdown is cyclical or structural, the government's advisors need to come up with ideas to find jobs for the 12 million youngsters entering the workforce each year. An aspirational society is an impatient society. Even more so, when it is so young, and getting younger.

Charting DEVELOPMENT

India improves, moves up one spot in HDI. However, it must plan for new challenges to human development

NDIA RANKS 129 among 189 countries on the 2019 human development index (HDI). As per the UN's HDI 2019 report, India's score improved from 0.431 to 0.647, moving it up a rank from 2017's 130th. In the last three decades, India's life expectancy at birth increased by 11.6 years, average schooling years by 3.5 years, and per capita income by 250 times. India did poorly in comparison to Sri Lanka (71) and China (85), but did better than countries like Pakistan (152), Bangladesh (135), Bhutan (134), Myanmar (145), and Afghanistan (170). South Asia was the fastest growing region in terms of human development—46% growth over the period 1990-2018.

The report highlights that, in terms of inequality-adjusted HDI or IHDI, India's rank drops to 130. IHDI highlights the percentage loss in HDI due to inequalities. This drop cost India, for the purpose of calculating the score, half the progress made in the past 30 years. The report also brings to the fore gender-based inequality—India ranks 122 out of 162 in the gender inequality index. HDI also captures multidimensional poverty. India should take heed of what the report highlights in terms of areas needing improvement—inequality due to technology and climate change, and gender inequality. Meanwhile, India has set ambitious goals for universal healthcare and child nutrition. India has 28% of the world's poor even after lifting 271 million people out of poverty between 2005-15. Surely, it has a long way to go before it matches the HDI standards in developed world, but past efforts have yielded gradual progress. Policy makers must focus on proper implementation, if they are to deliver the kind of progress expected from a country targeting to become a \$5-trillion economy in the next half-decade. The report warns that in the coming decades, technological changes, climate change, and skilling gaps will contribute to increase in poverty. Therefore, as India aspires to improve on conventional parameters, it needs to brace for the new-age variables that will hinder human development.

ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN

ATYPICAL DYNAMICS OF HIGH INFLATION AND WEAKENING DEMAND, WITH OTHER GROWTH DRIVERS FIZZLING OUT, COULD CLOSE THE MONETARY SPACE AVAILABLE TO THE MPC

The return of inflation fears

BI SENT MARKETS into a shock by deciding not to cut the policy rate last week. Overturning consensus expectations of furthereasing, the central bank slashed the FY20 growth forecast by 110 basis points to 5%, which was commonly anticipated. On the other side, the central bank revised up its inflation forecast for H2FY20 by 1-1.6 percentage points to 4.7-5.1%; H1FY21 inflation forecast was scaled up 20-40 basis points to 3.8-4%. The unanimous decision to pause while staying accommodative was even more surprising in light of the assessment that the food price push to headline inflation was transitory—at least one or two dovish members could have been expected to press seeing through the temporary shock, given the steep downgrade of growth.

At the post-policy media interaction, the RBI Governor was asked precisely why, if the food price spike was short-lived, the MPC did not chose to override and ease more when growth had slipped so low. Acknowledging such a case, the Governor alluded to core inflation that was currently expected to remain under 4%, but on whose evolution the MPC wanted more clarity with regard to certain decisions, like telecom tariff and other things that may play out, including any countercyclical fiscal measures in the forthcoming budget. The Governor also pointed out the primary objective of an inflation targeting central bank is price stability, while due weightage has been assigned to growth. Executive Director and MPC member Dr MD Patra elaborated some more on this, flagging additions to core inflation from price increases in some of its components such as transportation, health, and education, besides the possible telecom tariff impact.

From a macro diagnostic point of view, however, the central bank's biggerworries may be potential fiscal slippages, and the persistent overhang of

RENU **KOHL** New Delhi based macroeconomist Views are personal

for triggering inflation. The sharp rise in bond yields following the post-policy announcement sent out the unambiguous signal.

surplus liquidity in the system, a recipe

Inflationary expectations overlooked

Curiously, the central bank did not sufficiently press upon the crucial link of households' inflation expectations, which adapt to food prices in India and are the bridge of transmission to core inflation. In turn, core inflation can potentially spillover into generalised inflation if second-round effects take hold. The written MPC statement detailed that households' inflation expectation rose 120 basis points over the three-month ahead horizon while the increase was a hefty 180 basis points over the one-year ahead horizon in November. This rise occurred on top of a pick-up two months earlier, in September, when inflation expectations had increased 40 and 20 basis points respectively, over the July round. In the four months to November, three-month ahead inflation expectations of households zoomed from 7.6% to 9.2%, and those over the one-year ahead horizon jumped from 7.9% to 9.9%!

This, perhaps, is the key reason for the MPC's unanimous decision to pause, its preference to watch how core inflation unfolds ahead, and to be sure of the inflation forecasts. However, an open apprehension of the possibility of such a scenario in an environment of sliding demand would be an unexplainable oddity, which could trigger a further slide in negative sentiments.

Hunt for revenues

could be the trigger While the central bank and the mar-

ket are worried about large fiscal slippages given anaemic revenue collections until now, the trigger could come from raising tax rates. Press reports suggest the GST Council contemplates significant rate hikes across slabs.

While the central

bank and the

market are worried

about large fiscal

slippages given

anaemic revenue

collections until

now, the trigger

could come from

raising tax rates

The telecom tariff decision is but one example RBI spoke of. There could be others. Most arise from a frantic revenue hunt by the government, which faces a mounting deficit as collected taxes fall. Telecom firms revised tax liabilities, after a court ruling prompted their tariff hike, and other affected firms could respond similarly, e.g., GAIL may have no choice but to raise gas prices. Sliding GST collections have pressed the gov-

ernment to review tax and compensation cess rates, inclusion of exempt items, etc, to augment revenues. One needs to watch out if the states follow suit and revisit VAT rates, e.g., on fuels, as they, too, face revenue pressures and have been compressing capital expenditures. Some signs of revenue triggers to prices are visible amongst private firms as well; for example, automanufacturers have announced hikes in January 2020 even though pricing power is absent amidst weakening demand, and production cuts continue in some pockets.

Typically, tax increases are one-off, and not considered inflationary because

of a one-time increase in costs. Central banks look through these and RBI has done the same in the past. But, in an environment of rising inflation expectations, the fear of a price spiral build-up is perhapswhat RBI would carefully watch for. Then, although food inflation may come off as expected, supply management could fail to contain anticipated and/or unanticipated shocks as happened recently. There is also the enormous liquidity overhang on the monetary side, a potential ignition to the cocktail of latent cost-tax pressures in a revenue-constrained economy. Further monetary easing in such uncertain macroeconomic settings could also create another round of credibility issues for RBI, which

grappled with overpredictions of inflation one year ago, and, in the current year, has been caught out overpredicted growth. The Governor's emphasis on gaining clarity on the inflation outlook could be driven by these apprehensions and the reason for a pause.

The return of inflation fears couldn't have come at a worse time. Growth has steeply declined for six successive quarters as the economy has been passing through a phase of sharp

demand contraction. Raising taxes at such a juncture could further compress demand and hurt consumer sentiment Ironically, these taxes, if raised beyond a critical level, could push up core inflation, resulting in stagflation. An atypical dynamics of high inflation and progressive weakening of demand is a macroeconomic challenge, especially when other growth drivers, viz. government spending, private investment, and net exports have all fizzled out, leaving alone monetary policy. If such a dynamics does come about, it could close the remaining monetary space that the MPC assured of in the policy review.

On a collection course

The solution to shore up revenues does not lie in amending liberal provisions and depriving GST of its progressive character

THE GST COUNCIL is scheduled to meet on December 18 with the agenda to arrest falling collections. The shortfall in revenues is impacting compensation to the states, and the unrest is palpable. The debate has changed from inflated and bogus input tax credit claims and non-filing of returns to addressing inefficiencies in the rate structure. Suggestions in public domain include increase in the lowest slab of 5% to 6%, and levy of compensation cess on some of the goods attracting 18% rate. Cess is presently confined to items that fall in the 28% category. To avoid a major disruption, converging 12% and 18% rate into 15% or 16% rate is not on the agenda. However, shifting some items from 12% slab to 18% rate is being discussed. An increase in the rate for sin goods is also doing the rounds.

Tax revenues cannot be divorced from the state of economy and dip in consumption. In the pre-GST regime, taxable event was manufacture for levy of excise duty, sale for applicability of VAT and provision of services for payment of service tax. But in GST, supply of goods or services is a taxable event. Therefore, mere production does not attract any levy and does not contribute to revenue for the exchequer unless the goods are supplied. In the intermediate stages, input tax credit neutralises tax revenue accruing to the government. Cause and effect of subdued consumption, thus, should be taken into account when the finance ministers meet for the GST council.

Lower collections from compensation cess is attributed to the slowdown in the auto sector—a major segment attracting cess. To reduce dependence on one or two sectors, the council should give serious thought to levy cess on certain non-essential items under 18% slab. Beauty and cosmetic preparations, marble and articles of plastics can attract additional cess. The tax incidence on most of these goods in the pre-GST regime was around 27%. Pruning of items resulted in several goods coming under 18% rate without eminent rationale. Hence, revisiting the items covered under 18% slab is sine qua non at this juncture.

E-way bill system has been implemented successfully. This should have had restraining influence on supply of goods without invoice. Recently introduced restriction of limiting input tax credit to the extent of 20% where invoice details have not been reported by suppliers in their outward supply return is a welcome step. Proposed einvoicing for large taxpayers from next year will give further impetus to such measures. Although these are intended to plug revenue leakage, they are not capable of significantly altering revenues.

Evasion is perceived as alarmingly high and is cited as a major cause for depressed collections. Revenue projections as contained in Budget documents take into account loss on account of tax incentives, but do not account for loss due to frauds. Nonimplementation of invoice matching for input tax credit is a major lacuna. For decades, manufacturers were availing Cenvat credit without any matching of invoices. Pre-GST period also had a fair share of evasions, but were not the focus of discussions of tax shortfall.

The rate of growth in VAT collections during the period before implementation (2001-02 to 2004-05) was around 10%. This figure rose to 15% to 20% from 2008-09 onwards—three years after nation-wide roll-out of VAT. New tax law needs some time for all the stake-holders to reorient themselves.A grand reform of the magnitude of GST cannot be judged by tax collections during the initial years. Frequent

G GOKUL KISHORE

Advocate, Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan. Views are personal

changes in rates and returns have been made more out of necessity. But, stability and certainty have suffered in this process. The council is required to do the fine balancing act of providing stability even while being responsive and adaptable.

Stagnant industry also means pile up of inventory of raw materials. Quantum of tax credit lying unutilised will be more, resulting in lesser or no cash payment for taxes on output supplies. This effectively dents the net tax revenues of the government. In the pre-GST regime, refund of accumulated input tax credit due to inverted tax structure was not available. GST law has specific provision for refund in such cases. Except goods or services used in construction of immovable property and a small negative list, GST law allows tax credit on everything used for business. Such factors put together do affect tax collections. The solution to shore up revenues does not lie in amending such liberal provisions depriving GST of its progressive character.

Increase in limits for threshold exemption and composition scheme may not have had substantial impact on revenues, but the base has shrunk to some extent. Lack of clarity on composite supplies, intra-company support services, post-sale discounts, liquidated damages, anti-profiteering provisions coupled with issues like restriction on input tax credit for sectors like real estate and hotels and attempt to cover BPOs and ITES sector under intermediary service compel taxpayers to adopt aggressive position. Issues affecting several sectors need to be addressed before the taxpayers are convinced of the interpretation adopted by the tax administration. Revenue gets blocked in such grey areas only to be further choked in longwinding litigation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Need for CAB & NRC The home minister must be

appreciated for having explained at length, the need for a Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), and also the differences between CAB and NRC. The honourable minister is correct to state that ever since the religionbased partition at the time of independence, there has been a continued influx of people within the India. An initiative, such as the NRC, is necessary to track the true count of citizens and preserve the solidarity and national security. While the identification and deportation of anti-nationals is important, it is equally essential for the sovereign to retain its international image and good will too. The CAB, only respects the constitutional values of the three neighbouring countries, and promises to safeguard the longterm interests of permitted refugees, already living in the sovereign. It also happens to be in line with the earlier agreements, wherein the sovereign accepts the responsibility of minor communities within the three adjoining countries. The step also sends a strong message to international forums and highlights the value, that nations are expected to keep their promises by being compassionate towards not only the residing majority but also the minority communities. Leaders must recognise the political intent, rationale and the potential of a bill to serve the larger national interest, before acting in a premature manner or resorting to an unduly critical and non-constructive approach. The regime has assured time and again, that existing residents are not impacted by the CAB, and therefore, needn't be anxious. Further, a nationwide exercise in the form of NRC, especially in a vast geography and varied demography, with a sole purpose to track and record the details of valid citizens residing in each state, and thus, segregate the illegal immigrants, sounds fair and logical. — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

R.N.I. Reg. No. 6188/61 Printed for the proprietors, The Indian Express (P) Ltd by Vaidehi Chintaman Thakar at The Indian Express (P) Ltd Press, Plot No. EL-208, TTC Industrial Area, Mahape, Navi Mumbai-400 021. Phone: 22022627/67440000. Fax: 022-22856323. Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Managing Editor: Sunil Jain, Resident Editor: Malini Bhupta* (*Responsible for selection of news under PRB Act) © Copyright: The Indian Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express

FINANCIAL EXPRESS



• RECORD CAFE: RS SODHI, MD, GCMMF (AMUL)

Dairy is livelihood in India, not merely trade

India opted out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations last month, citing possible adverse impact on its 100 million dairy farmers. RS Sodhi, managing director, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), popularly known as Amul, spoke to Sandip Das, senior consultant with ICRIER, on the issues that will be faced by the Indian dairy industry post-RCEP. "Those countries that demanded reduction of import duties by India on dairy products have not allowed uninterrupted flow of labour across RCEP member

HEYEAR 2019 turned out to be

a golden year for the 450-odd

registered agriculture-technol-

ogy start-ups, as they witnessed

a growth rate of 25% (Nass-

com, 2019). Also, these start-ups, in the

Industry 4.0 era, are reported to have

received \$248 million funding in a six-

month period of 2019, which is 300%

surge in total funding compared to 2018.

start-ups have received considerable

attention of technology developers,

investors and agribusiness firms? And how

ecosystem is thickly populated by small-

holders and driven by informality in the

domestic markets, and lack of scalability,

traceability, transparency in agri-value

chains has made agribusiness less trusted,

ill-governed and less remunerative to

farmers and/or processors. Hence, an end-

to-end technology-enabled architecture is

necessary to integrate the value chains

spanning production, processing and dis-

tribution. To this end, agri/dairy-tech

start-ups have gained salience because

technology innovations brought out by

these start-ups aim to capture or augment

values in every possible "node" of the

chain, and enhance chain traceability and

efficiency through smart contract

unleashed their potential in improving

crop production systems, optimising util-

isation of critical resources, enhancing

Digital technology start-ups have

We know that the Indian agricultural

to integrate them into the value chain?

It is important to discuss why agri-tech

states," he says. Excerpts:

What are key issues you thought India might have considered before it withdrew from RCEP negotiations?

RCEP is a trade agreement. You have to separate issues associated with trade and livelihood. Dairy and agriculture are livelihood issues in India. Those countries that demanded reduction of import duties by India on dairy products have not allowed uninterrupted flow of labour across RCEP member states. If RCEP wants to include agriculture or dairy in

multinational dairy cooperative). Fonterra has only around 10,000 farmers as members, and it's a business for them. The purposes of dairy cooperative in India and New Zealand are different. We are aiming at opening up the dairy sector, although India is not deficit (in terms of milk production) and countries that are importing right now and members of RCEP are not allowing India to export to them. RCEP was an unfair trade negotiation. Indian negotiators should have been brought these unfair trade practices during RCEP negotiations. How do you anticipate the growth and

for example, Fonterra (New Zealand's

development of the Indian dairy sector in the next decade?

The total value of the dairy products market is estimated at ₹7 lakh crore. Overall, the dairy sector is witnessing 5% growth annually. The organised sector is growing at 12-13% annually. Nowhere in the world the dairy industry is growing like in India. The reason is simple: As India moves from a carbohydrate-consuming country to more protein-consumption nation because of rising disposable incomes, the demand for dairy products is going to rise further. Milk is considered as the best form of protein. There has been wide diversification in varieties of products. There is a large number of private sector players who have entered the market. At present, the farm gate price of milk is 40% more than in the previous year. Cow milk price last year at this point of time was ₹18-21 per litre, while today it is ₹30-33 per litre. Over the last few years we were able to export as global prices were low. However, we paid prices to farmers that were unviable. Now, viability is there. Now, the flush season has started.

What are the expansion plans of the GCMMF?

PORTRAIT: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

trade negotiations, it must first include

free flow of manpower resources across

countries. In India, around 50% of the population depends upon the agriculture

Any country's economy consists of

three things: capital, natural resources

and manpower. If you want to have a free

trade agreement, allow free flow of

labour. All RCEP countries want to have

things that are their strength. We are

strong in our manpower resources, so

allow unrestricted flow of manpower. If

you want to export agricultural products

to us, please allow exports of agricultural

labour. In India, trade comes after the

government has provided livelihood

opportunities to its people. Without tak-

ing care of livelihood of

people, how can you get

(New Zealand and Aus-

tralia, milk-surplus coun-

tries) come here and

invest. We will even pro-

vide support and facili-

Post-RCEP, how do you see the domestic dairy

industry responding to

the need for improving

efficiency in the milk

Organised dairy sector has become

efficient in the last decade. When we are

talking of manufacturing industry, you

have to deal with the level of automation;

in India, providing employment is a crit-

ical aspect. Like in textiles, a manufac-

turing unit that is fully automated will be

more efficient than, say, a power loom

that provides employment opportuni-

ties. More than 100 million families are

dependent on dairy sector in India. What

are the alternatives you are providing to

these families before opening up the

dairy sector? Small dairy farms that are

not fully automated can't compete with,

value chain?

tate their presence.

In addition, let them

into trade?

sector for sustenance.

We are setting up processing plants in Kolkata, and have already entered Guwahati, Siliguri and other places like Varanasi. Annually, we invest ₹600-800 crore for expansion of our processing facilities. This year (2019-20), we will achieve ₹40,000 crore turnover. Another ₹12,000 crore turnover we will achieve through the Amul brand (which is not reflected in the GCMMF balance sheet). Gujarat district unions sell products directly in the state, in Banas, Surat, etc, and it does not reflect in the GCMMFbalance sheet. We will be more than a ₹52,000 crore turnover enterprise by FY20. In fact, we will be the biggest Indian FMCG brand.

What has been GCMMF's strategy for the Indian market? You also pay differential prices for milk procurement from farmers in Gujarat, Rajasthan,

Let milk-surplus countries

like New Zealand and

Australia come and invest

in the Indian dairy sector,

rather than seeking

reduction in import duties

on dairy through RCEP

Punjab and Uttar Pradesh...

We provide best quality at an affordable price, and are a trustworthy brand. People have blind fate in the brand. We pay more to farmers compared to other cooperatives in the country. We have to pay farmers the market price, wherever we procure milk. We are, at present, paying more to farmers from

Rajasthan and Punjab compared to Gujarat farmers for milk procurement. It's all market-driven. Even in Gujarat, all the district unions do not provide uniform prices for milk procurement to farmers.

How do you visualise the Indian dairy

sector, say, after a decade? India's organised dairy sector, which is currently estimated at ₹1.8 lakh crore, is expected to reach a size of ₹6 lakh crore in 10 years. The organised sector (includes cooperatives and private players) is, at present, procuring 90 million litres of milk, which is expected to increase to 300 million litres in 10 years.

ONION TEARS

A symptom of larger malaise

MURLIDHARAN

The author is a CA, and a veteran columnist on taxation, finance, business and commercial laws

We must try and replicate the Amul model of producers' cooperatives on the larger agricultural front, too

HATTHE PRICE of onions in many retail markets across India has soared to an unbelievable ₹150 per kg is, indeed, a matter for concern. However, it also comes across as a symptom of the larger malaise of neglecting agriculture and irrigation sector by successive governments over the decades. In fact, economically-developed nations have progressed from agricultural growth to manufacturing, before preening with pride as a services economy. But India bucked this trend to its own detriment in hindsight. In 2018-19, the services sector accounted for 54.4% of GDP. Industry contributed 29.73%, while agriculture and allied sector accounted for 15.87%. With some foresight, however, we could have consciously followed the time-tested template of the developed nations.

The lopsided nature of India's growth story—60% of the population contributing to 15.87% of GDP—should have sounded warning bells. But our policymakers believe in firefighting—reacting only when a crisis blows on our face. This explains the import of onions from Egypt to douse the flames of relentless price rise on the back of excessive rains playing havoc with the crop. We took a cue from the US and built oil reserves. Oil captured our policymakers' imagination because we are import-dependent, whereas onion was glossed over, because in normal times we have had enough of it to feed our population. In any case, our public distribution system, with the FCI as its linchpin, has always mistaken food for cereals—namely rice, wheat and sugar. Not much

Less than 10% of

the total food

produced in India is

processed into

value-added

products. The US

and China process

65% and 23% of

their produce,

respectively

attention has been paid to pulses and vegetables, which, by a rough reckoning, form half of the common man's plate.

For storing vegetables and fruits, an efficient and connected cold storage system is a prerequisite, which, alas, figures in the government calculus only at the time of annual Budget presentation by way of tax sops for setting up and operating this infrastructure. That 40% of Himachal apples are lost to elements is a wellknown fact. According to the ministry of food processing industries, the annual post-

harvest losses account for \$1.5 billion (₹92,000 crore). And yet we haven't addressed the issue on a war-footing. Along with cold storage to carry perishables like onions from season to season and from place to place, we also need food processing industries to take roots, near production centres or along the cold chain route. Less than 10% of the total food produced in India is processed into value-added products. In comparison, the US and China process 65% and 23% of their produce, respectively. No wonder, then, that in the US fruit juice is more affordable than fruits!

Both these industries can turn out to be a very large employment providers in the hinterland, and this would, at once, also arrest the mindless migration to urban areas by the rural folks. So, let us not view the current onion crisis in isolation. It might have erupted due to the problem of plenty (heavy rains), but no one can quarrel with the elements. Let us not blame the rains for our own monumental neglect of the agrarian and allied economy over the decades. We must apply all our efforts towards addressing agricultural and rural distress. Usher in corporate farming without compromising the interests of the landowners and farmers. Let the landowners be paid lease rental for, say, 99 years, and farmers be guaranteed employment as well as share of profits through stock offers. Only corporates can take a holistic view of agriculture, cold storage and food processing unless we are fortunate to replicate the AMUL model of producers' cooperatives on the larger agricultural front, too.

Agriculture, clearly, isn't getting the attention it deserves because, unlike IT, it is not glamorous. But a nation that condemns its agriculture to nature has no salvation.

Scaling up Indian agri-tech start-ups

How to build scalable and systemic solutions for agricultural value chains



The author is assistant professor, IIM Lucknow, associated with the Center for Food & Agribusiness Management. Views are personal



traceability in food supply chains, and improving transparency in transactions. For example, the "food print" product promoted by Jivabhumi is a produce-based aggregation and food traceability solution working for integrated agriculture development in Karnataka.

In parallel, Samudra Network offers digitisation services for farmer producer organisations using mobile applications and dashboard. In addition, it provides agricultural market network to connecting farmer producer organisations with wholesale buyers, agri-finance companies, input suppliers, and logistics via market

linkages. Farmer Connect, a blockchainbased app, helps improve traceability for coffee value chain in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Anumber of start-ups are into the business-to-consumer (B2C) segment also. For example, AgroStar provides crop production solutions to farmers through a missed call or via its app-based service, apart from purchasing of critical inputs and farm implements. However, the fact is that most of these start-ups are yet to showcase scalable and time-tested solutions.

So, a key question arises, as after 2015, start-ups are yet to consolidate their business. How to sustain their operations and integrate them into agri-value chains?

Here, we can draw insights from the Nasscom 2019 report that has important policy implications.

First, especially for agri/dairy-tech start-ups, business-to-business (B2B) is emerging as a revenue-generating segment relative to B2C and, thus, these startups need to partner with corporates and government agencies for value creation and appropriation. Some of these have already marked their footprints in employment rationalisation (EM3, Goldfarm), stakeholder empowerment (Samu-

dra Network, Farmsurge), supply chain integration (Yuktix, AgroStar), processing and exports (Jivabhumi), resource utilisation (KisanRaja), and digital infrastructure (FarMart, Gramcover).

Second, public-private partnership (PPP) in agricultural value chains is gaining ground for start-ups as they can benefit to private as well as public sector through formalising value chain finance, improving decision-making, streamlining direct benefit transfer or subsidies, accessing large markets and so on.

Third, fund-raising remains a challenge as start-ups require a few critical

years to withstand the test of time. Impact investors can, therefore, come forward to enable performing start-ups achieve their scalability and viability in value chain businesses. There is a silver-lining for fund-raising as agri-tech-focused Indian investor fund, Omnivore Partners, raised \$97 million in 2019 from companies based in the UK, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Japan.

Fourth, agri-tech start-ups regulation calls for a robust policy framework—integrating financial inclusion, agribusiness incubation and acceleration, data privacy and sharing, and licensing policies into a single-window system. A few states have evinced interest in the promotion of agritech start-ups and made provision for catalytic or micro-fund (\$2-14 million) to nurture them. We can draw anecdotal evidences from Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Fifth, as agriculture and dairying is a state subject, agriculture and animal husbandry universities and anchored extension agencies need to identify potential start-ups for tie-up for technology solutions such as farming as a service and crop/livestock management. Agribusiness incubation centres should rope in agritech start-ups to sustain technology transfer from lab to land and attain scalability in agri-value chains. Sixth, there is an utmost need for an

appropriate institutional design, incentives and enabling market infrastructure to integrating digital technologies into agri-value chains.

financialexp.epa

between multiple stakeholders.

WORDLY WISE

THE IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE IS NOT VICTORY BUT COMBAT; IT IS NOT TO HAVE VANQUISHED BUT TO

HAVE FOUGHT WELL. — PIERRE DE COUBERTIN

The Indian EXPRESS

S FOUNDED BY S RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A DIMMING CONFIDENCE

Plummeting inflows into equity mutual funds signal investor uncertainty over growth prospects

HE SHARP FALL in inflows into equity mutual funds signals a shift of mood within the investor community in India. These inflows plummeted to Rs 1,312 crore in November — the lowest levels since June 2016 — according to latest data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI). That this fall has taken place despite the Sensex hitting a record high, and foreign investors pumping around Rs 20,000 crore into the stock market during this period, seems to reinforce the view that sentiment in India has been badly hit. It suggests that investors are voting with their feet, and is in line with the findings of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) consumer confidence survey which reveals that sentiment on the general economic situation and the employment scenario in the country weakened further in November.

For some time now, there has seemingly been a growing disconnect between the stock indices and the broader economy. While economic growth has fallen precipitously, the Sensex has scaled new heights. But a closer look at the market suggests that the rally was largely driven by a few stocks, reflecting the fact that investors were shifting to high quality stocks at any price. In fact, while returns in the large cap category have been around 12 per cent over the past year, they were much lower for the small and mid-caps, reflecting the pain in the larger economy. The fall in inflows in November could be indicative of a reassessment by market participants of the growth trajectory. India's economic growth has fallen from 8 per cent in the first quarter of 2018–19 to 4.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2019–20. The fall in nominal growth to 6.1 per cent is particularly disconcerting, as it would mean lower sales and profit growth for companies. With growth prospects likely to remain uncertain for the foreseeable future, cuts in earnings per share are likely to continue, further depressing sentiment.

The only silver lining in the data seems to be that inflows, channeled through systematic investment plans (SIPs), remained stable, rising marginally to Rs 8,272 crore, up by Rs 27 crore last month, with the total number of SIP accounts increasing to 2.94 crore. Yet, if concerns over the country's growth prospects deepen further, these inflows are unlikely to hold up. Markets are forward looking. And with the Monetary Policy committee (MPC) deciding against cutting rates further, they will now be eying the upcoming Union Budget in February for measures to shore up the economy. The finance minister cannot afford to ignore the great expectations. A comprehensive reform package is needed to revive both business and consumer confidence.

HELSINKI'S DIFFERENT

Finland's new government will not be led by a wilful man in a hurry to wield absolute power absolutely

HE DREARINESS OF the global political landscape, dominated by ageing, distinguished gentlemen who are not distinguishably gentle in their ways, is alleviated by the election of Social Democrat Sanna Marin as prime minister of Finland. She will head a five-party coalition government in which 12 out of 18 cabinet berths are expected to go to women, leaving little elbow room for men with long heads and deep purposes. A coalition with a distributed power structure is also a refreshing reminder to electorates which have become recklessly appreciative of strong men who command the allegiance of overwhelming majorities that all the people are not comfortable with absolute power all the time.

Marin is the world's youngest prime minister at 34, which is five years younger than New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, who earned global admiration for her handling of hate crime. In a depressing contrast, about 1,000 miles from Helsinki, in London, another prime minister will be elected this week. He will be a man of either 70 or 55 winters, depending on whether Labour or the Conservatives prevail. Also, Marin is the first person in her family with a university education. She represents the demographic dividend which is endlessly talked up, but generally does not get sufficient opportunity, or the education to do justice to it. She is also the child of same-sex parents in what she has described as a rainbow family. In the world's biggest democracies, such a candidate would have sunk without a trace, leaving not a political ripple behind. She would have ticked all the wrong boxes and raised a tsunami of prejudice.

Coalitions in which a single party does not wield near-absolute power are often derided for being unable to just get the job done, since they have to accommodate the priorities of their constituent partners. It is not fully appreciated that a coalition, by diluting power, also offers built-in checks and balances — one of the fundamental mechanisms of democracy, which prevents a single party from amplifying majoritarian prejudices. Also, while it cannot be assumed that power wielded by women is intrinsically less dangerous than power in the hands of men, a government in which women are numerically superior does harbour the possibilities of new priorities and will perhaps innovate processes. In a political landscape dominated by wilful men in a hurry, it offers a glimmer of a promising alternative.

Now you see Russia

... and now you don't. But is the WADA ban the denouement, or a token rap on mittened knuckles?

PORTS' EQUIVALENTS OF 007s, the righteous athletes from the UK and US, must've celebrated, oh so briefly, the banning of their favourite whipping boys, the Russians. Such has been the frenzied outrage at the dope taint on the sporting superpower of the erstwhile eastern bloc, that World Anti Doping Agency's ruling to purge the 2020 FIFA World Cup and Olympics of Russian presence started a small hurrah across Twitter. Only for the fine print to collapse the Mexican wave of cheer before it crossed the Atlantic and it became apparent that the Russians could fetch up anyway if they could prove they were clean to their federations. Which ought to have been exactly what happened at all previous Olympic editions, but WADA can't quite be sure. That, in a nutshell, means that the Olympics, World Cup and other events might not have Russia but they certainly will have Russians.

WADA, with the ever generous and hospitable Americans, managed to whisk away a whistleblower and get the lid off the Russian doping programme five years ago. But the Russians brazenly tampered readings in computer files, muddying waters. For the sake of fairness, WADA has allowed the "clean" Russian athletes to compete. So, expect the glorious Olgas, Marias, Alexeys, Antons, Tatianas, Yulias and Aleksanders to match the 56 medals that athletes from the Country That Must Not Be Named (CTMNBN) won last time. And don't be surprised if Vova Putin keeps count of those CTMNBN medals and chuckles away, cackling about the unfairness of the west with a wink.

chuckles away, cackling about the unfairness of the west with a wink.

Like Babushka dolls, Russia is stuck with the reputation of compulsive doping ever since the days of Cold War intrigue, and the 2020 ban is considered the denouement, though it feels like a token rap on mittened knuckles. For the Russians who'll be there in Tokyo, but not quite, it's slipping into yet another script, this time Roald Dahl channelling Ian Fleming in "You Only Live Twice."

Instant injustice

Encounters, like the one in Telangana, call attention to a criminal justice system in need of urgent reform

These examples seem to

raise questions of instant

justice, they actually raise

questions of injustice. We

dividing line and must also

governed by the rule of law

not forget that our society is

need to recognise this

and a progressive

Constitution where

everyone is presumed

could also have been

that to happen.

innocent (not isinnocent)

until proven guilty through a

fair trial. This was the basis

of Ajmal Kasab's trial, who

despatched in an encounter

amidst celebrations, but our

Constitution did not allow

without any furore and



THE CHIEF JUSTICE of India (CJI) said in his speech on Law Day, November 26, 1985 that, "I am pained to observe that the judicial system in the country is almost on the verge of collapse. These are strong words I am using but it is with considerable anguish that I say so. Our judicial system is creaking under the

Can we be brutally frank today and admit that the criminal justice system (not the entire judicial system) has collapsed, or is it still on the precipice?

weight of arrears" (Chief Justice PN Bhagwati).

"Fair is foul and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air," said one of the witches in Macbeth. In the celebrations and furore following the recent encounter in Telangana, the Uttar Pradesh police announced that in the last two years they have killed 103 criminals (extra-judicially perhaps) and injured 1,859 in 5,178 engagements. Over this period, instead of remaining on bail, as many as 17,745 criminals have voluntarily had their bail cancelled or have surrendered, apparently fearing death in an engagement, echoing the words of a former CJI suggesting to an accused that he would be safer in jail.

What do encounters achieve other than the death of fellow humans masquerading as instant justice? The report of Justice V K Agarwal on the Sarkeguda massacre of June 2012 in Chhattisgarh is a shocking example of innocents being slaughtered on an extrajudicial assessment of guilt for a crime not even committed. The trigger-happy personnel of the security forces may be prosecuted but will they ever be punished? It's unlikely because of the time lag. How about the death of 103 criminals in Uttar Pradesh? Will we ever know the truth about these extra-judicial killings? Again, it's unlikely, though for different reasons.

While these examples seem to raise

questions of instant justice, they actually raise questions of instant injustice. We need to recognise this dividing line and must also not forget that our society is governed by the rule of law and a progressive Constitution where everyone is presumed innocent (not is innocent) until proven guilty through a fair trial. This was the basis of Ajmal Kasab's trial, who could also have been despatched in an encounter without any furore and amidst celebrations, but our Constitution did not allow that to happen.

What has changed since then and how

can we resuscitate or resurrect our criminal justice system? First, let us appreciate the problem. As per the National Judicial Data Grid, more than 20 lakh criminal cases are pending for more than 10 years in the district courts and high courts. The report of the National Crime Records Bureau (2017) informs us that 1.27 lakh cases of rape are pending in the courts at various stages, with 1,840 of them pending for more than 10 years. The NCRB says that more than 30,000 cases of rape were registered in that year. In other words, a rape was committed every 15 minutes in 2017, almost unnoticed. Assuming no dramatic improvement, when will the more than 90 women statistically and tragically likely to be raped today see justice? Justice delayed is not only justice denied but injustice perpetuated.

They say that prevention is better than cure. If so, what have the state governments done to prevent (to the extent possible) crimes against women? Over the last five years, utilisation of amounts released by the Ministry of Home Affairs for the Nirbhaya fund projects is only to the extent of 9 per cent and in Maharashtra, it is 0 per cent. Similarly, funds released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development have been utilised only to the extent of 20 per cent and

in Madhya Pradesh, it is 0 per cent. Thereby hangs a tale for women's safety.

If the law is an ass, the legislature must change it to make it more effective — widening definitions and making punishments more stringent are not the answer — procedural changes are required. Infrastructure for the courts? In 2012, the then CJI was deeply concerned about the non-availability of infrastructure for the courts and had expressed his unhappiness at the slow progress. He eventually gave up and his concerns have been tragically forgotten. Filling up of vacancies of judges in the courts? Who will address it — the judges

or the executive — and when?

The problems are many, but so are the solutions. All stakeholders must keep their eyes wide open, identify all the problems and demonstrate a will to resolve the issues, both for women and children and the courts. Reliance on anecdotal or experiential evidence for ad hoc solutions is passé. What is essential (for cases of rape, for example) is a study of each pending case as also a study of the requirements of each court before any realistic solution is proffered. While this task will require an enormous effort, it needs to be carried out as a mission mode project in

Is the judiciary up to such a scrutiny? The National Judicial Academy demonstrated in a regional conference in Delhi that delays are endemic and go to such an extent that in a criminal case, the trial court granted a staggering 94 adjournments! We need to set the alarm clock to wake us up now and cancel the snooze button, otherwise we will continue to witness the sufferings of women followed by examples of instant injustice.

The writer retired as a justice of the Supreme Court of India

GLOW IN THE GATHERING GLOOM

JNU protests uphold public morality at a time when it's being undermined

Janaki Nair

THERE IS AN awe-inspiring incandescence to the JNU students' struggle which has lit up many institutions in India and elsewhere, and shows no sign of abating immediately. At a time of rapidly waning visionary futures, what does this fierce glow promise us? How is the steadfastness of this student body — consisting of many in their first semester — to be understood, especially their commitment to something larger and greater than themselves, of which they themselves may have only a tenuous grasp?

The Indian public university has been a politicised space from its very founding. It both produced and challenged the obvious inequities of colonial rule. In the early 20th century, it began to be recognised as a space for the redressal of caste inequalities — as in measures that were pioneered, for example, by the Mysore State in 1918. From the 1920s at least, it became an important site of nationalist and revolutionary agitation. Bengal in the late 1960s and the Sampoorna Kranti movements of Bihar in the 1970s took antigovernment, anti-state student mobilisation to a new height. Despite the raging antireservation stirs of 1990 and 2006, the university, today, is the site of hard won statemandated equality.

The student movements of the preIndependence period were largely subordinated to the agendas of larger nationalist or
communist parties, and were not necessarily engaged in intergenerational conflicts.
Since Independence, there has been far
greater engagement with university-related
issues — hostels, fellowships, deprivation
points, reservations, grading systems, fee
hikes, and sometimes, though perhaps too
rarely, course content.

Of late, there have been anti fee-hike agitations in institutions ranging from IIT Mumbai in 2017 to the Uttarakhand Ayurvedic University in October 2019. That they have not attained the high visibility of the JNU agitation is not so much because they were any less heroic, but because INU enjoys hyper-visibility for simultaneously being the site of excellence — at least for the last 45 years — and exemplary inclusion.

The historic strike at the FTII in 2015 inaugurated a new phase of student movements the students rose in defence of an idea of the institution and its unique place in Indian film history. FTII's reputation was brazenly undermined by the appointment of Gajendra Singh Chauhan as chairman and four others to the institution's council. Many of its illustrious alumni also then believed that such appointments only undid the professional heights that this institution had reached. By January 2016, Hyderabad Central University exploded in anger over the tragic suicide of Rohith Vemula, and protests broke out throughout the country in support of another view of the public university, its achievements and also its injustices. The JNU events of 2016 saw yet another shift of gear: While students were upholding their right to question the state, and its actions, much like the Sampoorna Kranti agitations of the 1970s, the institution was quickly daubed a different colour and dissent was declared unpatriotic. Since then, we have witnessed something like a war, between the idea of the university as a precious "gift of an interval", to cite Michael Oakeshott's memorable words, and the university as a cathedral, where unquestioning, militarised worship of the ethnicised nation has taken root.

At the same time, the JNU events beginning in February 2016 provided a fortuitous escape for a ruling party on the edge of a precipice: It temporarily masked the workings of an unruly market economy logic that had seized hold of higher education. That logic had already intervened and reconstructed institutions of higher learning to produce academic credentialling on an unmatched scale

the capitation fee phenomenon, for example. That was the more benign form; the per-

nicious form reached its epitome in the industrial-scale cheating that was pioneered in Madhya Pradesh, where the BJP held office, and goes by the name of the Vyapam scam.

Of late, there have been anti fee-hike agitations in institutions ranging from IIT Mumbai in 2017 to the Uttarakhand Ayurvedic University in October 2019. That they have not attained the high visibility of the JNU agitation is not so much because they were any less heroic, but because JNU enjoys hyper-visibility for simultaneously being the site of excellence — at least for the last 45 years — and exemplary inclusion. The frontal attack on both of these cherished values will make way not just for a market logic to triumph in what may be a last bastion, but to reassert privileges — of caste, ethnicity and gender that had been painstakingly dismantled. The EWS quota has already paved the way.

Is the determined student struggle at JNU looking back with nostalgia at a public university that was, or heralding the public university's new future? When the prospects of steady, well paid, or dignified work are so bleak, and when even those with academic credentials no longer harvest the same "returns" that might have been true even a decade ago, what can motivate the students to take such an unwearied stand? To make any hackneyed point about the dreams and revolutionary ardour of youth would be to dishonour the movement. What the JNU students have upheld is a reminder of the importance of public morality, at a time when it has been degraded beyond recognition in our republic's life. That is the precious glow we perceive in this gathering gloom.

The writer teaches history at JNU



DECEMBER 11, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM POLLS DELAYED THE ELECTION TO the Lok Sabha from 10 of the 14 constituencies in Assam stands postponed indefinitely, according to official sources. Reports received by the chief election commissioner from Assam's chief electoral officer indicate that no nomination papers could be filed for any of the 10 constituencies in the Brahmaputra valley. The state has been in the grip of tension following agitation by students and other organisations demanding postponement of the Lok Sabha poll till the names of illegal immigrants from across the border are eliminated from the electoral rolls. The agitators have successfully prevented filing of nomination papers in 10 constituencies.

IAEA CONFERENCE

THE WEEK-LONG 23rd general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concluded in Delhi without resolving some of the important issues raised by the third-world countries. The issues which have been shelved till the next general conference include the resolution of the "Group of 77" third-world countries submitted to the IAEA's board of governors regarding the imbalances in the agency's technical assistance programme vis-a-vis the safeguard implementation and their demand for proportionate representation on the board of governors. The Group of 77 countries had also suggested in their resolution that, instead of being largely dependent on doles from rich countries, the technical assistance financing should be all from the IAEA's regular budget like the provision made for safeguards implementation and which the agency will be spending about \$19 million in 1980.

NOBEL FOR MOTHER

MOTHER TERESA OF Calcutta's Catholic Missionaries of Charity order received her \$1,92,000 Nobel Peace Prize for 1979. She said she considered herself an unworthy winner, but accepted the prize cheque, the Nobel gold medal and diploma on behalf of the world's poorest of the poor. The 69-year-old nun is the first Indian citizen and first Yugoslavia-born peace prize laureate, accepted the prize from the committee Chairman.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019

THE IDEAS PAGE

This land is mine

But can India refuse to own me? If Parliament passes the Citizenship Amendment Bill, India's constitutional structure, as we know it, will lose its soul



Harsh Mander

DESPITE BEING UNDER constant siege, the edifice of India's Constitution has endured so far. The onslaught has intensified since the expanded mandate to the Narendra Modi government in May.

However, if Parliament passes the Citizenship Amendment Bill, India's constitutional structure will cave in. Make no mistake. The Constitution will not need to be rewritten. But, its soul will be annihilated. A new nation will emerge from its rubble wrathful, muscular, majoritarian, and inhospitable to its minorities.

This Bill weighs upon tangled contestations of belonging and rights. Who belongs to India, and on what terms? And indeed, who does India belong to? A young Bengali-origin Assamese poet Kazi Neel lamented, "This land is mine. But I am not of this land". He loves India, but India refuses to own him.

Citizenship ultimately is the right to have rights. Who in this country should have rights, and from whom should these be withheld?

The answer to these fraught questions were settled within the humanist and inclusive framework of the Indian Constitution. Its iridescent central premise was that religious faith has no bearing on eligibility for Indian citizenship. India belongs equally to its Muslim, Christian and Parsi residents, as much as to its Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains.

Questions of belonging — and religion as politics — have torn India apart. The Muslim League regarded religion as the key to citizenship; therefore, India was not one but two nations — Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. V D Savarkar concurred. India's Constituent Assembly steadfastly rejected this idea that India belonged only to its Hindu majority. Jawaharlal Nehru declared, "We accept as Indian anyone who calls himself a citizen of India".

By introducing the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), the BJP-led government has deliberately reopened old wounds, reviving old fears, anxieties and hatred of Partition. This Bill, in effect, endorses the twonation theory by creating a hierarchy of citizenship based on religious faith, excluding Muslims from this hierarchy.

The moral fig leaf offered is that this intends to provide refuge to people suffering religious persecution in neighbouring countries, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. If religious persecution was truly to become the yardstick for eligibility for Indian citizenship, then few neighbours are more tormented than the Ahmadiyas in Pakistan who face even death for worshiping in a mosque, the Rohingyas battling genocide in Myanmar, and the Uighurs held in internment camps in China.

Until 1987, to be eligible for Indian citizenship, it was sufficient for a person to be born in India. Then, spurred by the populist movements alleging massive illegal migrations from Bangladesh, citizenship laws were first amended to additionally require that at least one parent should be Indian. In 2004, the law was further amended to prescribe that not just one parent be Indian; but the



other should not be an illegal immigrant.

The unease of the BIP-led governments of India and Assam with the NRC is that a much larger number of Bengali-origin Hindus have been excluded from it than Muslims. If they are judged as illegal immigrants, not just they, but their offsprings would become illegal because of the 2004 amendment. The CAB alone can rescue the BJP from this political conundrum. It will treat Bengali Hindus as refugees, and only the Bengali-origin Muslims and all their later generations would become illegal, even if they were born in India and know no other country as their home. Treating Bengali-origin Hindus, excluded

from the Assam NRC, as persecuted refugees from Bangladesh, however, will require multiple extraordinary leaps of official faith. Not one of these persons would have claimed in any official forum — the NRC offices, Foreigners' Tribunals or police stations — that they are illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. They would have strenuously tried to establish exactly the opposite. But after the CAB, to secure Indian citizenship, they would have to claim to be foreigners to become eligible for Indian citizenship. There will also be questions of evidence. How will they prove that they were citizens of neighbouring countries and that they were persecuted? The truth is that most had not crossed any border, but were unable to produce documents which satisfied officials that they were Indian citizens.

The CAB is the harbinger of a national NRC. By passing the CAB, effectively, the government is clearly messaging that if people of any identity except Muslims are unable to produce the required documents, they will be accepted as refugees and given citizenship. This means that the real burden to prove that they are Indian citizens of the national NRC after CAB is only thrust on Muslims, because only they will risk statelessness. Most Indians would find it impossible to muster the required documents to prove their citizenship, but only documentless Muslims will face the prospect of detention centres, or being stripped of all citizenship rights.

And then, since this imagination of citizenship is all vested in documents, which documents will prove my religion? At present, it is only one's own declaration during the decadal census which is the official evidence of one's religious persuasion. I can be born into a religion, and can reject it when I am an adult. I can be born to parents who claim no religion. But if religion becomes the principal fulcrum of whether or not one is a citizen, then which document will the state rely upon to decide if I am a refugee or should be thrown into a detention centre?

For a republic built on guarantees of equality and non-discrimination on the basis of religion, creating a class of potentially stateless persons exclusively because of their religious identity would mark decisively the demise of India as a secular republic. The responsibility for this catastrophic collapse of the edifice of our constitution would be shared by a political opposition emptied out of its moral and political convictions.

The CAB-NRC poses the gravest threat to India's secular democratic constitution since India became a republic, and must be fought with a nation-wide civil disobedience movement. The contours of this struggle need to be worked out by We the People.

But, I have decided on my form of civil disobedience. If the CAB is passed, I will, in solidarity with those whose citizenship alone will be contested, first declare myself to be Muslim. When the national NRC is organised, I will boycott it, and refuse to produce any documents. I will then demand that I be given the same punishment to which my undocumented Muslim sisters and brothers will be subjected, be it detention or the extinguishing of my citizenship rights.

Mander is a human rights worker and writer

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"America might be in a hurry to get out of Afghanistan, but a final settlement needs to be hammered out between the Taliban, the Kabul government as well as other Afghan political players, and should not be imposed by external powers."

Betrayal of the republic

Religious basis of citizenship would be a negation of secularism, liberalism, equality and justice



THE YEAR WAS 2013. I was travelling in China, when a taxi driver there posed a question to me: Why are there so few Buddhists in India? The fact is we did persecute Buddhists in India. Religious persecution has always been there and all religions are guilty of it. The Narendra Modi government is, therefore, right in recognising religious persecution. But the solution it presents to the problem is not only unconstitutional but dangerous. It will surely damage India's standing in the comity of nations.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) is more in tune with the Israeli law of retun that treats Israel as the natural home of all Jews. Ideally, we should say anyone persecuted anywhere in the world, on the ground of religion or political opinion, would be welcome in India.

Shared identity is at the core of citizenship. The framers of our Constitution and those who enacted the Citizenship Act in 1955 believed in citizenship as a unifying idea. Today, citizenship is being used to divide people and treat people of certain religious persuasion as inferior. The majoritarian politics is divisive as it distinguishes Indic faiths from those that originated outside India and says the latter cannot have any sacred places of worship in India. Now, through the CAB, we are creating divisions between Abrahamic religions by including Christians in the Bill but excluding Jews and Muslims. The Bill also ignores atheists.

Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution give details of various categories of persons who are entitled to citizenship. Article 11 empowers Parliament to regulate citizenship and the Citizenship Act was passed in 1955. This does not mean that Parliament, through an ordinary law, can destroy the fundamental values or the basic structure of the Constitution. The religious basis of citizenship would be a negation not only of secularism but also of liberalism, equality and justice. Interestingly, neither the Constitution nor the Citizenship Act define the term "citizen".

The citizenship law was amended in 1986 due to the Assam Accord and in 2003, because of the BJP's opposition to illegal migrants. Unlike the original Citizenship Act that gave citizenship on the principle of *jus soli* (everyone born in India), the 1986 amendment was less inclusive as it added the condition that in addition to one's own birth in India, one can get citizenship only if either of the applicant's parents happened to be an Indian citizen at the time of birth. The 2003 amendment by the Vajpayee government made the law even more stringent. Now, the law requires that in addition to the fact of birth, either both the parents should be Indian citizens or one parent has to be an Indian citizen and the other not an illegal migrant.

The Assam NRC has busted the narrative of several million Bangladeshis illegally staying in India. Rs 1,600 crore was spent on the

NRC, which brought Assam to a standstill for five years. BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma has rejected the final NRC and wants it to be undertaken again with the national NRC. It seems most of the 1.9 million excluded from the NRC are non-Muslims. Clearly, the CAB is nothing but a face-saver for the BJP. But like the flawed NRC, it too is not going to give the desired results, either in terms of deportation or denial of citizenship to one particular community. Moreover, the CAB will put even non-Muslim citizens under severe hardship as those who were till now asserting that they are Indian citizens will now have to prove that they, in fact, came from these three countries.

The CAB is against five of the BJP's primary positions. First, the BJP manifesto for the 2016 Assam assembly election had promised honouring the Assam Accord in letter and spirit. Second, it had been advocating that the cut-off date should be July 19, 1948 not March 25, 1971. The new Bill has brought forward the cut-off date to December 31, 2014. Third, though the BJP has been using all kinds of adjectives against illegal migrants, the CAB deems such illegal migrants as citizens and abates all proceedings against them under the Foreigners' Act, 1946. Fourth, the argument that refugees or illegal migrants are a burden on national resources does not stand any longer. Fifth, the Statement of Objects & Reasons to the Bill takes strong exception of a "particular religion" being declared as state religion in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Does that mean the Hindu right no longer wants to make India a Hindu rashtra?

The CAB is in the teeth of Article 14 which not only demands reasonable classification and a rational and just object to be achieved for any classification to be valid, but additionally requires every such classification to be non-arbitrary. The Bill is an instance of class legislation, as classification on the ground of religion is not permissible. Neither is religious persecution the monopoly of three countries nor is such persecution confined to non-Muslims. Religious persecution is rampant in China and Myanmar. Several Muslim groups such as Hazaras in Afghanistan and Shias in Pakistan too face persecution. The Supreme Court in EPRoyappa (1973) observed that "equality is a dynamic concept with many aspects and dimensions and it cannot be 'cribbed, cabined and confined' within the traditional and doctrinaire limits. From the positivistic point of view, equality is antithetic to arbitrariness. In fact, equality and arbitrariness are sworn enemies... Where an act is arbitrary, it is implicit that it is unequal both according to political logic and constitutional law and is therefore violative of Article 14'

Finally, if those who support the CAB think the Bill would be able to take away the citizenship of billions of Muslims, they are wrong: The CAB would apply to only Muslims who have migrated from Pakistan Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Moreover, citizenship once conferred cannot be retrospectively revoked.

The Bill is unnecessary. If we care for refugees, India should sign the Refugee Convention and make illegal migrants eligible for citizenship.

> The writer is vice chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad Views are personal



A law that includes

Citizenship Bill continues long tradition of welcoming persecuted minorities

The CAB is the harbinger of

a national NRC. By passing

messaging that if people of

are unable to produce the

required documents, they

will be accepted as refugees

and given citizenship. This

means that the real burden

citizens of the national

NRC after CAB is only

only they will risk

statelessness.

to prove that they are Indian

thrust on Muslims, because

any identity except Muslims

the CAB, effectively, the

government is clearly

RAM MADHAV

FIRST THINGS FIRST. The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) is not about excluding anybody; it is about including some. It is an effort to grant citizenship to those minorities from erstwhile Pakistan — that now includes Pakistan and Bangladesh — and Afghanistan, who have come to India seeking refuge from religious persecution or the fear of it. The first time such refugees were included was immediately after Partition in the first census, which was also regarded as the National Register of

Citizens. Let's remember that every time such refugees come to India and claim citizenship, the government has been issuing citizenship to them after the due process. There are a number of instances of religious minorities from these three countries coming over to India on religious visas and deciding to stay back because of the dangerous situations that existed back home. They include Sikhs from Afghanistan, Sindhis and SCs from Pakistan and Bengalis and tribals from Bangladesh. What the government intends to do through the proposed CAB is simplify the process of granting of citizenship to these minorities. Earlier, there was a 12-year wait under the regular citizenship laws. The new Bill reduces that period to five years. A minority citizen from these three countries, who turns to India seeking citizenship, will become eligible for the same provided he or she has entered India before December 31, 2014 and has lived here for at least five years.

Unfortunately, the debate on the Bill has been distorted by the Opposition, citing erroneous arguments like the violation of Article 14 and the principle of secularism. Granting citizenship to sections of the population is a regular process. During the liberation war of Bangladesh, lakhs of Hindus and other minorities had poured into India. This migration was no smaller than at the time of Partition. A majority of them had come to states like Bengal, Assam and Tripura. Camps were created for such migrants and special efforts were made to provide citizenship to them by the government at the time. There are a good number of such Bangladeshi immigrants in these three states who had secured citizenship documents at that time. Nobody called it a violation of Article 14. Similar facilities were extended to persecuted Indians from Uganda during Idi Amin's rule and then, too, nobody had demanded that in order to be secular we should extend citizenship to Ugandans.

Home Minister Amit Shah's invoking of Partition has an important historical bearing on the issue. We can't shut our eyes to the fact that India was partitioned on religious lines and large-scale communal violence erupted as a result, Between 1947 and 1950, millions crossed over to either side. They all became citizens of the respective countries.

But then, it came to the knowledge of the authorities that even after 1950, the migration was continuing into the Northeast for reasons that were not necessarily Partition-re-

lated. It was then that the Jawaharlal Nehru government promulgated The Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950. The Act stated that the government would deport those immigrants who had entered Assamillegally and whose presence was considered detrimental to the interests of Assam and India. When the question of minorities was brought to Nehru's attention, he exempted all of them from the 1950 Act. The relevant portion of the 1950 Act states: "Provided that nothing in this section shall apply to any person who on account of civil disturbances or the fear of such disturbances in any area now forming part of Pakistan has been displaced from or has left his place of residence in such area and who has been subsequently residing in Assam."Nehru was categorical that the Act wouldn't apply to minority immigrants like Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Sikhs.

The proposed Bill is a continuation of that unfinished agenda. It has become necessary that the issue of the illegal immigrants be addressed in one go, as their numbers have swelled to millions in the last several decades. This Bill will come as a big boon to all those hapless people who have been the victims of Partition and the subsequent conversion of the three countries into theocratic Islamic republics.

Arguing that the Bill is anti-secular is specious. After Independence, not once but twice, we conceded that the minorities in our neighbourhood were our responsibility. First, immediately after Partition and again during the Indira-Mujib Pact in 1972 when India had agreed to absorb over 1.2 million refugees. It is a historical fact that on both the occasions, it was only the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians who had come over to our side. Far from being anti-secular, Indian citizenship was a commitment given by our leaders to the minorities. That is precisely what the Narendra Modi government is fulfilling now.

India has several other refugees that include Tamils from Sri Lanka and Hindu Rohingya from Myanmar. They are not covered under this Act. Similarly, the Nepalese and others from neighbouring countries are guided either by bilateral agreements or the citizenship laws of our country.

Concerns of some sections in the Northeast have also been adequately addressed by excluding Schedule VI areas and the Inner Line Permit-restricted areas from the purview of the Bill. The CAB is a law applicable to the entire country. The government will make sure that no state shall face any adverse impact on its demography, culture, language and customs.

In its two millennia-long history. India has always welcomed persecuted minorities, like the Parsis, Jews and others, from wherever they came. The CAB is a continuation of that national tradition.

The writer is national general secretary, BJP and director, India Foundation

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

APATHETIC BODIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Put out the fire' (IE, December 10). It was sad to see the ill-fated building turning into a gas chamber and hapless workers choked to death. The key cause of such unregulated and unregistered units flourishing under the nose of the authorities are their economic viability. Setting up a unit in commercial areas means high rents and the onerous task of securing NoCs from venal agencies. In a country where 22 per cent of people are below the poverty line and many face hunger daily, people perishing in such devastating fires does not move the apathetic authorities and the indigent worker's fate is fixed.

Deepak Singhal. Chennai

THANKS AMBEDKAR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Ambedkar and I' (IE, December 10). Like the writer's, my parents changed my surname to hide my Dalit identity. They were trying to shield me from the discrimination they suffered. For many years, I struggled with my identity but Babasaheb helped me understand my roots. His life and books educated me about his legacy and filled me with positive attitude about my caste.

Anshul Choudhary, Agra

SUU KYI'S SURPRISE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'Moment of reckoning' (IE, December 10). When

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to

editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

Aung San Suu Kyi announced that she would personally defend Myanmar against accusations of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICI) in The Hague this week, it came as an enormous shock. Myanmar has steadfastly ignored UN reports alleging that since 2017, its army has raped, murdered and tortured the Rohingya, driving more than 7,40,000 to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. Technically, Suu Kyi, the de facto leader of Myanmar, is going in her capacity as foreign minister. But the world will recall her as the heroine who won the Nobel peace prize in 1991 in recognition of her dogged resistance to a military junta.

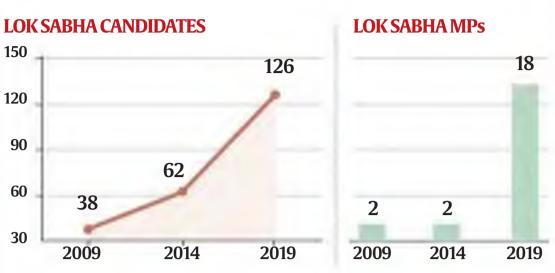
Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

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

TELLING NUMBERS

Rising trend in number of MPs, MLAs and candidates who face cases of crime against women

DECLARED CASES OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN



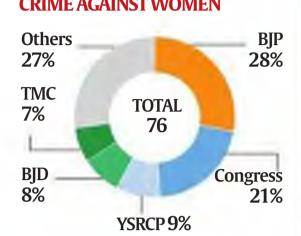
BETWEEN 2009 and 2019, there has been an increase of 231% in the number of candidates with declared cases of crime against women contesting Lok Sabha elections. The number elected as MPs has increased 9 times, according to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and the National Election Watch.

For current MPs and MLAs, the ADR analysed 4,822 election affidavits (759 MPs and 4,063 MLAs) out of a total of 4,896 (776 MPs and 4,120 MLAs). It found that 76 MPs/MLAs had declared cases of crime against women. Of these, 18 are MPs and 58 are MLAs. Among candidates in MLA, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha elections in the last five years, 572 were found to have declared such cases; none of them has been convicted. Among them, 410 were given tickets by recognised political parties while the remaining 162 were independent candidates.

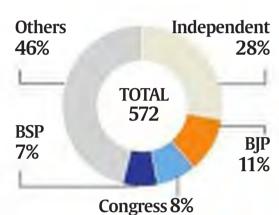
The BJP has 21 MPs/MLAs with cases relating to crimes against women, at 21, the ADR said. The BJP is followed by the Congress at 16, YSRCP at 7, BJD at 6 and Trinamool Congress at 5. In terms of candidates who declared such cases, the BJP fielded 66, followed by the Congress at 46, BSP at 40, CPI(M) at 15, and Shiv Sena and Samajwadi Party at 13 each.

The highest number of MPs/MLAs with declared cases of crime against women are in West Bengal (16), followed by Odisha and Maharashtra (12 each), Andhra Pradesh (8), Telangana (5) and Madhya Pradesh (3). Among candidates in the last five years, 84 facing such cases were fielded from Maharashtra, followed by Bihar (75), West Bengal (69), Uttar Pradesh (61), Odisha (52), Andhra Pradesh (33) and Karnataka (26).

MPs. MLAs FACING CASES OF **CRIME AGAINST WOMEN**



MP, MLA CANDIDATES FACING CASES OF SUCH OFFENCES



In accounting for crime against women, the ADR counted cases of acid attack(IPC Sections 326A & 326B; rape (Sections 375, 376, 376A, 376B, 376C, 376D & 376E); outraging the modesty of a woman (Section 354); sexual harassment (Section 354A); assault on women with intent to disrobe a woman (Section 354B); voyeurism (Section 354C); and stalking (Section 354D).

In the last five years, recognised political parties have given tickets to 41 candidates with declared cases of rape against them. Out of these, nine were elected, three of them as MPs and the other six as MLAs. In addition, 14 independent candidates had declared cases of rape against them.

Source for all data: ADR

EXPERTS EXPLAIN _____

The rising threat to Mumbai

A new study projects that in the absence of quick and significant action, Mumbai in 2050 will look much like what it did in 1700 — with the sea having reclaimed much of the landfill that the city has been built on

MUMBAI'S PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE? MAPS OF THE CITY AND THE SEA IN 1700, 2019 AND 2050 (PROJECTED)







Map data: Mathur, Anuradha, and Dilip da Cunha, 2009: Soak: Mumbai in an estuary; 'Climate Central | Land Projected to be below Annual Flood Level in 2050': https://coastal.climatecentral.org/; Google Earth 2018, accessed on 18.11.2019. Maps: Sara Anand



NIKHIL ANAND & CAROLINE TERENS

ON OCTOBER 29, 2019, the journal Nature published an important paper identifying the dangers climate change poses specifically to Mumbai and other coastal cities.

The research, carried by many newspapers including The Indian Express, indicates that anthropogenic climate change will inundate significant sections of Mumbai by 2050. Unless the city takes significant action in the next three decades, the sea will reclaim much of the landfill that the city has been built on. As per this study, Mumbai in 2050 will look a lot like Mumbai in 1700, unless the city makes serious efforts to adapt to climate change.

Together with Guangzhou, Jakarta, Miami, and Manila, Mumbai now regularly appears on a list of cities endangered by climate change. As the cyclones battering coastlines near Mumbai and unseasonal, heavy rains indicate, climate change is not some event in the distant future. It is present. It is here.

Recent studies, published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and in *Nature* by Lu and Flavelle in October 2019 indicate that its effects are more

intensive than earlier models predicted. For example, sea levels are rising significantly faster than were previously estimated. The Special Report on the Ocean and

Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, published last month by the IPCC, indicates that sea levels are significantly higher than were originally anticipated, and as such will have significant impacts on cities like Mumbai.

As city residents are very aware every monsoon, much of Mumbai is tenuous land made dry, just a few metres above sea level. The IPCC report warns Mumbai's planners and administrators and states that "in the absence of adaptation, more intense and frequent extreme sea level events, together with trends in coastal development will increase expected annual flood damages by 2-3 orders of magnitude by 2100."

The report points out, however, that "welldesigned coastal protection" could both "reduce expected damages" and "be cost efficient for urban and densely populated... areas".

Despite the urgent need for adaptation and action in a vulnerable city like Mumbai, the city is ignoring climate adaptation programs and infrastructures in its development planning processes. Worse, Mumbai's ongoing infrastructure projects don't address climate change, and as such, may significantly worsen climate risks that its 19 million residents face.

Take, for example, the ways in which climate change is treated in Mumbai's new Coastal Road project, now stalled by the Bombay High Court. The project proposes the construction of a 29.2 km road on the western coast of Mumbai, that aims to mitigate "extreme traffic congestion" and "transport related pollution" in hopes of increasing productivity and quality of life for citizens. (Environmental Impact Assessment Report)

Much of the project is to be built on reclaimed land, even as project documents acknowledge that reclamation makes the city vulnerable to flooding. Further, our reading of the Coastal Road Detailed Project Report and

the Environmental Impact Assessment show that these studies significantly underestimate sea level rise, a key consideration for designing a road being built on reclaimed land.

For example, in its assessment of risks from sea level rise, the project uses data from the 20th century (the period between 1878 and 1993), which indicates an average sea level rise of 1.27 mm/year. (See Coastal Road Detailed Project Report p 47, EIA p 98.) But the rate of sea level rise has more than

doubled in India in just over a decade in line with global rates. Research conducted by Dr A S Unnikrishnan and his team at the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa has shown that sea level rise has increased to 3.2 mm/year in the period 1993-2012 (Unnikrishnan et. al 2015). The IPCC projects sea level rise to accel-

erate still further and faster in the coming years. If infrastructure is being designed for the future (and not for the past), then it remains unclear why planners do not use current and future projections that will more correctly estimate future climate risk in the design of urban infrastructure.

As we note flooding in Mumbai, elsewhere in Maharashtra, Kerala, and beyond, we ask, who would be held responsible for the catastrophes that may unfold in Mumbai when important climate data are ignored in the design of new infrastructure projects? And who will be held responsible for urban catastrophes that might ensue, when climate infrastructure and adaptation plans are never implemented in the city despite all evidence pointing to the need for urgent interventions?

Mumbai is in the midst of a climate emergency. While it is slow and difficult to perceive in the everyday, this emergency requires city administrators to rethink how Mumbai may be remade in and with rising waters. These unprecedented times demand new imaginaries, designs, plans, and infrastructures, not the materialisation of failed ideas of the 20th century. For instance, award winning landscape

architects and planners Dilip da Cunha and Anuradha Mathur have shown that sea walls, river embankments, and reclamation do not always prevent inundation from intensified rains and rising seas. They instead magnify the risks of inundation. Water seeks its own level. While a wall might prevent inundation in one part of the city, it would exacerbate inundation in other parts. Managed wetlands provide water with a place to go, but are difficult to create. What might the Municipal Corporation do to make the city livable amidst a climate crisis?

Climate change is not just an environmental issue. It is a human issue and an urban issue that will dramatically affect every resident of Mumbai, particularly its urban poor Mumbai's current priorities are misplaced. It is currently spending a large part of the city's 'rainy day' corpus to construct a coastal road that few will use. Wouldn't it be wiser for the city to instead spend this money on mitigating the effects of actual rainier days, floods, and rising seas that already are a new normal in the city's climate changed future?

Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on infrastructure, urbanism and environment. He is the author of Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai (2017) and The Promise of Infrastructure (2018). He is currently researching climate change, the sea, and the city. Terens is a Research Assistant in the Department of Anthropology, specializing in Urban Studies)

(Anand is Associate Professor of

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

USCIRF, the Commission concerned over CAB: what are its functions?

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 10

ON MONDAY, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) said it was "deeply troubled" by the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha, "given the religion criterion in the Bill", and recommended that "if the CAB passes in both Houses of Parliament, the US government should consider sanctions against the Home Minister and other principal leadership".

Who are the USCIRF?

The USCIRF is an advisory or a consultative body, which advises the US Congress and the administration on issues pertaining to international religious freedom. On its website, the USCIRF describes itself as an independent, bipartisan US federal government commission that was created by The International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). "The broad-based coalition that advocated strongly for IRFA's enactment sought to elevate the fundamental human right of religious freedom as a central component of

US foreign policy," the website says. In practice, the USCIRF has little teeth in implementation, but acts as a consciencekeeper for the two branches in the US government — the legislature and the executive. It often takes maximalist or extreme positions, and has been used by civil society groups to put pressure on US Congress members and administration officials.

And what is the IRFA?

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 was passed by the 105th US Congress (1997-99) and signed into law by then President Bill Clinton on October 27, 1998. It is a statement of the US's concern over violations of religious freedoms overseas.

The full title of the Act reads: "An act to express United States foreign policy with respect to, and to strengthen United States advocacy on behalf of, individuals persecuted in foreign countries on account of religion; to authorize United States actions in response to violations of religious freedom in foreign countries; to establish an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom within the Department of State, a Commission on International Religious Freedom, and a Special Adviser on International Religious Freedom within the National Security Council; and for other purposes."

What does the USCIRF do? The USCIRF is mandated by US statute to "monitor the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad — not in the United States — using international standards to do so and makes policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress". "USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and Congressional leaders of both political parties. While USCIRF is separate from the State Department, the Department's Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom is a non-voting ex officio Commissioner. A professional, non-partisan staff supports USCIRF's work," according to



Protest against CAB by Assamese film personalities in Guwahati. Dasarath Deka

the commission's website.

The USCIRF's main responsibilities are: ■ To issue an annual report by May 1 of each year, assessing the US government's implementation of IRFA. It recommends countries that the Secretary of State should designate as "Countries of Particular Concern" for engaging in or tolerating "systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom"; documents conditions in about 30 countries; reports on significant trends; and makes recommendations for US policy.

■ To engage Congress by working with

Congressional offices, advising on legislation, testifying at hearings, and holding briefings on religious freedom issues.

■ To meet regularly with Executive Branch officials, including the Departments of State and Homeland Security, to share information, highlight situations of concern, and discuss USCIRF's recommendations for US policy.

How does USCIRF define "freedom of religion or belief abroad"?

On its website, the Commission says:

"Religious freedom is an important human right recognized in international law and treaties... The freedom of religion or belief is an expansive right that includes the freedoms of thought and conscience, and is intertwined with the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. The promotion of this freedom is a necessary component of US foreign policy."

In its statement issued to "raise serious concerns and eye sanctions recommendations" in the aftermath of the passage of the CAB in Lok Sabha, the USCIRF said the Bill "enshrines a pathway to citizenship for immigrants that specifically excludes Muslims, setting a legal criterion for citizenship based on religion". The CAB, it said, "is a dangerous turn in the wrong direction; it runs counter to India's rich history of secular pluralism and the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law regardless of faith. In conjunction with the ongoing National Register of Citizens (NRC) process in Assam and nationwide NRC that the Home Minister seeks to propose, USCIRF fears that the Indian government is creating a religious test for Indian citizenship that would strip citizenship from millions of Muslims".

Has USCIRF raised issues relating to

India in the past? In August this year, USCIRF had issued a statement against the NRC in Assam and said that it creates a "negative and poten-

tially dangerous climate for the Muslim

community" in northeastern India. It had

said that the updated NRC could be used to

disenfranchise Muslims in the region and is part of the government's ongoing efforts to introduce a "religious test" specifically aimed at clearing out Muslims.

In June this year, in response to mob lynching of Tabrez Ansari in Jharkhand in India, USCIRF Chair Tony Perkins had condemned the incident. "We condemn in the strongest terms this brutal murder, in which the perpetrators reportedly forced Ansari to say Hindu chants as they beat him for hours. Ansari later died from the injuries he suffered due to this horrific attack. We call on the Indian government to take concrete actions that will prevent this kind of violence and intimidation by a thorough investigation of Ansari's murder as well as the local police's handling of the case. Lack of accountability will only encourage those who believe they can target religious minorities with impunity," the USCIRF chair had said.

In July 2008, it had urged the US State Department to deny a tourist visa to then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, who had been invited to attend a conference in New Jersey. It had said that "Modi was previously denied entrance to the United States due to his role in riots that overtook the Indian state of Gujarat from February to May 2002 in which reportedly as many as 2,000 Muslims were killed, thousands raped, and over 200,000 displaced. Numerous reports, including reports of official bodies of the Government of India, have documented the role of Modi's state government in the planning and execution of the violence, and the failure to hold perpetrators accountable".

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 253

सहज हो आय कर ढांचा

संकेत दिया कि सरकार व्यक्तिगत आय कर दरों को कम करने और कहीं अधिक तार्किक बनाने पर विचार कर रही है। सरकार ऐसा उठाए जा रहे कदमों के तहत कर सकती है।

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने गत सप्ताह है। सरकार को आगामी बजट में आय कर को संशोधित कर और तार्किक बनाना चाहिए। इसकी तमाम वजह हैं। उदाहरण के लिए इससे पहले सरकार ने कॉर्पोरेशन कर दर में आर्थिक वृद्धि को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए कमी की है जिसके बाद यह तार्किक कदम होगा। इससे प्रत्यक्ष कर सुधार की प्रक्रिया स्मरण रहे कि वित्त वर्ष की दूसरी तिमाही में और आगे ले जाई जा सकेगी। कर ढांचे को आर्थिक वृद्धि दर घटकर 4.5 फीसदी रह गई सहज बनाने से मध्यम से दीर्घ अविध में कर

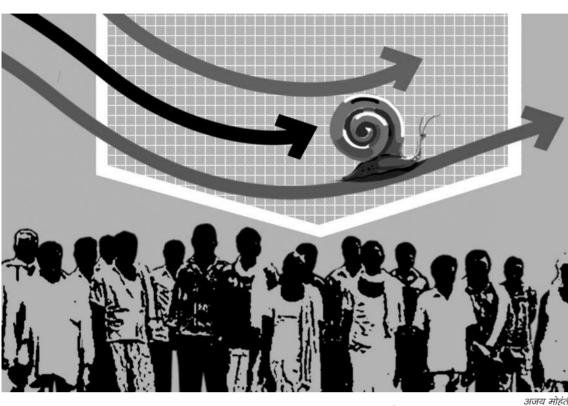
संग्रह में सुधार की संभावना बढती है। दूसरा, इससे करदाताओं की अन्य श्रेणी के लिए कर को तार्किक बनाने और विसंगति दूर करने में

उदाहरण के लिए दिवंगत अरुण जेटली ने 2018 के अपने बजट भाषण में कहा था कि आकलन वर्ष 2016-17 में वेतनभोगी लोगों ने औसतन 76,306 हजार रुपये का कर चुकाया जबिक पेशवरों तथा व्यक्तिगत कारोबारी करदाताओं के मामले में यह औसतन 25,753 रुपये था। यहां तक कि समेकित स्तर पर भी वेतनभोगी लोगों का कर संग्रह व्यक्तिगत कारोबारी करदाताओं और पेशेवरों द्वारा चुकाये गए कर का तीन गुना तक था। तीसरा, व्यक्तिगत करदाताओं के लिए कर दर कम करने से उनकी खर्च करने लायक आय में इजाफा होगा और खपत में सुधार होगा। हालांकि संपूर्ण अर्थव्यवस्था पर इसका प्रभाव सीमित हो सकता है क्योंकि व्यक्तिगत करदाताओं की तादाद बहुत ज्यादा

यकीनन सरकार प्रत्यक्ष कर कानूनों की समीक्षा करने वाले कार्य बल की रिपोर्ट जारी करती तो अच्छा रहता। इससे इस विषय पर और अधिक जानकारीपरक बहस हो पाती। इससे सरकार भी सुधार प्रक्रिया को आगे ले जाने के मामले में कहीं अधिक बेहतर स्थिति में रहती। व्यापक स्तर पर देखें तो एक ओर जहां व्यक्तिगत आय कर दर को तार्किक बनाने की बात उचित है, वहीं यह भी ध्यान रखना होगा कि सरकार राजस्व संग्रह के मोर्चे पर कठिन स्थिति में है और उसे बेहद बारीक संतुलन साधना होगा। दरों में उल्लेखनीय कटौती राजस्व पर बुरा असर डाल सकती है और सरकार की राजकोषीय स्थिति और बिगड़ सकती है। ज्यादातर विश्लेषक मानते हैं कि सरकार के लिए इस राजकोषीय घाटे को जीडीपी के 3.3 फीसदी के तय लक्ष्य के भीतर रखना लगभग असंभव है। चंकि अर्थव्यवस्था में निकट भविष्य में कोई बडा सुधार होता नहीं दिखता इसलिए राजस्व संग्रह अगले वर्ष भी दबाव में रह सकता है।

ऐसे में विसंगतियों को समाप्त करने और रियायतों को तार्किक बनाने पर ध्यान देना चाहिए। इसमें कर दरें भी शामिल हैं। ऐसा करने से राजस्व संग्रहण पर पडने वाले असर को न्यूनतम किया जा सकेगा। जुलाई के बजट में सरकार ने अत्यधिक अमीर करदाताओं पर

अधिभार बढा दिया था। इससे आय कर ढांचा और जटिल हो गया। ऐसे उपायों से बचा जाना चाहिए। एक छोटे समह के लिए कर दरों में अहम वृद्धि कर वंचना की संभावना बढ़ाती है। यह भी निश्चित नहीं है कि आय कर दर में कटौती से व्यय बढ़ेगा ही क्योंकि कठिन वक्त में लोग बचत करना चाहते हैं। तार्किक कर दर वाली सहज व्यवस्था में अनुपालन में सुधार और संग्रह के आधार में इजाफा अवश्य हो सकता है। इस बीच सरकार को कर विभाग में संस्थागत क्षमता बढाने पर भी विचार करना चाहिए। इस दौरान तकनीक का बेहतर इस्तेमाल कर कर वंचना पर निगरानी रखनी चाहिए। इससे राजस्व संग्रहण में बेहतरी आएगी और ईमानदार करदाताओं पर से दबाव कम होगा।



मांग, आपूर्ति और वृद्धि में धींमापन

यदि देश को विकास के क्षेत्र में बदलाव लाना है तो घरेलू मांग को व्यापक और समावेशी बनाने को पहली प्राथमिकता देनी होगी। इस विषय पर विस्तार से अपनी राय दे रहे हैं रियन रॉय

श मं इस जा.. है कि क्या मौजूदा मंदी माग अवज. आपूर्ति बाधित अर्थव्यवस्था को चर्टी है। विश्लेषण किया जाए तो यह सवाल तब उठता है जब मंदी की प्रकृति चक्रीय हो। यदि समेकित मांग कुल उत्पादन क्षमता से कम हो तो अर्थव्यवस्था मांग बाधित होती है। परंत यदि समेकित मांग के बावजद वास्तविक उत्पादन, उत्पादन क्षमता से कम हो तो इसे आपूर्ति क्षेत्र की बाधा वाली मंदी कहा जा सकता है।

ढांचागत मंदी अधिक जटिल होती है। विकासशील देशों में ऐसी मंदी के लिए विशिष्ट कारकों को उत्तरदायी ठहराया जाता है। इनमें बुनियादी ढांचे की कमी, अत्यधिक नियमन आदि प्रमुख हैं। लेकिन मांग और आपूर्ति के कारक भी उतने ही उत्तरदायी होते हैं।

मांग उस मुल्य से संबंधित होती जिस पर वस्तुओं और सेवाओं की पेशकश की जाती है। आपूर्ति क्षेत्र की बाधाओं के कारण कीमतें इतनी अधिक हो सकती हैं कि समेकित मांग कम हो जाए। यह तब होता है जब ये बाधाएं उत्पादकता कम करती हैं और इसलिए कीमत इतनी ज्यादा हो जाए कि वृद्धि को समर्थन देने के लिए जरूरी मांग ही तैयार न हो पाए। व्यापार में कोई बाधा न होने से ऐसी मांग की पूर्ति बढ़े हुए आयात के माध्यम से भी की जा सकती है। इससे घरेलू उत्पादन और वृद्धि को कोई मदद नहीं मिलेगी।

मैं भारत में इसे कुछ इस प्रकार घटित होते देखता हं। वर्ष 1991 के बाद से भारत की वृद्धि की गाथा कमोबेश कभी निर्यात आधारित नहीं रही है। इसे गति प्रदान करने में घरेलू खपत और निवेश मांग की अहम भूमिका रही। संक्षेप में कहा जाए तो देश के शीर्ष 15 करोड़ लोग जिन जिंस का उपयोग करते हैं उनकी कीमतों में 1991 के बाद से गिरावट आई है। इस क्षेत्र की आबादी की आय से तुलना करके देखें तो उन वस्तुओं और सेवाओं की कीमतों में निरंतर गिरावट आई है जिन्हें आर्थिक वृद्धि का प्रमुख संकेतक माना जाता है। इनमें कारें, दैनिक उपयोग की उपभोक्ता वस्तुएं, हवाई यात्राएं आदि शामिल हैं।

इस गिरावट की प्रमुख वजह हैं उदारीकरण, बढ़ती आय और पूंजीगत लाभ। इन क्षेत्रों को उपलब्ध उपभोक्ता और उत्पादक ऋण भी इसकी वजह है। जैसा कि मैंने पहले भी कहा था। इस बात के प्रमाण हैं कि इस क्षेत्र से मांग वृद्धि

बहरहाल ढांचागत अवरोध अभी उन वस्तुओं की समेकित मांग को सीमित किए हुए है जिनका उपभोग देश की अगली 30 करोड की आबादी करती है। वस्त्र आयात की बात करें तो बांग्लादेश और वियतनाम से होने वाला कपड़े का आयात देश की समेकित मांग की पूर्ति कर देता है। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि घरेलू उद्योग उच्च मेहनताने क्षेत्रों से कम वेतन वाले उत्तरी और पूर्वी भारत का रुख नहीं कर पा रहा है। सरकार देश की सबसे बड़ी भूस्वामी है लेकिन इसके बावजूद खासतौर पर शहरों में नियामकीय और संस्थागत बाधाएं इतनी हैं कि वे जमीन का इस्तेमाल कर सस्ते आवास बनाने की संभावनाओं को सीमित करती हैं। न्युनतम आय पर गुजारा कर रहे भारतीय बिना सब्सिडी के बेहतर शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य नहीं पा सकते।

ऐसे में न्युनतम आय अर्जित करने वाले लोग जिन चीजों को खरीदने की आकांक्षा

रखते हैं उनकी मांग इसलिए जोर नहीं पकड़ पाती क्योंकि आपूर्ति क्षेत्र की बाधाओं ने कीमतों को बढा रखा है।

लॉजिस्टिक्स की बढ़ी हुई लागत, महंगी और अविश्वसनीय ऊर्जा आपूर्ति, मानव संसाधन में कम निवेश, शोध एवं विकास पर पर्याप्त ध्यान न देने और निष्प्रभावी और मनमाने नियमन और प्रशासन के साथ राजकोषीय और ऋण नीतियों के सुसंगत नहीं होने से भी उत्पादकता में कमी की समस्या को बढावा मिलता है। इससे लागत बढ़ती है और इन वस्तुओं और सेवाओं का गुणवत्तापुर्ण उत्पादन प्रभावित होता है।

सार्वजनिक नीति के जरिये दी जाने वाली प्रतिक्रिया भी संतोषजनक नहीं रही है। गरीब और न्यूनतम मेहनताना अर्जित करने वालों को खराब गुणवत्ता की सब्सिडी वाली वस्तुओं से ही संतोष करना पड़ता है। इससे वृद्धि को भी कोई सहायता नहीं मिलती। बल्कि इससे लेनदेन की लागत बढती है और दुर्लभ संसाधनों तक पहुंच में प्राथमिकता की चाह भी। यही कारण है कि अफसरशाह और नेताओं को एम्स में चिकित्सा सुविधा, सस्ती दरों पर बेहतरीन निजी स्वास्थ्य सेवा और गुणवत्तापुर्ण सार्वजनिक आवास जैसी सुविधाओं में प्राथमिकता प्रदान की जाती है।

मौजूदा मंदी को कई टीकाकारों ने वित्तीय और ऋण बाजार के तमाम ढांचागत झटकों से जोड़ा है। इसे मध्यम अवधि के निवेश-ऋण रिश्तों की कमी भी माना गया जिसने मध्यम अवधि में देश की वृद्धि दर का निर्धारण किया है। कई आकलन बताते हैं कि बेहतर ऋण सुविधा, नकदी और निवेश को आकर्षक बनाने से हालात सुधर सकते हैं। इन दलीलों में दम है लेकिन मेरी नजर में मौजूदा मंदी में इस बात के संकेत निहित हैं कि देश की वृद्धि गाथा की ढांचागत कमजोरी को दूर करना आवश्यक है भले ही यह प्राथमिक कारण नहीं दिख रहा हो।

मैंने कहीं और यह दलील भी दी थी कि मंदी से निपटने के लिए अल्पाविध के उपाय अधिक आवश्यक हैं। सरकार ने इस दिशा में प्रयास भी किए हैं। मैंने यह सुझाव भी दिया था कि ढांचागत मौद्रिक और ऋण नीति के उपायों को अपनाकर भी इस दिशा में प्रयास किया जा सकता है।

परंत अगर भारत को अपनी विकास अवस्था में बदलाव लाना है तो उसे कहीं अधिक व्यापक और समावेशी घरेलू मांग को महत्ता प्रदान करनी होगी। यह मध्यम अवधि का काम है लेकिन इसके क्रियान्वयन की शुरुआत अल्पावधि के उपायों से होनी चाहिए। यदि ऐसा नहीं किया गया तो अल्पावधि के उपाय मुद्रास्फीतिजनित मंदी की वजह बनेंगे। भारत को ऐसी आय और औद्योगिक नीतियां तैयार करने की आवश्यकता है जो कहीं अधिक व्यापक और समावेशी वृद्धि प्रक्रिया तय करें। ऐसा करके ही हम सफल बदलाव हासिल कर पाएंगे और मध्यम आय के जाल में फंसने से भी बच सकेंगे। इस समस्या पर ध्यान न देने वाले कई देश ऐसे जाल में फंस चुके हैं।

श्रम नीति में किए गए सुधार से अर्थव्यवस्था पर बड़ा असर

भारत की श्रम नीति ने एक नया कलेवर धारण कर लिया है। अब चार श्रम संहिताएं सार्वजनिक रूप से उपलब्ध हैं। ये पारिश्रमिक संहिता, पेशागत सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कामकाजी हालात संहिता. औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता और सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता हैं। पारिश्रमिक संहिता को गत अगस्त की शुरुआत में संसद ने पारित कर दिया था और औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता को गत 28 नवंबर को लोकसभा में पेश किया गया है। पेशागत सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कामकाजी हालात संहिता को गत जुलाई में लोकसभा में पेश किया गया था लेकिन उसे अक्टूबर में संसद की स्थायी समिति को भेज दिया गया। संसदीय समिति की रिपोर्ट अगले महीने आने की संभावना है। केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता के प्रारूप को गत 4 दिसंबर को मंजूरी दी है और इसे जल्द ही संसद में पेश किया जा सकता है। इन चारों संहिताओं में कुल

28 श्रम कानूनों को समाहित किया गया है। इनमें से 13 कानून पेशागत सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कामकाजी हालात संहिता, आठ कानून सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता, चार कानून पारिश्रमिक संहिता और तीन कानून औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता में समाहित किए गए हैं। यह एक लंबा सफर था जो

भारत में आर्थिक सुधारों की धीमी रफ्तार को बयां करता है। दूसरे श्रम आयोग ने वाजपेयी सरकार के समय जून 2002 में रिपोर्ट सौंपी थी। उसने सुझाव दिया था कि मौजूदा श्रम कानूनों को मिलाकर पांच बड़े समूह बनाए जाने चाहिए। आयोग ने औद्योगिक संबंध, पारिश्रमिक, सामाजिक सुरक्षा, सुरक्षा और कल्याण एवं कामकाजी हालात पर समृह गठित करने को कहा था। लेकिन रिपोर्ट सौंपे जाने के 17 साल तक विशेषज्ञ एवं अफसरशाह इन सुझावों के असर को लेकर चर्चा करते रहे। यह सिलसिला तीन सरकारों तक चलता रहा। इन लंबी चर्चाओं से यह भी पता चला कि सरकारें भी राजनीतिक रूप विवादास्पद कानून बनाने को लेकर सशंकित हैं। खुद मोदी सरकार भी अपने दूसरे कार्यकाल में जाकर श्रम कानूनों को चार समहों में वर्गीकृत करने का फैसला ले पाई। हालांकि आयोग



दिल्ली डायरी ए के भट्टाचार्य

के सुझाव को पूरी तरह मानने के बजाय सरकार ने सरक्षा. कल्याण एवं कामकाजी हालात पर बने कानूनों को एक ही संहिता में रख दिया है।

श्रम नीति की चारों संहिताएं

अर्थव्यवस्था के एक अहम क्षेत्र में सुधारों की स्थिति के बारे में क्या बताती हैं ? इस पूरी कवायद के चार अहम निहितार्थ हैं। पहला, केंद्र सरकार ने श्रम नीति एक महत्त्वपूर्ण क्षेत्र में खुद की भूमिका कम कर दी है। पारिश्रमिक संहिता वेतन संबंधी नीतियां तय करने में केंद्र की भूमिका को केवल रेलवे, खनन एवं तेल तक ही सीमित करता है। बाकी सभी क्षेत्रों में राज्यों को पारिश्रमिक से जुड़ी नीतियां तय करने की स्वतंत्रता दी गई है। इसका मतलब है कि विभिन्न उद्योगों के लिए मजदरी तय करने वाले तमाम केंद्रीय कानून अब प्रभावी नहीं रहेंगे। इसी तरह न्युनतम वेतन के मुद्दे पर केंद्र एवं राज्य अपने-अपने मजदुरी स्तर तय कर सकते हैं लेकिन वह देश के भीतर अलग इलाकों के लिए

निर्धारित वेतन से कम नहीं हो दूसरा, नए कानूनों ने श्रम विभाग के निरीक्षकों की शक्तियो को काफी कम कर दिया है। मसलन, पारिश्रमिक संहिता सुनिश्चित करता है कि उल्लंघन के मामलों में अभियोजन की प्रक्रिया शुरू होने के पहले निरीक्षाक - सह - समन्वयक नियोक्ता को एक अवसर देगा। निरीक्षक अभियोजन कार्यवाही तभी शुरू कर सकता है जब पांच वर्षों के भीतर वही उल्लंघन दोहराया जाए। सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता के प्रारूप में भविष्य निधि के दस्तावेज मंगाने की निरीक्षकों की शक्ति पर भी पांच वर्षों की समय-सीमा रखी गई है। उस समय के बाद निरीक्षक ऐसे

रिकॉर्ड तलब नहीं कर सकते हैं तीसरा, नई श्रम नीति में अधिसूचनाओं पर निर्भरता की

प्रवृत्ति देखी गई है जिससे संसद के विधि-निर्माता शायद खश नहीं होंगे। असल में, औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता में उन पुराने प्रावधानों को कायम रखा गया है जिसमें 100 से अधिक कर्मचारियों वाले औद्योगिक प्रतिष्ठानों के नियोक्ता के लिए छंटनी या बंदी करते समय केंद्र या राज्य सरकार की पूर्व-अनुमति लेना जरूरी किया गया है। लेकिन अब इसके साथ केंद्र एवं राज्य सरकारों को यह छूट भी दी गई है कि वे अधिसूचना जारी कर प्रतिष्ठानों में कार्यरत श्रमिकों की न्यूनतम संख्या तय कर सकते हैं। इसी तरह सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता का मसौदा सरकार को यह छूट देता है कि वह अधिसूचना जारी कर कर्मचारी भविष्य निधि संगठन (ईपीएफओ) या कर्मचारी राज्य बीमा निगम (ईएसआईसी) के दायरे में आने वाले संगठन की

सीमा बदल सकती है।

चौथा, नई श्रम नीति ने

कर्मचारियों की नई श्रेणियों को समाहित करने के लिए कानून का दायरा बढ़ाने की गुंजाइश काफी अधिक कर दी है। औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता तय अवधि वाले कर्मचारियों की भी बात करती है और यह सुनिश्चित करती है कि उन्हें भी समान कार्य करने वाले नियमित कर्मचारियों की तरह सामाजिक सुरक्षा एवं पारिश्रमिक के सभी लाभ मिले। पेशागत सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कामकाजी हालात संहिता रंगमंच, फिल्म, मनोरंजन एवं मीडिया जैसे नए क्षेत्रों पर भी लागू होगी। सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता के मसौदे में ग्रैच्युटी एवं बीमा लाभ तय अवधि वाले कर्मचारियों को भी देने का प्रावधान है। मोबाइल ऐप से संचालित होने वाले उद्योगों में भी सिक्रय कर्मचारी इस कानन के दायरे में होंगे। नई अर्थव्यवस्था वाली उबर, ओला या स्विगी जैसी कंपनियों के कर्मचारियों को भी इस प्रावधान का लाभ मिलेगा।

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था पर श्रम नीति में हो रहे इन बडे बदलावों का असर पडना तय है। लेकिन कुछ वर्षों बाद ही यह पता चल पाएगा कि ये बदलाव किस तरह असर डालते हैं।

सम्मति से कैंटीन की सब्सिडी

छोड़ने का निर्णय लिया गया है।

यह निर्णय लोकसभा अध्यक्ष के

सुझाव के बाद लिया गया। सांसदों

द्वारा सब्सिडी छोड़ने से सालाना

17 करोड़ रुपये बचाये जा सकेंगे।

सांसदों द्वारा स्वेच्छा से सब्सिडी

छोड़ने के निर्णय लिए जाने के बाद उन्हें अन्य मदों में मिलने वाली

सब्सिडी भी छोड़ने की पहल

करनी चाहिए। सांसदों को यात्रा

करने पर रेलवे तथा हवाई यात्रा में

भी छूट मिलती है। उन्हें इन सभी

पर मिलने वाली छूट को स्वेच्छा

से छोड देना चाहिए। आरंभ में

सांसदों के वेतन भत्ते काफी कम

थे इसलिए उन्हें कुछ चीजों पर

रियायत मिलती थी। आज उनके

वेतन भत्ते सम्मानजनक स्तर पर

पहुंच चुके हैं। ऐसे में उन्हें ऐसी

मिलने वाली छूट या रियायतों से

परहेज करना चाहिए। सांसद

कानाफूसी

ब्रिटेन : बोरिस को जिताना है

ब्रिटेन में चल रहे चुनाव प्रचार अभियान ने सोमवार को उस वक्त देसी मोड ले लिया जब एक वीडियो सामने आया जिसमें प्रधानमंत्री बोरिस जॉनसन को सारी समस्याओं का एक मात्र हल बताया गया था। वीडियो के बोल थे, 'बोरिस को हमें जिताना है, इस देश को बचाना है।' माना जा रहा है कि हिंदी का यह गीत वहां रहने वाले 15 लाख प्रवासी भारतीयों में से ही किसी समूह ने तैयार किया है। इस वीडियो में ज्यादातर तस्वीरें जॉनसन की और कुछेक तस्वीरें विपक्षी नेता जेरेमी कॉर्बिन की शमिल हैं। कॉर्बिन को वीडियो में झूठा बताया गया है। अब यह वीडियो भारतीय समुदाय के लोगों को आकर्षित कर पाएगा अथवा नहीं यह तो देखना होगा लेकिन फिलहाल तो यह लोगों के बीच मनोरंजन का एक साधन बना हुआ है।

अनूठा विरोध

हुई हैं। देश के कुछ जगहों में प्याज के दाम 100 रुपये से 200 रुपये तक पहुंच गए हैं। राजधानी दिल्ली में भी प्याज के दाम 100 रुपये तक पहुंच चुके हैं। सोमवार को जब कांग्रेस पार्टी सबसे लंबे समय तक अध्यक्ष पद पर रहने वाली नेत्री सोनिया गांधी का जन्मदिन मना रही थी उस वक्त पार्टी के एक नेता और पुदुच्चेरी के मुख्यमंत्री वी नारायणसामी ने केंद्र सरकार के प्याज कीमतें नियंत्रित नहीं रख पाने को लेकर विरोध प्रदर्शन करना तय किया। उन्होंने पार्टी की महिला कार्यकर्ताओं को प्याज के पैकेट तोहफे में दिए और केंद्र सरकार की निष्क्रियता की आलोचना की। पार्टी कार्यकर्ताओं के अलावा वहां से

प्याज की लगातार बढ़ती कीमतें समाचारों की सुर्खियां बनी

गुजर रहे अन्य लोगों को भी प्याज के आधा-आधा किलो के पैकेट तोहफे में मिले। गौरतलब है कि बेमौसम बारिश से फसल नुकसान और प्याज की आवक की कमी के कारण प्याज के दाम इन दिनों काफी बढ़े हुए हैं।

आपका पक्ष

सुरक्षा के लिए जरूरी नागरिकता विधेयक

संसद में सोमवार की रात को नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक पारित हो गया है। गृह मंत्री अमित शाह द्वारा पेश इस विधेयक में अफगानिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और पाकिस्तान से धार्मिक प्रताड़ना के कारण भारत आए हिंदू, सिख, बौद्ध, जैन, पारसी और ईसाई समुदाय के लोगों को भारतीय नागरिकता मिल सकेगी। विधेयक में कहा गया है कि अवैध प्रवासी जो 31 दिसंबर, 2014 तक भारत में प्रवेश कर चुके हैं उनके लिए नागरिकता देने की व्यवस्था की जाएगी। संसद में इस विधेयक के पेश होने पर काफी हंगामा हुआ। विपक्षी दलों का कहना है कि धर्म के आधार पर नागरिकता देना उचित नहीं है। जिसके जवाब में गृह मंत्री ने कहा कि इस्लामिक देशों में मुस्लिम समुदाय के लोग कैसे पीड़ित हो सकते हैं। असम में इस विधेयक को लेकर बंद का आह्वान किया गया है। इस

विधेयक के खिलाफ वहां काफी



विरोध प्रदर्शन हो रहा है। सबसे बडा सवाल है कि इस विधेयक की जरूरत क्यों पड़ी। आजादी के समय भारत के तीन टुकड़े हुए जिसमें पाकिस्तान और पूर्वी पाकिस्तान (अब बांग्लदेश) का गठन हुआ। भारत धर्म निरपेक्ष देश बना जिसमें सभी धर्मों को समान अधिकार दिए गए। लेकिन पाकिस्तान और बांग्लादेश इस्लाम

धर्म का देश बना जहां अन्य समुदाय एवं धर्मों के लोगों को प्रताड़ित किया जाने लगा। धार्मिक प्रताड़ना से बचने के लिए ऐसे लोगों में से कुछ ने भारत में शरण

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

ली लेकिन उन्हें यहां की नागरिकता नहीं मिल सकी। इसके अलावा भारत में पाकिस्तान और बांग्लादेश से काफी घुसपैठ होने लगी है। इससे देश की सुरक्षा को खतरा होने लगा था। पाकिस्तान के कब्जे वाले कश्मीर से आतंकी घुसपैठ कर कश्मीर में आतंकी गतिविधियों को अंजाम देते हैं। अब देश में हर व्यक्ति की सही पहचान होगी तथा आतंकियों की पहचान भी हो सकेगी। नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक देश की सुरक्षा के लिहाज से भी सही है।

राजेश कुमार, नई दिल्ली

सांसदों का सब्सिडी छोडना सराहनीय

पर मिलने वाली सब्सिडी को सांसदों द्वारा छोड़ा जाना सराहनीय

आवास के रखरखाव में भी काफी खर्च होता है। अगर देश के सांसद बचत की पहल करेंगे तो उस राशि 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

सोमवार की रात को लोकसभा में नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक पारित हुआ

-पीटीआई

संसद के कैंटीन में खाद्य वस्तुओं पहल है। सभी सांसदों द्वारा सर्व

> का देश के विकास कार्यों में अहम योगदान होगा।

प्रियंका कुमारी, नोएडा



असल दोष यह है कि दोषों को सुधारने की कोशिश ही न की जाए

शरारत भरा दुष्प्रचार

यह बेशर्मी की पराकाष्ठा है कि लोकसभा से पारित नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक पर पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान भी आपत्ति जता रहे हैं। जो देश धार्मिक आधार पर अल्पसंख्यकों के उत्पीड़न के मामले में दुनिया भर में कुख्यात हो और जहां अल्पसंख्यक एक तरह से अंतिम सांसें गिन रहे हों वह आखिर किस मुंह से भारत को नसीहत दे सकता है? नागरिकता विधेयक पर इमरान खान की शरारत भरी टिप्पणी भारत के आंतरिक मामलों में हस्तक्षेप ही नहीं, लोगों को गुमराह करने की कोशिश भी है। यह सहज ही समझा जा सकता है कि इमरान खान यह धृष्टता इसीलिए कर सके, क्योंकि हमारे कई विपक्षी दल यह दुष्प्रचार करने में जुटे हुए हैं कि यह विधेयक मुस्लिम विरोधी है। आखिर जिस विधेयक का देश के किसी भी मजहब के नागरिकों से कहीं कोई लेना-देना ही नहीं उसे लेकर यह माहौल क्यों बनाया जा रहा है कि वह भारतीय मुसलमानों के हित में नहीं? नागरिकता विधेयक को लेकर जानबूझकर दुष्प्रचार तब किया जा रहा है जब विपक्ष की आपत्तियों का जवाब देते हुए गृहमंत्री अमित शाह ने बार-बार यह स्पष्ट किया कि इस कानूनी कवायद का भारतीय मुसलमानों से कोई लेना-देना नहीं। जो भी इस दुष्प्रचार में लिप्त हैं उन्हें बेनकाब करने की जरूरत है, क्योंकि कोई इस विधेयक को जिन्ना के विचारों के अनुरूप बता रहा है तो कोई भारतीय मूल्यों के प्रतिकूल? क्या भारत का हित इसमें है कि दुनिया भर के लोगों को देश में बसने की इजाजत दे दी जाए?

यह मानने के अच्छे-भले कारण हैं कि नागरिकता विधेयक को लेकर दुष्प्रचार करने वाले सब कुछ जानते हुए भी इस तथ्य की अनदेखी करना पसंद कर रहे हैं कि यदि इसमें कुछ विसंगतियां होंगी तो उच्चतम न्यायालय के पास उन्हें दूर करने का अधिकार होगा। यह अच्छा हुआ कि भारत ने नागरिकता विधेयक पर एक अमेरिकी आयोग की टिप्पणी का प्रतिवाद करने में देर नहीं की। इस आयोग की टिप्पणी अनावश्यक ही नहीं, अज्ञानता से भी भरी है। उसे इससे परिचित होना चाहिए कि खुद अमेरिकी प्रशासन अपने हिसाब से यह तय करता रहा है कि उसे किन देशों के नागरिक स्वीकार हैं और किन देशों के नहीं ? उसके ऐसे कई फैसलों को वहां की अदालतों ने सही भी ठहराया है। अमेरिका या फिर अन्य किसी देश को यह तय करने का अधिकार नहीं मिल सकता कि भारत के नागरिकता संबंधी नियम-कानून कैसे हों ? यह आवश्यक है कि भारत सरकार पाकिस्तान को भी सख्त संदेश दे कि वह उसके आंतरिक मामलों में टांग अड़ाने से बाज आए। यह भी उचित होगा कि भारत की ओर से पाकिस्तान में अल्पसंख्यकों के उत्पीड़न के मामले को उठाया जाए।

कोलकाता के चटकल उद्योग से यूपी-बिहार समेत कई राज्यों का गहरा नाता है। जूट मिलों की बदहाली ने रोजगार के लिए बंगाल को ठिकाना बनाने वालों के सपनों पर पहरे बिठा दिए। कुछ लौट गए तो कुछ दूसरे धंधों से जुड़ गए। रोजगार की तलाश में आने वाली नई खेप की आमद भी कम <u>ह</u>ई। अब उम्मीद की रोशनी दिखाई पड़ी है। जूट मिलों में रोजगार की नई संभावना दिखने लगी है। दरअसल केंद्र सरकार ने अनाजों की पैकेजिंग में 100 फीसद जूट की बोरियों के इस्तेमाल का फैसला किया है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की अध्यक्षता में कैबिनेट कमेटी ऑन इकोनॉमिक अफेयर्स की बैठक में केंद्र सरकार ने अनाजों और चीनी की पैकेजिंग के लिए जूट की बोरियों का इस्तेमाल अनिवार्य कर दिया है। प्रधानमंत्री बंगाल की नब्ज जानते हैं और उनके इस फैसले से सर्वाधिक प्रभावित यही राज्य होगा। यह फैसला 2021 में बंगाल में होने वाले विधानसभा चुनाव में भाजपा के पक्ष में माहौल बनाने में कारगर साबित हो सकता है, क्योंकि यहां दशकों से रह रहे मजदूर वर्ग का इससे सीधा वास्ता है। कोलकाता की दर्जनों जूट मिलें बंद हो चुकी हैं। जूट उद्योग पर अभी तक आफत के ही बादल मंडरा रहे थे, लेकिन अब अनाजों की पैकेजिंग के लिए जुट की बोरियों की मांग बढ़ेगी। यह मांग निःसंदेह जुट मिलों को पुनर्जीवित करने में सहायक सिद्ध होगी। केंद्र सरकार ने जूट पैकेजिंग मैटेरियल एक्ट, 1987 के तहत जूट पैकेजिंग को बरकरार रखा है। जूट उद्योग को बढ़ावा देने के लिए मोदी सरकार ने प्रयास भी किया है। इस फैसले से करीब पौने चार लाख मजदुरों और लाखों किसानों को लाभ मिलेगा। सिर्फ बंगाल, यूपी और बिहार ही नहीं, ओडिशा, असम, आंध्र प्रदेश, मेघालय और त्रिपुरा जैसे राज्य भी इससे प्रभावित होंगे। मोदी के इस फैसले की सर्वत्र सराहना हो रही है। भारतीय जूट मिल्स एसोसिएशन ने भी मोदी सरकार के इस कदम की सराहना की है। इस फैसले से जहां एक तरफ रोजगार को बढ़ावा मिलेगा, वहीं दूसरी तरफ पर्यावरण संरक्षण को भी बल मिलेगा। सरकार ने प्लास्टिक की बोरियों पर रोक लगा दी है। प्लास्टिक की बोरियों पर रोक लगाए जाने पर मोदी ने खास जोर दिया है। अभी तक जूट बोरियों की अनुपलब्धता के चलते फर्टिलाइजर कॉरपोरेशन ऑफ इंडिया को प्लास्टिक की बोरियों के इस्तेमाल की छूट मिली हुई थी, लेकिन सरकार ने जूट को महत्व और प्लास्टिक पर रोक लगाकर दोहरे लाभ की भूमिका रची है। निःसंदेह यह फैसला उम्मीदों को परवान चढ़ाने वाला होगा। भविष्य में जुट मिलों के खुलने और नई मिलों की नींव पड़ने से रोजगार की तलाश पूरी होगी और खाली हाथों को काम मिलेगा।

उचित आधार वाला नागरिकता विधेयक



इस दलील की अनदेखी नहीं होनी चाहिए कि नागरिकता विधेयक का मकसद विभाजन के बाद के हालात से निपटना है

गरिकता संशोधन विधेयक पर संसद के भीतर और बाहर बहस गर्म है। यह बहस मीडिया में भी है और सोशल मीडिया में भी। हर कोई इस या उस पक्ष में अपनी राय रख रहा है। आलोचक इस विधेयक को मुस्लिम विरोधी के तौर पर पेश कर रहे हैं। जो विधेयक के विरोध में नहीं हैं वे उसका समर्थन इसलिए नहीं कर रहे हैं कि यह कथित तौर पर मुस्लिम विरोधी है। वे तो इसका समर्थन इसलिए कर रहे हैं, क्योंकि यह पड़ोसी देशों के उन सताए गए अल्पसंख्यकों के पक्ष में है जिनका कहीं ठौर-ठिकाना नहीं। 1947 में जब देश का धार्मिक आधार

पर बंटवारा हुआ तब भारत ने अपनी हिंदू मान्यताओं के चलते धर्म आधारित देश बनना पसंद नहीं किया। हिंदू मान्यताएं सेक्युलरिज्म के अनुकूल हैं और उनका किसी भी पंथ के साथ कहीं कोई टकराव भी नहीं। भारतीय इतिहास इस तरह के दुष्टांतों से भरा पड़ा है कि भारत ने विभिन्न पंथों के धार्मिक आधार पर सताए गए लोगों के लिए अपने द्वार किस उदारता के साथ खोले। इस मौके पर देश की पहली मस्जिद का संज्ञान भी लिया जाना चाहिए जो केरल में बनी। अगर भारत ने किसी धर्म को अपना राजकीय धर्म नहीं घोषित किया तो यह किसी विवाद या दुविधा के कारण नहीं, लेकिन भारत से अलग होकर बने पाकिस्तान ने खुद को इस्लामिक देश घोषित किया। उसने ऐसा तब किया जब वहां अच्छी-खासी संख्या में धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यक रह रहे थे। इन धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों ने इस उम्मीद में भारत की ओर पलायन नहीं किया कि नए देश में उनके अधिकार सुरक्षित रहेंगे। वक्त ने उन्हें गलत साबित किया। जब बांग्लादेश पाकिस्तान से अलग हुआ तो उसने भी खुद को इस्लामिक देश घोषित किया। समय के साथ इन दोनों देशों में बलात मतांतरण और उत्पीड़न के कारण धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों की संख्या घटनी शुरू हो गई। इसके विपरीत भारत में मुसलमानों की संख्या बढ़ती गई। आज यह बढ़कर 14 प्रतिशत हो गई है।

नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक में पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश के अलावा जिस तीसरे देश अफगानिस्तान का उल्लेख है वहां भी लगातार चले युद्ध और तालिबान के दमनकारी शासन के चलते सिखों और हिंदुओं का सफाया हुआ। इस सफाए को दुनिया ने भी देखा। वास्तव में इसी कारण नागरिकता विधेयक में अफगानिस्तान को शामिल किया गया है। नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक के विरोधी यह तर्क दे रहे हैं कि इन तीनों देशों के साथ-साथ म्यांमार में भी मुसलमानों का उत्पीड़न हो रहा है। निःसंदेह अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती।

पाकिस्तान में अहमदिया और शिया सताए जा रहे हैं। यह तब है जब इस्लाम वहां का राजकीय धर्म है। चूंकि ये समुदाय पाकिस्तान के निर्माण में सहायक बने और उसकी आंतरिक संरचना का अंग हैं इसलिए उनकी देख-रेख करना पाकिस्तान सरकार की जिम्मेदारी बनती है। इस जिम्मेदारी के लिए उसे जवाबदेह बनाया



जाना चाहिए। पाकिस्तान के बलूचिस्तान इलाके में लोगों का उत्पीड़न इसलिए हो रहा है, क्योंकि वहां के लोग आत्मनिर्णय का अधिकार मांग रहे हैं। वहां की समस्या को धार्मिक आधार पर किए जाने वाले उत्पीड़न की संज्ञा नहीं दी

म्यांमार के अराकान इलाके में रोहिंग्या उत्पीड़न का शिकार हो रहे हैं। उनके उत्पीड़न पर आंग सान सू को अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत के समक्ष अपनी स्थिति स्पष्ट करनी पड़ रही है। अराकान में रह रहे हिंदू भी रोहिंग्या आतंकियों के हाथों प्रताडित हो रहे हैं। बहुत दिन नहीं हुए जब वहां एक कब्र में दफनाए गए करीब सौ

हिंदुओं के शव मिले थे।

चूंकि नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक में श्रीलंका के तमिल हिंदुओं और मुसलमानों को भी शामिल नहीं किया गया है इसलिए सरकार की इस दलील में दम है कि इस विधेयक का मकसद विभाजन के पहले और बाद के हालात से निपटना है। अफगानिस्तान इस विधेयक का हिस्सा है तो वहां के युद्ध जैसे असामान्य हालात के कारण। अफगानिस्तान के विपरीत म्यांमार एक लोकतांत्रिक देश है और वहां एक विधिवत सरकार है। यह सरकार धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों के उत्पीड़न पर अपने लोगों और साथ ही अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय के प्रति जवाबदेह है। म्यांमार सरकार ने रोहिंग्याओं से देश लौटने को कहा भी है। इसकी संभावना है कि उनकी वापसी को सुनिश्चित किया जाएगा।

एक आदर्श विश्व में हमें किसी सीमा की जरूरत नहीं, लेकिन आज के खतरनाक माहौल में देशों को अपनी सीमाओं को न सिर्फ सुरक्षा के दृष्टिकोण से, बल्कि अर्थव्यवस्था के लिहाज से भी गंभीरता से लेना पड़ रहा है। भारत जैसे विकासशील देश में विशाल आबादी की अपनी चुनौतियां हैं। ऐसे में हमें यह सोचना पड़ेगा कि आखिर हम और कितने शरणार्थियों को स्वीकार कर सकते हैं। आज तो यूरोप के समृद्ध देश भी इसके प्रति कड़ा रुख अपनाए हुए हैं। ब्रिटेन में इस पर बहस छिड़ी है कि खुली सीमा उनके हित में नहीं है। ब्रेक्जिट इसी की देन है। हमारी सीमा बांग्लादेश से लगती

है। दशकों से वहां से लोग बेहतर जीवन की उम्मीद में भारत में प्रवेश कर रहे हैं। वे उस क्षेत्र की आबादी के साथ घुलमिल गए हैं। इससे वहां की आबादी का संतुलन बिगड़ गया है। संसाधनों पर उनका कब्जा हो गया है। इसके अलावा वे असम और पश्चिम बंगाल के कुछ हिस्से में कानून व्यवस्था के लिए भी खतरा पैदा कर रहे हैं। दोष बेहतर जीवन की चाह रखने वाले गरीबों का नहीं, बल्कि स्वार्थी नेताओं का है जो वोट बैंक की राजनीतिक चमकाने के लिए घुसपैठ को बढ़ावा देते रहे।

बेलगाम घुसपैठ से देश की सुरक्षा के लिए पैदा हो रहे खतरे की भी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती। तब तो बिल्कुल भी नहीं जब खुफिया एजेंसियां यह कह रही हों कि हूजी सरीखे आतंकी संगठन घुसपैठ को बढ़ावा देने के साथ ही घुसपैठियों के बीच पैठ भी बना रहे हैं। इन संगठनों का मकसद भारत में हिंसा और आतंक फैलाना ही है। इसका कोई मतलब नर्ह कि राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के सवाल की चिंता करने में संकोच बरता जाए। चूंकि विपक्षी दलों की ओर से नागरिकता विधेयक का विरोध किय जा रहा है इसलिए वह एक भावनात्मक मसला भी बन रहा है। हैरत नहीं कि भारतीय मुस्लिम इस विधेयक को भेदभाव करना वाला समझें जबकि सच यह है कि इससे उनका कोई लेना-देना नहीं। चूंकि धारणा का महत्व होता है इसलिए सत्ताधारी दल और सरकार के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि वह लोगों तक पहुंच बढ़ाए और यह स्पष्ट करे कि इस विधेयक को ऐसा स्वरूप क्यों दिया गया? इस विधेयक पर संसद की मुहर लगने के आसार हैं, लेकिन लोकतंत्र में जनता को उन मुद्दों से परिचित होना चाहिए जिनके बारे में उसका यह मानना हो कि वे उस पर असर डाल सकते हैं। पारदर्शिता और खल संवाद भरोसे को बढाने में सहायक ही बनता है

> विश्लेषक हैं। response@jagran.com

(लेखिका ब्लॉगर एवं राजनीतिक

दोराहे पर खड़ा ब्रिटेन

टेन के निचले सदन हाउस ऑफ कॉमंस की 650 सीटों के लिए 12 दिसंबर को चुनाव होने जा रहा है। भारत की तरह ब्रिटेन में भी हर पांच वर्ष में आम चुनाव होते हैं, लेकिन ब्रेक्जिट की अनिश्चितता के चलते वहां हाल के वर्षों में राजनीतिक अस्थिरता इस कदर बढ़ी कि 2015 के बाद से यह ब्रिटेन का तीसरा संसदीय चुनाव है। ब्रिटेन के आधुनिक इतिहास में यह सबसे महत्वपूर्ण चुनाव है। इसके नतीजे उसकी आगे की राह तय करेंगे। अभी ब्रिटेन दोराहे पर खड़ा है। दरअसल 2016 में एक जनमत संग्रह के द्वारा ब्रिटेन के बहुसंख्यक 52 प्रतिशत मतदाताओं ने यूरोपीय आर्थिक संघ से बाहर निकलने का विवादास्पद निर्णय लिया, लेकिन वह फैसला अब तक अपने अंजाम तक नहीं पहुंच सका है। इस दौरान ब्रिटेन की राजनीतिक और सामाजिक खाई काफी चौड़ी हो गई, जिसका दुष्प्रभाव चुनाव में नजर आ रहा है। मैं 1983 से यहां के चुनावों का विश्लेषण कर रहा हूं, पर चुनावों में ऐसी कड़वाहट, इतना क्रोध और इतने आरोप-प्रत्यारोप पहले कभी नहीं देखे। देश विभाजित है। जनता भ्रमित है। व्यापारी चिंतित हैं। युवा आक्रोशित हैं और अल्पसंख्यक अपने भविष्य के प्रति आशंकित हैं। 2008 की आर्थिक मंदी के बाद से ब्रिटेन की

अर्थव्यवस्था उबर नहीं पाई है। स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, आवास और सामाजिक सुरक्षा में लगातार कटौतियां होती रही हैं। कमजोर तबके के लोगों का वेतन बढ़ा नहीं है। गरीबों और अमीरों के बीच की खाई भी बढी है। अपनी इन विफलताओं को छिपाने के लिए ब्रिटेन के बहुत से राजनीतिज्ञों ने इन आर्थिक कठिनाइयों के लिए यूरोपीय संघ को दोषी ठहराना शुरू कर दिया। ब्रिटेन प्रतिवर्ष यूरोपीय संघ को भारी अनुदान देता है। उदाहरण के लिए 2018 में ब्रिटेन ने यूरोपीय संघ के बजट में 8.9 अरब पाउंड का अतिरिक्त अनदान दिया। ब्रेक्जिट के पक्षधर नेताओं का मानना है कि यूरोपीय संघ छोड़ने के बाद 8.9 अरब पाउंड की इस भारी भरकम रकम को स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा और रोजगार जैसी स्थानीय सेवाओं पर खर्च किया

सत्तारूढ़ कंजरवेटिव पार्टी के प्रधानमंत्री बोरिस जॉनसन का कहना है कि चुनाव जीतने के तुरंत बाद ब्रेक्जिट विधेयक को क्रिसमस से पहले संसद में पास कराया जाएगा और 30 जनवरी से पहले ब्रिटेन यूरोपीय संघ से बाहर आ जाएगा। लिबरल डेमोक्रेटिक पार्टी की नेता यूरोपीय संघ में बने रहना चाहती हैं। वहीं प्रमुख



विपक्षी लेबर पार्टी के नेता जेरेमी कोर्बिन का कहना है कि पहले तो वे यूरोपीय संघ के साथ ब्रेक्जिट के लिए एक नया समझौता करेंगे। फिर उस समझौते पर एक नया जनमत संग्रह कराएंगे। यदि जनता ने इस नए समझौते का समर्थन किया तो ब्रिटेन यूरोपीय संघ को छोड़ देगा और यदि समझौते को खारिज कर दिया तो ब्रिटेन युरोपीय संघ में बना रहेगा। लेबर पार्टी की इस नीति को लेकर ब्रेक्जिट से उकताए मतदाताओं के मन में दो आशंकाएं हैं। एक तो यह कि अंतिम फैसला होने में महीनों लग सकते हैं और दूसरा हो सकता है कि जेरेमी कोर्बिन को स्पष्ट बहुमत न मिले। उन्हें स्कॉटलैंड की आजादी की समर्थक स्कॉटिश नेशनल पार्टी (एसएनपी) के साथ मिलकर सरकार बनानी पड़ सकती है। एसएनपी पहले ही यह कह चुकी है कि यदि ब्रिटेन ने ब्रेक्जिट का फैसला किया तो वह स्कॉटलैंड की आजादी के लिए जनमत संग्रह कराना चाहेगी, क्योंकि स्कॉटलैंड की जनता यूरोप में रहना चाहती है। ब्रिटेन के बहुत से मतदाता मानते हैं कि यदि एसएनपी और लेबर पार्टी की साझा सरकार बनती है तो भविष्य में ब्रिटेन टूट सकता है। स्कॉटलैंड यूनाइटेड किंगडम से

ब्रिटिश राजनीति का एक और निराशाजनक पक्ष है जनता में तीनों प्रमुख पार्टियों के नेताओं के प्रति अविश्वास का भाव। बोरिस जॉनसन के बारे में माना जाता है कि उन्हें सिर्फ अपनी कुर्सी और अपने अमीर समर्थकों की चिंता है। जेरेमी कोर्बिन अपने धुर-वामपंथी विचारों के कारण हमेशा विवादास्पद रहे हैं। वह ब्रिटेन की राजशाही में यकीन नहीं रखते। वह अफगानिस्तान से लेकर सीरिया तक ब्रिटेन के सैनिक अभियानों के विरोधी रहे हैं। उन पर यहूदी विरोधी होने के गंभीर आरोप हैं। वह कश्मीर में अंतरराष्ट्रीय हस्तक्षेप के समर्थक हैं। वह पाकिस्तान के इस दृष्टिकोण का भी समर्थन करते है कि भारत कश्मीर में मानवाधिकारों का उल्लंघन कर रहा है। कोर्बिन के भारत विरोधी रुख के कारण भारतीय मूल के मतदाता लेबर पार्टी से नाराज हैं। 15 अगस्त को जब भारतीय मूल के लोग भारत के उच्चायोग के सामने जश्न माना रहे थे तो हजारों पाकिस्तान समर्थकों की एक भीड़ ने वहां हिंसक प्रदर्शन किया। उस प्रदर्शन में लेबर पार्टी के कई सांसदों ने भारत विरोधी भड़काऊ भाषण दिए। सितंबर में लेबर पार्टी के वार्षिक अधिवेशन में अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के विरोध और कश्मीर की आजादी के समर्थन में एक प्रस्ताव पारित किया गया। पाकिस्तान समर्थक गुटों ने कंजरवेटिव पार्टी के उन सांसदों को हराने के लिए एक अभियान शुरू किया है, जिन्होंने भारत के पक्ष में आवाज उठाई थी। मस्जिदों में लेबर पार्टी के समर्थन में बड़े बड़े पोस्टर देखे जा सकते हैं।

ब्रिटिश चुनाव में जारी इस सांप्रदायिक खेल का विरोध करने के लिए भारतीय मूल के संगठनों ने भी ब्रिटिश हिंदू वोट मैटर्स नामक एक लेबर विरोधी अभियान चलाया है। रोचक यह है कि इस्लाम और कुरान का वास्ता देकर मुस्लिम वोट को प्रभावित करने वाले लेबर नेता अब यह शिकायत कर रहे हैं कि भारत ब्रिटेन की आंतरिक राजनीति में हस्तक्षेप कर रहा है। जबकि वास्तविकता इसके विपरीत है। ब्रेक्जिट की विवादास्पद राजनीति ने ब्रिटेन के सहिष्णु समाज को गहरी चोट पहुंचाई है। भारतीय और पाकिस्तानी समुदाय हिंदू-मुस्लिम प्रतिद्वंद्विता के आधार पर मतदान का मन बना चुका है। दक्षिणपंथियों और वामपंथियों के बीच मानो तलवारें खिंची हैं। मीडिया में उग्र बहस जारी है। जनता की कुंठा बढ़ती जा रही है। यदि अगले शुक्रवार की सुबह कंजरवेटिव पार्टी को बहुमत नहीं मिलता तो सामाजिक तनाव की यह स्थिति अनिश्चित

> (लेखक लंदन में रह रहे वरिष्ठ पत्रकार हैं) response@jagran.com



सद्बुद्धि

विकास और विनाश की जड़ सद्बुद्धि और दुर्बुद्धि को माना गया है। सद्बुद्धि मानव मस्तिष्क में सकारात्मक सोच की उपज करने वाली ईश्वर प्रदत्त औषधीय शक्ति है। इससे अवरोधों से भरे मार्ग पर भी रास्ता तैयार करने की क्षमता विकसित होती है और लक्ष्य तय कर लिय जाता है। सद्बुद्धि को जीवन में धारण करने के कारण ही व्यक्ति का विकास होता है। वहीं दुर्बुद्धि-ग्रस्त होने से मनुष्य का हर तरह से पतन हो जाता है।

भिक्त की प्रगाढ़ता जब बढ़ती है तो परमात्मा वरदान के रूप में भक्त को सद्बुद्धि के रूप में दैवी संपदा प्रदान करते हैं, जिससे उसे नाना प्रकार के लौकिक सुख, संपत्ति, धन दौलत, यश-कीर्ति, पद-प्रतिष्ठा की प्राप्ति होती रहती है। वहीं ईश्वर के प्रति नास्तिकता का भाव होने के कारण दुर्बुद्धि-ग्रस्त व्यक्ति को पग-पग पर ठोकर अपकीर्ति, दुख, संताप, पीड़ा, कष्ट प्राप्त होते हैं। ईश्वर के प्रति नास्तिकता के कारण ही उसकी मित क्षीण हो जाती है और समस्त संपदा नष्ट हो जाती है जबिक सद्बुद्धि के कारण असहाय व्यक्ति भी अपना जीविकोपार्जन कर लेता है। किसी के समक्ष उसे हाथ फैलाने, भिक्षा मांगने की जरूरत महसूस नहीं होती है।

सद्बुद्धि के जागरण से ही जीवन की समस्त अनसुलझी समस्याओं का समाधान किया जाना संभव है। प्राचीन समय में समस्त ऋषि-महर्षि और देवगण सद्बुद्धि के जागरण के लिए नित्य गायत्री उपासना किया करते थे। यही अंतर्दृष्टि के जागरण का भी मूल है। इसके बिना तो व्यक्ति मूढ़, मूर्ख, पशु-तुल्य निज जीवनयापन करता है। आत्मिक प्रगति और जीवन की सार्थकता का स्वर्णिम अवसर तो सद्बुद्धि के जागरण से ही संभव होता है। ऋषि-मुनि जीवन को संस्कारित एवं बंधन मुक्त बनाने के लिए बाल्य काल से ही सद्बुद्धि के जागरण का अभ्यास कराते थे। जिससे बच्चों में उत्कृष्ट सोच, स्वभाव, कर्म का जन्म होता था और इसके कारण उनका जीवन मनुष्यता को पाकर सुखी संपन्न, नैतिक प्रधान बनकर गौरवशाली एवं महान बन जाता था।

आचार्य रामकुमार बघेल, पलवल

मोबाइल फोन ने बदली दुनिया

3 अप्रैल, 1973 को जब मोटोरोला कंपनी के मालिक मार्टिन कूपर ने दुनिया के सामने एक किलो वजनी पहला मोबाइल फोन प्रस्तुत किया था तो शायद उन्होंने यह कल्पना भी नहीं की होगी कि विज्ञान का यह चमत्कारिक ईजाद एक दिन पूरी दुनिया को ही सम्मोहित कर लेगा! मोबाइल फोन के आगमन के बाद न सिर्फ पूरी दुनिया तकनीक के मामले में बड़ी तेजी से परिवर्तित हुई है, अपितु 'विकेंद्रीकृत तकनीक' की अवधारणा को साकार करने में भी इसकी भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण रही है। लोगों को तकनीक से जोड़ने तथा उनमें तकनीकी समझ विकसित करने का बहुत बड़ा श्रेय मोबाइल को ही जाता है। कभी सिर्फ फोन करने और संदेश भेजने के लिए इस्तेमाल किया जाने वाला मोबाइल अब अपने परंपरागत दायरे से बहुत आगे निकल चुका है। स्मार्टफोन के आगमन के बाद ऐसा लगता है मानो पूरी दुनिया महज पांच-छह इंच की स्क्रीन में समा गई है। बहुद्देशीय प्रकृति होने की वजह से मोबाइल ने आधुनिक जीवन को अत्यंत सरल और सुगम बना दिया है।

एक अनुमान के मुताबिक देश में करीब

लोगों को तकनीक से जोड़ने तथा उनमें तकनीकी समझ विकसित करने का बहुत बड़ा श्रेय मोबाइल फोन को ही जाता है

80 करोड़ मोबाइल फोन धारक हैं। आश्चर्य की बात है कि इस सूची में 50 से 60 लाख फोन प्रतिवर्ष जुड़ भी रहे हैं! हालांकि कुछेक दशक पूर्व ऐसा बिल्कुल भी नहीं था। भारत में मोबाइल फोन का आगमन 1995 में हुआ, जब बंगाल के तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री ज्योति बसु ने तत्कालीन केंद्रीय दूरसंचार मंत्री सुखराम से मोबाइल फोन के जरिये बात करके देश में मोबाइल के आगमन का श्रीगणेश किया था। मोबाइल फोन खरीदना तब बहुतों के लिए एक बड़ा सपना था। स्थिति यह थी कि तब इनकमिंग कॉल के भी पैसे देने होते थे।

बहरहाल मौजूदा समय में देश तकनीक के मामले में भारी बदलाव के दौर से गुजर रहा है। केंद्र सरकार के प्रयासों से देश में डिजिटल क्रांति को नई दिशा मिली है। सच्चाई भी यही है कि आज के इस तकनीकी दौर में जो व्यक्ति

दूर है, वह निश्चय ही तकनीक के मामले में गरीबी रेखा से नीचे जीवन व्यतीत कर रहा है! देश को डिजिटल क्रांति के पथ पर अग्रसर रखना उचित कदम तो है। किंतु हमें यह भी ध्यान में रखकर चलना होगा कि देश में बिजली किल्लत, सुस्त इंटरनेट, डाटा की महंगी दर जैसी समस्याएं डिजिटल भारत की योजना के लिए बाधक बन सकती हैं। इसलिए डिजिटलीकरण के साथ-साथ बुनियादी मुद्दों पर भी काम करने की आवश्यकता है। तकनीक का प्रयोग बढ़ने से पर्यावरण संरक्षण होगा। सरकारी विभागों में पेपरलेस कार्य तथा ई-शिक्षा को व्यवहार की जमीन पर उतारते ही कागज के कारण होने वाले पेड़ों की बहुसंख्य कटाई पर अंकुश लगाया जा सकेगा।

कहा जाता है कि एक तकनीक आपको दुसरी तकनीक से जोड़ती है। ऐसे में अगर हम तकनीक से जुड़े नहीं रहते हैं तो नई-नई तकनीकें भी हमारी पहुंच से दूर रह जाएंगी। इसलिए जरूरी है कि हम तकनीक से जुड़े रहें और उसका सीमित तथा सार्थक प्रयोग भी करते रहें।

(लेखक बीएचयू में अध्येता हैं)

समान नागरिक संहिता वक्त की मांग

समान नागरिक संहिता में बेवजह की देरी शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में नाइश हसन ने समान नागरिक संहिता को लागू करना हर धर्म के लोगों के लिए हितैषी बताया है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट भी लंबे समय से देश में समान नागरिक संहिता लाने की बात करता रहा है। अगर समान नागरिक संहिता लागु हो जाए तो यह हमारे देश की एकता और अखंडता को और मजबूत करने का काम करेगी। मोदी सरकार को जल्द ही इसे लाने का फैसला करना चाहिए। जब संविधान में हर धर्म-जाति के लोगों को एक समान अधिकार और कर्तव्य का प्रावधान है तो फिर समान नागरिक संहिता लाग् करने में किसी को क्या हर्ज? जो मुस्लिम इसका विरोध करते हैं, उनसे यह सवाल है कि कितने मुस्लिम देशों या अन्य देशों में हर धर्म के नागरिकों के लिए अलग-अलग कानून हैं? कानून का कोई धर्म नहीं होता। फिर एक देश में अलग-अलग धर्म के नागरिकों के लिए अलग-अलग

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

कौन है मौतों का जिम्मेदार

दिल्ली के रिहाइशी इलाकों में चल रही अवैध फैक्ट्रियां कब तक मजदुरों की जान लेती रहेंगी? इन मौतों का जिम्मेदार कौन है? जिसके सहारे परिवार खड़ा था वह आज दुनिया से चला गया। अलग-अलग वजहों से समय-समय पर लोगों को असमय मौत के मुंह में डाल रहीं ये फैक्ट्रियां किसी काल से कम नहीं हैं। इसमें हमारा पूरा प्रशासनिक तंत्र जिम्मेदार है, जो इस समय एक-दूसरे पर आरोप मढ़ रहा है। इसमें राजनीति करने से अच्छा है कि उस स्थिति को ठीक किया जाए। इन सत्तर वर्षों में हमने न जाने कितनी

मेलबाक्स

तकनीक का विकास किया, लेकिन आज भी हमारे होटल, स्कूल, अस्पताल और फैक्ट्री बिना सुरक्षा उपकरण के संचालित हो रहे हैं। आनाज मंडी में लगी आग बहुत ही दखद है। इससे हमें सीख लेनी चाहिए और त्वरित गति से सभी फैक्ट्रियों की जांच होनी चाहिए। वहीं अवैध रूप से चल रही इन इकाइयों को बंद करना होगा। इसके अलावा पुरानी दिल्ली की गलियों में फैले बिजली के तारों के जाल को भी सुधारा जाए।

आशीष, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

जन्मसिद्ध अधिकार है मानवाधिकार

संविधान ने सभी मनुष्यों तथा जीवों को कुछ ऐसे अधिकार दिए हैं जो उनको जन्म से ही स्वतः प्राप्त हो जाते हैं। जैसे-जीवन, आजादी, सम्मान, बराबरी का अधिकार हम सभी को है। अगर कोई व्यक्ति किसी व्यक्ति के इन अधिकारों का हनन करता है तो न्याय प्रणाली द्वारा आरोपी को दंडित किया जाता है। क्या आज मानवाधिकारों का हनन नहीं हो रहा है? दिल्ली अग्निकांड हो या महिलाओं पर होते अत्याचार ये सब मानव अधिकारों का हनन हैं। मात्र कागजों में अधिकारों की बातें करने से हम आम नागरिकों तक उसका अधिकार नहीं पहुंचा सकते। इनका पालन सरकारों का दायित्व बनता है। दिल्ली अग्निकांड में निर्दोष लोग दम घुटने तथा जल कर बेमौत मर गए। उनके अधिकारों की रक्षा करने की जिम्मेदारी किसकी थी? हर दूसरे दिन महिलाओं पर अत्याचार और बलात्कार कर हत्या करने की दर्दनाक घटनाएं हो रही हैं इन सबका जिम्मेदार कौन है? मानवाधिकार प्रकृति प्रदत्त अधिकार है। मानवाधिकारों की रक्षा के लिए सरकार को सख्त कदम उठाने की जरूरत है

स्थानीय संस्कृति को बचाने की कवायद

यह पत्र 'नागरिकता विधेयक' के संदर्भ में है। नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक को लेकर जैसा माहौल खड़ा किया गया वह वोट बैंक की राजनीति से ओतप्रोत है। जो भी लोग इसका विरोध कर रहे हैं उनको अपनी सोच बड़ी और सही करने की जरूरत है। पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान तीनों मुस्लिम बहुल देश हैं। वहां के मुसलमानों को भारत में रियायत देने का सवाल ही नहीं खड़ा होता। इसके अतिरिक्त अन्य धर्म के लोग जो 2014 के पहले से भारत में आकर बस गए हैं उनको कैसे भारत की नागरिकता देनी है यह विधेयक उसके संदर्भ में है। अवैध तरीके से बांग्लादेश से आए लोगों ने असम के अलावा पूर्वोत्तर के अन्य राज्यों का नक्शा ही बदल दिया है। स्थानीय संस्कृति को बचाए रखने के लिए इस पर कदम उठाने का समय आ गया है।

बाल गोविंद, नोएडा

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

> अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें : दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com

इन्स्

आशंका और सवाल

गरिकता संशोधन विधेयक लोकसभा में पास भले हो गया हो, लेकिन इसे लेकर देश के विभिन्न इलाकों में जिस तरह का भय और संदेह पैदा हो रहा है, उसे अच्छा संकेत नहीं कहा जा सकता। इस विधेयक के विरोध में मंगलवार को असम, मेघालय, त्रिपुरा सहित पूर्वोत्तर के कई इलाकों में लोग सड़कों पर उतरे, बड़े पैमाने पर विरोध-प्रदर्शन हुए, हिंसा-आगजनी की खबरें आईं। इतना ही नहीं, लोकसभा में सोमवार को देर रात तक चली तीखी बहस में दशकों पुराने मामले उखाड़े गए, एक दूसरे पर इतिहास की गलतियों के ठीकरे फोड़े गए और बताया गया कि पहले भी शरणार्थियों को नागरिकता दी गई है। गृह मंत्री ने देश के बंटवारे के लिए कांग्रेस को जिम्मेदार ठहराया तो कांग्रेस ने बताया कि द्वि-राष्ट्र सिद्धांत का प्रस्ताव तो 1935 में पहली बार हिंदू महासभा के नेता वीर सावरकर ने रखा था। इन सबसे लगता है कि नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक को लेकर जिस तरह की आशंकाएं और डर विपक्ष, देश के बुद्धिजीवियों और दूसरे वर्गों की ओर से व्यक्त किया जा रहा है, वह निराधार तो नहीं है। हालांकि अभी इस विधेयक पर राज्यसभा में चर्चा होनी है और सरकार वहां भी इसे पारित कराने में कामयाब हो जा सकती है। अगले चरण में यह कानून भी बन जा सकता है। लेकिन इसे लेकर विपक्ष के जो बुनियादी सवाल हैं, उनका जवाब शायद नहीं मिल पाए।

विपक्ष की आपत्ति शरणार्थियों को नागरिकता देने को लेकर नहीं है। उसकी आपत्ति धर्म के आधार पर नागरिकता देने को लेकर है। विधेयक में पाकिस्तान, अफगानिस्तान और बांग्लादेश से आए गैर-मुसलमानों को नागरिकता देने की बात है। इन गैर-मुसलमानों में इन तीनों देशों में अल्पसंख्यक के रूप में रह रहे हिंदू, सिख, ईसाई, जैन, बौद्ध और पारसी धर्म के लोग हैं। मुसलमानों को बाहर इसलिए रखा गया है कि इन देशों में मुसलमान अल्पसंख्यक नहीं हैं। लेकिन सवाल यह है कि जब भारत एक धर्मनिरपेक्ष राष्ट्र है तो ऐसे में मुसलमानों को इससे बाहर रखा जाना संविधान की मूल भावना के खिलाफ है, जो भारत राष्ट्र-राज्य की संकल्पना पर चोट पहुंचाता है। इसीलिए विपक्ष ने इस विधेयक को अनैतिक और असंवैधानिक करार दिया है। भले ही सरकार कितनी सफाई दे और दावा करे कि यह विधेयक मुसलमानों के खिलाफ नहीं है, लेकिन इससे पूरे देश में जाहिर तौर पर यह संदेश गया है कि मुसलमानों के लिए भारत के दरवाजे बंद हैं। सरकार के लिए यह बड़ी चुनौती है कि वह विपक्ष और देश के नागरिकों खासतौर से मुसलिम समुदाय के इस डर का समाधान कैसे करती है।

शरणार्थी और घुसपैठिए दोनों पुराने मुद्दे हैं। शरणार्थियों को नागरिकता देने के लिए किसी भी तरह के दस्तावेज की जरूरत भी खत्म कर दी गई है। एक मोटे अनुमान के मुताबिक इस वक्त भारत में करीब चौरासी हजार बांग्लादेशी शरणार्थी और एक लाख से ज्यादा तमिल शरणार्थी रह रहे हैं। यह वह आंकड़ा है जो सरकार के पास दर्ज है। लेकिन हकीकत में शरणार्थियों की संख्या इससे कहीं ज्यादा होगी। नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक में तमिल शरणार्थियों को शामिल नहीं किया गया है। ऐसे में ये कहां जाएंगे ? इससे भी बड़ा सवाल तो यह है कि एनआरसी से जो लोग बाहर हो गए हैं, उनका क्या होगा? इनकी तादाद तो लाखों में है। फिर घुसपैठियों और शरणार्थियों की पहचान कोई आसान काम तो है नहीं। पहचान के नाम पर स्थानीय प्रशासन और पुलिस लोगों का उत्पीड़न करेगी और मानवाधिकार के सवाल उठेंगे। पूर्वीत्तर के ज्यादातर इलाकों में इनर लाइन परमिट व्यवस्था है, फिर भी सबसे ज्यादा चिंता और खौफ वहीं है। अगर सरकार नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक को कानूनी जामा पहनाने की दिशा में बढ़ रही है तो इन सवालों पर भी गौर तो करना होगा।

विचार के बजाय

ते तीन हफ्तों के भीतर दूसरी बार जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय के विद्यार्थियों ने फीस बढ़ोतरी के मुद्दे पर विरोध जुलूस निकाला और एक बार फिर दिल्ली पुलिस ने उनसे निपटने के लिए धक्का-मुक्की और लाठीचार्ज को ही उपाय माना। क्या सचमुच ऐसे हालात पैदा हो गए थे, जिनमें में पुलिस को छात्रों और छात्राओं खिलाफ यह रवैया अपनाना जरूरी लगा? गौरतलब है कि सोमवार को जेएनयू के विद्यार्थियों का जुलूस अपनी मांगों के साथ राष्ट्रपति भवन की ओर बढ़ना शुरू हुआ तो रास्ते में पुलिस ने उन्हें रोकने की कोशिश की और फिर धक्का-मुक्की के बाद लाठीचार्ज भी किया। हालांकि पुलिस ने लाठीचार्ज के आरोपों से इनकार किया, लेकिन जिस तरह की तस्वीरें सामने आई हैं, वे अपने आप में काफी कुछ बताती हैं। खबरों के मुताबिक छात्राओं ने यहां तक आरोप लगाए कि पुरुष पुलिसकर्मियों ने उनके साथ बदसलूकी की। सवाल है कि शीर्ष स्तर के जो अधिकारी पुलिस को निर्देश दे रहे थे, क्या वे इस सबसे पूरी तरह अनभिज्ञ थे? विद्यार्थियों की मांगों पर विचार करने और सहमित पर आधारित किसी फैसले पर पहुंचने के बजाय दमन को ही आखिरी रास्ता क्यों मान लिया जाता है?

पिछली बार जब विद्यार्थियों के विरोध प्रदर्शन ने जोर पकड़ लिया था, तब जेएनयू प्रशासन ने बढ़ाए गए शुल्कों में मामूली कमी करने का प्रस्ताव दिया था। लेकिन विद्यार्थियों की नजर में वह नाकाफी था और वे पूरी बढ़ोतरी को वापस लेने की मांग कर रहे थे। दरअसल, जेएनयू में उठे इस आंदोलन को मुख्य रूप से छात्रावास के शुल्क में बढ़ोतरी के तौर पर प्रचारित किया गया। लेकिन नई नियमावली में मेस सिक्युरिटी, बिजली-पानी समेत कुछ अन्य मदों में भी जो बढ़ोतरी की गई थी, उसमें वहां पढ़ाई और शोध कर रहे बहुत सारे विद्यार्थियों की पहुंच से बाहर होने की आशंका जताई गई। इसके अलावा, शुरू में पहनावे और छात्रावास में लौटने के समय के साथ पुस्तकालय की अवधि सीमित करने का भी प्रस्ताव था। इस समूची कवायद को जेएनयू में उच्च गुणवत्ता की पढ़ाई-लिखाई और उस तक समाज के कमजोर तबकों की पहंच की परिकल्पना के विरुद्ध माना गया। जेएनय प्रशासन के इन्हीं कदमों के खिलाफ विद्यार्थी आंदोलन पर उतरे और 'सस्ती शिक्षा, सबका अधिकार' को मुख्य नारा बनाया। उनके इस आंदोलन को दूसरे विश्वविद्यालयों के विद्यार्थियों का भी समर्थन मिला

गौरतलब है कि पिछले प्रदर्शन के बाद जेएनयू के कई विद्यार्थियों पर मुकदमा कर दिया गया था। उसके बाद केंद्र सरकार ने अपनी ओर से मुद्दे के हल के लिए दखल देते हुए वे सभी मुकदमे वापस लेने, मौजूदा जेएनयूएसयू को अधिसूचित करने और एक समझौते तक पहुंचने की सलाह दी थी। विद्यार्थियों की ओर से उच्चाधिकार प्राप्त समिति की रिपोर्ट भी जारी करने की मांग की जा रही है। लेकिन यह समझना मुश्किल है। कि जेएनयू प्रशासन की ओर से ऐसी पहल क्यों नहीं हो रही है कि शुल्क बढ़ोतरी के सिरे से जेएनयू में उठे विवाद का सर्वमान्य हाल निकाला जा सके ? जेएनयू के विद्यार्थी अगर छात्रावास के शुल्क सिहत कई मदों में बढ़ाए गए खर्च पर सवाल उठा रहे हैं और उसे वापस लेने की मांग कर रहे हैं तो क्या यह पूरी तरह अनुचित है और क्या इसके लिए उनसे सख्त तरीके से निपटना ही एकमात्र उपाय है? आखिर ऐसे सवाल क्यों उठने लगे हैं कि अगर देश भर में नेताओं, सांसदों-विधायकों के वेतन-भत्तों से लेकर निजी कंपनियों के टैक्स और कर्ज में अगर भारी रियायत दी जा सकती है तो शिक्षा के मद में खर्च को क्यों नहीं बढ़ाया जा सकता है!

कल्पमधा

जिस समय हम समझते हैं कि हम नेतृत्व कर रहे हैं, उस समय अक्सर हम दूसरे के नेतृत्व में होते हैं।

- बायरन

www.readwhere.com

स्वदेशी मिसाइलें और चुनौतियां

योगेश कुमार गोयल

भारत के पास फिलहाल ब्रह्मोस जैसी 2.8 मैक गति वाली सुपरसानिक मिसाइलें तो हैं, जो तीन सौ किलोग्राम हथियार के साथ करीब दो सौ नब्बे किलोमीटर तक हवा से हवा में मार कर सकती हैं। अमेरिका, रूस और चीन की बढ़ती मिसाइल ताकत की वजह से ही भारत को हाइपरसोनिक मिसाइलों का विकास करना जरूरी हो गया था।

नियाभर में हथियारों की होड़ तेजी से बढ़ रही है। चीन 🔰 और पाकिस्तान जैसे भारत के पड़ोसी देश भी अत्याधृनिक हथियारों से लैस होकर सैन्य ताकत बढ़ाने में जुटे हैं। इसी कारण भारतीय सेना को आधुनिक हथियारों से सुसज्जित करना समय की बड़ी मांग है। स्टॉकहोम इंटरनेशनल पीस रिसर्च इंस्टीट्यूट की एक रिपोर्ट के मृताबिक पाकिस्तान के साथ लगातार बढ़ते तनाव के बीच सऊदी अरब के बाद भारत दुनिया के दूसरे सबसे बड़े हथियार आयातक देश के रूप में उभरा है। पिछले कुछ समय में अमेरिका के अलावा रूस, इजरायल, फ्रांस आदि के साथ भारत ने अत्याधनिक हथियारों और अन्य साजो-सामान की खरीद के लिए कई बड़े सौदे किए हैं। भविष्य की रणनीतियों और युद्ध के खतरों को ध्यान में रखते हुए सेना के सभी अंगों को अत्याधुनिक हथियारों से परिपूर्ण बनाना बेहद जरूरी भी है, लेकिन इसके साथ ही इस बात की भी जरूरत महसस की जाती रही है कि अत्याधनिक हथियारों की खरीद के लिए हम पूरी तरह से विदेशी

हथियारों पर आश्रित न रह कर उन्नत स्वदेशी तकनीक वाले हथियारों से भी सेना को सुसज्जित किया जाए।

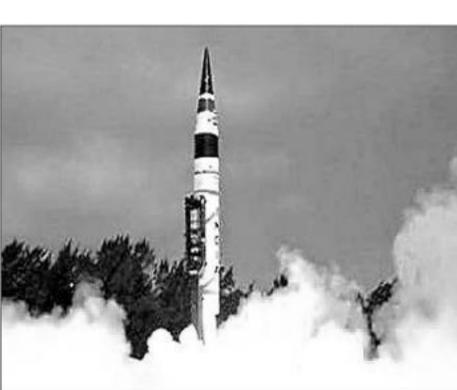
पिछले दिनों रक्षा मंत्री ने कहा था कि केवल हथियारों का आयातक बने रह कर कोई भी देश महाशक्ति नहीं बन सकता। पिछले कुछ सालों में भारत ने स्वदेशी तकनीक से निर्मित हाइपरसोनिक हथियारों और मिसाइलों से सेना की ताकत बढ़ाई है, जिनकी मारक क्षमता का लोहा पूरी दुनिया मान रही है। भारत और रूस ने 2015 में पांच अरब डॉलर का हथियारों का करार किया था। इसके तहत अक्तूबर, 2020 तक सेना के बेड़े में दुनिया की सबसे आधुनिक और लंबी दूरी की एस-400 बैलिस्टिक मिसाइल रक्षा प्रणाली शामिल होने वाली है। यह मिसाइल प्रणाली लड़ाकू विमानों और हर प्रकार के ड्रोन को निशाना बनाने और दुश्मन की तरफ से होने वाले किसी भी हवाई हमले को चार सौ किलोमीटर की दुरी पर ही खत्म करने में सक्षम है। इसके अलावा भारत में ही तैयार हो रही विभिन्न मिसाइलें भारत को मजबूत

सुरक्षा कवच प्रदान करने में सहायक सिद्ध हो रही हैं। सीमित क्षमताओं के बावजूद रक्षा अनुसंधान एवं विकास संगठन (डीआरडीओ) ने भारतीय सेना की ताकत बढ़ाने के लिए कई रक्षा प्रणालियां, उत्पाद और प्रौद्योगिकियां विकसित करने में बड़ी कामयाबी हासिल की हैं। डीआरडीओ द्वारा विकसित अग्नि-2 बैलिस्टिक मिसाइल का पिछले दिनों पहली बार रात के समय सफल परीक्षण करते हुए भारत ने अपनी स्वदेशी मिसाइल ताकत का स्पष्ट अहसास कराया था। अब भारत रात में भी मिसाइल दागने और लक्ष्य भेदने की क्षमता हासिल कर लेने वाला देश बन गया है। अग्नि-2 मिसाइल 21 मीटर लंबी, 1.3 मीटर चौड़ी और सोलह टन वजनी है जो तीन हजार किलोमीटर तक के दायरे में लक्ष्य को भेद सकती है और यह परमाण्

करने की क्षमता से लैस इस मिसाइल को वर्ष 2004 में ही सेना में शामिल कर लिया गया था, लेकिन रात के समय इसका सफल परीक्षण अब किया गया। अग्नि-2 के अलावा इसी शुंखला की सात सौ किलोमीटर तक मार कर सकने वाली अग्नि-1, तीन हजार किलोमीटर तक जाने वाली अग्नि-3, लंबी दूरी तक मार करने वाली अग्नि–4 और पांच हजार किलोमीटर तक मारक क्षमता वाली अंतरमहाद्वीपीय मिसाइल अग्नि-5 भी भारत की मिसाइल परियोजनाओं की बडी देन रही हैं। अब अग्नि-6 पर भी तेजी से काम चल रहा है।

अमेरिका, रूस और चीन के पास इस समय विभिन्न प्रकार की हाइपरसोनिक मिसाइलें हैं। अमेरिका के पास

एक साथ तीन परमाणु हथियार ले जाने और तीन अलग-अलग लक्ष्यों को भेदने में सक्षम तेरह हजार किलोमीटर की मारक क्षमता वाली एलजीएम-30 माइन्यूटमैन है तो रूस के पास एक साथ दस ठिकानों पर निशाना साधने में सक्षम सोलह हजार किलोमीटर की मारक क्षमता वाली आर-36 है। इसी तरह चीन के पास एक साथ दस से भी ज्यादा ठिकानों पर निशाना साधने में सक्षम डोंगफेंग-41 मिसाइल पांचर्वी पीढ़ी का हथियार मानी जा रही हाइपरसोनिक मिसाइल की गति कम से कम पांच मैक होती है और एक मैक गति ध्वनि की गति के बराबर मानी जाती है, यानी ध्वनि से पांच गुना तेज गति वाली मिसाइलें ही हाइपरसोनिक मिसाइलें कहलाती हैं, जो एक सेकेंड में एक मील से भी ज्यादा दूरी तय करती हैं। ध्विन की गति से दो से तीन गुना अधिक गति वाली मिसाइलें सपरसोनिक मिसाइल कहलाती हैं। भारत के पास



हथियार ले जाने में भी सक्षम है। सतह से सतह पर प्रहार - फिलहाल ब्रह्मोस जैसी 2.8 मैक गति वाली सपरसोनिक मिसाइलें तो हैं, जो तीन सौ किलोग्राम हथियार के साथ करीब दो सौ नब्बे किलोमीटर तक हवा से हवा में मार कर सकती हैं। अमेरिका, रूस और चीन की बढ़ती मिसाइल ताकत की वजह से ही भारत को हाइपरसोनिक मिसाइलों का विकास करना जरूरी हो गया था।

> अगर बात की जाए भारत और रूस के साझा प्रयासों से बनी ब्रह्मोस सुपरसोनिक मिसाइल की तो नौसेना, थलसेना और वायुसेना की जरूरतों के आधार पर समुद्र, जमीन और आकाश से दागे जाने वाले इस मिसाइल के कई संस्करण पहले ही तैयार हो चुके हैं, लेकिन सितंबर 2019 में ब्रह्मोस सुपरसोनिक मिसाइल के जिस विशेष संस्करण का सफल परीक्षण किया गया,

उस टू-इन-वन मिसाइल को जमीन के अलावा समुद्री पोतों और पनडुब्बियों से भी दागा जा सकता है। यह दुनिया की सबसे तेज क्रूज मिसाइल है और वर्ष 2020 तक सुखोई-30 लड़ाकू विमानों में भी ब्रह्मोस तैनात कर दिए जाने की योजना है। पिछले महीने डीआरडीओ द्वारा ही तैयार साढ़े तीन हजार किलोमीटर की मारक क्षमता वाली के-4 परमाणु मिसाइल का भी परीक्षण किया गया था। वैसे वर्ष 2010 से अभी तक इसके कई परीक्षण किए जा चुके हैं और अब परीक्षण के दौरान यह शून्य त्रुटि के साथ लक्ष्य को भेदते हुए सभी मानकों पर खरी उतरी है। इन सफल परीक्षणों के बाद भारत अब अमेरिका, रूस, फ्रांस और चीन के बाद पानी के भीतर मिसाइल दागने की अभूतपूर्व ताकत और तकनीक रखने वाला दुनिया का पांचवां देश बन गया है।

इस साल सितंबर में भारत पूर्णरूप से स्वदेशी 'अस्त्र' मिसाइल का भी सफल परीक्षण कर चुका है। 'अस्त्र' मिसाइल हवा से हवा में मार करने वाली

पहली पूर्ण स्वदेशी मिसाइल है, जिसमें अलग-अलग ऊँचाई पर उड़ान भर रहे कम व लंबी दूरी के हवाई लक्ष्यों को निशाना बनाने की क्षमता है। ठोस ईंधन से चलने वाली यह मिसाइल दुश्मन देशों के रडार की आंखों में धूल झोंकने की क्षमता से भी लैस है और पंद्रह किलोग्राम विस्फोटकों से लैस होकर यह साढ़े पांच हजार किलोमीटर प्रति घंटे की रफ्तार से वार कर सकती है। चूंकि यह प्रक्षेपण के तुरंत बाद बड़ी तेजी से अपने लक्ष्य को भेदती है, इसीलिए इसे 'बियॉन्ड विजुअल रेंज मिसाइल' भी कहा गया है। इस मिसाइल को विशेष रूप से मिराज, सुखोई एसयू-30, एलसीए तेजस, मिग-29 और मिग-21 बायसन जैसे लड़ाकू विमानों में लगाने के लिए विकसित किया गया है और अब इसका नया विकसित संस्करण बनाने की तैयारी भी शुरू हो गई है।

अगर भारत द्वारा विकसित की गई अन्य स्वदेशी मिसाइलों पर नजर दौडाएं तो सतह से सतह पर मार करने वाली. सतह से हवा में मार करने वाली. हवा से हवा में मार करने वाली और हवा से सतह पर मार करने वाली अनेक मिसाइलें भारतीय सेना की ताकत बनी हुई हैं। बहरहाल, भारत केवल विदेशी हथियारों और मिसाइलों पर निर्भर न रह कर अब जिस प्रकार अत्याधुनिक तकनीकों से लैस सुपरसोनिक और हाइपरसोनिक स्वदेशी हथियारों के निर्माण की दिशा में तेजी से आगे बढ़ रहा है, उससे भारतीय सेना की ताकत दिनोंदिन बढ़ रही है और इसे देखते हुए अब पाकिस्तान तो क्या, चीन जैसे देशों के भी पसीने छूटने लगे हैं।

छोटा उ से उम्मीद

प्रतिभा कटियार

🖚 समें आश्चर्य की भला क्या बात है कि 'सारा देश' 🔫 जश्न मनाता दिखा कि 'मृठभेड़' से न्याय हुआ! क्यों होना चाहिए आश्चर्य कि बाबाओं को बचाने के लिए हिंसक होने तक टूट पड़ने वाली भीड़ उसी पुलिस पर फूल बरसाती है, जिसके पास जाकर रिपोर्ट लिखवाने जाने से डरती हैं स्त्रियां! ऐसी खबरें अक्सर आती रहती हैं कि पुलिस हिरासत में हत्या हुई या बलात्कार हुआ। लेकिन हिरासत में हुए बलात्कारों की संख्या के बारे में जनता नहीं सोचती तो भी अब कोई आश्चर्य नहीं होता। अब तो इस बात पर भी कोई हैरानी नहीं होती कि इस जनता में ज्यादातर पढ़े-लिखे लोग भी शामिल दिखने लगे हैं। सांसद से लेकर लेखक, साहित्यकार, फिल्मकार भी! क्यों होना चाहिए आश्चर्य आखिर? हम अतार्किक लोग हैं। हम भीड़ हैं... हमें भीड़ बनना सिखाया गया है... तालियां बजाना सिखाया गया है। बात मानना और झुंड बन कर किसी के पीछे चलना सिखाया गया है। और यही असल सुख है, यही मानना हमारे भीतर बो दिया गया है। किस बात पर कितना हंसना है, किस बात को किस हद तक सहन

करते जाना है सदियों तक, और किसे पीट-पीट कर मार डालना है, यह सब हमारे लिए कोई और तय करता है। हमने कब खुद के लिए खुद की मर्जी से सोचना सीखा ? जो बता दिया गया, उसी को अंतिम मानते रहे ! हम तो बताई गई मर्जियों पर अपनी मर्जी की मृहर लगा कर ही जीते जा रहे समाज रहे हैं हमेशा से।

क्यों आश्चर्य हो जब आपके तार्किक होने और यह पूछने को गुनाह मान लिया जाए कि 'क्या यह कोई न्यायिक प्रक्रिया है'? शिक्षकों के

दुनिया मेरे आगे आंदोलन को दरिकनार किया जाए और विद्यार्थियों की फीसवृद्धि को रद्द करने और शिक्षा को मुफ्त करने की मांग को देशद्रोह ही कह दिया जाए! सवाल पूछना आपका काम नहीं था। सौंप दिया गया काम था ताली बजाना, जयकारा लगाना। सवाल पूछेंगे तो मारे जाएंगे तो इसमें हैरत क्यों हो भला! क्यों हैरानी हो कि हम यह भी न सोचें कि यही पुलिस अपनी ही महिला अधिकारी की रक्षा में अक्सर नाकाम पाई जाती है। पुलिस क्या कोई व्यक्ति है? भीड क्या कोई

अपनी-अपनी तरह से खेलती रहती है। ऐसा लगता है कि पुलिस और सुरक्षा बलों का महकमा अपने भीतर भी तमाम लड़ाइयां लड़ रहा है।

व्यक्ति है ? नहीं, दोनों ही सत्ता के खिलौने हैं, जिससे सत्ता

एक सिपाही को छुट्टी नहीं मिलती है और वह किन स्थितियों में पहुंच कर पांच साथियों को मार कर खुद को भी मार लेता है, यह बात क्यों चर्चा का विषय नहीं बनती? महीनों उन्हें घर जाने का मौका नहीं मिलता, हफ्तों छुट्टी नहीं मिलती, सोलह-सोलह घंटे ड्यूटी करनी पड़ती है। यह पूरे महकमे की कुंठा से भरी बातें हैं। ऐसी कुंठा भरी खबरें उनके भीतर भी बेलगाम प्रतिक्रिया की राह प्रशस्त करती हैं। पुलिस अपने

नकारेपन को इस तरह ढंकती है और सुर्खियों में हिट हो जाती है। जनता नाचने लगती है कि

न्याय हुआ। पर क्या सचमुच न्याय हुआ? बिल्कुल आश्चर्य नहीं होता कि यही जनता सवाल नहीं करती कि बलात्कार, हत्या और अन्य अपराधों में शामिल लोग संसद में क्यों हैं! हां, याद आया... आखिर जनता ने ही तो उन्हें चुन कर भेजा है! क्यों भेजा होगा जनता ने उन लोगों को संसद में, यह सोचना मना है। हम तमाशबीन समाज हैं, क्योंकि ऐसे ही हम बनाए गए हैं। इसमें आश्चर्य कैसा भला? और जो इस भेड़चाल में शामिल नहीं हुए हैं, जिन्होंने सवाल करने बंद नहीं किए है, जिन्होंने बेहतर समाज का सपना देखना नहीं छोड़ा, जो भीड़ की तेज बहाव के खिलाफ

भी अपना हस्तक्षेप दर्ज कर देते हैं, जो इंसाफ और हकों के लिए अब भी लड़ना और आवाज उठाना जानते हैं, उनका अगर मजाक उड़ाया जाए, उन पर मुकदमे दर्ज हों, उन्हें नजरबंद किया जाए, देशद्रोही कहा जाए तो भला क्यों आश्चर्य होना चाहिए! एक जागे हुए दिमाग से ज्यादा खतरनाक भला और क्या होता है ? तो उसे घेरने में तो सत्ताएं जुट ही जाएंगी न?

नहीं आश्चर्य होता कि हम सबको, इस पूरे समाज को धर्म, जाति, मंदिर, मस्जिद और कहीं-कहीं सत्ता की चापलूसी से मिलने वाले फायदों, पुरस्कारों आदि की अफीम चटा-चटा कर कठपुतली बना दिया गया है। ये कठपुतलियां भीड़ हैं, साइबर सेल हैं। ये कठपुतिलयां विलक्षण लेखक हैं, पत्रकार हैं, फिल्मकार हैं। इनके पास वे 'तर्क' हैं जो इंसानियत की पैरवी नहीं करते, धर्म की करते हैं, जाति की करते हैं। 'तर्क' जो अपराधियों में भी धर्म देखते हैं और पीड़ित में भी!

आश्चर्य तो यह है कि कोई उम्मीद है जो अब तक बझी नहीं है। आश्चर्य तो यह है कि एक संदर समाज का सपना है जो तमाम किरचों में टूट जाने के बावजूद बचा हुआ है। दूर किसी गांव में कोई शिक्षक बच्चों को सुना रहा है प्यार भरी कोई कविता और कोई बच्ची लिख रही है 'छोटा उ से उम्मीद'!

बेरोजगारी का दंश

मजबूर होना पड़ा है। देश में बेरोजगारी की समस्या कोई नई नहीं है। 'गरीबी हटाओ' का अभियान आज से लगभग पैंतालीस वर्ष पहले इंदिरा गांधी ने प्रारंभ किया था। लेकिन आज इक्कीसवीं सदी के पूर्वार्ध में बेरोजगारी अपनी जड़ बहुत मजबूत कर चुकी है। जिस तरह उसके उन्मूलन के लिए प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं, उससे तो यही लगता है कि राहें बेहद मुश्किल हैं। एक युवक के बेरोजगार रहने से न सिर्फ उसके अपने रहन सहन पर असर पड़ता है, बल्कि उस पर आश्रित पूरे परिवार को निम्न स्तर की जिंदगी भी नसीब नहीं हो पाती है।

इसी अक्तूबर में बेरोजगारी की दर 8.5 फीसद हो गई, जो पिछले तीन वर्षों में सबसे ज्यादा है। बेरोजगारी की यह दर अगस्त 2016 के बाद सबसे ज्यादा है। ताजा आंकड़ों से पता चलता है कि भारत में बेरोजगारों की फौज इकट्ठा हो रही है। भारत जैसे देश में शिक्षा और रोजगार के अवसरों की कमी, कौशल की कमी, प्रदर्शन संबंधी मुद्दे और बढ़ती आबादी सहित कई कारक इस समस्या को बढ़ाने में अपना योगदान देते हैं। इस कारण से भारत के जीडीपी पर भी असर साफ दिख रहा है।

बेरोजगारी की वजह से गंभीर सामाजिक-आर्थिक समस्याएं खड़ी होती हैं। इससे न केवल एक व्यक्ति, बल्कि पूरा समाज प्रभावित होता है। यह बेवजह नहीं है कि आज बेरोजगारी एक सामाजिक समस्या भी बन गया है। सरकारें जो कदम उठाती हैं, वे प्रभावी नहीं हैं। बल्कि आमतौर पर यह दिखावे के लिए होता है। इसके किए ठोस कदम उठाने की जरूरत है। नीति निमार्ताओं और नागरिकों को अधिक नौकरियों के निर्माण के साथ ही रोजगार के लिए सही कौशल प्राप्त करने के लिए सामृहिक प्रयास करने चाहिए।

• अनु मिश्रा, बिठुना, सिवान

देश की साख

सदन में नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक लाया गया। रोजगारी भारत के लिए सिर दर्द बन गया है और इस पर सदन में काफी तीखी बहस हुई और हंगामा भी हुआ। पर भारत के एक पंजीकृत नागरिक होने के नाते कुछ बातों पर गौर करना चाहिए। इस विधेयक को लाना जितना आसान था, उससे कहीं अधिक मुश्किल इसे पारित कराना और लागू करना है। जो हो, विधेयक कहीं न कहीं हमारे धर्मनिरपेक्षता और संविधान के मूल ढांचों पर एक प्रश्नचिह्न खड़ा करता है। अगर विवेक के साथ सोचा जाए तो कहीं न कहीं ये देश के दो धर्म विशेष समुदाय के बीच दूरियां बढ़ाने का काम करेगा।

पड़ोसी देशों के अल्पसंख्यकों को आसरा देकर भारत के नागरिक बना सकते हैं तो फिर पाकिस्तान, अफगानिस्तान और बांग्लादेश ही क्यों? श्रीलंका के तमिल क्यों नहीं? उनके साथ भी तो वहां भेदभाव होता है! इस बात की क्या गारंटी है कि आज जो प्रयास मुसलमानों के साथ हो रहा है, वह भविष्य में किसी और समुदाय के साथ नहीं होगा? अगर इसके दूरगामी परिणामों पर गौर करें तो लगता है कि जब-जब हिंदुओं के समकक्ष कोई समुदाय आकर खड़ा होगा, तब–तब हम नागरिकता संशोधन करके उस समुदाय को बाहर निकाल देंगे।

अगर देश को किसी खास धर्म

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

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

विधेयक के प्रावधानों पर गौर किया जाए तो लगता है कि यह किसी खास धर्म वाले समुदाय को इसके दायरे से बाहर निकालने का प्रयास है। अगर इसे सदन से पास करा कर देश भर में लागू कर दिया जाए तो कहीं न कहीं यह हमारे राष्ट्रनिमार्ताओं की सोच, उद्देश्य, और उनकी कल्पना के भारत का गला घोंटना होगा। हम 1947 में काफी संघर्ष और बलिदानों के बाद एक स्वतंत्र देश बने और तुरंत हमारा विभाजन भी हो गया। हम धर्म की तलवार से दो भागों में बंट गए। अलग देश के सवाल के साथ पाकिस्तान बन गया और शेष भारत में हर धर्म के लोगों को रहने. अपना गजर-बसर करने की आजादी मिली। ये बातें संविधान के मौलिक अधिकारों में भी कही गई है।

अब सवाल उठता है कि इस विधेयक में ऐसा क्या है। जो हमारे मूल ढांचे पर असर डालता है? अगर हम अपने

देश बनाना है तो फिर संविधान में 'धर्मनिरपेक्षता शब्द का कोई मतलब नहीं रह जाता है। हम शायद भूल रहे हैं कि अगर आज हम दुनिया से आंख में आंख डाल कर बात कर रहे हैं, वह शक्ति और जज्बा हमें हमारी धर्मनिरपेक्षता से मिली है। यह जिस दिन समाप्त होगी, भारत को दुनिया भर में एक कमजोर देश माना जाएगा। हमें याद रखना चाहिए कि कभी कि एक पंख से उड़ान नहीं भरी जा सकती है।

• धीरज कुमार, दरभंगा, बिहार

गरीबी की जड़ें

गरीबी और भुखमरी एक दूसरे से संबंधित है। राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर गरीबी रेखा के निर्धारण के तरीकों को लेकर हमेशा विवाद रहा है। नतीजतन, योजनाओं को लक्षित वर्ग तक पहुंचने में

हमेशा कठिनाई आती रही है। कुपोषण की निरंतरता गरीबी और भुखमरी को और जटिल बना देता है। इसके चलते एक बहुत बड़ी जनसंख्या भुखमरी और

गरीबी की जाल में फंसती चली जाती है। उदारीकरण की नीतियों ने भी गरीबी और भुखमरी को बढाया है। इसके परिणामस्वरूप असमानता के स्तर में अत्यधिक बढ़ोतरी हुई है, जिसने गरीबी और भुखमरी को जन्म दिया है। समस्या यह है कि इसे कैसे नियंत्रित किया जाए और आर्थिक विकास को किस तरह से गित प्रदान कर संसाधनों का वितरण सही तरीके से किया जाए । योजनाओं का सही तरीके से क्रियान्वयन न हो पाना भी इसकी एक प्रमुख समस्या है। सरकार, प्रशासन और समाज में व्याप्त भ्रष्टाचार, अकर्मव्यता गरीबी और को बढ़ाने में प्रमुख भूमिका है। • विश्वजीत शुक्ला, पलामू, झारखंड

हवा की कीमत

हमारे देश में हर दिन एक नई सामाजिक समस्या जुड़ती जा रही है। लेकिन अब प्रकृति भी हमारा साथ छोड़ती नजर आ रही है। वायु प्राणी की प्राथमिकता है। लेकिन हालत यह है कि वाय की स्थिति बिगडती जा रही है और इसका हल किसी के पास नहीं है।

इस बात की परेशानी हर किसी को खाए जा रही है कि इसमें सुधार कैसे लाया जाए। सरकार ने भी अपनी तरफ से तमाम कोशिशें की हैं। काफी हद तक बेहतर परिणाम के आसार भी दिख रहे थे, मगर यह पूर्ण रूप से तभी खत्म होगा जब हर व्यक्ति अपना योगदान प्रदूषित वायु को कम करने में दे। लोगों के मन में खौफ तो उस दिन का है, जब शुद्ध हवा भी खरीदनी पड़ जाएगी। उस पल न जाने क्या होगा देश के उन लोगों का जो आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर हैं। यह एक ऐसी समस्या है, जिसने सबको परेशान कर दिया है।

निशा कश्यप, हरी नगर आश्रम, नई दिल्ली

नई दिल्ली