Reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide

A descendant of CO₂-eating e coli could be modified to make organic carbon molecules



QUANTUM LEAP

DEVANGSHU DATTA

he reduction of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) is vital to combat Climate Change, since CO₂ contributes roughly half of all greenhouse gases. Research at Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science indicates there could be a way to design bacteria to absorb atmospheric CO₂.

The natural mechanism for removing atmospheric CO₂ is photosynthesis. Leaves contain chlorophyll, which uses energy from sunlight in a chemical reaction that creates sugars out of

atmospheric CO₂ and water.

Sugars have a large number ("n") of carbon atoms coupled to a large number of water molecules (H2O) and formulae on the lines of Cn(H₂O)n. An important "waste product" in photosynthesis is excess oxygen, which is released by plants into the atmosphere. Plants and trees also absorb oxygen and release CO2 during hours of darkness. But net-net, plants release more oxygen (O) and consume more CO₂. Photosynthetic cyanobacteria — aquatic microbes that produce oxygen — also use energy from light to fix CO2 and turn it into sugars, proteins and fats. But natural photosynthesis is insufficient to deal with the excessive production of CO2 by industrial processes.

Now Israeli scientists claim they have found a way to engineer common bacteria to eat atmospheric CO₂. Right now, these bacteria release more CO₂ than they consume. But this is a transformative approach and it may lead to insights that help to fight Climate Change.

Living organisms are either autotrophs (such as plants) that convert

CO₂ into biomass (wood), and heterotrophs that consume organic compounds (humans and other animals). The common bacteria Escherichia coli (E.coli) is found in the guts of many animals and it is heterotrophic. It is easy to genetically engineer, and its fast growth means changes through generations can be quickly tested and tweaked to optimise mutations. Normally it consumes sugars, and emits CO₂.

However, in an experiment described in Cell magazine, (https://www.cell.com/fulltext/S0092-8674(16)30668-7), a Weizmann team described how they transformed the dietary habits of e coli. Lead author, Shmuel Gleizer said, "From a basic scientific perspective, we wanted to see if such a major transformation in the diet of bacteria — from dependence on sugar to the synthesis of all biomass from CO_2 — is possible. Beyond testing the feasibility of such a transformation in the lab, we wanted to know how extreme an adaptation is needed in terms of the changes to bacterial DNA."

The engineered strain of e coli first

harvested energy from formate (HCO₂), a chemical which can be produced electrochemically from renewable sources (or from formic acid, which is found in ants). Formate has only one carbon atom, and does not normally serve as a food source for e coli.

In 2016, the Weizmann team created an e coli strain that ate CO_2 , but it preferred sugars. Using genetic engineering they gave it genes that allow photosynthetic organisms to convert CO_2 into carbon. Photosynthesis isn't possible in bacteria but they managed to insert a gene that lets the bacterium eat formate for energy.

The scientists further modified the bacteria to inactivate key enzymes that made it heterotrophic and thus, more dependent on autotrophic methods. Eventually they succeeded in "building" a bacteria that consumed only CO₂. They confirmed this by labelling food sources with marker chemicals and detecting changes in the marker-levels.

Then they cultured successive generations of the modified bacteria, with minute quantities of sugar, and CO₂ at

very high concentrations (about 250 times that in the atmosphere). After about 200 days, bacteria capable of using CO_2 as their only carbon source grew. After 300 days, these bacteria grew faster than those that could not consume CO_2 .

The autotrophic bacteria still prefer sugar. Also this is slow-growth. Normal e coli doubles in number every 20 minutes, while the autotrophic type divides every 18 hours in an atmosphere that is 10 per cent CO₂. They can't survive at current atmospheric levels of CO₂ of about 0.0407 per cent (407 parts per million). The scientists are trying to make the bacteria grow faster and live on lower CO₂ levels. They are also trying to understand how changes in just 11 genes allowed the switch.

Biotech companies use cell cultures

living on corn syrup to produce chemicals. If such cells — yeast or bacteria — could live on CO₂ and renewable electricity, they could be weaned from corn syrup. They may be further adapted to take energy from a solar cell and store that energy for use as fuel in the form of carbon fixed in cells. Thus, a descendant of this CO2-eating e coli could be modified to make organic carbon molecules to use as biofuels. Such products would have lower emissions and ideally, they could remove atmospheric CO₂.

Storm gathers momentum

CHINESE WHISPERS

Surendra Singh 'Shera', independent

government in Madhya Pradesh but is

headlines for his criticism of the state

government. During a government

discussion. When asked about his

said: "Kamal Nath is my captain,

whenever he asks me to bat, I will

come to the crease and start hitting

fours and sixes. I am waiting for my

turn with my pads and gloves on.'

possible inclusion in the cabinet, Singh

MLA from the Burhanpur Assembly

seat, is known for his rebellious

unhappy at not being offered a

ministry. He is frequently in the

event recently, Singh and Chief

Minister Kamal Nath were in a

nature. He supports the Congress

Ready to bat

Even as the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Uttar Pradesh is trying to recover from the rebellious sit-in by party legislators in the Assembly to protest against alleged harassment by police and district officials, BJP MLA Nand Kishore Gurjar has demanded a probe into the properties of all politicians and bureaucrats. Gurjar was the first to raise the harassment issue in the Assembly on the inaugural day of the UP legislature on Tuesday and was later joined by other party legislators and members from the opposition benches. Gurjar said the graft probe should include spouses of political leaders and bureaucrats because several of them were running nongovernment organisations. The MLA lamented he was being targeted because he was trying to expose corrupt officials in his constituency, Loni.



Gandhi in the time of CAA

Protests against the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act have now reached every part of the country. While government spokespersons and 'people's forums" continue to disseminate their own version of the events, the Press Information Bureau has been, since December 18, tweeting quotes by Mahatma Gandhi that do not have any connection with any specific date or event. "One should assimilate in oneself what is good in others and reject the bad," reads one. "Lack of our awareness was a reason we became subjects of British rule," reads another. Yet another reads: "Good deeds can only be accomplished with righteous methods; dishonest methods cannot yield good results."

Dealing with family businesses

Business partners should take care to understand the family in a family business or they may find family businesses too enigmatic to deal with



JANMEJAYA SINHA & VARUN GOVINDARAJ

espite the importance of family businesses across the globe it is surprising that often their business partners do not know how to deal with them. Business partners whether investors, private equity firms or joint venture partners — tend to focus on the business side of the family business. However, every family businesses combines two conflicting sides. On one side there is the business where profit, growth and shareholder returns are paramount. On the other side there is the family where emotions of love, fairness and trust reign supreme. Successful family businesses skillfully navigate these disparate perspectives to achieve both success and stability in their business. If a family business fails because it cannot reconcile the needs of the business with the wants of the family, its partners (who have invested time, capital and other resources) also lose a great deal. So one would expect that potential partners are alert to this conundrum when they begin engaging with family businesses. Yet this is often not the case. Partners often treat family-owned businesses as they would any other company, which is a mistake. We believe potential partners should undertake a more comprehensive evaluation of the family before working with them.

In particular, there are five areas worthy of deep investigation.

■ The reputation of the family: It is important to understand the family's reputation. This can be done by examining their past behaviour or the behaviour of other companies owned by the promoter group. Have their joint ventures survived? Have promoter group companies defaulted on their loans? How have they used the judicial process? How close are they to certain political parties? It is crucial for potential partners to speak with other partners to understand their experience working with the family.

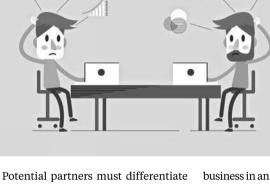
With that said, it is also worth noting that family businesses with strong reputations cherish their reputations. They will go to great lengths not to stain the integrity associated with their names. Only in truly extreme situations will they default on their commitments. Typically their partners will trust them deeply because of the flawless reputation of the promoter family.

Identify the decision makers: In family businesses often the formal structure of the company does not reflect the underlying power dynamics of the company. While there may be a CEO or chairman

of the company, their actual autonomy might be limited. Their titles are often titular. So it is critical to identify the true decision maker. This may be a head of the family (such as a patriarch) or a group of elders that deeply influence business decisions despite holding no official titles. Potential partners must know them, understand their individual motivations and their vision for the family business and ensure these are in line with their own objectives before entering into a partnership.

If partners find that there is a lack of alignment between different members of the family then they should be careful and recognise that decisions taken by the current incumbent may be stalled or even overturned later. Ignoring the underlying family dynamics is a big mistake which can turn out to be very time consuming and costly for potential partners.

■Understand the influence of non-family top executives: The power that nonfamily executives have in a family business varies. Some long-term executives serving in a company may actually be very influential. Their advice is taken seriously and they know how to navigate the family's dynamics. So their support counts for a lot more than that of a freshly installed CEO. In comparison many freshly hired CEOs may not last long in the company especially if they come to the family business from a different background (like an MNC) — simply because they will not understand the culture of the family and the company.



between these different types of nonfamily executives in family businesses. ■Understand the succession dynamics: Succession in family business is complicated. If there is a clear line with one uncontested inheritor, and the relationship between the successor and the parent is good then there isn't much to worry about. But if there are more than one aspirant it becomes critical to understand the succession plan of the family (especially if the current leadership is nearing retirement). And if no plan is in place then potential partners must be concerned. Family businesses may be split between successors or given to one sibling rather than the other. Succession battles in family-owned companies are often bitter and public that almost always cause massive value erosion. No potential investor or lender would ever want to be caught in the middle of such a battle.

■ Underlying nature of capital markets: Finally, potential partners must assess

ness will differ greatly across countries and this has implications on the safety of their investments. It would, for example, be much harder for a private equity investor to sell a stake in a family business in an emerging economy without developed institutions. In the same vein, developed markets also allow

financial

ecosystem within

which the family business operates.

The ease with

which partners can

exit a family busi-

vein, developed markets also allow family businesses more freedom to find alternative sources from where they can raise capital or manage family restructuring. All partners need to appreciate this.

Given the critical position of family businesses in many economies, it is surprising that more work has not been deposited by the labeliance of the surprising that more work has not been deposited.

Given the critical position of family businesses in many economies, it is surprising that more work has not been done in helping partners create a work book on how to deal with them. Though there are many partners who have a good intuitive understanding of how to do business with family businesses — there are many that do not and flounder because their due diligence ignored the family dynamics of the promoter group. Business partners should take care to understand the family in a family business or they may find family businesses too enigmatic to deal with.

Sinha is chairman & Govindaraj is consultant, BCG India. Views personal

INSIGHT

The new face of environment activism

India needs to develop its own environment framework



JYOTI MUKUL

Rajeev Chaba, president and managing director, MG Motor India, walked in before guests with child actor Prachi Thakur as his company unveiled the ZS, an all-electric SUV, earlier this month. After being ushered into the car, Thakur waved at the audience at New Delhi's Pullman Hotel from the car's sunroof. During the show, the hall's dome projected moving caricatures conveying the message that conventional vehicles cause pollution and going electric was the only way forward.

It was not without reason that the Chinese company roped in Thakur to unveil its high-end EV, whose battery can be reused for power generation. Whether such high end models will make much of a difference to air pollution remains a subject of debate but children and young adults have been at the forefront of movements across the globe demanding critical action on environment from governments and decision makers. These actions could be in the public space or within the confines of the family.

While the COP25 summit in Madrid concluded without drawing much attention in India and failed to get nations to speed up targets set under

the Paris agreement, it is the likes of Thakur and those slightly older who would define climate change movements going forward. Daily Intelligencer, a website of the New York magazine group, in a December 16 write-up called António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, a "Greta Thunberg's alarmist equal" for saying at Madrid that "the point of no return is no longer on the horizon... it is in sight and hurtling towards us".

Though Intelligencer's comment

had more to do with the failure of COP25, it brings out the dichotomy of the times — that a 16-year-old girl is able to carry the message more forcefully while member countries failed to put an action plan in place. In September 2019, she addressed the UN Climate Action Summit in New York to warn about the world her generation would end up inheriting if nations failed to act now.

Earlier in 2019, Thunberg spearheaded the School Strike for Climate (Skolstrejk för klimatet in Swedish), also called Fridays for Future (FFF). School students did not attend classes and instead took part in demonstrations to demand action to prevent further global warming and climate change. On March 15, more than one million were reported to have kept out of schools. This, however, went unnoticed in India except for some pockets in the major cities where students egged on by their schools held events to drive home the message of environment-friendly behaviour among urban citizens.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi did try to wage a war on plastics but the government's efforts at environment preservation have been peripheral, and is often confused with Swachh Bharat, the flagship programme for clean toilets and sanitised living.

There is another face of environmental activism that has emerged with the Extinction Rebellion. This movement has an India chapter as well. Though run by professionals and people much older than Thunberg, it practises civil disobedience and forces closure of what it perceives as environmentally harmful. Set up by Roger Hallam and Gail Bradbrook and activists United Kingdom in May 2018, the Extinction Rebellion is also called XR. Many do not support the antics of XR sympathisers because they coerce people rather than convince them to shun environmentally harmful activities. Nonetheless, it is true that the lack of global leadership among policy makers and influencers has been the main reason behind the emergence of subnational forces this year.

Within India, getting those beyond a defined group to use less water or recycle waste or do less damage to environment in whatever small way they can is largely left to non-government agencies. This is despite the fact that damages caused due to climate change are more pronounced in smaller cities and villages simply because the infrastructure in both personal and public spaces is less disaster resilient. It is, therefore, important that the benefits of being environment friendly, having a smaller carbon footprint and being less of a burden on natural resources is built into public psyche. The first step is to shun complacency. For policy makers sitting in the national and state capitals, COP25's failure should be no relief but a push for developing India's own national environment framework with actionable triggers and urgent targets.

LETTERS

Think before you speak

At a time when parts of the country are on the boil over the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the Army Chief's warning that the situation along the line of control can escalate any time and the Indian Army is always ready for an "escalatory matrix" is not only alarmist but unwise too. While it is true that ceasefire violations by Pakistan have witnessed a spurt since the abrogation of Article 370 in August, "escalatory matrix" is not an option particularly when our economy seems headed for the ICU, as opined by Arvind Subramanian, former chief economic advisor. The Army Chief needs to be more circumspect in his public utterances and consider their likely political ramifications. With a large number of leaders, including three former chief ministers, still under detention in Kashmir despite Union home minister's claim of normalcy there, the Army Chief's warning of a possible escalation of tensions along the LoC could well be used by the Centre as a ground to maintain the status quo in the valley. That would be unfortunate.

SK Choudhury Bengaluru History repeats itself

The recent countrywide uprising by students and members of the civil society is unnerving. The implementation of CAA and the imminent operationalisation of the National Register of Citizens is a dangerous cocktail for our political economy that is already on the stretcher. It is widely thought that the enforcement of such laws will inflict the same amount of pain and damage to our social and political firmament as did demonetisation to our economy barely three years ago. The economy is paying a heavy price for that single step and the pain is not over yet. As the saying goes, history repeats itself; the second time as a farce. We are surely and



dividend into a demographic curse. If not, then what is the point of forcing 25 per cent of our existing labour force to abjure work and queue up to prove their existence, nationality, citizenship, identity and so on?

Ganga Narayan Bath Hyderahad

Ganga Narayan Rath Hyderabad Do your job

This refers to the well-timed piece, "All is not well with the media, says former President Pranab Mukherjee" (December 19). That a former president had to point out "orchestrated, out-of-context and motivated reporting for partisan agendas" and call for self-correcting measures to check such irregularities must truly awaken the conscience of all concerned. He has expressed his utter dismay at the blur-

ring of distinction between views and news and exhorted media organisations not to compromise on their basic role of behaving like ever-alert watchdogs of the society. He also thought it wise to provide a comprehensive list of dos and don'ts. It becomes incumbent upon those at the helm of affairs to meticulously follow them. It's also time to bid adieu to paid and fake news. That would require a lot of determination and conviction, but that is the need of the hour.

S K Gupta New Delhi

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MUMBAI | FRIDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2019

Don't over-react on GST

Govt must be restrained on collection targets

he Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, the body which comprises Union and state finance ministers and oversees the indirect tax system, met for the 38th time on Wednesday. But this was a meeting with a difference. So far, the Council has been able to maintain a tradition of unanimity, with every member agreeing on changes. However, on this occasion, voting took place for the first time, and the rate on lotteries was increased to 28 per cent. This took place, reportedly, because the Kerala government maintained a resolute opposition to the proposal. While there may have been no alternative, this is not a good harbinger for the future. Indeed, GST in general is looking increasingly troubled. States are deeply concerned about their GST compensation not coming in time, which has stressed their own finances.

Yet GST itself continues to underperform. This takes on particular salience at a time when, following a drop in corporate income tax rates, the mop-up of corporation tax has actually gone down by over 5 per cent in the months between October and December 2019, as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. Personal income tax is not showing sufficiently robust growth to make up for it, an indication that an overall slowdown is also partially responsible. Thus, the low GST collection is stoking a fiscal crisis. The finance ministry has set a target of ₹1.1 trillion a month for GST collection, which is more than the collection in all but the first month of the current fiscal year. It appears that the belief has taken hold that the problem is essentially widespread evasion, and fraud relating to input tax credits.

Various measures are being proposed to address this issue. Several ways to limit the outgo in terms of input tax credit are also being proposed, such as the lowering of the amount that is provided before invoices are uploaded to 10 per cent of the amount from the current 20 per cent. But the government must be very careful in how it approaches anti-evasion mechanisms. In general, giving tax officials targets and enhanced powers to achieve those targets has proved to be massively counter-productive in India. Currently, the thinking appears to be that relaxation in penalties for late filing, alongside some extension in deadlines, might be tried. But it appears a consensus is developing for harsher measures, including enhanced penalties and more powers to block credits for tax officials. As usual, the possibility of arrest is also being thrown into the policy mix. But the government must take a holistic view of the problem.

The success of GST depends upon voluntary participation in the tax. Cracking down too harshly now will scoop up both the innocent and the guilty, and further depress business sentiment at a time when reviving animal spirits is crucial to get out of the current slowdown. What is needed is an overall review of GST's structure. Can it be simplified in such a way that compliance increases without the use of the metaphorical *lathi*? The Council must deliberate on the broad direction of the tax as well as specific rates.

Mixed signals

IUC extension is welcome, but Trai should take a holistic view

he decision by the telecom regulator to extend the current regime of 6 paise per minute termination charge or IUC (interconnect usage charge) for wireless calls ending on a different telco's network for another year is a welcome move. It would help improve the cash flow of the incumbent operators, which have been complaining that some of the decisions taken by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) have only helped the newest telecom operator. But the regulator needs to iron out some more creases. For example, while extending the current regime, Trai has announced that zero IUC or the BAK (bill and keep) regime will be implemented in January 2021. Although telcos will get a year to transition to the new system, setting a date for zero IUC without any review condition ahead of the rollout seems ill-planned.

Before its implementation, Trai must make sure that the timing is right for shifting to a zero IUC regime. One of the factors guiding Trai to fix termination charges is traffic symmetry, a term used to describe the ratio between outgoing and incoming calls. Following consultation with industry stakeholders, Trai believes that by the end of 2020, traffic symmetry will be achieved and, therefore, zero IUC would be feasible from January 2021. But at a time when the telecom industry is bleeding and, on top of that, has received an adverse court order to pay up adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues of around ₹1.4 trillion (with interests and penalties), the regulator should not be in a hurry to abolish the interconnect charges.

In fact, the Trai decision to extend the IUC must be seen in the context of comments by top companies. Vodafone Group Chief Executive Officer Nick Read had told reporters in a post-result discussion that the Indian venture was reaching a liquidation-like condition. Following that, Vodafone Idea Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla had said it might be the end of the road for the telecom venture if there was no help from the government. Even Bharti Enterprises Chairman Sunil Mittal said in recent interactions that these were the most difficult times for the telecom sector.

IUC has been a controversial subject ever since Reliance Jio launched its service with free calls three years ago. In 2017, Trai had cut the interconnect charge from 14 paise per minute to 6 paise per minute, a move that may have hit the industry by around ₹5,000 crore a year. Incumbents argued that the regulator's decision to slash IUC by more than half helped Jio subscribers make calls to those on other networks at a much lower price, while enabling the company to keep disrupting the market with predatory tariff. Another grudge that incumbents expressed against Trai's calculation of IUC was that some key components such as capex and spectrum charges were not considered. This is an opportunity for Trai to show its fairness. And, any change in the IUC regime should come after a proper assessment of the market. The point is that IUC is a cost, and hence it should be cost-based. That's the reason the regulator should be mindful of traffic symmetry so that the market does not get distorted.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

Natural partners, unnatural times

India-US defence ties remain strong despite discord over trade and human rights. New Delhi would do well not to put this to the test

BROADSWORD

AJAI SHUKLA

n Wednesday night in Washington DC, after the second US-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, in which US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defence Mark Esper co-hosted Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, persistent questions from the US media about the continuing crackdown in Jammu & Kashmir and the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which discriminates against Muslim refugees in granting Indian citizenship, made it clear that these issues are now front and centre in the American perception of India.

Since the warming of US-India relations two decades ago, Washington and New Delhi have both talked up the "natural partners" rationale for partnership, with almost every US and India joint state-

ment citing the "shared values" between the two "vibrant democracies". Indeed, Wednesday's joint press conference played that same tune. Lovers of realpolitik have tended to dismiss that as empty rhetoric, pointing to America's long and unlovely record of backing dictators — not least Nguven Van Thieu in Vietnam and the Shah of Iran: and in more recent times the undemocratic leaders of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The cynics argue that expediency, not principle, dictates Washington's policy, and that even the post-Soviet expansion of

the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has involved a strong element of holding one's nose. This argument, however, overlooks the fact that, while Washington happily makes tactical compromises with strongmen and their authoritarian regimes, its strongest and deepest partnerships — such as the Five Eyes alliance with Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK rest on the bedrock of shared values and worldviews.

Others argue that Donald Trump can hardly accuse New Delhi of discrimination against Muslims, given his own misogynistic racism and his shameful imposition in 2017 of a travel ban on citizens of specified Muslim countries. However, it should be remembered that his ban was repeatedly overturned by US courts, strongly opposed by the American media and by large

sections of US lawmakers. Trump is an aberration in the US polity and will cease to be president latest in January 2025, and perhaps even earlier in the unlikely event of the Senate echoing his impeachment on Wednesday by the House of Representatives.

The US administration has not so far meaningfully chastised New Delhi for discriminating against Muslims or its continuing detention of Kashmiri leaders. Pressed by the US media on whether Washington had brought up these issues in the 2+2 dialogue, Mr Pompeo trod carefully, noting that "we care deeply and always will about protecting minorities, protecting religious rights everywhere... and the US will be consistent in the way that we respond to these issues, not only in India but all across the world"; but also saving Indian face by telling the questioner that "we honour

Indian democracy as they have a robust debate inside of India on the issues that you raised.'

However, it would be hard to dispute that the US administration faces a new element of embarrassment due to its India relationship, something that will inevitably corrode the solid bipartisan consensus in the US Congress on the India relationship. It would be prudent to anticipate that New Delhi's days of an unending free ride — when it needed to do little for the US and just being India was enough — are now coming to an end. The implications of this are significant.

It might become increasingly difficult to obtain waivers from US laws on issues like the import of S-400 air defence missiles from Russia. And India might now have to contribute more visibly and to take more visibly pro-US positions on certain issues, even where Indian interests would be better served by ambiguity. With India's moral power diminished in global perceptions, New Delhi might have to compensate with other, more overt, forms of influence.

The 2+2 dialogue itself yielded predictable diplomatic outcomes. Washington backed India's security positions in the Indo-Pacific, while New Delhi catered to Chinese sensitivities by backing an Indo-Pacific security architecture "based on the recognition of Asean centrality." The US side appreciated India's

contributions to Afghanistan, but there was clear divergence over Washington's continuing peace talks with the Taliban. Mr Pompeo said: "We understand the concerns, too, that India has, rightful concerns that they have about terrorism emanating from Pakistan and we assured them that we would take that into account." On Iran, Washington urged New Delhi to back the "maximum pressure campaign" even though the US has already granted sanctions waivers for India-Iran cooperation in the Chabahar Port and connectivity project. The US side voiced "common fears" on the risks associated with Chinese 5G communication networks, while the Indian ministers remained silent on this.

There was more visible progress on the defence partnership. A clear achievement was the signing of an "Industrial Security Annex" (ISA) that will facilitate the flow of critical US defence technology to India The ISA stipulates measures that Indian firms, including private companies, would need to take in order to protect sensitive US information and intellectual propertv. thus facilitating closer cooperation and collaboration between defence industries on both sides. The start of negotiation for ISA was announced during the first 2+2 dialogue in New Delhi in September 2018, which means it has taken just over a year to negotiate. This is a measure of growing comfort between the two sides, since the two earlier "foundational agreements' - the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement signed in 2016; and the Communications Compatibility and Security Arrangement signed last year —both took over a decade.

That leaves just a single "foundational agreement" to complete the military-legal framework that Washington requires for close defence cooperation —which is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), which will streamline the sharing of geospatial intelligence between the US and Indian militaries, allowing for, amongst other things, better navigation and targeting. Vikram Singh, former deputy assistant secretary of defence for South and Southeast Asia who now advises the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, says there was hope that BECA could be concluded early, but clearly areas of concern remain.

In the defence relationship, the two sides also announced the finalisation of three agreements under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative for co-developing and co-producing critical technologies. Also announced was the completion of a hotline between the two sides' defence ministers, a link between the navy headquarters in Delhi and US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) in Hawaii and the posting of an Indian naval officer at the US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) in Bahrain. With the two sides cooperating closely in tracking Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean, the cross posting of officers will help in coordination. It was also agreed that, with the Indian Navy's "area of interest" including the West Asian and East African littorals, senior US officers from Central Command (USCENTCOM) and Africa Command (USAFRICOM) should participate in joint training and patrolling.

Even as discord over US-India trade and commerce colours diplomatic relations, defence relations between the two countries remain on a firm footing. Traditionally, as in the case of Pakistan, the Pentagon has been guided by alliance and security partnership concerns, rather than human rights, political and religious freedoms. But India would do well not to test this tolerance and to return to the values that have brought it influence and admiration in the international arena.

Translating economic scale into financial heft

hina is the second largest economy in the world with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$14 trillion, about 18 per cent of global GDP, and may soon become No 1. It has been the world's biggest trading nation since 2013 and has a current export-import volume of more than \$4.5 trillion. China has the world's second largest equity and bond markets, respectively. Its bond market is worth \$13 trillion and constitutes 11 per cent of the global total. Similarly, its equity market by capitalisation is 12 per cent of the global volume But its weight in the global economy is not reflected in its financial profile.

has fallen in recent years from a high of 25 per cent in 2013 to less than 15 per cent in 2018. Only 2 per cent of international payments is conducted in RMB. In 2016, the RMB was included in the trillion dollar Special Drawing Rights (SDR) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a reserve currency alongside the US dollar, the euro, Japanese yen and the British pound and given a weight of 10.86 per cent. Its inclusion in the foreign exchange reserves of IMF member countries could reach a maximum of \$1 trillion but is currently only

\$194 billion. China has encouraged currency swap agreements with over 30 countries and this is valued at \$500 billion currently, but this has been used only marginally. The RMB has failed to achieve the same credibility as other reserve currencies. Its reluctance to give up control over capital flows and tolerate currency volatility, has stalled progress so far.

China has now shifted to a different strategy to achieve the eventual goal of internationalisation of the yuan. It is pursuing the systematic integration of its huge equity and bond markets into global financial markets using sheer scale to gain pre-eminence. Initially, China set up the Hong Kong-Shanghai and Hong Kong-Shenzhen Stock Connect to allow quotabased trading in Chinese shares, progressively liberalising the quota and allowing easy repatriation of funds. It began to develop its bond market by allowing the issuing of RMB-denominated bonds initially in Hong

Kong and then later in Singapore, Taiwan and London. It is now encouraging key global indices to include Chinese equities and bonds in their benchmarks. Chinese A-shares, which trade on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges, have been included in the MSCI Emerging Market and MSCI All Country World Index. Chinese Government Bonds (CGB) have now been included in the Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Index and may soon become part of the TSE Russells Bond Index - Schroders, an investment firm, claims that the flow of funds from international institutional investors, who typically invest passively The use of renminbi (RMB) in trade settlement in indexed funds, would be \$200 billion annually in

each category initially, going up to \$400 billion eventually. As the Chinese equity and bond markets expand and retail investors also begin to participate, we are looking at fund flows in trillions of dollars. It may be noted that only CGBs have been included so far. It is only a question of time before corporate bonds also get included. Standard and Poor's has been allowed to function as a rating agency inside China. Ratings of corporate

bonds against international benchmarks will enable their inclusion in global indices and this will add to the volume of fund flow into the Chinese bond market. The setting up of a yuan-based oil futures exchange in Shanghai, leveraging the country's status as the world's largest oil importer is raising the currency's profile. Shanghai has emerged as the world's third largest oil

futures market, overtaking Dubai this year. China's UnionPay credit card is also helping raise the country's profile in international financial markets. UnionPay constitutes 58 per cent of all credit cards issued across the world and there are currently 7.6 billion UnionPay card holders. It is accepted in 174 countries. With Chinese making 150 million foreign trips each year and accounting for 20 per cent of tourism spending, acceptance of UnionPay has become indispensable for merchant establishments worldwide.

way, the Cross-border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) in 2015 on the lines of the Brussels-based SWIFT. Currently, CIPS is cooperating closely with SWIFT, but the ultimate aim is to emerge as an alternative global payment and settlement system. There are 31 participants, including 12 international banks, and 745 indirect participants associated with them, which take part in CIPS. In 2018, CIPS handled \$755 billion in cross border yuan settlement business. This is minuscule compared to the SWIFT processing of \$6 trillion daily, but is rising rapidly. Its use is being helped by the US using SWIFT to exclude countries under its sanctions such as Russia and Iran. Russia has set up its own System for Transfer of Financial Messages, which operates among the Eurasian Economic Union countries and has Chinese banks as participants. It has been reported that India. China and Russia are discussing the setting up of a trilateral payments gateway independent of SWIFT in order to avoid being targeted by US sanctions.

Finally, China is moving towards the launch of a sovereign digital currency based on blockchain technology, though details are unclear. Since over 70 per cent of all transactions in China are already digital this is not a farfetched idea. This is being linked to another parallel plan to create an "Asian Yuan". A Chinese economist Sun Mingqi spells out the strategy, "The short-term goal is to create the 'Greater China Renminbi' by internally integrating the Hong Kong dollar and the New Taiwan dollar. The medium-term goal is to build the Asian Yuan system in cooperation with the Japanese ven, the Republic of Korea won and other Asian currencies to establish a 'three-legged system' consisting of the US dollar, the euro and the Asian yuan under the global currency system. The ultimate goal is to establish an ideal, digital, decentralised or non-sovereign global currency based on each country's economic strength and trade value."

And if China is already off the mark with its digital currency, who will the future belong to when this ultimate goal is achieved? And where does all this leave India which is now reduced to gazing angrily at its turbulent navel?

China set up its own international payment gate- The writer is a former foreign secretary and is senior fellow, CPR

The mind of a champion



DEVANGSHU DATTA

At 50, Viswanathan Anand's curriculum vitae runs to many pages. India's first grandmaster announced his arrival on the world stage in 1987 by winning the World Junior Championship. In 2018, he won the World Rapid Championship. Inbetween, he won multiple world titles, in different formats, alongside countless

othersuccesses. Obviously Anand was born with an

extraordinary aptitude for this highly demanding sport. Equally obviously, he has a manic work ethic that helped him master the technical skills to maximise that talent. Less obviously, achieving such success and maintaining this consistency for over 30 years also requires intense introspection and selfexamination. Anand has ruthlessly analysed his own flaws and weaknesses, and understood how to play to his

Such introspection is not unique to Anand - Roger Federer, Magnus Carlsen $and \, Sach in \, Tendulkar \, to \, name \, three \,$ people, must have gone through similar processes. Anand is unusual in that he was already part of the world elite long before he received any formal coaching. He was, therefore, an absolute auto-

He learnt to deal with self-doubt triggered by loss of form. He learnt how to bounce back after crippling defeat, and equally importantly, how to maintain equilibrium and retain motivation, after bigwins. He taught himself the art of revving into super-gear in "must-win" games and learnt how to switch off completely in order to recharge mentally. He also taught himself how to use anger. discrimination and disappointment as motivational spurs.

Remarkably, this book succeeds in verbalising some of that understanding in terms that will make sense to readers, who have never played chess, or indeed, any other sport. This is one of several things that raises this book well above the norm

in terms of sporting biographies.

SHYAM SARAN

There are other stellar qualities as well. The narrative dips in and out of Anand's life, pausing to take snapshots of key moments Somehow, without going through the tediumof

chronological description, it gives a pretty complete picture of his life and career.

There are some utterly fascinating descriptions of Anand's thought processes before, during and after a vital game, or match. (In chess parlance, a match is a series of games against one specific opponent). There are also great explanations of the relationships between a champion and his seconds and of the

 $sport \'s\, transition\, to\, the\, digital\, era.$ The book also introduces us to many

MIND MASTER: Life Author: **Price:**₹599

Winning Lessons From a Champion's /iswanathan Anand with Susan **Publisher:** Hachette

are interesting details about Anand's relationships with

other characters on

the chess circuit.

fascinating

shades of

and chess is full of

characters. There

some of the many

gamesmanship

that occur. There

are also subtle

descriptions of

his other great contemporaries. Despite being a cut-throat sport, chess players are often friendly with rivals. Anand is on very good terms with several of his greatest rivals, while having a somewhat "transactional relationship" with Garry Kasparov. He has worked with Magnus Carlsen, who helped him prepare for a title match against Veselin Topalov. Even during two hard-fought world title matches when Carlsen beat Anandto

become his successor, they were laughing onstage at the same jokes (both quote chunks of Monty Python).

The "insider" descriptions of the match against Veselin Topalov is epic. The match almost didn't happen: a volcanic explosion led to flights across Europe being cancelled. Anand had to ask for a timeout. He hired a van and his team drove for over 40 hours, from Germany to Bulgaria, to get to the venue. Then they drove up and down outside their hotel for an extra hour because they were watching the concluding part of the Lord of the Rings!

Anand's work-life balance has always been exemplary and that has contributed to his success. He takes wind-surfing holidays, bakes cakes with his son and pursues hobbies like astronomy, maths. His relationships with his mother Susheela, and with his wife, Aruna, are both touched upon, with love, delicacy, humour and honesty.







ON IMPEACHMENT President of the US Donald Trump

I got Impeached last night without one Republican vote being cast ... Now the Do Nothing Party want to Do Nothing with the Articles & not deliver them to the Senate, but it's Senate's call!

NCLAT verdict is a severe indictment of the Tatas

The SC may overturn the NCLAT ruling, but the illegalities flagged by it show the Tatas in poor light

■ **HE UNCEREMONIOUS REMOVAL** of Cyrus Mistry from the post of chairman of Tata Sons in October 2016 has been pronounced illegal by the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) which said he had been ousted without due process. In a dramatic reversal of the ruling by the Mumbai bench of the NCLT, the appeal court has upheld the Mistry family's contention that it was oppressed as a minority shareholder. Indeed, the move to convert Tata Sons into a private company has been viewed by the appeals court to be illegal. This newspaper had condemned Mistry's removal when it took place, and the subsequent actions taken to relieve him of all other posts in group companies. It had also said the conversion of Tata Sons into a private company appeared to be aimed at hurting the Mistrys who have been long-time stakeholders of Tata Group.

While the NCLAT ruling is not the last word and could well be overturned by the Supreme Court (SC), there is no doubt it comes as a big jolt for the Tatas. Even if not too many businessmen and corporate experts expressed their views publicly, the unseemly manner in which Mistry was sacked, and charges made against him, were seen to be unbecoming of India's most ethical business group. Several independent directors had, in fact, supported Mistry, applauding the very performance that was questioned by Tata Sons.

Going by the charges traded between the two camps, it appeared that Mistry's efforts to clean up the damaged balance sheets of some group companies and also to regularise matters at others were not always met with approval by Ratan Tata. Given most of the larger group companies are listed entities, the balance sheets clearly showed how unprofitable acquisitions and bad decisions had hurt businesses. Apparently, the various trusts had a bigger role in decision-making than the chief executives of the boards of the operating companies. Mistry had pointed out that directors left a meeting midway to discuss the agenda separately with Tata, something not expected in a Tata Sons boardroom, and probably why the NCLAT order asks Ratan Tata to 'desist' from interfering in the operations.

There is nothing to prevent Tata Sons from ignoring the court's observations altogether and continuing to operate in the same fashion as it has in the past; it is a large and powerful conglomerate. But, it would do well to take cognisance of the views and to reflect on its actions because, even if the SC verdict goes in its favour—and there are several legal experts who believe it will—the reputation of its board has been severely damaged. To be sure, no one will say so, but the appeals court order paints a poor picture of the company's boardroom practices. Tata Sons will claim that it has always followed due procedure and never once violated the law, and that is probably correct. However, it is the spirit behind the actions, and not the legal correctness that is being questioned. Indeed, the NCLAT's 174-page order would, and should, be read by other business groups. It is unfortunate that very few companies in India consider it necessary to maintain some standard of corporate governance; most, including those that are supposedly run by professionals, care little for ethics, with independent directors largely playing along with the rest of the board. But, the NCLAT ruling, even if it has overstepped its limits, should serve as a wakeup call. Mistry has done corporate India a service by fighting for his rights.

Developing human capital

Fixing higher education & rapid urbanisation critical

COUNTRYTHAT aspires to become a \$5-trillion economy in a span of five years must understand that it can't get there with a chunk of its youth having only school-level education. To be sure, India has made considerable progress in improving its gross enrollment ratio (GER) for tertiary education—from 21.5% in 2012-13, it rose to 26.3% in 2018-19. And, the government targets 30% by 2020. But, contrast that rate of progress with China's—the country pushed up its GER from 39% to 51% in just three years, 2014 to 2017. This, when, in 1995, China's tertiary GER lagged India's (4.48% of the school-leaver age cohort in the respective national population vs 5.5%). India has a very low human capital base for research—just 0.45% of the students enrolled in higher education are enrolled in doctoral programmes.

There is no doubt that India has made significant progress in R&D capacity and output—in 2016, the US's National Science Foundation data shows, India overtook Japan as the fourth-largest producer of science and engineering research. Between 2003 and 2016, India's article count in Scopus, the world's largest catalogue of abstracts and citations went up from 27,000 to 110,000. But, over that period, China's went up from 87,000 to 426,000. Thus, the trend of rise in enrolment in science education in India at the graduate level, as AISHE data shows, is quite encouraging. The need, now, is to ensure that a critical number of science graduates receive the necessary support to enter post-graduation and get follow-on opportunities in research. It is also here that the fall in graduate engineering courses becomes worrying—technical education is key to innovation for the fourth industrial revolution, and India must focus on producing quality engineering graduates who can become part of the R&D ecosystem in companies, or enter the research pipeline at universities. Both quality of training and course content in engineering colleges must be radically rethought; else, the country will have the same high proportion of unemployable engineers that has been reported in the recent past.

Unemployment data from CMIE for May-August 2019 shows that unemployment rate is the highest for those with tertiary-level education. Either the bulk of those with tertiary level education who are part of the workforce don't have the skills that the industry requires or don't match up to the standards. Policymakers must pay heed to the recommendations that Mohandas Pai and Nisha Holla make in Human Capital Development *in India*, their report for Ficci. Pai-Holla advocate a greater role for the private sector in higher education through increased partnership with industry for infrastructure, teaching talent, and research. But, they argue, the government's spending capacity is central to this since higher education must also be affordable and accessible. Low urbanisation, and thus a lack of diversity in skilling and employment opportunities, is also holding back human capital development. Pai and Holla recommend that higher education institutions in India's villages and semi-urban areas focus on programmes that will skill the youth for the needs of local and traditional industry. Consolidation also must happen in the higher education space, as recommended by the draft National Education Policy, in which standalone institutions become part of multidisciplinary universities and colleges, to pool and optimise use of resources. Also, greater academic, financial, and administrative autonomy for higher education institutes will be key. The government hasn't really committed to this, despite making the right noises.

NutriAIN'T

PDS for proteinaceous foods is a bad idea; govt should go with cash transfers instead to push better nutritional uptake

ITI AAYOG IS mooting a proposal to extend government subsidy on food to protein-rich foods, including egg, fish, and meat, and make them available $through \,PDS. \,Given \,that \,India \,faces\, a \,double \,burden-housing\, a \,quarter\, of\, the$ global hunger burden while facing a growing burden of obesity—and that over 68% of deaths in India among children aged under five years are due to malnutrition, the proposal seems well-intended. However, India already spends nearly 1% of its GDP—the food subsidy bill for FY20 is pegged at ₹1.84 lakh crore—and expanding the PDS list like this will add a massive sum to the government's outgo. The government would be better able to meet nutrition goals if it were to focus on tied direct benefits transfer instead.

IFPRI and J-PAL South Asia studies found that cash transfers are not only less costly to implement but also encourage greater diet diversity. That Indians are moving toward "oily, sugary and spicy food" as opposed to diversifying to more nutritive options is, according to NITI Aayog's Ramesh Chand, one of the major reasons why the proposal is being considered. It is surprising that the government think-tank should recommend an avenue—inkind transfers—that research across the globe shows is guaranteed to fail to result in diet diversification. In addition, the battle against malnutrition must focus on social and behaviour change communication. For instance, despite the impact that such campaigns have had on health and nutrition, India has not seriously pursued any since the hugely successful 1980s campaign to promote egg consumption.

US-CHINA TRADE DEAL

THE BRIEF PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY BEFORE IT BECOMES CLEAR IF CHINA WILL LIVE UP TO ITS END OF THE BARGAIN MEANS INDIA MUST URGENTLY BRING IN WTO-COMPLIANT EXPORT SCHEMES

Time running out to woo FDI exiting China

HE RECENT BILATERAL trade deal between the US and China has important implications for India. It hastens the need to conclude India's ongoing efforts to provide a policy framework for attracting foreign direct investment seeking locations other than China. The trade deal covers important areas of concern for the US, ranging across Intellectual Property Rights, technology transfer, currency related issues, greater market access for US products (goods and financial services), and dispute settlement for effective implementation.

Under the trade deal, the US will maintain its 25% tariff on imports worth \$250 billion, reduce its 15% tariff to 7.5% on \$120 billion worth of imports, and not implement the planned tariff increase on the so-called List 4B products, which include mobile phones, laptop computers, apparel, and toys.

For List 4B products, the window of commercial opportunity is now open for a longer period because the planned US tariff increase is not being implemented. The US-China deal provides a framework for a potential longer-term solution to US-China problems. However, the US trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, has noted that whether or not China will live up to the commitments is as yet uncertain, and depends on whether the hardliners or the reformers in Beijing will prevail during the implementation of the trade deal. Both, the US and large multinational companies will be watching the implementation of this deal, to assess whether or not the Chinese leadership will effectively implement the agreement.

This period of uncertainty is significant because it allows the window of opportunity to be open, but only to a limited extent. In such a situation, India has only a short period of time to conclude its intense process of policy consideration, which has been going on for the past several months, with the objective of making India an attractive investment destination. The window of opportunity is closing, but the opportunity to establish credibility and attractiveness of India as an alternative investment destination is still present if the policies under consideration are finalised and implemented within a couple of months. Time is of

RAJEEV KHER & HARSHA VARDHANA SINGH

Kher is former Commerce Secretary of India & Singh is former Deputy Director General of WTO. Views are personal

essence now.

India is a large market, but an export hub that replaces the aspirations for global trade links of large companies considering alternatives to investing in China requires access to a much larger marketplace within the context of global value chains. This, in turn, needs significant reform in operational conditions. India's policymakers have been focused on creating such reform-based improvement, and have considered the possibility of initiating reform in some major sectors. The recent report of the High Level Advisory Group on international trade also emphasises such an approach. The current developments are very significant in this regard.

List 4B, for which the US has postponed its planned tariff increase on imports from China, contains at least two product areas which India has emphasised for its key national objectives—apparel for employment, and mobile phones for technology. Such an emphasis is required for these two sectors. Bangladesh and Vietnam now have double the apparel exports compared to India, rising from much smaller levels in 2000, or even 2005. Both these countries have expanded their exports with the help of FDI. India seems to have missed out on attracting large FDI in the apparel sector. Extensive reform is required, along with policy support, factor market reform, international institutional engagements, upscaling existing enterprise, and modernising smaller enterprises. The required reforms and incentive policies are important for both rejuvenating the established domestic industry, and attracting FDI.

For mobile phones, the top exporting economies, i.e., China, Vietnam, and Hong Kong (China), account for over 70% of the global market. India's global export share is about 0.6% at present, but the nation has high aspirations in this sector. India's National Policy on

Electronics (NPE), 2019 aims to achieve an export of \$110 billion for mobile phones by 2025—an approximately 70-fold increase. The aim is to increase in domestic design and technological ecosystem, as well as to generate a major rise in foreign exchange earnings.

The large increase in mobile phone exports can take place only if major multinational companies with extensive global market presence invest in India at scale. It is significant that

India has only a

to conclude its

intense process

of policy

consideration,

which has been

going on for the

the largest global mobile phone companies are present in India. However, their additional investments and commitment to a business plan that helps achieve the NPE 2019 target would depend on policy changes and reform. This has to happen during the short period for which the window of opportunity for countries to attract investment that seeks locations other than China is still available. This

period is of not more than a few months. A quick decision and implementation within a couple of months or so would give India credibility, bringing back the attention of large investors to the country in this period of uncertainty. Other countries such as Vietnam

attract FDI due to their ease of doing business and by implementing an incentivising policy framework. These policies give FDI in Vietnam a commercial advantage of about 9-12% over India's mobile phone production. In this competitive situation, a WTO panel has found India's main export incentive schemes, like the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS), to be inconsistent with WTO provisions. India will have to phase out MEIS, and some of the other schemes found to be in violation of WTO provisions. Meanwhile, ironically, India has

actually reduced the level of its prevailing MEIS incentive, thus lowering the support provided to investors/exporters. While the window of opportunity is closing, Indian policy incentives are actually becoming less attractive.

This results in a number of adverse effects. One, it results in future policy uncertainty for investment decisions Two, it reduces the attractiveness of establishing export hubs in India when other competing countries are providing incentives, especially for large investors. Three, for large export orders—India wishes large firms to increases exports by several billions of dollars—a 2% lower margin of competition due to reduction of MEIS would have a large aggregate impact on earnings and ability to compete. Four, the business of large exports necessitates creating advance orders,

inventory planning and hiring of workers to address export demand, systemic clearances snort period of time (including from the importing market) to ensure that the planned exports can take place smoothly, and established business relationships to create and maintaining large exports. A significant change in the incentive past several months and competitive margin disrupts all these aspects, and creates a reluctance on the part of major investors to

> invest and make large efforts for exports. An alternative support policy is required to mitigate these negative impacts. Indian policymakers have been

> aware of the need to implement policy support and incentives. Intense discussions and efforts have taken place in several government departments and institutions for some months now, to develop WTO-consistent policy alternatives that will encourage invest ment by major firms in India, particularly in areas with high technology and export potential. This process should now be concluded, and the relevant policies implemented in the near term to encourage major investments and exports, especially for the priority areas for which US tariff increases have been postponed, i.e. products in List 4B mentioned above.

TRUMP IMPEACHMENT

A shot in the arm for the US Constitution

Impeachment vote is the single most significant action that the House can take in defence of the Constitution. It isn't enough. But, it is a start

THE HOUSE OF Representatives' historic vote to impeach president Donald Trump comes near the end of the president's third tumultuous year in office which is also the third year of the prolonged stress test he has been giving to the US Constitution. It is an occasion to check in on the most basic question that can be asked in a democracy: What is the state of our Constitution?

The short answer is that the Constitution is, so far, holding up in the face of the most extended challenge to its principles and norms that it has confronted since World War II. The impeachment itself is actually a significant improvement in the Constitution's performance. It signals that at least half the legislative branch—the House—is now taking seriously its own responsibility to uphold the Constitution in the face of presidential contempt for it. Until now, it is the other branch of government—the judiciary that has been almost the only effective check on Trump's recurring impulse to violate the Constitution. When Trump has signed executive orders that break the Constitution, courts have often struck them down. The courts have also blocked other unlawful executive branch action. So when it comes to the formal constitutional rules that courts interpret and apply, the Constitution has been functioning remarkably well

since January 2017. Where the Constitution has been faltering is in the significant erosion of our informal, unwritten norms. These have constitutional weight even if they aren't identifiable as strict rules of constitutional law. They include things like the politicisation of the department of justice and the FBI, and the subtle corruption of the presidency through Trump's continuing pursuit of his business inter-

ests while in office. For most of the last three years, Trump has successfully undercut those kinds of hard-won, unwritten norms.

Since taking office, Trump has committed a wide range of acts that could plausibly be classified as impeachable high crimes and misdemeanors. The House chose not to impeach him for those—like the obstruction of justice described in Robert Mueller's report but for high crimes and misdemeanors that specifically violated the constitutional principles of democracy and the separation of powers.

The first article of impeachment, for abuse of power, stands for the House's insistence that the Constitution prohibits the president from using his office for personal political gain, and from corruptly influencing his own reelection with the help of a foreign power. Although no statute clearly prohibits this conduct, it is barred by the Constitution itself through the clause that prescribes impeachment for "high crimes". The impeachment puts flesh on the bones of basic principle that the president can't try to break democracy.

The second article, for obstruction of Congress, stands for the principle that the president can't stonewall the legislative branch and thus render himself beyond the reach of the Constitution. Here the House is vindicating the principle of separation of powers. Here, too, there is no legal provision saying the president can't refuse to cooperate in an impeachment inquiry. But, it is a principle embedded in the Constitution itself specifically in the logic of Congress's authority to oversee the president.

Impeachment on its own is only part of what the legislative branch should do **NOAH FELDMAN**

to stand up for the Constitution. If, as seems likely, the Senate does not remove Trump, it could imply that Trump's conduct is acceptable. The result could erode constitutional norms still further.

Nonetheless, the House at least has

conveyed the message that Trump has breached the Constitution. And he has done so more markedly than any president in US history, with the possible exception of Richard Nixon. Andrew Johnson was impeached for ignoring a law, itself unconstitutional, that said he couldn't fire his cabinet members without Senate consent. Bill Clinton was impeached for lying under oath about his sexual relationship with an intern, an act that was legally and morally wrong, but not obviously a violation of a bedrock constitutional principle. Nixon, who resigned before he could be impeached, covered up his campaign's efforts to subvert democracy—much like Trump. And he obstructed Congress, albeit less absolutely than Trump did. Nixon's actions were also directed against the Constitution. Theywere high crimes and misdemeanors, like Trump's. And they have gone down in history as exemplars of unpresidential conduct.

When historians tell the story of Trump's legacy of weakening the Constitution, they will now include the House's response. That matters. The Constitution is not the dead hand of the past. It is a living tradition whose meaning evolves in real time, and is affected by what today's constitutional actors say it means.

The impeachment vote is the single most significant action that the House can take in defence of the Constitution. It isn't enough. But, it is a start.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unity in diversity

The nationwide agitation by the people, irrespective of their religion, against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) enacted by the BJP government conveys one thing very clearly—the people of our nation cannot be divided in the name of religion. Though the CAA is alleged to be only anti-Muslims, the solidarity shown by Indian people of different hues seeking its cancellation is really amazing. We have witnessed the avowed principle of our nation, 'unity in diversity' in their spontaneous agitation against the Act. It is time the government understood the sentiment and wishes of the people and rescinded the Act, which appears to be against the principles of secularism engraved in the sacred Constitution of our country. — Tharcius S .Fernando, Chennai

Impeaching Trump

For the third time in history, the United States House of Representatives voted to impeach a President. The lower house of Congress voted to impeach Donald Trump for abuse of power. The Senate, the upper house, will now weigh in on the trial—and on account of it having a Republican majority, Trump, in all probability, will be acquitted. However, this is still being seen as a historic win for the Democrats, who initiated the impeachment enquiry against Trump, permanently marking the President's tenure. With this, the bid for a re-election for President Donald Trump looks doubtful and he may be rejected for lowering the image of the country. — Bhagwan Thadani, Mumbai

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CHLOROPHILE

Mirzapur could wipe away India's onion tears

The sandy loam of the Indo-Gangetic Plain is just right for onions as it drains well. A drive, thus, to encourage production in this belt could check onion price fluctuations

IVERSIFYING THE AREAS of production to northern India, adopting raised-bed planting practice along with drip irrigation and reducing losses with better storage technology can help avert episodes of price slumps and

spikes that afflict the onion trade. A majority of onion supply (60%) comes from the rabi crop which is planted in December and January, and

harvested from March to June. Farmers store onions on premise, in ventilated structures with asbestos or thatched roofing, for release till October, after which the kharif crop, planted in July-August enters the market. There is also a late kharif crop, planted in September-October and harvested between December and February. Kharif and late-kharif onions have a short shelf-life. They last for about a month after harvest. About a

quarter of the annual supply comes from the kharif crop, and 80% of it is from Maharashtra and Karnataka. Disruption of supply from these two states has a ripple effect across the country.

This year late onset of monsoon delayed the kharif planting season. The October report, of the agriculture ministry, said 7% less area was planted. Heavy and prolonged rain damaged the transplanted seedlings and also destroyed late kharif nurseries. Official reports highlighted production at 52 lakh tonnes during the two seasons was 26% less than last year. Besides, stored rabi onions were also damaged because of high humidity. Of the buffer stock of 77,000 tonnes created with the price stabilisation fund, about 39,000 tonnes had to be discarded because of spoilage. Farmers and traders suffered from such losses.

Spreading the production of onions across the country and close to the places of consumption can help avert such situations. Major Singh, director at the Directorate of Onion and Garlic Research at Rajgurunagar near Pune reports encouraging results from trials in eastern UP's Mirzapur district. He says the sandy loam of the Indo-Gangetic Plain is just right for onions as it drains well. Flooding is an issue for which he recommends raised-bed planting. In all, 140 farmers have participated in as many field demonstrations which the directorate has held since the monsoon season last year. Five farmers did very well. They swapped local varieties for improved ones like Bhima Dark Red and Bhima Super, and adopted better agronomic practices. Reported yields of 4,857 kg and 9,360 kg an acre, earned a profit of ₹2-2.5 lakh per acre, according to the Directorate, helped by the spike in onion prices. A drive, thus, to encourage production in this belt could check onion price fluctuations.

Better storages will also help. Currently, onions are stored at ambient temperature in raised floor structures with side slats (for ventilation) and asbestos roofs. These are low-cost storages, which the Maharashtra government subsidises. Yogesh Thorat, managing director, Maharashtra Farmers Producer Company (FPC), a state-level consortium of FPCs, says it wants to create large storages totalling 25,000 tonnes in 10 locations, but cannot home in on the right technology. In open ventilated storages, losses can be as high as 30-40% or even more, depending on the outside temperature and relative humidity. Onions last longer in cold storages, but sprout when kept in the open, unless irradiated. Singh says losses were found to be lower—10%—in bulbs stored for four months at 27 degrees celsius. The monthly running cost was 30-50 paise per kg, about five times less than that of cold storages. The 20-tonne prototype which the directorate has developed needs to be scaled up to a few hundred tonnes and validated for commercial use, for which Singh wants financing partners.

India has the largest area under onions (13 lakh hectares), but yield at 17 tonnes per hectare is less than China's 22 tonnes. Productivity in countries like Netherlands (51.8 tonnes/ha), Germany (46 tonnes/ha) and Iran (38.5 tonnes/ha) is higher, but their cultivation is limited to a few thousand hectares and, therefore, can give better attention.

India's production was almost flat between 1991-92 (47 lakh tonnes) and 2001-02 (53 lakh tonnes). It doubled to 108 lakh tonnes by 2006-07, and has doubled again since. Annual production currently is about 209 lakh tonnes, which exceeds the domestic demand. Exports have increased from 4.42 lakh tonnes valued at \$70.73 million in 2001-02 to 20.62 lakh tonnes worth \$470 million over the last few years.

Anil Khar, an onion breeder at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi, says yields can be increased with hybrids. Hybrid onions are of uniform size, shape, colour and maturity unlike open-pollinated varieties, which have a mix of A, B and C grades. Developing hybrids, he says, is a tedious process as onions are a highly cross-pollinated crop. India should sequence the onion genome, he says, to discover the genes responsible for particular traits. This can help in faster breeding through marker-assisted selection, an agribiotechnology tool, for higher yields, longer shelf-life, processing quality (more solids, less water) and resistance to pests, diseases and climate stresses.

Singh says the directorate has hybrids, but has not been able to popularise them because they are not higher yielding than open pollinated varieties. He says the package of practices it has developed including planting on raised beds (ridges) and use of drip irrigation can improve yields. There are a set of farming practices to improve durability including lesser use of nitrogen, maintaining moisture during dry spells, and stopping irrigation a fortnight before harvesting. Shade curing for two weeks and disinfecting the storages to prevent fungal infections will also help keep rabi onions longer.

There is a lot of demand for onions from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Gulf countries. India has not been able to make a dent in the European and American markets, where bigger and less pungent onions are preferred. Singh says exporters do not take the trouble of obtaining certification for good agricultural practices. These countries are also strict about infections like black sooty mold.

Can processing help tide over episodes of scarcity? Jalgaon-based Jain Irrigation has about 5,000 farmers on contract who produce processing quality onions with less water (88%). But dehydrating them to 5-6% moisture costs about ₹25 a kg, says senior vice-president Kalyanrao Patil. Akg of dehydrated flakes is equal to 10 kg of fresh ones. The company supplies to the military and some pizza chains.

Dehydrated onion flakes retail for ₹197 per 450 grams in online stores. Red onion powder sold in combination with garlic powder retails for ₹299 per 150 grams. Onion flakes, powder or paste are unlikely to be popular like tomato puree. The farmers of eastern UP and Bihar can satisfy India's love of fresh onions without having to cry about prices, if they are assured of profits.

Surging ahead

BANSAL

Author is Deputy CEO, KPMG in India. Views are personal

India is making strides but has more ground to cover

HE YEAR 2019 has been eventful. With two budgets being presented this year, India came out with decisive policies in the face of economic and trade uncertainty. Some key changes which were made by the ministry of finance have the potential to impact the country's future. These included the corporate tax cut and amendments to the IBC, aimed at streamlining the insolvency process and protecting last-mile funding. The Centre also announced a relief package of ₹25,000 crore to revive stalled housing projects. It also declared removal of all charges on digital payments to promote Digital India. Further, the Union Budget 2019 gave a boost to make electric vehicles affordable with a GST cut from 12% to 5%, and introduced a provision of additional income tax benefit of ₹1.5 lakh on loans taken to purchase electric vehicles.

The government has also laid emphasis on reducing the financial stress of farmers by offering them additional income opportunities. During the Interim Budget presented in February 2019, the government announced a ₹6,000 annual income support for marginal farmers, called the PM KISAN. The Union Budget, presented in July 2019, proposed innovative pilot programmes on 'zero-budget farming', scaling up of rural infrastructure under the PMGSY and incubators to develop 75,000 entrepreneurs in the agro-rural industry. Recognising the importance of capital for MSMEs, a 2% interest subvention on fresh and incremental loans was also announced along with a partial credit guarantee to public-sector banks (PSBs) for purchasing high-rated pooled assets of strong NBFCs.

In September, the finance ministry set up a task force to build a national brownfield and greenfield infrastructure project pipeline worth ₹100 lakh crore over the next five years. In the same month, the Union Cabinet approved 100% FDI, under automatic route, for contract manufacturing and commercial coal mining. The local sourcing conditions for singlebrand retailers were also relaxed. Such norms are expected to

In many ways, 2019 has created the base for India's future growth. The key would, however, be in implementation

reinforce India's position as a potential global manufacturing hub, and reduce dependence on imports. The ministry of finance also announced a stimulus package with an upfront disbursement of ₹70,000 crore for staterun banks and merger of 10 state-owned banks to form four large banks. If implemented well, these moves can revitalise the banking sector and enable PSBs to compete more effectively.

In 2019, India climbed 14 places to become 63rd among 190 nations in the World Bank's ease of doing business ranking (up from 77th rank in 2018). The country also attracted FDI of \$27.2 billion during FY2019. India's economic engine, however, hit a snag as GDP growth slowed, corporate revenues moderated, unemployment increased, urban wages and farmer income stagnated and consumption declined.

While the government has taken several initiatives to steer the meandering economy to the fast-growth lane, more work remains to be done on the policy front to shift India onto an accelerated growth trajectory. These reforms will have to include improvements to land and labour laws, a much more open trade regime and removing bottlenecks for accessing capital. The reforms could be supported with rationalisation of taxes with a GST 2.0, a stable regulatory regime and ensuring greater physical and digital connectivity across the country. Decentralisation of decision making by empowering states and creation of a coherent longterm vision could help guide the economy out of this slump.

Creating a conducive environment that will rebuild citizens'trust in the economy, improve investor confidence, stimulate investments and integrate India into global supply chains would need to be taken up on priority. Furthermore, providing universal healthcare, easy access to quality education and electricity, developing transport infrastructure and addressing sustainability issues will be the foundation for India's next stage of development. The country also faces immense pressure to create job opportunities for its large working-age population.

Despite uncertainties, the momentum of structural reforms is undoubtedly strong. The government has covered a broad gamut of trade and investment through its reforms. In manyways, 2019 has created the base for India's future growth. The keywould, however, be effective implementation such that India meets its objective of a \$5 trillion.

GST

NSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY Time for an Code (IBC) and Goods & Service Tax (GST) were major structural reforms during previous tenure of the Modi government. There are operational change some delays in resolution of cases, but IBC has gained momentum and various important amendments have been made to address the operational issues raised by stakeholders. The Supreme Court If the policymakers want to augment judgment in the matter of Essar Steel has GST revenues they should focus on

GST was biggest ever indirect tax reform. It was aimed to improve the ease of doing business by having a common set of law across the nation. It was also expected that GST will improve tax collections and curb evasions.

also settled various open issues and

scope of litigation has reduced.

While GST is, indeed, a game-changer, it is important to understand that its implementation is dependent on an IT platform. This IT infrastructure is the interface between taxpayer and the government. A majority of problems, thus, stem from poor design of GST returns. That is one of the primary reasons that the due date for filing of annual return for FY 2017-18 has been extended many times. It would be better if entities are given exemption from filing of annual return for FY 2017-18. Matching the input tax credit was a key under GST to check the tax evasion and this functionality is not yet enabled in the way it was envisinfrastructure to curb tax evasion aged. Considering the uneven trend in tax collection, the government recently

work on improving the IT

simplifying the operational part and

sionals need a long term solution. GST has affected service providers more than manufacturers or traders. It has not only increased the tax rate for service providers, but compliance burden has also

changed the rules relating to input tax

credit for cases where amounts claimed as

input is not shown by seller in her return.

However, these are only temporary fixes,

and both the taxpayer and finance profes-

increased exponentially. Manufacturers were required to file factory-wise monthly return under erstwhile central excise regime, but service providers were filing half yearly return for their entire operations in form ST3. Now, service providers have to file a state-wise monthly return, thereby increasing the compliance burden. Moreover, the service provider has to take care of assessments for each state separately, a divergence from the centralised system of filing followed earlier. The gov-

SHSHANK

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SAURAY



FM NIRMALA SITHARAMAN AND REVENUE SECRETARY AJAY BHUSHAN AT THE 38TH GST COUNCIL MEETING IN NEW DELHI

ernment must consider taking states on board for a single comprehensive return for service providers. A system of centralised assessment based on the principle place of business as applicable for Income Tax purposes needs to be established.

GST is often criticised for multi tier tax structure and people demand rationalisation, but a multiple rate structure is needed for a country with large lower-middle class population. Besides, there are certain essential items which need to be taxed at conces-

sional rate or exempted fully from tax net. India is a vast country and having a single tax rate will not be in consideration of the social structure. Besides, an analysis of VAT rates in various European countries shows that there are multiple tax rates in place.

The government is facing an uphill task to meet the fiscal deficit target amid economic slowdown, as it requires public expenditure to go up. Union finance minister is in a tough situation given the fact that state governments are raising voice over **GST/VAT** rates in major European countries in 2010

European countries in 2019					
Country	Standard rate (%)	Reduced rate (%)*			
UK	20	5			
Sweden	25	12, 6			
Spain	21	10, 4			
Portugal	23	13, 6			
Poland	23	8, 5			
Germany	19	7			
Norway	25	15, 12			
Italy	22	10, 5, 4			
France	20	10, 5.5, 2.1			
Hungary	27	18, 5			
*(Rates for small businesses and special schemes)					

Source: Ernst & Young (EY) report

delay in settlement of their share of cess collections. Considering the decline in demand, GST council has rightfully decided not to increase tax rate in the last meeting, held on Wednesday. Council has also given a major relief by waiving the penalty for non-filing of return, if these returns get filed by January 10, 2020. However, if the policymakers want to augment GST revenues they should focus on simplifying the operational part and work on improving the IT infrastructure to curb tax evasion.



WORDLY WISE

HISTORY DOESN'T HAVE A CURFEW.

— JOHN GREEN

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

WITHOUT FEAR

That was the place on the street across the country where women and men, citizens all, stepped out to be seen and heard

O MANY OF the images and videos from the people's protests in cities across the country on Thursday, including and especially the national capital, are a reproach to the Narendra Modi government. They frame mostly young, mostly anonymous people who took to the streets mostly peacefully, to raise their voices against a citizenship law that seeks to recast and redefine citizenship of this country in majoritarian terms, faced with a grim and repressive state machinery in BJP-ruled states. They frame historian, Gandhi biographer and prominent public intellectual Ramachandra Guha being pulled and pushed and arrested by policemen in Bengaluru for no evident crime other than holding up a placard showing a picture of the father of India's Constitution, BR Ambedkar, and articulating his own disagreement with the regime's new law. They frame intellectuals and writers and activists being hauled away from protest venues in Delhi. They frame, essentially, a nervous and paranoid government that appears to have lost the ability to either listen to its intellectuals or its young, or to talk to them. A government that seems to respond to dissent only by suppressing it — by imposing Section 144, through arbitrary detention and by snapping voice, internet and sms services. That the world's fastest growing internet market is also now a global leader in cutting off access to small and large swathes of its population, that the internet clampdown as a way of blocking protests is becoming increasingly commonplace, and that in this, India is in the company of countries like Myanmar, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela, is a reason for deep embarrassment to all those who take pride in the argumentativeness of its democracy.

The summary attempt to crack down on dissent against the citizenship law takes place in a grey context. In the backdrop of the current moment is the revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir in August in a manner that has isolated and continues to isolate its people, the detention of thousands of its political workers and leaders, including 83-yearold former chief minister Farooq Abdullah — his incarceration was extended by three months a few days ago — and the longest ever continuous internet shutdown in the country. The scenes that played out in the national capital on Thursday have sent out the signal that the apparent obduracy and imperviousness of government is not limited to its treatment of a long-standing trouble spot. It is the reflexive response to all disagreement and discontent. This is a disquieting signal to the country.

There has also been violence and arson, as in Seelampur in the capital, in parts of Lucknow and Mangalore on Thursday. It is incumbent on the state governments and the entire political establishment, including the Opposition, to do whatever it takes to keep the peace. But in doing so, the world's largest democracy cannot look like it cannot accommodate its young who disagree, it cannot afford to signal that it is so ill at ease with itself. At any time, and especially when its economy is in slowdown, India risks a lot if it begins to be seen as a place where the dissenter's mind is not without fear.

RESET THE BOARDROOM

NCLAT ruling on Tata Sons case flags deeper questions of corporate governance that need to be addressed urgently

HREE YEARS AFTER being abruptly unseated, Cyrus Mistry appears on course to being reinstated as executive chairman of Tata Sons, the holding company of one of India's largest business conglomerates, with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) ruling on Wednesday that his sacking in October 2016 and the subsequent appointment of N Chandrasekaran was illegal. This is an extraordinary development in the history of corporate battles in India. It could have a destabilising impact on not just the scores of companies in the over \$100 billion diversified group but also on markets and investors.

The tribunal has said that the manner in which Mistry was suddenly removed, the absence of any discussion at the board meeting on October 24, 2016, and his subsequent removal as a director in group companies, amounted to prejudicial and oppressive action. It has ordered that Mistry be reinstated as director of four Tata companies, while setting aside the decision to convert the company from a public to a private firm. The tribunal's verdict will become operational only after four weeks with a window being provided for the Tatas to appeal to the Supreme Court. But irrespective of the final verdict in this case, there are some larger issues which need to be addressed by corporate India.

These questions concern corporate democracy or democratic behaviour in listed corporate firms, be they promoter-driven companies or professionally managed companies and appropriate governance structures including independent boards. It is important in a public corporation to make a clear distinction between decisiveness and arbitrariness. While corporate governance in any country may be shaped by several factors, including the cultural backdrop, it is also about ethical values, integrity standards and following the spirit of the law. At a fraught time when many Indian companies are struggling to manage their balance sheets, one of the grave risks that the latest ruling poses is that of further deepening the distrust of corporates by many investors hurt already by events in many firms over the past few years. That could be a dampener for long-term investment in India and for companies and entrepreneurs looking to bet on projects here. Much will depend on how swiftly the Supreme Court ensures an early closure to this corporate feud, and the behavioural change in India's boardrooms over the next few years.

JUST IMAGINE

USDA has ended a free trade agreement with a fictional country created by Stan Lee. But are real countries for real?

IRED OF BATTLING China, the United States has launched a trade war against the state of Wakanda, the world's only source of the metal vibranium, by taking it off the online list of nations with free trade agreements. That's as unbelievable as putting it on the list of the Department of Agriculture in the first place, since Wakanda is a fictional African nation which exists only within the Marvel universe, as the home of Black Panther. Imagine some unsung lower-rung bureaucrat, tired to death of moving files on alfalfa and Brussels sprouts, swerving to his monitor and with a rebellious but steady hand, injecting the database of the world's biggest economy with the fiction of Wakanda. This is fandom at its noblest.

Sadly, the imaginary country was quietly removed from the pages after a software engineer in New York discovered it on the list and alerted the Twitter community. All traces of Wakanda vanished, down to interesting details like tariffs on tobacco and booze, live animals and dairy products. What a pity, when the myth of the relatively stodgy Kailasa, allegedly established by fugitive rape accused godman Nithyananda, is allowed to linger, to offer succour to allegedly dispossessed Hindus from the world over, who have

"lost the right to practise Hinduism authentically" in their countries. On the other hand, maybe Wakanda and Kailasa are authentic, and those who doubt their existence aren't. The world is now full of people who wonder if they had been sleepwalking in the alternate histories of their countries, and have now woken up in the authorised version. But actually, it is we who make history. Tintin exists irrespective of whether Syldavia and Borduria exist, but these mythic nations can only exist in Tintin's world.

What the young say



Implementation of nation-wide NRC will put India in a state of conflict. Government must listen, step back

NAJEEB JUNG

THERE HAVE BEEN signs that anxiety was building up among the youth for some years now. The initial manifestation came with the agitation following the unfortunate suicide of Rohith Vemula in January 2016 in Hyderabad, which highlighted the callousness and insensitivity of university administrations towards Dalit students. At the same time, JNU was simmering: Its vice-chancellor had done enough to damage what is arguably the most outstanding university in India. Harsh actions against students and faculty, locking up of spaces to curb the movement of students within the campus, restrictions on speech caused umbrage in universities not just in India but across the academic world. There have been protests elsewhere too. Adding to this anger is the fact that there are few jobs available to students leaving universities.

Protests in Jamia Millia Islamia against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) provided the spark for an inferno to rage across the country. Jamia was established 100 years ago. Gandhiji (like Madan Mohan Malviya for BHU) travelled throughout India collecting funds to set it up. Jamnalal Bajaj became the university's first treasurer. Its founders participated in the freedom movement and none went to Pakistan. The university retains its tradition of nationalism and India's syncretic culture. Jamia's students have never participated in a protest of a communal nature. To give a communal colour to the recent protests betrays a lack of understanding. Today, students of Jamia are mobilising against the National Register for Citizenship (NRC) and CAA, which they believe are contrary to the secular values enshrined in the Constitution.

It is true that students at Jamia, AMU and some other universities have been increasingly concerned over the repeated challenges to their patriotism or nationalism. Many of these young boys and girls come from India's mofussil towns. They share the same dreams as the students who may follow other beliefs. To this end, they need confidence-building measures. Quite naturally, they have concerns about how they are, at times, viewed as the "other". This new legislation claims to help those fleeing persecution abroad but divides communities

This week has seen the biggest display of opposition to the government since it assumed office. This is largely because it confirms the fears among many that the country's government is taking it on the trajectory of becoming a Hindu nation with minimal dissent allowed. Unease among many of us — Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and secular-minded people who believe in the principles of the Constitution — will remain. There will be more protests. In all probability, thousands will boycott the

NRC process. States will

decline the Centre's diktat,

challenging the very core of

our federal structure.

within. It underlines the fact that Muslim citizens are not intrinsically "Indian".

It is tragic that Jamia's authorities did not counsel the students towards restraint. The students had no senior leader to turn to. In fact, it is devastating that the Muslim community has no seasoned leadership to turn to. Its leadership has fallen into the hands of poorly educated, backward-looking, conservative maulanas. And, with palpable antagonism from the government, young Muslims have no one to turn to. So far, most Muslim students in leading

universities have been removed from negative influences. But anxieties and frustrations run high among them. Statements of ministers and ruling party spokespersons that the NRC will be implemented across India have only increased their anxiety. There have been reports of detention camps coming up in some states. The government is pushing increasingly provocative policies and using tactics like shutting down the internet to stifle dissent and free speech. The CAA was the final straw that broke the camel's back.

While the constitutionality of the CAA is for the Supreme Court to judge, the Indiawide NRC is the immediate cause for concern. Originally meant only for Assam, it is intended to be extended to all of India. Such an exercise is understandably feared for its potential to disenfranchise millions of Indian Muslims.

The final register in Assam became a major source of embarrassment both for the Union and state governments. The majority of people excluded from it were reportedly non-Muslims, who would now have to go through the tedious and expensive process of appeal, and even then would not be certain of their inclusion. Thousands of non-Muslims in Assam were potentially in fear of losing their homes and being condemned to a life in camps. Faced with a major embarrassment, the government rushed in to pass the CAA to reassure the non-Muslims that their right to Indian citizenship is fully protected:Under the new law all others, barring Muslims, who having come into India (from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan) till 2014, are guaranteed citizenship. Simply put, only Muslims' citizenship is under threat and there will likely be thousands of them who will not have the required documents.

The protests by students may quieten soon. But they will possibly recur with greater ferocity in the near future. Assam and many parts of the Northeast are seething. The uncertainty of the NRC process destroyed people emotionally – some committed suicide, unable to bear the anxiety. They are now burdened with the appeal process, having been excluded from the Register. Once the CAA comes in, there is fear of being swamped by non-Muslim refugees — that will challenge the ancient Assamese culture and burden Assam's scarce resources. There are similar concerns in other parts of the Northeast.

This week has seen the biggest display of opposition to the government since it assumed office. This is largely because it confirms the fears among many that the country's government is taking it on the trajectory of becoming a Hindu nation with minimal dissent allowed. Unease among many of us - Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and secular-minded people who believe in the principles of the Constitution — will remain. There will be more protests. In all probability, thousands will boycott the NRC process. States will decline the Centre's diktat, challenging the very core of our federal structure. Where will the detention camps be built? What will be the cost? How much of administrative manpower will be used?

Those of us with some administrative experience know the cost of usual work for conducting elections or carrying out the census exercise. Almost all routine work in field offices comes to a halt. School teachers, revenue officers, panchayat employees are all utilised, causing delays. Where will state governments get the manpower for this exercise? I need not add the beating India's image is taking in the international community.

The implementation of the NRC will put India in a state of conflict. It is up to the Union government to quickly step in, initiate dialogue with a range of people that should include political parties, Muslims, students and civil society, and come up with some understanding to restore the people's confidence urgently.

> The writer is a former vice-chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia and was Lieutenant Governor of Delhi



Assam's Edge

Restiveness in the state has come full circle with the Citizenship Amendment Act

KAUSTUBH DEKA

A WHOLE NEW generation in Assam has recently been introduced to curfews in their towns and army flag marches in their lanes — though, for the older generation, this means revisiting a trauma. The current sense of dismay in Assam is

primarily due to what they perceive as the BJP's backtracking on pre-poll stances like securing an "immigrant free Assam" and "protecting the indigenous" by putting the state under the purview of the Citizenship Amendment Act without any exemptions. This is precisely why the repeated assurances by the home minister about bringing "safeguards to the indigenous of Assam" in the context of the CAA has not found many takers in the state. While the government is promising to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, which promises protection to the cultural-economic identities of the Assamese, in the same breath, it seems to be denouncing the essence of the Accord by not respecting the cut-off year of 1971. The Accord also refrains from making religion a criterion of identification.

The present agitation is largely a reaction to the perceived breach of this political commitment, given by the government of India to Assam. At the base of this equation lies another cardinal political truth about Assam that language has historically trumped religion as a primary marker of identity. This

The present agitation is largely a reaction to the perceived breach of this political commitment once given by the government of India to Assam. At the base of this political equation lies another cardinal political truth of Assam, that language has historically trumped religion as a primary marker of identity

in Assam.

that with the "acceptance" of Bengali Hindu migrants, there appears a real possibility that the Assamese speakers and the other "indigenous" communities will be turned into absolute minorities, linguistically and politically. It is often pointed out that with consecutive census reports, the number of Assamese speakers has been coming down — to 47.8 per cent (2001) from 57.8 per cent (1991). During the same period, the share of Bengali speakers has gone up — to 27.5 per cent (2001) from 21.7 per cent (1991); number of Hindus declined to 64.9 per cent (2001) from 67.1 per cent (1991), and, further declined to 61.47 per cent (2011 census). During the same period, the number of Muslims went up by 2.4 per cent in 2001 — that number stood at 34.22 per cent in the 2011 census.

foundation quickly lapses into the argument

Evidently, during 1991-2001 the rise of Bengalis as a linguistic group seems to be due to the growth of both Hindu and Muslim Bengalis in Assam. The statistics do not support a linear relation between the growth of the "Muslims" alone (which the ruling party insists on projecting as a threat to "Assamese identity") and the decline in the number of Assamese speakers.

As different mass programmes have been announced jointly by multiple groups — political and otherwise — across districts in Assam, parallels are being drawn with the

Assam Movement of the Eighties. That was a social movement launched by an "apolitical cultural front", spearheaded by students and backed by different segments of society through a complex alliance. It succeeded in overthrowing the Congress government in the state by forming a new regional party. As that regional party, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), once hailed as paragon of regionalism in Assam, finds itself the object of people's wrath today, many wonder if the final demise of the AGP will usher in the entry of a new regional force in the state.

A road near my house that is now tarred with the rubber of burnt tyres, ringing with the uneasy silence of curfew and patrolled by army trucks, still bears the sign, "Asian Highway 1". People look at it and wonder what sense notions like the "Act East" policy make when one is beneath the military boots? I thought of taking a picture of it recently to send it to a friend abroad, only to realise that internet services had been suspended. Perhaps "normalcy" will be restored in a few more days, but by then, India would have taken a few strides backwards when it comes to acquiring the good faith of smaller "nationalities" within the larger design of the nation state.

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INDIAN EXPRESS

DECEMBER 20, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

GANDHI'S MISTAKES TWO COSTLY MISTAKES of Mahatma Gandhi are responsible for the problems tormenting post-Independence India, according to Prime Minister Charan Singh. He said these mistakes were Gandhiji's support to the Khilafat movement in 1920 and his preference for Jawaharlal Nehru as the Congress president in 1945, ignoring the claim of Sardar Patel. According to Singh, thefirst "mistake" bred communalism and led to Partition and the second led India down "the path of superfi-

US SANCTIONS POLICY WASHINGTON HINTED THAT it might go as

far as to blockade Iran if the American hostages in Teheran are tried or investigated by a "grand jury" in Teheran. White House press secretary Jody Powell said that the Iranian authorities should be aware that they would bear "full responsibility for any ensuing consequences."

Janata vs Indira

THE JANATA PARTY appealed to the Lok Dal and other parties to facilitate direct contest between its nominees and Mrs Indira Gandhi in Rae Bareli and Medak. The party's general secretary, Surendra Mohan, wanted the Lok Dal leaders to realise that Mrs Gandhi's defeat "is in the interest of democracy."

Replying to questions, Mohan said the retirement of other candidates was necessary to defeat Mrs Gandhi in both constituencies.

ASSAM ELECTIONS

ELECTIONS WILL BE held as scheduled in three Parliamentary constituencies of Assam Karimgani, Silchar and autonomous districts. S L Shakdher, chief election commissioner, confirmed this. Doubts about elections cropped up in the light of a press report that KS Rao, chief electoral officer of Assam. had said that he had written to the Election Commission for the postponement of elections in these constituencies due to the law and order situation.

cial westernisation."

5 THE IDEAS PAGE

India's Great Slowdown

Standard remedies for getting out of the current predicament aren't working. Out-of-the-box solutions are needed to resolve the balance sheet problems



AND JOSH FELMAN

SEEMINGLY SUDDENLY, INDIA'S economy has taken ill. The GDP numbers are worrying enough, but the disaggregated data are even more distressing. Production of consumer and investment goods is falling. Indicators of exports, imports, and real government revenues are in negative territory, or close to it. Clearly, this is not an ordinary slowdown. It is India's Great Slowdown.

The government and the RBI have been trying vigorously to bring the economy back to health. But the standard remedies for getting out of the current predicament aren't working. Monetary policy is stymied by a broken transmission mechanism, which impedes the pass-through of cuts in policy rates to lending rates. And the scope for fiscal stimulus is limited, since fiscal deficits are already close to double-digits (when properly measured) and larger bond issues will only further crowd out the private sector, by pushing up already-high interest rates.

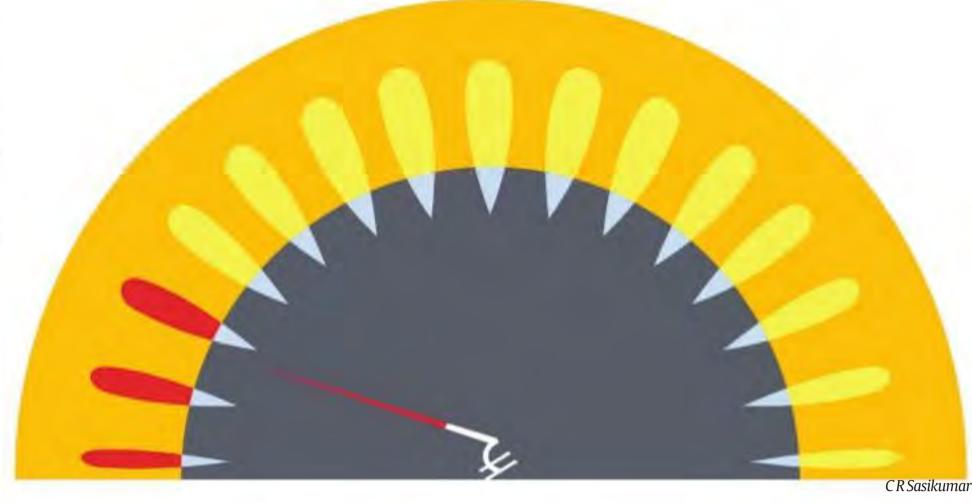
In a recent paper, we argued that the Great Slowdown stems from a balance sheet crisis that arrived in two waves. The first wave — the Twin Balance Sheet crisis, encompassing banks and infrastructure companies — arrived after the global financial crisis, when the world economy slowed and infrastructure projects started during India's investment boom of the mid-2000s, began to go sour. These problems were not addressed adequately, causing investment and exports, the two engines propelling rapid growth, to sputter.

The second wave came from the collapse of a credit boom, led by NBFCs, and centered on the real estate sector. The collapse owed to the recognition that the boom involved unsustainable financing of a rising inventory of unsold housing. As a result, the economy now confronts a Four Balance Sheet (FBS) problem — the original two sectors, plus NBFCs and real estate companies.

What then can be done to address the FBS? We propose a comprehensive plan in our paper, including a new asset quality review (AQR-2) to get a more honest recognition of the magnitude of stressed assets, and further strengthening the IBC. Here we focus on one idea, namely the creation of special resolution mechanisms for two sectors: Real estate and power.

These special mechanisms are needed because even a strengthened IBC will not be suitable for certain types of cases, notably those where social considerations are as important as commercial criteria, where public subsidies of one kind or another are inevitable, and where coordination across government is critical. The real estate and power sectors ful-

Consider first the real estate sector. In most residential cases, developers have funded their building partly through pre-selling, that is by requiring prospective owners to pay in advance for their promised flats. So when builders go bankrupt, prospective owners are left with neither money nor flats. It is obvious that the plight of these individuals cannot be ignored — a point underscored by the Supreme Court. But, it is equally obvious that



they will not be well served by the IBC. For a start, it is unclear how the prospective owners could be represented on the creditors' committee. And, even if a way could be found, it hardly seems acceptable to ask them to wait for years, only to receive a small fraction of the money that they paid, and perhaps even nothing at all. It would seem far better to provide them with a speedy settlement, with a guaranteed minimum fraction of the amount that they paid. But this will require a government mechanism, most likely with government subsidies, since recovery rates from builders are likely to be very low.

The stressed power-sector assets pose another major quandary. Unlike most assets, private power firms cannot be easily sold, since they are incurring heavy operational losses and their prospects are highly uncertain. Even the public sector power producers have been reluctant to take them. But neither can they be liquidated. Although, supply currently outstrips demand, and the plants are only operating at half capacity, eventually the gap will close. And, technologically and environmentally, these power plants are good assets, in many cases better than the fullyutilised plants.

The essence of the problem, the reason there cannot be a private sector led solution, is that the viability of power assets is inextricably entwined with government policies. For example, demand for power depends on whether the state electricity boards are financially strong enough to buy the power that the public is demanding. Similarly, demand for the stressed assets depends on the pace at which the government, Centre and states, phases out much older, environmentally inefficient public sector plants. As a result, the government would need to be heavily involved in any solution to this sector's problems.

Consider how a bad bank for the power sector might work. The first step would be to take these loans, exceeding Rs 2.5 trillion, off the books of the banks, for that would free up balance sheets and management attention, allowing banks to focus again on their core business of supporting economic growth.

Once removed, the assets will need to go somewhere. A few of the plants could probably be sold off, once their debts are reduced to manageable levels. But most of the plants would need to be 'warehoused' until they can be returned to the private sector. To do this, the government could create a holding company, which would purchase the assets and manage them.

Essentially, the holding company would operate like a public-sector asset rehabilita-

tion agency (a "bad bank"). The holding company would buy power companies at prices based on the recommendations of independent parties, such as investment banks, which would take into account a special regulatory regime that the government would establish for these assets. Importantly, this regime would include pre-announced levels of subsidies.

Such an open, ruled-based procedure would allow the transaction to be seen as fair by all stakeholders: The holding company, banks, and perhaps most importantly, the public. In addition, fair prices would give the holding company some chance to make a profit in the long run as power demand increases. And, the prospect of profits, in turn, might induce private investors to provide some of the capital that the bad bank would need, thereby alleviating the upfront cost to the government.

One may then ask what the holding company would do with the assets. The ultimate objective would be to sell the plants back to the private sector. In fact, this objective should be built into the charter, which should state that the purpose of the holding company is to sell off the assets within five years, after which it would be dissolved. To realise this objective, the holding company should endeavour to reduce uncertainty, especially by securing long-term contractual arrangements for coal inputs to be supplied by Coal India and output to be purchased by state electricity boards. Once this is done, and as demand for electricity grows to the point where the plants can operate at somewhere close to full capacity, the appetite for these assets will gradually revive, at which point they could be sold.

Of course, bad banks are not magical solutions. They will take some time to establish, and will require difficult political choices, in particular about how to allocate the costs amongst creditors, promoters, home owners, and taxpayers. But, equally, something needs to be done: The nation cannot allow vital power plants to continue to deteriorate, operationally and financially. And, by now, all the alternatives have been tried, and found wanting.

The Great Slowdown is upon us. Two bad banks to resolve the Four Balance Sheet problem might be one critical element of the solution.

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

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The verdict in the treason case against retired Gen Pervez Musharraf marks a seismic shift in Pakistan's history." —DAWN

Philosopher of Marathi stage

For Shriram Lagoo, theatre was a serious art form and advancement of culture its function



The date: December 9, 2006. The place: Chavan Natyagruha, Pune. The occasion: The third edition of the Roopvedh Pratishtan, a trust created by Deepa and Shriram Lagoo.

VIJAY TENDULKAR WAS to be bestowed the Tanveer Sanmaan. I was to be honoured with a youth fellowship, the Tanveer Abhyaasvrutti. The auditorium was jampacked. The stage had a lot of heavyweight personalities, and there were many more in the audience. Grandiloquent speeches were being made and lofty dialectics were being bandied around. After the ceremony, a select few moved to a hall in a nearby hotel. More dialogue-baazi and a little bantering. It was well past midnight when I sauntered into the cloakroom, and said to myself in the mirror, a few minutes more, and then you can go home.

Just then the door opened. A dramatic entry. It was my host for the evening, Dr Lagoo. He said, "Budmaash!" A dramatic pause. He continued, "I've been keeping an eye on you throughout the evening. You escaped into the wings during the speeches, and during the party, you wandered off for a walk. Now, where will you escape?"

I mumbled my apology. Then we stood there and chatted for a long while. We spoke about his book, which demystified the science of voice through simple voice exercises for overworked stage actors, and how his practice as an ENT surgeon provided a scientific foundation. "If your pitch is Kali 2 (black 2), you must speak in Kali 2. Despite this, if you keep straining every nerve to reach Pandhari 4 (white 4), you will destroy your voice."

Then we spoke about his letter to Bhalbha Kelkar, who was the president of Progressive Dramatic Association (PDA). This public letter criticised Kelkar for his narrowmindedness during the Ghasiram Kotwal imbroglio. Lagoo used to act in the PDA plays and Kelkar was his director. Lagoo's assessment: "Bhalba Kelkar was a Varkari of the Natya-Pandhari, a pilgrim on his way to the shrine of theatre. He worked till the end as devotedly as a pilgrim who sets out on a pilgrimage. But Bhalba's morality was puritanical. He didn't bother to intellectually analyse his work. That's why PDA, which was founded in 1951, ceased to be progressive, 10 years later."

It was a warning to my generation of theatrewallahs! Theatre is a serious art form and the advancement of culture is the function of the theatre movement.

Other than as a theatre theorist, my memory of Lagoo was that of a true theatre professional. A glowing example of this is how in a single day, he would perform the lead roles of three blockbuster plays that played to a full house: *Natasamrat* in the morning, Himalaychi Savli in the afternoon, and Gidhade in the night. It was an extraordinary testimony to his physical stamina and mental alertness — a true-blue athlete-cumphilosopher.

For theatre rasiks, he was memorable as Sridhar Kulkarni in G P Deshpande's Uddwastha Dharamshala and then Siddheswar Bhatji in Premanand Gajvee's Kirwant. Other than the politics of the play, he was able to capture the pathos of the Brahmin character whose hands were tied up in an unusual sort of mannerism. It was non-verbal acting at its best.

He staged *Antigone* during the most repressive phase of the Emergency. As the state police was overseeing the censorship, Lagoo went to meet the officer. No one (including the omnipotent state) had any idea about the focal point of Antigone. In fact, the group was approached by Doordarshan officials, and the play was telecast. Subsequently, the vexed political issues in the play were discussed on stage and off-stage. Lagoo said, "It's a mad, mad world, this realm of censorship." One more lesson for us, theatrewallahs. Never ever give up.

With Vijay Tendulkar's Gidhade, the censor board had spotted 150 highly objectionable bits and pieces. Lagoo and his team were nonplussed. Like all theatrewallahs, they had three options: One, to concede to the objections and delete the unsavoury bits from the play; two, cancel the show; or three, to carry on with the show in spite of the objections of the censor board. And that's what Lagoo did.

Lagoo told the board chief that they didn't accept the cuts that the board had suggested. The cuts were eventually reduced from 150 to 125, and then to 100. Who stood by the beleaguered theatrewallahs during this period? Interestingly it was the women: Kumud Mehta, Shanta Shelke, Sarojini Vaidya and Durga Bhagwat who would say, "The censor board is foolish! Continue to perform... you are doing a good job."

Gidhade played a big role in Lagoo's life. Ramakrishna Naik of the Goa Hindu Association attended a show of Gidhade. Now, Lagoo had criticised the Goa Hindu Association's Raigadla Jenvha Jag Yete in the periodical, Rasaranga. Ramakrishna Naik told Lagoo that V V Shirwadkar (Kusumagraj) had written a new play. This was Natasamrat.

Lagoo was ready to play Ganpatrao Belwalkar. Natasamrat was to be mounted in one month. Lagoo had a busy schedule. He attended the first rehearsal of Natasamrat after memorising all the lines in the play. He did this for the first time in his life. This was Natsamrat, play with the cult classic line, "Nat mhanje bharvahak, lamaan" (We actors are but a nomadic tribe that transports goods from one place to another).

In the case of Lagoo, besides transporting the goods, he travelled across his beloved Maharashtra to raise funds for the Samajik Krutagnyata Nidhi and supported Medha Patkar's Narmada Bachao Andolan and Narendra Dabholkar's Andhashradha Nirmoolan Samiti.

As we exited that cloakroom in the wee hours of the morning, Lagoo quoted Thoreau, "If a soldier is walking out of pace, he is probably hearing a different drummer. (The famous Lagoo tremor here). Try to be that soldier." Lagoo followed what he preached. He didn't hear the drumbeats that the rest of the society was dancing to. His drummer was different.

Ramanathan is Mumbai-based playwright



A moral law

A misinformation campaign is underway to make Muslims fearful of CAA

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real estate and power sectors

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fulfill these criteria.

needed because even a

PRADEEP BHANDARI

THE PASSAGE OF Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA) is not only historic but also upholds the democratic and moral values of Indian republic. It is not just the expression of the majority but an article of faith to protect the minorities. It is not a law which grants citizenship based on religion but one that grant's citizenship based on religious persecution. Religious persecution per se is against the minority by a majority in a non-secular

It is a fact that religion was a prominent factor in the partition of India and the Constituent Assembly even debated the demand for naturalised citizenship for communities that were forced into becoming minorities in countries in our neighbourhood. However, amidst the influx of refugees, it became impossible for rules and procedures to be drafted in this regard. But the Constitution left the window open to make laws for these minorities, who feared religious persecution, in Articles 6,7,10 and 11.

India has always stood for what is moral and just. It would have been unjust, immoral and unethical for the liberal and secular Indian democracy to look the other way when lakhs of people living in India, having fled from Pakistan after Independence, continue to remain without an identity or voice despite their residence and ancestral linkages here. Not only has the Indian state given such people citizenship in the past on a caseby-case basis, leaders across the political spectrum from Jawaharlal Nehru to Jayaprakash Narayan and even Manmohan Singh have expressed the need to grant them citizenship.

India has given the right to a dignified life to its minorities and believes in the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. When secularism is under threat in the neighborhood, must a secular state not perform its Gandhian duty? Selective secularism goes against constitutional morality. Many have asked why the Bill did not include Muslims. The purpose of the Act is to address religious persecution, not economic migration. Human rights reports by the UN and countless media reports have the persecution of Jain, Sikhs, Christians and Hindus in these countries. How can a follower of Islam face persecution in a country where the state religion is Islam? Even if such exceptional cases arise, the doors for naturalised citizenship remain open.

Given that the CAA does not impinge on a single constitutional right of an Indian citizen, the protests against it on the pretext that it is anti-Muslim are dishonest and against the secular fabric of this great nation. The truth is that the Constitution provides enough protection to minorities in case of discrimination. Morality teaches us to favour positive discrimination for minorities to bring them on a level-playing field. The CAA is based on the principle of positive discrimination for the minorities suffering from human rights' abuses in our neighbourhood. How can steps to protect minorities in India be termed secular, but steps to protect similar minorities in the neighbourhood be called communal? A global power cannot be silent when minorities are facing existential threats across its border.

Conscious fear-mongering over the CAA is not only against India's national interest but it also hurts the cause of informed dissent on the law. Informed dissent is legitimate, but violence has no place in a society governed by the rule of law. Those who think the law is unconstitutional should approach the Supreme Court and those who think that the anti-CAA protests reflect the mood of the people should make it a part of their political narrative. Anti-CAA protests must eschew radical, violent and communal thoughts and protesters must not vandalise public property. Police excesses should be investigated by the judiciary and, if found guilty, the perpetrators should be punished. However, the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" must be applied equally, across the board. Neither law enforcement agencies nor protesters have the license to break the law. Students have right to dissent but they should be cautious of becoming tools for groups with vested interests.

Parliament is the most legitimate institution reflecting the will of the people. The CAA was passed with an absolute majority. What will a majority government do if not bring policies which were part of its manifesto? The parties supporting the anti-CAA protests need to test their belief against the popular will. The AAP government in Delhi should campaign on its anti-CAA stand, as should the RJD in Bihar and Congress in UP.

A misinformation campaign is being undertaken to make Indian Muslims fearful of the new Act. Why should the second-largest Muslim population in the world be threatened by an attempt to grant citizenship to a few lakh persecuted minorities in a fraternal democracy? No one is deporting Indian citizens; no one can deport an Indian citizen. Every right-minded citizen should spread facts, not fiction, about the CAA.

The writer is founder, Jan Ki Baat and hosts Lalkaar on Republic Bharat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STILL WE RISE

ment stands exposed and discredited. This is a day when love and solidarity face down bigotry and fascism. Everybody has joined in to protest against the unconstitutional CAB and NRC. We are Dalits, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Adivasis, Marxists, Ambedkarites, Farmers, Workers, Academics, Writers, Poets, Painters and most of all Students who are the future of this country. This time you will not stop us.

INDIA IS STANDING up. This govern-

Arundhati Roy, via email

NRC worries

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'States stand up' (IE, December 19). It is not the CAA but rather the proposed nationwide NRC that is the cause for so much concern and opposition. The CAA is not against Indian Muslims; it will prevent only Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Afghan illegal Muslim immigrants from acquiring Indian citizenship. But, as far the NRC is concerned, there are genuine fears surrounding documents to prove citizenship. Though such fears apply to all communities equally, but the fears are possibly more among Indian Muslims, as they may be dubbed as illegal immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh or Afghanistan in the event of their inability to produce the required documents to prove citizenship and

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.

parentage.

Anoop Srivastava, Greater Noida

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'States stand up' (IE, December 19). The difference between dictatorship and democracy is that there are multiple centres of power and checks and balances in the latter. The erosion of democratic institutions has been underway in India since they were first conceived. But every now and then, a few people emerge who help reinstate our faith in them. The resistance from chief ministers is the best example of Indian democracy thriving. Hopefully, the NRC is undone or the CAA doesn't apply to NRC results.

Safdar Ali, Kolkata

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

TELLING NUMBERS

India had most deaths caused by pollution in 2017: new report

In 2017, pollution was responsible for 15% of all deaths globally, and 275 million Disability-Adjusted Life Years. India saw the most pollution deaths about 2.3 million — a new report has found. The 2019 Pollution and Health Metrics: Global, Regional and Country Analysis report from the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP) updates findings from The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health, and provides a ranking of pollution deaths on global, regional and country levels. The report uses the most recent Global Burden of Disease data from the Institute of Health Metrics Evaluation.

The top 10 countries with the most pollution deaths include both the world's largest and wealthiest nations, and some of its poorer ones. India is followed by China in the number of pollution deaths, with about 1.8 million. The United States makes the top 10 list with 1,97,000 pollution-related deaths, while ranking 132nd in the number of deaths per 100,000 people.

The report includes three lists on pollution-induced deaths. India is the only country that features in the top 10 in all three lists (right).

In the list of top 10 countries with the most pollution-related deaths in proportion to their population, there are many smaller countries where the impact of pollution in relation population size is more intense. Chad tops this list with 287 deaths for every 1,00,000 people, whereas India is at number 10 with 174 deaths for every 1,00,000 people.

The list of top 10 countries with the most deaths related to air pollution, significantly, corresponds closely to the list of top 10 countries with the most pollution-related deaths. Air pollution

— both ambient and indoor — is one of the largest and most obvious types of pollution affecting global health.

ANNUAL PREMATURE POLLUTION-RELATED DEATHS

1	India	23,26,771
2	China	18,65,566
3	Nigeria	2,79,318
4	Indonesia	2,32,974
5	Pakistan	2,23,836
6	Bangladesh	2,07,922
7	USA	1,96,930
8	Russian Federation	1,18,687
9	Ethiopia	1,10,787
10	Brazil	1,09,438

DOLL LITION DEATHS DED

1,00,000 PEOPLE				
1	Chad	287		
2	Central African Republic	251		
3	North Korea	202		
4	Niger	192		
5	Madagascar	183		
6	Papua New Guinea	183		
7	South Sudan	180		
8	Somalia	179		
9	Serbia	175		
10	India	174		
ANNUAL PREMATURE AIR				

POLLUTION-RELATED DEATHS

1	China	12,42,987
2	India	12,40,529
3	Pakistan	1,28,005
4	Indonesia	1,23,753
5	Bangladesh	1,22,734
6	Nigeria	1,14,115
7	USA	1,07,507
8	Russian Federation	99,392
9	Brazil	66,245
10	Philippines	64,386
Source: GAHP		

THIS WORD MEANS

MERIT PTAH

Said to the first woman physician. Was she?

FOR DECADES, an ancient Egyptian has been celebrated as the first woman physician. Known by the name Merit Ptah, she

appears in online posts about women in STEM, in computer games, and in popular history books; even a crater on Venus is named after her. Now, a researcher from the University of Colorado has suggested that no physician by that name ever existed. Dr Jakub Kwiecinski of the Department of Immunology and Microbiology believes that the attribution might be the result of mistaken identity.

Merit Ptah

Kwiecinski found that Ptah was first mentioned in the 1930s, when Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead, a medical historian, wrote a history of women in medicine. Her

book mentioned a picture of a woman named Merit Ptah on the site where a tomb in the Valley of Kings was excavated.

> In 1929-30, an excavation in Giza uncovered a tomb of Akhethetep, an Old Kingdom courtier, which mentioned a woman called Peseshet as "Overseer of Healer Women". Both Peseshet and Ptah came from the same period, and mentions to both were made in the tombs of their sons.

According to Kwiecinski, Hurd-Mead confused Ptah with Peseshet, "and from a

misunderstood case of an authentic Egyptian woman healer, Peseshet, a seemingly earlier Merit Ptah, 'the first woman physician' was born".

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How Section 144 CrPC works

Several state governments have invoked Section 144 to crack down on protesters against new citizenship law. What powers does the administration draw from this provision, and how have courts interpreted it?

Police lathicharge protesters in Lucknow on Thursday. Prohibitory orders under

Section 144 CrPC have been clamped on Uttar Pradesh. Vishal Srivastav

APURVA VISHWANATH & SHRUTI DHAPOLA

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 19

AS PROTESTERS against the Citizenship Amendment Act hit the streets in large numbers in several states on Thursday (December 19), state governments sought to tamp down on the demonstrations by issuing prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code Of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973. On Wednesday, Section 144 was imposed in Bengaluru for three days, while the entire state of Uttar Pradesh remains under this provision.

What is Section 144?

Section 144 CrPC, a law retained from the colonial era, empowers a district magistrate, a sub-divisional magistrate or any other executive magistrate specially empowered by the state government in this behalf to issue orders to prevent and address urgent cases of apprehended danger or nuisance.

The magistrate has to pass a written order which may be directed against a particular individual, or to persons residing in a particular place or area, or to the public generally when frequenting or visiting a particular place or area. In emergency cases, the magistrate can pass these orders without prior notice to the individual against whom the order is directed.

What powers does the administration have under the provision?

The magistrate can direct any person to abstain from a certain act or to take a certain order with respect to certain property in his possession or under his management. This usually includes restrictions on movement, carrying arms and from assembling unlawfully. It is generally believed that assembly of three or more people is prohibited under Section 144. However, it can be used to restrict even a single individual. Such an order is passed when the magistrate considers that it is likely to prevent, or tends to prevent, obstruction, annoyance or injury to any person lawfully employed, or danger to human life, health or safety, or a disturbance of the public tranquility, or a riot, of an affray.

However, no order passed under Section 144 can remain in force for more than two months from the date of the order, unless the state government considers it necessary. Even then, the total period cannot extend to more than six months.

Why is the use of power under Section 144 criticised so often?

The criticism is that it is too broad and the

words of the section are wide enough to give absolute power to a magistrate that may be exercised unjustifiably. The immediate remedy against such an order is a revision application to the magistrate himself. An aggrieved individual can approach the High Court by filing a writ petition if his fundamental rights are at stake. However, fears exist that before the High Court intervenes, the rights could already have been infringed.

Imposition of Section 144 to an entire state, as in UP, has also drawn criticism since the security situation differs from area to area.

How have courts ruled on Section 144?

In Re: Ardeshir Phirozshaw ... vs Unknown (1939), a British judge of the Bombay High Court censured the Chief Presidency Magistrate in Bombay for passing an illegal order under Section 144: "A Magistrate acting under Section 144 may no doubt restrict liberty. But he should only do so if the facts clearly make such restriction necessary in the public interest, and he should not impose any restriction which goes beyond the requirements of the case." The judge criticised application of power under Section 144 for two months, "not only to the particular riot, but to any past riots and any future riots which may take place within the next two months are strong measures and; require cogent facts to justify them".

The first major challenge to the law was made in 1961 in Babulal Parate vs State of *Maharashtra and Others*. A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court refused to strike down the law, saying it is "not correct to say that the remedy of a person aggrieved by an order under the section was illusory".

It was challenged again by Dr Ram Manohar Lohiya in 1967 and was once again rejected, with the court saying "no democracy can exist if 'public order' is freely allowed to be disturbed by a section of the citizens". In another challenge in 1970 (Madhu

Limaye vs Sub-Divisional Magistrate), a sevenjudge Bench headed by then Chief Justice of India M Hidayatullah said the power of a magistrate under Section 144 "is not an ordinary power flowing from administration but a power used in a judicial manner and which can stand further judicial scrutiny". The court, however, upheld the constitutionality of the law. It ruled that the restrictions imposed through Section 144 cannot be held to be violative of the right to freedom of speech and expression, which is a fundamental right because it falls under the "reasonable restrictions" under Article 19(2) of the Constitution. The fact that the "law may be abused" is no reason to strike it down, the court said.

"Occasions may arise when it is not possible to distinguish between those whose conduct must be controlled and those whose conduct is clear. A general order may be necessary when the number of persons is so large that the distinction between them and the general public cannot be made," the court said, justifying blanket prohibitory orders passed under Section 144.

In 2012, the Supreme Court came down heavily on the government for imposing Section 144 against a sleeping crowd in Ramlila Maidan. "Such a provision can be used only in grave circumstances for maintenance of public peace. The efficacy of the provision is to prevent some harmful occurrence immediately. Therefore, the emergency must be sudden and the consequences sufficiently grave," the court said.

Does Section 144 provide for communications blockades too?

The rules for suspending telecommunication services, which include voice, mobile internet, SMS, landline, fixed broadband, etc. are the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017. These Rules derive their powers from the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885, Section 5(2) of which talks about interception of messages in the "interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India".

However, shutdowns in India are not always under the rules laid down, which come with safeguards and procedures. Section 144 CrPC has often been used to clamp down on telecommunication services and order Internet shutdowns.

In Sambhal, UP, Internet services were suspended by the District Magistrate under Section 144. In West Bengal on June 20, 2019, mobile internet, cable services, broadband were shut down by the District Magistrate in North 24-Parganas under Section 144 over communal tensions.

Under what provisions were telecom services interrupted in parts of Delhi?

In Delhi on Thursday, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Cell, issued an order to the nodal officers of telecom operators including Airtel, Reliance Jio etc to interrupt services in specific areas.

"No specific legal reason has been cited for this. Police cannot issue these directions because they are not the proper authorities to permit internet shutdown. In Delhi's case since it is a Union Territory, it would have to be authorised by the Home Ministry itself,' Apar Gupta, Executive Director at Internet Freedom Foundation told *The Indian Express*.

Under the 2017 Rules, directions to "suspend the telecom services shall not be issued except by an order made by the Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs in the case of Government of India or by the Secretary to the State Government in-charge of the Home Department in the case of a State Government (hereinafter referred to as the competent authority)..."

The Rules also say that in case the confirmation does not come from a competent authority, the orders shall cease to exist within a period of 24 hours. Clear reasons for such orders need to be given in written, and need to be forwarded to a Review Committee by the next working day.

What is the Meghalaya law held up by Gov?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 19

ON MONDAY, Nagaland Governor R N Ravi was given additional charge of Meghalaya, whose Governor Tathagata Roy is learnt to have gone on leave. In the days leading up to the move, Roy had tweeted controversially on the Citizenship Amendment Act, and had also upset many in the state by not giving assent to amendments to The Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act, 2016. The amendments had been approved by the Meghalaya Cabinet by an Ordinance.

What is the Ordinance about?

The existing 2016 Act deals with registration and documentation of non-state residents living in Meghalaya. The Ordinance, cleared by the Cabinet in November, seeks to extend similar rules to cover all non-state residents visit-

ing or living in the state, Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong said last month. "This Act is indicative only for those people who are interested in visiting our state as tourists, labourers or for education and business. With this Act in place, they will need to comply with guidelines to be prepared in the form of rules," Tynsong had told The Indian Express.

What is the point of the amendment? It came in the backdrop of the National

Register of Citizens (NRC) process in Assam, which led to concerns among civil society and political leaders, including Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, that people excluded from the Assam NRC might try to enter Meghalaya. Besides, political parties and activists in Meghalaya had long been demanding replication of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram, which has now been extended to Manipur following the passage of the Citizenship

Amendment Bill. While the ILP-regime states are exempt from the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), practically the whole of Meghalaya is exempt by virtue of special protections under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Ordinance itself was not a fallout of the citizenship legislation, but a precautionary measure in view of the Assam NRC.

How would the registration take place? Amid concerns that followed the

Ordinance, the Meghalaya government clarified last month that the modalities for registration of visitors have not been finalised. The Director of the Tourism Department issued a statement on November 5: "The registration process will be designed keeping in mind the convenience of tourists who are visiting our state. It will be a simple process with both online and offline registration options and will be similar to the registration when you check into your hotel. There will be no need to stand or wait in queues when you enter the State. We understand that your time and resources are precious. Meghalaya welcomes all domestic and international travellers who wish to explore our landscapes and experience our culture and traditions. Make your plans and watch our official channels for further updates."

So. Governor Roy had not given assent? By some accounts, he had refused to sign

the amendments. Robertjune Kharjahrin chairperson of CoMSO, an umbrella organisation of 22 NGOs and civil society organisations in Meghalaya that are opposing the new citizenship law, told The Indian Express recently: "There has been a lot of anger among the people in Meghalaya against the Governor because he has been refusing to sign the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act. This was compounded by his tweet about North Korea."

Key takeaways from NCLAT order; will Mistry be back at Tata HQs?

AASHISH ARYAN

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 19

THE NATIONAL Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Wednesday reinstated Cyrus Pallonji Mistry to the position of Executive Chairman of Tata Sons and Director of the Tata Group of companies for the remainder of his tenure.

Mistry, who was at one time the favourite protégé of Tata Sons Chairman Emeritus Ratan Tata, was unceremoniously sacked both as Executive Chairman and Director in 2016.

The NCLAT held Mistry's sacking and the subsequent appointment of N Chandrasekaran to the top post at Tata Sons illegal. prejudicial, and oppressive. It set aside a July 2017 order by the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which had upheld Mistry's removal from his positions at Tata Sons and other Group

companies. The NCLAT was constituted under

Section 410 of The Companies Act, 2013 to hear appeals against the orders of the NCLT(s). It is also the appellate tribunal for orders passed by the NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, and for orders passed by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) under Sections 202 and 211 of the IBC.

The order of the appellate tribunal, passed by NCLAT Chairman Justice (retd) S J Mukhopadhava, a former judge of the Supreme Court, included directions on several major questions of corporate governance.

MINORITY SHAREHOLDERS

The appellate tribunal directed Tata Sons to consult all its minority shareholders before making any appointments in the future to the posts of Executive Chairman, Independent Director, and Director on the boards of Group companies.

The NCLAT direction will empower the minority shareholders, and will force Independent Directors to take their objections more seriously. The Code for

Independent Directors, which is part of The Companies Act, 2013, says that one of their functions is to "safeguard the interests of all stakeholders, particularly the minority shareholders".

The directive will give a boost to the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, which is owned by Mistry's family and which, although a minority shareholder (18%), is still the biggest outside shareholder in Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group.

USE OF ARTICLE 75 The NCLAT has barred Tata Sons from taking any action against Mistry, Shapoorji Pallonji, Cyrus Investments, and other minority shareholders under Article 75 of the Articles of Association of the Tata Group. This provision grants Tata Sons the right to transfer the 'ordinary shares' of any shareholder, including those of the Mistrys', bypassing a special resolution in the presence of nominated directors of Tata Trusts.

In doing so, the NCLAT has ensured that any decision taken by the Tata Group does not take the Mistrys or other minority shareholders by surprise, which was one of the main allegations made by Mistry and his team.

MAKING PUBLIC COMPANY, PRIVATE The NCLAT has held that Tata's decision

to convert from a public limited company to a private company was "prejudicial and oppressive to the minority members and depositors" and, therefore, illegal.

Tata Sons, which had functioned as a private concern until 1975, had to turn into a public company following the insertion of Section 43A(1A) in The Companies Act, 1956. This provision forced certain companies to turn public based on their turnover, irrespective of their paid-up share capital.

The NCLAT order built on the issues of oppression and mismanagement, and observed that the company's affairs were still being conducted in similar ways — a "winding-up order" against Tata Sons would, therefore, be justified.

What had the NCLT said?

In 2017, the NCLT had observed that just because the board of Tata Sons had held a board meeting at short notice or included the item agenda (that removed Mistry from his post at the top) at the last minute, it could not be termed as a fraud.

"Of course, removal of Cyrus would have become heart-burn not only to Mr Cyrus but to others holding the shareholding of the petitioners, but it cannot *ipso facto* become a grievance," the NCLT had held.

The tribunal had also upheld Tata's decision to go private because it had not "altered any of the Articles of Association so as to bring any new entrenchment to the articles already in existence". This action, the NCLT had said, could not be said to have been prejudicial to the Mistrys.

What next for the Tatas?

Tata Sons will likely move the Supreme Court as soon as it opens after the winter vacation. In the interim, they will have to call Mistry for any/all board meetings of companies where he was a Director before

his ouster. The company is likely to keep in abeyance major decisions until contentions such as those on the use of Article 75 of its Articles of Association, are decided by the Supreme Court.

Will Mistry return to Bombay House?

No, and yes. Although the NCLAT passed an order restoring Mistry to the top position at Tata Sons, the execution of the order has been suspended for four weeks. This will allow the Tata Group to challenge the NCLAT decision before the Supreme Court.

However, barring the direction to reinstate Mistry, the NCLAT has not stayed the execution of any of its other directions. This means Mistry will be immediately restored to his position as Director on the boards of at least three Tata Group companies, including Tata Steel and Tata Chemicals.

He will, therefore, have to be invited to the board meetings of these companies, thus ensuring his return to Tata's Bombay House headquarters, albeit as only a Director.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 261

जीएसटी पर प्रतिक्रिया

बैठक अन्य बैठकों से अलग थी।

इस परिषद में राज्यों और केंद्र के वित्त विरोध जारी रखा। मंत्री शामिल हैं और अब तक परिषद की बैठक में सर्वस्वीकृति की परंपरा थी जहां रहा हो लेकिन यह भविष्य के लिए अच्छा किसी भी बदलाव पर सभी सहमत होते थे। संकेत नहीं है। निश्चित तौर पर जीएसटी

अप्रत्यक्ष कर व्यवस्था की निगरानी करने पहली बार, यहां मतदान के जरिये लॉटरी वाली वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) परिषद पर लगने वाली कर दर को बढ़ाकर 28 की 38वीं बैठक बुधवार को हुई। परंतु यह प्रतिशत किया गया। ऐसा इसलिए हुआ क्योंकि केरल सरकार ने इस प्रस्ताव का

संभव है कि कोई अन्य विकल्प नहीं

में दिक्कतें नजर आ रही हैं। राज्य भी है। ऐसे में कम जीएसटी संग्रह राजकोषीय जीएसटी से मिलने वाली क्षतिपूर्ति को लेकर काफी चिंतित हैं क्योंकि वह समय पर नहीं मिल रही है।

इससे उनकी वित्तीय स्थिति पर दबाव उत्पन्न हुआ है। इसके बावजूद जीएसटी का प्रदर्शन कमजोर बना हुआ है। यह बात इस वक्त इसलिए भी महत्त्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि कॉर्पोरेट आय कर में कमी आई है और कॉर्पोरेशन कर अक्टूबर से दिसंबर 2019 में पिछले वर्ष की समान अवधि की तुलना में 5 फीसदी तक कम हुआ है। व्यक्तिगत आय कर में पर्याप्त वृद्धि नजर नहीं आ रही है ताकि इसकी भरपाई हो सके।

इससे यह संकेत निकलता है कि इसके लिए मंदी भी आंशिक तौर पर उत्तरदायी संकट पैदा कर रहा है।

वित्त मंत्रालय ने जीएसटी संग्रह के लिए 1.1 लाख करोड़ रुपये मासिक का लक्ष्य तय किया था। चालू वर्ष के पहले महीने को छोड़ दिया जाए तो अब तक इतनी राशि एकत्रित नहीं हो सकी। ऐसा प्रतीत हो रहा है कि व्यापक कर वंचना और इनपुट टैक्स क्रेडिट के मामलों में धोखाधडी की धारणा जोर पकड रही है।

इस मसले को हल करने के लिए तमाम उपाय किए जा रहे हैं। इनपुट टैक्स क्रेडिट के क्षेत्र में हो रहे नुकसान को रोकने के लिए कई तरीके भी प्रस्तावित हैं। मिसाल के तौर एक सुझाव यह है कि इनवॉइस अपलोड होने के पहले मुहैया कराई जाने

वाली राशि को मौजूदा 20 फीसदी से घटाकर 10 फीसदी करने की बात। परंतु सरकार को कर वंचना से निपटने को लेकर सावधानी बरतनी होगी। आमतौर पर कर अधिकारियों को लक्ष्य देना और उन लक्ष्यों को हासिल करने के अधिकार देना देश में अनुत्पादक

फिलहाल विचार है कि देर से फाइलिंग करने वालों को जुर्माने से राहत देकर देखा जाए। इसके अलावा समयसीमा में इजाफा भी किया जा सकता है। परंतु ऐसा लगता है कि कड़े उपायों पर भी सहमति बन रही है। इसमें जुर्माना बढ़ाना और कर अधिकारियों को अधिक अधिकार सौंपना शामिल है।

स्वाभाविक है कि नीतिगत बदलाव में

की उत्सुकता बनी रहती थी कि

किन उत्पादों या सेवाओं पर कर

बोझ कम होगा या नए कर लगाए

जाएंगे। सभी यह समझने की

कोशिश करते थे कि अगले वर्ष

से उन्हें प्रत्यक्ष कर से जुड़े क्या

लाभ मिलेंगे। अब वस्त एवं सेवा

कर (जीएसटी) की शुरुआत और

व्यक्तिगत करदाताओं और

कंपनियों के लिए अपेक्षाकृत कर

दरें अधिक स्थिर रहने से संघीय

बजट का आकर्षण कम हुआ है

और इसे लेकर लोगों की उत्सुकता

भी पहले जैसी नहीं रह गई है।

बजट कुछ अलग होगा। प्रत्यक्ष

कर एवं जीएसटी दर स्थिर रहने

के बावजूद 1 फरवरी को वित्त

मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण द्वारा पेश

किए जाने वाला बजट सभी का

ध्यान आकृष्ट करेगा। पिछली छह

से

अर्थव्यवस्था के सकल घरेलू

उत्पाद (जीडीपी) की विकास

दर लगातार कमजोर हो रही है।

सरकार ने इस स्थिति से निपटने

के लिए कुछ कदम अवश्य

उठाए हैं, लेकिन इनका कोई

सकारात्मक असर अब तक नहीं

दिखा है। वित्तीय क्षेत्र भी संकट

से उबर नहीं पाया है। इससे

पहले कि सरकारी बैंकों को नई

पुंजी देने और कई भारतीय

कंपनियों द्वारा लिए ऋण के

समाधान से जुड़े उपाय किए

जाते, गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय

कंपनियों (एनबीएफसी) के

संकट ने समस्या कई गुना और

हाल में एक शहरी सहकारी

बैंक के पतन ने वित्तीय क्षेत्र की

हालत और बिगाड़ दी। भारतीय

रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) इस वर्ष

अब तक रीपो दर 135 आधार

अंक तक कम कर चुका है।

हालांकि इससे ऋण आवंटन में

सुधार नहीं हुआ है और न ही

विनिर्माण क्षेत्र की क्षमता की

उपयोगिता ही बढी है। बेरोजगारी

दर 6 प्रतिशत पार कर चुकी है,

जो पिछले चार दशकों का

सर्वाधिक चिंताजनक आंकडा है।

इन कारणों से आगामी बजट पर

सभी का ध्यान जाना लाजिमी है।

बजट को लेकर उत्सकता बढने

के दो अन्य कारण भी हैं। पहला

बढ़ा दी।

तिमाहियों

वित्त वर्ष 2020-21 का

लोगों को गिरफ्तार करने की बात भी शामिल की जा रही है। बहरहाल, सरकार को समग्रता से विचार करके ही निर्णय लेना चाहिए।

जीएसटी की सफलता इस बात पर निर्भर है कि कर मामलों में लोग स्वैच्छिक हिस्सेदारी करें। ज्यादा कड़ी कार्रवाईकरने से मासम और दोषी दोनों चपेट में आएंगे और ऐसे वक्त में देश का कारोबारी रुझान कमजोर होगा जब कारोबारी भावनाओं को जीवंत बनाना अत्यंत महत्त्वपूर्ण है।

जरूरत यह है कि जीएसटी ढांचे पर समग्र दृष्टि डाली जाए। देखा जाए कि क्या इसे आसान बनाकर अनुपालन बढाया जा सकता है ? परिषद को कर और विशिष्ट दरों को लेकर भी व्यापक दिशा स्पष्ट



वृद्धि दर बढ़ाने के लिए निर्यात प्रोत्साहन जरूरी

सुस्ती के दौर से गुजर रही भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को तीव्र वृद्धि की राह पर लाने के लिए निर्यात स्थिरता का दौर खत्म करना होगा। इस बारे में विस्तार से बता रहे हैं शंकर आचार्य

रतीय अर्थव्यवस्था एक गहरी एवं व्यापक होती सुस्ती के बीच में है। आर्थिक वृद्धि दर लगातार छह तिमाहियों से गिरते हुए सितंबर तिमाही में 4.5 फीसदी पर आ चुकी है और हालात जल्द सुधरने की गुंजाइश भी नहीं दिख रही है। इस बात पर मीडिया एवं अन्य क्षेत्रों में काफी चर्चा हो रही है कि कुल मांग के उपभोग और निवेश जैसे मुख्य अवयवों में कैसे तेजी लाई जाए और क्या मुश्किल राजकोषीय स्थिति में सरकारी व्यय बढाने की गुंजाइश बाकी है ? आश्चर्यजनक ढंग से निर्यात के बारे में चर्चा लगभग नदारद है।

फिर भी वर्ष 2013-14 तक उत्पादों एवं सेवाओं का निर्यात सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) का 25 फीसदी था जो सरकारी व्यय की हिस्सेदारी से अधिक और निर्धारित निवेश से थोडा ही कम है। दुर्भाग्य से, भारत का उत्पाद निर्यात वर्ष 2011-12 से ही करीब 300 अरब डॉलर पर स्थिर रहने से कुल निर्यात का हिस्सा वर्ष 2018-19 में 20 फीसदी से नीचे आ गया और उत्पाद निर्यात की हिस्सेदारी 12.4 फीसदी पर आ गई। वैश्विक विकास अनुभव बताते हैं कि कोई भी बडी अर्थव्यवस्था निर्यात में सशक्त वृद्धि बनाए रखे बगैर तीव्र आर्थिक वृद्धि (सात फीसदी से अधिक) नहीं कायम रख पाई है। खुद हमारा अनुभव भी ऐसा ही है। भारत की आर्थिक वृद्धि के दो बेहतरीन दौर (1992-97 और 2003-11) में निर्यात वृद्धि का सिलसिला मजबूत रहा था। निर्यात गतिविधियों में रोजगार के अवसर अधिक होते हैं और भारत में एमएसएमई क्षेत्र का उत्पाद निर्यात में हिस्सा परंपरागत तौर पर 35-40 फीसदी रहा है। कुछ हद तक कमजोर बाह्य वित्त को मजबूती देने के लिए भी निर्यात वृद्धि जरूरी है। फिर निर्यात को नजरअंदाज करने वाली नीति को पलट क्यों देते हैं ?

नीतियों में बदलाव करने के पहले हमें उस भ्रामक धारणा से भी निपटना है जिसके मुताबिक भारत की व्यापार नीतियों में खास गड़बड़ी नहीं है और हमारी निर्यात स्थिरता वर्ष 2011 के बाद वैश्विक कारोबार में आई स्थिरता के चलते है। वास्तव में, उसके बाद से वैश्विक निर्यात वृद्धि डांवाडोल रही है। लेकिन हमने तीव्र वृद्धि के दोनों ही चरणों में वैश्विक निर्यात वृद्धि को मात दी है। इसके अलावा हमसे उलट कुछ अन्य एशियाई देशों ने हाल के वर्षों में काफी अच्छा काम किया है। आंकडे बताते हैं कि 2011 से 2018 के बीच भारत का उत्पाद निर्यात केवल आठ फीसदी ही बढ़ा है जबकि इसी अवधि में वियतनाम ने 154 फीसदी, कंबोडिया ने 114 फीसदी, म्यांमार ने 82 फीसदी, बांग्लादेश ने 61 फीसदी, फिलीपींस ने 40 फीसदी और चीन ने 31 फीसदी तक की वृद्धि दर्ज की। तीव्र निर्यात वृद्धि का मतलब बाजार हिस्सेदारी बढाने से है। वर्ष 2011 और 2018 के बीच विश्व निर्यात में हमारा हिस्सा 1.7

फीसदी पर स्थिर बना रहा जबकि वियतनाम का हिस्सा लगभग दोगुना, म्यांमार का 80 फीसदी, बांग्लादेश का 50 फीसदी से अधिक, फिलीपींस का 27 फीसदी और व्यापार युद्ध में उलझने के बावजूद चीन का हिस्सा 20 फीसदी से अधिक बढा। विश्व निर्यात में चीन की हिस्सेदारी पिछले सात वर्षों में 2.4 फीसदी बढ़ गई जो वर्ष 2018 में भारत की कुल हिस्सेदारी से 60 फीसदी अधिक है।

लिहाजा हमें विश्व व्यापार प्रवृत्तियों को दोष नहीं देना चाहिए। सही नीतियों के साथ हम विश्व निर्यात में अपनी हिस्सेदारी बढा सकते हैं जिससे जीडीपी. रोजगार. एमएसएमई आउटपट और सशक्त बाह्य वित्त में बढोतरी का लाभ मिल सके। इसके उलट मौजूदा अपर्याप्त नीतियों के चलते निर्यात में स्थिरता बनी रह सकती है जिसके नकारात्मक असर समग्र आर्थिक वृद्धि, रोजगार और बाह्य वित्तीय व्यवहार्यता पर

ऐसे में सवाल उठता है कि निर्यात के मोर्चे पर हमारे कमजोर प्रदर्शन को सुधारने के लिए कौन से नीतिगत कदम उठाने होंगे ? हमें कम मजदूरी पर काम कर रहे श्रमिकों को बेहतर शिक्षा देने और कुशल बनाने, संपर्क एवं भंडारण सुविधा बढ़ाने के लिए अधिक संख्या में एवं बेहतर ढांचे के निर्माण के अलावा सस्ती ऊर्जा की उपलब्धता सुधारने, भूमि एवं श्रम कानूनों में सुधार और अपने खस्ताहाल वित्तीय प्रणाली में नई जान

फूंकनी होगी। इन कदमों से कुल आर्थिक उत्पादकता बढेगी जिससे एक प्रतिस्पर्द्धी एवं उत्पादक अर्थव्यवस्था बनाने में मदद मिलेगी।

संक्षिप्त एवं मध्यम अवधि के भुगतान से विदेश व्यापार नीतियों का दायरा कम होने से हमारा ध्यान उन नीतियों पर होना चाहिए जिन्होंने पिछले सात वर्षों से निर्यात को स्थिर रखने में बड़ी भूमिका निभाई है। इनमें चार नीतियां खास तौर पर अहम हैं। पहली, हमारी मुद्रा के मौजूदा अधिमूल्यन को दुरुस्त करना हैं क्योंकि यह निर्यात पर कर लगाने एवं आयात को सब्सिडी देने के बराबर है। आंकडे बताते हैं कि इस दशक में रुपये की वास्तविक प्रभावी विनिमय दर खासी अधिक रही है। भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के 36 देशों के सचकांक से यह पता चलता है।

इस अधिमूल्यन में गिरावट आने से न केवल निर्यात को बढावा मिलेगा बल्कि इससे तीन वर्षों से जारी आयात शुल्क संरक्षण को भी पलटने में मदद मिल सकती है। हमें इस बात को मानना होगा कि ऊंचे आयात शल्क न केवल अक्षम एवं उच्च लागत वाले घरेलू उत्पादन को बढ़ावा देते हैं बल्कि उत्पादन में इस्तेमाल होने वाले कच्चे माल के महंगा होने से निर्यात भी हतोत्साहित होता है। कोई भी देश आयात शुल्क संरक्षण की राह पर चलते हुए उच्च निर्यात वृद्धि कायम नहीं रख सकता है। अगर हम तीव्र निर्यात वृद्धि बहाल करने को लेकर गंभीर हैं तो हमें हाल के वर्षों में की गई आयात शुल्क वृद्धि को वापस लेना होगा। और मुद्रा अधिमूल्यन की पृष्ठभूमि में ऐसा करना कहीं अधिक आसान होगा।

तीसरी, हमें यह समझना चाहिए कि गत दो दशकों में विश्व व्यापार वृद्धि का एक बड़ा हिस्सा वैश्विक (एवं क्षेत्रीय) मूल्य शृंखलाओं (जीवीसी) से चालित होता रहा है। यह महज संयोग नहीं है कि तीव्र निर्यात वृद्धि के अधिकांश प्रतिमान भारत की तुलना में जीवीसी में कहीं बेहतर ढंग से अंतर्निहित हैं। इसके अलावा वित्त मंत्री ने अपने बजट भाषण में भले ही जीवीसी की अहमियत स्वीकार की, लेकिन व्यापक एवं अप्रत्याशित आयात शुल्क की तरफ लौटना जीवीसी में सफल भागीदारी को कमतर बनाता है। जीवीसी में भागीदारी के लिए नगण्य या निम्न आयात शुल्क होना और उत्पादों की सरल एवं सीमापार आवाजाही जरूरी है। क्षेत्रीय व्यापक आर्थिक भागीदारी (आरसेप) समझौते का संस्थापक सदस्य बनने से हमारे इनकार का हमारे व्यापार एवं निर्यात संभावनाओं पर असर समय बीतने के साथ गंभीरता से महसूस किया जाएगा। अगर अब भी इस समझौते का हिस्सा बन पाना संभव है तो हमें आरसेप का हिस्सा बन जाना चाहिए। अन्यथा, समय बताएगा कि हमने व्यापार नीति में एक ऐतिहासिक भल कर दी थी।

चौथी, जीएसटी लागू होने के बाद से ही निर्यातक इनपुट टैक्स क्रेडिट के अधूरे एवं विलंबित भुगतान की शिकायतें लगातार करते रहे हैं। हमें प्रक्रियागत सुधारों से इन समस्याओं को युद्धस्तर पर दूर करना होगा। जीएसटी प्रणाली में शुन्य-दर वाले निर्यात का किताबी नियम व्यवहार में लाना होगा। निर्यात वृद्धि अधिक होने से आर्थिक सुस्ती दूर करने, नए रोजगार पैदा करने और हमारे बाह्य वित्त को मजबूत करने में मदद मिलेगी।

के लिहाज से रह सकता है खास पिछले कई वर्षों के दौरान केंद्र सरकार के सालाना बजट के महत्त्व एवं इसकी उपयोगिता में हास हुआ है। एक समय था जब बजट को लेकर उद्योग जगत उत्साहित रहता था और यह जानने

वित्त वर्ष 2020-21 का बजट व्यय

ए के भट्टाचार्य

कारण तो यह है कि चाल वित्त

वर्ष के लिए राजस्व संग्रह का अनुमान काफी खुशनुमा है, लेकिन इसे प्राप्त करना सहज नहीं लग रहा है। राजस्व संग्रह के वर्तमान आंकड़ों से तो यही लगता है कि राजकोषीय घाटा जीडीपी का 3.3 प्रतिशत तक रखने का लक्ष्य हासिल नहीं हो पाएगा। इस वर्ष के पहले आठ महीने में राजस्व संग्रह की अनुमानित दर महज 1.5 प्रतिशत रही है, जबकि लक्ष्य 18 प्रतिशत रखा गया है। दुरसंचार कंपनियों को अतिरिक्त दूरसंचार शुल्क देने का सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का निर्देश और आरबीआई से एकबारगी लाभांश से सरकार को 1.3 लाख करोड़ रुपये राजस्व की प्राप्ति होगी। हालांकि अंतर तब भी रह जाएगा। वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 के लिए राजकोषीय घाटा 3.8 प्रतिशत स्तर तक रह सकता है।

2020-21 के बजट में 15वें वित्त आयोग की सिफारिशें भी शामिल करनी होंगी। हालांकि इस महत्त्वपूर्ण प्रश्न का उत्तर 1 फरवरी को ही मिल पाएगा कि क्या राज्यों के साथ कर राजस्व के बंटवारे के लिए विभाज्य कोष से रक्षा एवं आंतरिक सरक्षा पर व्यय होने वाली केंद्र की रकम के समतुल्य राशि अलग की जाएगी या नहीं। जीएसटी संग्रह की सुस्त गति से परेशान राज्यों के लिए यह दोहरी मार होगी और इससे उनका राजकोषीय घाटा भी बढ सकता है।

दसरा कारण यह है कि

जीएसटी संग्रह में कमी के मद्देनजर जीएसटी परिषद के समक्ष कर दरों में अधिक कटौती की गुंजाइश नहीं रह जाती है। इसके उलट कच्चे माल की तुलना में तैयार उत्पादों पर दरें कम करने के नकारात्मक असर को दूर करने के लिए जीएसटी दरें अधिक तर्कसंगत बनाने की जरूरत है। तैयार उत्पादों पर दरें घटाने से कर

वापसी में तेजी आई है, जिसका सीधा असर कर संग्रह पर हुआ है। कॉर्पोरेट टैक्स में पहले ही कमी की जा चुकी है। आखीआई ने 1,500 कंपनियों का सर्वेक्षण किया है, जिसके अनुसार नई क्षमता विकसित करने या पंजी परिसंपत्तियों के सृजन के लिए इन कंपनियों द्वारा किए गए निवेश की दर में स्वागत योग्य बढ़ोतरी हुई है। आय कर दरों में कमी से लोगों के पास उपभोक्ताओं एवं निवेशकों के पास खर्च या बचत करने योग्य रकम बढ जाएगी। इससे देश में मांग में तेजी आने में मदद मिलनी चाहिए। वित्त मंत्रालय को प्रत्यक्ष कर समिति अपनी रिपोर्ट सौंप चुकी है, जिसमें कर रियायत तर्कसंगत बनाने एवं व्यक्तिगत आयकर में कमी करने की सिफारिश की गई है।

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में कई ढांचागत क्षेत्रों पर बड़े पैमाने पर व्यय की दरकार है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में ढांचागत क्षेत्र पर व्यय घटा है और इसकी भरपाई के लिए बजट में संसाधन जुटाने की जरूरत है। अतिरिक्त संसाधन का प्रावधान करने की राह आसान नहीं होगी और इससे राजकोषीय मजबूती का निश्चय कमजोर पड़ सकता है। अगर सरकार ढांचागत क्षेत्र के निर्माण के लिए अतिरिक्त संसाधनों का उपयोग सुझ-बुझ के साथ करती है तो राजकोषीय मजबूती से भटकाव को भी उचित ठहराया जा सकता है। वैसे भी जब आर्थिक वृद्धि दर पिछले 18 महीने में आधी रह गई है तो अर्थव्यवस्था में जान डालने के लिए राजकोषीय घाटे में इजाफा नजरअंदाज किया जा सकता है।

लिए याद रखा जाएगा कि इसमें व्यय के मोर्चे पर क्या कदम वी सोमनाथन को वित्त मंत्रालय में नया व्यय सचिव नियुक्त किया गया है। सोमनाथन की नियुक्ति कोई सामान्य बात नहीं मानी जा सकती। वह 2015 से 2017 तक दो वर्षों के लिए प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय में थे। इस दौरान उन्होंने आर्थिक नीतियों के क्रियान्वयन पर नजर रखी थी। इसके बाद अगले दो वर्षों तक उन्होंने तमिलनाडु के वित्त एवं वाणिज्यिक कर विभाग का कामकाज देखा था। अब वह केंद्र की व्यय योजना के लिए क्या करते हैं इस पर सबकी नजरें होंगी।

बजट 2020 इस बात के

कानाफूसी

बिगड़ती बात

जब बात देश के अन्य राज्यों में चुनाव प्रचार करने की आती है तो उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री आदित्यनाथ भारतीय जनता पार्टी के सबसे चहेते नेताओं में से एक नजर आते हैं। लेकिन इसके बावजूद वह प्रदेश में अपने खिलाफ पनप रहे असंतोष से निपटने में नाकाम रहे हैं। मंगलवार को जब भाजपा के विधायक पुलिस और जिला प्रशासन द्वारा प्रताडना के खिलाफ विधानसभा में ही धरने पर बैठ गए तो मीडिया में इसकी खबरें जमकर प्रकाशित हुईं। उधर पार्टी के एक अन्य विधायक श्याम प्रकाश ने सोशल मीडिया पर एक संदेश के जरिये यह सुझाव दिया कि विधायकों को भी कर्मचारी संगठन जैसा एक संघ गठित करना चाहिए। उन्होंने यह इल्जाम भी लगाया कि राज्य में मौजूदा सरकार के कार्यकाल में बहुत अधिक भ्रष्टाचार है और इन हालात में विधायक भी खुद को असहाय पा रहे हैं। इन तमाम बातों पर ध्यान देते हुए ही मुख्यमंत्री आदित्यनाथ ने 40-40 विधायकों के समृह बनाकर उनसे मुलाकात



आपका पक्ष

देश से पलायन रोकने के हों उपाय

प्रतिभा संपन्न व्यक्ति ही किसी समाज या राष्ट्र की वास्तविक संपदा होती है। इन्हीं की दशा एवं दिशा पर देश का भविष्य निर्धारित होता है। अपने स्वर्णिम अतीत में देश इन्हीं की बहुलता के कारण स्वयं में समृद्ध एवं खुशहाल और ज्ञान-विज्ञान के क्षेत्र में विश्व का अग्रणी देश था। देश-विदेश के जिज्ञासु, विद्वान एवं प्रतिभा संपन्न लोग इसी कारण यहां खिंचे चले आते थे और अपने ज्ञान को समृद्ध कर लौट जाते थे। लेकिन आज स्थिति बदल गई है। दूसरे देशों में प्रतिभा का पलायन कोई नई समस्या नहीं है और न ही किसी एक देश तक सीमित है। यह समस्या दशकों पुरानी है और विश्व के अधिकतर विकासशील देश इससे पीडित हैं। लेकिन इससे सबसे अधिक नुकसान भारत का हो रहा है, क्योंकि प्रतिभा संपन्न लोगों के क्षेत्र में भारत विश्व का अग्रणी देश है तथा सबसे अधिक प्रतिभाओं का पलायन यहीं से हुआ है और हो रहा है। वैसे तो पहले भी



प्रतिभा का पलायन होता रहा है : देश की प्रतिभा का पलायन लेकिन इस समस्या को उदारीकरण ने और हवा दी है। करीब 60 से 90 के दशकों में ज्यादातर 20-25 वर्ष की आयु की युवा प्रतिभाएं ही देश से पलायन करते थे। फ्रेशर होने के कारण इन्हें इस उम्र में दूसरे देश के वातावरण और कार्यशैली में ढलने में आसानी होती थी। दूसरा उस समय अधिकतर वैज्ञानिक,

रोकने के लिए सरकार को उचित कदम उठाने चाहिए

डॉक्टर, इंजीनियर आदि ही अधिकतर जाते थे। भारत से कुशल और प्रशिक्षित व्यक्ति विदेश पलायन कर जाते हैं जिससे भारत में उच्चस्तरीय प्रतिभाओं की कमी

डॉक्टर विदेशों में पलायन कर रहे हैं जबकि भारत में डॉक्टरों की संख्या जनसंख्या अनुपात से काफी कम है। विशेषकर भारत के गांव डॉक्टरों की कमी से जूझ रहे हैं जिससे भारत की स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं में अपेक्षित सुधार नहीं हो पा रहा है। अब वक्त आ गया है कि राष्ट्र के विकास को गति देने के लिए प्रतिभाओं का पलायन रोकना अति आवश्यक है। इसके लिए उपयुक्त परिस्थितियां एवं वातावरण बनाना होगा। यह सरकार की इच्छाशक्ति एवं महत्त्व पर निर्भर करता है। सरकार को प्रतिभा पलायन जैसे मुद्दे के लिए सख्त कदम उठाने होंगे। देश की प्रतिभा अगर देश में ही रहकर देशहित में काम करे तो यही सबसे बेहतर होगा। इस प्रकार हम पूर्ण रूप से अपना सामाजिक विकास कर सकेंगे।

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in पत्र/ईमेल में अपना डाक पता और टेलीफोन नंबर अवश्य लिखें।

हिंसा अनुचित नागरिकता संशोधन कानून का देश

हो जाती है। भारत से बड़े पैमाने पर विरोध प्रदर्शन में

की कई जगहों में विरोध प्रदर्शन हो रहा है। इस विरोध प्रदर्शन के दौरान कुछ असामाजिक लोग हिंसा कर रहे हैं। प्रदर्शन के दौरान लोग सड़कों पर आगजनी, सार्वजनिक बसों में आग लगाने, पथराव और तोड़फोड़ करने पर उतारू हो रहे हैं। विरोध प्रदर्शन हर नागरिक का संवैधानिक अधिकार है लेकिन हिंसा करना कहीं से भी उचित नहीं है। हिंसा करने से आंदोलन की दशा एवं दिशा बदल जाती है। अगर सरकार के किसी निर्णय का विरोध करना है तो उसे शांतिपूर्ण तरीके से करना चाहिए। हिंसा से लोगों में भय पैदा होता है तथा कई लोगों को बेवजह परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ता है। अत: अपनी मांगे मनवाने के लिए देश की संपत्ति को नुकसान पहुंचाना कतई उचित नहीं है। हिंसा करने वाले लोगों की पहचान कर उन पर कड़ी कार्रवाई होनी चाहिए।

अभिषेक कुमार, नई दिल्ली



विचार

उचित योजना के अभाव में लक्ष्य प्राप्त करना लगभग असंभव है

राजनीति का शरारती रूप

अब इस पर कोई संशय नहीं कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून के हिंसक विरोध के पीछे अज्ञानता भरे अंदेशे के साथ ही शरारत भरे राजनीतिक दुष्प्रचार की भी एक बड़ी भूमिका है। नागरिकता कानून में संशोधन के बाद विभिन्न विपक्षी राजनीतिक दलों और किस्म-किस्म के गैर राजनीतिक संगठनों ने एक ऐसा माहौल खड़ा कर दिया है, मानो सरकार ने अनर्थ कर दिया हो। हैरानी यह है कि ऐसा माहौल खड़ाकर अराजकता को हवा देने का काम वे दल भी कर रहे हैं जो एक समय नागरिकता कानून में वैसी ही व्यवस्था चाह रहे थे जैसे सरकार ने की और जिस पर संसद ने विधिवत मुहर भी लगाई। नागरिकता कानून के खिलाफ आज आग उगल रही कांग्रेस बड़ी चतुराई से यह भूलना पसंद कर रही है कि वाजपेयी सरकार के समय राज्यसभा में बतौर नेता विपक्ष मनमोहन सिंह बांग्लादेश जैसे देशों के अल्पसंख्यकों को नागरिकता प्रदान करने में नरमी बरतने की जरूरत जता रहे थे। उन्होंने इन प्रताड़ित अल्पसंख्यकों को नागरिकता प्रदान करना देश की नैतिक जिम्मेदारी भी बताया था। अब जब मोदी सरकार ने इसी नैतिक जिम्मेदारी का निर्वाह कर दिया तो कांग्रेस समेत अन्य दल अराजकता का माहौल बनाने में जुटे हुए हैं। कायदे से तो मनमोहन सिंह को प्रधानमंत्री बनने पर इस नैतिक जिम्मेदारी का निर्वाह करना चाहिए था, लेकिन उन्होंने उससे पल्ला झाड़ना ही बेहतर समझा और वह भी तब जब असम से राज्यसभा सदस्य होने के नाते इससे भली तरह परिचित थे कि पर्वोत्तर के विभिन्न इलाकों में पड़ोस से आए अल्पसंख्यक कितनी दयनीय

यह तथ्य भी उल्लेखनीय है कि मनमोहन सिंह के प्रधानमंत्री रहते समय माकपा नेता प्रकाश करात ने उन्हें चिटठी लिखकर नागरिकता कानन को इस तरह संशोधित करने की मांग की थी कि बांग्लादेश से आए और परेशान हो रहे अल्पसंख्यकों को भारत की नागरिकता मिल सके। इस चिट्ठी में उन्होंने मनमोहन सिंह को उनके उस संबोधन की याद भी दिलाई थी जो उन्होंने राज्यसभा में दिया था। आज माकपा और अन्य दल बिना शर्म-संकोच नागरिकता कानून को काला कानून में बताने में लगे हुए हैं। वास्तव में इसी शरारतपूर्ण राजनीति के कारण नागरिकता कानून का हिंसक विरोध हो रहा है। यह भी एक किस्म की शरारत ही है कि शांतिपर्ण विरोध के बहाने अशांति और अराजकता फैलाने का काम किया जा रहा है। बंगाल, दिल्ली और उत्तर प्रदेश की हिंसक घटनाएं यही रेखांकित कर रही हैं कि अराजकता और उन्माद फैलाने का काम किस सुनियोजित तरीके से किया जा रहा है। राजनीतिक फायदे के लिए हमारे नेता किस हद तक गिरने को तैयार हैं, इसका ही शर्मनाक उदाहरण है ममता बनर्जी की जनमत संग्रह संबंधी मांग।

नशे के खिलाफ मुहिम

हिमाचल प्रदेश में नशीले पदार्थों की बरामदगी बढना चिंतनीय है। हर रोज नशीले पदार्थ बरामद हो रहे हैं। प्रदेश के कई जिलों के सीमावर्ती क्षेत्रों में नशा माफिया ने जाल बिछाया है। कई युवाओं का नशे की गर्त में फंसना चिंतनीय है। जिस उम्र में युवा करियर चमकाने के लिए संघर्ष करते दिखने चाहिए, उस दौरान उनका नशे की ओर झुकाव सही नहीं है। हालांकि सरकारी स्तर पर नशीले पदार्थों की तस्करी को रोकने के लिए प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं, मगर जरूरत उनमें तेजी लाए जाने की है। जरूरत इस बात की है कि नशा माफिया पर लगाम कसी जाए। अक्सर देखा जाता है कि ज्यादातर मामलों में वही लोग पकड़े जाते हैं जिन्हें नशीले पदार्थों को एक स्थान से दूसरे स्थान तक ले जाने के लिए थोड़े से पैसों का लालच दिया जाता है। ऐसे मामलों में मुख्य सरगना कम ही

पकड़ में आते हैं। इसलिए नशीले पदार्थों की तस्करी के मामलों में मुख्य सरगना को दबोचने के प्रयास किए जाने चाहिए। लोगों को समझना चाहिए कि चंद पैसों के लिए तस्करी में शामिल होना सही नहीं है। ऐसे मामलों में पकड़े जाने पर सजा के अलावा लोगों को सामाजिक रूप से भी तिरस्कार सहना पड़ता है। उनके परिवार को भी इसका खामियाजा भुगतना पड़ता

पदार्थों का खात्मा हो सकता है। उत्तर भारत के राज्य यदि इस भाव से नशीले पदार्थीं पर वार करेंगे तो इस बुराई को मात दी जा सकेगी है। असल में नशा नाश की जड़ है। इसलिए समझदारी इसी में है कि नशे

एकजुटता से ही नशीले

से दूरी बनाकर रखी जाए। युवाओं को चाहिए कि वे नशे से दूर रहकर अपना करियर संवारें। अभिभावकों का भी फर्ज है कि यदि उनका बच्चा नशे के चंगुल में फंस गया है तो उसे डांटे, नहीं बल्कि उसका उपचार करवाएं। प्रशासन की ओर से नशे के खिलाफ लोगों को जागरूक करने के अभियान को और तेज किया जाना चाहिए। विशेषकर शिक्षण संस्थानों में विद्यार्थियों और युवाओं को नशे के दुष्प्रभावों से अवगत करवाया जाना चाहिए। नशीले पदार्थों का खात्मा एकजुटता के साथ ही किया जा सकता है। इस दिशा में सुखद खबर यह है कि उत्तर भारत के राज्य अब नशे के काले कारोबार के खिलाफ सामृहिक वार करेंगे। इस दिशा में शिमला में सात राज्यों के पुलिस अधिकारियों की समन्वय बैठक हुई है। इस बैठक में तस्करों के खिलाफ और सख्ती से निपटने की पुख्ता रणनीति बनाने के अलावा कार्ययोजना तैयार की गई है। इस समन्वय से सचना और सचना से सजा तक का रास्ता आसान होने की उम्मीद बंधी है।

पाकिस्तान में भूचाल लाने वाला फैसला



सेना में भूचाल सा आ गया है।

मुशर्रफ 2016 से देश के बाहर हैं और

आजकल दुबई में गंभीर बीमारी का इलाज

करा रहे हैं। मुशर्रफ को झटका देने वाले इस

फैसले का आधार पाकिस्तानी संविधान के

अनुच्छेद छह और उसके तहत बने कानून हैं।

उनके मुताबिक अगर कोई व्यक्ति पाकिस्तान

के संविधान को दरिकनार करने की कोशिश

भी करता है तो वह देशद्रोह का दोषी माना

जाएगा। इसे 1973 में तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री

विवेक काटजू

बाजवा के सेवा विस्तार पर अड़ंगा लगाने के बाद मुशर्रफ को मौत की सजा सुनाकर न्यायपालिका ने पाकिस्तानी फौज को सख्त संदेश दिए हैं

जुल्फिकार अली भुट्टो की पहल पर बनाए गए किस्तान के इतिहास में 17 दिसंबर की तारीख एक अहम पड़ाव के रूप पाकिस्तानी संविधान में शामिल किया गया था। में दर्ज की जाएगी। ऐसा इसलिए, इसमें दोषी पाए जाने पर उम्रकैद या मृत्युदंड क्योंकि इसी दिन पाकिस्तान की एक विशेष का प्रावधान किया गया। भुट्टो ने इसे इस मंशा अदालत ने पूर्व राष्ट्रपति एवं सेनाप्रमुख परवेज के साथ लागू किया था ताकि पाकिस्तानी सेना मुशर्रफ को देशद्रोह के आरोप में मृत्युदंड की प्रमुख देश की हुकूमत पर काबिज न हो सकें। उनका मकसद था कि अयूब खान और याह्या सजा सुनाई। एक जज ने तो यहां तक कहा कि यदि मुशर्रफ मृत पाए जाएं तब भी उनके शव खान जैसे फौजी तानाशाह फिर से न उभरें, को घसीटकर इस्लामाबाद के चौक पर तीन लेकिन विडंबना यह रही कि उसके शिकार दिन के लिए सूली पर चढ़ाया जाए। हालांकि वह स्वयं हुए। इसकी कीमत उन्हें अपनी जान उनके साथी जज इससे सहमत नहीं थे। यह देकर चुकानी पड़ी, क्योंकि उनके द्वारा नियुक्त टिप्पणी पाकिस्तानी सेना को बहुत चुभने वाली जनरल जिया उल हक ने न केवल उन्हें सत्ता है। इससे पहले पाकिस्तान की ताकतवर सेना से बेदखल किया, बल्कि उन्हें फांसी पर लटका और उसके पिट्ठू माने जाने वाले प्रधानमंत्री दिया। इस वाकये के बीस साल बाद 1999 में इमरान खान की सरकार ने मुशर्रफ को बचाने परवेज मुशर्रफ ने तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री नवाज के लिए सारी तिकड़में आजमाईं, लेकिन वे शरीफ का तख्तापलट कर स्वयं सत्ता हथिया अदालती फैसले को रोकने में नाकाम रहे। तीन ली। जिया उल हक और फिर परवेज मुशर्रफ न्यायाधीशों द्वारा 2-1 के बहुमत से दिए गए इस द्वारा किए गए सैन्य तख्तापलट को पाकिस्तान फैसले की धमक बहुत दूर तक सुनी जा सकती की न्यायपालिका से पूर्ण सहमति मिली। जिस मामले में मुशर्रफ को सजा मिली है है। इससे पाकिस्तान की राजनीति, समाज और

उसकी कड़ियां 2007 से जुड़ी हैं जब वह राष्ट्रपति के साथ-साथ सेना प्रमुख भी थे। तब राजनीतिक वर्ग पर शिकंजा कसने के बाद मुशर्रफ ने न्यायपालिका पर भी दिबश बढ़ा दी थी। इसी सिलसिले में तत्कालीन मुख्य न्यायाधीश इफ्तिखार मोहम्मद चौधरी को बर्खास्त कर नजरबंद करा दिया था। पाकिस्तान की न्यायिक बिरादरी ने इसका भारी विरोध किया। नवंबर, 2007 में मुशर्रफ ने संविधान को निलंबित कर दिया। छह हफ्ते बाद संविधान



की फिर बहाली हुई। इस अवधि में उन्होंने सेना प्रमुख का पद छोड़ा और एक सिविलियन राष्ट्रपति बने। आठ महीने बाद उन्होंने राष्ट्रपति पद भी छोड़ दिया। उनके राष्ट्रपति पद छोड़ने से पहले ही मुख्य न्यायाधीश इफ्तिखार चौधरी ने संविधान के निलंबन को अवैध करार दिया। यही पहलु इस मुकदमे का आधार बना।

जैसी उम्मीद जताई जा रही थी, इस मामले

में पाकिस्तानी फौज ने बेहद तल्ख प्रतिक्रिया जताई। उसने इस फैसले पर कई सवाल उठाए हैं। फौज का यह आक्रोश बेवजह नहीं। वह मौजुदा सेना प्रमुख जरनल बाजवा के सेवा विस्तार में अदालती अवरोध को लेकर पहले ही तिलमिलाई हुई है। उनसे जुड़े फैसले में भी अदालत ने स्पष्ट किया है कि यदि पाकिस्तानी संसद ने छह महीने में उनकी नियुक्ति को लेकर उचित कानून नहीं बनाया तो उनका सेवा विस्तार अटक सकता है। स्वाभाविक है कि पाकिस्तानी सेना इन अदालती फैसलों को अपनी साख से जोडकर देख रही है। पाकिस्तानी सेना श्रेष्ठता बोध से ग्रस्त है। उसे यह मुगालता है कि केवल वही पाकिस्तानी

सीमाओं एवं वैचारिक बुनियाद को महफूज रख सकती है। पाकिस्तानी नेताओं के बारे में उसकी धारणा है कि वे कमजोर, अक्षम और भ्रष्ट हैं जो राष्ट्रीय हितों का संरक्षण नहीं कर सकते। नौकरशाही को भी वह नकारा और स्वार्थी समझती है। उसकी नजर में केवल वही एकमात्र ऐसा पवित्र संगठन है जिसे देश और जनता की फिक्र है और जिसका दामन भ्रष्टाचार से बचा है। राष्ट्र की स्वयंभू संरक्षक मानते हुए वह कानून और परंपराओं को तोड़ने से भी गुरेज नहीं करती। इसी कारण पाकिस्तान का इतिहास सेना की कारगुजारियों से भरा है।

हालांकि यदाकदा पाकिस्तानी न्यायपालिका ने सेना को असहज करने वाले फैसले भी सनाए, परंतु यह तभी हुआ जब न्यायपालिका के शीर्ष पर सख्तमिजाज और विधि के लिए समर्पित न्यायाधीश मौजूद रहे हों। मिसाल के तौर पर बलूचिस्तान में लापता लोगों के मामले में पाकिस्तानी न्यायपालिका ने सिक्रयता के साथ सख्ती दिखाई। कुछ मामलों में तो सैन्य अधिकारियों को फटकार तक लगी, लेकिन सेना के शीर्ष नेतृत्व पर इसका कोई असर नहीं

पडा। बलचिस्तान में उसकी दमनकारी नीतिय यथावत जारी रहीं। इससे यही पता चलता है कि पाकिस्तानी सेना ने न्यायपालिका को कभी गंभीरता से नहीं लिया, लेकिन अब एक पूर्व सेनाध्यक्ष को सजाए मौत और मौजूदा सैन्य मखिया के सेवा विस्तार पर लटकी तलवार से उसका खीझना स्वाभाविक है।

पाकिस्तानी फौज न्यायपालिका को उसकी हैसियत जरूर दिखाना चाहेगी, पर फिलहाल उसके लिए ऐसा संभव नहीं दिखता। पाकिस्तान इस वक्त गंभीर आर्थिक संकट से दो-चार है उसकी अंतरराष्ट्रीय साख तार-तार है। मोदी सरकार ने कश्मीर को लेकर भी उसकी चुनौती और बढ़ा दी है। ऐसे में फौज कोई ऐसा कदम नहीं उठाएगी जिससे अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर यह संदेश जाए कि वहां लोकतांत्रिक सिद्धांतों की बिल दी जा रही है। वह सार्वजनिक रूप से अदालत को पूर्णतः बेइज्जत करने का जोखिम उठाने की स्थिति में नहीं है।

सवाल उठता है कि आगे क्या? इसमें संदेह नहीं कि फौज इमरान सरकार के कंधे पर बंदुक रख अपने हित साधेगी। इसमें पहला काम तो बाजवा के सेवा विस्तार के लिए कानून बनान होगा। बाजवा भी कोई बीच का रास्ता निकालने की सोचेंगे जिससे उनका और फौज का स्वाभिमान कायम रह सके। जहां तक मुशर्रफ के मामले का सवाल है तो ऊपरी अदालतों में इस फैसले को पलटवाने के पूरे प्रयास किए जाएंगे। वैसे भी इस फैसले को अमल मे लाना लगभग असंभव है, लेकिन देखना है कि मुशर्रफ देशद्रोह के दाग से मुक्त होते हैं या नहीं? जो भी हो, न्यायपालिका के जरिये फौज को लगे लगातार दो झटकों के बावजूद ऐसे कोई आसार नहीं कि पाक की कार्यप्रणाली मे कोई बदलाव आएगा। भारत नीति फौज अपने हाथ में ही रखेगी। यह छोड़ना उसके लिए

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कुप्रचार का शिकार नागरिकता कानून

सद के शीतकालीन सत्र में संसद से पारित किए गए विधेयकों में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक था, जो अब कानून बन चुका है। किसी भी देश के लिए नागरिकता एक महत्वपूर्ण राजनीतिक प्रश्न होता है। जब सरकार किसी व्यक्ति को देश के नागरिक के रूप में मान्यता देती है तो वह नागरिक की सुरक्षा और उसके अधिकारों को सुनिश्चित करती है, ताकि वह देश के नागरिक के रूप में गरिमापूर्वक अपना जीवन व्यतीत कर सकें। संसद से पारित इस कानून के तहत पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान से भारत आए अल्पसंख्यक समूहों-हिंदू, जैन, सिख, ईसाई, बौद्ध और पारसी समुदाय के लोगों को भारत की नागरिकता देने का प्रावधान है। भारतीय संविधान के तहत दिए गए अधिकारों में से कुछ सभी को दिए गए हैं, जबकि कुछ केवल देश के नागरिकों को दिए गए हैं। यह केवल भारत में ही नहीं, बल्कि दुनिया के हर देश में है कि कुछ अधिकार सभी के लिए होते हैं और कुछ अधिकार केवल वहां के नागरिकों के लिए होते हैं। इस कानून से जुड़े तीन महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न हैं। पहला, सरकार को इस कानून को लाने की आवश्यकता क्यों पड़ी? दूसरा, क्या यह कानून लोगों को नागरिकता प्रदान करने में धर्म के आधार पर भेदभाव करता है? तीसरा, क्या सरकार द्वारा विधेयक लाने की पूरी प्रक्रिया में संवैधानिक वैधता है? इन प्रश्नों का उत्तर जानने के पहले यह समझना होगा कि देश का विभाजन 1947 में धार्मिक आधार पर हुआ। 1950 में तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री जवाहरलाल नेहरू और उनके पाकिस्तानी समकक्ष लियाकत अली खान के बीच एक समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर हुए। यह दोनों देशों में अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय को सुरक्षा प्रदान करने से संबंधित था। नेहरू-लियाकत समझौते पर पाकिस्तान ने कभी अमल नहीं किया। इस कारण बड़ी संख्या में अल्पसंख्यक पाकिस्तान और बांग्लादेश (उस दौर के पूर्वी पाकिस्तान) से भारत आए। इनके भारत आने का मुख्य कारण धार्मिक उत्पीड़न और उनकी धार्मिक

वर्तमान सरकार का ध्यान गया। 2003 से 2014 के बीच संप्रग सरकार ने संसद में अनेक बार यह बात दोहराई कि पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान में धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों को प्रताड़ित किया जा रहा है और इसलिए वे भारत आ रहे हैं। इतना ही नहीं, 2003 में जब केंद्र में राजग सरकार थी तब मनमोहन सिंह ने इन पीड़ित धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों को नागरिकता

पहचान का खतरे में होना था। इस गंभीर समस्या पर सिर्फ



पर एक पत्र लिखा। कुल मिलाकर लंबे समय से चली आ रही इस समस्या की तरफ लगभग हर दल के नेताओं का ध्यान गया। सभी ने इस समस्या को एक गंभीर चिंता के रूप में जाहिर किया, किंतु दुर्भाग्य से समस्या को जानते और स्वीकारते हुए भी कांग्रेस ने ठोस समाधान निकालने की कभी कोशिश नहीं की। मोदी सरकार ने नागरिकता

संशोधन कानून लाकर इस समस्या का समाधान किया है। जहां तक इस विधेयक की संवैधानिक वैधता का प्रश्न है तो हमें यह याद रखना चाहिए कि संविधान की प्रस्तावना में कहा गया है कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को विचार, अभिव्यक्ति, विश्वास और पूजा पद्धति की स्वतंत्रता है। विपक्ष द्वारा इस विधेयक के संबंध में उठाया गया मुख्य मुद्दा संविधान के अनच्छेद 14 के संदर्भ में है। वे तर्क दे रहे हैं कि पड़ोसी देशों के कुछ धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों को नागरिकता देकर सरकार भेदभाव की राजनीति कर रही है। सच्चाई आरोपों से परे है। यदि एक कल्याणकारी सरकार किसी उपयक्त आधार पर लोगों को वर्गीकृत करती है और फिर समूह के सभी सदस्यों को समान अधिकार प्रदान करती है तो

को आरक्षण का लाभ देने के लिए एक वर्ग को चिन्हित करने के समान है। यदि देश के दस प्रतिशत लोगों को गरीबी के आधार पर आरक्षण दिया गया है तो यह नीति देश के करदाताओं के खिलाफ नहीं है। इसी तरह ओबीसी मुस्लिमों को दिया जाने वाला आरक्षण उच्च जाति के हिंदुओं के खिलाफ नहीं है।

टीएमए पई मामले में सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने धार्मिक और भाषाई आधार पर लोगों के वर्गीकरण को संविधानसम्मत स्वीकृत किया था। इसलिए विपक्ष द्वारा उठाए जा रहे ऐसे मुद्दे निराधार हैं। ये भी आरोप लगाए जा रहे हैं कि यह कानून पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों के खिलाफ है। यह भी सच नहीं है। सरकार ने पूर्वोत्तर के सभी 'इनर लाइन परिमट क्षेत्रों' को कानून के दायरे से बाहर कर दिया है। साथ ही पूर्वोत्तर के जनजातीय क्षेत्रों को भी इस कानून के दायरे से बाहर रखा गया है। सरकार ने इस कानून के तहत लोगों को नागरिकता देने के लिए 31 दिसंबर, 2014 की तिथि निर्धारित की है। यानी नागरिकता प्रदान करने के लिए नए प्रवासियों को इसमें शामिल नहीं किया जाएगा। इस कानून के तहत केवल उन्हें नागरिकता दी जाएगी जो निर्धारित तिथि या उससे पहले प्रवेश कर चुके हैं। बाहर से आए लोगों को विशेष परिस्थिति में नागरिकता पहले भी दी जाती रही है। 2003 में राजग सरकार और यहां तक कि 2013 में संप्रग सरकार ने सर्कुलर के माध्यम से पाकिस्तान से आए हिंदू प्रवासियों को नागरिकता प्रदान की थी। इसलिए धार्मिक उत्पीडन के आधार पर लोगों को नागरिकता देना संविधान के सिद्धांतों का उल्लंघन नहीं है। यह कानून लाकर तो सरकार ने लंबे समय से चली आ रही समस्या का स्थायी हल निकाला है। बिना किसी अधिकार के अनिश्चितता और असुरक्षा का जीवन व्यतीत कर रहे लोगों को नागरिकता प्रदान करके भारत सरकार ने मानव अधिकारों की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण कार्य किया है। कांग्रेस सहित कुछ विपक्षी दलों द्वारा जिस ढंग से नागरिकता संशोधन कानून पर भ्रामक अप-प्रचार करके जनता में भ्रम की स्थिति पैदा करने की कोशिश की गई है, वह अत्यंत दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण और निंदनीय है। यह बार-बार स्पष्ट किया जा चुका है कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून 2019 से भारत के किसी भी धर्म के नागरिक को कोई खतरा नहीं है। इस कानून से किसी की नागरिकता पर कोई खतरा होने का सवाल ही नहीं है।

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मानवीय गुण

इस दौर में मानव का शारीरिक एवं मानसिक रूप से स्वस्थ रहना एक बड़ी चुनौती बन गया है। इसका कारण तमाम तरह की व्याधियों से घिरा होना है। अधिकांश व्याधियों का संबंध मानव मन एवं मस्तिष्क से जुड़ा है वास्तव में मानव शरीर सद्गुण, रजोगुण एवं तमोगुण से मिलकर बना है। इनकी अलग-अलग विशेषताएं हैं सद्गुणों द्वारा मनुष्य में ईश्वर के स्वरूप की पहचान रहती है। इससे वह प्रायः प्रसन्न रहता है। रजोगुण की प्रधानता में हर्ष तथा भय साथ रहते हैं। वहीं तमोगुण में मनुष्य पशु के समान केवल स्वयं के स्वार्थ के बारे में ही सोचता है। इससे वह मानसिक रूप से एकाकी होकर चहुंओर विषैला माहौल पाता है। सनातन धर्म के अनुसार वर्तमान काल को कलयुग कहा जाता है। इसमें मानव में तमो ज्यादा, रजो थोड़ा तथा सद्गुणों का मुख्य रूप से अभाव ही होता है। मनुष्य तत्वज्ञान तथा योग के द्वारा तमो और रजो गुणों के प्रभावों से मुक्त होकर सद्गुण अपनाकर किसी भी परिस्थिति में प्रसन्न रह सकता है।

इन सद्गुणों कों पतंजिल के अष्टांग योग एवं ईश्वर भिक्त द्वारा प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। ईश्वर भिक्त सतयुग में योग, त्रेता में यज्ञ और द्वापर में पूजा द्वारा प्राप्त की जा सकती है, परंतु यही ईश्वर भिक्त कलयुग में केवल भगवान के नाम से ही प्राप्त हो जाती है। इसलिए कलयुग के स्वरूप को समझते हुए रामचरितमानस मे कहा गया है कि इस युग में मानसिक पुण्य तो होते हैं परंतु मानसिक पाप नहीं होते। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि सभी जगह ऐसा ही माहौल है जहां सर्वत्र पाप एवं अप्रिय दृश्य उत्पन्न होते रहते हैं। इनके कारण कभी-कभी बुरे विचार मनुष्य को घेर लेते हैं जिन्हें वह पाप समझकर अपराध बोध में गिरा रहता है। ऐसी स्थिति में वह ईश्वर भक्ति तथा विवेक से इन मानसिक पापों से निवत्त होकर सकारात्मक विचारों से स्वयं को ऊर्जावान बना सकता है। संभवतः इसीलिए कलयुग को सबसे अलग काल माना जाता है, क्योंकि इसमें वह थोड़े से प्रयास से ही अपनी उन्नति कर सकता है। इसलिए मनुष्य को यह राह अपनाकर आगे बढ़ना चाहिए।

कर्नल शिवदान सिंह

असामाजिक होता सोशल मीडिया

हमारा देश आखिर किस दिशा में जा रहा है? हिंसा और अविश्वास का भाव हावी है। परस्पर प्रेम और भाईचारे का तानाबाना टूटता जा रहा है। यह अब कैसे और किस तरीके से जुड़ेगा, यह कोई नहीं जानता। सोशल मीडिया को भी इसके लिए कुछ तक हद दोषी माना जा सकता है जहां अफवाहों को तूल दिया जा रहा है। देश में बोलने-लिखने की आजादी है तो क्या उसका इस तरह बेजा फायदा उठाया जाएगा। हमें इसका विवेकपूर्ण उपयोग करना होगा।

क्या सोशल मीडिया पर हम सब यही करने के लिए आए थे! यह मंच हिंसा और भावनाएं भड़काने के लिए तो नहीं था! इसके रूप में हमें एक जरिया मिला था अपनों से जुड़े रहने का। दुनिया को खुद से जोड़े रखने का। दूरियों को कम करने का। अपनी बात को अपने तक ही सीमित न रख, पूरी दुनिया में फैलाने का। नए रिश्ते कायम कर उन्हें नया नाम, नई पहचान देने का। अपने विचारों को लिखने और दूसरे के विचारों को पढ़ने का। तर्कपूर्ण बहस करने का। कुछ अच्छा पढ़ने का, किंतु हमने तो इस खूबसूरत माध्यम को अपनी कुत्सित राजनीति अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता का अर्थ यह नहीं कि अनाप–शनाप लिखकर सामाजिक समरसता को बिगाडने का काम करें

और सांप्रदायिक सोच से नष्ट कर डाला। जो सोशल मीडिया पर व्याप्त इन मूर्खताओं को बर्दाश्त नहीं कर पाए, उन्होंने इसे त्याग दिया और कुछ ऐसा करने की तैयारी में हैं। उनके पास आखिर क्या विकल्प है?

कोई भी संवेदनशील व्यक्ति किसी भी तरह की हिंसा और उपद्रव को सहन और उसका समर्थन नहीं करेगा। अपने ही देश, समाज और नागरिकों को उपद्रव की आग में जलते देखना किसे अच्छा लगेगा। सांप्रदायिक सौहार्द बिगाड़ने से पहले हमें इंसानियत को नहीं भूलना चाहिए। साथ ही अपने उन हमददों की हकीकत भी समझें जो अपने हितों के लिए अक्सर हमारा इस्तेमाल करते हैं।

हर मसले को 'राजनीतिक रंग' देने की हमने कितनी खराब आदत बना ली है। नेताओं का तो काम ही राजनीति करना है, लेकिन हमें तो

कम से कम उनके हाथों की कठपुतली बनने से बचना चाहिए। नेता तो राजनीतिक दांव खेलकर अपने हित साधकर निकल जाएंगे, मगर हम और आप कभी धर्म तो कभी जाति की दीवारों में बंटते चले जाएंगे। हमें यह नहीं भूलना होगा कि हमारी पहचान गांधी और विवेकानंद से होती है, हिटलर या मुसोलिनी से नहीं। हमें उन क्रांतिकारियों और सत्याग्रहियों के पुरुषार्थ को व्यर्थ नहीं करना चाहिए जिन्होंने हमारी स्वतंत्रता के लिए इतने यत्न किए।

ऐसे में हमारा दायित्व है कि अपने देश में ऐसा कुछ भी गलत न होने दें कि पड़ोसी मुल्क हम पर हंसे। हमें बदनाम करे। हालांकि हम ऐसा कुछ भी देश के संग कभी होने नहीं देंगे। निरंतर फैल रही हिंसा को हमें ही रोकना होगा। बड़े लोकतांत्रिक देशों में हमारा नाम आता है, कम से कम उसी की लाज रख लें। यह मुल्क हम सब का है। सबकी साझा विरासत है। इस विरासत को बचाना होगा। हमें अपनी बुद्धि का सही इस्तेमाल करना होगा। इसके लिए हम सभी को अपनी जिम्मेदारी समझनी होगी। कम से कम सोशल मीडिया के सार्थक उपयोग से हम सौहार्द की बुनियाद तो रख ही सकते हैं। (लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

नागरिकता कानून को समझने की दरकार

यह व्यवस्था अनुच्छेद 14 के तहत मान्य है। यह लोगों

अज्ञानता से उपजा हैंसक विरोध शीर्षक लेख के तहत रामिश सिद्दीकी ने नागरिकता कानून के बारे में यह बताने की कोशिश की है कि यह कानून मुस्लिम विरोधी नहीं है और मुस्लिमों द्वारा इसका विरोध करना उचित नहीं है। स्वामी विवेकानंद ने युवा शक्ति के बारे में कहा था, 'मेरा विश्वास युवा शक्ति पर है। इन्हीं में से मेरे कार्यकर्ता निकलेंगे, जो अपने पराक्रम से विश्व को बदल देंगे।' युवा वर्ग का देश के विकास, देश और समाज में अच्छा बदलाव लाने के लिए महत्वपूर्ण योगदान होता है। राष्ट्र और समाज को नई दिशा की ओर ले जाने के लिए युवाओं की सोच अहम भूमिका निभाती है। इस बात का गवाह तो इतिहास भी है, लेकिन यह तभी संभव है जब देश में रहने वाले हर धर्म के युवाओं की सोच अपने राष्ट्र और समाज के प्रति अनुकूल हो। नागरिकता कानून पर जो हिंसक विरोध उपजा इसका कारण अज्ञानता के साथ-साथ इस कानून पर होने वाली संकीर्ण राजनीति और मुस्लिम समाज के कुछेक धर्म के ठेकेदारों की अपनी झूठी शान भी है, जबकि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी और गृहमंत्री शाह बार-बार एक ही बात कह रहे हैं कि यह कानून न तो मुस्लिम समाज के लिए और न ही अन्य किसी धर्म के लोगों के खिलाफ है। हालांकि मौजूदा हालात को देखते हुए मोदी सरकार को इस कानून की कमियों को दूर करने के उपाय अपनी हठधर्मिता को छोड़कर करने चाहिए, ताकि इससे देश को कोई नुकसान न हो। देश में प्रत्येक धर्म के लोगों को संकीर्ण राजनीति से हमेशा बचकर रहना चाहिए, धर्म-संप्रदाय पर राजनीति करने वाला का मकसद हमेशा अपना वोट बैंक ही होता है। इस कानून का विरोध करने वालों को इसका भान अवश्य होना चाहिए।

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

मेलबाक्स

विरोध के पीछे राजनीति

नागरिकता संशोधन कानून का किसी भी भारतीय नागरिक की नागरिकता से कोई संबंध नहीं है। यह बात इस्लामिक मामलों के जानकार रामिश सिद्दीकी ने अपने आलेख में मुस्लिम समाज को समझाने की कोशिश की है। बुधवार को जामा मस्जिद के शाही इमाम ने भी यही बात कही है, लेकिन इसके बाद भी कुछ लोग विरोध प्रदर्शन कर रहे हैं। कायदे में इस विरोध के पीछे कुछ राजनीतिक दल हैं, जिनकी जमीन खिसक चुकी है। वे इसी बहाने स्वयं को स्थापित करने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। असम से तो खबर आ रही है कि कुछ उग्रवादी व कट्टरपंथी संगठन आंदोलन में शामिल होकर आंदोलन को हिंसक बना रहे हैं। दिल्ली में भी कई मुस्लिम नेताओं ने प्रदर्शन में भाषण दिए, लेकिन उनका दावा है कि उस प्रदर्शन में हिंसा जैसी कोई बात नहीं थी, फिर हिंसा कौन कर रहा है? जाहिर है कुछ गलत लोग इसमें प्रवेश कर गए हैं, वे आंदोलन के जरिये अपना मकसद पूरा करना चाह रहे हैं। जो लोग विरोध कर रहे हैं उन्हें पहले नागरिकता कानून के प्रावधान को पढ़ना चाहिए। किसी की कही बात पर उबल पड़ने से बेहतर है खुद इसकी सही जानकारी हासिल करें। यह कानून किसी के खिलाफ नहीं है। यह पाकिस्तान व बांग्लादेश के उन नागरिकों को भी नागरिकता का अधिकार देता है जो बहुत पहले यहां आकर बस गए हैं। यह कानून केवल भविष्य में किसी घुसपैठ को रोकने के लिए है तो इसमें बुराई क्या है। अमेरिका जैसा देश भी अपने यहां किसी को आसानी से नहीं आने देता है। इसके विरोध में सुप्रीम कोर्ट में याचिकाएं दायर की जा

रही हैं और उसने इस मामले में सुनवाई करना स्वीकार भी कर लिया है। इसके बावजूद कुछ निहित स्वार्थी तत्वों द्वारा मुस्लिम समाज को गुमराह किया जा रहा है।

सुधार के लिए स्वयं करनी होगी पहल

अगर देश की प्रमुख राजनीतिक पार्टियां ही ऐसे लोगों को टिकट देंगी जिनके विरुद्ध दुष्कर्म के मुकदमे चल रहे है तो उनका कोई हक नहीं बनता कि वे किसी भी दुष्कर्म की घटना का विरोध करें। उनकी खुद की कथनी और करनी में बहुत बड़ा फर्क है। इससे सिर्फ एक बात साबित होती है कि वे सब राजनेता, जो संसद और संसद के बाहर आक्रोश जाहिर कर रहे थे, उनका विरोध सिर्फ घड़ियाली आंसुओं जैसा ही है। यह भी सर्वविदित है कि केवल मीडिया के दबाव के कारण ही भाजपा को अपने उत्तर प्रदेश के विधायक कुलदीप सिंह सेंगर को पार्टी से निष्कासित करना पड़ा। जब तक इन पार्टियों की महिला नेता अपने दलों पर दबाव नहीं बनाएंगी तब तक बड़ा बदलाव नहीं आएगा।

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 :

इस स्तंभ में किसी भी विषय पर राय व्यक्त करने अथवा

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

आशंका के सामने

हा ही में नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक के संसद में पारित हो जाने के बाद उठा विवाद अब जिस तरह देश भर में फैल गया लगता है, उससे साफ है कि इस मसले से निपटने में सरकार के स्तर पर शायद जल्दबाजी की गई। यों भी, आजादी के बाद से भारत जिस परंपरा का वाहक रहा है, उसमें सरकार के किसी फैसले से असहमति और उस पर होने वाले विरोध प्रदर्शन लोकतंत्र की खूबसूरती रहे हैं। मगर नागरिकता संबंधी बने नए कानून को लेकर लोगों के बीच जो आशंकाएं उभरीं, उसका समाधान निकालने के बजाय उसकी अनदेखी की गई। खासतौर पर दिल्ली में जामिया मिल्लिया के विद्यार्थियों के प्रदर्शन के बाद परिसर में घुस कर पुलिस ने जैसा बर्बर रवैया अख्तियार किया था, उस पर गंभीर सवाल उठे। सही है कि उस प्रदर्शन के दौरान हिंसा करने वाले तत्त्वों से निपटना पुलिस की जिम्मेदारी थी, लेकिन विश्वविद्यालय के पुस्तकालय और हॉस्टल तक में जाकर विद्यार्थियों के साथ जिस तरह मारपीट की गई, उसका औचित्य साबित करना संभव नहीं है। इसका नतीजा यह हुआ कि विवाद के जो केंद्र पहले कुछ विश्वविद्यालयों के परिसर तक सीमित थे, वे देश के बड़े हिस्से में फैल गए। हालत यह हुई कि गुरुवार को इस मुद्दे पर कई नागरिक समूहों की ओर से देश भर में व्यापक विरोध प्रदर्शन सामने आए।

असम और पूर्वोत्तर के राज्यों में इस मुद्दे पर उठा तूफान पहले ही सरकार के लिए एक बड़ी समस्या बनी हुई है। सरकार की ओर से तमाम आश्वासनों के बावजूद वहां के लोगों का विरोध नहीं थम रहा है। बल्कि देश के दूसरे राज्यों में भी लोग सड़कों पर उतर आए। अब जब हालात गंभीर होने लगे तब गृहमंत्री ने ताजा हालात पर विचार के लिए बैठक बुलाई, लेकिन क्या यह जरूरी नहीं था कि पिछले कुछ दिनों से देश में जैसी स्थिति बन रही थी, उसके मद्देनजर समय पर कदम उठाए जाते! कायदे से यह विषय जितने महत्त्व का है, उसमें इसके व्यापक असर के मद्देनजर हर पहलू पर गौर करके इस पर आने वाली आपत्तियां और संशोधनों पर विचार किया जाना चाहिए था। इसका फायदा यह होता कि आज अलग-अलग नागरिक समूह और राजनीतिक दल धर्म आधारित नागरिकता की व्यवस्था पर जैसे सवाल उठा रहे हैं और लोगों के बीच जैसी आशंकाएं खड़ी हो गई हैं, उसे दूर करने में मदद मिलती।

विडंबना यह है कि इस पर किसी भी तरह के विरोध या सवाल को स्वीकार करना जरूरी नहीं समझा गया। बल्कि सरकार की जिद का अंदाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि न केवल संशोधनों और आशंकाओं को कोई तरजीह नहीं दिया गया, बल्कि इस बात की भी घोषणा होती रही कि नागरिता संशोधन कानून को लागू करने के लिए देश भर में राष्ट्रीय नागरिकता रजिस्टर यानी एनआरसी की व्यवस्था लागृ होगी। इस मामले में असम का उदाहरण सामने है, जहां अनिवार्य घोषित किए गए दस्तावेजों के अभाव में करीब उन्नीस लाख लोग एनआरसी से बाहर रह गए। यानी उनकी नागरिकता कठघरे में है। इसके अलावा, काम के पूरा होने की प्रक्रिया में एक लंबा वक्त और भारी राशि खर्च हुई। सवाल है कि अगर देश भर में एनआरसी की प्रक्रिया शुरू की गई तो उसका प्रारूप क्या होगा? चिंता या आशंका की मुख्य वजह यही है कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून लागू होने के बाद अगर एनआरसी तैयार करने की प्रक्रिया शुरू होती है तो एक बड़ी जटिलता खड़ी हो सकती है। जरूरत इस बात की है कि इस मसले पर सरकार लोगों की बात सुने और उनकी आशंकाओं का निराकरण करे।

लॉटरी की दर

रतु एवं सेवा कर यानी जीएसटी को लागू हुए करीब ढाई साल हो गए। इस बीच कई बार व्यापारियों और उपभोक्ताओं की समस्याओं के मद्देनजर करों में बदलाव के लिए जीएसटी परिषद की बैठकें हो चुकी हैं। हर बार सर्वसम्मित से फैसले किए गए। पर यह पहली बार है, जब किसी कर के निर्धारण को लेकर परिषद के सदस्यों के बीच मतदान का सहारा लेना पड़ा। यह मौका था लॉटरी पर एक समान कर निर्धारण का। लॉटरी की बिक्री पर संबंधित राज्य में बारह प्रतिशत जीएसटी का प्रावधान था, जबिक दूसरे राज्यों में उन्हें बेचने पर जीएसटी अठाईस फीसद रखा गया था। कुछ लोगों की मांग थी कि इस पर दो तरह के कर न रखे जाएं। मगर जीएसटी परिषद के कुछ सदस्य इसके पक्ष में नहीं थे। आखिर मतविभाजन का सहारा लेना पड़ा। इसमें इक्कीस राज्यों ने लॉटरी पर जीएसटी की दर अठाईस फीसद करने के पक्ष में मतदान किया। इस तरह अब सभी जगह लॉटरी की बिक्री पर एक समान दर अठाईस फीसद कर दी गई है।

वस्तुओं पर कर का निर्धारण करते समय ध्यान रखा जाता है कि उसके उपभोक्ता किस आय वर्ग के हैं, उस वस्तु की खपत और समाज में उसकी उपादेयता कितनी है। अगर उस वस्तु से समाज के कमजोर आर्थिक तबके पर बोझ बढ़ता है, तो उसे अच्छा नहीं माना जाता। इसीलिए शुरू में जब जीएसटी दरों का निर्धारण किया गया, तो बहुत सारी वस्तुओं पर कराधान अधिक होने से आम उपभोक्ता पर आर्थिक बोझ पड़ने वाला था। उसका विरोध हुआ तो सरकार ने उनके करों में बदलाव किया। लॉटरी एक तरह का जुआ है। इससे नागरिकों के जीवन पर कोई प्रत्यक्ष प्रभाव नहीं पड़ता। बल्कि बहुत सारे लोगों में लॉटरी खेलने का नशा इस कदर हावी देखा जाता है कि वे परिवार के भरण-पोषण की परवाह किए बगैर अपनी कमाई लॉटरी पर लुटा बैठते हैं। कई लोग लॉटरी के चक्कर में भारी कर्ज में फंस जाते हैं। उन्हें सिर्फ यह उम्मीद होती है कि कभी न कभी किस्मत खुलेगी और वे भारी रकम जीत लेंगे, जिससे उनका जीवन खुशहाल हो जाएगा। यह उम्मीद जब नशे का रूप ले लेती है, तो कई लोगों के घर-परिवार भी बर्बाद करती देखी गई है। फिर लोगों में लॉटरी के नशे को देखते हुए बहुत सारे फर्जी लॉटरी बनाने वाले इस खेल में शामिल हो जाते हैं। इस तरह लॉटरी का बहुत सारा पैसा न तो लॉटरी कंपनियों को जा पाता है और न सरकार को उस पर राजस्व मिल पाता है। लॉटरी के इन्हीं दुष्प्रभावों को देखते हुए अधिकतर राज्यों में लॉटरी का कारोबार बंद कर दिया गया। मगर कुछ राज्यों में अब भी यह चलता है। वहां की लॉटरी दूसरे राज्यों में भी बेची जाती है।

जिन राज्यों में लॉटरी के कारोबार की अनुमित है, उन्हें इससे राजस्व की खासी कमाई होती है। कुछ राज्य सरकारें खुद लॉटरी चलाती हैं। सो, समझना मुश्किल नहीं कि उन्हें अंदेशा रहा होगा कि इस पर कर की दर ऊंची रखने से बहुत सारे खरीदारों पर प्रतिकूल असर पड़ेगा, इसलिए स्वाभाविक ही वे इसका विरोध कर रही थीं। मगर लॉटरी न तो आवश्यक वस्तुओं की सूची में आती है और न सेवा क्षेत्र में, इसलिए इस पर बारह प्रतिशत कर की दर रखने का कोई औचित्य नहीं था। अगर कर की दर ऊंची होने से कुछ गरीब लोग इसकी लत से मुक्त हो सकें, तो अच्छा ही है।

कल्पमेधा

जो मनुष्य अपने क्रोध को झेल लेता है, वह दूसरों के क्रोध से बच सकता है और जीवन को सुखी बना सकता है।

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अभिषेक कुमार सिंह

भारत अपने इन निगरानी उपग्रहों के जरिए पाकिस्तान के सत्तासी फीसद क्षेत्र यानी कुल 8.8 लाख वर्ग किलोमीटर में से 7.7 लाख वर्ग किलोमीटर इलाके पर पैनी नजर रखने में सक्षम हो गया है। इससे भारत जब चाहे, पाकिस्तान के महत्त्वपूर्ण सामरिक इलाकों की गतिविधियों को देख सकता है और महत्त्वपूर्ण नक्शे और तस्वीरें हासिल कर सकता है।

अगज दुनिया के तमाम देशों में जिस तरह के तनाव बढ़ रहे हैं, उनसे युद्ध की एक आशंका हमेशा बनी रहती है। ऐसे में अब कोई भी देश अपनी सुरक्षा को हल्के में नहीं ले सकता और इस काम में आसमान से निगरानी के इंतजाम किए बगैर खुद को सुरक्षित नहीं मान सकता। इस नजरिये से देखें तो हाल में श्रीहरिकोटा से प्रक्षेपित ताकतवर राडार इमेजिंग उपग्रह रीसैट-2बीआर-ा को भारत के लिए एक उपलब्धि कहा जाएगा। रीसैट के समान एक अन्य उपग्रह शृंखला कार्टोसैट की अंतरिक्ष में तैनाती के बल पर हमारा देश बादलों के पार से भी सरहदों पर हो रही हलचलों पर नजर रख पा रहा है और आतंकी व देश-विरोधी गतिविधियों पर निगाह रख उनसे निपटने के प्रबंध कर रहा है।

कार्टोसैट और रीसैट जैसे उपग्रहों की तैनाती की जरूरत 26 नवंबर, 2008 को मुंबई में हुए आतंकी हमलों के बाद ज्यादा महसूस की गई थी, ताकि दुश्मन इलाकों से होने वाली आतंकी घुसपैठ और संदिग्ध

हलचलों की जानकारी हमारे सुरक्षा तंत्र को पहले से मिल सके। यही नहीं, इसके लिए शुरुआती रीसैट उपग्रह की तकनीक में बदलाव भी किया गया था। उल्लेखनीय है कि इससे पहले भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन (इसरो) द्वारा अंतरिक्ष में स्थापित किए जाने वाले ज्यादातर उपग्रहों की भूमिका मौसम की जानकारी देना और कृषि, जंगल और आपदा प्रबंधन विभागों को संबंधित सूचनाएं प्रदान करने तक सीमित हुआ करती थी। लेकिन मुंबई हमले और उसके बाद उरी सेक्टर और पुलवामा में हुए आतंकी हमलों के मद्देनजर घुसपैठ पर नजर रखने और आतंक विरोधी उपायों पर अमल करने के लिए इस शृंखला के उपग्रहों में सीमाओं की निगरानी के प्रबंध भी किए जाने लगे। इन उपग्रहों से सीमाओं की निगरानी इसलिए ज्यादा पुख्ता ढंग से हो पा रही है, क्योंकि माइक्रोवेव फ्रीक्वेंसी पर काम करने वाले रीसैट श्रेणी के उफग्रह रात के अंधेरे और खराब मौसम में भी काम कर सकते हैं। धरती पर कितना भी

मौसम खराब हो, कितने भी बादल छाए हों, इसके कैमरे घने बादलों को चीर कर सीमाओं की साफ तस्वीरें ले सकते हैं। इस मामले में सिर्फ रीसैट ही नहीं, बल्कि कार्टोसैट शृंखला के उपग्रह भी बड़े काम के हैं। इसरो कार्टोसैट शृंखला में भी कई उपग्रह छोड़ चुका है और हाल में इस कड़ी में सबसे नया उपग्रह 27 नवंबर, 2019 को कार्टोसैट-3 उपग्रह प्रक्षेपित किया गया था, जो कार्टोसैट शृंखला का नौंवा उपग्रह है। कार्टोसैट शृंखला की शुरुआत वर्ष 2005 में हो ही गई थी, लेकिन सैन्य महत्व के उपग्रहों के सिलसिले की बात करें तो इसका आरंभ मुंबई हमले से साल भर पहले 2007 में कार्टोसैट-2ए के प्रक्षेपण से हुआ था। यह दोहरे उपयोग वाला उपग्रह था जो मौसम की जानकारियां बटोरने के साथ भारत के

अड़ोस-पड़ोस में मिसाइल कार्यक्रम पर नजर रख सकता था। इसके बाद जून 2012 में छोड़े गए कार्टोसैट-2सी से पडोसी देशों के संवेदनशील ठिकानों के वीडियो रिकॉर्ड करने और उसका विश्लेषण कर उन्हें वापस धरती पर भेजने की सुविधा देश को मिल गई। इसी शृंखला में अगला उपग्रह कार्टोसैट-2 ई था, जो जून 2017 में छोड़ा गया।

आसमान से सरहदों की निगरानी का मामला असल में इलेक्ट्रॉनिक खुफियागीरी की वह व्यवस्था बनाने का है जिसमें जमीनी हलचलों पर सुदूर अंतरिक्ष से नजर रखी जा सकती है। इस बारे में दावा किया जाता है कि जब देश रीसैट और कार्टोसैट जैसे निगरानी उपग्रहों की शृंखला अंतरिक्ष में तैनात कर देगा, तब पड़ोसी दुश्मन

मुल्कों से कोई परिंदा भी नहीं आ सकेगा। छद्म युद्ध की नीति के तहत आतंक फैलाने वाले पड़ोसी मुल्कों की हरकतों पर लगाम लगाने में रीसैट और कार्टोसैट जैसे उपग्रहों की एक बड़ी भूमिका हो सकती है। तकनीकी पहलुओं को देखें, तो रीसैट और कार्टोसैट उपग्रह इलेक्ट्रॉनिक खुफिया तकनीक से युक्त होते हैं, जिससे धरती के किसी भी इलाके का इलैक्ट्रो-मैग्नेटिक स्पेक्ट्रम नापा जा सकता है। इस तकनीकी खुबी के आधार पर ये उपग्रह सैकड़ों किलोमीटर की ऊंचाई पर रहते हुए जमीन पर संचार प्रणाली, राडार और अन्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों के सिग्नल पकड सकते हैं। इससे दुश्मन देश के राडार ढूंढ़ने में मदद मिलती है, साथ में ये उपग्रह भारत के जंगी विमानों को दुश्मन की वायु रक्षा प्रणाली की निगाह में आने से बचा सकते हैं। इन्हीं खूबियों के चलते रीसैट-2बीआर1 और कार्टोसैट-3 को भारत की आंख भी कहा जा रहा है।



सवाल है कि आसमान में तैनात ये तकनीकी आंखें हमारे देश की सुरक्षा में कैसे मददगार साबित हो रही हैं। इसकी एक मिसाल उरी हमले के प्रतिकार में सितंबर, 2016 में भारत की ओर से पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ की गई सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक में मिलती है। इस कार्रवाई में एक अहम भूमिका कार्टोसैट शृंखला के उपग्रहों ने निभाई थी। इन उपग्रहों से हैदराबाद स्थित नेशनल रिमोट सेंसिंग सेंटर को स्टैंडर्ड और बेहद सुक्ष्म ब्योरे के साथ उपग्रहों से जमीन के लिए गए फोटो उपलब्ध कराए गए थे। इनके विश्लेषण के बाद सेना को जमीनी हालात का आकलन करने, हमले की सर्वाधिक उपयुक्त जगह और समय का चुनाव करने में मदद मिली थी। निगरानी उपग्रह कहलाने वाले इन

उपग्रहों में एक विशेष किस्म का राडार लगा होता है। यह राडार असल में इजरायली सिस्टम टेकसार-1 का संशोधित और देसी विकल्प है, जिससे एक बार में धरती के पांच से दस किलोमीटर के इलाके में करीब आधे मीटर से भी कम दायरे में मौजूद दो वस्तुओं में अंतर पकड़ा जा सकता है और उनकी पहचान की जा सकती है। इतनी सूक्ष्मता से मिलने वाली जानकारी का अर्थ यह है कि दुश्मन देश की सैन्य हलचलों से लेकर आतंकियों की हर गतिविधि का समय रहते पता लग सकता है।

एक तथ्य यह है कि भारत अपने इन निगरानी उपग्रहों के जरिए पाकिस्तान के सत्तासी फीसद क्षेत्र यानी कुल 8.8 लाख वर्ग किलोमीटर में से 7.7 लाख वर्ग किलोमीटर इलाके पर पैनी नजर रखने में सक्षम हो गया है। इससे भारत जब चाहे, पाकिस्तान के महत्त्वपूर्ण सामरिक इलाकों की गतिविधियों को देख सकता है और महत्वपूर्ण नक्शे और तस्वीरें हासिल कर सकता है।

सिर्फ पाकिस्तान ही नहीं, बल्कि पिछले पांच-छह वर्षों में इसरो ने कई ऐसे उपग्रह अंतरिक्ष में स्थापित किए हैं, जिनकी मदद से भारत की क्षमता आस-पड़ोस के चौदह देशों के करीब साढ़े पांच करोड़ वर्ग किलोमीटर दायरे वाले भूभाग पर सूक्ष्म नजर रखने की बन चुकी है। सेना यह स्वीकार करती है कि देश की सरहदों से लेकर पड़ोसी मुल्कों की जमीन पर हो रही गतिविधियों पर करीबी नजर रखने संबंधी जरूरतों का सत्तर फीसद हिस्सा इसरो के उपग्रह पूरा कर देते हैं। इस वक्त इसरों के कम से कम दस उपग्रह ऐसे हैं जो देश की सैन्य और खुफिया जरूरतों को पूरा कर रहे हैं। हाइपर स्पेक्ट्ल इमेजिंग उपग्रह यानी हाइसिस को 28 नवंबर 2018 को छोड़ा गया था और इससे रात के अंधेरे में भी तस्वीरें खींचकर जमीन के कुछ सेंटीमीटर जितने हिस्से की सूक्ष्म

निगरानी की जाती है। यहां तक कि जमीन में बारूदी सुरंगों और आइईडी का भी इससे पता चल जाता है। इसी साल 23 जनवरी को प्रक्षेपित उपग्रह माइक्रोसैट-आर को इस मायने में खास कहा जा सकता है कि इसका निर्माण विशुद्ध रूप से सैन्य उद्देश्यों के लिए डीआरडीओ ने किया है।

यह सही है कि अक्सर दो देशों के बीच सैन्य संतुलन का आकलन करते समय सैनिकों की तादाद, जंगी जहाजों, विमानों, मिसाइलों और टैंकों आदि की गणना ही होती है, उनमें अंतरिक्ष में तैनात निगरानी उपग्रहों की गिनती नहीं होती। लेकिन भारत के अगल-बगल शत्र इरादों वाले पडोसियों की मौजदगी के मद्देनजर ऐसे निगरानी उपग्रहों की कीमत किसी भी सैन्य साजोसामान से ज्यादा ही ठहरेगी।

पर्यटन की सीमा

संतोष उत्सुक

🔁 मारे देश की आर्थिकी में पर्यटकों का अहम ए योगदान है। भारतीय पर्यटक धरती पर चल रही पर्यटकीय दौड़ का हिस्सा हो चुके हैं। घुमक्कड़ी, आजकल आनंद के लिए कम, देखा-देखी और दिखाने के लिए ज्यादा होने लगी है। माउंट एवरेस्ट को पर्यटक स्थल बना दिया गया है। इधर वहां मरने वालों की खबर आती रहती है, उधर पहाड़ पर चढ़ने वालों की लाइन लंबी होती रहती है। पर्यावरण प्रेम के नारों के शोर में पारिस्थितिकी संतुलन बिगड़ता जाता है। डिजिटल यूग में बाजार के शातिर प्रतिनिधियों ने हाथ मिला रखे हैं, लेकिन जगहों का विज्ञापन वस्तुस्थिति से परिचित नहीं करवाता। कुछ महीने पहले प्रशासन के पंजीकरण के बिना मणिमहेश जैसी रोमांचक, लेकिन खतरनाक यात्रा पर निकले पर्यटक बर्फीले मौसम में बुरी तरह से फंस गए थे। प्रशासन के सघन प्रयासों के कारण कुछ को ही बचाया जा सका था। यह ठीक है कि प्रशासन को काफी पहले से ज्यादा चौकन्ना रहना चाहि, लेकिन पर्यटकों ने भी जिम्मेदारी नहीं समझी।

बहुत लोकप्रिय हो चुके हिमाचली स्थल चूड़धार आने वाले पर्यटकों को उनके अतिउत्साह ने परेशान कर रखा

है। प्रशासन और स्थल प्रबंधन ने कब से मना किया है। कि अभी चुड़धार यात्रा न करें, लेकिन नासमझ पर्यटक मानते नहीं, वहां जाते हैं और परेशान होते हैं। इस स्थल पर बहुत हिमपात होता है। पिछले दिनों बहुत मुश्किल के बावजूद मंदिर प्रबंधकों और समाज सेवियों ने परेशानी उठा कर अपनी मर्जी से वहां पहुंचे, गंभीर रूप से अस्वस्थ हो जाने के कारण उन्नीस वर्षीय पर्यटक को पीठ पर उठा कर दूसरी जगह पहुंचाया। इस युवा पर्यटक ने

जानबूझ कर अपनी जान को जोखिम में डाला। इसके अलावा

भी ऐसी की घटनाएं हो चुकी हैं। कुछ महीने पहले एक नवविवाहित जोड़ा रास्ता भटका, चिप्स खाकर और पानी पीकर रात गुजारी। प्रशासन ने हेलिकॉप्टर से उन्हें ढूंढ़ा। हाल ही में दो युवा चिकित्सक इस जगह के लिए निकले। रास्ते में युवक की तबीयत खराब हुई और ढाबे में रुकना पड़ा। हैरानी की बात यह है कि साथ गई डॉक्टर युवती बीमार साथी के साथ लौटने की बजाय अकेली चूड़धार चली गई। इधर युवक की हालत ज्यादा बिगड़ गई और अंतत उसकी मृत्यू हो गई। यह पर्यटकों की घोर लापरवाही है कि बिना सोचे-समझे, अल्पज्ञान होते हुए भी चल पड़ते हैं। इन नासमझ और बेकरार पर्यटकों को रोकने का प्रयास किया जाता है, लेकिन

मानते नहीं। अपनी उच्छशृंखल प्रवृति के कारण अनेक पर्यटक जीवन से हाथ धो बैठते हैं।

भेड़चाल का शिकार हो रहे पर्यटकों को समझना चाहिए कि जिन पर्यटक स्थलों पर पूरी सुविधाएं उपलब्ध नहीं हो पाई हैं, सरकारी प्रशासन या स्थानीय प्रबंधन, बर्फबारी या अन्य कारणों से मना कर रहा है तो सुरक्षा अपना कर लौटना ही बेहतर है। कुछ जगहों पर अब पर्यटकों को वाकई कम संख्या में आना चाहिए। विदेशों से सीखने की आदतें समृद्ध दुनिया मेरे आगे

आर्थिकी से जीवित कई छोटे देशों ने अपना प्रबंधन सुधारा है। उदाहरण के तौर पर वेनिस ने क्रूज जहाज सीमित करने शुरू किए हैं। आइसलैंड नई जगहों को बढ़ावा दे रहा है। कोपेनहेगन पर्यटकों को अलग-अलग जगह भेज रहा है। क्रोएशिया पर्यटकों की सीमा निश्चित कर रहा है।

करनी चाहिए। पर्यटन आधारित

एक घटना उल्लेखनीय है। पेरिस में एक संग्रहालय में पर्यटकों की भीड़ ज्यादा हो जाने कारण वहां के कर्मचारी बाहर निकल गए। हमारे देश में अनेक जगहों पर भीड बहुत परेशान होती है और करती भी है। यों भी विदेशी और स्थानीय पर्यटकों के तौर-तरीकों में गरम और ठंडे का फर्क है। हम विदेश यात्राओं के दौरान सुधरे रहते हैं, लेकिन देश में वापस आते ही पुराने बिगड़े हुए माहौल में घुस जाते हैं। हमें अतिउत्साही, अनुशासनहीन चालक, अपने स्वास्थ्य और सुरक्षा से बेपरवाह मेहमानों की जरूरत नहीं होनी चाहिए। इनकी यात्रा को निरुत्साहित नहीं, स्थानीय प्रशासन द्वारा सीधे निरस्त कर देना चाहिए। किसी भी व्यक्ति, चाहे वह कितनी ही पहुंच वाला क्यों न हो, स्थानीय यात्रा, अनुशासन तोड़ने, हुड़दंग मचाने की अनुमित नहीं दी जानी चाहिए। पर्यटक अगर पैरा-ग्लाइडिंग, ट्रैकिंग, जलक्रीड़ा, साहसिक खेल किसी भी गतिविधि में हिस्सा लेना चाहते हों, तो हर क्षेत्र में एक प्रवेश बिंदु होना चाहिए, जहां से प्रशासन की अनुमति के बिना कोई आगे नहीं जा सके। प्रशासन द्वारा समय रहते स्वास्थ्य और सुरक्षा संबंधी पुख्ता इंतजाम करना भी लाजिमी है।

हादसा होने के बाद कुछ समय के लिए जागरूक रहने की आदत बदलना जरूरी है। दुर्घटना के बाद भी आखिर प्रशासन को अपने बहुमूल्य संसाधन प्रयोग करने ही पड़ते हैं। तो उनका खर्च बचाया जा सकता है। पुरातत्त्व या अन्य कोण से महत्त्वपूर्ण जगहों पर कम लोग आएं तो जगह की महत्ता कम नहीं हो जाएगी। इस संदर्भ में हम अमेरिका के लाजवाब एरिजोना से सीख सकते हैं. जहां, 'द वेव' को देखने के लिए एक दिन में सिर्फ बीस लोग लॉटरी के माध्यम से अधिकृत होते हैं। हमारी अनेक दिलकश जगहों को भी बेहतर पर्यटक चुनने का हक है।

४ चामन और रास्ता' (संपादकीय, 17 दिसंबर) 🛰 पढ़ा। पिछले दिनों पारित नागरिकता संशोधन कानून के खिलाफ देश भर में आंदोलन हो रहे हैं। सरकारी संपत्ति की बर्बादी हो रही है। इसकी जितनी भी भर्त्सना की जाए, कम है। लेकिन इसी के साथ इस देश में कई और भी अनुत्तरित प्रश्न हैं, जैसे वर्तमान सरकार की कानों पर अहिंसक और शांतिपूर्ण आदोलनों से जूं भी नहीं रेंगती। उदाहरण के लिए पिछले दिनों रेलवे के निजीकरण करने के फैसले के विरोध में रेलवे के लाखों कर्मचारियों और आत्महत्या करते भारत के लाखों किसानों द्वारा अपनी फसलों के उचित मूल्य निर्धारण के लिए बार-बार किए गए शांतिपूर्ण और अहिंसक हड़तालों, प्रदर्शनों और आंदोलनों के बाद भी इस कथित लोकतांत्रिक सरकार के कर्णधारों को कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ा। ज्यादातर टीवी चैनल दिन-रात सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी के किए हर गलत-सही कृत्य का एकतरफा प्रचार करने के सिवा कुछ महत्त्वपूर्ण विषयों को लेकर किए गए अहिंसक प्रदर्शनों को दिखाना तक भी जरूरी नहीं समझा।

समाचार पत्रों के अनुसार इस लोकतांत्रिक शासन के कर्ताधर्ताओं द्वारा दिल्ली पुलिस के अपने प्यादों के माध्यम से दिल्ली के जामिया मिल्लिया इस्लामिया के गेट के सुरक्षा गार्डों को धिकयाते हुए, बगैर उसके प्रॉक्टर या कुलपति की इजाजत के विश्वविद्यालय में घुसकर जो तांडव मचाया, उसे देख कर तानाशाही शासन का खौफ उभरता है। खबरों के अनुसार दिल्ली पुलिस ने विश्वविद्यालय परिसर में लाइब्रेरी में पढ़ रहे छात्र-छात्राओं को शौचालय तक से खींच-खींच कर उन्हें किसी संगीन अपराधी की तरह मारा-पीटा। यही नहीं, वहां के कृत्य को कवरेज करती एक महिला पत्रकार से अमर्यादित और अभद्रतापूर्ण व्यवहार किया।

सवाल है कि सरकार के कर्णधारों से इस देश के आमजन का भरोसा क्यों टूट रहा है! ये इसके लिए खुद जिम्मेदार हैं। पिछले छह सालों से जनता बहुत ध्यान और सूक्ष्मता से यह आकलन कर रही है कि ये कहते कुछ और हैं और इनका एजेंडा कुछ और ही होता है। इनकी नीयत में खोट है। आखिर दिल्ली पुलिस द्वारा अमार्यादित, हिंसक व्यवहार करने का आदेश किसने दिया? इनकी बातों और इनके कामों में इतना फासला क्यों है? प्रजातंत्र में प्रजा का विश्वास खोना किसी भी शासक के लिए गंभीर संदेश है।

• निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

सुरक्षा नियंत्रण व्यवस्था के नाम पर राज्य सरकारें फुली नहीं समाती है। हर साल राज्य सरकारें बजट में करोड़ों रुपए सुरक्षा व्यवस्था के नाम पर आबंटित करती हैं। फिर वह पैसा जाता कहां हैं? क्या बजट में मेटल डिटेक्टर लगाने की व्यवस्था नहीं की जा सकती? हर आगंतुक की तलाशी नहीं ली जा सकती? निगरानी के लिए कैमरे नहीं लगाया जा सकता? लेकिन ऐसा होता नहीं है। शायद इसीलिए अपराधियों के हौसले बुलंद रहते हैं और भरी अदालतों में वारदात करने से भी वे झिझकते नहीं! बिजनौर की घटना से राज्य

सरकारों को सबक लेना चाहिए और

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

असुरक्षित अदालतें

उत्तर प्रदेश के बिजनौर सत्र अदालत में मंगलवार को भरी अदालत में एक अभियुक्त की हत्या कर दी गई। हालांकि कोर्ट परिसर में हत्या का यह पहला मामला नहीं है। ऐसे और भी मामले सामने आते रहे हैं। इसी साल जुन में आगरा के बार काउंसिल की नवनिर्वाचित अध्यक्ष को भी कोर्ट परिसर में गोली मारकर हत्या कर दी गई थी। अब सवाल यह उठता है कि जब देश की न्यायपालिकाएं ही सुरक्षित नहीं है, तो सरकारें आम आदमी को सुरक्षा का भरोसा कैसे दे सकती है? हाल में सुप्रीम कोर्ट में एक याचिका में यह कहते हुए अदालतों की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था पुख्ता करने की अपील की गई थी कि अदालतों की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था रामभरोसे है।

आईंदा इस तरह की घटना न हो. इसे सनिश्चित करने के लिए पुख्ता इंतजाम भी करना चाहिए।

• गौतम एसआर, एमसीयू, खंड़वा परिसर

भेदभाव का विकास

आज देश की महिलाएं सामाजिक, आर्थिक, राजनीतिक, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में उपेक्षा की शिकार हो रही हैं और दूसरी तरफ बलात्कार, छेड़छाड़ और घरेल हिंसा जैसे अपराधों के ग्राफ में तेजी से वृद्धि हो रही है। इन सवालों की पुष्टि विश्व आर्थिक मंच की ताजा रिपोर्ट ने भी कर दी है। इस रिपोर्ट में भारत पिछले साल वर्ल्ड इकोनॉमिक फोरम की सूची में 108 वें स्थान पर था, लेकिन इस बार फिसल कर वह 112वें स्थान पर पहुंच गया है। इस रिपोर्ट ने देश और समाज के लिए

चिंता और बढ़ा दी है। इससे साबित होता है कि महिलाओं के कल्याण के लिए सरकारी नीतियां नाकाफी हैं और नीतियों का क्रियान्वयन सही नहीं हो रहा है।

सरकारें नीतियों को बदलें और नीतियों को लागू करते समय निगरानी रखें, ताकि महिलाओं की स्थिति सुधारी जा सके। देश के प्रत्येक नागरिक का दायित्व है कि जागरूकता के द्वारा महिलाओं के स्तर को सुधारने के प्रयास करें और देश में बढ़ रहे हैवानियत के तांडव की पुरजोर मुखालफत करें, ताकि महिलाओं में छिपी प्रतिभा का देश के उत्थान में योगदान सुनिश्चित किया जा सके। सवाल है कि जब तक पितृसत्तात्मक सोच के खिलाफ व्यापक सोच विकसित करने की ओर समाज नहीं बढ़ता है तब तक पुरुष और स्त्री के बीच गहराते फासले को कैसे दूर किया जा सकेगा!

हरेंद्र सिंह कीलका, सरवड़ी

नाकाम चीन

अब तक संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद् में भारत के विरुद्ध चीन लगातार वीटो का प्रयोग कर परेशान करता रहा है। लेकिन इस बार उसने कश्मीर संबंधी एक प्रस्ताव रखा तो अमेरिका, फ्रांस, ब्रिटेन और रूस-चारों महाशक्तियों ने उसे वीटो कर दिया। नतीजतन, वह खारिज हो गया। किसी प्रश्न पर ऐसी महाशक्तियों की एकजुटता बहुत कम देखने को मिलती है। इसने चीन को अलग-थलग कर दिया। एक दौर था जब जरूरत पड़ने पर केवल रूस हमें अपने वीटो द्वारा बार-बार बचाता था। अब चार महाशक्तियां हमारा साथ दे रही हैं। जहां तक चीन का सवाल है तो चीन की असली चिंता इस समय अर्थव्यवस्था है, जो अमेरिकी प्रतिबंधों के कारण दुर्गति को प्राप्त हो गई है। इसका राजनीतिक लाभ उठाया जा सकता है।

आस्था गर्ग, बागपत रोड, मेरठ

नई दिल्ली