

Needed: Seamless internet

In times of need, access to internet should be widened to scotch rumours and fake news and not the other way round



NOT FOR PROFIT
NIVEDITA MOOKERJI

As another year comes to a close, wish lists are being drawn up in plenty all over the place for 2020. If there could be any pecking order for wish lists, my top choice would be a ban on internet shutdown, whether it's Delhi or Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh or Kerala. Even though the government motiva-

tion to stop internet is mostly driven by its desire to check violence or maybe public unrest by restricting social media, the outcome of an internet shutdown is catastrophic to put it mildly. As we saw in some parts of the country recently, including in NCR that houses a fairly large number of professionals working in India's capital city, no internet meant no cab booking on the mobile app, which has emerged as the most popular mode of travel for many however much you may hate Uber, Ola and the like. No internet also meant no food ordering on a click, even if Swiggy and Zomato are the only names one remembers while hungry, irrespective of the nature of meals they aggregate and deliver. Add to that the challenge of e-commerce and m-commerce. While home-grown traders must have rejoiced at the thought of Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart

losing business due to no internet, it's the consumer who lost out big time. With no internet, banking too was at a standstill for those who got used to transacting online. Digital payment was a casualty as well and cash was again the only go-to option. So many other services, which are supposed to ensure safety and convenience for the people of the country, went for a toss. It was then that it occurred in real sense what Kashmir might have been going through for months. Often cut off from the mainstream, Kashmir is like a different universe and its issues rather remote to most. The Internet shutdown, following the nationwide protests against the citizenship law, brought Kashmir and its problems closer home. Kashmir has been dealing with no internet and restricted phone connectivity for long, but it was a matter of intellectual debate only, till

recently. Not anymore. The government should think before shutting down internet as the country aspires to go up the rankings in World Bank's ease of doing business. India is still not in the top 50 club of countries. Blocking internet, for whatever reason, will not help the country in achieving its goals. With international press watching India-related developments closely, cutting off internet connection will only have an adverse impact on the future ease of doing business rankings. Besides, some of the flagship government schemes like Digital India and Start Up India would have no relevance left if internet continues to be treated like a state-run commodity, if not a "walled garden". The same goes for the government effort to reduce the use of cash. If demonetisation forced us to adopt non-cash methods, any further clampdown on Internet will move us away from digital payments. Since the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) promised red carpet for investors before it was elected to power in 2014, any going back on that promise might not be a good idea. Also, breaking the silence of the previous UPA govern-

ment, the Narendra Modi regime went on a social media high to reach out to the people of the country like never before. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has shown the way to exploit all possible digital platforms—Twitter to FaceBook, MyGov.in to the app named after him—to talk about the achievements of the government and to even crowd source for all major schemes and programmes. It's odd for such a big backer of all things digital to shut down Internet and block data that should be flowing free. India wants to be a \$5 trillion economy and as the PM himself said recently, it would mean a much higher degree of ease of living. Indeed, one thing should lead to the other. But the dream of \$5 trillion economy may remain a dream if curbs are imposed on internet and data. Data is the new oil, as many have authoritatively pointed out. If that is so, why should there be any restriction on data or internet at any time? To be able to belong to a first world club, the state machineries should not mess around with internet. In times of national contingency or for security, access to internet should widen to scotch rumours and "fake news" if at all, and not the other way round.

Cross-border love for Indian start-ups

Not just from the likes of Alibaba and Didi Chuxing, Indian start-ups saw a surge in Chinese funding from financial investors this year

T E NARASIMHAN

The year may not have been a great one for Indian industry, but start-ups saw a surge in funding from one particular country: China. The past year has seen large amounts of Chinese cash flow into Indian start-ups: Investments from China rose nearly 94 per cent to \$3,916 million, from \$2020 million last year, according to private equity database supplier Venture Intelligence. This is a sevenfold jump from \$459 million in 2016.

Chinese investors are pouring money into the country at a time when PE/VC investments from the US and Europe are slowing. US investors infused around \$9.18 billion in 2019 so far in 331 deals, as against a five-year high of \$10.52 billion in 320 deals in the entire year in 2018.

This funding surge is vastly different from what the country has seen before. Up until now, Chinese investment was made into Indian unicorns primarily by technology majors: Tencent and Didi Chuxing in Ola, and e-commerce giant Alibaba, along with its affiliate Ant Financial, in Zomato.

The flood of money this time round is coming from financial investors looking to diversify their portfolio or pick up stake in promising start-ups for long-term investment. Shunwei Capital, which has been established by the founder of Xiaomi, China Lodging Group and

China-Eurasia Economic Cooperation Fund and Baring Asia, among others, are among the new investors.

The most recent entrant is Ping An Global Voyager Fund, which has invested around \$250 million across Europe, China and Israel. Along with other investors Ping An invested \$70 million in Jaipur-based CarDekho, an autotech company, earlier this month. This is its first investment in India and the fund has lined up \$20-\$35 million more for the country.

What's interesting is that these investors are willing to look past the current economic slowdown. "The country is just far too significant a player to ignore on the basis of macroeconomic concerns or cultural differences," says Donald Lacey, COO & MD, Ping An Global Voyager.

"The Chinese investors perceive a tremendous amount of long-term opportunity, rooted in demographics, technology know-how, and a strong roster of high-quality entrepreneurs and new companies," he adds.

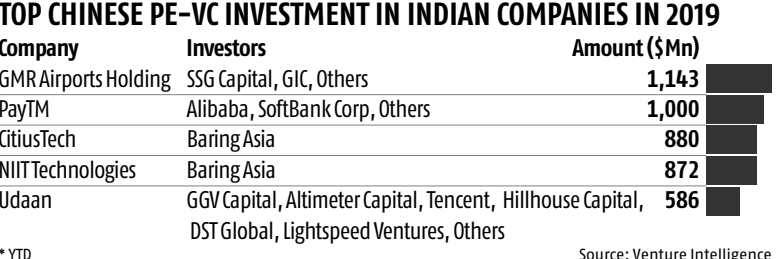
One can hear an echo of his words at Beijing-headquartered Fosun RZ Capital, an affiliate of Fosun Group, an active VC firm in India.

Tej Kapoor, managing director and head of Fosun RZ Capital India, says investors see India as the next China. The group, which has invested in online travel and hotel booking firm Ixigo, logistics firm Delhivery and online parenting network Mylo, among others, has made three investments in India in 2019.

The India opportunity also comes



Ping An invested \$70 million in Jaipur-based CarDekho earlier this month. This is its first investment in India



from the country being a land of big contrast. On the one side is its IT and pharmaceutical industry that have become global giants and, on the other, there are huge gaps in infrastructure, health and transportation.

"New enterprises are urgently needed to explore the Indian market and fill gaps. Due to the current lower valuations and greater potential of Indian Internet companies, the fund believes it is an excellent opportunity to enter the market right now," says Kapoor.

The adoption of tech and growth of tech companies in China have been massive. The Chinese investors see a way in replicating the same in India, given the gap. Many of these investors

are from Chinese corporations as against pure financial ones. "Massive amount of money is being invested by corporations, who get the expertise, technology, know-how and reach in foreign markets that give their portfolio companies a chance to grow and expand beyond their domestic borders," says Rajat Tandon, president, Indian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (IVCA). In terms of sectors, information technology will remain on the top of the agenda for Chinese investors in India. There have been quite a few tech and e-commerce investments and the sector will continue to attract more funding.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Matchmaking for cows



Owners of cows in Madhya Pradesh can now find perfect matches for them, thanks to the animal husbandry department, which has compiled a matchmaking database of some 200 bulls. The database, called 'sire directory', contains copious amount of information on the bulls. The information is divided into three parts. The first deals with the breed, parentage and age of the bulls. The second is about the milk production capacity of the mother and the fat percentage in the milk. The third details tests undertaken to ascertain diseases. The directory would be updated regularly and put online for better access.

New Year's gift



With a new government in place, Maharashtra has allowed hotels to remain open till 5 am during Christmas and the same rule would apply on New Year's Eve as well. Aditya Thackeray, son of chief minister, Uddhav Thackeray, had promised that hotels would remain open 24 hours and that would be the first step towards making Mumbai a global city.

BJP's CAA outreach

Following widespread anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests and the closing of ranks by the Opposition parties in the state, Uttar Pradesh's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has taken many fire-fighting measures, including an extensive outreach programme especially among the minorities and the rural people. State Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma has met prominent Muslim clerics in Lucknow to assure them that there was nothing against the community in the new Act. Next, party leaders plan to hit the streets to reach out to 5 million households in 100,000 villages across the state to clear misgivings on the issue. During the month-long drive, senior party leaders would also address the local media at the various district headquarters.

INSIGHT

Does IBC work for financial firms?

The economy might be better off with a dedicated legal regime for the resolution of financial service providers and financial market infrastructure



PRATIK DATTA & VARUN MARWAH

Dewan Housing Finance Company Ltd. (DHFL) has become the first financial service provider (FSP) to undergo resolution under the new framework for FSPs. Regulated FSPs, such as banks, insurance companies, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) etc. were initially kept outside the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC). It is evident from recent developments that the government has reconsidered this position. The IBC has been extended to NBFCs and housing finance companies (HFCs) with assets more than ₹500 crore. Against this backdrop, it is worthwhile to understand why FSPs are unique and what could possibly go wrong if their resolution happens under the IBC in its current form. Various FSPs constitute the financial system. This financial system helps channel capital from savers to entrepreneurs for productive use. The failure of certain FSPs could reduce the aggregate capital available for productive use by entrepreneurs in an economy, seriously impairing economic growth. A problem of such magnitude is unlikely to arise due to

the failure of any real sector company. This is a fundamental difference between FSPs and other real sector companies. FSPs are of three broad types. First, some FSPs such as banks use their balance sheet to engage in liquidity transformation, maturity transformation and credit transformation. Similarly, FSPs such as insurance companies use their balance sheet to engage in risk transformation. These unique features make the business model of such FSPs extremely fragile. Moreover, such FSPs are usually highly interconnected with other such FSPs through their assets and liabilities. Insolvency of one might trigger a contagion across the financial system, jeopardising efficient allocation of capital across the economy. Evidently, these FSPs raise unique issues in insolvency. Second, certain FSPs are only service providers, such as the financial market infrastructure (FMIs). They may also face counter-party default risks. These risks are magnified if the pre-funded financial resources or liquidity arrangements to deal with default-related shortfalls prove insufficient. They also face operational risks. Materialisation of such risks could be devastating for systemically important FMIs. These may raise special concerns in insolvency. Third, some FSPs are pass-through entities such as mutual funds, brokers, pension funds etc. These FSPs pass investment risk through to their end-investors. Moreover, their client accounts are usually segregated from their proprietary account. Usually, they are not exposed to the balance-sheet risks discussed above. Only operational risks could push them into insolvency. Therefore, these FSPs usually do not raise any unique issue dur-



ing insolvency. A corporate insolvency law like IBC is ill-suited for FSPs of the first two categories. IBC is designed for value maximisation, not to promote financial stability. A judicially supervised public marketing process for an insolvent business may facilitate price discovery, maximising its value. However, such an elaborate process may be counter-productive to financial stability in the case of these FSPs, especially for systemically important financial institutions (SIFIs). Instead, a swifter resolution through a less transparent mechanism may be desirable. For instance, bank resolutions are typically executed by a regulator over a weekend. Moreover, a collective resolution process driven by a committee of creditors (CoC) is unsuitable for these FSPs. For instance, in the case of NBFCs, it is likely that the CoC would comprise of banks and other NBFCs that may often be competitors to the insolvent NBFC, creating perverse incentives at the time of voting. Also,

coordination costs for retail depositors or insurance policyholders may be extremely high. Moreover, such creditors would be motivated by their immediate considerations and may not be concerned about financial stability. Therefore, the creditor-in-control regime under IBC is not designed to address financial stability concerns that arise during insolvency of these FSPs. Finally, under the IBC regime, resolution can be triggered only after a default. This arrangement may be fine for real sector companies. But for these FSPs, it may be useful to take corrective measures before they default. A default or even its mere possibility could cause a run on the FSPs with extremely short-term liabilities, which may put financial stability at risk. The special treatment needed for FSPs has been acknowledged by Indian policy-makers in the past. The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill was introduced in Parliament in 2017 but was withdrawn. The FRDI Bill had proposed the creation of a separate resolution authority, which steps in at advanced stages of stress. The resolution authority was designed to swiftly and efficiently resolve the distressed FSP, and protect the interests of unsophisticated consumers. Policy-makers should consider reviving the FRDI Bill. In the long run, the Indian economy may be better off with a dedicated legal regime for the resolution of balance sheet-based FSPs and FMIs. (The authors are grateful to Sudarshan Sen & Prashant Saran)

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LETTERS

Playing with numbers

This refers to "Addressing the great slowdown" (December 24). While the don'ts prescription looks laudable, in the dos list, the authors seem to be extra cautious and relied only on conventional first-aid remedies like putting bad loans in isolation wards (two 'bad' banks are suggested) and providing incentives to participants. The reluctance of economists and media analysts to even consider options like levying agriculture income tax, exploiting the possibility of mainstreaming the idle unaccounted for domestic gold stock (estimated at 24,000 tonnes or upwards) and forcing the rich who have lakhs of crores stashed in foreign banks to come clean by paying taxes and legitimising their assets abroad is intriguing.

MG Warrier Mumbai

Hidden purpose

This refers to the "Peacenick Mayawati" (December 24). Given the track record of her political career, otherwise overambitious Mayawati is apparently ambivalent about the Citizenship Amendment Act not because of her respect for constitutional values but because of her undisclosed long-term political interests. Her double-track politics only reflects her opportunism. It is an open secret that in the last Assembly elections in UP, Mayawati's refusal to have the Congress party on board in her alliance with the Samajwadi Party had benefitted the BJP electorally. As a result, it is now widely believed that

her contrarian agenda in the opposition parties' moves against the BJP-led NDA government is meant to bait it out of a difficult situation. In return, this government will respond to her underhand gesture by holding its investigating and agencies back from harassing her.

Tarsem Singh Hoshiarpur

Insensitive action

It is a matter of shame that a 24-year old German student pursuing his post-graduation at IIT Madras was summarily asked to leave the country by the Immigration Bureau officials for having committed the sin of participating in protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. It is ironical that a German student should have been subjected to such a harsh treatment. After all, the IIT-M owes its existence to technical and financial assistance from the former government of West Germany the largest educational project sponsored by West Germany outside their country. The student's act, in no way, had the potential of even remotely causing any prejudice to our national interest. Yet, if indeed there was a violation of visa conditions, his apology should have been gracefully accepted and he should have been let-off with a warning.

SK Choudhury Bengaluru

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HAMBONE



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Depoliticise power

Power sector's structural problems are revealed again

When the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) was rolled out by the government in 2015 to revive the power sector, many observers pointed out that it was merely pushing the problems down the road, rather than providing an effective solution. This had been done twice before when power distribution companies (discoms) had been bailed out and then found themselves back in trouble. As predicted, UDAY's benefits have ceased to operate, and the power sector is once again in trouble. Although the UDAY scheme had moved discom debts to the states' balance sheets, it had not done enough to address the fundamental imbalance between the cost (average cost of supply, or ACS) and the sale price (average realisable revenue) of power in many states. Thus, discoms are once again weighed down by losses (in FY19, the figure has nearly doubled from the previous year) and are struggling to buy power in the open market or meet their obligations. Discoms were also given the goal of reducing their transmission and distribution losses to 15 per cent by 2018-19, but failed to meet the target.

The problem with the UDAY scheme was that it relied on compliance by discoms and state governments even though it had become amply clear over the years that such compliance was not in their interest. The incentives built into the scheme for the utilities to address their funding gap were simply not structured well enough — and, as a consequence, discoms were more willing to miss payments to generation companies than to address their own structural problems. The problems then ripple upstream to generation companies that find themselves short of their planned revenue, and then miss interest payments. This has led most recently to a crisis in India's renewable energy sector — solar and wind power companies are owed around ₹70,000 crore by discoms. Attempts are being made to address this problem directly. Mandates to pay in advance have not worked, so suggestions are being made regarding escrow mechanisms. But, again, this does not necessarily fix the structural problems in the sector, which will undoubtedly recur.

There were certain basic principles that underlay the planning of the Electricity Act, 2003, and these principles should be revisited and operationalised. First, constraints on open access should be revisited. Currently, discoms are unhappy that some large consumers switch from their tariffs to the open power market depending upon relative prices. This issue can be easily addressed by enforcing time limits on open access choices. But all state utilities should then ensure that wheeling and other charges are within reasonable limits. Second, the issue of stranded assets in power, including high-cost legacy thermal power purchase agreements, should be addressed centrally. If recent technological changes have rendered past power purchase agreements unprofitable, then rather than states being burdened or unilaterally reneging on contracts, a consistent and transparent mechanism for renegotiation or buyouts should be adopted. And, finally, the promise of depoliticising tariffs should be actually operationalised. State electricity regulators have effectively been captured by politicians, and tariff choices are too often determined by political requirements rather than technical and economic constraints. The method of selection of such regulators, currently dominated by government nominees, will have to be changed.

Half-baked idea

Distributing livestock products through PDS is impractical

The proposal to subsidise protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, chicken and eggs for supply through the public distribution system (PDS) being considered by the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, seems outright utopian. No doubt, the need to promote the intake of protein-rich food cannot be disputed as four out of every 10 children in India are undernourished. But disbursal of highly perishable stuff through the vast PDS network for this purpose seems imprudent. These food items require constant refrigeration, which cannot be ensured in over 500,000 ration shops, spread across the country, including the areas where power supply is erratic. Equipping all these fair price shops with the special paraphernalia and infrastructure needed to dispense non-vegetarian items is logistically unmanageable and financially burdensome. Any compromise on food quality is bound to cause health hazards, defeating the very purpose of this move. The food subsidy, which already exceeds ₹1.84 trillion (Budget 2019-20), would have to be scaled up massively to bring these high-priced foods within the economic reach of the poor. What is worse, even if the government manages to muster the needed resources, the desired objective of eradicating malnourishment may still not be fully served because a sizable section of the population is compulsively vegan who may not eat livestock products even if given free.

However, there is no dearth of nutritious, yet cost-effective and easy-to-handle, alternatives to the livestock products for distribution through the PDS. Pulses and millets stand out among these. Leguminous grains, grown widely in the country, can potentially wipe out protein deficiency if these can be brought within the economic reach of the poor. Their production needs to be stepped up to generate surplus for supplying through the PDS. The extent of subsidy required for pulses would be only a fraction of what is needed for the livestock products. Millets, now rechristened as nutri-cereals, are the other strong contenders for a place in the PDS on the merit of their nutritional value. These small-seeded cereals, including pearl millet (*bajra*), sorghum (*jowar*), finger millet (*ragi*) and others, are the storehouses of nutrients, especially the micro-nutrients, which fine grains such as rice and wheat lack. These have, in fact, been a regular part of people's diet prior to the availability of subsidised fine grains. Their health benefits have recently been revalidated through a millet-feeding study on school children in Karnataka. Conducted by the Hyderabad-based International Crops Research Institute for Semi-arid Tropics and a non-governmental organisation, Akshaya Patra, this study has indicated that replacement of rice with millets in the mid-day meals improved children's growth by 50 per cent.

The popularity of millets as health foods is growing rapidly the world over. The Indian government, too, is not unaware of their nutritional worth. In fact, it had declared 2018 as the year of the millets. The minimum support prices of millet crops, too, were increased substantially to incentivise production. But the next logical step of lending the needed marketing support through procurement and dispensing them through the PDS is still awaited. It would be far better for the NITI Aayog to concentrate on promoting nutrient-dense products like pulses and millets to alleviate rampant malnutrition rather than brooding over ways and means of distributing livestock products through the PDS.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



Is IBC in ICU?

Senior judges need briefings on economy-wide consequences of their decisions

The overall Indian economic picture has been gloomy for the past several quarters. Discussions on whether the downturn in growth is cyclical or structural distracts attention from specific issues. Abstracting from wider concerns this article focusses on the need to raise long-term lending from current levels to get economic growth back on track. Public sector banks (PSBs) continue to be hesitant about providing project funding or even extending short-term credit to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) "Report on Trend & Progress of Banking in India 2018-19" dated December 24, 2019 mentions that "although the time limit for resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has been recently extended to 330 days, some cases are delayed beyond the limit partly reflecting repeated litigations". According to the same RBI report "faster resolution of stressed assets remains key to the revival of the banking system" and credit growth for PSBs has been "well below that for private banks in the last few years". Further, according to this RBI report, the gross stock of non-performing assets for PSBs, as of end September 2019, was about 12 per cent of total advances. This number needs to be well below 10 per cent for PSBs to raise long-term lending levels. For better oversight India should have just two well capitalised PSBs. However, that discussion can be left for another day.

The central government has made reassuring noises that the IBC is working well. However, the current cautious posture of PSBs indicates that there are continuing concerns about credit risk and ex-post indictment of bank managers by government's investigative agencies. In most cases of financial sector fraud it is difficult to prove

guilt. Consequently, as investigations about criminality continue, the practical course of action is for assets to be retained as going concerns to not only keep employees on the rolls but also to attract alternative investors.

Several promoters after overstating their borrowing needs, complicate resolution processes through never-ending legal challenges. They object to appointments of resolution professionals (RPs) on grounds of insufficient qualifications or bias and seek to create differences among members of the committees of creditors (CoCs). If these stratagems fail, sponsor-borrowers file for relief with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) and finally the Supreme Court.

The Essar Steel debt default case should be taught at Indian law and business schools. In this instance creditors accepted the Arcelor-Mittal bid of about ₹42,000 crore for Essar Steel and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved this change in ownership in March 2019. Essar appealed against the NCLT decision that 90 per cent out of Arcelor's offer would go to financial creditors with the NCLAT. The NCLAT ruled that secured financial creditors should be treated on a par with operational creditors thus restricting what was to be repaid to financial creditors to 65 per cent of the ₹42,000 crore. In a significant November 14 judgment, the Supreme Court reversed the NCLAT ruling and stipulated that lenders can decide on the distribution of assets in insolvency cases. This Supreme Court decision has finally cleared the way for Arcelor-Mittal to acquire Essar Steel and rescued the IBC from "Intensive Care".

Each case of default is different in terms of the complexities involved. Erstwhile promoters try to complicate matters to prevent sale of their assets



JAAMANI BHAGWATI

The rise of sub-nationalism

The fracas over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) offers more compelling evidence of this regime's tin ear for the infinite variety that is Indian multiculturalism. That the Modi-Shah grand plan for a Muslim-*mukt* nation has boomeranged is, however, only part of the story. A closer look at the anti-CAA/NRC protest suggests they were far from monolithic and have given impetus to dormant sub-nationalisms with risky consequences for India.

In mainland India, the protests converged on the anti-Muslim element embedded in the law and the registration exercise. In Jharkhand, with its 27 per cent tribal population, voters have signalled their dissatisfaction with the NRC process with the impossibly high bar for proof of citizenship it has set. In the north-east, the principle grievance is the prospect of distinctive ethnicity being swamped by Bengali Hindus via the CAA/NRC process (assuming the NRC process ejects Bengali Muslims). The last is particularly ironic since the Bill that was defeated in January was tweaked to accommodate the concerns of these states in the latest version. Accordingly, tribal areas in the north-east were largely roped off from the provisions of the new law.

The fact that different groups have different problems with the CAA/NRC also contain the possibilities of Indians turning against Indians in the not-so-distant future. In the north-east, Bengalis, whether Hindu or Muslim, who have been rooted in the north-east for aeons, face the very real danger of becoming targets of ethnic aggression all over again — in Assam, the threats have restarted. The warning shot across the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) bow, in fact, came from Sikkimese footballer-turned-politician Bhaichung Bhutia who feared a cultural swamping of his state — which was muscled into the Indian

Union by Indira Gandhi in 1975. Everybody is tactfully pointing to Bangladeshi infiltration as the Fear Factor, but when linguistic cultures supersede borders, the stage is set for ethnic violence. The BJP has long made it clear that all pro-Muslims can go to Pakistan. Now, the demand that all Bengalis should go to Bangladesh is no less possible.

This worrying thing about this nascent sub-nationalism is that it is likely to intensify if economic growth does not pick up and job opportunities narrow. Mr Modi does not need to delve into the mists of history for evidence — only as far as the year of the global financial crisis.

Thus in 2008, the country was witness to the unedifying spectacle of panicked Indian citizens from UP and Bihar fleeing India's financial capital after being set upon by Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) goons who demanded that the state only employ Maharashtrians.

In 2012, when the Indian economy started stalling, we beheld thousands of Indian citizens from

the north-east fleeing the city that the media so erroneously describes as India's Silicon Valley after threats of annihilation circulated on social media.

In May this year, viral videos showed local political thugs attack vendors because they were from Kashmir and were, by some twisted logic, terrorists. Now we have that state shorn of its special status so that mainland Indians can buy land there and, according to some crudely sexist politicians, marry Kashmiri women. This grand integration strategy has resulted in the region, now two Union Territories, being under lock-down since August 5, its leaders under house arrest and internet access lifted only intermittently. A high-profile investor summit scheduled in Srinagar in October was postponed and then finally held in New Delhi.



SWOT

KANIKA DATTA

Decoding Digital India



BOOK REVIEW

SAI MANISH

At a time when India's demographic dividend dream seems to be in tatters; with high unemployment, falling economic growth and social unrest becoming the hallmark of the India story; a book on how an algorithm and not a human is making a robot that will make a robot make another robot might look like the end of the road for India's young, restless and unemployed population. Pranjal Sharma's book *India Automated—How the Fourth Industrial Revolution is Transforming India* chronicles how technology is reshaping not just

landscapes but also the country's mindscape. It delves into technological transformation unfolding in India before everyone's eyes; the intricacies of which everyone sees but does not understand.

The book uncritically and patronisingly captures how technology, mechatronics, robotics, artificial intelligence and everything that comprises what World Economic Forum founder Klaus Schwab described as the "fourth industrial revolution." Mr Sharma succinctly describes how over the last few years, new technology has penetrated every facet of life in India — from government functioning, industry, service sector and defence. There are anecdotes about the positive impact of invasive technologies on governance and social well-being. For instance, Mr Sharma illustrates how facial recognition, which is still in its infancy in terms of sophistication and accuracy in India, has helped the Delhi police track down 3,000

missing children. He sounds a warning about the adverse consequences without delving into how a database of faces could be potentially misused as a tool for surveillance as it is being done in China.

Mr Sharma notes, "Facial recognition is yet another technology that could have terrible consequences if it goes rogue, but a boon if used responsibly. In the end, the government will have to take a responsible approach to a technology that can improve a range of citizen services."

The book offers useful insights into the companies that are shaping these technological changes in India, be it in the

field of manufacturing, services, healthcare or human resources. In particular, there is a rich description of companies in the manufacturing sector that are using and deploying technologies that are revolutionising their manufacturing processes, improving product quality, saving costs and creating a 'smarter' factory. An interesting

example is how Altizon, the world's first industrial internet platform company, helped a legacy Indian multinational integrate its production lines across several countries without investing more money in

replacing old machinery or buying new ones. In effect, Altizon's solution helped the Indian multinational centralise the operation of its machines at 35 factories spread across the globe through a system

that not just gave a single point of control but also helped engineers predict when a machine needed downtime or was headed for maintenance. Earlier, it would need an engineer with a spanner and other tools in hand to individually inspect a machine and take a decision based on his own expertise and understanding of the situation.

Mr Sharma has interesting, although potentially scary insights, for job seekers and how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be judging their employability in the times to come. It is estimated that 62 per cent of enterprises used some form of AI in their human resource departments. It provides a fascinating insight into how Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's biggest IT company employs AI for recruitment. Mr Sharma writes that any potential candidate has to go through two levels of AI screening before she finally faces the human interviewer. It is AI which sifts through hundreds of resumes before zeroing on the ones which will pass through to the next stage. Those selected are again put through an AI-driven video interview process. The book notes,

"Experts now offer several tips for candidates who have to face an AI-based interview. For instance, they must ensure a good internet connection, settle in a noiseless area and make sure they are as well dressed for the interview as they would have been if there was a meeting with a human recruiter. Remember though, it will no longer be easy to smooth talk your way into a job, for the AI-bot will see through you faster than a human can."

And just in case the reader thought that the book was all about companies and businesses, Mr Sharma also provides insights into how digital content companies minutely analyse a person's behaviour to serve them tailor-made content. Mr Sharma offers Netflix as a case in point. The online content streaming giant stores every action taken by a user on a computer while browsing through its website. The AI analyses this behaviour and makes a personalised home-page for every viewer. In effect, an invisible force has created a psychological profile of the viewer — and is showing her what it believes she is most likely to see. Bigger brother cometh?

Govt is responsible for the suspicion over NPR

CAA rules & home ministry reports are clear that NPR is the 1st step towards NRC; so govt denying any link not convincing

IT IS ENTIRELY possible, as the government argued after the Cabinet cleared the proposal to go ahead with the National Population Register (NPR) on Tuesday, that the NPR is the same thing the UPA had started when it was in power, that there was no proof of citizenship being asked for—that is what the National Register of Citizens, NRC, would do—and what the Cabinet had cleared was just the collection of routine data from those normally resident in an area; indeed, no one was going to be forced to give any documents to prove what they told those conducting the NPR census. Since the results of the exercise were, in fact, going to be used for various government welfare schemes, the NPR exercise has been clubbed with the 2021 Census.

If there was an air of suspicion, a belief that NPR was just a precursor to NRC, even after two senior ministers gave strenuous clarifications at the post-Cabinet media briefing, the government has only itself to blame. For one, the Cabinet clearance came even as the countrywide agitation over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)—and its link with the NRC—was going on. So, the argument went that, with the countrywide agitations forcing the government to say that there was no plan to go ahead with the NRC, it decided to go ahead with the NPR, which was nothing but a step towards the NRC; since the prime minister had said there was no discussion on NRC despite the home minister repeatedly saying NRC would follow the CAA, this added to the suspicion over the government’s intent.

And, though the government said, after the Cabinet clearance, that there was no connection whatsoever between NPR and NRC, there is enough evidence to show this isn’t quite correct. Apart from various statements on the connection between the two by various NDA ministers in Parliament over the years, even the rules of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003 talk of a ‘population register’ (the NPR) and how citizenship can be struck down during the verification process; the rules talk of the power to ask people to furnish any information in connection with the determination of citizenship, and clearly mention the National Register of Indian Citizens. So do most annual reports of the ministry of home affairs, regardless of whether the UPA or the NDA was in power. The 2014-15 one—NDA era—says that “as a first step towards creation of a National Register of Indian Citizens the government has decided to create a National Population Register”. Even the 2008-09 report—of the UPA era—says “after the NPR is so made ready, it would be possible to create National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) independently as a subset of NPR”.

The UPA did not go ahead with the NRIC even as it pushed the NPR, possibly because, as the home ministry’s 2005-06 annual report put it, “verification of the citizenship of each individual... is extremely cumbersome as the document base for proving citizenship is not readily available in the rural areas”. No one can doubt India needs to identify its illegal immigrants, especially since this has important security ramifications, but if the exercise results in genuine citizens in either rural areas or the poor—and less literate—also finding it difficult to prove citizenship, the NDA needs to think very carefully before taking the next step after NPR. And, since the CAA has made it clear that Hindu/Buddhist/Christian/Sikh/Jain illegal immigrants will find it easier to get citizenship, it is only natural that Muslims will be worried about being singled out. Instead of issuing bland denials, and then springing a nasty surprise on the nation, the BJP would be well-advised to come up with solutions to the problem of proving citizenship, or promise that the NRC is not going to be implemented.

Evaluating GST correctly

Sluggish collections also due to rate cuts and poor GDP

THE OCTOBER GST collections were encouraging, having risen 6% year-on-year (y-o-y) to ₹1.03 lakh crore, albeit on a soft base and in a very festive month; collections in August-September were very weak, and fell 4% y-o-y. On a cash-accounting basis, October GST collections are estimated at just ₹95,000 crore, implying an FY20 run-rate, so far, of around ₹90,100 crore. That, then, pushes up the asking rate for the rest of FY20 to ₹1.4 lakh crore per month. At the current run rate, there could be a shortfall of ₹52,000 crore in CGST + IGST, and ₹1.2 lakh crore in SGST collections.

It is clearly crunch time. Not only is government staring at a shortfall in GST and direct tax collections, the compensation cess deficit in 2019-20 could be, by one estimate, as high as ₹63,200 crore. The monthly run-rate for cess collections—used to ensure state-government revenues continue to rise by 14% a year—is currently around ₹43,300 crore while the required rate is ₹55,900 crore. That is worrying because it means the states may not have enough to spend at a time when they need to. Even otherwise, the slow nominal rate of GDP growth—just 6.1% y-o-y in Q2FY20—would hurt tax buoyancy.

Given this, it is natural to ask for a hike in GST rates and/or a reduction in the exempted goods and services. But, as ex-CEA Arvind Subramanian argues, the poor performance has to be seen in the context of a rapidly slowing economy. For April-October 2019, the total collections—including CGST, IGST, SGST, and compensation cess—were ₹7.02 lakh crore, and grew 3.4% year-on-year. That isn’t so bad given GDP growth has decelerated for six consecutive quarters and the 4.5% in Q2FY20 is a six-year low. Indeed, the government had budgeted for an 11% nominal GDP growth in FY20, but as of now, it would seem the final number will be closer to 6-7%. Keep in mind that corporate taxes grew 0.8% in April-October, and personal income taxes at just 6.7%.

Also, it must be appreciated that the levies themselves have been reduced across almost 500 goods and services; in two-and-a-half years and across 19 meetings, GST rates have been tweaked some three dozen times. The weighted average effective GST rate has fallen from 14.4% in July 2017 to 11.6% in September. So, while the collections seem below expectations, raising rates or cutting exemptions is probably not a good idea when consumption demand is so weak. The rates can always be revisited a year or two down the line, after growth stabilises and starts ticking up. Having one rate may not be politically feasible, but certainly the five slabs can be pared to three first, and maybe to two later.

MentalBLOCK

India needs more awareness campaigns and better infrastructure to counter mental health disorders

LANCET PSYCHIATRY study finds that, as of 2017, over 197 million—or one in seven—people in India suffered from a mental health disorder, a sharp increase from the 150 million reported in the 2016 National Mental Health Survey. At 4.7% in 2017 the contribution of mental disorders to India’s disease burden, measured in terms of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) is double the 2.5% in 1990, making mental disorders the second largest contributor (14.5%) to years lived with disability (YLDs). A majority (91 million) suffer from depressive and anxiety disorders. Even more worryingly, the study found a positive association between socio-economic indicators such as per-capita income and mean education and the prevalence of adult-onset depression and anxiety.

Precious little, however, is being done to equip the country’s healthcare infrastructure to cope with this burden. The study finds that there are two mental health professionals and 0.3 psychiatrists for every 100,000 of the population—while the latter number, by some estimates, is 0.75, even that is abysmally short of the global average of four. The revised Mental Health Act, 2017, mandated that mental disorders be covered under health insurance schemes, but only 19 states have formed a board in compliance with the regulations. Moreover, high treatment gap for mental disorders, poor evidence-based treatment, and gender-differentials in treatment remain. Given the impact of mental illness on the quality of life and the high economic cost of an increasing mental health burden—the World Health Organization estimates India’s losses due to mental health conditions between 2012 and 2030 at over \$1 tn—there is a desperate need to spread awareness and strengthen the healthcare infrastructure.

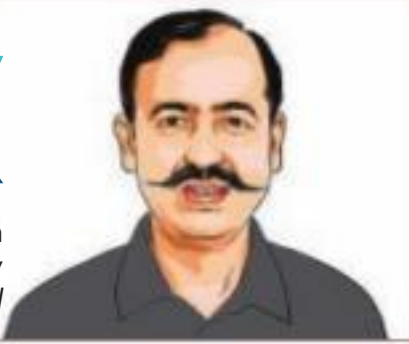
GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

EFFECTING A REFORM AS BIG AS THE GST REQUIRES ONE TO BE PATIENT. STAKEHOLDERS MUST HAVE A GIVE AND TAKE APPROACH, AND REALISE THAT THERE IS ALWAYS A BETTER WAY OF DOING THINGS

Compensating for the growth slowdown

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Views are personal



be funded by a GST compensation cess (GSTCC) levied on certain commodities (e.g., tobacco products, motor vehicles, etc). The intent was to create a GST compensation fund that would fund the estimated revenue loss for the first five years of GST, i.e., July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2022.

How did it work in 2017-18 and 2018-19?

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated in the Rajya Sabha on December 12, that in 2017-18, the total cess collected was ₹62,596 crore, of which ₹41,146 crore was released to the states. The remaining ₹15,000 crore was accumulated in the cess fund. In the next year, ₹95,081 crore was collected and ₹69,275 crore released to states, but “cess accumulated in the fund was zero”. How the cess accumulation in 2018-19 became zero is not clear.

According to an August 30, 2018, amendment “fifty per cent of such amount, as may be recommended by the Council, which remains unutilised in the Fund, at any point of time in any financial year during the transition period shall be transferred to the Consolidated Fund of India as the share of Centre, and the balance fifty per cent shall be distributed amongst the States.”

The same amendment also provides that in years of the shortfall, 50% of the surplus amounts taken from the GSTCC account by the Centre and states would be returned. For example, if surplus taken in 2018-19 by Centre and states was ₹100 crore each, they would return ₹50 crore to the GSTCC account.

Why should cess surplus in any year not be fully adjusted against subsequent deficits in the GSTCC account?

The states’ GST shortfall was also funded by a special coal cess, renamed as ‘GST compensation cess’. Cess amount is substantial and increases India’s energy costs. It is subsumed under GSTCC and accounted there.

Next, is the issue of 14% revenue protection.

Can the states highlight, on what basis the revenue was calculated in the base year of 2015-16? According to a National Institute of Public Finance and Policy Working Paper by Sachidananda Mukherjee, “In the pre-GST regime it was not possible to separate revenue on account of VAT, CST and entry tax into two baskets—items under GST and out-of-GST items. Second, GST subsumes various taxes and cesses, which were earlier used to be collected by local governments/authorities. In the absence of information on state-wise revenue collection from these taxes and cesses, it will be difficult to estimate the revenue under protection for States”.

Mukherjee’s paper shares state-wise growth rate in VAT, entry tax, and central sales tax (CST) for 2012-2016 and 2015-16.

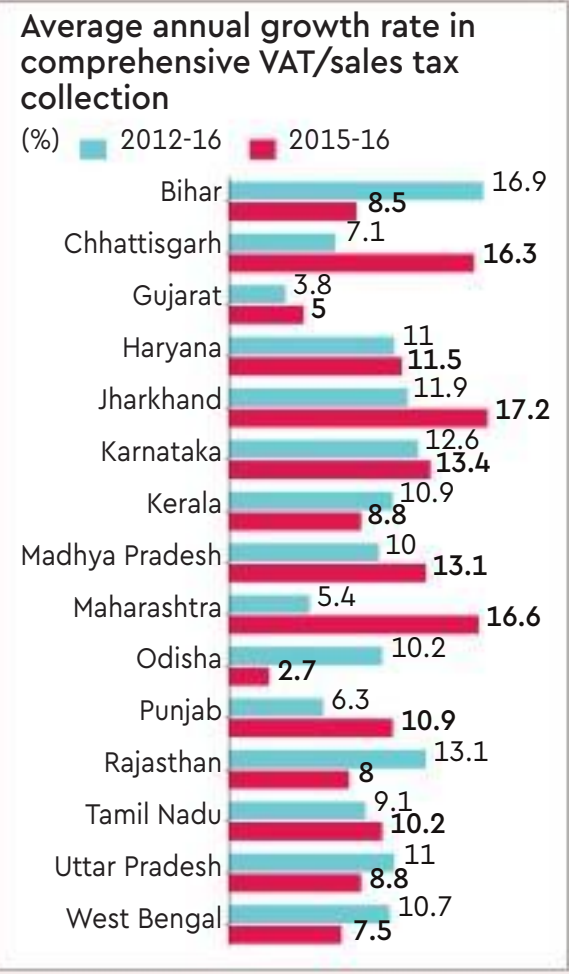
During 2012-2016, Bihar, and in 2015-16, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra had growth rates over 14%. To be fair to states, the above excludes taxes collected by local government and authorities. However, the accompanying graphic indicates a trend.

Can the GST Council be transparent, put numbers in the public domain, so there is an informed and healthy debate?

Another interesting point Mukherjee made is, “The benefits of 14% assured growth in revenue collection under GST will differ across states. States like Gujarat and Punjab have had low rates of growth and the assurance of 14% would imply augmentation of revenue while states like Bihar might not get the same deal”.

So, should the 14% assured increase in revenues be related to the actual growth in state-wise revenues? This becomes an incentive for states to improve tax efficiency.

Next, is the central government bound by law to pay a 14% assured increase to states even if cess collections are inadequate?



Beyond the compensation mess

States are right in pushing the Centre to pay their dues on a timely basis, but they would also need to look at other measures to increase tax revenue

BIPIN SAPRA

Tax partner, EY
Views are personal



THE LAST COUPLE of months have seen much debate between the Centre and the states, wherein the states, especially the opposition-ruled ones, have been complaining about the non-release of compensation cess by the Centre. It is crucial to understand what exactly the compensation cess is.

Compensation cess was introduced as a relief for the loss of revenue states would incur due to the implementation of GST. Since the states have given up their powers to collect certain taxes on goods and services, they were guaranteed a 14% tax revenue growth in the first five years after GST implementation. The compensation cess was to be provided to states till July 1, 2022. States’ tax revenue as of FY16 was taken as the base year to calculate this 14% growth. Any shortfall was supposed to be compensated by the Centre, using funds specifically collected as compensation cess.

Under GST law, compensation cess is levied over the 28% GST on luxury cars, and demerit goods like aerated drinks and tobacco. Further, the compensation cess is not payable by exporters and those who have opted for compensation levy. States are required to be compensated bi-monthly from the accumulated funds in this account.

During these past months, there has been a hue and cry by various states—Delhi, Punjab, Kerala, and West Bengal, to name a few—regarding the release of compensation cess for the months beginning August, 2019. In the first year of GST implementation, FY18, the compensation cess collection was ₹62,596

crore, out of which ₹41,146 crore was paid to the states. The remaining value was accumulated. In the subsequent year, collection from compensation cess was ₹95,081 crore, and ₹69,275 crore was released to states.

In the current fiscal, the government has already collected cess of ₹55,467 crore till October 31, 2019, just 1.5% more than what was collected in the same period last year. In fact, just two days before the GST Council meeting on December 18, the Centre had released ₹35,298 crore to the states and union territories. FM Nirmala Sitharaman has assured that the Centre will not back out on its promise of GST compensations. The delays in passing on the money to the states are due to slippage in collections under GST.

Given that the states have a constitutional right to the compensation, they tend to be complacent in trying to collect GST revenue. The states should support the Centre in the implementation of GST to curb tax evasion. This will ensure that the government’s tax revenues—and, therefore, automatically that of the states—go up. For example, the decision, taken in the recent GST council meeting, to block the e-way bill facility on non-filing of two consecutive GSTR-1 returns should definitely go a long way in increasing tax compliance. Similarly, a standard operating procedure, with regard to action to be taken on non-filing of GSTR-3B (monthly tax return), will be issued for tax officers. States need to ensure that state tax officers implement such measures diligently, so that the tax

revenue collections of both the central and state governments increase.

In addition, states also need to look at other measures to increase tax revenue in their respective territories. Besides the effective implementation of the recent proposals of the GST council meeting, states should support the Centre on other critical proposals such as e-invoicing to curb the fraudulent availing of input tax credit. Also, states should take a cue from the Centre and introduce amnesty schemes under VAT/Entry tax, so that any blocked revenues that are under litigation would also flow into their coffers. These measures will also help the states reduce dependency on the Centre.

The recent GST council meeting saw certain interesting suggestions given by the states to the Centre to ensure timely release of funds to the former. One of these, was that the Centre should give a share of cesses and surcharges, including the super-rich tax levied on people earning over ₹2 crore a year to the states. While states already get a 42% share in the Centre’s tax revenue, they do not get a share of the surcharges and cesses levied for specific purposes. While all these concerns voiced by the states are valid, it is only a matter of time, i.e., till July 1, 2022, before the states will need to stand on their own feet to meet their tax revenues.

To conclude, while the states are right in pushing the Centre to pay their dues on a timely basis, they would also need to look at other measures to increase tax revenue.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On UP protests

BJP ruled Uttar Pradesh had witnessed large scale violence resulting in the death of 24 civilians mostly due to bullet injuries from firearms is saddening. Rather than responding to the legitimate questions being raised from different quarters, chief minister of the state Adityanath had set the template for his state police to use excessive force against protestors with his controversial comment. The much admired argumentativeness of our democracy appears to have been at stake in BJP ruled states like UP with rulers riding a rough shod over the constitutionally guaranteed right of citizens to assemble and protest peacefully. It is time the UP government shed its adversarial strategy towards protestors and order an impartial probe in to the charges of alleged police brutality. — M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

On student violence

The attack on the convoy of Karnataka CM BB Yediyurappa in Kannur by activists of the Student Federation of India and Democratic Youth Federation of India is deplorable. The protesters took the cops by surprise as they blocked the chief minister’s car and attacked it with sticks and bricks. A group of Youth Congress workers and the Kerala Students Union (KSU) also held a separate protest. The outfits were infuriated over the incidents in Mangaluru recently during the anti CAA protest. The Kerala government must be held culpable for this unsavory episode. — NJ Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

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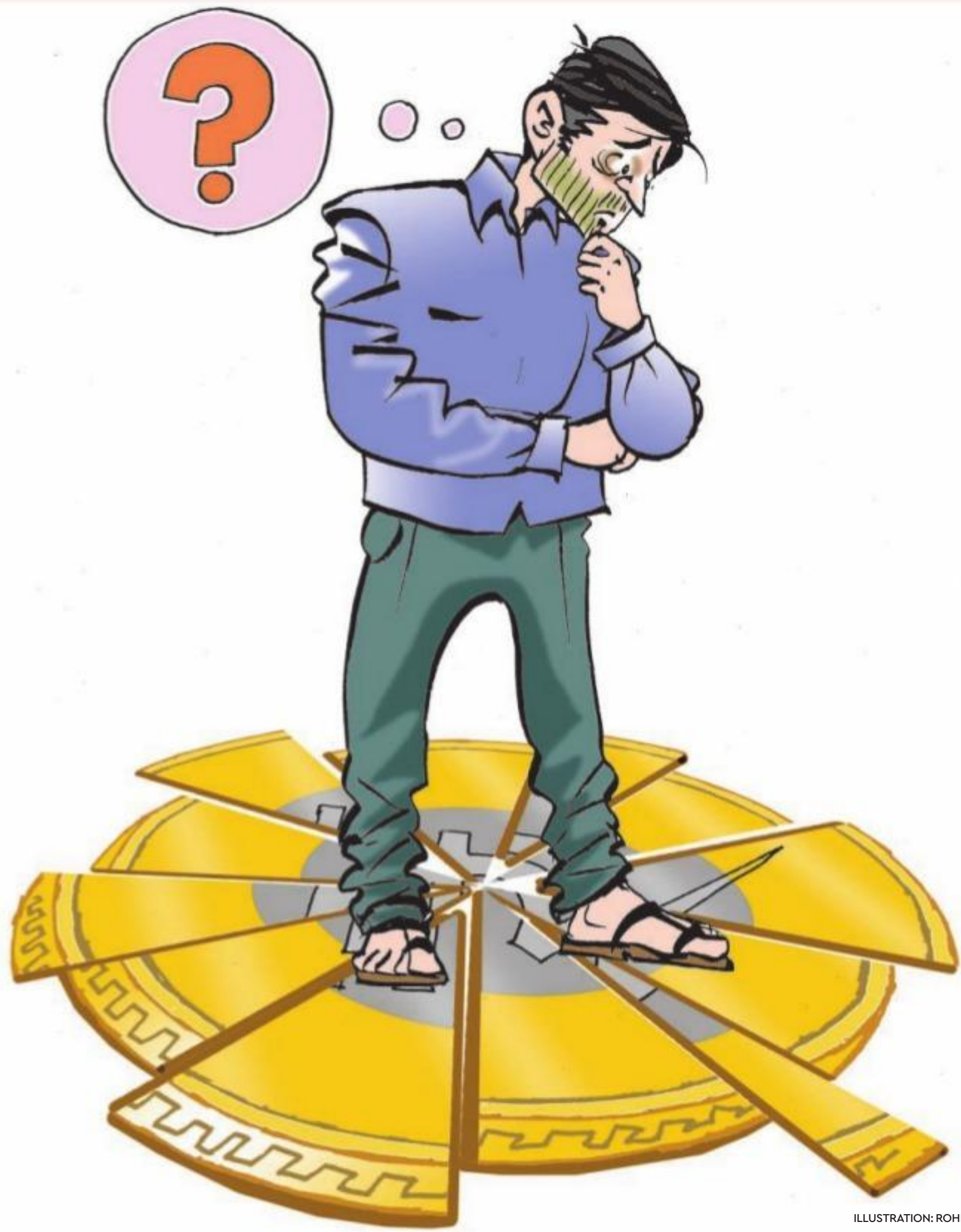


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

S CHANDRASEKHAR

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INDIAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Getting the numbers right

We need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the statistical system and address the shortage of personnel. Then we need to invest in the statistical system in a manner it leads to sizeable revenue streams

IT IS ESTIMATED that the statistical systems of Australia and the US spend, on average, \$18 and \$11 per person per year, respectively, on collecting data. These estimates are from the report of the Task Force on the Value of Official Statistics, published in 2018, by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. In contrast, the ministry of statistics and programme

implementation (MoSPI), of the government of India, has a budget of less than ₹8 per Indian per year. Not only is the Indian statistical system severely underfunded, it is also understaffed. Large investments, both in terms of financial and human resources, are required to strengthen the system.

These investments are important if the Prime Minister's vision for a digital

India has to become a reality. In this new digital world, much has to change: the way data is collected, the way data is analysed, and the way it is consumed. The system needs to broaden its scope beyond its traditional role of keeping account of economic activity in the economy. There is demand for providing real-time business intelligence for informed policymaking.

For this, we need to ensure a stepped increase in the budget of the MoSPI, linked to progress not in terms of expenditure outcomes, but in terms of improvement in quality of official statistics. To ensure that increased budgetary allocation is not a case of good money spent without any tangible improvements, we have four specific suggestions.

The first is to strengthen the institutional capacity, and there are three things that need to be done. On a priority basis, we need to address the shortage of personnel, in particular the Subordinate Statistical Service, and staffing of the departments of economics and statistics of state governments. We need to develop and agree upon a system for scoring of statistical capacity of state statistical systems and departments of the central and state governments. We need funding for establishing an inter-university centre led by Indian universities in collaboration with the National Statistical Systems Training Academy. The primary objective would be to assist in leapfrogging the statistical system. An immediate task at hand for the centre would be to clearly articulate the relevance of surveys to fill critical gaps, a reasonable time-frame for establishing the

We need to ensure increasing MoSPI's budget, linked to progress not in terms of merely expenditure outcomes, but in improvement of the quality of official statistics

accuracy of administrative data, and use machine learning in analysing big data.

Investing in statistical system can also lead to sizeable revenue streams and this brings us to our second suggestion. It is a fairly straightforward exercise to monetise data sets collected by the government of India. To name a few databases that can be easily sold are database on companies maintained by the Registrar of Companies and the ministry of corporate affairs, export-import data maintained by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, and the National Remote Sensing Centre's satellite images. Today, the private sector does a much better job of repackaging, selling such data in an easy-to-use format, than the government. In our view, selling data will automatically increase accountability and improve data quality. Furthermore, an added benefit of making high quality granular data available would be an increase in employment opportunities in data analytics.

The third suggestion is to develop standards. It is important to harmonise definitions and develop taxonomy for each sector. This helps in reducing the cost of data collection, and also improves the ease of doing business. This is particularly important in cases of issues that are cross-cutting across department or ministries. For instance, the Public Health Department and the Women and Child Department should have a common database. An excellent example where data standardisation has happened is on account of the efforts of the Reserve Bank of India. The current practice of developing new management information system every time a new programme is launched needs to be discontinued. This can be avoided if we have a common data architecture, based on accepted definitions, for each and every sector.

The fourth suggestion is to improve returns to expenditure by ensuring that it reaches the targeted population. We need to use technology to map expenditure flows to output to outcomes. It will be important to geotag expenditure in every programme. This can be a feature of the Public Financial Management System. By geotagging, we can aggregate expenditure data and the outcomes at PIN code or village level while preserving the confidentiality of names of beneficiaries of programmes. The release of such data will allow various stakeholders to develop metrics for measuring return on government spending, and suggest areas for improvement. These could eventually lead to significant cost savings.

The cliché 'data is the new oil' was surely not in vogue when the Constitution of India was debated and finalised. However, the framers did realise the importance of inquiries, census, surveys, statistics and vital statistics. These find

mention in the Seventh Schedule that deals with demarcation of powers via the three Lists, viz. Union List (Entries 69 and 94), State List (Entry 45) and Concurrent List (Entries 30 and 45). The framers dwelled on the need for having uniform data across the nation. During the Constituent Assembly debates, Prof Shibban Lal Saksena, a member of the Assembly, said, "(W)ithout proper land records, it is impossible to maintain uniform statistics for the

whole country and it is a very important thing which must be provided for... If that is not done, you cannot have any statistics on a countrywide basis on a uniform basis, and agricultural progress will be handicapped." This quote is just an example of the quality of discussion that took place on the importance of data for development. Somewhere in the last seven decades we have forgotten our way and unfortunately got stuck in a rut. Now is a good time, as any, for the Prime Minister and the finance minister to revitalise and restore faith and fund the Indian statistical system.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The future of mass commute?

PANKAJ M MUNJAL

The author is chairman & MD, HMC, a Hero Motors Company



E-bikes and e-scooters are the answer, but need a safe cycling infrastructure

WITH GLOBAL WARMING and environment becoming major concerns, governments across the world are putting increased thrust on the need for phasing out petrol/diesel vehicles. While electric vehicles (EVs) have been in the pipeline for decades, it is only now that these are emerging as a viable alternative to petrol/diesel vehicles. Support from governments backed by ambitious targets as well as evolution of battery technology has enabled this shift. In China, 1.1 million electric cars were sold in 2018—more than half the total world sales.

With the ambitious target of shifting a bulk of its vehicles to electric fleet by 2030, India has launched policy measures and incentives to promote electric and hybrid cars. Earlier this year, the government announced ₹10,000 crore in outlay for the second phase of the FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid & Electric Vehicles) scheme to be invested towards developing charging infrastructure.

Major manufacturers across the world are now investing in electric and related technologies. Ford plans to have 13 EV models by 2020 at an investment of \$4.5 billion. Tesla plans to build 1 million EVs by 2020. In India, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors have already launched electric cars, and Maruti Suzuki is fleet testing its first electric car. However, lack of infrastructure is a major concern.

At the same time, while electric cars are clean, they do not solve the problem of congestion and remain outside the economic reach of a large section of population. Electric bicycles, on the other hand, offer both an affordable and a sustainable mobility solution; they can also address traffic woes. And then there is no range anxiety—if one loses battery charge, she can always pedal back easy with gear shifts.

India largely runs on two-wheelers, with about one-third of households owning one. In comparison, just 11% households own a car. E-bikes are also a rapidly emerging global trend—these essentially are an evolved version of bicycles, fitted with an electric motor to enable motorised pedalling along with manual pedalling. Given that two-wheelers account for as much as 75% of vehicular pollution in India, e-bikes can be an eco-friendly alternative to conventional two-wheelers. For this, the government must initiate policies for those people who currently use bicycles and are planning to upgrade to motorcycles or conventional scooters.

According to a report by Persistence Market Research, the global e-bike market is projected to register a CAGR of 4.7% during the 2017-22 period. Here again, China is leading. Also, in Europe, government subsidies and favourable policies are ushering in an impressive growth in e-bikes—France registered 90%-plus growth in the sales of e-bikes in recent years, thanks to a government subsidy on its purchase.

E-scooters are also an attractive option for people who struggle with last-mile transport connectivity issues. California-based start-ups Bird and Lime pioneered an interesting concept of shareable dockless e-scooters, and the success of the idea propelled these start-ups to spread to more than 100 cities. People struggling with traffic congestion, those needing short but costly taxi rides from public transport to work/home, or those walking to work/home have found e-scooters flexible, affordable and enjoyable to use. While this concept is yet to find ground in India, the need for flexible, last-mile transport solutions makes this a prospect.

The Economic Survey 2019 points out the limited availability of charging infrastructure coupled with lack of fast-charging facilities are major impediments to increased adoption of EVs in India. The project to make EVs a functioning reality of Indian roads needs the creation a massive infrastructure of charging stations across cities, residential buildings, parking spots, and community spaces.

While e-bikes have caught the attention of a small group of health-conscious and tech-savvy Indians, the absence of safe biking infrastructure hampers its growth in India. It must be underlined that countries which have provided government support—in the form of subsidy or infrastructure building—and imposed implementation of strict environmental rules have witnessed the steepest growth rates in e-bikes. India not only needs to encourage people to turn to e-bikes through subsidies and incentives, but also build safe cycling lanes across cities.

TIKTOK

AMERICA IS GOING to have to reckon with an internet that is becoming less American. Some US lawmakers on both sides of the partisan divide have said they are worried about TikTok, the app that lets users record and share short skits or dance routines to music. The app quickly became popular in the US and some other countries, and that has generated anxiety about TikTok's ownership by the Chinese internet company ByteDance.

The US is conducting a national security review of TikTok, and a foreign investment committee is considering whether ByteDance should be forced to unwind an acquisition that brought the TikTok app to the US. The US Navy this week alerted personnel not to use TikTok on government-issued smartphones because of a cybersecurity threat that the Navy didn't detail.

TikTok has been on a mission to alleviate worries about its Chinese ownership by ramping up its outreach to US politicians. It has also taken steps and considered structural changes to create separation between the app and China. Some of these efforts seem like pointless window dressing.

I don't know whether TikTok is a genuine threat. I don't know whether it is harvesting Americans' data for the mother country. There have been news reports that TikTok scrubs material on its app outside of China that is considered unpalatable by the Chinese government and therefore helps spread a sanitised view about China outside the country's borders. TikTok now

When the internet gets less American

The popularity of Chinese-owned TikTok raises concerns about security and values

SHIRA
OVIDE

Bloomberg

says that it doesn't house data on US users in China and that the Chinese government doesn't censor its global video app.

The discussion about TikTok in US political circles has become caught up in the broader tug of war between the US and China, but the fundamental issue is real. This isn't the first non-American internet service to get big in the US. But this the first time, truly, that Americans have had to consider what it means to have a popular consumer internet service that isn't owned by an American company. I suspect it won't be the last time.

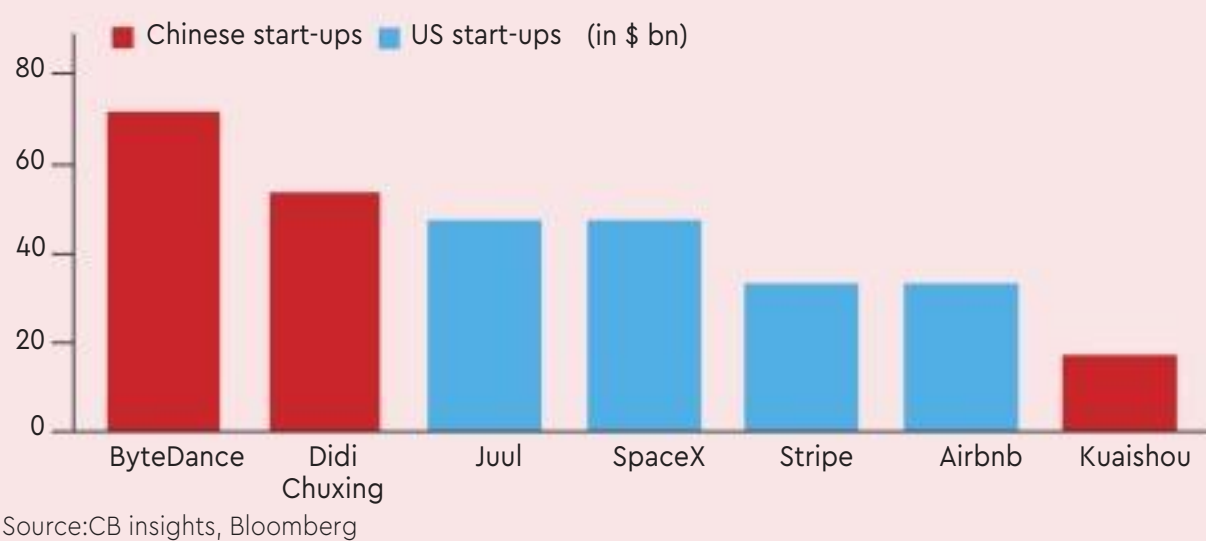
This is not new ground for most other countries. Facebook and its Instagram and WhatsApp apps; Google and its YouTube service; Netflix; Twitter; and other digital services from US companies have become

prevalent in many parts of the world. Foreign governments have at times chafed at the internet dominance by American companies for both justifiable and bogus reasons and have sought to make those companies comply with local laws and norms.

It's mostly understandable for governments outside the US to have those worries about American internet services. It's likewise mostly understandable for the US to consider the implications when an internet service from a company in China or Russia gains traction in America. What I wonder is whether what's happening now is a declaration that an internet company cannot operate in the US if it comes from a country with which the US has fundamental and unresolvable disagreements over government policies or values.

We are the world

Chinese technology companies are among the world's most valuable start-ups



Source: CB Insights, Bloomberg

There has been anxiety in technology circles for years that the world is being divided into two or more versions of the internet. There is the US version, mostly freewheeling and free, that had become something of a global default. There's the Chinese version, a parallel world in which activity and speech are tightly controlled by the government and from which foreign internet companies are largely barred. Some people also talk about a European internet and maybe an Indian internet, again with standards for behaviour and company conduct that aligns with government priorities.

On the one hand, I am an American and I'd rather live in an American-style internet than one mirroring Vietnam, where what happens online is commandeered by

an authoritarian government. On the other hand, tax regimes differ from country to country, in reflection of different government's policy priorities. Should internet policy be so fundamentally different than tax policy? (There are legitimate technical reasons why it's harder to have country-by-country internet services.)

Facebook, Google, Apple and Netflix have had to grapple with the balance between sticking to their American-honed principles while also complying with different standards and laws in all the countries where they operate. That may mean the companies have to push back when they believe their principles are compromised too much, and it may mean the companies should not do business in some places where the rules are fundamentally

at odds with what their leaders and home country citizens believe.

There are not necessarily easy answers. US internet companies do fall to strike the right balance outside of America's borders, and do and should face scrutiny from the media, US lawmakers and other outsiders when that happens.

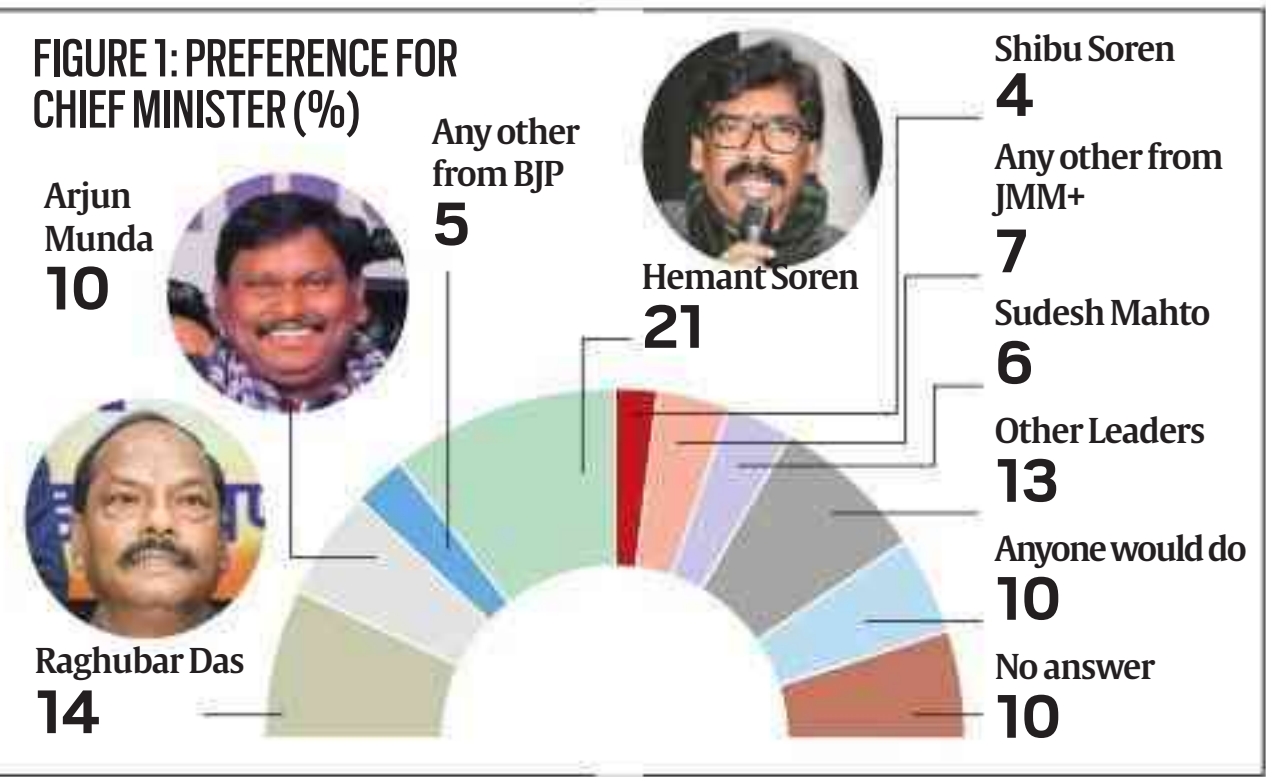
ByteDance should face the same scrutiny when it sets foot outside China's borders. ByteDance and TikTok leadership will have to figure out how to be a Chinese company that doesn't always operate by Chinese internet norms. That isn't something China's internet companies have been forced to grapple with until recently. That country's popular internet companies including Tencent, Weibo, Douban and Baidu have mostly been used in China or by the Chinese diaspora. That is starting to change with TikTok and other apps such as the TikTok-like app called Kuaishou or Kwai.

Chinese internet companies, and American citizens and politicians, face a similar challenge. They have to care how the rest of the world thinks and behaves after being insulated from those realities for a long time.

I don't know the right way to deal with this in the US, but it's long overdue for Americans and US political representatives to take seriously—truly seriously; not in hyperbolic panic—how we should feel about digital hangouts incubated in a country that may not share what we consider American values.

How Jharkhand result fits into a pattern

Data from the Lokniti-CSDS Post-Poll Survey underline the difference in the roles played by local and national factors in determining the outcome. In keeping with recent trends across the country, this Assembly poll saw a focus on local issues and a limited influence of the central leaders of parties, particularly the BJP



SUHAS PALSHIKAR, SANDEEP SHASTRI & SANJAY KUMAR

THE LOSS of an incumbent government is not very dramatic, but losing over 17 per cent of the vote in just six months is indeed deeply troubling for a government. This is what the Jharkhand results have brought about for the BJP. As the post-poll carried out by Lokniti-CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) shows, there are many state-level factors contributing to this debacle but, at the same time, the larger impact would still haunt the BJP.

The Jharkhand elections happened when the national scene was becoming more and more heated due to the national-level debate on the question of citizenship. As such, a first temptation would be to see the Jharkhand outcome in retrospect as a response to all-India issues. In order to understand how the BJP lost this election and how JMM and its allies managed to win, it is necessary to dispel this temptation and situate the outcome firmly into the dynamics of state politics of Jharkhand.

No CAA resonance

For instance, did the debate around the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) make any difference? There is very little evidence to indicate this. The last two rounds of voting (fourth and fifth) were held after the debate on the Citizenship Amendment Bill and the passage of the legislation. The BJP won eight of the 15 seats that went to polls in the fourth round. In 2014, the BJP had won 11 of these 15 seats. In the seats that went to polls in the fifth round, the BJP won three of the 16 seats and had won five of the 16 in 2014. Further, the CAA and NRC were rarely mentioned by respondents as a factor that influenced the way they voted. This, despite reports that top BJP leaders did mention this issue in their campaign rhetoric with the Prime Minister defending CAA as “1,000 percent correct”.

Despite the state-specific explanations which we discuss below, the outcome must be rattling for the BJP because while state-level factors caused the defeat, the larger, all-India implications are unmistakable. The Jharkhand outcome fits into a pattern. In consonance with the trends across the country since the Gujarat Assembly elections, state polls have seen a specific focus on local specificities rather than national issues and therefore, influence of the central leaders of parties — particularly the BJP — has been rather limited. More significantly, the voter choices appear to be increasingly different from national to state elections.

Loss of popularity for CM

While all-India narratives did not work, problems faced by voters of Jharkhand might still be the same as those faced by citizens elsewhere. The data emerging from the CSDS-Lokniti Post-Poll Survey in Jharkhand endorse the critical role of local factors and developments in explaining the electoral outcomes in the state. More than four of every ten respondents (43%) in the Jharkhand post-poll survey indicated that economic issues were the most important factor that influenced their voting choice (Table 6). The state government had to bear the brunt of popular dissatisfaction on this account.

Thus, it is important to record that in the post-poll survey, more than half the respondents (55%) expressed their dissatisfaction with the outgoing Raghubar Das government (Table 1). In a sense, the present outcome was pre-destined because at the time of the Lok Sabha elections too, the Raghubar Das government was not at all popular. At the time of the state election, the ex-

tent of dissatisfaction with the state government increased from 37 per cent in April-May 2019. Five years ago, the post-poll survey done at the time of the 2014 state assembly elections indicated that just over one-third (34%) of the respondents were dissatisfied with the then Soren government in the state.

What is more, no community was actually much satisfied with the state government. Among all communities, net satisfaction with the state government was negative (i.e., more respondents were dissatisfied than those satisfied). With voter dissatisfaction thus spread across the social sections, it would have been a surprise if the BJP had managed to win because past surveys have indicated that an incumbent government which evokes a high level of dissatisfaction from voters is often voted out of power; Jharkhand proves to be no exception in this regard.

No wonder, half the respondents said they did not want the Das government to be given another chance. Only a little over one in every three voters were willing to give the government another chance — incidentally, that is exactly the vote share of the BJP in the election.

A linked factor is the low levels of approval for the incumbent Chief Minister (Figure 1). When respondents were asked an open-ended question on who they would prefer as the Chief Minister after the Assembly polls, just over one of every ten respondents (14%) mentioned the name of Raghubar Das. Hemant Soren’s name was mentioned by over one-fifth of the respondents (21%). This seven-percentage-point gap between the incumbent and his challenger is indicative of



While the BJP had an 8-percentage-point advantage in terms of the Hindu vote, the JMM alliance had an 18-percentage-point lead among the Christians, and a 39-percentage-point lead among the Muslims

how the popularity of state-level leaders could have influenced the electoral verdict.

Modi factor limited

For quite some time now, the Indian electorate has been making a clear distinction between national-level and state polls. The data clearly indicate that national issues could well have been accorded a lower level of priority in the state polls. In an Assembly poll, local factors and the impact of economic factors appear to play an important role. Nevertheless, some attrition in the overall popularity of the BJP is evident. So much so, that even the “Modi factor” played a limited role and voters seemed to have begun to be disenchanted with the central government as well.

Compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, this time around two of every five of those who had voted for the BJP changed their party choice (Table 3). Among BJP voters, only two of every ten mentioned that they voted for the party on account of Prime Minister Modi (Table 2). Moreover, among the respondents in Jharkhand there has been a dip in the popularity of the central government since it assumed power for a second term.

At the time of the Lok Sabha poll of 2019, three-fourths of the respondents in Jharkhand had expressed satisfaction with the performance of the central government (Figure 2). Now, in the post-poll in Jharkhand, less than half the respondents (47%) expressed satisfaction with the performance of the central government. If at the time of the Lok Sabha polls one-fourth were fully satisfied with the performance of the central government, that number has steeply dipped to one-seventh of the respondents at the time of the Jharkhand assembly polls. If one-fourth were dissatisfied with the performance of the central government at the time of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, it has increased to close to half the respondents (47%) around the time of the Jharkhand Assembly polls.

The implications of these trends are important. While local factors and dissatisfaction with the state government did play a central role in shaping voters’ choice, the popularity of the Prime Minister or the performance of the central government could not bail out the state government; in fact, the result suggests a more all-round distancing by the voters from the BJP.

Demographic divisions

The BJP breaking its alliance with the All

FIGURE 2: DECLINE IN SATISFACTION WITH CENTRAL GOVT (%)

QUESTION ASKED: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the BJP/NDA government at the Centre?

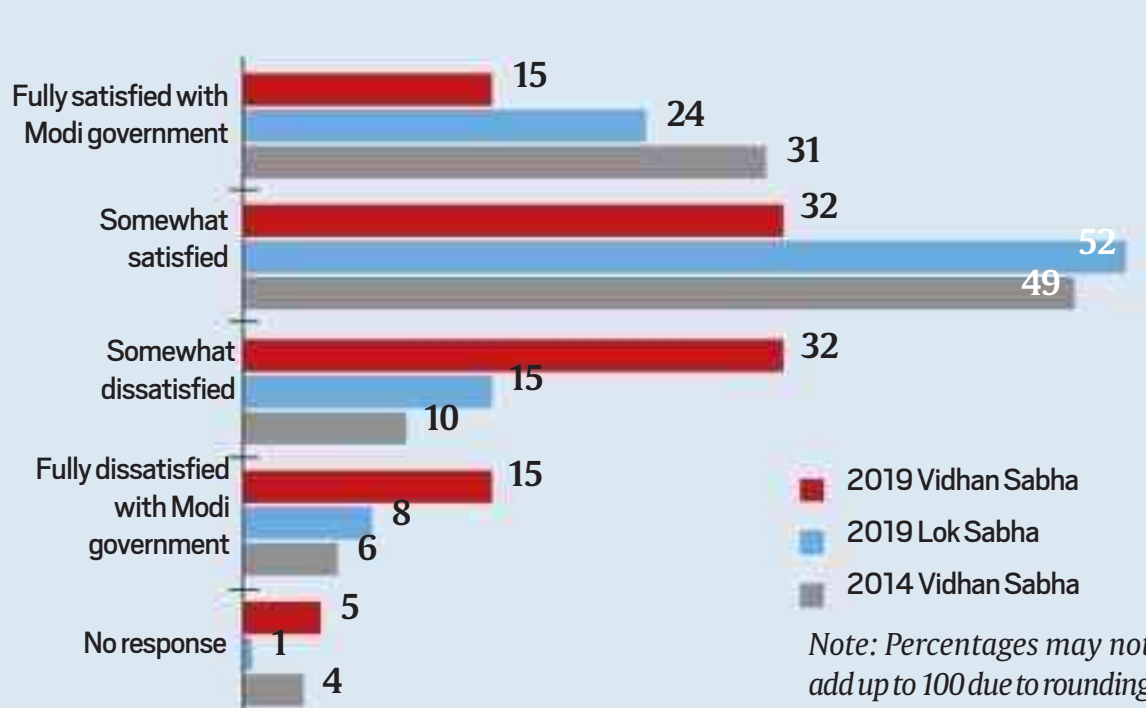


TABLE 1: DAS GOVT ASSESSED FAR MORE NEGATIVELY THAN SOREN GOVT

QUESTION ASKED: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the ruling state government in Jharkhand?

	During 2019 Vidhan Sabha (Das govt)	During 2019 Lok Sabha (Das govt)	During 2014 Vidhan Sabha (Soren govt)
Fully satisfied	13	13	11
Somewhat satisfied	26	48	51
Somewhat dissatisfied	31	27	14
Fully dissatisfied	24	10	20
No response	6	2	5

Note: Figures are percentages & may not total 100 due to rounding

Sample size (N) in 2019 VS - 2700; N in LS 2019 - 648; N in 2014 - 1608

TABLE 2: WHICH OF THESE MATTERED MOST TO VOTERS (%)

	Party	Candidate	CM candidate	Narendra Modi
Voters of JMM+	50	32	12	1
BJP voters	50	18	9	21
AJSU Voters	57	30	5	3
JVM voters	44	42	12	2
Voters of other parties	31	61	3	2
Overall	43	30	8	8

TABLE 6: ECONOMIC ISSUES TOP PRIORITY FOR VOTERS

QUESTION ASKED: What was the single most important issue for you while voting in this election?

Unemployment	18
Rising prices	16
Development and governance	10
Education and health	10
Corruption	9
Basic needs	7
Poverty	6
Political choice-related	4
Crimes and law & order	4
Housing	3
Farmer woes	2
Caste and tribal identity related	2
Terrorism and Naxalism	2
Environment	1
Hindutva-related	<1
NRC and CAA	<1
Other issues	1
No response	5

Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) could have contributed to splitting the vote and working to the advantage of the JMM-led alliance. If one were to combine the vote share of the BJP and AJSU in the 81 constituencies, it would have been leading in 40 seats. However, this simplistic calculation becomes somewhat irrelevant in the backdrop of overall dissatisfaction with state government.

With almost no community barring the OBCs feeling that the state government did indeed take care of its interests, the JMM-Congress-RJD coalition managed to forge a winning combination of different segments of the society. Thus, in explaining how the BJP lost Jharkhand, it may be useful to look at a few key demographic variations in support for the JMM-led alliance and the BJP (Table 7). There was not much variation in support for BJP if the educational attainment of the respondent is kept in mind. The gap between the BJP and the JMM-led alliance appears consistent across age groups, though the BJP did marginally better among older voters as compared to youth. The real differ-

ence is noticed in terms of economic categories. The BJP did much better among the more affluent voters while the JMM-led alliance performed much better among the economically less privileged.

The tribal vote is a key factor in the state of Jharkhand. Compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP was able to retain only half the tribal vote in the Assembly polls (Table 4). The BJP vote share fell sharply among the Oraon and other Scheduled Tribes, save the Santhals and Mundas. This factor was critical to the defeat of the BJP and the victory of the JMM-led alliance.

The CSDS-Lokniti post-poll data for Jharkhand also indicate a clear religious divide in terms of support. While the BJP had an eight-percentage-point advantage in terms of the Hindu vote, the JMM alliance had a huge double-digit advantage when it came to the religious minorities and others. The alliance had an 18-percentage-point lead among the Christians, a 39-percentage-point lead among the Muslims and a 12-percentage-point lead among the others (Table 5).

TABLE 3: BJP LOST TWO OF FIVE OF ITS LOK SABHA VOTERS TO OTHER PARTIES, GAINED VERY LITTLE FROM OTHERS’ SUPPORTERS

	Party voted for in Assembly Election 2019				
	JMM-Congress+	BJP	AJSU	JVM	Others
JMM-Cong-RJD’s LS 2019 voter	73	3	2	4	18
BJP’s LS 2019 voter	17	58	9	4	12
AJSU’s LS 2019 voter	7	32	61	—	—
JVM’s LS 2019 voter	29	2	2	60	7
Others’ LS 2019 voter	10	—	2	—	88
Did not reveal LS vote	17	8	14	13	48
Did not vote in LS elections	33	23	7	4	34

Note: Figures are percentages and may not add up to 100 because of rounding off

TABLE 4: COMMUNITY-WISE GAINS & LOSSES SINCE 2014 (%)

	JMM-Congress+ gains/losses compared to 2014	BJP gains/losses compared to 2014
CASTE-COMMUNITIES		
Upper caste	-2	-8
Yadav	+11	-14
Kurmi	-11	-4
Other OBC	+2	-6
Jatav	+1	-2
Other SC	-1	+14
Oraon (Hindu and Christian)	+8	-21
Santhal (Hindu and Christian)	+2	+13
Munda (Hindu and Christian)	-7	+22
Other ST	-11	-13

Note: Although JMM and Congress-RJD contested separately in 2014, the JMM-Congress gains and losses here have been calculated after combining JMM and Congress-RJD vote share of 2014; although BJP and AJSU contested separately in 2019, BJP gains and losses here have been calculated with respect to the BJP-AJSU alliance in 2014.

TABLE 5: THE RELIGION VOTE, AS SHARED AMONG PARTIES

	JMM-Congress+	BJP	AJSU	JVM	Others
Hindu	31	39	9	6	16
Muslim	53	14	5	6	22
Christian	41	23	7	4	25
Other	40	28	9	4	19

Note: Figures are percentages and may not add up to 100 because of rounding off

TABLE 8: BJP RETAINS ONLY HALF ITS ST VOTE SINCE LS POLLS

BJP’s retention of its LS vote	
Communities	
Upper caste	70
Yadav	49
Kurmi	58
Other OBC	65
SC	57
ST	49
Religion	
Hindu	60
Muslim	66
Christian	40
Other	49
Economic classes	
Poor	61
Lower	53
Middle	59
Rich	65
Age groups	
18-25	51
26-35	62
36-45	55
46-55	66
56+	59

Methodology

THE FINDINGS here are from a post-poll survey conducted in Jharkhand by the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). It was conducted from December 2 through December 22, 2019 among 2,700 voters in 108 polling stations spread across 27 Assembly constituencies. The sampling design adopted was multi-stage random sampling. The constituencies were randomly selected using the probability proportional to size method. Thereafter, four polling stations within each of the sampled constituencies were selected using the systematic random sampling method. Of these 35, 25 interviews were targeted. Except in Phase 5, in all other phases the interviews were conducted a day or two after they had voted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Hindi using a standardised questionnaire. In order to ensure representativeness, the achieved raw sample has been weighted by Gender, Religion, Locality, and Caste group based on Census 2011 data. The survey was designed, supervised and analysed by a team of researchers associated with Lokniti. The survey was coordinated and supervised in Jharkhand by Harishwar Dayal (Associate Professor, Department of Economics, St. Xavier’s College, Ranchi) and Amit Kumar (Institute for Human Development, Ranchi). It was directed by Prof. Sanjay Kumar of CSDS, Delhi.

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The IndianEXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

TOWARDS JOINTNESS

A Chief of Defence Staff is welcome, points to reform roadmap for future — leading to joint theatre commands

THE UNION CABINET'S approval for the post of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on Tuesday brings to fruition the process set in motion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech when he announced that "... after formation of this post, all the three forces will get effective leadership at the top level". The office of a principal military advisor to the government was first mooted many decades ago but it got a serious push only after the 1999 Kargil War. The Kargil Review Committee, headed by the late K Subrahmanyam, stated the requirement which was fleshed out in detail in 2001 as a substantive recommendation of a CDS by a Group of Ministers (GoM) on National Security in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. But the recommendation did not find favour with either the Vajpayee government or the UPA government, largely due to bureaucratic and political resistance to the idea of an all-powerful military commander and also because of the interservice rivalry between the Air Force, the Navy and the Army. Meanwhile, another expert committee, headed by Naresh Chandra, again recommended a top military advisor, not a CDS but a Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee — but it, too, did not see the light of day.

The major task of the CDS, as stated by the government, is to ensure coordination between the three services, especially in matters of defence procurement, besides helping in force structuring of the services to bring in savings and operational synergy. The CDS will prioritise requirements of the three services within budgetary allocations, taking a big responsibility away from the ministry, and has also been tasked to facilitate "restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands". That is an important role, which also points to a reform roadmap for the future — towards the eventual creation of joint theatre commands.

While the CDS will provide principal military advice to the government, he is not the commander of all the armed forces in the country — a far cry from the Commander-in-Chief of the British colonial era. In fact, the government made it clear that "CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs, so as to be able to provide impartial advice to the political leadership". It also means the dilution of the 2001 GoM recommendation which had envisaged the CDS as a single-point military advisor — not limited to principal advisor — to the government. Not only is there no concentration of power, he will be functioning as the secretary of a department within the ministry, while being at par with the three service chiefs in military status and rank. Some teething problems can be expected in the beginning but things are bound to fall in place as norms, processes and rules are worked out between the three services, the CDS and the defence ministry. It will require the navigation of entrenched institutional interests, hierarchical powers and military traditions, to lay the foundations for a strong and functional CDS.

THE RIGHT COUNT

National Tiger Conservation Authority acknowledges need for greater transparency in census. Now, bring in peer review

EVER SINCE THEY slumped to an all-time low of around 1,400 in 2006-2007, India's tiger numbers have increased. The last Tiger Census Report, released in July, put the population at 2,967, a 33 per cent increase over 2014 when tigers were last enumerated. But the achievements in conservation have been clouded by doubts over the counting methods. In September, an investigation by this paper revealed that the last tiger census had over-reported the population by 16 per cent. Following that investigation, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) — which along with the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) conducts the tiger census — has taken the first step towards introducing correctives. It has admitted the necessity of "bringing more scientific robustness to the exercise".

In the 1970s, when India embarked on Project Tiger, conservation authorities sought to identify every tiger in the wild from its paw print. But scientists criticised this method as highly subjective and riddled with the possibilities of duplication. Their fears came true in 2005, when this newspaper reported that the Sariska National Park in Rajasthan had lost all its tigers — an year before, pug mark surveys had claimed that all was well at the reserve. Since 2006, tiger audits have relied on camera traps, they have estimated the animal's prey base and tried to gauge the health of the tiger's habitats. All this has helped the NTCA and WII to arrive at more realistic numbers. But doubts over methodology have persisted. The quality of camera traps has been a major issue in several reserves and scientists have contended that the NTCA and WII have not devised sound protocols.

The last tiger census, however, invited questions. It counted under-age cubs, methods used to identify the uniqueness of an individual animal were given short shrift and the problem of duplication resurfaced. These have led to renewed demands by scientists for transparency in the census operations. In the past, the NTCA has stonewalled such demands. It is heartening, therefore, that it has finally acknowledged the need for "accountability". However, it is disappointing that the agency has dismissed calls to subject the tiger census procedures to peer reviews. Without passing this credibility test, India's greatest wildlife protection success story will not have a place in scientific literature. Worse, tiger conservation will continue to be linked to attempts to score political points.

WHERE I AM

North Pole is shifting, and Google Maps may not work as well anymore. It's time to re-navigate the city

IN THE LAST few years, the only time street names have mattered, really, is when they are being changed. And as they are burdened with the onerous task of rewriting history and fulfilling the demands of a majoritarian politics, their primary purpose has been lost. Since the advent of Google Maps and other navigation systems on the smartphone, the name of a place is no longer the marker it once was — a pleasant, if obviously artificial, voice guides you along the way. A sense of direction — like the memory for phone numbers — has been outsourced to technology. Now, it appears that it's time to go back to navigating by direction, not dictation.

The North Pole, it turns out, is shifting eastwards at an unprecedented pace. About 15 years ago, this would have made little difference to the daily lives of people and even Google Maps relies largely on satellite imaging, which is mostly unaffected by this shift. But now, in addition to its implications for industries and sectors that rely on the magnetic north — airports, defence, drilling — it will affect smartphones as well. Most contemporary phones have three magnetic sensors that tell the direction the user is facing. This feature could be compromised with the pole shifting, and people would be, quite literally, direction-less.

Learning to navigate by memory, and, more importantly, asking for directions may not be a terrible development. In fact, in India, it is a necessary skill. The spate of frequent internet shutdowns means that Google is of erratic help across cities in India. And since Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (deployed recently with increasing frequency) ensures that no more than four people gather at a time in one place, there is the joy of an illicit pleasure to the simple act of asking for directions.



Soumya Kanti Ghosh

THE RELEASE OF second quarter GDP data and the subsequent revision by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) of its own growth estimate for the year has brought the spotlight firmly back on the issue of reviving growth. Even as the government and the RBI collectively battle the slowdown, its extent has left most of us befuddled. The question, therefore, is: Is a turnaround in sight?

First, the world has fundamentally changed since the onset of the global financial crisis. India and China accounted for 19.1 per cent of world GDP in 2018, as against 9.1 per cent in 2008. India's GDP has jumped 2.3 times, while that of China jumped 3 times since then. Over the same period, while India's per capita GDP has increased by 102 per cent, that of China's has grown by an even sharper 182 per cent. Clearly, while we have done well, we could have done even better if we take China as the benchmark. But, what is more important is that as a nation, our aspirations have increased manifold.

The GDP numbers convey a serious policy predicament on the fiscal front. Take, for instance, the gap between gross domestic product (GDP) and gross value added (GVA), which reflects indirect taxes, net of subsidies. A higher gap (higher GDP and lower GVA) could simply mean that while indirect taxes are growing, government transfer payments like subsidies have been stagnant because of fiscal compulsions. In the context of the current fiscal, it is imperative that the government clears the fertiliser subsidy at the earliest so that the system is unclogged.

This has been the trend in earlier years as well when the gap between GDP and GVA has been as high as 80 basis points on some occasions, peaking in the third or fourth quarter as the government tried to maintain the delicate trade-off between fiscal discipline and growth. During such apparent trade-offs, the point we conveniently forget is that it is only growth that leads to adherence of revenue targets, and hence fiscal prudence. Fiscal policy in India has often been painted as the

Governments must ensure policy continuity, refrain from creating sector-specific uncertainty

The Monetary Policy Committee's decision not to hike rates, though surprising, clearly defines the limited role of monetary policy in the context of the current growth conundrum. It needs to be emphasised that when we are facing a quadruple balance sheet problem (corporates, banks, NBFCs and households), rate cuts will only increase household leverage and in such a scenario, they might not work unless accompanied by counter-cyclical fiscal policy measures.

mother of all villains (populist dole-outs like loan waivers have not helped either) and the obsession of the markets with a 3 per cent deficit target has led to unrealistic, unjustified and irrational exuberance in the debt markets.

Interestingly, we must remember that contrary to popular perception, rating agencies are concerned about growth and the recent S&P episode only underlines this. Thus, we must chase growth and strictly avoid using fiscal policy targets to satisfy bond market traders. Further, by repeatedly emphasising that we will stick to the mandated fiscal deficit target during a year when growth poses a serious challenge, it makes one prone to non-transparent and non-credible fiscal rules that markets will not believe in.

Second, the Monetary Policy Committee's decision not to hike rates, though surprising, clearly defines the limited role of monetary policy in the context of the current growth conundrum. It needs to be emphasised that when we are facing a quadruple balance sheet problem (corporates, banks, NBFCs and households), rate cuts will only increase household leverage and in such a scenario, they might not work unless accompanied by counter-cyclical fiscal policy measures.

Now, coming back to the question that we asked at the beginning of this piece, let me present some interesting facts.

Take the case of the growth challenges that the auto industry is facing in India. Strangely, it seems that the auto industry globally is facing a structural dilemma. Even though sales have been falling across almost all emerging and developed economies, the SUV segment has belied all doomday predictions and continues to expand. India has been no exception. Our in-house study, based on a stratified sample of the SBI portfolio, reveals that car sales are income agnostic across regions, age and gender, as more and more car buyers, in every population group, are showing a preference for high-end

cars. This finding provides food for thought for car makers looking to adjust to changing demand preferences.

In a related study, our customer behavioural analysis of a large portfolio of individuals, who used SBI cards to buy online products from Flipkart and Amazon, during the festive season, reveals an even more interesting trend. We observe a significant latent demand among consumers. The median spends of people in tier II and tier III cities, spread across states like West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, that have a population size of not even 1 per cent of Mumbai, were close to 40 per cent higher than that of Mumbai and other metro cities. Thus, the current slowdown in demand could be largely attributed to consumers holding back spending because of uncertainties.

Since we have talked about uncertainties, we must also emphasise how to remove them. First, we must refrain from creating sector-specific uncertainties in areas like telecom through contradictory policy statements. Any potential setback in the telecom sector could hold back consumption spending further. This will negate any impact of a counter-cyclical fiscal push in the forthcoming budget.

Second, the states of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana together account for around 16.8 per cent of the global GDP (in purchasing power parity terms). We strongly recommend that these states maintain policy continuity, especially when the political regime changes. For example, rather than opting for measures like farm loan waivers, which lead to problems of moral hazard that impact credit culture, measures should be undertaken to improve agricultural productivity. Alternatively, can we not enact a law to preserve policy continuity?

The author is Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India. Views are personal

PROTESTS AND AFTER

Real remedies are beyond political and institutional realms, require societal efforts



Naman Pugalia

ANGER IS AMONGST the most powerful of emotions. It is also ephemeral. Therefore, how the sentiment is channeled across time and space determines how its incidence will eventually be judged — as an enduring celebration or as mere frustration. We have been furious often, but have failed consistently in harnessing our rage for sustainable change. Hopefully, the current clamour over citizenship is different.

In 1979, the Mandal Commission was established with a mandate to identify socially or educationally backward classes of India. Though its report, which advocated reservation, had been completed in 1983, the V P Singh government declared its intent to implement the report in August 1990. This led to widespread student protests including self-immolation by Rajiv Goswami, a student of Deshbandhu College in Delhi. While the dispossessed rallied for reservation, the privileged defended their privilege. Since then, there have been political, administrative and judicial efforts to increase access for the marginalised by way of reservations. However, caste-based discrimination has only worsened outside the walls of institutions that grant symbolic space.

In 2010, the self-immolation of Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, triggered the Arab Spring — a series of anti-government protests across the Islamic world. The early hopes that these movements would end corruption, increase political participation, and bring about greater economic equity collapsed in the wake of the counter-revolutionary moves by foreign state actors in Yemen and of the Saudi-UAE linked military deep state in Egypt, the regional and

international military interventions in Bahrain and Yemen, and the civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

In 2011, the India Against Corruption movement evoked widespread resentment against corruption. Given the subject's secular appeal, campaigners came from across socio-economic strata and geographies. On December 27, the government passed the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill 2011. Among the several outcomes of the protracted agitation was a hope that the venality of the state and its arms would end. Yet, graft at all levels continues unabated.

In 2012, in the aftermath of the Delhi sexual assault case, millions of Indians poured onto the streets across the country. A legislation — the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 (Nirbhaya Act) — was passed by both houses of the Parliament in March 2013. It provided for amendments to the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences. For good measure, we got a Nirbhaya Fund too, for schemes that would improve women's safety. Yet, women's safety continues to be a distant dream.

What was common across all these episodes? Each of these initially had at least two kinds of participants — those who were impacted by the event and those who were sympathetic to the cause. In most cases, the former continue to suffer and persist, while the latter moved on. In many of the cases cited above, the revolutionaries sought institutional and specifically, legislative responses; they gave up too easily. The causes warranted additional societal efforts.

In 2019, people across the country have rallied against the Citizenship Amendment Act on the grounds that it discriminates against Indians based on religion. At least 24 lives have been lost in the protests. Among the remedies that have been sought, the ones trending call for a rollback and for state governments to reject it. Sloganeering apart, will these steps truly end religion based discrimination? Legislative changes may be necessary, but they will be woefully insufficient in altering mindsets.

Based on the evidence from India and elsewhere, our grim reality points to a few lessons that the current crop of rebels must bear in mind. Rallying for causes needs a consistent critical mass in an attention-deficit world. Will the movement have enough votaries to sustain it when the news cycle changes? Seeking legislative answers as magic bullets is the surest way to prematurely lose our battles. Real remedies may be above and beyond the political and institutional realms.

The current uprising points to growing national consciousness. It seems to be saying that on discrimination, we have had enough and we want our voices to be heard. What we are yet to discover is whether the revolutionaries will do enough. Do they have the strategy and stamina it takes to defend an important term in the preamble of our Constitution, and move beyond it, towards creating a deeper resistance enterprise?

The writer is founder, WalkIn. He previously co-founded, FourthLion Technologies, a political campaign planner

DECEMBER 26, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO SECRET PACT

JANATA PARTY LEADER Jagjivan Ram denied that there was any secret understanding between the Congress and the Janata Party, as being speculated in some circles. Asked if his party would form a government at the Centre with the help of Congress after the elections, Ram commented: "Where is the question of forming such a government? We (Janata Party) are getting a majority and will form the government." When his attention was drawn to Devraj Urs's statement admitting his party's mistake in joining the Charan Singh Cabinet, Ram said the Congress President had indeed made a sensible statement.

ASSAM ALLIANCE

THE ASSAM PRADESH Congress is understood to be going ahead with an alliance with the Janata Party to form a government in the state despite the high command's directive to defer the matter till the general elections are over. The leader of the state Congress legislature party, Sarat Chandra Sinha, is said to have informed Congress president Devraj Urs that the PCC had decided to form a coalition government in Assam because of the peculiar situation in the state. Meanwhile, the leader of the Janata-Congress coalition, Golap Borbora, said that he had not yet contacted Governor L P Singh to stake his claim to form a government.

X'MAS IN TEHERAN

FOUR WESTERN CLERGYMEN held tearful Christmas services with the American hostages in the US embassy. They said they were told there were only 43 captives, that they met all of them and they were in "good shape" even though some were suffering psychologically. They also said they were assured by the captors — who filmed the services — that they would be allowed to pick up messages from the hostages and convey them to the hostages' families. The clergymen added they would release the hostages' names. "As far as we could tell, and on the physical side you can tell, they are in good shape," Reverend William Sloan Coffin said.



State incapacity and NRC

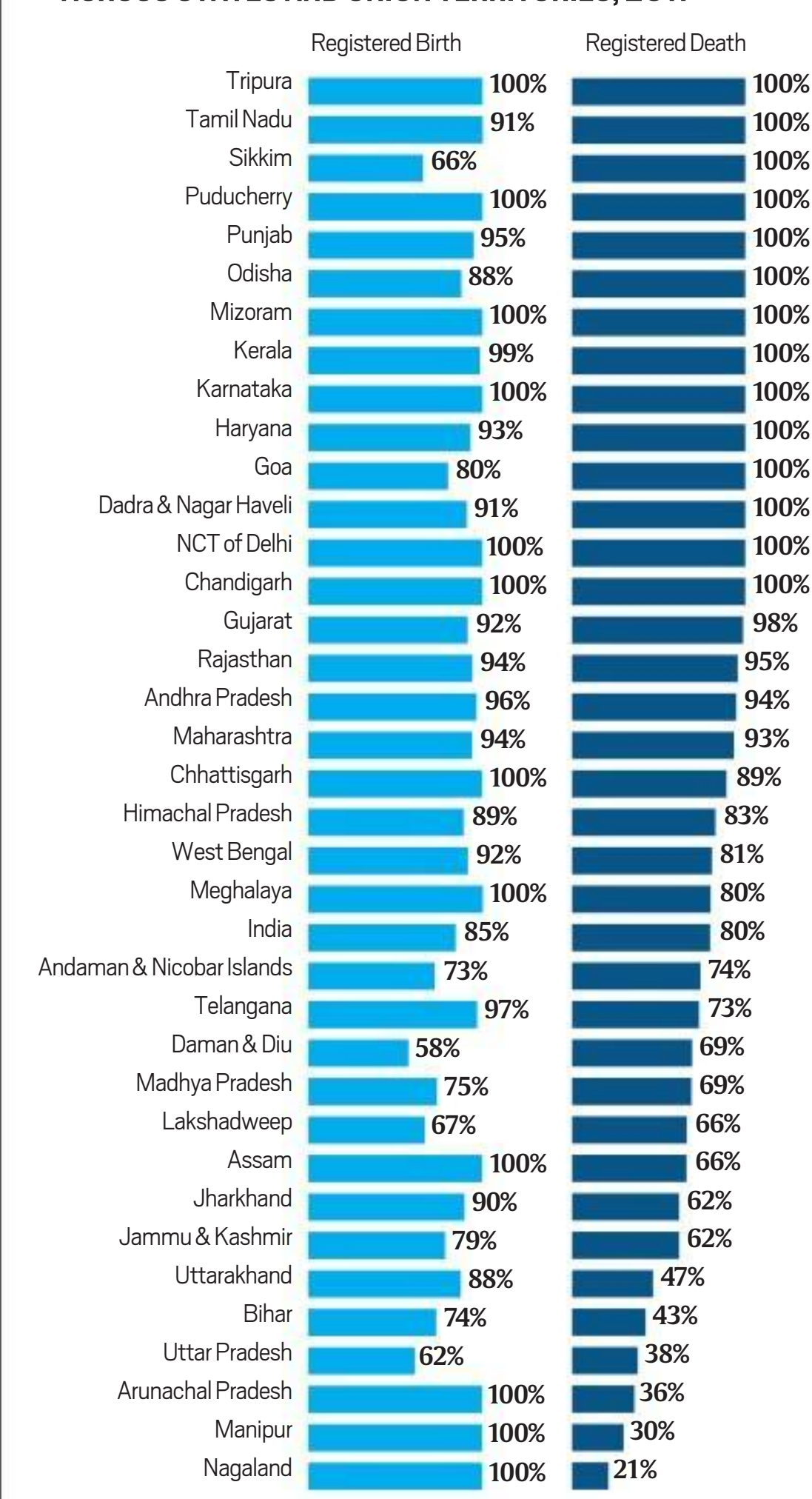
Existing government infrastructure is not conducive to launch such an operation. It will lead to chaos, confusion and exclusion of the weakest and poorest sections of society



MUDIT KAPOOR AND SHAMIKA RAVI

WHILE DEFENDING THE Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 in Parliament, the Union home minister announced that the government will launch a countrywide NRC very soon. This has led to an ideological divide, and a fiery debate across the country. It is worth noting that the Citizenship Act of 1955 has a provision (point 14A) where: One, the central government may compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card to him. Two, the central government may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens and for that purpose establish a National Registration Authority. Three, on and from the date of commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, the Registrar General, India under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1969 (18 of 1969) shall act as the National Registration Authority and he shall function as the Registrar General of Citizen Registration. However, in contrast to the important normative question of whether the central government should launch an NRC or not, it is perhaps more important to look at the positive question of whether the central government has the capacity for such an ambitious undertaking. A faulty implementation of the NRC could create a human rights issue of unimaginable magnitude. To understand issues related to the central government's capacity to launch an NRC, we focus our attention on the most important activity of the Registrar General of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) — the implementation of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1969, whereby every birth and death in the whole of India is to be compulsorily registered. Registration of birth is the right of every child and is the first step towards establishing a legal identity. It was envisaged under this Act that the Civil Registry System (CRS) would be “the unified process of continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the vital events (births, deaths, still births)”. Closer inspection of data from the MHA report on Vital Statistics of India based on the Civil Registry Systems, 2017 reveals several shortcomings, which are a harbinger of the challenges that the government will face in the implementation of the NRC. First, there are large variations in registered births and deaths across states. For example, in large and less developed states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, 62 per cent and 74 per cent of the births, respectively, were registered, while only 38 per cent and 43 per cent of the deaths, respectively, were registered. Overall in India, 85 per cent of births and 74 per cent of deaths were registered. Some of the Northeastern states, such as Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh have less than 40 per cent of deaths that are registered. Even in Assam, which has 100 per cent of birth registration, only 66 per cent of the deaths are registered. This clearly reflects the acute poverty of infrastructure across

FIGURE 1: REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS, ACROSS STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES, 2017



states to implement the constitutionally mandated Registration of births and deaths Act of 1969. Unfortunately, this also suggests that the NRC implemented under present conditions will disproportionately hurt the vulnerable and weaker sections of the society. (See Figure 1) Next, to understand the nature of the exercise, we look at the registration of deaths of a particularly vulnerable group — children less than a year old. They are vulnerable because they depend on adults for all their needs and do not have adequate political representation. They are, therefore, neglected by society and the state. This apathy is reflected in their registration numbers. We estimate by using data from the sample registration system (SRS) and comparing it with data from the CRS, that only 19 per cent of infant deaths are registered. In some large states like Bihar, less than 1 per cent of infant deaths were registered, in Uttar Pradesh it was merely 4.3 per cent. Even in states that report high levels of social development, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, merely 62 per cent and 58 per cent of infant deaths were registered. This clearly reflects the impoverished nature of the state to address the

In contrast to the important normative question of whether the central government should launch an NRC or not, it is perhaps more important to look at the positive question of whether the central government has the capacity for such an ambitious undertaking. A faulty implementation of the NRC could create a human rights issue of unimaginable magnitude.



FIGURE 2: REGISTERED INFANT DEATHS, ESTIMATED INFANT DEATHS, ACCORDING TO LARGE STATES, 2017

State	Registered Infant deaths (A)	Estimated Infant deaths (A)	Ratio (%) (A/B)
Andhra Pradesh	9115	27123	33.6%
Assam	3372	30718	11.0%
Bihar	840	97438	0.9%
Chhattisgarh	8779	22677	38.7%
Gujarat	16093	38070	42.3%
Haryana	5481	17219	31.8%
Jharkhand		22520	
Jammu & Kashmir	2131	4458	47.8%
Karnataka	10832	27445	39.5%
Kerala	3176	5103	62.2%
Maharashtra	16951	36390	46.6%
Madhya Pradesh	11359	92468	12.3%
Odisha	11868	32201	36.9%
Punjab	2455	9218	26.6%
Rajasthan	10435	68001	15.3%
Telangana	5390	18426	29.3%
Tamil Nadu	9730	16650	58.4%
Uttarakhand		5981	
Uttar Pradesh	10204	236387	4.3%
West Bengal	13035	34509	37.8%
India	165494	858929	19.3%

identity of the voiceless. We also found a strong negative correlation between infant mortality rate and proportion of infant deaths that were registered. States that have poor infrastructure in registering infant deaths also have a significantly higher infant mortality rate. Given India's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative upon the state to accurately account for all infant deaths. In light of the severe capacity constraint, if the NRC is to be ever launched then the first step for the MHA should be to strengthen the existing infrastructure to account for at least every birth and death within the country. An unintended consequence of this could be its immediate effect on health and safety policies, which are significantly hampered by the non-availability of regular and reliable data, in particular on deaths. At present, the existing infrastructure is not conducive to launch an NRC. It will only lead to chaos, confusion and exclusion of the weakest and the poorest sections of society.

Kapoor works at ISI and Ravi with Brookings India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The US and Western political and public opinion elites should realize that the Western political system is unleashing negative energy that is splitting society. They should try to prevent such Western political logic extending to the outside world.”

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Refugee to citizen

CAA will not take away anyone's citizenship, only seeks to confer dignity and rights to the persecuted



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

THE HISTORIC CITIZENSHIP Amendment Act (CAA) has come into effect across the country following a gazette notification on December 12. This moment signifies the continuous struggle of many visionary leaders and freedom fighters. With the CAA, a long-pending demand for relief to persecuted religious minorities has been met.

Recalling two incidents from history will be useful to understand the importance of the CAA. Following the 1971 Indo-Pak war, Rajasthan faced an influx of around one lakh refugees comprising people from the Sodha Rajput, Meghwal, Bheel, Charan, Maheshwari and Sindhi communities. The Simla Agreement signed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and President of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, sought to bring about the withdrawal of troops and exchange of prisoners of war. Atal Bihari Vajpayee rushed to Shimla during the five-day summit and pleaded with Indira Gandhi to take a tough stand and insisted that “sacrifices made by the Javans should not be surrendered at the negotiation table”. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh led by Vajpayee opposed the return of refugees to Pakistan on the Simla Agreement's terms and took out a march to Indian occupied territories of Pakistan in Gadra city in July 1972. During Vajpayee's stay at Gadra Road, Barmer, which was the focal point of the agitation, thousands of refugees joined hands with him. Atalji, along with the volunteers, walked five to six kms from Gadra Road in India to territory India had occupied in Pakistan and assured the persecuted minorities and Dalits a dignified life in India. He stayed in the House of Kojhraj Maheshwari, visited the refugees' camp and assured the refugees that they will be allowed to stay in India. Tarun Rai Kaga, a former MLA from the Chohtan constituency in Rajasthan was one such Dalit who had came to the Gadra Road camp in 1972 from Chachro township in Tharparkar district, Pakistan. The NDA-I government of Vajpayee conferred special rights to district collectors in Rajasthan and Gujarat to decide on citizenship requests made by Hindu and Sikhs refugees.

The tale of the erstwhile Mohata Palace (now Jinnah House) in Karachi reveals the various shades of the hostile attitude of Pakistan's leadership towards religious minorities. Shiv Ratan Mohata, a successful Marwari entrepreneur from Bikaner, had built the palatial house in the seaside neighbourhood of Clifton in Karachi for his wife. At the peak of World War II, leaders preferred to visit London via Karachi for meetings related to Independence and Partition. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, used to stay at Mohata Palace during these visits. During one such occasion, Jinnah told Shiv Ratan Mohata that he will have to vacate the magnificent building after Partition. Mohata's numerous requests that he be allowed to retain his palace were refused by Jinnah.

Shiv Ratan Mohata spoke about his exchange with Jinnah to his brother Ram Gopal Mohata, a very simple, affluent and spiritual personality of Bikaner. He told Shiv Ratan that, “if the king cannot take care of people of his region, we should not live there” and suggested that he leave Pakistan immediately. After Independence, Shiv Ratan Mohata settled in Mumbai and his Mohata Palace became the Jinnah House of Karachi. After Jinnah's demise in September 1948, the palace was handed over to Fatima Jinnah. In the 1950s, Shiv Ratan Mohata wished to have Jinnah House in Mumbai for Mohata Palace under the government's provisions for exchange of immovable properties. He got the then chief minister of Bombay state, B G Kher, to recommend his case to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. But his efforts were unsuccessful since Jinnah had told Nehru not to give his property to anyone. The historic occasion of the CAA brings a sigh of relief and smile to every person who was affected by Partition — from affluent business families like the Mohatas of Bikaner to Dalits like Tarun Rai Kaga and lakhs of other unnamed individuals. From time to time, various political parties, including the Congress, have voiced the cause of persecuted religious minorities. On November 15, 1950, while replying to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address in the provisional Parliament, Prime Minister Nehru, referring to Syama Prasad Mookerjee's statement said: “I am perfectly prepared to agree with him (Mookerjee) that the situation of the displaced persons is very far from desirable”, and added that “there is no doubt, of course, that people who have come to India, those displaced persons who stay in India, are bound to have citizenship. If the law is inadequate, the law should be changed”.

During a discussion on the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Rajya Sabha on December 18, 2003, the then Leader of Opposition, Manmohan Singh, demanded a liberal approach towards religiously persecuted refugees. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, in his previous tenure, wrote to the then Union Home Minister P Chidambaram on the plight of Pakistani Hindus and Sikh migrants. Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi had submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on April 20, 2012, pleading that Indian citizens who had to flee due to persecution and discrimination on religious ground at the time of Partition should not be treated as foreigners. Even Prakash Karat, the then CPM general secretary, had written to Manmohan Singh in May 2012 regarding the citizenship problems of Bengali refugees. When the Modi government showed the courage to address this daunting issue, the Opposition parties are trying mislead the people. The CAA is about inclusion and not exclusion. It has nothing to do with Indian Muslims. The Act is not meant to take away anyone's citizenship, but it will confer citizenship on persecuted minorities. The Act will ease the lives of Partition refugees and provide them a dignified life by allowing them access to the government's welfare schemes.

The writer represents Bikaner in the Lok Sabha and is Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Public Enterprises and Parliamentary Affairs



SATISH K SHARMA

MY FATHER, WHO was a religious teacher in the 7th Grenadiers during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, wrote a tribute in verse for the soldiers of his battalion who were killed in action in the Khemkaran sector. As a child, I was fascinated by this poem and felt particularly sorry for one soldier who died when shrapnel hit his exposed head. The jawan had, apparently, lost his helmet earlier in the battle and could not get a replacement immediately. He was marching ahead with nothing but a towel as protection when the enemy shell exploded near him. Twenty-four years later, on May 7, 1989, in the town of Mangrol in Junagadh district, 10 people, all Muslims, were killed in police firing as a direct result of a police officer not wearing a helmet on law and order duty. Apparently, an Eid procession of Bin-Tablighi Muslims was passing through a route disputed by the Tablighi Muslims. As the procession neared the Tablighi locality, a hail of stones from the rooftops of houses lining the street greeted it. When the sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), who was leading the police bandobast came out of his jeep to assess the situation, a piece of rock, hit him on the head. He fell down, bleeding profusely. The police thought he had been killed. It unnerved the force which, in sheer panic, fired more than 120 rounds causing 10 fatalities. The SDPO survived but if he had been wearing a helmet, the loss of lives

Whose head is it, anyway?

The problem with Gujarat government's decision to relax the helmet rule

could have been averted. I have personal knowledge of this incident because, I was rushed to Mangrol post haste (“Report your departure to state police control room in 1 hour”, said the terse radio message) as a young assistant superintendent of police to replace the injured officer. For the next one-and-a-half years — the time I was there — not a single incident of stone throwing happened and much of my time went in coping with the judicial enquiry which had been ordered into the police firing. In the end, the enquiry exonerated everyone but I learnt a lesson — ensure that every police officer wears a helmet during bandobast duty. The helmet came to haunt me again, but in a different context. On the August 28, 1990, my 25-year-old brother-in-law, Manish, was riding his motorcycle in the late evening on an empty road in New Delhi. The anti-Mandal agitation was at its peak. Some rioters had placed a large garbage bin in the middle of the road. Manish could not see it and his motorcycle crashed into the huge bin. He suffered a fatal head injury. When police came to the scene, they found the helmet on the handle of the bike. The accident triggered a set of events that changed the lives of my family forever. A year later, on July 22, 1991, as a deputy commissioner of police, I was supervising the bandobast of Tazia procession at Mandvi —

the city square of the walled city in Vadodara. The atmosphere was tense because the city had seen a long spell of communal clashes. Yet, all seemed to be going well when suddenly, instigated by provocative sloganeering, some miscreants from the adjoining Hindu locality started throwing rocks at the procession. There was immediate retaliation from the other side and the street turned into a battleground. As we tried to control the situation, a big piece of rock landed on my forehead. Fortunately, I was wearing the helmet and the visor was down. It saved my head, but on deflection, the rock hit my left collar bone and fractured it. I was shaken but happy that the elementary precaution saved my life. In 2017, out of 1.47 lakh road accident fatalities in India, 36,000 victims were helmetless two-wheeler riders. It works out to an alarming figure of 98 per day. The otherwise law-abiding citizens of Gujarat are not only averse to wearing helmets but it is also a sensitive issue with them. A helmet is one “inconvenience” they do not want to put up with. During my tenures of three years each as commissioner of police at Vadodara and Surat, I could not enforce the helmet rule with any degree of success. How can you when nine out of 10 bike riders violate it? We would challan thousands of bike riders but the vio-

lators ran into lakhs. However, in recent months, as a consequence of strict enforcement and a stiffer penalty one could see much better compliance. But it clearly did not go down well with people. Bowing down to the public outcry, the Government of Gujarat decided to relax the helmet rule substantially. Now, it is no longer mandatory for two-wheeler riders to wear protective headgear in eight metropolitan city areas of Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Junagadh and Gandhinagar and all 160-odd municipal towns of Gujarat. The decision has been welcomed all over Gujarat. Indeed, one could argue that enforcement is not the only way by which police can ensure better traffic discipline. The authorities still have the option of launching a massive state-wide education-cum-awareness campaign. One only hopes that considering the number of lives, especially young lives, at stake, such a campaign will start sooner than later. But while that happens, the question one wants to ask the two-wheeler riders of Gujarat is this: If you don't wear a helmet, whose head is at risk? The writer is a retired IPS officer and former commissioner of police, Surat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISTORTED PICTURE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘In citizenship debate, a related question — that of Sri Lankan Tamils’ (IE, December 24). In response to the question “What do the refugees from Sri Lanka expect from the government?” it is stated that “they expect citizenship of India — because they fear persecution and violence at the hands of the Colombo government and the Sinhala Buddhist majority”. In my view, the article attempts to create a negative image of Sri Lanka by depicting it as a place where the government, and Sinhala Buddhist majority will persecute the Tamil refugees if they return. There is no basis for the fears. In fact, the government welcomes voluntary repatriations, and arrangements are in place to resettle such refugees when they return. A large number of Sri Lankan refugees from Tamil Nadu have returned to Sri Lanka and no incidents of persecution against them have been reported so far. Austin Fernando, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India

ATAL FOREVER

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Firm policy, gentle politics’ (IE, December 25). Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a courageous person with a soft heart. Resisting US pres-

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.

sure, he declared India a nuclear power. He is indeed comparable to Swami Vivekananda as an orator. Barad Krishnapalsinh, Ahmedabad

CARTOON EXPLAINS

THIS REFERS TO E P Unny's cartoon on December 25. It has managed to explain what a thousand words could not. Between the NPR, NRC and CAA, hapless citizens are being tossed around and eventually dumped into the wastebin. Barad Krishnapalsinh, Ahmedabad

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 266

अपरिपक्व विचार

नीति आयोग इस बात पर विचार कर रहा है कि प्रोटीनयुक्त खाद्य पदार्थों मसलन मांस, मछली, मुर्ग और अंडों को सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली (पीडीएस) के माध्यम से वितरित किया जाए। यह अपरिपक्व विचार है। दस में से चार बच्चे अल्प पोषण की समस्या से जूझ रहे हैं, ऐसे में प्रोटीनयुक्त खाद्य पदार्थों को बढ़ावा देने की आवश्यकता से इनकार नहीं

किया जा सकता है। परंतु तेजी से खराब होने वाली इन वस्तुओं का पीडीएस के व्यापक नेटवर्क के जरिये वितरण करने का विचार समझदारी भरा नहीं लगता। इन उत्पादों को



विनय सिन्हा

अमेरिकी समाज में बढ़ती असमानता

अमेरिका में बढ़ती आर्थिक असमानता समाज के लिए बड़ी चुनौती बनती जा रही है। इस विषय पर विस्तार से प्रकाश डाल रहे हैं **पार्थसारथि शोम**

भारत और ब्राजील में बढ़ती असमानता के बारे में सभी जानते हैं। मैं काफी समय से इस बारे में लिखता भी रहा हूँ। परंतु अमेरिका में बढ़ती असमानता शायद अधिक चौंकाने वाली बात है। द इकनॉमिस्ट पत्रिका का एक ताजा अंक इस चिंता को कम करके अमेरिका में संपत्ति करता है। इसका शीर्षक है, ‘असमानता के भ्रम: क्यों संपत्ति और आय का अंतर उतना नहीं है जितना वह नजर आता है।’ इसने मुझे प्रतिक्रिया देने पर विवश किया है। इसमें हाल में आए विद्रुतापूर्ण पर्चों के बारे में कहा गया कि उनके नतीजे पूर्व में उन पर्चों के परिणाम से विरोधाभासी हैं जिसमें कहा गया था कि अमेरिका में संपत्ति और आय के अंतर में तेजी से गिरावट आ रही है।

द इकनॉमिस्ट की कवरेज पर करीबी नजर डाली जाए तो पता चलता है कि नये पर्चों में पुराने पर्चों के नतीजों को उलटा नहीं गया है। बल्कि वे उन नतीजों की तीव्रता को कुछ हद तक कम करते हैं। ऐसे में यह निष्कर्ष अक्षुण्ण बना रहता है कि सन 1980 के दशक से अब तक असमानता में तेजी से बढ़ोतरी हुई है। नये निष्कर्ष में नये आंकड़ों का अत्यंत चतुराईपूर्वक इस्तेमाल किया गया है। यही

कारण है कि पिछले निष्कर्षों को नकारने में उनकी अक्षमता दरअसल शुरुआती नतीजों की मजबूती की पुष्टि ही करती है। व्यापक आकलन की शुरुआत इस बात से की जानी चाहिए कि बाजार कैसे काम करते हैं? सन 1776 में आई एडम स्मिथ की पुस्तक वेल्थ ऑफ नेशंस इसकी बुनियाद है। पुस्तक में कहा गया है कि वैयक्तिक लोग व्यक्तिगत लाभ से संचालित होते हैं। उनकी कारोबारी भावना बाजार में उपभोक्ताओं के लिए न्यूनतम मूल्य पर अधिकतम वस्तुएं उपलब्ध कराती हैं। ऐसे में स्वार्थपरकता समाज कल्याण को बढ़ावा देती है। इसके पीछे पूरी तरह एक ही सिद्धांत है और वह है कि आपूर्तिकर्ताओं के बीच प्रतिस्पर्धा।

बाद में अर्थशास्त्रियों ने इस मॉडल में उस समय परिवर्तन किया जब कुछ आपूर्तिकर्ता रह जाते हैं जो बाजार की कीमतों को नियंत्रित कर सकते हैं तब बाजार की कीमतें प्रतिस्पर्धी नहीं रह जाएंगी और उपभोक्ताओं को ऊंची कीमत चुकानी होगी। चाहे जो भी हो लेकिन अदृश्य हाथ का सिद्धांत विश्वसनीय माना गया और बाजार के कामकाज के पीछे उसे ही मुख्य प्रेरणा माना गया।

इसके अलावा उत्पादन प्रक्रिया और श्रम उत्पादकता में सुधार के साथ तथा

तकनीक के उन्नत होने के साथ आर्थिक वृद्धि दर में स्थिर वृद्धि आएगी। उस राह पर तमाम संसाधनों के मालिक यह अनुभव करेंगे कि उनकी पूंजी या उनके श्रम पर प्रतिफल भी उसी दर से बढ़ेगा। यदि यह वृद्धि आबादी में वृद्धि की दर के समान हो गई तो उससे अर्थव्यवस्था की बढ़ोतरी के बुनियादी नियम से ही समझौता हो जाता है।

वह नियम संसाधन मालिकों के शुरुआती दान के बारे में कुछ नहीं कहता। इसे सन 1896 में इटली के अर्थशास्त्री विफ्रेडो पारेटो ने स्थापित किया। एक उभरते और विद्रोही प्रकृति के अर्थशास्त्री के रूप में मैंने अपनी स्नातकोत्तर की थीसिस का विषय रखा, ‘नॉन एथिकल डिस्ट्रिब्यूशन ऐंड फेल्योर्स ऑफ मार्केट।’ इसे एक बार में स्वीकार कर लिए जाने पर मुझे खासी प्रसन्नता हुई थी।

सारा आर्थिक सिद्धांत परिपूर्ण बाजार की सक्षमता पर आधारित था। इसी तरह कराधान सिद्धांत आगे बढ़कर इस निष्कर्ष पर पहुंचा कि आखिर विभिन्न करों का बोझ अंततः किस पर जाता है। इसके नतीजे स्पष्ट थे और उनका सामान्यीकरण किया जा सकता था। उन्हें टैक्स ईसीडेंस थ्योरम कहा गया। बाजार के समक्ष अनुनय मुझे हमेशा परेशान करती थी। मेरी पीएचडी

शाकाहारी है जो शायद निःशुल्क देने पर भी इन उत्पादों का सेवन न करे।

दूसरी ओर ऐसे किफायती और पोषक वैकल्पिक उत्पादों की भी कोई कमी नहीं है जिन्हें पीडीएस के माध्यम से आसानी से वितरित किया जा सकता है। दालें और मोटे अनाज इसमें शामिल हैं। देश में व्यापक तौर पर उगाए जाने वाले फलीदार अनाजों को अगर गरीबों की आर्थिक पहुंच में लाया जा सके तो देश में प्रोटीन की कमी की समस्या दूर हो सकती है। उनका उत्पादन बढ़ाने की जरूरत है ताकि पीडीएस के जरिये उसका वितरण हो सके। मांसाहारी उत्पादों की तुलना में दालों के वितरण में बहुत मामूली सब्सिडी देनी होगी। मोटे अनाजों को अब पोषक अनाज कहा जाने लगा है और अपनी पोषण क्षमता की बदौलत

थीसिस ने दर्शाया कि कैसे किसी बाजार अर्थव्यवस्था में परिणामों की स्वच्छता आसानी से ध्वस्त हो सकती है।

मैं यहां अपने उक्त प्रयासों का उल्लेख इसलिए कर रहा हूँ क्योंकि मैंने कभी इस बात पर यकीन नहीं किया कि बाजार बिना किसी खामी के काम करते हैं। मैंने सन 1970 के दशक में जो निष्कर्ष और नतीजे दिए थे वे संक्षिप्त थे और अमेरिकी आर्थिक प्रतिष्ठान को यह यकीन नहीं दिला पाए कि बाजार में उसका भरोसा गलत था। शायद अपनी परिभाषा के दायरे में भी बाजार अर्थव्यवस्था ने सन 1970 तक व्यापक तौर पर स्वीकार्य प्रदर्शन किया, आर्थिक एजेंट्स को निवेश पर अच्छा प्रतिफल मिला और वेतन भत्तों में बढ़ोतरी हुई। लोगों के जीवन मानक में सुधार हुआ।

सन 1980 के दशक से बाजार प्रतिस्पर्धा के बुनियादी सिद्धांत में दारार आनी शुरू हो गई। नयी सहस्राब्दी में तो ऐसा और अधिक हुआ। सबसे पहले तो आर्थिक एजेंटों के बीच पूरी जानकारी विस्तारित थी और हर एजेंट को इतना छोटा रखा गया कि वह बाजार मूल्य को प्रभावित न कर सके। बाजार को अस्थिर करने की बात तो छोड़ ही दी जाए।

ये दोनों सिद्धांत धीरे-धीरे टूटने लगे। सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी की प्रचुरता के बीच सूचना जुटाना आसान हुआ। विश्लेषकों ने सुरक्षित वैश्विक आंकड़ों से सूचना जुटाना और वैश्विक ज़िंस कीमतों के अनुमान लगाना शुरू किया। जिन निवेशकों को जानकारी नहीं थी उन्होंने मामूली बढ़ोतरी पर अपने शेयर बेच दिए। जबकि सूचित निवेशकों ने कीमतें बढ़ने के बावजूद और अधिक खरीदारी की। इससे कीमतें और बाजार की बुनियाद अस्थिर हुई। जिनके पास सूचना थी उन्हें अपने निवेश की तुलना में कई गुना अधिक लाभ हासिल हुआ। वैश्विक बाजारों को अस्थिर करने और असंगत प्रतिफल हासिल करने के बाद वे वैश्विक परीपकारियों के रूप में सामने आए। यह नई सहस्त्राब्दी का विरोधाभास था। वित्तीय क्षेत्र समेत तमाम क्षेत्रों में ऐसा देखने को मिला।

वृहद स्तर पर देखें तो बार-बार सामने आए वैश्विक संकटों में बाजार के अँधे मुंह गिरने के बावजूद ऐसे एजेंट अधिकतम मूल्य हासिल करने में कामयाब रहे। जबकि इसी अवधि में शेरय बाजार से खरबों डॉलर की राशि स्वाहा हो गई। इससे लाभान्वित होने वाले एजेंट वैश्विक स्तर पर बहुत बड़े स्वरूप में उभरे। इसका असर छोटे प्रतिस्पर्धियों पर पड़ा। कुल मिलाकर इससे प्रतिस्पर्धी बाजार की छवि प्रभावित हुई। ऐसे में असमानता तो लाजिमी तौर पर आनी थी।

वृहद आर्थिक कारकों के अलावा नई सहस्राब्दी के वृहद आर्थिक संकेतक बताते हैं कि कैसे समूचे अमेरिका का भी असमानता बढ़ रही है। यहां तक कि लिंग, नस्ल, आर्थिक गतिशीलता आदि सभी में असमानता बढ़ी है। हमने पत्रिका के जिस अंक से अपनी बात शुरू की, उसमें असमानता समाप्त करने को लेकर विचारों, विश्लेषण और नीतिगत कदमों में आमूलचूल बदलाव की बात निहित है। इसमें भारत के लिए भी अहम सबक हैं।

ये भी पीडीएस में जगह के दावेदार हैं। इनमें बाजरा, ज्वार, रागी आदि शामिल हैं जो उन सूक्ष्म पोषक तत्वों से भरपूर हैं जो चावल और गेहूं में नहीं मिलते। चावल और गेहूं जैसे सब्सिडी वाले अनाज की उपलब्धता के पहले ये अन्न निर्यमित रूप से आम लोगों के भोजन का हिस्सा हुआ करते थे। कर्नाटक के एक स्कूल में जहां बच्चों को मोटा अनाज दिया जाता था, वहां हुए एक अध्ययन ने इन अनाजों के स्वास्थ्यवर्धक गुणों को नए सिरे से सामने रखा है। हैदराबाद स्थित इंटरनैशनल क्रॉप्स रिसर्च इंस्टीट्यूट फॉर सेमी-एरिड ट्रॉपिक्स और एक स्वयंसेवी संगठन अक्षय पात्र द्वारा कराया गया यह अध्ययन बताता है कि मध्याह्न भोजन में चावल की जगह मोटे अनाज को शामिल किया जाए तो बच्चों की वृद्धि में 50 फीसदी तक

का सुधार हो सकता है।

मोटे अनाज के स्वास्थ्यवर्धक होने के नाते दुनिया भर में उसकी लोकप्रियता तेजी से बढ़ रही है। भारत सरकार भी उनके इस गुण से वाकिफ है। बल्कि उसने सन 2018 को मोटे अनाज का वर्ष भी घोषित किया था। इन फसलों के न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य में भी इजाफा किया गया ताकि उत्पादन बढ़ सके। परंतु पीडीएस के जरिये वितरण और उसके पहले सरकारी खरीद जैसी विपणन सहायता की उसे अभी भी प्रतीक्षा है। यदि नीति आयोग दालों और मोटे अनाजों का उत्पादन बढ़ाने और इनकी सहायता से कुपोषण समाप्त करने का प्रयास करे तो बेहतर होगा बजाय कि पीडीएस के जरिये पशु उत्पादों के वितरण पर विचार करने के।

सरकार क्यों अपनाती हैं उथल-पुथल की राह ?



सम सामयिक

टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवन

कारण

सरकार इतने बड़े पैमाने पर हंगामा क्यों खड़ा करती है इसे लेकर मेरे मन में दो व्याख्याएं हैं। इनमें से एक प्राथमिक है तो दूसरी नीतिगत। बाद वाली स्थिति के लिए सरकार को किसी ऐसे को प्रसन्न करना होता है जिसका समर्थन उसके अस्तित्व के लिए जरूरी हो। या फिर कोई ऐसा जो सत्ताधारी दल को वैचारिक संबल प्रदान कर सके।

परंतु इसे सफल बनाने के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि पहली स्थिति बन चुकी हो। यानी युग चेतना आ चुकी हो। एक अच्छा राजनेता समझ जाता है कि यह कब हो रहा है और वह इसका फायदा उठाता है। इंदिरा गांधी ने सन 1960 के दशक के आखिर तक विकसित हुई संपत्ति के पुनर्वितरण की ललक को पहचान लिया था और उन्होंने इसका पूरा लाभ लिया। उस नजरिये से देखें तो यह समझना महत्वपूर्ण है कि व्यापक उथलपुथल की समस्या अकेले सरकार को खड़ी की हुई नहीं होगी बल्कि इसके लिए देश का मिजाज भी वजह होता है जो बदलता है। ऐसे में वास्तविक प्रश्न यह होना चाहिए कि आखिर नया मिजाज क्यों आता है और राजनेता नया मिजाज बनाते हैं या वह मिजाज नेता बनाता है? उदाहरण के लिए सन 1960 के दशक के अंत तक न तो समाजवाद और न ही मौजूदा स्वरूप वाली धर्मनिरपेक्षता राजनीतिक मंचों पर नजर आती थी। इन बातों के बारे में कोई भी ज्यादा बात नहीं करता था। बल्कि इन विचारों को राजनीतिक हथियार के रूप में इस्तेमाल किए जाने को नापसंद किया जाता था और लोग इसे खारिज कर देते थे। जन संघ जैसे जिन दलों ने इस पर जोर दिया उनकी अनदेखी करनी उचित समझी गई। सन 1989 तक जन

इसकी तुलना वर्तमान से करते

हैं। मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल को बमुश्किल सात महीने हुए हैं और इसने हर वह काम किया है जो पार्टी और उसका वैचारिक साझेदार चाहता है— तीन तलाक, अनुच्छेद 370 का खत्या और नया नागरिकता अधिनियम।

परंतु अब जबकि बड़े राजनीतिक काम हो चुके हैं, समय आ गया है कि वह अर्थव्यवस्था पर ध्यान दे जो असली समस्या बना हुआ है। रंधाण्यता के सिद्धांत में इसे ऐसा बदलाव कहा जाता है जिसमें घोटालों को इस प्रकार परिवर्तित कर सकते हैं कि चीजें आपके पक्ष में घटित हों। इंदिरा गांधी ने इसका सफलतापूर्वक इस्तेमाल किया। अब मोदी भी ऐसा कर रहे हैं। हकीकत में उन्हें करना ही चाहिए। इंदिरा गांधी ने राष्ट्रीयकरण किया था, मोदी को इसे समाप्त करना चाहिए।

कानाफूसी

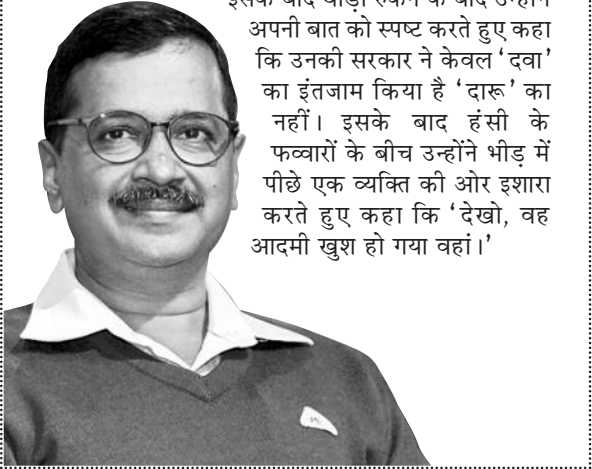
चॉकलेट वाले पुलिसकर्मी

देश भर में क्रिसमस, नए साल के आगमन के साथ-साथ अन्य त्योहारी मौसम की धूम है और त्योहारों का रंग गोवा की पुलिस पर भी चढ़ गया है। गोवा पुलिस ने यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन करने वालों को दंडित करने के बजाय उन्हें चॉकलेट भेंट की। इतना ही नहीं पणजी में गश्त कर रहे पुलिसकर्मियों ने क्रिसमस के मौके को देखते हुए सांता क्लॉज की पोशाक भी पहनी। साथ ही यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन करने वालों को यातायात सुरक्षा और संबंधित नियमों को लेकर लंबा-चौड़ा भाषण भी सुना पड़ा। यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन करने वाले कुछ लोगों को यह सब मजेदार लगा क्योंकि उन्हें जुर्माना नहीं देना पड़ा। वहीं अन्य लोग इस बात को लेकर संशय में थे कि यह कवायद जरूरी संदेश दे भी पाएगी या नहीं।

दारु नहीं सिर्फ दवा

दिल्ली के मुख्यमंत्री अरविंद केजरीवाल ने मंगलवार को शहर की झुगियायों और झोपड़ियों में रहने वाले लोगों के लिए ‘मुख्यमंत्री आवास योजना’ की शुरुआत की। ध्यान रहे कि दिल्ली में फरवरी महीने में विधानसभा चुनाव होने हैं। इस अवसर पर केजरीवाल ने कहा कि पिछले पांच साल में उनकी सरकार ने आम लोगों को बुनियादी सुविधाएं दिलाने के लिए काम किया है। उन्होंने कहा, ‘आपके स्कूल का इंतजाम कर दिया, आपके पानी का इंतजाम कर दिया, आपके दवा दारु का इंतजाम कर दिया।’

इसके बाद थोड़ा रुकने के बाद उन्होंने अपनी बात को स्पष्ट करते हुए कहा कि उनकी सरकार ने केवल ‘दवा’ का इंतजाम किया है ‘दारु’ का नहीं। इसके बाद हंसी के फव्वारों के बीच उन्होंने भीड़ में पीछे एक व्यक्ति को ओर इशारा करते हुए कहा कि ‘देखो, वह आदमी खुश हो गया वहां।’



आपका पक्ष

गरीबों की योजनाओं पर अमीरों का ग्रहण

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की सरकार ने देश के हर गरीब की रसोई तक रसोई गैस पहुंचाने के लिए उज्ज्वला योजना शुरू की है। सरकार ने उन गरीब परिवारों तक मुफ्त रसोई गैस देने के लिए पहल की है जो 21वीं सदी में भी कोयले या लकड़ी जलाकर रसोई चलाते थे। हिमाचल प्रदेश सरकार ने इसी तर्ज पर मुख्यमंत्री गुहिणी योजना के तहत उन गरीब परिवारों तक रसोई गैस पहुंचाने के लिए प्रयास किए जो किन्हीं कारणों से उज्ज्वला योजना का लाभ नहीं ले पाए। लेकिन देश के कुछ समृद्ध लोग भी सरकार की मुफ्त की सुविधाओं को लेना चाहते हैं। इसका उदाहरण हिमाचल प्रदेश सरकार की मुख्यमंत्री गुहिणी योजना के लिए मुफ्त रसोई गैस कनेक्शन लेने वालों में कुछ फर्जी आवेदनों का आना है। अगर केंद्र और राज्य सरकार मुफ्त की दी जा रही सेवाओं की निष्पक्ष और उचित जांच करे तो बहुत चकित करने वाले आंकड़े सामने आएंगे। अक्सर



देखा गया है कि केंद्र और राज्य सरकार को योजनाएं गरीबों के लिए बनाती हैं वे भ्रष्टाचार के कारण दूर दूराज गांवों तक पहुंचने से पहले ही दम तोड़ देती हैं और जरूरतमंद लोग सरकार की योजनाओं से वंचित रह जाते हैं। सरकारों को इन योजनाओं को अमल में लाने के साथ ऐसी व्यवस्था का इंतजाम करना चाहिए कि कोई भी अपने

गरीबों के लिए बनी सरकारी योजनाओं का क्रियाव्यवहन उचित तरीके से होना चाहिए

चहेतों को सरकारी योजनाओं का लाभ नहीं दे पाए और किसी अमीर व्यक्ति को गरीबों की योजनाओं का लाभ नहीं मिल सके।

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

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@bmail.in पत्र/ईमेल में अपना डाक पता और टेलीफोन नंबर अवश्य लिखें।

भिक्षावृत्ति पर रोक लगाने की जरूरत

देश में भिक्षावृत्ति सड़क किनारे, धार्मिक स्थल या चौक-चौराहों पर दिख जाती है। भारत में भीख मांगना और भीख देना पौराणिक कर्म है। इसे दान की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है। इस वजह से यहां भिक्षुकों की संख्या में वृद्धि हो रही है। देश में एक वर्ग ऐसा है जिनके पास भोजन, कपड़ा और आवास नहीं है। यह वर्ग मजबूर होकर भिक्षावृत्ति अपना लेता है। लेकिन आज भिक्षावृत्ति ने एक व्यवसाय का रूप ले लिया है जो दया, सहानुभूति जैसी मानवीय भावनाओं का लाभ उठाते हैं। इस पर रोक लगाने के लिए वास्तविक स्थिति का पता सर्वेक्षण के जरिये लगाया जा सकता है। सर्वेक्षण से प्राप्त आंकड़ों के आधार पर कानून बनाने की जरूरत है। इसके अलावा गरीबी, बेरोजगारी, भुखमरी के शिकार लोगों तक मौलिक सुविधाएं पहुंचाने की जरूरत है। भिक्षावृत्ति से जुड़े लोगों के लिए पुनर्वास योजना बनाने की जरूरत है।

अनु मिश्रा, सीवान



प्रेम हर बोझ को हल्का बना देता है

योजनाओं का असर

पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के जन्मदिन पर अटल भूजल योजना की शुरुआत कर प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने एक और उपयोगी योजना की नींव रखी। छह हजार करोड़ रुपये वाली इस योजना का उद्देश्य भूजल स्तर को उठाना और जल संकट से निपटना है। यह योजना देश के उन सात राज्यों पर केंद्रित है जहां भूमिगत जल का स्तर नीचे जा रहा है, लेकिन यह ध्यान रहे कि ऐसा अन्य राज्यों में भी हो रहा है। यह वक्त की मांग है कि अन्य राज्य अपने स्तर पर भूमिगत जल के गिरे स्तर की चिंता करें। जल को संरक्षित करने का काम केवल केंद्र सरकार के भरोसे नहीं छोड़ा जा सकता। जल संरक्षण के मामले में मोदी सरकार ने अपनी गंभीरता का परिचय तभी दे दिया था जब दोबारा सत्ता में आने के बाद जल संसाधन और पेयजल मंत्रालय को मिलाकर जल शक्ति मंत्रालय का गठन किया था। ऐसा करके उसने जल जीवन अभियान के तहत हर घर को नल से जल पहुंचाने की योजना पर भी काम शुरू किया। यह भी एक महत्वाकांक्षी योजना है। वास्तव में ऐसी योजनाओं के जरिये ही भावी जल संकट से निपटा जा सकता है। यह उम्मीद करनी चाहिए कि मोदी सरकार जल संबंधी जिन भी योजनाओं पर आगे बढ़ रही है उन्हें वैसी ही सफलता मिले जैसी विकास एवं जनकल्याण संबंधी अन्य योजनाओं को मिली है।

इससे कोई इन्कार नहीं कर सकता कि मोदी सरकार के पहले कार्यकाल में शुरू की गई र्सोई गैस, आवास, बिजली, शौचालय, स्वास्थ्य संबंधी योजनाओं ने उल्लेखनीय सफलता हासिल की। इन योजनाओं की सफलता का सबसे बड़ा प्रमाण मोदी सरकार की शानदार वापसी से मिलता है। अपनी विकास एवं जनकल्याण संबंधी योजनाओं के अमल में कहीं अधिक सक्षम होने के बाद भी मोदी सरकार को इस पर विचार करने की जरूरत है कि उसके राजनीतिक विरोधी जब-तब ऐसा माहौल तैयार करने में क्यों सफल हो जा रहे हैं कि इस सरकार को जनता के हितों की परवाह नहीं और वह तो अपनी किसी गुप्त एजेंडे पर काम कर रही है? इस सवाल पर विचार करने की जरूरत इसलिए है, क्योंकि हाल में नागरिकता कानून पर सुनियोजित दुष्प्रचार के तहत एक ऐसा माहौल खड़ा कर दिया गया जैसे सरकार ने कोई जनविरोधी और संविधान विरोधी काम कर दिया है। मोदी सरकार और साथ ही भाजपा को इस पर ध्यान देना ही होगा कि झूठ का इतना बड़ा पहाड़ कैसे खड़ा हो गया? सरकारी तंत्र और साथ ही भाजपा के तमाम सांसद एवं विधायक समय रहते इस झूठ की कात धक्कों नहीं कर सके? सरकार को चाहिए कि वह अपने प्रति जनता के भरोसे की डोर को और मजबूत करे।

मॉनिटरिंग की दरकार

उत्तरखंड में पलायन का दंश झेल रहे गांवों के विकास के मद्देनजर धनवर्षा तो खुब हो रही है, लेकिन इसके सार्थक नतीजे नजर नहीं आ रहे। पिछले तीन वर्षों की तस्वीर तो यही बयां कर रही है। न सिर्फ केंद्र, बल्कि राज्य सरकार से भी गांवों को खुब पैसा जारी किया गया। 14 वें वित्त आयोग की सिफारिशों के आधार पर वर्ष 2015-16 से अब तक राज्य में त्रिस्तरीय पंचायतों को 1694.40 करोड़ की राशि जारी की जा चुकी है। इसके साथ ही चतुर्थ राज्य वित्त आयोग की सिफारिशों के अनुसार पंचायतों को करीब एक हजार करोड़ रुपये जारी हो चुके हैं। यानी तीन वर्ष की अवधि में लगभग 2700 करोड़ का बजट। बावजूद इसके गांवों की तस्वीर में खास फर्क नजर नहीं आ रहा। ये जरूर है कि गांवों तक पहुंचने के लिए पैदल मार्ग तो दिखते हैं, लेकिन वहां अन्य मूलभूत सुविधाओं के विस्तार को अभी काफी कुछ किया जाना बाकी है। साफ है कि सिस्टम के स्तर पर कहीं न कहीं खोत है। यदि ऐसा नहीं होता तो बीते तीन सालों में 2700 करोड़ के बजट से हुए कार्यों के बूते गांव अपनी चमक बिखेरते दिखते।

असल में गांव के लिए बजट तो जारी हो रहा, लेकिन इसके सदुपयोग और समय पर उपयोग के मोर्चे पर सिस्टम की बेपरवाही भारी पड़ रही है। ऐसा नहीं है कि विकास कार्यों पर नजर रखने को तंत्र न हो। प्रदेश से लेकर जिला, ब्लॉक व ग्राम स्तर तक मॉनिटरिंग की व्यवस्था है, लेकिन मशीनरी अपने इस दायित्व की तरफ क्यों आंखें मूंदे है, ये समझ से परे हैं। गांव के विकास के लिए आए बजट का सही उपयोग हो रहा है या नहीं, कार्य ठीक से हो रहे हैं या नहीं, इनकी गुणवत्ता कैसी है, ये सब देखना तो मशीनरी का ही दायित्व है। यदि कहीं खामियां हैं तो उसे दुरुस्त कराना भी उसकी जिम्मेदारी है। मॉनिटरिंग के मोर्चे पर सुस्ती के इस आलम का ही नतीजा है कि गांव के हालात बदल नहीं रहे। ऐसे में वहां से बेहतर भविष्य के दृष्टिगत लोगों का पलायन नहीं होगा तो और क्या होगा। खैर, अब बीती ताहि बिसारि दे, आगे की सुध ले की तर्ज पर चलते हुए मशीनरी को ज्यादा सक्रिय करने की आवश्यकता है। उम्मीदी की जानी चाहिए कि राज्य सरकार इस बिंदु पर गंभीरता से कदम उठाते हुए मशीनरी के पेंच कसेगी, तब जाकर ही गांवों को सरसब्ज बनाने की मुहिम आकार ले पाएगी। साथ ही जनसामान्य को भी इसके लिए शिद्दत से आगे आना होगा।

त्रिस्तरीय पंचायतों में विकास कार्यों की मॉनिटरिंग के लिए ठोस एवं प्रभावी कदम उठाने की आवश्यकता शिद्दत से महसूस की जा रही है

लैंगिक भेदभाव को मिटाने की चुनौती

सुधीर कुमार

विश्व आर्थिक मंच द्वारा जारी ग्लोबल जेंडर गैप इंडेक्स-2020 में भारत एक साल पहले के मुकाबले चार पायदान फिसलकर 112वें स्थान पर पहुंच गया है। 153 देशों की इस सूची में आइसलैंड शीर्ष पर है, जबकि इसमें भारत का स्थान चीन, श्रीलंका, नेपाल और बांग्लादेश से भी नीचे है। महिलाओं को उपलब्ध आर्थिक अवसर, राजनीतिक सहभागिता, शैक्षणिक उपलब्धियां तथा स्वास्थ्य स्तर के मामले में भारत लगातार पिछड़ता जा रहा है। महिलाओं की राजनीतिक भागीदारी के मामले में भारत 18वें, स्वास्थ्य के मामले में 150वें, शिक्षा के मामले में 112वें तथा आर्थिक हिस्सेदारी में 149वें स्थान पर है। यह चिंताजनक है।

लैंगिक समानता के मामले में आइसलैंड, फिनलैंड और नॉर्वे जैसे राष्ट्र ही शीर्ष पर क्यों रहते हैं? आइसलैंड एक छोटा-सा यूरोपीय देश है, लेकिन लैंगिक समानता के मोर्चे पर विश्व का पथ-प्रदर्शक बन गया है। वहां की सरकार ने कानून बनाकर एक ही काम के लिए किसी महिला को कम और पुरुष को ज्यादा वेतन देने की प्रथा को अवैध घोषित कर दिया है। क्या

महिलाओं को सम्मान तथा समुचित अवसर देकर ही लैंगिक भेदभाव से मुक्त समाज की स्थापना संभव है

इस तरह की पहल अन्य राष्ट्र नहीं कर सकते? रवांडा दुनिया का पहला देश है, जिसकी संसद में 61 फीसद महिलाएं हैं। भारत में ये आंकड़े केवल 12 फीसद हैं। यहां की संसद में महिलाओं के लिए 33 फीसद आरक्षण का बिल अभी भी अघर में लटका हुआ है। जाहिर है, इस दिशा में भारत को लंबा सफर तय करना शेष है। 1906 में महिलाओं को राजनीतिक अधिकार देकर विश्व का पहला देश बना फिनलैंड के बारे में यह जानना रोचक है कि वहां कामकाजी महिलाओं की स्थिति बहुत ही अच्छी है। वहां बच्चों के साथ उनके पिता ज्यादा समय व्यतीत करते हैं, जिससे महिलाएं अपने कामकाज पर अधिक ध्यान दे पाती हैं।

लैंगिक समानता किसी भी राष्ट्र के उत्थान के लिए एक जरूरी शर्त है। इसका अर्थ महिलाओं को समाज एवं विकास की मुख्यधारा में

शामिल करने से है। देश में महिलाओं की जोड़ीपी में हिस्सेदारी 17 फीसद है। विश्व मुद्रा कोष के एक आकलन के मुताबिक देश की श्रम-शक्ति में महिलाओं की समान भागीदारी से भारत की जोड़ीपी में 27 फीसद तक की वृद्धि हो सकती है।

बहरहाल भारतीय संविधान में लिंग आधारित भेदभाव रोकने के अनेक सुरक्षात्मक उपबंध किए गए हैं, लेकिन पितृसत्तात्मक सामाजिक व्यवस्था में महिलाओं को सदैव दोयम दर्ज का ही समझा गया है। हालांकि समाज में लैंगिक समानता केवल कानून के बय के बल पर नहीं, अपितु मानसिकता में बदलाव दिलाकर ही स्थापित किया जा सकता है। समझना होगा कि स्त्री-पुरुष एक ही सिक्के के दो पहलू हैं। सामाजिक उत्थान में जितना योगदान पुरुषों का है, उतना ही महिलाओं का भी है। इस संबंध में हम मिजोरम और मेघालय से सीख सकते हैं, जहां बिना किसी भेदभाव के महिलाओं को समान रूप से काम दिया जाता है। महिलाओं को सम्मान तथा समूचित अवसर देकर ही लैंगिक भेदभाव से मुक्त प्रातिशील समाज की स्थापना संभव है।

(लेखक वीएचएन में अध्येता हैं)



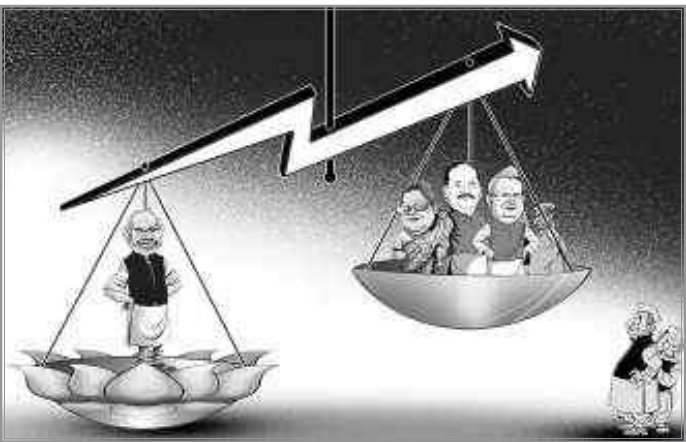
प्रदीप सिंह

भाजपा सांसदों और विधायकों के मन में यह बात घर कर गई है कि उन्हें कुछ करने की जरूरत नहीं, चुनाव जिताने के लिए मोदी-शाह तो हैं ही

झारखंड विधानसभा चुनाव का नतीजा भाजपा के लिए चेतावनी, चुनौती और अवसर, तीनों के लेकर आया है। मतदाताओं ने एक बार फिर साबित किया कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी जब अपने लिए वोट मांगते हैं तो वह उनकी झोली भरने में संकोच नहीं करता, पर जब वे अपनी प्रदेश सरकार या प्रदेश इकाई के लिए वोट मांगने आते हैं तो उसका रवैया बदल जाता है। मतदाता मोदी और भाजपा को अलग-अलग देखता है। मतदाता एक तरह से गौतम बुद्ध के अनुसर करता है। वह कुपात्र पर दया करने में विश्वास नहीं करता। उसकी नजर में रघुवर दास कुपात्र साबित हुए। मतदाता काफी अर्से से भाजपा को चेतावनी दे रहा है कि राज्य नेतृत्व पर ध्यान दीजिए। मोदी-शाह की कमाई का पुण्य कुछ तो पार्टी को मिल जाएगा, पर राज्य इकाइयों/मुख्यमंत्रियों का पाप उन्हीं के साथ रहेगा। दिल्ली, बिहार, राजस्थान और अब झारखंड में वही कहानी दोहराई गई। 'मोदी तुझसे बैर नहीं, वसुधा तेरी खैर नहीं' का नारा भले ही केवल राजस्थान में लगा हो, लेकिन सुनाई इन राज्यों में भी दे रहा था। 1977 से अब तक के भाजपा मुख्यमंत्रियों की बात की जाए तो रघुवर दास कई पैमाने पर खराब मुख्यमंत्री गिने जाएंगे। लगता है कि राजस्थान में नेतृत्व परिवर्तन न करने का खामियाज भुगतने के बाद भी पार्टी ने कोई सबक नहीं सीखा।

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की कार्यशैली से लगता है कि वह गुजरात के मुख्यमंत्री के रूप में अपने अनुभवों के आधार पर पार्टी के तौर-तरीके में बदलाव लाना चाहते हैं। गुजरात का मुख्यमंत्री बनने के बाद वह चाहते थे कि उन्हें काम करने की पूरी आजादी मिले। उन्होंने यह आजादी हासिल भी की। साल 2014 में प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद मोदी-शाह ने जिसे भी मुख्यमंत्री बनाया उस पर पूरा भरोसा किया। काम करने की पूरी छूट दी। यहां तक कि पार्टी के भीतर ही अपने विरोधियों को कमजोर करने की भी इजाजत दी, लेकिन जिन पर भरोसा किया वे उम्मीदों पर पूरी तरह खरे नहीं उतर रहे। दो इंजन वाली सरकारों को इन्होंने ऐसा बना दिया जिसमें एक ही इंजन काम करता है। भाजपा की ज्यादातर राज्य सरकारों के पास उपलब्धि के नाम पर केंद्र सरकार की योजनाओं की कामयाबी ही है। बात इतने तक ही सीमित नहीं है। भाजपा के ज्यादातर सांसदों और विधायकों के मन में एक बात घर कर गई है कि उन्हें कुछ करने की जरूरत नहीं है, चुनाव जिताने के लिए मोदी-शाह तो हैं ही। पार्टी के लोगों में इस तरह की प्रवृत्ति को रोकना मोदी-शाह की सबसे बड़ी चुनौती है। यह चुनौती और बड़ी हो जाएगी जब अमित शाह अध्यक्ष पद छोड़ेंगे।

चुनाव में हार-जीत के शोर में सबसे अहम बात की शायद अनदेखी हो रही है। मोदी के प्रधानमंत्री और अमित शाह के पार्टी अध्यक्ष बनने के बाद से भाजपा के सफर पर ध्यान देना



अवधेश राजगुप्त

जरूरी है। महाराष्ट्र में भाजपा चौथे से पहले नंबर और हरियाणा में तीसरे से पहले नंबर की पार्टी बन गई। यह उस समय हुआ जब मोदी लहर के अलावा उसे ऐंटी इन्कबेंसी का फायदा मिला। पांच साल बाद अपनी सरकार की ऐंटी इन्कबेंसी के बावजूद दोनों राज्यों में वह पहले नंबर की पार्टी बनी रही। त्रिपुरा, जहां पार्टी का कोई नामलेवा नहीं था, वहां वह सत्ता में आ गई। उत्तर प्रदेश में जहां 17 साल से पार्टी तीसरे नंबर पर थी वहां वह प्रचंड बहुमत से सत्ता में है। कर्नाटक में मई 2018 में बहुमत से भले ही थोड़ा कम रह गई हो, पर पहले नंबर की पार्टी बनी। असम सहित पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों में भाजपा हाशिये से राजनीतिक वर्चस्व वाली पार्टी बनी। इसी तरह बंगाल और ओडिशा में दूसरे नंबर की पार्टी बन गई।

पिछले दो साल में पांच राज्यों में भाजपा की सरकार जाने की बड़ी चर्चा है। ये राज्य हैं, मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़, महाराष्ट्र और अब झारखंड। छत्तीसगढ़ और झारखंड की हार भाजपा को जरूर खलेगी। हालांकि छत्तीसगढ़ में 15 साल सत्ता में रहने के बाद

पार्टी बाहर हुई है। वहीं, मध्यप्रदेश में 15 साल की सत्ता के बाद भी वह सत्ता से ज्यादा दूर नहीं गई। राजस्थान हर पांच साल में सत्ता परिवर्तन की परिपाटी का अभी तक निवाह कर रहा है। महाराष्ट्र में तो गजब ही हुआ। उसे भाजपा की चुनावी हार कहना ज्यादाती होगी। इसके अलावा एक और बड़ा काम मोदी-शाह की जोड़ी कर रही है-प्रदेश में नए और ज्यादातर जगह युवा नेतृत्व को उभारने की। योगी आदित्यनाथ, देवेंद्र फडुनवीस, सर्वानंद सोनोवाल, फिलव देव, जयराम ठाकुर और प्रमोद सावंत जैसे युवा हैं तो मनोहर लाल खट्टर और त्रिवेंद्र सिंह रावत जैसे नए नेता, लेकिन दिल्ली और बिहार में नेतृत्व अभाव पार्टी के लिए समस्या बना हुआ है। हाल-फिलहाल इस समस्या के हल के आसार भी नहीं दिख रहे। कहते हैं कि युद्ध जीतने के लिए कुछ लड़ाइयां हारनी पड़ती हैं। चार राज्यों की हार कुछ ऐसी ही है। भाजपा जिस राज्य में सत्ता से बाहर हुई है, वहां कांग्रेस की तरह मटियापेट नहीं हुई है। सबसे बड़ी और अहम बात यह है कि राष्ट्रीय विमर्श भाजपा के

अपने ही वादे से मुकरती कांग्रेस

बांग्लादेशी नागरिकों की घुसपैठ की समस्या से प्रभावित राज्यों का एक सम्मेलन सितंबर, 1992 में हुआ था। तत्कालीन केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री एसबी चव्हाण ने इस सम्मेलन में प्रभावित राज्य सरकारों के प्रतिनिधियों को दिल्ली बुलाया था। इसमें असम, बंगाल, बिहार, त्रिपुरा, अरुणाचल और मिजोरम के मुख्यमंत्री और मणिपुर, नागालैंड एवं दिल्ली के प्रतिनिधि भी थे। सम्मेलन में यह प्रस्ताव पारित किया गया कि सीमावर्ती जिलों के सभी निवासियों को परिचय पत्र दिए जाएं। सम्मेलन की राय थी कि बांग्लादेश से बड़ी संख्या में अवैध प्रवेश से देश के विभिन्न भागों में जनसांख्यिकीय परिवर्तन सहित अनेक गंभीर समस्याएं उठ खड़ी हुई हैं। इस समस्या से निपटने के लिए केंद्र एवं राज्य सरकारों द्वारा मिलकर एक समन्वित कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन पर भी सहमति बनी। बिहार के तब के मुख्यमंत्री लालू प्रसाद ने घुसपैठियों द्वारा अचल संपत्ति की खरीद पर रोक लगाने के लिए कानून बनाने का सुझाव दिया था। उन्होंने यह भी कहा था कि सीमावर्ती जिलों में भारतीय नागरिकों को पहचान पत्र जारी किए जाने चाहिए, लेकिन लगता है कि उस संकल्प को भुला दिया गया। समय के साथ घुसपैठियों की समस्या बढ़ती ही चली गई।

तथ्य यह भी है कि धार्मिक प्रताड़ना से पीड़ित शरणार्थियों को नागरिकता देने का वादा कांग्रेस ने 1947 से 2003 तक लगातार किया, पर इन दोनों मसलों के समाधान के लिए जब मोदी सरकार ने पहल की तो कांग्रेस सहित कुछ दलों ने एक वर्ग में भ्रम फैलाकर उसकासी की हस्तक्षेप कोशिश की, जिसका नतीजा जगह-जगह हिंसक विरोध-प्रदर्शनों के रूप में दिखा। धीरे-धीरे कांग्रेस सहित अन्य विपक्षी दलों का भंडाफोड़ हो रहा है। आने वाले दिनों में इसका राजनीतिक खामियाजा विरोधी दलों को भुगतान पड़ सकता है। नागरिकता कानून के विरोध में जिस तरह की हिंसक घटनाएं हुईं और अभी भी लोगों को झूठ के सहारे बरगलाना जा रहा है उसे सारा देश देख-सुन रहा है। धीरे-धीरे इस हिंसा से जुड़े लोग खुद ही बेनकाब हो रहे हैं। हिंसक तत्वों को बेनकाब करने वाले तथ्य लगातार सामने भी आ रहे हैं, जैसे कि अलीगढ़ मुस्लिम विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति तारिक मंसूर ने स्वीकार किया कि हमें परिसर में पुलिस बुलाने का दुखद निर्णय इसलिए लेना पड़ा, क्योंकि समाज विरोधी तत्व घुस आए थे। हालांकि यही काम दिल्ली में जागिया विश्वविद्यालय के प्रधान ने नहीं किया। इससे पहले दिल्ली के जामा मस्जिद के शाही इमाम सैयद अहमद बुखारी ने संजम बरतने की अपील करते हुए



सुरेंद्र किशोर



नागरिकता कानून के विरोध में खड़े दल यह समझें कि वे देश के शांत बहुमत की सहानुभूति तेजी से खो रहे हैं

कहा कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून, 2019 का भारतीय मुसलमानों से कुछ लेना-देना ही नहीं है।

नागरिक संशोधन कानून, 2019 से वैसे शरणार्थियों को नागरिकता मिलनी है जो वर्षों से यहां रह रहे हैं, पर उनको नागरिकता देने के लिए बने कानून का विरोध हो रहा है। यह विरोध तब हो रहा है जब पड़ोसी देशों के अल्पसंख्यक समुदायों के शरणार्थियों को नागरिकता देने के लिए दिसंबर, 2003 को प्रतिपक्ष के नेता मनमोहन सिंह ने वाजपेयी सरकार में उप प्रधानमंत्री लालकृष्ण आडवाणी से सदन में आग्रह किया था। यह भी ध्यान रहे कि नवंबर, 1947 को हुई कांग्रेस कार्यसमिति की बैठक में भी इसी आशय का प्रस्ताव पारित किया गया था। नागरिकता संशोधन कानून नेहरू-लियाकत समझौता-1950 की भावना के भी अनुकूल है, पर दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण यह है कि हमारे अधिकतर नेता समय के साथ राजनीतिक सुविधानुसार अपना रुख बदलते रहते हैं। इतना ही नहीं वे लोगों को या तो भ्रष्टाकरे हैं या फिर उनकी हिंसा से मुंह मोड़ लेते हैं। देशव्यापी हिंसक घटनाओं के मामले में ऐसी खबरें आ रही हैं कि इन घटनाओं के पीछे प्रतिबंधित सिमा और

पॉपुलर फ्रंट ऑफ इंडिया जैसे संगठनों का हाथ हैं। माना जाता है कि इन संगठनों को उन्हीं राजनीतिक शक्तियों से बढ़ावा मिला जिन्होंने देशव्यापी हिंसक घटनाओं की निंदा तक नहीं की। उल्टे पुलिस कार्रवाइयों की आलोचना की। जो लोग हिंसा कर या करा रहे हैं, उन्हें पता होना चाहिए कि देशव्यापी स्तर पर एनआरसी की अभी कोई पहल नहीं हुई है और सरकार ने वादा भी किया है कि जब भी यह कवायद की जाएगी उसमें इसका पूरा ध्यान रखा जाएगा कि कोई भारतीय नागरिक इसमें शामिल होने से रहे न जाए और सभी विदेशी घुसपैठियों की पहचान भी हो जाए। केंद्रीय गृह मंत्रालय ने यह भी स्पष्ट किया है कि किसी भी भारतीय को उसके माता-पिता या दादा-दादी के 1971 के पहले के जन्म प्रमाण पत्र जैसे दस्तावेज दिखाकर नागरिकता साबित करने के लिए नहीं कहा जाएगा। ऐसी बातें लगातार कही जा रही हैं, पर स्वाथी तत्व इसकी अनदेखी कर रहे हैं। इस अनदेखी या नासमझी का खामियाजा देर-सबेर उन दलों को भी भुगतना पड़ सकता है जो अतिवादिता को बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं, क्योंकि वे देश के शांत बहुमत की सहानुभूति तेजी से खो रहे हैं। यह बहुमत यह भी देख रहा है कि किस तरह एक के बाद एक मसले पर दुष्प्रचार हो रहा है। यह हास्यास्पद है कि अब राष्ट्रीय जनसंख्या रजिस्टर को लेकर भी दुष्प्रचार शुरू हो गया है, जबकि ऐसा रजिस्टर तैयार करने की पहल कांग्रेस के समय हुई थी। क्या कांग्रेस नेता यह कहना चाह रहे हैं कि जो काम हमने किया वह तो ठीक, लेकिन वही काम और क्यों करे तो गलत?

दुर्भाग्य है कि इन दिनों वैसे लोग देश एवं सरकार पर हावी होने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं जो देश को धर्मशाला समझ रहे हैं। राष्ट्रीय नागरिक रजिस्टर का कार्यान्वयन इस देश के मौजूदा स्वरूप की रक्षा के लिए अत्यंत जरूरी है। यह देश के जीवन-मरण का प्रश्न है। इस मामले में पहले ही देरी हो चुकी है। अब और देरी अत्यंत घातक साबित होगी। इस समस्या पर समय-समय पर विचार तो हुए, समस्या की गंभीरता को भी स्वीकार किया गया, कुछ निर्णय भी हुए, पर कितना लागू हुआ, यह एक यक्ष प्रश्न है? दरअसल वोट बैंक को ध्यान में रखते हुए नेता और दल इस पर रुक बदलते रहे। आज अधिकतर देशों के पास उनका अपना राष्ट्रीय नागरिक रजिस्टर है। अब यदि भारत में रजिस्टर नहीं बना तो आगे स्थिति इतनी खराब हो चुकी होगी कि उसे संभालना असंभव हो जाएगा।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ पत्रकार हैं)

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हाथ से नहीं निकला है, बल्कि उसकी पकड़ और मजबूत हुई है। पिछले छह महीने में तीन तलाक, जम्मू-कश्मीर का विशेष दर्जा खत्म करने और सुप्रीम कोर्ट से अयोध्या पर अनुकूल फैसले से भाजपा और मोदी-शाह की स्थिति मजबूत ही हुई है। अब नागरिकता संशोधन कानून पर विपक्ष के प्रायोजित हिंसक विरोध ने भाजपा के पक्ष में जैसा धुवीकरण किया है वैसा पहले कभी नहीं हुआ। यह काम भाजपा और पूरा संघ परिवार मिलकर अगले 10-20 साल में भी नहीं कर पाते।

नागरिकता संशोधन कानून, एनआरसी और अब एनपीआर का विरोध करके विपक्ष को लग रहा है कि उसने सरकार को घेर लिया है और मोदी-शाह को कदम पीछे हटाने पर मजबूर कर दिया है। विपक्ष दलों का हथ मुगालता उन्हें आने वाले समय में भारी पड़ने वाला है। विपक्ष का यह दांव नए भौगोलिक क्षेत्रों में भाजपा के विस्तार का आधार बनेगा। बंगाल, ओडिशा, तैलंगाना, आंध्र और केरल भाजपा के राजनीतिक/चुनावी विस्तार के नए राज्य बनने वाले हैं। इनमें 2021 में बंगाल पहली बार भाजपा को सत्ता में पहुंचा दे तो आश्चर्य की बात नहीं होगी। बिहार में जनता दल यूनाइटेड के नेताओं के बयान से लग रहा है कि इस माहौल में उन्हें अवसर नजर आ रहा है। खासतौर से झारखंड में हार के बाद। उन्हें लग रहा है कि विधानसभा चुनाव में ज्यादा सीटें लेने के लिए अब भाजपा को दबाया जा सकता है। लोकसभा चुनाव से पहले तीन राज्यों में हार के बाद उसने यही किया था। इस बार उन्हें झटका लग सकता है। 2019 में केंद्र सरकार दांव पर थी। पार्टी कोई जोखिम मोल नहीं लेना चाहती थी। इस बार दांव पर नीतीश कुमार का मुख्यमंत्री पद है।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं स्तंभकार हैं)

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भटकाव से मुक्ति

नर भटका हुआ देवता है। यदि वह इस भटकाव से छुटकारा पा सके और विवेकशीलता अपना सके तो इतने भर से ही स्वयं पार उतरने और अनेकों को पार उतारने की स्थिति बन सकती है। इसके लिए विद्वान या पहलवान होना आवश्यक नहीं। कबीर, दादू, रैदास, मीरा, शबरी आदि ने विद्वता या संपन्नता के आधार पर वह श्रेय प्राप्त नहीं किया था। मनुष्य के पास शरीर, मन और अंतःकरण ये तीन ऐसी खदों हैं, जिनमें से इच्छानुसार मणिमुक्तक खोदकर निकाले जा सकते हैं। बाहरी सहयोग भी सत्संगों को अनायास ही मिल जाता है। अच्छे नंबरो से उत्तीर्ण होने वाले विद्यार्थियों को सहज छात्रवृत्तियां मिल जाती हैं। मात्र कुपात्र ही कभी भाग्य पर, कभी ग्रह-नक्षत्रों को बहवा दे रहे हैं, क्योंकि वे देश के शांत बहुमत के सहारे जी जस्तुर है। इस स्थिति से उबरने की जरूरत है।

गतिवानों को किसी ने रोका नहीं है। गंगा का प्रवाहमान संकल्प, उसे महासागर के मिलन तक पहुंचाए बिना बीच में कहीं रुका नहीं है। आज की अदृश्य, किंतु दो महती समस्याओं में से एक यह है कि लोग परावलंबन के अभ्यस्त हो चले हैं। निजी विवेक इतना तक नहीं जागता कि स्वतंत्र चिंतन के सहारे जो उपयुक्त है उसे अपनाने और जो अनुपयुक्त है उसे बुझा फेंकने तक का साहस जुटा सके। यह परावलंबन यदि छोड़ते बन पड़े तो मनुष्य 'एकला चलो रे' का गीत गुनगुनाते हुए वह उपरोक्त तीनों क्षेत्रों में निहल कर सकने वाली संपदा उपार्जित कर सकता है। आज की सबसे बड़ी, सबसे भयावह समस्या एक ही है, मानवी चेतना का परावलंबन, अंतःस्फूर्णा का मुहुर्रस्त होना, औचित्य को समझ न पाना और कंटैली लाइजियों में भटक जाना। इस स्थिति से उबरने की जरूरत है।

वातावरण मनुष्य को बनाता है, यह उक्ति गए-जुगे लोगों पर ही लागू होती है। वास्तविकता यह है कि आत्मबल के धनी अपनी संकल्प-शक्ति और प्रतिभा से कम काफिरा अतीव वातावरण बना सकने में पूरी तरह सफल होते हैं। जो चाहते हैं उसे अवश्य ही कर दिखाते हैं जिससे संसार में उनकी प्रेरणादायी कीर्ति एवं गौरव की स्थापना हो जाती है।

मुकेश त्रिषी

चिड़ियों का विलुप्त होना
एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार बीते 50 सालों में परिरों की संख्या 3 अरब तक घट गई है। यह बहुत ही चिंतित कर देने वाला समाचार है। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार गौरैया, तोते, बुलबुल, कोए, गिद्ध आदि चिड़ियों की प्रजातियां तो तेजी से विलुप्त हो रही हैं, परंतु कबूतर की संख्या बढ़ रही है। इनके विलुप्त होने से कृषि को नुकसान पहुंचाने वाले कीट बहुत तेजी से बढ़कर कृषि को तबाह कर सकते हैं। पक्षी वैज्ञानिकों के अनुसार इन परिरों को बचाने के लिए पेड़ों, जंगलों को कम से कम काटना, बिल्डिंगों को खुले में बनाने से रोकना और खिड़कियों और कार के शीशों की बनावट में ऐसे परिवर्तन करने की सलाह है, जिससे परिरित उससे टकराकर भी घायल होकर न मरें। इसके अतिरिक्त गौरैया जैसे मानव बस्ती के आसपास रहने वाले परिरों के संरक्षण के लिए सघन अभियान चलाए जाने चाहिए। धरती पर मौजूद दूसरे जीव-जंतु इसांनों के लिए काफी उपयोगी होते हैं। ऐसा माना जाता है कि हम इसांनों का अस्तित्व इन्हीं पर निर्भर है। लिहाजा हमें ऐसी कोशिश करनी चाहिए कि इनका जीवन बना रहे।

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

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

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

लोकतंत्र का रास्ता

पश्चिम बंगाल में राज्यपाल और राज्य सरकार के बीच चल रही प्रत्यक्ष-परीक्ष तनातनी में कुछ सुधार होने के बजाय स्थिति और बिगड़ती जा रही है, तो इससे यही जाहिर होता है कि दोनों पक्षों के बीच संवाद में कोई बड़ी कमी है। लेकिन मंगलवार को जैसी स्थिति पैदा हुई, वह न तो लोकतंत्र के लिए उचित है, न राजनीतिक उथल-पुथल से उपजी समस्या को दूर करने में उससे कोई मदद मिलेगी। गौरतलब है कि राज्य के राज्यपाल और कुलाधिपति जगदीश धनखड़ जादवपुर विश्वविद्यालय के वार्षिक दीक्षांत समारोह में भाग लेने गए थे, लेकिन वहां भारी संख्या में जमा प्रदर्शनकारियों ने उन्हें परिसर में प्रवेश करने से रोक दिया और आखिरकार उन्हें वापस लौटना पड़ा। दरअसल, वहां जमा बड़ी तादाद में विद्यार्थी नागरिकता संशोधन कानून के खिलाफ प्रदर्शन कर रहे थे और नारे लगा रहे थे। विद्यार्थियों के मुताबिक उन्होंने पहले से ही तय कर लिया था कि वे दीक्षांत समारोह में कुलाधिपति के हाथों से डिग्री नहीं लेंगे। हो सकता है कि संबंधित विद्यार्थी किसी खास मुद्दे पर विरोध स्वरूप राज्यपाल के हाथों डिग्री नहीं लेने की राय रखते हों और यह उनका लोकतांत्रिक अधिकार है, लेकिन एक निर्धारित कार्यक्रम में राज्यपाल को भाग लेने से रोकने को कितना उचित माना जाएगा?

यह बेवजह नहीं है कि राज्यपाल ने इस संबंध में प्रतिक्रिया देते हुए साफ शब्दों में कहा कि यह घटना विश्वविद्यालय में कानून के राज की गंभीरता से समझौता किए जाने का उदाहरण है। किसी मुद्दे पर विरोध जताना या प्रदर्शन करने के अधिकार के समांतर अगर कोई समूह कानून और शासन को ताक पर रख देता है तो निश्चित रूप से यह एक गंभीर स्थिति है। यह राज्य सरकार और पुलिस की जिम्मेदारी है कि वह ऐसी अप्रिय स्थिति नहीं पैदा होने दे। लेकिन अगर वहां मौजूद प्रदर्शनकारियों के विरोध की वजह से राज्यपाल को लौटना पड़ा तो यह अपने आप में वहां की ड्यूटी के लिए जवाबदेह पुलिसकर्मियों की नाकामी है। आखिर पुलिस जादवपुर विश्वविद्यालय के बाहर मौजूद प्रदर्शनकारियों के बीच से राज्यपाल को परिसर में सुरक्षित ले जाने में कैसे नाकाम रही? अगर पर्याप्त पुलिसकर्मियों की तैनाती नहीं थी, तो इसका कारण क्या था? इसके अलावा, खबरों के मुताबिक अगर कुलाधिपति या राज्यपाल ने कुलपति को नियम-पुस्तिका के अनुसार चलने और दीक्षांत समारोह के संबंध में स्पष्ट निर्देश दिए थे, तो उसका पालन करने को लेकर लापरवाही की वजह क्या हो सकती है? इस मामले में नियम-कायदे क्या कहते हैं?

विडंबना यह है कि राज्य में राज्यपाल और मुख्यमंत्री के बीच आपसी बयानबाजी से उपजी तनातनी का असर सामान्य गतिविधियों पर भी पड़ रहा है। हाल में राज्य सरकार ने एक नए नियम के तहत कुलाधिपति और राज्य के विश्वविद्यालयों के बीच प्रत्यक्ष संवाद का माध्यम उच्च शिक्षा विभाग के जरिए तय कर दिया। इसी तरह के मतभेद की पृष्ठभूमि में सत्ताधारी तृणमूल कांग्रेस ने राज्यपाल पर राज्य में समांतर सरकार चलाने का आरोप लगाया था। लेकिन बात शायद तब ज्यादा बढ़ गई जब सीएए के खिलाफ रैली आयोजित करने और उसमें मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी के भाग लेने पर राज्यपाल ने एक ट्वीट के जरिए आपत्ति जताई। जहां तक नागरिकता संशोधन कानून और राष्ट्रीय नागरिक रजिस्टर पर विरोध जताने का सवाल है, तो देश के अलग-अलग हिस्से में इस मसले पर विरोध प्रदर्शन जारी हैं। इस पर व्यापक बहस भी चल रही है। लेकिन शासन के सामान्य कामकाज को सहजता से चलने देने से किसे दिक्कत हो सकती है? आखिर इन कामों का अंतिम लाभ आम जनता को ही मिलता है।

पाक की मुश्किल

आतंकवाद रोकने और आतंकी संगठनों के खिलाफ कड़े कदम उठाने को लेकर पाकिस्तान का संकट गहराता जा रहा है। अगर उसने वित्तीय कार्रवाई कार्यबल (एफएटीए) की ओर से निर्धारित मानकों को पूरा नहीं किया तो अगले साल फरवरी तक उसे काली सूची में डालने की प्रक्रिया शुरू हो जाएगी। अगर ऐसा हुआ तो पहले से आर्थिक संकटों का सामना कर रहे मुल्क के सामने कंगाली जैसे हालात बन सकते हैं। दो दिन पहले अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (आइएमएफ) ने जारी एक रिपोर्ट में इस बात की आशंका व्यक्त की है कि अगर एफएटीए पाकिस्तान को काली सूची में डाल देता है तो पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था ढह जाएगी। आइएमएफ को इस बात का डर है कि उसने पाकिस्तान को अरबों डॉलर का जो कर्ज दे रखा है और अर्थव्यवस्था को पटरी पर लाने के लिए पाकिस्तान सरकार के साथ जो कार्यक्रम चलाए जा रहे हैं, उनका क्या होगा? एफएटीए की कार्रवाई पाकिस्तान को महंगी इसलिए पड़ेगी कि काली सूची में डाले जाने के बाद पाकिस्तान में बाहरी निवेश को जोरदार झटका लग सकता है। जाहिर है, किसी आतंकी देश में कोई अपनी पूंजी क्यों लगाएगा?

आतंकवाद को लेकर पिछले कुछ सालों में पाकिस्तान पर शिकंजा तेजी से कसा है। अमेरिका और यूरोपीय देशों की पहले से ही यह संभव हुआ है। एफएटीए इन्हीं देशों की पहल पर बना संगठन है जो दुनिया के उन मुल्कों के खिलाफ कड़े प्रतिबंध लगाता है जो अपनी जमीन से आतंकवादी कार्रवाइयों को अंजाम देते हैं और आतंकवाद संगठनों को पालने-पोसते हैं। पाकिस्तान के बारे में तो सारी दुनिया एकमत है कि वह दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा आतंकी देश है। यह बात खुद उसका सबसे पुराना हमदर्द और मददगार देश अमेरिका कहता आया है। भारत पिछले तीन दशक से पाकिस्तान के आंतक की मार झेल रहा है। एफएटीए पाकिस्तान से इसलाभिक स्टेट, अलकायदा, जमात-उद-दावा, लश्करे तैयबा, जैश-ए-मोहम्मद, हक्कानी नेटवर्क और तालिबान से जुड़े लोगों के खिलाफ सख्त कदम उठाने को लेकर चेतावनी देता रहा है, लेकिन हकीकत में अब तक ऐसा कुछ भी होता नहीं दिखा है। इस साल अगस्त में भी एफएटीए के एशिया प्रशांत समूह ने पाकिस्तान को अंतिम चेतावनी जारी की थी।

पाकिस्तान को 2012 से 2015 के दौरान भी एफटीएफ की निगरानी सूची में रखा गया था। लेकिन उसने ऐसा कोई कदम नहीं उठाया, जिससे यह पता चलता कि वह आतंकी संगठनों के खिलाफ कड़े कदम उठा रहा है। आतंकवाद का रास्ता देश को कंगाली के रास्ते पर ले जाना वाला है, यह पाकिस्तानी हुक्मरानों को सोचना चाहिए। विश्व बैंक भी पाकिस्तान को चेता चुका है। पाकिस्तानी रुपए में गिरावट का दौर जारी है। देश में महंगाई लगातार बढ़ रही है। विदेशी मुद्रा का भंडार पहले से ही पैदे में जा चुका है। पाकिस्तानी मुद्रा के अवमूल्यन ने हालात और मुश्किल बना दिए हैं। तेल, गैस और सीएनजी की किल्लत से न सिर्फ लोग परेशान हैं, उद्योग-धंधे तक ठप पड़े गए हैं। सरकार गैस और तेल के दाम बढ़ाने की तैयारी में है। दूसरी ओर देश में बेरोजगारी चरम पर है। ऐसे में अगर पाकिस्तान को काली सूची में डाल दिया गया और कड़े प्रतिबंध लगा दिए गए तो उससे देश में हालात बर्सेन, वे आज के मुकाबले कहीं ज्यादा भयावह होंगे। पाकिस्तान के पास अब भी वक्त है कि वह एफएटीए के मुताबिक चले। फैसला उसे ही करना है कि आतंकवाद को चुने या अमन को।

कल्पमेधा

अपनी प्रसिद्धि और स्मृति के लिए मैं दूसरों की दया और कृपा पर निर्भर हूं।

- बेकन

अखिलेश आर्यदु

बिजली घरों से निकलने वाली काली राख से हजारों एकड़ भूमि बंजर होती जा रही है, उसका कोई उपयोग नहीं हो पा रहा है और आसपास की उपजाऊ जमीन भी इसके असर से बंजर होती जा रही है। इतना ही नहीं, आंधी और तूफान आने पर यह राख हवा में मिल कर सांस, त्वचा और आंख के रोग पैदा कर रही है।

देश में जितनी बिजली बनाई जाती है, उसमें से साठ फीसद जीवाश्म कोयले से बनती है। बाकी छब्बीस फीसद बिजली का उत्पादन पानी से और चौदह फीसद बिजली उत्पादन अन्य तरीकों से होता है, जिसमें यूरेनियम और थोरियम से बनने वाली बिजली महज दो फीसद है। जाहिर है, देश में कोयले से चलने वाले बिजली घर ही ज्यादा हैं और इनसे सबसे ज्यादा अपशिष्ट निकलते हैं, जिसमें काली राख को भरमार होती है। चिंता की बात यह है कि सरकार की नजर में इसका कोई उपयोग नहीं है। इसलिए बिजली घरों के आसपास करोड़ों टन काली राख फैली रहती है और यह पर्यावरण को ही नहीं, भूमि और जल को भी प्रदूषित कर रही है।

कोयले से चलने वाले बिजली घरों से निकलने वाले अपशिष्टों को ठिकाने लगाने की न तो भारत सरकार के पास कोई योजना है, न राज्य सरकारों के पास। बिजली मंत्रालय का मानना है कि यह ऐसा व्यर्थ का पदार्थ है जिसका किसी भी रूप में कोई उपयोग नहीं हो सकता। ताज्जुब की बात यह है कि आज वैज्ञानिकों ने धरती पर हर चीज का उपयोग किसी न किसी रूप में करने का तरीका ईजाद कर लिया है, लेकिन बिजली बनाने के दौरान कोयले से निकलने वाले इस अपशिष्ट के कोई बेहतर उपयोग का विकल्प आज तक नहीं खोजा जा सका है। ऐसा नहीं है कि इसका कोई उपयोग नहीं है। इसका उपयोग है, लेकिन सरकार इस तरफ गौर ही नहीं करती। इस वजह से इसके बेहतर उपयोग के बारे में कोई अनुसंधान भी नहीं हुआ है। दुनिया के विकसित कहे जाने वाले देशों ने कार्बन को दफनाने तक की समस्या का निदान खोज लिया है, जो कभी असंभव माना जाता था। ग्रीन हाउस की समस्या से निजात पाने की विधि खोज ली गई है, लेकिन भारत में करोड़ों टन कोयले के अपशिष्ट के इस्तेमाल का रास्ता आज तक नहीं निकल पाया है।

बिजली घरों से निकलने वाली काली राख से हजारों एकड़ भूमि बंजर होती जा रही है, उसका कोई उपयोग नहीं हो पा रहा है और आसपास की उपजाऊ जमीन भी इसके असर से बंजर होती जा रही है। इतना ही नहीं, आंधी और तूफान आने पर यह राख हवा में मिल कर सांस, त्वचा और आंख के रोग पैदा कर रही है। चिंता की बात यह है कि इससे सांस संबंधी अनेक रोग पैदा होते हैं और इसके संपर्क में लगातार काम करने वाले मजदूरों की असमय में मौत हो जाती है। तो क्या कोयले के इस अपशिष्ट से इसके आसपास रहने वाले लोगों को कई तरह की समस्याएं नहीं होती होंगी? जमीन और हवा के अलावा इस अपशिष्ट से बिजली घरों के आसपास जल स्रोत ही नहीं नहर, तालाब और कुए तक जहरीले होते जा रहे हैं।

वैज्ञानिकों के मुताबिक कोयले से निकलने वाला हर अपशिष्ट चाहे वह गैस हो या राख, इससे मानव शरीर, मस्तिष्क और मन पर प्रतिकूल असर डालते ही हैं। इसलिए इस बात से कोई इनकार नहीं कर सकता कि कोयले की राख से कोई समस्या इंसान को सीधे तौर पर नहीं हो सकती है।

दिल्ली और फरीदाबाद में पर्यावरण प्रदूषण की समस्या लगातार बढ़ती जा रही है। हवा में भुले जहर के कारण लोग गंभीर बीमारियों की चोट में आ रहे हैं। देश-विदेश के बड़े-बड़े वैज्ञानिक ‘प्रदूषण मुक्त

अतुल चतुर्वेदी

चाय की थडियों को विमर्श का नया केंद्र या आधुनिक चौपाल कहा जाए तो अतिशयोक्ति नहीं होगी। छोटी-बड़ी चाय की ये थडियाँ दरअसल मिलने-मिलाने, दो पल बतियाने का सस्ता ठिकाना है। इसे हम अपनी प्रेमिका से गुप्तगू करने या अभिसार के नितांत निजी क्षणों के रूप में तो उपयोग नहीं कर सकते, लेकिन संक्षिप्त मुलाकात करने, कुछ बातों के आदान-प्रदान के बहाने मिलने के प्राचीन पनघटों की तरह तो उपयोग कर ही सकते हैं। अधिकतर ऐसे शहरों में जहां कामगार आबादी ज्यादा है या जहां प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं की तैयारी का वातावरण है, वहां ये चाय की गुमटियां बहुतायत में पाई जाती हैं। इनके माध्यम से लाखों लोगों को रोजगार भी मिल रहा है।

थड़ी की कड़क अदरक वाली चाय का स्वाद ही अलहदा है। वह स्वाद नजाकत और तमाम तामझाम के साथ दूध, शक्कर, चायपत्ती डाल कर चाय बनाने वाले ब्रिटिश अंदाज में नहीं आ सकता। चाय बनाने की यह ठेठ खांटी शैली ही चाय को सर्वहारा तक जोड़ पाई है और उसका सफर ऊंचे होटलों, महलों से निकल कर आम जन तक पहुंचा है। चाय के ये ठिकाने दिन-रात फल-फूल रहे हैं। यहां पर तोखी राजनीतिक बहसें होती हैं, गंभीर साहित्यिक चर्चाएं होती हैं, दफ्तरों का ‘एक दूसरे की शिकायत करे’ कार्यक्रम आयोजित होता है और संबंध सुधार कार्यक्रम के तहत नई बिसात भी बिछाई जाती है। चाय की इन थडियों पर विद्यार्थी और सरकारी या गैर-सरकारी कर्मचारी से लेकर मजदूर और पार्टी कार्यकर्ता तक थकान मिटाने, ऊर्जा हासिल करने और भड़ास निकालने भी आते हैं।

किसी जमाने में बड़े और नामचीन शहरों में कॉफी हाउस होते थे। इलाहाबाद, लखनऊ, मुंबई और दिल्ली की शामें इससे ही आबाद होती थीं।

कलाकारों, पत्रकारों, साहित्यकारों के ये प्रिय ठिकाने थे, जहां खुल कर संवाद होता था, नई योजनाएं जन्म लेती थीं और तीक्ष्ण बहसें भी आकार लेती थीं। आज वे काली हाउस लुप्तप्राय हैं। उनकी जगह बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों ने कॉफी रेस्तरां की श्रृंखलाएं डाल ली हैं, जहां निजता है, रम्य वातावरण है, लेकिन वैसा जनतंत्र और खुलापन नहीं है। असल में निजीकरण ने मनुष्य को एकाकी छोड़ दिया है, हवां उसे अवकाश तो है, लेकिन संवाद के रास्ते बंद हो गए हैं। वह अलग-थलग पड़ गया है। इन ठिकानों के बंद होने का अभिशाप हम भुगत रहे हैं। हमारी चेतना कुंद हो गई है, संवेदनाओं

नागरिकता पर खर्च

बीते कुछ दिनों से देश में जगह-जगह पर नागरिकता कानून और नेशनल रजिस्टर ऑफ सिटीजन को गैर संवैधानिक बता कर विरोध प्रदर्शन चल रहा है। सरकार का तर्क यह है कि ये कोई संविधान के खिलाफ नहीं, वहीं प्रदर्शनकारियों का कहना है कि ये कानून संवैधानिक और सामाजिक तौर पर गलत है। गौरतलब है कि किसी कानून के तीन पहलू होते हैं। पहला कानूनी, दूसरा सामाजिक और तीसरा आर्थिक पहलू। देश में जगह-जगह पर पहला और दूसरा पक्ष नजर आ रहा है, लेकिन तीसरा यानी आर्थिक पक्ष विरोध के रूप में देखने को नहीं मिल रहा है।

हाल ही में असम में एनआरसी लागू किया गया था। लगभग तीन करोड़ की जनसंख्या में तकरीबन उन्नीस लाख लोग ऐसे पाए गए, जिनके पास भारतीय होने के कागजात नहीं हैं। सरकारी आंकड़ों के अनुसार इसमें असम में इस पर कुल खर्च लगभग बारह सौ बीस करोड़ रुपए हुआ। मतलब एक व्यक्ति पर एनआरसी का औसतन सरकारी खर्च चार सौ रुपए है। भारत की जनसंख्या लगभग एक सौ पच्चीस करोड़ है। अगर इसे पूरे भारत मे लागू किया जाता है तो कुल खर्च लगभग लगेभग पचास हजार करोड़ होगा जो सरकारी कोष पर गहरा प्रभाव डाल सकता है। क्या इस आर्थिक संकट के दौर में यह लागू करना सही होगा? क्या यह सही होगा जब भारत में बेरोजगारी दर शीर्ष पर है? क्या भारत में रहने वाले लोगों पर संसाधनों में कमी की जाएगी?

जिनके पास नागरिकता साबित करने के लिए पर्याप्त कागजात नहीं है, उन्हें रखने लिए कई डिटेन्शन सेंटर बनाए गए हैं, जिसमें फिलहाल सिर्फ तीन हजार लोग रह सकते हैं। क्या उन्नीस लाख लोगों को रखने से आर्थिक बोझ नहीं बढ़ेगा? किसी भी कानून का सिर्फ सामाजिक और कानूनी पक्ष के आधार पर समर्थन देना कहां तक सही है? किसी भी कानून का आर्थिक पक्ष सरकार को सामने रखना चाहिए, ताकि इससे सरकार

बिजली घरों से फैलता अंधेरा

अखिलेश आर्यदु

पास। बिजली मंत्रालय का मानना है कि यह ऐसा व्यर्थ का पदार्थ है जिसका किसी भी रूप में कोई उपयोग नहीं हो सकता। ताज्जुब की बात यह है कि आज वैज्ञानिकों ने धरती पर हर चीज का उपयोग किसी न किसी रूप में करने का तरीका ईजाद कर लिया है, लेकिन बिजली बनाने के दौरान कोयले से निकलने वाले इस अपशिष्ट के कोई बेहतर उपयोग का विकल्प आज तक नहीं खोजा जा सका है। ऐसा नहीं है कि इसका कोई उपयोग नहीं है। इसका उपयोग है, लेकिन सरकार इस तरफ गौर ही नहीं करती। इस वजह से इसके बेहतर उपयोग के बारे में कोई अनुसंधान भी नहीं हुआ है। दुनिया के विकसित कहे जाने वाले देशों ने कार्बन को दफनाने तक की समस्या का निदान खोज लिया है, जो कभी असंभव माना जाता था। ग्रीन हाउस की समस्या से निजात पाने की विधि खोज ली गई है, लेकिन भारत में करोड़ों टन कोयले के अपशिष्ट के इस्तेमाल का रास्ता आज तक नहीं निकल पाया है।

बिजली घरों से निकलने वाली काली राख से हजारों एकड़ भूमि बंजर होती जा रही है, उसका कोई उपयोग नहीं हो पा रहा है और आसपास की उपजाऊ जमीन भी इसके असर से बंजर होती जा रही है। इतना ही नहीं, आंधी और तूफान आने पर यह राख हवा में मिल कर सांस, त्वचा और आंख के रोग पैदा कर रही है। चिंता की बात यह है कि इससे सांस संबंधी अनेक रोग पैदा होते हैं और इसके संपर्क में लगातार काम करने वाले मजदूरों की असमय में मौत हो जाती है। तो क्या कोयले के इस अपशिष्ट से इसके आसपास रहने वाले लोगों को कई तरह की समस्याएं नहीं होती होंगी? जमीन और हवा के अलावा इस अपशिष्ट से बिजली घरों के आसपास जल स्रोत ही नहीं नहर, तालाब और कुए तक जहरीले होते जा रहे हैं। वैज्ञानिकों के मुताबिक कोयले से निकलने वाला हर अपशिष्ट चाहे वह गैस हो या राख, इससे मानव शरीर, मस्तिष्क और मन पर प्रतिकूल असर डालते ही हैं। इसलिए इस बात से कोई इनकार नहीं कर सकता कि कोयले की राख से कोई समस्या इंसान को सीधे तौर पर नहीं हो सकती है।

दिल्ली और फरीदाबाद में पर्यावरण प्रदूषण की समस्या लगातार बढ़ती जा रही है। हवा में भुले जहर के कारण लोग गंभीर बीमारियों की चोट में आ रहे हैं। देश-विदेश के बड़े-बड़े वैज्ञानिक ‘प्रदूषण मुक्त

अखिलेश आर्यदु

देश में जितनी बिजली बनाई जाती है, उसमें से साठ फीसद जीवाश्म कोयले से बनती है। बाकी छब्बीस फीसद बिजली का उत्पादन पानी से और चौदह फीसद बिजली उत्पादन अन्य तरीकों से होता है, जिसमें यूरेनियम और थोरियम से बनने वाली बिजली महज दो फीसद है। जाहिर है, देश में कोयले से चलने वाले बिजली घर ही ज्यादा हैं और इनसे सबसे ज्यादा अपशिष्ट निकलते हैं, जिसमें काली राख को भरमार होती है। चिंता की बात यह है कि सरकार की नजर में इसका कोई उपयोग नहीं है। इसलिए बिजली घरों के आसपास करोड़ों टन काली राख फैली रहती है और यह पर्यावरण को ही नहीं, भूमि और जल को भी प्रदूषित कर रही है।

कोयले से चलने वाले बिजली घरों से निकलने वाले अपशिष्टों को ठिकाने लगाने की न तो भारत सरकार के पास कोई योजना है, न राज्य सरकारों के पास। बिजली मंत्रालय का मानना है कि यह ऐसा व्यर्थ का पदार्थ है जिसका किसी भी रूप में कोई उपयोग नहीं हो सकता। ताज्जुब की बात यह है कि आज वैज्ञानिकों ने धरती पर हर चीज का उपयोग किसी न किसी रूप में करने का तरीका ईजाद कर लिया है, लेकिन बिजली बनाने के दौरान कोयले से निकलने वाले इस अपशिष्ट के कोई बेहतर उपयोग का विकल्प आज तक नहीं खोजा जा सका है। ऐसा नहीं है कि इसका कोई उपयोग नहीं है। इसका उपयोग है, लेकिन सरकार इस तरफ गौर ही नहीं करती। इस वजह से इसके बेहतर उपयोग के बारे में कोई अनुसंधान भी नहीं हुआ है। दुनिया के विकसित कहे जाने वाले देशों ने कार्बन को दफनाने तक की समस्या का निदान खोज लिया है, जो कभी असंभव माना जाता था। ग्रीन हाउस की समस्या से निजात पाने की विधि खोज ली गई है, लेकिन भारत में करोड़ों टन कोयले के अपशिष्ट के इस्तेमाल का रास्ता आज तक नहीं निकल पाया है।

दुनिया मेरे आगे

बिजली मंत्रालय का मानना है कि यह ऐसा व्यर्थ का पदार्थ है जिसका किसी भी रूप में कोई उपयोग नहीं हो सकता। ताज्जुब की बात यह है कि आज वैज्ञानिकों ने धरती पर हर चीज का उपयोग किसी न किसी रूप में करने का तरीका ईजाद कर लिया है, लेकिन बिजली बनाने के दौरान कोयले से निकलने वाले इस अपशिष्ट के कोई बेहतर उपयोग का विकल्प आज तक नहीं खोजा जा सका है। ऐसा नहीं है कि इसका कोई उपयोग नहीं है। इसका उपयोग है, लेकिन सरकार इस तरफ गौर ही नहीं करती। इस वजह से इसके बेहतर उपयोग के बारे में कोई अनुसंधान भी नहीं हुआ है। दुनिया के विकसित कहे जाने वाले देशों ने कार्बन को दफनाने तक की समस्या का निदान खोज लिया है, जो कभी असंभव माना जाता था। ग्रीन हाउस की समस्या से निजात पाने की विधि खोज ली गई है, लेकिन भारत में करोड़ों टन कोयले के अपशिष्ट के इस्तेमाल का रास्ता आज तक नहीं निकल पाया है।

युवा का हाल

कई बार बहुत से लोगों को यह कहते हुए सुना है कि युवा इस देश के भविष्य हैं। विगत कुछ दिनों से देश के हालात को देख कर कहा जा सकता है कि देश का भविष्य खतरे में है। राजधानी दिल्ली जैसे शहरों में विद्यार्थी अपने आप को सुरक्षित महसूस नहीं कर रहे। आखिर इसका दोषी कौन है? सरकार या जनता? हर सिक्के के दो पहलू होते हैं। सरकार ऐसी नीतियों का निर्माण ही क्यों करती है, जिससे जनता हिंसा पर उतारू हो जाए?

दूसरी ओर, जनता भी नीतियों का विरोध हिंसात्मक तरीके से क्यों करती है? क्या यही एक रास्ता है? हिंसा से समाज का अपना ही घाटा है। दूसरी ओर, विद्यार्थियों पर हमले की खबर भी उभर कर आती है। आखिर क्यों एक विद्यार्थी सरकार और जनता के बीच की लड़ाई में पिसता नजर आ रहा है? आखिर उन मासूमों का क्या दोष जो भारत के उच्च केंद्रीय संस्थानों से शिक्षा ग्रहण कर रहे हैं। उन रोती-बिलखती मासूम आंखों से एक ही सवाल उभर कर आता है कि क्या हम सरकार पर से अपना भरोसा खत्म कर दें? इसी बीच कुछ पुलिस हमलों की खबर भी उभर आती है। आखिर ऐसे हालात में मनुष्य करे भी तो क्या करे, जब रक्षक ही भक्षक बन जाए।

दिल्ली' बनाने में जुटे हैं, लेकिन यह समस्या अभी काबू में नहीं आ पाई है। दिल्ली में प्रदूषण का सबसे बड़ा कारण वाहनों से निकलने वाला धुआं बताया जाता है, लेकिन कोयले के निकलने वाले अपशिष्ट से दिल्ली की आबोहवा कितनी प्रदूषित है, इस पर वैज्ञानिक और पर्यावरणविद् कुछ कहते नजर नहीं आते। पॉलिथिन, यमुना का गंदे नाले में तब्दील होने और रेत माफियाँ द्वारा अवैध तरीके से किए जा रहे खनन पर्यावरण की समस्या पैदा करते हैं और इनके खिलाफ आंदोलन भी चलाए जा रहे हैं, लेकिन बिजली घरों से उत्सर्जित होने वाली राख को लेकर कोई चिंतित नजर नहीं आता।

ग्रीन हाउस गैसों के उत्सर्जन से उत्पन्न समस्याओं पर भारत से कहीं ज्यादा विदेशों में अनुसंधान किए जा रहे हैं। ग्रीन हाउस गैसों के उत्सर्जन में तिहत्तर फीसद योगदान ऊर्जा का होता है। वैश्विक ग्रीन हाउस गैस उत्सर्जन में बिजली और ताप आधारित उपक्रमों की हिस्सेदारी 24.6 फीसद है और परिवहन क्षेत्र की हिस्सेदारी महज दस फीसद है। ग्रीन हाउस गैस उत्सर्जन में भारत पांचवे स्थान पर है और इसके बढ़ने की रफ्तार काफी ज्यादा है। आने वाले पांच वर्षों में यह रफ्तार बढ़ कर पांच गुना तक पहुंच सकती है। जरूरत इस बात की है कि बिजली घरों के ईंधन कोयले और इसके अपशिष्ट से होने वाले प्रदूषण पर भी गहराई से ध्यान दिया जाए और इसके उपयोग के लिए कोई मुकम्मल रास्ता तलाशा जाए। भारत में परमाणु रिएक्टरों से भी बिजली बनाई जा

रही है, लेकिन अभी देश में इसका उत्पादन महज दो फीसद है। परमाणु रिएक्टरों से कुल बीस हजार मेगावाट बिजली पैदा होती है, जबकि उद्योगों, कृषि और घरेलू उपयोग के लिए बिजली की जरूरत इससे कई गुनी ज्यादा है। ऐसे में ज्यादा से ज्यादा परमाणु बिजली घर लगाए जाने की जरूरत है। लेकिन परमाणु बिजली घरों को लेकर देश में एक मत नहीं है। ऐसे में सरकार को ले-देकर कोयले या पानी से बिजली पैदा करने का विकल्प झंझट रहित लगता है। पर समस्या यह है कि कोयला और पानी भी उतनी मात्रा में नहीं मिल पा रहे हैं जितनी कि जरूरत है।

सवाल है कि कोयले के इस अपशिष्ट का निदान क्या है? सरकार या एनजीओ की नजर में यह बड़ी समस्या न हो, लेकिन यह एक बड़ी और गंभीर समस्या। आज भले ही इस पर गौर न किया जा रहा हो, लेकिन आने वाले वक्त में सरकार और पर्यावरणविदों को इस तरफ ध्यान देना ही होगा और इससे पैदा होने वाली समस्या के निजात के लिए कोई मुकम्मल समाधान खोजना ही होगा। देश भर में कोयले से चलने वाले जितने भी बिजली घर हैं, उनसे वर्ष भर में कम से कम सौ करोड़ टन कोयले का अपशिष्ट निकलता होगा। बिजली घरों के पास इसके निपटान के लिए न तो कोई सरकारी नियम और आदेश है, न बिजली घरों के पास कोई विकल्प। हालांकि सार्वजनिक रूप से मुफ्त में इसे उठा ले जाने का विज्ञापन भले ही वक्त-दर-वक्त निकलते रहते हैं। दूसरा सवाल इसके उपयोग से जुड़ा है। आमतौर पर कोयले के इस अपशिष्ट का उपयोग सीमेंट बनाने वाली कंपनिया करती है या कभी-कभार सड़क निर्माण में इसका इस्तेमाल होता है। लेकिन इससे समस्या पूरी तरह हल नहीं हो पाती। भारी मात्रा में राख पड़ी रह जाती है। सरकार भले ही इसे बेकार मान कर इस तरफ गौर न करे, लेकिन इसका उपयोग कोलतार की सड़क बनाने में बेहतर ढंग से किया जा सकता है। इतना ही नहीं, दूरदराज के गांवों में जहां पहुंचने के कोई साधन नहीं है, या जहां की मिट्टी इस लायक नहीं है कि पैदल वहां पहुंचा जा सके, वहां इसका बेहतर इस्तेमाल किया जा सकता है। इसके अलावा गमलों में और गड्डे पाटने में भी इसका बेहतर उपयोग किया जा सकता है। इससे जहां प्रदूषण की समस्या हल होगी, वहीं हजारों एकड़ भूमि जो इस अपशिष्ट के कारण किसी काम में नहीं आ रही है, काम में आने लगेगी।

चाय की इन दुकानों पर बैठने के लिए समय की कोई पाबंदी नहीं है। कोई शिगूफेबाजी नहीं है, सर्विस टैक्स या जीएसटी का व्यर्थ संकट नहीं है। उधार, नकद, खाते- सब चलते हैं। अपने बेटे से मैंने एक दिन पूछा कि तुम थडियों पर चाय पीने क्यों जाते हो, जबकि घर में इतनी अच्छी चाय मिलती है। उसने जवाब दिया कि वहां चाय के साथ जो चर्चा का आनंद है, अखबारों का वाचन है, अलग-अलग लोगों की बातचीत सुन कर समृद्ध होने का सुख है, वह घर में कहां है। घर में तो औपचारिक वातावरण रहता है। मैं निश्चर था।

चाय की गुमटियों में धड़कते, नव आकार लेते भारत को पता नहीं है। सेंगर ने बतौर शहरी चकाचौंध के चलते महसूस कर भी पा रहे हैं या नहीं, लेकिन विमर्श के ये नए मुकाम कम महत्त्वपूर्ण नहीं। किसी समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन के लिए तो बेशक शोधपूर्ण हैं।

समाजशास्त्रीय अनुभव कहते हैं कि सेंगर ने सार्वजनिक जीवन में उत्तरदायित्व वाले पद पर रहते हुए जो आपराधिक हरकत की, वह किसी भी सूरत में माफी लायक नहीं है। सेंगर ने बतौर विशाक की भूमिका में होने के बावजूद नाबालिग पीड़िता का बलात्कार किया। आरोपों के पुष्ट होने के बावजूद वह विशाकक कैसे बना रहा? क्या उसे अपनी जिम्मेदारियों का एहसास नहीं था? उसकी ऐसी हरकत से समाज को क्या समृद्ध मिला होगा? मेरी राय में बलात्कार और अपराधी की पहचान के बाद इस अपराध में फैसले की समय-सीमा अनिवार्य हो। केस से जुड़े पुलिस अफसर, वकील और जजों की जवाबदेही तय हो, क्योंकि कई बार दरी से हुआ न्याय इतना बेमानी सबीत हो जाता है कि न्याय सुनने और उसे महसूस करने के लिए पीड़िता या उसका परिवार जिंदा भी नहीं रहता है।

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शिक्षा के मूल्य

शिक्षा की बात जब हम करते हैं तो सर्वप्रथम यह सोचा जाए कि शिक्षा किसलिए दी जाए। अगर शिक्षा को व्यावहारिक रूप में देखा जाए तो ‘शिक्षा मनुष्य के व्यवहार में वांछनीय परिवर्तन लाती है।’ शिक्षा का वास्तव में यही है। इसके साथ ही समाज को भी प्रगतिशील मूल्यों के साथ जोड़ना शिक्षा है। शिक्षा ये कभी नहीं कहती है कि अगर आप शिक्षित हो गए हैं तो दूसरों को नीचा दिखाएं। बल्कि शिक्षा जाति, धर्म, मजहब और पंथ के बीच विभिन्न प्रकार के भेदों से मुक्त करती है। इसलिए भारत के महान शिक्षा दार्शनिक अरविंदो ने शिक्षा के चार महत्त्व को बताया है, जिसमें चित्त, बुद्धि, मनस और ध्यान को बताया है। शिक्षा मनुष्य में विश्वास को जन्म देती है, न कि घमंड को। इसलिए शिक्षा के मूल्यों को अपने जीवन में आत्मसात करने के साथ ही आपके व्यवहार में भी परिलक्षित करने में सहायक होता है, जिससे एक प्रगतिशील समाज का निर्माण होता है।

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नई दिल्ली