

Taking ayurveda to the world

With the whole world turning to natural products, the time for its rebirth is just right



AMBI PARAMESWARAN

As a speaker in the third Global Ayurveda Summit, I was worried. Unseasonal rains were lashing Kochi that day and at the scheduled time for start at 10 am, the hall was hardly full. The organisers pushed the start time by 15 minutes. I was not sure if the hall would even get half full. I should not have worried. In just under 20 minutes, the hotel staff was scurrying around adding chairs at the back of the hall. While I spoke

about the need for better branding of ayurvedic brands, a young speaker after me from Amazon spoke about the firm's channel for global customers of ayurvedic products. Incidentally, the summit attracted a significant number of global participants and also hosted well over 30 well-appointed exhibition stalls. But a question remained in my mind: What is ayurveda and are all ayurvedic brands the same? Perhaps the biggest-selling so-called "ayurvedic medicine" brand in India is not really ayurvedic. In the mid-1980s, the government decided that ayurvedic medicines will attract zero excise duty. The excise duty on all forms of over the counter medicines was around 15 per cent. Spotting the anomaly, one of the early MNC brands to jump on to the ayurvedic bandwagon was Vicks vaporub. Halls and Vicks cough drops were soon to follow. This is what I would call the "switchover ayurveda" brands. The next category of ayurvedic

brands are those that are not even tout-ing their ayurvedic heritage. The oldest and the biggest in this category is Liv52 from Himalaya. It has been around for decades but the ayurvedic origin is not trumpeted as much as its natural ingredients. Himalaya has rolled out a brand globally for hangovers called PartySmart; it does not speak of its ayurvedic origin and is presented as an all-natural product. There are numerous ayurvedic brands that are sold for multiple remedies -- from aches and pains to indigestion and hair fall. The brand Indulekha, which now belongs to Hindustan Unilever, is expected to hit a ₹2,000 crore valuation mark in the next five years. Then there are ayurvedic brands that are sold as prophylactic. The biggest in this group would be chyawanprash. This product, if sold as "chyawanprash", did not attract any excise duty during the excise duty era. The moment you brand it as, say, "HealthyFit", it came under the excise

duty regime. So much for individual brands that have been promoted and built in India. Traditionally, ayurvedic brands were sold under an umbrella brand. These brands spoke of many years of heritage and legacy. For example, this year, Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala celebrated its 150th year. Dabur too is almost 140 years old. Many global pharmaceutical companies may not be that old. In the last few decades, there have been many efforts to modernise ayurveda with better branding, better technology and better retailing. The first to tread this path is perhaps Biotique. There is also work happening in companies such as Indus Biotech to identify and extract valuable natural ingredients with medicinal properties. So when we talk of ayurveda, the field encompasses multiple shades of nature-based cures. Not all of them are called ayurveda of course. In the last decade, two ayurvedic brands have managed to invest heavily in design and high-street outlets -- Forest Essentials and Kama Ayurveda. They offer a wide range of products, all with roots in ayurveda. But while Forest Essentials speaks of natural ingredients more than ayurveda, Kama has ayurveda in its front-facing branding. Estee Lauder, the super-premium beauty brand, took a minority stake in Forest

Essentials 10 years ago. Don't be too surprised if you start seeing Forest Essentials in the shopping malls of the developed world. Encouraged by their success, numerous brands are venturing into the market with premium displays in airports and malls. What they need to keep in mind is that Forest Essentials and Kama Ayurveda have been at it for almost 20 years. The new brands on display in Kochi are still working on their go-to-market strategies. Is there a need to have a few arrow-head offerings (hair-fall cream; under-eye gel; natural hair colour)? What to tout more -- natural, botanical, ayurveda? Should the pricing be premium, super premium or affordable? Given the excitement around ayurvedic brands, even ayurvedic doctors are getting a new glow. A start up, Nirogstreet, is trying to create a network of ayurvedic practitioners. Hopefully all these efforts will help ayurvedic practices, products and offerings reach a wider target audience. With the whole world turning to more natural, botanical products, the time for the rebirth of ayurveda is just right.

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CHINESE WHISPERS

Parallel celebrations
The Congress has been celebrating its 135th foundation day (December 28) across the country. Some expelled leaders of its Uttar Pradesh unit have also been celebrating the occasion separately while simultaneously slamming the party for cracking down on them. Last month, 10 senior state unit leaders, including All India Congress Committee member Santosh Singh and former UP legislator Siraj Mehndi, were expelled for six years on charges of indiscipline. While the "official" Congress unit of UP was busy hosting party General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in Lucknow, the expelled leaders claimed they constituted the "real" Congress and that the current disciplinary panel of the party had no business easing them out because it comprised mostly people with a criminal history.

Stick to the script



Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari (pictured) had a tough time administering the oath of office to some ministers on Monday. He reprimanded two ministers on the dais during the swearing-in ceremony for deviating from the text of the oath. Koshiyari first intervened when Congress MLA Varsha Gaikwad invoked Dalit icon B R Ambedkar while taking the oath. The governor stopped Gaikwad, a four-term MLA from Dharavi in Mumbai, and asked her to stick to the written words of the oath. Then, while taking oath as a cabinet minister in the state government, Congress MLA KC Padvi added a few lines of gratitude for his voters. Koshiyari directed the seven-term legislator, who represents Akkalkuva in north Maharashtra, to take the oath again.

Flickers of interest in power distribution

Drawn by structural reforms, private players are hesitantly entering the customer-facing end of the business

JYOTI MUKUL

Power distribution, the end of the electricity value chain that involves selling to customers, has been the most problematic element of the sector. Predicated on the political compulsions of selling power below cost to large swathes of rural consumers, power distribution has been the root cause of the losses right from generation and sometimes even from the source of the fuel supply. Reform attempts by successive governments -- including the current government's UDAY scheme that ends in March 2020 -- have brought no fundamental change. Even so, there are signs of a realignment led by private sector players in areas where power pricing is more flexible. Earlier this month, for instance, Adani Transmission announced that it was offloading its 25.1 per cent stake in its Mumbai distribution business to Qatar Investment Authority for ₹3,200 crore at a small profit over the value the group paid for the business to Reliance Infrastructure in August 2018. The agreement requires 30 per cent sourcing of power from renewable alternatives for distribution in Mumbai by 2023. The transaction is likely to be completed by early 2020, subject to regulatory and other approvals.

There have been a few others in the recent past. Mumbai-based private equity player Bessemer Venture Partners' investment in Spanco Power, power distributor in Nagpur, in 2012 and Asia-focused private equity player ADV Partners' invested in Feedback Infra, which is into power and road management services, in 2018. There would well have been more such deals, according to Sambitosh Mohapatra, partner, advisory, power & utilities, PwC, were it not for the fact that "the opportunities were very few and even within that the success stories limited".

What explains this shift in private sector interest? After all, as Mohapatra points out, the performance of the distribution business remains largely in the hands of state-owned discoms. A good part of the reason lies in recent structural reforms introduced via the Electricity Act. The critical one is content carriage segregation, which separates power distribution from the generation business by allowing multiple licensees to supply power to consumers based on market-based pricing principles. This move to what is also known as open access systems (since it enables consumers to get a choice of supplier) is, in turn, expected to expand the market for large investments in networks and base systems (transformers and so on). Metering, data-driven infrastructure to optimise demand patterns and so on



are expected to be the growth areas, as will such non-tariff revenue sources -- for instance, the increasing level and volatility of power prices also increases value of energy management services. Several markets and business models are emerging and will co-exist in India. The emergence of local island grids is one of them. It is this potential that has attracted a big player like Tata Power in direct competition with energy supply companies that are essentially small enterprises currently facing pressure from grid power given by state-owned discoms. Tata Power has floated TP Renewables in tie-up with the Rockefeller Foundation for offgrid power generation and distribution in rural areas. In parallel, traditional privatisation of the distribution business, meanwhile, got a booster with the Odisha government deciding earlier this month to give licences for five circles to Tata Power under a 25-year-old contract. With this, the company will add 2.5 million consumers to its existing base of 2.5 million in Mumbai, Delhi

and Ajmer. Tata Power will be responsible both for procurement and distribution of power in the Odisha circles. Odisha's is the first full privatisation of distribution companies in 17 years since the privatisation of Delhi power distribution. The state government is offering three more circles over the next six months. Explaining the private interest in the Odisha circles, Mohapatra says, "The private sector is interested in any well-structured transaction with appropriate risk return framework, reasonable size and scale of business and regulatory certainty. Political stability and administrative support were also key factors. Odisha was providing all of that." The private operator also draws comfort from 49 per cent state government equity in the privatised entity. PwC was the transaction advisor for the Odisha deal. Before this, companies such as Feedback Infra, Essel and Tata Power had explored the franchisee model. This model only privatises billing and metering part of the distribution business leaving generation to state companies.

In states such as Madhya Pradesh, the franchise model hit a wall when the state government did not allow for a tariff hike for the Indore circle. The political pressure on tariffs remains the key sticking point to the expansion of private sector interest in the sector. This was the focus of the 2015 Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) programmes, which asked states to take over 75 per cent of discom debt and repay lenders by selling bonds. The central assumption of this financial revival programme was that state governments would raise power tariffs. The results have been mixed, with some states retaining subsidies to rural consumers and raising the cross-subsidy from other users. Even so, discoms have not been able to eliminate the gap between the average cost of supply and the revenue realised (ACSR gap) or reduce their aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses to 15 per cent. Nonetheless, Uday was successful in bringing down the cost of funds for discoms from 13-14 per cent to 8-9 per cent. "That's substantial savings when we look at around ₹2 trillion of borrowings. The scheme, however, put the onus of driving operational efficiency improvement and investments on the owners of the business -- state governments. That didn't work out at the step jump level expected but incremental gains happened," Mohapatra says. The way the power paradigm is playing out therefore is this. State government-owned discoms will have to balance the challenge of losses with the responsibility of universal electrification whereas private investors are innovating with investment models even as they keep away from the generation business.

Jharkhand clean-up

The new government in Jharkhand on Monday removed senior IAS officer Sunil Kumar Barnwal as principal secretary to the chief minister. Barnwal held the post since 2015 and was considered close to former chief minister Raghubar Das of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Sources said the clout he enjoyed in the previous regime had sparked speculation of his removal and that of some others. However, since the state Budget has to be tabled shortly, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led government is focusing only on critical positions. It is rumoured that anticipating the outcome, Barnwal had applied for a central posting just before the election results were announced but it is not known what happened after that. As of now, he is attached to the Department of Personnel, Administrative Reforms & Rajbhasha, the coordinating agency of the state government in personnel matters.

ON THE JOB

Unemployment cannot cause agitations

Campuses provide the critical mass of an aggrieved population necessary for a political movement



MAHESH WYAS

The best part of Shekhar Gupta's columns is the rich experience they reflect of his journalistic journey. To those who lived through the Emergency and through Gulzar's *Mere Apne*, his "Back to the inglorious past" (*Business Standard*, December 28) will connect vividly. To the rest, it is the best sketch of those times in under thousand words. *Mere Apne* highlighted joblessness in the late 1960s and early 1970s. And, as Shekhar describes, this was followed with a period of heightened nationalism and eventually the Emergency. Today's joblessness is also followed by heightened nationalism. But his hypothesis, that once people have suffered joblessness and economic stall for a length of time, nationalism will no longer calm their anger, remains to be tested. I may venture to wager that the link between unemployment and political agitations is not causal but is catalytic, at best. People do not get sufficiently angry to agitate because of prolonged joblessness or economic stall. Not in India. It is true that we do face high joblessness today. The unemployment rate

is of the order of 8 per cent according to CMIE's Consumer Pyramids Household Survey. According to official statistics, at 6.1 per cent in 2017-18, it was at a 45 year high. The agitation in campuses and across towns in India is not an agitation against this unemployment. It is an agitation against the CAA, NRC, NPR and against high-handedness of the government in many places. It is not a demand for jobs. A high rate of unemployment in the educated youth can be a catalyst in the germination of these movements in campuses and can be used to accelerate any political process. Campuses provide the critical mass of an aggrieved population necessary for a political movement. But, the connection between a large stock of unemployed and a particular political movement is tenuous, at least in India. Disillusioned youth can be rallied against CAA/NRC just as much as they can be for CAA/NRC. In fact, the deployment of youth for NRC is easier since it carries a potential reward that reduces the competition for scarce jobs by eliminating a few migrants from the competition. It is therefore facile to assume unidirectionally that the high stock of unemployed youth will help movements against the political dispensation of the day. The BJP is a better organised party than any other in India and therefore, it is more likely to be successful in mobilising the stock of unemployed than others. Independent of the particular case of CAA/NRC, it is difficult to appreciate that an unemployment rate of 6 per cent or even 8 or 10 per cent is a politically

potent problem. Unemployment among graduates is much higher at 17 per cent. But, even if such unemployment generates anger, it is not enough to be a serious political problem. Here's why. Unemployment hurts few. A 10 per cent unemployment means that 10 per cent of the people who are actively looking for jobs are unable to find one. This means that 90 per cent of the people who were looking for jobs did find one. And, most of the 10 per cent who are still unemployed remain hopeful that like the rest, they too will eventually find jobs. So, the number of people really agitated for not having found a job are really too few to make a political difference. Since unemployment hurts very few it is not considered to be a societal problem, or the government's problem, but a short-coming of the individuals who are left unemployed. The unemployed is ridiculed for his or her lack of effort or ability. In India, unemployment is not recognised as a macro-economic problem. Unemployment is tolerated. We have seen that when jobs are lost, people do not agitate on the streets. They simply stop looking for jobs and leave the labour force. Quietly. They do not seek a change in the political dispensation. The twin shocks of demonetisation and GST was followed by a 10 million fall in jobs in 2018. There were no agitations. The unemployment rate has been rising steadily since then. Yet, in 2019, the same political dispensation was rewarded with a bigger mandate.

There have been agitations for reservations in government jobs. But there are no agitations for good jobs in general. There are no agitations against the rise of contractual labour which compromises job security for those who have jobs. There are two possible reasons for the lack of agitations against unemployment. First, the number of households with no adult person employed has not increased even as unemployment has increased. And second, unilateral government (centre and state) transfers to households have increased. This has cushioned the impact of unemployment on households. The pain of unemployment is too local unlike the pain of inflation which has universal impact. When inflation rises, everyone is hurt. The pain is felt more by some compared to others but, everyone pays the price of high inflation. Inflation is therefore politically a lot more potent than unemployment. Further, governments are seen capable of handling inflation -- they can bring in price controls, change trade policy, control stocks with traders and crack down on "hoarders" etc. An agitation against inflation can be effective. And a government that fails to control inflation can be punished. But this is not the case with unemployment. Political parties may promise jobs but the electorate knows that those are empty promises across the political spectrum. If an incumbent government cannot provide jobs, others cannot either. Slowing growth and joblessness can impoverish us. They can be catalysts for change but they are not sufficiently potent to morph into political agitations.

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LETTERS

Fear exaggerated

This refers to the report "Banks need not fear probe agencies: FM" (December 29) that talks about Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman meeting the heads of the public sector banks or PSBs. She has performed yeoman service to the cause of promoting the health and efficiency of the banking system by assuring them in the presence of the director of the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) that granting of loans or any other financial decision should not be influenced by the fear of being hounded by the CBI. A similar meeting with the Enforcement Directorate and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence will also take place and that is good. Concerns about undue harassment by the Central Vigilance Commission and Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) were also expressed (incidentally, CAG has no audit jurisdiction over banks). A frank discussion and the assurance by the PM earlier and the FM now will be of great value to the bureaucracy in the banking world. The FM has assured that "no action will be initiated if genuine commercial actions turned bad". My view is that while this assurance needs to be reiterated, there should be no presumption that CBI has been harassing bankers and bureaucrats for genuine mistakes. All

these CBI cases relating to banks reported in the newspapers are not cases of genuine mistakes but of deliberate fraud. I have worked in the revenue department for more than three decades. My view about the efficacy of CBI should be more reliable than of one who has worked in the CBI itself. I am not talking of political cases but of cases in the revenue department and the banking department. There, I have not found any case of harassment by the CBI. These (CBI) cases take a long time to get decided which is not because of the CBI but due to court delays. Even failures cannot be attributable to the weakness of the basic charge-sheet made out by the CBI but largely to court decisions. I dare say that I have not found any honest and good officer in our department punished by the CBI. My firm view is that the fear of the three "Cs" is highly exaggerated. Slothful and corrupt fellows use this imaginary fear for not taking decisions. But the FM's assurance is useful and soothing. **Sukumar Mukhopadhyay**
Retired member, CBEC
Via email

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HAMBONE



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Indo-US ties: Sailing into choppy waters

Questions over India's democratic stability and economic upturn will weigh on the ties between the two countries in 2020

What is the outlook for the Indo-US tie in 2020? The upswing in the relationship that was highlighted by the signing of the civilian nuclear deal in 2008 started abating when Donald Trump became president of the US in 2017. Economic progress was the outstanding reason why India went up in America's estimation after 1991. Its high growth rates over a 15-year period persuaded Washington to believe that it could become a counterpoise to rising authoritarian China. Additionally, India's stability as a multicultural democracy also impressed the US, especially after the collapse of the authoritarian Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in 1991.

By 2019, however, it was obvious to the world that India's economy had fallen into decline over the last six years. Moreover, political and social polarisation, symbolised by increasing communal violence since 2014 and the large-scale protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) have raised questions about the quality of its democracy.

The economic downturn and New Delhi's ruling out of a quick recovery brings into question India's ability to counter China in Mr Trump's "Indo-Pacific". Over the last decade, India and the US have signed more than \$15 billion worth of arms deals — and Washington recently offered India another \$1 billion worth of naval guns. But to New Delhi's chagrin, the US still refuses to transfer sensitive military technology

because India is not a formal ally. While sovereignty decrees that India has a right to buy Russia's S-400 missile, this air defence system blocks closer military ties with the US, which sees Russia as a security threat. If the absence of an alliance reflects India's determination to uphold its strategic autonomy, it simultaneously makes Washington doubtful about the viability of the Indo-US tie.

Trade issues are another sticking point in their tie. India's cat's cradle of red tape and protectionist tariffs irritate Washington. They take the sheen off India as a trading partner. A mere 2.1 per cent of US exports come to India; and 2.2 per cent of imports come from India. Fifteen per cent of India's imports come from the US, 16 per cent of its exports go to the US.

As India's economy has taken a nosedive, China has shown off its economic progress by expanding its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) worldwide. Several member-states of the European Union and all of India's neighbours have joined the BRI. China's financial clout has established it as the largest investor in their economies. It is also the largest arms seller to Myanmar and Bangladesh. Its growing presence in the Indian Ocean poses tough queries about India's standing as the dominant South Asian power.

The other domestic development — the passing of the CAA and the large-scale protests that it provoked — have led many in the US to question India's secular democratic credentials. Even before that, the State



ANITA INDER SINGH

Department in June reported that religious intolerance in India had grown under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. India predictably riposted that a foreign government had "no right" to comment on the country's internal affairs.

At December's 2 +2 dialogue in Washington, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the US cared deeply about protecting minorities and religious rights everywhere. He voiced confidence in the Indo-Pacific partnership, as being grounded in democratic values.

Official Washington speaks in more than once voice. If Pompeo's statement appeared to dispel any idea that the Trump administration was putting pressure on New Delhi on domestic conflicts, the attitude of US lawmakers told a different story.

The situation in Kashmir since last August and the strong-arm tactics used to deal with popular protests against the CAA have led the US Congress to question India's commitment to secularism — implying equal rights for all communities and the maturity of its democracy. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's recent refusal to meet the Congressional committee on foreign affairs to discuss Kashmir sparked the response that shutting out US lawmakers who were standing up for human rights was what they expected from authoritarian regimes — not New Delhi.

Despite the strategic partnership, the Indo-US relationship will sail on choppy waters in 2020. But the economic gap between India and China raises questions about India's value as a contributor to Mr Trump's game plan for the Indo-Pacific. China's gross domestic product per capita is more than four times that of India. At \$1776 billion, China's 2019 defence budget was over three times that of India. And as China aims to build a world class military by 2050, India is finding it hard to upgrade its armed forces.

The fact of India's economic and military dependence on the US rankles with New Delhi and annoys Washington. The Trump administration likes prosperous allies because they are better able to face common threats.

As the New Year approaches, India's democratic stability and economic upturn appear uncertain. Although the widespread anti-CAA protests also reflect anger at declining job opportunities, the government shows little sign of harnessing financial and human resources to overcome India's economic and socio-political crises. Instead, its insistence on going ahead with the CAA shows that it ignores warnings that any move away from secular democracy could spark destabilising conflicts.

India's strategic position in the Indian Ocean rules out its being ignored by the US. But 2020 will show whether India's troubled domestic economic and political house reveals a mismatch in their strategic association or whether a closer strategic tie is yet possible.

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Restore data credibility

Govt move to set up new panel of statisticians welcome

It is welcome news that a high-level panel under former chief statistician Pronab Sen has been set up to examine currently used surveys of employment, industry, and services. These surveys are essential inputs into various major official statistics, in particular the estimates of gross domestic product (GDP). The 28-member committee has its work cut out. India's official statistics have recently been widely questioned, as on occasion they seem to work at cross-purposes with other high-frequency indicators of the economy. More worryingly, their credibility and independence from political interference have also come under fire. Government choices in terms of concealing some data — such as a recent round of the National Sample Survey — have not helped in dispelling these concerns. The setting up of this committee, as well as its chairmanship by Dr Sen and the inclusion of other academics who have questioned official statistics recently, might go some way towards recovering and repairing the reputation of Indian data.

Much, however, will depend upon what the panel feels empowered to do and how transparently it can restructure the statistical system. The committee has been told to examine various government data sets — such as its surveys of industries and service sector enterprises, of the labour force, and the widely watched index of industrial production, among others. While the committee's remit might appear limited to ensuring the data sets square with one another and are broadly consistent, as well as to identify gaps in data collection, it is also supposed to oversee the finalisation of the survey reports and to determine problems in the compilation of administrative statistics. This means that it has, if it so wishes, relatively broad powers to overhaul India's statistical approach. It is important that the government accepts what disinterested experts have to say. There are major problems with the statistical system that are regime-agnostic and need to be addressed. A case in point is the divergence in consumption between what is shown by the consumption survey and what is revealed by the national accounts. The GDP calculation, which perhaps overstates the formal sector through the use of Ministry of Corporate Affairs data, will also need to be looked into. Other crucial details will include how deflators are calculated and whether the corporate data is being extrapolated correctly.

The government has released draft legislation that intends to put the National Statistical Commission on a secure legal footing as the apex body for national statistics. It is to be presumed that the Standing Committee on Economic Statistics will discuss and evaluate what must be done to conduct immediate repairs and then create a blueprint for future reform on data collection and analysis, and the National Statistical Commission will be in charge of implementing it on a consistent basis. What is important, however, is that the institutional footing and powers of the NSC be sound. It should be independent and autonomous as well as having the powers to oversee the distribution and release of officially collected statistics, so that there is no longer any suspicion that inconvenient statistics are being concealed or manipulated for political reasons by the government or its bureaucrats. The NSC Bill does not go far enough.

Who's afraid of NPR?

The strong link with NRC and other rules raises concern

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statements that Indians have nothing to fear from the National Population Register (NPR), which is set to begin countrywide from March 2020 through September (except Assam), and that there is no link with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) are misleading on several levels. The impression that is being sought to be created is that the NPR is a benign enumeration exercise for the Census, as it was in 2010. There is, first, a critical difference with the decadal census exercise. The Census is conducted under the Census Act, 1948, and is done on the basis of self-declaration by people, without any verification. The NPR, however, is a coercive exercise; it is compulsory for everyone to share data, and there are penalties stipulated for non-cooperation. The NPR is defined as a database of usual residents in an area demarcated by the Registrar General of Citizen Registration, and it defines "usual resident" as someone who has resided in a local area for the past six months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months or more. Second, the rules for both the NPR and NRC were framed in 2003 under the Citizenship Act, 1955. The Registrar General's office is responsible for both exercises. The rules also explicitly state that the NRC data will be duly verified by the data from the NPR. In effect, the NPR forms the foundation for the NRC.

The government has clarified that no documents or biometrics will be required for the NPR. This should be reassuring, but the concern that arises is the level of discretion vested in local officials if the NRC exercise follows, as the government had stated several times (including in Parliament) until Prime Minister Narendra Modi denied it at a rally in New Delhi recently. The rules empower the local register to mark out a category of "doubtful citizens" after the verification exercise, and duly inform the individual or family concerned. This level of discretion raises the spectre of arbitrary exclusions of the kind that were seen in the Assam NRC exercise and opens the door for corruption. Even more worrying, the rules enable any person to file objections against the inclusion of someone in the local register of citizens, widening the ambit for abuse even further. The exercise becomes all the more fraught for those who are poor and uneducated.

The demographic details under the 2010 NPR required roughly 14 kinds of data, such as parents' name, nationality, occupation and address. The 2020 exercise has added the requirement of the date of birth and place of birth of one's parents. Apart from pointing to yet another link between the NPR and NRC, the significance of this new data requirement is that, following amendments to the Citizenship Act in 1987 and 2003, the citizenship status of the parents determines whether someone is an Indian citizen by birth. Indeed, when the Census data and a near nationwide Aadhaar database (verified via documents and biometrics) already exist, it is difficult to understand the need for the NPR, still less for the government to spend ₹3,941 crore for this exercise unless it is the starting point for determining citizenship within the ruling party's political paradigms.

Argentina's bright young hope

Judging by his appointment of a first-rate economist to his cabinet as Minister of Economy, Argentina's new president, Alberto Fernández, is off to a good start in confronting his country's economic problems. Martin Guzmán, with whom I have frequently collaborated in recent years, is among the world's leading experts on sovereign debt and the problems it can cause, making him the right person in the right place at the right time.

After completing his PhD at Brown University under Peter Howitt (co-author with Philippe Aghion of seminal work in modern growth theory), Guzmán obtained a coveted position at Columbia University, where he forged an academic career and became an influential expert on crucial policy debates at the domestic and global level. He has testified before the US Congress on Puerto Rico's debt crisis and spoken at the United Nations about the need for a better international system for resolving sovereign debt crises. In recent years, he has divided his time between New York and Argentina, where he is a professor of macroeconomics at the University of Buenos Aires.

When former President Mauricio Macri took office, his economic team openly admitted that while they had inherited many problems, they started with one major advantage: A low level of debt. They gambled on a set of policies — making, for instance, untimely and unnecessarily large cuts in export taxes, paying off old, defaulted debt to so-called vulture funds with unconscionably high returns, and taking on new high-interest, long-term, dollar-denominated debt, all in the hope that market-friendly signals would lead to a rush of growth-spurring foreign investment. Even at the time I thought it was a fool-hardy gamble.

The rest is history. It didn't work out, and as matters went from bad to worse, Macri compounded

the mistakes. More borrowing, including a \$57 billion programme with the International Monetary Fund. Austerity. Misguided sterilisation efforts to prevent inflation, which built up a debt overhang. The worst of all possible worlds was soon at hand: More inflation (reaching almost 60 per cent in the current year), higher unemployment (already at double digits and rising), and the re-imposition of the exchange controls, the removal of which Macri had hailed at the outset of his administration as the cornerstone of his economic policy.

As a result, Fernández inherits a far worse economic situation than Macri confronted: Higher inflation, higher unemployment, and now, a debt beyond Argentina's ability to service. Doubling down on a failed policy won't work; nor will returning to what preceded it. That's why it's so important that Fernández has appointed a knowledgeable, brilliant economist who combines youthful energy with a wisdom well beyond his 37 years.

Given the mess that Macri has handed Fernández, there are no magic bullets. It is easier to say what not to do. As Fernández has put it, one doesn't solve a problem of excessive debt by taking on more debt. Nor does one solve a problem of recession and unemployment by imposing more austerity, which in every recession always leads to more economic contraction. The reality is that there will be no substantial private-sector flows in the immediate future, no matter what policies the government enacts.

But Argentina must husband its limited resources, devoting them to reigniting the economy. One hopes that the multilateral development banks will provide countercyclical lending for investment projects that spur growth and poverty alleviation (under Macri, poverty has once again grown enormously, to more than 35 per cent of the population). There is enormous potential. Tourism, for example, boomed after

the last major devaluation. Argentina has first-rate universities and large numbers of highly educated, entrepreneurial people.

Bondholders won't necessarily be thinking, however, of Argentina's people or of the country's long-run potential. Many of them will be thinking only of the short-run gains from squeezing Argentina into more austerity. They will spin a story about a profligate country that lived beyond its means once again, even though they encouraged Macri in his misconceived policies and gave him the money that led Argentina into its current debt crisis. Presumably, they knew there was a risk: That's why they demanded and received such high interest rates. Some may be more thoughtful and understand that restoring Argentina's debt-service capacity depends on economic recovery.

In recent months, many other countries in the region have confronted political instability and economic turmoil. It is in no one's interest that Argentina be added to that list. We should celebrate the orderly transfer of power, and the commitment on all sides to maintain and defend democracy. We should also celebrate the shared vision that any effective economic programme must involve not only shared sacrifice but also shared prosperity when the fruits of that programme are achieved.

Fernández, with Guzmán, appears to be formulating a programme of moderation, avoiding the extremes of the past. Unlike Macri's agenda, the Fernández programme is not based on big gambles and wishful thinking. It is based on the hard realities of the situation that he has inherited. It represents Argentina's best chance to achieve gradual restoration of growth. Obviously, the more assistance the international community can provide, the faster and more robust the recovery will be.

The writer is a Nobel laureate in economics, University Professor at Columbia University and Chief Economist at the Roosevelt Institute. His most recent book is People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent © Project Syndicate, 2019

Memoirs of a turnaround artist



BOOK REVIEW

SANJAY KUMAR SINGH

The author of the book under review was the chief executive officer (CEO) of Nasdaq from 2003 to 2016. When he took over the reins, the business was caught in a deathly tailspin. Robert Greifeld chronicles how he first stabilised Nasdaq and then over time built it into one of the world's preeminent stock exchanges, leaving its more storied rival, the New York Stock Exchange, in its slipstream.

In 2003, Nasdaq was in deep trouble and Mr Greifeld often wondered if he had

taken on a hopeless assignment. Very few new tech companies were listing on exchanges in the aftermath of the dotcom bust. Transaction volumes had also plummeted. But the most serious threat arose from the fact that Nasdaq faced technological obsolescence.

In those days, customers could watch the buy and sell quotes of stocks on a computer screen. But to place orders they had to pick up a phone and call a Nasdaq dealer. The process was tedious and time-consuming. Prices would often have moved by the time a trade was executed, causing losses to traders.

The threat to Nasdaq came from start-ups called Electronic Communications Networks (ECNs), which were providing an alternative virtual platform for stock trading. On the ECNs, the customer did not have to call up a dealer. Order matching and execution occurred electronically. Mr Greifeld had won his

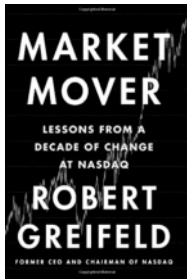
spurs as the co-founder of an ECN called ASC, which he subsequently sold to a company called SunGard. It was his experience in creating this ECN that made him a prized catch for the Nasdaq board.

On the people's front, Nasdaq was bureaucratic and slow-moving. Even before he joined, Mr Greifeld carried out an evaluation of its manpower. He hunted high and low within Nasdaq for people who would fit into his vision of the organisation, and placed them in key positions. He also laid off hundreds who he felt were not suited for the new, more driven and fast-paced culture that he planned to usher in. Only for positions

he could not fill with insiders did he turn to outsiders. Readers will find many insights in the chapter called "People first" on how a leader should go about putting an appropriate team in place.

A CEO who is trying to engineer a turnaround has limited time and resources. He must possess the ability to

triage, or determine which businesses and tasks need to be accorded higher priority. If he spends time on non-essential matters, he could win numerous battles and yet end up losing the war. Nasdaq's core business was transactions (exchanges earn a small commission on every transaction). Its dealer-based system had become obsolete. Mr Greifeld had two choices: He could develop either in-house the software for automating order



MARKET MOVER: Lessons from a Decade of Change at Nasdaq
Author: Robert Greifeld
Publisher: Nicholas Brealey Publishing
Price: ₹599

matching and execution, or he could purchase it from outside. The former route is usually more cost-effective but slow. In a rapidly-evolving business, where time is of the essence, it is sometimes wiser to buy a company that possesses the much-needed technology. Though doing so requires paying a premium, it is justified when survival is at stake. What you also get by adopting this route is a proven winner that has bested several rivals.

Mr Greifeld used Nasdaq's cash hoard, and even took a loan, to buy an ECN called Instinet. By acquiring and further building upon it, he was able to transform Nasdaq from a technological laggard into a leader.

The first part of the book is a veritable manual on how to turn around a moribund, bureaucratic, and technologically obsolete organisation. In the latter half, Mr Greifeld writes about the multiple acquisitions he undertook. This part contains insights on why international takeovers have become imperative, the pressures one

faces as a negotiator, and why some succeed while others fail.

Grace under pressure is an essential quality in a leader. In 2012, Facebook chose to list on Nasdaq. Unfortunately, high trading volumes on listing day caused Nasdaq's systems to falter. It was the worst fiasco of Mr Greifeld's career for which he was roundly criticised, even lampooned, in the media. He explains in a calm and sober tone why the failure occurred, how he dealt with the barrage of criticism, and the steps he took to make Nasdaq's systems more fool proof.

Most people learn from their mistakes and try not to repeat them. But the really smart ones learn from the experiences of others. Reading books such as this one may not turn you into a management wizard overnight, but they definitely have the power to shape your instincts. When faced with challenges in her own career, the reader will be better equipped to come up with appropriate responses. This book should surely find a place on the shelf of anyone keen to augment her leadership skills.

RationalExpectations

No magic bullet, just hard reforms

The twin balance-sheet crisis has got worse, investors don't trust govt & with empty coffers, pump-priming isn't an option

EVEN WHEN MANY in the government criticised ex-chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian for saying India's GDP was overstated by 2.5 ppt, few could explain why, if GDP was growing so fast, other indices were growing so slowly. As India's GDP has collapsed to 4.5% in Q2FY20, other indicators (*see graphic*) suggest that even this may be an overestimate. Even in FY94, when GDP grew at roughly the same rate as today, IIP grew at 6% vs 1.3% now, exports at 20.1% (-2.6% now), private consumption at 14.6% (7% now), and, the biggest surprise, while non-food credit was 5.7% then, it is -0.2% now; if everything is collapsing, how is GDP growing?

While many feel growth will come back soon, they ignore the fact that little has been done to fix India's credit crisis; in a recent paper, Subramanian and Josh Felman (S&F) argue that India's twin balance sheet crisis (banks and corporates with shot balance sheets) has morphed into a four balance sheet one (with NBFCs and real estate added). This is why, from ₹20 lakh crore in FY19, commercial credit completely collapsed in FY20.

In the past, the collapse in credit—due to a huge rise in NPAs—was tackled by the government injecting lots of capital into bank balance sheets. Since the NDA came to power, it has injected ₹3.5 lakh crore into PSU banks. But, with fresh loans turning bad and banks writing off ₹7.2 lakh crore, NPAs are still a high 9.2%; and 12% in the case of PSU banks.

While S&F speak of ₹2.5 lakh crore of stressed power loans that could turn into NPAs, other potential NPAs are the loans to NBFCs, real estate, and telecom (especially if Vodafone Idea shuts down, as is expected). And, with nominal GDP likely to grow at just 7-8% as compared to the 12% budgeted for, this will add to the stress; 40% of corporate loans in even Q1FY20 was to firms that couldn't service it, and this rose to 45% in Q2.

This is what finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has to deal with. She faces a possible ₹2 lakh crore tax shortfall due to poor GDP growth and bad budgeting—instead of the actual FY19 tax collections of ₹20.8 lakh crore, the budget estimated it at ₹22.5 lakh crore; she also needs money to recapitalise banks, and to take over some NBFCs, so that credit starts flowing again. Had the government privatised some banks, it would need less recapitalisation money, but Modi refuses to do this.

The low GDP growth means FY21 tax collections will also be low, leaving the FM little to either raise government-spend or recapitalise banks meaningfully. Sitharaman's challenge, in fact, is made worse by the fact that private consumption growth has been falling steadily, from 15.3% in FY14 to 7% in H1 this year. If government consumption can't rise much due to budget constraints, the only hope has to be a rise in investment, but adverse government policy in many areas ensured nominal investment growth plummeted from 13.7% in FY19 to a mere 4% in H1FY20; as a share of GDP, investment levels fell from 31.3% just before Modi came to power to 28.8% in the first half of FY20.

There are many reasons for why India staved off a crisis despite the twin balance sheet problem morphing into a quadruple one; most revolve around a massive jump in government expenditure, aided by the dramatic collapse in oil prices in 2015 and 2016. As a result, nominal government expenditure grew faster than GDP in the Modi period (1.85 times vs 1.69 times); it was the opposite in the UPA decade, with government expenditure rising 3.26 times vs 3.46 times for GDP.

How, and whether the current crisis will turn into one like 1991 is not clear since forex reserves remain robust and inflation is very low, but it is clear India's troubles are only deepening as—amazingly, given how GDP is plummeting—interest rates continue to remain so high. Since this prohibits both investment and consumption, ideally, as many argue, RBI should slash repo rates. But, even when it has done this, it has not resulted in lower interest rates as banks continue to face NPA stress and are also more risk-averse.

At a larger level, the lesson is that the government must have no magic bullets left, it simply has to reform at breakneck speed in the hope that this will, over a few years, stimulate both investment and exports, and, as a result, also consumption. A speedy resolution of the telecom problem can, for instance, arrest the collapse in investment in the sector; slashing government levies and rapidly allocating mines could spur investment in the mining sector including oil/gas, fixing defence procurement procedures could give a big fillip to Make in India, finalising an incentive package to get the likes of Apple/Samsung to shift their vendor base to India will give a big fillip to exports...

Many argue that Modi doesn't have the ability to push tough reforms—like privatising banks or allowing hire-and-fire—that require Parliament assent, and his failure over the land acquisition bill is often cited in this context. While many of the reforms—slashing levies in telecom and mining, or allowing FDI in multi-brand retail—don't even require Parliamentary approval, too much is made of the lack of Rajya Sabha majority. When Modi wants it, as in the case of the citizenship law, he manages to get tough bills passed and, in cases like demonetisation, he brooks no opposition. The question, then, is when will Modi think economic issues are worth expending political capital on.

MedalMUDDLE

RTI reply shows that armed personnel have little to show for their service

BESIDES THE SERVICE benefits received by army personnel, most have little more to show for their years of service than medals and honours. An *Indian Express* report shows majority army personnel have been forced to buy cheap fakes from the market as neither the force nor the government has been able to deliver their medals on time. An RTI, filed by a retired colonel who has been waiting for a medal for 13 years now, reveals that 17.33 lakh service medals were still on the waiting list as of July 31. Of these, 33,035 were of commissioned officers, and the rest belonged to Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR). Although earlier, the Directorate of Military Regulations & Forms, under the ministry of defence, was responsible for medals—another RTI reveals they had even allocated ₹20 crore in 2014, 2015, and 2016—for the last two years, the job has been given to service headquarters.

While the gallantry medals like the Shaurya and Vir Chakras are not the issue, the backlog seems to be in non-gallantry awards or service medals, which are awarded for completing certain requirements in service—for instance, the Videsh Seva medal, awarded for service rendered outside India, or the Sainya Seva medal, which is awarded in recognition of non-operational service under conditions of hardship and severe climate in specified areas. Even if the military thinks the fakes might serve the purpose for now, it must beware of depriving its personnel of the few satisfactions their service affords them.

THE UNION GOVT'S FUNCTIONING HAS CURBED STATES' OPERATIONAL FREEDOM, RELEGATING THEM TO BEING AGENTS OF THE CENTRE RATHER THAN AUTONOMOUS UNITS

India's eroding cooperative federalism

AS WIDELY RECOGNISED, India is quasi-federal, with powers and resources being highly tilted in favour of the Union. The Constitution provided for institutions like inter-state councils to serve as a platform for consultation between the centre and the states, and these have laid the foundation for cooperative federalism. Institutions such as the National Development Council, set up along with the Planning Commission, served to promote cooperative federalism. The 14th Finance Commission (FC) recommended a substantially higher share of the tax revenues for the states, with a clear objective to strengthen their autonomy. It also recommended the role of the inter-state council be reactivated. Even recently, when NITI Aayog replaced the Planning Commission, one of its important roles was to promote cooperative and competitive federalism.

However, in the Union's actual functioning, states' autonomy within their assigned jurisdictions, instead of being enlarged, has, in fact, been curbed. Over the years, states have come to function more as agents of the Union than as autonomous units. Here are a few examples that show how states have been coerced into accepting the Union's actions, and how the scope for states' autonomy has shrunk.

To begin with, Jammu and Kashmir, a full-fledged state, was split into two union territories at the time when there was Governor's rule and the state assembly was in suspension. This was done without ascertaining the views of the State Legislature in contravention of Article 3 of the Constitution.

The 14th FC hiked the states' share in the Centre's tax revenues by 10 ppt at one go—from the 13th FC's 32% recommendation to 42%—to promote states' autonomy in resource allocation. But, the Centre mobilised revenues by levying cesses and surcharges, not included in the divisible pool. Hence, cesses and surcharges' share in the Centre's gross tax revenues shot up to 15.7% in FY18 from 9.43% in FY12, shrinking the divisible pool of resources available for transfers to states. The divisible pool of taxes as a percentage of gross tax revenue of the

Centre declined to 78.28% in FY20, the terminal year of the award of the 14th FC, from 86.41% in 2010-11, the initial year of the award of the 13th FC. Despite the 14th FC recommending an increase in devolution, devolution during its award period as a percentage of gross tax revenue of the Union was 34.26% as compared to 27.88% during the award period of the 13th FC.

While the total central transfer to states/UTs was ₹4.1 lakh crore in FY18, revenue mobilisation by the central government through cesses and surcharges stood at ₹3 lakh crore, or 15.70% of the Centre's gross tax revenue. This went up to ₹5.12 lakh crore in the FY20 budget estimate (BE), accounting for 21.03% of the Centre's gross tax revenue, while the total central transfers to states/UTs was ₹5.2 lakh crore. What is more, the CAG, in its reports, has highlighted the issue of underutilisation of the proceeds from cesses. It has also pointed out that the monies raised for specific purposes through some of the cesses have been diverted for other purposes by the Centre.

Following the restructuring and rationalisation of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) in FY16, the burden on states' resources has increased considerably. Its implication is that states now have to spend more on schemes that they merely implement. To state more clearly, CSS were restructured into three categories—core of the core, core, and optional. The sharing pattern of financing between the Union and the states remained unchanged in the case of core of the core, and the contribution of states belonging to the general category was raised to 40% of the total cost of the core schemes, and 50% for optional schemes. In fact, 75.24% of the total cost of CSS falls in the category of core schemes in

the FY20 BE. To the extent the states have to contribute a larger chunk of resources to finance CSS, they lose the freedom to allocate resources on their need-based schemes.

Another example of how the states' autonomy is threatened is the additional terms of reference (AToR) given to the 15th FC. Specifically, towards the end of its tenure, the Commission was asked "to examine whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up and if so, how such a mechanism could be operationalised".

The ToR of a FC is constitutionally defined in Article 280(3): Distribution of the net proceeds of shareable taxes between the Union and the states and allocation among the states; the principles that should govern grants-in-aid of revenues of the states out of the Consolidated Fund of India; measures needed to augment the consolidated fund of a state to supplement the resources of the panchayats and municipalities on the basis of the recommendations made by Finance Commission of the state. Under Article 280(3)(d), the President may refer any other matter in the interests of sound finance.

Issues relating to sound budget and fiscal management have been referred to FCs starting from the 1st FC. However, AToR to the 15th FC, relating to protecting defence and internal security expenditures of the Union government, do not fit into the framework of the constitutional provision under Article 280(3)(d). Defence is in the Union list and, therefore, the responsibility of the Union government, while internal security is largely the states' responsibility. If states

The Centre is mobilising more revenue through cesses and surcharges, and it is not liable to share this with states

requisition paramilitary forces, they bear the expenses. It is not, therefore, an issue that should legitimately come under the domain of the Finance Commission. In any case, the original ToR itself incorporates a consideration for "the demand on the resources of the central government particularly on account of defence, internal security, infrastructure, railways, climate change, commitments towards administration of UTs without legislature and other committed expenditure and liabilities".

There could be two reasons why this AToR is added. One, the defence expenditure declined from 1.82% of GDP in FY15 to 1.54% in FY19, and is budgeted to decline further to 1.48% in FY20. As a percentage of total government expenditure, defence expenditure declined from 13.65% in 2014-15 to 11.22% in FY20. The other, with the slowdown of the economy, it could be hard to even meet this low budget provision in 2019-20 while maintaining the fiscal deficit at 3.3%. Hence, the attempt to ring-fence the defence expenditure. Also, it could be an attempt to nudge the Commission to apportion a larger proportion of tax revenue for the Centre, leaving less in the divisible pool for states.

However, the recent implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) can be cited as a remarkable act of cooperation between the states and the Union. After all, the states have agreed to give up their autonomy with respect to nine state taxes. Yet, the recent drastic cut in corporate tax, with its adverse impact on the divisible pool, and not releasing GST compensation to states falling short of the stipulated growth on time, as agreed upon, would deter the promotion of cooperative federalism.

All these examples clearly show that states' operational freedom to function within their specified jurisdictions is hugely curtailed. This is certainly not conducive to promoting cooperative federalism. Worse, they are coerced into actions that are contrary to advancing robust fiscal federalism.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On General's remarks

With his sweeping remarks against protestors of CAA, Indian Army chief General Bipin Rawat had not only overstepped the much important line held in high esteem in a constitutional democracy, the division of polity from military and the very supremacy of civilian leadership over military, but also done a great damage to his reputation and the office he holds. His publicly expressed conviction that protestors are leading people to carry out arson and violence in cities and towns and this is not leadership could add impetus to the attempts by Modi led government to criminalise the protests against CAA. What stands apart India from several of its neighbouring countries is our vibrant democracy where its military maintains the culture of neutrality, exercise voluntary restraint and its stronger commitment to apolitical ethos. With only days away from his retirement, General Rawat should have exercised restraint and refrained himself.

— M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

On archaic beliefs

It is incredulous that even in the age of the internet, some people continue to place their trust in blind beliefs and follow archaic rituals and practices. While sky gazers marvelled at the glorious solar eclipse that was unfolding in the heavens, eight children in Kalaburagi district had to undergo the trauma of being buried neck-deep in the ground. Hoping for a miracle and desperate to cure their children's disabilities, the parents allegedly ignored strong opposition from the villagers who doubted the wisdom of the move. Conducting awareness campaigns will help dispel wrong notions, besides, prevent the recurrence of such bizarre practices.

— NJ Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

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What a decade of Netflix did

Cord-cutting and consolidation redefined the media landscape in the 2010s. The next decade will usher in a new roster of leaders

TARA LACHAPELLE

Bloomberg

IT WAS THE decade that altered the very definition of "TV"—Noun: Netflix. Verb: to stream.

The industry's struggle to adapt to the new terminology sparked a merger mania that has rapidly condensed the market for entertainment content and pay-TV services into the hands of a powerful few. Here is a look at what the rise of Netflix Inc, the intrusiveness of Big Tech and a decade of dealmaking did to the media and entertainment landscape.

As viewers decided they didn't need so many channels, the industry decided it didn't need so many companies. Once-powerful corporations such as 21st Century Fox and Time Warner Cable were acquired by rivals better equipped to navigate the new age of streaming. Fox's studios joining the Walt Disney Co family probably came as the biggest shock, but Disney's more meaningful acquisitions were of the Marvel and "Star Wars" franchises, giving it near-total domination of the big screen.

Of course, the big screen isn't quite so big anymore: Netflix alone generates more revenue than the entire North American box office. Originally a DVD-by-mail service whose biggest competitor was the Blockbuster store, Netflix is now nearly as valuable as Comcast Corp (for a time, it was even worth more than the cable behemoth). It has also lured some of Hollywood's most sought-after directors and actors, while others have taken their movie-making talents to Apple Inc and Amazon.com Inc. That is as Lions Gate Entertainment Corp, the studio that produced "The Hunger Games", is barely able to hang on to its independence. CBS and Viacom recently became ViacomCBS Inc, but they, too, may be industry prey. Discovery Inc was able to corner the market for unscripted domestic and culinary programming by taking ownership of HGTV and the Food Network. But, the mega-deal of the

decade was AT&T Inc, a once prosaic phone company, swallowing Time Warner, the parent of HBO.

The so-called streaming wars didn't begin on any particular date, but an important one was April 2, 2010. That was the day the Netflix app appeared on the Apple iPad. Within a few months it was in the iPhone app store and suddenly streaming could fit right in our pockets, travelling wherever we went. Not long before, Netflix had struck a fateful distribution agreement with the Starz premium cable channel, which held the rights to major movies months after they left theatres. Starz would later regret the arrangement, but for Netflix, it meant gaining backdoor access to thousands of films, including hits made by Disney (which would later ink its own deal with the service). And just like that, a \$9-a-month app became a viable and satisfying alternative to cable TV.

Then came the mergers. Few industries were maimed by technology these last 10 years more than media—print media absolutely but also the entertainment giants, where the figures at stake were even larger. By 2015, the industry's centre of power was shifting as cracks formed in the traditional pay-TV model. A now-infamous earnings report that summer from Disney showed that cable subscribers were dropping the company's ESPN channel, the most valuable network on the air—what was supposed to be the Teflon of TV. The typical \$100-a-month-or-so cable bundle that forced consumers far more channels than they ever needed was going the way of antennas. AT&T, which had just bet big on satellite dishes by acquiring DirecTV, turned its focus to content assets and spent \$57 days straining to close its deal for Time Warner.

It was a seminal moment for the industry when a usually tenacious Rupert Murdoch sold most of his com-

pany to Disney, a deal which also included valuable franchises such as "The Simpsons" and "X-Men". The recent reunion of Viacom and CBS was the Redstone family's attempt to shore up the walls of its own vulnerable empire, bringing back together the broadcaster that owns Showtime and the parent of MTV and Paramount Pictures.

Sprouting from all these mergers are new Netflix-copycat services, such as the Disney+ app that launched in November and AT&T's HBO Max, which is set to launch in May. Apple TV+ subscriptions also went on sale last month, while Comcast's Peacock service—named for the logo of its NBCUniversal division—arrives in April.

Cord-cutting and consolidation redefined the media landscape in the 2010s. The next decade will usher in a new roster of leaders tasked with trying to make financial sense of the industry shape-shifting. Longtime media moguls such as Disney CEO Bob Iger and John Malone, the influential owner of Charter and Discovery, are on their way toward retirement; Iger, 68, has a scheduled date of December 2021, while the 78-year-old Malone has started to lighten his load. A bedridden Sumner Redstone is 96 and his daughter Shari Redstone is 65; AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson is 59; and Charter CEO Tom Rutledge is 66. Comcast chairman and CEO Brian Roberts is 60, though the company's unusual articles of incorporation say he can hold onto his job for the rest of his life. However, Comcast did recently announce that Steve Burke will retire as NBCUniversal's CEO at the start of the new year.

For investors and consumers alike, it is an uncertain road ahead. My cynical prediction: An already shrinking industry will get even smaller.

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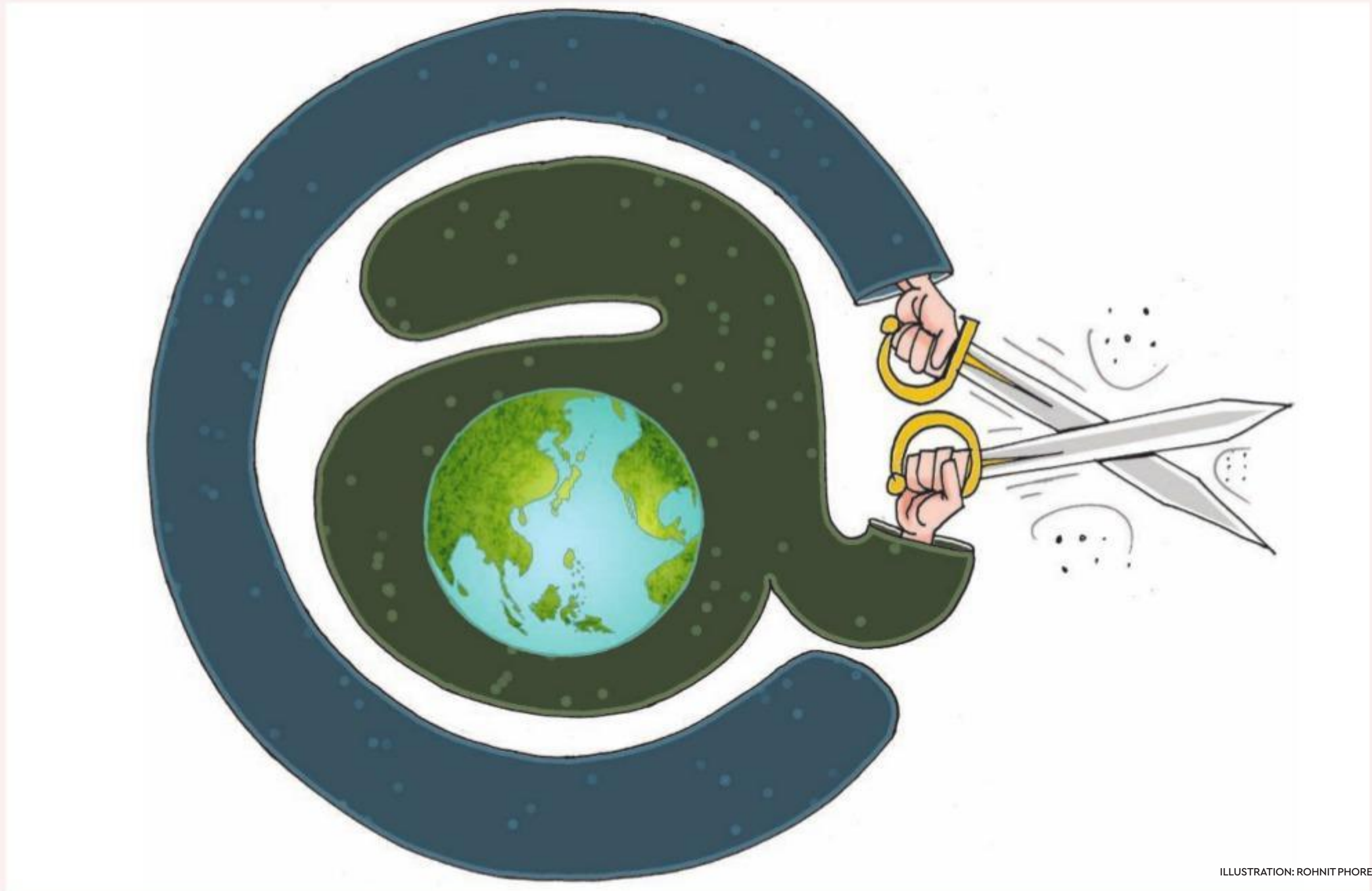


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

THE WORLD IN 2020

The Splinternet of Things threatens 5G's potential

The transformative potential of 5G will be diminished by America's blacklisting of Huawei

FOR YEARS, TECHNOLOGISTS have gushed about the promise of the "Internet of Things" (IoT). With ubiquitous sensors and universal connectivity, punters have been told, the IoT will transform ordinary workshops into smart factories. Passengers will enjoy safe travel in autonomous cars and cargoes will be tracked seamlessly across borders. Consumers will enjoy blazing-fast connections on mobile devices that allow whole films to be downloaded in an instant.

This heady vision was promoted so heavily for so long by tech vendors that it began to seem like a chimera. It is not. The two essential technologies speeding the IoT's arrival, inexpensive sensors and super-fast networking kit, are advancing fast. Gartner, a research group, predicts that the global number of devices embedded with sensors will

leap from 8.4 billion in 2017 to 20.4 billion in 2020.

The second enabler is 5G, a telecommunication-networking technology superior to today's 4G mobile networks. Hans Vestberg, chief executive of Verizon, an American telecom giant, has restructured his entire firm around 5G's potential, arguing that it will bring many benefits beyond blazing-fast speed. For example, an IoT network based on 5G connections would allow a million devices to be clustered within a square kilometre, as they might be on a dense factory floor or at a crowded sports arena—far more than the 60,000 or so possible with 4G.

Alas, the once-bright prospects for a speedy global roll-out are turning into a tale of the good, the bad and the ugly. The good news is that several big markets will see 5G networks deployed at scale in 2020. Verizon expects three-quarters of

the phones it launches in 2020 in America to be 5G-capable, and AT&T, a rival firm, expects to offer nationwide coverage by mid-year. Huawei, China's telecom-equipment giant, has spent \$46 billion developing 5G kit, and expects to deploy 1.5 million base stations across hundreds of Chinese cities by the end of 2020. Europe has been held back by market fragmentation, but the European Commission is pushing to have an EU-wide commercial roll-out of 5G by the end of 2020.

The bad news is that the usefulness of all this will be limited at first. Unless consumers spend a fortune on the latest 5G handsets, they will not be able to enjoy super-fast downloads. Most companies will not have sensors embedded in all of their factory machinery for a few years yet, though vendors like Siemens and GE will be keen to help them set up such "industrial internets". There are also barriers to the use of IoT devices in some industries (privacy concerns in healthcare, for example) that require policy reforms. As the various hurdles are overcome over the next few years, reckons Michael Chui of the McKinsey Global Institute, a think tank, IoT technologies will create between \$3.9 trillion and \$11.1 trillion in economic value globally by 2025.

The ugly aspect of the 5G story involves geopolitics. A decision to ban Huawei from America's telecom networks and to deny it access to vital intellectual property from American suppliers has dealt a severe blow to the market leader. President Donald Trump has cited security concerns. Huawei points out that no evidence of wrongdoing has ever been presented.

America has also been strong-arming its allies around the world to reject Chinese kit. Some, like Australia, have done so. Others, like Britain, may restrict Huawei to peripheral parts of their networks. In countries where Huawei is banned, telecom operators must rely on more expensive, non-Chinese 5G kit made by Finland's Nokia, Sweden's Ericsson or South Korea's Samsung. Sensing

opportunity, Ericsson plans to open a new manufacturing plant in Texas in 2020 to make 5G equipment that is palatable to the White House.

Still, vast swathes of the globe, from Russia to Malaysia to Peru, will remain open to Huawei in 2020. This is not only because they are in China's geopolitical orbit, though this is true for many Asian and African countries. Huawei's 5G equipment is also more advanced: Chinese firms represent over a third of global patent applications for 5G-related technologies, with Huawei alone representing 15% of the world total. And Huawei's equipment is less expensive than rivals' kit.

The result is likely to be a bifurcated IoT, dividing the world between countries willing to use Chinese telecom gear and those that share America's concerns over security. Part of the 5G dream was that of a unified global standard for networking. Once that is fractured, the resultant divide poses huge headaches. Multinational firms with operations in Shenzhen and Silicon Valley cannot use the same IoT systems in both. Global developers of IoT devices relying on seamless 5G, such as new virtual- and augmented-reality applications, may be handicapped by interoperability issues among markets.

Frank Appel, chairman of Deutsche Post DHL, a giant logistics and package-delivery firm, warns that if information cannot be exchanged easily between different networks, "we have to go back to paperwork and print and input into the system... I don't know how we will manage." Verizon's Mr Vestberg observes that 5G would then be a step back to 1G and 2G, which used network standards that did not allow seamless global connectivity. Vincent Peng, a board member at Huawei, warns that this could result in a disastrous "digital Berlin Wall". Unless a political settlement is soon reached between China and America on 5G, 2020 will be remembered for the arrival of the Splinternet of Things.

THE ECONOMIST

Chinese firms represent over a third of global patent applications for 5G-related tech, with Huawei alone representing 15% of world total. And Huawei equipment is less expensive than rivals' kit

DISTRIBUTION OF PROFITS

Buy-back of shares may still be viable?

SAUMIL SHAH & NITIN BOHRA

Shah is partner and Bohra is principal, Dhruva Advisors

Opting for buy-back or dividend is not a straightforward task

DIVIDEND HAS BEEN one of the preferred ways amongst Indian corporates to distribute profits to their shareholders. However, considering the additional dividend tax levy in the hands of non-corporate resident shareholders, buy-back of shares by listed companies has emerged as one of the preferred ways to distribute profits in recent years. This is also evident from the fact that the return of cash by listed companies to shareholders through the buy-back route got a big boost since the introduction of super-dividend tax.

The buy-back of shares by listed companies was more attractive on account of two aspects. First, the buy-back of shares by them was not subject to buy-back tax (BBT), and second, the receipt of consideration in the hands of shareholders was subject to capital gains tax, and where listed shares were held for more than 12 months, the same was exempt from tax. The combination of all these led to distribution of profits back to shareholders with almost no tax.

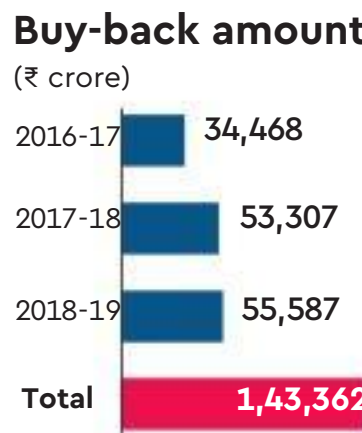
Post the introduction of long-term capital gains tax on the sale of listed shares and BBT on listed shares, the direction has certainly changed. As stated in the Budget speech by the finance minister, the reason for introduction of BBT on listed shares was to discourage the practice of listed companies announcing buy-back of shares instead of dividends, to avoid the dual levy of dividend tax.

However, after rolling out BBT on listed shares, it is interesting to analyse whether listed companies should switch to dividends as the preferred route for distributing profits to shareholders. A plain vanilla analysis still appears to be in favour of buy-back in the scenario where the majority of shareholders are non-corporate resident shareholders. With the levy of additional dividend tax in the hands of such shareholders, buy-backs offer a tax arbitrage of nearly 10%. This arbitrage may further increase if significant cost-base is available to the companies on shares being bought-back, as the same would reduce the BBT liability considerably, thereby leading to more surplus in the hands of shareholders. A detailed analysis of shareholding pattern (viz. corporates or non-corporates, residents or non-residents), consideration received on issue of shares proposed to be bought back etc, are essential for holistic comparison between buy-back and dividend route.

Another advantage of the buy-back route from a stock market perspective could be its positive impact on the EPS and consequently on the P/E ratio, as shares bought back are extinguished and lead to a lower capital base. It is also noticed that the buy-back price proposed under the offer is generally higher than the ruling market price, which imbues greater confidence amongst shareholders.

Apart from taxes, one must be also cognisant of other legal and commercial aspects that need consideration while deciding on buy-back vis-à-vis dividend route, viz. disproportionate participation from promoters and public shareholders, limits on buy-back size with minimum 15% entitlement for small shareholders, restrictions on fund raising for the next six months, constraint on maintaining minimum debt-equity ratio of 2:1 post-buy-back, etc.

Based on the above analysis, it becomes evident that opting for buy-back or dividend is not a straightforward task. It would require much more deliberation and consideration. Furthermore, recent remarks by the finance minister to address DDT as regressive tax levy have fuelled the speculation on the removal of DDT. If it is removed, it would certainly change the rules of the game. In such a scenario, it would be interesting to see what happens to BBT?



SECONDARY AGRICULTURE

SECONDARY AGRICULTURE assumes prominence with the announcement of the goal of doubling farmers' incomes. The term 'secondary' has a bearing on climate change adaptation and its mitigation, small farm viability and profitability, food security, nutrition, sustainable utilisation of natural resources, and optimal usage of produce from primary agriculture and farm incomes.

In other words, promoting secondary agriculture has implications on attaining sustainable development goals, which aim to connect primary, secondary and tertiary sectors by using slack/idle factors of production, such as land and labour—contributing to primary agriculture production, capturing 'value' in primary agricultural activities, and generating additional income at the enterprise level.

While there is no formal definition of secondary agriculture, based on the Economic Accounts for Agriculture of the European Union, a Technical Advisory Committee on Secondary Agriculture was formed by the then Planning Commission in 2007, and the committee had set out the inclusion criteria as "assembling, ripening, cleaning, grading, sorting, drying, preserving, packing and storing."

The essence of secondary agriculture was understood when the Ashok Dalwai Committee submitted its report on "adding value to primary agriculture and building agricultural enterprises in rural

The shift Indian farming needs

We must focus on sustainable production, monetisation of farmers' produce and strengthening of extension services

KUSHANKUR DEY

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



India" through "farm-linked activities and secondary agriculture" in February 2018. The committee has defined secondary agriculture as a production activity at enterprise/farm level, and it devised a four-fold strategy:

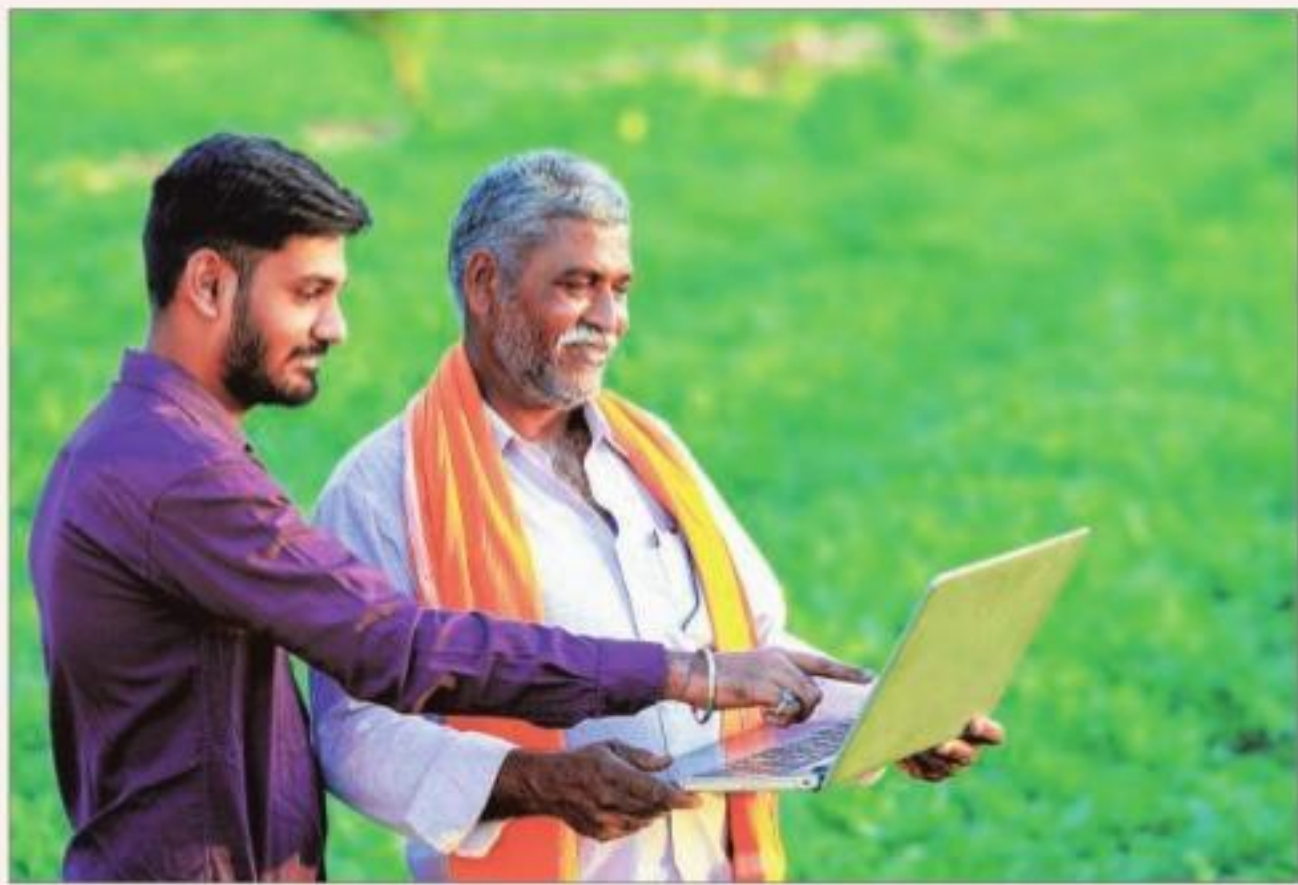
- Sustainability of production;
- Monetisation of farmers' produce;
- Strengthening of extension services;
- Recognising agriculture as an enterprise, and enabling it to operate as such, by addressing various structural weaknesses.

This four-fold strategy for secondary

agriculture has drawn attention of development professionals, agribusiness academics and experts, and policymaking bodies. Secondary agriculture, as is defined, can help drive the growth of primary agriculture, and three avenues have been identified that adequately help utilise capital, human resources, technology, organisational capabilities, and risk management:

Type A: Value-addition to primary agriculture production systems;

Type B: Alternative enterprises, but linked to rural off-farm activities;



Type C: Enterprises that thrive on crop residues and waste materials of primary agriculture.

Type A can be achieved by improving livelihood enhancement action plans that are implemented by farmer-based/community-based organisations. Linking farmers with the market through aggregation and assaying/grading of agricultural produce can help them in value enhancement and appropriation. Collectivisations, cluster farming, financial literacy, marketing skills are important to

build this avenue.

Type B is based on utilisation of alternative enterprises to primary agriculture, but is associated with rural off-farm activities. For example, poultry, bee-keeping, duck farming and livestock management are off-farm enterprises that can be promoted as part of integrated farming system. Integrated farming can hedge farm risk in the period of crop failure, or ease out the seasonality in the stream of cash flows.

Type C are such enterprises that strive on crop residues, or by-products of pri-

mary agriculture. For example, after recovering sugar from cane, cane can be used as bagasse for molasses production. Similarly, cotton stalk and seed (after ginning) can be used for de-oiled cake preparation or utilised in the secondary/tertiary sector.

To promote agricultural entrepreneurship or agricultural enterprises, there is recognition of priority sector status for institutional credit; low-cost skilling and knowledge-based exposure of farm communities; specialised extension services for enterprises owned by females; priority under rural electrification objectives; fast-track procedures to avail benefits under the ongoing central sector schemes; and label geographical indicators to products of village-scale secondary agriculture.

It is worth noting that the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, in association with the World Bank, had instituted the National Agricultural Higher Education Project (with a \$165 million funding support) in 2017-18 for a five-year period to promote skill development and agri-entrepreneurship amongst graduates of agricultural colleges, apart from institutional development and innovation funding to education. Agribusiness incubation and acceleration, if made marketable, can benefit farm communities, and appropriate market linkages can improve farmers' realisations through collectivisation. However, a concerted effort at both policy and implementation levels at the Centre and states is necessary to attain this goal.

Payment for destruction of property: what High Court order said

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30

IN ITS crackdown on protesters against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the Uttar Pradesh government has directed district administrations to serve notices on persons allegedly involved in arson and damage of public property, and direct them to pay a penalty. The quantum of the penalty is being determined according to the total cost of the damaged property, according to the FIR lodged by the police.

While issuing these notices, the administration has said it derives such powers on the basis of an Allahabad High Court order of December 2, 2010 in *Mohammad Shujauddin vs State of Uttar Pradesh*. It has said the police are empowered to take penal action under The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984. The High Court order, due to lacunae in the 1984 Act, has also empowered the civil administration to take action against the accused.

What was the High Court case about?

The order, passed by Justice Sudhir

Agarwal, relates to a scuffle between two persons from different political parties that had resulted in injuries and loss of public property. Justice Agarwal asked the state government to file an affidavit on the number of cases filed by the police under the 1984 Act. The police replied that in 26 years, only 585 cases had been filed, and only 11 cases had been disposed of.

"It appears that everybody believes that public property has no custodian. It is like orphan. It is the birthright to destruct and damage it in a manner they like without any sense of responsibility... What is more disturbing is that law enforcement machinery mostly is a silent spectator watching destruction of public property," Justice Agarwal observed.

The High Court then referred to a 2009 judgment of the Supreme Court relating to the destruction of public and private properties. The Supreme Court had issued guidelines on the basis of recommendations made by two committees, headed by former Supreme Court Justice KT Thomas and senior advocate Fali Nariman. In particular, the Nariman Committee's recommendations had dealt with extracting damages for de-



Anti-CAA protesters in Lucknow on December 19. Vishal Srivastav

struction. Accepting the recommendations, the Supreme Court had said that the rioters would be made strictly liable for the damage, and compensation would be collected to "make good" the damage.

"Where persons, whether jointly or otherwise, are part of a protest which turns violent, results in damage to private or public property, the persons who have caused the damage, or were part of the protest or who have organized it will be deemed to be strictly liable for the damage so caused, which may be assessed by the ordinary courts or by any special procedure created to enforce the right," the Supreme Court said.

What directions did the HC issue?

On the basis of the Supreme Court observations, the High Court directed that:

- As and when any incident of damage of public property takes place, if such agitation has been called at the "invitation of a political party or a sitting or former people's representative", a "report" shall be registered by the police against the political party/person by name.
- A "concerned department, local body,

public corporation" — that is, the owner of the property — would assess the damage and shall file a claim for realization of such amount before a "competent authority". The competent authority will be nominated by the government, and claims have to be filed within seven days after the nomination.

■ "Any person" belonging to the area where the public property is damaged can also approach the competent authority. However, when the money is awarded, it has to be furnished only to the concerned department to whom the property belongs.

■ There will be an "opportunity of hearing" against whom the claims is filed; and the competent authority is mandated to pass the "appropriate order" with a month after the hearing is complete.

■ If the person is found guilty by the competent authority (an official of the rank of Additional District Magistrate will be responsible for collecting the amount), and if the guilty is unable to pay the entire amount in a single instalment, the district magistrate has to issue a certificate, by which the person is made to pay in arrears under the relevant provisions of the the Revenue Recovery Act.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

What next in Afghanistan?

Preliminary poll results have returned President Ghani to power but have been challenged by his rival. What questions does it raise over the next government's stability, with or without US-Taliban talks?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 30

SINCE DECEMBER 22, Afghanistan has been debating the preliminary results of its election. Amid this uncertainty, the Taliban were reported to have agreed on Sunday to a temporary ceasefire in Afghanistan, before they denied these reports on Monday. A look at the controversial election, and what a Taliban ceasefire and US withdrawal — if that happens — could mean for Afghanistan:

Why is there uncertainty about the results of the election?

The results announced on December 22 gave President Ashraf Ghani 50.64 per cent of the 18,24,401 votes counted (which means a second round runoff would not be required); he managed to cross the halfway mark by fewer than 12,000 votes. His main rival, Abdullah Abdullah, polled 7,20,990 votes or 39.52 per cent, and was in second place.

But these are "preliminary" results. The elections were held on September 28. The preliminary results were scheduled to be declared on October 18, and the final results on November 7. The schedule could not be kept as the Independent Election Commission (IEC) of Afghanistan undertook an "audit and recount" process in 8,255 polling stations, later increased to 8,494 polling stations, for the following reasons: a discrepancy between votes cast on the basis of Biometric Voter Verification, and the paper trail at these polling stations; missing paper trail or "result sheets"; and other irregularities.

The recount and audit went slowly. Abdullah wanted 3 lakh votes invalidated (including over 1 lakh cast after polling hours and nearly 1.5 lakh set aside initially because of various suspected irregularities) and 2,423 polling stations excluded from the count. His supporters led street protests in many provinces and succeeded in getting the process suspended for a few days in November. The IEC has been accused of siding with Ghani.

Abdullah has declared that he does not accept the "fraudulent result" declared without excluding the 3 lakh "unclean" votes. He has equated the damage caused by the result to that caused by a suicide bombing.

Other candidates, including Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, have also opposed the result. Hekmatyar, the head of Hizb-e-Islami, who got 70,247 votes (3.85 per cent), has denounced the results as "false" and accused the IEC of "stealing" votes cast for him.

So what happens now?

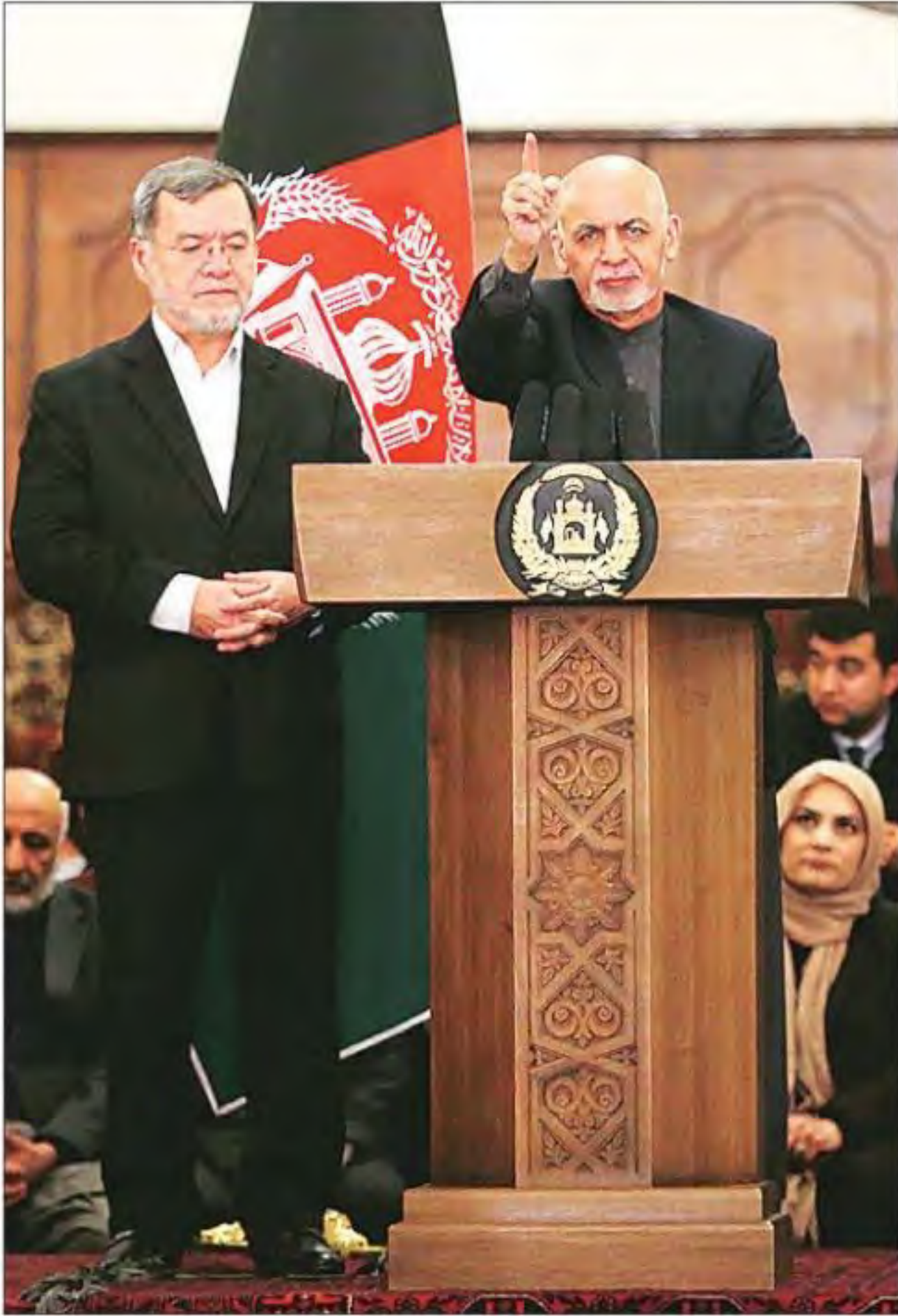
The final results may be declared only towards the end of January. The Election Complaints Commission has received 16,500 complaints, of which 8,000 are from the Abdullah camp. Ghani's side has filed 3,000 complaints. If Abdullah's complaints are rejected, Ghani will be declared the winner.

If the Commission takes on board Abdullah's concerns, especially about the invalidity of a large chunk of votes, it would bring down Ghani's vote count and pave the way for a second round runoff between the top two contenders — a runoff takes place when no candidate secures a simple majority. Neither scenario promises the formation of a stable government.

Why will the government not be stable?

Abdullah has already pledged that he will not allow "rootless fraudsters to rule over Afghanistan". This is *deja vu* — in 2014 a contested result after the second round had to be resolved by then US Secretary of State John Kerry, who flew in to hold talks with both Ghani and Abdullah. The two men then came together in a National Unity Government. Ghani became President and Abdullah was given the newly created role of Chief Executive.

Both Ghani and Abdullah have rejected



another national unity government. Ghani has said the country "needs one President, not two", and the idea was no more acceptable to him. Abdullah believes he was cheated out of becoming President twice earlier — before 2014, he had been narrowly defeated by Hamid Karzai in 2009. And the US, keen to hightail it out of Afghanistan, is focused on reviving the talks with the Taliban that President Donald Trump called off abruptly in September.

A second round may only bring more uncertainty as it did in 2014. The losing side is sure to see the electoral process itself as compromised.

Besides the low turnout — out of 9.6 million registered voters, the IEC pegged it at 2.8 million, but later revised it to 1.8 million — the election has thrown up a sharp regional divide. A vote map of the country's 34 provinces put out by the IEC shows that Ghani, a Pashtun, has won all the southern provinces, while Abdullah, of mixed Tajik-Pashtun ethnicity from the northeastern province of Panjshir, has won all the non-Pashtun northern provinces. If Abdullah and Ghani were partners in government, they would be seen as a bridge over the divide; as rivals, they would make it look dire.

Where do the Taliban and their talks

with the US figure in all this?

That is a big part of the uncertainty. In September, President Donald Trump had called off a talks process after nine formal rounds that began in January 2019. Zalmay Khalilzad, the US Special Envoy on Afghanistan, said just before the cancellation that the two sides had finalised an agreement that only required the President's signature.

As abruptly, during an unannounced Thanksgiving Day trip to Afghanistan on November 28 to meet US troops, Trump declared talks with the Taliban were on again. Ten days before this announcement, the Taliban released an American and an Australian who were teaching at the American University in Kabul, and had been taken captive in 2016. In an apparent exchange, the Afghan government released Anas Haqqani, brother of the Haqqani group leader Sirajuddin Haqqani, and two Taliban militants.

From December 7 to 12, Khalilzad met with Taliban representatives in Qatar again, just as he had until September. Just a day before this round of talks ended, the Taliban carried out a 12-hour attack at the Bagram airbase, north of Kabul. The attack began with a car bomb, after which gunmen entered a medical facility. Two Afghan civilians were killed and 73 were injured. Just before



President Ashraf Ghani (left) won just over half the votes in "preliminary" results; the camp of his main rival Abdullah Abdullah (above) has filed several complaints. Reuters & AP

the talks began, the Taliban carried out another deadly attack, this time on a security post in Kunduz, killing 11 Afghan soldiers. There were several other bombings and other violent attacks during the rest of December that killed civilians, Afghan soldiers and militants.

There have been no formal talks since. On Monday, the Taliban denied reports that they were ready to call a ceasefire in preparation for an agreement with the US on withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (the name by which the Taliban call themselves) has no ceasefire plans", the Taliban said in a statement. The Taliban's refusal to commit themselves to a ceasefire has been the main reason why President Ghani, other politicians and Afghan civil society have been filled with disquiet and dread about the US-Taliban talks.

Is there a chance that the new government will be included in the US-Taliban process?

It is unlikely. The Taliban have said they do not recognise the elections and have denounced all governments in Kabul as "puppets" of the US. The US kept the previous government out of the talks that ended in September, in deference to the Taliban's wishes. There isn't a new government in Kabul yet. Going by Khalilzad's statements during the pre-September talks, dialogue between the Taliban and Afghan "representatives" (not government), would follow a US-Taliban agreement, and it would be for this "intra-Afghan" dialogue to discuss the roadmap ahead, including perhaps a ceasefire. Back in September, the imminent US-Taliban agreement had cast uncertainty on the election itself. There was a view that the election would serve no purpose, and that instead, the "intra-Afghan dialogue" should negotiate the setting up of an interim government that would include Taliban representatives.

The cancellation of the US-Taliban process meant there was no more talk about not holding the election. Ghani, who had been determined from the start that the democratic exercise should not be disrupted, hoped he would return with a strong mandate, which in turn would help him face the Taliban with a better hand. But his slender majority from a low turnout, and the contested result may not help. If the election goes into a second round, a new government would potentially take months to form, raising the possibility that the US-Taliban talks may even conclude in an agreement before that, presenting the new dispensation with a changed ground situation in which its own role may be reshaped by circumstances outside its control.

TELLING NUMBERS

How the states, UTs scored on various goals in SDG Index

TOP 12, THE STATES

Kerala	70
Himachal	69
Andhra	67
Tamil Nadu	67
Telangana	67
Karnataka	66
Goa	65
Sikkim	65
Gujarat	64
Maharashtra	64
Uttarakhand	64
Punjab	62

BOTTOM 5, THE STATES

Bihar	50
Jharkhand	53
Arunachal	53
Meghalaya	54
UP, Assam	55

TOP 5, THE UTs

Chandigarh	70
Puducherry	66
Dadra & NH	63
Lakshadweep	63
Delhi, A & N Islands, Daman & Diu	61

GOAL BY GOAL, THE STATES

Sustainable development goal	Top score	2nd place	Bottom rank
SDG 1: No poverty	Tamil Nadu (72)	Tripura (70)	Jharkhand (28)
SDG 2: Zero hunger	Goa (76)	Mizoram (75)	Jharkhand (22)
SDG 3: Good health	Kerala (82)	Andhra (76)	Nagaland (29)
SDG 4: Quality education	Himachal (81)	Kerala (74)	Bihar (19)
SDG 5: Gender equality	Himachal (52)	Kerala (51)	Telangana (26)
SDG 6: Clean water & sanitation	Andhra (96)	UP (94)	Tripura (69)
SDG 7: Affordable & clean energy	Sikkim (97)	Goa (95)	Odisha (50)
SDG 8: Decent work & economic growth	Telanganagana (82)	Andhra (78)	Manipur (27)
SDG 9: Industry, innovation, infrastructure	Gujarat (88)	Kerala (88)	Mizoram (8)
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities	Telangana (94)	Manipur (81)	Goa (19)
SDG 11: Sustainable cities & communities	Goa (79)	Himachal (79)	Meghalaya (22)
SDG 12: Sustainable consumption & production	Nagaland (100)	Tripura (92)	Rajasthan (30)
SDG 13: Climate action	Karnataka (71)	Andhra (70)	Jharkhand (27)
SDG 14: Marine ecosystems	Coastal states only, not counted in overall SDG		
SDG 15: Life & land	Manipur (100)	Sikkim (100)	Haryana (40)
SDG 16: Peace, justice & strong institutions	Andhra (86)	Gujarat (86)	Assam (52)

High-performing Union Territories

Sustainable development goal	High UT scores
SDG 4: Quality education	Chandigarh (80)
SDG 5: Gender equality	J&K (53), Ladakh (53)
SDG 6: Clean water & sanitation	Chandigarh (100), Daman & Diu (96)
SDG 7: Affordable & clean energy	Puducherry (97), Delhi (96)
SDG 9: Industry, innovation, infrastructure	Dadra & NH (100), Daman & Diu (100), Delhi (100)
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities	A & N Islands (94), Lakshadweep (93), Puducherry (92)
SDG 11: Sustainable cities & communities	Chandigarh (83)
SDG 13: Climate action	Lakshadweep (100), A & N Islands (72)
SDG 15: Life & land	Dadara & NH 100, Lakshadweep 100
SDG 16: Peace, justice & strong institutions	Puducherry 96, Chandigarh 89

NITI Aayog has released its latest SDG India Index 2019, which assesses each state and Union Territory's achievement on 16 sustainable development goals (SDGs). Kerala is in the top slot with a score of 70, while Bihar is at the bottom with 50.

Each of the 16 SDGs — ranging from good health to quality education, gender equality, and climate action — comprise several indicators, with the number of these varying from SDG to SDG. Scores are given for a state or UT on each SDG. The composite score for each state or UT is computed by aggregating their performance across these goals, and then by taking the arithmetic mean of individual goal scores. A score of 100 implies that the state/UT has achieved targets set for 2030.

Among the 16 SDGs, marine ecosystems is for coastal states only, and scores on this one were not counted in the composite total. In the other SDGs, the best performers were Tamil Nadu for 'no poverty'; Goa for 'zero hunger'; Kerala for 'good health'; Himachal Pradesh for

'quality education'; Himachal again for 'gender equality'; Andhra Pradesh for 'clean water and sanitation'; Sikkim for 'affordable and clean energy'; Telangana for 'decent work & economic growth'; Gujarat for 'industry, innovation and infrastructure'; Telangana for 'reduced inequalities'; Goa for 'sustainable cities and communities'; Nagaland for 'sustainable consumption and production'; Karnataka for 'climate action'; Manipur for 'life and land'; and Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat for 'peace, justice, strong institutions'.

Following Kerala's composite score of 70, Himachal Pradesh took the second spot with a score of 69 while Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana shared the third spot with each scoring 67. There are eight states in the highest bracket, called frontrunners, with scores in the range 65-99.

Behind Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, the other states in this category are Karnataka (66), Sikkim (65) and Goa (65). Two UTs, Chandigarh and Puducherry, scored in this range.



FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FREEDOM FROM 3Cs

Finance Minister does well to reach out to bankers, but government needs a roadmap to boost their confidence

IT IS A reflection of the state of the Indian banking industry today, specially state-owned banks which dominate the landscape and are marked by a virtual freeze in lending, that the country’s finance minister had to reach out to bankers to assure them that they need not fear the three dreaded Cs — Central Bureau of Investigation, Central Vigilance Commission and Comptroller and Auditor General. At a meeting with bankers over the weekend, Nirmala Sitharaman while conceding that decision-making in banks was getting impacted because of the fear of the 3Cs attempted to assuage the apprehensions, saying that the government and its investigative agencies have put in place measures to address their concerns. Notably, Sitharaman’s predecessor, Arun Jaitley, in early 2019, had cautioned against the overzealousness of state agencies, warning of the dangers of the banking system grinding to a halt.

The Indian Banks Association, too, had protested a while ago after senior officials of the Bank of Maharashtra were arrested by the state police and following several cases dating back a decade or more being filed by agencies. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has blamed what he termed as the “malafide unless proven otherwise” doctrine of governance of the NDA Government for the breakdown of trust between institutions and the government. Bankers may tend to agree, especially when basic questions such as the definition of a bonafide decision and who should sit in judgement on loan approvals granted by banks years ago remain unclear even now. Little will be achieved through incremental moves. An enduring solution requires a significant lowering of state holding by the government in scores of banks — well below the threshold of 51 per cent — to free bankers from the purview of the three Cs, or privatisation.

A government with a strong mandate like the Modi-led NDA 2 hasn’t signalled so far that it has the desire or the appetite to go down that road. The second best but sub-optimal solution would be to empower bankers and professional bank boards to decide on whether a decision to approve a loan was bonafide or malafide. It is a fact that the seeds of the current mess in Indian banking were sown during UPA 2 but that doesn’t absolve the Modi government which was late in addressing the crisis during its first term. The perceived morality play reflected in punishing so-called rogue bankers and businessmen — a political response to Rahul Gandhi’s suit boot sarkar jibe — has already hurt banking and industry. With India set to end the fiscal with a multi-decade low in bank credit, the longer the government takes to unveil a roadmap and walk the talk to boost the confidence of bankers, the more elusive will be the economic recovery.

VENGEFUL STATE

UP government’s decision to demand compensation from protesters, arbitrarily targeting one community, is a new low

ON DECEMBER 19, soon after protests broke out across Uttar Pradesh against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath promised, or threatened, that his government would take “badla (revenge)” against the protesters and “auction off their properties”. Last week, people across the state were served notices demanding monetary damages for alleged acts of vandalism of public property. In Sambhal, as reported by this newspaper, civil society leaders, educationists and political workers are among the 59 people who have been issued notices by the UP government for the payment of Rs 15.35 lakh. The UP government’s message of revenge has, in fact, gone out unambiguously from Adityanath’s official Twitter handle, which exults: “Every rioter is shocked. Every demonstrator is shocked. Everyone has been silenced after seeing Yogi Adityanath government’s stern intentions... Every violent protester will cry now because there is a Yogi government in Uttar Pradesh.”

Two things are clear in Sambhal: First, civil society leaders who happen to be Muslim have been targeted. Second, it appears that there is little or no evidence of their involvement in the destruction of public property. The notices will, of course, be challenged in the courts. But the UP government’s “stern intention” to ensure that “every protester will cry out” will have been fulfilled by the tedium and cost of the legal process itself. Damage to public property must, of course, be condemned, but the current protests are not the first, even in recent times, where such damage has taken place. But there are no instances of compensation being demanded from the protesters. While protest must not descend into violence, and efforts must be made to prevent them from doing so, and there must be some penalties when they do, UP is witnessing a more dangerous phenomenon — the state is pitting itself against those who express dissent.

In UP, especially in the Adityanath regime, law and order has been flawed in its implementation, and fraught for the political ends it is apparently made to serve. Who can and cannot register an FIR has long been a barometer of which communities have a dominant voice in government — the police chowki is the most visible and immediate face of the state in the remotest parts. But even by UP’s poor standards, the Adityanath government has touched new lows — from “anti-romeo squads” to the celebration of “encounters”. Now, the chief minister seeks to style the law and order machinery as an agent of revenge. For the government to fulfill its role, law must not be selectively used, or weaponised.

SHE THE CHAMPION

Koneru Humpy gets the moves right. Her best is yet to be

FOR THE FIRST two months after returning from a two-year maternity break, Koneru Humpy was struggling for concentration. Not that she had drifted from the game during the layoff — she kept reading about the games and talking to her close friends on the circuit — but she realised she was too slow in deciding her moves. Her apprehensions were vindicated when she endured a torrid set of games in her comeback tournament at the Olympiad in Georgia at the end of last year. Another setback followed — a second-round exit in the World Championship. But just when she felt lost, her idol Judit Polgar soothed her: “Don’t worry, just a play a few more games, you will regain your speed. Your best years are yet to be”.

The Hungarian chess icon’s words came true as Humpy not only dusted up her form but also went on to become the world rapid champion in a breathtaking play-off final. On the morning of the final day, all she wanted was to be in the top three. But then followed a sequence of favourable circumstances, not least her opponent in the final, Lei Tingjie, losing a round to Ekaterina Atalik, while Humpy pushed and gambled for an unlikely victory over Tang Zhongyi. Buoyed, she went for the kill against Tingjie, still recovering from the shock defeat to Atalik. There was more drama, as she lost the first round, but then restored parity, and eventually forced her Chinese opponent to settle for a draw, thus becoming the second Indian to clinch a World Rapid Championship after Viswanathan Anand.

Humpy, too, first made her name in the rapids format, where she used to beat her father, a state-level chess player himself, and his friends, when she was barely five. But gradually, as her focus shifted to the classical versions, participation in rapids became a mere pastime. But the instincts remained. A world title was the dream that fuelled her during the break, and it should gratify her now that it came in a format where quick-thinking is the most fundamental principle. Now that it has arrived, her best years are yet to be.



SUJAN R CHINOY

THE APPOINTMENT OF General Bipin Rawat, the current Chief of Army Staff, as India’s first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) comes quick on the heels of the historic decision taken by India’s Cabinet Committee on Security on December 24 on the appointment of a CDS, bringing to fruition a matter that has been hanging fire for close to two decades.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced on August 15 the creation of the CDS. He had cautioned that “India should not have a fragmented approach” in regard to the three services. He was referring to the fundamental principle of jointness and integration of the armed forces and the need to ensure that India keeps abreast of global trends in military strategies and is capable of facing new threats and challenges in the multi-dimensional hybrid war scenarios of the 21st century.

The decision to appoint a CDS is a huge step towards achieving seamless coordination and greater effectiveness in higher defence management structures by creating an enabling architecture that permits fuller expression on the part of our professional armed forces. The Kargil War in 1999 may have been a victory for India, thanks to the valour of our armed forces, but it came at a steep cost due to lack of jointness and integration. The Kargil Review Committee’s report in 2000 and the Group of Ministers’ Report of 2001 had recommended that serious steps be taken towards integration of our armed forces.

The momentous decision involves the creation of a new post of CDS in the rank of a four-star general (or equivalent) with salary and perquisites equivalent to that of a service chief. This is the first time in the history of independent India that a uniformed individual will head a government department. The CDS is not a ministerial position. He will be empowered under the Allocation of Business Rules to run his department. The highest form of supervisory mandate that can be delegated to him is at the level of a secretary. The defence secretary and the three chiefs occupy important positions in the government’s pantheon. This will not change when a fourth officer joins as CDS at the four-star level.

Both the defence secretary and the CDS will report to the raksha mantri. If required, the raksha mantri could ask any or all of the

The new CDS will be the head of a newly-minted Department of Military Affairs within the existing architecture of the Ministry of Defence, which already has four departments — Department of Defence, Department of Defence Production, Department of Defence Ex-Servicemen Welfare and the DRDO. All matters that are purely military affairs involving the army, navy and the air force, including the territorial army, especially jointness in tri-service matters pertaining to training, transport, staffing, logistics, communications, repairs and maintenance and even jointness in procurement, would henceforth be handled by the CDS.

departments to give their comments on matters that require a coordinated position to emerge from the MoD.

The key point is that the new CDS will be the head of a newly-minted Department of Military Affairs within the existing architecture of the Ministry of Defence, which already has four departments — Department of Defence, Department of Defence Production, Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare and the DRDO. All matters that are purely military affairs involving the army, navy and the air force, including the territorial army, especially jointness in tri-service matters pertaining to training, transport, staffing, logistics, communications, repairs and maintenance and even jointness in procurement, would henceforth be handled by the CDS.

The CDS will also be a member of the Defence Planning Committee and the Defence Acquisition Council, besides functioning as the military adviser to the Nuclear Command Authority. He would ensure optimal utilisation of infrastructure, facilitate restructuring of military commands including establishment of joint/theatre commands, promote indigenisation and work on “out of area contingencies”. Preparation of strategy papers and rationalisation and reforms in the functioning of the armed forces would be part of his mandate.

The CDS will be dual-hatted. As the permanent chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), the CDS will be expected to promote jointness and integration and be the principal military adviser to the raksha mantri. In the past, this role has been attempted by the rotational chairmanship of COSC by the senior-most chief who often held the post for a short tenure, with no time for in-depth study of tri-service issues and integration. The CDS will now have a tenured appointment up to the age of 65 years.

In General Rawat, the government has chosen a seasoned COAS who, as the senior-most of the three chiefs, is the incumbent chairman of COSC. He has also spearheaded far-reaching reforms in the organisational structure and war-fighting capabilities of the army — the move towards greater integration, speed of decision-making and rationalisation of manpower in the army. The idea of Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) headed by major-generals is expected to do away with

the traditional brigade command structure. The existing structure met the requirements of all contingencies in an older age when intelligence and information were not readily available in real-time. The Department of Military Affairs will not only synchronise the expertise and endeavours of the three services but also create harmony and integration between the military and civilian experts.

The rotational chairman of COSC currently commands the only tri-service command in India, that is, the Andaman and Nicobar Command along with other tri-service agencies and organisations such as the Defence Space Agency and Defence Cyber Agency. Nothing prevents the government from changing the structure keeping in mind evolving situations.

The CDS, who will also be the permanent chairman COSC, will not exercise any operational command, including over the three service chiefs. The three service chiefs will continue to retain full command over their services, and give independent military advice to the raksha mantri on matters concerning their respective services. The CDS, in turn, will do what no service chief can do, that is, reconcile the viewpoints of all the three services. This feature will improve his ability to provide impartial advice since his service loyalties will no longer colour his advice. The defence secretary will continue to deal with defence policy, strategy and diplomacy. He will also be responsible for capital acquisitions, defence land, defence accounts, cantonments, border roads, coast guard and a host of other important areas.

The creation of the CDS is part of the fulfillment of commitments by the Modi government on defence matters, starting with the implementation of One Rank One Pension after 40 years, the establishment of the Defence Space and Cyber Agencies as also the Special Operations Division, Make in India initiatives aimed at ensuring an “India First” policy. It is in keeping with India’s aspirations to fulfill its destiny as a major power in the 21st century.

The writer, a former ambassador, has worked in the National Security Council Secretariat and is currently director general of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses. Views are personal



SANDEEP PANDEY

ON DECEMBER 19, the day nationwide protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens were planned, me and my close friends — advocate Mohammad Shoaib and retired IPS officer S R Darapuri, were put under house arrest in Lucknow. Today, both of them are in jail. Shoaib was not produced before any magistrate before being sent to jail and the first magistrate before whom Darapuri was produced had refused to send him to jail. They were picked up by the police from their respective homes much before the arrests were officially made. When they were under house arrest, how could they have participated in any violence outside?

Shoaib was already a member of the youth wing of the Socialist Party when I was born in 1965. He first went to jail for a month in the late 1960s, as a student in Gonda, for violating CRPC Section 144. During his university convocation, Shoaib burned his degree in the presence of then President V V Giri for raising a slogan that the youth want jobs not degrees. He was fined Rs 50 and debarred from future admission. Presently, he is the state president of Socialist Party (India). Committed to socialist values, he has been taking up cases of people who find it difficult to engage a lawyer for financial and political reasons. In his later years of practice, he also took up cases of youth who were implicated

INJUSTICE IN UP

Arresting Mohammad Shoaib, S R Darapuri insults their legacy of human rights work

in terrorism or related cases. He has been successful in getting 13 such accused in different cases including Aftab Alam Ansari acquitted from the courts.

Any fair society would have honoured Shoaib rather than try to paint him as anti-national. His courteous demeanour and personality stands in contrast to what the Lucknow police would have us believe. Shoaib and his clients were alleged to have raised “Pakistan Zindabad” slogans, news about which was published in local newspapers without reasoning as to why any accused in a terror case, and his advocate, would raise a slogan that could imperil his chances of acquittal!

Most surprising was the incarceration of Darapuri, a retired inspector general of police. Darapuri has been an untiring campaigner of human rights, especially Dalit rights. He also contested the 2019 Lok Sabha election from Lucknow on behalf of the Lok Rajniti Manch, founded by the late Kuldip Nayyar in 2004. Since then, Darapuri has contested two more elections on behalf of All India People’s Front, an organisation fighting for forest rights of the tribals in Sonbhadra district of UP. He too, like Shoaib, is a source of strength for the persecuted. A lot of my colleagues working at the grass roots call him directly to seek his intervention when they face harassment by the police or powerful local figures. We have jointly worked on a number

of things — fact finding in cases of human rights violations of Dalits, Muslims and members of downtrodden communities, public hearings on the implementation of various social welfare schemes like food security etc. In 2008, he and I were part of a fact finding team which produced a report declaring Shahbaz Ahmed from Lucknow innocent when he was picked up by Rajasthan police in the Jaipur bomb blast case — Shahbaz was recently acquitted by the court too. Now, the Anti-Terrorism Squad is trying to frame him in a fresh case. Siddharth Darapuri, whom I’ve seen as a child, wrote a Facebook post about his grandfather: “Loved by his juniors and seniors, he was a person who did not shoot a fleeting miscreant at point blank range, even after the person fired at his jeep. He was a person, who went alone to make a gang surrender, and not finish them off in an encounter. He revolutionised the police-mess, which was marred and divided on caste lines. Never did he fire from his service revolver.”

I’m putting out these facts in the public domain for people to judge whether Shoaib and Darapuri, both septuagenarians, deserve to be in jail. Is the BJP government in UP being vindictive in order to cover up its failure in maintaining law and order?

The writer, a Magsasay Award winner, is vice president of Socialist Party (India)

DECEMBER 31, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

US Aid To PAK

THE JIMMY CARTER administration has decided to give both military and economic assistance to Pakistan in view of the latest developments in Afghanistan. Negotiations between the two countries have reportedly started. Pakistan has a huge shopping list that includes not merely light arms for guerrilla warfare against the Afghan state but heavy arms that can fire in any direction. Meanwhile, India does not even have an ambassador in Washington. The embassy is under the Charge’ D Affairs, Ashok Gokhale.

UP CRISIS

THE MINORITY BANARSI Das government in

Uttar Pradesh is in danger with a further fall in its strength and the demand raised by the Opposition leader Raj Mangal Pandey for its dismissal. The panchayati raj minister, Jamuna Prasad Bose, and three Lok Dal members of the Vidhan Sabha, Shriram Dwivedi, Sukhpal Pande and Bharat Singh Chauhan, have resigned from the party and joined the Janata Party. Pande accused the UP government of having failed to give relief to the drought stricken people and said that the law and order situation in the state had broken down completely.

VETO ON LEGAL AID

A PROPOSAL OF the Union law ministry to

give free legal aid to the poor in Supreme Court cases has been turned down by the finance ministry even though a token budgetary allowance of Rs 1 lakh had been made for this purpose. According to official sources, the finance ministry turned down the proposal on the ground that it involved a policy decision that could not be taken at this point of time.

ALL’S WELL WITH RAM JAGJIVAN RAM TOOK exception to the AIR report that he was unwell and advised rest by doctors. Addressing an election meeting in Bhubaneswar, he said its a mystery how AIR found me ill.



“With more pubs opening, Britain feels like we can overcome social isolation and cultural confusion of this age. We ought to raise a glass to good news in these dark times.”

— THE GUARDIAN

The freedom to speak up

The test of a healthy democracy is that anybody, from any strata of society, can question the government over any decision



KABIR KHAN

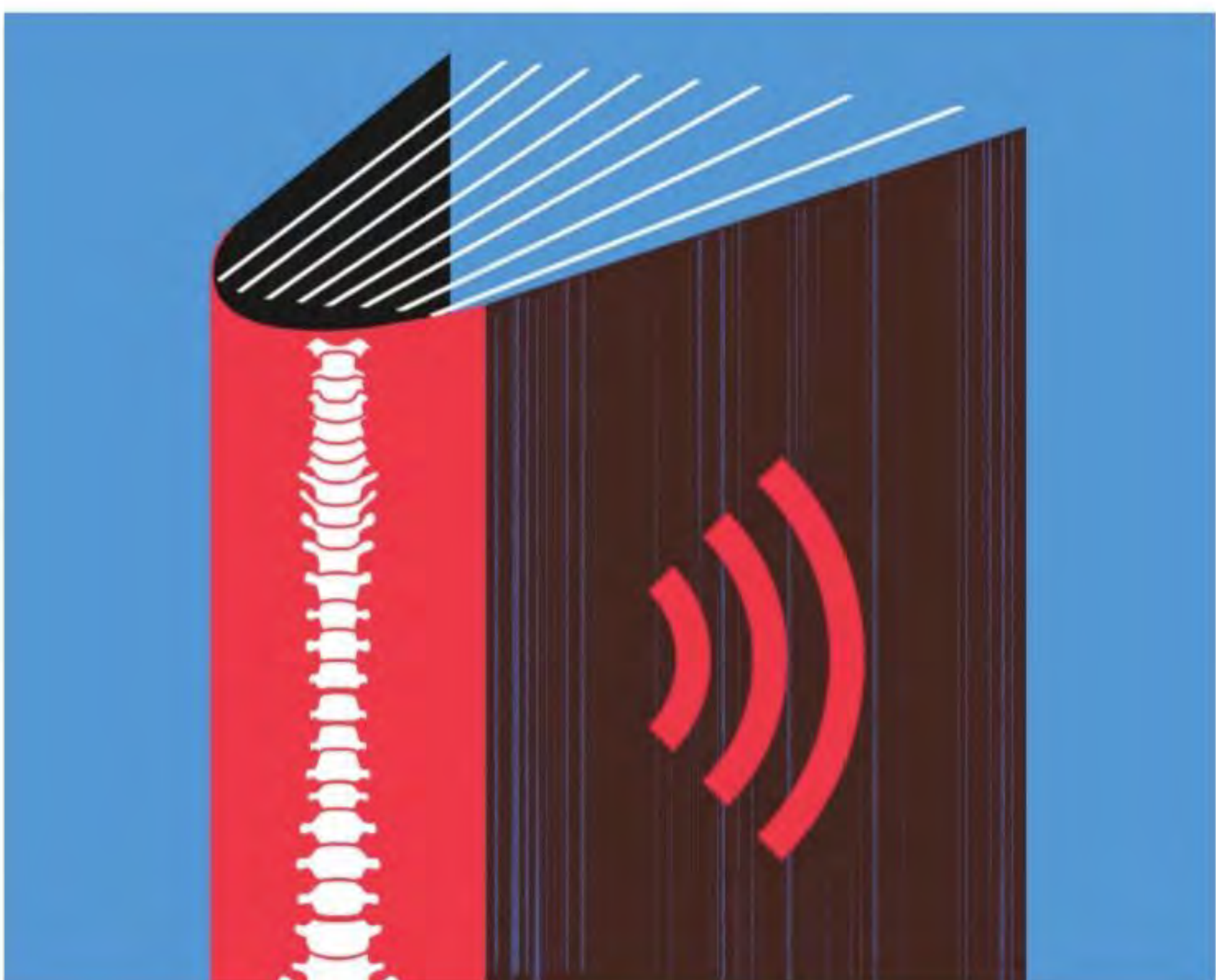
MY MEMORIES OF university life are associated with two institutions. I grew up on the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) as my father (Rasheeduddin Khan) was one its founding professors. In JNU, I witnessed a culture of political debate and dissent. The evenings would be spent at the Ganga dhaba where two people would stand up and debate some issue. At the Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC) at Jamia Millia Islamia, where I did my masters, we didn't interact much with the rest of the university but the MCRC itself had a very political atmosphere. We were documentary filmmakers in training and being aware of politics was a very important element of our education.

So, now when I see visuals of Jamia students walking with their hands up, it's something I can't get out of my mind. For me, that's like a tipping point. How can you prevent students from protesting peacefully about what they feel is wrong? There is this whole debate about outside elements being there, but we've seen students being pulled out of libraries and beaten up. It's unbelievable. And why is it happening in one university after another university in India — JNU, Jamia and Aligarh Muslim University?

Students are the conscience keepers of the country. As we grow up, we all get a little corrupt, blasé, laidback and indifferent about issues. But students don't. They have idealism. Often, we fear that our youth is becoming apolitical, that they are losing interest in the world around them. Now when you see them reacting to political developments, you should be happy that they care about our country. How can you not let them protest? You should be able to debate with them, and not send the police to beat them up, ransack hostels and libraries. If you don't promote protests among students, then it's going to be a sad day for the country because the youth is our country's tomorrow. The Jamia incident is the culmination of so many wrongs that we've been witness to.

The greatness of a country is reflected in how good its universities are. One of the strengths of the US, even though they have a host of other problems, is its strong university culture and its ability to breed leaders. Similarly, in India generations of leaders, nation builders, opinion makers, thinkers and administrators have come out of JNU, AMU and DU. We have to make sure that an enabling atmosphere flourishes in universities instead of labelling students as part of a “tukde tukde gang” or putting them in jail.

At present, there appears to be an atmosphere where dissent is not welcome — it's seen as anti-national. That we can all criticise and question our government means that we are a flourishing democracy. In the last six years, a narrative has been spun that a government is equal to a country; that if you question the government, you are questioning India. This is dangerous. A government has never been equal to a country. Governments will come and go. We are living in a healthy democracy till



C R Sasikumar

the day anybody, from any strata of society, can get up and question the prime minister, the home minister or any minister over any decision. Otherwise, what's the difference between democracy and dictatorship? At JNU and Jamia, we would have leaders from different parties coming and debating with the students. If a student is not able to openly stand up and put across strongly what he or she believes in, then let's not pretend that we live in a democracy.

I have never been more aware of my Muslim identity than I am today because it had never been never rubbed in my face before. I'm an atheist. For me, my religion is part of my culture and heritage. My religious identity has zero bearing on my life, as I go about doing my work and interacting with people. Religion should be very personal. Today, everything seems to be getting discussed through the prism of religion.

I grew up believing that India is an inherently secular country. Today, I question myself: Am I being naïve? I refuse to believe that the majority is comfortable with what is going on. If I start believing that, it will destroy the concept of India for me.

As a filmmaker, even when I make mainstream movies, I believe a political backdrop has to exist. Mainstream cinema is a powerful medium. I can forgive a bad screenplay, editing or cinematography, but I can never forgive bad politics. Every choice that a filmmaker makes needs to reflect its politics. This is the medium through which I will continue to make statements or ask questions in a format that is accessible to the audience. The chicken song in *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015), which lots of the children love, is very political — it questions the beef ban.

When I see visuals of Jamia students walking with their hands up, it's something I can't get out of my mind. For me, that's like a tipping point. How can you prevent students from protesting peacefully about what they feel is wrong? There is this whole debate about outside elements being there, but we've seen students being pulled out of libraries and beaten up. It's unbelievable. And why is it happening in one university after another university in India — JNU, Jamia and Aligarh Muslim University?

Not everyone speaks out. Our celebrities are more fearful because they are more vulnerable. Many of them have political views and feel strongly about certain issues. However, I cannot sit in judgement and ask them why don't they speak up. I can only hope that more and more people will speak up. In the Western countries, maybe there are certain safeguards in their system that are actually working. Those safeguards, which we used to have in our society, are perhaps breaking down here.

A strong, independent media does not really exist in India today. The one institution that stood up for citizens was a free media. If anything made the establishment wary of coming down on anybody wrongfully, it was the fear that the media would go after it. Today, we can count on our fingers the newspapers and television channels that have a space of their own. If media, that's supposed to be the watchdog of our society, disappears or cows down, it will be very unfortunate.

The only way that we can protect ourselves is if civil society continues to be vocal, be it by coming out on the streets and demonstrating, expressing themselves on social media, or being able to speak to the media. Students are a part of civil society. We don't all have to become political activists. We should just be able to express our opinions as normal citizens, without fear. We need to speak up whenever something goes against our country's ethos. We need to protect our country. Our country is larger than anything else.

Khan is a filmmaker and studied at the Jamia Millia Islamia

Challenge lies within

Domestic political climate affects external relations. India must recognise this urgently



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

INDIA WILL NEED some decisive domestic course-correction in the new year to prevent the crystallisation of serious external challenges. An India that turns on itself is weaker abroad and invites external meddling. And the combination of internal strife and a faltering economy could turn out to be a dangerous recipe for India's polity. Internal political accommodation and economic revival hold the key to India's diplomacy and foreign policy in the coming days.

In the 21st century, two important factors have boosted India's international relations. One is India's rapid economic growth stemming from the reforms of the 1990s. It put India on the course to join the league of major powers. The expanding size of the economy and the attractiveness of its market was reinforced by another important factor.

India's growing economic weight, many in the world believed, would translate sooner than later into military power and that, in turn, could make Delhi an important player in shaping the regional balance of power in Asia and the Indian Ocean: This would eventually reshape the structure of the international system. The rise of India's hard power capabilities was complemented by its soft power — defined by India's democratic values, the spread of Indian culture and the positive influence of its diaspora.

It is easy to underestimate the weight of India's soft power that is both intangible and difficult to measure. The idea of shared political values with the West played a critical role in ending the decades-old high technology blockade against India and improving the country's standing in the West. India's democratic values were of little strategic consequence during the Cold War, but they helped cement India's strategic partnerships with the US, Europe, Japan and other Asian democracies in the new century.

Besides the question of democracy, India's ability to live with religious, linguistic and ethnic differences highlighted its political exceptionalism amidst the proliferation of intra-national conflicts and civil wars around the world.

If the economic slowdown and the perceived antipathy to trade might be limiting India's attractiveness as a commercial partner, the sense of creeping Hindu majoritarianism has begun to generate concern among a range of groups—from the liberal international media, the US Congress, to the Islamic world. Meanwhile, the diaspora, once seen as an asset, is now becoming part of Delhi's foreign policy problem. India's internal divisions are inevitably transmitted to the diaspora that, in turn, feeds into the emerging negative sentiment towards Delhi.

The sharpening religious divide within the country coupled with the renewed confrontation with Pakistan is generating major headaches for the conduct of India's external relations. Just when India seemed to be pulling away from Pakistan — in terms of economic performance, internal unity and international salience — and poised for a larger global role, Delhi appears to be sliding back into regional conflict with Islamabad and, more dangerously, towards

a Hindu-Muslim conflict at home.

Some in Delhi might scoff at the notion of recognising external concerns in the conduct of India's domestic politics. To be sure, the theory is that all states are sovereign and free to do what they want at home and free to conduct foreign policies as they like. The reality, though, is quite different. Through the ages, statesmen have sought ways to manage the complex interdependence between the internal and the external: Those who pretended that there is no relationship between the two had to pay a high price.

For most nations today, domestic economic policy and, increasingly, technology policy are shaped by a dynamic interaction between the internal and external. Few would contest the proposition that absolute economic sovereignty is unsustainable in a globalised world. While one can control the degree of exposure to the world, there is no room for absolute separation.

The same is also true of political sovereignty. It has never been absolute and is always constrained by size, economy, geography, demography and history. There is no country that does not have internal fault lines. Maximising political sovereignty necessarily involves limiting domestic conflict and strengthening internal political coherence.

Statecraft has long recognised the value of taking advantage of others' internal problems. When a country chooses to inflame the divisions at home, it not only disappoints its friends and well-wishers, but also provides huge opportunities for exploitation by its adversaries.

It is not just strong countries that can take advantage of the internal conflicts of others. Russia, for long dismissed in North America and Europe as a declining power, is now being accused of interference in the domestic politics of more powerful Western democracies. Tiny Qatar in the Gulf is charged by many in the Middle East of destabilising other, larger societies, in the region. Beyond governments, old and new media, trans-national groups and non-governmental organisations are quick to highlight internal conflicts in societies and then shape the international narratives on them.

Nothing draws international attention to a country more than religious conflict. This goes back to the dawn of the modern state system. As the European Christendom organised itself into nation-states, the religion of the sovereign and the citizenry were no longer the same. As governments persecuted religious groups within their territories, the demand for their protection from other states who shared the faith of the oppressed began to grow louder. This eventually led to agreed principles among the sovereigns about protecting freedom of religion.

Few countries, however, have had to bear the kind of religious burden that independent India has. The partition of India along religious lines has left Delhi with extraordinary challenges about sustaining religious harmony at home and maintaining reasonable relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

All governments in Delhi have struggled to cope with the bitter legacies of Partition. The very nature of these challenges inevitably produced much ambiguity, self-doubt and vacillation in India's engagement with Pakistan and Bangladesh. It will be a great tragedy if the NDA government's attempts to answer some of these challenges ends up exacerbating them.

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



RAMESH POKHRIYAL NISHANK

An act of empathy

CAA is in line with India's ethos of fraternity

FOR CENTURIES, INDIA has welcomed visitors and refugees who brought with them their rich culture, languages, and traditions. Indians always preached universal love and peace for the universal family. Since ages, India has advocated *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* — that the entire earth is one family. Across the world, Indians are known for their extraordinary ability to assimilate different cultures and values.

After the British finally left the Subcontinent in 1947, India was partitioned into two independent nation-states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. This was followed by one of the greatest and most painful migrations in human history. Millions of Muslims trekked to West and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) while lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs headed in the opposite direction. Uncertain about their future, hundreds of thousands never made it to their final destination. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed the sentiments and basic spirit behind the Citizenship Amendment Act: “Citizenship Amendment Bill is not a favour; this Act will protect the interests of those who believe in Mother India.” The motive of this Act is to help minority groups who have come to escape persecution in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, which are Muslim-majority nations.

Mahatma Gandhi, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, J B Kripalani, Abul Kalam Azad and Syama Prasad Mookerjee or Tridip Chaudhuri — they all wanted refugees to be provided shelter

with respect. The CAA seeks to help oppressed illegal immigrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist and Christian religions from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who were forced to flee to India and have lived in India without documentation. In these cases, the standard eligibility criteria for citizenship — 11 years of residence in India — has been relaxed. Shah has rightly pointed out that the CAA would not have been necessary had the country not faced Partition based on religion. He further said that this law will bring a new dawn in the lives of crores of people.

It must be asserted strongly that all protests should be scrupulously peaceful and any attempt to damage public property or public servants is unacceptable. There are allegations that the CAA violates constitutional provisions. There are arguments that this Act will facilitate a huge influx of illegal migrants and that illegal migrants will be given citizenship retrospectively. India is a democratic country that ensures fundamental rights to its citizens conferred on them by the Constitution. No statute, including the CAA, can take these away. Certain anti-social elements are spearheading a misinformation campaign. The northeastern states in particular are being targeted to spread this false propaganda. A vicious campaign involving students has been launched to label this Act as anti-Muslim.

The CAA does not affect any Indian citizens, including Muslims. We have to understand

that the CAA has no role in the deportation of any foreigner. The process of deportation takes place as per the mandate of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and/or The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920. In any case, deportation is a judicial process based on inquiries conducted by law enforcement agencies. The home minister has reiterated that the interest of northeastern states will be safeguarded under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and the statutory protection given to areas covered under the “Inner Line” system of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.

We do understand that voicing concern, protest, dissent are inherent to the democratic setup but causing damage to public property and indulging in violence is unacceptable. To uphold the secular and democratic fabric of the country, we should only use democratic forums to express our difference of opinion.

It is heartening that a group of academics, intellectuals, and research scholars have come out in support of the CAA. In a statement issued by over 1,100 academics from all over the country, it was pointed that the CAA is in perfect sync with the constitutional values of India as it does not debar anyone seeking citizenship based on religion. The support not only came from premiere institutes like IITs and IIMs, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, All India Institute of Medical Sciences but also from various international institutions including Princeton University, Oxford, Politecnico di Milano-

Milan, the University of Warwick and Imperial College London. The signatories have expressed their complete satisfaction with the way the concerns of the Northeast states have been handled.

Concerns are being raised from different quarters about the violation of Article 14 that guarantees equality and equal protection of law to everyone. We must understand that the CAA proposes to help people under distress. Oppressed minorities are being helped under special circumstances.

As per data obtained from various sources, the minority population has dwindled substantially in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Now, the question is: What happened to the minority Hindu population? Right from the beginning, they faced oppression and because of this, they were forced to flee to India. This speaks volumes about the great failure of Nehru-Liaquat pact.

Thanking all those who supported this important law, the PM said that the CAA is in complete alignment with India's centuries-old ethos and a strong belief in humanitarian values. India has always supported the oppressed, helpless and persecuted people. So, what is new in this Act? India is India because of its rich cultural heritage and its ethos. This Act is about sharing the pain of our brothers and sisters who were forced to move out of their respective countries.

The writer is Union minister of Human Resource Development

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SOREN'S TASKS

THIS REFERS to the report, 'Soren sworn in as CM, stage signals show of opposition strength' (IE, December 30). The new Jharkhand government's decision to drop all Pothalgadi cases is the apt New Year gift for the state's tribal communities. Thousands of tribal people are still languishing in jails without trials for trivial offence. In many cases, these people from marginalised communities have spent more time in jail term than they would have had they been tried and convicted. The Hemant Soren government should take urgent measures to ensure long overdue justice.

L R Murmu, Delhi

AQUIFER MATTERS

THIS REFERS to the editorial, 'Not a drop to waste' (IE, December 30). It's shocking to know that around 70 per cent of the drinking water across the country fails on quality parameters. The country needs to adopt an agricultural model focused on future food security without affecting environmental and human health. Measures to improve water quality and rain water harvesting systems should be encouraged to recharge ground water and improve the water table.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

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.

ASSUAGE BANKERS

THIS REFERS to the report, 'Government soothes banks over harassment by CBI: Won't go after genuine decisions' (IE, December 29). Despite huge NPA levels across the banks, many bankers were targeted by agencies such as the CBI. There is an atmosphere of fear amongst them. The CBI, CVC, and CAG should certainly do their duties but not at the cost of harassing bank officials.

Bal Govind, Noida

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 270

डेटा विश्वसनीयता हो बहाल

यह एक स्वागतयोग्य खबर है कि पूर्व मुख्य सांख्यिकीविद प्रणव सेन की अगुआई में एक उच्चस्तरीय पैनल बनाया गया है जो रोजगार, उद्योग एवं सेवाओं के फिलहाल होने वाले सर्वेक्षणों की पड़ताल करेगा। विभिन्न प्रमुख सरकारी आंकड़ों खासकर सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) के आकलन में ये सर्वेक्षण जरूरी इनपुट होते हैं। इस 28 सदस्यीय

समिति को यह काम सौंप दिया गया है। भारत के आधिकारिक आंकड़ों पर हाल में काफी सवाल उठे हैं। कई बार ये आंकड़े एक-दूसरे और अर्थव्यवस्था के अन्य संकेतकों के उलट मकसद से काम करते हैं। अधिक चिंताजनक बात यह है कि उनकी विश्वसनीयता और राजनीतिक हस्तक्षेप से स्वतंत्रता भी हमले की जद में रही है। राष्ट्रीय

नमूना सर्वेक्षण के हालिया दौर जैसे कुछ आंकड़ों को छिपाने के मामले में सरकार की इच्छा ने इन आशंकाओं को निर्मूल साबित करने में मदद नहीं की है। इस समिति के गठन के साथ ही डॉ सेन को इसका अध्यक्ष बनाने और हालिया आंकड़ों को संदेह की नजर से देखने वाले विद्वानों को इसमें शामिल करना भारत के आधिकारिक आंकड़ों की प्रतिष्ठा बहाल करने में थोड़ा मददगार हो सकता है।

हालांकि बहुत कुछ इस पर निर्भर करेगा कि पैनल खुद को कितना सशक्त महसूस करता है और कितनी पारदर्शिता से वह सांख्यिकीय प्रणाली की पुनर्गठित कर सकता है। समिति को विभिन्न सरकारी डेटा समूहों के परीक्षण के लिए कहा गया है। मसलन,

उद्योगों एवं सेवा क्षेत्र की इकाइयों और श्रम शक्ति के सर्वेक्षणों के अलावा औद्योगिक उत्पादन सूचकांक का परीक्षण यह समिति करेगी। समिति के दायरे के बाहर वही डेटा रखे जा सकते हैं जो लगातार स्थिर हैं और दूसरे के साथ तालमेल में हैं। माना जा रहा है कि समिति सर्वेक्षण रिपोर्ट तैयार करने की निगरानी और प्रशासकीय आंकड़ों के संकलन में आने वाली समस्याओं को चिह्नित करने का भी काम करेगी।

इसका मतलब है कि अगर समिति चाहे तो उसके पास भारत के सांख्यिकीय परिप्रेक्ष्य को दुरुस्त करने की सापेक्षिक रूप से व्यापक शक्तियां हैं। यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि सरकार निष्पक्ष विशेषज्ञों की राय स्वीकार करे। शासन के प्रति अज्ञेयवादी सांख्यिकीय प्रणाली के

साथ बड़ी समस्याएं हैं और उन्हें दूर करने की जरूरत है। उपभोग सर्वेक्षण में दिखाए जा रहे और राष्ट्रीय खातों से उजागर खपत के बीच भिन्नता होना ऐसा ही एक मसला है। संभवतः औपचारिक क्षेत्र पर अधिक जोर देने वाली जीडीपी की गणना कंपनी मामलों के मंत्रालय के आंकड़ों से करने का मुद्दा भी है। अपस्फीतिकारकों की गणना का तरीका और कॉर्पोरेट आंकड़ों को सही ढंग से अलग रखने का मुद्दा भी अहम होगा।

सरकार ने राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकीय आयोग (एनएससी) के गठन की मंशा रखने वाले कानून का मसौदा जारी किया है जिसमें राष्ट्रीय आंकड़ों के लिए शीर्ष निकाय बनाने का प्रावधान है। माना जा सकता है कि संसद की आर्थिक सांख्यिकी समिति मसौदे पर चर्चा

कर यह तय करेगी कि डेटा संग्रह एवं विश्लेषण पर भावी सुधारों का खाका बनाने के लिए क्या करने की जरूरत है? इन कदमों को लागू करने के लिए एनएससी जिम्मेदार होगा। हालांकि महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि एक संस्था के तौर पर एनएससी को मजबूत बुनियाद और ताकत मिले। एक स्वतंत्र एवं स्वायत्त निकाय होने के साथ ही आयोग के पास सरकारी स्तर पर संग्रहीत आंकड़ों के वितरण एवं उन्हें जारी करने पर निगरानी की शक्तियां भी होनी चाहिए। ऐसा होने पर यह संदेह नहीं रह जाएगा कि सरकार या उसके अफसर राजनीतिक कारणों से असुविधाजनक आंकड़ों को छिपा रहे हैं या उनसे छेड़छाड़ कर रहे हैं। एनएससी विधेयक में इन बातों का ध्यान नहीं रखा गया है।



अजय मोहंती

भारत के लिए अहम है सन 2020

वैश्विक निवेशकों को लंबी अवधि में भारत की तेजी का रकीन दिलाने के लिए शायद यह अंतिम वर्ष होगा। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं आकाश प्रकाश

वर्ष 2019 का अंत करीब है और हम कह सकते हैं कि यह वर्ष एक बार फिर देश के सक्रिय फंड प्रबंधकों के लिए कठिन रहा है। बाजार का दायरा बहुत संकुचित रहा है और भले ही सूचकांक डॉलर के संदर्भ में 5-7 फीसदी का लाभ दर्शा रहे हों लेकिन हकीकत में भारत पर केंद्रित कई फंड गिरावट पर हैं। एक फंड आवंटक ने हाल ही में मुझेसे कहा कि उन्होंने देश के फंडों के प्रदर्शन में ऐसी भिन्नता कभी नहीं देखी।

हम सन 2020 में प्रवेश कर रहे हैं और कई लोगों ने लंबी अवधि में भारत की तेजी को लेकर सवाल करने शुरू कर दिये हैं। भारत का सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) और प्रति व्यक्ति अनुपात आज जिस स्तर पर है, चीन 2003-04 में उस स्तर पर था। किसी को यह अपेक्षा नहीं कि भारत चीन की तरह दो अंकों की वास्तविक जीडीपी भले हासिल न कर पाए लेकिन क्या 7 फीसदी की दर भी वास्तविक है? प्रशासनिक और न्यायिक अड़चनों को देखते हुए ऐसा लगता तो नहीं।

वैश्विक निवेशक देश की वास्तविक वृद्धि के रुझान आंक रहे होंगे। क्या यह केवल 5-6 फीसदी है या हमारा देश 8 फीसदी की पुरानी दर की ओर वापसी कर सकता है?

इससे निवेशकों के लिए बड़ा अंतर पैदा होगा। यदि भारत केवल 5 फीसदी की दर से वृद्धि हासिल कर सकता है तो यहां समय क्यों गंवाना? 5 फीसदी वास्तविक जीडीपी के साथ 9 फीसदी की नॉमिनल जीडीपी हासिल होगी और मंदड़िये कह सकते हैं कि लंबी अवधि के लिए भी यही दार होगी। दरअसल भारत का शेयर प्रतिफल केवल 10-11 फीसदी है। हां, कुछ अच्छी कंपनियां हैं लेकिन ज्यादातर पहले ही काफी ऊपर कारोबार कर रही हैं। इस लिहाज से देखें तो भारत ऊंची और स्थायी वृद्धि के लिए तैयार नहीं है। 2003-08 में हम भाग्यशाली थे। उस वक्त वैश्विक वृद्धि का माहौल नरम था। पहले के सुधारों का भी लाभ मिल रहा था। हम दोबारा उस उच्च वृद्धि दर तक शायद ही लौट सकें।

उच्च वृद्धि के साथ आंकड़े स्वाभाविक रूप से अलग नजर आते हैं। 13 फीसदी की नॉमिनल जीडीपी वृद्धि और कुछ वर्षों के लिए 30 फीसदी की मुनाफा वृद्धि की बात करें तो मुनाफा बढ़ने के साथ-साथ शेयर प्रतिफल भी बढ़ेगा। आय की इस धारा के लिए निवेशक भुगतान करने को तैयार हैं। इसलिए क्योंकि कोई अन्य बड़ा बाजार आने वाले पांच वर्ष में ऐसा प्रदर्शन नहीं कर पाएगा। वृद्धि की चुनौती से जुझ रही दुनिया में उच्च

वृद्धि और बढ़ा हुआ शेयर प्रतिफल अत्यंत मूल्यवान है। इस उच्च वृद्धि परिदृश्य में जब देश की आबादी का तीसरा हिस्सा खपत करने लगेगा तो स्थायित्व और अनुमन्यता में भी सुधार होगा। निवेशक को कम स्थिर और अधिक अनुमान वाले बाजार में प्रीमियम चुकाएंगे।

निवेशक अभी भी निश्चित नहीं हैं कि देश में वृद्धि में यह कमी चक्रीय है या ढांचागत। अगले 12 महीनों में कई लोग लंबी अवधि का नजरिया कायम करेंगे। मंदी ने पहले ही सबको चौंका दिया है। उसकी अवधि के आकलन और कारणों का अनुमान लगाते हुए निवेशक लंबी अवधि के आवंटन पर निर्णय करेंगे।

सन 2020 वह वर्ष है जब आखिकार निवेशक मोदी सरकार के आर्थिक एजेंडे और नीति निर्माण की काबिलियत के बारे में नजरिया बनाएंगे। बीते पांच वर्ष के दौरान नोटबंदी, वस्तु एवं सेवा कर, ऋणशोधन अक्षमता एवं दिवालिया संहिता, गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों के संकट आदि के रूप में एक के बाद एक झटके लगे। कारोबारी जगत में साफ-सफाई का भी एक सिलसिला चला। यह कहीं न कहीं तो समाप्त होगा। अर्थव्यवस्था को औपचारिक बनाने का क्या अर्थ है? यह अर्थव्यवस्था

के लिए कैसे बेहतर है? यदि कॉर्पोरेट आय इतने बुरे दौर से गुजरेगी तो अर्थव्यवस्था को औपचारिक कैसे बनाया जा सकेगा? क्या औपचारिक बनाने का अर्थ है छोटे उपक्रमों का समापन क्योंकि वे बदल नहीं सकते? क्या अर्थव्यवस्था को औपचारिक बनाने से रोजगार जाएंगे?

जो लोग सोचते हैं कि राजनीतिक नेतृत्व के लिए अर्थव्यवस्था महत्वपूर्ण नहीं रहेगी उनके लिए आने वाला वर्ष अहम है। देश का नेतृत्व इस मंदी से कैसे निपटेगा?

सन 2020 दिखाएगा कि मोदी सरकार ढांचागत सुधारों को लेकर कितनी गंभीर है। देश गंभीर आर्थिक मंदी से गुजर रहा है, यदि हम अब सुधारों को लेकर अहम कदम नहीं उठाए तो कब उठाएंगे? वैश्विक निवेशकों को पूरा यकीन है कि भारत के लिए सरकारी बैंकों में सुधार का यह बेहतरीन अवसर है। इसके अलावा प्रशासनिक बदलावों और देश को बेहतर कारोबारी केंद्र बनाने का भी यह अच्छा मौका है। इस सरकार के पास राजनैतिक ताकत है, एक शक्तिशाली नेता है जो अतीत में वृद्धि हासिल करने में सहायक रहा है और जिसने जोखिम उठाने का माद्दा दिखाया है। यदि यह सरकार अफसरशाही से काम नहीं ले सकती तो ऐसा कोई नहीं कर पाएगा।

भारत के लिए यह अवसर है कि वह वृद्धि को बढ़ावा देने वाले नये सुधार अपना सके। यदि हमने अब जोर नहीं दिया तो भविष्य में इसके पक्ष में दलील देना मुश्किल होगा। आज गंवाया गया अवसर देश को नुकसान पहुंचाएगा क्योंकि निवेशकों के मन में भारत की बेहतरी और 5 लाख करोड़ डॉलर की अर्थव्यवस्था बनने की संभावनाएं कम होंगी।

सन 2020 घरेलू भरोसा कायम करने का वर्ष भी होगा। मैंने इससे पहले कभी कारोबारी जगत को इतना निरुत्साहित नहीं देखा। इसके लिए एक हद तक वे खुद उत्तरदायी हैं तो दूसरी तरफ कुछ मामलों में न्यायिक और सरकारी हस्तक्षेप भी इसकी वजह हैं। लोगों को दोबारा जोखिम लेना होगा। किसी भी निवेश या पूंजीगत व्यय में जोखिम रहता है और वित्तीय तंत्र को जोखिम लेने का समर्थन करना चाहिए। निवेशक यह समझते हैं कि हमारे पास राजकोषीय गुंजाइश नहीं है। सरकार इस मंदी से यूं ही बच नहीं सकती। रिजर्व बैंक उपभोक्ता मूल्य सूचकांक को लेकर सचेत है और मौद्रिक गुंजाइश सीमित है। लब्धोलुआब यह कि बिना रुझान में सुधार के हम इस संकट से उबर नहीं सकते। रुझान में सुधार तभी आएगा जब कंपनियों और उपभोक्ताओं दोनों में भरोसा पैदा होगा।

सन 2020 में मुझे आशा है कि गैर अमेरिकी बाजार, अमेरिका से बेहतर प्रदर्शन करेंगे और डॉलर कमजोर होगा। यह उभरते बाजारों के शेयरों के लिए सकारात्मक हो सकता है क्योंकि वैश्विक वृद्धि मजबूत होगी लेकिन नकदी की स्थिति सहज बनी रहेगी। बीते दो वर्ष में व्यापक भारतीय बाजार के कमजोर प्रदर्शन को देखते हुए किसी भी तरह के सकारात्मक रुझान का प्रतिफल भारी लाभ के रूप में सामने आ सकता है। इसके लिए जरूरी है कि हम संतुलन कायम रखें और भरोसा बहाल करें। वैश्विक निवेशक यकीन करना चाहते हैं हमें उन्हें इसकी वजह देनी होगी।

गंदे खेल और टालमटोल से परहेज का आखिरी मौका

यह एक दशक के अवसान और संभवतः नए युग के आरंभ का वक्त है। हम जिस दशक (2010-2019) को अपने पीछे छोड़ने जा रहे हैं उसमें यह दुनिया खंडित हुई है, नाकाम हुई है, हमारे नेताओं का पतन हुआ है, अर्थव्यवस्थाएं मुश्किलों में घिरी हैं और हमारे चारों तरफ संघर्ष एवं विवाद नजर आते हैं। इस दशक में हमें यह अहसास हुआ है कि जलवायु परिवर्तन कोई सुदूर भविष्य का मसला नहीं रह गया है। यह घटित हो रहा है और इसके प्रभाव बढ़ते ही जाएंगे।

इस दशक में हरेक साल नए रिकॉर्ड बनते रहे हैं- कभी अधिकतम तापमान का तो कभी सबसे प्रतिकूल मौसम का। लेकिन मामला सिर्फ मौसम का ही नहीं है। मुद्दा यह है कि दुनिया में लोग अपने वर्तमान को किस तरह देखते हैं और अपने भविष्य के बारे में कैसी सोच रखते हैं? हमें मालूम है कि आज युवा बेचैन हैं और शायद पिछले किसी भी दशक की तुलना में सबसे ज्यादा बेचैनी है। अपेक्षाकृत धनी दुनिया में युवा तबका अधिक चिंतित एवं बेचैन है क्योंकि उन्हें तेजी से गर्म होती दुनिया में अपना वजूद बचाए रख पाने का तरीका ही नहीं मालूम है। लेकिन वे ख्याल से युवाओं को सबसे ज्यादा चिंतित यह बात करती है कि वे फर्क पैदा कर पाने में खुद को आवश्यक महसूस करते हैं। उनकी जिंदगी में सारभूत एवं आवश्यक हरेक चीज को समस्या के तौर पर पेश किया जा रहा है। वे इस स्थिति को कैसे बदलेंगे? युवा इस बात को लेकर चिंतित हैं और उन्हें ऐसा होना भी चाहिए।

वहीं विपन्न दुनिया में युवाओं को अवसर की चाहत है। लेकिन उन्हें अपने आसपास भविष्य की संभावनाएं क्षीण दिखाई देती हैं। वे गांव से शहर और वहां से दूसरे देश जाना चाहते हैं। वे अपने माता-पिता की दुर्दशा से इत्फाक नहीं रखते हैं। सरकारी स्तर पर सही व्यवस्था नहीं होने से वे समुचित औपचारिक शिक्षा से भी वंचित होते हैं फिर भी वे अपने मोबाइल फोन के जरिये मौजूदा दौर से तालमेल बिठाए हुए हैं। वे दूर चमकती रोशनी से परिचित हैं और उन्हें बखूबी पता है कि दुनिया उनका इंतजार कर रही है। वे इसे चाहते हैं। वे अपने आसपास की दुनिया को टुकड़े-



जमीनी हकीकत

सुनीता नारायण

टुकड़े होते देखते हैं। खेती-किसानी से जुड़े उनके मां-बाप दोनों मकसद नहीं पूरे कर पाते हैं। खाद्यान्न उपजाने से जुड़े मौसमी जोखिम एवं लागत दिन-पर-दिन बढ़ती जा रही है और हरेक मौसम में कर्ज का जाल उलझता जाता है। लेकिन युवा ऐसा नहीं होने देना चाहते हैं। यह पीढ़ी एक और लिहाज से अलग है। वे निरीह या दम्बू नहीं हैं। वे अधिक के लिए भूखे होने के साथ उतावले भी हैं।

ऐसे में कोई आश्चर्य नहीं है कि दुनिया के करीब हरेक हिस्से में हालात बहुत जल्द काबू से बाहर जा सकते हैं। ईंधन के दाम या शिक्षण संस्थानों के शुल्क में बढ़ोतरी का मुद्दा भी सरकारों को गिरा सकता है, सेना को सड़क पर ला सकता है और आगजनी, लूट एवं गोलीबारी की नौबत आ सकती है। विस्फोटकों से भरी यह दुनिया उलझा पर है।

यह एक विभाजित विश्व भी है। देश अब एक साथ मिलकर काम नहीं करते हैं। हर देश केवल अपने हितों के बारे में सोचता है, किसी और के बारे में नहीं। ऐसा नहीं है कि पहले ऐसा नहीं होता था। लेकिन दिखावा अब नहीं रहा और असाधारण अंतसंबद्धता एवं अंतर्निर्भरता के इस दौर में भारी नतीजे देखे गए हैं। साफ है कि पिछले तीन दशकों (1990-2019) में विश्व अलग-अलग को साफ किया गया है और उत्सर्जन को काबू में रखा गया है तब भी वृद्धि का खमियाजा पर्यावरण को उठाना पड़ा है जो वजुद पर खराब बन रहे जलवायु परिवर्तन का सबब बन रहा है। हमारे उत्तराधिकारियों को यह बात याद रखनी चाहिए।

इस दशक में याद रखने लायक कुछ और सबक भी हैं। हमारी दुनिया में हम अभूतपूर्व स्तर का आंतरिक प्रवास एवं

ग्रामीण असंतोष देख रहे हैं। मैं प्रवासियों के बारे में व्यापक एवं अक्सर नकारे खुलासों की वजह से ऐसा नहीं कह रही बल्कि हमें पता है कि हमारे शहर गैरकानूनी ढंग से बढ़ रहे हैं और यह वृद्धि व्यापक एवं काबू से बाहर हो चुकी है।

यहीं पर चक्र बंद हो जाता है। सच यह है कि दिल्ली आज ठीक से सांस नहीं ले सकती है। हमारी हवा जहरीली एवं अशुद्ध है। हमारी सेहत के साथ खिलवाड़ हो रहा है। हमें यह समझना होगा कि करीब 30 फीसदी प्रदूषण हवा में उत्सर्जन करने वाले उद्योगों के नाते हैं। ये उद्योग प्राकृतिक गैस जैसे स्वच्छ ईंधन का खर्च नहीं उठा सकते हैं। वे पेट कोक जैसे ईंधन का इस्तेमाल करते हैं और इस पर प्रतिबंध लग जाने के बाद कोयले या किसी भी सस्ते ईंधन का इस्तेमाल करने लगते हैं। लेकिन दिल्ली में सफा हवा की चाहत होने पर भी हम इन उद्योगों को दूसरे इलाके में नहीं भेज सकते हैं। एयरशेड तो एक ही है। मेरा मानना है कि वायु प्रदूषण सबकुछ बराबर कर देता है। हमें यह ध्यान रखना होगा कि यह औद्योगिक वृद्धि पर्यावरण की लागत में किसी मिलावट के बगैर आती है। हमें शहरी एवं ग्रामीण और अमीर एवं गरीब का समावेश करने वाले विकास की जरूरत है।

धनी देशों के अमीरों के लिए भी यही सबक होना चाहिए। उनकी सरकारों ने जलवायु वातााओं में समता एवं न्याय की बुनियादी धारणा को ही खत्म करने की कोशिश की है। लेकिन सच यह है कि यह एक साझा एयरशेड भी है। अगर अतीत में धनी देशों ने उत्सर्जन किया था तो गरीब भविष्य में ऐसा करेंगे। हमारा एक साझा भविष्य है और जलवायु प्रभावों के संदर्भ में यह उतना अच्छा नहीं लगता है।

लिहाजा अगले दशक में हम वास्तविकता के करीब रहें। अगर अपने लिए न सही तो इस ध्रुवीकृत, बेहद असमान और जोखिमों से भरपूर इस दुनिया की विरासत पाने वाले युवाओं के लिए ऐसा करें। अब खेल न खेलें और टालमटोल न करें। अगला दशक बातों पर खरा उतरने का आखिरी मौका है। हम इस मौके को नहीं गंवा सकते हैं।

कानाफूसी

मालदार माली

एक पुरानी कहावत है कि एक आरमी ने धनवान बनने के लिए प्रार्थना की और वह एक ही पेड़ से अनेक पेड़ उगाकर अमीर बन गया। बाद में उस व्यक्ति ने पेड़ का नाम ही मनी प्लांट रख दिया। बहरहाल यह तो नहीं पता कि यह कहावत सच है अथवा नहीं, लेकिन ओडिशा सरकार के अधिकारियों ने एक माली तथा साथ में सरकारी बागवानी कर्मचारी के पास से एक करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की संपत्ति का पता लगाया है। अधिकारियों ने एक गुप्त सूचना के आधार पर उद्भव बेहड़ा के घर तथा मयूरभंज और बालासोर जिले में रहने वाले उनके रिश्तेदारों के निवास पर छापे मारे। नकदी के अलावा बेहड़ा के पास से एक तीन मंजिला घर, 12 खाली प्लॉट, पोर्ट्रेट्री फार्म, तीन दोपहिया वाहन, बैंकों में बड़ी मात्रा में निवेश तथा जमा योजनाओं के साथ-साथ भारी मात्रा में सोने के गहने मिले।

फुले चलीं अकेले

उत्तर प्रदेश के बहराइच जिले की दलित नेता सावित्री फुले ने कांग्रेस पार्टी से इस्तीफा दे दिया है। वह 2019 लोकसभा चुनाव से ठीक पहले भारतीय जनता पार्टी को छोड़कर कांग्रेस में शामिल हुई थीं। कांग्रेस पार्टी ने फुले को बहराइच लोकसभा सीट से उम्मीदवार घोषित किया था लेकिन वह भाजपा के उम्मीदवार से हार गईं। इस हार के बाद फुले

राजनीतिक गलियारों में अलग-थलग पड़ गईं क्योंकि कांग्रेस अपनी राज्य इकाई के पुनर्गठन पर ध्यान दे रही है। कांग्रेस से इस्तीफा देने के बाद अब फुले अगले महीने लखनऊ में एक सम्मेलन में हिस्सा लेगी जहां वह अपने अगले कदम के बारे में घोषणा कर सकती हैं।



साइबर ठगी रोकने के हों उपाय

भारत डिजिटल लेनदेन की ओर कदम तो बढ़ा चुका है। लेकिन कुछ साइबर ठग इसकी राह में बाधा उत्पन कर रहे हैं। देश में प्रतिदिन साइबर ठगी को खबरें आती हैं। हालांकि साइबर ठगी रोकने के लिए सरकार और बैंकों ने उचित कदम भी उठाए हैं। फिर भी साइबर ठगी के मामले क्यों कम होने के बजाय बढ़ते जा रहे हैं। साइबर ठगी की सुरक्षा में अभी कुछ कमी या फिर लोगों में इसके प्रति जागरूकता की कमी है। कुछ कंपनियां लोगों को ऑनलाइन पुराने सामान बेचने और खरीदने का प्लेटफॉर्म अपनी वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध करा रही हैं। लेकिन साइबर ठग यहां भी लोगों को ठग रहे हैं। यहां साइबर ठग लोगों से सामान के एवज में अग्रिम भुगतान की मांग कर लोगों से उनके बैंक खाते, डेबिट या क्रेडिट कार्ड और ई-वॉलेट की जानकारी ले रहे हैं और जानकारी मिलने के बाद खाते से पैसा निकाल रहे हैं। लोगों



को चाहिए कि वह इसके लिए भी जागरूक हों तथा ऐसी वेबसाइट पर किसी प्रकार का लेनदेन न करें। साइबर ठग, ठगी या धोखाधड़ी करने के लिए लोगों को ऑफर या पैसे दोगुना करने का झांसा देकर भी फोन करके बैंक खाते की जानकारी जुटाते हैं। कुछ ठग लोगों को फोन करके उनके बैंक खाते या एटीएम कार्ड

सरकार को साइबर क्राइम रोकने के लिए उचित कदम उठाने चाहिए

के बंद होने की बातों में उलझाकर जानकारी जुटाते हैं। जिसके बाद लोग ठगी के शिकार हो जाते हैं। लोगों को चाहिए कि वह किसी के झांसे में नहीं आएँ। साइबर

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

सहूलियत भरा हो जीएसटी कानून

आयकर और जीएसटी में ऐसा बदलाव होना चाहिए जिससे देश में उद्योग लगाने वाले हतोत्साहित नहीं हों। देश में अभी जीएसटी एक नई प्रक्रिया है तथा इसे पूरी तरह सफल होने में कई वर्ष लग

सकते हैं। सरकार को जगह-जगह शिविर लगाकर जीएसटी के बारे में लोगों को जागरूक करना चाहिए जिससे छोटे-बड़े उद्यमियों तथा जीएसटी अदा करने वाले लोगों को इसका फायदा दिख सके। आयकर की दरों में भी कमी लाने की जरूरत है जिससे लोग आयकर रिटर्न समय पर दाखिल कर सकें। कॉर्पोरेट दर में कमी किए जाने से देश के कई उद्योग खुश हैं तथा पहले से बेहतर महसूस कर रहे हैं। मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों पर आयकर की मार पड़ती है जिसमें कर की दर में सुधार की जरूरत है। हर वर्ग के लिए कर की दर एक समान करने की जरूरत है जिससे देश का विकास हो सके। जीएसटी और आयकर की दर ऐसी हो जिससे सभी को आयकर देने में सहूलियत हो और व्यवसायी वर्ग जीएसटी आसानी से भर सके। साथ ही सरकार का राजस्व भी बढ़ सके। सरकार के राजस्व बढ़ने से वह राशि देश में विकास कार्यों में खर्च हो सके।

राकेश जैन, सतना

दैनिक जागरण

समय मूल्यवान है, लेकिन सत्य समय से भी ज्यादा मूल्यवान है

एक बड़ा बदलाव

देश के पहले चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस यानी सीडीएस को हरी झंडी मिलना एक और बड़े बदलाव की आधारशिला ही नहीं, बल्कि एक जरूरी काम को उसके अंजाम तक पहुंचाना भी है। चूंकि सीडीएस का फैसला तीनों सेनाओं के हित में है इसलिए यह देशहित में एक बड़ा फैसला है। सीडीएस महज एक और पद का सुजन नहीं है। यह प्रतिरक्षा मोर्चे को और दुरुस्त करने का उपाय भी है। सैन्य मामलों के प्रमुख के रूप में सीडीएस की नियुक्ति कितनी अहम है, यह इससे समझा जा सकता है कि इस पद पर आसीन होने वाले केवल तीनों सेनाओं से संबंधित सभी मामलों के लिए रक्षा मंत्री के प्रमुख सैन्य सलाहकार के तौर पर ही काम नहीं करेंगे, बल्कि प्रधानमंत्री की अध्यक्षता वाली न्यूक्लियर कमांड अथॉरिटी के सदस्य भी होंगे। इस सबके बाद भी सीडीएस की नियुक्ति से तीनों सेनाओं के प्रमुखों के अधिकारों में कहीं कोई कटौती होने नहीं जा रही है। वे पहले की तरह रक्षा मंत्री को रिपोर्ट करते रहेंगे। सीडीएस सरीखे किसी पद की आवश्यकता एक लंबे अरसे और खासकर कारगिल संघर्ष के बाद से ही महसूस की जा रही थी, लेकिन इस आवश्यकता की पूर्ति अब जाकर हो सकी। कारगिल संघर्ष के बाद यह पाया गया था कि तीनों सेनाओं के बीच समन्वय की कमी के चलते सेना को कहीं अधिक नुकसान उठाना पड़ा। कारगिल संघर्ष के अलावा अन्य अवसरों पर भी तीनों सेनाओं में तालमेल की कमी दिखाई दी।

एक ऐसे समय जब रक्षा मोर्चे पर चुनौतियां बढ़ती जा रही हों तब सेनाओं में तालमेल की कमी के लिए कहीं कोई गुंजाइश नहीं रहने देनी चाहिए। सीडीएस की जरूरत केवल इसलिए नहीं थी कि दुनिया के सभी प्रमुख देशों ने यह पद बना रखा है, बल्कि इसलिए भी थी कि तीनों सेनाओं की समस्याओं का समाधान तेजी से करने का काम ऐसे किसी सैन्य अफसर के जरिये ही हो सकता है। सैन्य मामलों में तकनीकी की महत्ता जिस तरह बढ़ती जा रही है उसकी अनदेखी एक दिन भी नहीं की जा सकती। उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए सीडीएस की नियुक्ति से केवल सेनाओं के आधुनिकीकरण की प्रक्रिया को ही गति नहीं मिलेगी, बल्कि उनकी रक्षा आवश्यकताएं भी समय से पूरी होंगी। नि:संदेह यह भी उम्मीद की जाती है कि सेनाओं के हितों की अनदेखी नहीं होगी और सेना के तीनों अंगों में जरूरी सुधार की प्रक्रिया तेज होगी। यह होने की चाहिए, क्योंकि आज के समय में सेनाओं का बड़ा होना उतना महत्वपूर्ण जितना कि उनका सक्षम होना। इस तरह की तमाम उम्मीदों के पूरा होने की संभावना के कारण ही सीडीएस के सुजन को एक संस्था के निर्माण के तौर पर देखा जा रहा है।

युवाओं की उम्मीद

केंद्र सरकार की हिमायत योजना बेरोजगारी से जूझ रहे जम्मू-कश्मीर के युवाओं के लिए एक उम्मीद की किरण है। योजना के तहत यहां के युवाओं को प्रशिक्षण देकर उन्हें राष्ट्रीय एवं अंतरराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों में रोजगार मिल रहा है। राज्य में बेरोजगारी की समस्या किसी से भी नहीं छुपी है। एक लाख युवाओं ने जहां रोजगार केंद्रों में अपने नाम दर्ज करवाए हैं, वहीं छह लाख के करीब बेरोजगार युवा रोजगार के लिए सरकारी एवं निजी कंपनियों से उम्मीद लगाए बैठे हैं। पूर्ववर्ती सरकारों ने बेरोजगारी की समस्या के समाधान के लिए शेर-ए-कश्मीर रोजगार योजना, ओवरसीज कॉर्पोरेशन जैसे कई कदम उठाए, मगर इनमें से कोई भी प्रयास सफल नहीं हो सका। युवाओं को इस काबिल नहीं बनाया गया कि वह प्रशिक्षण हासिल कर निजी क्षेत्र में भी अपना कौशल दिखा सकें। करीब सात वर्ष पूर्व जम्मू-कश्मीर में शुरू हुई केंद्र की हिमायत और उड़ान योजनाओं से युवाओं को रोजगार देने के लिए उठाए गए कदमों का सकारात्मक प्रभाव देखने को मिल रहा है। साठ हजार के करीब युवाओं को प्रशिक्षण देकर उन्हें बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों में अच्छे पैकेज पर नौकरियां दिलाई गई हैं। यह अच्छी बात है कि युवा भी यह समझ रहे

अनुच्छेद 370 खत्म होने के बाद से ही अन्य राज्यों के लोगों के लिए जम्मू-कश्मीर में निवेश के रास्ते खुले हैं। केंद्रीय योजनाओं के साथ-साथ निजी क्षेत्र को भी बढ़ावा मिलने से बेरोजगारी की समस्या पर जम्मू-कश्मीर में अंकुश लगाया जा सकता है

हैं कि सरकार के लिए हर किसी को सरकारी नौकरी देना संभव नहीं है। ऐसे में कौशल विकास की ट्रेनिंग लेकर युवा आत्मनिर्भर बन रहे हैं। वहीं युवाओं के लिए अच्छी बात यह भी है कि अगर कई औद्योगिक घरानों ने भी जम्मू-कश्मीर में निवेश के लिए रूचि दिखाई है। उन्होंने राज्य प्रशासन से संपर्क भी किया है। अगर यह औद्योगिक घराने भी यहां पर आकर बड़े पैमाने पर निवेश करते हैं तो इससे भी बेजारों युवाओं को रोजगार मिल सकता है। इसके लिए थोड़ी प्रतीक्षा करने की जरूरत है। इसी वर्ष पांच अगस्त को जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 खत्म किया गया है और उसके बाद से ही अन्य राज्यों के लोगों के लिए जम्मू-कश्मीर में निवेश के रास्ते खुले हैं। ऐसे में यह उम्मीद की जा सकती है कि केंद्रीय योजनाओं के साथ-साथ निजी क्षेत्र को भी बढ़ावा मिलने से बेरोजगारी की समस्या पर जम्मू-कश्मीर में अंकुश लगाया जा सकता है।



विवेक कौल

सरकार लोगों से विभिन्न मदों में वसूले 2,66,000 करोड़ रुपये बढहाल बैकों पर खर्च नहीं करती तो इस पैसे से वह 26,600 किमी हाईवे बना सकती थी

अर्थशास्त्र में एक पुरानी कहावत है, 'देयर इज नो फ्री लंच।' इसका मतलब यही है कि किसी न किसी को तो बिल भरना ही पड़ता है। अब भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक की मौद्रिक नीति को ही ले लीजिए। वर्ष 2019 में रिजर्व बैंक ने रेपो दर में 135 आधार अंकों की कटौती की थी। साल के आरंभ में रेपो दर 6.5 प्रतिशत थी और साल के अंत में यह 5.15 प्रतिशत तक आ गई थी। रिजर्व बैंक जिस दर पर बैंकों को कर्ज देता है उस दर को रेपो दर कहते हैं। एक आधार अंक एक प्रतिशत का सौवां हिस्सा होता है। इस कटौती के पीछे क्या सोच थी? रिजर्व बैंक का मानना था कि जैसे-जैसे वह रेपो दर में कमी करेगा वैसे-वैसे वह जिस दर पर उधार देते हैं उस दर को घटाएंगे। जब बैंक उधार दर को घटाएंगे तो ज्यादा लोग उधार लेकर पैसा खर्च करेंगे। इससे आर्थिक सुस्ती थोड़ी बहुत-दूर होगी, पर ऐसा कुछ हुआ नहीं। दिसंबर 2018 में बैंकों की भारत औसत उधार दर 10.35 प्रतिशत थी। अक्टूबर 2019 में यह बढ़कर 10.40 प्रतिशत तक पहुंच गई थी। साफ है कि बैंकों की उधार दर घटने की जगह बढ़ गई। इससे यह पता चलता है कि रिजर्व बैंक की मौद्रिक नीति 2019 में पूरी तरह से विफल हो गई है।

अब प्रश्न यह उठता है कि ऐसा क्यों हुआ? एक नजर बैंकों की भारत औसत सावधि जमा दर (वेटड एवरेज फिक्स्ड डिपॉजिट इंटेरेस्ट रेट) पर डालें। दिसंबर 2018 में यह

दर 6.87 प्रतिशत पर थी। अक्टूबर 2019 आते-आते यह दर केवल 12 आधार अंकों से गिरकर 6.75 प्रतिशत पर आ गई थी। 2019 में रिजर्व बैंक ने रेपो दर में 135 आधार अंकों की कटौती की थी, जबकि बैंकों की भारत औसत सावधि जमा दर में केवल 12 आधार अंकों की कमी आई। बैंकों ने इस गिरावट का भी फायदा उधारकर्ताओं को नहीं दिया। सवाल है कि ऐसा क्यों? पिछले कई वर्षों से भारतीय बैंक और विशेष रूप से सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंक खराब ऋण की समस्या से जूझ रहे हैं। इसलिए सावधि जमा दर गिरने का थोड़ा बहुत फायदा भी उधारकर्ताओं के पास नहीं पहुंचा। इससे बैंकों ने अपना मुनाफा बढ़ाया या फिर घाटे को कम किया, पर बैंकों की उधार दर नहीं घटने की केवल यही एक वजह नहीं है। निजी खपत का भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में करीब 60 प्रतिशत हिस्सा है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में निजी खब लो ग बढ़त दो कारणों से हुई है। पहला, लोग अपनी आय का ज्यादा हिस्सा खर्च कर रहे हैं। दूसरा, लोग पहले से ज्यादा उधार लेकर पैसा खर्च कर रहे हैं। इसकी मुख्य वजह यह रही कि पिछले कुछ वर्षों में लोगों की आय में पहले की तरह बढ़ोतरी नहीं हुई है। आय इसलिए पहले की तरह नहीं बढ़ रही है, क्योंकि पर्याप्त नौकरियां नहीं पैदा हो रही हैं।

जब लोग उधार लेकर पैसा खर्च करते हैं और अपनी आय का ज्यादा हिस्सा खर्च करते हैं तो फिर बचत कम होती है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में घरेलू वित्तीय बचत में गिरावट आई



अवधेश राजपूत

है। 2010-11 में घरेलू वित्तीय बचत सकल डिस्पोजेबल आय (ग्रॉस डिस्पोजेबल इनकम) के करीब 10 प्रतिशत से कुछ ज्यादा थी। वर्ष 2017-18 में यह गिरकर 6.5 प्रतिशत तक आ गई थी। इस माहौल में जब पूरे देश की घरेलू वित्तीय बचत कम हो गई है, बैंकों के लिए ब्याज दरों को घटाना काफी मुश्किल हो गया है। सवाल है कि इसका नुकसान किसको भुगतना पड़ रहा है? दरअसल खराब ऋण से न केवल बैंकों का नुकसान हो रहा है, बल्कि इससे ग्राहकों का भी नुकसान हो रहा है। यहां तक कि इससे पूरे देश का नुकसान हो रहा है। पिछले दो वित्तीय वर्षों में सरकार ने सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों को डूबने से बचाने के लिए 1,96,000 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए हैं। इस साल भी सरकार 70,000 करोड़ रुपये इन बैंकों को चालू रखने के लिए खर्च करेगी। आगे बढ़ने से पहले यहां यह समझना जरूरी

है कि एक बैंक चलता कैसे है? लोग बैंक में अपनी बचत को जमा करते हैं। इस जमा पूंजी पर बैंक ब्याज देता है। इस पैसे को लेकर बैंक फिर उधार देता है। उधार पर ली गई ब्याज दर, जमा पूंजी पर दी गई ब्याज दर से ज्यादा होती है। इसके अलावा यह जरूरी होता है कि उधार पर बैंक ब्याज दरों को घटाना काफी मुश्किल हो गया है। सवाल है कि इसका नुकसान किसको भुगतना पड़ रहा है? दरअसल खराब ऋण से न केवल बैंकों का नुकसान हो रहा है, बल्कि इससे ग्राहकों का भी नुकसान हो रहा है। यहां तक कि इससे पूरे देश का नुकसान हो रहा है। पिछले दो वित्तीय वर्षों में सरकार ने सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों को डूबने से बचाने के लिए 1,96,000 करोड़ रुपये निवेश कर चुकी होगी। यह पैसा कहीं और भी लगाया जा सकता था।

अपनी नई किताब इन सर्विस ऑफ द रिपब्लिक में विजय केलकर और अजय शाह

नैतिकता के संकट से घिरी राजनीति

देश में छोटी-बड़ी अनेकानेक राजनीतिक पार्टियां और उनसे जुड़े और साथ ही स्वयंभू नेताओं की भीड़ देखकर यही लगता है कि भारत में राजनीतिक चेतना का तीव्र विकास हो रहा है। दूसरी ओर जब राजनीति के इन किरदारों की भूमिका और आचरण पर गौर करते हैं तो आम आदमी चिंतित हो उठता है। उसका मन इस विचारों के प्रति संशुक्ति होता जाता है। कई नेताओं के देश, समाज और विश्व के इतिहास और वर्तमान परिस्थिति से अपरिचित, सामान्य शिष्टाचार की कमी और किसी तरह के भरोसेबंद प्रमाणिक संचार कर पाने की मुश्किल उन्हें आप दिन उपहास का पात्र भी बनाती रहती है। टीवी और ऑनलाइन मीडिया के चलते पूरा देश इस तरह की घटनाओं का साक्षी होता है। चूंकि देश का नागरिक होना ही नेतृत्व करने के लिए पात्रता के लिए पर्याप्त है इसलिए उसके किरदार लोकतंत्र के प्रपंच के चलते (चुनाव लड़े बगैर भी) प्रदेश और देश के लिए फैसले लेने की स्थिति में भी पहुंच जाते हैं। राजनीति में सफलता पाने की अनेक युक्तियां हैं जो खास-खास मुहूर्त पर आजमाए जाते हैं। ये सारे चैंतरे सत्ता पाने और उसे बनाए रखने की हिकमत से जुड़े होते हैं। समाज के लिए चिंतन का समय ही नहीं बचता। शेष समय आलाप और प्रलाप को समर्पित हो जाता है। टीवी चैनल इतनी संख्या में हो चुके हैं कि नाना प्रकार के विमर्श राजनीतिक युद्ध के रूप में चलते ही रहते हैं।

आजकल राजनीतिक विमर्श के दौरान एक पक्ष के कथन और दूसरे पक्ष के अनगल कथन का अंतहीन सिलसिला ही भरा पड़ा होता है। बातचीत सतही वाचालता और अवांछित आक्रोश पर जोर देती है। आग्रही राजनेता रूढ़िबद्ध होकर किसी अन्य दृष्टि-विचार को देखना-सुनना ही नहीं चाहते। वे किसी भी तरह के परिवर्तन के प्रतिगामी ही रहते हैं और गति की जगह यथार्थिकता को ही सुविधाजनक पाते हैं। नेताओं को यह भी अहसास नहीं होता कि उनके बेवुनियाद बयानों के क्या परिणाम होंगे? पिछले वर्षों में बड़े-बड़े नेता अपनी इस तरह की गैर जिम्मेदाराना हरकतों के लिए अदालतों में माफी मांग चुके हैं, लेकिन सब कुछ यथावत चला है। पिछले दिनों तथ्यों की मममानी और भड़काऊ व्याख्या शेषाकर एक कल्पित आख्यान से देश में अस्थिरता लाने की कोशिश की गई। इसके चलते आमजनी, पथव्य और हिंसा ने अनेक क्षेत्रों को अपने आगोश में ले लिया। अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता के नाम पर राजनीति किस तरह देश के लिए आवामहता



गिरीश्वर मिश्र



विदा होता वर्ष बता गया कि राजनीतिक नेतृत्व में व्याप्त विकृति समाज और राजनीति के लिए कितनी घातक हो सकती है?

हो सकती है, इसका उदाहरण इस गुजरते वर्ष के आखिरी समय में सभी ने देखा। विदा होता वर्ष एक बार फिर से यह भी बता रहा कि राजनीतिक नेतृत्व में व्याप्त विकृति समाज और राजनीति के लिए कितनी घातक हो सकती है? एक जमाना था जब नेता विश्वास का स्रोत होता था और उसकी बात का भरोसा रहता था। नेता होना भी आसान न था। उसे अर्जित किया जाता था। अब की बात ही कुछ और है। आज पार्टी हार्दिकमान किसी भी ज्ञात-अज्ञात व्यक्ति को कहीं से लाकर नेता के रूप में प्रतिष्ठित कर देता है और जनता को उसे स्वीकारने का ही विकल्प रहता है। कभी नेता को परिश्रमशील और रूखा जीवन बिताना पड़ता था, क्योंकि उसका एक मात्र लक्ष्य जन सेवा होता था। अब नेता और आम आदमी एक-दूसरे के करीब भी रहते थे। नेतागिरी के प्रति आकर्षण आज भी बरकरार है, उसके कारण जरूर भिन्न हो रहे हैं। बहुत से युवा जन नेता बनने को आतुर हैं। यह प्रवृत्ति किस करर तेजी से बढ़ी है, इसका अनुमान नियम-पांशद से लेकर संसद तक के चुनावों में भाग लेनेवाले प्रत्याशियों की बढ़ती संख्या से लगाया जा सकता है। नेतागिरी के प्रति आकर्षण का कारण उससे मिलनी वाली विभिन्न सिद्धियां हैं। लोग नेता की तलाश में रहते हैं, क्योंकि उनके मन में नेता की जो

छवि है उसमें जनता की सेवा (सर्विस) और कल्याण (वेलफेयर) की प्रमुखता के भाव ही प्रमुख होते हैं। दुरूह होती व्यवस्था के मकड़जाल से मध्य और निम्न सामाजिक वर्ग के लोग रस्त हो रहे हैं। इसलिए आज कोई भी शख्स सड़क पर आसानी से मजमा जुटा सकता है और नेतागिरी कर सकता है।

नेता बनने का यह आकर्षण क्यों बढ़ा है, इसके कई कारण हैं। प्रमुख कारण है स्वच्छंदतापूर्वक आचरण की छूट और उसके साथ मिलने वाली सुरक्षा और अन्य सुविधाएं। कुल मिलाकर नेता बनना एक निहायत फायदे का सौदा है जिसमें लागत के मुकाबले कई गुना ज्यादा लाभ की गारंटी है। अधिकांश नेताओं की धन-संपदा का ग्राफ कितना बढ़ा और किस तरह बढ़ा, यह सबकी आखों के सामने है। आज धन बल और बाहुबल का ही जय घोष है। आज नेतृत्व में गहरी नैतिक त्रासदी छा रही है। इसकी पीड़ा सभी महसूस कर रहे हैं। निजी तौर पर हर आदमी अकेले या सामूहिक तौर पर न्याय, ईमानदारी, भरोसा और प्रतिबद्धता जैसे मूल्यों को महत्व देता है, लेकिन मीडिया में नेताओं के अनैतिक आचरण की गथाएं दिन-प्रतिदिन गुंजती रहती हैं। नफा या फायदा उठाना ही राजनीति का खास मकसद दिख रहा है। जनता नेताओं से जिम्मेदारी की अपेक्षा करती है। ध्यान रहे कि चरित्र, नैतिकता और आचार के प्रश्न से विरत होने पर राजनीति लोक क्षेम के गंतव्य से भी विरत होने लगती है। राजनीति कोई व्यापार नहीं है जिसका उद्देश्य अधिकाधिक लाभ कमाना होता हो। आर्थिक साम्राज्यवाद और स्वार्थ के इस दौर में आत्म तुष्टि ही व्यावहारिक नैतिक नियम बन चुका है। घूस, मिलावट और द्रष्टृण के माहौल में नैतिक व्यक्ति ही नैतिक परिवेश का निर्माण में सहायक हो सकेगा। तभी आक्रोश, प्रतिशोध, अविश्वसनीयता, स्वाधंपरता, असंवेदनशीलता और अराजकता से मुक्ति मिल सकेगी। ऐसे कठिन काल में राजनीति को नए वर्ष के संकल्प के रूप में नैतिकता से दिशा लेनी की कोशिश करनी चाहिए। भारतीय समाज में नेता की भूमिका प्राचीन समय से ही महत्वपूर्ण रही है। देश का लोक मानस आज भी उसकी ओर आशा भरी दृष्टि से देखता है। नेतृत्व समाज के नैतिक संस्कार को प्रभावित करता है। नैतिक मूल्यों की उपेक्षा सिर्फ भौतिक नुकसान ही नहीं पहुंचाती। वह समाज के नैतिक परिवेश को भी कमजोर करती है।

(लेखक पूर्व कुलपति एवं शिक्षाविद हैं)

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आज में रखें आस्था

समय का आभास हम दिन, महीना, साल के रूप में करते हैं। सूर्य और चंद्रमा समय मापन के महत्वपूर्ण घटक हैं। इन्हें पर हमारा दिन और रात आश्रित होता है। समय का प्रवाह अविचल, शाश्वत और सार्वकालिक है। अतः समय ही नियति है और सतत चलायमान रहना ही समय की प्रकृति है। बीता समय हमारा अतीत है, चल रहा समय हमारा वर्तमान है और आने वाला समय हमारा भविष्य है। समय बंद मुद्रि में रेत की तरह फिसलता जाता है। इसलिए समय की हर घड़ी हमारे लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। समय के साथ परिवर्तन संसार का नियम है। समय कभी खराब नहीं होता। वह सभी के साथ न्याय करता है। समय को खराब बताने वाले अपने दूषित कर्मों से अनभिज्ञ रहते हैं। और अपना भी समय आगुण कहते वाले भविष्य की चिंता में वर्तमान के साथ छल करते हैं। समय न तो आता है और न ही आया। तारीखों के भरोसे तकदीर नहीं बदलती। कल हमेशा कल ही रहता है। अतः हमारी आस्था आज में होनी चाहिए। आज को जी भर के जीने वाले ही समय का पूर्णतः सदुपयोग कर पाते हैं। बीते कल को याद करने वालों के पास दुख और आने वाले कल को याद करने वालों के पास चिंता के सिवाय कुछ नहीं होता। भूत और भविष्य में जीने वाले ऐसे लोग वर्तमान के साथ अनुचित व्यवहार करते हैं।

वर्तमान तारीखों के इशारा पर चलने वाले नववर्ष से अधिक स्वयं में नवीन परिवर्तन लाने में है। स्वयं का बदलाव ही सुष्टि को बदलने का माद्दा रखता है। ये बदलाव अपनी हानिकारक वृत्तियों को त्यागने के अलावा प्रतिकारी प्रवृत्तियों के प्रति उत्सुख होने के अटल संकल्प के साथ ही संभव है। समय के साथ हमें स्वयं को हर पल मांजना चाहिए। क्योंकि स्वयं को मांजने से ही हमारे चरित्र में उज्ज्वलता और निष्कार आता है। अतः परिवर्तन में नहीं, स्वयं में संभव है। स्वयं में परिवर्तन ही बुद्ध और महावीर बनने का मार्ग प्रशस्त कर सकता है। और हमारी समस्त पीढ़ाओं को हरकर हमें परम शांति दे सकता है।

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

जो बीत गया उसे बीत जाने दें

अंशुमाली रस्तोगी

बस एक दिन और फिर साल 2019 भी हमसे विदा ले लेगा। विदाई में कुछ अच्छी तो कुछ मीठी यादें साथ रहेंगी। साल भर में हमने क्या खोया, क्या पाया का आंकलन जारी रहेगा। लेकिन हममें से शायद ही कोई इस बात पर पुनर्विचार करेगा कि साल के शुरुआत में जो छोटे या बड़े संकल्प लिए थे, उनका क्या हुआ? अंत तक हम उन पर डटे रहे या बीच में ही छोड़ उनसे मुक्ति पा ली। अक्सर ही यह ध्यान में आया है कि जब नया साल शुरू होता है, तब हम किस्म-किस्म के संकल्प लेते हैं। संकल्पों की ये लौ हमसे-दो हफ्ते तक तो बड़िया जलती है किंतु समय बीतते ही लौ धीमी पड़ने लग जाती है। और अंत तक हम ही उसे बुझा देते हैं। अपने लिए संकल्प हमें बोर और बोझ लगने लगते हैं। आज और अगर कल की रस्साकशी में ही साल बीतता चला जाता है।

संकल्पों पर टिके न रहना बताता है कि हममें आत्मविश्वास और दृढ़ता की कमी है। यों भी, अपनी कही बात से मुकर जाना ईंसान की सदियों पुरानी फितरत है। संकल्पों की इस यात्रा के बीच हम खुद को कितना बदल पाए

जो बीत गया सो बीत गया, जो आने वाला है उसी के साथ हमें अपना तारतम्य बनाना है

हैं, इस पर भी हमें थोड़ा ठहरकर सोचने की जरूरत है। एक बात और, हम अपनी किसी भी अच्छी या बुरी बात का बोझ साल पर नहीं डाल सकते। हमेशा साथ रहने वाला और आगे आता हुआ साल हमें जीवन को जीने का फलसफा देता है। हमारा संघर्ष सही और गलत का साक्षी बनता है। साल कुछ नहीं करता, जो करता है वह ईंसान ही करता है। दरअसल साल एक सूरज की मानिंद होता है। अगर साल 2020 में हम सही काम प्रकाश फैलाना होता है। यह निर्भर हम पर करता है कि हम उस प्रकाश को अपने जीवन में कितनी जगह देते हैं और कितना उससे दूरी बनाकर रखते हैं। समय की रेत पर हम निरंतर कुछ न कुछ लिखते-मिटते रहते हैं। यह जरूरी भी है। ऐसा अगर नहीं करेंगे तो बहुत कुछ हमारे बीच से और बीच का ठहर जाएगा। बस ठहरने ही तो नहीं देना है कुछ भी। विकास, सोच, विचार, अहसास की प्रक्रिया चलती रहनी चाहिए। साल हमें यही मौके हर बार देता है कि

हम कुछ अच्छा बुनें, कुछ अच्छा करें, कुछ अच्छा बनाएं, कुछ अविस्मरणीय यादें सजोएं रहें। नकारात्मकता को न केवल खुद से, बल्कि अपने जीवन से भी दूर, बहुत दूर रखें।

अच्छा लगेगा अगर साल 2020 में हम धर्म और जाति की जड़ताओं और भेदभाव से मुक्ति पाएं। अगर साल 2020 में हम राजनीतिक बहसों में सोशल या निजी प्लेटफॉर्म पर अपनी दोस्तियां न तोड़ें, उन्हें बरकरार रखें। मतभेद को मनभेद न बनाएं। अगर साल 2020 में हम कुछ दूर के लिए मोबाइल का साथ छोड़, घर के किसी बुजुर्ग या बच्चे का हाथ पकड़ें, उनका स्नेह लें, अपना स्नेह उन्हें दें। अगर साल 2020 में हम सही की इज्जत दें, उन्हें प्रवाड़ित न करें। अगर साल 2020 में किसी अनजान व्यक्ति के साथ चाय-कॉफी पिएं, कुछ उससे अपनी कहें, कुछ उसकी सुनें। अगर साल 2020 में हम अपनों को हाथ से कभी-कभार पत्र लिखें। हालांकि ये बहुत छोटी व्यवहार-गत बातें हैं, जिन्हें किन्हीं संकल्पों में बांधने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। इन्हें तो बैठे-उठे ही किया जा सकता है। यह तो जीवन का संगीत है, जिसे सुनने के लिए ईश्वर-बड नहीं चाहिए होते।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

एकपक्षीय विचार

संवैधानिक मूल्यों की बचाने का समय शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में पी चिदंबरम ने मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल में उठाए गए तमाम महत्वपूर्ण कदमों जैसे-तत्कालीन तीन तलाक कानून, नागरिकता संशोधन कानून, प्रस्तावित एनआरसी, एनपीआर एवं अनुच्छेद 370 की समाप्ति की आलोचना की है। उन्होंने बताया है कि इन मुद्दों का आम आदमी से कोई खास सरोकार नहीं है। उल्लेखनीय है कि तत्कालीन तीन तलाक कानून ने देश की करीब दस करोड़ महिलाओं को सीधे तौर पर प्रभावित किया है। जाहिर है कि इस मुद्दे का सरोकार सीधे-सीधे आम आदमी से जुड़ा हुआ है। नागरिकता संशोधन कानून का आधार भी शुद्ध रूप से मानवीय है, न कि धार्मिक। इस कानून में अधिभूचित धर्म समूहों से जुड़े लोग संबंधित देशों में अपनी आस्था और विश्वासों के कारण लंबे समय से प्रताड़ित होते रहे हैं। इन लोगों को यदि उदारतापूर्वक देश की नागरिकता देने का प्रस्ताव किया गया है तो यह अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानवाधिकार के प्रति भारत की प्रतिबद्धताओं के अनुकूल ही है। रही बात श्रीलंका के तमिलों को नागरिकता कानून में शामिल न करने की तो सच्चाई यह है कि श्रीलंका के तमिलों की समस्या का स्वरूप राजनीतिक है, न कि धार्मिक। वहां उन्हें अपनी आस्था एवं विश्वास के कारण प्रताड़ित किया जाता है, इसका कोई सुबुत नहीं है। यही बात भूटान के ईसाइयों के मामले में भी कही जा सकती है। लेखक ने केंद्र सरकार द्वारा एनपीआर के लिए डाटा संग्रह की कवायद को भी आलोचना की है। क्या वह यह कहना चाह रहे हैं कि कांग्रेस की सरकार के समय यह काम संविधान की भावना के अनुरूप था, लेकिन यदि उसी काम को भाजपा सरकार ने आगे बढ़ाया है तो वह संवैधानिक मूल्यों के खिलाफ है।

मेलबाक्स

ध्यातव्य है कि किसी भी देश की सरकार को इसका पूरा अधिकार है कि वह अपने क्षेत्र में रहने वाले लोगों की पूरी जानकारी रखे। यह उस देश की सुरक्षा और उसकी सरकार की विकास योजनाओं और कल्याणकारी नीतियों के लिए आवश्यक डाटा प्रदान करती है। वैसे भी एनपीआर किसी तरह से नागरिकता को परिभाषित नहीं करता। लगता है कि लेखक ने एक दल के राजनीतिक नेता के तौर पर उक्त लेख को लिखा है। इसलिए उनका दृष्टिकोण एकपक्षीय हो गया है।

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एक गलत परिपाटी

पश्चिम बंगाल के राज्यपाल जगदीप धनखड़ के साथ सार्वजनिक दुर्व्यवहार के बाद केरल के राज्यपाल आरिफ मुहम्मद खान के साथ भी दुर्व्यवहार ने केवल शर्मनाक है अपितु संवैधानिक पदों पर आसीन व्यक्तियों के अपमान की नई अवांछित परिपाटी शुरू हो रही है। सत्तासीन पार्टी निश्चित रूप से अपनी पार्टी के लोगों को राज्यपाल और राष्ट्रपति पद पर आसीन करती रही है और इसे यह केवल भाजपा ने शुरू नहीं किया है, कांग्रेस ने भी ऐसा खूब किया है, तो इसका तात्पर्य यह नहीं कि विपक्षी दलों और भिन्न विचारधारा के लोग उनका अपमान करें। कल को तो राष्ट्रपति के अभिभाषण पर भी दुर्व्यवहार हो सकता है क्योंकि वे सरकार के हर अच्छे तथा अलोकप्रिय फैसलों की प्रशंसा करते हैं। ये कैसा चलन प्रारंभ किया जा रहा है? विपरीत विचारधारा के बावजूद कम से कम संवैधानिक पदों का सम्मान तो होना ही चाहिए अन्यथा संविधान के सम्मान

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

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

लापरवाही के अस्पताल

कि सी त्रासद घटना का सबसे अहम सबक यह होना चाहिए कि भविष्य में उससे बचाव के सारे इंतजाम किए जाएं। लेकिन हमारे यहां बड़ी विडंबना यह है कि समान प्रकृति की दुखद घटनाओं के सिलसिले सामने आते रहते हैं और शायद ही कभी एहतियात बरती जाती है, ताकि फिर वैसी ही स्थिति का सामना नहीं करना पड़े। गौरतलब है कि राजस्थान के कोटा शहर में जेके लोन मातृ एवं शिशु चिकित्सालय एवं न्यू मेडिकल कॉलेज नाम के एक सरकारी अस्पताल में बीते दो दिनों के भीतर दस छोटे बच्चों की मौत हो गई। पिछले एक महीने के दौरान सतहत्तर बच्चों की मौत इलाज के दौरान हो गई। ये वे बच्चे थे, जिन्हें अगर समय पर इलाज मिल गया होता तो उनकी जान बचाई जा सकती थी। अब सरकार और अस्पताल की ओर से इस सफाई के बाद शायद चुप्पी साध ली जाएगी कि जिन बच्चों की मौत हो गई, उनकी स्थिति पहले ही नाजुक हो चुकी थी। आमतौर पर हर ऐसी तरह की घटना सुर्खियों में आने के बाद इसी तरह की सफाई की जाती है। लेकिन सवाल है कि अपना पल्ला झाड़ने के बजाय क्या ऐसी घटनाओं का उदाहरण सामने रख कर बचाव के पूर्व इंतजाम नहीं किए जा सकते?

जब काफी तादाद में बच्चों की जान चली गई तब विपक्ष के निशाने पर आई सरकार ने अस्पताल अधीक्षक को देखरेख में कमी बरतने के आरोप में पद से हटा दिया। राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री ने कहा कि पिछले सालों में इस तरह से जान जाने के मामलों में कमी आई है। लेकिन इन दावों की हकीकत बच्चों की मौत के जारी सिलसिले से पता चलती है। सवाल है कि अगर मौजूदा सरकार के नुमाइंद पहले की सरकारों को इस स्थिति के लिए जिम्मेदारी बताते हैं तो आज भी अस्पतालों की वही तस्वीर कैसे कायम है, जिसमें स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं का ढांचा बहुत कमजोर है और एक तरह से इसी खास वजह से बच्चों की असमय जान चली जा रही है। पिछले कुछ सालों में इसी तरह के हालात में सैकड़ों बच्चों की मौतों के मद्देनजर मां और शिशु का जीवन बचाने के मकसद से राज्य सरकार ने ‘निर्ोगी राजस्थान’ कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत की है और स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं को बेहतर करने के लिए कदम उठाए गए हैं। लेकिन इसके बावजूद और अस्पताल लाए जाने के बाद भी बच्चों की मौत की घटनाओं पर काबू नहीं पाया जा सका तो यह गंभीर चिंता की बात है।

दरअसल, ऐसी घटनाओं की कड़ियां एक दूसरे से जुड़ी हुई लगती हैं। बीमारी की चपेट में आए बहुत सारे बच्चे ग्रामीण या दूरदराज के इलाकों से होते हैं, जहां प्राथमिक स्तर पर स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं का ढांचा बेहद कमजोर है। जाहिर है, समय पर उचित इलाज नहीं मिल पाने की वजह से बच्चों की स्थिति पहले ही ज्यादा बिगड़ जाती है। ऐसे में अगर शहरी इलाकों में बेहतर अस्पताल और चिकित्सा सुविधाएं मुहैया करा भी दी जाएं तो स्थिति में कितना फर्क आ पाएगा? यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि पिछले कुछ सालों के दौरान देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में मौजूद कुछ अस्पतालों में किसी खास बीमारी की चपेट में आए भारी संख्या में बच्चों की मौत हो गई। हर बार जब घटना पर विवाद उठ जाता है और मामला तूल पकड़ लेता है, तब सरकारों की ओर से सफाई के तौर पर जो कहा जाता है, उसमें शायद ही कभी जिम्मेदारी लेने की बात होती हो। सवाल है कि अगर किसी खास मौसम में बड़ी तादाद में बच्चों के किसी बीमारी जद में आने और उनकी जान तक जाने का खतरा बढ़ जाता है तो ऐसे में सरकार हालात से निपटने के लिए क्या इंतजार करती रहती है?

ओआइसी की राजनीति

कश्मीर को लेकर पाकिस्तान कितना परेशान है, इसका पता इस बात से चलता है कि उसने इस मुसले पर जल्द ही इस्लामिक देशों के संगठन (ओआइसी) की बैठक बरसाने के लिए कोशिशें शुरू कर दी हैं। हालांकि अभी इस बारे में कोई अंतिम फैसला नहीं हुआ है, लेकिन माना जा रहा है कि अगले साल अप्रैल में ओआइसी के सदस्यों के विदेश मंत्री भारत से जुड़े इन मसलों पर चर्चा के लिए पाकिस्तान में जमा हो सकते हैं। हाल में सऊदी अरब के विदेश मंत्री की इस्लामाबाद यात्रा के दौरान पाकिस्तान के विदेश मंत्री ने कश्मीर में मानवाधिकारों की स्थिति, भारत में नागरिकता कानून और एनआरसी का मसला उठाया था और इन मुद्दों पर इस्लामिक देशों का सम्मेलन बुलाने की मांग की थी। इस पर सऊदी अरब ने सहमति जता दी। इसके बाद से ही यह सवाल उठने लगा कि भारत के अंदरूनी मामलों में आखिर सऊदी अरब पाकिस्तान को क्यों समर्थन दे रहा है। क्या यह माना जाए कि ओआइसी में पाकिस्तान का रुतबा बढ़ रहा है? हालांकि सऊदी अरब गिनती यों भी पाकिस्तान के बड़े मददगार देशों में होती है। ऐसे में अगर वह पाकिस्तान को हवा देता है तो यह भारत के लिए चिंता का विषय होना चाहिए।

कश्मीर मामले पर ओआइसी का रुख भले कुछ हो, लेकिन इस संगठन के ज्यादातर सदस्य देशों के साथ भारत के द्विपक्षीय संबंध अच्छे ही हैं। पाकिस्तान ने ओआइसी में जब-जब कश्मीर मुद्दा उठाया है, उसे कोई बड़ा हासिल हाथ नहीं लगा है। ऐसा कभी नहीं हुआ कि पाकिस्तान के कहने पर सारे मुसलिम देश भारत के खिलाफ हो गए हों और भारत के साथ उनके रिश्तों में कोई बड़ा बदलाव आया हो। बैठकों के बाद भारत के खिलाफ साझा बयान भले जारी होते हों, लेकिन बैठक से इतर सदस्य देश कश्मीर को भारत का अंदरूनी मामला कह कर बच निकलने की नीति पर चलते हैं। ऐसे में पाकिस्तान को ओआइसी का समर्थन भी मिल जाता है, लेकिन उसे हासिल कुछ नहीं होता। इस साल मार्च में अबु धाबी में ओआइसी के विदेश मंत्रियों के सम्मेलन में भारत को आमंत्रित कर इस संगठन ने यह संदेश दिया था कि बदलते वक्त के साथ वह भी बदल रहा है और इसका दायरा सिर्फ मुसलिम देशों तक ही सीमित नहीं रहेगा। इसलिए पाकिस्तान के कड़े विरोध और बहिष्कार के बावजूद विशेष आमंत्रित के सदस्य के रूप में भारत को बुलाया गया था। तब सऊदी अरब और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात ने इसके लिए पहल की थी। भारत के लिए यह बड़ी कूटनीतिक उपलब्धि थी। लेकिन सम्मेलन की समाप्ति पर जारी प्रस्ताव में कश्मीर मसले पर भारत की आलोचना की गई थी।

दरअसल सऊदी अरब इन दिनों मुसलिम जगत की राजनीति से परेशान है। इसी महीने मलेशिया की राजधानी कुआलालंपुर में हुए मुसलिम राष्ट्रों के सम्मेलन को लेकर जो राजनीति चल रही है, उससे सऊदी अरब की नींद उड़ी हुई है। उसे लग रहा है कि आने वाले वक्त में कहीं मलेशिया मुसलिम जगत का खलीफा न बन बैठे। इसलिए सऊदी अरब ने पाकिस्तान को इस सम्मेलन में शिरकत नहीं करने के लिए दबाव डाला था। पाकिस्तान मान तो गया लेकिन अब उसने कश्मीर सहित एनआरसी और नागरिकता कानून जैसे मुद्दों पर ओआइसी की बैठक बुलाने के लिए सऊदी अरब पर दबाव बनाया और इसमें वह सफल हो गया। पाकिस्तान को समझना चाहिए कि कश्मीर मुद्दा उठा कर उसे कुछ नहीं मिलेगा। सऊदी अरब तो उसका इस्तेमाल भर कर रहा है।

कल्पमेधा

झूठे की सजा यह नहीं कि उसका विश्वास नहीं किया जाता, बल्कि वह खुद ही किसी का विश्वास नहीं करता।

– श्वेत्सपियर



रमेश पोखरियाल ‘निशंक’

प्राचीनकाल से लेकर वर्तमान तक भारत ने हमेशा शरणागत लोगों का न केवल स्वागत किया है, बल्कि उन्हें सम्मानपूर्वक जीवन जीने के लिए एक वातावरण भी उपलब्ध कराया है।

चाहे महात्मा गांधी हों या जेबी कृपलानी, अब्दुल कलाम आजाद सबने ही तो इस बात की चिंता की है कि शरणार्थी को सम्मान सहित आसरा

उपलब्ध कराए जाना चाहिए। हमारा

गौरवमय इतिहास रहा है।

युगों से भारतीय संस्कृति ने मानव सभ्यता के सामाजिक, आर्थिक, आध्यात्मिक विकास में बड़ा योगदान दिया है। भारत की संस्कृति इस देश की आत्मा है। यह संस्कृति एक निरंतर प्रवाहमान धारा है, जिसे ऋषियों, संतों और सूरफियों ने अपनी पवित्र साधना और दर्शन से सींच कर एक वट वृक्ष के रूप में स्थापित कर विश्व को प्रेरित किया है। युगों-युगों से भारत ने वसुधैव कुटुंबकम की भावना को प्रतिपादित किया है। भारतीय संस्कृति ने हमेशा इस तथ्य पर जोर दिया है कि संपूर्ण विश्व एक परिवार है।

भारत सरकार ने संसद के दोनों सदनों में नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक–2019 पारित कराया। यह कानून अल्पसंख्यक शरणार्थियों को वर्षों के उन्पीड़न से निजात दिलाने के उद्देश्य से लाया गया है। यह कानून देश के संविधान की मूल भावना को पोषित और रक्षित करता है। यह अधिनियम पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान से आए उन हिंदू, सिख, बौद्ध, जैन, पारसी और ईसाई शरणार्थियों को भारत की नागरिकता देने के संबंध में है जो 31 दिसंबर, 2014 या उससे पहले से भारत में रह रहे हैं। प्राचीनकाल से लेकर वर्तमान तक भारत ने हमेशा शरणागत लोगों का न केवल स्वागत किया है, बल्कि उन्हें सम्मानपूर्वक जीवन जीने के लिए एक वातावरण भी उपलब्ध कराया है। चाहे महात्मा गांधी हों या जेबी

राकेश सोहम्

जीवन में स्मृतियों का बड़ा महत्त्व है। मेरे एक मित्र नाक, कान और गला विशेषज्ञ हैं। कुछ वर्ष पूर्व एक दुर्घटना में ‘अफेशिया’ का शिकार हो गए थे। चिकित्सा विज्ञान के अनुसार, मस्तिष्क में अगर तीन मिनट से अधिक खून का संचार अवरुद्ध हो जाए तो मानव मस्तिष्क आंशिक या पूर्ण रूप से निष्क्रिय हो सकता है। इस घटना में उनके साथ ऐसा ही कुछ हुआ। उनका आधा मस्तिष्क निष्क्रिय हो गया। स्मरण शक्ति पर बहुत बुरा असर हुआ। आश्चर्यजनक रूप से उनकी ‘वर्ड-मेमोरी-वेनिस’ हो गई, यानी दिमाग से शब्द-स्मृति पूरी तरह समाप्त हो गई। स्कूली शिक्षा से लेकर चिकित्सा पेशे की सारी पढ़ाई-लिखाई विस्मृत हो गई! वे बोलने में पूरी तरह सक्षम हैं, लेकिन शब्दों के अभाव में बोल नहीं पाते। आज भी वे किसी भी भाषा में किए गए प्रश्न का उत्तर नहीं दे सकते, क्योंकि उनके पास जवाब देने के लिए शब्द-भंडार नहीं होता। वर्तमान में हिंदी और अंग्रेजी वर्णमाला सीखने के लिए उन्होंने दृष्टुशन पढ़ाने वाले शिक्षक को रखा हुआ है। सच्चाई यह है कि फिर उसी स्तर का ज्ञान और शिक्षा प्राप्त करने के लिए शायद एक जीवन फिर से जीना होगा। स्मृति के अभाव में मित्र का

सशक्तिकरण की राह

हाल ही में जारी हुई वैश्विक आर्थिक मंच की ‘लैंगिक अंतर सूचकांक’ रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश में महिलाओं के पास संसाधनों की पहुंच सुनिश्चित करने के लिए लक्ष्य दृष्टिकोण आवश्यक है। भारत की स्थिति 2019 में 153 देशों में 112 वें स्थान पर है, जिसमें पिछले वर्ष की तुलना में चार अंक की गिरावट आई है। सूचकांक के पैमानों के हिसाब से महिलाओं की आर्थिक क्षेत्र में भागीदारी, उनका स्वास्थ्य एवं शैक्षिक स्तर तथा राजनीतिक सशक्तिकरण को मद्देनजर रख कर तैयार किया जाता है। इसके तहत वर्तमान परिस्थितियों के हिसाब से महिलाओं के हित में काम करने की आवश्यकता है, क्योंकि महिलाओं को लेकर समाज में जो अनिश्चितता है, चाहे हम आर्थिक क्षेत्र में भागीदारी की बात करें, चाहे शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में, महिलाओं को कई क्षेत्रों में रोजगार के अवसर कम मिल पाते हैं। अगर कहीं रोजगार मिलता भी है तो वहां उन्हें पुरुषों की तुलना में कम वेतन दिया जाता है। घर में जो महिलाएं कार्य करती है, उसका तो कोई आर्थिक मोल तय ही नहीं किया जाता। इसे भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में नहीं गिना जाता, जो नींव महिलाओं के द्वारा तैयार की गई और जिसके माध्यम से पुरुष घर से बाहर जाकर काम कर पाते हैं। इसके अलावा ‘आर्थिक लैंगिक अंतर’ के मामले में भारत 153 देशों में 149 वें स्थान पर है, जिसमें पिछले वर्ष की अपेक्षा सात अंक की गिरावट दर्ज की गई है।

जनसत्ता

नागरिकता कानून और सच

कृपलानी, अब्दुल कलाम आजाद सबने ही तो इस बात की चिंता की है कि शरणार्थी को सम्मान सहित आसरा उपलब्ध कराए जाना चाहिए। हमारा गौरवमयी इतिहास रहा है। एक समृद्ध परंपरा रही है कि हमने अपनी धरती पर दूसरे देशों के पीड़ित अल्पसंख्यकों का दिल खोलकर स्वागत किया है। 12 जुलाई 1947 की प्रार्थना सभा में राष्ट्रपिता महात्मा गांधी ने कहा था जिन लोगों को पाकिस्तान से भगाया गया था, उन्हें पता होना चाहिए कि वे पूरे भारत के नागरिक थे....उन्हें यह महसूस करना चाहिए कि वे भारत की सेवा करने और उनकी महिमा से जुड़ने के लिए पैदा हुए थे। केवल भारत ही एक ऐसा देश है जहां अल्पसंख्यकों के साथ कोई दुर्व्यवहार नहीं हुआ। स्वाधीनता के समय और आज हम अल्पसंख्यकों का अनुपात देखें ,तो पाएंगे कि भारत के विपरीत उनके अनुपात में काफी कमी आई है। पाकिस्तान में हिंदुओं के प्रति दुर्व्यवहार को देख कर 15 नवंबर 1947 को नई दिल्ली में एनआइसीसी की बैठक में जेबी कृपलानी ने कहा था कि हमें पाकिस्तान से आने वालों के लिए भारतीय संघ के सेवा और समझौतों के संदर्भ में केंद्रीय और प्रांतीय नियमों को सहज कर देना चाहिए। महात्मा गांधी ने समय-समय पर ऐसे बयान दिए जो पाकिस्तान में रह रहे हिंदुओं के साथ दुर्व्यवहार को इंगित करते हैं। 26 सितंबर, 1947 को महात्मा गांधी ने प्रार्थना सभा में खुले तौर पर घोषणा थी कि पाकिस्तान में रहने वाले हिंदू और सिख भारत आ सकते हैं, अगर वे वहां निवास नहीं करना चाहते हैं। उस स्थिति में उन्हें नौकरी देने और उनके जीवन को सामान्य बनाना भारत सरकार का पहला कर्तव्य है। 12 फरवरी, 1964 को एचएन मुखर्जी ने कहा था कि पाकिस्तान में हिंदुओं के खिलाफ बातें की जा रही हैं जो लोग आ रहे हैं और जो पहले यहां आ चुके हैं, उन्हें शरणार्थी कहा जाता है। वे शरणार्थी नहीं हैं। उन्हें एक घर उपलब्ध कराना होगा। यह देश उनका घर होना चाहिए।

इस अधिनियम के माध्यम से इसी दिशा में काम किया गया है। शरणार्थियों का मुद्दा हमेशा से अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण रहा है। इस अधिनियम के लिए क्वायद 2014 में प्रारंभ हुई थी। अगर क्रमवार देखा जाए तो पता चलेगा कि 15 जून 2015 को जारी आंकड़ों के मुताबिक पाकिस्तान और अफगानिस्तान से चार हजार तीन सौ हिंदू और सिख एक वर्ष के अंदर शरणार्थी बनकर भारत आए। इसका परिणाम यह हुआ कि 19 जुलाई 2016 को नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक को लोकसभा में प्रस्तुत किया। इसके पश्चात मंथन के लिए इसे अगस्त 2016 में संयुक्त संसदीय समिति के पास भेज दिया गया। पूरे बर्दई साल तक संयुक्त संसदीय समिति ने नागरिकता संशोधन मसौदे का गहन अध्ययन किया और जनवरी 2019 में सरकार को अपनी रिपोर्ट सौंपी। यह बिल लोकसभा में प्रस्तुत किया गया जनवरी, 2019 में विधायक लोकसभा में पास हुआ, लेकिन राज्यसभा में रुक गया। पिछली लोकसभा के भंग होने के साथ ही यह रद्द हो गया था, इसलिए अब इसे पुनः संसद के दोनों सदनों में पारित हो गया।

नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम के पारित होने के बाद तीन देशों– पाकिस्तान, अफगानिस्तान और बांग्लादेश के अल्पसंख्यक समाज के लोग तभी भारतीय नागरिकता के लिए आवेदन दे सकते हैं जब उन्हें भारत में पांच वर्ष पूरे हो चुके हों। यहां तक कि पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री इंदिरा गांधी ने 24 मई 1971 में कहा था–‘15 और 16 मई को मैंने असम, त्रिपुरा और पश्चिम बंगाल का दौरा किया, बांग्लादेश से आए शरणार्थियों की पीड़ा को साझा करने के लिए, उन्हें इस सदन और लोगों यानी भारत की सहानुभूति और समर्थन के लिए स्वयं पूरी व्यवस्था पर नजर रखने के लिए जो उनकी देखभाल के लिए उपलब्ध करवाई जा रही है।’

उपेक्षित, त्रस्त, प्रताड़ित, सताए लोगों को अगर शरण देने की बात है तो यह तो हमेशा से होता आया है। वसुधैव कुटुंबकम और ‘सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामया’ की भावना से प्रेरित होकर दुनिया के हर असहाय, कमजोर व्यक्ति को हमने आसरा दिया है। यही कारण है कि महान हिंदी कवि जय शंकर



प्रसाद ने कहा है- ‘अरुण यह मधुमय देश हमारा, जहां पहुंच अनजान क्षितिज को मिलता एक सहारा।’

यहां यह बताना आवश्यक है कि विश्व के किसी भी देश का मुसलिम भारत की नागरिकता के लिए मूल भारतीय अधिनियम के अनुभाग के तहत अपना आवेदन दे सकता है और नागरिकता प्राप्त कर सकता है। यहां तक कि पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान के मुसलमान भी भारतीय नागरिकता कानून के अनुभाग के तहत आवेदन दे सकते हैं और भारत में शरण लेने के लिए भी आवेदन दे सकते हैं। देश के विभिन्न भागों में लोगों को भ्रम जाल में फंसाकर राजनीति की जा रही है। विरोध कर रहे विद्यार्थियों को, आम लोगों को यही नहीं पता कि वे विरोध किस चीज का कर रहे हैं।

यह दुर्भाग्य पूर्ण है कि राजनीति से प्रेरित एक दुष्प्रचार यह किया जा रहा है कि भारत में गैरकानूनी रूप से रह रहे विदेशियों को देश से बाहर निकालने के लिए प्रत्येक मामले की जांच नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम के तहत होगी। सच बात यह है कि ऐसे मामलों पर

फैसला विदेशियों से संबंधित अधिनियम के तहत ही होगा। कुछ लोग संविधान के अनुछेद 14 और 21 की दुहाई देकर कह रहे हैं कि इस अधिनियम को लागू कर सरकार ने इन दो अनुच्छेदों के विपरीत कार्य किया है। जबकि सच यह है कि यह अधिनियम इन अनुच्छेदों की किसी भी प्रकार से अवहेलना नहीं करता है। संसद विशेष परिस्थितियों को देखकर कानून बना सकती है, जैसे हज पर जाने वाले यात्रियों को सब्सिडी देती है और अटल सरकार के दौरान इस पर विशेष ध्यान दिया गया था। वैसे भी यह अधिनियम केवल पारसी या केवल हिंदुओं के लिए नहीं है, यह हिंदू, सिख, पारसी, बौद्ध, जैन और ईसाइयों के लिए है। पूरे देश को यह बताना जरूरी है कि इस नए अधिनियम के तहत नागरिकता साबित करने हेतु कोई भी दस्तावेज नहीं दिखाना होगा। कुछ लोग रोहिंया की बात कर रहे हैं। जहां तक रोहिंया का प्रश्न है, उनमें से बहुत सारे लोग म्यांमार में आतंकवादी गतिविधियों में शामिल रहे हैं।

भारत के पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री आइके गुजराल ने कहा था कि हमने संसद में मोहम्मद अली जिन्ना के ऐतिहासिक भाषण में उन्हें यह कहते हुए सुना था कि नया पाकिस्तान एक धर्मनिरपेक्ष, लोकतांत्रिक और आधुनिक राज्य होगा। दुर्भाग्य से यह एक अल्पकालीन भ्रम था। नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम के संबंध में कई प्रार्तिाय हैं, जो निराधार हैं। लोगों ने अपने-अपने ढंग से अपनी आवश्यकता अनुसार उसकी व्याख्या शुरू कर दी। स्वार्थ पूर्ति के लिए कुछ लोग भ्रमित दुष्प्रचार कर इस कानून की गलत व्याख्या कर रहे हैं। जबकि वास्तविकता यह है कि पूर्णतः हमारे सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों से प्रेरित और संविधान की मूल भावना से ओतप्रोत है। राम मनोहर लोहिया जी ने कहा 1947 से 1967 के बीच में लगभग 70 लाख हिंदू पाकिस्तान से विस्थापित होकर भारत आए। 15 साल पहले

नेहरू लियाकत समझौता में अल्पसंख्यकों की सुरक्षा का वादा किया गया था लेकिन फिर भी पाकिस्तान में उनके खिलाफ अत्याचार हो रहा है।

यह कहने में कोई अतिशयोक्ति नहीं है कि यह कानून परंपरागत भारतीय मूल्यों के साथ उन सार्वभौमिक मूल्यों के संरक्षण की दिशा में एक मील का पत्थर है जिससे भारत की विश्व में पहचान बनी है। जहां एक ओर हमने हमेशा विदेशी भूमि से लोगों का स्वागत किया है और उन्हें गले लगाया है, उनके मूल्यों और परंपराओं को समाहित करती हमारी संस्कृति अत्यंत विविधताओं की समेटे हुए एक खूबसूरत जीवंतता के दर्शन करती है। विविध भाषाएं, विविध परंपराएं और विविध अस्तित्व का आनंद मनाने हमने एक बात पर जोर दिया है और वह है मानवीय मूल्य। सार्वभौमिक प्रेम और भाईचारा हमारी प्राथमिकता रही है। हम न केवल दूसरों के दर्द को समझते हैं और साझा करते हैं, बल्कि उनके दुःख दूर करने का प्रयास भी करते हैं। नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम इन्हीं मानवीय मूल्यों को परिलक्षित करता है।

(लेखक केंद्रीय मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री हैं।)

स्मृतिलोप का प्रकोप

चिकित्सीय पेशा समाप्त हो गया है। उनका स्मृतिलोप दुर्घटना के कारण हुआ था, लेकिन आज बिना किसी दुर्घटना के, केवल गलत जीवनशैली की वजह से स्मृतिलोप की बीमारी आम होती जा रही है।

आधुनिक मोबाइल-युग में मानव-स्मृति की उपयोगिता बुरी तरह प्रभावित हुई है। लंबा समय हुआ, जब कैलकुलेटर अस्तित्व में आया और छोटे-मोटे हिसाब-किताब के लिए मानव-मस्तिष्क का इस्तेमाल घट गया था। अब तो कैलकुलेटर की सुविधा मोबाइल में भी है।

बल्कि किसी व्यक्ति का नाम, पता, ईमेल आदी या मोबाइल नंबर को याद रखने की आवश्यकता नहीं रही। ये सब जानकारी मोबाइल पर तुरंत उपलब्ध हो जाती है। मानव-मस्तिष्क के घटते उपयोग और प्रयोग से स्मृतिलोप की समस्या दिनोंदिन बढ़ती जा रही है। सच तो यह है कि स्मृति और वास्तविकता में जमीन-आसमान का फर्क होता है। स्मृति में बसे चित्र और अवसर सुनहरें पल बन कर सुकून देते हैं। स्मृति में बसी बचपन की यादें, मकान, रास्ते, आयोजन और अवसर मन को प्रसन्नता से भर देते हैं।

निश्चित ही कैमरायुक्त मोबाइल से गजब की डिजिटल क्रांति आई है। जीवन के हरेक अवसर को कैमेरे की स्मृति में संजो लिया जाता है। लेकिन ऐसे

कितने लोग हैं जो इन संजोए हुए छाया चित्रों को दोबारा या बार-बार देखते होंगे। मानव स्मृति के साथ सबसे बड़ा घाटा यह हुआ कि मोबाइल में कैद करने के चक्कर में हम सामने घटने वाली घटनाओं, प्रकृति, परिस्थिति या मानवीय संवेदनाओं के साथ पूरी तरह से जुड़ नहीं पाते। लोग इतने निर्दयी होते देखे जाते हैं कि घातक दुर्घटनाओं में भी दुर्घटनाग्रस्त व्यक्ति की मदद करने की अपेक्षा मोबाइल से फोटोग्राफी करते रहते हैं।

प्रतिदिन प्रातः भ्रमण प्रकृति से जुड़ने का श्रेष्ठ उपाय है, क्योंकि प्रकृति हमें ऊर्जा देती है। अनेक लोग प्रातः भ्रमण के लिए जाते भी हैं। लेकिन आजकल अधिकतर युवा प्रातः भ्रमण के दौरान कानों में इयरफोन लगा कर गाना सुनते रहते हैं। ऐसे में प्रकृति से पूरी तरह जुड़ने के अभाव में मिलने वाली ऊर्जा से वे वंचित रह जाते हैं। वे खूबसूरत लम्हों की आत्मसात नहीं कर पाते। नदियां, जलप्रपात, पहाड़ी की ऊंची चोटियां और जंगल को सेल्फी में कैद करने के चक्कर में कई बार वे अग्रिय घटनाओं के शिकार हो जाते हैं। कई बार दुर्घटनाओं के मूल में यही एक कारण छिपा होता है। जुड़ाव के अभाव में स्मृतियां सूनी रह जाती हैं। ऐसा व्यक्ति एकांत में शून्यता महसूस करता है और खिन्नता से मन ऊब जाता है।

उभरे, क्योंकि महिलाओं में कार्यक्षमता अदभुत है, इसके प्रमाण की आवश्यकता नहीं है।

- करन कुमार खोइया , ग्वालियर, मप्र***

प्रकृति का रुख

आजकल देश के कुछ राज्य कंपकंपाती उंड के आगोश में हैं। लेकिन यह कोई हैरानी वाली बात नहीं है, जब गरमी के मौसम में झुलसाने वाला माहौल बनता है या फिर



राजनीतिक सशक्तिकरण में महिलाओं की भूमिका बढ़ी है। इसका प्रत्यक्ष उदाहरण 2019 के आम चुनावों में देखने को मिला, जब महिलाओं को 78 सीटों पर इस बार चुना गया, जो पिछले वर्षों की तुलना में सत्रह सीट अधिक है। स्थानीय स्तर पर पंचायतों में महिलाओं की भागीदारी में इजाफा हुआ है।

लेकिन अभी तक सरकार द्वारा जो कदम उठाए गए हैं, उससे भी अधिक तेजी से कार्य करने की आवश्यकता है। राज्य और समाज का कर्तव्य है कि लगातार महिलाओं की उन्नति के लिए प्रयासरत रहे। वैश्विक स्तर पर देश महिला सशक्तिकरण के रूप में

बाढ़ कहर बरपाती है या सूखा परेशान करता है तब भी ऐसे ही परेशानी बढ़ती है। लेकिन जब पेड़ बबूल के बोए जाएं तो मिटे आम की उम्मीद रखना भी नासमझी मानी जानी चाहिए। यानी हमने अगर भौतिकतावाद और आधुनिकता की अंधी दौड़ में प्रकृति की नाक में दम किया है तो यह उम्मीद करना हमारी नासमझी होगी कि प्रकृति भी हमारी हमेशा हितैषी बनी रहेगी।

मौसम की बेरुखी और समय-समय पर जो आपदाओं के रूप में प्रकृति जो कहर बरपाती है, उसके जरिए दरअसल वह ईसान को समझाती है कि ईसान प्रकृति के आगे अभी भी बौना है। वैशक ईसान विज्ञान

नई दिल्ली