

Death of an institution



SUNIL K SINHA

The controversy surrounding the release of the NSSO report on the status of unemployment in India and recent leak of NSO (earlier NSSO) report on household consumption have seriously eroded the credibility of the Indian Statistical System. A look into the working of the NSSO is needed at this moment.

The Indian Statistical System was developed to capture a wide variety of data on our very large and decentralised economy. Despite the system's impressive achievements, there has been growing concerns regarding the quality of data. To address problems of data collection, tabulation and interpretation the Indian Statistical Service (ISS) took shape in 1961. Subsequently in line with the recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission the present National Statistical Commission (NSC) came into existence on July 12, 2006. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has been tasked to undertake large scale household and enterprise surveys on various aspects of the economy.

The NSS was established in 1950 by the government on the advice of late Professor P C Mahalanobis, then statistical adviser to the Cabinet, with support from Jawaharlal Nehru. The National Income Committee had found large gaps in the statistical data for the computation of national income aggregates. The main objective of NSS was to fill these data gaps. In April 1961 the Department of Statistics was set up and NSS became a part of it. In October 1999, the NSSO became an attached office in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

The National Sample Survey inaugurated its survey operations with a multi-subject enquiry conducted in the rural areas only from October 1950 to March 1951. By the 10th round NSS was firmly established. The Indian Statistical Institute, too, got a statutory status, with the passing of the ISI Act in Parliament (1959). An evidence of its general recognition was the interest shown by government organisations and autonomous bodies in using the NSS survey apparatus for collecting data needed by them.

As per an administrative order of the MoSPI in May 2019, the NSSO along with CSO have now been renamed NSO with no change in the status of the four divisions of the NSSO. The little autonomy which the NSSO enjoyed to produce analytical reports seems to have been eroded. No doubt there are working groups and technical committees and the National Statistical Commission (NSC), but their present roles remain purely technical. Some of the recent NSS reports were leaked to the print media before release leading to many accusations.

Next year the NSS will be 70 years old. As a well-wisher of the Indian Statistical System and part of the system for more than 37 years here are some suggestions to improve data quality.

- The government of the day should consider data collection as its priority area and avoid short term contractual appointments. Sufficient increase in regular data collection staff will increase employment opportunities. For more autonomy, NSSO should be placed under National Statistical Commission (NSC) with more legal teeth to the NSC;
- Data collectors should be part of the present Subordinate Statistical Service;
- The Subordinate Statistical Service should be renamed Supporting Statistical Service (SSS);
- The present cadre strength of SSS should include data collectors;
- The strength of data collectors could be determined on the basis of the sample size of surveys to be undertaken by the NSS as approved by the NSC. They should be posted to the states to which they belong and know the local language;
- Since the NSS has been providing estimates of parameters in terms of rates, ratios and percentages, the present sample size of recent NSS surveys is adequate to provide reliable estimates of basic parameters;
- The NSS should now adopt the panel sample approach as is being done for the SRS of the RGI. Such a change in the sample design may need further technical discussions;
- There is need for more stress on research for the SDRD of the NSO. So far they are primarily engaged in designing of survey schedule, tabulation plans, instruction manuals for field staff, training and preparation of analytical reports based on data collected by the Field Operations Division (FOD) and cleaned and tabulated by the Data Processing Division (DPD). They should take up more analytical studies based on unit level data;
- FOD of NSO should intensify field staff training, supervision and random checks of filled-in schedules, analysis of tour diary of supervisors.

The author is former DG and CEO of NSSO

Why little Gurupreet had to pay with her life

As long as Asian governments are moved only by greed, corruption and callousness, massive illegal immigration, domestic abuse and child labour will continue



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K DATTA-RAY

The haunting tragedy of six-year-old Gurupreet Kaur from Hasanpur in Haryana who died of thirst in the blistering Arizona desert highlights the criminal negligence of a government whose empty rhetoric unmatched by caring policies forces despised and deprived Indians to vote with their feet.

Gurupreet entered the US from Mexico in June with her mother who was one of the five Indians dropped off by human traffickers at a remote and infamous location near Tucson. Apparently, the mother left her with another family to search for water but couldn't find any-one on her return. A border patrol eventually discovered Gurupreet's remains in the desert. The Sikh Coalition, an umbrella organisation for the community in the US, enabled the mother to join her husband who had been living in New York city while his asylum case made its way through the US immigration court system.

That horrendous report reminded me of Manmohan Singh telling P V Narasimha Rao in the early days of liberalisation that people were accusing him of selling India. "Who would want to buy this country anyway?" was Narasimha Rao's wry retort. That realistic assessment rebuts Amit Shah's proud vow to evict all illegal immigrants from India. Who would bother to smuggle into a country whose own citizens disgracefully head the global immigration list? Ireland's richest citizen is an Indian.

A small victory in Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal is of far greater relevance to Indian conditions than the sizzling pro-democracy riots and scorching election results that gripped the world's attention. A 32-year-old Pakistani who was referred to only as Zn to protect his identity said he was tricked into going to the city under a valid domestic helper visa and then subjected to beatings, abuse, threats and endless labour and all for no pay at all. He was sent home at the end of his tenure, but returned illegally to

Hong Kong to complain to the authorities.

Zn might easily have been an Indian who is driven abroad by persecution or neglect and is at the mercy of human traffickers who exploit poverty and trade in the hopes of men and women aspiring to a better life. The same poverty that drove him to Hong Kong forces hundreds of thousands of Indian victims of deprivation to take horrendous risks every year in the search for the decent livelihood that *Bharat Mata* denies them.

Noting that Indians account for one in 20 migrants worldwide, the American Pew Research Centre says that many Indian migrants complain of persecution by the Hindu nationalist authorities. Economic conditions are said to have worsened under the Bharatiya Janata Party. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime finds that dismal job prospects at home forces young Indians to seek employment abroad so that Indians account for about half the 11 million illegals in the US. The number of Indians caught spiralled from 77 in 2008 to 8,997 in 2018. Driven by hardship, these adventurous souls mortgage their homesteads in Punjab or Haryana, pawn the family jewellery and borrow heavily to satisfy the greed of the criminal traffickers who organise their trips.

Gurupreet's family are among them. "We wanted a safer and better life for our daughter

and we made the extremely difficult decision to seek asylum here in the US," the parents said in a heart-wringing statement. "We trust that every parent, regardless of origin, colour or creed, will understand that no mother or father ever puts their child in harm's way unless they are desperate."

Returning to Zn, after serving six months in jail for illegal entry he sued the authorities for ignoring his complaints and failing in their obligations under the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance. Upholding Zn's complaint, Justice Kevin Zervos said last week while Hong Kong laws prohibit certain acts under the umbrella of human trafficking — from prostitution to assault — it does not have legislation targeting human trafficking itself. Zn's lawyers want the law revised in line with international standards to suppress the "evil" of trafficking that has become "a colossal problem everywhere".

Deterrent punishment might curb the criminal activities of traffickers. But the demand for their services will remain as long as Asian governments are moved only by greed, corruption and callousness. That is the root cause not only of massive illegal immigration but of domestic abuses such as bonded and child labour. Both are also rampant in India. Little Gurupreet paid with her life for the lust for power that is the only motivation of India's politicians.

LUNCH WITH BS ▸ J J VALAYA | ARTIST

Fashion's lensman

Fashion photographer? Photographer fashionista? J J Valaya tells K S Shekhawat why he's an artist with a camera

When, in December 2017, fashion designer J J Valaya took a hiatus, the unkind word on the street was that the 25-year-old brand had run out of steam. "I was bored," the affable couturier tells me, stirring a sugar-free sweetener into his *gajar halwa* at the end of our *ghar ka khana* laid out over an expansive marble table. But it was more than inspiration — or its lack — that troubled him. "I love elaborate clothes for people to get married in; embroideries, textures, the whole shebang excites me," he tells me, "but let's face it, I am a lousy businessman."

It was the businessman who took a break to restructure his production, evaluating his core competency — "design" — exiting the manufacturing space by outsourcing it to focus on the creative and retail side. The result was a comeback show in September this year, and the announcement of an eponymous luxury store, spread over 25,000 sq ft, that will come up in New Delhi's Chatarpur in April 2020 combining his three passions: fashion, home and photography in one unified space.

Earlier this week, J J saw the capital's beautiful people beat a tattoo for a glimpse of his third photography exhibition as much out of curiosity about what he was up to as to see whether they featured in his portfolio. And it is the reason I've self-invited myself to his "studio in the city" in a leafy south Delhi colony for a home-cooked lunch. The studio where he does his "creative thinking" would be the envy of any well-heeled millennial — a fully equipped den with a well-stocked bar, capacious sofas, and the trimmings of a well-travelled life.

Shyam, his major-domo, has laid out a vegetarian meal — a fragrant *dal* tempered with ghee and *jeera*, *aloo-methi*, cabbage with peas, a *baingan raita* (all of which I help myself to), *palak-paneer* (who even eats that?) and a *bharta* I'd like but can't reach because it's placed beside J J who, well, isn't one for fussing about what you're eating — or not. At any rate, I promise to come back for more of what Shyam has to offer — the J J kitchen is an exemplar of why we should be eating at home rather than out.

Fashion designers are often dismissed as dilettantes because of the mindscape they

occupy in popular culture — self-styled curators of art, gourmands of exotic viands, purveyors of travel to lands from which they seek inspiration, consumers of literature, creatures as much of PR hype as of their own imaginations. But J J surprised everyone with the contents of his first exhibition of photographs in 2011. Yes, there were all the frills of what you'd expect of a designer — good looking models, known faces, great costumery, greater locations. He shot his images in crowded places rich in history as mis-en-scene. "I hadn't realised until then that I was always taking pictures, all the way back since my student years at NIFT in 1989."

He was certainly around photographers shooting his clothes on models, styling his own shots. In a sense the progression was almost organic. Did he have it in him to be considered a serious "art" photographer — a photographer as artist? One problem was, he thought that artists were "pretentious". He laughs, a spoon of *pulao* poised before him. "And I'm sure all artists think designers are pretentious." At any rate, that first exhibition pulled in celebrity-watchers, but brought him his first viewership without the struggle of a newbie "artist". It was mounted sans a gallery, but J J says the first print was sold to Peter Nagy of Nature Morte, who gave him his next exhibition of architectural photographs.

His current show, *Lalaari*, two-and-a-half years in the making, is different for being studio-staged. The title — dyer in Patiala lingua franca — is accompanied by the expected jingoism around a blank canvas that can be filled up at will, more designer-speak than artist-speak. "I spoke to my sitters at length, I sent them questionnaires," J J says, explaining the depths he plumbed for information surrounding their lives, including facts and memories they may have hidden from themselves. "All of us wear multiple faces, multiple masks," he says, reaching for the *aloo-methi*, tearing off half of a *khasta roti*, "but who are we really?" He eliminated "beauty for its own sake", finding it "bland", but also seeking to avoid the burden of vanity that accompanies it. There was no logic to how he chose them — "friends, strangers, staff", drawn by first impressions, their eyes, an instinctive connection, a sense of character, and their ener-

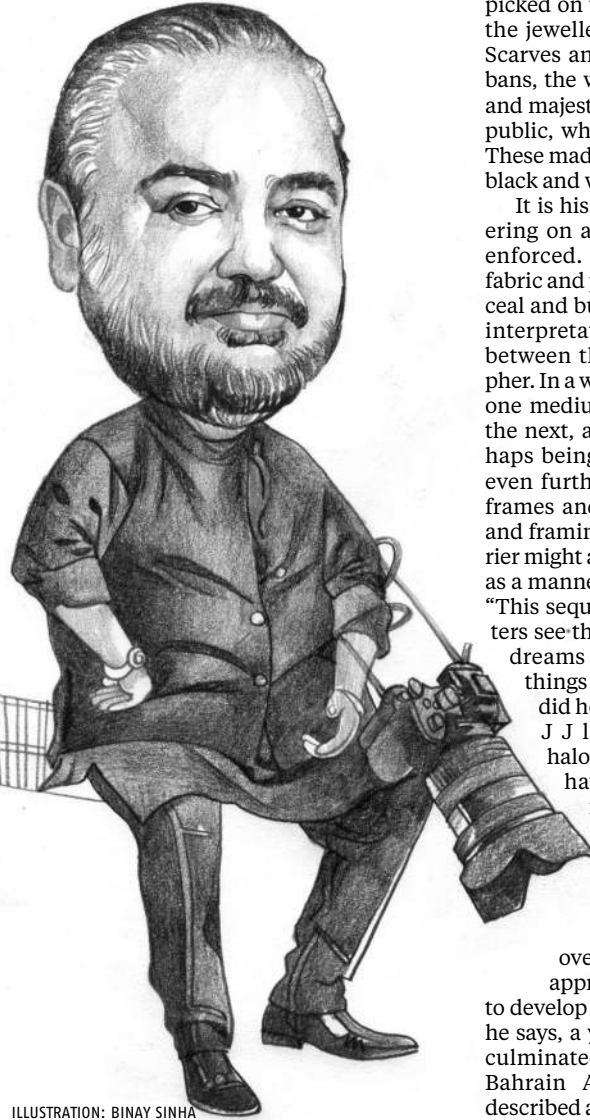


ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

gies. Shoots took up to six hours, post planning the details. "I remember (photographer) Prabuddha Dasgupta telling me that if in a day's work you can get one good shot, you know you've been successful, and you know it the moment you have it. The perfect shot can never be rehearsed."

J J's sitters spanned the spectrum of society, from the old to the young, from the rich and famous to the socially marginalised. I spot friends, acquaintances and celebrities among them, amidst which are portraits of the unknowns — of weavers, dyers, maids —

people invisible to us. "I photographed them as I saw them," J J muses. Even pre-planned, he let events take their course, waiting for Henri Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" to kick in. Clothes — costumes, really — were picked on the spur of the moment, as also the jewellery and other embellishments. Scarves and fabrics were draped like turbans, the whole J J ensemble of opulence and majesty that he purveys to his adoring public, which now sheathed their bodies. These made up most of the ensemble of his black and white portraits.

It is his treatment of texturing and layering on a series of portraits that seems enforced. Using "sheer and opaque" net fabric and playing peekaboo to reveal, conceal and build a sense of "perceptions and interpretations", you see the segueing between the designer and the photographer. In a world where distinctions between one medium and another, one world and the next, are increasingly fluid, is he perhaps being prescient? For he has moved even further with experiments involving frames and jamewarmounts, dressing up and framing the portraits the way a couturier might a body, reducing it to its function as a mannequin. JJ doesn't see it that way. "This sequence is based on how these sitters see themselves, their aspirations and dreams beyond the small and large things that have affected them." How did he represent that, I wonder aloud. J J laughs. "Didn't you notice the halos over them," he asks, "which I have placed to signify incidents from their pasts that they have overcome?" I did, I say, though the interpretation had eluded me at the time.

Now firmly back in the designer's seat, what did he do over his two-year sabbatical? "I was approached by the queen of Bahrain to develop a line with Bahraini craftsmen," he says, a year-long curatorial project that culminated with his participation in the Bahrain Art Fair earlier this year — described as "the coolest place to be" by the cognoscenti. He's also open to more collaborations of the kind he has for FCML (flooring) and Swarovski (jewellery), and his Home line should soon introduce furnishing textiles. Travelling every month to Bahrain, he seized the opportunity to photograph the kingdom extensively, something that will be published as a book, the third in a series of memory books he has created "for gifting to friends". The earlier volumes, on Istanbul and Goa, sit by my bedside, a token of friendship from J J who — practicing meditation, juggling meetings — is engaged with "aligning myself with myself". Amen.

Jewellery with hidden strings



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

In the picturesque Madhya Pradesh village Ghatgara in Dhar district, I came across an older woman wearing the most gorgeous silver jewellery. Even in rural MP, where women customarily wear bangles, rings, earrings and necklaces, her distinctive demeanour stopped me in my tracks. A large gold nose ring adorned her wrinkled face while multiple strands of silver necklaces glistened on her chest. Her arms were equally bejeweled and tattooed to boot, but it was her feet that had me riveted. Gorgeous toe rings tinkled gently as she walked, while solid, hand-crafted silver anklets encased her ankles. "Are you dressed this way for a wedding," I asked. She cackled, showing

off her missing teeth. "What wedding?" she said. "This is what I wear everyday to do my household chores."

Her name was Jada Bai and she belonged to the Bhil community, a fiercely independent tribe spread across Western India. "I've been wearing these ornaments since the day I got married," she told me. "They are now a part of me." Her mother-in-law had given them to her. She pointed to her shy young daughter-in-law standing nearby and said, "Soon I'll pass it on to her." The tribe, she said, has strenuously preserved their old ways to safeguard their tradition. Till date, Bhil youths mostly marry within their community, which also ensures that the family silver stays intact.

"We as a community don't like putting whatever little money we have in banks, so we wear whatever we possess," she laughed when I asked her whether wearing so much jewellery everyday was uncomfortable. "One gets used to it — I'd feel quite naked without it all." Bhil families displayed their social status and wealth this way, she told me. Even their men wore earrings, pendants and bracelets.

In the past, and even to some extent today, silver jewellery used to be an accurate indicator of a family's creditworthiness. "Since we as a community rarely own land or other assets, families would

use silver as collateral when taking loans from moneylenders," she said. Perhaps that was why they preferred designs that were simply hammered out of pure silver. "Embellishments often reduce the purity of the metal," she said showing me her anklets that were solid silver bands. "Our designs are such that they can be sold for the price of pure silver."

Jada Bai kindly allowed me to inspect all her jewellery, assuring me that I couldn't afford to buy most of it. "Do you know, these anklets are one and half kilograms of pure silver each," she asked. They had been twisted round her ankle with pliers and couldn't be taken off. "They say that women's gaits develop a seductive sway when they wear these anklets, but that's only because they are so heavy," she said recalling how hard it was to initially get used to carrying around such extra weight. "Luckily, tradition forbids us from going outside the house freely and wearing these anklets ensured we were physically unable to go very far," she said cackling mirthlessly. "We don't call them *bedis*, shackles, for nothing!"

And just like that, my lust for the Bhil anklets that I couldn't afford anyway, evaporated. I did buy a short chain though, just to remind myself that a taste for jewellery comes with many hidden strings attached.



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

Sometimes two Indias collide — surprisingly, giddily, happily. Case in point: When one woman gave another a hug and a peck on the cheek, a simple, spontaneous gesture of affection as we looked on. Except: one was a royal dowager, regal in her chiffon and pearls; the other a dancer, part of a troupe to entertain wedding guests. As receptions go, it was an intimate affair, ridiculously small by Delhi standards, making up in bonhomie what it lacked in numbers. That odd bonding warmed our hearts more than alcohol that cold night. Where, once, women of the *zenana* would look through those to the margins born, the

easy acceptance of the other was a marker of the distance India has come since independence, a moment of quiet triumph and celebration.

India exists on so many levels that one runs the risk of generalisation. Take the case of millennial couples who think little of toting a nanny along with their kids to a restaurant, but the *ayah* will not be offered a seat, her duty being to spoonfeed the little *babas* and *mis-sy-babys* while remaining standing; and any meal — it won't be leftovers if she's lucky — will be served on a separate table away from the family. How hypocritical that those who wash and cook for us should be considered unclean company. Yet, how often have we asked a driver to share a table when out on a highway, even in a *dhaba*? The thought of the house help sitting on the sofa is galling to most, so having the major domo run through house accounts, or the cook list the ingredients for a party menu while standing up, is not just acceptable, it's desirable.

How many of us care to provide the domestic staff furniture in the kitchen? Do we know the condition of their bed linen, the state of their bathrooms? Are we so tightfisted that we can't think to bring a little cheer into their lives with gifts of snacks (they

can suffer midnight pangs too) or half-decent toiletry? Must they take care of our privileged lives from a state of unhappy drudgery? Can we bridge the difference between the lives of their children and ours by ensuring basic hygiene, education — and the chance of a *chukker* in the sports field? Let us not think of it as charity as much as gratitude, for we owe our working lives to their unflinching support. They have our backs; do we have theirs?

To understand their aspirations and joys, peek into their cameras (with their permission, of course) to see the selfies they've clicked, the songs they've stored, the serials they watch. You'll find photos taken while posing against the family car, the sports bike, the strange sculpture, the lavishly laid table in a celebration of the family's good fortune. Their song list will consist of favourites they cook our meals to; they watch serials on their phone to discuss with their friends and families while waiting in the summer heat or winter cold for us to get off Netflix so they can serve us dinner.

As 2019 winds down and we get busy with our bucket lists and New Year resolutions, don't forget to make a wish for a little more equality for them. Dignity and grace? They have that in abundance.

NATO is full of freeloaders

BRET L STEPHENS

With the conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's 70th anniversary summit in London, it's fair to say that Donald Trump thinks that most alliance members, starting with France and Canada, are a bunch of ungrateful and unhelpful freeloaders. Fair to say, also, that most of those members see Trump as an erratic, pompous, dangerous simpleton.

There's no reason they both can't be right.

The tone of the summit was set several weeks ago, when Emmanuel Macron gave an interview to *The Economist*, warning of the "brain death" of NATO and wondering whether the alliance's mutual defense commitments still meant anything. "If the Bashar al-Assad regime decides to retaliate against Turkey, will we commit ourselves under it?" the French president wondered, imagining a scenario in which Ankara could demand that other NATO members play a supportive role in its barbaric adventure in northern Syria.

Macron was widely rebuked for the remarks, most of all by Trump, who this week called them "very disrespectful," "very, very nasty," and "insulting to a lot of different forces."

Yet they were also very true. Trump announced his withdrawal from Syria without bothering to consult France or Britain, both of which had special forces on the ground fighting the Islamic State. It's Trump, not Macron, who once called NATO "obsolete," just as it's Trump who has repeatedly cast doubt on whether the US would defend NATO states from an attack.

Words have consequences. Trump's domestic political base may think it's just fine to take the president seriously but not literally. Treaty allies like France can't be so cavalier. If Macron is now exploring France's options by talking up the prospect of a European army while talking down the threat from Russia, it's because that's where Trump's wild rhetoric and behavior have led him.

But then we get to the other side of the ledger.

Canada, for instance, spends just 1.27 per cent of its gross domestic product on defense (the NATO target is 2 per cent) and cannot meet its obligations to defend North America's airspace. When Justin Trudeau was overheard at the summit belittling Trump for taking too long with his press conference, the Canadian prime minister sounded to many Americans like a child whining that a working parent had kept him waiting for supper.

All of this means that when Macron and other European leaders muse about creating an autonomous European defence force, they are, as one seasoned Parisian observer put it to me, "playing with cards they don't have." Even sizable increases in defense spending wouldn't fill the gap that an American departure from Europe would leave: Roughly half of European defense spending goes to salaries and pensions, not warfighting capacity.

This is worse than brain death. It's a philosophical failure, the result of a long-term attenuation in the idea of an Atlantic community — the West — united not only by a shared history or common enemies, but also by a unifying set of ethical and political ideals, and the sense that those ideals entwine our destinies. That attenuation preceded Trump and Macron, and it has causes that go beyond any two leaders, including fundamental changes in the demographic makeup of both sides of the Atlantic. Even so, it is being accelerated by them. On Trump's side, through his coarse nationalism, crude transactionalism, and soft spot for strongmen. On Macron's, from an excess of political opportunism and a dearth of strategic sense. Anti-Americanism will always find a receptive audience with much of the French public. But a Europe without American protection is a continental disaster waiting to happen.

The good news is that an institution as large as NATO can run on autopilot for a long time, certainly beyond either Trump's or Macron's tenure of office. At some point, however, real pilots will be needed.

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Weekend Ruminations will resume next week

Divide and win

CAB plus NRC is an idea that's dead on arrival. But it's the BJP's next Ram Mandir that will be used to polarise and expose the party's rivals

For seven decades now, the Pakistani establishment has had one mantra: "Kashmir is just one unfinished business of Partition. You settle that, and we (Pakistan and India) could live as friends, just like Canada and the US."

The consistent Indian response has also been a mantra: Partition was final, and is over. Only fools or suicidal revanchists would talk of reopening that wound.

That script is now changing on the Indian side. Over the past several days we have heard many defenders of the latest amendments to the Citizenship Act, 1955, or the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 (CAB), hark back to Partition. And while they do not use the expression "unfinished business", they leave nothing to chance by using expressions like full justice, closure, and fair deal to non-Muslim minorities. The CAB, they assert, only redeems the promise implicit to the minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

What that promise was, however, is debatable. There is no doubt that Pakistan was imagined, fought for, and achieved as a "homeland" for the subcontinent's Muslims. It did not, however, follow that India could no longer be their home.

It is also true that there was an extensive exchange of population on religious grounds and it was bloodied and embittered by massacres and rape. In a couple of years, however, on the western side, this exchange was over and almost complete. Very few, if any, Muslims remained in Indian Punjab or Hindus and Sikhs on the Pakistani side.

Some trickles did continue until the mid-1960s. Cricketer Asif Iqbal, for example, who captained Pakistan, migrated only in 1961. Until then he was playing in the Hyderabad team, which was later captained by Tiger Pataudi. There was a minor surge in the wake of the 1965 war, and then it ended.

The picture in the east was quite different.

For a variety of complex reasons, the exchange of population between what was then East Pakistan and India's West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura was far from complete. Large sections of Bengali Muslims stayed back in India as did Hindus in East Bengal (Pakistan). But bouts of riots continued, each followed by a tit-for-tat exodus from either side.

It was to stop this that, in 1950, Jawaharlal Nehru and his Pakistani counterpart, Liaquat Ali Khan, signed a detailed agreement of great clarity, known

to history as the Nehru-Liaquat pact. You can read the text here (<https://mea.gov.in/Portal/LegalTreatiesDoc/PA50B1228.pdf>). The pact rested on five essential pillars:

1. Both countries commit to not only protect their minorities but to give them all the rights and freedoms including in government jobs, politics, and armed forces.
2. Those who have been displaced/migrated temporarily because of the riots and want to return to their homes will be given due facilitation and protection.
3. Those who did not want to return will be accepted as citizens like any other "migrants".
4. There will, meanwhile, be freedom of movement on both sides and those who still want to migrate will be given protection and help.
5. Both sides will sincerely try to restore order, so people feel secure enough to stay put.

It was following this that India carried out an enumeration and built the first (and so far the last) National Register of Citizens (NRC) in 1951.

In the CAB debate, we often hear BJP leaders refer to Nehru-Liaquat pact to argue that while India kept its part of the commitments, Pakistan didn't. It is difficult to argue with this. The population data shows that while in India the overall population of Muslims has risen, even at a rate marginally higher than that of the Hindus and Sikhs, in the two wings of former Pakistan the minority population has declined steeply. It is a safe conclusion that the minorities have continued to leave Pakistan (and later probably Bangladesh for some time) and settle in India.

Here is, therefore, the reason why the BJP now calls the CAB its answer to what it sees as the unfinished business of Partition: Pakistan didn't keep its commitments under the Nehru-Liaquat pact and, by implication, India became the natural home of non-Muslim minorities still being persecuted there. And there is no reason why a Muslim should feel persecuted for her religion in Islamic states.

Then we start running into complications: First, because Jinnah's two-nation theory is not what India's founders wanted their secular republic to be. Second, at which point does old history end, and the new one begin? And third, is "national" synonymous with "indigenous", "religious" equal to "ethnicity" and "language"?

Since we raised the question of old and new history, it might be necessary for us to go back a few decades to understand the nature and complexity of



NATIONAL INTEREST
SHEKHAR GUPTA

Nithyananda's Kailaasa



VIEWPOINT
DEVANGSHU DATTA

An apocryphal story features a meeting between Queen Victoria and Cecil Rhodes in the late 19th century. The empire builder had returned to Britain after years in Africa.

The Queen asked, "What have you been doing since we last met, Mr Rhodes?"

Rhodes replied, "I have added two dominions to your majesty's empire." (Northern Rhodesia and Rhodesia, now Zambia and Zimbabwe).

The Queen responded, "Oh thank you, Sir Cecil!"

The global political map was malleable then. It continued to see major changes until the 1990s. Apart from the nations

that emerged from the Soviet Union, South Sudan, East Timor and Kosovo have also been carved out in the recent past.

The latest attempted addition is an island called Kailaasa. A fugitive fleeing from rape charges in India has bought an island off the coast of Ecuador. He's set up a website which calls it "nation without borders created by dispossessed Hindus who lost the right to practice Hinduism authentically".

Kailaasa's owner, Nithyananda, used delaying tactics to avoid trial in a case filed back in 2010. An inmate of his *ashram* claimed she had been repeatedly raped over a period of five years. Along with the godman, five of his *chelas* faced charges under Sections 376 (rape), 377 (unnatural sex), 420 (cheating), 114 (criminal abetment), 201 (disappearance of evidence, giving false information), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and so on.

Along with disappearing evidence, the main accused himself disappeared. He ended up in Ecuador, which doesn't have an extradition treaty

with India. Although India could make an extradition request, there are no guarantees the request would be granted. The Latin American nation has also historically been sympathetic to requests for political asylum. This is why Julian Assange took refuge in the Ecuadorean Embassy when he was facing rape charges.

It is quite likely that Nithyananda will claim political persecution claiming he's not being allowed to practice Hinduism "authentically", whatever that means. Given good legal counsel, and as the owner of significant real estate, he might well escape extradition, even if the Indian government makes any serious effort to bring him back.

Kailaasa would be technically described as a micronation. There are many such examples, set up in various places by sundry criminals and eccentrics. *The Lonely Planet* actually has a Guide to Home-made Nations among its publi-

cations.

Some micro-nations such as Christiana in Copenhagen, Denmark, are seen as great tourist destinations. The 1,000-odd "citizens" of Christiana have Danish passports. Similarly, Parva Domus in Uruguay has been around since 1878. It's commemorated in Uruguay's stamps and treated much like an Indian housing society, in terms of local recognition.

Other micronations such as Celestia, Asgardia and Lovely are "concept-nations" created for some quirky purpose. Celestia, or the Nation of Celestial Space, claims the entire universe minus Earth. It was founded in 1949 and claims to have over 19,000 citizens. The founder wished to prevent large nations from hegemonical domination of space. Celestia citizens used to routinely protest nuclear tests, which polluted "their" territory. Asgardia, on the other hand, sees the launch of space vehi-

cles as its major goal. It has so far, launched one private satellite.

Lovely was founded by British comedian, Danny Wallace, as an exemplar for his 2005 TV Show, "How to Start Your Own Country." Lovely claims the territory of Wallace's flat in London. It has a flag and motto. The Principality of Sealand claims an offshore platform off the English coast. It has a royal family and sells titles to interested individuals. The Sealand dollar is tied to the US dollar.

It's a moot point if Kailaasa will ever evolve beyond being a haven for a fugitive from justice. But the website lists three official languages, English, Sanskrit and Tamil, and says it will have a cryptocurrency. It already has its own passport which offers entry to "all eleven dimensions and fourteen lokas". It also claims a population of "2 billion" practicing Hindus from "56 original Vedic nations". No, the numbers don't add up but what does that matter? At least one must admit that Nithyananda has more imagination than the average rape accused.

industrial output and its consumption, and therefore some services, have slowed down or perhaps even turned negative. All we know for sure is that they have.

Having seen the gravity of the situation the government finally seems to be on the right track. It has settled down to play a plodding innings after the flurry of policy announcements in September and October. Mercifully it doesn't have the money to indulge itself. Otherwise who knows what it might have done.

But now not only is it tightening its own belt, it is forcing everyone else to follow suit by not paying their bills. As a result everyone is broke.

In that sense it's very nearly a financial emergency of the Article 360 type. Very nearly, because the only ones not suffering income decline are current and former employees of the government. Ironically, 360 mandates that payments to them be stopped first.

This expenditure forbearance — remember I coined this term — will bear fruit soon. Until then may I request my fellow busybodies for some advice forbearance as well, please?

Fighting for Urdu

EYE CULTURE

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

On Monday, December 2, lovers of Urdu in the national capital were surprised to find that Rekhta Foundation, organisers of Jashn-e-Rekhta — a popular festival celebrating the language every winter, had dropped "Urdu" from its posters. Instead, the three-day festival beginning on December 13 at the Dhyan Chand National Stadium sent out posters that read: "Jashn-e-Rekhta: The Biggest Celebration of Hindustani Language & Culture." This prompted several writers and historians — as well as lovers of Urdu literature — to lodge protests through an online campaign till Rekhta Foundation, which did not issue any statement on the matter, to revise the poster by the evening to: "A Festival of Urdu Celebrating Hindustani Culture".

In March this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said it was necessary to make Urdu popular all over the world. The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development, had also revealed plans to get Bollywood stars, such as Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, and Katrina Kaif to promote the language, accepting that it had fallen behind private organisations such as Rekhta Foundation in this task. The move had, however, received mixed responses with some detractors even ridiculing Kaif's less-than-adequate Hindi. The efforts on the part of the government were perhaps prompted by data revealed by Census 2011.

Among languages spoken by 10 million or more people, Urdu was the only one that registered a decline — falling below 4.2 per cent of the population. According to the 2001 Census, Urdu was the sixth most spoken language in the country, but by 2011 it had slipped to the seventh spot, with Gujarati overtaking it. In Uttar Pradesh, the traditional bastion of Urdu, it had seen a decline, with only 28 per cent Muslims in the state (the language is popularly — and erroneously — associated with the religion) registering it as their mother tongue. At the same time, however, the language continued to maintain its pan-Indian identity, with 21 million speakers in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, and more in West Bengal, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Jharkhand.

Jashn-e-Rekhta has played a significant role in promoting Urdu in recent times. So what prompted the Rekhta Foundation, which describes itself as the largest website of Urdu poetry, to change to "Hindustani"? In the absence of a statement, there was widespread speculation, with journalist and writer Ziya Us Salam telling *The Indian Express* that the change had been prompted right after the Delhi

High Court had asked Delhi police to not indiscriminately use archaic Urdu and Persian words in first information reports (FIRs). *The Times of India* reported that the Bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shaktar said: "Urdu/Persian words are being used mechanically by cops without knowing the meaning." While the court's intention might have been to weed out archaic words and make processes more transparent, attacks on Urdu have grown in recent times.

In 2016, two artists — an Indian and a French — were forced by a group of people claiming to be affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to deface an Urdu couplet they had painted as graffiti as part of a beautification project for the Delhi government. Urdu is one of the official languages in Delhi, along with Hindi, Punjabi and English. Their couplet had read: "*Dilli tera ujarna, aur phir ujjar ke basna. / Woh dil hai toone paya, sani nahi hai jiska* (Oh Delhi, you were ruined and you overcame your ruin to settle. No city has a heart like yours). And, earlier this year, Panjab University provoked widespread protests when its administration decided to make its Urdu department a part of the School of Foreign Languages, after merging departments of Russian, French, German, Chinese, and Tibetan.

The classification of Urdu in popular culture with Muslims and defining it as foreign has been challenged by several scholars over the years. Urdu poet and theorist Shamsur Rahman Faruqi in his essay *The Name and Nature of a Language: Would Urdu by any other Name Smell as Sweet?* claims that the source of this confusion is in the name itself, which in Turkish means army or camp. "Whose army? ...the Muslim armies, of course. They came from abroad with the view of conquering this country and naturally needed some means of communication with the locals." He claims that Urdu originally referred to the city of Shahjahanabad, now called Old Delhi.

Faruqi also argues that the word Urdu to denote the language started only in the late-18th century when there was no Muslim army in the subcontinent. The only army of the British East India Company. "The fact seems to have occurred to none of us that taking away the name Hindi from our language and letting a new name, Urdu, develop in its place was the first major step towards creating a linguistic-communal divide," he writes. The British, of course, did it to prevent any inter-religious unity among their colonial subjects — one wonders whom the denigration of Urdu now helps. The answer is not too difficult to guess.

Every week, Eye Culture features writers with an entertaining critical take on art, music, dance, film and sport

The backseat drivers



LINE AND LENGTH
T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

I love our policy-wonking macroeconomists. They confirm my belief that I am not the only loser in the world.

Take the Great Indian Slowdown of 2019. All of them are accusing the government of not doing enough to reverse it. But none can agree on what is to be done, how, and how much.

Offering policy advice is risk-free, which is perhaps why, as Srivatsa Krishna, an IAS officer, has argued, it leads to a "tyranny of experts".

In 1991 Manmohan Singh was lucky. The IMF told him exactly what to do and how. He had to listen because the IMF was lending us a lot of money.

However, that's not the main thing. Even if everyone agreed on the what and the how much, the question of when, and in what sequence, would remain. But that is a job for managers, not economists.

The post-1945 consensus, as a result of Keynesian theory, is that a major slump in aggregate demand (which is the sum of consumption, investment and export demand minus import demand) can be countered by a steep increase in government demand.

For Keynes this was the only way of countering the growing appeal of communism to the unemployed. That's why I have maintained for long that the Keynesian solution was politics, not economics. Being a very clever man he dressed it all up in the plumery of economics. That gave it the much-needed intellectual respectability.

Print on, McDuff

But what if the government, like this one, doesn't have the money to do it? How can it increase demand?

Keynes said such governments should make up the deficit by printing notes. But he didn't say how much, and for how long.

And if that wasn't problem enough, he didn't answer another key question: What should these newly-printed notes be spent on? Consumption or investment or both?

Today half the macroeconomists say spend it on consumption, half say on investment. But the moment a finance minister seeks to do -- or does -- what they are saying, the same lot starts grumbling about the fiscal deficit, inflation, interest rates, bond prices and the rest. As all former finance ministers will tell you, they are damned regardless.

In the end, though, it's the finance minister who has to take a call. And for that he or she has to first identify the causes of the slowdown, which is not easy. In fact, it's impossible because everything is so highly connected.

Thus, why did people start suddenly consuming less? For

a mix of reasons, which means no one knows what to target, how, and how much. Simply throwing money at the problem, like carpet bombing, won't do.

Or, why did businesses start investing less? Again it's a mix of reasons — to which Mr Rahul Bajaj has now added fear — and the same problem arises: What to fix first and how.

Or again, why did exports stop growing? Slack global demand is one major reason but how do you fix that? Depreciate the rupee? How far and how quickly? Again there's no clear answer. You can only do it gradually — which is being done — but for the howling crowd that's bad policy.

Finally, there are all those non-economic structural and institutional reasons about which no one can do anything. They form the soft liberal infrastructure of the Indian reality.

Sit tight

This is the place India finds itself today. There's no clarity as to why the rate of growth of

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RBI policy signals huge govt deficit

RBI should have seen through inflation and cut rates, that it didn't suggests it is quite worried about FY21 govt borrowings

GIVEN HOW RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has dropped its GDP growth forecast for FY20 to just 5%, one would have expected it to trim the repo rate, even if only by 10 basis points. Since June, the central bank has slashed the growth forecast by a chunky 200 basis points, indicating how removed from reality it was even a few months back. Indeed, the arguments put forward by the Governor justifying the pause—the repo rate remains unchanged at 5.15%—are unconvincing.

While there may be some concerns on inflation prompting the MPC to raise the headline inflation forecast—5.1%-4.7% in H2FY20 and 4.0-3.8% in H1FY21—given how fast growth is decelerating, the concerns appear to be overdue. If the risks are broadly balanced as the Governor said, these numbers are nowhere close to even 5.2% and there is room till 6%, so where is the anxiety coming from? Demand side pressures are likely to remain dormant—core inflation is tracking close to 2% down from much higher levels in June—and while prices of food may be going up, there is little chance this will disrupt the inflation trajectory given the large output gap; RBI needed to see through the inflation, but chose not to. In contrast, growth is threatening to slip to sub-4.5% levels, and there are few signs of recovery. It is perplexing that the MPC should have taken such a conservative view on inflation—targeting rather than choosing to be more flexible.

Governor Shaktikanta Das's observation that we need to wait for the impact of the measures taken by the government—cuts in corporation tax and the last-mile-fund for housing projects—to play out is hard to understand. What exactly are we waiting for? Even if the government does come up with a big stimulus package in the budget, that is some time away, and remedial action can be taken at the time. The only justifiable reason for a pause is that the fiscal deficit for FY20 is likely to see a big slippage, forcing the government to borrow more. That, then, could stoke inflation, though the large output gap reduces the likelihood. Also, it is possible RBI and the MPC believe they have done enough, and that they feel it is now the government's responsibility to remove any hurdles to investment.

By RBI's own admission, transmission has been slow; the combined 135 basis points cut in the repo since February this year has yielded 44 basis points of a cut in the interest rate on new loans at a time when the system has been awash with liquidity for six months.

However, as this paper has argued for two years now, cuts in the repo rate mean very little because banks are focused, as they should be, on their cost of deposits. If transmission has remained weak all these years, leaving Governors wringing their hands in frustration, it is because lenders are unwilling to let their margins contract. After many moons, deposit rates are now at multi-year lows while loan rates are not. Also, deposits are coming in at a reasonably good pace of close to 10% year-on-year, so there is ample liquidity.

But, now, there are two new problems. One, banks have turned extremely cautious about lending to businesses, which is not surprising given the quality of corporate balance sheets continues to deteriorate. So, they are not about to write cheques for enterprises that look shaky.

Second, with the economy having slowed to a crawl, industry has little incentive to invest. The output gap remains negative and is expected to remain so through 2020, and the manufacturing sector is doing badly because demand has slumped, so there is no reason to add to capacity just yet. The top business houses have picked up stressed assets through the M&A route, and the borrowing on this count is complete. Few well-run companies have reason to borrow too much.

RBI is right in saying the government needs to do the heavy lifting. So far, we have seen very little in terms of measures to stimulate the economy. The sharp cut in the corporation tax rate was totally a misguided move that will help only rich companies, many of whom will not invest a penny given the nature of their businesses. And, that will cost the exchequer some ₹1 lakh crore. Given India's poor infrastructure, little ease of doing business, biased rules and regulations, and weak labour laws, not too many players are likely to want to invest in India. Simply wishing for a revival will not get us one—the high-frequency data for October and November are very disappointing, especially since October was a big festive month. Wholesale volumes reported by manufacturers show CV despatches to dealers in November fell some 20%, despatches of two-wheelers were down 16%, and car volumes down 5%. These can't be called green shoots. RBI probably knows that and is worried the government will roll out a big stimulus in February. Thursday's pause, however, sent benchmark bond yields to 6.61%, a two-month high, with the markets apprehensive that government borrowings in FY21 would be much higher than in the current year. Unless yields trend down soon, borrowing costs will rise again. We cannot afford the start of another vicious cycle.

StoppingRAPE

Systemic solutions needed, from wholesale change in attitudes towards women to beefing up technological aids to policing

THE HYDERABAD GANGRAPE—murder has foregrounded, once again, the pervasiveness and brutality of sexual crimes against women. The revival of public debate on the issue of women's safety with renewed vigour has exposed the sheer inability of the state to preserve the most fundamental right to life and dignity for about half its population. Lawmakers vociferously demanded stricter punishments for rapists in Parliament, from surgical and chemical castration to public lynching and more liberal awarding of the death penalty as a deterrent. The parliamentarians' statements betray, at best, their helplessness in dealing with a systemic problem; at worst, it indicates a failure to recognise the systemic nature of the problem of sexual violence. Neither case instills confidence.

Making public spaces safe for women is unachievable without wholesale change in attitudes towards and about women. That will be a multi-generational endeavour. Meanwhile, the state must make spaces safer and more gender-inclusive. For instance, simply reviving the beat constable system, as recommended by the NITI Aayog in 2016, and increasing the number of PCR vans can do much to make public spaces safer for women. Coverage and surveillance of public spaces, including roads, parking spaces, and buses, by CCTV cameras, too, should act as a deterrent. India could also look to emulate the US's strategy of employing drones for public safety. Reducing police response time—the average response time in India still remains abysmally high—would immensely improve both crime prevention and investigation. The judicial system, too, needs an overhaul—the need is not only to speed up the process of addressing cases of sexual violence but also to provide affordable legal aid to survivors. It is shameful that over half a decade after the Centre established the Nirbhaya Fund in the aftermath of the Delhi gangrape, its corpus remains largely unused. Telangana has only used 8% of the ₹12.3 crore that was allocated to it.

AGRI REFORM

FARM BUSINESS SCHOOLS CAN REMEDY INDIAN AGRICULTURE'S MARKET DISCONNECT BY BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH RE-TRAINING, AND RESTRUCTURING EXTENSION DELIVERY

From production to profitability

THE IDEA OF doubling farmers' incomes by 2022, when the country completes 75 years of its independence, was shared by prime minister Narendra Modi at a *kisan* rally in Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) in February 2016. The announcement triggered a multitude of committees, panels, and agendas to be set up at various tiers of the government in pursuance of this objective.

Despite zealous efforts made by government agencies toward fulfilment of this goal, the state of farmers and agriculture has shown little or no improvement. We must look for new pathways that can leverage India's advantages of abundance in land, water, fertile soil, cheap labour, and favourable agro-climatic conditions to the benefit of farmers as well as farming. Farmer business school (FBS) is a new idea picking up steam across developing countries for making agriculture a profitable enterprise.

Conceptualised by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, and inspired by its farmer field schools, FBS is an innovative training strategy for farmers to build entrepreneurial skills and management competencies to transform their usual farming into a profitable business venture.

It operates at the village level, and can be started by any number of individuals or agencies, including public sector extension services, civil society, farmer associations, or cooperatives. Farmers meet at a time of their convenience, usually for an entire season, to synchronise learnings with the various stages of a given production cycle. Extension officers and lead farmers are trained as facilitators to ensure smooth conduct of sessions and coverage of relevant materials. The school employs an "entrepreneurial learning-by-doing" approach, which is referred to as the Participatory Mutual

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Views are personal

Training and Learning Approach. Farmers work in small groups and learn to address business and marketing challenges and opportunities through collaboration and collective action based on discussions, practical exercises, and self-study. Farmers are taken step-by-step through the basics of farm business management based on their own production patterns. They train to take complex farming decisions in an iterative manner, to conduct it as any other business. At a farmer business school, farmers are not passively lectured on technicalities of production, about which they already possess knowledge; instead, they are trained to use simple decision support tools, checklists, and strategic questions that compel them to think like entrepreneurs, and act to maximise their profits from farming. This is what sets farmer business schools apart from other typical farmer training programs. The framework of an FBS is such that each farmer is largely responsible for his/her own learning.

The gap in Indian agriculture at present is its disconnect with the market—the idea of farm business schools has the promise to remedy this malady of Indian agriculture by hitting the nail on the head with its focus on transforming farmers' decision-making capabilities to respond to market signals. For instance, smallholders learn to assess market demands through an interactive approach, reflecting on their own production experiences, making observations, and generating new ideas that they can experiment

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during the season. Increasing globalisation of agricultural systems has exposed smallholders to greater shocks and risks, without commensurate state support, especially in developing countries like India. Smallholders, due to their small marketable surpluses, increasingly run the risk of being swept aside by the wave of competition from mammoth commercial companies in the food business that have large-scale standardised production and disproportionately better market access. How must extension services remould to correspond to emerging needs of farming as a business? To actively support market-oriented farming, appropriate capacity building through re-training and restructuring of extension delivery is essential. Farmers need support on achieving efficiency in production activities, refocussing from production to profitability. The emphasis of FBS is also on sustainability, putting scarce resources to their most efficient use. Crop diversification is one mechanism through which this can be achieved.

Efficient handling of complex farm management opportunities and challenges in production and marketing requires capacity building among farmers and a learning framework where they can learn from their own as well as others' experiences. The most essential

steps in planning the farm business include delineating its visions and goals, strategic planning, choosing and testing the feasibility of enterprises, and developing a business plan based on market evaluations. This is where the FBS comes in: rather than solving business problems for farmers, it helps them develop the knowledge and core managerial competencies to fully understand their problems, its causes, and derive experimental solutions.

Countries like Philippines, Indonesia, Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania, among others in Asia and Africa, have initiated Farmer Business Schools with diversified partner structures, though public extension services dominate. Only a few years after their introduction, FBSs in Africa have witnessed rapid expansion through adaptation for a wide range of crops such as cotton, rice, sesame, horticultural products, cocoa, cashew, and coffee, among others. In most projects, 20-44% of farmers trained are women, making agriculture more gender-inclusive. Reportedly, FBS trainings have been conducive to farm

business growth in almost all projects. From the FBS, farmers have acquired better financial management skills, doing basic cost-production calculations on their own. They can better plan farm operations, follow a more efficient cropping calendar, and, most importantly, realise what they had been missing in making agriculture a profitable business like any other. India, too, should experiment with this novel and pertinent idea to train Indian farmers to graduate from simply producing to profitably managing their market-oriented farm business if the game of agriculture in India is to change forever.

Efficient handling of complex farm management opportunities and challenges in production and marketing requires capacity building among farmers

Carbon risks reflected in stock prices

New research shows that markets are distinguishing among companies based on climate risks in significant ways, and the effects have been notably larger since the 2015 Paris Agreement

CLIMATE SPECIALISTS HAVE warned for years about a "carbon bubble" in which markets ignore or massively undervalue the risks to companies from climate change. Two new studies suggest, however, that financial markets have started seriously pricing carbon risk, especially since the Paris Agreement of 2015.

Whatever its other effects, that agreement may thus go down in history as the beginning of the end for any carbon bubble. With policymakers meeting in Madrid this week for the UN's annual climate conference, the new research should provide some comfort that their actions will be reflected in financial market prices.

One of the new studies, by Christina Atanasova of Simon Fraser University and Eduardo Schwartz of the University of California, Los Angeles, examines North American oil producers. In a sample of almost 700 oil companies, they find that, after controlling for multiple other factors, stock market values are higher for producers with larger reserves. This would be consistent with the carbon bubble perspective.

But, the research also finds that the growth of such reserves is associated with lower valuations, a trend that cuts against the carbon bubble view. And, when the authors dig deeper into the data, they find many clues that markets are pricing carbon risks in more meaningful ways.

For example, when reserves are divided into "developed" (which can be extracted from existing wells) or "undeveloped" (which generally require new wells), the developed reserves raise stock values but undeveloped reserves reduce them. This pattern is what one would expect if markets are awakening to climate risks, the authors note, suggesting the possibility that "future oil reserves that are generated from current capital expenditures will most

PETER R ORSZAG
Bloomberg

likely remain in the ground." The takeaway: "market participants recognise, at least partially, that these investments are potentially negative NPV (net present value) projects that will destroy firm value."

Atanasova and Schwartz also find evidence that the adverse effects on valuation are caused disproportionately by companies with high extraction costs (thus making it less likely they will yield sufficient future returns to justify their costs) and for reserves located in countries with tougher climate policies (which would likely reduce the future returns).

In addition, the negative effect of reserve growth on valuations has been much stronger after the Paris Agreement than it was before. If the agreement helped to awaken markets to climate risks, this difference would make sense.

The other recent analysis, by Patrick Bolton of Columbia Business School and Marcin Kacperczyk of Imperial College London, assesses a wider array of companies, numbering more than 3,000, that extend well beyond the oil industry. The title of their paper is "Do Investors Care about Carbon Risk?" Their answer is "largely consistent with the view that investors are pricing in a carbon risk premium at the firm level."

The authors find that the market puts lower value on, and requires higher returns from, companies with higher levels and growth rates of emissions. They also conclude that the market started to require significantly more compensation for climate risk after the Paris Agreement.

Interestingly, both studies conclude that institutional investors are not dri-

ving the markets' recent climate-related penalties. Despite the heightened attention to the issue among such investors, Atanasova and Schwartz find no material effect from institutional investors on the size of the climate penalty associated with undeveloped reserves. Similarly, Bolton and Kacperczyk find that divestment effects from large investors do not generally explain carbon risk pricing patterns. Such divestment tends to occur only in certain industries (such as oil and gas) and to be associated only with a narrow definition of emissions (so-called Scope 1, or direct, emissions).

The new studies together suggest that markets are distinguishing among companies based on climate risks in significant ways, and that the effects have been notably larger since the 2015 Paris Agreement. The most extreme version of the carbon bubble, in which carbon risks are ignored by markets altogether, is thus no longer an accurate picture of how stocks are priced.

What is not clear from either study, however, is whether the market is penalising future climate exposure sufficiently to reflect the risks. In other words, what if the magnitude of how financial markets price climate risks still underestimates the actual future risks? In that case, some carbon bubble effects would persist.

What is clear is that climate risks will continue to increase over time. It's also clear, based on the latest research, that the market will respond to those risks.

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

Crime and religion

The controversial Godman Nithyananda, who was accused of rape and child abduction, and declared a fugitive under the Indian justice system has now declared that he is the supremo of Kailasa, a Hindu Rashtra set up for aspiring and persecuted Hindus. Not long ago, he grabbed the attention of many with his attempt on YouTube to disprove the theory of relativity, and claims to have developed a software to teach cattle Tamil and Sanskrit. While the location of the greatest Hindu nation, as claimed by Nithyananda, remained unconfirmed, his Kailasa.org web portal claims that the new nation has a flag, a government, and a university. As a country considered as a sacred land or a *Punyabhoomi*, India remains and continues to remain one of most sought after spiritual destination for many. But, in the garb of *sonaryas*, godmen like Nityananda are doing more harm than good to Hinduism, with their alleged criminal activities and by taking their followers for ride. — M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

Citizenship Amendment Bill

The Cabinet's nod for the controversial Bill granting citizenship to undocumented non-Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who came to India on or before December 31, 2014 has raised the hackles of the Opposition, and all those who believe in the secular character of the country. The Opposition has rightly termed the Bill as an attempt at communal polarisation, and the Congress has threatened to move the Supreme Court. Inner-Line Permit (ILP) states and Sixth Schedule areas in the North-East have been exempt from the Bill. The Centre would do well to look at all religions in the same light, and drop the contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill.

— NJ Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

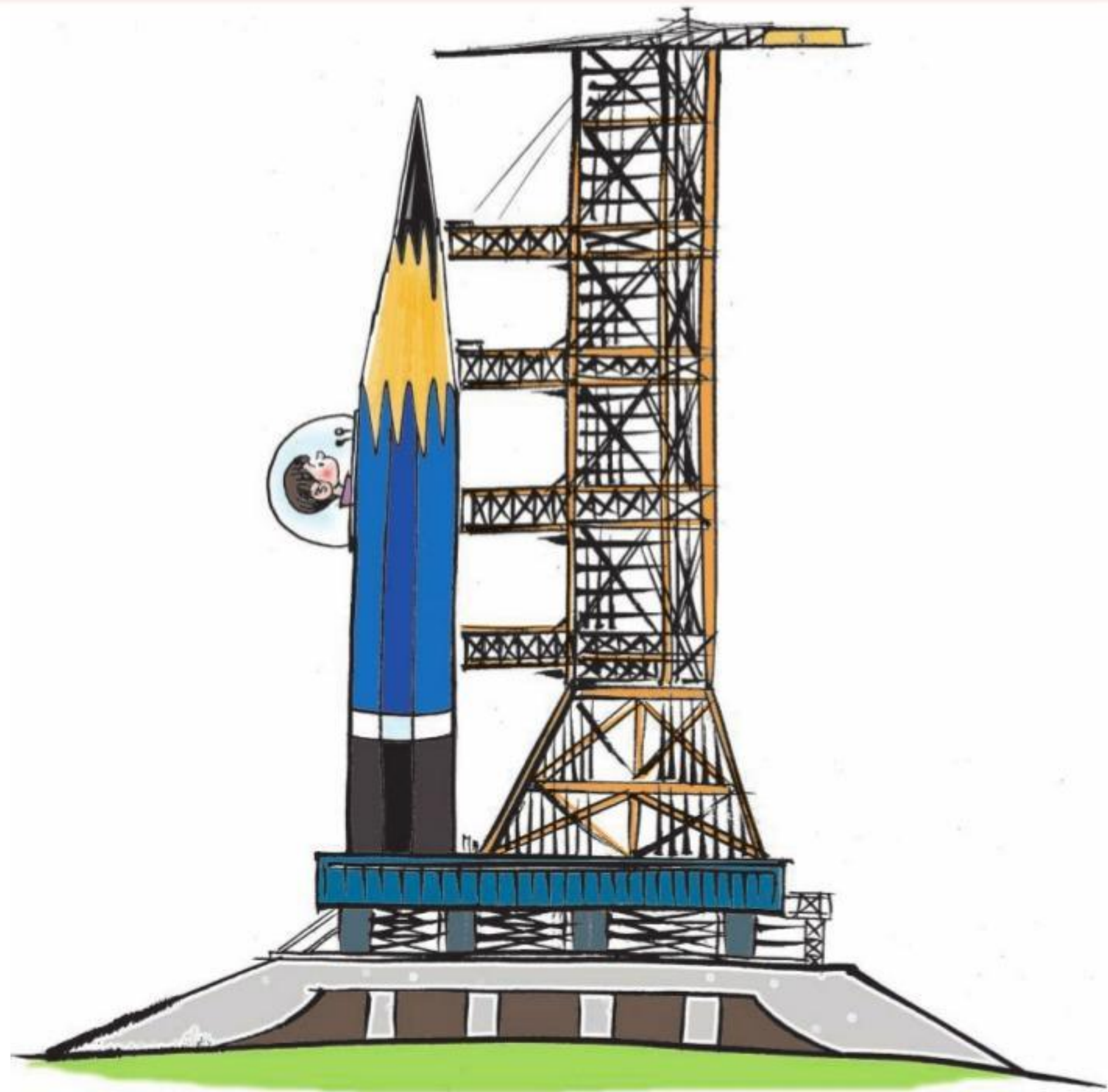


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

ASHISH DHAWAN

The author is founder & chairman, Central Square Foundation



FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

Let's not delay the NEP

We need to focus on foundational learning. Today's primary school-going students will join India's workforce by 2030, and to reap the benefits of our demographic dividend, we need to start with building a strong foundation. We know that if we fail on this, we fail on everything: We fail on poverty reduction, human capital, GDP, and so on

THE DRAFT NATIONAL Education Policy (NEP) 2019—the first update in almost three decades—is potentially a game changer as it aims to bring some long-awaited shifts in the education continuum and offers a clear pathway of reform. The draft NEP has identified issues of 'early childhood education' and 'foundational learning', which are at the core of the learning crisis, and it has the right set of ideas when it comes to giving importance to the liberal arts model for transforming higher education.

There has been an overwhelming response to the draft document, and the committee has done an outstanding job in synthesising diverse viewpoints. The government must now act quickly to finalise the document and pass it through the legislature. The focus must shift to its implementation, as it is going to be a complex task requiring sustained and concerted efforts. There are many steps that the education ecosystem will have to take at both national and state levels before this document can make its desired impact. The big ideas in the document will need unrelenting focus by the government, and various organisations and individuals who are committed to education reform are willing to come forward to support the government on ideas, innovations and funding.

Here, I will focus on one of the big ideas mentioned in the draft policy that needs to become a national priority—i.e. foundational learning. According to the draft NEP, India's learning crisis is rooted in foundational learning, and it rightly states that "our highest priority must be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school and beyond by 2025. The rest of the policy will be largely irrelevant for such a large portion of our students if this most basic learning is not first achieved."

A World Bank report that was released last month shows that 53% of all children in low- and middle-income countries suffer from learning poverty, which means that they are unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10. To galvanise this progress and to meet the Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG 4: Quality Education), the World Bank launched a new learning target to cut the learning poverty rate by at least half before 2030. This ambitious goal can only be achieved if India—which has the maximum number of primary school-going children—can show a massive improvement in foundational learning and cut its current learning poverty level of 54.8% by more than half in the next decade.

Universal attainment of foundational learning is of paramount importance. And since we do not have the resources to focus on so many things at the same time, my one advice to the government would be that they should maintain the sharp focus on foundational literacy and numeracy, and then phase in other priorities, as needed.

To translate this goal into real action, there are some critical ideas that will help operationalise the focus on foundational learning.

First, a strong thrust by the Centre in the form of a national mission backed by technical and funding guidelines will catalyse demand for critical reforms at the state level. In the current financing structure, foundational learning is largely dependent on the Union government's schemes, but the central government can ring-fence funding to states for early grade interventions; in turn, states could be mandated to share a three- to five-year plan on how they plan to achieve universal foundational learning.

Second, clear goal setting and alignment of sharp metrics. In primary schools, a teacher's daily dilemma is to figure out what to teach and to whom. To complete the curriculum, teachers usually choose to focus on the 'top of the class', leaving others to catch up on their own. This can be solved by identifying and communicating well-defined indicators or competencies such as alphabet and word recognition, oral reading fluency and comprehension of short stories. Setting these expectations amongst teachers and parents, and socialising them at district and block level by introducing competition, will ensure action in the classrooms.

Third, the central government will also need to ensure availability of independent, reliable and comparable data to all the actors on a regular basis to create

an environment where there is both an urgency towards achieving the critical goals by 2025 and providing incentives for improvement at all levels. Put together by independent organisations, this will help both the Centre and states identify the gaps that need to be addressed and customise solutions.

All this calls for a sense of urgency. Today's primary school-going students will join India's workforce by 2030, and to reap the benefits of our demographic dividend, we need to start with building a strong foundation. We know that if we fail on this, we fail on everything: We fail on poverty reduction, human capital, GDP, and so on... there is a lot riding on bridging this critical gap in our education system. The NEP, once implemented, can play a critical role in the transformation of our education system and ensure that today's primary school students become productive and empowered citizens of India who will drive the country towards its \$10-trillion ambition. To put the policy into action, I am confident that the state departments, educators, NGOs, parents and students will bring the sum of their considerable talent, commitment and resourcefulness to bear so that we see meaningful, measurable progress.

The government should maintain the sharp focus on foundational literacy and numeracy, and then phase in other priorities, as needed

Curing medical devices sector

MALAY MITRA

The author is regulatory advisor, Medical Device, Drugs, Cosmetics, and former deputy drugs controller, CDSCO

Will a separate Medical Devices Authority reinvigorate the medical devices sector in India?

A ROBUST REGULATORY mechanism has been a fairly long wait for India's semi-regulated medical devices industry. At a time when healthcare experts are expecting a separate regulatory framework for medical devices, the government is in the process of formulating a Medical Devices Authority (MDA) for the vast range of products in the sector. With the dichotomy between CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation) and BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards)—and the NITI Aayog also having its say—divided in opinions, one will have to wait to assess how successful the new body might prove to be. According to sources, BIS will continue to frame guidelines but these would be regulated by MDA. Also, the proposed body will be separate from CDSCO, which will continue to be the regulator for drugs.

Here, we are going against international norms. For instance, in the US, the FDA is the agency under which medical devices are controlled, and FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health regulates firms that manufacture, repackaging, relabel, and/or import medical devices sold in the US. Similarly, the European Medicines Agency has a medical devices agency. Same is in Japan. In such a scenario, a separate agency to regulate medical devices will be unique to India and may pose its own challenges.

One must ask if instead of forming a new body, wouldn't it be better to have the powers and working invested in a self-contained division within CDSCO? This would save costs and, more importantly, be within a regulatory system to share expertise. Also, non-compliance with global standards

and safety guidelines on the domestic front is a major loophole in ensuring the quality of locally-manufactured medical devices; India lacks infrastructure to test the quality of such devices. The new mechanism and multiple layers of a separate MDA might lead to more confusion amongst manufacturers, further hampering the ecosystem growth.

It would be interesting to see if India is able to fill in the gaps in the fields of R&D, manufacturing and testing facilities, with MDA in place. While we have policy mechanisms and regulatory practices to compare India's domestic produce, the true testament of quality can only be attributed to adoption and implementation of international harmonised standards rather than coming up with a new mechanism altogether. Another problem is the human resource crunch at multiple levels—a shortage of inspectors to carry out quality assessments, crippling state of manufacturing units and poor regulatory environment are major challenges.

A Deloitte report had noted that "India has not been able to develop itself as a strong manufacturing base for medical technology. The industry remains dependent on imports for meeting its domestic requirements." This also raises eyebrows towards the ongoing US-India trade talks and speculations around the pricing mechanism, which highlights the need for a scientific and promising alternative that thinks beyond capping prices of select devices (cardiac stents, knee implants).

For the government to realise the need of wider accessibility of healthcare services, one needs to create a holistic environment that supports the establishment of a new regulatory regime. With its primary objective of ensuring safety, quality and efficacy of medical devices, MDA would be able to focus on globally harmonising the standards of domestic as well as imported devices only with universally-accepted and harmonised norms like in the rest of the world. In what looks like a mutual (the government and the industry) inclination as per ongoing negotiations between the two countries (US-India trade deal) towards trade margin rationalisation (TMR), it could be the next scientific step to solving the crisis around price capping in the medical devices industry. If calculated the right way, TMR could be the hope the healthcare industry in India needs. However, it would be incorrect to jump to any conclusion regarding the success or failure of the new MDA before it is even formulated.

One must ask if instead of forming a new body, wouldn't it be better to have the powers invested in a self-contained division within the CDSCO?

THINK TANK ICRIER recently released the report 'Economic Implications of Cross-Border Data Flows', which is pertinent to ongoing discourse on data localisation, especially as initiated by the draft Personal Data Protection Bill (PDP).

The PDP by the expert committee under Justice Srikrishna (Srikrishna Committee) suggested staggered localisation of personal data from the perspective of protecting privacy. The white paper by the Srikrishna Committee that accompanied the draft PDP noted that "the representations made to us have not persuaded us of the possible economic implications of local storage and processing of personal data in India. It is our considered view that the size and potential of the Indian market trumps the additional cost that some entities may have to bear on account of a mandate to process personal data locally."

It seems, for the committee, the understanding of 'economic implications' was restricted to operative costs of relocating data servers in India. The understanding was thereby limited to 'some entities', predominantly those engaged in digital services, and the committee perhaps was of the opinion that the economies of scale offered by a market as large as India more than offset the initial 'cost'.

However, the actual economic cost of data localisation goes beyond mere relocation of data servers in India, and the ICRIER report is perhaps the first such detailed study that tries to capture the whole picture.

Data localisation will impact GDP

Data localisation can trigger 'contagion effect' on other sectors, affecting costs and operations for such businesses

AMITAYU SENGUPTA

The author works with the Internet and Mobile Association of India. Views are personal

In the report, the ICRIER team has estimated the impact of cross-border data flows on India's international trade at the macro level. The report finds that 1% increase in international internet bandwidth leads to an increase of \$696.71 million in total volume of goods trade for India. Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, about 12% of the growth of India's total volume of trade can be attributed to increase in international bandwidth. The impact is much higher when bilateral services trade is added into consideration. Therefore, in any form, a freeze on cross-border data flows risks derailing this positive network effect.

The report by itself has certain limitations that need to be taken into cognisance. For instance, it takes international bandwidth as a proxy for volume of cross-border data flows. Consequently, this study cannot distinguish what proportion of actual cross-border data flows are to be affected by the provisions of localisation of personal data (given the PDP keeps anonymised data outside its ambit), nor distinguished in terms of direction of data flows—inflow or outflow from India. Moreover, there is no analysis of sectoral impact—for instance, which sectors will be



affected and how, which all services sectors are most susceptible, and what impact will it have on other sectors?—or how any data localisation will alter trade balance (how much does it affect imports, or how are exports affected?).

Nonetheless, the report clearly draws the bigger picture of data, data flows, and how intrinsically it is linked to the overall economy. Much of the argument over data localisation is guilty of being myopic as they perceive data as a specific asset/resource particular to digital services. The ICRIER report proves that data flows cannot be seen in silos. As a corollary,

regulations like data localisation are not mere sectoral regulations that will only affect the digital services sector, but will have much broader implications.

A critical component of the study is the opportunity cost of data localisation, based on industry survey conducted for the purpose. The report suggests that opportunity costs of data localisation vary based on various parameters: the industry in consideration, the size and maturity stage of the business, local or multinational service providers, etc. IT, telecom, financial services are most likely to be directly impacted by data localisation. But

the report also touches upon the far-reaching consequences such a policy can have.

For instance, as the report reveals, a major food and lifestyle company of Indian origin that uses cloud services hosted in Singapore is worried about the quality and cost of data services under forced data localisation. Thus, data localisation can trigger a form of 'contagion effect' on other sectors, thereby affecting costs and operations for such businesses, even though they may not directly involve in cross-border data flow businesses.

Any policy mandate of data localisation by the government of India also risks consequences that can impact the Indian economy. For instance, the report highlights that the risk of retaliatory measures (by other jurisdictions) and potential fragmentation of the internet need to be evaluated as these are bound to have repercussions for the Indian economy. Similarly, the economic cost of delayed availability of latest services/technologies and the overall negative impact data localisation can have on innovation is another area of concern. This is critical given the nascent start-up sector in India and how much India is actually banking on this sector for the near future.

The ICRIER report captures the various direct and indirect avenues by which data localisation can affect the Indian economy. Even though the report may not quantify them all, it does provide enough macro insights for a more nuanced and informed choice on the matter, for both policymakers and industry alike.



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

THE STRUGGLE OF MAN AGAINST POWER IS THE
STRUGGLE OF MEMORY AGAINST FORGETTING
— MILAN KUNDERA

The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Strangers in their own land



GAUTAM BHATIA

Proposed citizenship law is immoral, will unleash a
legally-sanctioned regime of discrimination

CRIME AS PUNISHMENT

Killing of Hyderabad rape accused by police, voices of support for
it, point to a brutalisation that must worry all

WHEN A CALL for summary execution goes out from Parliament, a democracy is pushed to the brink of lawlessness. That's where India stands, after the Telangana police shot down four men accused of raping and murdering a woman in Hyderabad. The brazen choreography of events — the four men, unarmed and in police custody, are taken at midnight to the spot where the veterinarian had been violated and shot dead when they allegedly grabbed the policemen's firearms — reflects an idea of medieval mob justice that was heard, over and over again, in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, as legislators called for, among other things, the "lynching" of rapists. It was an abdication of their role and responsibility as lawmakers sworn to the Constitution.

More politicians have come out in praise of the police action. BJP MP and former minister Rajyavardhan Rathore called it the "victory of good over evil". BJP leader Shaina NC termed it "natural justice". BSP chief Mayawati exhorted other state police departments to take inspiration from the Telangana cops. Samajwadi Party MP Jaya Bachchan, who had called for a lynching, said "better late than never". Congress leader and Chhattisgarh chief minister, Bhupesh Baghel, said "I can say that justice has been done (in the case)". Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan tweeted that "demons of Hyderabad have been punished for their sins... the wicked should be treated in this manner". Images of people cheering the Hyderabad police or showering them with rose petals might explain the narrow political logic of such statements. But it only underlines that India's political class is choosing to whip up a toxic primal anger that never lies too far beneath this grossly unequal society. They are choosing to not just cheer, but lead the bloodthirsty mob.

In the name of the people, the call is going out to junk due process and the established norms by which a civilised society decides to affix guilt and punishment, the checks and balances that stand up to the excesses of power. The many lynching incidents in the last few years have already warned how a corrosive search for the "enemy" is leading to brutal violence, whether against "child-lifters" or "cow smugglers". Moreover, in an iniquitous society, public outrage is easily gamed when those in the dock are the "others" — the poor and the working class. The same political class that cheers vigilantism is noticeably muted when the powerful are the accused. In Hyderabad, now, the question to ask is not just "what if the four men were innocent?" But also, "what if they were not?" Their guilt ought to have been established in the court of law and punished. If the impatience with a long-drawn out legal process is being used to justify police lawlessness, the judiciary must urgently step in to stanch this anti-democratic spiral.

TAKING IT PERSONALLY

While Personal Data Protection Bill strikes a balance between
privacy and security, one provision does disservice to its objective

THE PERSONAL DATA Protection Bill is designed to fall between the laissez faire approach of US law and the much stricter regimen of the General Data Protection Regulation in force in the European Union, striking a balance between the imperatives of privacy and security. It includes features which have entered the legal lexicon only recently, like the right to be forgotten, and is a much-needed stepping stone towards a mature digital economy and society. But there is concern because a provision appears to compromise the security of personal data, instead of securing it.

This is the proposal of voluntary verification, which is designed to make social media companies more responsible, and make fake news easier to deal with, by marking apart unverified accounts for closer scrutiny. However, the efficacy of this strategy is questionable. Twitter already has such a verification service, with vetted accounts visibly ticked blue. But it seems to have had limited impact on fake news, since verified accounts also spread it, and the trolls just carry on regardless. For marginal gain, therefore, users would be handing over their personal details to social media companies, the biggest of which, Facebook, has not been a trustworthy fiduciary of public data internationally. It may also be recalled that one of the legitimate objections to Aadhaar was the handling of personal data by private contractors, who collected it outside the government silo. Besides, out of ignorance or callousness, the maintainers of government websites repeatedly exposed Aadhaar data to the internet. Now, if verification is made a feature of social media in India, the possibility of companies leaking data must again cause concern. Besides, there is no guarantee that companies would not use the data internally to profile users more accurately than they do already. Just adding an address and a phone number to the dataset of an individual's movements on a city map would bring in a new depth of meaning. In which case the bill, intended to secure privacy, would achieve precisely the opposite.

The need felt by the government, and by citizens who had suffered harm from misinformation or malicious communications on social media, was that traffic across platforms must not be so anonymous as to be untraceable. It is only specific posts which cross the line and cause public harm that need to be traced home. All bona fide users should not have to disclose their personal details to make that possible.

CITIZEN KUNDERA

Milan Kundera did not need his Czech citizenship restored. It
was an act of contrition for an era of exclusion

THE JUSTIFICATION FOR Milan Kundera's first expulsion from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was at least partially accurate, even honest. Kundera did indeed possess "individualistic tendencies", though whether he was "hostile" to the Party in 1950 remains an open question. At any rate, the Party and State were certainly hostile to him, and in 1979 stripped Kundera of citizenship after the publication of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Last week, the Czech Republic restored his citizenship.

Kundera, now 90 and among the most celebrated novelists of the 20th century, has little to gain from his restored citizenship. In fact, the memory of Prague, and the fact of Paris, where he has lived since his exile, have defined his work. The restoration of citizenship, then, is an act of contrition. It is an apology for a time when the state saw the citizen not as a bearer of rights, as an individual who, through criticism, can enrich the whole but instead, a thing to fit an ideological end. Kundera's exile — he did not denounce socialism — stemmed from the insecurity of a state that thinks it is strong, but lacks the magnanimity to tolerate even the slightest dissent and difference.

Kundera's early work was critical of totalitarianism, but his later novels are more philosophical than ideological. He wrote of love, memory, forgetting and a nostalgia that freezes places and times — human themes, in a place where people are not human. The state, then and now, too often wants the citizen to be dutiful, to be a good fill-in-the-blank, to exclude those who do not fit perfectly into its scheme. For many governments at the helm today, there is a lesson in the restoration of Kundera's citizenship. Forty years later, narrow-minded registers of inclusion and exclusion could well require acts of contrition.

ON DECEMBER 4, the Union cabinet cleared the Citizenship Amendment Bill (2019), paving the way for its introduction in Parliament. Ostensibly, the CAB is a legislation designed to protect persecuted minorities. It stipulates that "Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians" from "Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan" shall not be treated as illegal immigrants. Individuals belonging to these categories are also granted a fast track to citizenship by naturalisation (after a period of six years).

The CAB's stated objective — to give shelter and protection to persecuted minorities — is laudable. The text of the Bill, however, not only undermines that objective, but also rends the plural fabric of the Indian Constitution. In its careful listing of protected communities, it explicitly — and intentionally — leaves out Muslims. The message it sends, thus, is one of discrimination, exclusion and second-class citizenship based on religion.

What justifications may be advanced for the CAB in its present form? The first is that Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are Muslim-majority countries where Muslims, by definition, cannot be persecuted. This is false. The Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan has been subjected to sustained discrimination and violence. Religious communities — and nations — are not monoliths, and frequently persecute those who are ostensibly their own. And so, if the CAB is motivated by considerations of protecting the vulnerable, then what matters is not the religion of those who are persecuted but their humanity.

Furthermore, there is no explanation for why the CAB has picked out Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan — and only those countries. If the criterion is undivided, pre-Partition India (as the CAB's Statement of Objects and Reasons mentions), then Afghanistan ought not to have been a part of the list. If, on the other hand, the criterion is neighbouring nations, then there are a host of countries surrounding India that have visited terrible violence upon minorities. The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar have been subjected to ethnic cleansing and genocide. Sri Lankan Tamils have suffered systematic discrimination and state-sponsored persecution. It is suggested in the CAB's Statement

It is abundantly clear that the CAB has been designed in a manner that specifically excludes Muslim refugees from the possibility of amnesty and citizenship, for no reason other than their religion. To start with, this is morally indefensible, and a betrayal of the egalitarian and pluralistic values that guided our freedom struggle and the founding of our Republic. It is also unconstitutional. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees to all persons equality before the law, and the equal protection of laws. As the Indian courts have often held, Article 14 prohibits the state from engaging in irrational classification of persons, from arbitrary action, and from treating people unequally for no legitimate reason. The CAB manages to violate each of these three principles.

of Objects and Reasons that Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have an official state religion (Islam). But so does Sri Lanka (Buddhism).

When viewed objectively, therefore, it is abundantly clear that the CAB has been designed in a manner that specifically excludes Muslim refugees from the possibility of amnesty and citizenship, for no reason other than their religion. To start with, this is morally indefensible, and a betrayal of the egalitarian and pluralistic values that guided our freedom struggle and the founding of our Republic. It is also unconstitutional. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees to all persons equality before the law, and the equal protection of laws. As the Indian courts have often held, Article 14 prohibits the state from engaging in irrational classification of persons, from arbitrary action, and from treating people unequally for no legitimate reason. The CAB manages to violate each of these three principles. Its exclusion of Muslims from the list of protected communities in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh — in the teeth of the documented persecution of the Ahmadiyyas — is an irrational classification if the goal is to protect persecuted minorities. The restriction of the CAB to just these three countries is entirely arbitrary, as there is no underlying principle that connects them. And the design of the CAB — that first selects Muslim-majority countries and then offers amnesty only to religious minorities within those countries — creates religion-based distinction between those entitled to protection, and those excluded from it. This is an affront to the secular foundations of the Indian Republic, and therefore, an illegitimate legislative purpose.

There are two further factors that exacerbate the immorality of the situation. In response to widespread protests from the North-eastern states the last time the Bill was introduced, the CAB's new iteration now exempts the amendment from applying to the "tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution." This is an entirely unprincipled manoeuvre. The purpose of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution was — and is — to protect the distinct culture and way of life of India's indigenous populations. It has nothing

to do with separate citizenship regimes. In order to secure smooth passage, therefore, the Union cabinet appears to have tacked on a purely political exemption to an already unconstitutional legal regime. This is the very definition of arbitrary state action.

Secondly, the CAB cannot be viewed in isolation from the proposed National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC). The home minister has repeatedly vowed that the NRIC will be implemented shortly, in order to identify and remove "infiltrators" from the country. This follows upon the heels of the hugely expensive and disastrously-managed NRC process in Assam, that ended with the exclusion of 19 lakh individuals who now face the prospect of statelessness. The NRC process saw widespread panic, fear, and suffering — especially among the poor and marginalised — as it imposed onerous documentary requirements upon people. The NRIC will replicate this suffering on a national scale, but when it is combined with the CAB, it becomes clear that that suffering will be specifically visited upon India's Muslims, who will be facing the brunt of the NRIC without the prospective shield of the CAB (a shield that will be available to all other communities).

Together, the NRIC and the CAB constitute a pincer movement against India's Muslims. Their combined effect is to deny to Muslims equal moral membership in the polity. In the history of the 20th century, such legally-sanctioned regimes of discrimination have been seen before: In fascist states, the epitomes of morally and ethically bankrupt regimes.

The CAB, therefore, must be strongly opposed. It must be opposed by all those who continue to believe in a plural, egalitarian, and democratic India, where religion is not a brand that can condemn individuals to perpetual second-class citizenship. And it must be opposed in the courts, as a flagrant violation of equality and the rule of law. It is only principled opposition that can reclaim from naked power politics the fundamental values that animated India's freedom struggle, and that lie at the heart of the Indian project of secular and democratic republicanism.

Bhatia is a lawyer and author of *Offend, Shock or Disturb: Free Speech Under the Indian Constitution*



BADRI NARAYAN

B R AMBEDKAR once said, "I was born a Hindu... but I will not die as a Hindu". Hence, before his death, he chose Buddhism. Inspired by him, a section of Dalits also converted to Buddhism. So soon after his Mahaparinirvan Divas, December 6, we need to ask: What is the relationship between the ideals and lived reality of Dalit life in the context of growing Hindutva?

There is a trend among members of a section of newly-educated Dalits in north India of adopting Buddhism. But during field work in the villages of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, we observed that their conversion, in terms of religious memories from Hinduism to Buddhism, is not yet complete: Some, for instance, are unable to stop themselves from celebrating Hindu festivals and worshipping Hindu deities, alongside worshipping Buddha and Ambedkar.

In UP, one may find Ambedkar statues in and around the Dalit *bastis* of many villages. Ambedkar is a symbolic inspiration for Dalits and the marginalised. This kind of symbolism provides them social confidence. In some of these *bastis*, the youth offer their prayers to Ambedkar statues after achieving any success in life or on special occasions. They find a kind of divinity in the symbol of Ambedkar. The Hindu Dalits, Dalit followers of Kabir and Ravidas, worship Ambedkar alongside their *panthic* deities and gurus: As we know, most

AMBEDKAR WITHOUT CASTE

Babasaheb's legacy is being re-engineered to suit the Hindutva agenda

Dalits in North India are followers of Hinduism, the Kabir panth and Ravidas panth. Despite criticism of the caste system, these sects comfortably interact and work within various Hindu religious public spheres.

Ambedkar remained strongly critical of the Hindu caste system. However, the Hindutva movement is trying to reconfigure Ambedkar as a symbol that is respectable for everyone by downplaying his criticism of the caste system. They want to extricate the criticism of the Hindu caste system from the version of Ambedkar they are trying to propagate. If all Hindus across castes start respecting Ambedkar, then his criticism of Hinduism maybe sidelined from the memory of Dalits and subaltern communities.

Ambedkar is also projected as the brand ambassador of the *samrasta* campaign run by the Hindutva parivar. One may find Ambedkar calendars and portraits at many RSS offices and public programmes. The BJP has taken various steps to showcase its concern, and respect, for Ambedkar's memories and memorials: More than what the Congress did when it held office.

Although Kabir *panthis* and Ravidasis presented an alternative religious space and identity, they have a close relationship with Hindu religious memories due to their roots in the Bhakti movement. The aspiration to assert themselves as Hindu is growing among

a section of subaltern communities. In villages near Allahabad, Sonbhadra and Mirzapur, smaller Dalit castes like Nats and Mangata — who had liminal religious identity till a few years ago — are now worshipping Hindu deities. These communities aspire for social dignity by appropriating mainstream religious identities. Hindutva forces understand these growing aspirations, and try to project themselves as a social-cultural group working for the welfare of all Hindus. They also assert themselves as political-cultural groups following the ideals of Ambedkar. It is not easy for the Hindutva parivar to appropriate the symbol of Ambedkar, but they are consistently producing narratives — visual, cultural and political — to create a selective remembrance, and forgetting of, the original image of Ambedkar.

The social memories created by the Hindu religion, and the Hindutva version of Ambedkar's symbol, are creating a situation where the Hindutva parivar is easily accessible to a section of the larger Dalit community. It is interesting to observe that an emphasis on Hindu religion and values — once a major criticism of the RSS by Dalits and subalterns — is now providing fertile ground to the Hindutva parivar.

The writer is professor, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad

DECEMBER 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NAGPUR VIOLENCE

AN 18-YEAR-OLD BOY was killed and eight others injured in police firing in Sitaburdi and Gaddigodam areas of Nagpur when a mob agitating for the renaming of Marathwada University after B R Ambedkar turned violent. More than 500 persons were arrested for violating prohibitory orders. The deputy inspector-general of police, Rangaraju, said the police had to fire 12 rounds and burst more than 200 teargas shells, and resorted to repeated cane-charge as the agitators went on a rampage.

MULLING QUOTA

IN A DESPERATE pre-election move, Charan

Singh is again toying with the idea of reservation of jobs for backward classes in government services. According to informed sources, though the "idea" was not put on the agenda for the cabinet meeting, the prime minister is expected to bring it up before his colleagues. Singh had earlier thought of bringing an ordinance or issuing an executive order to give this concession to the backward classes. Singh had dropped the idea because of reported disapproval by the President, on the ground that it would be contrary to his advice that the caretaker government should not take policy decisions or give concessions to any section of society for electoral gains.

ENGINEERS' STRIKE

THOUGH THE UP power engineers called off their strike last night, they did not turn up for duty. Enquiries showed that they were awaiting the release of their arrested comrades. While, according to official sources, the number of the engineers arrested is about 300, the association claims that 1,350 engineers are in jail.

FERNANDES EXIT

GEORGE FERNANDES DENIED reports that he was likely to join the Janata Party. He described a Calcutta report attributed to Jagjivan Ram as "just so much unadulterated nonsense".



15 THE IDEAS PAGE

Fall of Indo-Pak Berlin Wall

Kartarpur Corridor shows the way for reconciliation between two parts of a common civilisational community



SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI

KARTARPUR SAHIB: EVEN when the dark night seems endless, hope for a hint of light never dies. That's how it is with India-Pakistan relations. Just when everything looked bleak, the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor opened. Showing welcome grace, Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan for making it happen. In a more significant comment, he likened the inauguration of the corridor to the "Fall of the Berlin Wall", since that day, November 9, marked the 30th anniversary of the event that accelerated the end of the Cold War. "Two different streams had come together and taken the pledge to make a new beginning. Today, the Kartarpur Corridor has started with the coordinated efforts of India and Pakistan."

If Modi genuinely wants the "Berlin Wall" of hostility between India and Pakistan to fall, he must now walk the talk. But, how? The answer lies in the words he himself spoke — "coordinated efforts" of the two countries to "make a new beginning".

Desirable outcomes call for determined actions. Boldness alone breaks deadlocks. Mao and Nixon demolished the "Bamboo Wall" and normalised relations between China and the USA. Gorbachev showed immense audacity and foresight to bring the Cold War to a bloodless end by initiating "coordinated efforts" with Ronald Reagan and mature European leaders of the time. The leaders of India and Pakistan must now show the same courage, commitment and innovativeness.

A significant testimony of that innovativeness is the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor itself. Earlier this month, I went on a pilgrimage to the gurdwara that marks the place of his departure from his mortal existence in 1539. I travelled not through the corridor, but from Lahore. The sight of the unending caravan of cars and buses bringing yatris to the gurdwara was unbelievable. Almost all of them were Pakistanis, unlike those who come through the corridor, who are mostly Indians. Ramesh Singh Arora, a former member of the Pakistan national assembly, told me, "There were nearly 20,000 yatris today, of which only around 1,800 came from India through the corridor. Muslims far outnumbered Pakistani Sikhs, because they are proud that Nanak Baba, who was born and passed away here, is part of Pakistan's heritage."

"This looks like a silent social-spiritual revolution," I said to Arora, who is a member of the gurdwara's management committee. His response, "This is just the beginning. The Indian media is painting a wrong image of Pakistan, as a place where Muslims hate non-Muslims. People in India should know that not a single political party in Pakistan opposed when our government built the world's largest and finest gurdwara complex here. There was no opposition in our media either."

The word "yatri" has a profound meaning in the context of the opening of Kartarpur Sahib. The idea of opening a road to bring mainly Sikh pilgrims from India to Kartarpur, located just 3 km from the India-Pakistan border, was first mooted in the talks between prime ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif in 1999, when the former had



C R Sasikumar

come to Lahore on his landmark "bus yatra". I was privileged to have travelled with him on that "peace bus". Even though it took two decades for the idea to fructify, the irrefutable fact is that the "Berlin Wall" between India and Pakistan has been pierced.

In Germany, the Berlin Wall fell because tens of thousands of ordinary citizens, desiring the reunification of the two Germanys, dealt hammer-blows on it. Something similar, though not identical, has happened between India and Pakistan. The Kartarpur Sahib Corridor has opened mainly because of the intense desire of the people, mostly Sikhs. Their prayers acted as silent "hammer-blows", which the leaders could not ignore. Unlike in Germany, they do not want re-unification of our two countries, but reconciliation between two parts of a common civilisational community.

Once this fundamental truth is realised, Modi and leaders of Pakistan's military-civilian establishment can think of opening many more corridors of peace and reconciliation, including some linking the two sides of Kashmir, without either side feeling insecure or threatened. But this requires bold and out-of-the-box thinking in both New Delhi and Islamabad. Here is a suggestion. Modi should invite Imran Khan and Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, for talks to New Delhi. Alternatively, he should go to Islamabad and meet them.

Why should Modi meet both Imran Khan and General Bajwa? For three reasons. One, both are responsible for opening the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor and have demonstrated their commitment to a breakthrough in India-Pakistan ties. Two, there is an entrenched view in India that Pakistan's military does not want good relations with our country. This is only partly true. If India treats its smaller neighbour on the basis of sovereign equality leading to an "honourable peace" — rather than "triumph" for India and "loss" for Pakistan — the military establishment in Rawalpindi can deliver better results than the wobbly civilian

In Germany, the Berlin Wall fell because tens of thousands of ordinary citizens, desiring reunification of the two Germanys, dealt hammer-blows on it. Something similar, though not identical, has happened between India and Pakistan. The Kartarpur Sahib Corridor has opened mainly because of the intense desire of the people, mostly Sikhs. Their prayers acted as silent 'hammer-blows', which the leaders could not ignore. Unlike in Germany, they do not want re-unification of our two countries, but reconciliation between two parts of a common civilisational community.

leadership in Islamabad.

Three, in General Bajwa, we have a Pakistani military chief who genuinely wants peace with India. I am saying this on the basis of my discussions with numerous Pakistanis who are well-informed about the power equations in their country. The messy controversy over his extension in office will soon end. We can count on him to back a valiant peace process with India.

There is a precedent for Pakistan's PM and army chief (along with the ISI chief Lt General Faiz Hameed) visiting a foreign capital together and holding talks with the leadership of that country. In October, they went to Beijing, just two days before Chinese President Xi Jinping came to India for the second informal summit with Modi at Mahabalipuram. General Bajwa had also met Xi Jinping in Beijing in September 2018.

Critics and cynics will ask: "China has a special clout with Pakistan, which India lacks. Will Pakistan's army chief talk to an Indian PM? Never." The belief that China matters more to Pakistan than India is flawed. Although China is important for Islamabad, all farsighted Pakistanis, including those in the military and civilian establishments, know that their country's long-term security, stability and progress is impossible without normalisation of relations with India. Furthermore, the untapped social, cultural, spiritual and historical ties between India and Pakistan are far deeper and stronger than anything that exists between Pakistan and China. For proof, come to Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara.

Does Modi have it in him to break the Indo-Pak "Berlin Wall", in coordination with General Bajwa and Imran Khan? Or will they allow inevitable provocations to interrupt the peace process, as has so often, and so sadly, happened in the past?

The writer is founder of the Forum for a New South Asia - Powered by India-Pakistan-China Cooperation

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"(Hong Kong) Citizens voted overwhelmingly for pro-democracy candidates. It was a clear signal to Beijing that the protests are not a foreign plot." — THE NEW YORK TIMES

Criminals in uniform

Encounters should not be encouraged by the political leadership. Until judicial process is put back on the rails, these short-cuts will continue



JULIO RIBEIRO

WHEN I WAS a young student of law, those accused of heinous crimes like murder or rape were tried swiftly and punished or set free, as the evidence on record dictated, within a year. The average time taken was eight or nine months, during which time the accused were in the custody of jailors.

The hearings were held daily, and no adjournments were asked for or given. The public prosecutor and the lawyer of the accused were invariably present in court to rise in their seats when the presiding judge entered at the appointed hour of the morning. The witnesses were kept ready outside the court and would be ushered inside the courtroom when his or her name was called by the judge's clerk.

There was great precision and solemnity to this whole process. Sadly, this has disappeared now with advocates for the prosecution or the defence seeking adjournments, often on flimsy grounds. Sadder still, they are able to obtain it without any difficulty. The entire atmosphere has been transformed into one witnessed routinely in the courts of the lower judiciary.

Delays in the disposal of trials of those accused who are charged with murder and rape, or other heinous crimes, has warped the judicial system. If those who dare to commit such crimes feel that there is laxity within the system, where the chances available to suborn witnesses are enhanced, then the threat of law catching up with offenders retreats. An atmosphere of lawlessness creeps in.

It is exactly this atmosphere of lawlessness that presently prevails. The middle-class, who form the bulk of the opinion makers in any country, put pressure — subtle or overt — on the governments of the day to preserve their sense of security in any way possible. Since the judicial system does not operate as smoothly as it used to in the past, popularly elected governments, in turn, put pressure on the police forces to use other methods to solve the problem.

I remember Gopinath Munde, deputy chief minister and home minister in the first Shiv Sena-BJP coalition government in Maharashtra, standing up to critics in the legislative assembly and countering them by proclaiming openly that he had ordered his police chief to dispose off criminals by shooting them at sight. He was not con-

cerned by the legality of what he said he had ordered the police to do, and, surprisingly, the Opposition also seemed to have concurred.

Third-degree methods adopted by the police and the fake encounters which have become a part of the police and public lexicon, are short-cuts that have become accepted, and almost formalised, because of public support. A beleaguered society that knows not what ails the system, openly supports short-cuts adopted by the police to circumvent the failures of the judicial process. The public is unaware of the fall-out of this new practice of fake encounters: A whole new breed of criminals is born. They are known as "encounter specialists".

These "specialists" are hero-worshipped by this puzzled society. Even films and biopics are made on their patently illegal deeds. In the process, they turn into criminals in uniform, willing to take on private requests for a price. That they are in uniform gives them an immunity that is doubly dangerous. Many of them have become filthy rich. If they contest elections after retirement, they declare assets that are clearly beyond the capacity of police inspectors to accumulate.

The Telangana police unit which shot dead the four suspects in the veterinary lady doctor's rape-cum-murder offence were likely carrying out a mandate entrusted to it by their own leaders who, in turn, will have received instructions from political superiors. The public baying for blood is a symptom of a puzzled and ill-informed society.

Until the system of judicial process is put back on the rails, these short-cuts will continue. How does the government — with the judiciary, the Bar and the police, all components of the judicial process — correct all these flaws in the system? For starters, the courts must hold daily hearings in such cases without any interruption. No adjournments should ever be given. If lawyers are busy with other cases, they must take steps to send their juniors to attend those other cases instead.

All stakeholders in the judicial process must sit across the table and take a decision to speed up the trials of rape and murder cases, at least. No encounters should be encouraged by the political leadership. In fact, there will not be any such demand from the public if the offenders are charged and punished swiftly. After all, the public, specifically the middle classes, who have a vested interest in law and order, want the legal system to work. They will not ask for illegal methods to be adopted if they enjoy a feeling of security.

The writer, a retired IPS officer, was Mumbai police commissioner, DGP Gujarat and DGP Punjab

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IT'S A RECESSION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'No cut in time' (IE, December 6). While the government describes the economic situation as a slowdown, all indicators suggest it is, in fact, a recession — manifested through unemployment, depression, frustration and mass suicides. Don't show the GDP growth rate. It could be artificially pushed up by government borrowing and spending, allowing lenders to buy up shares and assets. The need is to increase "production" and "productivity"!

Varin Dhir, Ahmedabad

OUTRAGE, NOT SHAME

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Only shame' (IE, December 6). The writer points out that a minimum qualification for a constable is Class 10 and to expect him to respond with sensitivity and professionalism is wishful thinking. That is terrible thinking. Constables should be trained and that is the responsibility of the police department. You do need to feel shame if you have not done anything about it.

Jagruiti Desai, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Only shame' (IE, December 6). In the long run, we need to address the structural bias against women in our various political, administrative and social institutions. Liberal education at the elementary level can act as a catalyst for this.

Anaiza Goel, Panchkula

RESTORE CALM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'An Ayodhya story, from 1857' (IE, December 4). In 1992, a BJP held office in the state and in 2019, it is the same party that holds office at the Centre. Politics is always a game for more power, but it shouldn't mean shedding the blood of inno-

LETTER OF THE WEEK

DATA VOID

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Between lines of a survey' (IE, December 4). It is premised on the fact that there is a "deliberate respondent bias" in government surveys and data collectors and enumerators are "poorly trained". This is either an erroneous argument or suggest that the programmes are targeted at the wrong beneficiary. The authors say that correcting this state-of-affairs will take time. It is disconcerting to the ordinary citizen that the country will be living in a data void for an unspecified period of time.

Varin Dhir, Ahmedabad

cents. We need aware citizens, a strong Opposition, unbiased judiciary and rational authorities to ensure that law and order is respected.

Zainab Gausiya, Chandigarh

BIASED BILL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Two-nation citizen' (IE, December 6). The proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill will make the process of acquiring citizenship by way of naturalisation more lenient for listed communities from selected countries. People like Taslima Nasrin and Asia Bibi will be left to the mercy of Western countries. India needs a refugee policy consistent with its long tradition of accepting and assimilating asylum seekers.

Sanjay Vijayan, Greater Noida



SANDEEP MAHAPATRA

BINOY VISWAM, RAJYA Sabha MP from the Communist Party of India, in the context of the ongoing protest at Jawaharlal Nehru University, has made references to the RSS in unsavoury terms without any basis ('Bastion of humanism', IE, November 29). The propensity to link the RSS with anything and everything happening in educational institutions has become the hallmark of the reasoning of left-leaning politicians and academics.

Post the February 2016 "tukde tukde" episode, the reasons for JNU being in the news has worried an alumnus like me. In the age of social media and 24x7 news media, all kinds of labels have been heaped on the varsity. JNU has been vulnerable to criticism ranging from being called a "den of anti-nationalists" to the university being accused of being a "waste of public money". The negative campaign has gone to the extent of demanding the "shutting down" of JNU by some.

The impression created by the "tukde tukde" has coloured the perception of the protest over the fee hike as well. The counter to such a reaction has various facets, from extolling the virtues of JNU to bringing in the argument of its contribution to our national life, which are justified and need to be articulated at all available platforms. At the same time, we must also analyse the role of those who

The Left's last gasp

At JNU, protest to further Left agenda hurts students from deprived backgrounds

have considered JNU their fief and anointed themselves the sole arbiter of what is good for the varsity.

We cannot sidestep the role of these "JNU fief-tainers", both inside and outside the campus, in causing the current perception deficit about the institution.

Protest and agitation by students in JNU has been a common feature. But a certain unwritten decorum has always been followed, even during a highly-charged atmosphere. Students always refrained from taking teachers, who are invariably manning administrative positions, as hostages to further their cause.

The fee hike protests saw this understanding breached. The right to protest turned ugly and some examples prove this beyond doubt: A woman teacher was unable to leave for 30 hours and videos have surfaced seemingly showing her being pushed and shoved by female students, a hostel warden was woken up in the dead of night and surrounded by hundreds of students professing the ideology of the Left. Such incidents bring a bad name to JNU, and many may even agree, rightly so.

What is even more worrisome is that the teachers body, JNUTA, otherwise a highly vocal union, chose to remain a mute spectator.

So, the issue that needs to be examined is whether these so-called students of the "left persuasion" are being prodded to take this inhuman approach by the "JNU fief-tainers" who cannot think beyond the motivation of their writ running large in the campus. The country's premier university has been shut and academic activities have come to a halt with these "protesters" locking the schools/departments with brute force. This has put a question mark on conducting the end semester examinations, supposed to be just days away.

Whether these protestors are helping the cause of the students, largely from the deprived section of the society for whom a degree from JNU could well be a ticket to come out of such deprivation, is something no "JNU fief-tain" seems to be bothered about. It seems that all the "protesters" and that their handlers are interested in is to further their cause, clearly at cross purposes with the issue of a fee hike being detrimental to the deprived students. And it is this Gordian knot that needs to be unravelled soon.

What comes out clearly from the protests is the time-tested methodology of alluding to a higher cause to divert attention. If it was "struggle against imperialism" from the Seventies till the late Nineties, it is now the illusory "machinations of the RSS" that are set

to "destroy the ethos of the varsity".

Reams of newsprint have been devoted to this newfound justification for the protest without realising that facts prove otherwise. The RSS, through its many social activities, has been instrumental in providing education all over the country and thousands of its volunteers, many of whom are JNU alumni, have devoted their entire lives for this noble cause. Having been at the forefront of student activism in JNU, I can proudly claim that right-wing student activism in JNU was always independent and self-motivated and in the worldview of the RSS, this campus was and still is like any other institution of higher learning.

Let's look at the facts. The UGC and HRD ministry have rolled back the fee hike and the powerful committee set up by the MHRD has asked the authorities to take decisions only after consulting the stakeholders, including students. Why are these students still agitating?

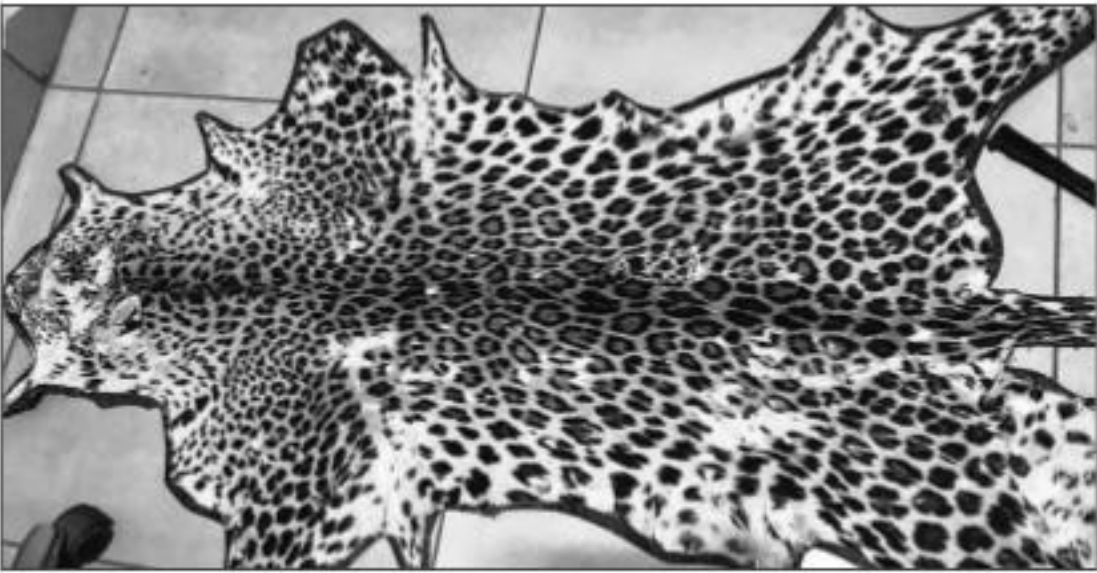
Being an erstwhile student leader myself, I am not against student activism or justified agitations. But one must also move ahead with classes once demands are met.

Mahapatra is an advocate, and former president, JNUSU



TELLING NUMBERS

388 wildlife crime cases last year, over 20% were about leopards



A leopard skin seized in Ballabhgarh (Haryana) in 2018. *Express Archive*

IN 2018, 388 cases of wildlife-related crimes were registered under the Wildlife Protection Act, according to a reply tabled in Parliament by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

In nearly one in every three cases — 123 of the 388 — the species involved was leopards or tigers. Leopards alone accounted for over one in five cases, at 81, while 42 cases involved tigers. In between the two big cat species were scheduled birds, which accounted for 61 cases, or a little over than one in seven.

Just five species accounted for two in every three cases — 259 of 388 — with leopards (21%), scheduled birds (16%) and tigers (11%) being followed by star tortoises or turtles (10%) and deer (9%). Ten species accounted for over 90% of the cases, the other five being elephants (7%), snakes (5%), rhinos (4%), mongooses (4%) and pangolins (a little under 4%). The remaining 10% were cases that involved 10 other species, including Tockay geckos and monkeys.

Overall, the number of cases of wildlife crime has come down since 2016, when 565 were registered, and risen slightly since 2017, when 342 were registered.

The ministry said a Wildlife Crime

WILDLIFECRIME IN 2018

SPECIES	CASES	SHARE
Leopard	81	20.9%
Scheduled birds	61	15.7%
Tiger	42	10.8%
Star tortoise /turtle	39	10.1%
Deer	36	9.3%
Elephant	27	7.0%
Snake	19	4.9%
Rhino	16	4.1%
Mongoose	15	3.9%
Pangolin	14	3.6%
Others	38	9.8%
Total	388	100%

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Control Bureau has been set up to gather intelligence about poaching and unlawful activity in wildlife trade in wild animals and animal articles. Under centrally sponsored schemes such as “Development of Wildlife Habitats, “Project Tiger” and “Project Elephant”, funds are provided to the governments of states and Union Territories, it said.

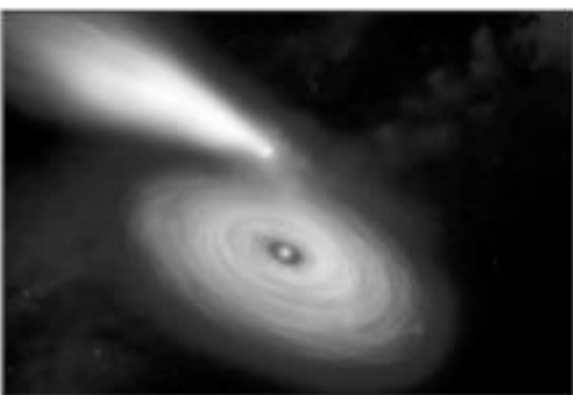
FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

WHY PLANET ORBITING WHITE DWARF STAR IS A BREAKTHROUGH DISCOVERY

SOME 4.5 billion years from today, our Sun will run of fuel and shed its outer layers. In the process, it will destroy Mercury, Venus and probably Earth, and is expected to radiate enough high energy photons to evaporate Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

What will remain of the Sun is called a “white dwarf”. Can any planet orbiting a star survive such an event? New evidence suggests it can. Astronomers from the University of Warwick and the University of Valparaíso have reported the first indirect evidence of a giant planet orbiting a white dwarf star (WDJ0914+1914). It is the first time any such planet has been found. The study, in the journal *Nature*, suggests there could be many more planets around such white dwarf stars waiting to be discovered.

The Neptune-like planet orbits the white dwarf every ten days, and cannot be seen directly. The evidence is in the form of a disc of gas (hydrogen, oxygen and sulphur) formed from its evaporating atmos-



Artist’s impression of the discovery. *University of Warwick/Mark Garlick*

phere. Spikes of gas were detected by the Very Large Telescope of the European Southern Observatory in Chile. The discovery is significant, because while there was growing evidence accumulated in the past two decades that planetary systems can survive into white dwarf stars, only smaller objects such as asteroids had been detected so far. This is the first evidence of an actual planet in such a system.



EXPRESS IN MADRID

AMITABH SINHA
DECEMBER 6

ALMOST HALFWAY through the climate conference in Madrid, one big thing it had to resolve — disagreements over setting up a new carbon market — remains contentious as ever. Carbon markets, which allow for buying and selling of carbon emissions with the objective of reducing global emissions, is an unfinished agenda from last year’s meeting in Katowice, Poland.

The market mechanism

Under the Paris Agreement, every country has to take action to fight climate change. These actions need not necessarily be in the form of reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which can constrain economic growth. India, for example, has said it would reduce its emissions per unit of GDP. Only the developed countries have included absolute emission cuts in their action plans. Yet, there is scope for absolute emissions reductions in developing countries too. For example, a brick kiln in India can upgrade its technology and reduce emissions. But because India does not need to make absolute reductions, there is no incentive to make this investment.

It is to deal with situations like these that the carbon market mechanism is conceived. Markets can potentially deliver emissions reductions over and above what countries are doing on their own. For example, if a developed country is unable to meet its reduction target, it can provide money or technology to the brick kiln in India, and then claim the reduction of emission as its own.



A protest against carbon markets at the Madrid talks venue. *Reuters*

Alternatively, the kiln can make the investment, and then offer on sale the emission reduction, called carbon credits. Another party, struggling to meet its own targets, can buy these credits and show these as their own.

Carbon markets also existed under the Kyoto Protocol, which is being replaced by the Paris Agreement next year. The market mechanisms being proposed under the Paris Agreement are conceptually not very different, but are supposed to have more effective checks and balances, and monitoring and verification processes.

How to set up a market

The provisions relating to setting up a new carbon market are described in Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. These are enabling provisions that allow for two different approaches of carbon trading, more or less on the lines described earlier.

Article 6.2 enables bilateral arrangements for transfer of emissions reductions, while ensuring that they do not double-count the reductions. Article 6.4 talks about a wider

carbon market in which reductions can be bought and sold by anyone.

Article 6.8 provides for making ‘non-market approaches’ available to countries to achieve targets. It is not yet very clear what these approaches would constitute, but they could include any cooperative action, like collaboration on climate policy or common taxation, that are not market-based.

What is contentious

The main tussle is over two or three broad issues — what happens to carbon credits earned in the Kyoto regime but not yet sold, what constitutes double-counting, and transparency mechanisms to be put in place.

Developing countries have several million unsold CERs (certified emission reductions), each referring to one tonne of carbon dioxide-equivalent emission reduced, from the Kyoto regime. Under the Kyoto Protocol, only developed countries had the obligation to reduce emissions. In the initial phase, some of these were interested in buying CERs from projects in India or China, which were

not obliged to make reductions.

In the last few years, several countries walked out of the Kyoto Protocol, and those that remained did not feel compelled to fulfil their targets. The second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (2012-20) never came into force. As the demand for CERs crashed, countries like India were left with projects generating CERs with no one to buy them.

India has about 750 million unsold CERs and, along with other similarly placed countries, wants these credits to be valid in the new mechanism too. Developed countries are opposing it on the ground that the rules and verification procedures under the Kyoto Protocol were not very robust; they want the new mechanism to start with a clean slate.

The second issue is that of double counting, or corresponding adjustment. The new mechanism envisages carbon credits as commodities that can be traded multiple times among countries or private parties. It is important to ensure that in this process, credits are not counted at more than one place; whoever sells carbon credits should not simultaneously count these as emissions it has reduced.

The developing countries argue that the country that reduced emissions should be able to show it even after selling the credits, and that adjustments should be made only for subsequent transfers, if any.

Is it a good idea?

Carbon markets are not essential to the implementation of Paris Agreement. But with the world doing far less than what is required to prevent catastrophic impacts of climate change, the markets can be an important tool to close the action gap.

Developed countries and many civil society organisations say they would rather have no deal on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement than have a bad or compromised deal that would allow transition of Kyoto regime CERs or any kind of double counting. Some developing countries, on the other hand, prefer to have an agreement finalised in Madrid.

THIS WORD MEANS: VIRTUAL AUTOPSY

How to inspect bodies without cutting them up

death. Virtopsy can be employed as an alternative to standard autopsies for broad and systemic examination of the whole body as it is less time consuming, aids better diagnosis, and renders respect to religious sentiments.” (*Journal of Forensic Dental Sciences*; K B Tejaswi and E Aarte Hari Periya)

When is this service likely to start?

In his reply to a starred question from Rewati Raman Singh of the Samajwadi Party, Dr Harsh Vardhan said: “The All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), New Delhi and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) are working together on a technique for postmortem without incising/dissecting the body. This technique is likely to become functional in the next six months.”

But what is the need?

As the Minister acknowledged, the traditional postmortem often makes members of the dead person’s family uncomfortable. That, in fact, is the primary reason for the increasing use of virtual autopsies internationally. Dr Harsh Vardhan said ICMR and AIIMS have studied global practices, and taken up this project for “dignified management of dead body”.

According to a paper in *The Lancet*, the advent of virtual autopsy owes to the “Longstanding public objection to dissection of cadavers (that) re-emerged in the UK as a major issue after organ retention scandals in the late 1990s. Some groups — notably Jewish and Muslim communities — have religious objections to autopsy, and demand for a minimally-invasive alternative has increased.” (‘Post-mortem imaging as an alternative to autopsy in the diagnosis of adult deaths: a validation study’: 2012, Ian S D Roberts *et al*) A virtual autopsy is also faster than a traditional one — 30 minutes against 2½ hours, Dr Harsh Vardhan said — and more cost-effective.

Is this currently practised anywhere?

According to a 2016 article titled ‘The Rise of Virtual Autopsy’ in the *Journal of Forensic Pathology*, virtual autopsy began in Sweden, but is now a “standard technique” in major centres in Japan, the US, Australia, and many European countries.

In the 1990s, a “post post-mortem” MRI service for “selected non-suspicious deaths” was introduced in Manchester, UK. This followed demands from the Jewish community for a non-invasive autopsy. Later, the Muslim

community in the northwest of England too, joined in the demands.

The Royal College of Pathologists UK has issued guidelines for virtual autopsies.

How accurate is a virtual autopsy?

According to the 2012 paper by Ian S D Roberts and others in *The Lancet*, “Radiologists provide a cause of death that is accepted by the Coroner with no autopsy in 90% of cases”. In 2018, in an article in the *Journal of Pathology Informatics*, Russian and Italian scientists compared the results of virtual autopsy and traditional postmortem.

“Out of 23 cases for which the traditional post mortem examination found a cause of death, 15 (65%) were diagnosed correctly using virtual autopsy, these cases were considered as true positives. For one case for which the cause of death was unascertained, the same result was also obtained during the virtual autopsy. This case was considered as true negative. Overall, in 16/25 (64%) cases, virtual autopsy results matched that of the traditional autopsy,” they concluded. (‘Virtual Autopsy as a Screening Test Before Traditional Autopsy: The Verona Experience on 25 Cases’, Vito Cirielli, *et al*)

What ad hoc teachers’ protest tells us about Delhi University recruitment

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 6

AROUND 4,500 *ad hoc* teachers of Delhi University, who comprise around 40% of the university’s teaching force, have been agitating since August over a circular by the university, which they saw as an attempt to hire them as guest teachers instead. After a call for a strike and boycott of examination duties by the university teachers’ association, thousands of teachers stormed the vice-chancellor’s office on Wednesday. On Thursday, the Ministry of Human Resource Development called for a meeting with the vice-chancellor in which it was decided to take certain steps to address teachers’ concerns.

What triggered the unrest?

It began when the university sent out a letter to all constituent colleges and departments on August 28, advising them to “fill up the permanent [teaching] vacancies at the earliest and till permanent appointments are made, Colleges may appoint guest faculty, if required, against new vacancies arising first time in academic session 2019-20”.

This resulted in confusion over what ex-

actly these “new vacancies” were: new posts created in 2019-2020, or vacancies created with the expiry of *ad hoc* teachers’ 120-day contracts last month, which were to be renewed by November 20. As a result, several colleges had not extended renewal of appointment of *ad hoc* teachers or released their salaries, and teachers have seen this as a move to do away with the *ad hoc* system and to move towards the less stable guest teacher system.

How far have the issues been addressed?

In Thursday’s meeting between senior UGC and ministry officials with the vice-chancellor, it was decided that the circular shall be amended to “The colleges/institutes shall fill up the permanent vacancies before the start of the next academic session without fail. During the interim period, if vacancies which have to be filled for maintaining smooth academic functioning of the colleges/institutions, *adhoc/temporary/contract* guest faculty can be appointed.” What this effectively does is put a cap of July 2020 to fill all permanent posts. It also means all *ad hoc* teachers who had served during the current academic year can continue until then.

In the meeting, it was also decided to tweak norms for shortlisting candidates for



Teachers protest outside the VC’s office on Wednesday. *Praveen Khanna*

interviews for assistant professor appointments to favour *ad hoc* teachers, by giving greater weightage to their work experience.

The teachers’ association, meanwhile, has said the strike and current boycott of duties for end-semester exams will continue.

Why are there so many ad hoc teachers in Delhi University?

A decade ago, the number of *ad hoc*

teachers in Delhi University was estimated at just around 500, which has multiplied to the current 4,500, or 40% of the university’s strength. Several factors have led to this.

According to Rudrashish Chakraborty, teacher at Kirori Mal College and former Academic Council member, one reason was that between 2008 and 2013, almost 1500 teachers retired, creating vacancies. Second, in 2006, central universities were given additional teaching posts to adjust for the larger student intake on account of OBC reservation. Delhi University was given around 2,600 posts, of which around 1,300 were released in 2007. While the number of vacancies ballooned, the recruitment process for permanent teachers stalled, and university departments and colleges began to resort to *ad hoc* recruitment. Many teachers have been working in an *ad hoc* capacity for years, some for over eight years.

But why was recruitment of permanent teachers in stalled?

The recruitment system has changed several times, which has led to agitation, litigation and court stays. This happened in 2010 against the introduction of the Academic Performance Indication score system to screen candidates before inter-

views, and in 2013 against the introduction of a 200-point roster. Even when posts have been advertised, interviews have not been conducted. This has been due to a centralised, elaborate process, which has often got stuck because the university simply did not send panels of experts to colleges to interview the shortlisted candidates.

How is ad hoc hiring done?

According to the university’s guidelines, an *ad hoc* appointment may be made “In case there is a sudden, unexpected and short vacancy, arising out of sudden sickness or death, on medical grounds (including maternity leave), abrupt leave or any other situation that may disrupt the normal process of teaching learning...”

Every year in June and November, the university draws up an *ad hoc* panel of applicants, to be forwarded to colleges looking to recruit. The interviews in the colleges are held by a selection committee. An *ad hoc* teacher is paid on the same scale as a starting-level permanent teacher, coming to around Rs 80,000 per month in hand. However, this amount is not subject to annual increment. Those working for many years in an *ad hoc* capacity have only got dearness allowance hikes. They are ap-

pointed for a period of 120 days at a time, with rules and conditions specified for leave and vacation with salary, and possible placement and promotion. While most colleges have decided to renew appointments at the end of the 120-day period, some like Shaheed Rajguru College of Applied Sciences for Women hold interviews once a year, and some even after every 120-day period.

What is different for guest teachers?

The qualifications required are the same for *ad hoc* and guest teaching. However, while *ad hoc* teachers are appointed for 120-day periods and paid a monthly salary on the same scale as an entry-level professor, guest teachers are hired and paid per lecture. According to UGC guidelines, guest teachers are to be paid Rs 1,500 per lecture, and cannot be paid more than Rs 50,000. Moreover, teaching in the university effectively only happens for eight months a year, so guest teachers can only be employed and paid for those months. They are not entitled to leave and vacation with salary. The guidelines also state that “Guest faculty will not be treated like regular teachers for the purpose of voting rights for becoming the members of various statutory bodies of the university”.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 250

निजी डेटा का संरक्षण

कैबिनेट ने निजी डेटा संरक्षण विधेयक को मंजूरी दे दी है। इसे मौजूदा सत्र में ही संसद में पेश किया जाएगा। यह पहला ऐसा कानून है जो व्यक्तिगत या निजी डेटा के संरक्षण के लिए ठोस सिद्धांत सामने रखता है। यह निजता के मूलभूत अधिकार को संहिताबद्ध करने का भी पहला मामला है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने 2017 के एक निर्णय में इस अधिकार की पुष्टि

की थी। यह ऐसे सिद्धांत सामने रखता है जिनके आधार पर डेटा के व्यक्तिगत, संवेदनशील या अहम होने का निर्धारण किया जाएगा। यह उस प्रक्रिया के बारे में भी बताता है जिसके द्वारा ऐसा डेटा सहमति से हासिल, भंडारित या प्रसंस्कृत किया जाएगा। बहरहाल, विधेयक कोई व्यापक निजता कानून नहीं है क्योंकि यह कई बिंदुओं को अधूरा छोड़ देता है। नागरिकों

को पर्याप्त सुरक्षा मुहैया कराने के पहले इसमें व्यापक संशोधन की आवश्यकता हो सकती है। ऐसे में इसे पारित करने के पहले अच्छी तरह जांच-परख की आवश्यकता है। इसका शुरुआती मसौदा गत वर्ष जुलाई में न्यायमूर्ति बी एन श्रीकृष्ण की अध्यक्षता वाली समिति ने पेश किया था। जानकारी के मुताबिक यह देरी तमाम संशोधनों और अंतर मंत्रालयीन मशविरों की वजह से हुई। जो मसौदा संसद में पेश किया जाना है वह सार्वजनिक भी नहीं है।

इतना ही नहीं मशविरा प्रक्रिया भी अस्वाभाविक रूप से अस्पष्ट रही। इलेक्ट्रॉनिक एंड सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय ने तमाम अनुरोधों और संसद में सवाल उठाने के बावजूद किसी भी टिप्पणी को सार्वजनिक करने से मना कर दिया है। इसकी वजह से अन्य लोगों के

साथ-साथ स्वयं न्यायमूर्ति श्रीकृष्ण के साथ भी विवाद हुआ। इन सबका कहना था कि अब मशविरा प्रक्रिया समाप्त होने के बाद टिप्पणियों को जारी किया जाना चाहिए। समिति के मसौदे में कहा गया है कि संवेदनशील निजी डेटा केवल उन्हीं सर्वर में भंडारित और प्रसंस्कृत किया जाना चाहिए जो देश में स्थित हों। इसमें डेटा हासिल करते वक़्त सहमति प्राप्त करने की प्रक्रिया का भी स्पष्ट उल्लेख है।

बहरहाल, विधेयक देशव्यापी निगरानी और कई उद्देश्यों के लिए बिना कारण बताए डेटा संग्रहीत करने की बात करता है। यह बचाव, अनुसंधान, जांच, अभियोजना या किसी अन्य विधिक उल्लंघन के मामले में निजी डेटा के प्रसंस्करण की इजाजत देता है। निगरानी से समुचित विधिक बचाव के अभाव में और नेत्र

जैसे व्यापक निगरानी ढांचे के बीच इसे एक बड़ी कमी माना जा सकता है।

जो मसौदा पेश किया जाना है वह सरकार को तमाम गैर-व्यक्तिगत डेटा तक पहुंच का अधिकार देता है। भले ही उक्त डेटा निजी संस्थान द्वारा जुटाया गया हो। गैर-व्यक्तिगत डेटा की परिभाषा व्यापक है। इसमें ऐसा डेटा भी शामिल हो सकता है जहां लोगों के नाम हटा दिए गए हों। ऐसे गैर-व्यक्तिगत डेटा तक पहुंच के तमाम तरीके हैं। खासतौर पर आधार, बैंक खातों और अन्य संवेदनशील जानकारी के बाद। ऐसे गैर व्यक्तिगत डेटा का इस्तेमाल चुनावों के दौरान मतदाताओं को अनैतिक रूप से प्रभावित करने में किया जा सकता है। मसौदा सोशल मीडिया नेटवर्क से भी कहता है कि वे उपभोक्ताओं की पहचान सुनिश्चित करने के

लिए कदम उठाएं। यदि इसका इस्तेमाल सरकार के आलोचकों को निशाना बनाने के लिए किया गया तो देश के सोशल मीडिया जगत में अभिव्यक्ति की आजादी को काफी क्षति पहुंचेगी।

इन तमाम कमियों और अंतराल के बावजूद व्यक्तिगत डेटा संरक्षण की दिशा में यह पहला बुनियादी ढांचा अहम है। ऐसे कानून के अभाव में सरकार के अंगों और निजी क्षेत्र के लिए बिना सहमति के लोगों का डेटा जुटाना आसान है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्णय के बाद दो साल में हमने ऐसा देखा है। परंतु कानून बनाने वालों को विधेयक की सावधानी से परीक्षा करनी चाहिए और उचित प्रश्न उठाने चाहिए ताकि कानून की कमियों को दूर किया जा सके।

भारतीय मीडिया फर्मों के बढ़ते आकार से कारोबार विस्तार



मीडिया मंत्र

वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

83.6 करोड़ से भी अधिक भारतीय प्रतिदिन परंपरागत टीवी सेट पर चार घंटे से थोड़ा ही कम वक़्त बिताते हैं। यह संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है।

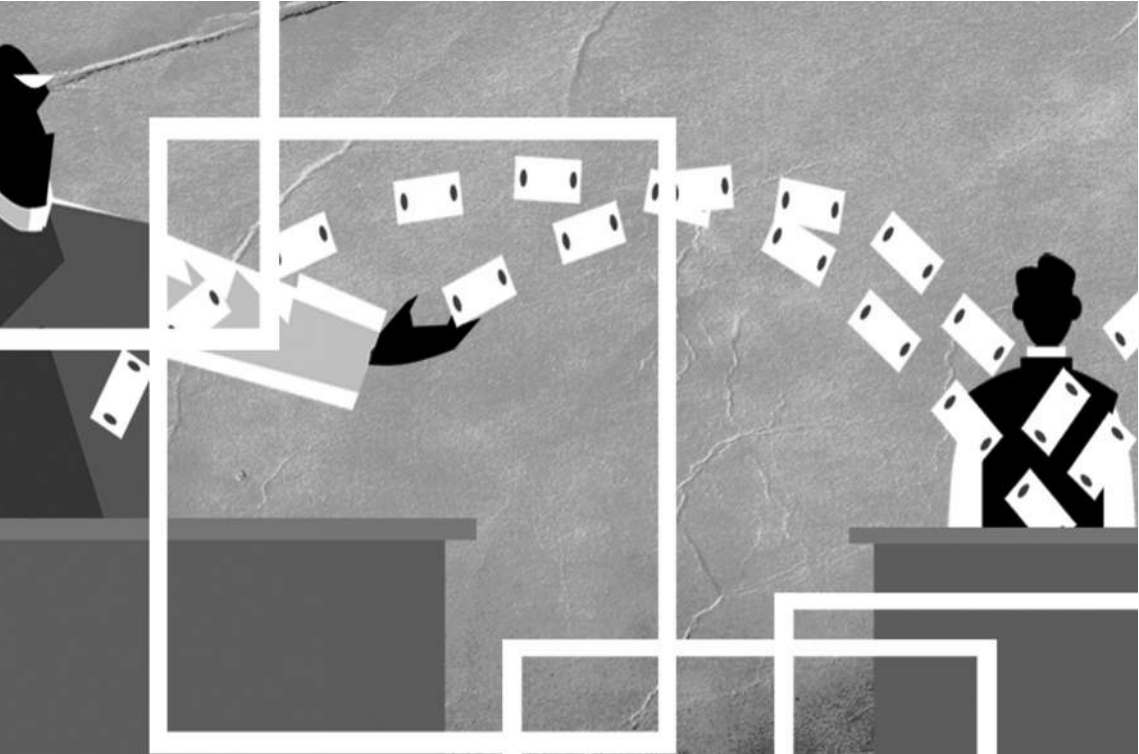
दुनिया से दशकों पीछे है। यहां पर इंटरनेट ने वर्ष 1995 में दस्तक दी थी। लेकिन बाजार वृद्धि के कई चरणों को धता बताते हुए यह अलग ढंग से बढ़ा और आज दुनिया भर में वीडियो उपभोग करने वाले अग्रणी देशों में शामिल है। केवल ऑनलाइन ही नहीं बल्कि टीवी पर भी ऐसा ही हो रहा है।

83.6 करोड़ से भी अधिक भारतीय प्रतिदिन परंपरागत टीवी सेट पर चार घंटे से थोड़ा ही कम वक़्त बिताते हैं। यह संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है। और उनमें से 60 करोड़ से अधिक लोग ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म पर ड्रामा सीरीज, फिल्में एवं उपभोक्ता-सृजित सामग्री देख रहे हैं। कॉमस्कोर के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि गूगल के वीडियो प्लेटफॉर्म यूट्यूब (27.5 करोड़), टाइम्स ग्रुप के एमएक्स प्लेयर (9.5 करोड़) और डिज्नी के हॉटस्टर (9.1 करोड़ उपभोक्ता) सबसे बड़े लाभार्थी हैं। अमेरिका में ओवर-द-टॉप (ओटीटी) उपभोग का बड़ा हिस्सा केबल पाइपों के दम पर चलता है लेकिन भारत में यह दूरसंचार पाइपों के दम पर चलता है। भारत के कुल मीडिया एवं मनोरंजन बाजार का 45 फीसदी हिस्सा टीवी प्रसारण का है। देश के शीर्ष दौ मीडिया

समूहों- जी एवं स्टार मुख्य रूप से ऐसे टीवी प्रसारक हैं जिनका अन्य मीडिया कारोबार में भी दखल है। डिज्नी के हाथों फॉक्स के अधिग्रहण का मतलब यह था कि स्टार इंडिया का स्वामित्व अब एक ऐसी कंपनी के पास है जो फॉक्स के दुगुने आकार की है। भारत में 90 अरब डॉलर के आकार वाली रिलायंस इंडस्ट्रीज के स्वामित्व वाली जियो के उभार, 12 अरब डॉलर वाली भारती एयरटेल और गूगल से खतरा है। मोटे तौर पर भारत में 10,000 करोड़ रुपये राजस्व के साथ यह देश की सबसे बड़ी मीडिया फर्मों में से एक है। ऐसे में प्रसारकों के लिए खुद को सशक्त करना तात्कालिक जरूरत हो गया है।

पिछले साल के आखिरी दिनों में जब जी को अपना कर्ज कम करने की जरूरत थी तो उसने एक रणनीतिक निवेशक लाने का फैसला किया। कॉमकास्ट (84.5 अरब डॉलर) और सोनी (78 अरब डॉलर) संभावित निवेशक माने जा रहे थे लेकिन लेनदारों से दबाव बढ़ने पर जी एंटरटेनमेंट का 95 फीसदी से भी अधिक हिस्सा वित्तीय निवेशकों के पास चला गया। वे रणनीतिक बिक्री जल्द ही कर सकते हैं। बड़े दर्शक आधार वाला प्रसारक जी किसी भी तकनीकी या दूरसंचार कंपनी के लिए अहम पूंजी साबित होगी। अपने पोटेफोलियो को सुधारने के अभियान में लगी सोनी वायकॉम18 में बहुलांश हिस्सेदारी का अधिग्रहण करने की सोच रही है। ऐसा होने पर सोनी भारत की दूसरी बड़ी मीडिया फर्म बन जाएगी। अगर सब कुछ अनुमान के मुताबिक हुआ तो भारतीय मीडिया जगत की शीर्ष पांच कंपनियां डिज्नी स्टार, सोनी-वायकॉम18, गूगल, टाइम्स ग्रुप और जी एंटरटेनमेंट ही होंगी। ऐसा होने पर दक्षिण भारत का अग्रणी मीडिया समूह कलानिधि मानन का सन टीवी खासा असुरक्षित हो जाएगा।

वैश्विक एवं भारतीय कंपनियों के राजस्व आंकड़ों को देखें तो वे बहुत बड़े हैं। और ये सभी कंपनियां इस समय अपने विस्तार के दौर में हैं। फिलहाल मीडिया एवं मनोरंजन कारोबार महज आकार तक सीमित है। इससे कई विलय एवं अधिग्रहण होंगे और कुछ अरब डॉलर स्वाहा होंगे। तब जाकर असली विजेता सामने आएंगे।



विनय सिन्हा

छिपे हुए आंतरिक संबंध वृद्धि को कर रहे प्रभावित

राज्यों के बजट पर पड़ रहे राजकोषीय दबाव की प्रकृति चक्रीय अधिक है। वहीं कमजोर आयात के कारण बॉन्ड प्रतिफल बढ़ रहा है। विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं नीलकंठ मिश्रा

आर्थिक व्यवस्था एक जटिल व्यवस्था है जहां कई अंत:संबंध होते हैं जिन पर पर्याप्त ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता। जबकि इनका आर्थिक गति और आर्थिक चक्र पर गहरा असर होता है।

राज्य के व्यय से शुरुआत करें तो आम धारणा में सरकार से तात्पर्य केंद्र की सरकार से होता है। जब कंपनियां भुगतान में देरी की शिकायत करती हैं तो हर कोई केंद्र की तरफ देखता है। बहरहाल, विशुद्ध आधार पर देखा जाए तो राज्य मिलकर केंद्र की तुलना में 90 फीसदी अधिक व्यय करते हैं। अपने व्यय के मामले में उन्हें केंद्र की तुलना में अधिक विवेकाधिकार भी हासिल हैं। उदाहरण के लिए केंद्र के व्यय का करीब चौथाई हिस्सा ब्याज भुगतान में जाता है। उसका पांचवां हिस्सा वेतन और पेंशन में जाता है जिसे टाला नहीं जा सकता। रक्षा व्यय, राज्यों को हस्तांतरण और सब्सिडी को इसमें जोड़ें तो केंद्र के व्यय का तीन चौथाई हिस्सा इसमें जाता है।

राज्य सरकार के भुगतान को लंबित करने की गुंजाइश अधिक होती है। राज्यों के कुल बजट को देखें तो इस वर्ष उनके

पास 38 लाख करोड़ रुपये की राशि व्यय करने को है। यह पिछले वर्ष के व्यय से 19 फीसदी अधिक और जीडीपी की हिस्सेदारी के रूप में करीब एक फीसदी ज्यादा है। पूंजीगत व्यय के गत वर्ष की तुलना में 21 फीसदी बढ़कर 6.3 लाख करोड़ रुपये होने का अनुमान है। परंतु इन आंकड़ों में संशोधन के बाद काफी कमी आ सकती है। राज्य अक्सर बजट में तय व्यय एवं प्राप्ति के लक्ष्य से चूक जाते हैं। क्रियान्वयन की चुनौतियां भी हैं। हाल के वर्षों में राज्यों की उधारी तय लक्ष्य से कम रही है। इन वर्षों में प्राप्तियों में कमी इसलिए रही क्योंकि केंद्र से होने वाला कर स्थानांतरण बजट अनुमान से कम रहा। इस वर्ष हालात अधिक खराब हो सकते हैं। हमारा अनुमान है कि कुल व्यय वृद्धि सालाना आधार पर 7 फीसदी तक फिसल सकता है।

महालेखा परीक्षक (सीजीए) द्वारा केंद्र सरकार के मासिक आंकड़े पेश किए जाने के साथ ही विश्लेषक केंद्रीय कर में फिसलन का परीक्षण करते हैं। इसके साथ ही वे केंद्रीय घाटे और व्यय पर इसके प्रभाव का आकलन भी करते हैं। बहरहाल, यह देखते हुए कि केंद्रीय कर का 42

फीसदी स्वतः राज्यों को हस्तांतरित हो जाती है और राज्यों के कुल व्यय का 40 फीसदी हिस्सा इन्हीं से बनता है, कहा जा सकता है कि राज्यों पर इसका काफी असर है। राज्यों के पास अपने राजकोषीय घाटा लक्ष्य को लेकर कोई लचीलापन नहीं है। परंतु इसका आकलन मुश्किल है क्योंकि सीजीए की वेबसाइट पर सभी राज्यों के मासिक आंकड़े उपलब्ध नहीं हैं। चूंकि धीमी अर्थव्यवस्था का असर राज्यों की प्राप्तियों पर भी पड़ता है इसलिए जिन राज्यों के राजकोषीय घाटे की सीमा 3 फीसदी के आसपास है उन्हें व्यय में कटौती करनी होगी।

वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) व्यय का मुद्दा हालात को और खराब कर सकता है। जब जीएसटी की शुरुआत हुई, राज्यों से वादा किया गया था कि पांच वर्ष तक सालाना 14 फीसदी की दर से राजस्व वृद्धि होगी। यह भी कहा गया था कि संग्रह में किसी भी कमी की भरपाई केंद्र सरकार द्वारा जुटाए जा रहे क्षतिपूर्ति उपकर के माध्यम से की जाएगी। यह उपकर कोयला, कारों, तंबाकू और कुछ पेय पदार्थों पर लगे अधिभार से आती। गत वर्ष तक राज्यों को जीएसटी का लाभ मिल रहा था क्योंकि

आपका पक्ष

देश के प्रहरियों की भी सुध लें

हाल में एक हृदयविदारक घटना सामने आई जिसमें छत्तीसगढ़ के नक्सल प्रभावित जिले में पदस्थ आईटीबीपी के एक जवान ने अपने चार सहकर्मियों की गोली मार कर हत्या कर दी। इस घटना के पीछे के वास्तविक कारणों की जांच अभी जारी है। लेकिन इन घटनाओं को सुर्खा बलों के सदस्यों में विभिन्न कारणों से व्याप्त अवसाद तनाव एवं कुंठा से होने वाली घटनाओं से जुड़ी कड़ी के रूप में माना जा सकता है। अक्सर सुरक्षा बलों के जवानों की कई प्रकार की समस्याएं सामने आई हैं। आवश्यकता होने पर भी सैनिकों को अवकाश नहीं मिलना आम समस्या है। हाल में सुकमा में हुए नक्सली हमले में शहीद हुए जवानों के संबंध में एक हैरान करने वाला तथ्य सामने आया है। उक्त हमले के कुछ दिन पूर्व हुए हमले में वह जवान दृढ़ता से लड़ते हुए जांच में गोली लगने से घायल हो गया था। कुछ दिन



उपचार के बाद अस्पताल से छुड़ी होते ही उसे सीधे मोर्चे पर तैनात कर दिया गया। अपने शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य की स्थिति के आधार पर मांगे गए अवकाश के निवेदन को उच्चाधिकारियों द्वारा स्वीकार नहीं किया गया। जवान फिर भी अपने कर्तव्य से पीछे नहीं हटा। निजी कारणों अथवा अनुशासन के नाम पर वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों द्वारा कनिष्ठ

कर्मचारियों, अधिकारियों को प्रताड़ित करने के कारण हुई आत्महत्या की घटनाएं भी सामने आई हैं जो चिंतनीय है। उक्त घटनाओं की रोकथाम के लिए

छत्तीसगढ़ में आईटीबीपी के एक जवान ने अपने चार सहकर्मियों की हत्या कर दी थी

उपचार के बाद अस्पताल से छुड़ी होते ही उसे सीधे मोर्चे पर तैनात कर दिया गया। अपने शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य की स्थिति के आधार पर मांगे गए अवकाश के निवेदन को उच्चाधिकारियों द्वारा स्वीकार नहीं किया गया। जवान फिर भी अपने कर्तव्य से पीछे नहीं हटा। निजी कारणों अथवा अनुशासन के नाम पर वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों द्वारा कनिष्ठ

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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।

कानाफूसी

शोक प्रदर्शन

कुछ अपवादों को छोड़ दिया जाये तो तमिलनाडु के राजनेता आमतौर पर सार्वजनिक कार्यक्रमों में शिरकत के दौरान सफेद कमीज और सफेद रंग की मुट्ठी (एक किस्म की धोती) अवश्य पहनते हैं। बहरहाल अखिल भारतीय अन्ना द्रविड़ मुन्नेत्र कणम (अन्नाद्रमुक) के नेता जिनमें पार्टी समन्वयक और मुख्यमंत्री एडाप्पडी के पलनिस्वामी और उप मुख्यमंत्री ओ पन्नीरसेल्वम शामिल थे, गुरुवार को काली पोशाक में अपने कार्यालय पहुंचे। गुरुवार को प्रदेश की पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री और अन्नाद्रमुक की सर्वेसर्वा रही जे जयललिता की तीसरी पुण्यतिथि थी। कुछ नेत्रियां भी मरीना बीच पर जयललिता की समाधि तक पैदल मार्च में काली साड़ी पहने हुए नजर आईं। नेताओं ने अपने टिवटर पेज भी काले कर लिए और अम्मा (उन्हें अम्मा कहते थे) की तस्वीर के साथ शोक संदेश लिखे।

बिना फोन के

महत्वपूर्ण बैठकों में मोबाइल फोन की वजह से होने वाले व्यवधान को देखते हुए उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री आदित्यनाथ ने गत जून में यह आदेश दिया था कि मंत्रिगण कैबिनेट की बैठकों मे मोबाइल नहीं लाएंगे। हाल ही में एक कैबिनेट बैठक के दौरान प्रदेश के एक वरिष्ठ अफसरशाह मोबाइल पर बात करते देखे गए। इससे नाराज मंत्रियों ने मुख्यमंत्री से शिकायत की। इस पर मुख्यमंत्री ने आदेश दिया कि अब प्रदेश के अफसरशाह भी बैठकों में फोन लेकर नहीं आएंगे।



ठोस कदम उठाने की जरूरत है। जवानों की ओर से आ रही दिक्कतों से जुड़ी शिकायतों का सज़ान लिया जाना चाहिए। किसी अनियमितता एवं भ्रष्टाचार के आरोपों की जांच तटस्थ एवं निष्पक्ष संस्था द्वारा उच्च न्यायालय की देखरेख में की जानी चाहिए। मनोवैज्ञानिक सहायता लिए जाने पर भी विचार किया जा सकता है। सरकार को जवानों के कल्याण पर विचार करना चाहिए।

ऋषभ देव पांडेय, छत्तीसगढ़

भारत पर दूसरे देशों की आबादी का बोझ

सरकार नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक ला रही है। इसका मकसद पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान से शरणार्थी के रूप में भारत आए उन गैर मुस्लिमों को नागरिकता प्रदान करने का प्रावधान

है जिन्हें धार्मिक उत्पीड़न का सामना करना पड़ा हो। इससे पहले सरकार राष्ट्रीय नागरिकता पंजीकरण लाई थी जिसके असम में लागू किया गया था। असम में लाखों लोगों को भारतीय नागरिकता नहीं मिल पाई है। ऐसा माना जा रहा है कि ऐसे लोग बांग्लादेश से घुसपैठ कर भारत आए थे। हालांकि सरकार के इस कदम का विपक्षी पार्टियों के नेता विरोध कर रहे हैं। भारत एक धर्म निरपेक्ष देश है। यहां सभी धर्मों के लोगों को समान अधिकार मिले हैं। ऐसे में किसी विधेय धर्म के लोगों को नकारा उचित प्रतीत नहीं होता है। लेकिन क्या भारत दूसरे देशों से घुसपैठ करने वालों के खिलाफ कोई कदम नहीं उठा सकता है। अगर भारत में घुसपैठिये नहीं रोके गए तो भारत पर बोझ बढ़ता जाएगा। सरकार को धर्म के आधार पर नागरिकता नहीं देनी चाहिए। अगर सरकार घुसपैठ रोकना चाहती है तो घुसपैठिया किसी भी धर्म का हो उसे देश से बाहर कर देना चाहिए।

अमित कुमार, नई दिल्ली



मधुर वचन औषधि हैं और कटु वचन तीर

मुठभेड़ का सच

हैदराबाद में सामूहिक दुष्कर्म के चार आरोपी जिस तरह पुलिस मुठभेड़ में ढेर कर दिए गए उसे लेकर केवल सवाल ही नहीं उठाए जा रहे हैं, बल्कि खुशी भी बताई जा रही है। पुलिस की कार्रवाई को सही ठहराने और यहां तक कि उसे न्याय की संज्ञा देने वालों में आम आदमी के साथ सांसद भी शामिल हैं। ऐसा तब है जब इस मुठभेड़ से जुड़े कई प्रश्न अनुत्तरित हैं और हर कोई इससे अवगत है कि पुलिस कई बार फर्जी मुठभेड़ों को भी अंजाम देती है। फर्जी मुठभेड़ें भीड़ की हिंसा का ही एक रूप हैं। यह जल्द सामने आना ही न्याय के हित में होगा कि हैदराबाद पुलिस ने जनाआक्रोश के दबाव में आकर मुठभेड़ को अंजाम दे दिया या फिर उसने वाकई आत्मरक्षा में सामूहिक दुष्कर्म कांड के आरोपियों को मार गिराया? यदि इस सवाल का जवाब सामने आने के पहले ही एक बड़े वर्ग की ओर से हैदराबाद पुलिस की कार्रवाई को जायज बताया जा रहा है तो इसकी जड़ में दुष्कर्म के मामलों का बढ़ना, महिला सुरक्षा का सवाल कहीं अधिक गंभीर हो जाना और न्यायिक तंत्र का शिथिल होना है। इस शिथिलता का शर्मनाक प्रमाण है सात साल पहले देश को दहलाने वाले निर्भया कांड के गुनहगारों की दी गई सजा पर अमल न हो पाना।

किसी को सामने आकर यह बताना ही चाहिए कि आखिर निर्भया के गुनहगारों की सजा पर अमल में देरी के लिए कौन जिम्मेदार है? केवल यही नहीं, इस सवाल का जवाब भी मिलना चाहिए कि दुष्कर्म की घटनाओं के निस्तारण में जरूरत से ज्यादा देरी क्यों हो रही है और ऐसे मामलों में दोष सिद्धि की दर इतनी कम क्यों है? क्या निर्भया कांड के बाद कानूनों में तमाम संशोधन यही दिन देखने के लिए किए गए थे? अगर नहीं तो फिर हालात जस के तस, बल्कि उससे भी बदतर क्यों दिख रहे हैं? समाज को इन सवालों का जवाब मांगने के साथ ही इस पर भी गौर करना होगा कि दुष्कर्मों तत्व कहीं बाहर से नहीं आते। वे समाज का ही हिस्सा होते हैं। आम तौर पर ये वही तत्व होते हैं जो सरे आम महिलाओं पर फबितियां कसते हैं और उन्हें वासना की पूर्ति का साधन मात्र समझते हैं। समाज को अपने बीच सक्रिय ऐसे तत्वों पर लगाम लगाने के लिए कुछ करना ही होगा। वास्तव में एक ओर जहां समाज को महिलाओं को ओछी निगाह से देखने वालों के खिलाफ सक्रिय होने की जरूरत है वहीं दूसरी ओर नीति-निर्याताओं को यह समझने की जरूरत है कि संचार तकनीक के जरिये हो रहे अश्लीलता के प्रसार ने एक गंभीर सामाजिक समस्या का रूप ले लिया है।

उत्तराखंड में उच्च शिक्षा

उत्तरखंड में उच्च शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में अब सरकार गंभीर नजर आ रही है। इन दिनों जारी विधानसभा के शीतकालीन सत्र में सरकार ने जानकारी दी कि वर्ष 2022 तक प्रदेश में प्रत्येक सरकारी डिग्री कॉलेज का अपना भवन तैयार हो जाएगा। इसके लिए अनुपूरक बजट में बाकायदा 40 करोड़ रुपये की व्यवस्था भी की गई है। दरअसल उत्तराखंड गठन के 19 साल बाद भी उच्च शिक्षा में गुणवत्ता लगातार सवालों के घेरे में है। विशेषकर पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में स्थिति बेहद गंभीर है। उच्च शिक्षा के नाम पर हो रही सियासत ने हालात को इस स्थिति में पहुंचा दिया है। वोट की फसल काटने के लिए माननीय डिग्री कॉलेज खोलने की घोषणा तो कर देते हैं, लेकिन शायद ही कभी इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर को लेकर सोचा जाता हो। पिछले दिनों बताया गया कि प्रदेश के 20 ब्लॉकों और 15 विधानसभा क्षेत्रों में डिग्री कॉलेज नहीं हैं। इन क्षेत्रों में डिग्री कॉलेज खोलने के लिए उच्च शिक्षा विभाग को प्रस्ताव तैयार करने के आदेश दे दिए गए हैं। यह आत्म तब है कि जबकि कि दो सौ से कम छात्रसंख्या वाले डिग्री कॉलेजों को नजदीकी कॉलेजों में मर्ज करने पर विचार किया जा रहा है। जाहिर ऐसे में यह सवाल मौजू है कि जब कॉलेजों को पर्याप्त संख्या में छात्र में नहीं मिल रहे तो एक के बाद एक कॉलेज खोलने का क्या औचित्य है। सच्चाई यह है कि पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में डिग्री कॉलेज जैसे संस्थान एक या दो कमरे में संचालित किए जा रहे हैं। कॉलेज में फैकल्टी का अभाव है तो छात्रों को अपने पसंदीदा विषय के अध्ययन की सुविधा भी नहीं है। इतना ही नहीं इन कॉलेज में न्यूनतम 180 दिन पढ़ाई कराना एक चुनौती बन गई है। भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान रुड़की और भारतीय प्रबंधन संस्थान काशीपुर को छोड़ दें तो प्रदेश का कोई भी संस्थान देश में टॉप-100 में जगह नहीं बना पाया। इस पर चिंतन और मनन की जरूरत है कि 12वीं के बाद क्यों पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों से बच्चे देहरादून, हरिद्वार अथवा नैनीताल और हल्द्वानी का रुख करने पर विवश हैं। प्रश्न यह है कि स्कूली शिक्षा के लिए उत्तराखंड भले ही छात्र-छात्राओं की पसंद हो, लेकिन उच्च शिक्षा के लिए वे अन्य राज्यों का रुख करना पसंद करते हैं। अच्छा है कि सरकार सभी सरकारी कॉलेजों के भवन बनाने के लिए टुटसंकल्पित है, लेकिन इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर और गुणवत्ता पर भी फोकस करना होगा।

सरकार अब उच्च शिक्षा पर फोकस कर रही है, इसकी सराहना की जानी चाहिए, लेकिन सिर्फ भवन खड़े कर देने पर्याप्त नहीं है। फोकस गुणवत्ता पर होना चाहिए



विक्रम सिंह

फास्ट ट्रैक अदालतों को सक्रिय करने के साथ ही यह सुनिश्चित किया जाना चाहिए कि वे तय अवधि में दुष्कर्म के मामलों का निस्तारण करें

हैदराबाद में वीभत्स सामूहिक दुष्कर्म कांड के चारों आरोपियों को पुलिस मुठभेड़ में मार गिराए जाने की घटना ने संसद से लेकर सड़क तक बहस तेज कर दी है। पूरा देश इसी घटना पर ध्यान केंद्रित किए हुए है। पुलिस अधिकारियों की मानें तो पुलिस इन चारों आरोपियों को रिमांड पर लेने के बाद विवेचना के क्रम में उन्हें घटनास्थल पर ले गई थी। इसी दौरान आरोपियों ने पुलिस पर आक्रमण कर भागने का प्रयास किया। पुलिस ने भी आत्मरक्षा में गोली चलाई और अंततोगत्वा चारों पुलिस मुठभेड़ में ढेर हो गए। इस मुठभेड़ की खबर सामने आते ही लोग पक्ष और विपक्ष में खड़े हो गए हैं। एक समूह कह रहा है कि यही होना चाहिए था। उसने पुलिस को बघाई भी दी। हैदराबाद में तो जश्न जैसा मनाया गया। दूसरा समूह यह कह रहा है कि यह औचित्यपूर्ण नहीं है। पुलिस को और सावधानी बरतनी चाहिए थी। सवाल उठाए जा रहे हैं कि आखिर किन परिस्थितियों में प्रातःकाल आरोपियों को घटनास्थल पर ले जाया गया? क्या वांछित पुलिस बल नहीं था? ऐसा क्या हुआ कि पुलिस को गोली चलानी पड़ी और चारों आरोपियों को निष्क्रिय करना पड़ा। संदेह भरे सवाल उठना स्वाभाविक है, परंतु जो कानूनी स्थिति है उसे भी समझ लेना चाहिए। व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा या किसी अन्य की सुरक्षा अथवा जीवन को खतरे के आधार पर वांछित बल का प्रयोग किया जा सकता है। यह अधिकार भारतीय दंड संहिता

ने प्रदान किया है, लेकिन बल प्रयोग का यह अधिकार मनमाना नहीं है। यदि अनुपात बल का प्रयोग नहीं किया गया तो यह अधिकार समाप्त हो जाता है। क्या हैदराबाद पुलिस ने जो बल प्रयोग किया वह वांछित था और उसी अनुपात में इस्तेमाल किया गया जो आवश्यक था या उससे अधिक? आपराधिक दंड संहिता के अंतर्गत हैदराबाद मुठभेड़ की मजिस्ट्रेटी जांच होगी। चूंकि पुलिस मुठभेड़ के मामलों में उच्चतम न्यायालय और मानवाधिकार आयोग की ओर से दिए गए दिशानिर्देशों का भी पालन आवश्यक होता है इसलिए इस मुठभेड़ के मामले में भी एक अपराध पंजीकृत किया जाएगा और उस अपराध की विवेचना क्राइम ब्रांच सीबीसीआईडी करेगी, न कि स्थानीय पुलिस। ऐसी सावधानियां यही सुनिश्चित करने के लिए बरती जाती हैं ताकि यदि पुलिस ने स्वार्थवश या जन भावनाओं के दबाव में कोई मनमाना व्यवहार किया हो तो उसे सामने लाया जा सके। पुलिस को जिम्मेदारी जनभावनाओं के अनुरूप या अपनी इच्छा के अनुरूप काम करने की नहीं होती। उसे संविधान और कानून के तहत मिले अधिकारों के तहत ही काम करना होता है। अच्छा होगा कि हैदराबाद मुठभेड़ की मजिस्ट्रेटी जांच जल्द हो ताकि सच्चाई सामने आ सके। यदि हैदराबाद पुलिस की कोई गलती सामने आती है तो हत्या का मुकदमा कायम होने के साथ मुठभेड़ में शामिल पुलिस कर्मी



अवधेश राजपूत

निराबित भी होंगे और जेल भी भेजे जाएंगे, लेकिन यदि मुठभेड़ सही मानी जाती है तो पुलिस कर्मी पुरस्कृत भी हो सकते हैं। एक बड़े समूह की ओर से हैदराबाद मुठभेड़ को सही बताने का जो काम हो रहा है उसे भी समझने की जरूरत है। देश इससे स्तब्ध है कि निर्भया के गुनहगारों को सात वर्ष के लंबे अंतराल के बाद भी फांसी की सजा नहीं हो पाई। येन-केन प्रकारेण सजा विलंबित ही होती गई। इस विलंब के कारण समझ से परे हैं। यह देखना दर्शनीय है कि कानूनों में संशोधन के उपरांत भी हमारी बचचियों और महिलाओं को किसी प्रकार की रहत नहीं मिली है। दुष्कर्म के मामलों की संख्या बढ़ती जा रही है। बड़ी संख्या में दुष्कर्म के आरोपी दोषमुक्त हो रहे हैं। निर्भया फंड का भी सदुपयोग नहीं हो पा रहा है। पुलिसकर्मीयों का प्रशिक्षण वांछित स्तर का नहीं हो पाया है। फास्ट ट्रैक कोर्ट त्वरित गति से मामलों का निस्तारण नहीं कर पा रही हैं। ऐसे में जन आक्रोश स्वाभाविक है। पुलिस के ऊपर यह दबाव भी रहता है कि वह कोई ऐसी कार्रवाई करे जिससे जनता में एक भरोसा पैदा

जब अपने ही सताएं तो बच्चे कहां जाएं

वर्षों पहले इंदु और आशीष की घटना ने लोगों को दहला दिया था। इंदु ने आशीष के साथ रहने के लिए अपने दो छोटे बच्चों को आग लगा दी थी। अखबारों ने लिखा था कि जब इस घटना के बारे में आशीष से पूछा गया तो वह हंस रहा था। दो छोटे बच्चों को आग लगाना और उस पर हंसना, सबको भयानक लगा था। बाद में इन दोनों का क्या हुआ, पता नहीं, लेकिन इन दिनों तो ऐसी घटनाएं जैसे आम हो चली हैं। एक हफ्ते के भीतर दो ऐसी घटनाएं पढ़ीं कि इन अनजाने बच्चों के प्रति मन करुणा से भर उठा, जिन्होंने अपने ही परिजनों के कारण जान गंवाई हैं। अपने ही बच्चों से निजात पाने के इतने क्रूरतम तरीके। एक महिला के दो बच्चे थे। वह अपने पति को छोड़कर किसी और के साथ रहने लगी थी। बड़े बच्चे को उसने गर्भ में अपने माता-पिता के साथ छोड़ दिया था। दूसरा बच्चा छोटा था, इसलिए उसे साथ ले आई थी। जिसके साथ रहती थी, वह आदमी इस बच्चे को बहुत मारता-पीटता था। एक दिन उसने इस बच्चे को इतना मारा कि उसकी सांस खड़ गई। मां ने यह देखा तो बच्चे का गला दबा दिया। दूसरी घटना में एक महिला की दूसरी शादी हुई। पहली शादी से उसकी चार साल की एक बच्ची थी। सौतेले पिता ने बच्ची के सीने पर इतनी जोर से मुक्का मारा कि वह चल बसी।

सौतेली माताओं के अत्याचार से न केवल हमारे ग्रंथ, बल्कि समाज में बेशुमार कहानियां भरी पड़ी हैं। हालांकि सभी सौतेली मांएं बुरी नहीं होती हैं, वे अच्छी भी होती हैं। आमतौर पर तो वे पति पर पूरा अधिकार चाहती हैं इसलिए वे पहली शादी से हुए बच्चों को सताने में कोई



क्षमा शर्मा

सौतेली मां का बच्चों पर आतंक तो पहले से रहा है, पर इन दिनों सौतेले पिताओं के अत्याचार के मामले भी सामने आ रहे हैं

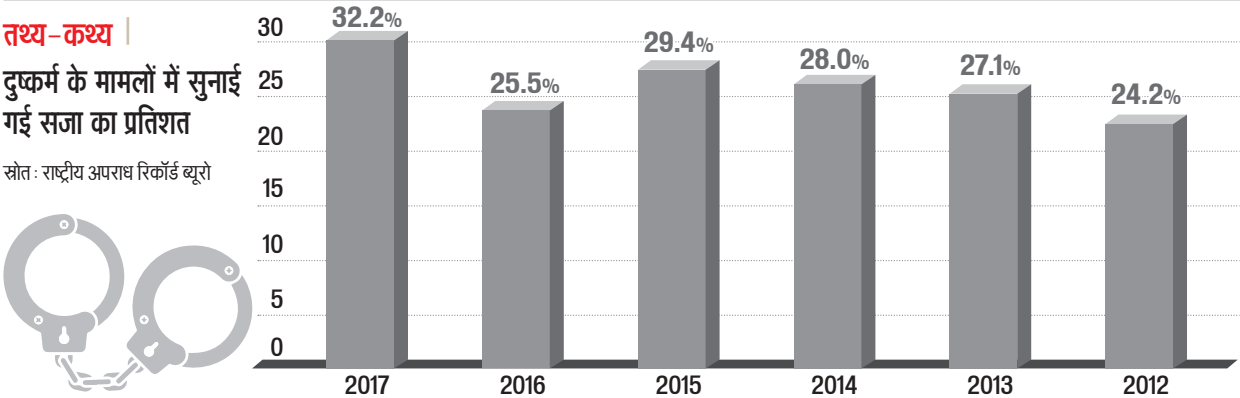
कसर नहीं छोड़ती हैं। वे सारे अधिकार सिर्फ अपने बच्चों के लिए सुरक्षित रखना चाहती हैं। समाज में सौतेली मां का बच्चों पर आतंक रहा है, लेकिन इन दिनों दूसरे पिताओं यानी सौतेले पिताओं के अत्याचार के किस्से भी पढ़ने को मिलते हैं। जो रंगटे खड़े कर देने वाले हैं।

पहले सौतेले पिता कहानियां, स्मृतियां में इसीलिए नहीं आते थे, क्योंकि तब वे समाज में मौजूद नहीं थे। आमतौर पर औरतों की दूसरी शादी नहीं होती थी। पति के छोड़ देने या विधवा होने पर वे अकेली जीवन काटने को मजबूर होती थीं, जबकि आदमी पत्नी के मरते ही फौरन दूसरा विवाह कर लेते थे और बच्चों की सौतेली मां ले आते थे। बहुत बार ये माताएं बच्चों से भी उम्र में छोटी होती थीं। बेमेल विवाह के ऐसे किस्से रोज देखे जाते थे। प्रेमचंद का उपन्यास निर्मला ऐसे ही बेमेल विवाह की कहानी है, मगर उसमें सौतेली मां एक अच्छी महिला है। वक्त बदल गया। समाज और कानून ने औरतों के दूसरे विवाह को स्वीकार किया। परिवारों में अब दूसरी मांएं ही नहीं, दूसरे

पिता भी आते हैं। और यह कितना अफसोसनाक है कि वे अपने परिवार में किसी दूसरे के बच्चे को रहने देना नहीं चाहते। सारी इंसानियत स्वांथ और किसी दूसरे पुरुष के बच्चे को देखकर नफरत में बदल जाती है। जैसे सौतेली माताओं को अपने पति के घर में किसी दूसरे का बच्चा नहीं चाहिए, वैसे ही पुरुषों को भी किसी दूसरे आदमी का बच्चा नहीं चाहिए। इसे वे अपनी तौहीन समझते हैं। औरतें इस बात को अच्छी तरह से समझती भी हैं। इसलिए अनेक बार बच्चों के कारण शादी नहीं करतीं।

वर्षों पहले साथ काम करने वाली एक महिला के पति की मृत्यु हो गई थी। उसे अपने पति के स्थान पर उसी दफ्तर में नौकरी मिल गई थी। मैंने एक बार यों ही जिज्ञासावश उससे पूछा कि क्या वह दोबारा विवाह के बारे में नहीं सोचती? आखिर कब तक ऐसे अकेली रहेगी? तब उसने कहा था-मैंडम, लोग मुझसे तो शादी करना चाहते हैं, लेकिन मेरे बेटे को नहीं अपनाना चाहते। वे कहते हैं कि उसे अपने साथ न लाऊं। अब भला उस बच्चे को कहां छोड़ींगी। उसके पिता तो पहले ही नहीं हैं। अब मां भी उसका साथ छोड़ दे तो वह कहां रहेगा? किसके भरोसे रहेगा। मुझे जिंदगी भर माफ नहीं करेगा कि मैंने अपने सुख के लिए उसका जीवन तबाह कर दिया। एक तरफ हमारा जीवन है। उसके अपने तर्क हैं, लेकिन दूसरी तरफ बच्चों का जीवन, जहां माता-पिता के निर्णयों के कारण वे तरह-तरह की हिंसा, यहां तक कि जीवन गंवा देने को मजबूर हैं। जाहिर है जब अपने ही सताएं तो बच्चे कहां जाएं।

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भय के माहौल में बेटियां

डॉ. मोनिका शर्मा

आज श्रमशक्ति में अहम भागीदारी निभा रही बेटियों के सामने सबसे बड़ी चुनौती सुरक्षित दफ्तर पहुंचने और घर लौट आने की ही है। असुरक्षा के कारण आज भी महिलाएं योग्यता और क्षमता के मुताबिक नौकरी नहीं चुन पातीं। असुरक्षित हो चले परिवेश में महिलाएं एक बंधे हुए स्टीन में ही काम कर पाती हैं। यही वजह है कि उच्च शिक्षा के बढ़ते आंकड़ों के बावजूद 1994 से महिलाओं की श्रम बल में भागीदारी लगातार घट रही है। राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकीय कार्यालय ने कुछ समय पहले महिला श्रम बल की हिस्सेदारी को लेकर यह अदुमान जारी किया था। यानी योग्यता और क्षमता के बावजूद देश की महिलाएं खुद को घरों में कैद करने को मजबूर हैं। इतना ही नहीं बेटियों को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने की सोच रखने वाले अभिभावक भी डरे-डरे रहते हैं। गौरतलब है कि कुछ समय पहले आए एसोसिएम के एक सर्वेक्षण में दिल्ली की 92 प्रतिशत, बेंगलुरु की 85 प्रतिशत, कोलकाता की 82 प्रतिशत और हैदराबाद की 18 प्रतिशत महिलाओं ने स्वीकार किया कि वह दिन और रात दोनों ही पाली में काम करने में

योग्यता और क्षमता के बावजूद देश की अधिकांश महिलाएं खुद को चाहददीवारी में कैद करने को मजबूर हैं

खुद को असुरक्षित महसूस करती हैं। वहीं शत प्रतिशत महिलाओं ने माना कि महिलाओं की सुरक्षा की समस्या देश की किसी भी समस्या से ज्यादा बड़ी है। वहीं राष्ट्रीय अपराध रिकॉर्ड ब्यूरो (एनसीआरबी) के ताजा आंकड़े भी आधी आबादी की चिंतनीय स्थिति को सामने रखने वाले हैं। वर्ष 2017 की रिपोर्ट बताती है कि देश में महिलाओं के खिलाफ अपराध में करीब छह फीसद का इजाफा हुआ है। एनसीआरबी के अनुसार घर के भीतर अपनों का दुर्व्यवहार हो या नाबालिग बच्चियों के शोषण के मामले हों, देश में हर उम्र, हर वर्ग की महिलाओं के साथ आपराधिक घटनाएं हो रही हैं। 18 से 30 साल की युवतियों के लिए तेलंगाना देश में सबसे असुरक्षित राज्य है। वर्ष 2017 में वहां दर्ज हुए दुष्कर्म के कुल मामलों में 91 फीसद

पीड़िताएं 18 से 30 साल की हैं।

आज की बेटियां कामकाजी बन रही हैं। आत्मनिर्भर बन परिवार ही नहीं देश की तरक्की में भी अपना योगदान सुनिश्चित कर रही हैं। बावजूद इसके नैतिक और सामाजिक मूल्यों की गिरावट के इस मौजूदा दौर में आधी आबादी भय के परिवेश में जीने को विवश है। हैदराबाद में हुई सहायता करने के नाम पर दरिंदगी की घटना भी पूरी सामाजिक व्यवस्था से भरोसा उठाने वाली है, कामकाजी बेटियों की सुरक्षा से जुड़ी चिंताओं को सामने रखती है। ऐसी घटनाओं से न सिर्फ ईंसान का एक दूजे से भरोसा डामगा रहा है, बल्कि खतम हो रहे सामाजिक ताने-बाने की हकीकत भी हमारे सामने आ रही है। दुखद है कि ऐसे हदसे उस समाज के बीमार और बदगं होते चेहरे को दिखाते हैं, जिसमें बेटियों की सुरक्षा साजी जिम्मेदारी समझी जाती है। आपसी सहयोग और सम्मान विचार और व्यवहार का हिस्सा रहे हैं। जरूरी है कि समाज, परिवार और सरकार सभी चेते। न सिर्फ ऐसे लोग का सामाजिक बहिष्कार किया जाए, बल्कि त्वरित कार्रवाई कर दोषियों को सख्त सजा भी दी जाए।

(लेखिका स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

दिशाहीन करने वाला निर्णय

कांग्रेस को दिशा देने वाला फैसला शीर्षक से प्रकाशित रशीद कितवई के लेख से सहमत नहीं हुआ जा सकता। मेरा मानना है कि महाराष्ट्र में शिवसेना के साथ जाने का कांग्रेस का यह निर्णय पार्टी को दिशाहीन करने का काम करेगा। याद कीजिए राष्ट्रपति चुनाव के दौरान कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी ने विचारधारा की लड़ाई की बात कही थी, लेकिन आज वही विचारधारा से समझौता करके कट्टर शिवसेना के साथ सरकार बना रही हैं। यह कैसा वैचारिक संघर्ष है जो सत्ता की मलाई देखते ही ढोंग बनकर रह जाता है। यह तो कांग्रेस की पूर्णतया मौकापरस्ती और कपट की राजनीति है। देश भर में कांग्रेस की विचारधारा का झंडा बुलंद करने वाले हजारों कार्यकर्ताओं में इसका क्या संदेश जाएगा? क्या इस पर कांग्रेस नेतृत्व ने कभी विचार किया है? यह यक्ष प्रश्न है। महाराष्ट्र में विभागों के बंदरबांट का जो खेल चल रहा है उसे पूरा देश गौर से देख रहा है। बेहतर होता कि कांग्रेस अपनी वैचारिक पूंजी बचाकर जनता के बीच सरकार की नीतियों के विरुद्ध संघर्ष करती तो उसकी कहीं ज्यादा विश्वसनीय छवि बनती।

अभय सिंह, आदर्श नगर, अयोध्या

बेटियों की सुरक्षा

देश के हर राज्य में हम नारी को सुरक्षा देने में असमर्थ हैं। जिन बेटियों को हमने खो दिया है उनको वापस नहीं लाया जा सकता है, लेकिन आने वाले समय में ऐसे घृणित लोगों से अन्य बेटियों को बचाने का प्रयास अवश्य किया जाया जा सकता है। इसके लिए हम सभी को अपने बच्चों को अच्छे संस्कार देने की जरूरत है। अच्छे संस्कारों से ही ऐसे अशुभ आपराधिक मानसिक बीमार लोगों से मातृशक्ति

मेलबाक्स

की रक्षा की जा सकती है। घर, विद्यालयों, महाविद्यालयों आदि में भी परिवार के साथ शिक्षकों की पूरी ईमानदारी और गंभीरता से नारी सम्मान जैसे विषयों के प्रति बच्चों तथा युवाओं को समय-समय पर जागरूक करते रहने की जरूरत है। बाल्यावस्था से लेकर युवावस्था तक बच्चे किस संगति में रहते हैं इन सभी बातों को ध्यान रखते हुए उनको गलत हरकतों के लिए प्यार तथा सख्ती से मना करते हुए उन पर विशेष नजर रखी जानी चाहिए। बेटियों को मानसिक तथा शारीरिक रूप से सक्षम बनाने का भी प्रयास करें। परिवार तथा अध्यापकों का दायित्व बनता है कि बच्चे किसी भी प्रकार के नशे अथवा बुरी संगति में नहीं पड़े इसके लिए विशेष ध्यान देना होगा। सभी स्थानों पर हमारी रक्षा के लिए सरकार और पुलिस प्रशासन नहीं हो सकता है, इसलिए हमको भी एक जागरूक नागरिक का कर्तव्य निभाते हुए बहन-बेटियों की रक्षा करने में उनकी मदद करने की जरूरत है। आप किसी स्थान पर बेटी की रक्षा करते हैं तो किसी अन्य स्थान पर आपकी बेटी की रक्षा करने के लिए भी आप जैसा कोई जरूर आगे आएंगे।

आचार्य राम कुमार बघेल , पलवल

सब आएंगे

मनुष्य अपनी जरूरतों को पूरा करने के लिए प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का इतना दोहन कर चुका है कि अब इस धरती का धैर्य साथ नहीं दे रहा है। वह इसके प्रतिरोधस्वरूप कभी तूफान, कभी अविर्बुध, मौसम असंतुलित करके बार-बार चेतावनी दे रही है। पता नहीं कितनी बार दुनिया के तमाम देशों के राष्ट्राध्यक्षों द्वारा इस असंतुलन को ठीक करने के

लिए वैश्विक जलवायु सम्मेलन हो चुके, परंतु कुछ देशों का स्वाधैं इन सम्मेलनों के उद्देश्य पर पानी फेर देता है। विचारणीय है कि इन असंतुलनों से जब यह धरती पर संकट आएगा तो उसकी चपेट में सब आएंगे। संपूर्ण मानव मात्र के हित की सोच पर विचार कर ही कोई निर्णय करना चाहिए।

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

प्याज के बढ़ते भाव

देश में प्याज 75 से 100 रुपये प्रति किलो की दर से बिक रहा है। इस बीच कृषी से प्याज आयात की खबर आ रही है। गौरतलब है कि हमारे देश के ही महाराष्ट्र, कर्नाटक, गुजरात व बिहार समेत कई राज्यों में प्याज की भरपूर पैदावार होती है। वहीं सरकारी गोदामों में रखे प्याज के हर साल सड़ जाने या खराब हो जाने की खबरें आती हैं। इसके बावजूद भी हमें विदेशों से प्याज आयात करना पड़ रहा है। सरकार को चाहिए कि सरकारी गोदामों में सामान के रख-रखाव की स्थिति में सुधार लाए और कालाबाजारी पर रोक लगाने के प्रयास करें।

उपासना, दिल्ली विवि

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

अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें :

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यथावत मुद्रा

माना जा रहा था कि आर्थिक विकास दर के नीचे की तरफ रुख होने के आंकड़े आने के बाद बाजार में पूंजी का प्रवाह बढ़ाने के मकसद से रिजर्व बैंक अपनी दरों में कुछ कटौती करेगा। मगर उसने ऐसा न करने का फैसला किया। इससे पहले वह पांच बार रेपो रेट में कुल मिला कर 1.35 फीसद की कटौती कर चुका है। इस मौद्रिक समीक्षा में रिजर्व बैंक ने कहा कि बार–बार बैंक दरों में कटौती करना उचित नहीं है। फिलहाल उन खामियों को दूर करने की जरूरत है, जिनकी वजह से आर्थिक वृद्धि दर बाधित हो रही है। इसके साथ ही केंद्रीय बैंक ने अपना आर्थिक विकास दर का अनुमान घटा कर पांच फीसद कर दिया है। पिछली तिमाही में उसने विकास दर 6.1 फीसद रहने का अनुमान लगाया था, पर दूसरी तिमाही के दौरान विकास दर घट कर साढ़े चार फीसद पर पहुंच गई। इसके अलावा खुदरा मुद्रास्फीति यानी महंगाई की दर बढ़ कर 4.6 फीसद तक पहुंच गई है। इन स्थितियों को देखते हुए रिजर्व बैंक ने अपनी मुद्र्ती बंद रखना जरूरी समझा है। इस तरह ताजा मौद्रिक समीक्षा के बाद सरकार की मुश्किलें और बढ़ गई हैं।

विकास दर की रफ्तार सुस्त होने के आंकड़े काफी पहले से आने शुरू हो गए थे, मगर उन्हें गंभीरता से लेते हुए व्यावहारिक कदम उठाने के बजाय सरकार अर्थव्यवस्था की गुलाबी तस्वीर पेश करती रही। अर्थव्यवस्था को पांच ट्रिलियन तक पहुंचाने का दम भरती रही, इसके लिए कुछ समितियां भी गठित की गईं। फिर भवन निर्माण जैसे जिन कुछ क्षेत्रों में सुस्ती बनी हुई थी, उसे तोड़ने के लिए अपनी तरफ से भारी निवेश जुटाने की घोषणा कर दी। जबकि समग्र विकास नीति पर पुनर्विचार की जरूरत थी। अब जब आर्थिक विकास दर सिमट कर साढ़े चार फीसद पर पहुंच गई है और महंगाई पर काबू पाना कठिन हो गया है, तो नए तरीके से कर लगाने के प्रयास हो रहे हैं। कुछ उद्यमों को उत्पादन के क्षेत्र से निकाल कर बाहर कर दिया गया है, ताकि उन पर अठारह के बजाय चाईस फीसद जीएसटी वसूला जा सके। जाहिर है, इससे उन क्षेत्रों के कारोबार पर असर पड़ेगा और कर वसूली का लक्ष्य पूरा नहीं हो पाएगा। इसलिए आर्थिक विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि इस तरह कर बढ़ा कर अर्थव्यवस्था को पटरी पर लाना संभव नहीं होगा।

रिजर्व बैंक अपनी दरों में कटौती इसलिए करता है कि बाजार में पूंजी का प्रवाह और उद्योग–धंधों में निवेश बढ़े। पर जब वह अपने हाथ रोके रखता है, तो उसका अर्थ होता है कि उसे जल्दी ही अर्थव्यवस्था में सुधार की उम्मीद नहीं है। यानी बैंकों का ऋण कारोबार पहले ही धीमा चल रहा था, रेपो दरों में कटौती न होने से उसमें कुछ तेजी आने की उम्मीद भी धुंधली हो गई है। बैंकों का कारोबार मंद होने का अर्थ है कि उत्पादन, विपणन, विनिर्माण आदि सभी क्षेत्रों के प्रदर्शन पर बुरा असर पड़ता है। पहले ही प्रत्यक्ष निवेश आकर्षित करना सरकार के लिए मुश्किल बना हुआ है और वाहन उद्योग, कपड़ा उद्योग जैसे क्षेत्रों पर मंदी की बुरी मार पड़ी है। उस पर विकास दर की रफ्तार धीमी होने से बाहरी निवेश आने की उम्मीद और क्षीण हो गई है। इस तरह रोजगार सृजन के क्षेत्र में नई संभावनाओं के द्वार खुलना भी मुश्किल है। इस स्थिति से पर पाने के लिए सरकार को व्यावहारिक उपायों पर विचार करना होगा।

बुजुर्गों की फिफ्र

समाज में बुजुर्गों के जीवन में मुश्किलों को कम करने के मकसद से लंबे समय से कवायदें चल रही हैं, लेकिन आज भी वे व्यावहारिक स्वरूप नहीं ले सकी हैं। इस मामले में समय–समय पर कई तरह के कानूनी प्रावधान किए गए, जिनके तहत बेटे–बेटियों से लेकर दूसरे संबंधों की भी जिम्मेदारियां तय की गई हैं। लेकिन आमतौर पर व्यवहार में उनके पालन को लेकर कई जगह लापरवाही देखी जाती है। इसके अलावा, कुछ सामाजिक संबंध ऐसे भी हैं, जो खुद को मौजूदा कानूनी प्रावधानों के दायरे से बाहर मानते हैं। हालांकि अब इस दिशा में भी कानूनों का विस्तार करने की कोशिशें जारी हैं, ताकि बुजुर्गों के आसपास मौजूद लोगों की भूमिकाएं कानूनी तौर पर निर्धारित की जा सकें। इस मकसद से केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने माता–पिता एवं वरिष्ठ नागरिकों के भरण–पोषण और कल्याण (संशोधन) अधिनियम, 2019 को मंजूरी दी है, जिसके तहत बुजुर्ग सास–ससुर की देखभाल करने में नाकाम रहने और मासिक गुजारा खर्च नहीं मुहैया कराने पर दामाद और बहू के खिलाफ भी मुकदमा चलाए जा सकने के प्रावधान किए गए हैं।

कई बार देखा जाता है कि कुछ परिवारों में बुजुर्ग अपने घर के बच्चों के बड़े हो जाने या विवाह होने पर उनके दूसरी जगहों पर चले जाने या फिर एक परिवार के रूप में जीवन शुरू करने के बाद अकेले हो जाते हैं। लेकिन पुत्र के अपनी पत्नी के साथ परिवार से अलग हो जाने से इतर यह भी संभव है कि किसी माता–पिता को केवल पुत्री हो। ऐसे में कानून के तहत अगर सिर्फ पुत्र की भूमिका तय होती है, तब बाकी लोग अपनी जिम्मेदारी समझना जरूरी नहीं समझते। जबकि पुत्री और दामाद की भी यह जवाबदेही है कि वे जरूरी होने पर अपने माता–पिता का खयाल रखें। यह सामाजिक संबंधों में मानवीयता और संवेदना को कायम रखने के लिए एक स्वाभाविक तत्त्व भी होना चाहिए। लेकिन अगर कुछ लोग इन संवेदनाओं का निर्वाह नहीं करते हैं, तो इसके लिए कानूनी व्यवस्था की पहलकदमी स्वागतयोग्य है। यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि जीवन की सांध्यबेला में भी बुजुर्गों को अपनी रोजमर्रा की जरूरतों के लिए आर्थिक के साथ–साथ मानसिक सहयोग की भी जरूरत होती है।

वक्त के साथ समाज का स्वरूप बदलना एक हद तक स्वाभाविक कहा जा सकता है। लेकिन समाज के घटक एक–दूसरे के साथ कुछ संवेदनाओं से जुड़े होते हैं। लेकिन इन संवेदनाओं की बुनियाद पर खड़े समाज में अमूमन हर व्यक्ति की कुछ जिम्मेदारियां भी होती हैं। यह समाज खुद भी विकसित करता है और इसे शासन की ओर से भी निर्धारित किया जाता है। हमारे समाज के मुख्य घटक परिवार के ढांचे में लगभग सभी पीढ़ियों की भूमिकाएं तय मानी जाती हैं। माता–पिता से उम्मीद की जाती है कि वे जिन्हें जन्म देते हैं, आत्मनिर्भर होने तक उनका खयाल रखें। फिर बच्चों से भी यह उम्मीद होती है कि अपने दम पर खुद होने के बाद वे अपने माता–पिता, अभिभावक या फिर घर के बुजुर्गों के लिए हर वह काम करें, जिनकी उन्हें जरूरत पड़ती है। इसी तरह की जिम्मेदारियों का निर्वहन किसी परिवार की संरचना को सहयोगात्मक, संपूर्ण, सेहतमंद बनाए रखता है और समाज को एक ठोस शक्त देता है। जबकि इसकी कड़ियों के ढीला होने पर समाज के सूत्र कमजोर होते हैं और इस तरह एक व्यापक बिखराव की जमीन बनती है, जिसका खमियांजना न केवल बुजुर्गों, बल्कि बाद की पीढ़ियों को भी भुगतना पड़ता है।

कल्पमेधा

प्रकृति अपनी प्रगति और विकास में रुकना नहीं जानती। हर अकर्मण्यता पर वह अपने शाप की छाप लगाती जाती है।
—गेटे

जनसत्ता

ईरान में प्रदर्शन और भारत की चिंताएं

सुजाता माथुर

निश्चित रूप से भारत अपने व्यापारिक और अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनयिक संबंधों को सिर्फ अमेरिकी चश्मे से नहीं देख सकता। हमें यह तो समझना ही होगा कि हम इसकी क्या कीमत चुका रहे हैं और इसकी भरपाई कैसे करेंगे।

बीते मंगलवार को एमनेस्टी इंटरनेशनल से मिली एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार ईरान में अब तक दो सौ आठ प्रदर्शनकारियों की मौत हो चुकी है। एमनेस्टी के एक अधिकारी के अनुसार इनमें से ज्यादातर मौतें पिछले एक सप्ताह में प्रदर्शनों को रोकने के लिए की गई सरकारी कार्रवाई के दौरान हुई हैं।

ईरान में पिछले 15 नवंबर से वहां की सरकार द्वारा तेल की कीमतों बढ़ाए जाने के विरोध में जबर्दस्त प्रदर्शन हो रहे हैं। सरकार इनसे निपटने के लिए पुलिस बल का सहारा ले रही है। उसने इंटरनेट पर भी पाबंदी लगा दी है। इसलिए देश के भीतर क्या हो रहा है, इसकी सही–सही जानकारी बाहर नहीं आ पा रही है। ईरान की संवाद समितियां आईआरआईवी और इरना पूरी तरह चुप हैं और वहां के अखबारों में इन प्रदर्शनों के बारे में खबरें नहीं छप रही हैं। लेकिन इधर–उधर से छन कर आ रही खबरों के अनुसार इन प्रदर्शनों ने वहां काफी उग्र रूप धारण कर लिया है। एमनेस्टी की रिपोर्ट इसका एक संकेत है। ईरान में इसकी भूमिका कैसे तैयार हुई, यह विस्तृत अध्ययन का विषय है, लेकिन असंतोष का तात्कालिक कारण ईंधन के संबंध में लागू

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किए गए वहां की सरकार के नए नियम ही हैं। नए नियम के अनुसार अब प्रत्येक मोटर मालिक को प्रतिमाह सिर्फ साठ लीटर पेट्रोल पंद्रह हजार रियाल प्रति लीटर की दर से मिलेगा। अगर वह इससे अधिक पेट्रोल खरीदता है तो उसे प्रति लीटर तीस हजार रियाल का भुगतान करना होगा।

इससे पहले मोटर मालिकों को दस हजार रियाल प्रति लीटर की दर से एक माह में ढाई सौ लीटर पेट्रोल खरीदने की अनुमति थी। जब तेल नियम में किए गए बदलावों के खिलाफ ये आंदोलन शुरू हुए तब ईरान सरकार के हवाले से जारी एक रिपोर्ट में बताया गया था कि नए नियम के तहत पेट्रोल पर लागू सब्सिडी हटाने से उसे जो धन प्राप्त होगा उससे देश के निम्न आयवर्ग के लोगों को नकद लाभ दिया जाएगा। बताया गया था कि इससे सरकार को प्रतिवर्ष तीन सौ ट्रिलियन रियाल की आय होगी और इस धन से जल्दी ही करीब अठारह मिलियन परिवारों की अतिरिक्त नगद भत्ता देना शुरू कर दिया जाएगा।

सरकार द्वारा मुहैया सब्सिडी के कारण ईरान में शेष विश्व के मुकाबले तेल की कीमत सबसे कम है। अमेरिकी प्रतिबंधों की वजह से ईरानी तेल निर्यात में बेहद गिरावट आई है और उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था चरमरा गई है। ऐसे में ईरान सरकार अपने घरेलू उपभोग पर सब्सिडी की कटौती कर रही है, ताकि कमजोर आयवर्ग के लोगों के लिए चलाई जा रही कल्याणकारी योजनाओं को वह जारी रख सके।

तेल की कीमतों में की गई इस वृद्धि के विरोध में शुरू हुए आंदोलन से कुछ ही दिन पहले भारत की महिला पत्रकारों का एक दल ईरान के विदेश मंत्री मोहम्मद जवाद जरीफ से मिला था। उसने अपनी बातचीत में जरीफ ने इस बात की पुष्टि की थी कि अमेरिकी प्रतिबंध के कारण तेल से प्राप्त होने वाला राजस्व गिरा और मुद्रास्फीति बढ़ी है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेकिन ईरान की अर्थव्यवस्था का आधार तेल है, इसलिए वह तेल बेचता रहेगा और बहुत से देश उससे तेल खरीदते भी रहेंगे। लेकिन उस व्यापार में भ्रष्टाचार पनपेगा और संभव है कि पारदर्शिता भी न रहे।

जरीफ ने कहा कि इन प्रतिबंधों के चलते बहुत से देशों ने ईरान से तेल खरीदना बंद कर दिया है। हम समझते हैं कि कोई भी देश अमेरिका के खिलाफ जाकर अपना अहित नहीं करना चाहता, लेकिन उनके देश को इस बात से काफी तकलीफ

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हुई है कि भारत जैसे बड़े लोकतंत्र और दुनिया में तेल के तीसरे नंबर के सबसे बड़े उपभोक्ता ने भी अमेरिका के आगे घुटने टेक दिए हैं और ईरान से तेल का आयात बंद कर दिया है। ईरान की लगता है कि भारत जैसे बड़े देश को अमेरिकी दादागिरी के सामने झुकना नहीं चाहिए था।

जरीफ ने कहा कि दरअसल, इससे दोनों देशों का अहित होगा। आप हमारा तेल नहीं खरीदेंगे तो हम आपका चावल, मसाले, चाय और अन्य रासायनिक उत्पाद नहीं खरीदेंगे। फिलहाल अपने परंपरागत सांस्कृतिक और राजनीतिक रिश्ते को शायद हम कुछ समय तक और बचाए रख सकें।

ईरान भारत का दूरस्थ पड़ोसी है और उसके साथ हमारा लंबा ऐतिहासिक और सांस्कृतिक रिश्ता रहा है। इसके अलावा चार अन्य ऐसे महत्त्वपूर्ण क्षेत्र हैं, जिनमें ईरान के साथ भारत का गहरा संबंध रहा है। उसमें पहला है ऊर्जा का क्षेत्र। कच्चे तेल

के लिए ईरान दुनिया का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा निर्यातक है। ईरान में तेल के तीसरे नंबर के सबसे बड़े उपभोक्ता ने भी अमेरिका के आगे घुटने टेक दिए हैं और ईरान से तेल का आयात बंद कर दिया है। ईरान की लगता है कि भारत जैसे बड़े देश को अमेरिकी दादागिरी के सामने झुकना नहीं चाहिए था।

और गैस के लिए यानी अपनी ऊर्जा जरूरतों के लिए हम जिन चार–पांच मुख्य देशों पर निर्भर हैं, उनमें ईरान का दूसरा स्थान है। हमारी ऊर्जा की साठ प्रतिशत जरूरतें ईरान और इस क्षेत्र के अन्य देशों से पूरी होती हैं। ईरान हमें प्रतिदिन चार लाख पच्चीस हजार बैरल तेल की आपूर्ति करता रहा है और उसके बदले में भारत उसके तेल और गैस उद्योग में निवेश करने वाले देशों में शामिल हैं।

दूसरा महत्त्वपूर्ण क्षेत्र है कनेक्टिविटी यानी संपर्क या पारगमन सुविधा। ईरान के रास्ते हमें अफगानिस्तान, तुर्कमेनिस्तान और उज्बेकिस्तान जैसे कई मुक्तों तक व्यापार संपर्क बढ़ाने की सुविधा मिली है। अफगानिस्तान, खासतौर से चारों ओर से जमीन से घिरा हुआ देश है और पाकिस्तान

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