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**Unending stench of corruption
Besmirched reputation of UPA-II
by Inder Malhotra**

OVER the last six months or so, a cascade of scams and scandals — ranging from the sale of 2G Spectrum to the daylight robbery in the Commonwealth Games to the Adarsh building racket in Mumbai and the burning of a district official by oil mafia in another part of Maharashtra — has not just overshadowed all other issues except high prices. It has also generated mounting anger within the country and has badly besmirched Rising India's image abroad. Rare is a prestigious publication overseas that hasn't underscored that corruption, though a part of India's life from ancient times has never before been so alarmingly high as now.

The latest issue of *The Economist*, that has written on the subject in recent weeks more than once, has deemed it necessary this week to devote not one but two articles to the subject. The heading of one is "A Rotten State", the sub-heading of the other: "Congress drags its feet over tackling graft. It may pay a heavy price". Evidently, no one seems impressed the Congress spokespersons' almost daily (or should one say, in view of TV talk shows, nightly?) claim that their party has taken firm action against corruption, unlike other political parties when they were in power.

For, the action in the 2G Spectrum mega scam came much too late and with obvious reluctance. It was in 2007 that A. Raja, then minister for telecommunications, perpetrated the spectacular loot. All concerned knew it. Yet, after the May 2009 general election, he was re-appointed to his old post ostensibly because of "compulsions of coalition politics". The Radia tapes give a flavour of how this was done. Only after the damning report by the Comptroller and Auditor-General was he asked to resign. It also says something about the Congress' crusade against corruption that the ruling party resisted the united Opposition's demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe for months and surrendered only after an entire session of Parliament had gone waste. Of late, the pursuit of the suspects in the Spectrum scandal has indeed been impressive. But this has nothing to do the Congress or the UPA of which it is the core. Mr Raja is in jail and the

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has questioned the wife and daughter of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and patriarch of the Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam, M. Karunanidhi. It is because the Supreme Court is directly supervising the CBI's investigations.

Nothing underscores this more vividly than the case of Hasan Ali Khan, the Pune-based stud farm owner alleged to be the country's biggest tax evader as well as the biggest hoarder of

black money in secret bank accounts in tax havens overseas. The shocking handling of his case demonstrates what happens when the higher judiciary does not monitor the functioning of the government's investigating and enforcement agencies. Normally, there should be no room for judicial interference in this respect. But, alas, the functioning of these agencies ceased to be normal decades ago.

Once again it was way back in 2007 when it was found that Mr Khan had amassed \$8 billion in Swiss banks and he could be involved in gunrunning and even financing terrorism. Despite such grave allegations, nothing whatever happened to him for more than three years while he strutted around the country with impunity.

On one occasion, when the people's demand for his arrest became too persistent, the police reported that he could not be traced though anyone could have seen him at Pune Race Course. And so things might have gone on indefinitely had these stark facts not driven the Supreme Court to asking the government's law officers: "What the hell is going on in this country"? The next question the Supreme Court Judges asked was why hadn't there been "custodial interrogation" of the man.

No wonder, soon afterwards and barely 24 hours before the Union Government was to appear again in the Supreme Court, the Enforcement Directorate took Mr Khan into custody for interrogation. But the fiasco that followed could not have been worse or more revealing. The ED did ask for Mr Khan's custody for 14 days but, despite being given three days to furnish evidence to back up its request, offered material so flimsy that Mumbai's Chief Metropolitan Magistrate had no option but to release Mr Khan on bail. Under the circumstances, is it any surprise that most people believe that the ED botched the case not on its own but under instruction "from above", a charming euphemism for its political masters?

This focuses attention on what is the heart of the matter. Bribery and black money, especially when stashed in tax havens of which there are no fewer than 77, are obviously the two sides of the same cursed coin. They are also mutually reinforcing. However, the perception in the country is that the powers that be are even more indulgent to the crooks plundering the country and stashing black money abroad than to the other law-breakers including those with the gift of the grab. The motivation for this is said to be that hoarders of black money in foreign banks often act also as front men for high profile political leaders.

That should explain the widespread skepticism about the government's repeated plea that its commitment to the "confidentiality clause" in the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) with the countries concerned prevents it from disclosing the names of even those holders of secret accounts who are caught in the act. Even if this is allowed to pass, people ask, why hasn't the government yet ratified the UN Convention on Corruption and Black Money that it had signed in 2005? Timely ratification would have made it easier to compel foreign banks to come clean. In any case, in a country where top-secret military files are sometimes found on the roadside, the zeal to protect the anonymity of criminals is rather touching.

Nor should it be forgotten that the big blow that the Hasan Ali Khan case has delivered to the UPA government's already dwindling credibility has come in the wake of the Supreme Court's mortifying verdict quashing the indefensible appointment of Mr P. J. Thomas as Central Vigilance Commissioner. The Prime Minister has accepted the responsibility for this "error of judgement". But that hasn't persuaded the BJP, despite differences within its leadership, to close the issue. Its task is facilitated by the blame game that is going on. And

as Mr Thomas has decided to file a revision petition in the Supreme Court, it has given the sordid episode a fresh lease of life.

Constituting the JPC **It may not help solve the problem** by P.D.T. Achary

THE Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) has come to occupy the national attention in an unprecedented way basically because of the stridency of the demand from the Opposition for the constitution of the JPC and the vehemence with which this demand was rejected by the Treasury Benches till the other day. The whole of the winter session of Parliament got washed out in this curious parliamentary battle. Finally, it was decided to constitute the JPC. As was expected, after it has been set up the issue of 2G spectrum is off Parliament's radar.

When the agitation for setting up the JPC was at its peak, a lot of misinformation about the role, functions and powers of a parliamentary committee also began to spread. It was made to appear as if a JPC has unlimited powers to investigate any matter or anybody in any manner it chooses. It was also said that a JPC is different from other parliamentary committees inasmuch as it can call the ministers and even the Prime Minister for evidence.

There was considerable worry in the official circles that if the JPC is set up the Prime Minister will be summoned before it and he, thereupon, will put in his papers. It is not clear whether this bureaucratic worry, borne out of ignorance of parliamentary procedures and practices, was at the root of the stubborn resistance to the formation of the JPC. However, the Prime Minister's clear statement that he is prepared to go before any parliamentary committee set at rest all doubts and worries about an imagined resignation.

A JPC is an ad hoc committee of Parliament which is formed for a specific purpose. It does not have any supernatural powers. The JPC's powers are all derived from the terms of reference adopted by Parliament. As a matter of fact, in a fundamental sense, investigation is not a part of the legislative jurisdiction of the House. However, the British Parliament, which is the mother of all parliaments, acquired the investigative power being the "High Court of Parliament". In ancient times, during the early stages of its evolution, Parliament had the judicial powers of the state vested in it and it used to be described as the "High Court of Parliament". This power of investigation remained with parliaments though the judicial powers of the state were separated from this body.

But the basic question that arises in the context of investigation by a parliamentary committee is not whether it has all the powers required to carry out this task or whether its powers are limited by the terms of reference. The question which needs careful examination is how effective these committees are. Parliament, in fact, functions through its committees. The Lok Sabha alone has around 40 committees, including the departmentally-related Standing Committees. One notable fact about these committees is that on most of the issues these function on a non-political basis. This is said to be a very unique aspect of the functioning of parliamentary committees in India. However, it does not mean that on politically contentious issues there will always be a consensus. But by and large, the Parliamentary Committees have upheld a healthy tradition of maintaining political neutrality in dealing with issues.

Mr P.C. Chacko, Chairman of the newly appointed JPC, said the other day as quoted by newspapers that the infrastructure of the committee was weak because it lacked technical expertise required to deal with a subject like 2G Spectrum. He is in a way right in his assessment about the capabilities of the Secretariat in dealing with very complex subjects like spectrum. This certainly has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of a high profile investigative body of Parliament such as the JPC. But this is only one part of the problem.

This writer has long years of experience in supervising the work of Parliamentary Committees. Without any fear of contradiction it can be said that the examination of issues by the Parliamentary Committees is not as effective as it is expected to be or even as it used to be earlier. Reasons are many. The problem begins with the selection of members for the committees which is done by the respective parties. Rule 254 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha says that the members of a committee are either appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker. In reality, the members of a committee are selected by their party leadership and forwarded to the Speaker. So, the appointment or election by the House or nomination by the Speaker is just a formality. When the members are selected the parties seldom look at the special interest or specialisation of the members. It is often a random selection. The result is that there are many square pegs in round holes. A selection made on the basis of the qualification, special interests and suitability for the specific job, etc, will go a long way in enriching the committees because the members will then take genuine interest in the deliberations of the committees and contribute to its work.

There is a general feeling that due to other preoccupations some members do not come to the committee meetings fully prepared. There are occasions when some members come into the meeting room even without reading the agenda. This happens mainly because their commitments in the constituencies leave them little time for hard work in Parliament or in committees. Then, the questioning of the government officials in the meetings is often unplanned. Sometimes questions unrelated to the issue under discussion are put which shift the focus away from the main topic and the evidence from the officials remains incomplete and many important points do not get highlighted.

In the earlier times, members used to assemble in the chamber of the Chairman well before the meeting and jointly plan the line of questioning of the officials. Persistent and well-planned questioning of the officials will bring out many vital information. Besides, this created a sense of awe in the minds of government officials who took the parliamentary committees very seriously. Even the most seasoned and "tough" Secretary would sweat when a parliamentary committee got into its stride.

Appearing before a parliamentary committee and that too committees like the PAC, the PU, EC, etc, was almost a nightmare for senior officers of the government. Senior members with their knowledge of the subject and capacity to articulate would be devastating in their comments.

In one such sitting of a committee — it was, I think, either PAC or the PU -Mr Ravindra Verma, a veteran parliamentarian, told a senior Secretary who was not coming to the point even after the Chairman repeatedly asked him to be relevant, "Mr. Secretary, you are creating the bush and beating around it". Such witty and intelligent comments are very rare these days. The sense of awe that was there earlier among the bureaucrats has gone and now there is a growing tendency to take these committees "lightly".

Coming to the point made by Mr P.C. Chacko relating to the weak infrastructure of the Secretariat, it is true that there is not sufficient expertise in the Secretariat to deal with complex and technical subjects like spectrum. In fact, when the Standing Committees of Parliament were created, there was an apprehension in the minds of members that the staff of the Secretariat was not equipped with sufficient knowledge of the technicalities of budget. This problem did exist in the initial stages, but over a period of time the staff acquired a certain amount of knowledge about budgetary and related matters.

When I was Secretary-General one of the important initiatives I took was to send the staff to prestigious training institutions for getting training in financial and budgetary matters. Most of the staff got training in finance, accounts, management and other professional areas. The basic idea was to equip the parliamentary staff with the necessary knowledge so that parliamentary scrutiny of the executive becomes more effective.

Constant efforts at capacity building of the parliamentary staff are essential for the effective functioning of Parliament. It should be remembered that it is the officials of the Secretariat who draft the report. So their knowledge of the subject is the key to a good report. Of course, a Parliamentary Committee can obtain the assistance of any expert. But it would always be better to have in-house expertise in various matters. What is required is a proper perspective on the requirements of the system, and quick and purposive action to meet those requirements.

The present JPC has very senior and experienced members who are expected to make the deliberations in the committee more informed and purposive. However, the JPC like other parliamentary committees can only make recommendations which are not mandatory. The government may or may not accept the findings and recommendations of this committee. Further, the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament too is investigating the 2G spectrum and is thus covering practically the same field. In fact, a convention is followed by the committees of Parliament whereby a subject which is considered by one committee is not taken up by the other committees. The reason is that there is a possibility, though remote, of two committees coming to different or even contradictory findings. Such an eventuality will destroy the credibility of parliamentary probe.

JPCs have, in the past, exposed systemic weaknesses and deficiencies and suggested measures to fix them. However, nothing much seems to have been done by way of follow-up. But, then, these weaknesses and deficiencies are symptoms of the decadence of a society which has lost its civilisational moorings. A JPC cannot address this problem. So, society will have to look beyond the JPC.

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Protecting women from domestic violence
Notwithstanding many legal reforms, societal responses to domestic violence still largely exclude legal intervention. Women's access to these laws is very rare as male batterers are not arrested, prosecuted, or sentenced as severely as other violent offenders which are confirmed by studies.
Vineet Kapoor

VIOLENCE in the private sphere of the family and the victimisation of women in the intimate relationships has acquired legitimacy and urgent attention in the legal discourse.

Starting from its recognition as a crime in the last 40 years, the issue is now actively advocated by women's rights group as an important concern of their human rights.

This recognition identifies violence in the private sphere not merely as a crime, but locates the context of this crime into the systemic process of structural subordination of women in a gendered social order where violence reconfirms and reproduces those gender hierarchies through fear, which produce this violence in the first instance.

That is why the criminal justice response is not similar to other crimes happening in the public sphere. There is a gap between the normative and legal framework on the one hand and the accessibility of justice and law enforcement on the other. Though progressive and social justice based laws have been enacted for the emancipation of the subordinated people and groups, the laws related to domestic violence remain victim to gaps.



The central context of the problem of domestic violence and women's access to justice is that despite a proliferation of laws, domestic violence is still perceived as less condemnable than other forms of abuse. Locating violence against women as denial of human rights raises fundamental concerns for the women's access to justice and how the legal order of any country addresses this issue.

The context of subordinated social existence of most women, when seen through a human rights angle, depends on how best a domestic legal order responds to these expectations (Dairam: 2004). Despite a proliferation of laws in this direction, there is a lack of proper law enforcement in case of domestic violence reflected by an international phenomenon cutting across different countries.

This phenomenon confirms to a gendered social order of subordination in which women exist and struggle against their victimisation. The high stakes the Indian Constitution attaches to the question of equality, by enshrining it as a fundamental right, whose mandate covers the issue of non-discrimination on grounds of sex, gives much credence to human rights readings of legal discourse and women's rights in India.

The women's emancipation and rights realisation on the ground, however, forms a different context. The brutalised and subordinated existence of a large proportion of women within their social environment gives formidable challenge to visions of equality and human rights which inform most of the 'progressive' laws designed to promote social justice and social change.

The evaluation of women's access to justice gains primacy when we find that the progress in law has not often matched with the progress in providing justice to women.

Some scholars working on women's human rights maintain that certain sections of society may encourage a culture of violence due to the socially constructed view of women as flawed and wayward creatures who require chastisement for their own and social good. The encouragement may stem from a dominant focus on male self-identity, using violence against women to define and differentiate men from the inferior 'other'.

It was until late 1960s that the problem was seriously scrutinised and the public concern started mounting against it internationally. The issue of domestic violence came under the sharp focus of second wave feminism from 1970s onwards when the feminists attacked the patriarchal legitimacy of violence and talked of women's rights to security within the family and their claims to equality and liberty within the private sphere.

They argued that "personal is political" and that the inner world of family should be open to public scrutiny so that the inequalities and power relations within the family could be made visible.

Since the popular conception of violence at home did not merit much consideration as a punishable offence, the feminist movement, aimed at attaining substantive equality for women, regarded the domestic violence as one of the chief disabilities for the promotion of women's rights and their claims to equality. Women's rights movement struggled hard to campaign for the inclusion of various manifestations of domestic violence as a crime within the criminal justice system to get law on the side of the women in their struggle for justice. The feminist movement exerted influence in extending the reach of criminal law within the insulated world of private sphere manifested by family and the home.

By 1980s and 1990s, many countries legislated for inclusion of domestic violence within the criminal law while most countries still did not legislate and were slow to respond. Most countries which did not legislate against domestic violence as a distinct crime continue to treat it under its criminal assault laws.

There was growing realisation since late 1980s that domestic violence needs special attention and is closely associated with women's rights. Due to the growing influence and impact made by the women's movement between 1970s and 1990s, the issue of domestic violence attained a primacy in at least the formal stance taken in public policy and criminal justice system of many countries.

The local women's movement in many countries, inspired and energised by the international women's human rights movement greatly contributed in exerting pressure on their respective governments to change their policy stance especially in the criminal justice system to comply with the ongoing international standard setting.

The international developments in this direction gave strength to the demands from the women's rights groups in India. The recognition of domestic violence as a crime in India was brought about in the early 1980s after a sustained campaign by feminist groups and women activists all over the country. There was a huge demand for tackling the criminalisation of dowry death and domestic violence which led to the enactment of Section 498A in the IPC in 1983, Section 304B in 1986 and corresponding provisions in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

The criminalisation of domestic violence in the form of Sections 498A and 304B (dowry death) were considered significant developments in law in correcting historical, legal, and moral disparities in the legal protections afforded to abused women. It sought for the first time to bring the issue of domestic or family violence out of the protected private realm of the family and into the public domain in India.

Despite these legal reforms, societal responses to domestic violence still largely exclude legal intervention. Women's access to these laws is very rare as male batterers are not arrested, prosecuted, or sentenced as severely as other violent offenders which are confirmed by studies done by several organisations and NGOs.

There are problems in access to justice and implementation of these laws. The police often exercises discretion in avoiding arrest while responding to domestic violence incidents and emphasises on mediation and conciliation.

Public prosecutors fail to actively pursue cases of domestic violence under Section 498A, as often women turn hostile during the prosecution and agree to drop the charges. Sentences tend to be less serious for those convicted of domestic violence.

The result of these processes has been a higher dismissal rate for domestic violence cases at the prosecution stage, compared to other violence cases, and less serious sentences. The passing of the specialised legislation in October 2006, called The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, is a significant development in this direction as it provides the much-needed civil law remedies to help victims of domestic violence.

These criminal laws and the civil law provisions now make an impressive set of laws designed to deal with the domestic violence and to provide justice to the victims of domestic violence. Despite this, the question that arises is how far these laws are being used by the victimised women.

The delivery of these laws within a gendered social order raises a number of concerns regarding the human rights of victimised women who exist in a position of structural subordination, which leads to formidable barriers in access to justice.

As a background to discuss women's access to justice in case of domestic violence, it is useful to first discuss the domestic violence as an issue of women's human rights. Violence against women is also an issue of the women's human rights as the systematic perpetration of violence on women is a result of the subordinated position of women in society which in itself raises questions on the right to equality based on grounds of sex.

Since violence against women mostly occurs in the private sphere of the family, the human rights of women as an individual need to be considered while dealing with policy issues attached to domestic violence. The human rights tenets give credence to the responsibility

of the state. Therefore, the role of the state in providing for need-based policy provisions for access to justice for women need to be urgently addressed.

As for policy, the government will have to consider that the women's lack of access to justice in cases of domestic violence remains victim to the structural issues of women's subordination which gets reflected in the delivery of justice and its distance from the victim, throwing challenges at law, justice and governance in the country. How this law reaches women and how and in what context it is delivered would determine whether women have access to justice as equal citizens.

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Economics of peace

A new agenda for research in India

by Shivalli M. Chouhan

THERE is no way to peace, peace is the way". When Mahatma Gandhi advocated this, little did he know that some day India will score a low 128th rank out of 149 in the 2010 Global Peace Index (GPI) ranking released recently. Produced by the Institute for Economic and Peace, the index ranks 149 countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe according to their internal and external peacefulness, using 23 indicators. India's ranking stands at 19 out of 25 countries in the region.

In the midst of global economic collapse, dwindling economic resources, widening financial inequalities, expanding income gaps, accelerating climate change, the ever lasting policy questions related to global stability, security and peace have resurfaced in new light. Emerging economies like India should be more concerned about these questions since the exposure of these economies to global world through the process of globalisation has increased their vulnerability at a premature stage of development.

Institutional, social and political globalisation has not been able to keep pace with economic globalisation. India has reached the stage of High Mass Consumption in terms of Rostow's stages of development but failed to convert it into High Consumption by Masses stage. Hence, post- economic reforms of 90s, whereas the annual growth rate GDP at current prices of India has increased from US\$ 317.5 billion in 1990 to US\$ 1.31 trillion in 2009, the inequality as measured by Ginni's coefficient has also increased multifold to 0.37, suggesting a highly skewed distribution of wealth.

This inequality has fuelled internal and external conflicts and social unrest of many forms and has set in pace a realignment of social relations. The groups with lesser share of cake are trying to assert their identity in newer forms, thereby diverting the focus from their economic status in society. Many of these newer forms are not only retrogressive in nature but pose a great threat to social stability.

The emergence of khap panchayats and their reassertion on following the illogical medieval traditions in the name of culture; a powerful Naxalite movement backed by local population who feels 'left out' in the growth story of the country; growing voices to demand reservations for their castes; an increased focus on caste, community and regional identities; new demands for separate states; honour crimes are vivid examples of unhealthy tendencies in the country. Experts are unanimous in their prediction of various types of resource wars such as water wars in the near future.

The past decade judged a person's worth more from his pay package rather than his contribution to society. A person's social significance is identified with the number of flats he

owns rather than his role in nation building. People started jumping this blind fray willingly or unwillingly just to maintain their worth on this fragile social foundation. The education system and the politico-administrative system have been reoriented towards achieving this goal.

Corruption of various forms became an accepted norm. We became unmindful of the fact that the human mind, if left unleashed without any moral or social control, is capable of finding justifications for all anti-social or immoral acts it may chose to indulge in. Terrorism, financial scams, crime especially white collar ones, tax evasion, black money, bribery, participation in mindless mob behaviour, irresponsible corporate behaviour as in the case of Bhopal Gas tragedy etc. are some of the manifestations of unreigned and unregulated human minds.

An increase in mental disorders of varying degrees also indicates a mismatch between the personal-societal value system and a system which promotes peace, harmony and a healthy functional behavior in human minds. The impact of these unhealthy trends on productivity and efficiency of human resource should not be ignored by a sensible economist.

Therefore, the understanding of various issues concerning the inter-relationship of economics and peace has assumed a new significance in India. The agenda for research in this area is very wide and has to address economics of peace at various levels — be it at an individualistic micro level or at the societal, national and international macro level.

Peace economics embraces all aspects of the economics of defence in terms of the cost benefit analysis and opportunity cost of defence; the peace dividend and its various forms; disarmament and its economic impacts especially in terms of international trade; industrial relations, management of human resources and its optimal utilisation; socially responsible commercial practices, etc. Examples include the study of alliances and burden-sharing; military spending in developed and developing nations; arms races; terrorism/extremism, its economic causes and effects; the impact of disarmament on employment and unemployment; the prospects for conversion and the role of public policy in assisting the transition; the costs and benefits of arms control regimes; the arms trade; economic sanctions and the role of the United Nations; the economics of distribution of resources etc.

Further topics can be grouped around efficiency issues including human resource productivity, peace budgeting, the military production function, procurement policies, defence industries, military manpower, internal markets in the armed forces and public choice issues, evaluation of optimum level of personal wealth creation and related various trade-offs.

In the midst of global economic collapse, India should seek wiser systems of commerce and more equitable economic relationships. While it is imperative to understand the history of India's economic structures to know as to what went wrong, it is equally important to explore the possibility of collaborative commercial practices such as cooperative businesses, complementary currencies, green business, green jobs, slow money, slow food, living wage initiatives, social finance, credit unions, BALLE (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies) etc.

The challenge is to evolve an equitable participatory economic model involving individuals, businesses and organisations to channelise their energies and efforts to infuse fresh life into our failing social, economic and personal spaces.

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INDIAN EXPRESS

Off with his head

Tavleen Singh Posted online: Sat Mar 19 2011, 23:16 hrs

Last week, when it was announced that there were plans afoot to set income tax sleuths on to those who invest in Gujarat, my first reaction was disbelief. Surely not, I thought, not when foreign investors are fleeing India in droves, not when the Reserve Bank has itself pointed out ominously that foreign direct investment in India has dropped by nearly 40 per cent in recent months. Why would a prime minister whose expertise lies in the field of economics allow such insanity to go ahead?

The reasons could most certainly not be economic, so I started searching for political reasons and realisation quickly dawned. Narendra Modi has long been seen by political pundits in Delhi, especially those of Congress persuasion, as the only man who could in 2014 challenge their glamorous young prince and so he must be destroyed. Besides he has been flying too high for his own good, has he not? Always holding those conventions to boast about 'vibrant' Gujarat and always making jokes about the Congress Party that the silly old 'aam aadmi' laughs his head off at without noticing that they are laughing on the same side as a merchant of death, a 'maut ka saudagar'. Remember when the financial scandals started falling out of the central government's cupboard at so alarming a rate and how he made that speech in which he said 'munni badnaam hui'. How dare he? Who did he mean? The Congress Party or she who leads it? So off with his head.

Not easily done politically because somehow he has managed, wretched man, to keep winning elections (with even Muslims voting for him), so someone in Delhi came up with the cunning plan to destroy him economically. Ordering income tax raids on political opponents is an old Congress practice that was used recklessly and with powerful effect by first

Mrs Gandhi during the Emergency and then again by V P Singh when he was Rajiv's finance minister. He went too far, though, because he started to raid Rajiv's friends and so he had to go. But to get back to Gujarat. Under that 'maut ka

saudagar', its economy has climbed to dizzying heights. Even a casual visitor can see the speed at which roads get built, the availability of electricity in remote villages, the check dams that help irrigate areas that have never seen irrigation, the primary health centres that actually work. Investors see much more. They see an administration that is less corrupt than most and a chief minister who fulfills his promises. If he tells you that he will make land available to you in a week, he ensures that this happens, and if he promises a single window to clear your projects, he delivers. These are not things that Congress chief ministers can do because their primary concern is to ensure that the 'high command' is kept happy by regular and large infusions into the coffers of the party. They can get away with no governance at all as long as they do this. Then they have to ensure that they pay regular obeisance to the party's ruling Dynasty and by the time all this is over, there is little time for doing anything else. So the best governed states in India are those that are not run by Congress chief ministers and the only way to keep them in check is to curb them in every possible way. If it is income tax raids in Gujarat, it is unwieldy schemes like the NREGA in Bihar. You see when the central government puts in place a scheme like this then the state government loses some of its own control over funds and welfare policies. They regularly complain about this but their complaints fall on deaf ears because this is an area in which Sonia Gandhi and her cabinet, the National Advisory Council, are personally interested.

The end result is that India, so glittering, so full of allure only six months ago, is now beginning to look like it did before economic liberalisation. It is beginning to look like a dangerous country to invest in and in this bleak scenario there is Gujarat that has so far continued to shine like a beacon where foreign and Indian investors are concerned. This cannot be allowed to happen because it makes the rest of India look even worse than it already does. Besides, we all know that Narendra Modi is an evil man, a merchant of death, so who cares if all his efforts to make Gujarat rich and prosperous are endangered by famously corrupt income tax inspectors. Of course, there is the small problem that the people of Gujarat may suffer as well but since they have been regularly rejecting Congress at election time who cares about them. Off with their heads as well.

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TIMES OF INDIA 19.3.11

Lessons from Japan, review N-projects, says Kalam

Abdul Kalam

PUNE: The images of radiation-laden steam clouds rising from the four tsunami-struck nuclear reactors in Japan have raised doubts about setting up nuclear power plants in India. While the political leadership is wary of the costs of a disaster and protests are growing louder against the proposed [Jaitapur plant](#), former president APJ [Abdul Kalam](#) on Friday said that [India](#) must learn from Japan's calamity and review all the planned nuclear projects in the country.

"It's a big experience for all of us. Though it is a rare disaster, India should learn from it. In the light of what is happening in Japan, all our planned nuclear projects should be reviewed," Kalam said.

He was at the fifth convocation ceremony of the Defence Institute of Advanced Technology (DIAT) in Pune. Kalam was honoured with a doctorate degree for his contribution to defence research. Former chairman of the [Atomic Energy Commission Anil Kakodkar](#) and DIAT's vice-chancellor [L M Patnaik](#) were also present.

At an earlier interaction with scientists at the institute, Kalam said an integrated disaster management programme must be developed to deal with natural calamities. "We witnessed a combination of high-intensity earthquakes coupled with high intensity tides in Japan recently - a new threat to humanity. We need 'impossible technologies' and imaginative collaboration possibilities for advanced technologies," he said.

Nuclear research institutes and those devoted to defence research should pitch in with joint disaster management plans, he added.

Kalam also spoke on 'Dynamic profile for defence research - 2030. "It is essential to earmark at least 30 per cent of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) budget for developing futuristic systems required beyond 2030," he said.

The anti-ballistic missile programme and the BrahMos supersonic missiles were futuristic systems ahead of their times, he said, adding that they are in demand in the defence services and also have export potential.

He said some defence systems could be taken up by the DRDO that can be of use to the services and for export by 2030. These included unmanned reusable hypersonic missiles, ruggedised cyber warfare

system, visible and invisible micro RPVs for reconnaissance and surveillance, nuclear submarines armed with reusable hypersonic missiles and low-intensity warfare technologies, products and systems.

"All these systems and areas may need unique organisational collaborations, nationally and internationally, for design development leading to production and marketing," he said.

A technological revolution triggered by the convergence of bio-info-nano technologies can be looked at, Kalam said. "Information and communication technology have already converged. IT, combined with bio-technology, has led to bio-informatics. Now, nano-technology is knocking at our doors. It will replace microelectronics and many fields with application potential in medicine, electronics and material science," he added.

