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# **E-GOVERNANCE**

PIONEER 24.10.10 E-GOVERNANCE

## **Scam-rocked JPSC to go for electronic transparency**

Santosh Narayan

It is like arriving late but correctly for the otherwise tarnish-imaged Jharkhand Public Service Commission. Uncountable charges of malpractice, right from the tender process to selection of candidates for various examinations, have compelled the Commission to go online completely.

The Pioneer has accessed information suggesting that the high profile recruiter of the State is well set to install its own server for the purpose of making available admit cards, interview call, subject wise marks of all the appeared candidates, information about posts vacant and publishing advertisement directly on the internet. The initiative would lessen the manual workload on the Commission and also make it easy for the candidates to get relevant information with complete transparency.

A tender for installing the server would be published in early next week. The exercise is expected to cost Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh. The step is worthy in the backdrop of malign image of the Commission in conducting sundry examinations. The skeletons of mass level irregularities have attracted Vigilance probe involving eighteen examinations including Civil Services, Lecturer, JET, Junior Engineer/Assistant Engineer, Marketing Supervisor, Cooperative, Audit, Principal, Residential School Teacher, Pharmacy, Deputy Registrars of Universities.

Eighteen different Investigating Officers are probing the selection processes by seeking wide range of documents on almost daily basis.

Audit teams demand papers concerned to requisitions sought by the Government time to time, notifications issued, application forms of successful candidates, their answer sheets, final merit lists and results etc.

PIONEER 25.10.10 E-GOVERNANCE

### **Government to implement e-governance scheme in state next year**

After success of the pilot project in six districts under e-governance scheme, the state government is gearing up to implement the scheme all over state from beginning of next year.

Under the scheme, sponsored by central government, common service centres providing 35 types of services including issuance of land revenue documents, ration cards and birth-death certificates will be opened in rural areas, principal secretary IT & Electronics, Chandraprakash told on Sunday.

The scheme formally covering all districts of state will take off from January 2011 and in beginning the land related documents will be made available to farmers through common service centres, he said.

We have marked 35 services of nine important government departments for which electronic forms are being developed. All these services are proposed to be made available to common public by June 2012 and by that time each gram panchayat will have its own common service centre, said Chandrprakash.

# **INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

## **Generating employment with growth**

C.R.L. Narasimhan

AP A container is loaded onto a cargo ship at the Tianjin port in China. A number of countries, especially Japan, South Korea and more recently, China, have prospered on the back of an export-led strategy. File photo

For economic growth to be sustained it is essential that investments should result in productivity gains that are equitably shared between labour and capital. More wages would enhance consumption and hence boost domestic demand to counter a declining export market.

The flagship publication of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Trade and Development Report, 2010 (TDR), was released recently. As would befit a report that has its sub-title 'Employment, globalisation and development', the TDR reviews the experience of developing countries with export-oriented growth strategies over the past 30 years.

Of special topical interest is the question: do those export-oriented strategies generate sufficient decent jobs to absorb the labour surpluses that are typical of developing countries?

### **Basic tenets**

A review on these lines calls into question some of the basic tenets of growth strategies adopted by many countries.

A number of countries, especially Japan, South Korea and more recently China, have prospered on the back of an export-led strategy. The

strategy was considered worthy of emulation by others. In India, not long ago, the slogan 'export or perish' seemed to convey the urgency to make export promotion one of the top most objectives of macroeconomic policy. A variety of incentives and concessions, duty drawbacks and so on as well as exempting from taxation income earned from exports have been tried. The list is continuously updated through the five-year Foreign Trade Policy with its annual supplements. More recent additions to the list of export promotion measures include special economic zones (SEZs). While few would question the rationale of export promotion measures such as those obtaining in India, the point is that such measures distort macroeconomic policies. Concessions to one sector come at the cost of another. In recent times, countries, which have made exports their overriding priority, have subjugated other macroeconomic policies, notably the subordination of exchange rate policies to the export effort.

China has been accused of keeping the yuan deliberately undervalued to give an edge to its exporters. The country's alleged currency manipulation has sparked fears of retaliation by the U.S.

### **Focus on wages**

The focus of TDR is not on currency war but on wages. After studying the performance of developing countries over 30 years with export-led strategies, the TDR comes to the conclusion that most countries gained a competitive edge by keeping domestic wages low.

Persistently high employment was blamed on labour market rigidities that kept wages from falling to 'market clearing levels'.

The implication is that a policy that keeps wages low is justified in the context of exports. Labour-intensive industries such as garment manufacture, leather and leather goods, gems and jewellery as well as a whole range of extractive industries (mining) have apparently prospered because of low wages.

However, the TDR repudiates the premise strongly. In a macroeconomic sense, the approach is flawed.

One, wage increases spur growth of domestic demand and boost employment to satisfy that demand.

Two, it is, moreover, the expectation of rising domestic demand and favourable financing conditions rather than a reduction in unit labour costs that drives investment in productive capacity.

Three, an appropriate investment strategy ought to aim at distributing the productivity gains between labour and capital in a way that lifts domestic demand.

Four, monetary and fiscal policies should be reoriented towards strengthening domestic demand.

Towards that end, macroeconomic policy should also include what is known as an 'income policy' — a set of instruments and institution-building measures that would ensure that mass incomes rise along with average productivity growth. (Example of institution-building measure is strengthening collective bargaining among workers' and employers' associations).

Five, an appropriate income policy must ensure that productivity gains are distributed in such a way that the share of wages in national income does not fall as it has in many countries over the past four decades.

A sustained increase in wages in line with productivity gains will also ensure a sustained rise in domestic consumption which in turn will boost employment.

Six, drawing from the recent global economic and financial crisis, the report observes that counter-cyclical fiscal policy to stabilise demand has been rediscovered by many governments. Such policy will help in less dramatic times.

States should encourage infrastructure and offer other services that would enable profitable investment in productive capacity.

An employment-friendly monetary policy will keep credit costs for investment in fixed capital low and will protect the international competitiveness of domestic firms by preventing currency appreciation.

Finally, in many developing countries, including the poorest, public employment schemes are potential instruments of fighting unemployment and poverty.

In addition to reducing unemployment directly, they generate purchasing power that will have indirect employment effects on the rest of the economy.

# **NATIONALISM**

## **Kashmir yesterday and today**

Gautam Adhikari

WASHINGTON: [Arundhati Roy](#) is right. And she is wrong. She said the state of Jammu & Kashmir was "historically" not a part of India. But nor was India, as we know it.

The geopolitical entity we now call the [Republic of India](#) simply did not exist till the midnight hour of August 14/15, 1947. So, all its constituent parts technically did not constitute a whole we could legitimately call India until that hour. There was a [British Indian empire](#), there was a civilisation that we might call Indic and which encompassed a huge swathe of [South Asia](#), but formally there was no nation of India.

Historically, Kashmir was very much a part of that wider civilisation. Roy needs to read up that bit of Indian history. The kingdom of Kashmir was also a part, loosely, of British India, as were several other princely states. The states opted to join one of the two independent nations after that midnight hour in 1947. Jammu & Kashmir formally opted for India when [Maharaja Hari Singh](#), under attack from Pakistani army irregulars, signed India's [Instrument of Accession Act](#) on October 26, 1947.

So if Kashmir is not a legitimate part of India, and we should accordingly give it up to Pakistan, then much of India including, say, Baroda or Mysore, is illegitimate. We hope that is not what Roy implied when she said Kashmir was not an integral part of India. Fortunately, she has the right to say what she wants, even when she knows less than she ought to about a subject, because India's democratic Constitution allows her that freedom. She must not be prosecuted for sedition or for being naive.

Nor should Dileep Padgaonkar, now heading a committee entrusted with the job of exploring possible solutions for the Kashmir problem, be harassed for suggesting that [Pakistan](#) would have to be part of any move to resolve this dispute. Kashmir would not be a problem for India if Pakistan did not question the legitimacy of the state's accession to the Indian Union. To insist that the status of Kashmir is not a 'dispute' between India and Pakistan is nothing but silly, ultra-nationalist posturing.

In fact, the dispute is exclusively between the two nations over who should possess the state. It is not about 'independence' for the Kashmiri people. That is not to say that a section of Kashmiris in the Valley would not like independence; the contest between India and Pakistan, however, is about settling a Partition-era dispute.

As India prepares to receive President Barack Obama, several administration officials in this town have clarified publicly that the US does not see a role for itself mediating the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan unless it is invited to do so by both sides. That amounts to telling Pakistan, which has been asking for American intervention, that the US will not intervene if India doesn't want it.

The Indian position is that all differences between the two countries, including over Kashmir, should be reconciled bilaterally. That was what the two nations had signed up to in 1972 after negotiating the Shimla Agreement, which remains legally binding.

The problem is one of perception, internationally as well as, it seems from the pronouncements of Roy and friends, with a section of Indian opinion. Pakistan has successfully sold a lemon to the world that it is fighting for Kashmir's independence. It adds to the deceit by qualifying the portion of Kashmir it has taken over as 'Azad' or independent Kashmir. Which, of course, is nonsense. Pakistan's north-west frontier

areas enjoy a greater degree of effective independence from [Islamabad](#).

The fact is that neither India nor Pakistan is ready to offer independence to any part of Jammu & Kashmir, certainly not under those oft-cited UN resolutions asking for a plebiscite in J&K to assess how much popular support each country enjoys in the state. No plebiscite has taken place but several credible opinion polls in recent years have offered a glimpse of public opinion in Kashmir. One by the respected Chatham House of [London](#) showed barely 2 per cent support among people in the Valley for joining Pakistan. A majority in the Valley wanted independence but that's not on offer from either Pakistan or India. That is to say nothing of [China](#), which occupies 20 per cent of the state's territory, and no one in the world dares ask it to vacate.

Independence, if it is to be at all considered, becomes a complicated issue when we try to visualise it. Will it be independence just for the Muslim majority Valley? Or will it be also for Jammu, with a predominantly Hindu population, and Buddhist Ladakh, neither of which is particularly anxious to break with India? And who will protect that independence from the likely possibility that Pakistani army irregulars will pounce to merge it with the part it now controls and call it all Azad Kashmir?

Some will argue that an international force can be created, perhaps under UN auspices, and stationed in a truncated Kashmir to guarantee its independence. Yes, of course, like an international force is today guaranteeing protection for [Afghanistan](#) from marauding bands of ISI-directed [Taliban](#) and al-Qaida jihadis operating out of shelters in Pakistan, right?

Come on, get real.

*The writer is a FICCI-EWC fellow at East West Centre, Washington DC.*

# **POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT**

## **Caste over development**

Hari Shankar Vyas

There is complete confusion in Bihar. Though, all media surveys have predicted that Nitish will win, that does not mean that Bihar has come out of the mess of caste politics. If this were so, Nitish and Sushil Modi would not have lost in caste equations to decide the candidates. In caste politics, both have followed Lalu Yadav. The RJD chief has made a strong, strategic circle of Paswan, Yadavs, Muslims and Rajput voters. Hence, media surveys don't clearly predict Lalu's performance.

The impact of Nitish and his development works would certainly be there. All over the State people are praising his development drive. But if you ask them who will win, the reality of caste politics returns. Leaders and workers of all parties have only one answer: Anything can happen. Moreover, journalists are saying the same thing. The NDA has an edge but a hung Assembly, too, is a distinct possibility. There is no possibility of a clean sweep and a tough fight is in the air.

While selecting candidates, all parties gave importance to caste so the view is the Bihar result will be decided on caste equation. Caste politics would make Lalu stronger. Earlier, Muslim votes were not united. But, the stand taken by Muslim leaders and organisations on the Ayodhya verdict has gone in Lalu's favour. Nitish is also worried about this and that's why he first finalised candidates castewise and only then returned to the development plank. In election rallies, Nitish puts this question: You have given 15 years to those who only made big claims so can't you give one more term to me?

## LALU FACTOR

So, this election pivots around Nitish and Lalu. Both are confident. The RJD chief is claiming big, “only in two months Lalu will be your CM.” Indeed Lalu is fighting courageously and taking daring decisions. To give 75 seats to Paswan was one courageous step. To project himself as CM was also a gutsy move. But then, urban and forward caste voters are least worried over Lalu’s claim. There may be two reasons for this. One, people are sure that Nitish will return. But if this happens NDA would suffer a loss; those who don’t like Lalu will not go to vote.

Two, people may think it would not make any difference if Lalu wins. Again, this will hit NDA’s health. The current of Lalu’s defeat may prove fatal for NDA and Nitish.

## FIGHTING BOOTH

There is neither an anti-incumbency wave against Nitish nor are people dead against Lalu, like they were in 2005. In 2005, the forward votes had ensured Nitish’s victory but this time those would be divided. Nitish had come to power with the help of *sarvjan* votes but later on he followed caste politics. Nitish and his advisors argue: If Nitish had not done this, Lalu would have been the king of the OBC community. Likewise, Paswan would have been the king of Dalit community. They say that to erode the votebanks of Lalu and Paswan, Nitish has done politics of ultra-backward and maha-Dalits. Today maha-Dalits, ultra-backward and Pasmada Muslims have their own identity. If they come out in favour of NDA, Nitish would comfortably get the majority. These voters have got political ambitions. Maha-Dalits, ultra-backward and women have experienced political empowerment, and this fact would fetch votes for Nitish Kumar. Oppositely, some experts say that when Yadavs and Paswans will be there to manage the booths with great obsession, then Maha-Dalits and ultra-backward castes would face difficulty in casting their votes. In this scenario Yadavs, Paswans and

Rajputs would cast their votes in great numbers and the booth management of JDU-BJP will be ineffective. But there is a catch in it: on each and every seat there is great fight among candidates to win the election so they will manage everything. Any candidate from any party will not allow any mismanagement at booth level.

## CHANGING TONE

BJP is changing its tone in Bihar. The party wants that it should be equally given credit for good governance in the last five years. So it has been decided that governance of the NDA Government should be used in place of the CM's name during election campaign. BJP has directed all its leaders to demand votes for the NDA Government, not for CM or deputy CM. Actually, opinion poll done in the last 3-4 days has made BJP leaders worried. They fear that if the result comes out according to the survey then the BJP would be isolated. BJP thinks that it is being overshadowed by the popularity graph of the CM and JDU. That is the reason why BJP leaders have started making their own independent strategy. BJP leaders now say that they have already agreed to many terms and conditions of the CM, so now no new conditions would be agreed upon and BJP will campaign according to its own terms. As per this strategy, justification for Advani's campaign was given. Ravi Shankar Prasad himself told the media that the CM had never made an objection to Advani's campaign. But sources say that JDU and BJP discussed this issue that if in election rallies Advani mentions the Ayodhya verdict, then Muslim votes of JDU would be affected. But BJP rejected all the preconditions of JDU regarding campaigns of Advani and Ravi Shankar Prasad. BJP has become more aggressive after the surveys of the first phase of the polls.

## The great cover-up

A save Kalmadi movement has started with many senior Congress leaders saying he is small fish. When it comes to financial irregularities,

Kalmadi, they say, had a very small budget. It was the Delhi Government, Sports Ministry and Urban Development Ministry that had the big budgets. Hence, Congress leaders Sheila Dikshit, S Jaipal Reddy and M S Gill would certainly be a worried lot. Dikshit has no answer to the allegation that she has developed the Games Village on the banks of the Yamuna only because the area comes under her son's constituency. The Village now faces a serious seepage problem. It is a fact that in the Village mess, Rs 700 crore of the Urban Development Ministry went to a private company, but it is also true that the initial blunder was committed by Delhi Government which decided the location of the Village.

Many Congress leaders are now pointing fingers at the contracts awarded by Dikshit, and some are against MS Gill. They point out that the Sports Ministry had been taken from Mani Shankar Aiyar and given to Gill to "efficiently organise CWG." But he did nothing for the last three years. Moreover, who is responsible for the extra money spent by SAI in stadium construction? Isn't it Gill? Likewise, Jaipal Reddy is in the dock for late completion of projects. That is why the CVC, CAG and other agencies have started investigations against DDA, NDMC, the Sports Ministry and other Delhi Government departments. Disbursing money to private builders and allocating lands at prime locations for hotels are also big scams. Games have finished but these hotels are non-existent. Many leaders remember a similar scam in the posh Chanakypuri. But no serious investigation will take place. After the 90-day probe, some officers will be made scapegoats and the matter will be closed. In the politics to balance power within the Congress all — Kalmadi, Dikshit, Reddy and Gill — will be saved.

### **Anti-defection & coalition politics**

M. Veerappa Moily

The idea of bringing in an anti-defection law in India had been brewing for so long before it was ultimately enacted in the first two months of the year 1985 — the year in which Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister of the country with a massive mandate. All governments that followed did not have a majority of their own and any proposal for enactment of an anti-defection law through an amendment of the Constitution by those governments would presumably have met with the same fate the Women's Reservation Bill is currently facing. Thus, if there had been no Rajiv Gandhi and his government with an unparalleled massive majority, there would not have been any anti-defection law in the country.

The Constitution (52nd Amendment) Act, 1985, otherwise known as the anti-defection law, is deeply rooted in history. Since 1967, proposals were being mooted in one form or the other to curb defections. The Lok Sabha took formal notice of defections when P. Venkatasubbaiah, a private member, moved a resolution for constituting a committee to study and report on defections. The resolution was moved in the Fourth Lok Sabha on August 11, 1967 and discussed on November 11, 1967 and December 8, 1967. The resolution was adopted by Lok Sabha with an amendment for verbal modification moved by Madhu Limaye.

Rajiv Gandhi, speaking in Rajya Sabha on the bill on January 31, 1985, devoted the law to the memory of the Mahatma: “Shri Chairman, sir, yesterday, the 30th January, we had all gone to Gandhiji's samadhi to pay our respects and homage. On Gandhiji's samadhi in very large letters are written what Gandhiji called seven social steps. The first step is against politics without principles and it was only appropriate that we took up this bill in the Lok Sabha on the same day.”

The political history of the country, particularly in smaller states, bears

testimony to the fact that the anti-defection law has brought more instability than stability. Consider the hindrance the anti-defection law had caused to government formation in Bihar, thereby compelling another election within six months in 2005.

The biggest tragedy the anti-defection law had caused to the Indian political scenario was that it effectively halted the evolution of a two-party system and in its place brought about coalition politics. The talk of a Third Front strongly started gaining momentum during the Eighth Lok Sabha. Instead of the Indian polity graduating into a two-party system of the puritan version, it has, over the period of the past two decades, settled for a system of two coalition fronts through the transitory route of the Third Front. Though the slogan of the Third Front refuses to die, it appears it will be difficult to resurrect any Third Front in view of the effective positioning of two coalition fronts based on two intensely polarised ideologies and programmes, as distinctly identifiable choices before the electorate.

However, there were several loopholes in the act as defections numbering more than one-third of the party's strength were considered to be legal. It also provided for the disqualification of individual members defecting from the party through which the member was elected. Even here, the law is open to considerable interpretation, and in some state legislatures the bias of the Speaker leads to confusion, often resulting in litigation.

The first challenge to the anti-defection law was made in the Punjab and Haryana high court in *Prakash Singh Badal and others vs Union of India and others* (AIR 1987 Punjab & Haryana 263). One of the grounds on which the law was challenged was that paragraph 2(b) of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution violated Article 105 of the Constitution, wherein the court held: "So far as the right of a member under Article 105 is concerned, it is not an absolute one and has been made subject to the provisions of the Constitution and the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of Parliament. The framers of the Constitution, therefore, never intended to confer any absolute right of freedom of speech on a member of Parliament and the same can be regulated or

curtailed by making any constitutional provision, such as the 52nd Amendment. The provisions of para 2(b) cannot, therefore, be termed as violative of the provisions of Article 105 of the Constitution. (Para 28). The Constitution (32nd Amendment) Bill, 1973 and the Constitution (48th Amendment) Bill, 1978 had provisions for decision-making by the President and governors of states in relation to questions on disqualification on ground of defection.

The Constitution (52nd Amendment) Bill, 1985 suddenly introduced the provision that questions of disqualification on ground of defection shall be decided by the Chairmen and Speakers of the legislative bodies. The intention was to have speedier adjudicative processes under the Tenth Schedule. This provision was a subject matter of serious debate in both Houses of Parliament when the bill was being passed.

The 91st Amendment to the Constitution was enacted in 2003 to tighten the anti-defection provisions of the Tenth Schedule, enacted earlier in 1985. This amendment makes it mandatory for all those switching political sides — whether singly or in groups — to resign their legislative membership. They now have to seek re-election if they defect and cannot continue in office by engineering a “split” of one-third of members, or in the guise of a “continuing split of a party”. The amendment also bars legislators from holding, post-defection, any office of profit. This amendment has thus made defections virtually impossible and is an important step forward in cleansing politics. The irony of the situation today is that the events have nullified the real intent of the dream of Rajiv Gandhi.

There have been instances wherein after the declaration of election results, a few of the winning candidates have resigned from their membership of the House as well as the party from which they got elected. Immediately, they have joined the political party which has formed the government and have again contested from that political party, which appears to be a fraud and goes against the spirit of democracy and the 52nd Amendment. The ingenious human brain invented innovative ideas to obtain resignations and, in effect, made the anti-defection law as a cover to hide their heinous crime. Hence, the

constitutional pundits need to revisit the issue to combat the menace of corruption and defection, which has eroded the values of democracy. The question whether the presiding officer should or should not decide disqualification has become a matter of debate as appreciating the fact that several chairman and Speakers would not be able to extricate themselves from petty political considerations. The Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by me, in its Fifth report “Ethics in Governance” has recommended: “The issue of disqualification of members on grounds of defection should be decided by the President/governor on the advice of the Election Commission.” The Election Commission has also endorsed this view. Such an amendment to the law seems to be unfortunately necessary in the light of the long delays seen in some recent cases of obvious defections.

M. Veerappa Moily is the Union law minister

## **Bihar and Beyond**

Raj Kumar

Travelling across Bihar in the middle of a heated political campaign this week, psephologist and political analyst Yogendra Yadav says he didn't find a single person who felt that Bihar had not changed for the better in the last five years. "Development is a complicated word. It might not have reached each and every Bihari but the hope for a better future has reached all of them. That's not a small change," says Yadav, a fellow of Delhi's Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

Economist Shaibal Gupta agrees. "I do not expect an economic turnaround in five years in a state where the state (government) was absent for earlier 15 years," he says. Gupta adds that the most important change Bihar saw from 2005 was that its "fundamentals got corrected".

With [Nitish Kumar](#) as chief minister, Bihar is a different state from the time Lalu Prasad called the shots, first as head of government and later as husband of chief minister [Rabri Devi](#). In the Lalu era, bureaucrats, ministers and even the chief minister managed to land in jail for their role in scams. But in the last five years, there has not been a single scandal in Bihar. In an earlier age, the corrupt bosses of the [Bihar Public Service Commission](#) (BPSC) hardly ever worked at their day jobs; instead they cooled their heels in prison. Now, the BPSC routinely clears the recruitment backlog and it is not considered surprising anywhere. From 2005, thousands of doctors, policemen, engineers and teachers have been appointed. Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi acknowledges it was an uphill task.

"Initially, much of our time was spent in creation of workforce. After all, you need people even to use development funds".

It has been a challenge on economics as well. Bihar grew at an annual rate of 3.5% from 1999 to 2004. From 2004, its average growth rate rose to 11.35%. In 2004-05, the state's per capita income was Rs 8,307. By 2008-09, it had risen to Rs 13,959. Plan expenditure, which denotes development activities and assets creation, went up from an average Rs 4,689 crore every year till 2006-07 to an average of Rs 14,800 crore every year from 2007. "But it would be a fallacy to compare Bihar with developed states like, say, Gujarat," says Gupta.

Statistics apart, there has been some very real change on the ground. For housewife Mamata Sinha, Bihar has become a better place to live. So too for Confederation of Indian Industry's Bihar chairman Satyajit Singh. He says his home state has become a better place from which to operate. "The most important change is that I can now work at my industrial unit till late in the evening and my wife at home would not make anxious calls about my wellbeing. And after the day's work, I can take my family to watch a movie at night," Singh says. "For the first time, I fell in love with my state. Look at the roads; they are as good as the ones in the metros," gushes Rahul Ranjan, who belongs to Patna and studies engineering in Nagpur. It's a far cry from what Satyajit Singh recalls as the dismal days when Patna High Court described the law and order situation as "jungle raj".

For now, "jungle raj" seems to be history.

Consider this:

\* There were 14,664 murders in Bihar between 2006 and August 2010, down from 22,040 in the five years from 2000

\* There were 484 kidnappings for ransom between 2006 and 2010, down from 2,196 kidnappings from 2000 to 2005

\* Roughly 53,600 criminals were convicted between January 2006 and September 2010; 9,280 were sentenced to life imprisonment and 132 sent to the gallows

\* With fears of being kidnapped pretty much over, business has thrived and food chains such as Yo-China, Smokin Joe's and Domino's Pizza swept into the state. As have mobile service providers.

According to a CII survey, private investment of at least Rs 30,000 crore came to Bihar from 2006. This included Rs 750 crore invested in 12 major towns in the state, mostly to open new showrooms. The state's economic survey report shows high growth rates of 36%, 17% and 18% in the construction, communications and trade sectors respectively from 2004. The construction boom has benefitted the poor as well with daily wages rising from Rs 120 to Rs 200 for labourers and from Rs 150 to Rs 250 for masons in Patna.

Surgeon Narendra Prasad is all praise for the Nitish Kumar government. It has "performed wonderfully" he says. Not so Nawal Kishore Chaudhary, an economist at Patna University. "This government gave relief to richer sections only and at least 55% of the population still lives below the poverty line," he says.

But fellow economist Shaibal Gupta disagrees. "If you earlier scored 0 in math and now you get 30, that's also a growth even though it is merely a pass percentage," he says.

So, what does Bihar expect from the next government? Expectations are high and no one wants a return to the dark days of yesteryears. The Congress party's youthful icon, [Rahul Gandhi](#), wants to raise the benchmark further. At every rally in the state he has asked Bihar's voters to compare their state with more developed ones such as [Delhi](#), Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Don't compare Nitish's Bihar to Lalu's, he begs them. "Even the poorest of African nations would look

better in comparison to Bihar under Lalu regime," the Congress general secretary said at rallies on Thursday.

Perhaps. But even Nitish's Bihar is a great leap forward for a state that has long been known as the basket case of [India](#). The people's verdict will be clear a month from today, November 24, the last day of polling and the day votes are counted.

## **Let's keep the score**

Sitaram Yechury

As the Parliament building is being spruced up to receive President Barack Obama, he has reportedly fired an advance missive in the form of a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh conveying his expectations. Apart from certain defence and telecom deals and nuclear commerce, the letter reportedly seeks greater market access to US agricultural products in India. Succumbing to such pressures, as are already being mounted in the World Trade Organisation's Doha round of negotiations, will only further accentuate the agrarian crisis and distress in our country.

This runs contrary to the declarations Obama made before the recent United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) summit. Never short of flowery rhetoric, he declared : "At the dawn of a new millennium, we set concrete goals to free our fellow men, women and children from the injustice of extreme poverty". He went on to caution, "that if the international community just keeps doing the same things the same way, we will miss many development goals. That is the truth." However, there was nothing concrete on how the US intends to do things differently.

The MDGs, adopted by 191 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and governments in 2000, envisaged among others, halving extreme poverty and hunger from 1990 levels, reducing by two-thirds the child-mortality rate and slashing maternal mortality by three-quarters and achieving universal primary education. A UN review, however, shows that between 1990 and 2008, the mortality rate of children under 5 in developing countries declined only from 10 per cent to 7.2 per cent — far from the target of a two-thirds reduction by 2015. Maternal mortality

declined from 480 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 450 deaths in 2005. The 2015 goal is closer to 120. Enrolment in primary education reached only 89 per cent in 2008, up from 80 per cent in 1991.

The situation has worsened further. The UNDP MDGs Report 2010 states, “Newly updated estimates from the World Bank suggest that the global economic crisis will leave an additional 50 million people in extreme poverty in 2009 and some 64 million by the end of 2010 relative to a no-crisis scenario, principally in sub-Saharan Africa and eastern and south-eastern Asia. Moreover, the effects of the crisis are likely to persist: poverty rates will be slightly higher in 2015 and even beyond, to 2020, than they would have been had the world economy grown steadily at its pre-crisis pace”.

Coming home, the India Country Report 2009 reveals: The number of people living below poverty line in 1990 was 37.2 per cent. This was to be brought down to 18.5 per cent by 2015 but is expected, most optimistically, to reach 22 per cent. There were 53.5 per cent of underweight children below 3 years age in 1990 targetted to be reduced to 26.8. This is expected to come down to about 40 per cent only. Under-five child mortality rate was 125 per 1,000 live births in 1990 targetted to be reduced to 42. It is expected to only reach 70. In 1990, infant mortality rate was 80 per 1,000 live births targetted to be reduced to 26.7. This is expected to reach only 46. In 1990, maternal mortality rate was 437 per 100,000 live births targetted to be brought down to 109. This is expected to reach only 135. Only 51 per cent of our population are covered by sanitation facilities targetted to be brought down to 38. Our government states this goal cannot be achieved. The developed countries had pledged in 2002 to contribute 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Income (GNI) as aid to meet MDGs. But many reneged on this commitment. In 2009, the US contributed only 0.2 per cent of its GDP to aid, while the European Union’s contribution is only 0.48 per cent of its GNI. On average, developmental assistance amounted to only 0.31 per cent of GDP of developed nations last year.

Does this mean that the MDGs are simply unachievable? On the contrary, they are perfectly realisable if only there is a shift in the policy trajectory globally and domestically in India. This is endorsed by the UN itself : Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, states, “Policies and interventions will be needed to eliminate the persistent or even increasing inequalities between the rich and the poor, between those living in rural or remote areas or in slums versus better-off urban populations, and those disadvantaged by geographic location, sex, age, disability or ethnicity”.

The New York Times reports that the US has made commitments of about \$12.2 trillion in bailout packages. In India, the Tax Forgone data in the budget shows that the government provided tax concessions (2009-10) amounting to R5,02,299 crore. If these amounts of money were instead used for public investments rather than bailing out corporates, this would have generated substantial employment and the consequent expansion of domestic demand would have sustained the cycle of economic growth. This, in turn, would have led to substantial reduction in the levels of poverty and malnutrition. Such a shift in the policy trajectory would also have to include strict regulations on financial markets to prevent speculative trading in food and other essential commodities leading to inflation which pushes greater numbers into poverty. Further, in the ongoing negotiations in the WTO and on climate change, the developed countries must desist from renegeing declared commitments and imposing crippling pressures on the developing world’s energy needs that prevent effective measures to tackle poverty from being undertaken. President Obama, having won the Nobel Prize must now earn it by leading the developed world towards such a shift in the policy trajectory in order to realise the MDGs.

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# **PUBLIC POLICY**

## **Food security: Start now, improve later**

*By editor*

Whatever the nature of the debates that it may provoke, the National Advisory Council headed by Congress president Sonia Gandhi has — apparently after contentious deliberation — produced a fairly detailed conceptual scheme that is expected to provide the basic inputs for framing the Food Security Bill due to come up in Parliament shortly. The food security provision for the poor is UPA-2's big-ticket social sector project just as the NREGS had been the chief anti-poverty measure in UPA's first term in office. The NREGS had led to two broad discussions: who will foot the bill, and will it provide universal or cent per cent coverage to all the poor in the country? Fortunately, the country did not permit itself to be derailed by voices of concern on these points. Eventually, it turned out that NREGS — although it is implemented in a slipshod way and is shot through with corruption, especially in the poorly administered states of the country — actually put some money in the hands of the rural poor throughout India, and this went on to boost aggregate demand in the system and was a factor that saw the country out of a threatened economic trough in the wake of the worldwide recession that is still plaguing leading Western economies. In the end, NREGS came to be perceived as beneficial to our economic system, whatever the initial anxieties, although some continue to voice a few worries. The ideological maximalists too were harsh with their criticism of the NREGS proposal that had been first mooted. The scheme sought to cover only 100 districts in India to begin with, and those that spoke in the name of the poor suggested that this was too feeble and was tokenism by another name. Life has shown this not to be the case, although there are deficiencies galore in implementation.

The criticism of those who desire the best straightaway has already

begun to be attracted by the NAC's food security proposal. Prof. Jean Dreze, a leading light of the NAC who has done laudable theoretical and empirical work on the state of the country's poor, has distanced himself from this proposal, saying that he would have liked universal coverage. This conveys the idealist's dream, and is not the pragmatist's method. The latter believes that it is best to get started and try and improve in the light of experience. Thus the so-called "consensus" that the NAC has produced on food security is a watered down version of the "first best" solution, and is probably not even the second best. And yet, it is hard to endorse the position that we must either have all or nothing. The way matters stand, the current proposal seeks to provide foodgrain cover to around 75 per cent of the very poor in the country, in both rural and urban areas. It is far from certain that even this will be attempted with sincerity and without corrupt elements having a field day. No less significantly, the public distribution network has been all but obliterated. To get it going in the right spirit calls for close supervision as well as expenditure, and will be among the key challenges before the government. For all the problems that can be envisaged, the measure is unprecedented and calls for political support. Those who might question it on the money argument ("who will foot the bill?") may find that a workforce that has food in its belly is more productive and less disaffected. Seen in this light, the measure deserves their support. India is a fast-paced economy but it continues to have the largest proportion of the world's very poor, countrywise. This is why the solution that we envisage needs to transcend the imperatives of the market.

## **Think Beyond PDS**

Will UPA-II's ambitious food security programme work? The issue gains immediacy, with the National Advisory Council unveiling a new draft plan envisaging legal entitlement to subsidised foodgrain for at least 75 per cent of the population. That works out to almost 800 million people. If implemented, this means the government's food subsidy bill will be far bigger. Also, our groaning public distribution system will come under greater strain. Now, central to the question of the doability of any food cover plan is the efficacy or otherwise of its delivery apparatus. Clearly, the public distribution system as it exists can't deliver the goods.

Unsurprisingly, policymakers have called for alternative delivery mechanisms. Reportedly, a paper by the finance ministry's chief economic advisor Kaushik Basu advocates a lower profile for the Food Corporation of [India](#) in the delivery framework. It also asks that the PDS seen as pretty much beyond redemption be replaced by more effective mechanisms such as food coupons. In response to the contention that coupons may be bought and sold, defeating the purpose of reform, it is suggested that they be given to women members of households on an experimental basis. The idea makes sense. Women household heads will hardly resort to malpractice at the cost of letting their families go hungry.

Given the political class's aversion to radical change, consensus on the PDS's total dismantling may be hard to come by. But, remember, over 65 per cent of PDS foodgrain lands up in the open market. Basu highlights a study revealing that 70 per cent of PDS wheat eludes

targeted BPL families. So, there's no denying that the PDS needs a thorough overhaul. Structural makeovers, however, can't happen overnight. While PDS revamp is undertaken, there's every reason to test out other innovative ways of providing access to food. Some states are already experimenting with food coupons, which are accepted at all grocery shops. An even better idea is biometric smart cards, whose use Orissa is piloting, which make identity theft or fudging difficult. Under PDS, ration cards using false names ghost cards are a big problem. Poor-directed cash transfer is also worth considering.

All these options are qualitatively superior to the existing system on several counts. They allow subsidy to go directly to targeted beneficiaries rather than circuitously via an inefficient, leaky PDS. Selling food at market rates reduces the incentive for profiteering through diversion by officials, transporters and fair price shops. Plus, people get to choose what they want to buy. It's been recommended that food coupons, supported by the UID project, should eventually cede way to mobile banking-linked smart cards. The government must act on this advice, which also mandates that UID and financial inclusion initiatives are fast-tracked.

# **RIGHT TO INFORMATION**

### **TN police stonewall RTI queries on IPS officers` assets**

CUDDALORE: At a time when judges of the [Supreme Court](#) and high courts are coming forward to disclose their wealth, the police department in Tamil Nadu has refused to furnish details about the assets of three IPS officers in response to a query filed under the [Right to Information Act](#).

The details sought "are highly confidential in nature, and not open to public scrutiny unless the information (is) sought by the officers concerned themselves. Therefore, it couldn't be provided to any private persons on any purpose", said the IGP (Establishment) in the office of the Director General of Police, who is the public information officer (PIO) under RTI. He was replying to a query by K Irisappan from Puducherry, seeking copies of annual property returns (APRs) submitted by three IPS officers. The department not only refused to part with details on assets, it also declined to disclose information pertaining to service records and educational qualifications of the officials.

Irisappan, however, argues that information regarding civil servants wasn't exempt from disclosure. He cites a Punjab state information commission order passed in December 2009, declaring that information regarding assets of Punjab IAS officers was not exempt from disclosure under the RTI Act, as annual property returns submitted by government employees were in the public domain. It had further observed that "the decision should be considered a step to contain corruption in government offices, since such disclosures may reveal assets disproportionate to known sources of income."

## **New RTI forum to offer free help to citizens**

V. A. KAMAT

PANAJI: Have you filed a right to information (RTI) application and are struggling to get your information from a government department? Fear not, for help is at hand. The Goa [RTI](#) Forum was inaugurated in Panaji on October 12 to help citizens in RTI matters, free of cost.

The 35-member forum comprises several social activists, RTI activists as well as lawyers from Goa. Inaugurated at the hands of celebrated RTI activist and Magsaysay award winner, Arvind Kejriwal, the Forum has long-time Goan RTI activist [V A Kamat](#) as its president. [Nicholas Dias](#) (lawyer) and Gurudas Natekar are vice-presidents. Kamat told TOI, "The forum will help citizens get information under RTI and provide the assistance they need. We are yet to decide whether we will be able to argue RTI cases for citizens. We will provide them with all the guidance they need at no cost as this is strictly a social service." Kamat, also a member of the [Goa Bachao Abhiyan](#) since its inception, is well versed in RTI matters.

He has locked horns with various government departments since 2003 when the Goa Right To Information Act was passed and later, under the Central RTI Act, 2005. Says Kamat, "Although it's been five years since the central Act was passed, it is not so effective in Goa. Many departments still take people for a ride. Some do not provide the information, while others delay and cook up excuses. It becomes a big problem for the layman, which we will solve." As a first step, the forum will create a website where citizens will be able to access all RTI data. It will also provide its members' contact details, such as email IDs and

telephone numbers, so that citizens can contact them directly with any queries.

"We also intend to carry out awareness programmes on RTI matters in Goa," Kamat said. One common problem encountered by citizens is that if a citizen makes an RTI application to a government department asking for information pertaining to the entire state, the public information officer (PIO) of the department simply transfers the application to its sections or branches in the various talukas of Goa. The citizen is then asked to go to those section offices in all the talukas to get the information even if it is only one or two pages. "The [PIO](#) is supposed to gather the information from his various section offices and give it to the citizen centrally," explains Kamat.

Presently, the forum has no funds and does not intend to take donations fearing it will be indebted to donors. Kamat said that raising of funds will be discussed shortly, but one of its members has offered the forum office space in Panaji. The forum has no dearth of legal eagles. Besides the vice president, there are five more lawyers on the forum including, CCP corporator Avinash Bhosale, Yatish Naik of the Pilerne Citizens' Forum, Suresh Dhond and others. Other prominent members of the forum include Anand

# **TERRORISM**

## **Enough seeds of discontent**

Sudhir Hindwan

Just three days before the second phase of assembly polls were due in Bihar, a landmine explosion in Sheohar district killed four special auxiliary police personnel and a police inspector. The repeated attacks are a matter of grave security concern for the Indian state and display the audacity of the present breed of Naxalites. While it is clear now that they cannot be made to change their mind by reason, honour or threat, the question that arises is how to tackle them otherwise.

Blowing up school buildings, butchering police personnel through hidden warfare, gunning down coalmine officials are the instances of Naxalite violence haunting post-modern India. The simmering rural unrest, over the last few years, has vested itself through violence in states like West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. Most of the targets are selected to change people's opinion about the potency of government authority. The attacks are planned such that people see in them the justification of a cause and one that will lead to a just order by overthrowing a particular order.

In Bihar, a number of attacks on police pickets have been carried out by extremist organisations like the Indian People's Front, the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). In parts of Central Bihar, their underground operations are on the rise. These organisations raise funds by means of extortion from contractors, subscriptions from corrupt officials and powerful landlords. Although it is difficult to ascertain their actual strength, the MCC is considered to be the most organised, possessing sophisticated weapons. A few years ago, the massacre of 11 people near the Dodadih Hills in Bihar by the MCC had almost led to a caste war. There have been other instances of such gruesome acts by the MCC which is active in districts

like Patna, Jehanabad, Gaya, Nalanda and Navada. In areas around Jehanabad, the weaker sections are mobilised by the IPF and the MKSS on the basis of a common concern for equitable distribution of land and payment of minimum wages. After the Dalelchak Baghora ( Aurangabad ) massacre, the state government declared a ban on the activities of the MCC.

Over the years, the government of Andhra Pradesh has suffered heavy loss of public and private property because of the upsurge in Naxal activities. In the

last two decades, the People's War Group, dissatisfied with government policies, has lashed out violently committed bank robberies, murdered policemen, abducted businessmen and officials and attempted political assassinations.

The menace of Naxalism, however, continues to grow and there are several reasons for it. The Minimum Wages Act has not been properly implemented and often, rural labourers do not get the minimum wages fixed by the government.

The lack of development programmes, the illegal occupation of uncultivated public land by landlords, lack of irrigation facilities for rural poor and the denial of political rights to them are some of the other reasons. The nexus between the landowners and the police and the constant tussle for political domination also contribute to a feeling of disquiet.

Given that unemployment, underdevelopment, poverty, the continuing feudal order and growing corruption among politicians and bureaucrats contribute to Naxal violence, the formation of special units like COBRA to fight Naxalism alone cannot yield prompt results. We need to bring about better coordination among intelligence and local police, modify our information-gathering exercise and involve a multi-dimensional

mechanism including the support of the media to make people less sympathetic to the cause of the needy.

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# **WOMEN**

TIMES OF INDIA 25.10.10 WOMEN

## **Higher education allowance for Muslim girls**

Swati Sengupta

Three years ago, there were hardly enough scholarships for poor Muslims in Bengal, especially for women. Cut to 2010 post [Sachar Committee report](#) and the [Lok Sabha polls](#) there is a flush of funds for education and self-employment of Muslims. And more so, for the doubly marginalised poor Muslim women.

The latest to be added is graduation and post-graduation (PG) allowances for girls. Those with family income lesser than Rs 2.5 lakh annually will get Rs 9,000 at graduation and Rs 14,400 a year for PG or its equivalent. What's more, no specific marks are required to qualify for this allowance. There isn't any cap on the number of beneficiaries as well.

"We are allocating Rs11 crore for this project because we want to include all women who are at graduation, PG or its equivalent level and come from a certain economic background. All this while we targeted school education and higher education was left out. If more qualify, the funds allocated can be increased," minister of state for minorities, [Abdus Sattar](#), said on Sunday.

In the last two years, the state government's allocation for scholarships and stipends has increased by more than double, standing at Rs200 crore now. Allocation for West Bengal Minorities Development and Financial Corporation (WBMFDC) has increased from Rs 7 crore, 12 years ago, to Rs 425 crore, with maximum funds coming in the last two to three years. Of this, Rs 125 crore is only for women.

Bengal's scholarships to minority students have grown by leaps and bounds. Impressed, the Centre has written to all states and Union Territories to send officers here to see how the schemes are being implemented.

However, a close look at the data shows that this "progress" has been inversely proportional to the way votes have come down for the Left Front in elections since 2008 the lesser the votes, the more money spent on schemes.

Former [CPM](#) MP and chairman of WBMFDC, Mohd Salim, doesn't want to ascribe this increase to Bengal's over enthusiasm in reacting to the Sachar Committee report. "In fact, the Centre has increased its allocation and Bengal has done well among the states in using the opportunity to benefit its people. The Centre also has a target to meet and so if other states don't do well, the loan amount comes to us for living up to expectations."