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DISASTER MANAGEMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES 28.7.10 DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Disasters sow seeds of success

Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar

Great disasters occur constantly. The Asian financial crisis blasted the miracle economies of Asia. The Great Recession of 2007-09 led to the bankruptcy/rescue of the five top investment banks on Wall Street, the biggest bank (Citibank), the biggest insurance company (AIG), the biggest auto manufacturer (General Motors) and the biggest mortgage underwriters (Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac). The BP disaster in the Caribbean is the greatest environmental disaster in history. Some people fear that global warming will be the biggest manmade disaster of all.

Many NGOs and politicians want to retreat from cutting-edge technologies (deepwater exploration, climate geoengineering) to avoid all risks. Others want to end or avoid innovation in economic and financial issues, retreating into state-regulated cocoons. Alas, these remedies will be worse than the evils they seek to remedy. The right approach is to learn from disasters and combine innovation with greater safety. The wrong approach is to retreat from innovation. Many Americans want to stop offshore oil exploration, saying the BP disaster shows that potential costs exceed the benefits. This argument is bogus. If true, all offshore oil exploration across the world should be banned, since environmental disaster can strike anywhere. Such a ban will quadruple oil and gas prices and send the world into a Great Depression. That will be infinitely costlier than the BP disaster.

After the Great Recession, some point to the state-controlled banking

systems of India and China as safer. Yet, India merely proves that if a financial system is bound hand-and-foot, it will not have enough rope to hang itself. Ratios of bank credit to GDP of 200% in some countries may have been too high, but India's 50% is clearly too low, and has starved citizens of badly-needed credit. Over-controlled India escaped the Asian financial crisis. But its Asian neighbours, though badly hit, had 5 to 20 times India's per-capita income. For Indians, with a per-capita income of \$350, to gloat over the troubles of Thailand, with a per-capita income of \$3,000, was a case of sour grapes.

Indeed, India's economic success in the last decade was aided crucially by financial liberalisation. The lesson India learned from the crisis was to calibrate financial liberalisation, not abandon it. The global system is also learning from the Great Recession. Right now, the proposed changes look insufficient. But certainly, risk awareness has improved greatly.

Disasters will still occur. No innovation or new exploration is ever risk-free. But just as shipwrecks did not stop exploration of the seas, so too economic and technological disasters should not stop economic and technological innovation. Henry Petroski of Duke University has written a book, *Success through failure: The paradox of design*. Its key lesson is that failures teach us more than successes. Failures lead to radical design changes that are needed but are ignored in times of unbroken success. One example is the 1940 collapse of the Tacoma Bridge in the US. For decades, engineers had built ever-longer suspension bridges, and this lulled them into overconfidence. The Tacoma disaster showed that suspension bridges were vulnerable to high winds if their stiffness and girth were not specifically engineered for safety. Subsequent suspension bridges, often longer than the Tacoma one, were made stiffer, and sometimes had a second deck to combat high winds even if traffic did not justify it. Failure at Tacoma bred success in ever-longer bridges, not a retreat into smaller bridges.

Airships in the 1930s used hydrogen to keep aloft. Then the Hindenburg, the world's biggest airship, caught fire and airship production ground to a halt. However, this soon led to airships being filled with safe, inert helium instead of inflammable hydrogen. The sinking of the Titanic, the meltdown of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor and the collapse of the World Trade Center in 2001 all forced engineers to come up with new designs to combat risks earlier thought to be negligible.

The Exxon Valdez tanker was rock-wrecked by a drunken captain in 1989, and leaked enormous quantities of oil into the sea. This spurred a global shift from single-hulled tankers to double-hulled tankers that can withstand a crash. The Exxon Valdez disaster spurred Exxon to develop one of the best safety records in the industry. The BP disaster will lead to vastly-improved equipment to thwart future deep-sea disasters. Already four top oil exploration companies have decided to pool their safety and rescue resources in the Caribbean. This lesson should also apply to geoengineering to combat global warming. Pilot projects have begun to pour iron ore into the sea to increase its carbon-absorption capacity. Simply spraying seawater into the sky could create clouds that reflect back sunlight and combat warming. The same effect might also be achieved by shooting aerosols and sulphates into space to reflect back sunlight. Many green outfits oppose such geoengineering because of the risk of calamitous side-effects. Dumping iron ore in the sea, for instance, could increase sea acidity and bleach corals. Yet, iron ore is one of the common minerals in the earth's crust, and must be abundant in seabeds already.

We should start with pilot projects to educate us on possible benefits and risks, and scale up after adjusting for risks. Geo-engineering could be a far cheaper way of providing insurance against global warming than carbon reduction. Many greens believe that humans should not tinker with nature, and will be penalised for it. In fact, humans evolved from

the hunter-gatherer stage only because exploration and innovation is hardwired into their DNA.

Poet TS Eliot wrote, “We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to return to where we started, and know the place for the first time.” Greens who fear exploration know very little of the nature they claim to protect, and think that ignorance is bliss.

Regardless, we humans must and will explore every facet of nature. Then alone will we know the place for the first time.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

How finance is abetting suicide

Jayati Ghosh

Rarely has an economic idea had such a brief revival. After several years of almost undisputed sway of monetarist ideology over economic policymakers across the world, suddenly Keynesian ideas were back in fashion, in particular the idea that active state intervention in the form of increased state expenditure is necessary to bring a market economy out of a recession or depression.

When the global financial crisis broke in September 2008, leading to what is now called “The Great Recession”, suddenly policymakers everywhere turned to Keynesian ideas to rescue the world economy. Not only were governments — especially in the developed capitalist countries — required to spend or provide for huge amounts of money to bail out companies in trouble, but they were actually encouraged to spend much more to provide fiscal stimuli to prevent recession.

This enthusiasm for strong fiscal intervention in the face of crisis even infected the hoary old supporter of fiscal rectitude, the International Monetary Fund. In its annual flagship World Economic Outlook, which appeared in the midst of the outbreak of the crisis in September 2008, the Fund argued that “Macroeconomic policies in the advanced economies should aim at supporting activity, thus helping to break the negative feedback loop between real and financial conditions, while not losing sight of inflation risks... Discretionary fiscal stimulus can provide support to growth in the event that downside risks materialise, provided the stimulus is delivered in a timely manner, is well targeted, and does not undermine fiscal sustainability” (page 34).

The Group of Twenty (G-20) countries that set themselves up as the power lobby to run the world also declared their support for collective fiscal expansion in their early post-crisis meetings. Even bankers and

large multinational company executives hailed this shift as necessary, even critical, to save global capitalism.

And then suddenly, and so quickly as to be quite unexpected, it was over. The brief honeymoon that financial markets had with state intervention appeared to sour as soon as the banks felt strong enough (as a result of the massive bailouts they had been given and the very low interest rates that were applied everywhere) to manage without any more direct funds. And they — along with other financial players — turned on the source of their deliverance, increased government spending.

The attacks began first in the financial press, with fears being expressed about rapidly rising government deficits and fears about the sustainability of government debt levels. They then spread quickly to bond markets themselves, which attacked any government that was perceived as having a slightly weaker position in terms of aggregate debt levels.

A more classic case of biting the hand that has fed you would be hard to find. It turns out that of the top 10 countries whose governments saw a significant deterioration in their fiscal balances in 2008, a majority had actually been running fiscal surpluses just the year before. And for the largest of such countries — the US and Spain — the change in fiscal situation was directly related to the large bank bailouts that had to be provided. Indeed, Spain, Mongolia, Iceland, Latvia and Turkey had all been running fiscal surpluses in 2007. It was private sector irresponsibility that created the imbalance and associated crisis in all of these countries, but it was the government that had to step in and save the economy as well as its most reckless banks.

What they have now got for their pains is a prolonged hammering from bond markets which are demanding massive cuts in public expenditure that would require enormous sacrifices from their populations. So the banks are putting pressure on governments to reduce government deficits that their own actions necessitated, but in ways that preserve their own incomes and profits while imposing austerity on workers and other hapless citizens.

All this is particularly surprising because there is no theoretical or

empirical basis for deciding that a particular level of public debt is more than what is acceptable, or that a particular debt trajectory is sustainable, or even that a particular level of fiscal deficit will generate so much more debt over time. All of these depend upon several other factors, none of which is likely to stay the same. So most predictions of future public debt levels in any country, whether they are pessimistic or optimistic, are equally unreliable.

In fact, countries have had debt crises with ratios of public debt to gross domestic product (GDP) that are lower than half, and some have managed to avoid debt crises even when their public debt to GDP ratio has been more than 100 per cent for a prolonged period. The confidence of bond markets is driven not by superior knowledge or better predictive capacity, but by a range of factors that are hard to pin down. Indeed, it is likely that if financial markets were to be confronted by confident governments that insisted on co-ordinated and positive fiscal stimuli, they would respond by accepting this and bond yields would not rise so much even for weaker deficit countries.

Instead policymakers are joining the general tom-toming about the dangers of fiscal deficits. Partly this reflects the continued political power of finance in most countries. But it also reveals the misplaced but unfortunately common belief in each country that it can somehow export its way out of trouble. Obviously, all countries cannot do this. But as long as people everywhere continue to accept the nonsense currently being peddled about economic policy, the collective lemming-like march to economic self-destruction cannot be stopped.

EDUCATION

HINDU 26.7.10 EDUCATION

RTE Act: some rights and wrongs

Pushpa M. Bhargava

As it stands, the Right to Education Act has several flaws that will prevent its efficacious implementation. Several amendments are called for.

Something that cannot work, will not work. This is a tautology applicable to the Right to Education (RTE) Act, which cannot meet the objectives for which it was enacted. There are several reasons for this.

First, the Act does not rule out educational institutions set up for profit (Section 2.n.(iv)). The protagonists of such institutions cite Article 19.1.g (“All citizens shall have the right to practise any profession or to carry out any occupation, trade or business”). However, they fail to realise that the Article is regulated by Article 19.6: it is because of the provisions in Article 19.6 that no one in the country can set up a nuclear energy plant, or grow narcotic plants, or build satellites, unless approved by the government.

P.N. Bakshi, a member of the Law Commission, in his book on the Constitution of India says: “Education per se has so far not been regarded as a trade or business where profit is a motive.” Yet, the TMA Pai Foundation vs Government of Karnataka judgment of the Supreme Court in 2003 said it is difficult to comprehend that education per se will not fall under any of the four expressions in Article 19.1.g. Therefore, appropriately, the model Rules and Regulations (R&R) for the RTE Act say in Section 11.1.b that a school run for profit by any individual, group or association of individuals or any other persons, shall not receive recognition from the government. However, this Section will not be

binding on the States as it is not a part of the Act. If the Government of India were serious about the issue, it should have made this a part of the RTE Act.

The common-sense resolution of the discrepancy between the TMA Pai Foundation judgment and the model R&R for the RTE Act could lie in the fact that education is a generic term. We need to distinguish between the minimum quantum of education that a citizen should have in order to be able to discharge his or her responsibilities and claim rights, and the subsequent education geared to train him or her for a profession such as medicine or engineering.

As regards the first category, it is now virtually universally recognised that 12 years of school education beginning at the age of six, preceded by appropriate pre-school education, is a minimum requirement. Therefore, in virtually all developed countries, a vast majority of children including those of the rich and powerful go to government schools for 12 years of totally free education. The RTE Act is unconcerned about the four most important years of school education – that is, from Class IX to Class XII.

The second category would include three sub-categories: (a) higher education that could lead to a technical diploma, a first university degree in broad areas such as the liberal arts, science or commerce, or post-graduate education in these areas; (b) education leading to a university degree, in a common profession of prime public interest that would cater to the basic needs of society, such as medicine, engineering, law, or management; and (c) education leading to training in specialised areas (which could vary with time), such as flying, catering or hotel management, which does not lead to a degree but is a prerequisite to join the profession at an appropriate level.

It stands to common sense that the first category should be totally free with no hidden costs whatsoever. In the second category, in the public interest and to ensure that quality is maintained, education in sub-

categories (a) and (b) must be in a non-profit organisation. The selections should be made on merit in a means-independent way which would imply that appropriate fees could be charged from those who can pay. Those who cannot pay must be able to continue their education through freeships or scholarships, or bank loans arranged by the institution.

There is no argument against education in sub-category (c) of the second category being provided for profit, for the employers will ensure quality in the institutions providing such education.

The judgment in TMA Pai Foundation would appropriately apply to sub-category (c). There is, therefore, a strong case to ensure that Section 11.1.b of the model R&R of the RTE Act is made mandatory for all schools without exception, through an amendment of the Act.

There is the argument that if people can pay for the education of their children they should have a right to have their own schools where the fee charged would be determined by them or the authorities of the school they set up. Indeed, according to the Constitution we cannot ban such schools, which will essentially be the de facto profit-making schools of today where almost exclusively the children of the rich and powerful go. However, the government will be within its rights to say that such schools would not be recognised as they would violate the principle of equity in regard to the minimum education that every Indian citizen should have.

The RTE Act and its R&R fail on many other counts. These are some of them:

- Experience tells us that no government school is likely to function well (or as well as the government schools did till about 1970) unless children of the rich and powerful also attend such schools. Further, it is a myth that private – de facto commercial – schools provide better training

than, say a Central School of the Government of India or trust-run schools which are truly not-for-profit.

- The Act places no restriction on the fees that may be charged by unaided private schools ostensibly set up as a Society or Trust but, de facto set up to make money for the investors, just like a corporate company. If they are truly set up not to make any profit they should not be charging any fees, and the fees paid by the children should be reimbursed by the government. They could then function as a part of the common school system in which children of the neighbourhood would have to go irrespective of their class or status.
- Why should unaided private schools have a system of management with no obligatory participation of parents, unlike other schools that require the formation of a school management committee in which parents will constitute three-fourth of its membership?
- Why do we have only 25 per cent poor children in private unaided schools? Why not 10, 20, 40, 60 or 80 per cent? Would it not create a divide amongst the children of the poor, leave aside a greater divide between the children of the rich and the poor?
- No method is prescribed for selecting the 25 per cent poor students for admission into unaided private schools. Selection by lottery would be ridiculous. In the absence of a viable provision, the private unaided (de facto commercial) schools can choose the 25 per cent poor children in a way that the choice would benefit the school.
- There is nothing in the Act or its R&R that will prevent unaided private schools from charging students for activities that are not mentioned in the Act or its R&R. Examples would be laboratory fee, computer fee, building fee, sports fee, fee for stationery, fee for school uniform, fee for extra-curricular activities such as music, painting, pottery, and so on.

- Norms for buildings, the number of working days, teacher workload, equipment, library and extra-curricular activities are prescribed only for unaided schools, and not for other schools including government schools. Only an obligatory teacher-student ratio is prescribed both for government and unaided schools. This means that as long as the teacher-pupil ratio is maintained, the school would be considered as fit. Thus, even if a government school has 12 students in each class from I to V, it will have only two teachers.

- Two arguments often given for continuing to have, or even encouraging, private unaided schools is that the government has no money to set up the needed schools, and that government schools cannot be run as well as private schools. Both these are deliberate lies. There have been excellent studies and reports that show that the government can find money to adopt a common school system with a provision of compulsory and totally free education up to Class XII in the country over the next 10 years. Further, even today the best system of school education in the country is the Central School (Kendriya Vidyalaya) system run by the government. The country needs 400,000 such schools, and India can afford it.

The RTE Act and its R&R are destined not to work. We should recognise that if we do not take appropriate care of school education, agriculture and left-wing extremism – and all the three are related – we may be creating conditions that would encourage internal turmoil.

(The writer is former vice-chairman, National Knowledge Commission.)

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

A stronger, wider, deeper relationship

David Cameron

Economy isn't the only reason India matters to Britain. There's also its democracy with its three million elected representatives — a beacon to our world.

It's a real pleasure to be back in India. This is my third trip here and with each visit, time seems to have leaped forward by decades in just a few years. It is exhilarating to see a country growing at super-speed before your eyes. But I'm not just here to enjoy the energy of this country. I'm here with a very clear purpose: to renew the relationship between India and Britain — to re-launch a relationship that is stronger, wider and deeper. Both our countries have talked about it long enough. Now it's time to turn those words into reality.

To show how serious I am, I have brought with me the biggest visiting delegation of any British Prime Minister in recent memory: members of my cabinet, industry leaders, top businessmen and women, figures from the arts, sports and local government. We're all here to make the case that this deeper relationship will be beneficial not just for our own countries, but for the world.

From the British perspective, it's clear why India matters. Most obviously, there is the dynamism of your economy. In the U.S., they used to say: “Go West, young man” to find opportunity and fortune. For today's entrepreneurs, the real promise is in the East. But your economy isn't the only reason India matters to Britain. There's also your democracy with its three million elected representatives — a beacon to our world. There is your tradition of tolerance, with dozens of faiths and

hundreds of languages living side by side — a lesson to our world. And there is this country's sense of responsibility. Whether it's donating reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, peacekeeping in Sierra Leone or providing intellectual leadership in the G20, India is a source of strength to our world.

So it's clear why India matters to Britain. But why should Britain matter to India? I believe our two countries are natural partners. We have deep and close connections among our people, with nearly two million people of Indian origin living in the U.K. We share so much culturally, whether it's watching Shah Rukh Khan, eating the same food or watching cricket. Beyond the cultural bonds, Britain has practical attractions for India. We speak the world's language. We are still the world's sixth largest manufacturer and the best base for companies wanting to do business in Europe. We have some of the best universities in the world and we are a great hub for science and innovation. Britain still has the strengths of its history, not least our democracy, rule of law and strong institutions, but there is also the modern dynamism of the nation that helped pioneer the internet, unravel the DNA code and whose music, films and television are admired the world over. All of these things can mean opportunity for Indian investors and entrepreneurs.

So if these are the foundations of a stronger relationship, how can that relationship benefit our countries and the wider world? I believe there are three global challenges we must take on together.

The first challenge is economic. In the past couple of years, we have seen global economic turmoil. Now both our nations must ask how we can emerge from the storm stronger and more prosperous. We come at this challenge from very different angles. On any measure, India's economy is on an upward trajectory. In Britain, we're waking up to a new reality. For centuries my country assumed we could set the global economic pace. But economic power is shifting — particularly to Asia — so Britain has to work harder than ever before to earn its living in the

world. I'm not ashamed to say that's one of the reasons why I'm here in India. I believe that to spread opportunity for all our people, from Delhi to Dundee, Bangalore to Birmingham, we would benefit from a common strategy for economic growth.

We must start by making our own economies as open and dynamic as possible. That's why within fifty days of coming into power, our government introduced an emergency budget to cut red tape, reduce corporation tax rates, improve our infrastructure and show that Britain is open for business. Next, both India and Britain must encourage more investment from each others' countries. Companies like Vodafone, Wipro and Infosys are showing the way — now let's go further. Yes, that means bringing together the best and brightest from both our countries through scholarships and by twinning universities. But it also means doing the more difficult thing of opening up our own economies to foreign direct investment. We have welcomed your expertise in car manufacturing and steel production; and we need you to reduce the barriers to foreign investment in legal services, defence, banking and insurance.

But perhaps the biggest economic boost of all will come from more trade. EU-India trade is worth £50 billion a year already — and I'm determined we expand that by sorting out an EU and India Free Trade Agreement by the end of the year. We also need to hammer out a global deal. Agreement on Doha would add \$170 billion to the world economy. Together we need to make the argument that we will only get things moving on Doha if we expand it — because when the pie gets bigger, we'll all get a greater share. So let's demonstrate our commitment by opening up our economies and showing we mean business.

The second challenge we must meet together is ensuring global security. Both India and Britain have suffered grievously at the hands of terrorists. We've worked together in the fight against terrorism before and I'm here in India to propose an even closer security relationship.

This year and in 2012, Delhi and London are hosting the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. It makes sense that we co-operate closely to ensure both are as safe as possible. It also makes sense for us to share expertise on defence technology — as we've seen with the building of Jaguar and Hawk aircraft in India in recent decades. And when it comes to the security of our people, we cannot ignore what's happening in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Let me be clear: India's relations with those countries are a matter for you — and you alone. But because when we both want to see a Pakistan free from terror, when we both want to see an Afghanistan that is secure in its own right, again it makes sense that we work together to realise those interests.

The third challenge we must meet together is climate change. Decisive action is long overdue — and that must be global action, with all major economies playing their part. It's only fair that those with the longest history of carbon emissions make the biggest contribution to this. But it's also fair that the largest polluting countries contribute too. Indian action is of course different to U.K. action. We know that India's development needs mean that its energy needs and carbon emissions will have to grow. But by working together, we can help you avoid some of the high carbon mistakes we made.

So this is the case I'm making for a stronger, wider, deeper relationship between India and Britain. I have come to your country in a spirit of humility. I know that Britain cannot rely on sentiment and shared history for a place in India's future. Your country has the whole world beating a path to its door. But I believe Britain should be India's partner of choice in the years ahead. Starting this week, that is what we are determined to deliver.

(David Cameron is British Prime Minister.)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

WTO urges cooperation in natural resources trade

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) on Friday called for closer international cooperation in the global trading of natural resources. In the World Trade Report 2010 that focuses on natural resources, the WTO said the tension between rising demand for natural resources and their scarcity and exhaustibility is a challenge facing modern society.

This tension is likely to increase, especially due to the recovering global economy, spreading industrialisation and the rise of emerging economies, according to the report released Friday in Shanghai. “Fears of inadequate access to supplies in resource-scarce countries and of inappropriate exploitation in resource-rich regions could lead to trade conflicts or worse,” it said.

Adequately defined rules for international cooperation, built on a shared perception of gain, would help to avoid such conflicts, the report said. “I believe that there is not only room for mutually beneficial negotiating trade-offs that encompass natural resources trading, but also that a failure to address these issues could be a recipe for growing tensions in international trade relations,” Pascal Lamy, WTO' s Director-General, wrote in the foreword.

The global trade of natural resources expanded by more than six times to \$3.7 trillion, in the ten years through 2008, it said. — Xinhua

JUDICIARY

Rework the agenda

Sitaram Yechury

A recent decision of the Supreme Court has attracted considerable attention in public discourse. The apex court refused to entertain a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the need for political parties to declare allegiance to ‘socialism’ — enshrined in the Preamble of our Constitution — to obtain recognition from the Election Commission. Noted jurist and my former Rajya Sabha colleague Fali Nariman had a point when he argued that since market forces, under neo-liberal economic reforms, have been the determining factor for over two decades, it was a dichotomy to force political parties to owe allegiance to ‘socialism’. The court, however, rejected this on the grounds that no political party has challenged this requirement so far. Such hypocrisy has been decried, if not denounced, by some columnists who entertain the so-called ‘eternality of capitalism’ and the ‘end of ideology’ predilections.

Strange as this may sound, this ruling reflects the supreme hypocrisy of our ruling classes as reflected in Solicitor General’s defence (reflecting the UPA 2 government’s view) of the existing Constitutional requirement. ‘Socialism’ was inserted in the Preamble by Indira Gandhi during Emergency in the mid-70s. The rise of authoritarianism and the large-scale curtailment of democratic rights and liberties under the Emergency was sought to be cloaked under exhortations of ‘socialism’. Very chillingly reminiscent then of the way Adolf Hitler used ‘national socialism’ to consolidate the Nazi fascist machine.

The issue of mentioning ‘socialism’ in our Constitution was a matter of debate in the Constituent Assembly itself. Moving the resolution to draw

up a Constitution for India's governance, Jawaharlal Nehru, while asserting that he stood for socialism and hoped that India will stand for socialism, didn't use the word as 'it may be agreeable to many and may not be agreeable to some'. He, however, went on to stress that the content of the resolution that proposed to guarantee social, economic and political equality to all sufficiently reflected a socialist character. On a later occasion, B.R. Ambedkar rejected an amendment moved by Professor KT Shah inserting the word 'socialism' in the first clause of the Constitution. Ambedkar advanced two reasons on the lines similar to that of Nehru's. He strengthened the content argument by pointing out Part IV of the Constitution, which deals with the directive principles of State policy, by saying, "If these directive principles to which I have drawn attention are not socialistic in their direction and in their content, I fail to understand what more socialism can be." However, directive principles were never made mandatory.

Socialism, as a political slogan, had a big relevance given the powerful mass movement that resulted in our country's freedom and the accompanied hopes for a better future. While the façade was maintained for sometime, the hypocrisy lay in the fact that, all along, independent India pursued a trajectory of capitalist development, which is the antithesis of socialism. The public sector, erroneously and sometimes deliberately described as 'socialism', was nothing else but the marshalling of people's resources through the State to create the required economic infrastructure for the growth of private capitalism. Leaders of Indian monopoly capital collectively proposed the establishment of the public sector in the famous Bombay Plan that they drew up in 1944. The defence of the public sector today, as the means to resist imperialist globalisation's assault on our economic sovereignty, in no way detracts from this class need for the creation of the public sector in the first place. This trajectory resulted in the assets of the top 22 monopoly houses shooting up from Rs 312.63 crore in 1957 to Rs 1,58,004.72 crore in 1997, a 500-fold increase. Private capital, thus enabled, mounted pressure for the privatisation of the public sector in

order to further enlarge their profits. The subsequent years of neo-liberal reforms have today produced 52 USD billionaires whose combined assets equal a fourth of our country's GDP. On the other hand, 77 per cent of our people are living on less than Rs 20 a day.

This is accompanied by an unbridled loot of public resources and the country's mineral wealth under what can be described as 'crony capitalism' at its worst. The telecom scam, the Indian Premier League scam and the illegal mining scam appear to rule the roost. Further, this is also distorting our parliamentary democracy where money power is influencing the voting pattern of the people.

The election expenses of candidates of major bourgeois parties, in the recent elections, make a mockery of the limits set by the Election Commission. Democracy is increasingly being defined not by people's popular choices but by the capacity of political parties to spend exorbitant amounts of money to coerce the voters. Leave alone socialism, even democracy is fast losing its real meaning.

The reason why none of the political parties that embrace neo-liberal reforms, like the Congress and its allies now or the BJP and its allies earlier, have objected to the need to show allegiance to socialism, as the Supreme Court questioned, is not far to seek. The loot of our resources and the distortion of our democracy require the socialist mask (read: aam aadmi) to hide behind. The point is not to rip the mask apart. The point is to change the reality behind this mask. Instead of seeking to remove 'socialism' from the Constitution, we need to work towards realising its spirit and content of providing — in the real sense — liberty, equality and fraternity to all. We can begin by making the directive principles of State policy mandatory.

Sitaram Yechury is CPI(M) Politburo member and Rajya Sabha MP

The views expressed by the author are personal

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

India needs new politics

Sudheendra Kulkarni

India is adrift. Worrisomely adrift. This is not because of any widespread social unrest or destabilising economic problems. Discontent in society there certainly is. Grievances due to the country's unbalanced economic growth there certainly are and they are mounting. But the lack of direction is primarily due to the stagnant state of Indian politics. There is no soaring sense of purpose, fresh vitality and inspirational energy visible in any segment of the political spectrum, including in the two main national parties — Congress and BJP. Making matters worse for the country is their growing mutual antagonism, which is set to create a storm in the monsoon session of Parliament.

Discussing the state of regional parties is unnecessary in this context because, significant though they are in their respective states, they do not critically determine the health of national politics. Discussing the state of the two communist parties is also not pertinent here. Their national footprint and influence have both shrunk enormously, mainly due to the fossilisation of their ideology. Their future looks bleaker than the present. The socialist movement, once a persuasive voice and a powerful factor in Indian politics, has all but vanished. Can there be a sadder commentary on its disappearance than the near-total absence of a suitable commemoration, in 2010, of the birth centenary of its greatest

leader, Dr Rammanohar Lohia? How effortlessly we have forgotten one of the most original political thinkers in independent India.

What is truly worrisome is the state of the two national parties. Outwardly all seems well with the Congress and the government it heads. UPA II is stable. Dr Manmohan Singh has become the third longest occupant of the office of Prime Minister. Not a small achievement. It is also a tribute to the quickly acquired political expertise of Sonia Gandhi. Her authority is unlikely to be challenged by anybody within her own party, something which was not true even in the case of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. However, in spite of all these pluses, the calm in the Congress and its government is suggestive of stagnation, not the strength, self-confidence and sagacity needed to take the nation forward, rapidly and in the right direction.

Efforts of UPA II to normalise relations with Pakistan are leading nowhere, mainly because of India's overdependence on American mediators. Pakistan's shrewd rulers are trying to strike their own anti-India bargain with the US, stuck as the latter is with its needless and hopeless military occupation of Afghanistan. India's gains in normalising the situation in the Kashmir valley, which were the outcome of the farsighted efforts of both Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Dr Singh (in UPA I), have been largely frittered away by UPA II due to inattention. There is lack of consensus within the Congress and the government on how to deal with the menace of Maoism. And there is no big and enthusiasm-creating action to walk the government's laudable talk on inclusive development. This cannot be done, as ample examples from history caution us, merely by launching yet another poverty alleviation programme by spending thousands of crores of rupees. What is needed is firm and sustained action against corruption, inefficiency,

unaccountability and bureaucratic insensitivity, which are responsible for the abysmal failure of most government-funded anti-poverty schemes. Besides distorting India's development, corruption is also poisoning the very lifeblood of India's democratic institutions, including the judiciary. Sadly, there is no real and credible outrage over corruption in Political India. The BJP's recent conduct in Karnataka and Jharkhand shows that it has no energy or intent left to retrieve what was once its biggest USP: its attempts at probity in public life.

There is a dichotomy today between India's stagnant politics and vibrant society. The vibrancy and vitality are most visible in India's young population — not only the rich but also the poor, not only in urban areas but also in villages. However, the political and governance establishment seems woefully unresponsive to their aspirations and ambitions. This is evident from the fact that no political party is articulating the agenda of thorough-going political and governance reforms, without which all talk of “inclusive development”, “social justice”, “education and health for all”, “zero tolerance towards terrorism and Maoism”, etc. are meaningless. The only party that is talking about political reforms, with specific ideas, is Lok Satta in Andhra Pradesh, led by Dr Jayaprakash Narayan. It is still small and struggling, but nevertheless a ray of hope.

India today needs not just new leadership, but new morality-based politics. This new politics will have to discard old habits of conduct and old ways of thinking, which have compelled even the good people in our parties to become prisoners of myopic and sectional considerations. It should muster the courage and understanding needed to fight corruption, and thereby reinvigorate all the institutions of democratic governance. It must eschew misuse of government agencies for partisan ends. It should also be committed to creating national consensus on all major national

challenges, including the two inherited from history — disputes with Pakistan and China — which are sapping India's energies and hindering its rise in Asia and the world.

Is new politics possible? Remember, stagnation is always an invitation to start new attempts.

POPULATION

Positive Curve

IST

In a welcome development, there is evidence to suggest that the country's birth rate, death rate and natural population growth rate are on the decline. Statistics gleaned from the annual Sample Registration System survey for the years 1998 and 2008 indicate that the overall birth rate dipped by as much as 14 per cent in a decade. This would mean that while coercive methods in the past failed to curb population growth, there is now a conscious effort on the part of the public to do so. This corroborates the thesis that education, particularly female literacy, as well as income growth can help curtail excessive fertility, as the past decade has seen strides in both areas. Punjab, noticeably, has been the most impressive where birth rate has fallen by a massive 23 per cent.

On the other hand, the crude death rate too has come down by 18 per cent. This clearly indicates that quality healthcare is slowly becoming more accessible to the people at large. But what is truly a pleasant surprise is that the so-called BIMARU states are leading the way. Madhya Pradesh, for instance, has seen a decline of 23 per cent, the same as Rajasthan, while Bihar has experienced a dip of 22 per cent and Uttar Pradesh 20 per cent. This would strengthen Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia's assertion that the concept of BIMARU is losing relevance. The infant mortality rate also mirrors the decline in death rate, showing a countrywide decrease of 26 per cent over the last decade.

More than 50 per cent of our billion-plus population are below 25, which

puts the Indian economy in a demographic sweet spot. However, having a large workforce is only an advantage when it can contribute in a meaningful way to the economy. This is something yet to be realised in India. The system, therefore, stood to be overwhelmed if population trends didn't moderate. There are now signs that this is happening.

That's a welcome trend indeed, because it means that politicians now have some slack to do their job. They must now ensure that India feeds its millions and the economy generates enough jobs. The government would do well to encourage investment in and expansion of the labour-intensive manufacturing sector, to soak up the large numbers of unemployed. If income growth and education can deliver the goods, then we will need more of the same. Let's leverage positive demographic trends to transform the country.

PUBLIC POLICY

Making government policies more palatable

Mythili Bhusnurmath

A majority of the public in the European Union's five largest countries disagree with their governments' decision to let budget deficits rise in order to combat the financial crisis, says a recent Financial Times-Harris poll. Asked if public spending cuts were necessary to help long-term economic recovery, 84% of the French, 71 % of Spaniards, 69% of Britons, 67 % of Germans and 61 % of Italians answered, yes!

In the US, 73 % of Americans agreed. Most seemed to understand that fiscal prudence, even if it meant fewer freebies today, would be in their long-term interest. And they were willing to make that trade-off even though cost-cutting was likely to push up unemployment and affect living standards adversely. And, surprise, surprise, they agreed high budget deficits and subsequent spending cuts call for a re-examination of Europe's generous welfare state.

You read that once. And you read it again; this time more slowly, just to ensure your eyes are not playing any tricks on you. Then, having made sure you read it right first time you scratch your head and wonder. Why are Europeans so willing to have their governments cut back on freebies when Indians, even middle-class Indians who don't need handouts, just can't seem to have enough? Witness the loud protests when the government recently withdrew some of the freebies (oil subsidies) that

they've been enjoying for so long. And undeservedly!

Short-term pain for long-term gain! That's a trade off even children understand. Finish your homework then you can go to play is something most of us grew up hearing and, in turn, tell our children now. Yet when it comes to public policy issues, more particularly issues of public spending, the average Indian just doesn't seem to get it.

While the FT/Harris poll finding may be partly due to higher public awareness after the debt crisis seriously endangered the eurozone, the contrast with India could not be starker. Unlike the European public that seems to understand that if governments focus only on the short-term without keeping an eye on the long-term consequences of their actions, the burden will ultimately fall on ordinary people, the public in India seems to have little or no appreciation of ground realities. Even the educated middle class wants the government to spend more and more, as though there is some bottomless pit from which it can draw resources indefinitely. What explains this inability to appreciate the consequences of fiscal profligacy; to accept some hardship in the short-term in order to improve our prospects, long-term?

'We're Northern European, less emotional and more accepting of what needs to be done in a crisis,' is how former Irish PM Garret Fitzgerald (who raised taxes and was instrumental in getting its public finances in order) put when asked how the Irish have accepted the austerity package with relatively good cheer. So can our cussedness be put down to cultural factors? Not quite! It is more because most of us tend to see public policy issues as 'them (government) vs us'. Add to that our innate distrust of government (not without reason!) and the latter's inability to explain its position and there you have it!

'It's the economy, stupid!' That was Bill Clinton's rallying call during

the 1992 US Presidential election that he won with a handsome majority against the incumbent George Bush senior. The UK election in May this year was also fought principally on economic policy. Likewise, the economy is the main plank on which the Australian elections will be fought later this year. When was the last time an election was fought on economic issues in India?

The answer is almost never! Except for the time when the BJP government lost an election after onion prices hit the roof, few issues other than inflation, perhaps, have any resonance with the aam janta. Caste, religion and narrow parochial and regional issues might find a place but not larger economic issues that have a much more far-reaching impact on our lives.

Hopefully this will change as more and more Indians get educated in the true sense of the word. We also need to educate people (and here both government and media must play a bigger role) on how seemingly esoteric stuff like fiscal deficit touches their lives. Why is this important? Because it is only then that governments will cease to regard measures such as a cut back in subsidies as political harakiri and not hesitate to dole out some tough love. And there are times like now that call for tough love.

Detracting from entitlements

Brinda Karat

The National Advisory Council's proposals on the Food Security Bill represent a bad deal for the poor.

The struggle for an effective and equitable Food Security Bill (FSB) has received a setback with the disappointing proposals put forward by the National Advisory Council. There is a disturbing disjuncture between what is being claimed and the actual implications of the proposals.

Indeed it may be said that the NAC proposals create new discriminations.

The most basic requirement for a legal guarantee for food security is the replacement of the present targeted system by a universal system of public distribution. India had such a system till the advent of neo-liberal policies in the 1990s when targeting started. The NAC proposal actually expands the sphere of targeting in at least four ways.

Geographical targeting: According to the proposal, "...initial universalisation in one-fourth of the most disadvantaged districts or blocks in the first year is recommended, where every household is entitled to receive 35 kg per month of foodgrains at Rs. 3 a kg." This will translate into around 150 districts out of 640. This proposal actually introduces a new discrimination among those who are equally poor, on the basis of where they were born and where they live. For example, an unorganised worker in the construction industry who does not possess a

BPL (below poverty line) card, would in the 150 districts selected be eligible for the entitlement. But if she lives in a village outside these selected districts, even though she may be in the same economic category she will not be eligible. This is legally sanctioned discrimination based on geographical location, and can be challenged in a court of law.

Also, who will determine the list of districts? Will it mean that some States, for example Kerala, may be left out in the first year altogether as was done in the case of the National Rural Health Mission, in this case because they do not fit the definition of “most disadvantaged”? Thus the question of identification of the “most disadvantaged” may itself be discriminatory against States. The NAC is overlooking the fact that the “most disadvantaged people” often live in the “least disadvantaged districts.”

New category of socially vulnerable groups: What happens in the remaining districts? Will the “initial universalisation” be extended to them over time?

The proposal says: “In the remaining districts/blocks... there shall be a guarantee of 35 kg of foodgrains per household at Rs. 3 a kg for all socially vulnerable groups including SC/STs...” This means that unlike in the 150 districts where all households will have access, in the rest of the districts, which form the majority of rural India, it will not be universal but targeted for socially vulnerable groups. Who will be included, apart from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes? What about the minorities and the most backward castes? Will occupation be a criterion for inclusion in the category of socially vulnerable groups? Will the 77 per cent of the workforce in the unorganised sector with a spending power of less than Rs. 20 and who are plagued by fluctuating incomes, be included? In any case, by differentiating between the 150 districts and the rest of India, by introducing the category of socially vulnerable groups, the NAC has

retained the APL/BPL divide, albeit with a different name and different criteria.

Targeting out others: The proposal says that for all others (other than the category of socially vulnerable groups) the guarantee will be 25 kg “at an appropriate price.” This is the crux of the issue — lower entitlement at a higher price. In fact, the issue of differentiated allocations and higher prices for the APL sections is what the Planning Commission has been pushing for — except that the Commission has been more forthright about its aims than the NAC. In a discussion paper for the Empowered Group of Ministers looking into the food security legislation, the Commission said: “We can give the APL sections a legal entitlement [later it was specifically mentioned as 25 kg] but at a non-subsidised price. We should calibrate an APL price linked to MSP [minimum support price given to farmers for foodgrain] in such a way that the annual APL offtake is around 10 million tonnes or so. If there is excess grain availability, as at present, there can be a discount from this price to encourage a larger offtake. If not, the discount should be withdrawn.” It is precisely this utterly cynical manipulation by the Planning Commission of a popular demand to suit government requirements that the NAC wants to project as universalisation. This is unfortunate, to say the least.

Category to be excluded: The proposed law will legally exclude certain categories, the details of which are yet to be worked out. If this means the income-tax paying category, there can be no objection to it. But more details are required.

Time-frame

The NAC has not suggested any time-frame for implementation except for the 150 districts. The proposal says that the “differentiated entitlements... would progressively be expanded to all rural areas in the country over a reasonable period of time.” Who will define “reasonable”? It has been reported that the NAC's thinking is guided by

the pattern set by the staggered implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. This is a misplaced comparison. First, for the NREGS the Left parties had ensured that there was a fixed time-frame of five years with no switch-off clause. Equally important, the NREGS was a new work-based right that required a certain amount of experience in implementation. The PDS not only exists but the infirmities in the targeted system in different States have had a negative impact on food security rights. People all over the country are affected by food inflation and the consequent food insecurity. Thus there is no basis for any staggered implementation as far as an urgent issue such as food is concerned, more so since India has huge buffer stocks.

Denial

There is no mention of the Antyodaya category. Elimination of this category would mean 2.5 crore families being deprived of their existing entitlement of wheat at Rs. 2 a kg and having to pay Re. 1 more. This is unacceptable. In States such as West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Jharkhand, BPL card-holders get rice at Rs. 2 a kg, and in some States at Re. 1 a kg. These States have also expanded the numbers of the BPL population. Surely a Central Act must expand on existing entitlements and not detract from them. If the State governments implement the pricing suggested by the NAC of Rs. 3 a kg, crores of families will find that the Central Food Security Act actually increases their foodgrain costs. State governments are already facing a severe resources crunch. This will make it more difficult for them.

Urban poor

As far as the identification and categorisation of the urban population is concerned, it is clear that targeting is going to be the basis. Households eligible for 35 kg at Rs. 3 are to be identified on the basis of criteria developed by the Hashim Committee. Oddly, the NAC has accepted the

recommendations of the Hashim Committee even before the Report has been written. Usually one would like to examine recommendations before accepting them — for which they have to be written in the first place.

The urban poor have been neglected in the proposals. There are no recommendations to give a legal backup to nutrition schemes such as Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and midday meal programmes, nor are any other essential commodities included in the ambit of the food security system.

The NAC has compromised on the basic issue of universalisation. What it is suggesting is a differently targeted system. An opportunity to take the struggle forward into official institutions such as the NAC has been lost. The NAC should have held out in the knowledge that in any case what it is suggesting may be further whittled down.

(Brinda Karat, MP, is a member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).)

TIMES OF INDIA 31.7.10 PUBLIC POLICY

MP assembly ratifies timely delivery of public service

TNN

Babugiri could soon be consigned to history in Madhya Pradesh. In a first-of-its-kind move, the Madhya Pradesh assembly on Friday passed a law which guarantees delivery of public services to common people within a stipulated time frame, failing which officials will have to pay a fine.

According to the Madhya Pradesh Public Services Guarantee Act 2010, that was passed with a voice vote, a notification will be issued for delivery of services within a fixed time period.

In case, citizens fail to get services on time, they could make an appeal to first and second appellate officers, who would give instructions to the officers concerned. If there is a delay, the officers would have to pay a fine of Rs 250 per day, with a maximum of Rs 5,000.

If first appellate officer fails to ensure delivery of services without valid reason, he, too, would have to pay a fine -- the minimum has been fixed at Rs 500 and maximum at Rs 5,000. It would also be fixed as to how many days an officer is entitled keep a file.

Scoffing at doubts raised by the Opposition members, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that public servants would have to receive applications from citizens and give them receipt. The time limit would

start from the date of receiving applications.

If needed, disciplinary action would be taken against the errant official.

Chouhan said that the suitable amendments could be made in future. Describing the salient features of the Bill, he claimed key public services -- such as birth, caste domicile certificates, khasra copies, tap-water supply connections etc -- would be listed and their timely service guaranteed.

Chouhan said that the chief minister and his ministerial colleagues would also be brought under the purview of the legislation in future. The law aims to provide legal teeth to the citizen charter system.

WOMEN

HINDU 31.7.10 WOMEN

Gender war, yet to be won

V.R. Krishna Iyer

The move to create a U.N. Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, named U.N. Women, is a major stride for humankind.

Whether you believe in god or not, every effect must have a cause. Out of nothing, nothing comes: ex nihilo nihil fit. Any creation must have a creator: call him Brahman, God, Allah the Merciful... God is everywhere and in everything. As the philosopher Arthur Young said, god sleeps in the mineral, wakes in the vegetable, walks in the animal, flies in the bird and thinks in man. This critical awareness is unique to human beings, gives them the power to identify themselves with creativity and universal consciousness. Call it omnipresent infinity through absolute power present universally and ubiquitously. The vedic seer's universal vision of existence does not discriminate.

Walt Whitman wrote: "... [A] leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars. And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren, and the tree toad is a chef-d'oeuvre for the highest, And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven." Indeed, the deepest waters and the summit skies are made sublime by the same divine wonder.

Jesus described this infinite wonder the kingdom of god and made it the

universal truth: “The Kingdom of God is within you,” he told humanity. The upanishads called it Advaita Brahman. Islam stands for peace, purity, submission. Every human being finds a celestial essence in cosmic brotherhood, whatever his or her religion. So he is all-merciful. The vedic vision is absolute unity in creation. Brahman is not plurality of gods but one god — Advaita.

So, whatever be your religion we have but one god, the awakened over the supreme wonder as the Buddha. The Buddha did not preach. God believed in truth and non-violence — the Enlightened One, a Hindu avatar. So I am a Brahmin, a spark of Brahman. Thus I am a Christian with Jesus' vision, and also Islam's single brotherhood credo. This profound unitary global glory is the foundation of Indian constitutional-cultural-theological secularism. Ignorant of this deeper spiritual core, those who set off religious acrimony and communalism forget the quintessence of secularism. Vulgar religious rivalry violates sublime secularism.

We discriminate between man and woman and consider the latter to be inferior. No man is born without a woman. There are some biological differences but they do not warrant basic discrimination. Man, woman and child are humanity in unity.

This sublime, supreme truth of divinity has led the United Nations to found a gender wonder. It seeks to give a stronger voice to the notionally illusory weaker sex. They are equal in terms of their potency. The queen on the throne is no less than the king can be. Indira Gandhi was as powerful as her father was before her. So too the spiritual-temporal jurisprudence of peer sex power.

The U.N General Assembly on July 2, 2010 voted unanimously to create a U.N. Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, named U.N. Women (UNW). The new entity is meant to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide.

It aims to create a new vibrant ethos, a valiant instrument to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment, bring to a close discriminatory disparity, according to a U.N. statement. UNW brings four U.N bodies dealing with gender issues under one umbrella. It is meant to be an egalitarian organ.

With the creation of UNW, the egalitarian gender jurisprudence is affirmed unanimously. Hopefully, a grand transformation is under way now that it has come into being. A man or a woman can be vibrantly one. But, give woman nuclear weapons, and she will bomb as terribly as a man will.

Every faculty in the cerebral power is equal across genders. But this militant equality has yet to become a social reality. Indian culture accepts the wealthy and the 'illthy', the rich and the indigent, equally in its epics. Egalite is writ large in constitutional print. Currently in Indian politics a few women are right at the top, such as Sonia Gandhi and Mayawati. But in Parliament, the judiciary and the executive, or in the professions, have women gained gender equality? It is a war yet to be won.

The U.N. resolution has called for the appointment of an Under-Secretary-General to head the UNW, and the establishment of an executive board to provide intergovernmental support to and supervision of its operation. All public institutions must aid this process.

This move must be radically supported by every country. India should not lag behind. It is a shame that the Indian Parliament does not yet have one-third composition of women members. In the judiciary, too, women are obscure. India should have at least a third of all judges coming from the humblest among women. Then social justice will become gentler, more compassionate and real.

Equal roles

Women are not domestic slaves to be sold for a dowry and beaten up by alcoholic husbands. They are equal and eligible to wield public power. Women can be economically independent and be the guardians of minor children under the law.

More women should come into the police department, for one. They are generally less corrupt and harsh than many of their male counterparts, less violent in handling persons in custody, kinder to women offenders and juveniles. We need more police women in high positions, just as we need successful women District Collectors, Chief Secretaries and Chief Justices.

Women, awake, arise and make every political party include equal gender justice as a policy in their manifesto. In the matter of C.B. Muthamma, who was the first woman to join the Indian Foreign Service, I had condemned statutory gender discrimination resorted to by the Union government.

A women's code to deal with special requirements for gender development calls for special institutions. The right to be born healthy must be guarded for the girl. In education, sports, conjugal life, maternal facilities, old age maintenance, the law has to show special concern. This writer once presented a fair and comprehensive women's code, prepared by a committee appointed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. But there has been no legislation in this regard yet. Public pressure is needed to make the code a law. India has promises to keep for gender justice. A Ministry for gender justice is essential.

UNICEF made me chairman of a committee to prepare a children's code since the Government of India had failed to produce a statute under the International Children's Convention. Margaret Alva, a Minister under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, appointed me chairman of a panel to prepare a report on the maladies facing women kept in custody. In

both these cases the committees drafted exemplary codes and presented them to the Central government. But the story ended there: the reports were not implemented.

Many gender-oriented reforms in jurisprudence were recommended by the Kerala Law Reforms Commission, of which this writer was the Chairman. The Bills are progressive and will transform society if implemented. But there has not been any movement on this front.

The unanimous U.N resolution for the creation of the UNW was a great day for world womanhood, indeed all of humankind. All thinking persons will greet the decision. Gender power will gain strength as humanity becomes aware that sans mother there is no man. When I advocate the development of womanhood I really argue for the cause of humanity as a whole.