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CORRUPTION

The heart of power

Minhaz Merchant

Those who question the role of civil society in India's battle against corruption should recall the words of [US Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter](#), one of the great reformers of the Franklin D Roosevelt era, whose judicial tenure extended through the presidencies of Dwight Eisenhower, [Harry Truman](#) and [John F Kennedy](#). "In a democracy," Justice Frankfurter thundered, "the highest office is the office of the citizen."

The government is elected to govern. If it does not, it will be voted out after five years. In the interim, it is the job of citizens, at whose behest the government discharges its constitutional obligations, to protest misgovernance. Civil society globally has catalysed great change. In the [United States](#), Martin Luther King fought for and won civil rights for African-Americans. That was civil society at its best. In [Egypt](#), civil society ended the 32-year, one-party dictatorship of [Hosni Mubarak](#). Civil society is leading change in [Tunisia](#).

[Anna Hazare](#) and Baba Ramdev would not have drawn nationwide support had the UPA government done the job it was elected to do. Corruption does not only corrode the foundations of our democracy. It is the fount of several other ills. For example, systemic corruption ensures that nearly 75% of taxpayers' funds meant for anti-poverty programmes like MNREGA do not reach the poor. A government deeply steeped in corrupt practices has little incentive to legislate a strong institutionalised anti-corruption body like the Lokpal.

Consider two key questions which have divided politicians, jurists and citizens alike and stalled progress on the Jan Lokpal Bill: first, should

the prime minister come within the purview of the Lokpal? Yes: the prime minister as head of the government must welcome institutional scrutiny - as, for instance, US presidents routinely do - not evade it.

Secondly, should the higher judiciary (high court and Supreme Court judges) fall within the purview of the Lokpal? No, the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, currently under legislative review, should instead be strengthened to include a judicial commission which would hear public complaints against senior judges. The judicial commission could have five members: the chairperson of the Lokpal body, the central vigilance commissioner, the leader of the opposition, a senior government minister and a former chief justice of [India](#). The judicial commission would thus ensure the Lokpal participates collectively - not unilaterally - in determining charges of corruption against senior judges. The Jan Lokpal draft Bill already has a provision for judicial review by the Supreme Court of all decisions by the multi-member Lokpal body. This system of counterchecks and balances between the Lokpal and the higher judiciary will best serve the citizen.

But will we get a Lokpal Bill at all in the next session of Parliament as promised by the UPA government? The government is likely to present a watered down Bill to Parliament. MPs across party lines will reject such a diluted Bill. Does this signify business (and corruption) as usual for the Congress-led UPA government? Fortunately for citizens, no. A Rubicon has been crossed. There are moments in a government's life when the tide turns. That moment has arrived for this government.

Rewind to recent history when similar points of inflection were reached: June 26, 1975 when the Emergency was declared and thousands jailed without trial leading, on March 24, 1977, to the end of 30 years of uninterrupted Congress governments; April 16, 1987 when Swedish Radio first unveiled the Bofors scam - within 31 months Rajiv Gandhi's 404-MP majority in the Lok Sabha had been reduced to less than 200, the steepest decline in Indian electoral history. And, finally, December

6, 1992 when a somnolent Narasimha Rao failed to stop the demolition of the Babri masjid, setting off a chain of events that allowed the BJP-led NDA to form a government at the Centre for the first time just over five years later.

The UPA government will retain office for the present because it possesses the instruments of office: control over the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and the Enforcement Directorate among others - and therefore over the way Mayawati, [Mulayam Singh Yadav](#) and Lalu Prasad vote in Parliament. The only outcome the UPA government truly fears is being voted out of office. That would dry up its financial pipeline. Most politicians regard being in government not as an obligation to serve the citizen but to serve themselves. Being in opposition is not a profitable option for those used to being in government for 52 out of the past 64 years.

With a mere 28.55% national vote share in the 2009 Lok Sabha election, there are two constituencies the Congress cannot afford to lose: Muslims and the Hindi heartland. Muslims give the Congress around 10% of its 28% vote share, which it protects fiercely through calibrated appeasement. The other 18% falls squarely in Baba Ramdev's constituency: rural farmers and OBCs, not all of them natural BJP supporters. Baba Ramdev is a Yadav himself. The caste implications of his movement on the 2012 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections and the next Lok Sabha poll could prove decisive. It could cost the Congress what it most fears losing: the power and protection of office.

The writer is an author and chairman of a media group.

Get the message

Now that the crisis situation over Baba Ramdev's fast-unto-death has been defused via persuasion and fruit juice, it's time for the government to stop brandishing minutiae - who's propped up by which political interest, whose assets need checking, whose voices adorn which CD - and focus instead on the big picture. That is corruption, the melee over the Lokpal Bill just one manifestation of public feeling on this issue. Pranab Mukherjee has stated extra-constitutional voices should not dictate on [corruption](#) to Parliament. While the minister's rightly emphasised Parliament's supremacy in the Indian polity, the fact is corruption has pushed such deep roots into the country that we're likely to see more voices from civil society raised against it, not - as the government might wish - less.

Growing public discourse over corruption is linked to important changes shaping the Indian people. Two paradoxical developments are taking place. On the one hand, scams are becoming monsters of quantum proportions, eating into the nation's development. They come coated in political arrogance, apathy and assumed helplessness of the people. On the other, the corpus of educated, aware citizenry is also growing. Importantly, this citizenry's access to mass media has never been as expansive as now. Where earlier scams filtered through to the Indian public after considerable time elapsed, names of foreign tax havens, banks and brokers growing from whispers in the wind to in-your-face facts, today it's possible to track corruption while it happens. The media provides a platform for investigators, whistleblowers and citizenry to challenge corrupt practices together.

This isn't just India-specific. The resonance of WikiLeaks highlights

global concerns about abuses of power - with the belief that truth can change things. The same belief's showing in the Indian electorate now, media-armed and well-informed. It knows for instance of the Ombudsman's office in Scandinavian nations, controlling corruption, itself woven skilfully into a system of interlocking checks and balances. It knows it is entitled to the same, an effective Lokpal overseen by a stringent judiciary, for example. It also knows why, instead of calling a special parliamentary session for representatives to clarify positions on corruption, politicians are instead deflecting the topic through allegations and retorts.

Yet, the belief in change is strong, energised by developments that range from Barack Obama's 'Yes, we can' slogan to the [Jasmine Revolution](#), Arabs standing up peacefully before dictators and their tanks. This is in fact a time of wonder for politics around the world. With its 'transparency revolution', [India](#) is joining in. It's time for its politicians to see that big picture. And drop their small talk.

DANGERS OF THE CIRCUS

- Democracy does not feed on ignorance and credulity alone

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray



Asked by Karan Thapar in a CNBC programme whether the Ramdev episode had damaged the government's image, I had no hesitation in replying that it had damaged India's image. Governments come and go, and no one is surprised when they stumble. But for a government to be seen to be held to ransom by a dancing, prancing performer who mesmerizes thousands of people who know nothing of the billions he has stashed away in business enterprises is a slur on the country's pretensions to modernity and rationalism.

My comment was not well received, as I had known it wouldn't be. Earlier, the e-mail brought me a heavily sarcastic message titled, "The babagiri in emerging India". It was not, as the title seemed to imply, an indictment of "godmen" (that hideous oxymoron with which India pollutes the English language) who exploit faith, sell their benediction and run profiteering ventures. Instead of ridiculing "babagiri" like "dadagiri" or "Gandhigiri", the e-mail ranted against the "roughly 2% population of the so-called intellectuals/upper strata" who apparently resent "this rural, illiterate ruffian... trespassing on their zamindari". Echoes of that same class complex surfaced on television with a snide reference to Doon School and St Stephen's College (distinctions I cannot claim), presumably as bastions of the English-speaking elite that is supposed to feel threatened by holy con men.

Leaving aside vitriol which says more about a speaker than his target, the only new aspect of the current furore over corruption is the attempt to package it as a mix of moral crusade and political theatre. Televised meetings of the lok pal committee would serve a similar populist effect by enabling viewers to feast on the circus of histrionics even while denied the bread of true reform. No one quarrels with the need to address the core malaise but the way it is being done replaces all sense of serious purpose with showmanship. That is not to endorse the charge of a conspiracy of right reaction and left anarchism which, as I also said on CNBC, smacks of an afterthought. But no one in his right senses would ever imagine that, however shrewd and versatile the star performer might be and however devout the crowd he assembles, they can come to grips with the legal, political and social intricacies of widespread corruption.

The Kripalani Commission that Jawaharlal Nehru set up was before my time. But I remember writing to welcome the appointment of an independent Central Vigilance Commission as a result of K. Santhanam's report, while criticizing the refusal to grant the CVC the wide powers of inquiry and investigation Santhanam proposed. We also deplored the rejection of the recommendation that "[if] a formal allegation is made by any 10 members of Parliament or a legislature in writing addressed to the Prime Minister or Chief Minister, through the Speakers and Chairmen, the Prime Minister or Chief Minister should consider himself obliged, by convention, to refer the allegations for immediate investigations by a committee".

Every government since then has been under pressure to take decisive action to check corruption and has avoided doing so. The legal framework to bring to book serious offenders, especially in the areas of tax evasion, misuse of position by public servants to award contracts, black marketing and adulteration that Santhanam listed, has not been strengthened. As prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee did not act on his own admission to a parliamentary committee when he was a relatively

young Opposition politician that all Indian legislators start their careers with the lie of the false election spending returns they file. Even if a prime minister like Manmohan Singh were prepared to accept a lok pal's jurisdiction (and I cannot think of a single other soul in Indian politics who would be willing to take such a risk), the system will not allow him to do so.

Jayaprakash Narayan well understood the ingenuity with which authority takes away while appearing to give. "Let me not create the impression that the appointment of a Lokpal and Lokayuktas will in itself cure the disease of corruption so rampant among Ministers and civil servants," he wrote, saying that a careful scrutiny of draft legislation would reveal that "the action of these vital officers is severely limited and hemmed in by restrictive provisions". Bureaucratic transfers, postings and promotions were major sources of ministerial corruption in JP's time. Globalization, the economic boom, spiralling exports and imports, sophisticated technology, soaring election expenses, arms purchases, trade in contraband and the ramifications of terrorist activity have added many layers since then to the business of generating illicit wealth.

That apart, any assemblage centred on a so-called godman who talks of mobilizing 11,000 armed followers warns of the peril India faces of being dragged back into its own dark ages. Recognizing the danger, the first Press Commission denounced as "undesirable" what it called "the spread of the habit of consultation of, and reliance upon, astrological predictions" that was "certain to produce an unsettling effect on the minds of readers". The second Press Commission called on editors "who believe in promoting a scientific temper among their readers and in combating superstition and fatalism" to "discontinue the publication of astrological predictions". No editor took the least notice because astrology, like *vaastu*, appeals to a huge mass of Indians whom newspaper circulation and advertising managers can't afford to ignore even if some of them practise gender discrimination, bride-burning and

caste persecution, and indulge in sporadic *sati*, honour killings and *khap* activism.

Tragically, it's not only the poor and uneducated who are prisoners of ancient superstitions. Hamish McDonald's racy account of the Ambani story describes members of the warring clan going off to temples and *ashrams* to muster the spiritual forces on their side for the epic showdown. Indira Gandhi's socialism did not exclude a curious succession of supposedly holy men and women. The Bharatiya Janata Party's pyramid of rational conservatism rests on the base of *sangh parivar* primitivism. Some among West Bengal's Marxists may nurse the private conviction that they wouldn't have been trounced if they had paid greater attention to *pujas* that animate the masses. Many corporate chiefs won't stir an inch without consulting the stars. It isn't considered patriotic to cite Churchill but one of his more memorable speeches roundly castigated "these Brahmins who mouth and patter the principles of Western Liberalism, and pose as philosophic and democratic politicians" but, at the same time, cruelly suppress "untouchables". "And then in a moment they turn around and begin chopping logic with John Stuart Mill, or pleading the rights of man with Jean Jacques Rousseau."

Such contradictions are seared into Indian society. The obvious reason for the government's initial placation of Ramdev was fear of the wrath of his followers. But I also suspect superstitious fear for similar Ramdevs might come tumbling out of the cupboards of many Congress party members too. Both sides of the political divide are also accustomed to passing responsibility to what used to be called extra-constitutional centres of power. The category might include sundry *sadhus* but it's an insult to the masters of India's spiritual life to compare every Tom, Dick and Harry in beads and saffron to Swami Vivekananda or Mahatma Gandhi.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Focus on economics in upcoming India-U.S. meetings

Narayan Lakshman

Two sides may seek to iron out issues such as defence, visas

Hillary to visit India to pursue “huge range of bilateral government-to-government activity”

Washington: The second round of the United States-India Strategic Dialogue is likely to be held in July, according to sources here, including statements by Robert Blake, Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asian Affairs. Additionally, the U.S. Treasury confirmed that the coming U.S.-India Economic and Financial Partnership will be held during June 27-28.

Speaking at a hearing on Capitol Hill this week, Mr. Blake spoke of the “arc” of U.S.-India relations, noting that the Obama-Singh meeting in Washington in November 2009 had opened a “new chapter” in the bilateral relationship.

Other senior officials confirmed that next month would be the likely window for the talks.

Mr. Blake too said that in July Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would travel to India to pursue with her Indian counterpart the “huge range of bilateral government-to-government activity,” specifically 21 separate sub-dialogues that include trade, defence, visas and

innovation.

While trade and investments for innovation have broadly seen a strong upswing in recent years, there are outstanding issues relating to defence and visas that the two sides may seek to iron out.

Although, as Mr. Blake said, U.S. firms obtained almost \$8 billion in defence sales in the past four years, including the purchase of 10 Boeing C-17 airlifters, six C-130J aircraft, and eight P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft, the U.S. was ruled out during competitive bidding for the purchase of Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft by the Indian Air Force.

The decision, in April, to consider either the European Eurofighter or the French Rafale caught some policymakers here off-guard, raising questions about the extent to which India would continue to deepen its military ties with the U.S.

Mr. Blake said U.S. visa issuance to Indians was a good indicator of “thriving relations,” and in the last four years, “Indians have received about half of all H1-B visas issued worldwide, and more than 44 per cent of all L-1 intra-company transfer visas.” He noted that 6,50,000 Indians travelled to the U.S. in 2010, an 18 per cent increase over 2009.

However, in this area too there are numerous wrinkles to smooth out, including allegations that some Indian IT companies were misusing H1 and B1 visas. Indian Industry Minister Anand Sharma, who is set to arrive in Washington later this month for a series of meetings, reportedly said he planned to take up the matter with the U.S.

Mr. Sharma was quoted as saying: “We have taken this up on more than one occasion with the U.S. government; I had written twice to the U.S. trade representative ambassador Ron Kirk, it should come

up in the joint Trade Policy Forum.”

A dominant theme throughout this month's meetings in Washington and next month's talks in New Delhi is likely to be economic links and how they could be strengthened in the light of the ongoing recovery in the U.S.

In this context of particular salience will be the second annual meeting of the U.S.-India Economic and Financial Partnership, which will be hosted by U.S. Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and led by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee on the Indian side.

HEALTH

One billion people disabled, says first global report

Karen McVeigh

The World Health Organisation says disabled people more likely to be denied healthcare and less likely to find work.

The proportion of disabled people is rising and now stands at one billion, or 15 per cent of the global population, according to the first official global report on disability.

An ageing population and an increase in chronic health conditions, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, mean the proportion has grown from an estimated 10 per cent in the 1970s.

But, despite a robust disability rights movement and a shift towards inclusion, disabled people remain second-class citizens, according to the report by the World Health Organisation and the World Bank. One in five experience “significant difficulties”.

In developed countries, disabled people are three times more likely to be denied healthcare than other people. Children with disabilities are less likely to start or stay in school than other children, while employment rates are at 44 per cent, compared with 75 per cent for people without disabilities in OECD countries, the report found.

Barriers include stigma, discrimination, lack of adequate healthcare and rehabilitation services, and inaccessible transport, buildings and information. In developing countries the picture is even worse. Tom Shakespeare, one of the authors of the World Report on Disability, said: “The clear message from the report is that there is no country

that has got it right. Italy is a world leader in terms of inclusive education and de-institutionalisation of people with mental health problems but in other areas it is not. In the U.S. the access is phenomenal — it is a civil rights issue. However, if you are looking at poverty and employment it is not good.

“Disabled people do not need to be poor and excluded; they do not need to be segregated. They do not need to be second class citizens.” One of the most “shocking and powerful” issues to come out of the report, according to Mr. Shakespeare, was the discrimination in healthcare.

Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the WHO, said disability was part of the human condition. “Almost every one of us will be permanently or temporarily disabled at some point in life. We must do more to break the barriers which segregate people with disabilities, in many cases forcing them to the margins of society.” Professor Eric Emerson, of the Centre for Disability Research at Lancaster University, England, said the findings on healthcare were not surprising.

“In the U.K., there have been numerous independent reports documenting the systemic discrimination faced by people with disabilities, particularly people with learning disabilities. The health and wellbeing of disabled people is not simply as a direct result of their impairment. It's a result of the way that people with impairments are treated by society.” Last year, the Life Opportunities Survey found many disabled people in Britain were isolated, cash-strapped and struggling to participate in normal activities, with a fifth saying they suffered from so much anxiety and lack of confidence that they lacked the ability to work.

The WHO report, which did not compare countries directly but highlighted best practice, singled out the U.K.'s Disability

Discrimination Act 2005, which places a duty on public bodies to promote equality and its direct payment policies for disabled people as an example of good practice.

But Mr. Shakespeare said: “The U.K. has done very well, due to its direct payment mechanisms, and benefits like independent living allowance and access to work. It appears that many of these developments are under threat. The axing of the independent living fund and other changes to benefit appear to move away from what was a good situation.” Liz Sayce, of the U.K. disability campaigning organisation Radar, said: “The UK has made some real progress and it's good to be reminded that there's something to celebrate, but the employment rate of disabled people has crept up by only six per cent in recent years to 47 per cent. But it is still only 47 per cent and many people are working below their potential.” Tim Wainwright, of ADD (Action on Disability and Development) International, said: “We welcome the fact that there's a lot more clarity on the figures. It confirms that disabled people are the world's largest minority. Great strides have been made in making sure that women are included in international development programmes. The next biggest group is disabled people.” — © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2011

Health is the real wealth

Vishwajit Pratapsingh Rane

The UPA government's guidance, as in the case of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), has made a significant impact in strengthening the healthcare delivery system in India. However, public health programmes are a state subject, where state governments must implement, innovate and ensure their sustainability.

No state is capable of paying for every piece of beneficial medical technology. Hence, difficult decisions of choosing life-saving technologies over other public health problems have to be made. So the most effective way of reducing mortality rate and healthcare spending is through prevention and increased access. The most successful mode of prevention is immunisation. Increasing access to vaccines is an essential tool in saving lives and eliminating the higher costs that come with treating diseases like polio.

The Indian vaccine industry is capable of producing the vaccines we need and are public-minded enough to offer them at a price that makes universal immunisation programmes viable. Recently, two Indian vaccine manufacturers announced cuts in the price of pentavalent vaccine that protects children against five diseases in just three shots. In Goa, this vaccine is available in five taluks, with plans to expand it to 11 taluks soon. Another manufacturer announced that by 2015, it would be ready with a vaccine for rotavirus, a diarrhoeal disease that kills over 1,00,000 children each year. It is taken orally, and if available for just R45 per dose, it could be a useful preventive tool.

Aggressive steps have been taken to prevent cancer too. To combat breast cancer, Goa acquired two mobile mammography units that will enable women to get routine examinations. Prevention methods are not all-encompassing, so resources and attention have to be turned to treatment as well. Chronic diseases require a traditional approach but access, affordability and early detection should remain priorities. To fight diabetes, the Goa government has partnered with the private sector to establish a registry of diabetics, established a mobile unit to provide blood glucose testing in areas without modern facilities and provided insulin to patients who require it free of charge. These measures of progress are not limited to Goa. Since the introduction of the Janani Suraksha Yojna (JSY) programme, safe deliveries, particularly in hospitals, have increased around the country. A concerted effort to eradicate polio has also reduced the number of cases from over 600 two years ago to a single case so far this year.

Continuous and sustainable efforts are critical to reduce poverty, expand education and improve access to healthcare for all. The opportunities offered by modern health technology must be used as an indispensable complement to the gains made in economic development.

Vishwajit Pratapsingh Rane is minister of health, Goa. The views expressed by the author are personal.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

HINDU 14.6.11 INTERNATIONAL RELATION

SCO: 10 years of evolution and impact

Vladimir Radyuhin

The dangers of the endgame in Afghanistan will be high on the minds of SCO leaders as they seek to energise the group's regional policies at the Astana summit.

The 10th anniversary summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on June 15, will be a historic event in terms of the security group's evolution and its impact on the line-up of forces in the region.

The leaders of the six-member SCO are expected to induct Afghanistan as an observer and flag off the process of admitting India and Pakistan as full members. The moves will place Afghanistan at the top of the SCO agenda and dramatically increase the weight and reach of the organisation. It will also be a major victory for Russian diplomacy.

Russia has been steadily working to include Afghanistan in the SCO's zone of responsibility. The SCO established a contact group with Afghanistan, and President Hamid Karzai has attended all its recent summits as a special guest. Russia has also formed a quadrilateral grouping with Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan to promote multilateral economic projects. Its efforts met with understanding in Kabul as it sought to diversify its external relations. According to Russian officials, President Karzai made the

request to join the SCO during his visit to Moscow in January.

Moscow has also consistently championed the admission of India to the SCO to balance China's dominance and strengthen the grouping's clout. "Geopolitically, the induction of India will help refocus its interests from the West towards Russia and Asian states," said Dr. Alexander Lukin, director of East Asia and SCO studies at the Russian Foreign Ministry's Institute of International Relations.

China has long resisted SCO expansion citing lack of standards and procedures. However, fears of chaos in Afghanistan and a spill-over of instability to neighbouring regions of Central Asia and China in the wake of the planned drawdown of the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have prompted the SCO to review its unofficial moratorium on admitting new members.

According to SCO Secretary-General Muratbek Imanaliyev, the summit in Astana will endorse Afghanistan's application for observer status and approve a memorandum on legal and financial obligations of would-be member-states. After that, he said, "we can start negotiations with the nations applying to join the SCO." Currently the SCO comprises China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan are observer states, while Belarus and Sri Lanka are dialogue partners.

Pakistan formally applied for full SCO membership in 2006, Iran filed its application a year later. Last year, India registered its desire to upgrade its observer status to full membership. Iran, for now, stands disqualified under a SCO provision that aspiring candidates must not be under United Nations sanctions or involved in an armed conflict. That leaves India and Pakistan as the only credible candidates.

President Dmitry Medvedev last month publicly voiced support for

Pakistan joining the SCO “together with other candidates.” Moscow recently turned around on its frosty relations with Islamabad hoping to make Pakistan play a more constructive role in Afghanistan. A joint statement issued during Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari's visit to Moscow voiced “support for Afghan-led and Afghan-owned efforts towards promoting national reconciliation in Afghanistan.”

Unique consensus

The lifting of the moratorium on SCO expansion is the result of a unique consensus that has emerged among its members in recent months on the role the security group should play in the region as the U.S.-led NATO forces prepare to pull out of Afghanistan. It is based on the shared belief that the problem of Afghanistan can be solved only in a regional format and that the SCO is the best instrument for facilitating such a solution.

“The SCO believes with good reason that Afghanistan holds the key to the future of the entire region,” Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, whose country holds the rotating chairmanship of the SCO, said in an article devoted to the Astana summit. “We cannot rule out that the SCO may have to bear the brunt of resolving many problems that Afghanistan will face after the withdrawal of the international coalition forces in 2014.”

Ahead of the SCO summit in Astana, Russia voiced concern that the situation in Afghanistan would deteriorate in the coming months and years. “The unfolding process of handing over responsibility from the NATO forces to the Afghan authorities will heighten tension. The situation in Afghanistan is steadily worsening,” Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov told a recent press conference in Moscow. “The security forces of Afghanistan — police and the army — are not ready to assume control even in a few provinces, let alone the entire country.”

The U.S. had 10 years to create a combat-ready army in Afghanistan, Mr. Kabulov said, but time had been lost. Russia was providing transit and other assistance to the coalition forces to help them finish the job and go. “The presence of U.S. military bases in Afghanistan on a long-term basis can greatly aggravate the situation in the region and become a source of tension,” Mr. Kabulov said.

However, experts warned that Washington had no intention of leaving the region. “Afghanistan takes a back seat in the U.S. calculus,” said Sultan Akimbekov, director of Kazakhstan's Institute of World Economy and Politics. “Washington's main goal is to get entrenched in Central Asia under the cover of combating terrorism.” He spoke at an international conference on Afghanistan and regional security held in Almaty on June 9-10 as a curtain raiser for the SCO summit in Astana.

“I think by 2014, the Americans will redeploy their forces in Afghanistan. They will most likely stay at several bases in southern and central regions and move their main forces to the country's north, with subsequent relocation to Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan and probably Uzbekistan,” said Dr. Alexander Knyazev, Russia's leading expert on Central Asia who helped organise the conference.

The U.S. already has an airbase near the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek in the north and plans to set up a military training centre in the south of Kyrgyzstan and an anti-narcotics training facility in Tajikistan. “These bases will have nothing to do with the fight against terrorism, but will serve as bridgeheads for U.S. geopolitical and geo-economic designs against Russia, Iran and China,” Dr. Knyazev said.

The expert believes that the U.S.' hidden agenda in the region also includes fragmentation of Afghanistan into two or more ethnically defined parts in keeping with the concept of creating “controlled

crises.”

The dangers of the endgame in Afghanistan will be high on the minds of the SCO leaders as they seek to energise the group's regional policies at the Astana summit. Russian officials admit though that the SCO at this stage has limited possibilities to influence the situation in Afghanistan. The Russian President's special representative for SCO affairs, Leonid Moiseyev, said the traumatic experience of the 10-year war the Soviet Union waged in Afghanistan made Russia and the new Central Asian states reluctant to work on security issues in Afghanistan.

“We are ready to work on the perimeter borders of Afghanistan and use the potential of observer states, Iran first of all,” Mr. Moiseyev said at a media event in Moscow last week. “But inside Afghanistan, SCO member states are ready to work only on an individual basis and mainly on economic issues.”

The SCO's most successful project so far is the Regional Antiterrorism Structure (RATS) set up in 2004. The member-states have since conducted several major anti-terror military drills. Another area where the SCO has acted in concert is in fighting drug trafficking from Afghanistan. The Astana summit will approve an anti-narcotics strategy for 2011-2016.

New challenges

The proposed expansion poses new challenges for the 10-year-old SCO. “The main question facing the SCO today is whether it will develop as a discussion club that occasionally makes loud statements or evolve into a serious international mechanism on a par with or probably more influential than the ASEAN or APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] forum,” said Dr. Lukin of the Moscow-based Institute of International Relations.

The expert called for organisational reforms to strengthen the SCO, first of all by enhancing the role and independence of the Secretariat, whose officials today are more accountable to their respective Foreign Ministries than to the SCO Secretary General. The consensus principle of decision-taking also needs to be modified to allow joint programmes to go ahead even if a member is unwilling to take part. The expert urged Russia to drop its “shortsighted” opposition to the Chinese proposal for setting up a SCO bank that would create a much needed mechanism for financing multilateral projects and enable the SCO to make full use of the economic potential of new members.

“Given the unpredictable situation in Central Asia, where one cannot rule out events similar to the ‘Arab awakening’, the SCO may soon be called upon to prove its worth as the most representative regional organisation,” the Russian expert said.

Dealing with India in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship

Howard B. & Teresita C. Schaffer

In its dealings with the United States, Pakistan starts from the threat it perceives from India and emphasises India's shortcomings. It will continue to use the United States as a balancer, barring a major improvement in India-Pakistan relations.

Pakistan's view of the world begins with the trauma of the 1947 partition of India, and from the chronic insecurity that it engendered. This is the starting point not only for Pakistan's foreign policy but also for its approach to negotiating with its principal international friends. Pakistan's position as a country one-seventh the size of its giant and, to Pakistanis, hostile neighbour is always at least in the background. The most painful part of this history — the “core issue,” in the term preferred by Pakistani officials and commentators — is Kashmir. Pakistanis believe they have been cheated and betrayed by both India and the international community. They feel that the very structure of their history and geography makes them dependent, vulnerable, and discounted. At the same time, national pride and the need to play up the ways in which they believe Pakistan is superior to India are important themes in their dealings with foreigners.

Pakistani negotiators often try to impress on their U.S. counterparts that Americans and others who have not had to deal with India from a position of weakness do not understand Indian ambitions and guile. As they argue it, Americans are taken in by the Indians and fail to recognise the overbearing, bullying policies and practices India inflicts on Pakistan and the other smaller countries of South

Asia. Most Pakistanis believe that Americans are not aware of India's longstanding hegemonic goals and the dangers to Pakistani and U.S. interests that they entail.

Pakistani tactics to correct these “misimpressions” and instil a “more realistic” understanding of what the Indians are up to will vary, of course, with individual Pakistanis, their American interlocutors, the nature of the negotiations under way, and current circumstances. Americans familiar with subcontinental history and politics may receive a more nuanced presentation than newcomers to South Asia. The highly one-sided interpretations Pakistanis provide stress India's unwillingness to accept Pakistan and its other regional neighbours as fully independent states entitled to pursue their own policies and go their own ways. In its crudest form, this approach focuses on dire Indian plots to undo Pakistan by breaking it up into smaller units, or making it a vassal state, or both. This fear is fed by one of the most traumatic events in Pakistan's history, India's support for the breaking away of East Pakistan in 1971. The memory of this time is still vivid.

Aware that Americans are impressed by Indian democracy and contrast it favourably with the congenital weakness of Pakistani civilian political institutions, Pakistanis will at times point to defects in the way India is governed, especially the way its Muslim minority is treated. Pakistanis are well versed in their version of the truth and will have facts and figures ready to support their accounts. They contrast the hierarchical character of the Hindu caste system with the more egalitarian ethos of Islam. Stereotypes frequently found among Pakistanis hold that Indians are more duplicitous, less honest, and less courageous than Pakistanis. Some military officers in years past were fond of saying that vegetarian Indian troops could never hold their own against their carnivorous Pakistani counterparts. Pakistani negotiators and briefers will call attention to India's overwhelming strength, especially its military capabilities, and argue that the

bellicose way India has used this superiority in the past indicates that it would be prepared to do so again if the opportunity arose.

The approach Pakistanis use with Americans knowledgeable about South Asia includes these and other points critical of India in a more nuanced form. But even those Pakistanis who do not accept the cruder versions of these stereotypes are eager to persuade the American side that Indians (unlike Pakistanis) are not to be trusted, and that India's claims that they prefer a stable and secure Pakistan as their neighbour are false.

Undercutting Indians in American eyes reflects Pakistani concern that Washington regards India as the more important of the two in ways that disadvantage Pakistan. These apprehensions have always been present, even in the heyday of the U.S.- Pakistan security alliance in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Pakistani fears that the United States would “tilt” toward India were heightened by developments after the Cold War ended. U.S.-Indian relations became substantially stronger, especially during the George W. Bush administration. As the Pakistanis are painfully aware, Washington has come to see India as a rising global power and an incipient economic powerhouse, an attractive partner for American strategists and business people. Some influential Americans view it as a useful Asian counterforce to an aggressive China, with which Pakistan has historically enjoyed a warm relationship. And the demise of the Soviet Union meant that Americans no longer worry about New Delhi's ties to Moscow. The United States and India now sometimes even describe each other as “natural allies,” an enormous reinterpretation of the relationship from the norm of Cold War days.

At the same time, the United States has also drawn closer to Pakistan, for different reasons. These relate almost exclusively to Pakistan's role in the U.S.-led effort to combat al-Qaeda and the

Taliban, a part it reluctantly accepted under American pressure following 9/11. Washington can rightly claim that it now enjoys the best relations it has ever simultaneously had with New Delhi and Islamabad. It also can assert more justifiably than it has in the past that U.S. policy in South Asia is not a “zero-sum game” in which improved American relations with India entail weakened ties with Pakistan (and vice versa). Washington plausibly insists that the United States has “de-hyphenated” India and Pakistan in its approach to South Asia. (Ironically, the term “Indo-Pak” once used in describing American policy in the region has now been succeeded by a fresh hyphenation, “Af-Pak,” which the Pakistanis find demeaning and distasteful.)

These assurances have not stilled Pakistani concerns that America will favour India on matters important to Pakistan. Islamabad wants the United States to deal with it as New Delhi's equal, and reacts sharply to any deviation from this norm. For example, the refusal of the U.S. government to consider a civil nuclear deal with Pakistan similar to the one it negotiated with India is seen as clear evidence that the United States has downgraded its ties with Pakistan, and is often referred to as discrimination against Pakistan.

Pakistan's call for equal treatment and its worry that it will not get it are closely related, of course, to its efforts to counterbalance the Indian threat that is still the central element in the country's chronic sense of insecurity. This effort is not limited to Pakistan's dealings with the United States, though Washington has usually been its prime target. Pakistan governments of various political persuasions have looked to China, the oil-rich Arab nations, other Muslim countries, and occasionally even the Soviet Union for diplomatic, political, and economic backing. Pakistan recognises that it is no longer in India's league in terms of overall power, if it ever was. It will continue to look for support from the United States and other outsiders to keep it strong enough to deter the aggressive Indian

designs that it considers its primary challenge. Only a marked improvement in its relations with India, including significant steps toward a settlement of their Kashmir dispute, will lead Pakistan to change this policy. Until that unlikely development takes place — and it has eluded the two countries for six decades — Pakistan will continue to see India as a basically hostile neighbour, and its negotiators will probably continue to believe that making India look bad is an important part of their task.

(This is excerpted from *How Pakistan Negotiates with the United States: Riding the Roller Coaster* by Howard B. and Teresita C. Schaffer, Washington: USIP, 2011. Reprinted by permission. The authors are former U.S. ambassadors, with long years of service in South Asia.)

HINDU 4.6.11 INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Time for a new era of growth with social justice

Juan Somavia

People's needs, which must be inspired by a practical vision of sustainable development, will be in focus at the 100th session of the ILO's on-going tripartite International Labour Conference.

Discontent worldwide is reaching dangerous levels. In three-quarters of the 82 countries with available information, a majority of individuals are getting increasingly pessimistic about their future quality of life and standard of living. This all points in one direction: mounting frustration with a lack of jobs and decent work.

More than 200 million people are officially unemployed worldwide, including nearly 80 million young women and men eager to secure their first job. Both figures are at their highest points ever, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. The number of workers in vulnerable employment — 1.5 billion (around half of the world's labour force) — and persons working but surviving on less than US\$2.00 per day — 1.2 billion — is on the rise again.

Current model

The bottom line is this: the current growth model that has evolved since the early 1980s has become economically inefficient, socially unstable, environmentally damaging and politically unsustainable. It no longer commands legitimacy. People are rightly demanding more fairness in every aspect of their lives. This no doubt contributed to mass uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East as well as significant protests in a

number of industrialised countries and other regions.

Yet as the economic recovery unfolds, in many places it seems as if the crisis never happened. Policy regressing to business as usual ignores the fact that it was precisely those ways of doing business that almost bankrupted the world economy.

Global productive investment as a percentage of GDP — the source of job creation — has stagnated. Instead, we have a continuously rising share of profits coming from financial operations with negligible employment creation. Global wage growth has been cut in half, trailing productivity increases. Income gaps between the top 10 per cent and the bottom 90 per cent are widening, with the middle class squeezed in between.

There are limits to how much inequality a society's social fabric can bear. There are many signs that the limits are fast approaching or have been breached.

On a personal note, having witnessed the social devastations of the policy responses imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the debt and financial crises of the 1980s and 1990s in Latin America and Asia, I am deeply troubled to see Europe, the cradle of social cohesion, apply these very same policies with the negative economic and social consequences that are inherent to them. So what would efficient, socially responsible growth look like?

To begin with, the needs of productive enterprises and workers in the real economy must dislodge financial interests and the bonus culture from the global economy's driver's seat. This will not be easy, given the entrenched power interests of banks that have convinced governments that they are “too big to fail” while pushing for austerity policies that wreak havoc in the lives of families and small enterprises seen as “too small to matter.” We need socially responsible fiscal consolidation in

which lenders also bear a part of the cost.

There is an urgent need to improve on the market outcomes and gains from international trade and investment. This can be achieved through increased integration between macroeconomic policies and labour market and social policies — for example, by making employment creation a targeted macroeconomic objective alongside low inflation and sustainable public budgets.

This would mean more productive and job-creating investment; expanding the real economy and reducing the space for unproductive financial operations; facilitating hiring, especially in small enterprises; providing for a fiscally sound social protection floor to the 80 per cent of the world population who lack social security; and facilitating the application of fundamental rights at work, in particular freedom of association and collective bargaining. There is much evidence that these approaches work. Countries — mostly emerging economies and some developed ones — that have applied a combination of these policies are coming out of the crisis faster than those that have stuck to the old recipes. The G20 Leaders rightly want to promote a strong, sustainable and balanced growth. I would add “equitable” to the mix. The forthcoming Summit under French leadership and the planned meeting of their Labour Ministers can open the way for policies that connect growth with people's aspirations everywhere for a fair chance at a decent job.

ILO conference

In short, we need a new era of growth with social justice inspired by a practical vision of sustainable development — an era where people's needs are at the heart of policy-making, the benefits of globalisation are shared equitably, and voice, participation and democracy can flourish. At the 100th Session of the ILO's tripartite International Labour Conference which began this week (June 1-17, 2011), government,

employer and worker delegates will consider how they, as representatives of the real economy, can assume their responsibility in meeting these challenges.

(Juan Somavia is Director-General of the International Labour Organisation.)

POVERTY

HINDU 9.6.11 POVERTY

An exercise in undercounting the poor

Brinda Karat

The impending BPL Census exercise will not help the poor; on the contrary, it will further deny them a fair share in national resources.

The BPL, or Below Poverty Line, Census 2011 for the rural areas will start in select States this month. In a country such as India with vast numbers of the poor, counting the poor often becomes an exercise in undercounting and dividing them, to suit the wholly inhuman policy of targeted provision of what should be universal rights. But since this is an intrinsic part of the present neoliberal framework, it is necessary to look at the actual design of the census. After the earlier questionnaires that were used to identify the poor faced widespread criticism, the government had promised a change. But except for the removal of a few absolutely objectionable questions that were in the 2002 questionnaire, the 2011 questionnaire remains problematic. The 2002 questionnaire included questions on the number of meals one ate each day and the number of saris owned: you got into the BPL category only if you ate a meal once a day, or owned one sari. These questions have now been removed.

The 2011 questionnaire includes an automatic exclusion category and an automatic inclusion category — new additions to the design. It, however, retains the ranking system for the rest, who will make up the majority of the rural population. The 2002 BPL questionnaire had 13 questions, each with a score of 0-4. The total score ranged from zero to 52, with zero denoting the most poor. The 2011

questionnaire has only seven questions. It has a 0-7 score, with seven denoting the most poor.

Exclusion

An easily verifiable exclusion category for the BPL Census would be unexceptionable, given the reality of social and economic inequalities in rural India. But the present criteria seem geared to stretching the 13 categories that would qualify for automatic exclusion to a much higher percentage of the total. There can be no objection to the exclusion of government employees, income tax payees, those who own tractors, or those who hold kisan credit cards with a credit provision for Rs. 50,000. But the list “automatically excludes peasants with 2.5 acres of irrigated land who own a tubewell.” With hugely fluctuating incomes, large debt burdens on poor peasant households, vagaries of the weather, droughts or floods, such automatic exclusion would amount to meting out grave injustice to a large section of rural India.

Another questionable exclusion is that of a household with “a non-agricultural enterprise registered with the government.” Even micro-enterprises run by women's self-help groups, for example, are registered with the government. So are many others, and why should they be automatically excluded? There are other such examples.

The experience in Tamil Nadu, for example, has shown that self-exclusion of those who do not require the subsidy benefit turns out to be more accurate and fair than otherwise. Moreover, automatic exclusion criteria make sense when the rest of the population is automatically included. But this is not the case in the present BPL Census design.

Inclusion

On the contrary, the five-point automatic inclusion category is so

absurdly narrow that it is unlikely to cover even 5 per cent of the rural poor. Destitute people have been defined as those living on alms: they will be in the automatic inclusion list. But if, for example, a family of two senior citizens who are forced to work, say, four or five days a month just to survive, they will not be included as destitute as they do not “beg.” Others include “households without shelter, manual scavengers, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labourers.” Presumably, if the worker has run away from bondage he or she is not legally released and therefore does not deserve automatic inclusion. Even social categories such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the disabled, widows, and casual manual workers are not automatically included.

Ranking

With such a narrow set of automatic inclusion criteria being applied, the large mass of the rural poor will be marked poor or non-poor through a ranking system. The questions are odd and have little connection with actual conditions. Suppose you are a tribal family of five members — Mina Usendi, aged 35, her mother aged 58, a 17-year-old boy and two polio-affected girls; owning half a bigha of agricultural land but doing manual work to survive. How would you be marked in the seven-point questionnaire that would make you eligible or ineligible for a BPL card?

Question 1: “Houses with one room with kutchha walls and roof.” Since within the small plot of land that you own, you have erected a kutchha house with a kutchha roof with two small rooms (not one), on the first question you will score zero.

Question 2: “Household with no adult member between age 16 to 59.” Since you are 35 years old and therefore an adult, on the second question also you score zero.

Question 3: “Female headed family with no adult male member

between age 16 to 59.” Although you are a woman, and you head your family, since your eldest child is a 17-year-old boy, you will get a zero rank.

Question 4: “Household with any disabled member and no able bodied member.” You have two children who are disabled, affected by polio. But since you are able-bodied you get zero on this question.

Question 5: “SC/ST households.” Since you are a tribal, you will get the score one on this marker.

Question 6: “Households with no literate adult above 25 years.” Since you are 35 years old and have studied up to Class 4, you are literate and therefore will again get a zero.

Question 7: “Landless households deriving the major part of their income from manual casual labour.” Since you own half a bigha of land, even if it is dry and unproductive, even though you work from morning to night as a casual manual worker, you will still get a zero.

Therefore, someone like Mina Usendi, a tribal woman heading a family, who depends on casual manual labour to survive, will get just one point on a score of seven.

This is just one example of how the method of ranking and also the questionnaire are bound to ensure that only a small percentage of the poor can score the highest or near-highest marks. It is like trying to distinguish between the ‘poor,’ ‘very poor,’ ‘very very poor,’ ‘extremely poor,’ and so on. This is the classic manner in which neoliberal policymakers make poverty “disappear.” You are no longer poor, because you are not as poor as the poorest of the poor!

Terror of cut-off marks

The Ministry of Rural Development and related departments at the State level have the job of identifying the poor according to the seven-point questionnaire. But the number of people who will be recognised as being poor is determined by poverty estimates, and the “caps” on numbers of the poor as determined by the dubious methods and assessments of the Planning Commission.

Thus, for example, to get 42 per cent, which is the poverty “cap” set for West Bengal, the cut-off score may be four. Those who score below four will be deprived of the card. The cut-off for each State will differ. A person in Madhya Pradesh who has the same score of four may not get into the BPL category. This is because, in order to suit the “cap” of the Planning Commission, the cut-off score in Madhya Pradesh may be five as there may be many more families with a score of 5-7 than there are in West Bengal. This is the terror of cut-off lines.

In this scenario it is most unlikely that Mina Usendi, with a low score of one, will get a BPL card.

The BPL Census is designed to suit the wholly arbitrary and utterly unfair State-wise “caps” on poverty that have been set by the Planning Commission. It can be safely said that this entire census exercise is not meant to help the poor such as Mina Usendi, but on the contrary to further deny them a fair share in national resources.

(Brinda Karat is a Member of Parliament, and a member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India-Marxist.)

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

The adharma of politicians

Joginder Singh

Whenever politicians are caught with their hand in the till they cry foul and claim innocence. M Karunanidhi's defence of Kanimozhi demonstrates this point.

The paterfamilias of the first family of the DMK which was routed in the recent Assembly election, has said that his daughter Kanimozhi, a Rajya Sabha MP who is in jail for her alleged role in the 2G Spectrum scandal, has been imprisoned "either because of an instruction from the Centre or due to the negligence of the Centre". Earlier, Mr M Karunanidhi, had also said that "bad friendship" would end in trouble.

According to the CBI's chargesheet, Kanimozhi was arrested along with the managing director of Kalaignar TV for allegedly receiving `200 crore in the 2G Spectrum allocation scam. Mr Karunanidhi, however, claimed that the investigating agency had arrested his daughter as it needed someone to take the blame.

Having seen the CBI work from close quarters, I know for a fact that whenever a politician involved in a scam or a scandal is arrested, the standard response is that he or she has been falsely implicated and that it is a part of vendetta against an innocent person. I have also noticed that politicians and the truth rarely go hand-in-hand. Moreover, if the politician has held a position of power, his or her approach has generally been to loot as much as possible as if there is no tomorrow and he or she would never be held accountable.

In this context, I am reminded of a dialogue between *dharma* and the eldest Pandav brother, Yudhisthir. *dharma* asked Yudhisthir, “What is the biggest wonder of the world?” Yudhisthir replied, “The biggest wonder of the world is that people should see others dying and still somehow believe that death will bypass them.” In other words, people tend to forget that nature too works along Newton’s Third Principle: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

In the name of coalition *dharma*, partners in a coalition tend to become law unto themselves. Minority partners hold the majority party at gunpoint and the latter conveniently looks away so that they may all continue to remain in power. Yet, no *dharma* permits such *adhharma* that allows the evil of corruption to thrive. In our country, the laws have been so framed that any investigation may be strangled by the Government at any step.

For example, according to the CVC Act the CBI cannot start any investigation against any officer of the level of Joint Secretary and above, which would include Ministers, without the Government’s sanction that can come only after the matter has been investigated. Thus, the CBI or any anti-corruption agency is left to deal with peons and clerks or junior officials at best, when everybody knows that the rot starts at the top.

The UPA Government went all out to save former Telecommunications Minister A Raja for nearly 14 months, till such time the Supreme Court took over the monitoring of investigations into the 2G Spectrum scam. Only after that was A Raja arrested and a case registered against him. Three months later, Kanimozhi was also put behind bars. Now, the politicians are making a fine distinction between what is moral and what is legal as a subterfuge to escape punishment for their crimes. The Government, of course, is still doing its best to save the thieves and robbers, especially if they happen to belong to the ruling alliance. The

only barrier that stands in its way is the judiciary.

This is not the case only in India; it is the same the world over. The famous American journalist Frank I Cobb once said about the US what is now equally applicable to India: “If the author of the Declaration of Independence were to utter such a sentiment today, the Post Office Department could exclude him from the mail, grand juries could indict him for sedition and criminal syndicalism, legislative committees could seize his private papers ... and United States Senators would be clamouring for his deportation that he... should be sent back to live with the rest of the terrorists.”

The system today continues to be unjust to the masses with the result that people with lots of money and the ability to afford expensive lawyers often go unpunished. Regarding the Government’s indifference to the criminal justice system, the Supreme Court recently said, “The criminal justice system has been destroyed by the Government. They are not providing (adequate) funds to the police and the courts.” The observation only proves that the Government has actually done more than enough to bail out criminals, contrary to what Mr Karunanidhi would like to believe.

Moreover, by ensuring that the CBI remains under-staffed and hamstrung, the Government has significantly weakened its main anti-corruption agency as well. According to the CBI’s data, some 915 posts at the executive officers level — these include positions for Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, Deputy Superintendents of Police, Superintendents of Police, Deputy Inspectors-General, Additional and Special Directors, Law Officers — are currently vacant. Hence, Mr Karunanidhi’s charge that the Union Government has not done enough to save his daughter does not stand up to scrutiny.

The only reason why Kanimozhi is in jail is because her case is being directly monitored by the Supreme Court. Once a case comes under the

scrutiny of the judiciary, the Government has no say and cannot even direct the CBI. However, the abuse and misuse of the police and other law enforcement agencies will continue unless they are given a constitutional status. But we can only dream about such things since no politician would like to place a noose around his or her own neck. The State Governments have not even implemented the September 2006 directives of the Supreme Court for minimum reforms within the police department.

Mr Karunanidhi's statements thus reflect the mindset of today's politicians who, like our erstwhile colonial rulers, are habituated to using the police as puppets to implement their wishes as was evident during the eviction of Baba Ramdev and his supporters from Delhi — they had gathered to protest against corruption and press their demand that the Government should bring back the black money stashed in safe havens abroad.

It is a fact that fighting corruption has never been on the agenda of any political party. Though there are some honest politicians, most others use black money to fund their election campaign. This is done with the explicit help of the Government. Therefore, it is the Government's duty to ensure that everyone declares their source of income. But perhaps it is never going to happen. So anybody who leads a movement against black money and corruption would be doing a signal service.

Many people say that democracy does not work. Of course it works. But we are the ones who have to make it work.